

Cult center of ancient Turks on the territory of central Kazakhstan

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Since 1999, excavations have been underway on the medieval site Bozok located in the southern part of the city of Astana. The monument is situated among marshlands of the left bank of the river Ishim. Its ruins occupy a compact area on the eastern bank of the lake Buzukty, dimensions 800x400 m (fig.1). Above, 8,000 sq. m have been unearthed over 11 field seasons. 10 abodes of medieval epoch have been discovered; remains of 5 mausoleums and 2 brick-firing kilns explored; 62 interments of the 13-16 centuries uncovered; architecture of defensive erections studied.

The monument proved to be complex and multicomponent; it consists of production, residential and cult erections of different epochs (fig.2). There are four parts in the spatial arrangement of objects. The first and the oldest one are 3 square-shaped grounds encircled with ditches and ramparts. In the north,



Fig. 1. Site Bozok. Space survey.

there is a complex of earth-houses with a well and aryk stretched from the lake. This is the second structural component of the site. In the south of central grounds there is a necropolis of the site Bozok composed of ruins of a mausoleum, a brick-firing kiln and Moslem interments of the 13-16 centuries. This is the third part of the archaeology monument. In the

east and north of the site there is agroirrigation layout that expands borders of the residential area. Its dimensions north-southwards do not exceed the limits of the lake Buzukty. Irrigation erections are the fourth structural part of the site Bozok. Investigations revealed that structural components of the object had repeatedly been reconstructed and renewed. Integrity and common nature of the monument are attributable to a special status of the site that initially combined functions of the military headquarters-residence and cult center (sanctuary). Ancient Turks' perception of the sacral nature of the space has been maintained throughout the history of the site Bozok. Materials identified make it possible to single out 3 stages in the development of the site: 1) 8-9 centuries; 2) 10-13 centuries; 3) 14-15 (16) centuries. The present article lays an emphasis on the first stage of the history of the site Bozok.

Pertaining to the 8-9 centuries are 3 square-shaped grounds conventionally titled as "quarters". Total area is 12,636 sq.m. Quarters are adjacent to each other but each of them is surrounded by a ditched

and a rampart. There are apertures for passages in the system of defensive erections that lead both outside and neighboring erections. Quarters are displaced in respect of each other and compositionally look as 3-petalled ‘flower’ (fig.2).

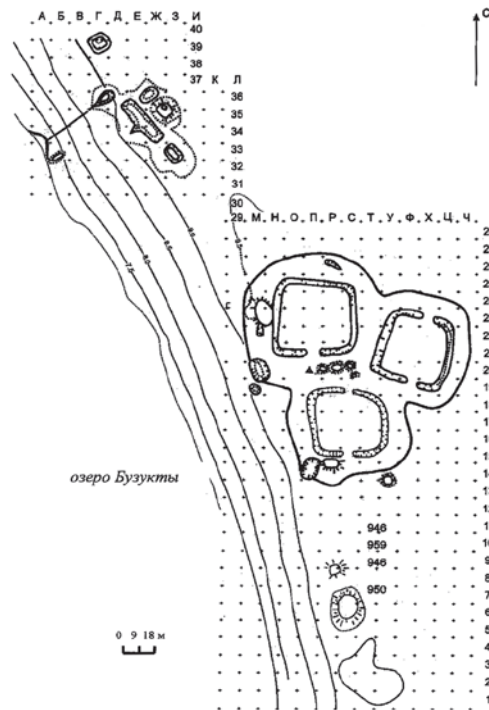


Fig. 2. Site Bozok. Topographic map.

The largest and principal town-forming element is the northern quarter with 2 others adjoining from the east and the south. The quarter is somewhat stretched along meridional axis, dimensions are 63x60 m; internal ground encircled with a ditch; its length is 35x35 m. the quarter is surrounded by high rampart, height 1 m. Width of the rampart by its foundation is 10-15 m. The ditch is 3 m wide; 0,5-1,0 m deep inside the rampart. The quarter is tightly closed from all sides; a single passage leading inside the site is located on the southern part. Compositional conditions and constructive features give it grounds to claim that the northern quarter occupied a dominative position not only in respect of to others but the entire site as well.

The southern quarter is second to its parameters. Its dimensions is 55x55 m. Internal ground is encircled by a ditch, 3 m wide and 0,8-1,0 m deep. The ground has 2 entrance apertures: in the northern part for internal communication; in the southern part for exit outside. Dimensions of the eastern part is 55x45 m. The internal ground is contoured by a ditch; its dimensions are 30x28 m. There are passages inside the quarter in the ditch from the northern and southern parts. Fully explored is a territory of the northern quarter out of 3 mentioned quarters. The eastern quarter is cut by 2 stratigraphic trenches, 3 m wide. Archaeologists explored a design of the rampart and ditch in the region of the northern passage. No excavations were carried out in the southern quarter.

