

THE MAKING OF THE SLAVS

*History and Archaeology of the Lower Danube Region,
c. 500–700*

FLORIN CURTA



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Chapter 1

SLAVIC ETHNICITY AND THE *ETHNIE* OF THE SLAVS: CONCEPTS AND APPROACHES

Our present knowledge of the origin of the Slavs is, to a large extent, a legacy of the nineteenth century. A scholarly endeavor inextricably linked with forging national identities, the study of the early Slavs remains a major, if not the most important, topic in East European historiography. Today, the history of the Slavs is written mainly by historians and archaeologists, but fifty or sixty years ago the authoritative discourse was that of scholars trained in comparative linguistics. The interaction between approaches originating in those different disciplines made the concept of (Slavic) ethnicity a very powerful tool for the “politics of culture.” That there exists a relationship between nationalism, on one hand, and historiography and archaeology, on the other, is not a novel idea.¹ What remains unclear, however, is the meaning given to (Slavic) ethnicity (although the word itself was rarely, if ever, used) by scholars engaged in the “politics of culture.” The overview of the recent literature on ethnicity and the role of material culture shows how far the historiographical discourse on the early Slavs was from contemporary research in anthropology and, in some cases, even archaeology.

THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF SLAVIC ETHNICITY

Slavic studies began as an almost exclusively linguistic and philological enterprise. As early as 1833, Slavic languages were recognized as Indo-European.² Herder’s concept of national character (*Völksggeist*), unalterably set in language during its early “root” period, made language the perfect instrument for exploring the history of the Slavs.³ Pavel Josef

¹ See, more recently, Kohl and Fawcett 1995; Díaz-Andreu and Champion 1996.

² Bopp 1833. See also Niederle 1923:4; Sedov 1976:69.

³ Herder 1994a:58. Herder first described the Slavs as victims of German warriors since the times of Charlemagne. He prophesied that the wheel of history would inexorably turn and some day, the industrious, peaceful, and happy Slavs would awaken from their submission and torpor to reinvigorate the great area from the Adriatic to the Carpathians and from the Don to the Moldau rivers (Herder 1994b:277–80). For Herder’s view of the Slavs, see Wolff 1994:310–15; Meyer 1996:31.

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Šafařík (1795–1861) derived from Herder the inspiration and orientation that would influence subsequent generations of scholars. To Šafařík, the “Slavic tribe” was part of the Indo-European family. As a consequence, the antiquity of the Slavs went beyond the time of their first mention by historical sources, for “all modern nations must have had ancestors in the ancient world.”⁴ The key element of his theory was the work of Jordanes, *Getica*. Jordanes had equated the Sclavenes and the Antes to the Venethi (or Venedi) also known from much earlier sources, such as Pliny the Elder, Tacitus, and Ptolemy. On the basis of this equivalence, Šafařík claimed the Venedi for the Slavic history. He incriminated Tacitus for having wrongly listed them among groups inhabiting Germania. The Venedi, Šafařík argued, spoke Slavic, a language which Tacitus most obviously could not understand.⁵ The early Slavs were agriculturists and their migration was not a violent conquest by warriors, but a peaceful colonization by peasants. The Slavs succeeded in expanding all over Europe, because of their democratic way of life described by Procopius.⁶

Šafařík bequeathed to posterity not only his vision of a Slavic history, but also a powerful methodology for exploring its Dark Ages: language. It demanded that, in the absence of written sources, historians use linguistic data to reconstruct the earliest stages of Slavic history. Since language, according to Herder and his followers, was the defining factor in the formation of a particular culture type and world view, reconstructing Common Slavic (not attested in written documents before the mid-ninth century) on the basis of modern Slavic languages meant reconstructing the social and cultural life of the early Slavs, before the earliest documents written in their language. A Polish scholar, Tadeusz Wojciechowski (1839–1919), first used place names to write Slavic history.⁷ Using river names, A. L. Pogodin attempted to identify the *Urheimat* of the Slavs and put forward the influential suggestion that the appropriate homeland for the Slavs was Podolia and Volhynia, the two

⁴ Šafařík 1844:1, 40. Šafařík, who opened the All-Slavic Congress in Prague in June 1848, shared such views with his friend, František Palacký. See Palacký 1868:74–89. For the Manifesto to European nations from Palacký’s pen, which was adopted by the Slavic Congress, see Pech 1969:133. For Palacký’s image of the early Slavs, see Zacek 1970:84–5.

⁵ Šafařík 1844:1, 75 and 78. There is still no comprehensive study on the influence of Šafařík’s ideas on modern linguistic theories of Common Slavic. These ideas were not completely original. Before Šafařík, the Polish historian Wawrzyniec Surowiecki (1769–1827) used Pliny’s *Natural History*, Tacitus’ *Germania*, and Ptolemy’s *Geography* as sources for Slavic history. See Surowiecki 1964 (first published in 1824). On Surowiecki’s life and work, see Szafran-Szadkowska 1983:74–7. Surowiecki’s ideas were shared by his celebrated contemporary, Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855), and his theory of the Slavic Venethi inspired at least one important work of Polish Romantic literature, namely Juliusz Słowacki’s famous tragedy, *Lilla Weneda* (1840).

⁶ Šafařík 1844:1, 42 (see also II, 17). These ideas were not new. The “dove-like Slavs,” in sharp contrast with the rude Germans, was a common stereotype in early nineteenth-century Bohemia. See Sklenář 1983:95. ⁷ Wojciechowski 1873. See Szafran-Szadkowska 1983:115.

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regions with the oldest river names of Slavic origin.⁸ A Polish botanist, J. Rostafiński, pushed the linguistic evidence even further. He argued that the homeland of the Slavs was a region devoid of beech, larch, and yew, because in all Slavic languages the words for those trees were of foreign (i.e., Germanic) origin. By contrast, all had an old Slavic word for hornbeam, which suggested that the *Urheimat* was within that tree's zone. On the basis of the modern distribution of those trees, Rostafiński located the *Urheimat* in the marshes along the Pripet river, in Polesie.⁹ Jan Peisker (1851–1933) took Rostafiński's theory to its extreme. To him, “the Slav was the son and the product of the marsh.”¹⁰

Despite heavy criticism, such theories were very popular and can still be found in recent accounts of the early history of the Slavs.¹¹ The rise of the national archaeological schools shortly before and, to a greater extent, after World War II, added an enormous amount of information, but did not alter the main directions set for the discipline of Slavic studies by its nineteenth-century founders. Lubor Niederle (1865–1944), who first introduced archaeological data into the scholarly discourse about the early Slavs, endorsed Rostafiński's theory. His multi-volume work is significantly entitled *The Antiquities of the Slavs*, like that of Šafářik.¹² Niederle believed that climate and soil shape civilization. Since the natural conditions in the Slavic *Urheimat* in Polesie were unfavorable, the Slavs developed forms of social organization based on cooperation between large families (of a type known as *zadruga*), social equality, and

⁸ Pogodin 1901:85–111. For Pogodin's theories, see Sedov 1976:70. A recent variant of these theories is Jürgen Udolph's attempt to locate the Slavic *Urheimat* on the basis of river-, lake-, and moor-names. According to Udolph, Galicia was the area in which the Indo-Europeans first became proto-Slavs. See Udolph 1979:619–20.

