

ON THE PROBLEM OF THE OWNERSHIP OF THE
VOZNESENSKY "TREASURE":
CONTINUATION OF THE DISCUSSION

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Annotation. *The proposed research, conducted using the methods of historiography, source studies, archaeology, archival studies, ethnostatistics, and biography, analyses the conclusions of national and foreign scholars — V. A. Grinchenko, M. O. Miller, S. S. Vaklynov, G. I. Shapovalov — on the ownership of the Voznesensky (or the Kichkas) "treasure". It is suggested that the "treasure" can be interpreted as a place of sacrifice to the Pecheneg gods for the victory over Grand Prince Svyatoslav.*

Keywords: *Voznesensky "treasure", Svyatoslav I Ihorovych, Grand Prince of Kyiv, Asparukh, Khan of Bulgaria, Pechenegs, Kyivan Rus', the First Bulgarian Empire, the Byzantine Empire.*

Statement of the problem. While working with the catalogues of the Scientific Archives of the Institute of Archaeology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (hereinafter — IA NASU), the authors noticed that until 1950 almost all expeditions of the Institute of Archaeology (hereinafter — the Institute) had thematic names, for example, "The Antes", "The Greater Kyiv", and "The Scythian Steppe". This meant that the field research of the expeditions at that time was carried out in accordance with the planned topics carried out by the relevant scientific departments of the Institute; these expeditions were also financed by these

topics. The priority of this approach remained until the 1980s.

Only one Dnipro Hydroelectric Station (DniproHES) expedition of the People's Commissariat of Education of Ukraine in 1927—1932, led by D. I. Yavornytskyi (fig. 1—2), was focused on the total study of all archaeological sites on the territory of the construction of Dniprelstan in the Dnieper Nadporizhye. The expedition involved geologists, zoologists, ethnographers, anthropologists, and photo-documentary filmmakers. Later, the All-Ukrainian Archaeological Committee (VUAC) received a "Note on the archaeological research of the



Fig. 1. Dmytro Ivanovych Yavornytskyi

Dniprelstan territory" prepared by M. Rudynskyi, in which the author proposed to separate archaeological research from other scientific work in the area, which was done. However, the board of the Dniprobud

project organization refused to fund such research, and the People's Commissariat of Education was forced to do so through the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences (VUAN), which caused a reduction in the time of archaeological research and affected the provision of personnel for the expedition [19]. Describing the significance of these works, D. I. Yavornytskyi noted: "We can already

say that the 40,000 exhibits found by the expedition change the primitive history of mankind in South-Eastern Europe, so the entire scientific world is following the work of the expedition" [42].



Fig. 2. Members of the DniproHES expedition, 1929 (after Попандоупо 2012, с. 266).

M. O. Miller, a member of the expedition, also mentioned 5,000 photographic negatives, maps, drawings, cuttings of granite blocks, monoliths, burials, etc.; reports, descriptions that covered the archaeological material obtained, which was of great scientific importance not only for the history of Ukraine but also for territories beyond its borders. In his own words, not a single "brief" report on the work of the expedition was published, and, therefore, *"the extraordinary achievements and inventions of the Dniprelstan expedition did not benefit science, and in many cases have already been forgotten or lost"* [27, c. 6]. This is not entirely true. In 1929, part of the materials of the DniproHES expedition (the results of the work for 1927) were published in the "Collected Works of the Dnipro Regional Historical and Archaeological Museum". The second part of the proceedings was prepared for a second edition in 1930, but due to repressions of the expedition members, it was scattered. It was found recently by S. M. Liashko [19, c. 199]. The bulk of the material (divided between museums in Kyiv, Kharkiv, Dnipro, and Zaporizhzhia) and archival material (IA NASU) have been preserved despite all odds.

Ultimately, the study of all archaeological sites in a particular region had its advantages, since archaeological sites located in the same natural environment, despite chronological differences, have many common features, while chronological differences are more pronounced and vivid. The experience of the DniproHES expedition was used in the work of later expeditions to the new construction sites. Thus, I. F. Kovaleva, speaking about the importance of the DniproHES expedition for further new construction sites research, called it fundamental in the organization of work on new

construction sites and crucial in the creation of a legislative framework for the protection of monuments [19, c. 197].

The considerations for total archaeological research of regions are mostly related to settlement structures, but are sometimes reflected in burial monuments. The latter are most often attractive because they are usually closed complexes and contain well-dated material at the same time derived from the everyday life of the buried person. Some of these "rich" burials have been the subject of heated debate since their excavation. The Voznesensky (the Kichkas) "treasure", to which this study is devoted, is usually referred to and which was dispersed among several museums.

The appeal to this monument is also relevant because it belongs to the circle of antiquities of the emergency zone that was formed in the Lower Trans-Dnieper after the destruction of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power station on 6 June 2023. We are convinced that without knowledge of the archaeology of the region before the formation of the Kakhovka Reservoir, without long-term and conscientious monitoring of how the shores of the "man-made sea" have changed over the nearly 70 years of its existence, and without taking into account the experience of the first expeditions to new construction sites in the Lower Trans-Dnieper, successful research and restoration of archaeological sites here is impossible. Moreover, the data on each monument before its destruction is of particular importance. All of the above justifies our interest in the Voznesensky (Kichkas) "treasure" and makes the material below relevant right now.

