

On Trade Routes to Zavolochye in the 11th–14th Centuries

The connotations of the term «Zavolochye» were not unchanging and originally, in the eleventh-thirteenth centuries, the name was used to denote a local territory in the North, the basin of the Vaga River (Vasilyev, 1971, pp. 103–109). Thus, the lands in question lie within the triangle bounded by the Vaga basin, the North Dvina and the Sukhona Rivers in the south. In the later periods, written sources of the fourteenth-seventeen centuries apply the name to a vast region between the Onega and the North Dvina Rivers.

The chronological framework of the subject under review is defined, on the one hand, by the earliest coin hoards of the late eleventh century as well as by graves of the eleventh-thirteenth centuries and, on the other hand, by extensive written sources since the fourteenth century which are available for research.

The hoards of West-European denarii of the tenth-eleventh centuries found in the territory of Zavolochye indicate, in our opinion, intensive contacts which were maintained between the western Novgorod lands and the northern territories since the mid-eleventh century. The finds in question are those in the Vaga River basin – on the bank of the Ustiya River near the village of Blagoveschenskoe (Potin, 1967, p. 161) and on the bank of the North Dvina near Krasnoborsk (Potin, 1974, p. 152). The only new finds of West-European coins came from excavations of several monuments: a denarius of the seventies of the eleventh century (Ever County) from grave 4 of the Korbala burialfield on the Vaga (Ovsyannikov, 1980, pp. 228–235) and a denarius of Aethelred, Winchester, found in the cemetery on the Tikhman'ga River near Lake Lache (Ovsyannikov, 1981, pp. 29–30).

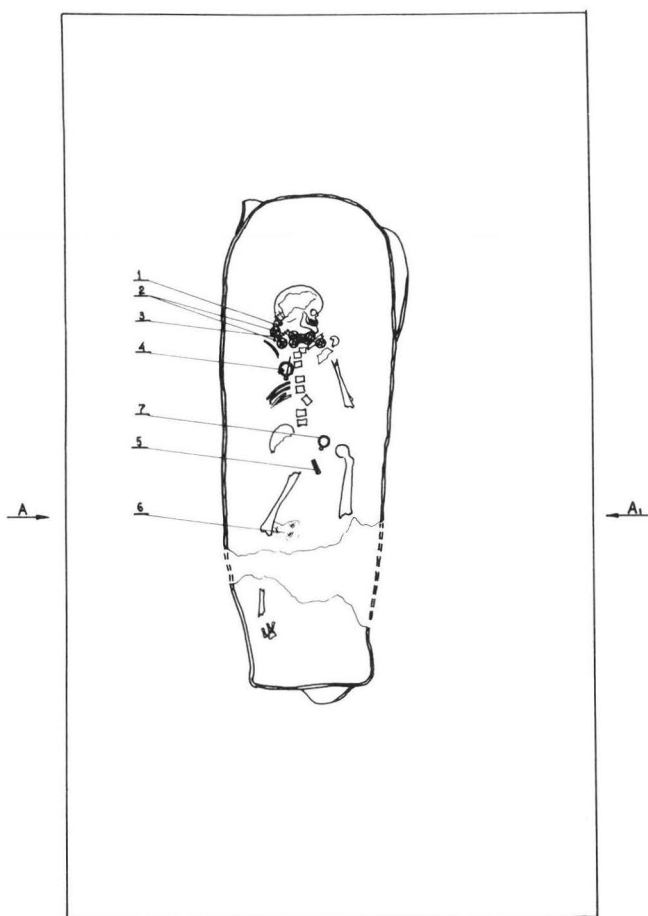
It is also significant that the newly discovered medieval cemeteries of the late eleventh-thirteenth centuries (along with already known stray finds) bear witness to the penetration to the Dvina lands, Zavolochye in the first place, of a broad range of bronze, silver, iron and glass articles of Russian origin associated with the north-western Russian lands (Novgorod) and the Baltic region, on the one hand, and the «ponizovskie» (Rostov-Suzdal) lands, on the other, which reflects the two streams of Russian northward colonization (Nazarenko, Ovsyannikov, 1981, pp. 103–106; Ryabinin, 1981, pp. 68–71).

Of much interest in this connection are the medieval burials that have been discovered in recent years on the south coast of the Kola Peninsula.

