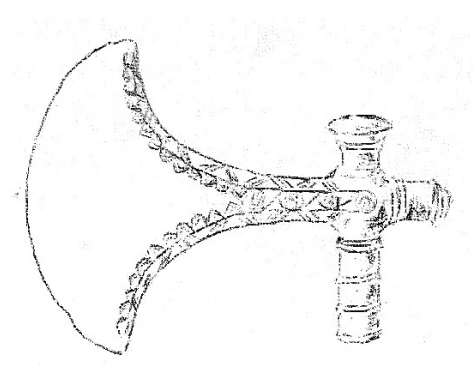


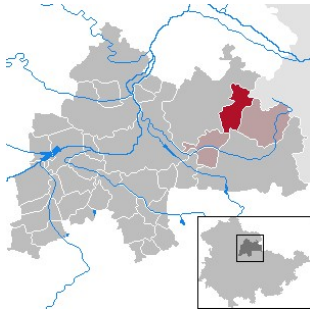
4. Research report by Heinz Axthelm, 1938.



The origins of the Axthelm family within the context of its folk history -
an attempt at a presentation

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- I. On the prehistory of our ancestral homeland.
 - a. The landscape then and now.



Where the Unstrut River forms its great angle to the north, where the Eichsfeld extends eastward into the Kyffhäuser Mountains and sends its foothills – the Dün, the Hainleite, Schmücke and Finne – to the southeast, the ancestral homeland of our ancestors is to be found on the southern slope of the Finne, on whose fields farmers of the true grain and character of our name still sow and harvest today.

1) orographic

From northwest to southeast, this region is traversed by a mountain range that forms part of the northern edge of the Thuringian Central Basin. Starting in the Eichsfeld region, the Dün and the Hainleite extend to the Unstrut River, where the two ruins of Sachsenburg Castle stand on the last promontory. Beyond the Unstrut, the Schmücke ridge continues this range and, at the forest boundary between Burgwenden and Kammerforst, transitions southeast into the Finne ridge.

Slightly to the north, the "Hohe Schrecke" (High Terror) stretches as a detached spur of the Eichsfeld region, parallel to the Schmücke hills, separated from them by the Helderbach stream, and merges into the Finne ridge at the forest boundary between Kammerforst and Rabenswalde. The Finne ridge extends southeast to the Ilm and Saale rivers. This mountain range has an average elevation of 272 meters and reaches its highest point (386 meters) at the Kinzelsberge; the ridge of the Hohe Schrecke, however, lies at an elevation of approximately 360 meters.

The Finne plateau is broken up by a number of larger or smaller, deeply incised valleys, which are traversed by living water, giving the whole landscape a varied character.

The name "Finne," first documented in 1106 as "Vin," means "The Height." This name is derived from the mountain rising above Burgwenden, the "Penna Height." "Penna" is of Celtic origin; the mountain received its name from the Celts, and the Germanic peoples altered the Celtic "P" to "F."

The name "Hohe Schrecke" derives from its 301-meter-high summit. "Schrecke" means a steeply rising mountain.

In contrast, the name "Schmücke" suggests a gently sloping, gracefully rising ridge. The name "Hainleite" appears in 1308 in the form "Haylitte" and means "wooded mountain slope." The part located north and northwest of the Wächterberg is still called "der Hayn" today, while the part to the southeast and belonging to the Sachsenburg Forest is called "Hainleite." The entire mountain range may originally have been called "Die Leite" until the double name "Hainleite" became widespread. Thus, over the centuries, all the original elevation names were applied to the entire mountain range.

2) hydrographic



This wooded homeland of our ancestors is bordered to the west, north, and northeast by the Unstrut River and lies like a forested peninsula in the Central German landscape. "Unstrut" likely derives from "Strut"—a forest with marshy ground. Thus, Unstrut is a formation of "Untiefe," meaning shallow or deep. Originally, the name referred to a wooded area traversed by the river; the river was probably called "Unstrut" only in the section of its course where it flowed through marshy ground.

Of the small bodies of water, we are only interested in the Lossa – it rises west of the village of Lossa in a small pond at an altitude of 311 m, flows through Lossa and then turns southeast. Near Billroda, it makes a sharp turn to the southwest, flows south from Rothenberga to the Hardisleben fields, then rushes west via Mansfeld, Gutmannshausen, Olbersleben, and Neuhausen towards the Unstrut plain, where it joins the Unstrut River near Leubingen.

(Formerly, around 1720, the Lossa flowed into the Unstrut much further north near Gorsleben and thus ran parallel to the larger river for a considerable distance.)

The name "Lossa" is highly disputed. One might assume it is of Slavic, i.e., Sorbian, origin, named after the elk (East Wendish "Los"). Since this place and river name already appears further east – near Wurzen – and dates back to the Sorbian period there, it is reasonable to assume that this name was brought to this area by the east-west Sorbian migration; it reappears much further west as a right tributary of the Fulda. Equally plausible is the alternative interpretation that the name Lossa is of Germanic origin from the 4th settlement period (c. 1050–1200).

In the oldest documents, it is called "Laz," derived from the Old High German word "*laz*" (sluggish, lazy). This name thus suggests a slowly flowing stream, and indeed, the middle course of the Lossa is so little affected by differences in the terrain's elevation that it has changed its course many times throughout history.

As recently as the first third of the 18th century, the Lossa, which is now 40 km long, had a course that was 10 km longer, in that it did not flow directly towards the Unstrut – as already mentioned above – but turned north before Leubingen and flowed parallel to the Unstrut until Gorsleben, only to merge with it there.



The Lossa is just a small, insignificant stream. Only a few kilometers separate its source from the brooks that flow into the Unstrut River on the northern slopes of the Finne hills; but from the village of Lossa, it turns south, flows through the Bunter sandstone formations of the Mühlthal valley, and then cuts through the Muschelkalk ridge near Rastenberg a second time. Even this section of

the Lossa's course reveals to the inquiring geologist the remarkable fact that the waters here once flowed in the opposite direction.

That was in those distant, ancient times when the Ilm River didn't yet take its course from Weimar via Ulza to Großheringen and then on to the Saale River, but instead turned north and flowed through the present-day Lossa Valley via Buttstädt and Hardisleben, crossing the Finne ridge and reaching the Unstrut River through the Haselbach Valley. Significant changes in elevation later forced the Ilm to take

this new course – but the Ilm gravel in the Lossa Valley still bears witness to this reversal of circumstances.

The section of the Lossa Valley between Rastenberg and Lossa also represents one of the oldest crossings over the Finne ridge; this depression was followed by the ancient so-called "High Road," which, coming from Erfurt, led via Großbrennbach and Mannstedt to Hardisleben and then, via Rastenberg, connected with the Unstrut Valley. When the Saxon emperors rode from Erfurt to their palaces in Memleben and Merseburg, they certainly took this route, which was heavily used at the time.

The Lossa River formerly fed the old Hardisleben moated castle along its course, passed the old settlement of Mannstedt, which once fell to the University of Leipzig through a donation, and then reached Guthmannshausen – whose oldest form of name apparently points to an ancient Germanic sanctuary of Wodan; for as late as the 8th century the place is called "Wodaneshusun".

The rest of the Lossa river's course via Neuhausen to the Unstrut river can be clearly traced on the map.

Just as the aforementioned geological finds and soil investigations on the upper reaches of the Lossa are of far-reaching importance for the study of the watercourse design and the groundwater conditions of the Schmücke and Finne area in general, so too did the excavations near Leubingen (so-called Leubingen hill), near the point where the Lossa flows into the Unstrut, provide historical insights of the greatest importance.



[Leubingen tumulus](#) was only recently discovered there, containing a wealth of skeletons, everyday objects, and jewelry dating back to the [Hallstatt culture](#), roughly 1000–500 BC, and of inestimable value to the study of antiquity. The arrangement of the actual princely grave and the skeletons grouped around it—those of fallen warriors as well as slaves, women, and children—allows for considerable conclusions to be drawn about the religious practices of this period and this tribe.

But this little digression is just a side note.

Why do I give such a detailed description of these two rivers, the Unstrut and the Lossa? Because the Unstrut marks the western and northern boundaries of our ancestors' ancestral homeland, while the Lossa defines the eastern and southern boundaries. Within this framework, which these two rivers form around the Schmücke, Schrecke, and Finne mountains like a natural boundary, our Axthelm lineage originated. There stood the cradle of our tribe, and from there all branches spread out.

Now, let me mention only the small streams where, to my knowledge, our ancestors grazed their herds. The first ancestor of my line is mentioned in 1623 in Rettgenstedt as "Hans am Wasser" (Hans by the Water). This water is the "Schafau," which rises south of the village of Schafau, flows slightly northwest to Bachra, passes through the village (my hometown), and from there—joining the "Rosenbach"—makes its way to Ostramondra-Rettgenstedt, before joining the Röse (coming from Burgwenden) before Kölleda and flowing into the Lossa under the name "Frauenbach" (near Frohndorf).

The name "Schafau" (literally "sheep") undoubtedly derives from the place name, which is not difficult to interpret. I will leave all other watercourses and streams unmentioned in this context; they can be found on the map. We are primarily interested in the bodies of water from which our ancestors drew their water and watered their livestock.

3) Conclusions from the geological formations

Geologically, this entire area belongs to the Thuringian Triassic Basin. Bunter sandstone, Muschelkalk limestone, and Keuper marl are the predominant strata.

The Bunter sandstone encompasses the entire Schrecke mountain range and the western ridge of the



Finne. Significant portions of this rock are overlain by glacial till and loess. The Muschelkalk limestone outcrops on the Schmücke ridge and along the southern edge of the Finne. In various places along its edge, it too is covered by clay. The southern foothills of the Schmücke and Finne are covered with Keuper marl.

So much for the description of the landscape. The local map provides a clear overview of everything.

4) Conclusions from the identification of place names and field names

What did our region look like in ancient times?

What can we deduce from place names and field names?

Based on his "History of Settlements in Northeastern Thuringia" (pp. 153 ff.), the prehistorian Dr. Schlüter posits the thesis "that swamp and forest were the obstacles that so severely hampered settlement throughout Central Germany that the history of settlement in this region appears primarily as a struggle with swamp and forest." Therefore, in order to paint a picture of the former landscape, one must attempt to determine the extent of the forest and swamp in those times.

It can be demonstrated for this Finnish region that large stretches of the loess plain were covered with forest, as they still are in some parts today. Dense forest covered the fields of the Finnish plain, where Neolithic people once had their homes.

Based on place names, field names, and the three old terms for forest – namely *Hart* (e.g., "Hartha" near Bachra, "Gehart" near Hemleben, etc.), *Heide* ("Heidefeld" near Bachra, "Heidewald" near Burgwenden), and *Loh* ("Lohparzellen" in Alt- and Schlossbeichlingen, the "Loh" in the Großmonra area, and south of the Finneberg, the "Hesseloh" and the "Hesselohberg") – local historians such as Schlüter and Naumann have concluded that in pre-Christian times, the areas of alluvial loam (golden floodplain) and some slopes covered with loess in the north along the Unstrut River remained free of forest, as did the area along the Unstrut and the Helderbach valley in the west. The southern slopes of the Schmücke and Finne hills and the land in front of them were particularly free of forest, although some individual wooded areas did occur. All the land in between – that is, the areas of the Schmücke, Schrecke, and Finne – was enclosed by forest, including the valleys between them. Although it would be very interesting for locals to describe the former landscape field by field and village by village, it would go beyond the scope of this discussion to go into detail. In any case, we note that the first bearers of our name settled in a predominantly forested area on the southern slope of the Finne. They cultivated some of the land and subsisted partly on hunting, while the tribes living a few hours south in the Lossa plain primarily practiced agriculture.

Regarding the type of forest cover at that time, it can be said – judging from old records – that the higher ground was mainly covered with deciduous forest: birch and aspen, beech and linden forests alternated with massive stands of oak. That the linden was particularly numerous is evident from the previously mentioned place names containing "Loh" (bark). Further clues to the tree species are provided by "das eichene Beil" (the oak axe) in the Kannawurf field and "das große und kleine Lindenbeil" (the large and small linden axe) in the Burgwenden field (the word "beil" contains the corrupted old "Bühl" meaning small hill). Generally speaking, one cannot draw conclusions about the tree species from the main definitions of forest (*Hart* or *Holz* , *Heide* , and *Loh*). *While the first three denote high forest, the word Loh is primarily used for scrubland.* In ancient times, deciduous forest occupied far more space in this area than the fir forest, which is predominant in some parts of our woodlands today.

Even from the word combinations with "-rode" or "Rod-" that still occur today, one can draw some conclusions about the prehistoric nature of the landscape.



These primeval forests were thus one obstacle our ancestors had to overcome in their settlement efforts. And the other? That was the marshland in the river lowlands. In prehistoric times, this marshland extended over vast stretches of forest and meadowland, as we already know from the history of the Roman campaigns, Tacitus' "Germania," and early medieval sources. While the marshy lowlands of the Unstrut River are of less concern to us, the marshy plains of the Lossa and Schafau rivers are more significant for our research. Dr. Schlüter asserts that the marshland of the lower

Lossa River spread from the west as far as the perpendicular line Altbeichlingen – Kölleda – Vogelsberg.

While the Unstrut River was bordered on both sides by extensive marshland, which also extended to the upper reaches of the Helderbach stream north of Hauterode, it can be assumed with some certainty that the settlements on the entire southern slope of the Schmücke and Finne hills lay outside this marshland and were built partly on alluvial loam (which was always free from flooding) and partly on loess. The inhabitants of this Schafau valley therefore had little to contend with in terms of marshy terrain, whereas the settlements to the west along the Unstrut and to the southwest along the Lossa River suffered greatly from flooding and waterlogging.

To gain a reasonably accurate picture of the landscape's former appearance, we cannot limit ourselves to simply identifying the once marshy floodplains. We must investigate the overall water conditions, inquiring about vanished lakes and ponds, and about dried-up watercourses. The latter, in particular, must have been far more numerous in earlier times, where the forest cover of the landscape was still largely untouched by human activity. With the progressive clearing of land, but also with the increasing cultivation of treeless areas, a completely different picture emerged. While many springs dried up due to the gradual deforestation of the hills, and especially the gentle slopes, the last major cultural project—land consolidation, land reclamation efforts by individual landowners, the straightening of streams, the construction of drainage ditches, and even the implementation of extensive drainage systems—ultimately led to many a water-rich region becoming water-poor. The older generation still remembers from their earliest youth how the stream, which today rushes in a straight line, once flowed sluggishly, or at least more sluggishly than today, in its meandering bed, its banks richly planted with willows and shrubs of all kinds. Thus, the "Crumbach," a tributary of the Lossa documented in 1140 near Billroda, has completely disappeared; its memory doesn't even survive in field names, while the

"Missbach" near Lossa lives on in the deserted village of Missberg and in the "Eisbach," now fenced off for military purposes.

Records from the Saxon era still reveal the conditions along the banks of the Lossa and Scherkonde rivers before the river regulation work began. The entire valley floor, through which the Frauenbach now flows into the Lossa (i.e., the Kölleda area), extending eastward upstream to Neuhausen and Olbersleben, presented a completely different picture. Even today, a stream flows into the Lossa near Leubingen, originating, according to the topographic map, from the Wellborn spring northeast of Battendorf and passing by Dermsdorf on its westward course. This stream was formerly called the "Molde"; its source can be seen in the former "Streitsee" (Dispute Lake). The stream's name has disappeared, while the word "Streitsee" remained in common use among the local population.

Around 1800, five small ponds with springs existed in this valley; around 1700, there were roughly twice as many. A vivid example of the disappearance of such small spring-fed lakes is the seepage hole in the "Kaltenborn" near Rettgenstedt, which suddenly dried up last summer (1936), having previously been a constant source of spring water.

The survey register of Schlossbeichlingen from the year 1833 states:

"Northwest of the western end of the Harrasberg, in the so-called Borntale, there is a marshy area that can only be drained at great expense. This basin is where the water collects that springs from the sources in the 'Totzlebener Grunde' and the 'Schiefgebrente' and which, during heavy rainfall, flows down from the mountains and often floods several acres."

The area south of the village and north of the ridge is described as follows:

"In the valley, the spring water from the so-called 'Großmonraer Rasenfleck' is collected by a newly constructed ditch on the left, which also collects the water from the 'Weihrutterborn' in the Burgwendener Felde and directs it into the Krebsgraben. The meadows in this valley suffer greatly from dampness."

These few examples already give us an indication of the wealth of research material available when one wants to investigate the water conditions of earlier times.

From the old field registers, one can still draw many conclusions about former stream courses and their valleys from the field names; all the names compounded with "-born" and "-klinge" indicate this, such as the "Goldborn" in the Bachraer field, the "Kreuzklinge" near Battendorf, the "Goldklinge" near Wiehe, etc.

We also learn about vanished lakes and ponds from the old field names: e.g. the "Streitsee" near Dermsdorf, the "Ezelsee" in Wolmirstedt fields, the "Irrensee" near Etzleben, the "Flursee" and the "Stödtener See" near Kölleda, the "Rundsee" near Frohdorf, etc.

The marshy nature of the floodplains is evidenced by the many reed place names, simple "Riethe," "Riethe" with other names like "Kuhrieth," "Hammelrieth," "Pferderieth," etc. Etzleben has a "Singenrieth," Leubingen a "Mörschrieth," and Frohdorf, with 850 acres of reed land, its "Sorgenrieth." Place names containing "Rieth" are also found in the valleys of the Helderbach, the Dornbach, and the Lossa. "Brühl"—a term for marshy meadow—is also occasionally found (Saubach, Schillingstedt, etc.). The old term for marshy land, "Sohle," is still found in the "Sohle" near Etzleben and the "Sohlfelde" near Brühel. Conclusions about the soil composition can also be drawn from old marsh plants, as seen in the names "Rohrwiese" (reed meadow) and "Rohrteich" (reed pond). And the old word "*sementa*" meaning reed grass resonates in the names "Seuchengraben" (plague ditch), "Seuchenborn" (plague spring), and "Seuchenhügel" (plague hill). Various field names still hint at traces

of a long-vanished aquatic flora and fauna. The "Entenpfuhle" (duck ponds) and "Entenfänge" (duck traps) near Kölleda are reminders of wild ducks that once inhabited these areas. Field names like "Kibitz" (lapwing) in the Leubingen and Etzleben fields, "der Kibitzhügel" (the lapwing hill) near Kölleda, and "aufm Kibitzfange" (on the lapwing trap) near Bibra demonstrate that a marsh bird, the lapwing, was also at home in these Finne and Schmücke lowlands.

From all these considerations it follows – and this was the purpose of my explanations – that the entire southern slope of the Schmücke and the Finne, as well as the Schafau valley, were probably free of marshland. Our ancestors must therefore have had less work to do in cultivating the land than the settlers in the Unstrut and Lossa plains. However, this does not reveal any significant difference in the nature of the work carried out by the various settlers in the entire area.

b. Who inhabited our ancestral homeland?

As in the previous section, the following will also provide a historical overview. Anyone who hasn't yet understood why I've gone into such detail will now increasingly grasp my point. To put it briefly: only through precise linguistic-historical investigation is it even possible to trace the origin of our family name and thus the genesis of our lineage. However, linguistic-historical argumentation is only possible if one knows the speakers of the language, that is, the history of the relevant ethnic groups. But when I speak of these linguistic groups, that is, of the former inhabitants of our ancestral homeland, I must first and foremost be familiar with this homeland itself. Hence the level of detail!

"But where better to recognize our ancestors than in their earliest accessible manifestation? That is, in prehistoric times! And what purer way than by observing their own activities in their homeland? Whoever wants to experience our earliest and most authentic nature in a pure and unadulterated way must look to prehistory."

Kossinna speaks these words in the foreword to his *German Prehistory*. He goes on to say:

"We would be nothing today, nothing of what we are, nor of the greatness that lies within us and may yet burst forth from us, were it not for the great inheritance from our forefathers. Our long-extinct ancestors bequeathed to us not only their flesh and blood, but also their thoughts, their spirit, and their character; we still bear the full weight of their faults – we receive the reward for all their merits."

These thoughts of one of our most renowned researchers express the necessity that compels me to draw on the past as much as possible in my investigations. In this context, let me add a fitting characterization of our ancestors from Kossinna: "In most of Europe, the peoples covered by Nordic strata remained for a long time in a state of sparsely scattered settlements in small villages and isolated farmsteads. There was no need for the legal codes of a Hammurabi, nor for written discourses for daily business, nor for temples for the communal worship of the masses, nor for so-called high art. What animated the Germanic people was rather their intimate connection with nature, though not with the wild, dark forest, as the seemingly ineradicable, but no less false, popular notion imagines. The Germanic people avoided that primeval forest when they settled there, just as we do. For the vast, desolate forest has always been the enemy of civilized man. The Germanic people only ventured into it—and then always with pleasure—when it was a matter of indulging in the hunt, and always with holy awe when they..." who secretly wished to approach the invisibly ruling deity there. But to dwell there permanently was only the curse of the one "desired to the forest," the outlaw, the restless, fugitive, outlawed criminal, who had to hide as a

"warg," that is, as a wolf, in thickets and swamps, where at night he could all too easily become a tool of elven powers, as we so often hear in our old, poignant folk ballads of enchanted knights: who doesn't know them, the immortal names Harald and Oluf, [Erlkönig](#) and Elbershöh, to whom Karl Löwe's ingenious musical power bestowed a second immortality! The Germanic people were driven by a tendency toward isolation, toward living out their individual impulses; they hated the cramped confinement in the stone heaps of the cities. Because he lived in utter isolation on his land as a farmer, he found contentment within a small circle, fulfilled by the diligent management of his farm and household, interrupted only by hunting and political activity. The Germanic tribes demonstrated what beautiful things could be achieved under such living conditions, undoubtedly offering the best that this era has left behind.

