

Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai 2.
XVI amžius,
parengė Norbertas Vėlius

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This impressive volume contains all the 16th century historical sources of information about Baltic religion and mythology beginning with a selection from Friedrich von Sachsen's *Neues Landesordnung* 'New land regulation' from 1503 (p. 10) and ending with Salomon Henning's *Warhafftiger und bestendiger Bericht* 'True and certain report' from 1589 (pp. 688-690). The book is also supplied with a list of abbreviations and all the works cited (pp. 691-719), an index of mythologems (pp. 720-768), an index of peoples and nations (pp. 769-773), a place name index (pp. 774-792) and an index of personal names (pp. 793-821).

Each entry is given in the original language and, if the original is in Latin, German or Polish respectively, it is supplied with a Lithuanian translation and commentaries by one or more authors. For example, the first selection from the *Neues Landesordnung* calls upon the government and the masters to do more to teach the Lithuanians and Old Prussians who work for them and to attract them to the (Christian) faith. Furthermore sorcerers and sorceresses are to be arrested and punished according to the law. In his commentary Algirdas Matulevičius writes that Mannhardt, who published this extract, concluded that even in the 16th century it was impossible either with punishments by civil and religious authorities or with the good will of priests to eradicate paganism (p. 9). Norbertas Vėlius adds that the order had in mind not so much the local people suspected of sorcery, of which there were plenty everywhere, but rather the wandering propagators of the old belief. He also quotes Mannhardt to the effect that there were more of them in the northeastern part of Prussia because of the proximity to Sambia where the bishopric was not so concerned with strengthening the faith of its wards.

The second selection is from Erasmus Stella's *De borussiae antiquitatibus* 'Concerning Prussian antiquities' written between 1508 and 1510 and published in Basel in 1518, according to Eugenija Ulčínaitė (p. 11). She writes also that Erasmus Stella was in fact Johann Stüller and was born in Leipzig, although the exact year is unknown. Norbertas Vėlius adds (p. 12), that knowing that Erasmus Stella quoted his sources rather inaccurately and that he mixed up and falsified much, and liked to create half historical, half fantastic legends, one can question the authenticity of the mythological information which he wrote. But when one compares this with other sources, it doesn't seem that his facts have been invented, but that they harmonize rather well with other accounts.

Since it is impossible to discuss in a review of reasonable length every item (as, indeed, each item deserves), I will comment rather arbitrarily and at random on some of the selections. Between 1520 and 1529 Simon Grunau, a Dominican monk who lived in Dominican monasteries closest to Elbing and later to Gdansk, wrote a large work entitled *Cronika und beschreibung allerlütlichenn, nützlichsten und waaren historien des namkundigenn landes zu Prewssen* 'Chronicle and description of the most amusing, useful and true known history of the Prussian land' consisting of 24 parts in which he described the Prussian land, its boundaries, nature, inhabitants, economy and the history of the country from the oldest times up to 1525. The German order was secularized in 1525 and in 1526 the *Cronika* was hastily re-edited and in 1529 supplemented (p. 35). According to Rimantas Jasas (p. 37) the greatest value of the *Cronika* is as a document for study of the attitudes and world-view of the Catholic elements during the period of the reformation. After a thorough discussion of Grunau's sources and the various opinions about his reliability Norbertas Vėlius concludes that Grunau's *Prussian Chronicle* is one of the most popular sources and that he has been quoted and criticized by a multitude of investigators of Baltic religion and mythology (p. 46).

According to Ingė Lukšaitė the *Sudovian booklet* entitled *Der Vnglaubigen Sudauen ihrer Bockheiligung mit sambt andern Ceremonien, so sie tzu brauchen gepflegeth* 'The goat sacrifice by the unbelieving Sudovians along with other ceremonies which they are in the habit of performing' is an anonymous tract about the Sambian Sudovian customs, way of life, beliefs and mythology and is to be dated between 1520 and 1530 (p. 123). Norbertas Vėlius writes (p. 125) that frequently Old Prussian mythology is reconstructed for the most part relying on this booklet and sources which were under its influence. Nevertheless it must be noted, according to Vėlius, that the *Sudovian booklet* describes Sudovian, not Old Prussian, gods and customs. It is true, of course, that the Sudovians had already lived in Prussia for several centuries, and had experienced Old Prussian influence, but the author of the booklet did not always carefully distinguish between Sudovian and Old Prussian beliefs. In addition the booklet was composed a few

