

The background of the cover is a painting depicting two women in traditional folk costumes. They are standing in a field of tall, thin grasses. The woman on the left is looking upwards, while the woman on the right is looking towards the viewer. A full moon is visible in the dark sky above them. The overall mood is serene and evocative of a rural, traditional setting.

New Researches on the Religion and Mythology of the Pagan Slavs

2

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Introduction to the Slavic pagan pantheon

The names of deities that the ancient Slavs actually revered

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Abstract. This article attempts to list all the names of the Slavic Pagan deities, which may with confidence be driven back to pre-Christian antiquity: the deities that the Slavs really revered. At the same time, those characters, which accidentally and without reason became a part of Slavic pantheon and gained some popularity (for example, gods from hoax texts) are briefly described. Such a pantheon, which belongs to different Slavic groups, is divided in the article into several parts. For each of them a brief historical background is given and the current case with the sources is described.

Keywords. Slavic paganism, Slavic gods, Ancient Rus', Baltic Slavs, Dvoeverie, medieval culture.

“Those of their narrations which I heard with regard to the gods I am not earnest to relate in full, but I shall name them only, because I consider that all men are equally ignorant of these matters”

Herodotus, “Histories” II, 3 (Trans. G.C. Macaulay)

When writing this article¹, I had set myself two goals: 1) to be succinct, but 2) at the same time try to show the *entire* list of the names of those deities (theonyms) known to be really revered by the ancient Slavs before Christianization or shortly after this, and thereby to draw distinction between the gods that were actually worshipped and all later or controversial ones that “joined the list”. At the same time, I will not delve too deeply either into the examination of sources (texts) comprising one or another name, or into consideration of the actual functions of deities. Even a brief overview of this kind would require the volume of a whole book. But my goal is to give a short list, a catalog of data, which would only provide prior areas for further research. It’s curious that in many ways the present article was inspired by the nonsense that at the time of its composing (early 2022) was widely represented by the English-language Wikipedia on the topic discussed. The Slavic pantheon has been my main research topic for more than 10 years, and over the years I have published more than 20 articles on this and related issues, mainly in Russian journals. Also I participated in editions of modern Russian translations of sources, for example, the “Lives of St. Otto of Bamberg”², etc. In many ways, this article is also a retelling of the conclusions of my thesis on religious studies, which I am currently preparing, entitled “Problems of Reconstruction of the Slavic Pagan Pantheon”. Below, I will refer much to passages in Russian from different studies: on the one hand, this may cause linguistic difficulties for the reader, but, on the other hand, it can give some idea of the very rich Russian scientific tradition in this area.

§1. What is considered the **starting point of Slavic history**? Obviously, the appearance of the Slavs as part of the collapse of the Indo-European primeval unity. Following a number of researchers, I believe that the separation of the Balto-Slavs, that is, the appearance of separate Balts³ and Slavs, occurs at the

1. First of all, I express my cordial gratitude to a notorious modern scholar of Slavic culture Patrice Lajoye for his accurate translation of my article in English. I would like also to pay thanks to my friend and colleague, a researcher chiefly in the field of western esotericism (though his area of interest includes the study of Slavic paganism) Mathew M. Fialko, who provided annotated translations from German “Saxon Chronicle” for my previous article (Kutarev 2021). He kindly revised the academic English of the present paper, made significant contributions to several passages and offered valuable suggestions to the data of my topic.

2. ŽOB 2021.

3. Today, the Balts are represented only by Lithuanians and Latvians; less than 5 million

very end of the old era⁴, although this issue remains very debatable and hot, and the spread in possible dating is huge⁵. But the Slavs didn't have any writing system until the 9th century, until the time of two Saint Brothers, Cyril (in honor of him the Cyrillic alphabet is called) and Methodius. For a long time their neighbors, who had their literature, were not much eager, so to say, to mention Slavs directly, although it is obvious that already in Antiquity, the Slavs and their language eventually became more and more widespread, having caused during the 6–8th centuries a demographic and cultural “big bang”, which will make the Slavs the largest ethno-linguistic group in Europe up to our time. Today, Slavic languages are native to almost a third of a billion people; about half of them are native Russian speakers.

Christianization of the Slavs mainly belongs to 9–10th centuries, when Bulgaria, Poland and Rus' were baptized; but one can point to the conversion of certain communities of the Slavs to Christianity during the period from the 6th to the 12th centuries⁶. It was only Christianization that caused the emergence of a full-fledged own bookishness of the Slavs in Cyrillic, Glagolitic or Latin scripts⁷. But the first

people speak the Baltic languages. Nevertheless, in the early Middle Ages, the Baltic peoples were geographically much more widespread.

4. On this topic, see the extensive review of literature provided by Sedov 1979.

5. Post-Soviet archaeologists often criticize Valentin V. Sedov and historians close to him because of their discovery of Slavic traces in certain early cultures (for example, in the *Chernyakhov culture*), but I will not dive deeper into this topic, noting only one point, a purely logical one, that explains my sympathy for discovering of Slavs rather at the turn of the New era than only in the middle of the first millennium. According to P.M. Barford: “It is clear that the traditional migratory explanation cannot account for the diffusion of the language from a relatively compact area to cover half of Europe, whatever extended timescale in the early medieval period one wishes to adopt. Demographic expansion at this rate can be demonstrated to be biologically impossible. One possibility is that the Slav languages were already in use over a wide area of central Europe before the beginning of the early medieval period” (Barford 2001: 16)

6. For example, the Baltic Slavs who lived on the lands of modern Germany (Obodrites and Rujani) formally adopted Christian faith finally only in the second half of the 1160s: see the “*Chronica Slavorum*” of Helmold of Bosau, II, 6–7, 12–13 (§102–103, 108–109) (Álvarez-Pedrosa 2021: 163–166 ff.).

7. Separate inscriptions of pagan Slavs are known to archeology or are mentioned in reliable texts. An example is the commemorative inscription of a princess from the Obodrite people of the 10th century on Germanic runes from the Danish stone *Sønder Vissing I* (Rundata catalog DR 55) (ŽOB 2021: 520 note 1) or the mention of written wills

stage in the history of the Slavs, the stage of their relative cultural and linguistic unity, lasting mainly until the Christianization, is called Proto-Slavic. This name is also applied to their language, which remained mutually intelligible throughout the early Middle Ages (actually until the 10th century) for anyone who was Slavic. Of course, most of the Slavs of that time were pagans: they learned the basics of this faith from their ancestors, continuing to develop it. One can only guess, basing on the data of modern comparative mythology and Indo-European studies, what form this faith had for nearly a millennium *before* 900 AD. How and when could, for example, the transition from an emphasis on cattle breeding to an emphasis on agriculture, etc. take place? But about the specific facts about the gods of this time, there is only one message, namely the Byzantine Procopius of Caesarea (middle of the 6th century):

The Slavs “believe that it is he, one of the gods – the creator of lightning, who is the only lord of everything, and bulls and all kinds of sacrificial animals are sacrificed to him. <...> However, they honor rivers, and nymphs, and some other deities, and they also make sacrifices to all of them, and during these sacrifices they perform fortune-telling”⁸.

A distinctive feature of this message is its ambiguity. No names are given for either the supreme god, or for “nymphs” and other deities (in the original Greek we read δαιμόνια, “spirits”?). The “creator of lightning” is usually considered the thunderbolt god Perun, but sometimes the blacksmith Svarog is also assumed, and even other deities. Researchers have too much room to speculate because no names are given. Unfortunately, this is a very common situation for ancient descriptions of Slavic paganism.

in the treaty of 912 in the “Primary Chronicle” (Ipat. 1908: 27). However, archeology does not allow us to say that any kind of an original pre-Christian Slavic alphabet could exist, and moreover that there existed any large texts. The Slavic Pagan culture was quite consciously formed as a culture of exclusively oral transmission.

8. Procopius of Caesarea, “The Gothic War” III, 14. “Θεὸν μὲν γὰρ ἓνα τὸν τῆς ἀστραπῆς δημιουργὸν ἀπάντων κύριον μόνον αὐτὸν νομίζουσιν εἶναι, καὶ θύουσιν αὐτῷ βόας τε καὶ ἱερεῖα πάντα. <...> σέβουσι μέντοι καὶ ποταμούς τε καὶ νύμφας καὶ ἄλλα ἄττα δαιμόνια, καὶ θύουσι καὶ αὐτοῖς ἄπασι, τάς τε μαντείας ἐν ταύταις δὴ ταῖς θυσίαις ποιοῦνται” (Meyer 1931: 5). See Drevnjaja Rus’ 2010: 72–73. Here and henceforth, I will frequently refer to compendiums (like those of *Karl H. Meyer* or *Viljo J. Mansikka*) instead of detailed studies and full editions of texts due to my willingness to be succinctly brief.

9. The division into gods and spirits intrinsic to classical mythologies might not have been commonly (or at all) learned and adopted by the ancient Slavs and other societies of Europe north of the Danube.

In the early Middle Ages, the Slavs disintegrated into three branches, which were the basis of the structure of the modern-day Slavs: eastern, western and southern. Parts of the Slavic world became too distant from each other, experiencing the influence of different neighbors: the southern ones mostly approached the ethnically diverse Greco-Byzantine *ecumene*. The western ones came to contact with the old German tribes on the lands of present-day Germany. The eastern Slavs collided with the peoples of the steppes and northern European forests on the lands from Ladoga to Volga. After the invasion of the Hungarian tribes, from the 10th century, the southern Slavs were completely geographically separated from the rest. This led to some differences between these branches.

§2. The largest of them is the **East Slavic branch**. Its languages are spoken today by Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians. But after the formation of the state of *Rus'* in the 9–10th centuries, throughout the high Middle Ages until the 13th century, a single ethnic and cultural community was formed here, Old Russian = East Slavic. Although the Christianization of *Rus'* officially took place in 988, up to the 13th or even 14th century, in the religious sphere, the so-called “*Dvoevérie*” (literally “the state of two faiths”) was common: the case, when under formal Christian authority a significant amount of pagan elements are preserved and even further developed. They never completely disappeared, becoming over the centuries part of the “folk religion”, today, for example, they can be seen during such modern Russian informal holidays like *Maslenitsa* or *Ivan Kupala* (Spring and Midsummer festivals respectively), which continue to be widely celebrated¹⁰.

Let's start with numerous reports about paganism by foreign authors: first of all, Byzantine and Oriental. Among the first are, for example, Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus and Leo the Deacon, authors of the 10th century who described the *Rus* and the Eastern Slavs¹¹. However, in the comprehensive accounts of Slavic sacrifices, the Byzantines avoid the names of the gods, perhaps bearing in

10. The skepticism of some modern Russian scholars doubting the pagan origins of these holidays seems rather strange and I will not discuss it. As for the popularity of, for example, *Maslenitsa* in modern times, this holiday is the second after the New Year. It is celebrated in one way or another by 53% of the Russian people (according to 2021 data: <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/maslenica-primety-i-sueverija>). For modern pagans, who trying to revive the Pagan faith in 20–21th century, *Maslenitsa*, in any way bound to the spring Equinox, is basically the main holiday of the year, as it probably was before Christianization.

11. Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, “*De Administrando Imperio*”, 9; Leo the Deacon, “*History*”, IX, 6 (*Drevnjaja Rus'* 2010: 164–165, 208).

mind the biblical words “do not mention the names of other gods; let it not be heard from thy mouth”, and similar passages¹².

Such Arab and Persian authors of the 10–12th centuries as *Ahmad ibn Rustah*, *Abu al-Mas'udi*, *Ibrahim ibn Wasif Shah* and some others occasionally gave us much information on this topic¹³, telling us something about the West Slavic affairs¹⁴. Nevertheless, like Byzantine authors none of them ever mention the names of deities, although they may provide, for example, a thorough description of the shrines and idols, the rite of sacrifice and even the texts of prayers, etc.¹⁵ We may exclude from our consideration such common Oriental designations of pagans as “fire worshipers”, due to the lack of specification. Additionally, the very concept of “fire worshipers”, which probably arose from the description of the Zoroastrians, became among Muslims merely a synonym for “pagans”, and may not imply any special cult of fire¹⁶.