As with the other peoples influenced by the north, the time finally came for the last remnant of the racial capital of Indo-European Europe that remained in its ancestral homeland—that is, for the Germanic peoples of the north—when they had to emerge from their reticence and confront those far more advanced cultures in their own lands. These cultures had, millennia ago, created cultures on foreign soil inhabited by the southward-migrating elements of their own ancestors, cultures that were now being used in a hostile manner toward their old homeland and their mother people. Only now, in the closest possible interaction with foreign culture, could even the purest remaining Germanic peoples demonstrate their capabilities in the competition with the entire world. Gradually, the great era dawned, in which the Germans, and with them the other Germanic peoples, increasingly rose to the forefront of European, and ultimately world, culture—an era that then leads into more recent history. But everything we still hope to achieve in this struggle from Germanic culture – it has all been contained within it from the beginning, “often much greater, often so glorious that it seems completely unattainable for us in the future” (A. Haupt).

“Since I learned that his language, his law and his antiquity were held in far too low esteem, I wanted to elevate my fatherland” (Jakob Grimm 1844).

1) Who inhabited our ancestral homeland in the Stone Age (until about 2000 BC)?

"The earliest Indo-Europeans still bear witness to the dewy freshness of paradise."
(Alexander von Peez, 1889)

Here we are talking about the Late Stone Age, which can be dated to around 2000 BC, as no traces of humans from the Early Stone Age have been observed in the Finne region. However, since such traces are more frequently found near Weimar and Taubach an der Ilm, it is not impossible that the footsteps of diluvial humans also reached our Finne homeland. In any case, the onset of the last Ice Age, along with the diluvial fauna, also drove humans from this area.

In contrast, the Neolithic period has left us with a wealth of archaeological finds. The artifacts unearthed, including artfully crafted weapons and delicately worked clay vessels, testify to the tremendous progress made by the people of this region. These Stone Age people were avid hunters but also practiced agriculture and animal husbandry. They buried their dead in stone cist graves, though less frequently without them. The bodies were buried in a "squatting" position, meaning the legs were bent towards the chest, and sometimes the arms were also bent, either in a seated position or laid to the side.

The long-held view that Stone Age humans lived in pit dwellings dug into the ground in the shape of cauldrons, funnels, or cylinders, which were only covered with wattle and daub in winter, has recently been strongly questioned – specifically due to the excavation of a Linear Pottery culture settlement near Lissdorf (near Eckartsberga). Professor Dr. Schuchhardt of Berlin has determined through this excavation that Stone Age humans lived in actual houses. These houses were constructed by driving posts into the ground and connecting them with wattle and daub walls, which were then sealed with clay. Living and sleeping areas were separate. The pits uncovered during the excavations are primarily intended as cellars and storage rooms, which were covered with planks. Perhaps the deeper, round holes served for burying storage vessels?



In any case, this excavation suggests that Stone Age people were much more advanced in house construction than previously thought. The fact that this house construction was far more complicated and involved considerable labor indicates that these Stone Age settlers were very sedentary and kept their permanent dwellings for as long as possible.

Judging from the numerous finds of Stone Age weapons and tools, the southern slopes of the Schmücke and Finne mountains must have been relatively densely populated. The discovered hand mills and grain crushers, spindle whorls, and loom weights speak volumes about this. These artifacts directly point to vanished settlements, and only such vanished settlements and graves bear witness to the former population of this area.

Some examples of individual finds: In addition to the many artifacts, of which the museum in Berlin has over 300 pieces, numerous Stone Age graves were found near Altbeichlingen, Bachra, Caubach, Bibra, Memleben, Heldrunen, etc.

- Near Heldrunen, graves without headstones.
- Near Memleben, a burial mound with skeletons in four stone cists.
- Near Sachsenburg, a group of 12–15 now plowed-over burial mounds; within them, skeletons with cord-decorated vessels. Not far from there, in the so-called "Götzenhain" (Idol Grove), a reclining stool in a hollow hewn into the limestone rock.
- On the Hainleite hill, three burial mounds with stool remains and cord-decorated shards were found; a fourth mound contained a stool on a stone packing at the bottom, a stone packing above it, and again three skeletons.
- In the Kölleda hill near Schlossbeichlingen, a grave 7 feet long, surrounded by yellow stone slabs, was uncovered; the ceiling and the floor as well.
- In 1909, a shallow grave was uncovered in Gorsleben, in the garden of the blacksmith Peter, containing stretched-out skeletons buried face down. A very primitive clay vessel stood near the neck.

Based on the skulls, Dr. Schlitz-Heilbronn determined that the dead belonged to a population group that forms the transition from the West German megalithic population to the Central German population of the Corded Ware culture.

Besides grave finds, numerous tool finds were made, especially in the Herrenposserstedt area; the school collection there alone numbers over 1000 pieces. The rich finds of millstones (which were also found in the Seena area), hand millstones, loom weights, and spinning whorls (Lossau area) indicate that Stone Age settlements existed here.

In the fields of Klosterhäseler and Frankenrode, particularly in the area known as "Bettelfelde," a large stone plowshare and boxes full of shards belonging to the Linear Pottery culture were discovered. Traces of this culture are particularly numerous in the Finne region. It was teachers and pastors who, with keen interest and diligent searching, collected finds of all kinds, thus preserving them for posterity. Such discoveries were made throughout the Finne – in Bachra, Lossa, Wolmirstedt, Borxleben, Braunsroda, Wischroda, Häseler, Schimmel, and elsewhere. This provides evidence to refute the erroneous claim that hills like the Finne were uninhabited during the Stone Age. The fact that the main find sites lie along the former postal road Essleben–Klosterhäseler–Burghäseler even suggests that an ancient trade route passed through this area in prehistoric times.

These finds and various remains of Stone Age settlements, in light of everything said above, suggest that the Finne region itself, even in the higher elevations, was relatively densely populated during the Stone Age, but also during the Neolithic (younger) period.

These early inhabitants of our region were already familiar with written language, as can be seen from isolated stone finds dating back to the early Neolithic period – around 3000 BC. They belong to the North Indo-European Elbe-Saale cultural sphere of the Stone Age, which culminated in the magnificent expansion of the Corded Ware culture.

Finally, I come to what is most important for this research: The emergence of the Indo-European term "[axe](#)" = *agési* falls within this period of the Late Stone Age, from 5000 to 2000 BC. (**see Report 2**).

But note well: the formation of the Indo-European term "axe" as a tool designation; the Common Germanic word *agizi* , which goes back to the Indo-European root and developed the spelling used today, originated in the cultural period of the Germanic Bronze Age (i.e. between 2000–500 BC).



These historical linguistic processes alone form the basis for a conscientious, indeed even possible, investigation. I must therefore discuss them in more detail in a separate section below. Here, for the sake of better understanding what follows, a brief overview of the major periods of development will be given:

In accordance with the large prehistoric "three-period system": Stone Age – Bronze Age – Iron Age, up to the entry of the Germanic peoples into German national history, the history of the Germanic language is also divided into large periods: Kluge, for example, makes the following division:

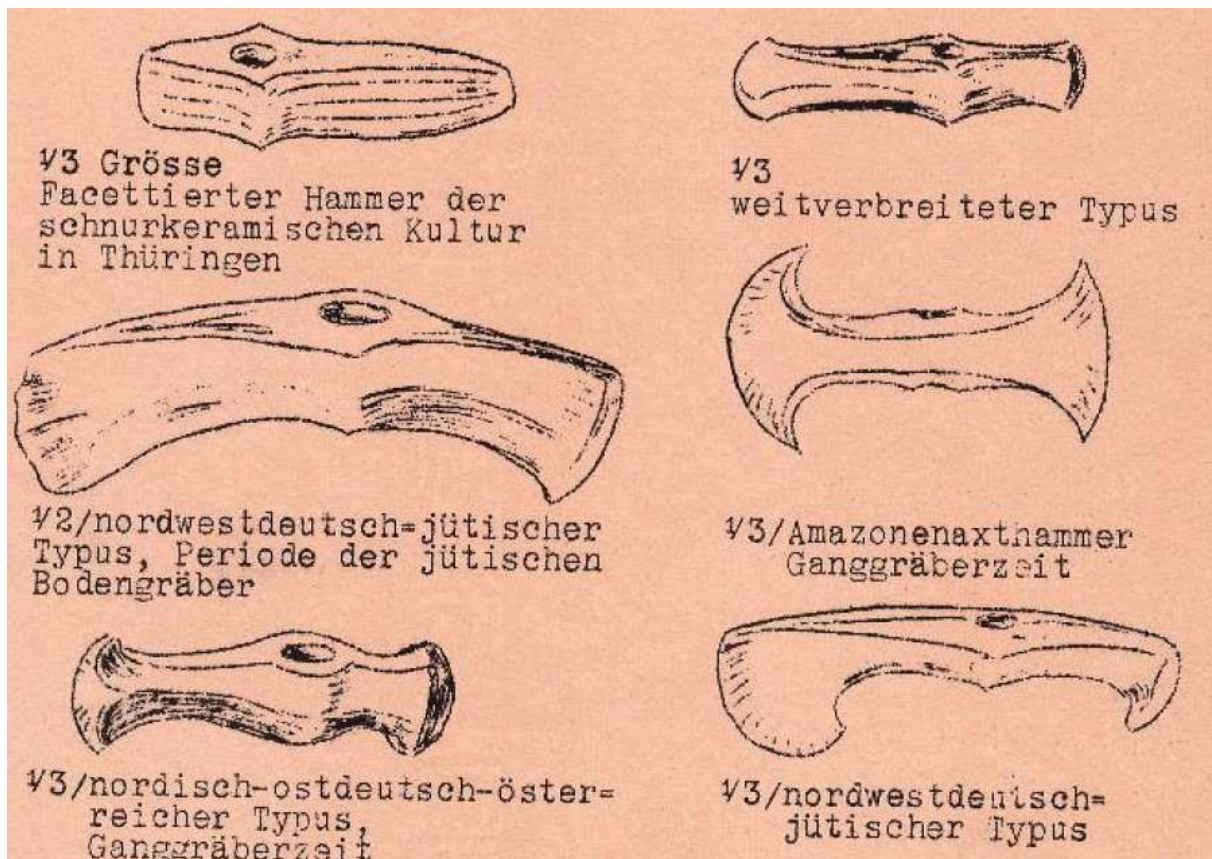
The [Stone Age](#) roughly corresponds to: 1. The pre-Germanic period (axe = *agési*, *agzi*)

The [Bronze Age](#) corresponds roughly to: 2. The Proto-Germanic period (common Germanic axe = *agizi*) (world Germanic halter, handle = *halftra*, *halmo*)

The [Iron Age](#) corresponds roughly to: 3. The Old Germanic period

The modern era within the Christian calendar roughly corresponds to the development of Middle High German into Modern High German. It should be noted, of course, that a precise demarcation is not possible in this comparison.

To illustrate the linguistic history of the word "axe", I outline the most important forms of stone axes:



Nowhere on earth has such beauty in stone weapons, war hammers and battle axes, been cultivated with such care and refined artistic sensibility as in the North Indo-European cultural sphere. One must admire the advanced technique and classical elegance of the design in these works carved from rock, these works of art in flint.

Finally, here is a fitting characterization of Schirmer in a literal excerpt:

"The Indo-European people were essentially a nomadic pastoralist society, but in the western (European) parts of their settlements, they also practiced rudimentary agriculture at an early stage. They were familiar with the most important domestic animals (excluding cats and donkeys); animals native only to the south were absent. The European populations of the Indo-European people were well acquainted with the forest, its trees, and animals. Fruit and vegetable cultivation was still lacking. Settlements with simple, probably wooden, single-room dwellings were known, but they frequently relocated, knew about wagons, and could construct walls from wattle and daub. Boats and oars were familiar to the Indo-European people, but they were not a seafaring people; only some of them probably knew the sea at all (which one? The Baltic Sea? The Black Sea?). Gold and silver were widely known, as was copper (ore); they were not yet familiar with iron ore or blacksmithing. They always possessed mead, a stimulant made from honey and barley, but did not yet know wine. The family unit was..." An agnatic paternal family (extended family) prevailed; the position of women was unfree. Tribal affiliation, but not a sense of belonging, was strongly developed. The legal concept of marriage existed; blood feuds and wergild played a role in legal life. Religious ideas were developed, although we are unaware of the names of gods. A fatalistic view of fate was particularly pronounced. Numbers and measurements were common. There was also likely a small-scale gift trade, partly based on highly valued hospitality.

These were our Stone Age ancestors, also in the Finne-Schmücke area. The original form of our word "axe" (not our name!) comes from them. I therefore conclude that the first foundation for the development of our later family name was laid in this prehistoric Stone Age through the tool designation "agesi" or "agzi".

The question of whether this linguistic affinity is complemented by a blood relationship is more difficult to answer. I'll leave that to Kossinna:

"All the beautiful and great achievements of Central Europe's Stone Age belong to cultures of peoples whom we largely no longer encounter in Central Europe during the earliest historical period, such as the majority of the South Indo-Europeans. For at the end of the Stone Age, these peoples left not only Central Europe, but for the most part even Europe, to migrate to Asia as Aryans, and only the northernmost branch of the South Indo-European Thracians extended into Central Europe via eastern Hungary. But around the same time, the proto-Greeks and the proto-Italians also migrated from Central Europe among the North Indo-Europeans. And in prehistoric times, that is, around the time of Christ's birth, we find there, besides the main body of Germanic peoples, only remnants of the Illyrians who had migrated to the northern Balkans, who are located in western Hungary and Austria under the name of the Pannonians, and likewise remnants of the Celts, who mostly migrated to northern France and England, in western and southern Germany and Switzerland. The area of the likewise The North Indo-European Germanic tribes, in their earliest tribal groupings during the Stone Age, were confined to Scandinavia and Denmark. That these areas, Germanic in the truest sense, were entirely on par with Central Europe, just described in detail, during that earliest period of development is evident from the art of crafting war hammers and weapons from flint...

"Even more astonishing things are offered by the Germanic Bronze Age, i.e., the culture of an area that is no longer limited to Scandinavia, but also extends over a wide stretch of coastline in northern Germany, initially only between the Ems and Oder rivers, later, during the younger Bronze Age, between the Ems and Vistula rivers."

According to Kossinna, the Bronze Age culture is the Germanic people's own heritage, originating on Germanic soil (not from the Orient, nor adopted from the Celts!).

Since the Indo-European peoples left our Central European territory, including Schmücke and Finne, at the end of the Stone Age, and the Germanic tribes migrated into these areas, the question arises: Where did the Germanic peoples come from? Undoubtedly from the north, probably from the regions of northern Scandinavia. What triggered the massive migrations at the end of the Stone Age, what motivated the Indo-European peoples to migrate southeast, to leave Central Europe, remains shrouded in mystery. Only conjectures will ever remain as we attempt to unravel this prehistoric secret. The most plausible explanation is that the gradually increasing pressure from the Germanic tribes pushing southward from north to south was the cause of these millennia-long migrations.

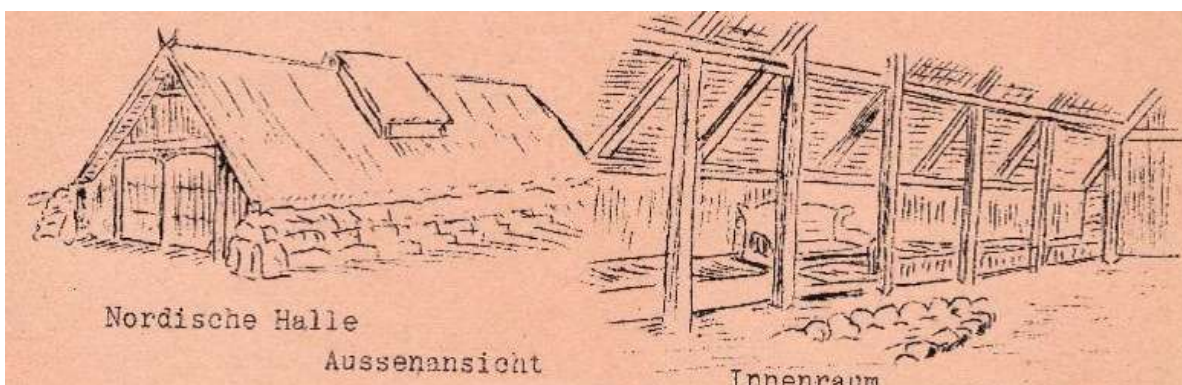
The Germanic tribe, likely a pastoral people, probably left their north-northeastern homeland along with the western Indo-European group. The migration of Indo-European tribes through the southern Russian lowlands (remnants of these Indo-Europeans can still be found in the Caucasus today) and the migrations of the Italic and Celtic peoples likely guided the Germanic tribes. The fact that continuous communication between the migrating Indo-Europeans, including peoples of unrelated races, and the Germanic tribes who followed led to a lively exchange of cultural achievements can still be clearly demonstrated through language.

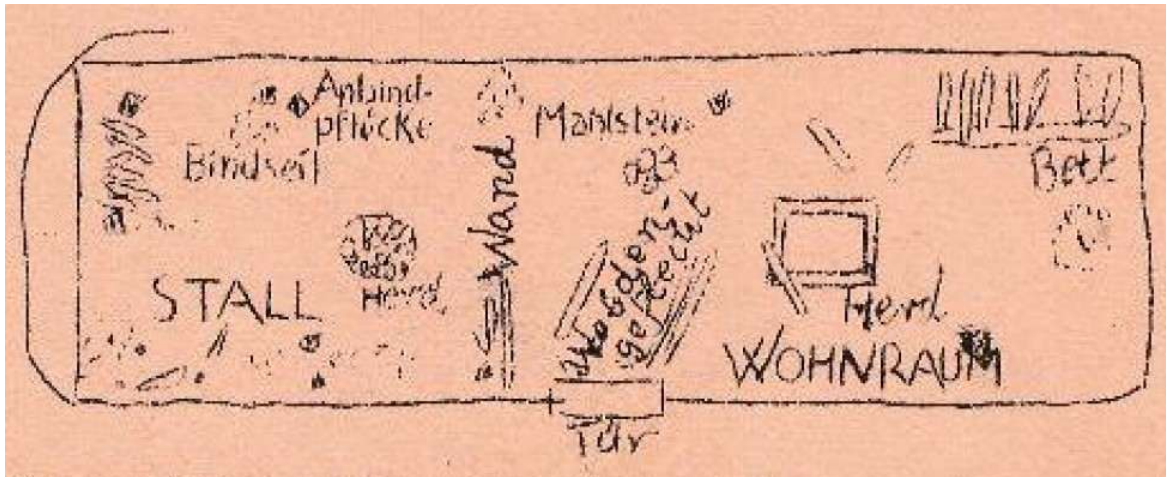
Thus, although the settling of the Germanic peoples in Central Europe marked the beginning of a new epoch in the history of peoples, the linguistic foundation had already been laid by the Indo-European proto-people.

[...] [Note: We owe important insights into the early stages of development of the German language to the research of historical linguistics. Since the discovery of ancient Indian texts, it has been recognized that the Germanic languages, along with many other European and Asian languages, belong to a language family. These languages trace their origins back to a common, unwritten proto-language that was spoken several millennia before our era. However, no conclusions about biological or ethnic relationships can be drawn from this linguistic relationship.]



The three major related peoples in Central Europe (around 1800 BC)





Floor plan of an ancient Germanic house (pre-Christian times)

- 2) Who inhabited our ancestral homeland during the Bronze and Hallstatt periods (approx. 2000–500 BC)?

"He who cannot account for three thousand years remains in the dark, inexperienced, and always moving at an ever-increasing pace." – Goethe

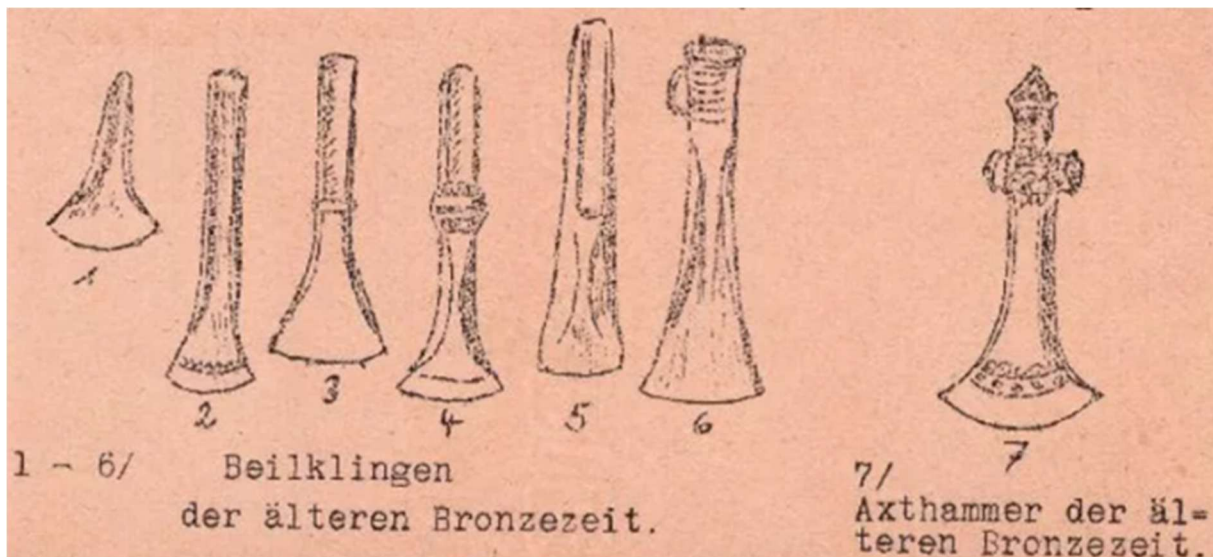
The reason the Stone Age is called the Stone Age is clear. And why the Bronze Age? Because this entire period was defined by the discovery of bronze, which replaced Stone Age weapons and dominated both women's jewelry and all everyday objects, although stone tools and objects remained in use. Since then, the development from one material to the next has been relentless. Bronze replaced stone, iron replaced bronze and reigned until the invention of steel; steel remains, but new materials have joined it, such as lightweight metals. And today we live in the age of plastics. One period has succeeded the next, and always at an ever-increasing pace.

