

CASTLES[®] CRUSADES

CODEX SLAVORUM



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CASTLES & CRUSADES

CODEx SLAVORUM

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CODEx SLAVORUM

This codex explores the diverse and unique Slavonic myths and pagan cosmography in gaming terms. Just like the others in this series, new character classes, monsters and other culturally relevant aspects will be carefully allotted out in chapters and sections for reference. These peoples in this book are designated the 'Old Slavs', Eastern Europeans that lived before Christianization occurred (and the medieval changes that will sweep Europe) and are the ancestors to the modern and diverse Slavic peoples in Europe and Russia.

The Slavic myths present many similarities to Germanic and Celtic myths but at the same time also have a different perspective and a pantheon that is organized along different lines to what was worshiped in the west of Europe. There is the familiar World Tree cosmography, storm and underworld gods, and fascinating and frightening monsters and magical beings. There is, however, a cultural uniqueness that is only found in Slavonic countries and peoples and nowhere else. This codex will explore these intricacies and put them into a context that is playable into gaming at the table.

Just as with the other codices in this series, there is some adjustment needed in places where the mythology varies (and often has large gaps) to explain more of the subject matter. Slavic mythology is more recent as far as belief and faded from practice and customs around the 12th century, and even later in some regions of Eastern Europe. Like the Nordic pagan religion, it was able to be documented more thoroughly than the earlier cultures and societies. Even so, this creates problems in presenting an accurate overview for those not already familiar with the mythos. This documentation also came from non-believers who, unfortunately, were in the process of Christianization and already had a bias and thus produced a modified source.

Many of the deities and magical beings from this pagan religion have been scarcely used, if at all, in roleplaying game statistics. This book will do so for those who want to have frightening beings like Baba Yaga (or *Yezda Baba*) or the leshy in their adventures. This codex will fit happily alongside the previous books in the series to be used in campaigns and will be a valuable resource when in need of a different being, character class, or idea taken from a culture in the real world to spice up a fantasy setting.

In the Slavic cosmic worldview of old, the god Perun ruled over everything and everyone in creation were at his mercy. He was able to throw his plentiful bolts of lightning down on those who earned his disfavor. There are hints of another more powerful god (Rod/Svarog) that might have reigned over Perun as well. This codex will offer a middle ground when these contradictory sources appear while still staying faithful to the belief.

Because there are so many groups within the Slavonic language family only a few will represent the whole in this book, and their orthographies will be modern as often as possible. Slavic witchcraft and the many varieties of wizards and witches are discussed in detailed. The codex also outlines several new character classes: the koldun, which presents a new take on the wizard class entirely; the zduhać, intense super-humans born of the elements; the zmajevit, dragon born humans gifted immensely with powers unspeakable; and the molfar, or shamans, that use a different angle on calling the spirit world. Detailed also is the bogatyri or 'heroes' from Slavic tradition and how that translates into **Castles & Crusades**. Heroes like Ilya Muromets and Dobrynia Nikitich can be emulated and a new generation of bogatyri can be played in an ancient Slavic cosmography, ran and told in the manner of the byliny ('oral epic'). The legendary vampire hunter class, the djadadjii/vampirdzhija is provided in this codex, placing the late medieval/early modern profession into an older context for gaming.

With this codex, you can immerse yourself in the Slavic otherworld of Iriy (Vyriy), or its underworld of Nav, and can be used with the others in the series to fully flesh out a "mythic Earth" game setting where the many worlds from ancient beliefs can merge, and its inhabitants can blend. The gaming possibilities expand with each volume in the series, and between the CK and players, the stories and characters are limitless. In a related note, each of these codices is filled with countless story/game hooks to be used by enterprising CKs that wish to develop them further. It just requires a little research and time to turn them into an adventure or series of them.

As with the other codices, the chapters in this book are organized in a story-telling manner for reference and memory:

1. IN BYGONE YEARS
2. THE WHOLE WORLD & THAT WHICH IS BEYOND
3. DID DWELL MANY PEOPLES
4. FILLED WITH GREAT MAGIC
5. OF MIGHTY GODS AND SPIRITS
6. BATTLE STRONG AND HEROIC
7. CASTLE KEEPER INFO

~Brian N. Young, 2016



CHAPTER 1: IN BYGONE YEARS

As with most ancient cultures whose pre-Christian beliefs date into prehistory, Slavic creation stories are missing for the most part. There are many remnants of them in later lore and rewritten heroic tales, but they do not provide a consistent and seamless 'story' or complete theology. Thus, what is given here is going to be a delicate combination of those tales and extant evidence.

The **Codex Slavorum** will give two histories, one for the documented and factual history of the Old Slavs into the Christian era and secondly the mythological story. The mythical story will give the origin of the universe, gods, and the living setting the stage for the next chapter "The Whole World & That Which Is Beyond" where these places are detailed and given color.

A large part of surviving creation stories deriving from the Slavic world is found in Russian folktales and, minus the Christianity, provides some idea of what the Old Slavs might have generally believed. The presence of dualism is in evidence in Slavic paganism, and this is not completely unusual, because most cultures shared the ideology of 'good vs. evil'. In this case, it may have been inspired from the Semitic religions from Mesopotamia and their early influence through contacts with Rome and Muslim relations in Arabia. A Persian influence is evident as well in the religion of the Old Slavs, but this is lost in time and had evolved alongside native traditions.

This early cosmic story centers on the two deities Czernobog (or 'Tsar Santanail') and his equal and rival (of questionable authenticity and worship) Svarog that waged a war over the destiny of mankind after they were first created by Czernobog from the earth. Although there are large gaps of missing tales and explanations of this dualistic story, many scholars insist that Svarog was merely an invention by later scribes to place a Semitic religious aspect in an otherwise unrelated belief system. Whether or not this is true, it fits neatly in the later Russian lore about Tsar Santanail (where the creation of mankind mythos is recorded by sources).

Regardless of the many heated academic debates and schools of thought on this and many other aspects of the religion of the Old Slavs, this codex will do its best to provide a playable setting that agrees with all sides and existing lore. Just as with the other codices, this book was not put together lightly or frivolously. It is a careful analysis of the given evidence and filled with plenty of supposition and ideas that cling to the idiom of the culture it represents.

FROM MISTY HISTORY TO BYZANTIUM

"They live in pitiful hovels which they set up far apart from one another, but, in general, every man is constantly changing his place of abode. When they enter battle, the majority of them go against their enemy on foot carrying little shields and javelins in their hands, but they never wear corselets. Indeed, some of them do not wear even a shirt or a cloak, but gathering their treds up as far as to their private parts they enter into battle with their opponents. And both the two peoples have also the same language, an utterly barbarous tongue. Nay, they do not

differ at all from one another in appearance. For they are all exceptionally tall and stalwart men, while their bodies and hair are neither very fair nor blond, nor indeed do they incline entirely to the dark type, but they are all slightly ruddy in color. And they live a hard life, giving no heed to bodily comforts..."

-Procopius, History of the Wars VII

THE EARLY SLAVS

It is not certain where the first Slavic peoples originated but Eastern Europe and around the Black Sea in the Eurasian territories seems highly likely as a starting place. They likely began in the western reaches of what was later called Bohemia, on the borders with the Celts to the west, Germans to the north, and the Greeks and Italian tribes to the south.

The Wielbark Culture, in what later became Poland, is a contender for the source of early Slavic cultures. This early society dates to the 1st century C.E. and displaced an earlier unknown culture that is one of many that once existed between Poland and Kiev going back to 3,000 B.C.E into prehistory.

Perhaps it was the pressure from the eastern Steppe peoples (Alans, Sarmatians, Scythians and later Huns) that pushed the Slavic tribes into Eastern Europe by the time of Rome's fall in 475 C.E. Whatever the forces were that propelled them into Europe sent them into the territories of the Carpathians and around the Black Sea before they moved westward again.

Tacitus mentions a people in his *Germania* (1st century C.E.) called the Venedi that were said to dwell in the wilderness between the Carpathians and Eastern Russia. They were said to be little more than brigands and robbers, while another Roman source, Pliny the Elder, also gives hint to their whereabouts. Pliny calls them the Antes and records that they inhabit the region around the Sea of Azov and the Caspian Sea.

In the 2nd century C.E., the Greek writer Claudius Ptolemaeus speaks of a people called the Soubenoi who lived near the Ural Mountains. Claudius says they lived next to many Asiatic peoples in the region and were sometimes also called Serboi. His writings, though vague at many points, tell that these Serboi inhabit land around the Caucasus, on its northern edge.

The introduction of the Old Slavs into history truly begins with the Byzantine Empire in the 6th century as recorded by the historian Jordanes. He mentions similar tribes as given by the earlier Roman authors, the Antes and another, the Sklaveni that dwelled in an area between the Carpathians, the Vistula River in Poland, and what is today the Ukraine. According to Jordanes, the lands of the Sklaveni were almost impossible to travel due to the thick forests, difficult rivers, and dangerous beasts that prowled the wilderness.

Many other Byzantine writers also commented on these mysterious peoples in a similar manner. Procopius stated that these Antes and Sklaveni peoples were tall, not entirely white, and tough from an austere life. Another Eastern Roman Empire author, Pseudo-Mauricius, noted that these peoples farmed millet, wheat, and other

grains, loved mead, used hollowed tree trunks for canoes, and were able to make a strong drink from honey and barley.

So deeply ensnared were the Old Slavs in this earliest of ages with the Asiatic peoples, that their futures were entwined. Attila and his Hunnish hordes were likely accompanied by Slavic mercenaries within his ranks as were the Sarmatians and other nomadic steppe peoples. No details are certain, but traces of Slavic language are found in the sparse documentation from these many varied tribes.

The Sarmatians moved into the Hungarian Plain by the 4th century to invade and plunder but not remain for long. Like all nomadic tribes, they were not planning on long term benefits from their time spent in a particular region. They only wanted what they needed at that time before moving on. The Slavs, however, followed in their wake and began to settle in various locations with a plan to stay.

Wealthy and powerful, the Eastern Roman Empire at Byzantium was enough reason to find a home. Countless peoples came to find fortune from the Empire in whatever way they could manage. Raiding and plunder were the easiest and fastest methods, and the Slavs were a part of this by the 5th century on as were many others. Attila's empire brought prosperity to any who allied with him; Goths, Avars, and Slavs were among his hordes to name a few.

Plundering raids by 'wild' eastern and steppe tribes into the Byzantium Empire were regular by the close of the 5th century and this menace was exacerbated by the actions of the Avars and Huns. The Avars began to settle in the Hungarian Plain but only for control and not a home, they used this large territory for their benefit under the nose of the Byzantine Empire. The Western Empire of Rome fell in 475 C.E. leaving the greater part of the Empire in ruins, now vulnerable to plunder and claim by thousands of disparate tribes. This pressure was felt by the surviving eastern half of the Empire, which had to contend with waves of greedy and 'barbaric' tribes from the steppes and Black Sea region.

In this early time, the Slavs were not masters of their own destiny but instead served their Hunnish, Avar and Gothic lords as subject peoples, never possessing a land for themselves. The Eastern Roman Empire documented that immense tribes of Slavs spilled into their borders, so many that where ever they roamed, no grass would grow in result.

With needless and endless attacks on and inside their borders, the Byzantine emperor Tiberius (578-582 C.E.) decided it was time to put this to an end. Instead of wasting the lives of his own legions against the hordes, he used the old Roman practice of hiring one group of barbarians to fight another. With careful bribery and tact, Tiberius convinced the Slavs to attack the Avars and rid himself of both enemies at once, hoping that the servile role of the Slavs would be enough reason to spur them on.

Tiberius was wrong however in his plans as the Slavs and Avars joined forces and even suspended their old rivalry to become equals. In this aftermath, they were even more out of control than ever before. Massive numbers of Slavs popu-

lated the Balkans north of Greece and created the land of Sklavenia by the 580's.

By a change of fortune, the Eastern Empire became an ally of the Slavic tribes settled in its territories and decided to use them in damage control and by other means. Having a serious problem with the Avars and Bulgars around the Dalmatian coast, Emperor Heraclius uses the two most influential Slavic tribes, Serbs and Croats, to do the dirty work during the 620's.

In the aftermath of this series of attacks, the Serbs and Croats, joined by the Slovenes, mingled and intermarried with the locals of Dalmatia and claimed the territory. The Slavic peoples were quickly becoming the heavy hands of the Eastern Empire and an extension of their policies of dealing with the violent raiders. The Slavs in the region, however, were swamped by the horsemen tribes of the Bulgars, fleeing the more violent Khazars in Caucasus and were subject to them by 670 C.E.

This fusion of Slavs and Bulgars became the later Bulgarians and were given independence within the Empire in 681 C.E. by Emperor Constantine IV. Their territory expanded into Greek Macedonia, north of the Danube, and centered on their new capital Pliska, one of many capitals that will come in the First Bulgarian Empire (681-1018 C.E.).

OCCUPATION OF THE RUSSIAN PLAINS

While a large section of the Slavs settled around the Black Sea and into the Balkans, many more migrated northwards into the plains of Russia by the 6th century to find better land to settle on. What they discovered was a rich and fertile land only inhabited by scattered Asiatic peoples, and it was available for the taking.

Initially, these groups were traders and explorers but they eventually surrendered the nomadic lifestyle for a sedentary one amidst the Russian Plains. It took more than two hundred years before the settlements turned into towns, the first real ones in what would become Russia. This new life, however meant that the old one was discarded and most of its allegiances, but strong ties remained with the other Slavic groups in the Balkans and within the Eastern Empire. Trade and relations linked these separate groups, but blood, culture and language did as well.

These Slavs were out of the reach of the Byzantine Empire, being so far north, and could have had a reasonably stable life; this changed as Swedish Vikings, or Varangians, explored and settled here by the 9th century. Quickly, the Viking imposition turned from trading and mercantile activities to one of rule and domination. The Varangian lords built fortified coastal cities and controlled the river ways and adjoining trade routes, but not without resistance.

The Slavs attempted to push back the Swedish Varangians from the 9th to 10th centuries according to the sometimes questionable source '*Tales of Bygone Years*' (*Primary Chronicle*) written or compiled by the monk Nestor in 1114 C.E. From the Slavic perspective, these Swedish raiders were called 'Rus' because of the redness of their pale skin in the harsh cold weather.

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Viking chief Rurik built Novgorod as his capital in the late 9th century to establish his power base among the Slavs. It was Oleg (882-912), however, that placed Varangian control truly over the Slavs and conquered the Slavic regional capital Kiev in 882 C.E. Kiev was the central capital for many Slavic tribal confederations, and this victory gained Oleg, and the later Swedish Vikings, domination over most of Slavic Russia. Oleg's victory also gained him the title Grand Prince of Kiev, or konung (king) of the Slavs.

Oleg took Kiev and converted it into a powerful city, more than Novgorod, and in time his descendants broadened the reach of his domain. This was carried on by the next ruler Igor in the mid-10th century.

Igor's victories were added to by his son Svyatoslav (945-972) who harried the Khazars and Bulgars near the Volga in an effort to gain more land. The intermarriage between the Swedish and Slavs at Kiev, at least among royalty, is seen the names of Igor and his son, showing that a transformation was already taking place in society. It is from the Kievan Rus that the later name Russia is derived, even though the Kiev Rus will not reign for more than a few hundred years.

With his victories, Svyatoslav had built a second capital, Pereyaslavets, in their territory to cement his power further in the lands of the nomads. Although loathed and hated by the many wandering warlike peoples, the Kievan Rus were establishing order in the normally chaotic Russian Plains. For the first time, this achievement was being made by outside peoples (Swedish), and it did not last.

As Grand Princes go in the lineage of Kiev, Svyatoslav was a capable and flexible man. He allied with Byzantium against the Bulgars, harassing lands by the Danube and on the other hand, he tried to invade the Eastern Empire in turn. This invasion failed utterly, and he and his forces were soundly defeated and sent to return home.

Svyatoslav had made many enemies in his time, and his expanding empire invited trouble from other nomads; by 972 he met his match. A people called the Pechenegs threatened his eastern borders. He fought boldly against them but was defeated by the Dnieper river. His head was then taken, cleaned, the skull lined with silver and made into a drinking cup by the chief named Kurya.

In this terrible defeat, there was a reprieve in the Kievan kingdom as another leader rose to power by 980 C.E. – Vladimir the Great. Vladimir and his legacy are even greater than his predecessors'. Through furious struggles, they obtained the land that is now Poland and began to drive out or absorb the Finnish tribes near the region that is now known as Moscow.

Vladimir was the son of Svyatoslav and a housekeeper concubine (and prophetess) named Malusha. Her visions and abilities were said to have given the dynasty its strength and victories. Malusha's, whose origins are obscured by time, may have come from a Varangian royal line and bound into servitude by the Slavs.

In Vladimir's reign, a renewed pagan religion might have been born through the temples and symbols of the gods in his domain. This, however, was not left unchallenged by encroaching influences from the far south, as Christians were now in the midst of his populace.

In one incident, a man objected to the faith of his people, specifically human sacrifice, and exclaimed he was a Christian castigating the people for their paganism. This prompted a reaction by the populace of the Kievan kingdom in which Christians were hunted down, executed, or driven out of the land entirely through persecution.

Later, as Nestor's histories say, Vladimir reflected on his treatment of these Christians in his kingdom and wanted to know more about the beliefs of many peoples. He sent his best to travel among the lands of Europe and the East to study the many religions and return with their discoveries.

His people returned to tell him of many religions and their tenets, but the one he chose was Christianity, specifically Eastern Orthodox from Byzantium. This move will alter the future of the Kievan kingdom and those in inside its borders; it also provided a diplomatic link to the Eastern Empire that was never available before.

Upon his conversion in 988, and marriage to Princess Anna of Byzantium, he earnestly started the conversion of his kingdom to the Orthodox religion, much to the dismay of his populace and son.

Yaroslav, Vladimir's eldest son and heir, took the previous centuries of conquests and victories of his Kievan predecessors and made a larger realm, including from Moscow, to the Balkans and the Carpathians, covering thousands of miles and over a diverse population, not wholly Slavic, but a mixture of many. His victories made the Kievan Rus into one of the greatest power blocks of Europe in 1054, with few rivals.

THE CYRILIC SCRIPT AND MISSIONARIES

When Grand Prince Vladimir converted to Christianity, he was not the only Slavic ruler in Eastern Europe or its nearby regions to do so. Many centuries before, Prince Rotislav of Moravia also wanted to convert his people to the religion, but this was also conversion of political necessity. Primarily due to the Byzantine Empire's state religion, (Eastern Orthodox) and Rome's Catholicism to the west, no enterprising ruler would be smart unless he accepted these faiths into the fold to further bond politically with those monumental nations.

Missionaries began to openly roam all areas of Slavic inhabitation converting the people as they went and translating the Bible from Greek (in most cases) into Slavic as they went. For this zeal and energy, the main portion of the masses did not succumb to the new religion so easily and generally followed both, referred to as dvoeverie or 'double faith'. In public, around officials and authority they took part in the Christian ceremonies and activities for appearances, but in private and at home, they continued their old practices.

Two influential monks from Macedonia left to preach and convert all across the Slavic regions of the east and into Russia by the 9th century. Their efforts would have a larger effect on the Slavic peoples in other ways than religion. Brothers Cyril and Methodius found a means, through literature, to not only convert the other Slavs to their religion but also created a writing system to do this by (Cyrillic) in place of the Greek and Roman.

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This was first used and developed in the First Bulgarian Empire before it was taken into other Slavic regions via missionaries. Designed for fellow Slavs, the Cyrillic script was eventually adopted by many other peoples as well and gave a separate alphabetical system singular to the east.

CONTINUITY & DIVISION

By the start of the 11th century, Slavic Europe and Russia were essentially Christian in religion as missionaries branched out in all directions. First springing out from Byzantium and then Kiev as well, the changes and conformity with the rest of Europe had begun. This did not obliterate the pagans and their ancient beliefs, however; the dual faith system remained for many centuries, strong in some regions.

Kiev became a city of literature and grand art in the name of Christianity with the backing of Byzantium to aid it. The state of the common folk would remain (until recent times) without a break or change from a bleak subsistence existence as serfs, poor and with little education, while different rulers and dynasties would come and go. Yaroslav would die in 1054 and his reign would be continued by his sons and descendants for a time.

In the Balkans, in earlier centuries, the Slavs and Gepidic Germans intermarried, and then joined with scattered groups of Avars. In Macedonia, the Illyrians and Thracians in northern Greece were absorbed into the population and Slavicized. By the Middle Ages, Slavic populations had spread across Eastern, Southern and Central Europe, around the Black Sea, and across the Russian landscape.

The kingdom of Poland formed between 1000 to 1813 C.E. and aided Europe in the Crusades and against the onslaught of Genghis Khans' Mongolians and other threats from Central Germanic Europe. The medieval Slavic urbanized communities joined in the pan-European changes (agriculture, religious, etc.), while the rural communities clung to the venerable ways of their ancestors, doing so until their pagan religion was a dim memory and all gods and spirits were mere folkloric relics.

THE WIDE WORLD & ALL BELOW IT

HOW THE GOOD AND BAD GODS CAME TO BE

In the first moments of time, there was nothing in the universe, and all was bare and bereft of life or features that we know today. There was merely an empty sea, and open skies filled the universe as far as one could see. This absence of all did not last long however, as one named Svarog flew over the sea in the form of beautiful swan, his white feathers glistening in the skies around him brightly, as a beacon in this loneliness.

Svarog was lonely and sought company of another. Searching high and low he did not find a living soul until he gazed down below in his own stark shadow on the waters and found Czernobog (or Aridnyk), a brother he did not know he had. Rejoicing in this new found company and family, Svarog proposed to his brother that there must be some land on this lone, watery horizon. Czernobog was a little confused at this request and asked how and where dirt could be found to do this.

Svarog comforted him with the knowledge that beneath the water, there is plenty of dirt. However, it must be taken to the surface for it to make land. Svarog informed him also that he must say 'By Svarog's power and mine' to make this work; there is no other way.

Reluctantly Czernobog agreed, not wanting to rely on his brighter and fairer brother for anything. Before diving into the sea, Czernobog mumbled to himself, 'By my own power', and then dove deep. Twice he tried, and each time he failed to reach the muddy bottom of the primordial sea. Frustrated, Czernobog finally gave in and said the phrase his brother had decreed. Only then was he able to swim to the dirt.

He scooped up two handfuls of earth for Svarog but took a big mouthful for himself before ascending to the surface laden with muddy earth. When Czernobog finally broke free of the water with the land, his brother's power was so mighty that it made the gathered earth scatter across the sea's surface and start growing into continents and islands. This also included the earth he kept for himself! With nothing else to do about it, Czernobog had to spit it from his mouth onto the seas and watch as it began to form lands around them. His mouthful of earth showered below to the land and became the many mountains and hills that dot its surface to this day.

Svarog watched with pleasure as his earth started to cover the seas in all directions. Czernobog, however, was bitter and unhappy at this turn of events. All around the two brothers the world was expanding without measure, and it seemed to never end. Czernobog was plotting revenge for being weak and secondary to his brother in every way and thought about murdering him once he slept.

Later, Svarog lay himself upon the earth to sleep. This was the moment Czernobog was waiting for, and he lifted his brother up to throw him into the sea, intent on drowning him. As he tried to carry Svarog to the edge of the earth, the land grew to accommodate the journey, and Czernobog was unable to reach the shore to throw his brother over. Now truly frustrated, Czernobog left Svarog to his slumber and began to think of other ways to dispose of his brother. He didn't care for Svarog's bright light, his cheerfulness or, most of all, his power.

Eventually Svarog woke and noticed the world was forming and was pleased. Czernobog sourly told him, 'This land should be blessed.' Svarog grinned at him and replied, 'I had already blessed it in all four directions before you tried to throw me in the sea.' Czernobog was furious and tired of the company of his brother and left him there to journey as far as he could from Svarog.

In his brother's absence, Svarog noticed that the earth would not stop growing in all directions. If this continued, the sky would be unable to cover it. This bothered Svarog greatly, because he did not possess the secret to make it stop. Only his darker, moody brother held that power. He must find him to stop this rampant growth before the entire universe was only earth and sky and nothing more.

Svarog prepared an expedition and sent animals to bring word to him of his brother's whereabouts. The expedition

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made its way across the long stretches of land to discover that Czernobog had created a goat to ride, and found it humorous. This humor made Czernobog feel mocked and chided, and he was bitter even more so. The expedition told Czernobog their purpose, but he refused to reveal his secret now that his feelings were hurt.

Svarog created the bee to spy on him, and it rested on his shoulder day and night to overhear anything that might help his master on the other side of the earth. Czernobog spoke to his goat friend one day, 'Foolish god, doesn't he know that to stop the earth from growing it only takes a diamond form made from several sticks bound together, and say that it is enough earth?' Hearing this, the bee flew to Svarog and told him the secret. Instantly, this was done, and the earth stopped in its growth to be the world it is today.

Pleased with the work of the bee, Svarog blessed it and made its excrement sweet and good for all to eat. This was another thing he would have to create, but it is something that only his brother could do. How could this possibly be done if Czernobog refused to speak to him?

THE THREE GENERATIONS

From the time of the gods and the creation of the universe under the World Tree, the lands were inhabited by several waves of different beings. The first of these were the 'little people' or dwarves, the dzhudzheta, who made all places in the many worlds their home. Svarog made them to show his brother how life can be created to populate the world.

After many centuries, the dzhudzheta were able to sustain themselves but this fortune did not last. Due to their minute size, they were not capable of working the land to create farms and feed themselves. Nor could they defend against the animals, and so their populations shrank. In a few decades, the little people were only a scarce remnant of what had they had been. Now, they are found in extremely rare places and do not wish the company of strangers willingly.

This failure of life was gloated upon by Czernobog, who felt that he could do better and made giants, the ipsolini, to replace the small folk. His carnivorous giants were destructive and made a disturbance of the once idyllic world by their brutish ways. Animals and the dzhudzheta fled before them and their ravenous lifestyle. Before long, Svarog became displeased with the ipsolini and sought to eradicate the race from the world. Sending fire and storms down on the world below, he nearly succeeded but Czernobog hid many of them in caves deep in the earth.

To both brothers, having failed at creating life on their own, it seemed that such matters would then be laid to rest. Svarog remained in Vyrjy among his court of gods and spiritual beings while sneaky and conniving Czernobog wasn't content to leave things be. The company of animals was not enough for him, and so he formed another plan that would create a third generation to inhabit the world.

THE CREATION OF MAN

The time would come when Czernobog would be weary of the company of animals and seek companionship of higher intelligence; Svarog knew this. Using his animal spies, he saw that Czernobog was taking clay from the earth in his hands and shaping them in the form of one woman and one man. To Czernobog's dismay, there was no life in his creations, and he realized that only Svarog could instill them with souls and life. However, he sought to confine them to the mortal world by their dirt forms and not give them the spirits to do otherwise.

By this time, Svarog made his kingdom high above to allow the earth to grow and develop. With his hands full of many clay people, Czernobog went to his brother's kingdom and sought to give them life; it was his only request. Svarog took the clay forms of mankind into his kingdom in the skies and gave them life and souls but wanted to discard their mortal, earthly bodies. Once they were there, in the world of *Iriy*, they did not want to leave, and many shed their mortal bodies to remain spiritual beings as Svarog wanted. It was paradise already and they did not want to live in the rest of the universe.

This third generation of peoples to inhabit the world took both brothers' abilities to create and sustain, unlike the other two previous. It was not a partnership that the dark god was pleased with. In fact, he deeply resented it.

Czernobog was not pleased by this turn of events and wanted them for his own, and so he lured them out of *Iriy* in small numbers. Many had not yet shed their mortal bodies as Svarog wished, and these were the ones that Czernobog convinced to leave. They came to his bidding, and once they did, they were unable to return to Paradise, being trapped in the world as it is known to people. Svarog saw what was happening and swiftly stopped the rest of the people from exiting *Iriy* by sending his army of celestial warriors to defend his borders and drive his dark brother away.

Czernobog was not unprepared for this however, and sent his own army of demons to face his brother's forces in the sky. The two armies clashed, and the mightiest storms in the history of the universe erupted for twenty-seven days, sending rain, lightning, and deafening thunder across the universe. This cosmic battle waged until Svarog was victorious and drove Czernobog's demonic army away.

This victory came with a price, however. Those people that Czernobog lured into the world were forever trapped, and they would become the many peoples of the world, but Svarog taught them of light and darkness, life and death, and most of all good and evil. To help them find their way in this large world, he impaled his fiery sword deep into the ground of *Iriy*, this glowing beacon would become the sun and would aid mankind for half a day. As part of this truce between brothers, each has a half of the day, and Czernobog's is night, where he is most comfortable.

Czernobog retreated from the world of men to his own realm below the earth in *Nav*. This is where the souls of the dead will journey to give him company and solace. It was the creation of man that finally split the two brothers, who would never speak or agree on anything again. Wherever Czernobog's influence

fell, his 'unclean force' or *Nechistaya Sila* would haunt the well-being of others. This was opposed by the throng of Svarog's people in Iriy whenever possible, and however.

Those who stayed in Iriy will grow to become the gods that would share their wisdom and power with their lesser brethren on earth. This would not be so simple as Svarog desired, however, as many gods and spirits still had the influence of Czernobog imprinted in them, making their choice of domains and powers gloomy and moody, never a benefit for mankind.

THE SKY AND EARTH'S FEUD

As the world was forming from Svarog's blessing, in the center of it grew a massive oak tree unlike any other ever seen. Its size and scale quickly dwarfed all other trees and even Czernobog's mountains. This tree divided the earth and sky in such a way that nothing else could, and it was well-suited for its task. Before, both worlds were joined as one, and the sky and sea were one continuous reality; not even the land was dividing the two completely. The tree is called Parv, and it anchors deeply in Nav while standing tall on the world of the living of Lav. The three worlds are now joined.

Flowing from under its roots, are two springs: one with Dead Water (*Mertvaya Voda*) and the other with Live Water (*Zhivaya Voda*). These waters run across the lands giving life and prosperity to a dry earth. These life giving waters run pure from the World Tree nearest its roots, and soak the world forming all rivers, streams and springs.

From Iriy or Vyrjy arose the copper-haired, bearded god Perun. Where he strode in the heavens storms would brew assuredly and rain would fall. Upon his horse the thunder would crack and his presence be known. Perun became Svarog's chosen hero to defend Iriy from the many demons and deceivers from his brother's abode in Nav.

Just as Svarog gave Perun the skies to guard, Czernobog also gave one of his own, Veles, the earth to protect from his brother. Perun's duty was to guard the sun's passage, often in his own hands, from the denizens of Czernobog and to destroy them if they show themselves by the light of day. Perun made a family, marrying one of the celestial maidens named Dodola, the Rain Goddess.

Veles' role was different and darker. Veles' chief goal is to eat away the World Tree until it is no more and collapses, forcing the sky and earth together again and the two brothers side by side, effectively destroying the world.

Veles could change into a dragon (*Zaltys*) to hide his presence, but Perun could transform into an eagle and search the skies for him just as easily. It took no time before these two champions finally met each other in the world of man and begin a series of battles that will never end. Furious storms erupt whenever Perun and Veles meet, and when they do fire comes down from the skies and disasters follow. When the two rivals do not face each other in person, they pick at each other by other, deceptive means.

Many times Veles would kidnap Perun's wife or children, or take his cattle and livestock, and each time a battle would ensue. Mankind is unfortunate that they often lie in the path of this perpetual conflict with only the hopes of survival when it is over with. Countless

times in the earliest of ages, before the nations of Man grew to be what they are, Perun and Veles would clash, and when they did, terrible things would transpire; but Iriy and Nav remained safe. Each time, however, Perun would slay Veles, or a form of him, and send his corpse back to the world of them in the underworld.

One would think that Veles' deaths would eventually come to an end, but the Death Waters of the World Tree would resurrect him as before to renew the struggle. After all, Czernobog would not like his brother Svarog to remain victorious for long.

THE COMING OF THE MANY GODS

Perun and Veles were not the only divine blooded beings to emerge from Iriy and Nav; many more were to follow as was planned by both brothers. They would arrive in the world of men ready to bring wisdom and grant great boons on all, or curses and devastation as well.

These mighty beings, good or evil, lived among man in the wildest of places and took locations as their own, jealously guarding them from man and each other. The original war between the cosmic brothers continued through these many families of gods.

In time, the gods and man would intermarry and bear children of special blood, to become champions and heroes, or monsters. This arrival of the gods into the world of men would bring the crafts and skills needed for those trapped by Czernobog's deceptions a degree of civilization and culture to survive the harshness.

The goddess Živa was one of many positive gods from Iriy that benefited man. Wherever she went life and fertility followed and those who appeased her prospered in plenty during these early ages. Her consort, Siebog, aided in mankind's ceremony and union of marriage, teaching them that a union of love is possible and can be binding. Through their efforts man learned that the fear and animosity that Czernobog's kind created could be opposed by love's strength.

Czernobog's evil and blackness gave him the drive to create fierce spirits of the stormy winds, demons, and many untold horrors from deep in Nav below the World Tree to combat his brother's more illuminated and enlightened beings. The mortals he wanted to keep to himself so badly were turning to worship the gods instead, ignoring him and rejecting his temptations.

Where he failed in Veles to create a god that would ever achieve victory over his brother by destroying the World Tree, he devised to bring many powerful beings of his own into the world to draw people away from the blessings and boons of Svarog, Perun, and the others from the shining world of Iriy.

IN THE AGE OF HEROES

From the moment the many tribes migrated out of the motherland, they were led by brave and stalwart bogatyr (heroes). Many carved the way through wild forests and monster haunted wildernesses to clear a path for their people to follow. Mankind was as a child to the world, naïve and vulnerable to its dangers, and it took these strong and capable leaders to wade through the untamed world.

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Nomadic wild tribes plagued them from the east and north while brutal barbarians did so from the western wildernesses. In the south was a massive empire of wealth and strange customs, following a strange, intolerant single god. The world was a place of great threats and wonders both, but this did not deter the many tribes seeking from land of their own.

If Berstack did not plague their time spent in the woods, then the other dark gods of Czernobog did so in the elements themselves to prevent them from succeeding. Bogatyr such as Dobrynya Nikitich, Alyosha Popovich, Svyatogor, and many others went on great adventures, even into the Otherworlds, to show that mankind was indeed as strong and capable as those given only the pure spirit of Svarog.

Czernobog employed his monsters and dark gods to challenge and even destroy his own creations at times, but the bogatyrs would succeed at any cost. Svarog and the gods of light were pleased with the strength of the spirit of men that was given to them so long ago, when they were in Iriy for so brief a time. Svarog was content in rewarding those valiant and worthy souls a home in Paradise for their effort and time spent in the mortal world. He would do this to give them the home they lost to the wiles and deviousness of Czernobog.

This is the age of tales and myths later recounted by the Old Slavs, when heroes set forth into the world to perform epic and noble deeds, outsmarted their foes and even the minions of Czernobog. The many tales that have survived since this time speak of bold unstoppable bogatyr that fought giants, demons, and armies of enemies from afar; Ilya Muromets is one them. His deeds will remain legendary for thousands of years, never to be forgotten.

Mankind made it an unspoken rule to seek out Iriy as Svarog and the other gods of light have told them of. To do this, they must banish the monsters and dark spirits of Czernobog away, slay them if possible and live appeasing the many gods until mortality overtakes them. If their souls are to ever pass on to Paradise when they perish they must play their part in the events of the universe and fulfill their role.

Deep in lightless Nav, Czernobog perpetually plots against mankind, the people he created with his own hands, and sends his many demons among them to deceive and bring them to ruin. For the many tribes and paramount people that he destroyed, many more succeeded and spread throughout the world of men to form powerful kingdoms and leaders who still respected him and his dark ways but kept him at a distance.

Man's nobility, acquired from their spirit given by Svarog in Iriy in prehistory, made them show recognition of terrible Czernobog and the other evil gods, building them temples and idols to appease them. This worked for many, silencing them and their cruel ways towards man. Even many bogatyr would confront vile Veles to stop his gnawing on the World Tree in the Otherworld; many times, the hellish dragon god would be slain or stopped. He would return though, as he had many times, and with a plan to change mankind within itself.

Veles would impregnate many women-folk and father children of his own blood, the Zmajevit, to live among flawed and vulnerable mankind. These dragon children would alter the course of thinking in man over time, and make them weak to the temptations of Czernobog's demons. Over the centuries, Czernobog's other demons bred with man and created all manner of new monsters and beings not imagined before.

Fed up with the resistance and persistence of mankind, Czernobog and the dark gods were determined to destroy them utterly. First disasters were sent: floods, famines and raging fires, to sweep across their many lands, but mankind was steadfast. When that did not shake them, armies of monsters were sent from Nav to destroy them all alike. Led by the furious sky giant Vii, armies of ispolini and other giants stormed the surface world bent on destroying all traces of mankind as their dark masters ordered.

Many bogatyrs met them and slew them, leaving none standing alive. Scores of giants died and their allies among man, the Goths, Avars, and Huns, during the battle across Slovinia. Only the leader Vii remained when the dust cleared from the confrontation. Using his storm-filled eyes, he sent lightning down on the heads of man, bent on eradicating them. He was opposed, however, by an array of shields strong enough to resist him. The bogatyrs repelled Morgavka, as some call him, and he retreated to the clouds.

Czernobog failed to eradicate man, his own creation, as he had wished and set his mind to simply counter the actions of his brother in Iriy instead, using man as a means to do so. The battle against the underworld was over for the moment, and mankind held their own against even the gods below enough to remain.

THE FUTURE OF THE WIDE WORLD

With mankind now fairly secure after centuries in the universe, torn between the gods of the sky and earth, they built kingdoms and wondrous temples to honor their origins and to make a future.

Monster-bred men were deeply entrenched in the affairs and politics of man. Many thousands of years had passed since the first moment that Svarog and Czernobog came together to bring the universe into being, but the animosity had not changed between the two. Families of gods lived amidst man, in the wild places not visited normally, and occasionally they interacted with man, in disguise or not.

Barbarian tribes lay to either side of the people of Svarog and Czernobog, bringing strange religions and customs, danger, and prosperity through trade. What the future held, and if the bogatyr would continue to protect and serve their tribes, no one could be sure. The plans of the gods can often be vague and always mysterious; it is best to be strong not only for today but for tomorrow as well. They continued to placate the gods and hoped to journey to Iriy when the time came.

One could only hope that new bogatyrs would come forward to face the threats and demons of Czernobog, or from the barbarians. There was no other way for man to remain in the universe, as he was created by the gods of light and dark, if more heroes were not born or made.



CHAPTER 2: THE WHOLE WORLD & THAT WHICH IS BEYOND

The many lands the Old Slavs once populated, and still inhabit in some cases, are detailed in this chapter, as well as their mythical locations. Historically, the lands they inhabited into the medieval period are covered in usable and fairly informative sections for use in gaming. They are given the touch of myth and magic to enable CKs the chance to run a mythic world from a Slavic perspective. The use of data is mostly speculative in this chapter of the codex, embellishing on what there is a trace amount of facts about, or simply inventing through a 'Slavic' lens and idiom.

The many names for Slavic kingdoms, principalities, etc are invented where there were ones lacking since Post-Roman sources generally only mention tribal names. We simply do not know what the various Slavic peoples called their territories until later politics come into fruition by the Middle-Ages, and so some creative interpretation is used to good effect here to make it a viable and realistic mythic, semi-historical setting.

The mythic locations are not well-described in the few sources and folktales, unfortunately, so a large measure of imaginative speculation is needed to flesh out those regions. This is the same method used in the other Codices due to the fact that these ancient religions left little to explain the full breadth and 'reality' of their cosmological view.

With limited information, the Slavic Three Worlds, Parv, Lav or Yav and Nav and the many other magical places in between will be explored as thoroughly as possible and given some playable definition. Lacking even more data on these mythical places in comparison to the Celtic, Germanic, and Nordic makes it challenging to define for playing, but it will be worth the effort.

LANDS OF THE OLD SLAVS

The mortal world to the pagan Slavs was called Yav and in this codex is the mythic setting where the monsters, gods and powerful beings co-exist with the real world and its peoples. This section details many of those places with plenty of mention of mythical locations to encourage gaming. Many of these locations have been added out of a combination of academic and creative imagination to further flesh out the setting, others come from actual lore and history, but both have been designed in such a way that they blur in which is which.

There are countless story hooks given here that an enterprising CK can base adventures around and run fantastic stories from a Slavic perspective. A thorough reading and some additional side research will give endless possibilities once the story seed is planted, and it is hoped by the designer that this is indeed done.

SKLAVENIA

This region in Eastern Europe stretched from northern Greece in Macedonia to the southernmost plains of Russia and was filled with thousands of miles of untamed wilderness and uncivilized tribes (Balkan and Ukraine regions, specifically). Vast,

thick forests cover expanses of the region, extending into Central Europe where the Germans and Celts dwell to the west. The *Sklaveni*, as the Greeks of Byzantium called them occupied these vast regions as tribal divisions with few kingdoms.

Sklavenia covered a few former Roman provinces (Moesia, Thracia, Dacia, Pannonia, and Dalmatia) in its territory, but was also under the sway of the Eastern Roman Empire of Byzantium after 475 C.E.

The Slavic tribes that have chosen to settle here are many (from 8th century sources): Croat, Teverians, Polanes, Severians, Radimichians, Krivichians, Slovenians, Derevlinians, Volhynians, Dregovichians, Ulichians, Vistulans, Serbs, Lindizi, Mazovians, Kuyavians, Pomoryans, Polonians, Sorbs, Veleti, Moravians, Bohemians, Silesians, Vah, and Obodrites. This is not taking into account the countless minor dependent tribes under each.

In the vast tracts of wilderness in Sklavenia monsters, demons, and giants dwell as they always had. Some regions in the north are completely untamed and still possess the same inhabitants as before, when the two divine brothers Svarog and Czernobog first lifted them up from the sea.

Many areas in Sklavenia are mountainous with the earth that Czernobog first spit out in creation, jutting from the earth peaked in snow and ice. Within these mountains dwell the many monsters, spirits, and demons that he employs to do his bidding. The Alps, Caucasus, and other mountains in Sklavenia are populated this way. If dangers do not exist there, then gods maybe present, staying in their remote fastness away from man.

The Slavic tribes have since lived alongside other peoples that once populated or ruled in these reaches of what the Byzantines call Sklavenia: Celts, Ligurians, Thracians, and Roman colonists. It is an uneasy peace, at times aided with peaceful intermarriage at the best. This region of Europa however has other serious problems deriving from raiding nomadic tribes from Eurasia.

Huns, Sarmatians, Alans, Avars, and many others storm settlements and homesteads, seeking loot and women and terror in their path. Bogatyrs stand up to them and oppose them often, usually resulting in epic battles. Sklavenia has a diverse population of mortals and supernatural beings, but its present menace is from these steppe tribes. Even into the far north of the Black Sea (Chornoye morye), they create havoc.

Many of the more savage and bold Slavic tribes deep in Sklavenia plunder and raid the Byzantine provinces and rich cities, ignoring treaties and pacts. The temptations of the Empire are too much to deny.

By the year 577 C.E, over 100,000 Slavs settled deeper south into Greece to avoid the threats and tyranny of the Avars. In doing so, they now raid and harass the peoples of Macedonia and Thessalonica (Macedonia Sklavenia) becoming a problem

SLAVIC KINGDOMS



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themselves for others. These Macedonian Slavs were never effectively ousted from their foothold in Greece by Byzantium, not even after several attempts. Many emperors came with ambition to accomplish this feat but their conflicts with raiding Goths and the Persians took their attentions more often.

Lysa Góra (Bald Mountain) is one of many sacred locations in Sklavenia. This is a high, bare location surrounded by dark woodlands, and it is where witches gather to perform their rituals and prayers to Czernobog and other dark gods. It is a dreaded and forbidden place for those who follow the gods of light, and there have been few heroes brave enough to endure the haunted and dangerous forests to even reach the location. In other places within Sklavenia similar sites can be found by the intrepid and foolish.

At Poljička mountain, in the tribal land of the Croats lays one of many sacred high hills to Perun. To honor the storm god in the skies, priests have built grand temples to praise him and, during holy days, aid him by prayers in his constant war against Veles.

One of the most holy temples to the gods lies in Radegast; it is for the Smith God Svarožič or Svarog. This is a large temple, construction of timber, raised high on a hill with many steps to it from all four sides. Sitting inside is a gigantic statue of Svarog adorned in gold. The skill of this temple's construction has few equals in other Slavic regions, but this isn't the single most holy of sites in the land. This temple is shared with the Polans and their tribal allies in the nearby region of Ludzie Svetovid.

'WENDLAND'

An ethnic term used by Germanic neighbors to the many tribes of Slavic peoples in Central and Western Europa from the earliest ages. Many lands of the westernmost Slavs were assimilated into Gothic and Frankish dominion, ruled over by heavy-handed chieftains, and later kings, that resented the encroachment of these strangers from the east.

Wendland spanned as far north as Saxony and the shores of the North Sea and into the regions of Germania adjacent to the Danube west into Bohemia bordering Austria. This rugged country is also shared with the Celts who still inhabit a portion of their ancient ancestral homeland near Hallstatt.

The Roman Empire failed to stave off the waves of Slavic peoples following in the wake of the Goths and other migrating Germanic tribes and now have a mixed population with many religions and languages. To the Empire, this region became known as Germanica Slavica due to the strong presence of both peoples in Central Europe.

The tribes that live here do not call themselves 'Wend', nor do they refer to their region by a generalized term. They were not unified enough to form a strong nation state or kingdom, but many tribes did share this part of Europa together. Each tribe had their own unique name for their territory, usually derived from their own name or that of a god or bogatyr from their legendary past.

