

Slavic Pagan World



Slavic Pagan World

Compilation by Garry Green

Welcome to Slavic Pagan World: Slavic Pagan Beliefs, Gods, Myths, Recipes, Magic, Spells, Divinations, Remedies, Songs.

Table of Content

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Slavic Pagan Beliefs | 5 |
| <i>Slavic neighbors.</i> | 5 |
| <i>Dualism & The Origins of Slavic Belief</i> | 6 |
| <i>The Elements</i> | 6 |
| <i>Totems</i> | 7 |
| <i>Creation Myths</i> | 8 |
| <i>The World Tree.</i> | 10 |
| <i>Origin of Witchcraft - a story</i> | 11 |
| <i>Slavic pagan calendar and festivals</i> | 11 |
| A small dictionary of slavic pagan gods & goddesses | 15 |
| Slavic Ritual Recipes | 20 |
| An Ancient Slavic Herbal | 23 |
| Slavic Magick & Folk Medicine | 29 |
| Divinations | 34 |
| Remedies | 39 |
| Slavic Pagan Holidays | 45 |
| Slavic Gods & Goddesses | 58 |
| Slavic Pagan Songs | 82 |
| Organised pagan cult in Kievan Rus' | 89 |
| <i>Introduction</i> | 89 |
| <i>Selected deities and concepts in slavic religion</i> | 92 |
| <i>Personification and anthropomorphisation</i> | 108 |
| <i>"Core" concepts and gods in slavonic cosmology</i> | 110 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| <i>Evolution of the eastern slavic beliefs</i> | 111 |
| <i>Foreign influence on slavic religion</i> | 112 |
| <i>Conclusion</i> | 119 |
| Pagan ages in Poland | 120 |
| <i>Polish Supernatural Spirits</i> | 120 |
| <i>Polish Folk Magic</i> | 125 |
| <i>Polish Pagan Pantheon</i> | 131 |

Slavic Pagan Beliefs

The Slavic peoples are not a "race". Like the Romance and Germanic peoples, they are related by area and culture, not so much by blood. Today there are thirteen different Slavic groups divided into three blocs, Eastern, Southern and Western. These include the Russians, Poles, Czechs, Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Serbians, Croats, Macedonians, Slovenians, Bulgarians, Kashubians, Albanians and Slovaks. Although the Lithuanians, Estonians and Latvians are of Baltic tribes, we are including some of their customs as they are similar to those of their

Slavic neighbors.

Slavic Runes were called "Runitsa", "Cherty y Rezy" ("Strokes and Cuts") and later, "Vlesovitsa". The Cyrillic system ("Cyrillitsa") was created in the 9th century by Sts. Cyril and Methodius based on a combination of the Greek alphabet and the Slavic Runes. Vlesovitsa continued to be used by the Pagans, while Cyrillitsa was used by the Christians. During the "war" against Paganism, the Christians destroyed each document that contained Runic instead of the Cyrillic writing, usually along with its owner. This was done so effectively that according to most sources, the ancient Slavic peoples had no written language at all. Therefore the nearly all records of the rituals, temples and idols/gods of the ancient Slavs come from the very people sent to destroy them. This, along with the fact that very little information on Slavic Mythology and Magick has been translated into English, makes studying the subject extremely difficult.

Research must then be done through the study of folklore and folk customs. Fortunately, the medieval Slavic peasant did not embrace Christianity on any more than a surface level. This gave rise to what the Russians call dvoeverie (dvoe-*ev*-VAIR-ryeh) or "double-faith". According to one historian, Christianity so shallowly masked the surface of the true Pagan beliefs, many a peasant did not know the name of the man on the cross to whom he prayed.

Dualism & The Origins of Slavic Belief

The origins of Slavic belief, like that of the rest of the world's, reside in animism and ancestral worship. The first two types of spirit were called the beregyni - female spirits that bring life and are the forerunners of the Rusalki, and Upyr - the spirits of death who eventually became our modern Vampire (Wampyr). From this original dualism sprang belief in all of the nature spirits, and eventually in the Rod and Rozhenitsa, the God and Goddess who imbue the newborn child with a soul and his/her fate. Although nearly all deities were originally ancestral, Rod and Rozhenitsa eventually pulled the Slavic mind out of that way of thinking and opened the doorway for the later "Indo-European" structure, although the original "Old European" mindset kept a stronger hold on the average Slav.

Dualism permeates all of Slavic Pagan spirituality and actually seems to be the basis for most of it. This should not be confused with the dualistic good against evil beliefs of the Christian religion which have unfortunately seeped into the Slavic spirituality of today. It is a system of complimenting opposites such as darkness and light, winter and summer, female and male, cold and hot more similar to the yin/yang. The God-brothers Bialybog "white-god" and Czarnobog "black-god" who rule the sky and underworld respectively, are further illustrations of this polarity. Unfortunately, because of the introduction of Christianity, these two gods later became confused with Jehovah and Satan.

Other examples of dualism are - the two Rozhinitzy, the mother and daughter fates, the spirits of midnight, Polnocnitsa and noon, Poludnitsa - both times seen to be equally as frightening, and the Zorya - Goddesses of dusk and dawn.

The Elements

The ancient Slavs had a deep sense of reverence for the four elements. Fire and Water were seen as sacred dualistic symbols on the horizontal or earthly plane. Earth and Sky were seen as a more vertical system of duality. High places such as mountaintops or treetops, especially birch, linden and oak, became sacred as meeting places the Sky father and the Earth mother. Where they met, they would join their procreative forces, usually in a flash of lightening and clap of thunder.

The winds were seen as the grandchildren of the God, Stribog. Water was referred to in mythology as the water of life and death and rivers were treated with respect lest they should drown you on your next visit. There are records of human, as well as other sacrifices being made to rivers such as the Dneiper and the Volga. Although many bodies of water had their own deities, most of them were ruled by spirits known as Rusalki or Vodanoi. Fire was personified by the god, Svarozhich and it was considered nearly criminal to spit into a fire. Mati Syra Zemlja or Mother Moist Earth, however, seems to have been given the greatest amount of respect.

No one was allowed to strike Mati Syra Zemlja with a hoe, until the Spring Equinox, Maslenica, as she was considered pregnant until then. Earth was considered so sacred that oaths were sworn while holding a piece of her, sometimes in the mouth and ancient wedding vows were taken while swallowing a small clump of Earth or holding it on the head. The custom of asking the Earth's forgiveness before death was still being observed far into the 20th century and when a priest could not be found it was considered appropriate to confess sins to the Earth.

Totems

Like the native Americans, it seems that each Slavic tribe had a totem animal that the clan was usually named after. It was considered taboo to kill or eat this animal except for specific religious rituals. Each member of the tribe was thought to have an animal twin, and the death of that twin could cause the death of the tribe member. The World Tree

The Slavs believed that the world tree was divided into three parts; The roots existed in the realm of the underworld, "Nav", and were where the zaltys lived. The main section existed in the mundane world and the uppermost branches reached into the land of the sky Gods. A magical bird was said to live in the branches. Although the Slavs did have Viking influence, the world tree beliefs seem to come more from the native Siberians. These Asian peoples each keep a tree, usually a linden, near their home and see it as a sort of "telephone" to the other realms.

Creation Myths

A Slavic magi was recorded as saying (*Russian 1071 CE - the transcript of Lavrentij*):

"We know how man was created: God was washing in the bathhouse and, after sweating, he wiped himself with a towel that he threw onto the ground; then Satan entered into dispute with God as to who should make man out of this towel; and God breathed a soul into him, therefore after death man's body returns to the soil and his spirit to God."

A Christmas Carol from Galica explains:

When there was in the beginning no world,
Then there was neither heaven nor earth.
Everywhere was a blue sea,
And on the midst of the sea, a green plane-trees
On the plane tree three doves,
Three doves take counsel,
Take counsel as how to create the world.
"Let us plunge to the bottom of the sea.
Let us gather fine sand;
Let us scatter fine sand,
That it may become for us black earth.
Let us get golden rocks;
Let us scatter golden rocks.
Let there be for us a bright sky,
A bright sky, a shining sun,
A shining sun and bright moon,
A bright moon, a bright morning star,
A bright morning star and little starlets.

-Drahomaniv p.10

In other recorded versions of this song, there are two doves not three, two oaks instead of a plane tree or blue stones instead of golden ones.

Much later versions have God, St. Peter and St. Paul riding the doves as the actual creators.

In the beginning, there were no earth and no people, only the primordial sea. Bielobog flew over the face of the waters in the shape of a swan and was lonely. Longing for someone to keep him company, he noticed his shadow, Chernobog and rejoiced.

"Let us make land" said Bielobog.

"Let us," said Chernobog, but where will we get the dirt?"

"There is dirt under the water, go down and get some," answered Bielobog, but before you can reach it, you must say 'With Bielobog's power and mine'."

The devil dived into the water, but said "With My Power", instead of what he was instructed to say. Twice he dived down and neither time did he reach the bottom. Finally, the third time he said "With Bielobog's Power and Mine" and he reached the dirt. Scraping some up with his nails, he brought it to the surface but hid a grain of dirt in his mouth in order to have his own land.

God then took the dirt from him and scattered it upon the water. The dirt became dry land and began to grow. Of course, the land in Chernobog's mouth also began to grow and his mouth began to swell. Chernobog was forced to spit and spit to rid himself of all the earth and where he spit, mountains were formed.

Angered that he was cheated out of his own land, he waited for Bielobog to fall asleep. As soon as the god was sleeping peacefully, Czernobog lifted him up to throw him in the water. In each direction he went, but the land had grown so much, he could not reach the ocean. When Bielobog awoke, Czernobog said "Look how much the land has grown, we should bless it."

...And Bielobog said slyly, "I blessed it last night, in all four directions, when you tried to throw me in the water."

This greatly angered Czernobog who stormed off to get away from Bielobog once and for all. In the meantime, the earth would not stop growing. This made Bielobog very nervous as the Heavens could no longer cover it all, so he sent an expedition to ask Czernobog how to make it stop.

Czernobog had since created a goat. When the expedition saw the great god Czernobog riding astride a goat, they couldn't stop laughing. This angered the god and he refused to speak to them. Bielobog then created a bee, and sent the bee to spy on Czernobog.

The bee quietly alit upon Czernobog's shoulder and waited. Soon, she heard him say to the goat "What a stupid god! He doesn't even know that all he has to do is take a stick, make a cross to the four directions and say 'That is enough earth'. Instead he wonders what to do."

Hearing this, the bee buzzed off in excitement. Knowing that he'd been heard, Czernobog yelled after the bee, "Whoever sent you, Let him eat your excrement!".

The bee went directly to Bielobog and said "He said All you need to do is make a cross to the four directions and say 'That is enough earth.' And to me he said 'let whomever sent you eat your excrement'.

So god stopped the earth from growing and than said to the bee "Then forever after, let there be no excrement sweeter than yours."

This myth is a combination of myths from Bulgarian and Ukranian sources. Although the versions of these myths use God and Satanail as the dual creators, Slavic scholars agree that the myth is a later form of the original dualism of Czernobog and Bielobog. Because of this I have replaced the names.

The World Tree.

Some Slavs believed that the Earth was an Island floating in water that the sun was immersed in every evening. At the center of this Island stood the world tree or mountain. The roots of this tree extended deep into the underworld and the branches reached high up into the realm of the sky gods, Irij.

Nav was the underworld, realm of the dead from whence it gets its name. Weles/Wolos, the God of cattle and wealth and Lada, Goddess of springtime were also said to reside here. This is not really surprising, considering that most cthonic deities, such as Pluto, Saturn and Ops were also associated with wealth and that the crops are pushed upward from inside the Earth. Also, Lada would return from the underworld in the spring, much like Kore, Persephone and Ostara of the Teutons did.

Origin of Witchcraft - a story

Long ago, when the world was still fairly new, a young woman ventured into the woods to pick mushrooms. In no time at all, the skies opened up upon her and narrowly escaping the rain, she ran beneath a tree, removed all of her clothing, and bundled them up in her bag so they would not get wet. After some time, the rain stopped and the woman resumed her mushroom picking. Weles, Horned God of the forest happened upon her, and asked her what great magick she knew in order to have kept dry during the storm.

"If you show me the secret to your magick, I will show you how I kept dry." she said. Being somewhat easily tempted by a pretty face, Weles proceeded to teach her all of his magickal secrets. After he was done, she told him how she had removed her clothing and hid under a tree.

Knowing that he had been tricked, but had no one but himself to blame, Weles ran off in a rage, and thus, the first Witch came into being

Slavic pagan calendar and festivals

Slavic myths were cyclical, repeating every year over a series of festivities that followed changes of nature and seasons. Thus, to understand their mythology, it is important to understand their concept of calendar. On the basis of archeological and folklore remains, it is possible to reconstruct some elements of pre-Christian calendar, particularly major festivals.

The year was apparently lunar, and began on the first day of March, similar to other Indo-European cultures whose old calendar systems are better known to us. The names for the last night of old year and the first day of new year are reconstructed as Velja Noc/Velik Dan (Great Night/Great Day). After Christianization, these names were probably passed onto Easter. In Slavic countries belonging to Orthodox Churches, Easter is known as Velik Dan/Great Day, whilst amongst Catholic Slavs, it is known as Velika Noc/Great Night. The names blend nicely with the translation of the Greek Megale Hemera, Great

Week, the Christian term for the week in which Easter falls. In pagan times, however, this was a holiday probably quite like Halloween. Certain people (shamans) donned grotesque masks and coats of sheep wool, roaming around the villages, as during the Great Night, it was believed, spirits of dead ancestors travelled across the land, entering villages and houses to celebrate the new year with their living relatives. Consequently, the deity of the last day of the year was probably Veles, god of Underworld.



The spring fertility festival of Maslenitsa, rooted in pagan times and involving the burning of a straw effigy is still celebrated by Slavs all over the world.

There was a large spring festival dedicated to Jarilo, god of vegetation and fertility. Processions of young men or girls used to go round villages on this day, carrying green branches or flowers as symbols of new life. They would travel from home to home, reciting certain songs and bless each household with traditional fertility rites. The leader of procession, usually riding on horse, would be identified with Jarilo. The custom of creation of pisanki or decorated eggs, also symbols of

new life, was another tradition associated with this feast, which was later passed on Christian Easter.

The summer solstice festival is known today variously as Ivanje, Kupala or Kries. It was celebrated pretty much as a huge wedding, and, according to some indications from historical sources, in pagan times likely followed by a general orgy. There was a lot of eating and drinking on the night before, large bonfires (in Slavic - Kres) were lit, and youngsters were coupling and dancing in circles, or jumped across fires. Young girls made wreaths from flowers and fern (which apparently was a sacred plant for this celebration), tossed them into rivers, and on the basis of how and where they floated, foretold each other how they would get married. Ritual bathing on this night was also very important; hence the name of Kupala (from kupati = to bathe), which probably fit nicely with folk translation of the future patron saint the Church installed for this festival, John the Baptist. Overall, the whole festivity probably celebrated a divine wedding of fertility god, associated with growth of plants for harvest.

In the middle of summer, there was a festival associated with thunder-god Perun, in post-Christian times transformed into a very important festival of Saint Elijah. It was considered the holiest time of the year, and there are some indications from historic sources that it involved human sacrifices. The harvest probably began afterwards.

It is unclear when exactly the end of harvest was celebrated, but historic records mention interesting tradition associated with it that was celebrated at Svantevit temple on the island of Ruyana (present-day Rugen), a survived through later folklore. People would gather in front of the temple, where priests would place a huge wheat cake, almost the size of a man. The high priest would stand behind the cake and ask the masses if they saw him. Whatever their answer was, the priest would then plead that the next year, people could not see him behind the ritual cake; i.e., he alluded that the next year's harvest would be even more bountiful.

There probably also was an important festival around winter solstice, which later became associated with Christmas. Consequently, in many Slavic countries, Christmas is called Bozhich, which simply means little god. While this name fits very nicely with the Christian idea of Christmas, the name is likely of pagan origin; it indicated the birth of a young and new god of Sun to the old and weakened solar deity during the longest night of the year. The old Sun god was identified as Svarog, and his son, the young and new Sun, as Dazhbog. An alternative (or perhaps the original) name for this festival was Korochun.

A small dictionary of slavic pagan gods & goddesses

BABA YAGA - Goddess of death and regeneration. Baba Yaga can appear as either an old crone or a beautiful young woman. Baba Yaga lives in darkness and eats people, but she has the gift of prophecy as well.

BELOBOG Also **BELBOG, BELUN** - The White God, the god of the day, the god of Heaven, the bringer of good luck, the god of heavenly light, the god of happiness and peace, the judge who rewards good and punishes evil. A wise old man with a long beard dressed in white, Belobog appears only during the day.

CHERNOBOG - The Black God, the god of night, the god of Hell, the bringer of evil luck, the god of infernal darkness, the opposite of Belobog in every way. Chernobog and Belogbog are personifications of opposing principles of good and evil, light and dark, chaos and order.

DAZHBOG - A personification of the sun. Each morning Dazhbog mounts a diamond chariot and drives forth from his golden palace in the east, starting the day as a young man and ending the day as a dying old man. His attendants are two virgins, the morning and evening stars; a wise old counsellor, the moon; seven judges, the planets; and seven messengers, the comets. Dazhbog ages with the year and takes on a different aspect with each season. Among other seasonal aspects, he was worshipped during the harvest as Sventovit, whose name means "Holy Light," and in winter as Svarozhich, the newborn winter sun. Also god of blessings and son of Svarog.



DOMOVOI - The protector of the house. Every home had its own domovoe who dwelled behind the oven and who might abandon the house if he was not properly honored. The Domovois protected not only the human inhabitants of the house but their herds and household animals as well. In some areas the Slavs believed that prosperity and well-being could not exist in a new house until the head of the family died and became its guardian spirit.

Iarilo - minor god of male sexual potency; associated with semik.

Khors - sun god.

Koliada - spirit of the winter solstice.

KUPULA - A goddess of water, sorcery and herbal lore. Kupula personifies the magical and spiritual power inherent in water, and Kupula's devotees worshipped her with ritual baths and offerings of flowers cast upon water. Since fire as well as water has powers of purification, her worshippers also danced around and leaped over huge bonfires. Frequently her effigy was burned or cast into pools of water. Kupula's cult preserved an extensive lore of magical plants and herbs which gave men the power to read minds, control evil spirits, find hidden treasures, and win the love of beautiful women. Spirit of the summer solstice, associated with Kupalo's Day (June 24).

Lada, Lado - variously thought to be the mother of Lel' and Polel', a god of the underworld and marriage, or not a deity at all; the goddess of spring and mother of Lelia.

Lel' - possibly the son of Lada and brother of Polel'.

Lelia - possibly the daughter of Lada.

MATI SYRA ZEMLIA - Not a name, but a title which means Moist Mother Earth. An earth goddess. The most ancient and possibly the most important of the Slavic gods. Ever fruitful and powerful, Mati Syra Zemlia was worshipped well into the twentieth century. Mother Earth was an oracle whom anyone could consult without any need for a priest or shaman as a go-between. The Slavs felt the profoundest respect for Mother Earth. Peasants settled property disputes by appealing to Mother Earth to witness the truth of their claims, and oaths were sworn in her name. Personification of the earth as a female deity.

MOKOSH Also **MOKYSHA, MOKUSH** - The goddess who both gives and takes life, the spinner of the thread of life, the giver of the water of life. Mokosh later became

PARASKEVA-PIATNITSA, a goddess of spinning, water, fertility, health with marriage. Only female deity included among Vladimir's idols, possibly associated with Moist Mother Earth; associated with fertility, bounty, moisture, women's work, the protection of maidens, October 28 (Saint Paraskeva-Friday) .

PERUN Also **PIORUN, PYERUN, PERON** - "Lord of the Whole World." God of thunder, justice, and war, chief adversary of the Black God. Perun's weapons are thunderbolts. The Slavs made sacrifices of goats and bulls to Perun in a grove with an oak tree. With the coming of Christianity, Perun merged with St. Elijah, who is portrayed in icons flying across the sky in a chariot. Chief of the pagan gods, god of thunder and lightning and of war; associated with July 20 (Elijah the Prophet).

Polel' - possibly the son of Lada and brother of Lel'.

Rod - minor god of birth; early primary god of the east Slavs, a creator and god of fertility and light, associated with the winter solstice and July 20, who was replaced by Perun shortly before the tenth century.

Rozhanitsy - minor goddess of birth; associated with the harvest (September 9).

Simargl - a winged dog, guardian of seed and new shoots; associated with rusal'naia week.

Stribog - possibly god of wind, storm, and destruction.

Svarog - sun god, father of Dazhbog, divine smith.



Svarozhichi - sons of Svarog.

Sviatovit - possibly an important god of the west Slavs, god of light, bounty, and divination regarding the harvest.

VED'MA - A demon goddess who flies over the clouds and mountains on a broom or rake. Ved'ma causes storms, keeps the water of life and death, and knows the magical properties of plants. Ved'ma can be young and beautiful or old and ugly as she pleases.

VELES Also **VOLOS** - Veles was worshipped in two aspects. As Veles he is god of death and the underworld, god of music, and a sorcerer. As Volos he is god of cattle wealth and commerce. The worship of Veles vanished with the coming of Christianity, but the worship of Volos survived as late as the eighteenth century. God of cattle (skotnyi bog), commerce and possibly the dead, associated with the winter solstice and spring equinox.

ZORIA Also **ZARIA** - The heavenly bride, goddess of beauty and morning. At dawn her worshippers greeted her as "the brightest maiden, pure, sublime, honorable."

Slavic Ritual Recipes

Traditionally, ritual libation would have consisted of mead. There is currently a very good commercial Polish mead available called "Piasť". It is produced and bottled in Poland and imported by Adamba Imports, Brooklyn, NY 11237. This brand of mead is SO Pagan that the back of the bottle boasts "Piasť, a 9th century Polish prince quaffed his honey wine from the horn of a bison, the same way his forbears paid homage to their ancient god, Swiatowid." - the strange thing is that...a 9th century prince would have been VERY Pagan as Poland was not Christianized until the year 966....the TENTH century.

Blini

Blini is not only a food appropriate for ritual, it is a traditional food offered to the dead.

Scald 2 cups milk. When it has cooled somewhat, stir in 1 package yeast, 1 Tbsp sugar and 1 1/2 cups flour. Let this rise, covered, in a warm place for 1 hour. beat 3 egg yolks with 1tsp salt, 1 Tbsp melted butter and 1/2 cup flour. Stir this into the sponge. Beat 3 eggwhites until stiff and fold them into the batter. Cook small pancakes in melted butter. Serve with sour cream and maybe some caviar.

Pierogi

These little moon-shaped dumplings are perfect for during and/or after any circle work.

mix 1 egg, 1 tbsp oil, a pinch of salt and enough flour to make a good pasta dough. Roll this out thin (best to use a pasta maker) and using a floured, upturned glass, cut circles out of the dough. Place a small amount of filling in the center of the circle and fold over, wetting the edge to seal. Boil in salted water until tender. You may then fry them in butter with sliced onions. Serve with sour cream.

Pierogi Fillings:

Seasoned Mashed potatoes

Seasoned mashed potatoes & sauer kraut

Seasoned farmer's cheese

Finely chopped mushrooms sauteed with onion

Ground meat mixed with 1 raw egg & some dillweed.

Other Recipes

Not specifically magickal, but any Slavic ritual should be followed by a good deal of eating....

Glumpki - Stuffed Cabbage

Core 2 or 3 heads of cabbage and immerse each one in boiling water for about 5 minutes each. Peel off all the larger leaves and cut out the stalky parts at the bottoms. Set aside.

Mix together: 1lb ground beef, 1 lb ground pork, 1 2 cups cooked long grain rice (al dente), 1 large chopped onion, salt, pepper and a little oil.

In each cabbage leaf place about 2 Tbsp of the meat mixture and roll up - first bring in the sides of the leaf then roll. Do this to all the meat mixture.

Line the bottom of a large covered casserole with some of the extra cabbage leaves. Place the cabbage bundles tightly together in the pot and cover with a mixture of 1 large can crushed tomatoes and 2 Tbsp cider vinegar. You may want to add tomato juice to be sure all the cabbage bundles are kept wet during cooking. Cover with a layer of extra cabbage leaves and either bake for 1 hr or cook atop the stove for 50 minutes.

Latkas - Potato Pancakes

Peel and grate 1 lb of russet potatoes. mix with one egg, 1/2 to cup flower, salt, pepper and 1 or 2 chopped scallions.

Heat a mixture of butter and oil in a frying pan. fry the batter in small, flattened amounts. The latkas should be brown and crispy. Serve with sour cream.

You can cheat by using left over mashed potatoes instead of grated fresh ones. It still tastes pretty good.

Mushroom Kasha

mix 1 cup kasha (buckwheat groats) with 1 egg and 1/3 cup sliced, sauteed mushrooms. Stir-fry in 2 Tbsp butter till the egg is cooked and buckwheat is separated. Add 2 cups boiling chicken broth, salt & pepper and simmer, covered, for ten minutes. Fluff with fork before serving.

An Ancient Slavic Herbal

Angelica - *Archangelica angelica*

Magickal Uses: "In the event of some kind of troublesome misfortune, gather the root with care during the descent of the lion's cub and hang it around your neck. It will drive away cares and cause a merry heart."
- Syrenius (1540 - 1611)

Medicinal Uses: In Russian, the seeds were made into a tea called "angelic water". It was used for stomach ailments and as an antispasmodic. An infusion of the roots and rootstocks was more often used. It taken to treat hysteria, insomnia, epilepsy, all respiratory ailments, rheumatism and lower back pain, to eliminate runny noses and hangovers and to expel intestinal worms. A syrup made of the roots boiled in honey or wine was said to draw out toxins.

Arnica - *Arnica Montana*

Medicinal Uses: A decoction of the flowers or rootstock was used to treat stomach problems resulting from poor digestion, including ulcers, spasms and cramps. It was also effectively used for podagra, epilepsy, colds, influenza and bladder problems. Arnica was also given to control uterine hemorrhaging during childbirth.

