

The Three-Headed One at the Crossroad:

A Comparative Study of the Slavic God Triglav*

Jiří Dynda

This paper introduces a comparative analysis combined with a historical source overview concerning a particular Slavic god: Triglav. The aim of this paper is to verify the hypothesis that Triglav was, in the cosmological perspective, a deity connecting the structured layers of the world. Numerous indications from various written and archaeological sources may be drawn upon in the forming of a comprehensive picture of competences of this deity.

Keywords: Triglav, tricephality, cosmology, crossroads, Indo-European comparative mythology

1. Introduction

I would like to present an interpretation of western Slavic deity called Triglav. As a basis for this study, I have chosen the tricephalic nature of this deity, and I treat it both with the *comparative* and the *historical-contextual* methods. Setting the tricephality into the wider context of the Indo-European comparative mythology in correlation with a thorough analysis of our medieval sources, i.e. mostly Latin texts from medieval Pomerania and Brandenburgia from 11th to 13th centuries, can lead to the detection of some of the Triglav's "faces" that were not much visible until now.

The claimed tricephality of Triglav's *simulacrum* (and, in general, the polycephality of various Slavic deities) was an important issue in the long-standing scholarly discussion, and the interpretation of this symbolic feature differs from scholar to scholar.¹ Is the tricephality of Triglav a result of a Celtic influence? Or a Christian one? Or is there no need to search for complicated and perhaps artificial "influences", and would much better option be to accept its genuine originality and its possible connection with the complex archaic symbolism of the number three?²

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¹ See for example Niederle 1916, 150–152; Pettazzoni 1946, 135–151; Łowmiański 1979, 195; Gieysztor 2006, 152.

² I do not mean this in so exaggerated and mystical way, as for example Lease, 1919 did; despite the fact that Lease's paper is full of Frazerian excitement and of non-critical comparison of everything with everything without any methodological framing, it contains many witty and useful remarks as well.

I am inclined to the latter possibility, and my intention here is to examine its width and verifiability. I believe that we are dealing with a type of god that, in the symbolic system, plays the role of a cosmological node and a mediator between the three levels, the three spheres or realms of the world – of the same world to which Triglav sovereignly rules as a henotheistic supreme god. In my view, Triglav would be a deity that binds the tiers of the world together in the form of a central cosmic pillar *axis mundi*, a deity that enables and protects the movement and passage of all things in general, as well as the transition between various tiers of the world in a wide cosmological perspective, especially the mediation between the world order and the divine order, and the transition to the netherworld, i.e. a transition inevitable for all living creatures.

Because of the very scarce extant testimony of Slavic mythology and cult that we possess, our only option in this case is to use a comparative method. However, since it might be considered to be methodically disputable, I must emphasize that each of hereafter presented parallels and comparative concordances from Indo-European mythological heritage is, I believe, also demonstrable for Slavic Triglav. Even though some of the evidence is rather covert and indirect, I would like to put forward these allusions and connections anyway, because it was those that have led me to the present hypothesis.

I see the comparative method of the study of religion as a heuristic and creative enquiry (Antalík 2005, 202) that enables a better understanding of the surveyed mythology, even though the outcome of this comparative research can be perhaps labelled, using the words of Marcel Detienne (2003, xiv), as a mere “series of informed guesses”. Nevertheless, these “informed guesses” are, in my opinion, the very core of the comparative method and the very process by which a philologist-religionist can attain a desirable, verifiable hypothesis. Hence, I call this process “informed guesses”, as Detienne does – proudly.

Henceforth, it will depend only on the reader’s consideration whether he will reject some of the presented comparisons and similarities, or whether he will be willing to ponder their verifiability and to assess whether the parallels and associations can or cannot refer to either some common origin, or to some kind of a “common prototype”. However my aim remains not to reconstruct some hypothetical *Urquell* of the representation of this particular deity.³ Rather, my aim is solely to outline the network of interconnections that could have been a *thematic*, rather than *historic* core of this representation – a network that can form a proper heuristic intellectual construct, usable for further research.⁴

2. Historical sources

The evidence of Triglav’s cult is attested in two Pomeranian cities, Wolin and Szczecin, by Adam of Bremen and by medieval biographers of Otto of Bamberg (i.e. Herbord, Ebbo and Monachus Prieflingensis).

In Szczecin, there were four heathen temples, but biographers considered just one of them worthy of further description: that of Triglav, allegedly the most important and

³ As, for example, Witzel 2012 does for the whole complex of the world mythology (in his words, Laurasian and Gondwana complexes inherited from original Pan-Gaeian mythology).

⁴ In this I am inspired by the work of Wendy Doniger (1979 and 1998).

the most beautiful one.⁵ The simulacrum of this deity was distinctive by its three heads, which were conjoined,⁶ which is not surprising, because his very name means “The Three-Headed One”. According to Slavic priests, Triglav had three heads as a symbol of his sovereignty over the three worlds: heaven, earth and underworld.⁷ Triglav’s eyes and mouths on each head were, as we are told, covered by golden bands: allegedly to prevent him from seeing the sins of men.⁸ Similarly to Arkonian Svantovit, a horse was consecrated to Triglav (a black horse, in contrast to Svantovit’s white one) and a decorated horse saddle hung on a wall of his sanctuary. The oracles were held using this horse in a specific case of hippomancy.⁹ Triglav from the city of Wolin was connected with horses as well: there is also evidence of a horse saddle in his temple: the so-called *sellam Trigelawi*.¹⁰

The evidence of Adam of Bremen is particularly interesting. While Adam refers to an important seaport city of Wolin, he mentions a local deity. However, he does not refer to him by his indigenous name, but instead calls him “Neptunus of three natures”.¹¹ He does so because, in his own words, the island, on which Wolin is situated, is surrounded by three different varieties of water, or sea: The first one is very green, the second one whitish and the third one is always raging and stormy (*unum esse viridissimae speciei, alterum subalbiade, tertium motu furibundo perpetuis saevit tempestatibus*).

In some texts written by other medieval authors (e.g. by Heinrich of Antwerp, by Přebík Pulkava of Radotín or by Petrus Albinus), there are more traces for the cult of the three-headed god in this area. This deity is always said to be tricephalic and always seems to have some relation with black or somewhat dark, resin colour, but it’s name is never given (cf. NIEDERLE 1916, 151).

⁵ Herbord II, 32–33 (for full titles see bibliography): “*Erant autem in civitate Stetinensi continae quator, sed una ex his, quae principalis erat, mirabili cultu et artificio constructa fuit... Erat autem ibi simulacrum triiceps, quod in uno corpore tria capita habens Triglaus vocabatur.*” (ed. Pertz 1868, 89–90; FHRS 25.41 ff and 26.24 ff) Nevertheless, Monachus Prieflingensis claims that there were just two temples and later says that Triglav was venerated in both of them, cf. Monachus prieflingensis II, 11: “*In ea siquidem civitatem domus duae, quas ab eo quod inclusa deorum simulacra continerent, continas dixere priores, ingenti cura vel arte constructae, haud grandi ab invicem intervallo distabant, in quibus ab stulto paganorum populo deus Triglaus colebatur.*” (ed. Petersohn 1999, 96; FHRS 41.4–9).

⁶ Ebbo III, 1: “*...summo paganorum deo Trigelawo dicatus, tricapitum habebat simulacrum...*” (FHRS 35.34–35).

⁷ Ebbo III, 1: “*...asserentibus idolorum sacerdotibus ideo summum deum tria habere capita, quoniam tria procuraret regna, id est coeli, terrae et inferni...*” (FHRS 35.36–36.1).

⁸ Ebbo III, 1: “*...aurea cidari oculos et labia cotengebat ... pro eo quod peccata hominum, quasi non videns et tacens, dissimularet.*” (FHRS 35.36 and 36.1–36.2).

⁹ Monachus prieflingensis II, 11: “*Hastis pluribus sparsim positis, equum Trogloi per eas transire fecerunt...*” (ed. Petersohn 1999, 97; FHRS 41.16–17) and Ebbo II, 33 (cf. also Thietmar VI, 24 and Saxo Grammaticus XIV, 39, 9–10). But similarities and connections between Triglav and Svantovit does not lie solely in a horse symbolism – as L. Niederle already noticed (1916, 150), Ebbo called Triglav “*summus deus*” (Ebbo III, 1), which appellation has its neat correlation in the case of Helmold’s title for Svantovit: “*deus deorum*” (Helmold II, 108).

¹⁰ Ebbo II, 13 (FHRS 34.24).

¹¹ Adamus Bremensis II, 22: “*Ibi cernitur Neptunus triplicis naturae: tribus enim fretis alluitur illa insula, quorum aiunt unum esse viridissimae speciei, alterum subalbiadae, tertium motu furibundo perpetuis saevit tempestatibus.*” (ed. Pertz 1846, 62; FHRS 14.7–15)

3. Neptunus triplicis naturae and axis mundi

“...the priests asserted that the statue of this supreme god has three heads because he rules to the three realms, and these are heaven, earth and underworld.”¹² This information of Ebbo brings to us an instant association with the abundantly widespread archetype of “the axis of the world”, *axis mundi*, which connects the tiers of the world together and bounds them into the totality of cosmos. This symbolic element was in the archaic cultures represented in many various ways, mostly as a cosmic tree, a cosmic mountain, a column or a rope connecting heaven, earth and underworld.¹³ Furthermore, there is no need to rely only on shallow and sketchy associations, because there are many particular indices that can lead us to the hypothesis about parallels between Triglav and *axis mundi*.