As with the Sklavenia and the other regions of Slavic Europa, they are constantly appeasing their gods, light and dark, and waging war against the demons and monsters of Czernobog. In this region, within the mountains of Bohemia, sits another sacred but dreaded mountain to the god Czernobog: the Brána Czernobog (The Gate of Czernobog). It is said that a direct passage takes the trespasser down to the underworld of Nav. By night, the foothills and forests around this cave are a dangerous place, flooded by the minions of the Black God, his witches, and other zealous worshipers.

There are few completely independent tribes in Wendland, but those who are, jealously hold on to it and are careful about allowing in outsiders to their group if asked. They are always politically being smart about their battles and who they pick them against. With many foes they have no choice in the matter (Germans, Celts, and some isolated hill-tribes descended from the earliest peoples in Europa going back thousands of years).

Travel into these territories is difficult for Slavs as the Germanic, and sometimes Celtic, tribes keep a tight rein on the traffic coming into their territory. Strangers are treated poorly by tribal guards and warriors and often do not stand a chance if they are found by these sentries on a bad day. Many Slavic tribes have contemplated assembling a great gathering of their bogatyr together to expel the outsiders, enabling them to rule solely over their chosen settlement.

The German and Celtic overlords have forced the Slavic tribes into small duchies to monitor their growth and potential risk factors and to better tax them when needed. A simmering animosity is boiling under the surface of the Slavs of Wendland, and someday it might explode under the right pressure.

BULGARIA

Later called The First Bulgarian Empire by historians, this major multicultural region formed in 680 C.E. in force with the violent acquisition of power (taken from the Byzantines) seized by Khan Asparuh. Asparuh, a Turkish Bulgar, led his nomadic people into this part of Sklavenia and defeated the armies of Byzantium several times before establishing his Khanate.

His horsemen and their families settled alongside the Slavs and quickly intermarried, forming a mixed-blooded people. The Slavs were moved to the Carpathians to protect against continued Avar attacks but possessed more autonomy and control over their destiny than they had with the Byzantine rulers.

Even though the Bulgarian horsemen came to dominate the Slavs in this large crescent shaped region, the language remained Slavic over time, and a melding of the two cultures occurred. This Bulgaria is not the same nation as the more recent territory so named in modern times, even though it is the original basis for it. The designation 'Bulgaria' is a Latin method of identifying a territory after a dominant people with the stem -ia.

The majority of Bulgaria consisted of a hard fought portion of the Balkans with intense resistance by Byzantium every step of

the way. This predominantly Greek area will become an additional section by the end of the 7th century. The many Khans that will rule will be both friend and enemy of Byzantium in the following centuries. In the early 8th century, they will aid Byzantium against an Arabic siege of Constantinople and help them 'save Europe'.

Unlike Wendland, Bulgaria is more receptive to strangers and travelers from afar if they are not Avar, Arabic, or from other troublesome nomadic Steppe peoples. Adventuring here provides many opportunities given the varied terrain and populations, mixing their beliefs and cultures. This area of Eastern Europe is a crossroads, one among many, between all directions of Europe, into Asia and beyond.

Bulgaria is a land full of terrible giants, and in the forests of the Carpathians numerous *leshys*, often led by the dark forest god, *Berstuk*. One of *Czernobog's* giant generals, *Vii*, is known to frequent the region in his travels across Eastern Europe and the Black Sea. He often will open his lightning filled eyes to incinerate villages and farms in his wrath, bitter from the ancient loss of the war against *Svarog* in *Iriy*.

WHITE CROATIA

Settled by the Croat tribe in the centuries around the fall of the Western Roman Empire, between the modern regions of Hungary and Bavaria, this strongly pagan territory resists the Christian missionaries sent from Rome and Byzantium. The Croats become subjects to the Franks, ruled over by Germanic kings against their will, but their loyalties lie with the Turkmen tribes. This bond is due to their non-Christian faith and stance which also makes their politics different.

The adjective 'white' does not refer to a skin coloration but an older word for 'west', and compared to the other branches of the Croat tribe, these members settled close to Wendland and Germania in the west. This region of Europa is a continuation of the others around it with the same pluralism of cultures and complexities of societies and religions.

Even though their allegiance is to the rulers from Germania to the north, by the 7th century Byzantium imposed upon them to forcibly move a large portion of the population of Croatians to the Balkans to the southeast to act as border guards against outside threats. This divided the tribe and created the later land of Croatia (as known in modern times) around Bosnia-Herzegovina.

West Croatia is in a magical wilderness where demons dwell and other spirits lay in wait for the unassuming and innocent. This gathering of the Croat tribe has no shortage of *bogatyrs* that wish to rebel against their overlords, but the people are so weak and their resources strained that not even blessings and magic can gain them an advantage for too long.

IMPERIUM SAMO

Founded in the mid-7th century by migrating Slavs by former Frankish merchant Samo, this conglomeration of Slavs were

gathered to defend against Avaric raids and bandits. Eventually, their hostility extended to other Frankish merchants forming a xenophobic empire. This principality sat in the area that is today Moravia, Slovenia, Slovakia and southern Austria and bordered, in its day, a heavily concentrated region of Avars.

Samo's small empire effectively defended its borders from the Avars in the southeast and later from Frankish armies at the Battle of Wogastisburg (631 C.E). His neighbors almost jokingly called his territory 'Samo's Empire' even though it did not constitute a very vast region of Central/Eastern Europa.

Imperium Samo's longevity as a realm was short lived, as it spanned a few years after its charismatic leader's death (658 C.E). The gods above and below are weak here but do possess some influence over the Slavs, and there are many *Zmajevits* and *Zhudač* born to outweigh the weakness of the people within its borders.

After Samo's death, the former problems of the Avars and Franks started to creep back into the slightly tamed land again. Even though Samo had twelve Wendish brides and many heirs to his empire (22 sons and 15 daughters, allegedly), none were able to continue his reign as a dynasty or monarchy and the Imperium Samo fell back into chaos again with the Slavic confederation he created gone.

LUDZIE SVETOVID

'People of (the War God) Svetovid'. These tribes, led by the Poles, settled deep in the open plains (thus their name, 'People of the Fields'). Dedicated to the war god Svetovid, they migrated here in the mid-7th century and defended their borders from Germans and Celts, cutting out a territory for their own.

Fiercely opposed to being ruled by others, the tribal confederacy in this region took the island of Rügen and made a spectacular temple in honor of their patron god. They were assured that their victories against the Germans and Celts were from the blessings of Svetovid, and this became one of the chief cultural centers to the whole state that the confederacy built. This sacred island is protected by a force of three hundred warriors picked from the tribal alliance. It is an esteemed duty to be one of the guardians of the war god's temple.

Spared the presence of the Roman Empire to the west or Byzantium in the east, the people of Svetovid were able to construct a great realm for themselves. Chief among forts in this realm is the great fortification of *Twierdza z potężną* (Fastness of the Mighty), located at the present Biskupin. There are definitely mighty chiefs that ruled from this gord, or fortress, that enforce their power and will over the plentiful tribes-people. Their harshness is for the protection of those inside the borders of their realm and to deny the peoples of Germania or the Celts a chance to reclaim this land again from them.

Aside from *Twierdza z potężną*, there are four other major forts in the country that protect the nearby tribes from threats. Devoid of any Roman influences or heritage, these gords are con-

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structed in a manner that is both uniquely original and influenced from the Germans and Celts. These forts, as all others in Europa, are placed atop promontory locations where they can survey the landscape for oncoming armies or trouble, and remind the communities living in sight of them who is in charge.

Many tribes have gathered together loosely in this region of Europa, with their own chiefs and leaders. These tribes are: Polans, Vistulans, Pomoransians, Bobrzanie, Pyrzykanie, Goplans, Łędzianie, Masovians, Biezuńczanie, Wolinianie, Gołęszyce, Lubuzanie, Opolanie, and the Trzebowianie. Under these many dominant groups lay multiple smaller dependent tribes as well.

The gods reign here strongly, and wage their eternal feud in the skies and on the earth, sometimes with no regard for the people who serve them. The many lakes, 10,000, in the tribal land of the Polans house many spirits and beings that dwell as they had since time began. The leshy are thick in these woodlands and the presence of their master, Berstak, as well. Newcomers to the tribal domain of the Polans must be weary here; all is not as it seems.

It is said by some that are wise in the secrets of the gods that Berstak has a forest of his own hidden within the plentiful woods that cover this land; it is rumored to date to the creation of the earth by the Divine Brothers and is a magical place, more than the woodlands surrounding it. The tribes have many names for it, their most common is Las dom Berstak (Berstack's Forest Home) and spirits, beasts, and monsters inhabit this enchanted region in great numbers.

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'Silesia'. This small flatland became a Slavic tribal territory by the 7th century, pushing out the Germanic and Celtic tribes into other surrounding regions. Centuries of unstable warfare made up most of the following history without too many periods of peace.

There are scarcely any tribal confederations here or any other peace because of the frequent and traumatic skirmishes and battles between the former inhabitants and the new. The presence of the Otherworld is thin here with little in the way of dangers from Nav or Pekla. Czernobog's power, however, can be felt during the holidays more than any other time in the year.

ANTIA

Located to the northwest of the Black Sea, this territory is ruled by Sarmatians and Ostrogoths in a constantly uneasy peace with the Slavs torn between them. The earliest possessors of this land are from the east and still remain but are submerged under the presence of other peoples.

These Antes people, originally horsemen from the steppes have intermarried with the Slavs commonly and have formed a powerful culture, only recently subject to the outsiders, including Rome and Byzantium. While little remains of the original Antes tribe, their Slavic descendants eagerly continue the customs and warfare tactics of them to survive.

By the 5th century, the Anteans regained power once their Gothic oppressors were soundly defeated by the Huns in a series of battles. King Boz' dynasty arose from the defeat of their Germanic rulers and formed a kingdom near the Black Sea that manages the important trade routes from the sea and rivers to inland, gaining his kingdom many benefits of spices, silks and other goods from afar. The king is intolerant of any remaining Gothic or Sarmatians in his realm and will swiftly expel them for crimes or execute them as an example to the rest.

Because Antia rests by the shores of the sea, the presence of the Sea King and his underwater kingdom can be a constant menace at times, interfering in with daily life. The famous ruler Ivan Tsarovich came ashore here after his many months at sea and adventures in distant lands, only to lose his son to the Sea King.

After the years of 518 C.E. the Antes became allies of Byzantium and were paid by them to help them in freeing Rome and Italia of the Gothic invader since they have experience in confronting them in battle and overcoming them. The many knyaz (nobles) eagerly prepare and send their well-armed and trained warrior retinues (Druzhina) with the Eastern Empire on military expeditions in hopes of gaining more support from the imperial forces in their lands against the ever threatening Avars and other steppe tribes.

The closeness of the Roman and Slavic people have enabled a fusion of both cultures on the southwestern edge of Antia. Although only a few generations old, they have become an intermediary group between the Slavs in Antia and the Byzantium Romans, and they are accepted generally by the Anteans. Many settlements have sprung up here in this wilderness, forming a link in the trade network and in imperial traffic. Unfortunately, this union of peoples has not guaranteed that the Empire will wholly protect and support the Anteans as they hope; it seems as though much of the Empire's peoples are expendable and exist only for wealth through taxation.

Antia lays closest of all Slavic territories to the steppes and the many nomadic tribes there, and is solely remaining a kingdom by its symbiotic relationship with Byzantium. If it were to lose that advantage, or if the steppe tribes were to ever increase their daring, the kingdom would fall.

PANNONIA SLAVICA

This gathering of migrated Slavs sits dangerously in another crossroads region of Eastern Europa. It has changed hands between the Ostrogoths, Lombards, Gepids, Avars, and Huns whilst the Slavic settlers (in the late 5th century) remain in the middle of this power struggle throughout.

There is a remnant of the original natives of the region, the Illyrians, still present in this territory, and Imperial Roman traces still fresh from their many centuries of rule here. Alongside them are the long time Celtic natives as well, the Scordisci, that still live near the old Roman provincial capital of Sirmium.

Pannonia as a whole (which is a larger region than just the Slavic portion) had five regional capitals in addition to Sirmium:

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Carnuntinum, Savaria, Aquincum, Vindobona and Poetovia. There are many scattered settlements in Pannonia and some feeling of isolation in the wilderness areas, but this region is a multicultural crossroads and busy, even in the worst of times.

By the time of the early 7th century the Slavs were left in control of Pannonia for themselves, even if Byzantium controlled Sirmium through the nobility and religious officials. Pannonia Slavica will remain for a time until the Avaric armies came by 582. Unlike the many other Slavic regions of Europa, Pannonia possesses many towns, cities and forts (partially due to its Roman legacy), numbering to about fifty-four. A large portion of these cities date to early Celtic times and were tribal forts later turned into Roman colonial cities.

SIRMIMUM – ANCIENT EASTERN CITY

Constructed on the Sava River by Illyrians and Celts in the 4th century B.C.E. as a fortified river settlement controlling traffic and trade, this central location grew into a large community before Rome's intervention in the 1st century B.C.E. Sirmium was then made into the capital of the province of Pannonia Secunda. This was in the 4th century when Pannonia was split into four sections to administer the region by Emperor Diocletian.

Rome will be proud of this major eastern multicultural city and later in the period of the Four Emperors (293-313 C.E.) make it one of the four regional capitals for Tetrarch Galerius to rule the eastern provinces from. In the 4th century a Bishop was placed here to handle missionary activities in this part of the Empire and other functions of the Church.

Sirmium will fall into the hands of the many Germanic rulers by the end of the 5th century on and slowly molder away in time. Its demise comes officially when the Avaric hordes sweep through Pannonia in 582 C.E., after nearly twenty years of interim rule by Byzantium. By the close of the 6th century Sirmium remains in squalid ruins with scattered Celtic, Illyrian, and Slavic ghettos in its fragmented streets inside the toppled walls.

At its height of use the city had a population of over 50,000+ living in its high and protected walls with legions garrisoned and generals for the Empire stationed here to strategize their wars in the eastern provinces. The CK can pick and choose which era to include this ancient city in the game and do more detailed research if needed to better present Sirmium to the players. This city has a lot of opportunities for exciting adventures in its walls.

MOESIA

This short lived territory is nestled between several mountains and rivers and near the edge of the Black Sea and first came into Slavic possession late into the Roman era. This land was already shared by the Thracians, Illyrians and Dacians before becoming a Roman province in 29 B.C.E.

In the 3rd century, Rome divided the territory into two halves, Moesia Prima and Moesia Secunda and given increased fortifications to secure its borders from the triple threat of Huns, Goths, and Dacians.

Slavonic tribes, the 'Sedem slavyanski plemena' or the 'Seven Slavic Tribes', populated Moesia, those tribes formed a union by the 7th century and were a solid community. Living alongside them in the 4th century on were deeply settled Goths who became termed the Moesogoths. Of the Goths throughout the Empire, these were the few acquiring literacy and being Christianized by Wulfas, a Gothic missionary.

The presence of supernatural forces in Moesia is sparse but there in the most remote wilderness. Usually the beings and monsters are integrated into mortal society in a way that no one can notice. Czernobog's hand in the affairs of men is hard to notice, with human cruelty and deception already occurring normally, but the Black God does not ignore his creations so easily.

MATI ZEMLJA (VLAŽNIH MATERE ZEMLJE)

'Mother Land (of the Moist Mother Earth)'. This holy, but lost, land is the original home of the Slavonic peoples located north of the Carpathian Mountains. It was once the sacred place of the earth goddess, Mokoš, and had plentiful temples and locations dedicated to her and the other gods of the sky. Now, this derelict wasteland is in the hands of nomadic Steppe tribes, who plunder and inhabit its former glories.

Using their hollowed out tree canoes to travel by river way and on foot or by other means of transport the original Slavonic peoples from Mati Zemlja departed from their concentrated landscape of many tribes into Eastern Europa by the 2nd century C.E. Herds of oxen and aurochs, Mokoš' roamed the Mother Land's rich and fertile soils freely, but they have long since been taken by the migrating tribes away.

Mati Zemlja still has a small population of Slavonic people, but they are struggling to remain in the face of the nomadic threats. Added to this are small communities of Scythians (See 'The Kurgans of the Steppes' below), the original horseman north of the Black Sea who once lived in Scythia. After the conquest and collapse of their own capital at Scythian Neopolis to the Ostrogoths in the 3rd century, these wandering and aimless bands of proud horsemen are now seeking a new home. Unlike the other roaming nomadic bands from Eurasia, the Scythians are amicable and do not wish to further eradicate their peoples by poor diplomacy.

To the memories of the many migrated tribes that left Mokoš' land, this is the place where Svarog and Czernobog first dropped earth on the primordial seas before it grew to become the world and still possesses great magic and enchantments from the days of the gods. According to the priests, witches and others wise in the craft of the supernatural many of the gods have their earthly abodes here still. The soil is so rich and fertile that the original immigrants took bags of it in their wagons and on their pack-animals to new lands to always have it close to them (this custom is shared by the undead Wampir who must do the same thing to survive away from their homeland).

It is the hope of many tribal leaders to take back Mokoš' Land someday and drive the mixed peoples out completely, but as they

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are now a part of many regions and other lands, it is increasingly more difficult. It is rumored that there is a secret brotherhood of Družina, led by reputable bogatyrs, which are plotting to return to Mati Zemlje someday and liberate their Mother Land. The whereabouts of these warriors is not known and said to be in many lands and cities with no one certain location.

ὦν δὲ δὴ νεηνίσκων τῶν ἀποπεπνιγμένων τῶν πενήκοντα ἕνα ἕκαστον ἀναβιβάζουσι ἐπὶ τὸν ἵππον, ὧδε ἀναβιβάζοντες, ἐπεὰν νεκροῦ ἑκάστου παρὰ τὴν ἄκανθαν ζύλον ὀρθὸν διελάσσωσι μέχρι τοῦ τραχήλου· κάτωθεν δὲ ὑπέρχει τοῦ ζύλου τούτου τὸ ἐς τὸρμον πηγνύουσι τοῦ ἑτέρου ζύλου τοῦ διὰ τοῦ ἵππου. ἐπιστήσαντες δὲ κύκλῳ τὸ σῆμα ἱππέας τοιοῦτους ἀπελαύνουσι.

On the horses they put bridles and bits, and stretch the bridles tight in front of them and then tie them up to pegs: and of the fifty young men who have been strangled they mount each one upon his horse, having first run a straight stake through each body along by the spine up to the neck; and a part of this stake projects below, which they fasten into a socket made in the other stake that runs through the horse. Having set horsemen such as I have described in a circle round the tomb, they then ride away.

-Herodotus, Book IV, Scythia

THE KURGANS OF THE STEPPES

These rich burial tombs of the Scythians, Thracians, and other neighboring cultures are spread over all of former Scythia and into the Ukraine and house the wealth of the chief of hero interred within. Each tumulus is carefully prepared, and in some cases of great kings enormous inside and built of cyclopean stonework.

A custom among the Scythians was to sacrifice the chief's closest men and their steeds, and then perform a ritual taxidermy on them before placing them on wooden stakes around the top of the kurgan. These men were given spells to ensure they will protect their fallen chief and his tomb with hopes that they will come alive when needed (similar to a Koschei spirit).

These elaborate burial mounds can be monumental in size, giving the illusion of being a natural feature of the landscape to the unaware, and most can be seen for miles around. These kurgans date back over several thousand years into the far past before such tribal names and ethnic groups (as later known) were even around.

The construction of these tumuli would require the manpower of a community or more and many months at the least to build. Each step of the process was part of a careful ritualized procedure and had heavy meaning religiously. It is likely that many of those who built and engineered the well-guarded and treasure stuffed kurgans were put to death afterwards to safe guard the secrets within.

Who the earliest kurgan builders were is lost in the distant past, but it influenced the later peoples that dwelled around the region that later becomes Scythia. From a gaming perspective, these ancient hollowed tombs can be a rich source of adventuring, for

within them are assured treasure (the belongings of the esteemed dead), possible traps to safe guard them, and the likelihood of monsters or supernatural guests residing within or near.

Common features of a kurgan tomb are: a firepit in the middle of the main chamber, tombs, possibly chambers for funeral events, a hidden earth/stone entry way inside, a holy altar to the gods within or even atop the mound, sometimes a wooden roof over the mound, ramparts of timber around its perimeter, statues of heroes/gods within, sacred funeral procession route(s), and sacrificial spots if not the altar itself. A kurgan can be as tall as seven stories in height within and elaborate. These places were the staple of fantasy pulp stories and role-playing for a long time but had lost their original, true-life, place in it all.

KARPTY KRALJESTVA MRTVIH

'Dead Kingdoms of the Carpathians'. Nestled deep in these dense mountains are frightful domains (9 to 12) ruled over by the undead. Petty kings and chiefs, these vampires command their ghostly and dead forces to draw in and feed on the nearby living. They were placed to rule here by the dark gods in Nav to weaken and tear apart the world of men so they cannot choose sides in the cosmic war between the Divine Brothers. Witches and others seeking the dark arts often search out these hidden kingdoms to gain power.

Fourteen passes cut in through the Carpathians making passage between the many nearby regions possible, but unfortunately the vampire lords control over most of them, more so by night. The most dreaded mountain pass is the Burgo. Although large and spacious enough for a caravan and even an army, it is the place where the vampire lords prey on the most after dark. Cautious and weary peoples, on both sides of the Burgo, avoid it after dusk knowing of the terrors and dangers that dwell there in the mists and rocks.

Since the time that Czernobog walked the earth these mountains, of his creation, have been a haunted and dreadful place. The mortal tribes that have lived around it have been cautious and relied on the blessings of gods and protective spells to keep them safe from the many numberless horrors that live within. The haunted Carpathians sit as a massive barrier between various regions and peoples in Eastern Europa and those tribes who have remained south of its semi-circular contours are very tough and considered barbarous.

The Roman Empire has carved out a presence here amidst the Dacians and Celts in earlier ages and built forts and garrisons to keep the peoples in check but they too had to handle the supernatural presence that hangs heavy in the mountains and its forests. The Carpathians are not just populated by the undead but dragons and other magical beasts which find lairs in the many caves and overhangs in the high places.

It is feared by the many peoples that live near the mountains that the vampire lords and their terrifying armies will invade them in the future, as instructed by the dark gods. It is thought that this will occur on Velju Notj (Great Night) when celebra-

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tions are across the Slavic world and everyone is unaware of the danger. It will first be seen as a rolling mist that creeps down from the dark Carpathians into the lands around them and a complete silence before the undead hordes come. Fogs drifting at night around the mountains frighten the living peoples greatly as they expect this attack to come. Veles rules the night on Velju Notj, and it is said he will lead the armies in the attack as well.

THE MYTHIC REALMS

In this section are the three Slavonic mythic realms of the Otherworld or *Drugi Svet*, the World Tree, and the many other places taken from various tales and the old religion. The CK can take players into these mystical and supernatural worlds to have grand adventures and memorable experiences.

As understood from the Old Slavs, the universe was arranged thusly: the World Tree spans the universe and is essentially the universe with the world of the gods of light sitting within the leafy crown of the great oak tree. The underworld of the gods of darkness exists under its roots with the mortal world in between within the trunk.

The same method of extrapolating multiple nuances and the barest remnants from countless tales and the overall mythology had to be done to make a coherent setting in which to play in. A clever CK can link the many mythic worlds together from the other codices into a massive multiverse composed of rival deities, beings, and champions and run a campaign unlike any other.

Mortals, Czernobog and Svarog's creations, exist in the world of life or *Lav* (or *Yav*), where mostly all beings exist with physical forms but there are plenty of spirits and ghosts that also share this vast world. Caves, lakes, and other normally inaccessible places in wildernesses are portals to the underworld of Nav. The heavenly world in the skies of Iriy or Vyrjy are not easy to find or cross into, and are usually guarded by spirits or demons, depending on the destination. Since Czernobog's deception of the mortals, entrance into Iriy or Parv is not so easy. This is due to Svarog's closing of the ways into this blissful world from the minions and servants of his brother.

Adventuring in these Slavic Otherworlds can be intense and relentless because they exist in a plane of higher existence not well-suited for fragile mortals. Iriy is not a completely peaceful realm even though it is 'paradise' by definition. There are many places of unrest where the spirits who did not go with Czernobog in times past still wish to pass over. It is hoped that this section provides players and CKs with limitless ideas for future adventures.

VYRJY – PARADISE

Iriy, Prav, or Vyrjy is the land of eternal summer and perfection where Svarog and many others gods dwell. This world lies above the World Tree, or *Strom Sveta*, high above the clouds and, like the mortal world below, is a flat landscape. Wondrous forests with plentiful game cover the land in all directions, and pure waters are found in the many rivers, stream, and lakes.



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This water is from the rains of the goddess Dodola (when she is not in her palace atop Strom Sveta). Dodola's waters find their way down on the World Tree to channel and filter their way out as the Waters of Life and Death in the mortal and underworlds.

Those of mankind who chose to stay away from Czernobog's temptations have remained and are now spiritual beings not recognizable as human anymore. The passage of the sun, with Perun's aid, courses over Vyrjy and shines down through it to the mortal world below. The weather in Iriy is perfect in every conceivable way, with no snows or ice, and storms that are brought on by Perun.

There are many communities of faeries and other supernatural beings throughout the pleasant world of Vyrjy that dwell peacefully, for the most part, even though disputes do arise between the many worshipers of the gods. Occasionally, Czernobog's minions manage to find their way into Iriy and are overlooked by Svarog in his palace, but their nefarious ways eventually reveal their presence.

Wealth abounds in Vyrjy as well. Amber is commonly found, growing on trees (Jantarja Drevo) as gleaming gem-like drops in certain places and then falling from the branches into streams to find their way to the mortal world, washed ashore on the Baltic Sea. Gold and silver are easily discovered in stones and mineable without effort. The soft, moist soils, blessed by Mokoš, have troves of gem stones that can readily be dug up. There is no end to the extent of the wealth here, but to the inhabitants, it is common and without the same value as it has with their mortal kin below in Lav.

The sun's light shimmers over Vyrjy, brilliant and clear. Only Perun's storms can darken them or night itself. Scenic mountains and hills cover the topography in this blissful world. This is a world of pure beauty and perfection, nature at its finest and in its top form and spectacle. Time stops here and nothing ages, even though the flora and fauna seem to, and life is newly born as in the other worlds.

The Fire God Kresnik lives atop the highest mountain in the worlds, the Svet Hora (World Mountain) in Iriy. Many mortals call his monumental mountain home as the 'Land of the Rising Sun' or Dežela vzhajajočega sonca because of the fact that the sun rises from behind his home every dawn. Snow and ice cap the mountain, and it shines brilliantly like silver in the sun. The mountain is made of pure crystal with veins of gold cutting throughout it.

Brave and rare are those who wish to scale it to seek the god and his magnificent copper and gold palace. He does not take to strangers too well and, like the element he reigns over, he is fiery spirited. Stone lined steps and trails wind their way up the mountain but any route is tiresome and tedious taking days to weeks of travel. This is one of many serene places in Vyrjy where those born of mortal origins would find great enlightenment and even be able to peer down through the mists that separate the worlds to view the world of Lav.

The sister to Perun (who dwells atop the World Tree), Ogniyena Maria, the goddess of fire also can be found in Iriy in her fiery copper palace in the mountainous regions. Her grand home can be seen shining by the glare of the sun each day. One can judge the position of the sun and time of day by the intensity of the sun shining on her palace from almost anywhere in this divine world. When she is not smiting Czernobog or Veles' minions in the underworld of Nav or in the mortal place, she is here holding court.

Higher than even Kresnik's home and mountain sits Svarog's heavenly domain. It is out of reach for even the other gods unless he requests their presence in his palace. None have ever visited it from the mortal world to recount what his palace looks like or how to find it. From the few rumors that have trickled their way down from the immortal and spiritual beings to man, it is described as being cloaked in clouds and mists and has no stair or bridge to reach it.

Many gods live below Vyrjy in the skies above the mortal world among the winds, clouds, sun, and moon (See Chapter 5: Of Mighty Gods and Spirits) and travel freely between the worlds, ruled by Perun as their king. It is not unusual to find the gods openly socializing with the many spirits and supernatural beings in this world, but they do not treat fleshy, living beings the same as those who stayed in Svarog's company and denied Czernobog's temptations.

Even under the ever-watchful gaze of Svarog, Perun, and the other gods, this is not a completely peaceful paradise. As mentioned earlier, the minions of Czernobog and Veles often seek their way into Vyrjy to corrupt the residents, or to poison them against the gods of light in hopes of drawing their dark masters into this world and invading with their armies of diabolical demons. There are many hidden dark forces here, protected by Czernobog or Veles' divine power against the gaze of the other gods and powerful spirits.

Vyrjy can be reached in the mortal world by sailing on the Baltic and Northern Seas beyond all sight of known islands and lands. It is a perilous journey, however, wrought with sea monsters, wrathful gods, and the risk of falling off of the edge of the world into the abyss to never be seen again. Terrible storms at sea and maelstroms stand in the way after a certain point in the voyage, and only the most expert and experienced in sailing can endure, and this is rare.

The world of Iriy's seas spills off into a waterfall around its edges, partially into the surrounding abyss and partially in the world of Lav, just as that world's own cascade below into the abyss known as "Peklo". The sailing between worlds relies on hidden sea-bridges the gods have built and only the bravest and most observant can find them (CL: 10) before the infinite plunge into Peklo.

PEKLO – THE ABYSS

This abysmal void completely encircles the universe and its worlds and is the ultimate realm of suffering beyond even that of the underworld of Nav. As it is an abyss, there is no light

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source or even a means to find one's way. It is said that no gods live here; not because of the conditions but because they are not near any mortals to bless or curse.

Peklo is, however, inhabited by swarms of demons, many cast out into the void by the various dark gods or the gods of light above the World Tree for various offences. Many breeds of demons fly and drift about Peklo's airy void, their glowing, fiery eyes the only source of light. Little else can be found here except for the countless ships and people that have fallen over the edge of the world, and they number in the millions.

Once here, it is nearly impossible to leave; few actually have to talk about it. There is nothing tangible aside from the floating wreckage of those who fell here to grab ahold of, and those who find themselves here are at the mercy of the demons or, perhaps, time itself before they perish. Peklo is the darkness that surrounds the Three Worlds of the universe and exists beneath the primordial sea. Once Svarog and Czernobog brought earth to the surface of the waters and started creating the universe, the abyss retreated outwards beyond the sky, earth and sea. It has always existed, however, with demons waiting to flood the worlds with their terror.

NAV- THE UNDERWORLD

From 'corpses', this is the dark subterranean world where the dead go and where horrors await. The dark gods live here and plot against mankind and the light gods above. This is not a place for the meek to journey casually; its dangers are endless and unexpected. Only the boldest bogatyrs have journeyed here, and it is not often when they do.

Far deep into the earth sits Czernobog in his lair, a dangerous and frightful place. Unlike Svarog's palace in Vyrjy, which is difficult to find, his dark and evil brother's abode is easily accessible. The Black God willingly invites strangers into his realm, to entice them and poison their minds and use in his personal war against his heavenly brother. No one is sure where in Nav he resides, but once the effort is made to find it, Czernobog's lair will eventually find the stranger.

Spirits haunt this lightless world beneath the earth, and demons roam the endless corridors. Another influential and negative god that lives close to his master is Peklenc. In his fiery palace, Peklenc summons his waters to create earthquakes and disasters on the surface world. There, he judges the criminals and questionable. His court is filled with werewolves (the troublesome and quarrelsome) and self-devouring monsters (the non-compassionate ones) in an earthen palace filled with stones.

Gems and valuable stones are forged in Peklenc's lair and eventually find their way to the surface to be used by mortals. Although wealth and misery abound in his part of Nav, there are also the fragments and remnants of the many villages, homes, and other structures that Peklenc has swallowed into the earth over the many centuries. They are ramshackle and often unapproachable to enter, but many are kept as they were on the surface world.

Basilisks serve him by his throne, and demons do his bidding in the world of men, taking terrible rulers from their thrones should they be judged poorly. Those who were drawn into the waters to drown in the surface world now drift about in the subterranean waters around his lair. They scream for help, but their pleas are mocked by the sinister goddess Ożwiena.

Veles' lair under the World Tree is in contrast to the rest of the underworld. It is pleasant, grassy, and with a perpetual spring-like environment and beautiful wildlife. He has the spirits of the dead instructed to watch over his supernatural herds of cattle for him, and fantastic beasts and monsters live in his blissful abode. Veles does not appear the wretched and diabolical god that Perun and his entourage have told others he is, but he does have sinister motives. Occasionally, based on the seasons and other supernatural events, he will transform into an acidic dragon to continue gnawing on the roots of the World Tree (See 'Chapter 5: Of Mighty Gods and Spirits').

Jarilo and his dreadful wife, Morana, also live in Nav. Each year, during the fall and winter, they return here when Jarilo suffers his annual death. Morana follows, sending the mortal world into ice and snow upon her departure.

Traveling in Nav can be a frightful and nightmarish effort, as in most underworlds from ancient religions, and does not occur so easily. The dead dwell here, in both rotting bodily form and spiritual form, and they crowd the many passages and caverns after their deaths above in Yav. Sensing the living, the dead will gravitate towards them and try to devour them to gain some trace of the life they once had.

This world can be set up as one endless dungeon to explore with monsters, demons, spirits, gods, and strange encounters along the way. Considering the many deities that make their home here, it is dangerous on a level that most traditional dungeons are not, but even this can be handled with care.

Because of gods like Czernobog and Peklenc, Nav is filled with magical monsters and beings; it is their creation place and world of origin. This can make traveling in the underworld unpredictable and extremely terrible for the weak, leaving no hope of survival.

There are entire areas in Nav where the dead linger aimlessly, taken from large battles or disasters and do not know how to leave. The rotting and long desiccated corpses crowd the place with their shambling forms in the darkness. To make matters worse, demons will often be found feeding on the undead hordes where they stand or sating sexual urges before serving their dark masters.

There are also rumored to be vampire kingdoms here, but they have never been discovered by the living. If they have, no one has survived to speak of it; only the rumor remains and little more. There are no existing stories of these dismal subterranean kingdoms except that it would not be smart to be lost in them. Pyres blaze to illuminate the realm, set around the many stone palaces of the undead lords, and grim charnel buildings are

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made to house the doomed that are sent here before they are bled dry, but little else is known. One name for them is simply and logically 'vampir kraljevstva peckla' (Vampire Kingdoms of hell) or 'krajiny mŕtvych' (Land of the Dead).

THE WORLD TREE

This is the whole embodiment of the universe or the 'Wide World' and spans the entirety of all existence; only the abyss of Pekla is outside of it. Unlike the similar World Trees of the Celts and Germans, this tree cannot be traveled to or physically reached in the Otherworld. Similar to the other cultural conceptions, it upholds the universe and the many worlds by its form.

If the World Tree were to ever suffer crippling damage (e.g. from the constant gnawing of the dragon in the underworld) the worlds would tremble and fall into ruins and all life would be lost. Only the constant vigilance by Perun in the skies above denies the dragon its full feast. The crown of this oak tree can be visited in the highest skies above the clouds and below the world of the gods Parv or Iriy.

The tangled roots also can be physically visited in Nav. They tangle and twist for thousands of miles and have serpents, reptiles, and foul dragons densely packed in the vines and earth making travel here extremely dangerous. Added to this threat is the likelihood that the god Veles will be here in his monstrous dragon form continuing his perpetual eating on its roots. Blood pours from the marks on the World Tree into the soil, further enriching it with fertility and more life, but it is not a clean or pleasant experience.

Only winged beasts like the griffin or other animals can lift mortals up to the crown in the skies, but it is not the place where the unwise go since they would find the storm god, Perun, there in his palace. If he is not in his typical golden eagle incarnation, he is in his massive, multilayered palace set amidst the leaf oak forest that makes up the crown of the tree.

Very few ever make the trip to visit either end of the World Tree if they can help it. With the constant battle over it by the gods of light and dark, it is no surprise that it is a difficult place to recognize, much less touch by hand. If Czernobog's desires are ever fulfilled, he will see the tree cut down and set ablaze, and the universe that he and his brother made forever destroyed.

Objects made from its wood, leaves, acorns, and sap are enchanted (See 'Chapter 4: Filled with Great Magic') and rare to encounter anywhere in the universe. There are those brave adventurers that go on near-suicidal forays to the roots, or even the crown, to obtain materials from the World Tree just to sell them to wealthy buyers in the mortal world.

MAGICAL ISLES

The gods have blessed certain islands in the mortal world of Yav to give them a prominent place in the universe. Many exist to house hidden treasures, and others are the home to gods. They can often be found in the Black and Baltic Seas by lucky sailors.

Others exist on the borders between worlds if one travels far out to sea beyond all of the known world.

BUNYAN – ISLE OF THE WEATHER

This enchanted island is capable of appearing and vanishing in a new location each day; it has been sighted in the Black Sea and the Baltic over the many years. It is an idyllic isle, forested and with waterfalls across its surface. Although originally made by Svarog in the earliest of days, Czernobog also has a claim to it, storing the souls of his Koschei here in chests deep in the earth.

Four brothers, assigned by Svarog, were given this island as their home to control the weather of Yav. North, South, West, and East are their names, but they reside in a wondrous golden and crystal palace. Perun visits this isle at times to bring forth his terrible storms on the world for various offences to him or his divine family.

The Gangana birds roam the island in terrible packs, eager for prey. They guard the souls of the Koschei and are under strict orders by Czernobog to do so; they will not stray from their task. Hundreds of them perch in the trees, waiting for the foolish to try and defeat the deathless in the graveyard of caskets.

LAND OF KITEZH – HOME OF THE PURE

This legendary land exists in the Svetloyer Lake in the land of the Rus and has a noble and pure population free of evil or corruption. To protect it from an invading army of steppe horsemen, Svarog miraculously cast it down into the waters to save it from a terrible fate at the hands of barbarous men.

Kitezh now exists on the bottom of the lake, its people unaffected by the deep waters by the enchantments of their god of light. Lights shimmer below and the ring of bells from the many temples of the worshipers to the gods echo across the shores frequently. The citizens of Kitezh are ancestrally bound to the city and its grounds since its first creation in early times, before the Varangians came from Sweden. Inclusion into Kitezh is an extremely difficult matter that binds the citizen to strict rules and codes of conduct ensuring that the city is never endangered. Rarely do the people of the city breed outside their own for fear of bringing in bad blood.

RAKHMANE – ISLAND OF THE ENLIGHTENED

This island lies where the sun sets to the far west, according to the tribes in what is now Galicia. The people who dwell on this blessed and pure island are not touched by time and fast from eating any meat but one day out of the year, during the festival in honor of Jarilo in spring. Colored eggs and fertility rites abound at this time.

It is imagined that this land is populated by enlightened holy men, who have long isolated themselves from the corruptible world of mortals and are impossible to seek without an impossible journey. The souls of the dead wander here and play in the trees among the shimmering fruits of the forests for days before they move on. They make noise like giggling children while their golden energies flit about.



CHAPTER 3: DID DWELL MANY PEOPLES

In this chapter, we explore and define the many magical beings and races stemming from the Slavic imagination going back thousands of years into mythology and belief. Many of these strange beings are likely derived from an Eastern influence, which is logical considering the closeness and constant interaction that has occurred with Eurasia since prehistory.

The additional statistics for player character use are provided for many of these beings as well, and they can be rolled up and played in any game or campaign and does not necessarily have to be a mythic earth setting. There are some truly wondrous and unusual beings that can grace the game and give it an odd flavor, many of these have likely never been placed into role-playing game statistics before; others have become standard creatures in fantasy gaming and literature.

Slavonic myth is populated by terrible demons, monsters, and also beautiful faeries as well and many difficult to label creatures in between. It is suggested that to fully utilize the faeries, the 'Faery Spell-like Abilities' provided in the **Codex Celtarum** should be used. This will enhance the faeries and give them the Otherworldly powers and presence that is deserving of them, especially so if they are being rolled up as a player character.

MONSTERS

ALA

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-2

SIZE: Large (20+ ft.)

HD: 5d12

MOVE: 100 ft.

AC: 18

ATTACKS: 2 Claw (3d10),

Bite (4d10), Weapon

SPECIAL: Deathly Wind, Shapechange, Face of Terror, Possession

SAVES: M

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil

TYPE: Extraplanar

TREASURE: 5

XP: 700+5

Ala are demons of bad weather who also loot or destroy crops and orchards of mortals. They are inherently maligned towards humans and are able to change their shape often to deceive their prey or enemies. In their natural state, they appear as female dragon-like beings that never show their heads. When they do, however, onlookers will go insane from the horror. The demon's form is also commonly seen as having a scaly serpent's body, sometimes with six heads; those heads are equine in nature.

Due to their shapeshifting, the descriptions of them vary greatly in the mortal world. Many speak of animal traits and forms while others of black, low flying clouds. Ala are sent from Nav by their master, Czernobog, to literally take Perun's thunder away from him and cause him grief, as the damage from the bad weather caused by these demons is a small disaster.

They will descend from turbulent, stormy skies with their massive wings spread and tails hanging to the earth and begin to summon bad weather to affect a large area (usually from a radius of 10 miles or greater, depending on the creature's power). When not feeling threatened or in danger, they will rain destruction on hapless mortals or strip them of their crops and fruits to feed themselves.

When they are assuming another form, only rare individuals can see them. Often these individuals were born under special circumstances (See 'Zmajeviti' character class in this chapter) or have an ability (second sight, for example) that enables them to see through magical guises.

Ala are normally gigantic in size and able to gorge themselves on anything edible, people, livestock and other beings, to maintain the size and power needed to sustain it. Their lairs are filled with the bones of children and are blood-soaked when discovered. Children who stray and wander off from their families or communities are often susceptible to the ala's hunger.

Ala can sniff out their human prey and sometimes attack them in their own homes, eating them alive where they find them. Hiding from a hunting ala is difficult, and only the most advanced skill in hiding and powerful magic can cloak the person(s) being sought. Their hunger is so great that they are known to try to devour the moon or sun whole at times, causing eclipses to those living in the mortal world.

They find lairs in caves and high places and always have dark clouds hovering nearby. It is easy for the uninitiated to associate all dark storm clouds with them, but the experienced know how to locate them. If they lack a suitable mountain to live in, they will claim a hollow great tree, lake, or even a cloud in the skies. The ala's presence will taint the environment by making it sour and unhealthy.

The enemies of Ala are eagles and dragons, and they will fight them as soon as they are in sight or detected. Dragon born individuals will sense them if they bring bad weather, and go into their state of being and then hunt them down regardless of the danger. Powerful wizards (zduhač) will also confront ala if given a chance, hoping to eradicate them from the land and to obtain benefits from their remains.

In rare instances, befriending an ala can be helpful and beneficial for the individual, but this is not done easily. The demon will give aid to the friend by supplying them with food and wealth for as long as they remain on good terms. The voracious behavior of the ala will guarantee that sooner or later it will endanger the friends or family of the individual, creating a dilemma that will sure reverse the relationship.

COMBAT: Depending on its form, it will battle savagely and ferociously using its massive bite and iron teeth or its razor sharp claws. Ala will show no mercy and rarely flee from battle. In the presence of more powerful demons, they will become even more emboldened and fierce.

DID DWELL MANY PEOPLES

DEATHLY WIND: This mighty gust of wind at the least produces the storms that devastate farms and crops and stir up more powerful storms (in a 10+ miles radius). Hail stones will rain down on all, doing damage (1d12 per round), and biting rain with winds so strong that it requires a strength save to remain in one's current place or be blown back 1d20+5 feet and take 1d10 damage.

At the most, if the ala focuses its demonic breath on individuals, it will exhale a black wind in a 25 ft cone for up to 1d6 rounds of combat and will not only blow the victims down (see the rules listed above), but also cause 5d20 damage per round. Only two beings are capable of withstanding this with impunity: the vmajeviti and the ala influenced aloviti are unaffected by this deathly wind.

SHAPECHANGE: The ala can assume many forms, from the largest monster to a small, black fly. They can use this ability seven times a day, and it lasts for an hour at a time. To fuel this ability, the demon must devour ravenously or it will lose its hold on its form and revert back to what it originally was in minutes.

FACE OF TERROR: If the ala is in its monstrous dragon-like form and reveals its hideous appearance to onlookers, they must make an intelligence save or lose their mind. If a fail is made, this mental insanity will last for 1d20 weeks. The victim will be completely neurotic and unable to function on their own without help, but they can be healed by clerics, divine aid, or simply lasting out the duration. If they fumble their save the insanity is permanent and they will never be cured.

POSSESSION: On rare occasions, the ala can possess the body of a mortal and take over its every action and word. The demon appears as a mist and dives into the victim unless a charisma save is made. Once taken over, the possessed eats like a glutton and begins to act oddly. Only a few things can drive the demon from the body: the demon choosing to leave, the cleric spells *dismissal*, *spiritual weapon*, or *holy word*, or the victim's death. The ala can use the possessed for whatever plans they are trying to manipulate or ordered by a greater master, or their own.

ALKANOST

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-4

SIZE: Large (10 ft.)

HD: 4d12

MOVE: 80 ft.

AC: 16

ATTACKS: 2 Claw (3d4)

SPECIAL: Destroy Memory

SAVES: M

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Neutral

TYPE: Monstrous Humanoid

TREASURE: 4

XP: 500+4

The alkanost is one of many chimeric creatures in the Slavic universe. Fairly large sized, these strange creatures have the bodies of colorful, flamboyant birds and the heads of mortal women. Alkanost perch on branches in forests and sing their mesmerizing songs to each other. This song has a terrible effect on mortals and in some cases is not reversible.



This creature is from Vyrjy but also lives in Nav at times. They serve as messengers for the gods of light and Rod, specifically. Alkanost are harmless to other beings and creatures if left alone but will become a menace if angered.

Alkanost lay their eggs on the sea shore and let them go out to sea in the waves. Once laid, they rarely protect or guard their eggs, leaving their offspring to fend for themselves. After almost a week at sea, the eggs hatch, and the young alkanost come forth. The hatching process stirs awful storms at sea, tossing ships and endangering coastal villages. These storms will last a few hours at a time, per egg.

