

Slavica Helsingiensia 27

The Slavization of the Russian North. Mechanisms and Chronology. Ed. by Juhani Nuorluoto.
Die Slavisierung Nordrusslands. Mechanismen und Chronologie. Hrsg. von Juhani Nuorluoto.
Славянизация Русского Севера. Механизмы и хронология. Под ред. Юхани Нуорлуото.

Helsinki 2006

ISBN 952-10-2852-1, ISSN 0780-3281; ISBN 952-10-2928-5 (PDF)

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Cultural Identity of the Russian North Settlers in the 10th – 13th Centuries: Archaeological Evidence and Written Sources

One of the most critically important phenomena that determined the ethnic map of the North of Eastern Europe in the Modern time was the interaction of the Slavs and the Finns, as now perceived. Proceeding from the concepts of the ethno-cultural history of Eastern Europe, commonly approved by modern scholarship, this interaction may be supposed to have been especially intensive in the 10th – 13th centuries. This interaction was also marked by the wide-scale colonisation of northern territories, important social transformations and the establishment of new state and administrative structures. The ethno-geographic introduction to the Primary Chronicle by the time of compiling the narration calls the Finnish tribes ‘the first settlers’ in the towns and lands incorporated into the structure of Northern Rus’ (Polnoe sobranie russkix letopisej I: 10–11; II: 8–9). This information is accompanied by the abundant place-name data which is of Finno-Ugrian origin and which was registered in a major part of northern territories that by the 12th century had been integrated into the Novgorod and Rostov-Suzdal’ lands (Matveev 2001; Matveev 2004). Taken together, these data determine the general content of the ethno-cultural shifts that occurred in the early 2nd millennium AD, but at the same time, give scope to the different interpretations as for the real character of the phenomenon known in the nineteenth century historiography as ‘Slavic colonisation’.

Archaeology came to play an essential role in studies concerning the medieval cultural situation in the North later than did history and linguistics; specialists limited the task of archaeology to revealing the detailed pictures of ethno-cultural development and transformations in the different regions. The northern outlands of Medieval Rus’ were considered to be the territory where the ethnic attribution of archaeological sites was a comparatively simple task, due to the substantial cultural difference of the interacting ethnic groups. Archaeologists

stood at a point where they could clearly observe the dissimilarities in woman's costume, pottery, and the burial rite of the Finnic tribes and the Slavs formed in the late 1st millennium AD. These different habits of these groups were easily distinguishable in the contact zones (Sedov 1953; Gorunova 1961; Golubeva 1973; Sedov 1982; Rjabinin 1979; Rjabinin 1997). The Slavic or Finnic identity of the population was considered to be the basic feature which determined a cultural situation in the northern outlands. To some extent such an assessment followed the ideas of the compiler of the Primary Chronicle: he clearly separated the Slavs from 'the other languages' when describing the contemporary ethnogeographic situation (Polnoe sobranie russkix letopisej I: 11; II: 8).

Nonetheless, the archaeological picture of the northern periphery, which was revealed by the investigations in the territories eastward from Lake Ladoga and northward from the Volga and the Northern Dvina watershed, turned out to be rather different than was expected. First, the Finnic sites of the second part of the 1st millennium – the period preceding incorporation of the territory into the political system of Russian state – have been discovered only in separate regions. At present it seems difficult to carry out comparative studies of the Finnic antiquities that were not affected by a Slavic influence in the major part of the Russian North. Evidently, an essential part of the territory was sparsely populated until the eleventh and twelfth centuries (Makarov 1997: 22–26; Makarov, Zaxarov & Bužilova 2001: 95–111). Second, original material culture formed in the 11th – 12th centuries within the wide territories from Beloozero to the Northern Dvina is characterised by a stable combination of the elements traditionally interpreted as Finnic and Slavic. The presence of Slavic and Finnic elements is clearly displayed by the burial rite of the cemeteries, the repertoire of pottery associations, and woman's apparel (Makarov 1990: 125–134; Makarov 1997: 160–161). The accumulation of archaeological materials all over the territory of the Russian North reveals the phenomenon of the multicultural character of the sites dating from the 11th – 13th centuries. The interpretation of these sites is a separate topic of investigation.

Two archaeological observations made in the early 1990s are of special importance when discussing the general comprehension of the historical situation in the territories that are situated north-east from the Lake Ladoga and the Volga and Suxona watershed. These archaeological observations increased in importance since they have been confirmed by recent materials. First, numerous archaeological sites of the 10th – 13th centuries were registered in the areas without any traces of an earlier settlement; second, the elements of medieval Russian culture gradually spread from the west and south-west to the east and north-east

(Makarov 1997: 45–47). These phenomena logically and lawfully must be interpreted as the archaeological aspect of colonisation. By this term I mean here not the migration and settlement of the Slavs, newcomers from the metropolis, but events of a broader scale, such as the process of the newly arrived population, both Finnish and Slavic, economically opening up new territories as well as the economic integration of new lands into the medieval Russian economy.

Within the territory situated between the Lake Ladoga and the River Vyčegda basins, three major zones may be outlined in accordance with the nature of medieval archaeological sites, the specifics of their spatial structure and chronological position (Figure 1). The first zone covers the Lake Beloe and the River Šeksna basins, and partly the Lake Kubenskoe basin. Medieval sites known from this territory are open dwelling sites with well-expressed cultural deposits and dense concentration of different finds and pottery fragments. The sites differ in size, with the large ones prevailing; dwelling sites of various size form clusters comprising cemeteries as well. The majority of sites functioned for several centuries, since the 10th – 11th until the 12th – 13th centuries. Some dwelling sites are topographically related to later administrative units (*pogosty*) and to the centres of local administrative districts (*volosti*) (Makarov, Zaxarov & Bužilova 2001; Makarov & Zaxarov, 2003; Kudrjašov 2002). As for the sites disposed in the Lake Onega basin and Zaonež'e, they look principally different. These materials were classified by Spiridonov: the sites are small in size, with a very limited repertoire of finds and a short duration – from the 10th – 11th centuries. No cemeteries related to the dwelling sites have been revealed, only separate burials performed within the site's area are known. No continuity was established between these sites and historical villages of the 15th – 16th centuries, except those situated in the Čelmužskij pogost (Kočkurkina & Spiridonov 1988; Spiridonov 2001). Finally, the southern part of the Lake Onega basin, and the basins of the Vaga and Northern Dvina rivers form a separate zone, unfortunately, quite insufficiently investigated. Dwelling sites registered in this zone are difficult to identify and not very informative, which arise, first of all, from limited use of pottery in this territory during the Middle Ages. The earliest dwelling sites date from the late 10th – 11th centuries, some of them are disposed close to later *pogosty*. Evidently, the sites were small in size, but functioned for a long time. Not far from these dwelling sites, cemeteries of the 11th – 13th centuries have been revealed, and some of them were used for a long period of time (Makarov 2003). The three zones singled out do not mirror the whole variety of situations in different regions. Even so, they show some substantial features of the historic

picture in the three discussed zones, including the different patterns of settlement structure and the strategy of economic development of the territories.

