

## Lyubech in the tenth—beginning of the eleventh century

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**Abstract:** Dating a settlement is an arduous task, especially without narrow chronological markers. Lyubech, a Rus settlement on the “from the Varangians to the Greeks” route, contains early strata damaged by later activities. Finds from the site can only provide wide date ranges that spurred differing interpretations by the archaeologists of the past. This work aims to introduce the array of archaeological material from the site, explain the landscape features of the area and how archaeology fits into the landscape, and review existing dates for the settlement.

**Keywords:** *Rus, Romny culture, tenth century, historic landscape, barrow cemetery.*

Early archaeological strata of a settlement are rarely saturated with artifacts that have a narrow date range. Often, the earliest archaeological layers are cut by later features, obstructing visibility. This fully applies to Lyubech, where the earliest, often damaged, strata show a coexistence of the Rus and the Romny cultures.

First mentioned in the *Povest vremennyh let* under the year 882 (PRSL V1: 23) and foreign sources in the mid-tenth century (DAI IX), Lyubech is strategically positioned on the river Dnieper. It can access Smolensk and Gnezdovo via the Dnieper and Sozh, Kyiv via the short journey along the Dnieper and

Chernihiv either through the Dnieper and Desna or river Bilous. This Desna tributary leads to Chernihiv. Thus, it is connected to all three major centres of Southern Rus.

The visibility of archaeological material on the ground attracted antiquarians to Lyubech from the nineteenth century. Notable finds include a hoard of silver coins, found in 1845 (MARKOV 1910: 50), and a thurible acquired for the State Hermitage by A. A. Bobrinsky in 1896 (ZALESSKAJA 1998: 44).

Lyubech was also the location of the Miloradovich family estate. Count Grigoriy Aleksandrovich Miloradovich was a famous amateur historian and collector of antiquities. His work on the history of Lyubech, with additions and modified titles, was reprinted six times between 1855 and 1905 (MILORADOVICH 1905; KOVALENKO 2006: 103).

#### RESEARCH HISTORY

Archaeological excavations in Lyubech began in 1881 by V. B. Antonovich and continued in 1888 by N. E. Brandenburg (ANTONOVICH 1906: 28–31; BRANDENBURG 1908: 194–196). Later, M. K. Yakimovich excavated the Lyubech barrow cemetery (YAKIMOVICH 1907: 97–98).

After the Second World War, excavations continued on the elevated terrace of the so-called Zamkova Hora. In 1947, Chernihiv-based archaeologist A. A. Popko created plans of Lyubech hillforts and mounds (POPKO 1947: 1–12). In 1948, V. C. Goncharov surveyed and excavated small areas of the Zamkova Hora and an area beyond it, which became known as the upper unfortified settlement (posad) (GONCHAROV 1952: 134–138). In 1953, Chernihiv-based archaeologists I. I. Edomakha and M. A. Popudrenko excavated a barrow and trial trenches at the Zamkova Hora.

B. A. Rybakov conducted large-scale excavations of Lyubech from 1957 to 1960. His work on the Zamkova Hora led to a near-complete excavation of the hillfort (RYBAKOV 1964: 21; 1965: 36). Working with Rybakov, S. S. Shirinsky excavated Lyubech barrows in 1958 and 1960, continuing with independent excavations of the Vysoke Polie barrows and other areas of Lyubech in 1962 (RYBAKOV 1958: 52–53; 1960: 86–94; SHIRINSKY 1962: 1–6).

Chernihiv-based archaeologists carried out subsequent Lyubech excavations. O. V. Shekun conducted a survey of Lyubech archaeological sites in 1989 (SHEKUN 1989: 23–25). A. L. Kazakov excavated large areas of the upper unfortified settlement in 1989–1990 (KAZAKOV, ПОТАПОВ 1991: 5–6; KAZAKOV, MARCHENKO 1993: 30–37).

From 2009, Lyubech excavations were conducted by a team from the T. G. Shevchenko National University “Chernihiv Collegium,” led by the

author. Excavations examined archaeological sites within Lyubech and its surroundings (VEREMEYCHYK 2018).

The town did not have a chronological break in its near thousand years of existence. This means that its earliest strata are often damaged or destroyed. Frequent finds of tenth-century material need to be visualised on a town map, and its layout needs to be explained.

#### LYUBECH: LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE

Lyubech was founded on the left bank of the Dnieper river, on a thirty-five—forty-metre high terrace overlooking the floodplain. The terrace forms a plateau cut by ravines and gullies, creating a favourable landscape for constructing defensive fortifications. Western and northern sides of the terrace were protected by the Dnieper, its eastern side—by the ravine formed by the river Honcharivka (ATLAS OF THE CHERNIHIV REGION 1991: 19). Only the southern side was in need of fortifying.

However, Lyubech is not a single site in one location. A series of hillforts run along the edge of the Dnieper terrace (Figure 1). The northernmost site, Lysytsya, or Lysa Hora (bald mound), is located in the northeastern part of the modern town. The Hora (mound) is a steep-sloped sub-triangular landmass formed by the left bank of the Dnieper and the right bank of the Honcharivka. B. A. Rybakov uncovered tenth-twelfth-century ceramics at the site and, possibly, Christian burials with no finds. Finds from the hillfort also include handmade Early Iron Age, Milograd culture, ceramics (RYBAKOV 1960: 86). In 1989 O.V. Shekun discovered an unfortified settlement southeast of the hillfort. Measuring sixty by 130 by 330 metres and dating to the tenth—thirteenth century, it abuts the hillfort (SHEKUN 1989: 25).

The 1500 square metre hillfort is cut off from the rest of the plateau by a moat and a rampart. The V-shaped moat is twelve metres wide and four metres deep. Similar moats were recorded as seventeenth-century fortifications of the Cossack stronghold—Baturin (KOVALENKO, SYTYI 2008: 126). In 2017, a seventeenth-century earthen redan was found on the edge of the plateau. The small rampart is also more characteristic of seventeenth-century fortifications. Traces of earlier fortifications, if ever present, were most probably destroyed in the course of subsequent reconstructions.