Prior to the excavations, a visual survey of the monument had been carried out to show special designation of these 3 town-forming complexes. These include “swamp” topography of the monument, planigraphic composition of 3 quarters and their semantics, non-standard layout of defensive works: internal ditch and external rampart. Typical for the site Bozok, like for many steppe settlements of Eurasia, is a thin cultural layer and the lack of settlement finds. A careful fixation and stratigraphic observations made it possible to single out 2 construction horizons in the cultural layer of

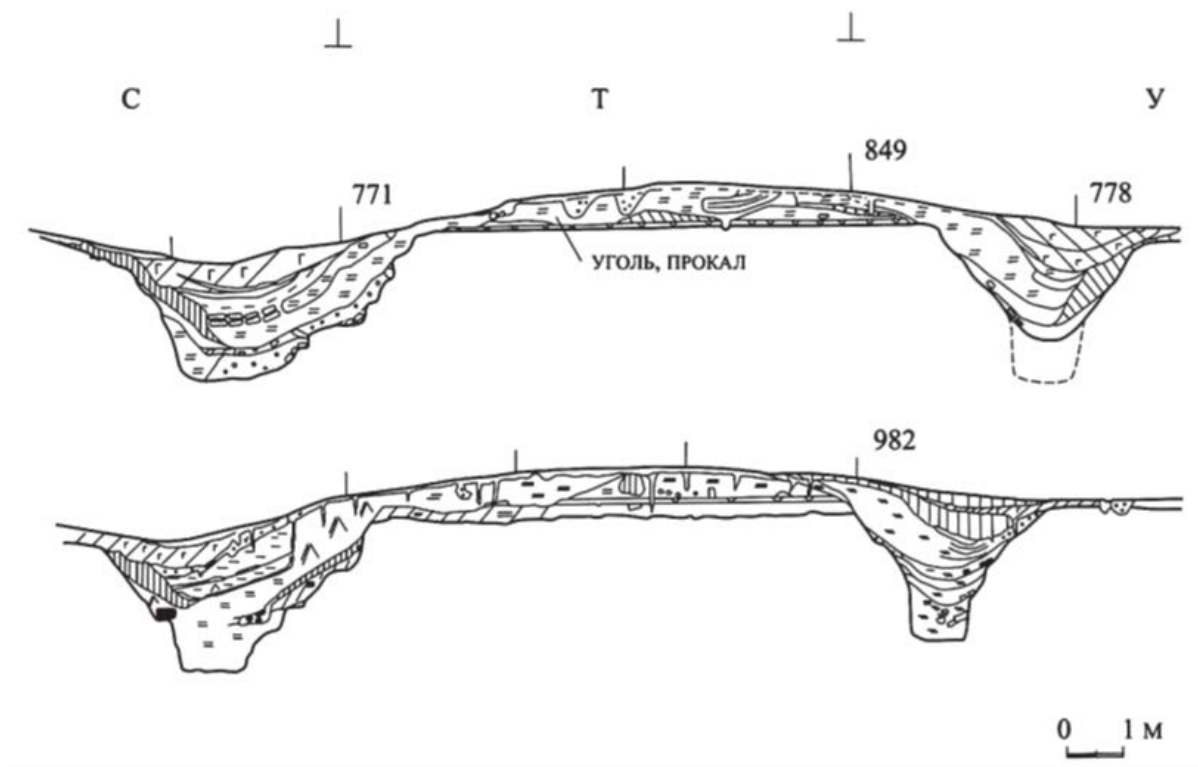


Fig. 3. Site Bozok. Ditches of the northern and eastern quarters in section.

the northern ground; reveal constructions of the lower construction horizon and associate them with initial architecture of defensive works. Experts identified repeated renewals of the ditch and rampart and, hence, protracted use of the territory of the quarters. The date of the construction of 3 quarters of the site Bozok is the 8-9 centuries based on the data of relative stratigraphy, as well as analysis of bridle accessories discovered in a ritual burial of horse and radiocarbon data of humic acids of the humus of burial soil, samples of which were taken from under the rampart.

Complex of the data obtained makes it possible to claim that the site Bozok served as military residence to perform functions of the cult center. It would be appropriate to briefly consider facts that substantiate a status of the site as **headquarters-residence** of the ancient Turkic epoch. It includes analyses of geographical placing of the monument and semantics of its layout.

Instrumental in the selection of habitation proved to be geo-strategic factor. Note that the site Bozok is situated in the center of Syr Arka, in a place where river-beds of the northern Siberian basin (Ishim, Selety, Shiderty) and the Central-Asian basin (Nura, Sarysu) come together. In the upper reaches of Ishim there is a juncture of trade caravan and military-migration roads of the ancient populations of Eurasia. Using the river Ishim, one could get to the taiga zone of Siberia, while latitudinal section of Ishim was a part of the main route that connected the eastern regions of Eurasia with the western ones. Numerous tributaries that fell into Ishim, both from the south and the north, conducted to the numerous

