The verification of Lithuanian deity *Bičbirbis / Birbulis* in view of information provided by Matthaeus Praetorius

**Keywords:** Matthaeus Praetorius, Bičbirbis / Birbulis, sundew (Drosera), authenticity, Baltic religion and mythology

The object of the article is mythical material on *Bičbirbis / Birbulis* in Matthaeus Praetorius’ work *Deliciae Prussicae or Prussian Theater* (*Deliciae Prussicae, oder Preussische Schaubühne*).

The purpose is to evaluate the authenticity of mythical material on *Bičbirbis / Birbulis* registered in M. Praetorius’ work.

Tasks:
3.1. To select and to evaluate interpretations on *Bičbirbis / Birbulis* by more significant researchers of the 19th–21st centuries who had analysed M. P.’s data.
3.2. To collect mythical information on *Bičbirbis / Birbulis* provided in the work of the late 17th century.
3.3. To prove or to deny the authenticity of Matthaeus Praetorius’ mythical material.

Methods: analytical, structural content analysis, hermeneutical interpretative description, comparative.

The main aim of the article is to establish the reliability of a deity which is a patron of bees and which Matthaeus Praetorius calls *Bičbirbis* (*Bicz(z)birbins, Bicž-birbins, hitzbirbins*) / *Birbulis* (*bicziu birbullis*).1 Further the article will chronologically – from the earliest to the latest – present and evaluate interpretations by more significant researchers of the 19th–21st centuries, those who analysed data on *Bičbirbis / Birbulis*.

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1 The previous articles have already discussed the authenticity and the research context of gods described by M. P. – *Perdoytus, Wejopattis, Gardouten, Bangpjitjs, Luohgelda* (and partly *Bardoayts*) [Vičinskas 2015: 178-200; Vičinskas 2017: 434-452]. One of the previous article called *Mato Pretori-jaus mitinės medžiagos apieąžuolą verifikacija* (Verification of Matthaeus Praetorius Mythical Material on Oak) attempts to evaluate the reliability of M. P.’s mythical material on oak [Vičinskas 2016: 63-84]. The mentioned researches have revealed the tendency of “information noise” and ambiguous authenticity of mythical data, therefore, the mythical material recorded by Matthaeus Praetorius should be verified further.
lis recorded by M. Praetorius. It should be noted that previous researchers of the defined period did not attempt, except a few fragmentary functional interpretations, to verify the reliability of Bičbirbis / Birbulis. For this reason, besides the poorly developed explanations of Bičbirbis / Birbulis there are provided interpretations of other deities of beekeeping, mentioned in ancient written sources, Babilas / Bubilas (Babilos / Bubilos) and Austėja (Austheia). Simonas Stanevičius (19th century) did not doubt that “[…] Lithuanians and Samogitians did have the god of bees […]”, but the reliability of the name is problematic, because “we do not know which of the two words [Bubilos / Babilos – Ž. V.] is more authentic” [Vėlius 1995: 95; translation here and hereafter Ž. V.). Finally, it is concluded that the name of the god of bees is Bubilus or Babilus [Vėlius 1995: 95]. S. Stanevičius’ did not consider the probability of god names (Austėja, Bičbirbis / Birbulis) or functions nor the use of a sundew. S. Stanevičius’ contemporary, Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, on the contrary, associated the patron of bees with a female creature Austėja. He made an assumption that “it was Aušrinė and evening star […] which at the time was called Auszta” and tried to justify it with Latvian material – “[…] Latvians had the goddess Žwets uhsinsz which guarded and defended the swarms from destruction” [Vėlius 1995: 208]. As it can be seen, J. I. Kraszewski did not provide more arguments on this guess and did not consider the question of reliability of the deity. He also did not discuss the question of other beekeeping deities mentioned in the chronicle. Researchers Hermann Karl Usener and Felix Solmsen, believed that in terms of derivation the combination of the words “bičių birbius” (Bičbirbis) in Lithuanian language system is inappropriate [Usener 1896: 88]. The linguists reasoned that the chain of god names: 1. Bičių Bobelis; 2. Babilas / Bubilas; 3. Birbulis [bob-, bab-, bub – and bir – (?))] is illogical, because the component bir – is a mistake [Usener 1896: 88]. Besides the identified gods, Ozstėja (a humming female) is mentioned, who took care of bees in the time of swarming, and Prakorimas, who, according to linguists, is prayed to when honey is being retrieved from the hive [Vėlius 1995: 426]. Interpreters did not attempt to determine the authenticity of the bee rites described by M. Praetorius or to restore the image of a sundew in Baltic religion and mythology. However, they seem to be the first to have formed a negative linguistic reconstruction of Bičbirbis / Birbulis and contrasted it with the mythical material of the previous chroniclers.

At the end of the 20th century, Algirdas Julius Greimas published a study called Tautos atminties beieškant. Apie dievus ir žmones (In Search of National Memory. Of Gods and Men), dedicated to the analysis of the pre-Christian Baltic religion, in which he discussed the relationship between Austėja and Babilas / Bubilas. The following three most essential researcher’s claims can be distinguished: 1. Austėja – an ideal of a married woman, manufacturer (+ connotation) [Greimas 1990: 259; 262]; 2. Bubilas – Austėja’s opposite or a seducer-user-pragmatist (– connotation) [Greimas 1990: 270-271]; 3. Author does not speak of the existence of Bičbirbis / Birbulis.

