

Different Peripheries

Two Examples from Russia and Sweden

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Abstract

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In this article two outland areas, generally considered as peripheral, are compared with the focus on the Viking Age and Early Middle Ages. It should be noted that the peripheral position of the areas is in relation both to the central authorities of the period and to the academic institutions of today. The two areas, the Beloozero area in northern Russia and northern Värmland in western Sweden, are quite different as regards the natural and the cultural landscapes. Settlements, productive land and burials were organized differently, and there was an important urban, trading centre in the Beloozero area, whereas there were no such centres in northern Värmland. There were also similarities. In both areas freeholding farmers appear to have been an influential social group, who used the outland for production of goods for sale during the period of interest in this article. The hypotheses are put forward that the freeholding farmers were part of larger trade networks on the basis of the products of the outland, and that they achieved considerable wealth, which they expressed differently. During the 13th century the production of goods on the outland diminished and changed character, and the economy in both northern Värmland and the Beloozero region became more agrarian.

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Periphery and marginality – in relation to what?

A common notion in archaeological research is that good agricultural, flat land areas are of a central character, whereas forested and

mountainous areas, moors and so on are peripheral or marginal and their inhabitants poor. However, in many such areas there were large productive lands outside the farmstead that could be used to produce a variety of goods both for the farm's own consumption as a complement to the weak agrarian production

and for sale on external markets. These productive lands would instead be desired means for accumulation of wealth.

In Scandinavia the concept of "outland" (*utmark*) and "outland use" can be employed to describe this phenomenon. When discussed in other than a Scandinavian context, "outland" is almost incomprehensible and areas with waste outlying productive land are normally referred to simply as "marginal areas" or "peripheries", without making this distinction clear.

However, from several points of view, outland use areas often *are* marginal areas or peripheries, and studies of outlands may to some extent benefit from the theoretical discussion in this field. The concepts "marginal area" and "periphery" are often, not quite correctly, used as synonyms.¹ However, they do have a lot in common, notably, that they both require a centre of some kind to be related to. Most theorizing has been about the inter-dependent pair "centre-periphery", perhaps most developed within the World System theories (see e.g. Frank & Gillis 1993; Hall & Chase-Dunn 1993). Often peripheries or marginal areas are perceived as passive receivers of impulses and as resource areas for exploitation from the centre. It is clear, however, that peripheries are and were active in one way or another and that there could be various forms of resistance against the centre. It should also be borne in mind that marginality tends to move on through time; new marginal areas are created or former centres become peripheries (Mogren 1997, 2000).

In most cases the concepts of marginality and periphery refer to geographical positions, but sometimes to social and political situations. Most often the geographical marginality also implies social marginality of some kind. The academic and public conception of marginality varies between negative and positive aspects. According to the negative conception, people in marginal areas are dirty, conservative in terms of politics and religion, poor, show little economic initiative and tend to live outside the law. The positive conceptions of marginality depict its

people as industrious entrepreneurs, freer from political and economic oppression, as innovators and as healthier due to a cleaner environment. Of course there are also views of marginality as something neither positive nor negative, and as something complementary to centrality (Pollard 1997).

However, it appears to be far more common to have a positive or negative opinion on marginality, as almost everybody has some kind of personal relation to the concept. The academic depiction of marginality should therefore be viewed as a strategy relating to the scholar's own situation. But it should also be considered as a part of greater social patterns, and it can be noted that universities are seldom located in what are considered marginal areas. At the academic institutions it therefore becomes something normal to study different expressions of the centre, e.g. power, whereas research on marginal areas is viewed as something exotic and different.

Although there are advantages of including studies of outland areas in the academic field of peripheries and marginality, we find it a gross simplification not to acknowledge that outland use areas could also be something else or something more than a periphery.

Beloozero, northern Värmland and the importance of outland use

The two areas we will present in this article, northern Värmland and Beloozero, are generally perceived as peripheral, being both forested and located far from the academic institutions. But they are of very different character. The differences of the respective cultural landscapes became very clear on our mutual visits, and in fact the Russian area did not appear peripheral to the Swedish scholars – and would not do so from a Swedish perspective at all. The Russian area is much flatter, more fertile and also more cultivated and densely populated than the

forested and mountainous northern Värmland. In Beloozero there were also ancient monuments which otherwise are associated with centrality and landscape of power – the most notable is the town of Beloozero – whereas such monuments are lacking in northern Värmland.

So, it should be stated that two areas in question are very different and that marginality here is perceived as something relative. Still, we think that there are important aspects of general interest that could be illuminated by a comparison between two areas – maybe even because they are different. The key feature, and the point of departure of the study here, is outland use on a fairly large scale within basically agrarian economies during the period late Viking Age – Early Middle Ages (c. 900–1200). These trends had been observed independently both in northern Värmland and in Beloozero. Another important similarity is that, according to written documents (although most are younger than 1200 AD) and archaeological monuments, freeholding farmers appears to have been the predominant social group.

Thus, the aims of this article, and one of the aims of a joint Swedish–Russian project (see below), are

- to show the expression of outland use in the archaeological record in the outlands and at the farmstead, and to discuss its social implications.
- to discuss the historical context surrounding the trend of intense outland production during the period c. 900–1200.

Another important point of departure for this study is the theory that marginal areas were used for production of goods for sale by farmers in order to be able to buy goods for socially desired consumption, apart from more “necessary” items, at the farm, as has been demonstrated for parts of Scandinavia. It was not the production for sale or the trade *per se* that was interesting (Martens 1992, p. 5; Martens 1998). This theory contradicts the common notion of the medieval

farmer as self-supporting and non-trading, and we find it important to change the picture of medieval farmers as passive subordinates in society, and instead acknowledge them as active and reflexive persons.

