

Early medieval miniature axes of Makarov's type 2 in the Baltic Sea Region

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Artefacts which are miniatures of regular size objects met a thorough interest in the archaeological literature. Unsurprisingly, several attempts to interpret phenomenon of the miniature axes have already been made (see. eg. Kucypera, Pranke, Wadył, 2010 a; Kucypera, Pranke, Wadył, 2010 b; Wołoszyn, 2006; Panasiewicz, Wołoszyn, 2002; Zemītis, 1998; Koktvedgaard Zeitzen, 1997; Golubeva, 1997; Makarov, 1992; Darkevič, 1961; Paulsen, 1956; Paulsen, 1939). It should be noticed that miniatures are defined as objects reduced in size to an extent preventing their practical application, which distinguishes them from tools smaller than typical, but which still may perform functions similar to those of a normal-sized examples. Despite this, defining a miniature object creates many difficulties. M. Koktvedgaard Zeitzen recently wrote that: "Instead, one should take into account how the axe looks – whether, for example, it is ornamented or has a suspension hole – which, although a more subjective criterion, seem to give one a better basis for identifying an amuletic axe than solely measuring its length in centimeters. Another way to identify amuletic axes is to look at their material <...>" (Koktvedgaard Zeitzen, 1997, p. 16). We fully share this view.

It should be stressed that the process of miniaturization has a long tradition in European culture. Miniature objects represent tools (scissors, sickles, hammers) and weaponry such as swords, axes, spears, shields and daggers (see. Koktvedgaard Zeitzen, 1997, p. 17–18, 57–58; Staecker, 1999; Capelle, 2003). It should be noticed that these objects have strong connection with German tradition. Moreover, Viking Age miniatures are also similar to those that can be dated back to Roman and Migration Period (Duczko, 2006, s. 111). Even so, the custom of miniaturization can not be associated with only one ethnic group (Wołoszyn, 2006, s. 597).

The aforementioned miniatures were most noticeably connected with the 'Rus' cultural area, often be-

ing referred to simply as 'old Rus' (cf. Panasiewicz, Wołoszyn, 2002; Makarov, 1992). However, these artefacts' ethnocultural and functional attribution as well as their origin produce a problem that demands large attention of the scholars.

Two main groups of miniature axes can be distinguished: Makarov's type 1 (Fig. 1:a–f) and Makarov's type 2 (Fig. 2)¹. Axe-amulets of these types are quite homogeneous. Apart from them there are objects, that can be defined as similar to the 1st type (Fig. 1:g–l) and another group consisting of miniature axes of unusual, untypical (original) forms (Fig. 1:m–p). In this paper we paid biggest attention to the group comprising miniatures of Makarov's type 2².

Axes of type 2 are characterised by a symmetrical or almost symmetrical, broad and fan-shaped blade with a pronounced heel and toe and hook-like protrusions on their inner ridges. The narrow neck, sometimes marked with a transverse ribbing, enters into the socket that extends in an archwise manner towards the poll.

We have collected information about 30 specimens of miniature axes of 2nd type (Table 1). The unique homogeneity of this group of miniatures should be emphasised. Only two miniatures can be treated as exceptions that somewhat miss the type's general traits: an iron miniature from Kruszwica and one example from Daugmale (Table 1:3, 8).

2nd type axes' size varies between 30–43 mm in length and 35–57 mm in blade width. Nearly half of the specimens are decorated. As mentioned before, Makarov's type 2 miniature axes have a symmetrical,

¹ It should be emphasized that a few decades earlier P. Paulsen (1939; 1956) and W. P. Darkevič (1961) proposed a similar classification of miniature axes. In this paper we distinguish miniatures' forms using Makarov's classification (1992).

² In another paper we presented a complete catalogue of all gathered axes (see. Kucypera, Pranke, Wadył, 2010 a).

