RODNOVERY AND THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE:
LINKING ANCIENT RELIGION WITH THE EVOLUTION OF EAST SLAVIC LANGUAGES

by
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ABSTRACT

The origin, formation, and evolution of language has been an ongoing topic since the beginning of linguistics itself. This research aims to demonstrate and explain the relationship between the Slavic Native Faith, Rodnovery, and the development of the Russian language, as well as the impact of this relationship on the survival and ultimate comeback of the Native Faith in Russian society. To assess these two dimensions, a combination of both demographical data and lexical data have been used to perform multivariate regression analyses. The demographics data encompass the role of religion in modern Russian society, including non-Orthodox faiths like Rodnovery, and provide insight not only into presence of the faith but also its importance. The lexical data are comprised of 564,493 words taken from the modern Russian language, which were subsequently filtered to remove non-Slavic loan words and categorized by root word. The most important root word analyzed was *rod*, the name of the primary Rodnover god, and compared with the English language and its equivalent word, *god*. The results showed that overwhelmingly, the Russian language is far more heavily centered around religious terms than is English. Additionally, comparison between the two types of data allows for the secondary inference to be made—that it is plausible that Rodnovery survived a thousand years of repression due to its tenants being embedded within the Russian language itself.
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1. INTRODUCTION

The resurgence of the Slavic Native Faith, Rodnovery, over the last 30 years, despite having been officially repressed by the Russian state since antiquity brings into question how and why it has been able to survive, let alone thrive. In order to address this phenomenon, it must first be situated among the existing research in the fields of both demography and linguistics. The concept of *dvoeverie* is one which has been actively studied for nearly two centuries—and posits the notion of a dual-religion adopted and practiced by the East Slavic peoples since the initial Christianization of the Kievan Rus’ in 988 AD.¹ Two methods of statistical analysis, multivariate regression and time series regression, will be performed in order to determine the role of religion in contemporary Russia, and more importantly the endurance of Rodnovery from antiquity into modernity. This research will address the relationship between Rodnovery and the development of the East Slavic language family, focusing on Old East Slavic and modern Russian, as it is plausible that the embedment of Rodnover ideas and terminology within these languages prolonged or sustained its survival over the last thousand years. Not only have more people openly identified as Rodnovers, or converted to the faith, but the very importance of religion itself has gradually increased since the fall of the Soviet Union. This research is hinged on linguistic reconstructive techniques which allow one not only to piece together an extinct language, but assist in the comparison of modern languages to determine the original meanings of chosen words.² Thus,


comprehensive data on the Russian language comprising of 564,493 words will be analyzed in combination with demographical data on religion from the Levada and Pew Centers.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 ESTABLISHED KNOWLEDGE

Languages and their respective language families derive from reconstructable sources and means—simply put, languages originate and evolve for definitive reasons and to fill a necessary means of communication. Languages from the Germanic family, for example, have been demonstrated to have evolved around the need for early humans to express and explain the natural landscape around them. Languages formed in a tactical and locative manner allowing for clear and direct communication, thus making cooperation and survival more viable. This was proven using the Maze Game hypothesis in which people were tasked with making up a new language in order to effectively and clearly communicate where they were within the maze. This locative knowledge and its comprehensible transmission enabled cooperation amongst the participants such that they could help one another solve the puzzle and exit the maze.

2.2 SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

2.2.1 Comparative linguistics

Comparative linguistics uses two or multiple languages to draw conclusions and similarities between them. This field is responsible for much of what we know about

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linguistic evolution and development—as well as our understanding of ancient languages and how they shaped early human societies.

2.2.2 Quantitative linguistics and Lexicostatistics

Quantitative linguistics is concerned with the statistical measures of languages or their lexicons, allowing for further examination and mathematical study. Its more common applications are relating to the evolution and change of language over time, the degree and nature of said change, and the underlying structures of the language itself. It has been used to derive linguistic laws—measurable statistical regularities found across languages and language families.