Unknown to most of the Slavic world, Arnica was mostly used in Ukraine, Belarus and the Karpatskie Mountains.

Barberry - *Berberis vulgaris*

Medicinal Uses: A 16th century Russian manuscript describes Barberry's ability to cure diseases that cause infertility in women. The Princess Xenia of Pskov supposedly used this extract to help her conceive . A decoction of the root is also used as a remedy for liver and gallbladder ailments including gallstones and jaundice as well as colitis and urinary tract infections.

Barley - *Hordeum vulgare*

Medicinal Uses: Barley water was used to treat bladder and urinary tract disease, kidney stones, hemorrhoids, reduce swelling and tumors and treat jaundice. A Barley malt bath was used to treat just about any skin ailment imaginable including pimples, psoriasis and baldness.

Basil, Sweet - *Ocimum basilicum*

Medicinal Uses: It's smell alone was thought to stop a runny nose. It was taken internally to bring dreams to those having trouble sleeping and as a diuretic.

Beet - *Beta vulgaris*

Magical Uses: Beet leaves were wrapped around eggs and boiled to give them the red color used to denote beauty, prosperity and as a symbol of the Sun-God.

Medicinal Uses: Honey and vinegar were added to a tea made of grated beets and used as a gargling agent for sore throats and colds. Beet leaves were applied to the head to draw out pain. Warm beet juice was dropped into the ear to stop buzzing and was boiled with sage as a cold and sore-throat remedy.

Belladonna - *Atropa belladonna*

Magickal Uses: Found chiefly in the Carpathian region of Poland, his plant was always associated with Witches and evil. It is hallucinogenic and listed as an ingredient in most old flying ointment recipes, but highly toxic and very deadly.

Bellflower - *Campanula trachelium*

Magickal Uses: In Poland, children suffering from consumption were bathed in the herb. If their skin darkened during the bath, it was taken as a sign that they would live. If their skin did not darken, it meant they would die.

Medicinal Uses: The flowers were boiled in a covered pot then left to steep. The resultant tea was used as a wash for ear problems. The roots

of this plant were steeped in strong liquor for several hours. This was then taken in small quantities for stomach pains.

Betony - *Betonica officinalis*

Medical Uses: An infusion or decoction of its aerial parts was used for various lung and bronchial conditions including asthma and tuberculosis and to improve appetite. It is sometimes used as a nose-drop for arthritis.

Birch, white - *Betula alba*

Medical Uses: An infusion of fresh birch leaves may be used to treat edema, various bladder and kidney ailments and poor circulation. It is also said to prevent the formation of kidney stones. Birch sap is used to strengthen the immune system and as a general tonic. It is also used for nearly all skin ailments including dandruff and to speed hair growth. Birch tar is wonderful for skin diseases and to help wounds heal. An infusion of birch buds is used to remove skin spots.

Folklore: The birch is considered a feminine tree and is often associated with the rusalki and wily. The spirits of dead ancestors often take residence within the birch. The great world tree, according to many Slavic traditions, is a white birch.

Bryony, white - *Bryonia alba*

Magickal Uses: It was believed that anyone who dug up this herb would destroy their own happiness. For this reason, many folks fenced in any bryony plants they found in their yard. For Witches, this plant was said to grow anywhere, even in pots without dirt. Witches supposedly kept bryony hidden on their person.

Medicinal Uses: The boiled root was used to heal any wound on a horse's hoof.

Burnet Saxifrage - *Pimpinella saxifrage*

Medical Uses: Steeped in strong alcohol, the roots and leaves were an effective treatment for dysentery and cholera (perhaps the two sisters in the following story?):

Magickal Uses: This plant was called "the herb which breaks" because the touch of this plant was said to break up metal by its touch alone. To gather it, mown grass and crops were thrown into water and the saxifrage would float to the top. This herb was considered most powerful when gathered at Kupalo.

Folklore: (*Poland*) There were once three scythe wielding goddesses who dealt death and did so quite generously. One of these sisters hurt her leg and could not keep up with the others. No matter how much she begged for them to wait, they were too obsessed with their blood lust to take any pity upon her and they left her in their dust. Angered by the abandonment of her sisters, the lame death crone limped through the villages calling to the people, "Eat and drink saxifrage and you will be safe from death!" The people listened and the saxifrage stayed the scythes of her two sisters.

The two sisters were enraged and fell upon their lame sister in a fury. The lame sister used her scythe to block them, and one sister fell upon it dying. In the tumult, the second sister fell upon the other's scythe, leaving only one death, Marzana, for whom there is no remedy.

Carraway - *Carum carvi*

Magickal Uses: A pan of carraway seed in boiling water was placed beneath the crib of any child who was thought to be plagued by demons.

Medicinal Uses: Chewed carraway seeds were smeared upon the face and hands upon going to sleep to protect one from mosquitos.

Meadowsweet - *Filipendula ulmaria*

Medicinal Uses: A decoction of the flowers and shredded roots was used to treat nervous disorders such as hysteria and neurosis, hypertension and difficulties urinating. A decoction of the flowers and leaves is used for colds and other nasal and respiratory ailments. It was also used for ulcers, and other stomach problems and to treat inflammation of the kidneys or liver.

Folklore: (*Russia*) Kudryash was the strongest and bravest knight in

the village, but one day he awoke with an awful terror of his own death. He was so afraid, he could no longer fight. When a band of thieves began to threaten the village and the people looked toward him for help, Kudryash became filled with shame. He wandered down to the river intent on drowning himself when who should arise, but a beautiful water maiden who gave him a garland of meadowsweet flowers. She told him to wear it in battle and he would not be harmed. He later wore the garland fearlessly into battle against the thieves and easily defeated them. Kudryash was proclaimed hero of the village and his courage was celebrated throughout the land.

Mugwort - *Artemisia vulgaris*

Magickal Uses: Mugwort picked from 9 different fields was a powerful amulet against infertility in women. Girls would stare at the Kupalo bonfire through a wreath of mugwort to strengthen the eyes. Effective protection against evil, mugwort was often carried or tucked into the eaves to protect a home from unclean spirits.

Purple Looststrife -

Magickal Uses: This plant was considered most powerful when gathered at Kupalo. One could control demons and troublesome spirits with the root if the following words were chanted over it before a sacred image:

Tear-weed, tear-weed

You have wept long and much but gained little.

May your tears not drown the open field

Nor your cries sound over the deep blue sea.

Frighten off the demons and the witches!

If they do not submit to you, then drown them in your tears!

If they run from your glance, throw them over cliffs or into pits!

May my words be firm and strong for hundreds of years!

Willow, White - *Salix alba*

Magickal Uses: The willow is a symbol of fertility. Every Egorij day, the cattle and women are whipped with pussy willow branches to ensure their ability to bear offspring. Afterward, the branches are thrown into the fields to ensure a good harvest. A pussy-willow bud was eaten to guarantee health and prosperity for the coming year.

Medicinal Uses: Willow bark was used for fever, cough, headache, rheumatism, diarrhea, pain-relief...after all...it is aspirin. A poultice of the bark was placed on puss-filled wounds or taken internally as a tea.

Folklore: (*Poland*) A cruel farmer was angered by the arrival of his cat's litter. Feeling he already had too many mouths to feed, he stuffed the kittens in a sack and threw them into the river to drown. The distraught mother sat on the riverbank mewling and crying for her little ones. A nearby willow tree heard her cries and took pity upon her. The tree dipped her branches into the water and pulled the sack out, but alas, most of the kittens had drowned. Since that time, willows everywhere burst into kittenlike bud each spring in honor of the mother cat and her drowned children.

Wormwood - *Artemisia absinthium*

Magickal Uses: Wormwood was carried to protect one from the Rusalki.

Medicinal Uses: As a tea, wormwood was used to increase appetite and treat stomach disorders. Dogs were bathed in wormwood to kill fleas and bouquets of the herb were hung in homes and barns as an insect repellent.

Folklore: (*Russia*) A group of girls was returning from picking herbs in the forest when they accidentally happened upon the rusalki. The water women asked them "What do you have there?"

"Wormwood, yes, wormwood" they all answered except for one very young inexperienced girl who laughed and said "not I, I picked meadowsweet!". The rusalki all fell upon her and she was never seen again.

Slavic Magick & Folk Medicine

Spells

- Prosperity and Domestic Tranquility

To Attract a Domovoi: Go outside of your home wearing your finest clothing and say aloud "Dedushka Dobrokhhot, Please come into my house and tend the flocks."

To rid yourself of a rival Domovoi: Sometimes a home may have one too many Domoviki. In this case poltergeist-like activity may occur. Beat the walls of your home with a broom shouting "Grandfather Domovoi, help me chase away this intruder."

- To Gain Magickal Knowledge

Calling a Leshii: Cut down an Aspen tree so that it's top falls facing the East. Bend over and look through your legs saying "Leshi, Forest Lord, Come to me now; not as a grey wolf, not as a black raven, not as a flaming fir tree, but as a man."

The leshii will teach the arts of magick to any whom he befriends.

(from Ivanits - Russian Folk Lore)

- For Love

a zagorovui, or runespell, to capture the one you love:

In the ocean sea, on the island of Buyan, there live three brothers, three winds: the first Northern, the second Eastern and the third Western.

Waft, O winds, bring on (lover's name) sorrow and dreariness so that without me s/he may not be able to spend a day nor pass an hour!

and yet another...

I, (conjuror's name), stand still, uttering a blessing.

I go from the room to the door, from the courtyard to the gates.

I go out into the open field to the Eastern side. On the Eastern side stands an izba (cottage). In the middle of the izba lies a plank, under the plank is the longing.

The longing weeps. The longing sobs, waiting to get at the white light. The white light, the fair sun, waits, enjoys itself, and rejoices.

So may s/he wait, longing to get to me, and having done so, may he enjoy himself and rejoice! And without me let it not be possible for him to live, nor to be, nor to eat, nor to drink; neither by the morning dawn, nor by the evening glow.

As a fish without water, as a babe without its mother, without its mother's milk, cannot live, so may s/he, without me, not be able to live, nor to be, nor to eat, nor to drink, nor by the evening glow; neither every day, not at mid-day, nor under the many stars, nor together with the stormy winds. Neither under the sun by day, nor under the moon by night.

Plunge thyself, O longing, gnaw thy way, O longing, into his/her breast, into his/her heart; grow and increase in all his/her veins, in all his bones, with pain and thirst for me!

- from *"Songs of the Russian People"*, William Ralston

- For Protection

Prayer: Recite the following prayer to Zorya:

Oh Virgin, unsheath your father's sacred sword.
Take up the breastplate of your ancestors.
Take up your powerful helmet.
Bring forth your steed of black.
Fly forth to the open field,
There, where the great army with countless weapons is found.
Oh, Virgin, cover me with your veil.
Protect me against the power of the enemy

Against guns and arrows, warriors and weapons;
Weapons of wood, of bone, of copper, of iron and steel.

(from The New Larousse Encyc. of Mythology)

- For Happiness

Recite the following to a flame:

"Dear Father, tsar fire,
Be gentle and kind to me.
Burn away all my aches & pains, tears & worries."

- To Have Lost Animals Return

The following letter is written on three pieces of birchbark:

I am writing to the forest tsar and forest tsaritsa with their small children; to the earth tsar and earth tsaritsa with their small children; to the water tsar and water tsaritsa with their small children. I inform you that (name of owner inserted) has lost a (color mentioned) horse (or cow, or other animal - distinctive marks should be given). If you have it send it back without delaying an hour, a minute, a second. If you do not comply with my wish, I shall pray against you to the great God, Weles and tsaritsa Alexandra.

One letter is fastened to a tree in the forest, the second buried in the earth and the third thrown with a stone into water. After this, the lost animal is supposed to return by itself.

- To Bring the Rain

If rain was needed a virgin girl was chose, one not yet old enough to conceive whose mother was no longer able to conceive. Naked, yet draped all over with flowers, she would whirl around and around while

singing invocations to Perun. All the while she would be "watered" by the surrounding women.

- To Win a Fist Fight

Recite while holding a stone from a gravesite:

"I summon to my aid the forest spirits from the forest and the water spirits from the water: and you, forest spirits of the forest, water spirits of the water, come to my aid against my opponent fist-fighter, and enable me to defeat my opponent fist-fighter with my own fists. And you, forest spirits from the forest and water spirits of the water, take the rock from this corpse and place it on the hands, or head, or feet of my opponent fist-fighter...and just as this dead man is heavy from the earth and rock, so too may my opponent fist-fighter be heavy to lift his hand against me, and may my opponent become weak in the arms and the legs, and blind in the eyes from my verdict until the time I remove it."

- To Guard against Slander

A zagovorui, or runespell, against Slander:

O righteous Sun! Do thou in my foes, my rivals, my opposers, in the powers that be, and public officials, and in all people of good mouth and heart, parch up evil thoughts and deeds, so that they may not rise up, may not utter words baleful for me!

- Spoiling

"Spoiling" is a Slavic term for cursing. The following spells are posted here only for research purposes:

- To Cause One to Wither

Dirt from the victim's footprint was collected and placed in a little bag, or a lock of the victim's hair was coated with clay. Either of these were hung inside the chimney. As the dirt or clay dried out, so, supposedly, did the victim.

- To Cause Death

Bareheaded and wearing only an undergarment, the magick user would circle the property of his or her victim's yard with a burning candle. The candle was then broken in two and turned upside-down.

Eggs (termed "white swans" for this purpose) and/or bread were brought to the gravesite of a known criminal in exchange for some soil from their grave which was removed while saying "As this corpse has died unrepentant, so may you too die, unrepentant."

Divinations

Tatyana curiously gazes
At the prophetic waxen mold,
All eager in its wondrous mazes
A wonderous future to behold.
Then from the basin someone dredges,
Ring after ring, the player's pledges,
And comes her ringlet, they rehearse
The immemorial little verse:
"There all the serfs are wealthy yeomen,
They shovel silver with a spade;
To whom we sing, he shall be made
Famous and rich!" But for ill omen
They take this plaintive ditty's voice;
Koshurka (kitten) is the maiden's choice

- *Pushkin, from Eugene Onegin V.8, translated by Walter Arndt.*

Podbljudnaja - (Pohd-blyood-NIE-ya) - "Under the Plate"

This form of divination should be done on Koliada and New Year's only. Each person takes a ring off their finger and places it into a bowl filled with water. A plate covers the bowl and songs are sung over it. At the end of each song, a ring is pulled out and the fate that the song is believed to apply to the owner of that ring.

Some traditional Podbljudnaja:

Podbljudnaja that fortell a wedding:

The ring was rolling
Along the velvet
The ring rolled up
To the ruby.
For one who takes it out
For her it will come true,

For her it will come true,
She will not escape

A Maple entwined with a birch
It did not untwine - Lada, Lada
Whoever takes it out
For her it will come true,
All will be well.

A little cat is sitting
In a wicker basket
She is sewing a towel.
She will marry the tom
For whom we are singing
All will be well.

Podbljudnaja that fortell wealth:

A rooster was digging
on a little mound of Earth
The rooster dug up
A little pearl.
For whoever gets it
All will be well.

A calyx is floating from somewhere beyond the sea.
To wherever it floats, there it will blossom.
Whoever takes it out - For her will it come true.
She will not escape - glory!

To predict a journey:

The sleigh stands, ready to go - Glory!
In it the cushions are all arranged - Glory!
It stands near the forest, waiting to go for a ride - Glory!
To whom we sing this song, all will be well.
It will come true, she will not escape - Glory.

To predict widowhood:

I sat - by a window
I waited - for my beloved
I could no longer wait
I fell asleep.
In the morning - I awoke
I suddenly - realized
I am a widow.
To whom we sing, all will come true.

To fortell death:

Death is walking down the street
Carrying blini* on a plate
Whoever takes the ring out
For her it will come true.
She will not escape - Glory.

*(*blini is a traditional food offering to the dead)*

This podbljudnaja is traditionally sung at midnight on New Year's eve and also predicts death.

A dandy once took a very sharp axe - Lileju
The dandy went out - into the wide courtyard.
The dandy began - to hew some boards
To nail the wood - into an oaken coffin
Whomever this song reaches,
For her it will come true
She will not escape

If you choose to write your own songs for this divination ritual, you may want to use some traditional symbolism. Bread, grain, millet or rye symbolize harvest, fulfillment and material security. Gold, silver, jewels, pearls, fur and expensive cloth symbolize luxury and wealth. Doing things together like eating, drinking, working, standing or sitting together symbolize love and happy marriages. The songs are usually short as one song quickly follows another and traditionally, each refrain ends with a praise word such as glory.

Songs taken from Reeder: Russian Folk Lyrics.

A Russian flower divination resembles the "He loves me" rhyme. They say:

Lyubit, Ne lyubit, Plyunit, Potseluyet, K sertsu prizhmet, K chertu poshlet, Dorogoj nazovet

(S/He loves, doesn't love me, Spits on me, Kisses me, Hugs me to his/her heart, Sends me to the devil, Calls me his/her dear one.)

If a thread was hanging from one's clothing, they would wrap it around the finger while reciting the alphabet. Whatever letter you stop on when the thread is fully wrapped is the initial of the future spouse. The color of the thread is also important. If the thread is pale, the spouse will be blonde, if dark, the spouse will be a brunette.

Wax Divinations - before Koljada, wax was melted and after it cooled, or was dropped into water, special attention was given to its shape. A coffin meant death to the inquirer, a ring meant marriage, etc. Sometimes this method was used by dropping molten lead into the water instead of wax.

New Year's Divinations -

Divination rituals that occurred on New Year's Eve were considered especially powerful if one followed certain rules. No crosses or belts could be worn and no blessings could be asked.

It was customary on New Year's Eve for a girl to back up to the bathhouse door with her hem over the back of her head (rear-end exposed) and ask a question of the Bannik. If a cold touch or scratch from his claw was felt, it meant no. If a warm touch or caress was felt, it meant yes.

This same divination could be used if one put their hand in-between the wood of the bathhouse.

If you looked into the mirror in the steam bath on New Years eve, you would see the face of your future husband, or if you slept on a log, you would see his face in a dream.

If you caught the moons reflection in a mirror, your future spouses name would also be revealed there.

Remedies

These are actual remedies that were used, taken from various sources. Whether or not they work, I could not tell you.

- Alcoholism:

a zagovorui, or rune spell, for alcoholism:

Dost thou hear O Sky (Svarog)? Dost thou see, O Sky? O ye bright Stars! Descend into the marriage-cup, and in my cup let there be water from a mountain spring. O thou fair Moon! Bow down to my klyet (store-room). O thou free Sun! Dawn upon my homestead. O ye Stars! Deliver me,(insert name here), from drink! O Sun, draw me from drink!

- Colds:

I think Babci was just trying to keep me quiet with this one when I was little!

Into a cup of hot tea add fresh lemon juice, honey and a shot of jezynowka (Polish cherry brandy). Sip. Have no more than 2 cups, unless you WANT to get drunk.

- Coughs:

Upon retiring, have a glass of hot beer.

Add some honey to a grated radish and eat along with any of the radish juices.

- Crankiness:

"When your child is mysteriously cranky, has a strange unyielding headache, or can't sleep after a day out or around people, either the child has been jinxed or exposed to negative energy/forces

The child's mother should take the lower left corner of her skirt, apron, or shirt with her right hand and wipe the child's face several times in a

clockwise direction. Afterwards, give the child some water and put it to bed.

This spell is normally used for young children but it works at any age. My 70 year old grandma did it to my 50 year old mother a little while ago and it worked."

- Fever:

Rub vodka on your chest and feet, put some mustard powder in a pair of woollen socks and put them on. Drink a mixture of milk, honey, baking soda, and vodka and go to sleep.

Before bed, stand naked, wearing only a woolen hat, with your feet up to the ankles in hot water and drink a large mug of tea with honey, jam, and at least 100g (about 2 1/2 shots) of vodka.

- Hemmorhoids:

Put two liters of milk and four large onions in a large covered clay pot and slowly heat it in the oven. Remove the pot from the oven, replace the cover with a toilet seat or similar object and sit on it. Steam yourself for a while and then rub the afflicted area with vaseline.

- Hiccups:

Rub a mixture of vinegar and mustard on your tongue. Hold for two minutes and then rinse.

- Illness, general:

a zagorvorui, or runespell, for healing:

Mother Zorya of morning and evening and midnight! as ye quietly fade away and disappear, so may both sicknesses and sorrows in me, (insert name), quietly fade and disappear - those of the morning, and of the evening, and of midnight!

- Pain:

"For unexplainable pain in the arm, hand, or wrist which nothing seems effective on...."

Take a piece of thread (red is best...I don't know why but I can ask if you like) and tie it around your wrist. It should ease the pain if it doesn't get rid of it all together."

- Sore Throat:

Mix one cup vodka, one cup oil and the juice of one lemon. Gargle with it and then drink.

Make a juice of mashed onion and water. Gargle.

Breathe heavily on a frog for about 8 to 10 minutes. The frog's heart should start beating rapidly and the sickness should pass entirely to the frog. You should feel instant relief. The less faint of heart should put the frog directly into the mouth and hold it for a couple of minutes.

- Stuffy nose:

Mash several cloves of garlic and put them in a pot of boiling water. Stand over the pot and breathe through your nose for five minutes.

- Tickling, To proof a child against:

Roll dough over the child's back, then bake a flat cake of that dough and feed it to the dog.

- Toothache:

Place a piece of salo (a slab of fat) in the opposite side of the mouth from the painful region. Hold for about 20 minutes.

A zagovorui, runespell, for a toothache:

O thou young Moon! Test the dead and the living: the teeth of one who is dead, do they ache? Not at all ache the teeth of one dead, whose bones are tanned, whose teeth are mute....Grant, O Lord, that the teeth of me, _____, may become mute and never ache.

This zagovorui must be recited three times while biting the stone doorway of a church:

As this stone is firm, so may my teeth also become stony - harder than stone

This supposedly goes back to pre-Christian times and the stone was originally the stone of an axe or hammer, symbols of Perun.

- Ulcer:

Mix two raw eggs with a shot of vodka and drink 20 minutes before breakfast.

- Upset stomach:

Add salt and pepper to two shots of vodka and drink.

- Warts: My grandmother's remedy -

Cut a piece from a potato (be careful that it does not include an "eye") rub the cut part on the wart and then bury the piece of potato. As the potato dissolves, so will the wart.

Omens & Superstitions

Never touch a person or shake their hand over the threshold. If you don't wait until they are inside, you will not see them again for seven years and risk angering the Domovoi to boot.

It is unlucky to sit at the corner of a table.

If the cat is cleaning herself it means that company is coming.

If you whistle inside, you risk losing all your money.

Never begin a new project on a Friday.

If you compliment a person on their appearance or their baby's health, you must either knock unpolished wood or spit three times over the left shoulder lest the fairy's take them.

Never shave or cut your hair when a family member is in danger.

Never cut your hair while pregnant or the umbilical cord will wrap around ur baby's neck.

When giving flowers, give only odd numbers of flowers. Even numbers are for the dead.

If a bird hits the window, someone will die.

If you accidently step in poop or a bird poops on you, you will win money.

If you break a mirror, you can run the pieces under water to counteract the bad luck.

Never show a newborn baby to a stranger until it is at least 40 days old.

Do not put keys on a table. You'll lose money.

Tatyana, in her heart obeying
The simple folkways of the past,
Believed in dreams and in soothsaying
And heeded what the moon forecast.
Weird apparitions would distress her,
And any object could impress her
With some occult significance
Or dire foreboding of mischance.
A preening pussycat, relaxing

Upon the stove with lick and purr,
Was an unfailing sign to her
That guests were coming; or a waxing
Twin-horned young moon that she saw ride
Across the sky on her left side
Would make her tremble and change color;
Each time a shooting star might flash
In the dark firmament, grow duller
And burst asunder into ash:
All flustered, Tanya would be seeking,
While yet the fiery spark was streaking,
To whisper it her heart's desire.
But if she met a black-robed friar
At any place or any season,
Or if from out the meadow swath
A fleeing hare should cross her path,
She would be frightened out of reason,
And filled with superstitious dread,
See some calamity ahead.

*- Pushkin - from Eugene Onegin V.5 & V.6 - translated by
Walter Arndt.*

Slavic Pagan Holidays

Winter

Koljada (Kohl-YAH-da) - The Winter Solstice.

Most agree that the word comes from the Roman word "calendae" which meant the first 10 days of any month. Some, however, believe the word is derived from the word "Kolo" or wheel - much like the word "Yule" is an Anglo-Saxon word for wheel. The holiday's original name may have been "Ovsen". The holiday was filled with revelry. Processions of people masked like animals and cross-dressers roamed the village. Often they were accompanied by a "goat" - a goat's head, either real or (usually) made and stuffed on a stick. The person holding the "goat" would be covered by a blanket to play the part. Sometimes a child on horseback - symbol of the reborn sun - would accompany them; the horse was often played by two young men in horses costumes. One of the wenders would carry a spinning solar symbol, internally lit by a candle, on a stick. Later, after Christianity entered the scene, the spinning "sun" became a star.

This unusual group would stop and sing Koljada songs from house to house. These songs usually included invocations to "Koljada", the god or goddess of the holiday, praises and good wishes, requests for handouts and threats for refusal. The handouts, also called "koljada", usually took the form of little pastries or "korovki" shaped like cows or goats. They were sometimes just in the shape of the animals head, but often were described as having "horns and tails and everything." The korovki were traditionally baked by the old people in the house, the grandmothers and grandfathers.

The "tricks" played by those who were not rewarded could be brutal: Garbage might be brought from all over the village and piled in front of the offending host's gate, their gate might be torn off and thrown in the nearest water or livestock could be led off.

In Poland one "caroller" would carry a bundle of hazel twigs and after receiving koljada, would gently hit his host/ess with a small stick loudly

wishing "Na shchestia, na zdравia, na tot Noviy Reek" (happiness, health, in the coming New Year). A small twig was left with the farmer who nailed it above his door for wealth and protection.