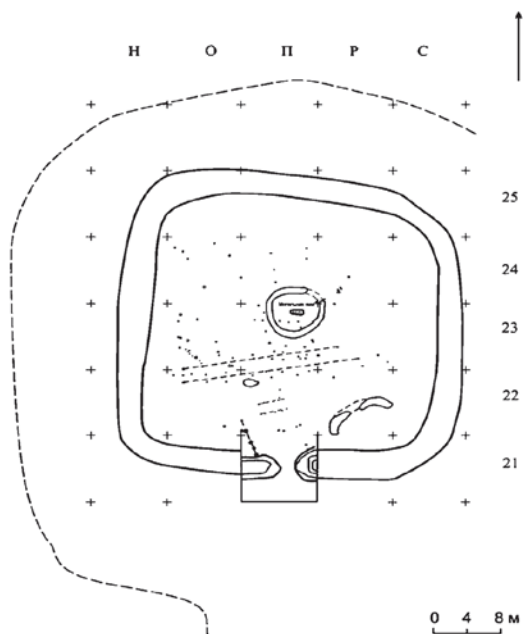


Fig. 4. Site Bozok. Map of lower horizon structures.

significance to play a role of code left by its builders.³ Division into 3 parts, each with its own name, is known from ancient times and typical for nomadic sites and residences of chiefs of Turkic- and Mongolspeaking nomads. In the 10-12 centuries, 3-part division of dependent territories and a tribal alliance was typical for Ghuzes and Oghuzes. The state of Karakhanides and related tribes were divided into *ordu*, eastern possessions – *buzuk*, western – *uchuk*. Origin of these terms is mythological.⁴ Later on, these terms were used to designate administrative structures of tribal unions and early state formations. From this comes a federative division of Kazakh khanate into 3 *zhuzes*, here comes names of Ak Orda., Kok Orda, Kyzyl Orda. It may be presumed that the semantics of spatial placing of the quarters of the site Bozok reproduces a standard elite headquarters of the 8-9 centuries. An indirect argument is a name of lake “Buzukty” mentioned on present-day maps of Tselinograd region. Perhaps, the lake was named after the first residence of ancient Kypchaks on their way westwards. Despite hundreds of years, a term *Buzuk* preserved in the local hydronym and survived hitherto.

The facts that substantiated a status of the site as **cult center** are based on “swamp” topography of the monument, including unusual layout of defensive works (internal ditch and external rampart); relative stratigraphy that illustrated repeated renewal of the ditch and rampart; contents and layout of lower building horizon of the northern quarter; discovery of sacrificial burial of a horse in the ditch and a ritual burial of a man in the center of the northern ground.

comfortable ramifications of trade caravan routes. The upper reaches of Ishim are crossed by the shortest branch that linked towns of Great Silk Way with towns of the Western Siberia.¹ A ford near Bozuk enabled people to control and manage these currents.² Thus, the site Bozok is located in strategically advantageous place, both from economic (ancient “customs” station) and political (center of the northern part of Syr Arka) standpoint.

Semantics of planigraphy. Among presently known medieval sites of Eurasia there is no monument characterize by a form of 3-part composition in placing townforming erections. The planigraphy of this sort is of particular



Fig. 5. Site Bozok. Reconstruction of lower horizon structures.

The site Bozok has unordinary topography for Syr Arka. Its creators tried “to hid themselves” among swamps in the low-lying flood valley of Ishim (fig.1). Keeping to the lake-swamp landscape was not a rare thing for Turkic-speaking tribes of early Middle Ages. This is vividly echoed in the swamp towns of Ghuzes, located in delta ducts of Syr Darya, in the topography of some Khazar and Bulgar towns.⁵ In doing so, an aim was pursued to protect against enemy through the use of natural obstacles. Most probably, it was an isolated and inaccessible locality that contributed to the cult status of the site. Note that the site was probably attended by people who committed certain actions of ritual nature.

Testifying indirectly to the construction of towns by Turkic-speaking tribes in the low-lying flood valleys is a Turkic vocabulary that specified a notion of “town” by a term *balyg*.⁶ Used in the meaning of “town”, this word is referred to in Orkhon runic inscription of the 8 century; later on it was mentioned in the names of Turkic and Mongolian towns – Beshbalyk, Ordu Balyk, Khan Balyk. As viewed by linguists and historians, a term *balyg* is derivative from a root *bal* that meant *clay, dirt* and *swamp*. Etymology of this word indicated to centuries long notion of *town*, its erection of *clay* (wattle and daub architecture), special landscape conditions together with *water reservoir* and fishery. The latter is corroborated by another Turkic meaning of the word *balyg* as “fish”.

Architecture of cult erections of the site. Architecture of the rampart, filling of the ditch and the construction of lower building horizon of the northern ground are confirmative to the use of this territory as sacral space, not a place of mass residence.

It should be noted that all 3 quarters were built simultaneously. Future quarters had been marked out before the work began. Ancient surface remained under the rampart. Excavations of the northern quarter revealed that the internal ground was deepened up to subsoil ground; humus and a part of subsoil layer were taken away from its surface. A strip, 3-3,5 m wide adjacent by perimeter to the internal wall of the ditch was slantingly trimmed at a depth of 50-70 cm.⁷ The ditch was dug from this

level only. Thus, there arose a difference of heights of the upper level of ditch's walls. Internal wall of the ditch was initially down 0,5-0,7 m from external wall.