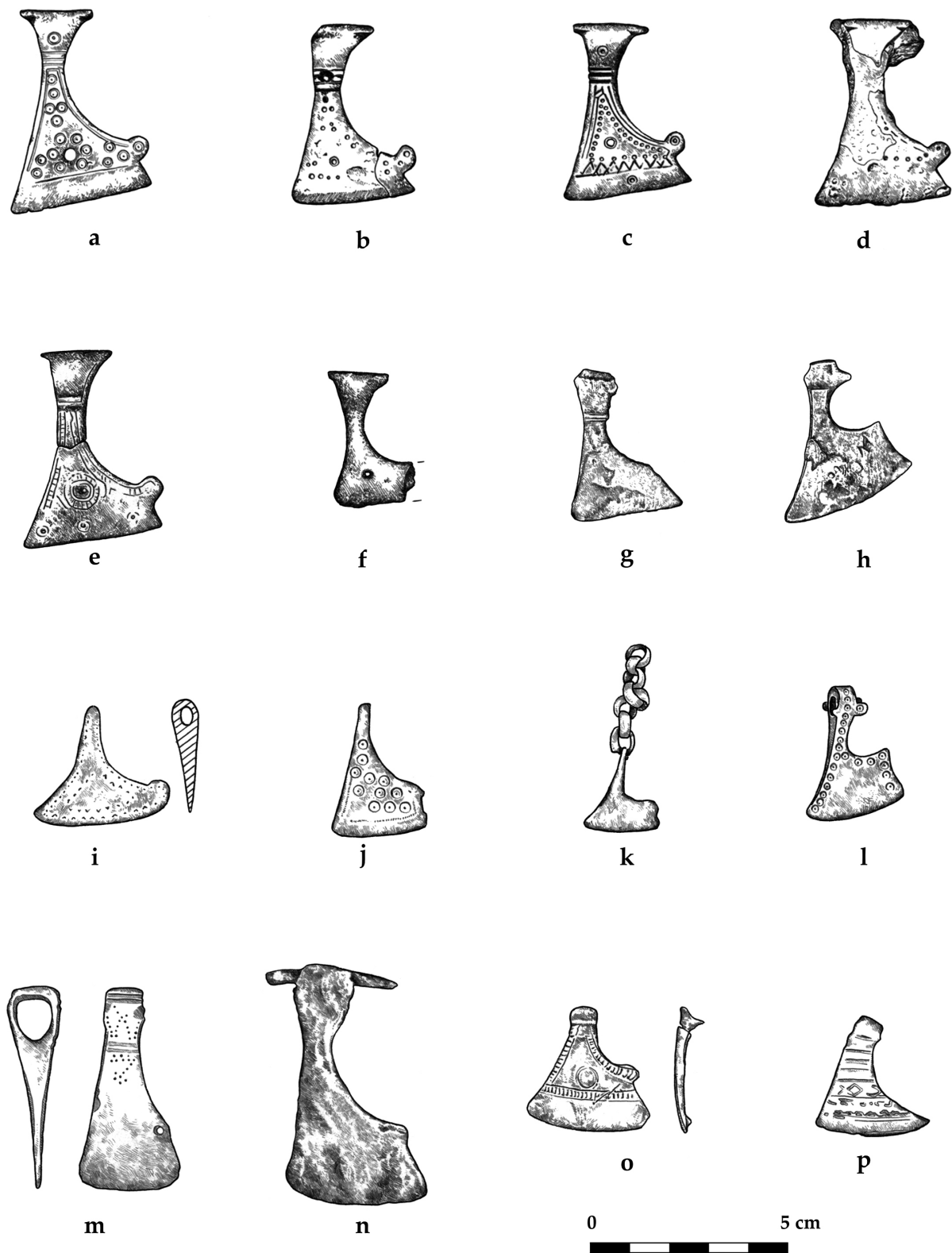


Fig. 1. Examples of miniature axes of Makarov's type 1 (a-f), similar to type 1 (g-l) and of original forms (m-p). a – Rinkaby, b – Sigtuna, c – Daugmale, d – Sigtuna, e – Hjelmshøllille, f – Mežotne, g – Sigtuna, h – Sigtuna, i – Burg Holme, j – Talsi, k – Talsi, l – Ultuna, m – Nętno, n – Opole-Nowa Wieś Królewska, o – Gródek, p – Wrocław.

1 pav. Makarovo 1 tipo kirvių miniatiūros (a-f), to paties 1 tipo (g-l) ir originalios formos (m-p)

