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## The Princely City of Zvenyhorod: The State of Conservation, the Concept of Protective Measures and the Prospect of Scientific Research

### ABSTRACT

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The article explains the motivation for creating a historical and cultural reserve and park within the remaining relics of the ancient Ruthenian city of Zvenyhorod. The author presents a brief history of the city, the main results of archaeological research, the need to continue to study the site, and the prospects for its popularisation. The article focuses on the role and significance of Zvenyhorod as the capital of the principality of the same name for the genesis of urban processes and state-building in Southwest Rus'. It is emphasised that the results obtained in the course of archaeological research conducted from 1953 to 1994 are a strong basis for preserving, further studying and transforming into a tourist attraction this place that belongs to the cultural heritage of Ukraine.

**Keywords:** Rus', Zvenyhorod, capital city, historical and cultural reserve

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Zvenyhorod, as the capital city of the principality of the same name, was mentioned on the pages of ancient chronicles, where it was first brought up in 1086 (*Ipatievskaya letopis*, col. 197)<sup>1</sup>. The emergence of three principalities (Peremyshyl', Terebovl' and Zvenyhorod) was associated with Yaroslav the Wise's great-grandchildren, Rostyslav's sons – brothers Riuryk (?–1092), Volodar (?–1124) and Vasylo (1066–1124), and their struggle for the right of succession and participation in the rule of the state (Kotlar 1985, 46; for genealogy of the Rurikid dynasty see Voytovich 2000; 2009). The dominions of Rostyslav's sons, which occupied the large territory of Ukrainian Sub-Carpathian Rus', laid the

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administrative and territorial foundations for the future formation of the Galician-Volyn' Principality. Due to the objective historical circumstances, Zvenyhorod, while remaining the main city of the Zvenyhorod land, periodically lost and regained the status of the principality's capital. Thus, in 1084–1092 Zvenyhorod was the capital during the reign of Volodar Rostyslavych, in 1124–1144 during the reign of Volodymyr Volodarovych, in 1144–1145 during the reign of Ivan Rostyslavych, in 1184–1187 during the rule of Volodymyr Yaroslavych, and in 1205–1207 and 1208–1210 – the years of Roman Ihorovych's rule.

The city was mentioned in the ancient Ruthenian chronicles many times, usually in the context of political events, such as armed conflicts which ended, as a rule, at its walls. The existing records testify that the final stage of conflicts between the Princes resolved by diplomatic agreements, which were concluded outside the city, since it had never been captured by force (*Ipatievskaya letopis* col. 197, 315–316, 319–320, 719–720, 723–726, 738, 740, 749, 776). However, the chronicles do not contain the slightest hints about the features of the system of fortifications, the planigraphy of the city or even where it was located, because, according to researchers, it was burned down by the Mongol-Tatar army in 1241 during Batu Khan's campaign against Rus'. Unlike the other princely capitals known from the chronicles, Zvenyhorod found itself in circumstances that caused it to fall into complete oblivion. As a result, the remains of the city's earthen fortifications stayed unidentified for six centuries.

At the time when the ideas of the Enlightenment were spreading, which gave rise to a pan-European movement for the preservation of monuments from Antiquity, at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> c. on the territories of Galicia the interest in the material remains of past civilisations flared up (Bulyk 2006). In the context of shedding light on the history of the Galician-Volyn' Principality (Zubrytsky 1852; Sharanevich 1863), an objective necessity appeared to find out the location of the capital city of Zvenyhorod, which played an important role as one of the pillars of state-building processes on the southwestern outskirts of Rus'. The heated debate about the location of the city which erupted among historians, ethnographers, and amateurs and went on for several decades (Ilnitskiy 1861; Bielowski 1862; Savchinskiy 1870; Schnejder 1872; Ploshansky 1880; Lam 1887) was ended by M. Grushevsky. Relying on contemporary achievements in the fields

