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BELARUSIAN PANYAMONNE IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES (10TH–13TH CENTURIES)

БЕЛОРУССКОЕ ПОНЕМАНЬЕ В РАННЕМ СРЕДНЕВЕКОВЬЕ (X–XIII ВВ.)

Summary. *The article examines the political, ethnic and economic history of the Belarusian Panyamonne in the early Middle Ages (10th – 13th centuries). The Belorussian Panyamonne is a historical and ethnographic region of modern Belarus, located in the Neman river basin. The analysis of written and archaeological sources shows that the population of the region was poli-ethnic during this period. The East Slavic (Dregoviches, Volhynians, Krivichs) and the West Slavic (Mazovians) tribes came into contact with the Baltic tribes (Yotvingians, Lithuanians, Prussians). The cities of the Belarusian Panyamonne (Grodno, Slonim, Volkovysk, Novogrudok, Tureisk) were founded by the Slavs in the 11th – 13th centuries and quickly became centers of political, economic, and cultural life in the region. The unique architectural school was formed in 12th century in Grodno. In the middle of the 13th century the territory of the Belarusian Panyamonne became the center of the formation new political association - the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.*

Key words: *Belarusian Panyamonne, written sources, Ipatiev Chronicle, archaeological excavations, political history, socio-economic development, Slavic tribes, Yotvingians, Galician-Volhynian princes, fortified city.*

Belarusian Panyamonne is a historical and ethnographic region of Belarus. It is distinguished by a complex of specific ethno-cultural features and occupies the territory of Grodno and adjacent parts of Brest and Minsk regions. In historiography, it is often called by the term “Black Ruthenia”. However, we find it unsubstantiated to call the Panyamonne region of the 10th – 13th centuries by this term, because this name is absent from the chronicles and other medieval written sources. Attempts of researchers to find out the etymology of the term “Black Ruthenia”, and how it was attached to the territory of Belarus, has not yet yielded convincing results [1, pp. 27-30, 66-87, 117-136; 2, pp. 82-85].

The main study sources of Belarusian Panyamonne history in the Early Middle Ages are the archeological and written ones. Nevertheless, specific information on the ancient history of the region, found in written sources, is rare.

The chronicles, as a general rule, primarily reflect the facts of political life. This is mainly due to the nature of chronicles themselves, the main purpose of which was to reflect the events of national importance. The content of the message was also influenced by personal views of the chronographer, general political environment and territorial distance of the events from the location of recording. For these particular reasons it is rather difficult to restore an objective history of the region.

The territory of Belarusian Panyamonne began to be settled by people in the Mesolithic Period. Here, in the 7th century BC begins to establish the Hatched Pottery Culture. From the 5th century BC, this culture is replaced by the cultures of Eastern Lithuanian Mounds and Bancerovo-Tušemlios culture (lit.), which the majority of researches classify as Baltic [3, pp. 63, 73-74].

There are several views on the issue of ethnic composition of the population in the region of Belarusian Panyamonne in the Early Middle Ages. Most researchers (F. Gurevich, P. Lysenko and others) consider the Dregoviches to be the main population in the 10th – 13th centuries. V. Sedov believes that Yotvingians and their descendents, who became slavified, lived there [4, p. 120]. The survey of evidence collected from archeological sites of Panyamonne shows that the population of the region was multiethnic in the 10th – 13th centuries. It is difficult to single out any particular area where one single ethnicity dominated. The settlement of the region occurred from two directions: southern (Dregoviches, Volhynians, Drevlians) and eastern (Krivichs).

The presence of groups of burial grounds that belong to different chronological periods and the evidence collected from settlements allow us to speak about two main waves of Slavic colonization. The first wave came here in the second half of the 10th – 11th century. This is confirmed by the fact that in the early stages of settlements' existence the southern traditions are observed in house building and ceramics. In the 12th century a new influx of population from the South occurred due to the strengthening of the Galicia-Volhynia Principality. Simultaneously with these processes the inflow of the Krivichs and the Mazovians was occurring. All Slavic tribes and the Baltic population entered into close contact, mutually enriching each others' material and spiritual culture. This constitutes the special nature of Belarusian Panyamonne which is located on the settlement border of various tribes.

Hypothetically, the involvement of Panyamonne population in political history can be associated with Prince Vladimir's and Prince Yaroslav's campaigns against the Yotvingians and Lithuania in AD 983, 1038, 1040 [5, p.58, 103; 6, p. 116]. At the same time, there is information that the place of Yaroslav's victory over Lithuania, in 1040, is located "in the fields of Slonim" [7, 195]. The campaigns of Yaroslav against Lithuania and the **Yotvingians** signified the expending influence of the Principality of Kiev. Apparently, here clashed interests of Yaroslav and Bryachislav, the Prince of Polotsk. Yet, because the Princes were allies, there clash did not result in an open armed fight. The Princes divided their spheres in influence over Baltic lands – Yaroslav consolidated his

hold on the left bank of Panyamonne, and Bryachislav – in the basin of Western Dvina called Padzvinnie.