⁹ Rostafiński 1908. For Rostafiński's “beech argument,” see Kostrzewski 1969:11; Sedov 1976:71; Szafran-Szadkowska 1983:105; Gołab 1992:273–80. Pogodin's and Rostafiński's arguments were couched in the theory of Indo-European studies. A growing field in the early 1900s, this theory attempted to reconstruct the original language (*Ursprache*) of the original people (*Urvolk*) in their homeland (*Urheimat*), using the method of the “linguistic paleontology” founded by Adalbert Kuhn. See Mallory 1973; Anthony 1995:90.

¹⁰ Peisker 1926:426; see Peisker 1905. For Peisker's life and work, see Šimák 1933. Peisker's ideas are still recognizable in the work of Omeljan Pritsak, who recently argued that the Scлавenes were not an ethnic group, but amphibious units for guerilla warfare both on water and on land. See Pritsak 1983:411.

¹¹ Many scholars took Rostafiński's argument at its face value. See Dvornik 1956:59; Gimbutas 1971:23; see also Baran 1991; Dolukhanov 1996. For good surveys of the most recent developments in Slavic linguistics, in which the “Indo-European argument” refuses to die, see Birnbaum 1986 and 1993.

¹² Niederle 1911:37–47, 1923:21, and 1925:iii. A student of Jaroslav Goll, the founder of the Czech positivist school, Niederle was a professor of history at the Charles University in Prague. His interest in archaeology derived from the idea that ethnography was a historical discipline, capable of producing evidence for historical constructions based on the retrogressive method. For Niederle's life and work, see Eisner 1948; Zasterová 1967; Tomáš 1984:39; Gojda 1991:4. For Niederle's use of the linguistic evidence, see Dostál 1966:7–31 and 1967:147–53.

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the democracy described by Procopius, which curtailed any attempts at centralization of economic or political power.¹³ This hostile environment forced the early Slavs to migrate, a historical phenomenon Niederle dated to the second and third century AD. The harsh climate of the Pripet marshes also forced the Slavs, whom Niederle viewed as *enfants de la nature*, into a poor level of civilization. Only the contact with the more advanced Roman civilization made it possible for the Slavs to give up their original culture entirely based on wood and to start producing their own pottery.¹⁴

Others took the archaeological evidence much further. Vykentyi V. Khvoika (1850–1914), a Ukrainian archaeologist of Czech origin, who had just “discovered” the Slavs behind the Neolithic Tripolye culture, was encouraged by Niederle’s theory to ascribe to them finds of the fourth-century cemetery at Chernyakhov (Ukraine), an idea of considerable influence on Slavic archaeology after World War II.¹⁵ A Russian archaeologist, A. A. Spicyn (1858–1931), assigned to the Antes mentioned by Jordanes the finds of silver and bronze in central and southern Ukraine.¹⁶ More than any other artifact category, however, pottery became the focus of all archaeological studies of the early Slavic culture. During the interwar years, Czech archaeologists postulated the existence of an intermediary stage between medieval and Roman pottery, a ceramic category Ivan Borkovský (1897–1976) first called the “Prague type” on the basis of finds from several residential areas of the Czechoslovak capital. According to Borkovský, the “Prague type” was a national, exclusively Slavic, pottery.¹⁷ After World War II, despite Borkovský’s political agenda (or, perhaps, because of it), the idea that the “Prague type” signaled the presence of the Slavs was rapidly embraced by many archaeologists in Czechoslovakia, as well as elsewhere.¹⁸

¹³ Niederle 1923:26 and 1926:173.

¹⁴ Niederle 1923:49, 1925:513, and 1926:1–2 and 5. For Niederle’s concept of Slavic homeland, see Zasterová 1966:33–41.

¹⁵ Baran, Gorokhovskii, and Magomedov 1990:33; Dolukhanov 1996:4. On Khvoika’s life and work, see Bakhmat 1964; Lebedev 1992:260–2.

¹⁶ Spicyn 1928:492–5. See also Prikhodniuk 1989:65. On Spicyn, see Lebedev 1992:247–52.

¹⁷ Borkovský 1940:25 and 34–5. Emanuel Šimek (1923) first called this pottery the “Veleslavín type.” Niederle’s successor at the Charles University in Prague, Josef Schranil, suggested that this type derived from the Celtic pottery, an idea further developed by Ivan Borkovský. Borkovský argued that when migrating to Bohemia and Moravia, the Slavs found remnants of the Celtic population still living in the area and borrowed their techniques of pottery production. For the history of the “Prague type,” see Preidel 1954:56; Zeman 1966:170.

¹⁸ Borkovský’s book was published shortly after the anti-German demonstrations in the protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia under Nazi rule (October 1939). The idea that the earliest Slavic pottery derived from a local variant of the Celtic, not Germanic, pottery was quickly interpreted as an attempt to claim that the Czechs (and not the Germans) were natives to Bohemia and Moravia. Borkovský’s work was thus viewed as a reaction to Nazi claims that the Slavs were racially

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Following Stalin's policies of fostering a Soviet identity with a Russian cultural makeup, the Slavic ethnogenesis became the major, if not the only, research topic of Soviet archaeology and historiography, gradually turning into a symbol of national identity.¹⁹ As the Red Army was launching its massive offensive to the heart of the Third Reich, Soviet historians and archaeologists imagined an enormous Slavic homeland stretching from the Oka and the Volga rivers, to the east, to the Elbe and the Saale rivers to the west, and from the Aegean and Black Seas to the south to the Baltic Sea to the north.²⁰ A professor of history at the University of Moscow, Boris Rybakov, first suggested that both Spicyn's "Antian antiquities" and the remains excavated by Khvoika at Chernyakhov should be attributed to the Slavs, an idea enthusiastically embraced after the war by both Russian and Ukrainian archaeologists.²¹ The 1950s witnessed massive state investments in archaeology and many large-scale horizontal excavations of settlements and cemeteries were carried out by a younger generation of archaeologists. They shifted the emphasis from the Chernyakhov culture to the remains of sixth- and seventh-century settlements in Ukraine, particularly to pottery. Initially just a local variant of Borkovský's Prague type, this pottery became the ceramic archetype of all Slavic cultures. The origins of the early Slavs thus moved from Czechoslovakia to Ukraine.²² The interpretation favored by Soviet scholars became the norm in all countries in Eastern Europe with Communist-dominated governments under Moscow's

Footnote 18 (*cont.*)

and culturally inferior. As a consequence, the book was immediately withdrawn from bookstores and Borkovský became a sort of local hero of the Czech archaeology. Nevertheless, the concept of Prague-type pottery was quickly picked up and used even by German archaeologists working under the Nazi regime. See Brachmann 1983:23. For the circumstances of Borkovský's book publication, see Preidel 1954:57; Sklenář 1983:162–3. For the "politics of archaeology" in the protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia under Nazi rule, see Mastny 1971:130–1.

