

THE QUESTION OF THE HETEROGENEOUS POPULATION OF THE UPPER OKA AND THE UPPER DESNA REGION IN THE MIDDLE AGES

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Abstract

Among the barrows attributed to the local Slavic population in the area of the left bank of the Upper Oka and right bank of the Upper Desna are barrows where the burial rites differ from the local inhabitants'. Different types of burials, a man's burial with weapon and a horse, a horse's burial, a horse's burial with a man's or animal's cremation, a man's burial with weapons, a man's burial with a bird's burial, a man's burial under a rectangular stone barrow, were typical burial customs of Baltic and Finno-Ugric inhabitants in the 11th to 13th centuries AD.

Key words: barrow, burial item, Slavonic, Baltic, Finno-Ugric, Oka, Desna, medieval.

A lot of barrows are known in the enormous area of the left bank of the Upper Oka and the right bank of the Upper Desna basin in the Kaluga and Smolensk regions. They were erected by the local Slavic population at the end of the first or the beginning of the second millennium AD. They may be divided into three groups by the ethnic signs.

The first group. Vyatichi barrows are situated in the central and eastern parts of the region.

The second group. Krivichi barrows are located in the Desna and Ugra (a left tributary of the Oka) basin.

The third group. Vyatichi and Krivichi barrows are both situated in the Bolva river basin (a left tributary of the Desna).

The barrows date from the 11th to the 13th centuries AD. The earliest Slavic burial rite was cremation with urns, bronze and glass ornaments in a mound dated to the ninth or tenth centuries AD. (Yermolino) (Массалитина 1992: 3–6). The rite of cremation stopped in the 11th century. At first, the rite of inhumation of a single corpse under a barrow appeared; and at the end of the 11th century it was laid in a pit grave. These burials contained rich implements, such as pottery, bronze and silver ornaments, and iron tools (Prudki) (Прошкин 1986: 67).

Many archaeologists have investigated barrow cemeteries in this area, eg V. Sedov, T. Nikolskaya and others (Седов 1973: 10–16; Никольская 1981: 97–119).

From the 14th century, barrows are not typical of the region. The inhabitants buried their dead in cemeteries in the Christian rite. At the end of the 19th century, the archaeologists N. Bulychov and D. Chetyrkin explored

several barrows in which the burials were committed in a rite not typical of the inhabitants either of the ninth to 11th centuries, or of the 14th and 15th centuries (Fig. 1). Two barrow cemeteries with such interments are situated in the Bolva basin.

1. Trashkovichi (Fig. 1). The barrow cemetery is located 300 metres northeast of the village, on the right bank of the Snopot' river (a right tributary of the Bolva). It contained 17 round mounds (Fig. 2, 1). The author researched the cemetery in 1987 and fixed the traces of the excavations which Bulytchov did on the method of "a well". At the end of the 19th century, the barrows were situated in two groups along both sides of the road. The first group (13 mounds) are in a forest. The barrows have been preserved up to the present. The second group (four mounds) were situated in a field and have not been well kept. The barrows' height was 0.6 to 1.9 metres, the diameter from six to nine metres. In 15 barrows there were burials containing inhumations, which were supplied with rich funeral gifts, including rings, buckles, amulets, beads, pottery and other objects from the 11th and 12th centuries (Булычов 1899). According to the ornaments and the burial rite, local Slavic inhabitants called "Krivichi" in written sources made these barrows.

Two barrows (1 and 12) differed from the others very much. In barrow 1 a burial of a dead person with a horse was discovered. It was found at a depth of about 105 centimetres from the mound's edge. The horse lay on the right side, pointing north. The individual was placed extended on its back beside the horse. Its hand bones were stretched along its skeleton. It was pointing east. An iron spearhead and axe were laid near the right hand of the skeleton. A clay urn was at its feet

