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FROM PAGANISM TO CHRISTIANITY

BURIAL RITES DURING THE TRANSITION PERIOD

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The Main Phases in the Development of the Burial Rites of the Late First Millennium to Early Second Millennium Slavic Population of the Upper Viliya (Neris) Region

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The main objective of this article is to summarise the results of long-term research into Upper Viliya (Neris) region Slavic burial sites from the late first and early second millennium, and to identify the main periods in the development of the burial rites of the population of this region. By territory of Slavic settlement in the Upper Viliya region, we mean the region in the upper reaches of the Viliya (Neris) and its tributaries approximately up to the confluence of the Usha on the left and the Narach (Narachanka) on the right. In the development of burial rites, three main periods can be distinguished: period 1 covers the third quarter of the first millennium; period 2 can be dated to the last quarter of the first millennium or, more correctly, from the eighth (?) or ninth century to the beginning or the first half of the 11th century; and period 3 is the 11th and 12th centuries.

Keywords: burial rites, Upper Viliya (Neris) region, Slavs, Balts, cremation, inhumation.

Introduction

The main objective of this article is to summarise the results of long-term research into Upper Viliya (Neris) region Slavic burial sites from the late first and early second millennium, and to identify the main periods in the development of the burial rites of the population of this region in the Balto-Slavic borderlands. The limited scope of the article does not allow us to dwell on a detailed discussion of various

issues of ethnocultural identification and a substantiation of the chronology of different archaeological cultures, cultural groups and individual burial sites mentioned in the text. For this reason, the article is rather concise. However, considering the fact that most of the material presented in the work, and all the conclusions drawn from the analysis, are published here in English for the first time, I have taken

the liberty of reducing the justification of some theses to the necessary minimum, referring colleagues who are interested in them to the cited literature.

The Upper Viliya (Neris) region is a historical and cultural region in the northwest of Belarus, the exact definition of the boundaries of which for the Middle Ages is rather difficult to find in the existing literature. In this article, by territory of Slavic settlement in the Upper Viliya region, we mean the region of the upper reaches of the Viliya and its tributaries approximately up to the confluence of the Usha (Уша) on the left, and the Narach (Narachanka) (Нарач or Нарачанка) on the right (Fig. 1). In the modern territorial-administrative division, this area corresponds to the northwest of the Minsk region: the Vilieika, Lahoisk, Miadziel and Maladziechna districts, and part of the Dokshytsy district of the Vitebsk region. As a kind of western border of the region throughout the entire period under consideration, the eastern border of the distribution of monuments of East Lithuanian Barrows Culture can be used, which was stable over many centuries, starting from approximately the middle of the first millennium and until the end of the existence of this cultural community.¹

Archaeological studies of the burial monuments of the Upper Viliya region began in the middle of the 19th century. In fact, it was there that some of the first systematic scientific research in the history of Belarusian and Lithuanian archaeology was carried out, and in the entire forest zone of Eastern Europe in general. In 1856, Konstanty Tyszkiewicz organised a scientific expedition along the Viliya, one of the main goals of which was the study of archaeological monuments. Subsequently, the description

of this expedition was published in the book 'The Viliya and its Banks'.²

At different times, excavations of barrow cemeteries in the region were carried out by E. Tyszkiewicz and K. Tyszkiewicz, A. Kirkor, F. Pokrovsky, H. Cehak-Hołubowiczowa, W. Hołubowicz, A. Mitrafanau, Y. Drahun, I. Ciuryna, J. Zviaruha, L. Duchyc, V. Kaziej, H. Shtychau, V. Rabcevich, A. Plavinski, M. Plavinski, V. Tarasevich, V. Makouskaya and P. Kurlovich. Unfortunately, material from previous research cannot always be fully used in the process of analysing the burial rites of the population of the region. This concerns first of all excavations in the second half of the 19th century, and in part the results of the work carried out before the Second World War. Artefacts from the earliest studies (for example, by E. and K. Tyszkiewicz) are largely lost or re-documented, which does not allow for the confident reconstruction of the sets of grave goods. In turn, the graphic and photographic documentation of the excavations by F. Pokrovsky and H. Cehak-Hołubowiczowa has not been preserved, which makes it difficult to analyse the burial rites in the necropolises studied by these archaeologists (with the exception of those that were published in more detail).³ In any case, today we have at our disposal fairly reliable information about excavations of about 300 barrows in 11 cemeteries, and about 20 flat burials in at least three necropolises (Table 1).

Based on an analysis of the rite and the grave goods from this array of burial complexes, several main periods can be distinguished in the development of the burial rites of the Slavic population of the Upper Viliya region. It should be noted that we will not dwell in this article on a consideration of

- 1 L. Kurila, Lietuvių etninė riba rytuose IX–XII a. (1. Archeologijus duomenys), *Lietuvos archeologija* 27, 2005, pav. 12; L. Kurila, East Lithuanian Barrows – Burial in the Cradle of Lithuanian Tribes, *A Hundred Years of Archaeological Discoveries in Lithuania*, ed. G. Zabiela, Z. Baubonis, E. Marcinkevičiūtė, Vilnius, 2016, p. 199.
- 2 K. Tyszkiewicz, *Wilija i jej brzegi: pod względem hydrograficznym, historycznym, archeologicznym i etnograficznym*, Drezno, 1871.
- 3 H. Cehak-Hołubowiczowa, Materiał i zagadnienia cmentarzyska kurhanowego koło wsi Nawry w powiecie Postawskim, *Rocznik Archeologiczny* 1, Wilno, 1937, pp. 5–51; W. Hołubowicz, Ceramika słowiańska z XI–XII wieku z cmentarzyska koło wsi Nawry, *Rocznik Archeologiczny* 1 Wilno, 1937, pp. 52–69.

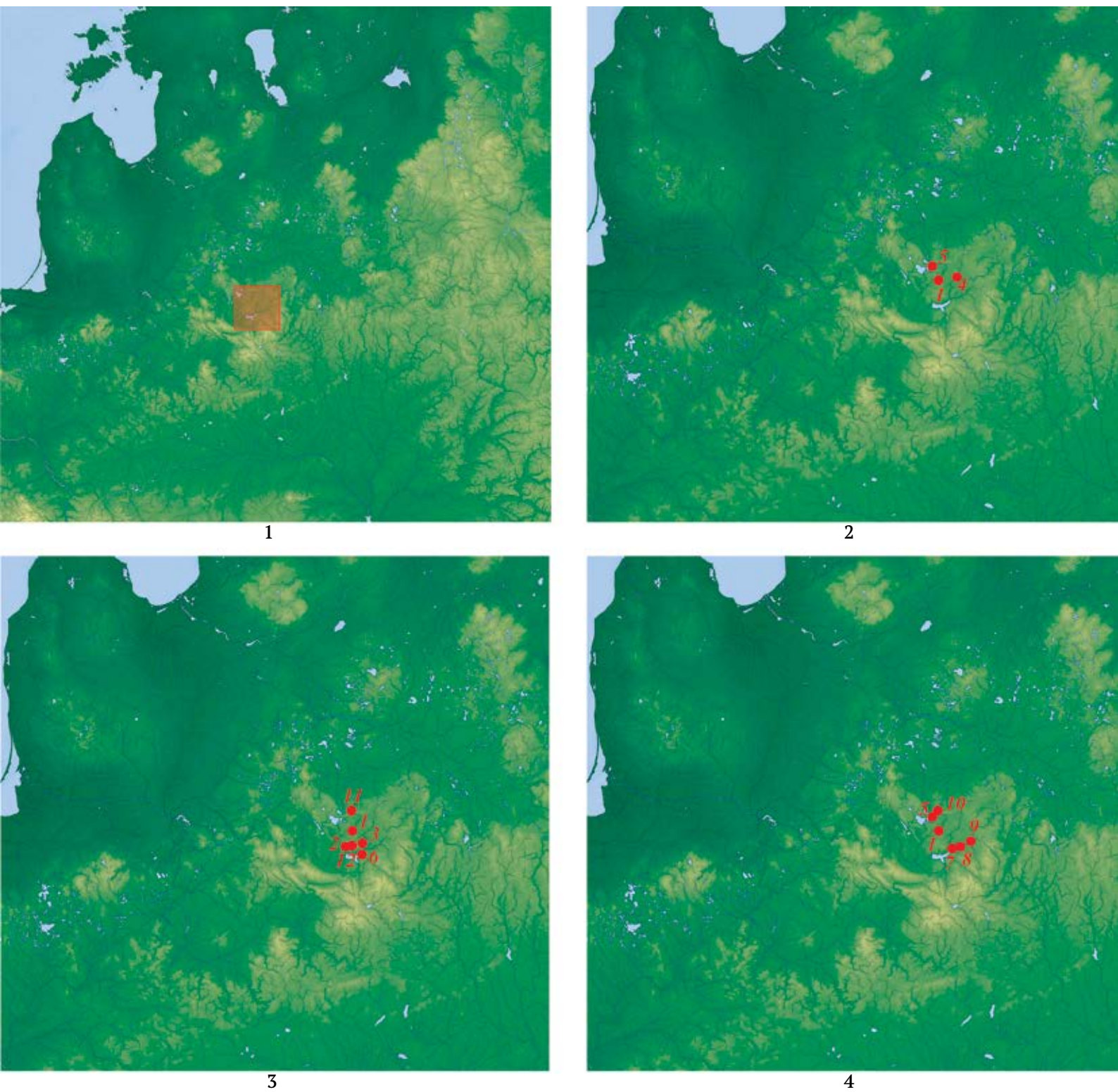


Fig. 1. The Upper Viliya region on the map of Eastern Europe (1) and the main burial sites of the region mentioned in the article: 2 – burial sites of period 1; 3 – burial sites of period 2; 4 – burial sites of period 3. The numbers on the maps correspond to the numbers in Table 1. Drawn by M. Plavinski.

individual burial complexes, but, first of all, we will focus on the characteristics of the main trends in the development of the burial rituals of the population of the region. In addition, we should dwell separately on a number of methodological issues that are fundamentally important to the study of the burial monuments of the Upper Viliya region.

