

Interethnic Contacts in the East Kama Region in the 10th – Beginning of the 13th Centuries

Azgar Mukhamadiev

*PhD, Doctor in History, Full Professor, Kazan Federal University, Kazan, Russian Federation
ncai@mail.ru*

Albert Nigamaev

*PhD in History, Associate Professor, Kazan Federal University, Kazan, Russian Federation
alnig.07@mail.ru*

Fayaz Khuzin

PhD, Doctor in History, Full Professor, Kazan Federal University, Kazan, Russian Federation, Archeology Institute named after A. Kh. Khalikov of the Tatarstan Academy of Sciences, Kazan, Russian Federation; khuzinfayaz@mail.ru

Tatyana Nikitina

PhD, Doctor in History, Deputy Director of the Institute, Mari Research Institute of Language Literature and History named after V.M. Vasilyev, Yoshkar-Ola, Russian Federation; tshikaeva@yandex.ru

Konstantin Rudenko

*PhD, Doctor in History, Full Professor, Kazan State University of Culture and Arts, Kazan, Russian Federation
murziha@mail.ru*

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Abstract

Relevance of this research is caused by the lack of studies dedicated to the problems of interethnic contacts with the neighboring regions in the pre-Mongol Bulgaria era. The aim of this article is to summarize the data received during excavations in recent years, which testifies to the existence of ethno-cultural ties of the Volga Bulgarians from the lower Kama region with the Turkic, Ugric and Finn-Perm population. New material allows defining the extent of participation of each component of unique culture in medieval population of the region. The particular interest is paid to the role of the XVIII ethno-cultural group of ware for the Finn-Perm population (on T.A. Khlebnikova's classification). This group of ceramics appeared in the Volga Bulgaria in the XII century. Research data on archaeological settlements of the East Kama region of the pre-Mongol period represents considerable interest related to studies of ethnic composition of population of the Volga Bulgaria and nearby territories. Results of the research can be useful for experts studying the problems of interethnic contacts of the medieval population of the Central Volga area and the Urals.

Keywords: *the Volga Bulgaria, burial places, migration, Finn-Perm population, ceramics.*

1. Introduction

In the end of I – the beginning of the II millennium AD in the Middle Volga and Cisural region a new era which was accepted to call the "Bulgarian" began. The poly-ethnic composition of the Volga Bulgarians' state which was finally created in the first quarter of the 10th century was differed. The Turkic tribes of the East European steppes which appeared in the Volga-Kama region as a result of several waves of migration inhabited the territory during a rough era of the Great resettlement of peoples in 4-10 centuries. A great number of population was represented by local tribes – The Volga region and Cisural Finns, as well as the Ural Ugric tribes started their migration from the East. By the end of the 10th century a multi-ethnic Bulgarian nationality appeared, however the inflows of population to the Middle Volga from the East (the Cisural Finns and Ugric) and from the South (small groups of Pecheneg and Kypchak) continued to arrive up to the Mongol conquest.

Unfortunately, due to the lack of archaeological studies on the Kama territories of the Volga Bulgaria we still cannot represent the stages of interaction of the Turkic and Finno-Ugric population of the Lower Kama region and the Urals area though in historiography this problem was covered by the works of M.V. Talitsky who paid attention to abundance of finds of the Bulgarian origin at the monuments of Rodanovsky culture of the Upper Kama. Excavations at the early Bulgarian Tankeevsky burial ground which was carried out in the 1960-ies by E.A. Halikova and E.P. Kazakov provided us with materials testifying to active participation of the Finno-Ugric who were far ancestors of the modern Udmurt, Komi, Mari and Hungarian in formation of ethnos and culture of the population of the Volga Bulgaria (Khalikova and Kazakov, 1977).

In recent years the new material on this subject has been mainly represented by the results of excavations during the Yelabuga archaeological expedition to the Bulgarian ancient settlements of Alabuga and Kirmen. They proved that a complex ethno-genetic process took place in the X-XIII centuries in northeast regions of the Volga Bulgaria which played an important role in formation of ethnic composition of modern Tatars in the Volga region and the Urals areas.

