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Czerwień – the golden grail of the Polish historiography

Annotation: The article focus on the problem of shaping the Polish-Russian borderland in the early Middle Ages, especially the role played by the border town Czerwen in the political competition between of both neighboring authorities. The analysis of source concerning the aforementioned city and the so-called „Czerwienian Gorod” and their confrontation with the latest archaeological research, leads to the conclusion, that Czerwien did not play a key role in the Polish Ruthenian relations, as believed historians, of the end of the 10th and the first decade of the 11th century. The relation of the *Tale of Bygone Years* about achievements Volodimir I, should be considered not, as the sequence of events that took place during the reign of this ruler, but as a manifestation of historical memory, functioning in Ruthenia on the eleventh and twelfth centuries, achievements which were a kind of certificate justifying the right to rule over given territory of the successors of the mention ruler.

Keywords: Ruthenia, *Tale of Bygone Years*, *Galician-Volhynian Chronicle*, *Vladimir I*, *Czerwen*, Cherven Cities (Cherven Grods)

Czerwień – złoty graal polskiej historiografii

Streszczenie: Artykuł podejmuje problematykę kształtowania się pogranicza polsko-ruskiego we wczesnym średniowieczu, a zwłaszcza roli, jaką odgrywał pograniczny gród Czerwień w rozgrywkach politycznych obu sąsiadujących władztw. Analiza przekazów źródłowych dotyczących wspomnianego grodu jak oraz tzw. obszaru „Grodów Czerwieni” i konfrontacja ich z najnowszymi badaniami archeologicznymi, prowadzi do wniosku, że wbrew opinii historiografii nie pełnił on kluczowej roli w relacjach polsko-ruskich końca X i pierwszej dekady XI w. Przekaz *Powieści Lat Minionych* wspominający o zdobyciu Czerwienia przez Włodzimierza I, rozpatrywać należy nie tyle, jako sekwencję wydarzeń jaka miała miejsce za panowania władcy, lecz jako przejaw pamięci historycznej, funkcjonującej w środowisku dworu kijowskiego na przełomie XI i XII stulecia, która była swego rodzaju certyfikatem uzasadniającym panowanie, lub prawo panowania Rurykowiczów nad obszarem ziem nadbużańskich.

Słowa kluczowe: Ruś, Kronika halicko-włodzimierska, *Powieść Lat Minionych*, Włodzimierz I, Czerwień, Grody Czerwieńskie

Червень - золотой грааль польской историографии

Аннотация: В статье рассматриваются проблемы польско-русской границы в раннем средневековье и, в частности, роль пограничного города Червень в политических играх обеих соседних держав. Анализ исходных сообщений относительно указанной крепости и так называемой территории «Городов Червенских и их противостояние новейшим археологическим исследованиям позволяют сделать вывод, что, вопреки мнению историографии, эта территория не играла ключевой роли в польско-русских отношениях конца 10-го и первого десятилетия 11-го века. Передача Повести временных лет, в котором упоминается о захвате Червеня Владимиром I, следует рассматривать не столько как последовательность событий, имевших место во времена правления правителя, но как проявление исторической памяти, функционировавшей в среде киевского двора на рубеже XI-XII веков, что было своего рода свидетельством обоснования правления или права Рюриковичей править землями над Бугом.

Ключевые слова: Русь, Летопись Галицко-Владимирский, Повесть временных лет, Владимир I, Червень, Червеньские Города.

In 1268, Vasilko Romanovich, the prince of Vladimir, led an army of armed warriors to Tarnawa, a settlement on the border of Poland and Ruthenia which was chosen as a place for a congress with the Prince of Lesser Poland, Bolesław V the Chaste. The reason for the princes to meet was to re-establish good neighbouring relations severed by the alliance of Volhynian princes with the ruler of Latvia, Wojsełka. Bolesław the Chaste knew beyond doubt that the Latvian pillage which took place in the Eastern part of Lesser Poland had to have involved the Volhynian princes. If not in the active pursuit, at least they certainly did not object. The counter-offensive by the knights of the Lesser Poland affecting Chełm and Czerwień did not result in an expected outcome. Thus, the ruler of the house of Piast decided to end the conflict amiably.

The congress in Tarnawa of 1268 however did not take place. When the Ruthenian prince arrived at Grabowiec, he learnt the Poles had hatched a plot. Instead of heading for the congress, they were reaching for Belz, pillaging and burning down the nearby settlements. Romanovich, accompanied by his son Vladimir and his nephew Svarn quickly moved from Grabowiec do Czerwień and saw that "hamlets burn while the Poles charge and plunder"¹.

This short-lived event described in the Halycki-Volhynian chronicles is not only a great display of the intricate relations between Volhynian rulers and their distant family, representants of the house of Piast in the second half of the 13th century but also serves as an introduction to a discussion of the role of the Czerwień settlement on the border between Poland and Ruthenia. The aforementioned passage is one of the most significant sources indicating a precise location of this ancient hamlet. Allegedly, it was placed on the road connecting Belz and Grabowiec, near the former since the Ruthenian prince travelling to Czerwień observed the blaze of fires started by the Poles in the vicinity of Belz². The assumption that Czerwień was a settlement historically located near

¹ *Kronika Halicko-wołyńska (kronika Romanowiczów)*, wyd. D. Dąbrowski, A. Jusupović, [in:] *Monumenta Poloniae Historica* [hereafter MPH], ser. II, vol. XVI, Kraków 2017, p. 458-461.