Southwest of Lysa Hora, on the opposite bank of the Honcharivka, is another hillfort. Located on a circa thirty-five-metre elevation called Zamkova Hora (castle mound) or Mazepina Hora (Mazepa mound), it was called “the Castle” by B. A. Rybakov. Measuring 110 metres long by forty-two to thirty metres wide, it is oriented along the northeast—southwest axis. The circa twenty metres wide and forty metres long entrance to the hillfort is located on the

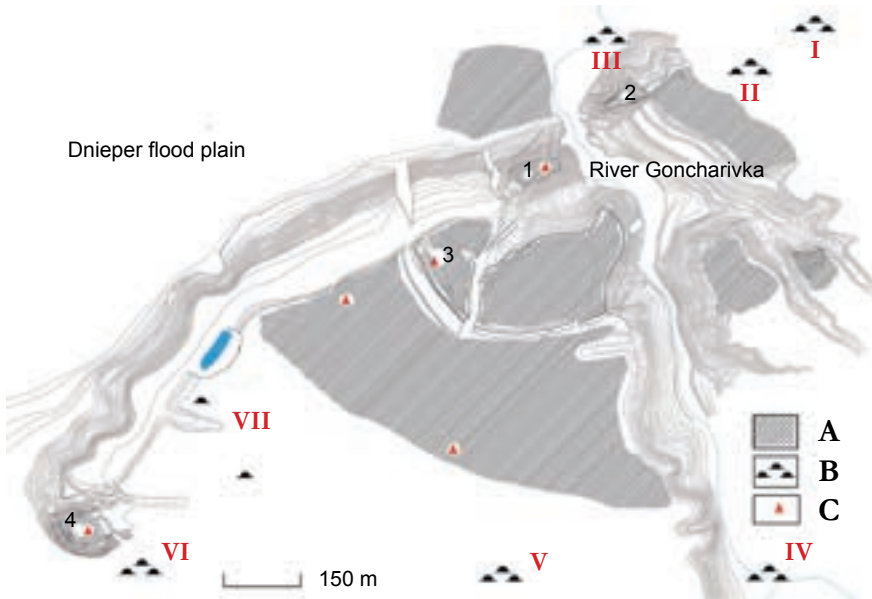


Figure 1. Plan of Lyubech.

Created by the Lyubech archaeological expedition 2010–2018,  
by O. M. Bondar, E. V. Osadchiy.

Lyubech hillforts:

1. Zamkova Hora; 2. Lysa Hora; 3. Hillfort 1; 4. Monastyryshche.

Barrow cemeteries:

I. Vysoke Pole; II. Mokrievshchina; III. Chabotok; IV. Duhovshchina;  
V. Dubret; VI. Barrows; VII. Monastyryshche. Legend:

A. extent of the tenth–eleventh-century cultural layer; B. barrow cemeteries;  
C. areas with tenth–eleventh-century household and domestic structures.

southwestern slope of the terrace (Figure 1). Excavations by Rybakov and, later, by the author, uncovered three Romny culture features on the mound (RYBAKOV 1964: 21; VEREMEYCHYK 2014: 213).

Rus period fortifications are located southwest of the Zamkova Hora hillfort (RYBAKOV 1957A: 24–34; 1958: 47–51). They are separated by a ravine that runs towards the river Honcharivka, east of the Zamkova Hora, forming a track to the lower unfortified settlement (podol).

Another set of fortifications, southwest of the Zamkova Hora, was named Gorodishche 1 by Popko, or hillfort 1 (POPKO 1947: 4). His trial trenching uncovered a high concentration of archaeological material, including tenth-

eleventh-century artefacts. Popko interpreted it to be a sub-triangular hillfort with two lines of moats and ramparts. He positioned the second moat and rampart line through the middle of the proposed hillfort, blaming modern agricultural activity for their poor preservation in the landscape. Excavations in 2010–2012 were only able to record a small, shallow ditch. The outer fortification line was investigated in 1957–1958. Ceramic finds suggested a tenth-century date.

Southern fortifications, or Posad-2, as they were called by B. A. Rybakov, were surveyed in 2011–2012. They formed a polygonal fort of circa forty-two thousand square metres, measuring 350 by 200 metres. It was cut off from the plateau by an eighteen to twenty metres wide and up to 1.5 metres deep moat and a sixteen to twenty metres wide and two metres high rampart. These fortifications date to the sixteenth–seventeenth century, and there is no clear evidence to suggest that they were built on Rus period defences.

Unstratified material from this part of Lyubech includes large quantities of tenth-early eleventh-century ceramic finds gathered from an area of over eleven thousand square metres (VEREMEYCHYK, BONDAR 2012: 15–16, 64). Similar ceramics were found during trial trenching southwest of Posad-2, in 2015 (VEREMEYCHYK, BONDAR 2015: 25, 173).

South-west and south of the aforementioned semi-circular fortifications is the unfortified settlement. It measures circa 200,000 square metres. A. L. Kazakov excavated its southwestern extent in 1989–1990. Excavations of over 2,300 square metres uncovered materials dating from the tenth to the eighteenth centuries, including Romny culture features (KAZAKOV, MARCHENKO 1993: 31–33). Further southwest, recent archaeological works uncovered burials dating to the tenth–early eleventh centuries. They include cremations and chamber inhumations (VEREMEYCHYK, BONDAR 2017: 7–8; 2018).

Monastyrishche completes the chain of Lyubech hillforts, rising over thirty metres above the Dnieper on its left bank, 1.1 kilometres southwest of the Zamkova Hora. The oval hillfort measures eighty metres long by sixty-five metres wide. Excavations in 2013–2015 unearthed tenth-century features and an unstratified find of a whole ceramic vessel of a type often found in tenth-century burials. The vessel (Figure 2) has an 8.5-centimetre rim diameter, a base diameter of six centimetres and stands 10.3 centimetres high (VEREMEYCHYK, BONDAR 2012: 11).

Northwest of the Zamkova Hora is the lower settlement, or Podol. It stretches to the old river Dnieper channel that may have been an early medieval harbour site.

