since the diminutive form of addressing deities is a characteristic Slavic phenomenon. (For instance, božič, “little god,” is a form frequently used instead of bog, “god.”) As in all other Indo-European religions, this deity was portrayed as a warrior, dressed in armor and a helmet, carrying a sword and shield, and accompanied always by a horse. Weapons and horses were manifestations of his powers.

In Christian times, the god of heavenly light fused with the Christian God and Saint John (Ivan). Up to the beginning of the twentieth century, the spring aspect of the god survived in Belorussia and Russia in the image of Iarilo, who was worshiped in the week following Whitsun tide. Folklore preserves the image of Iarilo riding upon a white horse: he wears a white cloak, is crowned with wildflowers, and carries a sheaf of wheat. Girls honored Iarilo by performing choral dances upon newly sown fields. In the eighteenth century, the Orthodox bishop of Voronezh is central Russia prescribed a pagan festival and “satanic” games centered on an idol called Iarilo. In Kostroma, until 1771, people buried an idol with exaggerated male attributes. The burial of a phallic idol typifies the year god’s cycle. The death of the year god, symbolized by submerging his image in water or by burning a birch tree, was commemorated in Belorussia until the early twentieth century.

Reminiscent of the Indo-European archetype of the divine twins—the Dioscuri of Greek myth, the Asvins of the Vedas, the Diego Sunelai of Lithuanian folk songs—are the saints Boris and Gleb, Cosmas and Damian, and Flor and Lavr. The emblem of Boris and Gleb, the youthful martyrs, was a young shoot. They sometimes appear as bogatyri (“knights”) who have vanquished a dragon and harnessed him to a plow, and on Serbian icons they are depicted as doctors holding the tools of their trade. In Russia, Flor and Lavr were the protectors of horses. Their holiday was August 18, at which time animals were sacrificed to them and the flesh cooked for a feast in their honor.

The cult of the dawn was common among all Slavs. The Slavic deity Zoria, or Zaria, is the heavenly bride, the goddess of beauty, the dawn. At daybreak she is greeted, like Usas of India, as “the brightest maiden, pure, sublime, and honorable.”

Certain Slavic myths give an anthropomorphic interpretation to the relationship between the sun and the moon. The Russian word for “moon,” mesiat, is masculine, but many legends portray the moon as a beautiful young woman whom the sun marries at the beginning of summer, abandons in winter, and returns to in spring. In other myths, the moon is the husband and the sun is his wife, as in Baltic mythology. In folk beliefs, Mesiat is addressed as kniaz’ (“prince”) and is believed to have powers over the growth of plants. In Polish, the word for “moon,” księżyc, is the diminutive form of the word meaning “prince” or “lord.”

The god of death and the underworld. The names Veles and Volos apparently represent two aspects of the same god: (1) a sorcerer god of death, related to music and poetry, and (2) a god of cattle, wealth, and commerce. The etymology suggests ancient functions: ve- is connected with “death,” “the dead,” and “giant” on one hand and with “sight, foresight, insight” on the other. Volos has connections with “hair, fur” and with “disease, evil spirit.” The original name of the god must have been Veles, not Volos.

Veles was degraded to a devil at the beginning of Christian times. All that remains of this god are such expressions as k Velesu za more (“to Veles in the otherworld”) and the formula “Volosovo vnuk” (“grandson of Veles”), apostrophizing the musician and prophetic poet Boian of the Old Russian epic Slavo o polku Igoreve. Place-names incorporating Veles imply sites where this god was worshiped, such as Titov Veles in Macedonia.

Volos was merged with the image of Saint Blasius (Vlasii) and also partly with that of Saint Nicholas (Nikola), the patrons of flocks and crops. He was honored as such up to the twentieth century on his holiday, 11 February. Such forms as Voloovo and Volosovskii were frequently used as names for monasteries and churches in Russia. According to legend, they were founded on the spots where the idols of Volos stood in pre-Christian times.

Idols and places of Volos worship are mentioned as late as the eighteenth century. Of utmost importance is the description of the sacrifice of the priest Volkhv in Skazatii o postroenii grada Yaroslalia (Legends about the Founding of Yaroslavl), published in 1876 and based on a manuscript of 1781. Having burned the sacrificial victim and prophesied in the name of Volos, the priest was himself sacrificed to the god. This is a parallel to the self-sacrifice of the Germanic god Öðinn (Odin).

The thunder god. Overseer of justice and order, purifier and fructifier, and adversary of the devil, Perun is feared to this day in some Slavic areas. His presence and actions are perceived in lightning and thunder. His animals (the bull and the he-goat), his birds (the dove and the cuckoo), and his weapons (the ax and the arrow) are pervasive symbolic motifs in Slavic folk beliefs and songs.

Parallels in other Indo-European mythologies, such as the Baltic Perkons and Perkūnas and the Germanic Ærr (Thor), attest to the antiquity of this god. The root per-*perk* (“to strike, to splinter,” “oak, oak forest,” “mountaintop”) is common to Indo-European languages. The oak was Perun’s sacred tree. Oak forests and mountaintops—where a god of storms might easily alight—are attested by literary sources as places of veneration. The name Peryn, known from Russia and the Balkans, must have preceded the name Perun. The original name of the god is likely to have been *Perkyn*, which conforms to the Baltic Perkūnas and to Indo-European words for “oak” (Latin quercus, from *perkus*) and “oak forest” (Slavic *pergynja, Celtic hercynia*); hence the origin of the designation “oak god” (Brückner, 1980, p. 106).

