

THE ŁÓDŹ ATLAS

Sheet III: Łódź in prehistoric times and so-called agricultural period (from prehistory to the early 19th c.)

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Prehistory of Łódź

Late Palaeolithic Period (10th–9th millennium BC) – progressive warming and then cooling of the climate. Witów-type complexes appear and vanish due to the harsh climatic conditions of Dryas III. Flora completely disappears from central Poland. The oldest findings linked to this period come from Łódź Łaskowice.



A flint arrowhead, one of the objects made of flint left by Mesolithic nomads found in the places of their camps.

Mesolithic Period (8th–5th millennium BC) marks the beginning of the Holocene which brought climatic improvement. Within the Łódź area, most of the data come from objects made of flint left by Mesolithic nomads found in the places of their camps. To this day there have been no archaeological excavations at Mesolithic sites in the Łódź area. Traces of settlements have been noted in several places around Łódź, mainly in the vicinity of Zdrowie Park and Ruda Pabianicka..

Neolithic Period (late 5th millennium BC – approx. 1800/1700 BC) an economy based on agriculture-animal rearing emerges. In this period economic transformations were initiated – mainly as a result of developing skills in crop growing and animal breeding. Similar to the Mesolithic cultures, human traces within the territory of Łódź in the Neolithic are only known from accidental discoveries at locations near Cyganka, Ruda Pabianicka and Stare Chojny. So far none have undergone any systematic excavational research.

Bronze Age (1800/1700 BC – 650 BC) at the time Łódź still represents an area penetrated by small groups leaving only scarce traces over the whole area. The beginnings of this new era did not really feature a general use of bronze. An important permanent centre crystallised near Łaskowice, where traces of a settlement established at the beginning of the second phase of the Bronze Age were found at the foot of the contemporary waste dump. This is where some fragments of an ornamented vessel come from. Settlement from that time was noted mostly in the south-western parts of Łódź – Łaskowice and Lublinek and discoveries have also been made on the northern outskirts at Marysin and Julianów. In a later phase (1500–650 BC), in almost every section of the different river valleys there are traces of settlements related to a new culture - Lusatian - which cultivated burial rituals and cremation. Within the area of Łódź, mainly on the Ner, the Dobrzynka, the Sokołówka and the Olechówka Rivers there are 127 known settlements. The initial period falling in the middle of the Bronze Era (1500–1300 BC) is by no accident called the ‘Łódź phase’, because of the large number of sites around the city. Many sites were established at the time, the most outstanding of which is the cemetery in Gorzew. Several tombs made of stone were discovered here in the form of chests containing cremated mass burials. Around 1000 BC established were larger settlements which lasted over longer periods of time and for the first time in the history of Łódź traces of the processing of bronze are found. Remnants of moulds were found in Gorzewo, Grzywienna and near the confluence of the River Dobrzynka with the River Ner. Also found were the remnants of bronze slag created from the smelting process, and finished products: awls, pins, and sickles. Unique forms of vessels are made – amphoras, vases, strongly moulded mugs, bowls, and ladles. The settlement continues to flourish until the end of the Bronze Age, when as a result of detrimental climatic change it suffers evident breakdown.



Early Iron Age (650 BC – 100 BC)

Another revival of Lusatian settlements. The large cemetery in Ruda Pabianicka which provided the first examples of pins, necklaces, armlets, bracelets, knives and sickles from prehistoric Łódź dates back to the beginning of this time. Bronze is still an important material, as proved by the hoard of metal objects found in Teofilów. Remnants of settlements from this period are noted mainly in the Ner River valley near Lublinek airport in Obywatelska Street, and in Gorzewo. About 400 BC groups from northern regions linked to eastern Pomerania moved towards the Łódź area. Several traces of cemeteries that were established at the time are found in Łaskowice (two), Chocianowice and Lublinek. The characteristic types of burial are large tombs built of stone slabs - so-called chest graves, and urns covered with a large vessel - so-called bell graves. Also unique is a form of ceramic product used as funerary urns. These are so-called face-shaped urns, in relief form, which depicted outlines of the deceaseds’ faces. The only period settlement discovered to date has been found at the Collective Sewage Treatment Plant [Grupowa Oczyszczalnia Ścieków].

