

RUSSIAN HISTORY – Ancient Period

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Prehistory, Paleolithic Age, Bronze Age, Iron Age, First Indo-European Settlers in European Russia, Cimmerians, Scythians, Sarmatians, Slavs, Srubna and Andronovo cultures, Chernyakhov culture, Lusatian culture

Overview. Like all nations, the history of Russia begins with the settlement of its territory by early humans. This took place approximately 40,000 years ago during the last Ice Age. Archeological excavations show a record of continuous human adaptation to the conditions they faced and the massive environmental changes that occurred after the end of the Ice Age. Over time, tool-making techniques became more sophisticated as did human society. Agriculture, cattle breeding, and the discovery of techniques to work metals made larger and more complex societies possible. Trade networks appeared leading to even greater contact among societies, but conflict among different groups was also present. Due to the lack of historical records for these early periods these peoples are known only from the artifacts they left behind.

However, in the past few decades archeological excavations in the southern part of European Russia have discovered evidence of distinct cultures and settlements of Indo-European origin dating back to at least 3500 BCE have been identified by archeologists. Beginning around 1000 BCE pastoral nomads dominated this region. The first identifiable Indo-European groups who settled in this territory and played important roles in its development were the Cimmerians, Scythians, Sarmatians, and Slavs.

Earlier, around 1500 BCE the Slavs had settled in the region of Poland and western Russia. Slavs had lived on the plains of western Russia hundreds of years before the first East Slavic state called the Kievan state was founded.

Events.

Prehistory (100,000 – 1,000 BCE). The periodization of early human history in the Russian territory is very complex. In Russian historical science periodization is based on the archeological findings of man-made tools; and the ancient history of Russia can be divided into three broad periods: the Stone Age (Paleolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic), Bronze Age and Iron Age.

Paleolithic Age (Stone Age) (to 10,000 BCE). The archeological findings tell us that the roots of the early people in Russian territory go back to the distant past, the period of a primitive-communal system; and that the first humans came to Eastern Europe during the very early period of the Stone Age, approximately 700,000 years ago. Archeologists have found evidence that showed the beginning of the expansion began from the south; and these people began to settle in the Crimea, Abkhazia, Armenia and Central Asia.

During the Paleolithic period almost all humans survived by hunting and gathering. Such societies were generally small in size and with no distinct social classes.

Stone Age peoples used natural formations such as caves and overhangs, such as those found in the Crimea and the Dniester, as shelter from the elements. The tools used by the people who lived in these caves were generally made from flint and were very basic in design, requiring only a few strokes to make. These stone tools were then used to prepare wood and bone to create other tools and implements, such as the sewing tools and bone arrows for the sites at Uday and Desna.

Neanderthals (100,000-40,000 BCE). At about 100,000 years ago Neanderthals began to move into Europe from the Near East and expanded into the Caucasus, the Crimea, Central Asia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and the lower parts of Dnieper and Don Rivers (see pic. 1). Initially, the Neanderthals inhabited only the broad river valleys formed by melt water from the glaciers that covered the plateaux and plains of southwestern Ukraine. Eventually Neanderthal settlement would spread to the mountainous regions and steppes of the Crimea, Caucasus, and Central Asia.



Pic. 1 Mezmaiskaya Cave, a Neanderthal occupation in the southern Russian Republic of Adygea, in the North Caucasus ⁱ

Hunting provided the Neanderthals with most of their food, and they hunted a variety of species. Bones found at Neanderthal sites indicates that they hunted mammoth, deer and bison. It is very likely that their diet was supplemented by gathering edible wild plants.

Neanderthals were tool makers, but their tools, such as knives made of stone and some bone tools, are very primitive in their techniques. (see pic. 2).



Pic.2 Knives found in the Paleolithic site in the territory of the Komi Republic, near the village Byzovaya ⁱⁱ

Archeological findings in the first artificial burials in these regions indicate the existence of primitive religious beliefs.

Neanderthal habitations were natural formations and caves. These habitation sites in Russian territory have been discovered in the Lower Volga and central Urals regions ⁱⁱⁱ.

Modern Humans (40,000-10,000 BCE). Between 40,000 and 13,000 BCE new developments and changes occurred in the territory of Russia. Although all of Eastern Europe and North Asia was locked in ice, people learned to survive in the harsh climate. Using fire was one discovery that allowed them to protect themselves from the harsh

climate, to heat their caves and to cook their meals. Learning to make more complex cutting tools was a later invention that followed.

The melting of the glaciers was completed during the late Paleolithic Age (10-35 thousand years ago); and in Eurasia the climate began to change, becoming similar to the modern one. Adaptation to the new habitat changed the physical appearance of human beings, too.

The glaciers were replaced by dense forests; the territory from the Baltics to Yakutia was now covered with taiga and the flora was completely changed. The Ice Age megafauna - mammoths and the others – were replaced by much smaller animals.