It should be borne in mind that what was considered socially desired consumption varied, especially in such culturally different areas as Beloozero and northern Värmland. From this it follows that it is of great importance to study both the production areas in the outland and the farmstead as a consumption arena.

The Swedish–Russian cooperation

The idea of this Swedish–Russian joint project was born at the symposium *Utmark -96*, which was held in Torsby, northern Värmland in 1996 (see the conference publication, Andersson *et al.* 1998). The symposium dealt with problems connected with outland use, settlements and activities in marginal/peripheral areas. At the symposium it became quite clear that the economic history of several of the investigated areas showed similarities, although they were not in geographical contact with each other. The most striking similarity was that most areas showed relatively large-scale production of goods for sale based on outland resources of various kind during the Viking Age and Early Middle Ages. It also became clear that the producers of the goods for sale consumed a great deal of more or less luxury items such as jewellery, which were not produced locally. This boom was followed by a recession that could only partly be due to the late medieval agrarian crisis; and in fact it appeared that several of the studied marginal areas were affected negatively already during the 13th century.

It seemed like a good idea to look into this problem more closely on both local and comparative levels. Therefore a small joint project was created for the years 1998–2000. The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences financed the project.

The project had three major aims:

- 1 To produce new knowledge about the past in so-called marginal areas, on the basis of a comparison between the Beloozero area in northern Russia and northern Värmland in western Sweden.
- 2 To encourage international and interdisciplinary scientific cooperation on an egalitarian basis.
- 3 To create arguments for the preservation of threatened cultural landscapes and environments, especially in Russia with the new economic situation following the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The two last points will not be elaborated here, but it may be said that the basis of the joint project was mutual visits during fieldwork. In 1999 the Russian team visited northern Värmland, and in 2000 the Swedish team visited northern Russia. During these visits good personal relations were created, which hopefully will be elaborated further. It should be noted here that both teams consisted mostly of younger scholars, with previously little or no international experience or personal academic contacts. The participation in each other's different ways of fieldworking was also most instructive.

Northern Värmland

The medieval parish of Dalby (today consisting of the parishes of Norra Finnskoga, Södra Finnskoga and Dalby) is the northernmost area of Värmland. It is a forested and mountainous area, out of slightly more than 2,000 km² only about 20 km² is agricultural land, cut into two halves by the narrow, predominantly north-south oriented river valley of Klarälven. It is in the fertile river valley that the earliest permanent settlements were established in prehistoric and medieval times.

The area was surveyed for ancient monuments by the National Heritage Board in 1990,

and ongoing surveys are carried out by the Forest Commission. The monuments were mainly located in the forests and connected with outland use. Two research projects have been carried out in Dalby; the first resulting in a thesis (Svensson 1998), the second being a not yet published interdisciplinary project, "Settlement, Shielings and Landscape". The second project included archaeologists, a human geographer and a vegetation historian and focused on a single homestead in Dalby. In 1997 about 80 bloomery furnace sites, some 1,300 charcoal pits, roughly 150 shielings and 700 pitfalls for elk were documented. Also localities for haymaking and agriculture in the outland have been recorded. Excavations, pollen analyses etc. showed that bloomery iron was produced in the area from AD 400 to early modern times, pitfalls were constructed from c. 3000 BC to early modern times, and shielings were used from AD 500 to modern times. However, datings from pitfalls and bloomery sites are strongly concentrated in the period AD 900–1200, and there seems to be an intensified use of shielings and haymaking and agriculture in the outland in early modern times (Svensson 1998, "Settlement, Shielings and Landscape"). Excavations of bloomery sites in a neighbouring area have also been dated to the period AD 900–1200 (Myrdal-Runebjer 1998).

Finding settlement remains from prehistoric and medieval times has been a problem in Dalby, but through intense surveys a few possible localities have been discovered, and a farmstead, Skinnerud, from the Viking Age and Early Middle Ages has been partly excavated in conjunction with the project "Settlement, Shielings and Landscape". According to recent results, it appears likely that permanent settlements within the field and meadow system were established during the centuries after the birth of Christ, and there are indications of the establishment of permanent settlements at least from the Bronze Age ("Settlement, Shielings and Landscape", see also Johansson *et al.* 1997). It should be noted that no prehistoric grave

monuments have been located in the area, a fact that has led scholars in earlier times to describe Dalby as an area where permanent settlements were established only in medieval times and later. With the discovery of remains of prehistoric permanent settlements with an agrarian economy, the absence of prehistoric grave monuments has to be explained in other ways. Here a hypothesis including social and mental features based on historical analogy is put forward.

As in many other forested areas of middle and northern Scandinavia, indications of the presence of persons or institutions representing the state, nobility or the upper strata of the clergy are lacking during medieval and early modern times. The dominating social group appears to have been the land-owning, tax-paying forest farmers, whose social strategy in pre-industrial times is described as *communication* of equality within the local community. This should not be confused with real equality. The social network of the forest farmers often included a variety of joint projects and work cooperatives on a formal and equal basis. It should be noted that the communication of equality was a successful mean of obscuring social differences in real life, and added to the strong feeling of affinity and belonging within the local community, as has been demonstrated for post-medieval periods (Ekman 1991, p. 30; Johansson 1994, pp. 20 ff.). According to our notion, the parish of Dalby in medieval times can best be described as a local community, and an arena for decision-making, dominated by freeholding forest farmers.