On the left bank of the Varzuga River near the village of Kuzomen' N. N. Gurina has collected bronze ornaments from a destroyed cemetery of the twelfth century (Gurina, 1981, pp. 65–70). Among the finds was a West-European silver coin. (denarius, Count Albert II 1018–1064)/the coin was identified by A. N. Malvygin/.

In 1982 we examined the site and gathered some new twelfth-century artefacts (a key-amulet and an umbo-shaped plate). We also came across some weathered human bones, which attest that it had been an inhumation burial ground.

Another small burial ground of three graves was discovered and investigated; it is



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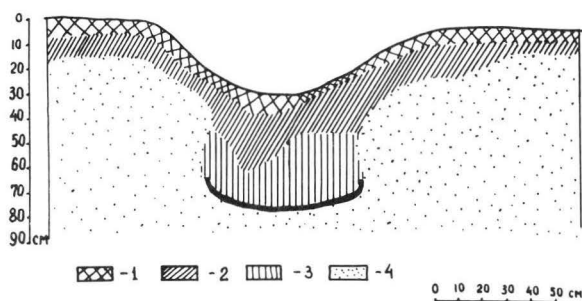
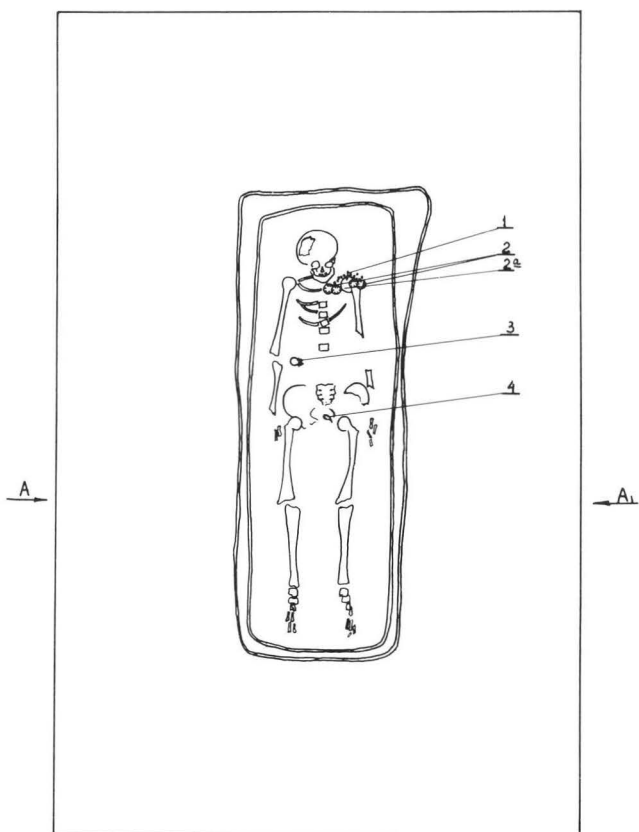


Fig. 1. Plan of grave 1.

situated at a distance of about 800 metres from the destroyed cemetery on a high cape terrace, near the confluence of the Kitsa and Varzuga Rivers.

Grave 1. Visible on the surface as a depression (0.3 m deep, about 1.2 m long and 0.5 m wide at the top), the grave pit contour could be traced at a depth of 0.45 m (marks of depth from the present surface), at a depth of 0.65 there was a clearly