Firstly, it is the remarkable cosmogonic narration from the Slovenian folklore tradition, where we are told that “in the beginning the great Triglav mountain arose from the sea” (i.e. the peak of the Julian Alps).¹⁴ The beginning of the world is connected with the emerging of the primordial mountain called Triglav. In fact, many significant or outstanding mountains and hills have a great potential to be sacralised. Nevertheless, this veneration of a central cosmic and sacred mountain is typical and significant especially in the context of Slavic religious representations,¹⁵ e.g. the Polish Ślęza, Bohemian Říp, Slovakian Kriváň, or Montenegrin Durmitor. However, only the abovementioned eponymic mountain Triglav in the Julian Alps has a clear and evident connection with the god Triglav.¹⁶ We can only parallel this Slovenian triple mountain with the fact that Triglav’s temple in Szczecin stood on the highest of the three hills,¹⁷ and that Polish Ślęza is also the highest peak of the group of three (next to Ślęza, there are Radunia and Wieżycza mountains).¹⁸ The connection of this axial triple deity with triple mountains must be therefore seen as no coincidence.

Moreover, in the case of the Szczecin deity, we can follow the trail further. As we know from Herbord, once Bishop Otto had destroyed pagan temples in Szczecin (and once he had sent Triglav’s head to Rome to the hands of pope Callixtus II as a testimony of successfully continuing evangelisation of Baltic lands), he ordered one more thing: to uproot and burn a huge oak that grew nearby Triglav’s temple, with a small well under it. He had not actually done this only on requests of “the common people”, because they

¹² Ebbo III, 1: “...asserentibus idolorum sacerdotibus ideo summum deum tria habere capita, quoniam tria procuraret regna, id est coeli, terrae et inferni...” (FHRS 35.36–36.1).

¹³ Cf. Eliade 1949, 16–22; Eliade 1965, 28–47; Eliade 1968, 211–222; or most recently Witzel 2012, 131–137.

¹⁴ Szyjewski 2003, 82. Cf. Yasna 43.8, RV 1.19.7, 2.11.8, 6.30.3. See Witzel 2012, 112 for primordial mountain emerging from the sea, and Witzel 2012, 116–117 for earth-island and Earth Diver myth – cf. Johns 2005, 257–291. But A. Pleterski pointed out that in this region there is no such tradition, but only a legend about emerging of the mountain from the Bohinj Valley, which was consequently filled with water and the Bohinj Lake was made.

¹⁵ Třeštík 2003, 76, accentuates the fact that Slavs were originally people from the lowlands and therefore mountains could have had an extraordinary effect on their religious representation.

¹⁶ Cf. Šmitek 1999, 161 ff; Ślupecki 2002, 25–28; Třeštík 2003, 72–77; Szyjewski 2003, 80.

¹⁷ Ebbo III, 1: “Stetin vero amplissima civitas et maior Iulin tres montes ambitu suo conclusos habebat, quorum medius, qui et alcior summo pgnarorum deo Trigelawo dicatus...” (FHRS 35.30–35)

¹⁸ See Rosik 2001, 62–72.

promised him that they would not hold any cultic ceremonies under that tree anymore.¹⁹ With regard to the high-grown oak (*quercus ingens et frondosa*) and the well under it (*fons subter eam*), it is impossible not to mention Old Norse cosmic ash Yggdrasil, which had its roots nearby three wells in the three worlds,²⁰ and to remember its (probable) mundane representation in a form of the tree and well in the sanctuary of Uppsala, about which the scholion on Adam of Bremen makes a notion.²¹ The cult of a tree, and cult of an oak in particular, is quite expectable universalia in the context of archaic religions of Europe.²² However, speaking of Triglav, this “protector of three realms”, the present conjunction of motives is very interesting indeed.

Furthermore, as we know from Ebbo, the Szczecin priests succeeded in their efforts to hide Triglav’s golden statuette from the bishop’s destructive attempts. The statuette was then taken away to “a small village, where there was no chance to find it”²³ and there hidden inside a hollow tree,²⁴ from which the spy, who was later sent by bishop Otto, found it impossible to extricate.²⁵ We can observe here that Triglav’s cult after the Christianization was held under the cover of veneration of the old tree, where locals went to sacrifice coins to this deity.

On our imaginary list of the *axis mundi* representations, we have just checked a mountain in Slovenia and a tree (twice) in Szczecin. In Wolin, a pillar remains: according to all three biographers of Otto of Bamberg, in Wolin was situated very revered wooden pillar into which a very ancient lance was hewn²⁶ – a lance allegedly belonging to Julius Caesar himself, who had supposedly founded the whole city (this medieval etymology is the reason Wolin is in the Latin texts called Iulin).²⁷ We have no other additional data about this mysterious pillar, except that in 1147, during a crusade against Slavs, the pillar was destroyed by the hand of Bernard of Clairvaux himself (if Ebbo’s account can be

¹⁹ Herbord II, 32: “*Erat praeterea ibi quercus ingens et frondosa, et fons subter eam amoenissimum quam plebs simplex numinis alicuius inhabitatione sacram aestimans, magna veneratione colebat. Hanc etiam episcopus cum post destructas continas incidere vellet, rogatus est a populo ne faceret. ... ‘Acquiesco’, inquit episcopus, ‘de arbore; sed illud unum, vivum numen sortium vestrarum, de medio tolli oportet, quia nec augurium nec sortilegium exercere christianis licet.*” (ed. Pertz 1868, s. 89–90; *FHRS* 26.36–27.7).

²⁰ As Snorri Sturluson writes (*Gylfaginning* 15–17): Urðarbrunnr somewhere in Ásgarðr (cf. *Völuspá* 19–20; *Hávamál* 111), Hvergelmir in Niflheimr, and Mímisbrunnr on a place where Ginnungagap once was and where now lies the land of *jötnar* (cf. *Völuspá* 19 and 27); see also Bauschatz 1982.

²¹ Adamus Bremensis IV, 26, schol. 138: “*Prope illud templum est arbor maxima late ramos extendens, semper viridis in hieme et aestate, cuius illa generis sit, nemo scit. Ibi etiam est fons, ubi sacrificia paganorum solent exerceri et homo vivus immergi. Qui dum non invenitur ratum erit votum populi.*” (ed. Pertz 1846, 200).

²² On Slavs, see Tétra 2009, 197–225; generally Dowden 2002, 66–77 and Witzel 2012, 484; cum grano salis also Frazer 1994, 101–123. Cosmic tree is Aarne-Thompson motif A652.

²³ Ebbo II, 13: “*...apud villam modicam degenti, ubi nec spes ulla requirendi esset.*” (*FHRS* 33.17–18).

²⁴ *Ibidem*: “*...trunco validissimae arboris...*” (*FHRS* 33.21).

²⁵ So he at least stole Triglav’s saddle. Cf. Ebbo II, 13 (*FHRS* 34.15–27).

²⁶ Ebbo III, 1: “*Iulin a Iulie Cesare condita et nominata – in qua etiam lancea ipsius columpnae mirae magnitudinis ob memoriam eius infixata servabatur – cuiusdam idoli celebritatem in inicio aetatis maximo concursu et tripudio agere solebat.*” (*FHRS* 35.14–18); Monachus Prieflingensis II, 5–6: “*...venerabiliter reservata Iulii Caesaris lancea colebatur, quam ita rubigo consumpserat, ut ipsa ferri materies nullis iam usibus esset profutura. ... Pagani vero, ut impii et infideles, vehementer abnuerem lanceam divioris esse naturae, nichil ei transitorium vel caducum posse conferri, ac proinde nullo umquam a se pretio extorquendam, in qua praesidium sui, patriae munimentum et insigne victoriae esse constabat.*” (ed. Petersohn 1999, 87–88; *FHRS* 40.24–37); According to Herbord III, 26 bishop just ordered not to venerate “*...Iulii hastam...*” (ed. Pertz 1868, 140; *FHRS* 31.35).

²⁷ Gieysztor 2006, 151.

trusted).²⁸ L. Niederle (1916, 203–204) supposed that the name *hasta* or *lancea Iulii* was merely a misunderstanding from the side of Otto's hagiographers, who just incorrectly interpreted the specific Germanic term *Julblock*, i.e. name for the "log of Yule", a timber that was revered during the time of winter solstice.

Even though this log/pillar and lance from Wolin have no provable connection with Triglav (there is no mention to which deity it was actually consecrated), on a base of henotheistic tendencies of all Polabian deities,²⁹ it can be assumed that their cult could not be absolutely detached from this otherwise sovereign god. Moreover, the lance inserted into wooden pillar reminds us of Triglav's golden statuette hidden and wedged into the trunk of a hollow tree.³⁰ Whether it is a mere coincidence or a manifestation of some complex but fragmentarily preserved "theology" of this deity cannot be known for certain.