¹⁹ For the political and cultural circumstances in which the academic discourse in the Soviet Union adopted the Slavic ethnogenesis as its primary subject matter, see Velychenko 1992; Aksenova and Vasil'ev 1993; Shnirel'man 1993 and 1995.

²⁰ E.g., Derzhavin 1944:46; Mavrodin 1945:15.

²¹ Rybakov 1939 and 1943. For the influence of Rybakov's theories, see Liapushkin 1965:121; Shchukin 1980:399; Baran, Gorokhovskii, and Magomedov 1990:35–6. Despite heavy criticism in recent years, these theories remain popular. See Sedov 1972:116–30; Dolukhanov 1996:158 ("indisputable archaeological evidence proving that the peoples who made up the bulk of the agricultural population of the east Gothic 'state' were Slavs"). For Rybakov's political activity after the war, see Novosel'cev 1993; Höslér 1995:25–6.

²² For excavations in Polesie in the 1950s, see Rusanova 1976:12–13; Baran 1985:76 and 1990:59–60; Baran, Maksimov, and Magomedov 1990:202. During the 1960s and 1970s, the center of archaeological activities shifted from Polesie to the basins of the Dniester and Prut rivers, not far from the Ukrainian–Romanian border. See Baran 1968. For the "Zhitomir type," a local variant of the Prague type, and its further development into the archetype of all Slavic cultures, see Kukharenko 1955:36–8 and 1960:112; Rusanova 1958:33–46; Petrov 1963a:38; Rusanova 1970:93.

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protection.²³ The “Prague-Korchak type,” as this pottery came to be known, became a sort of symbol, the main and only indicator of Slavic ethnicity in material culture terms. Soviet archaeologists now delineated on distribution maps two separate, though related, cultures. The “Prague zone” was an archaeological equivalent of Jordanes’ Sclavenes, while the “Pen’kovka zone” was ascribed to the Antes, fall-out curves neatly coinciding with the borders of the Soviet republics.²⁴

The new archaeological discourse did not supersede the old search for the prehistoric roots of Slavic ethnicity. In the late 1970s, Valentin V. Sedov revived Šafářik’s old theories, when suggesting that the ethnic and linguistic community of the first century BC to the first century AD in the Vistula basin was that of Tacitus’ Venedi. According to him, the Venedi began to move into the Upper Dniester region during the first two centuries AD. By the fourth century, as the Chernyakhov culture emerged in western and central Ukraine, the Venedi formed the majority of the population in the area. As bearers of the Przeworsk culture, they assimilated all neighboring cultures, such as Zarubinec and Kiev. By 300 AD, the Antes separated themselves from the Przeworsk block, followed, some two centuries later, by the Sclavenes. The new ethnic groups were bearers of the Pen’kovka and Prague-Korchak cultures, respectively. Sedov’s theory was used by others to push the Slavic ethnogenesis back in time, to the “Proto-Slavo-Balts” of the early Iron Age, thus “adjusting” the results of linguistic research to archaeological theories. The impression one gets from recent accounts of the Slavic ethnogenesis is that one remote generation that spoke Indo-European produced children who spoke Slavic.²⁵

²³ For Czechoslovakia, see Poulik 1948:15–9; Klanica 1986:111. In the 1960s, Borkovský’s idea that the Slavs were native to the territory of Czechoslovakia surfaced again. See Budinský-Krička 1963; Bialeková 1968; Chropovský and Ruttkay 1988:19. For a different approach, see Zeman 1968 and 1979; Jelínková 1990. For Poland, see Lehr-Spławinski 1946; Hensel 1988. In the late 1960s, Jozef Kostrzewski, the founder of the Polish archaeological school, was still speaking of the Slavic character of the Bronze-Age Lusatian culture; see Kostrzewski 1969. Kostrzewski’s ideas die hard; see Sulimirski 1973; Hensel 1994. For the final blow to traditional views that the Slavs were native to the Polish territory, see more recently Parczewski 1991 and 1993. For a survey of the Romanian literature on the early Slavs, see Curta 1994a. For Yugoslavia, see Karaman 1956; Korošec 1958a; Čorović-Ljubinković 1972; Kalić 1985. For Bulgaria, see Vážarova 1964; Milchev 1970; Vasilev 1979.

²⁴ Fedorov 1960:190; Rafalovich 1972a; Prikhodniuk 1983:60–1. For an attempt to identify the Slavic tribes mentioned in the *Russian Primary Chronicle* with sixth- and seventh-century archaeological cultures, see Smilenko 1980.

²⁵ Lunt 1992:468. For Sedov’s theory, see Sedov 1979, 1994, and 1996. For the Zarubinec, Kiev, and other related cultures of the first to fourth centuries AD, see Baran, Maksimov, and Magomedov 1990:10–97; Terpilovskii 1992 and 1994. For the association between the respective results of the linguistic and archaeological research, see Lebedev 1989. Russian linguists still speak of Slavs as “the sons and products of the marsh.” See Mokienco 1996.

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More often than not, archaeology was merely used to illustrate conclusions already drawn from the analysis of the linguistic material. The exceptional vigor of the linguistic approach originated in the fact that, after Herder, language was viewed as the quintessential aspect of ethnicity. As depository of human experiences, languages could thus be used to identify various “historical layers” in “fossilized” sounds, words, or phrases. In this ahistorical approach, human life and society was viewed as a palimpsest, the proper task for historians being that of ascribing various “fossils” to their respective age. It was an approach remarkably compatible with that of the culture-historical archaeologists, described further in this chapter. This may also explain why so many archaeologists working in the field of Slavic studies were eager to adopt the views of the linguists, and rarely challenged them. The current discourse about the Slavic homeland has its roots in this attitude. Though the issue at stake seems to be a historical one, historians were often left the task of combing the existing evidence drawn from historical sources, so that it would fit the linguistic-archaeological model. Some recently pointed out the danger of neglecting the historical dimension, but the response to this criticism illustrates how powerful the Herderian equation between language and *Volk* still is.²⁶ Ironically, historians became beset by doubts about their ability to give answers, because of the considerable time dimension attributed to linguistic and archaeological artifacts. With no Tacitus at hand, archaeologists proved able to explore the origins of the Slavs far beyond the horizon of the first written sources.

