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The Role of Economy in the Early Wars of Novgorod*

Novgorod became the mercantile centre of the Northern Rus' in the 10th century. After the city (or *city-state*) gained independence from Kiev in 1136, its main aim was to keep this position as its economy was based on trade. Evidently, the military and economic interests of the Novgorodian elite met and determined the city's war policy. The early period, especially the 12th century was the creation of the "*Novgorod Land*", expanding the city's possessions in all corners of the region. During this expansion, Novgorod conquered local tribes and settlements in north-eastern Europe but instead of incorporating them directly into its realm, the city-state rather maintained taxing centres to get primary products as tribute for the Baltic trade. This expansive period ended around the 1220s when strong new enemies appeared at Novgorod's borders: "Latin" crusaders in the West and Mongols in the East. Facing these new challenges Novgorod strengthened its dependencies and began to follow new, defensive policy. In this paper, my aim is to introduce the early, expansive period of Novgorod's history and to highlight the links between the military activities and the economic interests of the city.

Key words: Novgorod, warfare, economy, Rus', expansion, trade



Introduction

The history of Novgorod the Great, a successor state of Kievan Rus' is special in many ways in the history of the medieval Rus'. It is a well-known and popular topic among the scholars as Novgorod had a unique political system (a sort of *republican* one) and strong connections with Western Europe and was also a centre of medieval Russian historiography.¹ The city

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¹ Giving a detailed bibliography about the history of Novgorod in the Middle Ages is not the aim of my paper. Thus, I should only cite a few authors and works. Great general overviews: Валентин Лаврентьевич ЯНИН: *Очерки истории средневекового Новгорода*. Moscow. 2008. (hereafter: ЯНИН 2008); Виктор Николаевич БЕРНАРДСКИЙ: *Новгород и новгородская земля в*

on the banks of River Volkhov has also been a subject of deep-going archaeological excavations in the past century.²

However, the most of the primary sources have only a few connections with military history and reference to Novgorodian warfare and one must collect the parts of the puzzle from many different types of sources. This is the reason why the military history of the largest successor state of the Kievan Rus' was not developed and written before in its details.³ My aim is to fill this gap with my researches and in the present paper I shall show how the economy affected the early war policy of Novgorod. The city became the mercantile centre of the Northern Rus' in the 10th century. After the city (or city-state) gained independence from Kiev in 1136, its main aim was to keep this position as its economy was based on trade. Evidently, the military and economic interests of the Novgorodian elite met and determined the city's war policy. The early period, especially the 12th century was the creation of the "Novgorod Land" (or "Novgorodian Land", *Novgorodskaya Zemlya* in Russian), expanding the city's possessions in all corners of the region.⁴ During this expansion, Novgorod conquered local tribes and settlements in north-eastern Europe, but instead of incorporating them directly into its realm, the city-state rather maintained taxing centres to get primary products as tribute for the Baltic trade. This expansive period ended around the 1220s when strong new enemies appeared at Novgorod's

XV веке. Moscow – Leningrad. 1961. (hereafter: BERNARDSKY 1961); Henrik BIRNBAUM: *Lord Novgorod The Great: Part One: The Historical Background*. Los Angeles. 1981. (hereafter: BIRNBAUM 1981); *The Cambridge History of Russia. Volume I. From Early Rus' to 1689*. Ed. Maureen PERRIE. Cambridge. 2006. p. 188–210. (hereafter: PERRIE 2006) About the economic history of the region: *Novgorod – Markt und Kontor der Hanse*. Ed. Norbert ANGERMANN – Klaus FRIEDLAND. Köln. 2002. (hereafter: ANGERMANN – FRIEDLAND 2002); Eduard MÜHLE: *Die städtischen Handelszentren der nordwestlichen Rus'*. Stuttgart. 1991. (hereafter: MÜHLE 1991); Елена Александровна РЫБИНА: *Новгород и Ганза*. Moscow. 2009.

