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TETIUSHI-II HILLFORT — AN URBAN-TYPE SETTLEMENT OF THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

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Abstract. The article deals with the issues related to the problem of the existence of urban-type settlements in the Early Middle Ages in the Volga-Kama. On the example of the materials of Tetiushi-II hillfort located on the right bank of the Volga, the author gives arguments confirming this thesis. Having been studied for six seasons since 2007, Tetiushi-II hillfort has a unique stratigraphy which made it possible to identify the chronological stages of its existence, as well as to determine the peak of its functioning — the second half of the 6^{th} — first half of the 7^{th} centuries. The hillfort, as well as the settlement adjacent to it from the side facing the enemy, belongs to the Imen'kovo culture. A clear layout of the hillfort was recorded: an industrial site with furnaces and melting pits in the northern part of this settlement, an area of craft workshops and residential estates in the southern part of the site near the rampart. The population of the hillfort was engaged in crafts, trade, and had a developed system of cults and was multi-ethnic.

Keywords: Tetiushi-II hillfort, Imen'kovo culture, urbanization, hillforts, craft, trade, early medieval city, the period of the Great Migration of Peoples

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ТЕТЮШСКОЕ-II ГОРОДИЩЕ — ПОСЕЛЕНИЕ ГОРОДСКОГО ТИПА ЭПОХИ РАННЕГО СРЕДНЕВЕКОВЬЯ

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Резюме. В статье рассматриваются вопросы, связанные с проблемой существования поселений городского типа в раннем средневековье в Волго-Камье. На примере материалов Тетюшского-II городища, расположенного в правобережье Волги, автор приводит аргументы, подтверждающие этот тезис. Тетюшское-II городище, исследовавшееся с 2007 г. в течение шести сезонов, имеет уникальную стратиграфию, позволившую выделить хронологические этапы его существования, а также определить пик его функционирования: 2-я половина VI — 1-я половина VII в. н.э. Городище, как и прилегающее к нему с напольной стороны селище, относится к именьковской культуре. Зафиксирована четкая планировка городища: производственный район с горнами и плавильными ямами в северной части этого поселения, район ремесленных мастерских и жилые усадьбы в южной части площадки у вала. Население городища занималось ремеслом, торговлей, имело развитую систему культов и было полиэтничным.

Ключевые слова: Тетюшское-II городище, именьковская культура, урбанизация, городища, ремесло, торговля, раннесредневековый город, эпоха Великого переселения народов

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The question of the nature of the settlements of the Early Middle Ages of the Kazan Volga region in the context of socio-economic history has not been raised until now. There are several reasons for this. The main one can be considered a methodological approach, according to which the urbanization processes reflect a certain stage of historical development — the feudal period. The beginning of this period in the Volga-Kama is traditionally associated with the formation of Volga Bulgaria, that is, the 10th century. For the pre-Bulgar period, the possibility of the emergence of complex developed socio-political and economically arranged structures seemed unlikely. As, in fact, the possibilities of social organization and stratification of the societies with the emerging necessity for special forms of economic life — centers of craft and trade, i.e., urban centers or preceding forms. The second reason is the archaeological materials needed for the analysis. Also among the complex issues are the specifics of the Imen'kovo archaeological culture, the existence of which belongs to this period.

Currently, the hypothesis of exclusively evolutionary development of socio-economic and state institutions in Eurasian communities is examined differently. It is assumed that the types of politogenesis could develop in alternative versions that did not imply a classical system both in form and content (Bondarenko, Grinin, Korotaev, 2006, p. 21, 22). Thus, in principle, the question of the possibility of the emergence and functioning of socio-economic units with the character of early urban centers in the pre-Bulgar period in the Volga region is permissible. It should be noted that at the beginning of the 21st century, the hypothesis of a stateless civilization became widespread (Kradin, 2021, p. 124). Taking into account these theories, it is necessary to search for other explanations for the available data that do not fit the scheme of the communal-patriarchal structure of the society of the population of the Imen'kovo culture.

