

LITHUANIAN INSTITUTE OF HISTORY

# FROM PAGANISM TO CHRISTIANITY

**BURIAL RITES DURING THE TRANSITION PERIOD**

**Edited by Rytis Jonaitis, Irma Kaplūnaitė**

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# Between Paganism and Christianity: The Rite of Partial Cremation in the South of Old Rus'

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*The article is devoted to the rite of partial (incomplete) cremation and its existence in the south of the Old Rus' state at the end of the first and the beginning of the second millennium AD. The most complete and reliable sample of burials with partial cremation is presented, and the peculiarities of the funeral rite are analysed. A typological analysis of inventory items found in burials is carried out, on the basis of which the chronological framework of the rite is established. Special attention is paid to the problem of religious attribution of burials. The given characteristic is complemented by materials from similar burials from adjacent territories, first of all from the Sozh River basin, where, probably, the highest number of them is observed. The obtained results significantly supplement the available information about the process of Christianisation of the Old Rus' lands after the introduction of Christianity as the official religion in 988, which is poorly covered by written sources. In particular, taking into account these data, the question of the existence of a restriction on cremation of the dead by the Church and the princely governance is raised again.*

**Key words:** Kyivan Rus', funeral rite, partial cremation, cemeteries, position of hands, Christianisation.

## Introduction

The determination of religious attribution for certain groups of burials is one of the most complicated and urgent tasks in studies of the funeral rite in Eastern Europe at the turn of the first and second millennia AD. One way or another, Old Rus' Christian burials preserved an obvious pagan 'veil' as late

as the Mongol invasion. This 'veil' was manifested by the presence of barrow mounds, specific burial structures, accompanying inventory items, and other things. The disappearance of the 'veil' was quite a slow process spreading from the main administrative centres down to the periphery.

Similar changes can also be observed in the ways the bodies of the deceased were treated. In this regard, a specific and little-known group of burial sites is of great interest. Unlike typical burials carried out by cremation rite on the place (to which they are commonly attributed), such complexes include skeletons, charred (sometimes split) under high temperatures, however anatomically integral. Describing individual burials of this type, most archaeologists use the term 'incomplete' or 'partial' cremation. The first researchers already regarded such complexes as an evolutionary link between cremation and inhumation on a funeral pyre extinguished earlier;<sup>1</sup> to this day, this view is generally accepted. Y.M. Sytyy explained a gradual shift in burial practices by influence of Christianity,<sup>2</sup> and O.P. Motsia by simplification of the rite occurring due to economic difficulties.<sup>3</sup> The latter identified four cemeteries where partial cremation was found in the middle Sub-Dnipro (Richytsia, Kyiv, Kozarovychi, Hlynsk).<sup>4</sup> I.P. Rusanova<sup>5</sup> – and later V.V. Sedov<sup>6</sup> – reported similar cases in the Drevlians settlement area. However, these are only brief remarks on the evaluation of the rite of partial cremation in the southern territory of the Old Rus' state found in specialised literature, since until now this rite has not been considered a special phenomenon.

### The spread of partial cremation burials in the south of the Old Rus' state

We have collected information on 34 reliable complexes with partial cremation located in 12 cemeteries in the south of the Old Rus' state (Fig. 1). The only complexes described in detail have been taken into account.

Among the two and a half hundred of mounds uncovered by K.M. Melnyk in the Volyn area in 1897–1898, seven were recorded as having 'not a complete cremation like those found in the mounds of other tribes, e.g. the Severians, but more likely the superficial burning of the dead'.<sup>7</sup> Two of them were studied in the cemetery Lyshe-1 near Lutsk, in the middle River Styr area. A partially burnt coffin with a slightly charred and split skeleton was found under the large funeral pyre in mound No 2. The burial in mound No 3 was structured similarly, however, the corpse was cremated completely.<sup>8</sup> Five burials carried out by rite of partial cremation were found by K.M. Melnyk on the River Stubla in the middle Horyn River area, in the vicinity of the chronicle Peresopnytsia (Starozhukiv – 2, No 5; Biliv, Nos 11, 14; Peresopnytsia, Nos 17, 22). The remains of coffins were recorded, some of them looked like strips of charcoal or iron nails along charred skeletons.<sup>9</sup> In 1958, I.K. Sveshnikov found a similar burial in mound No 4 near Zbuzh village downstream of the Horyn River.<sup>10</sup>

- 1 Y. Yarotsky, *Kratkiy otchet o raskopkakh kurganov Rechitskogo mogilnika*, *Trudy Obshchestva issledovateley Volyni I*, 1902, p. 103.
- 2 Y. Sityy, *Mogily khristian Chernigova X veka (k postanovke problemy)*, *Khrystianizatsiyni vplyvy v Kyivs'kiy Rusi za chasiv knyazya Oskolda: 1150 rokiv. Materialy mizhnarodnoyi naukovoï konferentsiyi, 19–20 lystopada 2010 r.*, ed. P. Tolochko, Chernihiv; Lutsk, 2011, p. 106.
- 3 A. Motsya, *Naseleniye Srednego Podneprov'ya IX–XIII vv. (po dannym pogrebal'nykh pamyatnikov)*, Kiev, 1987, p. 13.
- 4 A. Motsya, *Naseleniye...*, p. 13.
- 5 I. Rusanova, *Arkheologicheskiye pamyatniki vtoroy poloviny I tysyacheletiya n. e. na territorii drevlyan*, *Sovetskaya arkheologiya* 4, 1958, p. 37.
- 6 V. Sedov, *Vostochnyye slavyane v VI–XIII vv.*, Moskva, 1982, p. 104.
- 7 Y. Mel'nik, *Raskopki v zemle luchan*, *Trudy XI Arkheologicheskogo sezda 1*, 1901, pp. 502–503.
- 8 Y. Mel'nik, *Raskopki...*, p. 558.
- 9 Y. Mel'nik, *Raskopki...*, p. 520, 26, 27, 38, 39.
- 10 I. Sveshnikov, *Otchet o rabote Rovenskoy arkheologicheskoy ekspeditsii Lvovskogo Gosudarstvennogo Istoricheskogo Muzeya v 1958 g.*, *Naukovyy arkhiv IA NANU*, f. 64, 1958/27, pp. 12–14.



**Fig. 1.** Burials with partial cremation in the territory of South Rus':

- 1 – Lyshche; 2 – Starozhukiv; 3 – Biliv; 4 – Peresopnytsia; 5 – Zbuzh;  
 6 – Pidhirtsi; 7 – Horishni Sherivtsi; 8 – Richytsia; 9 – Hrubskе;  
 10 – Kozarovychi; 11 – Hlynsk; 12 – Gochevo. Map by D. Bibikov.

In 1946, in the Poruby tract near Pidhirtsi village (upstream of the Zakhidnyi Buh River), a burial was excavated containing charred bones, nails, and charcoal. The author of the excavation – I.D. Starchuk – called it ‘partially cremated’ and referred it to the Volyn mounds mentioned above.<sup>11</sup> In the same way, the researcher attributed four burials unearthed at this place in 1949, though this time, only ‘separate small human bones’, ‘thin layers of charcoal’, and ‘charred iron nails’ were found.<sup>12</sup> This interpretation causes reasonable doubts among modern archaeologists.<sup>13</sup>

The burial with partial cremation in a log structure found in the Bukovyna area, in the interfluvium of the Prut and Dniester, is known due to excavations by B.A. Tymoshchuk (Horishni Sherivtsi, No 2). Three iron nails may also indicate the presence of a portable coffin.<sup>14</sup>

In 1901, Y.V. Yarotskyi discovered charred skeletons in coffins in two burials (mounds Nos 10, 22) near the village of Richytsia on the Ovruch ridge (Zhytomyr area). The coffin from the third mound, under No 2, was also affected by fire, the skeleton,

11 I. Starchuk, *Shyrshyy zvit z Plisnes'koyi arkeologichnoyi ekspeditsiyi za 1947–1948 rr.*, Naukovy arkhiv IA NANU, f. 64, 1948/20, 51; I. Starchuk, *Rozkopky horodyshcha Plisnes'ka v 1947–1948 rr.*, *Arkheologichni pam'yatky URSR III*, 1952, p. 394.

