

**History****UDC 94 (477)****DOI** <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20068944>**The importance of archaeological research in the study of the Zbarazh  
Fortress****Valerii Yanus,**

PhD student of the Department of History of Ukraine, Archeology and Special  
Branches of Historical Science of Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National  
Pedagogical University, Ternopil, Ukraine, <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-7232-9254>

**Volodymyr Kitsak,**

PhD (History), Associate Professor of the Department of History of Ukraine,  
Archeology and Special Branches of Historical Science of Ternopil Volodymyr  
Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University, Ternopil, Ukraine,  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7180-0588>

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**Abstract.** *This article presents a comprehensive analysis of the significance of archaeological excavations in the study of the Zbarazh Fortress as a valuable component of the fortification system of Western Podillia. Based on written sources, archaeological research materials, and historiographical studies, the main stages of the study of the chronicle-mentioned city of Zbarazh were traced, and the key problems of its precise dating and localization were identified. The study demonstrates that written records provide rather fragmentary and often contradictory information, and thus cannot serve as the sole source for studying the*

*structural features of defensive structures. This, in turn, significantly limits their utility in the reconstruction of castles. The article also demonstrates that archaeological excavations play a key role in the study of the Zbarazh Fortress, as they make it possible to establish the actual time frame of the settlement's development, determine the boundaries of its location, and identify the features of its fortification structures. The article analyzes the results of 19th–21st-century studies, including the works of A. Kirkor, I. Sivkovna, M. Yagodynska, and other scholars, thanks to which the location of the chronicle-mentioned city is now known, the stages of the formation of the moats and ramparts have been clearly traced, and the multi-layered nature of the fortifications has been documented. The article devotes special attention to the results of archaeological research from the 1990s, during which the contours of the fortress were delineated, defensive ramparts were documented, and a substantial cultural layer was uncovered, indicating continuous, systematic settlement of the territory. It was also established that the Zbarazh fortification system was formed gradually by utilizing the natural features of the promontory's terrain and combining various construction traditions, in particular wooden-earth structures and stone fortification elements. The finds recorded at the excavation sites were analyzed, including elements of weaponry, jewelry, household items, and objects of religious significance. This allows for an investigation of the social structure of the population and the level of religious and material culture among the inhabitants of the chronicle-mentioned city. It has been determined that the data from archaeological research allow for a reevaluation of conventional views regarding the date of Zbarazh's founding; in particular, they make it possible to assert that the urban center existed as early as the 9th–10th centuries, which significantly predates the first written mention. The need for comprehensive future research is explained, which will be aimed at expanding the excavation areas and clarifying the features of the fortifications' structures—a prerequisite for a full-scale*

*reconstruction of the development of the Zbarazh fortress and its place within the system of Old Rus fortifications in the region.*

**Keywords:** *Zbarazh Fortress, archaeological research, archaeological research methods, chronicle-mentioned Zbarazh, settlement, fortifications, defense system, cultural layer, localization, dating.*

### **Важливість археологічних досліджень при вивченні Збараської фортеці**

**Янусь Валерій Валерійович,**

аспірант кафедри історії України, археології та спеціальних галузей історичних наук Тернопільського національного педагогічного університету імені Володимира Гнатюка, м. Тернопіль, Україна,  
<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-7232-9254>

**Кіцак Володимир Миронович,**

доцент кафедри історії України, археології та допоміжних галузей історичних наук Тернопільського національного педагогічного університету імені Володимира Гнатюка, м. Тернопіль, Україна,  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7180-0588>

**Анотація.** У статті проведений комплексний аналіз значення археологічних розкопок при дослідженні Збараської фортеці як цінного елементу фортифікаційної системи Західного Поділля. Базуючись на писемних джерелах, матеріалах археологічних досліджень та історіографічних напрацюваннях, було простежено основні етапи вивчення літописного міста Збараж та виокремлено ключові проблеми його точного датування та локалізації. У процесі роботи доведено, що писемні згадки дають доволі

