

# THE BEHAVIOUR OF HORSES’ IN LITHUANIAN NARRATIVE FOLKLORE

**GIEDRĖ ŠUKYTĖ**

## Abstract

The paper analyses a horses’ behaviour in Lithuanian narrative folklore texts: a horse’s reaction towards unusual environment, a horse as a predictor and a horse as a sign of wealth. Horse’s connection with burial and wealth – keeping beliefs as well as relationship with the beyond is emphasized too.

Key words: horse, belief, burial, predictor, interdiction, wealth.

A horse, one of the first animals domesticated by humans, has various functions: it is used for working, riding, carrying and pulling loads. In traditional culture, the importance of a horse is prominent considering both material and spiritual world. As a result, the object of this article is a horse mentioned in Lithuanian narrative folklore.

In this paper, several types of depiction of a horse in the genres of Lithuanian narrative folklore will be analysed: a horse’s reaction towards unusual environment, a horse as a predictor and a horse as a sign of wealth.

Methods of text analysis, comparison, systematizing and description were used in this research.

The sources for article were archive of Institute of Lithuanian folklore and literature and various printed reservoirs. The most important of them are books of Jonas Basanavičius Folklore Library.

## A horse’s reaction towards unusual environment

In the ancient worldview, there was a belief that certain animals can see more than a human eye. It is said that horses can see ghosts and other beings of spiritual world that cannot be seen by humans. In most cases, such conclusions are made due to some extraordinary horses’ behavior. This capacity is confirmed in mythological legends. One says that, “according to Lithuanians’ opinion, ghosts can be seen by horses, dogs, cocks, and in rare cases, by humans” (Basanavičius 1998, p.161). Another legend emphasizes that “horses can see ghosts” (Basanavičius 1998, p.162). The ability to see the spiritual world is expressed by some special behaviour: “when a horse is intimidated and snorts, even though nothing unusual can be seen, it means that the horse sees ghosts” (Basanavičius 1998, p.162).

In *mythological legends*, horses’ reaction is expressed by some anxiousness and squirming, in other words, by strange behavior, even though a human can see no reason for it: “the horses permanently snorted” (Basanavičius 1998, p.164), “at once, all the four horses raised their ears, started snorting and shying” (Basanavičius 1998, p.215), “the horse started snorting and boggling” (Basanavičius 1998, p.278), “the horses started shying, snorting” (Basanavičius 1998, p.278). Horses seem to be trying to avoid collision with the objects they see: “if you cannot hold the horse, it runs back home like a bullet” (Basanavičius 2001, p.81), “the horses jumped back, snorting” (Basanavičius 1998, p.164), “the horses stopped and, as if being afraid of something, raised their ears and snorted”, (Basanavičius 1998, p.165), “stares, snorts, kicks and by no means goes forward <...> and trembles so much, with its ears raised! Well, I saw nothing there. But the mare saw something” (LTR4545 300).

The horses shy near the places where ghosts are believed to dwell. Cemeteries: “the horses stopped at once, raised their ears and started snorting, and instead of running forward, tried to step back” (Basanavičius 1998, p.163), soldiers’ graveyards: “by the graveyard, the horses raised their ears and jumped back, snorting” (Basanavičius 1998, p.163), bridges: “We came near the house, and by the river bridge, the horses started disobeying and were repeatedly trying to turn back” (Balys 2003, p.164), “on the road, the horses snorted, jumped aside and knocked down a hump” (Basanavičius 1998, p.165), a house where someone hanged oneself: “everytime the horses were scared <...> near that house <...> I could hardly hold them” (Basanavičius 1998, p.163). Such horses’ behaviour testifies their close relationship with the world of the dead and with burial beliefs.

It seems that the horses and the dead have always been closely related. The tradition to burn a horse together

VIII

HORSES  
IN ETHNOAR-  
CHAEOLOGY  
AND FOLKLORE

with its dead master remained for a long time. In the written sources of the fourteenth century describing the funeral of Lithuanian dukes, this custom is still mentioned (BRM 1996, p.469). Ancient Lithuanians believed that the dead travel to the beyond on a horseback, followed by a numerous escort (Beresnevičius 1990, p.127). The belief that horses are closely related to death, chthonic divinities or even the devil, existed in the whole Europe (Golan 1993, p.49). In Latvia, corpses were washed in a trough where horses drink (Basanavičius 1998, p.108). Considering this, there is no wonder that many legends exist about horses' reaction towards the ghosts from the beyond.