These theoretical calculations make sense when empirical material for analysis is available. In this instance, the monuments of the Imen'kovo culture of the Kazan Volga region of the 6th–7th centuries are under discussion. Its territory, as well as the chronological framework of existence, is wider than the above-mentioned region (Starostin, 1967; Matveeva, 2003). The understanding of the specifics and ethno-cultural interpretation of the Imen'kovo culture has changed significantly over the past decades. It became obvious that its population was multicomponent, as evidenced by the biritaul funeral rite, as well as the peculiarities of the material culture of individual territories (Kazakov, 2020; Valiev, 2019, pp. 109–116; Stepanov, 1967).

Object of Study and Methods

The unevenness of the study of various categories of Imen'kovo monuments makes it difficult to examine a number of issues, in particular, the nature of the Imen'kovo settlements, which were the centers of settlement agglomerations. There are few of them studied in the Kazan Volga region. Only Imen'kovo hillfort in Tatarstan has been completely excavated, but

its materials were published only in a review (Kalinin, Khalikov, 1960). Kirbi hillfort in the Cis-Kama region was investigated quite fully (Ostanina, 2002). Hillforts in the lower reaches of the Kama River have been studied in small areas: Maklasheevo–II and Troitsko–Uraisk I, as well as the settlement 'Kurgan' (Starostin, 1968; 1977; 1983).

The excavations of several hillforts on the right bank of the Volga can be considered as the most significant of the recent studies. Those are: near the village of Novaia Bedenga in the Ul'ianovsk region and Tetiushi–II hillfort in Tatarstan (Viazov, Semykin, 2016; Rudenko, 2010; Rudenko, 2011). The distance between them is not very large, but the material culture and the archaeological situation on the monuments differ significantly.

Tetiushi–II settlement, located on the narrow promontory of the rock terrace of the right bank of the Volga, was formed by two deep ravines (Fig. 1). Currently, its area is 2903 m². On the side facing the enemy, the settlement was protected by an arc -shaped rampart with the width about 6 m at the base. The preserved part of the embankment is up to 1.5 m high. There was a moat dug in front of the rampart. Because an edge of one of the ravines was used, the depth of the moat reached 10 m. Behind the moat, there was a vast settlement extended from west to east for more than 1000 m, to another ravine, and from north to south — up to 500 m. This area is now occupied by an urban development.



Fig. 1. Tetiushi-II hillfort. General view

Рис. 1. Тетюшское-II городище. Общий вид

Results

The excavations carried out by the author from 2007 to 2013 on the site and fortifications of the settlement (Fig. 2), with a total area of 444 m², enabled to discover the history of this monument. Unlike most of the Imen'kovo hillforts, Tetiushi–II hillfort has not only a solid cultural layer with an average thickness of 50–100 cm (in objects up to 3.5 m), but also a clear

stratigraphy (Rudenko, 2018). Together with the planography, this makes it possible to reconstruct the history of the cultural layer and the development of this territory.