First of all, it is necessary to note the methodological difficulties in determining the dating of cremation burials, both barrows and flat. Most of these burials are characterised by poverty or a lack of an inventory, which does not usually allow us to determine their relative dating precisely. In this situation, the only basis for developing a reliable chronology

Table 1. The main necropolises of the Upper Viliya region in the late first and early second millennium, explored from the 1930s to 2021, mentioned in the article

No	Necropolis	Author and year of excavation	Number of excavated barrows and flat burials
1	Naury I and II (Наўры) (Miadziel district)	H. Cehak-Hołubowiczowa, W. Hołubowicz, 1934, V. Rabcevich, A. Plavinski, 1987, M. Plavinski, A. Plavinski, V. Tarasevich, 2012, 2015–2020	50 barrows, 16 flat burials
2	Halinova (Галінова) (Vilieika district)	H. Cehak-Hołubowiczowa, W. Hołubowicz, 1934, 1937, 1938	20 barrows
3	Hury (Гуры) (Vilieika district)	A. Mitrafanau, 1955, 1965 i 1971–1972, E. Zaharulski, L. Poblal, 1956, M. Plavinski, 2021	16 barrows, 1 flat burial
4	Raviachka (Равячка) (Miadziel district)	A. Mitrafanau, 1973	3 flat burials
5	Navasiolki (Навасёлкі) (Miadziel district)	Y. Drahun, 1961, I. Ciuryna, 1962, V. Rabcevich, A. Plavinski, 1988–1990	35 barrows
6	Sosienka (Сосенка) (Vilieika district)	J. Zviaruha, 1972	23 barrows
7	Kastyki (Кастыкі) (Vilieika district)	J. Zviaruha, 1973, M. Plavinski, 2016, 2018	8 barrows
8	Kamienna-1 (Камена) (Vilieika district)	J. Zviaruha, 1974, V. Makouskaya, 2021	5 barrows
9	Izbishcha (Ізбішча) (Lahoisk district)	H. Shtychau, V. Kaziej, 1987–1991	114 barrows
10	Nahauki (Нараўкі) (Miadziel district)	V. Rabcevich, A. Plavinski, 1991	10 barrows
11	Milty I and II (Мілты) (Miadziel district)	V. Rabcevich, A. Plavinski, 1992–1993	7 barrows
12	Rechki (Рэчкі) (Vilieika district)	P. Kurlovich, 2021	1 barrow
Total:			289 barrows and 20 flat burials

of burial complexes is the creation of a radiocarbon scale. However, at the moment, radiocarbon dates from the cremations of the Upper Viliya region are single.⁴ Until their number increases, the dating of non-inventory and a few inventory cremation burials will to a certain extent remain hypothetical, and the chronological framework for the implementation of individual burials will be very wide (up to several centuries).

The second point that requires special attention is the definition of the ethno-cultural affiliation of Upper Viliya region burials of the late first and early second millennium, which is included, among other things, in the title of the article. It is quite obvious that in the absence of written sources, it is extremely problematic to determine the ethnicity of a particular group in the early Medieval population of the forest zone of Eastern Europe solely on the basis of the complex of objects of the material culture left behind by archaeological methods. All this is even more true for the border regions between different ethno-cultural masses of the population. For many centuries, up to the most recent times, the region of the Upper Viliya region was also one such territory. In this article, we will not dwell on the history of the study of the ethnic history of the region, since this issue has an extensive historiography with diametrically opposed characteristics of the ethnicity of the population of the region from Baltic to Slavic. In turn, we proceed from the concept that in northwest Belarus, all groups of the population from the second

half of the first millennium, whose material culture goes back to the traditions of the Kyiv archaeological culture, can be attributed to the Slavs.⁵

Let us turn to the periodisation of the burial rituals of the population of the Upper Viliya region.

The periodisation of burial rites

Period 1

Period 1 can be fairly broadly dated to the third quarter of the first millennium. At the moment, three flat burials can be attributed to this period, identified in the Raviachka open settlement, two barrows in Navasiolki cemetery, and two barrows in the Naury II necropolis (Fig. 1: 2). Cremations at Raviachka were placed in pits,⁶ two of them were accompanied by handmade urns (Fig. 2: 1–3). Their dating is determined only within the broad framework of the third quarter of the first millennium.⁷ Flat graves at Raviachka are traditionally considered in the literature as the only known burials of Bantsaraushchyna culture.⁸

In the barrow cemetery at Navasiolki, out of 35 mounds studied, two burial mounds with cremations date from the third quarter of the first millennium (Nos 26/14 and 35/23), identified as the first cultural and chronological horizon of the functioning of the necropolis. The dating of both mounds is determined on the basis of the grave goods found in the burials (Fig. 2: 4–6): two handmade pots in barrow 26/14,

4 N. A. Plavinskij, V. N. Tarasevič, *Predvaritel'nye rezul'taty raskopok nekropolâ vtoroj poloviny I tys. n.è. Navry II v kontekste izučeniâ pogrebal'nyh pamâtnikov severnyh regionov Respubliki Belarus', Kratkie soobšeniâ instituta arheologii* 263, 2021, pp. 305–306.

5 N. V. Lopatin, A. G. Furas'ev, *Severnye rubeži ranneslavânskogo mira v III–V vekah n.è.*, 'Ranneslavânskij mir', 8, Moskva, 2007, pp. 104–105, 125–127.

6 A. G. Mitrofanov, *Železnyj vek sredne Belorussii (VII–VI vv. do n.è. – VIII v. n.è.)*, Minsk, 1978, pp. 118–119.

7 N. V. Lopatin, A. G. Furas'ev, *Severnye rubeži ranneslavânskogo mira v III–V vekah n.è.*, 'Ranneslavânskij mir', 8, Moskva, 2007, p. 36; N. A. Plavinskij, *K voprosu o pogrebal'noj obrâdnosti naseleniâ meždureč'â Zapadnoj Dviny i Vilii v tret'ej četverti I tys. n.è.*, *Stratum plus*, 2013, p. 66.

8 V. Â. Koneckij, *K voprosu o formirovanii kul'tury dlinnyh kurganov, Novgorod i Novgorodskaâ zemlâ. Istorîâ i arheologiâ* 11, 1997, p. 221; V. I. Šadyra, *Bancaraŭskaja kultura, Archiealohija Bielarusi. T. 2. Žalieznyj viek i ranniaje siaredniaviečča*, ed. V. I. Šadyra, V. S. Viarhieŭ, Minsk, 1999, pp. 365–366.

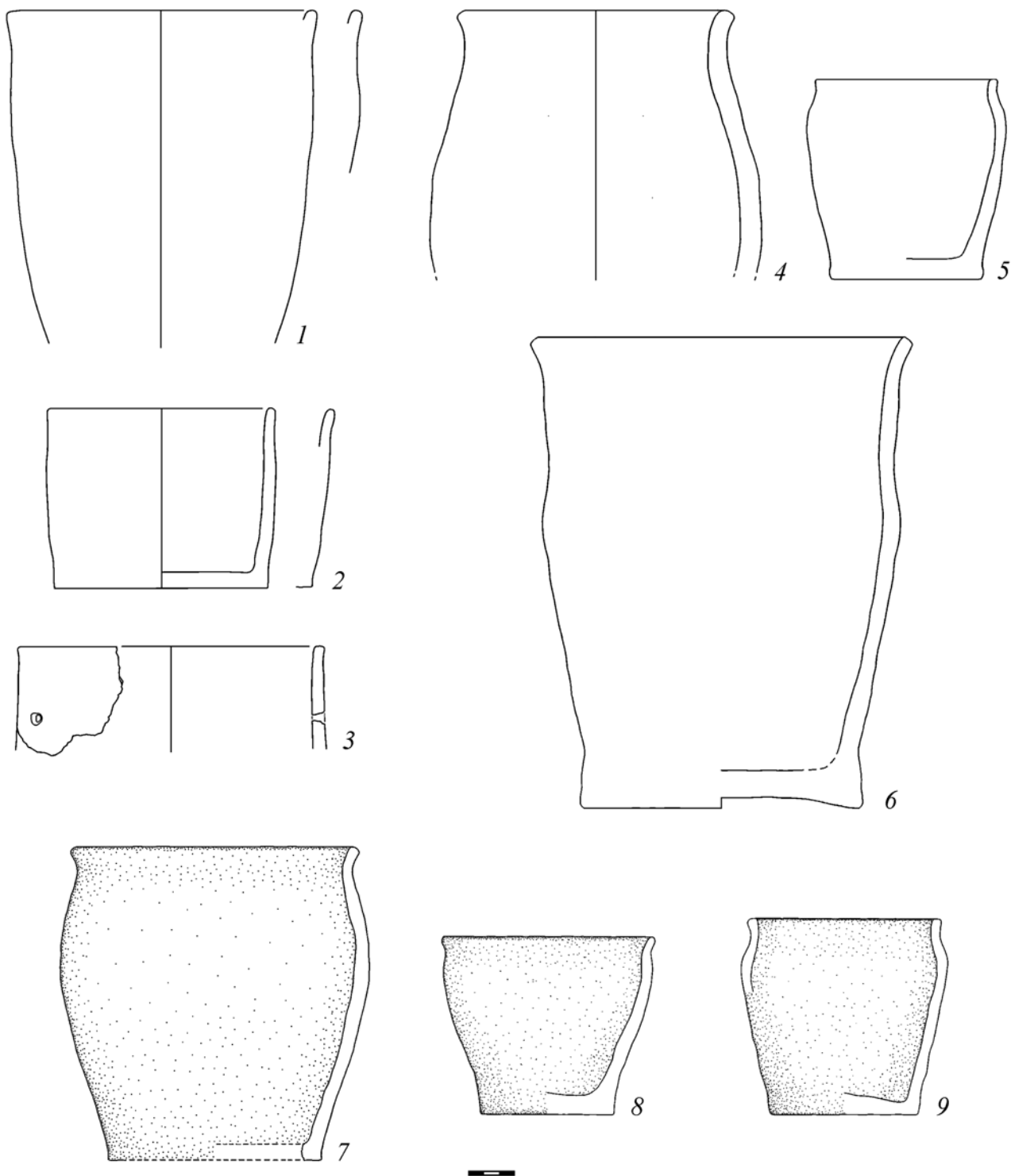


Fig. 2. Handmade pottery from burials from the third quarter of the first millennium: 1-2 – Raviachka, burial 1; 3 – Raviachka, burial 2; 4-5 – Navasiolki, barrow 24/16; 6 – Navasiolki, barrow 35/23; 7 – Naury II, barrow 13; 8 – Naury II, barrow 12, burial 1; 9 – Naury II, barrow 12, burial 2. 1-3 – after N. Lopatin; 4-9 – drawn by M. Plavinski.

and a handmade pot and an iron buckle with a frame close in shape to an oval in barrow 35/23.⁹

The third site in the Upper Viliya region where burials from the third quarter of the first millennium have been found so far is the necropolis of Naury II. In the existence of this necropolis, two cultural and chronological horizons have been distinguished, the first of which includes two studied barrows with cremations (Nos 12 and 13 [Fig. 2: 7–9]) from the third quarter of the first millennium. In turn, flat cremation burials from a later time, left by the population of Smolensk-Polack Long Barrows Culture, belong to the second horizon. In barrow 12, two cremation burials were found, for each of which a radiocarbon date was obtained that fits within the framework of the seventh century.¹⁰

Obviously, at present, the burial sites of the Upper Viliya region from the third quarter of the first millennium are extremely few; however, their number is gradually increasing in the process of new archaeological field research. Regarding the cultural affiliation of the burials in the barrows, I have repeatedly expressed the idea of the possibility of their attribution to Pskov Long Barrows Culture.¹¹ At the same time, it is obvious that both the barrows at Navasiolki and Naury II, and the flat burials at Raviachka open settlement, were left by the same population that lived in this region at the time under consideration, namely, the carriers of Bantsaraushchyna culture. Therefore, at the moment it can be stated that the population that left the hillforts and open

settlements of Bantsaraushchyna culture in the Upper Viliya region could have buried their dead according to the rite of cremation both in flat cemeteries and in barrow necropolises. It is possible that over time, as new necropolises from the third quarter of the first millennium are discovered, both in the Upper Viliya region and in other regions of northern Belarus, it will be possible to identify separate groups and types of burial monument of the local population.

