

CzasKultury/English

Slavic Conspiracy
Theories
as Non-scientific
Historical Narratives

Konrad Kośnik, Justyna Filipiuk

2/2016

Slavic Conspiracy Theories as Non-scientific Historical Narratives

Konrad Kośnik, Justyna Filipiuk

Contemporary popular perception of distant times deviates substantially from what was actually specific to them.¹ Historical narratives on the subject of the past life of one's own community (for example, of Poles) are often built on the basis of national myths or an idealized, great power image of military and political history.² Gaps in historical sources and a lack of familiarity within the greater society with the current consensus among academic scholars result in amateur efforts to replace the lacunae in our historical knowledge with the creation of stories about the nation's or our ethnic group's history that depart from the "official" schol-

¹ J. Hańderek, *Walka ciemności i światła – popkultura i jej imaginarium średniowiecza*, [in:] M. Karas (ed.), *Historia filozofii. Meandry kultury. Teksty i studia ofiarowane Jackowi Widomskiemu z okazji 65. urodzin*, Kraków 2014, pp. 121–137; I. Kowalczyk, I. Kiec (eds.), *Historia w wersji popularnej*, Gdańsk 2015.

² M. Morys-Twarowski, *Polskie imperium. Wszystkie kraje podbite przez Rzeczpospolitą*, Kraków 2016; A. Zieliński, *Sarmaci, katolicy, zwycięzcy. Kłamstwa, przemilczenia i półprawdy w historii Polski*, Warszawa 2015.

arly record. The “non-scientific” nature of these historical narratives relates to the lack of a consensus as to their correctness (meaning: accuracy) inside academic circles.³

Historical narratives of this type concerning the ways of the Slavs are based on a belief in the destructive effect of Christianity on Slavic cultures.⁴ The religious connotations of the problem mean that adherents of Slavic “rodnovery,” defined in scholarly literature as belonging to the movement(s) broadly known as neopaganism, are heavily engaged in the discussion.⁵ The legitimization of their reconstruction of local pre-Christian belief systems (leaving aside individual inner spiritual needs) is based on myths that describe the glories of the proto-Slavic era and present the decadence of (Judeo-) Christian culture.⁶ The juxtaposition of the former might of the Slavic peoples with their current state gives rise, in receptive minds, to suspicions of interference by harmful external forces that led Slavic cultures to their downfall through a deliberate conspiracy.

This article presents the results of research into Slavic conspiracy theories that exist mainly in the space of the internet. Polish-language texts, with their specific local focus on the legacy of Western Slavdom (Lechia), rather than Rus, have been the object of study, as well as claims

³ K. Kośnik, “Religia jako system poznawczy. Eksplanacyjna rola religii Słowian,” *Humaniora. Czasopismo internetowe* 3(7)/2014, pp. 67–82.

⁴ M. Agnosiewicz, *Zapomniane dzieje Polski*, Miłkowice 2014, pp. 23–29; R. Merski, *Moje słowiańskie przebudzenie*, Wrocław 2013, pp. 10–15.

⁵ M. Strutyński, *Neopogaństwo*, Kraków 2014.

⁶ A. Sołtysiak, *Jak neopoganie manipulują przeszłością?*, [in:] J. Olko (ed.), *Dawne kultury w ideologiach XIX i XX wieku*, Warszawa 2007, pp. 49–63.

made for a dominant role played by Poland among Slavic countries. The evidence analysed consists of direct sources, texts published on the internet directly by their authors (referred to ironically by their opponents under the term “Turbo-Slavs”), but also indirect sources, whose composition includes published books, scientific or popular-scientific,⁷ and others that belong to the genre of historical fiction;⁸ these works are promoted on websites via subjective commentaries.

The Psychological Study of Historical Narratives

Exploring the secrets of historical narratives is an area of inquiry within the psychology of cultural history, derived from the dualistic psychology of Wilhelm Wundt.⁹ The perspective it brings to studies of how human beings function takes into account the context of the religion, mythology, or ethnic group to which an individual belongs, using knowledge provided by history and the study of culture. It studies human mental processes as they manifest in cultural products (material and spiritual), among which we might include historical narratives, and supplements the data gathered by the main body of psychology with contextual factors, placing the universal character of psychological laws in doubt.