COMBAT: If needing to fight, they will use their talons and rip and claw their opponent to pieces. They can also grab their enemy and fly them up to a great height and drop them to their death.

DESTROY MEMORY: The alkanost's song is enchanting and sounds unlike any other being in the universe. If heard by other sentient beings, they must make a wisdom save, or they completely lose their memory for 1d20 days. A fumble will be a permanent loss of memory that will erase all recollection of the individual's past, name, life, and everything else that defines them.

AŽDACHA

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1

SIZE: Large (15+ ft.)

HD: 5d10

MOVE: 70 ft.

AC: 19

ATTACKS: Special

SPECIAL: Cyclonic Force, Storm Fury

SAVES: M

INT: Low

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil

TYPE: Elemental

TREASURE: 5

XP: 300+5

This elemental dragon-being is embodied in a whirling vortex or cyclone of surging air and rain, and can be seen moving in the wilderness or in fields at times. It is judged best to avoid them, but many fearful folk try to placate them with offerings and prayers to keep their mysterious and dangerous behavior at a distance.

These beings will sweep into a farm or settlement and take people, livestock, or other things up into their cyclonic mass to feed upon, leaving broken, dried up corpses in their wake. So dreaded is their presence, they are worshiped by many in hopes that they will leave people alone.

In the Slavic lands they are known by many other names, 'smokokształtny' (Air Spirit) or 'ogólnosłowińskiego' (Adder) and other euphemisms to do with the air or dangerous weather. Sometimes, they form out of thin air on a perfect day and begin to tear up and rend whatever lies in their path. Other times, they can be found in the midst of a storm causing mass destruction. Inside the whirling vortex lies a dragon, scaly and fierce.

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COMBAT: Not able to wield any physical weapons in its cyclonic form, the elemental being will instead use its natural abilities to take care of any danger to its well-being. This is usually enough to deter any wishful adversaries. If for some reason its storm cloak is taken down, it will attack and do so as a Young Adult Blue Dragon (See **Monsters & Treasure**).

CYCLONIC FORCE: Using its wind, the Azdacha can lift up objects and people, 1d4 per round, and fling them with devastating force at 1d20 ft doing 2d20 damage each time. Large or small, this will do the same to anything that falls in the path or dares to come too close to its stormy, tornadic mass.

STORM FURY: Its main attack is the ability to grab up others into its mass against their will (strength save) or become caught inside its swirling, stormy center. If this happens, they will suffer lightning damage (2d20), wind damage (2d6), and being fed upon by the dragon inside (5d20) each round unless freed somehow from the tornado. Once in, it is often hard to escape from it unless one perishes or, less likely, the monster is slain. The victim(s) can fight back while in this storm, however, but their rolls are at a -5 due to the chaotic conditions.

BAGIENNIK

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-6

SIZE: Small (4 ft.)

HD: 3d8

MOVE: 50 ft.

AC: 17

ATTACKS: Claw (d8), Bite (2d6)

SPECIAL: Acidic Oil

SAVES: M

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil

TYPE: Extraplanar

TREASURE: 3

XP: 250+3

Servants of the underwater goddess, Wąda, these water demons are not pleasant beings to share the waters with, by accident or on purpose. They are humanoids with lanky grey-green bodies and stringy moss-like hair and deep set black eyes. They prefer to remain in the water but if taken from it for more than 1d4 rounds they suffer a -4 on all rolls and saves as they begin to quickly dry up. If they are let to dry up they will fall into a pile of crumpled remains resembling a corpse.

These malevolent demons will rip, rend and tear a victim apart if they can and eat them alive. Bagiennik cannot speak but only communicate in rasps and snarls. A sure sign of them in a shallow lake or stream is the presence of sporadic bubbles that will come to the surface. A second sign is a dark or muddy coloration in the water.

COMBAT: Bagiennik attack, nightmarishly savage and ruthless, with their claws and sharp teeth, going for vital or vulnerable spots when able.

ACIDIC OIL: From out of their short nostrils, exudes an oily liquid

which burns all clothing and skin of a victim on contact in the water. Initially, this oil will cause 1d12 damage and then a continued contact with it will do 1d8 per round more. The oil is found in a spot between the eyes, under the skin in a fleshy sack.

BANNIK

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1

SIZE: Small (4 ft.)

HD: 3d6

MOVE: 50 ft.

AC: 15

ATTACKS: Claw (d8)

SPECIAL: Divination

SAVES: M

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Neutral

TYPE: Extraplanar

TREASURE: 3

XP: 250+3

This small, hairy demon is related to the bagiennik because of its watery origins and appearance but fulfills an entirely different function. It is rarely seen except for its shadow or noise, but it is a being that uses its supernatural origins to foretell the future.

To find a bannik one must look in the right place; they only frequent one known place in the mortal world, otherwise they are impossible to find. In Slavic territories, the nobles and royalty use bath houses, a tradition derived from the Romans and neighboring Turks, and the bannik only prefers the steam room to visit. This does not happen so easily, however, as once the other users are done, a final bath and steam is drawn for the demon and all offending elements taken out of the room (Christian symbols, idols, etc).

In time, the bannik will come but no one must look for it or it will not arrive at all and forego the steam room. Once there, it can be asked a question, but this must also be done with care. The questioner must have his or her back to the half open door of the steam room, facing outside. Once the question is asked of the bannik, if the answer is positive or fortuitous, the demon will give a rub and pet the back, but if it is not claws will be used, even enough to draw blood if bad enough.

COMBAT: Banniks will use their steely claws and rip and slash at the foe swiftly, and if judged weak enough, it will remain to kill them. Otherwise, the demon will make an escape and completely vanish into the wilds without a trace.

DIVINATION: As strange as its power is, the bannik chooses to only give physical indications of the answer to its questioners even though it can speak, if wanted. There is nothing that the demon does not know or is privy to, not even the secret doings of the gods.

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BAUK

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-20

SIZE: Small (4 ft.)

HD: 3d4

MOVE: 60 ft.

AC: 14

ATTACKS: Claw (d6), Bite (d8), Weapon

SPECIAL: NIL

SAVES: M

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil

TYPE: Humanoid

TREASURE: 3

XP: 275+3

Bauk are hideous goblin-folk that live in dark and miserable places. Bauk love to snatch away people to devour them alive if they are capable. These goblins resemble little, grizzled, old men with stringy white hair on their lumpy heads. They have long noses and ears and a mouth full of awful teeth. Some observers notice that the bauk are extremely hairy beings, often covered in a brown or black hide.

The bauk is frightened by bright lights and loud noises and will recoil in fear, fleeing to somewhere safe and shielding their ears from the sounds. Their large eyes are sensitive to sunlight or shining lamps, and they avoid all traces of it, preferring to use their heightened senses in the dark and silence. These goblins are clumsy and move about in a shamble, not very coordinated.

The bauk lurk in holes and abandoned places, hopeful for a chance to grab a victim. If it takes several to snatch someone taller or stronger, they will use the man power, so long as they can feast on them later. When their hunger comes, there is no victim too big or strong for them and they will plot and scheme to take them down.

COMBAT: Bauk will be fierce when in battle, using their natural claws and teeth and any weapon on hand to take down their foe. These goblins will be vicious and monstrous in their attack, using all of the manpower they possess to win – so long as no loud noises or blinding lights are in the way.

BEREGINYA

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-8

SIZE: Medium (5 ft.)

HD: 3d8

MOVE: 50 ft.

AC: 14

ATTACKS: Weapon

SPECIAL: NIL

SAVES: M

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Neutral

TYPE: Humanoid

TREASURE: 3

XP: 350+3

These peaceful merfolk do not wish to harm others and quite often live in rivers and deep streams, more than the usual sea.

They are beautiful, fair skinned and fair haired beings, and eagerly play in the waters when unseen by mortals but will quickly hide in their underwater caves if spotted.

They are related to the rusalka, but are the milder and more benign version. These water-folk have legs and forms similar to mortals with slippery wet skin and aquatic features and nuances.

Contrary to modern neo-pagan belief, the bereginya are not divine or supernatural beings from the Otherworld. They live in Yav just as commonly as they do in Iriy but are not found in the underworld at all.

COMBAT: Bereginya will avoid combat if possible but if pushed to it, they will resort to weapons and defend themselves with spears or swords.

BISYTSIA

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-6

SIZE: Small (3 ft.)

HD: 4d6

MOVE: 80 ft.

AC: 18

ATTACKS: 2 Claw (2d6), Beak (d10)

SPECIAL: Song of Allure

SAVES: M

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil

TYPE: Extraplanar

TREASURE: 4

XP: 300+4

This demon was once a child that died from a violent death and has since been made into a demonic servant by Czernobog. After undergoing this change, the bisytsia now appears a monstrous, dark bird with fiery eyes and a taste for blood. These demons' calls are akin to a child's voice or baby's whine and often lure in the unwary to their ambush.

Many bisytsia return as alluring she-demons and wish to feast on the souls of vulnerable mortal men. They will appear as sensational women, very open sexually and wild by nature with no care for consequences or their actions. The female bisytsia live in the forests, especially in the Carpathians and other areas in Sklavinia and prowl for men to seduce, employing their ability of *Song of Allure*.

Bisytsia fly in flocks by night and search for vulnerable prey to attack from the skies. Being consumed by the rage from their violent former life, the bisytsia will not be just an angry bird pecking at the eyes.

These demons are common in Nav and circle the abyss in clouds, able to fly to and from this void freely. There are not found in Vyrjy but are common in the mortal world of Yav. They are, however, especially common in places that have a presence of the underworld or evil.

COMBAT: Bisytsia will shred the fingers of their foe to deny them use of their weaponry or spells and will usually go for the eyes next to disable them before feeding on them madly.

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SONG OF ALLURE: The female bisytsia can sing an enchanting song once she catches sight of a man, or men, and draw them to her. Her radius is 20 ft, and the tunes she sings, if the males fail their wisdom save, will cause them to do her bidding. This will last for 1d20 minutes at a time. She will command the seduced male(s), usually to their peril, over cliffs, into bogs, or into ravines, etc.

BLUD

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-4

SIZE: Small (3-4 ft.)

HD: 3d6

MOVE: 50 ft.

AC: 16

ATTACKS: Weapon

SPECIAL: Disorientation

SAVES: M

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Neutral

TYPE: Fey

TREASURE: 3

XP: 200+3

The blud are beautiful little dainty faeries that are full of mischief day to day. While the women are very pretty, the men are more like corpses and appear sinister in contrast. Blud live in the wilderness and do not like their territories threatened by strangers, even if it is unknowingly.

Using their abilities, they will confuse and befuddle others if given a chance. They live a simple life and do so in Iriy as well, not meaning ill or harm to anyone, but they do not like trespassers or troublemakers in their part of the forest.

COMBAT: The blud prefer to use their special ability to overcome the struggle by making the opponent lose their way, their thoughts, and their mind instead of battling to the end. Blud are not fighters by nature.

DISORIENTATION: These faeries exude an aura (5 ft) that smells like sweet flowers to lure in the unwary, and then it will disorient them once they do catch its scent. If those in the aura fail their wisdom save, they will be completely confused, aimless, and lost for 1d6 hours. A fumbled save will result in 1d6 days of this. Once affected, the victim will be unable to find their way regardless of direction or means; they will need assistance or become completely lost in a room with one door, for example.

BOGINKI

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-2

SIZE: Small (4 ft.)

HD: 5d6

MOVE: 50 ft.

AC: 19

ATTACKS: Nil

SPECIAL: Incorporeal

SAVES: M

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Neutral

TYPE: Aberration

TREASURE: Nil

XP: 200+5

Normally the boginki dwell in the earth or in Paradise and do not interact with mortals, but through the efforts of witches they can be summoned. Boginki are small, pale forms, humanoid and ghostly, with wispy hair in appearance and move as though they are underwater.

The function of these spirits as a whole is not known, but for the witches it serves one that is both wondrous and sinister. Witches will summon them by a lengthy ceremony performed on riverbanks for any resident nymphs and command them to take a newborn child and replace it with one more suitable. This replacement is called an *odmieńce* (See 'Odmieńce'), and will resemble the taken baby except for its otherworldly characteristics.

The boginki are some of the most ancient of spirits in the universe, rumored by some to be the first ever and even dwelling in the universe before the Divine Brothers appeared to create all.

COMBAT: Boginki have no normal means to battle others due to their ghostly form, but if pushed will use magic (equal to a 5th level illusionist).

INCORPOREAL: These spirits never were tempted by Czernobog and so have no physical form, making their bodies only wispy and mist-like instead. Only weapons of magical make can do their normal damage to them or spells.

BOLOTNYI

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-3

SIZE: Medium (5-7 ft.)

HD: 7d8

MOVE: 60 ft.

AC: 17

ATTACKS: Bite (5d10), Claw (6d8)

SPECIAL: Bog Stealth

SAVES: P

INT: Low

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil

TYPE: Aberration

TREASURE: 4

XP: 400+7

The Bolotnyi are wretched and disgusting swamp or bog spirits that excel in taking victims under the murky waves to feed on if given a chance. They swim about, never breaking the surface or revealing themselves for a time, appearing as a fish, snake, or other animal. They are also called *bagnica* to the Polenes.

The bolotnyi are gaunt, bony, and the color of the bog or swamp waters in which they dwell. They have a mouth full of sharp teeth and claws on their large hands, to grab victims by. These evil beings seek to feed off of the unprotected around their homes and erase all existence of them if given a chance.

COMBAT: They lash out rapidly with their deadly claws and biting teeth as they attempt to drown their opponent in the swampy

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water. It is rare to find them on the surface at all; if so they will make a devastating path to the nearest water source to survive.

BOG STEALTH: Bolotnyi blend in perfectly with the dark muddy waters where they reside. This makes finding them or knowing where they will next attack nearly impossible. In bogs and swamps, these evil spirits can move and attack in the same action undercover of the murky water without limitation.

BUKAVAK

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1

SIZE: Large (10 ft.)

HD: 5d10

MOVE: 50 ft.

AC: 15

ATTACKS: Bite (4d12), Claw (5d6)

SPECIAL: Multiple Attack, Strangle

SAVES: P

INT: Low

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil

TYPE: Beast

TREASURE: 4

XP: 300+5

This loud and ugly monster sleeps in lakes and pools by day and emerges by nightfall to seek food, which is usually mortals and their animals. A bukavak is a six-legged, leathery skinned beast with twisted and gnarled horns atop its hideous head, and possesses a thirst for blood.

This creature is an ambush predator and lays in wait for the victims to be near its watery lair before it pounces. It will be capable of doing so to many targets at once.

COMBAT: If given the chance, the bukavak will use its large hands to grasp and strangle the life out of its prey. Once starting the process, it will drag them to its mouth and bite off the head before moving onto the next victim.

MULTIPLE ATTACK: The bukavak is capable of attacking two opponents at once, if they are in reach. This ability enables the monster to fend off and slay many attackers at once and then feed on them.

STRANGLE: Using its massive clawed hands, the bukavak will throttle its foes and squeeze the life out of them in minutes or less. To do this, an attack must first be made successfully. Once this is done, the victim must make a strength save or the strangling begins. The bukavak will do 5d20 damage per round as it crushes the life out of the prey. The foe can attempt to break free each round with a strength check if possible.

CHORT

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-4

SIZE: Medium (4 ft.)

HD: 6d6

MOVE: 50 ft.

AC: 17

ATTACKS: Bite (2d10), Claw (3d6), Hoof (d8), Weapon

SPECIAL: Possesses 5th level Cleric Spells (see below)

SAVES: M

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Lawful Evil

TYPE: Extraplanar

TREASURE: 6

XP: 350+6

Known to the Polish as a czeret and the Czechs and Slovaks as a cert, this foul demon is the direct descendant of Czernobog and possesses black skin, a horned head, goat legs, a skinny tail, and a swine-like face. These demons are common in Nav and the abyss but most of all in the court and service of their dark godly master.

In the Ukrainian region where many tribes dwell these demons have many names: didko, haspyda, kutsyi, and irod. They plague mankind and are one of Czernobog's primary agents of trouble and havoc in the mortal world. They cannot reach Vyrjy by any means due to their intensely evil souls, and they have no means of deception due to their cruel existence.

Because of their flawed creation, between Czernobog and his deathly wife, Marana, they have one leg that is always shorter than the other and leap about on their goat legs. Vast hordes of chort populate the underworld and form an army when needed by their father and master.

COMBAT: Chort battle ferociously and frantically, showing their demonic natures, especially when they are dealing with mortals, whom they despise. As warriors, these demons will not relent in the attack, causing as much fear as possible in their foe, taunting and with arrogance.

MAGIC: Chort possess great magics because of their divine origins. They can cast these spells without preparation, memorization or the other rituals mortals must go through. Each spell can be used twice a day if needed. These spells are: 0-detect magic, 1st-command, detect undead, 2nd-darkness, detect traps, hold person, speak with dead, 3rd-animate dead, dispel magic, 4th-air/water walk, discern lies, 5th-flame strike, insect plague, raise dead.

CHUHAISTER

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1

SIZE: Large (12-15 ft.)

HD: 6d10

MOVE: 45 ft.

AC: 15

ATTACKS: Slam, Club (4d10)

SPECIAL: Heightened Hearing,

Ugly Countenance, Forest Blend

SAVES: M

INT: Low

ALIGNMENT: Neutral

TYPE: Giant

TREASURE: Nil

XP: 300+6

There are few beings and supernatural creatures that are will-

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ing to aid humanity, but the chuhaister is a forest giant that is among the few that do. These lumbering woodland beings are normally indifferent and uninvolved in the affairs of mortals. However, they dislike the malignant folk that share the worlds with them, and they dislike even more how innocent and good people are preyed upon by them.

Chuhaister are absolutely hideous and terrible in appearance, but it does not reflect their kind nature as beings. People unused to seeing them for the first time mistake their monstrous appearance for an evil creature and attack even though their presence is not one of malign intent. They are hairy, lumbering giants with a vaguely humanoid face more reminiscent of demons.

Befriending a chuhaister, or their kind in general, can have its benefits against dangerous spirits, faeries, and demons for future encounters in the forest. The friend of one of these giants only has to knock on a nearby tree several times hard enough to signal a need for help. Within minutes, the woodland giant swiftly makes its way to the friend and fends off any threat.

These odd giants often are covered in leaves, twigs, and other assorted forest elements in its hide (bird nests, etc) and are oblivious to the symbiotic world that has attached itself to them. Chuhaister never socialize among their own kind or in other places, preferring to remain solitary.

COMBAT: When angered, the chuhaister will become a serious threat rather quickly. They dislike the evil beings of the woods enough to warrant making vicious attacks just to see them destroyed or driven off.

HEIGHTENED HEARING: Because they live in the forest, they can perceive distant sounds extremely well and identify them in seconds. Their hearing's range is over 50 miles in all directions at once, enabling the chuhaister to perceive any danger that its friends or innocent mortals may be in, allowing for swift action.

UGLY COUNTENANCE: The forest giant is so utterly hideous that it can scare others not expecting to see its face. Those first caught unaware must make an intelligence save or be paralyzed in fear for 1d10 rounds, a fumble means they will flee screaming never looking back until the duration is over.

FOREST BLEND: The chuhaister is able to perfectly meld into the forest and vanish before one's eyes only feet away. This power comes with its close bond to the world since it began, and allows it to leave no tracks or noise as well. This ability is used regularly, if needed, to hide from potential dangers stronger than itself. To spot it requires a *see invisibility* spell, or to be one of the forest-folk as well.

A second aspect of this ability gives the giant the power to travel swiftly through miles of forest, appearing as just a strong wind or breeze in the leaves and grass. The chuhaister can simply teleport in the woods, using the greenery and flora to guide it as it pulls the location toward it faster. This allows the giant to always be close

by to save others from the evil denizens in moments.

CIKAVAK

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1

SIZE: Small (1-2 ft.)

HD: 1d4

MOVE: 25 ft.

AC: 14

ATTACKS: Peck (d6), Claw (d4)

SPECIAL: Gather

SAVES: M

INT: Low

ALIGNMENT: Neutral

TYPE: Magical Beast

TREASURE: Nil

XP: 75+1

These strange little bird creatures are only known to be found, or made, by one well-tried procedure. A woman must take an egg from a black hen and none other, and then place it under her arm-pit for forty days. She must fast from grooming and prayer to the gods to make it hatch. Once it does, an unusual black bird, with a pelican-like throat sack, will emerge, that will be completely obedient to its owner.

Little more than a pet, this supernatural bird will cling to its owner's shoulder as a perch and make oddly intelligent-sounding chirps from time to time. Their redeeming factor is found in their special ability (see 'Gather').

COMBAT: Cikavak are not aggressive animals and will not attack another unless its owner is endangered. Otherwise, it will fly to a safe distance and stay out of the battle.

GATHER: This bird is sought for its ability to sense, seek out, and use its throat sack to gather honey from beehives and milk from cattle upon request. It can do this for its master five times a day and will return with enough for them to fill a goblet or drinking horn.

DOLA

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1

SIZE: Small to Medium

HD: 5d10

MOVE: 50 ft.

AC: 18

ATTACKS: Varies, Weapon

SPECIAL: Shapechange

SAVES: M

INT: Average to High

ALIGNMENT: Lawful Neutral

TYPE: Extraplanar

TREASURE: 5

XP: 500+5

These spirits are specially chosen or created by the forces of Fate and are sent down to the world of Yav to guide mortals towards whatever ends the gods desire. The person given a dola is unaware of this animal, person (NPC), or being doing so.

The dola spirit will perform certain actions to distract, lure, or alter their subject's attentions and actions if they are straying from something that might become problematic in their future. This change will be at the right time to persuade the mortal subject to do what was guided by Fate.

The dola's form can vary, and it can inherently change shape to fit according to what is needed to continue guiding the subject towards their fate. Because of their lot in life, the dola cannot get any more involved with the subject's fate than they are and must remain neutral towards them, even if the fated event is terrible. To not do so would attract the attention of the god or goddess that first put them in place and would bring their wrath.

COMBAT: Dola will do what is needed to survive, considering their present form at the time. Most of all they will do what is required to protect their subject if it is part of the fate they are sent to safe guard, even risking their life.

SHAPECHANGE: Dola can switch between forms as often as needed without any limitations (within reason) to serve their purpose. Their common forms are men, women, cat, mouse, or even the avatar of a god. These myriad of forms are needed to spy and give guidance to their subject as they go through life.

DOMOVOI

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1

SIZE: Medium (5 ft.)

HD: 3d6

MOVE: 50 ft.

AC: 14

ATTACKS: Weapon

SPECIAL: NIL

SAVES: M

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Neutral

TYPE: Humanoid

TREASURE: 3

XP: 425+3

Essential to the Slavic households in Yav, these beings co-exist symbiotically with most families. They will aid in chores and tending to other functions to keep the home in order. If the domovoi is very loyal to his family, he will even guard and protect them from outside threats.

Domovoi are usually hairy men, covered in brownish thick hair, with grey beards and often with horns and tails. Some take on the appearance of the former owners of the home, if necessary. These spirits are usually benign and silent within the home unless danger comes, in which case they will give warning signs such as pulling the wife's hair, making knocks on the walls, or other noticeable clues to alert the inhabitants.

Because they are so prevalent in the Slavic world there are many names for them. Among the Slavs in Russia there are many: susedko, domozhil, khoziain, and dedkob to name a few. In the region of the Ukraine they are khatnii didko, while in Czech territories the domovoi are both the rarášek and the skřítek. To

the Serb tribes they are the domaáci, among the Bulgarians they are called stopanin, and to the Polens, these beings are chowaniec. There are many methods of calling them forth, banishing them from the house, or establishing dominance over them.

A relative of this being is called the dvorovoi and haunts the courtyards, barns, and stables. The dvorovoi, however, is less friendly. It has a tendency to frighten the animals, particularly white furry ones, and wreak havoc on the handiwork of the farmhands. If the domovoi has a wife (domawiczka) that shares the same domicile, she helps him in maintaining the home and family, and appears quite pretty and faery-like.

The domovoi usually live under the threshold of the door or beneath the stove. Newly made houses or inhabitants without a domovoi will use bread or salted white bread under the house to attract it. Angering a domovoi is a terrible thing as they will become a nuisance quickly, starting fires, throwing things, and keeping people from sleeping by smothering them while they rest.

COMBAT: Domovoi (or domovye in plural) will use their strength and size or any nearby weapon to overcome a foe. If they are protecting a family, they will be ruthless and savage, even risking their own life to do so.

DREKAVAK

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-3

SIZE: Small (3 ft.) to Medium (4ft.)

HD: 4d8

MOVE: 50 ft.

AC: 15

ATTACKS: Claw (2d6), Bite (d8)

SPECIAL: Distracting Yell

SAVES: M

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Neutral Evil

TYPE: Aberration

TREASURE: 4

XP: 325+4

These monstrous beings are said to come from the wrongfully slain bodies of babies and children that have been corrupted by the influence of Czernobog or one of his minions when buried in the earth. Descriptions vary for the dreaded drekavak across Slavonic Europa, but they all agree that these creatures are not to be trifled with.

Drekavak hide from the light of day and appear at night, waiting for passing victims. Some describe it as appearing bird-like, hellish and sinister, perched high to glare down on its victim. Others describe this creature as a thin, lanky limbed being, dappled in color with oblong shaped head. Still, other others speak of a fox or dog-like creature stalking its prey from the shadows.

Stories say it is afraid of dogs and avoids them completely, and that it is commonly seen in early spring and during the 12 days of Yule (on the Germanic calendar). Common-folk speak of it as an omen of death, often the death of a child, in the witness' family.

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The drekavak can be found in cemeteries, mills, and other dark and forgotten locations that are built by man, but visited only briefly. Most consider the creature a demon or demon spawn by its dark nature and origins.

COMBAT: Shrieking and fierce, the drekavak lashes out with claws slashing and teeth chomping at its victim, moving ungainly and swiftly. They never attack larger foes unless there are more of their kind and they are able to outnumber the enemy. They typically target children, as they are similar in size and easily overtaken.

DISTRACTING YELL: Once every other round, the drekavak produces an ear-splitting shriek that distracts anyone in a 30 ft. radius. If a wisdom save is not made, those caught in the radius will be unable to cast a spell, fight in battle (-5 on rolls), or perform any other action for that round because of the annoying and haunting scream. This shriek resembles a wailing, tortured child with a demonic undertone and is very unique to this creature.

GAMAYUN

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1
SIZE: Medium (4ft.)
HD: 10d10
MOVE: 100 ft.
AC: 20
ATTACKS: 2 Claw (5d20)
SPECIAL: Foretell Future
SAVES: M
INT: Average
ALIGNMENT: Neutral
TYPE: Extraplanar
TREASURE: 10
XP: 800+10

The gamayun dwell on scattered islands near the Otherworld of Iriy. These prophetic, chimeric beings have the body of a fantastic bird and the head of a beautiful woman. They gamayun perch in the branches of the high trees and sing musical songs unheard of in the mortal world.

These intelligent beings serve the gods in Paradise by imparting their wisdom when given and carrying messages between worlds when needed, though their presence in Yav is exceedingly rare. Possessing a feather or parts from them is highly prized among mortals.

COMBAT: Gamayun will try to fly away and avoid all confrontations. If pressed, however, they will use their claws to slash the eyes and face of their foe. They will pounce with their feet to do damage and even lift their enemy up into the sky to drop them to their death.

FORETELL FUTURE: A gamayun can see into the future clearly and reveal every detail if asked, but doing so is rare. They normally give only hints and random details to those who ask due to the overpowering force of Fate. There is no limit to their use of this, but they will avoid using it if hounded.

GANGANA

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-20+
SIZE: Medium (4ft.)
HD: 5d12
MOVE: 80 ft.
AC: 15
ATTACKS: Bite (5d20), Claw (3d12)
SPECIAL: NIL
SAVES: M
INT: Low
ALIGNMENT: Neutral
TYPE: Magical Beast
TREASURE: 5
XP: 350+5

This large, magical bird comes from Paradise but lives in selected places in Yav, often assigned by gods for tasks. Their feathers are dark with a rainbow sheen, and they are equipped with copper claws on their feet and iron beaks able to snap the strongest items in twain.

They appear like a large sea-bird but with intelligent eyes. Gangana rarely mingle in mortal areas unless something is distressing them, or a god is sending them to perform a task. They will be effective and always efficient, methodical, and organized when they do so.

COMBAT: The gangana attack without hesitation, using their metallic beak and claws to rip and tear at their foe or prey easily. For birds, they are brave in combat and will rarely flee unless their numbers are depleted.

GERMAN

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1
SIZE: Medium (4ft.)
HD: 4d8
MOVE: 50 ft.
AC: 19
ATTACKS: Nil
SPECIAL: Influence Weather
SAVES: M
INT: Average
ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Neutral
TYPE: Fey
TREASURE: 4
XP: 250+4

The german is a nature spirit that influences rain and hail and can do so for mortals to aid or destroy their crops. These beings appear like shadowy, out-of-focus, men that dwell in the fields and high grasses. Even viewed face to face they seem as though they are on the periphery of sight and not distinct. They do not favor or dislike mortals but will help if appeased by effigies and worshiped like a god.

In the Yule period, mortals bring them food for offerings, wishing to ask the german spirit to stall any hail storms in the season and those to come, hoping to spare their crops. They do this by leaving bread, alcohol, and other food on the woodpile. Mor-

tals have witnessed the german perishing by winter and being reborn with the spring rains; this spirit never truly dies, making it immortal.

If Slovenian territories are plagued with drought, the common-folk will make a human sacrifice to the local spirit in hopes that rain will come. This is one of the most extreme options that is available, and often it will work, encouraging the spirit to do its influence on the weather for the local area.

Some of these spirits choose to be malignant and bring suffering on communities out of some personal spite or grievance. They will deny rainfall or shower hail down upon crops and livestock to damage and ruin them. These must be driven out or slain.

COMBAT: German spirits are not capable of violent physical action but will use their ability to hit the foe with intense rain and hail from the air around them instead.

INFLUENCE WEATHER: Not gods, these beings can only control the weather in a small area (200 ft on average). This can be used once a day and the spirit can call rain and hail for 1d20 rounds. Those caught in the area of effect will suffer a -4 on rolls due to the intense rain and take 1d6 damage x 1d20 times per round. Once the spirit is stopped, by death or otherwise, the influence on the weather will cease instantly.

IPSOLINI

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-6

SIZE: Large (10 ft.)

HD: 8d10

MOVE: 70 ft.

AC: 14

ATTACKS: Weapon, Bite (3d12)

SPECIAL: See Below

SAVES: M, P

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Neutral Evil

TYPE: Giant

TREASURE: 8

XP: 500+6

The ipsolini were created by Czernobog to prove that he too could make life just as his heavenly brother Svarog could. These brutal and savage giants still remain in the world in scattered numbers. They are hideous and foul and do not possess a good bone in their gigantic bodies.

Ipsolini are meat eaters, preferring only raw bloody flesh to anything cooked or prepared. Many ipsolini have multiple heads or a single eye and all are greatly varied in their wretchedness, each with an aspect of their creator. The ipsolini still live in the mountains and rocky desolate parts of the world where they fled from Svarog's wrath so long ago and are able to communicate to each other from atop the highest peaks by merely speaking aloud with their booming voices.

These giants are so disliked by Svarog and the other gods of light that many curses were placed on them over the years in an

attempt to eradicate them. One such curse is the simple blackberry bush, a plant that will trip, tangle and ultimately make life disagreeable for them should they come in contact. This plant is common in the world and hard to ignore, and the gods have made sure the giants would have a good chance of encountering them. Blackberry thorns can wound them badly causing 1d10 damage on contact.

Another problem is their absolute hatred for dragons, a dislike that is mutual. On sight or knowledge that a dragon is nearby will cause them to drop whatever they doing just to engage in a battle to the death. This arrangement was made by the gods to ensure that many of Veles and Czernobog's own creations would destroy themselves rather than harm innocent mortals, and rid them of both problems at once.

These giants are in large numbers in the Bulgarian Empire and are given many names referring to their dog-like heads, their dislike of the blackberry bush, Greek and Roman ethnicities and other obscure local terms for them. The ipsolini do possess supernatural powers and can cast spells in the wizard/illusionist group up to 6th level in older individuals or possess many spell-like abilities in the **Codex Celtarum** at the CK's discretion.

COMBAT: Ipsolini are terrifying in battle, using their massive strength against lesser foes. They are often armed with clubs, axes, or the occasional massive sword and can wield dead trees as shields if needed.

JAUD

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-6

SIZE: Small (3 ft.)

HD: 6d12

MOVE: 30 ft.

AC: 19

ATTACKS: Bite (5d10)

SPECIAL: Vampiric Drain

SAVES: M

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Neutral Evil

TYPE: Undead

TREASURE: 6

XP: 500+6

Infected by the vampire while in the womb, the jaud is a premature baby that has exited from the mother, usually fatally and with a great deal of gore, to feed on others. This ghastly monstrosity is incapable of speech, only raspy growls and eerie noises. Jaud are pallid, ashen colored vampiric babies, slim, bony, and spindly in form. Their eyes are black and without any pupil or definition.

These creatures are demonic and evil, never getting better or redeeming themselves, only seeking to drain the life from their victims. They crawl and stagger around the depths of Nav seeking blood and flesh to devour. Many will crawl out of their graves to feed nightly.

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COMBAT: Jaud leap, crawl, and fall on their foe, biting and grabbing them and eventually taking them down. If many jaud are present, they will swarm a victim and bite and claw them to pieces until they expire.

VAMPIRIC DRAIN: Thirsty for blood to give them some semblance of life, the jaud will bite into the flesh of the living to get to it. The victim must make a constitution save or begin to suffer blood loss, taking 1d12 HP for each round the jaud is attached.

KARZELEK

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-12

SIZE: Small (3 ft.)

HD: 2d6

MOVE: 50 ft.

AC: 15

ATTACKS: Weapon

SPECIAL: Sense Danger

SAVES: M

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Neutral

TYPE: Humanoid

TREASURE: 2

XP: 200+2

These dwarf-sized beings live in the earth and populate the mines of mortals for their own. The Karselek look like ragged, dirty little men, garbed in work clothes and grime with a look of hard work on them. They also have an intimate knowledge of the many tunnels and treasures in the earth.

To the Polens tribes they are called 'The Treasurers' (Skarbnik) due to their knowledge of the whereabouts of valuable stones and veins of gold, silver, and other precious metals. Gaining their friendship is more important in the long run as they know the dangers of the earth and can warn miners of cave-ins and the like by knocking against rocks or making other signals moments before disaster strikes.

The karselek live in that realm between the surface world of mortals and the utmost layer of the underworld as their home. They are not evil enough to be among Czernobog and his kin, nor good enough to be with mortals or the spiritual beings in Paradise. Left to their own devices, they are harmless and cause no trouble. Due to their skill at finding wealth in the earth, however, mortals often try to trick or trap them for their own purposes.

COMBAT: If pressed, the karzelek will arm themselves and go to battle. They will approach their foe with a silent determination and little more, defeat or victory is the same to them. These dwarves are not a warrior race by nature, but they can make life difficult for their enemy.

SENSE DANGER: These beings possess the ability to sense danger and can detect such minutes before anything happens that might be threatening; it is rare that they are surprised. It does not matter what the nature of the danger is, they can detect it easily.

KRASNOLUDEK

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-6

SIZE: Small (2 ft.)

HD: 1d8

MOVE: 30 ft.

AC: 19

ATTACKS: Weapon

SPECIAL: nil

SAVES: M

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Neutral

TYPE: Humanoid

TREASURE: 1

XP: 100+1

These tiny, gnomish people live in many worlds and cause no harm whatsoever to other lifeforms. They are commonly seen wearing red, pointed hats and the menfolk are known to have long bushy beards. These small beings can inhabit a garden or yard and its mortal owners would never know it.

To the Polens, they are given the name gnom and noludek and both mean the same thing – dwarf or gnome. These beings are industrious and busy, always with work in mind. They live in large populations in Iriy and are often the workers for the gods, laboring in their palaces.

COMBAT: If made to fight, krasnoludek will go to battle armed with spears and swords. They prefer to be non-confrontational and do not wish to harm others; they will flee when in danger.

KIKIMORA

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1

SIZE: Medium (4ft.)

HD: 3d6

MOVE: 50 ft.

AC: 17

ATTACKS: Claw (d8)

SPECIAL: Cause Nightmare

SAVES: M

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil

TYPE: Extraplanar

TREASURE: 3

XP: 400+3

These slightly malign spirits from the underworld are able to either help mortals or wreak havoc and terror upon them if so compelled. They appear as a humanoid being with chicken legs, a furry body and strangely human-like head with glowing eyes and elongated nose, and are often dressed as an old woman.

They marry other spirits from Nav (the domovoi and leshi) to breed more frightening children. When the kikimora choose to occupy a house with a family, they are able to be an asset or nightmare. In the house, they will perform housework and tend the chickens for the mortal family, sleeping behind the stove or in the cellar out of sight of the family.

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DID DWELL MANY PEOPLES

If the kikimora dislike the family for some reason, they will terrorize them in many ways. One way is by causing nightmares for the family, often with diabolical results, whistling and shattering the dishes, or general noises to deny the mortals rest. When the kikimora are not inhabiting a home, they can still annoy and pester intruding mortals in the same way.

Another habit of the kikimora is to spin thread at night in the house of a mortal family, and it is said that she is plotting the ways she can bring ruin to the world at the same time. Few wish to encounter the kikimora because of her ability to cause nightmares in her foes.

COMBAT: These spirits are not the most confrontational or involved in battle. If cornered, however, they will resort to using their long, sharp claws to rip into the faces of their foe.

CAUSE NIGHTMARE: The kikimora can mark a target to suffer horrible nightmares. She just has to gently tap them on the head, in which case the victim must make a wisdom save or suffer nightmares for 1d6 nights. Each night, the dreams will cause the victim to progressively get worse, becoming more harmful to themselves and others. The nightmare will only appear as a disturbing dream, but in reality they will be casting spells, slitting throats, or stabbing their companions as the nights go on.

KOSCHEI

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1

SIZE: Medium (5 ft.)

HD: 3d12

MOVE: 50 ft.

AC: 14

ATTACKS: Weapon

SPECIAL: External Soul

SAVES: M

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Evil

TYPE: Extraplanar

TREASURE: 3

XP: 500+3

The koschei are skeletal beings from the underworld that serve the devious machinations of the dark gods. They are foul, humanoid in form, and sinister in presence. The Koschei are usually sent to kidnap the wives of powerful leaders and hold them hostage as leverage, but they can serve other purposes due to their innate ability of having an external soul.

To the Slavs of the Rus, they are called 'Koschei the Immortal' or 'Deathless' because of their invulnerability. In the armies of Nav, these frightful beings serve in plentiful numbers in the front-lines for their evil masters. Czernobog creates these monstrosities from the bones of the dead and gives them their immortality in return for their utmost servitude.

COMBAT: These skeletal horrors attack in a ruthless and efficient manner to eradicate their living foes. Koschei use the weapons of the living against them in battle. They will strategize and utilize tactical advantages to slay their enemies.

EXTERNAL SOUL: For each koschei, Czernobog has placed their soul inside the eye of a needle, hidden inside an egg within a duck, and kept in a hare which in turn is stuffed in a chest, sometimes of iron, gold, or crystal. These chests are stored away underground on the Island of Bunyan. Opening a chest will require chasing down each animal in turn until the needle with the soul is obtained, and is not an easy task. Once this achieved, the koschei will be slain instantly.

LESHI

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1

SIZE: Large (7 ft.)

HD: 8d10

MOVE: 80 ft.

AC: 18

ATTACKS: Club (3d20),

Whip (3d12)

SPECIAL: Shapechange, Dominance Over Animals, Magic, Forest Blend

SAVES: M

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Neutral

TYPE: Fey

TREASURE: 8

XP: 2,000+8

These forest beings, said to be the children of Berstuk, tend to the woods and its creatures and are more benign than their divine master. This doesn't mean that encountering a leshi is always a positive event. Their temper is guided by the method in which visitors treat the forest and its inhabitants. Leshi teach the birds and other animals in the forest the correct times to migrate.

They are described variously in Slovene lands with traces of similarity. More often than not, they are described as tall, hairy beings with horns, hooves, and bright green eyes, with grass and vines growing from their pale skin. These beings cast no shadow, regardless of how much light is present. Leshi women are called leshachikha and their children are leshonky. These woodland beings migrated to the mortal world from Iriy in the earliest of times and lived in the forests of the world of men before men could carve them out by axe and fire for their own. They are very protective of their ancient woodland homes.

Often leshi dwell with packs of gray wolves as companions, or perhaps bears travel with them. These forest masters only dwell where greenery is found and do not wander into hills or open plains if they can help it. The leshi generally are not fond of humanity's encroachment into their forests and use many tricks to drive them from it. From hiding the wood-axes, to causing sickness and disorientation, the leshi will use mostly non-confrontational methods to drive humans away.

Strange cries and noises in the forest are made to confuse, frighten, or distract visitors. These often sound like children, people in distress, or other noises that humans associate with their own kind. These tricks are used to lead mortals away from

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a desired place. Most leshi have a territory claimed in the forest for themselves and will defend it by fiercely throwing down trees, making ferocious calls, and haunting any trespassers.

The lustier of leshi will kidnap mortal women and take them deep into the forests for their own unless prevented or hunted down. Leshi are naturally capable of magic and use their powers to aid or prevent the work of farmers and shepherds unless appeased with offerings and worship. It is known that farmers will make offerings to the local leshi to keep their livestock from wandering into the woods and for ensuring their safety.

To the Slovene peoples they go by many names: boruta, lesun, leshik, lesovik and lesní mužík ('Forest Man') and other similarly sounding names. All peoples alike know to never anger or cross a leshi, or their fate will be awful. It is best to keep these forest guardians happy and unbothered as much as possible.

COMBAT: Leshi will use their terrifying strength and presence to attack their enemy if needed. They will use their weapons or the beasts of the forest to aid them in defeating difficult foes, or their magic.

SHAPECHANGE: Leshi can turn into many forms of various sizes with their magic. Stories have been told of them appearing as peasants, average in every way except for their glowing eyes, or strange mushrooms with faces that speak. They can do this as many times as needed so long as they remain in their forest home. Only those with abilities to see illusions can get past the leshi magic.

DOMINANCE OVER ANIMALS: Because of their closeness to nature and link to Berstuk, the leshi can command any animal with no effort. Large or small, the leshi can control the beasts of the wild around it in a 100 ft radius. If the animal(s) are linked to individuals, the leshi can use its club or whip and give one strike or lash to master the beast. There is no limit to the number of animals the leshi can control, which can make life difficult for their foes. This ability is the combination of several spells together: *animal friendship*, *animal messenger*, *charm animal*, *hold animal*, *speak with animals*, *summon swarm*, and *summon animals*.

MAGIC: The Leshi are equal to 4th level druids with their inherent abilities. They naturally possess these spell-like powers: *know direction*, *light*, *purify food and drink*, *first aid*, *animal friendship*, *detect snares and pits*, *entangle*, *faerie fire*, *goodberry*, *magic stones*, *obscuring mist*, *animal messenger*, *barkskin*, *cure light wounds*, *warp wood*, *meld into stone*, *plant growth*, *speak with plants*, *wall of wind*, *control plants*, *cure serious wounds*, *dispel magic*, and *reincarnate*. Unlike spell-casters the leshi can call upon these instinctively as many times as needed (as long as they are in the forest). If the leshi is taken from the woods, their powers drop to one use per day, and it drains them of energy.

FOREST BLEND: Leshi can blend into the forest with ease just by a small step behind a tree or stone. They will leave no trace of their presence when they do move, making it impossible to track them. This ability can also be used on others, however. The leshi can confuse or disorient others by initiating this ability. The victim(s) must make a wisdom check or be lost in

the forest for 1d12 hours if they move too close to a leshi. They could be within a few feet from the edge of the woods and never find it if led astray by the leshi.

LIKHO

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1

SIZE: Medium (5 ft.)

HD: 5d10

MOVE: 50 ft.

AC: 14

ATTACKS: Claws (3d6)

SPECIAL: Alter Luck, Invisibility

SAVES: M

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Neutral

TYPE: Humanoid

TREASURE: 5

XP: 450+5

This hideous, one-eyed, hag is not a being to be trifled with. She is garbed in black, hunched and sinister, with only evil intent in mind. These foul beings undermine the fate and fortune of others by association or by being sent to do the dirty work of Czernobog or another dark entity.

Once a likho chooses a target, it will not relent until it is driven off or slain. While invisible, a likho can force its victim to do things that result in negative or awful circumstances (e.g. making them thieves, murderers, etc). When this doesn't work in her favor, she will influence the daily odds against the individual dooming them all the same.

If this results in the victim being slain, the likho will then feast on them afterwards, relishing in the folly of their prey. Most people make prayers to the gods and spirits in hopes of warding off the likho.

COMBAT: The likho will shriek and lash out with claws bared and may even employ spells (equal to a 3rd level wizard/illusionist) against their target. Even when confronted in battle, the likho will not cease her negative influence on the victim.

ALTER LUCK: The likho can influence the victim 3-7 times per day, altering their skills and actions in the process. To do this, the likho will give a -d6 on their rolls and even influence events in such a way as to reflect poorly on its victim. This alteration of luck can affect damage being dealt, saves, and all other rolls the individual makes.

INVISIBILITY: In order to manipulate the victim's life, the likho must be invisible. She can choose to let the victim, or others, see her just to confuse or startle them but usually remains hidden to masterfully destroy the victim's life.

LIKHORADKA

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1

SIZE: Medium (5 ft.)

HD: 4d12

MOVE: 50 ft.