Thus, in order to discover East Slavic deities' names, the main emphasis should be placed on the proper Old Russian texts. Despite the legendary basis in the descriptions of the events of the 10th century and earlier, the rank of the main source about ancient Russian customs is assured to the “Primary Chronicle” (also known as “Tale of Bygone Years”), composed in Kyiv around 1118. To fully take into account information about paganism, it is enough to refer only to the following pair of editions of this chronicle: namely, the Laurentian and the Hypatian codex, and here for citations, the Hypatian one is enough for my purposes¹⁷. This edition gives eight names of Slavic pagan deities. All these names, no doubt, must be recognized as reliable. The Slavs definitely revered such gods. The first two names appear in the oaths that three Russian princes conclude with Byzantium under 907, 945 and 971: these are Perun and Volos

12. Exodus 23:13; see Kutarev 2016a: 136.

13. Garkavi 1870: 125, 130, 135–137, 139–140 (erroneously attributed to the Slavs), 264–270, etc. Eastern sources still require new translations, editions and further research.

14. E.g., Ibrahim ibn Yaquub in the 10th century.

15. For example, a description of the 10th century sanctuaries on the Volga were left by Ahmad Ibn Faldan (Garkavi 1870: 95–101) who visited those lands – though he wrote about the Rus, and probably it could be a Scandinavian custom, it is unlikely that it was very different from the local Slavic ones, because the Slavs by the 10th century had already significantly assimilated Scandinavians here. Prayer texts may be found, e.g., in Ahmad ibn Rustah: Garkavi 1870: 265, etc.

16. Mansikka 2005: 237–247.

17. I will quote the original “Primary Chronicle” according to Ipat. 1908, giving my own translation from Old Russian. Minor differences in the Laurentian edition are discussed below, if it makes sense to dwell on them.

(the latter one bearing the epithet “cattle god”)¹⁸. Let’s skip the details of these curious messages and move on to the next place. This passage from “Primary Chronicle” is the most frequent source quotation on Slavic paganism in all of literature. Year 980:

“Prince Vladimir began to rule in Kyiv only by himself, and placed kumiry (idols) on a hill outside the palace courtyard: a wooden Perun with a silver head and a golden mustache, and Xors, and Dažbog¹⁹, and Stribog, and Semargl²⁰, and Mokoš. And [people] offered sacrifices to them, calling them gods”²¹.

By this action, Prince St. Vladimir created the main state pagan sanctuary in the actual capital, which had such a status until the country was Christianized. Further, the chronicle mentions human sacrifice to the gods²², speaks rather vaguely about reverence for heaven and earth: “if the earth is their mother, then the sky is their father”²³ and many similar passages that are somewhat vague. This will not offer us any new names – even the colorful description of the expulsion rite of Perun during the Christianization of Kyiv and Rus’²⁴.

The descriptions of the psycho-techniques of the Volkhvs – the ancient Russian priests and “shamans” – are exceptionally curious and quite voluminous. Their concepts of the gods are offered by the chronicle under the year 1071. But again

18. “КЛАШАСА <...> ПЕРУНОМЪ БОГОМЪ СВОИМЪ. И ВОЛОСОМ СКОТЪИМЪ БОГОМЪ” (Ipat. 1908: 23–36, 41–42, 61). The fact is that the Old Russian word скотъ “cattle” can also be understood as “wealth”, “money” (cf. under year 1018 etc., Ipat. 1908: 130–131) and not only – can be found in almost any study of Volos: I won’t give details here.

19. In the Laurentian Chronicle, between the names of Xors and Dažbog the conjunction и (“and”) is not inserted, which led many scholars to significant conclusions. Also, in the Hypatian edition we have a spelling of the name Daž(d)bog with one or two “d” – I wrote about all this extensively here: Kutarev 2021a: 196–197, 205–212.

20. In the Laurentian Chronicle there is another spelling: with the second letter “i”, “Simargl”, the etymology of this name is debatable, and both forms can be considered legitimate.

21. “НАЧА КИНАЖИТИ БОЛОДИМИРЪ ВЪ КИЕВѢ ВДИНЪ. И ПОСТАВИ КУМИРЫ НА ХОЛЪМУ. ВНѢ ДВОРА ТЕРЕМНАГО. ПЕРУНА ДЕРЕВАНА. А ГОЛОВА ЕГО СЕРЕБРАНА. А ОУСЪ ЗОЛОТЪ. И ХОРЪСА. И ДАЖЬБОГА. И СТРИВОГА. И СѢМАРЪГЛА. И МОКОШЬ. И ЖРАХУТЪ ИМЪ. НАРИЧУЩЕ БОГЪ” (Ipat. 1908: 67). I note that of these names, only the name Mokoš is considered feminine; N.M. Gal’kovskij classically defined her as the goddess of “women’s household in general” (Gal’kovskij 2013: 25).

22. Year 983 (Ipat. 1908: 69–70).

23. “АЩЕ ИМЪ ЕСТЬ ЗЕМЛА МАТИ. ТО УТЕЦЬ ИМЪ ЕСТЬ НЕБО”, year 988 (Ipat. 1908: 100).

24. Year 988 (Ipat. 1908: 101–102). The year 988 in Rus’ serves the turn from the early to the high Middle Ages.

there are no names here: either “*five gods appeared to me, saying...*”, then some heavenly god involuntarily created a person from his sweat²⁵ – and we will omit this passage. Finally, under the year 1114, the Hypatian edition gives a rather long story about the blacksmith god Svarog and his son Dažbog – I examined this episode with the source text in detail in English at once in two recent works available on the internet²⁶. So, we have 8 names: 6 at the shrine in Kyiv under the year 980, as well as Volos and Svarog. We will omit the names of the ancient gods of the Balts, which can also be found in the Hypatian chronicle under 1252 and 1258²⁷: in historical times, the Slavs and the Balts diverged very far and the unification of their pantheons, common among the authors of the 16–19th centuries, is the result of a misunderstanding of the extent of this discrepancy.

Independent legends about Perun, sometimes apparently very ancient, are brought to us not only by the Kyivian “Primary Chronicle”, but also by the Novgorod chronicles: among them, for example, the story of how the idol of Perun, expelled after Christianization, sailing along the Volkhov River under the bridge in Novgorod, threw his club on the bridge as a keepsake for people, etc.²⁸ But no new names of deities are provided from the Novgorodian texts²⁹.

The small epic “The Tale of Igor’s Campaign”, composed around 1185, helps us to understand better the functionality of some of these characters. Among all other literary monuments in the ancient Russian literature this text is the most thoroughly studied, and therefore let’s look straight at its mentions of paganism. The gods act here as grandfathers for their “grandchildren”: the poet and singer *Boyan* is the “*grandson of Veles*” and “*the winds, Stribog’s grandchildren, blow from the sea*”. Some *Rus’* princes (or the Russian nation as a whole), are twice called there “*the grandchildren of Dažbog*”. One “*werewolf-like prince*” crosses the road to the “*great Xors*”³⁰. If *Veles* is the same deity as *Volos*³¹, then we have

25. “явили ми ся естъ. ѿ. богъ” (Ipat. 1908:164–171).

26. There is nothing of the kind in the Laurentian edition (Ipat. 1908, 278–279, Kutarev 2021a, Kutarev 2021b).

27. Ipat. 1908: 817, 839.

28. Mansikka 2005: 87–89.

29. I voluntarily omit here a lot of these texts. For example, “The Life of Abraham of Rostov”, including an interesting story about the idol of *Veles*, which was deemed quite powerful (Mansikka 2005: 216–217), etc. I’m looking for new names, not details about already named ones.

30. “вѣщей Бояне, Велесовъ внууче”, “вѣтри, Стрибожи внуци, вѣютъ съморя”, “Дажь-Божа внука” etc., “великому хръсови влъкомъ путь прерыскаше” etc. (SPI 1800: 7, 12, 19, 36).

31. The discussion on this topic has long been one of the most heated in the study of Slavic paganism. The variety of opinions here is hard to observe. Supposing *Volos* and *Veles* to be the same deity (Kutarev 2017), I am currently preparing a more detailed essay.

four characters, equally known from “Primary Chronicle” and from “The Tale of Igor’s Campaign”, which does not show any dependence on the chronicle. But there are also new names. The most mysterious is Trojan, mentioned four times: it is difficult to consider him briefly, but it is likely that he is a god, a hero or an ancestor. He is also mentioned in several other Old Russian texts³², where Christian scribes stubbornly try to explain him as Trajan, the Roman emperor, for some reason deified by the Slavs (this is extremely doubtful for a number of reasons). A certain strange entity *Bus*, whose time is mentioned as a semi-mythological past, could be an ancient hero, but it is hardly necessary to recognize him as a god. A certain Div either screams at the top of the tree, or falls from it: Div can also be either a god, or a spirit, or someone else. *Karna* and *Žlja* (the personifications of pity and lamentation respectively) could be as well considered deities or their companions³³. The epic mentions a number of people’s conversations with the sun, wind, rivers, and generally helps us much to understand the phenomenon of “dual faith”.

But the main sources on Dvoeverie (“dual faith”), and perhaps the least studied area in the field of East Slavic sources on paganism, are so called *Sermons against paganism*. This is a distinct genre of literature that had existed for several centuries. The most valuable for our theme are, of course, the earliest texts. The two of them are the key ones. The first is “Sermon of man who loves Christ”³⁴, apparently dated back to the 11th century³⁵; its author scolds those

“who lead a life in two [different] faiths, those who believe in Perun and Xors, and Mokoš, and Sim and Regl, and Vilas that are 30 sisters. The illiterates affirming this regard all these as gods and goddesses, and, therefore, make offerings to them, and slaughter roosters [in sacrifice] to them. They pray to Fire, calling it Svarožič, and take garlic as a deity <...> under [the roof of] the drying barn they pray to Fire and Vilas and to Mokoš and Sim and

32. For example, Mansikka 2005: 214–215; Gal’kovskij 2013: 315–316. Here, among the gods, Diy is mentioned – this image is not associated with Div / Diva and even with Slavic mythology. It’s a name of ancient god Zeus that came from Greek literature (Kutarev 2021a: 209).

33. “На седьмомъ вѣщѣ Трояни” etc., “поютъ время Бусово”, “дивъ кличетъ ерѣху древа, велитъ послушати земли незнаемъ”, “уже врѣжеса дивь на землю”, “Карна и Жля по скорчи по Руской земли” (SPI 1800: 35, 25–26, 9, 20).

34. For its full title, as well as the actual text, see the classic edition of Gal’kovskij 2013: 300–312.

35. And again, we have been facing for more than a hundred years as a debatable topic: the dating of sermons. I adhere to the opinion of an authoritative reference book (Pis’mennye pamjatniki 2003: 153, 155). We disagree with J. Dynda to some extent on the dating of the “Sermon of man who loves Christ” and had a dispute on this point.

*Regl and Perun and Xors and Volos, god of cattle. [They pray] to Rod and Rožanicas and to all those who are like them*³⁶.