Since the discovery of a Kyivan Rus' sword near Khortytsya Island, which the authors of the publication associate with

Svyatoslav I Ihorovych, Grand Prince of Kiev [30, c. 61], scholarly interest in the Voznesensky "treasure" has somewhat waned. In particular, O. Komar [21, c. 252] rightly noted that new archaeological finds could bring researchers closer to resolving issues related to the Voznesensky "treasure". However, it is possible that the well-known artifacts of this site have not yet exhausted their scientific potential.

Thus, the **purpose** of this article is to review the materials from the Voznesensky (Kichkas) "treasure" and the discussions that have accompanied this site over the years, based on a combination of primarily archaeological and written sources.

Historiography of the issue. Most researchers do not dispute the dating of the monument, but the problem of the ethnicity of the owners of the "treasure" remains, although almost all point to the similarity of the found objects with other finds of the Pereshchepy group of monuments of the Trans-Dnieper and associate the monument with the funerary ritual of the Early Slavs [35; 37; 38; 7;], Turks [5; 31], Khazars [1; 2; 3; 4; 20] or Bulgars [23; 15].

There is even a version that the burial belongs to the Asparukh, Khan of Bulgaria (7th century) [15; 36]. Based on the dating of the excavations by the author, the Voznesensky "treasure" could be linked to the activities of the first ruler of the Bulgarian Kingdom. After all, Kagan Asparukh, the son of Kubrat, the ruler of Old Great Bulgaria, who took possession of the lands on the right bank of the Dnipro, took advantage of the constant wars of Byzantium with the Arabs, crossed the Danube in 680 and entered Minor Scythia (present-day Dobrudzha). The Byzantine emperor Constantine IV Pogonatus, led by an army of 15,000—25,000 soldiers, came to meet him.

The Bulgarian army retreated to its fortifications on Peuce Island. *"And the Bulgarians, seeing the large Byzantine army, did not dare to engage it in battle but fled to their fortifications"* [24]. Constantine IV positioned his infantry between the Olga and Danube rivers and placed his ships near the river banks. The Romans held the siege for four days, after which emperor Constantine IV announced to his soldiers that he was going to Aquae Calidae for treatment and left the battlefield. This was interpreted by the soldiers as an attempt to escape and negatively affected their morale, which was taken advantage of by Asparukh. His numerous surprise attacks forced the Romans to retreat, and in the decisive battle the Bulgarians defeated the demoralized enemy army. *"And the Bulgarians, seeing this, began to pursue them, and most of them were killed by the sword, and many were wounded"* [24]. After the victory at Ongle, the Bulgarians continued their attack on Moesia. By the end of the summer of 681, the emperor was forced to sign a peace treaty that marked the emergence of a new state in the Balkans — the First Bulgarian Empire.

The Bulgarian archaeologist S. S. Vaklinov (fig. 3), who for many years studied the monuments associated with the First Bulgarian Empire with reference to the Bulgarian apocryphal chronicle of the 11th century, noted that Asparukh died near the Dnipro rapids in a war with the Khazars in the late 7th century, defending the Steppe part of Bulgaria from the Khazars. He underlined that this *"confirms the greatness, the stark simplicity and the richness of the burial near the Dnipro rapids. Isn't this the meaning of the unravelling of Asparukh's burial?"* [8, c. 35-39; 36].

During the processing of the expedition materials in the 1940s, another version



Fig. 3. Stancho Stanchev Vaklinov

emerged, which became known to the general public of Ukrainian archaeologists only in the 1990s. Thus, among the participants of the DniproHES expedition, the figure of archaeologist M. O. Miller stands out (fig. 4), who miraculously escaped repression and, working since 1939 as the Head of the Department of Ancient History and Archaeology of Rostov-on-Don State Pedagogical Institute, continued archaeological research in the Nadporizhye region. In 1943, the researcher emigrated to Germany, where he began active scientific work, becoming a full member of the Ukrainian Free Academy of Sciences in Munich (Germany), a doctor of philosophy at the Ukrainian Free University, and a full member of the Shevchenko Scientific Society (1949).

He discusses with another member of the DniproHES expedition, V. A. Hrinchenko, who actually found and published the materials of the Voznesensky (Kichkas) "treasure" [9; 12, 13]. A year after the

publication of V. A. Hrinchenko's article, in 1951, M. O. Miller published a small book in Canada "Mogila kniazia Svyatoslava (The Grave of Prince Svyatoslav)". It shows that at the time of its publication, the author was not familiar with V. A. Hrinchenko's article. At the same time, his brochure appeared as a kind of continuation of Hrinchenko's publication. In the list of the "treasure", the works of both archaeologists are identical and coincide even in detail. However, M. O. Miller enters into a discussion with his colleague and opponent. In his opinion, V. A. Hrinchenko's interpretation of the find as *"an ordinary treasure hidden by the builders and owners of the settlement in times of danger"* is completely erroneous because it is contrasted with a complex ritual in which the "treasure" was created and its belongings were half-burnt. Moreover, M. O. Miller unequivocally stated that the Kichkas "treasure" is nothing more than the grave of Prince Svyatoslav [27, c. 14]. So, we



Fig. 4. Mykhailo Oleksandrovych Miller

have another version that has its own arguments.

