Scholarship on the Ancient Eastern Slavs: A Bibliographic Overview

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To dig into the "cultural archaeology" of the ancient Slavs and to reconstruct their material and spiritual culture requires first agreeing on who the "ancient Slavs" actually were and where and when they lived. Unfortunately, this is an area in which scholarship is far less certain and documentation less detailed than is the case with the Celts or even the ancient Germanic tribes. No one can say with certainty at what point the Slavs as a cultural or ethnic unit could be said to have existed, but they are generally considered to have emerged out of a larger Indo-European-speaking tribal massif sometime around the first millennium B.C., and to have resided roughly in the area of central and eastern Europe drained by the Oder, Elbe, and Vistula rivers in the northwest and the Danube, Dnister, and Dnipro in the southeast. Of these, the eastern Slavs, ancestors of today's Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusans, are thought to have distinguished themselves linguistically from the remaining Slavic groups sometime in the first millennium A.D.

Attempts to reconstruct the archaic Slavic cosmos draw mainly on somewhat unreliable early historical documents, ethnographic and folkloristic collections, archaeological finds, comparative mythological explorations and linguistic research.[2]

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Early documents on Slavic mythology and religious practices include native medieval chronicles and annals (such as the Primary Chronicle attributed to Nestor and the later *Hustyn* Chronicle); ecclesiastic writings against paganism; and the Byzantine, Arab, Latin, or German writings of foreign travellers, such as those of Procopius of Caesarea (sixth century), Thietmar of Merseburg (late tenth century, on the religion of the Elbe Slavs), Adam of Bremen (eleventh century), al-Masudi and Ibrahim ibn Vasifshah, the "Three Lives of Otto von Bemberg," Helmold's "Chronica Slavorum," and Saxo Grammaticus's "Gesta Danorum." Later, secondary sources include sixteenth to eighteenth century works such as the *Life of Vladimir*, Gizel's *Sinopsis*, the writings of Dimitrii of Rostiv, Teofan Prokopovych, Jan Dlugosz's "Annals Poloniae," and others. These are described and catalogued in M. Znayenko's

The Gods of the Ancient Slavs: Tatishchev and the Beginnings of Slavic Mythology (Columbus, Ohio, 1980). Their accessibility is documented in M. Kulikowski's *Bibliography of Slavic Mythology* (Columbus, 1989). Of course, literary sources from ancient Kievan Rus', especially the epic poem *Slovo o Polku Ihorevim* (various editions), contain useful information on the worldview of the period. In all, however, there is a dearth of documents from the period in question, and most of the later or foreign documentation is unreliable or problematic.[3]

ETHNOGRAPHY

Most ethnographic overviews of the folk traditions of the Eastern Slavs subdivide the data into the calendric cycle of customs and rites (winter, spring, summer and autumn cycles, or at least a winter and a summer cycle), customs and rites related to family life (birth, wedding, funeral rites), mythology (usually divided into a "higher mythology" and a "lower mythology" or "demonology"), and oral literature (a tremendous variety of songs, incantations, laments, children's games and so on). The nineteenth century witnessed an enormous amount of ethnographic fieldwork and collection of materials. Arguably the most comprehensive attempt to synthesize the elements of the traditional worldview of the Slavs was that of one of the main representatives of the so-called "mythological" school, Aleksandr Afanas'ev's mammoth *Poeticheskie vozzreniia slavian na prirodu* (*Poetic Representations of the Slavs on Nature*). The mythological school, which also included A. A. Potebnia, O. F. Miller, and F. I. Buslaev, had as its most obvious shortcoming its overreliance-almost to the exclusion of anything else-on a single explanatory principle or metaphor that supposedly underlay all mythological motifs and symbols, folk rituals, and customs. For Afanas'ev, this central metaphor was that of heavenly phenomena-storms, clouds, rain, light and darkness were seen as the ultimate sources of the symbols reflected in the myths and rituals of ancient peoples. Fortunately, Afanas'ev's outdated methodology need not detract from the wealth and scope of factual materials collected in his works. (A "mythological school" overview of Ukrainian myth is Ivan Levyts'kyi's *Svitohliad ukrains'koho naroda*, 1876.)

