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PAGANISM OF THE BALTS: SACRED SITES, TEMPLES AND SACRIFICE SITES

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It has been noted by many scholars that in order to understand a people's history, customs, folklore, folk music, folk art, architecture, literature, theater, art and any other area of culture, one must first learn of their religion and mythology.

Based on written sources known today, as well as findings and published work from other academic disciplines (linguistics, folklore, ethnology, archaeology and others), it can be stated that the main features of Baltic paganism should be considered the following: a) an abundance of hierarchically and functionally different gods, b) the ancestor cult, c) open sacred sites with an eternal flame or one kindled during rituals, d) communal rituals performed by servants of the cult in order to confirm the cosmic order or the welfare of members of the community, e) the expression of godly powers and a return connection to the gods via mediums, and hence a deep respect for nature, and f) a conception of the afterlife as reward for loyalty to the gods and their established order.

This article is dedicated to one of important elements of Baltic paganism, namely, characterizing the sacred buildings, sacred sites and sacrificial sites.

Keywords: Paganism, Balts, Sacred sites, temples, sacrifice sites.

Introduction. The pre-Christian sacred sites of the Balts, i.e., cult and sacrifice sites, were called *alkai* (singular *alkas*). What follows is how the terms *alkas*, *alka* and *aklavietė* are defined in the book *Religijotyros žodynas* [Dictionary of Religious Studies] published in 1991¹. There are actually several definitions in the Lithuanian dictionary for the lexeme *alkas* and its variant forms *alka*, *alkai*, *alkė* *elkas*, *elka*, *elkė*: a) a site on a mountain where burnt sacrifices were performed; b) a sacrifice; c) an idol, a god; d) an ancient Lithuanian sacred site; e) a hill overgrown with trees; f) a manor estate; g) grave mounds, mountains of giants; h) a small forest, woods, grove². The Lithuanian language is full of other words which preserve the ancient traditions of sacrifice: *alkakalnis* – a sacrificial (*alka*, *auka*) mound; *alkakapis* – the grave of a sacrifice/victim (*alka/auka*); *alkakmenis* – a sacrificial stone.

¹ *Religijotyros žodynas*. Romualdas Petraitis, ed. (Vilnius: Mintis, 1991), 16.

² *Lietuvių kalbos žodynas. Vol. I*. J. Kruopas, ed. (Vilnius: Mintis, 1968), 102, 103; *Lietuvių kalbos žodynas. Vol. II*. J. Kruopas, ed. (Vilnius: Mintis, 1969), 1125.

Lithuanian *alka*, *alkas*, *elkas* are cognate with Latvian *elks*, meaning an image of the god, an idol or simply an object of worship³, just as Lithuanian *alkūnė*, “a joint in the middle of the hand; a protuberance in a forest, field or meadow; a twist or turn in a road or river” is cognate with Latvian *elkonis* and Prussian *alkunis*⁴. E. Fraenkel and later Vilius Pėteraitis noted Lithuanian *alkas* and Latvian *elks* are allied with words conserved in other Indo-European languages (Gothic *alhs*, “sacred edifice”, Old English *ealh* “self-defense, protection”, Sanskrit *arĉa* “idol” and others). This leads to the conclusion that the ancient meaning of words with the root *alk-* might have been connected with self-protection and defense, and later expanded to include sites where sacrifices were made for safety, and protected, or “safe”, cult sites⁵. In that case, in terms of the ancient religion of the Balts, *alkas* would not have meant exclusively a mountain or hilly location, but also a turn in a river or other body of water, a protuberance (a peninsula or cape), a bend (dip), a large stone, and so on.⁶ Nonetheless this sort of conclusion can only be made with the reservation that only a few toponyms with the root *alk-* are to be found in the lists of historical Prussian placenames (Alkehen, Alken)⁷.

Vykintas Vaitkevičius was the first to define the terms *šventvietė*, *šventykla*, *alkas* which until then had been used synonymously, without any clear differentiation. A *šventvietė* is a natural ritual site; *šventykla* includes not just natural or artificial elements, but necessarily buildings, and *alkas* is suggested for more generic use as a term to

³ K. Mūlenbacha *Latviešu valodas vārdnīca, redīgējis, papildinājis, turpinājis J. Endzelīns. Sēj. I.* (Rīgā, 1923); *Latviešu valodas vārdnīca (A–Ž). Atbildīgā redaktore Dainavīte Guļevska* (Rīga: Avots, 1987), 210.

⁴ *Lietuvių kalbos žodynas. Vol. I.*, 106; B. H. Топоров, *Прусский язык. Словарь. Т. I.* (Москва: Наука, 1975), 72–74; Vytautas Mažiulis, *Prūsų kalbos etimologinis žodynas. Vol. I* (Vilnius: Mokslas, 1988), 67–68; Dalia Pakalniškienė, Audronė Kaukienė, Jūratė Laučiūtė. *Baltų kalbų žodynas (A). Res Humanitariae. Vol. IV* (Klaipėda: Klaipėdos universiteto leidykla, 2008), 21–22; *Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai. Vol. II.* Norbertas Vėlius, ed. (Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidykla, 2001), 659–660; Actually Fraenkel rejects a connection between *alkas* and *alkūnė* (see: Ernst Fraenkel. *Litauisches Etymologisches wörterbuch. Bnd I.* Heidelberg–Göttingen, 1962, 8).

⁵ Ernst Fraenkel, *Litauisches Etymologisches wörterbuch. Bnd I*, 7; Vilius Pėteraitis, *Mažosios Lietuvos ir Tvankstos vietovardžiai. Jų kilmė ir reikšmė* (Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidybos institutas, 1997), 48–49; Dalia Pakalniškienė, Audronė Kaukienė, Jūratė Laučiūtė. *Baltų kalbų žodynas (A)*, 21–22.

⁶ The religious custom, as among the Gallic druids, of considering groves sacred despite the lack of any temples, among other matters, led Philippus Callimachus Buonaccorsi, writing in the 15th century, to the conclusion the Balts originated among the Gauls (see: *Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai. Vol. I.* Norbertas Vėlius, ed. (Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidykla, 1996), 601, 603; Gintaras Beresnevičius, *Palemono mazgas. Palemono legendos periferinis turinys. Religinė istorinė studija* (Vilnius: Sapnų sala, 2003), 23).

⁷ *Baltische Ortsnamen in Ostpreußen. Hydronymia Europaea. Sonderband III.* Bearbeitet von Grasilda Blažienė (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2005), 16–17, 307–308; Jurgis Gerulis, *Die altpreußischen Ortsnamen: gesammelt und sprachlich behandelt von Georg Gerullis* (Berlin und Leipzig: Vereinigung wissenschaftlicher Verleger, 1922), 8–9; Vilius Pėteraitis, *Mažosios Lietuvos ir Tvankstos vietovardžiai*, 48–49.

describe a *šventvietė* as a site of sacrifice and as a cult site, differentiating it from natural sites and objects held sacred⁸. If we agree upon this formulation and usage of the terms, we're still left with a problem. The written sources of the 16th–17th centuries contain much information about sacrifices and rites dedicated to the elder gods and performed on the peasant's farm or in the farm buildings themselves (in the *jauja* (a grain-drying shed or section of the barn), in the sauna, in fields under cultivation and elsewhere). None of the terms mentioned previously seem appropriate to these rites because all of the former describe a site for rituals outside the farm, in the natural environment, operating continually or when required. Here, on the other hand, we are speaking of locations for rituals (e.g., a stone in the *jauja*, hidden from the view of non-believers by straw) which function continually as well, but also about a very specific place set up or built for a specific rite (the fireplace in the *jauja*, straw spread on the clay floor of the *jauja*, grain placed in the middle of the barn, a table covered with straw, and so on) which after the performance of the rite is either disassembled or hidden in order not to arouse suspicion on the part of the tireless guardians of Christianity. I propose calling these temporary worship sites on peasant farms (in the *jauja*, farmhouse, sauna, cultivated fields, etc.) described in 16th–17th century sources *aukvietės*.