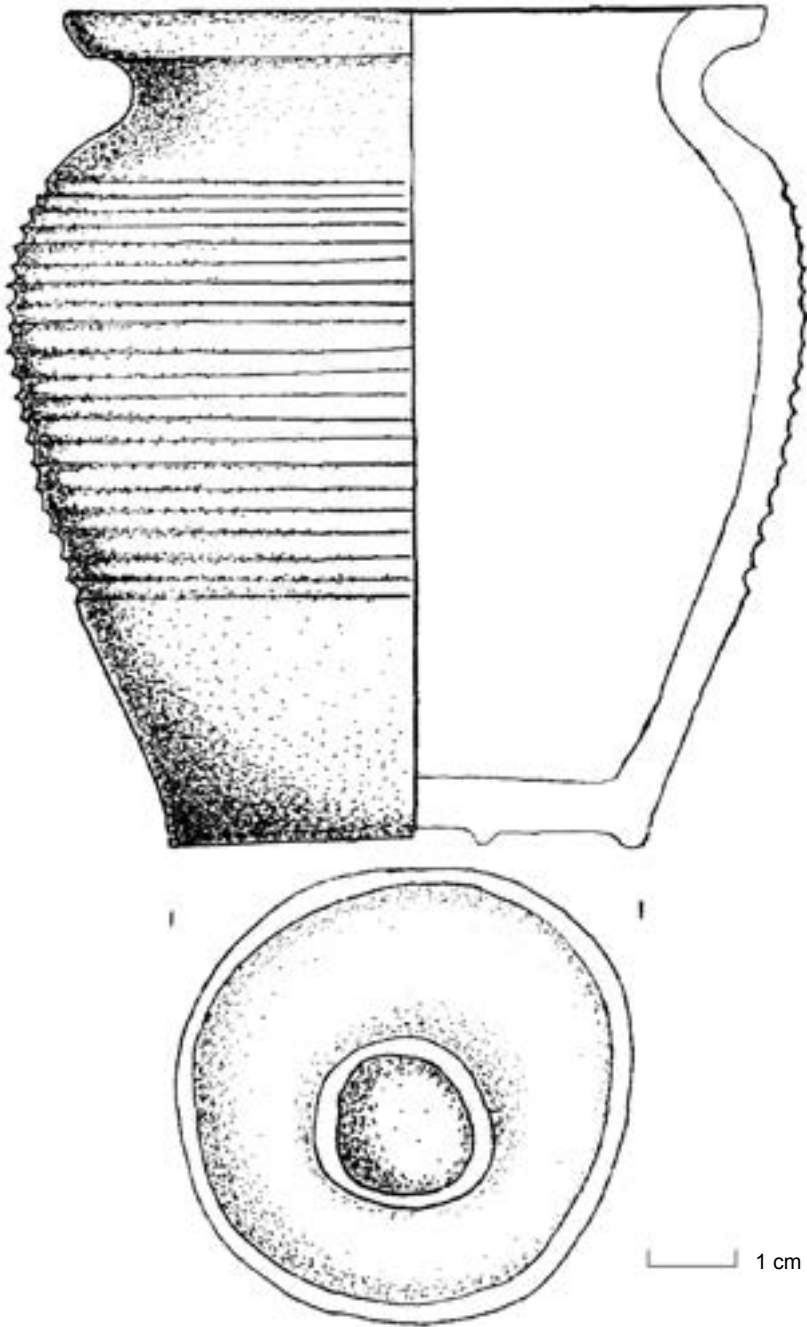


Figure 2. Ceramic vessel from the tenth-century hillfort at Monastyrshche.

## LYUBECH BARROWS

Lyubech barrow cemeteries are only partially preserved. Investigated by V. B. Antonovich, N. E. Brandenburg and M. K. Yakimovich in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, they were first put on a topographic plan by A. A. Popko in 1947. He identified six barrow groups: in the central part of the town; on the Lysa Hora; in the Dnieper flood plain, northwest of the town; in the northern part of the town, called the Vysoke Polie; east of Lyubech; and in the southern section of the town, near Monasteryshche. Of all the mounds recorded by Popko, only three to six per group survived to the present day (POPKO 1947: 9). Only at the Vysoke Polie fifty-three mounds survive, although N. E. Brandenburg reported on more than a hundred mounds there (BRANDENBURG 1908: 195). This spread of barrow groups suggests that a single barrow cemetery formed a semicircle around Lyubech in the medieval period.

From the nineteenth to the early twenty-first century, a total of thirty-nine barrows dating to the tenth–early eleventh centuries were excavated in Lyubech (Table 1) in the tenth century (KOMAR 2012: 357).

Table 1. Quantity of tenth–early eleventh century barrows investigated in Lyubech.

Excavation	Vysoke Pole	Lysa Hora	Dnieper floodplain	Monasteryshche	Total
Antonovich 1881	9	4	2	–	15
Brandenburg 1888	2	3	1	–	6
Yakimovich 1907	2	–	–	–	2
Edomaha, Popudrenko 1954	1	–	–	–	1
Shirinskij 1958, 1960, 1962	13	–	–	–	13
Veremeychuk 2017, 2018	–	–	–	2	2
Total	27	7	3	2	39

No burials were found in ten cases. Previous publications suggested that they are cenotaphs (YASNOVSKA 1997: 172). However, investigators of these mounds indicated that the burials were probably destroyed by previous excavations (ANTONOVICH 1906: 30). In addition to this, some of the mounds in the Dnieper floodplain may have been sand dunes, making attribution of mounds as barrows, let alone cenotaphs, difficult.

Of the twenty-seven barrows excavated at the Vysoke Polie, no burial was recorded in five (Table 2), nineteen were identified as cremations, and three as inhumations. At the Lysa Hora, three burials were cremations. One cremation burial had a secondary, later period inhumation burial, another barrow contained an inhumation, and no burials were found in three barrows. Two mounds in the floodplain contained no burial, and one is a cremation.

Table 2. Burial rite in Lyubech barrows.