In the past decade most wide-scale and fruitful studies were conducted in the region of Lake Beloe and Lake Kubenskoe and the Šeksna River (the central part of the modern Vologda region). Local archaeological sites have been investigated far more exhaustively than in many other regions of European Russia. Today this region is of special significance in understanding the mechanisms of the Slavic-Finnic interaction in the northern outlands. But before I dwell upon the Beloozero and Kubenskoe materials, I should draw attention to another and rather well-known group of antiquities originating from Novgorod but related to the Lake Onega and the Vaga and Pinega river basins. I have in mind the wooden cylinder tallies from Novgorod with the names of the northern tax districts cut on them, these finds now being well familiar both to archaeologists and specialists in linguistics.

The significance the cylinder tallies have for the comprehension of the history of Novgorod proper, especially as far as the organisation of collecting tribute by boyars in the earliest period is concerned, has been exhaustively revealed by Janin (2001). Yet the discussed artefacts are equally important for understanding colonisation processes. We should keep in mind that the inscriptions on the six cylinder tallies contain the place-names attributed to the river system of the Northern Dvina and Onega. These are: Tixmega, Emca, the Vaga estuary, the Vaga and the Pinega (Figure 2). The tallies originate from the eleventh-century cultural deposit, except one cylinder bearing the name of the Pinega, which was found in the layer of the early 12th century (Janin 2001; Makarov 2003). The finds reliably date the presence of the Novgorod tax districts in the Zavoloč'e region to the time before Prince Svjatoslav Ol'govič issued the Charter of Statutes in 1137. This document contains the list of the northern Novgorod pogosty. The inscriptions on the cylinders prove that Zavoloč'e, despite being a very distant area, was the scene of direct activity of the Novgorodian townspeople who undertook regular trips there and noted the tax districts' names in medieval Russian (Makarov 2003). Judging from the birch-bark charters, the persons active in Zavoloč'e as tribute collectors (and perhaps participants of commercial operations) had Christian and Slavic pagan personal names: Domaneg, Sem'jun (charter No. 685), Novič, Nežka (charters Nos. 721, 647, 683), Sava, Tudor (No. 724), Gleb (No. 739), see Janin & Zaliznjak (1993: 69–70) and Janin & Zaliznjak (2000: 22–25, 37). They wrote in medieval Russian and used the term *voločane* (No. 739) to identify the regional population settled behind the portage (*volok*) (Janin & Zaliznjak 2000: 37). The Zavoloč'e place-names mentioned in

the birch-bark charters and the cylinder tallies refer to rather dense groups of archaeological sites, modest in size and dating from the 11th – 13th centuries. No traces of dwelling sites of the tenth century have been discovered in these localities, whilst those of the eleventh century show the initial stage of the process of colonisation of the territories in question (Makarov 2003). Thus, even though no eleventh-century monuments of the Russian culture have been registered on the Dvina and the Vaga, we know that the Novgorodian people speaking medieval Russian had already appeared here in the earliest period of colonisation. The reason that prompted the Novgorodians to expand their tax system over these regions, however distant and difficult to access, undoubtedly was an abundance of certain sorts of valuable furs that were not available in the central regions of the Novgorod land.

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Rich archaeological materials obtained in the course of long-term field work at Lake Beloe have now been introduced into scholarly circulation and comprehended (Golubeva 1973; Golubeva & Kočkurkina 1991; Makarov 1990; Makarov, Zaxarov & Bužilova, 2001; Zaxarov, 2004). At present we have rather clear ideas both as to the general picture of the medieval settlement in the discussed territory as well as to the specific features of its culture. The wide-scale colonisation of the lands around Lake Beloe and in the Šeksna basin started in the second half of the 10th century. After a period marked by relatively sparse settlement, this colonisation resulted in the formation of a relatively dense (in northern standards) network of dwelling sites typified by a culture of mixed Slavic-Finnic appearance. Among the most spectacular features of this culture is the hand-made pottery decorated with stamped ornamentation and the wheel-made vessels of Slavic types, as well as woman's attire combining Slavic and Finnic ornaments. Most of the Finnic sites dating back to the 1st millennium AD are disposed in the south-western part of the Lake Beloe basin region, on the River Suda and in the Suda-Mologa interfluvium. In this region, cemeteries have been found with cremation burials accompanied by numerous ornaments of Finnic types and the majority of these necropolises functioned for a long period of time. For this reason, it is this territory that should be identified as the core of the Ves' tribes known from the chronicles (Makarov, Zaxarov & Bužilova, 2001: 188–198). Thus, both the regional centre of the Beloozero land – the town of Belo-

ozero, and the principal clusters of the rural settlement network, had emerged in the eastern periphery of the Ves' area, eastward from it.

Recent excavations of the group of archaeological sites situated near the Minino village provided a unique possibility for the reconstruction of the character of Slavic-Finnic interaction on Lake Kubenskoe, in the territory disposed on the border of the Beloozero and the Vologda lands. The study investigated there in 1996–2004 two medieval dwelling sites and a necropolis with over 80 burials performed according to the cremation and inhumation rites. The earliest medieval dwelling site was established here in the second half of the 10th century and later, it transformed into a local cluster of dwelling sites that functioned until the early 13th century. The significance of the Minino cluster is the unusually good state of preservation of these medieval sites, the impressive number and rich repertoire of artefacts and the possibility of comparing the materials from the dwelling sites and the cemetery when reconstructing the history of single local group. It is of importance that the different chronological groups of burials are represented in the cemetery, from the cremations of the second half of the 10th century to the inhumation burials without any funerary gifts of the early 13th century. This fact provides grounds for raising the question of the continuity and changes in development of the burial traditions and costume in one local group during the period over 250 years long.

Minino was initially established rather as a large dwelling site, its area covering around one hectare. The colonisation of the Minino micro-region was based on complex economy. This economy represented a combination of agriculture, animal-breeding and fishing with a large-scale fur trade, with its products set aside for exchange. Even though resources gradually reduced, this economic pattern for a long time enabled the stable functioning of the village, a high standard of living for the inhabitants and their involvement within the system of trade connections.

The lands around Lake Kubenskoe, where Minino is situated, together with Beloozero, entered the Rostov-Suzdal' principality, but had the status of separate territorial-administrative units, independent from Beloozero. Nonetheless, the Kubenskoe antiquities closely resemble the Beloozero ones, with the following features in common: prolonged use of hand-made pottery with stamped ornamentation together with medieval Russian wheel-made vessels; woman's attire combining ornaments of Slavic and Finnic design; ground cemeteries characterized by the burial tradition of depositing numerous grave goods practiced until the late twelfth century. Let me now consider in a more detailed way the combination of cultural components in this assemblage in the different periods.

Already, on the earliest stage of the dwelling site's existence in the second half of the 10th century, the culture of the Minino micro-region derived components related by their origin to different regions and ethnic traditions. In that period original character of this region was determined by the elements typical of the Volga Finns and Beloozero. First of all, these were the ornaments, including those manufactured using a composite technique, or their imitations. A large group of such artefacts originates from the early associations of the Minino cemetery (Figure 3), and some specimen – from the cultural deposit of the dwelling site. These consist of a wire temporal ring with a large socket (Figure 3:3) and a fragment of another ring of this type (Figure 3:5), three composite horse-headed pendants of the type XVII according to Rjabinin (two of which are intact and a fragment of third one, cf. Figure 3:4), two pendants with triangular shields shaped of volutes attached by soldering (Figure 3:1), one pendant of a half-tube shape supplied with loops, and bottle-like sub-pendants. These finds have similarities with the sites attributed to the Merya tribes.

