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VERIFICATION OF THE MYTHOLOGICAL MATERIAL ON CELEBRATIONS RECORDED BY MATTHAEUS PRAETORIUS: RYE HARVEST CELEBRATION

In analyzing the pre-Christian culture of the Balts, the nucleus of which consists of pagan religious logic and mythology, there is a problem

of the value and reliability of the recorded writings about it. The article reviews and verifies the mythological information having a direct relation to the rye harvest celebration that Matthaeus Praetorius (Matthäus Prätorius) recorded in the source "Deliciae Prussicae oder Preussische Schaubühne" (Deliciae Prussicae or Prussian Theater, late 17th century). The scholars specializing in Baltic religion and mythology used the mythological material recorded by Praetorius very commonly in the 19th to 21st century, have been using it currently, and are likely do so in the future. Therefore, it makes sense to try and find out which things are (not) authentic in the manuscript. In succession, the paper discusses the interpretations made by the 19th to 21st century researchers who analyzed the mythological material recorded by Praetorius about rye harvest celebration. The context of the research made in the 19th to 21st century has revealed that the scholars of earlier periods gave different assessments to the reliability of the aforementioned mythological material provided by Praetorius: they did not question authenticity, but considered the information to be quite reliable, and used it in their works; the scholars noticed the authenticity problem and more or less tried to solve it. The analysis suggests to determine that the mythological material related directly to the rye harvest celebration recorded by Praetorius is to be considered authentic and reliable. This is to be supposed because the mythological data in question are, in many cases, coincident with (and / or reiterate) the information that ethnographers of a much later period of time collected. The study makes it possible to state that both in the period of time described by Praetorius and in the late 19th century to early 20th century, almost identical patterns of thinking were recorded. All this shows the inheritance and continuity of the tradition, the insularity of the rural community and the inertness of the peasant worldview.

Keywords: Matthaeus Praetorius, rye harvest celebration, authenticity, Pre-Christian Baltic religion and mythology.

Аннотация

Анализ дохристианской балтийской культуры, ядром которой является языческая религиозная логика, поднимает проблему достоверности ее письменности. В статье рассматривается мифологическая информация, непосредственно связанная с праздником жатвы ржи, записанная Маттеусом Преториум (Matthäus Prätorius) в источнике «Deliciae Prussicae, oder Preussische Schaubühne», конец XVII века), и производится ее верификация. Последовательно обсуждаются интерпретации, проведенные в XIX–XXI веках учеными, исследовавшими зафиксированный М. Преториум мифологический материал о празднике жатвы ржи. Контекст проведенных в XIX–XXI веках исследований показал,

что ученые до сих пор давали разную оценку достоверности мифологического материала М. Претория: не ставили под сомнение его подлинность, считая информацию достаточно достоверной, а также использовали его в своих работах, пытаясь решить проблему подлинности. Исследование подтвердило, что мифологический материал, записанный М. Преторием и имеющий непосредственное отношение к празднику жатвы ржи, следует считать подлинным и достоверным.

Ключевые слова: Маттеус Преторий, праздник жатвы ржи, подлинность, дохристианская балтийская культура и мифология.

I n t r o d u c t i o n

The principle objective of this study is to verify the reliability of the mythological information about rye harvest celebration that Matthaeus Praetorius (*Matthäus Prätorius*) recorded in his work "Deliciae Prussicae or Prussian Theater" (*Deliciae Prussicae, oder Preussische Schaubühne*, hereinafter referred to as the "Deliciae Prussicae"). The study will do that by (1) reviewing and assessing the interpretations made by scholars in the 19th to 21st centuries, who analyzed or employed the data that Praetorius provided (research context) and (2) analyzing the material that Praetorius captured and comparing it with ethnographic and verbal folklore data (verification). In seeking to accomplish the established objective, the study uses analytical method, hermeneutic interpretation method, and comparative method. It is noteworthy to mention that this is the third written work from the planned series of studies which aims to determine the reliability of Praetorius' data on the celebration. The authenticity of Praetorius' mythological information on s o w i n g celebration, midsummer herb fest, and driving the cattle to pasture celebration has already been discussed in two publications [see 31¹; 32, 110–132; see also 33, 135–176]. Since the introductory part of the first publication in the series – the one on sowing – outlines the basic characteristics of the agricultural celebrations, captured by Praetorius, which potentially reflect or have conserved the relics of the Balts' ancient religious behavior, the readers who seek a

¹ The publication is currently presented to the editorial board of the research journal *Res Humanitariae* of Klaipėda University, Lithuania (chief editor – prof. dr. Rimantas Balsys). The work is reviewed, evaluated positively, waiting for the press. The article is scheduled for release in *Res Humanitariae*'s XXIVth volume (Q1 2019).

more detailed immersion into the subject in question would also find it useful to familiarize themselves with that material as well [31; see also 33, 135–160].

The context of research into mythological information about rye harvest celebration

In order to actualize the problem of verifying the mythological data that Praetorius provided, we will first assess the context of previous research. After that, we will continue to present chronologically and describe the interpretations by the 19th to 21st centuries researchers who have examined (used) the mythological material about rye harvest celebration recorded by Praetorius.

Eduard Wolter (1896) stated that Lithuanian paganism manifested itself in showing respect for the land, or the cult of the land-goddess *Žemyna* [16, 352]. According to him, at the beginning of the spring agricultural activities, while bringing dung into the fields and starting to plough, the members of the cult were carrying out the rituals which they called *žemyneliavimas* [16, 352]. He interpreted that "in celebrating the end of rye harvest, the demon of reaping or vegetation was worshipped in the form of the last sheaf" [16, 352]. Wolter relies on Praetorius' "Deliciae Prussicae" and treats mythological information as reliable. The question of authenticity is left out.

Aleksander Brückner (1904), inspired by Praetorius' mythological material, writes that "<...> the deity of fields, grain crops and harvest lived in cultivated fields and took care of fertility; when the time of harvest came, it was necessary to pray for it to purify the soil, to thank it for the good harvest, and to gain its grace for the coming year; during such reaping ceremonies, the Prussians would weave (from the last sheaf or head of grain crops?) the shapes of animals or humans unknown to us; they called them *Kurku* and respected them as deity" [16, 477–478]. Brückner operates the mythological information provided by Praetorius, which he gives positive assessment to. There is no attempt to resolve the issue of the reliability of Praetorius' mythological material.