Speaking of the three layers of the world, it is necessary to mention the so-called Zbrucz idol (*Збручський ідол*). It is a stone stele from 11th or 12th century, which was found in 1848 in Ukraine, in the riverbed of a brook named Zbrucz near a village of Lychkivtsi (Личківці), north of Husyatyn (Гусятин). On this monument, a representation of a three-fold universe can also be observed. This stele is vertically divided into three layers:

1. In the first, uppermost tier are four human-shaped figures, most likely gods and goddesses, one on each side of the monument; they are probably two males and two females, and their heads are united beneath a tall rounded hat. The attributes of these deities differ: one of the females holds drinking horn; the male on her right side is depicted with a sword and horse; the female on the right holds a ring or a bracelet; and the last figure on the opposite has no attributes at all.
2. The middle tier displays four smaller figures with extended arms joined together; their gender correlates with the gender of upper deities and beside the woman under the goddess with drinking horn, there is a tiny figure of a child.
3. On the lowest tier is depicted probably only one entity that appears to support the whole idol and both upper tiers with its hands; it is most likely one, supposedly three-headed figure, which is depicted in perspective from the three sides.³¹ The fourth, rear side, was left blank except for an engraved circle with three crossed lines.³²

The four-headedness of this idol indicates a background for its common name "Svantovit of Zbrucz" because its appearance is strikingly similar to a description of Svantovit's four-headed *simulacrum* in Arkona on Rügen, as known from Saxo Grammaticus.³³ Most frequently, its appearance is interpreted as a reflection of a Slavic cosmological conception, i.e. the union of four points of the compass (four elemental horizontal directions) and three vertical tiers of cosmos (heaven, earth and underworld) into one whole³⁴ – a representation of *axis mundi* in its perfect form. Nevertheless, all attempts to

²⁸ Ebbo II, 2: "*Bernhardus amore martirii flagrans, arepta securi columnnam mirae magnitudinis Iulio caesari, a quo urbs Iulin nomen sumpsit, dicatam excidere aggressus est.*" (cited by Niederle 1916, 158, footnote 1).

²⁹ Cf. Tétra 2009, 313 ff.

³⁰ My colleague Jan A. Kozák pointed out another significant metaphor: A *beehive* full of honey can be conceived as the "gold" hidden in the trunk of a tree. This additional remark about gold will become clearer in the subsequent section of this article.

³¹ Cf. Leńczyk 1964, 5–59.

³² Cf. Szymański 2001 (for recommendation of this article I thank to Andrej Pleterski).

³³ Cf. Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum* XIV, 39, 3.

³⁴ Cf. Łapiński 1984, 128–139; Szyjewski 2003, 89.

identify any particular deity shown in the uppermost tier and to interpret the symbolic features of the whole stele are altogether flawed in one point: they will remain forever mere “unprovable constructs without any reasonable foundations.”³⁵ For this moment, only one thing is quite certain: in the case of the Zbrucz idol we can observe merging of polycephality and triplicity, however, in this particular stele, its connection is rather complicated and differently structured than in the case of Triglav.

The abovementioned testimony of Adam of Bremen, concerning the three-coloured sea around “Neptunus” from Wolin, can be explained. Karel Jaromír Erben was the first to interpret it as a metaphorical representation of the three realms over which Triglav reigns. According to Erben, the colours of the sea, i.e. white, green, and black (black is Erben’s “correction” of the tempestuous sea) represent colours of heaven, earth, and underworld, respectively.³⁶ This is in correlation with the evidence known from Triglav’s priests. Additionally, Erben found some similar mythological concepts in Slavic and German folktales, where the main villain is a kind of dark, ominous character usually endowed with some ternary attributes (for example a three-headed dragon or a necromancer with the three rims or bands around him). This villain steals and hides a treasure, or a princess, in the air, in the earth and under the ground, and hero must save it/her by performing some heroic deeds in these three areas.³⁷

It seems very tempting to interpret these colour/nature specifications via a prism of the Indo-European (IE) colour symbolism as it was reconstructed by Dumézil.³⁸ The green colour (*unum esse viridissimae speciei*) could be a representation of third, agricultural function, the white colour (*subalbidae*) is in IE contexts always connected with the priestly and sovereign first function, and the tempestuous and fierce nature of the third sea (*tertium motu furibundo perpetuis saevit tempestatibus*) probably denotes the second, warrior function, whose representing figures are mostly thunder gods. In this interpretation, Triglav would be the point of the merging of all three dumézilian functions in a similar way as can be said of various other deities in the henotheistic cults³⁹ and as was foreshadowed by Dumézil himself in his hypothesis concerning the abovementioned Zbrucz idolum.⁴⁰ Even though tripartite dumézilian interpretation is only an additional, probably unprovable hypothesis, it nevertheless can supply our search for the characteristics of this “Neptunus of three natures” with one more aspect.

³⁵ Těra 2009, 121.

³⁶ Erben 2009, 276, the poems *ibidem* 282.

³⁷ Erben 2009, 177–8. But Erben puts the whole narrative in the context of his typical nature-mythological constructions about annual battles between the triple “Triglav-Černoboh” of Winter (or Krt, the pseudo-deity invented by Václav Hanka’s in his glosses in *Glossae Salomonis* [or *Mater verborum*]) and the triple “Triglav-Bělboh” of Summer (or Hanka’s Sitivrat). Yet quite interesting is Erben’s notion of the three-coloured bird “strakapoud”, Woodpecker, *Dendrocopos*.

³⁸ See briefly Dumézil 1992, 104–106 or Dumézil 1973, 124; Dumézil’s color analysis in the context of tripartite ideology was later extended and enhanced by Lyle 1982 and especially by Sauzeau & Sauzeau 2012, 75–130. For IE perception of colours in general see Mallory & Adams 2006, 331–334.

³⁹ Cf. Dynda 2012, 29–31. This henotheistic tendencies in area of Western Slavs are most evident in a case of monolatric cults of Svarožic in Retra/Riedegost (*urbs tricornis*, by the way) in the times of dominance of the Lutician Union, and in the shift of this theocratic power from Retra to Rügen Arkona and its uppermost god Svantovit; cf. Hrabová 2006, 119–127.

⁴⁰ Dumézil 1983. Dumézil interprets the attributes of each figure in the uppermost tier trifunctionally. The same interpretation is implicitly (i.e. not in Dumézilian terms) presented by Ślupecki 1993, 61, footnote 162.

In addition to Triglav, “the ruler of three realms”, who binds different spheres of the world together in a form of a sacred mountain, a tree, or his very *simulacrum*, we can now potentially see a deity in which the three functions of Indo-European religious ideology are henotheistically merging, and the dumézilian three function can in a certain sense also be seen as three discrete worlds that need to be united in some way, most often under the figure of the king (*la synthèse fonctionnelle royale*).⁴¹ Triglav is indeed *summus deus*, using Ebbo’s words.

As we will see further, Triglav’s reign over the three spheres of the world have had its specific expression in each one of them. In the following sections of this article, I will therefore attempt to render a thorough account of modalities of his activity in each one of these spheres, while simultaneously attempting to draw an outline of his conduct and competences in the world in general.

3.1. *The Heaven: The Blind Seer and the Mute Poet*

“Szczecin had within its scope three hills, from which the one in the middle was the biggest and it was consecrated to the supreme pagan god Triglav, who had three-headed simulacrum, whose eyes and lips were covered by golden ribbons. ... [A]nd due to face covered by a ribbon he leaves the sins of men – as if he did not see nor speak – unnoticed.”⁴²

That is how priests from Szczecin (according to Ebbo) explained one of the most remarkable Triglav’s attributes – his eyes and mouth being concealed behind golden bands, ribbons, or stripes (*cidaris*).

We see that the most important deity from Szczecin allegedly cannot see or speak of the sins of men and leaves them unnoticed. In my opinion, the most extraordinary but very enlightening can be the puzzling word *quasi* (*non videns et tacens*) – “as if (he did not see nor speak)”. I assume that the golden bands covering Triglav’s face can be interpreted to denote a “paradoxical mutilation” (*la mutilation paradoxale*), i.e. the principle that was discovered by Georges Dumézil in the case of some Indo-European gods. This paradoxical mutilation is in Dumézil’s opinion very typical primarily for deities of the first function, i.e. gods of the Varuṇa-type⁴³ usually suffer from some kind of vision defect, they use their sight in extraordinary way, or their eyes are in some way monstrous, malformed, ill-coloured, or extreme in general (Óðinn, Velinas, Lugh, Varuṇa, etc.); and gods of the Mitra-type are either completely missing their right hand or have this hand mutilated (Týr, Nuadu, etc-).⁴⁴

⁴¹ See Sauzeau & Sauzeau 2012, 49–52.

