

# The first early urban centers in Little Poland and the policy of the first Piast' dynasty

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## Zusammenfassung:

Im Gebiet Kleinpolens lassen sich bestimmte Facetten der Stadtentwicklung näher untersuchen. Im westlichen Bereich, der ehemaligen Region Wislanie, ist das nur für Krakau und Wiślica möglich, im Osten ist besonders Sandomierz von Bedeutung, welches von Gallus Anonymus als 'sedes regni principalis' bezeichnet wurde. Dabei handelt es sich wahrscheinlich um das erste städtische Zentrum der Piasten außerhalb Grosspolens. Um 970 entwickelte sich in dieser Region ein Netzwerk neuer befestigter Orte. Der Autor ist der Auffassung, dass diese Städte gegründet wurden, um die Ostgrenzen des Polnischen Staates gegen die Kiewer Rus' zu verteidigen. Sandomierz als neues politisches und administratives Zentrum der Piasten spielte auch bei der Übernahme Krakaus von den Tschechen um 989 eine wesentliche Rolle. Im Gegensatz zu den Verhältnissen im Ostteil Kleinpolens, vollzog sich dies relativ friedlich. Es gibt keinerlei archäologische Hinweise auf größere Unruhen in den alteingesessenen Zentren, auch nicht in Krakau, das kontinuierlich seit dem 9. Jh. wuchs. Es ist erstaunlich, dass die Piasten zur Verdeutlichung ihrer Herrschaft im Umland Krakaus keine neuen Befestigungen errichteten, so wie sie es in anderen Teilen Polens getan hatten.

## Abstract:

Some peculiarities of early urbanisation can be investigated within the territory of Little Poland. In the western part of the region, in the old territory of Wislanie, only Cracow and Wiślica can be associated with the earliest phase of state formation, in the eastern part special attention is paid to Sandomierz, which was called 'sedes regni principalis' by Gallus Anonymus, and was probably the first Piast urban centre beyond Great Poland. Around 970 a network of new fortified places appeared in the landscape around Sandomierz. The author believes that these new towns were founded to protect the eastern border of the Polish state against Kiev Rus. Sandomierz, the new political and administrative centre of the Piasts, also played a fundamental role in taking Cracow from the Czech's around 989. Contrary to the areas of eastern Little Poland, this act was achieved relatively peacefully. There is no archaeological evidence for a great upheaval in the old indigenous centres, including Cracow, which was growing continuously almost since the 9<sup>th</sup> century. It is surprising that the Piasts did not erect new centres to symbolise their sovereignty in the area around Cracow, as they have done in other parts of Poland.

## Introduction

The Slavic towns of the early Middle Ages were, for many years since WWII, perceived as a culmination of the slow socio-economic and political changes, which had been taking place in central and eastern Europe for centuries. The condition for their creation was a highly developed agrarian and livestock-rearing economy, capable of supporting parts of the population which were not directly occupied in agriculture. The predecessors of the early urban settlements were craft and trade centers. The direct connection between the stronghold and settlement (*podgrodzie*) which was often also fortified formed a new type of

settlement. It is assumed that various factors were involved in creating towns. However the most decisive role was probably played by specialized craftsmanship, the markets and exchange networks, political conditions and the people connected with rituals and cults. The first phases of the earliest towns were called 'proto-towns' and their origins were dated to the pre-state period, usually to the late 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1</sup>.

The progress in research and especially the more extensive use of dendrochronology (for dating) which took place in the 1990s resulted in a critical re-evaluation of many of these assumptions<sup>2</sup>. Now we can

<sup>1</sup> Hensel 1963; Leciejewicz 1972.

<sup>2</sup> Krąpiec 1998; Kurnatowska 1999.

say, that for the majority of cases, Polish towns formed only after the appearance of the state, that is from the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD. Some of these urban-stronghold centers (this is the appropriate name for the phase of urban centers prior to the rise of Medieval chartered towns) played a key part in the process of creating and strengthening the state and many of them have retained their high standing till today.

In Little Poland – which is the subject of this paper – the urbanization pattern is particularly interesting. One can observe the high urbanisation of the eastern part of the region and surprisingly – very low urbanization of the western part of the region, where, besides Cracow, only Wiślica can be taken into account (fig. 1). How does one explain such differences in urbanisation in the same region and how can the factors responsible for such a pattern be defined?

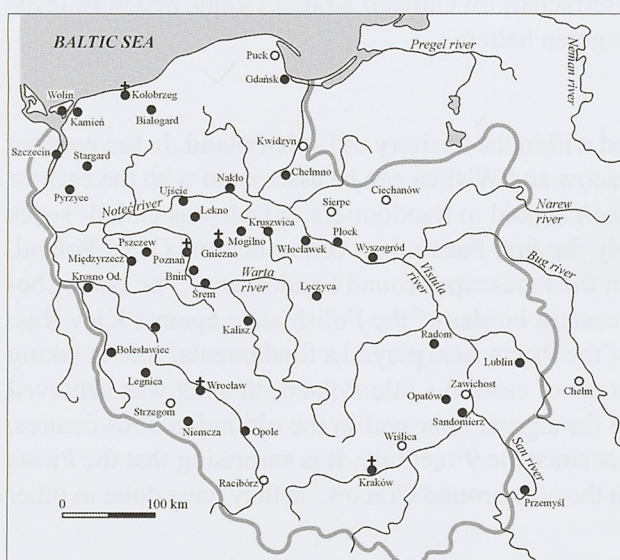


Fig. 1: Polish towns with a history of a thousand years. Early urban centers whose origins are determined by archaeological evidence are marked with black circles; the centers which require further verification are marked with white circles. Bishoprics created at the Gniezno Summit are marked with crosses (after A. Buko; digital processing: M. Trzeciecki).

### Cracow and its “long durée”

Cracow is one of the few Polish towns (and the only one in Little Poland) which has been developing continuously from before the mid-10<sup>th</sup> century and which has retained its high standing in the structures of the Piast monarchy<sup>3</sup>. What is more, at the birth of the Piast state, Cracow was already a metropolis on

a European scale. Ibrahim ibn Yaqub seems to suggest that it was considered, together with Prague, the most important town under Bohemia rule<sup>4</sup>. Archaeology, however, has so far shed only a limited light on the origins of the town.

Cracow developed on fertile loess soils, in an area rich in natural raw materials such as saline springs, deposits of iron ores (or lead and silver in the area of the town of Olkusz) and quarries of stone suitable for construction. It lay on trade routes of international and local importance. During the formation of the Piast dynasty Cracow was incorporated in Mieszko's domain in the late 10<sup>th</sup> century. Its high standing at the very beginning of the Polish state was increased by one of the four bishoprics established at the Gniezno Summit.

In the plan of the urban center preceding the street layout of the Medieval chartered town there were three settlement zones (fig. 2). The southernmost is Wawel Hill where a dense cluster of houses was built at least from the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD. At the beginning of state formation, Wawel became a place where nu-

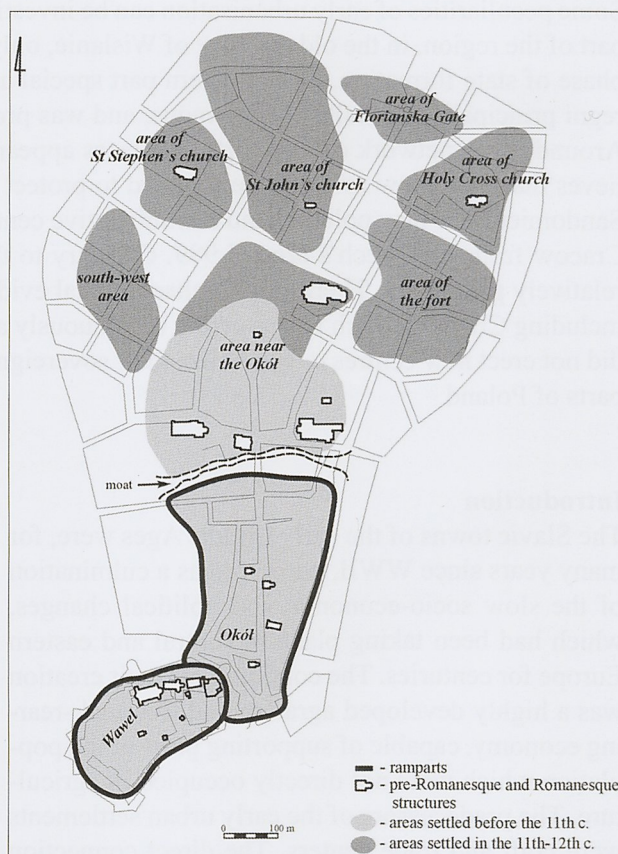


Fig. 2: Topography of Early Medieval Cracow (after K. Radwański/A. Żaki; digital processing: M. Trzeciecki).

<sup>3</sup> Radwański 1975.