It is to be expected this suggestion will encounter criticism, if only for the fact that the word *auka* is considered a neologism by some linguists and mythologists, a new word allegedly coined by S. Daukantas, seeking a replacement for the foreign borrowing *afiera*, *apiera*.⁹ It is doubtful, despite frequent claims made in the past and now, that Daukantas did make this word up. In the earlier writings of Bretkūnas we find the word *aukoti*, “to make a sacrifice to the gods”.¹⁰ If Lithuanians already knew the verb *aukoti*, then the noun *auka* “that which is sacrificed, that is, an object, farm animal, agricultural product” should cause no surprise (compare *auka* ?! *aukoti*; *nauda* → *naudoti*, *rauda* → *raudoti* and so on). Furthermore, this word is recorded in toponyms and hydronyms with the root *auk-*: Aukupė, Aukupis, Aukrakštis¹¹, Auksūdis, Auksūdys¹², Aukai, Auklapiai¹³. We therefore have to agree with B. Savukynas, who says the first element in these hydronyms is related to Lithuanian *auka*¹⁴. J. Palionis, it seems, finally put the whole dispute to rest in 1989, demonstrating

⁸ Vykintas Vaitkevičius, *Alkai. Baltų šventviečių studija* (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 2003), 10–11.

⁹ See: K. Būga, *Rinktiniai raštai. Vol. I* (Vilnius: Politinės ir mokslinės literatūros leidykla, 1958), 355–357; Ernst Fraenkel, *Litauisches Etymologisches wörterbuch. Bnd I*, 25; Vykintas Vaitkevičius, *Alkai. Baltų šventviečių studija*, 22–23.

¹⁰ *Lietuvių kalbos žodynas. Vol. I*. Atsakingasis redaktorius J. Kruopas (Vilnius: Mintis, 1968), 477.

¹¹ Aleksandras Vanagas, *Lietuvių hidronimų etimologinis žodynas* (Vilnius: Mokslas, 1981), 52.

¹² Marija Razmukaitė, Auksodė ar Aukūdys, *Švyturys* 2 (1989): 32.

¹³ Vilius Pėteraitis, *Mažosios Lietuvos ir Tvankstos vietovardžiai*, 58–59.

¹⁴ Bronys Savukynas, Ežerų vardai. *Lietuvių kalbotyros klausimai* 3 (Vilnius: Valstybinė politinės ir mokslinės literatūros leidykla, 1960), 298.

rationally that Daukantas could not have been the author of the word *auka*. He based this on examples from the *Contiones litvanice*, a collection of sermons from the beginning of the 18th century: “*Praszau jusu way-kialiay mana, te-gul miayle Wieszpates die-wa szyr-dij jusu kaip didžiausia auka, batay tasay zynsius nuog musu bus jam wdzie-cznas...*” [“I beseech you, o children of mine, let [there be] the love of God in your hearts as the greatest *sacrifice*, so that the *zynis* might...”]¹⁵. The linguist Aleksas Girdenis agrees with Palionis. Doubting, with good reason, the relationship of the lexeme *auka* with the verbs *aukauti*, *aukoti* “to lift, to swing, to lull to sleep”, he derives *auka* from the Old Lithuanian **avikà*, “sheep”¹⁶. The arguments and conclusions in these articles seem sufficient not just for rehabilitating the lexemes *auka*, *aukojimas*, but also all compound lexemes with the *auk-* element such as *aukuras* (*aukakuras*), *aukakalnis* and *aukakmenis*. In this context the use of the term *aukvietė* seems completely permissible and conceptually sound.

1. Sacred places (*Šventvietės*)

Šventvietės, i.e., naturally formed sites for rituals, are referenced by the very first authors to write about the lands of the Balts, including Adam of Bremen¹⁷, Pope Innocent III¹⁸, Oliver von Paderborn¹⁹, Peter von Dusburg²⁰ and Jan Długosz²¹. G. Beresnevičius is of the belief that “this information shows clearly that these sorts

¹⁵ Jonas Palionis, Zur, Wörter *aukà* ‘Opfer’ und *aukó-ti* ‘opfern’, *Zeitschrift für Slawistik* 34: 10–212.

¹⁶ Aleksas Girdenis, Lie. *aukà* – iš **{au/ikaë}* ‘avis’, *Baltistica* 41 (2006): 375–378.

¹⁷ Adam of Bremen writing about Semblans and Prussians in 1075 mentions that “even until today” in their lands “it is not allowed to visit groves and springs which, in their opinion, visits by Christians would pollute” (see *Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai. Vol. I*, 190–191).

¹⁸ Pope Innocent III in his bull of 1199 notes the Livonian tribes, among their other heresies, give “the honor due God” to “leaved trees” (see *Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai. Vol. I*, 201–203).

¹⁹ Oliver von Paderborn (ca. 1220) states: “They believed in groves, which no axe dare touch, and whose springs and trees, mountains and hills, cliffs and valleys were worshipped” (see *Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai. Vol. I*, 224–225).

²⁰ Petras Dusburgietis 1326 metų “Prūsijos žemės kronikoje” rašo: “...Jie turėjo šventųjų miškų, laukų ir vandenių, kur niekas nedrįso nei medžio kirsti, nei žemės dirbti, nei žuvauti...” (*Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai. Vol. I*, 344).

²¹ Jan Długosz writing in the first half of the 15th century about the adoption of Christianity in Lithuania says Jagiello (Jogaila) ordered the “cutting down and destruction of the groves and forests, held by them to be untouchable”. Długosz again: “[They] worshipped many forests as completely sacred and inviolable. To enter them and desecrate them, to cut down a tree or to tear off a leaf, meant to lose one’s head. The demon murdered or wounded some part of the body of the vandal of leaf or tree” (see *Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai. Vol. I*, 551, 557, 572). The same Długosz: in those forests families and each house had their own fireplace assigned to them in which they used to burn the bodies of all their dead householders and loved ones. ... As if that weren’t enough, every first day of October in all the aforementioned groves in Samogitia the greatest festival was held to which men and women from throughout the land thronged. ... Each brought to his own altar his sacrifice to the pagan gods, first of all to the god whom they call Perkūnas in their language”. (*Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai. Vol. I*, 559–560; 580–581).

of sacred groves were off-limits to practical activities, and were entered on holy days and for the performance of worship. They were, simply put, cult sites”²². They might have been referred to as “the dwelling places of the gods” by adherents of the pre-Christian religion. In this regard, Enea Silvio Piccolomini tells the story of how, during the Christianization of Lithuania when the sacred groves were put to the axe, “gaggles of women, mourning and grieving, came to Vytautas to complain of the cutting of the sacred woods and the confiscation of the abode of the gods, where they customarily always prayed to a god for stopping the rain, or for sun, and who now no longer knew where they should seek their god, deprived of his house”²³.

The linguistic data, and especially toponyms, essentially confirm the information from the written sources. There is an abundance of oikonyms, hydronyms, demonyms and oronyms in the historical lands of the Balts (Alkakalniai; Alkos, Maldu, Perkūno, Dievo, Saulės kalnai; Šventupiai, Šventežeriai, Perkūno, Velnio, Laumės akmenys; Šventgirės; Velnio raistai, akivarai; Perkūnkiemiai, Perkūnakaimiai, Romainiai and etc. and etc.) witnessing to the large number of such sacred sites and the rather dense network they formed²⁴.

After the introduction of Christianity, the destruction of sacred places and buildings and the confiscation of the “houses” of the gods, some these ritual sites were transferred to more distant and inaccessible locations, lesser-known to outsiders, foreigners and followers of other religions. Nonetheless the knowledge that the former locations were sacred was passed down via folklore (legends, traditions, stories) and, to some extent, through customs (the St. John’s Eve, or Midsummer’s Night Eve, bonfires, for example, on top of the old sites of sacrifice and worship on sacred hills). There are many traditions, legends and tales about the sacred fire kept lit, the sacrifices made and the worship of the elder gods, ancient temples which had formerly stood and had sunk into the earth itself on these sacred hills; about sacred lakes and rivers and their guardians and gods; about sunken treasure and its guardians; about stones with impressions from the feet of Velnias, Laumė and Maria; about special groves and

²² Gintaras Beresnevičius, *Trumpas lietuvių ir prūsų religijos žodynas* (Vilnius: Aidai, 2001), 15.

