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Jan Łasicki, Jan Sandecki-Malecki. **O bogach i wierzeniach dawnych Żmudzinów, Litwinów i Prusów.** Magdalena Wolf (przeł. i opr.). Wrocław: Oficyna Wydawnicza ATUT – Wrocławskie Wydawnictwo Oświatowe, 2019. 73 s.: ilustr.

De diis Samagitarum caeterorumque Sarmatarum et falsorum Christianorum by Jan Łasicki was published in Basel in 1615 by Jan Jakub Grasser. In 1823, Łasicki's work was translated into Polish by Adam Rogalski and published in the first volume of *Dziennik Wileński* (Vilnius Daily). Rogalski gave it the title 'The Mythology of Jan Łasicki the Pole, On the Gods of the Samogitians and other Sarmatians'. Magdalena Wolf believes it would be better to call the work a Polish 'adaptation' rather than a 'translation'. She justifies her position convincingly:

'The term translation or interpretation is somewhat dubious, since the part of the original work containing a description of the cult of the Christian saints has been completely omitted. In many places, the translator has paraphrased rather than translated the text. There are also parts of the work that completely change the meaning of the original text. For example, Łasicki said that women were involved in raising cattle and men in cultivating fields and all activities related to flax processing (from carding to making clothes), while in Rogalski's example the reader finds that this activity is attributed to women. There are more such mistakes, which makes the translation far from ideal' (p. 11). These insights are important not only to translators, but to anyone interested in the ethnographic value of Łasicki's work. A German edition of the work was published a little later, in the 19th century, by Wilhelm Mannhard: *De diis Samagitarum libellus* (Lasicii Poloni 1868).

A bilingual, Lithuanian-Latin edition of *De diis ...*, entitled *Apie žemaičių, kitų sarmatų bei netikrų krikščionių dievus* (edited by K. Korsakas and others), which includes a reference to Rogalski, was published in Vilnius in 1969. The translation was by Juozas Jurginis (1909–1994), and was reviewed by Leonas Valkūnas. Included in the book are an introduction, a biography of Jan Łasicki (*Žinios apie J. Lasickio asmenį*), and a brief overview of the reception of his work to date. The translation of *De diis ...* also includes a catalogue of the deities mentioned by Łasicki (with variations on their names and ways of writing them, and a reference to the corresponding parts in the works of Maciej Strykowski and Teodor Narbutt). We also find references to works on Lithuanian mythology. The publication is complemented by extensive and detailed footnotes explaining, among other things, who the characters mentioned in *De diis ...* were, and how to interpret, among other issues, the title's reference to Sarmatism.

It is certainly worth mentioning the work *Dingęs šventybės pasaulis: dievai ir šventieji XVI a. Žemaitijoje. Jono Lasickio knygos interpretacija* by Vytautas Ališauskas and Pranas Vildžiūnas (2009), which appeared as part of the Baltų mitologijos biblioteka. It is preceded by a biography by Łasicki, enriched, among other things, with conclusions derived by analysing archival sources from Lithuanian collections. In contrast to the previous edition, as the Latin and Lithuanian versions of *De diis ...* are on adjacent pages, we can follow the text of the translation at the same time. The translation is accompanied by an extremely thorough and detailed commentary, taking into account wordings, extracts and portions of the text that are potentially incomprehensible to the reader. (By the way, a comparison of the footnotes and commentaries by the translators, and often

also by researchers of this work, both from the 19th century and today, could result in an interesting analytical work going far beyond considerations in the field of translation studies, and would also be important to ethnographers and ethnologists, and all those interested in *cultural translation*, recently identified as an important problem by, among others, Peter Burke.)