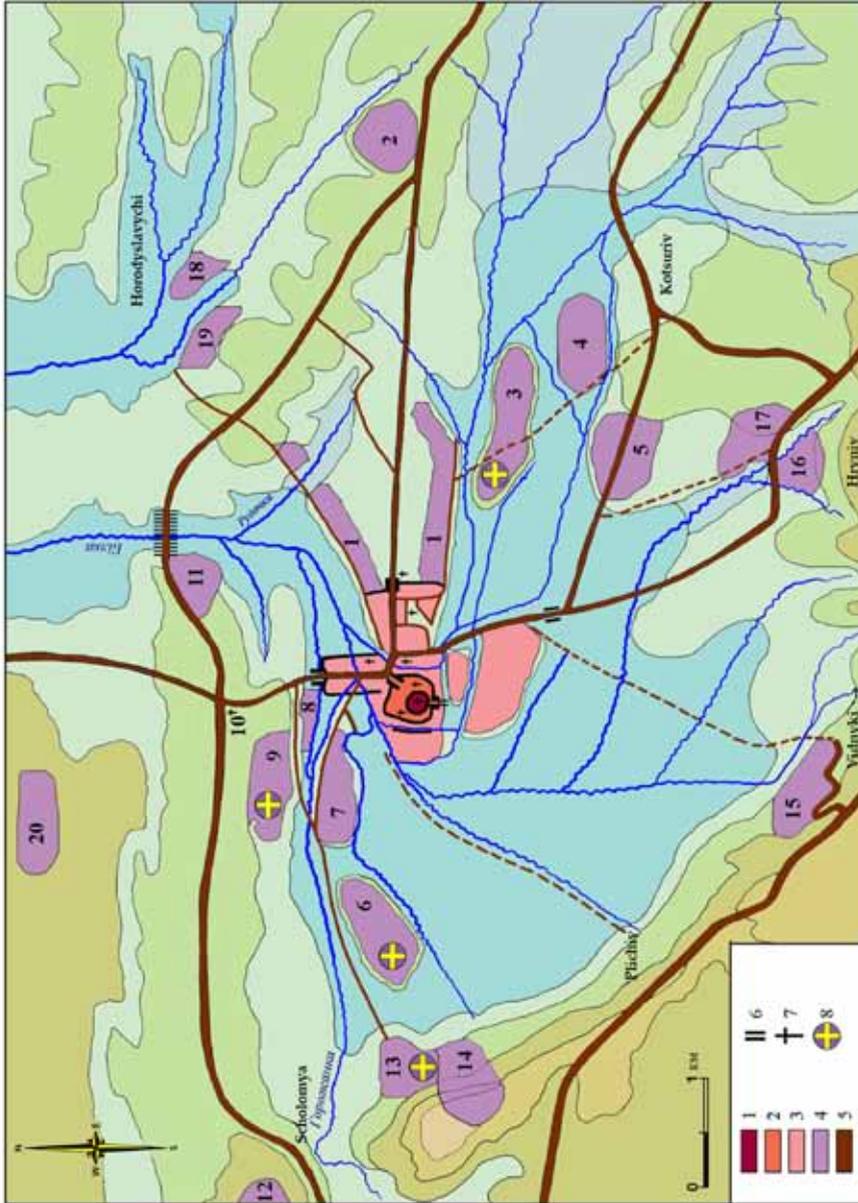
of topography and archaeology, the researcher convincingly proved the location of Zvenyhorod near L'viv (Grushevsky 1899).

At that time, i.e. at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> c., in the central part of Zvenyhorod (now Zvenyhorod village, Pustomyty district, L'viv region) it was possible to visually explore the heavy earthen fortifications that had survived until that day. They are located on a narrow headland, which cuts into the floodplain of the Bilka River (Fig. 1). All this dry land (262.3 m a.s.l.) stretches for about 3 km from the west to the east and 500 m from the north to the south. Around the rise (from the north, west, and south) there is a spreading plain (246 m a.s.l.), which stretches for almost 9 km from the northwest (Sholomyia) to the southeast (Kotsuriv-Romaniv), and about 4.5 km from the southwest (Vodnyky) to the northeast (Zvenyhorod). On the lowlands, there were many small streams that fed the Bilka River and, at the same time, transformed the plain into an impassable peat bog. Fortifications were located on the western part of the headland, where the hill rose (278–280 m a.s.l.). They were planned on two levels: on the top of the hill and around it on a flat rise, whose silhouette stands out against the background of the boggy lowland.