Kurgan group	Cremations	Chamber burials	Inhumations	No burials	Total
Vysoke Pole	19	–	3	5	27
Lysa Hora	3	–	1	3	7
Dnieper floodplain	1	–	–	2	3
Monastyryshche	1	1	–	–	2
Total	24	1	4	10	39

Overall, finds from barrows are somewhat limited. All researchers note wheel-thrown ceramics, with no handmade ceramics recorded. Artefacts include shears, crystal and glass beads, spindle whorls, copper alloy buttons, rhomboid sabretache fitting, fragments of Volyn type earring (Figure 3), and KIRPICHNIKOV (1973: 15) type I horse bit with bone cheek bars (Figure 4). A. V. Komar interprets the Vysoke Polie burials as secondary cremations, with an urn placed in the upper section of the mound. He attributes them to Sever tribe practices and sees them as evidence of a Sever tribe presence at Lyubech in the tenth century (KOMAR 2012: 357).

The Monastyryshche barrows were dated to the tenth—early eleventh century. Both barrow mounds were damaged and invisible in the modern landscape. In the twelfth—thirteenth century, the location of the barrows was the site of a Christian cemetery (VEREMEYCHYK 2015: 280–281).

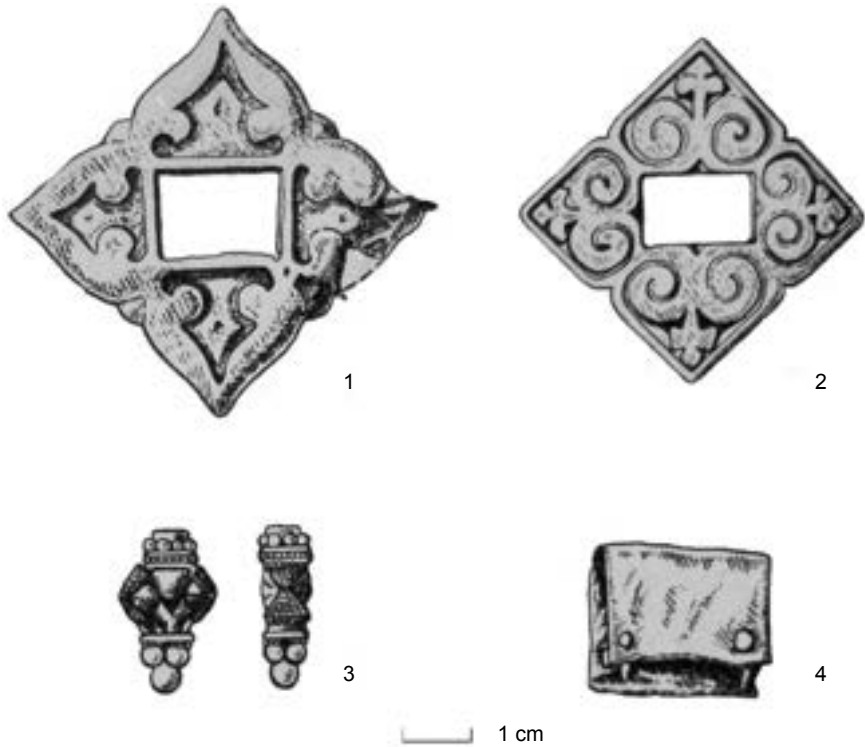


Figure 3. Things from the Vysoke Pole barrows.

1. Barrow 13; 2. Barrow 11; 3–4. Barrow 10, S. S. Shirinskij excavations in 1962 (after: SHIRINSKIJ 1962: fig. 8).

The earliest burial was a cremation, located on the headland overlooking the Dnieper (VEREMEYCHYK, BONDAR 2017: 7–8). Heavily damaged by later activity, it was visible as an oval greyish-yellow sandy loam spot in the natural, measuring thirty-seven by forty centimetres in size. This layer formed a shallow pit of ten centimetres deep. Finds included charred bone, charcoal, ceramic fragments, a copper alloy bell (Figure 5) and unidentifiable melted copper alloy objects. In the southern extent of the greyish-yellow deposit was a second pit of the same depth. Filled with a mottled grey loam, it contained broken tenth-century ceramic vessels and charred bones (Figure 5). One of the vessels was reconstructed from more than forty fragments. Vessel walls are eight to nine millimetres thick, the rim diameter is eighteen centimetres, and the base has an eleven-centimetre diameter, standing twenty-one centimetres high.

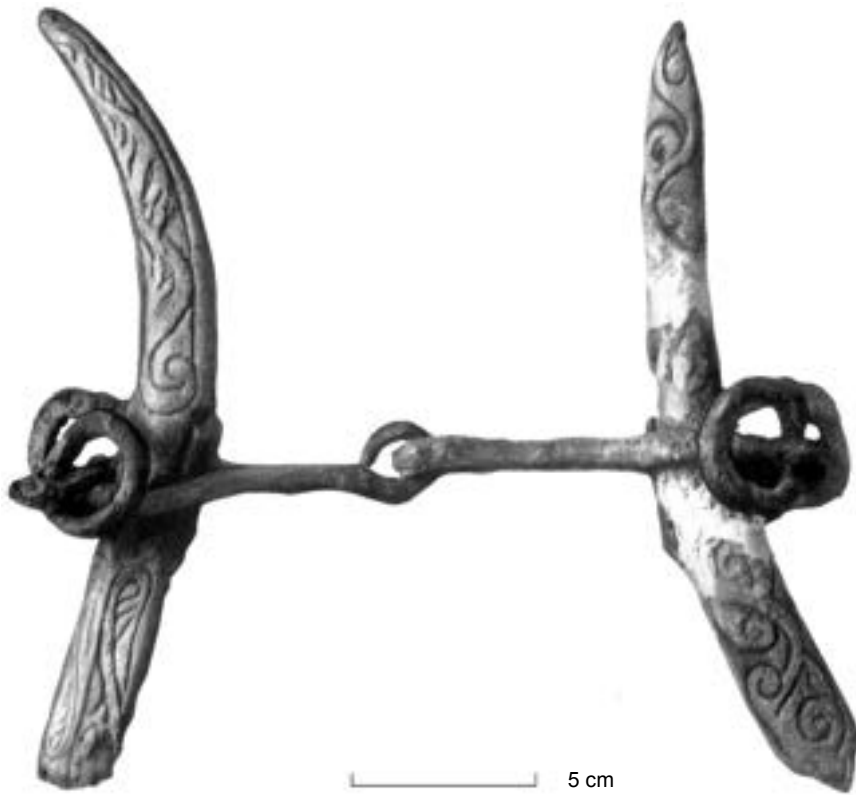


Figure 4. Horse bit from Vysoke Pole barrow, M. K. Yakimovich excavations in 1907.  
After: KIRPICHNIKOV 1973: fig. IV.