In this period the modern human race evolved from homo habilis to homo sapiens and the major races of humans, *Caucasoid*, *Mongoloid*, and *Negroid* emerged.

These people developed new technologies to make different types and sizes of stone tools. They were hunters and they learned how to make spears and arrows to use in hunting. They domesticated dogs and later began to breed sheep, pigs and cattle.

In the late Paleolithic period people began to process stone, bone and horn. Therefore, this period is also called the Bone Age. Among the artifacts found in this period are daggers, spears, harpoons and awls.

The oldest known sites of modern human habitation have been discovered in Kostenki, near Voronej, Zaraysk, in Moscow Oblast (both from the 45th-35th millennium BCE), and Sungir, near Vladimir (from the 25th millennium BCE). These people lived in shelters made of mammoth bones that were covered with skins, and most likely used other skins (such as fox, wolf and bear) for bedding. Such shelters were a major development from the earlier use of natural shelters such as caves. Another similar site excavated at Mezin, in the Ukraine, contained the most artifacts discovered from the Paleolithic Age.

In addition to constructing complex shelters, these early people dressed in fur clothing. Their custom of sprinkling ochre on the bodies of their dead before burial indicates that they had complex religious beliefs.



Pic. 3 A shelter found in Mezin, in Ukraine^{iv}

This was also the period when the first modern human arts – sculpture and painting- flourished. The earliest examples of wall paintings and engravings found in caves depicted the animals they hunted: bison, mammoths, bears, horses, deer etc. There is also a female deity figurine found in the Kapova cave in Bashkortostan. Bracelets, beads and other ornaments made of bone and stone have also been discovered in this period.



Pic. 4 Red-Ochre Painting of Mammoths (12,500 BCE) Hall of Drawings Kapova Cave^v

The more complex techniques used by the hunters in this period indicate more complex forms of social organization. Evidence has also been found that goods were being traded via extensive networks, providing these early people with new methods of coping with the harsh climatic conditions they faced.

The religious character of the burials of the late Paleolithic Age, burying the dead with household items and ornaments is an indication of the awareness of the earthly and spiritual life.

Traces of the people of the late Paleolithic have been found in many places in Russia - around the Don, the Oka River, the Desna River, near Voronezh, and in the Urals and Transbaikal.

Mesolithic (9660 to 5000 BCE). The Mesolithic Age was a time of transition and dramatic change. As the climate grew warmer the glaciers retreated northward, forming deep rivers that flowed southwards. In addition, the melting of the glaciers exposed large tracts of land that could be exploited, and the warmer climate made gathering of wild plant foods an increasingly important activity.

In addition, during the Mesolithic Age humans began to migrate from the south to the north and settle in the lands recently freed from the ice. They moved through the forest zones following the rivers, with some eventually reaching the northern coasts of Eurasia and surviving by hunting sea mammals. Increasing numbers of settled foraging communities develops as the forested regions provided increasing resources that could be used by the inhabitants.

This new life style required new technologies and new inventions that would make hunting easier. The most significant of them was the invention of the bow which allowed them to hunt wild animals and birds more efficiently. There also developed new techniques to work stone; and they used stone axes to shape wood.

In addition, people began to discover new hunting and fishing grounds. As they left their sedentary life and habitats and followed a mobile hunting way of life, their shelters became temporary tents. In winter they lived in caves and dugouts.

During this period they also built small rafts and boats to use the rivers and lakes to move to their new habitats. This new way of life turned large patrimonial collectives into constantly moving small groups that lived by hunting and fishing. These people began to form their own tribes whose culture, life style and economical habits were different from the sedentary ones.

In the Mesolithic era the European part of Russia was inhabited by people from the Kama (Volga-Kama) culture (5th-3rd millennium BC). They used bows and arrows as weapons. In the later stages of the transition to the sub-Neolithic periods, they began to learn how to make ceramics. Their economy was based on hunting and fishing.

Neolithic (to 3,000 BCE). During the Neolithic Age (the last period of the Paleolithic Age) tribes began to unite, forming the basis for the creation of ethnic groups. This period is characterized by the emergence of grinding and drilling tools made from stone. They attached handles to axes, made clay pottery, knitted nets to catch fish, and built boats. Another important invention was the wheel. It was used for both the potter's wheel, as well as creating a revolution in transportation.

The most important development in this age was the transition from simply gathering to a production economy. People began to exchange goods, marking the beginning of the first trade. People left their homelands for more fertile lands, if it was available, to build their lives.

Climate changes also created the conditions for the development of various types of economic activities. In the steppes stretching from the Central Dnieper to the Altai, tribes began to deal with cattle breeding. There were agriculturists settled in the Ukraine, Central Asia, the South Caucasus and South Siberia. Agriculturists were particularly concentrated in Turkmenistan near Ashkhabad, and in Armenia near Erevan. In Central Asia the first artificial irrigation systems were created.

