

The Origins of Sventovit of Rügen

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The article investigates the origins of a Slavic deity, Sventovit of Rügen Island. Based on the previous research of the author, the notion that Sventovit was originally a Slavic war god or disguised Perun is dismissed. On some etymological ground and numerous conceptual similarities, the research concludes, that Polabian deities Sventovit of Rügen, Yarovit of Wolgast and Yarovit of Havelberg, evolved from the same common Slavonic god, which name included the root “yari”. On the functional level, the author postulates an agriculture, harvest, fertility and vital forces as the original domain of this primeval deity. Therefore, the war and other functions acquired by these later deities, as known from historical records, are a result of post-migration developments. Furthermore, the author postulates conceptually.

The origins and functions of the Polabian god Sventovit venerated at Arkona temple on the island of Rügen eluded most of the past and modern scholars. Most common, current theory postulated by Aleksander Gieysztor claims that Sventovit was an incarnation of Perun.¹ A deity that evolved to prominence with the rise and growth of Ranove’s principality and acquired different, local name during the process. However, deriving Sventovit from Perun is based on a false assumption that both were war deities. It is true that Perun attained war-god attributes among the Eastern Slavs and was perceived as such, but this does not imply that he was a common Slavic war deity. On the contrary, evidence shows that Perun was initially an atmospheric deity sharing its origin with Indian weather god, Parjanya, whose domains were atmospheric forces, thunderstorms and seasonal monsoons. He was also a deity that made things grow, and like the Slavic Perun he was associated with cattle.²

At the same time Sventovit’s war functions and attributes are beyond doubt as they are well attested in the sources. A huge sword and Ranove’s war standard that belonged to Sventovit³ is a prime example. Other evidence provided by Saxo Grammaticus explicitly stated that the Ranove believed in Sventovit riding his horse at night, and fighting their enemies. Moreover, divinations involving a horse to predict the outcome of oncoming conflicts or raids⁴ are also the evidence for the war-like characteristics of

¹ Gieysztor, A., *Mitologia Słowiańska* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1982), pp. 90-105.

² R. Zaroff, ‘Organized Pagan Cult in Kievan Rus’ The Invention of Foreign Elite or Evolution of Local Tradition?’, *Studia Mythologica Slavica*, No. 2, 1999, pp. 56-60.

³ Saxo Grammaticus, *Danorum Regum Heroumque Historia, Liber X-XVI*, in E. Christiansen, ed. (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, International Series No. 84, 1984), XIV.39.

⁴ Saxo, XIX.39.

this god. Furthermore, there were 300 mounted horsemen assigned to the temple at Arkona who must have been the core of the Ranove's army as they carried Sventovit's war standard during the war.⁵

However, one of the primary domains of Sventovit of Rügen was farming and agriculture. This should not be a surprise taking into consideration that like the all Slavs, the Ranove of Rügen was predominantly an agricultural society. The Ranove's harvest festival is relatively well documented in the sources. The first reference to it comes from William of Malmesbury, an early twelfth century English chronicler.⁶ He lived in western England and it is commonly believed that he used a now lost German source of the middle of the eleventh century from the times of the emperor Henry III.⁷ Another description of the same festival comes from Saxo Grammaticus, the twelfth century Danish source.⁸ Both accounts show clearly that Sventovit of Rügen was a dominant tribal deity of the Ranove and his primary functions was associated with agriculture with emphasis on protection of farming and crops.

The later ethnographic evidence from Poland shows that as late as the eighteenth century on 11 November, that is St. Martin's Day, peasants had a holiday marking the end of the autumn and field works, and the beginning of winter. In many regions on that day a levy, either in money or produce, to the landlord was due. Various oracles were performed including foretelling from bones of goose. Probably due to regional variation or as marking Christian Advent, in some areas of Slavdom, the beginning of winter was celebrated on 25 of November on St. Katherine's Day or on 30 of November, on St. Andrew's Day. An echo of this is a custom still known in today's Poland when on St. Andrews Day people have parties and sometime pour melted wax on water in an attempt to foretell the future from the solidified wax shape. Of course, today it is regarded only as a tradition and not treated seriously. Therefore, we may conclude that harvest festival and rituals involving oracles, performed at Arkona during the November celebration, evolved into complex and state-like ceremony from a simpler, but conceptually similar older, common Slavonic tradition.