It may be assumed that A. J. Greimas, ignoring M. P.’s mythical information about Bičbirbis / Birbulis, considered it as unreliable. For the same reason, the Greimas’s
work does not use the material on the rites of *honeybee hive* – *hiving a swarm* – *sanctifying of bees* described by M. P., and at the same time does not discuss the role of a sundew. At the end of the 20th century, Pranė Dundulienė-Stukėnaitė, on the basis of functional similarity, also associated Praetorius’ recorded god of bees with the creatures *Babilas* / *Bublas* recorded by the authors of historical documents of the 16th century: Maciej Stryjkowski – Jan Łasicki [Dundulienė-Stukėnaitė 1990: 118]. On the other hand, unlike the above-mentioned interpreters, Dundulienė-Stukėnaitė does not view the mythologem negatively. The researcher assumed that M. P. had made a mistake and had mixed *Babilas* / *Bublas* with *Bičbirbinis* but she did not provide any arguments for this hypothesis [Dundulienė-Stukėnaitė 1990: 118]. Dundulienė-Stukėnaitė widely enough discussed the god of bees *Bubilas* and the goddess *Austėja*; she thought them to be the “royal couple of gods”, perhaps under A. J. Greimas’ influence [Dundulienė-Stukėnaitė 1990: 118]. The author, when reasoning about the latter creature, states that it was already known “[…] in the late Palaeolithic Age for gatherers of vegetable and other food and hunters” [Dundulienė-Stukėnaitė 1990: 117]. Moreover, Dundulienė-Stukėnaitė extends *Austėja’s* functions, stating that the goddess “[…] patronised […] flora, blossom, from which the bees collected honey, and material for combs” [Dundulienė-Stukėnaitė 1990: 117]. Finally, she reconstructs the feast day in honour of *Austėja*, its exact time (mid-August), its attributes (unspecified grasslands) [Dundulienė-Stukėnaitė 1990: 117]. And when describing history of the research of *Bubilas* / *Babilas* the researcher is critical about A. J. Greimas’ study, referring to it as sophistries of little value [Dundulienė-Stukėnaitė 1990: 118]. In fact, Dundulienė-Stukėnaitė did not attempt to base the above mentioned declarative statements on any cultural, linguistic or any other material analysis, therefore I view her interpretations negatively. In conclusion, Pranė Dundulienė-Stukėnaitė considered mythical data by Matthaeus Praetorius as sufficiently reliable to be used in scientific work, but she did not analyse information from the point of view of authenticity. Norbertas Vėlius, analysing the mythical vocabulary recorded in Jacob Brodowski’s dictionary, argues that the chronicler who had rewritten M. Praetorius’ material, from *Bičbirbis* / *Birbulis* had made *Bičių Bobelis* [Vėlius 1996: 69]. N. Vėlius does not discuss the issue of reliability of *Bičbirbis* or *Birbulis* directly; however, the fact that he uses M. P.’s mythical information in his study, in order to verify the reliability of any other document, reveals that he was conscious of the problem of the authenticity of the ancient written sources and tried to explore it.

Daiva Steponavičienė refers to the *Austėja – Bubilas* / *Babilas* opposition formed by A. J. Greimas but the question of *Bičbirbis* is not raised in her work; which takes into account examples of folklore (songs). She argues that in the Lithuanian folklore b e e –

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2 In the work written in 1990, the researcher specifies the precise metrics of the cited data; the precise reference to the work by M. P. also exists in the monograph issued in 2007 [Dundulienė-Stukėnaitė 2007: 213]. To record the system of conveyance of data cited by Dundulienė-Stukėnaitė is necessary because in the previous works [Vičinskas 2017: 438-440; Vičinskas 2016: 65-66] it has been identified that the author of the monograph does not always comply with a uniform citation system.
drone (lith. bitė – tranas) symbolically represent Austėja – Babilas or Babilas [Steponavičienė 2000]. Another researcher Gintaras Beresnevičius (the early 21st century), partially extended and expanded the established tradition in respect of Bičbirbis / Birbulis; arguing that it is “probably close to Lasicki’s mentioned gods of bees Austėja and Babilas whose relationship with Bičių Bobelis is not clear” [Beresnevičius 2001: 70]. Other than, for example, Dunduliéné-Stukienaitė, Beresnevičius, when paralleling Bičbirbis or Birbulis with Babilas / Babilas / Austėja, indicates a common semantics that unifies deities – “[...] roots bab-, bub – indicate grumbling (lith. bumbėjimas), aušti – to run here and there, flounce [...]” [Beresnevičius 2001: 70]. Speaking about A. J. Greimas’ study, he is not in favour of the argument that in Jan Łasicki’s list of gods one can notice conscious grouping of Lazdona and Babilas / Babilas [Beresnevičius 2001: 66]. On the other hand, he agrees with the idea introduced by Greimas that “functions of both gods are very similar and it may be so that they are just a couple of gods of bees, one of them grumbles (lith. bambėti or bumbėti) and the other chatters (lith. aušti)” [Beresnevičius 2001: 66]. It follows that Beresnevičius trusted the data given by M. P. and tried to reconstruct the relationship with deities described by his precursors. Bičbirbis / Birbulis is also approved of by another researcher of the 21st century – Rimantas Balsys. Studying the origin and functions of deities of beekeeping mentioned in the written sources, he, probably, was the one who mostly used mythical data recorded by Praetorius. The researcher compares Bičbirbis / Birbulis to Babilas / Babilas, but does not attempt to merge them. The author draws attention to three stages of sanctification of a new honeybee swarm and distinguishes the ritual action – humming by the performer of the rite: “probably this way the very god of bees Bičbirbis is imitated” [Balsys 2004: 39]. It is concluded that Bičbirbis (Bičių birbulis) was a regional deity, which emerged during the recession of the old religion (pantheon) [Balsys 2004: 41]. And it appears that this conclusion (see the analytical part of this article below) is valid. R. Balsys is one of the researchers who realized the problem of authenticity and tried more or less to solve it. Dainius Razauskas (early 21st century) has discussed the research context of goddess Austėja and attempted to reconstruct her image in the “Baltic mythical imagery”. In his work he mostly approves of Austėja concept reconstructed by A. J. Greimas, but does not reject other researchers’ efforts to recreate the characteristics of the mentioned creature. D. Razauskas, discussing the research context and emphasizing interpretation by predecessors as credible, less credible or not justified, tries to understand the probability of a deity as well as its reliability. D. Razauskas concludes that Austėja, despite only fragmentary mentions in historical sources and its absence in folklore, is considered to be “reliable and can be treated as an example of a successful scientific research of Lithuanian religion and mythology” [Razauskas 2009: 16].

