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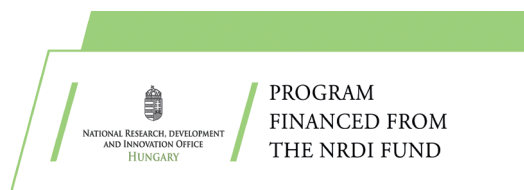
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31 August–3 September 2022

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CENTRAL PLACES OR RITUAL PLACES AND THE OLDEST HILLFORTS IN SLAVIC TERRITORY IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE (5TH/6TH–7TH CENTURIES)

Bartłomiej Szymon SZMONIEWSKI¹ 

Besides the open settlements commonly linked with Early Slavs, another settlement type, consisting of a hillfort-like part and some small hamlets in its vicinity, is also present in the 5th/6th–7th-century AD archaeological record of Eastern and Central Europe, with concentrations in the Upper Dnieper and Middle Daugava basins. A part of these ‘hillforts’ probably served basic defensive purposes, providing shelter for the nearby communities in times of danger (Shmidt 2003, 22–23). Another use of such hillforts along the upper course of the Dnieper was suggested by Treťyakov (Третьяков), who referred to them as ‘sanctuary hillforts’ (Treťyakov 1958). In light of recent research, some of these sites were really used for purposes other than defence, related to the religious and funerary realm instead. By systematising and completing earlier descriptions, the hillforts in focus – of this latter type – can be characterised by their setting (rising above the surrounding landscape), specific layout of their interior, insignificant defence abilities, presence of layers with burnt bones (including humans), and the presence of artefacts (including imports and items associated with non-agricultural activities) otherwise unusual in the find material of the cultures emerging at the beginning of the Early Middle Ages in Central and East Europe (Dulinicz 2000, 85). These hillforts were likely multifunctional, serving diverse purposes and always adapting to actual demand.

Az általában a korai szlávokhoz kapcsolt nyíltszíni települések mellett egy másik településtípus is jelen van Kelet- és Közép-Európa Kr. u. 5/6–7. századi régészeti anyagában, elsősorban a Dnyeper felső és a Daugava középső folyása mentén. E másik típus központi elemét egy a magaslati erődített telepekre emlékeztető mag jelenti, melynek közelében egy vagy több kisebb tanya vagy kis település szóródik. Ezen „erődített telepek” egy része vélhetően alapvető védelmi célokat is szolgált, azaz veszély idején a közeli kis települések lakóinak menedéke lehetett (Shmidt 2003, 22–23); emellett a Felső-Dnyeper vidéki telepeket Treťyakov „erődített-szentély-telepként” („sacrificial hillfort”) értelmezi (Treťyakov 1958). Az újabb kutatások fényében elképzelhető, hogy e telepek egy része valóban rituális, temetkezési célokat is szolgált. A korábbi leírások rendszerezése és kiegészítése nyomán leírhatóvá vált a vizsgált ‘erődített telepek’ jellegzetes topográfiai helyzete (mindig a környező vidék fölé tornyosuló magaslaton létesültek), valamint belső területük tagolása és az ott található konstrukciók jellegzetességei. Kirajzolódott az is, hogy számos közülük nem volt alkalmas igazán támadás elleni védelemre, viszont kultúrrétegeikben gyakori lelet az égett emberi és állati csont, valamint a korszak nyíltszíni telepeire nem jellemző leletanyag (import áru és a mezőgazdasági termeléshez szorosan nem kapcsolódó tárgyak; lásd Dulinicz 2000, 85). Az a legvalószínűbb, hogy ezek az „erődített telepek” több funkciót is elláttak, mely mindig az aktuális igényeknek megfelelően változott.

Keywords: hillfort, defence, funerary practice, Upper and Middle Dnieper Basin, Tushemla-Bancherovska Culture, Kolochin Culture, Prague Culture

Kulcsszavak: erődített település, temetkezési rítus, Felső és Közép-Dnyeper-vidék, Tushemla-Bancerovska-kultúra, Kolochin-kultúra, Prága-kultúra

There is a widespread opinion that the common settlement type in the territories inhabited by Early Slavs was an open settlement consisting of several to a dozen sunken or semi-sunken dwellings (see Szmoniewski 2016 with references). However, there is also another type, with considerably fewer sites,

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Fig. 1. Distribution of the hillforts from the initial phases of the Early Middle Ages in Central and Eastern Europe. a: Zaozer'ye circle (mid. 3rd-5th century); b: Kolochin; c: Tushemla-Bancherovska; d: Long Barrows Culture; e: Prague Culture; f: Penkovka Culture.

1: Szeligi, Płock County, Masovian Voivodeship, Poland; 2: Hańki, Bielski County, Podlaskie Voivodeship, Poland; 3: Zimno (Зимно), Volodymyr district, Volyn Oblast, Ukraine; 4: Khotomel (Хотамель/ Хотомель), Brest District, Belarus; 5: Bantserovshchina (Банцеровщина), Minsk District, Mins Oblast, Belarus; 6: Zhabino (Жабіно), Usvyatskiy District, Pskov Oblast, Russia; 7: Akatovo (Акатово), Demidovskiy District, Smolensk Oblast, Russia; 8: Bliznaki (Близнаки), Smolenskiy District, Smolensk Oblast, Russia; 9: Demidovka (Демидовка), Smolenskiy District, Smolensk Oblast, Russia; 10: Sloboda Glushitsa (Слобода-Глушица), Pochinkovskiy District, Smolensk Oblast, Russia; 11: Nikadzimava (Нікадзімава/ Никодимово), Horki District, Mogilev Oblast, Belarus; 12: Tushemla (Тушемля), Pochinkovskiy District, Smolensk Oblast, Russia; 13: Gorodok (Городок), Pochinkovskiy District, Smolensk Oblast in Russia; 14: Sluchovsk (Случовск) Pogarskiy district, Bryansk Oblast, Russia; 15: Kolochin (Калочын/Колочин), Rechytza District, Gomel Oblast, Belarus; 16: Pastirs'ke (Пастырське/ Пастырское), Smila District, Cherkasy Oblast, Ukraine (after Lopatin 2018; graphics by B. S. Szmoniewski) ►

which is defined as hillfort due to its ‘defensive’ character and appearance, by which these sites clearly stand out from the surrounding landscape (Dulnicz 2000, 85). A part of these ‘hillforts’ probably served basic defensive purposes, providing shelter for the nearby communities in times of danger (Shmidt 2003, 22–23). Besides, another use of such hillforts along the upper course of the Dnieper was suggested by Treťyakov (Третьяков), who referred to them as ‘sanctuary hillforts’ (Treťyakov 1958). In light of recent research, some of these sites were really used for purposes other than defence, and related to the religious and funerary realm. Wojciech Szymański believes it possible that such facilities were constructed as places of expedient and interim defence to protect a small group of newcomers against a local threat, as was the case with ‘defensive places’ known from Byzantine sources (Szymański 2008, 34).

In general, the number of hillforts increases considerably towards the east and northeast from the middle course of the Vistula River. Most such features are concentrated in the Upper Dnieper and Middle Daugava basins. Smaller concentrations have been observed, among others, along the upper and middle courses of the Desna and Seym rivers, while in the rest of Eastern Europe, they are more scattered and fewer in number (*Fig. 1*; Lopatin 2018, *Ris. 1*).

Central and Eastern Europe, where the oldest hillforts were established in the initial phases of the Early Middle Ages (5th/6th–7th centuries AD), was occupied by southward-advancing groups of first the Pskov Long Barrows culture, then the Tushemla-Bancherovska and Kolochin cultures, and finally the Prague and Penkovka cultures. The last three cultures are commonly associated with Slavic peo-

ples (Godłowski 2000, 231), although the Penkovka culture should be regarded rather as a multi-ethnic tribal federation dominated by a Slavic-speaking population and also including, to a limited extent, some other ethnic groups, especially in the border regions (Szmoniewski 2010a). The ethnic identification of the Kolochin, Tushemla-Bancherovska, and Pskov Long Barrows cultures is more complicated (Barford 2009, 29). The first one (Kolochin culture) has been associated with the Eastern Baltic population or the Slavs (Godłowski 2000, 231–232), while the latter (Pskov Long Barrows culture) has commonly been linked with Eastern Baltic peoples (Shmidt 2003, 171–191), although some believe that their connection with the Slavs cannot be ruled out either (Godłowski 2000, 232). However, the ethnic attribution of the Pskov Long Barrows culture is complicated, and the current theories revolve around its originating from local Baltic-Finnish cultures or being a result of the migration of Slavs, mainly from the Vistula Basin, and the Slavicization of the local population (Islanova 2021, 16–17 with references). In light of recent findings, the Pskov and Novgorod Long Barrows cultures are thought to be part of an eastern group of Baltic Finns (Tvauri 2007, 277).

Most (29) of the about seventy 5th–7th-century AD hillforts in Eastern and Central Europe are in the territory of the Tushemla-Bancherovska culture and 21 in that of the Kolochin culture (for further information on the localisation of the main archeological cultures mentioned, see Rusanova 1976; Prihodnyuk 1998; ; Shadyry, Vyargey 1999; Shmidt 2003; Lopatin, Furashev 2007; Oblomskiy 2016; Szmoniewski 2016; Curta 2021). No such clear attribution can be made in the case of nine more (see Shmidt 2003, 27–31; Oblomskiy 2016, 21–22; Lopatin 2018, 294,

► *1. kép.* A magaslati erődök elterjedése a korai középkor elején Közép- és Kelet-Európában. a: Zaozer’ye kör (3. sz. közepe–5. század); b: Kolochin; c: Tushemla-Bancherovska; d: A “Hosszú sáncok kultúrája”; e: Prága-kultúra; f: Penkovka-kultúra.

- 1: Szeligi, Płock megye, Mazóviai Vajdaság, Lengyelország; 2: Hački, Bielsk megye, Podlaskie Vajdaság, Lengyelország; 3: Zimno (Зимно), Volodymyr kerület, Volyn tartomány, Ukrajna; 4: Khotomel (Хотамель / Хотомель), Brest tartomány, Fehéroroszország; 5: Bantserovshchina (Банцеровщина), Minsk kerület, Mins tartomány, Fehéroroszország; 6: Zhabino (Жабино), Usvyatsky kerület, Pskov tartomány, Oroszország; 7: Akatovo (Акатово), Demidovsky kerület, Smolensk tartomány, Oroszország; 8: Bliznaki (Близнаки), Smolensky kerület, Smolensk tartomány, Oroszország; 9: Demidovka (Демидовка), Smolensky kerület, Smolensk tartomány, Oroszország; 10: Sloboda Glushitsa (Слобода-Глушица), Pochinkovsky kerület, Smolensk tartomány, Oroszország; 11: Nikadzimava (Никадзімава / Никодимово), Horki kerület, Mogilev tartomány, Fehéroroszország; 12: Tushemla (Тушемля), Pochinkovsky kerület, Smolensk tartomány, Oroszország; 13: Gorodok (Городок), Pochinkovsky kerület, Smolensk tartomány, Oroszország; 14: Sluchovsk (Случовск) Pogarsky kerület, Bryansk tartomány, Oroszország; 15: Kolochin (Калочын / Колочин), Rechytsa kerület, Gomel tartomány, Fehéroroszország; 16: Pastirs’ke (Пастирське / Пастырское), Smila kerület, Cherkasy tartomány, Ukrajna (Lopatin 2018 után; grafika: B. S. Szmoniewski)

300). Zaozer'ye-type pottery (dated to the mid-3rd–5th centuries AD) was found in these nine hillforts and one more in the area of the Kolochin culture (Lopatin 2018, 300). This abundance is in contrast with the territory of the Prague culture, where only four hillforts are known (Fig. 1). Two other sites from Belarus (Kharomsk [Харомск] and Khylychysi [Хильчынцы]) were not included here due to the weak grounds for classifying them as hillforts (Eremeev, Dzyuba 2010, 123–157). Only three hillforts are known from the territory of the Penkovka culture (Prihodnyuk 1998, 22–24, Ris. 9.a–b; Lopatin 2018, 300). The largest of these, Pastirs'ke (Пастирське/Пастырское) in Smila District, Cherkasy Oblast in Ukraine, is located in the forest-steppe zone and was a place functioning both as a hub for production and exchange and a dwelling (Prihodnyuk 2005; Szmoniewski 2010b).

