

# Kresnik: An Attempt at a Mythological Reconstruction

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*The Slovene Kresnik tradition has numerous parallels in Indo-European mythologies. Research has established connections between the myth about a hero's fight with a snake (dragon) and the vegetational cult of Jarilo/Zeleni Jurij. The Author establishes a hypothesis about Iranian influences (resemblance to figures of Yima/Yama and Mithra) and outlines a later transformation of Kresnik in the period of Christianization.*

If it is possible to find a mythological figure in Slovene folk tradition which is reminiscent of a "higher" deity, this would undoubtedly be Kresnik. It is therefore not strange that different researchers were of the opinion that Kresnik represented the key to old Slovene mythology and religion.<sup>1</sup> Their explanations, however, are mostly outdated, insufficiently explained or contrasting in the context of contemporary findings of comparative mythology and religiology. Equally doubtful is also the authenticity of older records about Kresnik since the still living traditions seem not to verify them.<sup>2</sup> Kresnik thus remains a controversial and mysterious image as far as the origin of his name is concerned, but also concerning the role and the function it was supposed to have in old Slovene, Slavic and Indo-European mythological structures.

The first extensive and thorough comparative study about Kr(e)snik was written by Maja Bošković-Stulli.<sup>3</sup> She justly ascertained that there were differences between the majority of Slovene records on Kresnik and the data on a being with the same name collected in Croatia and east of it. On the other hand, however, certain fragments of Slovene tradition did correspond to the image of Krsnik which she had documented during the course of her

<sup>1</sup> Kresnik was linked to Božič or Svarožič (Jakob Kelemina, *Bajke in pripovedke slovenskega ljudstva*, Znanstvena knjižnica, Tome 4, Celje 1930, p. 8), with Svetovit (Niko Kuret, *Praznično leto Slovencev I*, 2nd ed., Ljubljana 1989, p. 385), he was thought to be the "Sun personified", (Ivan Grafenauer, *Bogastvo in ubožstvo v slovenski narodni pesmi in v irski legendi*, *Razprave IV.*, Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti, Razred za filološke in literarne vede, Ljubljana 1958, p. 61), a lunar deity (Damjan J. Ovsec, *Slovanska mitologija in verovanje*, Ljubljana 1991, p. 470), and Davorin Trstenjak compared him with the Indian god Krishna (*Raziskavanja na polji staroslovanske mythologie*, *Letopis Slovenske matice* 1870, p. 25).

<sup>2</sup> According to Milko Matičetov the data by Davorin Trstenjak could be deemed the most questionable of all (Milko Matičetov, *O bajnih bitjih s prstavkom o Kurentu*, *Traditiones* 1985, p. 25).

<sup>3</sup> Maja Bošković-Stulli, *Kresnik-Krsnik, ein Wesen aus der kroatischen und slovenischen Volksüberlieferung*, *Fabula* 1960, No. 3, pp. 275-298; idem, *Hrvatske i slovenske usmene predaje o Krsniku - Kresniku*; in: *Usmena književnost kao umjetnost riječi*, Zagreb 1975, pp. 205-227; idem, *Testimonianze orali croate e slovene sul Krsnik - Kresnik*, *Metodi e ricerche*, n.s., VII (1988), No. 1, pp. 32-50. The Author published part of the material on Krsnik in Dalmatia under the title *Usmene pripovijetke i predaje s otoka Brača*, *Narodna umjetnost* 1975, No. 11-12, pp. 5-159.

field work in Istria, the image about which there are also records from the Quarnero islands and Dalmatia. Since this geographic area did not have close historic or linguistic connections with the territory of present Slovenia, she assumed that the extension of Kresnik is the result of old Slavic colonization and/or a potential influence of pre-Slavic cultures in this area.<sup>4</sup> Based on this supposition she derived a logical, yet questionable conclusion: if this is an identical or kindred ethnic substratum, then the figure of Kresnik should be uniform everywhere, typologically as well as functionally. Anything disruptive of this supposed uniformity was thus disturbing and suspicious. Hence she was ready to believe Slovene data on Kresnik only if it matched the information she or other expertly trained researchers collected mostly outside Slovene ethnic territory. Consequently she did not find objectionable Kelemina's reports that Kresnik watches over the well-being of his territory, that he turns into different animals, or that those who fight him have to be born on the same day, because all of these particulars have been verified on the territory of her "own" fieldwork.<sup>5</sup> She also accepted Kelemina's note that the Kresniks fought one another despite the fact that in Istria the opponents of the Kresniks were only the "štrige/štrigoni") because this is parallel to the South Slavic legends about "Moguti" and "Zduhači".<sup>6</sup> She labelled most of the other notes from Kelemina's collection as utterly unreliable and an alleged product of the fantasy of romantically-inclined note-takers of the 19th century.<sup>7</sup> Since it is not possible to estimate the authenticity of cultural elements in individual Slovene areas (i.e. in Štajerska and Koroška) only by making analogies with Istria and Dalmatia, this was a methodological mistake. The fact that Kresnik, despite the same name, proved to originate from two entirely different traditions, was thus interpreted in the wrong way.

In view of obvious difficulties with the inductive method of Kresnik's mythological explanation, deduction is becoming more valuable again. A more recent attempt at a mythological explanation of Kresnik by Nikolai Mikhailov follows this orientation.<sup>8</sup> Unlike Maja Bošković-Stulli, he not only has no doubts regarding the value of Slovene legends about Kresnik, but sees Kresnik's role in the very center of Proto-Slavic or Balto-Slavic mythology, in the "basic myth" as has been reconstructed and quite persuasively argued by V.V.Ivanov and V.N.Toporov.<sup>9</sup> This is the myth about the duel between Perun, the god of heavens (the thundermaker), and his evil opponent Veles, a chthonic deity. A female figure was supposed to be connected with the two, but it was impossible to establish its original name. This reconstruction is based primarily on East Slavic (especially Belarus) data, but was also confirmed for the area of South Slavs by R. Katičić and other authors.<sup>10</sup> While the scheme of the "basic myth" was thought to be identical throughout the Balto-Slavic area, the names of the partakers and their attributes change in different versions.

<sup>4</sup> Bošković-Stulli 1960, p. 296

<sup>5</sup> Kelemina, p. 39 (2.III), pp. 88-90 (35.I-III); Bošković-Stulli 1960, p. 291.

<sup>6</sup> Kelemina, p. 90 (36.I-II), p. 92 (37), p. 93 (38); Bošković-Stulli 1960, p. 289.

<sup>7</sup> Bošković-Stulli 1960, p. 275, 278; idem, *Istarske narodne priče*, Zagreb 1959, p. 224, 234.

<sup>8</sup> N.A. Mihajlov, *Fragment slovenskoj mifologičeskoj tradicii*, in: *Koncept dviženija v jazyke i kul'ture*, Rossijskaja akademija nauk, Institut slavjanovedenija i balkanistiki, Moscow 1996, pp. 127-141.

<sup>9</sup> V.V. Ivanov, V.N. Toporov, *Issledovanija v oblasti slavjanskih drevnostej*, Moscow 1974.

<sup>10</sup> Radoslav Katičić, *Hoditi-roditi*, *Spuren der Texte eines urslawischen Fruchtbarkeitsritus*, *Wiener Slavistisches Jahrbuch* (= *WSIJ*) 33 (1987), pp. 23-43; idem, *Nachlese zum urslawischen Mythos vom Zweikampf des Donnergottes mit dem Drachen*, *WSIJ* 34 (1988), pp. 57-75; idem, *Weiteres zur Rekonstruktion der Texte eines*

In Slovene notes about Kresnik, Mikhailov recognized some of the key motifs of the “basic myth”: Kresnik fights a negative hero who appears in the form of either a snake, a snake king or queen, a dragon, a giant, etc., or another, hostile Kresnik. During the fight, or afterwards, Kresnik’s victory is followed by a storm, by black fog or clouds, lightning and thunder, rain or hail, all of which bring about a bountiful harvest.<sup>11</sup> According to Mikhailov, the fight among the Kresniks and the figure of “the evil Kresnik” (Vidovin) already belong to a degenerative phase of the myth under the influence of Christianity. Moreover, it was presumed that three chronological sequences of Kresnik were evident in folk tradition: a deity, a good demon, and a benevolent hero.<sup>12</sup> Kresnik’s dwelling on a mountain or in the sky, his attributes which link him with fire, lightning and the color of gold, his connection with certain animals and atmospheric phenomena - all of these place him in the role of the thundermaking god. Mikhailov was also in favour of analyzing some other folk sources about Kresnik (i.e. song tradition) and of researching the St. John’s Eve ceremony. In connection with the term *kres* and the process of the St. John’s Eve celebration he indicated connections with the Baltic area and with an Old Prussian ceremony (*kresze, krysze, keyse*) which is described in sources from the 15th century, but about which no details are known. He also stressed the analogy between Kresnik and his Lithuanian, Latvian and Old Prussian double (*Perkūnas, Perkons, \*Perkuns*).<sup>13</sup> According to Mikhailov the etymology of the word *kres* is almost certainly connected with the notion of fire, but also with striking a fire (hitting, setting ablaze, sparkling, glittering). The third variant is: “*kresen* = lively, strong.” This last interpretation originates mainly from the Balto-Slavic linguistic fund.<sup>14</sup> Mikhailov finds meaningful especially the association *kres - kresanje* (sparkling) which is thought to denote the thundermaker, a deity of lightning and thunder.

Speaking of etymologies, let me remind the reader that older researchers (G. Krek, J. Šuman, J. Kelemina) derived Kresnik from the name of East Slavic sun god Hors (*Khors*). *Khors* was thought to be borrowed from Iranian *Khursid* (personified Sun). Kresnik, however, was thought to be only a nickname of the god whose real name was Svarožič (Božič), thus the son of Svarog, the god of light.<sup>15</sup> This explanation has already been rejected by F. Bezlaj, and is thought to be problematic by N. Mikhailov as well.<sup>16</sup>

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urslawischen Fruchtbarkeitsritus 1-2, WSIJ 35 (1989), pp. 57-98, 36(1990), pp. 61-93; idem, Nachtrage zur Rekonstruktion der Texte eines slawischen Fruchtbarkeitsritus 1-2, WSIJ 36 (1990), pp. 187-190, 37 (1991), pp. 37-39; idem, Baltische Ausblicke zur Rekonstruktion der Texte eines urslawischen Fruchtbarkeitsritus, WSIJ 38 (1992), pp.53-73; idem, Weitere baltische Ausblicke zur Rekonstruktion der Texte eines urslawische Fruchtbarkeitsritus 1-2, WSIJ 39 (1993), pp. 35-56; 40 (1994), pp. 7-35; Vitomir Belaj, Randbemerkungen zu Katičić’ “Nachlese”, WSIJ 34 (1988), pp. 159-161; idem, Hoditi - goniti. Drugi aspekt jednoga praslavenskog obreda za plodnost, Studia ethnologica 2 (1990), pp. 49-75; idem, Mladenkin vijenac na suhoj grani. Mitska pozadina jednoga svadbenog običaja u sjevernoj Hrvatskoj, Studia Ethnologica Croatica 4 (1992), pp. 81-91; idem, Der mythologische Hintergrund eines kroatischen Hohzeitsbrauches, WSIJ 41 (1995), pp. 43-50.

<sup>11</sup> Mihajlov, p. 130.

<sup>12</sup> idem, p. 135.

<sup>13</sup> Nikolai Mikhailov, Baltico-Slovenica. Alcuni paralleli mitologici, Res Balticae 1996, pp. 164-166, 168-169; idem, Eine slowenisch-prussische lexikalisch-mythologische Parallele: *kres/ kresze*, Slovenski jezik - Slovene Linguistic Studies 1 (1997), pp. 151-159. The first to mention the Old Prussian St. John’s Day bonfire-making, in comparison with the one celebrated in Slovenia, was Gregor Krek in his etymological treatise *Kres* (Kres 1881, p. 54, 55).