The above analysis of interpretations of famous researchers of the 19th–21st century, who were concerned with data on Bičbirbis / Birbulis written by M. P., has revealed that Praetorius’ information is rarely used, probably because the care of bees has traditionally been ascribed to Austėja and/or Babilas (Babīlas). Poor usage of M.
P.’s mythical material may also be related to the fact that, if viewed chronologically, Praetorius’ text is the last or latest document by a chronicler. On the basis of authenticity, 19th–21st century scientists can be grouped into one secondary (0) and two main (1–2) groups: 0. Those who did not consider the issue of authenticity, did not use data on Bičbris / Birbulis (S. Stanevičius, J. I. Kraszewski, A. J. Greimas, D. Steponavičienė); 1. Those who did not consider the authenticity issue of M. P.’s mythical data on Bičbris / Birbulis but considered it to be sufficiently reliable to be used in a scientific work (H. Usener and F. Solmsen, P. Dundulienė-Stukėnaitė); 2. Those who understood the problem of authenticity and tried to solve it (G. Beresnevičius, R. Balsys, N. Vėlius).

The analysed source of the 17th century has seven subsections related to the patron of beekeeping. Subchapters 1 and 4 of Chapter 5 “On the sanctifying of bees” of Book 6 “On various consecrations and rituals, which Nadruvians are still practicing during the engagement, funeral, etc. […]” should be mentioned separately, since honey-bee-hiving a swarm – sanctifying of bees are discussed there. The other three mentions are less informative and provide only the name of a deity and/or its sphere of activity [Pretorijus 2006: 149; 273; 301]. However, it is worth noting that they imply two things: first, Bičbris / Birbulis is rewritten from the living tradition: a) “[…] there are those [gods – Ž. V.] that are still found among the current Nadruvians, Skalvians, Samogitians and partly among Lithuanians […]” [Pretorijus 2006: 273]; b) “[…] what we have noticed from our own experience and what we have seen with our own eyes, the old Prussian gods could be divided into […]” [Pretorijus 2006: 149]. Second, in some places Praetorius ascribes Bičbris / Birbulis to the pantheon of the old Prussians, and elsewhere – to the pantheon of current Nadruvians, Skalvians, Samogitians, and Lithuanians. It is assumed that such unsystematic arrangement of the material reveals that the author was familiar with the material from the earlier sources where the pantheon of Lithuanians, Samogitians, Sambians, Latvians, Prussians had been described (chronological sequence of the rewrites of information: 1. Maciej Śtryjkowski (1582)3; 2. Jan Łasicki (1582)4; 3. Wilhelm Martinius Memelensis (1666)5); besides, he himself had gathered some authentic material which is recorded in the above mentioned Chapter 5 of Book 6. In terms of chronology, mythical data of the mentioned chronicles is earlier than the data by Matthaeus Praetorius, which allows reasoning that the analysed chronicler is the latest or the last chronicler of Lithuanian and Prussian pagan religion who recorded Bičbris / Birbulis as a god which is a patron of bees6.

3 “Bubilas (Bubilos), god of honey and bees […]” [Vėlius 2001: 546].
4 1) “[…] Babilos – […] of bees”; 2) “[…] of bees – Austheia” [Ališauskas 2012: 113].
5 “[…] Babila (Babiliase) […]” [Vėlius 2003: 63].
6 In fact, Jacob Brodowský (about 1740) mentioned Bičių Bobelis (Bicziu Bobelis), whom he compared with Priapus, the Greek god of fertility and harvest [Vėlius 2005: 29]. The relationship between Bičbris / Birbulis and Bičių Bobelis is still not confirmed [Vėlius 1996: 69; Balsys 2010: 130].
Mythical information provided in Chapter 5 of Book 6 of the analysed work can be divided into three scenes: 1. Sanctifying of a hive; 2. Hiving a swarm; 3. Sanctifying of bees. The named scenes can be analysed structurally by splitting them into smaller units (donator; preparation; place or time of an action; victim is alive or dead). The first scene (see [Pretorijus 2006: 571]): 1.1. DONATOR. The main initiator of the action is a beekeeper (owner of a homestead), who, after receiving a swarm, sanctifies a hive or “house of bees”. 1.2. PLACE OF AN ACTION. Owner of a homestead brings hive to a house (residential house + “house of a family of bees” = “house within a house”). According to the ethnographic material about beekeeping rituals in Lithuania (16th century – first half of the 20th century) collected by Laura Piškinaitė-Kazlauskienė: “In Ramygala they thought that bees are not going to grow well for anyone who likes to sit on the doorstep” [of a residential house – Ž. V.], and in Vadokliai sitting on the doorstep in the rain meant the same thing [Piškinaitė-Kazlauskienė 1995: 131]. “In Spirakiai (Joniškis county) they believed that bees would disappear if one cleaned the house and poured the rubbish over the doorstep” [Piškinaitė-Kazlauskienė 1995: 131]. These examples from the 19th century show that the people caring for bees believed that actions performed in a house can affect (positively / negatively) the swarm, which proves the authenticity of the mythical material by Matthaeus Praetorius. 1.3. DEAD VICTIM(S). A beekeeper puts besides him: a) some first honey, extracted when lindens bloom; this implies that the action takes place in July (August?); b) a loaf of white bread; c) some boiled peas with honey. Then he fills a sanctified scoop with beer and says a prayer committing bees in trust of deity, believing that he will protect-bless-multiply them. It should be emphasized that the beehive will not be sanctified again for the rest of its lifetime.