12 I. Starchuk, *Rozkopky na horodyshchi Plisnes'ko v 1949 r.*, *Arkheologichni pam'yatky URSR V*, 1955, p. 34.

13 A. Filypchuk, H. Filypchuk, *Arkheolohiya kurhannoho mohyl'nyka davn'oho Plisnes'ka (doslidzhennya 1940, 1946, 1949, 1980, 2007, 2015–2017, 2020 rr.)*, L'viv, 2021, p. 14.

14 B. Timoshchuk, *Davn'orus'ka Bukovyna (X – persha polovyna XIV st.)*, Kyiv, 1982, pp. 63–64.

however, was almost unaffected: only the left elbow bone was charred, which can hardly be explained by deliberate actions.<sup>15</sup> The mound No 27 excavated by V.B. Antonovych in the Hrubskye tract, upstream of the River Zdvizh, contained a charred skeleton and nails among an accumulation of charcoal.<sup>16</sup> In another two mounds in the same cemetery (Nos 32, 54) the bones survived as charred fragments that might indicate their complete cremation.<sup>17</sup>

The only case of partial cremation in the ground grave is recorded in the village of Kozarovychi at the confluence of the Irpin River into the Dni-pro River<sup>18</sup>.

On the left bank of the River Dnipro, the traces of partial cremation were found by D.Ya. Samokvasov in burial mound nNo II near the village of Hlynsk on the River Sula.<sup>19</sup> In the Gochevo cemetery in the upstream of the Psel River, out of 287 barrows he excavated in 1909, 19 contained 'graves with charred skeletons' (Nos CCLX–CCLXXVIII).<sup>20</sup>

Certain cremation burials excavated earlier (in the 1870s) can be attributed to partial cremations only theoretically. The burial mound found near the village of Semeniv in the vicinity of chronicle Terebovlia in Ternopil area contained 'traces of fire with shards, bones, and nails' (possibly cremation in a coffin).<sup>21</sup> One of the barrows near the village of Kamianopil in the Lviv area contained burnt bones, which at the same time were placed in an anatomical

order.<sup>22</sup> Still stronger doubts are caused by the statement of A.F. Rohovych about finding 'pots with post-mortem ashes and survived semi-charred human bones' on the territory of the Kyiv necropolis II.<sup>23</sup> It hardly means the remains of partial cremation: examples of their placement in burial urns are not known to us. Moreover, in his more detailed notes, V.B. Antonovych mentions only one white-clay pottery vessel with a wavy pattern, which was placed in the burial with its bottom up and contained burnt human bones.<sup>24</sup>

Burials with partial cremation are typical mostly of peripheral areas of the Old Rus' state. Almost all the cemeteries where such burials might be found can be associated with specific settlements, which will be discussed in more detail below.

### General characteristics of burials

Unfortunately, most of the burials with partial cremation were studied in the late 19th and early 20th centuries when the excavation process was seldom supported with graphic capturing. However, sufficient detailed descriptions of the complexes have been preserved, which makes it possible to characterise their main features of ritual practices. The most important information about the burials considered is given below in the table (Table 1).

15 Yarotsky, *Kratkiy otchet...*, pp. 102–103.

16 V. Antonovich, *Raskopki v strane drevlyan*, Sankt-Peterburg, 1893, p. 41.

17 V. Antonovich, *Raskopki...*, pp. 42–43.

18 L. Stepanenko, N. Blazhevich, *Poselennya ta mohyl'nyk XI XIII st. poblyzu s. Kozarovychi na Dnipri, Doslidzhennya z slov'yano-rus'koyi arkeolohiyi*, ed. V. Dovzhenok, Kyiv, 1976, pp. 155–156.

19 D. Samokvasov, *Mogily Russkoy zemli*, opisaniye arkeologicheskikh raskopok i sobraniya drevnostey professora D.Ya. Samokvasova, Moskva, 1908, p. 219.

20 D. Samokvasov, *Dnevnik raskopok v okrestnostyakh s. Gochevo Oboyanskogo uyezda Kurskoy gubernii, proizvedennykh v avguste 1909 g.*, Moskva, 1915, pp. 36–39.

21 B. Janusz, *Zabytki predystoryczne Galicyi Wschodniej*, Lwów, 1918, pp. 247–249.

22 B. Janusz, *Z prazdiejów ziemi Lwowskiej*, Lwów, 1913, pp. 166–167.

23 M. Karger, *Drevniy Kiev*, T. 1, Moskva; Leningrad, 1958, p. 164.

24 V. Antonovich, *Arkeologicheskiye nakhodki i raskopki v Kieve i v Kievskoy gubernii v techeniye 1876 g., Chteniya v Istoricheskoy obshchestve Nestora-letopistsy 1*, 1879, p. 252; V. Antonovich, *O drevnem kladbishche u Iordanskoy tserkvi v Kieve (o rezul'tatakh raskopok, proizvedennykh v severnom uglu goroda Kieva, Trudy IV Arkeologicheskogo sezda v Kazani I, Kazan'*, 1884, p. 43.



**Table 1.** Main information on burials with partial cremation in the territory of South Rus'

Name of the cemetery, mound number	Funeral pyre: location relative to the horizon, dimensions, and thickness	Burial structure: type and dimensions	Skeleton: position relative to the pyre, condition of bones	Body orientation	Position of hands	Burial inventory
Lysche-1, No 2	on the horizon, 3×? m, thickness 0,45 m	coffin 2,15×0,58 m	under funeral pyre, charred, split	←	right – on the waist, left – along the body	silver large-granulated bead, carnelian bead, gilded bead, bronze wire ring, 2 silver wire temple rings
Lyshche-1, No 3	on the horizon, thickness 0,4 m	coffin (?)	under funeral pyre (?), charred, split	←	?	–
Starozhykiv-2, No 5	on the horizon, >3,5×3 m, thickness 0,1 m,	thick log structure + coffin (?)	on funeral pyre, charred, split (mostly on top)	←	along the body	iron object (axe-?), flint, pot
Biliv, No 11	on the horizon, 4×4 m	coffin	under funeral pyre, burnt, split (burnt through in the center)	←	on the waist	–
Biliv, No 14	on the horizon, 2,4×1,2 m	coffin	on funeral pyre, charred (mostly at the bottom)	✓	along the body	2 carnelian beads, S-shaped temple ring, 3 silver ring-liked temple rings, silver wire ring
Peresopnytsia, No 17	on the horizon	coffin 2×0,4 m	under funeral pyre, burnt on top, split	←	right – on the clavicle, left – along the body	silver wire temple ring, silver twisted ring
Peresopnytsia, No 22	on the horizon	coffin 2,2×0,8 m	under funeral pyre, charred	✓	along the body; the body is curled up	–
Zbuzh, No 4	on the horizon, 2,85×1,3, thickness 0,45 m	–	under funeral pyre ?	↓	along the body	–
Pidhirtsi, No I/1946	on the bedding, 1,2×0,6 m	coffin	?	↖	?	–
Horishni Sherivtsi, No 2	on the horizon, thickness 0,2 m,	log structure 2,8×2,2 m + coffin (?)	under funeral pyre (?), charred	←	?	silver S-shaped temple ring
Richytsia, No 10	on the horizon	coffin	under funeral pyre, burnt	←	?	–
Richytsia, No 22	on the horizon	coffin	under funeral pyre, charred	←	?	bronze wire ring