<sup>14</sup> Mikhailov, pp. 165-166.

<sup>15</sup> Gregor Krek, Einleitung in die slavische Literaturgeschichte, 2. Aufgabe, Graz 1887, pp. 393-394; Josef Šuman, Die Slovenen, Die Volker Oesterreich-Ungarns, Bd. 10, Wien und Teschen 1881, p. 22; Kelemina 1930, p. 8.

<sup>16</sup> France Bezlaj, Nekaj besedi o slovenski mitologiji v zadnjih desetih letih, Slovenski etnograf 3-4 (1951), p. 346; Mikhailov 1997, p. 5.

Maja Bošković-Stulli was also of the opinion that Kresnik has no connection with personified Fire and Sun. She suggested a derivation from the word *krst* (meaning cross and baptizing). In support of her hypothesis that this expression is Old Slavic and thus pre-Christian she also cited some other authors, among them F. Miklošič.<sup>17</sup> Old Serbians knew the *krstovi* as guardians of territories, settlements and borders.<sup>18</sup> These primitive idols were made in the shape of a cross which represented protection of property and harvest in more traditional parts of the Balkans as well.<sup>19</sup> Of interest is her presumption that even before they had settled on the present territory, Slavs encountered Christianity and its symbols, which might have affected the image of Kresnik.

Franc Jeza explained the origin of the word *kres* in a totally different way. He tied it to the Old Norse expression *hress*, meaning “fresh, fiery, alive, lively, merry.” *Hressa* denotes “to refresh, to invigorate, to encourage.” *Hress-foerr*, for instance, would thus denote “burning lively,” the same as “*Freundfeuer*, ogin tuga veselja, krejs” (the fire of joy, bonfire) as defined by Hippolytus in his *Dictionarium trilingue* (II, 63) at the beginning of the 18th century.<sup>20</sup> The fire of merry celebration should also present the center of each solstice celebration.

Finally, let us also mention the explanation of Alemko Gluhak that aside from fire and the position of the sun, the Old Slavic word *kres* denoted mainly the revival and awakening of nature and man. This is where the rituals of Jarylo and Zeleni Jurij come from. On St. George’s Day, the pre-Christian *Božitъ*, son of God, appears in order to revive vegetation and make the wheat harvest plentiful. Gluhak’s opinion that the Indo-European root *\*ker-*, *ker-*, *kre-*, “to grow, to feed” appears in, for instance, in ion. *κουροζ*, dor. *κῶροζ*, “young man” (lat. *Ceres*, -eris, Italic and Roman goddess of fertility) is by no means meaningless for our research of the Indo-European context of Kresnik.<sup>21</sup>

Marija Gimbutas stressed the fact that parallels should be found for Slavic mythological figures in a wider Indo-European territory. Along with this, she also drew attention to the etymological relationship of Slavic terms from the sphere of religion and ethics with the corresponding Iranian vocabulary. We can also agree with her notion that a reconstruction of Slavic religion must be based mainly on a hypothesis about the existence of a god similar to the already-known gods from the Indo-European or Indo-Iranian pantheon; evidence and modifications in written sources and in the still-living folklore must be found afterwards.<sup>22</sup> Within such a comparative frame we can find numerous interesting parallels to the Slovene Kresnik, and more: “romantic fantasies” about Kresnik prove to be a rather consistent system. This is a confirmation and supplementation of some findings already arrived at by Mikhailov in his comparative study. But before we embark on a detailed analysis, it is im-

<sup>17</sup> Franz Miklosich, *Die christliche Terminologie der slavischen Sprachen. Eine Sprachgeschichtliche Untersuchung*, Denkschriften der keiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Classe, Bd. 24 (1876), pp. 1-57.

<sup>18</sup> Veselin Čajkanović, *Studije iz religije i folklor*, Srpski etnografski zbornik XXXI, Beograd 1924, p. 106; Bošković-Stulli 1960, p. 296.

<sup>19</sup> Bošković-Stulli 1960, p. 297.

<sup>20</sup> Franc Jeza, *O ključnih vprašanjih rane karantansko-slovenske zgodovine*, Buenos Aires 1977, pp. 107-108; Jože Stabej, *Iz zgodovine slovenskega besedja*, Jezik in slovstvo 1969, No. 4, p. 122.

<sup>21</sup> Alemko Gluhak, *\*Vъzъm i\*Vъskrs*, *Filologija* 20-21, Zagreb 1992-93, p. 119, 122-123; also compare Julius Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Bd. 1, Bern-München 1959, p. 577.

<sup>22</sup> Marija Gimbutas, *Ancient Slavic Religion: A Synopsis*, in: *To Honor Roman Jakobson, Essays on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, *Janua Linguarum, Series Maior XXXI, Vol.1*, The Hague-Paris 1967, p. 739.

perative to separate the mythological elements of Kresnik from other (possibly just as archaic) additions.

We have already noted that Slovene legends about Kresnik are mostly different from the ones in Istria and in other parts of Croatia. Since it is difficult to defend the hypothesis that all these differences spring solely from the rich fantasy of unscrupulous researchers (more about this later) it seems that we are dealing with two separate traditions, both present in our territory, yet with centers in different regions. If they really do originate from the same common basis, they can be defined as an "older" (motivically more accomplished) and a "younger" tradition. These labels were also used by Mikhailov, who had written that, as a "local spirit", Kresnik is the result of a later degradation of the original myth.<sup>23</sup> The "younger" cycle lacks all of Kresnik's mythological biography, and his figure is set in a wholly different, everyday environment on earth. The common traits - which (although only in certain variants) unite both cycles - are Kresnik's uncommon birth, his unusual capabilities, fighting this or that opponent, changing into different animal figures, the element of air in which fights take place, and Kresnik's influence on atmospheric phenomena. Kresnik as the protector of territory, *genius loci*, is thus only loosely connected with the "older" Kresnik who was the supreme ruler of the earth.

The findings of Carlo Ginzburg, who discovered parallels with the "younger" Kresnik among our Friulian and Hungarian neighbours and also in numerous other European cultures where Kresnik, of course, assumes other names, also testify that close relations between the two types of Kresnik are rather unconvincing.<sup>24</sup> Kresnik in his "younger" edition is thus not limited solely to the South Slavic cultural area and cannot be linked solely to Slavs and the time of their settlement.

Ecstatic cults, according to Ginzburg, are in some way connected with old Eurasian shamanism.<sup>25</sup> In view of our data this explanation seems convincing: let us remember, for instance, a typical shamanistic motif, the fight of the Kresniks under a (world) tree, the dismemberment of one of them, and his subsequent revival. In view of all this we cannot, of course, speak about the "older" and the "more recent" Kresnik. For practical reasons we shall name both alleged cycles of Kresnik the "mythological" and the "ecstatic" Kresnik. This is the structure of their contents (asterisk\* denotes partial or complete analogy) :

"Mythological Kresnik" :

1. There is only one Kresnik.
2. Kresnik is the son of god.
3. He is a "positive" hero.
4. He appears as a prince.
5. \*His mother gives birth to him after a nine-year pregnancy; he has a birthmark.

"Ecstatic Kresnik" :

1. There are several Kresniks who gather in groups.
2. Kresnik is a human (man or woman) with special powers.
3. He is an ambivalent creature.
4. Outwardly he does not differ from other people.
5. \*Unusual birth (placenta).

<sup>23</sup> Mihajlov, p. 140.

<sup>24</sup> Carlo Ginzburg, *Storia notturna. Una decifrazione del sabba*, Torino 1989, pp.130-160.

<sup>25</sup> Idem, pp. 149-151.

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| 6. He is connected to sun and fire.  | 6. Kresniks are mainly creatures of the night.  |
| 7. He travels across the sky in a golden chariot pulled by horses.                             |   |
| 8. His weapons are lightning, a mace, an axe, a hammer, a sword...                             |   |
| 9. He lives in "the ninth country."  | 9. They live nearby.  |
| 10. His palace is on the top of a mountain.  |   |
| 11. A tree grows by a well on top of the mountain.   |   |
| 12. On the mountain Kresnik grazes his herd or hunts.  |   |
| 13. His assistant is a dog.  |   |
| 14. Kresnik has a (twin?) brother or a sister.   |   |
| 15. He has an incestuous relationship with his sister (marries her).                           |   |
| 16. His opponent steals his herd, or wife/sister.  |   |
| 17. *Kresnik fights his opponent (a snake).  | 17. *Kresniks fight one another or wizards/witches.                                       |
| 18. *During the fight fighters turn into different animals.                                    | 18. *Opponents can also assume different animal shapes during their fights.               |
| 19. *The fight takes place on a mountain, in the air, or underground.                          | 19. *The battleground is in the air, in the middle of the crossroads, or below the trees. |
| 20. He saves his wife, or his property, from the underground or from water.                    |   |
| 21. *The cause for fighting can also be of local character - - the "happiness of his country." | 21. *Kresnik is the protector of his own territory.                                       |
| 22. When Kresnik defeats his rival, there begins to rain down water or golden wheat.           | 22. Kresnik can stop the hail (prevent crop destruction).                                 |

In view of all this we cannot, of course, defend all of what is ungenue in notes dating from the second half of the 19th century. It is true that some notes are doubtful, some details biased, and that the comparative school of mythology intensively researched the motif of the fight between a mythological hero and a snake demon in the very years after 1850 when these notes originated. Yet even this trend might be understood as an incentive to look for similar motifs on our territory, and not only as a possible pattern for uncritical copying. Finally: could researchers from the second half of the 19th century (whose educational backgrounds and local origins were very diverse, and with no coordination between them) really have "invented" a homogenous entirety which would correspond to the Indo-European mythological structure even in details? A tendency towards "inventing" Slovene mythology, in combination with a certain degree of professional knowledge, could be ascribed only to Davorin Trstenjak.<sup>26</sup> His texts (e.g. the one about the Vurberk Kresnik) do manifest traces of literary revision. But

<sup>26</sup> Kelemina, p. 342-343 (245.III).

since the story about the Vurberk Kresnik “was recorded by the late Vurberk priest A. Donau who gave it to the late Professor Dr. Puff”<sup>27</sup>, it is clear that the oldest known note of this tradition originated as early as 1831-1834, long before Trstenjak started his career.<sup>28</sup> Consequently Trstenjak did not “invent” the Vurberk Kresnik, but learned about this tradition from Maribor Professor Rudolf Gustav Puff with whom he often associated.<sup>29</sup> Even if he altered the language and style of the story, the core of its contents must have remained. The essential element of the story is Kresnik’s rescue of the princess who was captured in her castle by a demon in the shape of a snake or a dragon. During the fight in the air, which was supposed to have taken place on St. George’s Day, the dragon revealed that the princess was Kresnik’s sister. Despite this, Kresnik married her after his victory and chained the dragon to the castle well.<sup>30</sup> Trstenjak himself wrote down a variant which he had “heard from the mouth of the folk and the truth and certainty of which can be verified by anybody”: in the story, a large white snake crawled across the Drava river and wrapped itself around the Vurberk castle. Kresnik defeated it, took the golden crown from its head and chained it inside the castle well. As a reward he married the daughter of the Vurberk squire.<sup>31</sup>

The thesis about the age of the Vurberk Kresnik is confirmed by the coat-of-arms of the Vurberk castle. Already in 1204 it had a dragon in it.<sup>32</sup> Otokar’s Austrian rhymed chronicle from the beginning of the 14th century describes it as the figure of a black snake with a yellow background.<sup>33</sup> In the middle of the 13th century the estate and the coat-of-arms were taken over by the feudal family of Ptuj. The headstone of Friderik V. of Ptuj from 1438, which is walled into the Ptuj castle, features a shield with a fire-spitting snake in three coils and with an upturned tail. The Vurberk castle was an institution of the Salzburg archbishops from the second half of the 12th century. It was built in a populated countryside, on a hill where a smaller Roman settlement with a Mithraic temple presumably stood.<sup>34</sup> It was first indirectly mentioned in 1238, directly in 1244. There is a legend about its origin, according to which it was built at the end of the 11th century by a Styrian knight on the spot where he had killed with a burning log a dragon living in the Metava swamp on Ptujsko polje.<sup>35</sup>

It has already been mentioned that an argument in favour of Kresnik’s authenticity might be the “completeness” of its “mythological” Slovene tradition. Even more decisive is the fact that numerous elements from Kresnik’s mythological cycle can be recognized in other segments of the Slovene oral tradition, although not bearing the name of Kresnik. Connections of the hero with fire, light and warmth, the figure of a young prince, his

<sup>27</sup> Trstenjak, p. 22.