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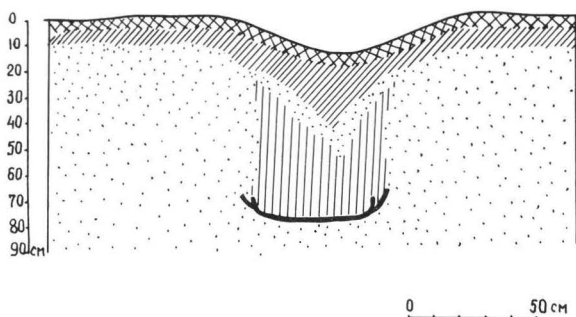
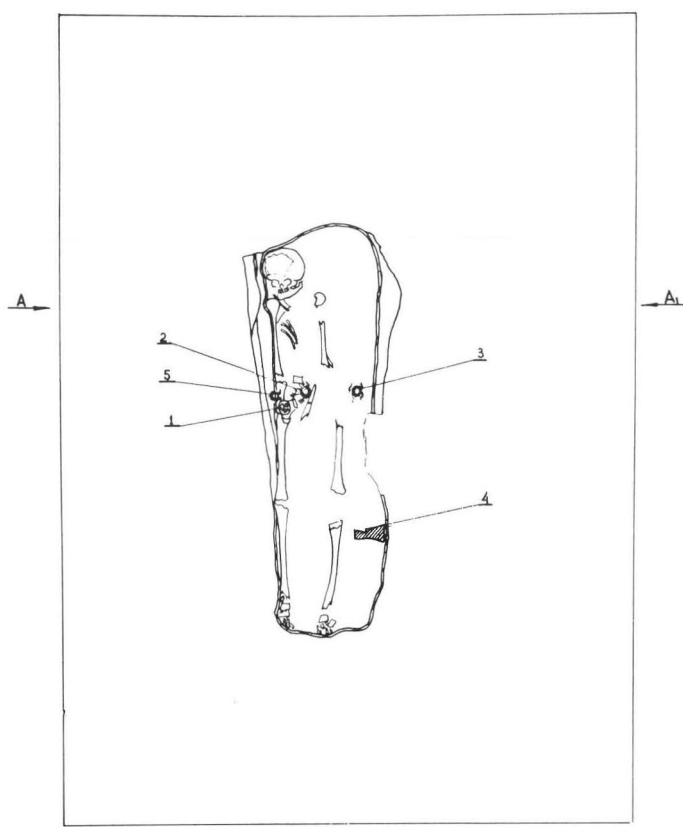


Fig. 2. Plan of grave 2.

defined contour of the decayed remains of a wooden coffin (Table 1 Fig. 1). The »burial» layer in the grave (the remains of the coffin and its contents) was rather thin: from the depth of 0.65 m to that of 0.8 m, the contents being a dense but thin (2–3 cm on the average) layer of organic remains. After cleaning the surface of the cist contents it became evident that they were plates of bast, and one could clearly see



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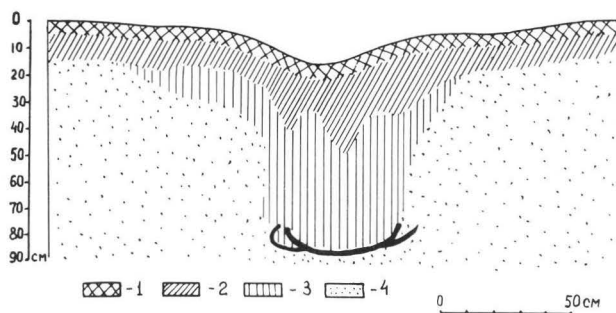


Fig. 3. Plan of grave 3.

the direction of the bast fibres, viz. cross-wise. This mean that the corpse was first »swaddled» in the bast and afterwards placed into the cist. With the shallow depth of the burial there was intensive infiltration of water at its level, which led to the disintegration of the bones and of some metal objects, primarily coin-shaped pendants of low-strength alloys. This, no doubt, was caused by the fact that the pit had for a long time stood unfilled, which is apparent from the gradual crumbling of its walls. Under the weight of the earth crumbling into the pit the inner part of the cist caved in. After the surface of the bast »swaddling band» was cleaned, imprints of a



Fig. 4. Grave 1.

skull and large bones stood out in relief on it. The layer of earth that had fallen on the cist and bast helped to form the impression of the bones on the outer surface of the bast. In those sections of the cist where there were neither bones nor any objects the overlying ground had so densely pressed together the upper and lower bast plates that it proved practically impossible to separate them when the grave was cleaned. The measurements of the wooden cist, most probably of the log frame type, were 0.7×2.0 m. After the bast layer was cleaned and removed, fragments of human bones in a very poor state of preservation as well as some artefacts were revealed. On the occipital part of the skull there remained a small piece of elk or deer fur and a triangular pendant of bronze wire (possibly, for tightening the fur headgear). In the region of the neck, under the lower jaw, there were traces of eight round pendants which, together with glass beads, made up a necklace (the state of preservation of the objects was such that in the field the type of pendants could be recorded only by way of drawing). On the right side of the chest there was a horseshoe-shaped brooch with spiral ends and the plate triangular in cross-section. At the waistline there was an iron ring with remains of a woven belt and a small iron knife. Several pieces of cloth with bronze spirals sewn on to it and forming a geometrical pattern were found at the level of the kneejoints. It was, most probably, the hem of a woman's dress. A piece of coarse woollen cloth, of which the dress was made, has remained with a sewn-on border, woven on small planks, with a checked pattern, possibly, in green and red threads. A fragment of a belt woven on 16 small tablets has survived on the belt ring (determinations of fabrics were made by N. V. Khvoschinskaya). Thus, the body of a woman, judging by the set of ornaments, was buried in a log cist deposited in a shallow pit. The corpse was first wrapped in cloth and then in bast plates and laid in the cist face upward, with the head to the north-east and the arms stretched along the body. It is difficult to say what kind of structure could have been placed over the grave, possibly, a shed or hut which soon went to ruin.