centuries after the prohibition of the Sudovian and Old Prussian religions, which had in that time been subject to the influence of the Christian religion (p. 126). In this booklet the Sudovian gods are listed in the order of their importance: heaven - earth - under the earth. Thus we encounter (pp. 128-129): *Ockopirmus* - the first god of heaven and the stars; *Swayxtix* - the god of light; *Auschauts* - the god of the lame, sick and healthy; *Autrimpus* - the god of oceans and seas; *Potrimpus* - the god of running water; *Bardoayts* - the god of boats; *Pergrubrius* - who nourishes leaves and grass; *Pilnitis* - this god enriches and fills barns; *Parkuns* - the god of thunder, lightning and rain; *Peckols* - the god of hell and darkness; *Pockols* - the flying souls or devils; *Puschkayts* - the earth god under the elder tree; *Barstucke* - the little people; *Markopole* - the people of the earth. The exceptions are *Auschauts* who is placed directly after the heavenly gods and *Parkuns* who is placed after the earth gods.

The *Sudovian* booklet furnishes us also with the phrase *Kellewese periot, Kellewese periot, der treiber kompt* 'the (wagon) driver is coming' (p. 136). Mažiulis, ascribing the work to Maletius, gives the variant *Kellewefze perioth, der treiber ist kommen* 'the (wagon) driver has arrived'.¹ According to Mažiulis there have been attempts to explain the form *perioth* as reflecting a 3rd singular athematic present (cf. Old Indic *yā-ti* 'goes'), but he is of the opinion that the translation does not imply a present, but rather a preterit tense.² Thus he reconstructs the verb as **perjāt*, which he analyzes as a nom. sg. neut. past passive participle < **perjāt*?. In any case, whether one interprets the Old Prussian form as present or preterit, one must assume the loss of a final vowel (if present then **-i*, and if preterit participle, then **-a*). I have accepted Mažiulis' explanation of the morphology, but have a slightly different explanation of the syntax, namely that the noun *Kellewefze* may be in the nominative case and that *perioth* may reflect **perjātā* a neuter *-t-* participle in predicate position. The construction would then be more or less parallel to Old Indic *Yamaḥ* (nom. sg. masc.) *pra-yā-ta-ḥ* (nom. sg. masc. *-t-* participle) 'Y. set out on the road', in which Old Prussian *-jā-tā* = Old Indic *-yā-ta-* the only difference being that the Old Indic participle shows grammatical concord, whereas the Old Prussian participle apparently does not.³ The use of the neuter adjective without grammatical concord in predicate position is common, however, in Baltic and other Indo-European languages.

1 *Prūsų kalbos paminklai*, compiled by Vytautas Mažiulis, Vilnius: Mintis, 1966, 30-31; Vytautas Mažiulis, *Prūsų kalbos paminklai* 2, Vilnius: Mokslas, 1981, 63.

2 Vytautas Mažiulis, *Prūsų kalbos etimologijos žodynas* 3(L-P), Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidykla, 1996, 263-264.

3 William R. Schmalstieg, "Kellewesze perioth 'der Treiber ist kommen' 'the (Wagon) Driver Has Arrived'", *Baltu Filologija* 11(1), 2002, 73-76; Jan Gonda, *A concise elementary grammar of the Sanskrit language*, translated by Gordon B. Ford, University, Alabama, 1966, 90.

Ingė Lukšaitė (p. 399) writes that Michael the Lithuanian (Michalo Litanus) was really Venclovas Mikalojaitis from Maišiagala, a man with broad horizons and learning, who knew Latin and Lithuanian very well and could compare the lexicon of the two languages in many fields. Around 1550 he wrote *De moribus tartarorum, lituanorum et moscorum* 'Concerning the customs of the Tartars, Lithuanians and Muscovites' which was published in Basel in 1615. In his attempt to further the notion that the forefathers of the Lithuanians came from Rome, Michael the Lithuanian published a list of Latin nouns which have congeners in Lithuanian. Apparently he assumed that the Lithuanian congener would be obvious to anybody who knew Lithuanian, because the congeners are not given in the original (p. 402), but only in the Lithuanian translation (p. 404).

As is well known, the great majority of these words are, indeed, Indo-European congeners and it is, of course, due to the extraordinary conservatism of the Lithuanian language that even the person without philological training notices many resemblances between Lithuanian and Latin words immediately. In the translation, however, a few misprints have crept in. Lat. *tenuis* 'thin' is cognate with Lith. *tėvas*, not *tėvas* 'father' and for Lat. *pecus* 'cattle' one wonders why the rare form *pėkus* (according to LKŽ IX, 754 known from Friedrich Kurschat's dictionary) is given rather than the more common *pėkus* 'animals, herd.' The translator, Ignas Jonynas, gives no Lithuanian cognate for *vetustus* 'aged, ancient,' but it would, of course, be the somewhat archaic *vėtušas*.