²³ *Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai*. Vol. I, 592, 595.

²⁴ See: Georg Gerullis, *Die altpreußischen Ortsnamen : gesammelt und sprachlich behandelt von Georg Gerullis* (Berlin und Leipzig: Vereinigung wissenschaftlicher Verleger, 1922); Aleksandras Vanagas, *Lietuvių hidronimų etimologinis žodynas* (Vilnius: Mokslas, 1981); Vilius Pėteraitis, *Mažosios Lietuvos ir Tvankstos vietovardžiai. Jų kilmė ir reikšmė* (Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidybos institutas, 1997); Norbertas Vėlius, *Mitinės lietuvių sakmių būtybės. Laimos. Laumės. Aitvarai, kaukai. Raganos. Burtininkai. Vilkolakiai* (Vilnius: Vaga, 1977); Norbertas Vėlius, *Chtoniškasis lietuvių mitologijos pasaulis. Folklorinio velnio analizė* (Vilnius: Vaga, 1987); Vyckintas Vaitkevičius, *Alkai. Baltų šventviečių studija* (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 2003); Marija Razmukaitė, *Lietuviški tradiciniai vietovardžiai: Gudijos, Karaliaučiaus krašto, Latvijos ir Lenkijos*. Main list compiled by Marija Razmukaitė, reverse lists compiled and prepared for publication by Aistė Pangonytė (Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidybos institutas, 2002); *Vietovardžių žodynas*. Compiled by: Aldonas Pupkis, Marytė Razmukaitė, Rita Miliūnaitė (Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidybos institutas, 2002).

²⁵ Bronislava Kerbelytė, *Lietuvių liaudies padavimai* (Vilnius: Vaga, 1970); Bronislava Kerbelytė, *Lietuvių pasakojamosios tautosakos katalogas*. Vol. III. *Etiologinės sakmės. Mitologinės sakmės*.

forests and specific trees, and others²⁵. Analysis of these texts reveals traces of religious changes (e.g., different variations with different explanations of the origin of footprints in rocks: one set of texts says they were made by Velnias/Laumė, while another group of texts claims Christ/Maria made them, and so on). It is a regular phenomenon in religious transformation that older sacred sites are converted to sites used by the Christian cult. In this way chapels and sacred posts appear at the sacred sites and special trees are distinguished with the images of the saints²⁶.

Despite the changes underway, the status of the former sacred sites has been ever more frequently confirmed by archaeological investigations beginning in the first half of the 20th century and especially those of the last several decades. These studies have provided results which clearly correlate with the written sources and linguistic and folklore material²⁷. Vytautas Urbanavičius, who investigated sacred sites with stones with depressions in them in the 1970s, for example, states that all of these sites were distant from the settlements of their time, were located in forests, swamps and river valleys²⁸, and everywhere there were fireplaces (*aukurai*) located next to or under the stones, fireplaces usually containing pottery shards, animal bones and other material²⁹. The striking fact here is that most of these sacred sites are dated to the 16th–18th century period, when Lithuania and Samogitia (*Žemaitija*) had already been officially Christian for two to three hundred years. This shows that many of the sacred sites (especially those set in places difficult to access) appeared, as has been said previously, after the razing of the formerly legal communal houses of worship–pagan temples–and sacred sites during and after the introduction of Christianity.

The information provided by the early sources and the evidence collected and conclusions made by linguists, folklorists, archaeologists and ethnologists tend to give

Padavimai. Legendos (Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 2002); Bronislava Kerbelytė, *Lietuvių pasakojamosios tautosakos katalogas. Vol. IV. Pasakojimai. Anekdota. Oracijos* (Kaunas: Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto leidykla, 2009).

²⁶ Vytautas Daugudis, Pagoniškujų šventyklų Lietuvoje klausimu. *Ikikrikščioniškosios Lietuvos kultūra. Istoriniai ir teoriniai aspektai* (Vilnius: Academia, 1992), 64; Vyckintas Vaitkevičius, *Senosios Lietuvos šventvietės* (Vilnius: Diemedis, 1998); Vyckintas Vaitkevičius, *Senosios Lietuvos šventvietės: Aukštaitija* (Vilnius: Diemedis, 2006); Vyckintas Vaitkevičius, *Alkai. Baltų šventviečių studija* (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 2003).

²⁷ Petras Tarasanka, *Pėdos akmenyje. Lietuvos istoriniai akmenys* (Vilnius: Valstybinė politinės ir mokslinės literatūros leidykla, 1958); Vytautas Daugudis, Pagoniškujų šventyklų Lietuvoje klausimu, 50–77; Algirdas Girininkas, Apie Stajėtiškio aukų akmenį, *Liaudies kultūra* 3 (1994): 8; Rimutė Rimantienė, *Akmens amžiaus žvejai prie Pajūrio lagūnos. Šventosios ir Būtingės tyrinėjimai* (Vilnius: Lietuvos nacionalinis muziejus, 2005); Vladas Žulkus, *Kuršiai Baltijos jūros erdvėje* (Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2004), 179–193; Gintautas Zabiela, *Lietuvos medinės pilys* (Vilnius: Diemedis, 1995).

²⁸ These stones with depressions in them were actually discovered at farm sites and former illage settlements, but Daugudis believes these stones were brought to the farmsteads in the 19th and earlyth centuries (Vytautas Daugudis, Pagoniškujų šventyklų Lietuvoje klausimu, 58–59).

²⁹ Vytautas Urbanavičius, *Senujų tikėjimų relikvai Lietuvoje XV–XVII amžiais: pagoniškos šventvietės XVI–XVII amžiais*. Lietuvos TSR Mokslų akademijos darbai. A serija T. 3 (60) (Vilnius: Lietuvos mokslų akademijos leidykla, 1977), 83.

the impression that all of our ancient sacred sites were the wanton creation of wild nature, chosen because of one dominant or several elements which were associated with the idea of the *axis mundi*. These elements, as already noted, were the mound/hill, the tree, the stone, and a body of water surrounded by groves of somehow special and exceptional trees (usually oaks). Besides these natural sacred sites, which were likely considered sculptured by the gods themselves and sites through which the gods not only expressed themselves, but if need be could also be accessed by humans, the Baltic tribes also had temples.

2. Temples

The written sources don't speak of just one temple for all the separate Baltic tribes. S. Grunau writes about the *Heiligenbeil* site, where there was an oak, a sacred flame was kept eternally burning, sacrifices were burnt and an idol of the god *Curcho* stood³⁰; Peter von Dusburg writes about the Romova worship complex which was located in the center of the Nadruva region; Augustinus Rotundus (second half of the 16th century) about the temple of Perkūnas in Vilnius; Maciej Strykowski about a temple on the Nevėžys River in Samogitia; and Wigand von Marburg in the 14th century tells of a Lithuanian pagan temple which held at least sixty people, and of a "holy man" (perhaps a *žynis*, the general office of the pagan hierophant, or priest, among Balts?) caught by the crusaders³¹. Archaeological investigations in recent decades have shown there were many more temples, i.e., cult sites with ritual edifices. The most notable are Bačkininkėliai in the Prienai region, Imbarė and Kurmaičiai in the Kretinga region, the Birutė complex in Palanga, and Raizgiai and Sauginiai in the Šiauliai region, among many more³².

Here we'll concentrate upon the last two cult sites, Romava and the temple to Perkūnas, which, appropriately enough for such sites, were established "in the very heart", "in the middle of the treacherous [Prussian] nation", "on the summit of the highest hill", i.e., in the exact center. The center, the middle, the "navel" of the world, as demonstrated in the history of religions of different peoples, is a rather significant

³⁰ *Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai. T. II*, Norbertas Vėlius, ed. (Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidykla, 2001), 113.