The major written source of the history of Panyamonne in the Early Middle Ages is the Galician-Volhynian Code of Ipatiev Chronicle. The information in the Code is divided into two chronological periods. The first one refers to the 12th century and is entirely associated with **Goradzien** (Grodno). It is this city that is mentioned the most often than other cities of Panyamonne in the Chronicle. Notably, the local Princes are mentioned first and then the city itself. The second period dates back to the 13th century when the Neman region lands became the arena of wrangling between Lithuanian and Galician-Volhynian Princes.

It is generally thought that the first mentioning of Grodno Princes dates back to AD 1116: “that year Vladimir (Monomakh) gave away his daughter Agafia to be married to Vsevolodko” [8, p. 284]. The location of the Prince and whether he was in Grodno is unknown from the report. However, in AD 1128, the Chronicle tells about the campaign against Polatsk and identifies “Vsevolodko from Grodno” [8, p. 292]. As it is commonly known, the campaign against the land of Polatsk was organized by Mstislav Vladimirovich simultaneously from four directions. Vsevolodko led one of them. As a consequence, we can indicate the existence of an apanage principality headed by Vsevolodko Davydovich. It is known from the Chronicle that Vsevalad (Vsevolodko) and Agafia had three sons and two daughters. The descendents of Vsevolodko actively participated in the political activities of Kievan princes during the 12th century, as stated in the Chronicle [8, pp. 410, 413, 424, 426, 427, 433, 528, 538, 574, 631]. The last chronicle report of the 12th century, pertaining to Grodno, dates back to AD 1183. It is the only one that refers to the life of the city itself: “The same year Grodno burned down entirely and all stone churches form streaks of lightning and thunder” [8, p. 634].

It should be noted that the scarce information about the initial period of city's existence led to controversy among historians as to the location of Grodno. Some believed that this is the contemporary Grodno on the Neman River. The others assumed that the remoteness of Grodno from the stage of political struggle in the 12th century – the Dnepr Region - does not allow to connect the Chronicle reports with the city. That is why they identified the chronicled Goradzien with similarly-named little town Garodna (Garadnaya) to the south-east of Pinsk. The third ones believed that the reports dating from the 12th century pertain to Garodna in the vicinity of Pinsk, and the events dating from the 13th century relate to Grodno of the Neman region. It seems that archeological excavations in Grodno have to put an end to the controversy as to where the Goradzien of the 12th century is to be found. However, M. Ermalovich in his work “The Ancient Belarus” regards that pinpointing the location of the chronicled city is challenging [9, p. 259]. We will return to this issue further when we will be considering the archeological sources.

The middle of the 13th century is marked with renewed attention of the chronographers to the events in Panyamonne. In Ipatiev Chronicle, the record

dating back to AD 1237 mentions for the first time Izyaslav, the Prince of Navagarodak. He, along with the Lithuania of Mindaugas, was “sent on” Konrad, the Prince of Mazovia, by Daniel of Galicia [8, p. 776]. Navagarodak was the center of a separate principality that was the vassal or ally of the potent Galician-Volhynian Principality.

The second half of the 13th century is marked by the struggle of Galician-Volhynian Princes with the Lithuanian ones for the territories in the Neman region. In AD1252-1253 Daniel of Galicia carries out campaigns against the cities of the Neman region which, at that time, were under the authority of Mindaugas [8, pp. 819, 828]. At that point in time the following cities are registered in written sources: **Navagarodak** (Navahrudak), **Vaukavyesk** (Vaukavysk), **Uslonim** (Slonim), **Turyisk**. The campaign of 1253 “on Lithuania, on Navagarodak” resulted in the peace treaty of 1254 whereby Panyamonne was transferred to the son of Daniel – Roman. The record in Ipatiev Chronicle, dating back to 1256, reports about the activity of two more princes of Panyamonne lands – Gleb of Vaukavysk and Izyaslav of Svislatch. They, along of Roman Navagarodak took part in the campaign of Galician-Volhynian princes against the Yotvingians [8, p. 847]. This tells us about the existence of two more apanagan principalities in Panyamonne. In 1259 Burundai, the Tatar voivode, with the support of Galician-Volhynian forces busted into Panyamonne, but failed to subdue it [8, p. 847]. At that time Vaišvilkas, the son of Mindaugas, became already the Prince of Novagarodak. He managed to sway Tautvilas on his side and capture and kill Roman [8, p. 847].