It should be stressed here that some of the analysed hillforts were established on previous fortifications and were themselves used again in later periods, which greatly influenced their state of preservation and, thus, the possibilities of interpretation (Shmidt 2003, 22).

This paper focuses on this special hillfort type. While the phenomenon was discussed by some researchers earlier (Szymański 1983; Kobyliński 1990; Dulnicz 2000; Eremeev, Dzyuba 2010, 123–157; Szmoniewski 2010b; Szymański 2015), new discoveries made it necessary to overview and the current state of related research.

By systematising and completing earlier descriptions, the hillforts in focus can be described with their characteristic setting (rising above the surrounding landscape), specific layout of interior, insignificant defence abilities, presence of layers with burnt bones (including humans), and the presence of artefacts (including imports and items associated with non-agricultural activities) otherwise unusual in the find material of the cultures emerging at the beginning of the Early Middle Ages in Central and East Europe (Dulnicz 2000, 85). Some hillforts only contained a small number of artefacts (Shmidt 2003, 22).

Dating these hillforts in Central and Eastern Europe is often challenging due to the lack of finds with a high chronological value. Consequently, the general dating of these structures is from the 5th to the turn of the 6th/7th centuries AD, with a few persisting into the 7th century AD, too (Dulnicz 2000; Shmidt 2003; Lopatin 2018). Only a few, including Szeligi, Hački, Zimno [Зимно], and Nikadzimava

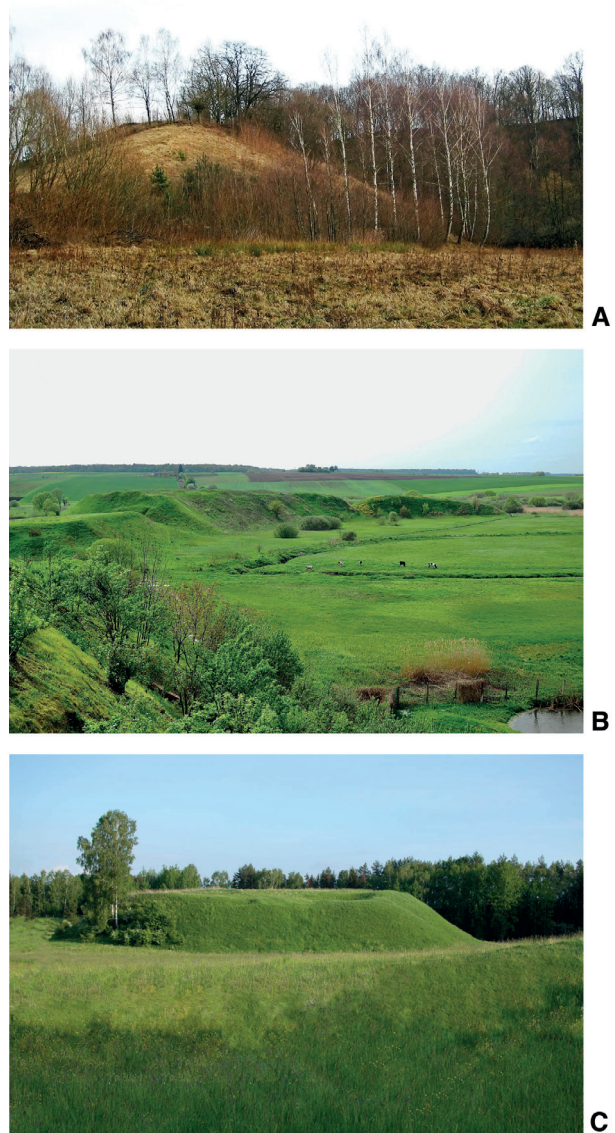


Fig. 2. Hillforts from the initial phases of the Early Middle Ages. A: Szeligi, Poland; B: Zimno, Ukraine; C: Hački, Poland (sources: A: CC BY 3.0 https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wczesnośredniowieczne_grodzisko_w_Szeligach_na_Mazowszu.jpg; B: CC BY-SA 4.0 https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Зимненське_городище#/media/Файл:Зимнівське_городище.jpg; C: photo by the author)

2. kép. Magaslati erődök a korai középkor elején. A: Szeligi, Lengyelország; B: Zimno, Ukrajna; C: Hački, Lengyelország (forrás: A: CC BY 3.0 https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wczesnośredniowieczne_grodzisko_w_Szeligach_na_Mazowszu.jpg; B: CC BY-SA 4.0 https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Зимненське_городище#/media/Файл:Зимнівське_городище.jpg; C: a szerző felvétele)

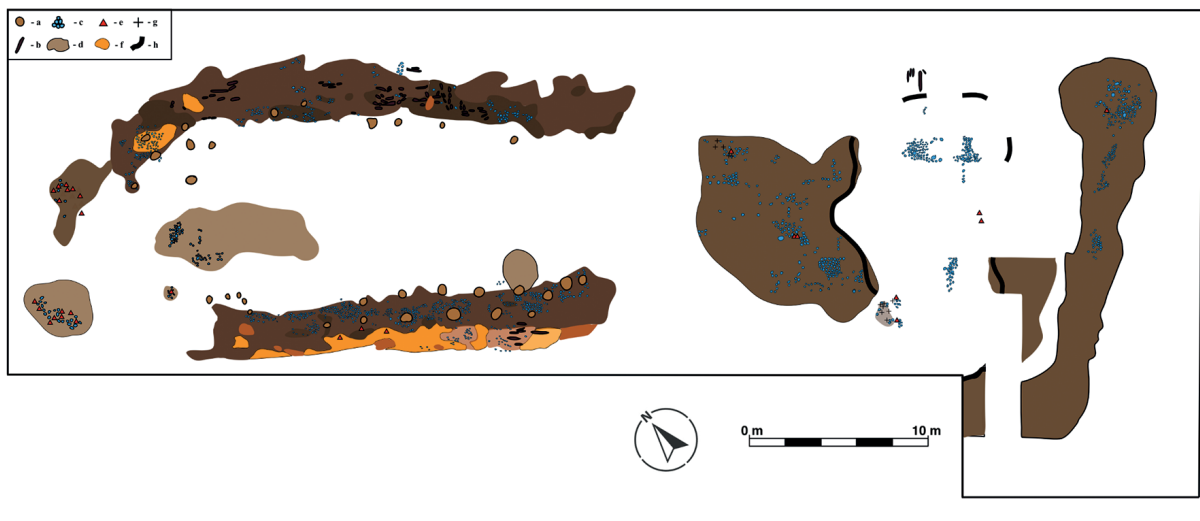
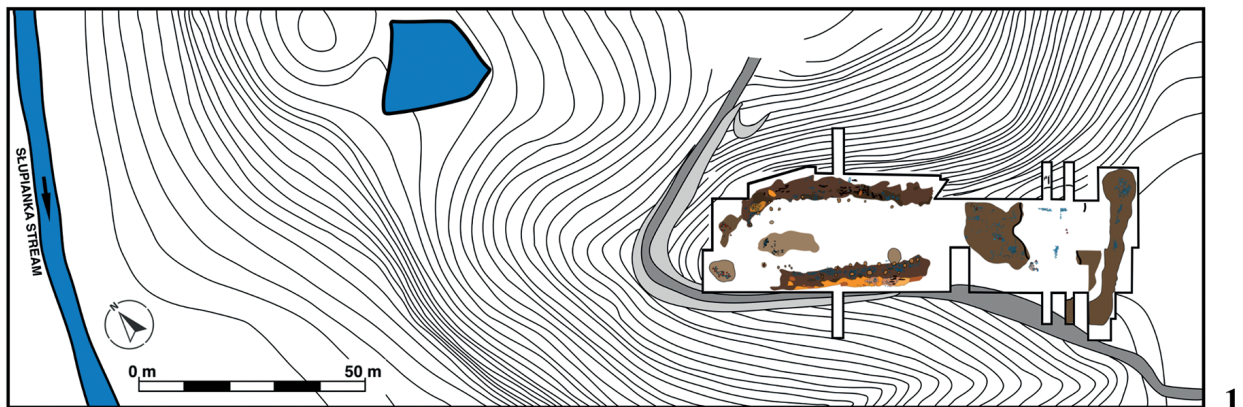


Fig. 3. Szeligi, Poland. 1: Survey map of the hillfort and the excavations; 2: survey map of the hillfort (a: posthole; b: wood and remains of wooden constructions /burnt or rotten/; c: stones; d: pit; e: potsherd; f: daub; g: bone fragments; h: edge of the rampart (1, 2: after Szymański 1967, drawing B. S. Szmoniewski).

3. kép. Szeligi, Lengyelország. 1: Az erőd és a feltárások térképe; 2: az erőd térképe (a: oszlophely; b: fa és fa építmények maradványai /égett vagy korhadt/; c: kövek; d: gödör; e: kerámiatöredék; f: patics; g: csonttöredék; h: a védmű pereme (1, 2: Szymański 1967 után, grafika B. S. Szmoniewski).

[Никадзімава/ Никодимово], could be dated more precisely based on metal finds; these cases are discussed in detail below.

According to W. Szymański (Szymański 2015, 33), the first such hillforts were constructed in the initial phases of the Early Middle Ages in the Eastern European forest and forest-steppe belt, especially the area of the Zarubintsy culture, which emerged there at the end of 1st century BC and established open settlements with artificial fortifications also called 'hillforts' by some researchers. These fortifications were erected on isolated hillocks or knolls, which, surrounded by lowlands, must have had defensive

qualities. Two clusters of such defensive settlements are known: a bigger one by the middle course of the Dnieper below Kyiv and a smaller one in the upper catchment area of the same river, by the lower course of the Berezina, one of its right tributaries (Oblomskiy, Terpilovskiy 1991, Ris. 25; Rusanova 1993, Karta 8 and 9). The defensive features comprised a simple system of several low earthen embankments crowned by a kind of wooden construction resembling a fence accompanied by shallow ditches. Such constructions were erected not only around the plateau but also on the slopes (Maksimov 1982, 41–44; Maksimov 1990, 32). Semi-sunken or sunken dwell-