In another associated ritual during the same festival on Rügen:

They (Ranove) also offered up a honey-cake, round in shape and almost as big as a man. The priest would put this between himself and the people, and ask, whether the men of Rügen could see him. And when they answered, he requested that he would be invisible to them after a year. By this form of prayer he sought to know not his, nor the people's destiny, but the growth of the harvest to come.⁹

This account brings immediately to our attention an almost identical customs known widely from Slavic and Baltic speaking people's folklore, especially Russian peasants. Its form, expression and details may vary in different places, but basically it

⁵ Saxo, XIV.39.

⁶ For identification of idol described by William of Malmesbury as that of Sventovit of Rügen see: R. Zaroff, & L. P. Słupecki, 'William of Malmesbury on Pagan Slavic Oracles: New Source for Slavic Paganism and its Two Interpretations', *Studia mythologica Slavica*, vol. 2, 1999, pp. 11-14.

⁷ A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England, c. 550 to c. 1307* (London, 1974), pp. 171,178.

⁸ Saxo, XIV.39.

⁹ Saxo, XIV.39.

involves farmer who stands behind the food and asks gathered people do they see him. And wishing that in the next year they will not be able to see him.¹⁰ A similar custom of presenting a large rounded loaf during the harvest festival is known, for example, from Lithuania.¹¹ Needless to say, in folklore these customs lost their religious meaning and character, but were an echo of ancient rituals. An old, pre-Christian religious ceremony when gods were asked for plentiful harvest in the following year and offerings were made. It is worth noting, that a large wheel shaped loaf or cake as an element of harvest ceremonies was much wider common Indo-European tradition. Large flour-cake in shape of a wheel known as *summanalia* used as offering to a Roman thunder deity named Summanus.¹² A similar ceremony was performed in ancient India where large sacred cake called *rarha-çakra* was made in a form of wheel. A wheel or wheel-like artefacts are well known to be Sun symbols in ancient India,¹³ and it was also common pre-Christian European tradition to associate wheel-like disks with Sun and sun worship.¹⁴ *Rarha-çakra* has been used in ceremony of Vajapeya in autumn following the harvest. During this ritual various other sun symbols were employed or displayed, and its solar association was most clearly expressed by invoking sun god Savitṛ during the ceremony.¹⁵ In the Slavic context, horses and solar disks are very common and well documented motives in folklore, mythology and iconography of all branches of Slavdom.¹⁶ So, this custom reinforces Sventovit's association with harvest and agriculture but also supports notion of strong solarization of the cult.

With clear evidence that Perun was not a common Slavic war god¹⁷ the explanation of Sventovit's war functions and attributes may lay somewhere else. First of all we should look into the etymology of the name Sventovit. The root *svet* implies strength, and sometimes strength of somehow supernatural nature is cognate to the root *jary*, that appears as a first part of the name Yarovit. The deities worshipped at Wolgast and Havelberg at the beginning of the twelfth century. In Slavic languages this word also indicates youthfulness, strength, and ardency.¹⁸ The second root *vit* in both names is cognate to Old Church Slavonic *vitędz*, Russian - *витель*, a member of the Slavic class of warriors.¹⁹ However in my opinion, as the first part of the name *svet* is an adjective with application to the individual, it forms a better conceptual link with meaning "warrior, Lord, warlord". Hence the name of Sventovit and also Yarovit can be interpreted as "Strong, Mighty Lord". These deities share many similarities, including their association with war and agriculture.

¹⁰ S. Urbańczyk, *Dawni Słowianie: Wiara i kult* (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1991), p. 91; and A. Brückner, *Mitologia Słowiańska*, (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1985 ed.), p. 319n.

¹¹ R. Pettazzoni, R., *Essays on the History of Religions* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1954), p. 99n.

¹² R. Pettazzoni, *Essays on...*, p. 95.

¹³ *Rig Veda*, in R.T.H. Griffith, trans., *The Hymns of the Rig Veda* (Varanasi: The Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1971 ed.), I.30, 13.

¹⁴ R. Pettazzoni, *Essays on...*, pp. 95-96.

¹⁵ R. Pettazzoni, *Essays on...*, pp. 100-101.

¹⁶ N. Čausidis, 'Mythical Pictures of the Southern Slavs', *Studia mythologica Slavica*, vol. 2, 1999, pp. 288-289.

¹⁷ R. Zaroff, 'Organized Pagan Cult...', pp. 56-60.