Lexicostatistics is a set of methodologies most commonly employed for refining the comparison between two or more languages and quantifying their common characteristics.\(^5\) This approach allows for a detailed comparison amongst cognates that determines two things—the mathematical overlap between languages (i.e., if and how closely they are related within a language family) and the time necessary for these languages to evolve from their progenitive proto-language.\(^6\) It has one further usage, which is the ability to determine the mathematical relationship between cognates within a single language.\(^7\)

2.2.3 Proto-linguistics

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The study of proto-linguistics often involves reconstructing dead or theorized languages. This is done by comparing all the languages in a given language family or subfamily, removing all known loan words (words from sources outside the original lexicon of the language), and drawing out as many similarities as possible between them. This is typically done on a word-by-word basis in which the variations of a word are taken from each of the selected languages and overlayed to determine the most plausible ‘origin word’ for all of them.8

For example, using the living members of the Slavic family, it is possible to derive the common origin word for ‘mother’. Firstly, one would need to gather all the modern-day words meaning ‘mother’—in this case they are \textit{mati} (Slovene, Serbo-Croatian, Bulgarian, Czech, Ukrainian), \textit{majka} (Macedonian), \textit{mat’} (Slovak, Russian), \textit{matka} (Polish), and \textit{matsi} (Belarusian). The most common word here is \textit{mati}; the Slovak and Russian \textit{mat’} can be added in as the final ‘ represents the voiceless \textit{i} sound. The logical conclusion, therefore, would be that the original proto-word was \textit{mati}. This can be checked against the Old Church Slavonic dead language as it was initially used approximately 1000 years ago and is thus closer to Proto-Slavic than a modern language would be. In Old Church Slavonic, the word for mother is indeed \textit{mati}, and thus the official Proto-Slavic reconstruction has been attested to be \textit{mati} (мати).

While this is a relatively straightforward example, it demonstrates the methodology used for reconstructing and understanding dead languages and proto-languages. A similar process is used for reconstructing previously used grammatical structures and

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pronunciations.⁹ While we can never be entirely certain of the exact historical pronunciation or word usage, this approach is accurate enough to provide valuable insight and understanding about ancient peoples and their means of communication.

The above explanation applies to comparative reconstruction. An alternative approach, internal reconstruction, is more applicable to the research analysis in this paper. This method uses irregularities and cognates within a single language to posit the previous nature of that language. Cognates are a group of words which all share a common etymological origin or root word. This works on the assumption that the cognates all descended from a singular origin word in a proto-language, and that that origin word had a specific and discernable meaning. This meaning is thus shared by all the cognates and links their modern-day meanings together.

2.2.4 Origin of language hypotheses

While there are many competing theories on the origin of language itself, some of them, including the ‘from where to what’ theory, posit that language evolved as a tactical mechanism to help early hominids communicate localities.¹⁰ This linguistic evolution would fall into place with the concept that human cooperation ensures better survival for the group and thus better survival for the individual. This idea is important to note, in this case, because it provides substance to the notion that entire language families are locationally derived, as it is demonstrated by the maze game hypothesis.

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3. **GAPS IN THE ESTABLISHED KNOWLEDGE**

The present research examines the East Slavic languages and their collective origin, as well as the reason and environment responsible for their unique evolution. Unlike with other language families, the basis of the East Slavic languages is not clearly understood. In the Old East Slavic language, the progenitor to modern-day Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian, many of the root words share a common stem——*rod*. Some of the descendants of these ancient words in modern Russian are as follows: *vrode* (like, or in the image of), *vozrodit’ya* (to be reborn), *vozrozhdat’* (to revive, *rozh* originally being the vocative form of *rod*), *bezrodnii* (rootless, lost, disconnected), *priroda* (nature, the natural world), *srodi* (akin), *rodina* (motherland), and *rodnii/rodnaya* (native).