2. Materials and Methods

Data on ethno-cultural composition of population of the Volga Bulgaria was mainly based on material of properly studied monuments of the West Kama region of the pre-Mongol era (Khlebnikova, 1984; Halikov, 2011). Materials from the pre-Mongol settlements of the East Kama region and the territories adjoining to it are still not completely introduced into scientific circulation.

In the East Kama region 11 ancient settlements, 3 burial grounds, 3 treasures and some other locations belonged to the number of pre-Mongol Bulgarian monuments. It is possible to study the unique monument of the end of the 11-12th centuries located slightly away from Kama as a sacrificial place of Chumoytlo on the bank of the river Wala. These monuments, which are not numerous because of the lack of archaeological studies, are important markers defining northeast borders of the pre-Mongol Volga Bulgaria. The most substantial materials on a problem of interethnic contacts were received at excavations of medieval Alabuga which took a special place in economic, political and cultural life of the region (Nigamayev and Khuzin, 2000).

Through the analyses of sources we proceeded from methodological aims of the Russian historical science claiming that the history of any people was not only history of its alienation from other people, but, first of all, a history of various contacts with them ("a dialogue of cultures"). Interaction of cultures nowadays is the major subject of historical research (Repina, 2011).

The study can be based only on archeological materials since there are not any written sources. The analysis of artifacts is carried out by a traditional technique assuming definition of their chronological framework based on a comparative and statistical analysis of ceramics and female jewelry which serve as ethnic markers.

3. Results and Discussion

The East Kama region had advantageous geographical position and control of the most part of the Kama trade way and always was attractive for ancient migrants from the East and the North. Therefore peoples from the Upper Kama and the Urals area were always consisted in a number of populations of the Volga Bulgaria during the pre-Mongol period.

In the 10th century, most likely, in its first half, from regions of hills and forests of the Urals area a new wave of migrants started arriving in the Volga Bulgaria; they made specific round-bottomed ware made of clay dough with impurities of stamped shell: it had a cylindrical neck decorated with pectinated ornaments. The settlements where such ware was found were described by E.P. Kazakov as remains of postpetrogromsky culture, left by the Ugric and found on a large territory of the Urals area and the Kama region (Khuzin, 2008.). A significant amount of such ceramics has been revealed in Bilyar excavation. It is the VII ("the Kama and the Urals") ethno-cultural group, known from the classification of T.A. Khlebnikova (Khlebnikova, 1984).

The ware made by the population of Kama and the Urals of "postpetrogrgy" culture made up the largest part of finds at the Yelabuga ancient settlement, in a ceramic complex of the majority of excavations the shell ceramics occupied about 80% of all medieval ware. Obviously, the bearers of "postpetrogrgy" culture (the Ugric population) took part in construction of the Bulgarian fortress and lived there during the whole pre-Mongolian period. The ornaments consisted of two copper rustling pendants and a silver ring decorated with a spherical element which had analogies found in the Ugric settlements and were obviously found at the burial places of the Yelabuga II necropolis. The pendants of this kind are often met at monuments of the basin of the Cheptsa River. By the way, equivalent technologies of production were used in settlements of the basin of the river Sylva in the Western Urals where the Ugric population lived.

So, the analysis of ceramics found at excavations during the Yelabuga archaeological expedition let us assume

that by the beginning of the Bulgarian colonization a group of the Finno-Ugric population lived on the territory of Yelabuga ancient settlement next to the first defending line. A fact that a pagan necropolis existed near the ancient settlement proves that the bearers of the above-mentioned ceramic technology occupied the area of future Yelabuga ancient settlement before the arrival of Muslim Bulgarians. Their choice of the place for continuous accommodation was caused by natural and geographical conditions, in particular, the proximity of a temporary bridge through the river Kama which meant an opportunity to control the river Toyma which was the only way to reach a sanctuary of Chumoytlo located in 80 km to the north.