Pranė Dundulienė (1963), in her work "Žemdirbystė Lietuvoje (nuo seniausių laikų iki 1971 metų)" ("Agriculture in Lithuania (From Most Ancient Times Until 1971)"), has rewritten several fragments of the rye harvest celebration captured by Praetorius [9, 165, 182–183]. Basically, her results are fairly correct, and in succession, she also provides references to the primary source. True, Dundulienė states inaccurately that the homestead owner and his hired farm workers, after reaping a sheaf, "<...> would seat themselves on the ground <...>" [9, 165].

"Deliciae Prussicae" emphasizes that "<...> the homestead owner seats himself down upon the r e a p e d r y e ², his workers as well, each one on his truss and in his swath <...>" [25, 507]³. Hence, between the cropper and the ground, there is rye left as a kind of mediator to separate the different spaces (the land – the rye – the human). Along with that, the scholar presents ethnographic examples from the 19th to 20th centuries that reflect the tradition of the first sheaf [9, 165]. However, she does not do that in order to justify and / or deny the authenticity of Praetorius' mythological data. Rather, she intends to draw some attention to the reflection of the ancient worldview (namely, that of Baltic origin) in the cycle of works performed by Lithuanian farmer.

Rimantas Balsys (2011), in his article "Dievo stalas" XVI–XVII a. rašytinių šaltinių duomenimis" ("God's Table" In the Data Of Written Sources From 16th to 17th Centuries"), noted the celebration of rye harvest described by Praetorius [4, 157; see also 7, 91–92]. The scholar, using the latter as a foundation, formulates a hypothesis that "<...> straws (hay) also had a symbolic meaning – that manifested itself through the function of mediation between gods and people, between this world and the world beyond" [7, 93]. In another study, he also operates the data of Praetorius' writings to justify the statement that "in the process of desacralization of the ancient harvest deities, <...> the protection of crops is gradually taken over by the Christian God and some of the saints" [3, 157–158]. Therefore, in succession, he also provides rather full-dressed fragments of the descriptions of the beginning and end of rye harvest celebration, in which rituals of *žemynėliavimas* are performed, with having prayed and thanked God before them [3, 158]. Balsys gives positive assessment to the written mythological information about rye harvest celebration that Praetorius recorded, and does not raise the issue of authenticity separately.

Rolandas Kregždys (2012), basing on the ethnographic material that Dundulienė collected, argues that the rye harvesting rituals that

² All spacings in the publication text and quotations, unless otherwise stated, are made by the author of the study – Ž. V.

³ Identical inaccuracy should also be noted in the following: 10, 226, 247–248. Interestingly, alongside Praetorius' mythological information, we find a remark by Dundulienė: "It would seem that the reapers that Praetorius mentions were men, but this is improbable, because in those times, they would reap by using sickles, and the reapers were women" [10, 248]. The scholar questions the reliability of the source data, but does not undertake carrying out the verification.

Praetorius described in *N a d r u v a* are not of Prussian origin, but rather, are more characteristic to and witnessed in (to be read: authentic to) Lithuanians [12, 145]. In other words, in this particular case, he does not exclude the value of Praetorius' mythological material, but doubts the attribution of the described celebration to Prussians, because "<...> such true Prussian rites have not been recorded in any reliable source <...>" [12, 145]. The monograph by this researcher is quite complicated to read, as he has written it in a specific style. But one thing is clear: Kregždys feels and admits that Praetorius' "<...> works have also captured some authentic [as we guess, highly archaic] factographic motives <...> but they need to be verified <...>" [12, 75]. That is exactly what he attempts to do, usually from the linguistic aspect.

Nijolė Laurinkienė (2013), in "Pirmieji pjaunami javai" ("The First Reaped Grain Crops") subsection of "Aukojimai per rugiapjūtę" ("Offerings At the Rye Harvest") section of her monograph "Žemyna ir jos mitinis pasaulis" ("Žemyna And Her Mythological World"), states that "The first fruit of grain harvest was considered to be a substance of specific quality" [15, 290]. Further on, basing on Praetorius' testimony on the handful of rye that the homestead owner reaps, first of all, secretly from others, she interprets that "<...> it [the first fruit of the grain harvest – Ž. V.] is imagined to contain some strong and fresh, somewhat primordial vitality, that is to say, specific potency that the new harvest has accumulated <...>" [15, 290]. The scholar seems to base the homestead owner's fasting before the beginning of reaping, which Praetorius recorded, on the material of late ethnographic recordings registered in the surroundings of Dieveniškės (2006), as well as on the ban for the Roman matrons (*matres*) on eating bread, which covered the whole period of celebrating the sacred anniversary of Cerera [15, 290–291]. In succession, her study speaks of the tradition of making offerings of bread and salt on the ground, on the spot where the first rye heads have been reaped, as recorded in the territory of Lithuania (Poškonys district and Adutiškis) [15, 292–293]. Laurinkienė, without giving more detailed explanations, states that all this is "<...> of course, making offerings to the land, in other words, to Žemyna" [15, 293]. Then, she rewrites Praetorius' mythological material which testifies to the respectful behavior of the homestead owner with a handful of pre-reaped rye which would guarantee the blessing of all the grains [15, 293]. The scholar concludes that "Such actions with the first fruit being offered to gods are to be seen as a manifestation of sacred practice, because they were performed by the homestead owner or senior priest, that is to say, clergyman <...>, the priest of the community of that time" [15, 293]. Apparently, the examples from the 20th century that she presents along with this one, reflecting the utmost respect for the first fruit of grain

harvest ("the guest", "the master", "the old man") or other realia associated with it, should testify on the behalf of Praetorius' material? [15, 293–294, 294–299]. In the following section of the monograph, "Pirmasis javų pėdas – auka" ("The First Sheaf of Grain As An Offering"), she presents the historical and cultural context of the first harvest as an offering in other countries (Egypt, Greece, the Slavs, the Germanes) [15, 299–301]. Judging by all this, Laurinkienė trusts the authenticity of the mythological data provided by Praetorius, and forms her concluding statements based on them.

In the "Žemynėliavimas per pradėtuves" ("Žemynėliavimas At the Beginning of Reaping") subsection of the monograph under discussion, the scholar uses the following material presentation model: 1) rewrites Praetorius' mythological information as a historical context whose authenticity is not questioned [15, 302–303]. The purpose of Praetorius' data is to demonstrate the close links between the "X" celebration and Žemyna. For example, "The direct and obvious connection that the beginning of the reaping has with Žemyna is testified by Praetorius' descriptions of (according to him, ancient Prussian) rituals of žemynėliavimas on the first day of reaping <...>" [15, 302]; 2) next to Praetorius' information, she reports closed-valued examples of agrarian customs captured by ethnographers in the territory of Lithuania [15, 303].

