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## COMMENTS TO THE HISTORY OF SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT OF WIŚLICA IN THE MIDDLE AGES

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### UWAGI DO HISTORII ROZWOJU PRZESTRZENNEGO WIŚLICY W ŚREDNIOWIECZU

#### **Abstract**

The former town of Wiślica is located in the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship, in the Busko district. Currently, it is a peripheral centre, whose origins date back to the early medieval period. Several settlement elements from that period have survived in Wiślica (relics of the Romanesque church of St. Nicholas; relics of the church of the Holy Spirit; relics of the church of St. Martin; the archaeological-architectonic relics "Regia"; relics of the 1st and 2nd Romanesque church and a hill fort), which constituted an early-medieval agglomeration in this area at the time. During the high Middle Ages the agglomeration acquired a regular urban the layout (9-square model) of a chartered town. In this article, the authors try to present the spatial development of Wiślica during the Middle Ages, on the basis of their own analyses and findings resulting from archaeological research conducted in the past.

**Keywords:** Wiślica, spatial development, Middle Ages

#### **Streszczenie**

Niegdyśejsze miasto Wiślica położone jest na terenie województwa świętokrzyskiego, w powiecie buskim. Obecnie jest to peryferyjny ośrodek, który swoim rodowodem sięga okresu wczesnego Średniowiecza. Z tego okresu na terenie Wiślicy przetrwało wiele elementów osadniczych (relikty romańskiego kościoła św. Mikołaja; relikty kościoła św. Ducha; relikty kościoła św. Marcina; relikty archeologiczno-architektoniczne na „Regii”; relikty I oraz II kościoła romańskiego oraz grodzisko), które w wymienionym okresie tworzyły na tym terenie aglomerację wczesnośredniowieczną. Aglomeracja ta w okresie dojrzałego Średniowiecza została wzbogacona regularnym układem urbanistycznym (model 9-polowy) miasta lokacyjnego. Autorzy niniejszego artykułu, na podstawie własnych analiz oraz ustaleń badań archeologicznych, podjęli próbę scharakteryzowania rozwoju Wiślicy w okresie średniowiecza.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Wiślica, układ urbanistyczny, średniowiecze

## 1. Introduction

Wiślica is a town with an extremely interesting and eventful history. Currently, it is a neglected and forgotten village located on the outskirts of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship. The former town was established on the hill, in the Nida overflow area, during the early medieval period; the oldest traces of organized settlement discovered so far date back to the 9<sup>th</sup> century. For years, interdisciplinary research has been carried out in Wiślica in order to determine the history and provenance of the settlement motifs accumulated here, as well as of monuments and their relics. The research has been conducted by archaeologists, architects, urban planners and art historians, who systematically publish their work results. Despite their efforts, the medieval history of Wiślica has not been fully revealed yet and still poses a challenge for scientists. The reason for such a state of affairs is primarily the lack of archive sources and still incomplete archaeological research.

The urban complex in Wiślica comprises several elements, which, either in their entirety or as relics, have survived until the present. Among them, there are: the medieval urban layout; a complex of the Collegiate church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which includes: a church, a bell tower and the house of Długosz – the rectory; relics of the Romanesque church of St. Nicholas; relics of the church of St. Martin; an archaeological-architectonic reserve “Regia”; relics of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2nd Romanesque church and the hill-fort [1].



Fig. 1. Wiślica on Reymann's map from 1797, copy in the Archive KHAUiSzP WA PK, s.v.



Fig. 2. Wisłica on the map by Anton Mayer von Heldensfeld from 1808, copy in the Archive KHAUiSzP WA PK, s.v.

