

The Slavs Yesterday and Today

Different Perspectives on Slavic Ethnicity in German Archaeology

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This article deals with the numerous images of the Slavic tribes between the Elbe and the Oder in archaeological interpretations. The position taken by East German archaeologists was to integrate the Slavs explicitly into the theoretical constructions of historical-materialism; in the ideological struggle between East and West the Slavs, as victims of medieval feudal developments politically supported the picture of a common socialist identity and history. In contrast West German archaeologists on the basis of rigid source criticism placed the Slavs behind the scenes of the historical stage.

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After the collapse of the Berlin wall and the fall of the government in East Germany, almost the entire structure of the former, centrally organized, archaeological authorities was replaced by the federal West German model. By this time even the old archaeological establishment had retired due to its political involvement, and West German colleagues took over. It is not my intention to comment on these changes, to criticize or to justify the new order in German archaeology in the perspective of those people directly involved. What is essential is not to choose sides but to look at what both archaeologies have accomplished in their interpretation of the Slavs. An important question concerns the role of the Slavic people in the historical records and archaeological narratives. Which part did they play while forming national, ideological or regional identities? A proper starting point would be by examining how the Slavs were interpreted in German medieval records.

THE IMAGE OF THE SLAVS IN MEDIEVAL TIMES

The *Sachsenspiegel*, written by the Saxon nobleman Eike von Repgow in the 13th century, constituted an important compilation of different law texts and procedures for the administration of justice. In its popular form the *Sachsenspiegel* was a vernacular manuscript with depictions of different scenes of crimes, judgments and punishments. Because of the lack of a general law in the German countries, the *Sachsenspiegel* influenced the jurisdiction up till modern times, for instance in Thuringia until the beginning of the 20th century (Rünßberg 1930ff:11). The vernacular shows clearly how the connection to different groups in medieval society was significant for procedures of judgment. The different groups were depicted stereotyped by their clothing, their hairstyle or by their posture. The bearded Jew was clearly marked by his hat, the Frank by his fur collar, the Saxon by

his knife, and the Slav by his haircut (short at the neck) and striped socks. In the judgment scene all the different ethnic groups are represented with the count as judge and as judicial authority sitting on a chair. The Slav is clearly marked by his peripheral position and the gesture interpreted in the medieval text as an expression of incompetence (fig. 1). In judicial court the Saxon and the Slav were not allowed to pass judgement on each other (ibid:19).



Fig. 1. Court scene in the vernacular Sachsenspiegel in the Heidelberger manuscript. 14th century. From Rünßberg 1930ff, fig.13.

According to Manfred Gläser, being a Slav in the high Middle Ages implied several disadvantages. An integration of the Slavs into German society was not desired by the German authorities. The Slavs were judged according to the Vendish law and were paying different taxes compared with the German population. In the Middle Ages belonging to a different ethnic group like the Slavs implied also social and economical disadvantages. Ethnical representation and identity had slowly changed to an identity of class. A Slavic identity became synonymous with the rural peasantry of the Middle Ages until modern times. As the people of the hinterland, they were separated from those living in the towns (Gläser 1982). Their position in medieval society was clearly determined, but how did their image change and how were they interpreted in modern research? To understand how German archaeologists were trying to interpret the Slavs and integrate them into wider interpretations, we have to take a closer look at how the aims and

basic principles of archaeological research were defined.

HOW TO CONDUCT ARCHAEOLOGY – THE POST-WAR DEBATE IN GERMAN ARCHAEOLOGY

Both in post-war East and West Germany, archaeologists were developing research strategies but with clear attitudes of how to pursue archaeology in a proper way. The position taken by some East German archaeologists to rely on Marxist models and historical-materialism, could not be sustained without a response and a clear repudiation of these ideas by the West Germans. In this debate the initiative was clearly taken by East German scholars like Karl-Heinz Otto. When Otto started a discussion on how archaeology should be conducted with his West German colleague Joachim Werner (Otto 1953, 1954; Werner 1954), there was still no clear-cut division between a West German and the genuine East German Marxist archaeology at least on an academic level as there seemed to be later (Coblenz 1992).

Otto proclaimed that archaeology is historical science. The two sciences do not differ methodologically, and they have to apply the same kind of source criticism. According to the historical-materialistic concept outlined by Marx, archaeological source criticism has to verify and denote the level of development of the prehistoric group under investigation. As a historical science archaeology can reconstruct the economical structure and process of production and exchange. Material culture reflects ancient societies and their level of development; it signifies the forces of production that determine people's conditions in life and their relationships in the process of production. The economical embraces the social. Thus society's genetical development can be studied retrospectively with the aid of material culture, even in times before the appearance of written sources (Otto 1953:1–4). Otto's theoretical constructions were later refined by Joachim Herrmann, who applied them directly to Slavic archaeology.

Werner rejected Otto's concept of archaeology as a historical science and the importance of socio-economic studies, and pointed out the renewed interest in archaeological cultural groups and cultural history in Marxist archaeology – a breakthrough which was possible in the Soviet Union only after the denial of Nikolay Marr's theories of ethnogenesis as a false dogma by Stalin in the beginning of the 1950s (Trigger 1989:230). Thus Werner commented on the obvious dependence of Marxist archaeologists like Otto on ideological dogmas and political decisions. He refuted the influence of overall ideas like Marxism in archaeology and proposed common sense and proper archaeological documentation as basic principles (Werner 1954).