Together with language, the search for a respectable antiquity for the history of the Slavs showed two principal thrusts: one relied on the interpretation of the historical sources as closely as possible to the linguistic-archaeological argument; the other located the Slavic homeland in the epicenter of the modern distribution of Slavic languages. The former began with the affirmation of trustworthiness for Jordanes’ account of the Slavic Venethi, an approach which ultimately led to the claim of Tacitus’, Pliny’s, and Ptolemy’s Venedi for the history of the Slavs. The cornerstone of this theory is Šafářik’s reading of Jordanes as an accurate description of a contemporary ethnic configuration. Šafářik’s interpretation is still widely accepted, despite considerable revision, in the last few decades, of traditional views of Jordanes and his *Getica*. The explanation

²⁶ Ivanov 1991c and 1993. For the vehement response to Ivanov’s claim that the ethnic history of the Slavs begins only in the 500s, see Vasil’ev 1992; Cheshko 1993. Though both Ivanov and his critics made extensive use of archaeological arguments, no archaeologist responded to Ivanov’s challenge in the pages of *Slavianovedenie*. Before Ivanov, however, a Czech archaeologist advocated the idea that “as a cultural and ethnic unit, in the form known from the sixth century AD on, [the Slavs] did not exist in antiquity.” See Váňa 1983:25.

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of this extraordinary continuity is neither ignorance, nor language barriers. Jordanes' Venethi have become the key argument in all constructions of the Slavic past primarily based on linguistic arguments. Like Šafářik, many would show condescension for Tacitus' "mistake" of listing Venethi among groups living in Germania, but would never doubt that Jordanes' account is genuine. Archaeological research has already provided an enormous amount of evidence in support of the idea that the Venethi were Slavs. To accept this, however, involves more than a new interpretation of *Getica*. Jordanes built his image of the Slavs on the basis of earlier accounts and maps, without any concern for accurate description. It also means to give up evolutionary models created for explaining how the early Slavic culture derived from earlier archaeological cultures identified in the area in which Tacitus, Pliny, and Ptolemy apparently set their Venedi. A considerable amount of intellectual energy was invested in this direction between the two world wars and after 1945, and to question the theoretical premises of this approach is often perceived as denying its utility or, worse, as a bluntly revisionist coup. It is not without interest that claims that the Slavic ethnicity is a sixth-century phenomenon were met with the reaffirmation of Sedov's theory of Slavic culture originating from the Przeworsk culture, which is often identified with the Venethi.

The more radical the reaffirmation of Slavic antiquity becomes, the more writing about the history of the Slavs takes on the character of a mere description of the history of humans living since time immemorial in territories later inhabited by the Slavs. Pavel Dolukhanov opens his recent book on the early Slavs by observing that "the succeeding generations of people who lived in the vast spaces of the Russian Plain" without being noticed and recorded in any written documents cannot be ascribed to any ethnic group. "They had no common name, whether it was 'Slavs' or anything else." Yet, like the Soviet historians of the 1940s, Dolukhanov believes that "the origins and early development of peoples known as Slavs could be rightly understood only if viewed from a wide temporal perspective." This, in his description of Slavic history, means that the proper beginning is the Palaeolithic.²⁷

But the diagnosis comes easier than the remedy. Historians and archaeologists dealing with the progress of the migration of the Slavs outside their established *Urheimat* have, at times, correctly perceived the contradictions and biases ingrained in the current discourse about the origins of the Slavs. But they still work within a framework defined by the concept of migration. The discrepancy between the efforts of Romanian

²⁷ Dolukhanov 1996:ix-x; see Derzhavin 1944:3-4; Mavrodin 1945:15.

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archaeologists, who argue that the Slavs reached the Danube by the end of the sixth century and did not wait too long for crossing it *en masse*, and those of Bulgarian and Yugoslav archaeologists, who strive to demonstrate an early sixth-century presence of the Slavs in the Balkans, has prompted some to voice reservations and objections to both the dominance and the perceived accuracy of the archaeological view of Slavic history. Yet focusing on numismatic, rather than archaeological, data did not banish the concept of migration outright. Just as with pots, the invasions of the Slavs could nevertheless be traced by plotting finds of coins and coin hoards on the map.²⁸

Modifying the linguistic-archaeological view of Slavic history seems a better alternative than negating it. Even in America, where this view was most seriously challenged, scholars speak of the Slavs at the Roman frontiers as “the first row of countless and contiguous rows of Slavic, Venedic, and Antic peoples who spread from the Danube to the Dnieper and to the Elbe” and of Proto-Slavs as forerunners of the Zhitomir or Prague cultures. Indeed, in their work of historiographical revision, historians still acknowledge the link between ethnicity and language. Either as “cumulative mutual Slavicity” or as Slavene military units organized and controlled by steppe nomads, the idea that the Slavs became Slavs by speaking Slavic is pervasive.²⁹

WHAT IS ETHNICITY?

No other term in the whole field of social studies is more ambiguous, yet more potent, than ethnicity. In English, the term “ethnic” has long been used in its New Testament sense, as a synonym for “gentile,” “pagan,” or “non-Christian,” a meaning prevailing until the nineteenth century. The current usage of “ethnicity” goes back to 1953, as the word was first used to refer to ethnic character or peculiarity. We now speak of ethnicity as a mode of action and of representation. Some twenty years ago, however, no definition seemed acceptable. Ethnicity was “neither culture, nor society, but a specific mixture, in a more or less stable equilibrium, of both culture and society.” As a consequence, attempts to define ethnicity were remarkably few.³⁰

Today, ethnicity is used to refer to a decision people make to depict

²⁸ Romanian archaeologists: Nestor 1973:30; Teodor 1972:34; Diaconu 1979:167. Bulgarian and Yugoslav archaeologists: Milchev 1975:388; Angelova 1980:4; Čremošnik 1970:58–9 and 61; Ljubinković 1973:182. See also Barišić 1969:25–6. Numismatic evidence for the invasions of the Slavs: Kovačević 1969; Popović 1980:246.

²⁹ Bačić 1983:201; Milich 1995:49 and 204; see Pritsak 1983:423–4.

³⁰ The term “ethnicity”: Fortier 1994. Ethnicity as both culture and society: Nicolas 1973:107. Definitions of ethnicity: Isajiw 1974:111; Parsons 1975:53.