Outland use in Dalby can be reconstructed according to the recorded ancient monuments mentioned above. The outland use was aimed both at self-subsistence and at production for sale. Outland use for self-subsistence was mainly of an agrarian character, i.e. activities that could be pursued on the infields but were moved to the outland due to the infields being too small. Forest grazing (mainly in connection with shielings), hay-making (mostly on mires) and

agriculture both on swidden and on small manured fields were among the most important agrarian outland activities. Also some of the products of the non-agrarian outland use, such as iron production, hunting/catching for meat, furs, hides and antler, tar production etc. were consumed within the local community. The strategy behind these non-agrarian outland activities was, however, mainly production for sale on an external market.

Most of the agrarian and non-agrarian outland activities were established during the centuries around AD 500, but they were pursued with different intensities over time. As there is a strong concentration of datings of bloomery furnace sites and pitfalls for elk in the period AD 900–1200, it seems reasonable to presume that iron, fur and antler were produced for sale outside the local market. This assumption is reinforced, at least concerning the bloomery iron production, by the fact that the slag heaps dating to the period AD 900–1200 are much larger than slag heaps from earlier and later periods. Calculations of the presumed iron production, on the basis of the size of the slag heaps, and the presumed consumption of iron within the local community clearly shows that there was a large surplus production of bloomery iron during the period AD 900–1200 (Svensson 1998, pp. 99 f.).

Bloomery iron was produced in many areas of Scandinavia both before and after the introduction of the blast furnace in the 12th and 13th centuries and the expansion of the Swedish mining districts in medieval times (Magnusson 1983, 1998). In some areas, especially areas outside of or on the borders of medieval Sweden, the bloomery iron production increased even after the introduction of the blast furnace, but to some extent the blast furnace meant competition with the bloomery iron. However, there appears to have been competition within the bloomery iron production and trade earlier too, as different production regions display chronologically different booms (Magnusson 1986). Apart from factors such as geographical variations in demand

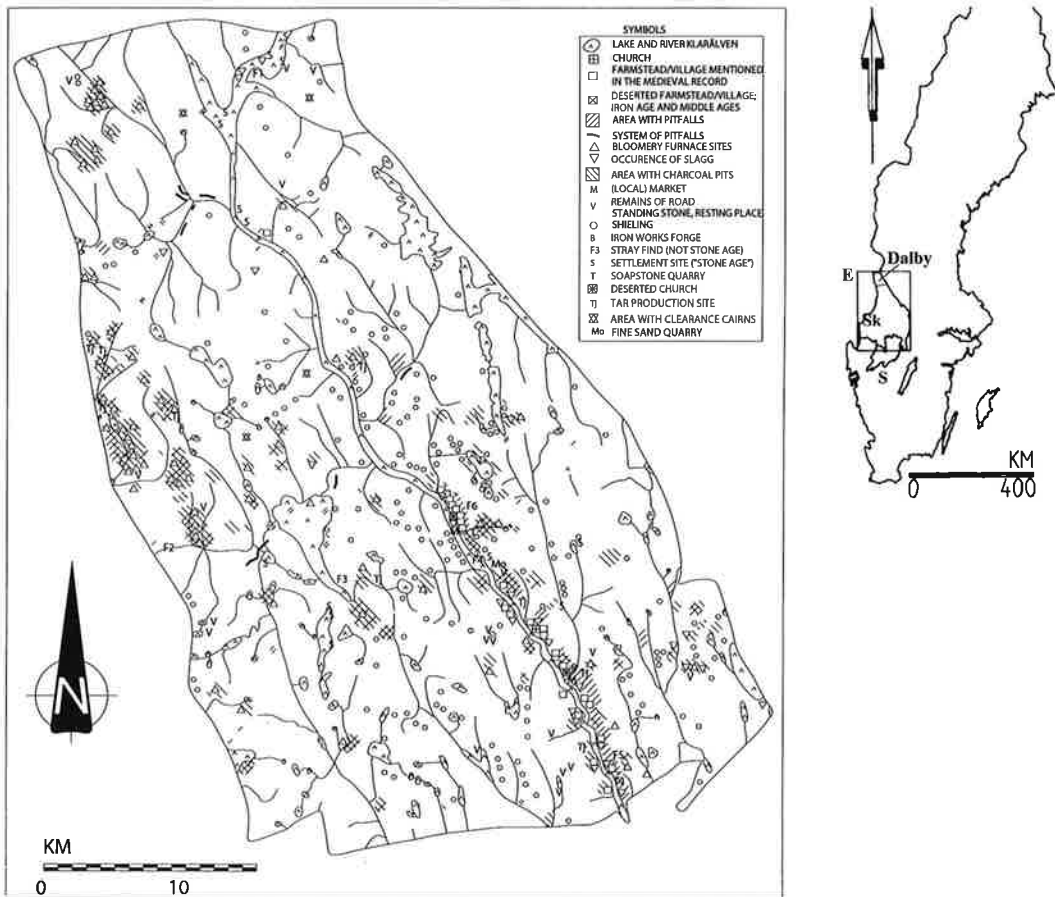


Fig. 1. Left: the medieval parish of Dalby, with ancient monuments and medieval farms/villages. Right: location of Dalby in the judicial district of Värmland. Skara (S), Elverum (E) and Skramle (Sk), mentioned in the text, are marked.

for iron, the quality of the bloomery iron must also have been of importance here. The decline in bloomery iron production in northern Värmland was probably in the short run due to competition from other regions and a declining market (see below), and in the long run due to the development of the Swedish mining district, Bergslagen. According to the present datings (see Fig. 2) there seems to have been an almost simultaneous decline in the construction of pitfalls for elk.

