

The main goal of the presented project is an archaeological chronological and functional verification of early medieval hillforts from the so-called tribal phases and the turn of the proto-state and early state phases in the area of the Mogilnica river basin in western Wielkopolska. Approximately 1000 such objects have been recorded in this area, which is known as the land of hillforts. So far, attention has focused on those associated with the state of the first Piasts. In the project presented here, research will be conducted on older settlements representing tribal/ruler structures of territorial organization. Undertaken activities will seek to answer questions about the detailed chronology of settlements (time of origin/fall, whether the settlements were contemporaneous), their function (space planning, intensity of use) and their relationship to the Poznań stronghold (whether they were destroyed in connection with the development of early state structures). The study of artefacts (ceramics, stone/bone/metal objects) collected during the research will provide valuable information on possible cultural contacts, chronology, nature of the site, etc. In a broader context, this will make it possible to obtain as much and as complete information as possible about strongholds in the northwestern part of Wielkopolska, and will serve to provide a comprehensive view of the older phases of the early Middle Ages. These objectives are to be achieved in three stages: 1. through non-invasive research, preceded by archival data queries and field verification, which will result in the selection of five settlements for further study. These will be identified by geophysical methods: magnetic and GPR, which will indicate the location, type and probable depth of archaeological objects. 2. through probing excavations which will make it possible to determine the chronology and possibly the function of the hillforts. These investigations will allow to collect necessary materials for biological dating: wood (dendrochronology), animal bones (radiocarbon dating) and ceramic fragments (thermoluminescence and archaeological dating). 3. analysis of the results of the conducted research with their correlation to previous archaeological hypothesis. An important element of the project will also be methodological and comparative, as some of the strongholds were identified during the so-called verification surveys (1970s and 1980s-90s) and it is intended to verify the chronological determinations made at that time. The described research will verify and update existing hypotheses, which were constructed for the whole Wielkopolska based on the recognition of the southern and central part of this region. The area of the central part of the Mogilnica Basin has never been the subject of a separate and systematic study. This state of affairs may be surprising, as a large research potential is apparent due to the concentration of hillforts along the Mogilnica River. Recognition of some of them will allow initial verification of their entire stronghold system in this area, and will also provide answers to a number of questions related to the time of their functioning and dependence on the well-recognized Poznań stronghold, whose formation is probably related to their decline. Taking advantage of the opportunities afforded by modern natural dating methods will contribute to expanding the database of mounds verified in this way. The data obtained in the course of the project will contribute to further interdisciplinary research on the early Middle Ages in Wielkopolska.