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EARLY MEDIEVAL SETTLEMENT OF SIEDLECKA PLATEAU AND ŁUKOWSKA PLAIN IN THE LIGHT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Abstract: The mesoregions of Siedlecka Plateau and Łukowska Plain comprise the macroregion of South Podlasie Lowland. They lie in the centre-east of Poland (mostly in the upper and centre basin of Bug) and take up some 5,000 square kilometres. More than 1,270 early medieval archaeological sites have been identified in the region, of which 57 % lie in Siedlecka Plateau and 43 % in Łukowska Plain. Of these, 31 are dated to the sixth–seventh centuries, 267 to the eighth–tenth and 726 to the eleventh–thirteenth centuries. The chronology of the other sites is given in general terms as “early medieval”. 57 % of settlement sites are classified as traces of settlement. Open settlements account for 40 % of the total. The share of cemeteries stands at 3 % and for hillforts it amounts to 1 %. The early medieval settlement pattern in the area under discussion was shaped by both natural factors (e.g. the hydrographic network, physical landscape features, fertility of soil) and cultural or economic ones (e.g. long-distance trade routes). Historical-political circumstances must also be borne in mind, as they determined possession of given parts of the area by Poland or Kievan Rus’.

Key words: Siedlecka Plateau, Łukowska Plain, early Middle Ages, hillforts, non-invasive archaeological surveys

The physicogeographic mesoregions of Siedlecka Plateau and Łukowska Plain lie in the east-central part of Poland and belong to the macroregion of South Podlasie Lowland [Fig. 1]. The units lie next to each other and are of roughly identical size (around 2,500 km² each). They lie almost entirely in the lower and middle Bug basin. The south-western part of Siedlecka Plateau forms part of the basin of the upper and middle Liwiec, whose largest tributaries include the Stara Rzeką, the Muchawka with the Zbuczynka, the Czerwonka and the Miedzanka. In its northern and eastern part, surface waters flow out by small, primary tributaries of the Bug: the Toczna, the Kołodziejka, the Myśla, the Turna, the Cetynia and the Buczynka. The greater part of the Równina Łukowska is found in the Krzna basin, whose valley marks the south-eastern boundary of the mesoregion. The most important of its left tributaries are the Klukówka and the Złota Krzywula. Through the western part of the plain flow the affluents of the Tyśmienica: the Bystrzyca with the Mała Bystrzyca and the Czarna. The mesoregions under consideration differ significantly in landscape and soil composition. The hilly Siedlecka Plateau rises to 190–200 m above sea level and is found in the terminal moraine region of the Wolstonian glacial stage. The clays and sands of the glacial till have turned into the relatively fertile brown earths. Łukowska Plain lies at around 140–170 m above sea level and is a flat, sandy area of the fluvio-glacial landforms of the Wolstonian stage. It is dominated by agriculturally poor podzols and wetlands.¹

¹ KONDRACKI 1994, pp. 143–145; 2009, pp. 201–206.

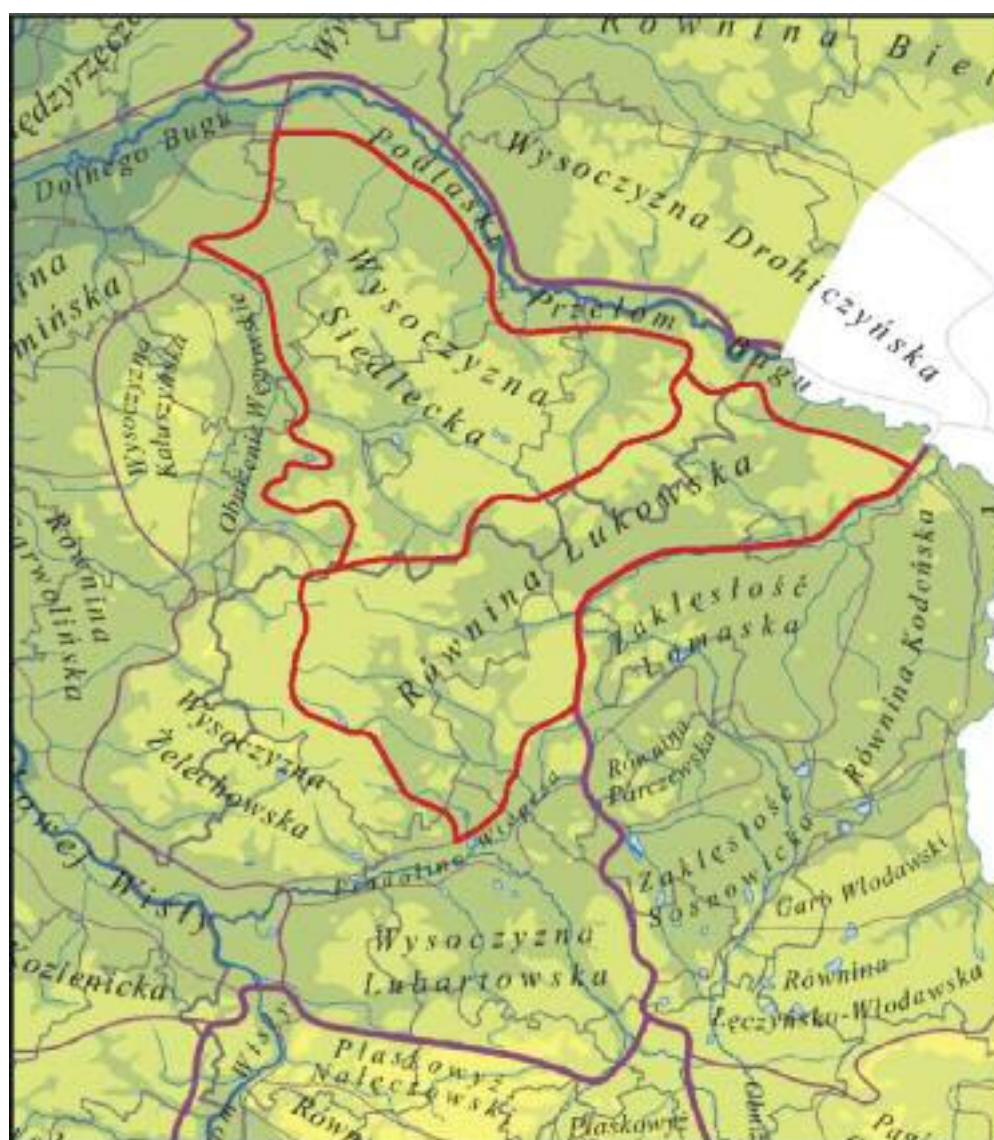


Fig. 1. Siedlecka Plateau and Łukowska Plain on the map of east-central Poland (source: https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regionalizacja_fizycznogeograficzna_Polski#/media/File:Regiony_Kondrackiego-hipsometria.png, author: Aotearoa, licence: CC-BY-SA 3.0 [<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>], accessed: 04.05.2015 r.)