It is not known where the products from the outlands of northern Värmland were exported, as there were no known trading sites in the vicinity. In fact, there were no towns or

permanent trading sites at all in Värmland until the late 16th century. According to the earliest preserved court rolls, from the 17th century (Bäckvall), it was an established practice that the peasants of Dalby traded their goods in Elverum on the Norwegian side of the border, and perhaps this custom was of older date. Another possibility is Skara in Västergötland. Skara was the episcopal see of the diocese of which northern Värmland was a part and one of the closest medieval towns. Of interest in this discussion is that elk antler was of great importance for combmaking in Skara until the early 13th century, when it was increasingly replaced by bones from horses and cattle (Vretemark 1997, p. 151). The change of

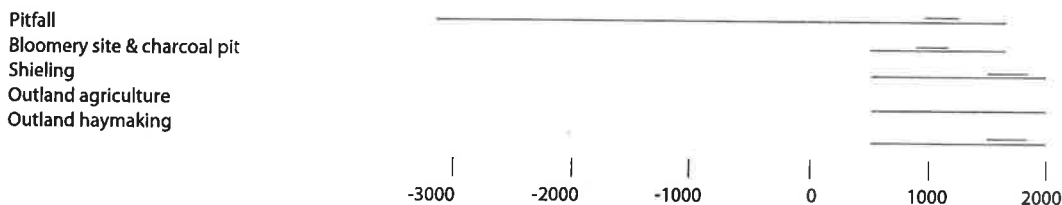


Fig. 2. Occurrence through time of different outland activities in Dalby. More intense production phases are indicated with double lines.

comb material thus coincides in time with the cessation of pitfall construction in northern Värmland.

In any case, the trade in outland products AD 900–1200 seems to have resulted in a demographic boom, or at least settlement expansion. Of the 20 farmsteads documented in written documents from early 16th century, six have names indicating an establishment of the settlement during the period in question (Johansson *et al.* 1997, pp. 10 ff.).

It can be discussed whether the surplus from trade in outland goods was used for buying consumption goods of a socially desired kind or at least of equal status to what peasants in more central areas consumed. So far only one settlement with occupation layers from the period in question, Skinnerud, has been excavated to any extent. Most of the finds from Skinnerud were of quite the same kind as can be found at other contemporary agrarian settlements of ordinary kind, but there were also a few objects

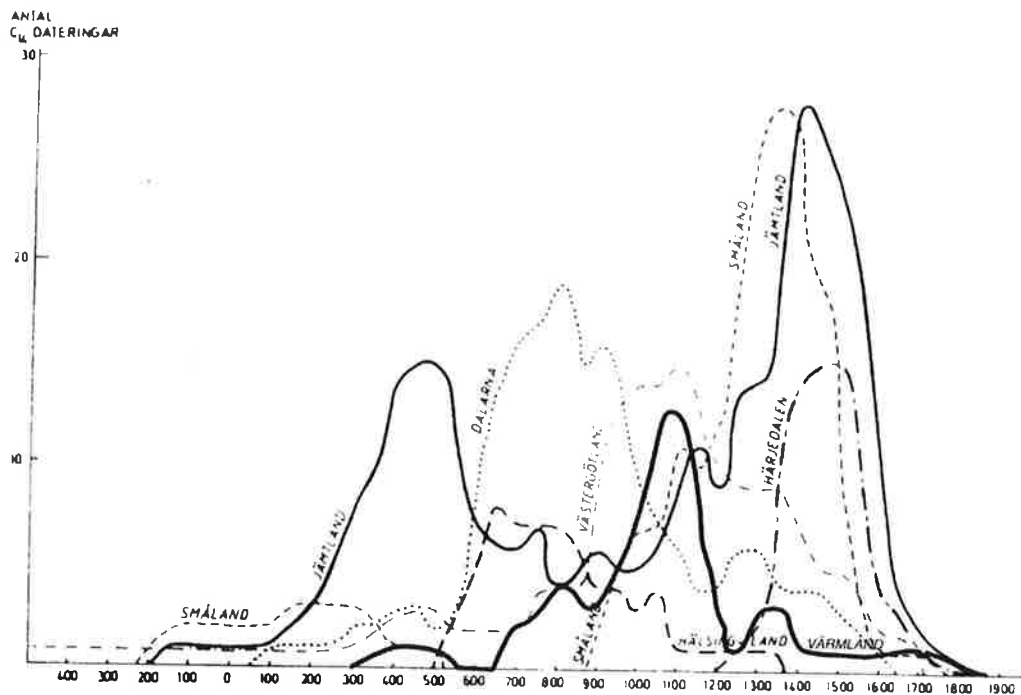


Fig. 3. Compilation of carbon-dated bloomery sites from various parts of Sweden (based on Magnusson 1986, p. 226) with the addition of datings from northern Värmland (Svensson 1998, p. 101).

of a more “luxury” character such as beads and remains from jewellery and dress accessories of bronze. However, the recovered artefacts mainly bear witness to being left behind by a household of well-to-do farmers without the need or means to boast. The artefact assembly from Skinnerud corresponds well in character with the slightly later finds from the nearby excavated forest farms in the hamlet of Skramle (Andersson & Svensson in press). This archaeological testimony seems to be well in line with what we know about the social strategy of the forest farmers of middle and northern Scandinavia in historical times.

After the decline in the non-agrarian outland production of goods for sale, the importance of the agrarian outland use increased as means for self-subsistence, and the use of shielings, haymaking and agriculture in the outland was

intensified especially during Early Modern times (Svensson 1998, “Settlement, Shielings and Landscape”).

