PREFACE

I miss the horse
I simply miss the horse,
its intelligent and good eyes.
I want something heavy to drag,
or just – to graze together.
Justinas Marcinkevičius

(from: *Eilėraščiai, Mažosios poemos*. Vilnius, 1975)

Baltic languages, dialects, narrative folklore, and folk songs have maintained over 100 names, synonyms, and loan words for *žirgas*, the riding horse, and *arklys*, the working horse – terms that not only name the horse, but also show its gender (Sabaliauskas 1968, pp.147-168; Lietuvių kalbos atlasas 1977, p.146ff). Thus, if we wanted to brag about our trotter riding horse, we would call it *žirgas*. But if we have a draught horse, we call it *arklys*, or an old useless horse or jade (or *nag, rip, screw, hack, knacker, weed, plug*) – *kuinas*. The *žirgas* is *žergiamas*, which means it is straddled; it is ridden upon by the lad who visits his lass, it is ridden to war, or to the fair, or to some other special occasion. One uses the *arklys*, however, to plough. If we wish to emphasize the horse's characteristics in distinguishing the riding horse from the working horse, its colours have great meaning; the discernment of the riding horse's colours gives it some 20 different, specific names.

So, based on age-old traditions, it is better not to buy a piebald horse at the Lithuanian horse fair (*jomarkas*) even on a Thursday, a day that otherwise is a favourable one for market (Greimas 1990, p.163), but if one can manage to inexpensively purchase a piebald horse, it is better not to ride it, because it is said that he who

Participants of the conference *The Horse and Man in European Antiquity*
(Worldview, Burial Rites, and Military and Everyday Life) in session (photograph by Vaitkevičius).

rides a piebald horse is untrustworthy or one who doubts himself. It is difficult to say what kind of horse the goddess Laumė had, since even *laumžirgiai* or fairy horses are known (http://www.lkz.lt). In fact, however, the "fairy horse" (dragonfly in English) is a large insect that, like fairies, lives near the water and is part of the *Aeshnidae* family of insects.

These first few paragraphs of the preface are not allotted for an analysis of the horse in Lithuanian ethnological material. Rather, they are meant to intrigue the reader, to demonstrate the significance of the horse in Balt lands and Lithuania since ancient times. On the other hand, Lithuania's history of horse breeding first is associated with small, staunch, stable, strong, and fast horses called the *žemaitukas*, a Samogitian or Lowland horse breed that is unique and native to Lithuania. But other breeds of horses began to push out the *žemaitukas* from the Lithuanian farm in the second half of the 19th century, bringing the *žemaitukas* to the brink of extinction. Realizing that the *žemaitukas* was an inseparable part of Lithuanian historical and cultural life because of its ancient roots and unique properties, the Oginskis dukes founded a social organization dedicated to breeding the *žemaitukas*. This institution organized local agricultural exhibitions, drove the horses to international exhibitions, founded a stud-farm, and in every possible way encouraged the peasants to raise these small, hardy horses (Prušinskas 2006, p.4ff). Today, the Horse Museum in Niūronys (Anykščiai district, East Lithuania), established in 1978 and one of the few museums of its kind in Europe, continues to

actualize the various meanings of the horse in the cultural life of present-day Lithuanians.

Thus, the location of the international conference *The Horse and Man in European Antiquity (Worldview, Burial Rites, and Military and Everyday Life)* on 8-12 October, 2008 in Klaipėda was in no way fortuitous. The intention of both the organizers of the conference – Klaipėda University and the Institute of Baltic Sea Region History and Archaeology – and the conference's organizing committee (Audronė Bliujienė, Algirdas Girininkas, Michel Kazanski, Bartosz Kontny, Konstantin Skvortsov, Vykintas Vaitkevičius, and Vladas Žulkus) was to demonstrate the significance of the horse in European antiquity, from the very beginning of its domestication. Another goal of the conference organizers was to take a look at the significance of the horse in the everyday life, military, burial customs, offerings, worldview, and artistic expressions in various regions of Europe. To Klaipėda University's scientists, it also was important to try to reveal the multi-layered and multi-aspected context of the uniqueness of the culture area of the Balts through the horse because here, the horse still was buried and sacrificed even in the 13th-14th centuries.