⁷ P. Makuch, *Od Ariów do Sarmatów. Nieznane 2500 lat historii Polaków*, Kraków 2013; A. Szejter, *Pod pogańskim sztandarem. Dzieje tysiąca wojen Słowian połabskich od VII do XII wieku*, Warszawa 2014.

⁸ M. Marchwiński, *Wierni Bogom. Zaginione dziedzictwo*, Szczecin 2015.

⁹ A. Pankalla, *Kultura psychologów. Wprowadzenie do psychologii (historyczno-kulturowej)*, Katowice 2014; R. Stachowski, *Historia współczesnej myśli psychologicznej. Od Wundta do czasów najnowszych*, Warszawa 2010, pp. 43–46.

The study of non-scientific historical narratives, representing a phenomenon on the borderline between psychology and history, forces the scholar to draw from the legacies of both disciplines with all of their possibilities and limitations.¹⁰ Paying attention to the construction of “stories” by particular individuals about the history of their ethnic group (in the form of journalism or literary works) through the prism of their form and content, unlike academic knowledge, enables conclusions to be drawn about the specific psychology of those individuals. “Sometimes the subjectivity of their authors is externalized in them with particular force, sometimes, on the other hand, they provide valuable information about their own psychological functioning.”¹¹ The bias of a “chronicler” whose narrative is seen by scholarly historians as a deformation of historical knowledge reveals either the conditions at work in his personality or his ideological entanglements, resulting in the formation of an image of history that, while clashing with the actual findings of scholars, testifies to the needs, desires or fears of its creator.¹²

Conspiracy theories constitute a particular category of historical narrative. They represent a conscious attempt to understand complex problems, a search for a rational basis behind suffering, wars, or a menacing sense of powerlessness and simultaneous absence of (historical)

¹⁰ M. Dymkowski, *Wokół problemu tożsamości psychologa historycznego*, [in:] B. Zimoń-Dubowik, M. Gamian-Wilk (ed.), *Oblicza tożsamości: perspektywa interdyscyplinarna*, Wrocław 2008, pp. 111–121.

¹¹ M. Dymkowski, *Wprowadzenie do psychologii historycznej*, Gdańsk 2003, p. 96.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 128–146.

facts.¹³ A low level of trust in the motives of others and a tendency to attribute negative intentions to them (what is called the *sinister attribution error*¹⁴), as well as a deep attachment to one's own theses, cause a strong emotional engagement in such professed theories. People who believe in conspiracy theories have a tendency to look for meaning and find causal links in the world around them even when the facts and meaning they find can (from an objectivist perspective) be considered arbitrary.

Anti-Slavic Conspiracy

In view of the fragmentary treatment given this subject by individual authors, it is difficult to speak of one coherent Slavic conspiracy theory. All of these conspiracy narratives have their source, however, in attempts to look for the ancient Slavic world that vanished in the shadows of history, a focus of interest as early as the Romantic era.¹⁵ Another shared feature among them is the attribution of conspiratorial activity to representatives of Western (Judeo-Christian) culture.

According to these non-scientific historical narratives, Slavs are an ancient people and have inhabited Central-Eastern Europe for many thousands of years. This view, which exists as part of autochthonic theories of the

¹³ V. Swami, R. Coles, *The Truth is Out There*, "The Psychologist" 23(7)/2010, pp. 560–563.

¹⁴ R.M. Kramer, "The sinister attribution error: Paranoid cognition and collective distrust in organizations," *Motivation and Emotion* 18(2)/1994, pp. 199–230.

¹⁵ A. Gajda, *XIX-wieczne korzenie polskiej myśli rodzimowierczej: słowianofilstwo, gminowładztwo, pogaństwo*, [in:] B. Szlachta (ed.), *Myśl i polityka. Księga pamiątkowa dedykowana profesorowi Jackowi Marii Majchrowskiemu. Tom 1*, Kraków 2011, pp. 205–224; M. Michalski, *Dawni Słowianie w tradycji polskiej I połowy XIX wieku. W poszukiwaniu tożsamości wspólnotowej*, Poznań 2013.

ethnogenesis of the Slavs, was widely disseminated in the historiography of the PRL period.¹⁶ Contemporary scholars are rather inclined toward allochthonic theories of Slavic ethnogenesis, postulating that the Slavs arrived in the fifth or sixth century C.E. from their original eastern abodes,¹⁷ though these are tempered by an awareness, typical with scientific knowledge, that new facts may yet alter that view and that existing research methods require further honing.¹⁸ Non-scientific narratives, on the other hand, tend to be deemed final and conclusive; their inconsistency with scientific findings is therefore thought to be the result of actions by hostile interests or errors on the part of researchers resulting from their reliance on faulty sources.