Beloozero

The name *Beloozero* means “white lake”. This name refers to three units: to a large lake, to the area that surrounded the lake and formed a territorial unit (see Fig. 5), and to the town located near the lake. Lake Beloe belongs to the Volga river system, and forms its northernmost part, neighbouring on the water systems of Lake Onega and the northern River Dvina. Thus, lying deep inside continental Russia, Beloozero was connected with the Baltic, the White Sea and the Caspian Sea.

According to the Primary Chronicle, Beloozero was incorporated in the ancient

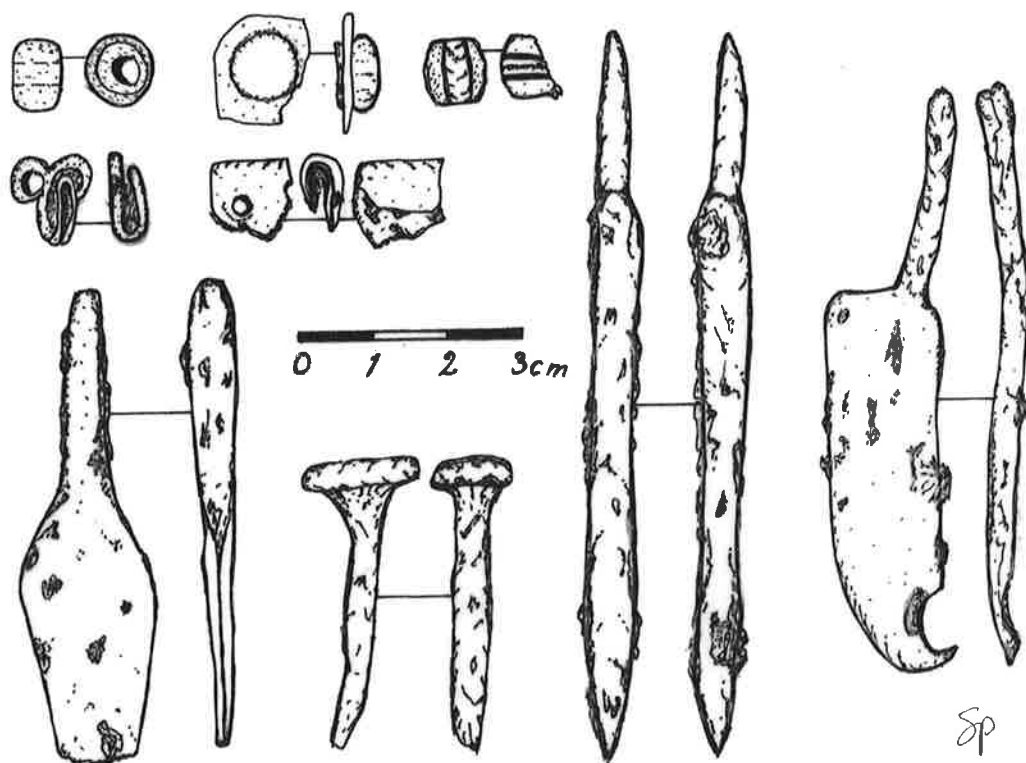


Fig. 4. Finds from the Viking Age and early medieval settlement of Skinnerud, Dalby. Drawing: Susanne Pettersson.

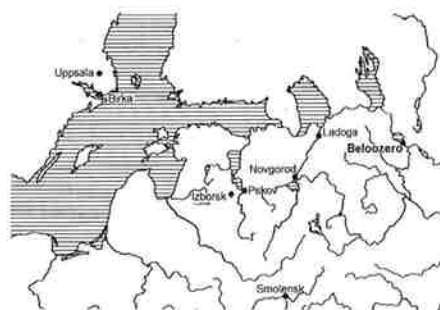
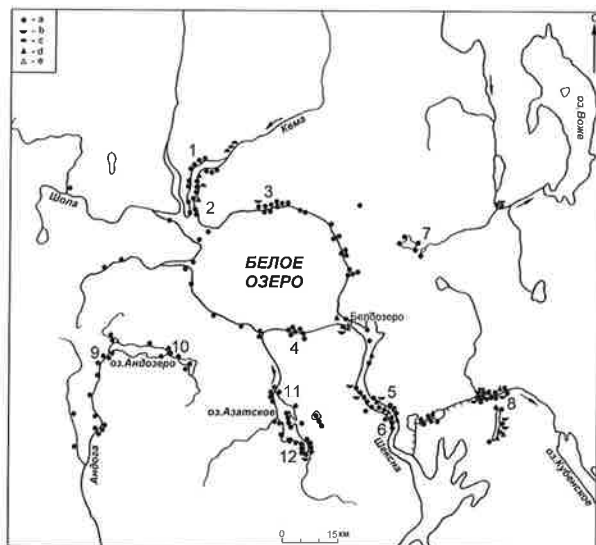


Fig. 5. Archaeological monuments of the 10th–13th centuries in the Lake Beloozero area. Figures indicate main local groups of dwelling sites. 1 Nikolskoe; 2 Novokemsky; 3 Kismema; 4 Maeksa – Belozersk; 5 Volokhovo – Pruzhinino; 6 Goritsy – Shuklino; 7 Volotskoe; 8 Volok Slavensky; 9 west Andozero; 10 Andozero – Novoe ozero; 11 Lozskoe; 12 Azatskoe – Rodionovskoe.

Russian state in 862 and governed by Sineus, the brother of Prince Rurik, who was invited to Novgorod from Scandinavia (Primary Chronicle 1953). It can be questioned how large the population was, as among the numerous dwelling sites that have been surveyed in the region very few display 9th-century occupation layers, and the earliest deposits in Beloozero town date to the middle or late 10th century. The chronicles contain very few records of Beloozero before 1237, when the town became a centre of a separate principality. For centuries Beloozero region had a reputation for being a sparsely settled, distant forest periphery in the ancient Russian state with rich natural resources as well as being a safe and well-protected territory (Белозеро, 1973; Makarov 1998).