The horse-headed pendants of type XVII are among the most spectacular ornaments of the discussed group. In the publication by Rjabinin 85 pendants of this type are registered. The author pointed out that despite our knowledge of the separate composite horse-headed pendants of type XVII from the Ladoga basin, the Upper Volga, in the Mari and Mordva cemeteries, and in the Kama basin, the majority of finds are concentrated within a limited area located in the Rostov-Suzdal' lands and near Murom (Figure 4). The horse-headed pendants mostly originate from the Vladimir barrows excavated by A.S. Uvarov, that is, from the territory settled by the Merya, and date from the second half of the 10th – the first part of the 11th centuries, while the latest finds fall within the late 11th – the early 12th centuries (Rjabinin 1981: 33–35). In the past decade, a series of new finds from the Beloozero region have been added to the collection of composite horse-headed pendants (Kroxinskie Peski, see Makarov 1990: 75, plate XXI, 1; and Nikol'skoe on the Suda river).

The presence of some north-western elements in the culture of the Minino settlers in the second part of the 10th century evidence the finds of horse-shoe-shaped brooches, numerous single-side antler combs, and the pieces of blacksmith's production performed in accordance with the traditions of North European craft, such as knives with a narrow wedge-like blade and keys with a T-shape slot from the type A padlocks. Probably, the basic type of dwelling which was registered in Minino not after the late 10th century is also of north-western

origin. This dwelling is a two-chamber log house with a partition dividing the house into a heated part and a non-heated entrance-hall.

Of interest is the burial rite performed in the earliest burials: after cremation, the ashes were deposited in round ground pits and probably the ashes were put on the surface of the ground. The field work of the past decade shows that this ritual was rather wide-spread among different ethnic groups in the late 1st millennium AD in the forest zone of Eastern Europe, though it is rarely registered archaeologically. It is also worth noting that, despite no finds of clearly Slavic types are represented in the early associations, various cultural elements (in particular, a cremation rite with few funerary gifts as well as certain shapes of hand-made pottery) correspond to the general context of medieval culture of the North-West of Eastern Europe, the bearers of this culture being identified as the Slavs.

In the early eleventh century the Minino micro-regional culture underwent essential changes. These are mirrored, first of all, by the burial rite and a woman's costume. At the turn of the 10th and the 11th centuries, the first inhumation burials were performed at the cemetery and gradually these supplanted cremations. The introduction of inhumation corresponds to the general trends in transformation of the burial rite in the territory of Medieval Rus' in the late 10th – the first half of the 11th centuries which are associated with conversion to Christianity. In the Minino micro-region the dead were deposited with their heads pointing eastwards as late as the second part of the 12th century, but in general they are similar to the inhumation burials found in the barrows and ground cemeteries from the other North Russian regions. A vivid example of the spread of the Rus' burial rituals at Lake Kubenskoe is the child burial accompanied by a glazed clay egg. This custom is well documented in the burials of children in Southern Rus' and in the neighbouring Beloozero region (Makarov & Zajceva 2003).

In the early 11th century a new set of woman's ornaments was formed and this set was quite different from that of the preceding period. Their apparel was made of such basic elements as temporal rings, brooches, necklaces of beads with attached pendants, and finger-rings (Figure 5:1, Figure 6). The general composition of this set of ornaments survived till the early 13th century, though it underwent transformations in the course of time and new elements (various types of ornaments) were introduced in certain chronological periods. The women's inhumations of the early group (the second-third quarters of the 11th century) contain similar sets of ornaments (Figure 6). This attire includes such characteristic elements as two to five bracelet-like temporal rings (Figures 6:9,

6:17) necklaces of glass beads, neck-rings of interwoven bronze wires (Figure 6:8), necklace pendants, horse-shoe-shape broches (Figure 6:1), and bracelets and finger-rings. This apparel is related by its provenance to the central regions of the Novgorod land and to the Upper Volga regions which are included in Medieval Rus'. Judging from the 11th-century hoards known from North-Western Rus', silver horse-shoe-shaped brooches and neck-rings were important components of aristocratic costume in the discussed period. Thus the Minino attire of the 11th century imitated to a certain extent the dress decorations worn by medieval Russian nobility, though these decorations were made of less expensive material.

New trends in the cultural development of the Minino area emerged in the late 11th – early 12th centuries. Several associations of ornaments are attested to this period; besides temporal rings and necklaces, these ornaments include jingling pendants that are attached to the side of the waistband by a special lace, sometimes they are adorned with metal spiral beads threaded on them (Figure 5:2, Figure 7). Here head ornaments are those with threaded beads instead of the bracelet-like temporal rings with finger-ring-like temporal rings. These ornaments were spread throughout Medieval Rus'. The described structure of costume also dominated in the second part of the 12th – the early 13th centuries. The set of ornaments comprised at that time massive waistband pendants (Figure 5:2, Figure 7:1, 7:2) whilst neck-rings and horse-shoe-shaped brooches fell out of use, which substantially changed the general structure of the apparel. Due to the zoomorphic ornaments and pendants, the apparel acquired a more smart and rich appearance, while at the same time, the costume was marked with specific 'regional' features, clearly different from the costume typical of the metropolis.

Zoomorphic pendants are among the most characteristic elements of costume indicating cultural specifics of the peripheral northern groups of medieval Russian population. For the whole period of excavations the sites included into the Minino cluster produced zoomorphic pendants, now their collection totals 30 items that display practically the entire repertoire of medieval Russian zoomorphic plastic of the 10th – 13th centuries. The majority of zoomorphic ornaments originate from the cultural deposits and burial associations dating from the 12th – early 13th centuries (Figures 7:1, 7:2). Nineteen zoomorphic pendants fall within this interval, six items were recovered from the associations of the last quarter of the 11th – the first part of the 12th centuries.

In the Minino collection of zoomorphic ornaments dating from the 12th – early 13th centuries those of widely spread types prevail; their area covered the

South-East of the Ladoga basin, the Beloozero region, the Volga basin near Kostroma and the River Vaga basin. The most numerous group of artefacts of similar shape includes openwork cock-pendants of the Vladimir type (type IV) discovered in three burials. Geographically they are mainly known from the Rostov-Suzdal' land, and it is worth mentioning that they were popular both in the largest urban centres, such as in Suzdal', Rostov and Vladimir, and in the outlands, including the Beloozero land (the sites Nikol'skoe XVIII on the Suda and Vojlaxta). Bird-shape pendants of the type discussed on Lake Kubenskoe should be regarded as the evidence for close cultural connections maintained by the region with the centre of the Rostov-Suzdal' land resumed in the 12th century.

Zoomorphic pendants form only one category of ornaments among the decorative elements of woman's costume of the 12th – early 13th centuries. Ornaments of general medieval Russian types: temporal rings, coin-like pendants and lunulae, wire, relief and shield finger-rings dominated in the apparel. Wire temporal rings, mainly of finger-ring-like type are one of the most numerous categories of ornaments met with in the cultural deposit of the dwelling site Minino I. They mostly were recovered from the horizon of the 12th – early 13th centuries.