Period 2

Period 2 is represented by a significantly larger number of necropolises than Period 1, and in some of them a fairly representative number of burial complexes has been studied. To this period can confidently be attributed barrow cemeteries Sosienka, Hury, Milty I and II, Halinova, and Rechki, and the flat burials of the Naury II necropolis (Fig. 1: 3; 3–5). They were left by the population of Smolensk-Polack Long Barrows Culture (SPLBC), which is associated with the annalistic Krivichi. At present, the most difficult is the question of the lower chronological boundary of this period. This is primarily due to the nature of the material at our disposal. The essence of the problem lies in the fact that most of the burials of SPLBC in the Upper Viliya region do not contain artefacts that could be narrowly dated to within the chronological boundaries of the existence of the culture. At the same time, no chronological indicators characteristic

9 N. A. Plavinskij, K voprosu o pogrebal'noj obrádnosti naseleniá meždureč'á Zapadnoj Dviny i Vilii v tret'ej četverti I tys. n.è., *Stratum plus*, 2013, pp. 67–69; M. A. Plavinski, *Slavianskija pachaval'nyja pomniki Vierchniaha Pavillia epochi Siaredniaviečča: materijaly i dasliedavanni*, Minsk, 2022, pp. 73–74, 81, 84.

10 N. A. Plavinskij, V. N. Tarasevič, Predvaritel'nye rezul'taty raskopok nekropolá vtoroj poloviny I tys. n.è. Navry II v kontekste izučeniá pogrebal'nyh památnikov severnyh regionov Respubliki Belarus', *Kratkie soobšeniá instituta arheologii* 263, 2021, pp. 301–319.

11 M. A. Plavinski, K voprosu o pogrebal'noj obrádnosti naseleniá meždureč'á Zapadnoj Dviny i Vilii v tret'ej četverti I tys. n.è., *Stratum plus*, 2013, pp. 67–70; N. A. Plavinskij, V. N. Tarasevič, Predvaritel'nye rezul'taty raskopok nekropolá vtoroj poloviny I tys. n.è. Navry II v kontekste izučeniá pogrebal'nyh památnikov severnyh regionov Respubliki Belarus', *Kratkie soobšeniá instituta arheologii* 263, 2021, pp. 320–321.

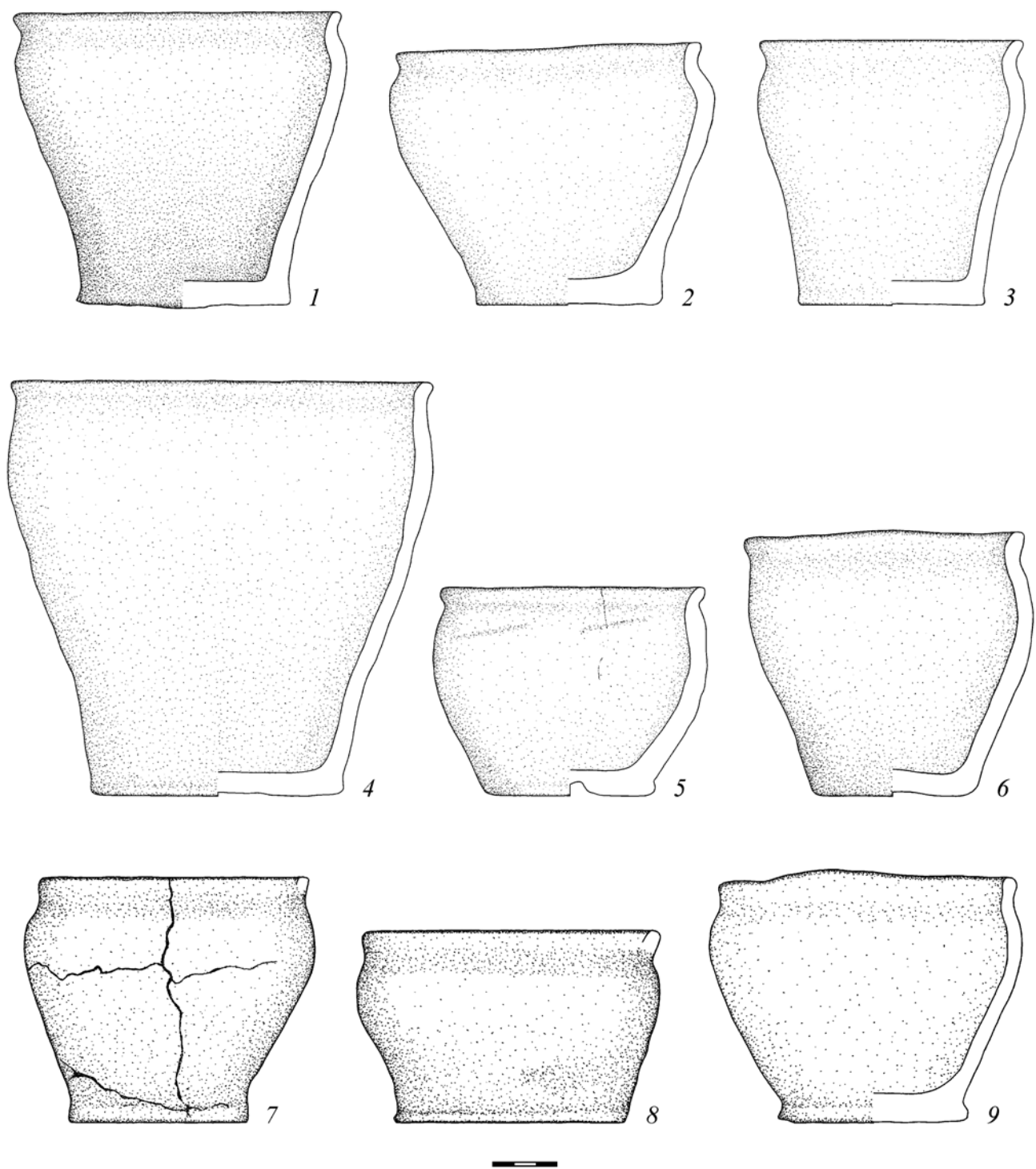


Fig. 3. Handmade pottery from Smolensk-Polack Long Barrows Culture barrow cemeteries of the Upper Viliya region:
 1 – Sosienka, barrow 5; 2 – Sosienka, barrow 9 (partial graphic reconstruction); 3 – Sosienka, barrow 13 (partial graphic reconstruction); 4 – Sosienka, barrow 16 (partial graphic reconstruction); 5 – Sosienka, barrow 18;
 6 – Sosienka, barrow 19; 7–9 – Hury. 9 – partial graphic reconstruction, drawn by M. Plavinski.

of the early stages of the existence of this cultural community have been identified in the burial complexes of SPLBC in this region.

Based on the available data, it can be assumed that SPLBC was formed in the Smolensk Dnieper region, and probably the northeastern regions of Belarus, no later than the middle of the eighth century.¹² In different regions of the range of SPLBC, the existence of settlement and burial monuments left by its bearers continued until the end of the tenth century (in the Smolensk Dnieper region)¹³ or until the beginning or middle of the 11th century (in the Belarusian Dzvina region and the Dzvina-Nioman watershed).¹⁴

The development of a more detailed chronology of the burial monuments of SPLBC in the Upper Viliya region seems to be extremely problematic at the moment, due to the already noted scarce and chronologically weak representative finds of grave goods, and also due to the lack of radiocarbon dates. At the same time, we can confidently assume that the Upper Viliya region is one of the westernmost regions of the distribution of SPLBC sites, where their functioning continued until the very end of the existence of the culture.

An example of such late necropolises of Krivichs of the Upper Viliya region is the barrow cemeteries of Milty I and II (Fig. 4), the dating of which can be determined to within the framework of the tenth to the first half of the 11th century. Distinctive features

of the grave goods, typical of these cemeteries, are the presence of fairly numerous glass beads and individual jewellery of Old Russian types, as well as early thrown pottery.¹⁵

Of particular interest belonging to SPLBC are the flat burials of the Naury II necropolis. Between 2017 and 2020 a total area of 733 square metres of this cemetery was investigated. Two barrows from the third quarter of the first millennium, described above, and 17 objects, which can be interpreted as flat cremation burials, fell within the boundaries of the excavations. The flat burials are of two types.

Type I includes burials in shallow pits (ten objects). The process of carrying out type I burials can be reconstructed as follows: most likely, uncleaned calcinated bones were transferred from the place of burning to the place of burial, where a round hole was dug. The bones could have been placed directly into the pit, or placed in the pit in some organic structure or container.

Type II includes burials on the surface (seven objects). In type II burials, calcinated bones were transferred from the place of burning to the place of burial, and were probably placed on the surface, possibly in some structures or containers made of organic materials, or without them.