However, these relics, in their shape, were significantly different from the original fortifications of the hillforts characteristic of ancient Ruthenian cities<sup>2</sup>. This is explained by the fact that the system of fortifications of princely Zvenyhorod was used as a basis during the general redevelopment of the hillfort at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> c. By the order of the Polish field hetman Adam Sieniawski (the owner of the city at that time) within the hillfort (*detinets* and *okolny gorod*) a defensive castle had to be built (Nestorow 2008), which consisted of two parts – upper and lower (Fig. 2). Using the achievements in the field of military engineering, a bastion was built on the site of the fortifications from the princes' times (hill four pentagonal bastions on

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<sup>2</sup> As a city, Zvenyhorod consisted of the central part, *prigorod* and suburbs. The central part (*okolny gorod*), where along the perimeter the residential and craft buildings were located, was protected by a system of powerful fortifications. Within the defenses, one more fortified area (*detinets*) was located, where the princely administration and military garrison were situated. The central part of the city (*okolny gorod*) was surrounded by the *pryhorods*, within which were a trading area and estates. *Prigorods* were also fortified, but with a lighter type of fortifications (a type of *ostrog*). The suburbs were joined to the *prigorod*. They were unfortified and occupied both dry land and island surfaces within the floodplain valley.



**Fig. 1.** Spatial organisation of Zvenyhorod (after L. Chachkovskiy 1932; R. Mohytych 1995; verified by the author).  
 Legend: 1 – *detinets*; 2 – *okolny gorod*; 3 – *prigorod*; 4 – suburb; 5 – roads; streets, paths; 6 – Ostroly's gate; 7 – cemeteries; 8 – monasteries. The suburbs: 1 – Zahuminky; 2 – Cherniv; 3 – Ostriv; 4 – Bolotni; 5 – Vidshyroki; 6 – Velyki; 7 – Korytkova; 8 – Zahorody; 9 – Tserkovna Storonka; 10 – Bilia Toku; 11 – Zhukiv; 12 – Sholomyia, Zaruby; 13 – Sholomyia, Zamonasty; 14 – Sholomyia, Pidzavallia; 15 – Vidnyky, Horbky; 16 – Hryniv, Kryve; 17 – Kotsuriv, Pidbabie; 18 – Horodyslavychi, Vyhin; 19 – Horodyslavychi, Hlynky; 20 – Zvenyhorod – Batyivytisia





**Fig. 3.** General view of the hillfort with bastions of the upper castle in the centre (Source: [www.zamki-kreposti.com.ua](http://www.zamki-kreposti.com.ua); accessed on 20.12.2018)

the town with escarpment curtain walls (Fig. 3) and on *okolny gorod* – a system of earthen bastions). The microtoponyms “Horodyshche” and “Valy”<sup>3</sup> have survived from the ancient hillfort.

The embankment structures have greatly changed since WWII. Gradually, over the next 50 years, the northern, southern and western lines of the earthen bastions of the lower castle were destroyed. Therefore, it is impossible to see the remains of the defensive system of the Ruthenian city, because they were transformed by redevelopment and distorted by the destruction of the relics of the earthen fortifications. The only evidence of the existence of the archaeological sites from the princely era in that place were numerous finds, which had accumulated on the territory surrounded by the fortifications. In these difficult

<sup>3</sup> This means hillfort and embankments, respectively.

circumstances it was only with the help of archaeological research that it was possible to determine the character of the rebuilding, and what is most important, to establish the boundaries and features of the fortifications of the ancient Ruthenian city.