⁴² Ebbo III, 1: “Stettin ... tres montes ambitu suo conclusos habebat, quorum medius, qui et alcior, summo paganorum deo Trigelawo dicatus, tricapitum habebat simulacrum, quod aurea cidari oculis et labia cotengebat ... et faciem cidari operiri pro eo quod peccata hominum, quasi non videns et tacens, dissimularet.” (FHS 35.32–36.2)

⁴³ I use the formula “Varuṇa-type deity” as a short form denoting a complex “pool category” of rather dark, mostly (cata)chthonic and ambivalent Indo-European deities that are, in my opinion, comparable via Vedic Varuṇa. I only found this short form useful in this context and in this repertoire of material, although I am well aware of the fact that this construct is a mere “academic myth” and that Dumézil’s construction of the concept does not respect the Vedic characteristics of Varuṇa and rather describes Varuṇa from the Brahmanas.

⁴⁴ Dumézil 1948, 163 ff.

Thus far we can observe that the god of wizardry and wisdom typically has no sight at all, or his eyes are in some way severely damaged or, conversely, absurdly hyperbolized, and god of justice, order and contracts paradoxically has no hand for making those contracts and he is potentially unable to carry out justice.

Therefore, if my hypothesis is right, Triglav's covered eyes would paradoxically denote his omniscience, or they might eventually indicate some kind of poetical inspiration by means of turning the sight into the inner vision (in the same sense as Irish poets, *filides*, closing their eyes while improvising⁴⁵). Likewise, a covered mouth would possibly denote the paradoxical mutilation of oracular deity that cannot speak. (Or perhaps a law-uttering deity that cannot speak.) In this part of article, I will attempt to underlay this hypothesis via comparative references of the other omniscient deities in Indo-European world, while simultaneously attempting to point out allusions to Triglav's peculiar solar competences.

This type of "omniscient protector" deity is usually connected with some solar attributes. The sun as omniscient and semper-vigilant entity is not a speciality merely of the Indo-European religions, it is mostly a kind of cultural universalia.⁴⁶ However, when considering only IE civilizations, one of the most illustrative cases is the Greek Helios, *ὁς πάντ' ἐφορᾷ καὶ πάντ' ἐπακούει* ("[he], who sees everything and hears everything"; see Homer, *Iliad* 3.277 and *Odyssey* 11.109) or *παν(τ)όπτης* ("all-seeing"; see Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound* 91, fr. 192.5). Or Vedic Sūrya, who is *viśvácakṣas-* ("all-seeing"; RV 1.50.2, 7.63.1),⁴⁷ *urucákṣas-* ("wide of vision"; RV 7.35.8, 7.63.4), *nrcákṣas* ("men-watching"; RV 1.22.7, 7.60.2) and who sees *ṛjū márteṣu vrjinā ca* ("[what] is right and crooked among the mortals"; RV 4.1.17, 6.51.2, 7.60.2). Sūrya is also called *dūredrśe* ("the one who sees far away"; RV 10.37.2),⁴⁸ and *mitrasya varuṇasya cakṣase* ("the eye of Mitra and Varuṇa"; RV 10.37.1);⁴⁹ cf. also Old Norse kenning⁵⁰ for "eyes", *ennis sólr*, i.e. "the suns of the forehead". The metaphoricity connecting the sun with eyes is an abundantly rich semantic field in many languages.

Mythologically speaking, the Sun is always the protector and overseer, merely because it sees everything (like Russian *матушка красное Солнце*), it covers the earth by its vision, by light (in many Slavic languages there is a semantic connection between the "world" and the "light", cf. Czech *svět* and *světlo/svit*; in Baltic languages the word for "world" means literally "under-sun", cf. Lithuanian *pasaulis*, Latvian *pasaule*), and it sovereignly rules to the world (like Russian *Солнце Цар* or Latin *Iouis oculus*).

The sun god also usually guarantees the law and punishes the violation of it; here we should recall Triglav and his paradoxical and peculiar connection with the law in the abovementioned formulation, according to which he "leaves the sins of men – as if he did not see nor speak – unnoticed." The formulation and the use of Latin wording seem to implicate that if he did not have the golden ribbons on his eyes, he *would have seen them*. Last but not least, the omniscience of the Sun allows him to guarantee oracles

⁴⁵ Téra 2009, 322.

⁴⁶ West 2007, 198; cf. Sick 2004.

⁴⁷ All quotations from the Vedic *samhitās* (i.e. *Rgveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Sāmaveda* and *Atharvaveda*) are done according to their on-line versions on the Internet Sacred Texts Archive (see bibliography).

⁴⁸ Hymn 37 from the 10th book (*maṇḍala*) of the *Rgveda* is extraordinary rich with various sight- and eyes-metaphors for Sūrya.

⁴⁹ Or *caḥṣurmitrasya varuṇasyāghneḥ* in RV 1.115.1; cf. also RV 6.51.1; 7.61.1 and 7.63.1.

⁵⁰ ON *kenning* is a poetical literary trope, specifically a circumlocution, using two words in place of a single-word noun; e.g.: *gjálfr-marr*, "steed of sea" = "ship", or *imun-laukr*, "garlic of battle" = "sword".

and divination. Moreover, as we know from Triglav's case, his sacred horse was used for divination in Szczecin and Wolin; the black horse was forced to cross a row of lances (!) lying on the ground, and if it touched one of them or not was considered as a decisive argument in the matter of war campaigns and setting sail.⁵¹

Nevertheless, it seems that Triglav's omniscience did not have its direct source in his solar character, which (after all) is not visible in his appearance. Most likely his clairvoyance came from a deeper, more complicated and darker source, as it is for example in a case of Old Norse god Óðinn. As we know from *Elder Edda* and from Snorri's account, Óðinn sacrificed his eye to Mími's well in the exchange of a vision of qualitatively different type; for this sacrifice he received his magical insight, deep clairvoyance and wisdom concerning the fate of the whole world (and, in addition to this, his sacrifice of eye is presumably a kind of explicative and supplemental mythological episode that is entirely correlative with Óðinn's second constitutive sacrifice, i.e. his self-sacrifice on a cosmic tree, by means of which he achieved the knowledge of the runes and the ability to provide poetical inspiration).⁵² Even the Vedic king-god Varuṇa, abiding in his cosmic waters (he is in a certain sense an antithesis of solar Sūrya/Agni) is an omniscient divine seer, who observes the whole world by his thousand yellowish eyes (cf. for example RV 7.34.10: *varuṇa ughraḥ sahasracakṣāḥ*)⁵³ and who judges the sins of men.⁵⁴

Therefore, Triglav's omniscience grows out of the merging of his primarily solar character⁵⁵ (a pillar, golden stripes), i.e. of the omniscience of the Sun, supplemented by the peculiar attribute of his bleary or veiled vision, which is paradoxically able to see much more than an ordinary vision. That is the omniscience of – what exactly? The dark side of the Sun, I believe.

We can ask ourselves a question: Exactly what type of connection lies behind Triglav's possible blending with the Sun? Even though we would not expect any solar characteristics in the case of Varuṇa-like deity, it seems that solarity has, in fact, played a decisive role in this mythological complex.⁵⁶ In this regard, it is not a coincidence that, in the cult of Old Norse Óðinn during the Migration Period, we can see a suspicious convergence with the cult of Roman (or, more precisely, Imperial) god Mithra(s), *Sol Invictus*; i.e. an eminent solar deity, patron of the secret society of warriors, a god, who has little in common with the rather dark, Varuṇa-like Óðinn.⁵⁷

In my opinion, it is not useful to seek behind this curious, elusive "solarity" any straight-lined reference to bright "apollonian" type of deity.⁵⁸ This kind of solarity can be

⁵¹ See above, footnote no. 9.

⁵² Cf. Kozák 2010.

⁵³ Cf. Jakobson 1985, 39–40.

⁵⁴ My view of Varuṇa is shaped mostly by Brereton 1981, 63–149.

⁵⁵ Niederle 1916, 152 ff already assumed that Triglav could be local Pomeranian variation of a solar deity; see also Pettazzoni 1956, 234 ff.

⁵⁶ Cf. Green 2001, who brilliantly argues for the ambiguous polarity of the Sun in the ancient European sun-cult, where the sun possessed both a light and a dark aspect (p. 43).

⁵⁷ Kaliff & Sundqvist 2006. It is good to mention here that two of the many Óðinn's names were *Þriði*, "The Third" and *Þriggi*, "The Triple", see Price 2002, 101.

⁵⁸ That is in a sense of "apollonian deity" or "principle", as it was artificially constructed by the "academic myth" of polarity between Apollo and Dionysos. Apollo is much more complicated god than this – he is absolutely ideal representation of deity, which is not just bright, nor straightforwardly dark. On the question, to which extent is this Dionysos-Apollo polarity mere modern academic invention and to which extent is it appropriate to archaic imagination, see Isler-Kerényi 2007, 225–254.

related to “the other side” of solar hierophany; i.e. it is *the Sun in the waters*, the setting sun that goes to the underworld. The Sun does not dwell in a celestial height forever, but it descends each and every day to the dark and dangerous underworld and it emerges once again from there every single morning.