In the Eastern European plains the oldest farming culture, the Cucuteni-Trypillian developed. This culture extended from the Carpathian Mountains to the Dniester and Dnieper regions, centered on modern-day Moldova and covered western Ukraine and northeastern Romania.



Pic. 5 Trypillian culture ^{vi}

These people engaged in farming and cattle breeding. Excavations of their villages has revealed millet, barley and wheat seeds. Archeologists have also found wooden sickles and querns for making flour.

Bronze Age (to 1,000 BCE). The beginning of the Bronze Age goes back to 3000 BCE. During this period there were tribes in the North Caucasus, Central Asia, the Urals and Siberia living near copper and tin deposits who began to use metals for their tools. In addition to farming and cattle breeding, the development of metal working further increased the demand for male labor, consequently increasing the role of men in society to the extent that the matriarchal family was transformed into a patriarchal one.

This was also the time that marked the beginning of the process of the breakdown of the primitive-communal system in different regions of Eurasia. The primitive-communal system was replaced by slaveholding societies, however this transition did not occur simultaneously in these regions. Rather, it first occurred north of the Black Sea, Transcaucasia and Central Asia, where large-scale slaveholding societies appeared.

This development led to the emergence of larger tribal unions and large cultural communities. Among these were in north-east Europe, the Trans-Urals, and western Siberia - the ancestors of Finno-Ugric people; in eastern Siberia and the vast steppes of Asia – the ancestors of Mongol and Turkic people; in the south-east Europe, Central Asia and North India – the ancestors of the Indo-Europeans; and in the north Caucasus, Asia Minor, in the west Iran –

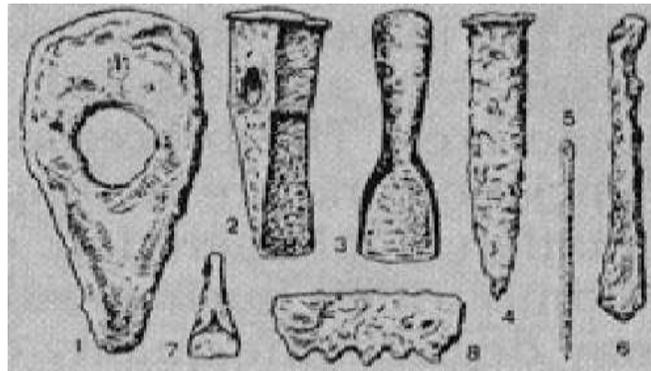
the ancestors of the people of the Caucasus and their languages. Historians claim that many language families appeared as a result of this process, and one of the largest language groups was that of the Indo-Europeans, settled in a region that extended from Central Asia to Ireland. The other large language families that developed in this time were the Finno-Ugric, Turkic and Ibero-Caucasian.

The Slavic tribes began to assume a distinct identity from other Indo-European peoples around the mid-2nd millennium BCE. These early tribes were found in a region that extended from the Carpathian Mountains in Eastern Europe to the Oder River in the west.

Iron Age (to 500 CE). The development and spread in the 1st millennium BCE of the technology and techniques for iron-making was a cause for the evolution of class societies from the slaveholding societies. Stone and bronze implements were replaced by iron due to its lower cost relative to bronze, and the greater availability of iron ore.

In the territory of Russia the Iron Age can be analyzed in three periods: the Cimmerian (8th-7th c. BCE), the Scythian (7th- 3rd c. BCE), and the Sarmatian (3rd c. BCE - 4th c. CE).

Although the use of iron in southern Russia can be traced back to the late 2nd millennium BCE, wider production and use of iron and steel implements in this region did not occur until the 8th-7th centuries BCE. Iron tools and weapons completely replaced stone ones, but ones of bronze can still be found in both the Cimmerian and Scythian periods. It is not until the late Iron Age that iron production in southern Russia became widespread.



Pic. 6 Sycthians iron tools^{vii}



Pic. 7 Cimmerian Tethered Axe Sagaris Iron Age Battle-Axe c.700 BCE from Russia^{viii}

The development of iron tools had a profound impact on almost all aspects of society, including trade, crafts and agriculture. In the early Iron Age the practice of nomadic pastoralism became widespread across the steppes of Eurasia. However, the need to follow their herds and disputes over pastureland led to increasing conflict among nomadic peoples. These conflicts stimulated the formation of large-scale alliances between tribes, and the appearance of the earliest states. As a result, both small, fortified urban centers even true cities began to develop in this period. In addition, Greek colonization of the northern Black Sea coast, followed by the founding of Greek city-states began in the 7th century BCE. It is at this point that this region of southern Russia and its people come onto the historical stage. They appear in Assyrian, Greek and Roman sources due to their commercial and cultural links with these civilizations.