Although the sources of the Krzna, the Liwiec and the Toczna are strongly dominated by wetlands and the greater part of the area under consideration offers merely average or poor soils, early medieval settlement developed mostly undeterred. The forbidding wetlands, found mostly in the southern and eastern part of the area, served presumably as protection for the fledgling settlement structures. One may also suppose that the light podzols and brown earths did not constitute a major barrier to development. In areas with particularly poor sandy soils dominated, food production moved to animal husbandry and to hunting and gathering. The only natural barrier to settlement is found in the form of the watershed between the Liwiec and Turna, Cedynia and Buczynka drainage basins, which significantly hindered access to water.

Based on surface surveys carried out in the course of the Archaeological Picture of Poland (AZP) programme of a complete archaeological mapping of the country, it may be concluded that the communities found in the area in the early Middle Ages favoured settlement in the immediate vicinity of minor watercourses. As many as 85 % of the sites were found within minor river valleys [Fig. 2]. The upper and middle sections of rivers and streams were in particular favour. The localisation of settlements in close proximity to watercourses allowed for easy access to clean water or to water only slightly contaminated with materials carried by the stream. A small watercourse was little of an obstacle in transport, which allowed for exploitation of an entire valley and human occupation of both banks.² As many as 73 % of settlements found within small valleys, were placed on their slopes with 15 % at the edges, 7 % both on the slopes and the edges, 4 % at the valley bottom and a mere 1 % both on the slopes and the bottom. Placing the habitat and areas used for farming on the valley slopes and thus at a small distance from the stream provided at least partial protection from flooding from spring snowmelt or summer rain, while not hindering access to water. A mere 11 % of the sites identified by surface surveys were found in large river valleys.

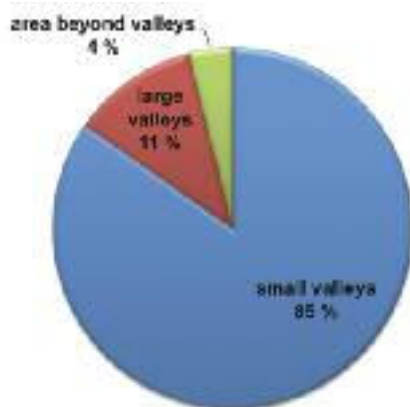


Fig. 2. Location of early medieval sites within physiocgeographic units (percentage share)

This stems from the fact that an overwhelming majority of rivers in the Siedlecka Plateau and Łukowska Plain are small streams with little flow and valleys without clearly marked fluvial terraces. Only some sections of the Krzna, Liwiec and Toczna occupy larger valleys. It is also likely that the immediate vicinity of these large watercourses was harder to manage than the slopes of small river valleys, gently descending to moderately sized rivers and streams. The most attractive from this point of view were the fluvial terraces just above the flood zone, which contain as many as 73 % of the total number of sites found within the large valleys. Clearly less attractive were the higher terraces (16 %) and the valley edges (9 %) due to their distance from the water. It is also unsurprising to find only a small percentage of the settlements on the current bottom terraces (a mere 2 % of the sites found in large valleys) due to the dangerously small distance from the water and to waterlogging. The areas beyond the valleys contained a mere 4 % of the sites registered for the early medieval period. It is worth pointing out that an overwhelming majority of these are just settlement traces, containing at most a few scraps of pottery. This confirms that the areas beyond immediate reach of groundwater were chosen for settlement only reluctantly and were beyond the sphere of intensive economic exploitation. The fact that a large proportion of sites found at a distance from watercourses were cemeteries indicates that such areas were frequently selected for sepulchral activities.

² HOCZYK-SIWKOWA 1999, pp. 32–34.

The earliest stage of Slavic settlement in the Siedlecka Plateau and Łukowska Plain is represented by a relatively small number of archaeological sites [Fig. 3]. In the sixth–seventh centuries a mere 31 settlements were present here with 16 recorded for the Siedlecka Plateau and 15 for the Łukowska Plain. It must be, however, that chronology of sites, explored through field survey alone, for the early Slavic period should be approached extremely cautiously. The only artefacts discovered in the course of such surveys are ceramic fragments, which renders precise dating difficult. In such circumstances particular attention must be paid to excavated sites. Worth mentioning among them are two sepulchral objects found in the Siedlce district, namely a pit burial with cremated remains in an urn at Izdebki-Błażeje (dated to the second half of the sixth century) and a kurgan (tumulus) with a cremation but no urn at Izdebki-Wąsy (dated end-sixth to mid-seventh century).³ Also very early is the open settlement at Łukowisko (Biała Podlaska district), which goes back to the sixth–seventh century.⁴ The cremation burial tumulus (“kurgan”) at Izdebki-Błażejki, found in close proximity to the aforementioned barrow at Izdebki-Wąsy, may also perhaps belong to the early Slavic period, although it has to date been linked to the Zarubintsy culture or the post-Zarubintsy horizon. This cultural attribution of the object may be justified on the grounds that a vessel with a handle, which is uncharacteristic of the earliest stages of the Slavic settlement of the Polish lands. It should, however, be pointed out that the remaining fragments of handmade ceramic vessels found inside the tumulus correspond to the pottery of the Prague culture.⁵ The early Slavic character of the burial is also implied by its form of a tumulus (“kurgan”), quite atypical for the Zarubintsy culture and the little-known sepulchral traditions of the post-Zarubintsy horizon with cremated remains deposited in flat cemeteries.⁶ Moreover, the early medieval dating for the tumulus is supported by direct proximity of another object, very similar in dimensions and construction, which is undoubtedly connected to the beginnings of Slavic settlement in the area.