Over the span of the next decades Tatar princes and dependent from them Galician princes repeatedly attempted to subdue Panyamonne lands but were unsuccessful [8, pp. 847, 874-878, 911]. In the 2nd half of the 13th century, despite intense struggle, a new state - the Grand Duchy of Lithuania - with Panyamonne lands being its center, managed to endure and subsequently increase its territory at the expense of both Baltic and Eastern Slavic lands. Thereby, it is known from written sources about the existence of five towns in Panyamonne: Goradzien (Grodno), Novagarodak (Navahrudak), Vaukavyesk (Vaukavysk), Uslonim (Slonim), Turyisk. Several more settlements are mentioned in the *List of Russian Towns* (14th century). These are Halshany, Lida, Krevia and also (according to the famous Moscow archeologist V. Sedov) Astrea and Vevyaresk. Maciej Strykowski, a 16th century chronicler, wrote about an ancient town of Mstibog. When did those towns emerge and what were they like before being chronicled? And overall were there other towns in Panyamonne? It is stated in the chronicle that during a campaign, in 1252, the troops of Daniel of Galicia “approached Novogorodok and having seized many towns returned home” [8, p. 816]. The following questions can be answered only with the help of archeological sources. New archeological materials have emerged in recent years. They allow us to expand our knowledge on Belarusian Panyamonne of the 10th-13th centuries.

In historiography the first written mentioning of **Novagarodak** is disputable. It is believed that the town itself was mentioned for the first time due to the

campaign of Galician princes, listed above, in 1252:” Daniel and Vasilko went to Novgorod” [8, p. 816]. However, by then Novgorodak was not just the center of a separate principality. Chronicle sources talk about the existence of a whole historical territory –The Land of Navagorod that Galician princes were competing for – “took captive the whole land of Navagorod” [8, p. 818]. A.M. Nasonov identified the term “land” with the names “volost” and “district” presuming that these were the names of feudal states [10, pp. 26, 87].

M. Dmitriev asserted that Novagorodak was founded in 1116 by the Yaropolk, the son of Vladimir II Monomakh [11, p. 230]. M. Tihomirov believed that Novagorodak was mentioned for the first time in 1212 [12, p. 42]. The Chronicle IV of Novgorod states, under 1044 that: “YaroslavI went with campaign on Lithuania and in spring established Novgorod and accomplished that” [6, p. 116]. Also more details are found about this event in a chronicle that Russian historian V. Tatishchev read but which did not survive to these days:”1044 of that year Yaroslav went on Lithuania and established Novgorod and accomplished that summer”. The historian gives the following remark: “This is understood about Lithuanian Novogorodok, but rather it seems to be about Severia as since that time it started to be mentioned” [13, p. 79]. V.Tatishchev was the first historian who, although with provisions, connected chronicle evidence to Novagorodak of Panyamonne. This point of view is also supported by M. Ermalovich [9, p. 103]. Famous historians M. Barsov, G. Laumyanski, B. Pashuta regarded otherwise [14, p. 40; 15, p. 273; 16, p. 11]. Belarusian historian G. Shtyhov agrees with the latter. Obviously, it is difficult to identify which city is mentioned here: Novgorod the Great, Novgorod of Severia, Novagorodak on Astera or Novagorodak of Panyamonne. We, for our part, would like to point on those moments that argue in favor of the fact the Novagorodak indeed enters the historic arena in the 11th century.

In the all above mentioned chronicles, the establishment of Novagorodak is connected with the campaign of Yaroslav on Lithuania. The establishment of the city had to assure the reign of Kiev over Lithuania. In favor of this speaks the swift introduction of its defense structures which only occurred in spring and fall. Numerous circumstances were contributing to this. Novagorodak had a convenient geographical location. It was situated in the middle of upland; from the West, North and East it was surrounded by the Neman River and dense forests. The town was established not from scratch. According to archeological evidence, up until the 11th century, this area was already inhabited by Slavic tribes. The existence in Novagorodak (Navahrudak) chronologically different groups of burial sites allowed K. Pavlova single out two waves of Slavic colonization in the Upper Panyamonne [17, pp. 45-47]. The first wave of Slavs headed here in the 2nd half of the 10th century. It is corroborated by the excavation evidence of Navahrudak, where F. Gurevich, a St. Petersburg archeologist, traced Southern traditions in home building on early stages of this settlement existence [18, pp. 45-51]. Also M. Maleshevskaya distinguished the features similar to the pottery of Volhyn in technique of pottery making of Navahrudak [19, pp. 14-20].