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DID DWELL MANY PEOPLES

AC: 18

ATTACKS: Claw (5d10)

SPECIAL: Possession, Sickness

SAVES: M

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil

TYPE: Extraplanar

TREASURE: 4

XP: 325+4

This evil harridan is related to the likho in appearance and in some mannerisms but is far worse in other ways. These miserable spirits are created by Czernobog and are set into the world of mortals to weaken them and bring them begging to be freed of the dark god's tyranny.

Likhoradka wear black death shrouds and appear like shambling, sickly, and rotting hags. They are gangly with deep set eyes in an almost skull-like head with stringy grey hair. It is bad fortune to encounter one of them, for they never leave without inflicting suffering upon others.

COMBAT: They are terrifying in battle and will fight as fiercely as the likho. Rather than using physical force, they prefer to use their abilities to defend or attack.

POSSESSION: The likhoradka can become incorporeal in an attempt to possess the body of a living being. To do this, she will step into the body unless a wisdom save is rolled. If the victim fails, the likhoradka takes control over the individual making them behave in a way that would likely seem out of character for them. If a fumble is rolled, the likhoradka has complete power over them and only a powerful cleric (5th level or higher) or divine aid can drive her out without killing the possessed individual. The likhoradka will often use the possessed body as a vehicle of sickness to complete its task for Czernobog.

SICKNESS: The likhoradka is a being of illness and plague and can cause those around it to acquire various sicknesses and diseases (CK can decide which ones as needed). A constitution save is required by those exposed to the likhoradka, or they will become stricken. Only normal means of healing are required, but the likhoradka can spread serious plagues just as easily and this is not so simple to prevent.

ODMIEŃCE

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1

SIZE: Medium (4 ft.)

HD: 3d6

MOVE: 50 ft.

AC: 14

ATTACKS: Weapon

SPECIAL: Shapechange

SAVES: M

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Neutral Evil

TYPE: Shapechanger

TREASURE: 3

XP: 350+3

These shape-shifting beings are granted to witches by the boginki to replace a mortal child of her choosing. If the ceremonies and sacrifices go according to plan and the gods are pleased, then one of these highly magical beings now will reside in the womb until birth.

Usually, it is the witch who desires to bear one of these divine beings, but an innocent victim may also be chosen as the subject of the ritual. As an NPC, this changeling can be a manipulative and powerful being, acting out the desires of the witch. If chosen as a player character, this could result in the zduhać character type, able to alter its shape in addition to the many abilities it gains from being one of the element-born.

These beings are inherently evil natured due to the dark gods that were called upon to impregnate the witch or woman, but they can change their ways. To do so requires more effort than other beings, however. Many changelings will sink back into the waters where the spirits and nymphs dwell and remain with them but others are made to socialize and interact with people to reach a goal set forth by its master.

COMBAT: They will attack as individuals do with their own specific and particular style. This combat could involve both magic and weaponry.

SHAPECHANGE: The odmieńce can change into any being or animal up to three times per day. Afterwards, it must feed on a living creature. The changed form is so cleverly made that few can see through its guise (wisdom check at CL 3).

OVINNIK

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-3

SIZE: Medium (4 ft.)

HD: 3d8

MOVE: 60 ft.

AC: 19

ATTACKS: Claw (4d6), Bite (d10)

SPECIAL: Fire Starting

SAVES: M

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil

TYPE: Extraplanar

TREASURE: Nil

XP: 250+3

These fiery spirits come from the depths of Nav, serving Czernobog, and are sent up to the mortal world to wreak havoc. They are simple beings, however, and can be dissuaded from their mischief by offerings and food.

Ovinnik are prone to living in the shadows of grain thrashing buildings. Their appearance is not well known except for stories of them looking like little hairy men with strange features. If angered, the ovinnik will set fire to the threshing room and granaries.

These are lesser beings from Nav and have a sporadic presence in human communities. Their place in the underworld is not prominent but serves various purposes for Czernobog.

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COMBAT: They will use their sharp fingernails and teeth to defend themselves, if needed, but will be more prone to setting fires and creating chaos instead.

FIRE STARTING: Ovinnik can make fire out of nowhere from the palms of their hands. This fire can be used to light anything flammable in seconds or be used as a weapon doing 1d8 damage.

POLEVIK (POLEWIKI)

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-6

SIZE: Small (3 ft.)

HD: 2d8

MOVE: 30 ft.

AC: 16

ATTACKS: Weapon

SPECIAL: Cause Sickness, Lead Astray

SAVES: M

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil

TYPE: Humanoid

TREASURE: 2

XP: 200+2

The polewikip are small, dwarven men that dwell in open fields and usually resent the arrival of farms and settlers to their home. They have eyes of a different color, green grass for hair, and can be seen dressed in white or black clothing. The best time of the day to encounter them is at noon or dusk, but according to the mortals that have dealt with them, there is no ideal time to find them.

If they do not use their abilities to harry and drive away mortals, they will often wait until any of them are passed out in a drunken stupor. The polewikip will then cut their victim's throat with a knife and watch them bleed to death where they lay, sometimes as a warning to others that they should not be in the polewikip's territory.

On rare occasions, they will gang up on their enemies and assault them from all sides with knives and axes. These dwarfs are happiest when they are left alone.

The women-folk, it is assumed by most, are the poludnisa. These tall, beautiful women run in the fields wildly and playfully, and bother the peasants where ever they go by tangling clothing and hair or befouling equipment and work. They are most known for distracting children and causing them to get lost in the fields. These 'midday' women are fond of appearing when the heat of the day is at its worst and causing mortals to suffer from it even more so by giving them heat stroke or sickness. On some occasions, they can cause madness in their victims with the same ability and fondly watch their victims mentally snap. If angered, she will change into the form of whirling cyclonic dust, wielding scythes or shears, and move towards her victims leaving death and terror in her wake. Often, they will take the heads of the victim, leaving only the body, in retaliation.

The poludnisa is also fond of encountering strangers in the field to ask them difficult questions or to speak with them about vari-

ous subjects. If her questions are not answered or the topic of the conversation changes, she will cut off the person's head or strike them with a malady and move onto the next person. In Slavic occupied regions of Saxony, she is called the kornwyf, and taunts children that pick flowers before snatching them up or leading them astray. They are known as belts in the eastern regions of the Polens tribes.

COMBAT: Polewikip will use bladed weapons, and they will do so fiercely. If the foe is larger and more powerful, they will not be so ruthless and direct. If weak, however, they will prey on them to gain an advantage.

CAUSE SICKNESS: With a wave of their wrinkled, bony hands, the polewikip can give someone a disease. If the victim fails their constitution save, they will suffer a terrible malady. The nature of this is the CK's decision, and will only be curable by the blessing of a cleric or deity, otherwise the chosen disease will gradually take the victim's life in whatever manner it exhibits. The polewikip can do this once a day.

LEAD ASTRAY: The polewikip or their women can make a victim lose their way completely with this ability. It just requires a touch and nothing more. If the victim fails their wisdom save, they will be lost with no sense of direction at all for 1d12 hours. To gain any ground at all, they will need to be physically guided by another individual. The polewikip can use this 3 times a day.

PSOGLAV

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-12

SIZE: Medium (5 ft.)

HD: 5d8

MOVE: 80 ft.

AC: 17

ATTACKS: Claw (3d8), Bite (2d10), Weapon

SPECIAL: Shattering Bite

SAVES: M

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil

TYPE: Aberration

TREASURE: 5

XP: 500+5

These beasts dwell in a lightless world where gem-stones are as common as stones and pebbles underfoot. Where this world lies is a mystery to most, but many mortals guess that it is somewhere between the deepest part of the underworld and the surface. Hideous monstrosities, they are a fusion of many beasts thrown together by Czernobog. They have a single large eye on a dog's head, iron teeth, horse legs, and a human's torso.

Psoglavic creatures gnaw and dig upwards into graves to feast on the interred as ghoulish demons; corpses are their preferred means of sustenance. They are commonly found in graveyards when they are not in their underworld home. These 'Dog Heads' are found in armies below the mortal world and live to serve their dark god; when he needs them he is able to muster immense forces.

The psoglavic serve witches and other dark beings as dutiful dog-like servants with a fierce loyalty. Another word for them is 'gvozdenzuba' (Iron Tooth) because of their sharp, metallic teeth. They snivel, growl, and howl as dogs do, but seem to possess a language and understand others when spoken to just as easily. Among Czernobog's demons, the psoglavic are his prized creations.

COMBAT: Psoglavic warriors fight in battle as any human force with weaponry and battle tactics, but they are also known to use their claws and dangerous, bone crunching teeth.

SHATTERING BITE: Using their deadly iron teeth, the psoglav can rend objects asunder in one bite. If they bite and roll a critical, that location's armor and bones are instantly snapped in two with one painful crunch. Psoglavic can also use this ability to snap, rend, and destroy other things as they need without a critical roll.

RARÓG

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-3

SIZE: Small to Medium (3-6 ft.)

HD: 5d8

MOVE: 60 ft.

AC: 19

ATTACKS: Claw (3d6), Beak (2d8), Weapon

SPECIAL: Shapechange, Fire Control

SAVES: M, P

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Neutral

TYPE: Extraplanar

TREASURE: 5

XP: 300+5

The Raróg are said to be the spawn of the smith god, Svarog, and definitely share in his fiery temper, hairy appearance, and other abilities. Normally, they appear as dwarven beings, but they have many appearances, if needed, to survive or to serve a purpose.

These dwarves are skilled in smithing weapons and tools but do not do so willingly. Their skills are often meant for their own circles of society, but if their items are obtained by mortals, they are prized and always highly enchanted.

Raróg have no enemies or allies in the world and can easily turn on anyone with savagery if betrayed, attacked, or deceived. Mostly, they live away from others, deep in the rocky hills and mountains.

COMBAT: In their natural dwarven form, they will lethally wield any weaponry, possessing knowledge of them from their skill at smithing. They fight simply and directly, leaving little room for subtlety.

SHAPECHANGE: These shape-changing beings can take the following forms: a fiery hawk, raven, falcon, or a demonic whirlwind of energy. As a whirlwind, they can cast lightning at two foes in one action, doing 2d20 damage and cannot be harmed

except by spells and one other weakness. They might also be taken down by throwing an iron dagger into the middle of the whirlwind. Only a critical roll will succeed, but it will slay the raróg instantly.

RUSALKA

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-6

SIZE: Medium (5 ft.)

HD: 3d6

MOVE: 50 ft. (land) and 100 ft. (water)

AC: 14

ATTACKS: Claw (2d10), Bite (3d8)

SPECIAL: Laugh of Death, Life Comb, Fateful Tickle

SAVES: M

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil

TYPE: Undead

TREASURE: 3

XP: 450+3

Rusalka are the vengeful, undead spirits of women who were either murdered or committed suicide in a body of water. Although varied in appearance, from beautiful amazons to ghastly hags, they all feed on the suffering of their mortal victims. By nightfall, they slip out of their watery homes, sit on a tree branch, and comb their hair while singing. Although seemingly innocent, they do this to lure in men and drain them of their life force.

The appearance of the rusalka can vary. They might have pallid skin, thin and transparent, burning green eyes, or be perpetually wet. Their hair is usually long and flowing and either green or golden, but very healthy. Rusalka are fond of gathering in open clearings in the woods beyond their watery homes to sing and dance in wild circles. Their goal is to lure mortal men and children into the circle with them. More often than not, these occasions end in tragedy for the mortal as they are usually slain by one means or another.

Many wise men among the Slovene tribes notice that the rusalka's appearance can be influenced by the condition of the landscape around it. If, for example, the surrounding land is fertile and abundant, they will be beautiful and seductive in appearance. If the land is rough and bare, they will possess harsh, haggard features.

The rusalka are at their most powerful and frequently seen during 'Green Week' in early June; this is their holy week. They spend the week in wild celebratory gatherings often in the fields of local farmers, if their watery habitat is close. Their savage and dangerous nature is heightened, and their menace to mortals is greater during this time.

These malign spirits serve the dark god and his underworld, playing on the carnal weaknesses of mortal men. Their existence in Czernobog's schemes against the surface world of the living is simple. Because of their feral and exotic natures, men are easily drawn to them, and there are few means to resist them

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except to banish them with a cleric's blessing or by destroying them entirely.

COMBAT: If forced to fight, the rusalka will slash with sharp nails and even bite the foe like a savage beast, snarling and crazed. Rusalka do not normally engage in battle but can if the option to use their magic is not possible. They will make sure the foe remembers them by the well-placed bites and cuts across the body.

LAUGH OF DEATH: Many rusalka can emit a death-dealing laugh that will resonate in the ears and mind of its victims. The range is 50 ft, and the rusalka will make its deathly call for a few rounds, forcing listeners to make a charisma save or suffer a loss of 1d20 hit points per hour until they waste away and perish. Only the blessing of a cleric can rid a victim of this curse.

LIFE COMB: The rusalka can remain out of water for a length of time without drying up and dying if they keep their enchanted comb on them. Without it, they will die in 1d4 hours and become a dried, shriveled corpse no longer capable of animation.

FATEFUL TICKLE: Just like their dreadful laugh, the rusalka can playfully tickle a victim and drain their life away, taking 2d20 HP in damage each round. The target won't even be aware of this being done to them until it is too late.

SAMODIVA

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-4

SIZE: Medium (5 ft.)

HD: 4d6

MOVE: 60 ft.

AC: 14

ATTACKS: Weapon, Claw (5d6),
Beak (2d10)

SPECIAL: Shapechange, Throw Fire, Make Flame, Fly,
Seductive Lure, Blindness

SAVES: M

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil

TYPE: Fey

TREASURE: 4

XP: 450+4

These tall, slender, ethereal women are among the many so created by Czernobog to deceive and cause mankind's downfall. They are fair haired and fair skinned, often glowing, and don thin dresses covered in bird feathers; they may even have wings of their own to fly. Their eyes blaze with a fierce fire, the element that they rule over and wield destructively.

Samodiva are the essence of the divine in nature, but unfortunately it is with negative consequences for those who encounter them. They are wrathful beings, easily angered and vengeful if wronged or tricked, and they will not relent in their efforts to exact vengeance. Crops, livestock, and other resources dependent on man for survival are often their targets when a lack of interaction with mortals is had.

Their power and strength is embodied in their long, golden hair and sustains them. If hair samples are taken or given, they have the capability of granting 1d10 HP once per day for a week until it runs out of its magical essence. They possess the knowledge of the forest and its herbs like no other but will never impart the secrets to non-samodiva. If one is clever enough, however, they can spy on them and gain some knowledge.

Similar to the rusalka, the samodiva are fond of dancing at night in groups. They do so to the noise generated by the winds in the woods and fields, moving in a primal manner unlike anything ever seen by others. They try to lure in mortal men to join them and make them dance to their death.

Of Czernobog's many demonic minions in the universe the samodiva are exceptionally blessed with many abilities to punish and malign mortals. Men try to resist them, prepare for dreaded encounters, and even make prayers to gods to drive them away. They are, however, persistent in their attempts to lure the mortals to certain doom without any sign of ceasing.

COMBAT: Samodiva attack wildly, hurling fire and sending the weaker mortals into terror from their frightening abilities. One angered samodiva is bad enough to confront, but a whole group of them is much worse and nearly impossible to defeat once they are on the attack.

SHAPECHANGE: As with most magical beings, they are capable of changing their form as needed. Quite often this form is a giant fiery bird, like a phoenix in form but far worse. They do this once per day but they may stay in whatever desired form until that day is over.

THROW FIRE: They can create and hurl fireballs from their hands with great ease. The samodiva can fling a fireball at a target if it is within 50 ft, doing 4d10 damage, double if a critical is rolled on attack. Two fireballs can be thrown per round, if desired. A dexterity save is needed to survive the blast by her foes.

MAKE FIRE: Because of their control over the element of fire, the samodiva can summon forth flames from anywhere (water, ice, stones, etc.) on command. This takes three rounds of concentration, and has a 100 ft range, but the samodiva can summon a raging bonfire that will burn fiercely. On a smaller scale, this can be focused, and a living target can become a victim of overheating or heatstroke if they fail a constitution save. This heat related malady will put an end to the activities of the target by downing them in a coma-state from the heat for 1d6 hours.

FLY: Many samodiva possess large, spectacular wings and can fly (70 ft per round), but others can do so by donning their feather covered dresses and raising their arms. This can be done as many times as needed per day and gives them the ability to soar high in the clouds. Because of their supernatural nature, they can carry several smaller people or one medium height person with little difficulty as they fly.

SEDUCTIVE LURE: The samodiva can make a victim fall into a crazed lust for them with a mere gaze. The chosen victim must make a wisdom save, or they will focus only on their love or lust for her and think of nothing else. The victim will be incapable of performing day to day functions such as eating, drinking, or sleeping while under the effects of her lure. During his enchanted seduction, she will drain him of his life essence, 1d10 HP per day and 1d4 constitution per day, until he is completely exhausted and unable to function anymore. Then, she will appear before him and make him suffer his last few moments of life as she finishes her vile work. Only a cleric's blessing to rid the victim of the curses, or the death of the samodiva, can end this dreadful lure.

A lesser form of this ability is the power to lure in males to their nightly dances. This requires the victims to make a wisdom save or be drawn to the frenzied dance, throwing their inhibitions and caution away in hopes of joining a samodiva for carnal pleasure. Only a cleric's intervention by removing the curse, being rescued by others, or the coming dawn can save them.

BLINDNESS: A rarely used ability of the samodiva is the power to cause blindness in those who gaze upon her beauty. If she is caught or spied upon by a mortal and made aware, she will make the victim go blind on command. The victim must make a wisdom save or lose his or her sight for a 1d8 hours; if a fumble roll is made, this will last for 1d100 days.

SHISHIGA

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-8

SIZE: Small (3-4 ft.)

HD: 1d10

MOVE: 50 ft.

AC: 16

ATTACKS: Claw (4d6), Bite (4d4) Weapon

SPECIAL: Jinx

SAVES: M

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Neutral

TYPE: Humanoid

TREASURE: 1

XP: 200+1

The shishiga are small, feminine, goblin-like beings. They are pale and very unkempt in appearance. Shishiga are trouble-makers and enjoy the sport of making life difficult for mortals through a mixture of playful pranks and completely homicidal machinations. Wild-eyed and with a mouth of nasty teeth, the shishiga can be found in dark, untraveled places in homes, large structures, and undesirable places in the wilderness.

Shishiga, by nature, are more inclined to be evil than good, and it is rare to appease them unless mayhem is allowed or offered in some way. These nasty creatures are plentiful in wild places where human settlements have not yet reached, but they will find a way to get inside the homes of those they dislike to wreak havoc. They especially dislike drunkards and will take advantage of them whenever possible.

COMBAT: In combat, the shishiga are quick, confusing, and deadly. As with most beings not human in origin, they are ruthless and show no mercy when they are facing their foes, especially humans. Shishiga will cut throats, jugulars, and arteries with steely knives to win a battle, preferring to use precision and tactics to dispatch an enemy.

JINX: If the shishiga is truly angered at someone, she will place them under a jinx to ruin their fortunes and possibly their life in time. This can be done twice per day and takes only a simple action of pointing at them and casting an evil eye. If the victim fails their wisdom save they will be jinxed for 1d20 days and suffer a -d6 on all rolls (to miss their saves, combat rolls, etc), and every action they undertake will most likely fail or even fumble. The CK can determine the likelihood of disaster in whatever manner they deem appropriate for the game.

SIMARGL

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-4

SIZE: Large (15-20 ft.)

HD: 4d8

MOVE: 50 ft. (land),
and 80 ft. (flying)

AC: 18

ATTACKS: Claw (9d8),
Bite (5d20)

SPECIAL:

SAVES: P

INT: Low

ALIGNMENT: Neutral

TYPE: Magical Beast

TREASURE: 4

XP: 450+4

This massive chimeric beast has seven dog heads on the body of a lion, giant eagle wings, talons on his four paws, and human-like faces. The creature is graceful and powerful and not malignant in nature. The feathers are copper colored on its sleek, furry hide. This is a very colorful being and more sentient than just an animal.

They dwell in Irjy on high mountain peaks and are nearly impossible to find or track, and even more unlikely to be tamed or befriended. Bogatyr and kings have done so, but this number is small in comparison to all who have tried and failed miserably. In spite of its unusual appearance, kings often choose to use the simargl as their heraldic symbol because of their might, grace, and majesty.

COMBAT: Simargl attack their foes using their advantage of having multiple heads and flight. Not only can they bite their prey up to seven times per round, but they can claw and grab their enemies and also have the ability to drop them from dangerous heights to their death. Not outwardly aggressive, the simargl will use tactics and planning in its battle.

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SKRZAK

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-6

SIZE: Small (2-3 ft.)

HD: 1d20

MOVE: 60 ft. and 90 ft. (flying)

AC: 18

ATTACKS: Weapon

SPECIAL: Take Soul, Fire Control, Wish Grant

SAVES: M

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil

TYPE: Extraplanar

TREASURE: Nil

XP: 325+1

The skrzak demons originate in the Land of Demons, a world in the underworld of Nav, and accompany their master Czernobog. Like their name, these spawn are small versions of their dark god and resemble his appearance and temperament. These malicious imps fly between worlds serving their cruel master, acting out his many schemes and plots.

Skrzak are of limited intelligence but serve well and follow orders as given without question. Winged and a little misshapen, the imps of Czernobog usually hide behind the scenes in the affairs of their victims, manipulating events to transpire as their master designs. Capturing or attempting to enslave one will only anger the rest of the skrzak who will seek to free their own and rain down death and destruction on those who dared to attempt it.

If someone manages to somehow continue to hold a skrzak, they can force them to grant a wish (See 'Wish Grant'), but it won't come without consequences if the wording is chosen poorly. Normally, the skrzak is a silent, servile being and little more, but they have a potential for mighty power if ever allowed to show it. They can assist mortals on their farms if appeased and can be helpful in cleaning and other chores.

COMBAT: Skrzak will use whatever weapon is at hand to defend themselves. They will fly swiftly around the enemy, cutting, slashing, and hacking as they go, sniveling and growling in demonic mockery.

TAKE SOUL: If a victim is weak, by loss of HP or if their constitution is badly reduced and sickness has taken them, the skrzak will attempt to take their soul. The imp will take their breath and life into their hands while they lay vulnerable. To resist this, the victim must make a constitution save or the skrzak will take 1d20 HP each hour. The imp will often make a bet with a foolish mortal and if it wins, it will claim their soul in turn. This occurs instantly but does not mean the loser dies. On the contrary, the victim is now the slave of the skrzak and Czernobog and must win their freedom by some epic means to be whole again, or they will remain a pawn of the demon.

Sometimes the skrzak will give a chosen mortal family good health and prosperity in exchange for their souls at some later date. The skrzak feed off of these souls but usually take them down to Nav for their master to control and transform into something else.

FIRE CONTROL: Czernobog has granted the skrzak the ability to control fire without trying. They can take a spark and make a bonfire or do the reverse. Any fires around them in a 20 ft radius can be influenced to serve the demon's purposes.

WISH GRANT: This is one of the rarely used powers of the skrzak because of its vast possibilities. They can grant a wish to a person that has managed to capture and keep them for a length of time. This wish has nearly no limit, but it will have strings attached in some hidden way that goes back to Czernobog. Whether the wish-maker knows or not, their wish will certainly doom them in some way in time. There are occasions when the skrzak will not be so cruel and give the person exactly what they desire, but it is exceedingly rare.

SIRIN

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1

SIZE: Medium (6 ft.)

HD: 5d10

MOVE: 90 ft. (flying), 50 ft. (walking)

AC: 17

ATTACKS: Claw (4d8)

SPECIAL: Siren's Call

SAVES: M

INT: High

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil

TYPE: Monstrous Humanoid

TREASURE: Nil

XP: 350+5

Related to the gamayan, the sirin is a Slavic siren capable of the same mind-controlling song and voice to mortals. They have the heads of women wearing crowns and the bodies of owls and date back to the world's first generation of beings.

Sirini are the voices of the gods sometimes, sent down to Yav to impart warnings or to signal a divine event. When they are not in the mortal world or perched on the World Tree, they sing to the gods a divine song that can only be appreciated by entities of that power; a song that will drive mere mortals to madness if they hear it.

Sirini are a part of Svarog's, and many other gods of light's, entourage and are not far away when one of them is present. The gods can control them without a spoken word if it is required. Mortals long for their song, without the terrible consequences, and seek to find a way to listen and gain some of the secrets and immortality of the gods.

COMBAT: Sirini will use their claws to fight off threats but are more likely to carry them aloft and drop them to their death, if they are able. Preferably, they will use their Siren's Call ability to take out opponents.

SIREN'S CALL: This divine song is on a frequency that mortals cannot handle, and it will cause them unbearable pain in a short time once sounded. All who are within a radius of 250 ft must make a charisma save or suffer series of problems. If just a failure is made then the victim(s) will mindlessly fol-

low the Sirin just to hear more of the enchanted song. If they fumble their save, however, all memories of their world are lost forever, and they will waste way at 2d20 HP per day until they perish. Very few remedies exist for this anywhere in the world and usually end up requiring epic quests or divine intervention to reverse it.

STUHAĆ

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-4

SIZE: Medium (5-6 ft.)

HD: 4d6

MOVE: 60 ft.

AC: 14

ATTACKS: Claw (6d8)

SPECIAL: Control Elements

SAVES: M

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Neutral

TYPE: Monstrous Humanoid

TREASURE: 4

XP: 400+4

Stuhać are demons that inhabit high mountains and desolate places in the wilds, never going near settled or civilized areas. No one is certain of their appearance, for there are few survivors who have encountered them at all. A defining characteristic that has been mentioned is the unusual habit of taking human ligaments to create a means to scale the dangerous rocks and heights. Whether this is to form rope, hooks, or other climbing gear it is not certain, but when their gear is broken they will come down from the hills and mountains seeking fresh human ligaments to renew their supply.

The whispered mention of the stuhać says they are masters of the elements and can bend them to their will. Since little is known about these demons, the stories about them are varied and wild in Slavic territories, never agreeing on anything more than their living conditions and requirement of human ligaments.

When the stuhać needs more ligaments, it will take them from the legs of victims, ripping into the skin and prying them out in one terrifying yank with its claws.

COMBAT: With steely claws in its bony fingers, the stuhać will rip and tear the enemy to shreds with sick delight. Its claws are said to be as hard as iron and unbreakable, and so it uses them to full effect in tearing apart the foe and their belongings.

CONTROL ELEMENTS: The demon can master any of the elemental forces (air, fire, water and earth) on command and make them do whatever it requires for the moment. The effects of this may be damage (doing an average damage of 3d8 to 5d10 depending on what this attack really is) or other changes to the environment. The CK can make and adapt the rules as needed for this ability to work; they can also use the *as stone* elemental faery spell-like abilities in the **Codex Celtarum** for a reference.

TOPIELEC

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-8+

SIZE: Medium (5 ft.)

HD: 6d10

MOVE: 90 ft. (in water)

AC: 18

ATTACKS: Grab

SPECIAL:

SAVES: M

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Neutral

TYPE: Undead

TREASURE: 6

XP: 400+4

These frightening spirits are the souls of those who have been drowned by various means in bodies of water and are now filled with rage. They will eagerly pull people, animals, and any living thing down into the waters and hold them under until they also drown and join their ranks.

They are known by several names in the Slavic world and are related to the vodník. Ghastly and pale, these spirits still are garbed in their tattered clothing from their life. They are water soaked and while in water suffer no damage from attacks unless it is magical in nature (spells, magic weapons, etc). Topielec are simply hideous to behold, half-skeletal, with white or missing eyes and gaunt features; there is nothing pleasant about them.

COMBAT: Once they have a grip on their foe and pull them under the water, they maintain a hold on them to keep them under until they drown. There is no need for attacks or defense even while they are in their element, but they will flee back to water if they somehow taken from their home.

GRAB: These water spirits have the ability to grab their victims with an iron-hard strength. Once they manage (functions as a normal attack), they will keep a hold on the victim under the waters. The only way to escape this is by making a successful strength save or by defeating the topielec.

VAMPIR

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1+

SIZE: Medium (5-6 ft.)

HD: 8d12

MOVE: 40 ft., 60 ft. (flying), 20 ft. (climbing)

AC: 20

ATTACKS: Slam (d6)

SPECIAL: Blood Drain, Children of the Night, Dominate, Create Spawn, Energy Drain, Alternate Form, Gaseous Form, Entourage, Electrical Resistance (half), Spider Climb, Shapechange

SAVES: M, P

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil

TYPE: Undead

TREASURE: 8

XP: 1885+8

This typically undead being forms a major part of the Slavic

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myths and there are many variations of this parasitic creature that are often in contrast to the others. For the sake of rules, rely on the basic Vampire in the **Monsters & Treasure** supplement, but this is the traditional Slavic vampire portrayed in this codex and varies greatly from the fantasy/horror variety so commonly used in games and literature.

Due to so many different Slavic traditions on the vampire, what is given here is a melding of those many ideas into one for easier reference. The vampir wasn't just an undead corpse to some, it was also an evil, cold-hearted killer or shapechanging being that was steeped in darkness and cruelty towards others. Many Slavic traditions of the so-called vampire never referred to it as being dead or blood-drinking. Instead, it was described a sinister being or individual that preyed on the weak, often by supernatural means.

The vampir creature, or person inflicted with this malady, will start to exhibit a red face and even grow a small demonic tail while living. They will stalk victims, attacking them and frightening villagers. If they are slain or procreate, however, a much worse breed of this being comes into the world. Dead and bereft of life, the corpse will take over a month to regenerate into its new form, laid out in the following stages:

1. Begins as an invisible, shadowy form, feeding off the blood of those around it to gain more substance and strength. This specter will rise from its grave each night to find victims.
2. After acquiring enough blood, the vampir will form a slimy body composed of ectoplasmic jelly but will still be invisible.
3. Once enough victims have been consistently fed upon, the vampir will then have a solid form again. This new form is similar to its appearance in life.
4. By the end of this long period of regeneration, the vampir can now continue its feeding and even find mortal women to bear its children (dhampir).

Usually only the vilest of people can become a vampir, living or dead, and prey on the innocent living. They can transform into a wolf, bat, butterfly, fly, or other beast form to disguise themselves and hunt. They are not weak in the sunlight and can wander in it like any other person. Often, they go unnoticed in human company, seeking out the most vulnerable to feed on them.

Because there are so many variations in the Slavic world, there are many names for them to match. In the Bulgarian Empire they are usually called kroijac, opryb, and other variants and have a professional class of vampire hunters who seek to destroy them (djadadjii or vampirdzhija – See 'The Djadadjii: Vampire Hunter' class at the end of this chapter) by capturing their spirit form into a magical bottle and tossing it into the flames. To most Slavic people the vampire is the upir, vepir, vipir, pijavica, kuzlac, or the mora (female vampires).

The use of mirrors, crosses, and holy-water do nothing to this vampire; it is not from the Christian world. Very few things can slow them down, though the most effective are fire, an iron stake to the heart while it is in its grave, or the blessings of clerics

(*turn undead*, for example). People have developed many countless superstitions to drive away or harm vampires in the Slavic countries, but needless to say they won't all work as hoped.

Vampir children are born into the world able to sense the full-blooded of their kind, even hunt them, and are often morally better than their origins. These children possess half of the abilities of their kind, but still may crave living blood to keep themselves healthy. It is said that these vampiric children do not live as long as either their vampire or mortal parents. Some vampiric children never grow past the newborn age, and they are monstrous demonic creatures called ustrel. These evil babies are tricked by vampire hunters into moving through a crossroads, blocked by a special fire, to be fed on by wolves. Ustrel will find their way into homes at night to eat their families and others unless stopped. Their main feeding source are cattle, and they will deplete a farmer's stock over a fortnight.

Ustrel do not necessarily look like their former human baby selves when they become a vampire. They may change and appear more bestial or demonic over time, with glowing eyes, wolf-like canines, and other strange features. The ustrel are always malevolent and never good, seeking to feed on others regardless of any personal connection in its former life.

The dark god in Nav is fond of his vampire children and what they do to serve him. He has made many kings and rulers on earth, controlling realms of spirits and undead, ever wishing to blanket mortal kingdoms with their darkness and corruption to gain superiority.

COMBAT: This depends on the type of vampir, but mostly it will be quick and lethal, causing as much trauma and blood-loss as possible in the process. Vampires are also capable of using spells, performing dark magics equal to a 5th level illusionist.

ABILITIES: These many abilities are found in the **Monsters & Treasure** supplement for 'Vampire'.

VED

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-2

SIZE: Large (15 ft.)

HD: 5d10

MOVE: 60 ft.

AC: 16

ATTACKS: Weapon

SPECIAL: Control Weather, Mighty Breath

SAVES: M, P

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Neutral or Evil

TYPE: Fey

TREASURE: 5

XP: 450+5

Vedi are tall forest folk covered in hair with massive, strong chests and muscular arms. They are able to uproot trees with their hands and carry impossibly heavy loads. There are two kinds of Vedi, the good and the bad, which dwell deep in the forests.

While the good Vedi aid mortals and even protect them at

times, the bad ones will enslave any mortal they meet, taking them back to their sylvan home (usually in a cave or other sheltered place) and treating them awfully. Because of their strength and size, few want to challenge them.

Vedi are generally solitary beings and never mingle with their own kind or others unless it is to find a mate. Mortals try to show them respect and avoid them if and when possible, mostly because they do not know which Vedi are good or bad until it is too late.

COMBAT: A Ved has no problem using its super-strength in battle, wielding trees and other heavy objects as weapons. It is a rare sight to see the Vedi assembling for war, armed and in groups, but there are stories of dangers in the wilderness too great for them to ignore sometimes, and they will amass to face it.

CONTROL WEATHER: If it is absolutely needed, the Vedi can control the local weather for hours at a time, changing it to whatever is needed. They can make good weather better or worse, snow in summer or rain during a dry season. This is one of their abilities gained from their hazy lineage going back to the time of the second generation.

MIGHTY BREATH: The Ved's large chest holds powerful air that can be expelled if required as a defensive or offensive tactic. The breath is so mighty that it can knock down most beings and objects (averaging about 150+ lbs or more). The Ved's breath blows in a wide cone 20 ft wide and 50 ft away. Unless a target makes a strength save, they are blown off of their feet 2d20 ft and will take 2d10 damage from the impact. Fires will be extinguished, and anything not held or tied down will be thrown away in the winds.

VODYANOY

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1

SIZE: Medium (4-5 ft.)

HD: 5d6

MOVE: 50 ft.

AC: 16

ATTACKS: Grab

SPECIAL:

SAVES: M

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Neutral

TYPE: Monstrous Humanoid

TREASURE: Nil

XP: 500+5

Also called a vodník, this green colored water spirit does not like strangers. They aim to drown or terrify outsiders to keep their stretch of home waters serene. The Vodyanoy are very aquatic in appearance, with green beards and long hair, and a dark scaly body slathered in mud, algae and other watery detritus. This enables them to blend into their surroundings seamlessly and spy on strangers well before deciding an action to take against them. Their eyes burn red, their hands are large and webbed, and their lower half is a fish's tail complete with fins. Many Vodyanoy are very human appearing with just a greenish

tint, some membrane in their fingers, and slight scaling.

They are known to linger by the shore if strangers are near, often in disguise appearing more like a vagrant or homeless man still wet in his clothes.

COMBAT: Vodyanoy are capable of using weapons, but prefer to grab their foes and drag them beneath the water to drown. They will use their natural camouflage to get as close as possible before attacking.

GRAB: The vodyanoy will attempt to seize a hold of its target and drag them below the water. A strength check is required to break the hold, or the target will begin drowning.

ŽIBURINIS

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-10

SIZE: Medium

HD: 1 (d12)

MOVE: 30 ft.

AC: 13

ATTACKS: Weapon

SPECIAL: Undead

SAVES: P

INT: None

ALIGNMENT: Neutral

TYPE: Undead (Common)

TREASURE: 1

XP: 5+1

Humanoid skeletons are the animated remains of humanoid creatures. Their bodies are little more than bone and sinew held together by vile sorcery. They move with a slow gait, but have the strength to wield weapons, wear armor and carry shields. Skeletons are mindless, but are aware of living things and always attack them. They are often encountered under the command of an evil cleric or wizard.

COMBAT: Skeletons attack silently and with a very frightening intensity, killing anything living in their path. Because of their boney nature, any slashing or piercing weapons do half damage, while blunt weapons do normal damage.

ZMEY

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1+

SIZE: Large (20 ft.)

HD: (See Below)

MOVE: 60 ft., 200 ft. (flying), 30 ft. (burrow).

AC: Special

ATTACKS: 2 Claw (d4),

Wing (d6), Tail (d6), Bite (2d8)

SPECIAL: Breath Weapon, Spell-like Abilities, Immunity to Fire

SAVES: M, P

INT: See Red Dragon

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Neutral

TYPE: Dragon

TREASURE: See table (hoard)

XP: Special

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The Zmey is a very particular type of dragon only found in the Slavic regions of the world. These three headed beings are very intelligent and wise but are also a threat to others because of their violent tendencies and bad habits.

As with all European dragons, they hoard wealth and seek mortal women to breed with them. Their children are called *zmajevit* (See 'The Dragon Born' in this chapter) and grow to become heroes and powerful people. Godlike, the zmey are worshiped by many and even honored by offerings and praise for fear of their wrath.

Zmey are still plentiful in the world since the early days after creation by the Two Gods. They are found in the wild, but can take over fortresses and palaces from mortals as their own and turn them into magnificent lairs. Bogatyr try to make a name for themselves by slaying a zmey and freeing any captive women, but these attempts usually end in disaster for those unprepared to match the intelligence of the dragon they encounter.

These dragons also go by other names in Slavic lands; *pozoj*, *smok* and *zmaj*, etc. For the sake of general dragon rules, the zmey's age and other factors counts as the 'Red Dragon' in the **Monsters & Treasure** supplement.

COMBAT: The zmey can attack with all three of its heads at the same time per round, using its breath weapon or biting, in addition to the other attacking options. Like all dragons, it will incinerate and eradicate its foes with brute force and magic.

SPELL-LIKE ABILITIES: These abilities will count the same as a red dragon as far as figuring the number of spells and of what levels.

BREATH WEAPON: The zmey emits boiling oils and roaring flames from its toothy mouth, doing 1d10 damage per HD; only a dexterity save will reduce the damage by half. This breath weapon is lethal and can melt much of what it hits leaving few defences.

THE MAGICAL BORN

In the Slavic mythic universe, there are many born with souls granted with magical and powerful spirits. These beings are exceptional and rare and typically outcast from normal Slavonic society.

Even so, they are not inherently evil, but blessed with powers and abilities far beyond the average mortal men. They are also born with destinies that are often obscure but linear and inescapable from the moment of their conception.

As player characters, these magical born races can challenge the game balance if not handled properly, but this is the issue with any additional races or creatures...It can be overwhelming, but the author feels it is more than welcome.

According to the beliefs of the Old Slavs, which found its way into later Slavic mythology across Europe and into Russia, certain people were born with unique origins. These are covered here in detail for the player and CK to use for gaming.

The first is the *zmajevit* or the 'Dragon Born', and those conceived of these origins are capable of profound and monstrous abilities on par with the dragons themselves. *Zmajevit*, however, do not have lengthy life spans because of their intense existences.

Second is the *zduhać*, individuals who were cast from elemental forces of nature. According to most traditions, these two blur and are the same but many view them as separate entities, and for the purposes of this codex they are two wholly separate things.

In the end it will be the CK that decides if the inclusion of these mighty magical born beings can be included into their campaign. Such power, even with limitations, can be unsettling and disturb the balance of gameplay.

ZMAJEVIT – THE DRAGON BORN

Peculiar from birth, with a caul that is either scaly as a reptile's, or is draconian in form, the *zmajevit* has dragon blood coursing in his or her veins from the onset. This has given them an innate link with the arrival of oncoming demonic inspired storms (always summoned by their rival and enemy the *ala*) and other abilities. Most who are conceived from a union between a dragon and mortal do not live long, or suffer from maladies such as physical or mental illnesses and little more, but those who prosper become the *zmajeviti*.

Often called the *zmajevit covek* (snake man) because of their many reptilian traits, the dragon born are considered both cursed and blessed by their birth. They are at once excluded from normal society because of their uniqueness and yet given a silent respect for the role they fulfil in combating the demons of the air and destructive dragons.

The dragon born are very private in nature and are considered magicians because of their mystical methods of dealing with their demonic foes. They can be found in the company with others but are not usually outgoing. This is generally because their heightened senses are constantly searching for their demonic foes on the winds. Storms on the horizon bring them anxiety and tension as they know the *ala* maybe behind it.

The dragon born are sometimes scaly in random places, if not all over, reflecting their dragon origins. They will do their best to conceal this when in the company of humans. *Czernobog's* followers can usually sense them (wisdom check) when in their presence.

Often, more than any other, the *zmajevit* do not worship the gods of Light or Dark as they consider themselves caught between the cosmic struggle of the Two Brothers. Another name for them is the *zmajeviti Ijiudi* or 'Dragon Lords' because of their greatness.

Unlike other mortals, the *zmajeviti* undergo a twelve month long term in the womb, which can kill their mother in the process. The village elders, priests, and others who are wise enough know that if the mother slips into her tenth month of pregnancy or more she is pregnant with a dragon born. They will not exile her, nor mistreat her in any way as her child will be the offspring

that will oppose the storm demons or dragons that plague the land. Unfortunately, there are exceptions to this rule, especially since the encroachment of Christianity into native lands. Such births have caused hysteria and panic, bringing talk of demons, witches, and other sinister beings.

More powerful, longer lived zmajeviti can shapechange (6th level) but only when they are battling their rivals the ala. Dragon born are best as wizards, or ‘magicians’ in the eyes of the common-folk across the Sklavenia and beyond. Their innate magic is amplified, and their powers shine like no other when they champion the people against the demons.

DESCRIPTION: The zmajeviti appear to be normal humans when garbed from head to toe, but may show reptilian scales in the face or even have the eyes of a snake or serpent. They can range from slender to stout in stature due to their dragon heritage, but do not flaunt their nature. Many are born with tails, serpent-like, or even the beginnings of a pair of wings on their backs and must hide them from the earliest age. In many regions, the zmajeviti are born strong and muscular due to their dragon origins and have a mighty frame.

PERSONALITY: Because of their unusual nature, they are generally secretive and not outgoing. Zmajeviti are unassuming in a crowded environment and wish to remain that way. They do not want to draw any attention to their presence. Once demonic or dragon based dangers are apparent and innocent common-folk are victimized, the dragon born will throw off their disguise and charge into battle with their enemies. This does not usually cross racial boundaries, and they will allow harm to befall other peoples (Saxons, Greeks, Romans, Celts, etc), but a few will bridge the gap between peoples and stand for all alike.

RACIAL AFFINITIES: The zmajeviti will only cling to their Slavic brethren or their own immediate tribe or community. This can extend outwards if more epic tasks and deeds call for it. They will join with other non-human races if there is a need and if the goals of both align. The dragon born can smell out the servants of Czernobog most of the time (wisdom check) or those who dwell in Nav, and refuse to accompany them or destroy them if given the chance.

Upon sight, smell, or sense the zmajeviti will show instant animosity towards the ala and dragons, attacking them regardless of their current situation. It will almost seem reckless and foolhardy to others, but they will cast aside all others and dive into battle (See Below ‘Battle Trance’).

ENVIRONMENT: The dragon born are like humans in how they travel and choose dwellings. They have a sense and a way with storms and bad weather, however, that gives them knowledge of the passing or possible arrival of the ala, and this enables them to track the whereabouts of them. Lone zmajeviti will often travel across the Slavic world, following storms in hopes of finding and battling the demons within to stop them from destroying crops and harming innocents along the way.

RACIAL TRAITS AND ABILITIES

RACIAL ENEMY (ALA): Upon immediate sight or sense, the dragon born will erupt into a violent confrontation with ala demon without reason or second thought. The zmajeviti will have a -2 penalty on charisma for any willpower attempts while in the presence of their hated enemy. There is no way the dragon born could focus on anything else but destroying them.

SECRET WINGS: Hidden under their back shoulders are large magnificent eagle-like wings. These do not come to full bloom until the character is 3rd level. Once this level is reached, the dragon born can fly up to 55 ft per round. The zmajeviti can magically hide these wings by tucking them in and folding them. Once they have done so, they vanish and appear as only scaly flesh on the spine and shoulder blades.

STORM SENSE: The dragon born are able to sense the oncoming storm and can tell if there are ala within it. The range is wider in radius with each experience level in addition to checks made (or failed). The initial range is 2 + experience level in miles. In turn, each ala must make a wisdom check or the zmajeviti can detect them.

BATTLE TRANCE: Once the ala have come, shrouded inside dark violent storms, the dragon born goes into a hypnotic trance to ascend up into the heart of the storm to battle them. The zmajeviti must not be disturbed while he or she meditates. This will take up to 1d6 rounds before the battle trance is completed, then their spirit is transformed into a glowing dragon which emerges from their mouth into the sky to fight the ala in the storms (See ‘Astral Dragon’). Only the most experienced dragon born undergo this and face the ala in this way. Otherwise, it is a very life-consuming ability that the snake wizards do not take lightly. For each time this ability is successfully used, a wisdom save must be made. If successful, nothing is lost; if the save is failed, however, the dragon born will lose a point of constitution. The battle trance places the zmajeviti covek into as much danger as it does the ala he or she faces. Over time, it will sicken them.

ASTRAL DRAGON: After a character reaches 3rd level, they are ready to use and battle the ala with their astral dragon. Until that time, they have spent endless years practicing the craft of meditation and harnessing the trance when the storms come in order to understand their zmaj blood. Until then, they only must battle the Ala or other foes physically or by magic. Each zmajeviti’s astral dragon is unique, and embodies the person who it has come from. These creature are usually able to battle only the ala. However, powerful and rare dragon born can turn their astral dragons on other enemies. These astral dragons can be used to terrible effect. Physical weapons cannot harm them unless they are magical; only spells or magical beasts and monsters can do damage (which shares the summoner’s hit points). Its attacks are similar to a basic dragon (see ‘zmaj’) with any spells the dragon born may also possess. The astral dragon’s range is the same as the storm sense and duration is until the enemy is slain, the astral dragon is

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defeated, or its summoner or the foe leaves. The astral dragon is semi-transparent in form but moves swiftly, able to combat the ala equally in the storms above. If a zmajeviti reaches 9th level or higher, the astral dragon can be summoned to face other foes that are not ala in origin. It is rare that the zmajeviti covek ever have the longevity to get to that level of power due to their violent life and destiny.