<sup>4</sup> Labuda 1999, 147.

merous structures, both sacral and secular determined its symbolic function, defining the status and authority of the ruling elite. For that reason, the main settlement area moved to the lower-lying area to the north, where the intensive settlement at so-called Okół developed along modern Grodzka Street. The earliest settlement horizon in that part of the town goes back to the first half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century. At the turn of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries a settlement surrounded by a palisade was built. The next habitation structures appeared during the first half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. At a later date (the early 11<sup>th</sup> to mid-13<sup>th</sup> century) the settlement was surrounded by a timber-laced rampart of stone and earth with an external ditch. At that time several Early Medieval churches existed in the area, the earliest of which is known as St. Andrew's church and was most probably built in the late 11<sup>th</sup> century.

At the turn of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries the church of St. Adalbert was built to the north of the Okół, in the area of the Late Medieval market square. This is the only church of such an early date which is not sited on Wawel Hill. Only the remains of the floor and outer walls of its earliest wooden construction remained. It has been established that the first church was a small (6 x 9 m) structure with a rectangular chancel, an almost square nave and a narrow narthex. In the next decades the church was successively rebuilt and enlarged. At the same time other settlement concentrations developed in the area of the later chartered town near St. John's church, in the area known as Gródek, and a later one, of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, near St. Stephen's church close to the northern end of Floriańska Street as well as in the area of the church of the Blessed Virgin Mary<sup>5</sup>.

One of the main questions concerns the 'tribal' origins of the town and its importance in the pre-Piast period. Cracow is considered as having been a leading fortified settlement of the proto-state phase known for many decades in the literature as the 'state of the Vislane'<sup>6</sup>. There are at least several premises supporting the claim that the center had a high standing. It has the monumental Wanda and Krak Mounds, which are unique in Poland and date to the pre-state period according to a long-lasting tradition<sup>7</sup>. The discovery of a hoard of iron like-axe currency bars (*hryvna*) at the foot of Wawel Hill at 13 Kanonicza



Fig. 3: Plan of the first Early Medieval structures on Wawel Hill: 1 – quadrangular structure, 2 – remains of cruciform chapel, 3 – tetrakonch church dedicated to St. Felix and St. Adauctus, 4 – fragments of pre- or early Romanesque cathedral, 5 – pre-Romanesque rotunda-baptistry, 6 – two-apse rotunda „B”, 7 – pre-Romanesque church of St. Nicholas, 8 – corner of a pre-Romanesque structure, 9 – early Romanesque palatium, „Hall with 24 Posts”, 10 – Romanesque basilica dedicated to St. Mary the Egyptian, 11 – chapel (?) of the Romanesque *palatium*, 12 – defensive tower, 13 – Romanesque cathedral, 14 – chapel with a rectangular chancel, 15 – Romanesque rotunda, 16 – Romanesque chapel with an apse, 17 – Romanesque church of St. Nicholas (after Z. Pianowski; digital processing: M. Trzecicki).

Street<sup>8</sup> was an archaeological sensation. Excavations also provide examples of imports indicating the links Cracow had in the pre-state period with the Avar Khanate and the Magyar cultural zone<sup>9</sup>.

In comparison to other centers in Poland, Cracow has an exceptionally large number of stone buildings connected with the early stages of the state<sup>10</sup>. At Wawel as many as 7 structures considered as pre-Romanesque have been found (fig. 3). They were first excavated in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the work has been continued from 1948 till today. Not all the earliest structures, however, have left material traces. The number and quality of discoveries of monumental architecture on Wawel Hill dating to the Early Middle Ages is impressive. No other town in Polish lands can be compared to it. However, little is known about the topography of Wawel Hill during the times of the Vislane as well as during the state-formation period. Was it a monotonous, gray, rural landscape, as Andrzej Żaki<sup>11</sup> suggested, or a functionally di-

<sup>5</sup> Radwański 1975.

<sup>6</sup> Widajewicz 1947.

<sup>7</sup> Żaki 1994, 46.

<sup>8</sup> Zaitz 1981.

<sup>9</sup> Poleski 1997.

<sup>10</sup> Zaitz 2001.

<sup>11</sup> Żaki 1994, 51.

verse center with specific defensive structures on Wawel Hill and numerous suburbs forming a well-designed spatial arrangement? There are other, equally important questions. Were there no monumental structures on Wawel Hill until the last decade of the 10<sup>th</sup> century? At present, such a possibility is accepted only with respect to Structure A, the remains of which are imprints of a clay and wood foundation under the north-eastern part of the cathedral. According to Zbigniew Pianowski<sup>12</sup> this was an insulation layer for an above-ground wooden building. Most probably it was a sacral structure consisting of a relatively short chancel and an elongated, square, or rectangular nave. This structure may be associated with the period before Cracow was occupied by Mieszko, but as very little has remained of it, it is difficult to justify this supposition. Andrzej Żaki<sup>13</sup> evaluates the earliest architectural remains of Cracow quite differently. He believes that it is hardly probable that the four earliest Wawel structures (Rotunda A, square structure, Rotunda C, Rotunda B) were built by one generation. According to him it is much more likely that they were erected successively between the year 960 and 1020 during the Bohemian and Polish times.

An interesting aspect of the excavations in Cracow is the discovery of tombs of individuals of high social status. However it is surprising that no warrior burials have been found, and no weapons known from the other regions of the country. The only exception is the burial ground at Zakrzówek, which was used from the turn of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries till the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century<sup>14</sup>. A single burial considered to be a warrior's grave has been recently discovered at the area of Planty Street in Cracow. The burial, dating to the 10<sup>th</sup> – early 11<sup>th</sup> century, is so far a unique find for the area of the city of Cracow itself<sup>15</sup>.

### Wiślica: an abundance of discoveries

The southern Polish town of Wiślica is first mentioned in 1224 as *Vislicia*. In the period after the Second World War, it became more famous than many leading centers of the Polish state. This was due to two elements. The first one is a brief but important remark in *The Life of St. Methodius*, where a similar name appears in a story concerning an anonymous pagan prince who, in the second half of the 9<sup>th</sup> cen-

tury AD, made life exceptionally difficult for the Christians (inhabiting his own land or his neighbors' from the south?) that he attracted the attention of his contemporaries. His actions worried Bishop Methodius, who at that time had his seat in (no place known) Slovakia, that he decided to confront him<sup>16</sup>. *Vislech*, the name of the prince's seat as it is mentioned in the Chronicle, is associated with Wiślica by many researchers. There was another reason for which the scientists' interest focused on the center mentioned above. Quite a long time ago the opinion was expressed according to which Wiślica was to be the capital of the tribal state of the Vislane. This view was shared by one of the most eminent specialists on the Middle Ages, Karol Potkański<sup>17</sup>. That is why Wiślica was included in the 'Millennium' program of research into the origins of the Polish state. At the beginning of the fieldwork it seemed that the researchers would be lucky. Few other centers could boast such spectacular discoveries; not only their number but also their quality were amazing. For how can one explain the presence of two fortified settlements of different dates (?), two rotundas with adjoining palatial structures, remains of several churches, including one whose plan resembled the archaic 'Great Moravian' architecture, a magnificent floor slab with figural engravings discovered in the crypt of the collegiate church, and especially a so-called 'baptismal font' with an adjoining platform, on which the bishop giving the baptism would stand? All these spectacular finds made Wiślica famous<sup>18</sup>. Four sites were chosen for excavation. The first one was the prominent earthwork site with an area of about 2 hectares, located approximately 500 metres away from the modern town on the flood plain of the Nida river (fig. 4). Despite great expectations it did not yield spectacular discoveries, especially in the context of the presumed early origins of the center. It has been established that the fortifications were of two main phases.

The stronghold of Phase I had a timber reinforced earthen rampart (the so-called grill-technique) and in the enclosed area eleven houses made from wooden logs and wattle were found. The whole complex had apparently been destroyed by fire<sup>19</sup>.

In the rampart of the fortified settlement of Phase II, mysterious walls of gypsum rock set in mortar were

<sup>12</sup> Pianowski 2001, 68.

<sup>13</sup> Żaki 1994, 60.

<sup>14</sup> Morawski/Zaitz 1977.

<sup>15</sup> Myszka 2000.

<sup>16</sup> Labuda 1988, 125–166.

<sup>17</sup> Potkański 1965.

<sup>18</sup> Antoniewicz 1961; 1968.

<sup>19</sup> Wartolowska 1963.

