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THE BLOSSOMING CUP: THE BEVERAGES AND RITUALS OF THE BALTS

SUMMARY

Metaphorically, a blossoming cup represents the vital power that surges from a vessel when a ritual drink is offered to the gods. Rituals involving drinks form a part of the Balts' key rituals of weddings, funerals, initiations, peace treaties, yearly cycles, and many others. Linked with other religious complements – a prayer, a blessing, or an offering – a beverage comprised the core of Balt rituals.

Alcoholic beverages made of honey and (or) grain were used in the world 9000 years ago, and the oldest drink made of honey and rice was found in China. In Europe, the earliest traces of mead were discovered in Spain, from the fifth and the fourth millennia BCE. At the same time, people in both southern and northern Europe knew how to make beer.

Due to insufficient research, Balt archaeological monuments have provided only scarce data on prehistoric drinks. In Lithuania, the traces of mead have been discovered in a single archaeological monument, the third-to-sixth-century Paprūdis burial ground in Žemaitija (Samogitia). Here, a grave of a rich man (No. 24) contained two drinking horns, and organic remains were found in the casings of their cusps. Infrared spectroscopic analysis revealed that they were the remains of an alcoholic beverage containing honey.

Linguistic facts show that the Balts have been making and drinking mead since ancient times. Latvian medus 'mead, honey' and Lithuanian midus 'mead' (under Germanic influence, Lithuanians replaced the old name of mead medus into midus) indicate that the name of mead derived from the root *médhu of the Indo-European proto-language, which meant a fermented honey drink; cf. Old Irish mid 'mead, a fermented and intoxi-

cating drink', Old Icelandic mjǫdr 'mead', Old High German metu, Old English meodu, English mead, Greek μέθυ 'an alcoholic drink, Old Hindi mádhu 'a sweet drink, honey' and others. The meaning 'bee honey' of the Lithuanian and Latvian word medus emerged later, in designating honey as the main ingredient of mead.

The earliest written information on mead in the lands of the Balts is the narrative about Aestii by the ninth-century traveller Wolfstan, which he wrote in the city of Drusuo in Prussia. He points out that here the dukes and the nobles drink mares' milk, while the rest of the people drink mead. After that, mead is mentioned in much later sources of the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries. Rulers, nobles, and warriors in Prussia, Livonia and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania drank it at banquets. In the fifteenth century, however, amidst the nobility mead started competing with wine, which supplanted mead at banquets in the mid-sixteenth–early seventeenth century. Only in isolated cases mead was still produced in estates and survived until the collapse of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1795. As honey was expensive and vodka was gradually replacing mead, the tradition of mead production was dying out among the peasants as well. In the late nineteenth century, the tradition of mead production and consumption decreased markedly, which explains the scarcity of ethnographic data. Nonetheless, mead survived in folklore, while in some cases the substitutes of mead (wine, vodka) absorbed and preserved its ritual functions.

The history of beer in the lands of the Balts was different. It survived much longer than mead and, judging from abundant historical references, remained not only as a popular drink but also as an element of weddings, funerals, agrarian and other rituals long after Christianisation. Archaeologists can validate the traces of beer in the Balt areas from as late as the third century. Having examined miniature clay cups from West Lithuanian burial grounds in Lazdininkai and Užpelkiai, the spectrometric analysis of their sediments revealed that most of the examined cups contained an alcoholic drink made of barley. This discovery dispels any doubts that in the first half of the first millennium the Balts made beer and used it for ritual purposes.

The ancient origin of beer in Balt culture is shown by its name that has equivalents in other groups of Indo-European languages: cf. Lithuanian alus, Latvian alus, Old Icelandic *ǫl* 'a beer feast' (<**aluþ*), Bulgar-

ian *ôl* 'beer', Slovenian *ôlovina* 'beer yeast', Osetin *æluton* 'beer of special make'. Unlike in Lithuanian and Latvian, in Prussian the word *alu* meant mead, and not beer; it is a late change in the meaning that after the spread of the Slavi borrowing *piwis* 'beer', which brought about the narrowing of the meaning of *alu*. The root *al-* is common to the whole western Indo-European world with a branching off in the group of east Iranian languages. As it is the only name of beer that has equivalents in several branches of Indo-European languages, there is no doubt regarding the ancient origins of this beverage.

The monograph mostly focuses on revealing the ritual and mythological significance of beer and mead. Since the information on these drinks before the fifteenth century when they were used in public religious practices of the Balts before Christianisation (1387 in Lithuania, 1413 in Žemaitija) is very limited, the research resorts to later data. Mostly, these are sixteenth-to-eighteenth-century historical documents and nineteenth-twentieth-century linguistic, ethnographical, and folklore materials that reflect the continuity of the tradition in changing forms. The main corpus of data consists of Lithuanian material, yet it is expanded by historical Prussian mythological and religious data, and by Latvian folklore and ethnography. Although much has changed in the course of centuries and the ritual function has been dying out, the different concentrated data allow highlighting the general contours of the ritual role of drinks.