Hrubske, No 27	on the bedding (?)	coffin	under funeral pyre, (?) burnt	?	?	–
Kozarovychi, No 1	in the pit, 1,3×1 m	coffin	? charred	←	?	–
Hlynsk, No II	on the horizon	–	under funeral pyre, burnt	←	?	2 silver rings, bead
Gochevo, No CCLX	on the horizon, $\varnothing \approx 3,5$ m	–	under ritual fire, burnt	←	right – near the jaw, left – along the body	twisted torque, 3 silver seven rays rings, «frontlet», bronze plate ring
Gochevo, No CCLXI	on the horizon (?)	–	under funeral pyre, burnt	?	?	2 silver wire rings with overlaid glass beads, 5 silver wire rings, 15 beads, bronze twisted ring
Gochevo, No CCLXII	on the horizon (?)	–	? burnt	?	?	2 silver wire rings (one with overlaid silvered bead), iron object, pyrophyllite spindle, 12 glass silvered beads and one gilded bead, 2 glass beads
Gochevo, No CCLXIII	on the horizon (?)	–	under funeral pyre, burnt	?	?	6 silver wire rings, 2 silver filigree beads, 20 gilded beads, iron knife
Gochevo, No CCLXIV	on the horizon (?)	–	?, burnt	?	?	3 cornelian bipyramid beads, 18 gilded beads
Gochevo, No CCLXV	on the horizon (?)	–	under funeral pyre, burnt	?	on the belly	bronze plate ring
Gochevo, No CCLXVI	on the horizon (?)	–	under funeral pyre, ?	?	?	copper object
Gochevo, No CCLXVII	on the horizon (?)	–	?, burnt	?	?	iron knife
Gochevo, No CCLXVIII	on the horizon (?)	–	?, burnt	?	?	copper ring
Gochevo, No CCLXIX	on the bedding (?)	–	under funeral pyre, burnt	?	?	silver bullion, iron knife, pot
Gochevo, No CCLXX	on the horizon	–	under funeral pyre, burnt	?	?	iron knife
Gochevo, No CCLXXI	on the horizon	–	under funeral pyre, burnt	?	?	iron knife
Gochevo, No CCLXXII	on the horizon	–	under funeral pyre, burnt	↖	?	pot
Gochevo, No CCLXXIII	on the horizon	–	under funeral pyre, charred	?	?	–
Gochevo, No CCLXXIV	on the horizon (?)	–	under funeral pyre, burnt	✓	along the body	–
Gochevo, No CCLXXV	on the horizon	–	?, burnt	?	?	–
Gochevo, No CCLXXVI	on the horizon	–	under funeral pyre, burnt	?	?	–
Gochevo, No CCLXXVII	on the horizon	–	?, charred	?	?	–
Gochevo, No CCLXXVIII	on the horizon (?)	–	under funeral pyre, burnt	?	?	–

So the main feature of the burials with partial cremation is the availability of charred skeletons. Probably, only soft tissues were burned. At the same time, the postures of the buried bodies categorially exclude unintentional, 'no-ritual-related' reason for skeleton deformation, in other words, death by fire. Moreover, in all the cases, thick layers of funeral pyres and calcination of surrounding soil were recorded.

The structure of the funeral pyres was best studied in Zbuzh (Fig. 2). Its dimensions were 2.85×1.3 metres, thickness 0.45 metres. The pyre consisted of charred 1.8 metres long, and 0.1 to 15 metres thick oak and pine bars which were found along the sides of the skeleton and over it. At the same time, the bars were laid across at the feet and in the abdomen area. The bars have preserved clearly visible traces of notches and cuts made across by a saw. A thin layer of charcoal<sup>25</sup> was found under the bones. Probably, the body of the deceased was laid on a wooden platform, and the funeral pyre was built over it in the form of a geometrically regular tiered lattice (Fig. 3).

From the experience of modern countries practising cremation, first of all, Hindu countries, we know that unburnt remains are the result of the lack of raw material – firewood. However, on the contrary, in the South Rus' complexes of the group discussed here unburnt logs were often recorded, which means that the flames were deliberately interrupted. For example, according to observations by G.M. Vlasova, an excavation participant in Zbuzh, the survived remains of wooden structures evidenced that after incomplete burning the unburnt funeral pyre was covered over with a barrow mound.<sup>26</sup> A similar phenomenon was mentioned by K.M. Melnyk: 'The funeral pyre had never been burned all the way down, it was covered

over with earth as soon as the flame embraced the dead, which is proven both by the quite minor degree of the charr of the skeleton as well as the items accompanying it, and by the significant number of large, unburnt charcoal'.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, the appearance of the rite was not affected by economic reasons, as some scholars suggested.

Almost all the burials were carried out at the paleosurface level, and thereafter they were covered with barrow mounds. As a rule, the skeletons were placed with their heads laid to the west with certain seasonal deviations; only one southward disposition was recorded (Zbuzh, No 4). In the absolute majority of cases, including the burials on the left bank, the funeral pyre was built over the deceased, and not vice versa, as it was done in the case of traditional cremation on the place. At the same time, the persistent feature of the right-bank burials (with various degree of probability – in ten out of 13 cases) is the existence of a coffin nailed together (charred or burnt), while in the left-bank burials no such examples have been documented. In the burial mound of Peresopnytsia, No 22, the coffin was placed on a platform made of oak logs.

In two cases, the burning took place inside wide log structures. Both burials in no way stand out from others by the richness of their inventory. In mound No 5 in Starozhukiv cemetery, the body was placed in a 'crypt' made of thick hewn bars; two iron nails found near the legs can evidence also the existence of a transportable coffin. The burial at Horishni Sherivtsi was carried out inside a 2.8×2.2 metres wooden chamber, and nails were also found near the skeleton. The combination of quadrangular wooden structures and cremation burials is rarely found both on the territory of the right-bank Dnipro (Velyka Horbasha and

25 I. Sveshnikov, *Otchet o rabote...*, p. 13; H. Vlasova, *Drevnerusskiy mogil'nik v s. Zbuzhe, Kratkiye soobshcheniya Instituta arkheologii USSR 11*, 1961, p. 91.