Systematic large-scale excavations in Zvenyhorod started in 1953 and continued intermittently until 1994. During this period 10,709.6 square metres were investigated, which accounted for only 3.3% of the total area within the city fortifications. At the same time, important results were obtained, which became the source of knowledge about the layout of the city. The upper castle, wherein the late 19<sup>th</sup> c. ruins of the palace complex from the 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> c. could still be seen, was not investigated. The reason for this was the confidence that the hill, on top of which was a construction from the early modern period, had an artificial character. The researchers focused their main attention on studying the area around the foot of the hill.

The first conclusions about the urban areas of princely Zvenyhorod were made in the 1960s and the 1970s. They were based on the discoveries which were made in the lower castle. At that time, in its eastern part, archaeologists discovered the remains of the foundation ditches of monumental structures, a white stone complex which consisted of the princely palace, a church with a baptismal font, and a tomb chapel (Ratich 1974). Meanwhile, in the western part of the lower castle, a complex of 44 manufacturing furnaces was discovered. They were located along a double line of an earthen embankment which was separated by a ditch (Tersky-Shelomentsev 1978a). It was determined that both the furnaces and fortifications, of which 93 metres were preserved, functioned from the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> c. until 1241. These materials allowed scientists to assert that, firstly, the defensive fortifications from the early 18<sup>th</sup> c. corresponded to the lines of the fortifications from the princely era (which was dictated by the features of the elevation), and secondly, the presence of the princely palace gave researchers a reason to identify the whole territory of the lower castle with a *detinets*.

A number of outstanding discoveries were made during the 1980s and the 1990s. The first excavations were conducted on the hilltop within the upper castle. There, on the line of curtain wall from the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> c., archaeologists found traces of levelled and destroyed wooden walls from the princely era with their internal constructions burnt. In relation to these fortifications, the pentagonal bastions from

the early 18<sup>th</sup> c. were made into a real embankment. In addition, the remains of the foundation ditch of a wooden church were recorded in the southern part of the hill. From the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> c. to the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> c., the northern part of the temple was occupied by a cemetery. Two tanks were revealed within this cemetery, one of which had a limestone inside. Both tanks are synchronous with the wooden church (Mohytych 1995, 20–21; Svieshnikov and Hupalo 1996). Finding these objects allowed the archaeologists firstly, to assert that the hill had a natural origin, and secondly, to review the plan of the princely city within the fortifications. Since then, the top of the hill has been considered a fortified *detinets*, around which the *okolny gorod* was developed and protected by powerful fortifications.

The results of the excavations conducted outside the fortifications which were considered the nearest to the *prigorods* were extremely important. The remains of a trading area and a wooden church were found in the north-eastern corner of the eastern *prigorod* (*urochishche* P'iatnytske; Ioannisyanyan *et al.* 1983). The temple was built in the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> c. Production complexes used for smithery, shoemaking and tanning were investigated on the western *prigorod* (Tersky-Shelomentsev 1978b; Svieshnikov and Braychevskaya 1990). Within the north-eastern *prigorod*, relics of a wooden building were discovered. It consisted of a log road, on either side of which estates were located, surrounded by a fence. In each yard, there were housing, farmstead and production complexes. The estates were separated by streets, alleys and a track paved with wooden planks (Hupalo 2014, 301–410).

Surveys and excavations were carried out on the two islands situated in the marshy floodplain: 2 km northwest (*urochishche* Velyky – 262.4 m a.s.l.) and 1.5 km southeast (*urochishche* Ostrovy – 257 m a.s.l.) of the hillfort. The remains of a necropolis and a cultural layer from the princely era were discovered there (Hupalo 2014, 412–415). The material goods characteristic of the ancient Rus' period also appeared on the surfaces of the smaller islands which are located around the aforementioned larger islands (Fig. 1). This gave rise to the assertion, firstly, about the settlement of all dry land sites suitable for life, and secondly, about the possibility that defensive and monastic complexes might have functioned there.