фрагментарну та часто суперечливу інформацію, тож не можуть бути єдиним джерелом для вивчення конструктивних особливостей оборонних споруд. Це, своєю чергою, суттєво обмежує можливість їх використання при реконструкції замків. У статті також доведено, що ключову роль у дослідженні Збаразької фортеці відіграють археологічні розкопки, які дають змогу встановити реальні часові рамки розвитку городища, визначити межі його розміщення та виявити особливості фортифікаційних конструкцій. Проаналізовано результати досліджень XIX–XXI ст., серед яких роботи А. Кіркора, І. Сівковни, М. Ягодинської та інших науковців, завдяки яким зараз відома локація літописного міста та чітко простежені етапи формування ровів і валів, а також зафіксований багатощаровий характер укріплень. Окрему увагу у статті приділено результатам археологічних досліджень 1990-х років, у процесі яких було окреслено контури фортеці, зафіксовано оборонні вали та виявлено чималий культурний шар, що свідчить про постійне системне заселення території. Також встановлено, що фортифікаційна система Збаражса формувалася поступово із використанням природних особливостей мисового рельєфу та поєднанням різних будівельних традицій, зокрема дерев'яно-земляних конструкцій та кам'яних елементів укріплень. Проаналізовано знахідки, зафіксовані на місцях розкопів, серед яких – елементи озброєння, прикраси, побутові речі та предмети культового призначення. Це дає змогу дослідити соціальну структуру населення, рівень релігійної та матеріальної культури мешканців літописного міста. Визначено, що дані археологічних досліджень дозволяють переглянути звичні уявлення про дату заснування Збаражса, зокрема завдяки ним є змога стверджувати, що міський осередок існував ще у IX–X ст., що значно передре першій писемній згадці. Пояснено необхідність комплексних досліджень у майбутньому, які будуть спрямовані на розширення площ розкопок та уточнення особливостей

конструкції укріплень, що є необхідним для повноцінної реконструкції розвитку Збараської фортеці та її місця в системі давньоруських укріплень краю.

**Ключові слова:** Збараська фортеця, археологічні дослідження, методика археологічних досліджень, літописний Збараж, городище, фортифікації, оборонна система, культурний шар, локалізація, датування.

The defensive structures of the chronicle-mentioned cities of the Ternopil region constitute an important component of Ukraine's archaeological heritage and require comprehensive scientific research. The territory of modern-day Ternopil region has been a zone of active military clashes for centuries, which led to the gradual formation of a developed system of fortifications.

Scholars attribute 24 hillforts in the territory of Western Podillia to the 10th–11th centuries. Twenty of these continued to exist in the 12th–13th centuries, and five became the foundation for chronicle-mentioned cities—Terebovlia, Mykulyn, Zbarazh, Moklekiv (Ternopil region), and Bakota (Khmelnyskyi region). All these settlements were located on well-protected high promontories, usually facing south (southwest or southeast). Occasionally, settlements were situated facing east or west, and only in rare cases—facing northwest. These promontories were bounded by steep cliffs and deep ravines, at the bottom of which there were usually rivers and streams. The edges of the settlements were fortified with an escarpment or rampart, and on the inner side—with several rows of ditches and ramparts. Settlements with 1–4 ramparts, according to M. Kuchera's typology, are classified as “simple”—those in which only the inner part is fortified. The settlement in Staryi Zbarazh is a prime example of this [1, p. 22].

The chronicle-mentioned Zbarazh (Zbirazh) was one of the region's major centers. However, written sources containing references to the city do not allow for

a comprehensive study of the stages of the fortress's development. They are often quite fragmentary and do not allow for a precise determination of the chronology of construction and the layout of the fortifications. In fact, most chronicle accounts are limited to brief reports of sieges or political events, without providing a description of the defensive structures. The dates indicated in the chronicles may also be somewhat inaccurate.

Under such conditions, researchers rely on archaeological excavations, which become a key source of information. The results of these expeditions make it possible to trace the specifics of the construction of defensive structures, as well as the technical features of ramparts and timber-earth structures. Additionally, the discovery of household items, weapons, and religious artifacts reveals new aspects of the daily and religious life of the inhabitants of ancient Zbarazh.

**The purpose of this article** is to determine the role of archaeological research in studying the history of the Zbarazh Fortress, to assess its significance for refining the chronology and location of the ancient city, as well as for studying the characteristics of its defensive system and the cultural and everyday life of its inhabitants.