² YANIN 2008. p. 318–333; BIRNBAUM 1981. p. 17–26; Márta FONT – Tamás KRAUSZ – Emil NIEDERHAUSER – SZVÁK Gyula: *Oroszország története* [The History of Russia]. Budapest. 2001. p. 99–101. (hereafter: FKNSZ 2001), here I must also mention the works of Anatoly Nikolaevich KIRPICHNIKOV (Анатолий Николаевич КИРПИЧНИКОВ) who published many books about the archaeology of Novgorod and the Rus' between 1966 and 1984.

³ Only a few monographs give short summaries about this question: Евгений Андреевич РАЗИН: *История военного искусства. Том II. VI–XVI вв.* Moscow. 1999. (hereafter: RAZIN 1999); David NICOLLE: *Armies of Medieval Russia 750-1250*. Oxford. 1999. (hereafter: NICOLLE 1999); David NICOLLE – Viacheslav ШПАКОВСКИЙ: *Armies of Medieval Russia 1250-1500*. Oxford. 2002. Nicolle's works are rather popular science books based on authentic primary sources and scientific secondary sources. On the other hand, many other works include elements of the topic, but in this essay, I cite only a very selected bibliography, as my aim is to give brief synopsis.

⁴ About the meaning of the "Novgorod Land": Charles J. HALPERIN: *Novgorod and the "Novgorodian Land"*. *Cahiers du monde russe: Russie, Empire russe, Union soviétique, États indépendants* 40 (1999), p. 345–363.

borders: “Latin” crusaders in the West and Mongols in the East. Facing these new challenges Novgorod strengthened its dependencies and began to follow new, defensive policy.

Brief overview of the history and politics of Novgorod

Novgorod is uniquely rich in written sources among the parts of the Rus'. About the early history of the region we can find information in the so-called Primary Chronicle (earlier known as *Nestor's Chronicle* and recently from its first words as *Tale of Bygone Years* or *Povest' vremennih let*, abbreviated as *PVL*), the very first Rus'ian chronicle. The later history of Novgorod is mostly known from the local annalistic chronicles (*letopis'i*) of five codex families, the Novgorod Chronicles (*Novgorodskie letopis'i*, abbr.: *NL*). Besides the *letopis'i* there are special diplomas or documents, the *gramoty* (sing. *gramota*), which contain commercial treaties and contracts with the princes.⁵ Another special kind of written documents in the Northern Rus' is the birch-bark letters (known also as *gramoty*) which are private letters mostly containing information about the everyday life.⁶

Besides local sources there are some foreign documents containing contemporary information about the history of Novgorod: *letopis'i* from the other principalities of the Rus', Latin, German and Scandinavian chronicles, diplomas and other typical documents of the era – mostly written in the close proximity of the north-western Rus'.⁷

Archaeology also gives us important additional knowledge about Novgorod. The city proper went under a series of high-scale archaeological

⁵ Both types contain a lot of valuable information about Novgorod's economy. While the economic importance of the commercial treaties is evident, the treaties with the “invited” princes is also important as they record the regions where the prince's courtiers can and cannot hunt, collect natural goods or levy taxes and so on. E.g. from the first surviving treaty: “*And these are the volosts of Novgorod: Bezhiche, Gorodets', Mchya, Shipino, Egna, Vologda, Zavoloch'ye, Koloperem', Tre, Perem', Yugra, Pechera. And you must govern these volosts with Novgorodian men and levy tax from them. And you must hunt wild boars [further] than 60 versts from the city [of Novgorod].*” It also contains other economic restrictions as well as the later treaties with the princes. See: *Грамоты Великого Новгорода и Пскова*. Ed. Спигизмунд Натанович ВАЛК. Moscow – Leningrad. 1949. p. 9-10. (hereafter: VALK 1949).

⁶ FKNSZ 2001. p. 98–99; Валентин Лаврентьевич ЯНИН: *У истоков новгородской государственности*. Moscow. 1998. p. 5–12. (hereafter: YANIN 1998); BERNARDSKY 1961. p. 112–147. Most of the birch-bark documents are available online: <http://gramoty.ru/index.php> (access: 06-19-2017).