Almost 200 years after the first partial Polish translation of *De diis ...*, a full translation of the work has been published as part of the National Programme for the Development of the Humanities 2017–2022 by Magdalena Wolf, a research scholar at the University of Wrocław's Institute of Classical, Mediterranean and Oriental Studies. The researcher has provided a comprehensive introduction to the work, and also revised previous findings, including those regarding the authorship of Latin entries of *De diis ...* She refers frequently to Henryk Barycz's monograph 'Jan Łasicki. A Study of the History of Polish Scientific Culture of the Sixteenth Century', still current and helpful in many places, and also eagerly recalled by Lithuanian researchers (Barycz 1973).

Like Henryk Barycz earlier, Magdalena Wolf argues that Łasicki was 'a broad-minded man, extremely busy, curious about the world and the people, an ardent advocate of a reformed church' (p. 15). She adds that 'his role in the universe of the humanists is evidenced not only by the friendships he formed, which we can observe through the correspondence that has survived in part, but also by the fact that Konrad Gesner, the creator of the international bibliographical catalogue *Bibliotheca universalis sive cathalogus omnia scriptorum locupletissimus*, employed him to gather information on the work of Parisian scientists and writers' (p. 15). Jan Łasicki's oeuvre was probably influenced by his religious convictions in both his life

and his work: he was an avid supporter of the Reformation. Many of his works have either not survived (his history of France), or have survived only in parts or in the original draft version (The History of the Czech Brothers). Łasicki and his work were appreciated by Peter Bayle (1647–1706). However, they were criticised quite harshly by Catholic theologians (such as Glibert Générard). This polemical stance was only tempered by 19th-century historians, historiographers and philologists (including Jacob Grimm and Joachim Lelewel).

Little is known about Jan Łasicki's early life. His place of origin is uncertain (researchers point to both Greater Poland and Lesser Poland, and sometimes use toponyms, believing that the Łasicki family estate may have been Łasice or Łasieczniki). Jan was born in 1533 or 1534, probably into a poor noble family. 'Among the schools he could have attended are the Jagiellonian University, the Lubrański College and the Maria Magdalena City School in Poznań, and Pińczów. Barycz's hypothesis that, since he originated from the land of Sochaczew, Łasicki was educated in Poznań, where he met Gregory Paul, became involved in the Reformation movement, and the rector of the school of Mary Magdalene in the years 1549–1550, seems the most likely' (p. 12). It is easier to reconstruct and describe his travels, when he was a tutor to the children of noble families. A network of his professional and friendly contacts has also been reconstructed, at least in part (including through correspondence), among whom figures associated with the Reformation movement played an important role: Theodore Beza, Henry Bullinger, and even John Calvin. Łasicki also knew Jan Sturm, Piotr Ramus, and many other prominent and distinguished Renaissance personalities. For many years, he was in frequent contact with the great thinkers

of Europe: he knew many important figures in Germany, Switzerland, England and Italy. He was 'a book agent for the well-known publishers Jan Froben and Nicolas Episcopus of Basel' (p. 13). Łasicki also visited the court of Queen Elizabeth. He spent more than 20 years abroad, and at least a dozen years in Lithuania, where he settled at the end of his life. Before his marriage, he accepted the position of tutor and teacher to the family of Jan Hlebowicz, the Castellan of Minsk. He supported the education and upbringing of his three sons, John, Nicholas and George. He openly praised the patronage of Hlebowicz, who was also keenly involved in printing polemical works in the dispute between Calvinists and the Jesuits. At the time, he usually stayed on Hlebowicz's Lithuanian estates, 'in Vilnius and Zaslauje' (p. 14). When he was in Lithuania, he also prepared a preface for a work by Andrew Wolan (ca. 1530–1610), the leader of the Lithuanian Calvinists who clashed not only with the Catholic community (his discussions with the Jesuits were widely known and described, including those with Piotr Skarga, Antonio Possevino, Emmanuel de Vega), but also with Fausto Sozzini (the disputes with the Jesuits concerned mostly transubstantiation, while with Sozzini the discussions revolved around topics such as non-trinitarianism, and there were some clearly social and political references). These findings, in various configurations, are repeated in the most important works on Łasicki, as well as in studies of *De diis ...*, above all those that provide an introduction to a translation of the work in contemporary languages.