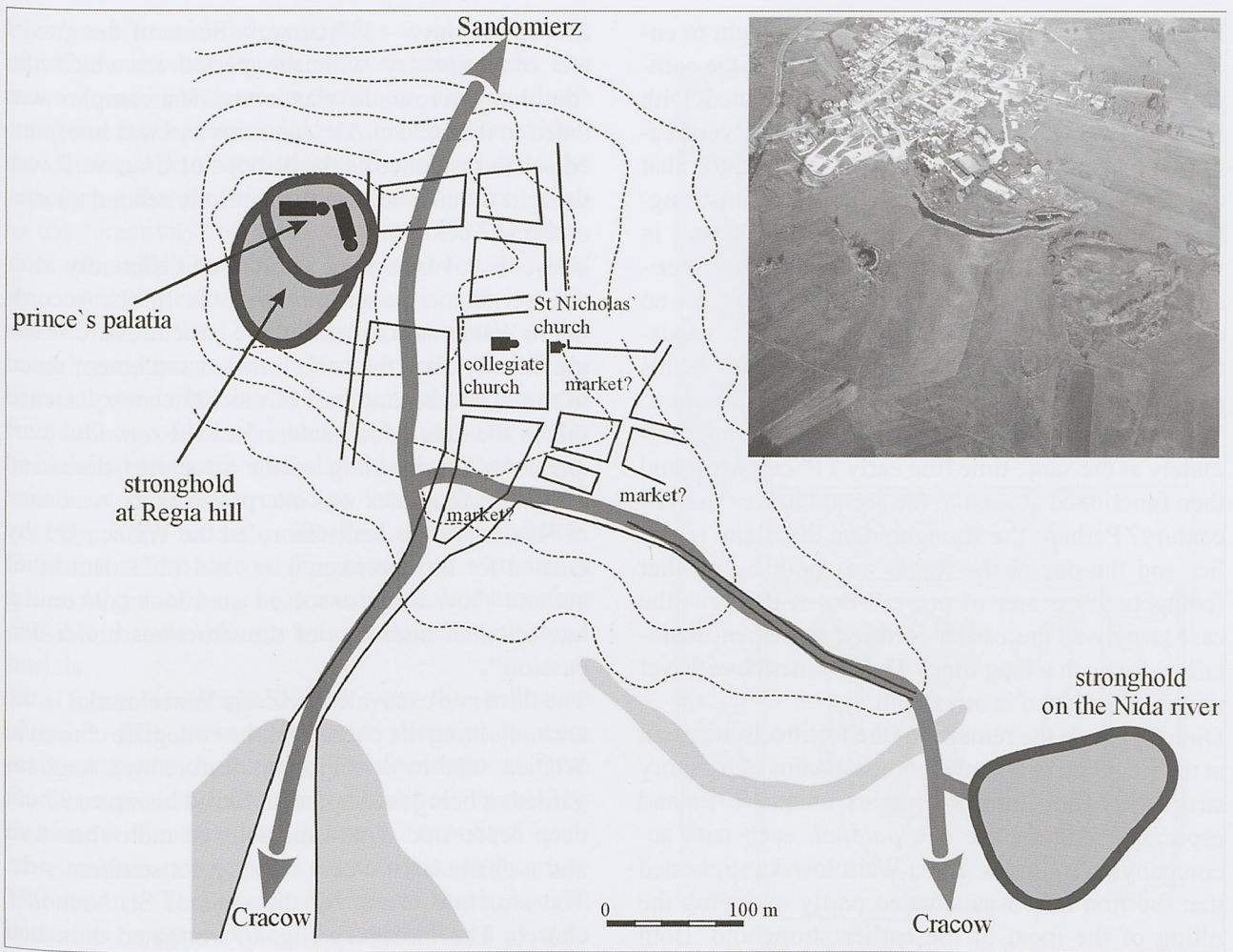


Fig. 4: Topography of Wiślica and archaeological sites in the area of the town (after W. Gliński; digital processing: M. Trzeciński).

discovered. One of the buildings inside the fortified settlement also had stone foundations. Most probably the inhabitants of the fortified settlement repeatedly suffered from flooding of the river Nida; which is indicated, amongst other things, by the traces of frequent repairs to the walls and repeated raising of the floor levels the structures inside the stronghold. This phase of the fortified settlement was roughly dated by its excavators to the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century AD. As a result there appears to be a gap of about 150 years between the two phases of occupation of the fortified settlement which is difficult to explain<sup>20</sup>.

The issues above were approached differently by the archaeologists who carried out a smaller-scale investigation in the 1990s, to verify the conclusions reached by the excavators of the Millennium project, the results of which had never been fully published. According to Waldemar Gliński<sup>21</sup>, not two, but three settlement phases can be distinguished in the strong-

hold on the 'island'. Phase I, running from the turn of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries to the 1180s; Phase II dating from the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century to the time of the invasion by the Polovtzy and Ruthenians (they are believed to have destroyed the town and the fortified settlement in 1135), and Phase III from the time after the invasion until the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century. During the 'verification' excavation conducted in 1997 in the rampart of the eastern part of the stronghold, remains of a dry-stone wall (i.e. built without the use of mortar) with an external face, were found. It was assumed that this wall was earlier than the stone wall described above as there were no traces of a grill construction of the earlier rampart.

The second fortified settlement at Wiślica is located on an elevation on the west side of the island in the town, that is, the so-called Regia. According to Zofia Wardołowska<sup>22</sup> the earliest fortified settlement on this site was oval in shape and was 140 x 100 metres.

<sup>20</sup> Idem.

<sup>21</sup> Gliński 1998.

<sup>22</sup> Wardołowska 1963.

Inside, a smaller interior rampart was thought to enclose an area of 60 x 50 metres. The end of the complex was assumed to have been associated with Svatopluk's mission of 879. However, the 'verification' excavations of the 1990s have indicated that this chronology cannot be maintained. The stronghold had two phases, which allows the period in which it functioned to be dated to a much later period, that is, the 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. There was no evidence whatsoever, which would allow the existence of a stronghold in the pre-state period at this place. There are however some unsolved questions. Why were two fortified settlements built approximately at the same time (the early 11<sup>th</sup> century?) and then functioned at least to the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century? Perhaps the stronghold on the island is earlier and the one at the Regia was built by another (competing?) center of power? But if that was the case, why was the earlier fortified settlement maintained for such a long time? These issues have as yet not been analyzed in any depth.

Directly above the remains of the fortified settlement at the Regia there are mysterious remains of masonry structures. They form a complex unique in Poland especially as there are two *palatia*, each with accompanying rotundas. Zofia Wartyłowska suggested that the first one, was situated partly overlying the filling of the moat of the earlier stronghold. Both structures (fig. 5) had, according to their excavators, two wings. The eastern wing also comprised a bipartite rectangular structure which measured 12 x 26 metres. Next to it there was a rotunda with a diameter of 9.8 m and an apse with a radius of 4 m. The yard in the angle between the two structures was cut by burial pits dated by Zofia Wartyłowska to the

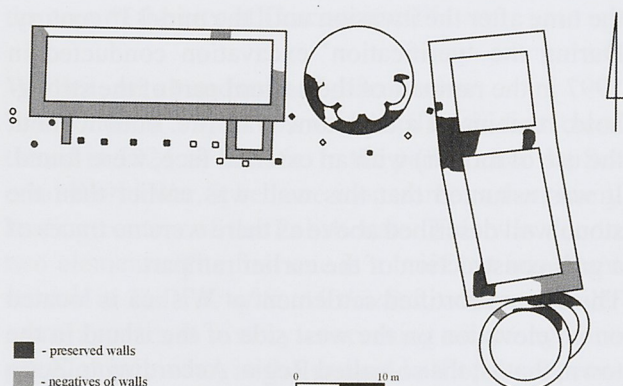


Fig. 5: The palatia and rotundas in Wiślica (after Z. Wartyłowska; digital processing: M. Trzeciecki).

11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century – 13<sup>th</sup> century. Some of the graves are contemporary with the period in which the 'multi-conch rotunda' was in use. The complex was dated to the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries and was interpreted as the residence of the bishops of Cracow. It was thought to have been in use until the second quarter of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

These discoveries were interpreted differently after the 'verification' excavations of the 1990s. According to Waldemar Gliński<sup>23</sup> these structures are stratigraphically later than the fortified settlement dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> to second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Hence this is the date which determines the *terminus post quem* for the building of the structures discussed above. The complex was interpreted as the residence of Kazimierz the Just who ruled the Wiślica Duchy created for him between 1166 and 1173. But other authors show some unsolved questions concerning late ottonian traditions of the structures under discussion<sup>24</sup>.

The third site excavated by Zofia Wartyłowska is the area adjoining the chancel of the collegiate church at Wiślica. The most important feature was long regarded as being the baptismal font. This was a 37 cm deep depression with a diameter of more than 4 m and a characteristic clay floor on its southern side. The structure is cut by the wall of St. Nicholas' church. The discovery (fig. 6) instigated animated debates and arguments especially when it was announced that it was a baptismal font dated to the 9<sup>th</sup> century connected to the Cyrillo-Methodian rite. In the subsequent discussions on the meaning of the discovery, other solutions have been suggested. The

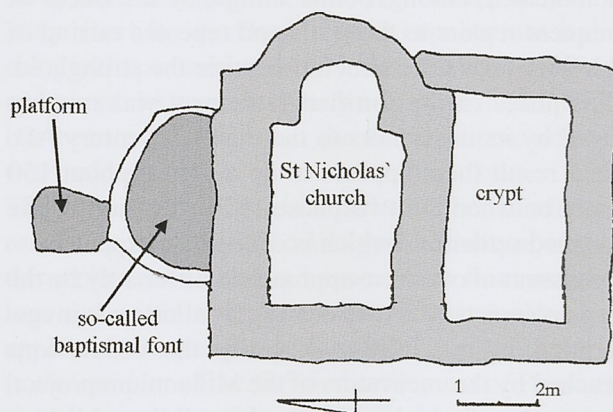


Fig. 6: St. Nicholas' church and the so-called baptismal font in Wiślica (after various authors, digital processing: M. Trzeciecki).