⁷ Early Livonian chronicles: *Heinrici Chronicon Livoniae*. Hrsg. Leonid ARBUSOW – Albertus BAUER. Hannoverae. 1955. (Monumenta Germaniae historica. Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi, 31) (hereafter: HCL 1955); *Livländische Reimchronik*.

Stuttgart. 1844. (hereafter: LRC 1844). Old East Slavic *letopis'i*: http://psrl.csu.ru/index/index_tom.shtml (access: 06-19-2017).

excavation from the 1950s and due to the local climate many artefacts were found in quite a good condition.⁸

Novgorod is one of the oldest settlements of the Rus' and its first centre according to the PVL.⁹ The city itself was founded in the 10th century on the shores of river Volkhov on the trade route from the Varangians to the Greeks between Scandinavia and Byzantium. The city grew fast and it became the second biggest city in the Rus' after the center, Kiev. In the north-western region Novgorod kept its role of regional centre – not only in political sense, but also in cultural and commercial one.¹⁰

In the early period Novgorod was an integral part of the Kievan Rus' until the local popular assembly, the *veche* exiled the actual prince, Vsevolod Mstislavich (1117–1136) in 1136 due to his “disloyalty” to Novgorod (he wanted to become the grand prince of Kiev and thus he did not want to settle in Novgorod and found a local dynasty). This conflict created a unique situation: Novgorod became a republic or more exactly an oligarchy led by the most powerful members (*boyars*) of the *veche*, the rich merchants and landowners. *Veche* became the only political actor and as such, they decided to “invite” another prince. However from that year, the princes of Novgorod should have had no monarchic power, they became military leaders with their own retinue (*druzhina*) and protectors of the city and its realm. The princes' scope of activities was recorded in the treaty between the prince and the *veche* (this kind of *gramota* is called *ryad*) and restricted and controlled by the *veche* (although some princes tried and were able to manipulate the *veche*).¹¹

Although Novgorod became sovereign in 1136, the political connections with the other parts of the Rus' remained strong: most of its princes came from another Rus'ian principality and the armies of Novgorod often fought in the internal wars of the Rus'. Between 1136 and the first half of the 13th century, Novgorod became the biggest Rus'ian polity expanding from its core territory at the lakes Ladoga, Ilmen and Peipus to Karelia and the White Sea in the north, to the Baltic Sea in the west and to the Ural Mountains beyond the River Northern Dvina in the east. This period is the

⁸ YANIN 2008. p. 318–333; BIRNBAUM 1981. p. 17–26; FKNSZ 2001. p. 99–101.

⁹ PERRIE 2006. p. 47–56; YANIN 2008. p. 11–18.

¹⁰ YANIN 2008. p. 20–25; FKNSZ 2001. p. 89–91; PIERRE 2006. p. 189–192; BIRNBAUM 1981. p. 13–39; Robert MICHELL – Nevill FORBES: *The Chronicle of Novgorod, 1016–1471*. London. 1914. p. XXII (hereafter: MICHELL – FORBES 1914); MÜHLE 1991. p. 127–131; ANGERMANN–FRIEDLAND 2002. p. 53.

¹¹ Although the Novgorodian situation, the ruling role of the *veche* was unique in the Rus', there were similar endeavours in other principalities of the Rus' too, but they were unsuccessful. See: FKNSZ 2001. p. 92–98; YANIN 2008. p. 26–56; PIERRE 2006. p. 74–88, 192–195; BERNADSKY 1961. p. 52–75; BIRNBAUM 1981. p. 73–75, 82–97. About the method and origin of the contract between the *veche* and the princes, see: YANIN 1998.

creation of the Novgorod Land, the region ruled by the city gaining the title “*His Majesty Lord Novgorod the Great*”. In the second half of this paper, I am going to give a summary account of this period due to its importance in the topic given in the title.

