

his classification, with over 80% of all but one of the cemeteries accommodated. Clearly, this work signifies real progress in the classification of decorated early Anglo-Saxon pottery. There are problems, but not of the analyst's making. It has been shown in the past by Richards (1987) that there are grounds to suspect that the size, shape and style of Anglo-Saxon cremation urns were influenced by the age and gender of those contained within them. Thus, it is entirely possible, that within Leahy's 'runs' of contemporary urns, we are seeing differentiated age/gender considerations, or indeed single/multiple burials. As there was no funding for skeletal analysis, there is simply no way of knowing if this is the case.

At the end of the book, Leahy flags up a number of aspects of the analysis of the excavated material that he was unable to carry out due to the lack of financial support. Correspondence Analysis of the urns and the contained artefacts is flagged up, and a similar analysis of the age and gender of the deceased with the decorative styles of their burial containers would doubtless also prove useful. Lack of time and funding also precluded spatial analysis and scientific dating. This is all understandable in the light of the problems which were encountered during the process of bringing this important site to publication.

This is a remarkable report, not merely for the important conclusions reached, but also for that fact that it was brought to publication with virtually no help from those national bodies charged with the distribution of public funds in archaeology. Simply bringing a project of this size and complexity to publication in such circumstances is an achievement for which Kevin and his team should be warmly congratulated, and indeed, thanked. It is certainly a valuable, and perhaps crucial step forward in the understanding of Anglo-Saxon cremation pottery, and it is to be hoped that in future, the work for which Kevin was unable to obtain funding will be carried out.

Paul Blinkhorn

## References

Richards, J D, 1987, *The Significance of the Form and Decoration of Anglo-Saxon Cremation Urns*. Brit Archaeol Rep Brit Ser 166.

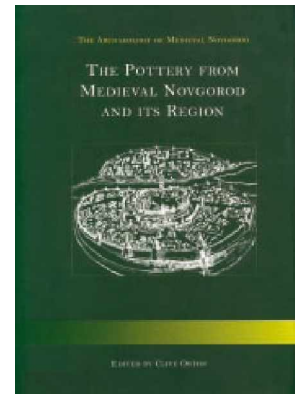
## Clive Orton (editor)

*The pottery from medieval Novgorod and its region: the archaeology of medieval Novgorod . Volume I*  
UCL Press . 234 pages

British archaeologists, at least most of those of my acquaintance, know that Novgorod is a big medieval town in Russia where excavations of extraordinary longevity have uncovered a lot of wood. There are wooden houses and streets, wooden documents and a wide range of wooden artefacts.

Novgorod was also important as a place where trade routes converged, including those between Scandinavia, western and central Europe and the Near East. According to Mark Brisbane, the editor of the Archaeology of Medieval Novgorod Series, the importance of Novgorod 'to the study of both early Rus and the development of Europe cannot be over-emphasised'. It is probably true to say also that the importance of the excavations in the progress of archaeology is fundamental. Work began in 1932, and has continued virtually every year since. Archaeology in Soviet times suffered its own peculiar trials and tribulations, but the post-Glasnost coming together of the British and Russian team that is working on this series signals the value of this project on many levels, not least the breaking down of cold war barriers. This collaboration has been working for over ten years now, and *The pottery from medieval Novgorod and its region* is the first in a series that will include volumes on other artefacts and environmental material. The political significance of this publication should be borne in mind as we consider the contents of this slim but hefty volume. For some Russian archaeologists this is a long-awaited opportunity to communicate their findings to a wide audience, and that alone is to be welcomed.

It is not clear why the pottery should be the first thing to be published. Of all the wonderful finds from Novgorod the ceramics do not seem to stand out. Even after working through the ten chapters presented here by a variety of authors, it is hard to grasp any sort of overall picture of what pottery actually meant to the inhabitants of Novgorod, nor what it represents and contributes to the study of medieval north-west Russia. It is also difficult to gain any sense of importance to the study of early Rus or the development of Europe, which may be difficult to over-emphasise, but should be brought out somehow. Perhaps the numerous authors are part of the problem, because it is rarely easy to find coherency or continuity in a collection of separate articles. There are two papers with an introductory flavour. Mark Brisbane and Clive Orton present 'The



study of medieval ceramics from North-West Russia: a view from the West' in the first chapter, and Orton again offers 'Handling large urban assemblages and their statistics' as Chapter 6. In between, and thereafter, we are treated to a further eight, more specific chapters grouped under various headings.