In the "Rugių bobos interpretacijos lietuvių tyrėjų darbuose" ("Interpretations Of The Rye Wifey In The Works by Lithuanian Researchers") subsection Laurinkienė, referring to the reaping of the last rye in the harvest, bases on the description of *Rye Wifey*⁴ provided by lexicographer Friedrich Kurschat (1874) (according to him, the *Rye Wifey* is the goddess of sowing) [15, 313]. The scholar gives a favourable praise of Kurschat, emphasizing that he "has characterized himself as a record keeper of reliable material <...>" [15, 313]. True, Kurschat himself did not specify in the "Vokiečių–lietuvių kalbų žodynas" ("German-Lithuanian Dictionary") which exactly goddess he was talking about [13, 140]. However, Laurinkienė believes that the very fact that the being is associated with sowing demonstrates that the goddess is Žemyna [15, 313]. What is more, the latter hypothesis is reinforced by Praetorius' text, which says that the sowing celebration "in the language of the present day, is held in the honour of the lovely goddess Žemyna" [15, 313]. The recorded attitude of the scholar is important, because it shows that Laurinkienė is well aware that not all information provided by written sources can be equally trusted. In other

⁴ Laurinkienė compares the *Rye Wifey* with the *Iron Wifey* [15, 316].

words, she feels the existence of the problem of ancient written sources. The following question arises: if the researcher understands that not all material in the ancient sources is equally authentic, why does she not question the truthfulness of Praetorius' mythological data so widely used? All the more, his mythological material – as a kind of foundation – is employed very often to reconstruct the mythological image of the goddess *Žemyna*.

However, even more interestingly, in the last subsection⁵ of the "Aukojimai per rugiapūtę" ("Offerings During the Rye Harvest") section of Laurinkienė's monograph, the information about the wreath [see 25, 509]⁶ – the one that the farmer wears and, seemingly, weaves on his own for the end of reaping – is omitted. Why is that? After all, according to the previously noticed and discussed model of material presentation, Laurinkienė should behave in the opposite way, i.e. rewrite the information without questioning its authenticity. The answer seems to lie in the text of the monograph. The scholar begins "Pabaigtuvių vainikas – javų dievybių ir pjovėjų atributas" ("The Wreath For The End of Reaping – The Attribute of Cereal Deities and Reapers") subsection with a picture of *Demeter* as a crowned Greek goddess [15, 352]. At the same time, the text remembers the Romans' Cerera, who "<...> was imagined to be wearing a wreath made of grain heads <...>" [15, 352]. Further on, she is trying to "restore" the outward appearance of *Žemyna*, although we do not have any specific data about it. The scholar uses implicit connections between *Krūminė* and *Žemyna*, as well as the romanticized (in other words, inspired by the antique tradition) description provided by Teodor Narbutt. According to him, *Krūminė* is "crowned with a wreath of flowers, with a circle of rays in the shape of grain heads around her" [22, 97]. Then, the text goes on to the ethnographic data, on the basis of which it is understood that "<...> it were only women who weaved the wreath, and they would start this ceremony while the others were still stooking" [15, 357]⁷. Apparently, it is not incidentally

⁵ "The Wreath For The End of Rye Reaping As An Attribute Of The Cereal Deities And Reapers".

⁶ Or the third plotline of the rye harvest celebration ("Verification of mythological information on the rye harvest celebration"), described in the next section of this publication.

⁷ The subsection emphasizes the exclusive precedence of females more than once: "It was more often women than men that carried the weaven wreath to hand over to the homestead owner and housewife" [15, 358]; "Because the

that the researcher carries out a separate analysis of the Belarusian tradition which has a recorded case when, at the end of rye reaping, a young girl crowned with a wreath of grain heads was referred to as *багіня* – a goddess [15, 354, 361–362]. Another example of the "primeval ritual" is given in the form of weaving a wreath from the last reaped grain heads, as recorded in Butrimonys district [23, 120]. All this enables the author to state that "The sitting in a circle around the bread and salt surrounded by a "plait" of rye is an offering to *Žemyna*, undoubtedly, a primeval ritual" [15, 357]. Laurinkienė concludes: "The grain harvest agent [it is understood that the context described above prompts this agent to be mostly female – *Ž. V.*] reminds one of the very deity of grain crops, who has this attribute in disposition" [15, 362]. Our impression is that mythological information on the wreath worn by the homestead owner for the end of grain reaping, as recorded by Praetorius, "got in the way" of the narrative that Laurinkienė created about the goddess *Žemyna* and, therefore, was omitted. In the author's view, such use of ancient written sources should not be practiced.

An overview and analysis of the interpretations of mythological material about rye harvest celebration that Praetorius provided reveals that the scholars of the 19th to 21st centuries can be divided into two parts based on the use and evaluation of his information. The first one did not discuss over the question of the authenticity of Matthaeus Praetorius' mythological data, but considered them sufficiently reliable, and used them in their scientific works (Eduard Wolter, Aleksander Brückner, Pranė Dundulienė, Rimantas Balsys, Nijolė Laurinkienė). The case of Laurinkienė is worth noting individually. It is unique in that the scholar uses the mythological information provided by Praetorius as a historical context (foundation) whose authenticity she does not question. The main purpose of her interpretations is to justify the mythological image of *Žemyna* as an all-embracing ancestress. In seeking to achieve this objective, Laurinkienė, alongside Praetorius' testimonials, provides ethnographic recordings from a later period of time. We can say that by doing so she, unconsciously, in certain cases, justifies the authenticity of individual fragments of the source in question. On the other hand, we have recorded the behavior of the researcher where she, intentionally, omits the information gathered by Praetorius – on the wreath worn by the homestead owner for celebrating the end of rye reaping. According to the data available, we should believe that this happened because the

wreath is more often handed over to the housewives, it means they are given the priority to rule in the house" [15, 360].

latter material did not correspond to the narrative about goddess *Žemyna* as constructed by Laurinkienė. According to the author, the aforementioned model of using information from ancient written sources should not be practiced. The second part of scholars felt the problem of authenticity of the mythological material provided by Praetorius and tried to solve it more or less (Rolandas Kregždys).