³¹ *Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai. T. I*, Norbertas Vėlius, ed. (Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidykla, 1996), 467, 469.

³² Vytautas Daugudis, Pagoniškujų šventyklų Lietuvoje klausimu, 53. Vykintas Vaitkevičius, *Alkai. Baltų šventviečių studija*, 225–231.

³³ It was, of course, on "the navel of the world" which is, we understand, the very center of the earth, that, according to Plato, the god Apollo taught the people. In ancient Greece such a location is the city of Delphi, where the Delphi oracle consecrated to Apollo was established. The omphalos stone guarded here was likely a deified meteorite (compare with *Perkūno pirštai*, the fingers of Perkūnas). The navel of the world (the center) was also important in Judaism and Christianity. The oldest information from the Bible points to Mount Gerizim in Samaria (see also the Gospel according to St. John, chapter 4, internet webpage: http://biblija.lt/index.aspx?cmp=reading&doc=Biblija_RKK1998_Jn_4), with the center later relocated to Jerusalem. The prophet Ezekiel says: "Thus saith

designation³³, in that it was through the temple standing in this center that connection was possible with the heavens and underworld, with the gods and goddesses residing in those realms and with the spirits of the ancestors³⁴.

2.1. Romava

2.1.1. Written Sources

Peter von Dusburg was the first to provide information about Romava in 1326: “Fuit autem in medio nacionis hujus perverse, scilicet in Nadrowia, locus quidam dictus Romow, trahens nomen suum a Roma, in quo habiabat quidam, dictus Criwe, quem colebant pro papa, quia sicut dominus papa regit universalem ecclesiam fidelium, ita ad istius nutum seu mandatum non solum gentes predictae, sed et Lethowini et alie naciones Lyvonie terre regebantur”³⁵. [“There was now in the midst of this perverse nation, that is, in Nadruva, the place called Romava (Romow), taking its name from Rome, where lived a man called the Krivis (Criwe), whom they worshipped instead

the Lord GOD; This is Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her” (Ezekiel 5:5). In the apocrypha the navel of the world is indicated even more clearly as the mountain upon which the Temple of Jerusalem is built. The Old Testament tradition carried over and became entrenched in Christianity, where the navel of the world became Golgotha, which the gospels claim was the site of the Crucifixion of Christ. In the latter part of the 17th century the Russian traveller V. Polozov visited Palestine and wrote: “After visiting the sepulchre of the most holy, I went to take a look at the navel of the world. In this Church of the Resurrection of Christ there is next to the navel of the world a small crack [leading] underground, about as wide as a man” (see Э. Г. Чумаченко, Путешествие В. В. Полозова по странам Ближнего и Среднего Востока в 70-е годы XVII в., *Палестинский сборник* 15 (1966): 221). In many myths and legends the navel of the world (the center) is the venue where cosmogony takes place. One Talmud tract says: “he Most Holy One created the world like an embryo. As the embryo grows from the navel, so God began to create the world by the navel and from there it spread out in all directions” (Mircea Eliade, *Myth of the Eternal Return* (London, 1955), 16). It is noteworthy that in the earliest myths the world is constructed from murdered giants and the first ancestors (Puruša, Ymir). The continuity of this idea in legends about Adam is visible. In the writings of mediaeval authors such as the 11th century text penned by the Syrian M. bar-Keti it is said that after his death Adam was laid to rest in Jerusalem, the center of all lands. When Noah was preparing for the Flood and built his Ark, he dug up the bones of Adam and took them with him. After the Flood Noah divided up the remains of Adam to his sons at the same time he was dividing up the lands of the earth and assigning them to his sons (Charles William Wilson, *Golgotha and the Holy Sepulchre* (London, 1906), 164). This text demonstrates how myths about the first ancestor are connected directly with the settlement of new lands (defeat and colonization). Akin to the topic under discussion is the legend ascribed to the Old Prussians of Brutenis and Videvutis. According to Prussian law, the gods grant land, and when travelling to visit the “kind gods”, that is, before entering the funeral fire, Brutenis and Videvutis divide up and grant all lands to their heirs: Lithppffo, Saymo, Sudo, Naydro, Scalawo, Nathango, Bartho, Galyndo, Warmo, Hogga, Pomeso and Chelmo (see *Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai. Vol. II*, 96–103).

³⁴ Mircea Eliade, *Šventybė ir pasaulietiškasumas*. Translated to Lithuanian from French by Petras Račius (Vilnius: Mintis, 1997), 28; Mircea Eliade, *Amžinojo sugrįžimo mitas: archetipai ir kartotė*. Translated to Lithuanian from French by Petras Račius (Vilnius: Mintis, 1996), 18–19.

³⁵ *Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai. Vol. I*, 334.

of the pope, and just as his Holiness the Pope rules the universal church of the faithful ... so, too, to the Krivis's will and word not only do these tribes adhere, but Lithuania and all the tribes of Livonia are ruled by him as well"]³⁶.

Based on this primary source, Romava was later referenced by Nikolaus von Jeroschin, Jan Długosz, Mathias de Miechow (Maciej Miechowita), Lucas David, Simon Grunau, Caspar Hennenberger, Martin Cromer (Martinus Cromerus), Alessandro Guagnini (Alexander Gugninus), Jonas Bretkūnas, Matthaues Praetorius and other chroniclers. The information about the most important Prussian religious center in works by these authors largely agrees, although there are differences. Initially they might appear insignificant and arising due to linguistic differences or writing styles. There is, however, a different viewpoint. It shouldn't be discounted that different information could be the result of the authors (or at least some them) using a different source, now lost to us, and stories told by contemporaries. For that reason (i.e., the differences encountered), it is meaningful to go over, at least partially, information about Romava from those who were writing in the 14th–17th centuries.

Nikolaus von Jeroschin translated Długosz's work into German in 1340, and translated the Latin passage "...locus quidam dictus Romow" as "dî stat dî hîz Rômowe",³⁷ i.e., "the city, called Romuva"³⁸.

Jan Długosz (15th cent.) puts for the year 997 (most likely using the work of Nikolaus von Jeroschin): "...speciale habens idioma, a Latino tamen aliquantum derivatum et quod cum Lithuanico habet concordantiam aliquam et paritatem, eosdem o que paene deos, ritus et sacra eadem unum vertum et eundem summum sacrorum pontificem apud civitatem eorum pro metropoli habitam Romowe vocatam residentem, a Roma intitulatam..."

"[The Prussians] had their own distinct language, originating in Latin, related to Lithuanian and similar to it, had almost the same customs and rites and had one true

³⁶ *Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai. Vol. I*, 344. Peter von Dusburg also mentions naval attacks by the *komtur* of Ragnit into the lands of the "Lithuanian king". It is said that during one such raid they "burnt down the village called Romainiai, which according to their traditions they considered holy..." R. Batūra believes this was a site on the left bank of the Nieman River, across from Raudondvaris, which really was a Lithuanian sacred site. Romainiai was also the name of the sacred forest stretching between the Nieman and Nevėžys Rivers (see: *Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai. Vol. I*, 355). And here in this very same Romainiai Maciej Strykowski locates the Romava also mentioned by Peter von Dusburg: "And the Lithuanians and Samogitians, as soon as they grown into a large nation, elected for themselves a separate bishop whom they honored as we do the Pope now, and established a new Rome in Samogitia, perhaps as early as Palemonas or Publius Libo, on the Nevėžys River, and they called that city Romove (Romowe), or Romainiai (Romnove) (see: *Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai. Vol. II*, 543). V. Vaitkevičius doesn't reject the possibility the main sacred site of the Balts was removed from conquered Prussia and relocated to Romainiai (Vyckintas Vaitkevičius, Raktas Romuvai, *Liaudies kultūra* 6 (2003): 23).

³⁷ *Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai. Vol. I*, 358.

