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Short articles



## NEW FEMALE FIGURINES FROM THE SITE KHOTYLEVO 2

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The site of Khotylevo 2 is located 25 km north-west of Bryansk town in Central Russia on the right bank of the Desna River. Topographically the place is a cape, formed by two ancient valleys that open onto the river valley. The promontory has a northern exposure and is divided into separate areas by small gullies. The site was first studied by F. M. Zavernyaev in 1968, who directed its excavations from 1969 to 1981. Fieldwork there was taken up again by the Department of Stone Age Archaeology (Institute of Archaeology RAS) in 1993. Now the cultural layer of Khotylevo 2 includes four locations which were marked by the letters of the Russian alphabet, starting from A and up to Г.

Khotylevo 2 is a specific type of settlement of the Eastern Gravettian in the Russian Plain. Its spatial structure is well correlated with the unique character of the material culture on the site manifest in the typological characteristics of both flint and bone implements.

The anthropomorphic sculptures found during the Khotylevo 2 excavations could be divided into three groups: a) realistic female figures; b) schematic figures, symbolizing the female image, c) a schematic anthropomorphic figurine. The first group consists of three figurines of obese, likely pregnant women, as well as fragments of female statuettes – head with “hair” and legs. Schematic female figures are represented by two biconical artifacts. The last schematic anthropomorphic sculpture is rod-like, probably symbolizing a male image.

The Khotylevo 2 female figurines were classified by M. D. Gvozdover as a culturally specific type, different from those at Kostenki I (layer 1) and Avdeevo. According to G. A. Khlopatchev, the difference between the Khotylevo and Kostenki-Avdeevo types are now confirmed both from the canon of figures and their technologies.

In 2006 we began to excavate Khotylevo 2, point B. This area is located at some distance from the edge of the high right bank of the river Desna uphill plateau. The stratigraphy of the sediments overlying, surrounding and underlying the cultural layer is usual for this site and quite similar to the stratigraphical position of A and Б, thus dated to post-Bryansk times. Point B has no radiocarbon dating yet while points A and Б, along the edge of the coastal cliff, have radiocarbon ages from 24 to 21 ka BP.

The cultural layer of the new location was studied over 45 m<sup>2</sup>. It proved very rich in flint, ivory and bone tools, faunal remains, as well as zones of concentration of bone charcoal and ocher, pits and other features, such as accumulations of mammoth bones, deliberately arranged in a certain order.



Double female statuette and schematic figure carved out of chalk  
(photo : D.O.Ozherel'ev).

Two different sets of objects existed in the investigated area. One of them is characterized mainly by specially arranged accumulations of mammoth bones. The second consists of pits, together with vertically standing bones located around the zone of concentrations of bone charcoal, ocher, chipped flint and broken bones of animals. The stratigraphy shows that these complexes existed at different times. The first one did not function at the time of formation of the second complex.

In July, 2009 a double female figurine and a schematic figure, carved out of chalk, were found in the second complex. Figurine and figure occur in the upper part of the concentration of splintered flint, small pieces of bone charcoal and indeterminate animal bones, to the west of pit #6. The first statue represents the image of two naked female figures which have been cut out of a small chalk slab. Its dimensions are 58.5 × 44.5 × 15 mm. The figures constitute a trapezium-shaped being designed in a realistic manner, which is usual for the Eastern Gravettian. The back of the slab is smoothed and divided by a longitudinal groove into two halves corresponding to the female figures. They are not realistic from the back. The women stand shoulder to shoulder, and their heads, hands and shins were not represented. Stylistically the image of women in a double statuette is analogous to the Kostenki canon. This similarity is emphasized by double transverse shallow grooves crossing the left breast which is rather like a bandage on statue 1 (figure) found during the Kostenki 1 excavation. The analogy to this composition is a bas-relief of women from the French site Angles-sur-l'Anglin (Roc-aux-Sorciers). The second figure is flattened and also trapezium-shaped (18 × 16 × 7/6 mm). Its front side is divided into two parts by a horizontal groove. Its back side is flat. We interpret this artifact as a schematic image of woman. If our assumption is correct, we suppose that the schematic woman's torso found during the excavations of Dolní Věstonice in Moravia could be compared to statue 2 (figure).

New finds of portable art from Khotylevo 2 reflect stylistic peculiarities inherent to the Gravettian sites of the Central Russian Plain and allow us to include Khotylevo 2 portable art into the cultural context both of Central and Western Europe.





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