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themselves or others symbolically as bearers of a certain cultural identity. It has become the politicization of culture. Ethnicity is not innate, but individuals are born with it; it is not biologically reproduced, but individuals are linked to it through cultural constructions of biology; it is not simply cultural difference, but ethnicity cannot be sustained without reference to an inventory of cultural traits. One anthropologist defined ethnicity as the “collective enaction of socially differentiating signs.” Others argue that ethnicity is a relatively recent phenomenon, resulting from dramatic historical experiences, notably escape from or resistance to slavery. According to such views, ethnic groups grow out of “bits and pieces, human and cultural, that nestle in the interstices” between established societies. Diasporas of exiles in borderlands coalesce around charismatic entrepreneurs, who gather adherents by using familiar amalgamative metaphors (kinship, clientelism, etc.), and also spiritual symbolism, such as ancestral aboriginality or other legitimizing events.³¹

Ethnicity may therefore be seen as an essential orientation to the past, to collective origin, a “social construction of primordiality.” Some scholars believe that ethnicity is just a modern construct, not a contemporary category, and that examinations of “ethnic identity” risk anachronism when the origins of contemporary concerns and antagonisms are sought in the past. Although ethnic groups constantly change in membership, ethnic names used in early medieval sources, such as *Gothi* or *Romani*, cannot usefully be described as ethnic groups, because the chief forces of group cohesion were not ethnicity, but region and profession. Others claim that ethnicity is only the analytical tool academics devise and utilize in order to make sense of or explain the actions and feelings of the people studied.³² But ethnicity is just as likely to have been embedded in socio-political relations in the past as in the present. What have changed are the historical conditions and the idiomatic concepts in which ethnicity is embedded.

In Eastern Europe, particularly in the Soviet Union, the study of ethnicity (especially of Slavic ethnicity) was dominated until recently by the views of the Soviet ethnographer Julian Bromley. According to him, ethnicity was based on a stable core, called *ethnos* or *ethnikos*, which persisted through all social formations, despite being affected by the prevailing economic and political conditions. Soviet scholars laid a strong emphasis

³¹ Cohen 1993:197; see also Verdery 1994:42. Ethnicity and the inventory of “cultural traits”: Williams 1992. Ethnicity and collective enaction: Eriksen 1991:141. Ethnicities as recent phenomena: Chappell 1993:272.

³² Ethnicity and primordiality: Alverson 1979:15. The orientation to the past, however, may also be associated with other forms of group identity, such as class; see Ganzer 1990. Ethnicity as a modern construct: Geary 1983:16; Amory 1994:5 and 1997:317. Ethnicity as a scholarly construct: Banks 1996:186.

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on language. As the “precondition for the rise of many kinds of social organisms, including ethnic communities,” the language “received and developed in early childhood, is capable of expressing the finest shades of the inner life of people,” while enabling them to communicate.³³ The association between language and ethnicity, so tightly bound in the Soviet concept of ethnicity, is no accident. For a long period, the literature concerning ethnic phenomena was completely dominated by Stalin’s definition of nation and by N. Ia. Marr’s ideas. Marr (1864–1934) was a well-trained Orientalist who had made valuable contributions to Armenian and Georgian philology, and became interested in comparative linguistics and prehistory. He adopted the view that language was part of the ideological superstructure depending upon the socioeconomic basis and therefore developing in stages like Marx’s socioeconomic formations. Marr treated ethnicity as something of a non-permanent nature, as ephemeral, and discounted “homelands” and “proto-languages.” Instead, he argued that cultural and linguistic changes were brought by socioeconomic shifts. Marr’s theories were a reaction to the nineteenth-century approach of the culture-historical school based on Herderian ideas that specific ways of thought were implanted in people as a result of being descended from an ancestral stock, the *Völkgeist*.³⁴

Despite its revolutionary character, Marrism was gradually abandoned, as Stalin adopted policies to force assimilation of non-Russians into a supranational, Soviet nation. He called for a “national history” that would minimize, obfuscate, and even omit reference to conflict, differences, oppression, and rebellion in relations between Russians and non-Russians. Instead, historians were urged to combat actively the fascist falsifications of history, to unmask predatory politics toward the Slavs, and to demonstrate the “real” nature of Germans and their culture. By 1950, Soviet anthropologists completely abandoned the stadial theory, as Stalin

³³ Bromley and Kozlov 1989:431–2; Kozlov 1974:79. To be sure, all ethnic identity is often associated with the use of a particular language. But language itself is only one of the elements by which access to an ethnic identity is legitimized in a culturally specific way. It is by means of an “associated language” that language and ethnicity are related to each other; see Eastman and Reese 1981:115. It is also true that much of what constitutes identity, including its ethnic dimension, takes form during the individual’s early years of life. Recent studies insist that the family contributes in a fundamental way to the formation of ethnic identity and recommend that family-based studies become the methodological strategy of future research on ethnic identity. See Keefe 1992:43.

³⁴ Bruche-Schulz 1993:460; Slezkine 1996. According to Marr’s ideas, meaning was attached to thought processes which were characteristic for a given social formation. The lesser or lower production stages produced lower or “primitive” forms of thought and language. Bruche-Schulz 1993:462. While denying the permanency of ethnicity, Marr viewed class as a structure inherent to human nature, an idea well attuned to the Bolshevik ideology of the 1920s and to the policies of the Comintern. See Szykiewicz 1990:3; Taylor 1993:725; Shnirel’man 1995:122.

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himself was now inflicting the final blow when denouncing Marrism as “vulgar Marxism.”³⁵

In the late 1960s, a “small revolution” (as Ernest Gellner called it) was taking place in Soviet anthropology. The tendency was now to treat ethnic identity as a self-evident aspect of ethnicity, though, like all other forms of consciousness, ethnic identity was still viewed as a derivative of objective factors. Soviet anthropologists now endeavored to find a place for ethnicity among specifically *cultural* phenomena, as opposed to social structure. To them, ethnic specificity was the objective justification for a subjective awareness of affiliation to a given *ethnos*. Despite considerable divergence as to what exactly constituted the “objective factors” of ethnicity (for some, language and culture; for others, territory or common origin), Soviet anthropologists viewed ethnicity as neither eternal, nor genetic, but as socially real and not a mystified expression of something else.³⁶

To many Soviet scholars of the 1960s and 1970s, ethnicity appeared as a culturally self-reproducing set of behavioral patterns linked to collective self-identity, which continued through different modes of production. Issues of continuity and discontinuity among ethnic entities and of their transformation were thus given theoretical and empirical attention as ethnic-related patterns of collective behavior. Ethnohistory became a major field of study and ethnogenesis, the process of formation of ethnic identity, replaced social formation as the main focus. This new concept of ethnicity was closely tied in to the ideology of ethno-nationalism, a politics in which ethnic groups legitimized their borders and status by forming administrative units or republics. The classification of “ethnic types” (tribe, *narodnost*’, and nation) involving Bromley’s conceptual categorizations justified the administrative statehood granted to “titular nationalities,” those which gave titles to republics.³⁷ Paradoxically, the Soviet approach to ethnicity could be best defined as primordialistic, despite its admixture of Marxist–Leninist theory. By claiming that ethnicities, once formed through ethnogeneses, remained essentially unchanged through history, Soviet anthropologists suggested that ethnic groups were formulated in a social and political vacuum. According to them, ethnicity was thus a given, requiring description, not explanation. To contemporary eyes, the academic discourse of ethno-nationalism in Eastern Europe in general and in the former Soviet Union, in particular,

³⁵ Stalin’s concept of national history: Velychenko 1993:20; Shnirel’man 1995:130. Abandonment of Marrist theories: Klejn 1977:13; Dolukhanov 1996:5; Slezkine 1996:852–3.