## 2. State of research

As has been mentioned above, Wisłica is still the subject of interdisciplinary research the results of which have been published in scientific articles and monographs for about 50 years. It should be stressed that the largest number of publications concerns archaeological excavations carried out on numerous archaeological sites within the town itself and its surroundings. They are e.g. works by W. Antoniewicz and Z. Wartołowska, concerning archaeological research conducted in the years 1950s and 1960s on the hillfort site [2] and on other sites in Wisłica [3–5]; as well as by W. Gliński concerning e.g. the palatial complex at the Regia site [11–14]. Several scientific studies on the history of Wisłica have been written so far, among which one ought to mention the work by F. Kiryk on the urbanisation process in the Sandomierz Voivodeship between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century [17], and the latest monograph of the place prepared by P. Kardys [16]. Z kolei The scientific findings so far, connected with the urban layout of Wisłica, have been published in the Studium historyczno-urbanistycznym (Historic-Urban Study) [18]; two articles by T. Zagodzki [24, 25] and a book by B. Krasnowolski on chartered-town urban layouts in the Krakow region during the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century [19]. However, it should be emphasised that the findings are mostly hypotheses, which can be regarded as a prolegomenon to further research on the urban shape of medieval Wisłica.

### 3. Pre-foundation elements of the urban complex in Wiślica

Wiślica is located on the old route connecting Krakow to Sandomierz, along which an urbanisation wave moved during the medieval period. It resulted in numerous foundations of new urban centres, e.g. Wiślica, which was then one of the most important cities in Lesser Poland (after Krakow and Sandomierz).

The town was founded on a gypsum isle surrounded by the Nida River, which formed a natural flood-land and marsh, and hence was difficult to cross. It should be added that natural water conditions around the town constituted a vital link in the defence of that settlement complex since the early medieval times. When describing the oldest elements of that early-medieval agglomeration, one has to mention the hill-fort in Łąki, located to the south-east of the historic town centre; another hill-fort located on the highest hill in the area, named “in Regio” by Jan Długosz, and a sub-settlement formed around the church of St. Nicholas and the other pre-foundation church situated on the site of the later Gothic collegiate church. It was complemented by: a settlement around the church of St. Martin, located in the south-east part of the town by the old route leading to the hill-fort in Łąki; and the “extra muros” settlement by the church of St. Lawrence, creating the later Wiślica suburb to the north of the town, by the route running to Busko and Sandomierz [17, p.159].

The hill-fort in Łąki, located on a separate isle east of the town, was a strategic point when crossing the Nida overflow area, and a place of commodity exchange on the bustling route [16, p. 29]. The original fort might have been erected here at the turn of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. The findings so far indicate that it might have had 3 stages of development. Finally, it was destroyed during a Tartar raid in 1241 [3, p. 239].

Another important link in the early-medieval agglomeration of Wiślica was the fort situated on the highest point of the urban isle, on its west side. The hill-fort, named “In Regio” [8, s. 404] by Jan Długosz, must have functioned as early as the 9<sup>th</sup> century, and in the 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century, it must have been replaced by a larger defensive object. It can be surmised that it had two parts and was surrounded by a moat and ramparts. The fort space measured 60 x 50 m, while acc. to some scientists the suburbium (or sub-settlement) might have been even four times bigger. From the east (the side of the later town), the fort was surrounded by a moat and a rampart probably levelled before the foundation of the chartered town [7, pp. 289–290]. The complex is known as the ducal seat consisting of two palatial and accompanying rotundas. The uniqueness of this layout lies in e.g. the existence of a double church-palace complex.

The third link in the early-medieval agglomeration was the settlement complex around the church of St. Nicholas, located in the centre of the urban isle (to the east of the later collegiate church). The results of archaeological excavations allow to date the church to the 11<sup>th</sup> century. It is also known that, in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, a new annexe was added to it. By the church, there was a graveyard, and to the west of it, another one-nave Romanesque church [5, pp. 105–116] was built around the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century. The church of St. Nicholas is also associated with a little-known commercial complex, which occasionally appears in the sources as: the cattle market, the salt market, or nowadays the Salt Square. A pre-foundation trade settlement might have existed in this part of the urban isle. The church of St. Nicholas functioned until the 14<sup>th</sup>

century. Currently, its relics can be found in the west section of the Salt Square. It should be mentioned that, in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the Romanesque one-nave church, located west of the church of St. Nicholas, was replaced by an also Romanesque 3-aisle church with two spires [16, pp. 44–46]. There is a hypothesis that the construction of the new impressive church was related to the increasing prestige of the Wiślica Chapter.

