

**The Slavs and their way of life**

The Slavs were originally an Indo-European tribe of which we do not have much information due to the fact that their ancestral homeland lay apart of the centre of the main historical events. First information comes from the antiquity scholars who named the Slavs as **Antes, Veneti or Viniti**.

 The ancestral homeland of the Slavs was originally to the north of the Carpathian Mountains, somewhere near the rivers **Dnieper, Vistula** and **Oder**. Under the influence of the Great Migration the Slavic tribes began to move which led to their subsequent division into **three major subgroups**:

1. East Slavs – Ukrainians, Russians, Belarussians
2. South Slavs – Croatians, Serbians, Bulgarians, Slovenians, Macedonians, etc.
3. West Slavs – South-west – Slovaks, Czechs

North-west – Poles, Sorbs

 First waves of Slavs came to eastern Slovakia between the 4th – 5th century. The Slavs came to the territory of western Slovakia from Hungarian lowland (S – SE). Groups that crossed the Carpathians settled in the north of Slovakia and other groups crossed the Moravian gate to the territory of Moravia and Czechia (then further to the west).

 The Slavs lived in **families** or **tribes**. They were the basic social units. They were ruled by **chiefs** who were elected by the **tribe elders**. Important decisions within the tribe were made at people's assembly – called **veča**. It was formed of tribe´s adult males.

 The Slav families were monogamous, only the chief had the privilege to have more wives. The proof of the monogamous marriages were smaller houses, so called **zemnice**/ **polozemnice,** which were small dugouts or pit-houses semi-recessed into the earth mostly of square shape with a gable roof. They were simply furnished, there was a small stone oven or a fireplace situated, and during the wintertime the cattle used to live inside together with people.

 The Slav´s main source of sustenance was **agriculture and livestock keeping**. They grew cereals, legumes, oilseeds, vegetables, fruits, kept horses, sheep, goats, pigs and poultry. Near their houses they dug out so-called **grain pits** 0,5 – 2 metres deep that served as food and grain storage. They were also **fishing, hunting and forest beekeeping**. For land cultivation they used wooden, later iron tools, for example a hoe.

They also spent their time with craftsmanship. Well preserved tools and products are the proof. They were skilled blacksmiths, carpenters, they knew how to process the animal skin, textiles, wood, metal, stone, etc. The ceramics of the Slavs were thick-walled which proves that they didn´t know the potter's wheel. Despite this it was elaborate.

 They believed in the afterlife. Because they could not explain many natural phenomena, they didn't understand them, they considered them, as well as the death, being supernatural beings. Their religion was **polytheistic**, they believed in many gods. They sacrificed gifts to their gods, mainly livestock, but also humans. **Perun** was considered as the main god. Until these days his name´s equivalent is used when swearing in the form of “do paroma”.

**Other deities:**

Veles - God of cattle, herds and wealth

Mokosh – Earth bread giver, goddess of sheep, fertility, richness and order

Morena - Goddess of death and winter

Vesna - Goddess of spring and life

Svarog – God of sun, fire and warmth

Svarozhits – God of fight and protection

Zhiva – Goddess of healing

Belbog – God of day and light

Chernobog – God of night and evil