

From the Earth to the Sky: Investigations into the Archaic Worldview of the Balts

Summary

Nijolė Laurinkienė Habil. dr., an eminent researcher in the field of folklore and mythology, has published four monographs. The present article focuses on the preconditions for the formation and background of Nijolė Laurinkienė as a researcher of the Baltic culture, establishes the sequence, nature and results of the works she has written. The article discusses the scientist's monographs. The first book *Mito atšvaitai lietuvių kalendorinėse dainose* [Mythological Reflections in Lithuanian Calendar Songs] (1990) deals with the ancient images of Lithuanian folksongs, reveals their meaning. Her second book *Senovės lietuvių dievas Perkūnas* [God Perkūnas of Ancient Lithuanians] (1996) gives a comprehensive picture of Perkūnas – time, space, the attributes of God, relations with other mythical creatures and a human being. According to folklore, the appearance of Perkūnas is as follows: a middle-aged man hunting for the devil. Perkūnas' attributes are the mountain, the oak-tree and weapons. These weapons are called Perkūnas' axe, a bullet and an arrow. Lithuanian people regarded belemnites found in nature and prehistoric stone axes as bullets. The book devotes much attention to elucidating Perkūnas' sacral qualities. The third book is *Žemyna ir jos mitinis pasaulis* [Žemyna and her Mythical World] (2013). The subject of

Nijolė Laurinkienė's research is Žemyna, the Goddess of the Earth. In ancient times the Balts believed that the fertility of the land, vegetation and existence of man depended on this Goddess. The main ritual was beer libation and sacrificing bread. Other food was also sacrificed. Many agrarian customs and traditions are described in the book. The fourth book *Dangus baltų mitiniame pasaulėvaizdyje* [The Concept of the Sky in the Baltic Mythical Worldview] (2019) reveals the conception of the sky and its celestial bodies in the Lithuanian tradition, reflections of the solar and lunar cult in it. Prayers said to the Moon that have survived in the Lithuanian village, as well as its images, are analysed. Attributes of the Sun are discussed. In folklore the Sun is represented as moving: during the day it moves across the dome of heaven and in the night, it sails in a boat. Zoomorphic, anthropomorphic images of celestial bodies, their family relations are analysed. Fragments of the Baltic myths are explained: about Sovij who introduced the custom of cremation and a new cult to Lithuania, which is recorded in the Chronicles of John Malala (1262) and the myth about liberation of the Sun confined in a tower. The latter myth is presented in the book *Ivairių vietų aprašymas* [Description of Different Places] (1477) by Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini.

Keywords: Nijolė Laurinkienė, Perkūnas, Žemyna, the Sun, the Moon, the Sky, solar and lunar cult, mythology.