

# MEDIEVAL RURAL SETTLEMENT IN NORTHERN RUSSIA: NUCLEATED VILLAGES AND HAMLETS IN THE BELOOZERO – KUBENSKOE REGION BETWEEN 900 AND 1250 A.D.

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*Land documents and cadaster books of late medieval and early modern period produce a picture of dispersed rural settlement in Northern and Middle Russia with single farmsteads and small hamlets dominating on an extensive territory from the Oka and Moscow river basin towards the White sea. However, archaeological investigations in the rural areas give rich evidence that settlement patterns of the earlier period - 900-1300 A.D. - in Russia had a different character. Rural settlements of this period usually cover large areas and thus can not be identified with the later hamlets, location and topographical patterns of the early medieval and late medieval sites, mentioned in the documents, usually do not correspond. One of the thoroughly surveyed areas where large agglomerated or nucleated villages formed an important element of local settlement structures is Beloozero region on the north-eastern boundary of Ancient Russian state. The rise of this settlement pattern in the North was probably connected with the development of complex economy, which combined extraction of outland resources, cultivation and trade, and obviously had certain advantages in the context of this economy.*

Rural sites and the problems of rural development never were neglected in Russian archaeology. Turning back we can find many examples of special interest to different types of monuments in the medieval countryside which emerged in archaeology at different stages of its development, starting from the period of the barrow excavations in the middle of the XIXth century, as well as many important contributions to the rural studies dealing with the problems of peasant culture and social organisation, agrarian production and settlement patterns.

One of the most important and influential books which inspired research interest to the archaeology of the rural settlement in Russia was V. Sedov's monograph on the rural sites of Smolensk area, published in 1960 (*Sedov 1960*). Medieval villages became the objects of growing research activity since 1970-ies, when a number of projects focusing on the reconstruction of the local settlement patterns or on the wide-scale excavations of the rural dwelling sites was put forward. This research direction was partly stimulated by similar trends in western archaeology - but at a greater degree by internal factors. Different programmes of ancient monuments registration launched in 1970-ies and supported by the Ministry of culture and regional administrations opened rather wide perspective for settlement patterns and landscape studies. On the other hand, it became clear that the problem of the origin and the phenomenon of medieval Russian town, which was a matter of hot debates in 1960-70-ies, could never receive solution until archaeology obtain knowledge on the settlement situation in the areas where towns emerged. Most significant and impressive research projects dealing with medieval rural settlement were accomplished in the 1980-ies in the Ilmen lake area in the centre of Novgorod land (*Nosov 1991; 1992, 7-25*) in the areas of Rostov and Suzdal in north-eastern Russia (*Leont'ev 1996; Lapšin 1985*) and of the Vorya local commune in the Moscow region (*Černov 1989; 1991*). Still it seems obvious that even in 1980-ies -1990-ies rural archaeology always remained in the shadow of the urban studies and at present we have serious gaps in our knowledge of medieval Russian villages, cultural landscape and rural economy. Many aspects of our present concepts of rural development in Russia seem to be historical reconstruction without reliable archaeological background.

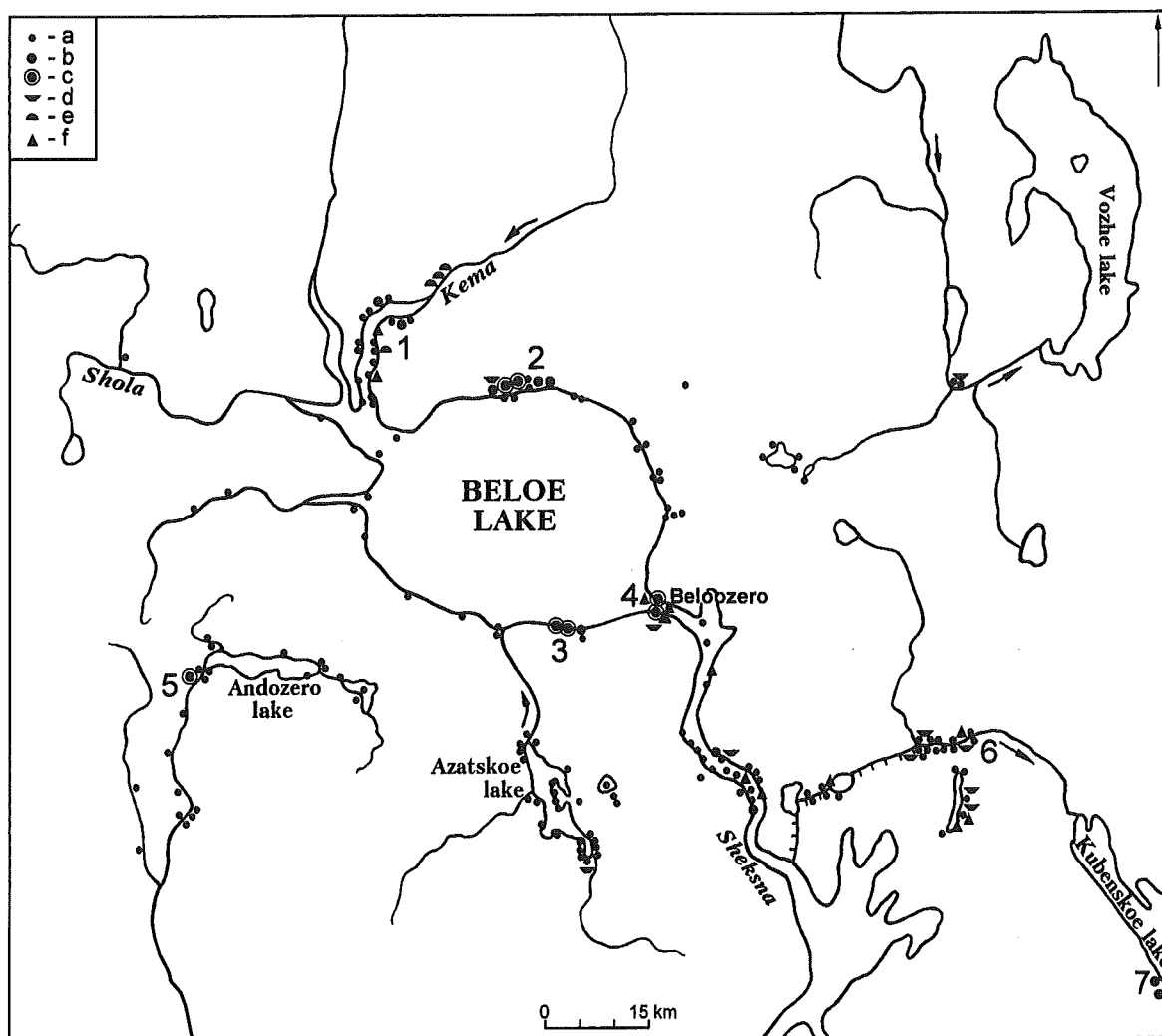


Fig. 1. Beloozero region in 900-1250 A.D. *a* - dwelling sites with the area up to 1 hectare; *b* - dwelling sites with the area from 1 to 2.5 hectare; *c* - dwelling sites with the area over 2.5 hectare; *d* - barrow cemeteries; *e* - flat cemeteries; *f* - hoards and stray finds; *l* - Lower Kema local group; 2 - Kisenema local group; 3 - Maeksa local group; 4 - Beloozero town; 5 - Western Andozero local group; 6 - Volok Slavensky local group; 7 - Minino local group.

