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Coordinates: 46°00′50″N 47°49′33″E

# **Atil**

[ Atil, Capital of Khazaria (8th-10th century). (Accessed Oct. 17, 2022). Overview, Turkic name for Volga River. Wikipedia. ]

**Atil** (<u>Chinese</u>: 阿得/阿得水 *A-de Shui*), literally meaning "Big River", was the capital of <u>Khazaria</u> from the middle of the 8th century until the end of the 10th century. The word is also a Turkic name for the Volga River.

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### **History**

Atil was located along the Volga delta at the northwestern corner of the <u>Caspian Sea</u>. Following the defeat of the <u>Khazars</u> in the <u>Second Arab-Khazar War</u>, Atil became the capital of Khazaria. The city is referred to as Khamlij in 9th-century Arab sources, and the name Atil appears in the 10th century. At its height, the city was a major center of trade, and consisted of three parts separated by the Volga. The western part contained the administrative center of the city, with a court house and a large military garrison. The eastern part of the city was built later and acted as the commercial center of the Atil, and had many public baths and shops. Between them was an island on which stood the palaces of the Khazar <u>Khagan</u> and <u>Bek</u>. The island was connected to one of the other parts of the city by a pontoon bridge. According to Arab sources, one half of the city was referred to as Atil, while the other was named Khazaran.

Atil was a multi-ethnic and religiously diverse city, inhabited by Jews, Christians, Muslims, Shamanists, and Pagans, many of them traders from foreign countries. All of the religious groups had their own places of worship in the city, and there were seven judges appointed to settle disputes (two Christian, two Jewish, and two Muslim judges, with a single judge for all of the Shamanists and other Pagans).

Svyatoslav I **Kiev** of sacked Atil in 968 or 969 CE. Ibn Hawgal and al-Muqaddasi refer to Atil after 969, indicating that it may been have rebuilt. Al-Biruni (mid-11th century) reported that Atil again was ruins, in and did not mention the later city of Sagsin which was



Map showing the major Varangian trade routes: the <u>Volga trade route</u> (in red) and the <u>Trade Route from the Varangians to the Greeks</u> (in purple). Other trade routes of the 8th–11th centuries shown in orange (note that Atil is the major commercial outpost from which trade extends into the far reaches of "Deep Asia").

built nearby, so it is possible that this new Atil was only destroyed in the middle of the 11th century.

## Alleged site

The archaeological remains of Atil have never been positively identified. It has been hypothesized that they were washed away by the rising level of the <u>Caspian Sea</u>. However, beginning in 2003 Dmitri Vasilyev of <u>Astrakhan State University led a series of excavations at the Samosdelskoye site near the village of <u>Samosdelka</u> (Russian: Самосделка) in the Volga Delta. Vasilyev connected artifacts from the site with Khazar, Oghuz and Bulgar culture, leading him to believe that he had discovered the site of Saqsin. The matter is still unresolved. In 2006 Vasilyev announced his belief that the lowest stratum at the Samosdelka site was identical with the site of Atil. In 2008, this team of Russian archaeologists announced that they had discovered the ruins of Atil.</u>

## **Gallery**











#### References

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#### **External links**

- Russian archaeologists find long-lost Jewish capital (http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/ 2008/09/03/2354822.htm)
- Atil entry from Dead Cities (in Russian) (https://archive.today/20130113220122/http://archive.cities.ru/city/itil)

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