Verification of mythological information on the rye harvest celebration

The sixth chapter of the fifth book of "Deliciae Prussicae" deals with the description of rye harvest celebration. Depending on the recorded mythological data, it is possible to reconstruct four (0, 1, 2, 3)⁸ major plotlines of rye harvest celebration: 0. Preparing for the rye harvest celebration, 1. The first part of rye harvest celebration – *Pradetuwe* (led by the homestead owner), 2. The second part of rye harvest celebration (led by the homestead owner). 2.1. The second part of rye harvest celebration (led by the senior priest), 3. End of the celebration – *Ruggpjuties pabeigtuwe* (led by the homestead owner). Praetorius did not describe the third part of rye harvest celebration that would be led by the senior priest.

0 plotline [25, 505, 507]. The homestead owner is preparing for the celebration. Secretly from others, a few days before the beginning of works, he reaps in the rye field a handful of rye and takes it to the granary⁹ (*Klete*), where he will store the grain. This must be done in fasting (having had no food or drinks), so that nobody would appropriate his first harvest, or damage the harvest by a spell. On the first day of rye

⁸ The plotlines of the "X" celebrations will be marked with Arabic numerals starting with zero. In this context, zero shall mark the stage of preparation for the "X" celebration recorded by Praetorius. Although preparation for making offerings is an important matter, however, judging from the source of Praetorius, it is not yet a ritual. Due to this, to mark the preparing for the celebration with a zero appears to be a rational solution (zero is a number, too, but it is not as concrete as, for example, the figure of one or two).

⁹ Only the grain that had been dried, threshed and winnowed (separated from the chaff) was transported to the barns (granaries). Here (away from the fire and safer from the thieves and mice), a part of the grain loaded into garners was usually used for food, while others were preserved carefully until the new sowing [5, 195].

reaping, before going outside for the works, he takes a "good hunk" (*gut Kamp*) of bread and a slice of cured pork fat. The housewife, on the first day of rye reaping, must cook a meal at home. There is ethnographic evidence of a much later period of time that prompt for the benefit of the latter material provided by Praetorius, which potentially demonstrates stability and continuity of the tradition (see 2, 193 (positions 2935–2936); see also 11, 38; 9, 194–195).

1 plotline [25, 505, 507]. 1.1. TIMING. The celebration takes place when the rye ripens, around the end of July or the beginning of August¹⁰, on the morning of the first rye harvest day ("quite a while after breakfast"). According to Jonas Balyš, "Nearly all the describers of the rye harvest celebration customs state that they begin to reap the rye around St. Anne's day (July 26)" [2, 169 (positions 2680–2681)]¹¹. "Later than St. Jacob's day (August 25), no one around here would begin to reap the rye: even before that day, almost everyone would have their rye reaped and preparing for the end of reaping. In those times, they would say: "Whoever has reaped the rye before Jacob, will have some bread, and whoever didn't, will stare into his feedbag (*Antalieptė*)" [2, 169–170 (position 2682)]. From the lunar point of view, most often, the attempt was made to start the harvesting works at full moon, so that the granaries and the barns would be full [2, 170 (positions 2684–2688); 9, ¹⁶¹]. Earlier, in many places in Lithuania, it was believed that the end of the week (Friday, Saturday) was the best time to begin reaping the rye (contrary to the start of the week), because then, one would thresh more rye, and the rye bread would be more filling and abundant [2, 170 (positions 2691–2697); 9, 161; cf. 8, 79]. 1.2. LOCATION. The field where the rye is being reaped. 1.3. PERSON(-S) WHO MAKE(S) THE OFFERING. Central one: the homestead owner; minor one(-s) – the men of the household and male hired workers. 1.4. INANIMATE OFFERING (-S). The homestead owner with his people – each one in his own swath

¹⁰ Since the climate in our country is not exactly uniform, the rye is not always ripe at the same time. For example, in the 19th century, Lithuanian farmers started the rye harvest around mid-July and the second half of July. However, in Southern Lithuania (*Seinai, Lazdijai*), rye was reaped and brought together a week earlier. In some places, in Samogitia and Northern Lithuania, farmers also began to harvest rye in August and early August [9, 161].

¹¹ Katkus, in discussing the harvest of 1862, writes the following: "In the middle of July, hay was cleaned, but rye – if you want, reap it, or if you want, keep it for one or two more days" [11, 31].

– reap(s) down a handful of rye heads. He and all the other workers seat themselves down on the armfuls of rye that each one has reaped; each one sits down inside his swath. The homestead owner slices the bread and cured pork fat into as many pieces as there are workers in the field. Having sliced them, he begins to pray: giving thanks to God for allowing him to live to see this time; asking God to bless the harvest; to protect him and his relatives from all misfortunes. Then they eat all the food (the pork and the bread), and begin to reap the rye (eating the offerings together). Cf. the episode described by Jan Łasicki, which tells about the behavior of a Samogitian during the thunderstorm and his relationship with the offering, i.e. a solid lump of cured pork fat that was intended for the god of thunder *Perkūnas*¹².

We can find the tradition recorded by Praetorius, with not much of a change, described abundantly by the 19th century ethnographers. For example, "The homestead owner [during the rye harvest – Ž. V.] must go outside along with his workers and make it through the first plot of land, at least making the first sheaf, sometimes also to sheaf it, often it is the housewife who sheafs it. In the opinion of Šimonys people, the homestead owner does it so that he would not be left without bread. In Rietavas district, the reapers, who leave for work earlier, would not start reaping without the homestead owner, but would stand around the rye, waiting for him; when the owner finishes reaping the first swath, or at least the first section, then the servants begin to reap, too. In Paežerėliai district, the workers, having gone outside, wait for the homestead owner to come, if he lingers, they do not reap.<...> In Vilkija district, when the homestead owner comes late, the workers tie him up with a rye band, lift him up, and shout "Hooray!" <...> In Antalieptė, when the homestead owner comes around, everyone ceases reaping and greets him" [2, 172 (position 2706); cf. 8, 72–73, 86, 90; 9, 165]. It should be noted that ethnography reports that the owner sometimes would come late to the reaping. Such behavior seems eccentric. The more so, knowing well the great importance that the successful reaping of rye (grain crops) had to the farmer's economy and his family. What could be

¹² " P e r c u n o s , to them, is a god of thunderstorms, whom, when the sky is roaring with thunder, the farmer, with his head uncovered, and bearing the lump on his shoulders, addresses with the following words: " P e r c u n e d e u a i t e n i e m u s k i v n d m a n a , d i e v v u m e l s u t a v v i p a l t i m i e s s u " – " Pull yourself together, – he says, – Perkūnas, and don't work harm to my field, and I will give you this lump." But, when the cloud is gone, he eats that meat himself" [1, 109].