Fig. 6. Site Bozok. Psalic and bit.

A ditch, 2,6-2,8 m deep, 4,8 m wide by top 1,5 by bottom. Note that the bottom is compacted; walls of the rampart go down by steps; a steep profile is observed in the internal part of the ditch (fig.3). In the middle of the southern part of the quarter there is a passage, 2,3 m wide. These constructions encircled an internal ground, dimensions 35x35 m. On the edge, the internal ground was fenced by wooden fence. Its traces are apparent in the form of hollows from pillars that stood at a distance of 3,4-5,0 m from each other.

Pillars were dug with diameter 20-30 cm. Rotten wood is still preserved in some of them. The fence must have been repaired, for 3-4 rows of pillar hollows were cleaned in places adjoining to corners of the quarter.

A rampart-wall was build out of ground taken in the course of digging. An ancient surface under the rampart was covered by a layer of clean clay. A small rampart, 3 m wide and 0,4 m high was put along external wall of the ditch. Surface of the rampart was smeared by humid yellow clay. In doing so, builders created a core of the future wall that gradually grew in volume. The rampart was made of clay. Its walls were reinforced by clay bricks. Height of the rampart was calculated to comply with the volume of ground that flowed into the ditch. All the profiles reveal that a clay clot goes down into the ditch from the rampart (fig.3). Its thickness is 1 m. If this ground is given back to the rampart, its height would rise by 1 m. When adjusted for the present dimensions of the rampart, one can say with certainty that the initial height of the rampart-wall was less than 2 m. Note that width of the rampart is 7-8 m; width of the top is 4 m. Also, the rampart is compacted in the top and has a trapezoidal form in the section.

The construction of the rampart and the ditch casts doubts in their defensive functions. Small grounds of the quarters are encircled by a deep ditch and a rampart behind it. Surface of quarters is additionally deepened up to subsoil ground; edges of the surface are slantingly cut by the entire perimeter towards the ditch, so that the internal wall of the ditch is down 0,5 m from the external one which makes it difficult to organize defense. Grounds of the quarters are pressed inside the rampart. From defensive tactics point of view, such a layout is ineffective. There interpretation as a territory closed for mass

dwelling seems to be more substantiated, as witnessed by the designed of the lawyer building horizon of the northern quarter (fig.4).

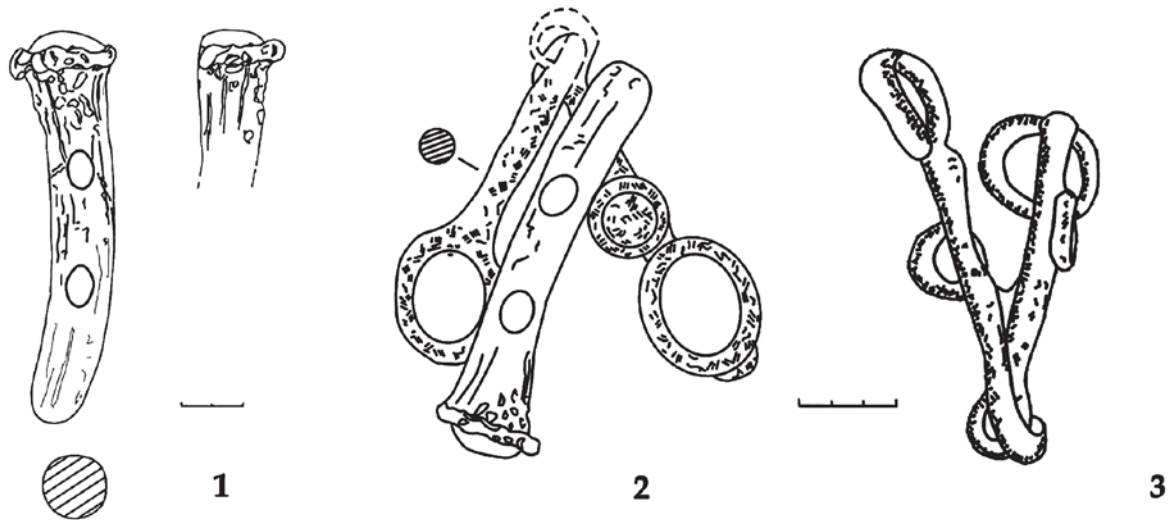


Fig. 7. Site Bozok. Bridle accessories: 1-corneous psalic; 2-upper bit; 3-lower bit.

In the center of the northern ground there is a round trench, 7 m in diameter. The trench has 1,0- 1,3 m wide and 0,2 m deep. Contours of the trench are surrounded by pillar hollows with rotten wood of wooden pillars in some places. There is a break in the north-eastern part of the ring trench. There is a pit, 0,5 m in diameter, at a distance of 2 m. Section of the pit presupposes a large pillar that had repeatedly been repaired: additional 4 pillars are dug around it.