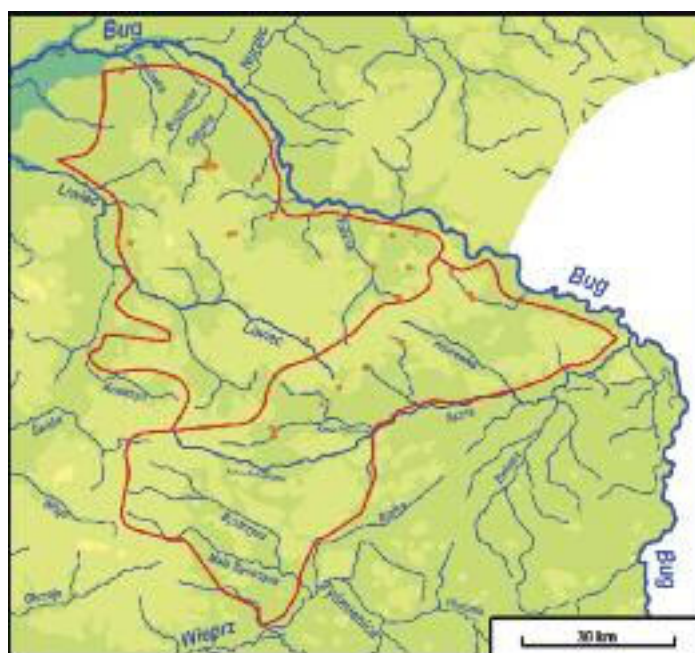


Fig. 3. Map of archaeological sites from the sixth–seventh centuries — orange dots (drawn by D. Chudzik)

³ KALAGA 2006, pp. 50–53.

⁶ TERPILOVSKIJ 2004, pp. 39–40; PAČKOVA 2006, pp. 51–71.

⁴ MIŚKIEWICZOWA 2003, pp. 76–78; SOBCZAK 2003, p. 7.

⁵ PARCZEWSKI 1988, pp. 13–36, figs. 3–17; KALAGA 2004, pp. 194–204; 2006, p. 299, fig. 27.II.

It is likely that the grave's cultural attribution could have been definitively resolved with a technological analysis of the handmade pottery found during excavations, but this is impossible due to the loss of the ceramic fragments.⁷ At present it thus seems likely that the Izdebki-Błażeje tumulus is of a similar date to the Izdebki-Wąsy barrow and is connected to the very beginnings of the early Middle Ages.

According to Maria Miśkiewiczowa, the settlement of Niewiadoma, Sokołów district belongs to the earliest stage of Slavic settlement in the South Podlasie Lowland. The monumental hillfort that forms part of this complex first came into use at the turn of the sixth and seventh century, she says. In the second half of the sixth century a nearby open settlement was also supposedly in operation with a further five cropping up at the beginning of the seventh century.⁸ It should, however, be noted that in most cases such an early chronology for the sites making up the Niewiadoma settlement complex is doubtful given the current state of knowledge and requires robust verification. It is also worth noting that the attempts have already been made to re-evaluate the chronology of Niewiadoma. According to the latest research, the beginnings of the hillfort date to the ninth century, as indicated by a re-examination of the ceramic vessels found at the site⁹ and the single C₁₄ date gained from the material at the base of rampart I.¹⁰ The earliest signs of early medieval settlement at Niewiadoma, presumably connected to an open settlement preceding the defensive structure, can be dated at the earliest to the beginnings of the tribal period. This is confirmed by, among others, the find of a spur with hook-shaped, inward-bent yokes, considered by Jan Żak and Lidia Maćkowiak-Kotowska to belong to type III: 2, subtype A, dated to the turn of the seventh and eighth century.¹¹

A clear change in the settlement dynamics of the area under consideration took place over the eighth to tenth centuries [Fig. 4]. Besides settling almost exclusively in the upper reaches of watercourses, as was the case in the early Slavic period, habitats in the middle and lower parts of

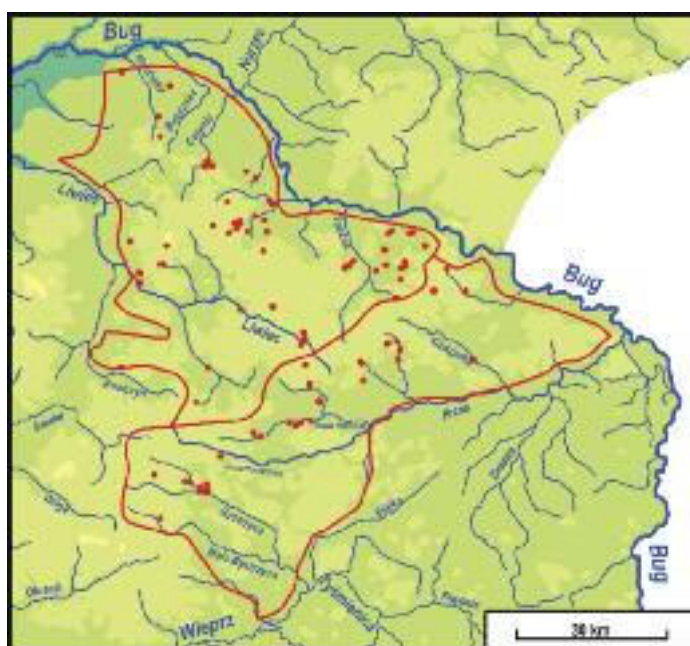


Fig. 4. Map of archaeological sites from the eighth–tenth centuries — red dots (drawn by D. Chudzik)

⁷ KALAGA 2004, pp. 194–195, 201.

⁸ MIŚKIEWICZOWA 1996, pp. 39–59.

