

Hoplology, Genetics, and Ancient History Versus Lechitic Prehistory: Notes on The Origins of Slavdom

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Abstract

The origins of Slavdom, especially the Lechitic lands and the territory of present-day Poland, are still an area of controversy. How long have the Slavs inhabited this area? Based on old sources (selected chronicles), the results of archaeogenetic research, and new studies, logical proof – logical deduction – was applied. The method involves a kind of analysis of a broader discourse – publications/literature from various categories. Based on a review of anthropological, genetic, and linguistic research, justifications in the areas of military and physical culture, as well as symbolic culture, were presented regarding the biological and, to some extent, cultural continuity of the centuries-long existence of Slavs in Polish lands – at least since around 2000 BCE. New knowledge unequivocally confirms the theory of the autochthonous origin of the Western Slavs, while simultaneously falsifying the allochthonous concept.

Keywords: Hoplology, Military Culture, History of The Western Slavs, Lechia, Archaeogenetics

1. Introduction

The origins of the Slavs, the origins of Slavdom and language, and the extent of their settlement, particularly Western Slavdom and the Lechitic lands (the extent of the Lechitic languages and the legendary Lechia), continue to generate scholarly debate. A significant number of archaeologists still support the so-called allochthonous theory, which suggests a late arrival of the Slavs in Central Europe. However, recent research findings, ranging from genetic to linguistic, as well as archaeological and anthropological, reveal a different state of affairs [cf. Juras et al. 2020; Cynarski 2023; Cynarski 2025].

2. Research Method

The author undertook research, drawing on old sources (selected chronicles), known research results, new archaeogenetic studies, and new studies. The method is a kind of analysis of broader discourse – publications/literature from various categories [Krippendorf 2004]. There was employed logical proofs – logical deduction and inference.

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3. Result

Who were these **Western Slavs**? Kazimierz Wachowski [2000: 191] describes tribes living between the Weser and Oder rivers, extending westward from Lübeck and Magdeburg, Bamberg and Nuremberg, Linz and Salzburg, India and Aquileia (listing southward) – these cities were Slavic strongholds. He focuses his attention on the western fringes of Slavic lands. Gerard Labuda [2002] does similarly in his extensive monograph. Michałek [2006] includes within this concept the Kingdom of Samos, the Kingdom of Greater Moravia, the Polabian region, and the land of the Polans – Poland. Meanwhile, linguists recognize the Polabian and Pomeranian dialects (today's Kashubian ethnolect) as Lechitic languages. West Slavic languages also include Sorbian (Lower and Upper Sorbian) and Czech-Slovak (Czech and Slovak).

Historically and genetically (based on biological relationships), the situation is more complicated. For centuries, Polish lands were shifted further eastward relative to today's borders. The settlement of the historical Lendians and Dulebi also extends eastward beyond today's Polish borders. Furthermore, the direction of subsequent migrations – from the Vistula and Oder river basins eastward – resulted in the expansion of genes and language. This expansion is confirmed by Nestor's historiography and the genetic studies of Peter Underhill's team [Nestor of Kiev 1113; Underhill et al. 2015]. Other historical sources also indicate this. The Volhynians, previously called Dulebs, were – according to al-Masudi – Western Slavs, as the Eastern Slavs were those living on the Caspian Sea and in the land of the Khazars [Labuda 2002: 58]. These *Walinjana* [al-Masudi 947] were supposed to be the leading people, inhabiting the land that was the cradle of the Slavs and leading others. This would be, let's call it this way, the center of Lechia – the land of the Lechites. And **Lechia** (or Lehia) [cf. Bieszek 2019; Jagiełło 2021] would be a conventional term here for the lands of the Western Slavs and their probable tribal union.

Interestingly, al-Masudi points to the similarity of rituals among many Slavic tribes to those of the "Indians," using the example of burning the bodies of the deceased, and in the case of rulers, along with their horses. This is a remnant of centuries-old customs common to the Aryan-Slavic ancestors of the Slavs and Hindus. Perhaps as early as the 4th millennium BCE, the R1a Y-DNA haplogroups split into Slavic and Aryan haplogroups [Kowalik, Słowiński 2021: 198], after which the Aryans began their migration eastward and southward – to Iran and India. Their starting point may have been the Vistula River basin or a wider area – between the Elbe and Bug rivers.

The Lechites and present-day Poles descend from the Proto-Slavic people who remained here. Their permanent residence in the territory of present-day Poland is confirmed by the results of archaeogenetic research [Zdziebłowski 2020; Mattila et al. 2023; Stolarek et al. 2023; Lazaridis et al. 2025; Speidel et al. 2025]. Individual studies date the beginnings of Lechia / Western Slavdom at different times. According to Cynarski [2025], it was from around 2000 BC, if not earlier.