Archeologists have identified the remains of the Timber Grave culture with the Cimmerians, a seminomadic people of Indo-European origin who appear on the steppes of southern Russia in the 8th-7th centuries BCE.

Settlers of Indo-European Societies in the Territory of Russia.

The Cimmerians. The earliest people of southern Russia, the Cimmerians (c.1000-200 BCE) were ancient mounted nomads of Indo-European origin. However, the name "Cimmerian" is ambiguous in the ancient sources as it is unclear whether it refers to a specific group or whether it is a general term for any nomadic Iranian-speakers in the steppes north of the Black Sea. Although scholarly opinion on the origins of the Cimmerians is divided, linguistically they are usually regarded as Thracian or as Iranian. In his book the *Histories* (in the 5th century BCE) the Greek historian Herodotus (c. 484-420 BCE) indicated that the Cimmerians established their control north of the Caucasus and the Black Sea till the 8th century BCE. By about 800 BCE, the Cimmerians were ousted by the Scythians, an Iranian speaking nomadic group that arrived in the area and absorbed some of the former into their tribal confederation while expelling the rest. Some of the latter group migrated through Transcaucasia into Anatolia and then into northern Mesopotamia, which were subject to their raids for almost twenty years.

The Scythians. The Scythians were a people of Indo-European origin who came from the east who had formed confederative nomadic tribal unions. The Scythians had been forced into the steppes north of the Black Sea between the Don and Danube Rivers by another people, the Massagetae, according to Herodotus. This Scythian migration then forced the Cimmerians out of the region. To which group the Scythians belonged remains unclear, but since they spoke an ancient Iranian language, they are believed to be related to other Iranian speaking groups. Towards the beginning of the 6th century BCE the Scythians extended over the Black Sea coastline. These nomadic groups settled between the Dnieper and the Don and covered the entire south of Russia and extended from the Kuban valley in the east to the Carpathian mountains in the west. The Scythians later expanded into the Hungarian plain. They had economic and cultural ties with the Greek cities along the Black Sea. The Scythians ruled this area from 700 to 200 BCE until the Sarmatians, another Indo-European group, defeated them. The Scythians are first mentioned in Herodotus's fourth book *Melpomene* of the *Histories*.

The Sarmatians. The Sarmatians, a confederation of nomadic Iranian tribes (Aorsians, Alans, Roxolani, Siraces, and Iazyges), replaced the Scythians and settled in the southern part of Russia. They were a nomadic people of Iranian origin, and first appear in the historical record in Eastern Europe, south of the Urals and east of the Don River, in the 8th century BCE. However, they vanished when their land was overrun by the Huns in the late 4th century CE and were displaced by a Germanic tribe, the Goths. The Sarmatians first appeared in Herodotus's *Histories*. They are known as the Roxolani, an ancestor of the Sarmatians and the Alans. A later Iranian nomadic tribe, the Alans, who lived in the North Caucasus are believed to be the descendants of the Sarmatians.

The Proto-Slavs. Based on archeological findings around 1500 BCE the Proto-Slavic tribal unions began to dominate the region of south-eastern Poland and north-eastern Ukraine. Some historians, on the other hand, have traced the origin of the Slavs back to indigenous Iron Age tribes living in the valleys of the Oder and Vistula rivers (in present-day Poland and the Czech Republic) around the 1st century CE, although this claim is still disputed.

The first time the name *Slav* appears is in Ptolemy's *Geographia* (100-178 CE), and written as *soubenoi*. Ptolemy writes practically nothing about the Slavs, only mentioning the names of the tribes the Scythians, Sarmatians,

Alans, Slovans and Avars who were settled west of the Ural mountains and north of the Black Sea. After Ptolemy, for almost 400 years the name *Slav* disappears from the historical sources. Only in the 6th century does the Byzantine historian Procopius of Caesarea mention the *Sklaveni* in his *Gothic War* (536 CE). He mentions that the *Sklaveni* tribes were settled in the lower part of Danube, showing that the *Sklaveni* tribes were the earliest Slavic tribes settled in the region.

Cultures.

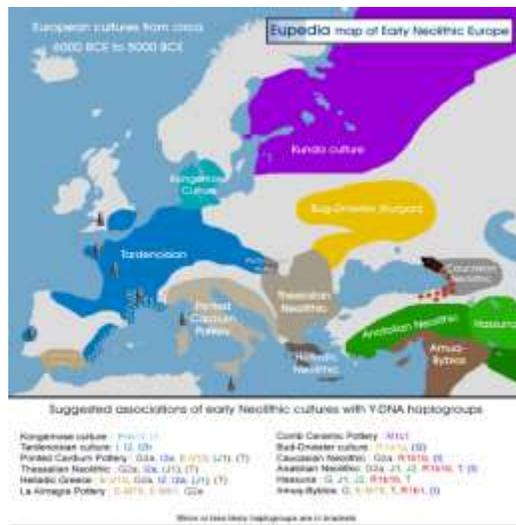
Hunter-Gatherer Societies.