In the historiography of Ukraine and neighboring countries, the history of the city of Zbarazh and its castle complex has not been sufficiently covered. Despite the fortress's important role in the military and political processes of various historical periods, little attention has been paid to this archaeological site. Most works are descriptive in nature or focus on individual events, which does not allow for a comprehensive understanding of the castle's evolution and its defensive system. These are typically literary and historical works describing the events of the so-called "seven-week siege" of 1649. The Nesvizh-Zbarazh princely family (who, in fact, owned Zbarazh) is mentioned in the context of the "genealogical war" of the early 20th century. [2, p. 6] Their lives and activities were studied by V. Semkovych,

Z. Radzyminsky, and A. Prokhaska. Recently, this issue was also raised by S. Kelembet. L. Demchenko conducted research on the documents (mostly wills) of the Zbarazh princely family. V. Sobchuk described the defensive fortifications of the princely families of Southern Volhynia (including the Zbarazkys) in his works. The works of A. Cholovsky, E. Kovalchik, A. Milobezky, Y. Nelgovsky, and I. and O. Okonchenko are also thorough. Here, the numbers of the works in the list can be provided in parentheses

The results of archaeological excavations are particularly valuable—they make it possible to pinpoint the location and chronology of the fortifications' construction and to determine the nature of the defensive structures. A. Kirkor made a significant contribution to the study of historical sites in the Ternopil region, including research on Zbarazh. As a representative of the Vienna Central Commission for the Search and Preservation of Ancient Monuments, he organized thorough excavations and extensive research in the Terebovlia, Zbarazh, Borshchiv, Buchach, and other counties of the Ternopil Voivodeship. Among the sites studied by A. Kirkor were Old Rus earthen and burial mound cemeteries in the villages of Saryi Zbarazh, Vovchivtsi, Horodok, Verkhniaivtsi, Dzvenyhorod, Hrytsivtsi, Zhnyborody, Pidhaichyky, Tovstoluh (Zastinka), Semeniv, Cherneliv-Ruskyi, and others [3]. Among other things, in 1883 A. Kirkor investigated the construction of a ground-level arched rampart in Zbarazh. He discovered a stone rampart 0.7 m high, as well as residential and domestic structures with a hearth. In the rampart's embankment, the researcher found fragments of 11th–13th-century pottery, a clay spindle whorl, an iron spearhead, ceramic beads, a fragment of a glass bracelet, and the bones of domestic animals ( ) [4, pp. 52–53]. He also investigated the inner ring rampart and the inner area of the settlement (partially). The rampart was erected on an artificially leveled mainland site. On its surface, the remains of charred wooden logs were found, from which the log structure was built.

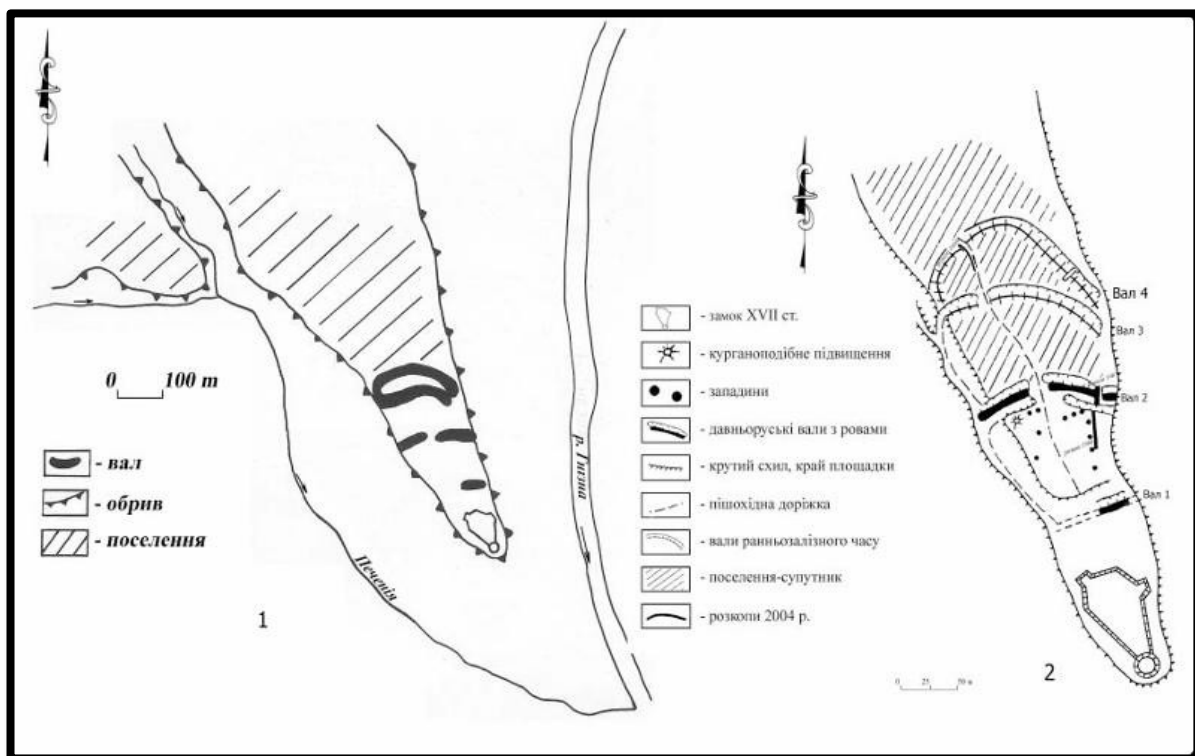
A unique find was discovered on the grounds of the Zbarazh Fortress during archaeological excavations conducted by Polish researcher Irena Siwkowska. In the 1930s, a silver hoard weighing 0.5 kg was unearthed on the grounds of Zbarazh. The find consisted of twenty items that were likely used as women's jewelry. Among them were seven beads, three round hryvnias (necklaces), six semicircular brooches with beads strung on them, two ornamented round bracelets, and two triangular pendants. This find is dated to the 12th–13th centuries. It is currently housed in one of Warsaw's museums [5].