26 H. Vlasova, *Drevnerusskiy mogil'nik...*, p. 93.

27 Y. Mel'nik, *Raskopki...*, p. 503.

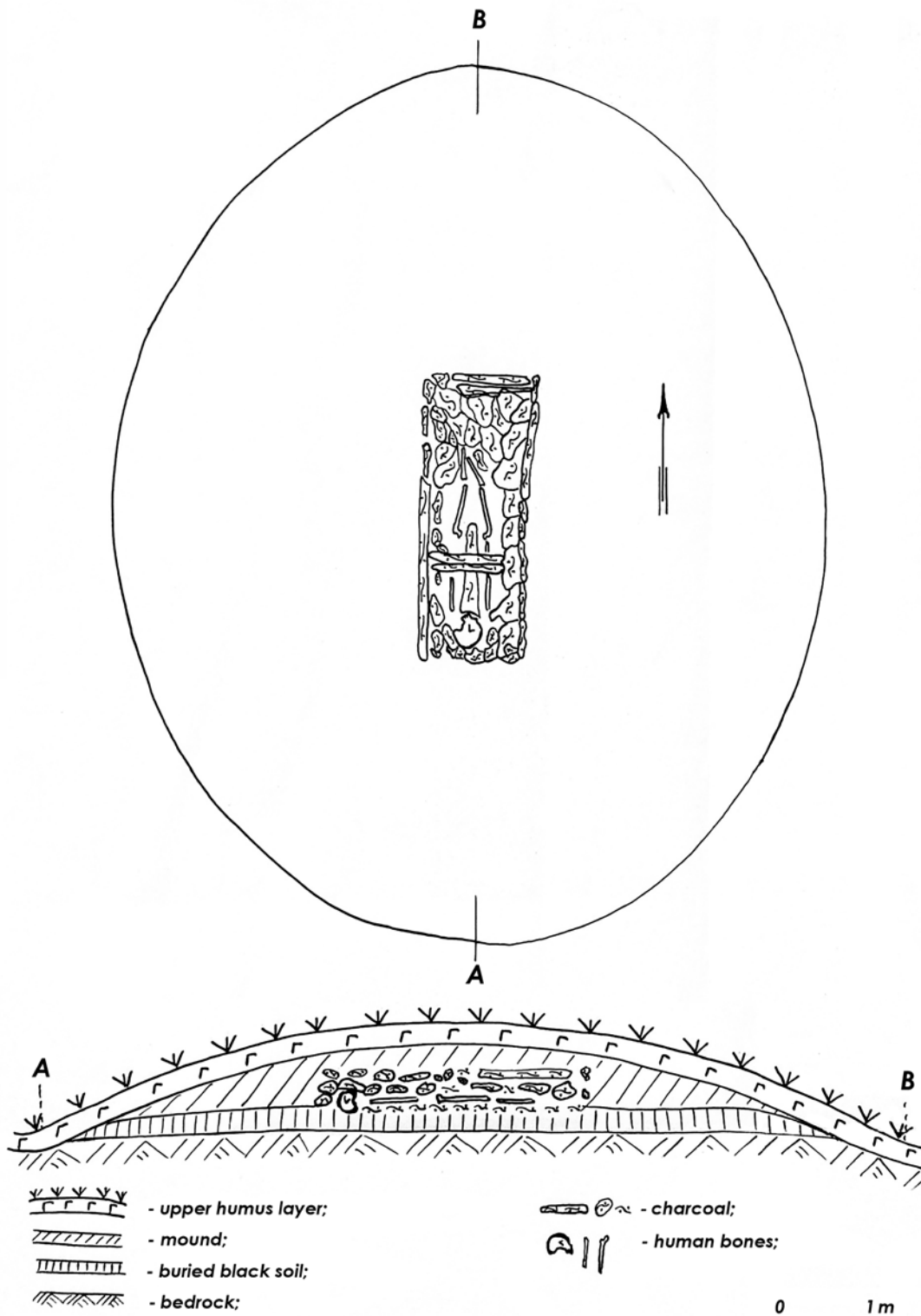
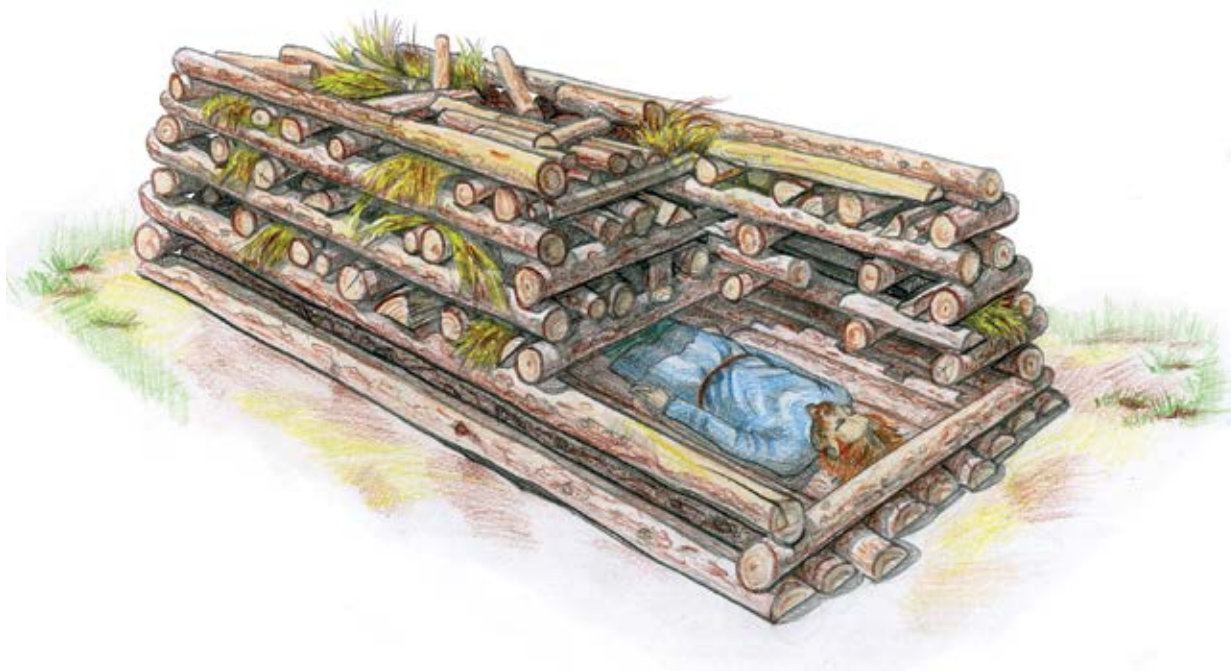


Fig. 2. Plan and section of mound No 4 near Zbuzh village. After Sveshnikov, 1958.



**Fig. 3.** Funeral pyre No 4 near the village of Zbuzh.  
Reconstruction and drawing by D. Bibikov.

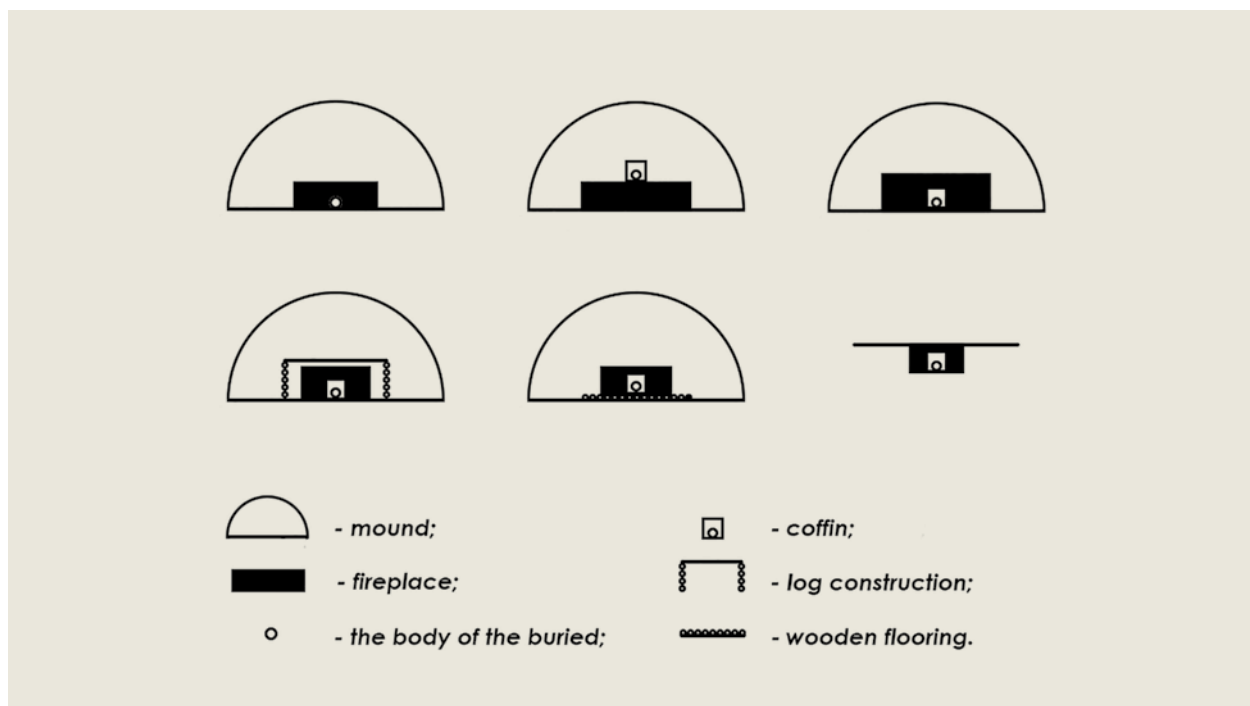
Mezhyrichka in Zhytomyr area<sup>28</sup>) and in the neighbouring territories (Kvetun' in the Middle Desna River, Otsertso near Minsk<sup>29</sup>), while it is more typical for the River Sozh area (Dzemyanka, Novy Bychaŭ, Vietačka, Popova Hora, etc<sup>30</sup>). Some burials in log structures, including two places in the Zhytomyr area, are associated with the early Slav tradition (so-called burial mounds of Lipsko type), and others date back to the time of the Old Rus' state, and were probably an imitation of chamber tombs of the Vikings era.

Only one burial stands out among others in Kozarovychi, which was carried out in an in a ground pit and was not covered over with a mound embankment. In general, the complexes with partial cremation are quite homogeneous although they have minor regional specific features (Fig. 4). As a rule the body of the dead was laid on the surface with the head to the west, thereafter the funeral pyre was built over it and ignited, at the same time not letting it burn down completely. The most essential difference was the presence or absence of a coffin, which would burn down with the body inside.