Grebenikian Culture. Evidence has found of settled hunter-gatherer societies in the region between the Dnieper River and Carpathian Mountains designated as the Grebenikian culture (c. 6000 BCE). This culture survived by fishing, hunting mammoths, wild boar, deer, and birds, and gathering edible wild plants.

Kama (Volga-Kama) Culture. Named for the Kama River, a tributary of the Volga, evidence of this culture has been found in an area extending across the watershed of the Kama, Vyatka, and Ik-Belaya Rivers. The Kama culture existed from approximately 4200 – 2000 BCE in northeastern Europe and was a hunter-gatherer society that made pottery.

Agricultural Societies.

Bug-Dniester Culture. The Bug-Dniester culture was the successor to the Grebenikian culture at some point around the 6th millennium BCE. Inhabiting the region extending from southern Moldova to the Dniester and Southern Bug Rivers in Ukraine, people of the Bug-Dniester culture subsisted by hunting, foraging and agriculture. In addition to agriculture and domestic animals, this culture is characterized by its flint scrapers and axes, as well as its pottery which first appeared around 6200 BCE, spreading from around Lake Baikal to the middle Volga.



Pic.8 Bug-Dniester Culture^{ix}

Cucuteni-Tripolye Culture. The Cucuteni-Tripolye culture (4800-3000 BCE) represents the first true agricultural community in the region between the Carpathian Mountains to the Dniester and Dnieper Rivers. Although they still hunted, they cleared extensive areas of forest for pastures and fields. Artifacts excavated from Cucuteni-Tripolye sites show influence from Linear Pottery cultures. Cucuteni-Tripolye culture settlements are larger and

denser than previous cultures' settlements. Fields were worked by cattle-drawn plows, and the people of this culture used copper that was imported across great distances.



Pic. 9 Cucuteni-Tripolye culture^x

Pastoralist Societies.

Srednyi Stog-Khvalynsk Cultures. The Srednyi Stog culture (5th – 3rd millennia BCE) was a contemporary of the Khvalynsk culture and had links with their neighbors to the west, the agricultural Cucuteni-Tripolye culture. Found along the lower and middle Dnieper and the lower Donets, people of the Srednyi Stog existed by fishing, hunting, stockbreeding, agriculture and pastoralism. Indications of this culture's mobility can be found in evidence related to horse riding and the first steppe burial mounds. There are also indications that this culture occasionally practiced some form of nomadic pastoralism.

The contemporary Khvalynsk culture was found to the east of the Srednyi Stog culture. While traces of the Khvalynsk culture have been found in the middle Volga, it was centered between the Ural River in the east, the Sea of Azov in the west, the North Caucasus in the south and Saratov in the north. The central role of horses for transportation and warfare in Khvalynsk culture, and the fact that most artifacts from this culture come from burials rather than settlements has been cited as evidence that this was a highly mobile culture.



Pic.10 Sredny Stog^{xi}



Pic.11 Between the earlier Khvalynsk and later Sredny Stog cultures that occupied Western Russia^{xii}

Yamna Culture (Pit-Grave Culture). Extending from eastern Ukraine up to the Urals as far as the estuary of the Danube River the Yamna (or Pit Grave) culture existed between the late 3rd and early 2nd millennia BCE, a period that saw the transition from the Copper to the Bronze Age. Although remains of some hilltop forts and agricultural sites near rivers belonging to this culture have been found, it was a primarily nomadic culture.

The distinguishing characteristic of the Yamna culture is its practice of burial in pit graves covered by a kurgan. Bodies were placed on their sides with the knees bent and then covered with red ochre. Some kurgans were used for multiple burials, some done at a later time from the original burials.

The discovery of the remains of a wheeled cart in the “Storozhova mohyla” kurgan , a Yamna culture kurgan near Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine provided the earliest evidence of the use of wheeled carts in Eastern Europe.



Pic.12 Yamna culture^{xiii}



Pic.13 Bronze objects from the Pit-Grave culture.

Afanasevo Culture. The first identified culture after the diffusion of pastoralism into the Central Asian steppes and southern Siberia is the Afanasevo culture, which existed from 3500 to 2500 BCE and was centered in the Altai Mountains and Minusinsk Basin of southern Krasnoyarsk Krai. The people of the Afanasevo culture raised cattle, sheep and goats; horse bones have been found in Afanasevo sites, but it is unclear whether they belong to

domestic or to wild horses. Afanasevo tools were manufactured from bone (fish hooks, spear points), antler, and stone (arrowheads, axes), and ornaments made of gold, silver and copper are frequently found in Afanasevo pit-grave burials.