The dating of burials of both types on the basis of the grave goods found both in the filling of objects (Fig. 5) and outside certain complexes can only be determined within the timeframe of the existence

12 V. S. Nefédov, O vremeni vozniknoveniâ kul'tury smolensko-polockih dlennykh kurganov, *Arheologîâ i istoriâ Pskova i Pskovskoj zemli. Materialy naučnogo seminarâ 1996–1999 gg.* Pskov, 2000, p. 197; E. A. Šmidt, *Kriviči Smolenskogo Podneprov'â i Podvin'â svete arheologičeskikh dannyh*, Smolensk, 2012, p. 60–61.

13 V. S. Nefédov, Smolenskie kriviči i Rus': severoevropejskie i drevnerusskie izdeliâ v smolenskih dlennykh kurganah, *Trudy III (XIX) Vserossijskogo arheologičeskogo s'ezda*, T. II ed. N. A. Makarov, E. N. Nosov, Sankt-Peterburg–Moskva–Velikij Novgorod, 2011, pp. 75–76; V. S. Nefédov, Rannie ètapy politogeneza na territorii Smolenskoj zemli (konec IX – pervââ polovina XI v.), *Severnaâ Rus' i problemy formirovaniâ Drevnerusskogo gosudarstva*, ed. S. D. Zaharov, Moskva–Vologda, 2012, p. 107.

14 M. A. Plavinski, U pošukach novych pohliadaû na historyju kryvičou Bielaruskaha Padzvinnia, *Bielaruski historyčny časopis* 5, 2020, p. 16.

15 M. A. Plavinski, *Slavianskija pachavalnyja pomniki Vierchniaha Pavillia epochi Siaredniaviečča: materyjaly i dasliedavanni*, Minsk, 2022, p. 23.

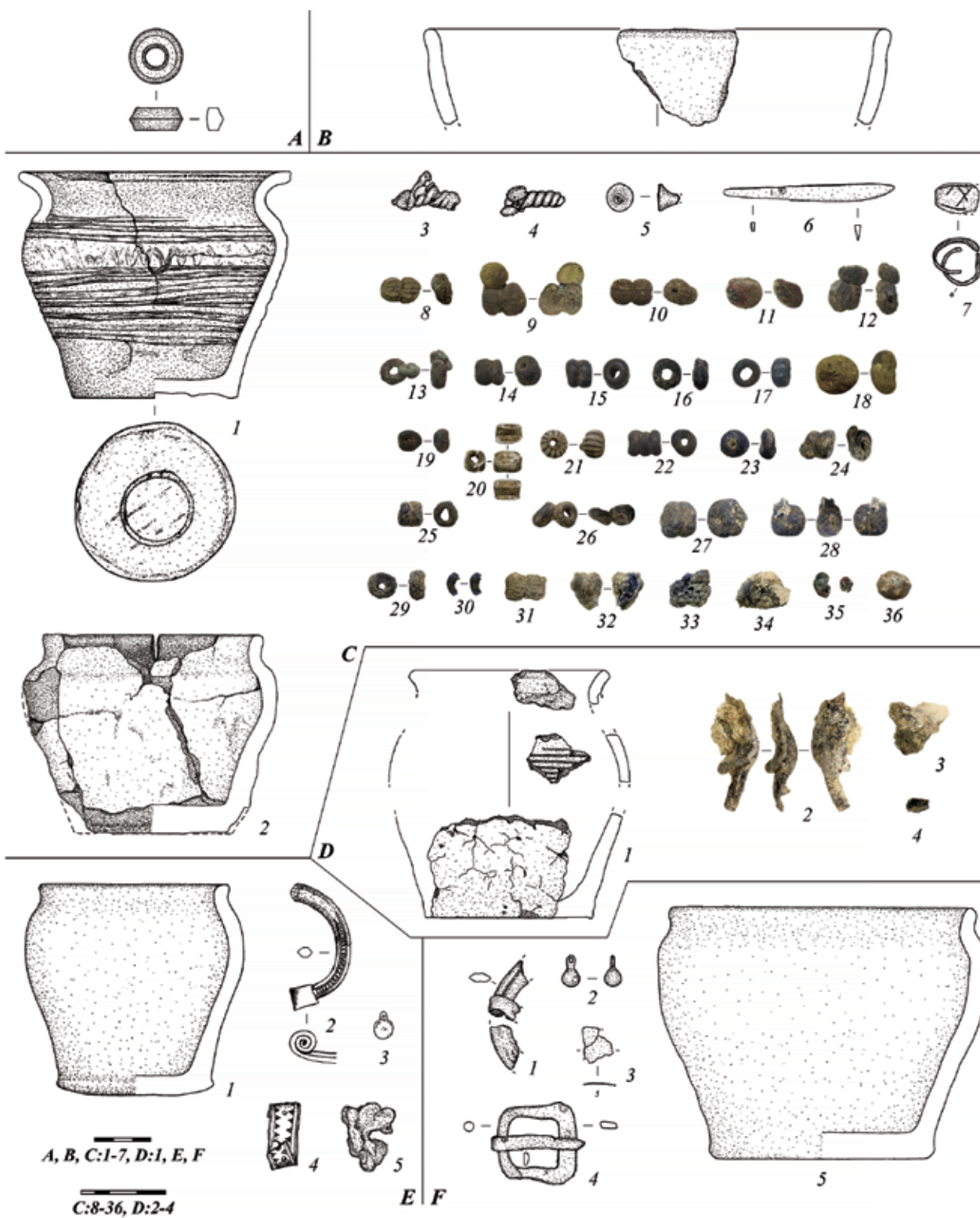


Fig. 4. Grave goods from Milty Smolensk-Polack Long Barrows Culture barrow cemetery: A – Milty I, barrow 1; B – Milty I, barrow 2; C – Milty I, barrow 4; D – Milty I, barrow 13; E – Milty II, barrow 1; F – Milty II, barrow 2. Drawn by M. Plavinski, photograph by M. Latyshava.

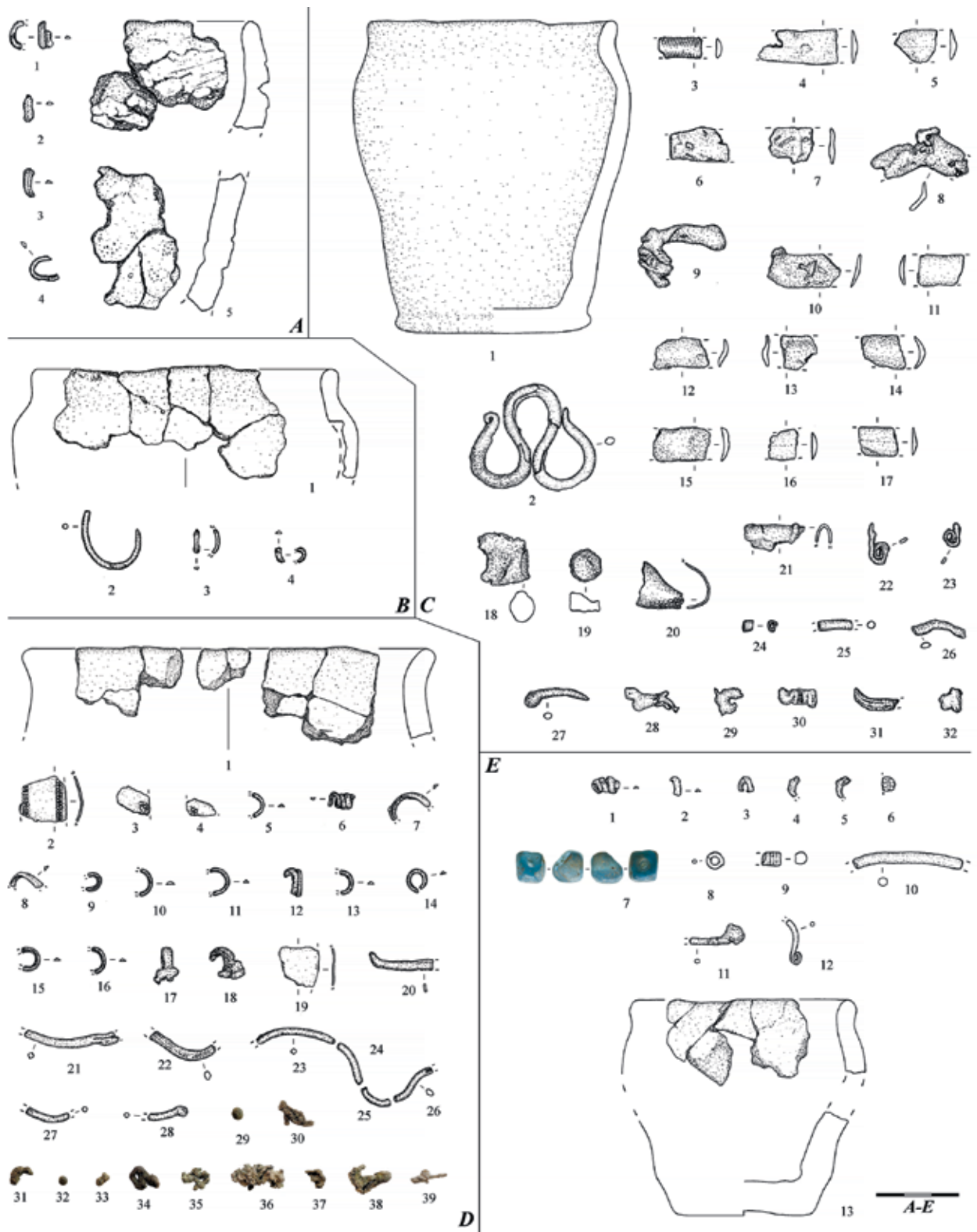


Fig. 5. Naury II Smolensk-Polack Long Barrows Culture necropolis, grave goods from flat burials: A – Object 0; B – Object 1; C – Object 6; D – Object 8; E – Object 17. Drawn by M. Plavinski, photograph by V. Tarasevich.

of SPLBC to the eighth to the beginning or the first half of the 11th century.¹⁶

The Naury II necropolis is the first cemetery in the area of SPLBC monuments where flat burials of this culture have been discovered and studied over a fairly large area. The fact that a flat necropolis of SPLBC was discovered is important not so much in itself, but in the context of the question of how widespread such a burial tradition could be in the area of this culture.