¹⁸ A. Brückner, *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego* (Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1985 ed.), p. 537. An alternative etymology was postulated by Dr. Vlado Nartnik, who derives the root *svet* from Slavic *svet* - light, bright. Nartnik, V. [Vlado@zrc-sazu.si]. "Sventovit". Private e-mail message to Zaroff, R. [r_zaroff@tpg.com.au]. 20 March – 22 April 2002.

¹⁹ Sventovit etymology: A. Gieysztor, *Mitologia Słowian*, pp. 90-91.

As for Yarovit of Wolgast, one of his primary functions can be deduced from Herbord's account. He reported an incident where Yarovit's priest, pretending to be a god himself, recited a following creed:

*I am your god; I am the one who covers the meadows with grass and the forests with leaves, raises crops in fields and trees, (gives) fertility to cattle. Everything that people use come from my power....*²⁰

This account suggests that Yarovit was initially most likely a deity of springtime regeneration, rebirth of vegetation and a protector of farming. Ebbo called Yarovit of Havelberg *Gerovitus*, which is almost exactly like the name *Gerowitus* worshipped at far away Wolgast.²¹ The functions and domains of Yarovit of Havelberg have not been mentioned by any of Otto of Bamberg's biographers. However, Ebbo, in his *Vita Ottonis Episcopi Babenbergensis* provides some clues:

*For on the very day of his (Otto of Bamberg's) coming the city, surrounded on all sides by stabards, was celebrating the name of a certain idol, Gerovitus (Yarovit). When the man of God saw this he felt remorse for so great an error; he refused to enter the walls of the city, but standing before the gate summoned Wirikind the lord of the place...*²²

Otto of Bamberg arrived there in early May, and Yarovit's feast was celebrated probably around the 10th. The timing of the celebration in spring implies that it was associated with spring, rebirth of vegetation and agriculture. Furthermore, the name 'Yarovit' itself derives from a Slavonic root *jary*, indicating youthful strength, being young, strong, ardent and lively and is cognate to the word *svet*.²³ This finds reflection in Polish proverb "Stary ale jary" that can be translated as "old but still full of vitality". Also, it is worth noting here that in modern Polish language the term *jare* is used to denote cereals sown in early spring.²⁴ Therefore the name of this god bears strong association with spring, renewal of vegetation and points to agriculture, fertility and natural forces as the domains and function of Yarovit worshipped in both Wolgast and Havelberg.²⁵ So, as it was shown Sventovit of Rügen, Yarovit of Wolgast and Yarovit of Havelberg shared many conceptual elements. Their association with vital forces and agriculture seems to be of common origin for these deities rather than parallel independent development. Above all their related names fit perfectly with these attributes and functions. Moreover, agriculture and to some extent animal husbandry was of utmost importance to the Slavic society of farmers, and existence of such a deity could be expected among them. It is worth to note, that agriculture was fundamental and inseparable part of Slavic economy from the time of their ethnogenesis. The area where ethnogenesis of the Slavs took place, that is roughly modern Western Ukraine and South-eastern Poland, is one of the oldest regions of Europe where farming was practiced. As early as 4,800

²⁰ Herbord, II.32.

²¹ Ebbo, III.3 and III.8.

²² Ebbo, III.3.

²³ M.Z. Jedlicki in TM, p. 329n.

²⁴ M. Szymczak, *Słownik Języka Polskiego* (Warszawa, Poland: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1978), p. 823.

²⁵ A. Gieysztor, *Mitologia Słowian*, p. 108.

B.C.E. so called Tripolye culture flourished there, it was older than Western European farming communities, and junior only to the Danubian and few coastal Mediterranean farmers cultures.²⁶

Yarovit of Wolgast was also explicitly compared, or rather identified by Herbord with Mars, the ancient Roman war god,²⁷ and Ebbo described him as *deus militiae*, “god of warriors”.²⁸ In the temple a huge, golden plated holy shield of Yarovit was kept:

*the hanging shield was of great size, skilfully and artistically laminated with golden sheets. No mortal was allowed to touch it and it was considered a source of power of which I know nothing, but which is the greatest in their pagan beliefs, so it was forbidden to move it if it was not wartime.*²⁹

So, the evidence that the holy shield was the subject of taboo and allowed neither to be touched nor carried outside in peacetime clearly implies the war-like nature of this deity.

In the cases of Yarovit of Havelberg due to the scarcity of sources their possible military functions can only be suspected. However, taking into consideration the appearance of the same names in different locations, the war functions of Yarovit of Wolgast, the relative geographical closeness of all these places as well as the degree of cultural and religious uniformity manifested by the Polabian Slavs, such functions are very likely. Going further, all these circumstances prompt us to claim that the above god from Havelberg served the function of war deities.