After this expedition, research on Zbarazh Castle was not conducted for a long time. It resumed in the 1990s. During this period, the fortress fell into even greater disrepair, and the stones that had previously been part of the castle walls were used to construct farm buildings for the new collective farm. However, in May 1997, an archaeological survey was conducted at the site of the castle and the surrounding areas, led by M. Filipchuk. As a result of these excavations, the contours of the fortress were identified at the location where the defensive rampart with a moat and walls had previously been recorded. A month later, in June 1997, excavations began on the territory of Castle Hill, led by M. Yagodynska [2, pp. 43–44]. The results of these studies once again raised questions about the time of Zbarazh's founding and the beginning of the construction of its fortifications. The reason is that sources and documentary references point to certain chronological boundaries, while archaeological finds indicate the presence of significantly older cultural layers.

The town of Zbarazh is first mentioned in writing in the *\*Galician-Volhynian Chronicle\** of 1211 [1, p. 41]. This mention is directly linked to the course of the civil war that began after the death of Prince Roman Mstislavich. [6, p. 143]. The text of the Rus' Chronicle according to the Ipatiev manuscript states: "...and then Lesko could not take Halych but went to war around Terebovlia and around Moklekovo and Zbirazh and Bikovno, took the Poles and the Rus' and took a great

number of captives and returned to the Poles...” However, as V. Sobchuk points out, the dates in this chronicle are inaccurate. According to L. Makhnovets’ translation, where the dates are given in accordance with the latest historical research, the events related to Zbarazh took place in the spring of 1214 [2, pp. 21–22]. However, based on the results of modern archaeological research, there are reasons to believe that the city existed even before the first written mention.