Selective use of scientific knowledge for the purpose of validating one's own claims can be observed in the references to the latest findings on population genetics (haplogroup R1a Y-DNA¹⁹). Studies have shown that the population of Central Europe has changed only slightly in genetic terms since neolithic times and is related to the population of Persia (Iran). The builders of non-scientific

¹⁶ W. Hensel, *Etnogeneza Słowian*, [in:] L. Leciejewicz (ed.), *Mały słownik kultury dawnych Słowian*, Warszawa 1988, pp. 433–444; J. Wyrozumski, *Historia Polski do roku 1505*, Warszawa 1984, pp. 63–68.

¹⁷ P.M. Barford, *The Early Slavs. Culture and Society in Early Medieval Eastern Europe*, Ithaca–New York 2001; A. Sołtysiak, "The plague pandemic and Slavic expansion in the 6th–8th centuries," *Archaeologia Polona* 44/2006, pp. 339–364.

¹⁸ K. Borowiec, "Kanon wiedzy na temat tzw. etnogenezy Słowian. Czas przełomu," *Kwartalnik Językoznawczy* 1/2012, pp. 1–36.

¹⁹ C. Białczyński, *Genetyczne odkrycia 2010/2015 – Nowa Genealogia Słowian i innych ludów Białego Łądu (Europy)*, Białczyński, 20.09.2015, <https://bialczyński.wordpress.com/slowianie-tradycje-kultura-dzieje/genetyka-skad-pochodza-slowianie-r1a/genetyczne-odkrycia-2010-%E2%80%93-nowa-genealogia-slowian-i-innych-ludow-bialego-ladu-europy/> (17.02.2016); *Haplogroup R1a (Y-DNA)*, Eupedia, http://www.eupedia.com/europe/Haplogroup_R1a_Y-DNA.shtml (17.02.2016).

conceptions of Slavic history have asserted a priori that the Central European genotype is closely linked to the Slavic ethnicity,²⁰ a claim subject to doubt in academic circles.

The Slavs' antiquity and, at the same time, exceptionality are thought to be demonstrated by their descent from the Aryan race.²¹ In more extreme versions, the Aryan origin of the Slavs is linked with their inheritance of an extraterrestrial civilization from which the Aryans are said to be descended, while the emergence of the Slavs as a separate entity resulted from the defeat of the Aryans in a war with the Atlantic Empire.²² Less "radical" narratives reject the cosmic aspects and indicate the greatness of the Slavs by revealing the (deliberate) onomastic errors in the names assigned to individual Eurasian peoples. A fundamental misunderstanding is thought to have occurred due to the nomenclature used during the Roman Empire, which referred to all tribes east of the Rhine as Germans. In contemporary non-scientific narratives, a strong belief in the Slavic origin of (at least) the majority of the Germanic tribes, such as the Goths and the Vandals, holds.²³ Other

²⁰ Marucha, "Jesteśmy jedną z najstarszych cywilizacji na świecie!", *Dziennik gajowego Maruchy*, 28.08.2015, <https://marucha.wordpress.com/2015/08/28/jestesmy-jedna-z-najstarszych-cywilizacji-na-swiecie/#more-53066> (17.02.2016).

²¹ "Ario-Słowianie starożytni duchowi wojownicy białej drogi (światła)," *Indiachinook*, 11.02.2015, <https://indiachinook.wordpress.com/2015/02/11/ario-slowianie-starozytni-duchowi-wojownicy-bialej-drogi-swiatla/> (17.02.2016); L. Czupkiewicz, *Pochodzenie i rasa Słowian*, Wrocław 1996; Miron, "Kolebka Ariów (Airyanem Vaejo)," *Wiara Przyrodzona*, 22.01.2016, <https://wiaraprzyrodzona.wordpress.com/2016/01/22/kolebka-ariow-airyanem-vaejo/> (17.02.2016).