In the 1870s and 1880s, critical reaction set in against the mythological school, and a new view favoring historical diffusionism and comparativism emerged in the work of ethnographers such as A. N. Veselovsky and V. F. Miller. The historical-diffusionist school in turn reached its own extreme in

the work of Anichkov (*Iazychestvo i drevnaia Rus'*, [St. Petersburg, 1914] and *Vesennaia obriadovaia pesnia na zapade i u slavian*, [St. Petersburg, 1903-05]), who viewed practically all of the mythological motifs of ancient Rus' as having originated elsewhere. Gradually there evolved a more balanced, synthetic methodology, influenced by then-current positivist currents, including E. B. Tylor's animist theory (which saw religious practices evolving from a primitive belief in souls and spirits). This more synthetic approach is reflected in the work of N. F. Sumtsov, D. N. Anuchin, and later the Czech Lubor Niederle, among others. Niederle's *Slovanské starozytnoste* (*Slavianskie drevnosti*, 1916/1924) remained for some time the most complete, serious and influential work covering ancient Slavic religion and mythology (and Slavic antiquities in general); Niederle presented Slavic beliefs as evolving from nature-embedded animism to the "higher mythology" of anthropomorphic gods. Other important works of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries included A. S. Famintsyn's mythologically inclined (to a very liberal extent) *Bozhestva drevnikh slavian* (St. Petersburg, 1884), D. N. Anuchin's *Sani, Iadia i koni kak prinadlezhnosti pokhoronnogo obriada* (1890), A. A. Potebnia's *O kupal'skikh ogniakh i srodkykh s nimi predstavleniakh* (Kharkiv, 1914), D. K. Zelenin's *Ocherki russkoi mifologii* (St. Petersburg, 1916), N. M. Gal'kowski's *Bor'ba khristianstva s ostatkami iazychestva v drevnei Rusi* (Moscow, 1913), Alexander Brückner's *Mitologia slowianska i polska* (1918), and Jan Machal's detailed overview of Slavic myth featured in the series *Mythology of all Races* (Boston, 1918).

The broadest collections of specifically Ukrainian folklore include Pavlo Chubyns'kyi's *Trudy etnograf.-statist. ekspeditsii v zapadno-russkii krai* (7 volumes, St. Petersburg, 1872-78) and the collections of Hrinchenko, Antonovych, Shukhevych (*Hutsul'shchyna*), Onyshchuk, and especially those of Volodymyr Hnatiuk and others, collected under the auspices of the Ethnographic Commission of the Shevchenko Scientific Society (including forty volumes of the *Etnohrafichnyi zbirnyk*, 1895-1929). A very good introduction to Ukrainian mythology, for instance, is Hnatiuk's "Ostanky peredkhrystyians'koho relihiinoho svitohliadu nashykh predkiv," published in vol. 31 of the *Zbirnyk*). Ethnographers who dealt with the traditional and ancient religious beliefs and customs of the Ukrainian people included Kotliarevskii (*O pogrebal'nykh obychaiakh iazycheskikh slavian*), Iashchurzhynskii (*Ostatky iazycheskikh obriadov, sokhr. v malorusskim pogrebeniu*), the prolific Sumtsov (including the series "Kul'turni perezhyvannia" in *Kievskaia staryna*, 1889), Partyts'kyi, Sosenko and P. Ivanov. Periodicals of interest include *Kievskaia staryna, Zoria, Etnograficheskoe obozrenie, Sbornik kharkovskogo istor.-filolog.*

obshchestva, and (in the 1920s) *Pervisne hromadianstvo ta ioho perezhytky na Ukraini* (cf. especially articles by K. Hrushevska and K. Koperzhyns'kyi). Useful bibliographies of the time include O. Andriievs'kyi, *Bibliografiia literatury z ukrains'koho fol'kloru* (Kiev, 1930), Hrinchenko, *Literatura ukrains'koho fol'kloru*, and Z. Kuzela, "Ukrains'ki pokhoronni zvychai i obiady v etnohrafichnii literaturi" in vols. 31-32 of *Etnohrafichnyi zbirnyk* (Lviv, 1912). (See the section on "Ethnography" in *The Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, 1963).