The **military culture** of antiquity and the early Middle Ages encompasses weapons, armor, and other equipment; the technical and tactical skills of individual warriors and entire armies, including the conduct of battles; the art of fortification, the ability to defend and conquer them; and, above all, a specific ethos. It is in this hoplological sense that Andrzej Michałek [2006] describes the territories of Western Slavdom. He reconstructs the weapons and harness of the period of Slavic-Frankish rivalry, depicts fortified strongholds and watchtowers, and describes battles and wars. This concerns the Western Slavs. Wojciech J. Cynarski [2025]

presents similar issues, but from a broader anthropological perspective and a longer historical perspective, in his new monograph.

4. Discussion

Reflection and Logical Proofs

In addition to the aforementioned al-Masudi and Nestor, it is worth **considering the Polish chroniclers** (Wincenty Kadłubek, Jan Długosz) and Czech chroniclers (Cosmas). Master Wincenty Kadłubek [1208/1612], describing the borders of Lechia, clearly identifies it with Greater Scythia. The Scythian language was perhaps the most primitive Indo-European language, similar to Proto-Slavic and Sanskrit [Cynarski 2020; Kowalik, Słowiński 2021: 197]. It was an Aryan-Slavic language, not an Iranian one. Today's Caucasian Ossetians have nothing in common with the Scythians, neither genetically (different DNA) nor linguistically – they speak an Iranian dialect [Kowalik, Słowiński 2021: 194-1996]. The Scythians were physically similar to present-day Poles and Ukrainians, and their portrayal as slant-eyed Asians is completely erroneous. Slavs may have descended from Scythian plowmen. The proximity of Persia likely influenced the spiritual and material culture of the Scythians. However, it was not Persia, its language, and mythology that were adopted by the Slavs, as Piotr Makuch [2013] argues, but rather the other way around. Makuch compares the Keyanid myths and legends concerning the kings of ancient Persia, as well as Polish chronicles and the Czech chronicle of Cosmas.

The problem of Lechia was perhaps most thoroughly explored by Jarosław T. Jagiełło [2021]. In addition to analyzing the work of Bishop Wincenty Kadłubek, he presents and discusses 26 items of literature on the subject. These are primarily monographs by Polish authors. Jagiełło concludes that the concept of "lech" in Old Czech referred to a nobleman or tribal leader. This concept, as well as the tradition recorded in the Polish and Czech chronicles of Cosmas, point to the common origin and cultural heritage of the Western Slavs. According to Jagiełło [2021: 268], "...Lechites are simply Lords, while the concept of Lechia, used once in the Polish Chronicle, would simply mean State." This author cites the earlier findings of Ernst Kunik [1844] and Jan Czekanowski [1955]. However, the conclusion that "the ancestors of the Lęchs were Iranians" [Kunik 1844: 507; Jagiełło 2021: 269]. They were once part of the Scythian state, which is a completely different matter. Western Slavs share only common ancestors with the Medes, Parthians, and Persians, as with the Pashtuns and the high castes of present-day India.

Cynarski's book "is a contribution to the study of ancient, medieval, and later warrior cultures, including the Lechites and Poles in particular." [Cynarski 2025: 235], conducted from an interdisciplinary perspective. As the author of these *Hoplological Essays* points out: "Biological kinship does not determine national identification. However, it is an important premise – a variable that should not be ignored. Therefore, genetic and archaeogenetic studies, especially those indicating common roots or permanent settlement of a given area, have been strongly emphasized here." [Cynarski 2025: 236].

Based on a review of anthropological (physical and cultural), genetic, and linguistic research, justifications are presented in the areas of military culture (material and immaterial), physical culture (horse riding), and symbolic culture (legends, noble coats of arms) regarding the biological and, to some extent, cultural continuity of the Slavs' existence in Polish lands over the centuries.

Further justifications and discussion

The Aryan-Slavic ancestry is the source of religious knowledge (the Hindu Vedas), warrior ethos, and linguistic canon. The Lekhs adopted these traits directly or through influence from their proximity to the Scythians. Their DNA and language were different from those in Persia – R1a predominated among the Scythians and Slavs, and R1b among the Persians. Slavic culture remained after Greater Scythia, as did Thracian culture in Thrace (incidentally, Mario Alinei sees peripheral Slavic areas in Dacia and Thrace).

In Asia, the Yakuts, Kazakhs, and Pashtuns from Afghanistan claim Scythian roots. The Scythians appeared on the Greek border earlier and may also have been the creators of the Slavic Vinča culture [Alinei 2000, 2020]. It is therefore possible that the ancient Macedonians and their kings – like Philip and Alexander – were Slavs [cf. Kowalik, Słowiński 2021: 211-223]. These names undoubtedly do not sound Greek. The author had the opportunity to visit the tomb of King Philip of Macedon, located in Vergina near Thessaloniki. The display of solar symbols on the objects found there is typical of Aryan-Slavic peoples, but also of other Indo-European peoples of that period.