⁹ SKRZYŃSKA-JANKOWSKA 2013, pp. 349–353.

¹⁰ MIŚKIEWICZOWA 1996, p. 40.

¹¹ ŻAK, MAĆKOWIAK-KOTOWSKA 1988, p. 330.

small river valleys are increasingly taken, while medium-sized rivers also begin to attract settlement. The first clusters of settlements show up in the record and can be interpreted as so-called settlement micro-regions. Surface area of such structures in the tribal period is relatively small at no more than 10 km². A particularly dense network of settlements in the eighth–tenth centuries is seen on the Liwiec, the north of the Krzna, the upper and middle Bystrzyca, Złota Krzywula, Leniwka, Myśla, middle Cetynia, Czyżówka, Kosówka, Oczka, Kałuża and Toczna. At some places, and in the basins of the Toczna, Myśla, Krzna Północna and Bystrzyca in particular, settlement microregions observed in the archaeological record cluster into larger structures of a mesoregional scale.

In general there are 267 settlement sites from the tribal period, including 167 in the Siedlecka Plateau and 100 in the Łukowska Plain. Among all the archaeological sites from the tribal period located in the two mesoregions, as many as 170 are considered open settlements. Although the results of field surveys must be approached with due caution, such a clear increase in the number of sites compared to the earlier period, points to significant demographic growth in the area. The settlement dynamics index, which illustrates the phenomenon by presenting the number of tribal-period sites as a multiple of early Slavic sites, amounts in this case to as much as 8.6 (860 %). Such a significant intensification of settlement was presumably the result of a number of factors. One was certainly biological growth in population, whose expansion into the area met with fairly favourable conditions. It is also likely that the South Podlasie Lowland received new waves of settlers from the area between the rivers of the Bug, Pripjat and Dnieper. The phenomenon seems to find confirmation in the archaeological record for the sites of the tribal period contain ceramic material morphologically similar to the “Luka-Raykovetska” pottery, which brings the area into close association with the territories then under East Slavic occupation.¹²

With rising population the tribal period also witnessed an expansion of defensive construction. Among the hillforts built at the time — besides the aforementioned Niewiadoma structure — there are those at Dołhołęka (Biała Podlaska district), Klimy (Łosice district) and Krzesk-Królowa Niwa (Siedlce district).¹³ The hillfort at Huszlew in the Łosice district was probably built around the turn of the ninth and tenth centuries.¹⁴ Four of the aforementioned hillforts (the Niewiadoma one aside) are characterised by very similar location in physicogeographic terms. They are typical plains structures, each located on a small eminence and surrounded by extensive, low-lying and partially waterlogged plains. Their characteristic feature is an almost perfectly circular shape, while the Klimy, Krzesk and Huszlew hillforts have double rings of concentric ramparts. The Klimy hillfort initially had a single line of fortifications. A second rampart, on the outside of the first, was built at a later date, perhaps near the turn of the ninth and tenth centuries.¹⁵ In the case of the Krzesk-Królowa Niwa [Fig. 5] hillfort, both lines of fortifications were probably built at the same time,¹⁶ while the chronological relationship between the inside and outside ramparts at the Huszlew hillfort is yet to be established.¹⁷ The Dołhołęka hillfort [Fig. 6] is for structures with a single ring of fortifications.¹⁸ The defensive establishment at Niewiadoma is located on an expansive promontory over the Cetynia valley with deep ravines immediately to the north and south. It was initially surrounded by a single line of fortifications along the edge of the promontory cut off from the plateau by a ditch and a wooden fence, which were subsequently replaced with a transverse, arch-shaped rampart. A second, crescent-shaped rampart was built probably around the turn of the tenth and eleventh centuries. Due to the adjustment of the hillfort to the local terrain, it was probably irregular in shape, slightly reminiscent of a triangle.¹⁹

¹² MIŚKIEWICZOWA 1996, p. 27; 2003, pp. 78–98; WRÓBLEWSKI 1994, p. 92.

¹³ JASTRZĘBSKI 1988, pp. 276–289; KALAGA 1989a, pp. 50–137; BIENIA 1998, pp. 12–15, 25–27; ŻUKOWSKI 2006, pp. 85–90; 2008, pp. 159–167.

¹⁴ DULINICZ, ŻUKOWSKI 2004, pp. 273–274.

¹⁵ ŻUKOWSKI 2006, p. 86; 2008, p. 167.

¹⁶ KALAGA 1989b, p. 116.

¹⁷ DULINICZ, ŻUKOWSKI 2004, pp. 265–270, 273–274.

¹⁸ JASTRZĘBSKI 1988, p. 276; BIENIA 1998, p. 12.

¹⁹ MIŚKIEWICZOWA 1996, pp. 42–48, 81–82, 84, fig. 2.

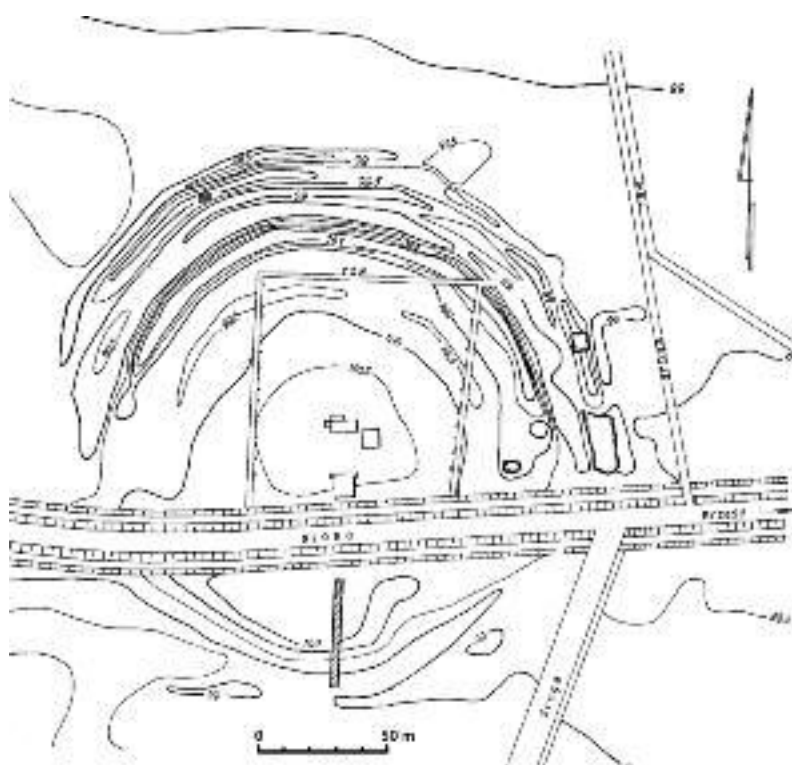


Fig. 5. Digital elevation model of hillfort at Krzesk-Królowa Niwa (GÓRSKA *et alii* 1976, pl. IX)



