

E. Razhiyeva
Department of History, Master Student
Research Supervisor: Candidate of History,
Assistant Professor P.I.Natykach
Language Supervisor: Assistant Professor A.V.Kuznyetsova

HISTORICAL RESEARCH OF SCYCYTHIAN MOUNDS

Scythian culture is a very interesting page in the ancient history of Ukraine. Scythia is a mysterious and enigmatic world investigated by many famous archaeologists. Historians and archaeologists have been discussing the question of the first settlements of Scythians throughout Europe and then in Ukraine. There are many items and monuments of that past era to be found in Ukrainian museums.

The objective of the article is to provide an insight into the history of investigation of Scythian burial mounds, searched through by casual as well as professional expeditions, to point out particular correlations and analyze the system of investigations which led to historical discoveries of global significance.

The research of Scythian burial mounds was started in 1763 with the excavation (more precisely, destruction) of Chervona Mohyla (Lyta Mohyla). This was accomplished due to an order passed by the General Governor of Novorossia O.P. Melgunov. The latter had no knowledge nor notion of Scythians, which accounts for the fact that we now have no data as to the sizes, structure and character of the inhumation sites. The whole stock of the excavated items from the mounds were presented as a gift to Empress Catherine II [5. c. 2–12].

By the end of 1830, an inhumation site in the Crimea was known to contain a considerable number of valuable items. In early September 1830, P. Dubrux worked at the Kul – Oba site. A big amount of stone was carried away, the work was nearly finished but it seemed to him that the mound might contain a grave. This was reported by him to Stempkovsky, who ordered that the work should be continued. On September 22 at 16 p.m. Dubrux managed it into the inhumation chamber. At first it seemed to have been ravaged, judging by the way it looked, but later on he found a number of golden items. Two graves were found, both worth consideration: a male and a female ones. The mound was not researched fully, as it was robbed one night because of careless guards [1].

In 1859, the Archaeological Committee was created by the imperial ministry which was aimed at excavating ancient sites. The research came to be better conducted at the point, since it was those who already had some experience that started doing it regularly. At that time Ivan Zabyelin began his career in archaeology. Over 1859 – 1861 he excavated a number of mounds near Dnipropetrovsk. In 1862 the research of a mound called Chortomlyk was started. The monument was 19 m high and 100 m in diameter. The items found there included bronze and gold hryvnias, gold pendants, broad gold bracelets, swords, gold rings, arrowheads, vessels, a big silver amphora and bronze cauldrons.

Later on, there followed a long pause in the research of Scythian mounds, with scientists overlooking the terrains due to inexplicable reasons. It was as late as 1912 – 1913 that M. Veselovsky, a professor at St. Petersburg University, eventually discovered the Solokha mound. There a number of items were found, including a bronze post, kitchenware, gold hryvnias and bracelets, pendants, a bronze helmet, iron armor, a quiver with arrows, a bronze axe. The most famous find was a gold haircomb, depicting three warriors fighting. All the figures were cast separately, attached to the comb and polished [3, c. 37–52].

The October revolution settled new priorities in archaeological research. The analysis of the revolution of the human society in the Antiquity, based on common people's labour, became of principal interest. Thus ordinary mounds and Scythian settlements began to be researched. This stage was initiated by O. Terenozhkin of the Institute of Archaeology at the Academy of the USSR, with his excavations in Melitopol.

Inside the Melitopol mound, a great complex of valuables was found, though the mound turned out to have been plundered earlier. Here, 4000 gold items (women's ornaments) were found, testifying that it was a Scythian queen's grave.

The subsequent discoveries of Scythian burial mounds are largely due to new construction in the South of the country, such as irrigation systems, quarries etc. Special finance was given out for research of that kind.

O. Terenozkin in collaboration with B. Mozolevsky conducted the research into the sites known as Chortomlyk, Strashna Mohyla, Haymanova Mohyla.

A big contribution into the research of Scythian burial mounds was made by Boris Mozolevsky. Beginning from 1970, he started individual expeditions to Scythian mounds. This constituted a great part of his life, as he approached the matter with all seriousness and devotion [4, c. 137–144].

The find known as the Golden Pectoral gained the greatest recognition and fame. This was found on June 21, 1971 by B. Mozolevsky in the mound of Tovsta Mohyla. Apart from it, the items excavated included gold plates, large pendants, a cast hryvnia. In general the site possessed a great complex of finds, even despite its earlier plunderings. These items give us an opportunity to make conclusions concerning the history of Scythia, its customs and rites, its kings and queens, people's occupations and their mode of life [4, c.145].

LITERATURE

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