Orange-yellow in colour, it was decorated with a linear ornament. The second vessel is much smaller and broken into thirteen fragments. Its rim diameter is ten centimetres, the base diameter is just six centimetres, and the height is 10.5 centimetres. Similar vessels often appear in burials dating to the second half of the tenth century.

The second burial was most likely placed in a chamber. It was dated to the late tenth—early eleventh century. The burial was only partially excavated in 2018, exposing approximately a quarter of the chamber. The base of the chamber contained evidence of a log structure in the form of shallow ditches. The finds from the chamber base include three temple rings and a, so-called, “Scandinavian type” silver cross (Figure 6). Similar crosses were found in other burials and chamber graves of the late tenth—early eleventh century

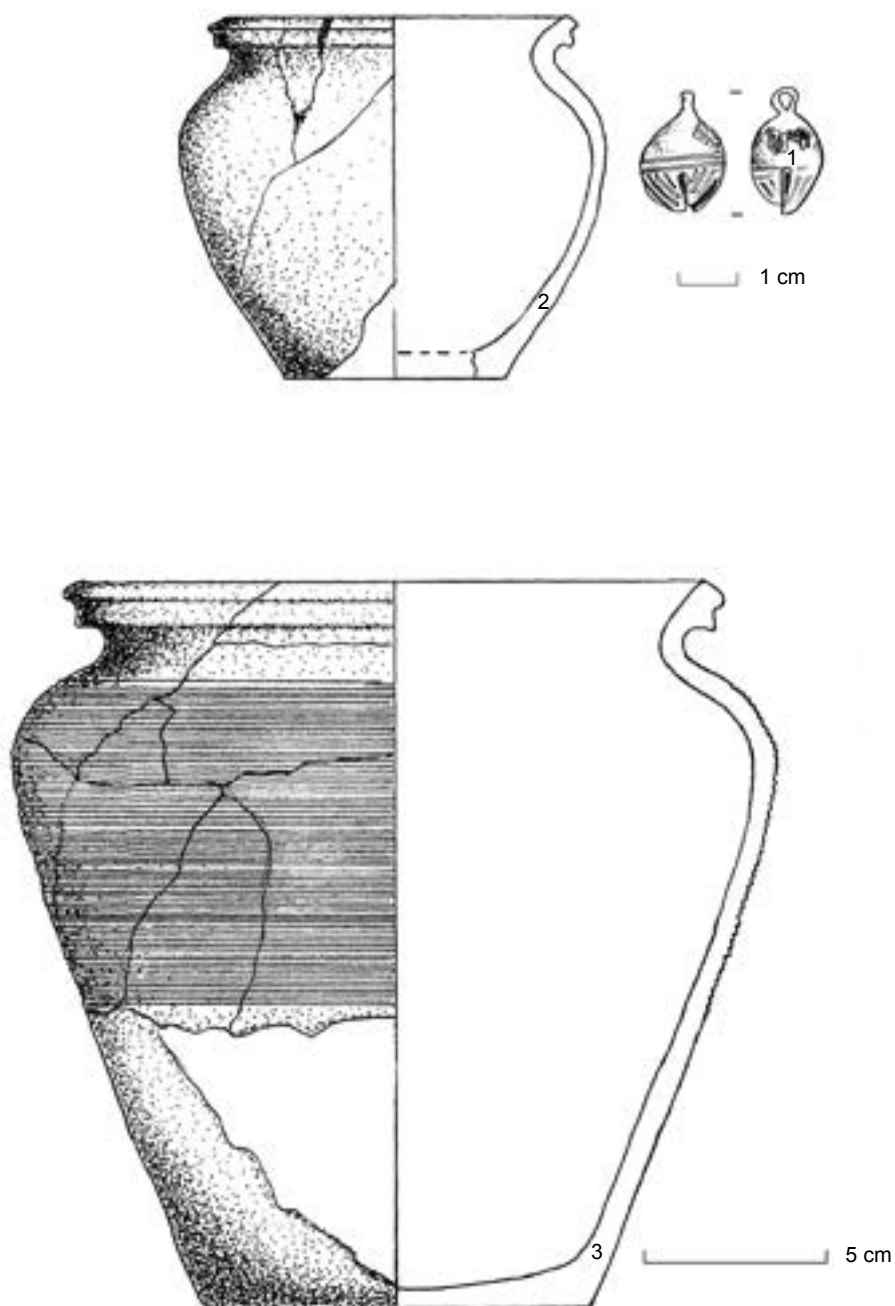


Figure 5. Things from a tenth-century barrow at Monastyryshche, E. M. Veremeychik excavations in 2017.