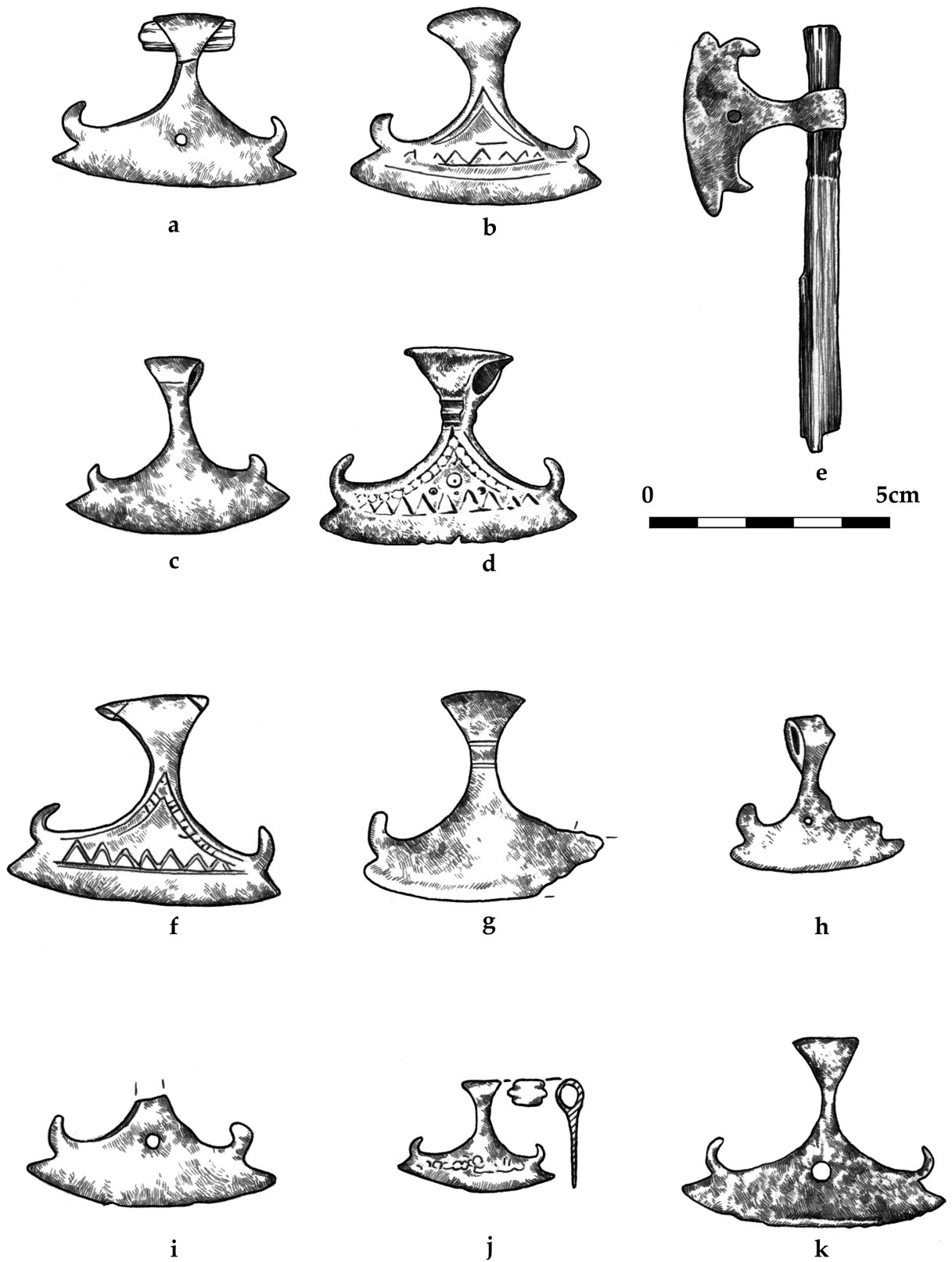


Fig. 2. Miniature axes of Makarov's type 2. *a* – Nikolskoje III, *b* – Novogorod, *c* – Novogorod, *d* – Szabolcsveresmart, *e* – Staraya Russa, *f* – Kniaża Hora, *g* – Lipliave, *h* – Lutsk, *i* – Tieriebovl, *j* – Zorniwskoje gorodiszcze, *k* – obl. Volyn.

2 pav. Makarovo 2 tipo kirvių miniatiūros

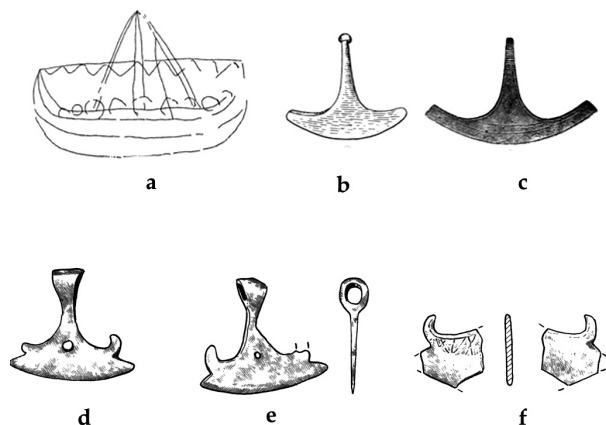


Fig. 3. Thor's hammers (b, c), image of ship (a) and axes of 2nd type (d–f). a – Gauldalen, Trøndelag, Norway, b – Finnland, c – Lieto-Ylipää, Finnland, d – Daugmale, e – Drohiczyn, f – Gródek.