In the second third of the 13th century, the leaders of the city had to face new enemies in the east and in the west: the Mongols who already conquered most of the Rus’ and the “*Latin*” (Scandinavian and German) crusaders in the Baltic. In this hard time, Novgorod chose to compromise with the fearsome nomads and accepted the nominal Mongol rule in 1238. This policy helped them to face the western enemies and stabilize the borders of the Novgorod Land in the Baltic by losing only small footholds in Finland and Estonia. Making relative peace with the new neighbours strengthened Novgorod’s trade and the north-eastern colonization and created Novgorod’s *golden age* between the mid-13th and late 14th century.¹²

From the end of the 14th century, the rich city-state had to face increasing pressure of the new regional powers, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Grand Principality of Moscow. After a long period of altering resistance and cooperation, Novgorod was annexed by Moscow in 1478.¹³

The economy of Novgorod

As I mentioned in the foreword, Novgorod’s importance was built on the long-distance commerce. In its society, foreign merchants played an important role. From the early period, we have information about Greeks and Norsemen and it also seems quite possible that Muslim, Turkic and Baltic traders frequently visited the city, while from the 11th century, the eastern Scandinavian (Swedish and Gutnish) and German trading colonies gain influence in Novgorod.¹⁴

The trade route from the Varangians to the Greeks started to decline around the turn of the 11th and 12th centuries as Cumans conquered the northern shores of the Black Sea. (However this route was still an important one until the first downfall of the Byzantine Empire and the Mongol-Tatar conquest of the Pontic steppes in the 13th century.) This was the reason of the increasing importance of the east-west Baltic trade instead of the north-south Eastern European route. From the end of the 11th century, strong commercial partnership was born between the Novgorodians and the

¹² FKNSZ 2001. p. 78, 91–92; BIRNBAUM 1981. p. 45–53; PIERRE 2006. p. 98–126, 198–202.

¹³ YANIN 2008. p. 222–304; FKNSZ 2001. p. 97; BERNADSKY 1961. p. 200–356; PIERRE 2006. p. 202–206; BIRNBAUM 1981, 53–54. Gábor GYÓNI: Moszkva és Novgorod küzdelme: „az orosz földek összegyűjtése” [The Struggle of Moscow and Novgorod. “The Collection of the Russian Lands”]. In: *Az orosz birodalom születései*. Ed. Tibor FRANK. Budapest. 2016, hereafter: FRANK 2016) p. 44–59. (hereafter: GYÓNI 2016).

¹⁴ YANIN 2008. p. 335–349; BIRNBAUM 1981. p. 79–80.

island of Gotland and between the Novgorodians and the Swedish shores. From the late 12th century merchants from the northern German cities also appeared in the eastern Baltic region and a close and intensive commercial link was born between them (first as independent merchants, later as the representatives of the Hanseatic League) and Novgorod. Initially both the Novgorodian and German merchants visited each other's markets and Novgorodian trading colonies existed in the Hanseatic cities, but from the 14th century Germans took over the lead in the Baltic trade.¹⁵

Novgorod exported its own products to the west like furs, wax, amber jewels and wooden goods and these materials arrived in Novgorod as tax from the Finno-Ugrian tribes ruled by the city. From the west they imported shortages chiefly: salt, precious metals (especially silver), steel, and weapons, but also luxuries (expensive textiles, spices). If the harvest was poor, Novgorod also needed to import grain, usually from the neighbouring Principality of Vladimir-Suzdal.¹⁶

Although in the earlier literature most historians agreed that the agricultural colonization of the eastern region started only in the 14th century due to the climate change (the weather became warmer and milder), recent studies show that this process started already in the early 13th century but the process reached a higher scale only later. From the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries, the manors started to grow and due to the colonization, the former semi-autonomous eastern and northern regions became integral part of the Novgorod Land. Nevertheless, as the climate was still harsh in this zone and the agriculture was rather underdeveloped, hunting, fishing and bee-keeping remained an important part of the local economy. For example people mostly used furs as currency instead of metal coins (the use of money became more general from the 14th century due to the Baltic commerce and local currency only appeared in 1420).¹⁷

The expansion of Novgorod in the 12th–13th century

To overview the expansion of Novgorod, we must start the story before earlier than the year of independence, 1136. The city on the River Volkhov established its power over the Slavic and Finnic tribes and settlements of the

¹⁵ YANIN 2008. p. 335–349; RAZIN 1999. p. 256; FKNSZ 2001. p. 78, 87–88.

