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Summary

**The state of archaeological research on the problem of ethnogenesis of the Slavs  
in Poland and the countries of Eastern Europe**

**Chapter 1** (*Introduction*) presents the topic and purpose of the dissertation, its time and territorial scope, the adopted research procedures and outlines the content of respective chapters.

Questions about the time, place and circumstances of the formation of the Slavic ethnos constitute one of the most interesting and at the same time most difficult research problems that have not yet been solved. Language is considered the basic criterion for distinguishing an ethnic group, in this case, the Slavs from other Indo-European peoples. However, the complexity of the factors justifying the definition of a given community as ethnic means that a wider range of sources is taken into consideration in studies on ethnicity. The investigation capacities of archeology in the field of ethnogenetic research, or the appropriateness of its discussion of this type of topic at all, raise doubts and are the subject of discussion. This does not change the fact that considerations on the origin of the Slavs in this discipline have over a hundred years of history and extensive literature on the subject. For archaeologists dealing with the early history of the Slavs, a crucial moment is the appearance of these people under their own name in written records, which occurred relatively late, in the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD. Comparison of historical information about Slavic settlements at the beginning of the Early Middle Ages to the cultural picture drawn on the basis of “silent”, ethnically anonymous archaeological sources opens the possibility of expressing much more certainty about the material traces of the Slavs – regardless of the exact composition of the communities called Sclavenes (as well as Venethi and Antes) at the dawn of the Middle Ages. This also gives rise to considerations as to what can be said – on the basis of archaeological monuments – about the cultural traditions they inherited and what areas they may have inhabited before their presence was noticed on the borders of the Eastern Roman Empire. In this context, studies on the nature, chronology and distribution of remains associated with the oldest early medieval Slavic settlements and their relation to earlier cultural phenomena become particularly important – all in connection with the methodological problem of the relationship between ethnos and material culture. One of the key issues of the ongoing discussion is the “eternal” presence of the ancestors of the historical Slavs in Central Europe north of the Carpathians or their arrival from the east (variously defined) shortly before being recorded in written sources.

The aim of the dissertation was to examine: – how knowledge about the oldest early medieval culture of the Slavs was developed in archeology and how its development influenced the views formulated on Slavic ethnogenesis; – what questions were tried to be answered when raising the problem of the origin of the Slavs, – using what methods were individual concepts built on and on what basis, – whether and to what extent the findings of other disciplines were used. Undertaking such a task is justified by the lack of a similar, detailed synthesis in Polish archaeological literature, especially taking into consideration the achievements of Eastern European archaeology. The statements of the participants of the discussion that has been taking place for years, touching on a very wide range of topics, are scattered in the extensive literature on the subject. It is not easy to determine – even for archaeologists dealing with periods of history other than the early Middle Ages – the basis and strength of the arguments presented and the value of the conclusions formulated or the adopted definition of the terms used. Claims containing inaccuracies are not uncommon. The conducted historiographical analysis may also

provide a reliable basis for familiarizing representatives of other disciplines interested in the topic of Slavic ethnogenesis with the achievements of archeology.

The state of research mentioned in the title covers primarily the period from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. However, references to the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were inevitable, when ideas developed or challenged after World War II were initiated. The presentation of the history of field research also included monuments discovered before the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century that are used in the discussion. The achievements of archaeologists from Poland and Eastern European countries, specifically from Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus and Russia, were taken into consideration.

The dissertation uses a factual arrangement, and (within specific chapters) also a chronological or geographical-chronological arrangement. It was based on the literature on the subject published by the end of 2021, and single works published in 2022 were also taken into consideration. If such knowledge was obtained, information was provided about monuments that have not yet been introduced into scientific circulation. Polish-, Russian-, Ukrainian-, Belarusian- and English-language items were used, to a lesser extent published in German and Romanian. Synthetic works, contribution and report articles, occasionally press texts, unpublished studies of the results of archaeological research, as well as translations of ancient and medieval written sources were used. When presenting some comments on the nature of monuments from the beginning of the Early Middle Ages, the author draws on the results of her own studies on early Slavic settlements and knowledge of source materials from south-eastern Poland.

The interdisciplinarity of the problem of the origin of the Slavs means that in the work dealing with the state of research on this issue in the field of archeology it is impossible to ignore the debate and results obtained by representatives of other branches of science. **Chapter 2** (*Ethnogenesis of the Slavs as an interdisciplinary research problem*) reviews the interpretation of written records, findings from linguistics, physical anthropology, genetics and genomics, ethnology/ethnography/cultural anthropology, folkloristics and ethnomusicology, and also considers the possible contribution of stable isotope analysis to solving the title problem. This was not only intended to show a broader picture of the issue under study. The information presented in the chapter constitutes a reference point for the analysis carried out in the relevant parts of chapter 5, aimed at determining whether, when constructing a specific hypothesis about the origin of the Slavs, its supporters referred to premises outside their own discipline, and if so, how this influenced interpretation of archaeological data. Similarly to archaeology, the sources analyzed in other fields did not lead to a common position on the problem we are interested in, and the conclusions put forward in the course of research were met with different opinions from specialists. It was therefore justified to present interpretative proposals from which archaeologists made their choices.