<sup>28</sup> Johann Georg Donau (and not A. Donau as cited by Trstenjak!), born in October 1793, completed his studies of theology in Graz and afterwards worked as a chaplain in Ptuj’s military hospital. On April 23, 1831 he was appointed vicar in Vurberk, where he died on February 2, 1835. In addition to German, Latin and some Italian, he spoke Slovene as well (Personalstand der Sekular- und Regular- Geistlichkeit des Bisthums Seckau in Steyermark im Jahre 1835, p. 77; Škofijski arhiv Maribor, D 22 (Ptuj); *Matične knjige, Vurberk, MMK 2, 1833-1861*).

<sup>29</sup> Trstenjak, p. 24.

<sup>30</sup> Kelemina, pp. 342-343 (245.III).

<sup>31</sup> Davorin Trstenjak, *Višnutova Kršna-Avatara*, Novice 1853, No. 41, p. 163.

<sup>32</sup> Ivan Stopar, *Grajske stavbe v vzhodni Sloveniji, I. Območje Maribora in Ptuja*, Ljubljana 1990, p. 141.

<sup>33</sup> Josef Seemüller, *Otokars österreichische Reimchronik*, *Monumenta Germaniae historica, Deutsche Chroniken* 5/1, Berlin 1890.

<sup>34</sup> Balduin Saria, *Nova raziskavanja po stari Poetoviji*, *Časopis za zgodovino in narodopisje* 28 (1933), pp. 127-128.

<sup>35</sup> Matthäus Slekovec, *Wurmberg. Topographisch- historische Skizze*, Separatabdruck aus der Zeitschrift “*Südsteirische Post*”, Marburg 1895, p. 22, 38-39; Jože Koropec, *Časopis za zgodovino in narodopisje*, n.v. 4 (1968), pp. 117-136; Kelemina, p. 245 (178.II).

celestial character (“shooter”), his dwelling on the world mountain, his marriage to his sister, abduction of his wife, his fight with a demon in the form of a snake, and the rescue of his wife and property can actually be discovered in prose and song tradition. These key elements are consequently present in our folklore, even if we do not consider the available records about Kresnik. We shall now deal with them in detail, analyzing each point from the list above :

### 1.

In any case Kresnik would not have left such visible traces in Slovene tradition had he had but a marginal position in mythological hierarchy, especially if he was only one of the numerous local “guardians of the territory.” It is hardly believable that the Slovene ancestors did not know higher deities, but only tribal “protectors”, in the period before Christianization. We can thus presume with considerable certainty that Kresnik is one of the central figures of the pre-Christian pantheon, appearing in more or less clear outlines in the folklore of Western and Eastern Slavs as well. Still more concrete, N. Mikhailov defends the link between Kresnik and Perun or Svetovit.<sup>36</sup> This time we shall center our attention mainly on the older phase, on the Indo-European prototype of Kresnik as illustrated by Yima of Old Iran and by Yama, his double from Old India, and later - to a certain degree - also Mithra, an Iranian deity.<sup>37</sup> Our main available sources are the Pahlavi writings from the 9th century (especially *Bundahišn* and *Denkart*), *Avesta* (notably the *Yašt* and *Vendidad* or *Videvdad* sections) from the period between the 3rd and the 7th century, and *Rig Veda* from the second half of the second millennium B.C.<sup>38</sup>

Yima (Jamshed in New Persian) is undoubtedly one of the most colourful figures in Iranian mythology and possesses a clearly recognizable identity. Like Indian Yama, he was the first mortal on Earth. Both have been elevated by gods to the status of their almost (Yima) or completely (Yama) equal. On god’s initiative, Yima also became the first earthly king. But because he defied God<sup>39</sup> - much the same as Slovenian god-defying King Matjaž - or because he indulged in the pleasures of the world<sup>40</sup>, he lost God’s benevolence after a millennium (or after 616 years) of ruling the earth. He had to leave his place to his demonic opponent.

### 2.

In our “mythological” tradition Kresnik was denoted as the “son of the heavenly ruler.”<sup>41</sup> Even if this relation had not been so (suspiciously?) clearly defined, we could anticipate it if we compared it to the Iranian Yima or Indian Yama. According to the *Avesta*, Yima was the son of sun god Vivasvant (Vivahvant). Yama was also an offspring of father Vivasvat, that is the Sun, and goddess Saranyu (*Rig Veda* 10. 17. 1-2). His grandfather was

<sup>36</sup> Mihajlov, p. 140.

<sup>37</sup> In connection with our mythological tradition, Davorin Trstenjak stressed the role of Yima/Yama as the first king, teacher and judge of the dead in his treatise *Ueber den Gott Latovius, Mittheilungen des historischen Vereines für Krain 1858*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>38</sup> *Denkart*, A Pahlavi Text, ed. M.J. Dresden, Wiesbaden 1966; *Avesta*, ed. K.F. Geldner, Stuttgart 1896; *The Hymns of Rgveda 1-2*, ed. Ralph T.H. Griffith, *The Chowkhamba Sanskrit Studies 35*, Varanasi 1963.

<sup>39</sup> *Yašt* 19.33-34 mentions Yima’s “wrong, false words” in this connection.

<sup>40</sup> Arthur Christensen, *Les types du premier homme et du premier roi dans l’histoire légendaire des iraniens*, 2e partie, *Archives d’études orientales*, Vol. 14 : 2, Leide 1934, p. 50.

<sup>41</sup> Kelemina, p. 35 (1.1), 341 (245.1).



Kasyapa, one of the seven Indian wise men who were the predecessors of mankind. So Yama was of divine origin from birth. By contrast, *Atharva Veda* (18.3.13) names Yama as the first mortal, which is similar to the Iranian tradition. Yama was supposed to acquire godly status only after he showed the way to the land of the dead and became its ruler. Unlike his Iranian namesake he left the role of the first human to his half-brother Manu, while the warrior function (fighting demons, defeating a dragon or a snake) fell to the god Indra. Yama was at first the ruler of souls in the radiant sky, under the rule of the Sun (*Rig Veda* 10.14.9), but later he ruled in the subterranean land of the dead somewhere on the southern rim of the world. As the god of death, he acquired attributes which do not have much in common with his original figure.<sup>42</sup>

In contrast to him, the Iranian Yima never ascended into the realm of the gods. He was the first man, the first earthly king and a mighty warrior, or (according to an explanation by priests and ordinary people) the master of the homeland of the blessed in the afterworld. Despite his earthly origin, his cult was widespread and persistent, much the same as the cult of Heracles among the Ancient Greeks. It is very possible that the Indian Indra was originally a human hero, not even a god.<sup>43</sup>

### 3.

Yima's reign remained in the collective memory as the happiest period, the "golden age" of mankind. According to the Iranian tradition, death did not exist then, since Yima closed the door of hell and kept death from coming into the world.<sup>44</sup> We can find a similar motif in Slovene songs about the death which was shut in a barrel by St. Thomas in the "land of India".<sup>45</sup> Yima himself always represented the forces of good and was an active protagonist in the cosmic battle with the creatures of darkness and evil.<sup>46</sup> He taught people different trades, and established a three- or four-part social structure. Each Iranian ruler was the symbolic successor of Yima and a personification of his good properties.

Likewise in the Slovene "mythological" tradition Kresnik has an entirely positive and benevolent character, while the "ecstatic" type of the Kresniks is ambivalent: beneficent to people from their region, but dangerous and harmful to strangers. This double nature is also illustrated by different Kresniks fighting each other.<sup>47</sup>

### 4.

The royal position on Earth was offered to Yima by Ahura Mazda and Yima accepted it together with his ruler's insignia. In the Slovene prose tradition Kresnik is also mentioned as a young man of the ruling lineage.<sup>48</sup> In certain Slovene songs, sung on St. John's Day,

<sup>42</sup> Christensen, p. 33, 45.

<sup>43</sup> Mislav Ježić, *Rgvedski himni. Izvori indijske kulture i indoeuropsko nasljedje*, Zagreb 1987, p. 82.

<sup>44</sup> Christensen, p. 68ss. (cites a translation from *Rivayat*).

<sup>45</sup> *Slovenske ljudske pesmi 1-3*, Ljubljana 1970-1992, (further SLP), No. 47/1-6; Fran Ilešič, *Sitni prilozki. Zatvorena smrt (Vječni Žid)*, Zbornik za narodni život i običaje južnih Slavena X (U Zagrebu 1905), pp. 7-8; M. Valjavec heard from his mother, either in prose or sung, a tale about an imprisoned death, and summarized it in *Novice* 1854, p. 208. See also L. Podgoriški, *Pripovedka o smerti*, *Slovenski glasnik* 1862, p. 110, and Radonski, *Smrt v ječi*, *Besednik* 1871, pp. 70-71. International motif AaTh 330.

<sup>46</sup> Marijan Mole, *Culte, mythe et cosmologie dans l'Iran ancien*, *Annales du musée Guimet, Bibliotheque d'études*, Tome LXIX, PUF 1963, p. 223.

<sup>47</sup> Kelemina, p. 39 (2.I-III), 349 (245.X).

<sup>48</sup> *Idem*, p. 35 (1.I), 36 (1.III-IV), 37 (1.V), 339-340 (245. I), etc.

there is a prince from the ninth land whose name we do not know, but may presume that he was Kresnik (more about the connection of Kresnik with the celebration of St. John's Day in item 22). The most significant one is from Podgorje in Rosenthal in Austria, recorded by Matija Majar before 1851:

*Devise tri kresujejo,  
na sred vesi kres nitijo:  
"Bog daj ti dro, oj kralič mwad!"*

*Taku lepu sprepihlajo,  
da se je daleč šlišawo,  
daleč v deveto dežawo.<sup>49</sup>*

In the song a prince who comes riding on his horse chooses one of the girls and takes her with him to the Ninth Land. "A young prince" appears also in a St. John's Day song from Tolmin; he joins the circle around the bonfire celebrating the occasion.<sup>50</sup> Even before the end of the 19th century the figure of the St. John's Day prince started to fade. This is evident from three variants of the above-mentioned song which instead of a prince know only a "noble gentleman." We can also notice the process of contamination with other motifs and the changing of mythological contents into a Christian legend.<sup>51</sup> According to Ivan Grafenauer, the core of this song was "the marriage of the sun hero Kresnik, the personified Sun, to a human girl celebrating St. John's Day who personified Earth"<sup>52</sup>, but this explanation would correspond more to a cosmogonic myth than to our context.

It is important to underline the social dimension of celebrating St. John's Day as described in the song above. The three girls singing around St. John's Day fire very clearly belong to three different social (economic) categories. The message of the song is consequently that the ceremony unites them, thus maintaining social stability. Kresnik as a young prince (a representative of all social classes) transcended antagonisms and represented the social microcosmos. This role of social connection was especially stressed in the Iranian Mithra. Some kind of "equality of all before the king" is evident also in this song in which the young prince takes with him the girl who is the poorest of all, but has the prettiest voice.