WITCH BOLT: The zmajeviti can call on a powerful bolt of lightning to rip into witches, doing experience level in 1d10 damage each round during combat. They can blast them through their hands, or in astral dragon form with the clawed hands on the end of their wings. By 5th level, the dragon born can fire two witch bolts per round. These lightning bolts can only be targeted at witches specifically or evil, female spellcasters.

LANGUAGES: Slavic (whichever native form the character is from, and an understanding of the other forms). Possibly Greek, Germanic, Turkic, Arabic, Celtic and Romanian/Latin.

SIZE: Medium

MOVEMENT: 20 ft. Flight 55 ft.

TYPICAL CLASSES: Wizard, Ranger, Fighter.

ATTRIBUTE MODIFIER: +1 Strength, +1 Wisdom, -2 Constitution

ZDUHAĆ – THE ELEMENTAL ONE

These individuals are also called stuhać (The Elements) and are considered born or conceived by them in a mortal woman's womb. Their function is very similar to the zmajeviti by all appearances, but they do things in a wholly different manner. The zduhaći do not focus their attentions on battling the ala. Instead, they use their abilities to drive storms away or to face each other as rivals.

Being born with a unique red or white caul from birth, the zduhać must keep it and sew it into their clothing as a magical focus for the rest of their life. If it is lost or broken, they lose their power, possibly resulting in death. Villages in the mortal world across the Slavonic lands that are fortunate enough to have a zduhać raise them as protectors of their homes, fields or local territory. They are rare, as uncommon as the dragon born, and thus they are highly prized.

Unlike the dragon born, the zduhaći have no obvious outward traits of their race, nor are they so burdened by a fated existence. They are simply considered magicians in touch with the forces of wind and air and can harness and use their abilities to great effect when needed. They are considered heroes by many, but there are darker and more evil natured individuals within the race as well.

Many of the more questionable zduhaći tend to use their powers to subject the innocent to suffering in order to exact tribute or create terror. Many villages and people are powerless against depredations of this kind as the zduhać is either extremely powerful and unapproachable, or secluded and acting anonymously.

There are many names in other Slavic regions for the zduhaći, or for beings similar. There are the gradobranitelj (Hail Defender), stuha (The Elemental One), vetrovnjak (One of the Wind) and many other titles. The older and more powerful they are, the more frightening their abilities with the wind and storms become. Harnessing this monstrous power does have its cost (See 'Calling the Wind') to the user if it is summoned to cause harm and destruction.

Many zduhaći in the southern Balkan regions become vampire hunters, using their storm abilities to seek out the undead, in which case they are then given another name, krsnik, and it is rumored they are taught by the faeries in the wilderness to seek out the undead.

Many consider them wind wizards or storm magicians once their presence is known and give them respect, even making offerings to ward off any threat of future danger. Others pay them in hopes they will prevent storms from harming their homes or crops or for protection from other zduhaći that might be coming to harm them.

They are not so much a class as a type of mixed race of mortal, able to blend their elemental nature in with their own path of occupation in life. They are predominantly male, although females are rare, perhaps 1 in 10.

Like the zmajeviti, the zduhać can step out of their body with their soul or spirit to do battle or to use magic. It isn't something each can do easily, but it is a trait that one is born to innately. Zduhaći must discover their ability by trial and error, by accident, or be taught by another who can do it. It does not come easily or automatically.

These Slavic storm wizards are revered across the Slavonic world, and feared in the exterior lands by foreigners who do not understand their magic or abilities. They are considered druids by Celts, sorcerers by Germans, and dangerous by the Byzantine Empire. What makes them deadlier is their occupation of taking on the full-time craft of spell-casting and wizardry in addition to their natural born abilities. In time, it would make them unstoppable.

As NPCs, they choose to protect one specific location and guard it from dangers, whether it be from rival zduhaći, demons, or other threats. A village may have such a storm magician present, and the visitors may not know it until they create a danger to the villagers. A group of zduhaći working together can be even more problematic as they can harness their abilities to great effect. Slavic myth mentions them in sporadic places and how rival teams would fight from village to village, sending storms to plague each other's crops and homes.

Mighty storm magicians are capable of ripping the trees from the earth, often by their own hand or by the force of their winds, and completely eradicating the fields. Zduhaći can side with the shining gods above or the dark ones below, they have no preference. They are eccentric in their manner, dress, and behavior.

In some locales, they are considered holy men, though more often they are akin to snake oil salesmen, traveling from village to village trying to drum up the next scheme and occasionally managing to summon up their wind to awe the people. Only the older more powerful storm magicians are not reduced to petty thievery or deception to get by and can rely on their innate powers for an occupation. Many kings and chiefs hire them to aid in disturbing the enemy with storms during a siege or pitched battle, paying large fees to secure a victory. It is said many famous generals in Slavic history were *zduhać* and used their own ability to win impossible battles; one such general was Marko Miljanov Popović.

DESCRIPTION: The *zduhaći* have a peculiar beginning, often born with a unique birthmark (a tuft of hair on their shoulder or neck) in addition to the caul that is white or red in color. They can have natural parents as with any other mortal but many seem to spring from nowhere giving rise to ‘virginal’ conception tales wherein the mother was impregnated by the very storm itself during a furiously rainy night. As they grow older, they do not appear any different than other people except for their eccentric behavior.

According to the sources, the *zduhaći* would uproot trees or craft specially made items from wood or other similar substances to face each other in battle. Many were described as having wind-blown hair and beards, with crazed eyes and icy blue skin from the harsh winds. They were often armed with firebrands and would bash their foes with them fiercely. Tales mention a weakness that all *zduhaći* share that only a few common-folk or wisemen possess the knowledge of; a piece of wood (a *luć*), usually taken from a fatwood tree, burning at both ends and blessed could seriously harm them (this counts as a *zduhać* bane weapon doing 10d20 damage per strike).

PERSONALITY: The *zduhaći* are mentioned as being fearless and bold in nature as the storms they oppose and summon. Their mindset is always one of strength and focus, never out of place with the events but to others they might appear distracted or distant. If they are in the wizard class, they are distracted more so by their magical affairs.

Many *zduhaći* are jealous of the others of their race, seeking to discover their power, strength, and allegiance. They will not hesitate in opposing a rival if they find out another is representing an enemy village or god, just to reduce them down to rubble or make a slave of them. Many are very intensely insecure about their place in the cosmic world and aspire to rise ever higher in time.

Many are law-abiding, honor bound and seek justice, living a life of prosperity if they can. These are the examples of which most are known by in the Slavic world, and how many are raised by their community.

RACIAL AFFINITIES: They consider themselves part of the human race, not apart from it, unlike the *zmajeviti covek*. Humans, on the other hand, do not always share the same feeling and are alienated by their strange ways. Even though they

are revered among the common-people across the Slavic world, there are many exceptions.

The noble ranks and the newly Christianized portion of the populace consider them Satanic and a menace in league with the Devil. A growing movement with the Eastern Greek Orthodox Church out of Byzantine is trying to oust their place in the Slavic provinces.

ENVIRONMENT: They generally dwell among the same regions as humans. Since wild storms rage across eastern Europe, the storm magicians are scattered from forest to village but never usually dwell in fortified structures unless under hire by a king or lord. They prefer the rural life to an urban one due to the peace and the ease that enables them to go into their hypnotic state for their *Calling the Wind* ability.

RACIAL TRAITS AND ABILITIES

WIND FLIGHT: Because their spirit is born of the elements, the *zduhaći* can fly aloft into the skies upon command. Unfortunately, this ability does not manifest itself until the storm magician is at 2nd level of experience or more (in whatever class they have chosen to follow). Once they have obtained this ability, they simply have to will the ability and their spirit raises them 10 ft. for every 2 experience levels with a movement of 55 ft./round.

SHAPE-SHIFT: Once a *zduhać* reaches 3rd level, their inner power has grown to such a state that they can morph themselves into beasts. For each experience level the storm magician gains another animal incarnate form. Beginning with 3rd level it will be a rooster, 4th level shepherd dog, 5th level bellwether sheep, 6th level billy goat, 7th level ox. This shifting of form is meant to help them blend into the farm environment to aid and protect their people. The *zduhać* gains the animal’s capabilities while possessing his or her own for a number of minutes equal to their wisdom score.

FUTURE SENSE: Only a *zduhać* with a wisdom score of 20 or higher can have this ability. This gift of prophecy is extremely rare. In flashes of random scenes, voices, and sensations, the storm magician will receive glimpses of future situations. These situations are not minor ones, but major and involve serious matters. It will be the CK’s decision in the course of the game and story to tell and craft these moments throughout the session. When these prophetic episodes occur is at random and can be set off or triggered by anything, or appear in dreams.

CALL THE WIND: Using their inborn power the *zduhaći* can either amplify or repel a storm. This is the ability that defines them to the core. It will also consume them as well, for its use will be tiring and destroy them or others in the process. When used to repel a storm, if it’s just an effect of the weather and not caused by another storm magician or the coming of an ala, a wisdom check is made with no modifier *after* the *zduhać* has summoned their out-of-body form (See ‘Storm Bull’). If, however, the storm is caused by another *zduhać*, then it becomes a battle, a fierce match that isn’t so simply handled by a mere repellent; it is now a duel. This duel must be dealt with as a

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combat, either by spells or melee, depending on how the opponents choose to fight it out in the stormy skies once in their astral forms. (The storm will remain for the duration of the duel and its effects will do its job on the surroundings.)

The storm is as powerful as the summoner and can do damage based on their experience level:

- 1st level – windy, light rain, -1 on missile weapons (to hit and damage).
- 2nd to 3rd levels – strong winds, rainy, small hail, -2 on missile weapons.
- 4th to 5th levels – intense wind, slanting rain, quarter size hail (d4 damage/round), blinding storm, uprooting foliage and dislodging stones, -3 on missile weapons.
- 6th to 8th levels – tornadic winds, baseball sized hail (d6 damage), biting rain, structures collapsing from storm, -4 missile weapons.
- 9th to 10th levels – hurricane weather, softball sized hail (d8), -5 missile weapons.

NOTE: All people on the ground must make dexterity saves if caught in storms at 6th level or higher or be thrown 1d100 ft and suffer more damage (5d20) as long as they are caught in the storm.

The duration of this storm or wind lasts in rounds as long as the zduhaći's experience level multiplied by 10. Its range is one-mile radius per experience level but this can be added to by another storm magician who can place their own level within it, thus the gathering of many into groups throughout the Slavic world. (For example: three 1st level storm magicians have joined forces with their leader, a 3rd level zduhać. When they combine their efforts and raise a storm, they can create or defeat, any storm up to 6th level together, a terrifying thought! This can be alleviated, however, by a few more powerful storm magicians or one greater in ability if confronted.)

STORM BULL: This ability grants the zduhać the skill to leave their body behind, similar to the dragon born, and face the oncoming storms or the summoning magicians behind it. It is named for the many that take the form of a white bull that thunders within the dark clouds while out-of-body, even though one does not have to be in that form. From an early age, the storm magician is aware that they can leave their physical form but they do not always know how. It takes various means to acquire the skill.

The zduhać must fall into a deep trance-like sleep before leaving their body. Once they do, both their astral form and physical body are vulnerable. The storm bull will have the same hit points as its corporeal form, and if it dies, so does its true form; likewise if the sleeping body somehow is slain or awakened and the link between it and the astral spirit is broken. The victim will need to make a charisma save or suffer insanity until there is a way to combine the two again. This can be done by divine aid, a priest or more powerful zduhać, or possibly some enchant-

ed artifact. Whatever injuries the zduhać suffered while in the storm bull state, they carry into their physical form to heal (this means if they lost whatever number of hit points during a combat, they would deduct that amount from their own when they return to their body).

Once in this state, the storm magician can direct and guide his or her storm, or repel another by remaining within it. The zduhaći can leave their physical body in the astral form for a range equal to 1 mile + 1/experience level. This can last as long as they choose, however, waking up has various side-effects if they remain in this state for two or more hours. With just one constitution save these side-effects can be avoided. If not, the following will occur:

- -2 on all combat related rolls due to extreme grogginess from the sleep.
- Unable to communicate effectively for up to 1d4 hours, in which case the zduhać will mumble and slur.
- Will only be able to cast or use 1d4 spells (if spellcaster) for the next 1d4 hours.

ZDUHAĆ JUMP: In their physical form, the storm magician can perform astounding leaps that defy normal mortals. From an early age they realize they are able to catch the winds and ride them. The younger or lower level zduhaći can still manage to jump higher than even the best mortal athlete. The base height is 20 ft. plus 5 ft per level of experience the character possesses based on their chosen class. They simply need to leap.

LANGUAGES: Slavic (and an understanding of other related forms throughout the Slavic world). Possibly Greek, Germanic, Turkic, Arabic, Celtic and Romanian/Latin.

SIZE: Medium

MOVEMENT: 30 ft. Flight 55 ft., Leaping 20+ ft.

TYPICAL CLASSES: Wizard, Illusionist, Ranger, Rogue, Knight, Bard.

ATTRIBUTE MODIFIERS: +1 Wisdom, +1 Charisma, -1 Constitution.

VAMPIRDZHIJA – THE VAMPIRE HUNTER (WISDOM)

In traditional Slavic society, especially in more recent history, the role of vampire hunter was a real occupation. The deep set fear that the undead would feed on and exploit the living was ever present, and this was intensified after the Black Death struck Europe and the infamous witch hunts that followed in its wake.

In the time of the Old Slavs, during the Migration Era, whether the vampire hunter (as we understand it) existed or not is conjecture, but it would not be entirely impossible. Because Slavic culture and beliefs were steeped in the dread of dark gods and their demonic servants always bent on harming mankind, it would only seem likely that self-trained, or even secretive closed

societies existed within tribes or realms that cleansed regions of the vampiric threat.

It is with this hypothesis in mind that this codex puts forward the idea that the vampire hunter could conceivably exist in a post-Roman (western Empire) Europe, and even perhaps worked for the Eastern Orthodox Greek Church of the Byzantine Empire, or remained pagan and independent.

The term “djadajii” is Bulgarian in origin and sought out the kroiĵac, or vampire, but they did so by tricking them into bottles. Sort of in the manner of putting a djin back in their lamp. They had many methods and traps to do this by and it was hardly as heroic or as shown in the movies. The more familiar Slavic term for a Vampire Hunter would be vampirdzhija. This word bears the more familiar ‘vampire’ within it making it easier for western readers to identify it.

The function of the vampire hunter in Slavic society was twofold: on the one hand, they sought out witches who were often the creators of vampiric kind and put them on trial and/or executed them. Their other function, of course, was to find and slay vampires. Traditionally, however, they did not simply arrive to decapitate or place a stake in the heart of the vampire; it was not so easy. The vampire in question often had to be in the act of transforming into one, and they could not slay it until it was fully transformed. This could take several nights of waiting until it had risen from its grave or tomb, then the vampire hunter would strike. Until it was completely a vampire, it was not able to be slain and was invulnerable for a time, protected by the dark forces that made it.

While the vampire is forming, it is classified as an obur. If a witch is behind its creation and her spells are stopped, the process is now underway and cannot be reversed. If even more powerful forces are guiding this, the vampirdzhija cannot handle it alone.

Vampirdzhija travel the Slavic territories, sometimes beyond, to rid communities of the undead menace for a fee, and their services are not cheap. They can specialize in many forms of the undead in addition to the vampire since such beings usually enslave other undead beings to work for them. Villages and rural peoples plagued by vampires will go out of their way to hire vampirdzhija if it will mean ending the terror.

There are some regions in the mortal world where it touches upon the world of Nav, and hordes of vampires nest within the hills, caves and mountains there. Even the most experienced vampire hunters never go there. These ‘Bald Mountains’ are never cleansed of their vampiric denizens for Czernobog’s power reigns untamed. Even the oldest and wisest of the vampirdzhija know it is best not to venture into these places, for they are outnumbered.

Many peoples make animal and human sacrifices to vampires to appease them rather than suffer their wrath. In some regions throughout Slavic Europe the chiefs and leaders are vampires. So, the vampirdzhija’s work is continual and dangerous. Often the vampire will have fanatic followers, cultists, undead min-

ions, monsters, or even an entire tribe to contend with before putting the undead being to the grave once and for all.

This occupation is not one chosen willingly by many. It can be forced upon one if their parents are victims of a vampire, or if they are being raised by a vampire hunter. Unless the CK designs it in the campaign setting, there are likely no schools set up to train the vampirdzhija to hunt and slay the vampires. It is a semi-random occurrence, infrequent enough that it would be a million to one that ever two vampirdzhija should ever meet.

Vampire hunters often had special or unusual births in the stories. Many believe they must be born on Saturday (enabling them to see the invisible or detect vampires), or that they had to be fed sheep’s meat slain by wolves. This was to prepare them for the terrible things in which they were soon to see in life.

Given the endless possibilities in the mythic world setting in these codices, the CK and players could devise many ideas behind the vampire hunter(s) in the adventuring party. The vampirdzhija is part fighter, cleric, and ranger wrapped up in one. They have a stress-filled, dark life rife with death and horror, never peaceful and given to endless nights awake in crypts and old burial mounds. While other classes may incur the wrath of local lords, jealous chiefs, or even dragons, the vampire hunter will bring on the vengeance of vampire lords or their even mightier demonic masters sent from Czernobog himself. Eventually the vampirdzhija may cause a confrontation with the upper levels of Nav’s evil and its dead legions for what damage they have done to their plans.

ABILITIES

TRACK WITCH: The vampire hunter possesses the skill of being able to hunt witches in a rural or urban setting. He or she can identify their telltale markings, traces of ceremonial evidence (animal/human sacrifice, candles, chalk markings, etc), or by other presences. The key to locating vampires is first finding the witch(es) that made them, if that be the case; this ability is crucial. Where others can only speculate on the likelihood that witches were present, the vampire hunter can investigate and spot the minute details that prove it. From 1st to 3rd level the vampirdzhija gains a +1 to their intelligence check when investigating a scene or location where witchery may have been. From 4th to 6th level they then maintain a +2 on said check, and then a +3 from 7th level or higher, and only a +4 at 10th level on. Witches and their ilk are ever more cunning in disguising their secretive presence and evading the mundane world.

FORGE VAMPIRE SLAYER: Unlike the more modernized undead in the cinema and literature, the vampires in the world of the Old Slavs did not perish so easily or regularly. The vampirdzhija gains the ability to create weaponry that can aid in the slaying of the undead foe. Although to the uninitiated these appear as just simple iron stakes, the vampire hunter must forge special crafted ones that can *only* slay the vampire while they sleep in their grave/coffin. These stakes measure a foot in length and are heavy, covered in traditional Slavic markings that have the sym-

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bols of the gods of light. The stake is called a 'Světlo Perun' or 'Perun's Light' as it strikes the undead and sends it to perish forever and for its gleaming silvery shine. Only the vampirdzhija knows the secret symbols and where to place them on the stake to make this work. It takes a few hammer blows over the vampire's heart for it to work and slay the undead servant of Czernobog. Having these stakes in hand, the vampire hunter gains a +2 to attack the vampire as long as it is in its grave sleeping and will count as an instant kill attack with no less than three blows.

DE-WITCHING CANDLE: By 3rd level, the vampire hunter can take bee's wax, special herbs, certain metals, and charms made from bone/metal/stone and make 1d4 candles per month. It requires intense concentration and time to make each candle, and with such limited supplies on hand there is little guarantee that the vampirdzhija can do so successfully. The process is extremely unique, and the bane of witches, vampires, and powerful liches. Each de-witching candle is as strong as the vampirdzhija's experience level as a nullifying agent against a spell or curse cast on the vampire hunter, or those within its limited radius (once lit). Each candle's radius is 2.5 ft. Each candle's duration is a base of 3 hours + any additional experience level above third level. The vampirdzhija may combine candles to increase the effective level of protection. (Example: If a 4th level vampire hunter created 2 de-witching candles to prepare for an encounter against a mighty vampire lord who possessed 8th level magic, the candles combined will block 8th level magic, the same as the vampire lord's own spells for the duration of the candles.)

VAMPIRIC CHARMS: The vampirdzhija must be able to manufacture small charms to ward off the various powers vampires or their lesser minions may exhibit. The vampire hunter acquires this ability once they have reached 3rd level, after many years of effort and survival against terrible odds. In later Christian centuries the vampirdzhija will use the religious icons with images of the saints, but during the Migration Era (or earlier) they likely used images of the gods of light in Vyrjy. Each level passed 3rd, the vampirdzhija can ward off a special ability of the vampire with a charm. These charms can be manufactured once per month with wood/bone/stone, written on with paint, or carved with a sharp blade or point. If broken, its power is ruined.

- 3rd level: **DENY DRAIN CHARM:** This charm will prohibit the vampire from draining the blood of the wearer. It will keep 1d6 damage regained in turn to replace the blood a vampire manages to drain (a vampire will drain 1d4/round).
- 5th level: **DENY ENERGY DRAIN:** This attack is more powerful, and the charm denies the vampire's energy attack. The charm will stall the level or hit dice drain completely but if the vampire continues to force the energy drain on the wearer of the charm for longer than the charm maker's experience level + d6 rounds (when first created), the charm will burst on the wearer.
- 7th level: **BLOCK DOMINATION:** The power of this charm will not only block the vampire's ability to dominate the wearer, but it will stop the *evil eye*. This is the most potent of the charms in the vampirdzhija's arsenal and requires 1d4 days

to create. This task will be neither cheap nor easy, and the vampire hunter does not make these often.

HOLY WREATH: When dealing with the vampire kind, they will more often summon beasts of the earth and sky to aid them using their *children of the night* ability. Vampirdzhija are wise and aware that many of the animals of nature also work for the vampires and their dark god Czernobog, and so have devised repellent to banish them at times. Whether it be swarms of bats, wolves, rodents, flies, or other beasts summoned to serve their master, the vampirdzhija must equip themselves accordingly to keep them at bay. This ability is gained at 4th level and usually takes the form of donning a wreath of herbs laced with blessed knots and small images of the gods of light. To the vampire hunter, this is the 'svatý věnec' (holy wreath) and is elaborate and worn with much pride, each one individual and distinctive. The svatý věnec will only protect the wearer from the vampire's animal agents and servants for as long as it is on. If it is cut, burnt, or somehow mangled or ruined, its potency is forever lost. The vampire's beasts will completely ignore and be unable to perceive anyone wearing this wreath. The vampirdzhija can only make one of these for themselves at a time ever, however. If ruined, another can be constructed, requiring nearly a month.

KUDLAK FIRE: Due to the often non-corporeal natural of vampires, many who attempt to harm them cannot. The experienced vampirdzhija who has risen to 5th level is able to create, through alchemy and special incantations, an ingredient that will explode into an awful fire. This dangerous fireball will harm gaseous and ghostly undead beings alike. Kudlak is another word in Croatia, from Slovenia, for vampire. The vampirdzhija will often bottle these *kudlak fires* up into small glass containers or other palm-sized objects to throw. It requires a fire source near the non-corporeal vampire or ghostly undead target and a throwing attack as a missile. (NOTE: This attack halves the vampire's AC, as fire alone makes all undead vulnerable.) The vampire hunter can manufacture their intelligence score divided by 3 per month (rounded up) at a time. Each *kudlak fire* will do 5d20 damage to a non-corporeal vampire/undead per hit with a blast radius of 10 ft. They will only do 1d5 damage to physical beings and a slight blinding flash otherwise with each explosion.

GATHER FOLLOWERS: At 7th level, the vampire hunter can choose, because of their reputation and legacy, a team of followers (1d6 NPCs) to aid them in the pursuit of seeking witches and vampires. They can help in investigating, contacting sources, finding out information, etc. for them while they are out adventuring. The CK and player can both design the NPC team, their backgrounds, experience levels (must be between 1st to 3rd level), etc. These followers can prove valuable to the vampire hunter in giving them story leads at any time during a normal game when there are no vampires or undead to deal with.

VAMPIRDZHIIJA CODE OF CONDUCT

Although most vampire hunters in Slavic Europe are likely independent and alone, many are possibly following orders to

locate and eliminate the vampire menace sent up from the abysmal depths of Nav. To do so, they all follow a set of basic rules to ensure that, in their struggle against the undead, they do not become one themselves.

1. **PROTECT THE INNOCENT:** This is the first and most important rule. The common-folk are the most preyed upon and victimized and their protection is above all. Nobles, priests, and others may be innocent as well but the common-folk are the most vulnerable to predations of the vampire.
2. **NEVER RELEASE A WITCH ALIVE:** One witch left alive is one too many. They can cast curses and create other vampires.
3. **CZERNOBOG'S TRICKS ARE MANY:** Master of deception and deceiver of his own brother, Czernobog will use any trick he can muster to fool the vampirdzhija. Always be prepared for the Dark God's many cunning tricks, whatever they may be, during the hunt.
4. **CHOOSE THE MASTER OVER MINIONS:** If put into a decision to confront the vampire master or his followers, avoid the followers to get to their leader. Destroy him or her and the rest of their entourage will collapse instantly. Waging a war against the army will never defeat the general singlehandedly.
5. **DESTROY THE LAIR:** Never leave the lair standing. Leave no traces. Destruction by fire is the best method. If the vampire is not present, they will seek another place to sleep. Do not destroy the lair unless the vampire and their followers were dealt with beforehand.
6. **TRUST IN THE WORD OF PEASANTS:** Common-folk gossip and spread rumors, but they usually always have their ear to the truth. Where life and limb are concerned they will never lie. When there is talk of vampires and the hungry or angry dead, seek out their words, no matter how confusing or contradictory.
7. **DO NOT LET PERSONAL LIFE DERAILED THE HUNT:** A vampirdzhija should never let their personal life interrupt hunting vampires. The vampire will use this as a strategy against the vampirdzhija to sidetrack them if able. The best plan for a vampire hunter is to be stoic and remain detached from it all.
8. **SLAY A FELLOW HUNTER IF THEY BECOME A VAMPIRE:** Regardless of whether they are family, a close friend, or another traveling companion/adventurer, they must now be slain. Make no exceptions and do not fall for any sentimental ploys they may use to avoid being slain. Burn them alive or stake them in their sleep. Make no mistake as they will easily feed on you and add you to the abysmal legions of Czernobog.
9. **YOU OWE NO ALLEGIANCE TO KINGS OR LORDS:** Even though you travel in the lands ruled by them, policed

by their armies and commanders, you wage war against a fiercer foe. If cast into their cells for crimes against them, trust in others in the Order to liberate you so that you may continue the fight again.

10. **NEVER BETRAY THE ORDER:** Of all the many rules listed, this is the most important. The Order spans all over the Slavonic world and even beyond its edges where it concerns those chosen by Svarog and the gods of light. The security of the Order in its war against the parasitic undead is paramount and cannot be compromised to anyone for any reason. The Order will just as easily turn its capabilities and hunting skills onto the traitor and be rid of them in short order, making no village or urban area safe if such a betrayal occurs. The whereabouts of the many safe-houses and training locations must remain secret, as well as the leaders, elders, and hierarchy of the Order.

PRIME ATTRIBUTE: Wisdom

HIT DICE: 1d8

ALIGNMENT: Lawful Good, Lawful Neutral, Neutral Good

WEAPONS ALLOWED: Any

ARMOR ALLOWED: Any

ABILITIES: Track Witch, Forge Vampire Slayer, Vampiric Charms, Kudlak Fire, Holy Wreath, Gather Followers, De-Witching Candle

LEVEL	HD	BTH	EPP
1	d10	0	0
2	d10	+1	2,251
3	d10	+2	4,501
4	d10	+3	9,001
5	d10	+4	18,001
6	d10	+5	40,001
7	d10	+6	75,001
8	d10	+7	150,001
9	d10	+8	250,001
10	d10	+9	500,001
11	+4 HP	+10	725,001
12	+4 HP	+11	950,001

13+ 225,000 per level



CHAPTER 4: FILLED WITH GREAT MAGIC

Slavic wizardry and shamanism are two systems that are both separate and identical and have been interwoven through the ages. Although the details and data on either are at times vague and hard to obtain, this chapter will entertain what knowledge there is available on both and make it playable.

While one system, wizardry (kolduny) is generally supported by the state or kings and nobles, shamanism (molfar) is more rural and from the wilds. Each has different worlds that weave and intertwine within the other and influence the other at times but never fully embrace the other.

Just as the world was diverse for the Old Slavs, so was their concept of magic and sorcery. A complex terminology has been passed down from the earliest of times during the Migration Era into the 12th century and after, during the earnest centuries of conversion by the Eastern Orthodox Church from Constantinople.

Just as with most religions, pagan Slavic religions believed in good magic and bad magic, both forces always at odds. These polar opposites were influenced and compelled by the gods Svarog (Bielobog) and his rival brother Czernobog.

Mankind is stuck between the two forces, forever trapped and forced to decide which to ally with when the time comes. Wizardry and shamanism can both harness the darker side of Czernobog's power or call upon the blessings of Svarog.

This chapter details what knowledge is available on Slavic pagan magical traditions, which is astoundingly plentiful in comparison to other European civilizations (the Celts, Germans, Norse, Roman, Early Greek and Etruscan for example). Also in this chapter are given two character classes; the koldun (Slavic wizard), and the molfar (shaman).

THE KOLDUNY (INTELLIGENCE)

Unlike the other European magical traditions, which were aggressively eradicated by missionaries from the Church by the 13th century, the Slavic pagan tradition remained for centuries into the early modern era. The kolduny functioned in both a small scale within local villages, farms, and tiny communities, and in the palaces of kings and nobles as well. Their services were highly sought after and respected in the Slavic world. This was in the time of the Old Slavs to the later medieval period consistently.

The koldun was revered as a more honorable form of wizard, able to harness magic in a pure manner, unlike so-called witches or healers. This is due to the fact that the others must call upon, or in some manner speak to, unclean spirits and are considered diseased by association. Largely, kolduny were poor and lived off the food and benefits given as payment by those they had helped. Many, however, lived resplendent lives graced by their time serving royalty, but they were the exception to the rule and disliked by the others among the kolduny.

Unfortunately, among the peasantry, the understanding between what was good magic and evil magic was often a hazy and indistinct. It was not well understood how such powers were summoned or shaped to bring about beneficial or malevolent outcomes. Knowing this, the kolduny often had to walk a fine line when using their wizardry when amid the peasantry, for fueling the fires of ignorance was easy if given the wrong dramatics or theatrics.

Illnesses, demonic possessions, and other ailments were more often blamed by the peasantry on the kolduny out of ignorance. This continued up into modern times in Slavic speaking regions of Europe. Kolduny, or specialists who were wizards, who were sent to detect witches or their presence, were called znakhari. This occupation ensured the job security and lives of the wizards when angry torch-wielding peasants sought out kolduny for their wrongs.

The more extravagantly and flamboyantly a koldun dresses, the more suspicious he or she (*koldun'ia*) is to the others of their kind, since most live a subsistence lifestyle. Kolduny are not like the standard fantasy wizard or sorcerer in that they are flashy or full of glamor. To the Slavic peasantry, the koldun's own chants, magical work, and presence is plenty enough for that, anything more is simply too much and reeks of foreign danger, wrought with too much potential evil.

This mentality may be due in part to a distant contact with the wizards or holy men of other peoples: the Persians' zoroastrian priests, Celtic druids, Roman pontiffs and others who were dramatic and full of theatrics. An air of suspicion has grown up around such extravagance and grandiose wizardry. The kolduny appear to be low-key, not as humble as the molfar or shaman, but near enough that the peasantry can generally come to terms with their existence.

In many Slavic territories (in antiquity and the present), the widespread belief in the *evil eye* is common. It is feared and thought that not only do witches possess this ability but that the kolduny as well. Urokljive or *evil eye* often doesn't have to be just literally one eye but both, and can be a fatal gaze that can lay low livestock, people, and crops. *The evil eye* was said to turn people and even the faeries to stone if used correctly.

Many kolduny are able to see into the future after they have gained enough experience and have been in tune with the Three Worlds long enough. These seers or volkhvy can peer into the future of an individual just enough to know what their fate may be, whether fortuitous or not. The vision might be vague in nature but it will give the volkhvy enough of a clue as to what may come, just not when or how soon.

In Poland, the witch is called czarwonica and, like the others throughout the Slavic world, are not trusted except by the most desperate or dark hearted. Their magic is filled with the energies from the underworld of Nav, breathed upon by the spirits of the dead and unclean. They are not always women either; warlocks are men, and this confuses the peasantry who seek their aid or

CHAPTER 4:

solace. One can easily see how the kolduny and witches are confused and why the kolduny must take measures to distance themselves from the rest to ensure no harm comes to them by enraged mobs of common-folk.

In the role of playing a koldun or koldun'ia, the player will gain several new abilities different from the normal wizard class for **C & C**, in addition to any extra for being one of the storm or dragon born race if chosen. At first, it appears to be quite a large set of extra abilities and almost a means to upset the game balance, but it won't be if handled correctly. The koldun's few abilities will not compromise the balance so the CK can be assured it won't be an issue.

ABILITIES

SENSE CZARWONICA: Once the koldun gains 3rd level, he or she can acquire an ability to sense a witch or warlock. This ability is optional, however, and will alter the course of the wizard's career turning them into a znakhari as well. The range is equal to experience level multiplied by ten feet in radius, with the witch/warlock in question making a charisma check or they are detected. This ability can be utilized once a day/night as it requires intense concentration and ceremony by the koldun.

VOLKHYV'S VISION: This ability is also optional, based on whether the koldun has a wisdom score of 19 or higher. The vision can be called upon in times of need, requiring a wisdom check (modified if certain conditions make it difficult – the CK can decide them as the story provides). If chosen, they can gain a stronger sense of vision over time.

- By 3rd level the volkhvy can only see/hear/smell/taste the barest minimum of a future incident or scene involving a person(s). This won't be enough to work off of on any level but enough to cause concern, even if it were a positive event.
- By 5th level the volkhvy's ability exhibits a more attuned skill and can visualize or sense with some precision. A greater depth of the vision is now apparent to the seer, providing some measure more of what is to be, even if it still a riddle.
- At 7th level the volkhvy has mastered the power and can call upon the gods of light or dark for the vision in its entirety. Unfortunately, this also comes with a price. The volkhvy possesses the entire scope of said event regarding the individual(s), but if they reveal any more than the whole of it, unless in riddle form, they will lose their magic for 1d100 days, lose half their hit dice, and may even be cursed or more (CK's decision).

SPELLS: The kolduny are wizards first and foremost and should be by **C & C** rules considered so. By Slavic tradition, they wield a fusion of what would be considered wizard, illusionist and cleric spells all together. It is this which also blurs their profession with the shaman class, but for the sake of brevity or balance, they can stick solely to the wizard list. The player of a kolduny can choose, however, during creation to use the illusionist spells rather than just wizard for variation.

PRIME ATTRIBUTE: Intelligence

ALIGNMENT: Any

HIT DICE: 1d4

WEAPONS: Dagger, staff, short-sword.

ARMOR: None

ABILITIES: Sense Czarwonica, Volkhvy's Vision, Spells.

LEVEL	HD	BTH	EPP
1	d4	0	0
2	d4	+1	2,601
3	d4	+1	5,201
4	d4	+1	10,401
5	d4	+1	20,801
6	d4	+2	42,501
7	d4	+2	85,001
8	d4	+2	170,001
9	d4	+2	340,001
10	d4	+3	500,001
11	+1 HP	+3	750,001
12	+1 HP	+3	1,000,001
13+	250,000 per level		

KOLDUN SPELLS PER DAY

Level	0	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th
1	4	2								
2	4	3								
3	4	3	1							
4	4	3	2							
5	5	4	2	1						
6	5	4	3	2						
7	5	4	3	2	1					
8	5	4	3	3	2					
9	5	5	4	3	2	1				
10	6	5	4	3	3	2				
11	6	5	4	4	3	2	1			
12	6	5	4	4	3	3	2			
13	6	5	5	4	4	3	2	1		
14	6	6	5	4	4	3	3	2		
15	6	6	5	5	4	4	3	2	1	
16	7	6	5	5	4	4	3	3	2	
17	7	6	5	5	5	4	4	3	2	1
18	7	6	6	5	5	4	4	3	3	2
19	7	6	6	5	5	5	4	4	3	2
20	7	7	6	6	5	5	4	4	3	3

THE MOLFAR (WISDOM)

In the earliest of societies worldwide, before any organized religions, the shaman came forward to lead the people into the spirit world. The shaman spoke to the dead without dealing with the dark gods or bargaining with Czernobog or his demons; he merely had to perform rituals, mystical and cryptic, to do so.

With many names in the Slavic world, for the sake of this codex, the term molfar (taken from the Slavonic tradition still in use today within the Carpathian Mountains surrounding Transylvania) will suffice. Bear in mind that koldun and volkhvy also are used as definitions for shaman in the Slavic tradition in other regions of Eastern Europe.

Most shamans in other regions of the world were driven out of society by the newer priesthoods and religions. In the Slavic territories, however, they remained far into the medieval period, and even into the present day. True shamanism is a rare and dying art and tradition.

The molfar is a recluse, normally, living in a very primitive home and close to nature as much as possible. He or she prefers to dwell close to the ways of the natural world in order to sense the changes of the seasons. They are smart with the lay of the land, knowledgeable of every stretch of terrain, waterway, food source, and animal traffic. Their knowledge in this is akin to the basic character class of ranger.

Unlike rangers, however, they speak to the spirits, beasts of the wilds, supernatural beings, and gods in a primal manner, unlike the more sophisticated priests. Shamans do have gatherings on occasion, but never as highly organized as the priesthoods around them.

The molfar is responsible for the wellbeing of the community he dwells near. When hard times come and nothing else seems to work, it is expected of the shaman that he make some sacrifice in a ritual or ceremony to lift the oppressive malevolent force that harms them. Molfar speak to the ancestors and have a chosen spirit guide, usually an eagle or bear.

Central to the molfar and his cosmological view is the World Tree that holds the Three Worlds together. The tree holds a prevalent place in their art and symbolism. It is said that only the molfar has actually climbed the branches of the World Tree and can thus see it at all times, while all others are blind to it. Few, unfortunately, have scaled to the very top of the tree and peered above the clouds where Svarog, Perun, and the other gods of light dwell. Just as rare are those who have gone further than the roots under the earth into Nav.

The higher, or lower, a molfar has gone in their time as shaman, the greater their power becomes. The molfar is a spiritual person, not a priest by profession. He does not seek to convert or change others' beliefs or ways. His universe is already set in order by the Two Brothers from the moment they created the Three Worlds. If others do not see what lays before them as he does, it is not for him to decide or alter

that perception. The wind will blow where it is guided by the lay of the land, one's hands can only alter it only so slightly and not matter in the end.

The shaman can choose to symbolically scale the World Tree in either direction and become either good or evil. By doing so, they can call upon the spirits of light or dark in their work, and likewise beasts that are reflective of their alignment. Molfar are flexible, more flexible than normal game mechanics allow a character to be and are able to switch from one to the other. They generally bridge the world of the living and dead, good and evil, but others can simplify it by choosing just one direction up or down the Tree.

Herbalism is their primary skill above all others. From a young age, they are raised and taught to know the properties of each herb and how they work. Between their use of herbs and the correct voicing of words, the molfar possesses great power. As mentioned earlier, to the peasantry, the shaman and wizard often appear the same and because of this are threatened likewise out of fear and ignorance in bad times.

By simple definition, if a molfar is choosing to be good, his or her magic is white or bílý. If they have chosen bad, it is black or černý. As mentioned before, the shaman is able to switch between both extremes when necessary for the needs of the people or if the situation demands it. From the shaman's perspective, life is too complicated to simply remain in one creed or alignment.

The Slavic shaman is usually dressed in traditional but modest Slavic garb, particularly unique to his or her people. There will not often be an indication of even those allegiances as the molfar has sworn off all of their ties to other people because of their closeness to the spirit world and nature. They may serve communities at times but they may also stand apart from them by choice or simply due to their upbringing.

In the time of the Old Slavs, the molfar are akin to wild men or eccentric hermits at times by societal standards. It is this separation that splits them from the wizards. More often, the dangerous and harmful beings of the wilderness (See 'Chapter 3: Did Dwell Many Peoples') avoid the shaman and give them a wide berth, knowing they possess the power to banish or drive them away.

A molfar is well known for their rituals involving chanting, drumming, and intense invocations. Their ceremonies are secretive and are typically passed on from parent to child, although many are said to be born inherently with the talent. These can call upon the gods easier, it is said, than the more structured and rigidly organized priests.

Gatherings of molfari occur during special occasions, or for private and unique ceremonies far away in the most remote wilderness fastness. They employ the spirits for their needs in all occasions and will appease them through sacrifice and ritual, never with the long-term intention of angering them without resolve.

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ABILITIES

SPELLS: Shaman use spells or magic that is the equivalent to clerical or holy magic in their work. Through their chants, drums, flutes, frantic dances, and fire rituals they perform the same range of spells in the end. By definition of the basic **Castle & Crusade** rules, the molfar or shaman casts cleric spells.

By 5th level, if their wisdom score is 18 or higher, they can add additional druid spells into their list as well, beginning at the 1st level and progressing as though they were doing so as a 1st level character.

SPIRIT MEDITATION: From 2nd level on, the molfar is able to reach a meditative state of mind using incense and proper music to locate spirits. This ritual may take hours depending on the strength of the shaman or that of the spirits he or she is trying to sense. The time spent is determined by the molfar's experience level in minutes multiplied by the number of spirits (decided by the CK), and added to by those spirits' own experience level/hit dice. For each spirit to resist being sensed by the shaman during this meditation, a wisdom save is required. The molfar's radius for the *spirit meditation* is his/her experience level in feet multiplied by ten. Only concentration can maintain this sense, however. If the shaman is shaken, or somehow disturbed from this state, the meditation will wear off again.

POWER DRUM: The molfar has crafted their own drum with matching beater that possesses the power to ward off evil beings and more if given time and the available means. From an early age, the shaman has learned the aesthetic of music and how to harness its power for good or evil. By this knowledge alone, the molfar crafts from wood and bone, stretched animal hide, and painted with herbal dyes, their own customized drum to change, influence, and create much in the world around them. Depending on the shaman's alignment, those of opposite alignment will react as described below, if their saves fail within the sound of its beats, once the molfar plays with intent.

How the power drum works is this: the shaman must designate they are using this ability during an encounter and chant while drumming, but be unable to perform any other action. With each drum beat a corresponding chant is made. This ability's power is only as strong as the molfar's experience level against his foes, and the radius is based on the experience level multiplied by ten in feet. The mere intensity of the spiritual music being played would be enough to drive away his enemies from the battle, should they fail their saves, for the duration of his or her playing. Once the foe flees from that encounter, they will not return, frightened soul-deep from the terrifying noise caused by the clatter. If the drum and beater are broken, so is the enchantment placed within, and it will require the molfar's experience level in months to create another of the same strength again. If two molfari confront each with rival power drums with the attempt to drive each other away, such an effort would nullify itself regardless of the experience levels.

(EXAMPLE: The Shaman is 4th level and has encountered five 3 hit dice foes, lesser demons, during a chance encounter. Rather than fight them, he wishes to banish them by his drumming and so calls upon his power drum and starts playing. Each demon must make a wisdom save while in the presence of the drumming or flee entirely from the shaman.)

SMOKE WALL: The shaman can create a dense smoke which, when mixed with herbs and chants, can deny spirits and certain demonic beings access to places. The molfar builds a fire, throws in some special herbs, chants about the ring of the flames, and waits for the billowing clouds to grow. The shaman must prepare this, taking several minutes beforehand to do so; it cannot be thrown together on the fly. The *smoke wall*'s strength is as great as the shaman's experience level, which means that it can restrict or block that many foes at one time. Each spirit or demon that goes within it must make a wisdom save or cannot pass through the smoky barrier. It will function as a solid, immovable force if the save is failed. The molfar can create a moat of this smoke, if needed, to deny as many enemies passage as needed.

NOTE: This smoke isn't like normal smoke, in that wind or breezes cannot stir or blow it away easily. It will emit from the coals, dense and heavy, enchanted and blessed. Only a magical wind could disperse it.

SHAMAN'S WAND: The molfar, using his knowledge and sense of the World Tree, sought out a counterpart on Earth to make his special wand, called a *hũlka*. This wand would not only fit in his or her hand perfectly, but also house all of their magic and abilities as a safe-keeping and focus. The shaman can craft this from an early age on, but will keep it close, always in contact with themselves day and night. The molfar *hũlka* is crucial to each Shaman and is usually paired with the power drum as a part of their kit. As the molfar acquires new spells and knowledge, each is stored spiritually in the wand after one night of concentration. Having the *hũlka* as a focus for casting, as with other spell-casters, is an option, but not the sole means of sending magic to the enemy.

If the *hũlka* is broken or destroyed, the shaman will not only go unconscious for 1d20 hours from the terrible experience, but will also lose half of his or her spells in that time period as well. They will be senseless and incoherent until another wand is made. To do so will not be easy and will take another 1d20+experience level in days to regain control over themselves and the spirit world again. A broken wand will sever their link to the World Tree. Thus, their power and control over the spirit world will be disconnected for a time.