Where did they get bronze from 4000 years ago? From the Orient, as has been claimed? No, quite the contrary. Bronze, copper alloyed with 2–10% tin, is the very property of the Germanic peoples. As Kossinna says:

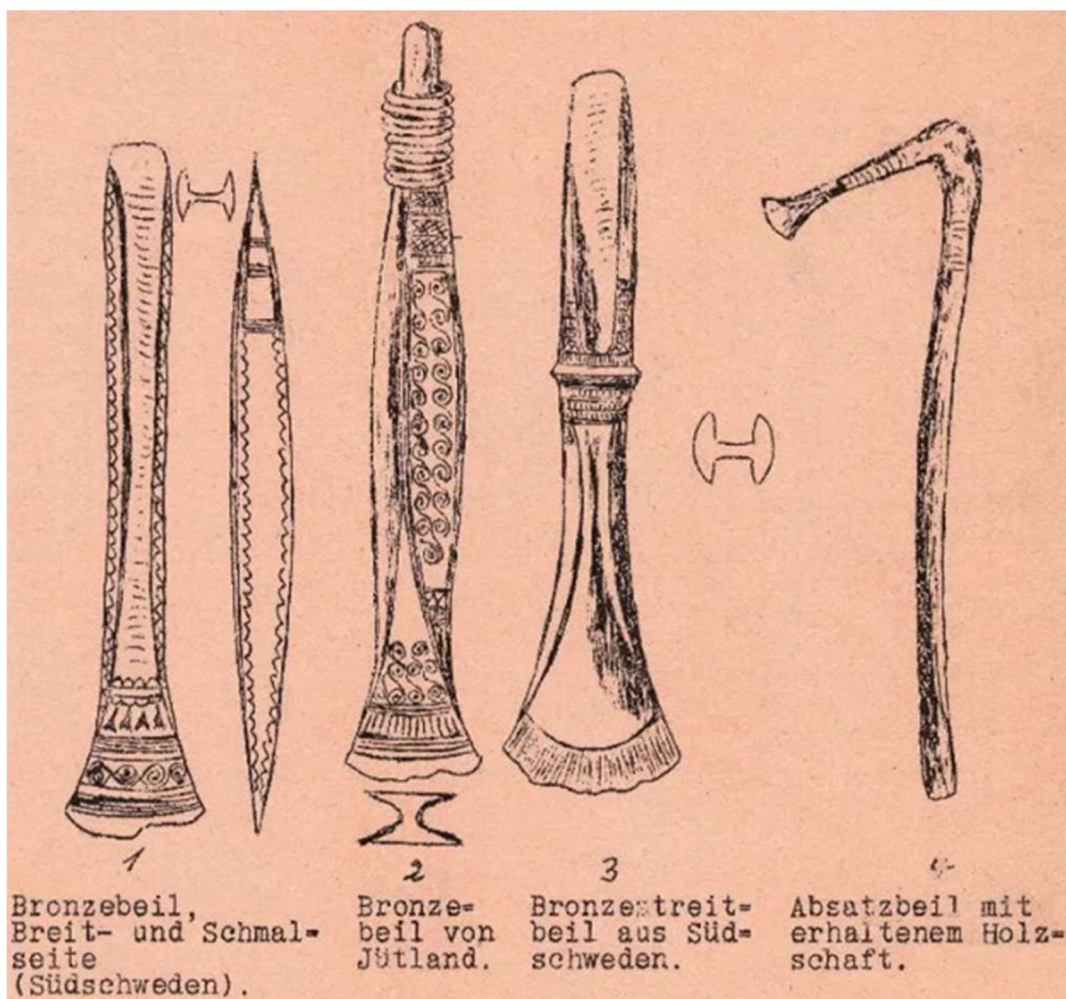
"Where a strong copper industry developed earliest thanks to the presence of rich and easily accessible copper deposits, and where these copper deposits were simultaneously accompanied by equally accessible tin deposits, bronze first appeared. This was the case in Spain and southern England. From these countries with the earliest emergence of a bronze industry, the new invention spread first to southern Central Europe, especially northern Austria, then to the other regions of southern Europe (Italy), western Europe (France), central Europe (northern Germany, Hungary), and finally northern Europe, while eastern Europe completely failed and continues to fail to this day, because there must have been a lack of settlement of a more advanced tribe there during the Bronze Age. Everywhere we see, alongside the very simplest general European tool types, such as the axe, which is now gradually transforming its Stone Age form, a large number of local types immediately emerging."



And indeed, the most wonderful forms of objects from this Bronze Age have been found, some of which I will present.



Several typical and beautiful Bronze Age axe forms will illustrate the significance of the axe handle in the evolution of axe design. It was by no means of secondary importance. Anyone with knowledge of woodworking and axe handle making will recognize the difficulty involved in attaching a handle at that time. Furthermore, the axe held particular cultic significance, especially during the Bronze Age and early Iron Age, which I will discuss in more detail below. This fact also explains how a specific handle technique must have developed.



4: The grooves on the leather wrapping for attaching the upper part of the bronze blade to the shorter end of the wooden shaft are visible on both the shorter and the longer end of the shaft.

The illustrations show that in the Stone Age and early Bronze Age, axe handles were still attached to the upper blade sockets using leather straps, specifically angled, gnarled hazel or hawthorn branches gathered for this purpose in the forest. Later, a shaft hole was forged, particularly for inserting a handle, as can be seen in the illustrations below.

What was the living situation of our ancestors in the Bronze Age?

From the grave goods that have survived, we can conclude that, for example, housing conditions during this period had improved considerably compared to the Stone Age. The nobility now lived in solid and sometimes elaborately constructed timber buildings, while the common people built themselves half-timbered mud huts or, as in the Stone Age, still lived in pit dwellings covered with a sturdy brushwood roof and clay covering. In general, however, it can be said that during this Bronze



Age period, solid timber construction became increasingly common, even among ordinary settlers. Nothing is more characteristic of this than the transplantation of the already Stone Age Nordic rectangular post-and-beam house with a porch, via migration through Greece, into the territory of the blond-haired, [Achaean](#) great kings of Mycenae and Amyclae. This type of construction, the so-called megaron house, can be seen as the precursor to the Greek temple. The discovery of the Bronze Age settlement near Lissdorf confirms this assumption.

In the Early Bronze Age, people still buried their dead, sometimes in a squatting position, sometimes in a stretched-out position. The Late Bronze Age, however, saw the relatively rapid introduction of cremation, a practice that had previously been uncommon or not practiced at all among the Germanic peoples.

A dense settlement of Thuringia, and especially its northeastern part, which is our home region, can be inferred from the numerous finds made, particularly in the Schmücke-Finne area. Based on the various types of tools and vessels, the Bronze Age could be divided into different periods. The earliest Bronze Age is characterized by the Únětice vessel type and the Únětice pin (see Dr. Schulz: "On the Population of the Saale District in the Bronze Age", 1912) and a saber-shaped eyelet pin.

"*agizi*" for *axe* falls within this ancient, native, common Germanic cultural period. First coined in Indo-European usage, this word was adopted with strong resistance by the Early Bronze Age, which is easily explained by the fact that our Germanic ancestors in the Early Bronze Age initially adopted the Stone Age weapon "axe" and only gradually replaced it with bronze axes.

This word **agizi** from the Early Bronze Age became the foundation and beginning of the linguistic development of our word **axe** through the millennia to the present day. And we can proudly say that this component of our name has remained remarkably intact throughout this long history, untouched by foreign linguistic influences. Both in its meaning and its language, the word **axe** still breathes the combative spirit of the ancient past of our Germanic ancestors and thus of the artistically rich cultural era of the Germanic peoples.

"The Bronze Age is this thousand-year golden age of Germanic culture." [...] "Golden not only because the Germanic peoples possessed a great deal of gold through their amber trade, which they knew how to craft into magnificent works, just like bronze, but also because their culture during this period gives the impression of great peace, unity, and self-confidence."

The flourishing period, which Germanic culture reached around 1000 BC, soon faded. The spread of a new belief, cremation, from the southeast during the Late Bronze Age meant that grave goods from that point onward tell us less; but even the surviving artifacts demonstrate that Central European influences from the Hallstatt culture had gained the upper hand, and towards the end of this period, the old forms were lost in outward, exaggerated splendor, with only a small portion of them continuing into the Early Iron Age. Nevertheless, the first golden age of Germanic culture remained fundamentally decisive for everything that followed Germanic, and it cannot be understood without a thorough knowledge of the Bronze Age. This applies to the later belief in gods, whose roots reach back to it, but also to later Germanic art. The serene ornamental art of the Bronze Age lives on, not only in the beautiful Germanic meander urns of the late Early Iron Age, albeit with a different repertoire of forms, but also, at least in spirit, in a certain austere, calm, almost sober direction in the art of the Migration Period and the Viking Age, despite all the fantastical restlessness that permeates it in manifold hybrid forms. Indeed, in more recent times, the North has once again come close to this cool, dignified restraint. The granite churches of Upland, the enclosed nature of Strängnäs or Gripsholm, the refined simplicity of the interior furnishings exhibit a distinctive, Swedish style. Even in poetry, it is not limited to the heroic creations of the Migration Period or the arts of the skalds. Germanic, and also Nordic, folk poetry, for all its depth, is simple and transparent. And in the rural folk festivals of present-day Sweden, something of that Bronze Age festive joy, revealed by the rock carvings of Bohuslän, still resonates. “ (see Dr. Schulz: “On the population of the Saale district in the Bronze Age”, 1912)

Precisely because the Bronze Age forms the foundation of our entire German cultural and national development, and because it brought to light the most outstanding abilities of Germanic intellectual curiosity, and because this very period is the cradle of our name, I must therefore devote more attention to it. It would be only a partial understanding of this era if one did not also emphasize the remarkable achievements in shipbuilding, as well as in the art of woodworking in general. Bronze, ornamentation, wood, and wickerwork, crafted by our Bronze Age ancestors, have been preserved for posterity as a glorious legacy of this period.

Of particular importance are the advances in woodworking. The fact that the Stone Age laid the foundations for timber construction has already been mentioned. The Megaron house design, with its imposing high gable, porch, and spacious hall, remains—despite some other building styles—the dominant dwelling type for all time. (A detailed and vivid description can be found in the work by [Dr. Schultz, Munich 1934: "Ancient Germanic Culture in Word and Image"](#)).

What caused the decline from the cultural heights of the Bronze Age? The most recent and arguably most compelling finding is this: At the end of the Bronze Age, a deterioration of the climate set in, primarily in the northern regions. This forced the Germanic farmers, who had settled in the north, to migrate southward, resulting in rapid overpopulation that the arable land could no longer sustain in the same way; the people became impoverished. Lakes rose, forests became swampy, fishing suffered, and hunting yields declined. Added to this were bitter tribal feuds, migrations, and other factors that contributed to the general decline in culture. Although conditions soon improved, Germanic culture remained under these misfortunes for almost a millennium. Nevertheless, its culture remained admirable even during this time, as Tacitus attests, for whom the Germanic peoples even served as a model and a warning to corrupt Rome.

“The spread of the Germanic tribes and peoples in the late Iron Age, which was prepared in the early Iron Age,” says Schultz, “encountered entirely different obstacles than the migration of the individual

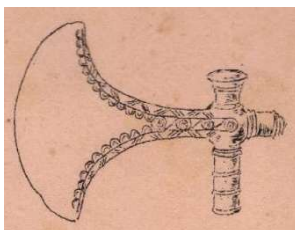
Indo-European peoples from their ancestral territories. The Indo-Europeans encountered peoples everywhere, whom they were mostly militarily superior to, and arrived in favorable regions where they could continue their ancient cultures through their own enriching efforts. The Germanic peoples, on the other hand, when overpopulation and hardship beset them, encountered the inhibiting barrier of other Indo-European peoples: the Celts in the west and south, and the Illyrians in the east. These difficulties were later exacerbated by the expansion of the Roman Empire, the Roman border wall (Limes), and Roman policy. This explains the high tension within the later Germanic culture, which gives it its unique cultural and historical character. Only the advance of the Goths, the conquest of more southerly settlements within the territory of the Roman Empire, enabled a new rise. But the later Iron Age of the Germanic peoples is heroically frenzied, exaggerated. The cheerful, balanced calm that characterized the Germanic Bronze Age stands in stark contrast to it. This must be kept in mind to appreciate the cultural and historical scope of the term 'Germanic'.

With the end of the Bronze Age and the continuous northward migration of the Germanic tribes, the tribes and peoples began to develop as historical and cultural figures.

"In the next millennium, this will be even more the case. It will become increasingly difficult to define Germanic as a unified concept without simultaneously highlighting the richly diverse characteristics of its various representatives. This is no wonder, given the inherent richness of tribal life and the vast spaces across which Germanic culture spread and from which it continually reinvented itself. With the late Iron Age, distinct linguistic and written monuments also become more abundant. The Migration Period brings a new art form employing new means, and the Viking Age of the North, in many ways already a culmination of this earlier period, further enhances all expressions of this culture, creating a cohesive whole of singular unity and grandeur."

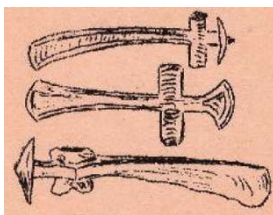
Having considered these fundamental points, I return to the actual purpose of these investigations. Using a ceremonial axe from the Bronze Age as an example, I will give two brief accounts whose content is as curious as it is revealing for our research.

First, an illustration of a ceremonial axe:



"Ornamental axe from the early Bronze Age; bronze cast on a clay core. Such axes were often found in pairs, corresponding to the twin gods or twin kings whose symbols of power they probably were" (as can be seen from stone carvings, [Schultz]).

Here are some forms from the late Bronze Age:



One thing is remarkable about all these axe hammers compared to the Stone Age and Early Bronze Age types: they have a proper handle neck or shaft hole into which a handle had to be precisely fitted.

This shows that far more care had to be taken in the production of an axe handle than before. Thus, as the axe shape evolved, a more precise handle technique developed, eventually becoming a craft that stood alongside that of axe smithing.

"Stiel" (*stem/handle*) appears in the later Bronze Age, or Hallstatt period (linguistically, in the Proto-Germanic, West Germanic period), in the word "Halbmo" = handle/handle, which derives from the same root as "Halfttra" = halter. Since both words originally meant "handle," the Germanic people understood "*Halbtra*" to mean the handle for holding the animal, the horse (bridle), and "Halbmo" or "Halmo" to mean the handle for holding the axe.

I will discuss the linguistic derivation below. First, we note that the name "axe helmet" already had its conceptual basis by the end of the Bronze Age or the beginning of the Iron Age. Whether the contraction of *agzi* + *halmo* = *akz(i) halmo* already occurred during this period is a question I will address below.

Now I must first consider a fact from the history of religion. Kossinna writes:

"This wonderfully rich second period of the Bronze Age is what presents us with the monuments of Germanic worship for the first time in considerable abundance. Even the Stone Age of the Germanic peoples left behind lasting symbols of the deity: particularly noteworthy here are those meticulously shaped and finely polished flint axes, of such enormous size that they could be used neither as weapons nor as tools, and which were sometimes found together in large numbers and placed in the earth in an apparently ritual arrangement. Likewise, amber axes of the same form as the stone axes and amber double axes with a socket in the shape of Amazonian axes belong here; the latter sometimes of considerable size and then undoubtedly sacred objects, but mostly of the smallest size, this being extremely frequent, and then to be regarded as amulet-like ornaments."

All these types of hatchets and axes are to be seen as symbols of the all-powerful sky god , who was undoubtedly conceived as a personal power. The stone hatchet and its miniature replicas in stone or other materials were images of lightning, the weapon of the sky god.

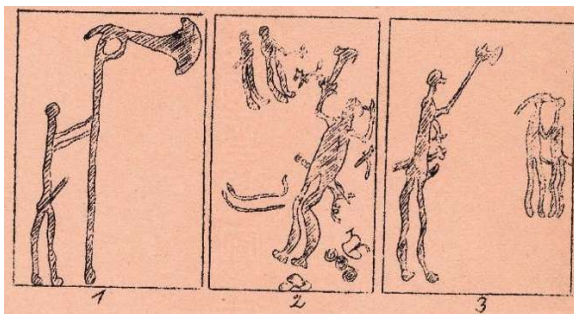


Image 1) The sacred axe, as a symbol of the god, planted by its bearer in the manner of a standard.

Image 2) The god, with five fingers, swings the axe. He wears a collar and carries a sword. Below are his footprints and the chariot. The unharnessed horses behind him are suggested. Above, near the axe, are two men, perhaps the twin gods, the sons of the axe god. Between them are a wolf and a raven.

Image 3) "The Wedding": The axe god and his priest consecrate the couple. The man is represented by the sword, the woman by her tuft of hair. In the [Thrym Lay](#) of the [Edda](#) , the god Thor says: "Bring me the hammer, to consecrate the bride!"

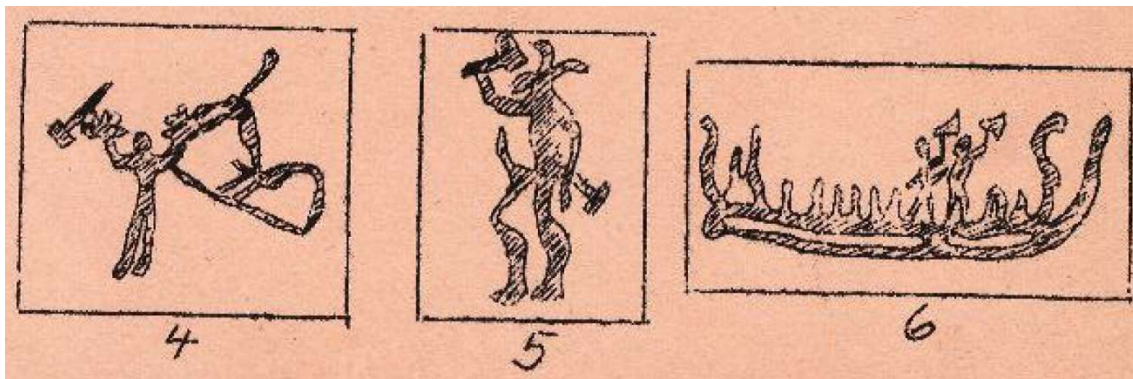


Image 4) The five-fingered god with the axe, connected to his stallion by a rope.

Image 5) God with two axes, horned helmet and animal mask.

Image 6) The divine twins: the twins sailing along in the ship with raised axes.

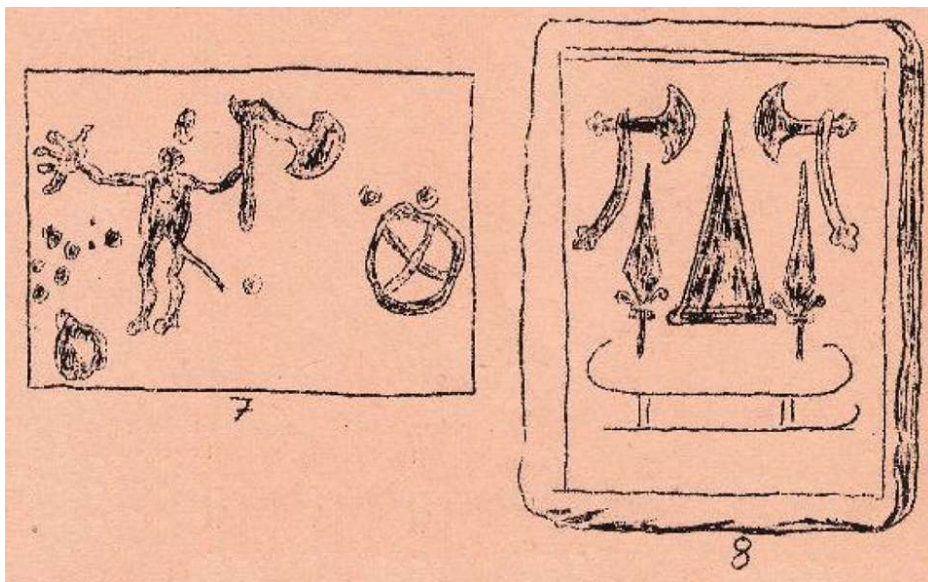


Image 7) Axe god with large hand next to ring and sun wheel (Kinnekulle, Västergötland)

Image 8) The stone slab (Kivik, Scania/Southern Sweden) shows axes such as those sometimes carried by the horse god of the triad of sun worship in his form as the axe god (Freyr).