Personal objects of Christian ritual include pendant crosses, pendant icons, and pendants bearing the image of cross (Figure 8) and this is an another important class of finds referring to the Minino settlers cultural identity. The finds of this class originate both from dwelling sites and the necropolis. The collection comprises thirty pendant crosses, four pendants with the image of a cross, and three pendant icons. Cultural deposit of the dwelling site Minino I has yielded the majority of these crosses. It should be noted that coeval burial assemblages have produced a far more limited series of the discussed finds. The earliest crosses were discovered in the cultural layer of the 11th century. These finds include three crosses of what is called the 'Scandinavian type', and the cross with rounded arms' ends. So the bulk of personal Christian objects date back to the 12th – the early 13th centuries.

The Minino cluster of sites collapsed in the early 13th century, roughly at the same time that many other sites of the Beloozero region were marked with similar culture. At that time, the settlement system in the region around Lake Beloe and many other territories of Northern Rus' underwent substantial transformations: large-size dwelling sites arranged in dense clusters were supplanted by a network of small villages formed of several households each, covering spacious territories (Makarov & Zaxarov 2003). During that period, the Slavic-Finnic culture came to an end. The latest burials at the Minino cemetery are in-

humations and the dead are deposited with their heads pointing west without any ornaments and utensils.

Thus, the excavations at Minino micro-region have revealed a compound that represents cultural diversity at all stages of its development. The specific character of the Minino antiquities of the second part of the 10th century points to the Volga Finns as the founders of the village, probably, with participation of the newcomers from the North-West, related to the Slavic or the Finnic background. The Minino local culture in the second part of the 12th – early 13th centuries should be regarded as a regional variant of medieval Russian culture typical of the Šeksna and the Lake Beloe basins, which synthesised medieval Russian and Finnic traditions, the latter term used in broad meaning. Should we explain the cultural transformations observed in the Minino micro-region as a consequence of the general changes of fashion, traditions and directions of trade and economic relations or as a result of the physical mixing of different ethnic groups settling the North? Our materials provide evidence that for two hundred fifty years, the Minino cluster of dwelling sites had no total population shift. The continuity which was reflected in the general pattern of spatial structure, house-building tradition, pottery associations, protracted functioning of one necropolis, as well, and some features of their burial rite hardly can be explained if we do not acknowledge that the descendants of the first colonists formed the core of the Minino community for a long time. Nonetheless, it seems quite likely that the cultural changes registered on different stages in the history of the Minino dwelling sites were determined not only by changes in the direction of commercial relations and general cultural traditions, but also by the inflow of a new population, most probably, from the Upper Volga territories and the Lake Beloe region. The newcomers did not form separate groups, but integrated into the existing community.

New knowledge of the cultural traditions of various regions and clusters of sites of the North, with their specific features revealed by archaeology, open a new perspective for the interpretation of written sources, which contain information about the Nordic regions of Eastern Europe in the 10th – 13th centuries. The Primary Chronicle and, in particular, the ethno-geographic introduction to it with the list of the peoples, is one of the basic sources with which we can reconstruct the ethnic map of Eastern Europe at the turn of the 1st and the 2nd millennia AD,

produce magnetic influence on a reader and a historian. However, one should keep in mind that names of ethnic groups are rather rarely mentioned in the Chronicle when describing the events of the 11th – 13th centuries (Lukin 2003), especially in Nordic regions of Eastern Europe, the zone of Slavic-Finnic interaction. The annalist shows little interest in ‘ethnic’ aspects of any particular community, except for the descriptions of some military conflicts and the narration on the journey of the warrior Gjurjata Rogovič to the Extreme North; noteworthy, in this text, the ethnic names ‘the Pečora’ and ‘the Jugra’ are used more to indicate geographic regions. The chronicler’s attention is turned to the territorial groups of population shown as the main collective characters during the events of the 11th – 13th centuries (including those that occurred in the North): the Kievans, the Novgorodians, the Černigovians, the Rostovians, the Suzdalians and the Ladogians. This observation with some corrections may be applied to the birch-bark charters. For the first time, the collective name of the people living in Zavoloč’e (*voločane*) is reported by charter No. 739 dating from 1120–1150 (Janin & Zaliznjak 2000: 37). The above-mentioned cylinder tallies with inscribed names of northern tax districts point out that the territorial division into administrative units known as *volosti* was a basic factor in the organization of the northern population as early as the 11th century. The most complete list of the regional population groups of the North (only some of them ethnic) is included into ‘The Life of St. Stephan of Perm’, compiled around 1398 (Žitie Svjatogo Stefana 1897: 87). Supposedly, the lack of interest indicated by written sources to the ethnic attribution of medieval communities mirrors some substantial features in medieval conscience, which for a long time perceived regional identity as the most significant.

The inhabitants of the north-eastern side of Lake Kubenskoe where the Minino archaeological complex is disposed appear in written sources in the end of the 15th century under the name ‘Sjamlians’ (Akty socialno-èkonomičeskoj istorii II: 207–209), that is, the people living in the volost’ Sjama. During the 11th – 12th centuries the bearers of the specific regional culture probably formed in the 11th century on Lake Beloe and the River Šeksna (and, as we know today, partly spread over the Kubenskoe lands). These people identified themselves foremost as the Belozेरians (*Belozercy*) that were first time mentioned in the chronicle written in the year 1071 (Polnoe sobranie russkix letopisej I: 175–178) – that is a quarter of a century earlier than the Suzdalians and the Rostovians are mentioned. The Beloozero identity did not exclude, naturally, self-identification within the smaller territorial groups.

The Slavic-Finnic culture, as revealed by archaeology, existed on the lakes Beloe and Kubenskoe for two centuries and a half. This culture represents an extremely spectacular phenomenon, because it appeared not only due to the contacts between the Slavs and the Finnic tribes, but also as a result of a specific historic situation formed in the North at that time. The specific conditions of the development of the economic pattern based on exchange and trade and the accumulation of considerable material resources in the northern outlands of Medieval Rus' all led to important consequences. On the one hand, the peripheral communities maintained and conserved their strong connections with the metropolis, the more so that the cultural progress achieved in the centre was of special importance; on the other hand, the same conditions resulted in working out specific forms of the regional representative culture, clearly manifested, in particular, in the woman's ceremonial apparel and burial rite of the Minino micro-region (Markarov 2005: 223–236). It seems that the discussed groups considered to be important first, to stress their self-identification with medieval Russian civilisation and involvement in the general network of cultural and commercial exchange; second, the northern villagers had aspirations to mark their consolidation and difference from the other regional groups, demonstrating high material potentials and the full social value of the outlands' settlers. In this situation, a different repertoire of visual means aimed at manifesting social prestige, and welfare was used in different periods. The changes in tastes and priorities exhibited in the ceremonial woman's attire at the turn of the 11th and the 12th centuries consisted in return of a number of Finnic decorations, which evidenced a consolidation of new regional population groups that were aware of their specific position among the other ethnic and territorial units. It is highly probable that some of these groups formed in the eleventh and twelfth centuries in the Beloe and Kubenskoe lake regions and the other lands belonged to the bilingual Slavic-Finnic population.