We have already encountered some of these characters. Though Volos appears here as an insert from “Primary Chronicle” only in one of the editions of the sermon, other names, we may assume, were included in the text independently³⁷ which would confirm the reliability and significance of the cults of Perun, Xors, Mokoš. God Simargl splits in two deities: this character (or two characters?) is the most mysterious in the entire ancient Russian pantheon, although, in my opinion, the grounds for considering him an Iranian winged dog or eagle, as Boris A. Rybakov and Mikhail A. Vasiliev did, are rather unsure. Svarožič, of course, is the god of fire, close or even identical to Svarog from the chronicle. Rod and his companions Rožanicas should be attributed to the number of secondary gods (*penates*) – I contributed an article about them in English to the first issue of this collection³⁸. *Vilas* are well-preserved spirits in South Slavic folklore. They were said to take a form of beautiful girls and were associated with water and death. Perhaps before the time of Christianization *Vilas* had a status of deities. These female spirits were *not* preserved under the name *Vily* in the folklore of the Eastern Slavs. They become designated here as *Rusalky* etc.³⁹

The next important sermon is the 13th century “Sermon about idols”⁴⁰. Conceived as a translation of the Greek sermon of Gregory the Theologian (4th century), containing many references to the pagan systems of the Eastern Roman Empire, it was seriously revised and supplemented with Slavic realities, and it is not always possible to make out the extent of this “supplement”. For example, the character of “*Koruna, who will be the mother of the Antichrist*”⁴¹ was interpreted either as an image

36. “Двоевѣрно живущихъ вѣрующе в перуна и хорса и въ мокошь и в Сима и въ Рѣгла и въ вилы ихъ же числомъ ѿ [variant: ѿ / ѿ / ѿ.д., – that is 9, 10 or “thrice nine” = 27 – О.К.] сестрѣницъ. глаголють во невѣгласии то все мнатъ боги и богынами и тако покладывають имъ требы. и кѣры имъ рѣжють. огневи са молать. зовуще его сварожицемъ [variant: сварожицемъ. See Kutarev 2021a: 200 – О.К.] и чесновитокъ богомъ творать. <...> молать подъ овиномъ огневи. и виламъ и мокоши симу рѣглу и пероуну и хърсюу и волосу скотью богу. роду и рожаницамъ и всѣмъ тѣмъ иже суть имъ подобни” (Gal’kovskij 2013: 305–307). See there also about the editions that I combined.

37. There is a possibility that this sermon, or some part of it, is generally more ancient than the “Primary Chronicle”, and some researchers even suggested that instead the sermon had some influence on the chronicle.

38. Kutarev 2019.

39. Barkova 2022: 108–119.

40. For the full title and text, see Gal’kovskij 2013: 281–299.

41. “Коруна же боудеть и антихрста мти” (Gal’kovskij 2013: 286).

borrowed from Greek cultural area or from Asia Minor⁴² or even as a part of Slavic mythology (the latter possibility cannot be completely excluded). Further we have:

“the Slavs produce and make sacrifice to these deities; to Vilas, and Mokoš, Diva, Perun, Xors, Rod and Rožanicas, Upyrs, and Bereginias, and Pereplut, and revolving, they drink from drinking horns [in] his [honor], and pray to Fire Svarožets, and arranged a bath for the Navys”⁴³.

It is not clear who exactly Diva is – maybe a distinct character, or an epithet for Mokosh, for example, with the meaning virgin or young lady (дева “deva”)⁴⁴, or someone “divine”⁴⁵. *Upyrs* are the prototypes of vampires, these words are cognates. Evil spirits also include *Beregini* – the spirits of the drowned⁴⁶. Despite the clear explanation in the sermon⁴⁷, and the fact that this word comes from the Russian root *береп* “*bereg*”, many today consider “*Beregini*” as some kind of kindly “cherishing” fairies (supposedly “protective”, from the Russian verb “to protect” – *беречь* “*berěč*”). This modern view seems to be an absurd one (such absurdities are, to be truth, numerous). *Navi* are, of course, the souls of the dead, including ancestors⁴⁸. *Pereplut* should be considered a spirit or even god – probably, it is an image of the Dionysian-like deity. In different editions, also *Ekadija* or *Edakinya* appears: all these are distortions of the Greek Hecate, which we encounter in the Greek original text, but it was not a character of Slavic paganism⁴⁹. I will omit other similar words derived from the Greek text.

42. Pis'mennye pamjatniki 2003: 156. See this also about the dating of the text.

43. “ТѢМЪ ЖЕ БОГОМЪ ТРЕБОУ КЛАДОУТЬ И ТВОРАТЬ. И СЛОВЕНЬСКИИ ЯЗЫКЪ. ВИЛАМЪ. И МОКОШЬИ. ДИВѢ. ПЕРОУНУ. ХЪРСОУ. РОДОУ. И РОЖАНИЦИ. ОУПИРЕМЪ. И ВЕРЕГИНАМЪ. И ПЕРЕПЛУТОУ. И ВЕРЬТАЧЕСА ПЬЮТЪ ЕМОУ ВЪ РОЗЪХЪ. И ОГНЕВИ СВАРОЖИЦЮ МОЛАТСА. И НАВЬМЪ. МЪВЪ ТВОРАТЬ” (Gal'kovskij 2013: 287).

44. Mansikka 2005: 147 etc.

45. Although this Indo-European root is poorly preserved in modern Russian (the word *диво* “*divo*” meaning “marvel” and its derivatives), it could be more common in ancient times (cf. *Div* in “The Tale of Igor’s Campaign” and Polish *Dzewana* by Jan Długosz, which will be discussed later).

46. If in “Sermon of man who loves Christ” several sisters are named *Vila*, then in one place in the “Sermon about idols” – *Beregini* are already listed as “7/9 sisters” (“ꙗꙗ / ѿ сестреницъ”); and in another sermon, *Beregini* “thrice nine” (“три ѿ сестреницъ”) (Gal'kovskij 2013: 297, 323).

47. Gal'kovskij 2013: 297.

48. This word has been preserved in many modern Slavic languages. In the “Primary Chronicle”, under the year 1092, an episode is described when in the city of Polotsk (modern Belarus) the *Nav* in the form of invisible demons killed the town’s people, apparently personifying the epidemic: “навье бьютъ Полочаны” (Ipat. 1908: 206).

49. Gal'kovskij 2013: 287, 292, 296.

Only two more Slavic words deserve attention: the *dual faith*-believers revere “*Kila*; [and] the called *buyakini* are greatly revered”⁵⁰. It is difficult to talk about the latter character: some believed that “*buyakini* are the souls of the dead”, “female spirits”⁵¹, or some participants in the rites of the “resurrection of a dead god”⁵². Nevertheless, it is possible that none of these pretensions is true. As for *Kilá* (feminine): this “deity” is the personification of the disease, which should be explained as being mentioned rather than venerated, in order just to interact her magically. This image is known to the 20th century anthropology⁵³. The later edition of the “Sermon about idols” (16th century⁵⁴) adds to the list of characters the following gods: *Kutnij*, *Jadrej*, *Skotnij*, *Poputnik*, *Lesnoj*, *Spekh*; the goddesses *Vela*, *Obiluxa*, *Sporyn’ja*⁵⁵. They are generally taken as spirits revered by some people known to the author⁵⁶. They are not mentioned anywhere else – with the exception of *Sporyn’ja*⁵⁷ noted in the more ancient edition of the “Sermon about idols”⁵⁸. Etymologically, *Kutnij* is probably a house spirit, *Vela* may have a connection with *Vila*, *Jadrej* and *Obilukha* seem to be the personifications of strength, fertility and abundance. *Sporyn’ja* is also an image of fertility.

Later sermons and other texts will mention various gods and spirits more than once. Especially a lot of information will appear about *Rod* and *Rožanic*⁵⁹. But

50. “килоу. вѣлами почитаютъ рекоуще боуякини” (Gal’kovskij 2013: 287, 296).

51. *Ibid.*, 30–31.

52. Klejn 2004: 373–374.

53. Toporkov 2013. I myself noted this almost disappeared word of the Russian language in the Tver’ region of Russia. The personifications of the illnesses that are magically worked on are a fairly common theme in a variety of texts, from ancient time to data of modern ethnography.

54. Gal’kovskij 2013: 294–295.

55. “И коутноу богу и велѣ богыни. и ядрѣю. и обилоухѣ и скотноу богу. и попутникоу и лѣсену богу. и спорынами и спѣхоу” (Gal’kovskij 2013: 298). In modern Russian a word *кут* “kut” designates a corner of house or building (and is somewhat obsolete), *скот* “skot” is cattle, *лес* “les” – forest, *попутник* – cf. *спутник* is “sputnik”, *ядро* “jadro” is core, *обилие* “obilie” – plenty, *спорынья* “sporyn’ja” – ergot / ripe and *спех* “spex” means “hurry”.

56. Gal’kovskij 2013: 295.

57. The same root is probably in the name of *Porevit* and maybe *Porenut*, the gods of the *Rujani* we will examine later. The word “kut” is undoubtedly related to the term “contina”, which is used in the “Lives of St. Otto of Bamberg” to name the pagan temples of the *Pomeranians* [ŽOB 2021: 560–568; Dynda 2017: 78, 151–155].

58. Gal’kovskij 2013: 289.

59. See review of sources in Kutarev 2019; about sermons in general – Mansikka 2005: 133–154.

there will be no additional reliable new *names* – only those that have already been mentioned in the “Sermon of man who loves Christ” and the “Sermon about idols”, even if additional important information is added to some names.

The period of the high Middle Ages ended in Rus’ after 1237, when the Tatar-Mongol yoke began to be imposed on this land. Nomads from the east brought colossal destruction and incredible extermination of the population, followed by a significant decline in culture. Kyiv, a great city previously, but now completely destroyed, has lost its significance, and the outflow of the population away from the steppe into the forests to the north will contribute to the future growing of Moscow (however, also devastated by the Mongols). According to Alexandra L. Barkova, “the advent of the Horde of Batu Khan led Rus’ to a gigantic cultural disaster; its consequences were overcome partly by the 19th century, partly in the 20th century, and a number of losses turned out to be irreparable. Among them is paganism”⁶⁰. Indeed, archeology and written sources show that in the 13–14th centuries, a disappearance of the most important element of paganism and *Dvoeverie*, namely the veneration of Pagan deities, finally takes place. Since that time, references to gods in texts have become not a *description of something real*, but only an attempt to speculate vaguely on the old texts becoming more and more incomprehensible⁶¹. Together with the decline of book culture, this leads to the appearance of distortions rather than something of value in relation to Slavic paganism.

Let’s take some examples from the 16th century. “Степенная книга” (“Book of Royal Degrees”, 1560s), retelling the passage from chronicle we already read, tells us about the destruction of the idols “*Perun and Xars, and Toad (Žaba) and Mokoš*”⁶². Obviously, the name of Xors was distorted, and Dažbog’s name was taken as two words, where the former is conjunction да “*da*” (“and”), and the latter is жаба “*žaba*” (“toad” by consonance), while the name of feminine deity Mokoš was interpreted as masculine. But the mistakes went beyond the borders of Rus’. Sigismund von Herberstein (16th century) from a misunderstanding of the words describing Perun in the chronicle, namely ус злат “*us zlat*” (“golden moustache”), coined a new god, *Uslad*, which, in turn, was “inherited” by a Polish author Maciej Strykowski (16th century). Then through him *Uslad* was included to the later Russian “Lives of Vladimir”, etc.⁶³ At the same time, a purely literary mixture of Slavic and Baltic paganism occurs among Polish authors: for example, inextinguishable oak fires in honor of the Baltic god Perkūnas are attributed without reason to Perun. And for example, Pozvzd or Poxvist, supposedly the god of the wind, who appeared

60. Barkova 2022: 16–17.

61. Mansikka 2005: 135, 171 etc.

62. “Перуна и Харса, да Жаба и Мокоса” (Книга stepennaya 1775: 138).