Beloozero region displays a comparatively high concentration of medieval monuments. A total of 186 sites dating to the period of late 9th–early 13th centuries were registered over an area of 9,000 km². Of these, 169 are dwelling sites or stray finds on the places of destroyed settlements. The settled region formed a topographically isolated unit with distinct borders in the east, north-east and north-west, being surrounded by a broad strip of uninhabited territories, mostly

bogs and woodlands on the watersheds. It formed a kind of isolated frontier settlement area, which constituted the largest group of medieval settlements on the northern outskirts of the ancient Russian state and to a certain extent marked the boundary of Slavic-Russian settlement in the 10th to early 13th centuries (Белозеро, 1973; Белицкий, 2000; Makarov 1998; Makarov 2000).

Beloozero town had no fortifications, unlike most other Russian towns. Its historical importance is rather demonstrated by its extensive size, with cultural deposits covering an area of 54 hectares, and by special categories of finds such as lead seals, golden jewellery and carved stone icons. The geographical position of the town had special advantages in the system of water communications, as it gave access to the three main portages of the Beloozero region, which opened the way to Lake Onega, the River Onega, the northern Dvina river systems and to the Volga. However, being a centre of a complex system of water communication and long-distance trade, the town had a rather weak subsistence environment, as there were almost no rural sites in its vicinity.

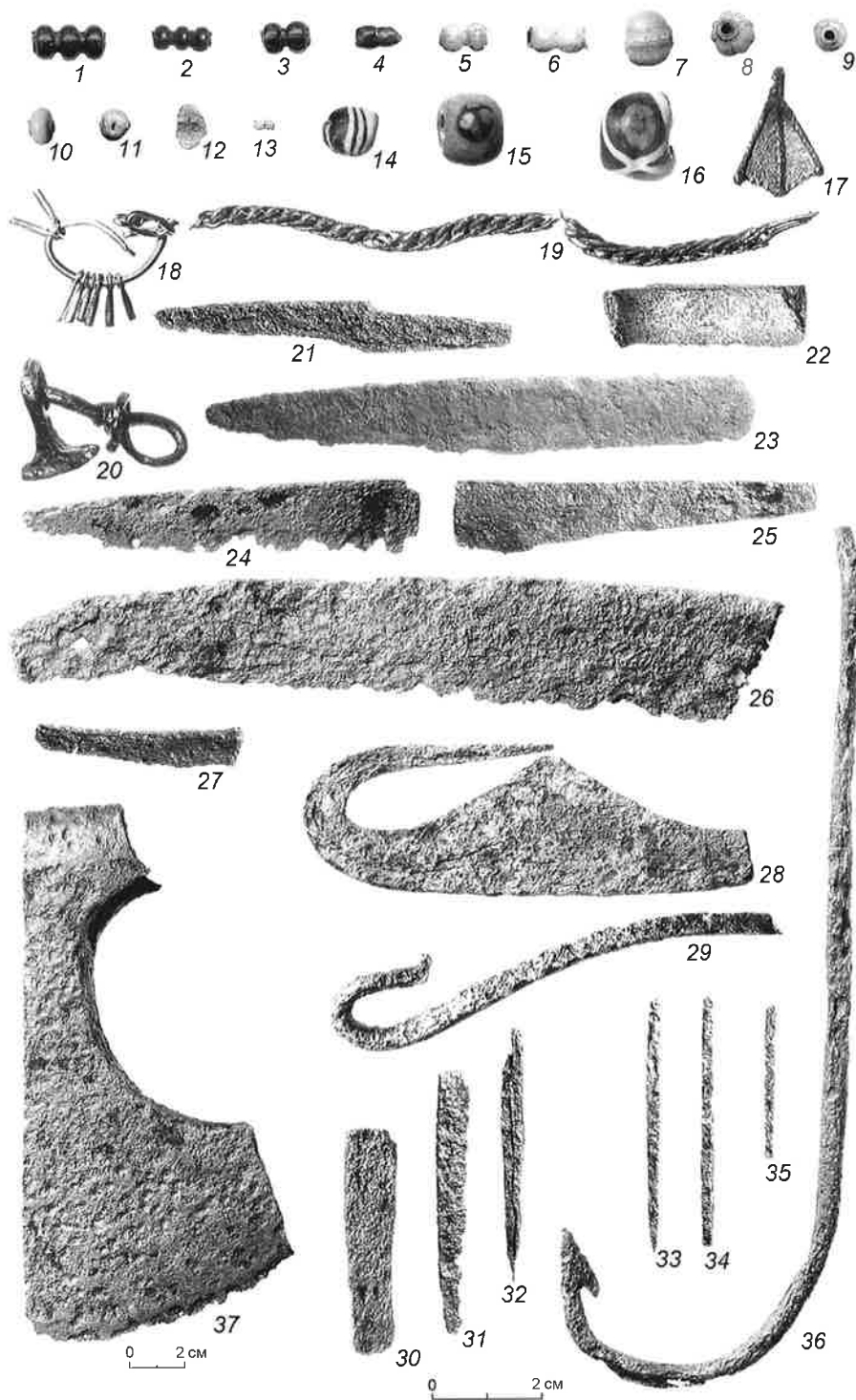


Fig. 6. Nikolskoe V dwelling site on the Lower Kema river. Artefacts excavated. 1–16 glass; 17, 19 bronze; 18 silver; 20–37 iron.

