

## THE SLAVIC HAMLET ROUND A CULT GREEN AS THE PRECURSOR OF THE REGULAR RUNDLING OF THE MEDIEVAL FRANKISH-GERMAN COLONISATION<sup>1)</sup>

With 10 figures

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*Zusammenfassung:* Der slawische Rundweiler mit Kultplatz als Vorläufer des planmäßigen Rundlings der mittelalterlichen fränkisch/deutschen Kolonisation

Die hier angesprochenen beiden Versionen ländlicher Siedlungen mit Gruppierung der Höfe um einen inneren Platz wurden von der bisherigen Forschung nur unzureichend voneinander abgehoben und oft pauschal als „Rundlinge“ zusammengefaßt. Eine detaillierte Untersuchung der Formen von Rügen bis Böhmen zeigt, daß sich die als ursprünglich slawische Rundweiler anzusprechenden Formen durch eine weniger regelmäßige Ortsgestaltung und Blockflur von den im Mittelpunkt der bisherigen Forschungen stehenden, erst im Mittelalter angelegten Rundlingen mit planmäßigen Streifenfluren auf der Grundlage der grundherrschaftlichen Hufenverfassung überaus deutlich unterscheiden.

Die Untersuchung der Verbreitung der Rundweiler mit Blockflur erweist deren Reliktcharakter und begründet die Umstände ihrer Persistenz gegenüber der in den meisten slawischen Siedlungsräumen im Mittelalter durchgesetzten Transformation zum planmäßigen Rundling. Dabei wird die Frage nach den historischen Umständen dieses Wandels, wo und wann dieser einsetzte und sich als Innovation ausbreitete, erörtert. Eine bisher nicht beachtete zeitgenössische Quelle aus dem 17. Jahrhundert bezeugt den Ursprung des beiden Formen gemeinsamen zentralen Angers als Kultplatz.

*Summary:* Two versions of a rural settlement type are discussed, which generally are taken together under the term “Rundling” because of the arrangement of the houses round a central green. But actually the two differ: the one form is more irregular and associated with block fields, the other regular with strip fields according to the feudal Hufen system. As is demonstrated, the irregular form originated from Slavic times while the regular form was created under feudal conditions in the medieval period. The author discusses the conditions under which in certain regions the Slavic hamlet round a green could persist, in which regions it was transformed into the regular Rundling and where and under which circumstances this transformation movement “from above” was initiated. Finally a historical source of the 17th century is quoted, which proves that the central green traditionally served the pagan cult of the Slavs.

### 1 Introduction: *The two variants of settlements round a green*

The topic of this article concerns two versions of a settlement form of eastern Central Europe, which have in common the arrangement of the farmsteads round a central green. The one version (Fig. 1) is more regular than the other (Fig. 2). Villages of the regular type have got a clear-cut exterior front which gives them a round or oval shape. The farmsteads, with their distinctive radiating enclosures, extend in an even curve around a clearly marked central green which may in some cases be narrowed to a blind alley but even then the farmsteads are arranged in the shape of a horseshoe (Fig. 1b). This settlement type with its round features has been termed “Rundling” (pl. “Rundlinge”) in German (“rund” = round) or “Rundlingsdorf” (“round village”)<sup>2)</sup>. The fields associated with the Rundling (Fig. 3) were – before field consolidation of the 19th century – regularly divided into long strips arranged in furlongs, each of which originally contained as many strip-shares of equal breadth as were (full) farm units in the village. The number of farms of a Rundling generally was less

than ten, with the smallest containing only three. As the farm holdings were classified as Hufen (standard tenements), from which the peasants were obliged to deliver fixed grain rents and labour services to feudal lords since the Middle Ages, there can be no doubt that the regularity of the village and field pattern resulted from feudal planning. In the lowlands of northern Germany the Rundlinge are generally located on the fringe of the wetlands with their farmstead sectors radiating into the grasslands (Fig. 3). Further south in the Elbe-Saale regions where arable lands dominate and stream valleys are narrower, the circle of the farmstead sectors

<sup>1)</sup> This article is the enlarged version of a paper read at the 17th session of the Permanent European Conference for the Study of the Rural Landscape, Trinity College Dublin, September 10–14, 1996. The paper is not included in the forthcoming conference volume.

<sup>2)</sup> The term was introduced by JACOBY (1845). A more detailed article of JACOBY was published in 1856. MEITZNER (1895, Vol. I, 52) in his basic work on historical settlements in Europe preferred the term “Runddorf” (literally “round village”).

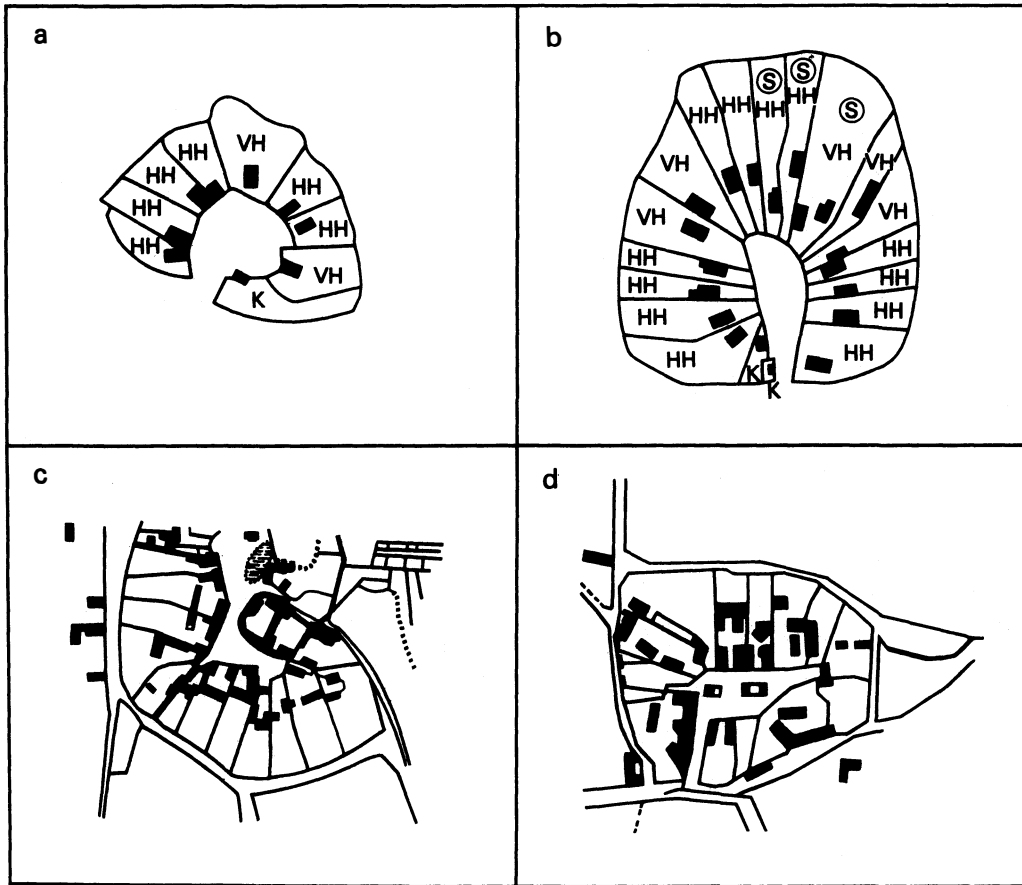


Fig. 1: Rundling settlements

a) Belitz 1824 (Hannov. Wendland)

Source: MEIBEYER (1964)

b) Trabuhn 1843 (Hannov. Wendland)

Source: MEIBEYER (1964)

c) Wendisch-Spergau 1820/40 (south of Merseburg/Saale)

Source: AUGUST in NITZ (1991a)

d) Tornau 1820/40 (east of Halle)

Source: AUGUST (1952)

Rundlingssiedlungen

a) Belitz 1824 (Hannov. Wendland); b) Trabuhn 1843 (Hannov. Wendland); c) Wendisch-Spergau 1820/40 (südlich von Merseburg/Saale); d) Tornau 1820/40 (östlich von Halle)

faces to the arable side and the exit to the stream side (Figs. 1 c, 1 d).

