Ethnogenesis of Slavs Viewed from Polish Perspective

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I. Introduction

Polish lands play a special role in the ethnogenesis and topogenesis of Slaves. The problem of ethnogenesis has not been restricted to the field of research as belonging only to archeology or history; instead, it has become the interest of other disciplines such as recently most discussed studies coming from authors on anthropology or historical linguistics. However, a certain lack of cooperation among the researchers from this variety of disciplines can be perceived as they seem to be more concerned more about possible personal animosities than about any really scientific controversy. During their heated discussions, they have elaborated a whole variety of interpretations and views on the most probable localization of the homeland of the early Slavs. Since the time this question has started to fascinate scholars, nine perspectives or conceptions have developed, respectively suggesting that the cradle or homeland of Slavs may be found in: 1) Asia; 2) Asia Minor 3) in the Danube basin; 4) along the Dneper; 5) between the Dneper and Vistula rivers; 6) between the Elbe and the Vistula and its tributaries (the neo-autochthonic theory); 7) between the Middle Elbe and the Dneper; 8) between the Elbe and the Dneper; 9) between the Oder and the Dneper (while during the Balto-Slavic phase - between the Vistula and Dneper). In recent years, two basic perspectives have solidified in the field of archeology: 1) the Dneper theory, localizing the most possible primeval Slavic abode in the basin of the Upper Dneper and partly along its middle run; this theory is called the *allochthonic theory* in Poland. 2) The Vistula-Oder conception, localizing the Slavic homeland along the Oder and Vistula and is called by Polish researchers the *autochthonic theory*. Within the boundary of linguistics, three persuasions have gained most importance: 1) the one identifying the first Slavic abode between the Oder and the Vistula, thus comprising Lesser Poland and Masovia); 2) the persuasion pointing to the

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regions surrounded by the Carpathian Mountains, the Pripyat river and the Middle Dneper basin, and finally 3) a theory where the localization is limited to the Middle Danube basin. 

II. Once upon a time...

Origins of Slavs described in the late antique and early medieval written sources, are set by them relatively late in the course of the European history, compared, among others, to Germanic or Celtic tribes. Slavs seemed to spark a strong interest of ancient writers from the moment they made their appearance; to prove it, let us revoke the mention of them in the Ravenna Cosmography. In this geographical work, written in the second half of the seventh or at the beginning of the eight century and describing the world as a gigantic circle surrounded by the ocean. Peoples were localized by the author according to a rule: geographical localizations of then known peoples and lands were carried out in relation to the convention of time, in which a day is divided into 24 hours – the twelve daily hours were ascribed to the peoples living in the Southern Hemisphere while the nocturnal twelve hours were related to the tribes living in the North. In areas which the author ascribed to the sixth night hour, he localized the homeland of Scyths (patria, unde Sclavinorum exorta est prosapia) - it is the region, according to him, from which generations of Sclavenes took their roots. In Nestor’s Primary Chronicle, written in twelfth century, the original homeland of Slavs is localized along the banks of Danube, and from there they were supposed to spread their territories as the descendants of Madai - son of Japheth, son of Noah. In some other interpretation, Pannonia was proposed to be the homeland of Slavs. The name of the region in this context is mentioned several times in the sources relating to some biblical legends which define the landscape as the homeland of Slavs, the view most of the medieval chronicles seem to support: Chronicle of Pulkava, Chronicle of Greater Poland, Chronica Polonorum. Repercussions of the Slavic exodus from the South are also to be found in

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6 Nestor the Chronicler (c. 1056 – c. 1114).
8 Pulkava of Radeni (?-1380).
Vincent Kadłubek’s\(^\text{10}\) *Chronica Polonorum*, a history work written at the end of twelfth and beginning of thirteenth century, where we find a legendary episode of Roman origin Gracchus/Krakus, a hero from Carinthia, whose proper name is said to be an eponym of Cracow but it also relates to the concrete person of the founder of the Polish state order.\(^\text{11}\) Another frequently appearing version of this mythos of origin represented the view that Slavs descended from common ancestors who were in the thirteenth/fourteenth century *Chronicle of Greater Poland*, the sons of Pan, the ruler of Pannonia. These common ancestors were, according to the author, the firstborn son Lech, the father of Lechites (the synonym of Poles), the second son Rus, the father of Rusyns i.e. Eastern Slavs, and the third son with the name Czech as the ancestor of the Czech people who were also called Bohemians.\(^\text{12}\) However, it is not the first instance of when the name and person of Czech appears – it is mentioned earlier in the twelfth-century *The Chronicle of the Czechs* written by Cosmas\(^\text{13}\) where he is staged as a legendary protoplast called father Bohemus (pater Bohemus), a leader of the Czech people, giving thus his name to the folk and to the landscape it inhabited.\(^\text{14}\) The legend grew probably to fulfill the need for the explanation of the origins of the noun Czech, a toponym as well as a proper name.\(^\text{15}\) In this context, a certain author Priest of Duklja (Pop Dukljanin) appears in the second half of twelfth century. We mention his work to recall this concept of close family bonds between the three ‘branches’ or clans as having one common ancestor because regardless how fantastic forms the myth would take on, it always features three brothers ruling some wild forest regions and defending them against three even wilder tribes of Goths: the Brus, Totila and Ostroil brothers, who were to be the sons of the king Svevlad.\(^\text{16}\) The tale of the common line of descent which accentuates Slavs’ brotherly tides was continued throughout the Czech annalistic production. In the *Chronicle of Dalimil*\(^\text{17}\) written in the beginning of fourteenth-century, Čech together with his six brothers (and not two or one) left the land of their father and settled near the mountain Říp. The reason for this exodus was to be a crime committed by Čech – most probably a murder. The two brothers’ version returns in the fourteenth-century *Chronicle of Pulkava*, a work ordered by Charles IV of Bohemia (1346-1378); next to Čech, a second hero by the name of Lech is mentioned there, moving together with his brother at first, and

\(^{10}\) Bishop of Cracow (1150?-1223).