³⁶ Gellner 1988:135; Bromley and Kozlov 1989:427; Dragadze 1980:164.

³⁷ Shanin 1989:413; Klejn 1981:13; Sellnow 1990; Tishkov 1994:444.

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appears as strikingly tied to political rather than intellectual considerations. This may well be a consequence of the romanticization and mystification of ethnic identity, which is viewed as rooted in the ineffable coerciveness of primordial attachments.³⁸

The *communis opinio* is that the emergence of an instrumentalist approach to ethnicity is largely due to Fredrik Barth's influential book,³⁹ which ironically coincides in time with Bromley's "small revolution" in the Soviet Union. Ethnicity, however, emerged as a key problem with Edmund Leach's idea that social units are produced by subjective processes of categorical ascription that have no necessary relationship to observers' perceptions of cultural discontinuities. Before Barth, Western anthropologists had limited their investigation to processes taking place within groups, rather than between groups. All anthropological reasoning has been based on the premise that cultural variation is discontinuous and that there were aggregates of people who essentially shared a common culture, and interconnected differences that distinguish each such discrete culture from all others. Barth shed a new light on subjective criteria (ethnic boundaries) around which the feeling of ethnic identity of the member of a group is framed. Barth emphasized the *transactional* nature of ethnicity, for in the practical accomplishment of identity, two mutually interdependent social processes were at work, that of internal and that of external definition (categorization). By focusing on inter-ethnic, rather than intragroup social relations, Barth laid a stronger emphasis on social and psychological, rather than cultural-ideological and material factors. His approach embraced a predominantly social interactionist perspective, derived from the work of the social psychologist Erving Goffman. Objective cultural difference was now viewed as epiphenomenal, subordinate to, and largely to be explained with reference to, social interaction. Barth's followers thus built on concepts of the self and social role behavior typified by a dyadic transactional (the "we vs. them" perspective) or social exchange theory.⁴⁰

Because it was a variant of the general social psychological theory of self and social interaction, Barth's approach led to a high degree of predictability and extensibility to new contexts and situations, which, no doubt, was a primary determinant of its popularity. To be sure, the subjective approach to ethnicity, which is so often and almost exclusively attributed to Barth, long precedes him. Both Weber and Leach were aware of its significance. Another important, but notably ignored, scholar is the German historian Reinhard Wenskus. Eight years prior to the

³⁸ Banks 1996:186; Jones 1994:48. ³⁹ Barth 1969.

⁴⁰ Barth 1994:12. For the process of categorization, see also Jenkins 1994:198-9. For the relation between Barth's and Goffman's works, Buchignani 1987:16.

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publication of Barth's book, Wenskus published a study of ethnic identity in the early Middle Ages, which would become the crucial breakthrough for studies of ethnicities in historiography. Wenskus' approach was based on the ideas of the Austrian anthropologist Wilhelm Mühlmann, himself inspired by the Russian ethnographer S. M. Shirogorov, the first to have used the concept of "subjective ethnicity." In a Weberian stance, Wenskus claimed that early medieval *Stämme* were not based on a biologically common origin, but on a strong *belief* in a biologically common origin. His approach, much like Barth's, focused on the subjective side of ethnic belonging and he specifically attacked the concept of ethnogenesis (as understood at that time by Soviet anthropologists) and the model of the family-tree in ethnohistory. He pointed out that "kernels of tradition" were much more important factors in making early medieval ethnic groups, for tradition also played an important political role, as suggested by the conceptual pair *lex* and *origo gentis*, so dear to medieval chroniclers.⁴¹ Wenskus' approach is congenial with the more recent studies of the British sociologist Anthony Smith and was followed by some major contemporary medievalists.⁴² Though never clearly delineating its theoretical positions in regards to anthropology (though Wenskus himself has been more open to contemporary debates in the field), this current trend in medieval history quickly incorporated concepts readily available in sociological and anthropological literature. Patrick Geary, for instance, used the concept of "situational ethnicity" coined by Jonathan Okamura. He might have found it extremely useful that the structural dimension of situational ethnicity pointed to the essentially *variable* significance of ethnicity as an organizing principle of social relations. More recently, Walter Pohl cited Smith's concept of *mythomoteur* as equivalent to Wenskus' "kernel of tradition."⁴³

Both Barth and Wenskus tried to show that ethnic groups were socially constructed. According to both, it was not so much the group which

⁴¹ Wenskus 1961:14–18, etc. See also Jarnut 1985; Pohl 1994:11.

⁴² Smith 1984; 1986; 1995. See also Wolfram 1988; Pohl 1988; Heather 1996.

⁴³ Okamura 1981; Geary 1983; Pohl 1991a:41. For the *mythomoteur* as the constitutive myth of the ethnic polity, see Smith 1986:15. Smith typically views ethnicity as "a matter of myths, symbols, memories, and values. They are 'carried' by forms and genres of artifacts and activities which change very slowly. Therefore, an *ethnie*, once formed, tends to be exceptionally durable under 'normal' vicissitudes" (1986:16 and 28). Smith also argues that "without a *mythomoteur* a group cannot define itself to itself or to others, and cannot inspire or guide effective action" (1986:25). There is, however, no attempt to explain the association between a particular "myth-symbol" complex and an *ethnie*, for Smith characteristically lists among the latter's components, "a distinctive shared culture" (1986:32). He thus seems to reproduce the general fallacy of identifying ethnic groups with discrete cultural units. More important, though recognizing that artifacts could provide a rich evidence of cultural identity, Smith argues that they "cannot tell anything [about] how far a community felt itself to be unique and cohesive" (1986:46).

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endured as the *idea* of group. They both argued that ethnic groups existed not in isolation, but in contrast to other groups. Unlike Wenskus, however, Barth does not seem to have paid too much attention to self-consciousness and the symbolic expression of ethnic identity. Enthusiasm for a transactional model of social life and for viewing ethnicity as process was accompanied in both cases by an interpretation of social relations as rooted in reciprocation, exchange and relatively equitable negotiation. In most cases, activation of ethnic identity was used to explain contextual ethnic phenomena, but this very ethnic identity, since it was not directly observable, had to be derived from the actor's "ethnic behavior." Barth's model of social interaction is so general that there is virtually nothing theoretically unique about ethnic phenomena explained through reference to it, for the model could be as well applied to other forms of social identity, such as gender. Despite its strong emphasis on ethnic boundary processes, Barth's approach does not, in fact, address issues concerning objective cultural difference (subsistence patterns, language, political structure, or kinship).