Late Iron Age (100 BC – the second half of the 6th c. AD

late La Tène Period (100 BC – 0 AD) – appearance of a new grouping representing the Przeworsk culture is for the first time recorded in written sources (under the name of the Lugian Federation).

early period of Roman influence (0 AD – approx. 180 AD) – mainly known are the cemeteries which were also used in the following period. There are very clear influences of the Roman Empire in the style of objects in use as well as numerous imports. Evidence of settlement is also manifest in the Bzura River watershed area (Marysin, Szczecińska Street) as well as in the Ner River valley.

late period of Roman influence (approx. 180 AD – approx. 350 AD) – most prominent is the discovery of a richly furnished female tomb in Retkinia. Finds from this site are evidence of the large wealth attained by the communities inhabiting the area. .

period of great migrations (approx. 350 AD – the second half of the 6th c.) – early Slavic density of settlement around Łódź decreases to the point of depopulation, attributable to the participation of local communities in the great migrations which subsequently ended in the collapse of the western part of the Roman Empire. Recorded are isolated finds corresponding to this period (Stoki and Górna).

Łódź in the so-called agricultural period

Early Middle Ages

Tribal period (second half of the 6th c. – mid 10th c.)

Beginnings of Slavic settlement and subsequent development of villages (mainly non-fortified) and cemeteries with the prevailing cremation ritual. A site from this time is located in Łaskowice.

Early period of statehood (first half of the 10th c. – end of 13th c.)

The period of the formation of the Polish state. Another phase of Slavic settlement is recorded in the archaeological material from the Łódź area. The site in Chocianowice that dates back to the 11th–13th c. has only been partially explored. Additionally, small quantities of finds with a similar chronology have been recorded at other locations – Józefów and Gorzew. A large percentage of finds are coins, but their role in the tracing of settlement networks is relatively negligible. An archaeological search conducted around Radogoszcz did not lead to the discovery of remnants of an early mediaeval fort which some researchers expected to have been located there..

The city’s younger chronological sections of the **late mediaeval period** (end of 13th–15th c.) and the **modern period** (16th–18th c.) are known as the **agricultural period** have not been subject to archaeological excavations and only surface works have been done to record a series of archaeological sites. Their locations conform to the range of settlements, as confirmed in historical sources, that constitute the present-day Łódź conurbation.

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Beginning of Łódź - Lodzia village

The beginnings of the oldest Łódź settlement - Lodzia village - are not well known. It was probably established at the beginning of 14th c. or even the 13th. The first mention of it appeared in a privilege issued by Duke Władysław of Łęczyca in 1332 (according to recent research in 1337) under which he released from his jurisdiction the subjects living on the Włocławek chapter’s properties located in the land of Łęczyca, including the village of Łodzia.

In 1387 Bishop Jan Kropido, to raise the economic status of Łodzia and Widzewnica, parts of the diocese estate, placed them under the Środa-type German law to establish an administrative structure (solectwo) for Lodzia village. The village leader (sołtys) would receive two fiefs of land in either village and also a mill in Widzew (later Wójtowski Młyn).

The village’s incorporation under the German law involved the planned organisation of its area. The village settlement, probably in a one-sided linear form, was established in the valley of a small left tributary of a little river, the Łódka, (then known as Ostroga where the current Browar Łódzki - Łódź Brewery is located). According to the three-field system of crop rotation, peasants’ and village leader’s fields comprised three strips of land, one of which was delimited to the width of the farmstead, with the other two on its either side. They were longitudinally arranged and probably reached the opposite northern slope of the Łódka River valley.

With the advent of the town of Łódź, the village of Lodzia was commonly referred to as Stara Wieś or Stara Łódź. The aldermanship of Łódź (Wójtostwo Łódzkie) where the alderman (wójt) lived, was located on the eastern outskirts of the village, on the land representing, in morphological terms, an independent settlement.