\(^{17}\) Kronika tak řečeného Dalimila, ed. M. Bláhová, Praha, 1977, p. 12.
then setting alone for a farther journey north. All the authors of the Czech annals mentioned here derived the origin of Poles and Czechs from the same ancestor and saw all Slavs as the two brothers’ descendants. Yet, it is only in Polish chronicles that the name of Rus appears either as their third brother *Chronicle of Greater Poland* or, as by Długosz, as the son of Lech. In this legend about the brothers, a certain tendency to raise the status of Čech as opposed to this of Lech becomes visible by Czech authors, whilst in the Polish annals Lech is referred to as the firstborn son of Pan and therefore more important of the two. Rus, on the other hand, takes on a less privileged role than the other two.

The general picture emerging from all the early medieval literary sources is not only the reflection of the common Slavic ancestry but also underlines the close linguistic relationship within Slavic Lands. The best expression of this view we find in the *Chronicle of Greater Poland*: Slavs speak different kinds of languages which they mutually understand and although they slightly differ in several words, yet their tongues took their beginning from the only one language used by their father Slav; hence these all people are called Slavs. References to this linguistic community, especially in the context of Western Slavs and within the concept of the Pan-Slavic unity are revived in the Czech literary tradition from the second half of the thirteenth-century to blossom during the Hussite Wars (1419-1434). In the Polish medieval annalistic writing, a general or pan-Slavic thought was pushed in the background as less important by the greater interest taken in the dawn of the Polish folk and of its state organization. During the sixteenth century, two contrasting views gained the upper hand: the Vandal and the Sarmatian interpretations. The first of them was based on the belief that Slavs had their ancestors in the tribes of Vandals (the East-Germanic tribes inhabiting Central Europe until the beginning of the fifth-century. They were organized into the Kingdom of Vandals and Alans in the years between 435-534 AD, thus being the only one state system built in North Africa at that time), it is the belief most probably generated in the Carolingian annalistic production. This persuasion could be supported by the fact that it was at this time when the tribes settling on the eastern frontiers gained

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not small attention of writers who began to associate them with Vandals inhabiting this region earlier in time. A good example here can be the figure of the first historically proved ruler of Poland, Mieszko, appearing in the vita of St. Ulrich26 written by Gerhard of Augsburg; Mieszko was a leader called by the author *dux Vandalorum* – the prince of Vandals.27 In later epochs, the eastern neighbors of Germans were also associated with Vandals, and the Vistula river was sometimes termed Vandalus, as it was the case in the Western (French and Catalan) geographic tractates from the fourteenth century with titles like *Anonymi descriptio Europae Orientalis* (*Anonymous Description of Eastern Europe*)28 or in a compendium *Book of Knowledge of All Kingdoms*.29 When it comes to Polish authors, Vincent Kadłubek was the first to suppose the origin of the Polish people to be from Vandals; moreover, he identified Lechites, i.e. ancient Poles, with Vandals.30 It is possible that this persuasion on the Slavic ethnogenesis was the aftermath of the author’s contacts with Gervase of Tilbury (c. 1150–1235), an Anglo-Norman scholar31; their exchange could have taken place during Kadłubek’s student years in Bologne.32 The Vandal theory identifying West Slavs with Vandals was more popular in West Europe than it was in Poland.33 The content and persuasion of Kadłubek’s opus was then acquired and elaborated by Dzierzwa in the beginning of fourteenth century; in his work, the biblical paradigm and genealogies from Troyans and Romans, widespread in the Antiquity, were supplemented with Vandals as the probable ancestors of Poles.34 In the *Chronicle of Greater Poland* mentioned earlier and relating to the Pannonian-Vandal interpretation of the genesis of Lechites appears next to the legend of Wanda’s drowning in the Vistula, as an attempted etymological explanation: the name of the heroine was transferred to the river in which she had died.35 Maciej Miechowita36 was the author of the first Polish scientific tractate describing the geography and ethnography of East Europe entitled *Tractatus de duabus Sarmatiis asiana et europiana et de contentis in eis* (*The Tractate on two Sarmatias, the

26 Bishop of Augsburg (893 – 4 July 973).
31 who used Wandalorum gens ferocissima for the whole Slavic world (see A. Mesarkin 2013, (footnote 9), p. 92).
36 Maciej z Miechowa called Miechowita (1457-1523).
Asiatic and the European ones, and on things they contain’), in this work, he wrote: *Vandals were from the kingdom of Poland, from the Polish land they had inhabited, and from which they took their geographic and proper names, using Polish language.*