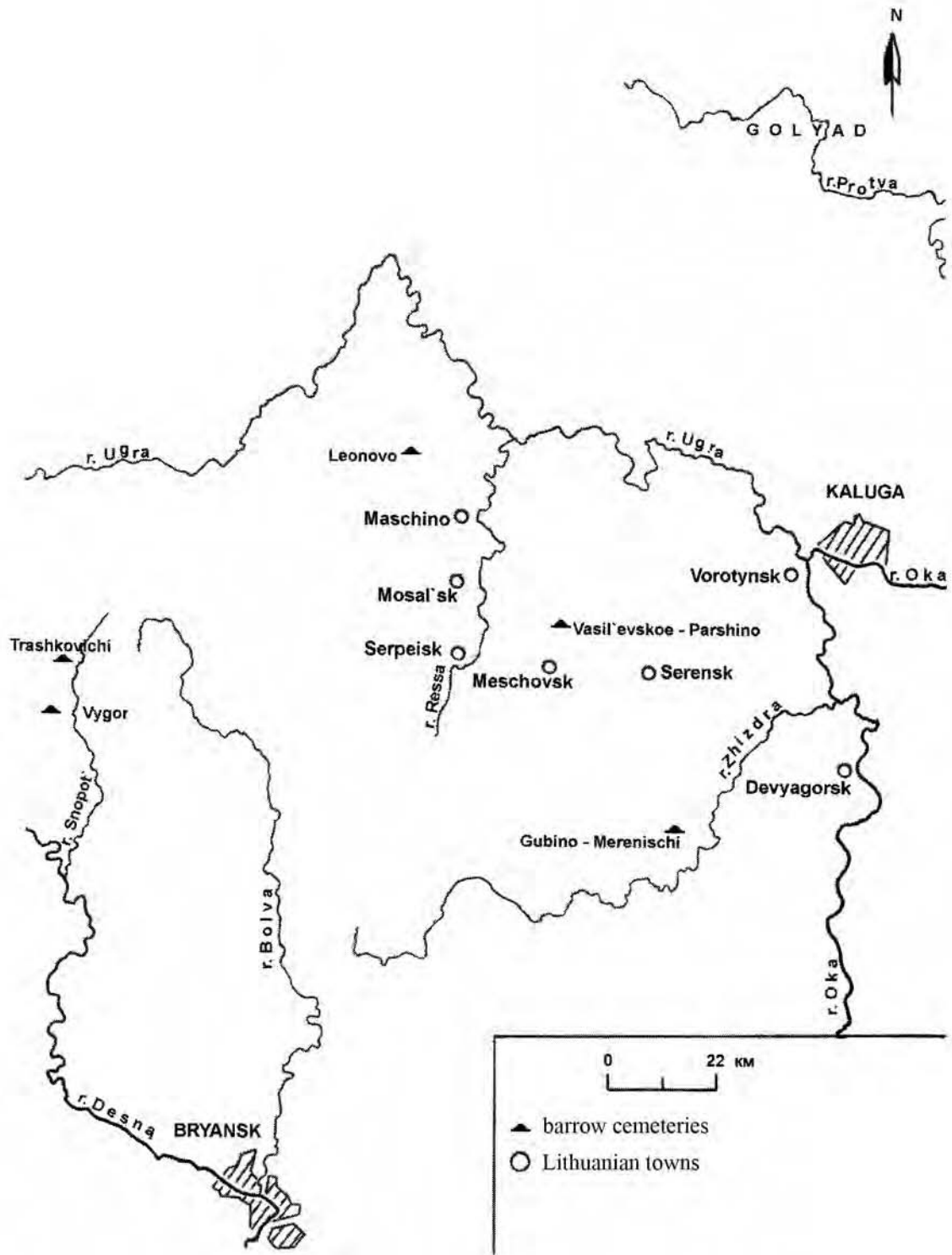


Fig. 1. Map of barrow cemeteries (Drawing by O. Proshkin)

(Булычов 1899: 58) (Fig. 2, 3). Bulychov does not describe these items and does not draw them. But some artefacts from this barrow cemetery are preserved at the State Historical Museum in Moscow. The spear-head and axe from barrow 1 form part of the museum's collection (SHM, No 25778) (Fig. 4, 1). Kirpichnikov distinguishes similar spearheads in the third type (data from the ninth to the beginning of the 11th centuries) (Кирпичников 1966: 13–14). But such spearheads

were found in burials of the seventh to eighth centuries (Kochkino), and in deposits of the 15th and 16th centuries (Novgorod) (АКР 1994: 44; Медведев 1959: 130). The axe has two pairs of side trunnions, a shaft-hole, a small flanged butt and a cutting edge (Fig. 4, 4 from the SHM's collection; 5 drawing by Kirpichnikov). Kirpichnikov groups similar axes in the fourth type (ninth to 12th centuries) (Археология СССР 1985: 310). He dates the axe from barrow 1 at Trashkovichi