## 5.

Kresnik was supposed to be born after "nine years beneath his mother's heart; " he had to be baptized nine times, and he had a birthmark in the shape of horse hooves. He was also the twelfth brother.<sup>53</sup> These characteristics are obviously linked to the myth about Zeleni Jurij/Jarylo who is the ninth brother in a Russian ballad, whereas in Croatian songs sung on St. John's Day he has nine brothers, which makes him the tenth child in the family.<sup>54</sup>

The figure of the tenth brother/sister is one of the most characteristic in Slovene folk tradition. It seems that this is the personification of the year divided into ten months as in the old Roman calendar. The legend of the tenth brother is reminiscent of George's vegetational cycle because of the following elements: departure from home, returning after

<sup>49</sup> Karel Štrekelj, *Slovenske narodne pesmi 1-4*, Ljubljana 1895-1923 (further SNP), No. 297; SLP, No. 57/2; compare also SNP, No. 5151.

<sup>50</sup> SNP, No. 300.

<sup>51</sup> Grafenauer, p. 60 (24).

<sup>52</sup> Idem, p. 61 (25).

<sup>53</sup> Kelemina, p.35 (1.I), 40 (2.IV), 341 (245.I); Jožef Pajek, *Pravljica o Vurbergu in tamošnjem Krsniku*, Popotnik 5 (1884), No. 1, pp. 11-13.

<sup>54</sup> Katičič 1989, p. 64.

a long sojourn abroad, spending the night in his childhood home, taking part in a wedding (although not his own as is the case with Jurij), and again departure into the world. In the case of the tenth sister the scene of the event is a green field and wheat reaped by twelve sisters (the twelve months of the year?).<sup>55</sup> The image of the horse or his symbols (hooves) is characteristic of Zeleni Jurij. Due to all these similarities some authors are of the opinion that the “ninth man” and the “ninth king” are simply a “synonym for Jurij - the ninth brother,” a Slavic mythical figure.<sup>56</sup> Yet this conclusion would be rather too simplified. If we accept the conclusions about the solar symbolism of St. John’s Day (such as rolling fire wheels downhill, shooting burning arrows in the air, running with torches)<sup>57</sup> it is extraordinary that Zeleni Jurij and not Kresnik would appear in such a context. Even though they do have numerous similar features, they cannot be viewed as one. More on this in item 22.

## 6.

The figure of a solar deity was very widespread on Eurasian territory. Indo-European mythology also knew a number of gods who radiated light and were thus tied to the Sun and fire in one way or another. Because of his genealogical relation to the sun (see item 2) Yima acquired the nickname *khšaeta* (*Xšaeta*; New Persian *-shed*), meaning “radiant.” In yet other words: his characteristic feature was *khvarənah* (*xvarənah*; Avest. *hvar*, Ved. *svar*) which represented the blessing of the highest god in the form of light. This is probably also the origin of the name of East Slavic Svarog and Svarožič. According to Marija Gimbutas the suffix *-og* denoted the Scythian origin of this name. The same author assumed that Western Slavs also knew Svarog, justifying this by toponyms in Poland (Swarocin, Swariszew), Bohemia (Tvarožna gora) and in Styria (Twaroch, Twarog in the 14th century).<sup>58</sup>

The rays of light were represented by the color of gold. Yašt (15.15), the youngest of the Yima texts, describes him on the mountain of Hara Berezaiti “all glittering with gold, sitting on a golden throne, on a pillow and a carpet embroidered with gold”, offering a sacrifice on the Hukairja mountain, i.e. on the highest peak of the mountain of gods...<sup>59</sup> When Yima defied God, *khvarənah* came into the possession of Mithra who did not have this characteristic in the early Avesta tradition (comp. *Videvdāt* 19.28-29). Since we will discuss the connection of the Yima cult with the worship of Mithra elsewhere, let us only mention the Greek text of Mithra’s mysteries from Egypt (around 300) which praises a handsome, radiant young man in white robes, with flaming locks and a blazing crown on his head.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>55</sup> SNP, No. 310-313, 315. See also: Dušan Ludvik, *Izvor desetništva*, Slovenski etnograf 1960, pp. 79-90.

<sup>56</sup> Compare the figure of the “ninth man” and the “ninth king” in the song *Godec pred peklom*, SLP I, pp. 258-259 (No. 3-4); Mirjana Mencej, *Pomen vode v predstavah starih Slovanov o posmrtnem življenju in šegah ob smrti*, M.A. thesis, Univerza v Ljubljani, Filozofska fakulteta, Oddelek za etnologijo in kulturno antropologijo, Ljubljana 1996, p. 56.

<sup>57</sup> Kuret 1967, Vol. 2, pp. 84-86, 92-97.

<sup>58</sup> Marija Gimbutas, op. cit., p. 748. On place names derived from Tvarog and Trot see Kelemina’s review of J. Peisker, *Tvarog, Jungfernsprung*, etc. in *Etnolog* 1926/27, pp. 166-169. One of such toponyms is also the name of the Svarošek farmstead in the Paka area, (Pavle Blaznik, *Slovenska Štajerska in jugoslovanski del Koroške do leta 1500, Historična topografija Slovenije II (N-Ž)*, Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti, Znanstvenoraziskovalni center SAZU, Zgodovinski inštitut Milka Kosa, Maribor 1988, p. 358).

<sup>59</sup> Christensen, p. 46.

<sup>60</sup> Manfred Clauss, *Mithras, Kult und Mysterien*, München 1990, p. 15 (this text is part of a collection of what are known as the *Paris magic papyri* and was published entirely in: Albrecht Dieterich, *Eine Mithrasliturgie*, Leipzig 1903, p. 11, 67-68).

As the first human, Yima was also the first sacrificer, and fire was the mediator between earth and sky at each sacrifice. "Earthly fire," on the other hand, was only an ambassador of the "world fire," Yima's father Vivasvant. This points to the close connection of Yima's image with fire and Sun and may also explain relations of this kind concerning Kresnik. By analogy with Yima, we could thus also maintain that Kresnik was never a sun or a moon god, but nevertheless closely connected with the Sun, fire and light.

To honor Yima, ancient Iranians lit fires on mountain peaks (*Bundahišn* 17.5), while *Rig Veda* (2.35.11) mentions that during some sacrificial ceremonies fire was lit by young girls (compare with the song, sung on St. John's Day in item 4). *Rig Veda* notes (3.14.2; 7.11.1-2; 10.98.9) prove that Vedic god of fire Agni was invited to attend sacrifices. Agni also came from the afterworld in the form of a young man with golden hair. According to H. Güntert, Agni could assume the roles of other gods due to his mediator function and his radiant essence.<sup>61</sup>

## 7.

Astral mythologization of the ruling gods influenced court ceremonies of their earthly representatives from the era of the Sassanids to the period of the Late Roman Empire.<sup>62</sup> One of such elements was also the elevation of the enthroned emperor towards the symbolic "sky." The moving throne and the sky chariot or ship<sup>63</sup> were thus placed in such mutual relation. Let us therefore mention a note, written down by Firdausi that lesser gods (*devs*) carried Yima into the sky on a throne. The two shapes of divine vehicles can also be explained by the supposition that a chariot is used for travelling across the sky while a boat or a ship sails on the watery "lower world."<sup>64</sup>

According to Iranian mythology, Yima was the owner of a glass chariot built by demons with which he flew from his home to Babylon. The spring equinox New Year's celebration (*Nau Ruz*) was reminiscent of this event.<sup>65</sup> The glass of Yima's chariot represents the afterworld, the same as the "glass mountain" in our fairytales. The god Mithra was also supposed to travel across the sky in a sun chariot pulled by four white horses.<sup>66</sup> The image of the riding Mitra became widespread only later. In general it stands that myths about chariot-riding gods are older than those in which gods are portrayed as riders; in the oldest phase the gods themselves assume the image of the horse.<sup>67</sup>

White was the color of sacred and sacrificial horses for Iranians, Greeks, Romans and Germans. According to our legends Kresnik rides in a golden chariot pulled by four white horses and accompanied by his brother.<sup>68</sup> His horses are sometimes named "four lively green horses" which is identical with the "green horse" of Zeleni Jurij.<sup>69</sup> A combination of colors - white-grey-green - which can also alternate - is repeated in the cycle of Zeleni Jurij.

<sup>61</sup> Güntert, p. 281.

<sup>62</sup> H.P.L'Orange, Studies on the iconography of cosmic Kingship in the Ancient World, Institutet for Sammenlignende kulturforskning, Serie A, XXIII, Oslo, etc. 1953, p. 28.

<sup>63</sup> Idem, pp. 110-111.

<sup>64</sup> Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Arktička pradomovina Veda, Biblioteka Istok-zapad 6, Beograd 1987, p. 259.

<sup>65</sup> Comp. reports of Tabari and Biruni in: Christensen, op. cit., p. 86, 99.

<sup>66</sup> H.S. Nyberg, Die Religionen des alten Iran, Mitteilungen der vorderasiatisch-ägyptischen Gesellschaft, Bd. 43, Leipzig 1938, p. 60.

<sup>67</sup> Joseph Wiesner, Fahrende und reitende Götter, Archiv für Religionswissenschaft 37 (1941/42), p. 36-46.

<sup>68</sup> Kelemina, p. 38 (I.VII.), 273 (202.II).

<sup>69</sup> Idem, p. 38 (I.VII); SNP, No. 4987. See Monika Kroječ's treatise on the connection between the hero and the horse in this volume.

This is why the Belarus Jarylo, double of our Zeleni Jurij, is clad in white, riding a white horse. Exchanges of the same colours are also documented in Croatian and Serbian traditions.<sup>70</sup> According to Christian explanations the radiant chariot belonged to St. Eliah, while St. George rode on a white horse.<sup>71</sup> The latter also kept the properties of the rain master, the promoter of fertility and the protector of farmers.<sup>72</sup>

## 8.

Kresnik is armed with a sword, a mace, an iron hammer or an axe, all of which are typical for the image of the thundermaker.<sup>73</sup> His brother was also supposed to fight with a golden axe.<sup>74</sup> The burning log with which the builder of Vurberk supposedly killed the dragon (see above) is reminiscent of a blazing mace or lightning. The Kresniks were supposed to cause lightning which was not accompanied by thunder, also in the "ecstatic" tradition.<sup>75</sup> The farmers of Štajerska believed that stone and copper axes, found while plowing their fields, were the remains of sky lightning and kept them in their homes to protect them from fires.<sup>76</sup> According to Trstenjak, thunderbolt is supposed to represent the thundermaker's golden axe thrust into the ground; the one who plows it from the soil and brings it into his house will enjoy happiness and prosperity. Such an axe protected cattle from animal plague and also helped to summon rain.<sup>77</sup> People believed that lightning penetrates so deeply into the ground that it would take seven years to reach it, but after seven years it surfaces by itself.<sup>78</sup> As a "shooter", Kresnik (originally the thrower of lightning) has gained the status of a magic hunter with a gun (Jurij with a gun, Lampret, etc.) According to people's beliefs, even St. Eliah used a gun.<sup>79</sup>

## 9.

Ancient Iranians believed that Yama's home was in paradise in the center of the world, in the land of *Airjanəm vaejah* (Pahl. *Eran vej*). This was also the country of important religious events and a mythological homeland of the Iranians. Souls of deserving ancestors lived here in blessed abundance. After the example of Mesopotamia, Iranian and Indian cosmologies located paradise north of their own countries. The Bible also stated that paradise was close to the sources of the Euphrates and the Tigris, therefore north or northeast of Mesopotamia. From the point of view of the area of Slovene settlement, it was entirely in accordance with this belief that Kresnik's "home" was in the Land of the Rising Sun, in the East.<sup>80</sup> This land was also called the Ninth Land because it lay "beyond nine black mountains."<sup>81</sup> In Russian folklore, the "black mountain" was replaced by the "dark

<sup>70</sup> Katičič 1990, p. 64.