Land surveys in different rural areas of Northern and Central Russia and excavations on the early medieval rural sites create background for some general observations concerning medieval settlement and rural development. Perhaps the most striking fact is the general character of the spatial distribution of prehistoric and medieval sites with the areas of the high concentration of monuments and the areas of sparse settlement. Configuration of these areas and balance between them probably were decisive factors which shaped the territory of Ancient Russia and strongly influenced its territorial and political organisation. Of not less importance is rich evidence of rapid rural settlement growth and settlement continuation since late X-XIth century until XIIIth century A.D. in different regions of Northern and Central Russia after a period of rather sparse settlement and slow development in the second half of the I millennium A.D. We have distinct indications that this process had much in common with the agrarian growth in Western Europe in the same period. The following period of the late XIIIth-early XIVth centuries A.D. was the time of serious settlement changes and transformations, though we have no evidence of growth interruption or complete break of the former settlement tradition.

Land documents and cadaster books of the late medieval and early modern period produce a picture of dispersed rural settlement in Northern and Middle Russia with single farmsteads and small hamlets (Russian "derevnja") dominating on an extensive territory from the Oka and Moscow river basin towards the White sea. Since XIXth century historical geography put forward and developed the concept of medieval cultural landscape as a system of small isolated farms scattered over extensive woodland areas. However, archae-

ological investigations in the rural areas give rich evidence that settlement patterns of the earlier period - approximately 900-1250 A.D. - in Russia had a different character. Rural settlements of this period usually cover large areas and thus can not be identified with the later hamlets, location and topographical patterns of the early medieval and late medieval sites, mentioned in the land documents, usually do not correspond. Assuming the spread of the more dispersed settlement patterns with smaller dwelling sites since 1250-1300 A.D. as a main trend, we should also assume that these patterns varied in different regions and that we still have very few detailed and complete regional studies that can illuminate medieval settlement in its dynamics.

One of the areas where thorough surveys produce reliable source base for settlement studies is Beloozero region in Northern Russia, the territory which formed the north-eastern boundary of Ancient Russian state in 900-1100 A.D. and remained a stable territorial unit since Early Medieval up to Modern Times (*Kopanev 1951*). About 180 early medieval dwelling sites had been registered in Beloozero region as a result of our field works at an area of about 8500 square km. Although some sites could have been missed during ground level observations or have been completely destroyed, there mustn't be much doubt that archaeological maps give adequate picture of medieval settlement in the area.

The name "Beloozero" is translated from Russian as the "White lake". This name refers to a large lake, to the region, which surrounded the lake and formed a territorial unit, and to the town, which was located near the lake. Beloe lake belongs to the Volga river system, but forms its most northern part, neighbouring with the water systems of the Onega lake and the Northern Dvina river. Thus, lying deep inside continental Russia, Beloozero was connected with the Baltic, the White, and the Caspian seas.

According to Primary Chronicle - the chronicle which displays the most significant information concerning the earliest period of Russian history, - Beloozero region was inhabited by ves' - fenno-ugrian people, and since 862 was governed by Sineus, the brother of prince Rurik, who was invited to Novgorod from Scandinavia (*Polnoe sobranie 1997*, 10, 20; *Polnoe sobranie 1998*, 14-15). However, we must take into consideration that very few sites with the cultural layers of the IX-th century were registered in the area and that in the later period Beloozero was incorporated in Rostov-Suzdal principality and governed from Rostov. Records of the later period in the chronicles contain very few mention of Beloozero until 1237, when the town served as a shelter for the Rostovian bishop Kirill during the Mongolian invasion and became a centre of a separate principality. Since that time Beloozero received a reputation of a safe and well-protected territory. In 1480, in the moment of the most serious conflict with the Tatars, Moscow grand prince Ivan III sent to Beloozero his wife and his treasury. Sigizmund Herberstein, ambassador of emperor Maximilian, who visited Russia in 1517 and 1526, described Beloozero as a place, practically inaccessible because of the forests and swamps surrounding the town (*Herberstein 1988*, 152-153).

Land documents of the early XVth-XVIth centuries, contrasting with Herberstein's statement, give evidence of many hamlets, farmsteads and fields located around the Beloe lake, mostly to the south of it. At that time a number of monasteries was founded in the Beloozero region by the monks from Moscow and other towns of Middle Russia. Kirillov monastery, founded in 1397, soon became one of the most powerful religious centres of Russia and concentrated extensive land property in its possession. Numerous land documents, which had been preserved in the monastery, produce rich data on the settlement organisation, land use and local economy. The earliest of them date to the late XIVth-early XVth century (*Akty social'no-ekonomičeskoj... 1958*, v. II). Very few territories in Russia possess comparable source base for the settlement studies. Since XIX-th century these documents drew attention of many scholars dealing with the problems of social, economical and agrarian history (*Kopanev 1951*).

More than 490 prehistoric and early medieval monuments had been registered in Beloozero region. Early medieval cultural layers or finds are presented on 186 dwelling sites. Unfortified sites form the majority of the monuments. The number of the cemeteries doesn't exceed 20. The practice of erecting burial mounds wasn't widespread in the region and identification of medieval burial places with no marks on the surface still remains a difficult task.

Dwelling sites of the Beloozero area, as elsewhere in Northern and Central Russia, usually have rather thin cultural deposits, mixed and destroyed by ploughing and water regulation. Remains of the houses can not be distinctly identified on most of the sites as stone constructions were not used by the medieval inhabitants and timber is poorly preserved in the dry sandy soil. Cultural deposits contain burned stones from the hearths and ceramics and in many cases - rather rich find material, which gives good opportunities for the dating. Test pits and land surveys make possible to locate the area of the sites and to trace their boundaries. Thus, conducting surveys since 1992 until 1998, we managed to obtain evidence about the location of the sites, their chronology, their sizes and in some cases about their development.

Sites are usually located near the large lakes and in the valleys of the large rivers, the majority of them - close to the Beloye lake, the Sheksna and the Kema rivers. The greater part of the territory, lying aside the