Bonfires were sometimes lit and the dead ancestors asked inside to warm themselves. Mock funerals were held where a person pretending to be dead was carried into the house amidst both laughter and wailing. Sometimes even a real corpse was used. One young girl would be chosen and tradition made her kiss the "corpse" on the lips. If a pretend corpse was used, the person would leap up after being kissed - a symbol of rebirth.

Holiday foods included kut'ia, a traditional funeral food consisting of whole grains and pork. The whole grain is a universal symbol - "the seed as the mysterious container of new life" (*J A Propp p.8*)

On the last day of the koljada season in Poland, all the unmarried men of the village would get together to "wend" for oats. It was impossible to get rid of them with a scoop of oats; it took at least 7 liters. The farmer would keep a sharp eye on his grain that night, because otherwise the carollers would steal it as part of the evening's custom. With the money from the sold oats the men would hire musicians and organize a large dance party in the village during the pre-Spring festival period.

If you don't give us a tart - We'll take your cow by the horns.
If you don't give us a sausage - We'll grab your pig by the head.
If you don't give us a bliny - We'll give the host a kick.

- Reeder, p.85

New Year's Day - originally on the Winter Solstice, New years was considered the most powerful time for divination. A traditional New Year's divination was called podbljunaja (powd-blyew-NIE-ya) or "under the plate". Details of this divinatory system may be found on the Slavic Magick page. Pork was traditionally eaten at this time.

Spring

Strinennia - Mar 9th. Clay images of larks were made, their heads smeared with honey and stuck with tinsel. They were carried around the village amidst the singing of vesnjanki, invocations to Spring. Birds were thought to bring the Spring with them upon their return. Children were given pastries shaped like birds to toss into the air while saying "The rooks have come.". Sometimes the pastries were tied to poles in the garden. The baking of these pastries was to ensure that the birds would return.

Oh little bee, Ardent bee!
Fly out beyond the sea.
Get out the keys, the golden keys.
Lock up winter, cold winter
Unlock summer, warm summer.
Warm summer -
A summer fertile in grain.

- *Reeder, p 92*

Maslenica (Mah-sweh-NEET-sa) "Butter woman" from the word Maslo which means butter. Originally it was practiced at the Vernal Equinox but later was celebrated the week before lent. Maslenica (mah-sweh-NEET-sa), sometimes called Shrovetide, was a celebration of the returning light, a time of games and contests, especially horse racing, fist fights, sliding and mock battles. It was a time for protection and purification rituals and a time of gluttony, obscenity and dissolution.

At the beginning of the festivities a life-sized corn doll would be made as a personification of the holiday. The doll would be invoked and welcomed by the name Maslenica. Sometimes a drunken peasant was chosen, instead, to represent Maslenica. He would either be dressed in woman's clothing or in a costume sewn all over with bells. His face would be smeared with soot and he would be seated on a wheel resting on a pole within a sledge. Wine and pastries would surround him and as many as could would accompany him in other sledges. Crowds would follow on foot, laughing, dancing and singing ritualsongs. Corn

"Maslenitsas" were also driven around in barrows, wagons or sleighs accompanied by crowds of celebrants.

Many customs honoring the sun were included in the festivities such as the lighting of bonfires, pushing a wheel whose axel pole was a flaming torch about or circling the village on horseback with torches. Farmsteads were also circled at this time, either with a religious icon or with brooms, sweeping around the entire property three times to create a magickal circle which protected against illness and evil spirits.

Traditionally, the house and barn were cleaned and decorated and holiday foods such as bliny (pancakes), kulich (sweet bread) and paskha (pyramid shaped cottage-cheese bread) were prepared. Special loaves were baked and fed to the cattle to guard them from unclean spirits. Kozuli, pastries shaped like cattle, goats, etc. were prepared and eaten to bring on the multiplication of the herds. Eggs were decorated and rolled along the ground in order to transfer the fertility of the egg to the earth. The customary "swinging" which occurred at this time was believed to strengthen the stock and fertility of the villagers as well.

Maslenitsa was considered to be a time for purification. All salt was prepared for the coming year, as salt was used for cleansing and curative purposes. Ritual baths to prepare for the oncoming work in the fields were also taken before sunrise and followed with fumigation in the smoke of the juniper.

Another important part of Slavic ritual is the funeral meal. A huge feast was prepared and brought to the cemetery where it was eaten amidst much wailing and laughter. Food was always left for the dead. In Eastern European ritual, funeral and fertility rites are intertwined. Volos, a god of the herds, is believed by many to be the same god as Veles, an underworld deity.

At the end of the week the Maslenitsa (if a doll was used) was taken to a field outside the village, usually where the winter crops were planted. There it was destroyed, either by being torn apart and thrown into the field or burned. This was the remnant of an earlier cult of a

dying and resurrected God, Volos perhaps, whose death brought life to the fields. The "God" was always destroyed with laughter as such a "death" was seen to bring life. Smaller dolls were also made for individual households which were also torn apart at the week's end and fed to the livestock. This was believed to ensure their fertility and the customary willow branch they were fed was thought to protect them for the entire year to come.

Our Dear Maslenica, dear, leli, dear
Came for a while, for a while, leli, for a while
We thought for seven weeks, seven weeks, leli, seven weeks
But Maslenica stayed only seven days, seven days, leli, seven days
And Maslenica deceived us, deceived us, leli, deceived us
To lent she offered a seat, offered a seat, leli, offered a seat
Bitter horseradish she put out, put out, leli, put out
And that horseradish is more bitter than xren, more bitter than xren,
leli, more bitter than xren.

(Traditional Maslenica song - Zemcovskij - xren is a form of horseradish also)

It is interesting to note that in this song, the singer laments that he is betrayed by Maslenica because she gives up her seat to Lent and gives him bitter things (to eat). In the Slavic traditions, The periods directly before and after Easter were filled with customs, rituals and celebrations although Easter itself came and went without much ado. This is supposedly due to the Orthodox Priest's successful efforts to keep the day of Easter, itself free of pagan influence. The holiday of Maslenitsa lasted a week and marked the beginning of the Slavic Spring Festivals which continue through to the Summer Solstice, Kupalo.

Krasnaja Gorka - "beautiful" or "red" hillock - the Sunday after Easter. In Russia, a woman holding a red egg and round loaf of bread would face East and sing a spring song which the chorus then took up. Afterward, a doll representing Marzena, grandmother Winter, was carried to the edge of the village and thrown out or destroyed. Xorovods, Russian circle dances, started on this day as well as were

Spring game songs; A female performer would enter the center of a circle and mime the sowing, pulling, spreading, etc..of the flax all the way up to the spinning. She and all those in the circle would sing:

Turn out well, turn out well, my flax.

Turn out well, my white flax. *

This is a form of sympathetic magic to ensure a bountiful flax harvest.

(* - *Reeder - Russian Folk lyrics*)

Radunica - (Rah-doo-NEET-sa) The second Tuesday after Easter. This holiday was originally known as Nav Dien (Day of the Dead) and was a bi-annual holiday to celebrate the ancestors. The original dates of these two holidays were probably May eve and November eve - cross-quarter dates. Usually feasting and celebrating occurred in the cemeteries among much ritual wailing. Offerings, often of eggs, were left to the dead.

Ascension - 40 days after Easter. This holiday may have originally fallen on May eve and been tied in with the holiday of Nav Dien. On this day, lark pastries were again baked. After supper, all would rest a while and then take their lark pastries into the rye fields. A prayer would be offered at each side of the field while the larks were tossed into the air and people cried "So that my rye may grow as high". The larks were then eaten.

Village girls customarily imitated the spring bird's song. Songs were sung on opposite ends of the village with one chorus answering the other. When finished, another song would begin in the distance and in this fashion the songs would travel from village to village.

St. Egorij (George) Day - April 23 - George is Greek for "farmer". The first day the flocks are taken to the fields. They were driven out using pussy willows that had been blessed on Palm Sunday. The energy of the willow was thought to be transferred to the animal, or person, being whipped by it. According to an old song;

The pussy willow has brought health

The pussy willow whip beats you to tears

The pussy willow does not beat in vain.

People walk around the fields singing invocations to Egorij begging him to protect the flock from wild animals in the fields and beyond them. These invocations probably originated as prayers to the god Weles, ruler of horned animals, wealth and the underworld. After the flocks left, the entire village would gather together for one solemn moment. Some of the pussy willows were then stuck in the rye fields to give them strength, others were brought home to ensure the flock's return.

St. Egorij is a holiday predominated by men. One ritual for this day consisted of the old village men going down to the river and gathering a stone for every animal in their family's flock. They would then put them in a bag and hang the bag in the courtyard saying

Tsar of the fields, Tsarina of the fields,
Tsar of the forest, Tsarina of the forest,
Tsar of the water, Tsarina of the water,
Protect my flocks, from the evil eye,
From wicked people, from wild beasts,
And from all others.

On the eve of this holiday, young boys and men do a form of trick-or-treating by singing from house to house for food and bestowing blessings upon those who are generous and curses upon those who are not. This door-to-door singing was called "The Labor of St. George."

Cows, give birth to calves. Pigs, give birth to sucklings.
Roosters, stamp your feet. Hens, hatch chickens.
Hostes be good to us. Host, don't be stingy.

If the host and hostess were generous, the singers would usually wish for the hosts and for themselves 200 cows and 150 bulls each. If the host was stingy, he might hear:

Neither a farm, nor a courtyard
Not any chicken feathers
May God grant you cockroaches and bedbugs

Rusal'naia Week - (Roo-sahl-NIE-ya) originally just after May eve, this holiday was later celebrated on the 7th or 8th week after Easter. The holiday was possibly named after the Roman holiday Rosalia. During this week the Rusalki, female water spirits, were said to leave the rivers and go to the forests and fields. Birches were considered a source of vegetative power and homes were decorated with birch branches, both inside and out.



On the Wednesday of this week, girls would go into the forests and choose and mark the birches. The following day, Semik, bringing fried eggs (omelettes) & beer, they would decorate the chosen trees with flowers. One special birch would be chosen and "curled". That is, the ends of the twigs would be knotted and twisted to form wreaths. The fried eggs would be placed around it while Semickajas (songs sung only at Semik) were sung. Then the kumit'sja ceremony would be held: The girls would kiss each other through wreaths on the birch tree and swear an oath of friendship. This spell was believed to ensure that they would be friends for life or, "kumas".

This tree was sometimes left in the forest, and sometimes cut down and brought into the village. No males were allowed to touch the tree. The tree might be dressed in woman's clothing and/or stripped of its lower branches. Sometimes this tree was set up in a home as a guest. If left in the forest, its tip might be bent down and tied to the grass, ensuring that its sacred energy would return to the earth. Girls would sing and dance the xorovod around the tree.

Banishings of the Rusalki were performed during Rusal'naia. Dolls of them were made and ritually torn apart in the grain fields.

On the Sunday of this week, girls would perform memorial rites on the graves of their parents and afterward divide eggs among their family members. Then the sacred birch tree was removed from the village and tossed into a local river or stream. Girls would take wreaths from their heads and toss them in after the birch. If their wreath floated off, love was to come from the direction the wreath floated toward. If the wreath sunk, the girl was supposed to die within the following year. If it circled, misfortune would come.

I, a young girl, am going to the quiet meadow, the quiet meadow.
To the quiet meadow, to a little birch.
I, a young girl, will pick a blue cornflower,
A little blue cornflower, a cornflower.
I, a young girl, will weave a wreath.
I, a young girl, will go to the river.
I will throw the wreath down the river.
I will think about my sweetheart
My wreath is drowning, drowning.
My heart is aching, aching.
My wreath will drown.
My sweetheart will abandon me.

- *Reeder, p.101*

Semik - (Seh-MEEK) the Thursday of Rusal'naia Week. This was the day to perform funerals for all those who had not yet been properly buried.

Semik songs (*Semikjas*):

While selecting the birch:

Don't rejoice oak trees. Don't rejoice green ones.

Not to you are the girls coming. Not to you, the pretty ones.

Not to you are they bringing pies, pastries, omelettes.

Yo, Yo Semik and Trinity!

Rejoice birches! Rejoice green ones!

To you the girls are coming!

To you they are bringing pies, pastries, omelettes.

Yo, yo Semik and Trinity.

While curling the birch:

Oh birch, so curly, curly and young,

Under you, little birch, no poppy is blooming.

Under you, little birch, no fire is burning -

No poppy is blooming -

Pretty maids are dancing a xorovod,

about you little birch, they are singing songs.

Summer

Kupalo - (Coo-PAH-loh) - the Celebration of the summer solstice.

Kupalo comes from the verb kupati which means "to bathe" and mass baths were taken on the morning of this holiday. On this holiday, the sun supposedly bathed by dipping into the waters at the horizon. This imbued all water with his power and therefore, those who bathed on this day would absorb some of that power.

Fire was sacred to the ancient Slavs and fires were never allowed to go out. In the sanctuaries, fires were tended by the priests and in the home, guarded by the mother. On the eve of Kupalo, however, all fires were extinguished and rekindled with "new fire". New fire was created by friction. A peg was rotated within a hole in a block of wood made especially for this purpose. In some areas, animals were sacrificed on Kupalo's eve and a feast prepared of them entirely by men was shared as a communal meal. Bonfires were lit and couples jumped over them.

It was considered a good omen and prediction of marriage if a young couple could jump the flame without letting go of each other's hand. Cattle was chased through the fires in order to ensure their fertility.

At the beginning of the celebration, a straw image of "Kupalo" was made of straw, dressed like a woman and placed under a sacred tree. At the end of the festival, the effigy was ritually destroyed by burning, "drowning" or being ripped apart. Afterward, elaborate mock funerals were held. Two people pretending to be a priest and deacon would cense the figure, with a mixture of dung and old shoes burning over coals in a clay pot. The funeral was carried out among much wailing and laughter.

Kupalo was considered the most powerful time to gather both magical and medicinal plants. It was considered the only time to gather the magical fire-fern. On Kupalo's eve, the flower of the fern was said to climb up the plant and burst into bloom. Anyone who obtained it would gain magical powers including the ability to find treasures. To gather the herb, one must draw a magic circle around the plant and ignore the taunts of the demons who would try to frighten them off. Kupalo marked the end of the "Spring festival" period which started in the beginning of March.

Perun's Day - July 20th. On this day a human sacrifice was chosen by ballot. There is record of a viking's son being chosen and the viking refusing to give him up. Both father and son were killed as a result. This day was considered a "Terrible" holiday. The sacrifice was seen as necessary to placate the God and keep him from destroying the crops with late summer storms. According to Dr. Buhler in *De Diis Samogitarum*, the prayer uttered by the officiating priest went as follows:

Perkons! Father! Thy children lead this faultless victim to thy altar. Bestow, O Father, thy blessing on the plough and on the corn. May golden straw with great well-filled ears rise abundantly as rushes. Drive away all black haily clouds to the great moors, forests, and large deserts, where they will not frighten mankind; and give sunshine and rain, gentle falling rain, in order that the crops may thrive!"

A bull was also sacrificed and it was eaten as a communal meal.

Autumn

St. Ilia's Day - August 2nd. In the Ukraine, this day marked the beginning of autumn. It was said "Until dinner, it's summer. After dinner, it's autumn." Ilia is closely related to Perun and this was most probably one of Perun's holy days. After this day, no swimming was allowed as Ilia will curse anyone he finds swimming after his feast day.

Harvest - Harvest Holidays occurred anywhere from Aug 2 to the autumn equinox and lasted from 4 days to a week. Various rituals center around the reaping and threshing of the sheaves. The Harvest Holidays of the Slavs were far more practical than ritual. The songs sung at this time are almost completely concerned with the work at hand or praises for the host and hostess or the one who brought the cup. Work parties called *tolo'ka* or *pomoi'* were formed and these travelled from farm to farm until all the work was done. The host was obligated to provide the day's food and entertainment.

Yablochnyi/Medovoy Spas - or "Apple/Honey Saviour. This is a cross-quarter holiday between the summer solstice and the fall equinox. It celebrates the wealth of the harvest when fruit and honey are ready to be gathered. The first fruits and honey picked on this day and the bee hives were blessed.

Zaziuki - on or around Aug 7, might be the same holiday as Spas. Particular attention was paid to the first sheaf (*zazhinochnyi* or *zazhinnyi*) which was usually brought into the house and threshed separately. Sometimes it was blessed and then mixed back in with the seed. The end of the harvest celebration was called *Dozinki*. The last sheaf (the *dozhinochnyi* or *rotzhinnyi*) was also brought in the house where it was either decorated with flowers and ribbons or dressed in woman's clothing. It was then placed in the entrance corner of the home or near any religious icons until Oct 1, when it was fed to the cattle. Sometimes the last sheaf ceremony was merged with the ritual surrounding a small patch of field that was left uncut. The spirit of the harvest was said to precede the reapers and hide in the uncut grain. This small patch was referred to as the "beard" of Volos, the God of

animals and wealth. The uncut sheaves of wheat in "Volos' beard" were decorated with ribbons and the heads were bent toward the ground in a ritual called "The curling of the beard". This was believed to send the spirit of the harvest back to the Earth. Salt and bread, traditional symbols of hospitality were left as offerings to Volos' beard.

Mokosh Day - Mokosh was honored on the Friday between Oct 25 and Nov 1. She was given offerings of vegetables. One reference fixes this date on Oct 28.

Slavic Gods & Goddesses

Magic permeated every aspect of our ancestor's lives. The fields, forests, barn, bath and hearth were all ruled by spectral beings, sometimes good, sometimes horrible. Each flame and river was a goddess or god, each flower and stone a sentient being. The spirits of the dead too, filled the Slavic world. Life-draining wampyr, trees housing the souls of the departed, fairy-folk and ancestral spirits were an integral part of life, demanding respect and often, sacrifice. The Pagan Slav spent his entire existence tightly wrapped in a dark cloak of magic, mystery, and sometimes, terror. The spirits, after all, are always watching.



Temple of Swiantowid from the archives of Gavin Bone, Janet & Stewart Farrar

This page is far from complete as only one or two descriptions are being added at a time. With such a rich collection of Deities and

Spirits in the Slavic tradition, this page should soon grow to a disproportionately large size. Highlighted entries link to images and stories.

Fairies, Spirits and Minor Deities

• **Bannik** (BAHN-neeck)

Bath house spirit. Slavic bathhouses were like saunas with an inner steaming room and an outer room for changing. They were dark and frightening and like many scary places, were considered perfect for divinations. They were also the place most often used for child-bearing. No newborn was left there long, though, lest the fairies would steal him. No Christian icons were allowed in the bath house, neither, as they may offend the it's true occupant - the Bannik. It was customary in some places to offer every third firing of the sauna, or sometimes the fourth to the Bannik. One did not want to disturb him while bathing, though, or he might just throw hot water on them. Other times he would use his sharp claws to flay his victim alive. Besides a firing of the sauna, he liked offerings of soap, fir branches, and a water. The Bannik usually takes on the appearance of a member or friend of the family; so if you ever see someone you know in the bathroom, and find out later that they weren't there.

• **Bereginy** - Byginki in Polish (boo-GIN-kee)

Traditionally "covens" of old women performed the rituals and sacrifices for these river bank nymphs. Byginki means "little Goddess". They were said to steal human babies and leave behind changelings called Odmience in Polish, Oborotni in Russian.

These spirits were the original spirits of life and predate the sky deities. They are the forerunners of the Rusalki.

• **Bolotnyi** - Bagnica in Polish (bahg-NEETS-ah)

from "boloto" or "bagnu" - swamp. Female bog spirit

• **Dogoda** (doh-GOH-da)

The gentle West wind.

• **Domawiczka** (Doh-mah-VEETCH-kah)

female Domovoi or wife of the Domovoi. May be the same as the Kikimora. There are very few reports on this spirit, but they usually involve her rewarding anyone who bathes or finds her baby.

• **Domovoi** - Domowije in Polish (doh-moh-VEE-yeh)

Male house spirits from "domu" -home. The Domovik usually lives in the attic, behind the stove, under the threshold or in the stables or cattle barn. He is thought to be responsible for all domestic prosperity and tranquility and finish chores when family members forget. He will howl and moan to warn of approaching trouble, and pull hair to warn a woman in danger of abuse from a man. He can be heard laughing if good times are ahead, and if you hear him strumming a comb, there is a wedding in the future. The Domovoi should be fed nightly or he may cause trouble, much like a poltiergeist. Usually, if neglected, he will simply leave. To attract a domovoi, put on your finest clothing, go outside and say "Dedushka Dobrokhhot (grandfather well-wisher), come live with us and tend the flocks."

Special care was taken to only obtain pets and farm animals in the Domovoi's favorite color. Each new horse was introduced formally to the Domovoi for the spirit took especially good care of the animals he liked but tormented the ones he didn't.

When a new house was built, the owner would put a piece of bread down before the stove went in, to attract the domovoi. When a person moved, the coals from the stove were taken with them and the formal invitation "Domovoi, Domovoi, don't stay here. Come with our family" was recited to ensure that the Domovoi came along to the new home. Salted bread, wrapped in a white cloth will appease the domovoi as will putting clean white linen in his favorite room - an invitation to eat with the family. You can also hang your old shoes in the yard to brighten the Domovik's mood. The domovik usually resembles a male head of household, living or dead. This supports the belief that the Domovik is a remnant from the times of ancestral worship. He can be seen if you view him through a harrow or horse collar. Otherwise, if he shows himself, it is usually to warn of death.

He, like the Banshee, can be heard weeping when death approaches a member of the household.

• **Dvorovoi** - Russian

Male yard spirits from "dvor" - yard. Like the domovoi, he usually resembles the male head of household and has preferences as to the color of pets and livestock. He is usually malicious and sometimes, but not often, deadly. He is appeased by placing a shiny object, slice of bread and piece of sheep's wool in the stables while saying "Master Dvorovik, I offer you this gift in gratitude. Please look after the cattle and feed them well." If he is completely out of control he is punished in the following way: The head of household wove a three-tailed whip from a corpse's shroud, dipped it in wax, ignited it and whipped all corners of the cattle shed and manger, hoping to beat the spirit into submission.

• **Eretik** - (EH-reh-teek), erestun, eretica, eretnik.

"heretic" This later term for the upyr is due to the belief that heretics returned from the dead as evil spirits. This belief was considered responsible for the brutality and hysteria surrounding the medieval Russian campaign against heretics. The eretik usually returns from the grave to devour people, the eretsun is usually a living vampire created when the soul of a sorcerer possesses and revives the body of one on the brink of death. The eretica usually causes one to wither by the power of her eye. The eyes of the dead, in Slavic belief, could lure one into the grave. That is why it was so important to close the eyes of the newly deceased.

• **Kikimora** (kee-kee-MOHR-ah) or Shishimora

female house spirit who usually lives in the cellar or behind the stove. She comes out at night to spin and will look after the housework and the chickens if the home is well tended. If the household is a sloppy one she will wine, whistle and tickle the children at night. She is sometimes married to the domovik. To appease an angry Kikimora, you should wash all your pots and pans in a fern tea. She appears as an average woman with hair down (Slavic women always kept their heads covered) or sometimes with chicken feet. She would occasionally appear, spinning, to one about to die.

• **Kurinyi bog** (kur-EEN-yee book)

"Chicken God". Usually a round fieldstone with a hole in the middle in the chicken yard. This "deity" was supposed to protect chickens from the domovoi, kikumora and dvorovoi.

• **Leszi, Leshii** (LESH-ee)

"Forest lord". From "les" - forest. He often appeared as a peasant, either without a belt or with shoes on the wrong feet. Sometimes he was said to have wings and a tail and be covered in black hair. Many assigned him goat's hooves and horns like Pan. He is usually attributed with green eyes. He could change his size from that of a blade of grass to that of the highest tree. Usually he carried a club to show his rulership over the forest creatures. The Leszi could take the shape of a familiar person and lead you astray with the sound of their voice. Once in his domain, he might tickle his victim to death. He could also become a hare, wolf, bear, raven, pig, horse, rooster, flaming fir tree or even a mushroom. The Leshi is fond of trees and is said to be heard weeping when one is cut down. He is the protector of the forest and all it's creatures. His favorite animal is the wolf - the king of the beasts in Slavic folklore. He is also said to be often seen in the company of bears.

Upon entering a forest, one always uttered a protective spell or prayer lest they run into him. If he got hold of a child, he might replace it with one of his own - who would grow up stupid, with a voracious appetite. If the child returned it would ever afterward be a useless tramp. When the Leshii got his hands on an adult, the adult would return sometimes mute and covered with moss, othertimes unable to concentrate and would act oddly for the rest of their lives.

The Leshii likes offerings of kasha, suet, blini, bread & salt. He is also perfectly happy with a cookie or candy left on a stump or log. To protect yourself against the leshii, you can: turn all your clothing backward and also the collar on your horse, chant "Sheep's mug, sheep's wool" or if you encounter him, get him to laugh. When the leshy could be coaxed to befriend a human, the human often had to make a pact, never again wear a cross or take the eucharist. In return, the Leshy would teach the human the secrets of magic. He is, after all, the Green Man.

In myth and art, the Leshy is often associated with the psychotropic mushroom *Amanita Muscaria*. This may connect him in some way to Shamanic mind-altering techniques.

• **Lesovikha** - (Leh-soh-VEE-kah)

Female Leszi. Sometimes an ugly woman with large breasts, sometimes a naked young girl - or a woman in white as tall as the trees.

• **Lugovik** - (loo-GOH-veek)

Spirit of the meadow. "lugo" - meadow. He should not be confused with the spirit of the grain field.

• **Musail**

The forest tsar, king of the forest spirits. He was associated with the Rowan tree.

• **Ovinnik** - (Oh-VEEN-neek) Russian

Barn spirit from "Ovin" - threshing barn. The Slavic threshing barn was a 2 story building with a furnace entrenched in earth on the first floor and the second floor for drying the grain. It was ruled by the Ovinnik who appeared as a huge disheveled black cat with burning eyes. You could sometimes hear him laughing or barking like a dog from the corner of the barn in which he lived. Offerings of blini or the last sheaf were left to him. If angered, he was known to burn down the barn, usually with it's owner or owner's children in it.