The book has three main parts. In the first part, the author examines the process of the production of drinks, the second part deals with the relation between beer and mead and ritual feasts of farmers and beekeepers, and the third part focuses on the structure of the drinking ritual.

In the first part of the book, 'Gėrimų alchemija' (The Alchemy of Beverages), the author introduces the key technological principles of beer and mead production and reveals the mythical images that become evident in the process of the drink production. This part of the book follows the path of the drinks from the raw materials to a culinary product. The author discusses the composition of beer and mead wort, the peculiarities of brewing, and the reflection of the taste and strength of the drinks in culture.

Although beer malt can be made of various grains, barley malt sometimes supplemented with a small quantity of malt made of other grains – wheat, rye, oats, peas, or vetch – was the most popular in Lithuania. Beer

brewing encompasses a whole technological programme that starts from the preparation of malt. Usually, a grain matures, swells, and withers, and gives life to a new plant. Malt production is a disruption of the natural vegetation cycle as a sprouting barley grain is dried and later, ground. However, the grain acquires a new meaning, not that of a seed, but of a drink: the life of barley continues in the form of beer.

A number of mythical aspects become obvious in the process of barley sprouting. An ancient way of sprouting soaked grains is by spilling them on straw and covering them with straw. The grains sprouted thus are called *patalas* 'bedding'. Sometimes they would be poured into a female beer-brewer's bed: the grain that is part of the male dimension sprouts by passing through the female space that imitates the earth. The grains as if find their way to the earth's uterus and start sprouting. On the other hand, grain sprouting is associated with *Velnias* 'devil', the creature who in Baltic mythology is not only the ruler of the posthumous world, but also the deity of the underworld and soil and is responsible for the roots of plants. It should be noted that when malt is sprouting, it is the roots and not the shoots that appear first. Therefore *Velnias*'s mythological role in the preparation of malt is important. On the other hand, *Velnias*'s role is limited: before the sprouting grains are dried, beer brewers would meticulously rub off their roots so that beer is not pungent.

Fire and heat are the key elements in malt drying. They play a part in the key concerns of the malt maker in the final stage of malt production, the sweetness and colour of the malt. The fact that catches the eye is that beer brewers often gave preference to red beer for which darker and more deeply roasted malt was needed. Red is the colour of fire, heat, and desire that passes from beer to the human and inflames the cheeks and the blood. In Lithuanian traditional culture, rosy cheeks are a trait of beauty, health, youth, and desire, unlike a pale face, which used to be seen as a symptom of illness or weakness.

The next stage in beer brewing is converting malt into wort. Technologically, it is a complex stage in beer brewing, which encompasses a number of different actions (malt crushing, mashing (saccharification), lautering). First the mash, a thick mixture of malt and water, is prepared in order to convert starch into sugars. Then it is diluted and filtered until it turns into transparent wort. Two different vats are used in the process: a vat for

mashing the malt, and a filter-vat, which has a special opening for letting the wort out, the mash is diluted with water. In the past, the brewer used to drop hot stones into the vat for the mash to reach the temperature at which starch converted into sugar. Sometimes, an additional action squeezes in between these two stages: the brewer would shape the solidified mash into loaves resembling loaves of bread, bake them in the stove, then break them, place them into the filter-vat, and pour water over them. This ancient way of preparing beer wort is an interchangeable heating of mash from inside and outside: first, heat is created inside the vat (the mash is heated with hot water and heated stones), and then from the outside (the mash is baked in the stove); finally it is again heated inside, by heating the liquid mash in the filter-vat with hot stones. In this way, fire and water embrace each other in turns and merge into a homogeneous mass.

Like in the case of the malt, the brewer made efforts to produce wort that would be deep red. This would be achieved by roasting the mash in the stove or burning it with hot stones. Besides, plants with dyeing properties as raspberry stems or alder sticks would be added to the filter-vat. In Lithuanian mythological tales, the redness of the alder was – again – derived from *Velnias*, who climbed up an alder, a wolf bit his heel, and *Velnias*'s blood dyed the alder red. In Lithuanian folklore, beer was metaphorically called barley blood; adding alder redness to barley blood imparted it with the mythical powers of *Velnias* as the god of the underworld.