In the decade following the October Revolution, a thriving period of Soviet folklore research included the formalistic and structural studies of V. Ia. Propp (*Morfologiia skazki*, [Leningrad, 1928], trans. by L. Scott as *Morphology of the Folktale*, [Bloomington, Ind., 1958]), and the so-called Finnish school of historical-geographical method (Andreev, et al.). With the rise of Stalinism, Soviet ethnography and folkloristics became ever more stifled. One of the most valuable works of this period published outside the Soviet Union was Polish ethnographer K. Moszynski's *Kultura ludowa slowian* (Cracow, 1934). By the end of the fifties, more fruitful work began appearing in the Soviet Union: in particular, S. A. Tokarev's *Religioznye verovaniia vostochnoslavianskikh narodov XIX-nachala XX veka* (Moscow, 1957) was a thorough study of the beliefs, magical rites and practices, and demonological conceptions extant in the past century, including a balanced historical overview of the ethnograpic literature; and the more historically inclined writings of B. A. Rybakov helped open up the field to a more synthetic approach drawing on literary sources, archaeology, folklore research and linguistics.

Useful recent overviews of the traditional religious beliefs and folk customs of the East Slavs include: V. K. Sokolova, "Kalendarnye prazdniki i obriady" and other articles in Chistov (gen. ed.), *Etnografiia vostochnykh slavian* (Moscow: Nauka, 1987); A Gieysztor, "Slav Countries: Folk-lore of the Forests," in P. Grimal, Ed., *Larousse World Mythology* (New York, 1965); M. Gimbutas, "Ancient Slavic Religion: A Synopsis" in *To Honor Roman Jakobson: Essays on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday* (The Hague, 1967) and her "Slavic Religion" in Eliade (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion* v. 13 (New York, 1987); Ivanov and Toporov, "Slavianskaia mifologiia," in Tokarev (ed.), *Mify narodov mira* v. 2 (Moscow, 1988). An extensive bibliography (which unfortunately limits itself to the "higher mythology" and to cult practices related to it) is M. Kulikowski's *Bibliography of Slavic Mythology* (Columbus, Ohio, 1989). L. Ivanits' *Russian Folk Belief* (London, 1988) is a basic introduction to the various beliefs about nature spirits, the cult of saints and sorcery found in the "double-faith" Russian peasants. Of interest also is Maria

Kravchenko's *The World of the Russian Fairy Tale* (Berne, 1987), a work which seeks to place its subject matter into the perspective of world myth and of the ancient worldview of the Slavs and Indo-Europeans.

The Ukrainian folk calendar is thoroughly and exhaustively documented in S. Kylymnyk's five-volume *Ukrains'kyi rik u narodnykh zvychaiakh* (Winnipeg, 1957-64) and O. Voropai's two-volume *Zvychai nashoho narodu* (Munich, 1958). Z. Kuzela and V. Petrov provide an excellent and concise overview of "The Spiritual Culture of the People" in *The Encyclopedia of Ukraine* (Toronto, 1963), 319-349). See also V. Petrov's article "The Oldest Types of Oral Literature" in the same volume (pp. 351-361), and Mytropolyt Ilarion's (I. Ohienko's) *Dokhrystyians'ki viruvannia ukrains'koho narodu* (Winnipeg, 1965), for its time a fairly complete overview of the pre-Christian beliefs of the Ukrainian people.

THE QUESTION OF ETHNOGENESIS: PROBLEMS IN CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH

The problem of the ethnogenesis of the Slavs, like that of Indo-European-speaking peoples in general, has received a broad array of interpretations and explanations, and is far from being successfully resolved. A historical overview of theories would serve little purpose, so it is best to limit our considerations to the current state of affairs. Archaeologists, of course, are limited to the material remains of culture, which usually provide few clues toward knowing the ethnic identity, language (given a lack of decipherable writing), or worldview of the given group of people, and only limited clues toward reconstructing population movements. Consequently, an "archaeological culture" may or may not correspond to an actual ethnic culture, and competing theories strive to account for the movements of restless populations or, on the other hand, to the steady evolution of autochthonous societies.