In the center of the trench there was found a grave pit west-eastwards. A burial of a man writhed left was found on its bottom; with his head westwards. His bones are half rotted; his hands bent in elbow and placed in perpendicular to the body. Hands are cut and put under forearms his fingers put on belly. No other things were unearthed. Depth of the pit from ancient surface is 0,7 m; from the top of the quarter is 1,2 m.

A round trench encircled with pillar pits is reminiscent of the foundation of yurt-shaped erection. Width of the trench and pillar pits makes it possible to judge about wall construction. This could be a strong wall of clay fixed by a wooden framework of stele (?).

One more arcuated trench was discovered in the south-eastern corner of the internal ground of the northern quarter. The trench is located on the slope toward the ditch. Its destination is not clear, perhaps, it is a drainage construction (fig.4).

On the space between a ring trench (yurt?) and entrance to the quarter there were found 2 transversal lines of doubled pillar pits. A distance between them is 4 m. The northern (10 m from the entrance) transverses the quarter from the western age to the eastern one and is in the form of pillar pits of oval form (0,3x0,2; 0,4x0,3 m), where doubled foundations of the 2 wooden pillars were discovered. In some of them, bones of animals (ribs and shoulders) were pressed for fixation. The second line is shorter and placed 6 m in front of the entrance. To judge by a rectangular form of pits, these were pillars of beam, dimensions 20x10 cm. Extant in some pits is rotten wood. These lines were repaired; there are pits put one on another. As a wpit, these were a construction in the form of turluch wall placed in front of the entrance to the quarter.

Thus, we have a picture as follows (fig.5). The internal ground of the northern quarter, area of above 1200 sq.m, is tightly closed from all the sides of the high and large rampart's wall, deep and wide ditch and a wooden fence. An entrance, 2,3 m wide, is placed in the middle of the southern part. In the center of the ground there was yurt-shaped structure. A wooden "pillar" (stele?) was dug 2 m in the east. The yurt-shaped structure is fenced by 2 rows of wooden pillars dug in pairs. While, the first row from the entrance to the quarter was short and it could be passed by from the west and the east, the second row traversed the wpit of the ground from edge to edge (probably, there was a sort of "gate" for passage to the yurt). In the center of the yurt-shaped structure there was discovered a ritual burial of a man with cut and displaced hands. The construction of the lower horizon of the northern quarter is indicative of its use as a sacral ground and a place for unknown rites. The ritual burial of a man above testifies in favor of cult destination of the northern quarter.

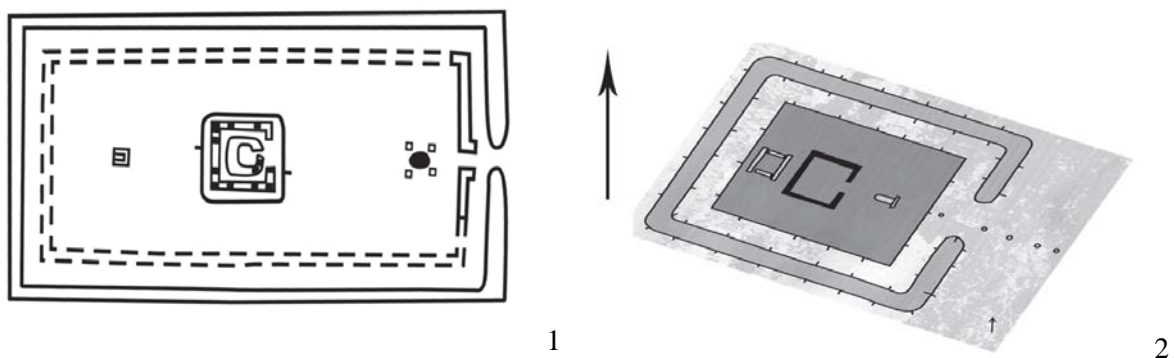


Fig. 8. Site Bozok. Analogues: 1-funeral temple Kultekin; 2) Kara-Golskiy memorial (according to M. Zholdasbekov, K. Sartkozhauly, 2006).

Dating of lower building horizon. Feeling of the ditches and stratigraphy of the cultural layer of the northern ground is illustrative of its long utilization, repeated renewal and cleaning of the ground. The said above is documented in the traces of repair of wooden structures and stratigraphy of the ditches. Ditch profiles reveal that the ditch was dug twice after its initial construction (fig.3). In some time, the ditches were cleaned at a depth of 2,0-2,2 m with its contours slightly displaced. This renewal is

clearly manifest in the profiles of the ditch of the eastern quarter where a wall of the rampart was scantily cut from the top (fig.3). For a long period of time the ditch was hollow but with due course of time it was covered by ground from both sides. A strong body of clay came from the side of the rampart. There is a grey loam from the side of the internal ground. For the third time, the swollen ditch is laid by bricks in the center in two rows. They are seen in the profiles at a depth of 1 m from the top. Yellow clay bricks are put horizontally and fastened by black humus-silt solution. Humus is formed higher from this level and alternated by clay fragments.