Production of mead wort is much simpler as its foundation consists of honey diluted with water. Honey was also used as an ingredient of other alcoholic beverages: for example, it used to be added to beer wort. Lithuanians used to call such beer brewed with honey *mieštinis,* and for Latvians it was *miestiņš*. Conversely, in the course of history, when vodka supplanted mead, honey was used to dilute vodka, which was then called *mieštinė arielka*.

In diluting mead, its strength is directly dependant on the ratio of honey and water. Historical sources tell us that mead used to be diluted with water at established ratios, for instance, 1:1, 1:2, 1:4, and the like. Since ethnographic descriptions of mead production are very scarce, we do not know if mead proportions might have been relevant in the production of ritual beverages. The only requirement that could be considered an element of the ritual production of mead was that it had to be as red as possible. People used to say that to achieve redness, red-hot iron had to be inserted into it

towards the end of boiling. When mead was replaced by vodka, the desire to have a red-coloured drink persisted: on festive occasions, vodka would be coloured red with berries.

In earlier times, berries were an important ingredient of beverages. Not only did they impart colour, but they also decided the taste and had an effect on the process of fermentation. Alongside mead made of pure honey and water, mead made with berries was known from long ago. Such mead is mentioned in the sixteenth-century 'Description of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania'.

The fact that once upon a time berries played an important part in the production of beverages is validated by Lithuanian folk songs. Although traditionally wine was not made in Lithuania, the poetical image of *vynas* 'wine' is highly vivid in folk songs. It is associated not with grapes and vines but with other berry-bearing plants: dogwood, bird cherry, guelder rose, rowan tree, elder, cherries, currants, and raspberries. Giving prominence to the berries of these plants in folklore shows that some time ago they might have been used in making mead or beer.

Along with these berry-bearing plants naturally growing in Lithuania or cultivated in gardens, folk songs also mention the plant that is called *ievaras* or *jovaras*: in songs, it is a tree bearing red or black berries. The name *jawor, явор* and the image of a berry-bearing tree is common in Slavic folklore as well. In the Lithuanian language, *ievaras* refers to several species of trees: the black poplar (*Populus nigra*), the sycamore (*Acer pesudoplatanus*), and common hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*), but these trees do not bear berries. The only common feature linking these trees and the mythical *ievaras* is the attribute of greenery: the trees referred to as *ievaras* are fast-growing, tenacious, and vibrant. It is quite possible that this image evolved in the lands of warmer climes that cultivated grapes and spread, through folklore, northwards to the territories inhabited by Slavs and Balts where grapes did not grow. Initially, the *ievaras* might have meant the grape and other berry-bearing plants, cf. Slovenian *jawornik* 'the common grape wine' (*Vitis vinifera*), Ukrainian *javirnice* 'the red currant' (*Ribes rubrum*).

From the overview of the peculiarities of mead and beer wort production, the author moves to the fermentation process. It is yeast that turns wort into mead or beer. Yeast added to wort, it *comes alive* and *starts moving*: bubbles start rising to the surface, the surface froths, and a sour smell begins

to emanate. Froth was a sign of good beer. Such beer was expected not only to froth in the tun but also *pūsti* 'to blow' – to flow from the keg with force and sound, and to froth in the glass on the table. The mythical expression of yeast and frothing wort is the image of *Rauga māte* 'Leaven Mother' in Latvian folk songs. She is depicted wearing a shawl of froth and a wreath of hops on her head. The bubbles rising to the surface during fermentation of the wort are a manifestation of another deity: here we can discern the properties of the Prussian and (or) Lithuanian god *Puškaitis*. This god, whose name is directly related with the words *puškėti* 'to bubble', *puškuoti* 'puff', *puška*s 'a pustule', puffs and emanates smells and thus gives birth to chthonic mythical creatures *barstukai*, who had large heads and a weak long bodies. Puškaitis's abode is elder (*Sambucus*), which has a characteristic specific stinking smell, as unpleasant as the smell of carbonic acid emanated by wort. Puškaitis and fermentation are brought close by the fact that colonies of yeast, which markedly improve fermentation, settle on the blossom of the elderberry. The use of elderberry flowers for fermentation is a known fact.

Another deity – *Raugų Žemėpatis* – arises in the discussion of the *namų raugas* 'home leaven', that is, a peculiar bread and beer taste specific for each home and family. Well-leavened and tasty bread and good fermentation of beer were considered a sign that a family is happy and protected by house gods. Therefore the belief was that not only the gods of leaven, but also the household god Žemėpatis took part in the fermentation process: this god maintained the medium necessary for yeast.

When beer (mead) has fermented, it is brought to the table where the genuine mission of these drinks begins to unfold. Two inherent properties of a beverage are of special significance: the taste and the strength. They attract considerable attention both in the situations of their consumption and in the mythology that envelops them.