¹⁶ FKNSZ 2001. p. 88–89; PIERRE 2006. p. 196.

¹⁷ BERNADSKY 1961. p. 52–111; RAZIN 1999. p. 256; FKNSZ 2001. p. 88–89; PIERRE 2006. p. 196, 207–208; GYÓNI 2016. p. 44–45; János MAKAI: *Fejezetek Vlagyimir-Szuzdal történetéből* [Chapters from the History of Vladimir-Suzdal]. Eger. 2014. p. 88–90. (hereafter: MAKAI 2014). About the geography and climate of the region, see: PIERRE 2006. p. 19–43.

region, e.g. (Staraya) Ladoga, (Staraya) Russa, and Pskov (originally Pleskov) in the early period as a seat of the Rus' princes.¹⁸ Just before the city became independent, the core of the Novgorod Land was around Lake Ilmen, River Volkhov, Lake Ladoga and Lake Peipus and the city started to levy tax on the proto-Estonian *Chude* tribes north and west of Lake Peipus (*Pskovsko–Chudskoe ozero*, lit. Pskovian–Chude Lake in Russian).¹⁹

Around then, in the first half of the 12th century the sphere of Novgorod's influence started to expand to the northeast, in the regions of *Zavolochye* (lit. "beyond the portage", also known as "Vолок on the River Dvina"), *Pechora* and *Yugra* conquering different Finnic, Permian, and Ugric tribes. During the conquest, there were no big campaigns only small Novgorodian expeditions subjected the local fragmented and scattered tribes. The Novgorodians founded palisaded taxing centres (*pogosts*) with small garrison on defendable riverbanks.²⁰ This way the region became a dependent but not integral part of the Novgorod Land until agricultural colonization did not begin and real settlements did not appear around the *pogosts* from the early 13th century.²¹

¹⁸ This core region became the foundation of the later administrative districts, the five *pyatinas* (lit. "fifths"). The subdued cities in this core region were called *prigorods* (lit. "suburb") and often translated to English as satellite-cities (or satellite-towns). YANIN 2008. p. 306–317; BIRNBAUM 1981. p. 70–71.

¹⁹ YANIN 2008. p. 44–45. According to the Novgorod Chronicles the conquest of the Chude tribes ended in 6641, year 1133 AD/CE in the Orthodox chronology, which counts the years from the theoretic date of the Creation. I used three different editions of the *Novgorod Chronicles* (*Новгородские Летописи*; hereafter, NL) so hereafter I cite them this way: "NL [year given in the chronicles], ([year in the Common Era])". The editions I used:

- *Новгородская первая летопись старшего и младшего изводов*. Moscow – Leningrad. 1950. (Online: http://www.lrc-lib.ru/rus_letopisi/Novgorod/contents.htm. Access: 06-19-2017)

- *Новгородская летопись по списку П.П. Дубровского. // Полное собрание русских летописей*. Том XLIII. Языки Славянской Культуры. Moscow. 2004. (Online: <http://www.lrc-lib.ru/?id=6>. Access: 06-19-2017).

- *The Chronicle of Novgorod, 1016–1471*. London. 1914. (English translation).

²⁰ GYÓNI 2016. p. 45; NICOLLE 1999. p. 16–17. There are theories about an administrative-taxing system similar to *pyatinas* of the core region in this northern and north-eastern peripheries. The first one would be *Zavolochye*, the region beyond the *Vолок* between the *Beloye Lake* ("White Lake") and the *Mezen River*, including the valley of the *Northern Dvina*. The second district would be the "overseas" land of *Tre*, *Tri* or *Ter* north of the *Onega Lake*: *Northeastern Karelia*, the southern shores of *Kola Peninsula* and parts of *Lapland*. The third region would be *Perm* or *Perem* between the valley of *Kama River* and the *Ural Mountains*, while the fourth district would be *Pechora*, the valley of the river with the same name and the fifth one would be *Yugra*, the northern *Ugric lands* between the *Pechora River* and the northern ranges of the *Ural*. See: MICHELL – FORBES 1914. p. XXX.