I assume that this dark and ambiguous nature of the Sun, which plunges regularly into the netherworld, is the reason why these solar-catachthonic deities have the ability to oversee and protect humans’ souls on the ramified path of their destiny in a sense of a typical *psychopompos* (as we will see thereafter), and the ability to judge and punish their sins. The order has to obtain its power from disorder, as well as structure gains its power from anti-structure⁵⁹ – the Sun from the water. However, we can at the same time see in this deity even that “first”, non-ambivalent and celestial Sun, which is *the face covered by gold*,⁶⁰ the giant eye, into which it is not possible to look straight, and which from the height of its cosmic pillar, tree or mountain oversees all “three worlds” and “the sins of men”.

One more very interesting comparative “cluster of material” for our purpose can be found in the Vedic literature. The characteristics of Vedic *Trita* (literally “Third”) are very close to those of Triglav. *Trita Āptya* is in some way a parallel to the thunder-god Indra, because he acts by his side in killing of the monstrous adversary of the gods, mostly dragon/Vṛtra/Vala/Viśvarūpa (see e.g. RV 1.187.1 or 8.7.24), or *Trita* helps Indra to kill monster by pressing Soma (RV 2.11.20, 9.34.4) and sometimes Indra kills the monster for *Trita* (RV 10.48.2, 2.11.19).⁶¹ However, *Trita* is much more complex character; he is the one who takes unto himself Indra’s every *sin and stain* that was generated by killing the adversary, who was monstrous, but he was a brāhman after all; thus the sin and consequent *Trita*’s “scapegoating” role is recalled in AV 6.113: “This sin the Gods wiped off and laid on *Trita*, and *Trita* wiped it off on human beings,” and in RV 8.47.13: “Each evil deed made manifest, and that which is concealed, o Gods, the whole thereof remove from us to *Trita Āptya* far away.” Furthermore, *Trita* is a god with “wise insight” (RV 10.8.7) and in *Trita* “all wisdom centres, as the nave is set within a wheel” (RV 8.41.6). Moreover, he is connected with *gold* (AV 5.1.3. depicts him as radiant fluid gold) and he himself harnessed *the stallion* for Indra (YV 19.14). Below in this paper, Triglav’s connection with various IE triple characters will be reconsidered once again.

Nevertheless, at the end of this section it is worth mentioning just one more enigmatic god, who is an especially outstanding figure amongst the tricephalic deities of archaic Europe. This is so-called “Thracian Horseman” or “Thracian Rider”, an interesting figure depicted on various stone steles from 3th to 5th century CE. These steles (in sum more than 2000 monuments) come from the area of Balkan Peninsula, particularly from erstwhile Roman provinces Thracia, Moesia a Scythia Minor. It is usually a relief image of a rider on horse; either he is endowed with some hunting tools, or he is depicted alongside a woman, a various dogs or a snake-entwined tree (which is the most common

⁵⁹ See in general Douglas 1966, Turner 1969, Chlup 2005a and 2005b.

⁶⁰ In the Old Norse Eddic poetry there is an idea that what people judge to be the Sun is in fact only a golden shield that covers the real Sun, which would be extremely dangerous to look at. Cf. *Grímnismál* 38; *Sigrdrífumál* 14–15.

⁶¹ These overlaps and fusion among Vedic gods are present mostly due to the syncretic nature of Vedic mythology, which probably assimilated the mythologies of different tribes. Cf. Hillberandt 1999, 32, or Witzel 2003, 71–73.

motif at all).⁶² This god (or *hērōs*) was later identified with Hellenistic Apollo (but also with a wide range of other various Greek deities), and eventually with Saint George; from these facts we can deduce his highly syncretic nature.⁶³ Some of his solar aspects were pointed out by Pettazzoni.⁶⁴ However, on a funerary inscriptions from the Odessus area (today Varna in Bulgaria), and even in some other cases, this rider is called *Hērōs Karabasmos* (*Ἡρώς Καράβασμος*), that is the underworld *hērōs*, presumably consorting the deceased man in particular grave to the netherworld. This corresponds with the fact that the inscriptions are often dedicated to the catachthonic deities (*Dis Manibus* or *Θεοῖς Καταχθονίοις*)⁶⁵ besides the dedications to this god/*hērōs* himself. Furthermore, the most remarkable representation of the Thracian Rider was discovered nearby Bulgarian Plovdiv: on a stone stele the rider is depicted *with three heads* on one neck. Even though this tricephality is rather unusual motif in context of the Thracian Rider depictions, even more intriguing could be the fact that in a Roman times the city of Plovdiv was called *Trimontium*, The Three-Mountain City, because of its setting in between the three almost equally high hills, similar to the Pomeranian Szczecin.⁶⁶

3.2. The Earth: Trivium, or The Three-Headed One at the Crossroad

In this section, I will first stray somewhat from the line of the straight evidence of Triglav. I will examine the properties of some other Indo-European tricephalic deities in a slightly broader context, and then I will come back to the Triglav once again.

I do so, because I wish to introduce here a certain motif: the deity standing at a crossroad. In the classicist's mind, that is a notion that instantly recalls image of *hermai*, stone steles with phallic image of the god Hermes, to whom many sacrifices were held at the crossroads in the antiquity.⁶⁷ Hermes was called "god of the paths" or "god of the roads" (*ἄδιος, ἐνόδιος, πομπαῖος*),⁶⁸ he was *psychopompos* (*ψυχοπόμπος*), a conveyor of souls, or *psychagōgos* (*ψυχαγωγός*), a leader of souls, and in the Hellenistic period he was called *Hermes Trismegistos* (*Ἑρμῆς ὁ Τρισμέγιστος*, "thrice-greatest Hermes"), or *τρίμορφος* ("three-formed"), or *τρικέφαλος* ("three-headed").⁶⁹ No less important for our purpose is the Greek goddess Hecate: most likely pre-Olympian goddess with three heads.⁷⁰ She was connected with crossroads as well, most importantly with the three-way crossroad (*trivium*),⁷¹ where her shrines were placed (she was called *τρίοδια, τριμόρφη, ἐνόδια*). Hecate was a guardian of door-steps: she was liminal goddess *par excellence*, who was connected with magic, with the souls of the deceased men, and with divination and oracular knowledge. According to Hesiod's *Theogony*, Hecate received from

⁶² Dimitrova 2002, 213.

⁶³ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁴ Pettazzoni 1956, 178–183.

⁶⁵ Dimitrova 2002, 210.

⁶⁶ See above, footnote no. 17.

⁶⁷ Brown 1966, 126.

⁶⁸ West 2007, 282.

⁶⁹ Versnel 1990, 233 ff. But Versnel points out that there is no ternary evidence in Hermes' cult until 1st century CE; at that time Hermes metamorphosed into peculiar hermetic god Hermes Trismegistos, cf. *ibidem*, 237.

⁷⁰ Even if Hecate was probably very old Greek goddess, her tricephalic iconography is attested in later times; according to Pausanias the first three-headed sculpture of Hecate was made by Alcmenes in 5th century BCE (see Farnell 1896).

⁷¹ Ovid, *Fasti* I, 141: "Ora uides Hecates in tres uergentia partes / seruet ut in ternas compita secta uias."

Zeus her share equally on earth, on sea, and in heaven.⁷² Hesiod also says that she was the protector of equestrians and seafarers,⁷³ i.e. the same characteristics as in the case of Triglav from Szczecin.

Why was the crossroad such a remarkable place that it had to be held under the protection of a particular deity? At this point, I have to emphasize that by “crossroad” I mean its elementary and original form, that is not the X-type crossroad, where two separate roads are crossing,⁷⁴ but rather the Y-type or T-type crossroad, in which an ordinary road from a point “A” to a point “B” suddenly splits and branches into another unexpected destination, point “C”, i.e. merging of three roads. In Ancient Greek this type of crossroad was called *τρίδος* (three-way), *τριπλαι άμαξιτοι* (triple roads), or *σχιστή όδος* (forked/split road).⁷⁵ Numerous examples from European folklore attest to which extent this very type of crossroad, lat. *trivium*,⁷⁶ was considered to be extremely numinous and, in a certain sense, an abnormally dangerous place.

Possibly a great deal of the importance of the crossroad was due to the fact that from a clearly utilitarian perspective an unexpected branching of the roads is rather confusing for the traveller, i.e. already dangerous and liminal journey on the Road is affected by breaking in of another Road. In addition to (and maybe because of) this aspect, the crossroad is considered to be a place where the dangerous and weird powers and demons manifest themselves. According to the folk beliefs throughout medieval Europe, the *sabbats* were held at night at the crossroads, and Satan himself (or rather non-specified “Evil One”) was manifested there;⁷⁷ in Russia, for example, the devil in a form of the whirlwinds was “mating with witches” there.⁷⁸ In Schleswig, the legend says that the wayfarers were hunted by the three-legged hare, which used to suddenly appear at the crossroad and which could

⁷² Hesiod, *Theogonia*, line 413: “He [i.e. Zeus] gave her splendid gifts, to have a share of the earth and the unfruitful sea.” Or *ibidem*, lines 426 – 427: “...but she holds, as the division was at the first from the beginning, privilege both in earth, and in heaven, and in sea [έν γαίη τε και ούρανῶ ηδὲ θαλάσση].” Cf. Dumézil 1985 and Brown 1966, 125.

