

The project plan includes several seasons of excavation at the settlement complex of Czerwno, designed to confirm the chronology not only of the hillfort in the small village on the Huczwa river but also of the dawning of the Poland-Rus' neighbourhoods in the 10th-13th c.. Natural science studies, an interpretation of finds (e.g. related to trade) and a comparison with other borderlands should enable us to answer the question whether the Polish-Rus' borderland ought to be treated as "no man's land" only traversed by borderlords, akin to Spanish El Cid, or as a bridge and a place which connects rather than divides.

Zorian Dołęga Chodakowski (1784-1825), one of the fathers of Polish archaeology, recorded in 1817 "a peculiar thing found in the village of Czerwno on the Huczwa River [...]. Circular ramparts as in all hillforts" (cf. *Pamiętnik Naukowy* 3 [1837], p. 22). He interpreted these as the remains of the stronghold Cherven', mentioned for the first time in the *Russian Primary Chronicle (Povest' Vremennykh Let = PVL; S. H. Cross, O. P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor [eds.] 1953)* under the year 981 when the Rus' prince "Vladimir marched upon the Lyakhs and took their cities: Peremyshl', Cherven', and other towns, all of which are subject to Rus' even to this day" (PVL, p. 95).

Obviously, early medieval borders were not linear, and it is too early to speak of nations (i.e. Poland and Rus') in the 10th-13th century. Nevertheless, by identifying the location of the stronghold of Cherven' we can locate and begin to trace the emerging Polish-Rus' borderlands. First initiated by Adam Naruszewicz (1733-1796) and Nikolay Karamzin (1766-1826), Polish and Russian historians respectively, this topic has continued to be the subject of discussion for over two hundred years. Due to the limited number of written sources relating to eastern Poland and western Belarus'/Ukraine during the 10th-11th century, as well as the existence of more than one town named Cherven' within Slav territory – even as far south as in Bulgaria! – many historians, including Aleksander Gieysztor (1916-99), Stefan Maria Kuczyński (1904-1985), Gerard Labuda (1916-2010), Henryk Łowmiański (1898-1984), Gotthold Rhode (1916-90), and more recently, Elżbieta Kowalczyk, Jan Tyszkiewicz, Karol Kollinger and Adrian Jusupović, have looked to archaeologists to settle the issue of whether the "circular ramparts" at Czerwno can be identified with the stronghold Cherven' recorded in medieval chronicles.

Since 1945, Polish archaeology has helped answer a number of questions about the origins of Poland (the so-called Millennial Studies), for instance, a history relating to the period during the reigns of Mieszko I or Bolesław Chrobry, would not be complete without mention of the results of archaeological fieldwork at Gniezno, Ostrów Lednicki or Poznań. In contrast, the region where Czerwno lies along with the upper reaches of the Bug River, is much less well recognized. This is despite the first written references to this area similarly dating to the reign of the same two Piast rulers and it being the case that following the account of the clash of Polish and Rus' armies on the Bug river in 1018, we find out the following information about the first king of Poland, described as having "a fat belly". "Boleslav was big and heavy, so that he could scarcely sit a horse[...]" (PVL, p. 113).

Overdue major progress in the archaeological study of Czerwno was made between 2013-20 thanks to the work of a team of archaeologists, historians, geographers who published the results of past research at Czerwno and analysed all the written and cartographic sources relating to this site (cf. <https://grodycierwieskie.pl/publikacje> // <https://pl-pl.facebook.com/Grody.Czerwieskie>).

The aim, however, of this project submitted for evaluation is to "dot the i's and cross the t's" of the research on Czerwno. Archaeological excavations will be carried out on the rampart and the moat of the main hillfort (site 1), its fortified suburb (site 2) and the mighty rampart which defended the stronghold from the south (site 66). Furthermore, two hundred absolute dates will be obtained (via C14, dendrochronology, and thermoluminescence dating).

The results of the archaeological fieldwork will be reported at congresses held in Poland (7th Congress of Polish Medieval Historians, Katowice 2022, Rzeszów 2025), and abroad (24th Byzantine Congress, Venice 2022, and the International Medieval Congress in Leeds). A series of articles addressed to archaeologists and historians will be published in journals with an international outreach, as well as a monograph written in English.

Whilst Vladimir's campaign of 981 and the taking of Cherven' is mentioned in every history schoolbook in Poland and Ukraine, we hope to connect with a wider audience through dedicated web pages: <https://grodycierwieskie.pl> // <https://grodycierwieskie.pl/uk/>, and via museum exhibitions organised with Museum in Tomaszów Lubelski and the National Museum in Lublin.