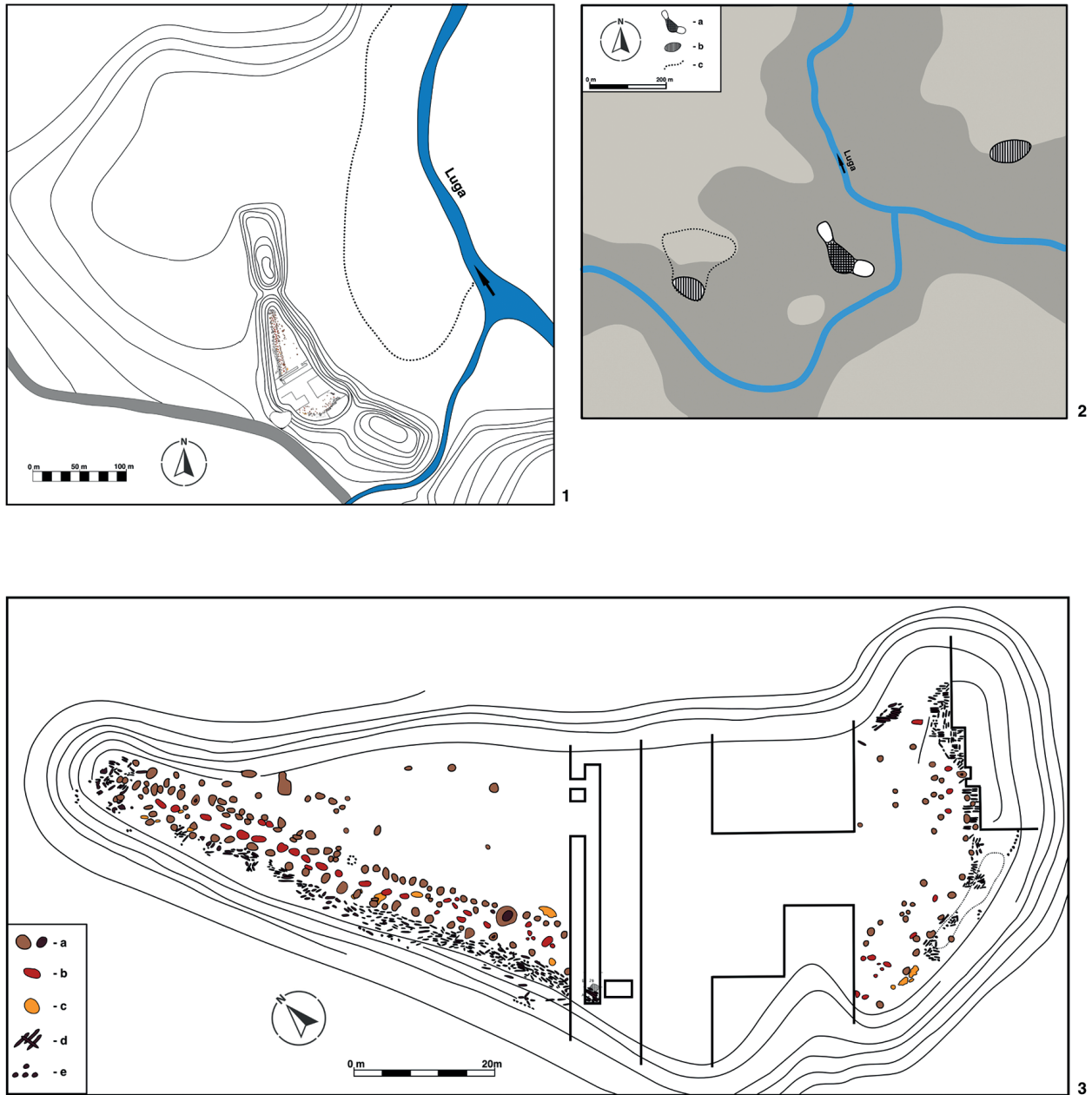


Fig. 4. Zimno (Зимно), Ukraine. 1: Survey map of the hillfort and the excavations; 2: the hillfort and contemporary settlements (a: hillfort; b, c: settlements); 3: survey map of the hillfort (a: postholes; b: hearth; c: daub; d, e: wood and remains of wooden constructions (burnt or rotten) (1, 3: after Aulih 1972; 2: after Gavrituhin 1993; graphics by B. S. Szmoniewski)

4. kép. Zimno (Зимно), Ukrajna. 1: Az erőd és a feltárások térképe; 2: az erőd és egykorú települések (a: erőd; b, c: település); 3: az erőd térképe (a: oszlophely; b: tűzhely; c: patics; d, e: fa és fa építmények maradványai /égett vagy korhadt/) (1, 3: Aulih 1972 után; 2: Gavrituhin 1993 után; grafika: B. S. Szmoniewski)

ings were built inside the fortifications, always in the vicinity of another settlement without any fortification. Albeit discussing the subject of the development of these constructions would easily exceed the frame of this work, it should be highlighted that all hillforts are located within the forest and forest-steppe belt, a zone prone to frequent raids of nomadic groups (Maksimov 1990, 30, 32).

No fortified settlements or hillforts have been found in the main area of the Kyiv culture (Terpilovskiy 2004, 36–38), which emerged around the 3rd century AD in a part of the territory occupied by the Zarubintsy culture and partly continued with its cultural tradition (Terpilovskiy 2004, 46–50; Oblomskiy 2007, 28–30). However, a few hillforts are known from the area of the so-called Zaozer'ye circle, i.e.,

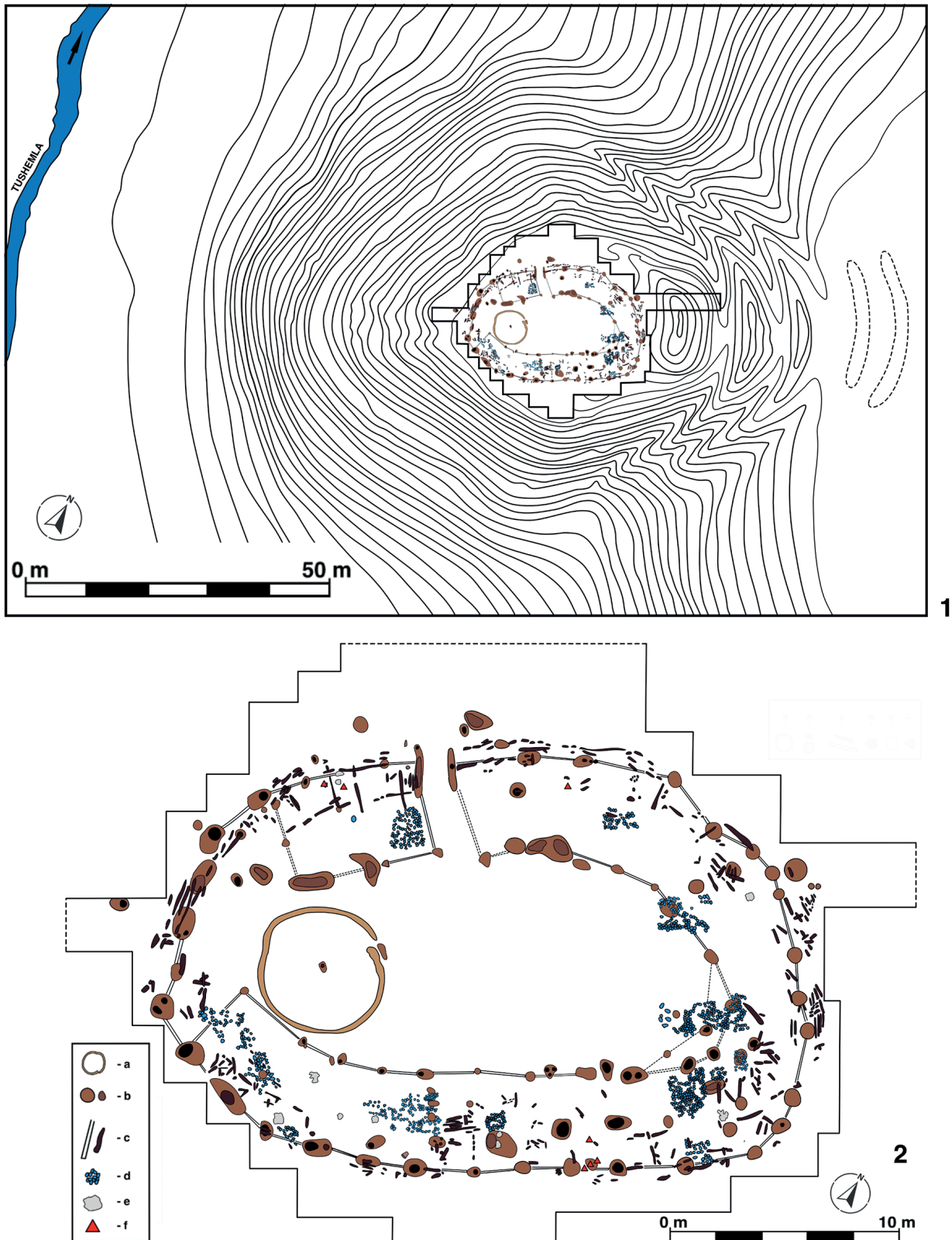


Fig. 5. Tushemla (Тушемля), Russia. 1: survey map of the hillfort and the excavations; 2: survey map of the hillfort (a: ring ditch; b: postholes; c: wood and remains of wooden constructions (burnt or rotten); d: stone/rock; e: birch bark; f: potsherds and complete vessels (1, 2: after Tret'yakov 1963; graphics by B. S. Szmoniewski)

5. kép. Tushemla (Тушемля), Oroszország. 1: Az erőd és a feltárások térképe; 2: az erőd térképe (a: kerítőárok; b: oszlophelyek; c: fa és fa építmények maradványai /égett vagy korhadt/; d: kő / szikladarab; e: nyírfakéreg; f: edény-töredékek és egész edények (1, 2: Tret'yakov 1963 után; grafika B. S. Szmoniewski)

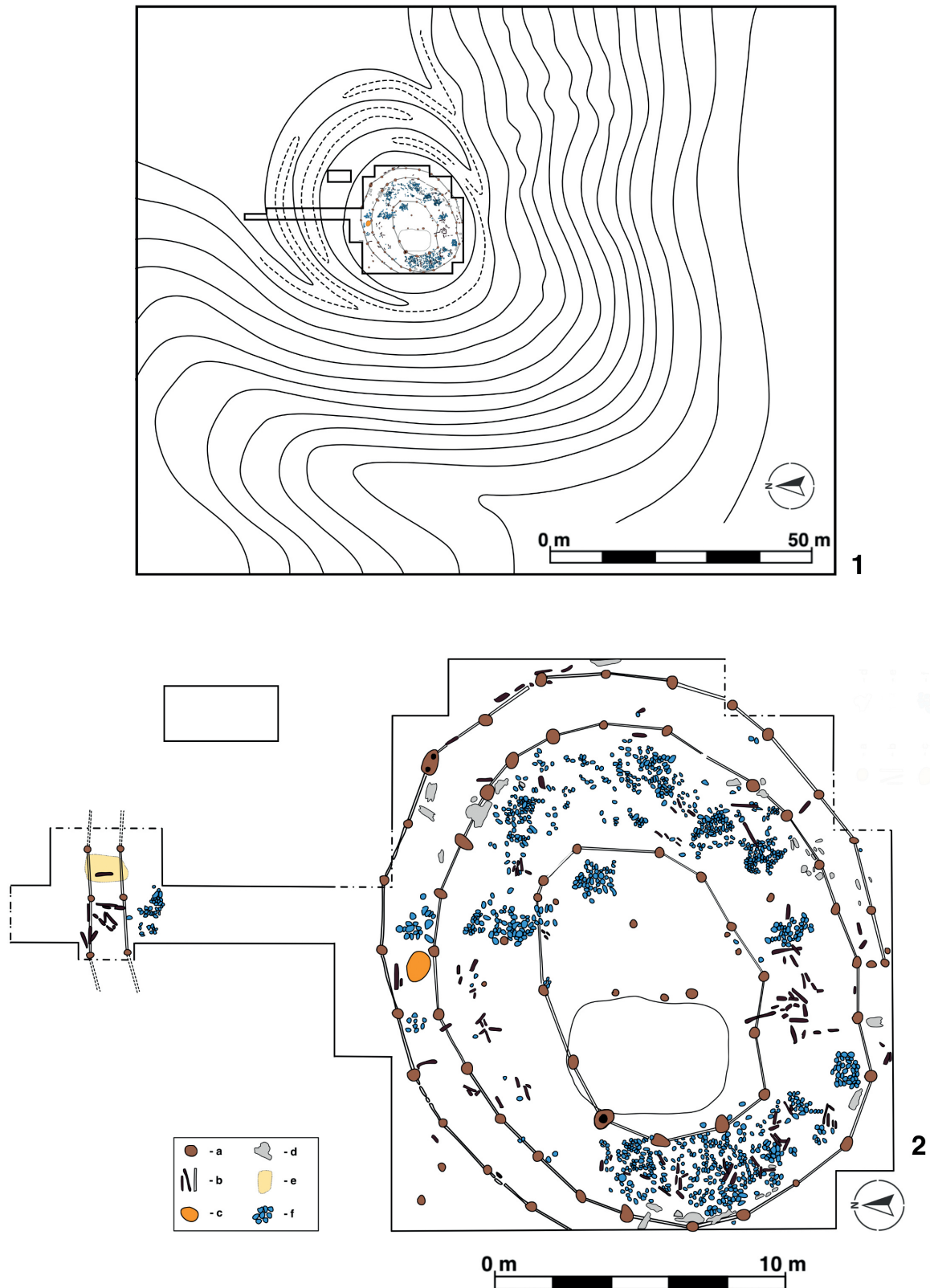


Fig. 6. Sloboda Glushitsa (Слобода-Глушица), Russia. 1: Survey map of the hillfort and the excavations; 2: survey map of the hillfort (a: postholes; b: wood and remains of wooden constructions (burnt or rotten); c: burnt soil; d: birch bark; e: sand; f: stones (1, 2: after Treť'jakov 1963; graphics by B.S. Szmoniewski)

6. kép. Sloboda Glushitsa (Слобода-Глушица), Oroszország. 1: Az erőd és a feltárások térképe; 2: az erőd térképe (a: oszlophely; b: fa és fa építmények maradványai /égett vagy korhadt/; c: égett talaj; d: nyírfakéreg; e: homok; f: kövek (1, 2: Treť'jakov 1963 után; grafika B. S. Szmoniewski)

the Upper Dnieper and Desna variant of the Kyiv culture, dated between the mid-3rd and the 5th century AD (Lopatin, Furašev 2007).