**Chapter 3** (*Outline of cultural relations at the turn of antiquity and the early Middle Ages [the 4<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> centuries] in the Central and Eastern European Lowlands in the light of archaeological data*) presents the general characteristics of archaeological cultures of the Roman period, the decline of which fell at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> centuries or the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century (in chapter 3.1) and archaeological cultures considered in Polish and Eastern European literature as potential traces of Slavic settlements from the 5<sup>th</sup> (4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup>) century to the 7<sup>th</sup> century (in chapter 3.2). The cultural and settlement changes that took place in the indicated period between the Oder and Dnieper rivers basins occupy a particularly important place in the discussion about the oldest history of the Slavs. Mentions in written records from the 6<sup>th</sup> century, considered to be the first reliable information about the Slavs, gave archaeologists the

basis to make more justified attempts to attribute relics discovered during excavations dating back to that time to the Slavic population. Only some of these proposals have gained widespread acceptance in the research community. At the same time, it became an important issue to determine what ancient traditions were the basis for the oldest early medieval culture of the Slavs, and, consequently, among which societies formed cultural communities in the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium AD (or earlier), you can search for their ancestors.

The relevant parts of **chapter 4** (*The history of archaeological research on the oldest horizon of the early medieval culture of the Slavs and the location of their settlements in ancient times – from a regional perspective*) present the increase in sources obtained through field research (excavations and surface research) and accidental discoveries, which were connected with the oldest horizon in the course of research on the early medieval Slavic settlement. The sites included were chronologically determined to date back to the 5<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. (possibly the 4<sup>th</sup> century, if the above-mentioned context was indicated). This applies to finds that undoubtedly come from this period, as well as those that, according to the current state of knowledge or in the opinion of some researchers, have a different chronology, but were introduced into the literature as dating from the 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries. The main focus of the discussion includes monuments of the following: Prague culture, Penkova culture, Kolochin culture and Sukov culture, as well as relics of unclear cultural affiliation. Moreover, the degree to which information about archaeological sources was introduced into scientific circulation was discussed, which allows us to determine what data the researchers who drew specific conclusions over the following decades had at their disposal and what the possibilities of their verification by other participants in the discussion were. Separate subchapters discuss from a historical perspective the main directions of interpretation of the acquired sources in the context of the oldest history of the Slavs, placing emphasis on discoveries, source studies and statements that influenced the formation of views, provoked discussion or led to the creation of new concepts. Individual parts of chapter 4 refer to Poland, Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus and Russia.

The literature search conducted on the subject allowed an attempt to systematize in **chapter 5** (*Analysis of hypotheses formulated in Polish and Eastern European archeology regarding the location of the so-called primordial homeland of the Slavs*) the views expressed by Polish and Eastern European archaeologists regarding the history of the Slavs before their appearance in the 6<sup>th</sup> century in the written sources. The attitude of researchers towards their presence in the Odra and Vistula basins in the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium AD (or earlier) was a criterion enabling the identification of two main concepts – western and eastern (from the Polish point of view autochthonistic and allochthonistic respectively). Within them there are variants that differ, among others: the chronological and territorial scope of considerations, the inference methods used by researchers, the selection and hierarchy of archaeological sources, the interpretation of detailed discussion threads, and the degree to which premises from outside their own discipline are used. The conclusion about the Danube or Danube-Vistula “homeland” of the Slavs immediately before their appearance in written records, formulated in Russian archaeology, was treated separately. By analyzing individual hypotheses regarding Slavic ethnogenesis, an attempt was made to determine – in accordance with the objectives of the dissertation – how their supporters defined the subject of their investigations, what the conclusions they formulated were based on, and which arguments from their perspective determined the validity of the proposed concept. The method of using archaeological sources was considered separately, as well as the influence of the interpretation of written records, linguistic findings and data from other fields.

In **chapter 6** (*Concepts of locating the settlements of the Slavs before the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD in the light of archaeological research – an attempt of assessment of the source and methodological bases*) an attempt was made to assess achievements of Polish and Eastern European archeology in the field of research on the ethnogenesis of the Slavs since around the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Observations of a more general nature are presented, relating to varying degrees to all the hypotheses discussed, regarding, for example, the method of defining the subject of research, the basis for adopting a narrow or broad time perspective in studies or placing the vision of changes reconstructed for a specific territory in a broader context. Additionally, commentary was formulated on selected threads of specific concepts, which often determine the overall shape of a given hypothesis. The validity of the conclusions formulated by researchers in the past was considered with the awareness of the radically different current state of knowledge about archaeological sources, especially in comparison to that from over half a century ago, but also bearing in mind the progress in other fields of science to which references were made. Hence, on the one hand, it was taken into consideration whether certain statements and methods used had stood the test of time, and, on the other hand, whether they were justified in the light of the information available to archaeologists in a given period.

**Chapter 7** (*The state of archaeological research on the problem of ethnogenesis of the Slavs in Poland and the countries of Eastern Europe – summary*) contains a synthetic approach to the conclusions, answers to the questions formulated in the introduction and an attempt to outline research needs and perspectives.