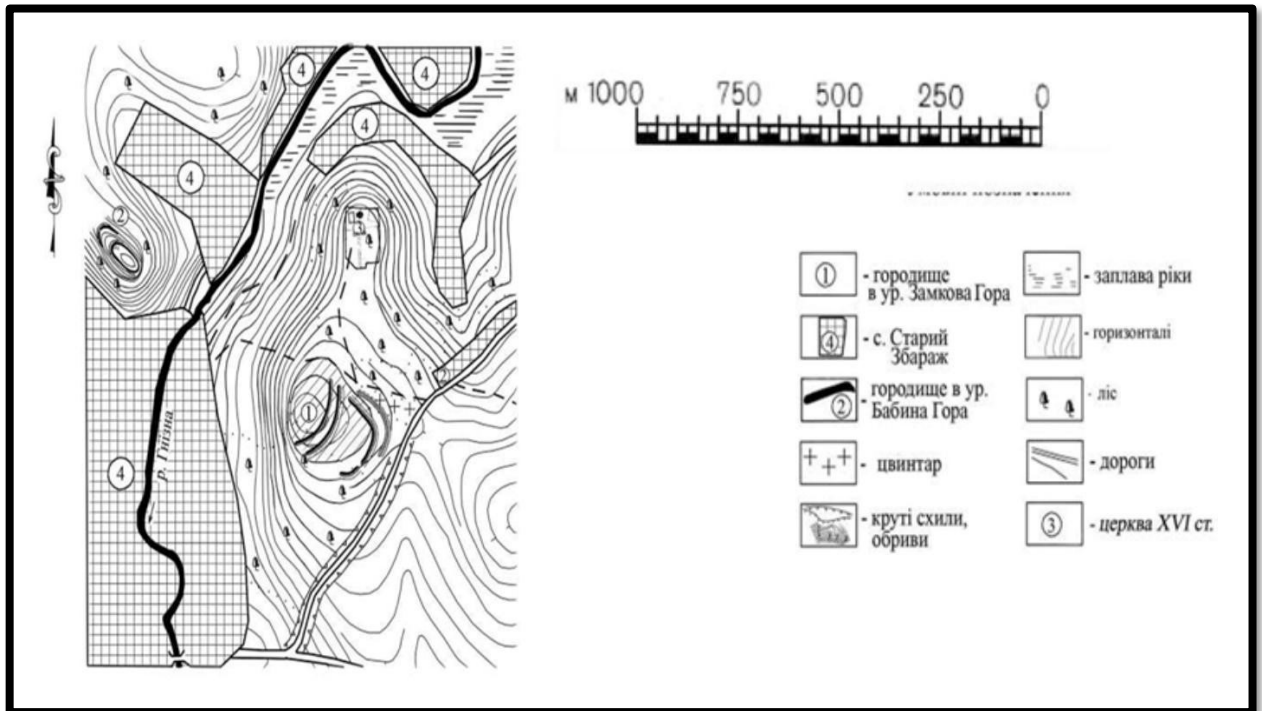
The known history of the Zbarazh fortress begins with the chronicle-mentioned settlement, which Leszek the White never managed to capture. The chronicle-mentioned Zbarazh, excavated by M. Yagodynska, is located on the border of the villages of Staryi Zbarazh and Zaluzhzhia in the Ternopil district. The town was established on a section of the Tovtry Ridge. Traditionally, the settlement was situated on the narrowest part of the promontory. The promontory had an elongated shape with a sharp natural drop in the southern section ( Fig. 1 ), which provided additional advantages for defense.



**Fig. 1. Terebovlia in the Chronicles: 1 – map showing the location of the citadel and the main satellite settlements; 2 – plan of the settlement (drawing by B. Tymoshchuk)**