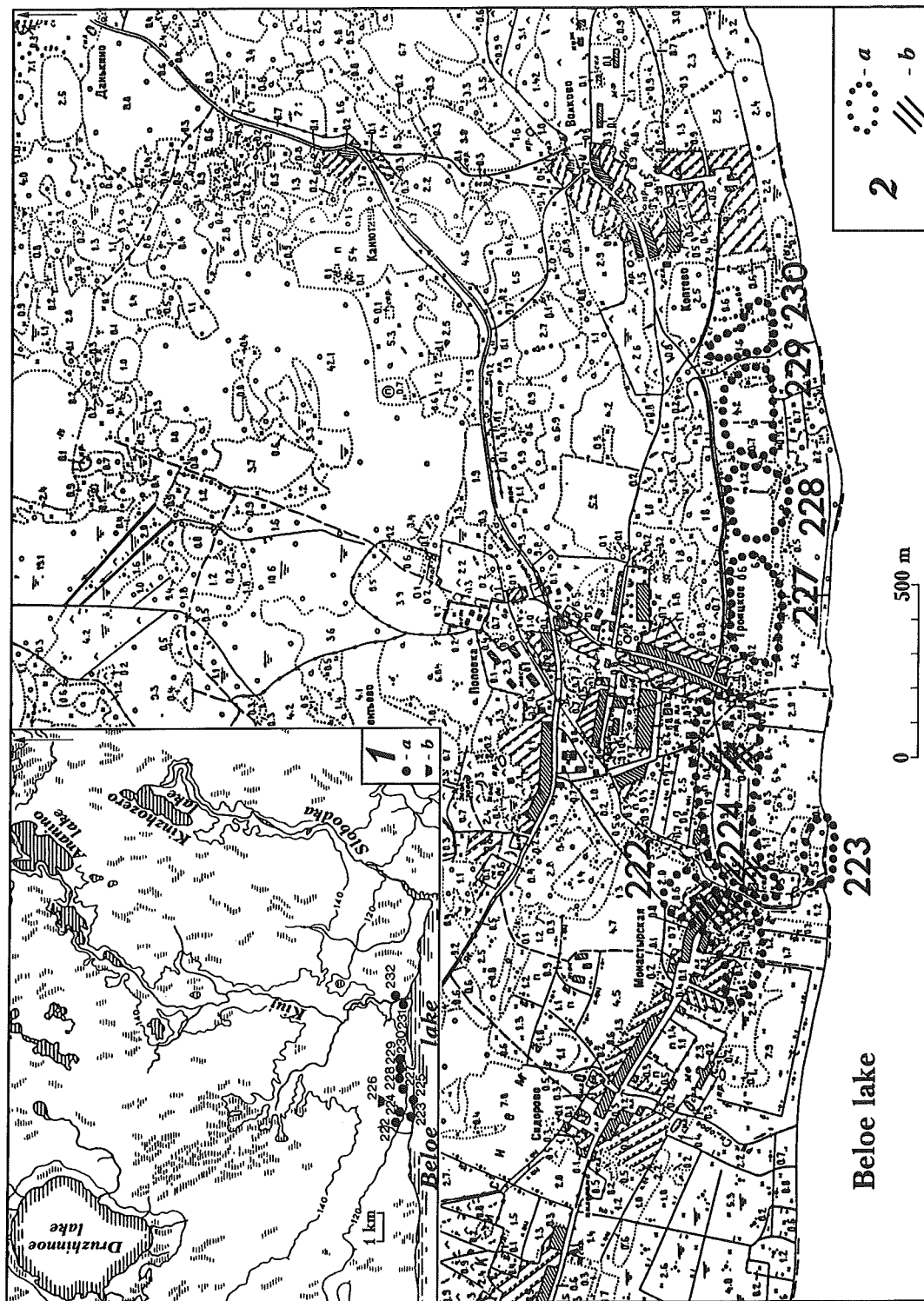


Fig. 2. Kismema local area. Settlement situation in 900-1250 A.D. 1 - Settlement situation in the Kismema local area and on the surrounding territories on the northern shore of the Beloe lake. 900-1250 A.D.: a - dwelling sites and stray finds; b - burial sites. 2 - Early medieval settlement unit in Kismema: a - sites of the period 900-1250 A.D.; b - areas with the Xth century find material on the sites.

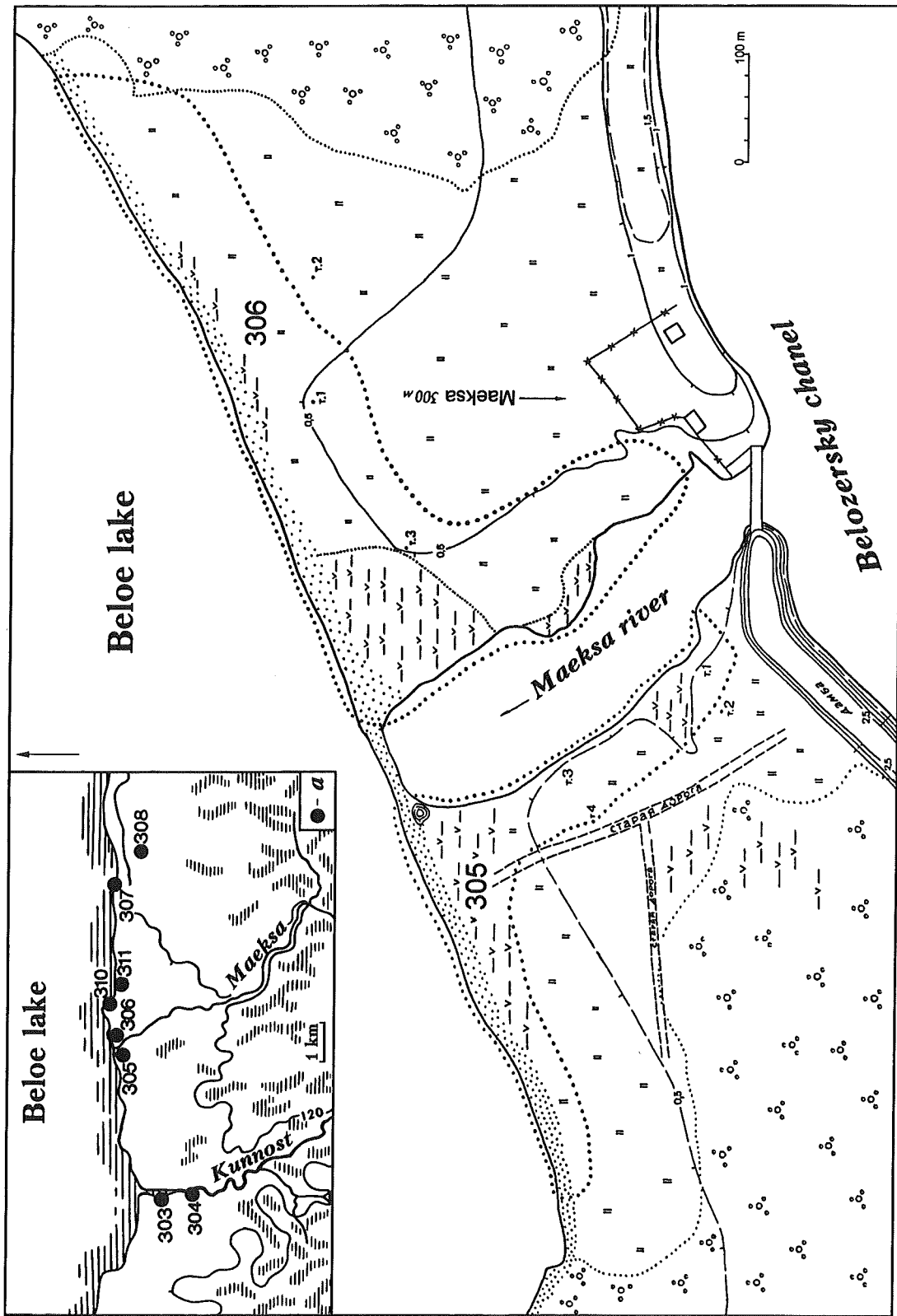


Fig. 3. Maeksa local area. Settlement situation in 900-1250 A.D. 1 - settlement situation in the Maeksa local area and on the surrounding territories on the southern shore of the Beloe lake. 900-1250 A.D.: a - dwelling sites and stray finds. 2 - Maeksa I; 305 - Maeksa I; 306 - Maeksa II. The area with the early medieval cultural layers is marked with black points.