<sup>23</sup> Gliński 1998.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Rodzińska-Choraży 1998.

‘font’ was considered as a place used for mixing mortar made when the church was being built. The most recent investigations, however, have not indicated that the depression had any continuation within the church. This observation ultimately leads to the conclusion that the whole feature owes its existence to the ‘creativity’ of the excavators. The ‘verification’ excavation carried out by Joanna Kalaga<sup>25</sup> was able to date the feature – whatever it was – to the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Remains of a settlement layer dating to the 11<sup>th</sup> century were found underneath the depression, and directly above it are the foundations of St. Nicholas’ church. The latter (which had originally been dated to the 10<sup>th</sup> century), was most probably erected as late as the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century, as the recent verification analyses indicate. On the southern side of the church lies a cemetery where 60 graves have been excavated. It is therefore possible that the church was connected with these burials.

The fourth investigated area was the collegiate church<sup>26</sup>. The most spectacular discoveries were made under the church floor. The foundations of two Romanesque churches were identified there. The first one with dimensions of 16 x 7.2 m built of limestone ashlar in a gypsum mortar dates to the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century. The church had a two-level chancel, and in its crypts, next to a damaged altar, a gypsum floor decorated with figural engravings was found. It is a unique discovery in Poland in that period (fig. 7). The decoration is divided into two square fields with figural engravings of six praying figures the contours of which were filled with black paste. The borders contain representations of mythical animals, palm leaves and floral motifs. Along the upper and right edge of the field there runs a partially preserved inscription (in latin) which can be read as ‘those who wanted to be trodden so that they could rise to the stars one day’<sup>27</sup>.

The style dates the floor to about 1170. Most commonly it is believed that these figures represent the rulers connected with Wiślica: Henryk of Sandomierz and Bolesław the Curly or Kazimierz the Just with their family. It is also possible however, that these are representations of the family of one of the mighty Polish *comes*<sup>28</sup>. All these suggestions are based on indirect assumptions so they are hard to justify.



Fig. 7: 12<sup>th</sup> century floor slab from the Romanesque church uncovered in the crypt of the collegiate church in Wiślica (after M. Walicki).

In the vicinity of Wiślica there is a concentration of names of service settlements, which is an indication of the standing of that center before the 12<sup>th</sup> century<sup>29</sup>. The process of establishing them ended most probably at the time of Bolesław the Bold, that is, in the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Finally, it is worth mentioning one more issue. Whereas in many Polish towns it is difficult to determine where the fortified center was located (and still harder to spot the part containing the elite residence) in Wiślica we have an over-abundance. Is this an accident or a proof that the center had a high standing already at the early stages of the state? Any answer to this question is burdened with a great risk of making an error. A further excavation to re-examine the remains and verify this assumption should therefore be formulated and carried out urgently<sup>30</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> Kalaga 1997.

<sup>26</sup> Tomaszewski ed. 1965.

<sup>27</sup> Kalinowski 1963.

<sup>28</sup> Idem.

<sup>29</sup> Dąbrowska 1965.

<sup>30</sup> Gąssowski 1997.

## Eastern Little Poland and the early urbanisation of the region

### Sandomierz – *sedes regni principalis*

Sandomierz played the central role in the eastern part of the region, which along with Cracow and Wrocław, is called a *sedes regni principalis* – ‘one of the main state centers’ by Gallus Anonymus. Researchers agree that its name is derived from Sudomir, or Sędomir (like Wrocław after Vratislav or Cracow after Krak), which is a personal name<sup>31</sup>. It is, however, hard to interpret the name Sudomir because it is not confirmed to have appeared in Poland in the Early Middle Ages. Curiously enough, names of similar form were used at that time to the south of the Carpathian Mountains, in Bohemia and Moravia. On that basis some scholars suggested that Sudomir might have been Moravian or Bohemian by origin and came to Sandomierz with a troop of warriors, strengthening the influence of the rulers from the south, like the Bohemian Premyslids or even the Great Moravian Mojmirids<sup>32</sup>. The pre-Piast origins of Sandomierz were also supposed to be indicated by the existence of the mysterious Salve Regina Hill located at the western edge of the town (fig. 8). The hill was believed to be a large barrow of the pre-state times, perhaps a burial of the person who had established the stronghold<sup>33</sup>. But the recent investigations have proved that this was not a true barrow but a natural hill which had been remodeled in the past<sup>34</sup>.



Fig. 8: Salve Regina hill in Sandomierz; view from the north (photo: A. Buko).

The excavations of the 1970s delivered more arguments for linking the origins of Sandomierz with the policy of the first Piasts. The material evidence for this was first provided by the results of the analyses of the Early Medieval pottery from Sandomierz<sup>35</sup>. The earliest settlement layers in Sandomierz, dating to the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> century, contain numerous pottery sherds similar in stylistic features and raw material to the West Slavic biconical vessels. Such products made only from iron rich clays do not have any analogies during that period in Little Poland except for Sandomierz<sup>36</sup>. Stylistically and technologically similar vessels appear commonly and in large quantities, mainly in the areas of Great Poland.

The described phenomena may thus be a material indication of the movement of groups of Polane from Great Poland to the area of modern Sandomierz. The core population probably consisted of representatives of the Piast prince, leading a group of warriors, merchant-craftsmen (including probably potters). Obviously, in such a mixed group the last-mentioned ones were not the most important, but unlike the other social groups which did not leave any traces of their presence perceptible for the archaeologist, the results of the potter's work are quite permanent, due to the scale of production and survival of the material.

This hypothesis is supported by the presence of migrants from Great Poland identified in the earliest cemetery in Sandomierz located on St. James' Hill and dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> century (fig. 9). The analysis of materials showed that men who had come from Great Poland were buried here in two phases. The earlier phase of these burials (after the mid-10<sup>th</sup> century) occurred in the southern part of the cemetery and the later one (the 11<sup>th</sup> century) in the northern part. The women's burials were, according to their hypothesis, the representatives of the local population whom the arrivals from Great Poland had married<sup>37</sup>.

Transformations in the 10<sup>th</sup> century seen in the archaeological record can also be documented for the region around Sandomierz. The mechanisms are very similar to the activities of the early Piasts in Great Poland. One may even venture a claim that the origins of early Piast Sandomierz follow exactly the scenario reconstructed by the archaeologists for the

<sup>31</sup> Lalik 1967, 47.

<sup>32</sup> Lalik 1993, 54.

<sup>33</sup> Gąsowski 1967, 188.

<sup>34</sup> Buko 1998, 29ff.

<sup>35</sup> Buko 1981, 189ff.

<sup>36</sup> Buko 1998, 55ff.

<sup>37</sup> Rysiewska/Rysiewski 1991 (1992); Rysiewska 1994.



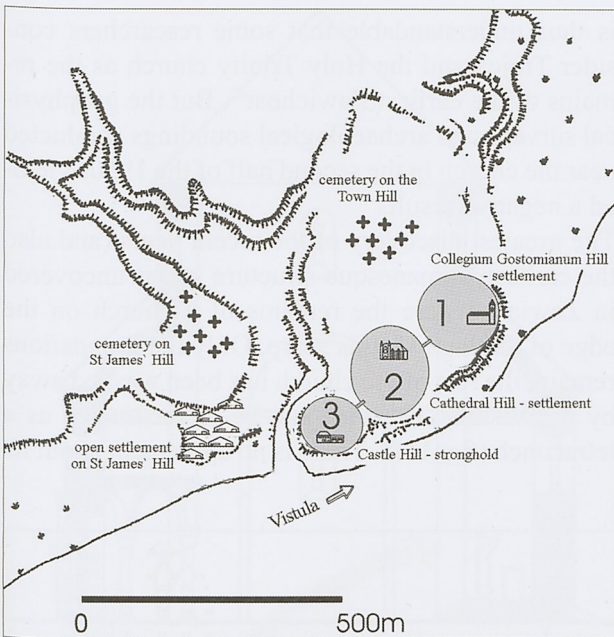


Fig. 9: Topography of 11<sup>th</sup> century Sandomierz: 1-3 – fortified parts of the town (A. Buko, digital processing; M. Trzeciecki).

territory of the Gniezno state. The layout of the earliest town is particularly compact and logically planned. Such an arrangement (cf. fig. 9) looks like the result of a single settlement stage. Most of the pottery assemblage from the oldest phase of settlement, dating to the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> century, is technologically very advanced. It is among this assemblage that traces of the presence of the Polanie in Sandomierz were first identified.