³⁸ For more on the translations of this text, see: Rolandas Kregždys. *Baltų mitologemų imologinis žodynas. Vol. I.: Kristburgo sutartis* (Vilnius: Lietuvos kultūros tyrimų institutas, 2012), 24.

senior *žynis* [sacred *pontifex*] of rituals, resident in the most important city of their state, called Romowe, named after Rome”³⁹. (translated to English from the Lithuanian translation by Daiva Mažiulytė).

Mathias de Miechow in his work “Tractate on the Two Sarmatias” published in 1517⁴⁰ writes: “this quadrilingual nation during the time of idol worship had one grand *žynis* (hierophant) whom they called Krivis. He lived in the city of Romuva (Romouae), which received its name from Rome...” This was basically how the text is translated to Russian in the publication of this work by S. Anninsky (Аннинский) in 1936⁴¹. Incidentally, Anninsky notes Mathias de Miechow made use of the works by Peter von Dusberg and Nikolaus von Jeroschin.

Simon Grunau also describes this temple among events recorded for the year 521, but gives it two different names, Rikojatas (Rickoyto) and Romuva (Romowo): “Do irst Bruttene im mit seinen götthin eine sonderliche wonunge baute. Der götthin woren 3, Patollo, Patrimpo, Perkūno, die stunden in einer eichen, dy 6 elen dicke war. Diese eiche und die wonung des crywen adir kyrwaidens mit allen seinen waidolotten, das woren priester, sie nantten Rickoyto”. [“Initially special houses were built for Brutenis and his gods. There were three gods: Patulas, Patrimpas and Perkūnas, [and] their abode was an oak with a width of six uolektys [the uolektis is an archaic unit of measurement roughly equivalent to 66–71 cm, so the oak was something like 12 feet wide]. They called this oak tree and the houses of the *krivis* or *krivaitis* with all his *vaidilučiai*, those being his clerics, ‘Rikojotas’ (Rickoyto)”] (translated by Sigitas Plaušinitis)⁴².

³⁹ *Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai. Vol. I*, 545–546, 565–566.

⁴⁰ Maciej Miechovita, *Tractatus de duabus Sarmatis Europiana et Asiana et de contentis in eis*, 1517.

⁴¹ Этот четвероязычный народ во времена идолопоклонства имел одного великого жреца, которого звали Криве. Жил он в городе Ромове (Romouae), названном так по имени Рима (Матвей Меховский, *Трактат о двух Сарматиях*. Пер. и комм. С. А. Аннинского (Москва, Ленинград: Изд-ство АН СССР, 1936), 94–112.

⁴² *Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai. Vol. II*, 54, 92. In another section of the same work Grunau treats this temple more comprehensively: “The large, broad, tall oak tree in which the devil carried on his deception and which contained idols of the gods was always green, in winter and summer (I think this was a work of deception by the devil), and the crown of the oak up so high was wide and the leaves so thick that it didn’t allow a drop of rain through. And around on all sides there were these beautiful curtains hung, one or three paces from the oak, some seven uolektys high. No one was allowed to go in there except the *krivaitis* and the senior *vaidilučiai*, and if someone came [wishing to make a sacrifice] then those curtains were pulled back. And the oak was divided into three equal sections in each of which, without comparing the opening intentionally made for that purpose, the idol of a god stood, and had his sign opposite him. The Perkūnas idol had one section, as said earlier, and his sign was, that the fire of oak fuel was kept continually burning, night and day, and if through ineptitude someone allowed the fire to go out, the guilty *vaidilutis* was killed and himself sacrificed on the fire. The idol of Patrimpas had the second section, and his sign was a snake, nursed on milk by the *vaidilučiai* and kept in a large cauldron always covered with sheaves of grain. The third, the idol of Patulas, had the third portion, and his sign was the mask of a person, a horse and a cow, and sometimes, during their festivals, animal fat was burned in their honor. On all sides around the *vaidilučiai* lived in tents” (*Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai. Vol. II*, 104).

Describing the events of the year 1113 and how Bolesław with a large army invaded Prussia and put the Prussian temple to the flame along with all its gods, S. Grunau at this point provides both names, Rikojotas (Rickoyot) and Romuva (Romowo). In the same entry Grunau says the Prussians quickly rebuilt their sacred complex Rickoyot, or Romewo⁴³.

Caspar Hennenberger mainly relies upon information from S. Grunau and provides no new information about the temple. He was chiefly concerned with where this sacred complex might have been located in Prussia. Maintaining the view that this sort of temple would have to have been located “in the center of the land”, he claims the place the ancient Prussians called Rikojotas (Rickoyot), or Romuva (Romove), where the oak tree of the devil with the three gods stood, would have been near Patoliai, “in the center of Notanga, where the monastery of the Holy Trinity is now”⁴⁴.

Neither does Martin Cromer provide new information about the Prussian temple complex. The only passage which excites interest is his chapter retelling the story of the burning down of the Prussian temple. Here Romovè (Romoue) is called a castle: “His ergo Boleslaus rex bellum intulit, et per Culmensem tractum, qui Polonicae ditionis erat, hostiles terras ingressus, agros vastat: Razinum, Romoue, et Balgam arces nullo negrocio capit et incendit: uicos et pagos diripit”. Martynas Kromeris taip pat naujų žinių apie prūsų šventovę nepateikia. Atkreiptinas dėmesys nebent į skyrių kuriame perpasakojama informacija apie prūsų šventyklos sudeginimą. Romovè (*Romoue*) čia vadinama pilimi: “His ergo Boleslaus rex bellum intulit, et per Culmensem tractum, qui Polonicae ditionis erat, hostiles terras ingressus, agros vastat: Razinum, Romoue, et Balgam arces nullo negrocio capit et incendit: uicos et pagos diripit”. [“So now King Bolesław attacked the Prussians in the Kulm territory as well, which belonged to Poland, and having made belligerent ingress into the Prussian lands, he ravaged them; he laid siege and took effortlessly the Razina, Romovè and Balga castles, and burnt them down; and pillaged the villages and farms”] (translated by Eugenija Ulčinaite)⁴⁵.

Alessandro Guagnini (also relying on works from earlier authors) wrote in his work that the Prussians built a church and house for their gods and called this palace Romava (Romowe): “i bogom swym zbudowali kościół i mieszkanie jedno pod wielkiem dębem, barzdo piękne i kosztowne, i nazwali on gmach Romove”⁴⁶. [“...and to their gods built a church and a lodge under the great oak, very beautiful and lavish, and called this building Romove”].

Strykowski also puts the Romava (Romnowe) of the Prussians in a city (*Romnowe miasto pruskie*)⁴⁷.

⁴³ *Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai. Vol. II*, 68, 69, 105, 106.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 335, 336, 346, 347.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 417, 421.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 479, 491.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 510, 543.

It should be noted that although these authors use the works of others (especially Grunau's), they describe the temple complex differently. So Romava is not merely an undefined location (a land, a forest plot), but also a castle, a city and a palace.

2.1.2. The Name of the Temple

Only one name for the temple complex, Romava (*Romow*), is recorded in Dusburg's chronicle. In works by Grunau and those who followed him, the name Rikajotas (*Rickoyott*, *Rickoyot*) appears together with Romava (*Romow*). This chronicler says Rikajotas and Romava are names of one and the same place, the temple. In a description of the Christians' march from Gnesen (Gniezno) to Prussia in 1113, it says they "went to Rikojotas (Rickoyott), or Romuva (Romowo), and here they burned down the buildings of the *krivaitis* with all his *vaidilučiai*, and cast the idols of the gods Patulas, Patrimpas and Perkūnas into the fire..." Grunau says again that Rikajotas and Romuva are the same place, stating the Prussians worked feverishly and "restored Rikojotas, or Romava", and set up new idols⁴⁸. Caspar Hennenberger equates Rikajotas with Romava⁴⁹.

The name of this temple has been subject to etymological speculation since the end of the 17th century. At the present time we can offer at least five different explanations for the origin of the name Romava.