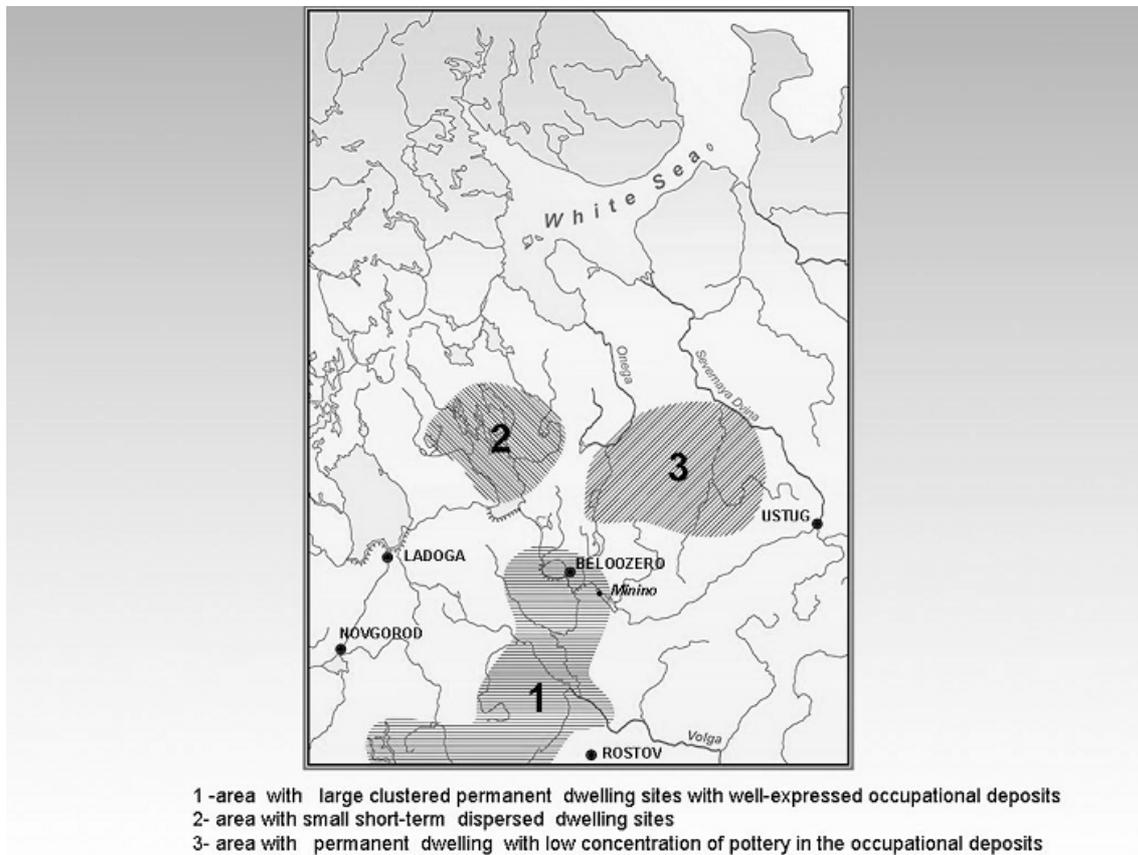
The early – mid 13th century was marked by essential cultural changes: the old dwelling sites were abandoned or decreased in size and the settlement system underwent transformation; at the same time the cemetery used since the tenth and eleventh centuries fell into neglect and the woman's apparel with metal ornaments – pendants and temporal rings fell out of use. Evidently, starting from this period, burials were performed in the graveyards near the parish churches. The partial levelling of cultural differences between the North and the Centre certainly mirrors substantial shifts in self-consciousness, however not to

the degree of the full neglect of regional identities that survived in the North long afterwards.

References

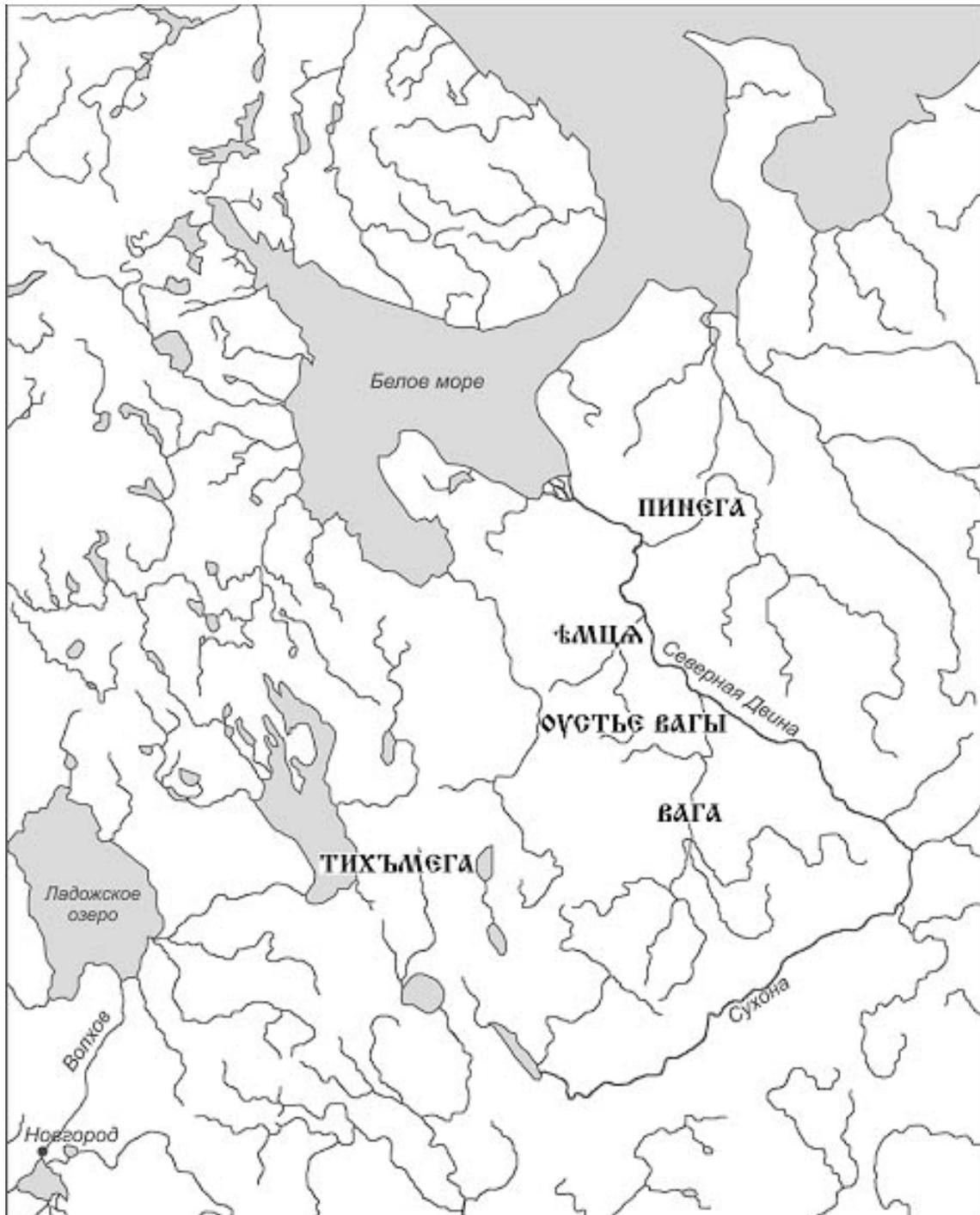
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Figure 1