The events connected with building the earliest Sandomierz may be quite reliably dated to the 970s. The analysis of grave goods demonstrates it was founded at the turn of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> century. If that was the case, the builders of the town must have arrived a generation earlier, that is, in the mid-970s.<sup>38</sup> Thus only one decade after the baptism of Poland, the Piast state was active in this part of Little Poland.

### Zawichost: an early urban centre close to Sandomierz

Located on the upper bank of the Vistula river, Zawichost is surprisingly close (17 km) to Sandomierz. It is apparently very rare in Medieval Poland to have such high ranking centers located so close together. Both were located at a strategic junction of roads which allowed control of a ford across the Vistula River. In Sandomierz the route led to Przemyśl and

Halicz and in Zawichost, towards Vladimir Volynski and Kiev. The main issue which has captured the researchers is the relationship between the two centers in the early stages of the state. There was a hypothesis that Zawichost did not compete with Sandomierz, but rather was an 'indispensable complement'. The two towns, as Tadeusz Lalik wrote, formed a specific tandem blocking important fords on the Vistula, which, combined with the administrative and political functions, had a strategic character in this part of Little Poland<sup>39</sup>.

In search for the roots of Zawichost, the dedication of the vanished St. Maurice's church (known only from the written sources) was taken into account. Teresa Dunin-Wąsowicz assumed that it was the church mentioned in the written sources before 1191 which could have been built even at the turn of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> century. The dedication was one of the earliest and, what is more, it refers to the symbols of the Gniezno Summit of 1000 A.D. and St Maurice's spear, a copy of which Otto III gave to the Polish ruler during the meeting. The fact that Zawichost was also near to the strongholds in Roztocze district also indicates it might have also been a kind of fortified bulwark of the early Piast state on the Vistula, why Saint Maurice, a knight and a martyr, seems to be a suitable patron for that place<sup>40</sup>. The importance of Zawichost in the 11<sup>th</sup> century may be indicated by the fact that besides the church of St. Maurice, the collegiate church of the Ascension of the Blessed Virgin Mary is dated to the same period, that is, the times of the reigns of Bolesław the Bold (1076–1079) or Władysław Herman (1079–1102). The community of canons founded there enhanced not only the local parish network but also increased its importance in the process of Christianization for the country. Interestingly, despite the closeness of Sandomierz, Zawichost not only retained its position as a center of a castellany, but became one of the three seats of a territorial archdeaconry, together with Sandomierz and Lublin.

An enigmatic remark by the fifteenth century Polish historian Jan Długosz, who called Zawichost *caput terrae Sandomiriensis* suggested to researchers<sup>41</sup> that the tribal center preceding Sandomierz should be sought in the area of Zawichost and its predecessor was to be the fortified settlement identified at Zawichost-Podgórze (fig. 10). However, this is not the only possible line of thought. In the past also the site

<sup>38</sup> Buko 1998, 84.

<sup>39</sup> Lalik 1967, 48; 1999.

<sup>40</sup> Dunin-Wąsowicz 1999, 256.

<sup>41</sup> Tabaczyński 1999.

of a castle (which lasted until the times of the Swedish invasion) on an island in the Vistula which today no longer exists was taken into account.

Trójca, and its church with an archaic dedication to the Holy Trinity built on a characteristic elevation, located two kilometers away from Zawichost, was also taken thought of as the possible fortified center (cf. fig. 10). The settlement complex at Trójca is also interesting due to its location at the crossing of important Early Medieval roads leading towards Sandomierz and Opatów with Ruthenian routes and one road along the Vistula leading to Solec. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century, that was the main junction in Zawichost. It

is thus understandable that some researchers consider Trójca and the Holy Trinity church as the remains of the earliest Zawichost<sup>42</sup>. But the geophysical surveys and archaeological soundings conducted near the church in the second half of the 1990s yielded a negative result.

The greatest discovery of the recent years (and also the earliest Romanesque structure so far uncovered in Zawichost) are the remains of a church on the edge of the high Vistula scarp. Only the foundations remain, the rest of the church has been washed away by the Vistula. The plan can be reconstructed as a tetraconch (fig. 11)<sup>43</sup>. There is no agreement about its

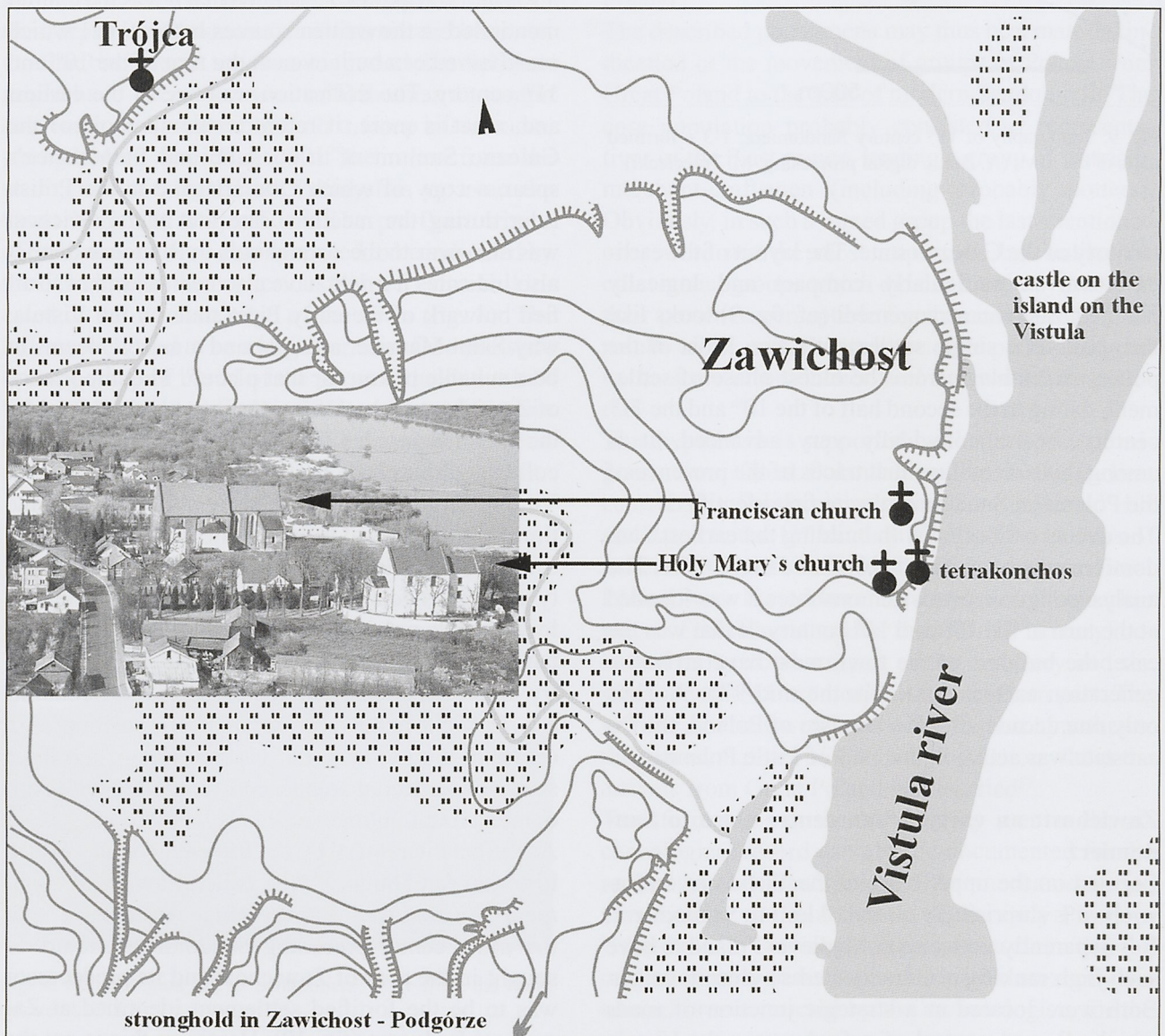


Fig. 10: Early Medieval settlement in the area of Zawichost (after D. Wyczółkowski, digital processing: M. Trzeciecki).

<sup>42</sup> Wąsowicz 1967, 120ff.

<sup>43</sup> Tabaczyński 2000.