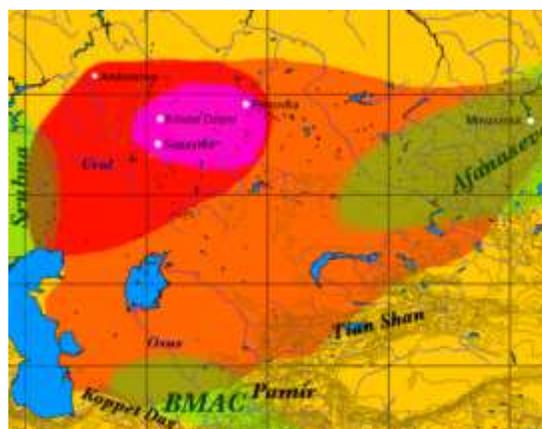
Pic.14 Afanasevo Culture^{xiv}

Srubna and Andronovo Cultures. The forest-steppe and steppe region north of and between the Black and Caspian Seas was home to the Srubna culture. Srubna settlements are characterized by their partially subterranean one and two-roomed houses and burial grounds made up of between five and ten kurgans.

Between c. 2000-900 BCE the Andronovo culture was found in the region between the Yenisei River in the east and the southern Ural Mountains. The Andronovo culture included small village settlements in Central Asia as well as nomadic pastoralists, and is believed to be the culture of the prehistoric Indo-Iranian peoples.

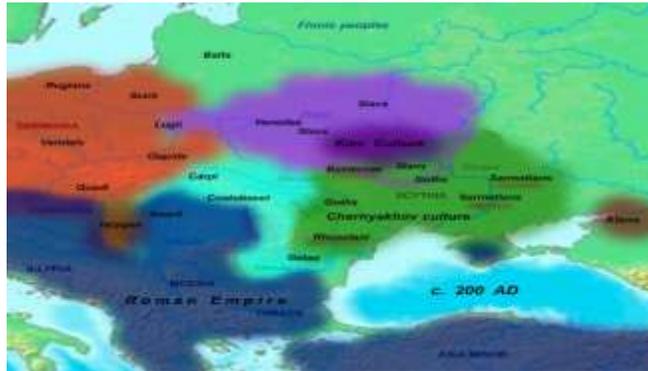
The link between the Indo-Iranians and the Andronovo culture has been proposed on the basis of a number of factors: the existence of Iranian-based toponyms in the region in which the Andronovo culture has been found, the practice of nomadic pastoralism by both groups, and historical evidence from the first millennium BCE indicating the presence of Iranian-speaking tribes such as the Saka, Sarmatians and Alans in the region.

The Cimmerians descended from the sedentary Srubna (timber-grave) culture of the 2nd millennium BCE. Their economy was based on agriculture and livestock breeding. The Cimmerian culture of the southern Russia is also linked with the Transcaucasian culture of Gandzha-Karabakh. Scholars believe that the Sarmatians, too, descended from the Srubna culture in the Volga River region and the Andronovo culture (c. 2000–900 BCE) which developed in the southern Ural steppes and included the Scythians, Sarmatians and Alans.



Pic.15 Srubna-Andronovo Cultures^{xv}

Chernyakhov culture. The Chernyakhov culture (The Sântana de Mureş) appeared in the 2nd century CE and was centered in the forests and prairies between the Dnieper and Danube Rivers. This culture spread across Eastern Europe, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, southern Poland and Romania between the 2nd and 5th centuries CE. The Chernyakhov culture included the Iranian-speaking Sarmatians. This culture's characteristics are its dense population and highly developed agricultural methods and crafts.



Pic.16 Chernyakhov Culture^{xvi}

Three distinct types of Chernyakhov houses have been discovered: semi-subterranean dwellings, above ground houses made of wattle and daub, and stone structures. In the forested regions where the Chernyakhov culture existed, traces of walls built from posts, similar to those that would be constructed by later Slavic cultures, and dating from the latter period of the Chernyakhov culture have been found. Chernyakhov settlements typically have storage pits containing traces of different varieties of wheat and barley; clay ovens are also typical feature of their houses.

The Chernyakhov culture had commercial links with Rome and goods obtained from trade with Rome such as glass beads, coins, pottery, alabaster and amber have been found in Chernyakhov sites. Their dead were buried or cremated, with cremated remains found in both small pits and in urns. The custom of leaving grave-goods was widespread and included tools, ornaments, pottery, weapons and what appear to be food offerings.

Several different ethno-linguistic groups settled in the territory that was home to the Chernyakhov culture. One of the most important of these groups were the Iranian-speaking Sarmatians, who inhabited the steppe and forest-steppe zones of this region. Extremely mobile, the Sarmatians left burial mounds across the region and were the successors to the earlier Scythians, who were also Iranian-speakers. Another important element in the ethno-linguistic mix of the Chernyakhov culture came from the northern Przeworsk and Zarubintsy cultures, distinguished by their practice of cremating their dead. Some scholars believe that the Przeworsk and Zarubintsy cultures were early Slavic cultures. Whatever the exact ethno-linguistic composition of the Chernyakhov culture was, it is seen as a contact zone where the linguistic borrowings between Germanic peoples and Slavs, and Iranians and Slavs took place. The movements of the Huns into this region in the 4th and 5th centuries CE put an end to the Chernyakhov culture.