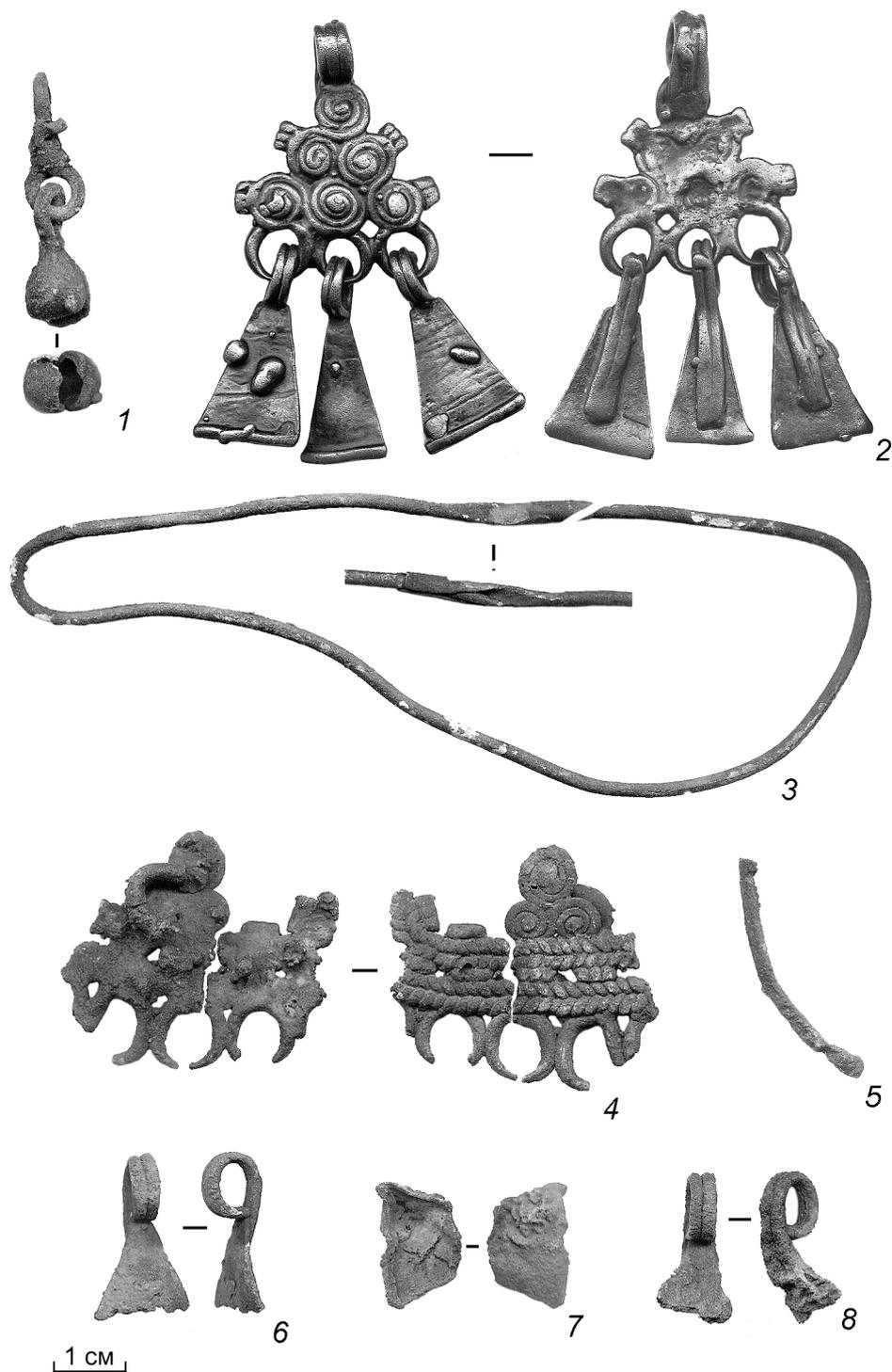
Northern Rus' with the 3 major zones outlined in accordance with the nature of Viking-age and medieval archaeological sites.

Figure 2



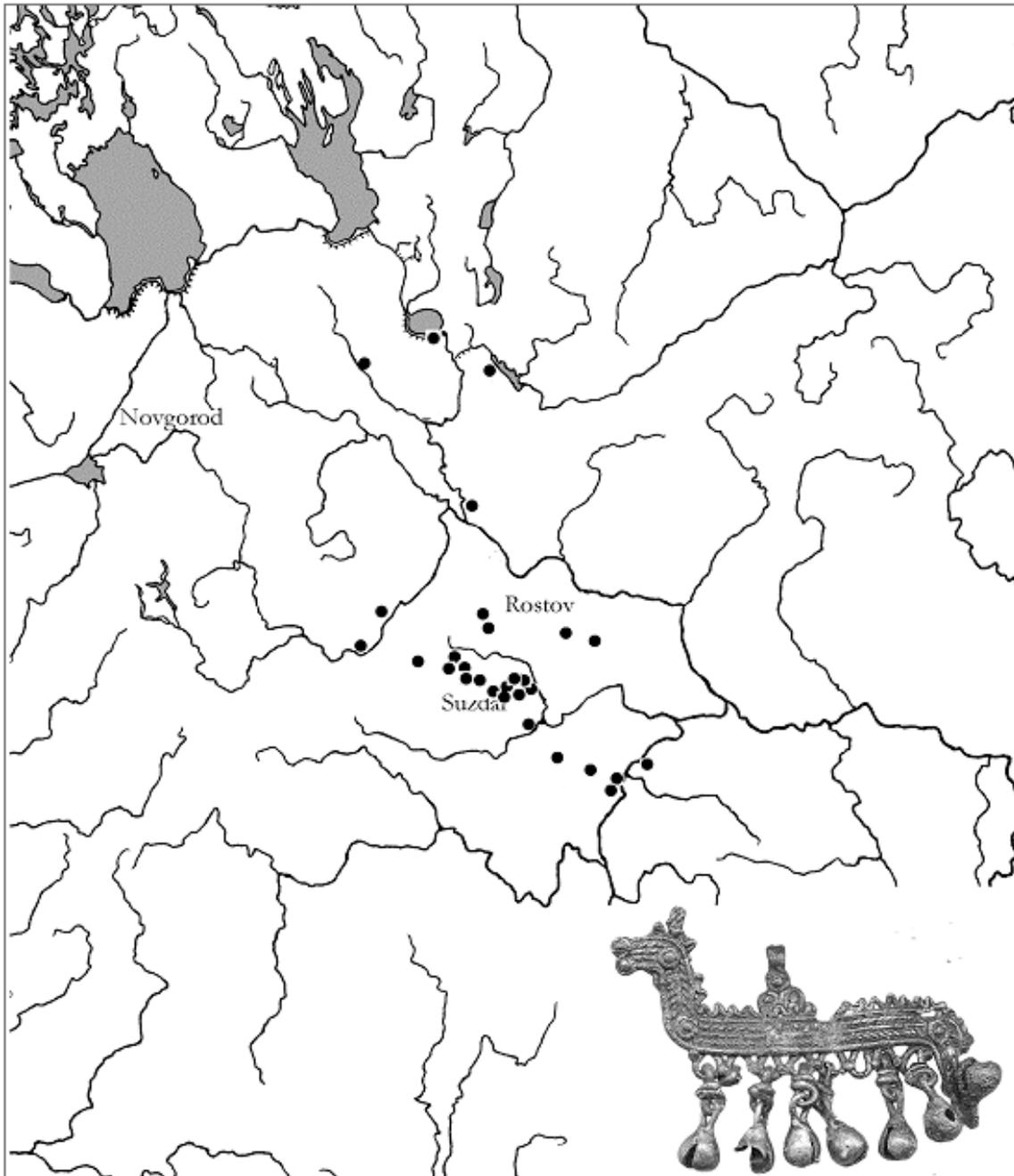
Tax districts in the Northern Dvina and Onega river basins, their names cut on the wooden cylinder tallies of the 11th – the early 12th centuries from Novgorod.

