

Maxim Charniauski

Minsk, Belorussia

**Peat-bog settlement of the Middle Neolithic - Middle Bronze Age Asavec 2.
The Current State of Research and the Prospects of Further Study.**

The Kryvina peat-bog is an archaeological micro-region of the Neolithic - Bronze Age settlements in the north-eastern part of Belarus, on the border of Bežankovičy and Sianno district, Vitsebsk region. It represents the eastern edge of a large swampy area that was meliorated in the 20th century.

Currently, 10 settlements (Asavec 1-7, Kryvina 1-3) and 4 locations are known at the micro-region. Cultural layer of 9 settlements preserves organic materials, 8 out of them are covered by peat.

The most ancient settlement at the Kryvina peat-bog is Asavec 4. Its materials belong to the Narva culture (the early Neolithic, 5860±50bp (Ki-6213) 4800-4620 cal BC). The basic amount of archaeological materials at the remaining settlements belong to Usviaty (the middle Neolithic) and the Northern Belarusian (the Late Neolithic – the Early Bronze Age) cultures. The most recent materials at the Kryvina peat-bog belong to the Middle Bronze Age. Changes of the climate in the 2nd half of the 2nd millennium BC led to the gradual expansion of the ancient lake surface and flooding of the settlements of the Kryvina peat-bog.

Asaviec 2 is one of the most researched settlements of the Kryvina peat-bog. It was discovered in 1966 by Michal Charniauski and was sporadically researched by him during 29 seasons up to 2012. The author of the report conducts the annual excavations of the settlement from 2008 up to date.

The Asaviec 2 settlement is situated in the northern part of the peat-bog, in a distance of 500 and 600 meters from the nearest shores of the peat-bog, on a small elevation of its mineral bottom. Before the melioration the natural bed of the Kryvina river (left tributary of the Dzvinia river) define the south and south-eastern borders of the settlement. The exact dimensions of the site haven't defined yet. The maximum known length is about 200 m, maximum width is about 90 m.

An excavated area of the settlement comprises almost 400 square meters. Researchers have concentrated on its northern and southern parts, where materials of Usviaty (the

Middle Neolithic) and Northern Belarusian (the Late Neolithic – the Bronze Age) cultures are presented in different proportions.

Initially the culture layer of the settlement was covered by sterile peat layer with its depth up to 2 meters. The present depth of the cultural layer is about 1.3 meter. An upper part of the culture layer in the southern part of the settlement is damaged due to the peat harvesting.

The Asaviec 2 settlement is known for extraordinary concentration of artifacts in its cultural layer. The main amount compose remains of economic and domestic activities of people: fragments of wooden structures and woodworking, kitchen remains - bones of mammals, birds, amphibians, and fish. The existing bones collection consist of more than 10 thousand fragments excluding fish bones, the collection of which exceeded 60 thousand units.

A collection of artifacts is represented by items made of flint, stone, bone and antler, wood, bark, amber, and rare copper and bronze items. Among them are tools for hunting, fishing and weapon: arrowheads, spearheads, daggers, harpoon heads, hooks, floats and sinkers for the nets, etc. Tools and household items are presented in large number as well: scrapers, cutting tools, punches, drills, axes, adzes, flint processing items, spoons, etc. A ceramic collection includes tens of thousands of vessels' fragments of different degrees of preservation and size. It reflects the presence of the main archeological cultures of the region - Narva, Usviaty and North Belarusian, and the infiltration of outsiders - Globular Amphora culture, circle of the Corded Ware culture, Middle Bronze Age materials. Numerous collection make out works of art and the cult items - amulets and pendants made of teeth and bones of the animals, more rare amber ornaments occur as well.

Currently, the research of the Asaviec 2 settlement meets a number of problems. One of them is penetration of the oxygen into the cultural layer and active organic' decay processes in southern part of the site due to the bareness of the cultural layer in its southern part. As a result, wooden structures and artifacts already disappeared in upper layer of 40 cm of this part of the settlement. Draining of the peat-bog, caused by the melioration led to its overall compression, which deformed wooden structures and the ceramic material. All this factors make annual excavation in the southern part of the settlement necessary as some kind of rescue works. In addition, the works on specification of paleogeography of the Kryvina peat-bog microregion, specification of topography of the Asaviec 2 settlement are not finished, as well as re-check of a

surrounding area of the peat-bog for possible unknown location of archaeological material.