Sweetness was the most desirable gustatory quality of beverages: Lithuanian folk songs convey the impression that sweetness is the key property of both mead and beer. It used to be highly valued not only for its good taste but also because it expressed the mythology of the sky in drinks: in Balt mythology, honey is of heavenly origin. Although bees collect honey from the nectar of plants, it used to be derived from the sweet dew (honeydew) that falls from the sky when there is lightning without thunder in summer.

In culture, sweetness means a certain sensual state. Mostly it is associated with love and eroticism, and along with that, with softness, tenderness, and intimate relations. The word *saldu* 'sweet' defines other states, such as lightness, relaxation, bliss, joy, and the experience of sacrality. At times, sweetness defines very sharp pain, the sense of vertigo or submersion into a dream; therefore one can say that the state of sweetness denotes a highly intense and sometimes extreme experience.

The opposite of sweetness is bitterness, which is imparted to a beverage by hops and which is a no less valuable gustatory quality. Bitter taste used to be considered so significant that in the absence of hops people resorted to other bitter-tasting plants – the common wormwood or aspen bark. Beer brewing was creation of a certain combination of sweetness and bitterness, which was subject to the taste of the brewer or the client. Lithuanian ethnographical material shows that men give preference to a bitter drink, while women go for sweeter drinks, and bearing this in mind, a special sweet beer would even be made for women for festive occasions.

In Lithuania, the hop was attributed both the bitterness and the strength of beer. Since hops do not actually possess the intoxicating effect, the conviction that the bitterer the beer the more intoxicating it is should be considered the legacy of an older tradition. In older times, not only hops but also the sweetgale (*Myrica gale*), wild rosemary (*Ledum palustre*), or other preserving plants that were not only bitter but also possessed stimulating or psychotropic properties that intensified the effect of alcohol were used. Isolated data on the use of sweetgale and wild rosemary in beer-brewing survived as late as the nineteenth century. Presumably, plant additives of this kind might have been used to stimulate certain states, and especially in warfare when it was of importance to trigger particular emotional states and intensify the courage and fury of the soldiers preparing for a battle. That explains why in ethnography and folklore a bitter drink was considered masculine and suitable for strong men despite the warnings known from songs and folk beliefs that it could lead to anger and fighting. The fact that even today men prefer bitter beer should be seen as a legacy of an old tradition.

Conversely, in a certain way, masculinity correlates with sweetness, too. Since the strength of alcoholic beverages directly depends on the sweetness of wort, the image of Bubilas, the god of bees, arises in the process of mead

production. This god, who looks like a drone, a male honey bee, was imagined as an immoderate honey eater. Bubilas's mythical image represents the huge appetite of the yeast when, feeding on sugar in the wort, it converts it to alcohol. Bubilas-drone has a large barrel-like belly, while his low voice resembles the drumming sound of a barrel or drums. In the mythological plane, a barrel filled with beer and bound by wooden or metal loops protecting it against the wild force of the fermenting beverage refers to a strong masculine god, and mead and beer imply a drink representing masculine strength and physical prowess. On the other hand, Bubilas, who looks like a drone, represents a sexual qualification (drones impregnate the queen bee), and this feature adds to the image of a strong and able man.

Another mythical image conveying masculine strength is a bear, which likes honey. Latvians used to say that if a beer brewer wanted to make strong beer, he had to 'bring a bear' to the tun. In this case, the fierceness of the bear becomes a significant quality. It is possible that this belief originates from the military context; for instance, Scandinavian *berserks* were ruthless and fearless warriors who would transform into bears or wolves in the battlefield and acquire the power, strength, and cruelty of these beasts.

The second part of the book, 'Žemdirbių ir bitininkų bendruomenės' (Communities of Farmers and Beekeepers), take the reader from drink production to ritual feasts. The author attempts to find out which primary content fills farmers' and beekeepers' feasts where beer and mead are consumed. As grains and honey are the main ingredients of these beverages, she examines communal rituals dedicated to ensuring the grain harvest and the abundance of honey. They preserved the ritual meanings of beer and mead and the remnants of ancient communal relations.

The peasants' customs and songs of the nineteenth and the twentieth century show that beer brewing and communal feast played the role of the ritual that aimed to guarantee the harvest. The songs preserve the image of the *miežių krūmas* 'the barley bush', a thick barley plant that grew in the place where the brother was drinking beer. Dense tillering is an important property of the crops on which their productivity depends: the more tillers a single shoot has, the more ears it will have, and, consequently, the better the harvest will be. A dense ('thick') plant, 'a barley bush', was an underlying mythical image contained in the names of a number of Balt deities patrons of the crops: Lithuanian *Krūminė*, Latvian *Ceroklis*, and Prussian

Curche are related with the Lithuanian words *keras*, *keroti* 'grow widely, branch off, expand, grow stronger', Latvian *cerot* 'to branch off at the bottom of the stem, close to the ground, to tiller, to grow into a bush' and are derived from **(s)ker-*, the root of the Indo-European proto-language that used to mean 'cut, divide'.