One of the earliest settlements emerged on the hill of Minor Castle no later than the end of the 10th century. It was unfortified (more precisely very primitively fortified in the form of sharpened wooden stakes). The neighboring Fortress Hill was settled later, approximately in the 1st half of the 11 century, and for some time was the other unfortified settlement. As F. Gurevich asserts, a rampart with wooden fortifications called “harodnyas” was erected by the middle of the 11th century. Thus, the settlement becomes the citadel of the ancient town which guards an unfortified settlement on Minor Castle. A mound necropolis (Bratyanka) was located nearby [20, p. 6]. By the middle of the 11th century, as we can see, Navahrudak has acquired a planned structure that is distinctive of an eastern Slavic town. Every time when a chronicle reports about the establishment of a town (New or Great) by one or another prince, the conversation refers to the building of fortifications around the inner city. Therefore, it will be more precisely to talk about not the establishment of Novagorodak in the middle of the 11th century, but about the functional change of initial Slavic settlements on the Castle Hill and Minor Castle. It is no coincidence that the change in the function of the settlements is associated with the active policy of the Prince of Kiev in Panyamonne, and that is what Chronicles report. After converting from two unfortified settlements in a stronghold and a center of Slavic colonization of the lands on the border with Lithuania, by the middle of the 13th century Novagorodak became an economic and cultural center of an entire region called the Novagorodak State.

The following question remains unsolved: in relation to which center the town has been called “New”(nov-y in Belarusian). Based on archaeological sources, we propose to solve it as follows: the town is called “new“ relative to the two Slavic settlements which had existed prior to one of them being surrounded by fortifications. Here, we observe the process of cynoecism: two adjacent tribal settlements are united in one town. After obtaining defensive structures, the town finally has become – Novagorodak - which is „new“ in relation to earlier settlements that had no fortifications and also „new“ as a matter of fact in that region.

The beginning of dwelling on the Fortress Hill of Grodno is dated to the second half or even the ending of the 11th century according to an archeologist and historian N. Voronin. He believed that Goradzien (Grodno), in the first place, was a fortress on the border with the Yotvingians and Poland [21, p. 17].

The excavations of 1980s in Grodno allow us to solve the question of Grodno’s ancient history differently. It was discovered that Slavic settlements on the Fortress Hill emerged in the end of the 10th century [22, p. 71]. The analysis of pottery demonstrates that, along with the Dregoviches and Volhynians, the inhabitants of Mazovia colonized this part of Panyamonne. Convenient geographical location has led to rapid flourishing of the settlement and turned it into the city and the capital of the Principality. The city’s history of the 12th century manifests itself by a three meter cultural layer. Goradzien (Grodno) of the 12th – 13th century is a large trade and commercial center that kept close ties with

other cities and territories: Kiev, Volhynia, Baltic region and Western Europe. At the end of the 12th century a local (Goradzien) school of architecture developed there. It is characterized by its originality in terms of techniques and basic compositional principles. The monuments of this school include the following churches: the Lower Church (on the Castle Hill), Prechistsenskaya (in outside settlement), Borisoglebskaya (Kolozhskaya) in Grodno, unfinished temple in the Volkovysk Castle, as well as the Prince's tower and unique fortifications around Grodno's inner city. Not so long ago, during archaeological research on the territory of the New Castle (a surrounding town), a pile of -thin brick called plinth form brick was discovered. It was used to build temples in the 12th century. The finding gives an indication about the existence in the 12th century of another monument - the Church of the Resurrection, which is mentioned in the documents of the 15th – 16th centuries [23, p. 71].

The construction of a stone church in those days required significant financial expenses and an apanage principality often could not afford the construction of large temples. The number of worship places in the cities of a principality, especially in the capital, evidences the power and wealth of a principality in the 12th century. In this regard, it should be noted that the opening of a fourth temple in Grodno during the 12th century gives all grounds for the revision of the current views on the role of the Grodno Principality in political and economic life of the East Slavic lands. Therefore, there is no reason to consider the location of the chronicle of Grodno problematic, as does M. Ermalovich. Archaeologists have already confidently answered the question about the location of chronicled Gorodzien. It is modern Grodno.

Vaukavyesk and Uslonim (Volkovysk and Slonim) are first mentioned under the year 1252 in connection with the already mentioned events. However, archaeological research, which was carried out on the monuments of Volkovysk archaeological complex and Slonim castle territory, evidences that life on them arose much earlier – in the 10th century. Volkovysk archaeological complex is a settlement of ancient Volkovysk, consisting of two sites: the Swedish Mountain and the Castle. The complex includes the site of an ancient town called Muravelnik which is 0.5 km away from the Swedish Mountain. The history of chronicled Vaukavyesk is closely associated with these archaeological sites.