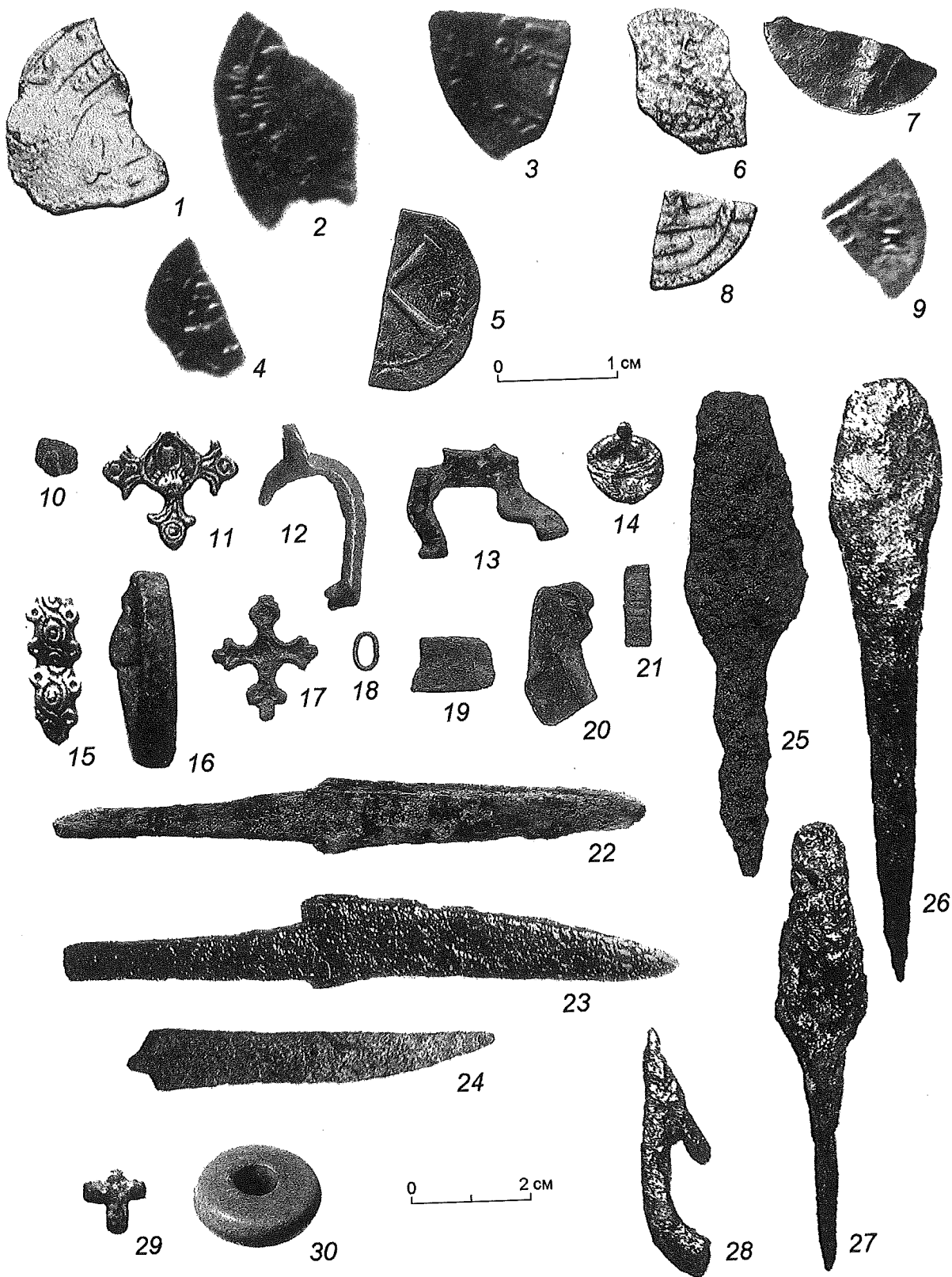


Fig. 4. Maeksa II dwelling site. Find material. 1-9, 11 - silver; 10 - glass; 12-21 - non-ferrous metal; 22-28 - iron; 29-30 - stone.

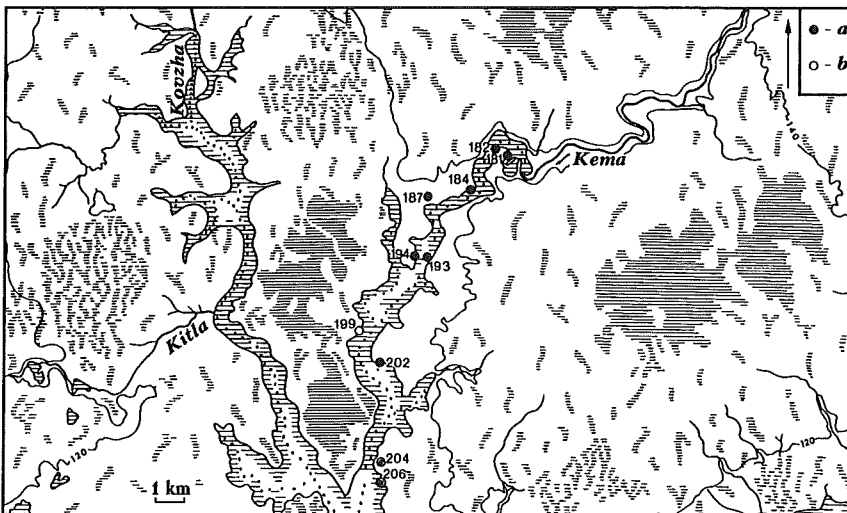
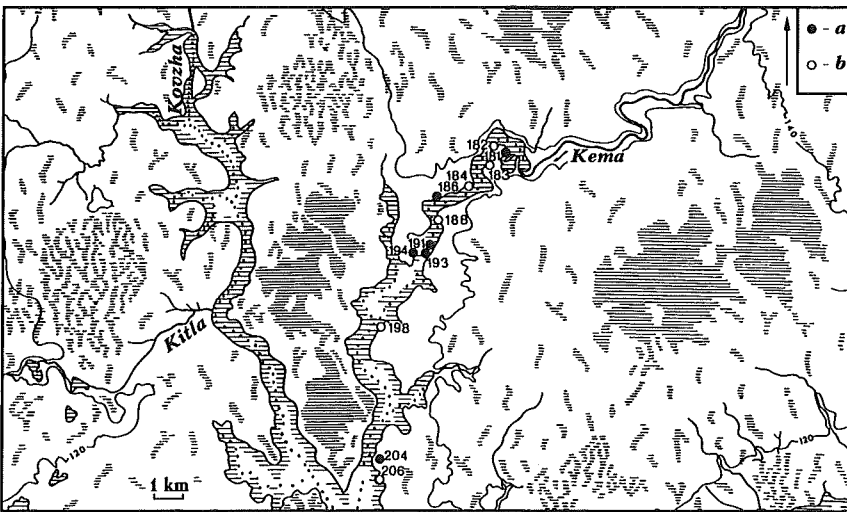
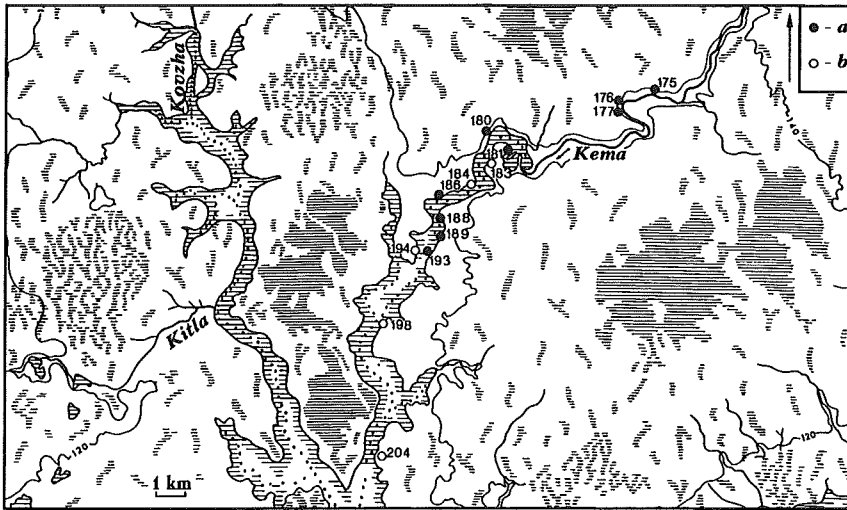


Fig. 5. Lower Kema local area. Settlement situation in 900-1250 A.D. 1 - late IXth-Xth century: a - sites dating to the period of late IXth-Xth century; b - sites dating to the period of late IXth-XIth century. 2 - XIth-early XIIth century: a - sites dating to the period of XIth-early XIIth century; b - sites dating to the period of Xth-XIth century or late Xth-XIth century. 3 - late XIIth-early XIIIth century: a - sites dating to the period of late XIIth-early XIIIth century; b - sites dating to the period of XIIth-XIIIth century or late XI-XIIIth century.