Another important mytho-poetical image revealing the connection between beer and crop productivity is *a blossoming cup*. Lithuanian drinking-songs read that the cup bursts into blossom if it is held in the hand long enough without drinking. In the seventeenth century, during ritual feasts, the farmers of East Prussia would pour beer as an offering to Žemyna the goddess of earth wishing her to blossom in rye, wheat, barley, and all the crops. The metaphor of the blossoming cup conveys the deity, who, incarnated in beer, returns to crop fields during the ritual drinking and libation so that the fields are green, tiller, blossom, and mature again.

The connection between beer and farming is obvious in numerous feasts of the agricultural cycle, but one of them has an exceptional feature: for this feast, beer is made of the grain contributed by each farmer of the whole village community. It is the feast of Sambariai, verified by historical and ethnographical sources from the sixteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century. Sambariai marks the end of the sowing of summer crops. The earliest sources show that on this occasion, village communities not only brewed beer and baked bread, but also sacrificed an ox or a ram. During religious rituals, a portion of the drinks and food was dedicated to gods asking them for good weather for the crops. Seventeenth-century East Prussian sources show that a similar feast used to be held in autumn, at the beginning of thrashing. The grains put aside for sowing were blessed at this feast.

The custom of brewing collective beer after the fields have been sown or harvested symbolically merged all fields of the village into one joint holding. The Sambariai feast evolved in the distant times of communal land management, before the emergence of the allodium in the early thirteenth century. The feast was celebrated for a long time, and a religious factor played a role: the village community had one common territorial deity, *Laukpatis*. In an agricultural community the main source of subsistence of which was earth and the crops, the deity protecting the arable field and all that grows in it played a fundamental role. Rituals dedicated to it united

the whole village community even after it was no longer directly bound by joint land management.

Meanwhile, mead rallied different communities. Although in Lithuania and Latvia the tradition of mead production and drinking died out during the last centuries, its traces can be found in historical, ethnographical, and folklore sources. There are two cases when it is most prominent: at high society balls/banquets in the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries, and at beekeepers' feasts recorded in the nineteenth-twentieth-century sources.

Mead had an important social and political role to play in the life of the high society of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. It was a drink of the ruler and his court and would be offered to foreign rulers and diplomats with whom political and trade treaties were concluded. Drinking mead was an indication of social prestige among the high society. Due to its important social and political role in the life of the nobility, mead made its way to a legendary tradition. The narratives of sixteenth-century Renaissance historians (Erasmus Stella, Simon Grunau, Lucas David, and others) about the origin of the Prussians and the Lithuanians depict mead as the drink of the military elite. Legends tell that it was invented and drunk by the Cimbri nobles that arrived in Prussia from Gotland; later they started sharing their mead with the local Prussian elite thus legitimising their status. The legendary Prussian king Widewutte structured the state of Prussia on the model of a bee family: he divided the society into groups by people's occupation (farmers, beekeepers, cattle growers, and the like), and established public mead feast to promote peace in the country.

Not only high society, but ordinary people, too, drank mead. Since the resources of the key ingredient of mead – honey – depended on beekeeping and beekeepers' work, the author of the monograph devotes part of the book to the description of the beekeepers' communal relations and feasts.

Before the sixteenth century, tree (hollow) beekeeping prevailed in Lithuania, and to some extent the activities of the beekeepers of those times resembles those of hunters: it was the forest that fed both groups. Due to the wild nature of bees and their hardly predictable behaviour, beekeepers, just like hunters, were highly dependent on their luck and the deities that influenced it. In this, beekeepers differed from farmers. Conversely, in the lands of the Balts, beekeeping was not only a branch of economy but also a social phenomenon connecting the beekeepers by the ties of friendship.

Beekeepers adhered to the view that if one person keeps bees, they are not successful: care of the bees and honey must be shared between one or several other beekeepers, *bičiuliai* in Lithuanian. The friendship built among the beekeepers brought them to *bičiuolija*, or beekeepers' communities; together, they harvested honey and held the feasts of *bičiuliai* at least twice a year (during honey harvesting in autumn and at the time of attending to the tree hollows in spring). At these feasts, beekeepers and their families ate and sacrificed honey and drank mead. Beekeepers' feasts were an alternative to the farmers' Sambariai feast where village communities drank beer brewed from the grain contributed by all the farmers of a village.