Summary of the main material. In 1930, the DniroHES expedition carried out work near the Voznesenka village (now part of the city of Zaporizhzhia (fig. 5) at industrial site A, the site of the future metallurgical complex.¹ According to the construction plan,



Fig. 5. Map of the location of Voznesenska Girka in Zaporizhzhia (after Komap 2002, c. 239).

the highest part of Voznesenska Girka was to be leveled. At that time, excavation work was carried out manually without the use of mechanical means. Thus, the mentioned area of



Fig. 6. Volodymyr Hrinchenko
2 × 2 km was

excavated by a team of 2.5 thousand people using more than one thousand rakes. As M. O. Miller recalled, the rakers dug with ploughs very quickly and quite deeply, with only two or three scientists to supervise them, which resulted in the destruction of ancient burials, and archaeologists did not have time to take the necessary measures to fix them [28, c. 8]. Eventually, the research at this site was entrusted to V. A. Hrinchenko² (fig. 6), who carefully examined the entire area (3000 m²), dividing it into 2 × 2 m

¹ By comparing satellite images and cartographic data, researchers managed to establish the exact location of the "treasure", which has been the subject of discussion for some time. Now it is a modern industrial zone on the site between Zaporizhstal Steel Plant and the Zaporizhzhia Glass Factory (Zaporizhzhia Plant of Welding Fluxes and Glassware) [16, c. 205].

² Hrinchenko Volodymyr Autonomovych (5.07.1900–19.04.1948) was born into a peasant family in the farmstead of Tsokurivka (Velyka Rudka village), Dykanka district, Poltava region [10, c. 132]. In 1924–1925, he was a Laboratory Assistant at the Department of Archaeology of the Central Proletarian Museum in Poltava, where well-known archaeologists V. Shcherbakivskyi, M. Rudynskyi, O. Takhtai, and others worked at the time. During the expeditions led by M. Rudynskyi, he gained experience in conducting exploration and excavations. From 1925 he studied at the Institute of National Education in Katerynoslav, worked as a Scientific Researcher at the Dnipropetrovsk Regional Historical and Archaeological Museum. In 1927–1933, the researcher participated in the DniroHES expedition [26, c. 185]. From 1932 he studied at the Ukrainian Research Institute of Material Culture in Kharkiv and worked as a Head of the Department at the Kharkiv Historical Museum. In 1936–1938 he was an employee and director of the Central Historical Museum in Kyiv [11, c. 510]. In 1939 he was repressed and served his sentence in the Krasnoyarsk Territory. After his release in 1947, he worked at the Institute of Archeology of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. He died of a heart attack and was buried in Poltava at the Monastery Cemetery. In 1956, the researcher was posthumously rehabilitated [28, c. 208; 29, c. 118].



Fig. 7. Exploration of the stone rampart, 1930 (photo negative, Scientific Archive of the IA NASU, f. 18; no. 317)

squares [27, c. 9]. All 1195 squares were studied by him sequentially.

In 1930, V. A. Hrinchenko discovered an archaeological complex on Voznesenska Girka, a burial ground oriented in the north-east—south-west direction, which included 30 mounds of various sizes and shapes, forming two groups located 500 m apart. Between the mounds of the southwestern group, a vague rampart 0.45—0.85 m high was visible, which formed a fortification in the form of a rectangle 82 m long and 51 m wide, with an average width of 11 m [9, c. 37].

During the excavations of this structure, many horse bones (over 800) and a small number of fragments of pottery were found. The researcher noted that the vast majority of these finds were discovered at a shallow depth of 30—35 cm, which could indicate that the material was thrown to the ground at some point in time [9, c. 40]. In the eastern part of the fortification, a ruined stone ring masonry with an area of 29 m² was discovered (fig. 7); [9, c. 39], in the

centre of which, at a depth of up to 2 m, there were burial pits with burnt human bones (18 of the 52 burnt bones belonged to a horse, and the researcher did not specify the rest), iron arrows and stones. A separate cylindrical pit up to 90 cm deep and 70 cm in diameter was completely filled with a large number of metal objects and pierced by three swords (fig. 8). The "treasure" was cut out completely and transported in a wooden box to the Dnipro Historical Museum, where experts professionally disassembled, described, and photographed the items found (fig. 9); [27, c. 10].

In terms of the number and weight of precious metals and objects of cultural significance, the "Kichkas" treasure, as D. I. Yavornytskyi called it in his notes after the historical name of the local area Kichkas, or "Voznesensky" treasure, as V. A. Hrinchenko called it in his reports, ranks second among the Ukrainian complexes found after the Pereshchepyne treasure. Among the numerous finds of the Voznesensky "treasure": 50 iron stirrups, 20