• **Polewik, Polevoi** (poh-LEH-veek)

Field spirit from "pole" - field. He appears as a deformed dwarf with grass for hair and two differently colored eyes. He usually wears either all white or all black and appears at noon or sunset. He will lead astray people who wander in the fields, and if they fall asleep there, give them diseases or ride over them with his horse. If a person falls asleep drunk while on the job, the Polewik might kill them. To appease the Polewik you must put two eggs and a rooster too old to crow in a ditch when no one is looking.

• **Poludnica** - Psežpolnica in Serbian (poh-wood-NEET-sah) Lady Middy, from "Poluden" - noon. She may appear as a 12-yr old girl, a beautiful woman or an old hag but is only seen at the hottest part of a summer's day. She is known to steal children or lead them astray in the fields and Russian mothers threaten their children with "Be good or the Poludnica will get you. She sometimes pulls the hair of farm workers or attacks women who have just given birth and wander out at noontime. She carries a scythe and will stop people in the field to either ask difficult questions or engage them in conversation. If the person fails to answer a question or tries to change the subject of the conversation, the Poludnica will strike them with illness or cut off their head (Poland). The Wends, German Slavs, called her pscipolnitsa and pictured her as carrying shears, a symbol of death. When not in the fields or streets, the Poludnica was said to float on the winds. Marija Gimbutas calls her "sunstroke" personified. It is thought that the Poludnica was the explanation for the dangers of working in the noon heat and remained a part of more recent legend because of her usefulness in scaring children away from valuable crops.

• **Polunocnica** - (Poh-woo-nok-NEET-sah) "lady midnight". A "demon" said to torment children in the middle of the night. May have originally been the third Zorya of midnight

• **Poluvirica** - (Poh-woo-vee-REET-sa) "female half-believer". This forest spirit probably had an earlier name but was later called poluvirica due to the belief that non-Christians returned after death as various home and forest spirits. She appears naked, with a long face, long hanging breasts and three braids of hair down her back. She is usually seen carrying a child.

• **Rarog** - (RAH-rook) Polish, Rarich - Ukranian, Rarach - Czech. This same word for whirlwind may be a late bastardization of the name Swarog. A falcon, hawk or fiery dwarf who turns himself into a whirlwind. From Lusitania to the Urals it was customary to throw a knife into a whirlwind to kill the demon residing within it.

Into this century, Blugarians, Pomeranians and Russians were still being observed casting themselves face down before a whirlwind to ward off illness and misfortune. Russians would do so shouting "a belt around your neck" in order to strangle the rorog.

• **Rusalka** (roo-SAHW-kah)

Female water Spirit. These souls of unbaptized babies or drowned maidens became beautiful pale girls with long flowing hair. They wear white or are sometimes naked, usually with poppies in their hair. They lived in the waters during the winter, but moved to the forests and fields during Rusal'naia week (hence the name) where they could often be seen perched in trees.

A danger to humans, the Rusalki may lead cattle astray, steal children, fall upon people from the treetops and tickle them to death or kidnap young lads to take as lovers. They love to come out in the moonlight to sing and dance the khorovod (circle dance). If they find someone bathing near where they dance, often, they will drown them. Tying ribbons to trees in which they were known to perch is one way to appease them. Linens and scarves, as well as eggs were also left as offerings.

Before these nature spirits were associated with the souls of the "unclean" dead, it is believed they were the spirits who brought moisture to forest and field.

• **Treasurers** pozemne vile - "earth spirits". I have not seen the Slavic name for these creatures anywhere - but in Polish the word for gnome is "karzelek" (kar-ZEH-lek) which these creatures most resemble. Called pchuvushi by the gypsies, they live in mines and underground workings and are the guardians of precious metals, gems & crystals. They are most often helpful toward miners and will lead them to rich veins of ore, protect them from danger and lead them back when they are lost. To evil persons or those who insult them they can be deadly and have been known to send tunnels crashing down upon them or push them into dark chasms. Whistling, hurling rocks into dark chasms and uncovering one's head are actions considered offensive to the Treasurer. He will, however, warn the offender once before taking action. Small insults warrant a pelting with handfuls of

soil. Larger insults are usually repayed with a beating with the Treasurer's cudgel or the forfeit of all the metals mined that day.

They sometimes appear as small naked children, as human miners, as glimmers of light or as salt people. Most often, though, they appear as adults of smaller stature, usually about 2 - 3 feet in height, carrying mining lanterns.

• **Wampyr , Upyr**

Vampires have featured in the legends of all Eastern Europe. The Kashubian region on the Baltic coast of Poland shows records of an exceptionally high belief in Vampires. As recently as the 20th century, attempts were made in Puck and Kartuzy to exhume vampires and render them harmless. People of high facial colour or an excitable nature were supposed to cool slowly on death, retaining a red complexion and flexible limbs, hence the expression "Czerwony jak wieszczy", red as a vampire. Vampires are the souls of the dead. Their physical body does not usually leave the grave. Their victims are their own family members whom they visit, one at a time to drain their life's force. When that family member is dead, they move onto the next. In this manner was evidence of vampire activity discovered. Members of a single family would begin to die, one by one. If the Wampyr had no relatives, they would pull on the church bell, signalling death for all that heard it.

Once a vampire was detected, the first family members to pass on in the string of deaths were exhumed. If one was found to be in extraordinarily good shape, various remedies could be used against them: They might be cut up and their bones re-arranged. A crucifix was often placed under the tongue and sometimes a fishing net or a bag of sand was placed in the coffin. Only one grain of sand could be removed each year, or one knot undone, keeping the vampire away for a very long time.

According to Dion Fortune - a brilliant occultist - the "soul body" lives on for about 3 days after the death of the physical body, then it dies also, forcing the remaining essence of the person to go on. If the person is knowledgeable in the occult, they may choose to remain on earth by latching onto a human victim who is weak or morally corrupt. Through this victim they absorb the life's energy of others. Taking blood is one method of doing this. They cannot take the life's force of

their victim, as he would die, so they possess him and force him to take the blood of others. ...just something to think about.

Upr were originally spirits of death and predate the sky gods.

(much of the information on Polish vampirism was e-mailed to me, the author was unknown - so no credit could be given)

• **Wila, Vily, Vile, Veles** in Lithuanian (VEE-lah)

Female fairy-like spirits who live in the wilderness and sometimes clouds. They were believed to be the spirits of women who had been frivolous in their lifetimes and now floated between here and the afterlife. They sometimes appear as the swans, snakes, horses, falcons, or wolves that they can shapeshift into but usually appear as beautiful maidens, naked or dressed in white with long flowing hair. It is said that if even one of these hairs is plucked, the Wila will die, or be forced to change back to her true shape. A human may gain the control of a Wila by stealing feathers from her wings. Once she gets them back, however, she will disappear.

The voices of the Wila are as beautiful as they, and one who hears them loses all thoughts of food, drink or sleep, sometimes for days. Despite their feminine charms, however, the Wila are fierce warriors. The earth is said to shake when they do battle. They have healing and prophetic powers and are sometimes willing to help mankind. Other times they lure young men to dance with them, which according to their mood can be a very good or very bad thing for the lad. They ride on horses or deer when they hunt with their bows and arrows and will kill any man who defies them or breaks his word. Fairy rings of deep thick grass are left where they have danced which should never be trod upon (bad luck).

Offerings for Wila consist of round cakes, ribbons, fresh fruits and vegetables or flowers left at sacred trees and wells and at fairy caves.

• **The Vodonoj** - Wydjanoj in Polish (vohd-YAH-noy)

Male water spirits from "Woda" - water. Master shape-shifters, they sometimes appear as old men with long green or white beards, sometimes as creatures with huge toes, claws, horns, a tail and burning eyes in a human face. At times they look like fat old bald men and other times like mossy looking fish or flying tree trunks. If he takes on

human form, you will know him by the water oozing from the left side of his coat. Vodonoj are said to live in underwater palaces made from the treasures from sunken ships and often marry Russalki.

They are usually malicious and are believed to lie in wait for human victims and drag them under the water to their death. Dark marks on the bodies' of drowning victims were thought to be bruises from their struggle with the Vodonoj. Retrieving a drowned body was thought to anger the Vodonoj who wanted to keep their spoils. A Vodonik may be appeased by pouring butter into the water or offering him your first fish. To employ the Vodonoj's aid in fishing, throw a pinch of tobacco into the water and say loudly "Here's your tobacco, Lord Vodonik, now give me a fish".

• **Zaltys**

The world serpent who lay coiled at the roots of the great world tree. He was the arch enemy of Perun, at whom Perun seemed to aim much of his lightning.

The Greater Pantheon

• **Baba Jaga** - (BAH-bah YAH-gah) Jezi Baba in Polish (YEH-zhee BAH-bah)

"Grandmother Bony-shanks". A terrifying Witch who flew through the air in a mortar using the pestle as a rudder and sweeping away her tracks with a broom. She lived in a revolving house which stood on chicken legs. Her fence was made of human bones and was topped with skulls. The keyhole was a mouth filled with sharp teeth. She would aid those who were strong and pure of heart and eat those who were not. I see her as a Goddess of death and initiation.

• **Bialobyg** (byah-WOH-book)

White God from "bialy" - white. He is not an actual God. Bialobog is really a title for the reigning sky God. The ancient Slavs believed

that to name something was to invoke it, therefore allegories were made up for whatever deity was being spoken of. Later, he became associated with the Christian God. He was said to appear as an old man with a long white beard, dressed in white and carrying a staff. He appeared only by day and often assisted travellers in finding their way out of dark forests or reapers in the fields.

• **Czarnobyg** (char-NOH-book)

Black God from "czarne" - black. Allegory for any Earth deity, usually Veles. Sometimes used as a nickname for Kolschei. Later, this deity was associated with the Christian Satan, and took on a much more negative aspect.

• **Dazhdbyg** (DAHZHd-book)

giver God from "dati" - to give. The sun personified - may be the same as Khors. This son of Swiantowid emerged from his Eastern palace every morning in a two wheeled, diamond chariot, pulled by twelve fire-breathing horses with manes of gold. He would travel across the heavens each day through his twelve kingdoms (zodiac signs?). Some believed that he emerged each day as a beautiful infant and would age until his death as an old man in the West. Dazhdbyg was also a god of justice who sat seated on a purple throne surrounded by his seven judges (the planets?) The morning and evening stars, seven messengers who fly across the heavens with fiery tails (comets) and sometimes, Mjestjas, his bald uncle - the moon. In some legends, Mjesyas is his wife. He has many children who, according to legend, live among the stars and the Russian people, who call themselves "Dazhdbog's grandchildren."

• **Dzarowit** (jahr-OH-veet) or Jarovit (yar-OH-veet)

God of war. Same root name as Jarilo - youth and springtime. The historian, Herbord, equated him with Mars. His sacred symbol seems to have been the shield. When his temple at Wolgast was destroyed in 1128, those entering it in search of idols found only a gigantic shield. Afraid of the crowds gathering outside, Bishop Otto's men took the shield to hide behind as they exited. On sight of moving shield the

people threw themselves upon the ground thinking that it was the god himself.

Dzarowit is thought to be one of four seasonal aspects of Swiantowid, the aspect ruling Springtime and looking toward the West. He may be related to Jarilo; In Dzarowit's name his priests proclaimed "I am your god who covers the plains with grass and the forests with leaves. The produce of the fields and woods, the young of the cattle and all things that serve man's needs are in my power."

from Gimbutas - "The Slavs" p160

• **Dodola** from "doit" - to give milk. A South Slavic cloud/rain goddess. Rain was thought to be a form of divine milk, sometimes thought to be from Dodola, sometimes the milk of Mokosh. Often, the clouds were perceived to be heavenly women or even cows. In Serbia, the rites of Dodola were kept up until quite recently: During a drought a girl, called Dodola, clad only in greenery and flowers was led through the village while her companions sang "Dodola" songs:

We pass through the village, and the clouds across the sky. We go quicker, and the clouds go quicker, But the clouds have overtaken us and have bedewed the fields.

We go through the village, and the clouds across the sky, and see, a ring drops from the clouds.

- *W.R.Ralston p.227-229*

Afterwards, the girl dances and spins while the woman douse her with water. This practice is thought to convince the heavenly women, clouds, to rain upon the earth, represented by the greenery. The custom has survived in the Polish Dyngus-smigus Easter custom

• **Dziewona** (jeh-VOH-nah)

This huntress was said to run throughout the Carpathian forests. A version of Diana whose legend is probably due to contact with the Romanians.

• **Jarilo** (yah-REE-loh)

The Young Lord - from "jaru" - young, ardent, Springtime, bright, rash. He is a beautiful, barefoot youth wearing a long white robe. His

head is crowned with a wreath of flowers and he rides a white horse. He is seen holding a bunch of wheat ears in his left hand and a skull in his right.

He is a god of youth and sexuality whose symbol was often the phallus. He is a dying and resurrected God whose funeral was celebrated during the rites of Kupalo.

• **Jurata** (yoo-RAH-tah)

A Baltic Sea Goddess who took the form of a mermaid. She was said to live in an underwater palace made of amber polished to look like gold. The mighty Perun fell in love with her beauty, but Jurata had eyes only for a human fisherman. The jealous God of Thunder send down a bolt of lightning which killed both Jurata and her fisherman. When pieces of amber wash ashore, they are said to be pieces of Jurata's ruined palace.

Another version of this myth has her palace and lover destroyed by her own sea father who disapproved of her romance with a mere mortal. During storms it is said one may still here her lamenting over the loss of her lover.(Poland)

• **Khors**

Probably a Sun God, from the Iranian word "khursid". May be the same as Dazhdbog, as there are some references to "Khors Dazhdbog". Others believe him to be a God of the Moon. The root of the word "xorovod" a circle dance, comes from his name.

• **Koljada** (koh-LYAH-da)

a seasonal deity of the winter solstice. See Kupalo below.

• **Kupalo** (koo-PAH-woh)

Although many references are made to this deity either being a water Goddess or another version of the sacrificial god, Jarilo, as best as I can ascertain, Kupalo is a "seasonal" deity of the Summer Solstice sometimes representing the summer sun. It was customary in Slavic culture to create an effigy named after the holiday which they were

welcoming in. At the end of the holiday, the effigy was torn apart and tossed into the fields.

• **Lada** (LAH-dah, WAH-dah)

Lada is the Slavic goddess of love, beauty and domestic harmony. In Russia, when a couple is happily married, it is said they "live in lada", in love. Lad is also a word meaning "peace, union, harmony" as in the proverb "When a husband and wife have lad, they don't require klad (Treasure)" - Ralston, p.105. She is said to reside in the underworld, *vrij*, until the Vernal Equinox, Maslenica, when she returns, bringing the lark and springtime with her. Like Jarilo, Lada is often portrayed as a goddess who is born and dies yearly. Her sacred tree is the lime/linden, supposedly because its leaves are shaped like hearts. As a Slavonian love song goes:

"As the bee is drawn by the linden-bloom (or lime-perfume),
My heart is drawn by thee." - *Leland, p.138*

One story has her married to Swarog who without her could not have created the world. Other sources give her a brother/lover named Lado which would make them divine twins such as Freya and Frey. There is also some mention of her two sons, Lel & Polel, and that of a daughter, Liuli or Lielia. She and her daughter are the Rozhanitsy - Goddesses of a child's fate

• **Lado** (LAH-doh, WAH-doh)

"I fear thee not, O wolf! The god with the sunny curls will not let thee approach. Lado, O Sun-Lado." - W.R.Ralston, p.105

Partner of Lada, Lado is compared to Frey and considered a solar deity by some. In one old chronicle, Lado is called "The God of marriage, of mirth, of pleasure and of general happiness" to who those about to marry offered sacrifice to ensure a good union.

• **Lel**

Son of Lada who, according to Pushkin, is the Slavic version of the Greek Hymen - god of marriage.

• **Marzanna** (mahr-ZAH-nah), Marena

Death and winter personified. the Marzanna appeared as an old woman dressed in white. Annually, an effigy of her was made, escorted to the edge of the village and thrown out. In Poland it was burned then "drowned". This was customary as both the fire of the sun, and the rainwaters were needed for the fertility of the crops.

• **Matka or Mata Syra Zjemiłja** (MAHT-kah SIHR-ah ZHYEM-yah)

"...Matushka Zemlia, Mother Earth, giving suck from bountiful breasts to countless children. When the peasants spoke of Matushka Zemlia, their eyes, usually dull and expressionless, were flooded with love, like the eyes of children who see their mother at a distance." - Shmarya Levin

Moist Mother Earth, seems to have never been personified as other Earth Goddesses were (given human form), but worshipped in her natural form. She may, however, be the same Goddess as Mokosh. Along with the ancestral worship shown in the belief in household spirits, Earth worship was most adamantly clung to despite the Christianizing of the Slavic world. She had absolute sanctity and no one was allowed to strike her or begin farming until her birthgiving time at Maslenica. Memorial day and Assumption day (sorry - I have no dates as of yet) were her name days so no plowing or digging could be done then. Anyone spitting on the Earth had to beg her forgiveness.

Property disputes were settled by calling her to witness the justice of the claims. Oaths and marriages were confirmed by swallowing a clump of earth or holding it on the head. Boundaries were measured while walking them with a clump of earth on the head. Villages were protected from cattle plague & epidemic by plowing a furrow around them to release Mother Earth's power. If no priest was present, sins were confessed to the earth and into the 20th century survived the custom of begging the Earth's forgiveness prior to death.

Earth worship was transferred to the cult of Mary and is why she is such a central part of Slavic Christianity. Unlike other nature deities, Mata Syra Zemlja was never personified as a Goddess with human features.

In the early 1900's to save their village from plague of cholera the older women circled the village at midnight quietly getting the younger women to come out. Without the men's knowledge, they chose nine maidens and three widows who were led out of the village and undressed down to their shifts. The maidens let their hair down, white shawls covered the heads of the widows. They armed themselves with ploughs and items of frightening appearance such as animal skulls. The maidens took up scythes and the entire procession marched around the village, howling and shrieking, while ploughing a deep furrow to release the spirits of the Earth. Any man who came upon the procession was felled by the maidens "without mercy".

• **Mjesjac** (MYEH-syahnts)

The Moon Deity- Sometimes seen as "The Sun's old bald uncle", sometimes his wife who grows older every winter as she moves away from her husband across the sky. In the summer, her youth returns and they are once again re-united and remarried.

• **Mokosz** (MOH-kosh)

Some believe her name means "moisture" and therefore believe her to be the personified version of Mat' Syra ZiemiJa (Moist Mother Earth). Images of her survive to this day in Russian embroidery with arms raised, flanked by two horsemen. She is usually described as having a large head & long arms. In Onolets, she was believed to walk abroad or spin wool at night and if a sheep mysteriously lost its hair, it meant that Mokosh had sheared them.

Mokosh is associated with weaving, spinning, and perhaps that is why she is seen as the Goddess of fate. As all forms of cloth making and embroidery are ritually and magically done, she is seen as the Goddess of Magic. She is also a Goddess of fertility and bounty often portrayed holding a horn or cornucopia. Some sources say she rules over occult knowledge and divination. She is also sometimes referred to as wife of Swarog which would then create a marriage of "heaven" and "earth". Rybakov called her the Great Mother Goddess of the Slavs.

16th century church chronicles contain a question posed to women parishoners "Did you not go to Mokosz?" It was believed that if Mokosz were pleased with the women's offerings, she would help the

women with their laundry. This helps to support some people's theory that Mokosz was actually a water Goddess. As a wandering goddess, she is thought to be tied into the fertility of the earth and rain is sometimes called "Mokosz milk."

Mokosz has survived in the legends of Mokosha - minor female spirits who punish women for spinning on Friday, Mokosh sacred day. Her worship was transferred to that of St. Paraskeva-Friday.

Mokosh's day is Friday - her feast day is on the Friday between Oct 25 and Nov 1. She was given offerings of vegetables which seem to have been the focal point of the day. One reference fixes this date on Oct 28.

• **Perun** - Piyrun in Polish (PYOO-run)

God of thunder from "per, perk or perg" - to strike. He is described as a rugged man with a copper beard. He rides in a chariot pulled by a he-goat and carries a mighty axe, or strely, sometimes a hammer. This axe is hurled at evil people and spirits and will always return to his hand., and of oak. The word strela can mean either axe or arrow, i.e. bolt and strela are hung on houses to protect them from storms, restore milk to cows, ease labor and grant good luck to newborns and newlyweds.

His lighting bolts were believed to pass through the earth to a certain depth and return gradually to the surface in a specific period of time - usually 7 yrs 40days. People, rocks and trees struck by lightning are considered to be sacred for the heavenly fire remains inside them. In 1652 a Lithuanian man was recorded to have eaten the ashes of a leather saddle burned by lightning. He believed his action would save him from illness and give him oracular powers and the ability to conjure fire.

All big trees were sacred to Perun, but he especially loved the oak. There are records of oaks being fenced in as sacred to him. Sacrifices to him usually consisted of a rooster, but on special occasions, bear, bull or he-goat might be killed. The sacrificed animal was then communally eaten as they were seen to be imbued with the power of their patron God. Eating the god's animal to absorb the god's essence is similar to and predates the ritual of Holy Communion.



Perun's arch enemy was the zaltys, a great serpent curled at the base of the world tree. Somehow, this also put him on Weles' blacklist and worship of these two gods had to be kept separate.

Temples to Perun tended to be octagonal and on high ground. An idol of him set outside the castle of Vladimir was said to have a silver head and gold moustache - in some accounts, gold mouth. When Vladimir tore down the idol, it was tied to a horse's tail and dragged to the Dnieper. Amid much weeping it was then tossed in as men with poles made sure that he was not washed ashore or pulled out. It eventually floated down river and was blown onto a sandbank still known as Perun's bank. Perun's holy day is Thursday, his feast day is the 20th of July.

• **Porevit**

from the root "pora" which means midsummer. This God, who was worshiped at Rugen, is thought to be one of the four seasonal aspects of Swiantovid facing South and ruling over summer. A temple of his in Garz was destroyed in the 12th century by Danish King Waldemar.

• **Rod and Rodenica, Rozhenitsa**

Literally creator and creatrix from the root verb, "dati" - to give birth. They seem to be the original "Lord and Lady" who created the universe. Swarog gained control later on, seemingly, with Rod's permission by becoming the Rod. The Rozhenitsa is Lada, his wife. Ceremonial meals in their honor were denounced by the church. These meatless meals usually consisted of cottage cheese, mead, bread and porridge.

Rod survived as a sort of Slavic penate, household god. His worship was at the center of the older ancestor cults. The rozhenitsy (pl.) Lada and Lielia survived as a mother-daughter team of glowing white fairies who visited children at their birth and determined each baby's fate.

• **Ruevit**

From the root "Ruenu" which was the Slavonic autumnal month named for the mating calls of the newly matured animals. Worshipped on the Island of Rugen, this God is thought to be one of the four seasonal aspects of Swiantowid ruling Autumn and facing East.

• **Rugievit**

God of Rugen, may be the same as Ruevit. His temple at Garz consisted of a large wooden structure with an inner room which had four posts and a roof and was decorated with purple hangings. His oak statue had seven heads (faces, probably) and seven swords in his girdle, an eighth in his hand.

• **Simargl**

A winged griffin or dog that probably came to the Slavs through their Sarmatian overlords. In Sarmatian myth, Simourg (Simargl) guarded

the tree which produced the seed to every species of plant. He also was responsible for the dispursement of these seeds and thus is connected with vegetative fertility. According to some, Simargl is another name for Svarozich, son of Svarog and is therefore the God of fire.

• **Slava**

A beautiful bird - a messenger of God Perun, every feather of which was said to shine a different color. This beautiful bird was called MATEPb CBA (Mater Sva) which can be translated either as Mater Slava (Mother Glory), Mater svex (Mother of everyone) or Mater Sova (Mother Owl - which may be why much of Russian Folk art depicts an owl). This flame colored bird usually appeared in the critical moment and pointed with its wing the direction in which an army should go. Everyone knew that either glory or a glorious death awaited the warriors and the prince had no choice but to follow the bird's lead. She is probably the forerunner of the Firebird.

• **Stribyg** (SHTREE-book)

From "srei"-to flow or from the Iranian "srira" beautiful, a common epithet for the wind. Grandfather of the winds. According to E.G.Kagarov, Stribog was a deity of wind, storms and dissension. He was supposed to bring the frost but somehow, also wealth.

• **Swaryg** (SHVAR-ook)

From "svargas" - radiant sky, "svarati" - gleams. His name survives in the Romanian word for sunburnt or hot - sfarog. A smith god, identified with Hephaestis, he was associated with fire & with it's generative power, particularly sexual. He created the Gods with strokes of his smithing hammer upon the great stone, Alatir. He is the father of Dazhbog (the sun) and Swarowicz - or Ogon, the celestial and hearth fires, respectively. A master craftsman, he could shapeshift into the wind, a golden-horned aurochs (ox), boar, horse, or the falcon, Varagna which was his main incarnation.

Svarog was concerned only with heavenly affairs and left the earthly ones to his son. Unfortunately for his children, Perun was a much

stronger war god and took over the role as chief deity of the warrior classes.

Swarog may be the "divine light" of God which in turn produced both the Celestial & Terrestrial fires.

• **Swarozhicz/Swarowicz** (shvar-OH-zheech/veech)

God of fire personified. As the name literally means "Swarog's son", all of Swarog's children would be called Swarozhich i.e. "Dazhbog Swarozhich", therefore, Swarowicz is a term that could be applied to any of Swarog's children. Some sources mention Dazhbog's brother as Ogon, meaning "fire". Most believe that the God of fire's name could not be spoken aloud, so people would refer to him by his title as Swarog's son. Jehovah was originally a fire god who's name could not be spoken aloud. Because of this, possibly the true names of both have been lost forever.

