

DISCUSSION

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EASTERN RELATIONS IN THE STONE AGE OF NORTH-EASTERN EUROPE *

THE Stone Age of North-Eastern Europe", published in this volume by Marija Gimbutas, is a work based largely upon the results of Russian excavations, but is unprejudiced by the syntheses of Russian scholars. Indeed, it provides a welcome complement to the Russian theories.

Gimbutas extends her field wider than do the Russians. She is unrestricted by political boundaries and can therefore take into consideration the Polish provinces, which are of outstanding importance to the study of the formation and spread of the peasant and pastoral cultures of Eastern Europe, and to the countless problems of Indo-European origins. But above all, she furnishes a necessary counterpoise to Russian research in that, in questions of migration and colonisation, she attaches most importance to movements proceeding from the West and South-West.

This appears already in the problem of the earliest migrations into the North Russian Forest Zone. Here the views of Eastern and Western scholars stand diametrically opposite to each other. The Russian author, Brjusov, is of the opinion that the first arrivals in the North were from the region of the Central Urals, which had in turn been populated from the South and South-East, from the present-day Kazakhstan. This eastern advance, palpable at several intermediary sites¹, had, he conjectures, penetrated as far as the Baltic, and isolated traces of it occur even further to the west. In other words, he holds that the lowest stratum at Gorbunov-Moor is older than the so-called Kunda Culture. He believes also that the characteristic skeletal type of the Balkans is not of West European but of Eastern derivation. Surprisingly, he gives a similar eastern origin even to the earliest neolithic settlement

* Observations du Prof. K. JETTMAR sur l'article du Dr. M. GIMBUTAS. Traduit de l'allemand.

¹ He considers a newly discovered site on the River Jagerba as one link of this connection.

of the Volga-Oka region (which was decidedly later than the first colonisation of the North)—mainly through the negative argument that the Volga-Oka types are foreign to the rest of the Central and East European sequence.

Gimbutas, on the other hand, holds to Indreko's traditional interpretation, which sees a strong cultural flow from West to East, and concedes the Kunda culture a considerable chronological priority. This theory is certainly much the better. Brjusov's view that Kazakhstan was the original centre can hardly be maintained against the lack of datable finds of the third and fourth millennia in that area. Although indeed, the present state of archaeological research there is no longer so unhappy as it has been for some years past, owing to the work of Tolstov, Formazov, Černecov and Okladnikov.

The first real agreement of opinion is reached over the migrations which presumably took place at the end of the third millennium, and, at all events, in the second. Gimbutas accepts the theory held by Foss and Brjusov, that a new and more intensive settlement of Karelia and North-West Russia resulted from expansions from the South and South-West, notably from the Volga-Oka region.

There is agreement too as to the reason for the migration northwards. Favourable climatic conditions and progress in techniques had brought about denser settlement or even over-population on the southern fringe of the forest zone. No exodus was possible toward the southern steppe and forest-steppe country, which was occupied by peasant and stock-breeding societies. Indeed the migration of Fatyanovo folk toward Central Russia had confined available space even further². There was therefore an expansion in the open direction north-wards, especially by way of the rivers. The climatic optimum rendered it possible for permanent settlement in villages to advance into territories which had afterwards to be abandoned in the "Fimbul-Winter" of the first millennium B.C. Brjusov believes it possible to observe the older and newer populations existing side by side with one another in the Far North, until in a later phase they became assimilated. The spread and the subsequent disappearance of decorated pottery tells the story.

Gimbutas stresses also an even more far-reaching wave of movements from the South-West toward Latvia, Estonia, Finland and North-West Russia. The folk in question here were traders and travellers. Gimbutas takes the site of Modlona on Lake Vozhe as belonging to this group (Brjusov can as yet give no satisfactory account of its origin). At all events, we get a picture of extensive movements caused as much

² Russian scholars now recognise that the Fatyanovo stockbreeders were not autochthons in Central Russia. Gimbutas has therefore no real need so to defend this view against the older Russian hypothesis. Marr is now the only one who objects to the migration theory.

by a climatic optimum offering new possibilities of settlement in the north as by the general disturbance in the south.

Yet there is still a considerable difference between the picture as painted by Gimbutas and that of the Russian researchers. For several authors hold that an additional, even more extensive migration was probable. This would have reached the North Russian area from the east. As a representative of the western stand-point, Gimbutas shirks all mention of this movement from the east, although it must be important, especially to anthropology³. It would therefore seem advisable to set down the views of the Russians here, in as objective a fashion as may be, so as to give the reader an ideal of all the possibilities.