63. Mansikka 2005: 121–123.

in the mentioned Polish chronicles, is the name of St. Vladimir's son, known to "Primary Chronicle"⁶⁴. Afterward in the late Russian "Hustyn Chronicle" (17th century) Pozvizard is declared to be the god of "air, and for others weather and bad weather, while others call him a whirlwind"⁶⁵. From an inaccurate translation of the name Simargl a goddess *Zimtserla* turns out in the 18th century⁶⁶. Ritual characters⁶⁷, song refrains, and personifications of holidays reached the rank of deities, for example, Kupala and Koljada in the "Hustyn Chronicle"⁶⁸. Even later, by the 18–19th centuries, there are attempts to present the characters of folklore as gods – for example, attempts were made to explain the vivid image of *Baba Yaga* as the goddess of death or the underworld. Even today some compare her to the Greek Hekate or the Irish Morrigan. But *Baba Yaga* is a character from fairy tales, unmentioned in the earliest sources, and her origin is unknown. These arguments are even more proper when we analyze the names of places (toponyms), even such interesting examples as "Belobog" (white god): it is unclear, when and how such names arose, and paganism cannot be reliably attributed here.

Well, are there any sources on the Old Russian pantheon excluding the literary monuments? Of course, there are, but again without specifications and names. Dozens of ancient depictions from the lands inhabited by the Slavs are well-known. They are often interpreted as deities: e.g., stone and wooden idols found by archaeologists. The most famous of all Slavic idols is the 10th century Zbruč idol (Fig. 1), which, however, has long been considered non-Slavic by some researchers⁶⁹.

64. "Позвиздъ", year 988 (Ipat. 1908: 105); Mansikka 2005: 116–120.

65. "Позвиздъ, ляхи его нарицаху Похвистъ; сего вѣрили быти бога <...> воздуха, а иньи погоды и непогоды, иньи его вихромъ нарицаху" (Gal'kovskij 2013: 560).

66. Kutarev 2016a: 146; Znayenko 1980: 42–43.

67. A good example of a *ritual character* is Santa Claus (in Russia he is completely replaced by Ded Moroz). He is remembered only during a specific festive period when he fulfills his role, and then is forgotten for a year. Among the ritual characters, *Yarilo* (or Jarila) is very famous: in Central Russia, as a symbol of spring, he was "buried" in one way or another at the beginning of summer and then abandoned, not being remembered. However, we meet him today anywhere in the status of a deity! According to sources, he has been mentioned since the 18th century (Gal'kovskij 2013: 29–30), and from the 19th century he was already overgrown with fake mythology (Kutarev 2016a: 153–155). Sometimes he is identified with god Yarovit, who is discussed below, but such an assertion would seem too bold.

68. Gal'kovskij 2013: 561–563.

69. A recent attempt to describe the idol as a product of the era of romanticism in the 19th century did not receive support. The most serious objections to the possibility of using the Zbruč idol to understand Slavic mythology are still those that point to some

**Fig. 1. The Zbruch Idol,
10th century.**

Kraków Archaeological Museum,
Poland (me, standing beside
the idol).

Photo: Oleg V. Kutarev, 2017



However, all its key features – let us look on its multiple faces and drinking horn, on its weapon and a prince-like hat – are completely typical for Slavic idols, especially if we take into account the West Slavic iconography (Fig. 2). I doubt not its influence on the Zbruch idol. Nevertheless, the overconfident interpretation of the Zbruch idol by Boris A. Rybakov has to be rejected⁷⁰. It does not *reconstruct* the ancient one, but *creates* a new Slavic mythology, eagerly adopted by one of the trends of modern Slavic paganism – Rodnoverie⁷¹. Though the top of Zbruch idol probably depicts four gods – two

steppe features of the statue. But it seems that the advantage still remains on the side of those who consider the East Slavic character of the Zbruch idol.

70. Boris A. Rybakov confidently identifies almost all the figures on the idol as specific gods, see this famous explanation, for example in Rybakov 1981: 460–464. Other researchers, even realizing the poor grounds for such reasoning, could criticize, but did not offer any alternatively solid interpretation: Kutarev 2017: 25–27.

71. On Rodnoverie and the influence of Boris A. Rybakov on it, see Kutarev 2019: 33–35.

male and two female⁷², in fact, there is no reliable reason to designate properly any deity on this monument. The lower character, without doubt, resembling the Greek god Kronos imprisoned underground or the Scandinavian Loki – is probably a god or some olden giant, but it could hardly be Veles, as Boris A. Rybakov believed, because Veles was one of the most revered deities among the Slavs, contrary to gods' rivals Kronos and Loki.

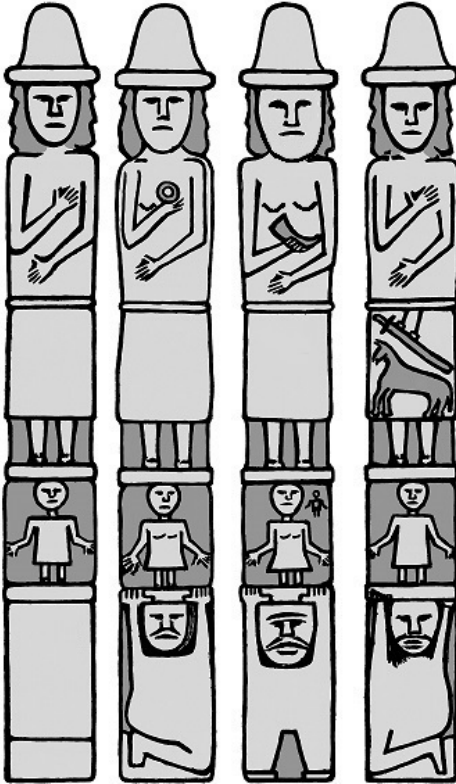


Fig. 2. Scheme of the Zbruch Idol⁷³

72. The feminine chest highlighted by the sculptor on the front and right side is convincing for me after I myself examined the idol in the Kraków Archaeological Museum, Poland. The other two characters – without breasts – are male. The middle tier repeats this composition even more clearly.

73. I created this drawing on the illustration in the statute of modern Polish pagans (Statut 2013: 15 (19)), making a few changes of my own based

on a detailed personal inspection of the idol and my photographs and videos. Firstly, I enlarged the head at the top of the female figure on the front side (with a drinking horn in her hand) relative to other characters (possibly a chthonic character). Secondly, I removed from the idol the “solar sign” in the form of a wheel with six spokes: this image was never carved on the idol. Telling the full story of the “wheel” (Boris A. Rybakov contributed to it) would take too much place. Thirdly, I added a female breast to the upper front and right images, and removed it from the left and back in the middle row and I could find on this point agreement in some studies. There are two men and two women. As for the moustache of the lower character (or its absence on the upper left and back) – this is a debatable issue.

The lack of clarity in the Slavic interpretation of the Zbruč idol is due to the fact that other well-known East Slavic stone idols have much simpler iconography. Usually it is just a head (with or without a hat), and there are almost no attributes on the body, if there is a body (rarely). Such are the idols from Sebež town and from rivers Promežitsa⁷⁴ and Šeksna (Fig. 3–4) dated back to the 8–10th centuries (and others similar).

**Fig. 3. Sheksna Idol,
8–9th centuries.**

Novgorod Museum-Reserve, Russia.

Photo: Oleg V. Kutarev, 2017



**Fig. 4. Sebezhd Idol,
8–10th centuries.**

Sebezhd Museum of Local Lore,
Russia.

Photo: Oleg V. Kutarev, 2018



74. Klejn 2004: 158 fig. 11.

Probably, the Zbruč idol turned out to be the embodiment of the latest and most developed stage of East Slavic paganism, after which, with the advent of Christianity, nothing similar could have appeared. In some cases, there are wooden idols (precisely wooden tiny figurines) with bodies have survived only in a very small dimension. They are about a palm in height or even less⁷⁵. There are no ancient inscriptions on any of them, and the archaeological context never makes it possible to understand the name of god of idol and learn more about the Slavic pantheon.

The researchers also paid special attention to the illustrations of the “Radziwiłł Chronicle” (the existing copy dates back to the 15th century). This manuscript is an illustrated (more than 600 pictures) version of “Primary Chronicle”, continued until 1206. Several images of idols are included here, as well as other characters associated with paganism. Some even suggested that the serpent in the “Radziwiłł Chronicle” represents the god Veles, but such a supposing is erroneous⁷⁶. Comparative analysis allows us to say that the images of gods on a high column, typical for the “Radziwiłł Chronicle” or, for example, the “Kyiv Psalter of 1397”, should be rejected as a source for understanding Slavic paganism: being an adoption of Byzantine and Western European book’s style⁷⁷. In the 20th century voluminous “sources” comprising immense fake histories accompanied by devotee “studies” appear in the East Slavic world. New gods become “known” (some of such fake-gods can be looked for as early as the 18th century – for example, Mikhail V. Lomonosov “revived” the god Чур “Čur”). The most famous case is the “Book of Veles” of the 1950s, *supposedly* a monument of the 9th century. Completely new characters are introduced here, such as Mother-Sva, Pater Dyi, Kryšen’, Zemun cow and new spiritual worlds, like *Svarga* borrowed from India (by mere consonance linked to the god *Svarog*). Some deities here are borrowed from earlier fakes from abroad (Vyšen’, Ognobog). I will them discuss a bit later. In the 1990s, writings of Alexander I. Asov and Alexander Yu. Khinevich (the latter’s works on “Ynglism” are today banned in Russia for provocation of ethnic hatred) influenced by Old Indian and esoteric concepts continued this trend. Here we see rather some new stories about previously known gods (both revered actually by ancient Slavs and those appearing later or taken from foreign traditions) than the emergence of new

75. For example Klejn 2004: 215–217 fig. 25.

76. Klejn 2004: 14–18.

77. Kutarev 2021c: 28–29.

deities. Such forgeries came out, of course, mainly from a longing to “find” something similar to the Greek myths or the Indian Vedas. Comparable to those later fakes would be the “Oera Linda Book” based on the ancient German mythology, etc.

But as I have already noted, all reliable references to the ancient deities that the pagan Eastern Slavs really revered belong to the period of the 11–13th centuries, and all the names within I have already analyzed.

§3. Although there are fewer **South Slavs** than Western Slavs, I will consider them second, because their sources have many intersections with the sources of the Eastern Slavs. The ancestors of the southern Slavs were the first to be widely captured in the lens of historical sources: from the 6th century, they forced an actual invasion to Byzantium, described with horror by many Greek authors. Something about their pagan customs or worship of idols can be found also in the Latin epistle of the Pope⁷⁸ or even in one Georgian hagiography⁷⁹ – but again there are no names of deities here.

The southern Slavs were Christianized early – Bulgaria in the 860s, and separate formations of Serbs and Carantanians (ancestors of Slovenes) – even earlier. Already in the 9–10th centuries, the ancestors of modern Bulgarians and Macedonians had a high level of book culture, a little later the Serbs took over the baton, quickly learning from the Greeks and Italians. It was the South Slavic

78. The answers of Pope Nicholas I to the questions of the newly baptized Bulgarians, from 866, are curious in that they mention a number of pre-Christian customs, such as divination and spells before the battle (chapter 35), oaths on the sword (ch. 67), the use of amulets (79), etc., but the messages about idol worship (41) that are important for this article of mine are very vague (Xarlamova 2017: 234). Full Latin text with parallel translation into Bulgarian: Izvori 1960: 65–125. Excerpts are included in the collections: Meyer 1931: 6 (excerpts from chapter 35), Álvarez-Pedrosa 2017: 66–71; Álvarez-Pedrosa 2021: 53–59 (translations of fragments of chapters 33, 35, 41, 51, 62, 67, 79), Dynda 2017: 26–29 (fragments and translations into Czech chapters 33, 35, 41, 62, 67, 77, 79). Full translation into Russian: Xarlamova 2017. I will not refer further to other text sources in such details of bibliography, that was just for example.