The other version of this settlement type (Figs. 2, 4 and 6) again has a central green with the farmsteads in a circle around it. This feature is common to both and permits one to speak of a single settlement type. But what makes the difference: the shape of the second variant is more or less irregular: the tofts are of different size and shape, which frequently leads to a more haphazard exterior front of the settlement and to varying shapes of the green, too. Therefore the term Rund-

ling seems not quite appropriate for this version, though so far it was applied by many scholars indiscriminately to both. It should correctly be termed as an "irregular village (or hamlet) round a green". As the common term for both SPERLING has proposed "Platzdorf" – "settlement around a village green" (SPERLING 1982, 185). The field pattern (Figs. 4 and 6) is irregular as well, with plots of various shapes and sizes, mostly block fields. This leads to the conclusion that settlements of this type have not resulted from an act of planning from above but were created by local groups



Fig. 2: Irregular hamlets round a green

a) Mockritz 1837 (near Dresden)

Source: MEITZEN (1895)

b) Kopschowitz 1826 (southern Bohemia, near Ces. Krumlov/Böhmisch Krumlau)

Source: Österreichisches Stabiles Kataster, Provinz Böhmen (KLAAR 1942)

c) Litochleb 1841 (east of Prague)

Source: Österreichisches Stabiles Kataster, Provinz Böhmen, Kreis Kaurzimer/Kourim, National Archives Prague

d) Domnowitz 1821 (Silesia, near Trebnitz/Trzebnica north of Breslau/Wroclaw)

Source: MEITZEN (1895)

#### Unregelmäßige Rundweiler um einen Platz

a) Mockritz 1837 (in der Nähe von Dresden); b) Kopschowitz 1826 (südliches Böhmen, in der Nähe von Ces. Krumlov/Böhmisch Krumlau); c) Litochleb 1841 (östlich von Prag); d) Domnowitz 1821 (Schlesien, in der Nähe von Trebnitz/Trzebnica nördlich von Breslau/Wroclaw)

and the field plots by individual peasant families. As in the case of the Rundling the original number of farms was small; in the case of Dobrigau (Fig. 4) the hamlet originally consisted of only four units each of which was subsequently divided among two families. Hence it seems that both variants of settlements, with a circle of few farmsteads round a central green, were predominantly inhabited by just a few families.

The map of the spatial distribution of the two variants of this circular settlement round a green (Fig. 7, for the Czech Republic still incomplete<sup>3)</sup>) shows several regions which together roughly form a belt running

north to south across Central Europe from the Baltic Sea east of Hamburg to Mecklenburg, the eastern part of Lower Saxony, along both sides of the Elbe and Saale Rivers, to the south of Saxony, into the Czech Republic and north-eastern Bavaria (upper Franconia). In south Bohemia the distribution has been (partially) mapped by KLAAR<sup>4)</sup>. Further east of this belt there extends the large continuous region of street villages and street-green villages associated with regular strip fields in large furlongs (the shaded areas of the map).

The Rundling variant with its regular strip field pattern clearly dominates in the central and northern part

of the belt. The irregular variant, with block fields, prevails in the south<sup>5</sup>). In addition there are, amidst the large region of regular street and street-green villages, three isolated small groups of the irregular type, each with only a few cases: the island of Rügen<sup>6</sup>) (Fig. 6), the marshes of the Oder river (Oderbruch) east of Berlin<sup>7</sup>) (Fig. 5), and a group in Silesia to the north-east of Breslau/Wrocław (Fig. 2 d).

What is further common to both variants is the dominance of Slavonic place names, which is of no surprise for Bohemia and Moravia, but they also dominate in the regions of Germany. Since the beginning of research on these settlements round a green in the 19th century, scholars have agreed that they were originally settled by Slavs. JACOBI expressively spoke of the “slawische” (slavic) or “wendische Rundling” (JACOBI 1845) respectively. A last common feature is, as already mentioned, the originally small number of farms per settlement in the Middle Ages, generally less than ten and frequently five to six, which is exceptionally small for the regions east of the Elbe river where the colonial German street villages and street-green villages of the 12th and 13th centuries were founded with twenty and more farms. For comparison a typical example is given in Fig. 8. The village of Schönfeld contained as many as 104 Hufen, with the individual farms holding two and the church and the mayor of the village (the “Schulze”) four Hufen; hence this village must originally have consisted of fifty farms, with fields covering more than 1 600 hectares compared to only about 120 hectares of the Rundling village of Tolstefanz with its (original) seven farms (Fig. 3).

These are the facts which lead us to several conclusions, but raise more questions. Obviously the western Slavs as an ethnic unit preferred the more or less circular arrangement of their houses around a central green – but what was the reason to do so? The Germans west of the Elbe river did not – with few excep-

tions in southern Lower Saxony, northern Hesse and again in eastern Thuringia adjoining the Slavic region along the Saale river. Were there contacts between the two neighbouring populations and if so, under which political circumstances? Why is this settlement type missing in the east, in Poland and Russia which were certainly settled by Slavs? And why is it not to be found in the Slavic Balkans? And especially the question arises as to the purpose(s) for which a central green was needed and around which the houses were arranged in a circle or a horseshoe pattern? Was there a specific ethnic background – in social, religious or economic respects? We have already stated that the settlements of the northern group are more regular, including a regular strip field pattern based on the feudal Hufen organisation. What were the political conditions under which these northern Slavic regions came under such a strong feudal regime, and did not do so in the south? Does the irregular version of our settlement and field type present an age-old traditional form of the western Slavs? And if this were so: what is the historical background whereby our settlement type is to be found only in that limited area in the west of the Slavic realm?

## 2 *Early immigration of the Slavs and the impact of the medieval German colonisation*

Since the 6th century Slavic tribes emigrated from the plains north and east of the Carpathian Hills (the region between the Vistula and the Dnieper rivers) and from the steppe regions of Ukraine. The southern group migrated westward to Central Europe and southwards to the Balkans<sup>8</sup>). The northern group of Slavic tribes of the forest regions of eastern Poland and northern Russia expanded west. The Ukrainian groups finally settled in what is now the Czech Republic and

<sup>3</sup>) The map is based on that by SCHRÖDER (1978). The earliest attempt at a map of the distribution of rural settlement forms including the Runddorf was published in the work of MEITZEN (1895).

<sup>4</sup>) KLAAR (1942); MEITZEN (1895) had already very roughly mapped a region of the “Runddorf” in south-west Bohemia. Recent studies of a selection of cadastral maps of Bohemia prepared in the 1840s by the provincial administration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire by the present author, have shown that villages around greens of various shapes occur east of Prague to the Labe/Elbe River and beyond, and also in parts of Moravia. Fig. 2 b (Kopschowitz, southern Bohemia) is a copy of a cadastral map (village only) collected by KLAAR (1942); Fig. 2 c was prepared by the author from a photocopy of a cadastral map taken at the National Archive Prague.

<sup>5</sup>) The author’s recent studies in the archives of Prague (for Bohemia) and Brno (for Moravia) have, however, revealed that part of early-settled Slavic core regions underwent a thorough transformation of their farmlands into regular strip fields with large furlongs of the “colonial” type introduced in the late Middle Ages. East of Prague a considerable number of villages retained the traditional irregular block fields well into the 19th century. Generally the villages proper preserved their traditional irregular form round individually shaped greens as shown in Fig. 2 c.

<sup>6</sup>) Samples published by KRENZLIN (1955, Fig. 5 and map 3 – see Fig. 6 in this paper). She did not accept these villages as arranged round a green – she simply spoke of “hamlets”.

<sup>7</sup>) Several examples published by KNEIHASE (1995).

<sup>8</sup>) For the history of the Slavs in Germany see HERRMANN (1985). For a short overview see HERRMANN (1989b).

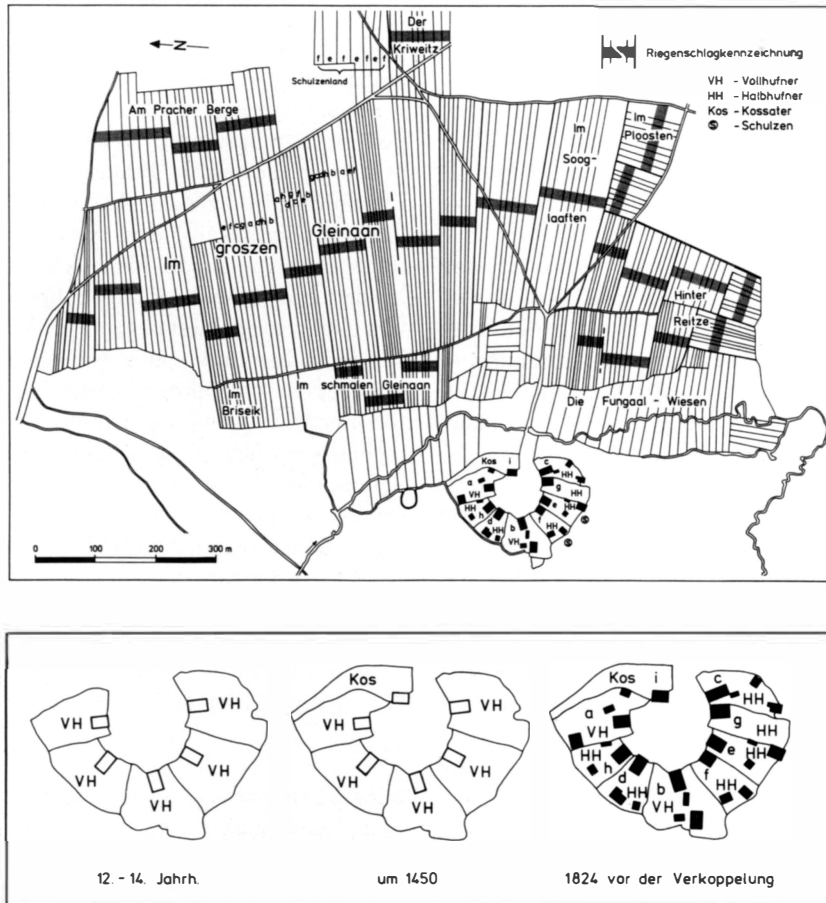


Fig. 3: Belitz 1824 (Hannov. Wendland). Shaded: reconstructed furlongs each containing as many strips as there are tofts in the village (8). Below: Reconstruction of three stages of evolution of the village

Source: MEIBEYER (1992)

Belitz 1824 (Hannov. Wendland)

the adjoining parts of eastern Central Europe. The groups of eastern Poland and Russia expanded along the shores of the Baltic Sea as far west as the lower Elbe river.