The concept of the triad of gods among the Germanic peoples of the Bronze Age was common to all Germanic and Indo-European cultures. This triad refers to the sun, moon, and dawn. The sun god and moon god remain constant. In contrast, the god of dawn encompasses all forms of natural forces. He is a wind god and a fire god, a spear god and axe god, and, as a horse god, precedes the sun like the dawn itself. His large, outstretched hand represents the deity of the sky, lightning, and fire, inseparable from the axe as the symbol of the power of dawn, the force of nature.

This axe god, who often also appears as a horse god, represents a clear precursor to the later Wodan, the wind and spear god (Nibelung saga!). The other side of the ancient axe god, his attributes as god of dawn, fire god, and also fertility god, most certainly lives on in the later [Freyr](#). Furthermore: both gods share the use of the axe.



"Yes, the symbol of the axe became so inseparable from Freyr's deity that [Saint Olaf](#), Freyr's Christian successor in Sweden, was depicted with a long-handled axe for a long time . Similarly, the sun and lightning god gradually evolved into [Thor](#) . His hammer, the symbol of lightning, already appears in rock carvings, and his associated team of goats is nothing more than an echo of his own original goat form, which must be connected with his status as a lightning god."
(Kossina)

Why am I going into so much detail about all these things? – Because only precise cultural-historical and linguistic-historical investigations provide a reliable basis for researching our name.

But what does the originally divine meaning of the "axe" have to do with our name Axthelm = axe handle? A great deal! For if the axe held such a sacred position among the Germanic peoples that it was worshipped as a sanctuary of the deity, then it is not difficult to conclude that the utmost care was taken in its manufacture. And if the long-handled axe was preferably dedicated to the deity, then this means nothing more and nothing less than that the "handle," the "grip" that directly grasped the god's fist and served as the support for the divine weapon, also enjoyed a certain preeminence among the implements of the ancient Germanic peoples. Shouldn't it be clear from this that the manufacture of the axe handle was undertaken with particular care, that one didn't simply fit a rough piece of wood into the axe's shaft hole, but rather worked it carefully, using especially tough wood and perhaps even adorning it with decorations, carvings, and so on?

Even today, the production of a good, durable axe handle that is also comfortable to use is a specialty of our wheelwrights and carpenters that not everyone understands.

I return to the local historical perspective and focus on the Hallstatt period (named after the Hallstatt burial ground in the Salzkammergut region), which I date from 800 to 200 BC; this period is also known as the Early Iron Age. This period, besides showing less robust bronzes, also demonstrates the use of iron. This is the time that Schultz describes as the Iron Age – a time of hardship – a time of wolves. Our region between the Harz Mountains and the Thuringian Forest was not affected by the older Hallstatt culture; its influence ended at the Thuringian Forest. However, by the end of the Hallstatt period, it was also established in northern Thuringia. The dominant population of this cultural period were the Celts, who had advanced from the west. They were initially pushed west and southwest by the north-south Germanic tribes of the Bronze Age, but by the end of the Bronze Age (due to economic and political weakness), they had once again advanced eastward. They expanded their territory as far as the Harz Mountains. The names for Bode and Saale, and perhaps also Halle, are probably of Celtic origin, as is the name of the mountain above Burgwenden, which was originally called penna, of Celtic origin and was later called "Finne" under Germanic influence.

The entire Hallstatt culture, in which the transition to iron technology was already being prepared, was a Celtic-Illyrian phenomenon, and by the end of the Bronze Age, its ostentatious displays and inexpensive mass-produced goods had spread to the Germanic peoples (Schultz). Iron (the Germanic peoples obtained both the word "iron" and the iron itself from the Celts for a long time) came from the Caucasus, was brought from Asia Minor to Italy by the Etruscans, and from there passed on by the Phrygians to the Thracians and finally to the Illyrians. From the Caucasus, the Hittites also brought it to Egypt and India. It was passed on by the Scythians and related Iranian peoples to the Finns, Lithuanians, and Slavs, while the West Finns only received it again from the Germanic peoples. Thus, iron reached the Germanic north via various circuitous routes. This explains how a ring of iron-possessing peoples formed around the Germanic tribes, all of whom were related to each other as Indo-European tribes. Heavily besieged, especially from the east and west, the Germanic tribes succumbed to poverty and the fate of migration, able to oppose their enemies only with ever-increasing, desperate bravery. Iron

remained a rare and often futilely coveted commodity among the Germanic peoples almost until the beginning of the Christian era.

Due to the aforementioned predicament, the Germanic tribes advanced eastward and southeastward in the direction of least resistance, as the Celts had blocked their path to the west. This situation shaped the entire period and also determined the next, as they ultimately received Greek-Scythian (Sarmatian) influence from the southeast and overcame and penetrated Rome—both events that paved the way for their new flourishing in the next millennium. However, they also earned recognition in the direction of greater resistance. Despite everything, they soon proved superior to the Celts and gained ground against them. Finally, the Roman Empire expanded from the south. It mastered the Celts, but not the Germanic tribes. (Schultz)

The Celts distinguished themselves during the Bronze Age neither through creative nor political achievements. Despite all external advantages and temporary successes, their culture played a relatively minor role. They even succumbed at times to the incursions of the Illyrians, who, however, soon found the Germanic tribes in the increasingly harsh east, with their harsh climate and ultimately the raids of the nomadic Scythians, a detrimental force. When the Illyrians were forced to abandon their territory in the northeast, the Germanic tribes benefited far less than the Celts, who quickly rose to prominence and initially overran the non-Indo-European Ligurians and Iberians in the west.

The Celts finally advanced into Spain in the 5th century, into northern Italy in the 4th, and through Gaul into Britain. In the 3rd century, they traveled down the Danube to the Black Sea, even reaching Delphi and Asia Minor, where they founded the kingdom of Galatians (see the Letter to the Galatians in the New Testament). Through these conquests to the south, they came into direct contact with the cultures of the south. Etruscan culture was influenced both by the Etruscans in Italy and by the Greek culture of Massilia. The Celts developed their own coinage, but from the 5th century onward, they formed a unique hybrid culture, which is known as the La Tène culture after a find recovered from a shallow area (La Tène) in Lake Neuchâtel in western Switzerland.



Before discussing the influence of this cultural epoch on Germania, I would like to examine the Hallstatt culture of our ancestral homeland based on archaeological finds. Individual finds from this culture have been unearthed in Altenbeichlingen, Auerstedt, Bachra, Weichlingen, Bilzingsleben, Burghessen, Burgwenden, Kölleda, Dietrichsroda, Donndorf, Griefstedt, Großmonra, Hauterode, Herrengosserstedt, Lossa, Niederholzhausen, Oberheldrungen, Sachsenburg, Reinsdorf, Steinbach, and Steinkreuz near Sachsenburg. In Reinsdorf, a hoard was discovered near the village during the construction of the Unstrut railway in 1888.

Graves from the Hallstatt period have been found in Backleben, Kölleda, Battendorf, Etzleben, Gorsleben, on Bonifatiusberg near Harras, at Teufelsburg near Hauterode, in the Schloscholz near Heldrungen, and on Schottenberg near Wiehe. Professor Götze writes in his work "The Prehistoric and Early Historic Antiquities of Thuringia": "The number of graves on the Schmücke, some flat graves, some burial mounds with interments, is very large; the ridge is, or was, virtually covered with them." This work focuses particularly on the graves in the "Seven Hills" on the Hainleite in the so-called "Götzenhain," located approximately 2 km from Sachsenburg. Bronze Age graves have also been uncovered within the ramparts of Sachsenburg. In 1902, a Hallstatt-period grave was discovered in Memleben above the aforementioned Stone Age grave. Since cremation was already widespread in the Hallstatt period, these mass burials are surprising. Presumably, these burials were carried out hastily during migrations when there was no time for cremation.



A particularly noteworthy find is the famous, gigantic princely grave in the Leubingen hill, with its valuable gold jewelry and unique cultural-historical revelations. I already mentioned it in **research report part 1** (it's on display in the Museum of Prehistory in Halle).

Furthermore, a Hallstatt-era settlement was uncovered in a clay pit on the southern slope of the Sachsenburg hill, not far from the village. Among individual finds, only the socketed axe found in the Gänseholz forest near Eckartsberga should be mentioned; it is 15 cm long and weighs 365 g.

What conclusions can be drawn from all this? That during the Hallstatt period, our home region was predominantly inhabited or traversed by Celts.

Does this Celtic influence have anything to do with the development of our name? No! Because the Indo-European foundation of the language, which was partly adopted by the Germanic peoples and partly developed independently, was hardly affected by the Celtic language. A wealth of related words connects both peoples, with Germanic language predominating over Celtic.

Is it reasonable to assume that the Germanic peoples were influenced by race or blood during Celtic rule in Central Germany? No! Firstly, political differences ensured that the Germanic peoples separated sharply from the Celts, and secondly, the fundamental differences were so strong that the two groups, Germanic and Celtic, did not intermingle.

3) Who inhabited our ancestral homeland during the La Tène period or the Iron Age (500 BC – birth of Christ)?

“I believe the German enjoys a greater aptitude; the Italian, however, has developed his inferior one more at this moment.”
– Hermann, in H. v. Kleist's “Hermannsschlacht” (1808)

Without a doubt, Celtic tribes inhabited the entire territory of present-day Thuringia up to the Unstrut-Saale border. Among these Celtic peoples, a distinct culture developed from around 500 BC, characterized by the extensive use of iron in tools and weapons. This ironworking technique spread and also reached non-Celtic peoples. During this period, glassblowing and the potter's wheel were introduced. Nevertheless, most vessels, especially the larger ones used for storing provisions, were still handmade. Cremation replaced burial even more frequently than in the Hallstatt period. The cremated remains were placed in simple or decorated urns. Iron weapons and jewelry were often also included.

But the Celts never developed their own, even remotely balanced, culture. The influences of the racially diverse pre-existing populations they absorbed during their extensive expansion were evidently too varied and detrimental. The upper classes soon indulged in foreign, Roman luxuries, the common people were subjugated, and the Druids consolidated their priestly rule. "The veneer of superficial culture cannot conceal the terrifying savagery inherent in this mixed people, more boastful than brave, but dangerous in its passions" (Schultz).

The Indo-European foundation of Celtic culture, which had not yet become too intertwined, was extremely close to that of the Germanic peoples, as evidenced by the many cognate words that connect both groups and their shared affinity for weaponry, although the Germanic peoples held the lead. For millennia, the Celts constantly retreated before the Germanic tribes until they finally lost their independence to the Romans. Indeed, some tribes were even proud to boast of their Germanic ancestry. Despite all this exchange, the two peoples never formed deep-rooted bonds. Where the Germanic tribes pushed back the Celts, they sometimes adopted some of their external cultural

heritage. But on the whole, they remained very hostile towards the Celts and their core identity remained unchanged.

The intellectual influence of Celtic culture on the Germanic peoples was also very insignificant, especially since the Celtic-Germanic hybrid culture, which ultimately developed under Roman influence, was primarily confined to the left bank of the Rhine. The influence of the Celts has always been greatly overestimated. For example, the veneration of the gift-giving, fate-determining mother, which appears in Roman-Rhenish artwork and inscriptions, has parallels among most Indo-European peoples and in the Disir and Norns of the North. It is probably a time-bound manifestation of ancient tribal possessions. In any case, it is difficult to determine whether this belief originated with the Celts or the Germanic peoples.

The god Thunaras (Thor, Donar) is certainly not of Celtic origin, as we saw above, but comes from the Bronze Age along with the belief in the divine twins.

With regard to the later transition of the Germanic character into German, one must admit that Celtic culture contributed greatly to the spread of "softer feelings, the tendency to reflect on oneself, and the half-darkness of the soul." (Schultz).

The Germanic peoples therefore had to grapple with Celtic culture not only externally, but also internally. And so they did. But thanks to the inherent freshness of the Germanic character, it was primarily positive traits that Germanic culture absorbed from Celtic culture, without thereby relinquishing its own distinctiveness or even allowing it to be noticeably influenced.

Far greater was the danger posed to the Germanic peoples towards the end of the early and beginning of the late Iron Age by the Romans, who, based on their Italic heritage, were closely related to both the Germanic and Celtic tribes. Trade brought Romans and Germanic peoples into contact with each other for the first time. Greco-Roman industry sought to sell its goods in Germania, and its merchants traveled up the Danube through Scythian and later, to the west, through Celtic territories into the still largely unknown northern lands. For this reason, it is understandable that ancient writers initially knew only Scythians and Celts, although the Greek Pytheas mentions individual Germanic names towards the end of the 4th century BC; he had sailed from Massilia far enough to reach the Wadden Sea and Heligoland and "saw the sun rise again soon after it set."

The ancestral relationship between the Germanic tribes and the Italian Romans unfortunately underwent a fundamental transformation due to a highly alienating development: the influx of Etruscan and Greek influences from southern Italy, and the expansion of the southern empire into a global power. Eventually, the Germanic tribes themselves came to the Romans: first the [Ambrones](#), [Cimbri](#), and [Teutons](#) at the end of the 2nd century BC. These migrants sought land in northern Italy, just as the Celts had before them. Despite superior tactics and weaponry, the Romans were only able to annihilate these hordes, hardened by their long migrations and intermingling with foreign influx, once they had already been weakened by southern influence and, in some cases, succumbed to drunkenness. Yet, in all Roman accounts, the terror instilled by these formidable invaders, whose will and actions were utterly incomprehensible to the Romans, still lingers.

Alongside their daring, fearless, and warlike tactics, a cultic practice is also mentioned: these Germanic tribes contemptuously threw gold and silver into the river, and the gray-haired, barefoot priestesses, dressed in linen garments, sacrificed prisoners in enormous bronze mixing cauldrons by slitting their throats and prophesying from their blood. The women confronted their husbands when they attempted to flee; they cut them down and attacked the enemy themselves; they did not surrender but killed their children and themselves unless promised that they would be left unharmed.

These were the first Germanic tribes to launch an attack on the south.

Only later did the Romans realize that these peoples came from the northern tip of Jutland, but the world-historical significance of the event remained hidden from them. The first Germanic migration was as follows: The advance of the Lombards to the Elbe was linked to the migration of the Cimbri from north to south, as was the settlement of Silesia by the Vandals, who also advanced from Jutland and southern Norway towards the mouth of the Oder, and a series of similar Scandinavian migrations to the Vistula – the first stage of the Germanic migrations that later began from the east ! The Vandals remained in the region, but the Ambrones, Cimbri, and Teutones moved southwards, swept away parts of the Celtic Boyer tribe near Breslau, and then, in separate campaigns from west and east, rushed towards their doom, invading Italy.

Whatever motivated the Romans in their later conquests of Germania, they did not seek colonization, but rather exploitation and dominion. This inevitably provoked resistance from the free Germanic tribes, and since Roman culture was already showing signs of decline and lacked inner strength, the Romans were bound to succumb to the far fewer Germanic people. For the Germanic army was based on free allegiance and courageous commitment. The bonds of blood bound the warriors together in a tenacious unity. It was not vast armies that overcame the immense Roman Empire – it was only a few thousand determined, primal warriors who overran the empire, led by their own chosen leaders, as brave as they were wise !

With that, I conclude this discussion of international politics and refer to the first comprehensive work on the Germanic peoples, Tacitus' "Germania," which, despite the shortcomings revealed by recent research, remains an invaluable source from the distant past. "Through it, a dawn has been lit in our early history, one that other peoples can envy" (J. Grimm).

"It was not the Celts, not the Romans who gave the Germanic peoples of the Iron Age their decisive character, but rather the move eastward . Here the Germanic peoples came into contact with peoples who were closer to them in their intellectual outlook than the Celts, who had been weakened early on by the high cultures of the south, and the Romans who exploited them."



Cremation burial , ushering in the Late Bronze Age, originated in the east . The Germanic peoples adhered to it fairly uniformly until the end, developing a profound belief system from this custom. The Illyrians were likely the intermediaries, who, along with the Balts, Slavs, Thracians, and even a certain segment of the Italic peoples, Homeric Greeks, and Indians, were swept up by this trend. The Celts, too, subject to Illyrian and later Germanic influences, were unable to consistently maintain their practice of inhumation.

Eastward points werewolv religion. Herodotus reports it from the Neuri in the north of the Scythians . However , this peculiar concept also dates back to early Greek and Indian antiquity. It likely entered the Germanic tribes on the Baltic Sea at the beginning of the Iron Age or during the reorganization caused by migration from the north, giving the age classes and initiation rites of the Germanic peoples, already established in Indo-European antiquity, a particular, passionate dimension.

And towards the end of the Early Iron Age, runes appeared in the southeast, shrouded in mysterious customs (in the 1st or 2nd century AD). From the very beginning, they did not primarily serve for writing, even though they constitute a fully developed script, but rather for secret knowledge and the magical power derived from it. The very name "runes," which is related to our word "murmur," hints at this.



"These runes are the most recent of the great intellectual achievements of the 2nd millennium of Germanic culture, but they bring it to a fitting close and remain entirely within the bounds of Germanic character. They also once again direct our gaze to the East and to the Goths."

The era is complete, the Germanic character has unfolded in all its essential aspects, and the foundation for the next millennium has been laid. Hardship, famine, and military campaigns have scarred this early Iron Age, and its face, despite all its majesty, may appear to us in many of its features wild and frightening, like the sacred hair of the Chatti to the Roman. But what era can understand this era, if not our own, with its fate so deeply intertwined with it! The triumphal columns of the Roman emperors, of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius, bring to mind what Germania suffered and what it struggled for. Let us never forget that Rome would have subjugated free Germania in a completely different way, perhaps preventing its rise forever, had Iran (cf. the Indo-European migrations to the southeast) not bound the other part of its power to itself. And that Iran later bestowed much upon us. Wave upon wave of its values, drawn from the blood of the Nordic race, also reached Western culture and brought unforeseen fruit to Germanic thought. Both peoples, who independently encircled and wore down Rome at that time, live on only in their descendants and echoes. But while the German branch, nourished by Germanic roots, still flourishes despite everything and is the last hope of Europe, indeed of the Nordic race, we see the Iranian branch almost withered by the incursions of the Arabs, the Mongols, and the Turks, and only scant knowledge remains of the fruits it bore. Yet this knowledge is so immense and radiant that we cannot do without it when it comes to clarifying and preserving our own essence. It is in keeping with the spirit of world history that Germanic and Iranian cultures, across the millennia and beyond the hostile Rome, find themselves spiritually reunited in the Nordic memory of a resurgent Germanness." (Schultz)

This is the exhibition in which we see our ancestors at the time of their entry into German national history, that is, in the first centuries after the Christian era. So, after this fundamental explanation, I will now return to the question: What was life like in our ancestral homeland during this period?

As we already established above, the Germanic tribes of the Late Iron Age advanced southwards to the Finne region around 400 BC. This is evidenced by individual finds near Beichlingen, Kölleda, Harras (Bonifatiusberg), Heldringen, Marienroda, Sachsenburg (within the rampart), and the stone cross near Sachsenburg. In addition, an Iron Age grave was discovered near Leubingen at the foot of the so-called Leubingen Hill, which is part of the Hallstatt-era princely grave, and a settlement was found at Griefstedt on the site of an old Stone Age settlement.

The mass finds of urns and vessel fragments near Auerstedt on the Katzenberg hill suggest a larger settlement, as do similar finds in the so-called clay pit northeast of Herrengosserstedt and near Milzingsdorf. So-called hearth pits were discovered near Herrengosserstedt. While these may date back to the Stone Age, the vessel fragments are certainly evidence of the Iron Age. The same standard must be applied to the pits uncovered and investigated along the road leading from Tromsdorf to Milzingsdorf. These pits were approximately 1.5 meters wide and narrowed in a funnel shape to a depth of 1.25 meters.

I will not discuss the burial practices, which alone would be worthy of investigation, at this point. However, it is interesting to take a look at the numerous hillforts, which appear to be important evidence of a considerable settlement in our ancestral homeland.

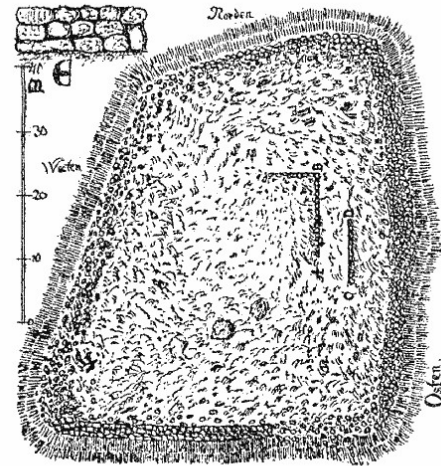


Fig. 4. Wallburg am Sinichkopf über Burgstall bei Meran. (Zeit.-Stom.)

The "Tittelsburg" near Bachra probably originated in this later Iron Age, as did the rampart near Schlossbeichlingen, the Lichtenburg near Burgholzhausen, the old rampart of the Eckartsburg near Eckartsberga and the Teufelsburg near Hauterode.

The Sachsenburg and the Bonifatiusberg near Harras may have originated in the later Bronze Age, while the Manraburg and the Wendenburg were built in the earlier Iron Age.

From these hillforts, of which often only earthworks or depressions remain, one might be able to draw conclusions – albeit with caution! – about the density of settlement. Another question is: What purpose did these hillforts serve? These entrenchments, which in times of peace may have served to protect livestock and in times of war probably also to protect all movable property, were likely – judging by the location and nature of the Finne and Schmücke ridges – originally intended for military purposes. They almost resemble a carefully constructed fortification system, which perhaps originated in the Stone Age and was gradually expanded.