²² J. Bieszk, *Słowiańscy królowie Lechii. Polska starożytna*, Warszawa 2015.

²³ I. Cwirko, "Jak ze Słowian zrobiono Germanów," *Kryształowy Wszechświat*, 30.04.2015, <http://krysztalowywszechswiat.blogspot.com/2015/04/jak-ze-sowian-zrobiono-germanow.html> (17.02.2016).

peoples who have been wrongly denied their membership in the Slavic fraternity are the Sarmatians, the Scythians, and even the Tatars.²⁴

The power of the ancient Lechian Empire (as the putative Slavic state is called) is thought to have manifested in its territorial reach. The Empire would have included all of Central Eastern Europe (including the Balkans) and stretched to the Urals, while its western border is thought to have lain at the Rhine or possibly even the Loire.²⁵ This imperial narrative portrays the Lechians as the rulers of nearly the entire ancient world, before whom the inhabitants of neighbouring countries, including the Roman Empire, trembled; not only did that empire fail to take control of the Amber Road,²⁶ it also fell due to the onslaught of Slavic warriors.²⁷ The Lechians are also thought to have colonized areas in North Africa.²⁸ The cultural legacy left elsewhere by the Slavs, with their highly advanced level of civilization, is inconsiderable, according to these conspiracy theories, because of the deliberate destruction of

²⁴ C. Białczyński, "Czy Scytowie byli Słowianami i czy Słowianie są Scytami? Tak!", *Białczyński*, 21.01.2012, <https://bialczynski.wordpress.com/tag/genealogia-slowian/> (17.02.2016); Miron, "Tatarzy," *Wiara Przyrodzona*, 17.03.2015, <https://wiaraprzyrodzona.wordpress.com/2015/03/17/tatarzy/> (17.02.2016); "Who are we Slavs and what is our Origin," *Slavorum*, 6.09.2014, <http://www.slavorum.org/who-are-we-slavs-and-what-is-our-origin/> (17.02.2016).

²⁵ *Mapy*, *Wiara Przyrodzona*, <https://wiaraprzyrodzona.wordpress.com/mapy/> (17.02.2016).

²⁶ M. Agnosiewicz, "Starożytności polskie," *Racjonalista*, 11.11.2015, <http://www.racjonalista.pl/kk.php/s,9933> (17.02.2016).

²⁷ I. Cwirko, "Starożytna historia Polaków. W drodze do Imperium," *Kryształowy Wszechświat*, 21.08.2015, <http://krysztalowywszechswiat.blogspot.com/2015/08/starozytna-historia-polakow-w-drodze-do.html> (17.02.2016).

²⁸ Miron, "Kolonizacja Afryki Północnej przez ówczesnych władców Imperium Lechickiego," *Wiara Przyrodzona*, 2.04.2015, <https://wiaraprzyrodzona.wordpress.com/2015/04/02/kolonizacja-afryki-polnocnej-przez-owczesnych-wladcow-imperium-lechickiego/> (17.02.2016).

evidence and sources, and each minor datum confirming the imperial sweep of the Slavs is therefore treated as a world-historic discovery. One example of a remnant of the Lechian Empire is supposed to be the Serpent's Wall in present-day Ukraine, interpreted as a giant network of defensive fortifications.²⁹

Amateur linguistic and source analyses have been treated as proof of the ancient imperial might of the Slavs. The Lechian state was supposedly known to the Hebrews, judging from the appearance in the Old Testament of the word "Lechia" (six times, in Judges and II Samuel) in the context of geographical names. Linguistic interpretations present theories no less interesting. Comparison of ancient Greek records with Polish language is used to argue the allegedly Slavic origin of the Trojans.³⁰ Whereas the identification of various terms, such as "Polska" ("Lechistan"), "Polak" or "szlachcic" (nobleman), as descendants of the root "Lechia" constitutes a relatively uncontroversial group of claims, the creators of conspiracist narration go considerably further in their line of argumentation. According to them, the names Yahwe (Lah-we) and Allah (Al-Lah) refer to representatives of the Slavic empire, whom adherents of the great monotheistic religions worshipped as gods.³¹

²⁹ M. Kozak, "Wielki Mur... Słowiański – gigantyczna sieć umocnień obronnych, wokół której panuje zмова milczenia. 'Do budowy zużyto kilka milionów metrów sześciennych drewna i usypano kilkaset milionów metrów sześciennych ziemi,'" *Niezłomni*, 1.09.2014, <http://niezłomni.com/?p=18916> (17.02.2016).