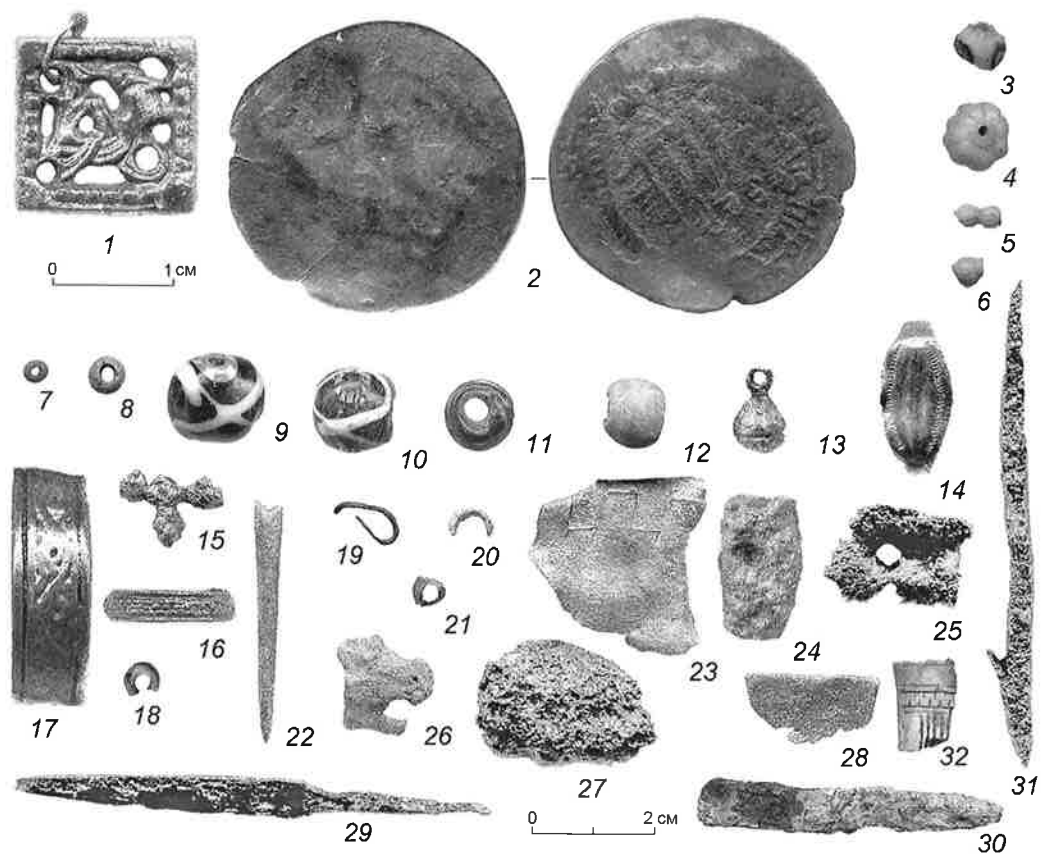


Fig. 7. Nikolskoe IX dwelling site. Artefacts from surface survey. 1, 2 silver; 3–12 glass; 13–28 non-ferrous metal; 29–31 iron.

Recent fieldwork has revealed that the period 900–1200 was a time of rapid colonization in Beloozero region, when lots of new settlements were established. Most of the early medieval sites emerged on the uninhabited places or in the local areas, settled in prehistoric times but later abandoned. Settlement growth went hand in hand with the formation of the new economic basis and new material culture. Finds from the Beloozero sites dating to the late 10th to 12th centuries include numerous imported goods and give evidence of trade activity, prosperity and a high level of consumption. Rich sets of metal ornaments, glass beads and Western European coins were found both in the burial places and in the cultural deposits of the

settlements. These sets seem to be much more impressive than in many central agricultural areas of the ancient Russian state. These sites should be contrasted with the material from sites and occupation layers with earlier and later datings, which display very modest sets of artefacts.

The character of the grave finds gives no indications of strong social or property status inequality between the people buried in most of the cemeteries. Being aware of the problems of making a detailed social reconstruction, we can still assume that well-to-do freeholding farmers constituted an important and numerous social group in the region.

The Beloozero area 900–1200 could thus be described as a geographical and topographical, but hardly an economic periphery in the ancient Russian state. But what could have been the economic background of the 10th to 12th century prosperity and the high level of consumption in the Beloozero area? Probably it was connected with the development of a complex economy, which combined the extraction of outland resources, agriculture and trade. The macrofossil flora from the early medieval cultural deposits in Beloozero gives evidence of cultivation and agricultural expansion in 900–1200. During the same period, we have distinct indications of a fur-hunting boom. Remains of the fur animals, mainly beaver, but also squirrel and marten constitute a large part of the osteological material. Special arrowheads for fur animal hunting made of antler, bone and iron were found both in the occupation layers and in the male graves (Makarov 1994; Makarov & Buzhilova 1997). It is obvious that Beloozero town played the leading role in the regional trade network, but it is also clear that the inhabitants of the town hunted themselves. Furs from Beloozero could have been transported both to the Volga and to the Baltic area. The domination of western ornaments and the high concentration of Western European coins in the region in the 11th and early 12th centuries indicate that a large part of the goods produced in the local outlands was exported to the west in that period or at least exchanged for western products.

Analysis of the osteological collections from different sites points to a gradual decrease of trapping in the 12th–early 13th centuries, or rather the moving of trapping eastwards. The decrease of fur hunting, and the increased importance of more agrarian production with limited trade activities in AD 1250–1350, caused serious changes in settlement organization, culture and consumption. This period is marked by the decline of a considerable number of the dwelling sites established in AD 900–1200. Changes in outland exploitation and trade

network destroyed the economic background of the old urban centre Beloozero town, which could not develop under the new conditions and consequently declined.