The instrumentalist approach received its new impetus from Abner Cohen, one of the important figures of the Manchester School, who published his *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa* in 1969 (the same year in which Barth's book was published). Cohen's approach was more pragmatic. His main point was that political ethnicity (such as defined by Wenskus' students) was goal-directed ethnicity, formed by internal organization and stimulated by external pressures, and held not for its own sake but to defend an economic or political interest. To him, such ethnicity needed to be built upon some preexisting form of cultural identity rather than be conjured up out of thin air. Cohen's approach thus came very close to Wenskus' idea of ethnicity as constructed on the basis of a "kernel of tradition," or to Smith's concept of *mythomoteur*. Unlike them, however, Cohen concentrated on changes in corporate identification (not individual identification) and on the politicization of cultural differences in the context of social action. He paid attention to ethnicity as a social liability and thus opened the path for modern studies of ethnicity as a function of power relations.⁴⁴ Many students of ethnicity now concentrate on ethnicity as an "artifact," created by individuals or groups to bring together a group of people for some common purpose. They are increasingly concerned with the implications of ethnic boundary construction and the meaning of boundary permeability for when, how, and, especially, why groups selectively fashion "distinctive trait inventories,"

⁴⁴ Cohen 1969. For the study of ethnicity as a function of power relations, see McGuire 1982:171 and 173; Roosens 1989:158; Eriksen 1991:129.

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symbolize group unity and mobilize members to act for economic or political gain, and “invent” traditions. Scholars now struggle with the counterfactual qualities of cultural logics that have made *ethnic* the label of self- and other-ascription in modern nation-states.⁴⁵

The emphasis of the post-Barthian anthropology of ethnicity has tended to fall on processes of group identification rather than social categorization.⁴⁶ Ethnicity as ascription of basic group identity on the basis of cognitive categories of cultural differentiation, is, however, very difficult to separate from other forms of group identity, such as gender or class. Moreover, both primordialist and instrumentalist perspectives tend to be based on conflicting notions of human agency manifested in an unproductive opposition between rationality and irrationality, between economic and symbolic dimensions of social practice. It has been noted that cultural traits by which an ethnic group defines itself never comprise the totality of the observable culture but are only *a combination* of some characteristics that the actors ascribe to themselves and consider relevant. People identifying themselves as an ethnic group may in fact identify their group in a primarily prototypic manner. Recognizable members may thus share *some* but not all traits, and those traits may not be equally weighted in people’s minds.⁴⁷ How is this specific configuration constructed and what mechanisms are responsible for its reproduction?

A relatively recent attempt to answer this question resurrected the idea that ethnic groups are bounded social entities internally generated with reference to commonality rather than difference.⁴⁸ Bentley dismisses instrumentality by arguing that people live out an unconscious pattern of life, not acting in a rational, goal-oriented fashion. His approach draws heavily from Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of habitus. Habitus is produced by the structures constitutive of a particular type of environment. It is a system of durable, transposable dispositions, “structured structures pre-disposed to function as structuring structures.”⁴⁹ Those durable dispositions are inculcated into an individual’s sense of self at an early age and can be transposed from one context to another. Habitus involves a form of socialization whereby the dominant modes of behavior and representation are internalized, resulting in certain dispositions which operate largely at a pre-conscious level. Ethnicity is constituted at the intersection of habitual dispositions of the agents concerned and the social conditions existing in a particular historical context. The content of ethnic

⁴⁵ Banks 1996:39; Williams 1992:609. ⁴⁶ Horowitz 1975:114.

⁴⁷ Jones 1994:42 and 61; Roosens 1989:12; Mahmood and Armstrong 1992:8.

⁴⁸ Bentley 1987. For a critique of Bentley’s approach, see Yelvington 1991. For an earlier suggestion that ethnic identity may be the result of a learning process, see also Horowitz 1975:119.

⁴⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, cited by Bentley 1987:28.

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identity is therefore as important as the boundary around it. An important issue, resulting from this approach, is that of the reproduction of identity on the level of interaction. The praxis of ethnicity results in multiple transient realizations of ethnic difference in particular contexts. These realizations of ethnicity are both structured and structuring, involving, in many instances, the repeated production and consumption of distinctive styles of material culture. The very process of ethnic formation is coextensive with and shaped by the manipulation of material culture. Bentley suggested that the vector uniting culture and ethnicity ran through daily social practice. He emphasized the cultural character of the process of ethnic identity creation, which provided a key reason for the emotional power associated with it. On this basis, the creation of ethnic identities should have repercussions in terms of the self-conscious use of specific cultural features as diacritical markers, a process which might well be recorded in material culture. Bentley's thrust coincides in time with an independent line of research inspired by Edmund Husserl and stressing ethnicity as a phenomenon of everyday life (*Alltagsleben*). Routine action, rather than dramatic historical experiences, foodways, rather than political action, are now under scrutiny. As the idea of ethnicity turns into a mode of action in the modern world, it becomes more relevant to study the very process by which the ethnic boundary is created in a specific social and political configuration.⁵⁰

WHAT IS ETHNICITY?

"Ethnicity" derives from the Greek word *ἔθνος*, which survives as a fairly common intellectual word in French, as *ethnie*, with its correlate adjective *ethnique*. The possible noun expressing what it is you have to have in order to be *ethnique* is not common in modern French. In English, the adjective exists as "ethnic" with a suffix recently added to give "ethnicity." But the concrete noun from which "ethnicity" is apparently derived does not exist. There is no equivalent to the *ἔθνος*, to the Latin *gens*, or to the French *ethnie*. Until recently, such a term was not needed, for it was replaced in the intellectual discourse by "race," a concept which did not distinguish very clearly, as we do today, between social, cultural, linguistic, and biological classifications of people, and tended to make a unity of all these.⁵¹ "Ethnicity," therefore, is an abstract noun, derived by non-vernacular morphological processes from a substantive

⁵⁰ Creation of ethnic identities: Jones 1996:72; Shennan 1989:16–7. Ethnicity and everyday life: Greverus 1978:97–8; Räsänen 1994:17–18; Tebbetts 1984:83 and 87; Tvengsberg 1991:17; Keefe 1992.

⁵¹ Chapman, McDonald, and Tonkin 1989:12; Jones 1997:40–51. See also Johnson 1995:12.

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that does not exist. It makes sense only in a context of relativities, of *processes* of identification, though it also aspires, in modern studies, to concrete and positive status, as an attribute and an analytical concept. Ethnicity is conceptualized as something that inheres in every group that is self-identifying as “ethnic,” but there is no specific word for the end product of the process of identification. When it comes to designate the human group created on the basis of ethnicity, “ethnic group” is the only phrase at hand.