According to an archaeologist Ya. Zverugo, who conducted research on the monuments, the original settlement on the Swedish Mountain was not fortified and perished from fire. At the end of the 10th century, around the perimeter of the site, a rampart was constructed; and the Swedish Mountain became a stronghold. By the middle of the 13th century the topography of the ancient Vaukavyesk finally formed. It became a city. West of the stronghold (the Swedish Mountain) where the aristocracy (prince, noblemen, princes' armed forces) lived, there was a surrounding fortified city (Castle), where artisans and merchants lived. Around both sites there were unfortified settlements of the poorest of artisans and newcomers. As for Muravelnik, the life on this site lasted for about half a century (the end of the 10th century until the beginning of the 11th century). The

site of the ancient town was immediately reinforced with a rampart and served as a protection fortress [24, pp. 134-135].

Archaeological excavations have discovered a rich material culture of the city. Especially impressive were a large number of weapons, rider and horse outfits. Quantitatively, these findings surpass other categories of artifacts. The city, which emerged on the border of Slavic lands, constantly restrained enemy attacks. There are fragments of swords, spurs, which have ornaments and gilding, special battle axes among weapon items in the Vaukavysk collection.

According to the chronicle Usłonim (Slonim), under the agreement of 1254, belonged to Roman Danylovich. In the 70s of the 13th century prince Traidenis included Slonim in the Grand-ducal possessions and populated the areas of Grodno and Slonim with the Prussians. Galician Prince Lev Danylovich tried to return Panyamonne with the help of Tatars but managed to regain only Slonim and Turysk. In the 80s of the 13th century, according to the chronicle, reigned in Usłonim Vasilko, who fought together with Vladimir Vasilkovich, the Prince of Volhyn, and brought him „trophy“ [8, pp. 819, 874-875].

The location of the chronicled Usłonim was unknown until recently. Researchers were looking for traces of it in the vicinity of modern Slonim. Nevertheless, the remnants of the ancient settlement were found in the center of the city, where the Castle is located.

In 1959 and 1970 on the hill where, according to the report of the chronicles, the Castle of Jan Radziwiłł was situated, the researchers found convincing evidence, showing that Usłonim of the 2nd half of the 12th century was a rich and well-kept city [25, pp. 276-279; 26, p. 148]. It is difficult to say something definitive about the time of the city origin due to the small amount of research of this settlement. So far we can assume that the settlement already existed in the end of the 11th century. In our opinion, ancient Usłonim already existed at the end of the 10th century. We have already noted that populating of Panyamonne by Slavs occurred from the South, and it is unlikely that Usłonim, which is situated in the southern part of the region in favorable geographical conditions, emerged later than other cities. The city was developing from a guard fortress. This fact is confirmed by its etymology “usłono” - means to shield or defend.

It is also necessary to also point to a significant number of archeological monuments in the vicinity of the city. There are (about 30) monuments with items belonging to the 10th – 13th century. Among them, there are archaeological complexes worth noting: sites of ancient settlements near the villages of **Talkaushchyna**, **Asabnyaki** on **Kosovo** post road. The presence of a large number of Slavic monuments testifies about the intensive colonization of these places. What is more, the existence of so-called nest of settlements is observed. It is likely that initially the settlement of Slavic community, neighboring similar settlements, existed on the place of Usłonim's stronghold. The Oaks landmark, where in the '20s pagan stone cult-figures were found, probably preformed the function of a shrine that was a religious center common for neighboring communities. Convenient location of the settlement, on a high bank of

the Shchara River, and the further process of society feudalization contributed to the rapid development of Uslonim and its transformation into a rural district center, a city-fortress, and further – the capital of the Principality.

In the Chronicle, **Tursk** (Turyisk) appears simultaneously with other cities of Panyamonne. In evidence of the above mentioned campaign by The Galician–Volhynian princes, in the beginning of '50s of the 13th century, the son of Mindaugas (most likely Vaišvilkas)“ fought near Toursk”. In 1276, the clash of Lev Danylovich in league with Vladimir Vasilkovich and Traidenis in league with Serputiy resulted in “Vladimir sent against him and took over Tourisk on the Neman River, in the village close to the flood land” [8, p. 874]. And even though M. Ermalovich asserts that “ it is difficult to say where this town was located, perhaps on the site of modern village of Turets (The District of Karelichy)”, the archeologists precisely know the location of this chronicled town [9, p. 338]. Its ancient town site is located on the east outskirts of modern village of Turyisk (The District of Shchuchyn), on the east bank of the Neman River.