It can be assumed that, at least on the western borders of the settlement of the carriers of SPLBC, flat burials could have been quite widespread. Two such burials were investigated at the Svila 1 hillfort, in the Hlybokaye district, Vitsiebsk region.¹⁷

It is likely that single flat burials could also be found on the territory of two necropolises in the Upper Viliya region. So during the excavations of the barrow cemetery at Hury, according to the information of the author of the research A. Mitrafanau, in 1971 an inlet cremation burial was discovered, placed in a pit, which was made in the ditch of barrow 10.¹⁸

In addition, during the excavations of the barrow cemetery of the Old Rusian-period Kamena-1 carried out by V. Makovskaâ in 2021, the remains of a destroyed and redeposited cremation burial were found.¹⁹

Period 3

Period 3 begins with the distribution of inhumation burials among the Slavic population of the Upper

Viliya region (Fig. 1: 4). At the moment, the spread of the idea of preserving the body of the deceased and the refusal to cremate the dead should be confidently associated with the expansion of Christianity in Rus'. In a particular region in the upper reaches of the Viliya inhabited by Slavs, the process of spreading Christianity was largely synchronous with the process of establishing the early state structures of the Principality of Polack here. The lower chronological boundary of period 3 can be determined within the framework of the beginning of the 11th century, although it is possible that some of the earliest inhumation burials could have been made at the very end of the tenth century. The end of period 3 is marked by a gradual departure from the erection of barrows over the bodies, which in most cases was completed by the end of the 12th century, although in some necropolises barrows could have been built during the first half of the 13th century.²⁰

The main characteristic features of the burial rites of period 3, or, in other words, the Old Rusian period, of the population of the Upper Viliya region were inhumation burials on the bases of barrows with their heads oriented to the west. At the same time, in some cases, early inhumation burials could have been performed in the so-called chamber-like graves.

At the moment, chamber-like graves have been found only in the barrow cemetery at Izbishcha, in the Lahoisk district, which is on the left bank of the River Dzvinasa (a left tributary in the upper reaches of the Viliya). At the time of the study of the necropolis between 1987 and 1991, there were at least 120 barrows in it, of which 114 were excavated. Seven

16 N. A. Plavinskij, V. N. Tarasevič, *Beskurgannye pogrebeniâ krivičej po materialam nekropolâ Navry II Mâdel'skogo rajona Minskoj oblasti Respubliki Belarus'*, *Stratum plus* 5, 2022, pp. 273–301.

17 A. Mitrafanau, T. Karobuškina, *Archiealahičny pomnik, Pommiki historyi i kultury Bielarusi* 4, 1975, p. 38.

18 A. G. Mitrofanov, *Otčet o polevyh issledovaniâh v 1971 godu, Fond arheologičeskoj naučnoj dokumentacii Central'nogo naučnogo arhiva Nacional'noj akademii nauk Belarusi, Opis' 1, File 380, Minsk, 1971, pp. 34–35.*

19 V. A. Makovskaâ, *Kurgannyj mogil'nik Kameno-1 v svete novyh issledovanij, Aktual'naâ arheologija 6. Materialy meždunarodnoj naučnoj konferencii molodyh učenyh, Sankt-Peterburg, 4–7 aprêlâ 2022 g.*, ed. M. I. Bažan, Sankt-Peterburg, 2022, p. 232.

20 M. A. Plavinskij, *Slavianskija pachaval'nyja pomniki Vierchniaha Pavillia epochi Siaredniaviečča: materijaly i dasliedavanni*, Minsk, 2022, p. 31, 112.

of them contained cremations, in five barrows both cremations and inhumations were found simultaneously, and 17 barrows did not contain traces of burials or were badly damaged. In the rest of the barrows, inhumations were found.²¹ An analysis of sets of beads found in the burials carried out by M. Latyshava (Stsiapanava) revealed that only one cremation can be dated to the second half or the end of the tenth century, while all inhumations with beads were made during the 11th or the early 12th century.²²

At first glance, the barrow cemetery at Izbishcha is a rare example of an Old Rusian necropolis for the Principality of Polack, which has been almost completely studied and published in the form of a separate monograph,²³ which could make it possible to use the materials from its excavations as a reliable basis for chronological studies and various sociological observations. Unfortunately, in practice, the state of the documentation on the excavations used by G. Shtychau to prepare a generalising edition of research material at Izbishcha, as well as collections of finds stored in the Institute of History of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, does not always allow us to treat the published data with full confidence. This is especially true of the descriptions of the stratigraphy of barrows and their plans that we have at our disposal.

Despite this, based on the observations of G. Shtychau (with all the necessary caution, considering the specified aspects), it can be noted that in 19 barrows at Izbishcha cemetery inhumation burials

were placed in grave pits. These burials were combined by the researcher into type 6.²⁴ Most of these grave pits are much larger than was required by sanitary norms for burying the bodies of the deceased (Table 2). Shtychau noted that a characteristic feature of the design of burial structures of type 6 was the presence of ash-coal layers above the grave pits,²⁵ which can be interpreted as traces of an overlap.²⁶

The placement of bodies of the buried in vast empty pits covered with wooden flooring allows us fairly confidently to attribute them to the number of chamber-like graves. Barrows 26 stand out against the general background (the size of the grave pit is 3.8×2.4 metres, its depth is 0.7 metres) and 99 (the size of the grave pit is 3.8×1.6 metres, its depth is 0.7 metres), containing rich female burials.²⁷ These burial complexes can with certainty be classified as chamber-like graves.²⁸

It can be assumed that individual groups living in the western regions of the Polack area practised burials according to the rite of inhumation in chamber-like graves starting from the very end of the tenth or the beginning of the 11th century. Chamber-like graves were dug in Izbishcha cemetery in the first half of the 11th century.

It is also likely that the first chamber-like graves appeared in necropolises which belonged to the population of local administrative centres such as Izbishcha that arose on the western borders of the Principality of Polack in the late tenth to early 11th centuries, when the Polack area became part of the

21 H. V. Shtychau, Mohiŋnik Izbishcha-Dzvinasa, *Materyjaly pa archiealohii Bielarusi* 16, 2008, Minsk.

22 M. I. Stsiapanava, Pacierki kurhannaha mohiŋnika Izbishcha, *Sbornik rabot 68-j naučnoj konferencii studentov I aspirantov Belorusskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta* 2, Minsk, 2011, pp. 63–69.

23 H. V. Shtychau, Mohiŋnik Izbishcha-Dzvinasa, *Materyjaly pa archiealohii Bielarusi* 16, 2008, Minsk.

24 H. V. Shtychau, Archiealahičny kompleks Izbishcha-Dzvinasa na Lahojščynie, *Acta Archaeologica Albaruthenica* II, 2007, 2; H. V. Shtychau, Mohiŋnik Izbishcha-Dzvinasa, *Materyjaly pa archiealohii Bielarusi* 16, 2008, Minsk, pp.22–29, 34.

25 H. V. Shtychau, Mohiŋnik Izbishcha-Dzvinasa, *Materyjaly pa archiealohii Bielarusi* 16, 2008, Minsk, p. 34.

26 M. A. Plavinski, Chamber-Like Graves in the West of the Polatsk Principality: Possibilities of Interpretation in the Context of Eastern European Antiquities, *Światowit* LX, 2021, p. 48.

27 H. V. Shtychau, Mohiŋnik Izbishcha-Dzvinasa, *Materyjaly pa archiealohii Bielarusi* 16, 2008, Minsk, pp. 23, 29.

28 M. A. Plavinski, Chamber-Like Graves in the West of the Polatsk Principality: Possibilities of Interpretation in the Context of Eastern European Antiquities, *Światowit* LX, 2021, pp. 46–48.

Table 2. Izbishcha barrow cemetery. The size of the burial pits under the barrows

Barrow no.	The size of the burial pits under the barrows (in metres)		
	Length	Width	Depth
25	2.5	1.3	0.5
26	3.8	2.4	0.7
29	2.6	1.2	0.5
35	3.0	2.0	0.4
36	3.0	1.2	0.4
43	2.8	1.5	0.9
49	2.0	1.0	0.4
51	2.8	1.2	0.5
54	1.8	1.0	0.6
63	2.8	1.6	0.6
69	–	–	–
73	2.1	1.6	0.65
74	1.9	1.1	1.0
76	2.3	1.1	0.6
87	2.3	1.2	0.6
89	2.2	0.7	0.5
97	2.5	1.5	0.5
99	3.8	1.6	0.7
107	2.6	1.4	0.6

Rurik dynasty's realm. Barrows with chamber-like graves in the west of the Polack area can be considered as a peculiar and rather rare type of burial rite of the local borderland elites, who could have striven to emphasise their special status, different to that of the surrounding rural population.²⁹

Another characteristic feature of the necropolises left by the population of local administrative centres in the western borderlands of the Polack area in the Upper Viliya region can be considered the presence of a significant number of weapons in male burials. In addition to the barrow cemetery at Izbishcha, the necropolises of Navasiolki and Naury I

can be attributed to the number of such monuments in the region under consideration.

There are two cultural and chronological horizons in the functioning of the Navasiolki barrow cemetery. The burial complexes of the first, which belong to the period 1, date back to the third quarter of the first millennium. In turn, 30 barrows with inhumation burials belong to the second cultural and chronological horizon. The date of this horizon is determined as the 11th to the first half of the 12th century.³⁰

A characteristic feature of the second cultural and chronological horizon of the Navasiolki

29 M. A. Plavinski, Chamber-Like Graves in the West of the Polatsk Principality: Possibilities of Interpretation in the Context of Eastern European Antiquities, *Światowit* LX, 2021, pp. 55–56.