Slavic speakers today can trace their *linguistic* history (though not necessarily their *ethnic* history) to the original "proto-Indo-Europeans," a theoretically reconstructed entity that serves to account for the widespread dispersal of Indo-European languages today (including the Indo-Iranian, Germanic, Celtic, Baltic, Slavic, and Romance language families). These original Indo-European-speakers are supposed to have lived and spread out from a "homeland" that different modern-day theorists have located in various parts of Eurasia-from northern and central Europe (Bosch-Gimpera, Devoto) through the Pontic-Caspian steppe (Gimbutas), the Transcaspian Armenian foothills (Gamkrelidze-Ivanov), Anatolia in present-day Turkey (Colin Renfrew), to

southern Siberia and central Asia. If there is anything approaching a consensus today, it is that eastern Europe and western Asia, between the Caspian and Volga-Ural basin in the east and the Danube in the west, is the likeliest territory to include within it the Indo-European homeland.

Arguably the most popular theory among Western researchers at present (though not always accepted in its full-fledged form) is the "Kurgan" theory developed by Marija Gimbutas. According to this theory, the Indo-Europeans expanded in a series of aggressive "waves" from the Pontic-Caspian steppe westwards, starting about 4500 B.C. and ending about 2500 B.C., by which time proto-Indo-European culture-patriarchal and hierarchically organized, more pastoralist than agriculturalist, sky-god-worshipping and warrior-like, with wheeled, horse-driven chariots, "corded" pottery, burial mounds known as "kurgans," and a highly complex and flexible language-had successfully grafted itself onto a more agriculturalist, matricentric, goddess-worshipping, relatively peaceful and stable "Old European substrate population. The leading representative of the Old Europeans in our area of interest was the culture known as the Trypillian (or Cucuteni), a peaceful and rather highly developed culture whose carriers inhabited the territory of present-day western Ukraine and Moldavia for a period of about two thousand years.

The Kurgan theory does have some holes and inconsistencies (though probably less than its competitors), and it could be argued that the theory's recent popularity derives in part from a cultural desire to reconstruct a matricentered, "pre-patriarchal" origin for European civilization. Most Soviet literature, in any case, has yet to come to terms with it, usually taking for granted instead that the Trypillians and their westerly neighbors were Indo-European speakers as well. We cannot, unfortunately, know for certain what language(s) the Old Europeans spoke. However, the Kurgan theory's pivotal strengths are the wealth of archaeological evidence garnered to support it, and that it accounts for the fact that the archaeological remains of Old Europe (7000-3500 B.C.) do not seem to fit the description of the proto-Indo-European culture as reconstructed by contemporary scholarship. Gimbutas's research, compiled in works such as *The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe, 6500-3500 BC: Myths and Cult Images* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1982) and more recently *The Language of the Goddess* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989) and *The Civilization of the Goddess: The World of Old Europe* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991), has boldly and almost singlehandedly reconstructed the cosmology of these ancient aboriginal Europeans. The arguments for the various reconstructions of the original Indo-Europeans are lucidly presented in J. P. Mallory's balanced overview, *In Search of the Indo-*

Europeans: Language, Archaeology, and Myth (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989).

The most important Soviet work of recent years is Tomas Gamkrelidze's and Viacheslav Ivanov's monumental *Indoevropeiskii iazyk i indoevropeitsi* (Tbilisi, 1984), noteworthy for its linguistic reconstruction of proto-Indo-European language. The authors' localization of the proto-Indo-European "homeland" in the Armenian foothills of Transcaspia is not widely supported, however. An issue of *The Journal of Indo-European Studies* was dedicated to "Recent Russian Papers on the Indo-European Problem and on the Ethnogenesis and Original Homeland of the Slavs" (Vol. 13, nos. 1-2, 1985). It included papers by Gamkrelidze and Ivanov, and by O. N. Trubachev, who has performed some of the leading linguistic and toponymical research on the matter. An interesting recent effort is V. A. Safronov's *Indoevropeiskie prarodiny* (Gorky, 1989). Safronov considers Gimbutas' Old Europeans as well as the 7th-6th millenia B.C. culture of Çatal Hüyük to have been Indo-European-speakers as well, and he places heavy weight on the Lengyel and the Yamna cultures (he locates the Yamna across broader east-west axis, reaching the Danubian and Transcarpathian areas, than does Gimbutas) of the third millennium B.C. as pivotal in what the author calls the "third phase" of the spread of Indo-European-speakers both east and west.