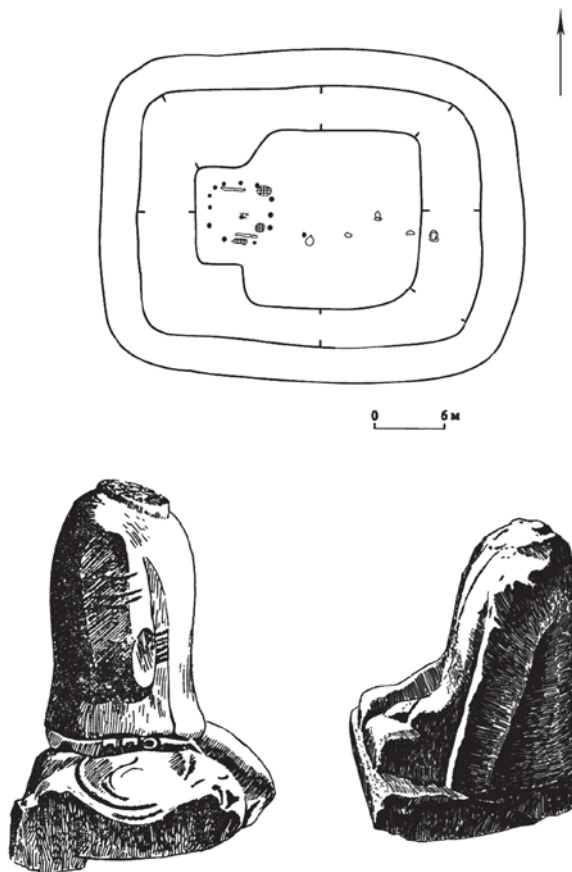


Fig. 9. Site Bozok. Analogues. Tuva. Sary-Bulun. Map and finds.

It is difficult to establish chronological fragments that separate ditch renewals. We dispose of 2 dates, first of which makes it possible to specify the date of the construction of three quarters; the second one is, perhaps, pertaining to one of the stages of ditch cleaning.

The first date was obtained on the basis of humus of buried soil beneath the rampart. Stratigraphical sections of the rampart were made on the said to select samples of buried soils. Radiocarbon dating of humic acids of buried soil made by experts from the laboratory of geology and palaeo-climatology of Cainozoic under the Institute of Geology and Mineralogy of the Siberian branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences provided the date as follows: 1500 ± 50 л.н. (COAH 0 7680).

Date calibration gave a temporary interval

between 503 and 644 A.D. (95,4% probability).⁸ This date is reflective of the time of formation of diagnosing signs of humus whose genetic development was suspended by conservation of these soil horizons. The point is that the buried soil is “open-closed system”, so radiocarbon date obtained by humic acids of soil is interpreted as minimum age of buried soils. Hence, the date of the construction of ramparts of the site Bozok should be attributable to 50-100 years later from the radiocarbon date, i.e. 7-8 centuries.

In 2009, a ritual interment of a horse was unearthed at a depth of 1,8 m in the ditch of the eastern quarter. The interment was made at the entrance to the quarter. Above a skull of the horse there were

discovered 2 pairs of iron bit and 1 corneous psalic. Bit was accurately put one on another with psalic above (fig.6). This complex was possibly of sacrificial nature intentionally dug at the entrance in the course of the construction of the ditch and the rampart. Cases of this sort are frequently found in the practice of steppe population from times of ancient times. They may be treated as construction sacrifices. Noteworthy is the fact that together with a skeleton of the horse there were uncovered bridle accessories (fig.7) and the sacrificial complex was cleaned at a depth of 1,8 m. In other words, the complex was erected after an initial construction of 3 grounds. Bridle accessories make it possible to date the event by the 7-9 centuries.

Bar-shaped, corneous, double perforated psalic, 12,2 cm long, slightly curved form, manufactured of corneous spoke of roe.⁹ A tip of the horn is cut off. Rosette is preserved in the basis of the horn (fig.7.1). Corneous, bar-shaped psalic go back to the Early Iron Age and up to the 9-10 centuries. A similar psalic was found in Tuva, Kokel sepulcher, burial mound #23 dated to the 6-7 centuries; in Altay, Kudyrghé sepulcher.¹⁰

Upper bit are iron, 2-componental annulated, 13 cm long (Fig.7.2). Bit is finished with rings of almondshaped form, dimensions 4,2 x 3,5 cm. An iron ring, 3 cm in diameter, was set on one of the links. Its relation to the bit remains obscure. Lower bit is 2-componental, annulated, 11,5 cm long of each link (fig.7.3). The design of the bit is inexplicable. An iron ring, 6,2 cm in diameter, was fixed on each link. Rings are riveted from above on a bar. They are located at practically identical distance (5,5; 6,0 cm) from central links of the bit. Their destination is unknown. They are likely to operate as supports. The bit is annulated with corneous double perforated psalic and is pertaining to the bit of Katandin type. In his resume of ancient Turkic complexes G.V.Kubarev singled them out into type 3.¹¹

Thus, the data obtained make it possible to date the origin and functioning of the site Bozok by the ancient Turkic epoch. To judge from radiocarbon dating of the humus of buried soil, one can suppose that the construction of the quarters started in the 7-8 centuries. One of the stages of the subsequent renovation of the ditch is dated to a horse bridle discovered in the sacrificial horse burial of the 8-9 centuries.