79. *Žitie Georgija Svjatogorca* 1872: 178–179. By the way, this 11th century text, the life of George the Hagiorite (Mtatsmindeli), is not mentioned in modern studies outside Russia including even compendiums of sources on the religion of the Slavs, although it is remarkable and undoubtedly reliable. It tells that a certain idol of a female deity, destroyed by George, was venerated in the lands of modern northern Greece even in the middle of the 11th century. Unfortunately, no name of this idol is given.

world that became the model and source for ancient Russian culture a century later. But during the 14th century the Bulgarians and Serbs defeated incessantly by the Turks came under the Turkish yoke. Their bookishness was largely lost, their culture fell into decay, and some of these Slavs had to wait until the 19–20th centuries for gain independence. As for the Croats and Slovenes, they became heavily influenced by the German or Italian states or Hungary even earlier.

However, much of the South Slavic literature was preserved in Ancient Rus'. Some texts were transferred there directly; others were assimilated by Russian literacy, just as students absorb the ideas of a teacher. Separate names of the South Slavic pantheon must be sought in ancient Russian literature. The insert under 1114 in the Hypatian edition of "Primary Chronicle" about Svarog and Dažbog is made from a South Slavic, Bulgarian text from about the 10th century. Both of these names show the cults of the southern Slavs; and if the name Dažbog coincides with Old Russian⁸⁰, then the name Svarog is unique and unknown to Russian texts, although his connection with the Russian god of fire Svarožič seems almost certain.

Just as the Slavic deity Svarog was interpreted by the Greek Hephaestus, Perun was used: in one Slavic translation from Greek, his name is put as the father of Alexander the Great instead of Zeus⁸¹. Ones also allowed the existence of some sermons against paganism initially in the South Slavic environment, whence only later they came to Rus': then the Vila sisters could be an insert of South Slavic origin⁸². That are all names we know reliably. Then we may examine one controversial text and anthropological data – of course, only as a secondary and hypotheticalal source.

I can't omit the story of "Piren" (Perun?) in the Byzantine text "Miracles of St. Demetrius of Thessaloniki", as a reference within (Greek "ἐκ τοῦ Πυρήνος", according to Lubor Niederle) is claimed to be the earliest mention of the name of a Slavic deity at all (late 7th century)⁸³. So, when around 616 the Slavic tribes decided to capture the Byzantine city of Thessaloniki (in modern Greece), one

80. About this, as I noted, two of my English articles: Kutarev 2021a, Kutarev 2021b.

81. Mansikka 2005: 223; Niederle 1916: 99; Kutarev 2021b: 111 ft. 26. However, researchers differ in explaining the origin of this mention. Some claim it to be South Slavic, while others – East Slavic.

82. Gal'kovskij 2013: 284; Mansikka 2005: 138–142 etc. The dual faith of the southern Slavs is extremely scarcely known. Perhaps it could have disappeared before the Russian *Dvoeverie*, by the 12th century.

83. Svod 1995: 93.

of their leaders, *Chatzon*, asked by a fortune-telling, would he capture the city. According to some reports, one of the versions of St. Demetrius' miracles reports that a certain [deity?] Piren answered Chatzon would enter in the city. However, neither I, nor Iordan Ivanov, nor L. Niederle could find the variant of this source containing such an episode⁸⁴: in the available versions of St. Demetrius' miracles we see Chatzon, his divination, and the entrance to the city (albeit as a prisoner), but not the name of Piren⁸⁵. It is known that "there is a vast corpus of texts about St. Demetrius, created in the Middle Ages in Greek and Slavic languages. The complete *Corpus Demetrianum* has not yet been collected and published"⁸⁶. If there existed such a text, then we probably have Perun in front of us, because his name is well known to the Slavs, isn't it? – But it is still impossible to believe this fact without a source. Could not it be a mistake or confusion (as it was regarding the name of another Slavic leader from "Miracles": *Pervud* from Greek "Περβούνδου")? Let's leave this question open, and the status of the source doubtful.

Since the 19th century in the records of the folk art of the southern Slavs, not only Vily (as Samovily, Samodivy, etc.) are known, but also, for example, Troyan. And two Serbian legends about a certain Dabog, the leader of evil spirits, led the prominent researcher of South Slavic mythology of the 20th century, Veselin Čajkanović, to claim Dažbog to be the main personage of the ancient pagan pantheon⁸⁷.

Folklore is also closely related to South Slavic fakes⁸⁸, giving rise to several new gods enrooted later in the 20th century in Russia and beyond. These fakes sources are three volumes of "Песме" ("Songs") by Milos S. Milojević, supposedly a collection of Serbian folklore, from where come Koročun (name of the winter holiday), Garuda (supposedly Slavic, but in fact Indian "messenger of the gods"), Vyšen' (from the Slavic *вышний* "vyšnij", "higher", that is, the supreme one – the

84. Ivanov 2005: 14, 40–41 n. 44; Niederle 1916: 99 pozn. 3.

85. "Miracles of St. Demetrius of Thessaloniki", II, 193 (Svod 1995: 133: both the Greek original and the Russian translation of fragments).

86. Svod 1995: 91.

87. Many conclusions drawn in study of V. Čajkanović should be rejected. See for more details: Kutarev 2016b: 132. See the text of both legends about Dabog in the original and English translation: Kutarev 2021b: 119–122.

88. I won't consider Mavro Orbini (17th century) and the god "Iacobog" invented by him (see Znayenko 1980: 41–43), paying more attention to falsifications with a large list of new names.

epithet of the Christian god really used in the South Slavic languages, clearly alluding to the Indian Vishnu – as later the Kryšen’ pseudo-god to Krishna), etc. There are many other gods here, both real and fake from the pantheon of Eastern and Western Slavs. There is also a certain Davor with a group of other characters, whom Alberto Fortis in the 18th century, erroneously interpreting a wedding song composed among the Morlachs or the Croats⁸⁹ called the actual gods. Basing on the “Songs” of Milojević, a little later at the end of the 19th century, Stjepan Verković published under the title “Veda Slovena” two volumes of an supposed collection of Bulgarian legends, where he further expanded the fake Slavic pantheon (here appeared Ognebog (“fire-god”), the goddess Maya, Suritsa – who read the Veda and drink the *sura*⁹⁰, like Indian gods), which was later largely adopted by the Russian “Ves Book” and other fakes.

§4. We will complete the review of the Slavic gods with the **West Slavic branch**⁹¹, dividing it in two parts. The first will include **Poland, Czech and Slovakia**.

The Great Moravia was the eldest cultural district, where Czechs and Slovaks’ ancestors were still closely tied to those of *Slovenes* (from the *South Slavic branch*), that is the *Carantians*. The Christianization of Great Moravia in the

89. I’m just preparing a more detailed study on this, and it seems that there are no any others.

90. In Slavic languages, the word “fire” is cognate of the name of the Indian fire god Agni (Bulgarian огън “*ogn’*”, Russian огонь “*ogon’*”, Polish *ogień*, etc.). *Maya* is an Indian sacred concept of illusion. *Sura* is an intoxicating drink that had a sacred meaning in ancient Hinduism.

91. I deem unsatisfactory the extent of studies devoted to West Slavic paganism in modern Russian historiography and therefore I will further refer to it less. Here I will often quote sources from collections of fragments referring to Slavic paganism, but I won’t mention them all at once, but selectively, for brevity. The work of Mansikka (2005) should be recognized as the best for East Slavic material, although we celebrated its centenary in 2022. However, the religion of the Western Slavs is reported mainly by sources in Latin. For short fragments without critical apparatus and translation (only the original languages) see the collection of Meyer 1931. The Czech researcher J. Dynda published two books in which he collected many passages from sources in the original languages, gave a small critical apparatus and translated them into Czech: for Ancient Rus’, see Dynda 2019. For Latin texts, Dynda 2017. A Spaniard researcher J.-A. Álvarez-Pedrosa, leading a team of authors, published with some commentary “Sources on the Slavic pre-Christian religion” (of all regions), first translated into Spanish (Álvarez-Pedrosa 2017), and then – with fragments in the original languages – into English (Álvarez-Pedrosa 2021). These generally excellent works have room for improvement and something to expand on.

9th century by a pair of Saints, Cyril and Methodius, was later considered by all Czech and Slovak states fundamental for their history, but since then the Czechs have experienced a huge political and cultural influence of the Germans. The formation of Poland takes place a little later. Father and son – *Mieszko I* and *Bolesław I the Brave* – managed to conquer and baptize from 960s to 1025 vast territories and communities that became the center where the Polish nation (the largest in the Slavic world after the Russians) would be formed. It is curious that in the 11th century several large pagan riots took place in Poland and in Bohemia, but Christianity eventually regained power.

Researchers do incessantly wonder: how brief and negligible is all that we know about the paganism of the Poles, Czechs and Slovaks, despite the relatively well records of their past and rather ancient and extensive book tradition. Until the 14th century in the sources we don't meet a single reliable name of any pagan deity of these peoples! At best, authors of the 12th century, like Gallus Anonymus or Cosmas of Prague, mention in rather literary and narrative way several Roman theonyms, but even if we assume some facts of Slavic religion or mythology to be given there in distorted way, this will help in no way to our task of finding names. At the same time, for example, thanks to the "Homiliarium de Opatoviz"⁹², we are somewhat acquainted with Czechs' magical practices in the 11–12th centuries, much similar to those of the Old Russian Dvoeverie, but the mention of "demons" here lacks the information we are looking for (the demons are not named).

We must go on to the period of the 14–16th centuries, because the data we need simply doesn't exist before this date. In the middle of the 14th century, Jan Neplach, a Czech chronicler, mentions "*an idol called Zelu*", which was allegedly venerated by the first pagan Czech dukes⁹³. It is not clear what to do with this: L. Niederle and Henryk Łowmiański believed that this name was in invention by Neplach⁹⁴, but Boris A. Rybakov and Vladimir N. Toporov recognized its authenticity and compared it with the Russian Žlja from "The Tale of Igor's Campaign". Other opinions are also expressed in the historiography.

The constant mention of name Veles or someone similar in Czech sources of the 15–16th centuries is remarkable⁹⁵. It becomes synonymous with the

92. Álvarez-Pedrosa 2017: 104–110.

93. "*ydoli vocabatur Zelu*" (year 894). *Zelu* (as "Zely") is also mentioned in the German translation of the Czech "Chronicle of Dalimil" (Dynda 2017: 261–262).

94. For example, Łowmiański 2003: 168, 408 n. 540.

95. Could the name "Zelu" be some kind of distortion of "Veles"? Whoever *Zelu* was, if this image is recognized as reliable, it must occupy the highest place in the pantheon. *Veles* would fit as the highest god, but definitely not a secondary one and only once mentioned *Žlja* from "The Tale of Igor's Campaign". Surely, this is only our humble assumption.

devil: “*what devil or what veles or what serpent turned you against me?*”⁹⁶. We read about a man who cursed a wicked woman and wished her to turn into a goose and go away “*over the sea to Veles*”. Another passage contains a folk expression: “*which veles whispered [you to do something evil]?*”⁹⁷. Only sometimes Veles or Vele is compared by the author to biblical devil-god Baal (we come upon similar expressions in ancient Russian literature). The lines from a song recorded in the 15th century are curious: “*Vele, Vele, an oak stand in the middle of the courtyard*”⁹⁸. Could it be a reference to the World Tree? Along the tree the thought of “*Veles’ grandson*”, the poet Boyan in “The Tale of Igor’s Campaign”, vaguely flows⁹⁹.

As we know, nature does not tolerate emptiness. Already in the 16th century, undoubtedly deliberate hoaxes appear in Bohemia. The Czech chronicler Václav Hájek invented many “Czech deities”. Three such goddesses are particularly well-known: Krosyna, Krasatina and Klimba¹⁰⁰. Hájek also mentions Zelu, quoting Neplach. Let us mention the most famous Czech forgery related to paganism – the glosses from the medieval dictionary “Mater Verborum” (the beginning of the 19th century). Here we also find a large pantheon, where the genuine gods of the Eastern and Western Slavs are combined with old and new fake ones (Prije, Sytivrat, etc.)¹⁰¹. So, all Czech data useful for our topic except, perhaps, the names of Vele(s) and Zelu, regrettably, must be discarded.