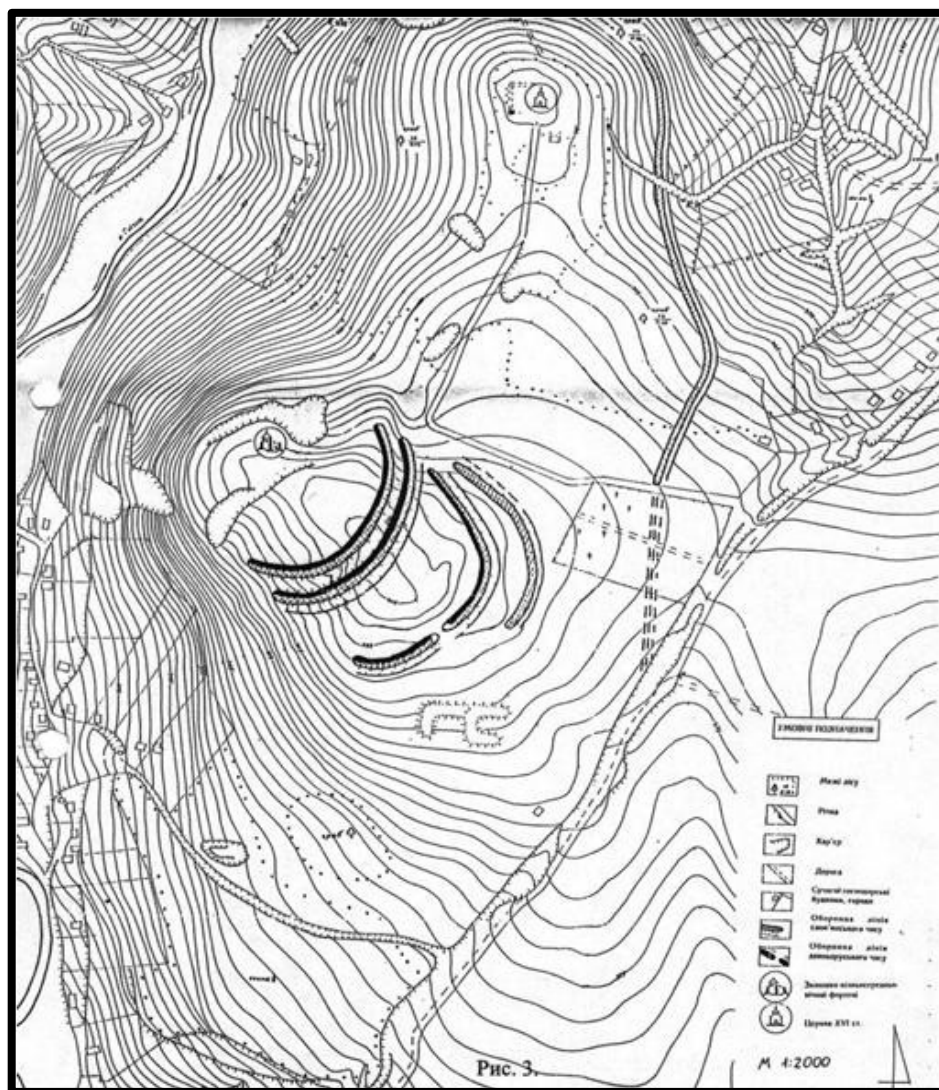
On the landward side, the settlement was protected by arc-shaped rows of ramparts and ditches (four ramparts, five ditches), the first and second of which date to the Old Rus period.

It comprises two settlements located on the summits of Zamkova and Babina Hills, on promontory-like projections of the Gnizna River ( Fig. 2 ).



*Fig. 2. The village of Staryi Zbarazh in Zbarazh District (illustration by M. Filipchuk)*

They date to the 10th–first half of the 13th centuries. The settlement on Zamkova Hora is encircled on the flat side by four arc-shaped ramparts, three of which date to the Old Rus period, and one to the Early Slavic period. [1, p. 41]. The inner bailey was destroyed by construction during the Lithuanian-Polish period, as well as by trenches from World War I and economic activity in the 20th century. Near the settlement, in the Babina Gora tract, two ramparts were discovered—an inner, ring-shaped one, and a second, arc-shaped one on the plain side. (Fig. 3)



*Fig. 3. Zbarazh as described in chronicles (illustration by M. Yagodynska)*

In addition to these two peaks, there is another one in the Zbarazh area—Chernecha Hora (Monastyrok tract)—which is occupied by a 16th-century fortified church. No fortifications have been identified at this site, but a 12th–13th-century settlement has been discovered.

The presence of a cultural layer, discovered in particular on three Old Rus defensive ramparts, unequivocally indicates the location of the chronicle-mentioned fortress-settlement on Knyazha Hora (13th century). However, the existence of a defensive rampart from the Slavic period “pushes back” the dating of the princely

town by 3–4 centuries. [2, pp. 29–31].

In 1997, during archaeological research on Zamkova Hora, conducted under the direction of M. Yagodynska, two excavations were established. The first of these was in the southern part of the hill. It covered fragments of the defensive rampart and the moat located in front of it. The 2.5-meter-thick cultural layer discovered at this site indicates that the area was bustling with activity in the 9th century. Armed conflicts also took place here in later years. Evidence of this is the significant number of arrowheads found during the excavations. They likely remained after numerous Tatar raids on this territory. A significant number of ceramic pottery fragments and animal remains were also discovered at this site. These findings suggest that the territory of ancient Zbarazh was a place of settlement for many generations. This theory is confirmed by another discovery: at a depth of 1.7 meters, archaeologists uncovered a unique piece of women's jewelry—a silver brooch consisting of two rounded plates connected by smaller plates. This ornament, 5–7 cm in diameter, has a tapered upper part with loops on both sides of the base. It was adorned with 14 cone-shaped artificial pearls. A distinctive feature is the ornamentation—the piece features a transparent hexagonal crystal insert backed by a silver plate bearing an image of a “thunderbolt symbol.” Such an accessory could only have been worn by a member of one of the noble families. The Zbarazh family was among them.