The analysis of archeological evidence allows us to characterize Turyisk as a small town, an administrative center of the rural district. The time of its origin is the end of the 11th century. In the beginning, it was an unfortified Slavic settlement. After the fire that destroyed the initial settlement, the hill, where it was located, was fortified around its perimeter by a rampart. The surrounding communities started to be settled in, thus creating trading quarters. The settlement evolved into a fortress from which a small town arose. A complex of characteristics that distinguish a town allows us to confirm that it is indeed the chronicled Turyisk. They are: layout (stronghold and surrounding settlements), populated territory around 1.5 hectare, the intensity of cultural layer up to 1.5 meter, remnants of craftwork (above all metal and iron works), finding in cultural layer, i.e., fragments of juglets, glass bracelets, artful bone products, book clasp. The archeologists note the closeness of material culture of Grodno and Turyisk [27, p. 75]. Presumably, with the development of feudal relations, the Princes of Grodno made Turyisk to be the tax collecting center from the local rural district. Simultaneously, it was a fortress on the border of Grodno Principality and Navahrudak Principality. The town received its name from a nearby little river called Turyia that joins the Neman River.

Consequently, the study of archeological and written sources allows to assert the following: the rise of cities and towns in Panyamonne is connected with the appearance of Slavs here and the evolution of Eastern Slavic society. There are three stages distinguished in the formation and development of Panyamonne cities and towns. The first stage dates to the end of the 10th century – the 1st half of 11th century. It constitutes the emergence of unfortified (communal) settlements as the result of Slavic colonization of the region. Initially, only Goradzien had been fortified (and only from the outside). The second stage dates to the middle of 11th century – the 1st half of 12th century. It involves the formation of standard urban topography (a stronghold plus surrounding settlement or trading quarter) and urban culture. The third stage dates back to the 2nd half of 12th through 13th

century. It signifies economic and cultural prosperity of the cities and their conversion into administrative, economic, military, cultural and ideological centers of the region.

All the cities emerged and developed among rural settlements, in the places that were most suitable for agriculture. By virtue of the fact that Panyamonne was on the periphery of Slavic colonization, there are no cities there that were developing from tribal centers. Among the urban population with the predominant Eastern Slavic element (the Dregoviches, the Krivichs, and the Volhynians) there is the presence of Western Slavic (Mazovian) and Baltic elements. It is explained by the border situation of the region and by the presence, here, of Baltic autochthonous population before the arrival of Slavs.

In a later chronicle called "The List of Russian Cities Far and Near" several more Panyamonne settlements are mentioned. Ya. Naumov believed that "The List" was compiled in 1394-1396, and its author called as the cities all the fortified settlements [28, pp. 150-163]. There are also earlier sources used in "The List". Among the first mentioned in this source are Lida, Kreva, Kamen, Halshany, and Loshask. Prior to that time, there were already stone castles in Lida, Kreva. However, archaeological excavations in the settlements near the villages of Halshany and Losk found evidence dating back 11th – 17th centuries. A stone castle was built in the 1st half of the 17th century in Halshany [29, pp. 166-167]. It is beyond doubt that "The List" describes earlier forts near Halshany and Losk. It is them that are the „ancestors“ of the above modern settlements. According to the Bychowiec Chronicle, the legendary Prince Holshys (Halshan) was the founder of Halshany [30, pp. 134-135]. However, these were not the cities in socio-economic sense, but rather they served as border fortresses and feudal manor-houses - castles.

The rise of a very interesting site, the site of an ancient town of Mstibav (the district of Vaukavysk), can be attributed to a real historical personality. For the first time the settlement was mentioned in the Chronicle of Maciej Strykowski when the Princes Daniel and Vasilka "took over Slonim, Volkovysk and Mstibogov under Mindaugas", i.e., in connection with the events of the 13th century mentioned previously. In the same chronicle Mstibogov is mentioned one more time when the record refers to the allocation of land plots to the sons of Gediminas, in the middle of 14th century: "Karijotas was given Novogrudok, the Principality with Volkovysk and Mstibogov" [31, p. 382].

Apparently, owing to this information, the historians of the 19th century identified Mstibogov as a major town [7, p. 203]. However, more likely, it was not a town but a feudal manor, the castle.

In Ipatiev Chronicle it is described how in 1202 Prince Vladimir Igorevich and the boyars of Galicia betrayed Prince Danila Ramanovich. They sent in Volodymyr of Volhyn a priest with the proposal to hand out to the boyars the children of Roman. The citizens wanted to kill the priest, however "Mstibog and Monchuk and Mikifor decided that it is not fit for us to kill the envoy". The Chronicler adds that they did that "with a heavy heart because they wanted to

betray their household and their city” [8, p. 201]. From the Chronicles text it can be assumed that Mstibog and Monchuk and Mikifor were the representatives of a boyars’ party that was hostile to Prince Danila. The fact that Mstibog is mentioned the first indicates that he had a position of influence among the boyars of Volodymir.