As an example of the West German point of view supported by Werner, Hans-Jürgen Eggers' thoughts on material culture can be mentioned here. Eggers influenced West German archaeology profoundly. His book *Einführung in die Vorgeschichte* (Eggers 1986) was compulsory reading for the student of prehistoric archaeology at all West German universities. Here he developed methods of archaeological source criticism, and continued the criticism that was already put forward by Ernst Wahle in 1941 against Kossinna's settlement-archaeological method (*siedlungsarchäologische Methode*) (ibid:237). Eggers' work resulted in the so-called archaeological-geographical method based on a source-critical concept of material culture, thereby separating "living culture" from "dead culture". Knowledge of ancient societies is severely biased depending on how and in which circumstances material remains are discovered and studied by the archaeologist. Thus material remains which are excavated belong to dead culture or retrieved culture. In contrast living culture denotes traces which were not buried and which have managed to survive above ground (Härke 1991:190). Eggers' source-critical purpose was to point out the traps which archaeologists and historians like Kossinna could fall into when dealing especially with living culture such as precious

metal artefacts and other objects of high cultural and social value. They could remain in circulation for several hundreds of years and distort distribution maps. Religious ideas or traditional patterns of behaviour among different tribes could influence and finally determine whether certain objects became dead or living culture. This becomes especially obvious when analysing different find categories such as grave, hoard and settlement finds showing different patterns of behaviour (Eggers 1986:255–297). Thus, criticism against Kossinna's ideas was mainly directed against the flaws in his methodology. The West Germans were following the conception of the cartographical and source-critical method outlined by Eggers and Wahle. But West German archaeologists did not continue in theoretical matters from the 1960s onwards, when processual approaches were being formed and theoretical and methodological questions were explicitly debated in the United States, Great Britain and Scandinavia (Härke 1991:191). The source-critical method outlined by Eggers seemed to be sufficient in West German archaeology, meeting the basic requirements of archaeological interpretation.

In some way these discussions foreshadowed later developments in German archaeology. The 1950s were in some way the heyday of a theoretical debate in post-war German archaeology. The shadow of Kossinna was haunting German archaeologists after the war and forcing them to emancipate and reconstitute archaeology. But the stress, strongly proposed by West German archaeologists, lay on how archaeology should be carried out on a methodological level. The theoretical outlines developed by Otto, as representative of a normative, Marxist view and by Eggers and Werner as representative of the West German source-critical type of archaeology – thereby denying and rejecting all interference of ideological matters into the business of archaeology – strongly influenced how the Slavs were represented in archaeological interpretations.

SLAVIC IMAGES IN EAST GERMANY – IDEOLOGICAL AND MATERIAL REPRESENTATIONS

East German archaeology according to the theoretical program advocated by Otto and later by Herrmann (1977) aimed at a broad archaeological reconstruction of the economic base of the former Slavic population. Epistemological advances through the materialistic approach of Marxism could only be accomplished by thorough empirical studies and the application of natural science. Herrmann, referring to Soviet ethnographers, characterized the dichotomical nature of material culture. The latter expresses a so-called economical-cultural type that embraces material production, as well as an external, historical-cultural dimension. The historical-cultural dimension has often been understood and described mechanically in traditional research as the distribution of specific artefact types. The economical-cultural dimension has consequently been neglected. Material culture is an expression of the forces of production. The forces of production directly reflect the working process materially. There are the objects

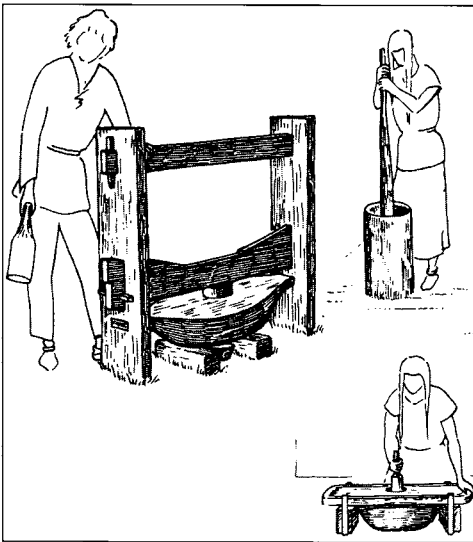


Fig. 2. Slavic peasants crushing millet and pressing oil. Reconstruction Groß Raden 8th/9th century. From Bartel et. al. 1985. *Deutsche Geschichte* vol. 1. P. 423.

used in the process of production; there are the means to run the working process; and finally there are the practical working skills, embracing technologies and procedures. Thus material culture both contains and reflects the societal relationships. Man at work and the conditions under which work is planned, executed and displayed, constitute the nexus of society (fig. 2).

Herrmann classifies material culture according to its archaeological expressions. First there are all objects that reveal material production, in other words all archaeological finds that are man-made; second, there are artefacts and archaeological complexes that directly reflect the forces of production, such as workshops, settlements, hoards, market-places and mines; and finally there are objects that reveal the artificial and intellectual ideas in contemporary society, such as graves, cult places, works of art, statues, objects of sacrifice, details of clothing and so on. Thus the chorological distribution of specific artefact types does not reveal anything about the other, inherent aspects of material culture and of society itself. Conclusions about society could only be drawn through research on the economical prerequisites. In the archaeological and historical context this means that investigations must aim at reconstructing the former settlement areas and their economical basis (ibid:19–22).

The aim of the practical fieldwork was to record all traces of Slavic occupation and activity. A systematic survey was first initiated after the foundation of the GDR (German Democratic Republic), and after the ratification of a new law in 1954 concerning the protection of antiquities. The initiative was taken as an archaeological complement to the broad research program and the renewed interest in Slavic history and archaeology in the GDR. The *Corpus*-project provided the hard data for this research program. As the authors of *Corpus* put it, an investigation covering all questions that deal with the history-generating activities of working people, tribes and tribal entities is not possible to realize without