In addition to this ornament, archaeologists found a significant number of valuable items in the area of the chronicle-mentioned Zbarazh: a cross-encolpion dated to the first half of the 13th century [7, pp. 175–176, 181], as well as a number of inexpensive ornaments, such as temple rings, glass bracelets, and beads [7, pp. 175–176, 181], as well as a number of inexpensive ornaments, such as temple rings, glass bracelets and beads, twisted and plate-shaped copper bracelets, and a fragment of an imitation bracelet. Additionally, fragments of a horseman's armor (a spur), household items (a spindle whorl, a spindle, an axe, knives, a tubular lock), weapons

(spearheads and arrowheads), etc., were discovered. [1, p. 41]

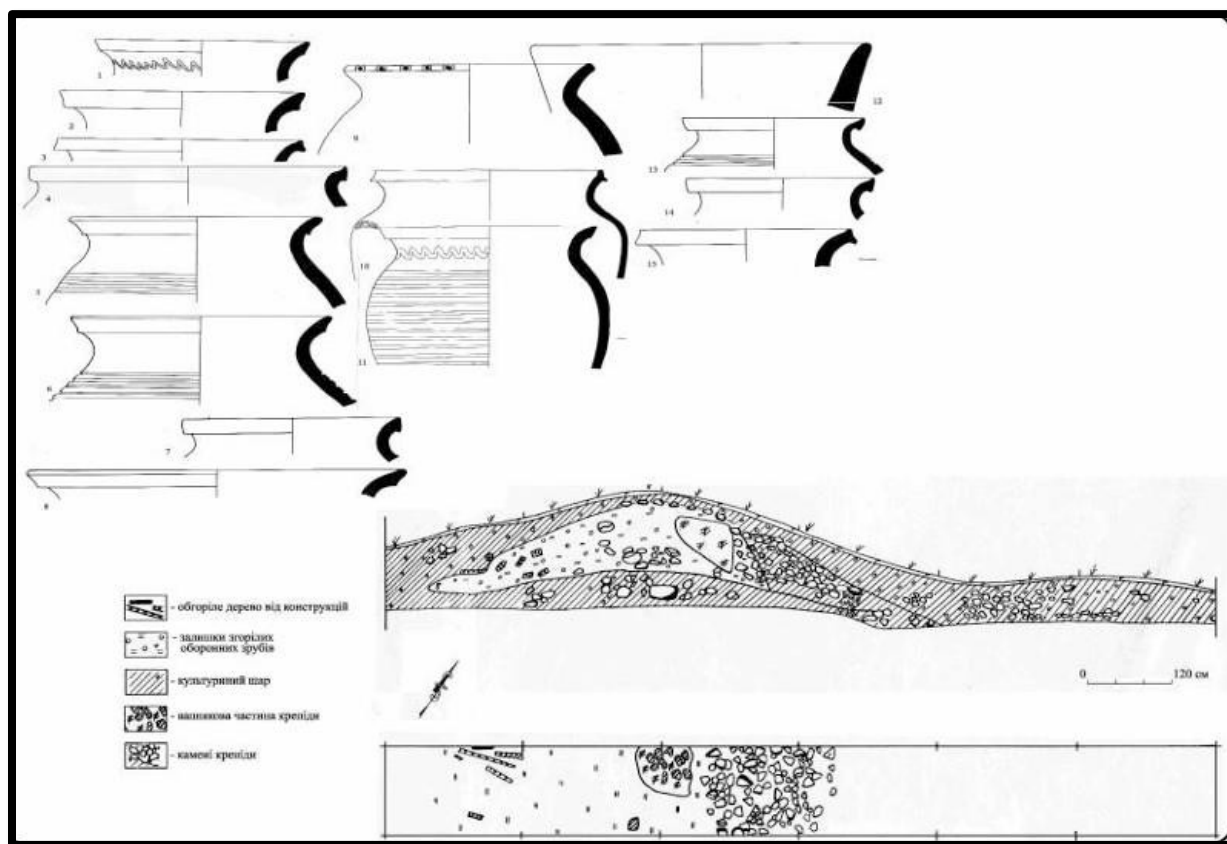
The second excavation was established directly within the fortress grounds. Here, archaeologists discovered the walls of a currently unidentified structure within the fortress. Most likely, this was a building used for domestic purposes. The walls, constructed of hewn sandstone, are fairly well-preserved and have clearly defined contours. The depth of the cultural layer at this site exceeds 2.5 m. During the excavation, a significant number of ceramic shards, several arrowheads, and animal bone fragments were also discovered in the soil. In addition, archaeologists discovered a bronze ring with a mineral ornament. This item was found on the last day of excavations at a depth of over 2.5 m [2, pp. 44–45]