<sup>71</sup> Kelemina, p. 275 (203).

<sup>72</sup> Franz Cumont, St. George and Mithra "The Cattle-Thief," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 27 (1937), pp. 63-71.

<sup>73</sup> Kelemina, p. 35 (1.I), 38 (1.VII), 342 (245.II-III).

<sup>74</sup> Idem, p. 273 (202.II).

<sup>75</sup> Idem, p. 39 (2.II-III), 40-41 (3.I-III).

<sup>76</sup> Stanko Pahič, *Arheološki spomeniki v Slovenskih goricah*, Ptujski zbornik II, Ptuj 1962, p. 188, 199 (note 8); Kelemina, p. 396 (note 202).

<sup>77</sup> Davorin Trstenjak, *O gromski sekiri*, imenovani "Taran -balta-sekira," *Novice* 1859, No. 1, p. 2; Kelemina, p. 273 (202.I).

<sup>78</sup> Henrik Rešek, *Nekaj o besedi "Paukon, Paukonje,"* *Novice* 1860, p. 27.

<sup>79</sup> Kelemina, p. 72 (21), 75-78 (24), 275 (203).

<sup>80</sup> Idem, p. 36 (1.IV).

<sup>81</sup> SNP, No. 1095.

forest”, which is not very different, especially if the original meaning denoted the “wooded mountains.”<sup>82</sup> Since people’s notion of creation was the same as this one it is not surprising that Zeleni Jurij encountered a sea, a mountain, a forest and a field during his journey from the afterworld.

#### 10.

According to some data, Kresnik’s castle was supposed to be “far away in the Land of the Rising Sun” on a Golden or a Glass Mountain.<sup>83</sup> This is not the only time this mountain is mentioned in Slovene oral tradition. It is described in a number of older and more recent records (on the Golden Bird, on Living Water, on the Golden-Haired Devil, etc.), most of which could be ranked within the AaTh 460 A, 460 B, and 461 motif groups. This is the archetypal “world mountain” which is present in myths and fairy-tales of numerous ethnic groups in the form of a glimmering, crystal, diamond, golden, silver, marble mountain, etc. It usually consists of three parts. Its peak is the home of the chosen, while other deceased go to the underground world. In some Slovene songs sung on St. George’s Day, the mythological scene is set in a fenced area or garden with the world tree which, like the mountain, is the symbol of the cosmic axis.<sup>84</sup>

The paradise of the Iranian god Yima also stood in the center of the world, on the “world mountain.” Originally it was a fenced-in garden (Avest. *pairidaeza*, Gr. *paradeisos*, Lat. *paradisus*), later a cave beneath the very top of the mountain. It was believed that Yima built an underground shelter (*var*) after the instructions of the god Ahura Mazda in order to keep - like biblical Noah - people, animals and plants from freezing cold and from sun storms. Paradise on top of the “world mountain” or in a cave inside it are but two forms of the same idea, and it is no coincidence that the cave (like the mountain) was divided into three floors (*Vendidad* 2.30). Later on, the owner of the palace on top of the highest mountain was supposed to be Mithra as well. It was built for him by the supreme gods Ahura Mazda and Aməša Spənta. Like Yima before him, Mithra was also known as the “Lord of All Lands.”<sup>85</sup> There are also obvious parallels between the paradise of Yima and Greek Olympus and Elysium. The master of the latter was the fair-haired (golden-haired ?) youth Rhadamantys.

#### 11.

The record of Kresnik’s dwelling on the Golden Mountain mentions golden apples which grow on the mountain and which bring immortality.<sup>86</sup> One of the Slovene folk songs describes such a golden apple-tree, but already in the Christian heavenly realm :

*V našem polji zlata jablan,  
pod jablanko zlata miza,  
okol mize zlati stoli,  
na njih sedi Bog, Marija.*<sup>87</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Comp. Katičič 1989, pp. 59-60.

<sup>83</sup> Josip Pajek, *Črtice iz duševnega žitka Štajerskih Slovencev*, V Ljubljani 1884, p. 177; Kelemina, p. 36 (1.IV).

<sup>84</sup> Katičič 1987, pp. 23-43.

<sup>85</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Zgodovina religioznih verovanj in idej I*, Ljubljana 1996, p. 210.

<sup>86</sup> Kelemina, pp. 36-37 (1.IV).

<sup>87</sup> SNP, No. 5183.

The three golden apples of the song (and in the SNP, No. 5189 variant) bring fertility to the village, to fields and vineyards, which is also consistent with Kresnik's main function.<sup>88</sup> According to paradise iconography, there should be a source of water ("the well of life") in direct proximity to the tree. In some of the Kresnik stories, this role has been assumed by the "castle spring" or a well. Identical notions of trees and wells in the dwelling of the deceased were also present in Slovene tradition concerning Attila's grave.<sup>89</sup> Such stereotypic images prevailed also in other archaic cultures, from India and the Near East to Europe. In front of old German Wallhalla (the palace of the dead), for instance, there grew trees with golden leaves.

## 12.

If the records are to be believed, Kresnik was a hunter and a stockbreeder.<sup>90</sup> This is another trait that links him with Yima, whose nickname was *hvatva*, "owner of good herds." Yima represented a "good shepherd" (*Vendidad* 11.21) and was portrayed on Indian Parsi ivory sculptures sitting, with his legs crossed, on top of the world mountain. With one arm supporting his head, as if dreaming or sleeping, he holds a lamb in his lap while another lamb leans on his shoulder.<sup>91</sup> It is interesting that a cross-legged position represented the pondering posture of a judge even in European Medieval symbolism, and appears in the ceremony of the crowning of the Carinthian dukes.<sup>92</sup> South Slavs knew Jurij as a (sleeping) shepherd grazing a herd of sheep.<sup>93</sup>

Like Yima's other numerous features, Mithra later assumed the reputation of the "good shepherd." He was believed to be a landlord and protector of pastures, a creature with a thousand ears and a thousand eyes who gazes from above far into all corners of the world, never sleeping, always watchful (*Yašt* 10.4.12-13). Some details in this text denote that it originated among settled cattle breeders of Eastern Iran.<sup>94</sup> Some of the late antique Roman reliefs portray Mithra also as a hunter with a dog.<sup>95</sup>

The "lord of pastures" was linked (on Slovene territory as well) to the notion of the afterworld as a pasture and the deceased as sheep.<sup>96</sup> The figure of the "good shepherd" surrounded with his herd or carrying a lamb on his shoulders was taken over from Mithraism by early Christian art.

## 13.

A record preserved in *Bundahišn* (19.33) states that in ancient Iran the dog (besides the rooster) had the function of the protector from evil deeds of demons and enemies.<sup>97</sup> It

<sup>88</sup> Katičić analyzed Slavic parallels (Katičić 1989, pp. 77-82, 92) and linked them also with the symbolism of lightning and thunder.

<sup>89</sup> Zmago Šmitek, Primerjalni vidiki slovenskega ljudskega izročila o Atili, *Traditiones* 1994, pp. 196-197.

<sup>90</sup> Kelemina, p. 35 (I.I), 38 (I.VII), 341 (245.II).

<sup>91</sup> Josef Strzygowski, *Das indogermanische Ahnenerbe des deutschen Volkes und die Kunstgeschichte der Zukunft*, Wien 1941, pp. 67-69 (ill. 40, 41).

<sup>92</sup> Bogo Grafenauer, Ustoličevanje koroških vojvod in država karantanskih Slovencev, Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti, Razred za zgodovinske in družbene vede, *Dela* 7, Ljubljana 1952, pp. 288-289; Andrej Pleterski, Mitska stvarnost koroških knežjih kamnov, *Zgodovinski časopis* 1996, No. 4, p. 513.

<sup>93</sup> Katičić 1987, 23-43.

<sup>94</sup> Nyberg, op. cit., p. 53, 55.

<sup>95</sup> Fritz Saxl, *Mithras. Typengeschichtliche Untersuchungen*, Berlin 1931, p. 13, ill. 37.

<sup>96</sup> Mirjam Mencej, Duša umrlega kot žival pri starih Slovanih, *Anthropos* 1995, No. 5-6, p. 207.

<sup>97</sup> Christensen, p. 94-95.

is true that the dog is not specifically mentioned in Iranian holy books as Yima's partner, but in Indian Vedic mythology two four-eyed dogs guard the path to the palace of god Yama, judge of the dead (*Rig Veda* 10.14.10). It was believed that Kresnik also had a four-eyed dog who was his helper and who appeared in several episodes of his "mythological" cycle.<sup>98</sup> In Slovenia this was linked to the belief that a farming dog with white or brown spots above his eyes (thus with "four eyes") is capable of sensing death and can announce its arrival.<sup>99</sup> According to east and south Slavic folklore, hunting dogs or wolves accompany St. George who resembles Kresnik, or some other mythical/saintly figure.<sup>100</sup>

#### 14.

It was believed that Kresnik had a brother Trot, but records do not reveal much about him beyond the fact that he accompanied Kresnik in a golden chariot and helped him in his fights.<sup>101</sup> According to Fran Ramovš the name Trot originates from *trotiti* - "to strike, to hit". *Trot* - "tinder, amadou", and Latv. *truts* - "grindstone" from the pre-Balt. *\*trantas*, were believed to belong to the same etymological group.<sup>102</sup> The name Trot thus carries a meaning similar to Kresnik's name. The existence of this name in Slovenia is confirmed by toponyms such as Trot, Trotkova, Trotkovski vrh, Trotovnik, Trotovškov dol.<sup>103</sup>

The Slovene "Čarostrelec", a figure similar or equal to Kresnik, also had a brother.<sup>104</sup> Yet it is unclear whether Kresnik and his brother had the same father, or if their characters were similar or different, for all these possibilities are present in the mythologies of Indo-European peoples.<sup>105</sup> A note that Kresnik was simultaneously a hunter and a shepherd (see item 12) is somewhat reminiscent of the two different functions of the twins and of two different activities, the first of which is linked with arms and aggressiveness, the second with quiet and patient work. Contrasts can cause a fight between the twins and a violent death of one of them. In the case of Slovene folklore, Kresnik fights with "George with a gun", or a magic shooter, and hunter Lampret fights his agricultural brother Perko.<sup>106</sup>

There are numerous foreign instances of such dioscurism. Let us mention as parallels only the "combative" relationship between the Iranian Ohrmazd and Ahriman, and the peaceful coexistence of Yima with his half-brother Manus, or Yama with Manu. Similarly, the brother of the Greek Lord of Paradise, Rhadamantys, was known as Minos (compare with item 10). It was believed that Manus as well as Minos looked after laws and regulations; the latter also became judge of the dead. In India, Yama was often equalled to, or mistaken

<sup>98</sup> Kelemina, p. 38 (1.VII), 342 (245.II), 345 (245.IV), 346 (245.V).

<sup>99</sup> Pajek, p. 137.

<sup>100</sup> Katičić 1990, pp. 79-86.

<sup>101</sup> Kelemina, p. 38 (1. VIII), 273 (202.II).

<sup>102</sup> Fran Ramovš, *Sprachliche Miscellen aus dem Slovenischen. Der steinerne Himmel bei den Slaven*, *Archiv für slavische Philologie* 36 (1916), pp. 457-460; idem, *Jezikovni drobci iz slovenščine (Kamnito nebo pri Slovanih)*, in: Fran Ramovš, *Zbrano delo*, Vol. 1, Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti, Razred za filološke in literarne vede, Dela 23/I, Inštitut za slovenski jezik 11/I, Ljubljana 1971, pp. 275-277.