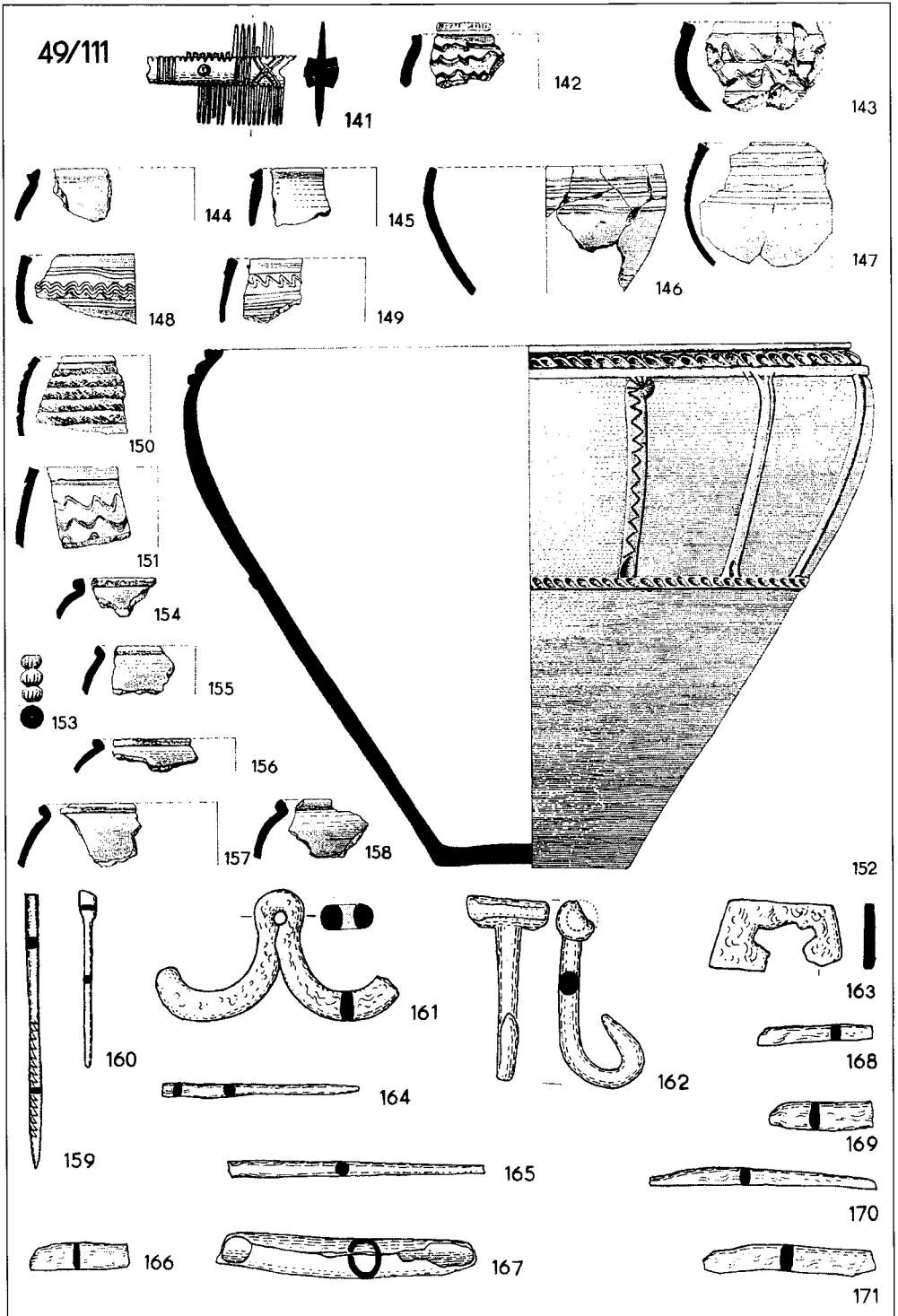


Fig. 3. Artefacts from the coastal trading site of Menzlin in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. *Corpus* 1979: 49/111.

an analytical processing of the archaeological sources. Finally the archaeologists behind the *Corpus*-project emphasized a strict objective documentation, avoiding any subjective bias (Corpus 1973:VII–VIII). The first volume of this ambitious survey-project covering the north-western parts with the general districts of Rostock, Schwerin and Magdeburg, was published in 1973. One important objective was to depict characteristic artefacts from the different Slavic settlement sites (fig. 3). Similar regional surveys have been done before as for instance Adolf Hollnagel's investigations in the former districts of Neustrelitz and Neubrandenburg in the northern parts of the GDR (Hollnagel 1958, 1962).

THE POLITICAL DIMENSIONS OF SLAVIC ARCHAEOLOGY IN EAST GERMANY

According to Joachim Herrmann, the task of archaeology is to confront the bourgeois writing of history that showed increasing influence in the politics of the federal republic of West Germany. In Herrmann's view the Slavs, as a genuine part of the occidental culture, were dependent on the mercy of western Europe and the German Empire's cultural hegemony and its economical, social and political influence. In the opinion of Herrmann, Slavic archaeology should serve as a scientific tool to support the Slavic position against the reactionary image of the Slavs in the West. However, the objective was not to create an East German Slavic identity. The young East German Republic and the old Slavs were in the same position, in danger of becoming extinct and disappearing. The Slavic heritage and the history of the Slavs are supposed to be a common frame of reference. It is the archaeologist's task to reconstruct the evolutionary course of class struggle. The possibility of class struggle is already determined by the socio-economic circumstances out of which human societies evolve. To make his point, Herrmann exemplifies the Sorbs' role in history. The Sorbs, as a substantial part of the former Elb-Slavic tribes, still exists as

an ethnic minority with its own language and genuine cultural traits in Saxony in the south-eastern part of the former GDR. Under the terror of the Nazi regime they were discriminated against because of their distinctive cultural otherness. In the view of Herrmann this otherness exploited by the Nazis in racial terms, showed in reality the event of the continuing class struggle. With regard to their political and class affiliation, the Sorbs represented the working peasantry and the working class in towns in modern times. The confrontation that already existed for over a millennium could be resolved by the abolishment of the exploiting classes. This has only been achieved by the development of socialism. Herrmann further interprets cultural and ethnic otherness in teleologic or almost religious terms. Sorbic otherness had a symbolic function, denoting the working-class struggle through centuries. As a symbol of the oppressed, their martyrdom has ended with the establishment of socialist order. Now they can be integrated as part of the socialist society (Herrmann 1985:3–4).