Fig. 6. Digital elevation model of hillfort at Dołhołęka (BIENIA 1998, p. 13)

Hillfort ramparts of the tribal period were built with a variety of earth and timber construction techniques. At Niewiadoma, for example, the remains of a wooden sandwich construction, attached on the outside to the earthen barrow of rampart I, were recorded.²⁰ In the first stage of its use, the internal rampart of the Krzesk-Królowa Niwa hillfort was topped off with a fence made of laths, while the external one with a timber structure similar to the box-framed construction. The fortifications, following a fire at the turn of the ninth and tenth centuries, were covered with a layer of earth stabilised with clay and rocks.²¹ Timber bulwarks filled with compact clay made up, perhaps, the core of the fortifications at Dołhołęka.²² The external rampart of the Klimy hillfort probably had a timber palisade at the front, stabilised by horizontal beams.²³ The external rampart of the Huszlew hillfort was reinforced from the front with stakes and its foreground had construction similar to the sandwich construction.²⁴ Also used in the construction of fortification were boulders, which served to reinforce the foundations and tops of the ramparts.²⁵

In the later stages of the early Middle Ages the area under consideration found itself in the borderlands two early states — Poland and Kievan Rus'.²⁶ Although in the early historical era it was the scene of permanent confrontation between the Piast and the Rurik dynasties, such events failed to halt the development of settlement. For the eleventh–thirteenth centuries we have 726 archaeological sites, of which 407 were recorded on the Siedlecka Plateau and 319 on the Łukowska Plain [Fig. 7]. As many as 356 of these are open settlements (including presumed ones). The index of the settlement dynamics for the early state period is around 2.7 (270 %). It thus stands at nearly one-third of its level for the tribal period, but is still fairly high. That means that the leap in settlement density in the pre-state formation era, the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries were a period of stabilisation of settlement and slower demographic growth.

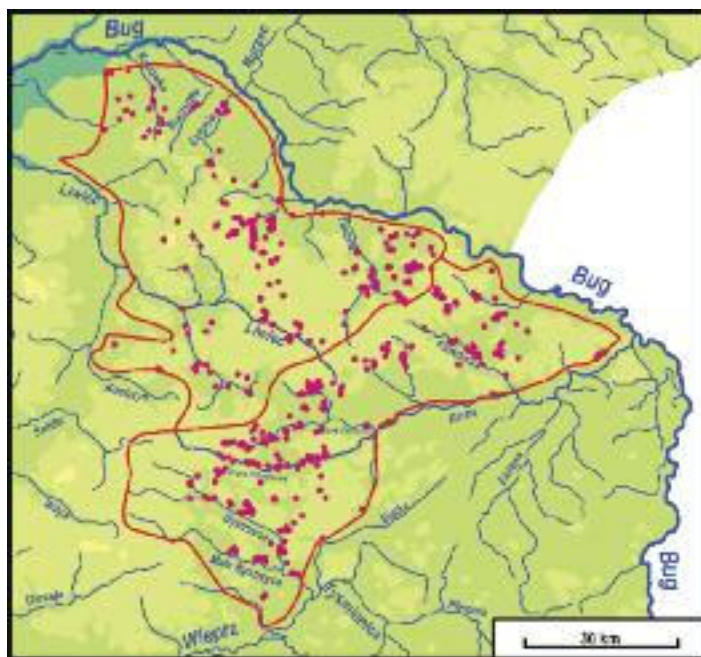


Fig. 7. Fig. 4. Map of archaeological sites from the eleventh–thirteenth centuries — red dots (drawn by D. Chudzik)

²⁰ MIŚKIEWICZOWA 1996, pp. 45–48, 81–91.

²¹ KALAGA 1989b, pp. 105–121.

²² JASTRZĘBSKI 1988, pp. 276, 278, fig. 5; BIENIA 1998, p. 12.

²³ ŻUKOWSKI 2008, p. 166.

²⁴ DULINICZ, ŻUKOWSKI 2004, pp. 267–270.

²⁵ JASTRZĘBSKI 1988, pp. 276–280; KALAGA 1989b, pp. 111, 114; DULINICZ, ŻUKOWSKI 2004, p. 270; ŻUKOWSKI 2006, pp. 86–87.

²⁶ SKRZYŃSKA-JANKOWSKA 2006, pp. 52–53, figs. 1, 2.

Despite all this, the later stages of the early Middle Ages are a period of continued development of the existing settlement structures. Systematic field surveys, undertaken as part of the AZP programme, found several large clusters of archaeological sites in the region. One of the clusters is found in the eastern part of the area under discussion, that is an area that in the later stages of our period belonged, theoretically at least, to Kievan Rus'. The cluster lies in the middle section of the Toczna basin. It is an area where several tributaries, including the Oczka and the Kałuża, flow into the Toczna, creating modestly sized valleys that facilitated movement between settlements. The cluster, covering an area of some 300 km², grew out of settlement patterns from the earlier stages of the early Middle Ages and undoubtedly deserves the name of a settlement mesoregion. It includes around 100 sites (hillforts, open settlements, traces of settlement and cemeteries), including 60 from the earlier phases of the early Middle Ages. Settlements cluster into several (at least seven) microregions of surface area ranging from 3 km² to over 10 km², interspersed with areas of low settlement density. The mesoregion's central point is the monumental defensive structure at Dzięcioły (Łosice district) [Fig. 8], dated to the twelfth century.²⁷ The structure lies in the Toczna valley and is surrounded by waterlogged meadows, difficult to traverse even today. Its ground plan is oval and it is protected by three lines of well-preserved ramparts. Its surface area does not exceed 8 ha and the ramparts rise to 3–4 m.²⁸ It must be counted among the hillforts of multiple concentric fortification lines, well known from the tribal period. As the structure at