Kowalik and Słowiński [2021: 390], citing the authority of Prof. Aleksander Lech Godlewski, opt for the allochthonous theory of the appearance of the Slavs in the Vistula River. It is puzzling that in 2021, when a series of scientific publications have clarified numerous questionable issues, these authors remain with this very paradigm. This theory of the late appearance of the Slavs in Central Europe was falsified by the results of genetic research by the team led by Peter Underhill (cited above) and research by other authors representing various scientific disciplines, such as: archaeology [Haarmann 2016], archaeogenetics [Juras et al. 2020; Zdziebłowski 2020; Speidel et al. 2025], anthropology [Piontek, Iwanek 2010; Piontek 2020], or interdisciplinary approaches [Cynarski 2021a, b, 2025]. The fact that the population of the **Lusatian culture** is the ancestor of the Slavs (or only the Western Slavs?) is confirmed by both anthropological and recent archaeogenetic studies (bone material from the years 1000-400 BC from the lake in Papowo Biskupie) [Piontek, Iwanek 2010; Gackowski et al. 2024].

Were the Lechites (the ancestors of today's Poles) the **Vandals** and Lugii [Kowalik, Słowiński 2021: 242-247]? There is little doubt that the Veneti, Wends, or Veneti were Slavs who can be linked to the Lechites, but their settlements extended beyond the lands of the Western Slavs quite far to the south. In the case of the Vandals, the situation is less clear. In his chronicle, Jan Długosz states directly that Poland was called European Sarmatia, that Poles and Ruthenians are Sarmatians, that the Lechites were Scythians, or Polans (from the arable fields), or Vandals (from the Vandal, i.e., the Vistula River), and that the name "Vandal" comes from the name of Queen Wanda [Długosz 1480/2020]. Mieszko I was also called the Duke of the Vandals (*Misica Dux Vandalorum*) by contemporary chroniclers. And the name Wends (German *Wenden*, *Winden*, Latin *Venedi*) may refer to the same people. If the Vandals later migrated alongside the Goths, must they have been a Germanic people of Scandinavian origin? If research confirms the dominant haplogroup R1a among them, then it is highly probable that they too were Slavic.

In his impressive work entitled "Slavic Antiquities" (796 pages, including numerous cited source texts), the Slovak scholar Paweł Józef Szafarzyk (Šafařík) points to the "ancient Slavic presence in Europe" – (...) "the nations of the Slavic tribe are the ancient inhabitants of Europe, who, (...) have settled here since prehistoric times" [Szafarzyk 1837/2003: 38]. The author proves this thesis by citing numerous historical sources. He points to the oldest

testimonies of the Veneti and the Serbs, which he considers the earliest. "Amber and the Veneti who collected it were known to the Greeks from time immemorial" [ibidem: 79]. Timeusz uses the Finnish/Estonian name *Wannoma* as the land of the Veneti (*Wann*) [ibidem: 82]. The name *Vindi* is more ancient than *Venedi*. Cornelius Nepos and Pliny used both names, respectively. Later, the Veneti were mentioned by Ptolemy of Alexandria and others. Pliny the Roman, in turn, mentions the Serbs in his work from 79 CE, and later by other writers as well [Szafarzyk 1837/2003: 76-134].

While in Polish literature, Lechia and Lechites are spelled with a "ch," deriving these names from Lech – the ruler's name and likely title, in his fourth book, Janusz Bieszk [2019] writes about Lehia and Leh. He draws on various sources, including foreign ones. This is indeed consistent with the Turkish and Persian name for Poland – Lehistan / Lehestan. The author cites Professor Henryk Samsonowicz, who points to two possible versions of the beginnings of Polish statehood – around 1000 BC and the 5th century AD. This means that the Slavs arrived in the Vistula River from the Prypiat marshes not in the 7th century, but perhaps already in the 4th century (according to allochtonists), or existed here as early as 1500 years earlier. There is also a reference to authors less known in Poland [cf. Starża-Kopytyński 2010]. This author extends the pre-Polish statehood, indicating its origins and listing the names of rulers from the 21st century BC. He describes the ancient and/or legendary history of the Western Slavs, whom he calls Slavs. Here he also includes the Vandals, Ligi, and various Lechitic and Scythian tribes. The former victorious kings of Lechia/Lehia, such as Marszyn, Lel, and Polel, were considered gods [Bieszk 2019: 54, 87, 90, 161, 232, 234], which recalls the posthumous fate of the Aryan leaders Indra and Mithra. The great, victorious battle of *Dołęża/Tolęża* (German: *Tollensee*) in 1250 BC took place during the reign of King Charpat/Karpath [ibidem: 233]. However, neither Charpat nor Krak (the victorious king of the united Slavs in the war against the Gauls) experienced this elevation to the divine pantheon. The Lechites' battles with the Romans in the 1st century BCE (on the Rhine and the Lech River), in the Teutoburg Forest in 9 CE, and for Vinde-Licum (Augsburg) [ibidem: 238] seem historically confirmed. Many other issues require further research.