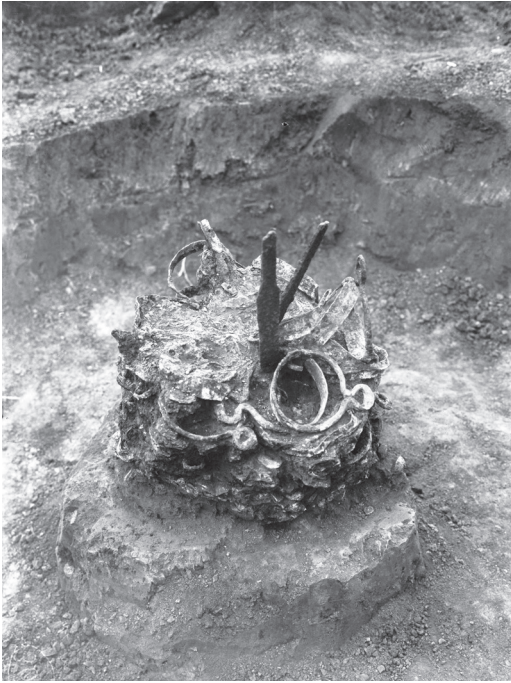


Fig. 8. Voznesensky "treasure" (photo negative) Scientific Archive of the IA NASU, f. 18)

iron horse bridles, as well as buckles and rings from horse harnesses. Two or three pairs of stirrups and bridles were ornamented with silver and gold notching; over 1400 gold items, almost all exclusively in the form of decorative plaques decorated with grain and scrollwork, and some stamped and molten metal lumps weighing over 1200 g. In general, the plaques were intended to decorate military belts and harnesses for horses. The finds also included gold rings, shackles, and other parts from saber scabbards, quivers, bows, saddles, and other equipment. Among the silver items, some stand

out (censers, discs), which had a religious purpose. Most of the finds contained traces of being in the fire, and many of them could not be identified due to interaction with fire.

According to V. A. Hrinchenko, the discovered structure was a fortification of the central headquarters of a military detachment of Slavs or Khazars, which allowed controlling the area within a radius of 15 km [9, c. 61—62]. As for the discovered "treasure", the researcher believed that it was the burial of several people: *"The composition of the burial objects from the Vosnesensky site indicates that they belonged not to one, but to several, possibly many, persons. These people certainly could not have died a normal death together. The reason for such premature deaths could be an unsuccessful battle, an uprising in the army, or some serious catastrophe during which commanders and a certain number of soldiers died. This catastrophe may have led to a*



Fig. 9. V. A. Hrinchenko together with members of the DniPROHES expedition P. Kozar, V. Solianyk, P. Kovtun, P. Smolychev, and E. Fedorovych studying the finds from the Voznesensky "treasure". Dnipro Regional Historical and Archaeological Museum, 1930 (after Попандоуло 2012, с. 269)



Fig. 10. Silver top of the Byzantine military standard in the form of an eagle. An artifact from the Voznesensky "treasure", Zaporizhzhia Museum of Local Lore

hopeless situation, and the surviving soldiers had to burn their military insignia (eagle and lion) along with their dead commanders and comrades so that they would not be taken by the enemy" [9, c. 61]. Among the finds were the figurines of an eagle and a lion, which V. A. Hrinchenko defined as *signums* — signs, emblems that the cohorts, maniples, and centuries of the Ancient Roman army had [9, c. 48]. One of the highlights of the Zaporizhzhia Regional Museum of Local

Lore is the figurine of an eagle (fig. 10) holding a snake in its talons. It is cast in silver, 13 cm high, 21 cm long, and weighs 1035 g. Of the silver items, the figurine of an eagle with a snake in its paws is the best preserved. The fight between an eagle and a snake has been known since ancient times as an allegory of the struggle between strength and cunning. On the back of the bird there are 12 cone-shaped protrusions in two rows, with crosses carved on top. On the top, on the edge of the left wing, a cross is embossed in relief, which seems to consist of two eights that are perpendicularly superimposed on each other. Only a part of this cross is stamped on the wing area, while the rest of it is beyond it. In the two loops of the cross and between them, there are letters, but they are difficult to make out, as well as the inscription on the piece stamped on the edge of the tail [9, c. 39]. Visual inspection reveals that the silver eagle has a number of defects: some of the fingers are broken off, the wing is bent and cracked, melted, scratched, and chipped; the head of the snake is very melted. The image on the eagle's chest attracts attention. On the melted field in the centre of the chest



Fig. 12. The stamp on the chest of a silver eagle figurine and its drawing

there is a monogram — a Latin cross, on the edges of which there are letters that make up the name "Petros" (fig. 12); [9, c. 45].

Numerous damages testify to the difficult destiny of the artefact, which was lost in the century before and recovered at the end of the last millennium. Moreover, during the Second World War, it was lost again and recovered thanks to another scientist whose fate was closely intertwined with the Voznesensky "treasure", H. I. Shapovalov (fig. 11). Heorhii Ivanovych recalls the search for the unique artefact: *"Interested in the find, for many years I tried to find out from experts in which museum of the Soviet Union it was possible to get acquainted with it, and everywhere I heard the answer that it was lost during the Great Patriotic War. In 1977, a researcher at our museum, G. I. Pugina, told me that ten years ago, almost by accident, she saw the silver eagle and all the other items from the Kichkas treasure in the storerooms of the Kharkiv Historical Museum. It was the time when the Zaporizhzhia Museum of Local Lore was given a new building and there was no time for treasure hunting. But I found out that immediately after the treasure was examined, the most valuable part of it (gold and silver, according to officials) was sent to the Kharkiv Historical Museum, which was then the capital of Ukraine. The ironwork was left in the Dnipro museum. In 1982, I was able to get acquainted with the Kichkas treasure in the Kharkiv History Museum. In the same year, I organized an exchange of exhibits between our museums, and the silver eagle from the Kichkas treasure ... returned to Zaporizhzhia"* [40], where it is now kept in the Zaporizhzhia Regional Museum of Local Lore.