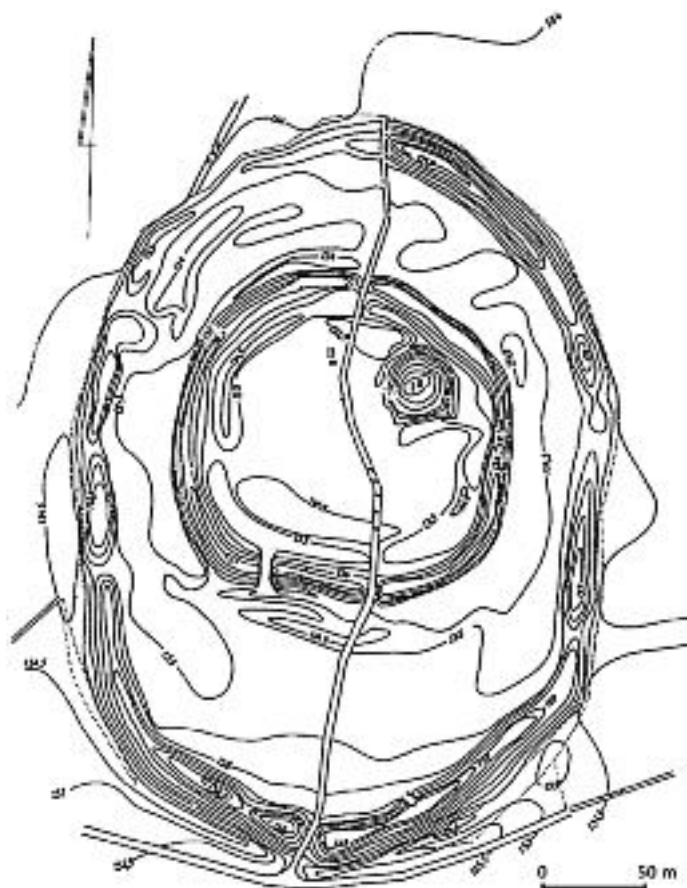


Fig. 8. Digital elevation model of hillfort at Dzięcioły (BIENIA 1998, p. 16)

²⁷ GÓRSKA *et alii* 1976, pp. 44–45.

²⁸ KOMOROWSKI 1953, p. 91; GÓRSKA *et alii* 1976, pp. 44–45; BIENIA 1998, pp. 15–17.

Dzięcioły has been only partially excavated, it may not be ruled out that, just as at Niewiadoma, it had many stages of functioning. This is indicated both by its large scale and ground plan, especially the annular inside fort in the north-eastern part of the structure. It should be noted that the Dzięcioły hillfort is not the only defensive stronghold within the early medieval settlement mesoregion in the Toczna basin. A small hillfort lies in the present-day village of Chłopki (Łosice district). The structure was unfortunately almost completely erased at the end of the nineteenth century, rendering its interpretation much harder.²⁹

Another compact cluster of archaeological sites has been located in the upper and middle basin of the small Myśla river. It is linked to the hillfort of Włodki (Sokołów district) immediately next to the Polish-Rus' border. The mesoregion covers around 125 km² and is made up of several micro-regions lying in the river valleys of the Myśla affluents. The cluster seems to have been fairly developed already in the tribal period, although its most intensive growth falls in the more recent parts of the early medieval era, when a hillfort, dated to the eleventh–twelfth centuries, is built in the present-day village of Włodki. It is a low-lying oval, annular hillfort of some 2 ha, surrounded with a single fortification line.³⁰

The location of settlement mesoregions functioning in the Toczna and Myśla basins indicates that they were part of the Drohiczyn hillfort region and functioned as its southern hinterland. The zone of intensive settlement from the early stages of the early Middle Ages also includes the upper basin of the Krzna and the Bystrzyca basin. Their location suggests they fell within the Piast dynasty's jurisdiction. They are to be linked to the formation of the Łuków castellany mentioned in written sources from the mid-thirteenth century.³¹ Two hillforts have survived from this area, the first at the village of Strzyżew,³² the other at Tuchowicz³³ (both in the Łuków district). In the earlier stages of our period two small settlement clusters can be seen — one on the Krzna Północna, the other in the upper Bystrzyca valley. The rapid development of the clusters took place in the latter stages of the early Middle Ages, when settlements also appear on the Krzna Południowa, Mała Bystrzyca and in the upper Bystrzyca valley.

Nearly all hillforts known from the early state period in this area lie in the plains on slightly elevated terrain and surrounded by extensive wetlands. The exceptions are the aforementioned hillforts of Chłopków and Niewiadoma, both located on high banks of river valleys. Most of the hillforts built in the latter stages of the early medieval period count among circular or oval annular structures with a single line of defences. Among these it is worth mentioning the small (up to 0.5 ha) hillforts at Strzyżew (Łuków district), Turów (Radzyń district) and Wylązy (Siedlce district) and the much larger (over 2 ha) hillforts at z Włodki and Podnieśno (Siedlce district). A single rampart is also around the irregular hillfort at Czołomyje (Siedlce district) [Fig. 9]. It is characterised by an atypical, 8-shaped form, which may indicate that it was originally a bipartite foundation. Among the hillforts with multiple concentric ramparts, still functional in the latter stages of the early Middle Ages are the aforementioned structures at Krzesk-Królowa Niwa, Huszlew and Dzięcioły. A double line of concentric ramparts is also found at the very well preserved hillfort at Walim in the Łosice district, although excavations carried out at the site have not allowed for date more precise than the early Middle Ages. A double line of crescent-shaped fortifications is characteristic for the latter stages of the Niewiadoma hillfort. It is also worth pointing out that the area of the Siedlecka Plateau and Łukowska Plain yields three known examples of mound hillforts from the very end of the early Middle Ages. They lie in the villages Czapple Górne, Krzymosze (both in the Siedlce district) and Tuchowicz.³⁴

²⁹ MIKULSKI 1937, p. 104; GÓRSKA *et alii* 1976, pp. 30–31; KALAGA 1989a, pp. 1–5; BIENIA 1998, pp. 7–8.