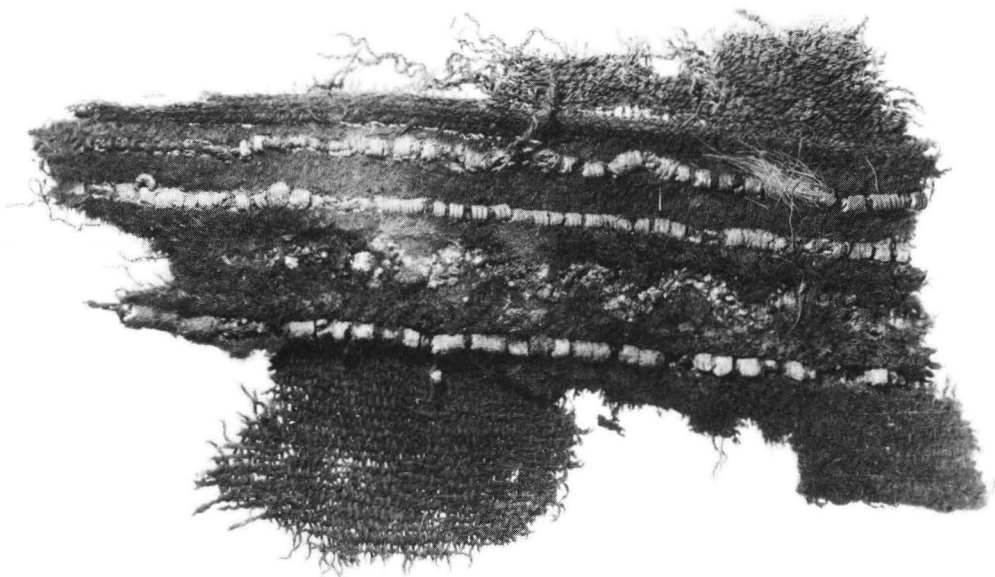


Fig. 5. Grave 1.

Grave 2. Visible on the surface as a depression (0.14 m deep, 0.7 m wide and about 1 m long). Traces of the grave pit were discovered at a depth of 0.3 m, and the outline of a wooden cist was cleaned at a depth of 0.7 m. The contour of the cist was revealed at a depth of 0.65–0.70 m, and on the upper plate of the bast covering the body there was a well-marked imprint of large bones, which as in grave 1, were practically unpreserved. The corpse was lying face upward, with the head to the north-east and the arms stretched along the body. Found at the left arm were remains of a necklace of glass beads, one of the two large round pendants, four round coin-shaped pendants with «pearls» on the edge and a round slit pendant. At the waist of the body there was a bronze pendant shaped like a duck's foot, and at the pelvic bones lay a belt ring of bronze. The grave contained the remains of a female. Description of the surviving bone remains: a heavily (posthumously) deformed skull and the first cervical vertebra. Most probably, the skull is of a woman of about 35 years of age. The noteworthy features are the small height of the face – a distinctive characteristic of a Lapp rather than a Russian- and large teeth for so gracile a skull (the bone remains have been defined by A. V. Shevchenko).

Grave 3. Visible on the surface as a hardly noticeable depression (0.11 m deep, 0.5 m wide and 0.6 long). The outline of the pit was revealed at a depth of 0.2–0.25 m. The body, wrapped in bast, was lying face upward, with the head to the north-east and the arms stretched along the sides (the bones were in a very poor state of preservation). Found at the waist was a bronze belt buckle with remains of a leather belt, a round bronze belt ring and two bronze belt ring plates with three links. Near the left knee of the body lay an iron axe, the handle had not survived. The remains are of a male body. Description of the surviving bone remains: the skull is gracile but steepershaped than the one in grave 2. This, as well as the shape of the upper edge of the orbit, suggests that the man was about 30 to 40 years of age. The first two lower right molars had traces of caries. The noteworthy feature is a very low face height



Fig. 6. Grave 2.