In any case, the proto-Slavs are usually considered to have emerged as a distinct cultural or linguistic family out of the broader Indo-European background sometime in the second or first millennium B.C. (though some consider their actual ethnogenesis to have occurred only in the first half of the first millennium A.D.). The archaeological record reveals a diverse and rather ambiguous array of Bronze Age cultures in the territory of eastern and central Europe in the late third and second millenia, which Gimbutas interprets as a result of "hybridization" between Indo-European and autochthonous (Old European) cultural elements. Most frequently identified as Indo-European speakers are the carriers of the so-called Corded Ware (or Battle Axe) cultural complex. Leading Soviet archaeologist Boris Rybakov sees a proto-Slavic tribal massif emerging out of the broader Indo-European complex in the territory stretching between the Oder, Vistula, upper Dnister, Prypiat' and middle Dnipro in the middle of the second millennium B.C., identified largely with the Trzciniec-Komarov complex, and the slightly later Lusatian complex (in the west). Rybakov further traces the ancestry through the Bilohrudiv and Chornolis cultures. He considers the latter-located across the right-bank middle Dnipro and Buh basins-to have already been the source or carrier of a great deal of Slavic lore, including the myths of heroes de-

fending their people from serpent-like monsters or dragons-that is, in Rybakov's (perhaps oversimplified) interpretation, from pastoral nomadic tribes attacking from the southeast.

With the arrival of the Iranian-speaking Scythians around 700 B.C., the eastern "wing" of the proto-Slavs can be reasonably identified with the agricultural tribes in the Ukrainian forest-steppe (Herodotus's "scythian-plowmen" and "scythian-farmers," or, according to Rybakov, the *Skoloty*), who become integrated into the Scythian empire and, as a result, take on a strong Iranian tinge in religious, social and linguistic spheres. With the end of the Scythian period brought about by the arrival of the Sarmatians in the third century B.C., the proto-Slavs are identifiable with the *Zarubyntsi* (and, for the Western Slavs, the *Przeworsk*) culture(s); and by the third century A.D. the Cherniakhiv culture is generally seen (by Soviet archaeologists) as a Slavic-dominated, though multi-ethnic, integrated culture. By this time we have historical accounts of the *Anti* and *Sclavini*, which are respectively identified as the eastern (Dnipro-Dnister basin) and western (southern Poland, east Slovakia) halves of the Cherniakhiv complex, and of the *Venedi*, who are thought to be the more northern (heavily forested Prypiat' and Desna basins) descendants of the Zarubyntsi culture carriers who were left out of the formation of the Cherniakhiv culture. Finally, the arrival of the Huns, Avars and other nomadic groups leads to the "great migration" of Slavic tribes to the southwest, northeast, and northwest (ca. 450-700 A.D.), followed by the gradual formation of the first Slavic states (for the Eastern Slavs, the state of Kievan Rus').[4]

The publication of Academician Boris Rybakov's two major works on Slavic paganism, *Iazychestvo drevnikh slavian* (Moscow, 1981) and *Iazychestvo drevnei Rusi* (Moscow, 1987) have served as a minor watershed in scholarship on early Slavic religious culture. Rybakov, for many years the head of the Institute of Archaeology of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, has brought together a hitherto unprecedented variety of up-to-date and scholarly information. He has been criticized by specialists for a casual approach to detail and some highly speculative and unwarranted interpretations[5], but the overall scope and synthetic quality of the two books is impressive. *Iazychestvo drevnikh slavian* reaches deep into prehistory in its attempt to trace the roots of the various components of the pre-Christian Slavic worldview: totemistic animal figures, references to heavenly deer and deer-goddesses, and the symbolic "horn of plenty," for instance, are all traced to the paleolithic and mesolithic hunting-gathering eras; various kinds of fertility symbols, the countless goddess and double-goddess figurines, and the notion of the sa-