3 pav. Toro kirveliai (b, c), laivo atvaizdas (a) ir 2 tipo kirveliai (d–f)

or almost symmetrical, fan-shaped blade with hook-shaped protrusions on its inner ridges. Their surfaces were often decorated with geometrical patterns, usually in a form of a wide edging filled with alternating triangles or diagonal/vertical lines (Fig. 2).

Miniatures of type 2 should be dated to the 11th–1st half of the 12th century. They are known from vast territories of Central-Eastern Europe, ranging from Sweden (Sigtuna) in the North to Hungary (Szabolcsveresmart) in the South, and from Poland (Kruszwica) in the West to Asian regions of Russia in the East (Fig. 6). It is clearly visible, that their appearance in early Middle Ages should be connected to the whole Baltic area, especially that a great number of finds originates from present Baltic states.

In Makarov's opinion 'axe-amulets' of 2nd type are reduced examples of broad battle axes, which were of particular popularity especially in Scandinavia and in the East Baltic Sea Region in the period of 10th and 11th c. Referring to Kirpičnikov's publication *Drevnerusskoe oružie. Meči i sabli* (1966, p. 40), Makarov claimed that these axes are classified as type B, unfortunately such type doesn't exist, at least not in this particular book (Makarov, 1992, p. 44, 46). This hypothesis does not appear to be correct, as there are only a few examples of these axeheads (notably axe from Muromskoe) that actually resemble the form of those miniatures. It should be noted that there is some resemblance in shape



Fig. 4. Runestone decorated with an image of a ship. Holmby, län Skåne, Sweden

4 pav. Runų akmuo su laivo atvaizdu. Holmby, län Skåne, Švedija



Fig. 5. Miniature axe of 2nd type found in Kaldus, comm. Chelmno, Poland.

5 pav. 2 tipo kirvelio miniatiūra, rasta Kaldus, comm. Chelmno, Lenkija

of miniature axes of 2nd type to some Thor's hammers (Fig. 3–4; cf. Darkevič, 1961, Fig. 1:2, 1:4). However, we believe that these axes should be considered as having an original shape, which is not an imitations of any other form. Main reason that led us to this conclusion is the presence of hook-shaped applications on these axe's inner ridges (which are distinctive for this group).

In our own conceit miniatures of 2nd type are symbolic representations of a boat. This hypothesis is



Fig. 6. Distribution of miniature axes of Makarov's type 2.

6 pav. Makarovo 2 tipo kirvelių paplitimas

based on an originally decorated miniature axe from Kałdus, comm. Chelmno, Poland, its ornament consisting of paddling men, round shields on the boat's side and – probably – cordage (Fig. 5). Most importantly, this depiction fits perfectly into the axe's form. Equally interesting is the location of the hook-shaped applications which possibly reflect stem and stern of the boat (cf. Chudziak, 2004, p. 193).

A depiction of a boat may be a reference to the symbolism of the solar wagon and bridge. In Norse mythology the boat was associated with the Vanir and fertility. A magical ship was an attribute of Norse goddess Freya. If the interpretation we presented is correct, axes of 2nd type should be clearly related to the Scandinavian cultural region, where images of boats were an extremely important cultural feature in that period. This may suggest the connection of this group with the cult of St. Olaf – among others – the patron

of sailors. Unfortunately, this association has only one corroboration, concretely a 2nd Makarov's type miniature find from Sigtuna.

The scholars who dealt with miniature axes were usually interested in their function and possible attribution. It is hard to answer whether they were worn only as jewellery, or they were connected with magical-religious practices. They were also interpreted as children's toys. One of the most popular hypothesis is the one connecting them with the worship sphere.