The second scene (see [Pretorijus 2006: 571–573]). 2.1. DONATOR. The main character is a beekeeper (owner of a homestead); 2.2. TIME, PLACE OF AN ACTION. The owner of a homestead when hiving a swarm (the implied place is garden) holds a sun Dew in his lips and blows (air from his mouth or using a special tool?) to a “male bee”, it seems that this is mother bee, which is being hived, and begs:

 AUTHENTIC INFORMATION

“Swarm, breed and fill the whole hive and whole garden” [Pretorijus 2006: 571].

Table 1. Authentic information by Matthaeus Praetorius.

2.3. DEAD VICTIM(S). After that the owner of a homestead, considering how many swarms he has sanctified that day, takes a corresponding number of scoops, 7 Information by Laura Piškinaitė-Kazlauskienė: in Nendriniai village, Marijampolė county, beekeepers also said prayers when bees were being hived, but those prayers were unusual; and the residents of Valkininkai parish knew that a beekeeper must know “prayers for bees” [Piškinaitė-Kazlauskienė 1995: 130].
i.e. one scoop for one swarm and drinks thrice in three times, nine times in total. Each time he drinks to the bottom and each time he takes a sip he buzzes like a bee, and he completes the sanctifying rite saying a prayer, the formula of which is not indicated, “returns to a family” that he communicates with. If wealthy farmers live in the homestead and if its owner has hived many swarms, he lets his family members drink beer.

The 3rd scene (see [Pretorijus 2006: 571]). 3.1. DONATOR. The main character is a beekeeper (owner of a homestead) – the one who lives near the wastes 8 – but not necessarily a “beekeeper of wastes”. He begs Birbulis (bičių birbulis) to bring a lot of success. 3.2. PREPARATION. The following steps of a preparation to a ceremony must be mentioned separately: a) the beekeeper must bake some white wheat bread, which will be used at the time of sanctifying; b) he performs sanctification alone; except if the beekeeper has an adult son, they do it together: continuity – the son as the future heir learns from his father. Examples from the 19th century indicate that the seclusion of beekeeping was already important thing in the 17th century, which proves that M. Praetorius’ mythical material is valid information. For example: “Bees do not bite true people, they bite only dishonest ones, and that is why when the bees are swarming one must not look at them secretly. Bees recognise their man or a friend who has come” [Piškinaitė-Kazlauskienė 1995: 130]. “When bees are swarming it is forbidden to watch them secretly through the fence, because bees are enraged and start to sting people (Gavėniškiai, Rokiškis county)” [Piškinaitė-Kazlauskienė 1995: 130]. Besides “[…] it was believed that people with the “evil eye” can give a malevolent glare to bees (Galminiai village, Zarasai county; Miškiniai village, Vilnius county)” [Piškinaitė-Kazlauskienė 1995: 130]. Summarising, it is clear that those who kept bees tried to increase the number of the already existing swarm; on the other hand, also not to lose the property they already had. Considering ethnographic information collected by L. Piškinaitė-Kazlauskienė, one of the ways to repel a swarm is “evil eye on bees”, perhaps that is why beekeepers, both in M. P.’s time and later, trusted and took to the bees only close people (“true”, “their own”, “friends”).

The question then arises how did a clergyman in general manage to capture socially sensitive and old religion logic based ritual? Whether this ritual, dedicated to Bičbirbis / Birbulis, observation was intentional (planned) or unintentional (unplanned)? Does this action occur several times or only once? The present author believes that in order to record the structure of the ritual dedicated to Bičbirbis / Birbulis in detail and clarity, Praetorius had to participate personally in these activities. It is therefore possible to assume that it was not a coincidence; on the contrary, this conversation had been previously agreed-planned and thought-out. It seems that Praetorius had established a close relationship

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8 Wastes (lith. dykra; old German Wildnis, Wilnis) in the 14th–15th century, less populated or uninhabited strip of lands in Minor Lithuania, Suvalkija (Užnemunė), the west and north of Samogitia, north of Aukštaitija, which separated more densely populated and castles-protected Lithuanian areas from Prussia and Livonia; the same borderland of the latter countries with Lithuania [Jasas, Matulevičius 2003: 765].
with local residents who also became his informants. Moreover, the analysed fragment allows reasoning that M. P. had seen beekeeping rites more than once. For example, he writes that only if the beekeeper is rich (necessary condition), after hiving swarm(s), will he allow his family members to drink beer. That is why the reader should presume that it might be the other way around (less wealthy beekeeper = no beer). And this should mean that he had had the opportunity to observe and compare the rituals, worshipping the patron of bees, performed by wealthy and less wealthy beekeepers (farmers). The assumption is also reinforced by M. P.’s statement that only “some [beekeepers – Ž. V.], especially those living near the wastes, still think that Birbullis […] is the god of bees […]” [Pretorijus 2006: 571]. This implies that the author, based on where the analysed beekeepers live and how they make sacrifices to the god of bees⁹, classifies them into at least two different categories: 1) the beekeepers who live near the wastes – those who make sacrifices to the patron of bees; 2) the beekeepers who do not live near the wastes – those who probably make sacrifices to X patron of bees.

3.3. DEAD VICTIM(S). Praetorius starts the description of an action by stating that after the first prayer and the usual rituals the owner of a homestead drinks not at all of the scoop. But with his finger he takes some honey (first honey which had been retrieved when lindens bloom?) – adds it to his beer. And then gives it a stir and puts some of this honey-beer mix¹⁰ on the hive, especially on the entrance. Then he takes some chamomiles and sundews – smokes the home of bees, ensuring that the smoke would come inward, and finally “casts a spell on the hive”:

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<th>AUTHENTIC INFORMATION</th>
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<tr>
<td>“Let the bees and honey be in my hive as abundantly and generously as abundantly and thickly smoke comes into the hive” [Pretorijus 2006: 571].</td>
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Table 2. Authentic information by Matthaeus Praetorius.

