

Chapter 10

**COULD *KEDIPIV* IN EAST SLAVONIC
CHRONICLES BE KEAVA HILL FORT?**

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Abstract

The article provides an overview of the evidence that enables us to associate *Kedipiv* with Keava hill fort; *Kedipiv* is described in East Slavonic (Kievan Rus') chronicles under the year 1054 as a fort taken during the campaign of Izjaslav, Grand Prince of Kiev. Also, the article analyses other reports about Estonia in East Slavonic chronicles in 1030–1061 and compares them with the data gathered during archaeological excavations.¹

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Introduction

There are relatively few written accounts from the 11th century about Estonia and its settlements. A possible exception is Keava hill fort, which was mentioned in East Slavonic chronicles as early as in 1054. It describes a military campaign led by Izjaslav, Grand Prince of Kiev, during which they took an Estonian hill fort called *osek Kedipiv*, which means *the Hand of the Sun* (N4L, 118).

Matthias Johann Eisen (1910) was the first scholar who identified *Kedipiv* in East Slavonic chronicles as Keava hill fort in southern Harjumaa. The historian Paul Johansen dealt with this problem more thoroughly; he found that in 1410 a village, which was located in the neighbourhood of the hill fort, had a very similar name *Kedenpe* (1933, 189). This name, as well as the name of *Kedenpäh* manor, which was first mentioned in 1486, reveal archaic forms of the Estonian words ‘*käe*’ (‘*käden*’) – ‘of hand’ and ‘*päike*’ – ‘sun’; they also occur in the translation of the name *Kedipiv* in Rus’ chronicles. Subsequently most Estonian historians have supported this view. Sulev Vahtre (1992, 625 f.) analysed the problems related to the campaign of 1054 at great length. In the past decade this event has been discussed to a greater or lesser degree mostly by archaeologists (Tvauri 2001, 225 f.; Lang & Konsa 2004, 116 f.).

However, also some alternative interpretations have been suggested for the chronicle account of 1054. For example, Yevgenia Nazarova, a Russian historian who analysed this chronicle account thoroughly in a separate article, suggested that *Kedipiv* could have been some fort in southern Estonia rather than Keava hill fort (2001, 282 ff.). Anatoli Aleksandrov, an archaeologist from Pskov, also suggested that *Kedipiv* could have been situated in the eastern part of south-eastern Estonia, that is, it could have been a fort in the border area between Estonia and Pskov-Novgorod (2009, 176).

Next the 1054 campaign by Izjaslav will be discussed once again, but not as a single event in its own right but against a broader temporal and spatial background. For example, Vahtre found that this campaign was only one event in 1030–1061, which could be regarded as a period when Rus’ princes were able to extend their power over some Estonian areas (Vahtre 1980, 519 f.; 1992). For this reason, the author will discuss also other events of this period that are covered by East Slavonic chronicles. In addition, findings of archaeological research will be used; they supplement the written records to a considerable degree.

Yaroslav’s military campaign in 1030 and the Russian stronghold in Tartu

The oldest Rus’ chronicle the *Tale of Bygone Years*, which was compiled at the beginning of the 12th century by Nestor the Chronicler, mentioned one of the undertakings of Yaroslav the Wise, Grand Prince of Kiev, in 1030 as follows: “the same year Yaroslav invaded the land of Chuds, conquered them, and laid the

foundations of Yuriev fort” (PVL, 65). A similar account can be found in many other East Slavonic chronicles (N4L, 113; NL, 79; S1L, 47; VL, 44).

The *conquest of Chuds* could be interpreted as the conquest of Tartu hill fort, which belonged to Estonians. Already the first archaeological excavations of Tartu hill fort (1956–1958, 1960), which were supervised by Vilma Trummal, showed that an Estonian hill fort had been situated there several centuries earlier (Trummal 1964, 89 ff.). However, the foundation of *Yuriev fort* implied that the Russians built new fortifications in the same place. The archaeological excavations of Tartu hill fort in 1979 revealed the remains of 11th-century defence facilities from oak beams (Myaésalu 1980, 376, pl. XIV), which could possibly be associated with the Russian-built fortifications. Other Estonian hill forts have not revealed any such defence facilities from this tree species; oak, however, was common in Kievan Rus’ defence architecture.