⁷³ Hesiod, *Theogonia*, lines 439–444: “And she is good to stand by horsemen, whom she will: and to those whose business is in the grey discomfortable sea [οἱ γλαυκὴν δυσπέμφελον ἐργάζονται εὐχονται], and who pray to Hecate and the loud-crashing Earth-Shaker, easily the glorious goddess gives great catch, and easily she takes it away as soon as seen, if so she will. She is good in the byre with Hermes to increase the stock.” Thus, we can mention also Hecate’s Roman equivalent goddess, called *Trivia* (“Three-wayed”), or rather Gallic Mercury, who was “*viarum atque itinerum ducem*” (Caesar, *Comentarii de bello Gallico* VI, 17.1), and Lithuanian/Prussian god of the roads, Kellukis (Matthaeus Praetorius, *Deliciae Prussicae*, cap. 74: “*Kellukis, der auf die Wege Achtung hat*”), or last but not least unknown god of the roads on the *Thornbrough dedication* from North Yorkshire (191 CE): “*deo qui vias et semitas commentus est*” (CIL, vii, 271).

⁷⁴ By the “original form” a mean the “more natural form” – such as the *branching of a tree* or *conflux of rivers*. The crossroad of X-type is something essentially artificial, human; it is a human perfection.

⁷⁵ See Rusten 1996, 97.

⁷⁶ In the later medieval Latin literature, this three-road intersection was called *bivium* and the X-type crossroad was *trivium*; in this case, the name comes from the perspective of the traveller approaching an intersection, whether he sees two or three possible roads. In this work, however, I hold (otherwise stated differently) the older conception, i.e. the *trivium* denotes a Y-type of crossroad, and X-type of crossroad is being called *quadrivium*.

⁷⁷ See for example Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum* V.2: “Die quadam tempore meridiano, eo quod tunc maiores habeat vires daemonium meridianum, Philippus militem in quoddam bivium duxit, gladio illum circumcircinavit, circuli legem infra circulum positio praedixit, et ait: Si aliquod membrorum tuorum extra hunc circulum ante meum reditum extenderis, morieris, quia mox a daemonibus extractus, peribis.”

⁷⁸ Ryan 1999, 40.

be stopped only by means of a silver bullet.⁷⁹ In Schleswig, in Denmark and in Pomerania (that is in the area of the erstwhile Slavic influence) it was believed that a mysterious wanderer used to join with the travellers only to disappear at the next crossroad again.⁸⁰

The spectres and the souls of the dead allegedly appeared at the crossroad as well, especially on the All Souls Day. In Denmark, it was purportedly possible to invoke the soul of the deceased on the All Souls Day; in Wales, Halloween Eve was called “the weird-est of the Three Nights of the Souls” (*Teir Nos Ysbrilion*), and in Scotland people foretold, using a tripod placed at the crossroad, who is going to die in the following year. Contact with the Otherworld was also done in many other ways: in Sweden people believed that the *trivium* was the place, where *álfar* (the elves) held their gatherings, and in Ireland there was a belief that the power of the fairies could be broken off only at the crossroad.⁸¹

Henceforth, we can see that at the crossroad not only an epiphany of evil and danger is present, but that its ambiguous nature allows to perform many positive magical practices as well, such as breaking off the curses, foretelling the future, or healing.⁸² The spread of this practice is attested by Saint Ouen/Audoen, who in the 7th century warned against the danger of performing rituals at the *trivium*.⁸³ The many magical and benevolent powers of the crossroads are preserved in vast folklore evidence of cultic practice of common people: in Wales girls were trying to lure their beloved boyfriends using the crossroad magic;⁸⁴ the same custom was documented in Russia.⁸⁵ In Denmark, it was believed that three fistfuls of the soil from the crossroad in a bag on hung from one's neck has the power to avert the curse of an Evil Eye;⁸⁶ in Russian, icons that had to be disposed of were burned at the crossroads,⁸⁷ and in Karelia and Arkhangelskaya Oblast' the crossroad was the best place to inconspicuously leave a curse, written on a birch-bark or a paper, because only there the curse would obtain its utmost power and easily “stick” to the victim, who would be the first to pass the crossroad.⁸⁸

In my opinion, it is possible to apply a similar explanation to a baffling practice that was common to virtually all medieval Europe: burying suicides at the crossroads. The people who committed suicide died by their own hands, thereby committing a capital sin for which they could not be buried in the common graveyard. Therefore, the dangerous potential arising from the unresolved status of their remains had to be dealt with a special care, i.e. it had to be “put aside” at a place that was capable of absorbing this ambiguous power, i.e. at the crossroad. In other words, crossroads were in this sense something like ambivalent storehouse of highly dangerous numinous trash (biohazard-sacrohazard).

⁷⁹ Puhvel 1976, 169.

⁸⁰ Puhvel 1976, 170 and 172.

⁸¹ Puhvel 1976, 173.

⁸² Soil gathered on the crossroad had many healing powers, see below.

⁸³ Saint Ouen, *Vita Eligii* II.16: “No Christian should make or render any devotion to the deities of the *trivium*, where three roads meet...”

⁸⁴ Puhvel 1976, 170.

⁸⁵ Ryan 1999, 110.

⁸⁶ Puhvel 1976, 171.

⁸⁷ Ryan 1999, 54.

⁸⁸ The same function was fulfilled by a doorstep and jamb of doors (lintel) – also places of exceptionally liminal character. My attention in this direction was brought by Ilya Lemeshkin from the Institute of East European Studies on the Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague, whom I wish to thank. Cf. Ryan 1999, 164 ff.

The crossroad, *trivium*, is the axial point, where otherwise distinctive spaces are merging together: either three “worlds” in horizontal spatial dimension, i.e. three roads; or in its vertical spatial dimension (because horizontal triplicity also implicates the fourth dimension, i.e. depth and height⁸⁹) it is the connection between our world, the underworld and the world “above” (although European folklore accentuates mostly the catachthonic dimension). The crossroad is a nodal point of *axis mundi*; it is a link between worlds *par excellence*. The same triple centrality is, in my opinion, present in the well-known symbols connected with the passage to the Otherworld: i.e. the Old Norse *valknút*, “node of the dead”, or the Celtic *triskelion* (which is attested already on the decoration of pre-Celtic Neolithic chamber tombs in Ireland, especially in Newgrange⁹⁰). As a place capable of mediation between different levels of the cosmos, the crossroad had to be protected by a very special deity that itself enabled the dangerous passage between the tiers of the world. These were usually deities of Hermes or Hecate psychopompic type.

For the time being, we have to say that regrettably we lack any allusion to the crossroad as such in the whole evidence surrounding Slavic Triglav *per se*, as far as I was not able to detect any. However, we do possess a noteworthy evidence that he might have been somehow connected with roads, journeys and protection of travellers. In Ebbo’s report of a secret mission of bishop’s companion Hermann, who was ordered to retrieve Triglav’s *simulacrum* from the trunk of a tree where it was hidden. Hermann, “after encountering many dangers in the course of his difficult journey”, had finally come to the house, where Triglav was venerated, and asserted, “He had been delivered from a tempestuous sea and desired to offer a fitting sacrifice as a token of gratitude for his safety. He said also that he had been led thither in a marvellous manner and by unknown ways.”⁹¹ This is a truly remarkable note that could indicate Triglav’s competence and purview of the roads. Thus, we have some further evidence that Triglav was in charge of journeys in a broad sense: he guaranteed and protected a journey to the Otherworld.

3.3. The Underworld: The Island of the Dead

There is a hypothesis that in the cosmological imagery of archaic Slavs the land of the dead was situated “somewhere beyond the waters”, or generally that the water is supposed to surround the underworld in some way. That is an old Indo-European concept⁹² (complementary to a concept of the Elysian pastures and the “usual” un-

⁸⁹ Brown 1966, 124.

⁹⁰ The *triskelion* inside Newgrange is allegedly illuminated by the rays of the sun that come there by an air shaft, or lunette, which was built exactly for this purpose. The rays enlighten the *triskelion* exactly and only on a winter solstice. See Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2008, 275 ff. (Let us recall here the Wolinian *hasta Iulii* and its possible interpretation as a *Julblock* in the context of celebration of winter solstice, as was mentioned above in the text.) The huge lintel stone in front of the entrance into the Newgrange mound is decorated by the same triple spiral (*triskelion*) as the inside stones are. This fact is particularly interesting with regard to the Lewis-Williams & Pearce hypothesis that the Neolithic chamber tombs were cosmological maps allowing passage to the Otherworld.