Following in the footsteps of Henryk Barycz, Magdalena Wolf also emphasises the qualities of *De diis ...*, which can be considered to be a work full of important observations of a proto-ethnographic nature. She recalls that three important parts can

be distinguished in the construction of *De diis ...*. 'The first part introduces issues in the field of geography (location, climate, environment), raises the issue of the origin and political status of the Samogitians, and also contains a fairly detailed description of the material culture, as well as various geographical messages. The second was devoted by the author to a presentation of the vast number of Samogitian and Lithuanian deities and festivals and rituals accompanying the rural population' (p. 27). The final and third part of the work has a letter by Jan Sandecki-Małecki on the beliefs of the ancient Prussians and his contemporaries 'the inhabitants of Polish Livonia, Samogitians and Ruthenians' (p. 21). It is already undoubtedly possible to perceive in such a brief summary of the contents information that could be relevant to the contemporary ethnographer, the historian of ethnography and the cultural historian. The translator emphasises that Jan Łasicki's work deals with issues that today are in 'the sphere of ethnographic research, and are also the subject of inquiry by cultural anthropologists' (p. 5, cfr. also Pompeo 2000). It is hard to disagree with such a statement. *De diis ...* may also be interesting research material to religious scholars and historians of religion, as well as to researchers of the history of Lithuanian culture.

What seems innovative in Magdalena Wolf's comments is the development of the suggestions of Wilhelm Mannhardt (*Lasicii Poloni* 1868) and Antoni Mierzyński, the author of the work 'Jan Łasicki. A Source for Lithuanian Mythology' (*Mierzyński* 1870). They pointed out that *De diis ...* clearly has a compilatory character. After careful research into biographical and historical literature, and also thanks to a comparative reading of Latin works and writings, the translator dares not only to ask a slightly provocative question about

the authorship of *De diis ...* (author or authors?), but also to respond to them convincingly and courageously. She traces the sources available on the life, activities and writing legacy of Jan Sandecki-Małecki. In a similar vein to Barycz, she feels that the assumption that Sandecki (who came from Sącz, hence his name) had studied at Krakow Academy cannot be supported. This is evidenced both by Sandecki's professional affiliation, having worked all his life as a printer, and by the numerous stylistic shortcomings in his writings (Sandecki knew Latin, Czech, German and Ruthenian, but in none of these did he attain full proficiency or university level). The course of his life depended largely on the vicissitudes of his patrons (these included Bishop Andrzej Krzycki, later Archbishop of Gniezno and Primate of Poland, and Bishop Pawel Speratus). Wolf states that Sandecki-Małecki was 'a character very complex and difficult to assess who [...] now finds recognition in the eyes of researchers' (p. 19). What may be interesting to readers of *De diis ...* is the fact that Jan Sandecki-Małecki's letter was included in this work. Written 'in 1545 in reaction to an elegy by George Sabinus dedicated to Cardinal Peter Bembo' (p. 21), and printed in 1551, it was originally included in Łasicki's work *De Russorum Moscovitarum et Tartarorum religione, sacrificiis, nuptiarum, funerum ritu, e diversis scriptoribus* (1582). Łasicki then placed the same letter, after careful editing, in the fourth part of *De diis ...* The translator emphasises that in *De diis ...* 'Łasicki did not include Małecki's letter in verbatim form [...] He edited and corrected the text in a way that is very reminiscent of the work of a modern editor on the publication of an article or book' (p. 22). He corrected stylistic errors and sentence formation, but did not interfere with the content. Wolf also points out important differences between the fourth part of *De*

diis ..., containing Małecki's text, and other parts of the work: 'Łasicki, clearly fascinated by the world of strange beliefs, tried to show them in a descriptive way, almost entirely devoid of negative opinions' (p. 22). Sandecki, on the other hand, did not hide his pejorative attitude, and criticised directly both the beliefs and the practices of the former pagans.