Beginning with the sixteenth century, the Vandal theory was losing its meaning to the advantage of the Sarmatian theory, yet it has never disappeared completely from annalistic works and cartography. The growing Poland’s interest for the East Europe and its attempts to extend eastward built the Jagiellonian dynasty’s political activities within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which had a strong impact on the status quo; one of the means to it, or the results was nobilitation of the nation and state by referring to the antiquity of Sarmatians, who were known and described already by writers of Antiquity. Roman Empire Period. Sarmatia was mentioned by Ancient Rome’s authors as being a vast land encompassing huge parts of Central and East Europe. The main protagonist of this view relating to the Ptolemaic division of Sarmatia into its European and Asiatic parts was mentioned previously Maciej Miechowita, in his *Tractatus de duabus Sarmatiis asiana et europiana et de contentis in eis*. The greatest role in the development of this conception, however, was played by Jan Długosz (1415-1480). Although there are no mentions to be found in the Polish historiography before the fifteenth century about Sarmatia and Sarmatians in the context of the origins of Poles, with the exception of one sentence in twelfth-century Gallus Anonymus’ chronicle *The Gesta principum Polonorum (Deeds of the Princes of the Poles)*, yet the Polish lands were called alternately ‘Sarmatian’ and ‘Vandalic’ by authors from West Europe. The terming of an east-European land ‘Sarmatia’ was nothing new; on the contrary, the term had been used by some more ancient sources. Let us here revoke Gervase of Tilbury again and his work *Otia imperialis*, or some other opus from the thirteenth century titled *De proprietatibus rerum* by Batholomæus Anglicus. In Długosz *Annales*, Poland i.e. Sarmatia was divided into the East Sarmatia and the West Sarmatia; the Carpathian Mountains were called the Sarmatian Mountains, Balticum bore the name of Sarmatian Sea and the Polish folk was called Sarmatians. However, Długosz continued to persuade also for the Vandal theory which was introduced to the Polish annalistic tradition by Kadłubek and Dzierzwa, who sought the roots there not only of Poles/Lechites, but of all the other Slavic tribes in Pannonia; one can easily get the impression, however, that he much prefered to accentuate the relationship with the ancient Sarmatians.

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37 Miechowita, Opis Sarmacji azjatyckiej i europejskiej, [w:] Źródła do dziejów nauki i techniki, XIV, transl. T. Biękowski, Wrocław, 1972, p. 50.
He expressed it by the words: *Therefore I consider the name Sarmatians as being the only proper and true because it has granted Lechites and Rusyns their antiquity.*

It may well be that the parallelism of the terms Vandals and Sarmatians was used purposely in order to release the author of Annales from the responsibility to side with either conception of genesis of the Polish folk. Undoubtedly, though, Jan Długosz should be regarded as a forerunner of the Sarmatian tradition within the Polish historical production.

The dispute among scholars supporting the Vandal, the Sarmatian or some mixed genesis of Poles, and in a less degree the genesis of Slavs in general, grew louder around the half of the sixteenth century. A new impulse in favor of the Vandal perspective was delivered by the work *Vandalia* by Albert Krantz (1450-1517) enjoying wide popularity among Polish readers not only of the Renaissance epoch, but also later. Krantz identified Poles and Czechs with the second wave of Vandal migration from the North, and, as a consequence, he regarded Slavs as Vandals i.e. of the Germanic ethnicity, part of whom underwent the slavicization process which reflected in using some Slavic dialect by them. Within the Polish historical tradition, Maciej Miechowita, one of the authors mentioned above, wrote as early as the first half of the sixteenth century that Slavs must have originated from Vandals ethnically, thus in spite using by him the geographical term ‘Sarmatia’. Another author by the name of Decius continued attempts of compromising the Vandal theory with the Sarmatian one; another one with this purpose was Marcin Bielski.

However, since the half of the sixteenth century, the view that Sarmatians were the direct ancestors of Slavs began to win its dominance among scholars and their readers.

Huge importance in spite of many critical opinions was given to the work by Marcin Kromer *De origine et rebus gestis Polonorum libri XXX*. The Warmian bishop, by regarding Sarmatians as the sole ancestors of Poles, broke with the popular to that time belief of Slavs originating from Pannonia in favor of their eastern ancestry. The venerable bishop opposed their Vandal genesis as well: *One should not confuse Slavs with Dalmatians or Illyrians; neither are they Vandals, nor of other tribe, just because the mentioned had sometimes settled on their lands and still do.* This gradual retreat from the Vandal theory was caused mainly by a certain fear of misusing this *Poland*
as Vandalia conception as the eastern part of Germania Mangna, and, as a consequence, a possible legitimization of the German expansive ‘go-east’ policy.\textsuperscript{50} Thus, turning the focus of the search for the ancestry from the West to the East should mean avoiding this German danger and, instead, seek for more success with this eastern Sarmatian tradition, which lasted as late as nineteenth century but degenerated in the so called ‘sarmatianism’ or ‘sarmatism’ already in the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{51} In later decades, many different conceptions arose around the issue, which will be discussed in detail in literature of the subject.\textsuperscript{52}

\textbf{III. Where pots are born out of soil being plowed […]\textsuperscript{53}}