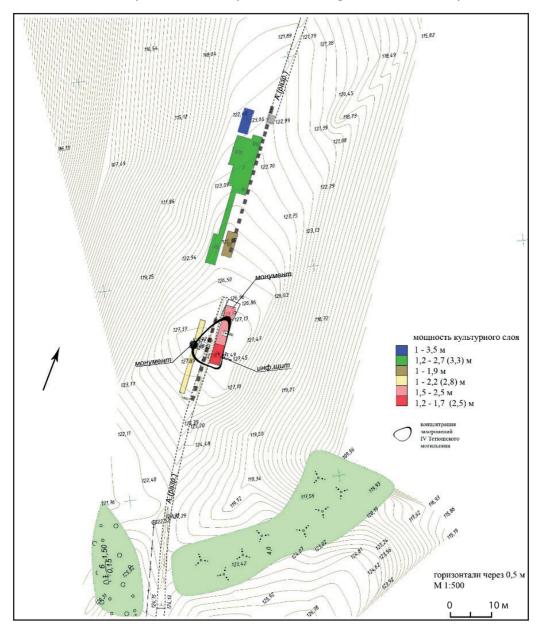


Fig. 2. Tetiushi-II hillfort. Plan with the excavations

Рис. 2. Тетюшское-II городище. План с нанесенными раскопами

Initially, this place was developed in the Late Bronze Age — the beginning of the Early Iron Age, when a small settlement appeared here, occupying the northern part of the cape, separated from the rest of the territory by a moat about 5–6 m wide, at a depth of 4–5 m. Traces of life of that time were revealed both on the site of the hillfort and behind the moat. Basically, these are fragments of ceramics (Fig. 4). This settlement probably corresponds to part of the burials of the Tetiushi–I burial ground dated to the 9th–7th centuries BC, located a few kilometers to the west, also on one of the capes of the high rock terrace (Khalikov, 1977, pp. 50–75; Patrushev, 2011, pp. 205–260).

In the 3^{rd} – 4^{th} centuries, a small group of people of the Azelin culture settled on the site of the above- mentioned settlement. They buried their dead at the Tetiushi-II burial ground, which occupied part of the territory of the earlier Tetiushi-I burial ground. They were located in a compact group at the very edge of the terrace (Kazakov, 2009, p. 33; Bugrov, 2004).

After them, no later than the 4^{th} century A.D., the settlement of the Imen'kovo culture began to function there. Its heyday was in the second half of the 6^{th} — first half of the 7^{th} centuries.

In the middle of the 6th century, the settlement of the Imen'kovo culture was not fortified. Moreover, initially, the western and southern parts of the site began to be built up, and the ancient moat began to be used for household purposes. It also became the boundary of the industrial site of iron smelting (Fig. 3). The cape part of the promontory was aligned. At the turn of the 6th–7th centuries or a little earlier, the settlement was destroyed, some of the inhabitants died. Soon after that, restoration work began: the pits of the destroyed outbuildings were filled in, the site was aligned. At the highest point of the promontory, a rampart was built and a moat was dug. The construction of the territory of the hillfort at the beginning of the 7th century was carried out according to a certain plan, although to some extent repeating the location of the previous time and taking into account the natural downgrade of the site to the Volga (the height difference was about 3 m).



Fig. 3. Tetiushi-II hillfort. Stratigraphy. Excavation IX. Western wall of the excavation

Рис. 3. Стратиграфия Тетюшского-II городища. Раскоп IX. Западная стенка раскопа

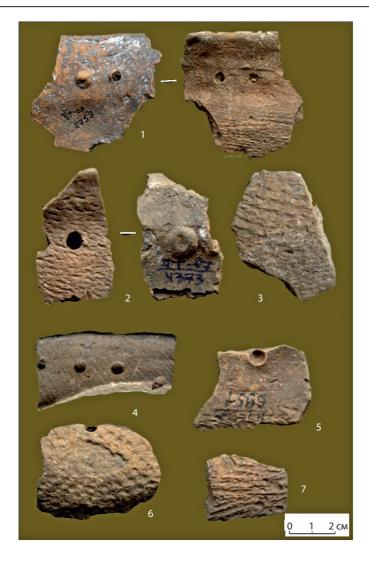


Fig. 4. Tetiushi-II hillfort. Ceramics of the 9th-8th centuries BC Рис. 4. Тетюшское-II городище. Керамика IX-VIII вв. до н.э.

The southern part of the hillfort, immediately behind the rampart erected in the 6th century AD, was occupied by residential estates. In the middle there were workshops with the related dwellings and outbuildings. Behind the moat of the Bronze Age, which had already became less steep by that time, there were furnaces and melting pits in the western part of the site; to the east there were auxiliary structures. That was the lowest part of the cape which ensured the relative safety of wooden buildings in the higher southern part of the hillfort in case of fire danger. This triple layout was preserved until the end of the functioning of the hillfort in the 7th century. It should be added that handicraft production at the monument began with the smelting of iron ore, then, the melting of non-ferrous metal became predominant.