Therefore, the suggestion to seek the origin of the first hillforts in the Zarubinty culture, although seemingly correct because of their similarity (especially to Early Slavic cultures), is too far-fetched and unfounded. W. Szymański interpreted the lack of defensive settlements in the Kyiv culture with that 'the imperative to provide security to the members of these tribal groups[...] had already been fulfilled in some other, (more effective?) way than local passive defence' (Szymański 2015, 34), but did not explain why did this 'passive form of defence' not reappear after several centuries during the Early Slavic Period. Moreover, he pointed out that while erecting a fortified settlement demanded great effort from the people of the Zarubinty culture, these fortifications were superior to the ones constructed later (Szymański 2015, 34). Significant functional differences in inner layout and buildings can be observed between the first hillforts and later variants: while the buildings in the oldest hillforts were meant to be inhabited permanently, only temporary dwellings can be found in the 'advanced' ones.

In my opinion, the origins of hillforts should rather be sought in the Upper Dnieper Basin, in territories where the Baltic, Finnish, and Slavic communities intermingled and where hillforts existed as early as 5th century AD (Lopatin, Furašev 2007, 49, 61–65, Ris. 24), earlier than in the Prague culture – especially as the structure of these has more in common with the early medieval constructions than the hillforts of the Zarubinty culture.

As for the inner layout of the 'hillforts' with wooden building complexes with hearths, one can distinguish between the following types: 1, two facing, separate rows of adjoining buildings (e.g., Szeli and Khotomel [Хотамель/ Хотомель]; Fig. 2. A; Fig. 3; Fig. 9, Fig. 13. 1); 2, two separate rows of adjoining buildings arranged at an angle, with one side longer than the other (e.g., Zimno [Зимно]; Fig. 2. B; Fig. 4, Fig. 13. 2); 3, roughly oval row of adjoining buildings with an open central space and circle place of worship (Tushemla [Тушемля], Fig. 5, Fig. 13. 3); 4, circle of adjoining buildings (closed structure) with an open space at the centre (Sloboda Glushitsa [Слобода-Глушица] and Nikadzimava [Нікадзімава]; Fig. 6, Fig. 8, Fig. 13. 4).

The first type includes the hillfort in Szeli in Płock County, Masovian Voivodeship in Poland (Fig.

2. A; Fig. 3). It was established in the 6th century AD; otherwise, its chronology is still unclear (Szymański 1987; Szymański 2000, 357–358, 366–367). It was erected on a steep, about dozen-metre high, sloping valley between two capes in the northwest and southeast, facing the right bank of the Słupianka, a small river. The relatively flat part of the area is about 70 × 25 m at its widest section (Szymański 1967, 15, Ryc. 4, plan 1–2); originally, it was cut off the plateau by an embankment accompanied by a ditch (Szymański 1962, 354–355, Ryc. 1). The centre of the terrace was occupied by an empty oval fairground or ward of 36 × 12 m (Szymański 1967, 232), framed by two facing rows of buildings on the opposite edges of the steep slopes. The buildings cannot be reconstructed due to the poor condition of their remains; they likely were rather simple adjoining dwellings attached to the defensive construction with a kind of post-and-plank barrier or palisade fence built of complete and split logs between posts in pairs 3.5 m apart (Szymański 1967, 27, 33; Szymański 2015, 34). The timber came from trees felled nearby, as indicated by the species variety of their non-debarked remains (Szymański 1967, 25, 27, Ryc. 7; Szymański 2015, 34). The construction was enclosed by the embankment, which was reinforced only by stones added to its core and covering its surface but had no timber bracing (Szymański 1962, 369). Recent research on the site has revealed an additional defensive structure, a stakewall under the edge of the plateau (Dulinicz, Moszyński 1998, 96–97).

The second hillfort type includes the site of Zimno (Зимно) in Volodymyr district, Volyn Oblast in Ukraine (Fig. 2. B; Fig. 4). It is located on top of a loess inselberg towering above the valley of the Luga River. The highest central part of the rock hill, an irregular, 135 m long and 14–65 m wide triangular peak 15–18 m above the plains, was cut off by a pair of trenches in the Early Middle Ages, which divided the hilltop in three. Only two parallel rows of postholes, ca. 4 m apart, with tens of clay-plastered hearths between them have remained of the surface buildings next to the fortification (Aulih 1972, 4–5, 8, 24, 27, Tabl. V). It is difficult to determine where the densely built-up area at the southwest slope ended, but it seems to have been at least 60 m long (Szymański 1974, 264), with a slightly narrower eastern part. It is also difficult to reconstruct the wooden buildings and tell, for example, whether they were mortise-and-tenon-joined post-and-plank structures or timber-framed ones. It could be determined, though, that

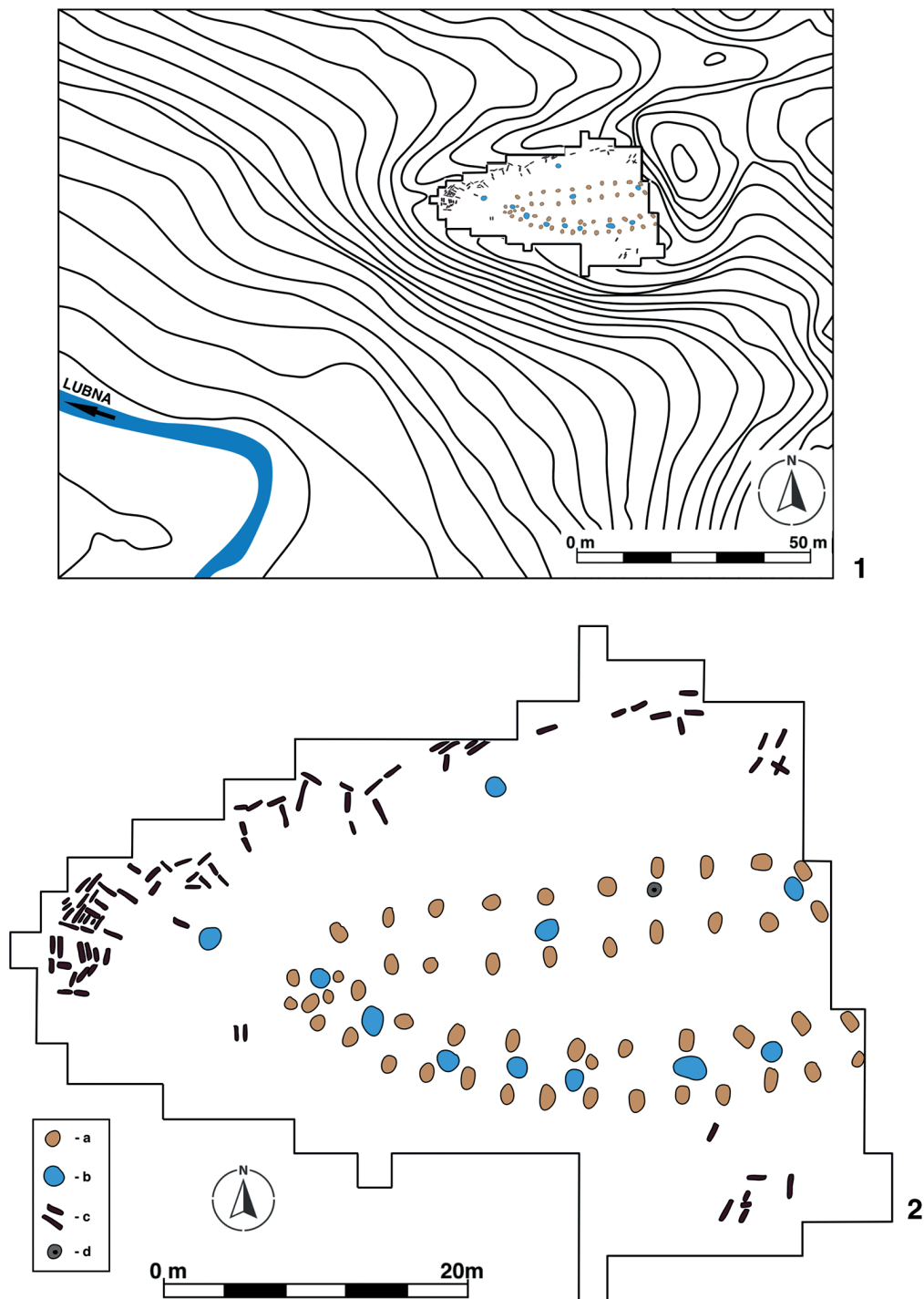


Fig. 7. Demidovka (Демидовка), Russia. 1: Survey map of the hillfort and the excavations; 2: survey map of the hillfort (a: posthole; b: rocks cluster; c: wood and remains of wooden constructions (burnt or rotten); d: grindstone (1: after Krenke et al. 2021; 2: after Shmidt 2003; graphics by B. S. Szmoniewski)

7. kép. Demidovka (Демидовка), Oroszország. 1: Az erőd és a feltárások térképe; 2: az erőd térképe (a: oszlophely; b: kőstruktúrák; c: fa és fa építmények maradványai /égett vagy korhadt/; d: őrlőkő (1: Krenke et al. 2021 után; 2: Shmidt 2003 után; grafika: B. S. Szmoniewski)

the remains of the fortifications along the western edge of the plateau – the remains of which have preserved up to a height of 1 m at some places – consist of up to three-metre-long oak, pine, and birch logs

laid horizontally on top of each other. The analysis of the dendrological material revealed details like logs with special holes to nest the sharp ends of the stakes to prevent the structure from wobbling, quavering,

and breaking apart. Additionally, an outward-tilted palisade, remains of which have been preserved up to a height of 0.7 m, followed the whole edge of the top. The whole system was completed by two deep crosswise ditches cutting off the main part of the settlement from the rest of the promontory. A small rampart topped by a post-and-plank fence was found by the ditch at one edge of the settlement. In contrast, a shuttered rampart followed the inner side of the other ditch, also with a post-and-plank fence on top (Aulih 1972, 10–30). The thickness of the cultural layer in the trenches of the 1997 excavations varied from 1 m in the northeastern part to 2.5 m in the southeastern one, indicating the intentional filling and levelling of the central part with the soil produced from the trench between the central and the northern parts of the inselberg (Bronicki et al. 1998, 14, Ryc. 3 And 15; Milyan 2006). This hillfort has been dated to between the 6th and the first half of the 7th century AD (Aulih 1972, 89).

The hillfort in Tushemla (Тушемля) in Pochinkovsky District, Smolensk Oblast in Russia, is the best example of the third type (Fig. 5, Fig. 10. A–B). It is located on a ridge between a pair of deep ravines by the Tushemla River. Some trenches and embankments of an earlier defensive structure were also built into the early medieval hillfort (Tret'yakov 1963, Ris. 11). A triple rampart-and-ditch fortification surrounds the central part; two of these join the upper part of the ravines, thus utilising these elements of the terrain for defensive purposes. The largest embankment (the second from inside), probably built much earlier than the other two, has been preserved to a height of 3 m. Its base is 10–11 m wide and about 20 m long; the two other embankments are about 1.5 m high. The oval plateau is 35 × 32 m, rising above the river valley by 17–18 m. The closest embankment runs around it about 2–4 m from the edge, reaching the largest (second) of the three embankments encircling the plateau. It has a 4–6 m wide base, and its body was preserved to a height of 0.2–0.3 m. Traces (postholes, charred timber, hearths, etc.) of wooden structures were discovered in the enclosed area on the plateau. Their scatter outlined a single, long, 5–6 m high building, divided into 4.2–4.5 m wide segments with hearths within, encircling an open central courtyard. The post-and-plank walls (planks between pairs of posts) encircling the plateau were reinforced by sand fills on the outside, which diminished their defensive capability. Only a single post-and-plank wall and no buildings

were identified on the western side of the plateau: the building complexes ended there, leaving some space open and also a place for the entries. A 0.2 m wide and 0.15–0.25 m deep circular ditch, about 6 m in diameter and with a single posthole at its centre, was found between the western ends of the building and the fence. Some believe the central post was for the statue of a deity. The start of the hillfort could not be determined, but we know that it was abandoned after a fire which destroyed it at the end of the 6th or the beginning of the 7th century AD (Tret'yakov 1963, 42–73, Ris. 13. 23; Shmidt 2003, 24–26).