This date finds its parallel in the similarity between the site Bozok and some early medieval monuments of Eurasian steppes. Non standard layout of defensive works (internal ditch and external rampart) is echoed in the cult and residential architecture of the ancient Turkic epoch of the Central Asia. Sacral space of the cult-memorial ensembles of Mongolia, 6-8 centuries, was confined to the internal ditch and external rampart in the rectangular form (fig.8). Sources of this tradition go back to the towns of Huns. At present, above ten of sites have been discovered in the Central Asia and are characterized, like Bozok, by square form and fortification system composed of the internal ditch and

external rampart. These involve sites of Ivolginskoye, Bayan Under.¹² Besides towns of Huns, the layout of defensive fortifications of this type is spread in the designed sites of Odintsovo culture of Verkhneye Priobye, 7-8 centuries.¹³ In the later periods this layout is rarely found in the architecture of fortifications of Bulgar and ancient Russian towns.¹⁴

By its architectural-layout composition, the site Bozok is pertaining to a special category of monuments, known in the archaeology of Eurasia under the name of cult-memorial complexes of the ancient Turkic epoch. Note that the very concept arose in ancient Turks and was brilliantly manifest in the construction and layout of princely memorials of Mongolia. The complex of Kultekin has been explored completely (fig.8.1). One of these ensembles was excavated in 1959 by L.R.Kyzlasov in Saryg-Bulun, Tuva.¹⁵ Note that Saryg-Bulun is identical to Bozok not only by its external architectural components but also by a wooden pillar (stele?) on the territory of “temple-yurt”.

Note that the memorial complex Saryg-Bulun was a quadrangular ground encircled by the rampart and the internal ditch (fig.9). Dimensions of the rampart is 36x29 m. The internal embankment had a protuberance in the west with remains of wooden “temple” in the form of eight-angular yurt on the surface. Author of the excavations L.R.Kyzlasov believed that this yurt-sanctuary was designed for memorial rites. Various articles and a jug of Central Asian type were discovered in the center of the ground near a pillar pit. Two stone figures in the sedentary position were discovered in the ditch (fig.9). The monument goes back to the 6-8 centuries.

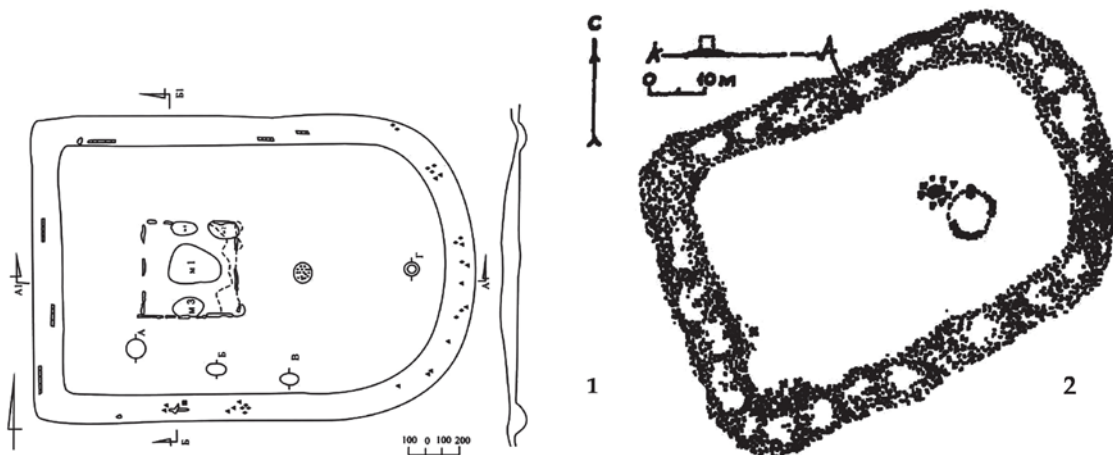


Fig. 10. Site Bozok. Analogues: 1-sepulcher Kaltyshino, burial mound # 1; 2-Voznesenka.

Architecturally congenial objects have been discovered far in the west, Eastern Europe. These objects were clustered into a group of monuments of the so-called “Pereshipinsko-Voznesenskiy. type”.¹⁶ The monuments are dated to the end of the 7-8 centuries. No functional area of the objects has fully been found out. That’s why they are called either sites or funeral-memorial complexes. The most revealing

is Voznesenka on Lower Dnepr; excavated in 1930. The monument is a rectangular ground, dimensions 61x 31 m, surrounded by a stoneearth rampart (fig. 10.2). In the eastern part of the ground there is a stone-faced ring, 8-9 m in diameter. Next to it there are 2 pits full of weaponry, bridles, and burnt horse bones. The monument is dated to the first half of the 8 century. Proceeding from archival reports, A.I. Semenov cleared up an architectural design of Voznesenka and discovered additional constructions in the form of external ditch and “cobbled roadway” that imparted grandeur to the complex which is not inferior to the funeralmemorial temple of Kultekin.¹⁷ Of interest is a round ring discovered on the internal space of the ground which, as S.A. Pletneva puts it, might be “...a foundation of lighter structure like hipped roof or yurt”¹⁸

It has repeatedly been noted that the architecture of funeral complexes of Lower Dnepr, particularly, Voznesenka, has its analogues in Saryg Bulun¹⁹; from now on it applies to Bozok as well. Their common feature is that the grounds are walled and ditched with yurts and a wooden stele (in Saryg Bulun and Bozok).