Soon the territory of the Eastern Vyatka became a place of active colonization by the Volga Bulgarians who started to occupy the region, as we know, since the end of the 9th century from Yelabuga, which can be proved by such finds as a red-clay jug with a bomb-alike corpus and a flattened bottom, similar to jars found at the Tankeevsky burial ground of the 9th century (Khlebnikova, 1984).

The existence of the Bulgarian outpost of Alabuga on the spot of already existed Finno-Ugric settlement in the end of the 10th century is enough to consider it to be a completion stage of the entry into the Bulgarian state. Military, political and trade interests of the Bulgarians who took control of the "Hazarian trade" demanded, first of all, expanding control over the Kama trade way. That was a way to contact the northern Finn-Perm areas. Therefore a new fortress should be considered, first of all, as a military, administrative and trade center of this large area (Nigamayev and Huzin, 2000).

Features of the Bulgarian colonization of region are still poorly studied. The difficulty lies in the fact that, unlike the "non-market" products of other ethnic and cultural groups, Bulgarian products were exported goods. Therefore, a specific number of Bulgarian ceramics in a particular settlement cannot be considered in proportion to a share of Bulgarian population of the area. The same problem is related to jewelry, household and trade items, weapons, etc. At the Yelabuga ancient settlement the Bulgarian ceramics made up maximum 15-20% of all ceramics of the pre-Mongol period. It is less than it has been found at the Rozhdestvensk ancient settlement of the Upper Kama region where the share of the Bulgarian ware reached 40–60% (Belavin and Krylasova, 2008). The majority of ware found at the Rozhdestvensk settlement was fragments of red clay pots, pitchers and jugs of strong roasting with broad glassing of surface. Bulgarian masters made that ware on the spot which can be proved by the remains of two-story potter kilns behind defensive walls of the ancient settlement (Belavin and Krylasova, 2008). The Bulgarian ware was also seen among finds of the Yelabuga IV necropolis (10 – the first half of the 12 centuries). About 40% of it was found at the site of Alabuga archeological diggings. A significant part of it was of brown color, poorly baked, that proves that they had their own technology for production of Bulgarian ware.

At a ceramic complex of the Yelabuga ancient settlement we found modelled or corrected on a potter's wheel ware of "dzhuketaa" type. It belongs to the XIII ethno-cultural group according to T.A. Khlebnikova's classification which means it was made of clay with plentiful inclusion of coarse river sand. Cup-shaped and pot-shaped forms with a roundish bottom and a sub-cylindrical or a short bell-like mouth. An ordinary technique of processing of an external surface of a trunk is characterized by cutting of horizontal strips of clay. The majority of jars are decorated with multi-row wave ornaments, often drawn with inclination. Such ware makes up 3–5% of total ceramic finds (in the western half of the internal territory up to 10–12%). Some fragments of ceramics like "dzhuketaa" were revealed on the territory of the city. It is remarkable that along with high-quality Bulgarian ceramics the dzhuketaa ware was found at the site of pagan IV necropolis of the 10th – the beginning of the 12th centuries.

This type of ceramics, according to T.A. Khlebnikova was developed on the basis of the IX ethno-cultural group of the end of the 9th – first half of the 10th centuries under strong influence of the VII Kama-the Urals ("postpetrogromsky") group. Perhaps, it belonged to descendants of the well-known known Chigil-Esegel. This population came to the Central Volga in the end of the 9th century from Kazakhstan steppes through the Bashkir lands together along with the Pecheneg raids to the Urals area. Esegel people went down from Belsk-Tulvinsk interfluvial territories, they went a rather long way along the southern borders of the East Kama region to the lower Kama (Itii) where they were found by Ibn Fadlan in 922. Therefore the expansion of modelled dzhuketaa ceramics zone up to Kama at a period of the Bulgarian expansion of the 11 century isn't surprising (Belavin and Krylasova, 2008). Fundamental ethno-genetic difference from the Bulgarians gave them a basis for self-identification during the whole pre-Mongol period and the most part of the Golden Horde period. The analysis of Yelabuga, Chally and, in particular, Kirmen complexes show that the dzhuketaa population was more susceptible to contacts with other Kama ethno-cultural groups, especially with the bearers of a ceramic tradition of VII and XVIII type.