This information appears mundane until one considers a secondary historical event which evolved in tandem with the Old East Slavic language—Rodnovery, commonly known today as the Slavic Native Faith or Slavic paganism. This belief system predates the proto-Slavic language and thus the Slavic language family as a whole. More importantly, its primary deity is called *Rod*. *Rod* is regarded as the father of the earth, of the natural world, and of all humanity. Keeping this in mind, breaking down the specific meanings of East Slavic prefixes leaves us some rather peculiar and noteworthy translations. Take *vrode* as an example: *v-* means ‘in’ or ‘into’ or ‘in the’, when combined with the root word *rod* and the stem ending -e, the very literal meaning becomes ‘in the image of Rod’. Implicitly, this

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13 Gasparini.
concludes that things that are alike are alike because they reflect Rod’s nature, form, or image. Another example is bezrodniy, to be lost or rootless. Repeating the same method as above, the prefix bez- means to remove or be without, and -niy is an adjective ending. Altogether, bezrodniy, taken literally, becomes ‘to be without Rod’. Taking this in a religious sense would mean that one is lost or rootless without Rod, perhaps spiritually rather than literally. Thus, the first hypothesis posed by this paper and its underlying research will address if and how this ancient religion influenced the formation of the East Slavic languages. The second hypothesis will approach the opposite side of this subject: did the embedding of Rodnover philosophy into the language itself lead to the long-term preservation of this faith despite adverse policies and mandates for its eradication in favor of Orthodoxy?

This secondary question stems from demographics research demonstrating the resurgence of Rodnovery and self-proclaimed Rodnovers over the last 30 years in which the Russian state has not mandated a national or official religion. Given the near-thousand years this religion has been suppressed, it is worth questioning why it survived at all. This research will build upon the previously studied concept of dvoeverie, or the dual-faith observed after the adoption of Orthodoxy by the Kievan Rus’ in 988 AD. This phenomenon has persisted and been observed since the Middle Ages to 19th Century Russia, and provides evidence of the endurance of Rodnovery.15

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4. DATA AND METHODS

4.1 Data Selection

Two types of data have been selected for this research and its underlying analysis: demographical panel data and lexical observational data. These data will be used to demonstrate and explore the enduring importance of religion in Russian society, as well as the continued survival of the Rodnover faith. While Rodnovers are not named specifically, they are represented by the denotation ‘Other’, which is used to classify the various pagan faiths in Russia.

4.1.1 Levada Center

Survey data on religion and its importance in the lives of Russian people has been selected from the Levada Center archives. These data were collected between January and February 2020, using observations from 1,614 individuals. For this dataset, the dependent variable is the importance of religion or religious denomination and the independent variable is time. The following tables 1-4 are examples of the data setup and variable usage. It is important to note that Tables 1 and 2 display counts of individuals’ responses, while Tables 3 and 4 are denoted using percentages of the total number of respondents. Table 4 in particular indicates a general increase in religiosity over the decades since the end of the Soviet era, during which a policy of state atheism prevailed.
### Table 1: Levada Center survey results by count.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role in Life</th>
<th>Oct 05</th>
<th>Sep 07</th>
<th>Jan 12</th>
<th>Mar 13</th>
<th>Feb 16</th>
<th>Feb 20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A very important one</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A fairly important one</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not a very important one</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No role at all</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is difficult to say</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2: Levada Center survey results by percentage. 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Affiliation</th>
<th>Aug 14</th>
<th>Dec 15</th>
<th>Jun 17</th>
<th>Dec 18</th>
<th>Jan 20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very religious</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat religious</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very religious</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all religious</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is difficult to say</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3: Levada Center survey results by percentage. 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Affiliation</th>
<th>Jan 20</th>
<th>Feb 20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orthodoxy</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestantism</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholicism</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judaism</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (&quot;shamanism,&quot; &quot;Shinto,&quot; &quot;Altaic faith, spirits, mountains&quot;)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No denomination</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atheist</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to say / refuse to answer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table 4. Levada Center survey results by percentage.\textsuperscript{18}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jan. 90</th>
<th>May. 00</th>
<th>Aug. 10</th>
<th>Feb. 20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orthodoxy</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholicism</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None / atheist</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two methods of analysis will be performed—multivariate regression and time series regression. The multivariate regression analysis seeks to explain the importance and significance of various contributing factors relating to the role of religion, and more specifically Rodnovery, in Russian society. The time series regression establishes the survival and endurance of the Rodnover faith into modernity. Combined with previous scholarly documentation of the concept of dvoeverie, or the dual-faith in Russia, this shows that the influence of Rodnover ideas is pervasive enough to have survived not only the state mandate of Orthodoxy in the Russian Empire, but also the state atheism decreed in the Soviet Union.