The hillfort in Sloboda Glushitsa (Слобода-Глушица) in Pochinkovsky District, Smolensk Oblast in Russia, is an example of the fourth type (Fig. 6). It is located on the cape-like end of a plateau above the bank of the Sozh River (Tret'yakov 1963, Ris. 56). The oval inner part, of 20 × 17 m, was encircled by a pair of ramparts with ditches accompanying them from outside. Almost the whole site was excavated; the fieldwork brought to light the remains of an oval wooden building complex, 10.5 m long and 7 m wide, encircling an empty courtyard. Its inner wall was supported by a row of thirteen, the outer by another row of 28 posts, running at an average distance of about 2 m. The circle was divided into 3–4 m long buildings with some kind of post-and-plank walls. At a distance of about 1.25–1.5 m from the outer walls, seventeen postholes of another fence or barrier have been discovered, running parallel to the walls of the building. No trace of any construction was detected between the outer wall and the fence, which was likely built to prevent the soil of the embankment from falling inside. No traces of any wooden construction have been discovered on top of the 0.6 m high remains of the 6 m-wide sand embankment either. The remains of another fence have been found in the northern trench. It ran about 6 m from the one around the central structure and consisted of two parallel post-and-plank walls at a distance of 1.2 m but no sand fill between them. Interestingly, no artefacts were found in the central structure, which some interpret as evidence that the place was used for only a short period, while the charred stones (interpreted as hearths) are supposed to prove its ritual function. The site was in use between the 5th and 7th centuries AD (Tret'yakov 1963, 107–112, Ris. 57; Shmidt 2003, 23–24).

The two hillfort types with the fewest sites are 1 and 2; their occurrence is limited to the territories of Poland (Szeligi), Western Ukraine (Zimno) and

Southern Belarus (Khotomel). In some further regions, the layout of buildings in Type 1 hillforts is similar to Demidovka (Демидовка) in Smolensky District, Smolensk Oblast in Russia (Fig. 7), where the metre-wide postholes of two long buildings, a southern and a northern one, were found on the two sides of an empty courtyard on top of the plateau. The postholes were arranged in parallel rows about 2.5–2.8 to 3–4 m apart (depending on the building); the two buildings adjoined at the western end, while their eastern ends reached the embankment. Previously, the hillfort was dated to the 5th–turn of the 6th/7th centuries AD (Shmidt 2003, 27–29, Ris. 11), but based on new radiocarbon results, its decline likely took place at the turn of the 5th/ 6th centuries AD (Krenke et al. 2021, 113, Ris. 2).

The layout of the hillfort of Akatovo (Акатово) in Demidovsky District, Smolensk Oblast in Russia resembles the three-part division of the Zimno hillfort; however, its dating to the 5th–7th centuries AD is uncertain due to the scarcity of its find material (Shmidt 2003, 31–39, Ris. 12).

When characterising hillforts, the presence of charred human bones in layers or features like hearths is often highlighted (Dulnicz 2000, 85). Many reports only mention bone finds (especially burnt ones) in general, and it is difficult to tell with no analytic results at hand whether these are human or animal. The charred bones found in late 6th–early 7th-century AD layers in Haćki in Bielsk County, Podlaskie Voivodeship in Poland (Fig. 2. C) are certainly human. The site comprises a narrow zone along the edge of the plateau, consisting of two layers: a lower, orange one rich in charcoal, ash, and burnt log fragments, which at spots continue on the edge of the slope, and a dark grey one with many rocks, an extremely interesting collection of metal, pottery and stone artefacts, and small fragments of strongly burnt human bones and teeth of various individuals of diverse age, scattered evenly, without any special concentration to indicate possible graves (Szymański 1983, 95; Dulnicz 2000, 94; Kobyliński, Szymański 2005, 61, 63). A few charred bones were also found in Zimno inside some fireplaces within the wooden structure along the edge of the plateau. Such hearths consisted of two layers: a lower one, represented by a burnt and soothed clay platform, and an upper one with ash and bones (Aulih 1972, 24). A similar clay structure was also found in Nikadzimava (Нікадзімава) in Horki District, Mogilve Oblast in Belarus: a 2.1 × 6 m large and up to 20 cm

high platform just outside the hall-like oval building surrounded by fortifications (Fig. 8. 1). An oval clay layer of 1.5 × 0.85 m, fired to red, was found in the building; it included charred human and animal bones and some weaponry. A human skull was also discovered there, several metres northwards (Sedin 1995, Ris. 1; Sedin 2012, 12–15). Human bones were also found in another hillfort at Tushemla, but these were associated with an older historical period (Tret'yakov 1963, 52, 70). The scattered remains of at least two inhumation burials, of a child and a young woman, were found in a layer with Kolochin-style pottery in another hillfort at Sluchovsk (Слuchовск) in Pogarsky district, Bryansk Oblast in Russia; this fort had been erected before the Early Middle Ages (Shinakov 1986, 69).

Animal bones among the stones, with pottery and other fragments next to them, were found at several points – the end of the plateau, in a cultural layer at the southwestern end, and on the bottom of the embankment – in Szeligi hillfort (Szymański 1962, 356, Tabl. XIII–XIV; 1967, 76, 290). Unspecified bones were also found near hearths in the southern building of Demidovka in a rather thick, dark soil layer with several pottery vessels and numerous potsherds (Shmidt 2003, 27). A different discovery was made in Gorodok (Городок) hillfort, Pochinkovsky District, Smolensk Oblast in Russia: bear skull fragments were found in the fill of a circular ditch surrounding a central posthole (Tret'yakov 1963, 96–99, Ris. 49–50). Such circles, also found in Tushemla, have been interpreted as cultic venues; Tret'yakov believes that the bear skull might have been a kind of totem or an image of a deity, displayed on a post (Tret'yakov 1963, 99). It should be noted that the bear cult played an important role in the animal worship of the Finno-Ugric and Baltic peoples (see Tianina 2023, 629–630). There is one more stronghold with traces of funerary rites, Diagilevo (Дягилево) in Totemsky District, Vologda Oblast in Russia; however, it had certainly been established by Pskov Long Barrows communities before the Early Middle Ages, who also erected two barrows in the central part of the then-future fort (Islanova 2015, 385).

The hillforts excavated earlier, especially in the 1950s and 1960s, likely contained more bone finds than what have been collected; mainly the small charred fragments could have been easily overlooked, as they are difficult to detect without dry or wet sieving the soil (as is often the case with Alt-Käbelich-type cremation graves; see Zoll-Adamikowa

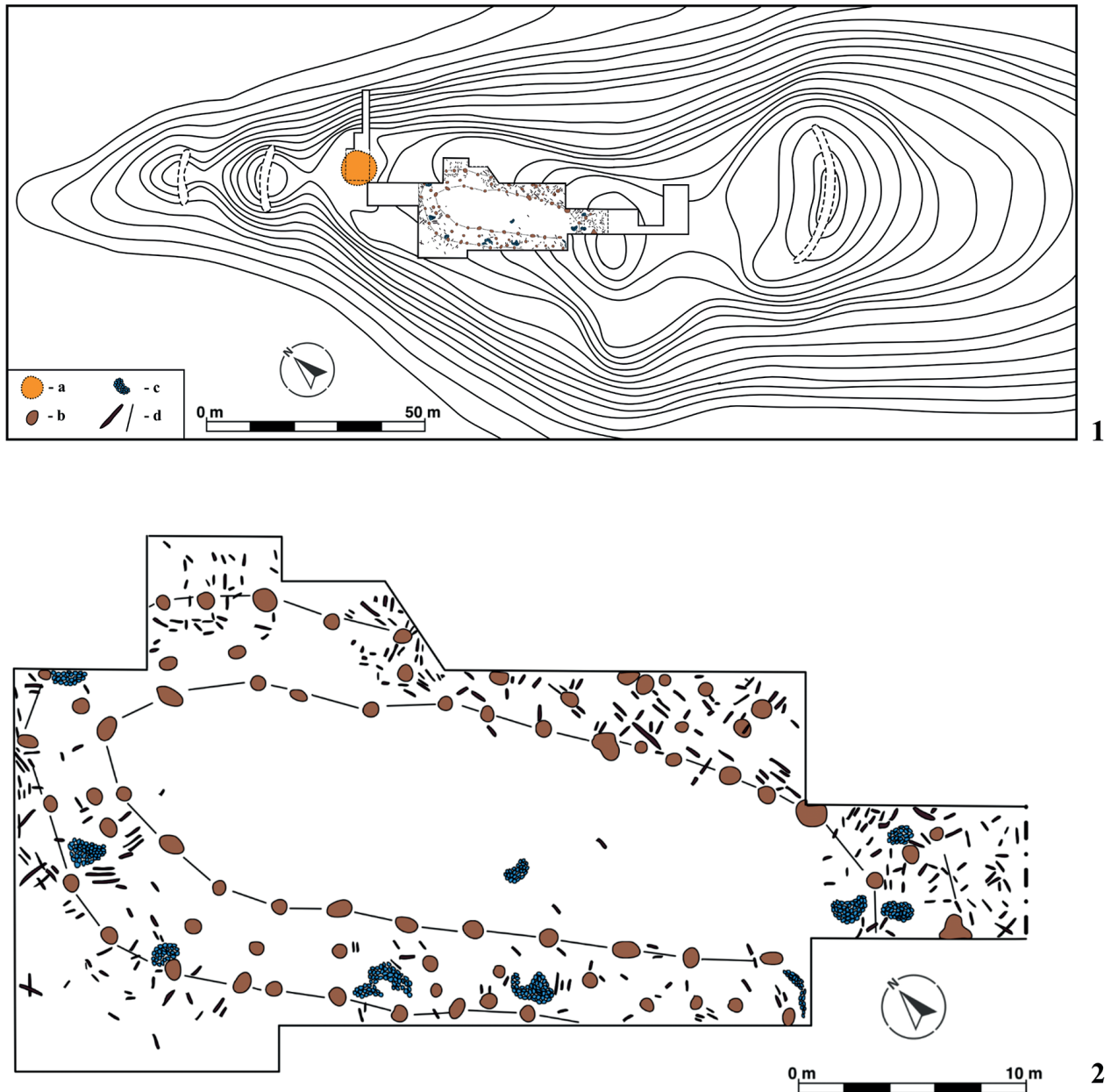


Fig. 8. Nikadzimava (Нікадзімава), Belarus. 1: Survey map of the hillfort and the excavations (a: daub; b: posthole; c: rock cluster; d: wood and remains of wooden constructions (burnt or rotten); 2: survey map of the hillfort (1–2: after Sedin 2012; graphics by B. S. Szmoniewski)

8. kép. Nikadzimava (Нікадзімава), Fehéroroszország. 1: Az erőd és a feltárások térképe (a: patics; b: oszlophely; c: kőstruktúra; d: fa és fa építmények maradványai /égett vagy korhadt); 2: az erőd térképe (1–2: Sedin 2012 után; grafika B. S. Szmoniewski)

1988; Szmoniewski 2007; Miechowicz et al. 2022).