• **Swiatowid** (shvyan-TOH-veed), Sventovit



From "svent" - strong, or perhaps "sventu" - Iranian for holy. God of war and protector of fields. His gender is not fixed as male, though, for his statue in Galica, Poland had 2 male sides and 2 female sides.

Swiantowid had his own white horse only ridden by the high priest. He was believed to accompany anyone who went to war seated upon it. Before a war, the horse was led down a row of crossed spears. If he walked the row without catching a hoof on a spear it was a good omen.

His temple at Arkona was described thus: One door, a red roof and strong walls ornamented in relief with all kinds of roughly painted carvings. The outer walls were made of vertical wooden posts enclosing an area more than 20m square. Inside was decorated with ornaments, purple items and animal horns. An inner room consisting of a roof supported by four columns and hung with purple rugs contained a sunken base for a huge idol of the god. The idol held a drinking horn in his right hand. Mead was poured into it at harvest, the higher the level reached, the better next year's crop was purported to

be. Swiatowid may be an aspect of or Western Slavonic version of Swarog.

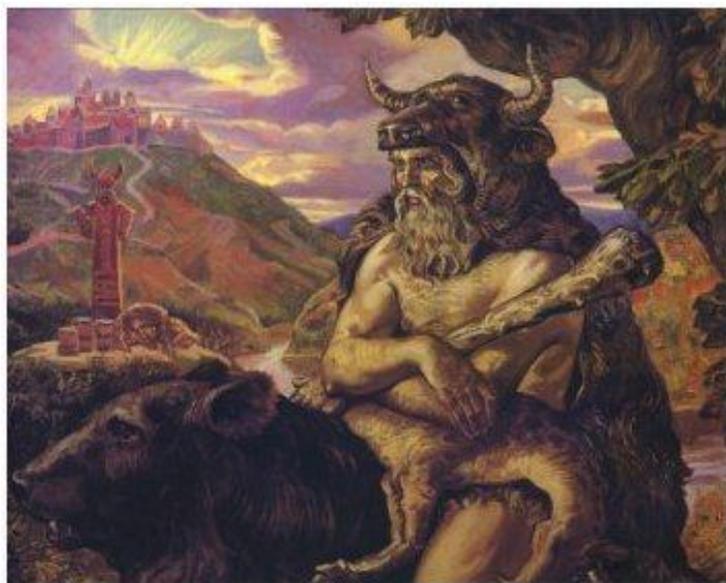
- **Triglav** (TREE-glahv)

Triglav was a three-faced deity, symbolizing the dominion over the three realms - sky, earth, and the underworld. Triglav was shown blindfolded, supposedly because the god was too sacred to view the evils of the earth, and his temple at Stettin was richly sculpted both inside and out and decorated with war booty on the inside.

- **Vesna**

"Spring". A Vernal Goddess, possible Serbian in origin, possibly another name or taboo-title for Lada.

- **Weles, Volos** (VEH-less, VOH-lohs)



The Slavic Horned lord, ruled horned animals, wealth and the underworld. He is believed to have survived from the time of a common Indo-European pantheon. He was also a god of trade and oaths were sworn in his name. Weles is also the God of poets and

bards and is often associated with magick. He was later associated with St. Blas, guardian of cattle.

At Kiev, his statue was not among those on the hill outside the palace but was instead, erected in the marketplace. This is supposedly because he and Perun are great enemies and couldn't be worshipped together.

• **The Zorya** - (ZOR-yah)

These daughters of Dazhdbog are the Auroras of dawn and dusk, and sometimes have a third sister, midnight (perhaps, Polunocnica) however, this makes little sense as the name, "Zorya" literally means "dawn." It is more probably that modern artists and neo-Pagans have added the third Zorya in order to "Wiccify" her as most in the Slavic system is dual and Polunocnica has a sister/counterpart, Poludnica - Lady Noon. The Zorya are the Guardians of the God or hound, which is chained to the constellation, Ursa Major. Like the Fenris wolf of the Norse mythos, this creature will destroy the world if it ever breaks free. The custom of making the colourful eggs, pysanky, is somehow supposed to strengthen the links in his chain.

Each morning, Zorya Utrenyaya opens the gates of Dazhdbog's Eastern palace so he may ride across the sky. In the evening, Zorya Vechernyaya closes the gates after her father's daily ride is finished. Their other two sisters, Zezhda Dennitsa and Vechernyaya Zezhda, the morning star and evening star are the caretakers of their father's horses and are sometimes considered to be the same two goddesses. These Goddesses, associated with Venus, are sometimes merged into one warrior Goddess, Zorya, who hides and protects warriors with her veil (see her prayer on the Slavic Magick page.)

Slavic Pagan Songs

English Translations of some Slavic Pagan Songs

Moist Mother Earth, subdue every evil and
unclean being so that he may not cast a spell on us nor do us any harm.
Moist Mother Earth, engulf the unclean power in thy boiling pits, in
thy burning fires.

Moist Mother Earth, calm the Winds coming from the South
and all bad weather. Calm the moving sands and whirlwinds.

Moist Mother Earth, calm the North Winds and the clouds, subdue the
snowstorms and the cold.

-

Mother Earth, giving suck from bountiful breasts to countless children.
When the peasants spoke of Matushka Zemlia, their eyes, usually dull
and expressionless, were flooded with love, like the eyes of children
who see their mother at a distance.

-

If you don't give us a tart - We'll take your cow by the horns.
If you don't give us a sausage - We'll grab your pig by the head.
If you don't give us a bliny - We'll give the host a kick.

-

The rooks have come.

Oh little bee, Ardent bee!

Fly out beyond the sea.

Get out the keys, the golden keys.

Lock up winter, cold winter

Unlock summer, warm summer.

Warm summer -

A summer fertile in grain.

-

Our Dear Maslenica, dear, leli, dear

Came for a while, for a while, leli, for a while

We thought for seven weeks, seven weeks, leli, seven weeks

But Maslenica stayed only seven days, seven days, leli, seven days

And Maslenica deceived us, deceived us, leli, deceived us

To lent she offered a seat, offered a seat, leli, offered a seat
Bitter horseradish she put out, put out, leli, put out
And that horseradish is more bitter than xren, more bitter than xren,
leli, more bitter than xren.

-

Turn out well, turn out well, my flax.

Turn out well, my white flax.

-

Water of death to water of life. We infuse you with the healing light.

Let us honor the Rusalki's return from the watery otherworld. With each step of their sacred xorovods, they bring moisture and life to the fields. With their arboreal ascent, the trees burst into leaf and bud. We salute you, water women, and invite you and all other friendly spirits of water and woodland, to enter our sacred circle. Hail & Welcome.

Let us turn our thoughts to the strengthening of the Sun king, Dahzhdbog, the celestial fire, who now moves toward the apex of his glory. Let us think of Svarovich, his divine brother of the terrestrial fire, the first fruit of wisdom plucked from the flaming tree of knowledge without whom our lives would be ever dim. Let us think of the fire which rages within the belly of our great Mother Earth. And finally let us call Swarog, the divine light which shines within and about us all. Hail & Welcome.

Let us now bring our attention to the belly of our Moist mother earth, womb of all who seek entrance into this life, and when this life is done, womb of all who seek entrance to the next. May she, and the Gods of Vrij grant passage to the spirits of those we have loved who have gone before us, that they may join us in today's feasting and celebration. Hail and Welcome.

The kumits'ja ceremony was performed to ensure a life-long bond between friends. Whomever you choose to kiss through the kumits'ja wreaths while we dance to raise the energy, will be your friend for life. This is not a spell to be taken lightly, so choose carefully or not at all.

Let it be so

We invite you, Gods and Goddesses of our people, Sovereigns of the sacred realms of Nav, Prav & Yav, to join us in our feasting and celebration. We invite you, O Spirits of Nature, otherworldly creatures of forest and field. Join us in love and trust in our feasting and celebration. We invite you, ancestors and loved ones who have gone

before us to pass through the gates of Vij and join in our feasting and celebration with those whom they love. Hail and Welcome.

In times of yore, our ancestors would give to the river a young girl. Her soul was said to be taken by the water women where she would join their rank. Without this offering, it was believed that the number of water women would dwindle and they would soon die off, never again to bring moisture to the vegetative world. All would wither and die.

Our offerings have changed, but not our devotion. We give you, Rusalki, this humble offering, that you may receive thanks and know that your work does not go unnoticed.

The River is Flowing

Ancestors, loved ones, those of the land of Vij, we thank you for your presence here. Hail and Farewell.

Rusalka, Nature Spirits, Protectors of the Mother, welcome back to our Realm, and thank You for Your presence here. Hail and Farewell.

Shining Ones, Gods and Goddesses, Sovereigns and Creators, thank you for your presence here. Hail and Farewell.

Moist Mother Earth, doorway to life in this world and the next, We humbly beg your forgiveness for the times we have not trod gently upon your flesh, have not felt as one with your presence. Hear us now as we give you our oath to be kinder and more responsible for your well being.

Our circle is done, our rite is over, may the Gods be your guides and the Zorya protect you.

-

I, a young girl, am going to the quiet meadow, the quiet meadow.

To the quiet meadow, to a little birch.

I, a young girl, will pick a blue cornflower,

A little blue cornflower, a cornflower.

I, a young girl, will weave a wreath.

I, a young girl, will go to the river.

I will throw the wreath down the river.

I will think about my sweetheart

My wreath is drowning, drowning.

My heart is aching, aching.

My wreath will drown.

My sweetheart will abandon me.

-

Don't rejoice oak trees. Don't rejoice green ones.

Not to you are the girls coming. Not to you, the pretty ones.

Not to you are they bringing pies, pastries, omelettes.

Yo, Yo Semik and Trinity!

Rejoice birches! Rejoice green ones!

To you the girls are coming!

To you they are bringing pies, pastries, omelettes.

Yo, yo Semik and Trinity.

Oh birch, so curly, curly and young,

Under you, little birch, no poppy is blooming.

Under you, little birch, no fire is burning -

No poppy is blooming -

Pretty maids are dancing a xorovod,

about you little birch, they are singing songs.

-

Perkons! Father! Thy children lead this faultless victim to thy altar.

Bestow, O Father, thy blessing on the plough and on the corn. May golden straw with great well-filled ears rise abundantly as rushes.

Drive away all black haily clouds to the great moors, forests, and large deserts, where they will not frighten mankind; and give sunshine and rain, gentle falling rain, in order that the crops may thrive!

-

Until dinner, it's summer. After dinner, it's autumn.

-

Dedushka Dobrokhhot, Please come into my house and tend the flocks.

Grandfather Domovoi, help me chase away this intruder.

Leshi, Forest Lord, Come to me now; not as a grey wolf, not as a black raven, not as a flaming fir tree, but as a man.

-

In the ocean sea, on the island of Buyan, there live three brothers, three winds: the first Northern, the second Eastern and the third Western.

Waft, O winds, bring on (_____) sorrow and dreariness so that without me s/he may not be able to spend a day nor pass an hour!

-

I, (_____), stand still, uttering a blessing.

I go from the room to the door, from the courtyard to the gates.

I go out into the open field to the Eastern side. On the Eastern side

stands an cottage. In the middle of the izba lies a plank, under the plank is the longing.

The longing weeps. The longing sobs, waiting to get at the white light. The white light, the fair sun, waits, enjoys itself, and rejoices.

So may she/he wait, longing to get to me, and having done so, may he enjoy himself and rejoice! And without me let it not be possible for him to live, nor to be, nor to eat, nor to drink; neither by the morning dawn, nor by the evening glow.

As a fish without water, as a babe without its mother, without its mother's milk, cannot live, so may she/he, without me, not be able to live, nor to be, nor to eat, nor to drink, nor by the evening glow; neither every day, not at mid-day, nor under the many stars, nor together with the stormy winds. Neither under the sun by day, nor under the moon by night.

Plunge thyself, O longing, gnaw thy way, O longing, into his/her breast, into his/her heart; grow and increase in all his/her veins, in all his bones, with pain and thirst for me!

-

Oh Virgin, unsheath your father's sacred sword.

Take up the breastplate of your ancestors.

Take up your powerful helmet.

Bring forth your steed of black.

Fly forth to the open field,

There, where the great army with countless weapons is found.

Oh, Virgin, cover me with your veil.

Protect me against the power of the enemy

Against guns and arrows, warriors and weapons;

Weapons of wood, of bone, of copper, of iron and steel.

-

Dear Father, tsar fire,

Be gentle and kind to me.

Burn away all my aches & pains, tears & worries.

-

O righteous Sun! Do thou in my foes, my rivals, my opposers, in the powers that be, and public officials, and in all people of good mouth and heart, parch up evil thoughts and deeds, so that they may not rise up, may not utter words baleful for me!

-

As this corpse has died unrepentant, so may you too die, unrepentant.

-

Tatyana curiously gazes
At the prophetic waxen mold,
All eager in its wondrous mazes
A wonderous future to behold.
Then from the basin someone dredges,
Ring after ring, the player's pledges,
And comes her ringlet, they rehearse
The immemorial little verse:
"There all the serfs are wealthy yeomen,
They shovel silver with a spade;
To whom we sing, he shall be made
Famous and rich!" But for ill omen
They take this plaintive ditty's voice;
Koshurka is the maiden's choice

-

The ring was rolling
Along the velvet
The ring rolled up
To the ruby.
For one who takes it out
For her it will come true,
For her it will come true,
She will not escape
A Maple entwined with a birch
It did not untwine - Lada, Lada
Whoever takes it out
For her it will come true,
All will be well.
A little cat is sitting
In a wicker basket
She is sewing a towel.
She will marry the tom
For whom we are singing
All will be well.

-

A rooster was digging
on a little mound of Earth
The rooster dug up
A little pearl.
For whoever gets it

All will be well.

A calyx is floating from somewhere beyond the sea.

To wherever it floats, there it will blossom.

Whoever takes it out - For her will it come true.

She will not escape - glory!

-

The sleigh stands, ready to go - Glory!

In it the cushions are all arranged - Glory!

It stands near the forest, waiting to go for a ride - Glory!

To whom we sing this song, all will be well.

It will come true, she will not escape - Glory.

-

I sat - by a window

I waited - for my beloved

I could no longer wait

I fell asleep.

In the morning - I awoke

I suddenly - realized

I am a widow.

To whom we sing, all will come true.

-

A dandy once took a very sharp axe - Lileju

The dandy went out - into the wide courtyard.

The dandy began - to hew some boards

To nail the wood - into an oaken coffin

Whomever this song reaches,

For her it will come true

She will not escape

-

Mother Zorya of morning and evening and midnight! as ye quietly

fade away and disappear, so may both sicknesses and sorrows in me,

(____), quietly fade and disappear - those of the morning, and of the evening, and of midnight!

-

We pass through the village, and the clouds across the sky. We go quicker, and the clouds go quicker,

But the clouds have overtaken us and have bedewed the fields.

We go through the village, and the clouds across the sky,

and see, a ring drops from the clouds.

Organised pagan cult in Kievan Rus'

The invention of foreign elite or evolution of local tradition?

by Roman Zaroff

Abbreviations

RPC - - Russian Primary Chronicle

SIC - Song of the Igor's Campaign

Introduction

According to the Laurentian version of the "Russian Primary Chronicle", in the year 980:

"... (Vladimir) set up idols on the hills outside the castle: one of Perun, made of wood with a head of silver and a moustache of gold, and others of Khors, Dazhbog, Stribog, Simargl, Mokosh".

No doubt, this was an attempt by the Kievan ruler to organise a more centralised, pagan cult to facilitate state building and centralisation. However, on many occasions, it has been claimed that he merely elevated the elite cult. And the beliefs, as well as those gods, were of foreign origin - namely Scandinavian. However, the native Eastern Slavic religion was assumed to be a collection of some animistic beliefs with an impersonalised "Mother Moist Earth" as a dominant, agricultural deity.

Such an assumption is a consequence of the paucity of knowledge about Slavic mythology. This is so for a number of reasons. First, in the English speaking world as far as now, no one really attempted to research pre-Christian Slavic religion. The subject usually occupies a

short chapter or paragraph in general publications on European mythology - and that is all. This is a surprising situation considering the fact that the Slavs are the largest linguistic sub-family in Europe, numbering close to 300 million people. Secondly, many publications do not go beyond various accepted ideas that originated in the German school of the 1930's and early 1940's, championed by Erwin Rieupeucker and Leonard Franz. Briefly, both Rieupeucker and Franz claimed that without outside help the Slavs were incapable of developing any complex beliefs beyond animism due to their racial inferiority and needed an external stimulus from the "Master Race" to invent more complex beliefs or personification of their deities. Thirdly, a number of Russian and Soviet scholars, more or less, accepted these notions. It may well be that those Russians in the West, who were recruited predominantly from post-revolution emigres, were in general deeply religious and conservative. Hence, their views were biased against any pagan beliefs. Meanwhile, many historians in the Soviet Union generally treated any religion as a collection of ancient superstitions not worth investigating.

The issue of this organised pagan cult of Kievan Rus' under Vladimir along with its emergence can be only properly investigated in a broader Indo-European and a common Slavic context. For that reason the first section of the following work will deal with the common Indo-European background and pre-migration Slavic beliefs. Apart from the deities of Vladimir's pantheon, some other Slavic gods, that were mentioned in other Eastern Slavic sources, will also be investigated. Nevertheless, it has to be acknowledged that the following reconstruction of the common ancient Slavic religion is only partial, and explores only selected "core" concepts and deities with some relevance to the later Kievan cult.

It is commonly accepted that all the Indo-European languages evolved from closely related Bronze Age dialects collectively termed Proto-Indo-European. Further, certain similarities in names of many ancient deities were also observed. From this premise, a rather simplistic Indo-European pantheon was postulated by the early twentieth century. More recently a comparative analysis of Indo-European beliefs focussed on common functional and conceptual elements rather than on linguistic similarities of the god's names. Such a study was first attempted by an American scholar of Romanian background - Mircea Eliade. It was further developed and championed by French philologist

Georges Dumézil, and is now followed by the "new comparative school" of religious studies world-wide. This new approach focuses on the premise that the pre-Christian beliefs of Indo-European people (Germanic, Celtic, Italic, Greek, Baltic, Indian Iranian and Hittite) share certain concepts, ideas and a number of deities on the functional level. And also, exploring the concept that various Indo-European people built their own theology and mythology drawing it from a common tradition. However, the "new comparative school" acknowledges that different peoples developed their beliefs on their own, in different conditions and under different influences.

The Slavs, as a culturally and linguistically distinct people, emerged in Eastern Europe in a relatively small area. Geographically the Slavic cradle was limited in the south by north-eastern slopes of Carpathian Mountains. To the West, their territory probably reached to the upper Vistula river in modern Poland. In the north, the Pripet marshes divided the proto-Slavic group from the proto-Balts. And finally, their eastern boundary was roughly at the Dneper river. As the linguistic uniformity of Slavonic languages suggests, the process of Slavic ethnogenesis must have been completed by the fifth century C.E. - prior to their migration period during the sixth and seventh centuries C.E. The area under discussion was under strong Iranian (to some extent Scythian and strongly Sarmatian) influence, during the first millennium B.C.E. and until the third century C.E. And this explains the strong Iranian influence on pre-Christian Slavic religion. The Scythians and Sarmatians spoke dialects which are classified as Eastern Iranian. Nowadays the Ossetic language of the Caucasus is a sole survivor of this linguistic group. However, for the purpose of clarity, throughout this study both Scythians and Sarmatians will be referred to as Northern Iranians, basically employing a geographical rather than linguistic context.

Taking into consideration the relatively small area where the Slavs emerged and that the Slavic languages did not begin to diverge significantly before the tenth Century C.E. , it may be assumed that prior to their migration period their culture and religious beliefs were relatively uniform. This working hypothesis is not implying that Slavic religion was a monolithic and solid set of beliefs, but rather like other tribal religions, a heterogeneous collection of various beliefs revolving around the same common "core" concepts.

The question of pre-migration Slavic religion will be addressed through a three-way approach. Firstly, by tracing common Indo-European concepts and ideas in Slavic religion. Second, by searching for these concepts among the Eastern Slavs, especially among the ordinary people. And thirdly, by looking for the existence of similar concepts among the Western and Southern Slavs. By doing this, we can isolate those beliefs which were common to all Slavs from those which were of foreign influence or a result of later cultural developments in Slavdom.

Selected deities and concepts in slavic religion

Most of the Indo-European mythologies shared a concept of a Sky god, as well as Sun and Fire worship. A common Indo-European world view shared a tri-partite functional division. The first function is sacred power and knowledge. The second, is associated with war. Finally, the third function covers economic activities, such as agriculture, animal husbandry and others. And this spiritual system is reflected in an organised social hierarchy, which found its greatest expression in the original caste division of India. There, society was divided into: priestly class of brahman; warriors - kshatriyas; and farmers - Vainya. In a similar fashion the functions of principal deities were divided into three main spheres of sovereignty, military and the economic activities. In a peculiar way, the first domain was occupied by two deities in a system of dual sovereignty. For example, Indian Varuna and Mitra; Iranian Ashura and Mithra; Germanic Wodan/Odin and Tyr/Tiw; and Italic Jupiter and Dius Fides. The second function was the domain of war gods, such as: Indian Indra, Germanic Donar/Thor, Celtic Taranis, Greek Ares and Italic Mars. Moreover, this tri-partite view found another reflection in the division of world into three spheres - those of heaven, atmosphere and earth. Much of the Indo-European mythologies revolved around the inter-relation of those three separate domains.

SVAROG

The name of a common proto-Indo-European sky deity derives from a word "deivos" - heavenly, and who was known in a form "Dyaus". Different historical and cultural developments over the millennia resulted in divergence from this concept but it still could be traced among many Indo-European people, either in its function or name. For example, many Indo-European languages associated a similar name with gods, divinities and the sky, such as: the Latin "deus" and even Jupiter himself whose name derived from "Dyau Pater", Greek - Zeus, Sanskrit "deva" and Dyaus. The old Germanic Tyr/Tiw and the Saxon god of the eight century called Tiewaz, also fall into that category. Baltic mythology also preserved a Sky deity known as Dievas - "the sky". The Balts and Slavs are culturally and linguistically closely related. Because the Baltic languages preserved many ancient Indo-European features it is believed that Slavic languages branched from the common Balto-Slavic dialects. Hence, it is logical to conclude that, in some form or the other, the concept of Sky god existed among the proto-Slavs too. At first the search for a Slavic sky god is disappointing as there was no deity known by the name related to the root "deivos" or to Lithuanian Dievas. It has been suggested by the Polish historian Alexander Gieysztor that Perun originated as a sky god. However, although Perun evinced some attributes of a sky god, the etymology of the name and his original functions point to the common Indo-European god of thunder, rain and weather. It seems that the Slavs abandoned the Dievas-like name of a sky god which they had shared with Balts while under the Northern Iranian influence. The old name echoes only in the term "div", which in the Slavic languages describes a supernatural occurrence or some demoniac being. Despite the quite fragmentary state of available evidence, only the god known as Svarog fits the concept. Etymologically, the name Svarog fits perfectly with the sky god because of its celestial connotations. The root "svar" in the name of Svarog is a cognate to the Old Indian "svar", describing upper heavenly worlds. Further, a related word "svargas" means radiant sky and "svarati" shines or gleams. Elsewhere, in a modern Hindi "svarg" means heaven. It is worth noting that around that time the Slavs adopted the Iranian word for the sky "nebo", derived from "nebah", both initially meaning the cloud.

The evidence for the Svarog cult among the Slavs is weak and sometimes confused with another deity known as Svarozhits. These

issues will be addressed in detail in the section on cosmology. In terms of written sources Svarog appeared in the Russian translation of John Malalas, a Byzantine chronicler of the sixth century. In the Slavic version, Hephaistos was substituted by Svarog, and Helios with Dazhbog. The Malalas version goes as follows:

"After the death of Hephaistos, his son Helios reigned over the Egyptians for....12 years and 97 days", and "Helios the son of Hephaistos, was very generous".

In the Slavic translation we read:

"After Svarog reigned his son, named Sun who was also called Dazhbog, for he was a mighty lord".

The Slavonic version clearly indicates that the translator was fully aware of the mythological nature of Hephaistos and Helios resulting in substitutions of Slavic deities instead. Usually it has been accepted that the functions of both Slavic gods correspond to Greek deities: that is, Hephaistos and Svarog of fire; and Helios and Dazhbog of Sun. But it is not necessarily the case. It is reasonable to assume that the translator, knowing Hephaistos to be the father of Helios, introduced into the text two Slavic deities who were in a father-son relationship. So, while Dazhbog was a Sun deity, his father Svarog's domain was not fire. Although in this translation there is no suggestion of Svarog being a Sky god, another account from the other side of Europe supports this claim. Certain relevant Slavic myths were reported by Helmold of Bossau, a German clergyman of the twelfth century:

"...one god in heavens ruling over the others. They (the Slavs) hold that he, the all powerful one, looks only after heavenly matters; that the others, discharging the duties assigned to them in obedience to him, proceeded from his blood...".

It is worthwhile noting, that the concept of a passive god is common among the other Indo-Europeans. Greek Uranos, a sky god, becomes incapacitated and an inactive deity after the act of creation. In Indian

mythology Dyaus', a sky god, is also a creator whose involvement in earthly affairs was unclear and indirect afterwards. In the Vedic period his importance was surpassed by Varuna and Mitra, with Varuna appropriating some attributes and functions of Dyaus. Taking into consideration that Sun worship was widespread among the Slavs (to be discussed later), it seems that one of the deities fathered by the Slavic Sky god was Sun. This again is a common Indo-European concept, and in Indian mythology the Sun - Sirya is often described as a son of Sky (Dyaus) and Earth. Although the name of the Sky god was not mentioned by Helmold, the complementary nature of both stories suggests that he was referring to Svarog.