TRIBAL RECONSTRUCTIONS – THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC BASE

According to Herrmann, ethnicity has inevitably merged into an ideological representation of class and the evolution towards socialism. Thus the objective of Slavic archaeology is to establish and to show how feudal society evolved, and how the resistance against this oppressive order was organized internally within Slavic society. In the eyes of Marxist archaeologists, some Slavic tribes represented a primary state in the evolution of societies described by Marx and Engels as *Urgesellschaft*. Other tribes have inevitably drifted towards feudalism with the establishment of an exploiting class with aristocrats and kings. Material culture directly mirrors people's living conditions and the socio-economic base. The Slavic tribes appeared in East German interpretations as socio-economic entities, each representing a microcosm with the sequences of an inherent unilinear socio-

economic development. In contrast, notions of tribes and ethnic groups in the medieval chronicles were integrated into the historical-materialistic approach. Questions about ethnicity were secondary in relation to socio-economic processes. They could only be answered according to the principles of socio-economic and historical analyses (Herrmann 1977:27). The notion of ethnicity was consequently dominated by a pure materialistic content. For instance, as an indication of a significant and distinct socio-economic development on a tribal basis, Herrmann used the abundant evidence of hoards containing coins in the Elb-Slavic territory. The size and frequency of coin finds in his model showed

the extent of the use of silver as means of payment in the different tribal territories and ethnic groups until the thirteenth century (fig. 4). The development of coin and silver economies is bound to the tribal organisation. In Herrmann's interpretations the historical explanation of the notion of different Slavic tribes is revealed through the dialectic relationship between the social and the economic organisation. Coin finds in this example are very sensitive indicators of these different but synchronous tribal developments (Herrmann 1968:128ff).

The East German archaeology thereby resembles some of the traits of the evolutionary approach in the New Archaeology. Neverthe-

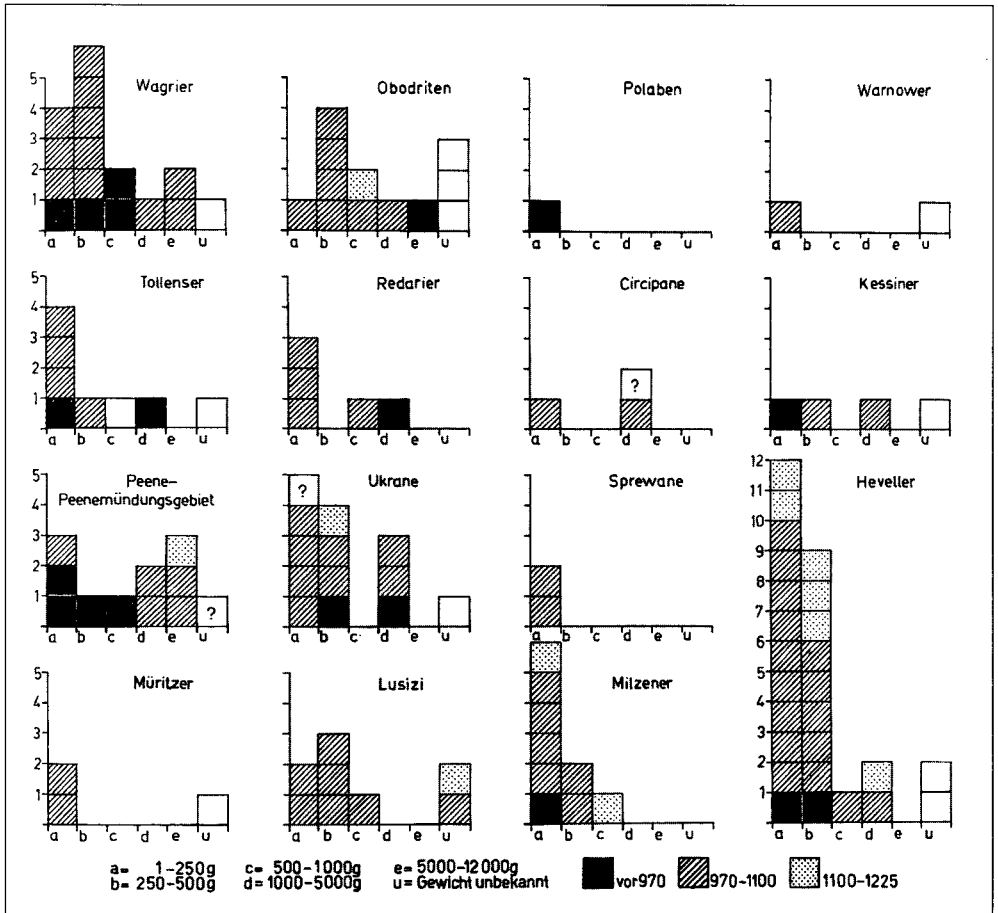


Fig. 4. Reconstruction of the socio-economic development of different tribes and territories after the size and frequency of the hoards. From Herrmann 1968:129.

less, Herrmann rejects the theoretical premises of New Archaeology and Cultural Anthropology. Those approaches can only provide a fragmentary picture of the basic role of the working process that ultimately determines people's existence and cultural traits. Socio-economic analyses are the only way to approach the study of human cultures (Herrmann 1977:24). Unlike West German archaeology, the historical-materialistic approach explicitly used the notion of ethnicity as a methodological tool. The notion of ethnicity should not be reduced to documentative studies of material culture. This epistemological position is put forward, for example, by Eggers and Werner.

TRADITIONAL ROOTS – RAMPARTS AND POTTERY

Nevertheless East German archaeology never lost its ties with cultural-history and more traditional ways of conducting archaeology. Unlike Soviet archaeology during the 1930s, archaeology in the former GDR was never

subjected to the radical Marxist approaches outlined by scholars like Marr and Ravdonicas (Trigger 1989:216). After the formation of the GDR, practical antiquarian matters like the reorganisation of the museum collections destroyed and dispersed by the war came to the fore. Research within Slavic archaeology, with traditions from the beginning of the century, was carried out quite unaffected by the new political system. Especially two research areas survived almost intact and formed the cornerstones of Slavic archaeology in East Germany, namely, rampart archaeology and the establishment of a chronology and typology of Slavic pottery. Ewald Schuldt introduced a new taxonomy for Slavic pottery. In fairly traditional manner he named characteristic pottery ware after famous rampart- or settlement sites from the Slavic period (Schuldt 1956). Archaeologists like Wilhelm Unverzagt and Ewald Schuldt continued investigations within rampart archaeology founded by Carl Schuchhardt in the beginning of the century. In German archaeology Schuchardt is