² Based on this reference the location of Czerwień was identified by H. Łowmiański, *Problematyka*

the village, Czeremo (today's Tyszowce) was made by Zorian Dołęga-Chodakowski as early as 1820s³. The achievements of this prominent scholar were most likely known to the authors of *Starożytna Polska* (ENG: The Ancient Poland) Tadeusz Lipiński and Michał Baliński⁴. They found a connection between a village by the river Huczwa, half a mile from Tyszowce, to Czerwień, a Slavic settlement conquered by Vladimir the Great, a Ruthenian prince in 981⁵. These hypothesis of Dołęga-Chodakowski regarding the location of Czerwień also happened to influence Mikołaj Barsow, an alumni of the philological faculty of the Sankt Petersburg University. In 1864, he was appointed as a history and geography teacher in the Vilnius District of Arts and Sciences. Subsequently he published *Materiały do historyczno-geograficznego słownika Starożytnej Rusi* (ENG: Materials towards a Historic and Geographical Lexicon of the Ancient Ruthenia) in which he included a description of Czerwień concurring its location in the village of Czeremo⁶.

There were also contradicting concepts regarding the location of that settlement⁷. A Russian historian, Sergej Soloviev proposed that the settlement was located by the Dniester river⁸. This conjecture was continued by Wojciech Kętrzyński, associating Czerwień with Chervonohrad located North from Zaleszczyki, on the left-bank side of the Dniester, close to the Seret river⁹. In the 20th century, we could see in the historiography new hypotheses regarding the location of Czerwień and the so-called Cherven Towns (Grody Czerwieńskie) which were considered by Violetta Krzywicka as a Northern location by the Dniester river, Volhynia and Przemyśl¹⁰.

These discrepancies amid scholars concerning the location of the settlement, which had been the target of the Vladimir I's conquest as well as considering the process the emerging of Polish and Ruthenian frontiers and the territorial influence of both Piast and Rurik dynasties in general, were largely a result of conflicting interpretations of the notes in the oldest Ruthenian narrative source – the so-called *Rus' Primary Chronicle*

historyczna Grodów Czerwieńskich, Kwartalnik Historyczny, R. 60, z.1 1953, p. 62; S. M. Kuczyński, *O wyprawie Włodzimierza I ku Lachom na podstawie wzmianki z roku 981 w "Opowieści Lat Doczesnych"*, [in:] *Studia z dziejów Europy Wschodniej X-XII w.*, Warsaw 1965, p. 87.

³ D. Chodakowski, *Puti soobščeniija w drevniej Rossii*, "Russkij Istoričeskij Sbornik", vol. 1, 1838, pp. 1-51. See V. Krzywicka, *Lokalizacja Czerwienia i Grodów Czerwieńskich*, "Region Lubelski", 5(7), 1991/1993, p. 15.

⁴ About extensive scientific connections and interests of Dołęga-Chodakowski see A. Poppe, *U źródeł postępowej historiografii szlacheckiego rewolucjonizmu: Zorian Dołęga Chodakowski (1784-1825)*, "Kwartalnik Historyczny", r 62, z. 2, 1955, pp. 15-25 and others.

⁵ M. Baliński, *Starożytna Polska*, vol. II, Warsaw 1845, p. 1187.

⁶ O znajomości pracy Chodakowskiego: przez Barsowa See N. Barsov', *Materiały dla istoriko-geograficznego Słowarja Rossii*, Wil'na 1865, p. V, p. 212.

⁷ A. Naruszewicz, *Historia Narodu Polskiego*, vol. II, Warsaw 1780, p. 53. See V. Krzywicka, *Ibidem*, p. 9-10.

⁸ S. M. Soloviev, *Istorija Rossii s drevniejšych vremen*, vol. I. Moskva 1851, p. 180.

⁹ W. Kętrzyński, *Granice Polski w X wieku*, Kraków 1892, p. 11-13.

¹⁰ V. Krzywicka, *Ibidem*, pp. 9-19. Zestawienie poglądów na temat Grodów czerwieńskich See also A. Jusupović, "Червень и иные грады" or "гроды Червеньскыя"? *History of the domain of Cherven' in the written record (9th-13th cc.)*, [in:] *From Cherven' Towns to Curzon Line. The lands on the Middle Bug during the Middle Ages and the historiographic perspective on the formation of Poland's eastern border, 18th-21st centuries.*, vol. 1, U Źródeł Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej = Frühzeit Ostmitteleuropas, vol. 3, part 1, M. Wołoszyn (ed.), Kraków 2017, pp. 61-64.

as well as the developments in the archaeological research carried in the vicinity of Czermno. This study will be focused on those two phenomena.

Rus' Primary Chronicle represents a group of sources which, due to the complexity of its narration, is difficult to define. Despite the research concerning the Chronicle lasting a better part of 200 years, there are still inconsistencies when it comes to the text's origin, authorship and fidelity of some of the passages.