4.1.2 Pew Center

The Pew Center’s data on religious affiliations in Eastern Europe will be used to supplement the Levada Center data. These data were collected during a survey from June 2015 to July 2016 over a spread of 18 countries in Central and Eastern Europe, thus making

them cross-sectional. The dependent variable is religious affiliation, and the independent variable is time. The data were thus broken down into percentages, shown in Tables 5 and 6:

**Most Central and Eastern European countries have Orthodox majorities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orthodox-majority countries</th>
<th>Orthodox</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>Other Christian</th>
<th>Muslim</th>
<th>Other religion</th>
<th>Unaffiliated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moldova</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belarus</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Catholic-majority countries**

| Poland                      | 1        | 87       | 3               | 1      | 1             | 7            |
| Croatia                     | 4        | 84       | 3               | 2      | 1             | 7            |
| Lithuania                   | 3        | 75       | 16              | 1      | 1             | 6            |
| Hungary                     | 1        | 56       | 20              | 1      | 1             | 21           |

**Religiously mixed countries**

| Bosnia                     | 35       | 8        | 1               | 52     | 1             | 3            |
| Estonia                    | 25       | 1        | 25              | 1      | 2             | 45           |
| Latvia                     | 31       | 23       | 23              | 1      | 1             | 21           |

**Majority-unaffiliated countries**

| Czech Republic             | 1        | 21       | 4               | 1      | 1             | 72           |

*Table 5. Pew Center survey results of religious identification.*

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People in most post-Soviet republics see religion rising in importance, in contrast with other countries in the region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Former Soviet republics</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belarus</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moldova</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>-9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other countries</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>-11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tables 6. Pew Center survey results of religiosity.  

The Pew Center’s data are not Russia specific, but are useful as they are broken down into further-subcategories that will be utilized in the multivariate regression analysis.

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4.2 Lexical Data

The lexical data on the Russian language were compiled from an observational list consisting of 564,493 words from the modern Russian language. These words were sourced from Github.21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROOT WORD</th>
<th>FREQUENCY of OCCURRENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Род (rod)</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Бог (bog)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Черн (chern)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Бело (byelo)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Words in Set 1</td>
<td>6116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7. Frequency table of root words in Russian language.

Table 7 displays a random of selection of 6,116 words from the total 564,493 words. They will be referred to as ‘Set 1’. For Set 1, four root words were chosen for their relevance to the topic of Rodnovery and thus searched to determine the number of the times they appeared. The four root words are as follows:

*Rod*—the supreme god in Slavic religion, the father, creator, and governor of the three realms of existence, *Prav, Yav*, and *Nav*.

*Bог*—Old East Slavic and later contemporary Russian word for ‘God’. Originally, its meaning applied to *any* god, but in the modern meaning it most typically refers to the Christian god. Its original meaning was usually combined with another stem word to create

the name of a particular deity, for example *Chernobog*, literally the ‘black god’ and *Byelobog*, the ‘white god’.

*Chern*—Dark or Black, used here due to its significance with the Slavic god *Chernobog*, the god of darkness and part of the supreme duality over which Rod governs.

*Byelo*—White, chosen for its relation to the Slavic god *Byelobog*, the god of light and the other half of the supreme duality, alongside *Chernobog*. The duality was included because it is the second most important tier in the hierarchy of Rodnover beliefs and deities.