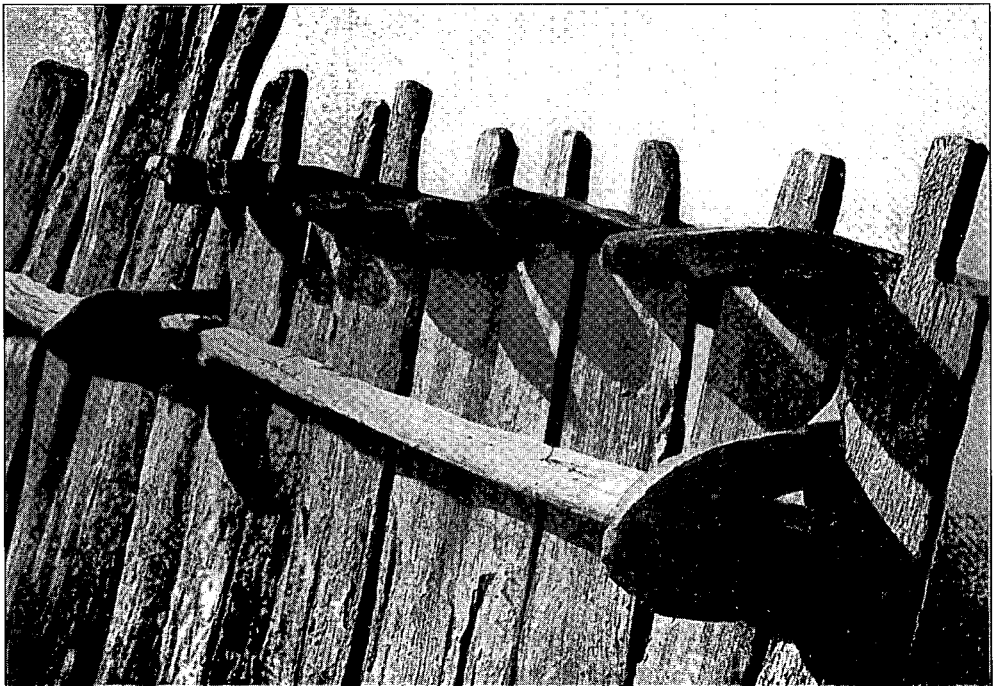


Fig. 5. Part of the wooden constructions in Behren-Lübchin. From Schuldt 1965. Fig. 67a.

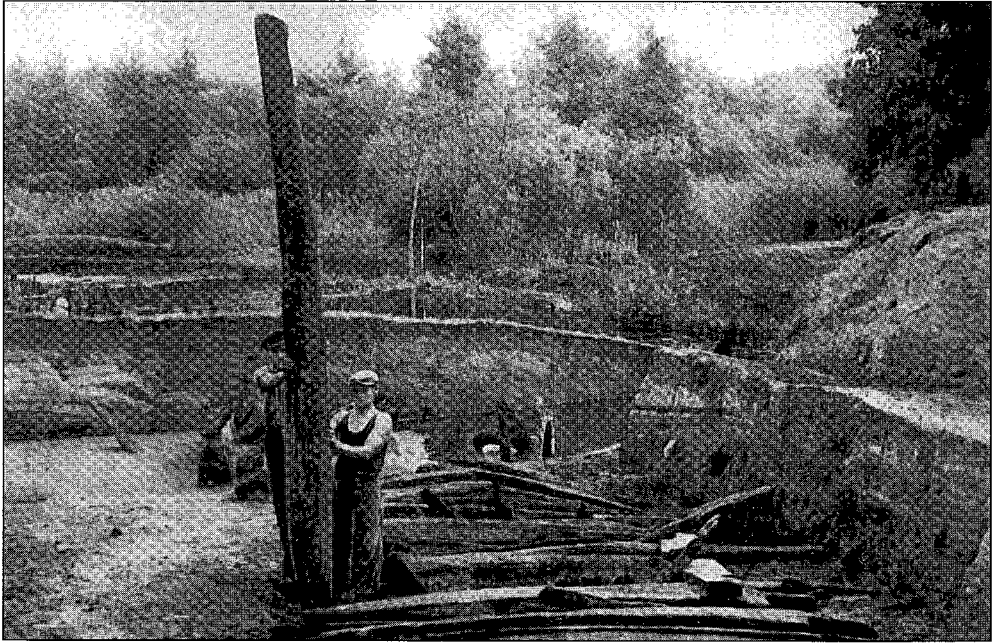


Fig. 6. Two workers holding a post from the outer wall in Behren-Lübchin. From Schuldt 1965. Fig. 67b.

known to have opposed Gustav Kossinna's national and racial ideas about archaeological cultures and prehistoric populations (Herrmann 1977:16). Unlike Kossinna, Schuchardt was a professional archaeologist trying to establish a chronology for the earthen ramparts in eastern Germany (Schuchardt 1909). Developing excavation methods, he became famous for introducing the postholes into archaeology (Eggers 1986:219–226). As a disciple of Schuchardt, Unverzagt was not connected with the nationalist archaeology founded by Kossinna. Unverzagt and Schuldt continued the excavations of huge ramparts from the Slavic period. As defensive ramparts they were often built near the shores of lakes or on islands. The conditions of preservation were often excellent. Aspects of the wooden construction work could be studied in detail (fig. 5). Most famous were the projects carried out on the lake sites in Teterow (Unverzagt & Schuldt 1963) and Behren-Lübchin (fig. 6) (Schuldt 1965). Rampart archaeology also played a decisive role later in the narrative of Marxist archaeology.

THE TEMPLE SITE IN GROSS RADEN

The investigations illustrating the transition to feudal society were not carried out in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern but in Saxony in the 1960s. The prestigious project in Tornow showed the strongholds of the feudal class, thereby illustrating internally the transition from the early classless society to feudal society (Herrmann 1985:187). Slavic rampart investigations continued into the 1970s and 1980s. The last large-scale excavation was carried out by Ewald Schuldt in Mecklenburg at the site called Groß Raden between 1973 and 1980. Besides the excavation of the ramparts, a settlement with buildings and traces of Slavic craftsmanship was revealed. A house construction consisting of vertical posts with heads carved at the ends was interpreted as a temple (fig. 7) (Schuldt 1985:35–49).