Therefore it can be claimed that all three, Sventovit of Rügen, Yarovit of Wolgast and Yarovit of Havelberg shared a common conceptual origin. Certainly these deities cannot be equal as the same gods as each cult developed its own way. It may be however, claimed that all three gods evolved from an older, common deity worshiped by the Slavs of the region, during the migration period of fifth-seventh centuries, and that it gained prominence during or shortly after. A deity whose domain was agriculture, harvest, fertility and vital forces. Hence, the gods and their cults as described in later sources are no doubt product of long separate development, which included amalgamation of various cults, rituals and domains of other Slavonic deities. Polish scholar Aleksander Brückner first postulated this conceptual similarity of Sventovit and Yarovit in the early 20th Century, but he emphasised more on their local character and origin, rather than a common Slavic background.³⁰

The original name of this deity must have contained the root *jary* rather than *svět*. Sventovit appears only on Rügen Island while deities named Yarovit were worshipped at least at two locations at Wolgast and at Havelberg. This suggests that the name Sventovit derives from Yarovit not the other way, and that change of name occurred on Rügen. Most likely to distinguished their god from the gods of other Polabian Slavs.

²⁶ B.M. Fagan, *People of the Earth* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1980), pp. 173-177.

²⁷ Herbord, *Dialogus de Vita Sancti Ottonis Episcopi Babenbergensis*, in *Monumenta Poloniae Historica*, Series II, vol. VII, part 3 (Warszawa, PWN, 1974), III.6.

²⁸ Ebbo, *Vita Ottonis Episcopi Babenbergensis*, in *Monumenta Poloniae Historica*, Series II, vol. VII, part 3 (Warszawa, PWN, 1974), II.8.

²⁹ Herbord, III.6.

³⁰ A. Brückner, *Mitologia Słowiańska*, pp. 45, 123.

As for the other well-known Polabian deity Svarozhits of Radegosc there is no clear evidence that it was associated with agriculture and harvest. However, one event suggests that some ceremony of great importance was held annually at Radegosc in November coinciding with similar celebrations at Arkona on Rügen discussed above. In 1066, in June, during the pagan uprising of Obodrites who were supported by the Veletians bishop John of Mecklenburg was captured. Surprisingly the Veletians kept him alive until 10 November when he was sacrificed and his head offered to Svarozhits at Radegosc.³¹ The coincidence of a bishop being sacrificed with Arkona's harvest ceremony and the keeping alive of such a "distinguished" captive for so long, indicates the importance of the celebrations in November. Taking into consideration that at Arkona and across Slavdom this celebration was associated with harvest, it is very likely that at Veletian Radegosc it was also a harvest festival and celebration. This in turn would imply the acquisition of some agricultural role by Svarozhits of Radegosc.

Similarly nothing conclusive can be said about similar autumn harvest festivals at other cult centres of the Polabian Slavs. Analysis of animal bones unearthed at Wolin indicates that some celebration and offerings were held there in early autumn.³² This may suggest a ceremony similar to that held at Arkona on Rügen sometime during November, which would mutually reinforce the claim for a harvest festival there and at Radegosc.

With common origins of Sventovit and Yarovit established, and the name Yarovit being an older and original name of the god we can attempt to trace Common Slavic origin of this Polabian deities. To analyse this we have to look into evidence from Eastern Slavdom where ethnographic date provides some clues. According to some Byelorussia tradition, recorded in the middle of the nineteenth century, a certain Yarilo appears in folk festivals. The name of this figure, like in case of Yarovit, derives from the root *jary*. Yarilo was a young person dressed in white who rides a white horse holding a human head in his right hand and spikes of rye in the left. This immediately brings to the mind a Yarovit's priest from Wolgast wearing a white robe. Above folk celebration of Yarilo took place on 27 April. Very close indeed to an early May festival at Havelberg where Yarovit was worshiped.³³ Some Byelorussia celebrations centred on a young girl who dressed up white, impersonated Yarilo by sitting on a white horse. The song sung during the celebration referred to human fertility and plentiful harvest:

*Wandered Yarilo around the world,
brought up rye in the fields, begotten children,
where he treads with his feet, there is abundance of rye;
and where he casts his eyes, ears of wheat will spring.³⁴*

In this folk festivity Yarilo's affiliation with spring, fertility, harvest and agriculture cannot be doubted. And there is no doubt that the roots of this nineteenth century spring festival go back into pre-Christian era when the cult of Yarilo could played a much more prominent role.