The data were prepared for analysis by removing blank entries and non-letter characters from the list. After all the words containing *rod* were selected, words which did not have this combination as the root word were filtered out, leaving only words which explicitly contained *rod* as the root, and eliminating those which contained it by random chance alone. Some words will be selected to be explained in full: their specific prefixes and suffixes, as well as their relation to the root word, will be explained and their literal translations provided, using Old East Slavic for reference.22

As an example of the sheer pervasiveness of *rod* in the Russian language and the extreme versatility of its usage, Table 8 is the full list of translations for *rod* available on Google Translate:

### Table 8. Numerous translations of the root word *rod*.23

While these data will not be directly used in this paper’s research, they do provide an interesting view into the usage of this particular root word.

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23 Google Translate.
5. **SUBSTANTIVE FINDINGS**

5.1 Stemming

Stemming is the process by which unique words as well as morphologically changed and inflected variants of words are stripped and clustered based on a common root word.

This methodology was employed to analyze both the modern Russian language in addition to the English language for comparison. Root words relating to the concept of god, respective to the prevailing culture behind each language, were selected and sorted out of the total. The counts are listed in Table 9.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Russian ROOT WORD</th>
<th>FREQUENCY of OCCURRENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Род (rod)</td>
<td>4339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Бог (bog)</td>
<td>801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Черн (chern)</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Бело (byelo)</td>
<td>436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Words</td>
<td>564493</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English ROOT WORD</th>
<th>FREQUENCY of OCCURRENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>God</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Words</td>
<td>66928</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9. Frequency table of Russian and English root words.
Figure 1 is a bar chart of root word frequencies, with Russian-based root words displayed in various shades of red, while English roots are in blue.

Figure 1. Root word percentages for individual Russian and English words.

Figure 2 quickly and easily displays the differences between the two languages—it’s clear to see that the Russian language has vastly more religiously or spiritually based root words than does the English language. Table 11 provides the contributing root words.
Figure 2. Root word percentage totals for Russian and English words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Words</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stem words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rod</td>
<td>4339</td>
<td>0.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bog</td>
<td>801</td>
<td>0.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byelo</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>0.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chern</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>0.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEMHO</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word count</td>
<td>5766</td>
<td>1.02%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Words</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stem words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word count</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0.07%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10. Root word percentages for individual Russian and English words.

5.2 Lemmatization

Lemmatization is a method for processing and analyzing large sets of linguistic data, such as comprehensive lists of words that comprise entire languages. It involves groups sets
of like-words together, based on each individual word’s lemma. A lemma is the unconjugated, dictionary form of a word—thus all words which are tied to that form are grouped together as one. An easy example in English would be *good, better, and best*. We know as English speakers that *better* and *best* are the comparative and superlative forms of *good*, and that they are intrinsically connected because of this, but a computer or program would not understand this without lemmatization.²⁴

Lemmatization proves vastly more useful on synthetic languages rather than analytic languages. A synthetic language, like Russian, Ukrainian, or any other member of the East Slavic family, is one which uses cases, case endings, inflection, and the addition of morphemes to a word to express the relationship between words, actions, etc. For example, the simple phrase ‘Я понимаю тебя’ (Ya ponimayu tebya), or ‘I understand you’, employs two separate instances of morpheme changes. The dictionary form of ‘to understand’ is *понимать* (ponimat’), whereas here the ending -*аю* designates that I have understood. Secondly, *тебя* is the genitive case form of *ты* (ty), the informal you. In this example, the morphological change expresses that *I* have understood *you*, thus asserting the relationship between them.

English, however, is an analytic language—one that relies on word order and helper words to convey relationships. Using the same example as above, in English it is absolutely necessary and imperative that one order those three words correctly. This allows one to continue to use the dictionary form without having to make any morphological changes. It would not make much sense to say ‘understand you’, as it does not express who did the

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understanding, or ‘I you understand’ as this is inherently confusing and thus meaningless. However, both of those combinations are acceptable and intelligible in Russian. Because понимать (ponimat’) is conjugated as понимаю (ponimayu), it is acceptable to drop я (ya, meaning I) entirely and it still remains clear that I did the understanding. It would also be possible to say тебя понимаю (tebya ponimayu, literally ‘I you understand’), but because of the morphological changes of each word, the meaning is still obvious.