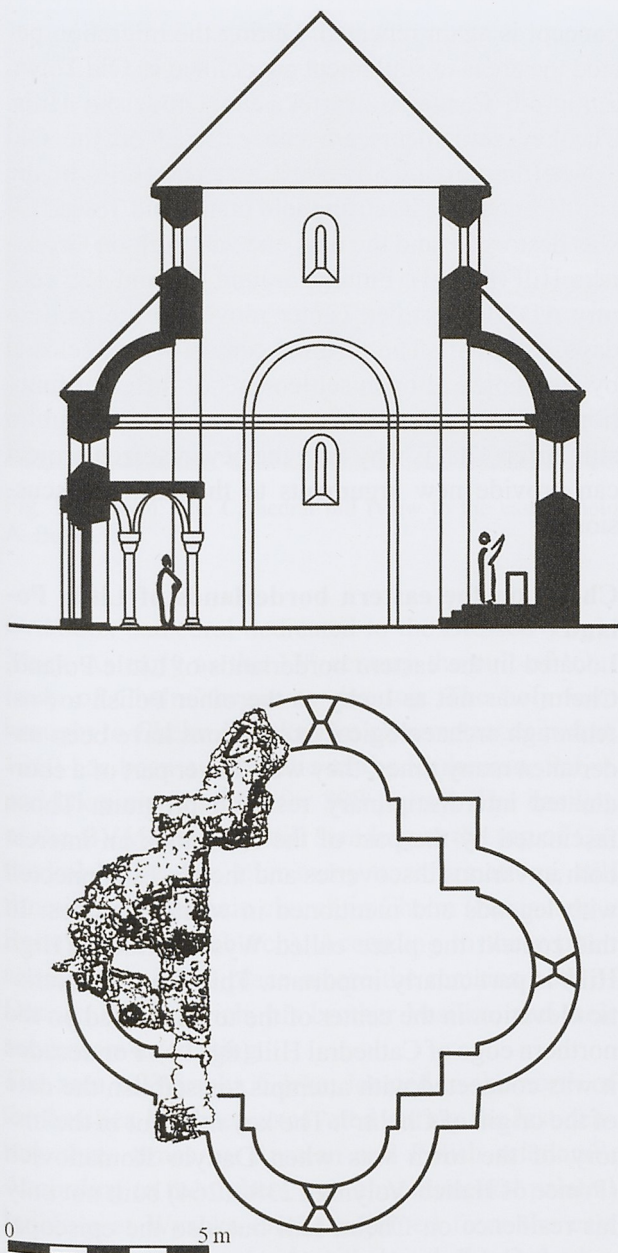


Fig. 11: The Zawichost tetraconch, tentative reconstruction of the church body (after R. Kunkiel; digital processing: M. Trzeciński).

cultural affinities, chronology or function. Although many researchers accept a relatively early date for the feature (the 11<sup>th</sup> century ?), this is weakened by the nature of the archaeological material discovered in association with the church, which cannot be assigned a date earlier than the middle of the twelfth century<sup>44</sup>. The analyses conducted so far indicate that the tetraconch at Zawichost is directly connected with the accompanying finds of eastern provenance. However, the origin of the structure has not

been explained. Was there a colony of Ruthenian origin in Zawichost and the finds are traces of that? In the light of the recent research, the material culture of Sandomierz and Zawichost are not really comparable. In Sandomierz we have a rare type of pottery vessels produced according to the style characteristic for Great Poland, which cannot be found in the settlement contexts of Early Medieval Zawichost. The two centers differ also in the scale at which vessels with eastern characteristics were used in everyday life. In Sandomierz there were only relatively few examples, whereas in Zawichost there were many more of these vessels in use, making it similar to the assemblages from the stronghold and town of Chełm – sited close to the present Ukrainian border (see below). There is therefore a direct, archaeologically testified connection between the material culture of Early Medieval Sandomierz and Great Poland, on the one hand, and of Zawichost and the culture of the eastern zone, on the other. At the present stage of research it is difficult to make any definite statements. Possibly some solutions will be brought about by further archaeological investigations in Zawichost.

#### Lublin still investigated

Lublin sited about 100 km to the east from Sandomierz is still not well recognized, despite a long tradition of research. During the last 65 years a decent quantity of studies has been carried out. But until now, there is not one coherent vision of its origins and earliest stages of development. The archaeological research started in the late 1960<sup>th</sup> on the Czwartek Hill, while during the next decades the attention shifted to the settlements sited on Castle Hill and Old Town Hill. Here, according to the excavators, the main center of the oldest Lublin was born (fig. 12). However there is more than one opinion regarding the chronological sequence of the oldest strongholds. According to S. Hoczyk-Siwkova the oldest period of its development goes back to the late 8<sup>th</sup> century, when Lublin was composed of several settlements, including the most important ones at Lublin Czwartek Hill and Lublin Old Town Hill. Hoczyk-Siwkova believes that during the time of the rising Polish state, the town formation process stopped for two successive centuries. The fortified centre appeared in the late 11<sup>th</sup> century on Castle Hill<sup>45</sup>. Another concept of development for the oldest Lublin was proposed by I. Kutylowska. Accord-

<sup>44</sup> Buko 1998, 55.

<sup>45</sup> Hoczyk-Siwkova 1996.

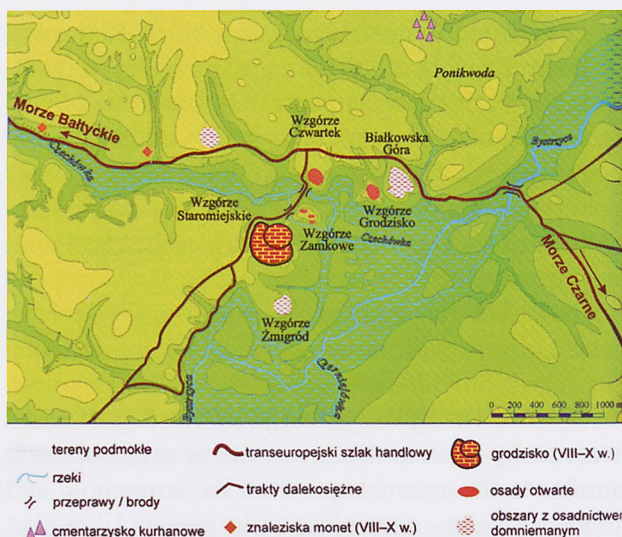


Fig. 12: The primary zones and settlement concentrations of medieval Lublin during the pre-state period (6th-10th centuries) (after Rozwałka, Niedźwiadek and Stasiak).

ing to this author Lublin was growing in the continuous way from the late 6<sup>th</sup> century onwards until today, which was the result from its particularly suitable transit position between Eastern and Western Europe. That is why the first fortified centre with a market place appeared already at the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD. During the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD, the early urban centre was relinquished to the State of Great Moravia and before 981 it was incorporated into the Polish State<sup>46</sup>. Other scholars, like A. Rozwałka, believe that Lublin is an example of an early town with a moving center: shifting from Old Town Hill during the 9<sup>th</sup> century successively to the Grodzisko Hill – in the time of first Polish Piast rulers, and, finally in 12<sup>th</sup> century to the Castle Hill<sup>47</sup>. In the last book covering the origins of Lublin, this

concept is again repeated. During the migration period the areas of settlement are defined as Old Town, Żmigród, Castle, Czwartek, and Grodzisko Hills. The key settlements are concentrated on the Old Town (the stronghold) and Czwartek Hills. In the late 10<sup>th</sup> century the stronghold on the Old Town Hill was destroyed, and the new one was built on Grodzisko Hill (fig. 13). Finally, around the mid 12<sup>th</sup> century AD, the fortified center moved to the modern day Castle Hill. The fortified centers were enclosed by a complex of open settlements of different functions<sup>48</sup>. Opinions concerning the origins of Lublin still differ. That is why only the new research project can provide new arguments to the further discussion.

### Chełm on the eastern borderlands of Little Poland

Located in the eastern borderlands of Little Poland, Chełm was not as lucky as the other Polish towns. Although archaeological excavations have been undertaken many times, they were never part of a coordinated interdisciplinary research program. Those fascinated by the past of the town took an interest both in various discoveries and the places connected with legends and mentioned in written sources. In this context the place called Wysoka Górka (High Hill) is particularly important. This is a characteristic elevation in the center of the town located on the northern edge of Cathedral Hill (fig. 14). For decades it was connected with attempts to establish the date of the origin of Chełm<sup>49</sup>. The key moment in the history of the town was when Danylo Romanovich (Prince of Halich-Volynia 1238–1264) built not only his residence on Chełm Hill but also the episcopal see (moved from the neighboring Uhrusk) with the



Fig. 13: The Grodzisko hill in Lublin (after Rozwałka, Niedźwiadek and Stasiak).

<sup>46</sup> Kutylowska 1990.

<sup>47</sup> Rozwałka 1997.

<sup>48</sup> Rozwałka/Niedźwiadek/Stasiak 2006.

<sup>49</sup> Buko 2004 with further literature.



Fig. 14: Chełm: The Cathedral hill (view to the east) (photo A. Buko).

Orthodox cathedral dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. As early as the 13<sup>th</sup> century the cult of ‘Our Lady of Chełm’ began to develop. The holy icon brought to Chełm in unknown circumstances before 1260 has been a holy relic of the Ruthenian, Polish and Ukrainian nations for 800 years<sup>50</sup>. The basilica of the BVM which is still standing at the top of Cathedral Hill today, after many transformations, still functions as the main church in Chełm (but is now a Roman Catholic church). According to the written sources this is the place where the remains both of Danylo Romanovich, his brother Vasilko, and their successors are resting.