28 I. Rusanova, *Slavyanskie drevnosti VI–IX vv. mezhdn Dneprom i Zapadnym Bugom*, Moskva, 1973, pp. 29, 39, 41.

29 V. Padin, Kvetunskiy drevnerusskiy mogil'nik, *Sovetskaya arkeologiya* 1, 1976, pp. 197–198; A. Voytekovich, *Pogrebal'nyy obryad naseleniya Polotskoy zemli v X–XII vv.*, Minsk, 2019, p. 26.

30 V. Bogomol'nikov, *Radimichi (po materialam kurganov X–XII vv.)*, Gomel, 2004, pp. 33–34.



**Fig. 4.** Funeral pyre No 4 near the village of Zbuzh.  
Reconstruction and drawing by D. Bibikov.

### Funeral inventory and dating of burials

The dating of burials is complicated due to the small inventory and the fact that most of the materials, first of all ceramics, have not survived to this day. Thus, 14 complexes had no inventory at all. The inventory of female burials included from one to three items, mostly decorations: temple rings, bead necklaces, finger rings. Male burials (which can be distinguished only provisionally) had one or two everyday items. Thus, the inventory composition allows us to

confidently consider the buried people as ordinary community members.

The biggest number of find categories, e.g. simple wire finger rings and temple rings, were commonly used during the entire period of the Old Rus' state. Gilded and silvered glass beads (Lyshche, No 2; Gochevo, Nos CCLXII, CCLXIII, CCLXIV), and temple rings with an S-shape curl (Biliv, No 14; Horishni Sherivtsi, No 2)<sup>31</sup> are dated to the late tenth to early 12th centuries. Ye.A. Shynakov attributes the use of the Radimichs seven-beam temple rings of V group

31 V. Levashova, Visochnye kol'tsa, *Trudy Gosudarstvennogo Istoricheskogo muzeya* 43, 1967, p. 40; Y. Shchapova, *Steklo Kievskoy Russii*, Moskva, 1972, p. 87; A. Motsya, *Pogrebal'nye pamyatniki*, p. 67; S. Zakharov, I. Kuzina, *Izdeliya iz stekla i kamennye busy, Arkheologiya severno-russkoy derevni X–XIII vekov: srednevekovye poseleniya i mogil'niki na Kubenskom ozere: v 3-kh tomakh*, T. 2, Material'naya kul'tura i khronologiya, ed. N. Makarov, Moskva, 2007, p. 291, ris. 237: 5.

(Gochevo, No CCLX) to the same period. Notably, version 35, which can also include the Gochevo specimen,<sup>32</sup> is dated by the researcher as hypothetically the earliest of them.<sup>33</sup> A twisted hryvnia was discovered in the same assemblage, similar items appear in the territory of Rus' in the late tenth and early 11th centuries.<sup>34</sup> Much earlier, eye beads were making their way into Eastern Europe, but they are found in the same assemblage as the twisted finger ring (Gochevo, No CCLXI), which is dated to not earlier than the 11th century.<sup>35</sup> A similar finger ring was found in the mound of Peresopnytsia 17. The carnelian bipyramidal bead (Gochevo, No CCLXIV)<sup>36</sup> is dated to the 11th–12th centuries. In two other cases (Lyshche, No 2; Biliv, No 14), the type of carnelian bead is not specified, but considering the presence of other datable items (a gilded bead and a ring with an S-shaped curl), this fact has no impact on the dating. Besides, K.M. Melnyk found in Lyshche a 'silver openwork seed bead',<sup>37</sup> mistakenly attributed by O.P. Motsia to paddle beads.<sup>38</sup> Based on the terminology used by the researcher,<sup>39</sup> she probably means large seed beads which appear in the 11th century being an ethnically defining feature of the Dregovychi.<sup>40</sup> On the contrary, the bead (Gochevo, No CCLXIII) called

'large seed bead' by O.P. Motsia,<sup>41</sup> was probably made by a filigree technique of three rows of soldered granules. Such jewellery is dated to the tenth to the 11th centuries,<sup>42</sup> that taken together with the set of gilded beads, allows us to narrow the burial complex dating to the late tenth to the 11th centuries. The kitchen pot from the Gochevo mound No CCLXXII – based on the pattern<sup>43</sup> – had a rim straight or slightly slanted cut that is typical of left-bank ceramics of the second half of the tenth and early 11th centuries.<sup>44</sup>

Having even formally excluded the latter case, we see that the lower chronological threshold of at least nine out of ten burials with comparatively close dating corresponds to the late tenth and early 11th centuries. In terms of inventory-free burials, it is important to have a general dating for the cemeteries and settlements to which they relate. The settlement complex in the village of Biliv (hillfort, settlement, and mound necropolis) was formed in the late tenth century and at the turn of the 11th–12th centuries terminated its existence.<sup>45</sup> In the 11th century, the hillfort existed in the village of Lyshche,<sup>46</sup> the authors of excavations dated the cemetery in Zbuzh by the same time.<sup>47</sup> In the late tenth and early 11th centuries, the mound necropolis began to form in the Poruby

32 D. Samokvasov, *Atlas Gochevskikh drevnostey. Prilozhenie k dnevniku raskopok v okrestnostyakh s. Gocheva, Oboyanskogo uyezda, Kurskoy gubernii, proizvedennykh prof. D.Ya. Samokvasovym v avguste 1909 g.*, Moskva, 1915, tabl. LI: 4.

33 Y. Shynakov, Klassifikatsiya i kulturnaya atributsiya luchevykh visochnykh kolets, *Sovetskaya arkhologiya* 3, 1980, p. 122, ris. 2.

34 M. Fekhner, Sheynnye grivny, *Trudy Gosudarstvennogo Istoricheskogo Muzeya* 43, 1967, p. 71.

35 M. Sedova, *Yuvelirnyye izdeliya drevnego Novgoroda (X–XV vv)*, Moskva, 1981, p. 125.

36 M. Fekhner, K voprosu ob ekonomicheskikh svyazyakh drevnerusskoy derevni, *Trudy Gosudarstvennogo Istoricheskogo Muzeya* 33, 1959, p. 152, 154, 178.

37 Y. Melnik, *Raskopki...*, p. 558.

38 A. Motsya, *Pogrebal'nyye pamyatniki*, p. 80, tabl. 6.

39 Y. Melnik, *Raskopki...*, p. 500, tabl. VII: 20

40 V. Sedov, *Vostochnyye slavyane*, p. 114.

41 A. Motsya, *Pogrebal'nyye pamyatniki*, p. 94, tabl. 8.

42 N. Zhylina, Drevnerusskaya zern'nachala X – nachala XI v. kak dekorativnoye iskusstvo. Rozhdeniye stiley. *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta* 449, 2019, p. 121.

43 D. Samokvasov, *Atlas Gochevskikh drevnostey*, tab. LIII: 1.

44 I. Sarachev, Tipologiya venchikov drevnerusskikh gorshkov Dneprovskogo Levoberezh'ya. V: Aleksandr Grigoryev, *Severskaya zemlya v VIII – nachale XI vv. po arkhologicheskim dannym*, Tula, 2000, p. 232.

45 B. Pryshchepa, *Pohorynski mista v X–XIII st.*, Rivne, 2016, p. 89.

46 M. Kuchera, *Slov'yano-ruski horodyshcha VIII–XIII st. mizh Sanom i Siverskym Dintsem*, Kyiv, 1999, p. 192.

47 G. Vlasova, *Drevnerusskiy mogil'nik...*, p. 93.

tract in Pidhirtsi.<sup>48</sup> The complex of monuments near the village of Gochevo<sup>49</sup> appeared at the same time. The ground cemetery in the village of Kozarovychi is dated to within the 11th–13th centuries like the village settlement located nearby, to which it was related.<sup>50</sup>

Thus, the spread of partial cremation in the south of the Old Rus' state may be confidently dated to the 'Christian' period. Characteristically, more than half the burials are found near the Great Prince's fortresses founded in the period of Volodymyr Svyatoslavovych. The large-scale process of the formation of urban centres must have been accompanied by mass displacement of population, and in this regard the availability of the Radimichis and the Drehovichis ethno-defining items in the burial inventory should be mentioned. Within each cemetery, the percentage of burials of our interest is from 3% to 7%, this possibly indicating the short duration of the period of the practice of this rite. On all these cemeteries, inhumation in its variable versions was the prevailing rite, it is only in Beleve and Hrubske that complete cremation was recorded in two cases at each place.<sup>51</sup> It would hardly be a mistake to attribute the burials with partial cremation to the earlier burials in each burial mound group. It was Ya.F. Yarotskyi who stated that this rite appeared before inhumation was finally accepted as the main funeral rite by the Drevlians. At the same time, he admitted the inappropriateness in accepting it as an independent chronological indicator for each individual complex.<sup>52</sup> All the above

arguments are indirect, but taken together they indicate the late tenth to early 11th centuries as the most probable time of practising the rite of partial cremation.