more important (or even equivalent), what kind of activity could make him linger? We must assume that the "master" is being late because he is engaged in something that he considers to be a very important action. Perhaps, in the secret reaping of a handful of rye, as was described previously by Praetorius? The presumption would be proved by the reapers' joyful reaction (greeting) to the owner coming late. In any case, we should note that the division of the "hierarchy of reapers" during the beginning of reaping has not changed much since Praetorius' time period to the time period of the traditional village.¹³

The fact that the host with the workers, having reaped the first common sheath, seat themselves down in the field and have some bread, saying, "Bread meets bread (Pušalotas)" is also proven ethnographically [Balys 2, 172 (positions 2709–2714); 8, 77, 80; 9, 166]. Separately, we must mention one more characteristic example, most probably, attributable to the high antiquity tradition: "Having begun to reap the rye, after [having reaped] the first handful, one has to bury some bread in the ground and say, "Dear land, you gave to me, so I am giving to you." And say one's prayer for three times (Čepliškės village, Tverečius district)" [2, 172 (position 2707); 19, 376]. The latter fragments are typologically close to the behavior of the agents described by Praetorius – their actions with bread and cured pork fat in the field where the rye is being reaped (see previous text). Moreover, the 19th century ethnography records reflections on fasting. "When you are going to begin reaping the rye, start reaping without having eaten a thing – the mice will not eat it (Valkininkas)" [2, 172 (position 2715); 15, 290–291]. The example does not specify exactly whom this "reminder" is intended for, but knowing that it is the homestead owner who, traditionally¹⁴, is the first to begin reaping the rye (both secretly and in front of everyone), the addressee becomes clear.

¹³ On the other hand, in ethnographic material of the 19th century, we can find cases where the housewife of the homestead goes to reap instead of the "master" or "owner". Interesting interactions on the first day of rye reaping were recorded, namely, between the man's mother and her daughter-in-law. Apparently, when we talk about an event of such magnitude and importance on the farmer's calendar, it is impossible to avoid variations of the rituals [9, 166–167].

¹⁴ The most popular rye cutting tools are the sickle and the scythe [9, 167–168, 173]. This publication will respect the provision dictated by the manuscript itself, which is verifiable, i.e. that making it through the first plot of rye is the duty of a male representative.

2 plotline [25, 507]. 2.1. TIMING. The action takes place in the afternoon of the first rye reaping day, approximately at three o'clock in the afternoon. 2.2. LOCATION. Farm house. 2.3. PERSON(-S) WHO MAKE(S) THE OFFERING. Central one: the homestead owner; minor one(-s) – the housewife, the men of the household, male hired workers. 2.4. INANIMATE OFFERING(-S). The homestead owner seats himself down at the table, while the hired workers must be standing. He takes a scoop in his hand, says a prayer, by which he thanks God for the harvest reaping period, and gives himself in his charge. Interestingly, the homestead owner, before having done that to the men, toasts the housewife and invites her to drink by doing *žemynėliavimas* and *saluting* her, only then all the other participants of the ceremony sit down and drink by *saluting* everyone. Such behavior is unusual, because at the celebrations discussed so far [see 31; 32, 118, 123], the main persons among whom the act of drinking takes place are male¹⁵. Perhaps the answer lies in the following: "In Dzūkija, when drinking beer, kvass, or any other drink, a man has to toast and invite a woman, and a woman has to do so to a man. Then, they say, their wheat will be growing" [8, 69 (position 6)]. In other words, in this specific case, one appeals to the natural vitality of a woman as a mother who is able to bear a new life. The owner, then, starts singing a chant, whose title Praetorius does not specify. Based on the "Deliciae Prussicae", after having chanted, they eat, and having eaten, holding the scoop in their hand, they pray. If the owner is rich and has a lot of beer (beer is a mark of distinction, indicating the farmer's material situation), then he will give as much of it to the household members as they want. The latter remark – *wealthy homestead owners behave in one way, while the failing ones in another way* – supports the premise¹⁶, formulated much earlier, that the author observed the rites carried out at the rye harvest reaping more than once.

2.1 plotline [25, 507, 509]. 2.1.1. TIMING and 2.1.2. LOCATION, for more detail see 2 plotline. 2.1.3. PERSON(-S) WHO MAKE(S) THE OFFERING. Central one: the senior priest; minor one(-s)

¹⁵ With the exception of the previously verified rituals of giving birth and christening described by Praetorius, where the homestead owner drinks with the midwife [29, 43–63].

¹⁶ The fact that Praetorius observed the things described in "Deliciae Prussicae" more than once (or had collected material about them through intermediaries) is a previously observed, discussed and authentic matter [29, 45; see also 30, 395–396].

– the homestead owner, the men of the household, male hired workers.

2.1.4. INANIMATE OFFERING(-S). Praetorius does not give a detailed account of the process of making offering(s), but notes three essential elements that make the rye harvest celebration different in the case if the meeting is led by a senior priest. First, the priest, at the table, when rye reapers have returned home, says a much longer prayer than the homestead owner. The senior priest, who was in charge of the ceremony during the previously discussed sowing celebration, behaves similarly [see plots 1 and 1.1 of the sowing celebration – 31 or 33, 149–157]. The persistence of the narrative makes it possible to summarize that the celebrations "X", led by the senior priest, probably take longer than the celebrations "Y", led by the homestead owner. Secondly, the priest, by *saluting* and doing *žemynėliavimas*, drinks three times, with a particular emphasis on the importance of this figure. The homestead owner, too, performs the rites of drinking, but does not emphasize the importance of the number three separately. The third difference is, obviously, the most significant. The priest, holding the handful of rye which the owner had first secretly reaped off his grain crops field, puts it down on the table and blesses it with a prayer. Praetorius explains that in this way, he will bless all the grains, especially the seed. The first handful which the homestead owner has reaped is kept on the first days, while the rye is threshed for seed. This plot probably speaks about a prototype of rye harvest attribute that is well-known on the territory of Lithuania – "the guest", "the owner" ("the master"), "elderly man" ("the old man", "the old boy") or simply "beginner of reaping" [2, 173–175 (positions 2727–2751); 8, 64, 72, 77, 87; 10, 165, 167; 15, 294–296; 28, 411–412; 19, 375]. According to Balys, "*the master* is the name of the first small sheaf, often reaped from the not quite ripe rye, which is immediately brought home and put at the table by the front place of honour. There it stands during the whole rye harvest, until the very time when rye is brought home. According to people of Merkinė, it protects the house from fire <...> and other disasters. In some places, "the masters" are made by male and female reapers (in Merkinė, Varėna, Butrimonys), while in others, the homestead owner or the housewife (Labanoras). If it is not the owner who makes it, having brought it home, he is given some money or something else. In the surroundings of Butrimonys, "the master" is arranged from rye picked by hand. When they transport the rye home, they take from the farmhouse "the master" that they had brought home in the beginning of reaping, and, having carried it first, put

it down to where the rye will be loaded [2, 175 (position 2752)]¹⁷.