Government. All prehistoric nomadic tribes did not form a formal government, but remained tribal in structure. They were initially ruled by their chieftains and later by a king.

Initially, early people were organized in tribal groups, but these tribal groups were not ethnic in character. Not until the Neolithic period does it appear that tribal groups united to form larger units that would become the basis for later ethnic groups.

In addition, these prehistoric communities were composed of autonomous groups and villages, and did not organized themselves into any form complex enough to be regarded as a state. However, the formation of sedentary groups resulted in social organization at the level of chiefdoms with a fair degree of social stratification.

By the time of the Scythians, social organization was far more complex. Although pastoralists, the Scythians created alliances formed from a large number of tribes, and had their own armies made up primarily of pastoral nomads. Scythian ruling dynasties were above the tribes, giving them the ability take advantage of the resources, military and economic, of many small groups, and to coordinated their activities. Over time, as the Scythians adopted a more sedentary lifestyle and became more assimilated into local agricultural populations, their system of government became more established. Despite these developments, the Scythians dynasties lacked the permanence or the bureaucratic traditions of a true state. These strong, homogenous tribal alliances were comprised of Thracians and Proto-Slavs in the West, Finnish tribes in the north-east, and ancestors of the Adyge people. This was the earliest class state system ruled by an aristocracy and and divided into regions where the inhabitants were engaged in agriculture and cattle breeding.

As for the later Sarmatians, they were organized not on the basis of individual ethnic tribes, but rather on the basis of tribal confederations. This was a result of their assimilation of various other ethnic groups in the process of their long movement to the west.

Finally, there is no scholarly consensus on either the way in which the Proto-Slavs lived or how they were ruled. Some claim that they were sedentary, living in the forests and swamps of eastern Europe, while others state that they were nomadic. As for how they ruled themselves the theories range from monarchy to primitive democracy.

Society. During the Paleolithic period humans lived in small, egalitarian hunter-gatherer bands that frequently moved to follow the animals they hunted or to take advantage of new sources of wild plant foods.

It is believed that the social structure of Neanderthals was very simple – parental groups and subsistence groups. The most basic unit, the parental group was made up of, at the very least, the mother and her young children, but may also have included older siblings and their father. Related parental groups that moved together in search of food formed a subsistence, or local, group.

It is not until the late Paleolithic period that these primitive social structures began to be replaced by a more complex form of social organization – the tribe. Tribes are a form of social organization whose members believe they share a common ancestry, hold a territory in common, and divide work on the basis of age and gender. In the early period many tribes were matriarchal in structure, due to women's important roles within the tribe as mothers, gatherers, housekeepers and cooks. Later, with the domestication of animals and the development of agriculture, men's role in society became more important, resulting in a transition to a patriarchal social structure. This process was accelerated with the spread of metalworking during the Bronze Age, another important activity that required male labor.

During the Mesolithic Age most people followed a mobile hunting way of life. By moving into new habitats their large patrimonial collectives were transformed into constantly moving small groups that dealt with hunting and fishing.

During the Neolithic Age (the last period of the Paleolithic Age) tribes began to unite which formed the basis for the creation of ethnic groups.

It was at this point in time that the primitive communal system of early societies began to break down in various parts of Eurasia. In its place slave-holding societies began to develop in some regions, beginning in Central Asia, the area north of the Black Sea, and Transcaucasia. These early, large slave-holding societies would be the first step in the process that would eventually result in the appearance of larger cultural communities and tribal unions.

Almost all societies were profoundly affected by the development and diffusion of iron making technology and iron tools that marked the start of the Iron Age. Nomadic pastoralism became a widespread way of life on the steppes of Eurasia in the early Iron Age, but this way of life led to new problems. Due to the constant need to move their herds to new pastures, nomadic peoples found themselves in conflict with other groups over pastureland. Such disputes encouraged the formation of alliances among tribes, and led to the development of some of the earliest states. As a part of this process the period witnesses the appearance of both fortified settlements and true cities.

The Scythians were mobile, expansionist and militaristic, pastoralist society lived in a hierarchical society with the Royal Scythians at the top, and both settled and nomadic tribes below them. While the nomadic Scythian tribes inhabited the region along the Dnieper River and the Sea of Azov, the Royal Scythians in the regions to the southeast as far as the Don River.