The archeological findings, carried out on the ancient city’s site, have found insignificant cultural layer with fragments of ceramics of the 13th - 18th centuries and a foundation of some building. Judging by the ceramics, this settlement arose no earlier than the 13th century. Its founding can be linked with the name of the boyar Mstibog, who, as the result of turbulent events of the early 13th century, fled from Volhynia in Panyamonne under the protection of a well-fortified Vaukavysk (15 km from Mstibav). It is confirmed by the name of the place in written sources of the 16th - 17th centuries, by the name of the place itself, that the settlement is mentioned as Mstibogau township, and then Mstibogau. However, due to various circumstances, life in the old settlement lasted for a short time, just a few decades, and then stopped, leaving behind an insignificant cultural layer. The second period of activity on the site associated is associated with 16th – 17th centuries, when Mstibogau was the center of a township [32, pp. 87-88].

Another interesting monument is the settlement three kilometers away from the town of Astryna, near the village of Kulbachina. It is located on the banks of the Astrynka River and belongs to the type of settlements, fortifications of which do not depend on the terrain. Similar settlements were already built in 10th – 11th centuries. It is the fact that the town is on the Astrynka banks that allowed the researcher V. Sedov to consider this site to be the chronicled city of Astreya [33, pp. 27-31].

Numerous finds testify to the busy life at the settlement site. As usual on such settlement sites, a large number of pottery, iron products, spindle whorls, grindstones, the remains of millstones, glass bracelets, beads of glass and amber, bronze fibula were found. However, the weapons are of particular interest. Close range weapons include two lanceolate spear tips. This type of spear tips was common in Scandinavia during the Viking age. The closest (and only) analogue to the tips of Kulbachina on the territory of Eastern Europe that is known from the excavations of the burial mounds was found in Gnezdavo (near Smolensk) [34, pp. 23-24]. In return, a lot of the same tips were found in the burial ground of Luistar, Finland, where Vikings were buried in the 12th century [35, p. 81].

A significant number of also lanceolate (13 copies) arrow tips draw the attention in the collection. It is this type of arrow tip that makes an overwhelming majority of the ones in the quivers of warriors, buried in Birka (Sweden) [36, p. 73].

In Panyamonne lanceolate arrow tips have been found only in Vaukavysk. It is interesting to note that 20 tips of various types were found together in one place, literally in a bundle. Apparently, they were in a quiver that had been lost.

The analysis of archaeological material shows that the settlement originated in the right bank of the Neman River that was nestled deep in the Baltic lands. In the late 10th century during the colonization of Panyamonne by Slavic population.

From the very beginning it was a fortress, a stronghold for reclaiming of the right bank of the Neman River that was nestled deep in the Baltic lands. With the development of feudal relations, starting from the 12th century, the settlement acquires the traits of a border fortress (probably it belonged to the Grodno Principality) and a feudal manor – castle. What about the name? Can this monument be considered to be the remnants of the chronicled city of Astrea? We have already mentioned that the site is located on the river which is now called Astrynka, located near the urban settlement of Astryna. „Perhaps in ancient times the river was called Astrea. In this case, the name of the city was derived from the hydronym“, – believes V. Sedov [33, p. 27].

This point of view could have been true until the Hermitage expedition unearthed a settlement on the shores of the Astrea Lake in Pskov region. The articles of the ancient Russian and later period were found there [37, p. 25]. Therefore, the localization of Astraea in Panyamonne should be abandoned. The localization of another chronicled city of Veviaresk in the Grodno region, which is also mentioned in "The List of Russian Towns Near and Far", should be abandoned as well. A famous Russian historian M. Tikhomirov called Veviaresk a mysterious city. However, archaeologist V. Sedov identified the chronicled Veviaresk with a site near the village of Kascianieva in the District of Shchuchyn. He believed that the name of the town is derived from a hydronym, the river Vaviorka (the left inflow of the river of Lebiada, a confluent of the Neman). He claimed that the city perished as a result of a hostile invasion in the 13th century. Those of the inhabitants who survived, did not return to the settlement, and founded new settlements (modern Waverka 18 km from the settlement). However, archaeological excavations have discovered the settlement of Kosteneva artifacts dating back to later times (15th – 17th centuries). And it is unlikely that the hydronym gave the name to the settlement from which the Vaviorka river flows 16-18 km away, and which is next to the river Kostenevo. Therefore, it is not feasible to connect the chronicled Veviaresk with the settlement near the village of Kostenevo.