Among numerous archaeological publications on this subject elucidating it from a variety of standpoints, two theories seem to be most contrasting: the \textit{autochtonic} and the \textit{allochtonic}. The first, which is the older one, is rooted in the so called \textit{Romantic autochtonism} which emerged as early as nineteenth-century. It was slightly modified by Gustaw Kossinna (1858-1931) and developed by him into the so called \textit{settlement-archaeology method} which was based on identifying archeological concept of cultures with certain ethnicities.\textsuperscript{54} With regards to the ethnogenesis of Slavs the method was applied by Józef Kostrzewski (1885-1969). The scientist assumed a certain continuity of the ethnical entity throughout constantly changing cultures, e.g. in the archeological sense; a specific constant on the background of ever transforming forms of civilization, and characterized by some common and repeated patterns or features. The starting point for his conclusions on the issue of a possible Proto-Slavic birthplace was the territorial range of the earliest documented Slavic presence in the Early Medieval Period. According to J. Kostrzewski, some repeating sequence of common features allowed for conclusions about the cultural continuity within the borders of contemporary Poland from the third period of the Bronze Age to the Early Medieval Period. As Proto-Slavic cultures one should consider Lusitan culture and the subsequent ones: Pomeranian, Przeworsk and Oksywie cultures. These people were associated with Herodot’s Neuri and Budini; as next, they were identified with the Ptolemeian

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\textsuperscript{50} W. Paszyński 2018, (footnote 24), p. 382-383.
\textsuperscript{51} T. Ulewicz, Sarmacja. Studium z problematyki słowiańskiej XV i XVI w. Zagadnienie sarmatyzmu w kulturze i literaturze polskie (Problematyka ogólna i zarys historyczny), Kraków, 2006.
\textsuperscript{54} B. Arnold, The Past as Propaganda: Totalitarian Archaeology in Nazi Germany, Antiquity, 64 (244), 1990, pp. 464-478, here p. 464-467.
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On the other hand- the autochtonic approach as suggested by Józef Kostrzewski has become the foundation for the so called Poznań school of prehistory. Among the most excellent supporters of this view, one should mention at least Konrad Jażdżewski, Lech Leciejewicz, Jan Żak, Zofia Hilczer-Kurnatowska, Stanisław Kurnatowski, Tadeusz Makiewicz oraz Witold Hensel. The school’s position, which has evolved within recent years as it will be elucidated below, was based on localizing the earliest Proto-Slavic homeland on the territories between Oder and Bug rivers, or between Elbe, Oder and Bug rivers; later on, such a birthplace was supposed to be extending from the middle Dneper to Oder rivers.

The evident presence of some Germanic tribes on these territories during the Antiquity has been explained as of rather temporary and impossibly permanent but sporadic appearance of small groups with purposes of either robbery or trade. These groups were said to form their isolated settlements of the insular type, which, after they had reached the end to their local mercantile possibilities to support their living, were heading south or east. This as sporadically defined Germanic presence within the Polish territories, according to the supporters of the autochtonic view, had no impact on the development of the ethnicity’s anthropological and cultural structure. The disappearance of the Germanic element from the areas was supposed to be explained by literary sources as associated with the Migration Period in Europe during which multiple tribes were moving toward the Roman limes - i.e. Burgundians together with a part of Vandals migrating along the Oder, and Goths with several remaining groups of Vandals along the Vistula. According to the view, by the end of the Antiquity a certain crisis or clash of civilizations was described to have taken place which reflected in a visible process of barbarization and in the significant decrease in standards of living. With the growing influence of foreign ideas conveyed by the incoming groups, a gradual stabilization of forms of typically Slavic settlement habitus took place.

A slightly different approach to the origins of Slavs was elaborated by Henryk Łowmiański.
(1898-1984). He saw the Proto-Slavic homeland in the territories along the Middle Dneper, that is true; however, he also pointed out to a possibility of the ethnicity’s westward migration as early as the Bronze Age and supporting his view with the help of Kazimierz Moszyński’s (1887-1959) conclusions relating to the fact that chronology of Slavic toponyms is diverse – the toponyms along the Middle Dneper and in Volhynia region are older than those which are to be found along the Oder and Vistula rivers. K. Łowmiański explained the localization by the Proto-Slavic migration from the East to the West, during which the assimilation of these newcomers took place with the Early Veneti population which had arrived here from the East in some earlier times. The ethnic homogenization within the territories along the Middle Dneper alongside those situated between the Oder and Vistula rivers was said to have taken place as early as fifth century BC.\(^59\) Another, more significant modification of the autochthonic approach was suggested by Witold Hensel (1917-2008) during the seventies of the twentieth century. This ethnic unification with was supposed to be founded on the extending the territories inhabited by Proto-Slavs from the Oder banks as far as to the Middle Dneper, and was also concerned with the definition of the ethnogenesis. Hensel allowed for the possibility of a decrease in settlement activities, as well as for the assuming a secondary slavization process on certain areas. This process involved a multi-ethnic composition of the population caused by probable cases of co-habitation of Slavs with the neighboring peoples inhabiting frontiers of what can be called Proto-Slavic territories, a certain ethnic mixing process which in turn effected in assimilation and acculturation processes.\(^60\)

The allochthonic approach is younger chronologically, and regarding its founders grouped around Jagiellonian University in Cracow, including such authors as cultural anthropologist Kazimierz Moszyński or archeologist Kazimierz Godłowski (1934-1995), as well as their successors with Michał Parczewski (b. 1946) among them, i.e. the so called Kraków school of historical archeology.\(^61\) Its distinguishing method is the analysis of material evidence available which should be strictly connected to literary sources. The latter constitute an important instrument serving the identification of ancient ethnic groups. According to the supporters of this view, the homeland of the archeological culture of