Finally, the priest, with the scoop in his hands, prays to God for the beginning of grain reaping or for *pradetuwe*, singing a chant. Then, as usual (by doing *žemynėliavimas* and *saluting* others), he toasts the homestead owner and invites him to drink, and everyone drinks around a circle.

3 plotline [25, 509]. 3.1. TIMING. At the end of the rye reaping, the end of grain harvesting. 3.2. LOCATION. Farm house. 3.3. PERSON(-S) WHO MAKE(S) THE OFFERING. Central one: the homestead owner; minor one(-s) – the men of the household, male hired workers. 3.4. FOLK BELIEFS AND SUPERSTITIONS:

1) The homestead owner and rye reapers, before the beginning of the ceremony at home, stand up around the last unreaped stretch of rye. The owner thanks God for helping them with harvesting and asks to let them finish successfully the work that they have started: to transport the grain, and to use the grain. Then, he and other Reapers, going around the rye "by the sun"¹⁸, are reaping it in dispatch. In doing so, they keep saying to each other, "Bara bara" ("Scolding, scolding"), which, in Praetorius' opinion, is thought of as (let's) hurry up. We can make a cautious guess that here, Praetorius has captured a model of thinking which states that the rye must be processed before the sun goes down. It was also thought in Lithuania that "If rye reaping finishes while the Sun is still there, then the bread will be white"¹⁹, and if in the twilight, one will have to eat black bread" [2, 185 (position 2873); 11, 38; 8, 68 (position 2), 74, 87; 9, 186; 10, 245]. Finally, the homestead owner finishes where he started, and reaps down the last handful of rye. The result is that it is him who both starts the rye reaping (let us remember the first "secret" handful of rye) and finishes them (the last "public" handful of rye).

¹⁷ According to Kārlis Straubergs, Latvians, too, would bring the first and the last reaped heads of rye to the house or to the granary, and would keep them safe over there [26, 133–135; 16, see position 25937].

¹⁸ The movement of the Sun, as seen from the Earth (in the Northern hemisphere) is counter-clockwise.

¹⁹ In the period of traditional village, white was the dominant color in the clothing of rye reapers (both male and female ones) all over Lithuania [8, 80; 15, 288–289]. On the one hand, white reflects light, so it is suitable for long-lasting outdoor works during the summer. On the other hand, this is another kind of projection into the future – the one with white bread.

Ethnographic records show that people who lived in the territory of Lithuania, with the exception of Samogitians, avoided the last swath or sheaf. They motivated this fear by the fact that there was someone hiding in it: the devil (demon), the death, a "wifey"²⁰, a *feebling*, a hare (cony), a drabble-tail, a weasel, a horse (they say, "the horse has run out"), a wolf ("the wolf has run out"), a frog ("the frog has leaped out") [2, 176–177 (positions 2757–2766), 177–180 (positions 2780–2800); 9, 182–184]. Perhaps, therefore, "In reaping the last sheaf, everyone is trying to [stand] around it together, so that the spook could not run out (Tauragnai)" [2, 176 (position 2759)]. However, the fact that previously, the last sheaf had a positive connotation, is implied by fertility-oriented magic logic and folk beliefs. It was thought that the man "A", the reaper of the last swath, and the woman "B" who helped him, could engage in (marry each other) [2, 176–177 (positions 2767–2769), 181 (position 2818)]. Or, if it is a young girl who picks up the last sheaf from the ground, she will eventually catch on a bastard [2, 179 (positions 2791–2794); 8, 65]²¹. In general, the last sheaf should be made massive, so that the next year: the grain (rye) would grow big, the harvest would be good; the granaries would be full, one would not run out of bread [2, 180 (positions 2801–2808); 9, 183]. But "The first and last sheaves are considered to be very honorable, their grain is only used for healing needs" (Pabiržė) [2, 181 (position 2821)]. The above-mentioned Samogitians as if increased the positive effect of the last sheaf by dropping a valuable object into the last swath: bread, butter, cheese, vodka [2, 175–176 (positions 2753–2756); 9, 184–185]. According to the author's understanding, it is not difficult to explain such a transformation being a result of derealization of the ancient worldview

²⁰ In some places in Lithuania (Žvirgždaičiai, Garliava, Veliuona) "wifey" was the name of the few sheaves made for the beginning of the last stook [2, 181 (position 2928–2929)]. It is interesting to note that cases were recorded where the last stook would be covered with a different hat, so that everyone knew where the king of the reaping was (Svédasai) [2, 183 (position 2849); 11, 35; 9, 181–182]. It is possible that the "crown of the stook" is an allusion to the wreath made for the end of reaping, which is placed on the head of the homestead owner (or housewife) or the fastest worker (see below).

²¹ Behavior to stimulate fertility: "To bring home the very first and last sheaf and give it to the hens – they will lay eggs very nicely (N. Radviliškis)" [2, 181 (position 2820); 8, 94].

and perspective²². Thus, at least in this specific case, Samogitians had maintained attitudes that were more archaic²³.

It is important to mention that, according to ethnographers, not everywhere the field was cleaned bare. In some areas, people would leave a "plait" – a handful of long ryegrass, which they would twist up as if it was woman's hair [2, 183–184 (positions 2853–2862, 2864); 9, 185–186; 15, 331]. Inside the handful of rye, they would put some bread, salt, and in some places, pour some soil on the top of such a "plait"²⁴: "so that mice would eat outside the field"; "so that bread will never leave from the field"; "so that the rye should thrive well next year" [2, 183–184 (positions 2853–2862, 2864); 24, 384]. In the understanding of the people, the "plait" is left for "the Rye Wifey" or "for lovely hare's sake" [2, 183 (positions 2851–2852)]. Balyš states (seemingly following Wilhelm Mannhardt) [17, 2, 7, 17, 26, 31; 18, 7–8, 21–24; cf. 14 position 25976] that the offering "for lovely hare's sake" or to the mice should be actually attributed to "the Rye Wifey", while the sacrifice that is buried in the ground – to *Žemyņa* [2, 184 (position 2864)]. However, he does not explain such interpretations more widely. Without going into detailed discussions, we should note that, from the point of view of ethnographic evidence, at least in the 19th century, it was females who were responsible for weaving the "plait".