²¹ FKNSZ 2001. p. 87–89; GYÓNI 2016. p. 44–45; MAKAI 2014. p. 88–89; Márta FONT: *Rusciától Moscoviáig. Oroszország középkori gyökerei a kezdetektől a 15. század végéig* [From Ruscia to Moscovia. The Medieval Roots of Russia from the Beginnings to the End of the 15th Century]. In: FRANK 2016. p. 21–43, here: p. 29–31.

Defending and controlling the local *pogosts* was prime necessity for Novgorod as its export products (furs and hides, wax and honey, etc.) came from this region in the form of tax.²² Sometimes the local tribes were able to unite their forces and attempt to break the Novgorodian yoke, which entailed bigger campaigns from Novgorod. A good example is from the year 1193 when a punitive campaign arrived in Pechora to repress the rebellion of the Permian and Ugric tribes. This army conquered many “towns” (probably tribal centres and *pogosts* conquered by the tribes during their rebellion) but was defeated later.²³ While the chronicle does not inform us about the further fate of this rebellion, the Novgorodian tax collectors even reached the Ural Mountains in the next years, so it was repressed for sure.²⁴ Similar rebellions could have happened even earlier as the fortress of Khlynov (also known as Vyatka) was built in the region on the shores of River Vyatka around 1174 but in the chronicles these rebellions left no trace.²⁵

Although the local tribes caused some trouble, the Principality of Vladimir-Suzdal was a far stronger competitor for Novgorod in the north-eastern region. This principality also had economic interests in this far-away corner of Europe and the war with this Rus’ian power set not only the Novgorodian tax-collecting back but also the important grain supplies, which arrived on the Volga route. During the 12th century, the conflict was almost constant between the two states. In the first half of this century, the Novgorodians built the fort of Torzhok (also known as *Novy Torg*, “new market”) on the border of the two power to control the trade route on the Volga.²⁶ Plundering on the borderland, skirmishes and short expeditions were quite frequent.²⁷ During this century there were two wars: the first one in 1147–1149 when both armies were deployed from year to year and Novgorod conquered six villages. In 1149, the two armies finally met on the field and the battle and war ended with the victory of Novgorod.²⁸

The next real war came in 1169 when a Novgorodian troop went beyond the valley of the Northern Dvina to collect the tax and was attacked by a Suzdalian army. It seems that the Novgorodians were well prepared as they

²² BIRNBAUM 1981. p. 49–52; FKNSZ 2001. p. 87–89; PIERRE 2006. p. 196.

²³ NL 6695, 6701 (1187, 1193); NICOLLE 1999. p. 8, 41.

²⁴ MICHELL – FORBES 1914. p. XV–XVII; FKNSZ 2001. p. 91.

²⁵ MICHELL – FORBES 1914. p. XXVI–XXVIII. As Khlynov was the centre of the region Vyatka, which got its name after its main river, the sources often call the settlement and the fort Vyatka, too. From the end of the 18th century, the settlement was officially renamed Vyatka but its name was finally changed to Kirov in 1934.

²⁶ FKNSZ 2001. p. 91; MAKAI 2014. p. 89–99.

²⁷ NL 6642, 6645, 6647, 6675 (1134, 1137, 1139, 1167).

²⁸ NL 6655–6657. (1147–1149.); NICOLLE 1999. p. 8; YANIN 2008. p. 51.

won the battle and after collecting the tax from the dependent tribes, they even collected tribute from some Suzdalian peasants. This action angered Vladimir-Suzdal and its leaders announced war on Novgorod and recruited an army from not only their own principality but from their Rus'ian allies, too, and this united army invaded the core territories of Novgorod and encircled the city in late 1169 or early 1170. After fruitless negotiations, the two armies met again on field at the walls of Novgorod and the Suzdalians lost again. This victory guaranteed the hegemony of Novgorod in the disputed north-eastern region but the small conflicts did not end completely.²⁹