How these goals were met can be judged by the articles of *Archaeologia Baltica's* 11th volume. By their themes, the articles can be organized into eight chapters. The first chapter, "From Horse Domestication to Images of the Horse and Horsemen," discusses the problems of the earliest horse domestication in Central Asia and the East Baltic region (Alicja Lasota-Moskalewska, Karol

Dieter Quast during the presentation of his paper "Merovingian period equestrians in figural art" (photograph by Vaitkevičius).

Jurgita Žukauskaitė presenting her paper "Images of the horse and horseman in Corded Ware Culture studies" (photograph by Vaitkevičius).
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Szymczak and Mukhiddnin Khudzhanazarov; Algirdas Girininkas, Linas Daugnora, and Indrė Antanaitis-Jacobs; Jurgita Žukauskaitė; Liina Maldre and Heidi Luik). In the chapter "Riding to Heaven: Horses from Burials," the authors discuss the peculiarities of horse burial rites, including their forms, types, ages (Andrei V. Zinoviev; Małgorzata Karczewska, Maciej Karczewski, and Anna Gręzak). The largest number of article contributions belongs to the chapter entitled "Horses, Horsemen, and Equestrian Equipment: Prepared for War, Burials, and Offerings." In European funerary customs there is no animal that led the person into the Afterlife as meaningful as the horse. Other animals or their parts, or birds placed into people's graves could not equal that of the horse in meaning because usually they ended up in the grave as ritual food, or as an allocation of the pleasures one had in life (such as hunting), or they were an effort of the relatives and friends to supply the one(s) departing for the Afterlife with other, additional attendants (Bartosz Kontny; Wojciech Nowakowski; Konstantin Skvortsov; Audronė Bliujienė and Donatas Butkus; Bartosz Kontny, Jerzy Okulicz-Kozaryn, and Mirosław Pietrzak; Audronė Bliujienė and Valdas Steponaitis; Christine Reich). "The Horse in Warfare" is the fourth chapter. Unfortunately, the military and the horse were inseparable in the history of humanity; this is illustrated by the example of the Kalkriese battlefield that continues to be investigated, as well as the operations of the Slavic cavalry during the Gothic war in Italy (Susanne Wilbers-Rost and Achim Rost; Michel Kazanski). The chapter "The World of Horse Symbolism" is represented by three Baltic region authors who discuss various horse symbols, often explained with

difficulty (e.g., the sickle), and the role of the horse in the "Divine trial" (Laurynas Kurila; Antonija Vilcāne; and Guntis Zemītis). In the chapter "Horse Offerings," the authors examine the diverse intentions by which the horse (or its gear) became the most popularly sacrificed animal (Nina Lau; Rūdolfs Brūzis and Roberts Spirģis; Mariusz Wyczółkowski and Daniel Makowiecki; Mindaugas Bertašius). Moreover, apart from being a status marker with strong ritual connotations, it might be suggested that the horse in prehistory was a liminal agent between sea and land (Christer Westerdahl). The chapter "Images of the Horse in Ancient Art" discusses the horse's and horseman's images and their significance in the Meriovingian Period in Europe and what is extraordinary unusual – figural art recently found on a wooden saddles from Medieval Time Prussian's (Samland peninsula) from horse graves (Dieter Quast; Konstantin Skvortsov and Aleksander Khokhlov). The "Horses in Ethnoarchaeology and Folklore" chapter examines horse skulls as depositions in buildings and horse behaviour in Lithuanian narrative folklore (Sonja Hukantaival; Giedrė Šukytė), and ends with the image of the horse in poetic texts of Lithuanian folk songs (Rimantas Sliužinskas). Thus, one of Lithuania's folklore songbook's many songs "Oh horse, horse, dear horse of mine (*Oi žirge žirge žirgeli mano*) …", with its many times "polished" concise poetical text, bears testimony of the horse's significance.

Audronė Bliujienė

Translated by Indrė Antanaitis-Jacobs

The conference's participants (photograph by M. Brazauskas).

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