According to Praetorius, the role of woman in the rye harvest celebration gains sense through the housewife of the homestead. As we have already said, she participates in the 2 plotline of the celebration, and during the rites, the owner of the homestead toasts and invites her

²² The "X" act or object (animate, inanimate), which had a positive meaning in the times of ancient faith, became a negative connotation after the establishment of the Christian perception of the world. Typical example: "he-goat or she-goat", previously a symbol of potency and fertility, became "devil's animal" when Christianity came [6, 44–45].

²³ In Latvia, the last tuft of grain crops was dedicated to god *Jumis* – a promoter of soil fertilization, whose vegetative powers are associated with the image of a double fruit (for instance, two grain heads grown into one, or two hazelnuts grown together, etc.) [20, 179–180; 27, 59]. *Jumis* has a female equivalent – *Jumis' mother* (*Jumja māte*) [27, 59; cf. 14, positions 11988, 11990–11992, 12003, 12004].

²⁴ Or they would dig a little pit and put into it the following objects: bread, salt, a tuft of reaped rye, and only after that, they would cover it with soil.

first of all. The housewife pours some water over the reaper who has come back from the fields wearing a rye wreath, thus wishing him or her good harvest (see below). Praetorius does not speak about young girls working as rye bandsters and (or) reapers. However, the later ethnographic material manifests the role of woman in the rye harvest celebration more abundantly. Katkus writes, "Women would reap faster than men; they are shorter, have to bend less, therefore, they all would come for the rye reaping – the housewives, too, despite being ladies" [11, 35]. "The one who has a baby, brings it to the field, puts it on the sheaves, covers it up from the sun with other sheaves, and does not come up to it until the lunch, as long as the child doesn't scream." [11, 35; 9, 170–171]. There is a good deal of evidence that young, unmarried girls, by using a sickle (throwing it over the head, trying to cast it as far away as possible), would read fortune to predict: which one will get married; which one's husband will be from a nearby place and which one's from far away; whether she will be rich in the future [2, 158 (positions 2865–2869)].

2) The homestead owner makes a bouquet from the last handful, while the other rye is used to weave (judging by the context, it is the owner himself who weaves it) a wreath of rye heads, which the owner then puts on his head. According to Praetorius, any of the workers involved in the process, even the most minor one, can put the aforementioned wreath on the head, but preference is given to the owner or the most honorable reaper²⁵. Throughout Lithuania, there was a custom to use those last rye heads to make: a) a wreath (usually, from only rye heads, although sometimes, they would

²⁵ As a matter of interest, what does Praetorius mean when he writes "the most minor" or "the most honorable" reaper? In the author's opinion, this is another reference to a kind of "hierarchy of rye reapers". A similar procedure was maintained by people who lived in Lithuania during the period of traditional village (i. e. in the late 19th century – early 20th century). For example, "in Gudžiūniečiai, the first to sit [at the table while celebrating the end of reaping – Ž. V.] is the one who made it through the first plot of rye in the field, with men sitting on one side, and women on the other side from him [2, 194 (position 2937); 8, 93; 9, 169–170, 177]. It would seem that the "most honorable reaper" ("the first bandster" or "plot leader") is the one who made it through the first plot of rye, potentially reaped more cereals and dictated the pace of work, while in the case of "the minor one" it is the other way around.

add one of the following: field flowers (cornflower), garden flowers²⁶, heads of different types of grain (rarely)); b) a band; c) a bouquet [2, 186–187 (positions 2888, 2891); 8, 65, 68, 78, 81, 87, 90; 9, 188, 192; 21, 22]. This is to make rye bloom better next year; in weaving the wreath, one would mix in some white flowers, so that the bread would be white [2, 187 (positions 2893–2893)]. According to the ethnographers, the aforementioned attribute is made by the workers in the fields, brought home²⁷ and handed over to the housewife (put on her head in the form of a wreath) or to the homestead owner (by wrapping it around his body) [2, 186 (position 2888), 187 (position 2896), 188 (positions 2907, 2910, 2912, 2915)]. For example, "Sometimes, the wreath is woven by the woman who will be carrying it, and sometimes, by all women, most often, the youngest ones and those who know how to weave well. They do it <...> somewhere away, having gotten inside a stook, or sat down next to it <...> Most often, the weave is carried and handed over, and the speech is delivered by the smartest and best singing woman, the one who is a gifted speaker <...>" [2, 187 (position 2896); 8, 65, 67–68, 84, 91]. Judging by the ethnographic recordings, the wreath for the housewife was traditionally woven by females, while the band (bouquet, or wisp, or tripod) for the owner by male workers [2, 187 (position 2897), 188 (positions 2907–2908, 2912)];

3) Later, after their coming back home with the songs²⁸, the

²⁶ On the other hand, it was thought that "alien plants" (various herbs), if mixed into the wreath for the end of reaping, can stimulate the rye harvest the next year to be "weedy" [2, 187 (position 2895)].

²⁷ The wreath is carried to the home either on the *head* (an archaic matter, because the happiness and wealth of a human being resides on the head. In other words, there is *hair* growing on the head of a human being, which is a particular unit or representant of happiness of a newborn baby) or upon a *plate* (which seems to be an innovation – one can see a symbolic link between the plate as a nourishing source of a human being, and the plate as the object on which food is traditionally served. On the other hand, it could be a distant reflection of the altar for making offerings) [2, 187 (position 2898); 8, 74].

²⁸ 19 century ethnography – "<...> There must necessarily be a musician <...> the participants of rye harvest celebration love to dance <...>" [2, 194 (position 2937)]; "<...> The celebration for the end of reaping would last until the cock crow. When retiring to their respective sleeping places, the

housewife will pour some water from a scoop over the rye reaper who has the wreath at that moment, thus expressing the following wish: like the grains swell and multiply from the water, so let the present and future harvest become swollen and multiply in her barn and granary. Ethnographers give a lot of evidence of water at the rye harvest celebration [8, 64–65, 73, 92–93; 9, 167], which makes it a reliable matter. The most common causes of water pouring: so that the next year, grain would grow well (it is understood that there would be enough rain), and they would thresh a lot from the grain they have reaped; so that the bread is white; so that no one gets to eat dry bread ("There is bread, there must be a drink!"); the water that is poured over has healing properties – it is said to reduce back pain in the bandsters [2, 187 (position 2897), 192–193 (positions 2921–2933, 2935)]. Sometimes, the reapers were sprinkled over with a bouquet of rye from the fields, which represented a kind of "aspergillum" [2, 188 (positions 2910, 2913)]²⁹. According to the author of the publication, a "jar of vodka"³⁰ provided by the homestead owner for the end of reaping had the function of securing all kinds of abundance as well.