It should be noted that the concept of funeral temple had, in the sequel, been developed in the monuments of ritual-funeral type. This includes a burial mound #1 of Kaltyshino sepulcher located in Kuznetsk kettle.²⁰ The monument had the appearance of an earthen ground, ditched, of rectangular form, 26,5 x 21,5 m (fig.10.1). The burial mound was unearthed in the western part with a square wooden structure with 3 sepulchral pits. There is a number of cult structures in the eastern ritual part of the ground, including a pit with the foundation of a wooden pillar (stele?). Like in Bozok and Saryg-Bulun, the ditch was renovated. A stone stele, higher than a bottom of the ditch, was also discovered. The burial mound #1 of Kaltyshino is dated to the 10- 11 centuries. Note that architectural fragments, layout and a complex of cult structures are indicative of genetic relationship with memorials of ancient Turks. Like Bozok and Saryg-Bulun, the complex is ditched; a wooden structure and a wooden stele eastwards?).

Thus, details of the Bozok site architecture, such as planigraphy of defensive fortifications, “yurt” and a vertically dug-in pillar, have analogues in the construction of cult-memorial complexes of the ancient Turkic epoch.

Another category of objects, identical to the site Bozok, is Bulgar and Slav sanctuaries of the later I - earlier II millenniums A.D. Architecturally, the closest similarity is a Bulgar sanctuary in the Tigashev site.²¹ Features in common are topography (bogging), dimensions, form of square, reconstruction, layout of fortifications, pacing and width of passage, system of wooden fences and an idol in the middle of the ground. Sacrificial pits with animal skulls, ceramic fragments and half-dugouts of wireframe construction. A foundation of a wooden idol (sculpture) was discovered in the pit, 1 m

deep, in the centre of the Tigashev sanctuary.²² The internal space of the sanctuary was enclosed with wooden fences. As viewed by A.P. Smirnov, that was a large tribal cult centre. “Double and, perhaps, triple division of the sanctuary suggests an idea that the centre was solely available to priests. Believers made themselves comfortable in-between fences and on a free space around the first fence”²³

A ritual burial of man was discovered in the centre of a round (yurt-shaped) building of the site Bozok. Human sacrifices were not infrequent in the practice of funeral cult of different epochs. Various written sources describe sacrifices of Huns and Turks. Note that cult burials in the houses of communal use are known from sources on Slavic sites of the 9-10 centuries.²⁴ These included towns that performed functions of tribal sanctuaries. Communal houses of Western Slavs of this sort were called *contins*. These houses were engaged in holding meetings and ritual actions. Slavic sanctuaries were surrounded by ditches and ramparts with wooden idols in the centre. Human sacrifices were typical for Polovtsian sanctuaries of the 10-12 centuries— “sanctuary-pits” with a wooden sculpture.

At present, researchers dispose of materials that testify to great variety of types of sanctuaries and cult places of ancient and medieval population of Eurasia. Some of them are systematized, both regionally and chronologically.²⁵ Note that Huns and Turks had special places for sacrifices and rites as evidenced by written monuments. Suffice it to say that one of the capitals of Central Asian Huns – town of Luchen served as a temple, religious center in charge of annual assemblies for administering rites and sacrifices.²⁶ According to Christian chronicles, Caucasian Huns had their own heathenish temples, pagan shrines and sacred groves as places of adoration and sacrifices to heavens, earth and water.²⁷

From archaeological point of view, of interest are sacred cult places of Huns, specifically the so-called circular sites of the II-I centuries B.C. in Southern Siberia.²⁸ The sites are enclosed with strong wattle and daub walls, deep ditches; no cultural layer on internal grounds has been revealed. S.G. Botalov identified funeral-memorial objects of Huns-Sarmats from the Ural-Kazakhstan steppes that testify to the cult status of the monuments.²⁹

Proceeding from architectural-design structure, lower horizon of the northern quarter and semantics of planigraphy, researchers are prone to construe Bozok’s origin within the framework of historical events of the period of Turkic khaganates. The site Bozok is a type of cult center of early medieval epoch to geographically unify cult-memorial complexes of the eastern and western outskirts of Eurasian steppes. The site Bozok is a manifestation of the initial period of the development of the Eurasian expanse by Turkic-speaking nomads. Note that their first headquarters-residences on virgin lands combined functions of residential and sacral centers. Centuries-long utilization of Bozok’s

territory is illustrative that succeeding generations embalmed in their memories a particular status of the place as sacral space of ancient Turks.

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