Bieszk cites Miorsz's Chronicle – *Miersuae Chronicon Lehitaram et Polomorum* – in translation and "reconstruction" (as he himself calls it). This work also provides a justification for the identity of the Vandals, "Lechites," and "Polani" [Bieszk 2019: 364-365]. This was intended as a model for subsequent Polish chronicles. The chronicles cited in this book (albeit without critical analysis of their authenticity and credibility) and the names of the rulers (princes, kings) and voivodes have at least phenomenological value in that they demonstrate an interest in the problem of the early Slavic origins from a longer, centuries-long perspective.

Tomasz J. Kosiński addressed the same issue, but from a 21st-century perspective. This is the "Greater Lechitic idea" treated as a literary and social phenomenon. He describes "Lechism" as the essence of Polishness, the Sarmatian ethos, and contemporary neolechism [Kosiński 2021]. However, the author cites recognized historical chroniclers – Einhard, Thietmar, Gallus Anonymus, Widukind, Nestor, and Kinnamos [ibidem: 24-29], which for historians who treat Polish chroniclers as storytellers is an argument harder to dismiss. Here, we find a polemic with Antoni Małeck'i's theses, whom Kosiński criticizes for logical inconsistency. The Lechites' homeland may have been White Croatia / Greater Croatia, an area similar to later Galicia (Lesser Poland plus Eastern Lesser Poland), as well as Lusatia and the lands west of the Oder. From here, the Czech is said to have arrived in Prague and established a separate statehood. However, according to Přebík Pulkava's Chronicle, "Lech is

said to have encompassed the lands beyond the mountains to the sea, and his descendants reached Ruthenia, establishing their state there" [Kosiński 2021: 54]. Craniometric studies and comparison of combat helmets have shown that the Polans from the Warta River are identical to those from Kiev and Volhynia [ibidem: 61], thus confirming the occurrence of another wave of migration of the proto-Polish tribe to the east (6th century), which contributed to the development of the East Slavic statehood.

The concept of *imperium Lechitarum*, introduced by Jan Długosz, and the earlier concepts of Lech, Lechia, and Lechites are still present in Polish scholarship and culture. Kosiński cites interesting facts, such as that the Lugii were a confederation of Slavic tribes, as claimed by Wojciech Kętrzyński [Kosiński 2021: 216-220]. Kosiński also cites contemporary researchers such as Mariusz Kowalski, Piotr Makuch, Adrian Leszczyński, Daria Keiss-Dolańska, and Natalia Klimczak. It is a pity that he includes only one article among several published in the "Ido Movement for Culture Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology," containing a hoplological comparative analysis of the Lechites and Scythians, but without providing a full bibliographic record of this publication [Cynarski, Maciejewska 2016]. The author of *The Great Lechia Phenomenon* discusses the current functioning of blogs and thematic portals, called "turbo-Slavic" by their critics. He himself advocates the study of Lechitic history, but with the principle of scientific skepticism in mind.

5. Conclusion

What is the current state of popular knowledge regarding the origins of Slavic culture? The *PWN Encyclopedia* [1982: 716] offers the following explanation of the entry "Slavs": "a group of Indo-European peoples (associated with the so-called Proto-Slavic language), from which the Slavic nations began to form in the early Middle Ages; the ethnogenesis of Slavs is controversial; the most popular hypotheses place Slavs between the Oder and the middle Dnieper; in the 1st millennium, they were divided into Western Slavs – the Wends, associated with the Przeworsk culture and perhaps also the Oksywie culture (ancestors of Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Polabian Slavs), Eastern Slavs – the Antes (...), and Southern Slavs – the Sclaveni (...)." However, the matter is much more complicated; The encyclopedia provided the briefest possible information, a sort of abbreviated outline. It also remains unclear whether the settlement of the lands between the Oder and Dnieper rivers occurred in ancient times, or only during the medieval migrations. Neither newer encyclopedias nor Wikipedia have addressed the validity of the autochthonous or allochthonous theory of the Slavs' emergence. The matter undoubtedly requires further research. However, Cynarski's new monograph [2025] compiles facts and arguments, providing a synthesized account of the current state of knowledge. This new knowledge quite unequivocally confirms the autochthonous theory of the origins of the West Slavs, while simultaneously disproving the allochthonous concept.

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