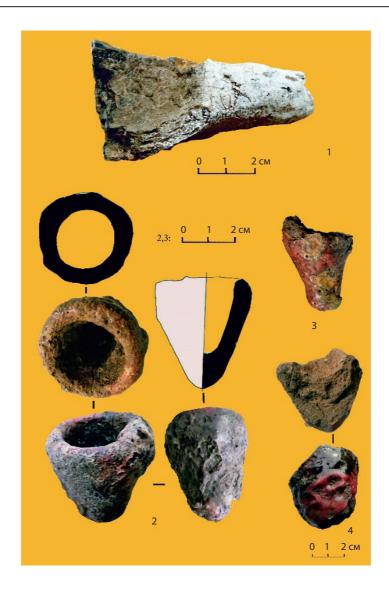


Fig. 5. Tetiushi-II hillfort. Crucibles and ladles. 6th—7th centuries Рис. 5. Тетюшское-II городище. Тигли и льячки. VI—VII вв. н.э.

The material culture of Tetiushi-II hillfort has its own specifics. With a fairly typical assortment of household ware found in many settlements of the Imen'kovo culture, there is a group of small (about 12–15 cm high) chamotte vessels with a bent upper part with pinches. Fragments of vessels of the Kushnarenkovo culture were recorded in the stratigraphic layer III. In addition to them, other artifacts related to that culture were met (Rudenko, 2013). In the III and IV layers of cultural deposits, there were found more than 50 fragments and whole forms of technical utensils, such as crucibles and ladles (Fig. 5) used for casting jewelry, and

parts of costumes (Rudenko, 2020). In the same layers in the central and northern parts of the hillfort site, slag, pieces of vitreous mass, slag fragments of ceramics, bronze splashes, stone grating plates for ore preparation were recorded (Fig. 6); collectively they reflect the intensity of industrial activity (Rudenko, 2020a).

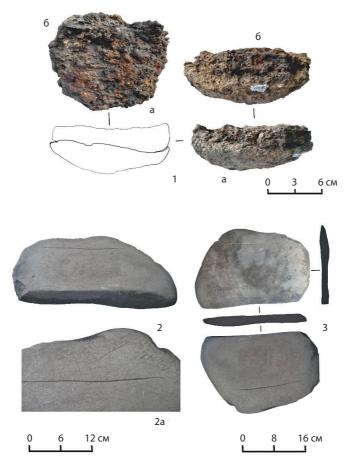


Fig. 6. Tetiushi-II hillfort. Traces of metallurgical production and related processes

Рис. 6. Тетюшское-II городище.

Следы металлургического производства и сопутствующих ему процессов

The industrial site, with the revealed bases of two iron-smelting furnaces and pits for melting non-ferrous metals and their alloys in crucibles (Fig. 7) is of particular interest (Rudenko, 2019). Details of the furnaces, nozzles and melting devices were found in two pits outside this site. Also, with metallurgical production, as well as with metal proceeding in general, certain rituals where miniature clay items played a role were associated (Fig. 8). More than 120 such specimens, including animal figurines, were found in the hillfort (Rudenko, 2021). During excavations, 182 specimens of fragments of the clay spindle whorls were found, and they could also have a ritual function associated with some kind of production or trade.



Fig. 7. Tetiushi-II hillfort. Part of the industrial site. Excavation IX. General view in the process of research

Рис. 7. Тетюшское-II городище. Часть производственной площадки. Раскоп IX. Общий вид в процессе исследования



Fig. 8. Tetiushi-II hillfort. Clay products: spindle whorls, miniature figurines made of clay. 6th-7th centuries

Рис. 8. Тетюшское-II городище. Изделия из глины: прясла, миниатюрные фигурки из глины. VI–VII вв. н.э.