1. Matthaeus Praetorius (latter half of the 17th century). Pretorijus was interested in the etymology of the name of the temple early on. He thought the name came from the Prussian words known to him (or at least overheard by him) "*Romiu*, *Rombiu*, *Rombothi*". These words, he said, meant "to grow" in the Old Prussian language. Therefore, Praetorius argued, the name of the temple complex derived from the gnarled, strangely over-grown old oak standing in the midst of the temple complex⁵⁰.

2. Martynas Liudvikas Gediminas Rėza (Ludwig Rhesa) (1819). Rėza was the first to suggest Romava was related to the Lithuanian words *romas*⁵¹, *ramus*: "This word, it seems, should be sought in the Lithuanian language, which shares many features with the Old Prussian language. *Romas* and *ramus*, Lithuanian adjectives, have the meaning of peace and calm. Therefore *Roma weta* means a calm and quiet place [*vieta* means "place" in Lithuanian]"⁵². A whole series of linguists followed and

⁴⁸ Ibid., 105–106.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 346.

⁵⁰ *Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai. Vol. III*, Norbertas Vėlius, ed. (Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidykla, 2003), 230.

⁵¹ Not only is *romas* (modern Lithuanian *romus*) well testified in the old written monuments, but so are *romė* "peace", *romėti* "to become peaceful" and *romybė* "humility, humbleness" (see: *Lietuvių kalbos žodynas. Vol. XI*. K. Ulvydas, ed. (Vilnius: Mokslas, 1978), 826–828).

⁵² Ludwig Rhesa, *De religionis christianae in Lithuanorum gente primordiis. Pars altera*. (Regiomonti, 1819), 15.

expanded upon Rēza's etymology, including Kazimieras Būga, Jānis Endzelīns, Julius Pokorny,⁵³ Pranas Skardžius⁵⁴, Vytautas Mažiulis and others.

Agreeing with Rēza that the name of Romava originated from Lithuanian *romus*, Būga further notes that *romava* might have been a generic term as well, i.e., the name of any Prussian sacred site⁵⁵ (and this would explain the abundance of toponyms with the roots *rom-*, *ram-*, *rim-* in the lands inhabited by the Balts).

Mažiulis believes Romowe, the name of the Prussian religious center, comes from the Prussian word *ramava*, "a place characterized by calm and quiet". He proposes lithuanianizing the placename as *Romava*⁵⁶.

This etymology for the temple (which is perhaps the most popular) hasn't passed without criticism. For instance, Pēteris Šmits, while not disputing the etymology of the Prussian temple itself, nonetheless expresses doubts regarding its semantic foundation, saying it is difficult to imagine a holy silence in rituals of sacrifice during that period, and that what would be much more expected would be "eating, drinking, dancing and happy song, rather than solemn prayer in the midst of solemn silence"⁵⁷.

3. Kazimieras Jaunius, Kazimieras Būga (1908) Jaunius, seconded later by Būga, proposed deriving the name of Romava from *ruome* (cognate with Lithuanian *rėmuo*, "frame"), meaning a fireplace. Thus Romava would be the place "where the sacred fire is kindled"⁵⁸. Later, Būga rejected this idea and cast his support in favor of Rēza's hypothesis instead.

4. Vyktas Vaitkevičius (2003). Vaitkevičius, disregarding the position taken by recognized linguists, formulated the hypothesis that the name of the Prussian temple is related to Germanic *rum-*, "an open place, a field". He argued in favor of this by pointing out that the version of the name with the element *Rum-* (Rumowe) appears first in primary sources from the 14th century⁵⁹, and that this placename might be compared with the small settlement of Roma (*Rumum*) on the island of Gotland⁶⁰.

5. Rolandas Kregždys (2009). Kregždys tends to discount the etymologies put forth by Būga and other linguists, calling the methods which have been employed until now for etymologizing the toponym questionable, and saying they are all based upon the primary root **rām*, which could not have given rise to the variation **Rmm-*. Kregždys's premise is that "Prussian *Romow* is a borrowing from Germanic, received via Polish: Polish *rum* 'der Platz; der Raum, der freyer Raum' (< from MHG *rûm* and

⁵³ J. Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etimologisches Wörterbuch*. Bern u. (München, 1959), 864, 874.

⁵⁴ Pranas Skardžius, *Rinktiniai raštai. Vol. I*. Albertas Rosinas, ed. (Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidykla, 1996), 21, 34.

⁵⁵ K. Būga, *Rinktiniai raštai. Vol. II*. Zigmās Zinkevičius, ed. (Vilnius: Politinės ir mokslinės literatūros leidykla, 1959), 32–33.

⁵⁶ Vytautas Mažiulis, *Prūsų kalbos etimologinis žodynas. Vol. IV*, 32.

⁵⁷ Pēteris Šmits, *Latvių mitologija. Iš latvių kalbos vertė Dainius Razauskas* (Vilnius: Aidai, 2004), 124.

⁵⁸ K. Būga, *Rinktiniai raštai. Vol. I*, 167–169; K. Būga, *Rinktiniai raštai. Vol. II*, 32–33.

⁵⁹ *Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai. Vol. I*, 320.

⁶⁰ Vyktas Vaitkevičius, *Raktas Romuvai, Liaudies kultūra* 6 (2003): 15.

MLG *rūm* ‘Raum’) + Prussian suffix *-av-, i.e., the gender should be reconstructed as **Rmma vC*«, which indicates not just “some” place, but a fortified castle/city with the residence of the pagan bishop”⁶¹.

The etymology of the other names for the Prussian temple (*Rickoyto*, *Rickoyoto*, *Ryckoyot*, *Rickoyott*, *Rickoiot*) encountered in the writings of Grunau and later writers at least partially supports Kregždys’s hypothesis.

In Grunau’s chronicle, as noted, the name varies: *Rickoyto*, *Rickoyoto*, *Ryckoyot*, *Rickoyott*, *Rickoiot*. In works by later authors it does as well: *Rickaito*, *Rykoiot*, *Rickoyot*, *Rickojothi*. Despite the variations, according to Būga, Rikojotas is a secondary name for the city of Romuva, or, Rikajotas is an epithet for Romuva, and [it] is formed from the stem *rikaj-* ‘Herr’ and the collective suffix *-o-ta*-⁶². Thus *Rickoyto*, *Rickoyoto*, *Ryckoyot*, *Rickoyott*, *Rickoiot* and so on are the seat of the priests, or *rikynas* in Lithuanian, which means, roughly, a collection of bishops/priests. Mažiulis, agreeing with Būga on the major points, provides the Prussian words *rikautvei* – to govern, to order, *rickawie* – governs, orders, *riki* kingdom, *rikis* lord, master⁶³. Prussian *rikis* is cognate with Lithuanian *rikis*, *rykys* king, ruler, *rykė* state, kingdom.⁶⁴ Both Prussian *rikis* and Lithuanian *rikis*, *rykys* should be treated as borrowings of the German *rick*. Even Būga thought so, saying the Lithuanian words *rykys* “ruler, king and *rykė* “state were popularized by Daukantas, who used them frequently in his writings. The loanword *rikis*, *rykys* was easily adopted into Lithuanian because of phonetic and semantic similarities with Lithuanian *rykauti*, *rikiuoti* to draw up, to form, to put in order as a series. It seems the Lithuanian hydronyms Rikinė and Rikupis and the Prussian hydronym Rigkegarwen should be considered allied with these words⁶⁵.

Reconsidering the information from the sources and the nuances of their translation into Lithuanian (the Prussian sacred complex is called a city, a castle and a palatial building); agreeing with Kregždys’s hypothesis; comparing it with the secondary name

⁶¹ Rolandas Kregždys, *Baltų mitologemų etimologinis žodynas. T. I: Kristburgo sutartis* (Vilnius: Lietuvos kultūros tyrimų institutas, 2012), 37, 38; Rolandas Kregždys, Pr. *Romow* pagal Petro Dusburgiečio “Prūsijos žemės kronika“ ir kitos istorinės interpretacijos iki mūsų laikų (toponimo etimologinė analizė, lokalizacija). *Senovės baltų kultūra* 8 (2009): 120–184.