As shown in materials from the settlement of Alabuga, ethno-cultural groups of the Upper Kama took part in ethnogenesis of the region, which got to the Volga Bulgaria by numerous waves of migrants starting from the 9th century up to the 13th century. The question of resettlement of culture bearers of the lomovatovsky circle was repeatedly brought up in scientific literature. The majority of researchers adhere to the opinion that polomo-lomovatovo-nevolinsky population was

forcedly removed to the Central Volga in the second half of the 8th and the second half of the 9th centuries. Some of this Finno-Ugric population who were familiar with the Bulgarian culture but did not break away with their historical homeland could return back to Cheptsas, the Central and the Upper Kama and introduce some new traditions.

The Yelabuga IV necropolis which was studied on the basis of the analysis of funeral places and dated the 10 – the beginning of the 12 centuries was associated with such population. The funeral ceramics is presented by modelled shell and red-clay pottery and cup-shaped one-handed jars of "dzhuketaa" type. The complex of funeral beads made of glass is a general characteristic of the 9th – the beginning of the 11th centuries. A silver temporal ring with balanoid beads decorated with triangular corbels made of grain dates from the 9-12 centuries. All of them are met on a large area from the Northern Urals to the Sura area. Other finds have more limited territorial borders and can be met in settlements of the Upper Kama, the basin of the Cheptsas and the Vyehgeda rivers. This burial place belongs to the mixed Bulgarian and Finno-Ugric population connected with the population of the basin of Cheptsas and the Upper Kama.

On the territory of the settlement of Alabuga along with the Bulgarian ceramics of pre-Mongol period there was a collection of finds of one more group of ware represented by handmade pots, coppers and bowls made of clay dough with a high content of stamped shell, and handles decorated with the horizontal platform made of pectinated stamp on top. T.A. Khlebnikova allocated such ware, based on materials of medieval settlements of the Western Kama, first of all the Bulgarian ancient settlement, to the XVIII group of her classification. Its origins are related to the Upper Kama territories (Khlebnikova, 1988).

In a ceramic complex of the Bilyar ancient settlement which is an etalon example of the pre-mongolian Bulgaria such ware wasn't presented. Based on a well-known statement that "anything that didn't exist in Bilyar, didn't exist in other pre-Mongol settlements", a period of distribution of the XVIII group ceramics can be defined by the Golden Horde period which was the second half of the 8th – the beginning of the 15th centuries. Certainly, the Bilyar ancient settlement is a unique monument of the pre-Mongol era, a peculiar template for material dating but we have no right to exclude a possibility of penetration of pectinate ceramics into the Volga Bulgaria during the pre-Mongol period. By the way, during excavation works in 2013 at the Staroromashkin ancient settlement (West Kama, Chistopolsky region) which was lost, most likely, in the period of the Mongolian conquests of 1236, some expressive fragments of ceramics of the XVIII group were revealed. However the only Bulgarian monument where the similar ceramics is quantitatively dominating not only in a layer of the Horde time (60%), but also in the pre-Mongol (55-58%), is the Alabuga settlement. It should be noted that domination in a number of ceramic ware among the population of the Upper Kama or the Western Urals area is a specific character of the early Alabuga culture and even the whole East Kama territory. Approximately such proportion of traditional and Bulgarian ware is noted on the territories up to the Vyatka area.

We can observe an interesting fact: on the ancient settlement of Alabuga where the ceramics of the VII group ("postpetrogy") is prevailing, any fragment of ware of the XVIII group of the Upper Kama sources has never been found. And, on the contrary, in the area where the ceramics from the Upper Kama are the most numerous, during multiple years of excavations only 5 fragments of the VII group have been revealed. But all the settlements existed concurrently; moreover, in fact they are the Kremlin and the settlement of the same city. Probably, those two groups of population, the bearers of VII and XVIII groups of ceramics avoided ethnic mixing for a rather long period of time.

