Interdisciplinary Hillfort Studies at the Daugava River: Merging and Decoding Archaeological, Environmental and Linguistic Data

Descriptors:

- HS3_8: Archaeology (incl. archaeology of Greece and Rome, archaeology of Egypt and Nubia, archaeology of Near East, archeology of the New World, pre- and protohistorical archaeology, archaeology of early medieval period, medieval archeology, archeology of modern period)
- ST10_7: Geomorphology, cryosphere, global and regional changes of the Earth's landscape
- ST10_6: Earth evolution, sedimentology, tectonics, regional geology, marine geology, planetary geology

Panel:

HS3 - The study of the human past: history, archaeology, ethnology, cultural anthropology

Host institution :

Uniwersytet Łódzki, Wydział Nauk Geograficznych
woj. łódzkie

Call: BEETHOVEN CLASSIC 4 - announced on 2020-09-15

2020/39/G/HS3/01542

Principal investigator (from the host institution):

dr hab. Piotr Kittel

Number of co-investigators in the project: 6

Amount awarded: 493 100 PLN
Project start date (Y-m-d): 2022-01-25
Project end date (Y-m-d): 2025-01-24
Project duration:: 36 months (the same as in the proposal)
Project status: Pending project

Abstract

The Daugava River is one of most important gateways from the Baltic Sea to the Trans Eastern Europe (e.g. Dnieper R.) waterways and backwards. This is the main reason for its high significance as central trade route. In the long-term perspective, there was being formed a settlement and hillfort system in the Daugava R. valley, that focuses on the use and maintenance of the waterway. The framework of this system is thought to be made up of fortified settlements and hithes, landing places for ships on naturally protected islands and promontories.

Archaeological research has traditionally focused on the outstanding fortified sites themselves along the Daugava R. waterway. Other sites that are further away from these points have not been sufficiently investigated, the same is the case with the immediate vicinity of the hillforts. Combining toponymical and archaeological information in the study area is crucial for understanding the whole system of fortified and unfortified sites in the study area along the river valley. Since the archaeological classification and chronological correlation of all sites is fundamental to the project, small scale field archaeological investigations will be carried out if necessary. They involve a combination of archaeological surveying with geomorphological, geoarchaeological and paleoenvironmental studies.

It is methodologically important to gain insights through systematic drillings, test pits and reliable dating based on large series of radiocarbon (and if possible dendrochronological) data. The result of the project will be the first systematic compilation of the archaeological sites at the Daugava River, including both known and new generated data in a condensed form. In addition to this, the project focuses on the topographic survey, mapping, and digital modelling of the Daugava waterway, related to its functioning in the Prehistory and early historical times. One outcome of the work will be an atlas, including standardized topographic maps of the archaeological monuments and their immediate surroundings with a special focus on their natural environment, mostly a relation to the river system.

The maps will be made according to a consistent methodology, using modern technologies and data management systems, and will be supplemented by cartographic and visual materials of the 17th-20th centuries AD, and also by the results of palaeogeographical reconstructions. Furthermore, the inclusion of minimally invasive archaeological fieldwork and analysis of archive material allows to present settlement spatial analysis as part of the Atlas. They, in turn, will be the starting point for comparative studies in the wider Baltic Sea region. Therefore, the aim of the project is to create a consistent basis for further comprehensive studies as an example of best praxis in a broader, European context.