Their European neighbours called them "Venedi" – from which the German term Wenden is derived, or "Sklaveni" – Slavs, in German Slawen. That they could rather freely move to eastern Central Europe was facilitated by the preceding out-migration of Teutonic tribes, among them the Goths and the Burgundians, to the west. The subsequent west migration of the Slavs was finally stopped by the 8th/9th century when the Frankish Empire established a military border line (Fig. 7) from the Baltic Sea along the Elbe and Saale rivers and farther south to the Danube where the Bohemian Mountains formed the natural frontier. Documents of the time use the Latin term "limes" for this military borderline – the Limes Sorabicus against

the Sorbian tribes, and Limes Saxoniae, the border of the Frankish province of Saxony against the northernmost Slavic chiefdoms. When it was firmly established under Charlemagne, several small groups of the westernmost Slavs who had migrated across the limes had become subjects of the Frankish state. This was, from its beginning, a multi-ethnic state, which under the Carolingian kings even invited Slavs to move across the border. Slavs who settled west of the Saale river were even engaged in the military border forces side by side with Frankish groups to defend the Carolingian empire against their Slavonic brethren to the east.

The Slavs east of the limes formed tribal chiefdoms under the unstable control of Frankish or German margraves respectively (the latter term applicable after the partition of the Frankish empire in 843, with the eastern part to become Germany). Finally – around the mid-12th century and after crusades against the pagan

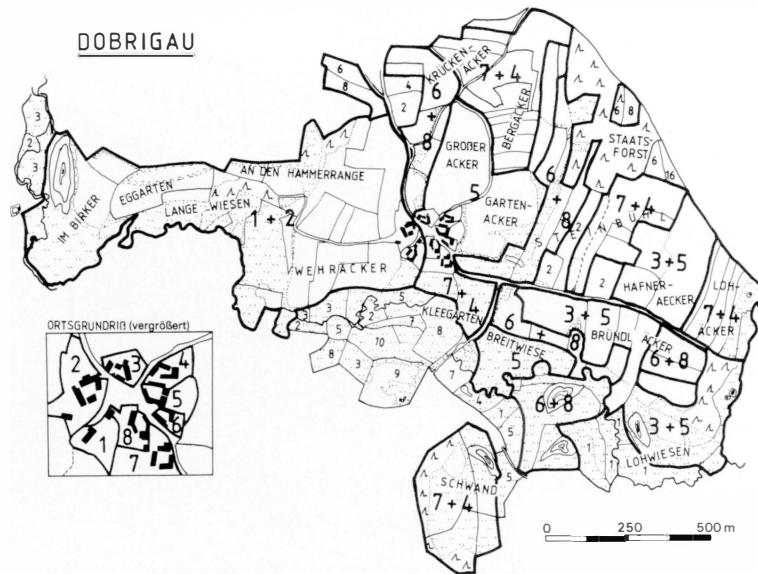


Fig. 4: Dobrigau 1843 (Oberpfalz, near Tirschenreuth). Each of the original four farms was subdivided: 1+2, 3+5, 4+7, 6+8  
 Source: Extraditionsplan des bayerischen Katasters (NITZ 1991a)  
 Dobrigau 1843 (Oberpfalz, in der Nähe von Tirschenreuth)

Slav chieftoms – these marches were extended to the Oder river and transformed into christianised German princedoms, in the north, in Mecklenburg and, even across the Oder in Pomerania, under Slav princes, in the centre and the south under the German margraves of Brandenburg, Meißen and Babenberg (Bamberg).

From this time there started what has been called the planned feudal “Eastwards German Colonisation” (Deutsche Ostkolonisation), with the immigration of people of German, Dutch, Flemish and Romanic origin who were settled in street villages and street-green villages (grey shaded areas of the map Fig. 7; as an example from the Margravate of Brandenburg see Fig. 8). This colonisation was organised by the margraves, the Christianised Slav princes and their vassals, not only in the eastern provinces of the German empire, but also by the Polish and the Bohemian princes.

In the course of this medieval colonisation the former indigenous Slavic settlements were radically transformed through legal actions, with the Latin term *locatio* in which the Slavic inhabitants, together with western immigrants, received by the princes, bishops and monasteries (as territorial lords) the modern village constitution of the so-called German settlers’ law (*ius Teutonicum*). The new large street and street-green villages with extensive strip fields cultivated under the common three-field system (Fig. 8) and worked with the mouldboard-plough were introduced as the most

modern village type of the time. New villages founded in the forests were of course immediately laid out in this new fashion. The traditional Slav hamlet with less intensive cultivation on squarish block fields worked with the ard, the Slavic *zocha*, with the need of cross-plowing, was looked upon by German and Slav princes and the western immigrants (noblemen and peasants) as anachronistic.

### 3 *Relic regions of Slavs in the realm of German colonisation and conditions for the survival of their traditional settlement pattern*

This innovative medieval colonisation and transformation explains why in the east the traditional Slavic hamlet round a green with irregular block fields has almost disappeared. That this special settlement type formerly did exist in these regions, too, is proved by the fact that it survived in a few small pockets as relic regions shown on map Fig. 7. What were the circumstances that these islands could persist amidst a sea of colonisation and transformation? And what were the circumstances that in considerably larger regions just on the westernmost fringe of early medieval Slavic expansion, i.e. in regions where the impact of the neighbouring German empire should have been earliest and strongest, the Slav hamlet round a small green could survive?

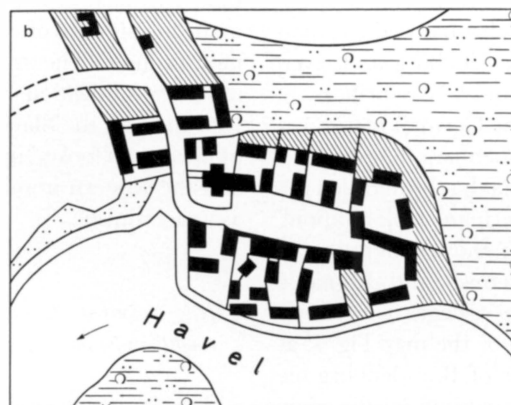


Fig. 5: Slavic fishermen's villages

a) Alt Wriezen (Old Wriezen) about 1800, Oderbruch (marshes of the Oder River). It is located on the "Alte Oder" (old Oder) and consists of a larger circular village with 17 tofts round the compact green and a semicircular hamlet with 9 tofts to the east. These numbers correspond well to the number of 30 fishermen registered in A.D. 1450. After 1753 a new river course was dug with the older Oder cut off which meant the end of the fishing economy and the transition to farming after drainage of the former swampy area

Source: KNIEHASE (1995)

b) Saaringen 1880, on the Havel River east of Brandenburg. Hamlet with 12 Slavic fishermen registered in 1624. (The map is an enlarged section of the topographical sheet "Königlich Preußische Landes-Aufnahme" 1:25 000, Erstausgabe, sheet no. 1903, mapped in 1880, edited 1882. The number of tofts including that of the chapel near the entrance to the green is 12 – as it was in 1624. A comparison of the sizes of the various tofts seems to indicate an originally smaller number of about nine)

Source: After KRENZLIN (1983)

Slawische Fischerdörfer

a) Alt Wriezen um 1800, Oderbruch; b) Saaringen 1880, an der Havel östlich von Brandenburg