⁶² K. Būga, *Rinktiniai raštai. Vol. I*, 160, 165. In a work he wrote in 1900, Antoni Mierzyński reasons that the Prussian infix *-ot-*, corresponding to the Lithuanian *-uot-*, was only used in personal names (see: Antoni Mierzyński, *Romowe* (Poznań: Drukarnia dziennika poznańskiego), 1900). For that reason he receives well-founded criticism from Būga, who presents a plethora of Prussian (Byoten, Jagoten, Megothen). Lithuanian (Pušalotas, Baidotai, Aleksotas) and even Latvian (Babāte, Trikāta) examples which show the infix *-ot-* was just as popular in the construction of toponyms and hydronyms as it was for the construction of personal names.

⁶³ Vytautas Mažiulis, *Prūsų kalbos etimologinis žodynas. Vol. IV*, 21–26.

⁶⁴ *Lietuvių kalbos žodynas. Vol. XI*, 604.

⁶⁵ Georg Gerullis, *Die altpreußischen Ortsnamen*, 142; Aleksandras Vanagas, *Lietuvių hidronimų etimologinis žodynas*, 277; Vilius Pėteraitis, *Mažoji Lietuva ir Tvanksta prabaltų, pralietuvių ir lietuvininkų laikais* (Vilnius: Mokslas, 1992), 146.

of the temple (*Rickoyto, Rickoyoto, Ryckoyot, Rickoyott, Rickoiot*) showing that it was the residence of the secular as well as spiritual power, or at least a place of meeting and consultation; and considering that archaeologists have long ago disproved the idea the Balts did not have permanent and/or fortified temple sites⁶⁶, it is possible to expand the field of search for this all-important Prussian center (religious or secular?), with a greater focus upon the castles built by the German Christian crusaders' Order on the sites of former Prussian castle complexes (cf. the temple of Perkūnas on the site of the current Vilnius Cathedral).

2.1.3. Location of the Temple

The location of the temple concerned both the authors of the primary sources and 16th–17th century authors who rewrote or at least used those primary sources, i.e., the information from Peter von Dusburg and S. Grunau.

Dusburg, as previously noted, said Romava was in Nadruva. Caspar Hennenberger wrote that the location which the old Prussians called Rikojotas, or Romuva, where the oak of the devil with three deities stood was near Patoliai (Patollen), in the center of Notanga, where the monastery of the Holy Trinity is now⁶⁷.

Alessandro Guagnini writes the oak tree with the three deities must have stood in a place where, in his time, the city *Heiligenpeyhel*, or Šventapilė, is built⁶⁸, i.e., in Varmia⁶⁹.

Jonas Bretkūnas, apparently based on Guagnini, says Šventapilė (Heiligenbeil)⁷⁰ was known formerly as Rikojotas (Rykoiot), and that there was an idol of the god *Curcho* which had stood there as well⁷¹.

Matthaeus Praetorius was convinced this temple stood upon Silver Hill near Gumbinē (Gumbinnen)⁷², because this site was still very much revered by the

⁶⁶ See: Romas Batūra, Petro Dusburgiečio Kronika: epocha, šaltiniai, tendencija, reikšmė. Paaikškinimai. Petras Dusburgietis. *Prūsijos žemės kronika* (Vilnius: Vaga, 1985), 355–359.

⁶⁷ *Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai. Vol. II*, 346–347.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 346–347.

⁶⁹ Jurgis Mališauskas objects to this, citing a lack of data which could allow placement of the religious center in Varmia (see: Jurgis Mališauskas, *Vėjas iš Aistmarių* (Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 2004), 116).

⁷⁰ Šventapilė (Lith. *Šventapolis*, German *Heiligenstadt*, *Heiligenbeil*, Polish *Świętomiejsce*, Russian *Хайльгенбайль*, and now since 1947 renamed *Мамонов*) is a small town in what is now the southwest portion of the Kaliningrad oblast near the Russian border with Poland, 48 km. south of Kaliningrad city. The city was founded by the Order of the Cross in 1301 on the site of the ancient Prussian holy site (or castle?) *Swentomest* which had been put to the torch (see: Vilius Pėteraitis, *Mažosios Lietuvos ir Tvankstos vietovardžiai*, 398–399).

⁷¹ *Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai. Vol. II*, 314.

⁷² Gumbinē (German *Gumbinnen*, renamed since 1946 Russian *Гусев*) is a city in the southeastern part of the Kaliningrad oblast about 25 km. east of Įsrutis (German *Insterburg*, since 1946 renamed Russian *Черяхово*) next to the Rominta River (German *Rominten*) where it becomes the Pisa (Pissa) River, one of the tributaries of the Prieglius River (German *Pregel*) It is believed the place was called *Pisakiemis* from the 13th to 15th century (see: Vytautas Šilas, Henrikas Sambora, *Mažosios Lietuvos kultūros pėdsakai Kaliningrado srityje* (Vilnius: Mintis, 1990), 85).

Nadravians living right there, many stumps of oaks of surprising size are still to be found, many finds have been unearthed [there]: spurs, pieces of armor, many pieces of pounded and coiled silver and gold and these finds included the bones of many people and animals⁷³.

Thus we have three different locations within the historical lands of the Prussian tribes given by authors writing in the 14th to 17th centuries:

- a) Nadravia (Długosz, Praetorius),
- b) Natanga (Hennenberger, Cölestin Myslenta (Celestyn Myślenta, Mislenta, Mislenski),
- c) Varmia (Guagnini, Bretkūnas).

Almost all authors who have written on the topic have tried to establish the exact location of Romava, beginning in the early 19th century with the German historian Johannes Voigt⁷⁴ and continuing into the present. Among those providing significant information, arguments and insights on the location of the temple are Max Toeppen (Töppen)⁷⁵, Antoni Mierzyński⁷⁶, Romas Batūra⁷⁷, Jurgis Mališauskas⁷⁸, Nijolė Laurinkienė⁷⁹, Vykintas Vaitkevičius⁸⁰ and many other researchers from the second half of the 19th century to the 21st century.

Vykintas Vaitkevičius in his article Raktas Romuvai [the Key to Romuva] has summarized almost all hypotheses by those attempting to assign a geographical location to Romuva⁸¹. He lists four main sites in different East Prussian lands where scholars have attempted to locate the old Prussian temple complex:

- 1) Heiligenbeile (now Mamonovo) near the Vistula Lagoon (Frische Nehrung) in Varmia;
- 2) In the environs of Romyčiai (German Romitten, now Slavyanovka) in Notanga/Natanga. The proposed site of the temple is located further on in Patoliai (German Patollen, now Osokino), where the Order established the monastery of the Holy Trinity. See Hennenberger;
- 3) Around Romsdorf (Polish Romankowo) in Bartia;
- 4) Around Romainys (German Romehnen) on the Semba Peninsula⁸². Voigt proposed this location early on, based on the placenames *Romehnen* and *Romayn*

⁷³ *Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai*. Vol. III, 231.

⁷⁴ *Geschichte Preussens, von den ältesten Zeiten bis zum Untergange der Herrschaft des deutschen Ordens* / von Johannes Voigt (Königsberg, 1827), 639–641.

⁷⁵ I. Toeppen, *Historisch-comparative Geographie von Preussen* (Gotha, 1858), 26–27.

⁷⁶ А. Ф. Мержински, Ромов: Археологическое исследование. *Труды X археологического съезда* 1 (1899) : 1–9.

⁷⁷ Romas Batūra, Petro Dusburgiečio Kronika, 355–359.

⁷⁸ Jurgis Mališauskas, *Vėjas iš Aistmarių*, 107–119.

⁷⁹ Nijolė Laurinkienė, Šventovė Prūsijoje baltų ritualų ir mitologinės tradicijos kontekste, *Senovės baltų kultūra. Nuo kulto iki simbolio* (Vilnius: Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas, 2002), 33–55.