A reinforcement for this claim that Svarog was the father of the major Slavonic gods comes from the name of another Slavic deity, that of Svarozhits, a Fire god. The ending of the name Svarozh-(its), indicates that he was son of Svarog. The endings "its" (spelled "icz" or "ic" in Polish and "ch" in Russian), common in all Slavic languages is a patronymic name, and it is still in use in present day Russia. For example: (Ivanovich), a "son of Ivan". In other countries it has been preserved in surnames: like in Polish - Weostowicz , "son of Weast"; or in the former Yugoslavia - Josich, "son of Joseph ". Some scholars postulated that Svarog and Svarozhits were the same god, and that Svarozhits is a diminutive for Svarog. But it is highly unlikely that such a fierce and fear-inspiring god of fire would be addressed in such a disrespectful way.

The relationship between Svarog, Svarozhits and Dazhbog, and their functions, has been interpreted in various ways by many different scholars. However, it only fits together perfectly if we accept the notion that Svarog was the Sky god, and furthermore that he fathered the Sun god (Dazhbog) and Fire god (Svarozhits).

The evidence for Svarog as a common Slavic deity comes mainly from the toponymy. Examples of it include: Swarozyn near Gdansk and Swarzhdz near Poznan, in Poland; Svaren in Czech Republic; and Svaryzh near Pskov in Russia. Moreover, the name of the German Mecklenburgian town of Schwerin derives from its old Slavic name Swarzyn. According to Roman Jakobson, a American scholar of Russian background, Svarog under tabu names appears in places like Twarouna Gora in Poland and Tvarowna in the Czech Republic. Besides, it could be assumed that whenever or wherever Svarozhits (son of Svarog) was reported, it implied that the concept of Svarog,

sky god, was also known. A prime case is the tenth and eleventh centuries cult of Svarozhits in Eastern Germany, then inhabited by Slavs, indicating that the concept of sky god - Svarog - pre-dates the migration period.

The explanation for the lack of a more prominent cult of Svarog lies in Helmold's account. The Slavic Sky god was an otiose and passive god who became removed from earthly affairs. Hence there is not much point in worshipping the "retired" deity and the cult slowly lost its prominence.

DAZHBOG

The cults of Sun is well attested among many of the Indo-European people. It was especially prominent among the Iranians and Medes of Persia, as well as among Masagetae, Scythians and Sarmatians. In case of the Slavs it is difficult to ascertain how "solar" their religion actually was. It is possible that "solarisation" of the religion was more prominent among the Eastern Slavs, due to the closer and prolonged contacts with Northern Iranian people. Whatever the case, there is evidence that in Slavic religion the Sun cult played an important part.

The Slavic Sun god was called Dazhbog, and it is reasonable to assume that he was a son of Svarog. The name Dazhbog could be translated as "giver of wealth" or "giving god". The root "bog", literally meaning god in all Slavic languages, is a clear Iranian borrowing, from Iranian "bhaga" - god.

The widespread Sun cult of Dazhbog featured prominently among the Eastern Slavs, not just as a part of the Kievan pantheon of Vladimir. In the "Tale of Igor's Campaign", a 12th century Russian epic poem, the Russians are twice referred to as "Dazhbog grandsons". Also in the poem, a prayer of Yaroslav of Galich's daughter begins with the words: "Bright, thrice-bright Sun!". Regardless of the literary nature of the "Tale", the survival of Dazhbog in popular memory and of sun worship in general indicates that it was deeply rooted in Eastern Slavic beliefs. It definitely would not be a case of short-lived elitist cults. An Arab traveller Al Masudi, reported around the middle of the 10th century that Eastern Slavs were sun worshipers and that they had a temple-like structure with opening dome with some other feature enabling them to watch the sunrise. Although it was most likely an

open shrine rather than a temple, it is almost certain that such structures were part of a sun cult.

The name Dazhbog does not appear in other Slavic languages in association with the Sun deity. However, the name Dazhbog survived in the Polish personal name - Dajbog. And in Serbian folklore it remains as demons called Dajboga and Daba. The cult might have existed in German Baltic region of Wagrien among the Slavic Obodrites, where Helmold of Bossau reported a temple and idol at Plon called Podaga. The name Podaga was interpreted by Roman Jakobson as a corruption of Daboga or Dajboga, but this interpretation is questionable. Nevertheless, the remnants of a sun cult survived among the Slavs till recent times. This clearly demonstrating its importance to all the Slavs since the pre-migration period. The Southern Slavic peasants were known to swear an oath on the Sun, while Bulgarians regarded the Sun as divine. Also, customs of greeting the rising sun were reported all over Russia, Ukraine and Belorussia. Certain medieval Eastern Slavic sources reported the rural custom of bowing to the south (the Sun) at midday. In Germany, in the south-eastern district of Lusatia the Slavic Sorbs were reported to greet the rising sun before entering church on Sunday. In the Western Ukraine a curse was known: "May the Sun make you perish", and in Croatia peasants would say "May the Sun avenge me on you". And in Christian times the Sun has been called "God's face" or "God's eye". Clearly this is an echo of the old Indo-European concept where the Sun deity Surja is called an eye of Varuna.

The Sun figures prominently in Slavic folklore throughout all Slavdom. It was believed that the Sun resided in the east, in the land of everlasting summer and of plenty, inhabiting a palace made of gold. The morning and evening auroras were associated with the Sun and were regarded as two virgin divinities. They were called morning and evening Auroras - Zoryas in Slavic. The Zoryas stood on both sides of the Sun's golden throne. According to one story, the morning Zorya opened the palace gates when the Sun was to begin his daily journey across the sky, while the other one closed the gates after Sun returned at the evening. Similar forms of sun worship and stories about auroras, morning and evening stars (planet Venus), were reported in Baltic mythology. Also, in Iranian mythology, there were two divinities of dawn and dusk associated with the sun god Mithra, and Ushas as Sun companions in Indian mythology. There is also some indirect evidence

for the Sun cult among the Slavs. For example, depiction of a wheel or circle in pre-Christian, Indo-European iconography are interpreted as solar symbols, and a large number of such engravings were found on early Slavic pottery. Furthermore, in Indo-European mythology, it is commonly accepted that the horse is usually associated with the Sun cult. It was reported among many Indo-European people, such as: ancient Indians, Iranians, Germans, Celts, Greeks, Balts and Slavs. Among the Western Slavs, horses associated with the cult of Sventovit of Rugen, Svarozhits of Radogost and Triglav of Szczecin were reported. One of their important function was being used in foretelling the future. Although none of those later and complex cults were purely solar, the incorporation of a horse indicates amalgamation of solar and other elements. It is worth noting, that there is a saying in Russian " - veschiy kon' ", meaning "prophetic horse" , indicating that use of a sacred horse in foretelling the future was common Slavic concept.

SVAROZHITS

The cult of Svarozhits, a fire god, and a son of Svarog, also shows common and strong Indo-European roots. Practically all Indo-European people worshipped fire in one or another form. It was of the greatest importance among the ancient Indians. The Iranians were regarded as fire worshipers, and were reported to swear oaths by fire. Also, the ancient Baltic people were reported to worship a female fire goddess, and to believe that fire was brought to the earth by a thunder god Perkunas. In Indian a fire deity was known as Agni, meaning "fire", with this being a cognate to the Latin word "ignis", Lithuanian "ugnis" and Slavic "ogni"- fire.

The Svarozhits cult also appears to be universal to all Slavs. Evidence for the cult comes from two extremes of Slavdom. According to the Russian source known as "Unknown Admirer of Christ (Bogolubiec)":

"They (the pagan Slavs) also address prayer to Fire, calling him Svarogich".

The sancticity and divinity of fire survived into the Christian era among most of the Slavs. The 19th century Russian peasants would not spit into the fire or swear at it. Throwing a sheaf into fire was

believed to bring luck. There was also a widespread belief that fire had special powers. A fire started by friction using wooden sticks was called a "living fire" and supposed to have a healing properties. For example: sick cattle were driven around "living fire" lit bon-fires in the field to cure them. One of the spells to cast out illness, that began with the words: "Little Fire, Tsar-Fire", seems to be a clear reminiscence of the times when Firewas worshipped as a god. Igniting a "sacred fire" through friction is a common element of wide-spread Indo-European tradition. It is known to have been practised in ancient India , and also was the case with ancient Roman Vestal fire , and it was also reported among the Lithuanians as late as the seventeenth century. Fire was started in this manner as late as the first half of the twentieth century in some parts of rural Poland on Annunciation Day.

In Western Slavdom the cult of Svarozhits gained prominence among the Veletian people, a branch of the Polabian Slavs. It was a regional deity and its major temple stood at Radogost, near modern Neubrandenburg, in eastern Germany. This elaborate cult was an amalgamation of various elements of Slavic religious traditions and it can not be totally equated with the Slavic fire worship of the pre-migration period. It will not be discussed in detail as it was a later development, and the issue goes beyond the scope of this work. Nevertheless, the name of the deity and its associated fire worship clearly show that the cult evolved from a common Slavic concept of a Fire God.

PERUN

There is also no doubt about the antiquity and Indo-European origins of the Slavic god Perun, the god of thunder and lightning. The name Perun derives from an Indo-European root "perk", "perg" or "per", meaning "to strike" and is directly associated with a striking thunderbolt. In Indian mythology there was a weather god, Parjanya, whose domain was thunder storms and monsoons. This deity, who also makes things grow, like Perun, is associated with cattle. And among the Balts, a thunder god Perkunas was one of the major deities. There is close conceptual relationship between the foregoing and thunder-associated gods of other Indo-European people, such as: Celtic Taranis; Greek Zeus and Germanic Thor/Donar. Independent developments separated Indo-European beliefs but a certain common

concept were preserved. For example, in Germanic mythology the goddess Fjorgynn is the mother of the thunder god Thor. Taking into consideration that in Germanic languages the original Indo-European "p" changed into "f", her name clearly appears related to the stem "perg". In Hittite mythology the stone monster Ullikummi, who fights the weather god Tenuk, is a son of the major god Kumarbi and a rock, a goddess called Peruna or Piruna. Unfortunately, Hittite mythology is so mixed up with Semitic and non-Indo-European beliefs that the similarity of name with Parjanya or Perun may be only a coincidence. On the other hand it may reflect a common Indo-European tradition shared with the Germanic people.

Further support for the antiquity of the Perun-like deity in Eastern Europe comes from Mordvinian mythology. In pre-Christian times, Mordvins, an Ugro-Finian people of middle Volga basin, worshiped a thunder god called Purginepaz. This is a clear borrowing from the Indo-European mythology. However, it was not borrowed from the Slavs, as their Eastern branch did not penetrate the middle Volga in pre-Christian times. While at the same time the root "Purg" in Purginepaz suggests some relation to the Baltic "Perk" in Perkunas. The only plausible explanation is that Mordvins borrowed the concept and the god's name from the Fatyanovo culture of the second half of second millennium B.C.E. The Fatyanovo culture emerged in the Eastern Baltic area and spread along Volga and Oka as far as Ural mountains. Physical anthropology and strong cultural affiliation of Fatyanovo complex with Kurgan and later Baltic cultures, indicates that they were Indo-European people. They were not Balts and probably not Balto-Slavic people either, but rather culturally and linguistically ancestral to both. Whatever the case, this shows that the concept of a Perun-like deity was common amongst the Old European population of Eastern Europe in the middle of the second millennium B.C.E. And this in turn clearly indicates continuity of this common Indo-European concept.

The evidence for the concept of a thunder god among the Slavs is relatively plentiful, with his worship first mentioned among the Southern Slavs. According to the mid 6th century Byzantine historian Procopius:

"For they (Slavs) believe that one god, the maker of the lighting, is

alone lord of all things, and they sacrifice to him cattle and all other victims".

There is no doubt that this account refers to Perun. The account does not imply that the Slavs were monotheists, but rather that Perun gained prominence among the Southern Slavs, whose religion evolved into henotheism. There is also evidence, that in the mythology of non-Slavic Albanians, there was a thunder god known as Perundi. Again, this is no doubt a borrowing from the Southern Slavs.

As a consequence of the relatively early Christianisation of the Southern Slavs, there are no more direct accounts in relation to Perun from the Balkans. Nevertheless, as late as the first half of the twentieth century, in Bulgaria and Macedonia, peasants performed a certain ceremony meant to induce rain. A central figure in the rite was a young girl called Perperuna, a name clearly related to Perun. At the same time the association of Perperuna with rain, shows conceptual similarities with an Indian god Parjanya. There was a strong Slavic penetration of Albania, Greece and Romania, between the sixth and tenth centuries. Not surprisingly the folklore of northern Greece also knows Perperuna, Albanians know Pirpiruna and so the Romanians have their Perperona. Also, in a certain Bulgarian folk riddle the word "perunan" is a substitute for the Bulgarian word "grm" (grmotevitsa) for the thunder. Moreover, the name of Perun is also commonly found in Southern Slavic toponymy. There are places called: Perun, Perunac, Perunovac, Perunika, Perunijka Glava, Peruni Vrh, Perunja Ves, Peruna Dubrava, Perunuja, Perunice, Perudina and Perutovac.

In addition, the Eastern Slavs, promised to uphold treaties with the Byzantines by invoking Perun in 907, 945 and 971. The Perun idol stood in Kiev, already by 945, when prince Igor swore to be true to the treaty at the shrine. Therefore, either Vladimir did not erect it or only enlarged the shrine.

But there are more accounts and other evidence showing that the cult was widespread among the ordinary people and in various forms, survived christianization. It is worth noting certain passage in the "Russian Primary Chronicle". It stated that when the Perun idol and its sanctuary was destroyed, the people cried, while, according to the Chronicle of Novgorod, assault on the Perun shrine in Novgorod

caused serious uprising and bloody fighting in the city. Surely, both cases implied that it was a well established people's cult.

The survival of worship well into the Christian era is also well attested. The following accounts strongly demonstrate the popularity of the cult among the ordinary people. In a Russian apocrypha of the 12th century, known as (Hozhdyene Boguroditsi Po Mukam), idols of Perun and other gods were mentioned:

"And they made gods out of the devils Troyan, Khors, Veles and Perun, and they worshiped these evil devils".

A fourteenth century source known as (Slovo Grigoriya) - "The Word of Gregory", says that in remote areas pagans still prayed to Perun. . In the late eighteenth century Russia an ecclesiastic ruling had forbidden the singing of Christian prayers in front of an oak tree. And it has to be remembered that the oak tree was closely associated with the cult of Perun (oak tree worship will be discussed later). Also, an interesting custom was reported near Novgorod, as late as the early twentieth century. Here many travellers or boatsmen, sailing the Volkhov river, would cast a coin into the water, at the spot where Perun shrine was excavated in 1950's.

Finally, after Christianization the cult merged and was transformed into veneration of Saint Elias. This happened most likely because of the Old Testament which credited Saint Elias with the ability to bring rain and thunderstorms. Thus through these means, an obscure Christian saint became a major celebrity in Eastern Slavic Orthodoxy. In the later Christian iconography of Saint Elias, he appears like Perun traversing the sky in the chariot of fire or riding on the horse. He has been also associated with thunders, arrows and oaks. In the early twentieth century, in the north-east of Russia, the following celebration was reported. On the 20th of July, Saint Elias day, a cow was slaughtered and the meat prepared by males. It was then distributed in the church and eaten by the whole congregation. This custom, evidently not being Christian, resembles the sacrificial killing of an animal and the communal consumption of the meat.

The veneration of St. Elias with its mixture of pagan and Christian elements is one of the best arguments for the purely Slavic character of Perun and of the cult being widespread among all sections of Eastern Slavic society. Put simply, if Perun was only a deity of the elite and

was elevated to prominence at Kiev only for a few years, ordinary people would not have retained the cult for centuries. Neither would the Orthodox Church be forced to accept and tolerate certain evidently pagan beliefs and practices.

The name of Perun also appears in Eastern Slavic toponymy. The most famous place is Peryn' near Novgorod, where the remnants of open site shrine were unearthed by archaeologists, and there was a place on the Dneper known as "Perun's Shoal".

Perun was also a deity of the Western Slavs, although the cult did not show up so prominently. In all Slavic languages, except Polish and Kashubian, the term for thunderbolt is "grom". The term is known to the Poles but more often they call it "piorun", a word clearly deriving from the name of Perun. In Silesia, even today, people say "Ty pieronie!", which in free-lance translation means "you bastard!". The older Poles' saying of dissatisfaction, "do pioruna!", could be translated as "by thunder!". It sounds like nonsense, but if we substitute the old meaning it would be "by Perun!". Very close to the familiar "by Jove!". Similar sayings have survived among Kashubians in the form of "na perona!" and "ty peronie!". It is worthwhile to note that in Kashubian thunder or lightning is called "parun" not "peron", indicating that original saying refers to deity rather than to the thunder. In Moravian and Slovakian folklore there are spells using the term "parom" or "hrom" (original Slavic "g" replaced by "h" in Ukrainian, Czech and Slovak languages) interchangeably for thunder. Furthermore, the Slovaks would say "parom do teba" or "do paroma", meaning "may Perun strike you" and "by Perun!", respectively. Among the now almost extinct Polabian Slavs of eastern Germany, a deity called Porenutius (Porenut) was reported on Rugen island by a Danish chronicler of the turn of the 13th century Saxo Grammaticus. Some scholars have interpreted the name as a corrupted form of Perun. However, this interpretation is not uniformly accepted. Another deity called Proue was mentioned by Helmold as being worshipped in the 12th century near Oldenburg in Wagrien. Its idol stood in an enclosed sanctuary situated in an oak grove. Sacrifices of cattle and sheep, and sometimes humans were performed for this deity, and once a week tribal court and the assembly was held there. Again it has been postulated that the name Proue is a corruption of Perun, taking into consideration that in another version of the chronicle, known as Stettin manuscript, it appears as "Prone". Whatever the case, Proue's

association with oaks and cattle sacrifice indicates close conceptual links with Perun-like deity.

Still, however, the strongest evidence for antiquity of the Perun cult, its universality among all the Slavs, and all sections of the Slavic society, comes from the western extreme of Slavdom. In the region of Hanoverian Wendland, west of Elbe river in Germany, a dialect of Obodrite Slavs survived till the end of the eighteenth century. Those Slavs called Thursday a "Perundan" - literally a "day of Perun". Evidently, these people were aware that the name for Thursday in German "Donnerstag" means "day of Donar", a continental Germanic war god. Clearly, they had substituted their god Perun for Donar, as it was the Slavic deity that most closely resembled the Germanic war god. There is no other explanation, unless we accept that the 18th century Slavic peasants of backward Hanoverian Wendland spent cold nights of the northern European winter passionately reading the "Russian Primary Chronicle".

VELES/VOLOS

The origins and functions of the god Veles or Volos, are controversial. According to the Laurentian version of the "Russian Primary Chronicle", Veles was the god of cattle. And this view was accepted by the majority of scholars, without questioning. However, there is some indication that he was more than a mere god of the beasts. In Christian times, Veles was replaced by St. Blasius - a patron of domestic animals. It is likely that a monk who had written the "Russian Primary Chronicle" had projected St. Blasius' functions onto Veles, albeit ignorant of the role of the ancient god.

From the scarce written records we know that at the official signing of the treaty with the Byzantines in 907 the whole Kievan army swore by Perun and Veles, and also, in the 971 treaty, the warriors swore by Perun and the "rest of Rus" by Veles. This shows that Veles was an important god whose functions must have gone much beyond caring for cattle. The importance of cattle for the Eastern Slavs can not be denied, but their economy was agriculturally based. It would make more sense if they swore by the "Mother Earth" rather than Veles. So, this suggests that Veles was also the guardian of the oath. In reference to the punishment for breaking the oath, the offenders would be killed by their own weapons" and "(da budem zoloti yako zoloto)" - "

become yellow as gold". Knowing the war function of Perun it seems that punishment by their own weapons must have referred to the wrath of Perun. For other punishment, at first the sentence appears to make no sense at all. However in Russian (zolotukha) means scrofula, a tuberculosis of bones and lymph glands - a serious and life threatening disease. So, this suggests that Veles was also able to inflict disease as a punishment. Furthermore, from the "Song of Igor's Campaign" comes a passage referring to the bard Boyan: "Vatic Boyan, grandson of Veles..", suggesting a clairvoyant and prophetic nature of the god. After Christianisation of Kievan Rus', Veles was transformed into St. Blasius (Russian - Vlasiy), a patron of domestic animals. An interesting insight into the cult comes from ethnographic data. Well into Christian times in Russia, during the cattle epidemic, peasants carrying an icon of St. Blasius and performed certain ritual. A ritual that involved killing an ewe, ram, horse and cow, all being tied together. The rite is a mixture of many traditions and customs, and it is impossible to analyse it in details. Nevertheless, the killing of horses must be an ancient tradition associated with the cult of Veles. Among Indo-Europeans a very common sacrifice of horse was performed to only a few major deities. Hence, in this new perspective, Veles emerges as a deity of great importance, not only as a cattle god, but also as a guardian of the oath, punishing with diseases, and associated with clairvoyance and prophecies. A horse, and possibly some other animals were sacrificed to Veles.

Furthermore, his importance could be fully realised if we look closer into the merger of the cult of Veles with St. Blasius. Most historians without much thought accept the simple notion that Veles was a cattle god transformed into the Christian saint of similar patronage. However, there is no doubt that Greek missionaries and Eastern Slavic clergy view the non-Christian beliefs as evil and tried as hard as possible to eradicate any traces of them. If they did not succeed and had to accept a merger of pagan and Christian beliefs, Veles must have been a god of great importance whose cult was deeply rooted in Eastern Slavic tradition. Only Perun, no doubt a major god of the 10th century Eastern Slavs, managed to achieve the same by "transforming" himself into Saint Elias.

Some further insight into the functions of Veles comes from Baltic mythology. Both Slavs and Balts are linguistically and culturally closely related and share many similar religious concepts. In Baltic

mythology, there is a deity known as Velinas, Velnias or Vels, very well attested in folklore and toponymy, hence indicating the importance of this god in Baltic beliefs. In folklore Velinas appears to be a deity or demon of the dead and cattle. And in some Lithuanian legends Velnias is attributed with clairvoyance. Furthermore, according to Marija Gimbutas and Jaan Puhvel, the underworld demons known as Pikulas, Pikis or Piktis are alternative names of Velinas. There is also evidence that Balts sacrificed horse, bull and he-goat to Velnias. So, the similarity of names and functions strongly indicate that both, Veles and Velinas are conceptually the same deity.

Other historical accounts also mentioned the cult of Veles on a number of occasions. A Veles statue stood in the suburb called Podol, an area apparently a craftsmen and tradesmen quarter. "A Tale of Vladimir's Baptism" tells us that this idol was destroyed shortly after conversion. We probably will never know if Veles was included in Vladimir's pantheon or not. And if not, why his worship was not incorporated into Kievan cult. The cult of Veles is also known from other parts of the Eastern Slavdom. The destruction of a stone idol of Veles was recorded in Rostov district in the 11th century in "The Life of Abraam", a biography of an archimandrite of the Rostov monastery. In the twelfth century source, known as "Hozhdyene Boguroditsi Po Mukam", Veles is mentioned as still being worshipped in some rural areas.

The name of this ancient god was also preserved in Eastern Slavic toponymy. Although many place names may relate to "volos" - hair in Russian, at least names for two places in Belorussian forests are associated with some supernatural forces called Volosin and Volosach, or the river Velesa in the Smolensk district of Russia seems to be derived from Veles. All this suggests that the cult of Veles was widespread among all sections of Eastern Slavic society.

It appears that the borrowing from Baltic mythology could be excluded and Veles-Velinas concept comes from common Balto-Slavic tradition. This is supported by evidence from other than the eastern branch of Slavic people. For example, there is a mount called Veles in Bosnia and a place of the same name, Veles, on the river Vardar in Bulgaria. The name of a Greek port on the Aegean coast of Thessaly, Volos, on the site of ancient Iolcos, may also be of Slavic origin, being a legacy of Slavic penetration into Greece between the 6th and 9th century. In Serbia, one of the names for the constellation of Pleiads

is Vlasici, clearly meaning "children of Vlas". In Western Slavdom, among the Poles of the Tatra Mountains there is a folk tale about the dragon and the mount called Woloszyn (phonetically: Voloshin) , while, in Kashubian folk song appears a female spirit called Velevitka (the root: Vele, Velev). In a certain Bohemian folk tale, a bad wife turns into the goose that flies "beyond the sea, to the Veles". In an old Bohemian carol, condemned by Christian priest, a spirit called "vele" brings the people luck and happiness. The word "vele" is meaningless in Czech language, and seems to be an echo of an ancient pagan chant. And the sixteenth century Czech could say about weird ideas "kuveles ti to naseptal? (what devil put you up to it)". And there is another Czech saying: "u velesa!", as an expression of annoyance.

So, despite this indirect evidence, it seems to be cumulatively convincing that Veles was a major god of various functions and known to all branches of Slavdom. Hence his cult definitely pre-dates the migration period.

STRIBOG

Stribog of the Kievan pantheon appears to be a god of Wind or winds. The word's etymology is unclear, but the root "stri" may derive from the Slavic "stru" (to flow). Whereas the root "bog" means either means god or wealth. An alternative etymology was postulated by Russian scholars Ivanov and Toporov. According to them, the name Stribog derives from "Patribhagos", a Father God. However, this would make Stribog a major god of a first function, at least among the Eastern Slavs. But it seems to be unlikely considering his rather minor position in the Kievan pantheon and low prominence in Slavic mythology and folklore.

There are parallel beliefs in various Indo-European mythologies. For instance in India there was a wind deity called Veyu, also known in ancient Persia as Vayu. Further, a similar deity named Wejopatis was worshipped by the Balts. Besides "The Russian Primary Chronicle" this deity was mentioned in the "Tale Of Igor's Campaign", where the winds were called " Stribog's grandsons". In another passage in the tale, the daughter of Yaroslav of Galich - a 12th century prince - addressed this prayer to the wind:

"Wind, Great Wind!

why, lord, blow perversly?
Why carry those Hinish dartlets
on your light winglets
against my husband's warriors?"

This seems to link the Wind with some military affairs, which finds a conceptual reflection in the military association of India Veyu and Iranian Vayu. Finally, the Stribog also appears in Eastern Slavic toponymy, such as: Stribozhe Lake or place called Stribozh.