Immediately after this he drinks and repeats smoking two more times (three times in total), finally after smoking the third time he prays again. Then the beekeeper eats

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⁹ And whether, in general, they make sacrifices; reference that other beekeepers of the same period trust insects to the Christian God.

¹⁰ Rotation of beer-honey mixture – around – with one’s finger alludes to a c i r c l e or the s e c u r i t y model. Ethnographically it is testified that “the magic circle, particularly circumscribed with a sanctified object, as the sign of the cross (in Miškininkų village, Vilnius County, during the celebration of the Three Holy Kings (lith. Trys karaliai) they used to mark three crosses on the hives with sanctified chalk) had to protect the swarms from the evil spirits that could take them away” [Piškinaitė-Kazlauskienė 1995: 129-130]. The rotation of a finger could also mean bee forming a common swarm; it is a magic action ensuring the organization of bees, their being in a team or together. Moreover, the Lithuanian language dictionary among the meanings of the word t o s w a r m (lith. spiestis) provides: a) “to gather into a crowd, to aggregate, to mass”; b) “to organise, to crowd, to unionise” [Web. 28.06.2016 Lietuvių kalbos žodynas].
some honey and peas. Eating the wheat bread (smeared?) with honey with each bite he blows to the hive three times, then he eats some peas and again with each bite blows three times. Each time he is blowing to the hive he buzzes / hums like bees hum, finally the beekeeper drinks performing the previously described rites (worshiping the goddess Žemyna, cheering?) and thanking to god. M. P. notes that if not all of the white wheat bread is eaten, the owner of a homestead buries the leftovers under the hive (the earth = medium). Systematicity of the rite deserves emphasis – there is a relationship between the prayer (verbal-magic action) and the smoking of bees (physical-magic action). It is perfectly possible that the prayer described in the inserted piece serves as unit of time measurement. The beekeeper uses the sequence of a prayer – drinking – smoking of insects as a means to measure time so he would know in what intervals he should smoke bees.

The authenticity of the expanded mythical material on Bičbirbis / Birbulis can be confirmed by the biological characteristics and geographical distribution of a sundew (Drosera)\(^{11}\) (Lith. also rasąžolė, pempėžolė, sáulės ašarėlė, raskilà)\(^{12}\) – the plant used for smoking bees. As for the distribution of herbaceous plants of the sundew genus in Lithuania, it is known that out of almost two hundred species of sundews, only three species and one interspecies hybrid\(^{13}\) can be found in our lands. The plant is very rare and one species that is distinguished from all mentioned is a common sundew (Drosera rotundifolia), which, according to botanists, is one of the few carnivorous organisms that are found in Lithuanian territory [Lekavičius 1989: 137-138; Gudžinskas 2012: 193; Grigaitė 1993: 21-23; 29-33; Mierauskas et al. 2005: 35]. The plant feeds on (receives nitrogen from) various small insects (mosquitoes, moths, bees, etc.), which, landing on the leaf, stick to the sticky digestive fluid-ferment released

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\(^{11}\) Botanical name of the plant (Gr. ὅρος) translated from the Greek means “dew; drop of a dew” [Barthlott et al. 2007: 75]. It is interesting that such a botanical name has been chosen because in Greek mythology it was the name of the water (swamp) nymph (naiad) Drosera [Bowersock 1990: 128]. Strange coincidence (?) that it is the nymph Melisa (Gr. Μέλισσα) which in Greek mythology is considered as a pioneer of beekeeping, moreover, in the mentioned culture the name of Melisas may be applied as a synonym for nymphs, because they could transform into bees [Smith 1870: 1022]. The Lithuanian equivalent of a plant, according to Dainius Razauskas, is based on the image of a crying sun [Razauskas 2012: 30]. And in the Swedish language, a synonym of a plant which had experienced Christian influence is also detected – a tear of Virgin Mary (Jungfru Maria tårar) [Berg 1845: 139]. It is interesting that in the listed examples of different cultures and religious systems, Drosera is one way or another related to the religious logic or sacrality.

\(^{12}\) Sinonimų žodynas (electronic source: http://goo.gl/B2UhWn), Lietuvių kalbos žodynas (The Lithuanian Language Dictionary – electronic source: http://goo.gl/VWMOzt) notes that the word raskilà is usually used to name the plants of Alchemilla species, and as its second meaning it is denoted as a synonym of a Common sundew (Lith. apskritalapė saulėšarė). Web. 02.06.2016.

\(^{13}\) 1. Greater sundew (Lith. ilgalapė saulėšarė) (Drosera anglica) – is unusual in Lithuania; 2. Oblong-leaved sundew (Lith. mažalapė saulėšarė) (Drosera intermedia) – in Lithuania is very rare, protected (registered in the Red Data Book of Lithuania Web. 02.06.2016. https://goo.gl/HRTK7t; 3. “Ivan’s Paddle” (Lith. bukalapė saulėšarė) (Drosera x obovat) – is a hybrid which is very rarely found in Lithuania (see [Lekavičius 1989: 137-138; Gudžinskas 2012: 193; Grigaitė 1993: 21-23; 29-33; Mierauskas et al. 2005: 35]).
by glandular hairs, and when those hairs are irritated, they fold and envelop the insect [Lekavičius 1989: 137-138; Gudžinskas 2012: 193; Grigaitė 1993: 21-23; 29-33; Mierauskas et al. 2005: 35] (see Illustration 1). It is known that sundews bloom in July-August and nurture their seeds, by which they breed, in August-September; they grow on moors, meadows, marshes, swamps [Lekavičius 1989: 137-138; Gudžinskas 2012: 193; Grigaitė 1993: 21-23; 29–33; Mierauskas et al. 2005: 35].