The ceramics of the XVIII group were widespread in the East Kama during the late pre-Mongolian period, which can be proved by the fact that a Bulgarian (Muslim) burial place with remnants of pagan culture was located on the site of Alabuga settlement, where we found a great number of the Finn-Perm (the Upper Kama) ware.

Bronze jewelry is also significant when studying ethno-cultural processes in the region. The majority of it is widespread in a certain region, which provides us with rather concrete ethno-territorial and chronological data.

A zoomorphic ornament in a form of a cast duck with dangling feet decorated from both sides with relief plaits and strips is originated from the settlement of Alabuga (the excavation of VIII) (Yutina, 1994). The same ducks came from the Kotlovsky and Anayin burial places. Other types of ducks were found in the village of Tanayka where two bronze ornaments in a form of two hollow ducks with ringlets on each side were found. One duck is decorated with the same ringlets attached to the head. The surface is decorated with a geometrical ornament or a spiral. Finds are stored at the National Museum of the Republic of Tatarstan. T.K. Yutina mentions the collection of the Yelabuga resident E.K. Tevtyashev which contains other bronze jewelry items represented by two ducks. One of them has a ringlet attached to the head. Finds of bronze birds in the Yelabuga region were not a rarity. The pendants in the form of ducks connect the East Kama with the basin of Cheptsas and, to a lesser extent, with the Upper Kama area. Most of researchers dated the bird-shaped pendants with tracery notches to the 11th – the first half of the 13th centuries (Golubeva, 1979).

E.P. Kazakov connects the distribution of this duck-shaped jewelry in the Middle Volga and the Lower Kama regions with penetration of the Mari population (Kazakov, 2007), he supposed this typical "Volga region - Finnish" jewelry was distributing directly from the Mari Volga region to the mouth of Kama and the East Kama. So we have no grounds to

connect them with Slavic ceramics from the settlements of the 11-12th centuries of the Mari Volga region (Pochinkovsky, Vyzhumsky I and the II burial places). Thus, in a well-studied Kirmen area we found Slavonic ceramics but for more than 20 years of excavations we have not found any "ducks". It seems to us that the tradition of zoomorphic pendants appeared in the south of Kama-Vyatka interfluvium and was originally from the Upper Kama and Cheptsya areas as well as ceramics of the XVIII group. At least, in the area of duck-shaped pendants distribution we found ceramics of the Finn-Perm sources, as soon as on the territory of Alabuga area and other settlements of the East Kama this type of ceramics is absent.

4. Conclusion

New materials of archaeological researches of medieval monuments of the East Kama region testify to the peculiarity of the ethnic structure of the population of the Volga Bulgaria of the studied region. During the pre-Mongol period the Finno-Ugric tribes which moved here from the Upper (Perm) Urals area and the more southern West Urals area were the bearers of VII, XIII, XVIII groups of ceramics (according to T.A. Khlebnikova). The ethnic origin of the ceramics of VII group is still questionable as the majority of researchers, as well as E.P. Kazakov, distinguish them as the ancient Ugric people. Ceramics of the XIII group are originated from the pottery of the population of South Kazakhstan steppes who belonged to Turkic tribes. The XVIII group of ceramics was developed among the Perm Finns represented by monuments of Rodanovsky culture. We suppose that the population of the Upper Kama moving to the Central Volga in the 8th – 9th centuries mastered some elements of material and spiritual culture of Bulgarians while the Bulgarians were migrating to the Upper Kama, and then returned to their historical homeland, bringing new traditions there. Those migrants actively participated in formation of Rodanov culture in the 11- 12th centuries. In the second half of the 12th century during migration of the Finn and Perm groups of population to the East and the South, a part of Rodanov inhabitants appeared in the Lower Kama. Their rather narrow way down Kama to the town of Bolghar can be traced by the presence of ceramics of the XVIII group of Finn-Perm origin at the Bulgarian settlements.

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