Tartu hill fort and the settlement, which was situated in the area of the present old town, have revealed various items and ceramics that are characteristic of Rus’ areas, which shows that during the next three decades the inhabitants from Rus’ operated there (Trummal 1964, 41 ff.; 1971; Tvauri 2001, 97 ff.). Some finds suggest that a Russian church and cemetery could have been located in the area between Vallikraavi and Vanemuise streets during this period (Mäesalu & Vissak 2002, 153).

The selection of the destination for the 1030 military campaign by Yaroslav shows that by this time Tartu had become the most important centre of south-eastern Estonia. One might assume that this new Russian-built stronghold was used to reign over large areas to the south and south-east of Tartu. For example, burnt layers in other hill forts of south-eastern Estonia, which are dated to the first half of the 11th century, have been associated with the 1030 military campaign by Yaroslav (Valk 2009, 393 ff.). The destruction of several hill forts to the immediate north of Tartu during this period has been explained in a similar manner (Lavi 2002, 260).

Considering the accounts about Estonia in the East Slavonic chronicles of the following decades, we can assume that efforts were made to extend the occupied territory. However, to this end the military force in Tartu was insufficient.

Military campaigns of 1054

The Novgorod Fourth Chronicle includes the following report under the year 1054:

Izjaslav came to Novgorod and appointed Ostromir to Novgorod. And Ostromir with Novgorodians fought against the Chuds and the Chuds killed [him], and many Novgorodians fell with him. And Izjaslav once again fought against the Chuds and conquered *osek Kedipiv*, which means the Hand of the Sun (N4L, 118).

A similar entry can be found in several East Slavonic chronicles of the 15th–16th centuries (NL, 86; ML, 379; S1L, 47; VL, 46). It is thought that the original

text of this account comes from an 11th-century written record from Novgorod (Nazarova 2001, 282).

This chronicle account poses a number of serious questions. At first it is doubtful whether all the described events actually took place in 1054. Prince Izjaslav could have nominated Ostromir Novgorod *posadnik* as early as in 1052 and as late as in 1055 (Nazarova 2001, 283 f.). Also, 1054 might not actually have been the year when Ostromir was killed because according to other sources he commissioned as late as in 1056–1057 the so-called Ostromir Gospel, which is the oldest Russian-language manuscript book (Nazarova 2001, 282). Thus, the military campaigns of *posadnik* Ostromir and Prince Izjaslav to Estonia could have taken place somewhat later – in 1057–1059.

It has been thought that one problem in identifying Keava as Kedipiv is the word *osek* which is used to denote the latter in the chronicles. It denoted first and foremost an abatis on a forest road, a fortification from felled trees, or a refuge enclosed by a fence (Nazarova 2001, 286). However, Keava hill fort is a typical hill fort, which is situated on a rather high and steep-sloped esker. On the other hand, we cannot exclude the possibility that the term *osek* could refer to the fact that wooden structures played an important role in the defence facilities of Keava hill fort (Vahtre 1992, 625 f.; Tõnisson & Lang 2008, 204) – as it really was the case at Keava in the mid-11th century.

The first chapter of the present volume showed that five construction stages can be distinguished in the profile of the excavated rampart of the hill fort. The third stage, when the rampart was improved with new wooden cells, was dated back to the 10th century or the first half of the 11th century. Thus, the destruction of this construction stage generally fits the time of Prince Izjaslav's military campaign; also, the nature of wooden fortifications of this period fits the account in the chronicle. At the same time no direct evidence was found to the effect that the hill fort was conquered during this military campaign. For example, the archaeological excavations of the hill forts of Tartu, Otepää, Varbola, and Soontagana, which according to written records had been besieged by the Russian forces in the 11th–13th centuries, have revealed bow arrowheads that are characteristic of Russians (Trummal 1964, 79 ff.; Tynisson & Selirand 1978, 360; Tamla & Tynisson 1988, 352; Mäesalu 1989, 31 ff.; Tamla & Tõnisson 1990, 425 f.). On the other hand, no such evidence has been found in Keava. However, we have to emphasize that the archaeologically studied area of Keava hill fort is rather limited (in total 88 m²), and it could well be that no arrowheads were lying about in this area. By comparison we might point out that the excavated areas of Tartu hill fort constituted 760 m², that of Otepää 2.300 m², Varbola 1.350 m², and Soontagana 400 m². Also, the Russian forces could have taken *osek Kedipiv* rather quickly without a long siege, and archers need not have been active at all.