³⁰ GÓRSKA *et alii* 1976, pp. 157–158.

³¹ BIENIA 2003.

³² BIENIA 2002.

³³ NIEDŹWIEDŹ 2003.

³⁴ MIKULSKI 1937, pp. 102–104, fig. 4; GÓRSKA *et alii* 1976, pp. 35, 76–77; BIENIA 1998, pp. 7–8, 15–17, 22–24, 30–34.

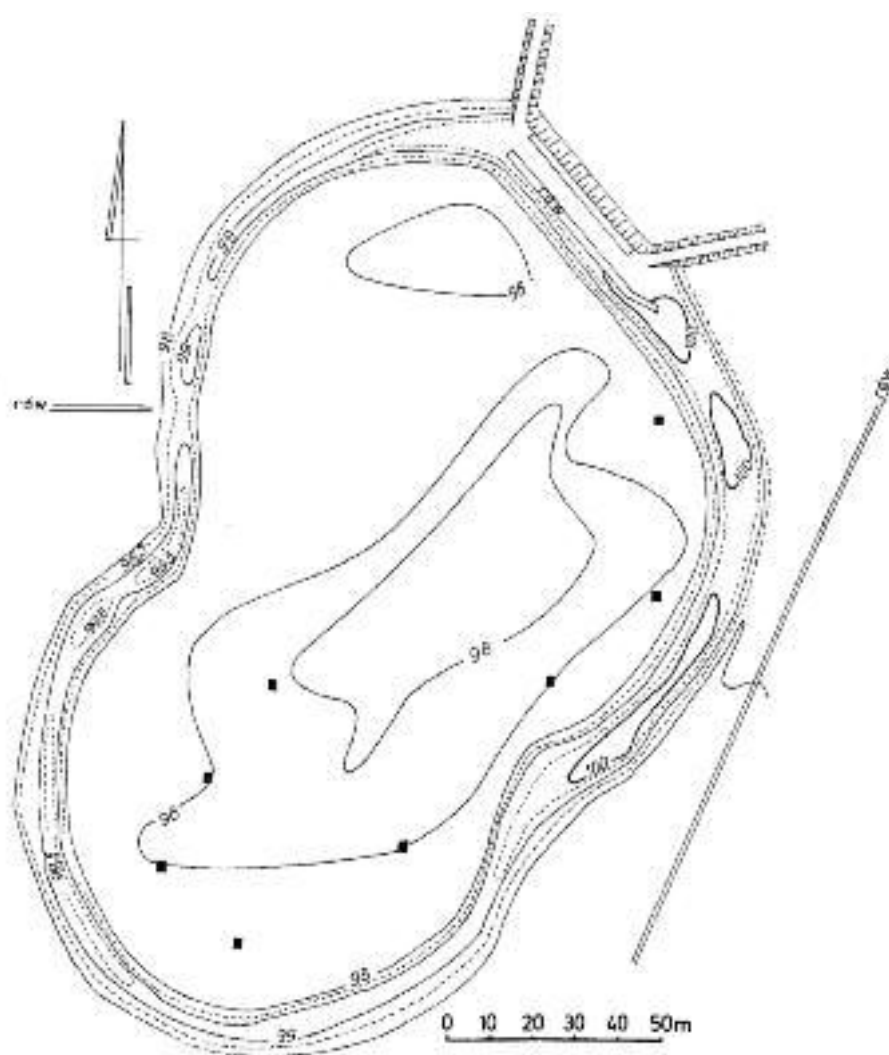


Fig. 9. Digital elevation model of hillfort at Czołomyje
(GÓRSKA *et alii* 1976, p. 42, fig. 48)

Not much can be said about the construction of ramparts of the South Podlasie Lowland hillforts from the later part of the early Middle Ages. At Turów for example timber construction similar to the box-framed construction was used.³⁵ The base of the rampart at Podnieśno was a timber structure derived from a gridded structure. A layer of charcoal found at the hypothetical location of the fortifications of the Wyłazy hillfort indicates that here as well the earth rampart was reinforced with timber. The sides of the Krzymosze mound hillfort were probably faced with timber. A rampart fragment built exclusively with earth and rocks was, on the other hand, excavated at Włodki.³⁶ The entirely damaged fortifications of the Chłopków hillfort were erected on a layer of compact clay reinforced with rocks.³⁷ In the more recent stages of the early Middle Ages the fortifications of the Krzesk-Królowa Niwa and Niewiadoma hillforts only had earth-and-stone constructions, erected over earlier timber ramparts destroyed by fire.³⁸

³⁵ BIENIA 1998, pp. 30–32.

³⁶ GÓRSKA *et alii* 1976, pp. 157, 161–164.

³⁷ KALAGA 1989a, p. 3; BIENIA 1998, pp. 7–8.

³⁸ KALAGA 1989b, pp. 111–112, 115–116; MIŚKIEWICZOWA 1996, pp. 42–48, 84–126.

In summary, more than 1,270 archaeological sites from the early Middle Ages are known for the area, of which 57 % are in the Siedlecka Plateau and 43 % in the Łukowska Plain. Nearly all have only undergone field surveys with excavations at a mere 4 % of sites, mainly hillforts and cemeteries. 57 % of the settlement sites are to be counted as mere traces of settlement. Open settlements constitute some 40 % of the total. The share of cemeteries stands at 2 % and hillforts at 1 % [Fig. 10]. 31 settlements functioned in the sixth–seventh centuries, 267 in the eighth–tenth and 726 in the eleventh–thirteenth [Fig. 11]. The remaining sites are dated generally to the early medieval period. The surface area of the open settlements, recorded in the process of the AZP surveys does not exceed a single hectare in 75 % of cases. 42 % have surface area of up to 0.5 ha, 35 % from 0.5 to 1 ha and larger settlements make up 23 % of the total. On that basis it may be presumed that most open settlements were small hamlets with at most a few households.