Returning to the original subject of lemmatization, the process is more useful on synthetic languages where each dictionary form of a word has many inflected forms, than on analytic languages, like English, where the dictionary form remains relatively unchanged despite changes in usage. The Russian language data analyzed in this research was left un-lemmatized, however, performing a simple stemming test demonstrated that doing so did not impact the final outcome. The un-lemmatized word list comprised of 564493 words, including different inflected forms of the same dictionary-form word. Using a stem selection for the root word Род (rod) yielded 4339 results, or 0.77% of the total. Using a lemmatized list, containing only 53405 words, yielded 413 instances of the root word, again coming to 0.77% of the total number of words.

5.3 Demographics

The demographical data show that over the last decades, religion has become increasingly important among Russian people. This is not limited to Orthodoxy, however. While Eastern Orthodoxy may be the most prevalent religion in Russia, it is by no means the only one. The data show that there is a small, but measurable population of actively practicing pagans or spiritualists—they are most commonly denoted as ‘other’, however an in-depth knowledge of Russian culture and society reveal that those falling into this category
are Rodnovers. Keeping this in mind, the number of individuals identifying themselves as such has slowly increased since 1990, or, more specifically, since the fall of the Soviet Union. As the Russian Federation has no decreed religion nor state atheism as the Soviet regime had, members of all religions have been able to practice openly. As a result, not only have more people identified as religious in some sense, or become open members of a certain religion, but the importance of religion itself has gradually increased, as is shown by the Levada Center’s data on role of religion and how religious does one consider oneself to be. These data are presented in the Figures 3-6.

**Figure 3. Religious affiliation of former Soviet states’ populations over time.**
Figure 4. Religious affiliation of former Soviet states’ populations in 2020.

Figure 5. Trendlines of religiosity over time.
As this research concerns Rodnovery specifically, rather than religion generally, a historical explanation of the significance of these modern data is required. Rodnovery itself is incredibly ancient—its roots lie in the primordial religion of the Scythians and it was the official religion of the Kievan Rus’ until the Christianization of 988 AD. It was first documented in detail in the Primary Chronicle, written in the early 1100s. The first question posed by this research was to determine if there was enough evidence within the Russian language to conclude that it is, in part, based around the root word *rod*, the name of the primary god in Rodnovery. The answer was simple: in comparison to other languages, in this case English, the Russian language had an overwhelming number of words within its lexicon that shared the root word *rod*. The second question seeks to understand how and why Rodnovery managed to survive from ancient times until the present day. Based on both the
linguistic and demographic evidence, an inference can be drawn—that it is plausible that the basis of the language itself influenced the preservation of this belief system.

6. CONCLUSION

This research began by asking two interrelated questions: did the Slavic Native Faith, Rodnovery, survive over a thousand years of repression because its ideals are embedded within the Russian language itself and did the core lexicon East Slavic languages evolve around religious concepts? Answering these questions required first situating them within two separate fields of study, demographics and linguistics, respectively, and using two methods of statistical analysis, multivariate regression and time series regression. The ultimate conclusions were that the role of religion itself is ever increasing among the Russian people, and that among these people is a small but persistently growing percentage of self-identified Rodnovers, despite the faith having been officially overridden by Christianity during the days of the Kievan Rus’, and religion itself being suppressed during the Soviet era.

The linguistic reconstructive and analytical techniques yielded sufficiently compelling evidence to conclude that the core lexicon of the Old East Slavic language, and subsequently that of the Russian language, is heavily based around the root word *rod*. This suggests that the ancient Rodnover belief system, or at the very least its principle god, *Rod*, played an important role in shaping the development of the East Slavic linguistic family. Furthermore, it is this influence which may have helped preserve the core beliefs of Rodnovery itself and thus its survival into modernity.
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