

## THE HILL NAMED STOJKOVIČ

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The aim of this paper is to inform the scientific community about the fact practically not known outside Russia (e.g. Trayner, 1997) that the highest hill (gora in Russian) at the site of the fall of Tunguska body is named Stojkovič in honour of Afanasij Stojkovič, as Russians write his name. Serb by origin, Atanasije Stojković is considered as the finder of the Russian meteoritics.

Born in Ruma, in 1773, Stojković graduated from the University of Göttingen, where he obtained the title of Doctor of Philosophy, according to rules of those days. After several years spent in Budim, he decided to take advantage of the foundation of new universities in Russian empire and accepted the post of the professor of physics at the University of Harkov, in 1804. His three volumes-textbook "ФΥΣΙΚΑ", the first textbook of physics in Serbian, published in Budim, recommended him well for this job. In Harkov he became very interested in the reborn science about "the stones falling from the sky". He was the contemporary witness to the great fight about origin of the objects which we now call meteorites.

After millenia when mankind did not contest the fact that some "stones" occasionally fall from the sky, majority of scientists of the XVIIth century denied celestial origin of these bodies. The collection of such stones was thrown out of the Imperial museum in Vienna (Krinov, 1955). The first scientist who introduced a seriously elaborated hypothesis about the celestial origin of such bodies was Ernst Florens Friedrich Chladni, in his book "Über den Ursprung der von Pallas gefundenen und anderer ihr ähnlicher Eisenmassen", published in Riga, in 1794. His ideas were not widely accepted by the scientific community until a meteorites shower did struck the town of l'Aigle, in France, in 1803, and the Commission of the Paris Academy of Sciences lead by Biot confirmed this event. Although the scientific community initially was inclined to give the crucial role to Biot in the introduction of the hypothesis about the celestial origin, Chladny after many years of struggle won the priority.

Stojković got very interested in this turbulent subject and studied it thoroughly. Meteorites were the subject of his inaugural speech at the ceremony of his inauguration as the rector of the University of Harkov. He wrote the book "The Air Stones and their Origin", the first monograph on the subject in the world (Fig 1.). In this book Atanasije Stojković critically collected the data on meteorites from the West European literature, added reports on previously unknown falls of meteorites in Russia and reviewed the

**ВОЗДУШНЫХЪ  
КАМНЯХЪ**  
**И**  
**ИХЪ ПРОИЗХОЖДЕНІИ.**

**Афанасія Стойковича,**

**Свободныхъ Художествъ и Философій Доктора,  
ИМПЕРАТОРСКАГО Харьковскаго Универси-  
тета Профессора Физики П. О. Ученыхъ Об-  
ществъ, Королевскихъ Геттингскаго и Прагскаго,  
Естественныхъ Испытательныхъ Енскаго и Москов-  
скаго, Варшавскаго Любителей наукъ и Мо-  
сковскаго Общества соревнованія лечеб-  
ныхъ и физическихъ наукъ, члена.**

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*De hoc multi multa, omnes aliquid, nemo satis.*

**Надпись Энзишгеймскаго воздушнаго камня.**

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**ВЪ ХАРЬКОВѢ,**  
**Въ Университетской Типографіи.**  
**1807 года.**

Fig. 1. The front page of the Afanasij Stojkovič's book about "Air Stones and their Origin" – the first monograph about meteorites.