At the turn of the 19th and 20th century, a Russian philologist, Aleksey Shakhmatov formulated a concept of the Old Ruthenian writing development which played a significant role in the research of the Chronicle¹¹. It relied on an assumption that the existing version (the oldest manuscript is dated to 1377)¹² is a subsequent edition, the first of which was written at least in 1040s. The aforementioned scholar identified four stages of creation of the Chronicle: *Kiev Edition* (dated by the scholar to 1039), *Novgorod Edition* (1050), *Kiev-Pechersk Edition* (1073) and *Initial Edition* (1095) which constituted the fundament¹³. This concept of acknowledging subsequent editions was relying on the comparison of the 1377's manuscript with the versions of Chroniclee from the late 16th-17th century codices (Sophia I and Novgorod IV)¹⁴. The scholar maintained that the author edited out the precedent versions of this work. Thus, this particular scholar acknowledged each supplement of the Chronicle found in the subsequent manuscripts as the remains of the former editions.

Shakhmatov's concept was held in very high regard by the Soviet historiography luminaries¹⁵: Dmitri Lichatschow¹⁶, Lew Czeriepnin¹⁷, Arsenii Nasonov¹⁸ and Boris Rybakov¹⁹. While limiting themselves to correct Shakhmatov's hypotheses²⁰, they succeeded in making it one of the most enduring dogmas of Soviet medievalism.

The hypothesis, which even Shakhmatov himself considered needed verifying, became a historical fact²¹. While relying on elusive premises, it was attempted to prove

¹¹ A. A. Šachmatov, *Razyskaniija o drevnejszich ruskich letopisnych svodach*. Sankt Peterburg 1908; *Ibid.*, *Povest vremennyh let*, Petersburg 1916; *ibid.*, *O načalnom kievskom letopisnom svode*, [in:] Čtenija w Imperatorskom Obščestvie Istorii i Drevnostej Rossijskich pri Moskovskom Universitete, 1897, kn. 3, pp. 1-58; *ibid.*, *Predislovie k' Načalnomu Kievskomu svodu i Nestorova letopis*, [in:] Izviestija Otdelenija russkogo jazyka i slovesnosti, 1908. T. 13. Kn. 1; *ibid.*, *Kievskij načalnyj svod 1095 g.* [in:] Sbornik statej i materialov, Moskwa-Leningrad 1947, pp. 117-160.

¹² *Slovar' knižnikov i knižnosti drevnej Rusi XI –pervaja polovina XIV w.* S. Lichačev (ed.), vol. 1, Lenin-grad 1987, 241-245.

¹³ A. A. Šachmatov, *Razyskaniija*, §§ 221 – 228; *ibid.*, *O načalnom kievskom letopisnom svode*, p. 1-58; *ibid.*, *Kievskij načalnyj svod 1095 g.* pp. 117-160.

¹⁴ A. Poppe, A. A. Šachmatov i spornyje načala russkogo letopisanija, *Drevnjaja Rus'. Voprosy Medievistiki'* 3, 2008, p. 76-77; A. Toločko, *Očerki načal'noj Rusi*, Kiev-Sankt Peterburg 2015, pp. 20-34.

¹⁵ A. Poppe, A. A. Šachmatov..., p. 78; . Toločko, *Očerki...*, pp. 30-32.

¹⁶ D. S. Lichačev, *Russkie letopisi i ich kul'turno-istoričeskoje značenie*, Moskwa-Leningrad 1947, pp. 71-72; *ibid.* Kommentarii [in:] *Povest' vremennyh let*, 2nd edition., Sankt Peterburg 1996, pp. 481-483, 624-625.

¹⁷ L. V. Čerepnin, *Povest' vremennyh let ee redakcji i predšestvujučše ej letopisnyje svody*, "Istoričeskie zapiski", 25,1948, pp. 330-331.

¹⁸ A. N. Nasonov, *Načalnyje etapy kievskogo letopisanija i svjazi s razvitjem drevnierusskogo gosudarstva*, *Problemy Istocznikovedenija*, 7, 1959, pp. 416-462.

¹⁹ B. A. Rybakov, *Ostromirova Letopis'*, "Voprosy Istorii", 10, 1956, pp. 46-59.

²⁰ A. Poppe, A. A. Šachmatov, p. 78.

²¹ B. *Grekow Walka Rusi o stworzenie własnego państwa*. – Warsaw, 1951. – S.69-70. See A. Toločko,

the oldest possible origins of the Old Ruthenian writing²². The assumption that the edition of the Chronicle from 1377 is not the primary but in fact, the final result of the writing achievements, a work edited based on old texts which do not exist now, led to a conclusion that the contents should be regarded as historical facts during the beginning of the Rurik dynasty. Nevertheless, the Rus' Primary Chronicle was a literary work where fiction, artistry and journalism were equally important as the factual events²³.