credness of domestic space, of the hearth-fire, and, of the four directions, are traced to the agricultural, eneolithic "golden age" of the Trypillians. The intensive population movements accompanying the activities of the more pastoralist and aggressive Corded Ware culture bring about the social and cultural transformations that lead up to the emergence of the proto-Celts, proto-Germans, and proto-Slavs in the second millennium BCE. Rybakov traces many of the components of Slavic myth and ritual (including the "birth" of the gods associated with thunder, the making of metals, and with the calendric cycle) and of the earliest epic poetry to this formative period. He sheds light on the continuity of religious symbols and conceptions, for instance, on how the three-tiered model of the universe has changed and yet persisted since the deepest prehistory, or on how the images of animals and of *berehynia* (goddess-creatrix) figures found on nineteenth-century embroidered towels are rooted in eneolithic agricultural and even paelolithic hunting culture. *Iazychestvo drevnei Rusi* follows the earlier book's examination of Slavic (now more specifically East Slavic) religious culture (burial rites, temples, idols, ritual games and celebrations, talismans, priestly functions, etc.) through the first millennium of the present era, the period of Christianization and the development of the hybrid "double faith" of the Middle Ages.

Other books that have dealt with pre-Christian Slavic religious culture and worldview in recent years include H. Lowmianski's well-researched *Religia slowian i jej upadek* (Warsaw, 1979), and M. Popovich's thorough *Mirovozzreniia drevnikh slavian* (Kiev, 1985), which lucidly brings together recent Soviet discussions about Slavic ethnogenesis, Indo-European mythology, the development of paganism in ancient Rus', and-as its title says- the worldview of the ancient Slavs. (See also Popovych and Shynkaruk, "Mifichni uiavlennia skhidnoslovianskykh plemen [V-IX st]," in *Istoriia filosofii na Ukraini* [Kiev, 1987].) N. N. Veletskaia's contributions on archaic Slavic ritual have been very valuable; her *Iazycheskaia simvolika slavianskikh arkhaicheskikh ritualov* (Moscow, 1978) is a fascinating work that traces the motif of life-death-life and the accompanying procession off to the "other world" (and later return to this world) in folk tales, calendric and funeral rites, and the literary tradition.

Archaeological discoveries in the past three decades have contributed a great deal to the understanding of pre-Rus' East Slavic myth and religion. The most important contributions in this field include those of V. V. Sedov, I. S. Vynokur, M. A. Tikhanova, R. V. Zabashta, B. A. Tymoshchuk (Timoshchuk), Ia. E. Borovs'kyi (Borovskii), D. N. Kozak, I. P. Rusanova, M. Iu. Braichevs'kyi, and B. A. Rybakov. See Sedov's summary in *Vostochnye slavi-*

ane v VI-XII vv. Moscow, 1982, pp. 261-268); Rybakov's extensive writings; Borovskii's *Mifologicheskii mir drevnikh kievlian,* (Kiev, 1982); Rusanova's *Slavianskie drevnosti VI-IX vv. mezhdu Dneprom i Zapadnym Bugom,* (Moscow, 1973); Rusanova's and Timoshchuk's "Slavianskie sviatilishcha na Srednem Dnestre..." in *Sov. Arkheologiia* 4, 1983; Vynokur's *Istorii lisostepovoho Podniprov'ia ta Pivd. Pobuzhzhia vid kamianoho viku do seredniovichchia,* (Kiev, 1985), and *Istoriia ta kul'tura cherniakhivs'kykh plemen,* (Kiev, 1972); Kozak's "Sakral'nye pamatniki plemen iugo-vostochnoi Evropy v 1 tys. nashei ery," forthcoming; and the collections: Timoshchuk (ed.), *Drevnosti slavian i Rusi,* (Moscow, 1988), Tolochko (ed.), *Drevnie slaviane i kievskaia Rus',* (Kiev, 1989), and Zubar (ed.), *Obriady i verovaniia drevnovo naseleniia Ukrainy,* (Kiev, 1990), especially the article in the latter by Kozak and Borovskii, "Sviatilishcha vostochnykh slavian.". The leading authority on Scythian religious culture is D. S. Raevskii; see his *Ocherki ideologii skifo-sakskikh plemen* (Moscow, 1977) and *Model' mira skifskoi kul'tury* (Moscow, 1985), and also S. S. Bessonova's *Religioznye predstavleniia skifov* (Kiev, 1983). V. N. Danylenko's *Neolit Ukrainy* and *Eneolit Ukrainy* (Kiev, 1969 and 1974, respectively) and the writings of Gimbutas, Rybakov, and S. N. Bibikov include materials on Eneolithic and Neolithic spiritual culture. The three-volume series *Arkheologiia Ukrainskoi SSR* (Kiev, 1985) and the first volume of *Istoriia Ukrainskoi SSR* (Kiev, 1981) contain general overviews of the spiritual culture of the earlier inhabitants of the present-day Ukrainian territories. J. Pasternak's *Arkheolohiia Ukraïny* (Toronto, 1961), though a bit outdated, is nevertheless thorough and compensates for certain state-imposed biases of the Soviet literature on the subject.