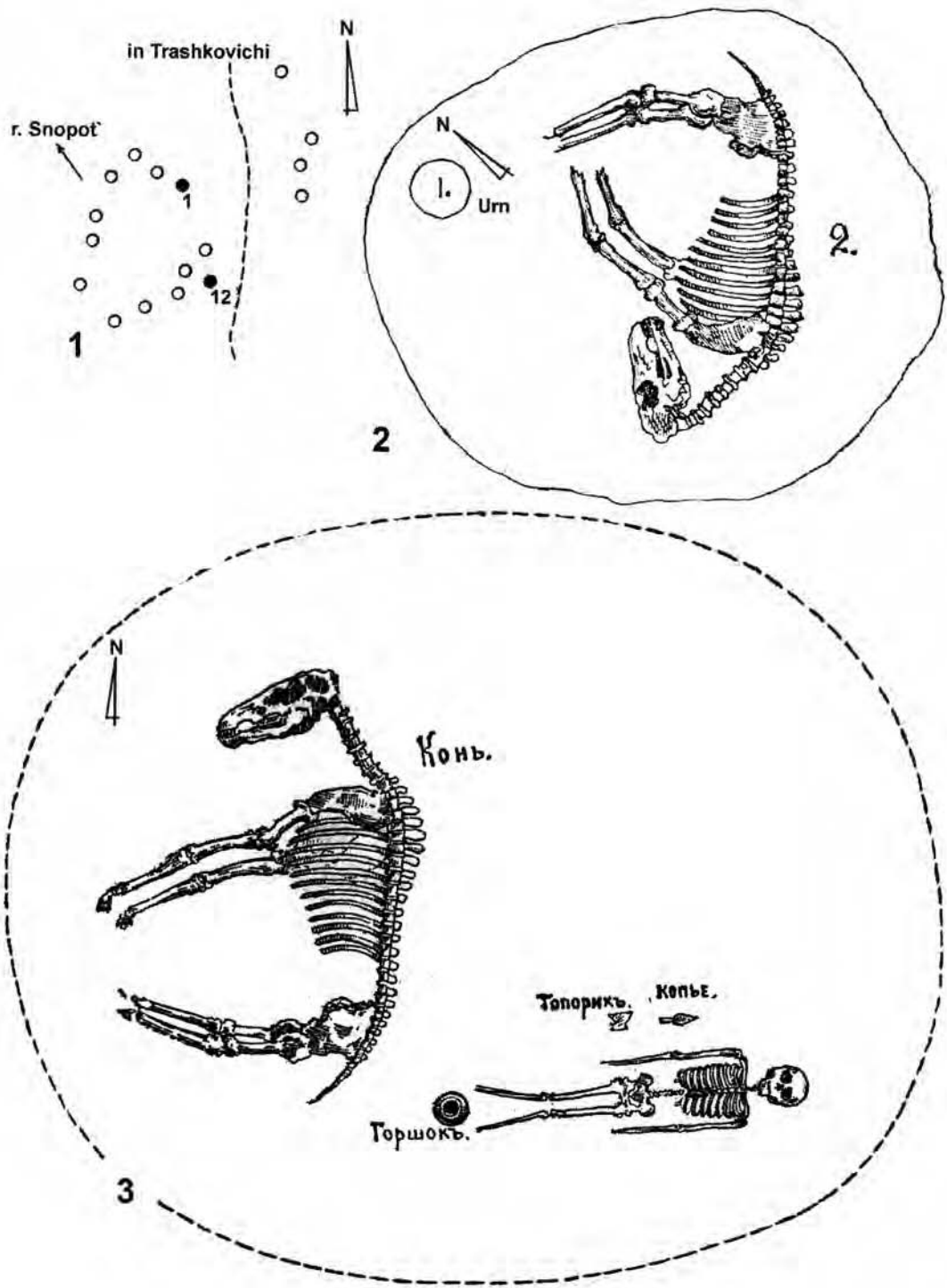


Fig. 2. Vygor' and Trashkovichi burials (Drawing by N. Bulychov)

to the 11th century (Кирпичников 1966: 118–119). But such axes were found in later burials (Археология СССР 1987: 141). Paulsen considers that similar axes were made in Russia and in the eastern Baltic (Paulsen 1956: 38–39).