³¹ Adam of Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*, in F. J. Tschan, ed., *History of the Archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), III. LI (50).

³² L. P. Słupecki, *Slavonic...*, p. 89.

³³ Ebbo, III. 3.

³⁴ A. Gieysztor, *Mitologia Słowian*, p. 109.

Some celebrations associated with Yarilo were also taking place as late as the second half of the eighteenth century at Voronezh in Russia. It has been celebrated a week following a Whitsunday, again in early spring, and it lasted between three to five days. A central figure of the festivities was a man dressed with flowers, holding little bells and with face painted red and white. The festival was banned and eradicated by bishop Tikhon Zadonskij in 1765 that called it “satanic games”.³⁵ Also, the Russian *Suzdal Chronicle* of the turn of the thirteenth century mentioned an idol called Yarun in the Suzdal district, but without any details.³⁶ Here again, the name of the deity derives from the root *jary*. And finally, allegedly an idol of Yarilo stood on sacred hill near Galich in Kostroma district.³⁷ Yarilo name appears also in Eastern Slavic toponymy with a place name *Ярилова Плешь* (Yarilo’s Clearing).³⁸ Yarilo festival described as comprising ‘wild gaiety and obscenities’ were celebrated in Russia until the eighteenth century and in some regions until the nineteenth century.³⁹ Furthermore, Russian *Семик* celebrated during Whitsuntide - a festival in Christianity falling 50 days after Easter, that is usually in late April or May. (Polish - Zielone Świątki). Russian scholar Boris Rybakov associated it with Yarilo.⁴⁰

The origins of this spring festival of Yarilo can be reasonably placed in the ancient agricultural tradition of the Slavs of pre-Christian times. The association of Yarilo with vital forces, spring and agriculture clearly makes him conceptually related to the Polabian Yarovit. Furthermore, the white horse that Yarilo rides immediately brings to attention a white horse of Sventovit. And the Voronezh celebrations after Whitsunday that often falls in May also reminds us of Yarovit’s May celebrations reported by Ebbo at Havelberg.⁴¹ Hence we can postulate that Yarilo, Yarovit-Sventovit, and Yarun had the same Slavic agricultural deity as their prototype and with name containing the root *jary*. Russian scholar and ethnographer Alexander Afanasyev brought the relationship between Yarilo and Yarovit to scholar’s attention as early as 1865, but his theory did not gain much support in later times.⁴² Aleksander Brückner reduced Yarilo to the level of minor Eastern Slavic demons with no association with Yarovit and later Henryk Łowmiański concluded likewise.⁴³ Recently, late Aleksander Gieysztor pointed to conceptual similarities between Yarovit and Yarilo, especially in the areas of spring festivities, vegetation and agriculture.⁴⁴ Russian historians Vyacheslav Ivanov and Vyacheslav Toporov observed a similar association between this Eastern Slavic deity and that of Polabian Yarovit and it finds acceptance with Leszek Ślupecki.⁴⁵

As it was pointed out agriculture was of utmost importance to the Slavs and it could be expected, like in any other farming society, that some deity whose dominion

³⁵ H. Łowmiański, *Religia Słowian i jej upadek* (Warszawa; P.W.N., 1985 ed.), p. 108n; and M. Gimbutas, *The Slavs* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1971), p. 162.

³⁶ A. Gieysztor, *Mitologia Słowian*, p. 109.

³⁷ A. S. Famintsyn, A. S., *Bozhestva drevnikhu Slavianu* (St. Petersburg, 1884), p. 224.

³⁸ B. Rybakov, *Yazicheestvo drevnikh Slavian* (Moskva: Izdatelstvo “Nauka”, 1981), p. 372.

³⁹ Fedotov, G.P., *The Russian Religious Mind, vol. 1 and 2* (Belmont: Nordland Publishing Company, 1975), p. 14.

⁴⁰ Ivanits, L. J., *Russian Folk Belief* (London: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1989), pp. 9 & 17.

⁴¹ Ebbo, III. 3.

⁴² H. Łowmiański, *Religia...*, p. 108n.

⁴³ A. Brückner, *Mitologia...*, p. 165; and H. Łowmiański, *Religia...*, p. 108n.