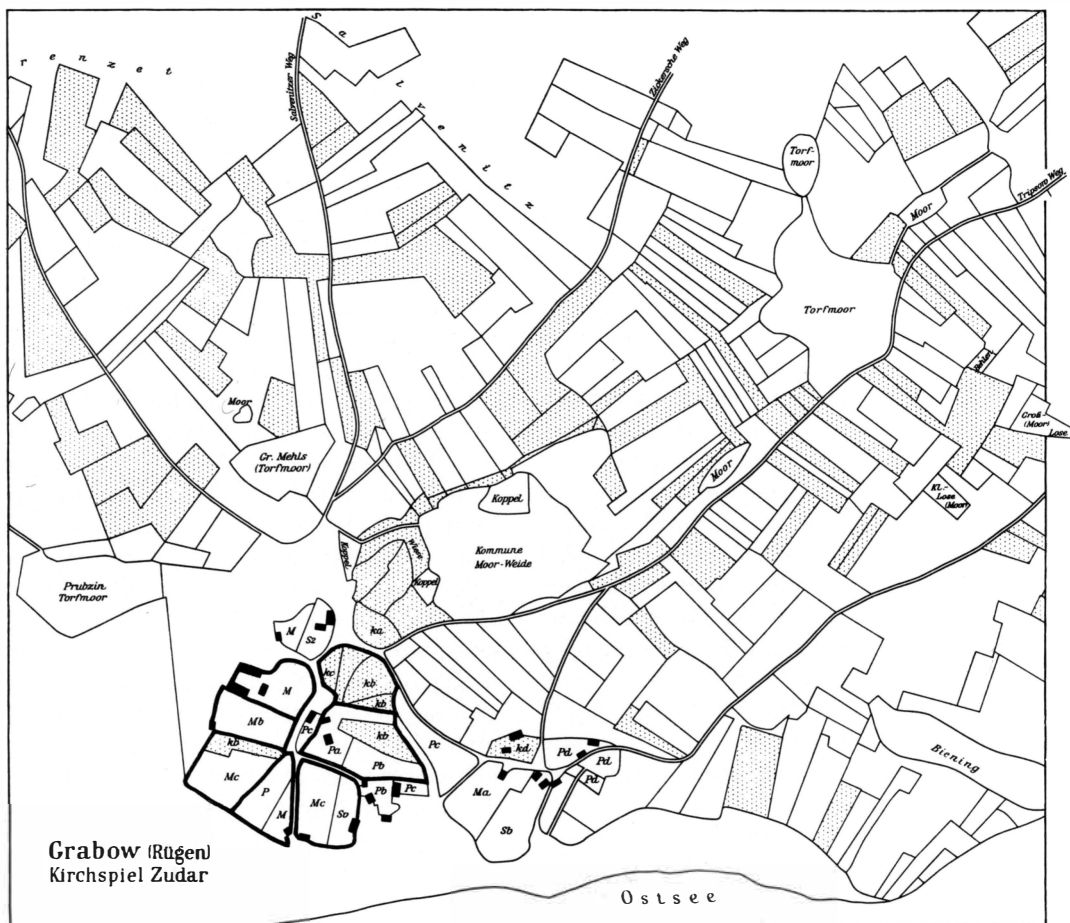


Fig. 6: Grabow about 1800 (Island of Rügen). In the larger hamlet to the left the central green is clearly developed, but not in the smaller one which has to be seen as a daughter settlement, possibly founded only under feudal conditions when the former extended families were split and the enlarged number of small family units given “Hakenhufen” of roughly similar size. (The author has marked with heavy lines those units which most probably formed the original tofts of the extended families)

Source: KRENZLIN (1952)

Grabow um 1800 (Insel Rügen)

Let us first look at the isolated small relic pockets in the east. In Silesia it was the conservatively minded administration of the monastery of Trebnitz (founded A.D. 1203) which did not join the modern movement for six of its villages donated or sold to it by Duke Henry I. For unknown reasons it did not abolish the traditional Polish village constitution of the “*ius Polonicum*” in favour of the modern “*ius Teutonicum*”. Domnowitz (Fig. 2 d) is one of them. While by the “*locatio*”-colonisation of the surrounding manorial districts the peasant farms were reorganised according to the Hufen-system and the villages newly laid out as street-green villages, in those six villages the peasant farms retained their traditional Slavic status and village form with the tofts arranged round the green, a form

that persisted from the Middle Ages and before into the 19th century and possibly to the present<sup>9</sup>. The monastery registers of 1410 say that the village of Domnowitz consisted of eight “*dziedzinas*”, which is a medieval Slavic term for family farms which were owned by extended families of “*undivided brothers*”<sup>10</sup> as they were called: two or more brothers and cousins lived and worked together on one farm which they had inherited from their forefather, the “*dziad*”, “*djed*, *djed*”, literally “*grandfather*”. Therefore the term

<sup>9</sup> MEITZEN (1895, Vol. II, 248–270; Vol. III, 354–367) based on medieval documents of the monastery of Trebnitz.

<sup>10</sup> WILHELMY (1936); MISSALEK (1914, 251); WILHELMY (1936, 436) has collected the respective Slavic terms from the literature.



“diedzina” had the meaning of a farm inherited from the grandfather or forefather. That this was a common (western) Slavic social institution can be concluded from its distribution: it is documented from Mecklenburg, the Wendland of Lower Saxony, from the Lausitz south of Berlin and from Bohemia<sup>11</sup>). The Trebnitz sources clearly prove that the peasants had Polish names, lived according to the traditional Polish law, which e.g. demanded unlimited labour services, and because the dziedzinas were different in size and capacity (land, oxen and men) each had to render individual amounts of grain, linen, honey etc.

Domnowitz until 1615 had no “Scholze”, no mayor, which was a legal institution in villages under German law. From other regions where similar Slavic social structures survived into the Late Middle Ages and beyond we know that the dziedzinas formed a kind of clan communities under a village headman called starosta, literally “the eldest”. Similar traditional village communities under an eldest are known from many tribal societies all over the world. It is easy to imagine that the central open green served for the meetings of the family heads under the starosta to discuss and decide matters of the community and to practice local pagan cults. This is well documented for another region, which will be shown later.

The conditions for the persistence of traditional Slavic green villages in the northern parts of the Oder marshes (the “Oderbruch”) and the marshes of the Havel river west of Berlin were different. In the past these regions suffered from annual inundations until they could be drained as late as the 18th century. Hence, for the German colonisers of the Middle Ages the villages of the Slavs who lived here as fishermen with very limited areas of arable sufficient just for a supplementary and always unsure grain harvest, it obviously did not seem worthwhile to transform them into modern farming villages. So they could continue their traditional way of life and of settlement undisturbed well into the 18th century, when the region was diked and drained (especially under the Prussian king Frederic II (“The Great”) and extensive arable areas and new peasant villages were created. The Slavic fishermen’s villages with their central greens could persist in the traditional pattern, but after the loss of most of their fishing waters were they developed into farm villages. Alt-Wriezen (Fig. 5) is an example of a former Slavic fishermen’s settlement consisting of a large and a small round green village, both located immediately on the bank of the Alte Oder (the “old Oder” because a canal as the new river course was dug between 1747–1753). In 1375 Wriezen – with a Slavic place name as all the other fishermen’s villages of the Oderbruch –

was inhabited by thirty families<sup>12</sup>), a number which was still almost the same about 1800, half a century after drainage. Compared to Slavic peasant hamlets of the time the number of families in the fishing villages in 1375 was rather large, ranging from eight to thirty with an average of twenty. The layout of the village cannot be called truly irregular, though the house plots are of different size, with the largest in the north, but no doubt the block pattern of a section of the fields in the west is irregular and so must have looked like the rest of the fields before reorganisation in the course of colonisation under King Frederic.

Though the large island of Rügen with its extensive arable districts did not undergo colonial transformation in the Middle Ages, nevertheless only a few Slavic hamlets round a green did persist, because large areas were transformed through the formation of large feudal estates from the 16th century, at the expense of the majority of the peasant settlements: their land was taken over, the peasant farms laid down and the peasants resettled in labour lines at some distance from the manor houses. Surviving peasant hamlets tended to dissolve and only a few persisted, such as the larger one of the two shown in Fig. 6 in which quite clearly former tofts are arranged in a circle round an elongated bag-like green but only a few still serve as farmsteads; the others are deserted, due to the ongoing process of estate formation. In 1318 there were together 19½ Slavic peasant Hufen in both hamlets (“Ambe Grabow”), classified as “Hakenhufen” because they were worked with the Slavic hook-plow. The field pattern is quite irregular as elsewhere in the surviving peasant communities<sup>13</sup>).

That Rügen did not undergo the formation of German colonisation villages during the Middle Ages, as happened on the mainland in the principalities of Mecklenburg and Pomerania across the strait just a few kilometers wide, is explained by KRENZLIN by the fact that the island lay away from the main stream of German colonists moving east, and that until 1326 Rügen was ruled by the – remote – Danish kings and under them by local Slav princes. These circumstances obviously were not favourable for an introduction of the German colonisation model and on the other hand

<sup>11</sup>) Quoted by WILHELMY (1936, 437) and from various sources collected by the present author.

<sup>12</sup>) The number of fishermen (and of peasant Hufen, too) for each and every village was noted in an imperial register of 1375 (GLEYS 1926, 54).

<sup>13</sup>) The number of “Hakenhufen” are taken from LENZ (1956). The author is indebted to K. Lenz for supplying these unpublished historical data.

favoured the persistence of Slavic settlement and field patterns and of the continuance of – compared to the three-field system – outdated Slavic farming practices, such as the primitive unregulated field-grass economy, well into the 18th century. KRENZLIN rightly stresses this point as an indication of persistence of age-old Slavic culture, but she disregards the occurrence of Slavic hamlets round a green though in her book she published two unquestionable samples; instead she simply speaks of irregular hamlets with block fields (“Blockflurweiler”)<sup>14</sup>.