Illustration 1. Mechanism of hunt of Drosera Capensis\textsuperscript{14}.

In this context we should also remember Aukštumalė marsh complex, which, in the times of Matthaeus Praetorius, belonged territorially to Lithuania Minor / Klaipėda region. This is one of the largest and most valuable raised bogs not only in Lithuania but in the whole Eastern Baltic region. Its surface is covered with rare herbaceous plants, dominated by white beak-sedge (Rhynchospora alba). Other plants growing there include common sundews or greater sundews (Drosera anglica)\textsuperscript{15}. It is clear from the above that Matthaeus Praetorius, when writing about the use of a sundew (~ in July-August) in the rituals of hiving a swarm – sanctifying of bees performed by inhabitants of Lithuania Minor – by beekeepers, especially those living near the wastes – reflects both biologically and geographically accurate information, thus giving credibility to the mythic material.

But the question is, why did “beekeepers of wastes” of Lithuania Minor / Klaipėda region after receiving a new swarm use a sundew to smoke it? It is assumed that the use of this plant in the process of hiving a swarm – sanctifying of bees, which had to ensure the favour of the deity, is not accidental. On the contrary, it reveals special physical (medical properties) and metaphysical (promotion of fertility) functions of a plant. In order to answer the previously raised question, one must realise that one of the main factors ensuring the continuity of the beekeeping tradition is that the care of bees is changing slowly, if at all. For example, the statement that bees are sick, so they must be treated was, is and will be relevant\textsuperscript{16}. Modern beekeepers in

\textsuperscript{14} The illustration shows how the hunting mechanism of Drosera species works; four shots are cut out of the video Midge on Drosera Capensis (Sundew) Web. 26.05.2016. https://goo.gl/zi3cA6


\textsuperscript{16} It seems that Greek philosopher Aristotle (Aristotelēs) (384–322 BC) is the first who had described ailment of bees, whose symptoms remind of paralysis [Ribièrea et al. 2010: 120–125].
the process of hiving the bees also use some special products containing protection against viral diseases and diseases caused by *varroa mites* (deformed wing, acute paralysis, etc.). In this context it is worth remembering that a sundew is commonly used in folk medicine of different nations [McNeill 1910: 123; Williams 2010: 120; Kelso 2011: 82; Logan 1999: 26] to treat: internal diseases – upper respiratory tract diseases, because it alleviates cough and symptoms of bronchitis (bronchial asthma); external diseases – it helps to reduce abscesses and warts. In Lithuania, according to data by Aurelija Genelytė, linguistically sundew is ascribed to the group of phytonyms, those that have the name of some kind of disease as its root – to phytonyms of *votis* (Eng. abscess) [Genelytė 2004: 20]. Phytonyms of this motivational group indicate that the plant named by a word with such a root is usually used to treat some disease (Lith. *Vōčiažolė* (Eng. *common sundew*) = *Drosera rotundifolia*) [Genelytė 2004: 17]. Referring to what has been already said, it is assumed that a sundew in ~ the late 17th century was used by the “beekeepers of wastes” of Lithuania Minor / Klaipėda region as a natural antibiotic because of its internal and external anti-inflammatory, antiviral, sedative effects.

The use of a sundew in ritual must be based on metaphysical or religious logic. As said before, it is a carnivorous herbaceous plat, feeding on insects – the ones that hum-buzz. It is assumed that the image of a plant did not remain in Lithuanian folklore. The reason was that sundew was a rare plant and, as discussed earlier, it grew in unique locations. A similar situation is with *Bičbirbis / Birbulis*, the deity described by Praetorius, in honour of which the plant had been smoked and which is not mentioned in folklore either, nor registered in toponymy, hydronymy or anthroponymy; therefore, it is considered to be a regional deity, which had appeared during the recession of the old religion [Balsys 2004: 41-42]. It seems that in order to restore the place and value of a sundew in the worldview of the inhabitants of Lithuania Minor of the ~ late 17th century, one should take into account the folklore of the neighbouring nations, which had preserved the image of a sundew.