<sup>103</sup> *Atlas Slovenije*, Ljubljana 1996, p. 421; *Krajevni leksikon Dravske banovine*, Ljubljana 1937, p. 437.

<sup>104</sup> Kelemina, pp. 76-78 (24).

<sup>105</sup> Donald Ward, *The Divine Twins. An Indo-European Myth in Germanic Tradition*, *Folklore Studies* 19, Univ. of California Press, Berkeley - Los Angeles 1968, pp. 12-14; Leo Sternberg, *Der antike Zwillingskult im Lichte der Ethnologie*, *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 61 (1929), pp. 156-157.

<sup>106</sup> Kelemina, p. 72 (21), 78 (24). In a variant on p. 77 (24), Lampret's victim is "the Ljubljana count."



for, his half-brother Manu.<sup>107</sup> It was consequently possible to equate one with another, and these pairs gradually blended into a single person.

The Slovene tradition about the “mythological” Kresnik also mentions his sister Deva or Vesina.<sup>108</sup> There is only one instance (from Bela krajina) of an indirect indication that she is also his twin.<sup>109</sup> Writings from Central Iran (the *Bundahišn*, etc., but not the *Avesta*) mention Yima’s twin sister Yimak. According to Indian *Rig Veda* (10.10) there was an analogous pair named Yama/Yami. Both female figures were rather colourless and, according to H. Güntert, reflect the belief that the first man was an offspring of a hermaphrodite cosmic pre-being.<sup>110</sup> In relation to this, Herodotus’s mention of the female side of Mithra (I., 131) might be rather vague. The Baltic pair Jumis/Jumala has more pronounced vegetational characteristics (connection to the underground, mud, forest, a horse image...), assuming Perun’s features only on occasion.<sup>111</sup>

## 15.

The Indian Yami tried to persuade Yama to commit incest, but her brother declined (*Rig Veda* 10.10). Yet this episode has no connection with any actual custom of marrying a relative among ancient Indo-Europeans and can be explained only as a memory of the mythological hermaphrodite Pre-being from whom the world originated. Besides Yima and Yama, other “twins” were also Iranian Gayomart, Zurvan, Ohrmazd and their European parallels Tuisto, Ymir, Tveggi. Yima and Yama thus appear in a pair with their mythological female companions when the aspect of fertility connected to the cosmic Pre-being is concerned. This role was taken over from Yima by his close relative Manus whose body “gave birth” to his daughter Ida with whom he engendered mankind. There is also a tradition maintaining that Ida was neither male nor female.<sup>112</sup>

It is a fact that in some Indian mythological variants Yama’s sister has the status of his spouse. It is therefore important that a mention of Kresnik’s wife (Deva, Alenčica, Vesina, Zora, Marjetica) is also present in his “mythological” tradition.<sup>113</sup> One case clearly states that the maiden he had saved became his sweetheart.<sup>114</sup> Such notions about the original couple were also present in a part of the territory along Slovene-Croatian border. Partly they are linked to the St. John’s Day celebration, but much more recognizable are elements of the Zeleni Jurij ceremonies. Songs sung in Adlešiči and Tribučje in Bela krajina describe a bride awaiting the arrival of a mythological hero from the afterworld; sometimes she sets out on a difficult journey to meet him on her own.<sup>115</sup> Some Zeleni Jurij songs mention the bride as sister Mara whom Jurij marries on his journey from the land of the dead into the

<sup>107</sup>Pandurang Vaman Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, Vol. 1, Part 1, Poona 1968, pp. 522-528.

<sup>108</sup>Kelemina, p. 36 (I.III), 342 (245.III).

<sup>109</sup>SNP, No. 5014; Belaj 1990, p. 72.

<sup>110</sup>Güntert, pp. 318-332.

<sup>111</sup>Belaj 1990, pp. 67-68.

<sup>112</sup>Bruce Lincoln, *Myth, cosmos and society. Indo-European themes of creation and destruction*, Cambridge Mass.-London, Harvard Univ. Press 1968, p. 132; Güntert, op. cit., pp. 336-340, 347.

<sup>113</sup>Kelemina, p. 36 (I.III), 38 (I.IX-XI), 342 (245.III), 346 (245.VI), 347 (245.VIII), 349 (245.X).

<sup>114</sup>Idem, p. 36 (I.III).

<sup>115</sup>SNP, No. 1095, 5080; Ivan Šašelj, *Bisernice iz belokranjskega narodnega zaklada II.*, Ljubljana 1909, p. 11 (No. 1), 16 (No. 6); Mirjam Mencej, *Gora v slovenskih ljudskih pesmih*, Glasnik Slovenskega etnološkega društva 1996, No. 1, p. 13.

world of humans.<sup>116</sup> It is possible to discover allusions to incest in some Croatian songs of this type in the “kaj” dialect.<sup>117</sup>

#### 16.

According to some explanations, the name of the demon Vrtra with whom the god Indra fought in the Vedic tradition, denotes “the one who holds on to something, or who covers or veils something.”<sup>118</sup> The characteristic of demons to appropriate something at all times is evident also when our “mythological” Kresnik is concerned. A demon steals his herd or something else that belongs to Kresnik, and locks it in a deep cave.<sup>119</sup> The Snake Queen or Trdoglav (also Krutoglav or Potoglav) abduct his sister or his wife and lock her in their dwellings underground or under water.<sup>120</sup> Trdoglav and the abducted wife appear in Slovene folk songs (Trdoglav and Marjetica) describing the demon’s castle which is golden inside and covered with moss on the outside. This dwelling, which is similar to a snake den underground, has no windows or doors save a single crevice. The same motif is also recognizable in songs about Alenčica of Ribnica and about the Shooter and the Bewitched Young Lady, even though their mythological core has already been depleted. The demonic abductor in them has been changed into a Turkish man, while the rescuer is “a young count” or the Shooter; but the latter still possesses the recognizable traits of the thundermaker - the thrower of lightnings.<sup>121</sup>

The German settlers in the slovene Kočevje area sung ballads about a young girl named “die schöne Meererin” who is saved from captivity by her brother and her husband. France Marolt tried to reject the explanation of some German experts that this is a popular version of the story from the Middle High German epic *Kudrun*. Marolt wanted to prove that the ballad’s content is linked to the Slovene folk tradition. It was presumed that ballads about the Primorka/Meererin originated from the beginning of the 14th century and contained much older elements as well. The two men who take the girl home by ship could be identified as divine twins from Indo-European mythology.<sup>122</sup>

#### 17.

On the basis of different Indo-European variants, Bruce Lincoln reconstructed the structure of a myth in which Kresnik can be incorporated as well: it concerns the fight of the hero with a three-headed snake which at first takes away his cattle (or those belonging to someone close to the hero). The hero, fortified by an intoxicating potion, and helped by the god of war, defeats the monster in the second encounter and takes back its prey.<sup>123</sup> Lincoln tried to link this myth to genuine social circumstances within cattle-breeding

<sup>116</sup>Katičić 1989, pp. 58-70.

<sup>117</sup>SNP, No. 5014-5018.

<sup>118</sup>Güntert, p. 21.

<sup>119</sup>Kelemina. p. 35 (I.I); 341-342 (245.II).

<sup>120</sup>Idem, p. 36 (I.III), 51-53 (8.I), 71 (18), 245-246 (179), 346-347 (245.VI).

<sup>121</sup>SLP, No. 21/1-6; SNP, No. 86-88; Mihajlov, p. 141, note 27.

<sup>122</sup>Adolf Hauffen, *Die deutsche Sprachinsel Gottschee, Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte, Literatur und Sprache Österreichs und seiner Kronländer* 3, Graz 1895, pp. 404-405; France Marolt, *Slovenske prvine v kočevski ljudski pesmi*, Kočevski zbornik, Ljubljana 1939, p. 311; Ward, p. 86-87.

<sup>123</sup>Bruce Lincoln, *Priests, warriors and cattle. A study in the ecology of religions*, Berkeley - Los Angeles - London: Univ. of California Press 1981, pp. 103-124.

communities in which the wish to own cattle became synonymous with conflict or fighting (compare *Rig Veda* 3.16, 3.31, 3.53, 4.22, 6.17, 8.75).<sup>124</sup>

Yima's greatest opponent in Ancient Iranian mythology was Azhi Dahaka (Dahak, later Zohak). According to sources from Pahlavi literature, Dahak was a demon and a sorcerer, and in the *Bundahišn* his snake nature was indicated by the two snakes he carried on his shoulders.<sup>125</sup> Dahak was at first linked to a location in Eastern Iran and later with Babylon.<sup>126</sup> The "Babylonian Snake Queen" and the snake "King Babylon" might have been preserved in our Kresnik tradition under the influence of medieval literature (to cite an example, the Ancient Russian text *Skazanie o Vavilone*), but their older foundations should also not be overlooked.<sup>127</sup>

When the "Snake queen" is mentioned in our fairy-tales, the question arises as to whether the principal Old Slavic chthonic being was female. This is namely indicated by the syntagm : female ruler of the underground - water - fertility - death. The Scythian underground goddess (Herodot IV., 8 ff.) was likewise half woman, half snake.<sup>128</sup>

## 18.

Opponents trained in magical skills, who turn into different animals during their fights, appeared especially frequently in the traditions of shamanistic cultures, but were also known in the Old Indo-European territory. The duel of Kresnik in the form of an animal is described in Kresnik's "mythological" as well as "ecstatic" tradition.<sup>129</sup> In his "mythological" tradition the two rivals appear as two boars or two bulls.<sup>130</sup> The fight of two animals (i.e. rams) is a characteristic of the afterworld in Slovene fairy-tales.<sup>131</sup> This is yet another instance of an accordance with Indian and Iranian mythology : the souls of the righteous deceased (*pitris*, *fravashi*) are involved in fights with demons and take part in cosmic and meteorological phenomena such as the circulation of the sun, the moon and stars, the appearance of dawn and the flowing of waters. (*Yašt* 13.57; *Rig Veda* 7.76.4, 10.68.11, 10.107.1). This is why these deceased appear in the same symbolic roles as the two main protagonists of the cosmic fight. The fight of two oxen on St. John's Day is also incorporated into a Slovene folk-tale about Peter Klepec, which indirectly links it to Kresnik.<sup>132</sup> And since we insist on comparing Kresnik to Yima/Yama let us also mention that the Indian Yama rode a black bull or assumed a buffalo image himself.

<sup>124</sup>Idem, p. 131.

<sup>125</sup>Ehsan Yarshater (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 3(1), Cambridge Univ. Press 1983, p. 427.

<sup>126</sup>Idem, p. 426.

<sup>127</sup>M.V. Naboko, *Skazanie o Vavilone i novaja zapis' epičeskoj pesni o Zmee Tugarine*, *Živaja starina* 1994, No. 4, pp. 9-10; Kelemina, p. 35 (1.I), 346 (245.V).

<sup>128</sup>Wilhelm Brandenstein, *Die Ursprungssagen der Skythen*, *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 1953, For European and Slovene parallels between *underground* and *fertility* see treatise by the same author, *Die Göttin von Dupljaja*, *Carinthia I*, 1956, Heft 3-4, pp. 422-423.

<sup>129</sup>Bošković-Stulli 1960, p. 280.

<sup>130</sup>Kelemina, p. 346 (245.V), 347 (245.VII). Such an example from the other part of Europe is a fight of two bulls or two "twin" magicians in Irish epic *Táin Bó Cúalnge* (4854-4920) and in one of the prologues to this epic, *De Chophur in da Muccida* (Lincoln, 1981, pp. 87-93).