A feature of the territory in the area of Zvenyhorod is the fact that the boggy valley, almost in the centre of which the hillfort sits, is

surrounded around its perimeter by a hilly terrain. The princely city was very well visible from the hills lying within the radius of 3–4 km. On the terraces (272.7–277.7 m a.s.l.), in the areas best for settlement, there are still villages today (Sholomyn, Vidnyky, Hryniv, Kotsuriv, Horodyslavychi), within each of which a cultural layer, contemporary with the princely city, was revealed (Fig. 1).

Summing up the state of research on Zvenyhorod, we need to emphasise that the results of the excavations of large areas of the hillfort, in conjunction with surveys of the near and far suburbs, allow us already at this stage of studying the site to draw important conclusions about the functional and spatial organisation of the ancient city. Namely, the urban plan of Zvenyhorod consisted of *detinets* (1 ha) and *okolny gorod* (12 ha), which were protected by a powerful fortification system. Externally, the *prigorods* (126.5 ha) were directly adjacent to these fortifications, surrounded by defensive structures of a lighter type in the form of *ostroy* (*urochishcha* Zahorodyshche, Na Hrebli, Piatnytske, Zamostyshche). The town was surrounded by suburbs, which formed part of its space and were functionally integral. In their layout, there are three lines: 1 – located on the main land beyond the *ostrog* fortifications (*urochishche* Zahuminky), 2 – on the island (*urochishcha* Velyky, Korytkova, Zahorody, Ostrovy, Vidshyroki, Pidbabie), 3 – located around the boundary of the Zvenyhorod lowland (Fig. 1).

The described structure of Zvenyhorod outlines both perspectives and directions for further investigations of the site. The large collection of artefacts, which totals several tens of thousands of items, plays a decisive role in solving a number of problems (such as the periodisation of objects, their functional purpose, etc.). Particular attention is paid to the material things found in the waterlogged areas of the *prigorod* – these are objects made of organic raw materials (leather, wood, birch bark), which represent artefacts unique to the territory of the Sub-Carpathian region. The primary task of future research will be to clarify the peculiarities of the layout of the individual urban areas and the communication links between them. Various aspects of the development of material and spiritual culture and, within the latter, funeral rites, require an in-depth study. Given the fact that Zvenyhorod is one of the three most ancient cities of Galician Rus', the materials that are still buried in the ground on the site are regarded as a source for studying the origins of town planning in the princely times. Furthermore,

preserving the historical landscape on the entire Zvenyhorod lowland in an almost unchanged condition for the first time outlines a broad perspective of studying the complex of suburban territories, their role and significance in the functioning of the urban organism as a whole.

To accomplish such tasks, it is imperative to protect this archaeological site from negative factors, primarily of an anthropogenic character. Considering this, it is important to establish restrictions on the use of the territory of the hillfort, which will allow us to preserve its authentic area. A further ban on all construction and earthworks is intended to protect and preserve the remnants of the cultural layer.

The characteristic feature of the modern village of Zvenyhorod is that its residential development is completely superimposed on the planigraphy of the princely city. At the same time, due to certain circumstances, today the central part of the hillfort is not exploited. The ruins of the collective farm complex from the 1960s and the 1970s, which does not operate today, are preserved here. Taking into account the present-day realities, all efforts are directed at turning the former *detinets* and *okolny gorod*<sup>4</sup> into a reserve and to creating, on this basis, the “Ancient Zvenyhorod” National Historical and Cultural Reserve. Taking into account first-rate relics of wooden buildings in the north-eastern *prigorod* (*urochishche* Na Hrebli) and the network of craft complexes in the western *prigorod* (*urochishche* Zahorodyshe), these areas are also to be included within the boundaries of the future reserve.