Figure 3



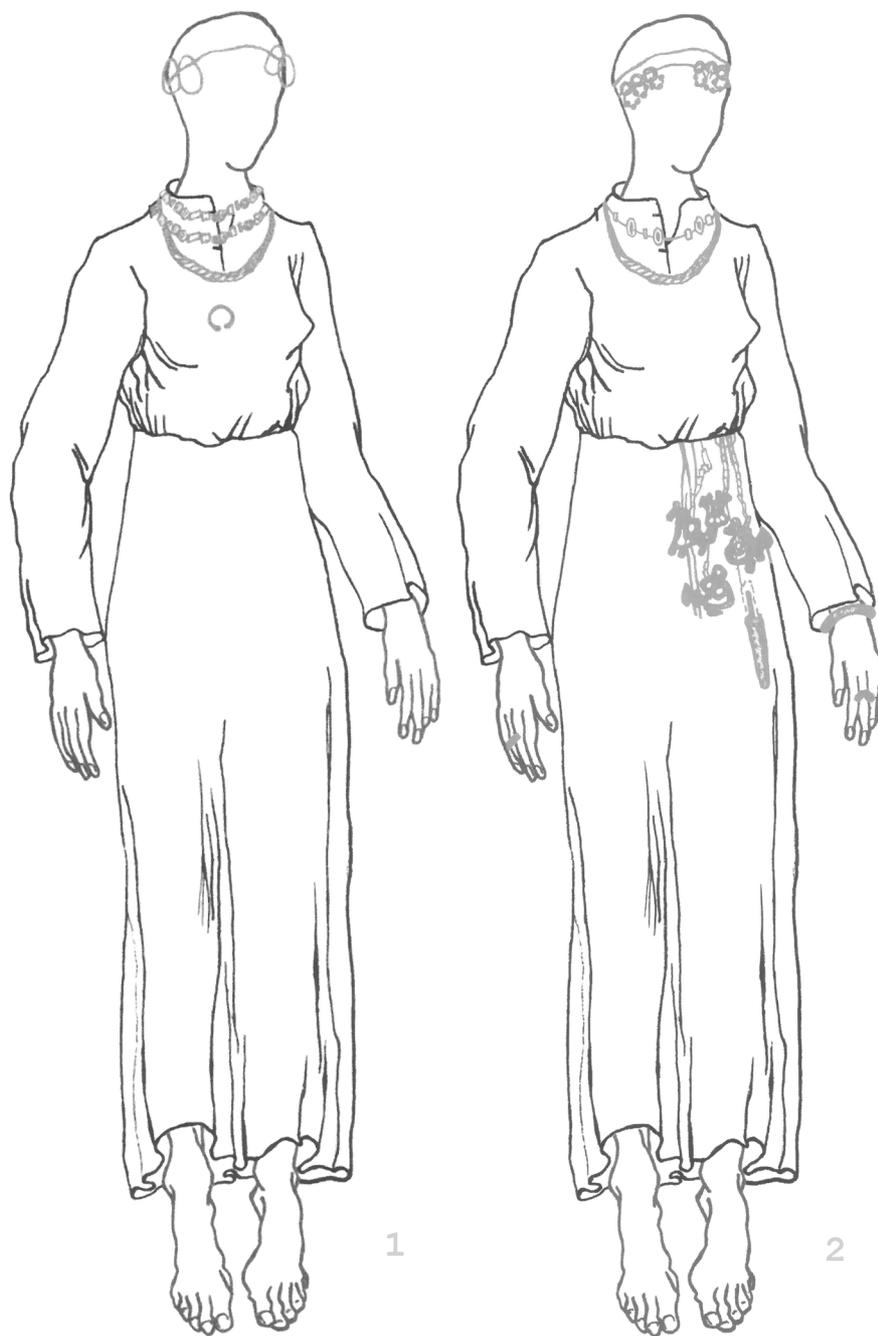
Metal ornaments from the cremation graves of the second half of the 10th century from Minino 2 burial site.

Figure 4



Finds of horse-headed pendants of type XVII after Rjabinin in Eastern Europe.

Figure 5

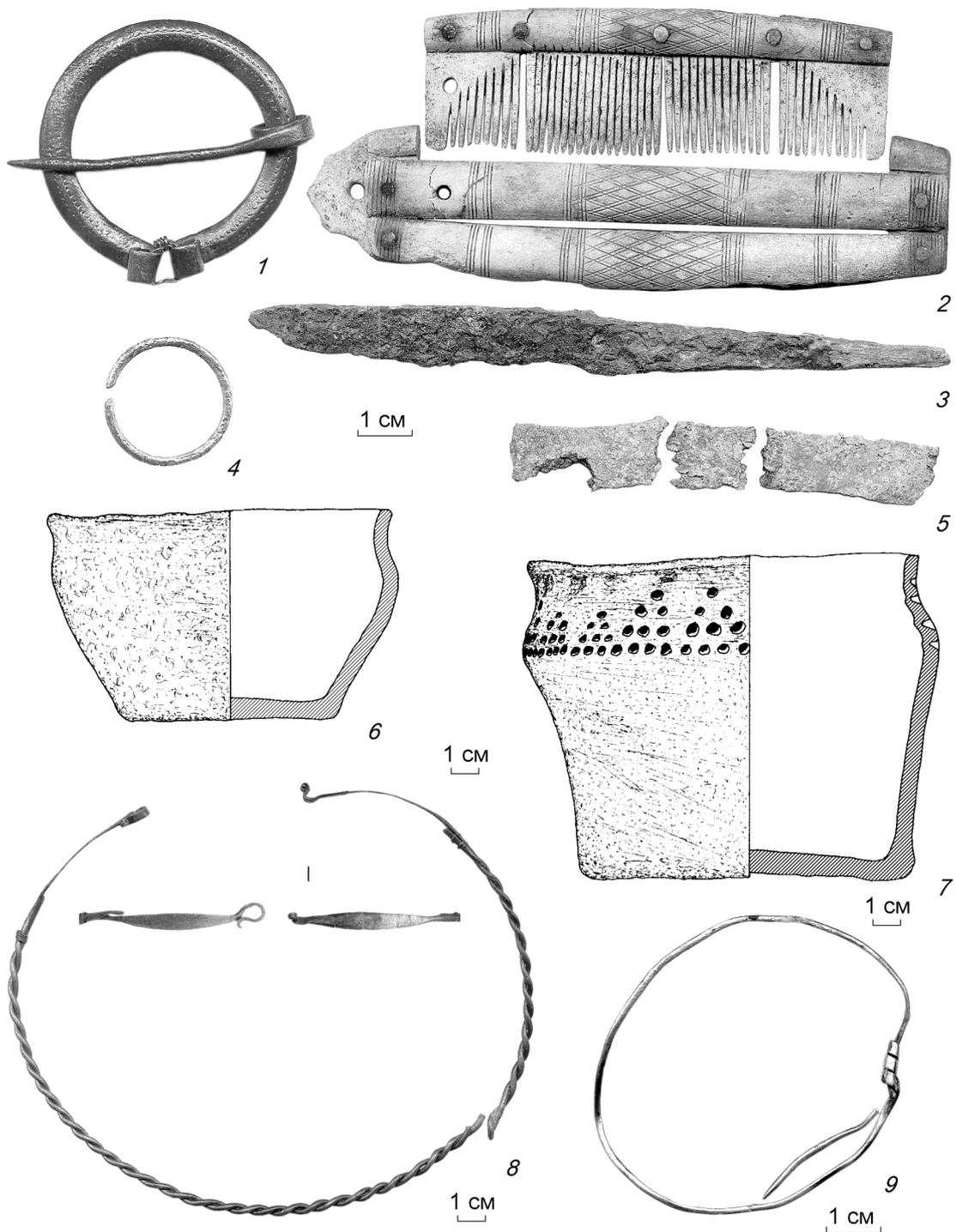


Sets of metal costume ornaments from Minino 2 burial site.