Both the economic- and craftsmanship buildings were interpreted as the 9th-century temple site of the easternmost part of the realm of the Obodrits, inhabited by a subtribe called Warnower. The excavation attracted great

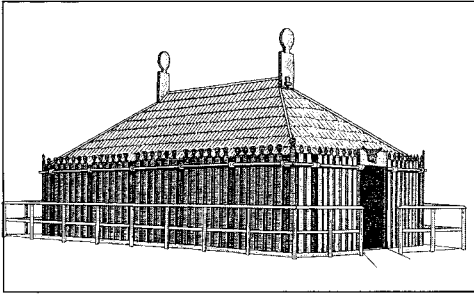


Fig. 7. Reconstruction of the temple building in Groß Raden. From Schuldt 1985. Fig. 50.

attention because a temple site from the early Slavic period had been discovered. Thus it could support the frequent mention of such sites by medieval writers (Schuldt 1985:216). After the project ended, the excavated site was reconstructed by Schuldt and an open-air museum was inaugurated. The purpose was to mediate everyday life in a Slavic village to the broader public. When Groß Raden was built in the middle of the 1980s, the relationship between the Soviet Union and the West changed. But that change initiated by the socialistic

brother state was not welcomed by the leadership of the GDR. East German politicians were sceptical to the reform models put forward by the Soviet government. Instead the traditions created by socialism and the achievements of the people of the German Democratic Republic were put forward and celebrated. Seen in the political context, the popular image created of the early Slavic tribes in Groß Raden should reinforce the roots and the history of socialism. A golden age of proto-communism was reproduced in the conception of Groß Raden. The Warnower in this image did not function as the victims of feudalism. The religious aspect and the work of simple craftsmanship dominate the conception of Groß Raden. The temple construction and the attachment to the simple Slavic heathendom could be interpreted as an attempt to establish a popular and spiritual image of the Slavs as opposed to Christianity and the decadence of the West (fig. 8). In the end Groß Raden represented a compromise between, on the one hand, Schuldt's scientific aims to reconstruct a tribal central place of the Slavic

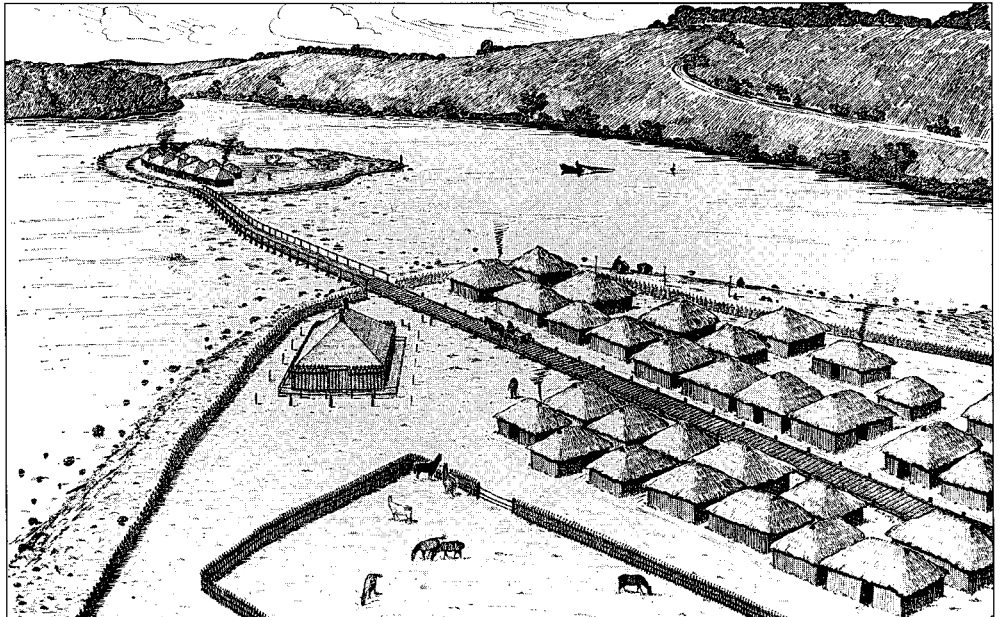


Fig. 8. Reconstruction of the earlier settlement in Groß Raden from the 9th century. From Schuldt 1985. Fig. 159.

period in accordance with the long experience of archaeological fieldwork and the profound knowledge of such sites in East German archaeology and, on the other hand, the idea of Groß Raden as a prestigious and boastful monument of the Communist Party.

MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENTS IN WEST GERMANY – THE SLAVS AND THE VIKINGS

Also in West Germany several ramparts from the Slavic period were excavated. But only a small part of the former Slavic lands was at this time accessible to West German archaeologists, such as the coastal areas of Ostholstein around Kiel, Oldenburg and Lübeck and the tiny inland area around West Berlin. Most famous were the excavations of the coastal sites in Old Lübeck and in Oldenburg. Besides having huge rampart-constructions, these sites are known as central places of political and economical importance (Fehring 1991; Gabriel 1984). Another project was carried out at the Burgwall in Spandau in former West Berlin (von Müller & von Müller-Mučić 1987). Oldenburg appears in the historical sources as the central place of the Slavic tribe *Wagrier*. Old Lübeck constituted the royal seat of the later Nakonids in the second half of the eleventh century. Old Lübeck is known as the stronghold of the powerful Obodritic ruler Heinrich (1093–1127) (fig. 9).