The most widespread concept on the miniature axes is that they were manifestations of the cult of Perun (Darkevič, 1961; Golubeva, 1997; Zemītis, 1998, S. 110). Such character of these objects is supposed to be confirmed by their typical ornamentation motifs, namely circles with a dot inside and zigzag lines. The former are tied to solar symbolism, the latter, running along the cutting edge, are supposed to depict a light-

Table 1. Catalogue of miniature axes of Makarov's type 2

1 lentelė. Makarovo 2 tipo kirvelių katalogas

Cat. No	Origin of find	The character of the site, context	Chronology	Source of information
1.	Sigtuna, län Stockholm, Sweden	early town	11 th –12 th c.	Wołoszyn, 2006, s. 597
2.	Estonia ³	?	Early Middle Ages	Paulsen, 1956, S. 197
3.	Daugmale, rajons Riga, Latvia	hillfort	Early Middle Ages	Paulsen, 1956, S. 197
4.	Daugmale, rajons Riga, Latvia	hillfort	Early Middle Ages	Zemītis, 1998, Fig. 4:6
5.	Drohiczyn, comm. Siemiatycze, Poland	loose find	Early Middle Ages	Musianowicz, 1969, s. 206
6.	Gródek, comm. Hrubieszów, Poland	settlement, cultural layer	11 th –12 th c.	Panasiewicz, Wołoszyn, 2002, s. 248–249
7.	Kałdus, comm. Chełmno, Poland	hillfort, Romanesque basilica (unfinished)	12 th c.	Chudziak 2000 a, s. 131; Chudziak 2000 b, s. 91, Fig. 6:e
8.	Kruszwica, comm. Inowrocław, Poland	settlement, cultural layer	1 st half of the 12 th c.	Hensel, 1979–1980
9.	Siemienice, comm. Kutno, Poland	?	Early Middle Ages	Paulsen, 1956, S. 197; Nadolski, 1953, p. 390
10.	Halshany, wob. Hrodna, Belarus	settlement, cultural layer	12 th –14 th c.	Makarov, 1992, p. 54
11.	Buchak, obl. Cherkasy, Ukraine	?	Early Middle Ages	Petrašenko, Kozūba, 2005, p. 66
12.	Bukvina, obl. Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine	?	Early Middle Ages	Makarov, 1992, p. 54
13.	Cherkasy, obl. Cherkasy, Ukraine	?	Early Middle Ages	Makarov, 1992, p. 54
14.	Horodnica, obl. Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine	?	Early Middle Ages	Paulsen, 1956, S. 197
15.	Kiev, obl. Kiev, Ukraine	?	Early Middle Ages	Makarov, 1992, p. 54
16.	Kniazha Hora, obl. Cherkasy, Ukraine	?	Early Middle Ages	Makarov, 1992, p. 54, Fig. 3:2
17.	Lipliave, obl. Poltava, Ukraine	?	Early Middle Ages	Darkevič, 1961, p. 94, Fig. 2:9; Makarov, 1992, p. 54
18.	Lutsk, obl. Volyn, Ukraine	?	Early Middle Ages	Kučinko, 2002; Savickij, Ohrimenko, 2006, p. 134–135, Fig. 6:5
19.	Tieriebovl, obl. Ternopil, Ukraine	?	Early Middle Ages	Makarov, 1992, p. 54, Fig. 3:6
20.	Zhornivskoye gorodishche, obl. Volyn, Ukraine	hillfort	Early Middle Ages	Prišepa, 1992; Savickij, Ohrimenko, 2006, p. 134, Fig. 6:8
21.	obl. Volyn, Ukraine	?	Early Middle Ages	Terskij, 2007, p. 56, Fig. 4:9
22.	Belozersk, obl. Vologda, Russia	?	Early Middle Ages	Makarov, 1992, p. 54, Fig. 3:4
23.	Kolchino, obl. Kaluga, Russia	barrow cemetery (female burial)	2 nd half of the 11 th –beginning of the 12 th c.	Makarov, 1992, p. 54, Fig. 3:1
24.	Nikolskoje III, obl. Vologda, Russia	cemetery, (child burial, age 3–5)	2 nd half of the 11 th c.	Makarov, Bieljakov, 1989, p. 75–83; Makarov 1992, p. 54, Fig. 3:3

³ We have no precise information about the origin of this find.