30 M. A. Plavinski, *Slavianskija pachavalnyja pomniki Vierchniaha Pavillia epochi Siaredniaviečča: materyjaly i dasliedavanni*, Minsk, 2022, pp. 88–89.

necropolis is the obvious predominance of male burials over female ones, which may indicate certain disparities in the composition of the group that left this cemetery. Of the 30 barrows belonging to this horizon, the sex of the buried is determined with a greater or lesser degree of certainty in 28 barrows (a total of 30 individuals). Of this number, 19 burials belong to men, and only 11 to women. Such a sex distribution, namely, a significant, almost twofold, preponderance of male burials, looks unusual. It is known that the rural necropolises of the Polack area of the Old Russian period are characterised by an approximately equal ratio of buried men and women.³¹

The second characteristic feature of the burial rite of the second cultural and chronological horizon of the necropolis at Navasiolki is the exceptional number of weapons, which were found in 17 out of 19 male burials. Moreover, in 15 barrows, inhumations were accompanied by axes, in one by a spear, and in another by a spear and an axe (Fig. 6). At the same time, some of the axes found in the burials, in terms of their weight and size, can be classified as polyfunctional or work tools. However, it cannot be denied that the placement of an axe (albeit a multifunctional or working one) in the burial should have symbolised the 'armament' of the deceased, and thus reflect his social status and position in society. Accordingly, at Navasiolki, 84.5% of men went to the next world 'armed'.³²

In turn, in the barrow cemetery at Izbishcha, out of 33 male inhumation burials, weapons were found in 27, which is about 82%.³³

In the Naury I necropolis, there were initially at least 117 mounds, of which 45 were investigated (in 1934, 1987, 2021 and 2015–2017). The materials from these excavations suggest that the necropolis functioned during the 11th and 12th centuries. In almost all the barrows, burials were made at the level of the day surface, and oriented with their heads to the west, with slight deviations, usually to the north-west.³⁴ Of the 17 undestroyed male burials, weapons were found in 11 (Fig. 7), which is about 65%.³⁵

It is obvious that in the Upper Viliya region at the end of the tenth and beginning of the 11th century several rather large barrow cemeteries appeared (Izbishcha, Navasiolki, Naury I) which are characterised by the burial of the dead according to the rite of inhumation, a significant degree of militarisation of male burials, and certain signs of elitism in the burial rites. Probably the oldest of these necropolises is Izbishcha, located in the very upper reaches of the Viliya, which arose at the end of the tenth century. In turn, the cemeteries at Naury I and Navasiolki began to function in the 11th century. Among other things, they are brought together by an almost standardised funeral rite: the placement of the deceased on the base of the barrow with the head to the west. All this suggests that the members of the communities who left these necropolises had a certain idea of Christian burial rituals.

31 O. A. Emel'ānčik, *Formirovanie antropologičeskikh osobennostej naseleniā Belarusi XI–XIX vv. po dannym kraniologii*. Dissertaciā na soiskanie učenoi stepeni kandidata istoričeskikh nauk po special'nosti 03.03.03 – antropologiā, Minsk, 2013, p. 79, tabl. 4.1

32 N. A. Plavinskij, Kurgannyj mogil'nik Novosēlki v kontekste pogrebal'nyh pamātnikov Verhnego Povil'ā načala II tys. n.ē., *Arheologičeskie vesti* 36, 2022, p. 163.

33 N. A. Plavinskij, Kurgannyj mogil'nik Novosēlki v kontekste pogrebal'nyh pamātnikov Verhnego Povil'ā načala II tys. n.ē., *Arheologičeskie vesti* 36, 2022, p. 164.

34 H. Cehak-Hoħubowiczowa, Materiał i zagadnienia cmentarzyska kurhanowego koło wsi Nawry w powiecie Postawskim, *Rocznik Archeologiczny* 1, Wilno, 1937; N. A. Plavinskij, Kurgannyj mogil'nik Nawry v Verhov'āh Vilii (po materialam raskopok 2012 i 2015 godov), *Arheologiā i istoriā Pskova i Pskovskoj zemli. Seminar imeni akademika V.V. Sedova: Materialy 62-go zasedaniā* 32, 2017, pp. 320–340; N. A. Plavinskij, Raskopki kurgannogo nekropolā Nawry Ī v 2017 godu, *Arheologiā i istoriā Pskova i Pskovskoj zemli. Seminar imeni akademika V.V. Sedova: Materialy 64-go zasedaniā*, (2018 z.), 34, 2019.

35 N. A. Plavinskij, Kurgannyj mogil'nik Novosēlki v kontekste pogrebal'nyh pamātnikov Verhnego Povil'ā načala II tys. n.ē., *Arheologičeskie vesti* 36, 2022, p. 164.

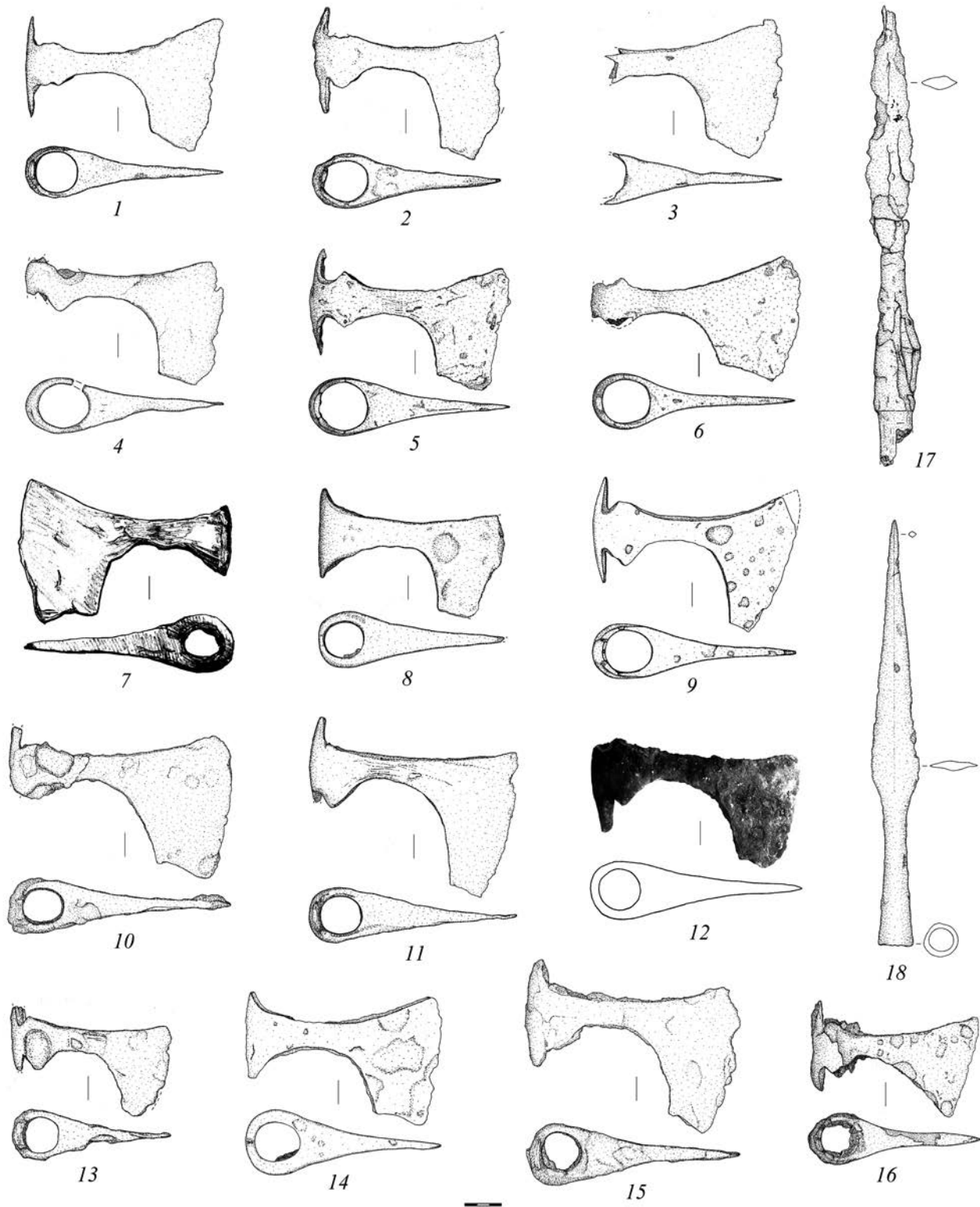


Fig. 6. Weapons from Navasiolki barrow cemetery: 1 – barrow 1; 2–4 – barrows 2–4; 5 – barrow 5/1; 6 – barrow 6/2; 7 – barrow 7/3; 8 – barrow 13/1; 9 – barrow 19/7; 10, 18 – barrow 28/16; 11 – barrow 29/17; 12 – barrow 31/19; 13 – barrow 32/20; 14 – barrow 33/21; 15 – barrow 34/22; 16 – barrow 22/10; 17 – barrow 12/8. 1–6, 8–11, 13–18 – drawn by M. Plavinski, 7 – by I. Ciuryna, 12 – photograph by A. Plavinski.