In the comparatively large formerly Slavic regions of Sachsen (Saxony) extending from the Vogtland around Plauen in the west to eastern Saxony around Leipzig and Dresden and to the former Margravate of Upper Lausitz in the east, the persistence of irregular and small Slavic hamlets with just a few farmsteads round a green (Fig. 2 a) is explained by the fact that these regions with very fertile loess soils were already densely settled by Slavs when they were conquered by the German king Henry I. in 929, and since then firmly held under the rule of the Margraves of Meissen. The Slavic peasants were soon brought under the manorial system, and somehow this worked without changing the settlement and field system as practised later in Silesia and other Slavic regions further east and north from the 12th century. The early-subdued Slavic regions of the Margravate of Meissen were able to maintain their traditional settlement and field pattern with little change under the newly introduced manorial system to which they were adapted. These conditions of persistence were so firmly established by the 11th and early 12th centuries that they were not basically affected when at this time the new colonial German village models were developed for immigrant German settlers under the margrave, who at this time started the clearance and colonisation of the still extensive forests around the early-settled Slavic cores. What actually happened was that in several cases the block fields of Slavic villages underwent a moderate transformation into small strip furlongs<sup>15</sup>.

But when the *ius Teutonicum*, newly developed in the colonisation regions of the Margravate of Meissen, was taken by German colonists and noblemen to Silesia to which they were invited by the prince of that Polish dukedom by the late 12th century, the new models were not only applied for the new villages in the clearances of the so far unsettled forest regions, but were also rigidly introduced by ducal order of “*locatio*” for the Slavic hamlets and villages which were – compared to the much earlier “westernised” Slavic settlements in the Margravate of Meissen – more backward in respect to the modern standards of the time. This was the reason

for the Duke of Silesia and other territorial lords – including the bishops and monasteries – radically to introduce the new system, which in most cases meant the immigration of German settlers into the transformed – formerly Slavic – villages.

The same happened, from the late 12th century, in the German margravates to the north: the manorial system was introduced immediately, together with the model of the German colonial village with Hufen-farms, strip plots and the common three-field system<sup>16</sup>. Here in several cases Slavic hamlets could survive for a while in their traditional form and economy, but were after some time dissolved and their inhabitants integrated into nearby German villages<sup>17</sup>. This refers especially to the Margravate of Brandenburg.

#### 4 *The Rundling with strip fields: Transformation of traditional Slavic hamlets round a green through colonisation*

River marshes with environments favourable for fishing and discouraging agriculture; a conservative monastery; densely settled and developed Slavic peasant regions as in Upper Saxony and in the core regions of Bohemia – these may be seen as preconditions for the survival of Slavic settlements, even under “progressive” feudal rule. But which were the conditions in those extensive regions further west and north on both sides of the Elbe and Saale rivers immediately adjoining the Frankish or German empire respectively, regions which also were originally settled by a Slavic population? Here we encounter the regions of the regular Rundling (Fig. 7) which, as has already been shown in Figs. 1 and 2 and discussed before, in its form strongly resembles the traditional Slavic form. As mentioned above, the place names of the Rundling settlements leave no doubt that their original inhabitants were Slavs, too, but in distinction to the traditional Slavic settlements they were given a “German” regular strip field pattern based on the Hufen system (as an example Fig. 3). These settlements and their Slavic inhabitants seem to have been half-way “westernised”. What were the historical circumstances that this occurred in a zone which belonged to the earliest Carolingian and later

<sup>14</sup> KRENZLIN (1955, 14–23); the two examples of Slavic green hamlets in her book are Grabow (map 3, our Fig. 6) and Nipmerow (her fig. 5, after MEITZEN 1895).

<sup>15</sup> Samples are given by MEITZEN (1895, Atlas, no. 128) and KÖTZSCHKE (1953, Fig. 14–16).

<sup>16</sup> Numerous examples (cadastral maps) are given by KRENZLIN (1952).

<sup>17</sup> KRENZLIN (1952, 99–103) on the forms of the remnant Slavic settlements.

German marches, on both sides of the Limes Sorabicus?

The northern part of the belt is dominated by most regular Rundling hamlets (Figs. 1 a and b). Here, since the 12th (and probably even since the 11th) century, a Slavic population was either reorganised in their already existing villages or newly settled as immigrating colonists after a settlement model which combined traditional Slavic features – the hamlet round a green – by the German authorities and the new Frankish or German Hufen respectively with the strip field system by which they were included in feudal manors, as part of counties and supervised from castles. The Slavic village eldest, the Starost, was appointed as village mayor with the German title Schulze as in German colonists' villages, but the Slavic inhabitants in their tongue continued to speak of their Starost. In the course of this planned reorganisation, the traditional Slavic hamlet round a green was given a more regular layout in accordance with the Hufen system, which basically demanded the abolition of the traditional social structure of the dziedzina system with “undivided brothers”: now each married couple received a Hufe as an equal share of the village field – a strip in each and every furlong – and a toft of more or less equal size as a sector of the Rundling, which is clearly to be observed in the sample village Belitz (Fig. 3, below left: the medieval structure of the settlement with originally only five farmsteads). In many cases (although not so in the case of Belitz) the village mayor, the Schulze, received a farmstead sector of double size in the middle of the circle of tofts just opposite the village entrance. In the course of reorganisation pre-existing Slavic block fields were eradicated and completely new furlongs were laid out on an extended area. This transformed “colonial” Rundling model was no doubt also used for new settlements of Slav colonists taken from the population surplus although, because of the identical features of transformed old and of new settlements, it is not possible to safely to identify the latter.

A further feature of continuity – and heritage – from the Slavic society is the small number of families in a Rundling settlement – generally below ten, frequently around five – (compare Figs. 1 and 2), though the number of persons belonging to a traditional dziedzina unit of “undivided brothers” must have been larger than of a single family on a Hufe. We can only guess that by the German reorganisation, dziedzina-settlements containing a larger number of couples were dissolved into two or more Rundlinge. This would explain the remarkable density of Rundling settlements with distances of only about one kilometer on average in the Wendland region (south-east of Lüneburg).

What could have been the motives for the German colonisers of the 11th and early 12th centuries not to introduce immediately the modern colonial street village for the Slavic population under their control, which by the 11th/12th century was already applied for German colonists in parts of the marches (map Fig. 7, the westernmost regions of the German colonisation Altmark, 11th century, Lauenburg and Holstein north and east of Hamburg, mid 12th century<sup>18</sup>), but instead to use a regulated version of the Slavic settlement type? In my opinion the reason was that in the early stage of German colonisation in the border region on both sides of the Elbe and Saale rivers, the majority of available settlers were simply Slavs. The immigration of colonists from the west started quite slowly and received its main impetus only in the late 12th century. For these growing numbers of colonists larger villages were needed, and the models of large street village and street-green village were applied. In this later phase of colonisation the tradition of the Rundling was continued only for strong local concentrations of Slavic settlers, as was stated by KRENZLIN for the central and eastern parts of the Margravate of Brandenburg (KRENZLIN 1952). The Rundling was obviously regarded as a specific (traditional) village form for Slavs – though in the western parts of the marches early German settlers, too, applied this model (PRANGE 1960, 184–188). With the progress of German colonisation to the east most of the Slavic hamlets which had already been regulated into Rundling settlements were finally dissolved and their inhabitants amalgamated into the general colonial pattern of street and street-green villages: because of their small size of just a few families, they were regarded as sub-optimal for applying the common three-field system which demanded larger communities (PRANGE 1960, 89; KRENZLIN 1983b, 90–102; 1983c, 103–114).

So I conclude that it was consideration of the colonisers for the Slavic inhabitants of the western parts of the northern marches reorganized at an early date, to leave them their traditional village form in the regulated version of the “colonial” Rundling<sup>19</sup>. Under border conditions with the danger of conflicts which arose again and again in the context of crusading Christianisation of the pagan Slaves, the Saxon princes, especially Duke Henry the Lion (duke from 1139 to

<sup>18</sup> Altmark: BUTKUS (1951, 382–388, map of village forms); Lauenburg: PRANGE (1960, map 21 “Dorfformen”).

<sup>19</sup> It was WILHELMY (1936) in his important article on ethnic and colonial settlement forms of the Slavs who for the first time made a clear distinction between the “colonial Rundling” with strip fields and the “pre-colonial Rundling” (“vorkoloniale Rundlinge”) with irregular blockfields.