At the end of 16th c., on a part of the land of Stara Wieś, established was a manor farm which (after the devastations of the Swedish war) at the beginning of the 18th c. covered most of the land of the former (depopulated) peasant holdings. Łódź Aldermanship (Wójtostwo Łódzkie) was transformed into a separate manor farm. The lands of both manor farms intermingled; additionally, some of the old town fields belonged to the parish and some to the Łódź miller. This situation remained until 1823 and was recorded on the archive maps from the period. The layout of fields, roads and buildings made it possible to reconstruct, with relative accuracy, the former village of Lodzia.

Łódź in the agricultural period of its history

The town’s first - episcopal - incorporation based on the Magdeburg law took place in 1414 and concerned the settlement on the opposite bank of the River Ostroga from which it took its name – Nad Ostroga. The settlement was probably established spontaneously during the wars with the Teutonic Knights, when numerous military and civilian formations from Wolbórz – a rendezvous point for knights – headed through this location on their way to Łęczyca and then further to the north. Where the Wolbórz-Łęczyca route was joined by the roads from Brzeziny and Lutomiersk, the local rural population began selling food and drink. In this spontaneous way there emerged a trading settlement. To participate in its income, the Kujawy chapter chartered the settlement..

However, the period of the war trade boom quickly passed, which undermined the development foundations of the young town. To keep it alive, in 1423 Bishop Jan Pella negotiated with King Władysław Jagiello a new privilege for the settlement – at that stage already known as Lodzia. Privileges like this were renewed again in 1424 and 1433, which is indicative of the poor economic development of the town – an isolated location away from main merchant routes in a vastly forested and poorly populated area. .

For this reason, the economic life in Łódź was mainly based on the cultivation of the land granted to the townsmen. This explains why historians refer to the pre-industrial period of Łódź’s history as the ‘agricultural period’..

The town’s incorporation entailed giving it an urban spatial layout. In the towns that were established from scratch the layout was usually geometric. In the case of Łódź this regularity can only be found in the western part, the eastern part was much more irregular. Bow-shaped plots of land seem to give evidence that this part – probably the earliest and spontaneously formed – was established on the land of Stara Wieś – precisely fitting its layout.

Łódź’s urban development area was very small (approx. 20 ha). Even in the best period of its development at the turn of 17th c. the town had no more than 800–900 inhabitants and 120–150 houses. The development was compact and concentrated around the market place and church square, with a few outgoing streets. Interestingly, the street name Stodolniana (stables street) signifies the agricultural character of the town. .

During the incorporation period, the town received approx. 470 ha of land, mostly forests that were gradually felled or burnt and turned into arable fields, hence their names – Pogorzel (burnt plot) and Niedźwiedź (bear). They stretched along the eastern and western sides of the town. In the mid-16th c., citizens on their own accord cleared new terrain further to the west creating two new fields: Długie Przymiarki and Nowe Przymiarki. In 1561 Bishop Uchański granted the town further areas to the south and on this land, the so-called Pola Włdżarowe were established. The arable land area increased to over 800 ha. On its western edges there stretched a forest of over 400 ha in area, the remnants of which are now Zdrowie Park and Duke Poniatowski Park.

In effect of the Swedish wars in the 17th and 18th c., the town suffered an economic collapse and depopulation, hence its layout survived in unchanged form until the beginning of the 19th c. The Prussian census in 1793 revealed only 191 population and 44 wooden cottages in Łódź. Thereafter, gradual development was observed: in 1810 the town already had 514 population, and in 1820 – 767 population and 106 houses. The growth of Łódź at that time is shown on the 1812 – 13 map by F. Johnney, which with certain supplements helped to prepare map 4. The reconstruction of the municipal fields’ layout, then, was possible based on the later maps of Łódź. The historical patterns of fields were petrified in the lines of streets, plots, and developments, and they are still visible in Stare Miasto in the bow shape of Żytnia, Pivna, Wróbla and other streets, and in Polesie in the oblique arrangement, in relation to the major central streets, of such streets as: Legionów, Więckowskiego, 6-go Sierpnia, Kopernika, etc. The remnant of the former municipal forest is the forest park named after Duke Poniatowski.

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