It was not only Michael the Lithuanian who noticed the connection between Latin and Lithuanian. In Maciej Strykowski's *Kronika polska, litewska, żmódzka i wszystkiej Rusi* 'Polish, Lithuanian, Samogitian and All Russian Chronicle' we read (book 11, 4th chapter, here p. 524-525) '[...] Gedimin [...] las ciemny bogom poświęcił, (co zwano u łacińskich pogan i inszych narodów *Lucus*, a Litwa i dziś las zowie *Laukos*)' ('[...] Gediminas [...] dedicated to the gods a dark forest [which is called among the Latin pagans and other nations *Lucus*, and Lithuania[ns] even today call a forest *Laukos*]'). So Strykowski must have noticed the relationship between Lat. *lucus* 'a wood, grove, or thicket of trees sacred to a deity' and Lith. *laukas* 'field'.⁴ In the Lithuanian translation (p. 558) the word *Laukos* has been corrected to *laukas* but Pol. *las* 'forest' is translated by Lith. *giria*, not *laukas*.

Some of the stories concerning the conversion of the Baltic peoples to Christianity are absolutely charming. According to Strykowski, book 15, chapter 5, (pp. 534, 567), once on Good Friday a Bernardine monk was demonstrating Jesus' sufferings by flagellation (*ad flagellationem*), and a Samogitian, a simple village fellow, asked his friend: 'Who is it that the priest is beating?' The friend

⁴ Ernst Fraenkel, *Litauisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Heidelberg: Carl Winter;

Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1955ff, 344.

answered: 'the Lord God.' The simple fellow then asked: 'Is that the one who made our rye crop bad?' and his friend answered: 'The very same,' so the simple fellow shouted to the preacher: 'Great job, dear priest, whip this God, who gave us the bad rye crop!'

There is also the well known story, quoted here from Guagnini's *Kronika Sarmacyi europejskiej* 'European Sarmatian chronicle' (p. 476, 489-491), that when a Christian preacher said that the world had been created, one of the Lithuanian nobles said to the king that the priest was not telling the truth, because the priest was a young man and that the other listeners including himself, who were much older, did not remember the creation. The king answered that the priest wasn't saying that the creation had occurred during his (the priest's) life time, but much earlier, about 5,000 years ago. Well, estimates of the age of the universe are different nowadays, so it seems to me that the Lithuanian noble was justified in expressing his skepticism.

In his *De diis Samagitarum caeterorumque Sarmatarum et falsorum Christianorum* 'Concerning the gods of the Samogitians and other Sarmatians and false Christians' Jan Łasicki writes (p. 580, 593) that when Iacobus Lascouius (Jokūbas Laskauskas) preached to the idolatrous Balts that there was only one God, they answered him: 'Why are you foisting off on us one God, as if he were more powerful than all of ours? One God is just one: more gods can do more.' Unfortunately we are not informed as to how Lascouius answered this question, but the question shows to my satisfaction, at least, that the idolatrous Balts were not so stupid.

Misprints include: p. 157, line 5 from the bottom, *antra vetus* > *antra vertus*; p. 300, line 6 from the bottom, *žmgu* > *žmogu*; p. 468, line 18, *Волътер* > *Вольтер*; p. 495, line 9, *pakui* > *paskui*. Sometimes it is not easy to locate the source of some thought. For example, I was interested in the statement that in the mythology and folklore of many Indo-Europeans the windows of the house are called eyes and human eyes are called windows (p. 239). The references given are to Цивьян, 1972 and Топоров, 1984. Since I have defended the view that Old Prussian (Elbing Vocabulary 214) *accodis* 'rochloch, hole in the wall for the elimination of smoke' is to be read as /akutis/ and derives from Proto-Baltic **akas* 'eye' (just as Lith. dial. *langutis* derives from *langas*), I was interested in seeing further parallels.⁵ Unfortunately the Civ'jan article was not immediately available to me. I did, however, look into the Toporov dictionary, but since no page number was given, it was impossible for me to locate the reference, even though I did scan the entire volume. Time spent reading anything by Toporov is always, indeed, time well spent, but it would have been much easier if an appropriate page reference had been available.

⁵ William R. Schmalstieg, "Lithuanian *akas* 'ice-hole' and Old Prussian *accodis* '*eye, opening'", *Blt* 36(1), 2002, 19-23.

The compiler, translators and commentators are to be congratulated on preparing this extremely useful source of information on Baltic religion and mythology. I might add also that the book is beautifully bound and printed. The book will undoubtedly be in the future an indispensable tool for research in the field.

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