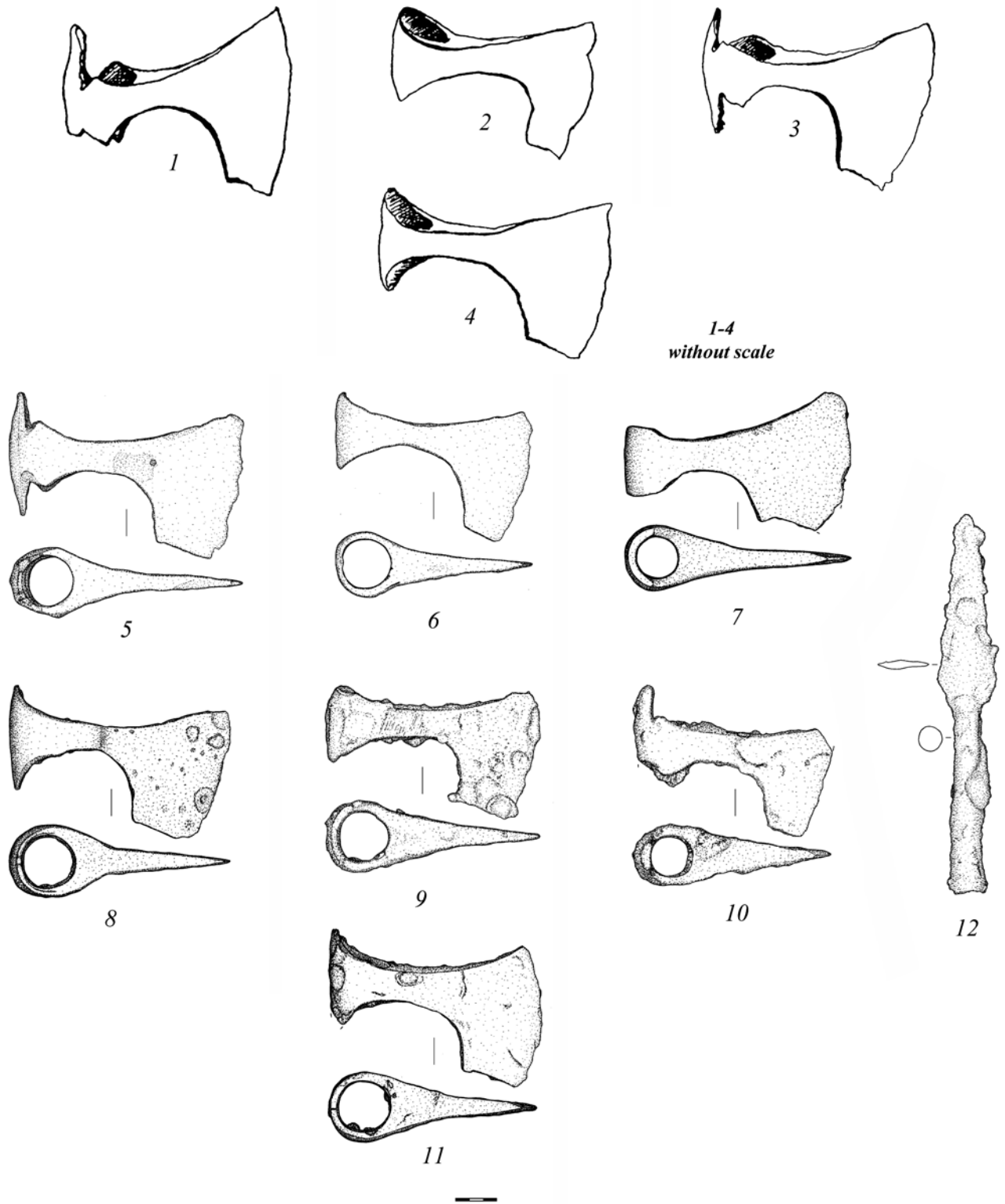


Fig. 7. Weapons from Naury I barrow cemetery: 1 – barrow 2 (barrow 8 / 1934); 2 – barrow 5 (barrow 9 / 1934); 3 – barrow 6 (barrow 15 / 1934); 4 – barrow 7 (barrow 7 / 1934); 5 – barrow 1 (barrow 5 / 1934); 6 – barrow 3 (barrow 2 / 1934); 7 – barrow 23 (barrow 1 / 1987); 8 – barrow 24 (barrow 2 / 1987); 9 – barrow 34 (2012); 10, 12 – barrow 35 (2012); 11 – barrow 70 (2016). 1–4 – after H. Cehak-Hońubowiczowa, 5–12 – drawn by M. Plawinski.

It can be assumed that Izbishcha, Navasiolki and Naury I mark the process of the spread of the Old Rusian administration in the Upper Viliya region. Accordingly, these cemeteries can be considered as necropolises of local administrative centres, whose inhabitants exercised control over the local population on the western borders of the Polack area. At the same time, it is possible that the somewhat later appearance of the necropolises at Naury I and Navasiolki (11th century), compared to Izbishcha (presumably, the end of the tenth century), may reflect the process of spreading the Old Rusian administration in the Upper Viliya region (Fig. 1: 4), and, in parallel, the penetration here of the population, which had a certain idea of Christian burial rituals. This population probably became a kind of model for the natives, both those who were part of the same communities as the newcomers-Christians, and for the inhabitants of the 'outback'.

As a result of these processes during the 11th century in the Upper Viliya region, a fairly uniform rite of burial in barrows was formed, in which the body of the dead was placed mainly on the base of the barrow with the head to the west.

As an example of a typical rural necropolis of the Old Rusian period, we can cite the barrow cemetery of Kastyki on the right bank of the Viliya. The first excavations at Kastyki were carried out by K. Tyszkiewicz in 1856. He unearthed one barrow, partially eroded by the Viliya, but no burial or grave goods were found in it.³⁶ As a result of research in 1973 and 2016, eight barrows were studied here, in one of which three inlet burials from the Late Middle Ages

or the Modern Period were found. The burial rites at the Kastyki barrow cemetery demonstrate a certain uniformity. In all cases, inhumation burials were placed on the bases of barrows. In cases where the orientation of the bodies of the dead could be fixed, they were oriented with the head to the west, with greater or lesser deviations to the north or south. The only exception is the burial in barrow 5, oriented with the head to the north, possibly with a slight deviation to the west. The dating of the necropolis is determined within the framework of the mid-11th to 12th century.³⁷

By the end of the 12th century, the tradition of erecting barrows was gradually becoming a thing of the past. By this time, most barrow necropolises ceased to exist. The necropolis near the village of Nahauki can be considered the latest Old Rusian barrow cemetery. According to J. Zviaruha, who examined this site in 1979 and 1985, there were 156 barrows, of which ten were excavated by V. Rabcevič and A. Plavinski in 1991.³⁸ Despite the paucity of the identified grave goods (Fig. 8), the dating of the necropolis can be determined to the second half of the 11th to the first half of the 13th century. Of the ten barrows studied, burials were found in nine. All of them were performed according to the rite of inhumation, and were placed at ground level. In one case, the state of preservation of the bone remains did not allow the determination of the orientation of the body. Of the remaining eight, seven were oriented with the head to the east. This fact is of obvious interest, since it distinguishes Nahauki from the rest of the necropolises of the Upper Viliya region,³⁹

36 K. Tyszkiewicz, *Wilija i jej brzegi: pod względem hydrograficznym, historycznym, archeologicznym i etnograficznym*, Drezno, 1871, p. 44.

37 M. A. Plavinski, M. I. Stsiapanava, *Kompleks archiealahičnych pomnikaŭ Kastyki ŭ viarchoŭjach Vili*, Minsk, 2019; N. A. Plavinskij, *Osnovnye rezul'taty issledovanij arheologičeskogo kompleksa Kostyki v verhov'âh Vili* (Minskaâ oblast' Respubliki Belarus'), *Arheologija i istorija Pskova i Pskovskoj zemli. Seminar imeni akademika V.V. Sedova: Materialy 65-go zasedaniâ*, (2019 z.) 35, 2020.

38 M. A. Plavinski, *Slavianskija pachaval'nyja pomniki Vierchniaha Pavillia epochi Siaredniaviečča: materyjaly i dasliedavanni*, Minsk, 2022, p. 24.

39 M. A. Plavinski, *Slavianskija pachaval'nyja pomniki Vierchniaha Pavillia epochi Siaredniaviečča: materyjaly i dasliedavanni*, Minsk, 2022, pp. 31–32.

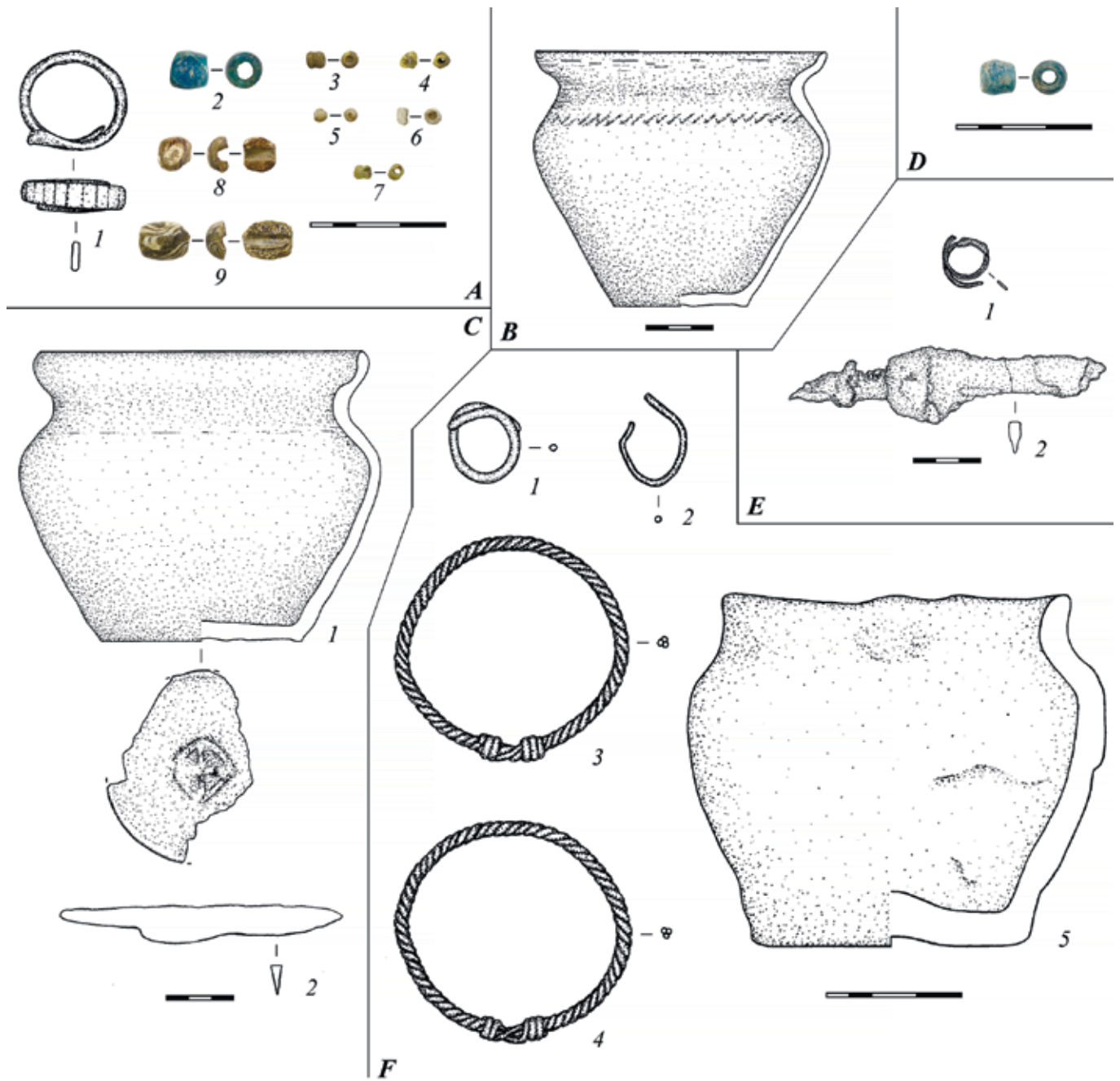


Fig. 8. Grave goods from Nahauki barrow cemetery: A – barrow 2; B – barrow 3; C – barrow 5; D – barrow 8; E – barrow 9; F – barrow 10. Drawn by M. Plavinski, photograph by M. Latyshava.

and from the general statistics of the orientation of inhumations on the territory of the Principality of Polack. So according to G. Shtychau, on the territory of the Principality of Polack, the eastern orientation of the buried was found in 11.04% of barrows with inhumations.⁴⁰ In accordance with the latest research by A. Voitekhovich, 421 bodies with a western orientation, and 53 with an eastern orientation, were recorded in the Principality of Polack (in another 47 cases, bodies were found with a meridional orientation).⁴¹

It should be noted that quite often the eastern orientation of the dead in barrows from the Old Russian period is interpreted by researchers as a manifestation of certain ethno-cultural features of the ancient community that left such burials. However, in my opinion, in the case of the Nahauki necropolis, there are no grounds for assuming a different ethnic character of the local population. At least the grave goods found in the barrows do not differ from the grave goods of other barrows of the Upper Viliya region from the Old Russian period. Probably the most logical explanation for the complete predominance of an eastern orientation of the dead in the Nahauki necropolis is that during Old Russian times, a strict idea of the proper norms of Christian burial rituals was not formed in this region. Obviously, the main sign of such a ritual was the burial of the body of the deceased under the barrow, oriented with the head to the west. However, it is also obvious that in some

groups, for one reason or another, this norm was not generally accepted. Such reasons may be, for example, the inaccessibility or territorial remoteness of the place of residence of a certain community from local administrative and parish centres.