In barrow 12 a man's skeleton was placed in a supine position on the land surface under the mound. Its hand bones were stretched along its trunk. It was pointing east. An iron knife and axe were laid near its left hand,

“there was a ring in the right ear” (earring) (Бульчов 1899: 60). The axe is preserved in the State History Museum. It has a narrow cutting edge, a butt, and trunnions (Fig. 4, 2 the SHM's collection, 3 drawing by Kirpichnikov). This axe is close to the third type of battleaxes, but it has some distinguishing features (Кирпичников 1966: 35–36). Kirpichnikov dates the axe to the 11th century (Кирпичников 1966: 112–113).

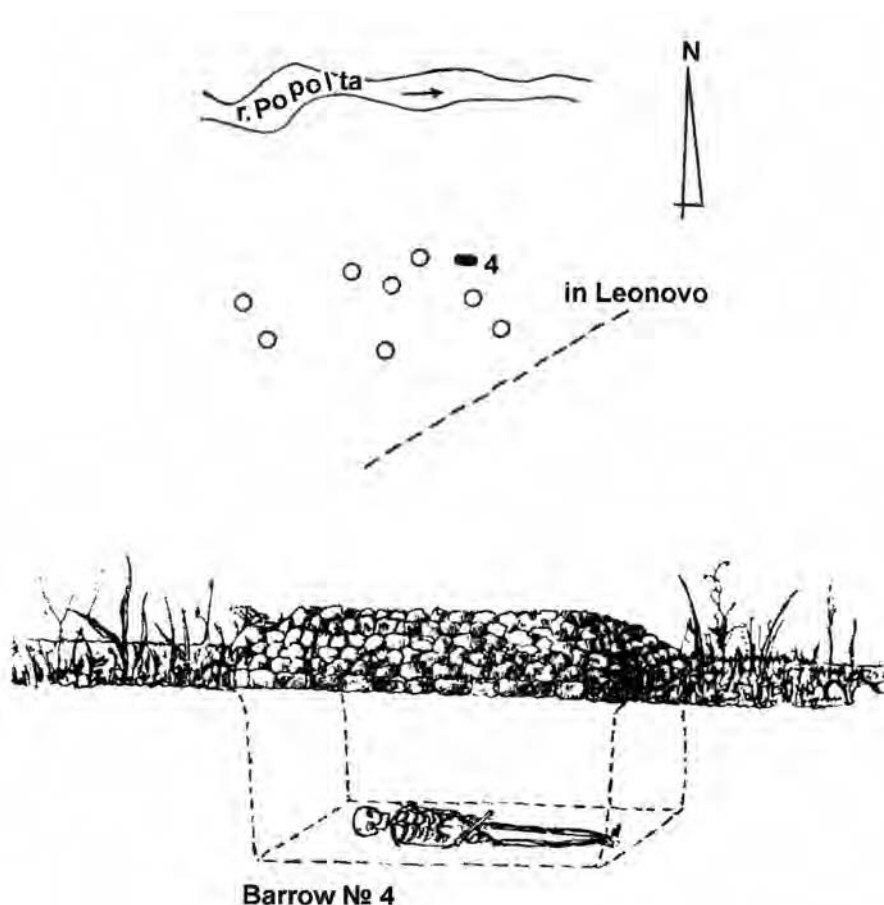


Fig. 3. Leonovo: the burial in barrow 4
(Drawing by N. Bulychov)

2. Vygor' (Fig. 1). The barrow cemetery was situated between the villages of Vygor' and Prochody, and consisted of two barrows which Bulychov excavated. Their condition is unknown today. One of the barrows contained the burial of a horse in the centre of the mound. The horse lay on its right side with the head to the southwest. A clay urn with burned bones was found to the northwest of the horse at the edge of the mound (Булычов 1899: 63) (Fig. 2, 2).

One burial was situated in the Ugra basin.

3. Leonovo (Fig. 1). The barrow cemetery was located on the outskirts of the village, on the right bank of the Popolta (a left tributary of the Ugra). It comprised nine barrows, eight of them round, with diameters of six to 20 metres, and one rectangular, measuring 2.1 by 2.8 metres, with a height of 0.7 metres, and built of stone (Fig. 3).