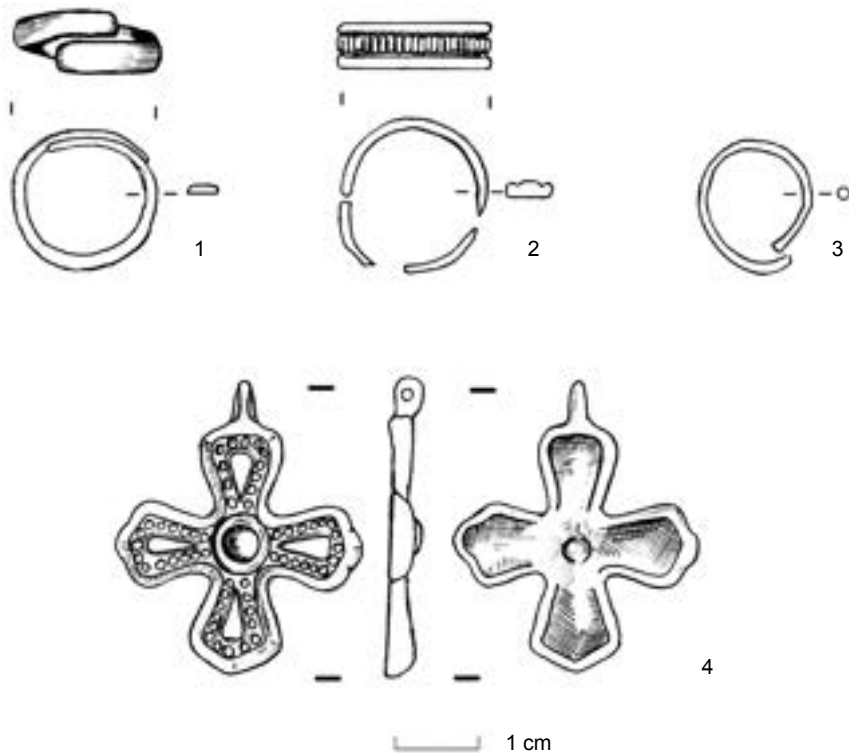


Figure 6. Things from a late tenth—early eleventh-century burial at Monasteryshche, E. M. Veremeychuk excavations in 2018.

(MIHAYLOV 2016: 135), hoards and settlement layers (FEHNER 1968: 212–214). The looped cast silver cross is 3.6 centimetres long by three centimetres wide. It is decorated with concentric circles and is similar to the A. V. Churakova classification group 1, despite being smaller than most other representatives of this group (CHURAKOVA 2017: 160–161). The burial also contained the remains of a bucket.

During the excavations of a seventeenth-century brick structure on the Monasteryshche hill, the team uncovered a collection of tenth-century objects typical of burial finds. They included a fragment of a lunula pendant, guided glass bead, a copper alloy pin and a decorated copper object (Figure 7). Among the finds is a decorative bridle fitting. Cast from copper alloy, this tear-shaped gilded find measures 4.3 by 3.7 centimetres. It depicts a male face (Figure 8). The two holes at the top contained traces of a metal wire which, unfortunately,

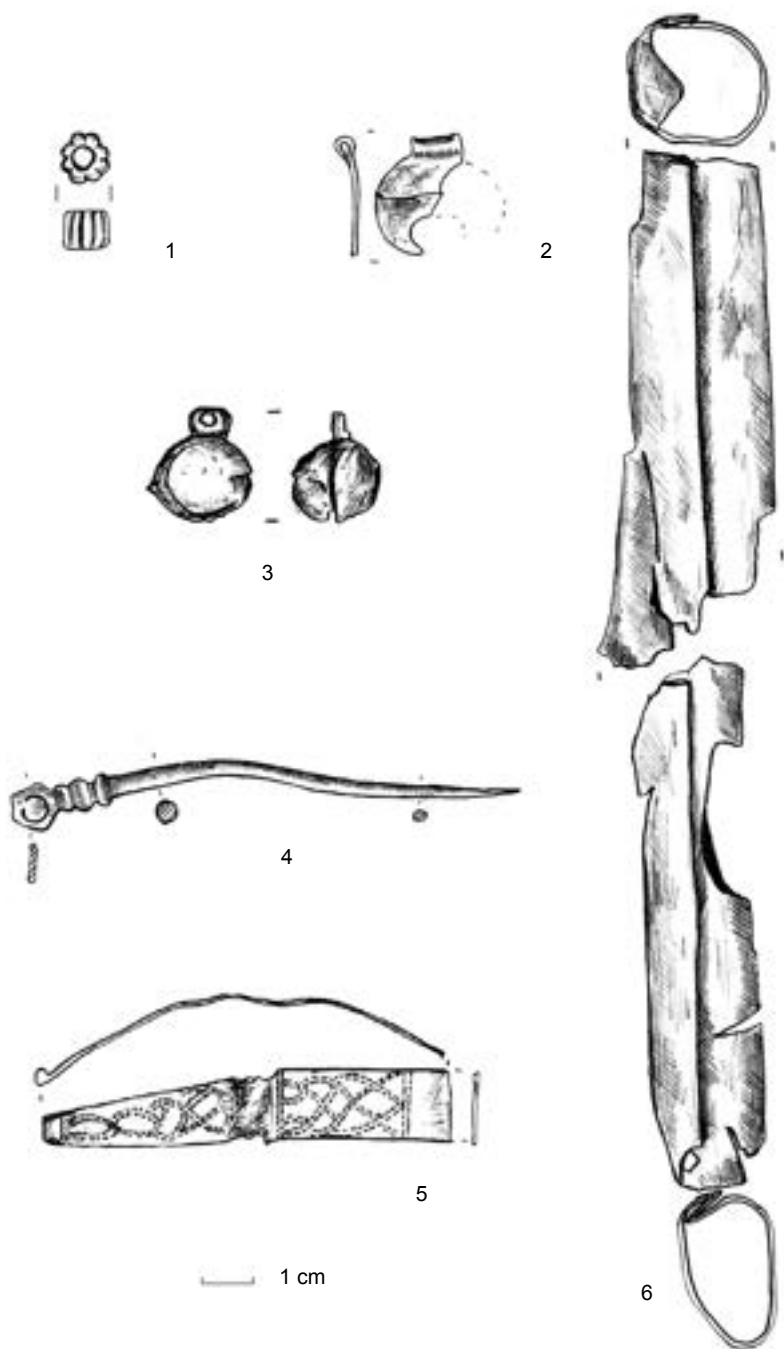


Figure 7. Things from a destroyed tenth-century cemetery.



Figure 8. Decorative bridle fitting dated to the tenth century.

was not preserved (VEREMEYCHYK, BONDAR 2018: 311). This is the third such find in Rus lands, with two others originating from the Gnezdovo settlement and barrow twenty-three. These fittings are associated with Turkic cultural influences in the late tenth century (MIHAYLOV 1997: 251–260). Another significant find from a seventeenth-century context is a copper alloy spear plate (Figure 7: 6), similar to the silver find from the Shestovytsya barrow excavated in 2006 (KOVALENKO, MOTSYA, SYTYI 2012: 330–331).

It is likely that the growth of Lyubech in the late medieval and early modern times led to the early destruction of the tenth and eleventh-century barrow cemetery.