The same confusion is obvious also for the Polish sources. At the end of the 15th century, Jan Długosz composes one of the most significant chronicles of the late Middle Ages, describing the Polish pagan pantheon in some detail. We have eight names here: *Yesza, Lyada, Dzydzilelya, Nya, Pogoda, Żywy, Dzewana/Dzyervana, Marzyana/Marziana*. Almost all of them are compared with Roman gods¹⁰². One is sure that Długosz didn’t invent all these names as some of them appear in a dozen texts about a century before him¹⁰³. But

96. “*Ký čert aneb ký veles aneb ký zmek tě proti mně zbudil?*” (Niederle 1916: 114).

97. “*Za moře k velesu*”; “*ký veles jim jich našepce*” (Niederle 1916: 114).

98. “*Vele, vele, stojí dubec prosted dvora*” (Niederle 1916: 114).

99. SPI 1800: 2–3; ŽOB 2021: 543–548, 613–616.

100. Łowmiański 2003: 168.

101. Kutarev 2016a: 150–153.

102. Jan Długosz. *Annales I*, “Lech metropolim Gnezno fundat...”; *II*, 965 (Długossii *Annales* 1964: 106–107, 178). Lada was briefly mentioned by him (and not at all like in the chronicle – where the god Lyada is the analogue of Mars – but as a goddess in Mazovia!) in another text (see Gieysztor 2014: 182).

103. I won’t analyze all the various forms of names such as Lada, Yassa, Nya, Leli and the prototypes of Marzana that were known before Długosz. There is no distinct study, where *all* these sources about the Polish pantheon before Długosz would be examined.

it was Długosz who made this list of characters similar to the classic Roman pantheon. At the same time, it's completely unclear what kind of figures they were and in what way they may be related to the pre-Christian Polish gods. This problem can be solved in completely different ways: for example, in Russian historiography, one is mostly skeptic on its reliability, and in Polish studies instead, a significant number of researchers admit its consistency (with some exceptions). I would not reject the "Długosz list" itself, but I claim to reject everything that came out of it afterwards. Since the 16th century numerous followers of Długosz (e.g., Maciej Miechowita, Marcin Kromer, Maciej Strykowski, Marcin Błażewski etc.) added more and more new characters and properties to the "Długosz Olympus" and in the 17–18th centuries, every outline of the Slavic gods is provided with mentioning such deities as "mother Lada and her children Lel and Polel". Such personages also "took roots" in the pantheons of Russia, Lithuania, etc.¹⁰⁴ The deity Boda¹⁰⁵ and Pozvzd (already mentioned) have the same origin. The successors of Długosz occupied in Poland the niche that "had" to be filled by hoaxers in Bohemia, Russia, Serbia and Bulgaria, though the authenticity of the original "Długosz list", I repeat, remains arguable. However, in general, literature about the "Polish folk faith or dual faith" (if we use this term¹⁰⁶) of the 14–15th centuries, seems to be a promising and under-researched scientific direction. The popularity of the "The Witcher" universe, originally a series of books by Andrzej Sapkowski, and now also a serials, video games, etc., gives this topic additional relevance: this magic has come to the Fantasy genre largely from Polish folk religion.

I will add here only one image of a Polish idol of the 7–8th centuries – the idol from Małocin¹⁰⁷, one of the most famous. As in the case of the Old Russian material, the archaeological sites of the Poles are "silent", they don't show their names and generally do not differ much from the East Slavic ones.

I am preparing such paper in Russian. Surprisingly, a number of texts were discovered only in the second half of the 20th century. Only a few are quoted and translated in Łowmiański 2003: 170–175 with notes; Álvarez-Pedrosa 2017: 197–198, 213–217 etc.

104. Mansikka 2005: 115–132; Gieysztor 2014: 180–181; Znayenko 1980: 33–38.

105. Gieysztor 2014: 183.

106. If at an early stage the texts of the dual belief (both Russian, Czech and Polish) show mainly Slavic materials, with great emphasis on various traditional mythological creatures, then further, by the 14–15th centuries, the emphasis is shifting to magic, and from "national" to more and more "global" themes, with the undoubted influence of southern and western European occultism, as well as more pronounced rejection of folk holidays. At some point, Slavic paganism almost disappears here. But there is no confident understanding of the boundaries of the "ancient Slavic" in science.

107. In Polish, the idol is called "Kamienne bóstwo pogańskie z Małocina".



**Fig. 5. Małocin Idol,
7–8th centuries.**

Muzeum Ziemi Zawkrzeńskiej,
Mława, Poland.

Photo: Oleg V. Kutarev, 2017

§5. If one may wonder how scarce is the data sources about the ancient Slavic paganism of the Poles and Czechs, it is even more surprising that we know much more about the paganism of several long-extinct **West Slavic** peoples than about any other, except, perhaps, Ancient Rus'! We are talking about the **Baltic Slavs** (the closest to them are modern Polish people) exterminated or assimilated by Germans and Poles already by the 18th century: these are *Pomeranians*, *Veleti*, *Rujani* (or *Rani*) and *Obodrites*. Their communities (apart from the Pomeranians) are also called *Polabian*, along with *Sorbs* – tens of thousands of Sorbs conserved their language, living in modern Germany. So, Polabian Slavs, who lived near the river Elbe (Slavic “*along the Elbe*”, cf. Czech: *po Labi*) are Sorbs, Veleti, Rujani and Obodrites. We'll use the term *Polabian-Baltic Slavs* referring to all these communities (as we have noticed, there are five and all of them already mentioned: Pomeranians, Sorbs, Veleti, Rujani and Obodrites). Once in the lands in the east of modern Germany and in the north-west of Poland, the Polabian-Baltic Slavs were numerous and formed the majority of the population. Charlemagne combated and allied with them. Otto the Great tried to baptize them. The long struggle for independence from Christian neighbors – Germany, Poland, Denmark – went on up to the 12th century with its up and downs. But when in the 1160s this struggle finally ended with the subjugation of these states, who were Christianized, this was the beginning of their actual

disappearance, by the 15th century already completed. Only a small Slavic island in the German ocean until the 18th century was preserved by last Obodrites in the most infertile lands near the German city of Lüneburg, where their language (the Polabian language, once spoken alike by Veleti and Rujani), the researchers managed to somehow study until the moment of complete extinction. The Pomeranian language, spoken by the Pomeranians, was less fortunate: it is almost unknown, although many people think that the Kashubian language that has survived to modern times in Poland comes from it (it is debatable)¹⁰⁸. Sorbs are the only ones who survived and preserved their language in Germany, but there are far fewer of them today than there were even in the 10th century.

The paganism of Polabian-Baltic Slavs, this unique branch of the West Slavic world, deserves a separate mention. It is much better known than the Polish or the Czech one, and the main sources concerning it date back to the 11–13th centuries (or earlier: we know that even in the 10th century, the Obodrites venerated a certain “Saturn”, whose Slavic name can only be guessed¹⁰⁹). But the first reliably recorded name of a pagan deity (not only among the Polabian-Baltic Slavs, but also among the Slavs in general¹¹⁰) appeared at the beginning of the 11th century (1008) with Bruno of Querfurt. He condemns Henry II, the Holy Roman Emperor, for his alliance with the pagan tribe Lutici (northern Veleti) against the Christian Polish people, mentioning the pagan god Svarožič (“Zuarasiz”)¹¹¹. Few years later Thietmar of Merseburg described a sanctuary of this god (“Zuarasici”) called Riedegost¹¹², also giving us more interesting information about the religion of the Sorbs, the Veleti and the Pomeranians – but unfortunately, almost without names. It is not clear whether the mysterious “Hennil” (or, according to another manuscript, “Bendil”), the patron of

108. ŽOB 2021: 524–525, 644–656.

109. Widukind of Corvey, “*Res gestae saxonicae*” III, 68 (Meyer 1931: 7).

110. Unless we confirm the name of Piren from the “Miracles of St. Demetrius of Thessaloniki”.

111. This German-Polish war took place in 1002–1018. See Bruno’s text in Álvarez-Pedrosa 2021: 64–66.

112. “Chronicon” VI, 23–25 (17–18) = Álvarez-Pedrosa 2021: 70–73. The manuscript of the chronicle (it may have been prepared by Thietmar himself and he personally contributed in its composing), managed to be published as facsimile before it was damaged during the Second World War. Despite some discrepancies in other manuscripts, I will take the main spelling from it. See passage about Riedegost in Mscr. Dresd. R. 147 1905: 108a–108b.

shepherds, was actually a deity. It's not entirely clear what kind of people revered him (Sorbs?)¹¹³. Or, for example, may we consider a deity the miraculous sacred water spring of Glomuci (the modern region of Lommatzsch in Germany), which predicts the future and which “*every inhabitant fears and reveres more than the church*”¹¹⁴? Thietmar doesn't mention any names of water deities in the Pomeranian city Kolobrzeg at all¹¹⁵. Meanwhile, these descriptions of paganism were brought to life by the recent Great Slavic revolt of 983, the purpose of which was to restore political independence and destroy the successes of the Christianization of the Slavs in the 10th century¹¹⁶. I think that the beginning of the high Middle Ages among the Baltic Slavs can be dated to the year 983.

About half a century later than Thietmar, Adam of Bremen composes his chronicle in the 1070s. As in the case of Thietmar, it serves a valuable source on the history and religion of other northern European peoples: for example, it is Adam who describes famous Scandinavian pagan sanctuary – the Uppsala temple in Sweden¹¹⁷. Adam also has a description of Redigast¹¹⁸ – it's no more a sanctuary city (here it's name “*Rethre*”), but a god himself. The name of Svarožič is no longer used¹¹⁹. Adam still writes a lot about the history and culture of the Lutici, Pomeranians, Rujani – but he doesn't give any new names of the gods, and I will skip it. But in a much smaller document from the beginning of the 12th century, in the call for a crusade against the pagans, the archbishop of Magdeburg

113. *Ibid.* VII, 69 (50) = Dynda 2017: 53. “*Don't sleep, Hennil, don't sleep!*” (Latin “*uigila Hennil, uigila*”) was sentenced at a certain rite with a staff (Mscr. Dresd. R. 147 1905: 173a).

114. “*Glomuzi est fons*” (Mscr. Dresd. R. 147 1905: 1a); “*hunc omnis incola plus quam aecclesias <...> veneratur et timet*”. *Ibid.* I, 3 = Dynda 2017: 43–44. The Lommatzsch or Glomuci spring still exists today, I drank from it in 2017. A small stream from the spring forced the builders of the local railway to build a bridge over it. Its approximate coordinates are: 51.221397026856934, 13.308480576358. Compare with the name of the sacred grove “Zutibure” – distorted *Swentobor*, that is, “holy grove” (this sheet was not preserved in Mscr. Dresd), *ibid.* VI, 37 (26) = Dynda 2017: 50, etc.

115. *Ibid.* VII, 72 (52) = Álvarez-Pedrosa 2017: 85.

116. Kutarev 2018.

117. “*Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*” IV, 26–27 and corresponding scholias.

118. *Ibid.* II, 21 = Álvarez-Pedrosa 2021: 80–83.

119. The reasons for this reversal of names are debatable. I believe that the names of Svarožič and Riedegost belong to the same god, but the second was also the Slavic name of the city, which the Germans, starting with Adam of Bremen, begin to call Rethra.