The Shakhmatov's vision of the writing developments in Ruthenia heavily influenced the interpretation of the message conveyed by the Chronicle regarding Czerwień and the so-called Cherven Towns. The researchers attempting at studying the Polish and Ruthenian relations of the 10th and 11th century recognised significant issues while interpreting the text. Nevertheless they intended to clear them by building intricate concepts which happened to justify all "discrepancies" and "doubts" with errors [sic!] of the subsequent Chronicle's editors. Thus, it was assumed that allegedly Vladimir I did not head for Przemyśl separated from Czerwień by a strip of dense forests but for Peremył which was located between Kiev and Czerwień²⁴. The issues with the chronological order of events led to the expedition of the Kievan prince being dated to 979²⁵, 993²⁶, 992 or even 1012²⁷. Similar doubts were raised by a question of who the target of the Vladimir I's conquest was. The research on the territorial expansion of the Piast's monarchy indicated a relatively slow annexation of the Eastern Lesser Poland²⁸. The possible enemies considered are Lendians²⁹, Dulebs³⁰ or Croats³¹.

The answer to the mystery of Czerwień and the functioning of the Cherven Cities was attempted to be found in the archaeological research on the area of interfluvium of the Wieprz and Bug rivers. Their results implicated further questions. Predominantly,

Očerki..., pp. 30-32.

²² Ibidem, p. 32.

²³ See B. Kürbis, O założeniach i metodzie edycji historycznych i literackich, [in:] *ibid.*, Cztery eseje o źródłoznawstwie, Poznań 2007, pp. 56-88, s. 75.

²⁴ S. M. Kuczyński, O wyprawie Włodzimierza... – S.82-84, 103.

²⁵ R. Jakimowicz, *Ślask wyprawy kijowskiej Bolesława Chrobrego w świetle archeologii "Rocznik Wołyński"*, vol.3., Równe, 1934, p.82; T. Wasilewski, *Dulebowie – Ledzianie – Chorwaci: Z zagadnień osadnictwa plemiennego i stosunków politycznych nad Bugiem, Sanem i Wisłą w X w.*, "Przegląd Historyczny", 1976, vol. 62, nr 2, p.189; A. V. Nazarenko, *Drevnjaja Rus' na meždunarodnyh putjach*, Meždisciplinarnye očerki kul'turnych, torgovyh, političeskich svjazej IX-XII ww., Moskwa 2001, p. 408.

²⁶ J. Widajewicz, *Południowo-wschodnie kresy Polski w X i XI w.* – Poznań, 1937. – S.3; W. T. Paśuto, *Vnešnjaja polityka Drevnej Rusi*, Moskwa. 1968. – C.33; W. D. Koroljuk, *Zapadnyje slavjane i Kievskaja Rus' w X-XI ww.*, Moskwa 1964, p. 89.

²⁷ *Kuczyński S.M. O wyprawie Włodzimierza... – p.39, 105;*

²⁸ G. Labuda., *Studia nad początkami państwa polskiego*, vol. II, Poznań 1988, pp.182-183; *ibid.*, Mieszko I. – Wrocław; Warsaw; Kraków, 2002. – S.160 ; T. Lalik, *Sandomierz w świetle źródeł pisanych*, [in:] *Sandomierz. Badania 1969-1973*, S. Tabaczyński (ed.), Warsaw 1993, vol. 1, p. 49-72; S. Tabaczyński, *Materiały kopalne w narracji historycznej o początkach i rozwoju ośrodka grodowo-miejskiego w Sandomierzu*[in:] *Sandomierz. Badania 1969-1973*, vol. 2, Warsaw 1996, s. 469-484; M. Parczewski, *Problem Łędzian a kształtowanie się polsko-ruskiej rubieży etnicznej*, [in:] *Civitas Schinesghe cum pertinentiis*, W. Chudziak (ed.), Toruń 2003, pp. 151-163.

²⁹ G. Labuda, *Studia...*, p. 182 and further.; S. Kuczyński, *O wyprawie Włodzimierza*, p. 74 and further..See annotations by A. Jusupović, "Червень и иные грады"..., pp. 67-68.

³⁰ K. Fokt, *Zagadka plemion znad Bugu, Sanu, Dniestru i Styru*, *Przegląd Historyczny* 95, 2004, pp. 441-456, 453.

³¹ V. D. Koroljuk *Zapadnyje...* 81-89.

doubts were raised regarding the functioning of gord centres which along Czerwień possibly constituted a system of Cherven Towns. In the light of the aforementioned excavations, the research on the tribal settlements on the discussed lands was focused between two areas: Łęczna and Chełm regions³². These are where we could find the most considerable remains of settlements, production sites, burial grounds and gords. The most densely situated settlements existed in the Łęczna, Puchaczów, Stara Wieś as well as Cyców, Hańsko, Busówno, Czulczyce and Chełm regions³³. In the landscape of the Eastern part of the Lubelski region, both near the perimeter and in the centres, first gords emerged between the 8th and 9th century e.g. Klarów, Kulczyn-Kolonia complex dated between the 9th and 11th century and in Tarnów from the 9th century³⁴. Nevertheless, it poses quite a challenge to connect the aforementioned examples of small gords functioning as shelters with the Cherven Towns. There are even more concerns regarding the excavations in Czermno from the previous century. Based on the archaeological observations, surface research and accidental discoveries, it was concluded that the settlement complex consisted of: a two-part gord surrounded by embankments, a fortified outside-the-gates settlement, nearby located open settlements and burial grounds. It was all connected by causeways and wooden bridges. The complex was surrounded by elongated embankments of approximately 1,5km constituting a border for the settlement from the Southern side³⁵. The main issue of matching the Czerwień from the Chronicle to Czermno gord was that the aforementioned archaeological research (carried between 1940 and 1997) underlined that the predominant part of discoveries dated back to a period between the 11th and 13th century, pointing to the 12th and subsequent century as the golden years of the settlement complex in Czermno.