WISDOM OF THE ELDERS: The Shaman can channel wisdom from their ancestors for guidance during difficult times. The molfar must have unbroken concentration, with eyes closed, for a time to perform this (1d10 minutes +5). Such an ability can be called upon when circumstances or situations become very murky or hard to discern. Many view this as a form of

fortune-telling or augury but, in reality, the shaman is being guided by the whispering voices of the ancestors. For this to work, the shaman must make a wisdom check; if this is failed it cannot be done again for a day. If it succeeds, the ancestors have spoken. (This is the CK giving the shaman a precious clue for a needed situation at hand. It doesn't necessarily need to be in the form of a riddle, but neither does it need to be absolutely straightforward. The *wisdom of the elders* can be used once per day.)

ANIMAL SENSE: The molfar can possess this ability if he or she has a wisdom score higher than 17. If so, they can naturally sense wild herds of oxen and other edible and useful beasts for mankind's needs. The shaman is not only able to find and know the migration seasons of these many animal breeds, but he or she can even join them without risk of bodily harm at times (if they are 3rd level or higher). This is because they are more in tune with the forces of nature than others, even hunters and rangers. If a wisdom check is made while in the company of said animals, the shaman can even understand their language for the time they are within earshot. Many molfar are fond of living amid the herds of their favorite beasts for years, taking residence with them until they themselves are more beast-like and less human in time, forgetting the ways of their own kind (See 'Wildman of the Woods' class in the **Codex Celtarum** for a multiclass option). The range for this sense extends for the Shaman's Wisdom score in miles (radius) and never leaves them, whether it is for birds, water animals or land based beasts.

DANCING THE TREE: Unlike many classes, the shaman, according to Slavic beliefs, is capable of shifting to an alignment within the spectrum on either end as needed, though by nature they are neutral alignment. Spiritually, they are 'dancing' the World Tree high or low, good or evil, and can change their alignment as so required. If the demonic or spiritual forces they encounter are opposing or demanding and the need is for their alignment to be the same, or opposite, then they can do so on command. This doesn't occur without consequence, however, and it isn't handled flippantly. The shaman must undergo a ritual first to alter their alignment. It cannot be neutral or any shade between, it must be one extreme or the other, good or evil. The drum, chanting, and hours of ritual are in use to make this change happen before such a change is made. This radical ability is rare, and makes them untrustworthy to others once it is known, but there are circumstances that will occur that will require such a need. For every time the shaman dances the World Tree, a charisma save must be made or they will remain in that alignment by choice, if it is not their own, and will have to struggle to fight their way out of it the next time around. The shaman must remember that neutral is their normal way of life in the spiritual struggle and cannot be held down by one side or the other.

WEAPON SELECTION: A shaman typically wields a knife or spear for close combat and hunting, or a bow but little more.

PRIME ATTRIBUTE: Wisdom

HIT DICE: 1d8

ALIGNMENT: Neutral (can change according to 'Dancing the Tree')

WEAPONS: Knife, Dagger, Bow, Spear

ARMOR: Any, but molfari prefer not to don any if the option is given, as they wish to be free from any distractions.

ABILITIES: Cleric spells, Spirit Meditation, Power Drum, Smoke Wall, Shaman's Wand, Wisdom of the Elders, Animal Sense, Dancing the Tree.

LEVEL	HD	BTH	EPP
1	d8	+0	0
2	d8	+1	2,251
3	d8	+1	5,001
4	d8	+2	9,001
5	d8	+2	18,001
6	d8	+3	35,001
7	d8	+3	70,001
8	d8	+4	140,001
9	d8	+4	300,001
10	d8	+5	425,001
11	+3 HP	+5	650,001
12	+3 HP	+6	900,001

13+ 250,000 per level

MOLFAR SPELLS PER DAY

Level	0	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th
1	3	1								
2	4	2								
3	4	2	1							
4	4	3	2							
5	4	3	2	1						
6	5	3	3	2						
7	5	4	3	2	1					
8	5	4	3	3	2					
9	5	4	4	3	2	1				
10	5	4	4	3	3	2				
11	6	5	4	4	3	2	1			
12	6	5	4	4	3	3	2			
13	6	5	5	4	4	3	2	1		
14	6	5	5	4	4	3	3	2		
15	6	5	5	5	4	4	3	2	1	
16	6	6	5	5	4	4	3	3	2	
17	7	6	5	5	5	4	4	3	2	1
18	7	6	6	5	5	4	4	3	3	2
19	7	6	6	5	5	5	4	4	3	2
20	7	6	6	6	5	5	4	4	3	3

CHAPTER 4:

EXTRA SLAVONIC TERMS

Across the Slavic world, in antiquity, and even in the present age, many odd and unique traditions survive that surround the belief in magic and the supernatural. In the limited space within this codex, we will give some of the terms from this treasure trove for players and Castle Keepers to use in their games.

DVOEVERIE: When Christianity began to spread in the Slavic world, it was as aggressive as it was elsewhere in Europe. Those devoted to the religion of their ancestors going back to prehistory decidedly didn't wish to surrender their customs, spells, and other gathered traditions so easily. What occurred was what was classified as dvoeverie or 'dual faith', a duality that continued until the 19th century in nearly every Slavic nation.

OBOROTEN: When sorcerers are able to change their shape in the Slavic world, they are called oboroten. Unlike general fantasy roleplaying games where they can only alter their shapes into another living creature, in Slavic belief, the oboroten can do so as an object as well. How the Castle Keeper chooses to handle this depends on their particular campaign world. The mythology is filled with many tales of sneaky wizards up to no good, using their ability to rob and cheat foolish mortals of riches and animals. This power blurs the line with the fearful vampir. Thus, the witch/vampir hunter class in this codex and why it crosses over two groups at the same time. In the Slavic mind, the witch/sorcerer and vampir are the same as they can alter their shape and are close to the world of the dead and living at the same time. There is no difference as one can create the other.

RAZVAJANJE: It is believed that sorcerers and witches are capable of spoiling everything around them if they desire. Merely living near someone who delved in the magic arts was enough to have the potential of this effect of maliciousness. By shape-shifting, they could be any animal or object, such was the fear and paranoia. This would begin by ceremonies and dark rites, but if the sorcerer or witch was truly powerful, they would only require something as simple as a stare, kiss, or touch. It is usually the spoiling that creates a panic, causing the peasantry to contact the witch-hunters after the food-stores go bad, crops wither, or live-stock are stricken. This is also called 'nechistaya sila' or an 'unclean force'.

SKAZKI: Skazki are fairytales that amplify the natural forces, primarily through cautionary examples or characters doing

things that are illustrative of foolishness. In Russia they are analogous to the *Grim's Fairytales* from Germany. These tales, for the most part, exemplify the ancient beliefs in animism and a respect for the elements. Examples of skazki range from the tales of the Baba Yaga to 'The Frog Princess'.

SVĀTÁ KRV: This is the rare and precious tree sap or 'holy blood' taken from the World Tree. When it is dried and washed ashore, it is known as amber (jantár). When it is not dried and appears as chunks of reddish rock fresh from the World Tree, it possesses magical properties. Witches, shamans, and anyone channeling supernatural powers seek to have it when fresh from the Tree. It can be molded and then attuned to the user almost instantly. With just a wisdom check while holding and manipulating the sap as desired, the magic user's entire collection of spells can be stored inside the sap once it is dried. These act as a reserve of spells to use a second time after their initial group are gone for the day. **NOTE:** These reserve spells are only able to be used once.

Christianity tried to use this concept against the pagans and deem it their own 'holy blood' as was from the cross, but the purpose and intentions go back to prehistory and failed to convince the populace.

VEDMA: Unlike the witches one encounters day to day, this is the allegorical or story witch. She was used as a cautionary tale to warn others about never joining with the Black God and his armies, or in the later Christian centuries, Satan. The vedma was usually portrayed as menacing and a little comical.

ZAGADKI: A Riddle. These riddles are similar to any found throughout faery lore in the rest of the world, and usually have enchantment behind them or some dread catch to them. Riddle games are often enacted by foes or participants with a goal placed out for the loser. This final zagadki, although it wouldn't be known that such a riddle would be the final one until it couldn't be answered, would usually be clever or even simple.

ZAGAVORY: The general Slavic term for a magical spell. From the smallest and most harmless incantation to the most divine word that could alter day to night, or food to dust, the zagavory is what is cast by shamans, witches, wizards, and all alike, but each in their own manner or idiom.



CHAPTER 5: OF MIGHTY GODS AND SPIRITS

"For they believe that one god, the maker of lightning, is alone lord of all things, and they sacrifice to him cattle and all other victims; but as for fate, they neither know it nor do they in any wise admit that it has any power among men, but whenever death stands close before them, either stricken with sickness or beginning a war, they make a promise that, if they escape, they will straightway make a sacrifice to the god in return for their life; and if they escape, they sacrifice just what they have promised, and consider that their safety has been bought with this same sacrifice. They reverence, however, both rivers and nymphs and some other spirits, and they sacrifice to all these also, and they make their divinations in connection with these sacrifices."

-Procopius, (VII. 14. 22-30)

The religion of the Old Slavs is not well documented during the post-Roman period (circa 475 C.E.). However, as they emerged from the eastern steppes and forests and into the powerful Eastern Byzantine Empire, it was fairly well understood later by the medieval period. With the Nordic peoples of Scandinavia, the majority of the Slavic peoples of Eastern Europe remained wholly pagan far into the Middle Ages while the rest of Western Europe was already essentially converted to the religion of Rome.

Greek Orthodox missionaries already knew the Slavic tribes worshiped a vast plethora of woodland and natural spirits and deities and had a diversity that was well-established and would be very difficult to convert to the Christianity of Empire. There was, however, some semblance of uniformity in this massive diversity from tribe to tribe. Many of the very different peoples shared the same basic concepts and theological notions from the Balkans up to Russia and all the way to newly settled Bohemia.

The face of Europe changed greatly since the Iron Age, when the Celtic peoples populated most of Europe from Turkey to Spain. Eventually, it was brought under the sway of the Roman Empire, ushering in a new era. Now it clung to a Germano-Slavic identity, and where that wasn't the case, the surviving Roman colonies now spoke various forms of Latin and practiced Christianity. The religious map of Europe was dotted with a varied combination of earlier remnants of paganism (deriving from shades of Celtic druidism, Roman, and Greek religions, etc) and several competing forms of Christianity.

Upon arrival into Europe with the Slavic tribes from the east, a new assortment of spirits and deities entered into the mix. Although the names and stories were different, they also would appear a little familiar to many as deriving from a heritage that was common to most Indo-European peoples.

Slavic belief also possessed woodland spirits that seduced wayfarers, dark beings that dwelt below in the earth, a World Tree, dragons, and many other familiar entities that the Germans, Celts, Greeks, and Romans who encountered the newly settling Slavs would not find too alien. Only the language and cultural barrier was to set them apart, aside from any religious differences, by the time of the arrival of the Old Slavs.

The Old Slavs believed in animism, a belief that held that spirits were alive in the natural world around them. Every stone, tree and drop of water possessed a spirit, even if minute,

whether benign or malign. Sources that document their beliefs as they entered history are limited to one Byzantine writer, Procopius, who only vaguely mentioned a Slavic tribe that worshiped a god of storm. It is assumed by scholars logically, that this deity was *Perun*, that Slavic storm god. Unfortunately little else can be mentioned for source material archaeologically from this early period. It isn't until the 12th century when other writers from the Orthodox Church and elsewhere began to document the 'strange' and 'unusual' beliefs of the various peoples of Eastern Europe.

What is represented here, as with most of what is in this codex, is the best surmised data, given the source material available. The many deities of the Old Slavs had many variant names over the Slavic speaking world, as well what their abilities and power(s) believed could have been. The sacred days and other spiritual and religious information is also gathered from this limited and summed up data, chiefly taken from the medieval period when such documentation was more readily available. Unfortunately, the many sources from the Middle Ages were heavily biased by the priests and monks who wrote them down in their earnest attempt to chronicle the efforts of conversion amid the huddled masses of Slavic tribes. To keep consistent with the other codices, such extreme and unnecessary wrongful coloring of a mythology by another more dominant one is edited out and filtered until only the primary one remains.

As with most of these codices, the many deep subtle elements that these ancient religions once had cannot be fully captured, and if they are, then the author is completely pleased that the readers have spotted them. If so, then use them in your games and explore each of these cultural prizes for what they are worth.

GODS OF LIGHT AND DARK

The theological arrangement of the Slavic universe is not known so well, but assumed academically from the implications by traces in folklore, myth, and archaeology. Whether Slavic pagan religion was influenced from its early contact from the many eastern peoples neighboring it (this includes the cultures of Asia, the steppes and Arabia) is not known, but there is an overwhelming theme of a warring between of the gods of light and dark.

The many other European pagan religions share in some of this duality but many as well fall into a shadowy middle ground where such stark contrast is uncertain. In Slavic pagan religion this is not as vague as the dichotomy is fairly clear and the lines are drawn out.

The Two Brothers, Svarog and Czernobog, and their strong division between the earth and sky, light and darkness, and life and death is well defined even through the often confusing sources and poor documentation. There are other deities, however, in Slavic religion that are seen as being the polar opposites and figures of paramount importance as well. For the sake of some clarity and definition in this codex, some position had to be made and fixed in order to situate an otherwise poorly defined ancient theology. This is further complicated by the confusing passages in the limited sources about the worship of another deity related to Svarog named Dažhbog which is another name for Czernobog. Dažhbog was worshiped by the Eastern Slavic groups with many variant myths (those will be mentioned in this section).

Clearly, the Two Brothers are the most significant and most written about Slavic deities, in both academic literature today. They are, for the lack of a better analogy, the Christian God and Lucifer of pagan Slavic paganism, with their own armies of deities under their employment to serve them. Separately, they also have spirits and other beasts and beings to aid them in their feud since their original split as kin.

Mankind are caught in the middle of this feud. Svarog only has the best intentions for man while his darker and ferocious brother seeks to summon the worst side of them, or to deny them life, etc. It has since become a spiritual battle for mankind to survive the feud of the Two Brothers in this universe, however possible, and usually they can seek the best route by the wise words of a shaman.

The universe under the World Tree is eternally bound by the war of the Brothers. Mortals are caught up in it regardless of how they try to avoid it. Other cultures and their religions, if not harmonious with Svarog or Czernobog's vision, would be viewed as the enemy to the cause in this feud of the Brothers.

THE GODS OF LIGHT

The many gods of light flock under the influence of Svarog and his dominance. They all chiefly rule from above in Vyrjy or somewhere upon the World Tree to gaze down upon mankind, but more importantly to keep an eye on their foes the gods of dark. Although their visions and ideas are always pure, their methods for their followers or worshipers to use are not always so clear.

The war between the demonic agents of Czernobog and the gods of light and their loyal worshipers is constant. Only the bravest of bogatyr and those magically capable can overcome the devious wiles of the followers of the Black God and his brood. The mortal world is plagued by demons, vampires and witches sent by Czernobog to distract the gods of light and their mortal followers, but they are not easily swayed. Their eyes remain fixed on Nav and Péklo, knowing that demonic evil awaits to spew forth at any time.

The family of gods is closely knit, even if its bloodline goes below into the lightless underworld and Abyss. Svarog and his eldest children of the divine do not fall victim to the pranks or tricks of Czernobog so easily as their mortal followers. Blessings and

miracles are given out sparingly, however, to those that have earned them along the way, for their mighty acknowledgment is not to be taken advantage of, ever.

SVAROG

Svarog is a mighty, well-built man with blond hair and strong limbs. He is a master blacksmith, with the hottest forge in the universe, so fiercely hot that it burns as the sun. Before Svarog, man had only fought or used simple wooden, bone, or stone weapons and tools, but since his time all had been manufactured with bronze and iron hot from the forge.

By dawn, he travels above to his sky palace in Vyrjy where his forge casts its pure fire's light down upon the world. His hammer churns sparks to keep the monsters and demons at bay as he makes his way across the skies until dusk in his glistening palace. His court is accompanied by other gods and mighty heroes and beings.

It is rare, though, that for all of his attention spent on his smithy that any vigilance is lost on gazing below on the nefarious activities of his foul brother Czernobog. To many in the mortal realm amid the Baltic tribes, Svarog is known as Belobog or the 'White God'.

Svarog has many guises in the mortal world for many purposes, none of them as devious or nefarious as his Norse counterpart Óðin Allfather. One of these is Belun, a gentle, frail, bearded man in flowing white robes bearing a long staff in hand. Belun would appear at the rarest of times to aid people lost in the dark, foreboding woods to help them find the way towards the light. In this guise, he would only be present in the daylight. Belun might also appear to assist farmers toiling in the fields.

Svarog is also the Lord of Wolves and is known by many mortals who are fortunate enough to encounter him in this guise. Often near dusk, as his heavenly forge reaches the end of its journey across the sky, Svarog will transform into a gloomy dark wolf with fiery eyes that leads a massive pack of wolves across the countryside. To many of the Slavic tribes he is the Hromi Daba or the 'Lame Wolf', for he is earthbound given his divine power. As Hromi Daba, Svarog is the Wolf Shepherd and able to muster them in the hundreds in the very least, or thousands or more at the most.

In his glistening palace high above in Vyrjy, Svarog has an army of divine celestial warriors to serve him. They are chosen from amongst the finest of the earthly heroes that have earned their place by his side (See Chapter 6 'Battle Strong and Heroic'). In whatever guise he wishes to don, Svarog is set, obsessed, on his eternal feud with his brother, Czernobog. With his burning sword of flame in hand, and finely divine wrought armor, the God of Light will not rest until his rival is defeated or his evil plots put down.

AUSTÉJA

She is the goddess of bees, fertility, and the household. Her role among the gods in their own palace was that of tending to the bees, their honey, and to the overall chores.

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Mortals praise her and call upon her during times of transition: age, marriage, festivities with the family, etc. Austėja is prayed to for the safety of the family in a humble manner and nothing more as she is a humble goddess.

AUSRINÉ

Saule's many children, who became stars, are numberless, but equally several were sexually attacked by their divine father, the moon god, Ménilus. Ausriné is one. Her story is complex and linked to two other siblings.

She lives on an island, hidden and enchanted from sight, where she was dedicated to caring for her magical apple-tree. The apples, if eaten, would grant love everlasting. On her island, iron cattle roamed and gave boiling milk to anyone that managed to get it, but once so, it would turn them beautiful.

Ausriné and two of her siblings, Breksta and Zleja, form a trinity of stars in the sky at night. Before dusk, or the arrival of the moon, Ausriné and her siblings will flee into the night to avoid her father.

BEREHYNIA

She is a fair haired, very rustic goddess, protector of the hearth and river banks. Berehynia is garbed in a long green dress, to resemble the flowing grasses and flowers along the riverside. Her eyes are deep blue and hypnotic, and her voice equally as strong to the weak willed. Chosen by the gods of light, Berehynia was once a mortal maiden, pure and noble in her cause and bearing for her people in the mortal world, and was blessed with divinity to become the protector after she fought and defended against the dark forces of Czernobog singlehandedly. Berehynia defended the tribes of her people and even those of others related before allies came to aid her to drive away the demons and monsters of the Black God back to Nav.

It is said that Perun was so impressed by her that he granted her divinity for her actions. Now, Berehynia resides on earth rather than in Vyrjy with the other gods of light so that she is not only closer to her foe (so they are always underfoot), but so she is near her mortal kin.

Mortal tribes now build shrines in her name near their hearths or place statues or small shrines near the more dangerous shorelines of rivers for her honor. It was said Berehynia resisted the hordes of Czernobog on the banks of the Dneiper, and so all waterways are now her domain.

This glorious battle occurred long before man could remember. The many beings and creatures that inhabit the waters are often under her control, and if prayed to she can banish them on command. The whereabouts of her palace are unknown, if she has one at all. Some say she wanders from region to region nearly aimlessly, using the rivers and tributaries as her guide, and battles evil as she finds it.

Berehynia is viewed by the people as a liberator and symbol of heroic strength and comfort at home. Her hatred for Czernobog

and all oppressors is great, and she will not stop in her fight against them once she has started.

DAZBOG

Amid the tribe of the Polens the magnificent god of the eastern sun is known as Dazbog or Dažhbog. He emerges from the east as a newborn infant and jumps astride his chariot, pulled by three enchanted steeds: one diamond, one silver, and one golden. Dazbog's ride across the skies beneath the roof of the clouds and realms of what the other Slavic peoples call Vyrjy ages him, however.

By the day's end, it has aged him greatly, and Dazbog's journey will result in him becoming an old man too weak to do much more but be pulled by his own steeds the rest of the way. If the dark gods below knew his vulnerable state they would surely try to trick, trap, or slay him and cast the world into perpetual darkness. Dazbog is too clever for this and has tricks up his sleeve.

He is the consort to Marzyanna, the goddess of the fields, but the two can only meet at odd times of the year due to their schedules.

DEIVĖS VALDYTOJOS

Worshiped by the Lithuanian tribes, these 'governing goddesses', seven in number, fawned over humanity and thus constructed clothing from their lives in consequence. Each one had their function: Verpiančioji spun the Threads of Life, while Metančioji placed the Rims of Life, Audėja wove the Threads, and Gadintoja would break the Threads. Sergėtoja would always bitterly complain to Gadintoja about breaking them and then set about making the people war against themselves. Nukirpėja decided to cut the Cloth of Life, and eventually Išskalbėja would wash the clothes.

These Seven Sisters are the Pleiades stars in the night sky above that gaze down on the mortal world every night.

DODOLA

The wife of the mighty storm god Perun, she is goddess of rain, bringer of blossoms and greenery. She only appears when Perun thunders in the skies during the spring storms and flies above the woods, landing only after she has milked her cattle. Dodola's herds are plentiful and number in the thousands, and so take many weeks to finish before the rains are done.

Many of the tribes know her as Perperuna, and when her rains do not come they devoutly follow rituals to encourage her to 'milk the cows'. Her worshipers construct leaf dresses in her honor, hoping to summon the green of spring. Although the tribes praise and fear Perun and seek his appearance, they need it to herald the arrival of Dodola afterwards.

Dodola is the bringer of rain. Drought is thought by the tribes to be brought upon by her wrath or attentions elsewhere, and she must be diverted again, reminded, back to attend to her

people. Perun doesn't need to be present to bring rain on occasion. Beautiful Dodola can come alone and simply douse the land on her own.

She resides in Vyrjy with Perun and rarely steps on the earth amid mortals. Her cattle must be tended to above in the skies or they will run amok. In their limited perception, the mortal tribes equate her cattle with the clouds. She cannot let her eyes off of the cattle for too long, for even if they ran wild, there is the chance that Czernobog may steal them and take them below into Nav.

DZIEWANNA

Dziewanna, the virgin goddess, is a symbol of purity and beauty above all else in the universe. Among the tribes of the Polans she is praised beside the war god equally. Her hair is shimmering white and as fair as her skin. It is said that her presence is so pure that the mere touch of her can destroy utterly the demons and monsters of the Black God instantly.

Unlike the other gods, Dziewanna chose to remain physically pure to harness her inner light and shine brilliantly, untainted. This has kept her unwed and a spinster amid the divine family, but sought after by many for her potential fertility. Gods, mortals, and monsters all seek her hand equally, most simply lustfully, but several with good intentions.

Her worshipers and priestesses try to imitate her methods in life by also remaining celibate. Donning white robes and clothing, they know her symbol and life are bound by the purity of light. Dzeiwanna is dreaded by the demonic agents of Czernobog for her purity. They perpetually attempt to trick and seduce her to tarnish and blemish her, but she foils them each time. Her light and shining purity can turn any of the minions of the Black God to ash with ease.

Czernobog seduced her and led her into Nav once after a complicated plot, lusting after her, only to have her awaken and walk out of the underworld and incinerate his hellish armies on her exit. For his might, which was beyond her own, he was powerless against her epic purity in the end. It was then that Czernobog realized he could only scheme to destroy her in time by convoluted plots, or overwhelm her with powerful force one day, until she cannot stop it.

DZYDZILELYA

The opposite of Dziewanna, she is the love goddess among the gods of light. Her beauty is famous and none can be compared to her in the many worlds or realms, nor would any shun her advances. Dzydzilelya has long fair hair, sky blue eyes, and her cheeks are rose colored; she is slender in form and her lips ruby in tone.

When mortals seek to create a love potion or an elixir to seduce another, they call upon Dzydzilelya or Długosz to bless or enchant it for them before administering it. Dzydzilelya lives in Vyrjy with the other gods of light but

is known to lust after certain mortals that catch her attention. The fortunate man will find her seeking him and his intimate company.

Using her illustrious abilities, Dzydzilelya is able to (and has) seduced Czernobog on many occasions in the past to distract him. She has done this for the sake of the other gods and even for the aid of mortals. Her powers of seduction cannot be ignored or refused; it is too powerful. It is a joke among the tribes of man that not even the dead can refuse her.

The wild forest nymphs that can cause harm to mortals can be traced back to her and are considered her children. It is rare that Dzydzilelya walks among mortals for her presence is too powerful to hide. Even toned down, such beauty is considered lethal to the lustful sensibilities of men. The goddess is well aware of her potency but never relishes in it. The time that she chooses to is feared, for all will be weakened by her wondrous splendor.

GABIJA

A night wandering goddess, Gabija needed to be appeased by baking specially shaped ornaments in her name. The women of the household's responsibility was to leave out water, food, wood, and salt for her. The house fire had to be covered on certain nights, but the priestesses among the tribes, the *vaidilut*[], of the Lithuanians, kept a constant sacred fire for Gabija to always guide her when she wanders.

What was baked for her was the first loaf of bread, while the last loaf was left for the baker only and never touched. It was earnestly hoped that Gabija was never to wander in the night, but if there were omens, the women of the households would prepare. Those that wouldn't had to suffer later as they would likely leave urine and waste out instead of food, water, or other more pleasant fare. If this was the case, then Gabija's wrath would shower down on the members of that chosen household, culminating in foul luck and curses.

GILTINĖ

Ominous and death-dealing, Giltinė's mere mention in the Slavic world brings dread. To some, she dons black and drives a carriage pulled by six black horses or is often dressed in yellow, carrying a scythe and a bone rattle. However she appears, she is terror and her appearance is monstrous, only signaling doom for those living.

Giltinė will lick the bodies of the dead and fill her tongue with venom. If she is sighted in a cemetery, she lashes out wildly, garbed in white and escorted by white hounds. Many healers and doctors claim that she invented the art and is the master over healing as well as death. No one regardless of their skill or talent can stop her will once she has set her mind to it – if she has marked someone to die, they will die.

The dying may see her stand at the end of their bed glaring, waiting. No one wishes to know of this goddess, for when she comes mortals are meant to perish, often by divine orders.

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Sometimes by the rulings of Peklenc, or even higher, if matters are worse.

HORS

In some sources, the sun god, while in more reliable ones a moon goddess that fell in love, tragically, with Radigast, the god of hospitality. Tribes around the region of Kiev worship Hors primarily and do so as a pair with Dažhbog, both sun and moon.

She was denied love by the one she sought and instead was deceived by Stribog, the god of the winds. The wind god took Radigast's enchanted cloak to trick Hors one night into thinking he was the other god, and then he seduced her and impregnated her.

After Stribog's deception was discovered, Hors was horrified and appealed to Radigast for mercy. He was angry, but not for the obvious reasons. The theft of his cloak and its misuse is what caused his ire. Quickly an animosity arose between the two gods over this while Hors was caught in the middle and gradually gave birth to her child, a child that became the goddess of autumn.

Seeing the trouble, the other gods stepped in to resolved the situation. Svarog wasn't pleased with how the entire mess came about, or how the child was chosen to be autumn, and he was not final on his decision for her fate being so.

Now, Hors' ill-begotten child, Živa, and Marzyanna battle over the claim to be the goddess of autumn, simply because Svarog doesn't wish to decide which one can preside over the season.

Hors' own power on the moon is now weak and, because of her tragic love, can be seen when it wanes and fades, but grows stronger when it waxes and becomes full with hope again, wishing that Radagast may love her.

JARILO

Unlike his son Perun, who became the paramount god of thunder to the Slavic tribes, Jarilo was truly the supreme essence of thunder and the divinity of agriculture. Jarilo's fate however was not so perfect as the other gods of light, who were given their palaces in Vyrjy to reign in majesty, for he becomes captive by the cruelty of Veles, under the auspices of Czernobog, between the harvest to spring. He is held in Nav to tend to the cattle and fields of the dead until his return each spring.

When Jarilo leaves the mortal world, the vegetation suffers with his departure, and only his twin sister Morana, the goddess of death, can sense his return accurately each season.

Jarilo's official return was celebrated on the summer solstice by the Slavic tribes, who would hold festivities in his honor across the many lands they inhabit. When Jarilo isn't held by Veles in the underworld against his will, he is betrayed by his ten sons, all gods, and sacrificed by the time of harvest. Jarilo's blood soaks the earth one last time as his corpse is cast into the soil, never again to be dealt with until the next

spring when he is renewed. This pattern is repeated and alternated every other year, and has since the time of the Two Brothers' feud.

If Jarilo's pattern were to ever be broken, the season would be broken and nothing would be the same in the many worlds. Veles seeks Jarilo one way or the other, dead or alive as was the pact made some time ago. Of the gods of light, however, he was connected to the moon and not the sun, and the many changing phases.

JEZI BABA

To the Polenes tribe, she is Jezi Baba or Jezda, and to the Northern Slavic tribes she is the Baba Yaga. To all Slavic peoples alike wherever her name is spread, she is the wild goddess of magic and mistress of spirits. Jezi Baba dwells deep in the forest, living in a very unique home: a wooden home with three giant chicken legs (sometimes just one leg) that revolve in the same spot and a fence made from human bones with skulls atop it, her door lock made from a human mouth filled with sharp teeth. She has two sisters as well, but few have ever seen them, or care too, since dealing with Baba Yaga is plenty enough of a problem.

Baba Yaga travels in a large mortar, using a pestle as a rudder, and she sweeps away tracks with a broom made from human hair. Her appearance is not pretty, but that of a crone, bent and hideous.

When encountered, she and her sisters will be threatening, ominous, and even on the verge of killing the strangers who might trespass onto their abode in the forest. Eventually, however, there is a master plan, a vision in mind that might be in store for the strangers should they be brave enough to endure the presence, conversation and even gifts or food that the Babas may impart. They will be helpful and send those who have a fated future on their way towards something, except to those who cross their path with nothing but negativity and harm in mind; the Baba Yaga will always be victorious.

The lead sister will travel through the woods (usually by night) in her mortar using her pestle and broom to hide her tracks. Witches hope to spot her and gain her blessing or even acknowledgment, and all others wish to get on her good side or out of her way if they see her coming.

The Jezi Baba's home is never in the same place for more than a few nights so those who find it do so for some chosen reason, good or ill. They better take the opportunity while it lasts before she is gone; their bravery may be rewarded, or foolishness punished.

At certain times, during wars and other times when there is a great loss of life, she will lead the souls who are scared and lost. If so, no one will stand in her way or make demands on her unless they already have beforehand.

It is told among the shaman that the Jezi Baba knows the hidden whereabouts to the Waters of Youth that shower down

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from Vyrjy, used by the gods. She was denied the drink, and aged, thus her name which in most Slavic versions means roughly 'Fearful/Terrible Grandmother'. Only the purest of heart can get those secrets from her, however, and only then by asking at the right time. If they are flawed or fall short of being 'pure', they will be cooked by her and her sisters in their large oven and devoured. This oven is used often by them as the temptation by strangers to ask overrides their need for anything else when in the presence of the Baba Yaga. A less than pure heart will often be the demise of the foolishly tempted rather than the more prudent.

The Jezi Baba, all three, are very contradictory by their presence alone. They will aid the pure of heart and heroic, but equally use terrible and wretched magic to kill strangers and devour them whole just the same. Strangers must be wary of them but be pleased when they do encounter them for such an opportunity is rare.

In the Slavic world they are called by many names: Baba Korizma (Serbian), Gvozdenzuba or 'Iron-Tooth' (Serbian), Baba Pehtre (Slovenian), Baba Roga (Croatia and Bosnian), and Sumska Majka or 'Forest Mother'.

KAREWIT

One of the many divine protectors of the tribal town of Charenza for the Rani of the Wends. His statue in the island temple displays a chimeric deity in its full glory. To some not accustomed, the imagery might be confusing: his head bares two faces, is naked, has an ox's head exposed from its chest and jutting out of his belly is a rooster's head. These images are symbolic.

This changes when he is paired with his co-guardian deity Rugiewit. The Wendish tribe alters his imagery into something different with six heads (four being male and two female) and a fierce lion's head projecting from his chest.

KRESNIK

He is a king among the gods, lord of the summer solstice, god of fire and lightning. Kresnik dwells in the highest mountain in the world. Kresnik is the son of Perun, and his wife is the goddess Vesina whom he married after slaying the Snake Queen that held her captive in her mountain fortress.

Kresnik's mountain home is crystal, unable to be reached by mere mortals or adventurers. It is simply too high and its peaks reach above the clouds into Vyrjy. It rests in where the World Tree is rooted between worlds. His palace is golden and shines brilliantly by the light of the sun. King Kresnik is highly honored and praised by mortals for his brilliance, majesty, and for his ability to drive away evil.

His arms, hair and legs are golden, each showing the greatness of his light and talent for banishing the darkness. He usually drives his chariot, also constructed from enchanted gold, about his glass mountain to gaze below at the mortal world for signs of turmoil. Kresnik is able to transform into a gigantic stag with golden antlers and fiercely defend or go to war against his foe if needed.

The divine king can simply choose his thunderbolt, sword, axe, club, or hammer in battle against his many foes. The king will undertake many adventures in the mortal world, usually assisted by his brother Trot, or his unusual four-eyed dog by his side. Unlike the other gods of light, Kresnik will journey into the mortal realm happily to struggle against the baleful hordes of Czernobog, and to protect mortals in need.

His rival, whom he has defeated, and will again, is Veles, the fierce dragon from the underworld. When the two meet, they will always drop whatever they are doing and go to battle; there is no other option.

His kingdom, considered the Ninth Kingdom, lies in the Bear's Castle. Kresnik was held in his mother's womb for nine years due to his unique nature, and bore the birth mark of horses upon his golden flesh. Kresnik, like all gods, can change his shape and form if needed to reach his goals.

King Kresnik is famed for his cattle breeding among the peoples, and many claim to have breeds derived from his own taken from his divine herds. After he recovered his herds from the Snake Queen, he gathered them again about his palace in Vyrjy, but occasionally a stray steer or newborn might find its way down to the mortal world where common-folk can claim them, or more often fight over them.

KUPALA

She is the wild, frenzied goddess of the Midsummer. Her name and deeds are celebrated by bonfires and, by those most devoted to her worship, orgiastic rituals. Kupala is the goddess of lust, herbal wisdom, the Midsummer and the sorcerous arts.

Few know of her appearance but talk of her place in the court of the gods of light, and how she represents the savageness of female virility and magic. She and her twin brother, Kupalo, rarely come to the mortal world, but when they do it is a festive time and sends the world into chaos, blinding their senses and minds with pleasure one way or another. Honoring her is to do so with fire and water.

To many tribes, she is portrayed as a regal lady, garbed in finery, shimmering in the grandest silks and light, while in others she is naked with lengthy hair and a savagery about her. Kupala's interpretation amid the Old Slavs varies greatly but her worship is generally the same with the exact intent from region to region.

Wreaths covered in candles are placed in lakes in her name often by younger girls and women on the night before the Midsummer sun. This ritual is the more sedate ceremony as most erupt into the wild orgies to celebrate the goddess' health and power in groves and temples, led by priests and her chosen priestesses.

To the Ukrainians, she is Купала, while to the Polens she is Kupala, and in Russia she is known as Купала.

LADO

Praised by the tribes of the Polenes, Lado is the goddess of beau-

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ty, love, merriment, harmony and youthful vigor. Wise men in the mortal realm teach that Lado and Lada are merely twins, sister and brother, and must never walk the world at the same time due to a curse by Czernobog and his demons.

Few have seen either amid the villages or public outings, but those that know swear by their miraculous powers that they exist. The kolduny know Lado dwells in Vyrjy and what her divine purpose is in the universe but will little speak of it to the uninitiated. It is usually counted fortunate enough to have her blessings, whenever and whatever they be as they come. Lado's presence and blessings *do* shower upon the faithful when prayers, offerings and ceremonies are given up to her. They are never ignored.

LAIMÉ

Of the many goddesses of Fate, Laimé fills an important gap in the Slavic world. She is similar to the Norse goddesses who weave fate by the loom and does the same in Vyrjy. To the tribes of Latvia, she is Dekla, and is sorrowful when a new child is born because she instantly understands and envisions its entire destiny and knows its highs and lows.

It is believed by many that if one could find the first blooming fern on the summer solstice, they would possess Laimé's prophetic powers.

The goddess presided over positive luck (Laimé-Dalia or 'Happy Fate'), but if one hears the sound of a cuckoo, then that luck has changed for the worse. As with many goddesses, Laimé is looked upon during times of childbirth for aid.

It is part of the worship of this goddess as well that often the naming ceremony for the newborn is undertaken. Her role is so crucial to fate, the family and fortune that her other name is Muza Mate or 'Mother of Life'.

LAUMÉ

She is the goddess of hard work and labor. She often appears as a large breasted blonde with her cat familiar. She can usually be found on a bridge or in the wild depths of the woods, catching those she observes unaware. It is best to not mock or laugh at her, for her temper is quick, and she will transform those who do into animals and rarely back to their normal forms.

Laumé respects hard work and industriousness and will even reward those bearing these qualities with blessings. The lazy are scorned and eaten. Laumé will take busy working children on trips and wild adventures as a reward for doing so well.

On rare occasions, she will freely clean and tend to a farm for peasants. If a foul word is spoken, however, her mood will change. In an instant, she will cause damage and leave the farm in disarray and vanish without a trace.

Laumé has the power to triple her form, in which case she is called in the plural Laumés.

MAROWIT

Very little is told of this Wendish household god except that he is the dreaded god of nightmares. His domain exists solely in the realm of dreams and sleep. The Wendish peoples that live on the edges of the Slavic world share this ungentle and dark god after many misty centuries of rocky and turbulent co-habitation of Central Europa amid the Alps and Carpathians.

Marowit takes those who anger him, fail to give him offerings before they rest, or those who pass away in their sleep. Many who fear him have an idol in their home and a table for offerings where they pray and give various tokens, food, and libations before slumber in hopes that Marowit's needs will be met. Few have ever spoken of or described him, except to say that he is scornful and with harsh eyes, cast downward, emotionless and filled with the lust of wanton hunger for the souls of those in rest. When he simply cannot take them by force, either due to blessings by other gods or magical forces, Marowit will try to disturb the resting mortal with terrible nightmares.

The Castle Keeper can use Marowit's nightmares for storytelling opportunities in the course of a game. However, should they earn his wrath, sleep will be their worst enemy. Marowit can only strike at them once they cross the threshold of sleep from consciousness, and he will, ruthlessly. He will win by attrition as all need to rest.

MARZYANA

Graceful, with hair the color of the wheat in the field, Marzyana is the protector of those that plant and harvest the crops and fruits of the farms. She is one of the many that have come down from Vyrjy to aid mankind, seeing their plight against the demonic forces of Czernobog below. She is innocent and naïve, but like the nature she protects and guides, her strength is only seasonal, meaning that she is weak during the icy and frozen months of the year.

Marzyana is patient and thirsty, seeking the open air and freedom. Due to this desire for her freedom, she is very wary of being held within a building or home. Only with care and proper attendance do crops and fruits prosper in gardens or contained settings. If they are not properly tended, they will wither. Dark forces are forever seeking to sap them of life and draw them below into the dark world of Nav.

She is considered the goddess of death and of winter.

Peasants make straw dolls in her honor, dress them in white, and place them with the dried remnants of the previous harvest's crops in hopes that she showers their farms with blessings in March. Songs and poems are given by the girls and women in her name during celebrations to honor her. Her effigies are both drowned and burned after a lengthy ceremony involving the effigies being carried to a sacred river. If performed correctly, the snows melt away and spring returns to the land and Marzyana's blessings will again come.

Marzyana is primarily worshiped in the region of the Polans tribe and she has a few other variant names: Marzanna, and Marzana.

MATI SYRA ZEMLYA

She is the 'Damp Mother Earth' and cannot be placed into any form resembling a human likeness. Her very existence is the world itself whereupon the Two Brothers first stepped and decided to create their life. What transpires on, under and over her, whether for good or evil will not change her, for she remains ever the same.

Mati Syra Zemlya's powers are all encompassing on the elements and weather, and the Slavic tribes respect her above all else, but many of the younger and newer peoples have no knowledge of her, her name only barely mentioned.

To swear an oath to Mati Syra Zemlya, one must make a hole large enough to place a hand in for an offering. Simply touching the earth and speaking to it helps to give one a chance of confession to her as well. Usually those close to dying will use their last moments of life to dig into the soil enough to speak to the earth goddess and confess to her with their final breath.

Her other names amid the tribes are: Matka Ziemia and Mat Zemlya. The mighty goddess Mokoš is her handmaiden.

MOKOŠ

She is the protector of women and their fates as well as work and childbirth. Primal and one of the earliest of deities in the universe, Mokoš is the handmaiden to Mati Syra Zemlya as well, tending to her needs across the earth.

When she is not serving Mati Syra Zemlya, she is at her loom spinning the fates of women on her eternal fabric, the pattern of which is complex and extremely difficult to understand.

When rain falls, many tribes and worshipers call it 'Mokoš' Milk', and it was seen as a blessing. This is due to her being a goddess over the menial task of laundry and the healthy benefits of water. To some of her most devoted, water itself is from her and is her essence, issuing from the earth or sky.

Offerings made to her are usually made by midwives in the form of vegetation. To many Slavic groups, she is the wife of Svarog while others say she is married to Perun, but no one in the mortal world is certain. That is how the wise have told the stories as well, to remain vague, or to be interpreted as the populace chooses to see it. What matters is the continued praise and worship of her and her duties, as well as what service she provides for Mati Syra Zemlya.

Her worshipers pick certain stones and carve upon them or choose to represent her in the landscape. The designs placed into the rock are of Mokoš: a loom, images of childbirth, mixed with other images the worshipers deemed important. Mokoš Stones will indicate the presence of her devoted followers, which are few in the world compared to the other gods. Her

followers are usually older women, nursemaids, or the odd wise one that understands the early primal deities.

Among the few deities the shaman acknowledge greater than the World Tree and the highest of the gods in the universe would be both Mati Syra Zemlya and Mokoš, whom they believe has a greater power than all of the gods of light and dark combined. The only unfortunate weakness they have is that they both do nothing for themselves but exist and must depend on all others to simply be, for the Earth and life-giving cannot will itself on its own.

MORANA

The goddess of winter, nightmares and death and known by many variations of the same name in the Slavic world. She is the wife of the god Jarilo.

It is a tradition to make an effigy of the goddess and to burn or drown it in a river on the 21st of March (modern calendar) at the symbolic end of winter. It is forbidden to gaze at her image while this ceremony is underway, however, as it is deemed bad luck and that the curse of Morana will be cast upon any who do.

During the winter season, the goddess is considered to be freely roaming the wilds of the mortal world feeling bitter and even angry for the loss of her husband Jarilo. It would be folly for the any mortal to gain her wrath should they cross her knowingly (or not) in these months, as death and nightmares will be rampant.

No one ever knows who or where Morana might be, and so they must be wary. Even though she is considered one of the gods of light, her actions are very dark and dreadful to those who wrongfully cross her. She bears no loyalty to Czernobog or his demons (even though she can command them). She even create witches with a wave of her hand and is their patron goddess. Her magic and dominion crosses over many borders in the universe.

The witches that serve Morana do so out of intention to ultimately do good in the world, even though their presence and purpose may be perceived differently by others. Witch hunters should never try to push Morana's patience in the winter season. If they pursue her followers during this time, it is likely that her witches' prayers will be listened to more often.

In the many Slavic lands, Morana's varied names are thus: Marzanna (Polish), Moré (Lithuanian), Morena (Czech/Slovak/Russian), Mara, Maržena, Morana, Moréna, Mora and Marmora (Baltic).

MYESYATS

This deity is a perplexing one in the realm of Vyrjy, for his or her role varies according to the stories and which mortal tribe is being consulted. Many tribes speak of Myesyats as being the bald-headed uncle of the god Dazbog. It is his shining face seen in the moon at night.

Amid other tribes, the name and gender is different and this is

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curious and makes one wonder if Myesyats is similar to the classical deity Janus? In these other tribes, Myesyats is a woman, the goddess of the moon, consort of Dazbog, and the mother to the stars in the night sky. She is extremely beautiful and reunites with him every spring, where they consummate their love, and then she leaves by autumn.

OŻWIENA

Being within Ożwiena's earshot is a terrible thing indeed. To be so could bring either fame or glory if one were on her 'good' side. More often, it would just prompt gossip and the inability to keep any secret. She is the echo in every voice cast on the rocks and throughout the world, but as stated before, rarely for the better.

Clearly, the gods in Vyrjy do not want her in their company, as she would quickly spread their plans to the underworld and their secrets to the mortals. This would ultimately result in the end of the world.

She does at times accompany the god Peklenc in the underworld, and during that time, uses her terrible ability to shout the awful doomed fates of those suffering below in Nav to those living above to torture them, in their nightmares. Ożwiena is now the companion to Veles and spreads the glory of his wondrous deeds when she can.

To those few who can gain her favor, her voice will also be used to bring recognition to their own actions. To receive her blessing is a challenge unknown as many have no clue or understanding as to how she would ever be a patron goddess to mere mortals without eventually betraying them. Her voice is too loud and random. Once she does, their fame will be shouted throughout the lands far and wide.

PEKLENC

Next to Czernobog, he is the most dreaded of gods for he is not only one of the rulers of Nav, or the underworld, but he is the Divine Judge. His role amid the Two Brothers is complicated, and as such he possesses much power. Peklenc is one of the gods of light, but his role as judge casts him deep into the underworld to know the actions and treacherous ways of the mortals above ground.

When Peklenc wishes to communicate with others, he sends basilisks as his emissaries. These monsters make the job difficult for those who have to deal with their petrifying presence.