Novgorod's attempts to establish control among the Baltic Finnic peoples was less successful. The main reason can be found in the society and demographics of these tribes: they were more organized socially and more populous than the eastern Finnic tribes.³⁰ For example, Novgorod gained control over just some of the Chudes after a long war in the early 12th century.³¹ As many Chude tribes remained free, they often raided the lands around Pskov – many times together with other Baltic tribes, the Latgallians³² and the Lithuanians (collectively known as *Litva* in Old East Slavic). In 1190–1191 a bigger Novgorodian army besieged and occupied the town of Yuryev and plundered many villages in Estonia but later they left the region and did not attempt to annex it for an unknown reason.³³

In the west, Novgorod's main target was not Estonia and its Chude tribes, but Finland. Most of Karelia came into Novgorodian rule in the early period already as a source of wood and furs and also for strategic reasons.³⁴ Another source for valuable raw materials was central Finland, inhabited by the *Tavastians*, a Finnish tribe whose Old East Slavic name was *Yem* (or *Yam* in other form).³⁵ The Rus' already attempted to subdue them in the 11th

²⁹ NL 6677. (1169.); PIERRE 2006. p. 196; BIRNBAUM 1981. p. 137; YANIN 2008. p. 55. As an example for later conflicts see year 1180 in the chronicles: NL 6688.

³⁰ Eino JUTIKKALA – Kauko PIRINEN: *Finnország történelme* [The History of Finland]. Budapest. 2004. p. 36–37, 56–57. (hereafter: JUTIKKALA – PIRINEN 2004); David NICOLLE: *Lake Peipus 1242. Battle of the Ice*. Oxford. 1997. p. 9. (hereafter: NICOLLE 1997).

³¹ NL 6641 (1133).

³² The Baltic Latgallians (or Latgalians) were the ancestors of the Latvians, close relatives of the Lithuanians. MICHELL – FORBES 1914. p. XXV–XXVII. and p. 32. footnote 1. About their history see: Michael NORTH: *The Baltic. A History*. Cambridge – London. 2015. p. 17–18.

³³ NL 6698–6699 (1190–1191). Yuryev was called Tarbatu in archaic Estonian and Dorpat in German. Nowadays it is called Tartu and part of Estonia. Although most parts of the Novgorod Chronicles are credible and detailed, it also contains some events without any further explanations like this one. About this issue see: MICHELL – FORBES 1914. p. XXXVI–XLI.

³⁴ JUTIKKALA – PIRINEN 2004. p. 51–52.

³⁵ The Old East Slavic word comes from the Finnish name of the region, Häme. JUTIKKALA – PIRINEN 2004. p. 412.

century.³⁶ For me it seems that this attempt was relatively successful and the Tavastians became the subjects of Novgorod until the early 1120s, when in the chronicles we read about their rebellion and the Novgorodian victory over them in 1123.³⁷ Around one and a half decade later, the Yems were independent again and raided the Novgorod Land around Ladoga but were defeated by the local garrison and militia in 1142. This raid seems to have a connection with the appearance of the Kingdom of Sweden in the region. Under the year 1142 the Novgorod Chronicle writes: the navy of the Swedish king and the Swedish bishop attacked some Novgorodian merchant vessels, but they were defeated. In spite of this entry in the chronicle the Kingdom of Sweden and Novgorod did not clash yet as the Swedes only started to conquer and convert the western shores of Finland.³⁸ In the next decades the raiding activity in the Finnish and Karelian region is frequent on both sides and there is also an entry about a Swedish raid again. It seems possible that Novgorod was finally able to (re-)conquer Tavastia at the end of the 12th century but we have no information about founding pogosts in that region.³⁹

At the end of the 12th century, the Lithuanians (sometimes allied with the Latgallians and the Rus'ians of Polotsk) became the main enemy of Novgorod in the west. In 1198 the Lithuanian-Polotskian troops plundered the town of Luki while in 1200 they even proceeded to march as far as Lake Ilmen before defeated by the Novgorodians.⁴⁰ The town of Luki on the border became the centre for operations against the eastern Baltic lands and was reinforced by walls and garrison in 1211.⁴¹

It seems quite possible for me that there was some kind of connection between the Estonians and the Lithuanians during this period as the raids of these peoples became frequent in the 1210s – as soon as the army of Novgorod invaded a Chude vicinity (probably they wanted to gain control over Estonia completely), the Lithuanians invaded the Novgorod Land.⁴²

1217 was a turning point in the expansion of Novgorod: during the actual war against the Lithuanians and Chudes, the pagan tribes sought help among the Catholic Germans of the Bishopric of Riga and the Livonian Brothers of the Sword who just started colonizing the Eastern Baltic shores (and soon to become the archenemy of these tribes). This was the first time

³⁶ NL 6550 (1042).