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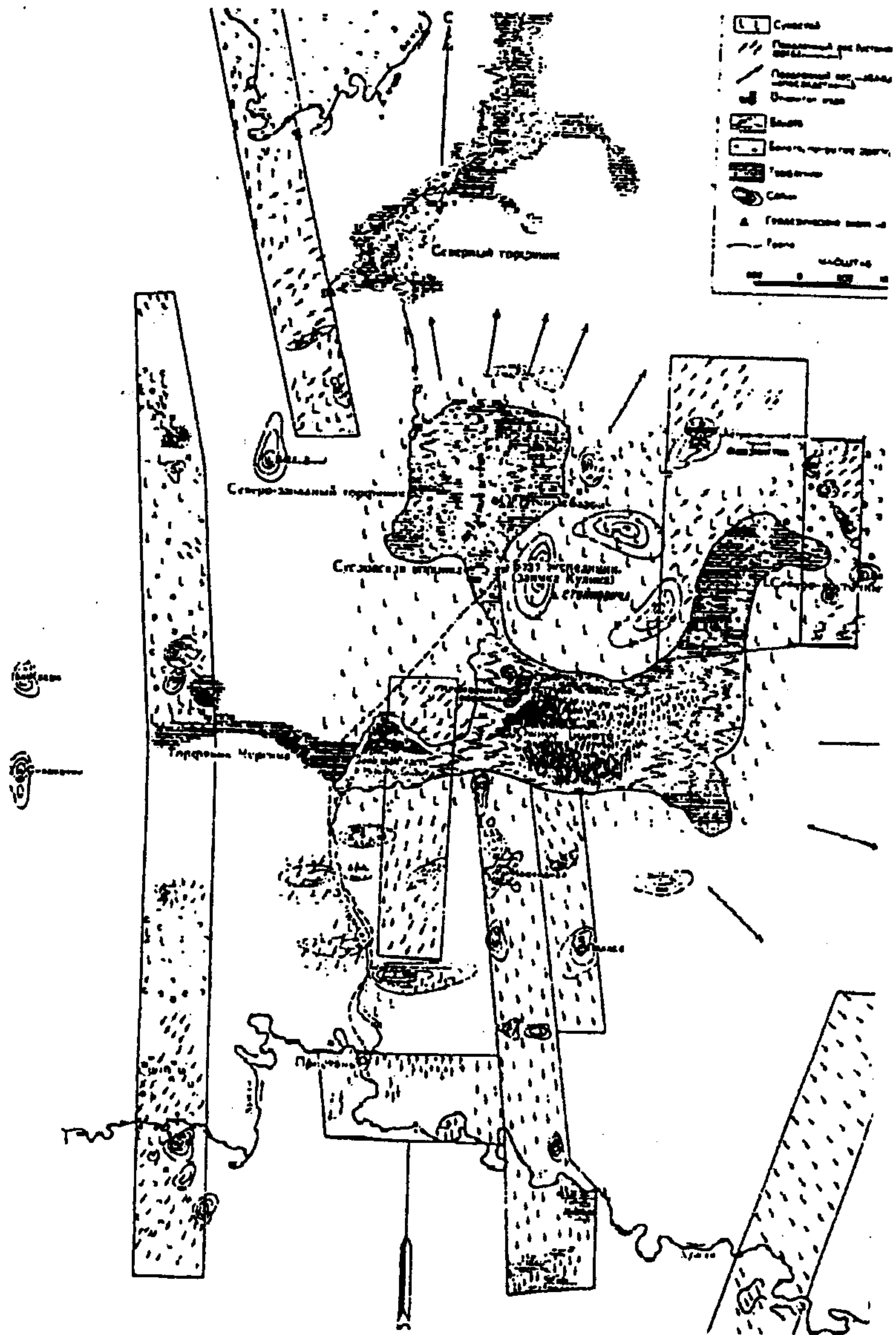


Fig. 2. The map of the epicentre of the Tunguska event. The hill near the centre of the map is labeled as г. СТОЙКОВИЧА what means the Stojkovič's hill. At the bottom of the hill was the base of the Kulik's expedition.



hypothesis concerning the origin of meteorites, giving arguments pro et contra. He himself gave the arguments relating to the hypotheses about meteorites being born in the universe (Milogradov-Turin, 1995).

His final opinion was that he "should not and cannot solve their origin". He also said:

"The subject is too new. Scientists will investigate it further, make new hypotheses and present this phenomenon much clearer.

For me it is enough to expose all these views. The presentation of all possible opinions has a benefit because it leaves to every reader to accept freely what he thinks is the most reliable." (Stojkovich, 1807).

He published an article about Russian meteorites in the famous journal of those days *Annalen der Physik*, in 1809 (Poggendorff, 1863).

He succeeded in getting his contemporaries in Russia interested in meteorites. Stojković's book had, according to the well known Russian scientist Jevgenij Krinov (1955), "great significance for spreading the knowledge about meteorites in Russia". He was the first scientist in Russia interested in this subject and influenced the development of meteoritics in this country.

Therefore, the famous researcher of the Tunguska event Leonid Kulik gave, in 1928, the name Stojkovič to the hill above the site of the fall of the Tunguska body (Bronstejn, 1999). The map of the region of Stojakovič's name is given in Fig 2. A good colour photograph of the hill named Stojkovič may be found in the review article about the Tunguska event by Trayner (1996).

Stojković lived long enough to see that Chladny's ideas won. Stojković, particularly after leaving the University of Charkhov, began to be interested in other, very diverse, subjects. He became the member of the Russian Academy of Sciences. He died in Sankt Peterburg, in 1832 (e.g. Đokić, 1995).

More about his life and the work can be found in the references quoted below.

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