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Early Slavs must have been situated along the Upper Dneper. On this area which comprised parts of the forest as well as the swampy areas, the Kiev culture emerged and solidified in the fourth century AD., giving birth in its turn to the Early Slavic culture. During the fifth century, a significant extension of the original territory of the Early Slavic culture to include areas in the Forest- Steppe Belt. This period is the time when distinguished cultural provinces emerged – the Prague, Pen’kovka i Kolochin cultures, sometimes associated with the Slavic ethnicity, as well as the Tushemla-Bantserosvshchina culture probably also belonging to this circle. The territories inhabited by this population were extended to the basins of the Upper and Middle Dneper, the Upper and Middle Southern Bug as well as the areas along Dniester river. The northernmost areas of the Early Slavic settlement could reach as far as the upper sections along the Neman and the Daugava rivers. This territory was the starting point for the multi-stage Slavic migration westward and southward, and encompassed at least 300 000 square km. Adversaries of this approach underpin the fact that the suggested territory of origin of the supposed Slavic expansion would be too small. Such a rapid spreading of the Slavic settlement activity on these allegedly depopulated, vast areas of Central Europe by these relatively small groups seem not much credible for them. In recent years, some new tendencies in the interpreting the issue of Slavic ethnogenesis can be observed which accentuate the impossibility to research the relation between an ethnicity/ folk and a culture in the archeological sense. As it is stated by Henryk Mamzer: Products of a past culture which we take under our scrutiny become rather results of our own interpretation and are seen through a prism of the culture in which we are taking part. Accordingly with such a scientific perspective, a concept of ethnic continuity does not require involvement with the concept of cultural continuity. Therefore, a change in a material culture does not necessarily involve a change of ethnic composition of a population.

IV[...] they speak in one and the same language which is Slavic.  

During the Early Medieval Period, languages of the Slavic family were showing far more similarities than they do now, a kinship which singles them out from other Indo-European language groups. A significant kind of testimony of this close linguistic relation are historical works of the native provenance as well as by foreign authors. The recognition of this language kinship can be found in Primary Chronicle mentioned above and written in Old Russian in 1113 AD by Nestor: *Thus, the Slavic race was divided, and its language was known as Slavic,* it can also be traced down in an anonymous French work from the beginning of the fourteenth century, also discussed here earlier *The Description of East Europe: One should keep in mind that Rusyns, Bulgarians, Rascians (i.e. Serbs), Slavs, Czechs, Poles and Prussians (Pomorians?) speak with one and the same language which is Slavic, and this proves that the Slavic language is more largely represented and more widely spread than any other language in the world.* In the fourteenth century Pulkava Chronicle there is a description of the confusion of languages at the construction of the Tower of Babel as the event that gave birth also to the Slavic language, and it is from that language that we call the peoples using it Slavs. In another work which is also mentioned above, in *The Cronicle of Greater Poland,* there is information that *Slavs speak different tongues which nevertheless are mutually comprehensible though, admittedly, they somewhat differ in a couple of words.* Literary sources commented on these close linguistic bonds within the Slavic world until the sixteenth century. Most interesting example here is a remark by Laonikos Chalkokondyles written in the fifteenth century: *But, I know, that Serbs, Bulgarians, Illyrians (here Bosniains), Croatians, Poles, and Russians speak one and the same language. So, if we must draw a conclusion from this evidence, it would be that they are all one and the same people, being of the same race. But over time their customs began to deviate from each

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67 The Russian Primary Chronicle Laurentian Text Translated and edited by Samuel Hazzard Cross and Olgerd P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor, 1953, p. 53.
others and they settled in the different lands in which they had arrived. This similarity of Slavic tongues contrasted however, as noted by Symeon of Suzdal during the Florence church council 1439-1443, with some deeper disparities between German dialects. Jan Długosz also belonged to the authors who accentuated many times the similarities between Czech or Russian languages with Polish (communis Polonorum et Ruthenorum locucio). Within the Polish literary circles, the Slavic unity and kinship was noted as late as the sixteenth century which was aptly summed up by a humanist writer Łukasz Górnicki: „our tongue is not as such very old (...), but it was born not so long ago from the Slavic language. For all these tongues: Polish, Czech, Russian, Croatian, Bosniac, Serbian, Rakian (Sorbian?), Bulgarian and others, all come from the one which had been earlier, as well as all the peoples (speaking them) come from one Slavic folk”. How could these similarities be explained? In literature, this phenomenon is interpreted in several ways. Most frequently, the relatively late distinction of the Slavic family from the common Proto-Indo-European stem is revoked, which caused this early perception of unity of the not yet differentiated Slavic language in the beginning of the Early Medieval Period. It is also assumed that in the dawn of migration movements, groups speaking in the Slavic language were not numerous and formed small settlements. According to some other researchers, in the case of large societies or communities using relatively homogenous languages, this mechanism was based on an acquisition of the homogeneous dialect used by a small group by a much larger community; more rarely it was a process of synthesis of a few languages where only one of them turned to be dominant. Therefore, in the case of Slavic Lands, Slavic was a kind of koiné, and it was on its ground where a common linguistic pattern was developed which encompassed a large population. Thus, using a common language was an identity requirement, and was not caused by any practical need. A common idiom and in consequence, better mutual understanding was the foundation on which a community could build its identity upon. The question arises here, where, within this linguistic concept, can the primordial region of Slavic tribes by the end of the Antiquity be searched for? Some scientists look towards the East as their starting point, where the archaic layer of Slavic toponyms, mainly rivers and other water basins had its source around the tributaries of Dneper or on the southern run of the Pripyat river and along the Upper Dnester. On the other hand, a large area from the territories along the Vistula and