Hentschel, Wagners-Schlieben, and Behlas even assume that the hillforts should primarily be seen as cult sites (see Dr. MG Schmidt: "Die Siedlungen an der Hainleite, Schmücke und Finne", Halle 1900/Z and Dr. Hentschel: "Wallburgen und Tanzberge", Zeitz 1917). However, this is highly improbable.

With this, I have given a precise account of our ancestral homeland as it was before our ancestors entered German national history.

Now I will focus specifically on the immediate settlement history of our region and attempt to establish a foundation for the origin of our family name; so far, I have been tracing the origin of the device called Axthelm, which is a prerequisite for the origin of the family name. And the latter, in turn, is a prerequisite for the origin of the Axthelm family name.

4) The settlement of our ancestral homeland until the fall of the Thuringian Empire in 531

"The thoughts and reflections of our ancestors, unfolded in our history and presented to us in their spiritual form, are for those who take it seriously a starry sky upon the foundation of their soul, according to whose mysterious message of light they will steer the storm-tossed ship of the present with firm confidence into a divinely ordained future." (Schultz)

The Roman writer Tacitus begins in his "Germania" (written in 98 AD):

"Germania in its entirety is separated from the Gauls, Raetians, and Pannonians by the rivers Rhine and Danube, and from the Sarmatians and Dacians by mutual fear and mountains. The rest of Germania is surrounded by the ocean, which encompasses extensive peninsulas and immeasurably large island areas. "

"I would consider the Germanic peoples themselves to be indigenous and by no means to be hybrids resulting from immigration and the hospitable reception of foreign tribes."

"The name Germania itself, incidentally, is new and only recently emerged. Those who first crossed the Rhine and drove out the Gauls, who are now called Tungri, were then called Germans; thus, the name of a single tribe, not a national name, gradually came into use. The collective term Germans, therefore, first originated with the victors because it inspired fear. But once the name had been found, the entire people then adopted it for themselves."

This account from the early days of our national history may suffice for now. The history of Germania as a whole, that is, of the individual tribes, can easily be found in history books. We are now only interested in the settlement processes in our immediate ancestral homeland.

To understand the overall context, I quote Schultz again:

"The third and final millennium of Germanic culture was fundamentally ambivalent. The old, still unequivocally Germanic, events faded away in the great creations of the Migration Period and the Viking Age, while a new, only conditionally Germanic, already transformed and no longer unified, becoming—Germanness—grew into the heart of Europe and secured the East through its colonization and by repelling the Mongol invasions. This flip side of the millennium, riddled with ominous rifts yet pregnant with the future, was still Germanic in race, in the language of the people, and in a significant, though increasingly fading, part of the folk tradition of customs, legends, and songs; but the writing of the educated became alienated from this foundation, even though the best of its power was drawn from it, and lost itself until its alienation from foreign models."

"The new and last millennium is no longer uniform. After 400 years of migrations, with which it begins, a period of stagnation soon sets in. But the North, only now swept by the scree of great events and not yet damaged by their setbacks like the motherland, around the year 800, with unexpected force, launches into a great aftermath that lasts another 400 years. It is called the Viking Age. 'Later Golden Age' and 'Silver Age' were also descriptive names for the two peaks of a world in flux; for in the Migration Period, the captured gold dominated the thoughts and feelings of the Germanic peoples and their heroic poetry, while in the Viking Age, silver predominates in the finds."

What was happening in our ancestral homeland during the first centuries?

I have already explained that the area was settled by Germanic tribes centuries before Christ and liberated from the Celts. However, if I were to say which people first settled it, I can only state in general terms that the first Germanic settlers in the Finne region belonged to the Suebian-Hermonic group, which occupied the Elbe and Saale rivers in the last century BC, pushed the Celts westward, and took possession of all of Central Germany.

The descendants of these older Suebi were the Hermunduri, who had joined together from smaller groups to form a large ethnic community and already populated present-day Thuringia in the last century BC.

Tacitus says in this regard: "The Suebi formed a unified people like the Chatti or Tencteri. They occupied over half of Germania and were divided into their own tribes, which had their own special names, even though they were all grouped together under the name Suebi."

One of the people's peculiarities is to comb their hair back to the side and loop it into a knot . This is how the Suebi differ from the other Germanic peoples , and how the freeborn Suebi differ from the slaves.

Semmons consider themselves the oldest and most respected among the Suebi . [...] The size of their population leads them to see themselves as the head of the Suebi."

"The Lombards , on the other hand, are famous for their small numbers. Surrounded by many powerful peoples, they are secured not by obedience, but by battles and daring."

The Suebi also included the [Naristi](#), [Quadi](#), and [Marcomanni](#). The latter were particularly renowned over the other two. Furthermore, there were the Eastern Suebi: the Marsigni, Boers, Lugii, Naharnadalen, and Harii.

Goths , Rugii, Semorii, Swiches, Astii, and Sitons among the North-East Suebi , and mentioned the Paucinians, Veneti, Fenni, and "legendary peoples" as border peoples in the east .

Hermunduri, the most important tribe for us, who were a brother tribe of the Semnones , with special praise. He writes:

"This part of the Suebi extends into the unknown regions of Germania. Now we will follow the Danube... Closer to us lies the state of the Hermunduri, who are loyal to the Romans. Therefore, they alone among the Germanic tribes maintain trade with us, not only along the riverbanks but deep inland, and especially in the splendid colony of the province of Raetia. They cross the border everywhere, unsupervised. While we only show the other peoples our weapons and camps, we have opened our houses and lands to them, without them showing any desire for it. In the territory of the Hermunduri, the Elbe (Albis) rises, once a famous and well-known river, now only heard of."

So much for the Hermunduri as described by Tacitus, their Roman contemporary. These Hermunduri are the first notable settlers in our ancestral homeland, whose blood still flows in our veins today. At that time, they formed the largest community among the Germanic peoples. This is already indicated by their name, for the suffix "Hermun," related to "Irmin," evokes the great and the divine, so that the name can be understood as "Greater or All-Duris."

Furthermore, the name suggests that this large ethnic group was named after a tribe that enjoyed particularly high esteem among its members and distinguished itself through exceptional power. This tribe may have been called "Turen" or "Duren"; perhaps its origin can still be traced in the "Thyrä River" and the village of Thürungen.

Around the Christian era, the homeland of these Hermunduri extended westward to the Eichsfeld region and the Werra River, southward to the Thuringian Forest (later to the Danube), northward to the Harz Mountains, and eastward to the Elbe River, including its source. The Elbe formed the border between this people and the related Semnones of the east.

Around the middle of the 1st century AD, the Hermunduri fought with the Chatti, who lived to the west in the Taunus region and along the upper Weser River, over the salt springs of Salzungen and, under their [king Weibel](#), defeated [Catualda](#), the successor of the Marcomannic king Marboz. However, as Tacitus reports, they maintained friendly trade relations with the Romans, which, however, did not lead to a direct influence on their culture. Numerous finds of Roman coins attest to this trade. In the Finne

and Schmücke area alone, 4 gold, 11 silver, 2 bronze, and 3 copper coins were found in Röttgenstedt, Beichlingen, Monrburg, Gorsleben, Harras, Heldrungen, and Leubingen. Coin finds were also discovered in the Sömmerda and Lissdorf areas.

These finds are proof of how lively trade was across the Finne peninsula at that time, moving from south to north and vice versa.

Grave finds are rare because the Hermunduri practiced cremation and buried the burnt bones only in urns. In contrast, skeleton graves reappear from the 3rd century onwards, sometimes containing valuable jewelry, indicating a shift towards a more luxurious lifestyle among the Hermunduri due to Roman influence. However, in the Finne region, such graves were only found on the Schmücke hill (with a palm-sized bell on the skeleton's chest) and near Leubingen at the small Wasserberg hill.



Is the name of the people "Hermunduri" still preserved in any form today?

No. It disappears from the sources as early as the end of the 2nd century. What is the reason for this? It is likely that this confederation of peoples dissolved for reasons unknown to us (if it was not destroyed). Perhaps the Lombards, pushing from north to south, or the Semnones, advancing from the east, scattered the group of these peoples, or perhaps it was the great general migration of the Suebi from north to south. It is reasonable to assume that some of the Hermunduri joined the southward-moving groups, only to then mix with the Marcomanni and the Burgundians coming from the northeast, while the larger part of the Hermunduri remained in their old settlements, gradually absorbing new blood from the passing tribes (see Schultze, History of the Saale District). The Lombards may also have given parts of their people to the ancient Hermunduri on their migration south, as may the Angles and Warnii coming from the north, who immigrated in the 3rd century and have since appeared as Alemanni.

These latter peoples merged with the established Hermunduri, along with the remnants of the migrating tribes, and emerged in German history at the beginning of the 5th century as the powerful Thuringian people. When Charlemagne had the old Thuringian law recorded in 802, he titled this work „*lex Anglionum et Werinonum, id est Thuringonum*“, from which the former merging is still evident. One should not assume, however, that these peoples settled haphazardly within the Thuringian people like a flock of sheep; rather, each tribe initially retained its distinct character and settled in close proximity. Thus, the actual settlements of the Angles were located in what would later become northern Thuringia, where the Elbe and Saale rivers converge. Their territory formed a corner (Old High German "angul") between the Elbe and the northern Saxon border, and they were subsequently called "Angeln" (Angels). They therefore only shared the name with the Angles who lived in Schleswig, because the northern Angles also inhabited a "corner" or "angle." The Thuringian Angles, however, were related by blood to the ancient Semnones, who lived in the area of present-day Brandenburg.

Shortly after the migration of the Angles, the Warnii advanced from the Baltic coast and the Heruli from Jutland and the Danish islands into the territory of the Semnones, who had migrated south. The Heruli settled there, and the Warnii established themselves in the central German region between the Thuringian Forest, the Harz Mountains, and the Elbe River, and partly in what is now Mecklenburg.

This immigration of the Angles and Warnii has raised a wealth of questions, all dealing with the time of the immigration and the incorporation of these peoples into the Thuringian kingdom.

In the journal for Thuringian History/1906, for example, Hofer, in an essay entitled "The Saxon Legend," sought to define the boundaries of the Angles and Warnii more precisely. According to him, around 500 AD the Warnii had extended from the left bank of the Elbe and Saale rivers to approximately Halberstadt, while the Angles must have lived west of them, as far as the area of Braunschweig and Helmstedt.

This presupposes, of course, that Hofer positions the immigration of the Angles and Warnii in such a way that the main immigration only took place after the fall of the Thuringian kingdom, on the grounds that the Thuringian people, at the time of their flourishing, would have resisted mass immigration.

From two letters from the [King of the Ostrogoths](#) (during the period 506–523) to the King of the Warnii, which have been preserved for us, he further concludes that the kingdom of the Warnii must have existed independently alongside the Thuringian kingdom until around 500.

To this last objection, one could argue that the Thuringians may have subjugated the previously independent Warnii between 526 and 531. It is also possible that Warnii migrated to Thuringia even after that time. In contrast, the first objection loses its force when one considers that the Angles and Warnii actually contributed to the flourishing of the Thuringian kingdom.

In any case, the traces left by the aforementioned tribes prove that the Angles and Warnii belonged to the territory ruled by the old Thuringians. The Engilina district, to which the northeastern part of the Eckartsberga district belonged, undoubtedly recalls Angle settlements, as do the places Kirchengel, Westernengel, Feldengel, and Holzengel.

Both the Weringau around Würzburg and the Gau Werinofeld west of the Saale near Bernburg trace their names back to the Warnen.

This is the prehistory of the old, powerful Thuringian kingdom, which reached its zenith around the turn of the 6th century, i.e., around 500 AD. From Burgscheidungen, the beautifully situated Thuringian castle on the Unstrut River, [Irminfried ruled](#) the eastern part of Thuringia.

The mighty Thuringian kingdom had become the strongest power in Germania under King Bisino around 508. After his death, this kingdom divided into three parts, which were inherited by his sons Baderich, Berthar, and [Irminfried](#). King Irminfried, who ruled the eastern part from Weimar, moved his residence to Burgscheidungen; there, the fate of Thuringia would be decided.

The wife of this first prominent prince in our ancestral homeland was [Amalaberga](#), a niece of the powerful Ostrogothic king Theodoric the Great (489–526) (also known as Dietrich von Bern), who founded the Italian Ostrogothic kingdom from Ravenna, thus establishing the political hegemony of the West (the most glorious period of power and cultural epoch of Germanic culture).

Amalaberga was a Christian. If she was free to live in the royal seat of the non-Christian Thuringians of her faith (she belonged to the Arian Christian faith, to which the Gothic peoples adhered), then it is likely that Christian ideas found their way into her environment, especially among the women.



This powerful Thuringian kingdom, after a brief period of prosperity, was conquered by the Franks in 531. (Weakened by the division into three parts, and by the superior military skills of their opponents). Three years later, Irminfried was treacherously murdered (see the Nibelung Wars!), and Amalaberga fled with her children to her brother in Ravenna.

With the fall of the Thuringian kingdom, the first Germanic-German settlement history, and thus the first section of our local history, came to an end, and a new era of Germanic cultural creation within German national history began.

Wherever victors and vanquished live together, the victor leaves his mark on the vanquished. So it was here. Soon after their victory, the Franks embarked on a period of intense colonization in Thuringia. As later under the Saxons, they had to establish strong garrisons everywhere to assert their dominance over the subjugated Thuringians. These military bases, however, also necessitated the establishment of estates and farm buildings to support the garrison. Initially, strategic considerations motivated these Franks; then, genuine colonization efforts took center stage; and finally, under Charlemagne, purely political considerations led to the Christianization and cultivation of Central Germany.

Initially, the Franks' efforts were focused on fortifying the conquered territory, and it is likely that the establishment of estates was accompanied by the granting of fiefs to deserving military leaders, at the expense of the subjugated population. This marked the beginning of a completely new chapter in settlement history. It wasn't long before the Franks from the west led colonies (settlers) into Thuringia, particularly into the Finne and Schmücken region, as evidenced by numerous archaeological finds, place names, field names, and the layout of settlements.

While two centuries later the Saxon territory was conquered with bloody brutality by the Franks, a peaceful settlement process took place in Thuringia, opening up vast stretches of uncultivated land to agriculture. Only once did this peaceful cultural development almost face annihilation: the Slavic invasion from the east in the 7th century. Recognizing this undeniable danger, victors and vanquished, friends and foes, took up arms and fought together for the fate of Germany, just as in 451 on the Catalaunian Plains, Romans and Germanic tribes fought together against Attila, the "Scourge of Nations," and the Hunnic armies. But despite all resistance, the sudden onslaught of the Slavs was too strong. The united Germanic tribes attempted to hold the Saale River as their border; nevertheless, the Slavs, specifically the Sorbian tribe, succeeded in gaining a firm foothold west of the Saale as well. This fact is of paramount importance for the ethnic makeup of our ancestral homeland. More on this below.

The origins of German personal names must be sought in this early period of Frankish settlement in Thuringia; an early form of personal names, or rather family names, dates back to the Migration Period. The first occupational names emerged in the 9th century, and around the turn of the 10th/11th century, a time when Henry I, through his far-sighted policies and victorious campaign against the Hungarian invasions, had established a vibrant German trade and industry, it became customary to add the profession of the bearer to men's names (i.e., during the time of the Frankish emperors). By the middle of the 13th century, truly established family names began to appear.

5) The faith of our ancestors and their conversion to Christianity

"The German people have been Christian since their earliest historical beginnings; indeed, their very origin is most closely linked to the Christian Church." (Baetke)

"The formation of the great Germanic empires as power-political phenomena would never have been conceivable without the intellectual foundation of Christianity as a religious and moral outlook and platform." (Adolf Hitler)

As a motto for the gate through which the Germanic peoples crossed from pagan times into the Christian Middle Ages, one could set a curious stanza in which a Christian skald has Christ (Krist) take the place of the Norns at the well of Urd:

"Krist sits in the south by the well of Urd, the mighty conqueror of the Aesir of the rock."

Certainly, this is just the word of one individual. But it speaks to the Germanic peoples' receptiveness to the Christian message. And that is important! For contrary to so many false claims that Christianity was forcibly imposed on our Germanic ancestors, it must be emphasized again and again with all decisiveness that the vast majority of the Germanic peoples, and especially the most historically influential tribes, adopted the Christian faith voluntarily. Who could have forced the powerful Visigoths and Ostrogoths, who in their relentless onslaught overthrew the crumbling Roman Empire, to adopt a faith they did not want? They, who were the lords and conquerors of half the Mediterranean world (see Theodoric the Great), would have submitted to a foreign religion against their own convictions? This assertion is as absurd as it is insulting to our ancestors!

Certainly, there were occasional attempts at forced conversion, primarily in the north, but only later, under Frankish rule, and even then almost always for political reasons. Before that, however, the Christian message had been sporadically reaching the ears of the Germanic peoples for over a century. Kings and princes were generally the first to embrace the new faith. If they then harshly imposed Christianity on their retainers, this should not be blamed on Christianity itself. Nor should it be forgotten that, without any protection of an armed or legal nature, numerous preachers and monks fearlessly ventured into the rugged forests of Germania to spread the message of the Redeemer of humanity there as well.

Why did our Germanic ancestors adopt the Christian faith?

Did they betray their old Germanic beliefs? No! Of their own free will, most embraced Christianity, recognizing its superiority over their old faith.

First, a brief overview of the development of religious ideas among the Germanic peoples: The "Germanic faith" can be divided – however questionable such classifications may be! – into 3 major religious epochs up to the entry of Christianity into German national history.

a. Primal piety (nature worship)

As with all indigenous peoples, the religious sentiment of the Germanic tribes was also based on a "belief in power," meaning that humans believed themselves to be dependent on a "mana," believing in the power of the world around them. Nature had "power," the popular assembly had "power," the military leader had "power," just as doctors still have "power" today, and even political leaders like Mussolini and Adolf Hitler.

This belief in power, which sees humans surrounded by good and evil forces, is a "belief in magic." For magic is power (e.g., the "evil eye," divination, later runes).

The belief in magic corresponds to a "belief in the dead": the power of the dead over the survivors played a significant role among the Germanic peoples. Changes in burial practices are related to views on the relationship between the dead and life. First, there was earth burial with its grave goods, food, clothing, weapons, etc. Later, around 3000 BC, a particularly impressive burial custom spread from Spain northwestward along the coasts to Scandinavia and the Oder River, and eastward along the Mediterranean coast to the eastern countries.

These are the "dolmens," "megalithic tombs," and "megalithic tombs." This custom likely originated with the so-called Cro-Magnon people, whose descendants, known as the Laelic or Dalian people, can still be traced in Lower Saxony and southern Sweden today. These people built stone houses for their dead, complete with a stone passageway, in which they lit fires (for what purpose?



Sacrifice? Or for warmth?), placed stone bowls containing liquid food, and left a "soul hole" in the capstone to grant the deceased freedom to leave the grave. However, a stone arrangement surrounding the grave marked the boundary that the deceased was not allowed to cross.

This burial site is important for the present day insofar as it has found its continuation in the underground crypt churches of Romanesque churches, in the burial of the dead of respected families in the churches, in the ordinary burial ring around the church, and in the crypts of the nobility and princes (see also Tannenberg Monument) of our time.

Around 2000 BC, cremation appeared among the Germanic peoples. First in southern Russia, then among all Indo-European peoples. Fear of and love for the deceased also played a role in cremation. However, even before Christianization, burial in the ground became common again among the Germanic peoples, after the Goths had first eradicated cremation. The Saxons, who, in the manner of the Faelic race, tenaciously clung to the old ways, had to be forbidden from cremating by Charlemagne in 784. In contrast, princes and many members of the nobility continued to be cremated by the Germanic peoples for a long time. Indeed, the seafaring North Germanic peoples, Vikings, etc., long after Christianization harbored the burning desire to set their dead kings and princes adrift at sea on ships.

These examples should serve as a reminder to us present-day people: More reverence for the dead! More care and respect in the upkeep of graves!

The Germanic people felt their greatest power in nature, where, with their strong, internalized senses and innate reverence for all that is great, they sensed divine life. The mystery of the spring, the rustling of the forest, the sun, moon, and starry sky, along with all the forces of nature, testified to them of the sanctity of these unknown powers. The Germanic people devoted their deepest religious feeling primarily to the mountains and hills (see later the Nibelung saga!). And from these mountains, springs trickle forth from mysterious depths, yielding life-giving water. All of this filled the receptive Germanic sense of nature with a secret awe. Even today, "holy springs" and holy mountains are reminders of these religious beliefs (see also Heilbronn and the springs near so-called St. Kilian's churches; in Essen-Werden, a spring flows in the middle of the foundations of a ruined church. The holy water in Regensburg Cathedral is drawn from a well inside the church, and in the Pirmont holy spring, 1200 objects were found, including 400 garment clasps and 600 rings, apparently votive offerings. The drawing of Easter water and the fairy tale of the stork bringing children from the pond are also remnants of the ancient religious worldview).

For the Germanic people, fire possessed magical power; they worshipped the sun as something divine, as well as the moon and stars.