At the same time, along with the preparation of a set of documents necessary for the creation of the reserve, the priority task related to the preservation of the site is to arrange its territory. This has led to the development of a project which involves turning the entire territory of the future reserve into a historical and cultural park. In order to achieve this objective, it is necessary to carry out a number of measures within the boundaries of the hillfort as an archaeological site of national importance: the revitalisation of the historical and landscape environment and the improvement of the site territory; the conservation of the sites from the princely era with the purpose of preserving them for future scientific research; marking, with the help of modern artistic and technical means, the most important buildings

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<sup>4</sup> This territory, in accordance with the Decree of Ukraine’s Cabinet of Ministers of 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2009 No. 928, was registered as a site of national significance, “The hillfort of the city of Zvenyhorod”, registration number 130021-N.



**Fig. 4.** Fragment of the exhibition “The capital city of Zvenyhorod – return from nonexistence” (Photo by M. Ivanyk)

from the princely era, in particular: the wooden church and the tanks on the detinets, from the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> c., the stone church of the princely palace and the tomb on the *okolny gorod*; adjusting the Bilka river bed (as an element of the city’s fortification system) to restore its shores to their natural appearance; and the revitalisation of the landscape of the river valley.

Even focusing on the princely period of Zvenyhorod as the capital city, it is impossible to ignore its history in the late medieval period and the early modern age. This is even more obvious given the fact that remnants of the princely fortifications are completely obscured by the fortifications from the early 18<sup>th</sup> c., which suffered and continue to suffer constant destruction. Therefore, one of the top priorities is the conservation and restoration of the bastion system of the upper and lower castles, along the whole line of fortifications.

The implementation of the measures outlined above is a prerequisite for transforming this area of national significance (“The hillfort of Zvenyhorod”) into a tourist attraction. On the territory of the future



**Fig. 5.** White-stone princely palace and church, connected by a gallery passage (Reconstruction by A. Kharkhalis)



**Fig. 6.** North-eastern *prigorod* (Reconstruction by A. Kharkhalis)

reserve, a special role will be given to the already existing local history museum. Its exposition includes the original exhibits from the excavations carried out between the 1970s and the 1990s. All this, taken together, will allow to open the princely city of Zvenyhorod to the public, as one of the most important consolidating centres of cultural and historical processes both in South-West Rus' and in Eastern Europe in general.

In order to test the idea of creating a historical and cultural reserve and park in the community, some measures to inform the general public about the history of the city and its role in the political processes in Rus' and about the level of development of the city's culture were initiated. These and many other aspects are reflected in the exhibition "The capital city of Zvenyhorod – return from nonexistence", which is housed in the local history museum in Zvenyhorod (Fig. 4)<sup>5</sup>. Little-known archaeological materials stored in various museums in Lviv were used to arrange it. Another important trend leading to the popularisation of Zvenyhorod is the reconstruction of the external appearance of the capital city, its transformation in time and space. With this end in mind, on the basis of archaeological sources, work has begun on creating a graphic 3D model of the development of its individual urban areas. The results can be seen in the first documentary "Zvenyhorod – unknown princely capital" (Figs. 5–6)<sup>6</sup>.

Consequently, the creation of a historical and cultural reserve and a historical and cultural park based on "The hillfort of Zvenyhorod" site of national significance will promote the implementation of interconnected basic tasks – conducting scientific research, its interpretation, and popularisation. The obtained results will serve to reveal and familiarise the European and world public with the history of the formation of the Ukrainian statehood, the genesis of urban processes, and the political history of the region as an integral part of the shared European civilisation transformations.

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<sup>5</sup> The exhibition was prepared by V. Hupalo, N. Voitseshchuk, A. Kharkhalis, O. Lozynskyi.

<sup>6</sup> A documentary created by a team of authors (idea - N. Voitseshchuk, script – V. Hupalo, M. Ivanyk, operators – N. Parkhomyk, S. Kozak, M. Pokhodzhai, editing – I. Martyniv, computer reconstruction – A. Kharkhalis, graphic reconstruction – V. Petryk): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pnBp\\_6Re5J0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pnBp_6Re5J0) (accessed on 20.12.2018).

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