G. I. Shapovalov believes that in the discussion between archaeologists V. A. Hrinchenko and M. O. Miller, the



Fig. 11. Heorhii Ivanovych Shapovalov

evidence of the latter is more weighty, and that the burial on Voznesenska Girka belonged to the Prince Svyatoslav I Ihorovych [41]. The scientist also describes, referring to Bulgarian publicist and archaeologist Georgi Kostov, how the version of the sacred significance of the silver eagle for Bulgarians as *"the shrine of the Bulgarian people — the personal standard of the founder of Danube Bulgaria, Khan Asparukh.... G. Kostov drew attention to the fact that the inscription on the eagle's chest can also be read as "Aspor". And this, in his opinion, gives the right to consider the Kichkas treasure to be the burial place of Khan Asparukh, the son of Khan Kubrat. I remember that when I gave an interview to G. Kostov for Bulgarian television back in 1991, I allowed for the possibility of Bulgarian antiquities entering the Eastern European Steppes as trophies of the Princes of Kievan Rus' and, in particular, Prince Svyatoslav. Only the years of Ukraine's independence made it possible to expand on this assumption. Among the numerous works by Ukrainian archaeologists and historians published in exile and now available to us, my*

attention was drawn to the work of Professor Michael Miller entitled *The Grave of Prince Svyatoslav*, published in 1951 in Canada. Dr. Miller, who himself was a member of the DniproHES archaeological expedition and participated in the excavations of the Kichkas treasure, convincingly proves that this burial-immolation is Svyatoslav's grave" [40]. Later, relying primarily on researchers who defended the Slavic origin of the monument, the version of Svyatoslav's grave was developed by A. Biletskyi [6], but did not receive the support of archaeologists, instead being mercilessly criticized [21].

Who actually owned the silver eagle figurine from the Voznesensky treasure? Who was buried on the Voznesenska Girka and when? These questions have been a concern of researchers since the discovery of the treasure. The eagle and the lion were revered by many European peoples who believed in the royal origin of the eagle, the king of birds, and the lion, the king of animals. Only the upper part of the lion's figure, the head, remains. V. A. Hrinchenko believed that the silver eagle figurine, a symbol of Jupiter surrounded by religious reverence, was most likely the top of the standard of the Byzantine army units. V. A. Hrinchenko named the Pereshchepyna, Kelegei, Novo-Sandzhariv, and Makukhivka treasures as the closest comparisons to the Voznesensky "treasure" [9, c. 62]. According to the researcher, these treasures, based on the Byzantine coins found in them, which were minted during 602—668, could have appeared no earlier than 668. However, V. A. Hrinchenko noted that most of the discovered coins were demonetized, turned into jewellery, and could have functioned for centuries in this state. In view of this, the researcher dated the Voznesensky "treasure" to no later than the 8th century. Since most

of the discovered items in the "treasure" were of Byzantine origin, the scholar believed that the monument was left by the Slavs or Khazars, who had close economic and political ties with Byzantium [9, c. 62—63].

V. A. Hrinchenko's remark on the plaques found, which were attached to horse harness, military equipment, portmanteaus, and possibly clothing, is also important. Thus, he noted that most of the plaques were attached with the help of dowels, which were attached to the top of the plaque from below by their curvature. When they passed through the hole in the belt, their edges were bent. More than a hundred such keys were found, but none were attached to the plaque [9, c. 45]. This may indicate the trophy nature of these plaques and the fact that they came into the fire already disassembled.

According to M. O. Miller, *"The find ... is not a treasure but a princely burial, common for that time, with the rite of corpse-burning and burying of his remains in the ground"* [27, c. 12]. Moreover, M. O. Miller unequivocally stated that the Kichkas "treasure" is nothing more than the grave of Prince Svyatoslav: *"In our chronicle we have a story about how the great Ukrainian Prince-knight Svyatoslav, returning home from the Danube in 972, near the Dnipro rapids, was suddenly ambushed by the Pechenegs. In the battle, the Prince was killed.... The area where Svyatoslav's grave was discovered also points to a number of possible historical details. Svyatoslav was returning home from Dorostol on the Danube, carrying all the spoils with him. For the attack... the most convenient... place is near the Kichkas crossing, where travellers have to stop their boats and disembark. From a high hill above the crossing ..., the Pecheneg guard watched over the Dnipro. After the battle ... in which Svyatoslav was killed, the rest of his squad went up the mountain, where they buried the*

hero's corpse with all the honours that were due to him. ... The funeral took place away from home, in the face of a close enemy and military danger, so no huge grave was built over the buried and the burial was secretive" [27, c. 14].

At the same time, Miller and his idea of Svyatoslav's "grave" were heavily criticized. Thus, pages were opened in the scientist's biography that were perceived by the scientific community rather ambiguously. In addition, O. Komar, studying the issue of Svyatoslav's grave, emphasized that "his own (M. O. Miller's) works simply do not leave the myth "about Svyatoslav's grave" any chance of existence" [21, c. 251].