Based on the presence of human remains in hillforts, some researchers have suggested that some or all segments of the long post-and-plank building complexes – a construction method rarely appearing on sites of cultures of the East European Plain (Dulnicz 2000, 92) – were used as ‘houses of the dead’, for storing human remains in perhaps organic containers (Szymański 1983; Szymański 2000, 366;

Szymański 2015, 303). The congeries of birch bark found along the walls of the hillforts at Sloboda Glushitsa (Fig. 6. 2) and Tushemla (Fig. 5. 2) are the remains of such containers made of birch, a material quite popular in northeastern Europe at that time (Moszyński 1967, 266; Tvauri 2007, 87). A small birch bark urn was found in a barrow at Romanovo, near Pskov (7th/8th–9th centuries AD; Beleckiy 1986, Ris. 6. 2, 3). Birch is embedded in folklore in

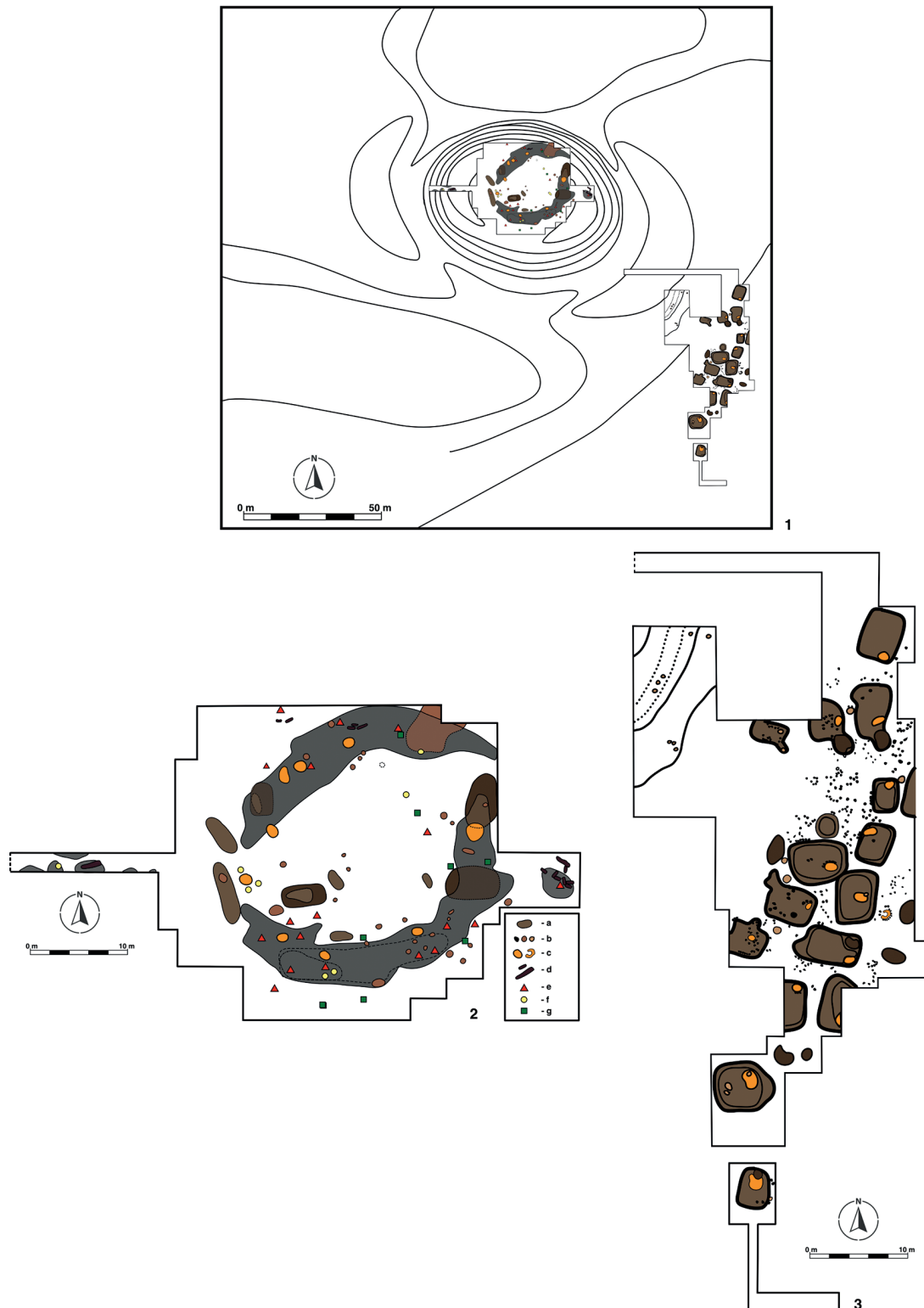


Fig. 9. Khotomel (Хотамель/ Хотомель), Belarus. 1: Survey map of the hillfort, the settlement, and the excavations; 2–3: survey map of the hillfort (2) and the settlement (3) (a: pit; b: postholes; c: daub, hearth or fireplace; d: wood and remains of wooden constructions (burnt or rotten); e: weapons and horse gear; f: ornaments; g: tools (1–3: Kuharenko 1961 and Ereemeev, Dzyuba 2010; graphics by B. S. Szmoniewski)

9. kép. Khotomel (Хотамель/ Хотомель), Fehéroroszország. 1: Az erőd, a település és a feltárások térképe; 2–3: az erőd (2) és a település térképe (3) (a: gödör; b: oszlophely; c: patic, tűzhely vagy tüzelőhely; d: fa és fa építmények maradványai /égett vagy korhadt/; e: fegyverek és lószerszámok; f: viseleti tárgyak; g: eszközök (1–3: Kuharenko 1961; Ereemeev, Dzyuba 2010; grafika B. S. Szmoniewski)

very diverse ways: it was identified both with impure, malicious powers and seen as a symbol of fertility and renewal (Frey 2013, 129). The birch was especially important for northeast European peoples (Moszyński 1967, 530). In a mortuary context, birch is considered a graveyard tree, while Old Slavs had the custom of lining their graves with birch bark, leaves, and twigs (Frey 2013, 129–130).

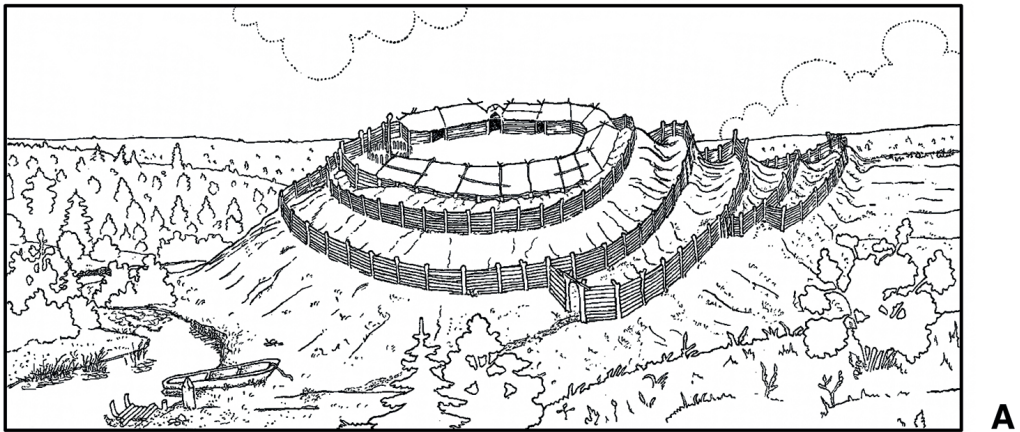
As for the post-and-plank building, which, as mentioned above, differs highly from the construction methods typical of the settlements in this part of Europe (Dulnicz 2000, 92), it could have been a symbolic place where the remains of the deceased members of a clan or a bigger local group were stored (Szymański 1983; Szymański 2000, 366; Szymański 2015, 305), and where funerary rites could be performed. It cannot be excluded that these ceremonies were performed around the clay platforms, made for the occasion, on which the pyre was piled or the charred remains were transported from a pyre outside the building after the funeral. Wojciech Szymański sees these long houses and hearths on clay platforms as echoes of 'a transmuted conception originating in the of Long Barrows cultural circle, particularly the cultures settled around Pskov and Smolensk in the 6th–9th centuries AD, which Russian researchers associated with Slavs, especially the historical Kriwichs' (Szymański 2015, 305). He mentions several dozens of cremation burials in long barrows, where the bodies were laid and cremated on a thin layer of clay, which became fired to red in the process; these features correspond to the discoveries made in Hački and Zimno (Sedov 1974, 19; Szymański 2004, 305). In light of recent findings, especially by researchers from outside Russia, the Pskov and Novgorod groups of the Long Barrows complex cannot be associated with Slavs and their spectacular northern expansion but with the local Baltic Finn population instead (Ligi 1994; Tvaauri 2007). That, however, does not change the fact that the expansion direction indicated by W. Szymański is quite probable, neither that the impulse to build structures like the ones presented in this paper could have reached the regions populated by Finno-Ugric speaking groups in northeast Europe as part of the said expansion. One must keep in mind that the Upper Dnieper Basin, a region with hillfort clusters, was a periphery of the Slavic world, laid open to various influences by diverse groups in the north and east, especially Baltic peoples and Finns.

As for the long barrows with cremation burials

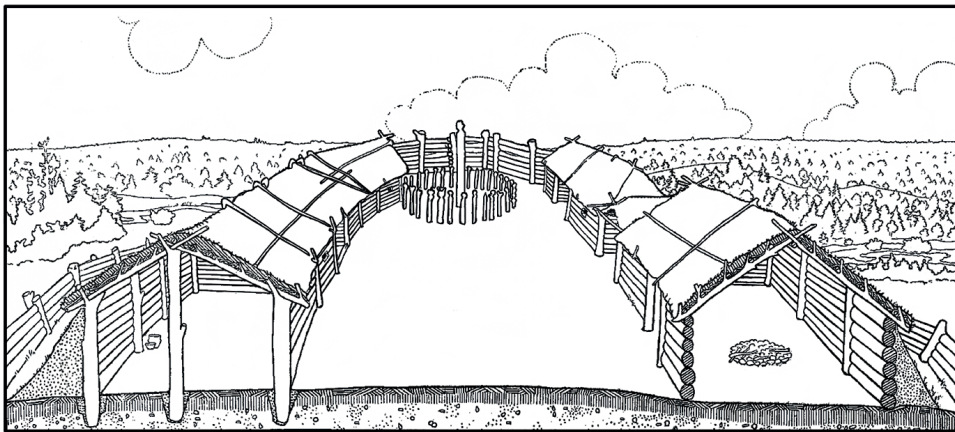
(the dating of which has currently been changed to the second half of the 6th century AD), P. Ligi writes, 'the earliest cremations in the large barrows might well have been initially flat graves, those in the »houses of the dead«, or in the small barrows'. No sooner than during the next one or two centuries, they could have been covered with earthen mounds used as another burial ground. Longer barrows could have been constructed to legitimise the higher status of the leading families by 'referring' to their 'roots', i.e., their ancestors (Ligi 1994, 109).

The remains of such wooden structures, interpreted as mortuary houses, cult houses, or houses of the dead, were found in several barrows in the territory of Estonia (Mägi 2005; Tvaauri 2007, 273). The most interesting of these is a rectangular feature of 4 × 2.5 m in Barrow 11 of Cemetery II at Laossina, dated to the pre-Viking period (550–800 AD). The remains of a pair of posts were found in each corner; its walls were made of horizontal, somewhat thinner logs, and its flat roof was made of beams. It contained only charred human bones but not any grave goods (Aun 1980, 47, 49; Tvaauri 2012, 273).