The opinions of the Russian writers are based on the fact that we meet with several ethnic types in the neolithic sites of North Russia. The most important group are Long-Heads, which must no doubt be accounted as European. They have been connected with the Cromagnon type. But there appear also proto-Mongoloid types such as the Lappoid, which seem to have some sort of connection with the Mongoloid group. The oldest discovery of this category occurs already at Shigir, apparently dated to the fourth millennium. Other examples occur in the Oka province as in the area of the Kargopol culture. Mongoloid types are known also from the cemetery on the great "Stag Island" on Lake Onega. The latest anthropological discoveries from the East European Forest Zone have recently been compared by Akimova, who distinguishes three essential types, the European, the Lappoid and the true Mongoloid.

Even if one attempts to exclude the so-called Lappoid type from the Mongoloid group, or even to consider it not as a hybrid form but as a variety within the European group, nevertheless one has still, in these circumstances, to reckon with the presence of true Mongoloids.

The centre of gravity of the Mongoloid race now lies in Eastern Asia in East Siberia; and there also there must have obtained climatic conditions such as would lead to a special development of the eye regions (the Mongol fold is a protection against extreme variations of temperature, glaring light and sand-storms); these factors indicate that we must reckon with a movement which had its genesis in Eastern Asia.

In fact there are also numerous archaeological connections between Siberia and Northern Russia. Brisk trade relations must have existed from time to time.

Even the funerary rites shows uniformity, and things must have been passed on relatively quickly over enormous areas. So, even without the consideration of the anthropological material, a simple acceptance

³ Gimbutas herself suddenly mentions Mongoloids (p. 431), but pays no attention to the problem of their origin.

of trade from tribe to tribe does not provide sufficient explanation of the facts. Ethnic movements must have taken place. It is therefore significant that the unusual rite of burying the dead in a standing position—the so-called Vertical Graves—which hitherto is known only from Stag Island, is now discovered beyond the Urals, in the southern margin of the Taiga, where also there occur the same characteristic bone knives.

Yet by no means can this be a question of a large folk-movement (that, indeed, would be hard to conceive even in the Forest Zone alone), but rather of a gradual infiltration by means of very varied social factors, such as traders, war-like adventurers and slaves. Witness to this is the diffusion of the new traits into very varying cultures. A similar current must also have been flowing in the opposite direction.

One cannot as a rule throw much light upon the course of such streams. But one must take into consideration the fact that, at that time, during a period of warm climate, conditions would have been much more favourable for navigation along the Arctic sea-coast than they are today. The rock-engravings published by Ravdonikas demonstrate that there were large sea-worthy boats in existence in Northern Europe then, as also do the amazingly far-flung connections of the Pit-Comb Ware culture, which only the use of sea routes can explain.

The ancient trade-routes must have penetrated as far even as the southern margin of the Taiga⁴.

Some such infiltration, certainly, had continued over centuries and must be considered as a further component of that described by Gimbutas. This alone is needed here to complete her work.

The resulting wider understanding offers a coherent picture, of which I shall here sketch only the most important aspects.

1. It may throw some light on the movements of the Mongols towards North-Eastern Europe: and it explains how, just at that critical period of great mobility at the beginning of the Bronze Age, Mongoloid skulls appear sporadically over a much wider area than before—as in the Bell-Beaker culture⁵, the Ossarn culture (an eastern variant of the Baden group) and the Hungarian Early Bronze Age⁶, and, above all, at the site of Hainberg-Teichtal. I have, elsewhere, followed up these examples and related them to the possible appearance of Mongoloid skulls at the cemetery site of Västerbjers in Gottland.

The stations at Hainberg-Teichtal and Västerbjers were perhaps junctions in a system of trade-routes connecting with those of Eastern Europe and Siberia. And these were partly Mongoloid. At the period

⁴ Note the appearance in the Ural region of nephrite from the Lake Baikal area.

⁵ This is questionable.

⁶ The sites of Orosvár and Tököl.

of the Bell-Beaker migrations this assumption is surely not wholly absurd.

2. It may be that diffuse movements such as these set the stage for greater migrations, through which, perhaps, the extreme Mongoloid type discovered in the cemeteries of the Ananino culture came to Europe.

3. It may be that linguistic connections such as those which have been asserted between the Yukaghir and Uralian languages, go back to similar connections in remote antiquity.

4. Finally, it follows out of this that the Russian writers sometimes attach enormous importance to the eastern component of the Pit-Comb Ware culture. Čeboksarov, for example, believes that the eastern element was essential in the formation of the Finno-Ugrian language group. But this is already implied by the hypothesis.