In four barrows, burials according to a rite of inhumation were discovered. They were accompanied by burial items from the 11th and 12th centuries. The ornaments and the burial rite indicate that these barrows were built by local Slavic inhabitants, called "vyatichi" in written sources, and also by inhabitants of southern and northern Russia (Булычов 1899). The rectangular barrow was situated at the edge of the cemetery, and was orientated from east to west. The corpse was laid

under the mound in a pit grave (the depth was 1.4m). He was placed in a supine position, his head was pointing east, his hands were laid on his belly (Fig. 3) (Булычов 1899: 2).

Another three barrows with unusual burials are known in the Zhyzdra river basin, a left tributary of the Oka.

4. Vasil'yevskoe-Parshino (Fig. 1). The cemetery incorporated 11 round barrows, with diameters from eight to 17 metres. Bulychov excavated five of them. Their condition is unknown today. They are not dated. A man's interment was discovered in barrow 3, laid in a pit grave, and there were no implements in the burial.

In barrow 9 a horse's skeleton was found, at a depth of 1.4 to 1.5 metres from the edge of the mound. Its head was pointing south. The horse's inhumation is not described. But it is known that there were coals underneath the skeleton (Булычов 1899: 38).

5. Gubino-Merenistchy (Fig. 1). The cemetery was situated between the villages, near the village of Volkonskoe, in the wasteground of Dubrovka. It consisted of 20 round barrows. I. Chetyrkin excavated five of them. Their condition is unknown today. Some pieces of pottery which have not survived were discovered in one of the barrows. The barrows are not dated.