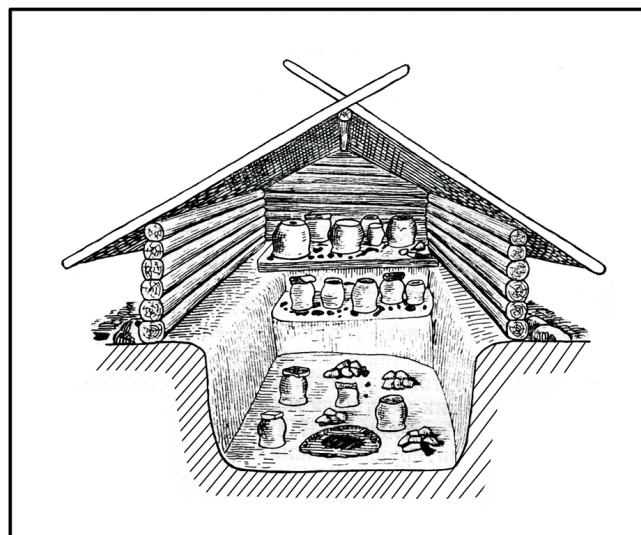
Recent theories link similar structures to the local Baltic Finns, specifically their *tarand* graves dated to the Roman Iron Age (50–450 AD). Their predecessors may have interred their dead in similar structures, found on inland sites in central and eastern Estonia and dated as early as the mid- or late 2nd century AD (Lang 2007, 203). These differ from the ones in the coastal region by their size (some are even 100 m long, 20–30 m wide, and preserved up to a height of 1–1.5 m); also, the predominant burial type on the inland sites is cremation, unlike on the coastal ones (Mägi 2005, 100; Lang 2007, 192). *Tarand* graves (rectangular surface constructions consisting of many rectangular enclosures with stone walls, called *tarands* in Estonian. The type is widespread in the eastern Baltic region, Lang 2006, 82) were mostly rectangular and consisted of a stone foundation and smaller *tarands*. According to some researchers, the stone foundations supported a horizontal log house, as indicated by a posthole in a corner between two *tarands* in Tõnija Tuulingumäe, Saaremaa Parish, Saare County in Estonia. Traces of hearths used perhaps for ritual purposes were also discovered inside some *tarand* graves (Mägi 2005, 100, 103, 116, Fig. 5). Some believe that the *tarand* graves were the burial places of families (Mägi 2005, 96), each housing 7–13 family members (Lang 1995, 116). However, according to Lang, not everyone could be



A



B



C

Fig. 10. Reconstruction of the hillfort at Tushemla (Тушемля), Russia. A: overview; B: cross-section of the central wooden construction. Savvino-Storozhevsky (Саввино-Сторожевский), Russia; C: reconstruction of the 'house of the dead' (A, B: after Treťyakov 1963; C: after Krasnov, Krasnov 1967)

10. kép. A tusemlai (Тушемля) erőd rekonstrukciója, Oroszország. A: áttekintés; B: a központi faszerkezet keresztmetszete. Savvino-Ztorozsevszkij (Саввино-Сторожевский), Oroszország; C: a "holtak házának" rekonstrukciója (A, B: Treťyakov 1963 után; C: Krasnov, Krasnov 1967 után)



Fig. 11. Items found in (1, 3) Zimno (Зимно), Ukraine, (2) Szeligi, Poland, and (4) Plisnesk (Пліснесько), Ukraine (4). 1: Casting ladle; 2: diamond-shaped copper alloy pendants; 3, 4: stone moulds (photo by the author; courtesy of the Ivan Franko National University of Lviv and The Mazovian Museum in Płock)

11. kép. Leleletek. 1, 3: Zimno (Зимно, Ukrajna); 2: Szeligi, Lengyelország; 4: Plisnesk (Пліснесько), Ukrajna.

1: Öntőkanál; 2: gyémánt alakú, rézötvözet csüngők;

3, 4: kő öntőformák (a szerző felvételei, az Ivan Franko Lvivi Nemzeti Egyetem és a Płocki Mazoviai Múzeum tulajdona)

laid to rest in these structures, as 'only some of the people were buried in stone graves; they may have belonged to a nuclear family owning the surrounding land. This may reflect an elite background for above-ground stone graves' (Lang 2007, 224). Finally, it is worth mentioning wooden structures, interpreted as 'houses of the dead', at the far end of the Finno-Ugric world, i.e., the area of the Diakovo culture, communities of which inhabited the basins of the Volga and Oka rivers between the 7th century BC and the 7th century AD (Smirnov 1990; Bashen'kin 1996; Novoselova, Vishnevskiy 2021). The most interesting feature was discovered in a hillfort at Savvino-Storozhevsky (Саввино-Сторожевский) by the Razvodni Stream (a left tributary of the Moskva River) in Moscow Oblast in Russia: the remains of a small wooden building of 2 × 1.2 m, with the best part of its

floor sunken by 0.5–0.6 m, and an entrance on the southern side. The remains of a hearth or pyre were found inside, in a shallow pit by the entrance, while the cremated remains of 24 men, women, and children were lined up in pottery vessels along the walls. The building was dated to the 6th–7th centuries AD (Krasnov, Krasnov 1967, 34–36) (Fig. 10. C).

The food remains – charred lumps of a substance resembling coarse-grained bread spread with perhaps millet porridge, flat pies baked of fine-grained flour, and millet porridge – discovered in a hillfort at Hački are likely evidence of funerary ceremonies performed inside these wooden structures or gifts or sacrifices for the deceased. Legumes (*pisum* and lentil) and hazelnut shells were also found on the site (Kobyliński, Szymański 2015, 138). The similar lumps of charred barley or millet (some porridge-like) made of both whole grains and ground ones from Bliznaki (Близнаки) in Smolensky District in Russia are probably also traces of similar ceremonies. They had most probably been put in some organic containers before they were burnt (Shmidt 2003, 99–100).

The quantity of the organic remains from long buildings in hillforts (Demidovka, Bliznaki, Nikadzimava, Bantserovshchina) stands in contrast with the scarcity of such finds from settlements, and the archaeobotanical record represents a relatively large diversity. Besides cereals like *hordeum* (barley), wheat, *avena* (oats), rye, and millet, legumes, as well as plenty of *pisum* and *vicia faba* (faba bean) remains have been recovered from there (Shmidt 1972, 68–69; Shmidt 1976, 7–8; Sedin 1994, 115–118; Shmidt 2003, 99–101). Additionally, cannabis or hemp seeds were discovered in the fort of Nikadzimava (Sedin 1994, 115–118).

Another important element belonging perhaps to the cultic realm is the presence of 'atypical' products, limited strictly to these areas and very sporadic among other eastern European cultures (Dulnicz 2000, 85, 93–94). However, not all hillforts comprise such special items, classified according to their function as associated with 1, metal casting and goldsmithing (casting moulds, casting ladles, models; Fig. 11. 1, 3–4), 2, weaving (spindle whorls); 3, clothing (accessories including pendants and brooches; Fig. 11. 2); 4, belt decoration for men (buckles, strap ends); 5, horse harness parts; and 6, weapons (arrowheads). It is worth mentioning that some of these finds feature burn marks. The hillforts of Hački (Kobyliński, Szymański 2015, 57–61, Ryc.



Fig. 12. Hypothetical spread of the idea of building hillforts (a: main directions; b: hillforts; graphics by B. S. Szmoniewski)

12. kép. A magaslati erőd építés innovációjának hipotetikus terjedési modellje (a: fő irányok; b: magaslati erődök; grafika B. S. Szmoniewski)

III. 16–35), Zimno (Aulich 1972, 40–86, Tabl. VIII–XVI, Ris. 7), Nikadzimava (Sedin 2012), and Szeligi (Fig. 11. 2; Szymański 1967, 34–42, Ryc. 5. 1, 10, 6: 10–13) abound with such finds. In contrast, some hillforts in the Upper Dnieper Region conspicuously lack artefacts and deposits; these sites have often

been referred to as ‘hillforts without occupation levels’ (Shmidt 2003, 22).

Apart from hillforts, such finds were discovered in a funerary context in an early medieval hillfort at Plisnesk (Пліснесько), Zolochiv’sky District, L’vivs’ka Oblast in Ukraine, at ‘Oleny Park’ (Олений

парк), where embankments were erected later (Filipchuk 2010; Filipchuk, Soloviy 2014; Filipchuk et al. 2021). This area is considered the oldest part of a bigger ceremonial(?) structure, dating in general to between the second half of the 7th and the beginning of the 10th century AD. The feature – referred to as ‘sacrificial zone’ – comprised stone structures with human remains, partial inhumation burials, pieces of charcoal, and several artefacts amongst the rocks. M. Filipchuk (Филипчук), the leader of the investigations, interpreted some of the stones as the remains of buildings which had once been standing near the ‘sacrificial zone’ where various rituals were performed, sacrifices were offered, and the cremated remains of the deceased were buried. Skeletal fragments of about nine individuals were found there; some bones displayed damage and fractures caused by sharp tools, based on which the respective features were interpreted as the burials of possibly sacrificed humans. Interestingly, each bone cluster was in some special relation to a group of medium and large stones, whereas cremains were found admixed with diverse-size bones and charcoal in patches. Every cremation burial included a grave assemblage (ornaments, casting moulds, clothing accessories, weaponry; *Fig. 11. 4*). The closest analogy to this stone structure is the remains of stone hearths or pyres in the Zimno hillfort about 105 km northwest (Filipchuk, Soloviy 2014, 49).

Cremation burials are known from typical settlements in the eastern area of the Prague culture (Rusanova 1976, 42–43); even a cultic complex, together with a pyre site (a kind of vast hearth surrounded by a ditch, akin to the ones known from the territory of the Penkovka culture (Prihodnyuk 1998, 29) was discovered at Shumska. However, unlike such features in the hillforts, these cremation graves did not contain finds of any interest. The single exception is Grave 14, a cremation burial in the cemetery of Sărata Monteoru in Romania, dated to the second half of the 6th–7th centuries AD, which included several small vessels interpreted as crucibles (Nestor 1953, 84–85, *Fig. 16*; Comşa 1975, 186, *Fig. 11. 4*). Many similarities can be detected in the grave assemblages of cremation burials between Finno-Ugric settlements and the initial phases of the Early Middle Ages (Golubeva 1984), especially the presence of casting ladles and casting moulds, which had likely been used and owned by the persons in the graves of which they were found. Considering what special skills and know-how are required to cast metal, the

finds were likely valuable personal belongings cremated and buried with their owner/users.

Several casting moulds have been found in Hački and Zimno, with a single casting ladle in the former (Kobyliński, Szymański 2015, 57, *Ryc. III. 16*) and three in the latter (*Fig. 11. 1, 3*; Aulih 1972, 73–74, *tab. XIV. 1–3*). The samples from Zimno are burnt. The oldest cremation burials to contain casting ladles and crucibles in Azelino culture settlements in the Volga Basin between the Lower Oka and Lower Kama rivers have been dated to the 5th–8th centuries AD (Golubeva 1984). The inhumation graves in two cemeteries in the same area have been interpreted as the burials of female metalsmiths laid to rest between the second half of the 7th and the beginning of the 8th century AD (Golubeva 1984, 78; Leont'ev 1996, 90–91, 98–99, *Ris. 36. 3–4*). As for the neighbouring cultural circles, casting equipment has been found in cremation burials assigned to the late phase of the Djakovo culture (dated to the 6th–7th centuries AD; Novoselova, Vishnevskiy 2021, 71, *Ris. 8. 7*) and cremation barrow graves of Baltic Finnic communities (crucibles in 6th–7th century, a casting ladle in a 7th–8th century, and casting models in a 7th and a 7th–8th century AD site; Tvauri 2012, 120–122, *Fig. 73. 1–2, 76*). Interestingly, most moulds recovered from a funerary context are for producing rectangular ornaments with diverse inner patterns, mostly a series of horizontal notches (*Fig. 11. 3–4*); this type variant is a relatively frequent find in the territory of the Prague culture. One such mould, discovered in Grave 140, of an Avar cemetery at Vác, Pest County in Hungary, the inhumation grave of a woman dated to the second half of the 7th century AD, was later re-used as a whetstone (Tettamanti 2000, 32, *Abb. 9, Taf. 5. 140, 39*; Szmoniewski 2020, 134–136, *Ryc. 7. 9*).

Conclusions

As the presented examples illustrate, the interpretation of the hillforts in focus – especially their function – from the initial phases of the Early Middle Ages in East and, to a lesser extent, also in Central Europe is extremely problematic. I believe the best answer is that these places were multifunctional, serving diverse purposes and always adapting to the actual demand.