In one way or another, by the end of the 12th century, the tradition of erecting barrows in the Upper Viliya region gradually ceased to exist, although the construction of barrows in some places could have continued in the first half of the 13th century. The barrow tradition was probably replaced by the ritual of burying the dead in an underground grave, over which small mounds of sand and stones were erected. Belarusian historiography uses terms such as *zhalniki*, for 'stone barrows' or 'stone graves'.⁴²

It should be noted that the region of the upper reaches of the Viliya and the upper reaches of the Biarezina Dnieper (a tributary of the Dnieper) is considered to be the territory of the concentration of such 'barrow-*zhalnik*' cemeteries.⁴³ In historiography, there is a fairly stable tradition that connects the spread of '*zhalnik*' cemeteries in the upper reaches of the Viliya and the Biarezina with the resettlement of the Yotvingians here.⁴⁴ However, there is no real confirmation of this hypothesis, and the further development of Christian burial rituals should be considered as the most plausible version of the spread of the '*zhalnik*' burial rite.⁴⁵ Despite the presence of quite numerous publications devoted to a discussion of the ethnicity and dating of the *zhalniks* of the Upper

40 H. V. Shtychau, *Kryvičy: Pa materyjalach raskopak kurhanou u Paŭnočnaj Bielarusi*, Minsk, 1992, p. 66.

41 A. V. Vojtehovič, *Pogrebal'nyj obrád naseleniâ Polockoj zemli v X–XII vv.* Minsk: Belaruskâ navuka, 2019, 39.

42 M. A. Plavinski, Siaredniaviečny mohil'nik Haraviec u viarchoŭjach Biareziny, *Kul'turnyy shar. Statti na poshanu Hliba Yuriyovycha Ivakina*, ed. O. P. Tolochko, Kyiv, 2017, pp. 340, 342.

43 L. U. Dučyc, Kurhanna-žal'ničnyja mohil'niki na terytoryi Polackaj ziamli (da pastanoŭki pytannia), *Historyčna-archiealahičny zbornik* 10, 1996.

44 L. U. Dučyc, Kurhanna-žal'ničnyja mohil'niki na terytoryi Polackaj ziamli (da pastanoŭki pytannia), *Historyčna-archiealahičny zbornik* 10, 1996; A. V. Kvâtkovskaâ, *Âtvâžskie mogil'niki Bielarusi (k. XI–XVII vv.)*, Vilniaus, 1998, pp. 175–176; V. V. Sedov, *Žal'niki, Rossijskaâ arheologiâ* 1, 2000, p. 18.

45 M. A. Plavinski, Siaredniaviečny mohil'nik Haraviec u viarchoŭjach Biareziny, *Kul'turnyy shar. Statti na poshanu Hliba Yuriyovycha Ivakina*, ed. O. P. Tolochko, Kyiv, 2017, pp. 353–354.

Viliya, the number of excavated sites of this type is still insignificant (the necropolises of Kamena-2⁴⁶ and Maliavichy in the Vilieika district).⁴⁷

The grave goods from these cemeteries reflect the process of the formation of the material culture of the population of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and finds direct analogies in the synchronous necropolises of the Belarusian Nemunas region⁴⁸ and the eastern regions of Lithuania.⁴⁹

Conclusions

Thus, in the development of the burial rites of the Slavic population of the Upper Viliya region in the late first and early second millennium, three main periods can be distinguished.

The first (period 1) covers the third quarter of the first millennium. At the moment, the known burial monuments from this period are extremely few, which so far only allows us to confidently state the fact that the local population (bearers of Bantsaraushchyna archaeological culture) buried their dead according to the rite of cremation, both in barrows and in flat burials.

The second period (period 2) is associated with the spread of Smolensk-Polack Long Barrows culture (annalistic Krivichi) in the Upper Viliya region, and can be conditionally dated to the last quarter of the first millennium, or more correctly, from the eighth (?) or ninth century to the beginning or first half of the

11th century. The usual rite of burial for this ethno-cultural group was the placement of cremations under, in or on the tops of barrows. After identifying and studying the necropolis at Naury II, it becomes obvious that the Krivichi, who inhabited the region of the Upper Viliya region, also buried the cremated remains of their dead in flat cemeteries.

It is possible that between the burial traditions of periods 1 and 2, in the future, certain intermediate or transitional horizons may be identified, which are currently outlined on the basis of an analysis of some relatively fully studied necropolises. However, in the entire region of the Upper Viliya region, the identification of such horizons can still be only hypothetical.⁵⁰

The third, or Old Russian, period (period 3) of the development of the burial rites of the population of the Upper Viliya region began at the beginning of the 11th century, although it is possible that some, the earliest inhumation burials could have been performed in the region at the very end of the tenth century, and continued until the end of the 12th century, and in some places the tradition of erecting barrows could have been preserved in the first half of the 13th century. The main, and in fact the only, material sign of the beginning of period 3 is the appearance and spread in the region of inhumation burials, and the gradual abandonment of the tradition of burning the dead. It can be assumed that the main norm of the new burial rites was the requirement not to burn the bodies of the dead, all the rest of the ritual actions

46 J. H. Zviaruha, *Bielaruskaje Pavillie ū žaliezny m vekiu i rannim siarednieviakoŭi*, *Materyjaly pa archiealohii Bielarusi* 10, Minsk, 2005, p.140.

47 L. U. Dučyc, A. A. Vajciachovič, P. M. Kieńka, Kurhanna-žaľničny mohiľnik Maliavičy Viliejskaha rajna, *Histryčna-archiealahičny zbornik* 27, 2007.

48 A. V. Kvátkovska, *Átvázskie mogiľniki Bielarusi (k. XI–XVII vv.)*, Vilnius, 1998.

49 R. Jonaitis, I. Kaplūnaitė, *Senkapis Vilniuje, Bokšto gatvėje: XIII–XIV a. laidosenos Lietuvoje bruožai*, Vilnius, 2020; E. Svetikas, *Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės christianizacija XIV a. pab. – XV a.: archeologiniai radiniai su krikščioniškais simboliais*, T. 1. Vilnius, 2009; E. Svetikas, *Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės christianizacija XIV a. pab.–XV a.: archeologiniai radiniai su krikščioniškais simboliais*, T. 2: Radinių lentelės, Vilnius, 2009; G. Vėlius, *Kernavės miesto bendruomenė XIII–XIV amžiuje*, Vilnius, 2005.

50 M. A. Plavinski, *Slavianskija pachavalnyja pomniki Vierchniaha Pavillia epochi Siaredniaviečča: materyjaly i dasiedavanni*, Minsk, 2022, pp. 87–88, 111.

carried out in the process of performing burials could have remained irregular and could have varied to a large extent.

The first necropolises with inhumation burials in Upper Viliya region, such as Izbishcha, Navasiolki and Naury I, were probably founded by the population of local administrative centres that arose in the region during the formation of the western borders of the Principality of Polack. In one of these

centres, the population of which left the necropolis at Izbishcha, for some time a kind of elite ritual for the outlying regions of Old Rus' was practised in the form of burials in chamber-like graves. However, the most widespread form of ritualism in the Upper Viliya region during the 11th and 12th centuries was the performance of inhumation burials on the ground level of barrows and the orientation of their heads to the west.

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Pagrindiniai Neries aukštupio slavų populiacijos laidojimo papročių vystymosi etapai vėlyvajame I m. e. tūkstantmetyje – pirmuosiuose II tūkstantmečio amžiuose

Mikalai Plavinski

Neries aukštupio slavų teritorija yra laikomas regionas Neries ir jos intakų aukštupyje apytiksliai iki Ušos žiočių iš kairės ir Naručio žiočių iš dešinės. Vakarine šio nagrinėjamo periodo laikotarpio riba galima laikyti rytinę Rytų Lietuvos pilkapių kultūros paminklų paplitimo ribą.

Išskirtini 3 pagrindiniai šio laikotarpio Neries aukštupio slavų populiacijos laidojimo papročių raidos periodai.

Pirmas apima I tūkstantm. III ketvirtį, kai vietos gyventojai (Bacerovo archeologinės kultūros nešėjai (pav. 1: 2; 2)) kremuotus palaikus laidojo tiek pilkapiuose, tiek plokštiniuose kapinynuose.

Antras periodas siejasi su Smolensko-Polocko kultūros (metraščių krivičiai) ilgųjų pilkapių paplitimu Neries aukštupyje. Šis periodas gali būti sąlygiškai datuotas trečiu I tūkstantm. ketvirčiu, arba, tiksliau, VIII (?) arba IX a. – XI a. pradžia arba I puse (pav. 1: 3; 3–5). Šios etnokultūros

grupės laidojimo būdui buvo įprasta degintus palaikus laidoti po pilkapiais, jų viduje arba viršūnėse, taip pat ir plokštiniuose kapuose.

Trečiam (Senosios Rusijos) periodui būdingos inhumacijos apeigos – virš palaidotojo pildavo pilkapį (pav. 1: 4). Šis laikotarpis datuojamas XI–XII a., nors pavieniai anksčiau vykę laidojimai pagal inhumacijos apeigas galėjo būti atliekami regione ir X a. pabaigoje, o pilkapių pylimo tradicija atskiruose jo vietovėse išliko ir pirmoje XIII a. pusėje (pav. 6–8). Galbūt per visą trečią laikotarpį pagrindinė laidojimo apeigų norma buvo reikalavimas mirusiųjų nedeiginti, o visi kiti ritualiniai laidotuvių veiksmai galėjo likti nenormuoti ir turėjo nemažą variacijų. XI–XII a. Neries aukštupio regione vis dėlto dažniausia laidojimo apeigų forma tampa laidojimas pilkapių pagrindo sluoksnyje, kūnai yra orientuojami galva į vakarus.