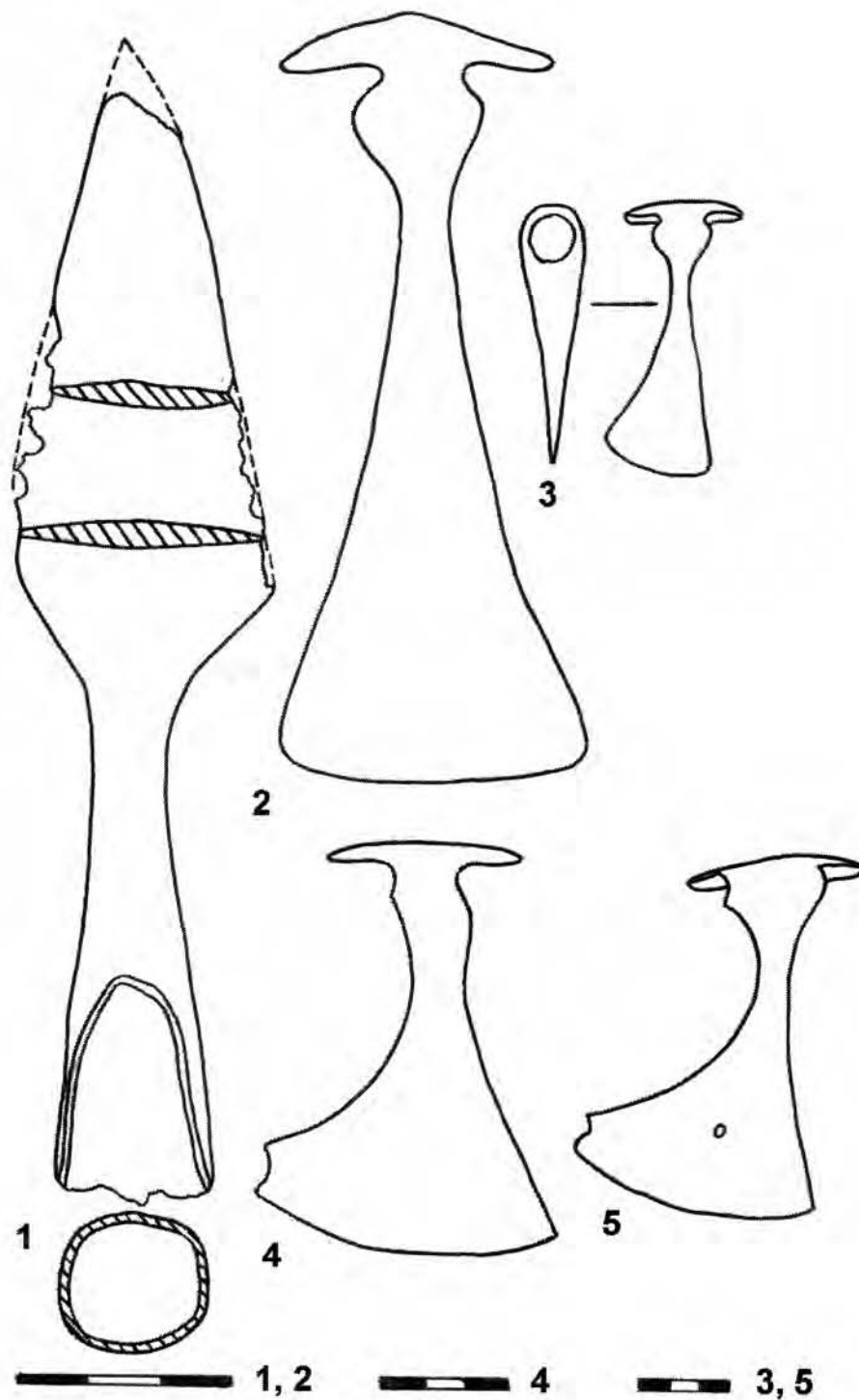


Fig. 4. Grave items from Trashkovichi: 1 spearhead (drawing by O. Proshkin); 2, 3 axe (2 from the State Historical Museum, drawing by O. Proshkin; 3 drawing by A. Kirpichnikov); 4, 5 axe (4 from the State Historical Museum, drawing by O. Proshkin; 5 (Drawing by A. Kirpichnikov)

In barrow 1 (the height is 1.8m, the diameter 15m) a horse's skeleton was discovered at a depth of about 0.5 to 0.6 metres from the edge. The burial is not described. There was a pile of ash underneath the skeleton (Четыркин 1899: 12). In barrow 2 (the height is 2.1m) "birds' bones" were laid in the centre under the mound of the barrow. There was a man's skeleton with the head pointing west in a pit grave, under the "birds bones" (Четыркин 1899: 12).

Thus six types of burial are known: 1) a man's burial with a weapon and a horse; 2) a horse's burial; 3) a

horse's burial with a man's or an animal's cremation; 4) a man's burial with weapon; 5) a man's burial with a bird's burial; 6) a man's burial under a rectangular stone barrow.

The burial rite of these barrows differs very much from the local inhabitants' rite of the Middle Ages. There are no analogies with the rite of the neighbouring areas, either. Written sources describing events in the 11th and 12th centuries in the Upper Oka basin area mention the "Golyad" tribe. Golyad' is mentioned for the first time in 1056, when Prince Izyaslav fought

this tribe (ПСРЛ 1962: 151). It was mentioned again in 1147, when Prince Svyatoslav waged war on Smolensk (ПСРЛ 1962: 339). This shows that the Golyad' tribe lived in the Protva basin (Oka left tributary) (Fig. 1). Many different points of view are expressed about the ethnic origin of this tribe. Many scholars consider that the Golyad' are Balts (Седов 1982: 44; Кушнер 1991: 56; and others). But archaeological materials of the Balts are not found on the River Protva in the 11th and 12th centuries.

We probably have to appeal to written sources of the 14th and 15th centuries. In the second half of the 14th century, the Lithuanian Grand Duke Algirdas fought the enormous Smolensk lands and the greater part of the Upper Oka area. At the end of the 14th century, the border dividing Lithuania and Muscovy ran along the Ugra and Oka rivers. In the "List of Towns" of the end of the 14th century, the next Lithuanian towns situated in the Upper Oka area are named: Berezuesk, Lyubutsk, Mtsensk, Moshchin, Vorotynsk, Serensk, Devyagorsk, Meshchovsk, Obolensk, Serpeysk, Tarusa (Тихомиров 1952: 224) (Fig. 1). The first inhabitants to come from the Eastern Baltic region probably migrated to the Oka area before 1341, before Algirdas' campaign to Mozhaysk. In 1449, the greater part of the Upper Oka was named as old Lithuanian possessions (ДДГ 1950: 160–161). Only in 1503 did Moscow win the Upper Oka and Desna area back.

The Lithuanians and other inhabitants of the Eastern Baltic region left certain traces, such as the burial rite typical of them. Many scholars have noticed these facts (Кулаков 1987: 23–24; and others).