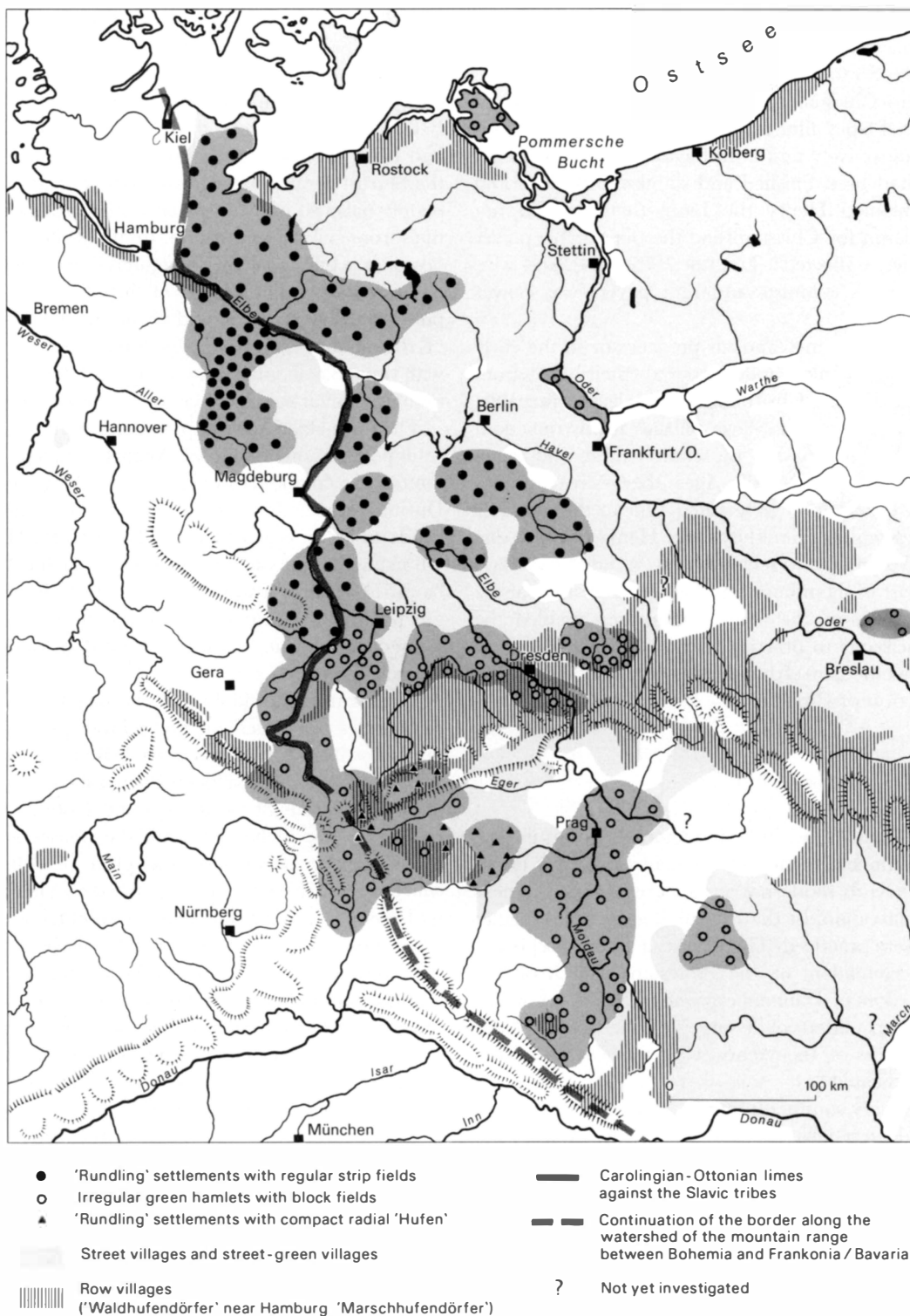


Fig. 7: Distribution of Rundling settlements with regular strip fields and irregular green hamlets with block fields  
 Source: After SCHRÖDER (1978); the distinction of the two types, several additions and corrections are added by the author  
 Verbreitung von Rundlingsiedlungen mit regulären Streifenfluren und unregelmäßigen Platzweilern mit Blockfluren

1180) and his vassals, were extremely cautious with the pagan Slavs whom they had forcibly brought under their rule. So too they hesitated immediately to force them into Christianity which they thought could be introduced later, after feudal colonisation or reorganisation respectively and introduction of the feudal tax system had been finished and stabilised. Bishops and priests blamed Henry the Lion, that he “did not care a damn for Christianising the Slavs if his power politics were affected” (LOTTER 1989, 294), and winning Slavs as colonists and rent payers was power politics.

That Duke Henry and his predecessor in the early and mid-12th century indeed spared “their” Slavs from immediate, forced Christianisation is clearly traceable: the great majority of Slavic villages in his dukedom were freed from paying the church tithe, and when finally, by the late Middle Ages, they were baptised, this tithe exemption was retained. One of these former Slavic regions conquered by Duke Henry is to this day called “Wendland” – region of the Wenden, i.e. Slavs (south-east of Hamburg, see Fig. 7). Here this *laissez faire* conduct of the feudal authorities enabled the Slavic peasants to practise their pagan village cult as long as to the late-17th century, so to say beneath the formal cover of Christianity.

### 5 *The Slavic cult green*

The Wendland is the only region where an important traditional function of the central green is documented in early modern written sources: it was on these public places amidst the ring of houses where pagan rituals were practiced. There exists a detailed report of the superintendent of the Protestant church of the sub-dukedom of Dannenberg who in 1671, on government order, undertook a survey of the heathen faith and practices of the Wends, with the aim of having them eradicated<sup>20</sup>.

Once every summer a fertility cult was practiced in each and every village: a tree trunk collected from the forest and brought to the village by the community of males in a festive, not to say ceremonial, procession was first hewn four-sided by a carpenter – never a German, but always a Slav who knew the rite –, set up in the centre of the green, where the people believed the village deity would reside beneath the ground. The village’s Starüst (the eldest who at the same time was the official village mayor) had to climb up to its top on wooden pegs knocked into the pole and fasten a small pole across and a metal weathercock; that is why this pole was called “Kreuzbaum” (cross pole). That done,

all the men of the village began to drink beer until they were totally inebriated and fell into a state of trance in which they began an ecstatic dance round the pole one after another, with the Starüst heading the chain. Before this was started, all the villages’ farm animals had been gathered on the green, and while dancing, the Starüst sprayed beer from a pot over the animals: people believed that this ritual would protect the animals from evil the year round. In many villages on this occasion a billy goat was slaughtered as a sacrifice to the village deity. The females of the villages, too, had a pole of their own – it had to be an alder – called “Kronenbaum” (crown pole), brought to the village with ritual Slavic songs, and set up with their own ceremonies. Similar round dances were celebrated by them.

The male elders used to pray daily at the spot of the “cult pole”, as one might say. As part of marriage ceremonies the couple had to dance round the two poles. During bad weather the village council of the family heads under the Starüst met in a half-timbered building (“Burstaw”) built on the green close to the “Kreuzbaum”. Certainly it was because of the holiness of the green with the cult pole that all the houses had to be located around it, with the front-door facing the “sacred” green.

There can be no doubt that this pagan cult with its ceremonies celebrated on the central green was not only a local tradition from pre-Christian times of the Wendland. It must have been a general pagan practice of the western Slavs throughout eastern Central Europe to live in hamlets with the houses arranged round a green which served as place of cult rituals, which were believed to protect the *dziedzina*-families settled closely around and forming the cult community. After thorough Christianisation this village form persisted only as a tradition. Hamlets with their farmsteads round a blind alley instead of a green seem in many cases to have been narrowed secondarily when, after Christianisation, the cult green was no longer needed.

### 6 *Villages round a green in Bohemia*

The impacts of the medieval transformation of the early-settled Slavic regions of Bohemia and Moravia

<sup>20</sup> Die Kopenhagener Handschrift – “Wendischer Aberglaube, angemercket bey der General-Kirchen-Visitation des Fürstenthums Dannenberg, im Monat August. Anno 1671” – was published by OLESCH (1967). Passages in the chronicle by Johann Parum Schultze, a Slav peasant of the Wendland, who lived from 1677 to 1740 refer to the same topic of cult practices on the green of Rundling villages; published as a source in the volume of OLESCH (1967, 148–149). See also the comment by SCHULZ (1978).

