

# **Ancient mounds in the developed urban structure of the city of Kherson.**

## **Proposals for Ancient mounds' preservation**

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## **Mounds as a characteristic element of the steppe landscape of Ukraine**

### **Problem formulation**

Mounds are a characteristic element of the steppe landscape of Ukraine and the main source of our knowledge about the historical past. Mounds have been built in the steppes of Ukraine since the Late Eneolithic period (4 millennium BC). They were built by various peoples who inhabited our steppes at different times: Cimmerians, Scythians, Sarmatians, Huns, Bulgarians, Magyars, Polovtsians, Nogais, and even earlier the people whose names we do not know - the bearers of so-called archaeological cultures: Yamna, Catacomb, Babinska, Sabatynivska, Zrubna, Belozerska, etc. Today in Ukraine there are 100-150 thousand mounds, while in the 19th century there were more than half a million of them. The territory of modern Kherson - the interfluvium of the Dnieper and Viriivchyna was built up with a large number of mounds (more than 100). Most of these mounds were absorbed by the city. One of these lines of mounds was located approximately between Universytetska and Perekopska streets from Kherson Fortress in the direction of Chornomorska Street. Francisco de Miranda, who visited Kherson in 1786, left memories of these mounds: "The one I saw is near the fortress (so it is already planned to level it), reaches a height of 4-5 tuaz (apprx. 8-10 m) and has a conical shape. From its top we saw on the horizon five other mounds of the same shape." Only a few mounds were investigated in Kherson. The most famous in the scientific literature is the so-called Kherson mound studied in 1896. by famous archaeologist V.Goshkevich, located in the Northern district. This Scythian mound of the 5 century B.C. gained popularity thanks to the statuette - the bronze handle of a mirror made by Greek masters.

The scientific value of the finds from the demolished mounds clearly demonstrated by the famous handle in the form of a female figure from a bronze mirror of Greek production from a Scythian

mound (in modern archaeological literature it was called Kherson Mound or Rozhniv Mound). At the time of the find (robbery excavations) in 1896, the mound together with a dozen other mounds was outside the city, but now it is part of the city and the neighbouring mounds remain unexplored: their embankments are levelled and the area is built. In the 19th century, there was a fierce struggle for the find from the Kherson mound: first the statuette was sold to Moscow, then redeemed by the Kherson mayor and returned to the Kherson Museum of Antiquities. However, the Imperial Archaeological Commission decided to transfer the statuette to the Hermitage (St. Petersburg), where it is now. All modern researchers of ancient Greek art on the territory of modern Ukraine turn to this discovery.

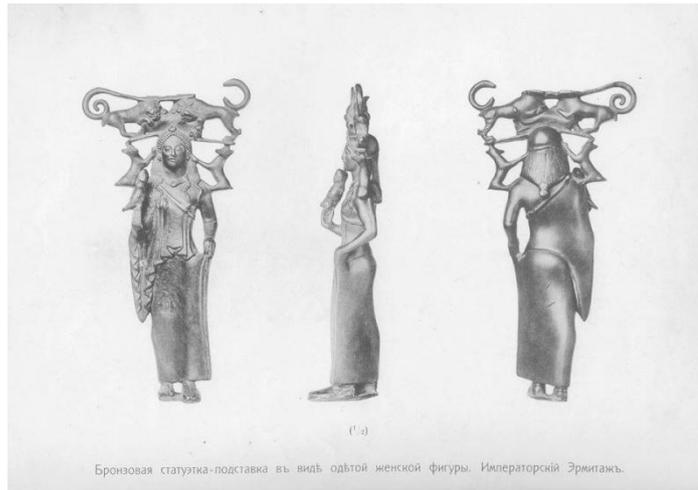


Fig. 1. Bronze handle of a mirror made by Greek masters (Scythian mound of the 5 century B.C) from Kherson (Rozhniv) Mound

The archaeological sites are often destroyed through economic activities related to agriculture and construction. The lack of systematic, geoinformation data on the location of immovable monuments by local and state authorities makes their policy in the field of cultural heritage protection ineffective. Programs in the field of culture and tourism, aimed at using archaeological monuments as an attractive resource for their further preservation - either do not work or are missing. Thus, archaeological cultural heritage often is not used as a source of data in spatial planning, location, reconstruction of architectural objects, including such as public recreational areas, institutions, objects and areas of tourist infrastructure.