The theory of Zbarazh's earlier founding is also supported by the presence of an urn cremation burial ground discovered by M. Yagodynska on the northern side of the settlement on Zamkova Hora. The burial ground dates to the late 9th–early 10th centuries [8, pp. 144–147]. On the western side of the settlement on Babina Gora, during excavations, A. Kirkor also discovered Old Rus earthen burials. [9, p. 160; 10, pp. 69–70]. To definitively determine the age of the city, additional archaeological research is necessary; however, all of the above-mentioned finds may indicate the urban status of the chronicle-mentioned Zbarazh [1, p. 42].

During the investigation of the inner rampart of the settlement in the village of Saryi Zbarazh (Saryi Zbarazh V, "Babina Hora" site), the use of log structures in combination with a limestone and stone crepidoma was discovered. It adjoined the log structure on the side of the settlement's inner platform. The limestone part of the crepida consisted of stones and large fragments of pottery and molded ceramics from the mid-10th century, joined with cement mortar. ( Fig. 4 ).

As noted by M. Kuchera, in the construction of ramparts at some hillforts in the Middle Dniester region, masonry made of unfired bricks is used. Such structures are typically characteristic of defensive fortifications in cities and date to

the late 10th century [1, p. 28]. It cannot be ruled out that the use of limestone mortar in the rampart structures of the Staryi Zbarazh V settlement indicates the site's urban character as of the 10th century. The second earthen rampart, which A. Kirkor dated to the 11th–13th centuries, had a stone foundation, to which, in turn, farm and residential buildings adjoined on the inner side [4, pp. 52–53]. No remains of huts were found beneath the rampart [1, p. 28].



**Fig. 4. Old Zbarazh V, Zbarazh District, Babina Hora site: I – pottery from the rampart section (1–6 – from the defensive log structure, 7–15 – from the limestone core of the rampart); II – section of the ring rampart (drawing by M. Yagodynska)**

Overall, the results of the study of the inner ring rampart located at the settlement in the Babina Gora tract, the discovered fragments of 10th-century pottery, and the destroyed cultural layer within the citadel allow for the formulation of a theory regarding an earlier date for the founding of Zbarazh. According to M.

Yagodynska, the city emerged in the first half of the 10th century [1, p. 43]

Thus, the analysis conducted once again confirms the view that archaeological research is a decisive tool in the study of fortifications. If we consider this issue using the example of Zbarazh—the written sources that have survived to the present day contain only fragmentary mentions of the city and provide neither a detailed description of its fortifications, nor the characteristics of the rampart structures, nor the stages of the fortress's reconstruction. In fact, chronicles provide general information, but it is always insufficient for a comprehensive historical analysis. It is archaeological materials that make it possible to establish the actual chronological boundaries of the settlement's formation, its exact location, and to determine the nature of the defensive structures. Excavations conducted in the city of Zbarazh and its surroundings have revealed a multi-layered cultural stratum, the presence of Slavic and Old Rus ramparts, and the use of limestone and stone fortifications and log structures; these findings provide valuable information about the development of the fortification system. Meanwhile, the discovery of ceramic fragments, weapons, jewelry, and ritual objects expands our understanding of the social structure and daily life of the region's inhabitants at that time.

Archaeological excavations are of particular importance for dating and locating the Zbarazh mentioned in chronicles. The cultural layers and burial grounds from the 9th–10th centuries indicate an earlier start to urban development than indicated in written sources.

Further research on this topic should focus on expanding the excavation areas and clarifying the structural features of the ramparts and internal structures. Only a comprehensive study that takes into account both the analysis of sources and the conclusions of archaeologists who worked at the sites will allow for a full reconstruction of the development of the Zbarazh fortress and its place within the system of defensive fortifications in the Ternopil region.

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