⁹¹ Ebbo II, 13 (*FHRS* 33.41–34.5; translation Robinson 1920, 89): “*Herimannus* [...] post multa arduae viae pericula viduam illam tandem conveniens, asserebat se nuper de procelloso maris gurgite per invocationem dei sui Trigelawi erutum, ideoque debitum ei pro salvatione sua sacrificium litare desiderantem, ductu eius illo mirabili ordine per ignotos viae tractus devenisse” (emphasis mine, J.D.).

⁹² See West 2007, 389 ff.

derworld) and as we have seen already, the sun sets in the sea.⁹³ Even though this was probably not true for the Slavic *Urheimat* (wherever it was, it was not nearby sea), the image of a reflection of the setting sun in the water can be seen virtually anywhere and might have contributed to this mythological notion. Moreover, water does not have to be the sea, as the Proto Slavic word **mor'e* originally meant rather “standing water, moor, lake”.⁹⁴

In the Slavic worldview, the concept of the watery netherworld was somehow related to the deity called Veles/Volos, who is the most appropriate candidate for the Varuṇa-like deity in the Slavic mythology. Veles, as well as his Lithuanian cognate, Velnias, could presumably be the mythical ruler of the underworld and subterranean waters. This is indirectly attested by the unique Czech phraseology in a dramatic play from 16th century, *Tkadleček*, where Veles is depicted as a demonic being alongside with dragon and devil:⁹⁵ “...what devil, or what veles or what dragon incited you against me?” (...*ký jest črt, aneb ký veles, aneb ký zmek tě proti mně vzbudil?*) Veles’ demonic character is implied in the words of a certain Hussite sermon, that called parishioners to leave their sin “at Veles”, *u Velesa*. (I cannot resist recalling again here the abovementioned RV 8.47.13: “Each evil deed ... remove from us to Trita Āptya far away”). Tomáš Hájek z Libočan depicted Veles as a sly whisperer, and quite remarkable is also *Knihá Jezusa Siracha* (1571), which contains a narration about a man who wishes his malicious wife to be metamorphosed into a goose and then “she should fly somewhere beyond the sea to Veles” (*někam k Velesu za moře*).⁹⁶

That the “Evil One” dwells behind the sea is attested in some medieval sources not related with Slavs. The first occurrence comes from *De miraculis* by Herbert of Clairvaux, in which the devil tells to the young Christian: “I hid in the sea escaping from your cross...”⁹⁷ The second occurrence is in *Dialogus miraculorum* by Caesarius of Heisterbach, in which the devil says to the knight: “I was behind the sea, just as far as the sea is distanced from this place.”⁹⁸

In a case of Szczecinian Triglav, above all we must recall Ebbo’s aforementioned information about a sacrifice, which was made for Triglav because of a gratitude for safety during sea voyages,⁹⁹ and then also Adam’s reference of Wolinian Triglav as a “*Neptunus* of the three natures” (as we already know, Wolin was a seaport town). As it was already said, the land of the dead in the Indo-European mythologies was often situated somewhere beyond the sea, on some kind of a blessed island of the deceased, or on some

⁹³ Cf. *Kauṣītaki Brāmana* XVIII, 9, where the sun setting into the water in the form of Varuṇa is depicted (citation by Hillebrandt 1999, 6) and an Old Norse phrase *sól gengr í ægi*, lit. “sun goes into sea” (see Cleasby & Vigfússon 1874, 738, entry *Ægir*).

⁹⁴ *Etimologičeskii slovar’ slavjanskikh jazykov*, vol. 19, 227-230, s. v. **mor'e*. For this remark. I thank to Andrej Pleterski.

⁹⁵ All consequent Old Czech citations were for the first time introduced by Jakobson (1985, 36) and I refer to them according to Jakobson.

⁹⁶ For an extensive examination of Veles’ connection with sea, marches, gold and underworld, see Golema 2006, 161–171.

⁹⁷ Herbertus Claraevallis, *De miraculis libri tres* LXXIV: “Ex quo venisti ad terram meam, ego inde exivi ac fugiendo crucem tuam usque nunc in pelago latitavi” (ed. Gufler, s. 257).

⁹⁸ Caesarius Heisterbacensis, *Dialogus miraculorum* V.2: “Tantum ex illa parte maris fui, quantum ab hoc loco distat usque ad mare.”

⁹⁹ See above, footnote no. 91.

mountain with the sea around it.¹⁰⁰ The water is a natural cosmological complement of the underworld in the mythological systems, and in the triad *heaven–earth–underworld* the water is a common variation often replacing the underworld.

Moreover, I am convinced that more a thorough and circumstantial analysis and comparison would show, and perhaps prove, the parallel between Triglav and the Indo-European *gods of waters and seas*, such as the Greek Triton (and his father Poseidon), the pre-Olympian Titan Oceanus, the Etruscan centaur Mares,¹⁰¹ the Roman Neptunus, the Irish Nechtan, the Welsh Rhiannon (goddess of horses and sea), the Vedic Apām napāt (literally “Child of the Waters”; perhaps a “Fire in the Water” type of deity, i.e. the Sun in the Ocean, or Soma/Agni in waters, which is Varuna¹⁰²), or the Vedic Trita Āptya (from the stem *āp-*, water¹⁰³), the Hittite “Sun goddess of Arinna”,¹⁰⁴ the Old Norse sea god Ægir (and it should be well noted that ON kenning for “gold” was *Ægis bál*, “the fire of Ægir”) and perhaps even the Old Norse Njörðr/Nerthus or the Greek Nēreus. These (semi)deities were usually, but not always, somehow connected with sea and/or fresh waters, with horses and with the inspired oracular visions and wisdom. Also worth mentioning are some other suspects, among them a Slavic folktale about the appalling Děd Vševed (“All-Knowing Old Man”),¹⁰⁵ who dwells *beyond the waters*, and about the hero, who has to steal his *three golden hairs* (possibly one hair from each of his three heads?).

And the crossroad? Honestly, as I said, we lack any source that would confirm the hypothesis and connection of Triglav and the Indo-European deities of the crossroads, apart from Ebbo’s enigmatic remarks concerning roads and Triglav’s protection on the sea. Nevertheless, I believe that if we can see the crossroad metaphorically as a mediating axis of the world, binding the three-layered cosmos together, and as a nodal point, from which a passage to the underworld is made possible, the crossroad in this light can be seen as a useful comparative parallel with no direct counterpart in the material we possess.

I believe this is not a problem. In my opinion, in Triglav’s case, the crossroad is the notorious “strange attractor”, a non-extant attribute, which *itself is not present* (he is “present in a form of absence”), but which *despite of this still clusters together the semantic field of the same motifs and symbols* that we tried to untangle in the presented analysis. These symbols were otherwise common to all abovementioned symbolic complex-

¹⁰⁰Cf. for example Celtic *Avallon, Amber, Glastonbury* (or ON *Glassisvellir*); see Ahl 1982. *Nota bene* the common spatial localization of the Neolithic mounds on the British Islands: the burial mounds were usually built on a tidal foreshore (see Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2008, 230), which was taken as a liminal zone allowing an easy passage to the netherworld.

¹⁰¹According to Aelian, the half-horse Mares underwent a *triple death and resurrection*; see Aelian, *Varia Historia* 9.16, cf. Versnel 1985, 147–148.

¹⁰²Varuṇa placed “Agni in the waters, the sun in heaven and, Soma on the stone” (RV 5.85.2), everything in its proper place; see Brereton 1981, 93. Varuṇa is associated with Soma and Agni in many ways (see Brereton 1981, 119–121), but the most noteworthy is that *when Soma comes in the water, he becomes Varuṇa* (cf. RV 9.73.4).

¹⁰³For mythological semantic associations between Trita, Varuṇa and Soma, see Brereton 1981, 121–123.

¹⁰⁴Hittite “Sun goddess of Arinna” (dUTU-*uš* URU*Arinna*) with her epithets “of the water” (*weteni*) and “of the sea” (*aruna*). These epithets were complementary to her more common names dUTU-*uš nepišaš* (the sun goddess of the sky) and dUTU-*uš taknaš* (the sun goddess of the earth); the third tier is watery, as we have already seen. For this remark, I thank Dalibor Antalič.

¹⁰⁵In Grimm’s fairy tales, it is No. 29, “The Devil with the Three Golden Hairs” (*Der Teufel mit den drei goldenen Haaren*); Aarne-Thompson Motif No. 461.

es connected with Tricephalic Deity: [Foretelling], [Knowing], and [Magic] /Hermes, Hecate, Apollo, Sūrya, Varuṇa/, [Horses] /the Thracian Horsemen, Poseidon, Trita Āptya/, [Lance] /Triton's *trident*, Hermes' *caduceus*, Óðinn's spear/, [Tree], /Óðinn's Yggdrasil, Hecate's cypress with its otherworldly connotations/, [Sea] /Neptunus, Apāṁ napāt, Hecate/, [Roads] /Hermes, Hecate, Mercurius Viator/, [Gold] /Apāṁ napāt, Ægir/, [Reign over the Three Worlds], [Underworldly competences], and last but not least [Tri-cephality] itself. It seems only reasonable to assume that sovereign, tricephalic, oracular, and roads-protecting deity could have some dealings with the *trivium* crossroads as well.