³⁰ Miron, "Słowiańskie napisy sprzed 2500 lat," *Wiara Przyrodzona*, 18.03.2015, <https://wiaraprzyrodzona.wordpress.com/2015/03/18/slowianskie-napisy-sprzed-2500-lat/> (17.02.2016).

³¹ "Lachy," *Indiachinook*, 26.01.2015, <https://indianchinook.wordpress.com/2015/01/26/579/> (17.02.2016).

The dominant role of Slavdom led, according to such narratives, to the conspiracy raised against it. The Lechians were too powerful, which provoked hostility toward them from all other peoples. A crucial role is played in Slavic conspiracy theories (as in many others) by the Jews, who are alleged to have sought revenge for the destruction by Slavs of the Judaic Khazar state in the tenth century C.E. Plans made by contemporary Jews, alleged to be descended from the Khazars rather than the ancient Hebrews,³² is thought to involve taking the Slavs' lands away from them and building a second Israel on the territory of contemporary Ukraine.³³ This anti-Slavic conspiracy is alleged to have begun no later than the ninth or tenth century, when the Judeo-Christians (in most of these narratives, any distinction between Jews and Christians is considered superfluous) took advantage of the Lechian Empire's increasing weakness to smash it apart and establish the power of the Pope following a bloody crusade.³⁴ The Slavic civilization was then replaced by the "Western Jewish anti-civilization."³⁵ Today's Germans were also involved in the conspiratorial activities directed against the Slavs, for

³² B. Machalica, "Prof. Shlomo Sand obnaża kłamstwo założycielskie Izraela: Żydzi nie są Semitami, czyli narodem wybranym, a 'antysemityzm' to technika globalnej manipulacji," *Tajne Archiwum Watykańskie*, <https://tajnearchiwumwatykanskie.wordpress.com/2015/01/31/prof-shlomo-sand-obnaza-klamstwo-zalozycielskie-izraela-zydzi-nie-sa-semitami/> (17.02.2016).

³³ Paziem, "Tajny plan Izraela – drugi Izrael na Ukrainie," *Wierni Polsce Suwerennej*, 21.12.2014, <https://wiernipolsce1.wordpress.com/2014/12/21/tajny-plan-izraela-drugi-izrael-na-ukrainie/> (17.02.2016).

³⁴ Miron, "Jak Europa krwawo nawracała Słowian i Bałtów," *Wiara Przyrodzona*, 31.07.2015, <https://wiaraprzyrodzona.wordpress.com/2015/07/31/jak-europa-krwawo-nawracala-slowian-i-baltow/> (17.02.2016).

³⁵ Opolczykpl, "Cywilizacja Słowiańska a żydo-anty-cywilizacja zachodu," *Blog polski*, 11.03.2014, <https://opolczykpl.wordpress.com/2014/03/11/cywilizacja-slowianska-a-zydo-anty-cywilizacja-zachodu/> (17.02.2016).

the purpose of obliterating the Slavic past from their territory and creating legitimacy for their very young emerging state.³⁶

The enfeeblement of the Slavs' might by conspiracies is said to have taken place through the implementation of the principle of "Divide and conquer," in accordance to which notion internal conflicts are stirred up among Slavic nations, in order that they might fail to unite against their common (real) enemies.³⁷ Moreover, conspiracist narratives postulate a modification of historical memory that made the social order in Slavic nations, deprived of their roots, succumb easily to external Western influences.³⁸ That belief is based on the low level of awareness of Slavic societies, observed, for example, in contemporary Poland, and manifested in the scant knowledge of the culture of the ancient Slavs or even attempts to deny the existence of certain elements of that culture.³⁹

The description above by no means exhausts the content of Slavic conspiracy-themed historical narratives. Only the most important and most representative elements

³⁶ Phoenix, "Niemcy? Jacy Niemcy? – Niemcy NIE są starsze od USA!", *Wspaniała Rzeczpospolita*, 7.01.2015, <http://wspanialarzeczpospolita.pl/2015/01/07/niemcy-jacy-niemcy-niemcy-nie-sa-starsze-od-usa/> (17.02.2016).