But any search for the Stribog cult beyond the borders of Eastern Slavdom does not produce much evidence. Nevertheless, the winds and associated demons are common in Slavic folklore and mythology - from Bulgaria to Poland. Among the Western Slavs, Poles called some winds "stryj", but this may well derive from the "stryj" - a term for father's brother. As for toponymy, there is Strzyboga in central Poland, and in the 13th c., a stream near Gdansk was called Striboc. The latter suggests that Stribog, like Perun and Veles, might have been a common Slavic deity. How developed this cult was in the pre-migration period is hard to determine. Definitely, it was not as prominent and elaborate as it was in the late tenth century Kiev.

The remaining deities of the Kievan pantheon, such as: Khors, Simargl and Mokosh seem to be specifically Eastern Slavic deities and will be discussed later.

Personification and anthropomorphisation

The question of Slavic animism is probably sufficiently answered by the fore-going evidence demonstrating that these major common Slavic deities were to a various degree personified. However, the whole issue should, nonetheless, be explored a bit further. It should be pointed out that the personification and antropomorphisation of Slavic deities is also supported by their very names. All the deities discussed above had different names from their functions or their domains. For example, Svarog was a sky god, while the sky is called "nebo" in all Slavic languages. Dazhbog - "the giver of wealth" or "giving god" was a Sun god and the Sun is called "sonce" in Russian, and similiary in all other Slavonic languages. In a common Slavic myth the Sun takes a

journey across the sky - from the east to the west - in his chariot, pulled by flame breathing white horses. This is a broad and general description of the myth as certain details differ from region to region. Nevertheless, the myth clearly indicates that Slavs worshiped the Sun god but not the Sun itself. The name of Svarozhits, a Fire deity, shows clear son-father relationship with Svarog. The "fire" in Russian is "ogon", in Polish "ogien", and similar in all other Slavonic tongues. It is interesting to note that the noun is cognate to Indian "agni" of the same meaning. Perun is the name of deity, not a thunderbolt, clearly related to personified Indian and Baltic deities of a similar function. The thunderbolt in all Slavic languages is called "grom". Veles etymology, although unclear, does not resemble any Slavic name for domestic animals. The same applies to Stribog, god of winds, as wind is called "veter" in Russian and similar by other Slavs.

Personification and anthropomorphisation of major Slavic deities, should not be a surprise. All the other Indo-European people had a personified and anthropomorphised deities from the earliest times, suggesting that the process began already among the Proto-Indo-Europeans, before divergence into separate linguistic branches. It would be extremely unusual if the Slavs would revert to animism after branching off from Balto-Slavic ethno-linguistic stratum.

To what degree Slavic gods were personified and anthropomorphised is difficult to establish. Possibly it varied not only between various Slavic branches and tribes but also between social classes. It is worth noting that different conceptions of deity are still common today, even in a very uniform and organised religions. For example, for a Calabrian peasant and a Christian Democrat minister in Italy, a concept of Jesus Christ is definitely very different, although both are Roman Catholics.

Beliefs and veneration of multitude of lesser gods, demigods, spirits, waters, wells etc., is an Indo-European phenomena and was common among the Celtic, Germanic, Italic, Slavic and other people, forming a lower layer of their pre-Christian religion. Claims of Slavic animism could emerge as a result of customs and beliefs observed among the Eastern Slavs in Christian times, a situation which arose out of the eradication of major cults where only the lower strata of beliefs survived in folklore, customs and some rites. While at the same time written records about Slavic religion were scarce. We can imagine a person equipped with a book containing Catholic doctrines but

ignorant of the ancient Aztec religion trying to reconstruct pre-Christian beliefs of Mexicans. We would have a similar situation where the upper stratum of Aztec religion was completely wiped out, while Catholicism of the rural Mexicans heavily intermingled with lower stratum of old beliefs. In such a case it would be very likely that conclusion would be: that Aztecs were animists.

"Core" concepts and gods in slavonic cosmology

As the above evidence shows, the Slavic pre-Christian religion was conceptually rooted in the common Indo-European tradition. It evolved into its own relatively uniform set of beliefs in a specific conditions and circumstances. Where especially Northern Iranian influences played an important part. They had major deities and their personification is also well attested. That does not imply that some animistic elements did not exist, especially on the level of lesser spirits.

The expression of particular cults might not have been common among all the Slavs, as the presented evidence often comes from much later times. Nevertheless, the "core" of pre-migration period Slavic religion was acknowledgement of a passive Sky god, known as Svarog. There are some indications that Veles was also a deity ranking among the major gods. The Slavs of pre-migration period were clan based, small tribal societies and it seems logical to conclude that lack of political unity and any central authority led to the demise of Svarog and to some degree of the Veles. Svarog was the creator of two deities, Sun and Fire, that being Dazhbog and Svarozhits respectively. This echoes an Indo-European tradition conceptually. In Rig Veda Sun-Surja is created by Dyaus but also often confused or identified with Fire-Agni. From there, it is not hard to conclude that both deities descended from the Sky god. Perun, and his thunderbolt was most likely perceived as the "fire link" between celestial fire of Sun and earthly fire. This clearly reflects a common Indo-European concept of tri-partite division of the world. At the same time, the original deity of the second function, the god of war, faded into oblivion. However, taking into consideration some war like attributes of Perun, it appears that the original deity of weather and thunder was always to some extent associated with war functions. This is supported by evidence of the association of Indian Parjanya with Indra and military functions. It might have happened that by the time the need for war deity arose,

Perun who fit the it most closely was assigned a function. And this is reinforced by the already presented evidence from Procopius and from Hanoverian Wendland.

Evolution of the eastern slavic beliefs

Now let us return to the end of the tenth century at Kiev, and Vladimir's pantheon. As it was already shown, Perun and Dazhbog are major and common Slavic gods. The case of Stribog seem to be unclear and his cult might have not extended far from the Eastern Slavdom. The remaining deities are without doubt specifically Eastern Slavic.

KHORS

Khors seems to be unique to the Eastern Slavs, and appears to be another version of Dazhbog, that is Sun god. The etymology of his name is Iranian again, and it appears to be cognate to Iranian "khvar", and the modern Persian "Khorsid", both meaning the Sun. It is likely that some easternmost Slavic tribes, possibly those of Tmutorokan, were under much stronger Sarmatian influence, than the rest of the Eastern Slavs. They might then worship the Sun god under its Iranian name. Khors' inclusion in a Kievan pantheon might have been an attempt to bring some tribal god into the mainstream and state organised cult. The cult is not Vladimir's invention as the deity and its worship is mentioned in some other source. He appears in the "Tale of Igor's Campaign", in reference to Vseslav a Russian prince-wizard, of the turn of twelfth century, strongly suggesting his solar character. In the twelfth century "Hozhdyene Boguroditsi Po Mukam", idol of Khors, alongside that of Troyan, Veles and Perun, are mentioned. The survival of Khors' memory into the Christian era suggests that the cult was widespread. And that under the name of Khors some sections of Eastern Slavic society worshiped the Sun.

SIMARGL

Simargl appears to be yet another direct borrowing from the Northern Iranians. In medieval Iranian and Caucasian mythology a bird-like demon with dog head is known as Simurgh, or Senmurv, and was the

creature of a "good omen". What the function of the Eastern Slavic Simargl was is unclear. In later Russian folklore a similarly looking creature is sometimes called Paskudj, and it appeared as a decorative motif between the ninth and thirteenth centuries. There is no evidence for this obscure cult anywhere else in Slavdom and it seems confined to its eastern branch. It is also hard to say how and why it was included in the Kievan pantheon.

MOKOSH

The interpretation of the Mokosh cult, the only female deity in Vladimir's pantheon poses a great difficulty. Above all the etymology of her name is unclear. An Indo-European etymology is unconvincing and speculative. An Ugrofinian borrowing has been suggested as there was a deity or demon called Moksha. However, Ugro-Finian borrowing from the Slavs can not be excluded either. In Russian folklore Mokosh is associated with a variety of activities such as shearing and spinning. There are also some links with sexuality and fertility. It is possible that Mokosh derives from a Slavic root "mok" or "mokr" - wet. And in that case, she could have been somehow associated with "Mother Moist Earth". Taking into consideration that there is no evidence of personification of Mother Earth in Slavic mythology, the possibility is that Mokosh was such an attempt on behalf of Vladimir. But it has to be acknowledged that the above argument is of highly speculative nature.

Foreign influence on Slavic religion

There is no doubt that long association of Slavs with Iranians left a visible mark on their beliefs. Their religion absorbed and incorporated numerous Iranian elements, nevertheless, Slavic beliefs had developed on their own.

In this context the deities like Svarog, Svarozhits, Dazhbog, Veles and Stribog should be regarded as Slavic, rather than Iranian. Only Khors and Simargl are clear, and direct borrowings from Northern Iranian pantheon. Finally, the knowledge about Mokosh and her cult is so obscure that any claims in regard to her remain in the sphere of speculations.

It is interesting to note that by an overwhelming majority, the champions of Slavic animism and supporters of Norman origin of organised cult in Kiev never substantiate their claims, rarely going beyond simple statement without any evidence being presented. Such statements were made by Alexinsky and Fedotov. For Vlasto and Turville-Petre, Veles was a rustic Slavic deity while Perun a "Varangian god". Additionally, Turville-Petre says that Perun is not well attested in Slavonic mythology, a claim already disproved by the above work. And in a recent publication, titled "Mother Russia", Joanna Hubbs claimed strong Scandinavian elements in Vladimir's pantheon, and that Thor was a prototype for Perun. Again, no evidence presented. As far as the author's research goes, only Nora Chadwick attempted to prove her point in the 1945 publication on Russian history. However, before addressing Chadwick's claims, let's analyse the Kievan cult in the context of possible Scandinavian influence.

Firstly, we can look into the organisational aspect of religious life in Kiev. One of the most common shortfalls in addressing the Slavic religion is a failure to recognize that like any living religion, it was not a static phenomenon. Any religion serves the social function, appropriate for the society that practices it, and both evolve together. Hence in the clan based, small tribal society, there is no need for elaborate, highly organised and hierarchical cults. On the other hand in supra-tribal society, socio-political realities facilitate the emergence of more complex and hierarchical religion. During the migration period and shortly after - that is between the sixth and ninth centuries - the Slavic societies underwent transformation from a clan based to a large tribal form of socio-political organisation. In the case of the Eastern Slavs, this was partly a result of their expansion to the north and east, The process is facilitated when people are on the move, colonising new territories, encountering new challenging environments, circumstances and often hostile locals. This undoubtedly created a need for better hierarchical organisation and more clearly defined leadership. Also, during that period, Eastern Slavs came into the contact with, and often were subjugated by nomadic or semi-nomadic people such as Huns, Avars and Khazars. This also stimulated internal socio-political changes. Consequently, by the 9th century, Eastern Slavs were already organised into supra-tribal political units, such as: Polyane, Kriviche, Drevlyane and others. In this context, the religion of the Eastern Slavs had to serve new and different functions, and became more organised, elaborated, and hierarchical.

It has to be acknowledged that Scandinavian military organisation and prowess as well as their mercantile spirit played a significant part in the foundation of Kievan Rus'. Nevertheless, the Scandinavian impact on the Eastern Slavs is frequently exaggerated. It is often overlooked that the Scandinavians did not have much to offer in political and religious spheres. Above all, Sweden did not exist as such by then, and on its territory there were a number of independent supra-tribal political units. And those principalities were more or less on a par with the large, regional, tribal political entities of the Eastern Slavdom. In the religious sphere, Scandinavians were also on a similar level. Their mythology was often as inconsistent as in the case of the Slavs. It is worthwhile to note, that a formal priesthood did not exist in Scandinavia until the tenth-eleventh century. Furthermore, Scandinavians did not have temples and worshipped their gods at open shrines. It is commonly accepted that later temples and priesthood (from subsequent centuries) came into being as a result of unification trends and to some extent as a response to the ideological challenge of Christianity. So, there is no reason to believe that the evolution of Eastern Slavic religion was the result of any direct Scandinavian influence.

Second, we can look into the cult of Perun and how it acquired its war god characteristics and developed henotheistic tendencies. It is hard to say when the atmospheric functions of this deity were surpassed by the military functions. Nevertheless, it is likely that it took place just before the Slavic migration began. This is supported by the fore-going evidence from Hanoverian Wendland, where Perun was conceptually perceived as a similar deity to the Germanic Thor/Donar, and where later contacts with Eastern Slavdom could be safely excluded. It seems natural that the warlike deities would become of greater importance in the societies engaged in frequent warfare. And this is the case of the Eastern Slavs during their northern and eastern expansion of the migration period, as well as a result of later constant conflicts with the people of the steppes. A similar development took place among the Southern Slavs, who conquered and colonised the Balkans. This is confirmed by the previously cited Procopius account that their dominant deity was a thunder god - no doubt Perun himself. On the other hand, it appears that among the Polish tribes, the cult of Perun never became dominant. Simply because they were surrounded by fellow Slavs and, as a consequence, sheltered from other hostile people. This of course does not imply that inter-tribal warfare among

the Slavs did not exist. It did exist, but such inter-tribal conflicts were of a different nature, magnitude and consequences. A similar development took place among the people of Scandinavia, where the cult of Thor gained prominence from the outset of the Viking era. , that is, when warfare became of greater importance to their society.

Third, we explore the close association of the Perun cult and the oak tree. There is evidence that sacred and consecrated oaks were situated in some form of enclosure, usually, surrounded by a ditch, a stone ring or a fence. Here sacrifices and offerings were made to Perun. The most common sacrificial animal was a cock, but sometimes on special occasions a bull, bear or he-goat. The sacrificial animals were killed and consumed at the communal eating event. It was believed that such a feast would strengthen the bonds between the group's members. This association clearly derives from common Indo-European heritage, shared by most of the European people. The oak was a holy tree not only of Germanic Thor/Donar but also of Italic Jupiter, Baltic Perkunas and Celtic Taranis. Also, Greek Zeus was associated with this tree. This universal association of thunder gods with an oak could be explained in the following terms. As oaks are quite tall and large trees, they must have been struck by lightning more often than any other trees. So, this coincidence must have been seen by ancient Indo-Europeans as caused by divine power. There is also a linguistic association of thunder gods with an oak tree. The Indo-European root "perg" - to strike, found in Perun and Perkunas, also appears in oak related terms. In Latin an oak is "quercus", where Indo-European "p" was replaced by Latin "q" . In Celtic "hercos" means "oak forest", where "h" replaced "p". While in Gothic, "fairguni", means "hill covered with oaks", with a typical Germanic change of Indo-European "p" into Germanic "f".

Fourth, in popular Slavic mythology Perun's magic weapon was a bow and arrow. The Slavs believed that arrow-like stones were Perun's thunderbolts. They were called (stryela) - arrow, arrow-bolt, and had certain magic properties when found. Evidence for this belief is overwhelming, and comes from the Ukraine, Slovenia, Serbia and Poland. This again echoes the ancient Indo-European tradition as arrows were associated with the Indian god Parjanya. At the same time, the most recognisable attribute of Baltic Perkunas was an axe same like the Germanic Thor/Donar who wielded and threw an axe or stone hammer.

Fifth, we can explore a shrine devoted to Vladimir's pantheon. Although we have no description of the Kievan site, presumably a similar shrine was excavated near Novgorod. It is known from historical records that Novgorod had a shrine for Perun and the site excavated nearby at Peryn' - must be the one. It was an open, circular site 33 metres in diameter enclosed by a ditch, in which a number of sacred fires were burning. A number of large post holes and a centrally located fragments of rectangular stone were interpreted as being bases for the idols. A similar, but smaller site was excavated near Zhitomir on the river Khnylopiata in Ukraine which dated from the second half of the ninth century. Numerous sites, similar to the fore-going, were unearthed all over Slavdom. Just to list a few, there were two enclosures at Trzebiatow and one at Smordzin dated to the ninth and tenth century. Stone encircled sites were located on mount Chermno, mount Gora Grodowa, Paleni hill, near Wapiennica in Silesia and mount Chwirty Krzyzh in Kielce district (all in Poland - the ninth - tenth century). Further, in Bohemia circular, ditched sites were unearthed at Old Kounim and at Pohansko, both from the ninth century. Generally speaking, the early Slavs did not build temples, but neither did the Scandinavians before the tenth-eleventh century. As a matter of fact the early ancient Indians, Iranians, Celts and Romans, also worshipped their deities in the open. For many Indo-European people the sacred places, were often: the trees or groves; springs and lake; or open, fenced or stone encircled enclosures. Hence, there are no reasons to believe that open, circular shrines of Eastern Slavdom bear any Scandinavian influence. The wooden or sometimes stone idols, often with a moustache are also common finds across Slavdom, dating from the sixth to eleventh centuries. Here again there is no evidence for Norse influence.

Now returning to Nora Chadwick. A major problem with her interpretation is her initial assumption that Scandinavian pre-Christian religion was somehow superior to that of the Baltic and Slavic peoples, an issue already briefly addressed. In her interpretation of the 971 treaty with the Byzantines, she postulate that a parallel exists with an Icelandic oath taken on a golden ring where Freyr, Njordr and an unspecified "almighty god" were invoked. She claimed that the name of Veles derives from the Scandinavian Volsi: a horse penis and a symbol of fertility from the "Saga Of King Olaf Tryggvason". Then by associating Volsi with the fertility attributes of the god Freyr, she equated Veles with Freyr. In the next step of her reasoning, she

introduced Thor as "almighty god" and equated him with Perun. This was followed then by the interpretation of a passage in the Russo-Byzantine treaty, "slain by their own weapon", as a reference to Odin/Wodan. Finally, she arriving at the conclusion that the 971 treaty was really sworn on Odin, Thor and Freyr. However, this interpretation poses serious problems. The passage "(da budem zoloti yako zoloto) - become yellow as a gold", already explained in terms of sickness as a punishment for breaking the oath, has no conceptual link with the Icelandic golden ring. A brief account of laying some gold under the Perun idol by prince Igor in 945, as a part of the oath is hard to interpret and explain. Unfortunately,

"The Russian Primary Chronicle" does not specify whether the "gold" of Igor's was a personal jewellery, some booty or some other artefacts. Consequently, it does not offer any clues which could assist in the interpretation of its symbolism and it could be freely interpreted or linked with most of the religions. Using Chadwick's logic we may come to the conclusion that the Kievan cult was influenced by Roman Catholicism. After all, Catholics are known to make golden votive offerings to their Saints.

Although, the authenticity and antiquity of the "horse penis - Volsi" story has been questioned, its links with god Freyr seem plausible. Nevertheless, this interpretation fails to explain how Freyr under the name Velinas, became a major deity of the Baltic people. And how, under the Slavic name Veles, it became known among the Western and Southern Slavs (see earlier paragraph on Volos). In a subsequent step in her study, Chadwick conveniently omitted Njordr and more or less out of the blue introduced Odin and Thor - mentioned by name neither in Icelandic oath or Russo-Byzantine treaty. Hence, taking into consideration that the entire interpretation is based on a lengthy sequence of highly speculative arguments it should rather be disregarded.

Also, Nora Chadwick claimed that the name of the Kievan deity Khors derives from the Anglo-Saxon "hors" and Old Norse "hross" - both meaning: horse - and that Khors did not appear in other sources. Then by association of horse with horse penis she also linked Khors with both Volsi and Volos. Evidently, she was unaware that this god was mentioned together with Veles and other deities in " - Hozhdyene Boguroditsi Po Mukam", and once more in "Tale of Igors Campaign". But above all, taking into consideration strong and undisputable

Northern Iranian influence on the Slavic religion and languages, the Iranian etymology of Khors and his solar association appear to be more plausible.

All together Nora Chadwick's theories on the origins of later pagan Eastern Slavic religion should rather be addressed in a freudian rather than historical context.

Nevertheless, taking into consideration that the Varangians and Slavs co-existed for centuries in the land of Rus', we could suspect that some diffusion of religious elements took place. For example, a number of ship burials were reported in Russia. This is obviously a Scandinavian custom with similar burials found all over Scandinavia, in Iceland, Brittany and England. It is hard to say who was buried there, but it is likely that at least in some cases the Slavic elite might have adopted these Scandinavian burial custom.

It is possible that prince Igor's act of laying down his weapons under Perun's idol , reflected a Scandinavian ritual. All Germanic people revered their swords resulting in many of them endowed with magical and supernatural powers. On the other hand, other people like Scythians worshipped a sword as a war god symbol and are known to perform the sacrifice of a horse and cattle to it. As a matter of fact "celebration" of weapons could be viewed as any warrior ritual, not exclusively Germanic.

On the contrary, there is some evidence of slavization of Varangian beliefs in Kievan Rus'. For example, according to Al Masudi, wives of deceased prominent Slavs were burned alive with their husbands. There is no reason to doubt the account as similar customs were practiced by Indians and Sarmatians. However, an account by another Arab trader of the early tenth century, referring to the Varangian Russes, tells as that they buried alive the wives of important man when he dies. There is no evidence for that practice among any other Germanic people and it is reasonable to assume that it was adopted by Varangians from the Eastern Slavs. It is also worth noting that, according to "The Russian Primary Chronicle" treaties with the Byzantines, in 907, 945 and 971 were sworn by the Russes on Perun. Regardless of conceptual similarities between the Germanic Thor and the Slavic Perun, the very fact that they swore by a Slavic rather than Scandinavian deity suggests a high degree of slavization of Varangian beliefs.

Conclusion

In summary, it has to be acknowledged that the reconstruction of the "core" Slavic beliefs (presented above) may be a subject of criticism, and certain details subject to different interpretations. Nevertheless, it could be said that the pre-migration religion of Slavs was clearly and deeply rooted in the common Indo-European tradition. In this period the Slavic religion shows certain conceptual uniformity but was not a single set of beliefs. It displayed very strong and an indisputable Northern Iranian influence, in both religious concepts and origins of many deities.

As fore-going work shows, the alledged animism of pre-Christian Slavic beliefs appeared to be a hard dying legacy of biases of the two German historians of 30's and early 40's, Winecke and Franz; and also of the general lack of a serious research on the subject.

Moreover, Vladimir's pantheon was not a foreign, Scandinavian elite cult. It is reasonable to assume that certain Norman elements were incorporated into the Kievan cult but their impact is hardly traceable. In principle, Vladimir's pantheon was a response to internal socio-political changes and the external needs of the emerging Eastern Slavic state. It was a henotheistic and dynastic cult focussing on the deity which best served state building purposes - Perun. It was a product of the long evolution of the Eastern Slavic religion which in post-migration times diverged from a relative conceptual unity of the common Slavic beliefs. Eastern Slavic beliefs evolved in specific geographic, ethnic and political conditions, characteristic for Eastern Europe. Its development was the response to those circumstances. Serving new needs and purposes, the Kievan cult must have incorporated new attributes and acquired a new dimension. Nevertheless, those new elements were drawn mainly from Slavic and Northern Iranian heritage, rather than from the Scandinavian one.

Pagan ages in Poland

By Margi B.

Polish Supernatural Spirits

Bannik - The Bathhouse Spirit. Bathhouses resembled saunas that had an inner steaming room and an outer changing room. A place where women gave birth and practiced divinations, the bathhouse was strongly endowed with vital forces. The third firing (or fourth, depending on tradition) was the offering to the Bannik, and no Christian images were allowed as it might offend the occupants.

Boginki - "Little Goddess" Traditionally, covens of old women would perform sacrifices and rituals for the nymphs of the riverbanks. Boginki were said to steal babies from their human parents that were replaced with Odmience - the Changed Ones. These spirits are said to be the original deities of life and predate the sky gods. They also appear to be forerunners of the Rusalki.

Djablek - An imp who plays practical jokes; in modern terminology now means "demon or "devil." As always, children in families who have too much energy and are always in mischief are called "djablek" in a loving, but amused way.

Dogoda - Gentle Spirit of the West Wind, associated with love.

Dola - The protective spirits which embody human fate. They can appear in the guises of a God, a cat, a man, a mouse, or a woman. They have their own preferences and provinces; and they would hound you if you made choices that were not planned by Fate.

Domowije - The Grandfather house spirit; resembles a male head of a family - living or dead. The favorite places for these spirits to live is the threshold under the door or under the stove. He is responsible for

maintaining peace and order in the household. Peasants made sure to feed him nightly, in return for being well taken care of and protected. When a new house is constructed, the owner would attract one of these spirits by placing a piece of bread down before the stove was put in. Special care was taken to make sure to only obtain pets and farm animals he liked, but the domowije would torment the ones he didn't care for. Salted bread wrapped in a white cloth appeases this spirit. Putting clean white linen in his room was an invitation to eat a meal with the family. Hanging old shoes in the yard makes him happy as well. The Domowije's behavior could foretell or forewarn about the future. He will pull hair to warn a woman of danger from an abusive man. He would moan and howl to warn of coming trouble. If he shows himself, it forewarns of death, if weeping it is said to be a death in the family. If he is laughing there are good times to be expected. If he strums a comb there is a wedding in the future.

Kikimora - A female house spirit that is sometimes said to be married to the Domowije. She usually lives behind the stove or in the cellar. She will look after the chickens and the housework if the home is well kept. If not, she will tickle, whistle, and whine at the children at night. She comes out at night to spin; if she appears spinning to someone it is said that person will die. To appease an angry Kikimora it is said one should wash all the pots and pans in a fern tea. She is said to look like an average woman with her hair down (Slavic women kept their heads covered).

Lakanica - A meadow spirit; Polish field spirit.

Leszi - Male woodlands elves who protect wild animals and have a close bond with the wolf. He is also seen in the company of bears. He is said to shape-shift to any size, animal or plant. He is the Forest Lord and carries a club to express his rulership in the wood. If one could be friends with the Leszi, he would teach them the secrets of magic.

Mamuna - a highlander Polish spirit said to lead one down the wrong path, literally and figuratively.

Mamony - The Polish Wild Woman spirit of the forest. She resembles such nature goddesses as Artemis.