The area of Wysoka Górka, located to the north of the basilica has been excavated during the last century three times by Russian and Polish scholars<sup>51</sup>. According to them there was a monumental palatial building at Wysoka Górka adjoined from the east with a sacral structure identified with the Orthodox church dedicated to St. John Chrysostom. Some knowledge about the interior decoration may be gained from the rich architectural details taken away by the Russians and deposited in the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg. Many researchers agree that the prince’s palace was built on the ruins of an earlier fortified settlement existing before the times of Danylo. Wiktor Zin and Feliks Grabski<sup>52</sup> reported that these were wood and earth ramparts of earth-filled timber boxes. The Russian researchers who conducted the investigations in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century also noticed that the earliest phase of the site was

apparently a pagan cult site with a sacred fire, the traces of which they discovered during their excavations at Wysoka Górka<sup>53</sup>. Although no full publication of these discoveries has ever appeared, they recall local legends, which mention a pagan holy oaks grove guarded by a white bear living in a chalk cave at the foot of the hill.

More details about the layout of structures at Wysoka Górka were provided by ‘verification’ investigations conducted by the present author and a research team from Chełm in the summer of 2001<sup>54</sup>. For the first time the remains of palace walls have been described in the context of the stratigraphy of the southern escarpment of the hill. It has been recorded that the above-ground part of the building is in a good state of preservation and its foundations based on the limestone bedrock, go almost 4 m beneath the present ground level. The width of the top of the wall in the explored section was 2.20 m. It has been established that the residential complex consisted in its second and third phases of at least three elements. It was a huge 38 m long and 22 m wide palatial-sacral structure (fig. 15) oriented on an east-west axis resting on the original bedrock of the hill and raised c. 3 m above the present summit of Chełm Hill. It seems probable that after some time the area of the palace was redeveloped (for unknown reasons) on

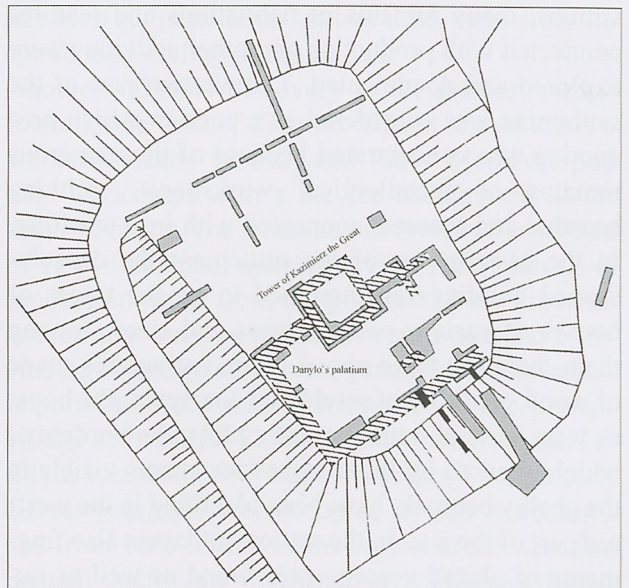


Fig. 15: Monumental architecture at Wysoka Górka with old trenches in grey and trenches from 2000 in black (after J. Gurba and I. Kutylowska; by M. Trzeciński and M. Auch).

<sup>50</sup> Aleksandrovich 2001.

<sup>51</sup> Rappoport 1954; Zin/Grabski 1967; Gurba/Kutylowska 1970.

<sup>52</sup> Zin/Grabski 1967.

<sup>53</sup> Rappoport 1954.

<sup>54</sup> Buko 2002b.

its southern side. On the escarpment, terrace-like stone constructions consisting of at least three steps, each 1.80 m long and up to 70 cm high can be made out. There were the foundations of a rubble-filled timber box construction, possibly a rampart. The lower part of the escarpment was faced with a layer of stones taken from the chalk bedrock and adjoined the moat of up to 15 m wide. In this way the Chełm residence complex became an architectural complex characteristic for urban centers and unique in this part of Europe, although from the historical point of view it was only a short episode of several decades long, in the one thousand years of the existence of the town. During the excavations, no traces of an earlier stronghold or of the supposed pagan shrine, were found<sup>55</sup>.

In Danylo's Chełm there were favorable conditions for the mixing of various cultural traditions. Particularly important in this context is the information recorded in the *Hypatian Chronicle* that when developing Chełm, Danylo 'began calling in Germans and Ruthenians, foreigners and the Lachy.'<sup>56</sup> This information has been suggestively reflected during the recent investigations in one of the districts of the town of Danylo Romanovich's time. The settlement was identified in the mid-1990s in the area to the south of Cathedral Hill in the grounds of the secondary school at Czarnieckiego Street. During the excavations, many remains of habitations and features connected with production and other activities were explored and documented. The western part of the settlement was considered as a zone in which production was concentrated because of the numerous remains of metallurgical workshops (smithing hearths) and features connected with iron smelting. In the eastern part of the settlement the densely-spaced buildings are assumed to be the traces of houses of various constructions and sizes. Among them there are large above-ground structures made of wood, probably of residential character. The houses were located within specific plots, the borders of which, marked by the trenches for beams visible in the chalky bedrock, have been identified in the western part of the site. In the settlement layers also fragments of glazed vessels were found as well as numerous objects of bronze including rings, belt buckles and a fragment of a traveling icon, a find unique

in Poland, as well as a mould for making golden *kolty* (headdress ornaments of Byzantine and East Slavic type)<sup>57</sup>.

The archaeological evidence from these sites indicates that Chełm in the time of Danylo's rule is a key center for understanding some episodes which are still poorly understood in the early history of Polish and Ruthenian statehood. It still remains to be determined when and in what circumstances the earliest town originated.

### **Przemyśl: The early urban center at the periphery**

Przemyśl entered Polish political history in 981 owing to a short remark made in Old Ruthenian chronicles. The Russian Primary Chronicle under the date 6489 (981) says: *W leto 6489 ide Volodymer k Lacham i zaja hrady ich Peremyshl, Cherven i iny hrady*<sup>58</sup>. For almost fifty years this remark has divided the scientific milieu; I leave aside the discussion whether the name 'Lachy' used by the chronicler concerns the Lędziane or Lachy-Polanie, which in recent years has been a subject of separate analyses. Some researchers tend to say that the name *Peremyshl* denotes Przemyśl whereas others believe that it may be also Peremil on the Styr river, located further to the northeast<sup>59</sup>. Assuming that it is indeed Przemyśl (this view is shared by the majority of the scientific community) the remark in the chronicle would be proof that a center of power of the Polane had been established there by Mieszko I before the year 981. Wherever the earlier stronghold had been, the Piast stronghold was built on Castle Hill and thus in the place with no traces of earlier settlement. The date of 981 seems to be acceptable also as a caesura in the history of the development of the town. As the investigations on the origins of Sandomierz have indicated (cf. above) the main Piast center in eastern Little Poland was formed most probably in the 970s. According to this concept, the formation of the next centers in the eastern borderlands of Little Poland, including Lublin and Przemyśl, would have taken place at a similar time, making up the consecutive elements of one process.

The present town is situated at the mouth of the so-called Przemyśl Gate, a depression 60 km wide between the edge of the Carpathians and the range of

<sup>55</sup> Idem.

<sup>56</sup> Sielicki 1987, 243.

<sup>57</sup> Gołub/Dzieńkowski 2002.

<sup>58</sup> Kronika Nestora, 38: In the year 6489 Volodymer went to the

Lachy and occupied their fortified settlements: Peremyshl, Cherven and other fortified settlements.

<sup>59</sup> Skrzypek 1962; Labuda 1988, 167ff. with literature.

hills known as Roztocze, providing an easy route between the San and Dniestr basins which already played a pivotal role in long-distance trade during the pre-state period, for example with the Byzantine Empire and the Arab world.

One of the Little Polish monumental mounds is located in Przemyśl itself. Its presence suggests that a center of tribal power associated with the west-Slavic Lachy-Lędzianie was being formed here<sup>60</sup>. In recent years an inhumation cemetery of nomadic Magyars, dating to the early 10<sup>th</sup> century was found. The fact that besides burials of mounted warriors, graves of women and children were discovered may indicate attempts at settling permanently in the area<sup>61</sup>.

The high rank of Przemyśl in the early Piast state is confirmed by the monumental buildings which have survived there till today. The stone *palatium* with a rotunda, built most probably in the times of Bolesław the Brave, resembles the constructions known from the main centers of the Gniezno state (fig. 16)<sup>62</sup>. This is an example of the unification of building programs across the whole territory of the Piast state. However, the entrance to the church did not lead from the *palatium*, as in the other cases, but from the open area in the center of the stronghold. This may indicate that the structure functioned not only as a palace chapel but also as the church of the fortified settlement<sup>63</sup>. This hypothesis seems to be supported to some extent by the form of the church: a simple, one-apse rotunda, and thus a church of missionary character. The layout of the sacral-palatial complex in Przemyśl may be interpreted as a manifestation of



Fig. 16: Remains of the residential structures in Przemyśl of the early 11<sup>th</sup> cent, the palatium and rotunda (photo: Z. Pianowski).

the ruler's might reflecting the rank of the center at the very outset of the Polish state.