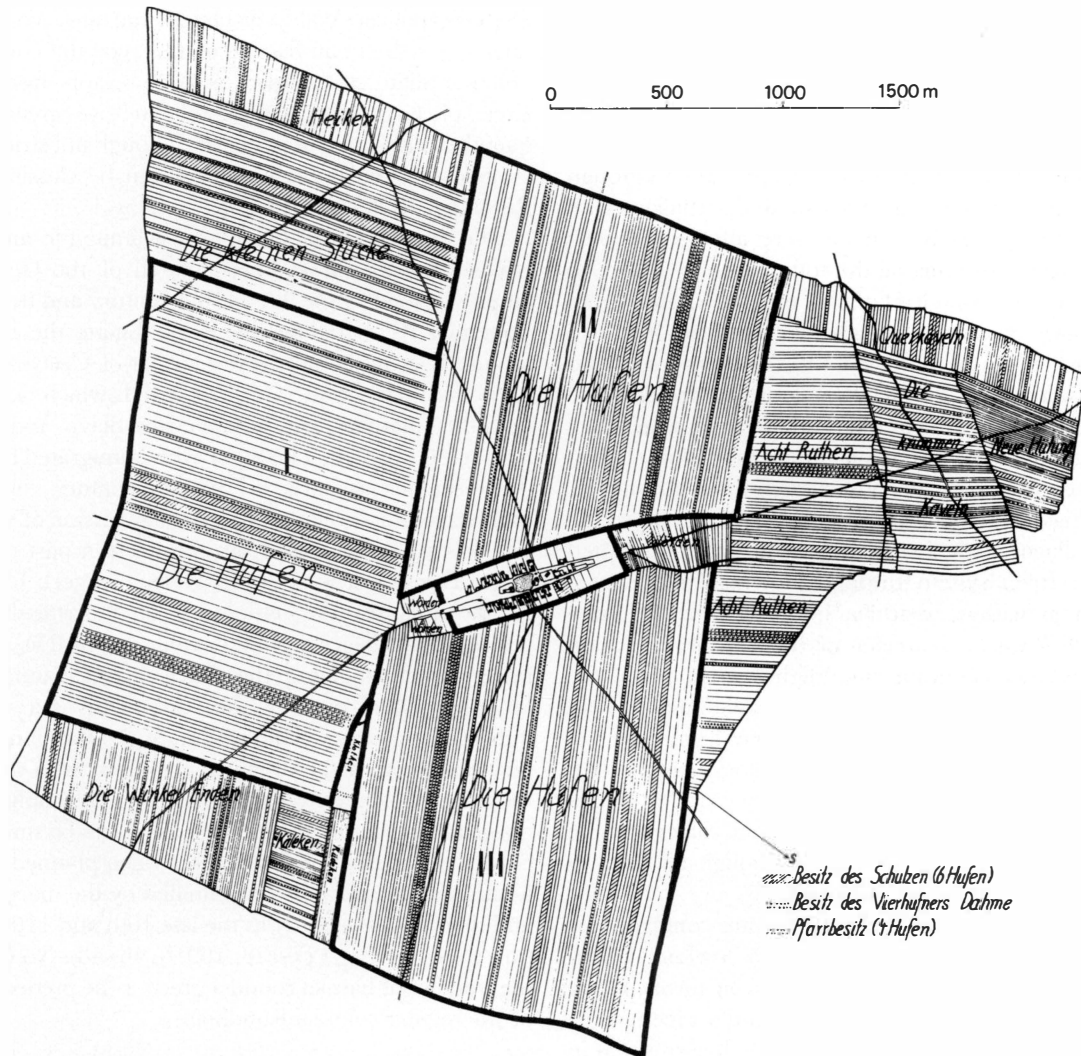


Fig. 8: Schönfeld 1836 (Barnim, east of Berlin). Street-green village (lancet shape) with three original large furlongs (I, II, III) according to the common three-field system. Schönfeld is one of the largest villages of the colonisation region of the Barnim province of the Margravate of Brandenburg. It consisted of 104 Hufen, which according to the practice of colonisation in the eastern parts of the margravate (after 1230), were distributed to the colonists as follows: each received 2 Hufen, the Schulze (mayor of the village) 4 Hufen and the glebe 4 Hufen, which comes to 48 peasant farms (96 Hufen) plus 1 farm (Schulze) plus 1 farm (glebe). The Hufen lands of the three large fields were termed “Die Hufen”. The peripheral fields are later additions

Source: KRENZLIN (1952)

Schönfeld 1836 (Barnim, östlich von Berlin)

after the newly introduced German “colonial” model are limited to only part of the villages and can be characterised as the least serious compared to (1) the radical solutions in the princedoms of eastern Central Europe (Silesia, Brandenburg etc.) with a complete abolition of the Slavic village and field pattern, and to (2) the version chosen in the western marches along the Elbe and Saale Rivers where the field pattern was completely changed and the Slavic hamlet round a green

was brought into the regulated “colonial” form of the Rundling. In respect to the regions of early Slavic settlement of Bohemia it seems to the author, after having studied a good number of historical cadastral maps of villages east of Prague to the Elbe River, that only part of the villages – in the latter region less than one third – underwent a planned transformation according to the German “colonial” model of the feudal Hufen system, with the introduction of strip

fields along with the common three-field system since the late 12th century under the Bohemian princes and their vassals. The majority of villages, though brought under feudal control and exploitation, retained the irregular pattern of block fields, which in the course of time underwent individual fragmentation through partible inheritance. The traditional Slavic village with its *dziedzinas* round a green were affected by only some slight adaptations of the tofts: formerly larger, to accommodate extended families, they were split up into customary tenements. In the villages with planned transformation the tenement sizes were brought into accordance with the new status of the standardised Hufen farm. The ring of tofts and the green which they surround, more or less retained their individual shapes, which tend to have not just a round but an angular form. Figs. 2 a (Upper Saxony) and 2 b (south Bohemia) show villages of the irregular type imperfectly adapted to the Hufen system through individual splitting of *dziedzinas* (with no basic changes of the block field pattern) while Fig. 2 c is an example taken from the region east of Prague showing some slight regulations of the tofts which cannot be called truly regular at all. There are indeed no really definite differences from those villages which retained their irregular block field pattern, from which we can conclude that they were not "regularised". The shapes of the individual villages of the Prague region vary considerably, though all have in common an angular central green.

These observations of the author are confirmed by the village samples collected from various Czech publications by SPERLING in his book on forms, types, origin and evolution of villages around a green in the Bohemian territories (SPERLING 1982). It seems that in those Bohemian regions, which were settled only after the introduction of the German feudal Hufen system, the new villages were laid out according to the Slavic tradition with the tofts arranged round a green, but with a more regular layout. This need not be the circular Rundling as in the northern German lowlands, but rectangular, even square, forms prevail. The field patterns generally consist of large furlongs with the number of strips corresponding to the number of farmsteads in the village, basically the same system as in the other regions of the German colonisation model (see Figs. 3 and 8).

The Rundling version with a circular green obviously prevails in the west and south of Bohemia from where SPERLING has taken most of his examples of this type. In the Bohemian west, with the largest area in the uplands round the monastery of Teplá, the circular villages belong to the same type as in the uplands around Eger and in the adjoining German upland regions of

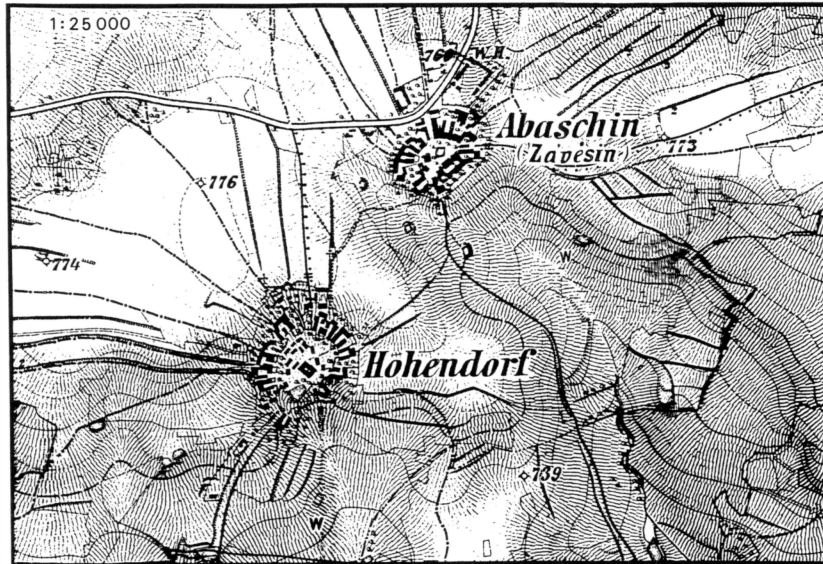
the Oberpfälzer Wald, Fichtelgebirge and Vogtland (Fig. 9). As the main feature of this type the compact Hufen radiate star-shaped as large sectors from the circle of farmsteads round an extensive green frequently with a pond in its centre. Though not strictly in every case circular these villages can be classified as Rundlinge (KÄUBLER 1963).

The distribution of this model is limited to an area coinciding with the southern march of the German empire formed by the 9th or 10th century and fronting Bohemia. At that time the Regio Egere, the region around Eger in the north-west corner of Czechia, was until 1322 part of the German march which, as with the other marches, was inhabited by Slavic and German settlers as well. The Slavs, who immigrated before the Germans as early as the 7th century, lived in hamlets round a green of the irregular version of which Fig. 4 is a classical case from the western part of the Regio Egere, just west of the German-Czech border. As the areas of the settlements of the star-shaped colonisation villages around circular greens (Fig. 9) are immediately adjoining the Slavic green hamlets in the early-settled parts of the region, this is a strong indication that this upland variant of the Rundling was created by the medieval feudal colonisers who shaped them by following the basic features of the traditional Slavic green hamlet, the more so as we can be sure that Slavs were among the first settlers when planned colonisation of the uplands was initiated by the margraves and their vassals as early as the late 10th and 11th century (NITZ 1991a, 127–128; 1991b, 46–48). No doubt the traditional hamlet round a green is the predecessor of the regular colonial Rundling.