Those who betray Svarog and the other gods of light above are judged primarily on multiple charges, but they are given a chance to redeem themselves over time. These wicked actions or thoughts are made known to Peklenc, and he takes notes of them all. While living, the guilty can fix their wicked ways in the eyes of the gods and Peklenc.

His punishments are brutal and take many forms. Those who never ceased in their evil ways against Svarog would eventually be put to death or killed by some means (guided by

Peklenc's divine hand). Cruel hearted ones were transformed into stones where they stood, never to live or breathe again, while those who were violent and unable to be calmed were transformed into werewolves, doomed to be hunted down and slaughtered. Those who had no feelings or compassion for others were transformed into strange creatures and made to devour themselves alive.

If villages enrage Peklenc with their diabolical ways and attract his attention, he will swallow them up with the earth. He will take every living person and animal below to the underworld as punishment. Lakes and ponds will then replace the spot where these terrible settlements once stood, leaving no trace.

Svarog and Czernobog both allow Peklenc to do this, for those judged wicked are sent to Czernobog rather than to Svarog. Peklenc is the god that sits in the middle of both, and his actions will send souls hurling to whichever brother deserves them based on the mortals' behavior in life.

Peklenc dislikes foul and corrupt governors and other officials and has a history of sending evil spirits to antagonize them until they are driven completely insane, quit their post, or die. Once they are gone, he will replace their building(s) with works nature, erasing their poisonous presence from the world.

Many mortals believe that Peklenc is the master of the subterranean fires and has the power to create and forge the metals below, placing the precious gems where they sit in the stones. Earthquakes are often said to be products of his rage or when he stirs on his throne of judgment.

PERCUNATELE

Percunatele is a thunder goddess, now aged and withdrawn up into the skies and clouds in Vyrjy with the other gods. Now that her more famous and powerful son, Perun, rules and reigns, her place in the cosmos is less important.

Her long, wild, dark hair is streaked with silver, reflecting the dark clouds and lightning, while her temper matches that of the storms as well. There was a time, early in the ages when monsters and beasts still ruled the world, before man carved their way into the wild wilderness, when Percunatele was worshiped. Few remember it, however, and those who speak of her only do so now as the Majka Peruna or 'Mother of Perun'.

The time of her blessings and miracles is rare, but not unheard of, as many still speak of it in the mortal world. An unexplained storm very well could be her doing. Because of her nearly forgotten existence among the gods, she is bitter, and her presence or blessings may come at a cost, for her storms are random and dangerous, and she is that aspect of it personified. Percunatele is not to be ignored, shunned, or taken lightly simply due to her being the mother of the mighty and famed god Perun.

She is also known as Perkunatate and Panna Perkunatele in some tribes.

PEREPLUT

As surely as those who brew the ale and beer for the community and feast, there is a goddess that presides over those fermented drinks, and Pereplut is her name. In the family of the gods who reside in Paradise, she serves Svarog and the others at their table personally and oversees the brewing of their divine ale which grants them immortality.

It is the mortals which hope that a little of her secrets will be imparted upon them, enabling their own drinks to be of good health. Pereplut is not the goddess of the intoxicated however, only those who drink.

Her other power rests on changing fortunes, and she can be fickle as fortune can be often. To appease her, worshipers would pour drinking horns or cups of beer or other alcoholic drinks as libations at the base of her statue in hopes that she would be pleased. Pereplut is known for shifting someone's fortune from good to awful in a matter of moments if she is not pleased, or the reverse.

PERUN

Also known as Perkunas and Peryn, he is the preeminent god of the many deities and the bold opponent of the venomous dragon, Veles. He is the son of Perkunatele, and his father remains a mystery. His time as a youth was spent acquiring the skills of a hunter and warrior.

Perun developed these skills swiftly and before he knew it, he was capable of capturing the very sun itself. By the time he was a man, the dragon Veles was terrorizing the mortal world below Vyrjy at the root of the World Tree. Veles was stealing cattle, slaughtering people, and laying waste to everything in his path.

Perched atop one of the branches of the World Tree, Perun plunged to the world below with his Thunder-Axe and confronted the dragon. This was the first of many battles between the two. Perun saved many mortals and drove off the poisonous serpent, sending it back into the earth. He was the first to best Veles.

Once, he was clever and disguised himself as an eagle. Veles came again and ravaged the land thinking Perun was nowhere near. Each time, Perun returned fiercer than before, using lightning bolts and casting them down at the dragon.

Perun and Veles would battle across the worlds often. In time, Perun grew into a mighty man with a copper beard and a strong physique. He would ride in a grand wagon pulled by a male goat, tugging the fiery sun in its wake. Depending on his mood, Perun would either wield a hammer or axe in his eternal hunt for Veles or other evils in the world. Although Veles is his nemesis, Czernobog's mere presence above the earth would be enough for him to confront.

Perun's popularity eclipses even Svarog's about the Slavic tribes, and he is deemed as the most important deity. His light bringing power, ability to drive away the creatures of evil, and active presence daily brings hope to all. Svarog could not even com-

pare to this fame for his inactivity since creation and the Feud. Every Slavic tribe, except for a few isolated or remote groups, worship Perun as their primary god above all else.

Just when Perun thought he had Veles in check, the monstrous dragon kidnapped his wife and took her below to Nav. This incident was not an isolated one, for many times has the devious monster managed to trick the sky god. Perun, however, was able to save his wife and wound the beast but never completely defeat it.

When lightning bolts strike during the daylight hours anywhere in the land, people could be sure it was Perun hunting and hitting his foe Veles. Veles would change shape into other animals, hide, and run away from the pursuit, but Perun will never relent. Not until the monster is slain and all innocents are freed. He hunts evil spirits and monsters and will never tire. While doing so, he will often use his axe and hurl it at them. This divine weapon will seek out his foe and devastate them with fiery lightning and destruction only to return to his hand seconds later; he and it will never be separated.

The family of Perun is complex and a little confused and filled with scandal. He was arranged to be wed to the moon goddess Myesyats or Menulis (in some tales), but not long after the wedding she cheats on him with the Aušrinis, who is the morning star. This adultery continues for some time until Perkunas finally catches on and is enraged. They divorce, and his light now never shines on her as before. The moon now must glow dimmer at night and rarely be viewed in the day when he arises, and many in the mortal world say both must look down on the Earth or Žemyna because it is their child.

Another of his brides-to-be, the rainbow, Vaiva, was kidnapped by Veles, and he can never see or be with her again. Wherever she stands, he is near but they can never be close, and Veles will often make copies of her to fool Perkunas.

Beyond this and these many past wives, Perun's present wife, and the one which his nemesis often kidnaps, is Dodola. She is the bringer of the rains. If a storm is coming and the rains subside, then it is assumed that Veles has taken her once more. Perun must again hunt her down and rescue her from the dragon's clutches.

In his family, his four sons were born into their posts across the world: North, South, East and West, forever to be on guard and aid their father when evil or dark forces are wreaking havoc across the land. Perun's brothers, nine in number, dwell in Vyrjy but little is known about them or what they do among the gods or man except they are the 'many thunders' one finds in a storm.

The Lithuanian tribes have portrayed and seen Perun as a horseman on a fiery horse in the sky, or in a wagon, his beard of many colors and his garb dark, axe in hand. To them he is Didieji Grižulo Ratai or 'The Grand Wheels of Grizulas' and the constellation of Ursa Major.

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The tribes of Latvia donned small golden axes in his honor, and they would sacrifice goats, black calves and roosters, or pour beer onto the earth in hopes of summoning his storms and ending dry spells across the land. If, however, storms were out of hand and becoming a problem and they asked Perun to relent, the Latvian tribes would sacrifice already prepared food to him. If this didn't work, they would gather their precious sweet honeycombs and throw them over the open fires while chanting in hopes that such an act would also extinguish the smoky clouds above.

If Perun is not atop the World Tree watching the Earth for signs of Veles, or flying in his wagon or horse with the sun, then he is in his golden palace atop the Great Mountain. He might be all-seeing, but there is much evil in the world and he cannot fight it everywhere singlehandedly.

His many names are thus: Peryn, Pirin, Piorun (Polish), Perkūnas (Lithuanian), Pērkona tėvs 'Father of Thunder' (Latvian), Vecais tėvs 'Old Father' (Latvian), and Perkúné.

PIZAMAR

Pizamar, through a series of enchantments, grew to become the goddess of the arts in Vyrjy. She was born a mortal, but was a chosen love of the god Svarog. There was a general consensus, however, that no god and mortal shall ever marry. This cast Pizamar into perpetual sorrow, and in her grief she tried to throw herself from a high cliff every night.

Seeing her suffer, the faery Nochnitsa prevented her death by placing her under a sleeping spell and went to the goddesses Lada and Chors for aid. Using their persuasion, they spoke to the goddess Podoga, the guardian of the mead of immortality, to give Pizamar just a drink and give her a place among them in Paradise. After some convincing, a deal was struck and Pizamar was handed a drink from Podoga's brew, a drink that only Periplut is allowed to serve on rare occasions.

After this was done, the mortal was transformed into one of the gods, and with her skill of music and song, Pizamar was able to entertain the other gods in Vyrjy and became the goddess of the arts. Her love for Svarog never dimmed, and the two were never far from each other. Even so, they never married.

PODAGA

The Wends' god of farming, hunting, and fishing was a rough, bearded man named Podaga. He was a rural figure (not to be confused with the goddess Podoga) and was considered more of a 'man's' god, a masculine deity that served men day to day.

The Wends' Germanic influence into Slavic culture is evident, but there really are few Germanic deities that Podaga could be equated with, which makes him unique. To many, he is the god of the weather, able to influence its change. Those who worship Podaga do not usually recognize Perun as being a significant storm god. In these tribes, Perun would most likely be worshiped as a sun god.

POLDUNICA

Her appearance may vary according to the Slavic land in which she appears, but her dread purpose does not. Poldunica is a goddess of vegetation, but one of blight and disease. Woe it is to those who cross her path while in the fields.

Generally, in the eastern regions of Europa, Poldunica is described a white clad lady that hovers over a field in midday using gusts of wind as her means to stay afloat. Anyone that goes near her or sees her will die with a touch of her hand.

Within the Balkan tribes, she will appear as a beautiful girl who will talk without pause. If those she is speaking to turn away or try to break from the endless conversation, she will lay a hand on them and kill them out of spite.

Far to the north, in the vast territories of the Rus, Poldunica will appear and twist the heads of strangers until their necks break. She and her fields are not to be trifled with at the wrong time of the day.

In Moravia, the goddess will either be an innocent 12-year old girl carrying a death dealing whip, or an old lady in a white dress with wild-hair, gawking eyes and goat-legs. In the tribe of the Polens, the goddess carries a sickle and stands unusually tall, and when she meets strangers she gives them riddles. If her riddles are not answered, she slays them brutally and moves on with her bloody blade.

Poldunica is feared throughout the Slavic world, and the story over why she is so ruthless and terrible is unknown. What is known is that she is to be avoided at all costs. No one knows for sure whether she is a god of light or dark, but her actions towards mortals are terrible. Her blessings on fields can be prosperous if she is not disturbed.

PORENUT

A local deity worshiped in the tribal town of Charenza by the Rani. He and several other deities have a temple devoted to them, built of the finest wood and decorated with elaborate works of art.

Porenut is represented as having four faces, or aspects, and holding his fifth face on his chest while standing. Unfortunately, what is known about Porenut is limited. More is understood about the other gods who shared the same temple in Rugia.

POREWIT

Porewit is another deity that shared the temple at Charenza. He is a forest god similar to the Hellenic Pan in function and purpose. He is a master of bees and their keeping deep in the forest. Their honey and sweetness is his.

He was shown as a statue with five heads and no arms, the meaning of which is lost in time.

RADIGAST

He is the god of hospitality, council, and hosts among the Slavic tribes. Radigast is pitch-black skinned, armed with a spear, and dons a helmet as a warrior in most portrayals. Many, however, also describe him as a gentle, bearded man that will occasion homes and be almost anonymous.

He has many varied spellings amid the Slavic tribes: Rodogost, Riedegost, Radigost, and Redigast. His existence is doubted by many scholars even though his name was documented in many early sources. Radigast's place among the gods isn't too suspect when the tale of Hors and Stribog is connected to his own separately.

RAGANA

Foul, with long teeth, hair and claws, this malicious dark goddess of the wilds must be sated, or her vengeance is swift. Ragana is infamous for stealing human babies out of their cribs to eat them, but she can be stopped by the odd measures of putting the baby afloat in salt water. Ragana is repulsed by the mere touch of the water.

Ragana traveled with her ominous owl companion everywhere. Her season is opposite to that of her rival, the goddess Saué, and she is celebrated during the winter solstice. Wielding her sinister red wand, Ragana can summon awful storms, ice, and snow. Blizzards are another of her specialties.

One of her abilities is the power to transform into a serpent or toad, but those clever of her whereabouts can wear an amulet with the shape of a toad. Ragana can also trick young men by appearing youthful and nubile and seducing them into sex, then afterwards killing them for their souls. She is a very spiteful and deceitful goddess, considered by many to be one of the dark gods in league with Czernobog.

Elderly women, haggard and repulsive are often called *Ragana* by the tribes and are believed to be protected by the harsh goddess. Secretly, many are in witch covens and follow Ragana. They will often let the ice and frost gather on them during the winter, believing it to be blessed, and then during a ceremony comb the frost from their hair. These loyal women will offer milk, butter, or hair to stone images or statues of the goddess in special rituals to appease her.

ROD

The supreme god, who may or may not be Svarog in another guise. Depending on the tribe and their beliefs across the Slavic world, such a correlation is not impossible.

Christian didactic works spoke against him, strongly indicating there was some form of belief in the Slavic communities in the deity called Rod. He was accompanied by goddesses defined as Rozhanitsy. The connection between Rod and his attendant goddesses is always familial.

His attendant goddesses acted as faery godmothers over the

chosen in the mortal world. They are able to foretell the future of certain children after their birth and periodically visit them to check on them.

Among many, it is believed that Rod is Svarog in another form, more involved in his universe and not restrained by his constant feud with his demonic brother, Czernobog, thus able to interact with his creations on a positive level. Many priests and midwives agree to this and pray to him and his many goddesses during times of conception, pregnancy, and childbirth.

The Rozhanitsy are the glimmering stars while Rod himself is the universe they rest upon. Birthing parties in peasant households are called rozing, and are derived from their name. It is believed that each one born into the world is a reincarnation of old ancestors once again returning the cycle. Only Rod and his goddesses could oversee this process through into this world, any other birth or creation into the universe is considered foul and evil.

Whether Svarog is Rod or not is open to the Castle Keeper in the scope of the game, for such a topic is in hot debate among scholars. If this is so, then the name is interchangeable in use throughout this codex and the Castle Keeper can make the call as required since the exact details of the theology of the Old Slavs is not completely understood.

RUGIEWIT

According to the Wends who live in the region of the Rügen Island, Rugiewit is another facet of the mighty all-powerful god Perun. In the same temple which houses several other deities in a grand shine, stands the tall, painted, wooden form of this god. Along with Porenut and Porewit, he and the others are praised in this island temple and deemed sacred.

To show his might, he possesses seven faces, matched with seven swords in his belt with an eighth sword in hand for battle. This incarnation of Perun is heavily worshiped at Arkona where the war god, Svantevit, is worshiped by the Rani tribe.

The god Karewit assists Rugiewit as protector of the isle of Rügen. Many peasants believe that Rugiewit is Perun's earthbound form, his avatar amid mortals when he hunts Veles.

Using his eight swords, Rugiewit is unstoppable in combat, and many warrior cults attempt to idolize him and his ferocity with lightning fast blades. In living memory of the elders of the Rani tribe, no one can recall when Rugiewit walked among them; it was so long ago, but they await when that time comes again.

The demons of the world never sleep or rest and Rugiewit's many faces gaze in every direction watching.

SAMOVILA

Samovila is an ancient bear goddess and fierce protector of animals and all wildlife. Anyone who has some measure of wisdom should refrain from garnering her wrath, for she will exact it, guaranteed.

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Samovila may lure those who catch her attentions negatively into a terrible fate by various means. Stories tell of how the goddess will draw the unwary into magic circles and force them to dance to their deaths, trick them into drowning in deep lakes, or kill them in a landslide.

If these means fail, then Samovila will personally take action and change shape into some form of nature to hunt the foolish ones down. Most gods can alter their shape, but Samovila can do so into any form of fauna on command. Her most common forms are swan, snake, horse, whirlwind, and bear but there are many others.

If her worshipers appease her during midnight ceremonies under the light of the moon, it is said that she would personally appear and teach secret skills to those present. To gain Samovila's trust and to achieve this honor is even rarer than her appearance.

Shamans say that Samovila falls out of the memory of Svarog's own creation or family and that she has always been present in the wildernesses and may have been there when nature was first brought into the world. Her origins are not known but she is thought to be somehow family to Mati Syra Zemlya and Mokoš.

Only those most devoted to nature and wildlife, willing to die for it, follow the ways of Samovila, for she will accept only the strong and those able to survive as the force of nature itself.

SAULE

The tribes of Lithuania, Letts, and Prussians call her the goddess of the sun and mother of Perkunas (Perun). Part of her sacred task is to tend to a small green serpent which symbolizes the lightning bolt of her son.

To honor this, her most devoted in the mortal world do the same and keep a green snake in their households to reflect her devotion.

Images of Saule portray a wise woman pouring light from a jug. This light is the divine light that shines in the world to grant health and prosperity to all. It is the warmth that keeps all safe during the coldest of times in Europa and is the basis for her son's own divine power.

Saule is statuesque in form, donning golden clothing, with a golden shawl. On her head is a shimmering crown also of gold under which flows her cascading golden hair. She is not easy to mistake or confuse with others. It is not unusual for her to depart from her castle in Vyrjy before dawn with her jug of light on her copper wheeled chariot. Then, riding with speed, she would carry the light across the skies over the world until the end of day.

Her worshipers praise her at dawn and sing a prayer at dusk to wait for her arrival again by morning. Wreaths are worn, with fires blazing in her name during certain celebrations, primarily at the summer solstice.

Her husband is Ménulis (the moon according to many), and her most loyal followers accord the creation of the universe to her alone; this is related to the collection of souls which she gathers in her special apple tree.

She and her husband had a child together (Saulé Meita), but a terrible incident occurred involving her lustful and despicable husband. Their child, the Earth, was raped, while Saule was watering and tending to the horses for her chariot. Her husband's deeds were finally made known to her, and out of rage she attacked him and scarred him, thus giving the moon its marks and keeping it from ever being in the sky at the same time as the sun.

Saule's many other children were the stars in the sky, but she made sure that Ménulis' evil deeds would never be repeated. To the various tribes of the Europa she is also called Perkunas Tete or 'Thunder Mother' and nearly respected more than he is, depending on the people met.

SAULÉ MEITA

The divine daughter of the sun goddess Saule and moon god Ménulis that had a tragic experience with her father. In the family of the gods, Saulé Meita's place is modest and not epic.

With her other siblings, the stars, she aids her divine mother Saule in decorating and creating the beauty in the universe every night. They would climb the highest trees, embroidering the night with light. Often, they would clean the home or run off to Germania and frolic like children with the other gods.

There would be times when their mother could not oversee them and had to be elsewhere preparing for her ride across the skies by dawn, watering her horses, or polishing her glistening chariot. It was in these moments of her absence that their father, the moon, would hover near them, or choose to not be in the sky overhead. Then finally his own terrible lusts became too much and he eventually raped many of his daughters.

Once the incident was revealed to her mother, the punishment was exacted on her father and her mother's wrath was far from over. Afterwards, Saulé Meita retreated with her other siblings that were attacked into the night sky as stars to never again visit the world in sorrow and fear that their father would find them.

SIEBOG

In the families of gods who reside in Paradise one had to establish a code or system of conduct for marriage and courtship, and this fell upon the god Siebog. He was chosen more out of circumstance than by his talents or skill.

As with many gods and goddesses of the Old Slavs, many of the stories are lost or were eradicated by the new faith. Siebog's story and his role is understood as being the consort to the goddess Živa, the unfortunate child of Hors and Stribog. Little more than this is known except that his image of a dutiful husband beside that of his fair and wonderful wife go hand-in-hand.

SILINIEZ

Living amid the tribes of the Polens, Latvia and in Lithuania, this unusual sylvan god demands that his sacred fire is kept alight by his holy moss. In the depths of the woodlands in these regions, as designated by the priests and shamans, they have specified one form of moss as Siliniez's.

Devoted followers must decorate his idols, altars and shrines with this moss if it doesn't already grow on it. Such places where it grows in abundance are deemed blessed and must be trodden with reverence.

Images of Siliniez show a wild man whose hair and beard are unkempt and possibly composed of this moss if not simply hair filled with foliage and moss within it. The growth rate of this dark moss is considered divine and guided by his hand, and wherever it falls is designated fertile. Even if the territory is in the depths of the woods, the tribes that worship him will farm and populate in the more habitable places nearby in order to remain close to him.

In some small way Siliniez is akin to the Green Man, and it would not benefit those who cross him in a negative way, for he will vex those with vegetation and moss-born curses that will be never ending. Victims of Siliniez will sprout foliage from their bodies uncontrollably and eventually turn into some form of the forest themselves, never to be seen again.

SRECA

Among the tribes of Serbia, Sreca is a beautiful maiden who spins golden thread. It is good fortune if one were to see this vision in a dream. Her counterpart, Nesreca is a foul hag, sleepy, with bloodshot eyes, that brings terrible luck to those who see her in their dreams. The northern tribes of Sklavenia (Russia) see her as Dolya, but the same goddess.

STRIBOG

He is the god and spirit of the four winds and ancestor of the eight directions of the compass, some say the grandfather.

Stribog's reputation among the gods is one of deception as the story of the moon goddess Hors recounts. Not only did he steal Radigast's cloak to fool the goddess, but he seduced her and impregnated her with his own child. There is nothing he cannot hear so long as it is spoken in the four winds in the mortal world.

Only those who reside above in Vyrjy, for example the four sons of Perun who sit in the four directions, can avoid the spying and deceptive means of Stribog; although he is very sneaky and his actions are insidious, he never betrays them to Czernobog willingly. His actions are just foolish and naïve, for it is his nature.

His worshipers are cautious knowing that Stribog is always aware of them when the breeze is blowing or the winds are a gust.

Stribog's many names are: Стрибог, Stribozh, and Strzybóg commonly in Slavic territories.

SUDICE

Also the Sudička, Sudaje or Sudičky, these three women are the divine fates of the Slavic world. They work the loom of fate and their efforts are irreversible once it starts. It is spoken by the priests and the wise in the mortal realm that even the gods cannot ignore their hand if they so choose to weave it.

For each child born, the three women weave the fate and play an intricate part: one fate drools the thread from her large bottom lip, while the second possesses an inch-wide thumb to size the thread into shape as it leaves the mouth, and the final fate pedals the wheel of the loom. Once it is brought together by the three, it is decided whether the child will be good or evil.

The three are bedecked in white garments, with necklaces of gold and silver, and they wear garlands of flowers. They carry candles, and their skin glistens strangely from a light source that never quite has a definite location.

When the three spoke, the eldest spoke first and the others afterwards in reverse order until what was needed to be said was conveyed.

SUDZ

Praised amid the tribes of the Polens, Sudz is the god of destiny. He is a solemn figure, bearded and perched on his throne in his rich palace, brooding and moody. It is due to this moodiness that peoples' destinies are so subject to his sporadic whim.

If he decides to throw handfuls of gold across his palace floor one day, then those born will have a positive and very beneficial future set before them, resulting in wealth.

If Sudz changes his mood in the opposite direction and isn't pleased, he will hurl earthen clods across his floor in a wild mess. Unfortunately, those born on that day will have a life of poverty and unhappiness, filled with hardship.

SVETOVID

The Rani tribe within the Wends worship the war god Svetovid, who is considered another aspect of the all-powerful god, Perun. He is also, for a better word, a conflation of the Celtic sun god Beli or Belinos, and even called so by many. His functions and titles are many.

Svetovid isn't just concerned with war, his focus is also on fertility and prosperity. His roles in the community are complex and although the other gods in the temple on the isle of Rügen are considered the protectors of Charenza, Svetovid's ability to do so extends beyond the village and over the entire the tribe and land they inhabit.

He either is armed with a sword or bow in one hand and a drinking horn in the other, he rides a grand white steed. This is the image portrayed by his devoted followers, usually the warriors, who fight and die for him.

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Divinatory priests and seers look to Svetovid for visions. This is portrayed in his statues, as his image is more often shown with four heads (or one head with four faces), two facing forward into the future and the other two backwards to the past. More often, each head is pointed in each direction of the compass, with each a color: north is white, south is black, west is red, and east is green. His four heads also symbolize the four seasons. He is also called 'World Seer'. According to some Slavic tribes, two of his heads are male while the other two are female.

Many tribes even consider him the creator god and place the other deities under him in importance. To the Polens tribes who consider him this high status, he is called Swaitowid by name.

They kept a white horse housed in his sacred temple in the island of Rügen, which they believed to be his own, embodied in this mortal steed, and it is maintained by holy attendants. The temple of Swaitowid was also the regional site of the oracle, similar to the Hellenic location at Delphi (*See the Codex Classicum*) where divination was undertaken by seers who would read the signs and omens. Dice were thrown by the seers as well to determine the signs. If threatened, a war-band of over three-hundred warriors protected the temple exclusively as their sacred task. They are the Warriors of Svetovid, 'Stražnici Swaitowid', or 'Guardians of Swaitowid'.

Svetovid has many names within the Slavic world, as his worship is profuse and widespread: Świętowit (Modern Polish), Svantovid (Croatian/Bosnian), Svitovyd (Ukrainian), Suvid (Serbian), Svetovid (Slovenian/Macedonian), Zvantevith (Latin/Alt Serbian/Bosnian) and Svantevit (Wendish).

TAWELS

A peaceful god who brings blessings to those maintaining their fields. He is the benevolent force that dwells in the fields and meadows when the sun shines golden and no darkness or storms loom. Offerings are left for him in the form of food, bowls of milk, or other drinks by the peasantry.

Generally, the peoples do not fear Tawels and have no reason to, as his history with them has been positive since his arrival down from Vyrjy with the other gods of light.

There is little else that has been recorded about him by the Old Slavs other than he is the divine force that looks over the fields and meadows.

TRESKA

During the beginning of time, rising from the depths of the seas when they were turbulent, were three terrible sisters: Ogneya ('Fiery One'), Glouheya ('Deaf One'), and Ledeya ('Icy Cold One'), and together they are known to the tribes in Bulgaria as Treska. Unlike the many gods and goddesses that protect and guide the pregnant and those giving birth, these three diabolical sisters plot to do the opposite.

Treska arose from the waves into the mortal world aware that such beings are weak and even worse, their newborns are vul-

nerable. They are set to causing harm and pain to mankind however possible and are greatly feared among the many dark gods. The Treska reside in the company of Czernobog when they are not harming or slaying newborns.

Only extreme prayers and offerings against them and their influence during times of childbirth can be done to ward them away. It is best to never encourage their appearance, for once they come they will never leave. Treska seek the cracks that make people and their community collapse and will send it into ruination in a short time if given the chance. Each sister will play their lethal part. In Macedonia, a river is named after them, where it divides the Hellenic speaking peoples and those of the Slavic, and it is believed the Treska reside in its dangerous waters.

TRIGLAV

Triglav is an unusual three-headed fusion of three separate divinities: Perun, Svarog, and Dazbog. This combination is thought to be a mighty fusion of their threefold powers placed into a single entity or concept.

Statues and images of Triglav are common in the Slavic world and fairly widespread as this trinity of deities is a holy of holies and generally accepted with most tribes and their priests. In short, very few see it as being blasphemous.

Such images of him vary, however. Many either display a three-headed man with golden blindfolds so that the gods are unable to see the sins of man. Often the blindfold also falls over the lips so that the gods cannot speak. Other images are more exaggerated and portray him with three horned goat-heads.

Smaller personal idols of Triglav, whatever the version, will often have a cloth draped over the heads to 'blind' them for the same reason, but enable them to be prayed to still at the family or personal altar.

According to some, the three heads also symbolize the sky, earth and the underworld each, and equally the function of each deity.

His many names in the Slavic world are: Триглав (Serbian Cyrillic), Trzygłów (Polish), Трыглаў (Belarusian), Trihlav (Czech and Slovak), and Triglav (Bosnian, Croatian, and Slovenian).

TRISHNA

This ashen skinned goddess of the dead and corpses is the protector of cemeteries. Trishna is a grim specter of a deity, ready to do her duty and oversee the task of watching and keeping the dead, or recently dead.

Trishna has no tolerance for those who desecrate corpses, and her wrath will be unspeakable for those who enact crimes or who vandalize their tombs and cemeteries. Often shrouded in a flowing white or black funeral gown, the goddess looms over the slain or their tombs. Her face is solemn, though she occasionally wears an expression of glee as though death brings her pleasure.

One would assume that Trishna is in the company of the gods of dark, but she is in fact with the others in Paradise, sent to respect the dead of the mortals. She is the rival to the fouler Giltinè, who seeks to cause terror and death wholesale among the mortals.

VA-KUL

Worshiped by the Zyrian peoples in the Slavic territories, she is the goddess of waters and possesses a quick temper as many deities do.

She has unkempt hair and dwells deep underwater, but if ever caught on the surface by others, they must tread carefully and not anger her. She will quickly flare up and summon horrific devastation on peoples and their homes.

Floods, quakes and other terrible events will follow if Va-Kul is enraged, and it wouldn't take much. It is often best to avoid this water goddess. Many priests in the Slavic lands do not accept her or her beliefs saying that they are imported from afar. Va-Kul's worship comes from the Syrian peoples' influence (note 'Zyrian').

VARPULIS

This god of storms is a companion to Perun on his adventures throughout the world to combat evil. Varpulis can call upon terrible winds and black clouds when needed to rain down storms upon the mortal world, or he can send them against demons and monsters.

His name and presence is recognized among many tribes from the Czechs, Sklavenia, Croatia, and Lithuania. He is a muscled, dark-haired, bearded and gruff man of short tempter (like his storms) who wields an axe. He rides a black steed that creates thunder with its hooves.

VELES

One of several gods worshiped by all Slavic peoples equally. Although seen in a negative light by most, he is the god of cattle and the peasantry and has a cruel history of punishing oath-breakers. More than this, he is the fierce rival to Perun, and the two are locked in an eternal struggle for supremacy.

Being a shapeshifter, Veles possesses many forms, but his most common guise is a venomous dragon that is said to coil around the roots of the World Tree poisoning it. When he isn't attempting to kill the Great Tree, or destroy the universe, he runs rampant, destroying lands, crops, people, and their livestock. Unless he is stopped by an able bogatyr, which is rare, it usually takes Perun's skilled hand to end his rampage.

Second to Czernobog, Veles is considered by many to be the next great evil in the world. He is devious and untrustworthy, and even though he does grant blessings to those that do appease him, he also is a monster to many. Veles' worship is just as any other deity with temples, idols, and holy litanies in his name.

There are gods of war, and then there is Veles who rules over them. Few wish to follow his harsh tenets, or be punished by his

strict measures in the afterlife, but those that do are extremely devoted to the level of fanaticism.

By the nature of their opposition, no temple or shrine devoted to Perun and Veles can be in the same location. Where Perun's were placed in high locations close to the sky in hopes to touch him, Veles' were intentionally built in the lowlands and deep depressions. Veles' sacred time is the seasonal celebration of Velja noć ('Great Night') where wild and intense reverence of him and his illustrious tales are honored by the celebrants.

Because of his power over oaths, Veles has his statues and shrines located where markets and other areas of commerce are also found. His role there is integral.

Perun relentlessly seeks him out day after day and will battle him until the serpent is slain. When and if he does, Veles will be reborn again in the underworld to return. Some shamans say this is due to his special relationship with Czernobog who grants him eternal power to unbalance the universe. No one knows for sure, and there are many theories.

Veles portion of the underworld is serene, grassy and filled with herds of cattle, making him the 'Skotji Bog' or 'Cattle God' to the Slavic peoples. The spirits of the dead dwell about him, and he commands them to be his messengers and spies on the surface. Other areas of his underworld are described as being a dark watery abyss that is unpleasant and terrible, where the dead can be found.

Sorcerers usually call upon Veles for aid, for he has the secrets of mischievous magic and the randomness that it requires. Most musicians also ask for Veles' blessings as well, for he is talented in the arts of many instruments.

Shepherds prayed to Veles, and the collection and selling of their wool for wealth was considered a blessing of the god. There are many expressions that are a play on words that deal with wool symbolizing a 'beard' and likewise, the more one has, the more money one would possess.

Veles is often described as being a bearded man with massive horns atop his head when he is not in his dragon or serpent form. He has many shapes and can call upon them when needed. The nearest equal to him in other belief systems would be the Norse god, Loki.

It would be rare for a highly devoted worshiper of Perun to also be one of Veles as well, as it would create too much internal conflict. If they ever encountered the two gods in their legendary battle, choosing a side would be even more difficult.

It is said that Perun's vengeance over Veles' deeds can sometimes turn obsessive and too dark, making him the antagonist in their never ending struggle for dominance. Perun would cast his lightning bolts down at any trick or attempt of deception that Veles would make, or even the slightest hint, until it went too far.

His varied names in the Slavic world are: Volos, Vlaho, Vlasihy, Vala, Weles, and Велес.

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ZARIA

In the Polens tribe Zaria, or Zoria, is the epitome of beauty; She is the Slavic Aphrodite. Girls and women deemed attractive are assumed to be blessed by her, or even descended from her in some way.

She is the goddess of the morning, and her visage is beyond comparison to any other, divine or mortal. Zaria is pure and without equal. Dawn is her only appearance into this world, to shower her greatness down upon mankind briefly.

ŽEMYNA

This earth goddess and essence of death and renewal is more ancient than even the Two Brothers, by way of being present before they first fought over who claimed what.

Offerings to her would be in the form of cooked food, or roosters sacrificed, beer poured from cups or kegs onto the soil. She was to be appeased or her bountiful nature would never come to fruition for her people, plants, or animals.

Farmers never begin their first plow of the season without waiting on the first crack of thunder in the skies, signaling the union between Žemyna and Perun, as the two symbolically wed and consummate in the spring season.

People joyfully praise the goddess and her blessings during their lives, in the meantime, knowing that she gives them plenty with a reward if they are true and loyal to her.

ZIRNITRA

To the Wends, Zirnitra is a mighty sorcerous god, dragon in form. Zirnitra reigns over magic, and his image is thought to grant his enchantment as well as his true blessings. Zirnitra is the black dragon, and spotting his symbol on others tells who worships him and his sorcerous ways.

His closest followers call him Zir, and the peasants, shamans, and priests all assume the wizards of Zirnitra are dangerous fanatics not to be taken lightly.

ZISLBOG

Although there are many accorded this title, to the Wends Zislbog is the moon goddess. She is also the Guardian of the seed from the fields.

Her other names in the tribes of the Wends are Kricco, Cisllobog, and Zilsbog, depending on the group. She is the silent moon that watches over the fields at night and the winds that stir them.

ZORYA

The goddesses of the dawn, Zvezda Dnierca, Zvezda Wieczorniaia, Zvezda Polnoca, are the auroras and watchers of the Dooms Day Hound, Semargl. If this hound is ever set free, it will chase down the constellation of Ursa Major and eat it whole,

setting off a chain of events which will lead to a horrible outcome for the universe.

Semargl is a chimeric monster hound with eagle wings and seven heads and is restrained by a chain to the star Polaris. He is ferocious, and it requires these goddesses to watch over him from night to day, each armed and expecting the worst at any time from the deceptive beast.

Zvezda Dnierca is the planet Venus, the Morning Star or 'Zorja Utrennjaja', and a warrior goddess, armed for battle and arriving every dawn, young and beautiful, opening the doors of Vyrjy every morning; this is her turn to look over Semargl. She is the goddess of horses, exorcisms, and protections.

Zvezda Wieczorniaia is the goddess of the Evening Star or 'Zorja Vechernjaja', and the mother of the Zorya. Her task is to close the doors of Vyrjy at dusk. She is aged and wise, also garbed as a warrior goddess.

Zvezda Polnoca is the goddess of Midnight Star or 'Zorja Polnochnaya' and the crone of the three. Death, magic, rebirth, and wisdom are her domains and by her time of the night it is believed that the day is dead as well as any doors between the mortal world and that of the gods above.

The Zorya serve Dažbog and, according to many tribes, he is their father. The three reside on the enchanted island of Bunyan out of reach by mortals. Tales vary as the marital relations between the Zorya, the moon, and the sun amid the Slavic tribes.

Even though there are other methods to reach Vyrjy, the Zorya protect the doors to the realm officially. If the brave and pure of heart ever make it to them and are confronted by one of the them throughout the day, they must be ready for whatever challenges await.

ŽYWIE

She is the goddess of health and healing, and is praised among the sick and those who are already of good health. The goddess is believed to be present in natural springs, fountains, and other places where the healing process occurs for people.

Salves, potions, and other means to give healing are attributed to her for their properties when used on the wounded.

ŽVAIGŽDĖS

In the plural, these are the stars, or more correctly, the planets in the night-sky above in Lithuanian belief. Beginning with the parents, the sun and moon, their many children are the planets and the distant stars.

Aušrinė (or Venus) is the Morning Star and most important on the list of siblings, and then next is Vakarinė, the Evening Star (or Evening Venus). Following this is Indrāja (Jupiter), Šėlija (Saturn), Žiezdrė (Mars), and Vaivora (Mercury).

PAGAN RELIGIOSITY

As much of the early religion of the Old Slavs is fragmentary and divulged from many sources, it is widespread across a vast territory; as the many branches of Slavic speaking peoples differentiated in their concept of the core pantheon and many other theological themes, it leaves us today with a conundrum.

Although very similar to the early Germanic and Celtic peoples' beliefs in many ways, they also show many great differences and a strong tendency towards a belief in a polarity or dualism. This wasn't always so clear a definition in the cultures in Western and Central Europe. Many Slavic deities were either strongly hostile or beneficial towards man, and there was no in between.

Living around the Black Sea, after settling there from wherever their original homeland may have been, they were exposed to many varied eastern religions. This gave the Slavic tribes a new direction in spirituality that the other peoples in Central and Western Europe only briefly glimpsed in early ages.

There are traces of a belief in reincarnation in Slavic paganism, and it must have remained for much of the history of the Old Slavs until the aggressive Christianization was underway (988 C.E.). Earlier attempts by the Greek Orthodox Church of Byzantine during the Eastern Empire, however, had already made inroads into pagan territories long before, but nothing was done to absolutely abolish it under state authority yet.

Slavic paganism was complex and an essential part of everyday life, from birth to death. It was unimaginable that this would ever be taken away. Profuse rituals, ceremonies, chants, and elaborate tales colored life. Our knowledge today of much of the original religion derives from the passed on traditions. Holy campaigns were undertaken by powerful lords to eradicate paganism, and these lords were backed by the Byzantine Church and sometimes even the Roman; but the Old Religion remained.

Temples were destroyed, statues burned, and priests driven out or murdered by the new religion, but the Slavic beliefs were old and their ancestry goes back to a time before people could even remember migrating into the regions their ethnic groups presently recognized as their own.

The Slavic cosmology portrayed in this codex, as with the others in the series, is typically one during its prime. Of course, the Castle Keeper can decide differently when they design and run their own game as this information is for them to use as they please.

We don't know enough about how the Old Slavs worshiped to explain it, but we do have some idea, and a little of this is given in various places throughout this codex already (on the gods, monsters, etc). Modern Slavic paganism is, for the most part, closer to the older beliefs than any form of paganism in the west of Europe and yet has been unnoticed by many. The Slavic pagan universe was animistic and heavily filled with spirits in everything, there is no doubt.

Rituals and holidays dating back to the centuries in which the Old Slavs once dwelt in Eastern Europe and the Balkans are still



performed today, and it is quite astounding! Unfortunately, it is a small microcosm to the whole that was lost, just the same as witnessing small elements of faery lore in Celtic countries being followed in the traditional sense, and knowing that it might have lineage going back to the original druids over a thousand years ago.

Not giving the deities statistics has been a rule in these codices from the start. It would demean them and give rise to the power-gamer who seeks only to slay them. That is why none of these books include them. Only the most important information useful for sparking the Castle Keeper's imagination is written and nothing more.

SACRED DAYS

Because there were too many tribes and Slavic peoples spread over a vast area in earlier times to list their holidays, what is given here is a basic summary of them for use in the game.

This list is generalized but within it local tribal character can be added through gaming, and the Castle Keeper can create their own peculiar traditions and customs that might derive from resident spirits or divinities.

- The pagan Slavic year began in March with the time known as Velja Noj ('Great Night') and Velik Dan ('Great Day'). These two times were more of a Slavic 'Halloween' that celebrated the end of the Old Year during the Great

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Night as it transitioned into the Great Day. At night, it was filled with masks and woolen costumes, bonfires and wild festivities in honor of various gods, and many customs were underway that were performed to ensure a good new year. It was feared that spirits roamed freely by night and could threaten all. Above all other gods, this was Veles' night.

- By spring the god Jarilo is honored with celebrations that involve colored eggs, house to house songs, rites to encourage fertility, and feasting. Processions of youths travel from village to village led by one boy on a horse who is chosen to represent the god himself. These children don green leafy plants and wave them to symbolize the new life and health into the world.
- Maslenitsa is a spring festival celebrated by the northern tribes across the plains of Russia that falls before the first day of March. For these tribes, this is their New Year, a little contrary to the rest of the Slavic world who follow Velja Notj/Velik Dan. The recognition that winter's end is now near brings elation and, with that, a mixed celebratory atmosphere of both fasting from meat, and many feasts with dairy instead. Games involving snow and ice are played by all as everyone awaits the sun to appear.
- The summer solstice is anticipated with many different names and under various titles in the Slavonic world. From Kries, Pust, Ivanje and Kupala. Although generally different by name and in some customs, essentially the solstice celebrations together share with girls who don garlands, dances around bonfires for fertility, ritual coupling by young lovers and divination for future marriages by hopefuls. Of the many holidays, this is one of the most frenzied and orgiastic in the year. Ritual baths are done, and the goddess Kupala is honored. It is hoped she will bestow her divine fertility on those so chosen.
- By midsummer there was a holiday to honor Perun. This special time came with a high price, however, as soon would come the harvests, and there would be doubt that it would be bountiful or prosperous. So to be sure and not to be ignored or inspire Perun's wrath, human sacrifices were made to him. These sacrifices would be criminals and enemies captured by various means to this point in the year. They would meet their fate by burning or hanging.
- By the time of the harvests, a time no one today is exactly sure of due to a lack of precise documentation, villages would bake a giant wheat cake. This sacred cake was about the size of a person and required the aid of most of the people to do the work. The eldest priest would stand behind the cake and if he could not be seen by the people it was a fortuitous sign meaning that next year's harvest and crops were going to be healthy. If a temple was in the village, the cake would be placed within it and the ceremony held safely inside.
- Bozhich or 'Little God' and later 'Christmas' sprang from a much darker winter seasonal holiday. The tribes feared the time of year when the snows and ice came in, the skies were bleak, and Perun's power was less. Svarog's power weakened during the winter solstice and after it is celebrated the birth of Dazhbog.

- Kračun is another Slavonic celebration on the winter solstice, an older and more traditional one that is related to the aforementioned one. The goddess Hors has been defeated by the Black God by the time of the solstice and dark forces are rampant. It is a dreadful time for all, as spirits and monsters are empowered by this, and their master Czernobog reigns. People light fires in graveyards for their dead relatives to keep them warm and place logs with fires at crossroads for the traveling spirits at night at this time. The superstitious tread warily in this time while witch hunters profit a-plenty.
- Koliada is related to the previous holiday and celebrates the transition from the dark time towards the brighter with singing children, games, brightly lit houses, and festivities. Knowing that the Great Night/Great Day are near, just a month away, this time is to make that stretch towards spring. Gift giving was done and other activities to encourage positivity and happiness even if the snows are nowhere near gone.

HOLY LOCATIONS

The Slavonic peoples worshiped their gods much in the same manner as all other ancient peoples. Great expense and communal effort went into building temples for a god, goddess, or several deities (the Isle of Rügen for example). Evidence shows that these statues were often painted, even dressed and given items to be personified.

Unlike the Mediterranean civilizations, or those of the East, the Slavic tribes evidently constructed their holy centers out of timber, for much of the written documentation describes how they burned. Not every community had temples, as this list will show. Aesthetic and architectural tastes were nearly identical among the ancient peoples of Western, Northern, Central, and Eastern Europe. There are many theories why, and most are obvious, but this book is not the place for discussing them. Ancient Europe was covered in dense woodlands and the many populated tribes exploited that commodity keenly.

GROVES: This was not explained well in the extremely rare sources, but it was clear the Slavic peoples did worship many of their deities in sacred groves. This would be apparent as many of their divinities are forest dwelling. How these groves were managed and what rituals were performed is unknown. The Castle Keeper would need to use their imagination here, or compare such information with the Celtic druids for more.

HIGH PLACES: Sky and sun gods were well documented as being praised by the devoted on hills, mountain-tops, and other promontories. Fires were lit, sacred stones and statues were in place, and other rituals were performed. Many of these locations were only visited during specific holidays, and it was blasphemous to do so otherwise; many could be subject to being killed on sight.

TEMPLE: As mentioned before, these holy places are not always so modest and required some patronage by local lords and a massive communal labor force to build. Before the intrusive and destructive arrival of Christianity, temples were once

widespread throughout the Slavonic world from the shores of the Black Sea to Bohemia, and the Balkans to up the Russian steppes. These were venerable and grandiose structures, hal-
lowed and rich with history.