Since about the early sixties, a number of the leading Soviet scholars have been applying a rigorous approach combining ethnolinguistics, structural analysis, and comparative mythology to the study of Slavic myth, with some fascinating results. V. V. Ivanov's and V. N. Toporov's *Issledovaniia v oblasti slavianskikh drevnostei* (Moscow, 1974) and *Slavianskie iazykovye modeliruiushchie semioticheskie sistemy* (Moscow, 1965) present some of these results (summarized in Popovich's *Mirovozzreniia drevnikh slavian* and in Ivanov's and Toporov's entry on Slavic myth in Tokarev, gen. ed., *Mify narodov mira* vol. 2, Moscow, 1988). Their studies are heavily indebted to the comparative reconstruction of Indo-European myth pioneered by, and largely identified with, the French scholar Georges Dumézil. In particular, they present strong and detailed cases for the residual existence of the Indo-European myth of the struggle between the thunder-god (Indra-Perun) and his chthonic adversary (Veles), and for the myth of incestuous divine twins.[6] Some of the best

Soviet work today is being carried out under the auspices of Moscow's Institute of Slavic Studies and Balkanistics. Emerging from the Ivanov-Toporov school, these scholars utilize folkloristics, historical and archaeological sources, formal and linguistic structural comparisons (of both an internal and external nature, i.e. comparison with Slavic and with non-Slavic, Inco-European sources), and ethnolinguistic fieldwork (e.g., a series of expeditions through Polissia, where some of the most archaic elements of Slavic culture have been preserved). Some of the results of this work have been presented in the institute's irregular publication *Slavianskii i balkanskii fol'klor* (e.g. *Slav. i balk. fol'klor Rekonstruktsiia drevnei slavianskoi dukhovnoi kul'tury: Istochniki i metody*, Moscow, 1989); see also the individual writings of N. I. Tolstoi, S. M. Tolstaia, L. N. Vinogradova, and V. V. Martynov.

Soviet scholarship, as mentioned above, has thus far largely ignored the implications of the "Kurgan" theory, with its supposed pre-Indo-European cultural substrate, for the study of Slavic myth. Marija Gimbutas' writings provide the best introduction to this viewpoint; see her treatment of "Slavic religion" in Eliade (gen. ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, v. 13, (New York: Macmillan, 1987), and her *The Slavs* (Harper and Row, 1971). Joanna Hubbs' laudable, if sometimes flawed, *Mother Russia: The Feminine Myth in Russian Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University press, 1989) has been one of the few comprehensive treatments of East Slavic myth and literature to seek for remains of this matrifocal Old European substrate. Hubbs attempts to reconstruct the image of the "Russian Great Goddess" through the ethnographic and archaeological materials on *rusalki*, the Baba Yaga (old hag of fairy tales), beliefs regarding mother earth (Mat'-syra-zemlia), the peasant-Christian images of the Mother of God and of St. Paraskeva-Piatnitsa, and the epic heroes ("Mothers' Sons") and autocratic father-rulers and their relationship to "Mother Russia." (An earlier and much more speculative attempt to do the same with archaeological materials was taken up by popular Ukrainian writer Dokia Humenna in *Blahoslovy, maty!* [New York, 1966] and *Mynule plyve v pryideshnie* [New York, 1978].) See also Evel Gasparini's *Il matriarcato slavo* (Florence, 1973).