The lack of discernible traces of other, older settlements in the Czermno region as well as the lack of evidence for the gord's fortification to exist before the 11th century led to speculations whether it was really the Czerwień conquered by Vladimir I. There were notions pointing to another location mentioned in the Ruthenian source e.g. in the vicinity of Przemyśl³⁶. The chronological order of events in Czermno was additionally complicated by the results of an analysis dendrochronological of wooden elements of the gord's fortification from 1997. The samples of wood collected from the oldest part of the embankment (first building phase) revealed four dates indicating that they must have been cut after 1007, 1027, 1030 and

³² S. Hoczyk-Siwkova *Małopolska północno-wschodnia w VI-X wieku. Struktury osadnicze*. Lublin 1999.

³³ T. Dzieńkowski "Poleskie" *pogranicze kulturowe w XI-XIII wieku*. [in:] *Badania archeologiczne na Polesiu Lubelskim*, E. Banasiewicz-Szykuła (ed.). "Skarby z Przeszłości" 8 Lublin 2006, pp. 119-134.

³⁴ T. Dzieńkowski, *Plemiennie grody wschodniej Lubelszczyzny. Miejsca władzy, obrony i kultu? Wybrane przykłady*, [in:] *Słowianie w dorzeczu Bugu*, J. Libera (ed.), Łęczna 2008, pp. 30-33.

³⁵ Gurba J., Gajewski L. *Z najnowszych badań nad wczesnośredniowiecznym osadnictwem Lubelszczyzny. "Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska"*, sec. F,32 (1977), pp. 57-61; J. Gurba, *Problematyka "Grodów Czerwieńskich"*. "Rocznik Tomaszowski" 1,1983, pp. 11-14, *ibid.*, *Wczesnośredniowieczny Czerwień i Grody Czerwieńskie na pograniczu polsko-ruskim*. [in:] *Geograficzne problemy pogranicza Europy Zachodniej i Wschodniej*, red. H. Maruszczak, Z. Michalczyk. Lublin 2004, pp. 53-60; M. Florek, *Problematyka "Grodów Czerwieńskich"* [in:] *Słowianie w dorzeczu Bugu*, J. Libera (ed.), Łęczna 2008, p. 40-41.

³⁶ J. Kotlarczyk, *Grody Czerwieńskie a karpaccy system obronny pod Przemyślem we wczesnym średniowieczu*. "Acta Archaeologica Carpathica" 11, 1970, pp. 239-269; E. Kowalczyk, *Systemy obronne wałów podłużnych we wczesnym średniowieczu na ziemiach polskich*. Wrocław 1987, pp. 201-210.

1050 which undeniably places its functioning in 11th century, most likely even in its second quarter³⁷.

On the other hand, the wood samples from one of the interconnecting bridges within the settlement complex suggest that it was created by the end of the 12th century (somewhere between 1186 and 1190). The aforementioned research undeniably places the build of Czerwno's fortifications no earlier than the second quarter of the 11th century. Thus, new hypotheses emerged trying to reconcile the information included in the Rus' Primary Chronicle with the results of those excavations. According to M. Florek, it was only after Cherven Towns were conquered by the Rurik dynasty, Yaroslav the Wise and Mstislav in 103, when the gord build and the reorganisation of the Cherven "volost" were commenced of which the city became the centre.

The aforementioned scholar highlighted also that the gord was studied only to a limited extent, hence there is no certainty that the chosen wood samples are in fact the oldest from those fortifications. It is entirely possible, according to Florek, that the primary Lendian gord referenced from 981 was in fact decimated completely during the conflict leading to a reconstruction after 1031. After Czerwień became part of Ruthenia again, the remains of the former gord might have been removed and then the build of the new princely gord intended as a centre of the newly-organised 'volost' which in turn poses a difficulty to archaeologists³⁸.

In order to solve the mystery of Czerwień, a team of historians and archaeologists funded by the National Programme for the Development of the Humanities planned complex palaeographic, geophysical and archaeological research of the Czerwno region. The results were astonishing and concerned predominantly the first phase of the gord's functioning, arguably the most debatable one.

The most significant data originated from another instance of examining the gord's construction. Excavations reached the length of 26m and the depth of 6m. Additionally, there were supplementary explorations of small stretches of territories. Based on the wood samples, it was concluded there were two phases of the gord's functioning. The oldest entrenchment found was allegedly constructed with oak beams carved at the turn of the 10th and 11th century (985, 983, 989, 1001)³⁹. However the proper extension to the gord took place only in 1030s and 1040s. Most artefacts are dated back to especially the 12th and the first half of the 13th century which appears to confirm a thesis that the golden years of Czerwno/Czerwień fell in those times⁴⁰. What is remarkable is that up until this moment there are not traces of the gord being damaged before the second half of the 13th century which could be

³⁷ Gurba J., Urbański A., *Nowe materiały do datowania drewnianych konstrukcji zespołu grodowego "Czerwień" w Czerwnie nad Huczwą.* "Archeologia Polski Środkowowschodniej" 1998, 3, p. 159; M. Krąpiec, *Wyniki analizy dendrochronologicznej prob drewna dębowego z Czerwna.* "Archeologia Polski Środkowowschodniej" 1998, 3, p. 166.