The above prompts us to analyse the events of 971—972. First of all, let us turn to Nestor the Cronicler's Tale of Bygone Years. Prince Svyatoslav, the son of Ihor Rurikovich, the Grand Prince of Kyiv and Olha, the Grand Princess of Kyiv, carried out a series of campaigns against Volga Bulgaria, the Khazar Khaganate, the First Bulgarian Empire, and the Byzantine Empire [17]. The chronicler describes in some detail the course of hostilities on the Balkan Peninsula, when Prince Svyatoslav I Ihorovych, in accordance with agreements with the Byzantine emperor Nikephoros II Phokas, after defeating the Bulgarian armies, tried to gain a foothold on the Danube and force Constantinople to pay overdue tribute but found himself in a difficult situation. A decisive offensive of the Byzantine army under the leadership of the new Byzantine emperor John I Tzimiskes allowed him to surround the Rus' army in the fortress of Dorostol. After a series of attempts to change the course of the war in his favour, Svyatoslav was forced to sign a peace treaty, which, given the fierce resistance that led to heavy losses on both sides, was quite favourable

for the ruler of Kyiv. "Having made peace with the Greeks, Svyatoslav set sail in boats to the (Dniipro) rapids. And his father's voivode Sveneld said to him, "Go around them, Prince, on horseback, for the Pechenegs are standing in the rapids." But he did not listen to him and set off in boats. Meanwhile, the Pereyaslavians sent messengers to the Pechenegs, saying, "Svyatoslav is coming to Rus', taking a lot of property from the Greeks and countless captives, and with a small druzhina." And when the Pechenegs heard this, they closed the thresholds. And Svyatoslav came to the rapids, but it was impossible to pass the rapids, and he began to spend the winter in Biloberizhzhya. And they had no food, and there was a great famine, so that a horse's head (was) half a hryvnia. And Svyatoslav spent the winter [here]. And when spring came, Svyatoslav went to the rapids. In the year 6480 (972). Svyatoslav came to the thresholds, and Kurya, the Pecheneg prince, attacked him. And they killed Svyatoslav and took his head, and made a cup of his skull, and binding his skull with gold, drank from it. And Sveneld came to Kyiv to Yaropolk. And all the years of Svyatoslav's reign were twenty and eight" [25, c. 44].

In his History, the Byzantine chronicler and eyewitness Leo the Deacon describes in detail the events of the summer of 971. Then, after a series of fierce battles between the troops of the Rus' and Byzantines, at the end of 971, the Byzantine emperor John I Tzimiskes met with Grand Prince Svyatoslav on the banks of the Danube after signing a peace treaty: "Sfendoslav left Dorostol, returned the prisoners in accordance with the treaty, and sailed with his remaining associates, heading for his homeland. On the way, they were ambushed by the Patsinaki, a large nomadic tribe that eats lice, carries their dwellings with them, and spends a large

part of their lives in carts. They killed almost all of them, killed Sfindoslav along with the others, so that only a few of the huge Rus' army returned unharmed to their native places" [14, c. 82, 133]. The chronicler states that the entire army, led by the brave prince, fell in the fierce battle.

The dominant force in the Dnipro area were the Pecheneg tribes, who appeared in the Black Sea region from across the Don in the late 9th century, bringing ruin to the settled population [37, c. 73]. At this time they also became a prominent political force in the Danube region. In particular, the Byzantine emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, who described this Steppe people in detail, mentioned that by the middle of the 10th century the area inhabited by the Pechenegs stretched from the Don to the Carpathians, with rivers such as the Dnipro, Southern Bug, Dniester, Prut, and Siret [22].

According to written sources, the first contact of Rus' princes with the Pechenegs occurred in the late 9th and early 10th centuries [32, c. 17]. They first appeared near the walls of Kyiv in 915. Already in 930, the Rus-Pecheneg peace was broken, and Prince Ihor fought with the Pechenegs. During the reign of Prince Svyatoslav, Pecheneg raids on Rus' became much more active. Thus, in 969, during Svyatoslav's Balkan campaign, the Pecheneg khan Kurya attempted to capture Kyiv. The nomads' forces were so numerous that the threat of the capital's fall seemed inevitable. The courage of the defenders, led by Princess Olha, a successful manoeuvre and the diplomatic talent of the Chernihiv voivode Pretych saved the city [39, c. 46-50].

The Pechenegs were at the camp stage of nomadism, which explains the absence of settlements or winter camps among the archaeological sites of nomads. The

archaeological material relating to the Pechenegs is rather insignificant and comes from under-mound burials, mostly inlet burials, carried out according to a very regular rite. It is characterized by the presence of weapons (sabers, arrows, bows), horse harness (bridle sets, reins, stirrups) and horse bones in the grave next to the deceased [39, c. 65].

Voznesenska Girka occupied a very favourable strategic position for controlling the river route through the rapids as well as roads bypassing the complex rafting, the Krariyska crossing of the Dnipro River and the surrounding areas in general [9, c. 61]. Given the territory of Pecheneg nomadism and the importance of the so-called "customs duty" in the area of the rapids for the nomads' economy, this place should have been included in the boundaries of their influence. Some researchers [30, c. 60] name the regaining of control over this area as one of the reasons for Svyatoslav's campaign "to the rapids", despite the known warnings. Another subject of discussion between researchers is the place where the battle of 972 took place. With the light hand of Constantine the Great, who wrote about the two most dangerous points on the rapids: the Neyasyt rapid and the Krariyska crossing [22, c. 46—49], two main versions of the place of Prince Svyatoslav's death were apparently consolidated, which, in our opinion, are closely related to the subject of this study.