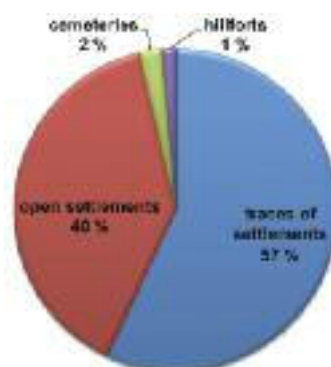


Fig. 10. Percentage share of individual types of early medieval archaeological sites in Siedlecka Plateau and Łukowska Plain

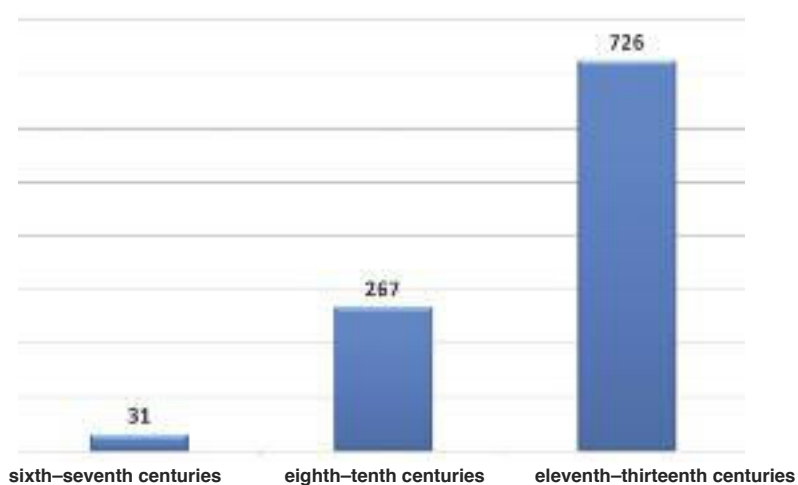


Fig. 11. Number of archaeological sites from individual stages of the early Middle Ages (excluding sites dated generally to the early Middle Ages)

Among the seventeen surviving early-medieval hillforts in the area under consideration, ten lie in the Siedlecka Plateau and seven in the Łukowska Plain. Five have a double or triple line of concentric ramparts. The structure on the promontory at Niewiadoma has an irregular shape, while the hillforts at Tuchowicz, Czaple Górne and Krzymosze are mound constructions, while the form of the poorly preserved Chłopków hillfort is yet to be determined. The remaining defensive structures (to the number of seven) are mostly circular or oval and are surrounded by a single ring of ramparts. Prominent among them is the hillfort at Czołomyje with an atypical, 8-shaped form.

Most of the hillforts with a single line of defences cover a small surface area, in five cases less than a hectare. The largest is the hillfort at Podnieśno (2.8 ha). There is also much variation in dimensions among the hillforts with two or three lines of fortifications. The smallest of them cover a surface area of little more than a hectare. The remaining three are much larger. The hillfort at Krzesk-Królowa Niwa has surface area of 3.5 ha, at Niewiadoma ca. 5 ha and at Dzięcioły slightly over 8 ha.³⁹ It must, of course, be borne in mind that the size of the hillforts may have changed considerable from one stage of its functioning to another, as can be seen at Klimy⁴⁰ and Niewiadoma.⁴¹

A number of factors shaped the settlement structure of the South Podlasie Lowland. In addition to the obvious natural factors these were cultural and economic, whose importance rose at the twilight of the pre-state formation era. Among the most important were trade routes, especially the Bug route with its many forks.⁴²

The political circumstances, determining the possession of the individual parts of the area to Poland or to Kievan Rus', must also be borne in mind.

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³⁹ GÓRSKA et alii 1976, pp. 44–45, 75–76, 87–88, tabl. IV, IX, XIII; BIENIA 1998, pp. 16–17.

⁴⁰ ŻUKOWSKI 2006, pp. 89–90; 2008, p. 166.

⁴¹ MIŚKIEWICZOWA 1996, pp. 47–48.

⁴² DUNIN-WĄSOWICZ 1982, pp. 46–56, figs. 8, 9; MIŚKIEWICZOWA 2003, p. 100.

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Streszczenie

Wczesnośredniowieczne osadnictwo Wysoczyzny Siedleckiej i Równiny Łukowskiej w świetle badań archeologicznych

Mezoregiony fizycznogeograficzne Wysoczyzny Siedleckiej i Równiny Łukowskiej wchodzi w skład makroregionu Niziny Południowopodlaskiej. Leżą one w Polsce środkowowschodniej (głównie w dorzeczu środkowego i dolnego Bugu) i zajmują łączną powierzchnię około 5 tys. km². Zarejestrowano tu ponad 1270 stanowisk archeologicznych z okresu wczesnego średniowiecza, z których 57 % odkryto na terenie Wysoczyzny Siedleckiej a 43 % na Równinie Łukowskiej. 31 z nich datowanych jest na VI–VII w., 267 na VIII–X w., a 726 na XI–XIII w. Chronologię pozostałych

określono ogólnie — na wczesne średniowiecze. 57 % punktów osadniczych zaliczono do kategorii śladów osadnictwa. Osady otwarte stanowią 40 % ogółu. Udział cmentarzysk wynosi 2 %, a grodzisk 1 %. Na kształtowanie się wczesnośredniowiecznej sieci osadniczej na omawianym terenie wpływ miały warunki naturalne (np. układ sieci hydrograficznej, ukształtowanie powierzchni terenu, przydatność rolnicza gleb) oraz czynniki kulturowe i gospodarcze (np. przebieg dróg dalekosiężnej wymiany handlowej). Nie można zapomnieć także o uwarunkowaniach historyczno-politycznych, determinujących przynależność poszczególnych części analizowanego obszaru do Polski lub Rusi Kijowskiej.

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