³⁸ M. Florek, *Problematyka "Grodów Czerwieńskich"...* p. 42-44.

³⁹ R. Dobrowolski, J. Rodzik, P. Mroczek, P. Zagórski, K. Bałaga, M. Wołoszyn, T. Dzieńkowski, I. Hajdas, S. Fedorowicz, *Environmental conditions of settlement in the vicinity of the mediaeval capital of the Cherven Towns (Czerwno site, Hrubieszów Basin, Eastern Poland),* *Quaternary International* 493 (2018), p. 260-262

⁴⁰ *Ibidem.*

an indication that the aforementioned complex was not an area of an armed conflict between the 10th and 12th century⁴¹.

The archaeological conclusions were additionally confirmed by a paleobotanical study. They suggested a discernible decrease in the volume of oak pollen grains in the first two decades of the 11th century which could imply logging for a settlement build or a related infrastructure. A sharp, distinguishable yet short-lived (only two decades long) increase in human activity took place at the turn of the 10th and 11th century. Intensive cultivation was combined with a substantial oak logging, as proven by the oak pollen grains analysis. The said analysis also seems to confirm the previous archaeological and dendrochronological conclusions, namely dating back to 999, 1020. Hence, the second period is a well document phase of build for fortification embankments. A discernible limitation of activity in the vicinity of the fortress lasted from the first half of the 11th century until the second half of the 12th century. Another phase of human activity is dated back to the second half of the 12th century⁴². The aforementioned conclusions yet again pose the question regarding credibility of the Rus' Primary Chronicle regarding Polish and Ruthenian relations in the 10th and the first decade of the 11th century.

Shakhmatov's hypotheses concerning early origins of the first Rus' Primary Chronicle edition caused apprehension among W.M. Istrin⁴³ and J.S. Lur'e while the latter highlighted that medievalist bases assumed by that Russian philologist were inadequate and his interpretation left a lot to be desired regarding source and tectological analyses⁴⁴. These critical comments remained untacked as the overall pursuit to prove the earliest 14th century's version of the Chronicle persevered. Only in the recent years, new attempts were made to verify Shakhmatov's conclusions. The progress achieved in medievalist research, especially the development of tectological as well as narratological studies yet again intended to answer the question of the most ancient monument of Ruthenian writing. The works by Andrzej Poppe⁴⁵, a Ukrainian tectology researcher Tatiana Vilkul⁴⁶, comments by Alan Timberlake⁴⁷ and Simon Franklin⁴⁸ leave no trace of ambiguity that the origins of the earliest edition for the Chronicle should be associated with 1070s or the beginning of the 12th century. Alexi

⁴¹ Ibidem, p. 162; A. Jusupović, „Червень и иные грады” or „гроды Червеньскыя”?... s.73.

⁴² R. Dobrowolski, J. Rodzik, P. Mroczek, P. Zagórski, K. Bałaga, M. Wołoszyn, T. Dzieńkowski, I. Hajdas, S. Fedorowicz, *Environmental conditions...*, p. 269-271.

⁴³ M. Istrin, Zamečanja o načale russkago letopisaanija (Po povodu izsledovanij A. A. Šachmatowa v' oblasti drevnirusskoj letopisi, Izviesta otdiela Russkogo Jazyka i Slovesnosti Rossijskoj Akademii Nauk, vol. XXVII, L 1923, 19244(24), p. 207-251.

⁴⁴ Ja. S. Lur'e, *Obščeruskije topisi XIV - XV w.*, Leningrad 1976, p. 5-15 and further.

⁴⁵ See especially A. Poppe, A.A. Šachmatov..., pp. 76-85

⁴⁶ T. V Vilkul, *Novgorodskaja pervaja letopis' i Načal'nyj svod*, XI, Cambridge, Massachusetts, vol. 11, p. 5-35. also *Tolkovaja Palela i Poviest' vremennyh let. Sjužet o "rozdelenii jazyk"*, Ruthenica, vol. 6, 2007, p. 37-85.

⁴⁷ A. Timberlake, *Redaction of the Primary Chronicle* [in:] *Russkij jazyk v naučnom osveščennii*, t I, Moskva 2001, p. 196-214.

⁴⁸ S. Franklin, *Borrowed Time: Perceptions of the Past in twelfth-Century Rus'*. [in:] *Perception of the Past in Twelfth Century Europe*, ed. P. Magdalino, London 1992, pp. 157-171, *ibid.*, *Writing, Society and Culture in Early Rus' c. 950-1300*, Cambridge 2004.