Another link in the pre-foundation settlement was the complex by the church of St. Martin, which was located in the south-east part of the urban isle, by the trade route leading to the hill-fort in Łąki. The church of St. Martin dates back to the turn of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. It did not serve as a parish church. Originally, it was a masonry object, which must have been burnt down at the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. It was rebuilt from wood and a churchyard was founded around it [16, p. 48].

The above-described pre-foundation elements of the settlement complex in Wiślica were complemented by the urban layout of the chartered town, which is described in the next section of this study.

#### **4. Plan of Wiślica during the Middle Ages**

During the medieval period, the settlement complex in Wiślica was granted its town rights. It was also then that the urban layout was marked out, adapting the former state of development characterised above. The establishment of the town took a relatively long time, hence it can be claimed that it happened in stages.

The exact date of the first foundation of Wiślica remains unknown because the oldest documents were lost in the fire of the town archive (1409). There are hypotheses that the town was founded by Duke Bolesław Wstydlivy in the 2nd half of the 13<sup>th</sup> c. [20, pp. 381–430; 17, p. 159], who wanted to strengthen the town destroyed as a result of two Tatar raids (in 1241 and at the turn of 1259 and 1260) [6, p. 200; 17, p. 159]. That being so, it could be assumed that Wiślica was already a town during the reign of Kazimierz Wielki [16, p. 109].

For the first time, Wiślica was referred to as “civitas” in sources in the years 1304/1305 [16, p. 107], and later in the years 1325–1327 [16, p. 109]. In 1344 and a year later, Kazimierz Wielki granted privileges to Wiślica. The first indicated Wiślica as a centre on the trade route to Hungary and Ruthenia. The other exempted the burghers of Wiślica from paying duty in the whole kingdom [16, p. 109]. Therefore, it can be assumed that the second foundation of Wiślica took place around the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century, and was executed by Kazimierz Wielki in order to revive the town after a stagnation period caused by its destruction by Tatars. It was then that the spatial relations in Wiślica were organised and defensive ramparts were built (or completed).

The urban layout of Wiślica from the time of the 2nd foundation was measured out in the middle of the isle, in the area where, as a result of archaeological excavations, the above described traces of settlement from the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century were revealed [22, p. 82]. It was planned according to the 9-square model, which means that the centre was occupied by the market place in the shape resembling a square (proportions 9:10). That chartered town layout was measured out between Regia in the west, and the alt trade route in the east

(currently Batalionów Chłopskich Street). In the diagonal block of the market square, in the south-east, there existed the above mentioned one-nave Romanesque church, replaced by a larger, 3-aisled object in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Such a location of a church was relatively frequently encountered in medieval urban layouts (among others Skawina, Krosno, Żmigród Stary, Gorlice). In addition, later, in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, a collegiate church was built on the same site, which influenced the change in spatial relations in this part of the town.

Coming back to the issue of the urban layout of the town, it ought to be mentioned that the latter was measured out on the measuring module. It can be assumed that the already mentioned plan of the medieval town based on the 9-square model followed the measuring module applied during the foundation of Krakow. Therefore, the chartered town was measured out on the 4 x 4 cable module (1 large 'cable' = app. 45 m). The market square, with its size fairly typical for medieval towns 2 x 2 cables, is currently deformed in its north section where a building block tilts northwards towards Targowa Street and the Busko Gate. Also, the east market block was changed probably in the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century and was deepened, from 1 to 1.5 cables, towards Batalionów Chłopskich Street. It must have been related to the construction of the above-mentioned Kazimierz collegiate church in Wiślica.

Another issue, which has not been solved yet, is the size of the settlement plot. Studies on measurement limitation in Wiślica (acc.to T. Zagrodzki from the 1960s and B. Krasnowolski from 2004), known in the literature of the subject, refer to the attempt at reconstructing the supposed centurial grids with sides measuring 9 and 12 rods, and in the other case to the attempt at reconstructing the measurement of "half-curial" market plots (36 x 144 feet). The reconstruction of settlement plots acc. to B. Krasnowolski may seem likely. However, it should be noticed that such a size of the plot appeared in Krakow from the times of the "great foundation" and was the result of a secondary division of combined blocks in which the full-curial settlement plot originally measured 72 x 144 feet. Therefore, looking for analogical layout patterns requires further research.