4. A trivial conclusion: *Ternarium numerum perfectum summo deo assignant*¹⁰⁶

This “Neptunus of the three natures” who binds and regulates in himself three spheres of the tiered universe (“three seas” in Adam’s metaphor) is – according to my hypothesis – a reflection of a complex symbolic concept that finds its origins in the very ancient Indo-European symbolic and religious representations: In addition to all the tricephalic deities described above, the part of this complex might go even to the archetype of a strangely “triple” Indo-European hero, who killed a triple monster of chaos (and perhaps simultaneously a monster inside himself?). How to imagine the archetypal harnessing of chaos and releasing of some benevolent powers other than on the example of Indian Trita, who killed the monstrous Triśiṛṣan (i.e. “The Three-headed One”) or Viśvarūpa; Trita’s Iranian “cousin” Ōraētaona, who killed Aži Dāhaka; Greek Zeus, who defeated many-headed Typhōeus; also Greek Hēraklēs, who killed three-bodied giant Gēryōn; Roman Hercules, who killed abominable Cacus; Horatius (or the Horatii triplets), who killed three Curatii?¹⁰⁷ However, the Slavic Triglav does not seem to have this monster-slaying aspect.¹⁰⁸

On the level of the first tier of the world (the celestial sphere) Triglav is an omniscient solar-celestial deity, perhaps a kind of “Varuṇa-like binder”, who on a metaphorical three-threaded rope holds the past, the present and the future together in a unity of time, about which only he himself knows absolutely everything and henceforth he is capable of bestowing the oracular omens. He is a sovereign ruler, who from his position of the supreme deity rules the world as a *summus deus* of Ebbo. He also guarantees the observance of the covenants: He mediates between the order of the universe and the society by means of (non)punishing the transgressions and evil-doing of men.

¹⁰⁶“The perfect quality of the number three can be assigned to a supreme deity.” Maurus Servius Honoratus according to Publius Vergilius Maro, *Eclogae* VIII.

¹⁰⁷Cf. Dumézil 1970, 9–28 and 115–138; see also Watkins 1995, most notably 297–468.

¹⁰⁸After this article was written and reviewed, I had a chance to read the paper by Trkanjec 2013, treating the very same topic. Trkanjec broadens the abovementioned similarities with Triglav and Indo-European tricephalic monsters (he omits the fact the killer-hero himself is usually ternary). His analysis, based on Watkins 1995 and folklore narratives from Katičić, is very profound and he sensibly connects these narratives with Ebbo’s notion (II, 13) and sets this into the context of Ivanov’s and Toporov’s theory of “basical myth” (основной миф). Although I agree with some of his conclusions, I disagree with the conception of Triglav as a mere adversary of the Thunder God. Surely he has this demonic side, but it’s not everything. Unfortunately Trkanjec’s arguments for his statement that Triglav was god of dead and underworld (which is probably partially true!) are not so persuasive in his article (the repeated notion of “a chthonic deity” doesn’t say much *per se*) and this statement doesn’t correlate with his assumption that Triglav is based on a heritage of the Indo-European serpent monsters. I believe that Triglav is much complex figure; and I tried to present my view as thoroughly as I was able to.

Triglav on the second tier of the world, in the terrestrial sphere, is a guide and mediator, perhaps the god of the roads similar to *Hermēs pompaios*, *Mercurius viator* and *Óðinn Gangleri* (“Wanderer”), *Gagnráðr* (“Journey-Advisor”) or *Vegtamr* (“Way-tamer”). In contrast to the first level, on which he mediates between two vertically related worlds, in the terrestrial sphere he helps the humans to go *horizontally* through the dangerous crossroads, *trivia*, of their lives. He is the protector and guide on a way when a man is about to cross his own threshold, when a man is travelling “there and back again”, and especially *when a man is travelling by sea*, which is always a journey to somewhere Else, somewhere Other.

Triglav on the third, catachthonic-aquatic level is the triple guardian of the netherworld and at the same time the guide, *psychopompos*, who helps souls to get there; he is something like *Cerberus*, *Lord of Annwn*, *Hermēs psychopompos*, *Varuṇa* in his celestial-oceanic representation of *yóni ápyam* (“womb of the waters”), perhaps the Old Norse *Brymr* (holding his three grey hounds [literally “bitches”, *greyjar*] on a golden chain). He guarantees contact with the netherworld; he enables the communication with the deceased and simultaneously prevents their permanent return to the world of the living.¹⁰⁹ He is the principle that rules the cosmos and consequently enables mediation and permeability of the whole system, thereby allowing the transfer between the tiers of the world.

In Triglav’s case, the number three is a powerful symbol – it is an expression of a very archaic numinous power. “Three” in the Proto-Indo-European possibly meant something like “further, over, too much”, i.e. a number beyond “two” (from a PIE stem **terh2-* “to traverse, to cross”¹¹⁰ or “middle, top, protruding”; cf. Latin *trans*).¹¹¹ Two is a company, but three is a crowd. And three, as well as any other number, is of course a silent potentiality of its following number: three implicates number four as its middle, that is an unsaid intersection point of the three ways, or as a Jungian *quaternitas* that exceeds the triadic structure quantitatively as well as qualitatively. As it was said above, the *quadrivium* is an artificial human perfection of otherwise natural shape of the *trivium*. To change *trivium* into *quadrivium*, i.e. a Y-crossroad into an X-crossroad, is very easy: simply add another path.¹¹² Possibly we could understand the four-headedness of Arkonian Svantovit, Garzian Porenutius, or Zbrucz idolum as a kind of “*quaternitas* potential in the *triplicitas* came true”.

Maurus Servius Honoratus, cited above, probably has made the correct conclusion: the perfect quality of the number three can be assigned to a supreme deity. The Celts were very much aware of the potential and power of this number; the triads are a constant feature in the Celtic symbolic universe. The metaphysical value of the threefold nature was fully grasped by gnostic Hermes Trismegistos, who was in a metaphorical

¹⁰⁹The vertical and horizontal aspects merge here, because the Slavic notion of the Netherworld might have been as well horizontal (Otherworld) as vertical (Underworld). Judging by a comparison with the other Indo-European traditions and their representations of the Netherworld confirm this guess.

¹¹⁰Watkins 1995, 351–356.

¹¹¹Cf. Sauzeau & Sauzeau 2012, 56; for arguments *contra* this etymology (originally by Émile Benveniste) see Mallory & Adams 2006, 311.

¹¹²Nevertheless even *quadrivium* is in truth (if we do not count the road of our arrival) actually a crossroad with *the three options of further directions*; see for example a Russian *bylina* about final journey of Il’ya Muromets.

sense his own substitute gladiator (*tertiarius*).¹¹³ The power of *ter unus* mystery was ingeniously employed by the Christian Church Fathers when they established the doctrine of the Holy Trinity as a central dogma of Christianity – the doctrine of a God, who is in the same time the creator, the creature and the creating, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Nevertheless, none of these concepts was in any way transplanted or “printed” onto the reality of early medieval Pomeranian Slavs in form of their Triglav. Under the weight of the assembled evidence – connections, parallels, and contiguities – I assume that it is not difficult to accept the genuine and original nature of this Slavic deity to the extent to which it is possible to speak about genuineness and originality in a case of conceptions and representations of an indubitable antiquity, and the conceptions and representations known and common to a large part of Indo-European civilization.

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¹¹³Versnel 1990, 206ff.

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Troglavi na razpotju
Primerjalna študija o slovanskem bogu Triglavu

Jiří Dynda

Članek predstavlja primerjalno analizo, ki jo dopolnjuje historično-kontekstualna analiza virov o zahodnoslovanskem božanstvu z imenom Triglav. Hipoteza je, da je imel Triglav v simbolnem sistemu arhaičnega verstva pomorjanskih Slovanov vlogo posrednika med različnimi kozmičnimi ravnemi. Pregled osnovnih Triglavovih atributov v kontekstu vseh dostopnih srednjeveških virov iz domačega okolja, to je z zgodnesrednjeveškega Pomorjanskega in Brandenburškega, ter vključevanje teh indicev v mrežo primerjalnih povezav splošnega indoevropskega verstva, vodi k odkritju drugih, doslej slabo vidnih Triglavovih »obrazov«.

Sklepam, da gre za boga, ki v simbolnem sistemu deluje kot vodnik in posrednik med tremi ravnemi, tremi področji sveta, ki mu vsemu popolnoma vlada kot henoteistični bog in s tega položaja omogoča njegovo prehodnost. Gre za božanstvo, ki povezuje v celoto tri plasti sveta v podobo kozmičnega stebra *axis mundi* (svetovna os). Gre za božanstvo, ki na splošno daje varstvo in sploh omogoča potovanje, zlasti pa prehod med različnimi svetovi v široko kozmoloških razsežnostih. Tako posreduje med božanskim svetom in svetom ljudi, nadalje skrbi za vodoravno potovanje po svetu in nazadnje tudi za prehod iz tostranstva v onostranstvo.