**Slavic material.** Valerija Kolosova (Валерия Борисовна Колосова) in her article *Studies of ethnobotany IX. Sundew* (Этноботанические Заметки. IX. *Росняка*), which appeared in 2015, has gathered examples of the plant in question from the Slavic ethnography (Russian *Росняка* [Анценков 1878: 129]; Belorussian *Расіца* [Раслінны свет 2001: 200]; Ukrainian *Riska, Risočka* [Makowiecki 1936: 133]; Polish *Rosiczka* [Pastusiak 2007: 285]). Functionally they can be divided into four groups: 1) *spells promoting fertility* – a) human fertility: grass worn on the chest or in one’s bosom (root extract is drank) in order to attract the right partner (“[…] in order for a girl to love a boy, or for a boy to love a girl, one has to gather some sundews (загардышки) and after wearing them all day in one’s bosom, 17 The research conducted in the early 21st century by representatives of biomedical engineering revealed that the digestive enzyme released by the plant in question can be applied to develop innovative medical technologies, such as tissue engineering and in the treatment of chronic wounds [Zhang et al. 2010; Lenaghan et al. 2011].
to hide them somewhere behind the locked gates, then love will be very strong (not a joke)” [translation from Russian (here and below) by Žydrūnas Vičinskas] // „[…] чтобы девушка парня или парень девушку любил, то нужно вырывать загартушки, поносить целый день за пазухой и заткнуть играючи куда-нибудь за ворот, то не на шутку будет любить […]“ [Federowski 1897: 327]; “[…] sundew is used for love spells. Root extract of a plant has the power to attract the desired person. However, according to village herbalists, such method is recommended only by witches, and not by those who treat and wish you good” // „[…] загартушка – используют для любовных чар. Приготовленный и выпитый настой корней имеет способность притягивать любимую особу. По утверждению деревенской лекарки, это средство советуют лишь ведьмы, а те, что лечат и хотят делать только добро, его не советуют“ [Ажэшка 2000: 461]); b) non-human fertility: spraying the bees – to encourage them to swarm (!) (“In the example, where a sundew is called “Czar’s eyes” one can notice the semantics which is directly related to promotion of fertility (reproduction): “[Sundew – Ž. V.] is used to smoke (to spray) bees in order to encourage their swarming […]” // „Семантику добывания, приумножения можно усмотреть и в следующем примере использования росянки под именем царевы очи (Твер.): „Употребляется для обкуривания пчел для возбуждения их к поноске […]“ [Колосова 2015: 418]); the plant is mixed into the cow feed so that animals would not lose their fertility (“In the western part of Polesia, people used to feed cows with sundews so that they would not lose their fertility” // „В западном Полесье росянкой кормили корову, чтобы она не осталась яловой“ [Michajłow 1993: 102]); 2) h u n t – when catching hares (living on the earth), birds (flying in the sky) and fishing (swimming in the water) (“[…] This herb is suitable for those who are going to catch hare in the forest. Or when one is fishing – the line and other items used for fishing are smoked” // „[…] Трава добра, хто в лес ходит по за[и]ци. И к рыбьему ловле тою травои курить нити, всякую снасть“ [Колосова 2015: 417]; “Those who hunt birds, must carry [sundew – Ž. V.] with them, it will help to catch many different birds” // „[…] Кто хочет птицу ловить, носи при себе, много уловишь птиц всяких“ [Самолечение 1884]); 3) r o t e c t i o n – protects “against the evil eye”; protects the cow against drying up (“Hostess pours milk over the sanctified crown made of sundews to protect milk against the spell” // „Через освященные веночки из этой травы хозяйки „проце́живают молоко, чтобы уберечь его от чар“ [Federowski 440]); 4) h e a l t h – Slavish people believed that just as a sundew kills its prey, it can destroy the disease (“[…] It was thought that, similarly as the plant kills its prey, so it can also destroy disease” // „[…] Считали, что, подобно тому, как она уничтожает насекомых, она может уничтожить и болезни“ [Торэн 1996: 229]).

The provided material implies four main things. First, the most important function of the plant is the multiplication of fertility. Second, in respect of the material by Matthaeus Praetorius, an identical example has been identified in Slavic folklore where a sundew (“Czar’s eyes”) is used to increase a swarm of bees. Third, referring to the
information by Valerija Kolosova, “witches” (ведьмы) advise to use a sundew if one is seeking somebody’s affection, and those who “treat and wish you good” do not do so. This approach recorded in the latter fragment, probably indicates the desacralisation of the old-world view (religion) and, thus, suggests the archaism of the analysed herb. Fourth, Slavic material reveals that predatory (death-bringing) nature can be associated with the renewal-recovery (destruction of the disease). It must be noted that in the traditional Lithuanian culture, a bee is also a prophet of death and life or an intermediary between human and God, e. g.: death – “It was believed that to the afterlife bees can take a human who had had contact with bees only through honey [Piškinaitė-Kazlauskienė 1995: 124]; “If a wax candle standing near the deceased beekeeper faded, it meant that bees would disappear” [Piškinaitė-Kazlauskienė 1995: 124]; life – “A triangle-shaped honeycomb in the hive meant blessing for the beekeeper’s house and the ring meant a wedding in the beekeeper’s family [Piškinaitė-Kazlauskienė 1995: 124]; in folk “[…] bees in a hive were associated with the foetus in the womb, so in Būdai village, Raseiniai county, it was believed that bees would live well in a hive if the hive were made with the help of a pregnant woman [Piškinaitė-Kazlauskienė 1995: 129]. In terms of authenticity, the provided data: validate metaphysical / religious importance of a sundew, ensuring the fertility of bees; strengthen the reliability of the analysed mythical material by M. Praetorius; allow the assumption that a sundew should be treated as an attribute of Bičbirbis / Birbulis.

Reasoning that the mentioned plant should be associated with a deity patronising the bees is encouraged by a number of references. First of all, during the rites of both of hiving a swarm and sanctifying of bees sundew is used to guarantee the fertility of bees: I) in the second scene, the owner of a homestead – when hiving a swarm – smokes the mother bee with the smoke of the analysed plant, also verbally prays insects to swim and fill “the whole hive and garden” (see Table 1); II) in a third scene, the scheme of the ritual is identical – the beekeeper smokes the hive with the smoke of sundews, ensuring that they would come inward, and finally starts the verbal prayer (see Table 2) – paralleling the abundance of sundew smoke with the abundance of bees. The common denominator – action, Drosera smoke, prayer, mouth (with the help of which the humming is made, imitating a god which patronises bees; hive-bees are blown with air / smell from the mouth where a sundew (!) is kept18). If we accept the statement that the beekeeper hums in the course of sanctifying because he imitates the god of bees [Balsys 2010: 218], we should

18 “A custom known is Lithuania – to put in the hive a sanctified host (Suvalkija, Dzūkija), which was taken out of the mouth in church (Ricielai, Alytus County) and carried home in a prayer book (Kruncikai village, Trakai County)” [Piškinaitė-Kazlauskienė 1995: 126]. And “in Traikiniai village, Ukmergė County, in springtime peaceful beekeepers, when releasing bees from the hive, smoked them with the sanctified incense received from the priest or sacristan […]” [Piškinaitė-Kazlauskienė 1995: 127]. “When establishing the apiary in the new place, frequent Lithuanian invited a priest to sanctify the selected location” [Piškinaitė-Kazlauskienė 1995: 129]. To sum up, the relationship between bees and sanctified attributes X (host (through/out of the mouth), sanctified incense, priest, smoke of sundew (through/out of the mouth)) positively influences insects.
consider the possibility that keeping the sundew in one’s lips – when blowing to the hive – means essentially the same. Second, the Slavic material allows reasoning that the analysed plant can be associated both with death (predatory nature – insect hunting) and the renewal-recovery\textsuperscript{19}. Therefore, a hypothesis is raised that the smoke of a sundew as an attribute of Bičbirbis / Birbulis (its breath?) destroys unwanted creatures that interfere with bees and thereby patronises them – p r o t e c t s - b l e s s e s - m u l t i p l i e s.