72 G. Labuda, Fragmenty z dziejów Słowiańszczyzny, 1960, p. 69.
partly the Oder to the regions neighbouring from the east, i.e. south of the Pripyat river (Volhynia, Podolia, Western Kiev region). The same area, in some more detailed descriptions, was to be found in today’s Subcarpathian area (between Zakopane in the Tatra mountain range and Ukraine’s Bukovina region or in Lesser Poland, Central Poland and partly in Masovia (?). An older conception of the Slavic homeland localizing it between the Oder and the Middle Dnieper is slowly losing its persuasive power, due to the lack of explanation for a development of such a unified line of language on such a vast territory in the course of many centuries. Studies in linguistics do not offer an unambiguous answer to the question whether one Proto-Slavic language could exist as a homogeneous entity, or if it possibly had to be differentiated to a smaller or greater extent. A similar evolution can be noticed from the earlier conception of the tight Balto-Slavic community, to the more modern concept of a certain type of community bonds within which a parallel transformation of the common Indo-European heritage occurred.

V. [...] while their bodies and hair are neither very fair or blonde, nor indeed do they incline entirely to the dark type, but they are all slightly ruddy in color.

Anthropology similarly, to archeology and historical linguistics engages intensively in the discussions around the theme of the ethnogenesis of Slavs. In this field, as is the case in the two previous disciplines, researchers cannot agree on the issue of the localization of the homeland of early Slavs. Two main perspectives can be distinguished: autochthonic and allochthonic, where the first option is more widely spread among physical anthropologists. According to the autochthonic perspective: Until now, there have been no anthropological study, including the recent research carried out also on the numerous and diversified craniologic and odontologic material evidence, to prove a thesis suggested by some archeologists on the discontinuation of settlement processes in the basins of the Oder and the Vistula between the Late Antique Period and the Early Medieval Period [...]. In opposite- this research has shown a high degree of biological similarities between the population of this region inhabiting it during the Late Antique and the people living there in the Early Medieval

Moreover, the study underlines some obvious differences between West Slavs and East Slavs. A significant morphological differentiation has been stated among the population inhabiting the territories of the Eastern Slavic Lands at that time; this diversification is said to increase in the course of time with the simultaneous stability of biological features of West Slavs. Supporters of the autochthonic view accentuate also the low biological within the population dynamics within the population inhabiting the basins of the rivers Pripyat, Dneper and Prut, so the areas partly pointed to by allochthonists as the starting point of Slavs. Consequently, an expansion coming from the East must have been limited and the rate of population growth in these groups would have to be insignificant. Some new analysis of craniologic features of the evidence found along the Middle and the Upper Dneper attributed chronologically to the time between the ninth century and twelfth centuries has shown unambiguously that groups of Slavs inhabiting their primordial territory in the Early Medieval Period and termed operationally as the Dneper Slavic population, formed a relatively homogeneous population, chronologically and spatially. Moreover, in contrast to some previous statements, a general arche-morphology of Slavic sculls has been evidenced, which is explained by the fact that Slavs and genetically related Balts overlapped with the older and more genetically archaic layer of Fins. This should cause the unusual anthropological similarity or closeness of the three ethnicities. This is a very interesting assumption because it is completely opposing theses of the supporters of the autochthonic persuasion. A weak point in this reasoning on low biological dynamics in the East Slavic Lands, according to allochthonists, is said to be the incongruent comparing of the average age, counted in years, at which grown up individuals inhabiting today’s Poland by the end of the Antiquity and in the beginning of the Middle Ages died. They argue that in the case of ancient DNA as well as in the case of skeletal evidence, a complete lack of it is evidenced due to the Slavic habit of cremation burials which are often too difficult for archeologists to evidence, and to which a small number of graves seems to indicate, especially in the western part of Slavic Lands. Within

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today’s Poland, this habit should have lasted until the eleventh century (due to the baptism of Poland in 966 AD.), and in the case of other Slavic territories, this process took place in other times, the southern and western territories were earliest, i.e. beginning with the end of the eighth century whilst in the northern and northeastern areas it took place in the twelfth century. Due to this, there is lack of evidence from the period between the Late Antiquity and the later stages of the Early Medieval Period, evidence which could allow for setting a demarcation line between a low, middle and high biological dynamics of the population. Let us consider how ancient Slavs could look like. Taking into account that literary sources must be necessarily of different factual value and are frequently biased, and based on uncritical repetitions, they should be treated with greatest caution. However, they are convergent in many cases which allows for a general reconstruction of a Slavic appearance in the initial stages of the Early Medieval Period. Since the Slavs emerged in the focus of annalists of Early Byzantine Antiquity in the sixth century, a Slav appears as of an athletic type, stout and burly, with a rather fair skin or tanned by winds, with dark-blonde hair of reddish hue. However, it seems to be typical description of the northern barbarians as tall, with light skin and blond or light ginger hairs used earlier in Greek and Byzantine written sources. In later centuries (seventh century to ninth century) the type was described as consisting of individuals with white or rosy taint and with fair or red hair being straight and soft. Facial hair was also fair or reddish with fair brows and eyelashes. Beginning with the tenth century, some growing differentiation of biological features could be noticed due to a process of hybridization which was fastest in the South Slavs – their skin as well as hair was becoming dark, whereas West Slavs and East Slavs remained mostly blond with fair taint and hair between blond and ginger. A description which rather differs from this blonde type of West Slavs is to be found in Ibrāhīm ibn Ya’qūb’s text on the inhabitants of Prague: it is remarkable that Bohemians are dark-skinned and black haired and blonde types are seldom there. This peculiarity can be explained by the fact that the tenth century’s Prague was one of largest and most important hubs in this part of Slavic Lands at that time and as such, it was a place where many populations with diverse phenotypes from various parts of Europe mixed. Thus, we cannot relate this description to all inhabitants of Czech territories at that time. It is assumed that irreversible changes in the anthropologic structure of Slavs