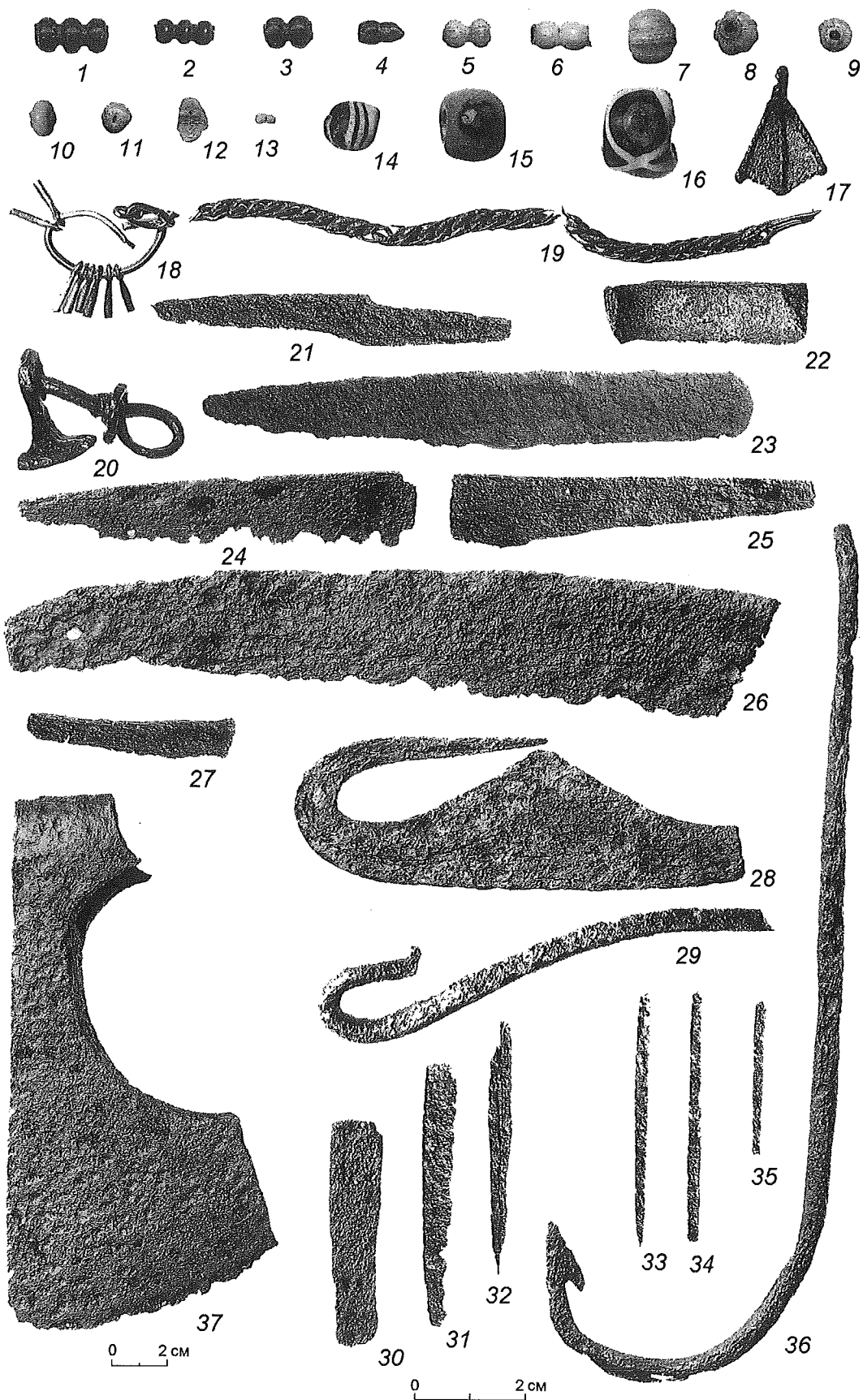


Fig. 6. Nikolskoe V dwelling site in the Lower Kema area. Find material. 1-16 - glass; 17, 19 - non-ferrous metal; 18 - silver; 20-36 - iron.



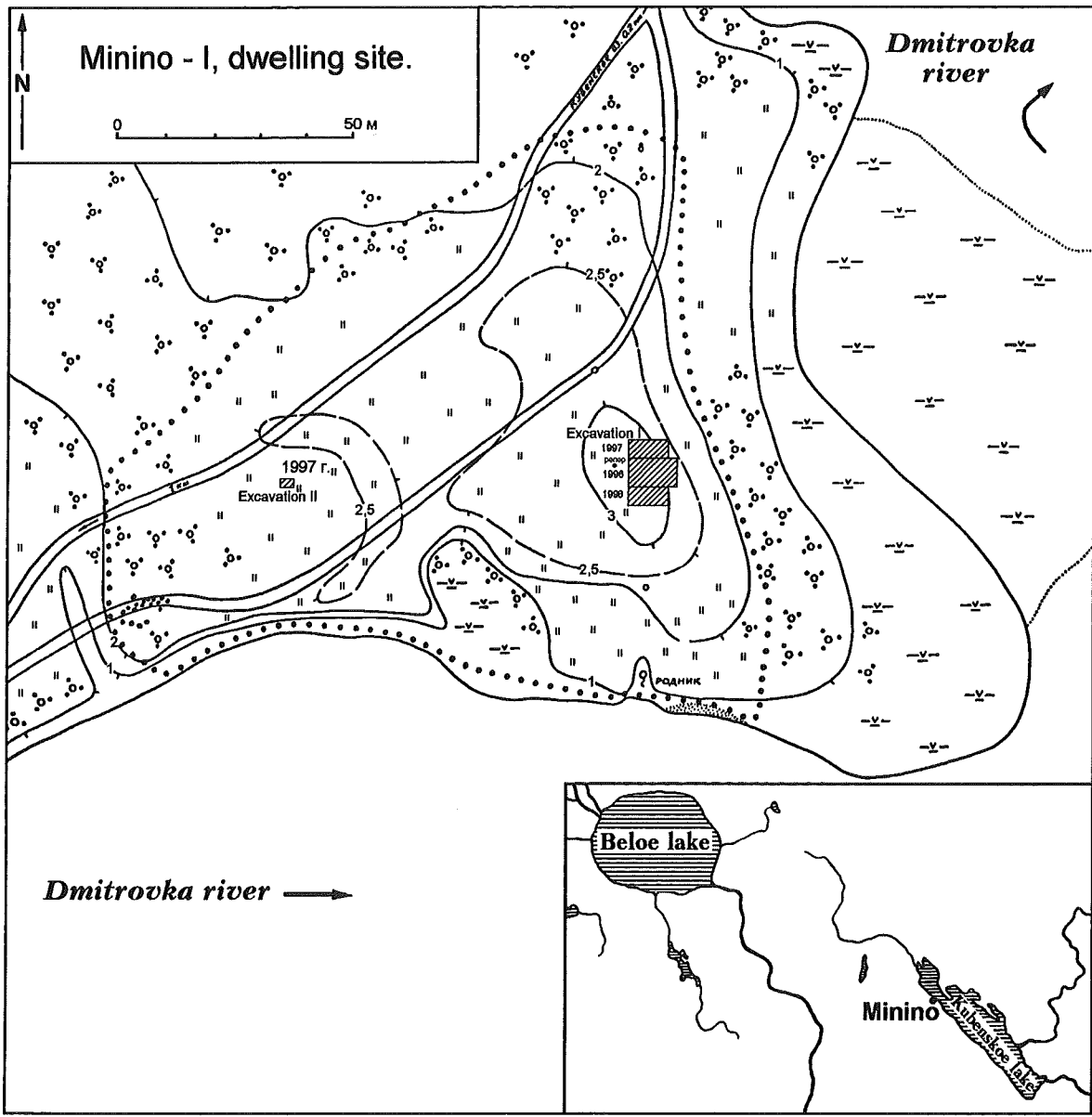


Fig. 7. Minino dwelling site. The area with the early medieval cultural layers is marked with black points.