In Chapter 1, Brisbane and Orton point up the differences between approaches to ceramic studies in western Europe (mainly Britain) and the more processual line followed in Russia. The effects of Soviet isolation on academic communication are now well known, and those differences are no surprise, so there is little point in focussing on them here. The authors, to their credit, pass no comment either. They simply describe the present position and it is apparent that one aim of their project is to enable communication with other specialists. The contribution from David Gaimster, on the German stoneware, exemplifies that purpose. The first group of papers, 'Chronology and Technology' includes four articles dealing with pottery from the towns of Novgorod, Rurik Gorodishche, and Pskov. Each of them combines to provide an understanding of which pottery types came and went in the region between the 10th and 16th centuries. These chapters are essentially descriptive, and there are few attempts to consider what prompted observed changes, or how the pottery might have been used. The final effect is to leave one wondering why this should be of interest to archaeologists working much beyond the Baltic region, but they are all well-ordered and thorough pieces of work. Chapter 6, Orton's consideration of the statistical approaches, provides a partial response, for if nothing else, he brings the problems facing Russian ceramicists into sharp focus. At Novgorod, one season's excavations alone produced 247,000 sherds, and even if that is only around 60 sherds per cubic metre, that is still a lot to work through. It is no surprise to find that ceramicists are still getting to grips with the daunting task of characterisation. This in part explains the less than contemplative approach of those who have worked on this material, and the following article by O A Rud, 'An attempt to classify the decoration of Novgorod medieval pottery using material from Troitsky excavation XI (Spits 22–10), is a case in point. It seems we might have to wait a bit longer, and certainly until the rest of the evidence can be brought to bear, before interpretation will really take off. Orton's paper and the one that follows are grouped under the heading 'Methodology', and it is here that the peculiarities arising from a project of such extraordinary longevity are most pointed. It is unlikely that statistical analysis of pottery sherds was on the minds of those who, in the 1930s, initiated the spit-digging approach to this rich and complex site. Orton demonstrates that the application of statistics can, as he puts it, 'bring out previously unexpected features of the data, the explanation of which should lead to further understanding of the role of ceramics in Novgorod'. The

subsequent classification of decorative techniques and motifs should therefore be recognised as the first step in ordering the data to allow more profound enquiry. The final group of three papers is headed 'International contacts'. This includes a paper by David Gaimster entitled 'Pottery imported from the West: reception and resistance', I V Volkov's consideration of amphorae from Novgorod and V Y Koval on 'Eastern pottery from the excavations at Novgorod'. These papers may be of interest to a wider audience than those dealing with local products, not least because they touch on the universal themes of long-distance exchange mechanisms and the various requirements of traders and consumers. A biblio-graphical index to publications on pottery from the Ilmen region and medieval Novgorod forms a final section, followed by the references and index. There is also a CD-ROM with six appendices to a few of the papers. These are data files in Microsoft Excel or text file formats. Not all of them appear to have keys, and are therefore of very limited value because the meaning of the data is not immediately apparent. The 'Experimental coding of a sample of pottery from the Troitsky XI excavations' is profoundly obscure. It is supposed to complement Orton's Chapter 6, but there is no reference to it there.

It would not be useful here to delve into the specific content of individual papers. All of them are well presented, with plentiful illustrations, tables and charts. The Russian texts were ably translated by Katherine Judelson, and read very well. A few colour plates would have been welcomed to give an idea of what the material actually looks like. That, perhaps, is the main issue. Novgorod remains a completely alien place to most of us, and many of you will probably be wondering why you should invest in this volume. Well, as discussed above, this is an important step in the collaborative project that brings together western European approaches to the discipline with local knowledge and experience. In those terms it is a success, mercifully untainted by any hint of patronage or competition. You could read this book in order to learn an awful lot about what the pottery of Novgorod and its region looked like, but that may not appeal to many of you. You should read this book to extend your understanding of the development of pottery studies on a wider scale. Parts of it may seem naive and simplistic to some of us, but we should take more time to pass judgement. Few of us can claim to understand fully the experiences of the Russian archae-ologists past and present who studied, or study, the archaeology of Novgorod. This collection adds up to an extensive statement of the approach to the subject and the current level of progress. As Volkov puts it 'the analysis ... at this time is, so far, only in its infancy'. Indeed, the whole volume carries the flavour of work being carried out with genuine pleasure, and if you allow yourself to enjoy its warmth and depth, then you can't help but look forward to the next instalment.

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