Conclusions

1. The evaluation of interpretations of the researchers of the 19th–21st century, who had analysed Matthaeus Praetorius’ data, has revealed that the researchers can be divided into one secondary (0) and two main (1–2) groups: 1.0. Did not consider the issue of authenticity, did not use data on Bičbirbis / Birbulis (S. Stanevičius, J. I. Kraszewski, A. J. Greimas, D. Steponavičienė); 1.1. Did not analyse the issue of authenticity of M. P.’s mythical data on Bičbirbis / Birbulis but considered information to be reliable and used it in scientific works (H. Usener and F. Solmsen, P. Dunduliienė-Stukėnaitė); 1.2. Understood the problem of authenticity, more or less tried to solve it (G. Beresnevičius, R. Balsys, N. Vėlius).

2. The chronological evaluation of the mythical material written by Matthaeus Praetorius has revealed that the analysed author is to be treated as the last (late 17\textsuperscript{th} century) chronicler of pagan Lithuanian and Prussian religion to have recorded a god that patronises bees Bičbirbis (Bicz(ƶ)birbins, Bicž-birbins, bitzbirbins) or Birbulis (bicziu birbullis).

3. The present author’s research has revealed that M. Praetorius’ mythical data, directly related to Bičbirbis / Birbulis, are authentic and reliable. It seems that Bičbirbis / Birbulis should be treated as a regional deity, which appeared during the recession of the old religion.

4. The analysis of adoration dedicated to the god of bees: sanctifying of a hive – hiving a swarm – sanctifying of bees enables the reconstruction of a sundew as an attribute of Bičbirbis / Birbulis.

\textsuperscript{19} „The beekeeper of Karaviškiai village, Varėna county, A. Sinkevičius (born in 1911) remembered that his father had told him that the mother bee was injected into the hive through the mouth of a shot wolf – so bees would not leave the hive and they would attack alien bees like wolves. This was also done in the parishes of Zarasai and Švenčionys. In Subačius, the whole swarm was transferred through the jaw of a wolf. In Žižmai village, Šalčininkai county, it was believed that such features could be acquired by those bees whose mother was transferred through the throat of a hawk” [Piškinaitė-Kazlauskienė 1995: 131]. The provided models show that seeking to ensure the abundance of bees one tried to stimulate their ability to defend themselves and to attack the enemy when needed. Such abilities could be ensured by a throat (mouth) of a creature of predatory nature – wolf, eagle, i. e. “tool” through which or using which predators feed on the caught prey. It is assumed that, in the second half of the 17\textsuperscript{th} century, the beekeepers of wastes of Lithuania Minor similarly encouraged the instincts of bees to d e f e n d t h e m s e l v e s / a t t a c k by smoking them with the smoke of the plant of predatory nature – sundew.
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WERYFIKACJA LITEWSKIEGO BÓSTWA BIČBIRBISA / BIRBULISA W OPARCIU O INFORMACJE ZAPISANE PRZEZ MATEUSZA PRETORIUSA

Streszczenie

Artykuł ma na celu ustalenie wiarygodności bóstwa opiekującego się pszczolami, które w dziele z k. XVII w. Deliciae Prussicae, oder Preussische Schaubühne Mateusza Pretoriusa (Matthäus Prätorius) nosi imię Bičbirbisa (Bicz(ƶ)birbins, Biczž-bibbins, bitzbirbins) albo Birbulisa (bicziu birbullis). Po zapoznaniu się z opracowaniami badaczy działającymi w XI–X–XX wieku ustalono, że naukowców zajmujących się mitologiczną zawartością Deliciae Prussicae... M. Pretoriusa można podzielić na jedną boczną (0) oraz dwie główne (1–2) grupy: 0. Autorzy nie rozpatrywali kwestii autentyczności i nie analizowali danych o Bičbirbisa / Birbulisa (Szymon Staniewicz, Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, Algirdas Julius Greimas, Daiva Steponavičienė); 1. Autorzy nie dociekali autentyczności danych mitologicznych M. Pretoriusa dotyczących Bičbirbisa / Birbulisa, ale informacje te przyjęli i wykorzystali w swoich studiach naukowych (Hermanas Uzeneris i Feliksas Zolmzemas, Pranė Dundulienė-Stukėnaitė); 2. Autorzy podważyli autentyczność podanych przez Pretoriusa danych i podjęli próbę rozwiązania tej kwestii (Gintaras Beresnevičius, Rimantas Balsys, Norbertas Vėlius). Chronologiczne odczytanie zapisanego przez Mateusza Pretoriusa materiału mitologicznego pozwala stwierdzić, że autor był ostatnim kronikarzem pogańskiej religii Litwinów i Prułów, który odnotował Bičbirbisa / Birbulisa. Przeprowadzona analiza pokazała również, że mitologiczne dane M. Pretoriusa, bezpośrednio związane z opiekunem pszczelarstwa są autentyczne. Z kolei rozpoznanie zwyczajów dedykowanych bogowi pszczół – poświęcenie ula; wpuszczenie roju do ula; poświęcenie roju, pozwala interpretować rosiczkę (Drosera) jako atrybut Bičbirbisa / Birbulisa.

Słowa kluczowe: Mateusz Pretorius, Bičbirbis / Birbulis, rosiczka, autentyczność

Žydrūnas Vičinskas
Klaipeda University
z.vicinskas@gmail.com