Toloczka made a significant contribution to the source research⁴⁹. This scholar supported the theory that the origins for the Chronicle date back later than assumed at the time. He proved the superficiality of the chronological order of the events in Ruthenia between the 9th and 10th century referenced in the Chronicle. Three Ruthenian and Byzantium's treaties, known to the Chronicles' authors from Byzantium, constituted a fundament of assigning dates to other events in the early ancient times of Ruthenia⁵⁰.

The aforementioned conclusions convince us to exercise scepticism towards the apriorism for the assumption that the Chronicle faithfully details the events taking place in the Ruthenia near the 10th century. Reflecting on the earliest period of Polish and Ruthenian relations as well as the role of Czerwień and Cherven Towns, we need to acknowledge that the Chronicle is simply a vision of Ruthenia written from the perspective of a chronicler basing it on the then existing legends, stories and tales as well as the scarce written sources, most likely of Byzantium origins⁵¹. It is history told from a perspective of a Christian ecumene member for whom the Christianisation of Ruthenia was in fact a "new beginning", a turning point in the history of Ruthenia⁵². Thus, Vladimir I appeared to have been a vital figure in that story. The prince was displayed not only as an avid Christianisation supporter in Ruthenia but also as a founder of the new order based on Christian ethics⁵³.

If we consider the references of Vladimir I's conquests not only from the angle of that many a time repeated sentence concerning the conflict with the Poles but holistically, the narration describing the conquests of this ruler, we could see it is a reflection of a fable well known in the ancient times. He was not only a ruler but a great warrior who embarks upon both a real and symbolic act of demarcating his kingdom. It follows a specific pattern: firstly, Vladimir extends his power over three centres: Novgorod (where he was a supreme ruler even while his father was still alive), Polotsk and Kiev⁵⁴. The special status of Kiev and Novgorod was referenced multiple times as centres regulating the main route in Ruthenia: from Varangians to Byzantium. Polotsk was not as prominent due to the fact that it was not referenced in the Chronicle frequently. It is worth noting that it was the third centre where a Saint Sophia's cathedral was founded⁵⁵. After conquering the central settlements, Vladimir extended his reign West over Czerwień and Przemyśl⁵⁶. In the following passage, there is a mention of the Eastern frontiers – the lands of Vyatichi – conquered by the Prince and forced to pay tribute⁵⁷. Eventually, the Kievan ruler headed North to subduing Yotvingia, Radimichs (the chronicler did not seem to mind that just a few pages earlier there is a mention of Prince Oleh conquering this exact land) and finally the lands of Volga

⁴⁹ A. Toločko, *Očerki načalnoj Rusi*, Kiev-Sankt Peterburg 2015.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 20-68 and further

⁵¹ cf. A. Toločko, *Očerki...*, pp. 43-49.

⁵² See S. Franklin, *Borrowed Time*, pp. 157-17

⁵³ M. Bartnicki, *Władca i poddani w historiografii ruskiej XI-XIII wieku*, Lublin 2015, pp. 43-60.

⁵⁴ *Lavrent'evskaja Letopis'*, *Polnoe Sobranie Russkich Letopisej* [hereafter PSRL], vol. I, Leningrad 1926-1928, kol. 24-26.

⁵⁵ M. Bartnicki, *Władca...*, pp. 49-54.

⁵⁶ *Lavrent'evskaja Letopis'...*, kol. 26.

⁵⁷ *ibidem*.

Bulgars⁵⁸. The description of borders under Vladimir end with the Southern frontiers, conquering Croats and the conflict with Pechenegs. These updates are divided from the rest of Vladimir's achievements by an elaborate passage on the perturbations related to the christening of the Kievan ruler⁵⁹.

The emerging borders of the Vladimir's reign was built according to the usual pattern of bringing order by previous communities. The most important location was the area considered central to the remaining lands, however not from a geographical perspective but a sacral one⁶⁰. What constituted a "centre of the universe" for former communities was usually the ruler's residence along with the nearest temples. Such was the function of plethora of princely residences over the course of one million square metres of the Rurikids' reign. Nevertheless amid those in the 11th century, only those three in Novgorod, Kiev and Polotsk had temples which were a direct reference to the imperial symbolic - Hagia Sophia.

Traditional communities, as a basic rule, perceive the territories occupied by dividing them by four directions or four pieces with an indicated central point⁶¹. It appears that the references in the Chronicle should not be considered as a sequence of events during the reign of Vladimir I but rather an expression of a collective memory, justifying specific lands being part of Ruthenia since at some point they were conquered by him. Vladimir's conquests constituted somewhat of a certificate rationalising the right to rule over the said land, also by his successors.

A good example for the functioning of such collective memory is a myth concerning the borders of the Piast's monarchy. Vladimir's counterpart in the Polish historical storytelling was Bolesław I the Brave who is credited with the forming of the borders for the Polish tribe. The historiographical fact of Bolesław conquering Kiev and defeating Ruthenian armies led to Master Vincent (at the turn of the 12th and 13th century) describing this intervention in the following manner: "the ruler decisively marching through Ruthenia could rest after the triumphant victory only if by thrusting the sword into the Kievan gate, he successfully restored the borders established by our forefathers"⁶². The subsequent Polish chroniclers continued and even elaborated on the myth of the Piast borders, as for example the author of the Silesian and Polish chronicle who bore no doubt that Bolesław "Russiam subiecit sue dicioni"⁶³.