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94 Ibrahim ibn Ya’qub at-Turtushi, tenth century Sephardi Jews.
from Central and East Europe, and the subsequent loss of the original phenotype took place after the twelfth century. It is related to the increasing mobility of populations, with migrations, plagues and invasions which caused the increasing hybridization of Slavs.97

Concluding this survey of views concerned with the ethnogenesis of Slavs, a summary of possibilities emerging from modern biological methods seems to be required regarding using them in ethnogetic studies. A special role here is played by paleogenetic techniques, i.e. in this case, analyses of contemporary DNA material within the context of changes in the ancient populations. The research on the contemporary DNA polymorphism as being transferred matrilineally have shown a high degree of homogeneity for the Slavic Mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA), as well as the lack of any significant difference as compared to other European populations. Some distinguishable varieties of mtDNA haplogroups such as U4a2a, U4a2, HV3 and R1a1 are characteristic for Slavs, the subclade U4a2 being the most important of them. This subclade is supposed to have derived from Central and Eastern Europe and its genesis is concluded from the population of the Cord Ware Culture who, according to some authors, were the ancestors of the contemporary Slavic ethnicity.98

In the research concerning the genesis of Slavs, the polymorphism of the Y chromosome is being taken into consideration, as inherited only patrilinearly. Distinguishing of 18 STR microsatellite markers for Y-STR haplotypes has shown a certain homogeneity of haplotypes Y-STR within the populations of Western as well as Eastern Slavs, and a notable diversification regarding Southern Slavs, with the exception of Slovenes. The results of these analyses indicate the closest genetic similarity to other Slavic populations inhabiting the today’s Ukraine which is supposed to be the core argument in support of the allochthonic theory whose supporters point to the basin of the Upper and Middle Dnieper as the region where the Slavic ethnicity emerged and solidified.99 The origin of Slavic tribes is interpreted quite differently in the view of the rendering of a haplotype R1a1–WSL from the Y-chromosome. This type appears very frequently among the contemporary Western Slavs (Czechs, Poles and Slovaks) and only on one territory in the Northwestern Russia around Novgorod. In the remaining parts of Slavic Lands it is clearly less frequent. On the ground of this fact, the conclusion has been drawn that this distinguished haplotype had been most probably present within the Proto-Slavic population before the times of the Migration Period during the sixth century AD.; moreover, this very haplotype can prove the genetic continuity of the population inhabiting this part of Central

Europe as early as the Bronze Age. The haplogroup YDNA R1a1a7 (its M458 mutation) is also considered to support the autochthonic approach as it appears with the frequency over 30% in Central and Southern Poland, as opposed to its lack in the areas populated by Western and Southern Slavs where its contribution into population reaches slightly over 10%. This particular haplogroup YDNA R1a1a7 (M458 mutation) is considerably frequent within the population of Southern Slavs as well as among other populations in Europe.

V. [...] and nobody can really say how half of Europe could become Slavic in such a short period of time.

In this work, I have been trying to demonstrate, the theme of Slavic ethnogenesis has been fascinating writers since the Middle Ages - first it was annalists and chroniclers, then in Renaissance – humanist authors until, in recent times, it has become the focus of scientific researchers from various disciplines. I would risk an assumption that the dispute between autochtonists and allochtonists is a remnant of the struggle deeply rooted in the Polish consciousness against the German element looking greedily to the West Slavs’ territories since the Early Medieval Period. To a certain degree, the discussion between the Vandal theory as it was conceived by German scholars and used by them to spread the persuasion about the German character of these areas was suppressed until the Third Partition of Poland in the year 1795. The Republic of Poland before the portions was the largest country in Europe. It agglomerated territories inhabited by West Slavs as well as East Slavs under its scepter, while most of its territories were localized east of the native Polish lands. In relation to this fact, the Sarmatian theory legitimized the expansion of the Polish rule on all the lands which were said to be Sarmatia because it was Poles who were considered its heirs. After the Third Partition, the situation changed because 37% of Polish territories with the population of 2.6 million found itself under the Prussian rule (out of 6.8 million Austria and Prussia shared). 4.2 million Poles came under the rule of Austria, and as much as 63% of territories with the population of 5.5 million became the Russian acquisition. During the nineteenth century Poles were living under the German and