Sun worship was prevalent among all Germanic peoples, particularly pronounced among the agricultural Cro-Magnon peoples in the western Baltic region. And it was precisely these tribes that later provided the most significant bloodline contribution to the indigenous population of our ancestral homeland. Sun festivals, sun processions, sun temples, and sculptural representations of the sun are evidence of sun worship among the Germanic peoples. The sacred, magical symbols of the sun held particular importance. Rectangles and swastikas have been documented since the end of the Neolithic period. The older rectangular cross apparently originated from connecting the four cardinal or solar directions with straight lines. Later, only the most important points of the sun's rising and setting throughout the year were connected. This is how the painted cross came about. If the circle of the sun's image or the circle of vision was placed around these symbols, the wheel cross was created. It existed even before the initially disc-shaped wagon wheel had spokes. Only now is the wheel cross understood as the wheel of solar rain.

swastika, which also appears with three arms and therefore has no connection to the cardinal directions, has a different origin. It first appeared at the end of the Neolithic period in Transylvania on the lower Danube and later became very popular among the Germanic tribes of the Migration Period, as weapons were blessed with it. From around 1500 AD, it gradually fell into oblivion among the upper classes. It was only in 1891 that Ernst Krause (of Carus Sterne fame) rediscovered it, and since then it has become the symbol of German nationalist associations.

The origin of the swastika is shrouded in mystery, and no one has been able to unravel its original meaning. Many interpretations have been offered: a depiction of a stork in flight, a child in the womb, a symbol of the invention of the fire drill, a double lunar spiral, a right-hand cross with small sun symbols attached.

In any case, it has always been a symbol of fertility and healing and initially had a curved shape; only later, when angular woodworking came about, did the angular shape still used today become established.

This is not the place to discuss the swastika and the sun myth in detail; we are only interested in the religious concept within the framework of nature piety.

That the forest and tree (e.g., the ash tree "Yggdrasil") primarily received their religious expression in poetry is well known from our heroic sagas, and recently, through the reading of the Edda, this knowledge is increasingly reaching the general public. Maypoles, quest trees, and divining rods also bear witness to ancient Germanic customs. I am also reminded of Böcklin's "Silence in the Forest"!

Besides animal worship, the belief in spirits should be mentioned as the last form of primal piety. Who in the countryside today isn't familiar with the superstition of wandering spirits? Ghosts and spirits of the dead haunt churchyards, roofs and barns, stables and cellars; everywhere, the nature-loving farmer sees mysterious things (especially the women). Of spiritual origin are the oppressive spirits: the Alp, the Trut, the Night Fool. In German myth, there are the Valkyries, the Swan Maidens, the Danube nymphs, and, as the most powerful spirit fairies, the Norns, the Fates of the Norse songs.

In witches, we encounter a transition from living, uncanny people to independent evil spirits, although one must bear in mind that belief in witchcraft has very little to do with German religious life in its origins. Of German origin are the weather-makers, cloud-riders, and sorceresses (see Ibsen's "Peer Gynt" or Hauptmann's "The Sunken Bell," and above all "Hansel and Gretel," the most German of all fairy tales!). Then there are the many grain, mountain, forest, and house spirits (the corn nymph, the dwarves, the elves, the goblins). The Germanic people do not stand idly by in the face of these spirits. They win over the good ones and seek to fight the evil ones.

From this primal belief of Germanic folk life in the first three millennia, a vibrant world full of heavenly life still breathes forth to us today. Thus, we learn:

The Germanic peoples "were neither pantheists nor believers in an all-god nor believers in a soul god. They were too simple and too natural for both forms of belief. They were a sober, robust farming people who grasped nature and church life strongly and intimately, and felt them warmly and devoutly" (Tögel).

b. Belief in gods and cult

"In the fetish, too, as carved by the savage, I recognized dark greed for God's eternal image."
(Hans Thoma).

Due to the extensive nature of the subject, I will only briefly outline the belief in gods here. It is highly doubtful whether Odin or Thor was the supreme god of the Germanic peoples. From Tacitus, we know that a cult association would unite several tribes who worshipped the same deity. In this deity, they venerated their ancestor and thus felt themselves to be part of a large community bound by blood ties. The three main deities of the Germanic peoples were probably identical to the following tribal gods:

- Frey or Ing, Old Icelandic Ingvi or Ingvi-Freyr, was the god of the Ingvaeones (i.e., the Low Germans).
- Tiu (Ziu) or Irmin, the Low German Saxnot, was the god of the Irvinones or Hermions (i.e., the Central Germans, see Hermunduri and the name Irminfrid, the last king of the Thuringians, who resided at Burgscheidungen with Amalaberga)
- And finally, Wodan, the god of the Isvaeones (i.e., the West Germans).

Whatever the circumstances, we know that the Saxons who were baptized under Charlemagne had to renounce three gods: Wodan, Donar, and Saxnot. Although the multiplicity of Germanic gods is now sometimes disputed, it is attested to as self-evidently by all authorities of the Viking and early Christian periods, as well as by Tacitus. In this respect, Germanic religion is no different from Greek and Roman religion. To deny its polytheistic character would contradict the testimony of the sources. And if some attempt to do so today, this does not stem from a more thorough historical understanding, but rather from the desire for a "purer" and "nobler" form of Germanic religion, one that could be presented as an ideal to today's enlightened, monistically minded humanity (Baetke). Likewise, there were also deities in the North.



And yet, many indications suggest that the Germanic peoples lacked idols in ancient times. For example, we cannot imagine a temple in the sacred forest of the Semnones ("dedicated to the signs of ancestral days and the awe of bygone times" – see Tacitus, Germania), and the god they worshipped there was apparently not represented in an image.

Until the very last days of paganism, the Germanic peoples in both the south and the north venerated sacred mountains, trees, and springs, even offering them sacrifices. It is reasonable to assume that this cult was originally connected to their belief in gods. For when Willibrord desecrated the sacred spring on Fosites-Land, King Radbod rebuked him, accusing him of violating his sanctuary and insulting his god. It is only true that the Germanic peoples later, through Roman influence, adopted the art of carving idols and erecting them in groves. This marked the beginning of an externalization of religious life, and the decline of the old faith began.

The belief in spring was of great importance among the Germanic peoples, as were all major festivals celebrated in honor of the gods, which were also religious folk festivals. There were three main festivals that coincided with the major turning points of the seasons: at the beginning of winter, at midwinter, and at the beginning of summer. The second, the winter solstice, held a particularly important position in the religious life of the ancient Germanic peoples, especially in the north. As we know from Adam of Bremen, this celebration was associated with human sacrifice; Tacitus reports the same for the Semnones and Ingvaeones.

At this point, I would like to include an important note by Schultz about the god of the Ingvaeones, the origin of the Hermunduri, and the origin of the Germanic name. This note seems so important to me because it delves into the original inhabitants of our ancestral homeland:

"The Ingvaeones are the worshippers of the god Ingwi, which in later northern times became an epithet of the god Freyr. A god Istwi is otherwise unknown, but Ingwi and Istwi correspond so precisely in initial sound, tone, number of syllables, and final sound that they are clearly an ancient pair. Erminaz, the god of the Hermions, is later associated with the Irminsul of the Saxons, which was meant to bring down the universe. The name gains clarity through the corresponding Greek word 'Ormenos,' meaning 'shoot, trunk, stump.' It refers to the seed that has sprouted, that has risen. From this arose the meaning 'mighty.' The Ermun-durs are 'the mighty Duren' (Thuringians, Thuringians). Ermen-rich is the 'king,' and the corresponding Old Norse word Jörmun means 'world.' And from this, the name Germanic peoples is also explained ." The initial g- (ga-) corresponds to the Latin co- (con-); the Germanic peoples (ga-ermanen) are 'those who grew up together' or 'those who rose up together'. The proud name clearly announces their claim to global dominance.

Human sacrifice was particularly common among the Semnonas as the highest and most solemn religious act; perhaps this suggests the great age of their tribe and their religion. For even kings were not permitted to judge over life and death, only the priests. In human sacrifice, the feeling of inner connection among the people and tribes, their shared destiny, likely found its highest expression. And at the great nature festivals, the covenant with the deity was renewed each year through human sacrifice. The blood of the victim was the glue that bound the people together with themselves and the god. And this concept of sacrifice was the deepest tenet of pagan religion in Germanic culture. A human life, the most precious thing there is, was not too costly to offer to the deity and renew the covenant of peace with them.

The Germanic peoples were also familiar with prayer. According to Tacitus, the priest or head of the family, gazing heavenward in prayer to the gods, would raise the lot sticks, and where sacrifices are mentioned in Norse sources, prayer is almost always included. For example, it is also recorded that Ingolf and Thorolf prayed to Thor so that he would grant them land.

Belief in the gods was based on belief in power, and this belief stemmed from a feeling of dependence on nature; in the face of its phenomena and forces, humankind recognizes its powerlessness and therefore feels fear and awe. Belief in gods is thus also a belief in demons, a belief in nature demons .

The Germanic people's relationship to their gods and their belief in them was essentially determined by the concept of power , but not in the sense of the mana of the primitive, but rather in the human sense of how they governed their own lives. They viewed life through the lens of struggle, which for them was based on opposition, and was, in essence , struggle. If we define political life today as unfolding in the encounter between friend and foe, between strength and resistance, then this definition expresses the Germanic worldview quite accurately. Life itself, in its totality, is subject to the law that finds expression in antithesis (Baetke). The Germanic people also transferred this friend-enemy relationship to their relationship with their deities. Their deity was therefore a friend and confidant; the relationship with the deity was one of friendship, a relationship of protection, a shared destiny. This belief in a friendly god dominated the entire life of the Germanic people.

Just as the Germanic people believed in gods, in animate and ensouled nature beings, so too did they believe in the divine within themselves (see entrance to Valhalla), but always only in failed self-knowledge and high regard for the divine outside of themselves.

Germanic religion was a religion of personality, not of infinity; its gods are beings with will, and this view of the deity alone left no room in the Germanic people for those diffuse pantheistic ideas that Eckehard would like to attribute to them today.

A clear sign of the decline of faith before the arrival of Christianity is the "godlessness" that arose here and there among the Germanic peoples. This stemmed from the Germanic people's feeling of being abandoned by their god and their doubts about his power. There were not a few men of this persuasion in the Viking Age; some even bore the epithet "the godless." It is said of them that they believed in themselves or in their own power and strength.

Despite the Germanic man's heroic demeanor, he was inwardly gripped by a genuine fear of God. For the Germanic man prayed, and in doing so, he would bow his body or throw himself onto his knees, even prostrating himself completely to the ground.

The belief in the power of the gods, which formed the core of Germanic worship, was not only expressed in a eudaimonistic trust in their benevolent assistance, but also had a dark side. The awareness of one's own powerlessness, which Tacitus already mentions, and the associated feeling of numinous awe before divine majesty – only these two aspects of piety together constitute the true picture of Germanic belief in the gods.

Of the Germanic deities, I must particularly mention the god Donar or Thor in this context, because the Germanic people loved no god more in Germanic times than their Donar-Thor (see "The Song of Thrym," Edda; "The Song of Hymir"). Just as Frya was the most feminine deity of the Germanic peoples, so Donar was the most masculine. He wielded lightning as a weapon, initially interpreted as an axe and later as a hammer. "Thundering from the blue heights, he hurls the jagged lightning." This god Donar or Thor rose among the Germanic peoples to become the most German of all gods, practically an image of the most industrious Germanic farmers. This Germanic axe god or hammer god was not merely a farmers' god or nature god in general, but because the Germanic people were so connected to nature, indeed, practically intertwined with it in life and death, they felt a profound connection to this beloved god. Considering the red beards of the Germanic tribes, they imagined their god to also have a red beard, and this ancient folk myth later found meaningful expression in Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, the Christian



ruler. This god, who with his stone hammer, the "thunderbolt," shattered everything that was hostile to the farmer, eventually rose to true moral greatness and, after the advent of Christianity, was compared by the ancient Germanic peoples to the tempestuous Peter, who, in his angry outbursts and his death-defying loyalty, in his blazing enthusiasm and his sincere warmth of feeling, is indeed similar to Donar. The small St. Peter's Church near Geismar, built by Boniface from the wood of the old Donar's Oak near Geismar, is a fitting example of this. Ascension Day also still recalls the old god, for since it falls on a Thursday, according to old folklore, a thunderstorm always occurs on this day. A powerful thunderclap, which still comes to mind for many a respectable German today, also evokes memories of the dear old god. The farmer from Ditmars says during a thunderstorm: "The old man is up there again, banging his axe on the wheels." It would therefore have been very difficult for the ancient

Germanic tribes to bid farewell to their old god Donar if they hadn't continued to worship him in Peter. That was the old axe god.

c. Ethos and belief in fate among the Germanic peoples

Since belief in gods apparently bore no relation to the moral life of the individual Germanic person, it began to waver long before the advent of Christianity. Instead, belief in an all-powerful fate increasingly came to the fore among the Germanic peoples. The powers of fate are primarily the Norns, female mythological figures frequently mentioned in the Edda, who determine human life from birth to death. One could say that the Germanic people, in acknowledging a power that governs fate, are simultaneously under the impression that this power is malevolent and hostile to humankind. For example, the bleak words of Angantyr at his brother's corpse at the end of the Huns' Battle Song: "A curse has befallen us, brother. I have shed your blood! It will never be erased. The Norns brought misfortune." It must be remembered that the killing of a clan member, such as a son or brother, was considered by the Germanic peoples to be the most terrible misfortune and, at the same time, the worst possible crime. Or consider the entire Nibelung saga, the fateful weaving of unknown malevolent powers in Wagner's "Die Walküre", in "Götterdämmerung" and in "Tristan".

Everywhere, the most terrible and disastrous events unfold, dark suffering for which no solace is ultimately offered. Even the fate that reigns in the heroic laurate is calamity in the deepest and ultimate sense of the word, without uplift and without reconciliation. Hildebrand's cry at the moment he draws his sword against his own child, "Ah, ruling God, woe is the fate that befalls," is an expression of incurable suffering. In the Fafnir Lay, just as in the sagas, it says: "For those doomed to die, everything brings death."

Germanic belief in fate is deeply rooted in a belief in guilt. Throughout the heroic lays, the Edda, and the sagas, guilt is mentioned, but not human guilt, rather the guilt of the fateful powers of the Norns. "The Norns tempted us, seduced us to murder," says Hamir. Fate is thus accused. These fateful powers are likely also expressed in the general Germanic term *Urd*, for it says: "No one overcomes the word of *Urd*, even if it brings him shame" (see also Hildebrand's exclamation: *welaga nu, waltant got, wewurt skihit* = woe-whom happens).

Indeed, even more than that, the gods themselves are subject to fate, for it is said in the "[Hymir song](#)" that the gods cast lots to ascertain the future. At the very least, belief in fate later became the deeper form of Germanic piety. However, it is not true that the Germanic people of the later period were constantly gripped by an uncanny fear of fate and that their state of mind was under the constant pressure of "world-weariness." Everywhere, fate is conceived and understood as the numinous, as the absolutely powerful, the higher, before which humankind can only submit. Belief in fate is primal piety. The humble feeling of dependence on a higher power, the profound religious awareness that humankind cannot do everything it wants, finds in it its ultimate, most sublime expression. It is the feeling of powerlessness, of numinous awe before the all-powerful—the regnator omnium—that cast the Semnones, the kin of our ancient Hermunduri, into the dust at Fesselheim. Their belief in fate lacked one aspect of the numinous: the alluring, the blissful, the fascinans. Fate was in no way a benevolent force, but rather a thoroughly hostile one; one was dependent on it in every respect, yet could not overcome it in any way. It was not the object of prayer and sacrifice, and by its very nature could not be, because it was no longer God, no longer a person. In short, belief in fate was a religious question that remained unanswered—because it was a futile endeavor. Fate was blind because belief in it was blind faith, even if the believing Germanic man was heroic in his stance. Belief in fate was close to becoming a belief in chance. It was incapable of giving birth to a new religion from within itself; deprived of its true religious content, rendered unbelievable in itself, it had gradually degenerated into a bloodless and cold pagan faith, incapable of any further propagation. Germanic religion had reached

the end of its allotted life; its time was fulfilled. The fate in which it believed collapsed upon it in the form of the new religion that brought the answer it itself had been unable to find—that was Christianity.

d. How our ancestors became Christians

"Listen to the evening, listen to the morning, everywhere you will hear God."

Gustav Schöler.

The premonition that speaks from this word is already preparing the messenger who was to receive the new message of Christianity:

"Everything is yours, but you belong to Christ."

Apostle Paul.

From the preceding observations on the transformation of Germanic beliefs from belief in gods to belief in fate, and beyond that questionable belief in fate to the bleakness of chance, it is already clear that the soul of the Germanic people yearned, at its core, for a true fulfillment of its religious longing. From the perspective of the sagas in particular, Christianity appears in a certain sense as the fulfillment of the religious longing that was alive in Germanic religiosity, wherever it becomes visible to us. The belief in a friendly god expresses the desire for an intimate, personal relationship with the deity, one founded on affection and trust—but, as the [Hrafinkelssaga](#) teaches, it cannot find satisfaction in the inadequate conception of God held by paganism. Rather, at the same time, belief in the power of the gods fades away, and in the great historical turning point of the ages, which shakes everything that was previously fixed, including the gods themselves, the question of fate awakens, a question that, at its core, is always a religious one. She calls for a God who is also Lord over fate. This question can still be clearly traced in the Heliand. But it wasn't long before the certainty conquered hearts: "Christ is more powerful than fate!", and with that, the victory of the new faith was decided and the foundation for a new world was laid (Baetke).

The conversion of the Germanic peoples to Christianity was, in approximately 80% of all cases, indeed a voluntary adoption of the new religion. The Germanic people recognized the superiority of the new faith and the truth of the Protestant message, even if they initially perceived it within the framework of their own Germanic beliefs. It is true that, for example, the conversion of the Saxons by Charlemagne was carried out with brutal force; however, firstly, it was motivated by political reasons; secondly, the harshness was due to the old tribal rivalries between the Franks and Saxons; thirdly, according to the latest research by Professor Bauer, the so-called slaughter of the 4,000 nobles is highly improbable; and finally, this Saxon conversion occurred centuries later, after large segments of the Germanic population had already become Christians out of conviction.

Who forced the Franks to adopt Christianity (5th century)? Who could have forced the Germanic tribes of the Ostrogoths and Visigoths, who had already subjugated Italy and part of the Mediterranean region in the 4th and 5th centuries, to adopt Christianity, when they had overrun the crumbling Roman Empire with only a few thousand men and were the masters of the Mediterranean world (see the powerful Ostrogothic kingdom under Theodoric the Great)?

Ultimately, even the Saxons who were forcibly converted became good and sincere Christians, and [Widukind](#), too, was convinced of his Christian faith. Surely, when judging these two great antagonists, Charlemagne and Widukind, we should proceed with more caution and fairness! German history rests upon the twofold fact that Charlemagne forced the Christian Bavarians and the pagan Saxons into the

Frankish Empire, thereby completing the circle of tribes from which a German state was to emerge. Thus, he stands forever at the gateway to German history. It is true that Charlemagne subjugated the Saxons with bloody brutality because this brought to the surface the old tribal rivalries between Saxons and Franks, as I mentioned above. But let us not forget that in the next generation, the baptized Saxons subjugated the pagan Wendish lands with the same bloody brutality and opened the way to the East. For it was on these baptized Saxons, among whom were also Widukind's son and grandson – not on the pagan Saxons – that the great achievement of colonizing the Slavic East beyond the Elbe was based, and they had to have violently separated themselves from the pagan North Germanic peoples in order to become the bearers of this mission, while the pagan North Germanic peoples, on whom Widukind had always relied, continued to ravage the German coasts with murder and fire for a long time. Such was the way of the times!



And one more thing: It is a denigration of Widukind to claim that he allowed himself to be baptized merely out of clever subservience. No! This man was a wild, but honest and upright character, a hero who knew no falsehood. Because he was convinced, he lived just as genuinely and sincerely as a Christian among Christians after his baptism. One does not praise his heroism by ascribing such a base sentiment to him. And one diminishes the strength of character of our ancestors by claiming that they allowed themselves to be forced into a foreign religion. Because the Christian faith was natural to them, they adopted it—and they did so voluntarily.

How did Christianization unfold in the region of our ancestral homeland? The Franks, who took possession of all of Thuringia, were Christians. Through them, the first Thuringians came to the Christian faith, initially without missionary work. In many individual cases, knowledge of the Christian faith was transmitted from the Franks to the Thuringians quite naturally. Political prudence dictated that the Franks should not forcibly deprive the conquered peoples of their old faith. And yet, they had to try to subtly bind the subjugated tribes to themselves by aligning their religions; thus, these were primarily political missionary efforts. Above all, they had to construct military fortifications to maintain control over the conquered territory. Our region, in particular, which lay so close to the old Sorbian border along the Saale River, required strong protection. When the Franks roamed along the Schmücke and Finne mountain ranges, they found the heights already occupied by old hillforts, situated at militarily important locations. The Franks then built their wooden castles there, housing their garrisons, who were, of course, Christians, just as they were back home. At the suggestion of the commanders, the Franks also erected chapels and oratories for daily worship, and gradually brought their priests from their Frankish homeland. This fact indicates that it was military chaplains who first proclaimed the Christian message in Thuringia. Although they initially came to the region only to provide pastoral care for the Frankish garrison, they would nevertheless have come into contact with the indigenous pagan population, especially since the Frankish noblemen who commanded the garrison supported the mission to the pagans, albeit for political reasons. The bell, which had previously rung out from a tower within the ramparts, later also called the Thuringian population to worship, and thus these old Frankish fortifications soon became the center and gathering place for the people. The wooden chapels were transformed into solid stone churches, which laid the foundation for the magnificent Romanesque basilicas and Gothic cathedrals that still bear witness to a glorious past in our country today.