Now let's return to the questions we posed at the beginning of the article: who did the Voznesensky "treasure" belong to and how can it be interpreted? These questions are undoubtedly very complex, and researchers have been trying to solve them for decades. With this in mind, we would like to draw attention to some

important, in our opinion, points in this story and express our interpretation of this extraordinary monument. As already mentioned, V. A. Hrinchenko, while researching the Voznesensky "camp", discovered a significant number of bones, mostly of a horse, which is known to have played a major role in the economy and beliefs of the nomads of the Steppe. In addition, according to the chronicle, during the wintering on the Biloberezhzhia, Prince Svyatoslav's soldiers *"had no food... and there was a great famine, so that a horse's head (was) half a hryvnia"*, so it is unlikely that the remnants of the Rus army could sacrifice even one horse unless they bought it from the Pechenegs. Moreover, experienced warriors would not have left their ships in battle and broken through the superior enemy forces uphill through unfamiliar terrain, thereby dooming themselves to certain death; most likely, they would have sailed down the Dnipro, but probably no longer had this opportunity, as evidenced by the images of the Radziwiłł Chronicle [34, c. 318]. The battle took place, and only a few of the Rus' survived and became prisoners of the Pechenegs. Of course, the Steppe people did not bury their enemies with honours. Khan Kurya ordered to make a bowl from the skull of the defeated knight Svyatoslav I Ihorovych, which was a fairly common custom³ among Turkic-speaking peoples [39, c. 52]. Thus, we conclude that the burial on Voznesenska Girka cannot belong to Prince Svyatoslav, whose decapitated body no one tried to identify and carry up to be buried with honours; most likely, he had

the same fate as his brothers in arms. It is important to add that there is no mention of other battles near the rapids in the written sources of that time or in the chronicles describing earlier events of the Middle Ages. It was the clash between Svyatoslav's Rus' and the Kurya Pechenegs that was the most grandiose battle known to researchers in these areas.

Let's return to the unique artefact that has become a symbol of the Voznesensky (Kichkas) "treasure". The stamps on the wing and breast of the silver figurine of eagle were mentioned above. The stamp on the wing could have been put by the craftsman during manufacture, or after the top was removed from the shaft, in a treasury where the object was stored for a long time. However, the researchers' attention was drawn to the stamp on the chest of the silver eagle. The monogram, which was deciphered as PETRO (fig. 12); [9, c. 45], is, in our opinion, the key to establishing the ownership of both the eagle and the entire Voznesensky "treasure". Taking into account the above archaeological facts and written references of contemporaries of the events, this stamp can obviously be associated with the son of the Tzar Simeon I the Great of Bulgaria — the Tzar Peter I⁴, who put his mark on the treasures stored in the royal treasury from the time of Asparukh. It is important that in addition to the above-mentioned treasure items, V. A. Hrinchenko also mentions other possible Byzantine military insignia such as a silver hemisphere (on the periphery of which wooden rods with bell-shaped tips hung), silver plates depicting a lion, dogs, and

³ This custom was also common among other Eurasian nomads, in particular the Scythians.

⁴ King Peter I (reigned 927–969) was married to the granddaughter of the Byzantine Emperor Romanos I Lekapenos, Maria Lekapene, which contributed to a short-lived peace between the two states. Peter used the title "tsar", which was a precedent in the history of the Byzantine Empire. He was also baptized and known for his support of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. These facts from the king's biography may explain his use of this Byzantine cross-shaped monogram.

acanthus leaves [9, c. 56]. It should be noted that no other ways of getting the silver tops and military badges into the Voznesensky "treasure", which were certainly military trophies, have been proposed by researchers so far, and therefore they selectively describe the composition of the treasure items.

So, let us assume a reconstruction of the events that preceded the discovery of the treasure near the Kichkas crossing. In 971, after the capture of the capital of the Bulgarian Empire, Great Preslav, which was defended by the voivode and adviser to Prince Svyatoslav, Sveneld, the Byzantine emperor John I Tzimiskes appropriated the treasures of the Bulgarian kings. He sent part of the captured wealth to Constantinople. After a long siege of the Dorostol fortress, which was defended by Prince Svyatoslav, a second treaty was concluded "*under Theophilus the Sinkel to John, called Tzimiskes, the Greek king, in Derst, in the month of July, indict 14, (in the summer of 6479)*" [25, c. 43], according to which Svyatoslav undertook not only not to attack the Byzantine Empire but also to defend it from enemies. "Svyatoslav made peace with the Greeks and went to the rapids in lodias <...> And the Pereyaslavians sent to the Pechenegs to say: "*Svyatoslav is returning to Rus' with part of his army, having taken great wealth and captives from the Greeks without counting*". When the Pechenegs heard this, they occupied the rapids" [25, c. 43]. Thus, the Emperor John I Tzimiskes paid Prince Svyatoslav a considerable ransom. And of course, he again took jewellery and money from the captured fortunes, among other items were a silver eagle holding a snake in its paws and a lion — the top of the standards of the Byzantine army units, as well as coins that the Kagan had once captured or received as

a ransom — symbols of Asparukh's victory over the Byzantine army. "*In the summer of 6480 (972). And Svyatoslav came to the rapids, and Kurya, the Pecheneg prince, attacked him and killed Svyatoslav. And they took his head and made a bowl from his skull, and, having covered it with gold, drank from it*" [25, c. 43]. The silver bird figurine, along with other treasures, became the prey of the Pechenegs, who defeated the Rus' army.

