

THE GEOARCHAEOLOGY OF RIVER VALLEYS

Edited by

HALINA DOBRZAŃSKA, ERZSÉBET JEREM
and TOMASZ KALICKI



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ERZSÉBET JEREM and WOLFGANG MEID

Cover Picture:

Vistula river valley in the Cracow Gate.

View downstream from the Palaeolithic site at Piekary.

Photo by Tomasz Kalicki

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Editorial Preface

The present volume is the 18th published in the Series Minor of *Archaeolingua*. It is a collection of papers presented at the 8th annual meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists (EAA), held in Thessaloniki, Greece, 24–29 September, 2002.

In the past decade or so, interest in the geoarchaeology of river valleys has been increasing continuously among archaeologists and geologists alike, and this gave us the idea to organise a session on the topic in Thessaloniki. Access to water, the subsistence of life, determined human activities at all times. Knowing that rivers were an important source of fresh water and also provided a means of communication, proximity to inland surface water resources – streams, rivers, lakes – was an important factor in choosing an appropriate place for settling in the past. Rivers play a significant role in the natural environment in the process of culture and social pattern formation from the Palaeolithic up to recent times. Thus the session concentrated on the following topics: how the interrelationship between man and the natural environment contributed to changes in the settlement network system and economy; the river valley in context of climatic and cultural changes; the river as a means of communication; the river as a border between communities; and the impact of natural and anthropogenic factors on the Late Glacial-Holocene evolution of river valleys.

The great number of abstracts that we received confirmed us of the demand for an academic debate on the questions, problems and solutions that the cooperation between archaeology and geology raises. The international and interdisciplinary character of the EAA ensured a lively and exciting session that provided us all with high-quality presentations on research projects conducted in various countries and regions of Europe. Although there is variation in the character and size of the projects that are presented in this volume, they nevertheless share a common approach: an emphasis on the significance of environmental factors in archaeological study.

We hope that this volume will be of interest to everybody who wishes to learn more about geoarchaeology and how it can provide us with information on past cultures, settlements and peoples. To further emphasise the contribution that geographical and geological studies can provide archaeology with, the

papers follow a geographical order, going from the west of Europe towards the east.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the contributors of the volume for their cooperation and Réka Benczes for copy-editing the text. We are also indebted to András Kardos, who spent many hours making the images even more perfect than what they originally were.

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