

TRADITIONS IN CURRENT-DAY RESEARCH ON PREHISTORY AND PROTOHISTORY

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The tendency to project present-day concepts and ideas — although in simplified form — back onto a thousand-year-old past has long obscured historical insights. This is why the author attempts to identify the concept of „people“ (*Volk*) in the early centuries of the Christian era. Heretofore it has been common to accept the data furnished by ancient authors on the size of population and of the army. These are not, however, sustained by a detailed examination. Thus the struggle between Arminius and Maroboduus, for example, gives us some insight into the „people“ in Maroboduus' empire: the Langobards and the Semnones switched allegiance from Maroboduus to Arminius, but the balance of power was restored when a Cherusci prince *cum manu clientum* went over to Maroboduus' side. But could one single group of followers balance out the forces of two Germanic tribes?

The tribal assemblies described by Tacitus suffice to demonstrate that the warriors of the Germanic tribes numbered not tens of thousands but at the most a few thousand. The author further cites numerous examples to prove that the Germanic tribes did not attack the Romans with „people's armies“ but with individual groups of followers or combined forces of several. In the final part of the article, dealing briefly with the problems of the Langobard campaigns in Italy, the author shows the misinterpretations which have arisen with regard to the appearance of groups of Heruli followers in the early *Völkerwanderung*.