Remnants of such chapels still greet us today on the banks of the Unstrut River in the ruins of Sachsenburg Castle; they bear witness to the fact that for centuries the bell of the Christian God called

our ancestors to worship from a wooden bell tower here. The same is true for the now long-vanished Monraburg near Burgwenden, a later addition to the original rampart.

On the heights of Stefansberg, the Frankish garrison of Lichtenburg had built their first mission chapel. Altenburg near Mallendorf was also founded in these earliest times. From these chapels, the cross greeted our ancient Thuringians, and throughout the land, peace reigned under this symbol, a peace that very soon became established between Franks and Thuringians. Sword and plow together in the hands of the grandchildren preserved what their fathers had won. And even if the settlers whom the Franks led to the Finne were not yet Christians themselves, their leaders were certainly Christians, as were the Frankish noblemen who, endowed with villages and farms in return for their military service, had sought and found a new home here (Naumann). And when, surrounded by ravens, the nobleman's seat rose in the village, then, in rare cases, only a chapel was lacking, which, although initially intended only for the lord of the village, soon became a gathering place for the villagers themselves. However, one must not close one's eyes to the stark reality and only think about a harmoniously developing Christianization.

It is likely that many a priest, living among pagans once again, became half-pagan himself and, after being baptized at midday under the symbol of the cross, sat by the fire in the forest darkness under cover of secrecy at night, a fire that burned in honor of Wodan. For it was rare for a wandering bishop to come from his Frankish homeland to inquire about the success of the missionary work. From uncertain accounts, one can still discern outbursts of anger from Boniface, who was enraged by such priests. And yet, it must be acknowledged that it was through these priests that the message of Jesus Christ first penetrated German lands, and that, under their influence, a good part of our ancestral homeland had already turned to the Christian faith by the turn of the 8th century. It is not true that Irish-Scottish monks set foot in the mountains of the Finne and Schmücke. And if chapels dedicated to St. Kilian arose at its foot, in the Laucha fields, in Rastenberg, and in Freiburg, these are merely proofs that the name of the man of God, who was active in and around Würzburg, also resonated well in our region. (This Kilian [Killera], supposedly an Irish-Scottish itinerant bishop, was a missionary on the Main River during the Merovingian period and was murdered in Würzburg along with his companions.) The Frisian apostle Willibrord also did not preach here.

Another question is whether Winfrieth, who was named Boniface after his episcopal consecration, ever set foot in our region. It is claimed that he was the founder of St. Peter's Church in Großmonra, but this is uncertain. Perhaps, while staying in Ohrdruf, he came to the Finne and Schmücke area during his missionary journeys and, on that occasion, suggested the construction of churches; the Church of St. Peter and Paul in Kölleda may also have been built at his instigation. Be that as it may, a considerable influence from his work may have reached our ancestral homeland, and the Frankish priests, accustomed to little oversight, may have been encouraged to more diligently fulfill their pastoral duties. Perhaps the founding of the monasteries of Fulda and Hersfeld allows us to draw conclusions about missionary activity in the Finne region.

Fulda Abbey, founded in 744 by Sturmi, a favorite disciple of [Boniface](#), became not only a model institution but also a center of intellectual culture in the 8th and 9th centuries. Famous men of the 9th century emerged from its school; this abbey was the motherhouse for the next generation of missionaries. It was particularly rich in estates in our region, including Beichlingen, Oberheldrungen, Rettgensstedt, Frondorf, Gosserstedt, Etzleben, Bibra, Auerstedt, Tromsdorf, Leubingen, and Gorsleben. These estates paid rents to Fulda Abbey, while old documents tell us that Rettgensstedt, Altbeichlingen, and Gorsleben, along with their surrounding fields, belonged to Fulda Abbey itself.

Hersfeld Abbey , founded by Lullus in 768, soon grew to become, alongside Fulda, the most powerful monastery in Central Germany and enjoyed even greater favor from the ruler. It owned estates in 132 locations in Thuringia, including the most important towns from Artern along the Unstrut River to its confluence with the Saale. Besides these estates and those situated on the northern slopes of the Schrecke and Finne hills, its holdings also included Allerstedt, Wolmirstedt, Memleben, Wennungen, Scheidungen, Balgstedt, Bibra, Hessler, Tromsdorf, and Millingstedt. Later additions included Kölleda, Griefstedt, Büchel, and Gorsleben.

These facts suggest that the monks who collected rent from these properties likely also preached the word here and there and exerted their influence. Where a church dedicated to St. Boniface stands, one might think of Fulda; where a church dedicated to St. Wigbert stands, the influence of Hersfeld Abbey may still be evident.

From all these investigations, one should by no means conclude that these kinds of foundations were established by force of arms. They were mostly donations from princes who had converted to Christianity of their own accord (whether for political or religious reasons is impossible to judge). However, those early Thuringians who became Christians among the first Franks did so out of their own free conviction. In later centuries, our ancestors themselves provided the answer in a profound medieval legend, the story of "Christophorus": "Christ was stronger than our gods!"

6) Does our gender have Slavic blood in its veins?

"A people is educated for its future only through its past, and the present should establish and mediate the correct relationship between the two." (Langbehn "Rembrandt as Educator")

The numerous fratricidal conflicts and the violent extermination of the Germanic inhabitants in our Central German homeland had disastrous consequences for the following centuries. Disturbed by the Huns, who invaded from East Asia, Slavic peoples, members of the last Indo-European tribe in Asia, had already moved into the territories east of the Elbe in the 5th century, filling the gaps left by the Germanic tribes during the Migration Period. Originally, the Slavs were neighbors of the Goths, who also had their settlements in the interior of Russia. Both peoples had been set in motion by the Hunnic invasions. The Slavs initially followed the Avars, an Asiatic people who forced them into slavery, and cultivated the land. When they entered the German territories, they were called Wends or Wends by the Germanic tribes. Around the middle of the 6th century, a part of these Slavs, called the Surbi (Sorbs) tribe, settled in the abandoned areas between the Saale and Elbe rivers after they had separated the margraviate.

Remnants of the Germanic population submitted to them and intermingled with them. The appearance of this Sorbian population reflected the typical Slavic ethnic type: stocky build, broad face with prominent cheekbones, smooth nose, dark eyes, and a wide mouth. The boundaries of Sorbian territory in the 6th century were roughly as follows: to the east the Bober River, to the west the Saale River, to the north the Spree and Havel Rivers, and to the south the Lusatian Mountains and the Ore Mountains.

In their advance, the Slavic immigrants initially followed the course of the rivers, gradually reaching the interior of the country. Although many researchers deny a military incursion westward across the Saale River, there is no doubt that these Sorbs crossed the Saale boundary. Certainly, most Slavic settlements west of the Saale originated with colonists (settlers), but the nature of the settlements still reveals whether they arose during a period of warlike migration or through peaceful settlement. It is likely that Frankish and Saxon princes employed the Sorbian Wends on their royal estates.

The same applies to the large landowners. Examples of this can be found right here in our district. On the other hand, in the immediate vicinity west of the Saale, Sorbian settlements are clustered so closely together that one cannot conceive of this as a process of peaceful colonization. Presumably, they crossed the river during the Merovingian period—when central authority was weaker—and were subsequently subjugated by the indigenous population.

The old imperial castle of Spielberg also fell victim to them, and in place of the old, destroyed Frankish settlement, the Sorbian circular village arose in a form so pronounced that it is probably only found elsewhere in the deserted village of Lasan west of the Saale River (Schlüter). Perhaps a clue for a proper distinction between genuine Sorbian settlements, built and established during the victorious advance, and settlements that arose peacefully, can be found by paying attention not only to village names and layouts, but above all to field names. For where we encounter Sorbian field names, there is the strongest evidence that a Sorb plowed the land there. These fields are primarily the so-called "Reisdörfer" (literally "rice villages"). However, such Sorbian settlement features are relatively scarce in the Unstrut-Finne region.



A few clues may suffice in this context: In 1124, during the division of the provost's estate of Bad Bibra, a Sorbian settlement is explicitly mentioned, the establishment of which can be traced back to the Saxon kings. The old church, long since vanished and dedicated to St. Agidius, supports this theory. This dedication, very popular among the Sorbs, appears again in Beichlingen and Kannawurf, raising the possibility that a similar Sorbian serf settlement to Bibra may have arisen at the foot of the Beichlingen castle hill. In Kannawurf, the St. Giles spring may have a Sorbian name. St. Vitus, also popular among the Sorbs, was the patron saint of the church in Auerstedt and the neighboring village of Reisdorf, which belonged to Weimar. Both places had a strong Sorbian population.

These written records do not yet extend to the immediate Finne region (with the exception of Beichlingen and Kannawurf). However, Slavic settlements in Borgau, Schafau, and Kalbitz can be traced back to place names and field names, and indeed, all endings in -au and -itz can be considered Slavic. Regarding Schafau, the place closest to our ancestral homeland, the ending -au could have been added later, referring to the Schafaubach stream. On the other hand, the custom of women wearing white clothing in mourning just a few generations ago also suggests a Slavic origin. Of course, the endings -itz cannot necessarily be considered Slavic in every case.

The question of whether field names allow us to draw conclusions about Slavic settlements is directly linked to the other question: to what extent can we recognize a former Sorbian settlement from the layout of villages? The most common settlement pattern among the Sorbs was the horseshoe shape or a circular one. Since many places and deserted settlements with similar layouts can be found in our region, but bear German field names, it is highly doubtful whether one can look for Sorbian foundations in them. After all, even in Germanic settlements, the idea of defense determined the form of the village layout, and the most advantageous form in this respect was undoubtedly the horseshoe shape.

Finally, it would be necessary to investigate whether the evidence found underground indicates Slavic settlements. Finds from the Sorbian period have been made at Altenburg near Eckartsberga (shards with the characteristic wave patterns, incised into the soft clay with a comb), as well as at the site of the Stone Age settlement near Griefstedt and in the Oberheldrungen area. Evidence against the

existence of regular Sorbian settlements west of the Saale River is the fact that the typical ringforts of Sorbian origin, which are so common east of the Saale, are not at all detectable west of the river.

Further finds have included: many shards with the wave ornament during the repair work on the Thüsdorf church, likewise in the clay pit on the hillside in the Herrengosserstedt area as well as in the Millingsdorf area, and likewise at the so-called "Totenkippe" (death dump), which is now covered with spruce trees, in the Gössnitz area, where pearls were also found, suggesting a possible Slavic burial site.

To the aforementioned historically significant and immensely valuable find in the so-called "Leubing Hill," a few more details, as described in Götze's work, should be added: In an upper burial layer, approximately 70 skeletons were found between 0.30 m and 2 m below the hill's surface, mostly densely packed one above the other and side by side, all with their heads to the west. Most were covered with charcoal, some also enclosed laterally, and one even below, thus resembling a coffin. Almost half were children, along with women and elderly people; one skeleton contained the remains of a horse.

Grave goods: Silver and bronze temple rings, some embroidered in leather braid; silver earrings, each with three hollow silver sheet metal pieces with soldered-on silver beads; silver beadlocks of fine filigree work; six open bronze finger rings, most flat and tapering towards the ends, only two of round wire. Glass and stone beads on the neck and chest, in seven cases forming larger necklaces, spherical, cylindrical, barrel-shaped, faceted, some inlaid with colored stones; among the stone beads were amethyst, rock crystal, agate, and jasper. Remnants of textiles and leather shoes, and only in a few cases individual, undecorated fragments of shattered clay vessels, covered with ashy burnt earth. (Cf. Yearbook for the Prehistory of the Saxon-Thuringian Lands V, 1906).

This find alone should provide sufficient evidence that the Slavic settlement of our region – for the entire Finne area lies between Leubingen and the Saale rivers – was not insignificant. However, it is impossible to determine precisely to what extent military incursions into this area led to permanent settlement and subsequent intermingling with the subjugated indigenous population. Based on all investigations, it can be asserted that Slavic settlements were probably only established sporadically here and there in the Finne area by colonists.

It is reasonable to assume that these serfs, recruited more or less by princes and kings, occupied a special position among the local population, and therefore, especially since their numbers may have been relatively small, the influence of Slavic blood on the original inhabitants of the Finne region should not be considered highly significant. That Slavic blood entered this or that family, however, cannot be denied.

If we now want to answer the initial question, "*Does our lineage have Slavic blood in its veins?*", then no precise answer can be given. Only one thing is certain: that in the immediate geographical area of our Finnish homeland, where our family can be traced back to ancient times, no Sorbian settlements have been found, and that Slavic blood may have entered our lineage at most through the marriage of a Slavic settler into this family. However, in the overall bloodline development of our lineage, this Slavic influence is to be considered insignificant, provided that our ancestors truly originated from this region.

II. At what time did our gender originate?

"Language is the mirror of a nation." (Schiller)

The answer to this question can only come from the results of historical linguistic studies. The landscape of our ancestral homeland, both past and present, is now clearly established, and the political movements of peoples from the Stone Age to the Middle Ages provided the basis for the

historical linguistic analyses that will supplement and, as far as possible, complete the results obtained so far. However, these observations also reveal the difficulty of pinpointing the origin of a family name.

Again, it must be emphasized: The danger of fantasy or free construction is so great that a precise critical examination of all linguistic-historical moments is just as necessary as a detailed explanation of the landscape and ethnological processes.

The history of a people is reflected in the development and growth of its language. Schiller recognized this when he said:

"Language is the mirror of a nation. When we look into this mirror, a great, magnificent image of ourselves is reflected back to us."

To fully understand a people, one must study all aspects of their life. Despite all scientific research, however, millennia of our people's childhood and youth remain shrouded in the darkness of prehistory. Only since the beginning of the Christian era has a clear picture of German history emerged, yet millennia before that, the German spirit and German blood laid the foundation for the Greater German Reich that would later be established.

Written records are scarce in pre-Christian times, but the singers proclaimed the great deeds of their people from generation to generation. These songs, this language, illuminate the primeval past as if in twilight and bear witness to glorious times in German prehistory.

- a. The linguistic-historical foundations of the name Axthelm and the conclusions that can be drawn from it

According to Prof. Kluge, the development of our language could be divided into seven time stages:

- pre-Germanic
- Proto-Germanic
- Old Germanic
- quintessentially German
- Old High German
- Middle High German and
- New High German time

Of course, these stages cannot be sharply defined chronologically. They blend into one another like the shades of a watercolor. The pre-Germanic period, that is, when the Germanic peoples were not yet truly Germanic, slowly developed into the proto-Germanic period, which in turn is not illuminated by any historical records.

"The transition from pre-literary obscurity has been taking place in linguistic facts since the last centuries before our era. This is when Germany enters history, and with it, its language. But between the ancient Germanic peoples of our third period and the ancient Germans of our fourth, the linguistic facts intertwine imperceptibly. The Old High German period begins, fluctuating and fluid, even before our oldest written records, which slowly emerge in the mid-8th century, gradually transforming into the Middle High German period in the 11th century. The Middle High German period, whose impulses are already present in the language of the 11th century, culminates in the classical poems of Walther and Wolfram, but already in the 13th century generates sound laws with which the modern era begins the development of our classical written language."

name Axthelm can now be traced chronologically if the origin of the Axthelm family is to be clarified at all.

First, an overview will be given of how he roughly compares the three major periods of linguistic history with the cultural-historical epochs and clarifies the origin of the linguistic material:

- Stone Age (younger) I. The pre-Germanic period
 - a) Indo-European (axe = agesi, agzi) b) European
- Bronze Age II. The Germanic period
 - a) indigenous
 - 1. Common Germanic (axe = agizi)
 - 2. West Germanic (halter, handle = halftra, halmo)
 - b) borrowed (pre-Old High German borrowings)
- Iron Age III. The Old German period
 - a) Old High German
 - 1. indigenous
 - 2. borrowed
 - b) Middle High German
 - 1. indigenous
 - 2. borrowed

What does this representation mean?

It initially appears enigmatic to the layman. And yet, at first glance, it reveals when and how the foundation of our name was laid. It clearly shows that our name Axthelm = Axhelm = Axhalb = ackeshalp = accushalalp = akzihalmo = ag(i)zihalbmo received its conceptual definition (for both axe and helmet = handle, halter) even before the Iron Age. Specifically, the word term helm = halm = halb = halp (Middle High German) = halap (Gothic) = halmo = halbmo (Old High German) originates from West Germanic and arose in the Hallstatt or Late Bronze Age, as already emphasized above.

The word "axe" (Middle High German: Ax = Aks = Ackes = Middle High German: ackus = Old High German: acchus = aksi = agizi = agési = Indo-European: agési) originates from an even earlier time. It belongs to the oldest part of our language's heritage, by which we mean the words that our Indo-European ancestors already possessed when they still lived together in the original Indo-European homeland (High Asia, Southeast, Central, or Northern Europe?), united with Indians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Slavs, Lithuanians, and Celts. This refers to the time when all the nations now considered originally Indo-European were still united in one large ethnic group before the great Indo-European migration. This heritage included only expressions for the most immediate, perceptible things, and above all, for agriculture and animal husbandry. This genetic material can still be found today in all Indo-European people groups (ancestors of the Indians, Persians, Greeks, Albanians, Italians, Celts, Slavs and Armenians).

The word axe = agési also originates from this early period of our language.

After the split of the Indo-European original people into tribes – which may have been caused by religious and political disputes, or perhaps simply by the constant increase in the population (Kluge) – and after the emigration of the tribes from their ancient homeland, a second stage of language formation begins, and thus the beginning of the Germanic language .

This Common Germanic of the Proto-Germanic period shows, in its vocabulary, besides the loss of some Indo-European roots (see po = to drink and do = to give), considerable innovations, which are particularly evident in the rich development of words for more advanced economic life, for concepts from the realm of military life (see axe) and for moral and religious ideas.

The Germanic peoples lost some of their ancient roots, but to compensate for this loss, they formed new tribes, resulting in a common Germanic vocabulary that reached approximately a quarter of the current vocabulary. However, because only a few words have been passed down to us through classical writers, and the few runic inscriptions on tools and weapons provide little evidence from this period of the Proto-Germanic community, we are dependent on reconstructing this Proto-Germanic language by comparing the various Germanic dialects. These include Gothic, Old High German, Old Saxon, Old Norse, Old English, and so on.

The oldest vocabulary of the common language family has been handed down from all Germanic languages to the present day, and our German language in particular possesses such rich treasures throughout the entire history of its writing from this ancient heritage, which already has a history spanning millennia, that we can hardly speak or read a German sentence in which an Indo-European word does not appear.

In any case, we note that the Indo-European word *agési* from the Late Stone Age reappears in the Common Germanic word *agizi* from the Early Bronze Age, meaning that it passed directly from Indo-European into the Germanic language and has since undergone its consistent development through all language changes in Germanic cultural history until the word form "axe" was established.

In the 3rd millennium BC, the Indo-European "battle-axe people" migrated from the east into the western Baltic region and merged with the Cro-Magnon farming people, the builders of the megalithic tombs. This union formed the basis of Germanic culture (Tögel). The first coinage of the Indo-European word **ag ési** = axe most likely originated from these Indo-European "battle-axe people," and after merging with the Cro-Magnon people, it re-emerged in the West Germanic form **agizi**.



Before addressing the question of how our family name was officially established, I would like to include a linguistic sample from Gothic literature that is also of great interest to laypeople. Gothic, which is the first Germanic language in which our word "axe" (= *agizi*) appears, is undoubtedly to be considered the most complete cultural sphere and the oldest language family, and, as it were, an intermediate stage between Indo-European and German. The following linguistic sample comes from the Gothic Bible translation by the Gothic bishop Ulfilas (d. 388 in Constantinople) and is easily understood by any layperson, both in terms of sound and by comparison with the Lord's Prayer.

“Atta unsar thu in himinam, weihnai namô thein skulam unsaraim. jah ni bringais us in fraistubnjai, ak lausei us af thamma ubilin; untê theina is thiudangardi jah mahts jah wulthus in aiwins.”

In Old High German, however, it says: “fader unsêr thu an radorum (andl. radur = heaven)

This Gothic literary record gives us a picture of the language around 350 AD.

Even from the 9th century AD, we have non-Christian songs from the North Swedish skalds who worshipped the axe god Thor (Donar). The veneration of this god and his axe dates back to the time of rock carvings; indeed, Thor's hammer (= Thor's axe; the axe later became a hammer!) retained its Bronze Age character until the very end, for as late as the 12th century AD, bronze Thor's hammers were found in a sacred grove on a remote island in Sweden. And it was precisely to the great deeds of Thor and his sacred hammer in the battle against giants and monsters that the skalds of the 9th and 10th centuries composed songs of praise, to which the ancient praise songs of the Rigveda to the god Indra in India provide the closest counterparts in form, content, and attitude.

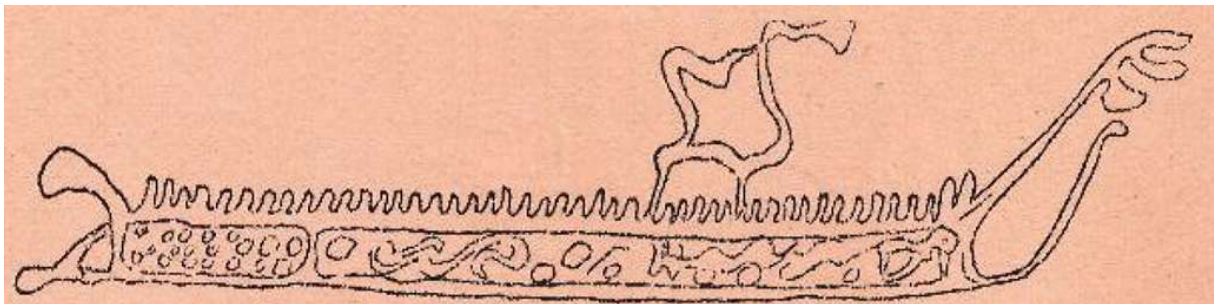
For example, around the year 1000 AD, a skald named Vetilidi praised Thor for his great deeds against monsters and giants:

"You broke the bones of Leikn, lame Thriwald, overthrew Starkard, trampled the lute Gjölþ."