CONCLUSION

When one considers that it has only been in the past fifteen years that Rybakov's two major works have come out, generating a fair bit of discussion in their wake, and that Gimbutas' Kurgan theory has begun to be applied in serious scholarly work with ancient Slavic (and proto-Slavic) materials, one would expect the future to hold much promise for our understanding of the

ancient Slavs. All of this work, to some degree, attempts to periodicize the various components of Slavic folk tradition (as it came down to us in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries); that is, it attempts to find the cultural-historical "roots" of the traditional worldview. (A few other writings may be mentioned still: O. Pritsak's "Elements of the Ukrainian Culture" in *The Encyclopedia of Ukraine,* [Toronto, 1963], details the Pre-Indo-European, Indo-European, proto-Slavic, Ukrainian-Balkan, Iranian, Altaic, classical Greek and Roman, and Germanic elements found in Ukrainian culture, largely in the language. M. Moskalenko's more speculative introduction to the collection *Zolotoslov: Poetychnyi kosmos Davn'oï Rusi,* [Kiev, 1988], is a very readable presentation of folkloric motifs as they relate to the different periods in the formation of the East Slavic worldview.)

It is hoped that scholarly work on the ancient Indo-Europeans, coupled with the work started by Gimbutas on the earlier, Old European civilization, will contribute to a further deepening of the understanding of those roots. The events of the last few years in eastern Europe have often left the inheritors of those roots confused and searching-often in the distant and archaic past-for some spiritual anchor. Short of providing such an anchor (and debunking the more misguided and reactionary attempts to reconstruct one), scholars might at least be able to offer some consolation that, in fact, underlying Slavic culture today there are repositories of folk knowledge and wisdom that demonstrate a closer connection to the earth and its ecological cycles.

REFERENCE NOTES

1. This article was written as a scholarly companion piece to a more popular overview of the archaic Slavic worldview, published as "The Cosmos of the Ancient Slavs" in *Gnosis* 31 (Spring 1994, pp. 28-35). I would like to thank Dr. Richard Marshall of the University of Toronto and Dr. Bohdan Budurowycz for their very helpful comments and suggestions in the preparation of both of these papers.

2. For the most part, the transliteration of foreign words that I will be using is the generally accepted one for the Ukrainian language. My reasoning for this is that right-bank Ukraine is one of the few areas known to be continuously inhabited by Slavic speakers, and certainly by the Eastern branch of the Slavic linguistic "family," for the longest period of time.

3. An interesting and controversial phenomenon is that of "new" literary finds. One such "find" which has recently attained a measure of popularity resulting from its being reprinted in the popular Ukrainian press-and perhaps from the mystery surrounding it earlier-is the so-called *Vlesova Joryha,* which purports to be a chronicle written by pagan priests during the reign of Kievan prince Askol'd in the early ninth century. The chronicle somehow found its way into the lands of Iurii Miroliubox, author of six highly speculative volumes on Slavic history, mythology, and religion. The authenticity of the *Vlesova knyha* has yet to be accepted by most scholars, perhaps, in part, due to the questionable scholarship of Miroliubov's other writings.

4. Sources: Rybakov, *Iazychestvo drevnikh slavian*, Moscow, 1989, pp. 215-284, and *Kievskaia Rus' i russkie kniazhestva*, Moscow, 1982, pp. 11-55; Gimbutas, *The Slavs*, London, 1972; Vána, *The World of the Ancient Slavs*, London, 1983; Pivtorak, *Formuvannia i dialektna dyferentsiatsiia davn'orus'koï novy*, Kiev, 1988, pp. 29-52; Braichevs'kyi, *Pokhodzhennia Rusi*, Kiev, 1968, and "Vichna problema" in *Vsesvit* 5, Kiev, 1989; Petrov, *Etnohenez slovian*, Kiev, 1972; Artemenko, Gen. Ed., *Istoriia Ukrainskoi SSR*, vol. 1, Kiev, 1981.)

5. Out of respect for Rybakov's status, this criticism is usually made in private conversation rather than in public. For instance, I have personally heard archaeological experts in the Trypillian and Scythian periods say that he simply "doesn't know" these periods.

6. Besides the writings of Georges Dumézil, useful works dealing with Indo-European myth include C. Scott Littleton, *The New Comparative Mythology: An Anthropolotical Assessment of the Theories of Georges Dumézil* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1973), Jarich G. Oosten, *The War of the Gods: The Social Code in Indo-European Mythology* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), and Jaan Puhvel, *Comparative Mythology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1987).

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