#### EARLY DWELLINGS—ROMNY CULTURE AND SEVER TRIBE HOUSES

Excavations in Lyubech recorded a series of features that can be interpreted as household structures and dwellings. The earliest features seem to contain Romny culture ceramics. They are located at the Zamkova Hora (three features) and the upper unfortified settlement (two features).

Features with Romny culture ceramics at the Zamkova Hora were positioned in a line, ten to twelve metres from the southeastern edge of the hillfort. Starting from the north, the first feature of the series is Structure 18 of 2011 trench 5 (VEREMEYCHYK, TERESHCHENKO 2011: 18–21). Forming a rectangular,

four by four metres pit, it was set thirty to fifty centimetres into the natural. The feature was damaged by later recuts that obstructed the identification of an entrance. A thin layer of gley of up to five centimetres was recorded along the entire base of the pit. It was overlain by a dense dark grey sandy loam of about four to five centimetres thick. This is probably the floor level of the feature during its use.

A hearth was located in the southern corner, forty centimetres from the southwestern wall. It measured one by 1.7–1.8 metres. Only a thirty centimetres high section of the hearth was preserved. It opened on the northeastern side.

The hearth's building material is heterogeneous, showing up in stratigraphy as grey and dark grey sandy loam, burned clay and burnt wood. Inside the earth was a mixed deposit of red clay and sandy loam, indicative of a collapsed roof of the hearth. Below it were three postholes, two of which were located near the hearth opening.

At the base of the pit of the feature was a series of postholes. Of which, eleven formed a line along the southwestern wall, measuring four to six centimetres in diameter and ten to fifteen centimetres in depth.

Finds from the feature include fragments of Romny culture ceramics, handmade ceramic pans and vessels, as well as an unidentifiable metal object.

The next Romny culture feature was discovered by B. A. Rybakov in 1958, five metres southwest of the previous (trench XII excavation, Structure 1). The sub-rectangular pit that measured 3.5 long by 3.2 metres wide, cutting sixty centimetres into the natural. The feature contained a large number of postholes, including a series along the northeast wall. The entrance was located in the northern wall. The southwestern corner of the pit formed by the feature contained a well-preserved rectangular hearth with an opening on the northwestern side. The excavation report recorded a hole of forty centimetres in diameter through the centre of the hearth. The base of the hearth was filled with ash and charcoal. On top of the hearth were the remains of a broken handmade ceramic vessel (RYBAKOV 1958: 43–44). Left partially un-excavated, this hearth contained fragments of handmade Romny culture ceramics. Finds from the feature include handmade ceramics, fragments of a clay pan, a biconical clay spindle whorl, bone awls and a cylindrical bone object.

A third Romny culture feature was recorded nine metres southwest from the previous (Structure 23, trench 7 of 2012) (VEREMEYCHYK 2012: 17–18). Heavily damaged by later activity, it measured four by four metres. The southern corner of the feature contained the remains of a hearth, measuring ninety by sixty-five centimetres. In some areas, the hearth was preserved to a height of thirty-five centimetres. The opening of the hearth was located on the northwestern side, with a clay-coated stone base. The average size of stones is six by ten centimetres. The stones rested on a layer of sandy loam with

stone inclusions at the top and burned clay with charcoal inclusions at the base. The hearth was built in a ninety centimetres long by seventy centimetres wide pit that was twenty centimetres deep. The pit contained two postholes. Finds from the feature include Romny culture ceramics, handmade clay pan fragments, a glazed miniature ceramic vessel, and wheel spun ceramics made from a coarse clay mix.

All three tenth-century Romny culture dwellings on the Knyazha Hora have similar layouts and hearth orientations.

Two additional Romny culture features were excavated by A. L. Kazakov on the upper fortified settlement of Lyubech, in trenches 5 and 6 of 1989 (KAZAKOV, GREBEN 1991: 86–87). Structure 5, excavated by Kazakov, formed a rectangular pit that measured 4.6 metres long by four metres wide and 1.2 metres deep. The hearth was recorded in the northeast corner of the dwelling and contained coarse wheel-thrown ceramics, with smaller quantities of handmade ceramic material. A series of postholes ran along the edges and the centre of the feature, representing the structure's frame. Finds from the feature included pyrophyllite spindle whorls, whetstones, bone awls, a knife and glass fragments. The excavation team dated the feature to the tenth century.

The second feature, Structure 6, measured 4.3 metres long by 3.8 metres wide and sat 1.2 metres deep in the natural. The hearth was located in the northeast corner. Finds from the feature include handmade ceramic vessels, bowls, and pans, together with coarse wheel-thrown ceramics. A knife, an axe, a hammer, bucket fragments, bone awl and a copper alloy bracelet with flared ends found in the dwelling allowed the excavation team to date the Structure to the end of the ninth—early tenth century (KAZAKOV, GREBEN 1991: 86; KAZAKOV, MARCHENKO 1993: 31–33).

Among the datable objects is a KIRPICHNIKOV (1966: 35) type 4 axe, usually dated to the tenth—eleventh centuries. Another datable find is a copper alloy bracelet. Analogies of the bracelet were found in the barrows of Vladimir, in Tver, near Yaroslavl and in Uglich. V. P. Levashova dated such finds to the eleventh—twelfth centuries (LEVASHOVA 1967: 237). A similar bracelet, dated to the tenth century, was also found in Shestovytsya (SKOROHOD 2012: 360). This gives reason to suggest that the feature dates to, at least, the second half of the tenth century or the early eleventh century.

During the 1989–1990 excavations of the upper unfortified settlement, A. L. Kazakov unearthed another series of features dated to the tenth century. Among them are two dwellings, a ceramic kiln and forty outbuildings (KAZAKOV, POTAPOV 1991: 5–6; KAZAKOV, MARCHENKO 1993: 35–37). These findings represent a significant area that the inhabitants of Lyubech already occupied from the end of the tenth century—the early eleventh. Dwellings tend to be located closer to the edge of the river terrace, while other Structures extended

from it. After the eleventh century, this area of Lyubech sees a decline in human activity (KAZAKOV, POTAPOV 1991: 6).