Since the phenomenon of *bičiulystė* (friendship through bees) is characteristic exclusively of the Balts, it must have evolved during the tribal period of the Balts. When the process of political integration of tribes began, political leadership was evolving and the military elite was rising in the Baltic tribes in the twelfth–early thirteen century. It is very likely that the social model of *bičiulystė* was applied in this process. Beekeepers' communities that united beekeepers from different villages by firm ties of loyalty and association were an ideal environment for the formation of soldiery or brothers-in-arms (*amicia*). Additional arguments to substantiate this assumption arise from the masculine nature of these communities, their relation with hunting and rituals of success, consolidation of mutual relations by marriages, and mead feasts.

The third part of the monograph, 'Gėrimo apeiga' (The Drinking Ritual) takes the reader from beverages to religious practices. Here the author aims to answer the question why drinking was a ritual. She analyses the main religious elements of the rite of drinking (prayer, libation, blessing) and examines in detail the inventory of the ritual vessels.

Historical and ethnographic sources indicate that ritual drinking was a constituent part of communal and family feasts. Such feasts were held at anniversaries or family occasions, at the beginning and completion of important activities, when receiving a special guest, concluding peace, during preparations for a battle, in healing, and on other occasions. The feasts would be held in buildings (residential buildings or barns) or in sacred places in the open air – on a hill, in a forest, or at a river. When a feast was dedicated to the dead, the Balts used to hold it both at home and at the burial site. The duration of these feasts varied, but larger feasts that

attracted the whole family or community would usually last three days or even longer. The number and the composition of the guests also varied: large feasts would be attended by the communities of three or four villages, while small feasts were limited to family members. Historical sources provide some information on separate feasts for men and for women. The ritual feasts were not spontaneous: even seventeenth-century sources still indicate that they were led by a high priest (Lat. *flamen*), a soothsayer (Lat. *sortilegus*), or sacrificer (Lat. *sacrifuculus*). Sometimes, although on much rarer occasions, a feast was led by a woman.

Ritual feasts had a characteristic set of drinking vessels and other utensils: horns and wooden cups, drinking and scooping cups, ladles, jugs, and buckets. Some of them were used in the ethnographic tradition for quite a long time before they were replaced by vessels made of other materials (clay, metal, glass). The oldest information on the ritual vessels reaches us from archaeological investigations, and as for the written sources, reliable data appears only from the sixteenth century.

Sixteenth-century East Prussian sources give information on the use of drinking horns at ritual feasts, from which we learn that bulls' horns were used for drinking at the offering of the goat. In the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, aurochs' horns were occasionally used in the feasts of the nobility. Even today, in Lithuania a drinking vessel with a stem is called *taurė* that derives from the word *tauras* (*Bos primigenius*).

Much later, in the late nineteenth-early twentieth century, the relics of the old tradition could be discerned in tiny vessels shaped as small cups, which were made by cutting off the top of a bull's horn and adding a horn or, not so often, an oak bottom. However, they can no longer be considered drinking horns.

The rather historical evidence on the drinking horns is outweighed by abundant archaeological material that provides information from prehistorical times. In the study *Geriamieji ragai Lietuvoje* (Drinking Horns in Lithuania; 1998), Andra Simniškytė-Strimaitienė examined 996 horns from 75 archaeological monuments in Lithuania and revealed the vast variety of the drinking horns and the dynamic changes in their forms at different chronological periods. Although almost all horns were found in burial grounds as the elements of grave goods (which may not directly indicate the primary use of the horns), their abundance points to the fact

that drinking out of horns was undoubtedly a reality of the tribal society of the Balts.

Historical and ethnographic data is much more generous on the use of smaller and larger wooden drinking bowls during feasts as these vessels were used much longer than drinking horns. The main drinking vessel mentioned in written sources is a smallish flat wooden drinking bowl. Matthäus Prätorius, who described drinking ceremonies in greatest detail, distinguishes two types of bowls in East Prussia: a drinking bowl with a handle and without it. They would be blessed by a priest and used only for rituals. Museum repositories contain ornate drinking bowls with handles that had been used until the early nineteenth century. They are embellished with tiny carved indentations, leaves, and curves, and their handles are often in the shape of animals' and birds' heads, tiny grass-snakes, and some have the recurrent solar sign of the cross in a circle. The ethnographic drinking bowls are quite small, 5–7 cm in diameter and 3–5 cm high. It is possible that their small size comes from the later times when people switched from beer and mead to spirits.

The data on drinking out of large drinking bowls is not so generous. Such drinking bowls are mentioned in sixteenth-seventeenth-century East Prussian and Livonian sources, and one of them, which was used by the Curonian descendants from the village of Ķoniņciems in the west of Latvia, has reached our times. The total length of this drinking bowl, including the handle, is 62 cm, the diameter 39 cm, and the depth 21 cm.