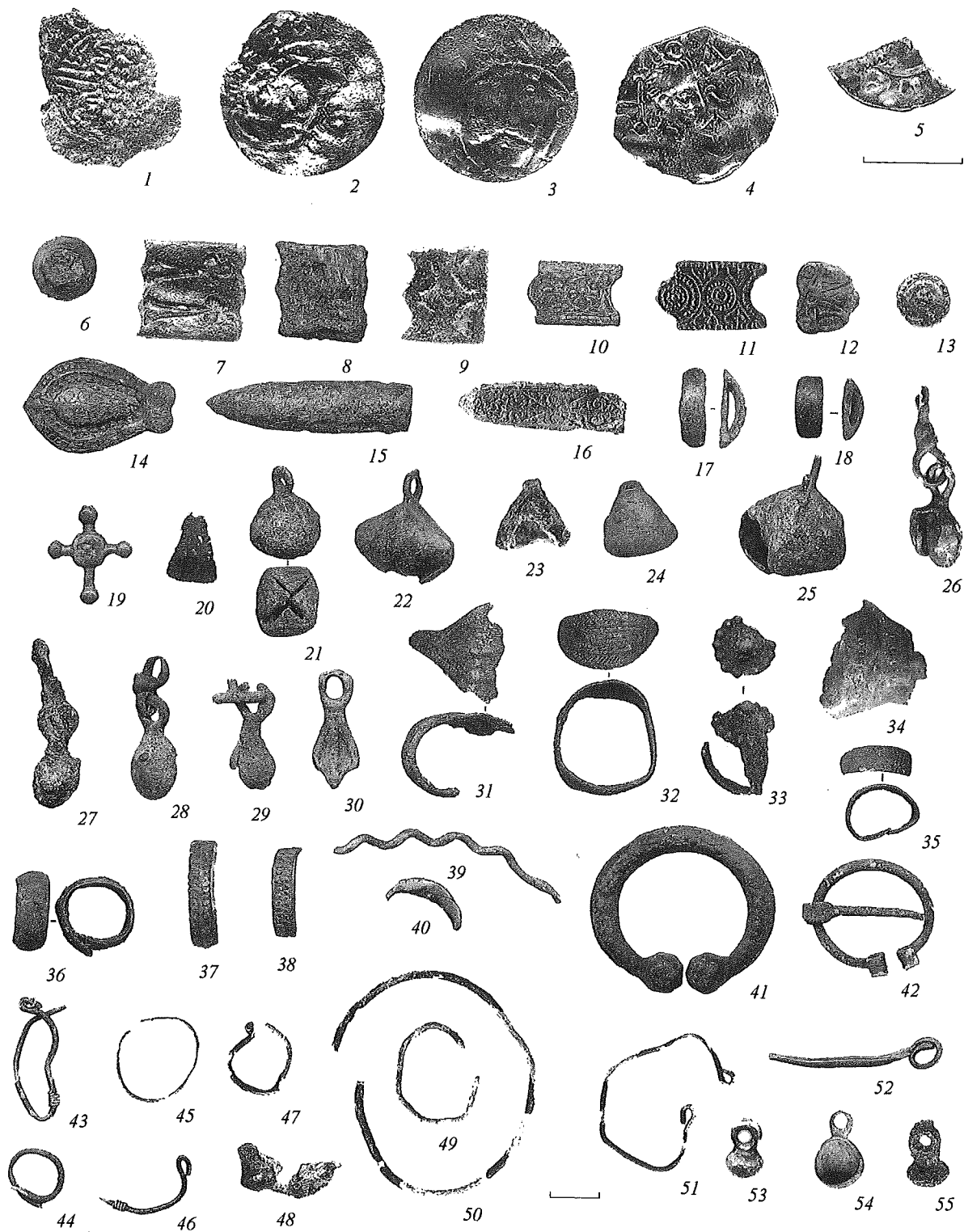


Fig. 8. Minino dwelling site. Find material. 1-5 - silver; 6-55 - non-ferrous metal.

largest lakes and rivers, yielded no indication of sedentary settlement earlier than 14th century. Almost all the early medieval settlements were founded in the period of 900-1200 A.D. as new sites, but very often - on the places which had been settled in the Neolithic, Bronze Age and Early Iron Age, but later abandoned. We have limited data about the layout of the sites. It seems that in some cases dwelling houses were constructed very close to each other and arranged in rows, stretching along the river banks, but these observations have preliminary character. Most of the sites produce few finds of pottery dating to the XIVth and XVth centuries. This fact indicates serious transformation in the settlement structures which started in the late XIIIth century.

Dwelling sites vary in size. Land surveys conducted in Beloozero area in 1970-ies-1980-ies gave indications of dispersed settlement with the small dwelling sites forming local groups. More thorough field investigations of the recent decade point that the picture was much more complicated. Small sites with an area of 250-7000 sq.m coexisted with larger ones, with an area up to 11 hectare. Among the 116 sites with defined areas small settlements with the area up to 7000 sq. m strongly dominate, constituting more than 85 %, settlements with the area from 9000 to 15000 sq.m constitute about 3,5 %. 8 dwelling sites with the areas from 2 to 11 hectare form considerably small group. Large sites were located mainly on the shore of the Beloe lake and in the valleys of the two large rivers - Sheksna and Kema - belonging to its water system, the small ones were spread over the whole territory of the region.

The character of the small rural sites is not very clear because of the poor preservation of the house remains and the lack of excavated monuments. However, it seems doubtful that they all were single farmsteads. Excavations on one of the smallest sites - Nikolskoe V on the Kema river (with the area of about 1500 sq.m) revealed remains of at least two dwelling houses dating to the late Xth-early XIth century. It is also unlikely that these sites were connected with some seasonal economical activities - such as fishing or fur hunting as most of them produce finds indicating permanent habitation and very often - the presence of the females (female ornaments, spindle whorls, etc.).

Several aspects of medieval settlement in Beloozero region seem to be of special significance. First, archaeological records reveal permanent settlement growth since approximately 950 until approximately 1200-1250 A.D. Comparing the distribution of the sites with ceramics and artifact material of the three chronological periods: late IXth-Xth century, the XIth-the early XIIth century, and the second half of the XIth-the first half of the XIIIth century, we can make certain observations concerning settlement development. Find material dating to the Xth century or to the broader chronological period of the late IXth-Xth centuries was identified on 47 dwelling sites. Most of them are sole settlements of a small size, up to 2000 square m. Villages are dispersed throughout the whole of the region, at large distances from each other. XIth-early XIIth century materials are presented on the 72 sites, thus we have vivid indications of growth and settlement expansion, especially in the eastern and northern parts of the area. Dwelling sites of the late XIIth-XIIIth centuries are more numerous - their total number is 112. They occupy larger areas (though some sites remain small in size) and are often associated in the local units. Some of these local groups developed near the former sole settlements, the others emerged on the new settled areas. But the general distribution of the settlements over the territory of the region didn't change much - internal woodland areas lying aside the river valleys and lakes remained uninhabited. Thus we have evidence of population growth, of certain expansion of the settled areas and of the formation of more complicated local structures.