3.5. INANIMATE OFFERING(-S). Finally, under the guidance of the homestead owner, they celebrate in the same way as *Pradetuwes*: eating, drinking, and singing, i.e. holding the scoop in one's hand, praying and chanting; having a drink and sending it around the circle. A reflection of the antique offering is also potentially considered to be in the following behavior, recorded in Šiauliai district (Valančių village): "There,

helpers would sing <...>" [2, 194 (position 2938)]. Dancing (stamping one's feet) at the end of rye reaping is a kind of projection (introduction) to grain threshing works. Not to mention the fact that, on the occasion of the end of reaping, in handing over the rye attribute to the homestead owner and housewife, the workers would dedicate a whole piece of discourse to honour the harvest ("the guest") and hosts, wishing them every success [2, 189–192 (positions 2918–2920)]; see also 8, 67–68, 75–76, 78–79, 81, 85, 88–89, 93; see also 9, 165, 190, 192–195; 10, 254–255].

²⁹ "<...> On the Easter morning, they would use its heads to make a small aspergillum and sanctify the food assembled on the table with holy water (Užpaliai district)" [2, 195 (position 2956)].

³⁰ Vodka (like beer or kvass) is symbolically "two in one": both liquid and bread, i.e. "liquid bread" [2, 189–188 (positions 2912, 2915), 193 (position 2935), 194 (position 2938); 11, 39–40; 8, 67–68, 76, 78–79, 81; 9, 161, 184, 190–191].

the reapers, having finished the meal, would get up from the table of the end of reaping celebration, and stand around in a circle inside the house. Both the homestead owner and the housewife would stand in the middle of the circle, holding a rye head taken out of the wreath in their hands. The homestead owner would congratulate everyone on the new bread, then take a cup, fill it with some grain of rye [an allusion to ritual beer? – Ž. V.], and everyone would go around the house singing. Having returned to the house, the end of reaping celebration participants would wish each other joy" [9, 195; 10, 269–270].

By comparing the material of the rye harvest celebration with the descriptions of previous celebrations (those of sowing, herbs and animals), we can see that those parts of the action that describe the rituals and prayers of beer drinking are shown in a more fragmented manner. Such as, the author does not always discuss the exact order of (toasting and) drinking, but simply mentions it instead: "<...> have a drink according to their habit <...>" [25, 509], or "<...> celebrate in the same way as the *pradetuwes* celebration <...>" [25, 509], or "<...> finish [the celebration – Ž.V.] <...> by eating, drinking and singing by the ancient Prussian habit <...>" [25, 509]. And instead of the full text of prayer, the author says briefly: "<...> and says a prayer proper for these circumstances <...>" [25, 507] or "<...> will say <...>a prayer that is proper for that moment <...>" [25, 507]. This may indicate that Praetorius did not have enough time to describe in detail all the nuances³¹ of the celebration in question, or did not see the need for it. Probably, knowing that certain rituals of the rye harvest celebration (namely, the structure of prayer and / or beer toasting and drinking) are

³¹ Subsection 4 of the sixth section of the fifth book of "Deliciae Prussicae" says that "<...>on the next morning and on later ones, they have to wake up early and go on reaping the rye again <...>" [25, 507]. This prompts us the fact that the work of a rye reaper began very early and lasted for a long time. Therefore, it can be assumed that the author of the source to be verified could not study everything carefully (after all, Praetorius had the duties of a priest that he had to perform as well). Therefore, in this case, he has potentially relied on the information he obtained through an intermediary. This would partly explain why, for example, some parts of the celebration description are presented in a fragmentary way, while others are described much wider.

very similar to those previously recorded, he decided to give a fuller description of that which is specific and summarize the parts which "reoccur".

C o n c l u s i o n s

1. An overview and analysis of the interpretations of the mythological material about rye harvest celebration that Praetorius provided reveals that, based on the use and evaluation of his information, the scholars of the 19th to 21st centuries can be divided into two parts. The first part did not discuss over the question of the authenticity of Matthaeus Praetorius' mythological data, but considered them sufficiently reliable, and used them in their scientific works (Eduard Volter, Aleksander Brückner, Pranė Dundulienė, Rimantas Balsys, Nijolė Laurinkienė). The case of Laurinkienė is worth noting individually. It is unique in that the scholar uses the mythological information provided by Praetorius as a historical context (foundation) whose authenticity she does not question. The main purpose of her interpretations is to justify the mythological image of *Žemyna* as an all-embracing ancestress. In seeking to achieve this objective, Laurinkienė, alongside Praetorius' testimonials, provides ethnographic recordings from a later period of time. We can say that by doing so she, in certain cases, unconsciously justifies the authenticity of individual fragments of the source in question. On the other hand, we have recorded the behavior of the researcher where she, intentionally, omits the information gathered by Praetorius – on the wreath worn by the homestead owner for celebrating the end of rye reaping. According to the data available, we should believe that this happened because the latter material did not correspond to the narrative about goddess *Žemyna* as constructed by Laurinkienė. In the opinion of the author, the aforementioned model of using information from ancient written sources should not be practiced. The second part of scholars felt the problem of authenticity of the mythological material provided by Praetorius and tried to solve it more or less (Rolandas Kregždys). All of this leads us to the conclusion that the question of reliability of Matthaeus Praetorius' "Deliciae Prussicae" mythological material has not been resolved so far, or has been dealt with very fragmentarily. The latter conclusion encourages the continuation of research in reliability of the mythological information about celebrations, recorded by Praetorius.

2. To sum it all up, the verification has confirmed that the mythological material on rye harvest celebration, recorded by Praetorius, is to be considered authentic and reliable. This is to be supposed because the mythological data in question are, in many cases, coincident with (and / or reiterate) the information that ethnographers of

a much later period of time collected. The study makes it possible to reason that both in the period of time described by Praetorius and in the late 19th century to early 20th century, almost identical patterns of thinking were recorded. All this shows the inheritance and continuity of the tradition, the insularity of the rural community, and the inertness of the peasant worldview.

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