Oldenburg was excavated at the same time as Groß Raden, between 1973 and 1982. The project followed the methodological principles outlined by Werner, Eggert and other prominent West German archaeologists. Gabriel defined archaeology's role in the historical period as a complement to the written sources. The excavations in Oldenburg – a trading place and the central place of the Ostholsteinian tribe of the *Wagrier* which had various contacts overseas – revealed the material culture of different ethnic groups around the Baltic and Western Europe. The German term *Sachkultur*, which is the German equivalent to material culture, signifies the artificial, technical qualities of material culture. These qualities

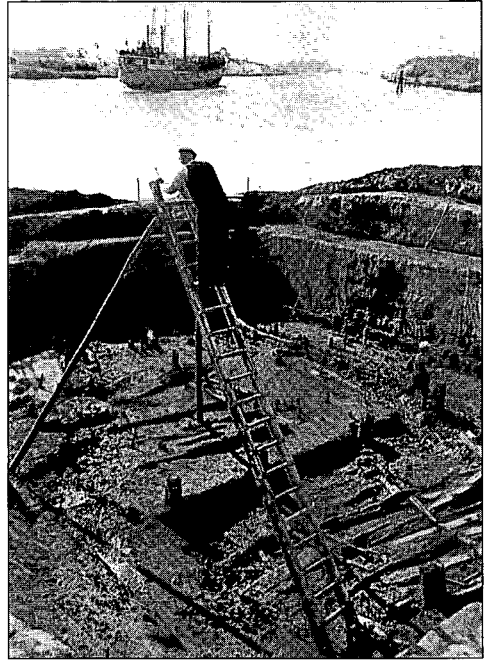


Fig. 9. Southern settlement in Old Lübeck with traces of log cabins. In the background the river Trave giving access to the Baltic Sea. Excavation 1953. From Neugebauer 1964/65. Fig. 19.

can be studied without reference to social or ethnic interpretations as guiding principles. Their value lies in their documentary qualities, telling us about artificial and technical properties of different ethnic groups. Conclusions can be drawn on the basis of vast comparative studies of different workmanship traditions. The ethnical significance is revealed in their chorological distribution. Gabriel stresses Oldenburg's international importance. Further, the influences from outside exhibit the needs of a higher class. He uses the terms *Hof- und Sakralkultur* to signify the specific upper class and the international and religious artefactual milieu found in Oldenburg. However, the excavated objects should not only be interpreted as traces of trade and an aristocratic environment, but also as utilitarian objects of everyday life in a multi-ethnic environment. The documentary value of *Sachkultur* for interpretations of ethnic, social, technical and artistic value is revealed only through the archaeolog-

ical context and the proper and extensive descriptions in the publications. Thus the West German interest in Slavic archaeology was concentrated to the important trading and political sites like Oldenburg and Old Lübeck. This is partly because Oldenburg and Old Lübeck are the most famous coastal sites in the north-western Slavic region, even in the historical records. The international character of the Oldenburg material is outstanding compared with the traces of the ordinary Slavic settlements from the rural inland sites. It shows strong influences from outside. As Gabriel points out, the most significant traits of Slavic inhabitation are the building constructions, the pattern of settlement; however, the most significant traces of Slavic occupation consist of the typical Slavic pottery (Gabriel 1988:109). Innovations exclusively came from Western Europe and were transformed and integrated. In the end the development of other typical traits of Slavic material-culture was strongly dependent on influences from the West, exemplified by the bronze mountings on knives (fig. 10).

Both categories are connected with persons of high social prestige (Gabriel 1988:109–110). Thus the Slavic population was considered as the receiving part. Internal developments were thus conceived as the images of the West or the North transmitted by the Vikings. West German archaeologists therefore concentrated more on the trading sites. Research was carried out to document the international, Viking-Age environment, literally the pattern of contacts with Western Europe, Eastern Europe and Scandinavia. The internal development on the ordinary rural sites was almost neglected in the archaeological narrative. The main question also implicitly concerns how local political, economical and social structures were influenced and transformed from outside.

LIVING AND DEAD IDENTITIES

The Vikings denote winners in as much as they were a powerful force in history, who founded kingdoms and vast networks of trade and

power relations in the Baltic and Western Europe, who were violent raiders and also had the capacity to adapt to different social, economic and political constellations. They deserve the respect and scrutiny of scholars and the public. In the Scandinavian countries the Viking-Age represents a living identity. One main issue in Iron Age archaeology in Scandinavia concerns the process of the manifestation of the state and the reproduction of power strategies by the Germanic people (Hedeager 1990; Randsborg 1980; Sawyer 1989). This concern with the establishment of state structures in Scandinavian archaeology is especially obvious in comparison with the writing of the history of and the research on the Slavs. The focus on macro-structures like Stateformation and the centralisation of organisation mechanisms may render the Slavic case quite uninteresting. In the end the Slavs failed. Instead they became zombies representing a dead identity and reproducing the image of the losers in history. Nevertheless the shell of a Slavic identity still exists, if only through the material remains in archaeological contexts or in the tales of the medieval writers. It is easy to imagine that Slavic ethnicity became the victim and the prey of a *priori* thinking. The hollow shell, the silent image, could be filled with different contents and used in research legitimating historical and scientific orders. As stereotypical actors in a play, Vikings and Slavs may fulfill our own needs, expectations and identification of winners and losers, of the strong and the weak, of the good and the bad. In these histories the Slav will remain the foreigner and “the other”.

EPILOGUE

Scholars in the field of Slavic history are always confronted with the situation that the dominant national approach becomes transformed and perverted in the racial approach (Arnold & Hassmann 1995). After World War II following the political division of Europe, two general developments can be discerned concerning research on the Slavs among German scholars. The national approach during