These remarks by the translator can be considered relevant today, not least because of the changes that have taken place in the way we think about authors and their work after the so-called turn after *Writing culture*. In the field of ethnology and cultural anthropology, this has resulted, among other things, in a significant (though seemingly only temporary) shift of emphasis to the study not only of what has been written, but of how it was written. These comments can also be applied to the works of participants in and observers of culture, which Jan Łasicki and Jan Sandecki-Małecki undoubtedly were in their times. It is also certainly worth bearing in mind that the formal shaping of a work is very much influenced by its cultural context: this is visible in *De diis ...*, which was written in the Counter Reformation. Wolf also explains what further influenced her opinion on the piece's authorship: 'In my opinion, even though Łasicki made a stylistic correction to the text by Jan Sandecki-Małecki, the piece definitely has two authors. In it, they both impart a knowledge of pagan beliefs that were already in decline in the 16th century. Due to the scarcity of sources on Samogitian, Lithuanian and Prussian mythology, both also provided readers and researchers with valuable source material for a better understanding of these ancient pagan beliefs' (p. 23). It is worth bearing these remarks by the researcher in mind when reading *De diis ...*, regardless of whether the recipient is interested in the study of Baltic

mythology, the history of the beliefs and religious practices of the Lithuanians, or whether they reach for this work intrigued by its title, or perhaps for other reasons.

The comments on translation decisions and the difficulties that arose when translating the work are indeed important, not only to readers but also to interpreters of *De diis ...* Wolf explains: 'The first difficulty in working on the translation were some names of places and rivers that turned out to be difficult to identify' (p. 35). This raises the issue of the referentiality of Łasicki's text, and the attempt to treat it as potential material for cultural and culturological analysis, or at least yielding more or less accurate information on cultural history.

There is also the following relevant information, especially in the light of Lithuanian works taking into account the theonyms in *De diis ...* (an article on the question of the origin of the theonyms in Łasicki's work, their source forms and proposals for translation into Lithuanian was recently written by Rolandas Kregždys: 'Baltiškųjų teonimų perteikimo ir dievų funkcijų nustatymo problematika Jano Łasickio veikalė „De diis Samagitarvm Cæterorvmque Sarmatarum ...“' (Kregždys 2011); his work is also available in Polish libraries), and those on religious practices: 'Another problem was that there is a vast number of terms and expressions in Latin that should generally be translated into Polish as offering sacrifices, and it is difficult to find any satisfactory synonym for this phrase. However, this task was nothing compared to the attempt to adopt one way of writing the names of the pagan deities mentioned in the text [...] Some of the theonyms are an attempt to record Lithuanian, Samogitian or Old Prussian names in Latin, while some, although not all, have been Latinised' (p. 35–36). Nor were clear-cut decisions facilitated by the decisions of other

scholars and translators, who, from at least the 19th century onwards, 'adopted the most varied name-bearing depending on the sources they used and their native language' (p. 36). The translator adds that, against this backdrop, 'only Lithuanian literature stands out extremely positively', but much also depends 'on how theonyms sometimes misreported in the source texts are reconstructed' (p. 36).

In the Polish translation, Latin forms of theonyms are preserved for lesser-known deities; for those with whom the native reader is already familiar, petrified proper names and names in Polish were introduced. 'Notes of sentences, prayers and other utterances in languages other than Latin' have been transcribed directly from the original *De diis ...* In this respect too, i.e. the wording of particular formulas cited by the author or authors, contemporary scholars do not agree; the scholar, however, was keen that the recipient, regardless of his or her formal background, 'thanks to [...] the phonetic notation, can "hear" them as Łasicki heard them and wrote them down' (p. 36–37). Magdalena Wolf also includes a table listing the deities found in Jan Łasicki and Jan Sandecki-Malecki. It includes a provision of the theonym in the Latin text juxtaposed with its provisions in available studies of the work (p. 30–35). This should also be regarded as her essential contribution to the study of ancient Samogitian, Lithuanian and Prussian beliefs.

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