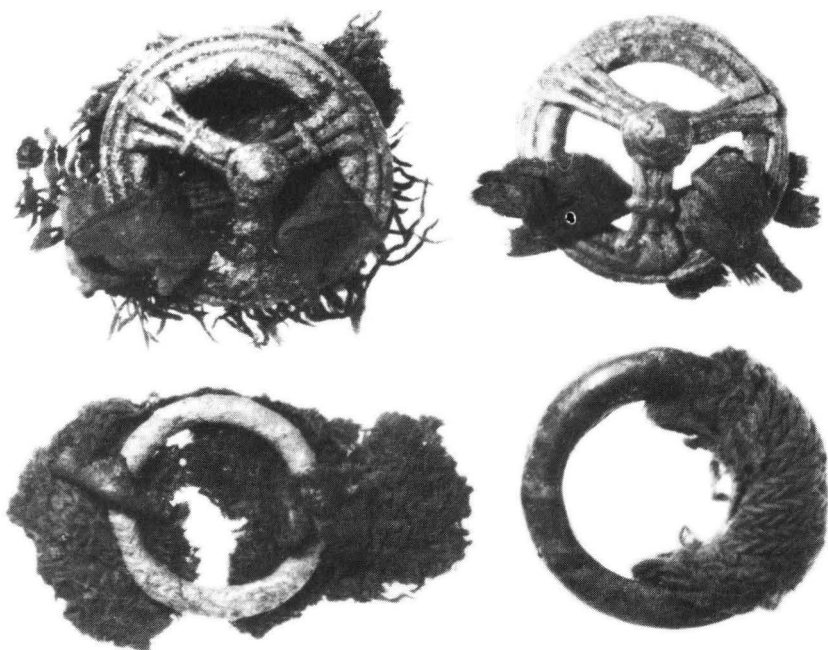


Fig. 7. Grave 3.



Fig. 8. Grave 3.

combined with a rather high orbit (both absolute and relative). The skull height is obviously low. The whole combination of features is not characteristic of the Russians but possible for a Lapp. On the whole the archeological complex of the artefacts of the burial field points to its Finnish origin. Among the articles there are some of the West-Roman origin – a penannular brooch with spiral ends (Mal'm, 1967, p. 153; Sedova, 1959, p. 214), separating belt ring-plates (Spitsyn, 1898, p. 27, Table VIII-9; Kivikoski, 1973, 138–1202) and pendants in the shape of webbed feet.

The remains may be tentatively dated to the twelfth-thirteenth centuries. A noteworthy fact is the intermediate orientation of the bodies (all three lying with the head to the north-east). The intermediate orientation is of interest as one of the signs characteristic of contact zones or as an indicator of microstructures in ethnic associations (Ryabinin, 1979, pp. 95–96). In touching upon the ethnic character of the monument under review, we should recall the chronicle Lapp. The region («Tre», «tir», «Ter») of the monument is regularly mentioned in written sources starting from the sixties of the thirteenth century (GVNP, 1949, pp. 9, 17, 27). In the 1294–1304 charter of Prince Andrei Alexandrovich to the Dvina the right of procuring expeditions to the «Terskaya side» is regulated (GVNP, 1949, p. 142). In some documents of the second half of the fifteenth century mention is made of the «Lapp borderline» (GVNP, 1949, p. 246) which is preserved throughout the whole sixteenth century: Pyalitsa – «. . . half of the Dvina River, the other half of that river is managed by the Tersk Lapps, and that is their bound» (SGKE, 1922, pp. 170–172). The Lapp border was, of course, changing in the course of centuries, the time of the cemetery coincides with one of the initial stages in the settlement of the Tersk bank by the Russian population, when the territory of the future Varzuga district was inhabited by Lapps. Throughout all that time the Dvina land played a particular role in the life of the Tersk bank. Even in 1560 the Dvina districts (Pinega and Mesen' excluded) paid «marine quitrent from the Tersk side» (Kopanev, 1970, p. 518). Thus, the investigated graves of the twelfth-thirteenth centuries were left by

the local Lapp population on their native territory. They date from the time of steady trade and cultural contacts between the Lapps and the Dvina lands.

Thus, the material from the burial remains of the eleventh-thirteenth centuries and the numismatic finds suggest that the material culture of the local tribal formations was evolving under the influence of trade and cultural contacts with the Russian population of two regions – the Novgorod and the »ponizovskie« lands. This paved the way for the development of a new stage in the feudal relations in Zavolochye in the fourteenth century.

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