

RUSSIAN HISTORY – Ancient Period

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. Beginning around 1000 BCE pastoral nomads dominated this region. The first identifiable Indo-Europeans 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 for 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.

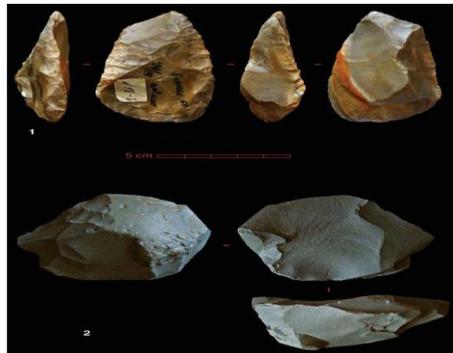
Neanderthals (100,000-40,000 BCE). At about 100,000 years ago Neanderthals began to move into Europe from the Near East and expanded into the Caucasus, the Crimea, Central Asia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and the lower parts of Dnieper and Don Rivers (see pic. 1). Initially, the Neanderthals inhabited only 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. Braclets, 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 survived 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.

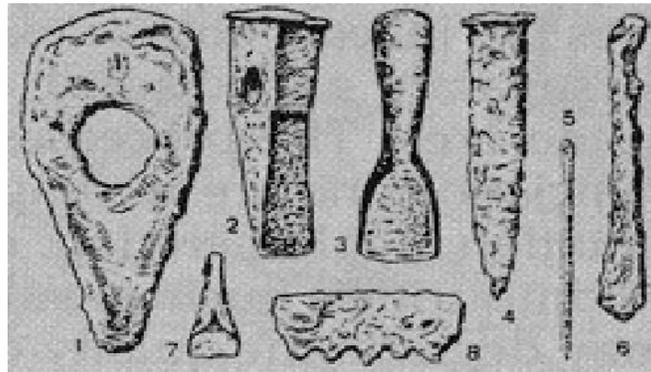
This development led to the emergence of larger tribal unions and large cultural communities. Among these were in north-east Europe, the Trans-Urals, and western Siberia - the ancestors of Finno-Ugric people; in eastern Siberia and the vast steppes of Asia – the ancestors of Mongol and Turkic people; 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 Scythians 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 (Aorsi, 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.

Discussion/Questions

- 1-What factors led to the development of human societies during the pre-historic period?
- 2-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?
- 3-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?
- 4-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?

Reading

- 1-Barford, P.M., From "Proto-Slavs" to Proto-State, A Companion to Russian History, edited by Abbott Gleason, Blackwell Publishing, 2009, p. 17-34.
- 2-Christian, D., A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia, vol. 1: Inner Asia from Prehistory to the Mongol Empire. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998, Part II, III
- 3-Gimbutas, M. The Slavs. Thames and Hudson, London, 1971, Ch. I, II
- 4-Curta, F., The Making of the Slavs, History and Archaeology of the Lower Danube Region, Cambridge University Press, 2004, Ch. 1.
- 5-Grousset, R., The Empire of the Steppes, A History of Central Asia, Rutgers University Press, New Jersey, 1991, Ch. 1.
- 6-Herodotus's the Histories, Book 4
http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/reference/herodotus_histories4.htm

POLITICAL HISTORY

GOVERNMENT

All prehistoric nomadic tribes lacked a formal government, remaining tribal in structure. They were initially ruled by their chieftains and later by kings.

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, which generally resulted in social organization at the level of chiefdoms with a fair degree of social stratification.

Scythians: 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 Scythian 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 the ancestors of the Adyghe people. This was the earliest class state system ruled by an aristocracy and divided into regions where the inhabitants were engaged in agriculture and cattle breeding.

Sarmatians: 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.

Proto-Slavs: Regarding the early Slavs, 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.

Discussion/Questions

1. What was the political organization of the early tribes?

Reading

1-Moss W.G., *A History of Russia, Vol I*, Anthem Press, 2005.

2- The Cambridge History of Russia, Vol. I, Edited by Maureen Perrie, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

3- Chernykh, E.N., *Nomadic Cultures in the Mega-Structure of the Eurasian World*, Academic Studies Press, 2017.

4-Grousset, R., *The Empire of the Steppes, A History of Central Asia*, Rutgers University Press, 2002.

MILITARY

In the south of Rus' land, there were kingdoms that occupied the north of the Black Sea for centuries.

Cimmerians: The earliest people of southern Rus' land were the Cimmerians, ancient mounted nomads of Indo-European origin. While they remained at the tribal level their hit-and-run tactics and lack of military organization presented no significant threat to more highly organized, settled societies.