³⁷ "Zasada 'Dziel i rządź' – taktyka, która obecnie okupanci stosują aby nami rządzić. Jak można odeprzec ta taktykę 'dziel i rządź'? Co się jej przeciwstawia i ją pokonuje?", *Indianchinois*, 14.04.2014, <https://indianchinois.wordpress.com/2014/04/14/zasada-dziel-i-rzadz-taktyka-ktora-obecnie-okupanci-stosuja-aby-nami-rzadzic-jak-mozna-odeprzec-ta-taktyke-dziel-i-rzadz-co-sie-jej-przeciwstawia-i/> (17.02.2016).

³⁸ Miron, "Dlaczego ukrywa się nasze dzieje Polski?", *Wiara Przyrodzona*, 15.02.2016, <https://wiaraprzyrodzona.wordpress.com/2016/02/15/dlaczego-ukrywa-sie-nasze-dzieje-polski/> (17.02.2016).

³⁹ M. Janion, *Niesamowita Słowiańszczyzna. Fantazmaty literatury*, Kraków 2007, pp. 12–20.

of the stories woven by self-taught historians about the history of the Slavs and the foes conspiring against them have been presented. Nevertheless, the examples shown reveal the mentality among those who create such narratives and enable us to perform a psychological analysis of them.

Historical Narratives and the Sense of Slavic Identity

From a psychological point of view, Slavic conspiracy narratives belong to the category of what are called “grand narratives”, a designation that can be applied to “basically any general, meaning-creating interpretation of reality and each system of knowledge – visual, scientific, artistic, ideological, bearing the status of a paradigm and constituting a key to understanding reality.”⁴⁰ At the same time, grand narratives are closely linked with personal stories relating to the perception of a particular individual.⁴¹ A sense of identity, understood in terms of content, representing a subjective, phenomenological equivalent of objective identity,⁴² in its layered structure creates a space for the construction of the cultural references that shape the structure of the private self.⁴³

⁴⁰ M. Straś-Romanowska, *Psychologia wobec małych i wielkich narracji*, [in:] M. Straś-Romanowska, B. Bartosz, M. Żurko (ed.), *Psychologia małych i wielkich narracji*, Warszawa 2010, p. 25.

⁴¹ E. Dryll, *Wielkie i małe narracje w życiu człowieka*, [in:] M. Straś-Romanowska, B. Bartosz, M. Żurko (ed.), *Badania narracyjne w psychologii*, Warszawa 2010, pp. 163–182.

⁴² M. Straś-Romanowska, *Tożsamość w czasach dekonstrukcji*, [in:] B. Zimoń-Dubowik, M. Gamian-Wilk (ed.), *Oblicza tożsamości: perspektywa interdyscyplinarna*, Wrocław 2008, pp. 19–30.

⁴³ J. Kociuba, *Idea Ja i koncepcja tożsamości. Zmiana znaczenia idei Ja i koncepcji tożsamości w nauce i kulturze*, Lublin 2014, pp. 171–204.

A strongly defined sense of ethnic or national identity (a Slavic self) results in considerable importance being ascribed to the role of knowledge about the history of one's community. The "blanks" that are a part of the natural course of development of scientific knowledge and contrasting or contradictory theories and hypotheses elicit an inner need for closure with regard to historical knowledge and the creation of a coherent narrative for the purpose of obtaining a sense of being in possession of a full range of data on one's own ethnic past. From a subjectivist perspective, Slavic conspiracy theories (regardless of their historical accuracy) reveal in their meaning the identity structures of their creators, propagators and exponents, or (to generalize somewhat) a substantial portion of the population of those who are Slavic at heart.