The Rus' Primary Chronicle's author while featuring Western conquests of Vladimir referenced two gords: Przemyśl and Czerwień which, contrary to the popular belief, specifically defined the lands which, according to his opinion were previously an object of rivalry between Poland and Ruthenia. It is worth highlighting that Przemyśl did not

⁵⁸ *ibidem.*, kol.26-27.

⁵⁹ *ibidem.*, kol. 41-42.

⁶⁰ M. Iliade, *Traktat o historii religii*, Warsaw 1993, pp. 361-370.

⁶¹ S. Czarnowski, *Podział przestrzeni i jej rozgraniczenie w religii i magii*, Warsaw 1939 (reprint from *Przegląd Socjologiczny*, vol. VII, 1939), pp. 18-20. J. Banaszkiewicz, *Jedność porządku przestrzennego, społecznego i tradycji początków ludu. (Uwagi o urzędzeniu wspólnoty plemiennie-państwowej u Słowian*, [in:] *ibid.*, *Takie sobie średniowieczne bajeczki*, Kraków 2012, pp. 156-160.

⁶² *Magistri Vincentii Dicti Kadłubek, Chronica Polonorum*, M. Plezia (ed.), [in:] *Monumenta Poloniae Historica* [hereafter MPH], nova series, vol. XI, Kraków 1994, p. 52.

⁶³ *Chronica Polonorum (kronika Polska)* L. Ćwikliński (ed.), MPH, vol. 3, Lwów 1878, p. 619 . cf. J. Banaszkiewicz, *Fabularyzacja przestrzeni. Średniowieczny przykład granic*, [in:] *Takie sobie średniowieczne bajeczki*, Kraków 2012, p. 137.

incidentally referenced as first on the list. By the end of the 11th century, the aforementioned gord constituted a centre for the sovereign principality of Rostislav Rurikovich and due to its political and economic significance surpassed Czerwień. Hence, considering the Przemyśl region as part of the Cherven Towns, if they are themselves not a historiographic creation altogether⁶⁴, seems to be unfounded.

Hence, what was the role of Czerwień in the Polish-Ruthenian relations between the 10th and 11th century? The aforementioned archaeological research allows for assuming that the gord located near the Huczwa river functioned as a local trade and communication route and did not in fact play a significant political or economic role by the end of the 10th century and in 1020s. Considering the economic and political potential, other settlements such as Volhynia and Brest, and the intention of controlling those gords might have led to a conflict between Piasts and Rurikids. It is worth highlighting that Czerwień and the Cherven Towns function as key points defining the rivalry between Poles and Ruthenians in the 10th and first half of the 11th century solely in the Rus' Primary Chronicle. If we consider the historiographical tradition referenced by Gall Anonim in his chronicle, it appears that the court chronicler of Piasts was in fact not aware of Czerwień at all. Detailing Polish and Ruthenian conflicts during the reign of Bolesław I the Brave, Gall Anonim referenced one specific point defining the venue for the action. It was the Bug river which, according to Gall Anonim, constituted the border of the Piasts' rule⁶⁵. While describing the Kievan expedition of Bolesław I the Brave, the chronicler did not mention any conflicts near the Bug river, conquering gords. After directly arriving at the river, the charge on Ruthenia began⁶⁶. Similarly, the message conveyed by the Rus' Primary Chronicle regarding Bolesław's 1018 expedition underlines the role of the river as a natural frontier defence forte. Czerwień, according to the Chronicle's author, is only a mention of an area which was annexed by the Piast prince under his rule while returning from the Kievan expedition⁶⁷.

The memory of the clash of Vladimir I, the Kievan ruler with a neighbouring Piast ruler most likely functioned in the Ruthenian court by the end of the 11th century. Nevertheless, the circumstances and details of this "great war" could have possibly been forgotten⁶⁸. The author of the Rus' Primary Chronicle was forced to depict and adapt them to the then reality. Undeniably, for a 11th and 12th century chronicler, the hotbed of Polish and Ruthenian conflicts could have been the most westward point for the lands: both Przemyśl and Czerwień volosts.

⁶⁴ See A. Poppe, *Gród Wołyń: z zagadnień osadnictwa wczesno-średniowiecznego na pograniczu polsko-ruskim*, Studia Wczesnośredniowieczne t.4, Wrocław- Warsaw 1958, p. 283.

⁶⁵ *Galli Anonymi, Cronica et Gesta ductum siue principium polonorum*, ed. K. Maleczyński, [w:] MPH, ns. 2, pp. 21-23.

⁶⁶ *ibidem*. See K. Kollinger, *Polityka wschodnia Bolesława Chrobrego (992-1025)*, Rzeszów 2014, pp. 267- 285.

⁶⁷ *Lavrent'evskaja Letopis'...*, k. 48-49.

⁶⁸ See M. Gruševs'kij, *Istorija Ukraïni –Rusi*, vol. 1, *Do počatku XI v. Kiïv* 1991. – s.493; M. Korduba *Stosunki polsko-ukraińskie w w. X-XIII*, "Sprawy Narodowościowe" T.7, 6, Warsaw 1933. – p. 756.

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