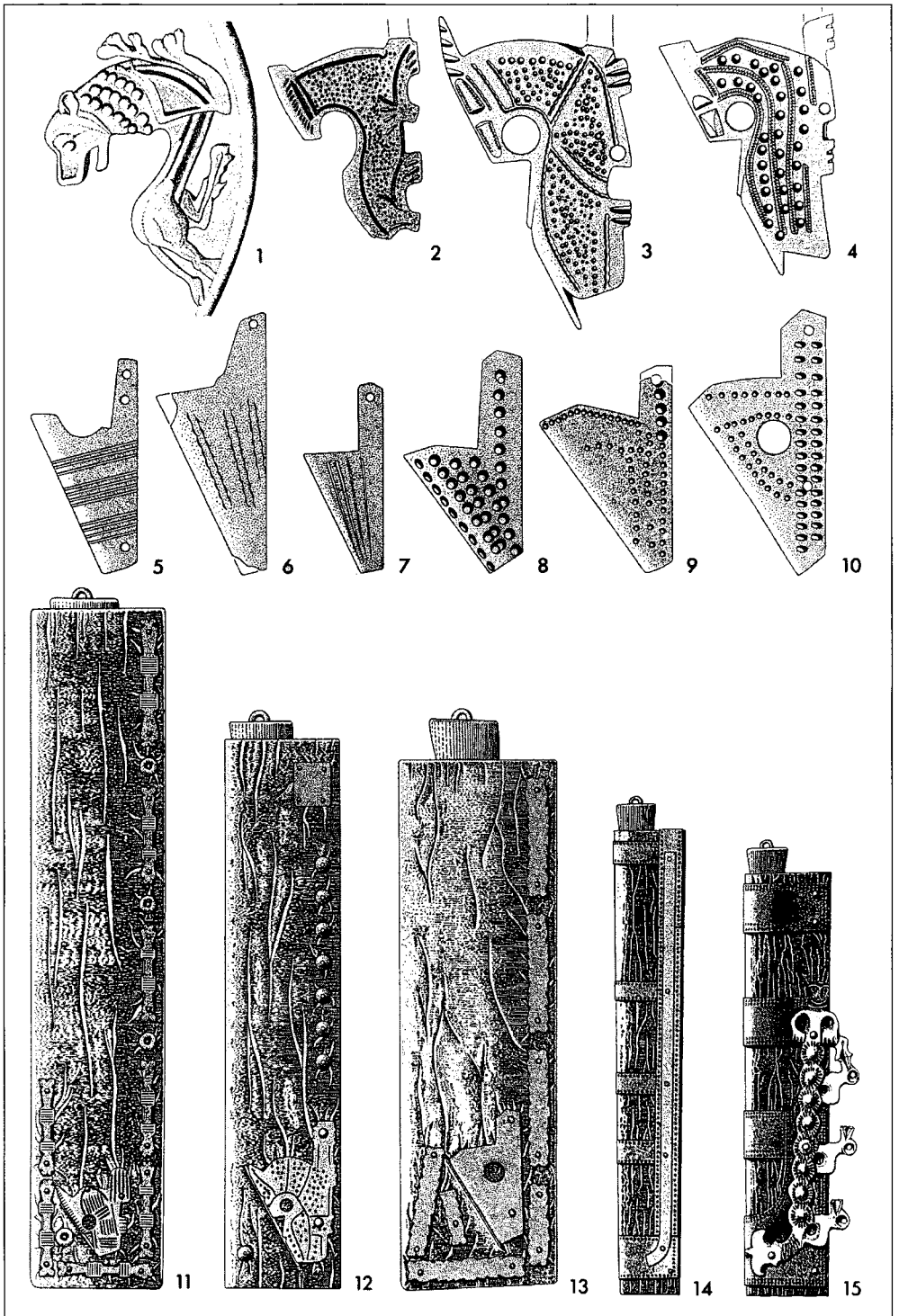


Fig. 10. Comparative studies of bronze mountings on knives denoting different traditions of manufacture. From Gabriel 1988. Fig. 26.

the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century until World War II (Brather 1996:177–180) merged in East German archaeology into an explicitly ideological one, but with a different point of view. The national interpretative view was enlarged and transformed. In its academic shape, Slavic archaeology entered the realm of historical-materialism. Thus research within Slavic history in the former GDR comprised an important part and established a dominant position in historical archaeology as it is understood by the scholars supporting historical-materialism. It comprised the core of East German archaeology and was of political and ideological significance. Research within Slavic archaeology opened the possibility of creating a common East European past with the socialist and Slavic countries in the East. Socialistic identity became rooted in a common Slavic history. The political division of Europe after World War II into an eastern-socialist and a western-capitalistic block reflected also geographically the “ethnic” division between the German Empire and the western Slavic regions in medieval times. Thus the GDR as a borderland was in constant need of processing an ideological and political identity which stressed the historically distinctive character of the western Slavs. In contrast, West German scholars were trying to exclude the overall impact of dominant theories as guiding principles in archaeological fieldwork and interpretations. Questions concerning ethnicity were lowered to the methodological level, such as the cartographical and source-critical method outlined by Eggers. The Oldenburg-project and the research on the Slavic sea-ports can be considered masterpieces of archaeological field- and investigation-work on the chronological and chorological distribution of the different artefacts found at these sites. Thus the only tool kit for interpretative work remains the profound knowledge about artefacts and constructions. Consequently West German archaeology could be termed a science of workmanship and artefactual science, but one that is unable to answer questions about

internal social and ethnical processes.

How the Slavs have been treated in the archaeological literature is a welcome question from the view of a critical archaeology. It might be easy to point out the faults and ethnocentric views and values noticed in earlier research which helped German archaeology to get a better understanding of historic and prehistoric processes. It is not the objective of this paper to re-establish a kind of Slavic consciousness and feeling of identification. It is more a feeling of sympathy as well as curiosity as to how the Slavs were treated in research and how history should appear. It further shows how important feelings of identification are when carrying out archaeological research. In my opinion the Slavic case remains a special one in which unconscious values have a strong impact on how research should be conducted and how the results should fit into already established structures of scientific procedure. Elements of this attitude towards this ethnic group have a long history and can, as we have seen above, be traced to the chronicles and law texts of the Medieval Ages. In the Slavic case it is obvious that interests are governing scientific research and that interests are governed by underlying values. Interestingly, the gap to the Slavs in East German research could be filled and their image as “the other” could be neutralized at least partially through Marxist archaeology and its theoretical constructions. The Slavs were the outsiders, the stupid and the ugly in German medieval history, and quite comparable to the image of the Jews. Their image as peasants, the working people from the countryside, was later used and adapted to a socialist image. Nevertheless, even if East German archaeology in its academical shape was deeply normative, trying to prove the dogma of historical-materialism in an archaeological context, it pinpointed the Slavs’ role as victims. But this feeling of sympathy was mainly grounded in ideological and even political reasons. On the other hand West German archaeologists were hiding behind archaeological contexts and source criticism,

consequently focusing on external processes that could have an impact on Slavic society. The position of value-free research is a difficult one.

English revised by Laura Wrang.

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