³⁷ NL 6631 (1123).

³⁸ NL 6650 (1142). For the problems with this information see: JUTIKKALA – PIRINEN 2004. p. 39; YANIN 2008. p. 50.

³⁹ NL 6651, 6657 (1143, 1149), 6672 (1164), 6694, 6699 (1186, 1191); JUTIKKALA – PIRINEN 2004. p. 36.

⁴⁰ NL 6706 (1198), 6708 (1200)

⁴¹ NL 6719 (1211).

⁴² NL 6718–6722 (1210–1214).

when the Livonian Germans appeared as enemies of Novgorod but after some skirmishes, they retreated. Then the Novgorodians defeated the Chudes and preyed on 700 horses.⁴³

Five years later the situation changed and the Lithuanians and Novgorodians attacked the Livonian Brothers together and unsuccessfully besieged the castle of Wenden. The alliance did not last long as in the next year, Lithuanians were marauding the possessions of Novgorod again, while there was an ongoing war against the Chudes. While both tribes were defeated, this war did not result in conquest (the town of Kolivan was besieged unsuccessfully), only in booting.⁴⁴

Soon the skirmishes and border disputes became frequent between Novgorod and the Livonian crusaders. The military order conquered Yur'yev (Dorpat) in 1224 and the Novgorod Land and the Livonian Brothers' state became neighbours along Lake Peipus.⁴⁵ In the same year a Novgorodian expedition army was decisively defeated by the Lithuanians and the first news about the Mongol-Tatar invasion arrived in the north-western Rus'.⁴⁶ In my opinion, these events mark a new era in the history of Novgorod: the end of expansion and the beginning of a defensive policy. The strengthening Lithuanians, the "Latin" crusaders and the fearsome Mongols were too strong enemies to deal with in a war on several fronts. This recognition helped the leaders of the city-state to survive the upcoming invasions and strengthen its commercial and economic positions in the region.

Conclusion

After making a brief survey on the military events of the period we can clearly see that the economic interest was the main motivational force in the wars of Novgorod. From the beginning of the 12th century, the leaders of the city were striving for expanding the city's realm in regions rich in valuable raw materials. During this strife, Novgorod faced several enemies from several cultures with different social and organizational structures. In the eastern region, we witness a relatively rapid expansion in a territory but without intense agricultural colonization, only creating taxing vicinities. In

⁴³ NL 6725 (1217); HCL 1955. p. 137–140; LRC 1844. p. 42–44. (*Livländische Reimchronik* is rather a literary source, an epic work about the heroic deeds of the German knights, its value as a historical source is not that significant. LRC 1844. p. III–VIII.) For the German settlement process in Livonia see: NICOLLE 1997. p. 10–15.

⁴⁴ NL 6730–6731 (1222–1223). Wenden was called Kes in Old East Slavic, nowadays it is part of Latvia as Cēsis. Kolivan later became Reval under Danish and German rule, nowadays it is the capital of Estonia as Tallinn.

⁴⁵ NL 6732 (1224); HCL 1955. p. 199–205; NICOLLE 1997. p. 11–12.

⁴⁶ NL 6732 (1224).

other regions where the armies of Novgorod met more organized adversaries (Vladimir-Suzdal, the crusaders or the Baltic Finnic peoples). Against them, Novgorod's main aim was plundering, seizing booty as these enemies were too strong to subject completely and possibly, they were more valuable as independent trading partners, too. After this recognition, Novgorod changed its policy and successfully protected its commercial and political interests in both the Baltic and the north-eastern region in the next one and a half century.