Scythians: It was the Scythians, also of Indo-European origin, who next came from the east and formed confederative nomadic tribal unions. Although they were of nomadic origin like the Cimmerians, the Scythians gained a reputation for innovative tactics and extreme courage. Like other nomadic pastoralists of the Eurasian steppes, Scythian armies consisted almost entirely of mounted archers. Their combination of mobile, guerrilla tactics and scorched earth policy proved a highly effective combination.

Sarmatians: After the Scythians, the Pontic steppes were dominated by the Sarmatians, another nation of mounted nomadic warriors whose lifestyle was similar to that of the Scythians. Like the Scythians, the Sarmatians used light, mounted archers in their armies, but they also used spears and swords for closing with the enemy. In addition, they made extensive use of cataphracts, heavy armored cavalry.

Proto-Slavs: During the middle centuries of the first millennium CE the Eastern Slavic tribes began to settle in the lands of Rus'. Militarily, these tribes were at the level of the neighboring tribal peoples. In this period, the Slavic tribes are not credited with any military innovations, and the size of their armies was only in the hundreds. However, the small size of these armies was well suited for rapid attack on and retreat from enemy territory. When the Slavs began wars of conquest to expand their territories, more sophisticated tactics and forces were needed. The use of flanking assaults, ambushes, guerrilla tactics and rapid mobility was combined with the coordinated use of infantry, archers and cavalry in these conflicts.

Discussion/Questions

1. How did the ancient people organize their military forces?

2. What was the role of the women in military organization of these nomadic people?

Reading

- 1-Moss W.G., *A History of Russia, Vol I*, Anthem Press, 2005.
- 2- The Cambridge History of Russia, Vol. I, Edited by Maureen Perrie, Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- 3- Chernykh, E.N., *Nomadic Cultures in the Mega-Structure of the Eurasian World*, Academic Studies Press, 2017.
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SOCIAL HISTORY

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Scythians: The Scythians lived in a clan-based society. A class of wealthy aristocrats who later became rulers of the southern Russian and Crimean territories emerged, and were led by a sovereign whose authority was hereditary. Later, a military nobility, a class of servants, and a priestly stratum emerged, but the Scythians still lacked a state.

Sarmatians: Sarmatian society also developed a clan-tribal system led by a sovereign, and like the Scythians, they had no organized state. Sarmatian burials indicated that there were princes, aristocrats, commoners and poor people.

Proto-Slavs: A clan-tribal system was also observed among the Eastern Slavic tribes. Prior to the evolution of the first official ruling class, the early Slavic population was divided into three distinguishable strata. At the lowest strata there were the slaves who were allowed to own property and even leave it to their children. Above the slaves were the freemen, known as *smerdi* who were below the rudimentary aristocracy. Later, this term was used for the agricultural population living on communal land-holdings. Above the freemen there were the seniors, and above them – a tribal chieftain.

Discussion/Questions

1. Why did the early societies lack social stratification?
2. Later, how and why did social stratification emerge?

Reading

- 1-Cross, S.H., "Primitive Civilization of the Eastern Slavs", *The American Slavic and East European Review* Vol. 5, No. 1/2 (May, 1946), pp. 51-87.
- 2- Moss W.G., *A History of Russia, Vol I*, Anthem Press, 2005.
- 3- The Cambridge History of Russia, Vol. I, Edited by Maureen Perrie, Cambridge University Press, 2006.
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GENDER RELATIONS

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. Archeologists have found 300 graves that belong to women dating from the Bronze Age to the second century AD, who were buried with axes, spears, swords, and arrows. Many of the graves contained female skeletons that bore combat injuries.

Scythians: There is compelling archeological evidence confirming that Scythians had warrior women who were buried with the same honors as men, with sacrificial horses, armor, weapons, tools and a great feast for the mourners.

Sarmatians: 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. There was also gender equality among the Sarmatians. Sarmatian woman sat on horseback to go hunting wearing the men clothes.

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. 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.

Proto- Slavs: Proto-Slavic society was matriarchal, and based social equality. Cooperation between large families, and a basic democratic structure prevented the concentration of power, political or economic, in the hands of any group or person.

Discussion/Questions

1. What was the role of the women in the military?
2. Why was ancient Slavic society matriarchal? Why did it become a patriarchal society later?

Reading

1-Cross, S.H., "Primitive Civilization of the Eastern Slavs", *The American Slavic and East European Review* Vol. 5, No. 1/2 (May, 1946), pp. 51-87.

2-Moss W.G., *A History of Russia, Vol I*, Anthem Press, 2005.