Men's burials with horses, weapons and sacrificial birds were typical of Baltic and Finno-Ugric peoples. Horses' burials were typical of nomads of the European and Asian steppes for a long time. On Old Russian territory, horses' burials or burials with horses are known in the interments of fighters, and also where Slavic peoples bordered closely Baltic and Finno-Ugric ones (Голубева 1981: 87).

But it is impossible to regard the burials with horses in the barrows of the Upper Oka and Upper Desna region as fighters' burials. They were not supplied with rich harnesses, belt-buckles or ornaments. Steppe nomads' burials with horses are different too (Зяблин 1955; and others).

The burial rite with horses here has many analogies with ones in northeast Europe, where it persisted up to the late Middle Ages. A striking example of it is the cremation of the Lithuanian Grand Duke Algirdas with his horses in 1377. This rite is very ancient, and connected with the worship of these animals. Its roots

probably derived from the Stone Age. Vaitkunskienė divides men's burials in Lithuania since the middle of the first millennium AD into three groups. The second category of burials were usually supplied with a spear and an axe, the third were supplied with a horse (Вайткунскене 1987: 57). In most cases, such burials in Lithuania are dated from the end of the first millennium AD to the 13th and 14th centuries (Куликаускаене 1953). A horses' burial rite with the remains of a cremation was marked in many Lithuanian cemeteries, where it persisted up to the 15th century (Урбанавичюс 1985: 161; 1988: 401; and others). Many researchers have noted the existence of horses' burials from the middle of the first millennium AD and especially at the beginning of the second millennium AD on southeast Baltic territory as an ordinary phenomenon (Кушнер 1991: 39; and others). In east Lithuanian barrows, the greatest number of horses' burials were made separately from men's. In barrows one horse pointing south, east or west was interred. Such burials appeared in the middle of the first millennium AD, and spread widely at the turn of the second millennium AD (Таугавичус 1959: 37). Men's burials with weapons, clay vessels and burials with sacrificial birds are known in Lithuania up to the 16th century (Урбанавичюс 1979: 439; 1985: 162; and others).

The rectangular stone barrow at Leonovo has analogies in the Upper Nemunas area. There, similar funeral constructions are dated, according to the Polish and Lithuanian coins discovered in them, to the 13th to 16th centuries (Седов 1982: 122).

Therefore, the burials in the Upper Oka and the Upper Desna area may be connected hypothetically with the population of the Eastern Baltic (Lithuanians, Yotvingians and others), and dated to the 11th to 15th centuries. But the local inhabitants could have built some of them.

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DEĖL KITŲ ETNINIŲ GRUPIŲ GYVENTOJŲ OKOS IR DESNOS AUKŠTUPIUOSE VIDURAMŽIAIS

OLEGAS PROŠKINAS

Santrauka

Okos aukštupio kairiajame ir Desnos aukštupio dešiniajame krante, t. y. dabartinėse Kalugos ir Smolensko srityse, žinoma daug pilkapynų. Tai I tūkstantmečio

pabaigoje – II tūkstantmečio pradžioje vietinių slavų palikti paminklai. Pagal radinius juos galima skirstyti į 3 grupes: 1-oji grupė – viatičių pilkapiai, aptinkami centrinėje ir rytinėje šio regiono dalyse. 2-oji grupė – krivičių pilkapiai, jie koncentruojasi Desnos ir Ugros (kairysis Okos intakas) baseinuose. 3-oji grupė – viatičių ir krivičių pilkapiai. Jie aptinkami drauge ir išsidėstę Bolvos upės (kairysis Desnos intakas) baseine. Pilkapynai datuojami IX–XIII a. Ankstyviausi IX–X a. pilkapiai yra slavų su degintiniais kapais ir inventoriuimi: urnomis, žalvariniais bei stikliniais dirbiniais. Nuo XI a. mirusiųjų kremacija nutrūksta. Paplinta inhumacija. Iš pradžių mirusiuosius laidodavo ant pirminio žemės paviršiaus, vėliau – į duobę po pilkapio sampilų. Kapuose daug dirbinių: puodų, žalvarinių ir sidabrinų papuošalų, geležinių buities rakandų (pvz., Prūdki).

Nuo XIV a. pilkapiai šioje teritorijoje jau nebūdingi. Atsiranda plokštinių krikščioniškų kapinynų.