⁴⁴ A. Gieysztor, *Mitologia Słowian*, pp. 108-110.

⁴⁵ L. P. Ślupecki, *Slavonic...*, p. 93.

would be spring, the rejuvenation of vegetation and agriculture would be prominent among them. At the same time, the relative absence of such a deity in written medieval sources could be also easily explained. Medieval chroniclers were not much interested in ordinary people, popular beliefs and every day economic activities. They themselves came from the upper classes and were mainly concerned with the major political events. Furthermore, with exception of Eastern Slavic authors, all the others were not Slavs and had limited understanding of Slavic internal affairs and their beliefs. If Slavic religion came to their attention it was usually a major, of unusual importance, state-like cult promoted by their leaders. Information about cults such as that of Sventovit and Yarovit would have come to their attention in this form and was considered worth recording. In other areas of Slavdom the agriculture linked deities and beliefs, despite their importance, were most likely neglected. Survival of Yarilo-like deity and associated festivities in folk culture of the Eastern Slavs into the modern times and centuries after Christianisation points to the importance of this deity in pagan times. It is worth noting here that over the centuries Church eradicated most of the pagan beliefs and customs, and the names of most of the pagan gods passed into oblivion. So, the reduction of Yarilo-type deity from an important god to a mythical folk figure should not be a surprise. At the same time Yarilo's survival, even in this diminished form, suggests that it was an important deity not to be easily eradicated from people's consciousness, despite Church vigorous attempts to do so.

So, we can postulate that the ancient Slavs worshipped a common deity whose domain was spring, rejuvenation of vegetation, agriculture and fertility in general. Its name contained root *jary* and he was possibly called Yarilo or Yarun. After Migration Period from around the seventh century onward, the cult and concept of this god diversified in different geographical and socio-political conditions. For unknown reasons and in unknown circumstances among some of the Polabian Slavs the cult and worship of a Yarilo type deity gained prominence and became dominant in some areas. The ending *vit* – “the lord”, was most likely a Polabian invention added to the original name of the deity after he began to dominate their pantheon and there was a need to distinguish this god and show him a due respect. The name change that must have taken place on Rügen island involved replacement of when root *jary* with a cognate *svę̃t*. It did not change meaning of the god's name but this dominant god of Ranove entered history as Sventovit. All these deities, Yarilo, Yarun, Yarovit of Wolgast, Yarovit of Havelberg and Sventovit, as known from historical records, were not identical. The gods and their cults as described in later sources are no doubt product of long development, which included amalgamation of various cults, rituals and functions of other Slavonic deities. However, the number of similarities strongly suggests their common conceptual origin. Therefore, the existence of common Yarilo-like deity in the times prior to Slavic Migration Period and that over the time the cults and this deity diversified and evolved in different geographical and socio-political conditions into different gods.

As for the war functions of Sventovit, Yarovit of Wolgast and most likely Yarovit of Havelberg most plausible explanation is that they acquired a war like attributes during their settlement in the former East Germany and in later times. These initially agricultural deities developed war-like characteristics as a result of endemic warfare that characterized period between the ninth and twelfth when the Polabian Slavs were engaged in a struggle for independence and survival with their more powerful

neighbours such as the Empire, Denmark and Poland. It should be of no surprise that strength and vitality of this deity could easily be transformed into war-like attributes in the same fashion Perun acquired its war functions among the Eastern Slavs.

Izvor Sventovita z Rügna

Roman Zaroff

Članek raziskuje izvor slovanskega boga Sventovita z otoka Rügen. Glede na prejšnje avtorjeve raziskave, sedaj opušča mnenje, da je bil Sventovit slovanski bog vojne ali druga podoba Peruna. Raziskava na osnovi nekaterih etimologij in številnih strukturnih podobnosti ugotavlja, da izvirajo polabska božanstva Sventovit z Rügna, Jarovit iz Wolgasta in Jarovit iz Havelberga iz istega skupnega slovanskega boga, katerega ime je vsebovalo koren "jari". Avtor predpostavlja, da so bila funkcionalna področja tega prvotnega božanstva poljedelstvo, žetev, rodovitnost in življenjske sile. Zato je razumeti vojaške in druge funkcije, ki so jih imela po poročanju pisnih virov prej navedena božanstva, kot posledico razvoja v času po razselitvi Slovanov. Avtor meni, da je obstajala strukturna povezava tega skupnega slovanskega božanstva z vzhodnoslovanskim Jari- lom in Jarunom.