It seems rather certain that the hillforts where charred human bones were found must have been used as ceremonial places. These must be regarded as centres for performing rites and festivities in con-

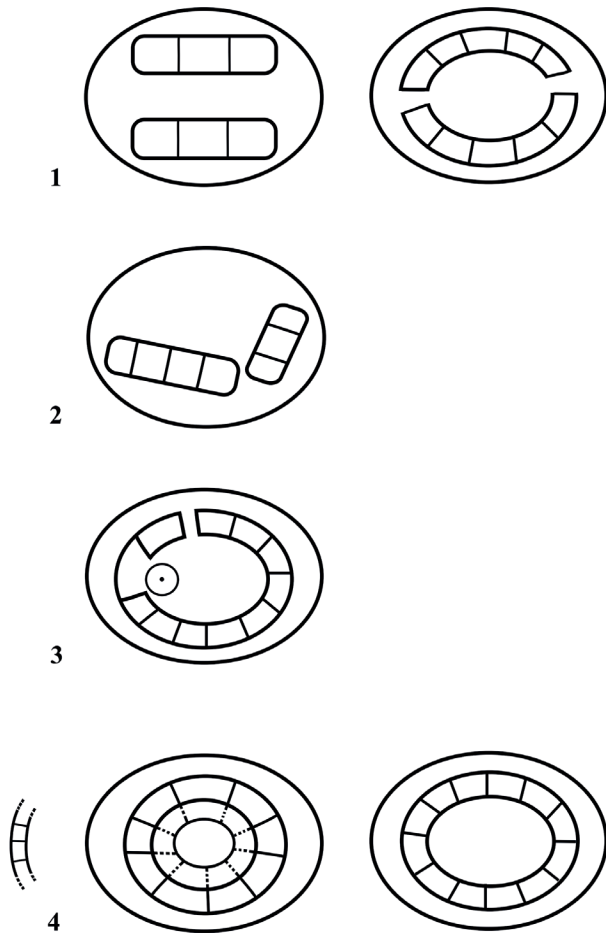


Fig. 13. Generalized models of hillforts (1–4: graphics by B. S. Szmoniewski)

13. kép. A magaslati erődtített települések általánosított modelljei (1–4: grafika B. S. Szmoniewski)

nection with funerals – which would also account for their insignificant defensive potential. This multi-functionality fits well with the interpretation by M. Dulnicz (Dulnicz 2000, 90–91, 95), who sees hillforts as some kind of centres where the power of rulers was born. Recent approaches in historical research focus on the role of space in maintaining and exercising power, stressing the necessity of a central place of governing even in the simplest social structures (Dalewski 1996). In that light, the presence of settlements in the vicinity of hillforts is in no way incidental; such arrangement was observed at Zimno (Fig. 4. 2), Khotomel (Fig. 9. 1), Szeligi (Dulnicz 2000, 89), and Kolochin (Калочын/Колочин) in Rechytsa District, Gomel Oblast in Belarus (Simonovich 1963). The 6th-century AD development of the settlement network by the Daugava River is especially interesting; the process resulted in the emergence of a model including a hillfort, one or

more settlements, and a cemetery; a good example is the settlement complex in Zhabino (Жабіно) associated with Baltic Finns (Okulicz-Kozaryn 1993, 47) in Usvyatsky District, Pskov Oblast in Russia, in the upper basin of the Lotova River (Stankevich 1960, 101–121, Ris. 62). The pattern is recurring but always in an adapted form to make the most of the actual topography, with special regard to any kind of elevation (Okulicz-Kozaryn 1993, 47). That, however, should not come as a surprise considering the lowland character of the landscape in this part of East Europe. It cannot be excluded either that these elevated locations, towering above the surrounding terrain and overseeing the flat woodland, had additional symbolic meaning.

In conclusion, it can be assumed that the impulse to construct such hillforts must have come from the Upper Dnieper Basin, a region with a centre and an interference zone of different ethnic communities, mostly Slavs, Balts and Finns (Fig. 12). Considerably fewer hillforts were erected after these groups migrated westward along the Pripyat River; only three, Zimno, Haćki, and Szeligi mark the dawn of the custom. The pottery reflecting eastern traditions in the layers of these sites might be a contribution of East European cultures; the best example is Haćki, where Prague-Korchak-style and Kolochin- and Tushemla-Bantserovshchina-style potsherds were also found (Kobyliński, Szymański 2005, 572). Both western and eastern types appear in the record of Zimno, marking “the modest but clear contribution of elements originating from regions with early Baltic traditions beyond the Pripyat River” (Szymański 1974, 264). To a lesser extent, such influences can be tracked in Szeligi, where the whole pottery record features elements typical of both the eastern and the western Early Slavic pottery traditions (referred to by W. Szymański as ‘Prague-Zhytomyr type’; Szymański 1967, 330).

The fact that the number of hillforts is decreasing towards the south and west is quite thought-provoking. Assuming that this hillfort type was a general marker of shared cultural background, showcasing that by following this construction model must not have always been necessary. Is it possible to associate the custom of building hillforts with communities originating from different parts of the Upper Dnieper Basin? The communities inhabiting the catchment area of the Upper Daugava and Dnieper rivers preferred a settlement model comprising a hillfort and several single homesteads at a small distance from

each other. In the case of Early Slavic settlements, the hillfort could have served as a ceremonial venue, a place where the remains of ancestors were stored, a gathering place for the members of the community, and maybe even a temporary shelter and refuge in times of danger. It is, therefore, possible that not every member of the community could hope for their cremated remains to find an honoured place in one of the so-called longhouses, as such a dignifying place could have been reserved for members with a higher position within the egalitarian-agrarian society of Early Slavs. Such a status could have been achieved by obtaining the skills necessary for casting, metalworking, and dealing with fire in general, as well as by weaving or skilfully handling weapons. Consequently, the layers with charred human remains and charcoals contain items that could have belonged to the deceased and were scattered together with the rest of the pyre. The unification of the methods of constructing barriers and post-framed longhouses

can be explained by the intent of the communities to accentuate their common origin, kinship, and connection with their ancestors' tradition of raising buildings such as the ones in their homeland in the upper basin of the Dnieper River. In contrast, the basic settlement model of communities with no such traditions, inhabiting more southern regions (especially by the right bank of the middle course of the Dnieper), was a simple open settlement, i.e., a cluster of single semi-sunken homesteads close to each other. For them, the most important element of the settlement was a roughly square semi-sunken dwelling with some heating device in the corner.

The hillforts built in Eastern and Central Europe in the initial phases of the Early Middle Ages continue to be the focus of research. Their case excellently illustrates the complexity of the social and economic transformation processes and settlement models characterising this period rich in diverse mutual cultural influences.

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KÖZPONTI- VAGY RITUÁLIS HELYEK, ÉS A SZLÁV TERÜLET LEGKORÁBBI MAGASLATI ERŐDJEI KÖZÉP- ÉS KELET-EURÓPÁBAN (5/6.–7. SZÁZAD)

Összefoglalás

Az általában a korai szlávokhoz kapcsolt nyíltszíni települések mellett egy másik településtípus is jelen van Kelet- és Közép-Európa 6–10. századi régészeti anyagában, elsősorban a Dnyeper felső és a Daugava középső folyása mentén. E másik típus központi elemét egy a magaslati erődített telepekre emlékeztető mag jelenti, melynek közelében egy vagy több kisebb tanya, vagy kis település szóródik. Ezen „erődített telepek” egy része vélhetően alapvető védelmi célokat is szolgált, azaz veszély idején a közeli kis települések lakóinak menedéke lehetett (Shmidt 2003, 22–23); emellett a Felső-Dnyeper vidéki telepeket Tret'jakov „szentélyként” értelmezi (Tret'jakov 1958). Az újabb kutatások fényében elképzelhető, hogy e „telepek” egy része valóban rituális, temetkezési célokat is szolgált.

A korai középkor hajnalán, az 5/6. század fordulóján és a hetedik században, Közép- és Kelet-Európát dél felé vándorló csoportok foglalták el: elsőként a „Long Barrows”-kultúra Pskov csoportja, majd a Tushemla-Bancherskova- és Kolochin-, végül pedig a Prága- és Penkovka-kultúrák.

Bár korábbi elméletek innen eredeztetik, a Kijev kultúra területén nem találhatók „erődített magaslati telepek” (Terpilovskiy 2004, 36–38). Ez a művelődés a Zarubintsi-kultúra területének egy részén alakult ki a Kr. u. 3. században, részben folytatva annak hagyományait (Terpilovskiy 2004, 46–50; Oblomskiy 2007, 28–30). Ezzel szemben a Zaozerje kör, azaz

a Kijev-kultúra Felső-Dnyeper és Desna-vidéki, a 3. század közepe és az 5. század közé keltezett változatának területén ismert néhány ilyen település (Lopatin, Furašev 2007). Ennek alapján a vizsgált jelenség eredetét a Felső-Dnyeper-vidéken kell keresni, ahol az első ilyen „települések” már a Kr. u. 5. században megjelentek; ez a régió ekkor különféle balti, finn és szláv közösségek interferenciaterülete volt (Lopatin, Furašev 2007, 49, 61–65, ris. 24).

A korábbi leírások rendszerezése és kiegészítése nyomán leírhatóvá vált a vizsgált „erődített telepek” jellegzetes topográfiai helyzete (mindig a környező vidék fölé emelkedő magaslaton létesültek), valamint belső területük tagolása és az ott található konstrukciók jellegzetességei. Kirajzolódott az is, hogy számos közülük nem is volt alkalmas igazán komolyabb támadás elleni védekezésre, viszont kultúrrétegekben gyakori lelet az égett emberi és állati csont, valamint a korszak nyíltszíni telepeire egyébként nem jellemző leletanyag (import- és a mezőgazdasági termeléshez szorosan nem kapcsolódó tárgyak; lásd Dulinicz 2000, 85). Az a legvalószínűbb, hogy ezek az „erődített telepek” több funkciót is elláttak, mely mindig az aktuális igényeknek megfelelően változott.

Belső elrendezésük, azaz a sáncok és palisádfalak által övezett területen levő fa építmények és a bennük talált „tűzhelyek” jellegzetességei alapján az „erődített telepek” négy típusba sorolhatók:

1, két egymással szemközt elhelyezkedő épületsor (pl. Szeligi és Kotomel [Хотамель/ Хотомель]; 2. kép A; 3. kép, 9. kép, 13. kép 1); 2, két különálló, egymással szöveget bezáró épületsor, melyek egyike hosszabb, mint a másik (pl. Zimno [Зимно]; 2. kép B; 4. kép, 13. kép 2); 3, Körülbelül ovális épületsor közepén kis, üres térrel (Tushemla [Тушемля]; 5. kép, 13. kép 3); 4, épületsor alkotta kör, közepén üres térrel (Sloboda Glushitsa [Слобода-Глушица] és Nikadzimava [Никадзімава]; 6. kép, 8. kép, 13. kép 4).

Bizonyosnak tűnik, hogy azok az „erődített telepek”, melyek rétegeiből égett emberi csontok kerültek elő, ceremoniális helyszíneként is szolgáltak: helyi központok lehettek, ahol a temetésekkel és a halottakkal kapcsolatos rítusok, ceremóniák és ünnepek zajlottak. Ez a felvetés e „telepek” csekély védelmi potenciálját is megmagyarázza. Az itt sugallt muntifunkcionalitás jól illeszkedik M. Dulinitz teóriájába (Dulinitz 2000, 90–91, 95), aki ezeket a „magaslati erődített telepeket” olyan központokként értelmezi, melyek az uralkodó réteg hatalmának forrását jelentették. Ennek fényében nem véletlen, hogy mindegyik közelében kis települések szóródnak, mint például Zimno (4. kép 2), Khotomel (9. kép), Szeligi (Dulinitz 2000, 89) és Kolochin (Калочын/Колочин) Recitsa körzet, Gomel Oblast, Fehéroroszország (Symonovich 1963) lelőhelyein.

Az „erődített telepek” létesítésének szokása a Felső-Dnyeper-vidékről eredhet (12. kép). Miután

az itteni szláv, balti és finn csoportok nyugat felé vándoroltak a Pripjat folyó mentén, jóval kevesebb „erődített telep” létesült a területen, mint korábban; csupán Zimno, Hački és Szeligi sorolhatók e legkésőbbi horizonthoz. A keleti hagyományokat tükröző kerámia, mely e lelőhelyek kultúrrétegeiből került elő, kelet-európai kultúrák hatását tükrözheti; a legjobb példa Hački, ahonnan Prága-Korcak, Kolochin és Tushemla-Bantserovcina stílusú kerámiatöredékek egyaránt ismertek (Kobyliński, Szymański 2005, 572).

Kapcsolatba hozható a „magaslati erődített telepek” létesítésének szokása a Felső-Dnyeper-vidékről származó közösségekkel? A korai szláv közösségek esetében e „telepek” ceremoniális helyszínek lehettek, ahol az ősök maradványai is nyugodtak, de a közösség tagjai is összegyűlhettek, sőt, veszély esetén akár menedékként is szolgálhattak. Sajátságaik nyomán valószínűnek tűnik, hogy nem mindenkit itt temettek el, mert ez a megtiszteltetés csupán a közösség kiemelkedő tagjainak járt. Jogot szerezni rá láthatólag valamely tudás (fémöntés és -megmunkálás, szövés, fegyverforgatás) révén lehetett.

A Kelet- és Közé-Európa területén a korai középkor kezdetén emelt „erődített magaslati telepek” kutatása folytatódik. E lelőhelytípus esete jól illusztrálja az ebben a különféle kulturális egymásra hatásokban gazdag korban zajlott társadalmi és gazdasági átalakulások folyamatait.