Like the Scythians, the Sarmatians were organized in a strict hierarchy. At the top were the *argarantes*, the aristocratic military elite, and at the bottom were the slaves, the *limigantes*, who were the true labor force. Sarmatian society remained nomadic, with tribes moving in *kibitkas*, covered wagons, or on horseback. Sarmatian society retained some matriarchal characteristics (for example, women could be warriors until they married) in its early period, however this would change over time. With increasing tribal organization, the power of military leaders increased, and changes in tactics, armor, weapons and riding equipment (the metal stirrup) all led to women being excluded from a military role in Sarmatian society.

In contrast, the Proto-Slavs were agriculturalists living in independent local chiefdoms. Their societies were based on social equality, cooperation between large families, and a basic democratic structure that prevented the concentration of power, political or economic, in the hands of any group or person.

Economy. Due to the lack of plentiful sources of food or long-term food storage techniques, humans lived as nomadic hunter-gatherers, relying primarily on the hunting of animals for their existence during the Paleolithic period. Later with the development of agriculture and the domestication of animals, raising sheep, goats, pigs and cattle became the center of their economy.

An important change that occurred during the Neolithic period was the transition to an economy of production. In other words, this was the transition from the traditional lifestyle of hunting and gathering wild food sources to the settled life in villages that resulted from the development of agriculture and the animal husbandry. There is evidence that tribes inhabiting the steppes between the Altai Mountains and the central Dnieper River began to raise cattle and domesticate new species in this period. In addition, they began to exchange goods with other groups, as shown by the imported shells, furs and amber beads that have been found at sites in the Ukraine.

The Cimmerians' economy was based on agriculture and livestock breeding.

While the Scythians themselves were nomadic pastoralists, the territory they controlled included both hunter-gatherers and agriculturalists who were subject to the Scythians. They obtained products that they did not produce for themselves in the form of tribute paid by these subject peoples. It appears that the first Scythians did not produce their own ceramics or metal goods, but acquired them from settled peoples. Such acquisitions could be the result of either an exchange of products from the Scythians' herds (meat, skins, milk, etc.) or as tribute paid by the settled agriculturalists to the Scythians. Eventually, trade would be as important as tribute in the Scythians' acquisition of manufactured goods. From the 6th century they began to trade with the Greek colonies along the northern Black Sea coast for precious metals, wines, olive oil, metalwork in bronze, silver and gold. The Scythians also had services to sell, particularly military services. They served as mercenaries for cash payments or prestige goods.

The Sarmatians were nomadic, traders and metal workers devoting themselves to hunting and to pastoral occupations. A measure of their power can be seen in the fact that the Greek colonies along the northern shores of the Black Sea were forced to pay tribute to the Sarmatians. Their herds provided them with most of their basic

needs, such as food and clothing. During the winter the Sarmatians lived in the southern Russian steppes between the Black and Caspian Seas and close to the large rivers. In the spring they would migrate north to find summer pastures.

Unlike the Scythians and Sarmatians, the Proto-Slavs had a mixed economy that included nomadic gathering, hunting, agriculture and livestock breeding. They lived in small communities within a defined territory and had commercial contacts with the peoples of the Mediterranean. Bones of sheep, pigs, horses and cattle found at early sites provide evidence for livestock breeding and the discovery of flint sickle blades, grinding and quern stones, and impressions of two varieties of wheat and barley attest to Proto-Slavs' agriculture. Hunting, gathering and fishing supplemented agriculture and animal husbandry.

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Discussion Questions

What factors led to the development of human societies during the pre-historic period?

List the major periods of history and discuss what determines the basis of periodization and what determines the characteristics of the development of man and society in each of these periods?

We know that early human settlements were well established in Rus' land by at least 3500 BCE. What was their origin? What ancient sources provide information about the early settlers and their cultures? Based on what evidence would we determine which cultures developed in the region?

We mentioned that the Proto-Slavic tribal unions began to dominate the region of south-eastern Poland and north-eastern Ukraine around 1500 BCE. However, we also mentioned that some historians trace the origin of the Slavs back to indigenous Iron Age tribes living in the valleys of the Oder and Vistula rivers around the 1st century AD. Why is the origin of the Proto-Slavs still debated?

Nptes

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- ⁱ <http://antropogenez.ru/single-news/article/91/>
- ⁱⁱ Ibid.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Christian, D. p.34.
- ^{iv} <http://all-ukraine.com.ua/ru/object.html?id=2989>
- ^v <http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/prehistoric/kapova-cave-paintings.htm>
- ^{vi} <http://www.rusif.ru/vremya-istorii/gm-Russia/rus-kultury/Russia-kultury-Tripolskaia.htm>
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- ^{ix} <https://vieilleurope.wordpress.com/2014/07/27/ro-an-i2-continuity-since-the-ice-age-the-classical-dacian-culture-a-fusion-between-the-old-dacians-the-la-tene-celts/>
- ^x <http://www.romanianhistoryandculture.com/fromdanubetoasia.htm>
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