We do not know settlement monuments of archaeology within the city of Kherson. Instead, mounds were located in this area. In the process of expanding the city, systematic archaeological work on the study of mounds was not carried out. All archaeological works in the vicinity of the city are connected with the construction of an irrigation system. Therefore, we assume that the embankments of most of the mounds were destroyed, and the burial structures sunk into the ground could be preserved. The mounds of some mounds could have been preserved without entering the construction zone. At least one such mound was found by us in the green zone. Cultural heritage authorities have never paid attention to this layer of monuments. Therefore, it is important to conduct systematic work to localize and research.

## Detection of mounds (problem of localization)

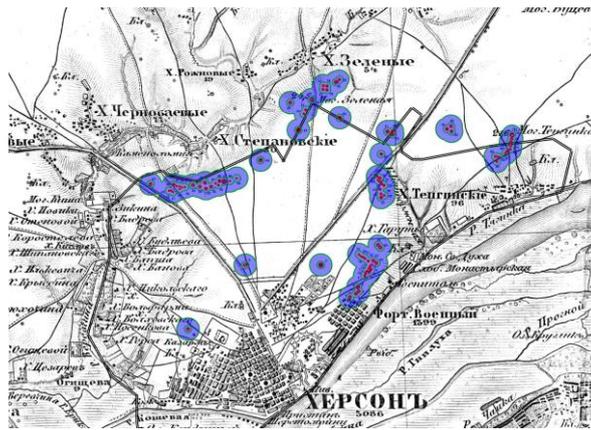


Fig. 2. Copying from *Three-Versta* (*Three-Versta Map of Schubert, 19 century*)

As the main source of information about the location of mounds in Ukraine in the 19 century is a so-called 'Shubert's map' (hereinafter - Three-versta). We used the fragment of topographic map of Russian Empire on which are marked localization of mounds of Kherson and its surroundings. On Schubert's map, within the framework of the modern General Plan of Kherson, we counted 96 mounds. According to the observations of archaeologists who mapped the mounds and compared their data with the data of Schubert's map, it mostly covered embankments about 2 m high and larger. Such mounds are the least represented in total. For example, as a result of work with cartographic materials and total visual inspection of mounds in the close to us region of the Bazavluk, Chortomlyk and Dniro rivers, it became known that mounds with an embankment of 2 m or more make up  $\frac{1}{3}$  or  $\frac{1}{4}$  part of the total number.

On the territory of Ukraine, the experience of complete excavations of large areas during the extraction of manganese ores provides information about a much larger number (3-4 times) of mounds than indicated on the maps. A comparison of old maps with modern buildings shows that a small part of the levelled mounds got into the park areas. Other mounds that got under the houses could preserve the underground structures depending on the depth of the burial, as written in his diary in 1786 by the military and political figure Francisco de Miranda. Thus, we can assume that within the current General Plan of Kherson there could be several hundred mounds, of which two dozen are now registered.

Localization of mounds in the area is done by superimposing Schubert's map on a modern Google map. In the process of working with Schubert's map, it became clear that the group of four small mounds does not really correspond to the number of mounds, but denotes groups of small mounds. We see between two large mounds, the embankments of which have been preserved, in a modern field under plowing. Space images show spots of a group of mounds numbering more than 10. During the visual inspection of this field, lifting material was collected in the form of stucco and pottery fragments from plowed mounds.

## The problem of preserving mounds and their historical and cultural value

The mounds on the territory of Kherson, already occupied by buildings at one time, were not properly investigated. In the media of the 19th century, there is information about the location of archaeological objects of different eras in the city during economic excavations. By the nature of the

finds, these were destroyed burial mounds. Only one object from one mound in the administrative centre of Kherson preserved in the Kherson Regional Museum of Local Lore. This is a clay dish of the Bronze Age. Other finds have either not reached the museum or are currently lost.

Medieval sources give us examples of the importance of mounds in the construction of the geography of the cultural landscape. For example, the concept of land tenure (yard, village) provided for its presence near the mounds. Mounds were often used in early medieval legal practice as evidence and proof of the right to inherit land or a ban on its sale. With the adoption of Christianity near the mounds included in the territory of the ancestral estate, began to build family churches. In Kherson, a project is underway to restore two mounds and create a public space around them on the territory of Kherson State University.



*Fig. 3. Example of creating public space around the mound on the territory of Kherson State University*

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Shubert's map". Fragment of topographic map of Russian Empire. 3 versta in inch (1260 m in 1

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