Mora - Souls of living people that leave the body during the night, and are seen as wisps of straw or hair or as moths.

Naw - Demons from the souls of persons that had met a tragic death or premature death.

Neuri - Shape-shifters of uncertain origins. They are said to be sorcerers that can take the shape of a wolf for one week once a year.

Nocnitsa - "Night Hag," nightmare Spirit that also goes by the names Krisky and Plaksy. She is known in Bulgaria as Gorska Makua.

Odmience - Changelings left behind by the Boginki.

Polewiki - A field spirit that appears as a deformed dwarf with different colored eyes and grass for hair. He appears either at noon or sunset and wears either all black or all white. He will lead wandering people in a field astray; give them diseases or ride them over with his horse if he finds them asleep. If a person falls asleep on the job after drinking, the Polewiki might murder them. Appeasing the Polewiki requires two eggs and a rooster, a toad and crow placed in a ditch when no one is looking. Poland was named after the word Pole, which means field.

Polundica - The whirlwind named "Lady Midday," who makes herself more evident in the middle of hot summer days. She takes the form of whirling dust clouds and carries a scythe. She will stop people in the field to ask them difficult questions or engage them in conversation. If anyone fails to answer a question or tries to change the subject, she will cut off their head or strike them with illness. She

may appear as an old hag or beautiful woman, or a 12 year old girl; and she was useful in scaring children away from valuable crops. She is only seen on the hottest part of the day and is a personification of a sun-stroke.

Psoтник - Elves, "mischief makers."

Rarog - A hawk, falcon, or fiery dwarf who turns himself into a whirlwind. The word for whirlwind seems to be a late bastardization of the name Swarog. In Lusitania to the people of Urals it was customary to throw a knife into a whirlwind to kill the demon residing in it. Bulgarians, Russians, and Pommeranians still cast themselves face down before a whirlwind to ward off misfortune and illness. Russians would shout "a belt around your neck!" in order to strangle the demon.

Rusalje - They are the Spirits that live in the waters from Fall to Spring; in some traditions they reside in the waters from Summer to Fall. In other tales, they become the Sky Women when they return from the waters. They are called Queen of Fairies and it is said only witches dared to swim with the Rusalje. The belief that the thunder and lightening of spring time was brought by the Sky Women mating with the thunder gods; so Spring festivals included celebrating the return of the Rusalje from the waters by placing wreaths on the waters, circle dances, and fire festivals. They brought moisture to field and forest.

Sky Women - The warm weather incarnations of the Rusalka. Slavic women would go out in the first snow fall and make snow women to honor them, as it is believed to be brought by the Sky Women.

Smierna - Polish Spirit of Death.

Spor - These spirits made the corn grow, and the cattle mature. The Spirit of fertility; and it is said every family invoked them.

Strzyga - Vampires in Slavic culture that had two hearts and two souls, as well as two sets of teeth, but one set growing in normally would pinpoint a Strzyga. When they die, only one soul gets passed on, and the other soul causes the deceased Strzyga to come alive and prey upon other living beings. Burying the body in a separate place than the removed head is said to prevent Strzyga from rising back from the dead; but also burying the body face down with a sickle around it's head is said to work as well.

Sudice (The Fates) - Spirits of judgement that meted out fortune, destiny, judgement and in some cases, fatality.

Tloka - The Spirit of neighborly compassion which compels you to put aside disagreements to come to the aid of a community member in financial trouble or help a neighbor repair a damaged home.

Topieke - Water spirits of human souls that died drowning, residing in the element of their own demise.

Treasurer/Karzelek - They live in mines and underground workings and are the guardians of gems, crystals, and precious metals. They will protect miners from danger, and lead them back when they are lost. They will also lead them to veins of ore. To people who are evil or insult them they are deadly; pushing them into dark chasms or send tunnels crashing down upon them. Hurling rocks, whistling or covering one's head are actions that are offensive to the Treasurer; who will warn the offender with handfuls of pelted soil in their direction before taking serious action. The word for treasurers is still a mystery, the Polish name being the closest resemblance.

Wila - Reputed in Poland and Lithuania to be the shape-shifting souls of the dead that were believed to visit the homes of their families. Peasants would lay flowers in the entrances to caves where they believed the Wila resided. Offerings for the Wila consist of ribbons, round cakes, vegetables, fresh fruit or other flowers left at sacred trees, fairy caves and wells. They are the female spirits that lived in the

mountains, woods, and clouds that could shape-shift into horses, falcons, or swans also.

Wodjanoj - Male water spirits that are master shape-shifters that are said to live in underwater palaces made from the treasures of sunken ships. They are reported to marry the Rusalki; and are asked to help by fishermen by placing a pinch of tobacco in the water and say "Here's your tobacco, Lord Wodjanoj, now give me a fish." A Wodjanoj can be appeased by giving him your first fish or pouring butter into the water. Millers, beekeepers, and fisherman were protected by the Wodjanoj.

Zors - Male spirits of Daytime.

Polish Folk Magic

Circles - Most Slavic people worshipped in natural circles and groves; and it plays a large part in all kinds of magic. In all traditions, circles can be made of with lighted candles, drawing circles in the soil, or with natural objects and tools. They are used to surround evil or protect oneself from it. (*see also - Matka Ziema*)

Crossroads - As in other European traditions, the crossroads are a sacred and magical place where both divination and invocations were uttered. Talismans and amulets were hung or buried there, as well as other spell work was conducted. The crossroads were a place where all places and directions meet; and all time faded away into the present moment.

Czarwonica - The Polish word for witch, entrantress or spellbinder.

Divination - Forms of divination that were practiced in Poland included the following: Candle wax dripped in a glass of water was held up to the light for interpretation; herbs thrown on the fire produced smoke that could be interpreted by the shape of patterns it

made; finding pysanky patterns in the natural world would yield a prediction of fortune.

Fire Flowers - To find this powerful plant, the seeker had to go into the forest before midnight on the Eve of Kupala. The flower itself would climb up the stalk of the fern and bloom into brightness so bright no one would look at it, precisely at midnight. A circle must be drawn around it in order to harvest it, and the seeker had to deal with demons trying to trick him/her into distracting them from their goal. It was said that if you answer the voices, or falter during the task or it would sacrifice their own lives. Anyone finding this flower gained the ability to read minds, finding treasure, and repel all evils.

Herbs - I have constructed a short list of non-pysanky related plants that are used in Polish folk customs. Disclaimer - I do not suggest anyone ingest or otherwise use these herbs in any of the methods shown here without the approval of a qualified physician.

Belladonna - This plant is found chiefly in the Carpathian region of Poland, and was listed as an ingredient in old flying ointment recipes. This led to the belief that it has always been associated with witches and evil. This plant is a hallucinogenic and very deadly.

Bellflower - Children suffering from consumption were bathed in this herb; and the results of skin darkening was used to divine whether they lived or would die. If the skin darkened, they would survive. If the skin stayed pale and sickly, the child would die.

Birch - A harbinger of spring, and it is said to bring good fortune and protect against witches and the evil eye.

Burnette Saxifrage - An herb that in folklore is said to protect you from death by eating or drinking it.

Juniper - On the Holy Day of Dyngusy, branches were used to playfully whip blessings onto each other.

Lady's Mantle - This herb would disperse storm clouds when thrown into a fire or hung into a window.

Linden Tree - The sacred tree that protected against evil spirits and lightning, commonly planted in front of houses to keep evil from entering. It was also a place to leave offerings and to hold folk rituals. The Blessed Mother is said to hiding in the tree, and since lightning didn't strike it - it also became a symbol of luck. It is also a symbol of family, faith, and the good life.

Meliot - Used as incense for protection to those who had been given the evil eye. May wine was flavored with this herb.

Mint - Thought of as a Universal healing herb, the most common use was for aid of digestion.

White Bryony - This herb was fenced in when it was found on property to protect it; as the leaves resemble a child and digging it up would destroy their own happiness. It is said that the stems and leaves from this plant were used in spells and incantations.

Knots - Knots performed powerful magic; and were used to bind the intent into the working. Knots in willows were considered powerful catalysts in love magic.

Ladanki - Medicine and charm bags that were worn on the belt or around the neck. Ladanki contained written spells, herbs, stones, amulets and talismans.

Lechebnik - A Russian word for charm books and no czarwonica would be worth his/her salt without one. This word carries into Polish

as well, the root word from which is Lecznie - meaning to heal or cures.

The Magic Belt of Poland - The original belt was 2.28m (89" long) parchment scroll with the magic symbols inscribed on the outside and the prayers for them written on the inside of the Belt. The Knights of Poland to protect them from all possible danger used it. The original source of protective magic probably dates to before 1600 AD in Christian magic, however the symbols might be from pagan antiquity. The Magic Belt was originally exhibited by the Archeology Department of the Warsaw University in 1922, but disappeared at the end of WWII. Invoking the talismans, one would take the belt off and stand in a circle with their hair loose. Belts held knives, ladanki and were wore by both women and men. It is possible in these everyday belts and magic belts were embossed with the symbols and possibly come from the origin of the Key of Solomon. For the Magic Belt talismans see Sources at the bottom of the page.

Matka Ziema - The Polish call her this name; and she is called Moist Mother Earth and the Mother of Plants. Poetic phrase describes her as "she who raises flowers." The Earth was the Supreme Being; and is the Universal Life force and the fabric of becoming. Oaths were made binding by touching the Earth. Sins were confessed to the Earth before death. She was worshipped in her natural form; and was not given a human personage or likeness. A traditional invocation to Matka Ziema; with a jar of hemp oil:

East - "Mother Earth, subdue every evil and unclean being so that he may not cast a spell on us nor do us any harm."

West - "Mother Earth, engulf the unclean power in thy boiling pits, and in thy burning fires."

South - "Mother Earth, calm the winds coming from the South and all bad weather. Calm the moving sands and whirlwinds."

North - "Mother Earth, calm the North winds and clouds, subdue the snowstorms and the cold." The jar, which held the oil, is buried after each invocation and offering is made at each Quarter. (*Slavonic mythology 1977:287*)

In Russia there was a quite terrifying ritual dedicated to Matka Ziema, and happened on the eve of the 1st World War to preserve their village against a plague of cholera. At midnight the older women circled the village, summoning the other women without the knowledge of the men. They would choose nine maidens and three widows who would be led out of the village. They would all undress down to their shifts. The maidens let down their hair, and the widows covered their heads with white shawls. They seized ploughs, the maidens armed themselves with scythes, and others would grab various objects of terrifying appearance including the skulls of animals. The procession would then march around the village, howling and shrieking, while they ploughed a furrow to permit the powerful spirits of the Earth to emerge, and to annihilate the germs of evil. Any man who had the bad luck to meet the procession was felled without mercy. (*Slavonic Mythology 1977:287*)

Pysanky - Decorated eggs. They themselves symbolize Spring, birth, rebirth and fertility. They represent the origin of life, the Universe, and the equality of polar powers. Traditionally, pysanky eggs were decorated by women and girls; who are taught the age-old rituals passed down from the Babci or Grandmother. The traditional working is done after dark in a quiet place. This ensures that concentration, meditation, and ritual consciousness can be performed with continuance. The artist should make an effort to be calm and anger free during the previous day. A white tablecloth covers the workspace, and your candle is set in the middle of the table. Bread and salt are placed behind the candle, flowers and incense to the right and a cup of water to the left. The water in which boiled-style eggs were prepared is meaningful, used to wash in, bless with and used to anoint beehives to bring plenty of sweet tasting honey. It was also poured along property lines to protect against the ravages of weather, also against thunder and lightening. It is traditional that the most magical, ancient pysanky had four or five colors used with them.

Spoiling - A term used to mean a curse being on someone, or working magic against someone. One way of doing this is measuring out the exact length of someone's footprint with a string, and then

burning the string. A footprint in mud or snow was dug up and buried under the victim's house to cause grief. Spoiling may be averted by lighting a candle if you not face to face with the culprit, or spitting on the ground, and by throwing dirt in the direction of the culprit walking away.

Szeptem - Polish for "in a whisper," the way of sending a spell on the winds. Used to enchant objects.

Thresholds - A place that was marked a crossover between the worlds as well as home space and the outside world. It is a place to hide written spells or magical objects. It wasn't considered acceptable to accept anything over the threshold, or to return over it once you have crossed it to start a journey. It was ill advised to cross it with the left foot first, as you would be cross into the Otherworld.

Zagavory - Verbal spells that were used the most effectively by folk magicians in their methods of spell work. They also used the whispers that were said to enchant objects. Verbal spells were burned or sent to the winds.

Zawlanie - The "word of power," a sound or word that focuses a person's energies into the workings. It is also a trigger to send one into the dream world.

Znak - A talisman and/or amulet, or a charm.

Znakhari - Practitioners of folk magic who were healers, herbalists, midwives, and were known as wise women and cunning men. Znakharka is the feminine form, and znakhar is the masculine. The znakhari would detect poison, and interpret dreams to detect witchcraft and counteract the evil eye and baneful spells. They did not conjure spirits, but use the whispers, which are more important than the amulets or talismans used in the spellwork.

Polish Pagan Pantheon

Bailobog - The white God of the waxing year; Guardian of the summer. Bailobog would defeat his brother in battle every Koliada to take his rightful place as the ruler of the waxing year. At Kupalo, Czarnobog would defeat Bailobog in battle to assume his position of ruler of the waning half of the year. Bailobog is said only to appear by day to assist travelers to find their way out of dark forests or reapers in the fields.

Czarnobog - The black god of the waning year. This particular is one source of inspiration for the music of Moussorsky's "Night on Bald Mountain" as he is portrayed as the Black God of evil, woe, and grief. He is also known as the God of Chaos and Night; and as the black God of the Dead.

Dazbog - The Sun God who lives in the Palace of the East; the land of eternal summer and plenty. Each morning he emerged from the arms of the Zorya to ride his chariot drawn by three horses: one is gold, one is silver, and one is diamond. In Russian lore he is said to begin the day as an infant and died an old man at the end of the daylight.

Dziewona - The Slavic Diana, whose name is said to appear very late in Slavic history. However, all names that are derivative of Slavic language translate to "The Maiden." She equates to the goddess Diana in name and function. She is more widespread in Slavic countries, where in other cultures she is a minor deity. She is the Polish virginal Goddess who is the huntress of the forest, and is associated with the Moon, spring, agriculture and weather.

Dzyczyleya - Polish Goddess of love and marriage and of sexuality and fertility. She is similar to Venus, Aphrodite, and other goddesses of this nature.

Jarilo - God of spring fertility, represented as a young man dressed in white with a wheat wreath on his head, wheat ears in his right hand and a human head in his left hand. Christianity associates him with Saint George.

Jeza or Jezi Baba - Wild woman goddess, the dark lady and mistress of magic. She is also seen as a forest spirit that leads hosts of spirits. Jezi Baba is portrayed as a witch who flies through the air in a mortar using the pestle as a rudder sweeping away the tracks behind her with a broom made out of human hair. She lives in a house that revolves around by means of three pairs of chicken legs that dance. Her fence outside was made with human bones that had skulls atop of them. The keyhole to her front door was a mouth filled with sharp teeth. She aids those who are pure of heart; and eat the souls of those that were not visiting her prepared and clean of spirit. She is said to be the Guardian Spirit of the fountain of the water of life. If she doesn't kill you, she can help you with advice and magical gifts.

Kupala - Goddess of herbs, sorcery, sex, and midsummer. She is also the Water Mother, associated with trees, herbs, and flowers. Her celebration falls upon the Summer solstice. It was a sacred holy day honoring the two most important elements of Fire and Water. Kupalo is a male form of Kupala, and recognized in other Slavic regions. Kupalo is associated with Saint John, June 24th being his feast day.

Lada - Goddess of harmony, merriment, youth, love and beauty. Her time is in the year of May; and is known as the Lady of the Flowers. Sacred to her is the linden and purple loosestrife. She is also the Goddess of order and manifested beauty. She is represented as a girl with a flower wreath on her head, dressed in white carrying flowers. She and her brother Lado are credited with creating the fertility of the greening world as they join May festivals in spirit with the people. They dance in each other's embrace, and each place their feet touch springs forth new flowers in full bloom. They are also lovers.

Lado - The God of marriage, mirth, pleasure and general happiness. The divine husband of Lada whom together they represent marriage, pleasures and happiness. He seems synonymous with the Spring fertility god Jarilo as Lada is with Jarila. Those soon to be married make sacrifices to him to ensure a satisfactory union.

Marzanna - Polish goddess of death and winter. Her name comes from Slavic words meaning to "freeze" or "frozen," and is the meaning of the month of March. She was ritually burned and drowned yearly; effigies made with the last straw of last years' harvest, dressed in white with a broom and cycle. She is decorated with ribbons, myrtle, or woodruff and was carried in a procession of the people to a river. They burned and drowned her to rid themselves of the cold, dark season of death to welcome the spring. Both were necessary as Sun (fire) and Rainfall (water) were necessary for the fertility of the year's crops. In Christian times she is equated with Saint Maria, and is the consort of Dazbog, who is associated with Saint Ivan. On Saint Ivan's day(summer solstice again); Mary is said to bathe with together with Ivan in a ritual purification. Mary sits on a stone or a golden throne and sews, suggesting that she might be associated with fate and death. Mary is also associated with swans.

Marzyana - Polish Goddess of the grain, presiding over harvest and can be comparable to Demeter.

Matka Gabia - Polish Goddess of home, hearth, and patron of it's care.

Miesiac - The Moon Deity; seen as both male and female. In both mythology of male and female deification, the moon is revered with the power to heal. As the Sun's wife (Dazbog's wife), she grows older during the winter and moves away from her husband, but to return to him in the Summer when her youth returns. She is the mother of the stars with Dazbog as well. In the mythology of the Moon being male, he is the Dazbog's bald uncle and consort of Dennitsa (Zorya Dnieca). Associated with the waxing and waning phases of dying but then being revived. In one myth, the Moon was married to a Sun Goddess but seduced Dennitsa. As punishment, Piorun struck his face, scarring him to account for the phases of the moon. In another version, his phases are his shame as he turns away from the Sun Goddess that was unfaithful to him. His festival seems to fall on midsummer's day.

Mokosz - Goddess of home and hearth, and female occupations such as spinning, weaving and fate. She is called Mokusa also in Polish folklore, and at night, women would leave strands of fleece beside the stove in her honor. She is seen as the Goddess of fertility, bounty, as well as occult knowledge and divination. Her sacred day is Friday; and her feast day falls between October 25th and November 1st. One reference fixes this day to October 28th. She was offered vegetables, which was the focal point of the feast day. It was said that women who made satisfactory offerings would be helped with their laundry, denoting her as a Water Goddess. This is illustrated by the fact that rainfall is sometimes called "Mokosz's milk." In Christian times she became conflated with the Virgin Mary and Saint Paraskeva. She is sovereign over the Domowije and the patroness of midwifery. In one myth, she is the wife of Piorun, and was represented as a woman with a large head, long arms and unkept hair. In another myth she is wife of Swarog, which created a marriage of heaven and Earth.

Oynyena Maria - Slavic "Fiery Mary," a fire goddess who assists and counsels the thunder God Piorun.

Percunatel - A Polish goddess that seems to be Piorun's own mother.

Piorun - Pan-Slavic god of lightening, storm, thunder and war-like attributes, as he is the patron of nobility and armies. He is lord of the forest and mountains; and his sacred tree is the oak in Lithuania. He is also seen as a God of Justice and Law. He was represented as a man with silver hair and a golden mustache; armed with arrows and stones. Eight eternal flames, or bonfires, or torches accompanied his images. Any place where lightening struck was considered sanctified in the eyes of the Poles, as holy places of healing and power; as anything struck by lightening is said to have heavenly spark and fire still residing within. Piorun's sacrificial animals included roosters, bears, bulls, and he-goats. Consumption of these animals was believed to have the person absorb the essence of God, which parallels modern communion in Christianity. In Christianity he is also conflated with

Saint Elya (Elias), also the prophet Elijah (*Feast days July 20th and July 21st*).

Porvata - A god of the woods; he has no idol or image; and is manifest throughout the primeval forest. His sacred day is Tuesday and is connected with midsummer. He is thought to be one of the four seasonal aspects of Swaitowid facing south and ruling over summer.

Rod - a god of fertility and family, concerned with the continuation of bloodlines and the extension and glorification of clans. Rodzanica were female and represented the stars; were also spirits of birth and fate. Rod were male and stood for the ancestors. Since Rodzanica were present at the birth of babies, the birth parties were called Rozing. Those that honored the Rod/zanica, it was believed that all new births were reincarnations of passed ancestors. The elements of Fire and Water represented the bathhouse where women gave birth; and the magical properties of the stove where folk tales birthing takes place. Polish traditions of the celebration of the dead is on April 30th, the second being on October 31st.

Siliniez - A wood god from Poland who moss was sacred; his altar fire was kept burning only with moss.

Sorrowful God - The Sorrowful God is depicted in pre-history sculpture sitting with his head in his hand, peaceful and contemplative. He is representative of the mature elder Year God, unmasked, with the wisdom of a sage.

Stribog - God and Spirit of the winds, sky and air; and is said to be the ancestor of the winds of the eight directions.

Sudz - A Polish God of destiny and glory. Those born at the time when he strews gold in his palace are destined to be wealthy. When he scatters earthen clods, those born are destined for poverty.

Swaitowid - Creator God/dess represented with 2 male faces and 2 female faces, corresponding with the seasons and directions. The white horse is his symbol, and at harvests honey bread was eaten in his honor. Literally translates to "Strong Lord."

Swarog - Polish God and Spirit of fire; meaning bright and clear. So sacred was the fire that it was forbidden to shout or swear at it while it was being lit. Folklore communicates him as a fire serpent, a winged dragon that breathes fire. Other mythos describes him as a smith God, identified the generative and sexual powers of fire. He is the father of and divine light of celestial and Earthly fires. He is associated in Christianity with Saint Damian, Saint Cosmas, and Saint Micheal the Archangel. His animals are a golden horned ox, boar, horse, and a falcon named Varagna, as well as a shape-shifter into the wind.

Syrena - A draconian snake goddess who protects the River Wisla and the Polish city of Krakow.

Tawals - A blessing bringing God of the meadows and fields.

Trishna - Goddess of corpses and the deceased. She protects graves.

Triglav - A three-headed God associated with in some mythos as being the god of night and darkness, as well as Earth and Sky. He is the highest God of all said oracles at Szczecin, Poland, were interpreted from the behavior of a black horse. He is veiled completely, so holy that he cannot see the evil deeds of men. He rarely appears around mortals, and is depicted as a three-headed man with bands of blindfolds over his eyes.

Weles - He is the God of cattle, music, poetry, and art. He was depicted with horns later, and became associated with flocks and herds as well as the underworld. He has many associations with wealth and the magical forces of the spirit world. Weles and Piorun were depicted as adversaries, and were worshipped separately from one another. He was the patron of oaths, death, divination, underworld, domestic animals and beasts and afterlife. His feast day is February 12th, but he

is also associated in Christianity with Saint Blaise(March 11th) and Saint Nicholas (December 6th)

Zaria - Goddess of Beauty

Zemina - earth Goddess

Zewana - Goddess of hunting (see Dziewona)

Zizilia - Goddess of love and sexuality

Zlota Baba - Polish "Golden Woman" a Goddess who received many sacrifices and gave oracles, depicted in gold.

The Zorya - The Three guardian Goddesses, known as the Auroras. They guard and watch over the doomsday hound that threatens to eat the constellation Ursa Minor, the little bear. If the chain breaks loose, the Universe is said to end. The Auroras of the Morning Star, Evening Star, and Midnight Star are depicted as Zvezda Dniera - Zvezda Wieczorniaia, and Zvezda Polnoca.

Zvezda Dnieca - Aurora of the Morning Star, married to the male aspect of the Moon; the maiden/warrior opens the Gates of Heaven for the Sun every morning to emerge. She is described as a fully armed warrior Goddess, courageous in temperament. The Slavs portrayed her each morning as the Sun rose; and is the patroness of horses, protection, and exorcisms and is associated with the planet Venus. She is invoked to protect against death in battle, and her prayers were addressed as "Defend me, O maiden, with your veil from the enemy, from the arquebus and arrow"

Zvezda Wieczorniaia - Aurora of the Evening Star and mother of the Zoryas. She closes the Gates of Heaven each evening as the aged

Sun God returns from across the skies. She is patron of protection and exorcisms as well.

Zweзда Polnoca - Aurora of the Midnight Star, the crone of the Zoryas. She is the Zorya of death to whom the Sun God returns to die but to be rejuvenated in her arms to live again in the morning. She is the patroness of death and rebirth, magic and wisdom.

Zywie - Polish for "Life." She is the Goddess of health and healing, and her animal is the cuckoo, Friday is her sacred day. She is associated as the Spirit of the dead by the Elbe Slavs, and she seems to be the Goddess of regeneration and rebirth.

The Dlugosz Olympus

A possibly fabricated Polish pantheon, also known as the Kiev Pantheon, however some are related to actual deities that were a part of the older pantheon:

Jesza, Iessa, Jessis - An early Slavonic God, a chief God equated to Jupiter in the Dlugosz Olympus. He is known as the "Heavenly Sky God" that is equivalent to the Celtic deity Esus.

Kiev - A God in Poland recorded in the Dlugosz Olympus as being a sun and daylight God. He was invoked for hunting and against diseases. He is depicted with a dog's head and horns, suggesting a connection with Weles and hunting goes of other cultures.

Lada - Dlugosz Olympus expresses her as the Slavic Mars.

Lele, Polele - Portrayed in the Dlugosz Olympus as the sons and daughters of Lada, and also as Divine Twins that are comparable to the Greek "Castor."

Nija - God of the Dead associated with Pluto in the Dlugosz Olympus.

Pogoda - Polish god of Fire, also mentioned in the Dlugosz Olympus as a god of weather. Also Slavic "Giver of Favorable Winds" a weather and agricultural goddess to whom sheep and cattle were sacrificed to. Comparable to the supernatural Spirit Dogoda.