Adelgot (or another author who attributed it to Adelgot) mentioned the name *Pripégala*¹²⁰, incomprehensible and no more mentioned, but, contrary to the skepticism of Aleksander Brückner, seeming authentic¹²¹. Further, around 1140, the English historian Orderic Vitalis says that the land of the Lutici (“*Leuticia*”), which went to war with the Danes against England, “*worships Woden, Thor, Freya and other false gods*” – probably the author describes the characteristics of deities, giving their Germanic analogies, but avoiding their true Slavic names, which would be of little use to Orderic’s English reader of the epoch¹²². Another message looks similar to this, from the “Chronicle” (Latin “*Chronica*”) created in the third quarter of the 12th century by Richard of Poitiers, which tells about the veneration of Mercury and Venus by the Lutici¹²³. By the way, a certain goddess of the Lutici (undoubtedly a *female* one) was also mentioned without a name by Thietmar¹²⁴. The fact is reliable, but none of the sources above give a *Slavic* name for the goddess.

The missionary journeys, made through the lands of Veleti and Pomeranians by bishop Otto of Bamberg in the 1120s, gave rise to several hagiographies. Three of them, composed between 1140 and 1160, are considered the main ones. These are the Lives of the monks: Anonym from Prüfening, and Ebo and Herbord of Michelsberg, and their order of appearance is exactly that¹²⁵. In each of these Lives there are three books, and the last two are devoted to the missionary’s stay in the lands of the Slavs, his struggle with paganism and dissemination of Christian faith. Omitting all the numerous valuable information about the priests, temples, holidays of the pagans, let’s focus on the gods, though the data on them is far from unambiguous. In the city of Wolin, Otto’s Lives mention a spear-wielding god named *Iulius*, clearly suggesting to the reader that he’s the deified Julius Caesar¹²⁶. But of course, this is not so: it means some kind of Pomeranian god with a consonant name. In the first complete edition of the Lives

120. Dynda 2017: 57–60.

121. Gieysztor 2014: 94.

122. “*Guodenen et Thurum Freamque aliosque falsos deos <...> colebat*”. “*Historia ecclesiastica*” IV, 1069 = Meyer 1931: 24; Łowmiański 2003: 176.

123. Meyer 1931: 58.

124. Thietmar, “*Chronicon*” VII, 64 (47) = Álvarez-Pedrosa 2017: 84.

125. Contrary to what can be found in K.H. Meyer and H.-A. Álvarez-Pedrosa: ŽOB 2021: 661–701.

126. Anonym of Prüfening II, 5–6, 16; Ebo II, 1, III, 1; Herbord III, 26 = Dynda 2017: 73–76, 106, 116, 173.

of Otto in Russian, I carefully assumed that this was Veles: such a theory had many followers in the 19–20th centuries, including Aleksander Brückner and Aleksander Gieysztor, although the name Veles is not mentioned in the sources about the Baltic Slavs¹²⁷. In the city of Szczecin, the god (the same?) was called Triglav (“Triglous / Trigelawo”), that is “three-headed” (with heads surveying the three worlds: heaven, earth and the lower world). Lives describe his temples, the sacred horse and other attributes¹²⁸. It is likely to say, that the three-headed god is mentioned in other *independent* sources (while the name Triglav itself there could be probably borrowed from Otto’s hagiographies). These texts mention – albeit very briefly – the cult of the god in the south Veletian city of Brandenburg. However, modern scholars in their surveys of sources on the religion of the Slavs, citing these references in approximately the same form since the time of K.H. Meyer, regrettably don’t consult a recent study, taking into account several previously unstudied manuscripts¹²⁹. Christina Meckelnborg shows that the 12th century “*Tractatus de urbe Brandenburg*”¹³⁰ and its adaptations of the first half of the 13th century, contains only a description of the three-headed idol without a name. The name Tryglav (sometimes distorted) appears only in the “*Chronica episcopatus Brandenburgensis*” (middle 13th century) and in the “*Chronicae principum Saxoniae excerptum*” (end of the 13th century), based on the text of “*Tractatus*”¹³¹. About a century later, the Czech chronicler Přebík Pulkava would quote the same corpus without adding anything new¹³². The

127. ŽOB 2021: 543–548, 573–574.

128. Anonym of Prüfening II, 11–12; Ebo II, 13, III, 1, 16; Herbord II, 32–33 = Dynda 2017: 78–81, 108–112, 118–121, 133, 153–157.

129. Meckelnborg 2015.

130. We give here the correct title and date. Those given by H.-A. Álvarez-Pedrosa, based on the editions of the 19th century (“*Tractatus de captione urbis Brandenburg*”, etc.) are incorrect. We should not also mention the name of Henry of Antwerp, analyzing this text (Meckelnborg 2015: 38, 54–70). Original text of the “*Tractatus*” and German translation cf.: Meckelnborg 2015: 110–119.

131. Meckelnborg 2015: 49, 65–76, 92–95, 100–102. The “*Diploma Brandenburgense*”, considered an independent source dated from 1114 by K.H. Meyer and H.-A. Álvarez-Pedrosa (Meyer 1931: 24; Álvarez-Pedrosa 2021: 108–109), belongs to the same corpus of texts, cf.: Meckelnborg 2015: 138.

132. Meckelnborg 2015: 46, 102–105. The text of Pulkava (year 1156: Dynda 2017: 176–178), although its data is clearly based on Brandenburg documents, doesn’t give us any new information about the Paganism and the cult of Triglav. It’s secondary, and therefore hardly deserves a distinct mention in future collections of sources.

question arises whether the name Triglav was really in Brandenburg in pagan times, could it have come there from the Lives of Otto, and is it the same god, or do this deity and Triglav only had the same number of heads¹³³? Another reliable name from the Lives of Otto is Gerovitus¹³⁴, which in Slavonic sounded like Yarovit, undoubtedly intersects with the root *jaro-*, associated with spring and rage, excitement¹³⁵. This god was revered by the Southern Veleti in the city of Havelberg and the Lutici in Wolgast. A number of the gods mentioned by the Lives, for example in the city of Gützkow, are unfortunately not called by name. A catalog of deities' names (mostly Obodritian, but also revered by other Baltic Slavs) are mentioned by Helmold of Bosau in his "Chronicle of the Slavs" (Latin "*Chronica Slavorum*"), completed at the beginning of the 1170s. These names are: *Prove* (variant *Prone*), the goddess *Siwa* (the only reliable female theonym of the Baltic Slavs!), *Radigast*, *Zcerneboch* ("black god"), *Podaga*. For the first time Helmold directly mentions Sventovit ("Zuantevith")¹³⁶. "*Chronica Slavorum*" is one of the key texts on the history and culture of the Baltic Slavs, and although the authenticity of some data provided by Helmold has also been disputed, the names of the gods are reliable. Quite interesting is the "monastic folklore", presented by Herbert from Clairvaux in several chapters of his "Three Books of Miracles" (circa 1178–1180). Here we read about a somewhat mysterious struggle of paganism of Baltic Slavs with eventually triumphant Christianity. But I will only note the insufficient attention to this source in research¹³⁷: the names of the deities are not mentioned there. Helmold's work was continued by was Arnold of Lübeck, who wrote his "*Chronica Slavorum*" in the first decade of the 13th century: here he mentioned the Lutici god Gutdracco¹³⁸, whose sacred grove was in the south of the present city of Rostock in Germany¹³⁹. He has no other deities. Circa 1170 we may see the end of the high Middle Ages in the lands

133. "They carve many [images of their gods] with two, three and more heads" (Latin "*multos [deos] etiam duobus uel tribus uel eo amplius capitibus exsculpunt*"). Helmold of Bosau. "*Cronica Slavorum*" I, 83 (§84) = Álvarez-Pedrosa 2021: 161–162.

134. Ebo III, 3, 7–8; Herbord III, 4, 6 = Dynda 2017: 121–122, 125–128 160–164.

135. ŽOB 2021: 592, 797–798 n. 499.

136. I, 2, 21, 23, 52, 69, 83 (§84), II, 12 (§108) = Álvarez-Pedrosa 2017: 143–155.

137. ŽOB 2021: 621–622, 735. The collections of J. Dynda and H.-A. Álvarez-Pedrosa both analyze only one episode (both authors have a different one), although there are other similar passages here.

138. V, 24 = Meyer 1931: 59.

139. Cf. Saxo Grammaticus 14.25.17.

of the Baltic Slavs and the eventually rapid disappearance of their paganism and originality.

A voluminous chronicle called “The Deeds of the Danes” (Latin “*Gesta Danorum*”), dedicated to Danish history from mythical times, was completed around 1210 by Saxo Grammaticus. A kind of Danish right-wing nationalist according to whom the Danes supposedly always defeated the Slavs (and almost always the Germans), Saxo inadvertently shows how enormous a role the Baltic Slavs played in Danish culture and history, from the Battle of Brávellir around the 8th century up to the end of the 12th century. With particular national pride Saxo describes in detail the conquest of the Rujani by the Danes in the 1160s–1170s. We read about the sanctuaries of the Rujani and their destruction. “*Gesta Danorum*” is the most voluminous and detailed of its kind from all sources on Slavic paganism, and I will limit myself only to the list of names of deities that he gives: first of all, this is Sventovit¹⁴⁰ (“Suantovitus”) already known to us in the city of Arkona, and in the city of Charenza: *Rugievitus*, *Porevitus* and *Porenutius*¹⁴¹.

In close connection with the descriptions of the Sventovit cult are two more texts. William of Malmesbury in “Deeds of the Kings of the English” (Latin “*Gesta Regum Anglorum*” about 1125, almost a century earlier than Saxo Grammaticus) writes that in the times of the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire Henry III (ruled in 1039–1056) “*Vindelici worship Fortuna*”¹⁴² and perform exactly the same divination rite with the drinking horn of an idol, which Saxo later describes in relation to Sventovit. This message will be succinctly repeated in the middle of the 13th century by the chronicle of Alberic of Trois-Fontaines (Latin “*Albrici Triumfontium Chronicon*”)¹⁴³. The well-known study of this passage by Leszek

140. In connection with Sventovit, one can recall several other documents related to the claims of the Corvey Abbey (ŽOB 2021: 547 n. 2) or the Danish conquest – to the island of Rujan (modern German Rügen), for example, a charter (forged?) from about 1200, in which Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa gives a list of land donations to the Bishopric of Mecklenburg (Meyer 1931: 47–48), but this is not so relevant for this article, since we have already taken into account the name of Sventovit, and there are no others.

141. Saxo Grammaticus. *Gesta Danorum* XIV, 39 = Dynda 2017: 200–233.

142. “*Vindelici vero Fortunam adorant*” II, 189 (Ślupecki, Zaroff 1999: 18). “Vindelici” (originally an olden name for a Celtic tribe) are undoubtedly Baltic Slavs, although the details are not clear (Ślupecki, Zaroff 1999: 11–17). Lutici, I guess.

143. The author of the Life of Otto of Bamberg, Herbord (II, 32 = Álvarez-Pedrosa 2021: 134–137), also mentions fortune-telling with the help of a drinking horn without details. See with a reference to Alberic (under 1003): ŽOB 2021: 351, 819 n. 678.

Słupecki and Roman Zaroff is not perfect. They do not analyze textual links from Alpert of Metz to Alberic of Trois-Fontaines (only William of Malmesbury, standing between these two figures, is mentioned)¹⁴⁴ and erroneously claim themselves to be the first scholars to introduce this text to the Slavic religion's studies¹⁴⁵. However, in this research we may find a hint here of one very valuable idea. Although one can think that some kind of *female* Slavic deity was meant by the name *Fortuna*, in fact it is possible to be just a way of conveying the idea of an oracle or an idol with a drinking horn / *cornucopia*, but actually the deity could be a male one (even Sventovit himself as is assumed)¹⁴⁶. Regrettably, due to usual lack of a Slavic name, again we are dealing with mere hypotheses.