3- *The Cambridge History of Russia, Vol. I*, Edited by Maureen Perrie, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

4- Chernykh, E.N., *Nomadic Cultures in the Mega-Structure of the Eurasian World*, Academic Studies Press, 2017

ECONOMIC HISTORY

INNOVATIONS

Stone Age: Stone age people used tools made from flint, and these stone tools were then used to prepare wood and bone to create other tools, such as knives made of stone and some bone tools, such as sewing tools and bone arrow points.

In addition, these people developed new technologies to make different types and sizes of stone tools, such as the spears and arrows they used to hunt.

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

Mesolithic Age: The new life style of this period 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. During this period, they also built small rafts and boats to use the rivers and lakes to move to their new habitats.

Neolithic Age (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.

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 roles and status of men in society to the extent that the matriarchal family was transformed into a patriarchal one.

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. The development of iron tools had a profound impact on almost all aspects of society, including trade, crafts and agriculture.

Discussion/Questions

1. What did the new discoveries tell us about the development of ancient technologies?
2. In what different fields did the invention of the wheel have an impact?

Reading

- 1- Chernykh, E., *Nomadic Cultures in the Mega-Structure of the Eurasian World*, Academic Studies Press, 2017.
- 2-Grousset, R., *The Empire of the Steppes, A History of Central Asia*, Rutgers University Press, 2002.

TRADE

Foreign trade was undoubtedly the primary factor in shaping the policy of all the empires in the Pontic steppes, from the Scythians down to the Khazars.

Scythians: For the Scythians trade was as important as tribute in the Scythians' acquisition of manufactured goods. From the 6th century BCE they began to trade with the Greek colonies along the northern Black Sea coast for precious metals, wines, olive oil, and metalwork in bronze, silver and gold. The Scythians also had services to sell, particularly military services, serving as mercenaries for cash payments or prestige goods.

Sarmatians: The Sarmatians were also traders. During the winter the Sarmatians lived in the southern Russian steppes between the Black and Caspian Seas and close to the large rivers for trading purposes. In the spring they would migrate north to find summer pastures.

Proto-Slavs: Even before the beginnings of Kievan Rus, foreign and domestic trade was important for the future Rus lands; even the Proto-Slavs had commercial contacts with the peoples of the Mediterranean.

Discussion/Questions

1. What were the main trading partners of the Khazars and the Proto-Slavs?
2. How did the early settlers conduct their trade, and which routes did they use?

Reading

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CULTURAL HISTORY

ART

VISUAL ARTS

Painting

Cave Paintings: The Kapova Cave paintings, dated to 12,500 BCE, are the oldest known stone age art in Russia. They depict various Ice Age mammals painted, in addition to abstract signs, pictograph, handprints and hand stencils all painted in red ochre. Near the town of Kislovodsk in the Caucasus red ochre cave painting dating to 3000 BCE have also been found.

Petroglyphs: Ancient petroglyphs have been discovered at a number of sites across Russia. Ones dating back 10,000 years in the Paleolithic period that depict bison, horses and other animals are found on the Ukok Plateau in the Altai Mountains. Petroglyphs from the Neolithic period have been found at Besov Nos in Karelia. These petroglyphs contain not only images of animals, but also also individuals, activities such as swimming and skiing, battles, religious scenes and geometric shapes.

Petroglyphs from the late 2nd millennium BCE, in the transition period between the Stone and Bronze Ages, have been found on cliffs at Sagan-Zaba near Lake Baikal. The variety of animals - including deer and swans – depicted has led some scholars to interpret them as tribal totems. In addition, scenes of birth and death, daily life and hunting are also found. Images of a dancing horned man may represent a shaman performing a ritual dance.

Another group of petroglyphs, the Kanozero petroglyphs, dating from the 3rd – 2nd millennia BCE was discovered on Kamenny Island. In addition to the usual images of birds and animals, the petroglyphs also include images that have been interpreted as religious symbols, depictions of household items and typical activities, along with more enigmatic images such as bird of prey with five talons, a large shaman and a flying crane.

Sculpture

During Paleolithic age in the southeast of Moscow a figure of *Venus of Zaraysk* was discovered. And this figure was found buried in a storage pit in next to a group of Kostensky-style hollowed out earth dwellings dating from the last Ice Age. Another figure *Venus of Kostienki* was discovered near Voronezh on the the west bank of the Don River and carved from a mammoth tusk depicting a tall, pregnant, and possibly older woman. The other figures found during this age were Avdeevo venus and Bison Sculpture.