The second issue is the size of the settlements and the character of their distribution over the territory. It was already mentioned that large settlements with the area over 2 hectare constituted a modest group if compared with the smaller ones, but their total area constitutes about 35 % of the total area of all the medieval sites. Besides, the greater part of the settlements formed local units of various sizes: small local units, consisting of 2-5 sites, stretching on a territory of no longer than 2.5 km with a joint area from 2000 square meters to 3 hectares and larger agglomerations, consisting of 5-13 sites, stretching over a distance of up to 7 km with a joint area from 1.5 hectare to 16 hectares. Several small units often constitute a larger one. In some cases we have rather vague grounds for registration of a site as a sole settlement or as a group of associated settlements, forming one local unit. Taking into consideration the fact that in many local areas sites are located rather close to each other and that their cultural layers date to one chronological period, we come to a the unexpected conclusion, that some of the local areas were rather densely populated during 1100-1250 A.D. while the others, often displaying similar environmental surrounding, remained uninhabited. Glancing on a regional map of the sites, we can assume this distribution of the sites as dispersed settlement, but detailed analysis of the situation on a local level leads to quite different conclusions. They seem more obvious if we compare this pattern with the earlier- Iron Age- and especially the later ones, of the Late Medieval period, when isolated farmsteads and small hamlets lying at a distance of about 0.5-1 km from each other, replaced sites and local units with an area of several hectares. Medieval large settlements and agglomerations of the Beloozero region display distinctive difference with the nucleated villages of Western Europe with

their regular layout. But it seems obvious, that formation of the large agglomerations with the high concentration of rural population was the important trend in settlement development in Beloozero since 11-th century - like elsewhere in Russia.

Formation of the large nucleated or agglomerated local structures is especially vivid in the Kismema, Maeksa and Lower Kema local areas.

Kismema settlement unit is situated on the northern shore of the Beloe lake and includes 7 sites with the total area of 16 hectare located very close to each other at a distances of 100-300 m. Dwelling sites occupy high terrace cut by a number of small rivers and stretch along the lake for about 2 km. 3 sites cover areas more than 2 hectare. Find material from Kismema includes knives, spindle whorls, cross-pendants, glass-beads, pieces of glass armrings, fragment of bronze neckring and numerous ceramics. Settlement history started with the formation of the two small sites(about 1000-2000 sq.m) at a distance of 250 m from each other in the Xth century. In the XIth century both sites expanded on a larger territory and two others appeared in their vicinities. Settlement went through a great upheaval in the XIIth-early XIIIth century. Ceramics dating to this period dominate on 5 sites, it is spread all over the territory of agglomeration. We have reliable evidence that in the XIIth century extensive territory of about 16 hectares was more or less occupied. The upheaval of Kismema with the high population density on a limited area wasn't followed by the settlement expansion to the neighbouring river valleys. Moreover, the mouths of the two rivers , nearest to Kismema, with the natural conditions favourable for medieval occupation, were not settled until the Late Medieval time. It seems that the inhabitants of Kinsmen deliberately kept colonisation under control, perhaps preserving these territories as special hunting and fishing areas belonging to the commune. Find material dating to the XIVth-XVth centuries is very poor on the Kismema sites. It seems that agglomeration was not totally deserted at that period, but only few small pieces of land there remained inhabited. The earliest land charters which mention Kismema are of the period of 1435-1470 A.D. (*Akty social'no-ekonomičeskoj...1958*, v. II, NN 84,90,104, 120,147). They give evidence of small farmsteads scattered over a large territory, some of them at a distance of 5 km from the lake. However, late medieval parish centre is located directly in the centre of agglomeration, very near to the site which produce the earliest medieval materials.

3 sites in Maeksa are located on the southern shore of the Beloe lake in the mouth of a small river. This settlement unit is symmetrical to Kismema in regional settlement structure, but displays different landscape surrounding. The sites occupy low flat terrace with even surface and cover total area of 17.5 hectares. Two largest sites (4.2 and 11 hectare) lie close to each other, divided by the river mouth. Ploughed cultural deposits contain rich find material including cufic and west-European coins, metal ornaments, cross-pendants, glass beads, knives, arrowheads. Cufic coins and hand-made pottery give evidence that settlement was founded in the Xth century and initially was located very near to the lake. Ceramics and metal ornaments of the XIth and especially XIIth centuries are much more numerous and spread over a larger territory. We have good proof that Maeksa settlement, like Kismema, went through the greatest upheaval in the XIIth century. Like Kismema, it was not abandoned in the late Medieval times. Mixed cultural layers contain late medieval pottery, stray finds include XVIth and XVIIth century coins. On the other hand, find material, probably dating to the XIVth century is very poor, indicating decline of the former agglomeration and perhaps - its transformation in a system of a small farmsteads.

Settlement unit Nikilskoe on the Lower Kema had a different character and a complicated history. It includes 12 unfortified dwelling sites and a small hillfort. The sites stretch along the river on a distance of 5 km, forming 3 smaller local associations. Settlement unit on the Lower Kema formed as a complicated structure with a hillfort and 5 small unfortified sites as early as in the Xth century. In the XIth century the hillfort was abandoned, but the number of the unfortified settlements increased and they expanded on the larger areas. Find material of the late Xth-XIth centuries includes cufic coin, metal ornaments and amulets-, (some of them of Scandinavian origin), numerous beads, different tools and implements. Ceramics dating to the XIIth-early XIIIth centuries was registered on the 6 sites. Some of the sites, founded in the early period, at that time were abandoned and replaced by the new ones, which emerged very near in the same landscape. Thus, the number of the sites in this area didn't increase, but the period of the XIIth century was marked by the development of the two large sites with the areas of about 2-2.5 hectare. One of this sites later( in the late XIVth century) became the centre of the small principality, and both of them became parish centres from at least XVIth century. Settlement situation of the XIVth century remains unclear. It seems that development of large rural sites in the river valley at that period stopped and colonisation expanded over broader areas with different types of landscape, but the early local centres didn't lost their importance.

The period of late XIIIth-the XIVth centuries was the time of serious settlement transformations in Beloozero region. At that time rural colonisation spread to the territories lying far from the rivers, including woodland watersheds, which had never been inhabited previously. Transformation resulted in the introduc-

tion of the new topographical models and more dispersed settlement organisation, in which small hamlets and single farmsteads became the dominating settlement form. Indications of these changes can be seen in most of the regions on the Russian Plain, but they have been studied in details in a very few local areas. Considerable number of the early medieval dwelling sites in the Beloozero region was abandoned or decreased in size in late XIIIth-XIVth century. Transformations interrupted development of large rural settlements and agglomerations and lead to their decline, though it doesn't mean that the early local centres were deserted. Comparison of the map of the early medieval sites with a map of the parish centres, mentioned in XVth-XVIIth century documents, proves, that about 70 % parish centres which are registered on the old-settled territories of Beloozero region are located on the places of the early medieval settlements or very close to them. Thus position of the local centres displays continuation in spite of many drastic changes in settlement organisation.