It can be assumed that the Pechenegs may have had some kind of sacred place on Voznesenska Girka, given that a large mound burial ground was located nearby [9, c. 37]. Let us add one more important, in our opinion, detail. In the publication of the complex, V. A. Hrinchenko noted that part of the stone ring discovered in the eastern part of the excavated rampart, next to which two pits were found, was destroyed, and the stones from it were used to fill these pits [9, c. 41—42]. Most likely, the stone ring already existed at the time of the pits' creation but did not fulfil its function and was later reused by the Pechenegs. The above hypothesis is based on the analysis of archaeological material and sources describing the events of the 10th century and does not contradict the dating of the Voznesensky "treasure" to the 8th century, which is recognized by almost all known archaeologists, as well as the ideas of those researchers who associated the Voznesensky complex with the Turkic Steppe world (Амброз 1982; Плетнева 2003). And, given the composition of the Voznesensky "treasure", the context, and the place of its discovery, it is reasonable to assume that it can be interpreted as a place of sacrifice to the Pecheneg gods. Thus, Svyatoslav's Balkan trophies could have found their way into the Voznesensky (Kichkas) "treasure" as a sacrifice to the Pecheneg gods for

the victory over a powerful enemy and honouring the comrades who died in a fierce battle at the rapids. The Voznesensky (Kichkas) "treasure" will continue to attract the attention of researchers, and the discussion of its ownership will encourage new searches and discoveries.

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Резюме

ДО ПИТАННЯ ПРО НАЛЕЖНІСТЬ ВОЗНЕСЕНСЬКОГО «СКАРБУ»: ПРОДОВЖЕННЯ ДИСКУСІЇ

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Актуальність. У дослідженні аналізуються висновки вітчизняних та зарубіжних вчених В. Грінченка, М. Міллера, С. Ваклинова, Г. Шаповалова щодо належності Вознесенського (кічкаського) «скарбу». На основі вивчення археологічних знахідок та історичних джерел визначається, що артефакти Вознесенського археологічного комплексу, відкритого учасниками Дніпрогеської археологічної експедиції Наркомпросу України, мають велике історичне значення і підтверджують давні історичні зв'язки між народами та державами Південної України та Балкан.

Метою статті є огляд матеріалів Вознесенського «скарбу» та дискусій, які супроводжували це місце протягом багатьох років, на основі поєднання перш за все археологічних та письмових джерел.

Висновки. Автори доходять висновку, що поява скарбу біля Дніпрових порогів пов'язана з подіями кінця 60-х – початку 70-х років. X ст., коли, в ході русько-візантійської війни візантійський імператор Іоанн I Цимісхій захопив столицю Болгарського царства Великий Преслав і привласнив скарбницю болгарських царів. Частина здобичі він відправив до Константинополя, а частина багатств пішла на виплату данини князю Святославу відповідно до Доростольської мирної угоди. Серед інших предметів були і срібний орел, що тримає в своїх лапах змію, та лев — наверхі штандартів візантійських легіонів, а також візантійські монети, які наприкінці VII ст. захопив або отримав як відкупне каган Аспарух, засновник Першого Болгарського царства. Виявлене на грудях срібного орла клеймо ПЕТРО доцільно пов'язати із сином царя Сімеона Великого — царем Петром, який, очевидно, поставив свій знак на цінних речах, що зберігалися в скарбниці. Зазначимо, що будь-яких інших шляхів потрапляння срібних наверх і військових емблем до Вознесенського «скарбу», які, безумовно, були воєнними трофеями, дослідники наразі не пропонують, а лише роблять припущення про їх належність Святославу, Аспаруху, правителям Хозарського каганату тощо.

Срібний птах разом із іншими скарбами став здобиччю печенігів, які розгромили війська русів, що повертались з балканського походу і були виснажені та знекровлені після зимівлі на Білобережжі. Ця подія зафіксована у вітчизняних та зарубіжних хроніках. Трофеї Святослава могли потрапити до Вознесенського «скарбу» як жертва печенізьким богам за перемогу над сильним ворогом. Ця гіпотеза не суперечить відомому практично всіма відомими археологами датуванню речей із Вознесенського «скарбу», а також ідеям тих дослідників, які пов'язували Вознесенський комплекс із тюркським степовим світом.

А якщо згадати, що поруч із місцем знахідки скарбу розташовувався великий курганий могильник, слід констатувати те, що Вознесенська гірка для печенігів, імовірно, мала сакральне значення. До цього висновку підштовхує важлива деталь, на якій акцентував увагу В. Грінченко, підкресливши, що частина кам'яного кільця, відкритого у східній частині розкопаного валу, на час створення Вознесенського комплексу вже існувала, але не виконувала своєї функції та пізніше була використана печенігами повторно. Це дає можливість інтерпретувати «скарб» як місце жертвоприношення печенізьким богам за отриману перемогу над князем Святославом.

Ключові слова: Вознесенський «скарб», князь Святослав, хан Аспарух, печеніги, Русь, Болгарське царство, Візантійська імперія.