The attribution of political failures to external actors while simultaneously believing in the former greatness of Slavdom creates a sense of belonging to a "mighty" ethnic group. The powerful idealization of one's own community brings with it a sense of approval for oneself as a participant in it. "Since time immemorial, among our Forefathers, a hard, warlike, heroic national character was formed. We are like that today because through the centuries generations of heroes together created a heroic and hard, unyielding, stubborn, always edging forward, immortal national character."⁴⁴ The dormant potential in Slavs often figures prominently in statements looking

⁴⁴ R. Merski, *Etyka słowiańska*, Wrocław 2013, p. 30.

forward toward expansionist activity aimed at recovering lands that have somehow been lost.

The perception of conspiracies aimed at Slavdom places individuals who identify with that ethnic identity in the role of victims of a hostile conspiracy, resulting in a sense that their territory is in danger (a danger symbolized by the fall of Arkona). Remedial measures against this intervention would theoretically include solicitude for the ethnic purity of the region (a popular internet meme says: “Muslims? Remember what happened when we let in the Christians?”) and close collaboration among all Slavic nations or even efforts to create a Pan-Slavic brotherhood. Being a Slav (where the creators of such narratives are concerned) would thus be linked with participation in a strong ethnicity-based collective association whose representatives are thought to be marked by numerous virtues, such as their love of peace and nature (reminiscent of the elvish peoples of fantasy literature.⁴⁵) These virtues, too, in the context of certitude as to the accuracy of these created historical narratives, would be accompanied by infallibility and a monopoly on truth.

The creation of such associations is made possible for proponents of Slavic conspiracy theories by the internet activism of charismatic and authoritarian personalities.⁴⁶ Studies conducted in 2010 showed that conspiracy

⁴⁵ Slaviceter, “Słowiańszczyzna – królestwo Elfów,” *Słowianie i Słowianowierstwo*, 11.04.2015, <https://slowianowierstwo.wordpress.com/2015/04/11/slowianszczyzna-krolestwo-elfow/#more-1490> (17.02.2016).

⁴⁶ J.W. McHoskey, “Machiavellianism and Personality Dysfunction,” *Personality and Individual Differences* 31/2001, pp. 791–798.

theories are more convincing for individuals with low self-esteem. Such narratives constitute reactions to feelings of self-doubt and impotence, a fact testified to by heightened activity in the sector of the brain responsible for social interactions, fear or aggression. Continuous processing of information of a conspiracist nature enables an increased subjective sense of their truth and the creation of a coherent narrative.⁴⁷ The decisive factor in remaining within a milieu where conspiracy theories are propounded, on the other hand, is the fact of being there, since deeming one conspiracy theory valid raises the probability of finding another one valid, even when the two contradict each other.⁴⁸ Despite their mutual exclusivity, particular Slavic narratives can thus be contained in the single (subjectively) coherent cognitive system of a particular person.

Understanding the conspiracy theories that function within contemporary Slavic cultures from the point of view of the psychological factors that lie at their foundation offers an incentive to understand the mentality of the present-day inhabitants of Central Eastern Europe and the social phenomena currently at play in the Slavic realm. Popular (non-scientific) historical narratives that exist in the media shape social consciousness, and as a result, also affect such aspects of public life as political preferences or attitudes toward other nationalities. A tendency to be susceptible to the “charms” of conspiracy theories or to create them, rooted in a sense of alienation

⁴⁷ V. Swami, R. Coles, *The Truth...*, op. cit.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

and helplessness or in an authoritarian mentality,⁴⁹ may, depending on the current socio-political situation, affect some sector of the population.

Although the reach of Slavic conspiracy narratives is limited, their influence should not be underestimated. They require further study from researchers, just as do other (sub)cultural manifestations of the contemporary revival of interest in the Slavic past. The “Slavophilic” trend constitutes a potential source for the formation of a new identity among Poles (and not only them), and a scientific awareness of its sources, of real continuity between the past and the future, is thus more crucial now than ever.

translated by Timothy Williams

⁴⁹ K. Korzeniowski, “O dwóch psychologicznych przesłankach myślenia spiskowego. Alienacja czy autorytaryzm,” *Psychologia Społeczna* 3(11)/2009, pp. 144–154.