This was exactly how the ancient praise songs of Rigireda to the god Indra in India were:

"You, O Indra, defeated the ravenous Luschna in battle, united with Kutsa. – You brought down the demon's hundred fortresses, the Sambara, which were unassailable."

This axe god is called "Aesir-Thor," because his two sons are the two Aesir, the divine twins (see illustrations above), who are later called Alci; they too wield the sacred axes, as the rock carvings and scrapers clearly show. Indeed, they are even only indicated by pairs of axes, as the following rock carving shows.



(A fur-covered ship, its hull painted with ornamentation. Inside the ship are the two sacred axes, symbols of the twin gods).

These twin gods with their sacred axes are saviors and redeemers from the face of death, and since magnificent hymnic poems were dedicated to them by the Indians and Greeks at roughly the same time, something similar can certainly be assumed for the Germanic peoples (Schultz). Examples of such poems from the period 1000 BC and 600 BC (the Jonian Alcaeus to the Dioscuri (Castor and Polydeuces, the divine twins)) can be found in Rig Veda VII, 70, 3; 69, 1 and 7, and in Schultz, "Altgermanische Kultur" 1937, pp. 29 ff.

- b. How should the transfer of the device name "Axehelm" to a human wearer be conceived?

The name Axthelm, as explained above, originates in its etymology from the earliest beginnings of our language and is of purely Germanic or Indo-European origin; it was neither transformed by Celtic influences nor affected by Slavic or Roman foreign influence.

Does establishing the original meaning prove anything about the origin of the term "axe handle"? No. But as I explained above, the meaning of the word "axe handle" must have arisen in the Late Bronze Age, when a distinct craft of axe handle carving developed.

Our next question is: When was the term "axe handle" transferred to a person? One might assume that this transfer occurred shortly after the emergence of the new craft, just as a craftsman named Karl Meier, who practices the cooper's trade, is usually called "Cooper Karl" rather than "Meier Karl" (as in my hometown: there, for example, the miller Otto Krieger is often called "Miller Otto," or the father of the merchant Hugo Brünner was a cooper, and so the son is still referred to as "the cooper").

Of course, such names didn't exist back then. They only appeared during the time of Charlemagne, just as our native language has undergone significant historical changes since his era. A proper system of naming can only be traced back to the late Frankish settlement period (in the 9th century), after the

major Germanic migrations had come to a standstill and settled groups of people had formed on Germanic soil through the merging of several tribes.

We therefore skip over the major cultural epochs of the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age and pick up again at the Late Iron Age of the post-Christian period, because the first male names developed during this time.

The origins of male names date back to the Early Iron Age. The word "name" itself is of Indo-European origin, as is the extended family with its abundance of terms for different degrees of kinship, a Germanic legacy from pre-Germanic times. The formation of our ancient personal names best illustrates how closely pre-Germanic and post-Germanic cultures are intertwined. Since the arrival of the Cimbri and Teutons, they have faithfully preserved their distinctive national character, which extends into the Christian centuries, to the age of Boniface and Charlemagne, and beyond. And yet, this Germanic distinctiveness originates from the Indo-European language community. The similarity in the structure of names among the Indians, Persians, Greeks, Celts, and Germanic peoples of antiquity justifies our conclusion that Germanic personal names derive from the Indo-European heritage.

"In the oldest naming practices of the Indo-European language community, a poetic disposition and talent of the original people was stirred. And this poetic spirit expressed itself in the hopes and desires that animated the parents or other relatives at the child's birth. Strength in battle, glory among one's own people, power, and possessions are, for gifted indigenous peoples who strive for higher goals in their struggle with nature, the epitome of all desires, the ambition of life. The oldest accessible names of the Indo-Europeans revolve around such key concepts. They find their linguistic expression in ancient compound words, whose components are often the same, even if we can derive small equations through deduction" (Kluge).

The word "wolf," for example, was the most popular, as was "horse" (= eknos), or abstract concepts like "fame," "honor," "power," "peace," etc. Again and again, the same elements reappear in new compounds within the Indo-European languages as a Germanic inheritance from the Proto-Indo-European language. Our pre-Christian ancestors significantly increased and enriched the Indo-European heritage without succumbing to tasteless aberrations, as the Romans did.

Since the Celts were already neighbors of the Germanic tribes in the 2nd millennium BC, it is safe to assume that linguistic influences occurred in both directions, influences which remain hidden from us today. However, these always refer to the old dual origin of the names.

Just as similarities can be observed between Germanic and Celtic peoples (Old High German Hadumar, Gallic Catumarus; Old High German Thiotmâr, Gallic Teutomatus, etc.), so too between Germanic and Greek peoples.

Of course, one shouldn't imagine the Indo-European personal name pool to be so extensive. On the contrary – it may have happened that some people had no name or didn't know one (as in the Thirty Years' War, the young Simplicius only knew himself as Bub and his father only as Knäu), since one could get by with names of age and kinship in one's immediate surroundings.

"Only public life, interaction within tribes and settlements, larger economic associations, and warring communities of adults makes naming necessary and unavoidable. Thus, the content of the oldest Indo-European names reveals the level of cultural development, where wealth and fame were considered ideals. The higher the material and intellectual culture of a people grows, the more richly it develops its naming practices along with the growth of tribes and settlements. New types of names constantly emerge, in which family names and personal characteristics, as well as embarrassment, jest, and chance, can play a role. The influence of parents and relatives can be expressed a hundredfold in

the names. And then, the combination of two personal names arises to create a third, through which a kinship relationship is meant to be indicated or established. This is evident when, after the Migration Period, seemingly impossible word formations like Siegfried (meaning "peace of victory") or Wolfram (meaning "wolf-raven") or the Anglo-Saxon Heorogar (meaning "sword-spear") appear." If such cross-stories appeared, they have an understandable meaning for the family and clan through references to persons who actually or even just mentally participated in the naming process."

The only purpose here is to clarify the peculiarities of common Germanic naming conventions in connection with their ethnic characteristics. The connection between these names and the craft of weaponry (Hiltibrant, Hadubrant, Gunther, Gernot, Giselher, Hildegunde, Brunhilt, Krimhilt, etc.) then becomes self-evident. This ethnic peculiarity thus lives on in our oldest vocabulary and shapes subsequent name formation.

Furthermore, history and legends reflect the life and spirit of early German times in the names. All personal names from our earliest period have a linguistic meaning, e.g., Wolfhard = bold as wolves, Hartmuot = bold and courageous. Indeed, one can still recognize our old Germanic tribal names in some of our older two-part male names, e.g., Engelhardt and Dänert, derived from the Angles and Danes. Engilhart = bold as an Angle; Deinhart = bold as a Dane; Werinhart = bold as a Wariner; Ingilomerus = famous among the Ingulons; Teutomorus = famous among the Teutons, etc.

In contrast, the ancient deities appear very rarely in place names. Our ancestors were prevented from doing so by the deities' holy sons, and perhaps also by the transformation of religious beliefs through Christianity, which was gradually gaining influence in German regions during this period. And yet, there were names that recalled the deities. The Aesir or Ansen (gods) appear, for example, in the Germanic names Anshelm, Ansfrid, and Ansgar; the elves or elves appear in female names like Albrun, but also in male names such as the Anglo-Saxon Alfred (Old High German = Alprad).

The name Anshelm has often been confused with our name Axthelm, but from a linguistic history perspective it has nothing to do with it; rather it means "God's helmet".

Just as this male proper name breathes true Germanic heritage, so too was alliteration of paramount importance for the naming of our ancestors.

We assume that our Germanic poetry is rooted in a primeval era that is no less ancient than Homer and the songs of the Indian Rigveda. In the days of original single-named heroes, the addition of a patronymic was common: for example, Agamemnon, the son of Atreus, or, when father and son thus appear in the poetry, we read, for instance, the short line "Wulf Wonréding" in the Beowulf poem or the long line "Hiltibrant gimahalta, Heribrantes sunu" and "Hadubrant gimahalta, Hiltibrantes sunu" in the Old High German Hildebrandslied. These are the earliest beginnings of naming.

Our name is neither a military designation nor a personal name, but rather a so-called implement name, meaning it was given to a tool or a person carrying it. As we saw in the cultural-historical observations above, this implement was not just any tool, but specifically an axe handle, which held cultic significance. This was because not only was the axe the weapon of the god Donar, the most popular among the Germanic peoples, but the axe handles themselves were venerated as symbols of the divine twins of Donar's sons. It is quite likely that the craft of axe handle carving developed within this cultic context, so it is not difficult for us to conclude that the craftsman practicing this art was very soon given the name of his craft. However, since no such naming occurred until the end of the Migration Period, and rather the first transfers of activities and characteristics only took place from the end of the 7th or beginning of the 8th century – in the Frankish-German settlement period – the transfer of the tool name Axthelm to a craftsman, who may have also been a warrior and farmer, can only be placed in the 8th century at the earliest.

During this period, the first house marks also appeared. It is reasonable to assume that a craftsman practicing the art of axe handle carving had, for generations, displayed an axe handle as his house mark on his gate and used this mark as his identifying mark. These two characteristics, house mark and craft, may have led to the initial adoption of the name "Axe Handle" as a personal name.

In all likelihood, the term "Axtholm," which was already linguistically formulated in Germanic prehistory, as I explained above, was used in the earliest runic inscriptions. Runes emerged among the Germanic peoples at a time when the Germanic tribes were on the move, but also when the first messengers of Christianity were penetrating the Germanic border forests; this was between the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. From the very beginning, they served not for writing, but for secret knowledge and the magical power derived from it. Even the name "runes," which is related to our word "murmur," suggests this. These runic symbols were carved onto spearheads, axes, swords—primarily weapons. To what extent the rune f, representing the letter a, the symbol for Aesir = god, is also a symbolic representation of the divine twins, who were depicted as a sacred axe, can no longer be proven. But the shape of this rune is striking, as it has the exact shape of an axe.

The runes, or Futhark, were divided into three sets of eight: the Eight of Freyr (eight characters, including the rune f); the Eight of Hagall; and the Eight of Tyr. All three sets began with the letter that denotes them. These runic symbols are among the oldest known features of writing from Germanic prehistory, yet a striking suspicion remains. This runic script, whose characters originally came from Latin, exhibits the distinctive Futhark arrangement throughout the Germanic world. This sequence of letters, "futhark," is one of the mysteries of the runic script. Although its existence is definitively established through inscriptions and ancient poems, it is reminiscent of the Lord's Prayer, which in Old Germanic would begin with " fader u nsêr t hu a n r adorum " (Our Father, who art in heaven). Only the letter k is missing, which means something like "Kaunaz" (bump).



Around the same time, at the end of the 2nd century, when runic inscriptions appeared in Germania, Christian communities arose among the Germanic tribes, as we have been told by the Church Father Irenaeus. I merely present these observations here without attempting to construct any connection between this enigmatic correspondence. This interpretation remains the domain of prehistorians, and even for them, this riddle will remain a mystery.

We note that the first written formulation of our name could therefore have occurred no earlier than the 2nd century, but perhaps not until the 7th or 8th century. It is merely a conjecture based on the cultural and religious-historical considerations I made above when I say that the name Axtholm may already have been expressed in runic script.

c. When did the family name Axthelm, and thus the family name, originate?

In this part of the investigation, too, we must proceed in a fundamental way in order to first establish the framework within which our gender could have originated.

We only learn about family names with the beginning of our written records under Charlemagne, that is, from the late Frankish settlement period. For example, in the Hildebrandslied, Hadubrand der Wülfing is challenged by his opponent to give his father's name or family name (Old High German *knôsal* = family). In contrast, the first documented evidence of a family name only appears in the

13th century in a Swiss document issued by Rudolf of Habsburg on December 23, 1257: In a legal dispute, "Izeli with the family that is called Izelinge" appears. Therefore, we can only truly speak of German family names from the beginning of the 13th century, or rather, the end of the 12th century.

The extended family, with its abundance of terms for different degrees of kinship, is a Germanic legacy from pre-Germanic times (Kluge). Old German male names also reach back this far; even our word "name" is an Indo-European proto-word (Latin = nomen, Gothic = namo, German = Name). Only at the end of the first millennium did the Old Germanic system of single names begin to come to an end. However, the emergence of family names did not arise directly from this, but only took place at the height of the Middle Ages, after the cities, with their trade and commerce, had developed the bourgeoisie. Since individual settlements were predominant in Germanic lands anyway, minor distinctions and identifications of people without family names were perfectly adequate.

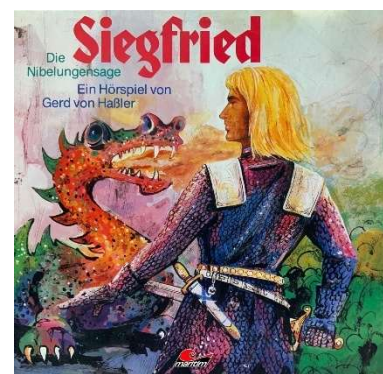
However, a precursor to family names can be traced back to the Migration Period. Dynastic names such as the Gothic Amelungs, the Frankish Merovingians and Carolingians, the Bavarian Agilolfings, the Lombard royal house of Litheringi, and others are examples of this. These Proto-Germanic -ing formations have always meant, for everyone, house, farm, and everything that belongs to them. This is why they have survived in so many place names and still exist today in our region (Thuringia).

With the Carolingian era, all dynastic names faded away, and a new cultural epoch slowly approached, characterized by true family names, which, within the framework of the old single-name system, could still be supplemented by surnames or additional names (Kluge). Wherever people live together, interaction, both joking and serious, leads to nicknames, which the ancient Germanic peoples may also have used. As early as the beginning of the 4th century, we encounter an Alemannic king named Chorusc, whose name is closely related to Middle High German *Rouch*, meaning rook. A short time later, the male name Hrabanus (= Raban as a family name) appears in a Nordic runic inscription. In Procopius's Gothic history, an *Asemon Chose*, identical with Wisandus, appears in the 6th century, who is identical to the Middle High German proper name *Wirt* (perhaps our family name *Wirt* is a derivative of this).

When Christianity then took hold in the forests of Germania, the first Christian baptismal names appeared, which at first may only have had documentary significance in the narrower sphere of the monasteries and were irrelevant in public life in house and farm.

tribal affiliation soon became common as a surname outside the monasteries for those living far from their homeland. Tacitus mentions a Suebian king named Sidio and another named Vangio from the 1st century AD, both of whom bore tribal names. As early as the 9th and 10th centuries, German documents mention men with the names Alaman, During, Franco, Frieso, Sahso, Swab, and Walah, and similar tribal names appear in Latin documents of the 12th and 13th centuries, for example, Hermannus Thuringus and Chuonrat Suevus = Hermann the Thuringian and Conrad the Swabian. What initially applied to individuals was then transferred to entire families.

Things are different when the Nibelung saga mentions Hagen von Tronege, Gernot von Metzzen, Völker von Alzei, and Rüdiger von Bechelaren at the end of the 12th century. But Dietrich von Berne would have been impossible in older poetry and legend, and is therefore absent from Old England as well as from the Norse Eddic poems. It is the same era in which the minstrel Speervogelein, a one-named traveling musician, praises his patrons Walther von Hüsen—the father of Friedrich von Hüsen—and Heinrich von Gibichenstein. They bear the names of their castles and ancestral seats, and these



names now become hereditary (Kluge). The same applies to poets and traveling musicians.

But names that didn't indicate noble families, but rather local origins, also soon emerged, for example, Heinrich von Veldeke, Hartmann von Aue, Walther von der Vogelweide. These were common among knights and were later adopted by burghers, i.e., townspeople. For example, Konrad von Würzburg. Such names were passed down from father to son and inherited by the family.

Another origin of family names is personal nicknames that became part of the family chain. While naming children was based on prevailing custom and created two-part full names like Siegfried, Siegmund, Friedrich, and Dietrich, the need often arose in life to give men and women nicknames that reflected their individual characteristics and personalities. Furthermore, the fact that kings in the Norse heroic sagas of the 5th century already bore the names Frodi and Helgi provides the earliest evidence of using personal attributes for true full names (cf. Old Norse frod = clever and helag = holy).

Examples:

- The Spanish Suebian king Audeca (6th century, Gothic Audax = blessed).
- Around 700 AD, the Frisian apostles Niger-Ewald and Albicus-Ewald.
- From the 9th century, the learned Fulda abbot Hrabanus Maurus and his contemporary, the Reichenau abbot Walafrid Strabo.
- The Carolingians Charles the Bald and Charles the Fat.

By the year 1000, such personal surnames had already become hereditary family names. In Cologne and throughout southwestern Germany, such names were prevalent in Latin documents from the 12th century onward.

Physical characteristics that have become names are also inherited, so that in the 13th-14th centuries, in simpler circumstances, one finds family names such as Swarz and Wiz, Lanc and Klein.

All family names are essentially the names of fathers, passed down to sons and grandsons. However, the nature of family names is now more diverse. Thus, from the era of single names, two-part full names from ancient times, such as Hartmut, Ludwig, Dietrich, and Dietmar, are also inherited, as can be seen, for example, in the name of the poet Johannes Hadlaub around 1300. Shortened names also appear early on, for example, shortened names for Heinrich (Old High German Heinzo, Modern High German Heinz and Hinz), Konrad (Old High German Kuonzo, Modern High German Kunz). Such names can already be found around 300 and 400 AD. They are documented in records from the 10th century. Nicknames from our early period become family names, such as Utz for Ullrich, Götz for Gottfried, and Lutz for Ludwig. Social status titles also became family names, so that by the end of the 13th century, one encounters family names such as Abbot, Bishop, Monk, Provost, Count, Duke, Ambassador, Knight, King, and Emperor. Indeed, such names could even refer to servants who bore the rank of their lords as their family name.

occupational and trade names come about ? Since our name suggests a craft, it can only have developed on this basis, and so can the family name. In the 9th century, family names gradually emerged that indicated a profession or trade. For example, the Old Germanic profession of a youthful hero yielded the personal name Recko early on, just as Kempfo already appears as a personal name in Old High German times. In trade, the frequently occurring Old High German name Bodo indicated the regular performance of messenger or embassy duties. A foreign merchant could already bear the name Chufman in the 9th century; Pilgrim also appears as a personal name as early as the 9th-10th centuries.

While these are not yet direct family names, they are surnames, precursors to family names. Before family names existed, the name Arbeo already existed in the 8th and 9th centuries, a name that still

survives in our surname "Erbe" (heritage). Direct family names indicating social status and trade only began in the 12th century (around 1140).

Around the middle of the 11th century, it became customary in Latin documents to add the bearer's profession to a man's name. For example: Waltherus pictor (painter). However, one cannot yet speak of a fixed family name. Many professions and trades were practiced within the same families, passed down from father to son and grandson, and finally, between 1150 and 1250, became established as fixed components of naming conventions. They could become given names, and this became all the more easily as many two-part full names of earlier centuries, such as Ludwig, Dietrich, Friedrich, Heinrich, etc., gradually became too widespread and also too indistinct. Even today, we can readily address waiters and conductors by their patronymics, but likewise, we can address them by their professional names.

Things may not have been any different in the Middle Ages. The bourgeoisie of the larger cities probably used both forms of address, just as we do today, and so we can assume that hereditary family names like Müller (Miller), Fischer (Fisherman), Schmied (Blacksmith), Schulze (Mayor), etc., became established during the first half of the 13th century. From the second half of the 13th century onward, truly fixed family names like Wagner (Wagoner), Gärtner (Gardener), Maurer (Mason), etc., emerged. All these names are still in use among our people today. They therefore already played a decisive role in bourgeois life around the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries. Thus, the cycle of German naming began during this period, a cycle that came to a close several centuries later. It had begun millennia ago with the oldest male names among the Germanic peoples and now found its permanent expression in hereditary family names.

The great danger threatening this considerable number of German family names at the end of the Middle Ages was Latin (chancery Latin). However, we don't need to elaborate on this further, because our name was in no way influenced by it; it had existed long before.

So when did our name Axthelm originate as a family name? Probably at the end of the 12th century, when people in German-speaking lands began to name individual trades. And since our name derives from a tool used in the oldest Germanic crafts, it likely also originated in the early days of trade naming.

Let me summarize once more: The term "axe" = agesi was formed in Indo-European, i.e., pre-Germanic times (before 2000 BC).

The Germanic definition of this same term occurred in the early Bronze Age.

The term axe handle (halbmo, or halftra) originated in the Hallstatt period, or at the beginning of the Iron Age.

It was probably during this time that a distinct craft of axe handle making developed.

After the end of the Migration Period, at the beginning of the Frankish colonization among the Thuringians, the tool name Axtstiel (ackeshalap) may have formed the basis for a house mark and passed to a practitioner of this craft in the late Frankish settlement period (8th - 9th centuries).

The family name, however, originated around the turn of the 11th and 12th centuries.

Continued in Report 5

Heinz Axthelm

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