### Religious attribution of burials

The burials considered stand out among the usual Old Rus' cremations in the place not only by the degree of bone remain deformation, but also by many other details of the funeral rite. First of all, we mean the presence of coffins documented with a certain level of probability in all complexes on the right-bank Dnipro. This constructive and ceremonial detail was not widespread in Eastern European cremation burials in the ninth and tenth centuries.

The burial in Kozarovychi was carried out in in a ground grave, which has no analogies among cremation burials in Southern Rus'. Other burials in the cemetery were carried out by all Christian canons of that time.

Interesting observations can be made by analysing the position of hands. In half the cases, either one or both hands were bent elbow and put with the arm on the breast or the abdomen. Such a position of the upper extremities is traditionally considered to be a true Christian feature.<sup>53</sup> As long as the new ideology was taking root, the hands of the deceased were more often placed on the body,<sup>54</sup> although their position could vary as late as the 16th century.<sup>55</sup>

48 A. Fylypchuk, H. Fylypchuk, *Arkheolohiya kurhannoho mohyl'nyka*, p. 64.

49 G. Starodubtsev, Gochevskiy arkheologicheskiy kompleks (letopisnyy Rimov) – gorod XI–XIV vv. na yugo-vostoke Rusi, *Sums'ka starovyna* XXVI–XXVII, 2009, p. 167.

50 L. Stepanenko, N. Blazhevych, *Poselennya ta mohyl'nyk ...*, p. 162.

51 V. Antonovich, *Raskopki v strane drevlyan*, p. 42, 43; F. Shteingel, *Raskopki kurganov v Volynskoy gubernii, proizvedennyye v 1897–1900 gg.*, Kiev, 1905, p. 147.

52 Y. Yarotsky, *Kratkiy otchet...*, p. 104.

53 P. Lysenko, *Dregovichy*, Minsk, 1991, p. 46; V. Bogomoln'ikov, *Radimichi*, p. 38; Y. Sytyy, *Khryssyanski pokhoval'ni pam'yatky davnorus'koho Chernihova*, Chernihiv, 2013, p. 128.

54 A. Motsya, *Pogrebal'nyye pamyatniki*, p. 27.

55 T. Panova, *Srednevekovyy pogrebal'nyy obryad po materialam nekropolya Arkhangel'skogo sobora Moskovskogo kremlia*, *Sovetskaya arkheologiya* 4, 1987, pp. 118–119.



The dating of burials with partial cremation, the presence of a coffin and ground graves, as well as the position of the hands of the deceased allow us to draw the confident though quite unexpected conclusion that people practising this rite were believed to be Christians and strove to observe certain elements of the Christian canon.

There is a version of the rite morphologically similar, when the inhumation was made in a coffin, which was set on fire outside during the funeral ceremony. Similar burials (undoubtedly Christian by their nature) are known not only in mound necropolises (Tepenytsia, Zhytomyr, Richytsia, Onyshpol, Buky, Kvetun), but also in ground cemeteries. For example, in Chernihiv, charred coffins were found in the oldest sections of the Christian cemetery and are attributed by Yu.N. Sytyi to the burials of the first Christians of the city.<sup>56</sup> At the same time, bones in contact with burned boards were sometimes also affected by fire. Charred coffins are known, for example, in mounds of the Prypiat River basin, Sozh.<sup>57</sup> Thus, instead of a traditional division into cremation and inhumations, we have the entire scope of rites associated with the use of fire where the line can be drawn only based on the intentions of the participants in the funeral ceremony.

The appearance of the rite of partial cremation can be easily explained. The fear before the unburnt dead was so deeply rooted in general European (and not only European) traditions that it is still preserved in modern mass culture. The universality of these beliefs was discussed by us in detail in a separate

article.<sup>58</sup> The enormous ethnographic materials (including East European), especially, its most archaic layer, establishes relations between the disposal of the malicious dead by the purifying power of fire.

Probably, this fear of unburnt dead explains numerous relics of the cremation rite in early Old Rus' inhumation burials. In the tenth century, the funeral pyre was often set on the slabs of the chamber tombs and later covered over with a barrow embankment, preventing the slabs from burning down completely.<sup>59</sup> With the development of the funeral rite of Southern Rus' later on, the relics of cremation became even more widespread. According to estimations by O.P. Motsia, in over 370 under-mound inhumation burials of the 11th–13th centuries – which makes 9% of the total number of burials studied – there was charcoal and ash found in the depth of the barrow embankments. More often, ca. 510 times (12%), charcoal and ash were recorded near the buried bodies in the form of interlayers or separate heaps on skeletons or around them, on coffin lids or on their bottom, on the floor of grave pits, at the horizon level. Less often funeral pyres (e.g. Berestovets, Korost'<sup>60</sup>) and vessels filled with charcoal that could have imitated burial urns (Surazh, Brykiv, Biliv, Leplianshchyna, Berestovets, Myropol'<sup>61</sup>) are found.

The conclusion about the Christian attribution of mounds with partial cremation fully corresponds to the picture of the syncretic worldview of the South Rus' population at the turn of the first and second millennia AD. Some characters in Icelandic sagas, while Christians themselves, did not hesitate to burn

56 Y. Sytyi, *Mogily khristian...*, p. 105.

57 P. Lysenko, *Dregovichi*, pp. 46–47; V. Bogomol'nikov, *Radimichi*, p. 39.

58 D. Bibikov, *Strakh pered nespalenymy nebizhchykamy v narodnykh viruvanniakh davnioruskoho naselennia: mizhdystsyplinarni studiyi, Tserkva - Nauka - suspilstvo: putannia vzhayemodiyi. Materialy Devyatnadtsyatoyi Mizhnarodnoyi naukovoï konferentsiyi (26–28 travnia 2021 r.)*, ed. Lubomyr Mykhaylyna, Kyiv, 2021, pp. 260–266.

59 K. Mikhaylov, *Elitarnyy pogrebal'nyy obryad Drevney Rusi*, Sankt-Peterburg, 2016, pp. 84–85.

60 F. Shteingel, *Raskopki kurganov...*, p. 14, 25.

61 V. Antonovich, *Raskopki kurganov v Zapadnoy Volyni, Trudy XI Arkheologicheskogo syezda 1*, 1901, p. 137; Y. Mel'nik, *Raskopki...*, p. 530; F. Shteingel, *Raskopki kurganov...*, p. 24; A. Motsya, *Pogrebal'nyye pamyatniki*, p. 34.

bodies of 'malicious' dead.<sup>62</sup> People's prejudices (and not manifestation of any deliberate paganistic response) should be probably the explanation for the small number of cases of cremations in burial mounds with inhumations, in particular, known in the Kryvich territory.<sup>63</sup>

### Burial mounds with partial cremation in neighbouring Old Rus' territories

The rite under discussion also extended to synchronic monuments of central regions of the Old Rus' state. Partial cremation is recorded in burial mound 278 of the Mokhov cemetery on the Dnipro River, to the north of the confluence with the Sozh River. The burial was made in the centre of a 4x4 metre quadrangle stonework, on a continuous 0.2-metre-thick layer of ash and charcoal. The charred skeleton was laid with the head to the west inside a burnt plank structure of irregular four-angle form of 1.6x1.5x2.2x1.2 metres. The inventory was represented by two bronze belt rings and remnants of a pottery pot of the second half of the tenth and early 11th centuries.<sup>64</sup>