#### EARLY FORTIFICATIONS

B. A. Rybakov excavated the first defensive fortifications of Lyubech in 1957–1958. The actual on-site head of excavations was L. P. Gussakovskiy. They investigated seventy square metres at the first hillfort, uncovering evidence of earthen fortifications with timber supports. Among the uncovered features was a possible dwelling with a hearth that measured 1.4 metres long by 1.1 metres wide. Below the hearth was an oval pit filled with an ashy deposit. The pit contained ceramic fragments dated to the end of the tenth—early eleventh century. Another partially excavated feature contained ceramic fragments dating to the tenth century and a fragment of a silver lunula pendant (RYBAKOV 1957: 33–34). Despite not completing the excavations to the level of the natural, the team established that the defences were built in the tenth century and rebuilt in the eleventh.

Rybakov's team recorded another dwelling with a hearth near the base of the fortification. It was dated to the ninth—tenth century (RYBAKOV 1958: 49). Surveying the area in 1989, O. Shekun found Romny culture ceramics in the area of these excavations, dating it to the tenth century (SHEKUN 1989: 24).

Excavations of early period features in Lyubech suggest that Romny culture and Rus features coexisted, rather than replaced one another, as was previously thought. In particular, this is visible by the co-occurrence of handmade Romny culture ceramics and wheel-thrown ceramics in the same features. A similar conclusion is reached from the dates of artefacts that were found together with ceramic assemblages.

#### RUS AND SEVER—COEXISTENCE OR CONFRONTATION

There is an ongoing debate on the nature of Romny culture finds from Lyubech. A. L. Kazakov considers the settlement a tribal centre of the Sever tribe, conquered by Oleg in 882 (KAZAKOV 2010: 113). Quoting, but not referencing, B. A. Rybakov excavations, Kazakov states that the first fortifications of Lyubech were built by the Sever tribe and the Rus period settlement succeeded its Sever predecessor in the ninth century (KAZAKOV, MARCHENKO 1993: 37).

A. V. Grigor'ev, quoting A. L. Kazakov publications (KAZAKOV, MARCHENKO 1993, 30–37), commented on the lack of hinterland settlement, suggesting that Lyubech was a “Slavic colonial stronghold” (GRIGOR'EV 2000: 197).

However, in later publications, Grigoriev omitted Lyubech from Slavic lands subordinate to the Khazar Khaganate (GRIGOR'EV 2009: 216).

A. V. Komar dates Lyubech features with Romny culture ceramics and wheel-thrown ceramics as contemporary to similar features containing different ceramic material in Chernihiv, Kyiv and Vyshhorod, to the ninth century. He sees them as evidence of resettlement of small groups of Sever tribesmen by Oleg, stating that “probably, the participation of Sever tribesmen in the founding of Rus towns Chernihiv and Lyubech is associated with the resettlement policy after the subjugation of the Sever tribe in 884” (KOMAR 2012: 357).

The closest sites with co-occurrence of Romny culture ceramics and Rus wheel-thrown ceramics are fairly distant. Among them are Chernihiv, (KAZAKOV, CHERNENKO 2007: 120), Sedniv (KOVALENKO 1984: 271–272), Novhorod-Siverskyi (KEDUN, CHERNENKO 2013: 85, 88), and sites in the vicinity of Homiel (MAKUSHNIKOV 2009: 22–23). The territory between the lower flow of the Desna and the Dnieper lacks any known sites with Romny culture ceramics. However, there is a dense network of unfortified settlements and barrow cemeteries dating from the tenth century between Chernihiv and Lyubech (SHEKUN, VEREMEYCHYK 1988). Of the eighteen settlements, Kozarki, Klonov, Liskove, and others are close to Lyubech (VEREMEYCHYK 2010: 211). A number of features on several of these sites were dated to the ninth–tenth century, but none contained handmade Romny culture ceramics (SHEKUN, VEREMEYCHYK 1999: 10–11).

The mention of Lyubech in the chronicles, dated to the ninth century, indeed as all ninth-century dates, is considered erroneous or artificial (GIPPIUS 2012: 61; STEFANOVICH 2012: 572–574). The original text of the chronicle was not divided into a year by year framework, which appeared due to later edits of the text (GIPPIUS 2012: 51).

#### NUMISMATIC FINDS

It is worth mentioning the numismatic finds from Lyubech. In 1845 a hoard of Islamic coins was found on the Zamkova Hora. The oldest of the eight known coins from the hoard dates to 933 AD (MARKOV 1910: 50). The second hoard, found in 1936, was also found on the Zamkova Hora. Only nine coins out of a total that amounted to 683 grams are known. The oldest dates to 975/976 AD (KROPOTKIN 1971: 90).

Aside from the hoards, there are four single coin finds. B. A. Rybakov excavations on the Zamkova Hora found a dirham of Mikail ibn Jafar. This Volga Bulgar coin most probably dates to the 920s. The coin mass is 2.32 grams, its minting place and year were copied from Samanid dirhams (KROPOTKIN 1971: 90–91). The excavation report states that there were no strata synchronous to

the coin at its find location. However, near its discovery location was a dwelling with Romny culture finds that may be linked to the coin (RYBAKOV 1958: 42).

In 1958, a Byzantine coin was found in the lower unfortified settlement (podol). Allegedly an accidental find, there is no further information about this coin.

Another coin was discovered in 2009 excavations headed by the author. Eric Ollivier of College de France identified this unstratified find as a Marwanid copper coin of Muhammad al-Dawla Sa'id, Mayyafariqin, 1000–1011 AD. The coin was found at Monastyrshche and may have been initially from the barrow cemetery.

The earliest known numismatic date is 920s–930s AD.

## CONCLUSION

Considering the limitations of archaeological sources and the danger of sweeping statements, it is possible to hesitantly make a series of observations.

The archaeology and numismatics in Lyubech can be dated from the first half to the mid-tenth century. This suggests that a settlement appeared here shortly before that period. In its early stages of existence, Lyubech had a multicultural population comprising of, at least, Rus and Romny culture carriers. The reason for this shall, perhaps, forever remain a mystery due to a lack of written sources. Slavic expansion into the area in a desire to colonise key sites on the Dnieper river, forced and voluntary migration under the influence of Rus colonisation, as well as a series of other interpretations, are equally possible and unsubstantiated.

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