⁸⁰ Vykintas Vaitkevičius, Raktas Romuvai, *Liaudies kultūra* 6 (93), (2003).

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 14–33.

⁸² *Ibid*, 15.

there⁸³.

This list needs to be expanded based on the rich and broad history of the search for this temple complex:

5) The lower river valley of the Auksinė (Auxinne, German Goldfliess, now Golubaya) in Nadravia. The first source testifies to Romuva having been here. Later authors (V. Frederick first of all) base their speculations on the placenames Romanuppen and Kreywutschen.

6) From the 13th century, on Romainys hill near the confluence of the Nevėžys and Nieman Rivers (Vaitkevičius's hypothesis).

If the main argument revolved around the abundance and distribution of mythonyms with the roots *rom-*, *ram-*, *rim-*, then the temple would have to have been in Nadravia, because this is where most of these sorts of toponyms have been found⁸⁴. But this isn't sufficient. We would be on much firmer ground and discussions on the true location of the Prussian temple complex would stop were archaeological studies to confirm the information gleaned from the written sources and linguistic studies. We hope such studies will be made in the future. Findings from diggings at the temple of Perkūnas in Vilnius mentioned earlier are very promising in this regard.

2.2. The Temple of Perkūnas

Two authors provide original information on the temple of Perkūnas which stood in Vilnius: Augustinus Rotundus and Jan Długosz. The former (in the second half of the 16th century) described the temple in detail: In Vilnius, where now stands the cathedral church, there grew an ancient grove of oaks, consecrated to the gods of the idolators. There where the small Vilija [creek] meets the great river [Neris], right next to the forest stood a grand temple made of masonry to the thundering Jupiter-Perkūnas, or thunder god, built by Grand Duke Geireimundas in 1285. Its length was 150 uolektys, its width 100 uolektys, and its height 15 uolektys. But above it had no roof; leading to it was a single entrance from the side of the great river; next to the wall across from the entrance was a shrine in which all sorts of rarities and important sacred things were kept. Underneath that shrine there was a cellar, where the sacred snakes, toads and so on were kept, Above the shrine there was a platform which soared 16 *uolektys* above the walls of the temple. On the platform itself stood a wooden idol of the god which had been brought from the sacred forests of Palanga...⁸⁵ Augustinus Rotundus goes on to describe the former sacrificial altar, where a fire burned continuously day and night and sacrifices of livestock were made; he mentions

⁸³ Jurgis Mališauskas, *Vėjas iš Aistmarių*, 107.

⁸⁴ Georg Gerullis, *Die altpreußischen Ortsnamen: gesammelt und sprachlich behandelt von Georg Gerullis* (Berlin and Leipzig: Vereinigung wissenschaftlicher Verleger, 1922); Aleksandras Vanagas, *Lietuvių hidronimų etimologinis žodynas* (Vilnius: Mokslas, 1981); Vilius Pėteraitis, *Mažosios Lietuvos ir Tvankstos vietovardžiai. Jų kilmė ir reikšmė* (Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidybos institutas, 1997).

⁸⁵ *Baltu religijos ir mitologijos paltiniai. Vol. II*, 464–465.

the supreme *krivis* (*Criven Criveyto*), his residence, his tower/observatory, and details the primary functions of the *krivis*.

Jan Długosz, writing about one century prior and providing valuable information about the destruction of the old religion and objects associated with it, including temples, in large part confirms the information Rotundas provides: King Vladislav ordered the fire, which they considered eternal and which in the capital Vilnius, the heart of the country, their *žynys*, called *Znič* in their language (who gave to those praying religiously to the deity and wanting to know the future answers allegedly whispered in his ear by the deity himself), who tended and kindled the fire, extinguished while the barbarians watched. The king ordered the temple and sacrificial altar, where they brought their sacrificial offerings, pulled down, and to cut down and desecrate the groves and forests they considered inviolable, and further to kill and exterminate the snakes... Describing in the next chapter where and how the Cathedral was built in Vilnius, Długosz affirms: “they placed the great altar in the place where the fire of the pagans was kindled, erroneously believed to be eternal...”⁸⁶

Despite the detailed description of this temple of the Eastern Balts and testimony from other sources, the correctness of the information Augustinus Rotundus provided was long doubted. It was believed the description of the Vilnius temple was the product of the fertile imagination of a romantic historian of Lithuania and mythologist, Teodoras Narbutas⁸⁷. Nonetheless, archaeological studies and the conclusions drawn from them over recent decades have shown the information about the temple in Vilnius may be considered reliable. According to historians and archaeologists the Vilnius Cathedral truly was built approximately between January of 1386 and February of 1387 on the site of the pagan temple which had stood there until then⁸⁸. Archaeological data also confirm discrete details of the temple described in Augustinus’s chronicle⁸⁹. Furthermore, Maciej Strykowski describes the temple in a similar way (although it is possible he was recycling Augustinus’s description). The only difference is the information concerning the idol of Perkūnas itself. Strykowski says Gediminas built a stone rather than a wooden idol of Perkūnas (Perkun or Piorun), but that the stone idol was a large flint stone, from which the priests kindled fire, holding it in their hand⁹⁰.

⁸⁶ *Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai. Vol. I*, 551–552, 554, 572, 574.

⁸⁷ Rimantas Jasas, Augustinas Rotundas 1520–1582 (see: *Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai. Vol. II*, 451).

⁸⁸ For more, see: Napoleonas Kitkauskas, Albertas Lisanka, Sigitas Benjaminas Lasavickas, Perkūno šventvietės liekanos Vilniaus Žemutinėje pilyje, *Kultūros barai* 12 (1986): 51–55; Napoleonas Kitkauskas, *Vilniaus pilys: statyba ir architektūra* (Vilnius: Mokslas, 1989), 115–125; Vytautas Urbanavičius, Vilniaus Perkūno šventovės klausimu. *Iš baltų kultūros istorijos* (Vilnius: Diemedis, 2000), 19–25; Kešutis Katalynas, Vilnius XIII amžiuje. Mitai ir faktai, *Kultūros paminklai* 6, (2000): 213–215; Vykintas Vaitkevičius, *Alkai. Baltų šventviečių studija*, 209–210.

⁸⁹ Napoleonas Kitkauskas, Albertas Lisanka, Šventykla Vilniaus žemutinėje pilyje (see.: *Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai. Vol. II*, 455–460).

⁹⁰ *Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai. Vol. II*, 558.

It is generally and almost unanimously admitted by historians, religious scholars and mythologists that this temple conformed to the criteria for being a venue for the state cult at that time and that it would have been a significant part of the complex of residential castles of the Lithuanian dukes.

ЯЗИЧНИЦТВО БАЛТІВ: СВЯТИНІ, ХРАМИ ТА МІСЦЯ ЖЕРТВОПРИНОШЕНЬ

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Багато вчених відзначали, що для того, щоб зрозуміти історію народу, звичаї, фольклор, народну музику, народне мистецтво, архітектуру, літературу, театр, мистецтво та будь-яку іншу сферу культури, потрібно спочатку дізнатися про його релігію та мітологію.

На основі відомих на сьогодні письмових джерел, а також знахідок і опублікованих робіт інших наукових дисциплін (лінгвістики, фольклору, етнології, археології та інших) можна стверджувати, що основними рисами балтійського язичництва слід вважати такі: 1) велика кількість ієрархічно та функціонально різних богів; 2) культ предків; 3) відкриті священні місця з вічним вогнем або запаленим під час ритуалів; 4) общинні ритуали, які виконуються служителями культу, щоб підтвердити космічний порядок чи добробут членів спільноти, 5) вираження божественних сил і зворотного зв'язку богами через медіумів, отже, глибока повага до природи, і 6) уявлення про загробне життя як нагороду за вірність богам і покору встановленому порядку.

Студія присвячена одному з важливих елементів балтійського язичництва, саме характеристики сакральних споруд, сакральних місць і місць жертвоприношень.

Ключові слова: язичництво, балти, святині, капища, жертвоприношення.

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