In Kvetun, the researchers distinguish four similar burials (mounds Nos 50, 88, 104, 142). In mound No 88, the charred skeleton was found on the horizon in a 'semi-burnt' coffin. As in the mound in the

Mokhov cemetery, two bronze belt rings as well as an iron knife were found.<sup>65</sup> According to V.A. Paladin<sup>66</sup> and V.V. Bogomolnikov,<sup>67</sup> two partial cremations were made on the place, which sounds quite disputable. One of them (mound No 142) was in a 3.4x1.6-metre grave pit with wooden flooring in the bottom. Based on the total inventory (petiolate diamond-shaped arrowhead, combat knife with a bone handle, horseshoe-shaped fibula with spiral ends), the author dated the complex to the tenth century.<sup>68</sup> However, according to conclusions by Yu.Yu Morgunov and V.V. Pryimak,<sup>69</sup> fibulae of the mentioned type began to penetrate into the territory of the left-bank Dnipro only in the later tenth and early 11th centuries. The burial in mound No 104 was also a pit burial.<sup>70</sup> There were two more burials (mound No 82, 'mound with belt set') where traces of partial cremation were found in pits, which was seen by Ye.A. Shynakov as a combination of pagan and Christian features.<sup>71</sup>

Few burial mounds with partial cremation were reported in the Smolensk area excavated by Ye.N. Kletnova in the 1990s (Rusiatka, Stanishchi, Tupichino, Khozhaevo, Gnezdovo). V.V. Sedov attributed them to the 'transitional' period – the second half of the tenth and early 11th centuries.<sup>72</sup> Little information on the details of the funeral rite has survived: as a rule, the researcher mentioned in passing the 'skeleton with traces of partial cremation'.<sup>73</sup>

62 V. Petrukhin, Pogrebeniya znati epokhi vikingov, *Skandinavskiy sbornik XXI*, 1976, pp. 153–154; Y. Kartamysheva, Neblagopoluchnyye umershie v slavyanskoj i skandinavskoj traditsiyakh: ,zalozhnyye' pokoyniki i ,ozhvyayushchiye mertvetsy', *Slavyanovedeniye* 2, 2008, p. 60.

63 V. Sedov, *Vostochnyye slavyane*, p. 162.

64 O. Makushnikov, N. Kurashova, V. Sychev, Raskopki srednevekovykh pamyatnikov u d. Mokhov na yugo-vostoke Belarusi, *Gistarychna-arkhealagichny zbornik* 23, 2007, p. 224.

65 V. Padin, *Kvetunskiy...*, pp. 199–200.

66 V. Padin, *Kvetunskiy...*, p. 197.

67 V. Bogomol'nikov, *Radimichi*, tabl. 5.

68 V. Padin, *Kvetunskiy...*, p. 202.

69 V. Priymak, Podkovoobraznyye fibuly iz drevnerusskikh pamyatnikov Levoberezh'ya Dnepra, *Filo Ariadne* 3, 2018, online: <http://filoariadne.esrae.ru/13–230>.

70 V. Bogomol'nikov, *Radimichi*, tabl. 5.

71 Y. Shynakov, *Ot prashchi do skramasaksa: na puti k derzhave Rurikovichey*, Bryansk, Sankt-Peterburg, 1995, pp. 135–139.

72 V. Sedov, *Svavyane Verkhnego Podneprov'ya i Podvin'ya*, Moskva, 1970, p. 115.

73 Y. Kletnova, Arkheologicheskiye razvedki gorodishcha bliz d. Tupichino, *Smolenskaya starina* 3, ch. 2, 1916, pp. 23–24.

Ye.A. Shmidt perceived this interpretation of these complexes with scepticism, and based on the funeral inventory, dated the cemeteries functioning to the 11th–12th centuries.<sup>74</sup> It is possible that it was the first time Ye.N. Kletnova encountered inhumation on a funeral pyre, which was widely practised by the Kryvichs in this period. Otherwise, it appears that almost every third burial mound she excavated had traces of such an uncommon rite, which was not recorded at all in subsequent long years of excavations in the region.

Separate consideration should be given to burials with partial cremations in the Sozh River area where possibly the highest degree of concentration is observed. The archeological literature pays more attention to these burials, and they are regarded as one of the most characteristic features of the funeral rite of the Radimichs. One of the first researchers to pay attention to the burial mounds 'including funeral pyre with charred skeletons lying on them' was A.A. Spitsyn.<sup>75</sup> Now, more than ten similar complexes are known on the cemeteries of Gadilovichi, Hraziviec II, Kniazieŭka, Kalasy, Karma-Paika, Čyrvonaja Slabada, Radamlia and Chocimsk.<sup>76</sup>

Most are male burials. The bodies lying here show more variety than in the south of Rus', although

westward lying with some seasonal deviations dominated. The body of the dead could be laid on top of the funeral pyre (Karma-Paika, No 21; Kniazieŭka, No 25; Kalasy, No 14), or the fire could be set on over it (Hraziviec – II, No 4; Kalasy, No 13), as in the absolute majority of South Rus' burials of this type. The structure of the funeral pyre, which strikingly resembles the structure of the burial in the Zbuzh necropolis, was studied in the best way in the Hraziviec – II cemetery. The ritual fire was 2.8×1.4 metres, ca. 0.7 metres thick. The wooden platform was discovered under the charred skeleton, thick crossbars were near the head and legs, and several rows of charred blocks were placed on top of the crossbars.<sup>77</sup>

The researchers give almost no details about the position of the hands. However, it is important that at least three times the burning was carried out in coffins.<sup>78</sup> In the Sozh River area, charred coffins with inhumation burials can also be found, typologically classified by V.V. Bogomol'nikov as close to remains of partial cremation.<sup>79</sup>

Within each of the necropolis, one or two burial mounds with partial cremation are known. Almost all excavated burials (except for one with complete cremation on site in Chocimsk) represent the rite of cremation on the horizon or on the bedding which

74 Y. Shmidt, *Drevnerusskiye archeologicheskiye pamyatniki Smolenskoj oblasti, ch. I*, Smolensk, 1982, pp. 29, 33–34; Y. Shmidt, *Drevnerusskiye archeologicheskiye pamyatniki Smolenskoj oblasti, ch. II*, Smolensk, 1983, p. 48, 49.

75 A. Spitsyn, *Obozreniye nekotorykh guberniy v arkheologicheskom otnoshenii. Mogilyovskaya i Chernigovskaya gubernii, Zapiski Russkogo Arkheologicheskogo obshchestva VIII*, 1 2, 1896, pp. 119–120.

76 M. Fursov, S. Cholovskiy, *Dnevnik kurgannykh raskopok, provedennykh letom 1892 g. v 5 uyezdakh gubernii. Pamyatnaya knizhka Mogilyovskoy gubernii na 1893 god*, Mogilyov na Dnepre, 1893, XXXVIII XXXIX, XLIII, XLVI; Y. Romanov, *Dve arkheologicheskiye razvedki, Mogilyovskaya starina III*, 1903, pp. 124–125; Y. Romanov, *Arkheologicheskiye razvedki v Mogilyovskoy gubernii, Zapiski Severo-zapadnogo otdeleniya Imperatorskogo Russkogo geograficheskogo obshchestva 3*, 1912, p. 62; A. Kavalenya, *Arkheologichnyia razvedki u magileuskay, babruyskay i menskay akrugakh, Pratsy arkhealagichnay komisii 2*, 1930, p. 148; G. Solovyova, *Slavyanskiye kurgany bliz g. Rogachova Gomelskoy oblasti, Kratkiye soobshcheniya Instituta arkheologii AN SSSR 129*, 1972, p. 51; G. Shtykhov, *Arkheologicheskaya karta Belorussii: Pamyatniki zheleznogo veka i epokhi feodalizma, Vyp. 2*, Minsk, 1971, p. 220, 223, 124, 232, 233; V. Bogomol'nikov, *Radimichi*, p. 27.