The ritual of drinking could not do without jugs or other utensils for serving beer or other drinks to the table. Before jugs had become popular, a wooden bucket or something very similar to it was used to bring beer to the table. The oldest buckets used to be carved out of one piece of wood, and later they were made of staves. Beer would be scooped with a ladle out of such buckets. There are also wooden jugs made of staves the lip of which is made of a drilled-through branch of a tree.

The ritual elements thanks to which the feasts turned into religious rituals played the central role. Three main structural components of the rite of drinking, which were preserved several centuries after Christianisation and could still be well discerned in the ethnographic materials of the nineteenth–twentieth century, were prayer, libation, and blessing.

Praying with a full drinking bowl or a glass in one's hand is a universal and recurrent action that does not depend on the aim of the ritual or the

nature of the deity invoked. Judging from the abundance of sources, prayer was a mandatory element at Balt ritual feasts. People would pray at the beginning of the feast and at its end. At some feasts, a number of different prayers would be said in succession.

The second drink-sacralising act would be the libation, pouring of a drink as an offering to a deity. Centuries'-old sources show that libation was an important religious practice and a common and mandatory part of the Balts' ritual feasts. Libation was not always and everywhere the same: people used to practise several ways of libation that differed in the direction of the act (up-down) and in the cosmological element that would be selected as the medium for libation. Most often the drink would be poured on the ground and in the air, yet sometimes it would be poured into fire and water.

The third essential element of the drinking ritual was blessing, which was called *palabinimas* in Lithuanian. These are the wishes pronounced with a bowl or cup in one's hand and accompanied by drinking so that they materialise. From this particular moment the wish cannot be recalled, because *words* turn into predestination. On the other hand, people believed that in voicing their wishes, the participants in the ritual blessed the drink itself. When such a drink was sprinkled on people, animals, and objects, they were consecrated.

For a drink to be consecrated, the drinking bowl would be passed in a circle, people would say their wishes in turn, and then they would drink to their neighbour and wish good health to him. This ensured communication between two drinkers and facilitated the establishment or strengthening of close relations. By voicing their wishes and drinking to them in a circle, the participants linked up into one closely connected community. In this way, ritual drinking would muster not only religious but also social power. It was supplemented by non-verbal communication: not only would people express their wishes to each other verbally during the drinking ritual, but also by shaking their hands and kissing them.

In addition to the social significance, the ritual of drinking performed a legal role. Before the appearance of the written law, the ritual of drinking was one of the main ways to validate the legality of contracts: they would be approved by public drinking. Historical and ethnographic facts provide data on three spheres regulated in the above-mentioned way: contracts of marriage, peace, and sale and purchase.

Since in Europe marriage became a holy sacrament only from the twelfth century and a mandatory sacrament even later, after the Council of Trent in the middle of the sixteenth century, marriages were arranged on the basis of the old wedding customs for a long time. Even in the first half of the twentieth century, the wedding customs of the Lithuanians and Latvians preserve the relics of the wedding agreement by drinking. Legally, there were two wedding moments of special significance: *sutartuvės* (wedding and wealth arrangements between the families), and *sužadėtuvės*, which was actually the wedding itself before the Church overtook the legalisation of the marriage. Along with drinking at these moments, shaking hands and kissing were also important elements of the ritual.

Discussing the drinking ritual with regard to the conclusion of peace treaties is much more difficult. Historical data about it are rather limited and of a fragmentary nature, yet the documents of the thirteenth–fourteenth century show that at the time peace treaties and military unions were consolidated through drinking or even a feast, even if such agreements were not always honoured. A separate symbolical act in the conclusion of a peace treaty was extending the hand, which can be seen as a separate element of the integrated ritual of drinking.

Magaryčios, or drinking to the validation of treaties of trade, services, or other property management and obligations, preserved its legal significance the longest. The co-drinkers to the contract would become witnesses at the court in case of a dispute. Like in other cases, two important ritual elements – drinking and hand-shaking – accompanied a trade or service agreement. Before the twentieth century, drinking to a sale and purchase agreement was accompanied by such ritual elements as libation and blessing.