On the east side of the medieval town, there exists the above-mentioned square known as the Salt Market. In the pre-foundation period, a salt market, located by the church of St. Nicholas, might have been located here. There is also a hypothesis, which says that trade routes, to which a cattle "market" and a commodity exchange point were connected, crossed in Wiślica at that time [16, p. 108]. A trade settlement might have existed here as an urban structure within that period. Its traces can be found to the north of the relics of the church of St. Nicholas. The settlement must have lost its functions around the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century, in favour of the increased depth of the east market block (a combined block) and forming the app. 15 m wide (3 rods) Batalionów Chłopskich Street, which might have continued its commercial function with adjacent streets (e.g. Towarowa Street). It has also retained its function of a transit passage through the town between the Krakow and Busko Gates.

In the market square in Wiślica, there stood the town hall, which had already existed here in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Its foundations were discovered in 1938. They were dug out and taken away, hence the exact location of the building remains unknown. Besides the town hall, in the market square, there were the scales, the cropping house and clothier's stalls [16, pp. 134-135], as well as 6 butcher's stalls and 1 cobbler's stall. The above clearly indicate that

the market square served both administrative and commercial functions, apart from those located in the vicinity of St. Nicholas church and the present Batalionów Chłopskich Street.

The town acquired stone defensive walls, which might have been founded by King Kazimierz Wielki [10, pp. 625–627], in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. However, there are hypotheses suggesting that the walls started to be built during the turbulent reign of King Władysław Łokietek [18]. The walls of Wiślica were mentioned by Janko from Czarnków [10, p. 625] and Jan Długosz [9, pp. 323–324]. The defensive perimeter was established on the “edges” of the urban isle, marking the limits of medieval Wiślica. The town inside the walls covered the area of around 13 ha, and had the shape resembling a triangle with sides 350 m long (in the north-south direction), 430 m (east-west) and about 600 m (along the north-west – south-east axis) [16, p. 113]. It is assumed that defensive ramparts had been completed by the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century. The defensive perimeter encompassed pre-foundation settlements, including the “in Regio” hill-fort with the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> palatium buildings, rotundas, the sub-settlement with the church of St. Nicholas (with the graveyard) and the settlement round the church of St. Martin with the Salt Market. The ramparts were over 1400 m long and approached the hill-fort in Łąki situated on the east side, on a lonely rise [23, p. 501]. According to the current results of archaeological research, the walls were 200–110 cm thick at the base, with an estimated height of 7–8 m [15, p. 129]. The walls might have been topped with crenellations and a wooden gallery for the crew. Relics of some donjons were uncovered within the walls perimeter. There were three gates in the walls: Krakow, Busko and Castle Gates [23, p. 501]. We do not know what they looked like, and they must have been built before the ramparts were completed. It is likely that the first two functioned originally and directed the merchant transit through the town, bypassing the market square. Later, at the time of the foundation, the Castle Gate was built as a shortcut between Sandomierz and the royal castle as the ruler’s residence [16, p. 29]. According to preserved bills of expense, walls were systematically maintained and repaired. They were eventually destroyed during the “Swedish deluge” and were never repaired. Their remains were demolished in 1766.

Two suburbs developed outside the defensive ramparts of Wiślica, along the route to Krakow and Sandomierz via Busko. The first, southern suburb was situated by the hospital for the poor and the church of the Holy Spirit, while the other – northern one – by the slightly further church of St. Lawrence.

The medieval urban layout and the functional – spatial structure did not entirely fill in the area of the chartered town, enclosed within the outline of the ramparts. Numerous natural disasters that ravaged the town (e.g. in 1409, 1437, 1467, 1471, 1564, 1628) [16, p. 151] and the destruction of Wiślica during the “deluge” might have hindered the process.