Discussion

The various crafts of the inhabitants of Tetiushi–II hillfort, as well as the proximity of the largest trade artery — the Volga, determined the intensive trade exchange of goods of their own production, and the resale of foreign imports, which included not only artifacts characteristic of this time, for example, glass beads, mainly from Asia Minor (Fig. 9.-1-8, 10, 11) (Stolyarova, 2009, p. 73; Stolyarova, 2016, p. 220) or beads from clam shells from the Indian Ocean (Fig. 9.-13, 14), but also some other products. The latter include the trade in iron axes (Fig. 10), the hoard of which was discovered in the hillfort (Rudenko, 2014). It is worth noticing that the axes were not in use and were not even sharpened. Most likely, they were intended for further sale in the nearest area. In the cultural layer and in the structures were found pieces of boxwood, cast bronze rod, amber and carnelian products, cowry shells, as well as bronze and silver belt mounts.

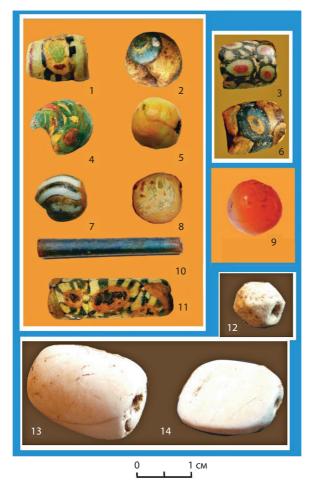


Fig. 9. Tetiushi-II hillfort. Beads made of glass and shells. 6th-7th centuries Рис. 9. Тетюшское-II городище. Бусы из стекла и раковин. VI-VII вв.

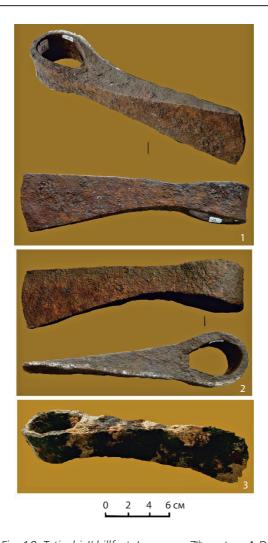


Fig. 10. Tetiushi-II hillfort. Iron axes. 7th century A.D. Рис. 10. Тетюшское-II городище. Железные топоры VII в. н.э.

Iron blanks, fragments of products used as raw materials and other such artifacts should be noted. At the same time, the tools of artisans are not numerous. In this regard, it can be assumed that not only their own craftsmen worked in Tetiushi-II hillfort, but also 'wandering' artisans, which is indirectly confirmed by the materials of the Kuzebaevo hoard of the 7th century (Ostanina and the others, 2011).

Conclusion

Thus, a combination of a number of factors determines the special status of Tetiushi-II hill-fort. These are the presence of a fortified hillfort (the core) and a suburb (posad), the population of which was engaged in crafts and agriculture. The presence of settlements (or a settlement) near the hillfort is not uncommon for the Imen'kovo culture. However, their location as

in this very case is not frequent. The population of the hillfort was multi-ethnic; at least the presence of Ugric people is obvious. There were professional craftsmen and merchants among them. There is a clear layout of residential and industrial facilities with regard to the natural terrain and its artificial changes for the needs of residents. The location of the Tetiushi settlement near the Volga contributed to the consolidation of these advantages. In addition, the connection of the inhabitants of this settlement with a number of other Imen'kovo monuments was revealed, in particular, the Komintern-II burial ground (Rudenko, 2022, p. 475).

Comparison with the monuments of the Kazan-Ul'ianovsk Volga region that are close geographically and by time of existence shows that similar conditions did not become the basis for similar development. Tetiushi-II hillfort has signs of an urban-type settlement, which are, in aggregate, absent from other Imen'kovo monuments of the Kazan Volga region, archaeologically studied to date. Meanwhile, many elements of the material culture of this settlement are found on synchronous settlements of the type of Osh Pando or Ufa-II (Stepanov, 1967; Ruslanov, Shamsutdinov, Romanov, 2016). It should not be excluded that these phenomena are not only of a stage order, but also social.

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