During Mesolithic Age *Shigir Idol* was discovered in a peat bog in western Siberia near Yekaterinburg in the Middle Urals and radiocarbon dated to between 9500 and 11,000 years, the Shigir Idol is the oldest known wooden sculpture in the world. Three-meter tall, limestone statue *Zbruchsky Idol* was found near the town of Gusyatyn on the Zbruch River. The statue was carved in a square column with three levels depicting from top to bottom the realm of the gods, the world of men and the underworld.

Architecture

Dolmens: Stone Age architecture was characterized with the Dolmens (Burial Chamber) found in the north-western Caucasus that date to between the end of the 4th millennium and the beginning of the 2nd millennium BCE. The dolmens are built with huge stone blocks that look like tables and were supposedly used as burial tombs, however there is no solid evidence to support this theory.

Kurgans (Tumuli): During Iron Age, Scythian and Sarmatian tumulis, burial mounds built over log houses, have been discovered in the area of the Dnieper River, the Strait of Kerch, the Kuban River and the Don River in southern Russia. The tumuli discovered in the region are the Alexandropol (Lugovaya Mogila),

Chertomlyk, the Royal Tumulus (Tsarsky kurgan), the Golden Tumulus (Zolotoy kurgan), the Tumuli of the Seven Borthers (Semibratskaya Mogila), Karagodeuashkh, Kelermes, Kostromskaya, as well as many others.

PERFORMING ARTS

Dance

Ancient cultures' expressed their loyalty to their gods with their folk dances. *Khorovod* (Karagod, tanok, krug, ulitsa) was a part of pagan rituals performed both to honor the sun god, Yaril, and to show repentance. The songs and the dances were slow with participants holding hands, generally in the middle of a circle created by three women. The other folk dance was *Plyaska* performed by one dancer, pairs, or numerous dancers, this folk dance is characterized by passionate movements, emphasizing the dancer's individuality. The music for this dance is a traditional instrumental form of music whose origins pre-date Kievan Rus. *Pereplyas* was another folk dance performed in pairs, this dance takes the form of a competition with each dancer attempting to outdo the other through a display of skill, power and talent.

Discussion / Questions:

- 1.What did ancient people depict in cave paintings and petroglyphs? What was their purpose?
- 2.What were the purposes of sculptures for the ancient inhabitants of Russia?
- 3.For what purpose were the Dolmens and Kurgans constructed?
- 4.How did the Russian ancient folk dance originate?
- 5.How and why did the Skomorokhi emerge?
- 6.How and why was dance important in ancient people's culture?

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- 1-Brentjes, B., "Rock Art in Russian Far East and in Siberia" <http://www.rupestre.net/tracce/?p=2065>
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- 7-Zguta, R., "Skomorokhi: The Russian Minstrel-Entertainer", *Slavic Review*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Jun., 1972), pp. 297-313
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RELIGION

The Scythian and the Sarmatian religion consisted of supernatural powers and superstitions. They did not worship any god(s), nor did they have altars, temples, idols or clergy. Shamans were bestowed with the gift of communicating with nature, the spirits and all things supernatural.

Paganism: Centuries ago tribes living in Rus' land believed in gods and spirits which they identified with the forests and meadows. Although very little information has survived about the religious customs of these tribes, we can learn about the religious beliefs and practices of one East Slavic tribe, from priests' manuscripts, epics and some treaties signed with princes. The pagan tribes, as mentioned in *The Tale of*

Bygone Years, worshipped the earth, trees, stones, fire, the sun and water. The tribes conducted their ceremonies, and made their prayers and supplications in these forests and in shrines. During these ceremonies they played trumpets and rang bells in a wild, noisy fashion, and danced skipping and hopping. Sacrifices were made during these ceremonies to obtain from the gods what they had asked for. Animal and human bones, skulls, vessels, coals and ashes have been found in archaeological excavations. Human sacrifice in Russia continued up until the middle of the 16th century.

Discussion/Questions

1. Since the pagan Rus had common beliefs, common myths and common rituals, and had a number of followers, can we consider paganism a religion?
2. Who abolished paganism in Russia? Is it possible to see traces of pagan culture in Orthodox Russia?

Reading

1- Andreyev, N., "Pagan and Christian Elements in Old Russia", *Slavic Review*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Mar., 1962), pp. 16-23.

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3- Delaine, L., "Ancient People of the Russian Steppes", *Russian Life*, 27 Sep., 2007, <https://russianlife.com/stories/online-archive/ancient-peoples-russian-steppes/>

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ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*

ⁱⁱⁱ Christian, D. p.34.

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^{vi} <http://www.rusif.ru/vremya-istorii/gm-Russia/rus-kultury/Russia-kultury-Tripolskaia.htm>

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