77 Y. Romanov, *Arkheologicheskiye razvedki...*, p. 62.

78 V. Bogomol'nikov, *Radimichi*, p. 167, tabl. 11.

79 V. Bogomol'nikov, *Radimichi*, p. 39.

appears in this region as late as in the 11th century.<sup>80</sup> The necropolis in the village of Gadilovich, which has been studied in detail, where the remnants of partial cremation of a child were found in mound 16, is dated in general to the 11th to the first half of the 12th centuries.<sup>81</sup> Narrow dating of individual complexes is currently impossible due to the significant scarcity of inventory, which is typical for cremation burials of the Radimichs. Individual items (ring and 'bracelet' of silver wire, bronze bells, glass beads, scythe fragment) have a wide range of uses, and the majority of burials have no accompanying items at all. In general, however, it looks undeniable that the cemeteries including burials with partial cremation appeared after the conquest of the Radimichs by Volodymyr in 984.

The appearance of partial cremation in the Sozh River area is often associated with the gradual displacement of cremation by inhumation and is considered as a chronological link between these two, or even as a remnant of complete cremation, its imitation.<sup>82</sup> B.A. Rybakov did not see any principal difference between complete and partial cremation, although he distinguished the former as an individual sub-type. According to him, the degree of a skeleton's deformation depended on the size of the funeral pyre only,<sup>83</sup> which contradicts the archaeological materials available. Some other researchers have even tried to prove the inexpediency of distinguishing partial cremation, having referred to the lack of a clear distinction between them and cremation on funeral pyres.<sup>84</sup> However, as we have seen earlier, there was a fundamental difference between

two groups of burials and it was not only associated with specific deformation of bone remains, but with deliberate termination of the fire action. In terms of the materials from the Sozh River area, the burial at Hraziviec is a bright example thereof.

The Sozh River area burials with partial cremation have a local specific feature in the form of soil bedding, while similar to the South Rus' rite in other ritual details. As we can see, the geographical diversity of such burials allows us to consider them not as an ethno-geographic marker of the Radimichs, but as a supratidal phenomenon. In general, the materials of neighbouring territories confirm the assumptions we made earlier.

### **Conclusions. Burials with partial cremations as a source for studying the process of the Christianisation of the Old Rus' state**

At times, the desire of some researchers to create a simplified, unified, classification of burial complexes leads to their incorrect interpretation. The Old Rus' burials with traces of partial cremation, although morphologically close to traditional cremation burials, are only relics by their nature. Unlike typical burials by cremation rite on site, the funeral pyre ritual fire as a rule was lit over the body of the dead (not vice versa), and thereafter the fire action was deliberately interrupted. The dating of the complexes (not earlier than the tenth century), availability of coffins, position of hands (arms on the breast or the abdomen), and other facts attest to their Christian affiliation.

80 G. Solovyova, *Pogrebal'nyye obryady, Drevnosti zheleznoogo veka v mezhdurech'ye Desny i Dnepra*, ed. Boris Rybakov, Moskva, 1962, pp. 52–53.

81 G. Solovyova, *Slavyanskiye kurgany*, p. 52.

82 G. Solovyova, *Pogrebal'nyye obryady*, p. 52; V. Sedov, *Slavyane Verkhnego Podneprov'ya...*, p. 137; V. Sedov, *Vostochnyye slavyane*, p. 154; Y. Riye, *Selskoye obshchestvo Mogilyovskogo Podnepor'ya X–XIII vv.* Po arkheologicheskim dannym, Mogilyov, 2010, p. 32, 33.

83 B. Rybakov, *Radzimichi, Pratsy sektsyyi arkheologii III*, 1932, p. 83–84.

84 A. Uspenskaya, *Kurgany Yuzhnoy Belorussii X–XIII vv.*, *Trudy Gosudarstvennogo istoricheskogo museya* 22, 1953, p. 101; A. Avlasovich, *Pogrebal'naya obryadnost' na territorii Mogilyovskogo Podneprov'ya i Posozh'ya v X–XIII vv.*, 2017, p. 9.

Partial cremations have a large sourcebook potential for highlighting the early stages of Christianisation, as was mentioned earlier.<sup>85</sup> They serve as a strong argument for a positive response to the question about the availability of a clerical restriction on the cremation of the deceased. The massive shift of the South Rus' population from cremation to inhumation at the turn of the first and second millennia AD could have taken place only under pressure from 'above', and not influenced by social and economic processes in Old Rus' society as was supposed by some scholars.<sup>86</sup> The control over compliance with the funeral rite 'in the regions' had to be exercised, first of all, by representatives of the princely governance, as it is frankly hard to imagine the almost simultaneous appearance of a large number of clergy in the Rus' state.

Evidently, the process of the refusal of cremation of the dead became one of the most painful interventions of the new Christian doctrine. The dying off of the cremation rite lasted for centuries, gradually spreading from leading political and administrative centres down to the most remote micro-regions. In general, this process for the Old Rus' state can be presented in the form of a chart reflecting the

strengthening of state control over funeral practices: complete cremation → partial cremation → inhumation on a funeral pyre → charcoal near the dead. However, in each specific micro-region, the rejection of cremation followed different scenarios, as a rule avoiding certain links in the chain.

The geography of burials with partial cremation reflects to some extent the first wave of Christianisation of South Rus'. It cannot be a coincidence that the majority of cities and fortresses where this rite was practised was founded by Volodymyr Svyatoslavovych as centres of military and administrative expansion (hillforts in Lyshche, Biliv, Gochevo, and possibly in Horishni Sherivtsi and Hlynsk), less often developed into such centres from earlier Slavic centres (Pidhirtsi). It is these settlements that must have undergone Christianisation before others. At the same time, partial cremation has not been found near large cities, such as Kyiv and Chernihiv, where after 988, the Church was formed as an organisation within a short period, and the population, which had been familiar with Christianity long before that, almost immediately shifted to burying in under-mound pits and ground graves.

85 Y. Sytyy, *Mogily khristian...*, p. 106.

86 A. Motsya, *Pogrebal'nyye pamyatniki*, p. 28; O. Sukhobokov, *Zemlya neznayema: naseleniye basseyna Srednego Psla v X–XIII vv. (po materialam romensko-drevnerusskogo kompleksa v s.Kamennoye)*, Kiev, 2016, pp. 235–236; A. Komar, *Khronologiya mogil'nika u s. Kamennoye...*; O. Sukhobokov, *Zemlya neznayema: naseleniye basseyna Srednego Psla v X–XIII vv. (po materialam romensko-drevnerusskogo kompleksa v s.Kamennoye)*, Kiev, 2016, pp. 354–355.

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## Tarp pagonybės ir krikščionybės: dalinė mirusiųjų kremacija pietų Rusijoje

**Dmytro Bibikov**

Straipsnyje nagrinėjamas mažai žinomas senovės Rusijos laidojimo būdas, vadinamas daline, arba nevisiška kremacija. Šio tipo palaidojimuose randama aukštoje temperatūroje apdegusių griaučių (kai kurie sutrūkinėję), tačiau skeletas randamas nesuardytas. Straipsnyje pateikiama 33 kapų informacija ir nagrinėjamos jų konstrukcinės bei ritualinės ypatybės.

Nesudegusių malkų liekanos liudija, kad per laidotuvių apeigas ugnis buvo tikslingai užgesinta. Daugeliu atvejų ji degta virš mirusiojo, o ne atvirkščiai, kaip įprasta kremuojant tradiciniu būdu. Nemaža dalis palaikų – karsuose. Taip pat pusė palaidotųjų rasti su viena ar abiem rankomis, sudėtomis ant kūno. Pastarieji atvejai neabejotinai

liudija krikščioniškojo kanono įtaką. Visi kapai pagal įkapes datuojami laikotarpiu po Kijevo Rusijos krikšto 988 metais: X a. pabaiga – XII a. pradžia, nors labiau tikėtina X a. pabaiga – XI a. pradžia. Šie duomenys liudija, kad palaidotieji priklausė krikščionių bendruomenei.

Dalinės kremacijos atsiradimą galima sieti su bažnyčios ir kunigaikščių administracijos draudimu deginti mirusiuosius, jis išleistas po 988 m. krikšto. Tikėtina, kad šio laidojimo būdo paplitimas rodo pirmąją draudimo bangą, todėl kapai, kuriuose aptinkama dalinės kremacijos požymių, yra vertingas informacinis rytinių slavų žemių christianizacijos tyrimų šaltinis.