Tarp minėtų pilkapių aptikta tokių, kuriuose laidosena nebūdinga vietiniams gyventojams nei IX–XIII, nei XIV–XV amžiais ar dar vėliau. Du tokie pilkapynai yra Bolvos baseine. Tai Traškovičiai. Jame 17 pilkapių, išsidėčiusių dviem grupėmis (1:1 pav., 2:1 pav.). Iki dabar išliko 13 pilkapių grupė, buvusi miške. Kiti pilkapiai, XIX a. pabaigoje buvę ariamame lauke, sunaikinti. Sampilai 0,6–1,9 m aukščio ir 6–9 m skersmens. 15-oje pilkapių aptikta griautinių kapų, kuriuose buvo XI–XII a. radinių. Tai vietinių gyventojų – krivičių – pilkapiai.

Pilkapiuose Nr. 1 ir Nr. 12 aptikti mirusieji laidoti galvomis į rytus. Įkapes sudarė ietigaliai, kirviai, peilis ir puodeliai (4:1 pav.; 2, 4 pav.). Pilkapyje Nr. 1 šalia vyro buvo palaidotas ir žirgas. Abu kapai datuojami XI a.

Vigor pilkapyje buvo 2 pilkapiai, kuriuos XIX a. pabaigoje ištyrė N. Buličiovas (1:2 pav.). Vieno pilkapio centre aptikti žirgo griaučiai, atkreipti galva į pietvakarių. Sampilo pakraštyje rastas molinis indas su sudegintais kaulais (2:2 pav.).

Leoniovo pilkapyje buvo 9 pilkapiai (1:3 pav.). 8 iš jų apskriti – nuo 6 iki 20 m skersmens, devintas – stačiakampio formos, – 2,1 x 2,8 m ir 0,7 m aukščio – buvo sukrautas iš akmenų. 4-iose pilkapiuose buvo rasta griautinių kapų ir XI–XII a. dirbinių. Tai viatičių ir galbūt šiaurės bei pietų Rusios gyventojų kapai. Stačiakampio formos pilkapyje buvo griautinis kapas, orientuotas galva į vakarus (3 pav.).

Dar 3 pilkapiai su neįprasta laidosena buvo žinomi Žizdros upės baseine.

Vasilevskoje–Paršino (1:4 pav.) pilkapyje yra 11 apskritos formos 8–17 m skersmens pilkapių. 5 iš jų tyrinėti N. Buličiovo. 9-ajame pilkapyje rasti žirgo griaučiai orientuoti galva į pietus. Po griaučiais buvo angliu.

Gubino–Mereniščių (1:5 pav.) pilkapyną sudarė 20-ties pilkapių grupė. 5 iš jų tyrinėjo I. Četirkinas. Viename iš jų aptikta keramikos šukė. Chronologija neaiški. Pilkapyje Nr. 1 buvo žirgo griaučiai. Paukščio kaulų rasta pilkapyje Nr. 2, o po jais, pilkapio centre, duobėje, buvo griautinis vyro kapas, orientuotas galva į vakarus.

Visų išvardytų laidosenos pavyzdžių analogijų aplinkui nėra. Rašytiniai šaltiniai, kuriuose aprašomi XI–XII amžių įvykiai, šiose teritorijose mini galindus ir nurodo konkrečią jų gyvenamąją teritoriją – Protvos upės baseiną (1 pav.). Vėlesni, XIV–XV a., rašytiniai šaltiniai mini Lietuvos didįjį kunigaikštį Algirdą užkariavus Smolensko žemes ir didžiąją dalį Okos aukštupio. XIV a. antroje pusėje siena tarp Lietuvos ir Maskvosėjo Ugros ir Protvos upėmis, XIV a. pabaigos „Miestų sąrašė“ taip pat minima daug lietuvių miestų (1 pav.). Išeiviai iš Rytų Pabaltijo turėjo palikti čia savo pėdsakų. Mirusiųjų kapai su žirgais, ginklais, taip pat su paukščiais būdingi baltams ir finougrams.

Taigi analizuoti svetimi slavams laidojimo papročiai Okos ir Desnos aukštupių regione turi analogijų su laidojimo tradicijomis Rytų Pabaltijyje ir palikti išėivių bei galbūt išlikusių vietinių galindų ir datuoti XI–XV a.

Vertė Vytautas Kazakevičius