In conclusion of this part, it should be stated that, during the reign of Kazimierz Wielki, Wiślica regained its political position in Lesser Poland. This is confirmed by e.g. the Congress of Lesser Poland nobility in Wiślica (in 1378); the meeting of King Ludwik Węgierski (Louis the Hungarian) with senators (in 1381) and, a year later, a convention of Members of Parliament in Wiślica in order to support pretenders to the Polish throne (1382) [16, pp. 88–90].

In 1409, at the burghers request, King Władysław Jagiełło renewed the Wiślica town charter [21, p. 198]. The request was prompted by the fact that the previous town charter was



lost in the fire that destroyed the town and the town hall. Wiślica, like other towns, appealed to subsequent monarchs to confirm the town right and privileges: to Jan Olbracht (1493) and Zygmunt August (1548) [16, p. 157].

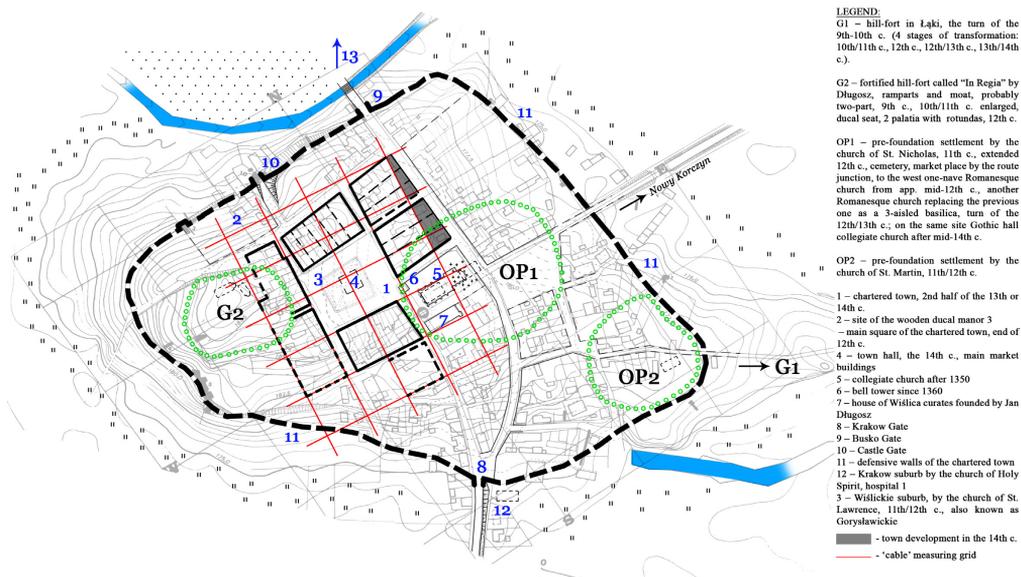


Fig. 3. Hypothetical layout of Wiślica in the medieval period (Prep. by authors, 2017)

## 5. Summary

The old town complex in Wiślica, described above, presents a rare example of an elaborate settlement complex, which contains all forms of urban development from the early and high medieval period. They are: a hill-fort in Łąki; the ducal hillfort complex “in Regia”; sub-settlements by the church of St. Nicholas and the church of St. Martin; possibly a trade settlement in the route between the Krakow and Busko Gates; a royal residence complex to the west of the Castle Gate; a medieval town (possibly established in two stages); defensive ramparts (which were completed at the same time as the construction of the collegiate church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary) and suburbs.

It should be added that the settlement complex in Wiślica has been preserved almost complete until today. This refers to both the relics of pre-foundation settlement in Regia, Łąki, in the sub-settlement around the churches of St. Nicholas and of St. Martin, as well as the medieval urban layout with the market square, the street grid and the building blocks layout. The church complex with the Kazimierz collegiate dominating the town silhouette, the bell tower, and the rectory founded by Jan Długosz are also well preserved. However, the town hall, trade devices in the market square or the defensive ramparts surrounding the town have not survived. In conclusion, it must be admitted that the whole urban layout enclosed within the outline of hypothetically reconstructed defensive perimeter is characterised by originality

and authenticity. It might be related to the currently peripheral location of Wiślica, as well as a lack of factors attracting investment processes. The town does not properly develop nowadays and is not modernised, owing to which it has remained genuine.

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