History

Kruszwica is inseparably connected with the origins of the Polish statehood. Archeological research which has been conducted in the Gopło region for many years, uncovers the history and proves rich and incessant settlers' traditions.

The oldest traces of settlement in the area of Kruszwica date back to the Stone Age, around 10000 BC. However, the intensification of settlement appeared in the Bronze Age and it resulted from the expansion of Lusatian people. In the early Iron Age, around 500-400BC, on an Gopło island, which is Rzępowski Peninsula today, the Lusatians built a fortified stronghold which was in the centre of a settlement complex. It wasn't long before the stronghold was burnt and its residents were killed during invasion of Scythian nomadic tribes; as it has been established on the basis of Scythian arrowheads found in the stronghold rubble. Much later, in the first centuries of the common era, the Amber Road ran through Włostowo, Lachmirowice and Łagiewniki. It was one of the most important ancient trade route which led from the Roman Empire into Europe and the trade and service on the route brought considerable profits to people who lived nearby, to those in the Gopło area, too.

In the Gopło region there were perfect conditions for the development of settlements. It was due to the location over the lake which was an important hub, just as well as the existence of an important land route at the same time. Not only was Kruszwica a strategic point, but also a buoyant economic centre, owing to its fertile soils, the lake abundant in fish and saline.

The oldest traces of medieval settlement were noticed on the western lakeshore at the turn of the 6th and 7th century. At that time Kruszwica was a strategic and economic centre of great importance. It is assumed that in the 8th and 9th c. the stronghold was the centre of the tribal state of Goplans; however, according to researchers, in the 10th c. the territory was in the domain of Polans. As one of the legends says a cruel and deprived of power Popiel found a shelter in Kruszwica and later he was killed by mice in a tower on the Gopło island. After his death, Popiel, the creator of a new dynasty, came into power.

Along with the development of a young country, the importance of Kruszwica was

growing too. The second half of the 10th century and the whole 11th century were the period of magnificence of the stronghold, and became one of the capitals of the first Piast kings and their favourite residence. The stronghold itself was expanded and it was surrounded with a ring of settlements, where the residents provided services for the stronghold. Kruszwica was also an Episcopal residence.

A long tradition of settlement and a high level of civilized development allowed Kruszwica to fulfil a significant political and administrative role. On the other hand, the advantageous location near the hub made Christianization of pagan Pomerania possible for the Piast dynasty.

In 1096 a family feud between prince Zbigniew and Ladislaus Herman of Poland took place. Although it weakened Kruszwica, it didn’t slow the development down. The main branch of the industry became the glass industry and production of enamelled ceramics.

On the west lakeshore of Gopło, the salt from the local salt springs was evaporated.

The turning point marking the end of the medieval prime was the year 1271, when Boleslau the Pious ordered to burn the town down. It wasn’t until the rules of Casimir III the Great that Kruszwica became prosperous again. Around the mid 14th century the king founded a new castle made of brick in the place of the old stronghold. This gothic structure was a strategic point on the Polish-Teutonic border and the residence of castellany and starosty. In 1422 king Jogaila granted Magdeburg rights to Kruszwica. Unfortunatelly, the town was stroke by fires and wars which made it collapse and deteriorate. The decisive blow was dealt in 1657 by the Swedish Deluge which caused further destruction of the town and castle.

In 1772, owing to the First Partition of Poland, Kruszwica became a part of Prussia. Throughout the whole period of partitions, the Piast stronghold was the source of patriotism and the symbol of independent Poland. For many artists legends about king Popiel and Piast and beautiful Gopło landscapes were inspiration.

After a while Kruszwica slowly started rising from decline. Especially favourable economic conditions appeared in the end of the 19th century when an engineered stretch of the Noteć linking Kruszwica with the Bydgoszcz Canal was submitted for navigation, which created possibility of cheap mass transport. At the same time a sugar factory was opened, which was also a great source of income.

In the interwar period, the town was blooming; however, the agricultural branch was developing the fastest. The same tendency maintained after 1945. Between 1952-1956, the oil and fats factory was built.

In June 1960, the all-Polish ceremonial opening of a Thousand Years of Polish State celebration took place. For the past ten years, tourism has been an essential direction of the development of the town and its surroundings and the founding of Gopło Millenium Landscape Park makes the tourist offer more attractive.