NATURE: Depending on the deity worshiped and the person performing the ceremony, this could take place in a field, by a river or stream, or any other place in the wilds where supernatural beings dwell. Offerings and libations would be given, prayers spoken, and perhaps more.

TO CALL THE DIVINE

It is very likely that the adventurer may wish to get the attention of a god or goddess in their journeys. Personal blessings and curses to be showered on the enemies' heads are always a benefit.

To the common man, the blessings of the gods brings healing for the wounded, sick, or malformed, prosperous crops and harvests, successful hunting forays, victory in battle, and terrible curses down on the heads of enemies. The adventurers' need for divine intervention would have to be a more direct, almost instantaneous event that brings gratification in gameplay, and these fast and quick rules can make such an element possible.

The character's base chance to gain a god's attention is taken from their charisma attribute. If this is not their primary attribute, their odds of being heard are slim, but using these many methods of appeasement can modify the chance. A god call begins with the worshiper finding a method of praise first, doing what it requires, and receiving a modifier and rolling a charisma check.

There are essentials to worshiping the many deities in the Slavic mind, and many of these will seem quite strange and brutal to modern sensibilities. To gain the favor of a particular divinity, a character may do any or all of the following:

SACRIFICE: Often it just takes a small trinket of wealth broken or destroyed (e.g., a piece of jewelry, coins, weapons, etc.), +1, or an animal (goat, bull, etc.), +3, or the most potent, a living person, +5. Sacrificing an animal or person often involves a knife or sword, or if that person is someone of great stature, a triple sacrifice (a rare event that usually involves the victims being strangled, drowned, impaled, bludgeoned, burned, or stabbed). This will give the worshiper a +8 on their god call.

PRAYER: Lengthy songs, poems and elaborate plays recalling events in the deity's life can be performed. This will gain each participant a +2 on their roll.

FASTING: The worshiper fasts from one specific thing for a length of time in hopes of gaining a brief moment or encounter with a deity of their choice. This fasting can be from eating,

sleeping, speaking, violence, etc, and must be according to the deity's style. This fast will give a one-time +5 bonus with no guarantee the deity will react.

OFFERINGS: This often runs very close to making sacrifices, except that nothing is broken or destroyed in the process. These offerings can be small strips of clothing tied to a tree or stone, necklaces, pendants, or other little items (+1 for each item to a maximum of three at a time). Larger offerings can be made, acquired treasure for example (+8), food or drinks (+3), or crafted goods/clothing (+2). These offerings, like sacrifices, can be placed on areas of worship sacred to that deity, whether in a ring of standing stones, a lake, a shrine, a grove in a forest, or a temple.

The vast array of deities and what they would be fond of for offerings and sacrifices is staggering to list, but it can be approached with some logic. War gods seek the blood and death of battle through the slaughter of enemies. Severed heads can be offered up to the deity (+1 per head of enemy slain), or a more active system involves the killing of each enemy during battle (+5).

The nature of the divine blessings depends on a combination of what the character is asking from the deity, the CK's interpretation, and the story. If the god call is successful, the level of divine intervention is slight and may not be apparent to the characters at all during gameplay, but it is there.

If a critical roll is made during the call, the deity will grant a miracle. This event will be epic and clearly divine in nature. Possible examples include a magical weapon/item, an avatar assisting them in some way, altering events or the landscape to suit the worshiper, etc. The CK can unleash magnificent changes in the form of the appeased god or goddess.

If the worshiper fumbles the call, they gain the wrath of the deity and must be blessed by a cleric/priest, shaman, or another deity to possibly undo the ire. Many bogatyr have seen their demise brought about by a spiteful god, and even with their skills and experience, they could not prevent it. Another miracle from the same or another deity can nullify this wrathful god as well.

Devoted worshipers call on their gods every day, but it is the CK's decision how often god calls can be made to affect gameplay. This is not a light event, and once the gods are invested in the characters' lives and stories, it becomes more complicated and personal.

Praising the gods for blessings and benefits during the holidays can ensure a more likely intervention as the veil between the worlds is thin. The worshipers can jointly gain an automatic +8 on the call on that day or night if they join in as one group during the ceremony. They will suffer dire consequences if they fumble the call.



CHAPTER 6: BATTLE STRONG AND HEROIC

“Ilya chose a strong steed named Karushka and walked him, washed him, and said to him, “You will be a knight’s horse, and your duty will be very difficult in the years ahead.” In the blacksmith’s shop, several masters hammered arms and armor for the knight Ilya.

They made chain mail, a strong steel sword, a lance, and a shield purple in color. They asked him where he would go then afterwards. “My path from here is to the city of Kiev,” Ilya answered to them, and after his equipment was finished he rode to Kiev.

On the way, he stopped at the city of Chernigov. It had happened that the Tatars were besieging the city. Ilya attacked them and won a famous victory. The Tatar troops ran away.

The citizens of Chernigov opened the gates and welcomed the bogatyr with bread and salt as gifts in gratitude. They asked him to be the leader of their army. He thanked the citizens for such an honor, but told them he must continue on to Kiev with no delay.

Ilya’s path to Kiev will be filled with dangerous lands and the swampy forests of Chornye Gryazi. There were no animals around, no birds – just a heavy silence. In the dark forest there lived an evil highwayman named, Solovey, who lay in wait atop a great tree and robbed travelers by killing them with a terrible, loud whistle. When Solovey heard the horse’s hoof beats, he became tense. He let out a whistle more fearful than a wolf’s howl, a bear’s roar, an animal’s bark all in one. From his horrible whistle, the leaves on the trees withered and fell. Ilya Muromets raised his heavy bow and fired an arrow that hit Solovey in the forehead. The highwayman fell from his tree at Ilya’s feet, and Ilya put him across his horse and rode on to Kiev.

The knight arrived by noon when Prince Vladimir and his knights were eating their midday meal. Vladimir asked the strange knight from whence he came. Ilya answered honestly, “I am Ilya, the son of a peasant. I am from the town of Murom. In the city of Chernigov I went to matins, then I listened to Solovey’s whistle, and here am I before you.”

-Several Bylyna of Ilya Muromets

Slavic warriors and their heroic culture is very analogous to Western European cultures. In both the real world and in the tales and folklore, there is a rich and diverse variety of fighting culture to explore. From a roleplaying perspective, it is a treasure trove to dive into as these tales and histories are stuffed with epic battles, real or imagined, and their bogatyr or traveling knight/hero.

What is surprising is that Western culture, especially in fantasy roleplaying, has seen a very limited influence by the Slavonic heroic influences over the many years. Whether this is due to the political atmosphere in the real world or a cultural/linguistic barrier is unknown. Whatever the case, this chapter will get you started on the path to playing a bold and mighty bogatyr in **Castles & Crusades**.

Due to a lack of space, we won’t recount the many tales about them, but we will give a small sample about the actual warriors in history and their place in early history leading up to the time of the Old Slavs. It would be easy to envision an adventuring party comprised of Celtic, Teutonic, Norse, and Slavic characters in a typical group.

THE SLAVONIC WARRIOR

Archaeologists, scholars, and historians and the many theories and splintered schools of thought are divided over how and where the many Slavic peoples came from. Their influences clearly fell on the Asiatic steppe tribes north of the Black Sea and beyond, but this is pure conjecture.

The Slavic warriors were propelled into Eastern Europe and Russia from these territories at an early date, perhaps as mer-

cenaries or support forces in a manner not understood today. However they arrived, they brought with them their families and gained the arts of war along the way.

From the aggressive and very indomitable horse tribes of the Scythians that inhabited the southern Russian steppes and along the Black Sea, the earliest Slavonic groups were first mentioned to be involved, and settled as the Sklaveni, by the Greeks. This was over 2,500 years ago.

It wasn’t until the fall of the Western Roman Empire, however, that the widespread migration of Slavic tribes became evident. It seemed that this documentation was predominantly from the Byzantine Empire in the east and by other Greek sources and occasional Latin authors. We never hear from the people themselves during this hazy period of history.

In this hazily documented era, it is assumed that the basic Slavonic warrior was similar most other Europeans in his choice of armaments and approach to warfare. Slavic warriors were primarily foot soldiers bearing spears, axes, and shields. Eastern influences would have been strong, especially from the later Huns and earlier Scythians, however, and horsemen and archery would have made a powerful impression on the Slavic tribes.

Attila the Hun and his warriors’ ethnicity is still a hotly debated academic issue, even though the Hungarian people are content with the notion that they are his descendants. Genetically and linguistically, there is little to nothing to work with. After Attila’s death in March of 453 C.E., this leaves a sparse archaeological trail and only those limited sources during his lifetime. The Hunnish influence on the Germanic and Slavic peoples is not doubted, and in his wake they followed and settled. Attila played a

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major role in establishing a new ethnic base in the fallen Western Roman Empire's cultural landscape. This also includes the trail he made traveling from the furthest east (wherever his original homeland was) and through the Byzantine Empire.

The Slavic warrior had assuredly joined his ranks, if not picked up the pieces, and learned from Attila's Huns.

What is known about the Slavic warrior in the Migration Period is that they were efficient. Even though the Byzantine Empire was powerful and bustling with wealth and grand armies and a fleet of ships after the Western Empire's fall (post-475 C.E.), the Slavic peoples were expanding rapidly into the Balkans and Central Europe with little hindrance. Emperor Justinian's hopes of re-establishing a united Roman Empire, East to West, never occurred, partially because of the many new cultures arriving on his doorstep. The territory now known as Romania was all that remained of the Western Latin Empire.

The Germanic and Saxon tribes settled in the territories not already inhabited by the Slavic tribes. They were followed by the Goths, and Slavic warriors' steel was being tested once again.

A breakdown of the basic Slavic warrior from the Migration Period and his armaments from the sources is limited to this:

- Spear is the primary weapon (each warrior carried two)
- Small Wooden Shield
- No Armor (may have padded leather or hide)
- Iron Helm (could also be made from bronze/leather)

Bear in mind, this extremely limited data is not the sole rule as to how the warrior dressed for battle and is given to us by biased Byzantine outsider observations. If the Slavonic peoples were in contact with the Scythians, Sarmatians, and other Eastern peoples (Huns, steppe tribes, etc), they would have had a larger variety of accoutrements on hand to wear and arm themselves with. Archaeology shows a continuity of material culture in many areas where cultural hearths have remained for millennia, and so this complicates the generalizations of what a Slavic warrior would have donned in the post-475 era.

Where unknown peoples once populated these cultural hearths in prehistory and through the Iron-Age, we know that Celtic speaking peoples then inhabited the regions (or the Dacians in what is now Romania), only to be subjected to a Roman domination later. The material culture wouldn't have altered too differently by the time of the rise of the Eastern Empire and the Migration Period.

The average size for an army was between several hundred to 5,000 or more warriors. Note that the Migration Period, when the Old Slavs entered into history, was not an era when massive armies were common as they once were in the Hellenic, Hellenistic, Roman Republic, and Late Antiquity periods. The Byzantine Empire could, however, still field armies numbering in the scale of the Late Antiquity period. Slavic armies were not great in number.

As mentioned earlier, gaining from their influences by the Scythians, living close to the Samaritans, and the interval with the Huns, the Slavic peoples would have had a strong cavalry element. The few sources that speak of them say they moved swift and their horsemen dismounted often to cool off.

The Slavs were skilled at guerrilla warfare as noted equally by the Eastern and Western halves of the Roman Empire. They also focused their manpower on the flanks of their enemy when in the field and were unable to perform hit-and-run maneuvers. In this early period, the sheer number of their tribes alone could account for their overwhelming odds. Greek, Germanic, Celtic, and other ethnic foes would gradually become overwhelmed by wave after wave of Slavic hordes, skilled in Asiatic and steppe tactics and horsemanship.

In the Russian steppes, even though they were the dominant populace early on, driving out much of the indigenous Asiatic peoples, new rulers came from Sweden to establish power. Using the might of brute force and their religion, they gained control over the Slavic communities (See 'Chapter 2.0 The Whole Wide & That Which is Beyond').

Byzantine sources recount that Slavs alongside Huns were mercenaries. There were hints of siege machine technology being employed by many armies. It is unfortunate that the extent of what is known about warfare and Slavonic warrior culture, pre-11th century, is largely unknown. Such details are lacking and poorly documented by the Byzantine Empire.

In the Byzantine manual on strategy (*Strategikon*), written by Maurice in the late 6th Century, he mentions the unusual leniency which the Slavs permitted long-time captives to have. In the eleventh book, *Characteristics and Tactics of Certain Peoples*, Maurice says that after a given time being held by them, if the ransom is paid, the prisoner has the right to leave or shockingly, choose to join them become a freeman and friend.

This leniency with prisoners of war isn't practiced by other cultures of the time, a trait which authors of oppositional cultures would be sure to write about to give their enemies an even more negative image. The Slavs, however, were generally peaceful towards their longtime captives if the ransom was paid. Such a price was akin to the Roman fee of manumissio without the action of becoming a slave to pay it.

According to many nationalists and scholars, the rapid Slavization of Eastern Europe was a several stage process. The warriors would sweep in, invade the previously populated peoples in stages (Celts, Germans, Ligurians, Colonial Roman citizens, Greeks, etc);

- A. Ransom them to their peoples,
- B. Hold out for the wealth or payment after a given time,
- C. If not gained, sacrifice captives to the gods/assimilate to their populace, or
- D. Set free and claim territory as before.

The basic Slavic warrior can be designed by using the **Castles & Crusades** fighter or barbarian classes, each with distinct differences. While the fighter can be treated as a basic warrior or soldier, the barbarian should be handled as a more elite or bogatyr. This specialized hero can also be rolled up using the paladin or knight classes. It depends on the manner in which the player wishes to create their hero and the style of the campaign.

DRUZHINA

This is a specialized elite warrior group or retinue that aided a lord in battle. They are akin to the Germans and Celtic warrior elites in nearly every way. The name derives from the Russian word meaning ‘fellowship’. It also is found in Poland and the Ukraine, and it is logical to assume that similar groups existed throughout the Slavic world. The earliest appearance of this use of the word isn’t until the 10th century amid the Polenes.

The druzhina had two levels of membership. One was for the chief members that not only were veterans and champions in battle but also advisors to their leader (the boyars). The second level was for the junior members earning their rank and place in the retinue.

The company were paid from the lord they served firsthand, and the junior members were his personal guards, assigned this duty to test their ability. Loyalty was tricky, however, as the druzhina could choose at any time to depart from one lord to another if they so wished. So the leader had to keep his retinue happy if he was pleased with them.

When taxing the populace, it was left to these men to circulate amid the peasantry and gather the riches and other means of taxation (food, livestock, etc.), thus trust was required.

Outsiders or wandering adventuring druzhina are given a similar name and title in the ranks once they earn a place in the retinue: druzhinniki. These men are very similar to the heroic bogatyri. Only the aristocracy or exceptionally talented outsiders could be given this status as they are handed estates, wealth, and slaves over time for service to their leader.

The exact size of these fellowships vary, but the higher echelon of the boyer group would remain small.

Other names for them in Slavic are: družyna, družyna, Дружина, Дружина, družyna, and knyaz.

Knyaz, also has several other meanings in the Slavic world: ‘mayor’, ‘elder’, ‘chief’, ‘prince’, and has its roots in the Germanic word *könig* or ‘king’. It was downgraded once these aristocratic warriors served new leaders and became lesser fighting men with status.

THE BOGATYRI

Although serious, hard data on the warriors of the Old Slavs is lacking, tales and names about their later heroes or bogatyri throughout the Slavic world are not. Across the many Slavonic languages, there are endless terms for hero, champion and simi-

lar meanings but the one word that anyone who is vaguely familiar with Russian byliny are the bogatyri. Ironically, the word itself doesn’t originate in the language but from outside it.

Bogatyri can be traced back to a fusion of Mongolian and Turkish influence, according to the estimations of linguists and scholars. At the very earliest, it was used by this ‘Turkic-Mongol’ synthesis in the 14th century for a title in the highest sense of honor; this was ‘Baghatur’ (‘Hero/valiant warrior’).

This is complicated in its simplicity. Most of the Slavic tales about the bogatyri pre-date the Mongolian influence and the use of this title. Other scholars place the Iranian word ‘bog-’ (lord) as the likely culprit due to its previous influence in divine names.

Whatever the origin of the Slavic word for the legendary hero or knight errant, he is always righting wrongs, slaying monsters, and even defeating entire armies singlehandedly. If one bogatyr wasn’t enough to contend with already, often several would join and adventure together in the tales. The grouping of Alyosha Popavich, Dobrynya Nikitich, and Ilya Murmometts are a famous trio, told in Russian tales and represented in the arts for centuries. Alyosha’s strengths in the team was his wits, while Dobrynya’s was his bravery, and Ilya’s was his spiritual might. Each bogatyr has one major element above all that they can give to the whole.

From a fantasy perspective, the adventuring warrior is an honorable and heroic warrior and fits this classification if played well in the game. If the player has difficulty understanding or grasping the concept of a bogatyr, remind them that such a hero is similar to one of King Arthur’s traveling knights without a seat at the table of Camelot, always on the move and never stationary.

The bogatyr needn’t come from Russia but must obviously originate in a Slavonic territory to qualify as such. He must also be larger than life in both personality and deeds. A low level character wouldn’t have a past of deeds to be worthy of being called a bogatyr for sure. If the Castle Keeper’s desired campaign is crafted around a mythic Slavic setting and this codex is the impetus to get that world propelled into action, then a higher level character is required. It would seem advisable that a starter bogatyr would be around 3rd level, whether fighter, paladin, knight, or barbarian.

The oldest usage of the word from a Polish source, ‘A description of the Old and the New Poland with the old, and a new division of the same’ (1585) refers to the bogatyri as more demi-gods in character. By lofty deeds alone, this would seem highly possible given they can topple great forces of the foe alone, slay dragons, and perform other impossible feats. If a game is ran correctly, this decently describes a good adventure!

Analyzing some of the stories of the Russian bogatyri at first makes little sense when compared to other cultural heroes’ origin stories. Ilya Murmometts for example was a hard working peasant for thirty-three years of his life until a gathering of mysterious wizards arrived outside his village one day, then enchanted him with his abilities. Before he knew it, he had the local blacksmiths forging his weapons and goods and was traveling to Kiev to begin his grand saga.

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Heroic tales from the Western perspective usually start from when the character was young, or have a sequential logic to them, and build as they go. Ilya's tale is one of many where he was suddenly made a hero and gravitated to the palace of Prince Vladimir of Kiev.

The bolder and more epic the character and his deeds are, the more memorable the story will be, as in times of old. When in doubt for what your bogatyr can do so far as combat stunts and other wild feats, refer to the **Codex Celtarum's** 'Battle Feats' ('Chapter Five: Strong of Feats and Deeds') for ideas. Unfortunately, in Russian and overall Slavic traditions, these knight errants were male, but it doesn't mean that it can't be shaken and altered. Players with new ideas should be able to reinvent the old conservative and traditional views and to play a female role in the same class all the same.

If the Castle Keeper has done research on a Russian or a Slavic themed campaign, then there should be a colorful enough setting for at least one bogatyr in the group, maybe two if the players can handle the challenge. Given the limitless potential of the supernatural beings and deities within the Slavic imagination from antiquity and the plethora of stories, the Castle Keeper can construct wondrous tales.

For some levity and to add some extra character to the creation process of the bogatyr, this origins table can assist in making the back-story.

BOGATYR ORIGINS TABLE (D10)

1. The bogatyr was born to a simple rural life in the countryside with nothing affluent or rich. Their upbringing is modest with a good, hard-working family. They know the difficult and tenuous life of peasantry and how precious life is and will struggle to keep it.
2. Born by the sea shore (Black Sea, North Sea, Baltic, etc), and raised by fishermen. The bogatyr is raised to the ways of the spirits and gods of the rivers and shorelines. They are also keen on the change of the tides and comings and goings of the ships and those who are in them.
3. The bogatyr was raised in the woods by forest-folk, hidden from the rest of humanity and the world. They were kept world wary from it all on purpose, and are naïve about other peoples and their dangers.
4. An orphan, the bogatyr was taken and raised by steppe peoples (Scythians, Samaritans, etc) and adopted their culture. Now they have returned to their original culture without any understanding of what to expect.
5. The bogatyr was born and raised on a mountain, near the realm of the gods. They were made to be as swift and strong as the mountain goats, able to leap and bound the rocks, but taught to avoid the evil Bald Mountains where Czernobog's minions are known to frequent. Now it is time to mingle with civilization below.
6. This bogatyr was conceived, educated, and raised in the palace of a lord or prince of a land. They are jaded by

the upbringing and even though they are wealthy, they are naïve of the true brutality and cruelty of the world beyond. This bogatyr seeks to do justice and aid the hurt and weak wherever they are, however possible.

7. Unlike the others, this bogatyr is from beyond the Slavic lands entirely. Where, is up to the player and must be agreed upon with the Castle Keeper. This bogatyr is unique in that they are a foreign hero whose fame and deeds are accepted in the land equally. They are given a Slavic name however.
8. The dark past and origins of this bogatyr may remain eternally hidden depending on how the player and Castle Keeper choose to handle it in the story. Perhaps they were a diabolical person before; they could have even working for the Black God and his evil forces at some point.
9. This bogatyr's sudden rise to power came about one random day/night unexpectedly caused by a god or goddess' whim. Roll this table again for the origin itself and combine this result and choose, with the Castle Keeper, the deity responsible to create the complete back-story. The bogatyr is now this deity's representative among mortals (it is wisest to play a paladin).
10. Blessed and fortunate, this bogatyr was raised in Vyrjy among the gods of light, nearly spoiled, but they have little to no memory of this childhood. When they were no more than five years old, they were placed in the world of men to be raised by peasants. Their real parents are unknown.

Naming the bogatyr could be simple or complicated depending on how one's story is brought about (See 'Chapter 7 –Castle Keeper Info, Naming Your Character in the Slavic Style'). The suggestion is: keep it simple. Let the language and cultural barrier, if there is one, slowly sink in and become normal over time and gameplay.

THE BOGATYRI

Here is short summary of many of the bogatyri to give an idea of how they were derived from Russian history and folktales. This list is by no means comprehensive or highly detailed. It is just to serve as a place to give a launching point for anyone wishing to create their own but do not have any clue as to the early medieval Russian characters of the same name. Note that not all of these characters are derived from historical people, and those whose legendary fame appear to lack any history or facts might have been someone from a period out of time. It will be apparent on this list those bogatyri that are strictly factual and those who are not.

SVYATOGOR: A giant who rode a giant steed as well. His own story and tales before encountering Ilya are largely unknown to us except that he must have had a fierce reputation. One of Ilya's tasks was to confront and defeat Svyatogor, but instead they journeyed together for a time. It wasn't until both discovered a mysterious, massive stone coffin that was clearly too large for Ilya that it was apparent who it was meant for. Ilya tricked Svyatogor into lying inside and trapped him within. Svyatogor's strength lies in his breath.

ALYOSHA POPOVICH: The son of a priest, clever and smart with a snide sense of humor, often fond of mocking women. Alyosha is the youngest of the trio of bogatyri that includes Illya

and Dobrynya. His reputation is one of a liar and a cheater just to win. In one occasion, he defends Prince Vladimir of Kiev's palace during a feast against the terrible dragon or Zmey named Tugarin Zmeyerovich. Alyosha calls upon rain to soak the dragon's wings and then defeats the beast. According to many, the dragon was a personification of the Mongol Khan who was then terrorizing Eastern Europe with his Golden Horde.

- **ALEXANDER PERESVET:** In 1380 at the Battle of Kulikovo, the Tartars-Mongol were losing their grip over most of Russia, and this battle cemented that loss. Amid that furious and bloody struggle near Moscow and the river Don, with over 60,000 Russians under the command of Grand Prince Vladimir, and the combined armies of the Tartar-Mongols at over 125,000, a monk named Alexander Peresvet faced the Tartar champion Chelubey. Each perished early on but Alexander did not fall from his saddle during the duel while his foe did. This gained Alexander the title of bogatyr nearly instantly. Even though the Battle of Kulikovo was a three hour ordeal, the Russians won and drove the Mongol presence from Moscow and formed the beginning of the first Russian state in the aftermath. Alexander's victory was crucial to this.
- **ANIKA THE UNBEATABLE:** Prone to violence and sacrilege, Anika the Warrior sought out to destroy the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. Anika was a strong and capable man and few could stop him on his way, but one, a stranger on the travels named Wonder. Wonder was half-beast and challenged him to a duel, defeating him. Instead of bowing down to this stranger (who is really Death in disguise), Anika attempted to bribe him. Wonder shows no mercy, however. This tale is a vicariously passed down and copied Byzantine and Greek story called Digenes Akrites.
- **DUKE STEPHANOVICH:** Depending on the story, Stephanovich came from one of several homelands, even as far away as India. As with many bogatyri, his adventures seem to gravitate around the court and palace of Prince Vladimir of Kiev. His travels were often beset by malicious birds or fire-breathing dragons. There was always a stress on the enormous wealth of his homeland and how even Prince Vladimir's own could never compare. Messengers would be sent to Duke Stephanovich's land to check the validity of his stories and wealth only to return in surprise of the vast riches the bogatyr left behind just to aid others. In a small way, he is comparable to the Arthurian Sir Lancelot as being a traveling hero from a faraway land offering to help the lord in need.
- **NIKITA KOZHEMYAKA:** In the region of Kiev, a terrible zmey named Gorynych was taking women into his cave and was unstoppable. He finally met his match in taking the daughter of the Tsar of Kiev, who rather than being taken captive, tried to distract him by pretending she was in love with him and finding his weakness. Gorynych sputtered out that he was afraid of one thing, a person, Nikita the Tanner, who was stronger than he. Wasting no time, the Tsar's daughter sent a messenger pigeon to her father to find Nikita. It took the Tsar forever to convince the simple Tanner to confront the dragon, but eventually he did. Nikita faced the zmey with club in hand, but the dragon knew he was beaten so he wished for a truce. The two could 'share the world together', beginning with plowing the earth. Nikita wanted to use the dragon as his plow so show no hard feelings. They came to an agreement, and Nikita plowed all the way to the sea drowning the dragon in the end.
- **MIKULA SELYANINOVICH:** 'The Villager's Son', Mikula was capable of plowing the field and working the fields where no one else can simply because he was blessed and chosen by Mat Zemlya (Earth Mother). There are many variations of this bogatyr in Russia and the surrounding regions, and they are told with a more regional superiority theme or trope. In short, each region's version of Mikula can do these tasks better than the other.
- **GAVRILA ALEXICH:** This bogatyr was in the historical Battle of Neva alongside Alexander Nevsky against the Swedish invasion in 1240. Prince Alexander of Novgorod had his champions afield during that engagement. Gavrila, Ratmir, and Vasili were his strong arms against a combined force of Swedes, Finns, Norwegians, and Tavastians. Gavrila's role in the battle was one of a mighty warrior against such overwhelming odds, but he, like his fellow knights fought bravely for Novgorod.
- **SUKHMAN SUKHMATIEVICH:** The vast majority of the tales of the bogatyri focus around the palace of Prince Vladimir; they fight for him, they aid him and do his bidding, and so Sukhman is unique. His story begins and ends in the palace of the prince; it takes place in the dungeon. During one of the many feasts, everyone present boasted of their lives and beautiful women and more—all but the grim Sukhman. Prince Vladimir asked why the bogatyr was so grim. He was told about how the hero was bloodied from a battle with the Tartars not long ago and had to heal using grass and mud. He spoke of how his struggle to keep the borders safe was a difficult feat to perform alone and therefore he had no time to celebrate or be boastful. Rather than believe him, the prince thought he was being mocked and threw the bogatyr into the dungeons and had his men verify the claims. After a few days, the scouts returned and verified each piece of Sukhman's story. Justified, the prince freed him and offered him lands and more. Rather than take this, the bogatyr wandered into the wilds and let his blood loss continue until the Sukhman River was formed from his blood, and he was no more.
- **VOLGA SVYATOSLAVOVICH:** Many of the bogatyri come from humble origins but Volga was born from noble blood and, even more unusually, his parentage was supernatural. As the bylina recount, a serpent, shape-shifter, or werewolf (volkodlak) gave birth to him. Added to this already strange origin story, there is a tale involving an incident wherein Volga and another bogatyr, Mikula, have a long face-to-face showdown. It is rare when heroes of this magnitude confront each other as foes, but they had briefly. Volga is also known for traveling the farthest in the tales, out of Russia and the Slavic world, reaching as far as India.



CHAPTER 7: CASTLE KEEPER INFO



his contains extra elements about Slavic culture and society to enhance gameplay. Much of what has been written has been conjecture, due to the scarcity of information.

What can be assumed is extrapolated from later Slavic cultures that entered into a more documented period and had founded stable governments and states.

Similar to the Germans and earlier Celtic speaking peoples, the Slavs were wide-spread in Europe. By the close of the Migration Period only the Germanic and Slavic people were left dominant. The Europe of antiquity was slowly fading as new forces were grinding it to dust.

OLD SLAVIC SOCIETIES

Because there were so many Slavonic groups across Eastern Europe, the Balkans, Russian steppes, and Central Europe, we cannot expect them to be uniform. Clearly from our limited sources we do not, as the Roman Empires, East and West, only mentioned them in relation to either the Huns or Germans, while Greek sources with the Scythians were often paired with the Slavs.

It is assumed that most Slavic tribal groups and kingdoms were arranged akin to other Indo-European societies using the same logic. There may have been some obvious eastern steppe influences altering this in places, with a strong emphasis on the shaman at one time as well.

As evidence shows, there was a clear demarcation between the Eastern and Western Slavs, both in societal structure and otherwise. Such a division was perhaps due to many external and internal forces. One of the greatest was a separation from the rest of their Slavic speaking kindred to the east by the westward migrating groups.

Using limited data, a sectional breakdown of the societal strata of the Old Slavs could be best assumed to be generalized for gameplay in this manner:

1. **MOLFARI:** A shaman. In some regions, the holy men are at the top of society and dictate the will of the gods and spirits to the people, but this isn't the case in every area. In the more rural territories one could assume a dependency on the molfari, who sense the needs of the earth and nature in general. For those tribes that have migrated towards other cultures more foreign and alien to their own, and where trade is strong, the role of the shaman is deemed less important. His place vies with the priests and priestesses.
2. **KRÁĚ:** A king. Not every Slavonic territory was dominated by a kráĚ, but those who were had a single authority that oversaw the laws and taxes. With his queen, the kráĚovná, he would dictate their authority from a seat of power over many tribes and chiefdoms, often a former Roman or Hellenistic palace or structure made of stone. Chiefs and nobles would carry out their word and laws for them. Reach

of power rarely had a radius larger than twenty to fifty miles realistically.

3. **NÁČELNÍK:** A chieftain. The Náčelník often ruled by brute force and used the manpower of his warriors to undertake his grimmer work. Chiefs were more common and could be found to rule over an entire tribe and many lesser dependent ones. In many cases, the territorial range of a chieftain was larger than that of a king due to the expanse of a tribe or tribes. Unfortunately, the power a chief held was tenuous, and it could be lost swiftly.
4. **UŠĚACHTILÝ:** A noble. These warriors were granted land as property as well a stock of thoroughbred horses, slaves, and peasantry to rule over for the chiefs. They would be given silken clothing, falcons, and other opulent luxuries as part of their status. During the Migration Period, the nobles functioned similarly to the later medieval lords, and likely even had complex titles given to them. Slaves were often won through raids and handed to them by various means. The nobles were the elites, and by the 8th and 9th centuries, the Slavic regions' nobility formed the core of what became the true power base later. They are completely analogous to the elite horsemen of other European peoples elsewhere. Also called the 'jazdci' (horsemen) or Druzhina.
5. **BOJOVNÍK:** A warrior. They were a great bulk of the soldiery in a tribe. Most have served as mercenaries but are essentially non-professional and live on farmsteads when not in season to wage war. Society is structured to focus on them and to supply them with attention. Well-fed and trained, they are considered expendable by the noble class to reach their goals. By the age of fourteen, they are considered ready for service, as with most European societies, and put into armies. Feasts are held to keep them entertained and distracted. Then, when battle and war is looming, they are sent off to fight their leader's conflicts, often without question, with only a promise of glory and wealth.
6. **ROENÍCTVO:** The peasantry. They form nearly 95% of the Slavonic population and toil hard in the fields, rivers, and seas to supply the endless food, crafts, fabrics, and perform the menial chores that truly make society exist. Without them and their work, there wouldn't a tribe, chiefdom, or kingdom at all. The majority of the religious fall into this category and worship devoutly, looking forward to the next holiday and festival as a break from the toil. As many people have wisely said throughout the ages, to best know a people, it is easier to understand a culture by immersing oneself into the peasantry for a time. That is where the heart of the culture and language lies. Social mobility in the period of the Old Slavs is unknown, but judging from the semi-mythical tales of the bogatyri, it would be possible if one were brave and bold enough to dare it through adventure.
7. **OTROCI:** Slaves. Captured as plunder in battle, either fallen warriors of the foe or the peasantry of other peoples,

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the slaves of the Slavic tribes usually had a slightly better fate than those of other cultures. Although the documentation was more positive, it doesn't speak for every tribe and group across the settled Slavic world, only from the limited Byzantine observation. Slaves generally had a tough and short life in antiquity no matter where they ended up.

NOTE: Aside from the *molfar*, the other terms were written in the Slovakian language. Due to a scarcity of sources from the period of the Old Slavs, these terms can be easily changeable with any Slavic language as needed in the game. This social strata system is just a generalization on Migration Period information and the Castle Keeper can modify it as often as needed depending on tribe.

NAMING THE CHARACTER

To name a Slavic character that pre-dates any influence used by the Greek Orthodox Church's system and the Eastern system later imposed on Slavic communities, which was structured in a three name system: *Given Name*, *Patronymic*, and *Surname*, one has to use some imagination. The system mentioned is clearly a Christianized system with a few traces of an earlier pagan naming and identity method still in place. In Russia and other connected Slavic regions, naming must be handled in this rigid pattern in modern ages, but for gaming we can be flexible.

As the names for the bogatyri display, they have unique and unusual styles to their names. Because we have limited data on the naming methods used by the Old Slavs, but can assume there was a very strict and structured ritual and system behind it all, we can become a little maverick about it for the sake of simplicity.

Pagan Slavs would first grant their children, among the peasantry it is documented, what is called a substitute name. This was to protect it during its first five years due to a high mortality rate, and a belief in the harm in evil spirits threatening them. These names were not meant to be sentimental if the child perished from poor health or one of the many terrible possible violent deaths in this era.

If the child managed to survive, then by their first haircut they were given an official name in a ritual act. To reach their adult phase is another phase of life, and this must be from the years of seven to ten years of age. Once there, they can finally be deemed healthy and worthy enough to be on the verge of adulthood and have their first haircut and true name.

Until a religious gathering, the *Council of Trent* (1545-63), native or pagan names were used by all, but after this Christian intrusion on society, naming of children *had* to legally be those of Christian origin. Many of these pre-Christian names have survived, and in fact are undergoing a revival today after centuries of repression and intolerance.

To simplify, for a patronymic, or to say 'son of', one would usually add the suffix '-ovich' after the father's name. For a daughter, the suffix is '-ovna' instead. Depending on the vowel ending in the name, however, this becomes more complicated. We won't

get into the many levels of linguistic complexity or other factors in this codex. A player should be able to make a character, find a good name and go.

An easy method of naming for Slavic characters could follow:

Given Name

Patronymic

Descriptive/Occupation

The many Slavonic names given below do not reveal their Slavic ethnicity other than they are obviously all from the cultural origin. Unlike the previous codices where some differentiation was used between some peoples within the same language family, here it is to reflect the fact they are all Old Slavs.

Of course, to make it personable, the player can choose to dig out a specific nationality (Polish, Croatian, Russian, etc) and use those names for their character instead. It is all about personal vision and creativity in the end.

MALE NAMES

Adis	Meckislavek
Admir	Mieczyk
Ajdin	Mieszko
Baran	Mijo
Bialas	Miodrag
Boian	Mladen
Boleslav	Mscislav
Bozidar	Mylan
Bladimiro	Nebojsa
Blagoje	Nemanja
Blahoslav	Nenad
Boba	Nepomuceno
Bohdan	Novac
Bojan	Ognjen
Bojánek	Osorio
Bojek	Plamen
Bojík	Pravoslav
Bolek	Preben
Broda	Predrag
Boleslao	Przbyslaw
Boleslav/Boleslaw	Radan
Boras	Radek
Bore	Radomir
Borik	Rados
Boris	Rosta
Borislav/Borislaw	Rostislav
Borja	Rus
Borka	Semir

Borut	Sinisea
Boryusha	Sladkea
Boza	Slava
Bozidar	Slavoljub
Branik	Slawek
Branko	Slobodan
Brodny	Slobeslav
Bronislav	Srba
Budimir	Stando
Bylun	Stanko
Cas	Svante
Casimear	Szydło
Casimir/Casimyr	Taman
Cich	Techoslav
Cvetko	Tihomir
Dalek	Uchacz
Damear	Vaclav
Danika	Vela
Dark/Darko	Velimir
Davor	Veloucek
Desimir	Vencel
Dobrica	Venselau
Dobromir	Vlad
Dragan	Vladan
Drago	Vladi
Dragomir	Vladimir
Dragoslav	Vladislav
Dušan	Vlatko
Duscha	Vladja
Estanislao/Estanislav	Vojin
Goran	Vojta
Gniew	Vuk
Izet	Vukasin
Jarek	Vyashaslav
Jarogniew	Włodzisław
Jaromir	Xexen
Jarousek	Yaromir
Jezdimir	Yaropolk
Kakol	Yasen
Kazek	Žaba
Kazik	Zapototki
Kazimeras	Zbyna
Kvetoslav	Zbynek
Ladio	Zbysek

Lao	Zdravko
Lasota	Zelimir
László	Zinion
Lech	Zivon
Ljuba	Zlatan
Loman	Zlogonje
Łopata	Zoro
Lubomierz	Zorya
Maslaw	Zvoncko
Mecek	Žyła
Mecheslav	Zvezdan
Mecik	

FEMALE NAMES

Ajla	Miloslavia
Aleana	Miluša
Alyona	Miluska
Bilijona	Mira
Biserka	Mren
Bojana	Nada
Bojka	Nadia
Boza	Naida
Brana	Neveně
Branka	Rada
Brencis	Radilla
Capecca	Radinka
Chesna	Radost
Cveta	Ratka
Dalenka	Redmilla
Dalka	Roscislawa
Danja	Rostuska
Darva	Sanela
Dejana	Slava
Divna	Slavena
Dobra	Slavica
Dobromila	Slobodanka
Dobroslava	Snežana
Draga	Sobena
Dragica	Srbijanka
Duša	Sveta
Eudleana	Svetlana
Eudlyna	Svetochka
Gordana	Ural
Grozdana	Vera

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Hourig	Vesla
Ilca	Vesna
Iskra	Zagorka
Kalina	Zahvala
Jarka	Zbyhneushka
Jagoda	Zbyna
Jasna	Zdiska
Jurissa	Zdisa
Kalon	Zitomeera
Krasava	Živa
Krasna	Zlata
Kveta	Zora
Leposava	Žyvia
Luba/Ljuba	Zvezdana
Lubov	Zyzlila
Marzhan	Zyzila
Mila	

SOCIAL BONDING & SAGA BUILDING

These feasts, communal and pagan in origin, have a purpose. Like every culture in antiquity, these occasions are meant to bring a system of social bonding and togetherness to a village, tribe, or community that undertakes it.

For the sake of gaming, it provides an opportunity to introduce the party to the resident nobility, the elite warriors and heroes, and other underlings in such a way that everything can be handled at one time in story form. The bylini are primarily centered on them and mostly around the palace and feasts in Prince Vladimir's presence to some degree. Think of the Arthurian story "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight" wherein it was at Arthur's Christmastide feast that the story begins. This is how many of the early and medieval tales begin and often end.

Consider it an alternative to the cliché tavern or pub that most fantasy role-playing games start in when there is little idea about where to begin. This section describes some of the Slavic feasts for settings that provide not only atmosphere and background in the game, but it may even be the catalyst for an entire adventure or campaign.

- **BRATCHINA:** This religious feast, in origin its name deriving from the word for 'brother', is held with much pomp and circumstance. Flower garlands decorate the tables, candles are lit, and elaborate food and drinks placed on the tables for the guests in honor of the gods. Most often this is to celebrate Svarog or Perun, and even the present day Christian Church has trouble trying to suppress it. The day for this falls on the 21st of September, when the cold from the year heralds its arrival. Women shut their doors to the chill, and blacksmiths and craftsmen sacrifice chickens to Svarog for protection. A three day feast is held

in this time, and one girl or woman from each household is chosen as the mistress or bride of the home. Story-tellers work their magic, and girls give kisses. The gift of Svarog's blessing of the axe is honored above all, and there are games and competitions related to it. Candles are lit by night to shine into the night as darkness comes for fear of Czernobog and his many demons. Bratchiny are held by the peasantry in the present day, but in its prime during the Migration Era, it isn't impossible that nobility, chiefs and even kings participated in this highly important ritualized feast honoring the high deity of creation.

- **SLAVA:** 'Glorification'. After the arrival of Christianity, these feasts were pushed to honor various Saints within the Church, but it is apparent that they were not doing so before, during, and even in the present day. Slava was essentially similar to the Bratchiny but with different traditions and customs fitting for each household deity. Each family would have their own deity of choice, and other families would be invited over to help honor and celebrate with them, even if they do not share in the same piety personally. The head of the household passes on the deity to the next of kin, always the eldest son, and this establishes the ritual of Slava. Among the feasting foods prepared for this, is first the Slavski kolač or 'Slava cake', and a fasting from meat unless that deity requires it in the food. This holiday is mainly found amid the Serb tribes.
- **SABOR:** 'Assembly'. Where the other gatherings are with a religious intention, this is for the nobility and their elites to come together and talk about politics, battles and other matters. Among the Croat tribes these assemblies are so named, but they are held throughout the Slavic world and have their analogs in all of Europa. Assemblies are usually held in neutral places, assuming one is on the side of the reigning lord holding the assembly/feast. These became the political diets and eventually evolved into the Croatian Parliament. As far as in the Migration Period during the era of the Old Slavs however, they are wild, uproarious feasts with entertainment, rulings on laws and other judgments being decided. It would be the place where an adventuring party would want to make an appearance if they are new to a region. Allies and enemies can be made here if everything is handled correctly by all.

PRAVDA OF IAROSLAV

Early tribal law in the many populace groups of the Old Slavs is a vague notion and only hinted at in the few sources that have survived. In early medieval Kiev there survives the first vestiges of codified Slavic law, written by King Iaroslav after Vladimir's death in 1015. Unfortunately, due to the strong Varangian, or Swedish, influences in Kiev and what is now Russia, the exact origin of these pravda cannot be precisely pointed to either a Slavic or Scandinavian source.

There was no Byzantine, Carolingian, Celtic or Italian influences in these laws, so the focus lies on a small chance that due to the Swedish interaction, these laws may be Rus in inspiration.

For example, if a murder were committed, then the victim's family had a right of vengeance, though there were limits placed upon this to prevent blood feuds, immediate family only. If there was no one to seek vengeance, then the killer, or the community from which he came if he was unable, would be required to pay a fine, called a vera. After his death, Iaroslav's sons would abolish the law allowing vengeance in favor of that of the vera.

If the victim was a king's man, the amount of the vera was determined as follows (excerpts taken from a *Troitzky Manuscript* of the 15th century):

- Every freeman was worth 40 grivna (roughly several pounds of silver).
- Royal officials and horse trainers are worth 80 grivna.
- Boys, stableboys, and cooks are worth 40 grivna.
- Overseer of servants are worth 12 grivna.
- Peasants and farmers are worth 5 grivna.
- Serf women are worth 6 grivna.
- Vengeance is legally upheld by the relations of the deceased family member.
- If one harbors a runaway slave, a price of 3 grivna is paid and the return.
- If the slave strikes a free man, the fine is 12 grivna.
- In matters of inheritance, the estate goes to the children among the nobility. If the wife survives, she only receives a small portion as laid out beforehand, and if she remarries, it is returned to the eldest son.
- If a slave hides in a free man's home, the master has the right to beat the slave in turn.
- In cases of assault, witnesses are called to a jury of twelve members. When commercial disputes or feuds erupt, a jury is gathered of twelve men again to aid in the grievance and settle the problem.

- A female slave is worth half of a male slave.
- If there is a murder and robbery with no reason, then the people shall not pay for the murderer, but give him up with his wife and children, and his property will be plundered.

If the murderer could not pay or could not be found, forcing the community to pay, they were given some leeway as to time, and were allowed to pay the vera in stages as follows:

- And such is the law for Iaroslav's vera collector: the vera collector takes 7 buckets of hops per week, also sheep or a meat carcass or 2 nogata (1 nogata = 1/20th of grivna); and on a Wednesday cheese and a marten pelt; and the same on Friday; and give him two chickens per day; and seven breads per week; and seven measures of grain; and seven measures of peas; and seven measures of salt; this for a vera collector with a man; and for him 4 horses, which be given a measure of oats; for vera collector 8 grivnas and 10 kunas in fees, and for the pageboy 12 squirrel pelts; and a grivna when he goes away, and for each victim 3 grivnas.
- And if one is accused of murder, but there are no acceptable witnesses, there shall be trial by iron. Thus shall be done for all grievances or thievery, if the accuser cannot provide proof, and the grievance is for less than half of a gold grivna, then give him a trial by iron in captivity; if the grievance is for less than that, but more than two silver grivnas, then trial by water; if it is even less, then he must make an oath.
- If a debtor steals something, the master is in his right; when the debtor is caught the master may reimburse the victim for his horse or whatever else, and makes the debtor his serf; or if the master does not want to reimburse, then he may sell his debtor into serfdom, and reimburse the victim from that, and keep the rest.

The Castle Keeper can do some research on the full extent of these laws and use them if they wish in the campaign setting to give it a more realistic environment.

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