<sup>131</sup>Vinko Möderndorfer, *Narodne pripovedke iz Mežiške doline*, Ljubljana 1924, pp. 113-115 (Zaklete duše).

<sup>132</sup>Kelemina, p. 373 (259.I).

19.

Kresnik fought in three spheres of the world : in the sky (in the air, in clouds), on earth (on a mountain, etc.), and in underground (in a cave, under the sea). This points to his sovereignty over the whole world and to his cosmological character. The sky, the earth and water are also three elements of the macrocosmos; the fourth element, fire, is represented by Kresnik himself. Likewise, in *Rig Veda* (1.95.3) fire (Agni) permeates the ocean, the sky and heavens.

20.

Apart from the above-mentioned Vrtra demon, Vala was Indra's opponent as well. Indra saved a herd of cows of the Morning Dawn from Vala's underground cave by bursting a rocky door.<sup>133</sup> There is an analogous story in Kresnik's cycle, too; in it F. Ramovš saw a modification of the Indoeuropean myth about a hero who shatters the sky arch with a rocky hammer, enabling light and rain to reach the earth.<sup>134</sup> Indian mythology contains episodes in which Indra saves an abducted woman from the demon's captivity, or opens the path to water current (rain) held back by the demon. According to some explanations, the herd which was set free by Indra, is a metaphor for rain clouds, just as the roaring waters in *Rig Veda* (1.32.2; 4.26.2) have been compared to the trampling and mooing of a herd of cattle. Followers of the Old Indian exegetical school of Nairukta had already explained the Vedic myths as a triumph of light over darkness, or a liberation of sun rays and water from dark clouds. Bal Gangadhar Tilak added to these Indian and later European interpretations maintaining that in Vedic literature "water" often denotes a river from heaven which circles from gathering-places in the "lower world" to the sky and stimulates the movement of celestial bodies. Vrtra stopped this circular current, which could be fatal for the activity of the universe. According to this explanation, mountains which had been shattered by heavenly God lay on the border between the upper and the lower world. After the demon's defeat the sun, the dawn and cows returned along with the water current.<sup>135</sup>

The sun god of the Eastern Slavs was linked with water as well as with cattle. A herd of cattle denoted general wealth. This is the origin of the fairy-tale motif of the snake guarding water = herd = treasure. In the Slovene folk tradition snakes also guard the magic golden apple which assures wealth for its owner (compare with item 11).<sup>136</sup>

21.

Based on Vedic texts (*Rig Veda*), Alfred Hillebrandt reconstructed the myth about a hero who defeats a demon resembling a dragon and opens the inside of mountains from which captive rivers and lakes pour out. The hero was supposed to be the spring god, the sun god, and the dragon a "winter giant."<sup>137</sup> Hillebrandt's conclusions were partly revised by H. Güntert whose opinion was that the chthonic demon in a way restrains waters (rain,

<sup>133</sup>Güntert, p. 21.

<sup>134</sup>Kelemina, p. 35 (1.1); Ramovš 1971, pp. 275-277.

<sup>135</sup>Tilak, p. 253.

<sup>136</sup>Kelemina, p. 136 (86.1).

<sup>137</sup>Alfred Hillebrandt, *Vedische Mythologie III.*, Breslau 1902, p. 173 f. D.Trstenjak also explained the story of the Vurberk Kresnik as a "fight of the son god with a winter or thunder dragon who was the master of the goddess of earth." (Trstenjak 1870, p. 22).

etc.) which are released after his defeat.<sup>138</sup> Such a water-restraining demon in Old Iranian tradition was Apaosha. After he was defeated by the star hero Tishtrya, winds, rain clouds and “cloud-forming fog” appeared (*Yašt* 8.29 f.).<sup>139</sup> The Snake demon Dahak was probably also linked with the idea of destructive drought (*Yasna* 9.8; *Yašt* 14.10).<sup>140</sup> Traces of these myths are still recognizable in Mithraism: one of late Antique Roman reliefs depicts Mithra shooting an arrow into a cloud, releasing a stream of water which will water the earth.<sup>141</sup>

A snake lying on a water spring is a very frequent fairy-tale motif in Europe as well.<sup>142</sup> Valvasor’s resumé of the tale about a large cave on a mountain above Kranj (Slovenia), from which rain, snow, thunder and hail erupt if anyone throws a stone into it, probably has the same background.<sup>143</sup> It is significant that also in the story about the Vurberk Kresnik, a snake restrains the Drava river stream with its body.<sup>144</sup> Because of this connection with water, Kresnik “throws the defeated snake into the castle spring (where it had come from) and chains it with a huge chain to a cliff where it remains even nowadays.”<sup>145</sup> Let us stress yet another detail: chaining a demon (snake) to a wall is an old mythological motif known in Iran as well. Demon Dahak was likewise chained and imprisoned in the Demavend mountain.<sup>146</sup>

## 22.

The connection between field fertility and water was especially stressed in St. John’s Day customs. *Tiragan*, a holiday in Old Iran (around June 18, therefore close to our St. John’s Day) on which participants poured water on each other was also called “the day of water.”<sup>147</sup> The same act was performed around the fire on St. John’s Eve in some places in Slovenia.<sup>148</sup> Christianity preserved the connection of this holiday with water in the person of John the Baptist. Like rain, golden wheat falling from the sky after Kresnik’s victory is a sign of fertility as well. “Golden wheat” is also present in Croatian folk poetry in relation to fertility rites.<sup>149</sup> According to Belarus folk tradition it is St. George who is linked to the wheat harvest.<sup>150</sup>

It is evident from the above-mentioned comparisons that elements of the original Indo-European myth about a hero’s fight with a snake demon and a myth about the yearly return and marriage of the god of vegetation and fertility are intertwined in Kresnik’s “mythological” cycle (Jarilo/Zeleni Jurij). Along with all that has been said, allusions to Kresnik’s (incestuous) marriage, his wedding, his infidelity and violent death all recall the

<sup>138</sup>Güntert, pp. 20-21.

<sup>139</sup>Idem, p. 22.

<sup>140</sup>Yarshater, p. 426.

<sup>141</sup>Saxl, p. 76, ill. 167.

<sup>142</sup>Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*, Vol. 1, FF Communications 106, Helsinki 1932, No. H 1292, l. s. (Why Is the Well not Working?).

<sup>143</sup>Johann Weichard Valvasor, *Die Ehre dess Hertzogtums Crain*, Laybach 1689, Vol. 2, p. 164.

<sup>144</sup>Kelemina, p. 342 (245.III), 350 (245.X).

<sup>145</sup>Idem, p. 343 (245.III).

<sup>146</sup>Yarshater, p. 426.

<sup>147</sup>Waldemar Liungman, *Traditionswanderungen Euphrat-Rhein*, Teil II, FF Communications 119, Helsinki 1938, p. 505.

<sup>148</sup>Niko Kuret, *Praznično leto Slovencev*, Vol. 2, Celje 1967, pp. 108-109.

<sup>149</sup>Vinko Žganec, *Hrvatske narodne popijevke iz Koprivnice i okoline*, Zagreb 1962, p. 44, (63); Katičić 1989, p. 66.

<sup>150</sup>Katičić 1989, pp. 57-58.

image of Zeleni Jurij.<sup>151</sup> Jurij, on the other hand, differs from Kresnik in that he can be represented in processions by a young woman<sup>152</sup>, that he is periodically born and dies, that he comes from the underground (the home of the water demon), and therefore has a bodily contact with water. Ivanov and Toporov tie Jurij/Jarilo to Balto-Slavic Jarovit, god of fertility, at first worshipped on April 15.<sup>153</sup> Jarilo was connected with seasonal agricultural activities and was therefore not part of the “original” cult. Furthermore, his personality was not as clearly defined as the personalities of some other Slavic deities.<sup>154</sup> St. George’s Day, which was moved to April 23 or 24 after calendar corrections, occurs two whole months before St. John’s Day (June 24), but this is the period from sowing time to harvest and a time of rapid growth of vegetation. This is probably why celebrations of St. George’s Day and St. John’s Eve, carol-singing and oral traditions connected to them, gradually became uniform. Yet it is interesting that in northwest Croatia, the area where Zeleni Jurij was celebrated, does not correspond to the area where St. George’s fires were lit. The only exception is the borderline area between both.<sup>155</sup> Does this signify that originally the two customs were separated?

Why was the mythological figure of Kresnik so well preserved in the Slovene collective memory? There are probably at least two answers: according to Marijan Mole, Kresnik’s “model”, Yima played the central role in Iranian theological speculations.<sup>156</sup> He left his traces in the vast territory of Eurasia from Scandinavia to the cattle-breeding Turkic tribes of southern Siberia and the Kafirs in Hindukush. A rich religious and folklore tradition was created around him. Even after Zoroaster’s religious reform, when Yima lost his privileged position in Iranian religion, his memory was still alive in the form or under protection of gods such as Mithra. The idea of Yima as a “divine man” acquired its expression in Hellenistic speculations and in Christian gnosis.

The second reason for the persistence of the memory of Yima/ Kresnik was the interpretative and cosmological character of his mythology. It answered questions about the origin of mankind and the last dwelling of the deceased, about the yearly cycle, the origin of rain and fertility, and linked it all to the function of Fire and Sun. Yima protected mankind from the forces of evil, was a cultural hero and the first king. It was believed that the cosmological aspect of the Iranian Yima as well as the Indian Yama and Scandinavian Ymir lay in the myth about the origin of the world from his dismembered body.<sup>157</sup> There is no (more) trace of this original meaning in our Kresnik’s cycle, but it is still contained in two Slovene stories about the creation, in which earth, sun, moon and stars originate from god’s gaze, man from a drop of god’s perspiration, and fertile soil from god’s body.<sup>158</sup> A remark about Kresnik’s twin brother might indicate that he used to be the hero of such a

<sup>151</sup>Kelemina, p. 36 (1.III), 37 (1.V), 38 (1.XI), 72(21), 78 (24), 347-348 (245.VIII), 349 (245.X).

<sup>152</sup>France Marolt, Slovenske narodoslovne študije, Drugi zvezek: Tri obredja iz Bele krajine, Ljubljana 1936, p. 8.

<sup>153</sup>Ivanov, Toporov, p. 184.

<sup>154</sup>Idem, p. 215.

<sup>155</sup>Višnja Huzjak, Zeleni Juraj, Publikacije etnološkog seminara Filozofskog fakulteta sveučilišta u Zagrebu 2, Zagreb 1957, p. 36.

<sup>156</sup>H. Willman - Grabowska, M. Mole, Legenda o Yamie w 2. fargardzie Vendidad i początki dualizmu iranskiego, Odbicie ze Sprawozdan Polskiej Akademii Umiej, Tom XLIX (1948), No.7, pp. 355-359. B.Lincoln, who writes that people and not gods played key roles in Indo-European and Indo-Iranian myths, agrees with this conclusion as well (Lincoln 1981, p. 60).

<sup>157</sup>Lincoln 1981, p. 80.

<sup>158</sup>Kelemina, p. 281 (206.I-II).

cosmogonic myth as well. If there were more data available on the subject it would be possible to ascertain if this links him to mythological pairs such as the Roman Romulus and Remus, or the Germanic Tuisto and Mannus.