Cat. No	Origin of find	The character of the site, context	Chronology	Source of information
25.	Nikolskoje III, obl. Vologda, Russia	cemetery (child burial, age 3–5)	half of the 11 th c.	Makarov, Bieljakov, 1989, p. 75–83; Makarov, 1992, p. 54, Fig. 3:5
26.	Novogorod, obl. Novogorod, Russia	early town, cultural layer	1006–1025	Makarov, 1992, p. 54, Fig. 3:8
27.	Novogorod, obl. Novogorod, Russia	early town, cultural layer	half of the 11 th c.	Makarov, 1992, p. 54, Fig. 3:7
28.	Olenino, obl. Yaroslavl, Russia	cemetery	11 th –1 st half of 12 th c.	Makarov, 1992, p. 54
29.	Staraya Russa, obl. Novogorod, Russia	?	2 nd half of 11 th c.	Kucypera, Pranke, Wadył, 2010 a, s. 149
30.	Szabolcsveresmart, megye Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, Hungary	?	Early Middle Ages	Fodor, 1986, s. 222–223; 1996, s. 172–173, ryc. 5

ning or thunder. In accordance with this interpretation, they could have also been used as amulets protecting their holders against the atmospheric phenomenon.

N. A. Makarov (1992) believed that miniatures were given to young boys during their first haircut (when such a boy died prematurely the axe was placed in his grave). M. Wołoszyn (2006) connected these axes with the Rus druzhina. An interpretation of them as a symbol of St. Olaf (the axe is one and the most recognizable of his attributes) should also be taken into consideration. We find the Rus druzhina hypothesis proposed by N. A. Makarov (1992) and developed by M. Wołoszyn (Panasiewicz, Wołoszyn, 2002; Wołoszyn, 2006) unlikely. In line with this thinking, the presence of discussed miniatures on other territories than old Rus' should be understood as traces of Rus troops' activity. Particularly in the context of finds from Sigtuna (15 specimens) this idea seems improper. It is highly arguable that they were brought there by Scandinavians returning to the royal city from military service in the Rus druzhina, as Rune Edberg suggested (2000): "Rather the axe-amulets in Sigtuna derive from Scandinavians returning from mercenary service with Russian princes" (it should be noted that they are not associated with one archaeological object, also their dating is varied). Similarly, finds of miniature axes on

other territories cannot be explained explicitly as traces of physical presence of Rus troops or trade contacts, and treated exclusively as imported goods. The fact that they are found mostly in stronghold centres (with emphasizing their elite character) is in no way a proof of their connection with the druzhina. More generally, there are no sources that allow to tie the miniature axes solely with Eastern Slavs.

We should also mention the hypothesis that links miniature axes with the cult of St. Olaf. Oscar Montelius suggested that the axe as an attribute of the god of the sun, which outlasted in the form of Thor's hammer, and then in the period of Christianity transformed into St. Olaf's axe. Cult of Thor found its continuation in the Christian tradition. Taking the place of Thor, Olaf Haraldsson adopted many of the god's features (Beck, Jankuhn, 1973, S. 566).

We believe that, due to the relatively large amount of finds, as well as their diversity, the presented miniatures should be connected with the magical-religious sphere. It should be stressed out that no hypothesis presented so far has enough compelling arguments to be accepted as decisive in the discussion over function and meaning of the early medieval miniature axes. It seems best to recognize a dynamic character of attribution of the analysed objects.

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ANKSTYVŲJŲ VIDURAMŽIŲ MAKAROVO 2 TIPO MINIATIŪRINIAI KIRVIAI BALTIJOS JŪROS REGIONE

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Santrauka

Straipsnyje aptariamas išskirtinis ankstyvasis viduramžių miniatiūrinių kirvių, gamintų iš metalo (dažniausiai bronzos) tipas, vadinamasis Makarovo 2-asis tipas. Šio tipo kirviai žinomi visame Baltijos regione ir datuoti XI–XII a. pirmąja puse. Jiems būdingi vėduoklės formos simetriški ašmenys su kabliuko formos išsikišimu vidinėje briaunoje. Arti pusės žinomų pavyzdžių yra dekoruoti, dažniausiai geometriniais motyvais. Šie kirviai siejami su magine-garbinamąja sfera ir dažniausiai laikytini kilusiais iš Rusios.

Vienas išskirtinis egzempliorius, kuriame galima įžvelgti lyg ir irkluojančius vyrus, leidžia straipsnio autoriams daryti išvadą, kad Makarovo 2-ojo tipo kirvukai-amuletai yra formalūs valčių atvaizdai. Autoriai įsitikinę, kad šie dirbiniai neturėtų būti laikomi būdingais tikrai rytų slavams.

Šie kirvukai būdingi visoms etninėms Baltijos regiono grupėms. Kirvukų paskirtis buvo labai įvairi ir priklausė visų pirma nuo naudotojo.

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