The archaeological research that was conducted in the vicinity of Keava in 2001–2006 yielded some new information that could at least indirectly support *Kedipiv*. Namely, several contemporaneous settlement sites were discovered in the close vicinity of Keava hill fort (chapter 11; Lang & Kõnsa 2004), which

suggests that by the 11th century Keava had developed into a major regional centre in the northern part of central Estonia. It could have served as a good reason for the campaign of Prince Izjaslav. Also, an entry in East Slavonic chronicles, which was made a few years later and will be analysed below, could describe areas that lie to the immediate north of Keava.

Events of 1060–1061

Several East Slavonic chronicles mention another campaign of Grand Prince Izjaslav against Estonians (so-called Sosols) in 1060 and their taxation with 2,000 grivnas. However, the Sosols then drove the tax collectors off; next spring they organized a counter-campaign to Yuriev, where they allegedly burned down the villages in its neighbourhood, the hill fort and the houses; they had done much evil and reached Pskov fighting; the Pskovians and Novgorodians had put up resistance, there was a battle where a thousand Russians were killed but countless Sosols (N4L, 120).

At present it is far from clear who the *Sosols* were. Possible candidates include inhabitants of Saaremaa (Johansen 1950, 95 ff.; Ligi 1968, 42 f.), Sakala (Bonnell, 1862, 30; Selirand 2000, 594 ff.), Harjumaa (Karamzin 1816, 376 f., reference 114; Vahtre 1992, 626 f.; Tõnisson 2000, 675 ff.; Tvauri 2001, 228 f.), but also Estonian peasants (Vassar 1954, 30). The version about the inhabitants of Harjumaa seems to be the most plausible one. Some Russian chronicles mention in addition to the Sosols also *kolyvantsy* (HL, 36; TL, 57; PL, 66); this term denoted Tallinners in East Slavonic chronicles.

Having conquered Keava, Izjaslav tried to extend his power over other regions of Harjumaa and Rävåla, as well as a suitable port location along Tallinn Bay. The Russians may have shown some interest in this port already earlier, soon after taking the stronghold in Tartu in 1030. For example, Paul Johansen (1951, 70 ff.) claimed that the small straits between the island of Aegna and Rohuneeme, which was a seaway to Tallinn Bay, could be the place (the 'Iron Gate'), where, according to the East Slavonic chronicles, the Novgorodians led by Uleb were badly defeated during their 1032 campaign, and only very few of them returned. However, it is only an assumption that has not been convincingly proved as yet. In fact, Russian historians have been looking for a place called the 'Iron Gate' in northern Russia.

The second half of the chronicle account of 1060 revealed that the Sosols (possibly inhabitants of Harjumaa, Rävåla, and perhaps men from some other districts) were able to join their military forces, retake Tartu in the spring of 1061, and invade as far as Pskov. According to the chronicles, the number of Russian warriors who fell in the battle is very large. At the same time, it is not mentioned which side won the battle. It could well be that the Estonians were more successful. It is proved by the fact that during the next fifty years we cannot find any reports in the chronicles about military campaigns into Estonia that were organized by Rus' princes.

Conclusion

In earlier times *osek Kedipiv*, which occurs in East Slavonic chronicles, was identified as Keava hill fort mostly for the reason that in the Middle Ages there was a village in the neighbourhood that was called *Kedenpe*. The archaeological excavations that were conducted in Keava hill fort and its vicinity in 2001–2006 did not directly confirm the chronicle account of 1054. Nevertheless, the existence of a cultural layer from this period and the character of the defensive facilities suggest that Keava might be *osek Kedipiv*, which is mentioned in the chronicles. The existence of extensive settlements in the vicinity of the hill fort suggests the presence of a major centre in this area and points to the possibility that Prince Izjaslav could have attempted to extend his power over it. Moreover, an interpretation of the events mentioned in the chronicles in 1030–1061 and the archaeological findings in this light suggests that it would in all respects be logical to identify the 1054 mention of *osek Kedipiv* as Keava hill fort.