With the onset of Christianity, Perun gradually merged with Saint Elijah (II’ia), who is portrayed in Russian icons.
crossing the heavens in a chariot. Bull sacrifice and a communal feast on Saint Il'ia's Day, July 20, were recorded in northern Russia in 1907. Saint Il'ia's Day was most reverently celebrated in the mid-twentieth century in the Rhodope Mountains of Bulgaria. The festival, during which a bull was sacrificed and prepared for the communal feast, took place on a hill or summit.

**Household guardians.** Slavic names for household guardians—Russian ded, dedushka (dim.), and domovoi; Ukrainian did, didko, and domovyk; Czech dedek; and Bulgarian stopan—have the meaning "grandfather" or "house lord," suggesting their origins in ancestor worship within a patrilineal culture. The guardian is commonly represented as an old man wearing a fur coat, or as an animal (a dog, bear, or snake). He was believed to live behind or beneath the oven. He cared for animal herds and protected the entire home and its occupants from misfortune. If not honored, Domovoi might leave the house, his departure bringing on illness or the death of householders or cattle. There is a related belief among the Slavs that well-being cannot establish itself in a newly built house until after the death of the head of the family, who then becomes its guardian. If the family moves into a new home, it takes its guardian with it.

The Russian forest spirit, Leshii or Lesovik (from les, "forest"), also appears as an old man or an animal. His principal function is to guard forests and animals.

Ancestor worship, a prominent practice among all pre-Christian Slavs, is evidenced in gifts presented to the dead. A strong belief in life after death is indicated by prehistoric and even modern burial rites. Food offerings are made in cemeteries to this day. Everything deemed necessary for the afterlife—weapons, tools, clothing, wives, slaves, horses, hunting dogs, food—was buried in the grave or was burned if the deceased was cremated. The richer one was in life, the more pompous the burial. Slavic royal tombs of prehistory and early history are as elaborate as those of other Indo-European groups: Phrygian, Thracian, Baltic, or Germanic.

The Arab traveler Ibn Faddlan stated (922) that when a Slavic nobleman died, his body was laid provisionally in a grave for ten days while his property was divided. The deceased, who was dressed in rich garments and equipped with weapons, food, and drink, was seated in a boat. His wife (who chose death voluntarily in order to enter the afterworld with her husband) was killed by stabbing and seated next to him. Then all was consumed by fire. A funeral banquet (trizna) continued for days and nights.

Thereafter, the deceased was commemorated and offered food on the third, seventh, twentieth, and fortieth days after death. Similar observances took place six and twelve months after death. In addition to these family observances, general festivals commemorating the dead occurred three or four times a year. These feasts, called "holy dziaudy," were offered in the home and in cemeteries. The holy dziaudy—the word literally means "ancestors"—show that the Slavs looked upon their forefathers as guardians.

**MYTHIC IMAGES ROOTED IN OLD EUROPEAN RELIGION.** The primary figures of the oldest stratum of Slavic culture are predominantly female: Fates, Death, Baba Yaga, Mois Mother Earth, and a host of nymphs and goblins (water, mountain, and forest spirits) largely preserved in folklore and attested by written records. In all these feminine figures may be discerned features of the goddesses of Old Europe: the life-giving and life-taking goddess, the goddess of death and regeneration, and the pregnant earth goddess.

**Life-giving and life-taking goddesses and their associates.** Mokosh is the only female deity mentioned in the Kievan pantheon of 980. In folk beliefs, Moksha, or Mokusha, has a large head and long arms; at night she spins flax and shears sheep. Her name is related to spinning and plaiting and to moisture. The life-giving and life-taking goddess, or Fate, was the spinner of the thread of life and the dispenser of the water of life. Mokosh was later transformed into the East Slavic goddess Paraskeva-Piatnitsa, who was associated with spinning, water, fertility, health, and marriage.

Up to the twentieth century, it was believed that fate took the form of birth fairies who appeared at the bedside of a newborn baby on the third or the seventh day after birth. In anticipation of the fairies, the baby was washed and dressed in new clothes while a special dinner was prepared. Bread, salt, and wine were put out for the fairies. Three Fates of different ages were believed to appear. They determined the infant's destiny and invisibly inscribed it upon his or her forehead. If the parents feared the Fates, they hid the infant outside the home, a practice common among the South Slavs.

Fate was given various names by the Slavs. To Russians she was Rozhenitsa or Rozhdenitsa ("birth giver"); to Czechs she was Sudücka; to Serbs and Croats she was Sudjenica or, earlier, Sudbina (cf. Russian sud'ba, "fate"); and to Bulgarians she was Narechnitsa (from narok, "destiny"). Both Rozhenitsa and the male Rod, to whom offerings were made, are mentioned in a thirteenth-century Russian text, Slovo Isaia proroka.

The Russian dolia and the Serbian sreća represent the fate of a person's material life. There were good and bad dolias and srećas. The benevolent spirit protected her favorites and served them faithfully from birth to death. The malevolent spirit, nedolia or nereća, usually personified as a poor and ugly woman, capable of transforming herself into various shapes, bestowed bad luck. The person who attracted an evil dolia would never succeed, and all efforts to shake bad fortune would be in vain.

Fate could also appear as two sisters, Life and Death. Her deathly aspect was known as Mora, Marà, or Smerti ("death"). She was perceived as a tall white woman who could change her shape. When chased by dogs, she turned into a stick, a block, a bat, or a basket. The plague was personified as a slim black woman with long breasts who sometimes had the legs of a cow or horse and the eyes of a snake.