More recently, in an attempt to find the origins of modern nations, Anthony Smith introduced into the scholarly discourse the French term *ethnie*, in order to provide an equivalent to “nation” for a period of history in which nations, arguably, did not yet exist. Smith argues that ethnicity, being a matter of myths and symbols, memories and values, is carried by “forms and genres of artifacts and activities.”⁵² The end product is what he calls an *ethnie*. The *ethnie* is a human group, a concrete reality generated by the meaning conferred by the members of that group over some generations, on certain cultural, spatial, and temporal properties of their interaction and shared experiences. Smith identifies six components of any *ethnie*: a collective name; a common myth of descent; a shared history; a distinctive shared culture; an association with a specific territory; and a sense of solidarity. He argues that in some cases, the sense of ethnic solidarity is shared only by the elite of a given *ethnie*, which he therefore calls a “lateral” or aristocratic *ethnie*. In other cases, the communal sense may be more widely diffused in the membership, such an *ethnie* being “vertical” or demotic. One can hardly fail to notice that to Smith, the *ethnie* is just the “traditional” form of the modern nation. His list of traits to be checked against the evidence is also an indication that, just as with Bromley’s “ethnosocial organism,” there is a tendency to reify ethnic groups and to treat ethnicity as an “it,” a “thing” out there to be objectively measured and studied, albeit by means of ancestry myths rather than by language.⁵³

No scholar followed Smith’s attempt to find a concrete noun to be associated with the more abstract “ethnicity.” Terminology, however, does matter; it shapes our perceptions, especially of controversial issues. The use of Smith’s *ethnie* in this book is simply a way to avoid confusion between the ethnic group and the phenomenon it supposedly instantiates (ethnicity). More important, if viewed as a result of a process of differentiation and identity formation, the use of *ethnie* suggests that ethnic groups are not “born,” but made.

⁵² Smith 1986:16.

⁵³ Smith 1986:22, 32, 76–7, and 28, and 1984:29. For ethnic groups as “fiduciary associations,” see Parsons 1975:61–2.

The making of the Slavs

ETHNICITY, MATERIAL CULTURE AND ARCHAEOLOGY

It has become common knowledge that the foundations of the culture-historical school of archaeology were laid by the German archaeologist Gustaf Kossinna. Today, both archaeologists and historians attack Kossinna's tenets and, whenever possible, emphasize his association with Nazism and the political use of archaeology. No book on nationalism, politics, and the practice of archaeology could avoid talking about Kossinna as the archetypal incarnation of all vices associated with the culture-historical school. Kossinna's own work is rarely cited, except for his famous statement: "Sharply defined archaeological culture areas correspond unquestionably with the areas of particular peoples or tribes."⁵⁴ Kossinna linked this guiding principle to the retrospective method, by which he aimed at using the (ethnic) conditions of the present (or the historically documented past) to infer the situation in prehistory. The two together make up what he called the "settlement archaeological method" (*Siedlungsarchäologie*). It has only recently been noted that in doing so, Kossinna was simply using Oskar Montelius' typological method, which enabled him to establish time horizons for the chronological ordering of the material remains of the past.⁵⁵ Kossinna also stressed the use of maps for distinguishing between distribution patterns, which he typically viewed as highly homogeneous and sharply bounded cultural provinces. This method, however, was nothing new. Before Kossinna, the Russian archaeologist A. A. Spicyn had used the map to plot different types of earrings found in early medieval burial mounds in order to identify tribes mentioned in the *Russian Primary Chronicle*. Like Spicyn, Kossinna simply equated culture provinces with ethnic groups and further equated those groups with historically documented peoples or tribes. Attempts to identify ethnic groups in material culture date back to Romanticism, and represent correlates of linguistic concerns with finding *Ursprachen* and associating them to known ethnic groups. Many German archaeologists before Kossinna used the concept of culture province. Though not the first to attempt identifying archaeological cultures with ethnic groups, Kossinna was nevertheless the first to focus exclusively on this idea, which

⁵⁴ "Streng umrissene, scharf sich heraushebende, geschlossene archäologische Kulturprovinzen fallen unbedingt mit bestimmten Völker- und Stammesgebiete" (Kossinna 1911:3 and 1936:15). For the association between Gustaf Kossinna and the culture-historical approach in "Germanophone" archaeology, see Amory 1997:334 with n. 10. Amory deplores the influence of "Continental archaeologists" working in the ethnic ascription tradition. See Amory 1997:335-6.

⁵⁵ Klejn 1974:16; Veit 1989:39. To Kossinna, the concept of closed-find (introduced into the archaeological discourse by the Danish archaeologist Christian Jürgensen Thomsen and of crucial importance to Oskar Montelius) and the stratigraphic principle were less important than mere typology. See Trigger 1989:76, 78, and 157.

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became his *Glaubenssatz*. He was directly inspired by the Romantic idea of culture as reflecting the national soul (*Völkgeist*) in every one of its elements.⁵⁶

The Berlin school of archaeology established by Kossinna emerged in an intellectual climate dominated by the Austrian *Kulturkreis* school. The roots of biologizing human culture lie indeed not in Kossinna's original thought, but in the theory of migration developed by Fr. Ratzel and F. Graebner. According to Graebner, there are four means for determining whether migration (*Völkerwanderung*) caused the spread of cultural elements. First, one should look for somatic similarities possibly coinciding with cultural parallels. Second, one should check whether cultural and linguistic relationships coincide. Third, one should examine whether certain cultural elements are *schwerentlehnbar*, i.e., whether there are any obstacles to their transfer, in accord to Vierkandt's idea of readiness and need. If positive, the result may indicate that those cultural elements were carried by migrating groups. And finally, one should investigate whether two cultures occur entire (not fragmented or simplified) at two widely separated locations. This last argument gains strength with distance and also to the extent that the set of culture elements occurs in closed form. Wilhelm Schmidt, the founder of the journal *Antropos*, tended to speak of a *Kulturkreis* even when only one element was present, for this was to him a clue of the earlier presence of other elements.⁵⁷

The concept of a philosophically derived nationalism, acquired in an intellectual context molded by Herder's and Fichte's ideas applies therefore to Graebner, as well as to Kossinna. It is, however, a mistake to speak of Kossinna's blatant nationalism as causing his *Herkunft der Germanen*, for the first signs of his nationalistic views postdate his famous work. Though often viewed as Kossinna's main opponent, Carl Schuchhardt shared many of his ideas, including that of identifying ethnic groups by means of archaeological cultures. Wenskus was certainly right in pointing out that Kossinna's mistake was not so much that he aimed at an ethnic interpretation of culture, than that he used a dubious concept of ethnicity, rooted in Romantic views of the *Völk*.⁵⁸ It is not the overhasty equation between archaeological cultures and ethnic groups that explains the extraordinary popularity the culture-historical paradigm enjoyed even among Marxist historians. Of much greater importance is the concept of *Völk* and its political potential. It is therefore no accident that after World

⁵⁶ For Spicyn, see Formozov 1993:71. For Romanticism, *Ursprachen*, and ethnic ascription, see Brachmann 1979:102. For the use of the concept of culture province before Kossinna, see Klejn 1974:13. For Kossinna's *Glaubenssatz*, see Eggers 1950:49.

⁵⁷ For the *Kulturkreis* school, see Lucas 1978:35–6.

⁵⁸ Wenskus 1961:137. Kossinna's political views: Smolla 1979–80:5.