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**Author's Subject:** new book: Vasil'ev on early Novgorod toponyms

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V[alerii] L[eonidovich] Vasil'ev. *Slavianskie toponimicheskie drevnosti Novgorodskoi zemli*. Moskva: Rukopisnye pamiatniki Drevnei Rusi, 2012. 816 pp. ISBN 978-5-9551-0607-6.

What is the poor historian, not trained in historical linguistics, to do when confronted with an imposing (and arguably significant) volume such as the one under consideration here? Explain its methodology, which is laid out carefully? – not likely. Distill the conclusions? – certainly more feasible. This is a book that will be of great value to anyone concerned with early Slavic migration and settlement in the North and with the early history of the Novgorodian lands.

Vasil'ev has been publishing on Novgorodian dialects and toponyms for some two decades. His earlier work, cited on two pages of the extensive bibliography here, includes two monographs: *Novgorodskaiia geograficheskaiia terminologiia: (Areal'no-semasiologicheskie ocherki)* (2001); *Arkhaicheskaiia toponimika Novgorodskoi zemli: (Drevneslavianskie deantoponimye obrazovaniia)* (2005).

The present work, by a process akin to what archaeologists undertake in peeling away strata, examines what the author determines is the archaic layers of Novgorodian Slavic toponyms, focusing on what he considers to be the most significant ones (thus not including micro-toponyms) connected either with descriptive designation of geographical features or with references to persons. In particular he is concerned mainly with the toponyms which subsequently were unproductive (this then suggesting their archaism). The geographic focus is on the territory of the main Novgorodian administrative divisions, the *piatiny*. The principal written sources are those which antedate the 16th century (cadastres, birchbark letters, treaties, chronicles). He has also mined cartographic sources and reference materials such as the *Spisok naselennykh mest Novgorodskoi gubernii* (1907-1912) and draws on evidence about Slavic toponymics all across Central and Eastern Europe.

The bulk of the book groups the toponyms according to type (e.g., "Iotovo-posessivnaia toponimiia na baze lichnykh imen," "Etimologicheskaiia i etnoistoricheskaiia razrabotka toponimii s elementami -goshch-/-gost-," "...Ocherki deapelliativnoi toponimicheskoi arkhaiki [analiz topoosnov]." "Deapelliativnye toponimy-arkhaizmy v ramkakh redkikh strukturnykh modelei"). Lest such chapter titles be offputting for the non-linguist, I would emphasize that each of the entries within these chapters contains a fascinating array of evidence about etymology, local history, and much more. There is an alphabetical index of all the place names analyzed, providing easy access if one wishes to use the book mainly as a reference tool.

The broader conclusions which Vasil'ev reaches are significant. If at one time scholars argued that Slavic colonization in the Novgorodian

lands came from the west, the evidence here supports strongly the more recent tendency to seek southern origins. His linguistic evidence points to movement from the Halych and Volhynian lands up through what is now eastern Belarus'. Supporting hypotheses advanced by E. N. Nosov, he argues that there were two waves of early Slavic migration into the northern lands. One should not think Vasil'ev is over-emphasizing a uniquely Slavic contribution to the early history of the region. Indeed, he is fully cognizant of the distribution of other ethno-linguistic groups in and around the core Novgorodian lands and notes, for example, the clear boundaries (established linguistically) separating Baltic and Finnic regions from those which were the main focus of the earliest Slavic settlement in the region around Lake Il'men and the lower reaches of the rivers that feed it. Of particular interest is his conclusion that the earliest Slavic migrations into the Pskov region were distinct from those into the Novgorod region. He discusses correlations between the linguistic evidence on the one hand and the types of burials (Novgorodian-Pskovian "long barrows" and the later "sopki") documented by archaeology on the other. While he obviously respects the work of V. V. Sedov, who is known for his study of the "sopki", Vasil'ev disagrees with him about what the distribution of those burials tells us regarding Slavic migration.

In addition to its 68-page index of toponyms, the book includes 16 maps, illustrating the distribution of specific toponym groups attested both in the Novgorod region and more broadly other areas of Eastern and Central Europe.