Parallels between Yima and Kresnik undoubtedly open the question of Slovene ethnogenesis. In principle Kresnik could also be the result of an independent derivation from Proto-Indo-European heritage, but words for important religious notions in Slovene, which were borrowed from Iranian, indicate direct cultural influences from that area. There are hypotheses about a close connection between Scytho-Iranian tribes along the Volga river and Eastern Iran, the homeland of the *Avesta*.<sup>159</sup> Max Vasmer established that the etymology of numerous place names in southern Russia was Iranian. According to him the predominantly Iranian population settled the southern Russian steppes at least between the 8th century B.C. and the 4th century A.D. Aside from some Slavic tribes there were also other mediators and transmitters of Iranian cultural elements, i.e. Scythians, Sarmathians, Alans, and Eastern Goths.<sup>160</sup> According to Herodotus (IV., 5-7), the Scythians were familiar with the myth about the first man, son of supreme God and the first king, all of which clearly indicates Yima. Furthermore, we should not neglect the role of the Avars, a mongol people, which crossed eastern Iran, and with whom a larger group of Slavs migrated to our part of Europe.

The relationship of Kresnik with the Old Slavic pantheon, and the degree to which he can be identified with the thundermaker - as is assumed by N. Mikhailov - is a question which would need an analysis of its own. We can only stress that in the earlier stage of the myth about the fight with the snake demon, the hero and the god of war appear as two separate entities. In later phases, however, their individual characteristics merge : during the expansion of his cult, the god Mithra, for instance, took over numerous functions and honorary titles of the "earthly" Yima, and at the same time acquired the character of war god and thundermaker.<sup>161</sup> His power spread to earth and to the sky, yet his home was the sky. It seems that he became equal to, or even superior to, the sun god, although this relationship remains somewhat unclear.<sup>162</sup> It is but a step from here to the Old Slavic Perun or Svetovit. In view of the Midsummer Eve fire ceremonies, the main function of the Slovene Kresnik was tied to the aspect of fertility, although he did have other functions as well. From analogies with Yima, but also with Slavic Zeleni Jurij/ Jarilo, Kresnik was believed to be the son of the supreme god - the thundermaker, his sister and wife the thundermaker's daughter.<sup>163</sup> Thundermaker's and Kresnik's properties, of course, are very similar because of this very relationship. If Kresnik (similar as Yima) was the first king, his role was then tri-functional, as is usual in Indo-European mythology. In the case of Ireland a mythological king looked after: 1. the maintenance of religion and justice; 2. a victorious military leadership in fights with neighbours and for maintaining peace at home; 3. fertility of the people, cattle and fields.<sup>164</sup> It was in this multilayered role of the ruler (not only a fertility

<sup>159</sup>Hermann Jacobsohn, *Arier und Ugrofinnen*, Göttingen 1922, pp. 242-244.

<sup>160</sup>Max Vasmer, *Untersuchungen über die ältesten Wohnsitze der Slaven I. Die Iranier in Südrussland*, Veröffentlichungen des baltischen und slavischen Instituts an der Universität Leipzig, Leipzig 1923, pp. 58-59.

<sup>161</sup>Lincoln 1981, p. 55.

<sup>162</sup>Eliade, Book 2, p. 194.

<sup>163</sup>Katičić 1987, pp. 36-38.

<sup>164</sup>William Sayers, *Tripartition in Early Ireland: Cosmic or Social Structure?*, in: Edgar C. Polomé (ed.), *Indo-European Religion after Dumézil*, Journal of Indo-European Studies Monograph Series, No. 16, Washington D.C. 1996, p.157.

symbol) that Kresnik's myth could have played a role when the Carinthian dukes were enthroned.<sup>165</sup>

The figure of the "mythological" Kresnik is undoubtedly closely connected to Zeleni Jurij and to processions celebrating him as are (were) known in northwestern (mostly the *kaj* dialect) part of Croatia, in Bela krajina, Dolenjska, Štajerska and Koroška. Despite some important common traits, the St. George's Day songs of Štajerska and Koroška differ considerably from those in Croatia and Bela krajina.<sup>166</sup> France Marolt compared Zeleni Jurij with the Thracian/Greek Dionysus, while Vitomir Belaj found parallels in the early agrarian cultures of the Near East.<sup>167</sup> The Swedish researcher of European yearly customs, Waldemar Liungman, tied this ceremony to Mithra's cult, which would also correspond to the "Iranian" origin of Kresnik.<sup>168</sup> Yet there are still a number of unclear points concerning these Oriental influences. There are many open questions pertaining to the contents and significance of Mithra's cult in the Roman Empire. At the turn of the 2nd, and at the beginning of the 3rd century at the latest, Mithraism - which had been widespread mostly in cities - started to be practiced also by country people. This is proved by the concentration of Mithra's temples in the Rhineland and also in some places in the area of ex-Yugoslavia.<sup>169</sup> Since the cult of Mithra preserved an important part of the Old Iranian pantheon, Yima was still denoted as the first man for members of such Mithraistic communities.<sup>170</sup> Yet it is doubtful that institutionalized western Mithraism should leave such visible traces in Slovene folk beliefs. The very practice of celebrating St. John's Eve, was contrary to the ceremonies, worshipping Mithra, which were forbidden to women. It is more believable that celebrating St. John's Eve and believing in Kresnik denoted a form of "folk" religion introduced from the East.

Through the mediation of the Kresnik tradition, the pagan ancestors of the Slovenes were familiar with ideas about the "good shepherd," the paradise, first human parents, the devil in the form of a dragon or a snake, etc. All of this undoubtedly made the process of Christianization considerably easier. The question whether these similarities were the result of the syncretism of solar mythologies derived from Hellenistic/Oriental cultures or a product of the direct influences of Iranian tradition on neighbouring peoples, on Judaism and early Christianity, is the subject of many learned discussions. These were by all means extremely complex processes.<sup>171</sup> Under the influence of Christianity, the ritual of lighting a bonfire in honour of Kresnik was changed into a holiday of the similarly named John the Baptist, solar myths acquired a new explanation, and pagan deities were often equalled to the devil. After the example of Kresnik and Zeleni Jurij, the devil appeared in Slovenia in a green (hunting) dress, rode a white horse at night, or drove a chariot pulled by horses spewing fire.<sup>172</sup> It was also believed that Kresnik took part in card duels, the protector of which was the devil (cards were also called "devil's pictures").<sup>173</sup>

<sup>165</sup>Pleterski, p. 516.

<sup>166</sup>Zmaga Kumer, *Jurjevske kolednice v Beli krajini*, Etnološka tribina 1986, p. 119; Huzjak, p. 39.

<sup>167</sup>Marolt, pp. 29-30; Vitomir Belaj, "Zeleni Juraj" u Svetoj zemlji, *Studia ethnologica* 1 (1989), pp. 73-75.

<sup>168</sup>Liungman, p. 531.

<sup>169</sup>Clauss, p. 46.

<sup>170</sup>Nyberg, p. 84, 100.

<sup>171</sup>On the presence of a mythological hero similar to Zeleni Jurij in ethnically mixed area of Palestine see Belaj 1989, pp. 65-78.

<sup>172</sup>Wilhelm Urbas, *Aberglaube der Slowenen*, *Zeitschrift für österreichische Volkskunde* 1898, p. 150.

<sup>173</sup>Idem, p. 150; Kelemina, p. 345 (245.IV).



Paul Ricoeur acknowledged that early Christianity possessed the ability to shatter (old) myths and readopt symbols in a new theological orientation.<sup>174</sup> In connection with this, Erwin Panofsky wrote that the “religious experience of late antiquity was so closely connected to astral mysticism and so utterly impregnated with the belief in the almightiness of the sun god that no new religious idea could have been embraced if it had not had solar connotations from the very start (as was the case with the cult of Mithra) or if it had not acquired such solar connotations *ex post facto* (as was the case with Christianity). Jesus Christ defeated Mithra, but even he was able to do so only after (or better because) his cult resumed some critical characteristics of sun worship... The church itself allowed for this connection between Christ and the sun from the very beginning, but it contrasted the cosmological sun god with a moral one, finally replacing the former with the latter; ‘Sol invictus’ became ‘Sol Iustitiae’ : ‘Undefeated Sun’ became the ‘Sun of Justice.’<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>174</sup>Paul Ricoeur, *Život, pravda, symbol*, Edice Oikumene, Praha 1993, p. 16.

<sup>175</sup>Erwin Panofsky, *Pomen v likovni umetnosti*, Studia humanitatis, Ljubljana 1994, pp. 261-262.

## **Kresnik: poskus mitološke rekonstrukcije**

*Zmago Šmitek*

Na vprašanje izvora in pomena Kresnikovega izročila so dosedanji razlagalci odgovarjali zelo različno. V skrajnih primerih so Kresnikov lik sprejemali kot vrhovno božanstvo solarnega ali lunarnega značaja, ali pa ga skoraj v celoti zavračali kot potvorbo zapisovalcev iz druge polovice 19. stoletja. V zadnjih desetletjih so k razjasnjevanju teh dilem posredno ali neposredno prispevala zlasti dela M. Bošković-Stulli, V. V. Ivanova in V. N. Toporova, R. Katičiča, N. Mikhailova in C. Ginzburga, z obilico primerjalnega gradiva.

Avtor pričujoče razprave je sledil deduktivni metodi, t.j. strukturi indoevropskih mitov, in z njeno pomočjo skušal rekonstruirati Kresnikovo mitološko vlogo. Pri tem se je pokazalo, da je treba razlikovati tradicijo Kresnika, znanega na mejnih območjih Slovenije s Hrvaško in vzhodno od tod, od tradicije o Kresniku, razširjene ponekod na Štajerskem in Koroškem. Primerjalna tabela kaže, da med obema ciklusoma ustnega izročila (imenovanima "ekstatični" in "mitološki" Kresnik) pri dvaindvajsetih karakterističnih vsebinskih sklopih obstajajo večje ali manjše podobnosti le v petih primerih, medtem ko gre pri ostalih posameznostih za neskladja ali za diametralne razlike.

Raziskava se je usmerila zlasti na analizo "mitološkega" Kresnikovega izročila in pokazala, da tudi ta ciklus ni vsebinsko in genetično enovit. V njem se prepletata dva mitološka horizonta, ki ju predstavljata: 1. človeški ali pobožanstveni heroj, kakršnega je npr. v starem Iranu poosebljal Yima (kasneje Mitra, pri Indijcih pa predvsem Yama in Indra) in 2. predstavnik vegetativnega kulta, sorodnega Jarilu/Zelenemu Juriju. Drugače povedano: gre za sestavine indoevropskega mita o boju junaka s kačjim demonom in mita o vsakoletnem vračanju in svatbi božanstva vegetacije in plodnosti. Razlog za povezovanje obeh karakteristik v Kresnikovi osebi je bila verjetno koledarska bližina nekdanj ločenih (?) obredij in njuna sorodna simbolika (ivanjski in jurjevski kresovi, koledniški obhodi itd.).

Kresnik ima značilnosti prvega kralja in kulturnega heroja. Kot vladarju mu po indoevropskih analogijah poleg vloge vojaškega voditelja pripadata tudi funkciji svečenika/sodnika in prinašalca blaginje in rodovitnosti. Slednje ga spet zbližuje s predstavo o Zelenem Juriju. Pomembna je tudi Kresnikova povezanost z likom konja in bika ter njegova dioskurična narava (nastopa skupaj z bratom ali sestro, ki v nekaterih variantah postane tudi njegova nevesta). V spopadu s kačjim demonom reši iz ujetništva sestro (ženo) ali čredo krav in povzroči deževni naliv ali padanje "zlate pšenice" iz oblakov na zemljo.

Hipotezo, da imata Kresnik in Zeleni Jurij pomembne paralele v bližnjevzhodnih mitologijah, je avtor skušal dokazati z navedbami iz staroiranskih in staroindijskih "svetih knjig" (Rig veda, Avesta...) in s pomočjo izbrane primerjalne literature (B. Lincoln, B. G. Tilak, H. Güntert, H. S. Nyberg, A. Christensen, W. Liungman idr.). V nekaterih primerih je opozorjeno tudi na poznejše krščanske interpretacije Kresnikovega in Jurijevega lika.