However, the interest in the settlements of Kulbachyna and Kosteneva is not diminished in view of the facts mentioned above. On the contrary, the results of archaeological research shed light on such issues as, for example, the place of Panyamonne in the system of international relations in the Middle Ages.

The appearance of Scandinavian origin items in Eastern Europe is associated with the existence here of the route from „the Varangians to the Greeks“ in the 10th – 11th centuries. Apparently, the Neman - Dnieper waterway was a serious competitor to the route „from the Varangians to the Greeks“ and was quite independent in connecting Scandinavia with the Black Sea basin. This is evidenced by the items of Scandinavian origin which were found in Panyamonne. These include a helmet of the 10th – 11th centuries from Slonim,

a part of a sword from around Grodno, the already mentioned tips from Kulbachyna. Openwork pendants with the image of anthropomorphic creatures, a spur with a loop and some other finds were discovered in Vaukavysk. Interestingly, it was possible to get from Neman to Dnieper by two routes that were both functioning.

The first waterway went through the left inflow, the Ross River, then through the portage trail to Yaselda and Pripyat. By the way, the etymology of Vaukavysk is associated by some researchers with the existence here of a portage trail (Vолоковск, High Portage) [38, p. 21]. In recent years a number of objects of Scandinavian origin were found in neighboring Western Polesie territory (Franapol, a town near Pinsk, Lemiashevichi) [39, pp. 117-119]. Taking into account the recent materials, the reasons of Vikings' appearance in Panyamonne can be correlated with the factor of Western Polesie waterway. It should be noted that the way through the Dnieper—Pripyat—Yaselda—Neman was the shortest one in maintaining the relations of Kievan Dnieper region with the island of Gotland.

The second waterway went through the Berezina, the right tributary of the Neman. Then it continued through the portage to Svisloch, then again into Berezina of Dnieper and then into Dnieper. The existence of important strongholds of Krevo, Losk, Mensk and Svisloch on this way emphasizes its importance.

From here, two large treasures of Arabic dirhems (827 items and 2 446 items) originate. They were found near the village of Rakovcy (near Krevo). Several coin treasures, which were hidden in the 10th - 11th centuries, are known from the upper reaches of the Ptich and the Svisloch (Dnieper) on the watershed of the Neman and Dnieper [40, p. 89]. According to some scientists, the Neman-Berezina-Dnieper waterway was more ancient than the one called „from the Varangians to the Greeks“ in maintaining the relations of the Baltic and Scandinavian territories with the Dnieper region [41, p. 123]. It is clear that the degree of intensity and efficiency of the Niemen-Dnieper waterway use (both across Berezina as well as through the Ross – Yaselda) depended on the general ethno-political situation in the Black Sea and-Baltic space. However, the appearance of the Slavs in the Belarusian Dnieper region and Belarusian Panyamonne as well as the strengthening of Kiev was instrumental in giving rise to one of the waterway's outstanding periods.

Thus, despite scarce chronicle information, Belarusian Panyamonne reached the high level of socio-economic development by the middle of the 13th century. A number of reasons contributed to this. This area had a developed agriculture due to fertile soil. Panyamonne was also the region of well-developed crafts. Here, iron was smelted and various items were produced from it; non-ferrous and precious metals were processed. There was pottery, bone-cutting and other crafts in place. The region conducted a robust foreign trade, as evidenced by the large number of foreign items found by the archaeologists. Among the settlements of the Belarusian Panyamonne lands, all major socio-historical types, typical of

the 10th – 11th century were present: fortified settlements of rural communities, border fortresses, administrative and military centers of municipalities, feudal estates-castles, cities [42, pp. 93-108]. Although the chronicle mentions, for the first time, the cities of Panyamonne just in the middle of the 13th century, they, as archeology suggests, originated 200-250 years earlier.

The favorable geographical position of Belarusian Panyamonne manifested itself particularly in the mid 13th century. It was of particular advantage during the period of two disasters – the Knights' of the Cross and Mongolian aggression — when Panyamonne was a relatively safe territory. That is why, in the middle of the 13th century, this region became a safe haven for populations from many Eastern European regions who were escaping the invaders from the West and the East. The tide of the new population has promoted an even greater development of the productive forces of this region and contributed to the advancement of political entity which is-Novagorod (Navahrudak) State. The high level of cultural and economic development, the influx of a new population, the growth of productive forces, the concentration of great wealth in the hands of the Novagorod feudal lords and the further strengthening of their power - all this increased political weight of Novagorod (Navahrudak) State and gave it the opportunity to become a new center for the consolidation of Belarusian lands.

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