#### *7 The earliest Rundling settlements with Slavic colonists in the Frankish border zones*

The final question to be discussed concerns where and when the earliest planned transformation of Slavic kinship groups and their settlements took place. It was in the Frankish frontier zone along the Saale river against Sorbian tribes, and to the north against the eastern Saxons as early as the 8th century, that for the first time Slavic groups were deliberately and in an organised way incorporated in the Frankish military forces. Together with peasant-soldiers of Frankish origin, they were settled around a system of castles. In detail this Frankish border system has been discussed by the author elsewhere (NITZ 1988, 252–262). Großgräfendorf (Fig. 10), literally the large count's village named after one count of the nearby royal castle of Merseburg, is an example from the frontier zone against the Saxons organised by the Franks on newly

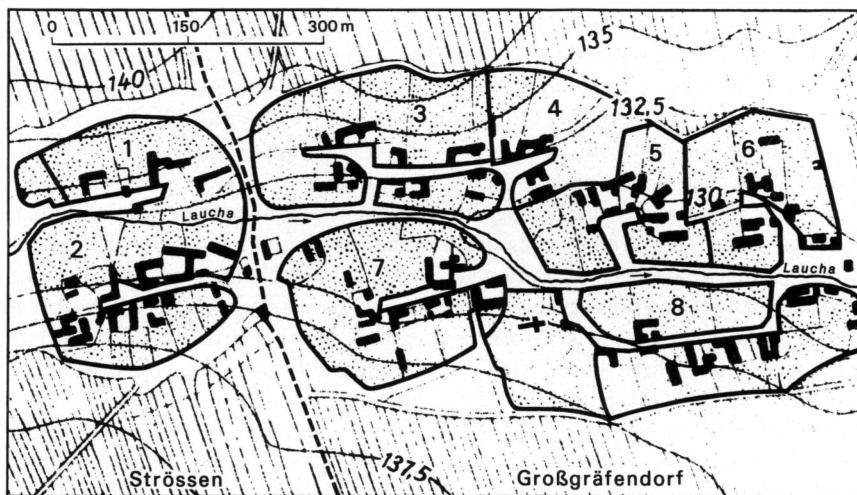




*Fig. 9:* Rundling villages with Hufen radiating in a starlike pattern (German term: “Radialwaldhufensiedlung”). Tepler Hochland, Czechia, before 1880

*Source:* Section of “Karte 1:25 000, Umgebung von Marienbad, Ausgabe 1880” (Einzelblatt)

Radialwaldhufensiedlungen, Tepler Hochland, Tschechien, vor 1880



*Fig. 10:* Strössen (left) and Großgräfendorf (right) 1710, near Merseburg, historically part of the Carolingian border region against the Saxons, mid 8th century. Slavic kinship groups settled in hamlets round narrow greens with a dead end. No. 8 is a small street village (with some tofts vacant) and the church

*Source:* SCHLÜTER a. AUGUST (1961)

Strössen (links) und Großgräfendorf (rechts) 1710, in der Nähe von Merseburg

conquered lands after a victory in A.D. 743, and Spergau (Fig. 1 c) an example from the Limes against the Sorbian Slavs across the Saale river in the 9th century. It was in this military frontier zone around Merseburg that for the first time Slavic peasants were adapted to the Frankish system of open and extremely long strip fields (in Fig. 10 part of them is shown). But they were

permitted to maintain their traditional settlement form. In the case of Spergau even for the German group, which was settled in the same community, but in a separate village, the layout of the Rundling was applied and both placed side by side: the green village proved practical for Frankish settlers, too, though of course not for cult purposes. In this case the two early-



medieval ethnic groups are still documented in the place-names: Wendisch Spergau – Deutsch Spergau. No ethnic reservations seem to have existed.

In several cases the Frankish authorities joined a number of small Slavic kinship groups to form a larger village, a case represented by Strössen (a Slavic place name) and Großgräfendorf (Fig. 10). Here each group was permitted to establish their own hamlet, each with originally three to six farmsteads round a narrow green with a dead end, the classical Slavic way to express the exclusivity of the kin. Großgräfendorf consists of five such individual hamlets. The small street village with the church in the south-eastern part of the village was probably a settlement of Franks. This again may be taken as a proof that these two ethnic groups co-existed under Frankish rule.

*8 Conclusion: general formulation of the findings and their position in the context of the history of genetic settlement research*

The final conclusion in respect to the evolution of the settlement type under discussion is as follows: the more or less irregularly – in geometric terms – shaped Slavic hamlet with *dziedzina* families settling round a green for pagan cult, dancing and meeting of the family heads under the *Starost*, the village eldest, and with block fields, has been the traditional form since pre-Christian times, probably dating from before the 6th century when Slav tribes migrated to eastern Central Europe. This early date is proved by archeological evidence. Several Slavic settlements with houses and sunken huts forming semicircles have been excavated in Dessau-Mosigkau in an early Slavic core region on the Elbe south-east of Magdeburg, in Berlin, in Moravia and several other places<sup>21)</sup>, the earliest dating back to the time of migration about A.D. 600. HERMANN, the leading German expert for Slavic prehistoric settlements, after having compared a good number of excavated early sites from the Baltic in the north to Bohemia in the south, comes to the conclusion (translation by H.-J. N.) “that the rounded form (*Rundform*) in its various local expressions has essentially determined the settlement pattern of the Slavic tribes during the whole period under discussion” i.e. the time before the German colonisation east of the Elbe (HERMANN 1985, 166). Its limitation to the Slavic regions of Central Europe remains a so far unsolved problem. Tentatively it could be explained as a specific sacro-religious cult province with Bohemia as the region of the earliest immigration.

This early type of prehistoric origin in regions of Slavic immigration is the “genetic predecessor” of the

Rundling, which with strip fields is the regulated “colonial” version first introduced in the border region by the Frankish administration of the Carolingian state, which permitted the Slavs to retain their tribal social structure on the village level. The quite individual shapes of the hamlets of Fig. 10 seem to indicate that in this early stage the Frankish authorities did not yet interfere in the residential pattern, leaving the Slav kinship groups arrange it as they were accustomed to. Here the clear shape of a Rundling has not yet been formed. But this step was soon taken: Wendisch Spergau, located only 16 km distant on the Saale frontier and numerous further settlements of the same regular Rundling layout along the Carolingian *Limes Sorabicus*, were founded around the turn of the 8th to 9th centuries (NITZ 1991a, 115–124).

Basically such an explanation as presented by the author was first formulated by MEITZEN (1895) based on a large number of cadastral maps collected as well from originally Slavic regions untouched by colonial transformations as from those Slavic region where during the German colonisation and colonial transformation the regular type of the Rundling was introduced. But MEITZEN’s view differs in one main respect from that of the present author: he viewed the irregular and the regular forms as both originally Slavic, for which he used the common term “*Runddorf*”; he saw the effect of German feudal colonisation only in the introduction of strip fields and the common field organisation.

But what is important in this context of the history of genetic settlement research: although the examples presented by MEITZEN were known to all German settlement scholars, they felt more convinced by a new explanation presented by KRENZLIN around 1950<sup>22)</sup>, which for the Rundling regions of the north German lowlands seemed quite persuasive. She claimed, that until the time of German colonisation the Slavs had lived in isolated farms and loosely grouped hamlets of irregular shape – she simply ignored the existence of greens in hamlets with traditional block fields; this field pattern she correctly interpreted as the main characteristic of a primitive field-grass economy carried on by Slavic peasants. Accordingly, in her view the Rundling

<sup>21)</sup> KRÜGER (1967); for a short overview see HERMANN (1989a); NEKUDA (1982; 1988, 703). A fairly complete overview of archaeological findings of prehistoric Slavic settlements with a circular grouping of houses round an inner open space is given by HERMANN (1985, 160–167).

<sup>22)</sup> KRENZLIN (1952) formulated her new theory in chapter III (*Das Volkstum* (ethnic groups), 3. *Ergebnisse* (Rundlingsfrage)). This and other relevant passages from her second book (KRENZLIN 1955) are reprinted in NITZ (1974).

was newly invented by Slavs or by the new feudal German lords for the Slavs as a settlement form best suited to combine their traditional cattle economy based on grassland along wetlands on the fringe of which their settlements had previously traditionally been located. The Rundling with its tofts radiating into the grassland and with its exit on the opposite side leading to the – now enlarged – arable lands cultivated under the newly introduced three-field economy, proved, in KRENZLIN's view, the optimal solution to integrate the Slavs into the German colonial system, at least in the first phase. What KRENZLIN did not notice, or avoided noticing, was that the farmstead sectors of the Rundling settlements south of the lowlands (see Figs. 1 c and d) are not at all orientated to the grassland, a fact which does not fit with her agro-ecological explanation of the radial shape of tofts. Nor do the fishermen's Rundling settlements of the Oderbruch (of which she was well aware

(KRENZLIN 1983a, 53 and 64)), whose Slavic inhabitants had never come under the feudal farm economy and Hufen system which KRENZLIN believed to be a *conditio sine qua non* for the formation of the "true" Rundling.

It was the aim of the present article to demonstrate that without regard to the traditional "tribal" hamlet round a green, in which Slavic extended families had lived since pre-medieval times, there can be no understanding of the evolution of the "colonial" Rundling. As has been demonstrated, the former contained the basic idea of the latter and the pagan Slavs, when they were incorporated into the feudal society, transmitted their age-old idea based on their religious tradition how the families should group their homes round an open public green which was originally their cult centre. Hence there can be no doubt that this settlement form has ethnic roots.

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