Archaeological record and social structure – some suggestions

It is clear that the character of the cultural landscape and the ancient monuments from the Viking Age and Early Middle Ages differed between northern Värmland and Beloozero. In the Beloozero area the permanent dwelling sites form the largest and the most noticeable part of the early medieval remains. Archaeological material from the large permanent settlements and their nearby cemeteries provides important information on various outland activities, which were conducted far from the sites. Seasonal winter and summer stations which probably constituted an important part of the whole economic network of the Early Middle Ages are not known in Beloozero, though special surveys were made with the primary goal of identifying these sites. Perhaps they were totally destroyed by the later agricultural exploitation of the territory, which has expanded since approximately 1300. In contrast, the forested landscape of northern Värmland contains numerous sites connected with outland activities and seasonal settlement remains (shielings). On the other hand, permanent settlement remains here provide rather modest site material, most probably due to the medieval settlements being disturbed by later settlements and activities. The general view of the local economy and settlement organization in Värmland is based mainly on the outland monuments.

Thus, the outland use is expressed in the forested landscape in northern Värmland and in the settlement sites and cemeteries in Beloozero. It may be argued to what extent these differences were shaped by the real difference of the activities which forest farmers practised, or to what extent they are different aspects of local conditions and

later development. For example, are we right in our interpretation that the Beloozero inhabitants did not need to establish shielings as they had enough meadows and arable lands around their hamlets, or have we not been able to locate sites of this kind? And are the far less rich artefact assemblies from the settlement layers in northern Värmland, compared with the Russian sites, really the result of different attitudes to how to display wealth (as will be proposed below), or is this result only a consequence of soil conditions in which metal is not preserved?

It actually appears that the archaeological record of northern Värmland and Beloozero displays two different halves of the totality of the outland-using communities: in northern Värmland the production in the outland and in Beloozero the consumption of the goods acquired on the basis of outland use. The comparison between northern Värmland and Beloozero has therefore clearly illuminated one of the most important problems when studying outland areas: the problem of grasping the totality.

Still, we would like to propose some hypotheses based on the presumption that the differences in the archaeological record to a great extent are the result of different social and economic situations. It appears that outland use in Beloozero was more specialized than in northern Värmland, and the importance of fur hunting much stronger. Russian material displays various indications of fur animal trapping which are less prominent in Dalby. It seems that outland economy in northern Värmland included a wider range of activities and was focused on a wider set of resources, which could have been extracted from the forest areas.

According to the archaeological material from the excavated sites, there appear to have been different attitudes to and possibilities for consumption in northern Värmland and in Beloozero. Judging by the existing source material, the farmers in Beloozero area displayed a very high level of luxury consumption, especially in jewellery and dress accessories during the Viking Age and Early Middle Ages. The

farmers of northern Värmland, on the other hand, seem to have been well-to-do during the period in question, but at the same time there are few items of “luxury” character located at the settlements. Perhaps this should be associated with the impression of the farmers having been a well-established social group who expanded already existing business in the outland during the Viking Age and Early Middle Ages without apparent conflicts. Modesty in performance would also be well in line with the presumed communication of equality within the local community.

Probably there was a greater need for the Russian population in Beloozero area to mark their status in their outward performance, as they were living in a *frontier situation* as new settlers in an area previously inhabited by other ethnic groups. Perhaps it was also of importance to display success in relation to the people that stayed behind in more agrarian areas when they left to colonize the Beloozero area. In any case it is most probable that they possessed greater economic means than their counterparts in northern Värmland.

The conjuncture of the Viking Age – Early Middle Ages

In spite of the differences, it is obvious that northern Värmland and Beloozero area took part in a similar historical trend; a boom in economy and a settlement expansion during the period 900–1200. This boom seems to be based on the premises that there were large outlands with resources that could be turned into attractive trading goods. In both areas this boom was turned into a decline about 1200, a decline that meant a change in economy towards a greater degree of agriculture on a self-subsistence basis. As stated earlier in this article, similar and fairly contemporary trends are known from other North European “peripheries” (Andersson *et al.* 1998).

We have not been able to fully explain either the boom or the subsequent recession, but we

think that they should be viewed in a larger framework than on a regional level. An attractive thesis is that the marginal areas became part of a European trade network during the Viking Age, which meant that they could to some degree specialize in the production of certain lucrative goods. If so, this network seems to have collapsed or changed character during the 13th and 14th centuries, which meant that the demographic and economic boom in these outland use peripheries was fading *before* the late medieval crisis. Perhaps the expanding powers of the monarchs, and the nobles in Scandinavia, and their cultivation of the regal doctrine (Wallerström 1995, pp. 27 f.; Wallerström in press; see also Drar 1980), which meant serious competition for the outlands and later also restrictions on their use, should be emphasized here.

In our view it would be of great importance to compile and compare the results of several more studies of outland use areas in order to illuminate and discuss this hypothesis further. It would also be of interest to discuss the hypothesis in comparison with what happens in more "central" areas.

Finally, marginality lies in the eyes of the beholder – and the fact that both the Beloozero area and northern Värmland are located far away from the archaeological and academic institutions has had a great impact on their alleged marginality. It has also made them more attractive as research areas to the authors of this article. After all, it is more of a challenge when you have to swim over a river or climb a mountain when you are on excursion...

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Notes

1. Periphery relates primarily to the (geographical) distance to a centre. Marginality also includes a notion of poverty of different kind.

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