In recent years intensive investigations have been conducted in another rotunda in Przemyśl, dedicated to St. Nicholas (the dedication is testified by the documents from the late 13<sup>th</sup> century), the remains of which are under the chancel of the cathedral church. The structure was discovered during the excavations of 1961 but the recent 'verification' works have brought to light some new facts. It was ascertained that the structure must have been a simple rotunda with a semi-circular apse. The most interesting result of the recent investigations, however, is the remains of a circular raised gallery inside it. This hypothesis is based on the remains of foundations visible within the nave, which have been interpreted as the base of a colonnade. Zbigniew Pianowski and Michał Proksa have suggested<sup>64</sup> that the structure had an additional practical advantage: in case of danger it would have provided shelter for more people. It is hard to determine to what extent this hypothesis is justified, as it is not certain that the builders had the defensive aspect in mind. The dating of the church is also an important problem. Depending on the adopted interpretation, the proposed dates fall between the extremes of the mid-12<sup>th</sup> and the early 14<sup>th</sup> century. The architecture has been kept in the style of sacral buildings in western and southern (Italy) Europe; and it has been suggested that settlers from these areas inspired the building of the church.

Another valuable discovery is the potters' village found in the area of Zasanie. This is one of the few archaeologically investigated Early Medieval potters' workshops with a service background in the area of Poland. The workshop in Przemyśl consisted of 12 two-chamber updraught kilns. The analysis of production waste from the pits next to the kilns has proved that various products were made there, including *korchaga* amphorae, generally considered as imports from the area of Kievan Rus. The potters' village at Przemyśl-Zasanie functioned from the 11<sup>th</sup> till the turn of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century<sup>65</sup>. In the early 1030s, Przemyśl was occupied by the Ruthenians and from 1087 it became the capital of the west-Ruthenian duchy, the first ruler of which was Ruryk Rostislavich. At that time appeared buildings characteristic for the eastern cultural zone in the town, among which was the opulent Orthodox church ded-

<sup>60</sup> Parczewski 2007.

<sup>61</sup> Koperski 2003 with literature.

<sup>62</sup> Sosnowska 1992.

<sup>63</sup> Sosnowska 2001.

<sup>64</sup> Pianowski/Proksa 2001.

<sup>65</sup> Kunysz 1981.

icated to the Blessed Virgin Mary built by prince Volodar (1092–1124).

Throughout the Early Middle Ages, the standing of Przemyśl is indicated by the finds suggesting far reaching external connections. In this context one should mention a huge hoard of 700 Islamic silver coins from the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, glass beads and imported textiles. The importance of Przemyśl is also supported by a mention of the site in written sources such as the account of the 12<sup>th</sup> century Arabic geographer Al-Idrisi. Most probably the most important contacts were those with Byzantium. In Przemyśl Byzantine cameo of chalcedony, unique for this part of Europe (fig. 17) was found. Another



Fig. 17: Early Medieval Byzantine intaglio gem from Przemyśl, 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> cent. (photo: M. Horwat, digital processing: M. Trzeciecki).

artifact worth noting is a Byzantine seal from Nicomedia dated to the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century. The Ruthenian-Byzantine cultural zone is also represented by the green and silver glazed vessels found in Przemyśl. The multidirectional exchange was fostered by the Jewish merchants whose district in the area of the town is testified already in the 11<sup>th</sup> century in the written sources. However, so far no archaeological traces of it have been discovered<sup>66</sup>.

### Final remarks

The crucial role in the early urbanisation of Little Poland played Sandomierz sited on fertile Loess. The foundation of today's town was therefore part of a strategic plan for the building of the Polish state and extended it into eastern Little Poland<sup>67</sup>. The newly built town was sited in an area relatively easy

to take over – on the political periphery occupied by a small tribe on the borderland located between Vislane, Lenzane, Mazowszane and Polane, but at the same time, at a strategically important point. The ease of annexation of this territory was not only the result of the military potential of the Gniezno state, but, to no lesser degree, from the weakness of the neighboring tribal alliances. The Kiev Rus rulers dominated Lenzane on the east and they paid them at this time a tribute. However, the Přemyslid's rulers dominated Vislane with their main center Cracow – on the west. Siting Sandomierz – a center of such great importance the Piasts created an unrepeatable chance for gaining full control (along the San River valley) over the Lenzane tribal territory and furthermore – the entire frontier region along the upper Bug River<sup>68</sup>. The rise of Sandomierz in the late 10<sup>th</sup> century was the first step in incorporating Little Poland into the Gniezno State.

The primary reason of the Piasts presence was to keep under control the old tribal territories of Lenzane and to protect the newly created state against Kiev Rus rulers on the southeastern border. The military support for such a strategy offered, as the author believes, a system of mysterious (because they were unidentified until now) strongholds known from written sources as “Červen Strongholds”. They were located, as many scholars believe, somewhere between Chelm and Przemyśl. That is why, in the late 10<sup>th</sup> century, one can observe very intensive investments in the urban structure in the borderland. At the same time Lublin, Przemyśl, and perhaps Chelm were born. On the western edge of eastern little Poland Sandomierz was built, and not far away two further centers, Opatów and Zawichost (fig. 18).

The beginning of this process dates back beyond the year 981 when, according to the Primary Chronicle, Vladimir of Kiev took Przemyśl and “Červen strongholds” from the “Lachs” (Lenzane?). At the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, Boleslaw the Brave built in Przemyśl – on the frontier with Kiev Rus – a new *palatium* and a royal chapel. This policy might have been used to keep under control the most important trade and exchange areas from the North to the Southeast.

But Little Poland never was a unified territory with one cultural tradition<sup>69</sup>. The basic division between the Cracow (in the west) and Sandomierz (in the

<sup>66</sup> Kunysz 1981, 100.

<sup>67</sup> Buko 2005.

<sup>68</sup> Buko 2008, 190ff.

<sup>69</sup> Lalik 1967, 41.



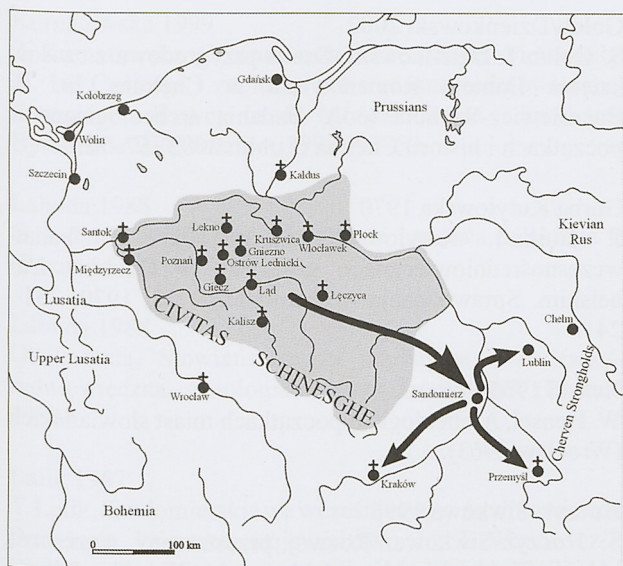


Fig. 18: Hypothetical scenario of the Piast expansion in eastern Little Poland. Places where the earliest sacral structures were discovered are marked with crosses (after A. Buko).

east) provinces (since the 12<sup>th</sup> century princedoms), from the very beginning was fundamental<sup>70</sup>.

In western Little Poland only Cracow and Wiślica can be connected to the earliest phase of state formation. Cracow – one of the biggest towns of 10<sup>th</sup> century Europe – was recognized in the mid of 10<sup>th</sup> century as one of biggest Bohemian (!) urban centers by medieval chronicler Ybrahim ibn Jaqub. The quantity of architectural remains from the late 10<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> century on Wawel Hill in Kraków is enormous and remains the ideological pattern of spatial organization recognized, as some scholars believe, in Akwizgran<sup>71</sup>.

The newly built early urban structures in eastern Little Poland, were fundamental to taking away Cracow from the Czech hands<sup>72</sup>. But contrary to the areas of eastern Little Poland, this action, carried out probably around 989, was relatively peaceful; there is no archaeological evidence of catastrophe of the older tribal centers, including Cracow itself, growing without traces of interruption almost since the 9<sup>th</sup> century<sup>73</sup>. Cracow with its vicinities was probably already well organized and economically prosperous. Significant symbols of its importance in the late migration period are the monumental barrows of Krak and Wanda (princes graves?) founded during the late 8<sup>th</sup> century<sup>74</sup>.

<sup>70</sup> Idem.

<sup>71</sup> Michałowski 1993, 87.

<sup>72</sup> Buko 2002a.

The first Piast rulers, coming from Great Poland to Little Poland, accepted the old tribal centers of Vislane (including Cracow – the biggest one). It is also surprising, that they refused to erect other new built early urban centers in the Cracow area (contrary to Sandomierz Land) as symbols of their sovereignty, so characteristic in other regions of Poland. After Břetyslav's invasion to Poland in 1039, Cracow became for centuries the historical capital of Poland.

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<sup>73</sup> Radwański 1975; Żaki 1994.

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