Different explanations of settlement patterns with large rural sites dominating in the landscape or forming the most important element of local settlement structure can be put forward. It seems obvious that medieval settlement strongly depended on the economy, and the difference between the early medieval and late medieval patterns is determined by different strategies in local economy and land use. However, very few large rural settlements in Northern Russia were the objects of proper excavations and in many cases their cultural deposits, totally disturbed by ploughing, produce poor material relating to economical practice. After several unsuccessful attempts to find stratified deposits on the Beloozero region sites we started excavations on the Minino settlement, located on the Kubeskoe lake, eastwards from Beloozero region. This site with surprisingly well preserved cultural deposits occupies an area of 1.4 hectares in a mouth of a small river falling into the lake. An area of about 130 sq.m. was excavated in Minino during 3 field seasons.

Medieval occupational deposits in Minino are considerably thick (up to 50 sq.m.), they cover the underlying deposits with of the Iron Age and Stone Age ceramics and a Stone Age cemetery. House structures are poorly preserved in the cultural layers, though the soil contains numerous burned stones from the hearths and pieces of burned wood which can be identified as remains of log constructions. Due to the lack of the evidence we can not identify the position, the size and the construction of the houses but only locate some of the hearths in the buildings. While excavating we practised floatation of the cultural layers (we managed to floatate approximately 25 % of the soil) in order to collect cereal remains and small artifacts which usually remain invisible. We also collected osteological remains, and co-operated with soil biologists trying to detect traces of medieval ploughing in the soil.

Excavations on the dwelling site produced about 1500 medieval artifacts and 15 000 pieces of pottery. About 300 glass beads present the most numerous category of the finds. Collection includes about a hundred silver, bronze and lead ornaments and their fragments, about 80 plates from the bronze bowls, and several hundred iron objects. 69 iron knives and 70 iron needles belong to the dominating items. Most of the artifacts are rather common items, such as arrowheads, fragments of the axes, locks, keys, scissors, firesteels, combs, spindle-whorls. Their concentration in the soil is high on both places of excavations. Some groups of finds give indication of fur hunting (flat arrowheads made of horn) and fishing (iron hooks, loads from the nets). Iron production is indicated by the slags, found near the site on the territory of the cemetery. I would draw special attention to a number of comparatively rare finds, which give evidence of advanced trade and high level of consumption, such as 7 western coins, an iron weight with a bronze plate, 9 bronze ornamented belt mounts, an amber cross-pendant, an amber fingering, a detail of an armour. Ceramics include hand-made pottery of local forms as well as the wheel-made pottery of the Slavonic type. All this material was collected on a very limited area.

Environmental remains from Minino are probably not less important than artifact material. More than 700 cereal grains were collected in the floatated soil from both places of excavations. They were identified as barley, rye, wheat and oats. Barley is dominating. Minino is not the only site in Beloozero region where cereal grains were found, as most of the sites where floatation was practised provided paleobotanical material, but in Minino this material is much more numerous, than on all the other sites except Beloozero town. At least part of this grain is a product of local agriculture, as remains of the ploughing were identified in the profiles in the western part of the site under the undisturbed XIIth century cultural layers. Osteological remains indicate broad species diversity, with wild and domestic animals represented. Bones of cow, sheep and horse constitute about 25 % of whole amount. Wild species are strongly dominating with the beaver bones, constituting about 54 %.

Find material from both places of excavations on the dwelling site can be dated to a period ranging from the late Xth-the early XIth century to the middle of the XIIth century. Set of the beads from the excavation place on the western part of the site points, that this area was settled later than the western part - not earlier than in the second quarter of the XIth century. Artifact chronology displays perfect correlation with

the 6 <sup>14</sup>C dates, which cover mostly period from late Xth century to the third quarter of the XIIth century (Tab. 1). Medieval cultural deposits in their upper part also contained several artifacts and pottery dating to late XIIth-XIIIth centuries, but the area, which was settled at that period lies probably in the northern part of the terrace and remains yet untouched by the excavations. Find material points that XIth century site covered the area of more than hector.

<sup>14</sup> C datings from the early medieval deposits of Minino I site			
laboratory No	sample	<sup>14</sup> C BP	calibrated datings (one sigma)
Le-5207	coal, depth-20-30 sm	990+-30	1012-1042,1096-1114,1144-1154 A.D.
Le-5208	coal, depth 30-40 sm	920+-50	1038-1102, 1108-1168 A.D.
Le-5209	coal, depth 40-50 sm	950+-50	1028-1058,1078-1122, 1134-1160 A.D.
Le-5320	wood, depth 20-30 sm	1060+-30	976-1014 A.D.
Le-5321	wood, depth 30-40 sm	1000+-20	1016-1030 A.D.
Le-5463	coal, depth 20-30 sm	930+-30	1042-1098, 1112-1128,1130-1144,1152-1162 A.D.

Set of the finds from the cultural deposits gives the impression of prosperity and wide-scale trade activity and possibly can be regarded as an evidence of some special functions of the Minino site which could have been, for instance, a local centre or a special trading place. But the more thorough view on the material leads to the conclusion that high concentration of metal finds and imports is rather common for most of the northern settlements dating to the Xth-XIIth century period which were the objects of thorough and skilful excavations or surface surveys - like Kisnema, Maeksa, or Lower Kema settlements in Beloozero. Many sites in Northern and Middle Russia display rather similar distribution of artifacts. Hence, from mine point of view, Minino materials present the pattern of early medieval culture and consumption which was widespread in Northern and Middle Russia and which can not be explained in connection with extraordinary status or specific functions of the site.

Not enough basic research has yet been done on the relationships between different patterns of spatial organisation and different models of medieval economy. It is probable that economical and social background of nucleated or agglomerated settlement was not the same in different regions of Ancient Russian State. At a current state of research I would prefer to avoid heavy determinism, interpreting medieval settlement in the North. However, archaeological material, obtained in Beloozero-Kubenskoe area, indicates some aspects of regional economy which can probably be the starting point in our interpretation of the early medieval settlement organisation and its transformation. Find material from the Beloozero -Kubenskoe area sites dating to late Xth-XIIth centuries includes numerous imports and gives evidence of trade activity, prosperity and high level of consumption, contrasting with the material of the later sites, displaying very modest set of artifacts. Excavations in Minino, where imports, cereal grains and bone remains of the fur animals were found in the same deposits, reveal that local groups engaged in fur hunting also acted as farmers and tradesmen, and that the formation of large settlements at least in some cases correlated with the development of complex economy. Indications of large scale fur hunting on these sites are perhaps the most unexpected fact, as this activity is usually associated with dispersed settlement. On the other hand, we should assume that development of the large agglomerations like Kisnema and Maeksa caused serious difficulties to normal agricultural land use, as the farmers had to cover long distances on their way to fields. Single farmsteads scattered on the pieces of land with the most fertile soils, which replaced large rural sites, better suited the needs of agriculture. Thus the rise of nucleated settlement and agglomerations in the North was probably connected with the development of complex economy, which combined extraction of outland resources, cultivation and trade and obviously had certain advantages in the context of this economy. Decrease of fur hunting and trend to agrarian economy with limited trade activities in 1250-1350 A.D. caused serious changes in settlement organisation and finally lead to formation of the dispersed pattern.

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### DIE MITTELALTERLICHE LÄNDLICHE SIEDLUNG IN NORDRUßLAND: GRUPPENSIEDLUNGEN UND WEILER IM BELOOZERO – KUBENSKOJE-GEBIET ZWISCHEN 900 UND 1250 n. Chr.

### L'HABITAT RURAL MÉDIÉVAL DANS LA RUSSIE DU NORD: LES VILLAGES CONCENRÉS À BELOOZERO – DANS LA RÉGION DE KUBENSKOE ENTRE 900 ET 1250 APRÈS J.-C.

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