Written not in Latin, but in Old Norse (the only exception in relation to sources about the Polabian-Baltic pantheon), "*Knýtlinga saga*" ("The Saga about Cnut's Descendants"), composed around the 1250s, also clearly bears on the "Deeds of the Danes" by Saxo Grammaticus as a source. However, the deities' names known from Saxo look different here, and this text gives several new ones. The name Sventovit ("Svantaviz") is recognizable¹⁴⁷, but here we also find the names of the gods of Charenza: Rutvit, Turupið, Puruvit. I think that it will not be possible to briefly explain the discrepancies with Saxo. Two more gods of this saga are unique: Pizamarr and Tjarnaglófi¹⁴⁸. I will personally claim to be these names authentic, although they can be distorted (for example, the *-marr* particle could look like *-mir*, etc.).

144. Nevertheless, at this point the text clearly goes back to the chronicle "On the Difference of Time" by Alpert of Metz (Latin "*De diversitate temporum*") I, 5 (but he does not mention the veneration of Fortuna). It is notable, that Alpert tells us that the Slavs were conquered by another German Emperor named Henry – Henry II (mentioned above), who was his contemporary. He could not write about Henry III, because Alpert died before the first years of his reign. Alberic also writes about Henry II (referring, however, to William of Malmesbury, who deals with Henry III). This tangled story deserves to be mentioned when we analyze this passage. Unfortunately, J. Dynda and H.-A. Álvarez-Pedrosa do not go further the study of L. Słupecki and R. Zaroff.

145. I wrote about this earlier: Kutarev 2021a: 196 ft. 2.

146. Słupecki, Zaroff 1999: 16–17.

147. In different manuscripts we find major discrepancies (not properly accounted for in the compendiums), undoubtedly distorting the personal names of deities, but I will not consider these alterations further. Below, the forms most plausible or frequently mentioned in the studies are given.

148. All the names of the gods are mentioned in chapter 122: Álvarez-Pedrosa 2017: 408–409.

I support the opinion of many researchers (we have a kind of scholarly agreement on this point): by the 13th century one can draw a line between *reliable* data on the deities actually revered and speculations that began after the disappearance of real pagan cults. It is curious that this dating coincides with such a date for Ancient Rus'. All later names either repeat those previously known, or uncertainly and dubious. In the German text of the 14th century, "The suffering of the holy martyrs resting in Ebstorf" (Latin "*De Martyrum in Ebbekestorp quiescentium Passione*"), names of the gods look like some kind of distortion: Hammon, Sventebueck, Vitelubbe¹⁴⁹. The "Saxon Chronicle" of 1492 (Low German "*Cronecken der Sassen*") creates a whole fake pantheon and its appearance (these are the earliest pictures of West Slavic deities in literature – it's a pity that they are fantastic) for the Saxons and Slavs. Here appears the fake god of the Sorbs *Flyns* and the originally Saxon *Krodo*, who later joins the number of supposed deities of the Slavs. In a recent study I presented a detailed analysis of this source relying on the translations of its passages to Russian¹⁵⁰. In the 16th century, a new character is born: Helmold's antipode of Černobog is the "white god", *Belobog* (Bialbug / Belbuck and similar names)¹⁵¹. Sometimes the gods were not invented from scratch, like *Flyns*, but were distortions of the real ones. In the 17–18th centuries from the god *Triglav* – the goddess *Trigla* was coined (influenced by Greeks)¹⁵². However, the largest and most famous corpus of fake deities of the Polabian-Baltic Slavs was given by the *Prillwitz idols*, allegedly found (in fact, created according to one's fantasies) at the end of the 17th and beginning of the 18th centuries in those places where, perhaps, the city of Redegost once was located. In addition to the well-known characters of Helmold appear here brand new *Nemisa*, *Ipabocg*, or *Chislobog* ("Zislbocg", "the god of number")¹⁵³, who was widely demanded by fakes of the 20th century (as "Book of Veles"), where he become the god of time, and others. Although by Helmold's chronicle were inspired not only hoaxers: we can remember, for example, Walter Scott with the character *Zernebock* and John R.R. Tolkien with *Radagast*, etc. In the 17–19th centuries, fake gods of the Baltic Slavs, mixed with the genuine ones, were widely presented in books on the history of the Germanic

149. Meyer 1931: 65.

150. Kutarev 2021c.

151. For a good overview of the topic of Černobog and Belobog, see Gorbachov 2017, but the author erroneously pretends to be the first to discover the appearance of Belobog in the sources of the 16th century (cf. Znayenko 1980: 41–42, 122 n. 128).

152. ŽOB 2021: 705–709.

153. Masch 1771; Kutarev 2016a: 148–150.

world and Europe¹⁵⁴. And nowadays, in public mind of a usual person, reflected and influenced by the Internet, fake gods, born mainly by mistakes and hoaxes of the 15–20th centuries, continue to live, acquire mythology and even be revered by some modern pagans (I emphasize – not all of them do such!).

Archeology has provided quite a lot of data regarding, apparently, the religion of the Baltic Slavs – however, none of the known idols (a large number of them exists) can be confidently correlated with a specific deity. Nevertheless, small wooden idols found in the once Pomeranian, and now Polish city of Wolin, were identified by some researchers – one-headed as “Julius”, and one four-headed as Svantovit (Fig. 6)¹⁵⁵, etc. Of course, one cannot fail to note the connection between the names of at least two stones with deities: these are built into the walls of churches in Altenkirchen (near Arkona, Rügen) and St. Peter’s Church of Wolgast town in Germany. The stones are named respectively “Svantevitstein” and “Gerovitstein” (Fig. 7–8)¹⁵⁶. However, these names are unknown in the Middle Ages, they appear only in the Modern Age, and the origin of the stones themselves is mysterious¹⁵⁷. Some modern reconstructions of idols based on

154. In one of my works, I have analyzed many sources of the actual way of thought that developed in the second third of the 18th century in European and Russian literature on the Polabian-Baltic pantheon (Kutarev 2020).

155. ŽOB 2021: 551–557, fig. 4–10.

156. The researchers hardly dared to date these images on the stone (ŽOB 2021: 557, 601–602, fig. 17).

157. I will summarize this discussion about idols: the archaeological material gives several dozen images that one tried to explain as Slavic gods. Most of them are made of stone or wood: all stone ones are monumental (human-sized or about), and wooden ones, although large ones are also known (mainly from ancient texts), are mainly presented in a “pocket” size (10–30 cm and about). Metal products that cause little doubt in relation to the Slavic pantheon are few. Not a single idol has any signatures or symbols, and attributes like a drinking horn or a princely cap (like the Monomakh’s Cap, but without the cross on top) move freely from one character to another (for example, from female to male, although male images are the vast majority). But unlike sources-*texts* on Slavic paganism (almost all of them were already known in the 19th century), archaeologists continue to make amazing discoveries from time to time, see for example the site section “Der Trinker von Vipperow” (compare with Svantevitstein!), talking about the finding of 2019: <https://www.kulturwerte-mv.de/Landesarchaeologie/Fund-des-Monats/Bisherige-Beitr%C3%A4ge/2022-05-fund-drei-bronzefiguren-mecklenburgische-seenplatte/> – I give an illustration for this link (Fig. 9), etc. A unified database of materials doesn’t yet exist. I will only mention one large collection: Słupecki 1994.

texts should also be called successful, like the figure of Sventovit in the museum of the town of Owidz in Poland (Fig. 10).



**Fig. 6. “Sventovit”
from Wolin
(Polish “Świętowit
woliński”), 9th century.
(Szczepanik 2020: 146 fig. 2)**

**Fig.7. “The Stone of Sventovit”
(German: “Svantevitstein”).**

Pfarrkirche Altenkirchen,
Rügen, Germany.

Photo: Oleg V. Kutarev, 2017



**Fig. 8. “Stone of Yarovit”
(German: “Gerovitstein”).**

St. Peter’s Church of Wolgast, Germany.

Photo: Oleg V. Kutarev, 2017



**Fig. 9. Bronze plate from Vipperow,
12th century.**

Germany.

Photo: Jens Ulrich, 2022



Fig. 10. Modern reconstruction of the Sventovit idol from Arkona of the 12th century.

Museum of Slavic Mythology in Owidz, Poland.

Photo: Oleg V. Kutarev, 2017

It is also impossible to discuss any dual faith related to the Polabian-Baltic Slavs' religion: the loss of their independence and paganism immediately led to severe oppression (some scholars directly called it the German Genocide of Polabian-Baltic Slavs), and even if they still retained some forms of old beliefs for some time, this no longer aroused interest and written fixation, as before: "Vae victis", "Deus vult".

Results

Gods of the Eastern Slavs: Perun, Volos / Veles, Xors, Dažbog, Stribog, Simargl (Sem and Rgl?), Mokoš, Karna and Žlja, Svarožič (Fire), Pereplut, Rod and Rožanicy (?), Vily (?), Troyan (?), Div (?), Diva (?), Koruna (??)

Gods of the South Slavs: Dažbog, Svarog, Perun (?)

Gods of the Czechs and Poles (Western Slavs): Veles, Zelu (?); "Długosz list" with variations of names (??): Yassa, Lada, (Dzydzi)lelya, Nya¹⁵⁸ // Pogoda, Żywy, Dzewana, Marzyana

158. These four names are known before the time of Długosz in alternative spellings (e.g. Lado / Lada / Alado etc.). The other four names are mentioned firstly by Długosz, although they had also some background.

Gods of the Polabian-Baltic Slavs (Western Slavs): Svarožič / Riedegost (Radigast), Pripegala, Iulius (~) [the god of the city of Wolin], Triglav, Yarovit, Prove / Prone, the goddess Siwa, Zcerneboch (“black god”), Podaga, Sventovit, Rugiaevitus and Porevitus and Porenutius / Rinvit and Puruvit and Turupiđ, Pizamarr, Tjarnaglófi, Gutdracco (?), Lommač (??), Hennil / Bendil (??)

What do we see here? – At best, about four dozen names, some of which are doubtful (and I did not include in the list many of those mentioned). Perun, Veles, Dažbog and Svarog / Svarožič do appear in several groups (and only they do). In addition, the similarity of Fire-Svarožič with Svarožič of the Baltic Slavs is observed only in name, but not in the god’s functions. We should deem the religion of the Baltic Slavs uniquely original. Only among them are reliably known roofed temples¹⁵⁹; only their idols acquired permanent multi-headedness¹⁶⁰, and so on. Could not the gods have risen here from the tribal local, late (?) and original images, following the fortune of certain tribes and communities?

We can confidently say that some of the names that were in antiquity have not been preserved. Comparative mythology argues that there could be much more. But the list that I have presented above shows authentically revered deities that can be referred to from ancient sources.

It’s somewhat puzzling that, at first glance, there aren’t many intersections between the names of the gods of the three Slavic branches. I myself believe that if we had more data on the ancient gods of the Poles, Czechs, South Slavs, and if we better understood the images of the Baltic Slavs, then throughout the large Slavic area we would find the same common Proto-Slavic pantheon developed and everywhere we would see first of all, Perun, Veles and Dažbog, taking different names and forms, as its leaders¹⁶¹.

159. ŽOB 2021: 560–568.

160. I don’t consider the Zbruč idol as a fully multi-headed one – there are several characters and the heads belong to different ones. Of the other multi-headed idols outside the world of the Baltic Slavs, I recall only one that is sometimes described as Proto-Slavic (from *Iwankiwci* on the Dniester; nowadays in the Nova Ushytsia Raion, Khmelnytska oblast, Ukraine), but this is debatable. This figure belongs to the Chernyakhov culture.

161. This may be similar to the situation with medieval Germanic communities. Everywhere we see the highest gods Woden / Odin, Donar / Thor or Freyr / Frigg in one form or another, with a variety of epithets and sometimes both genders.

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