Austrian occupation however the most of Slavic peoples as Czech, Slovak, Slovenian, Croat, Serbian, Bosnian and Ukrainian were living under Austrian rule. Thus, mostly Germans needed some scientific justification for the discrimination and forced Germanization of the non-Germanic people first of all to prove that Slavic people are not equal to Germans and allegedly don’t even deserve to live in their native lands. It was then that a particular intensification of anti-Slavic tendencies took place from the end of the nineteenth century alongside Kulturkampf *culture struggle* with its anti-Polish aspect. Together with the development of the ideology of pan-Germanism, attempts were made to create an organisation which was to serve zur *Wahrung der deutschnationalen Interessen gegen das immer übermütiger werdende Slawentum und seine Unkultur* (for the protection of German national interests against the Slavic population and its lack of culture). To justify the claim to possess Slavic (Polish) territories, propositions by a mentioned earlier German prehistorian Gustav Kossina (1858-1931) were perfectly fitted; these propositions included the so called *Kulturkreis theory* (culture-historical archaeology) grounded in identifying geographical regions with specific ethnic groups and based on archeological finds of material evidence. This theory was demonstrated by him in his work: *Die deutsche Vorgeschichte - eine hervorragend nationale Wissenschaft* (German Prehistory: A Pre-eminently National Discipline). The climax of application of this method was an article with 23 pages and titled: *Die deutsche Ostmark: ein Urheimatboden der Germanen* (The German eastern frontier- the primordial homeland of Germans) edited in the year 1919, where Kossina was showing his proofs that parts of territories granted to Poland after the Treaty of Versailles were in fact German, due to the evidence of face urns being found along the Vistula, artefacts which were to document early German settlements there. The same method applied in order to prove the Slavic character of Polish territories after Poland’s regaining its independence in 1918 was applied by a student of Kossina in Berlin and who later became a professor in Poznań - Józef Kostrzewski (1885-1969). An example of this scientific approach may be Biskupin, a fortified settlement discovered in 1933 which was used at once by propaganda as an exemplary material to demonstrate a Slavic settlement, and has been used as such ever since, in spite of the fact that later studies have found that it was built by the population of the Lusatian culture in the 8th century BC (late Bronze Age/early Iron Age), and its

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104 S. Jaworska, Anti-Slavic imagery in German radical nationalist discourse at the turn of the twentieth century: a prelude to Nazi ideology?, Patterns of Prejudice, 45, 2011: 435-452


ethical affiliation is impossible to reconstruct. In general, Germans (Ostforschung) as well as Poles (Westforschung) have been using archeology as one of their tools to support their territorial claims. A real explosion of anti-Slavic sentiments took place during the twenty interwar years in 20th century when the German ideologies of Drang nach Osten and the Lebensraum (living space for Germans) were intensified and spread after Hitler had come to power. These policies were at their peak during the Second World War when Adolf Hitler and his Nazi-supporters regarded Slavs as Non-Aryan, sub-humans, whilst they themselves were over-humans (Übermenschen). It was then that they reached for the Kossina method again, and again archeology was harnessed to serve propaganda. An extremal example of it could be using the find of a clay urn of Przeworsk culture in Biała, a village near Łódź in Central Poland. The artifact immediately became the focus of German scientists as there were certain carvings on its surface filled with some whitish substance, and among these patterns there was also a swastika. This symbol appearing within most cultures since prehistorical times till now was then used as a means of propaganda to prove German origins of these territories and their incorporation into the Third Reich. After the WW II, attempts were made to document the Polish ethnic character of Polish territories, and especially of the so called Recovered Territories which since the tenth century


Fig. 1 Polish Propaganda Poster, before 1939, public domain.
Ethnogenesis of Slavs Viewed from Polish Perspective (Szmoniewski) 43

AD were under the Polish rule but beginning in the thirteenth century were gradually gaining more and more independence or separating themselves from the Polish state rule to finally find themselves within Prussian borders after the year 1795. It is worth reminding here that the Polish affiliation of these lands was very strongly perceived also before WW II which can be illustrated by a poster from 1939 entitled *We are not here since yesterday once we reached far west: Once Lübeck and Berlin - Leipzig and Breslau belonged to Boleslaus - today Poland in 1939 borders* – by this, it revoked territories reaching the Elbe and Spree rivers and related them to historic settlements of Elbe Slavs and Sorbians. After the WW II, the dominant theory was autochthonism, which had also the purpose of scientically (archeologically) proving and sanctioning the Slavic character of the Recovered Territories granted to Poland at the Yalta conference in 1945 as amends recompensating for the loss of Poland’s Eastern Marches. On the other hand, the allochthonic theory, despite of a small number of supporters at its beginning, has gained an increasing acceptance of most archeologists dealing with the Late Antiquity and the Early Medieval Period. Simultaneously, the argument between *autochthonists* and *allochthonists*, out of various reasons, sometimes having nothing to do with scientific arguments, remains emotionally loaden and as such, hardly solvable.

As a conclusion, it needs to be stated that in spite of a century-long intensive research and discussion, as well as the implementation of rapidly developing genetic research of recent, we still are hardly capable of offering a definite answer to the question of the precise time point and birthplace of the emerging of the ethnic group which can be unambiguously identified as the direct ancestor of the early medieval Slavic population. In contrary, what remains indisputable, is the cultural transformation occurring in the vast territories of Eastern and Central Europe and beginning in the Early Medieval Period.

The phenomenon of the Early Slavic culture will continue to raise polemics and sentiments of researchers from various disciplines in their attempts to elucidate this phenomenon which was so exactly characterized by the words of Herwig Wolfram the words partly used as the heading of this chapter: *A silent revolution took place from the end of the fifth to the beginning of the seventh century in large parts of Eastern and Central Europe between Baltic Sea and the Aegean, and nobody can really say how half of Europe could become Slavic in such a short period of time.*

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