1: 11th century

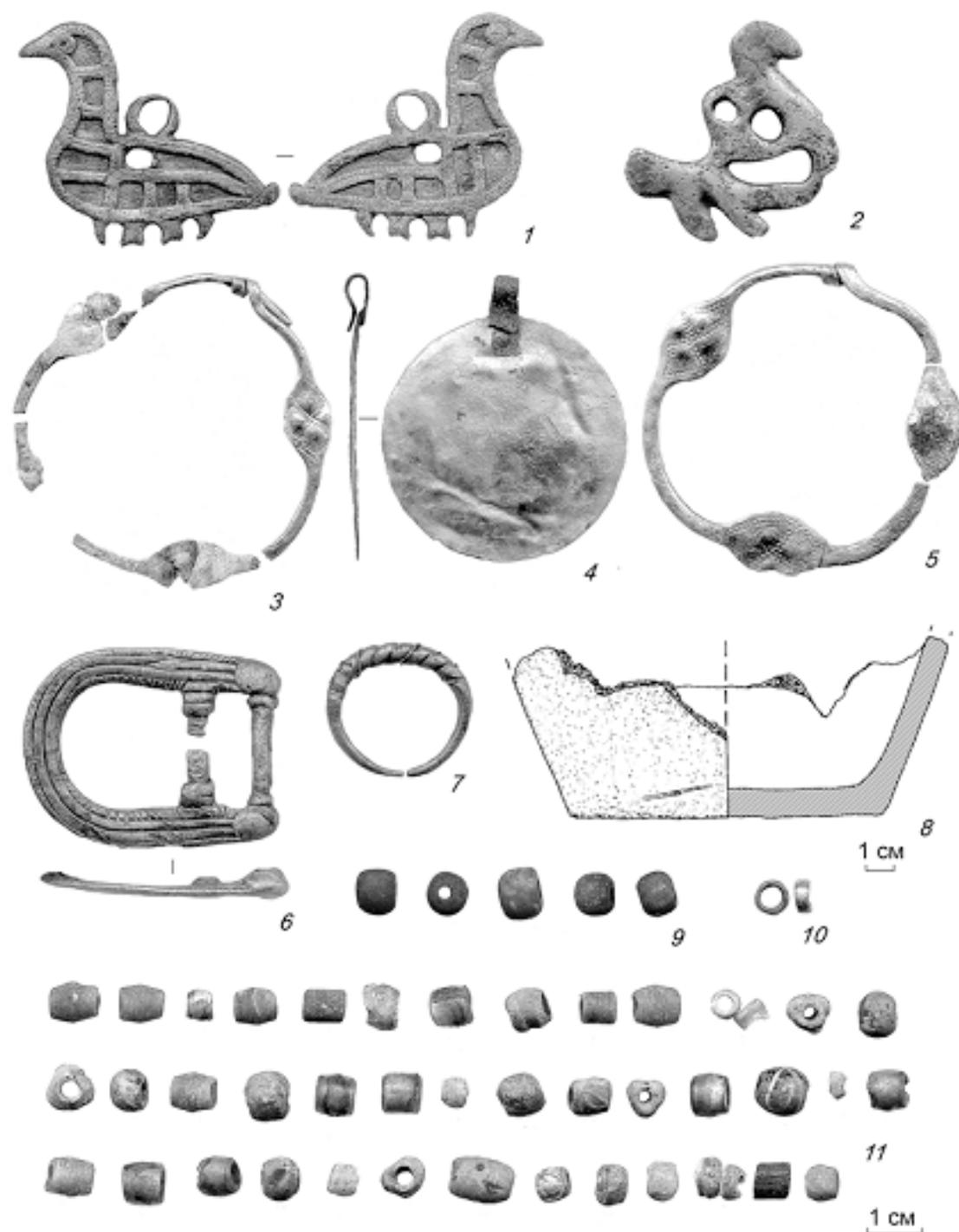
2: Early 12th century

Figure 6



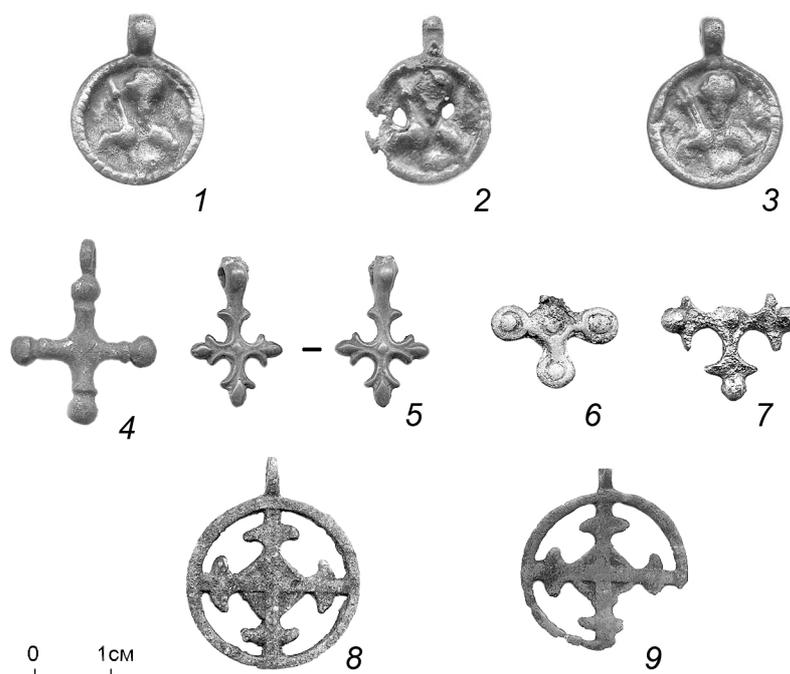
Set of ornaments and grave goods from grave 17 in Minino 2 burial site; second quarter of the 11th century. 1, 4, 8–13, 15–18: non-ferrous metal; 2, 5: bone; 3: iron; 6,7: clay; 14, 19: glass

Figure 7



Set of ornaments and grave goods from grave 1 in Minino 2 burial site; first half of the 12th century. 1–7, 10: non-ferrous metal; 8: clay; 9: amber; 11: glass

Figure 8



Personal objects of Christian ritual: pendant crosses, pendant icons, and pendants bearing the image of cross. Minino 2 burial site; 12th – the early 13th century.