The elements of the drinking ritual – drinking to something, a wish, shaking hands, and kissing – that emerge in various spheres show that some time ago the ritual of drinking was a common and widespread way of legal regulation. Its legal powers resulted from a religious ritual imparting sacral legitimisation.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

38. Julikas is preparing sticks for the mash filter.
39. The sticks must be scalded with boiling water.
40. The sticks are placed on the bottom of the vat.
41. The sticks must be arranged in two layers to keep the straw filter above the bottom of the vat.
42. The rye straw for swathing the spile.
43. The straw is scalded with boiling water.
44. Julikas ties the straw into 'a wreath' (vainikėlis) and pulls it on the spile.
45. Julikas's spiles and paddles (top down): the vat spile, the filter-vat spile, the mash stick, and the paddle for mixing hops.
46. Swathed in straw, the spile is lowered into the vat.
47. The filter (pavoliai) is ready: arranged on the wooden sticks, the straw is generously covered with hops.
48. The filter-vat (right) and the malt mashing vat (left).
49. Julikas transfers the mash into the filter-vat.
50. Julikas pours hot water on the mash.
51. The wort is ready for filtering.
52. Julikas is filtering wort.
53. Julikas tastes the wort to check if it is sweet enough.
54. Some hop extract must be added to the filtered wort.
55. Julikas brings some cold water from the well to cool down the wort.
56. Buckets with wort are cooled down by placing them into a tin bath.
57. The fermenting tub.
58. Julikas took the fermenting tub to the bathhouse and lit the stove to keep the room warm.
59. The hop extract goes into the fermenting tub first.
60. Diluted with the freshly filtered wort, yeast is placed on the stove to keep it warm.
61. Julikas is about to add some honey to the wort.
62. The foam is an indicator that the wort starts fermenting.
63. The fermenting beer must be tasted for sufficient bitterness.
64. Thinner wort that has been filtered later (antrokas) is fermenting in a smaller vat.
65. While beer is fermenting, Julikas cleans the filter-vat to prevent souring of the mash.
66. Julikas washes the filter-vat.
67. Julikas's vats: the smaller vat is for brewing beer out of 100 kg of malt and the larger one is for 200 kg of malt.
68. Julikas takes the filtered mash away in a wheelbarrow.
69. The mash turns into a fertilizer for the kitchen garden.
70. Julikas prepares barrels for the beer.
71. He pours some cold water into a barrel.
72. It takes two to rinse the barrels.
73. The barrels are scalded with boiling water.
74. The beer has fermented.
75. Julikas pours the beer into a barrel.
76. The spile of the barrel must be tightly hammered in.
77. Julikas transfers the barrels into the basement.

78. After two weeks in the basement the beer will be the best for drinking.
79. Jugs on a shelf in Julikas's storage room.
80. An amber drinking bowl with a handle in the form of the head of a water bird. Late 7th–8th c.
81–84, 86–87. Wooden drinking bowls with handles (the 13th–17th c.).
85. A wooden drinking bowl without a handle.
88. An illustration from *Sūduvių knygelė* depicting a Sudovian high priest with a drinking bowl in his hand at a goat sacrifice (the 16th c.).
89. A Prussian or a Sudovian high priest with a ritual drinking bowl in his hand. From Christophorus Hartknoch's book 'Old and New Prussia' (1684).
90. Matthäus Prätorius's drawing 'Several women drinking to one another'. The 16th c. An illustration for the sixth book, 'Ancient Prussian consecrations' (Chapter 8, § 44), of the manuscript *Deliciae Prussicae oder Preussische Schaubühne* (Prussian Curiosities or the Prussian Theatre).
91. Dressed up Lithuanians from the environs of Ragainė and Tilžė with drinking bowls in their hands. An illustration from the manuscript of Theodor Lepner's *Der Preusche Littauer* (The Prussian Lithuanian), 1690.
92–101. Carved wooden drinking bowls.
102. A wooden stave drinking cup.
103–105. Wooden ladle-shaped drinking bowls.
106–108. Ladles.
109. A large wooden drinking bowl with an ornamental handle from the Duchy of Courland. The 17th c.
110. A large wooden drinking bowl from Trakai voivodeship of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The ornament depicts the twelve signs of the Zodiac. The 16th c.
111. A drinking bowl.
112. A wooden stave bucket with a bow.
113. A small carved wooden bucket. It used to be reinforced with a hoop.
114. A bucket with a bow. Such buckets were used for pouring beer from the barrel and for other needs.
115. A wooden stave vessel with a spout. A branch in one of the staves was drilled through and used as a spout.
116. A vessel for scooping and measuring loose food and liquids (*gorčius*).
117. Earthenware jugs.
118. Earthenware jugs and pots in the market in Šiauliai.
119. A clay vessel for storing wine.
120. A festive table.
121. A wedding. Two dowry carriers are helping themselves to some beer next to the bride's dowry chest.
122. A wedding table.
123–145. Casings of drinking horns (the 3rd–13th c.).
146–147. Turned wooden drinking cups.
148. A wooden wedding horn for the bride and the groom.
149–151. Horn cups.
152–154. Welcoming the newlyweds with bread, salt, and a beverage.