Various means to see ghosts with the help of horses are mentioned in mythological legends. There was a belief that one can see ghosts while looking through a horse's ears holded (Basanavičius 1998, p.175), through a bridle of a tackled and curbed horse (Girininkienė 2001, p.45), through a hole of a bridle's side buckle (Basanavičius 1998, p.162). The possibility to see ghosts with the help of horses is also described in one legend. It tells about a soldier, who, scared in the battlefield, climbed into a horse's skeleton: "many dead horses lay on the battlefield, so the soldier hid himself in the skeleton of a horse and lay" (LMD III 271 39). While lying, the soldier sees how angels treat and honour the soldiers who perished in battle; as a result, he gains courage and fights with the rivals again. Such descriptions also support the belief of ancient communities that horses can see the dead, and at the same time highlight the importance of horses in traditional culture.

In several mythological legends, special attention is paid towards the horse rode by a dead man while being alive. These legends tell that the horse of the dead master is leaded after the coffin or the horse even follows by itself: "his horse was leaded after by a servant" (Basanavičius 2001, p.8), "the horse he used to ride on quietly followed the coffin" (Basanavičius 1998, p.163). When the funeral approaches the cemetery, both legends mention changes in horses' behavior: for some reason, they get restless, start squirming and run back: "his horse, that was lead after by a servant, turned loose and ran back" (Basanavičius 2001a, p.125), "the horse, that went after the coffin on its own will, turned back and, as if scared, ran away" (Basanavičius 1998, p.163). On the one hand, such horses' behaviour mentioned in mythological legends could be treated as a relic of old customs, where a horse and its master were believed to be connected by a very close relationship; as a horse was considered to be an essential helper in the spiritual world, so it had to leave this world with its master. On the other hand, when this custom died out, a symbolic escort of the dead master till the gate

of a cemetery might have remained in the mythological legends. It seems as if a horse is not allowed to cross the sacred boundary of a graveyard. This assumption might explain why horses avoid going into a cemetery.

Another genre of folklore that mentions unusual horses' reaction is called *local/historical legends*. These legends also note strange horses' reaction towards extraordinary phenomena or just towards the objects that human eyes cannot see. It is important to note that in local/historical legends, more attention is paid to the places where unusual horses' behaviour was noticed. These legends tell that there are places where horses become scared: "in the evenings, when the horses would be brought on the hill, they would snort and would not stay in that place. When one ploughs and horses get near this place, they also snort and shy" (Kerbelytė 1983, p.51), „especially at midday and about nightfall, the horses would shy, snort and run away from the hill, and, as if seriously scared, would gather in one place and would look at the hill“ (Basanavičius 1998, p.261), „suddenly he heard the horses snorting“ (Vėlius 1995, p.151) "Passing through Pašilis ant night, the horses stopped for no reason. He tried to urge them, but they would not walk, and that is it“ (Buračas 1996, p.254), „in the evenings, when brought by the mound, the horses snort and do not stay there at any means. They run into the field at once, even if hopped. If you plough, the closer you get to the mound, the more the horse moves its ears, snorts and shies“ (Kerbelytė 1999, p.263).

Consequently, it may be noticed that in local legends, horses show unusual reaction when they get near various mounds. In most cases, their reaction is described as snorting, shyness or, on the contrary, freezing – in other words, as strange behaviour. Sometimes historical legends mention whom a horse was afraid of: a man with a sheepskin coat ("riding with the horses to the meadows in the evening, the horses started snorting loudly, and he saw a man with a sheepskin coat standing by the hill. Scared horses were pushing the rider near the hill. <...> Snorting, the horses started trotting about and pulled both strings out of his hands. When the man was passing through, the horses could not be stopped and ran away into the meadows" (Basanavičius 1998, p.278) „on the hill, a man with a sheepskin coat appeared and frightened away the horses" (Remeikis 1990, p.95) or a ghost ("he felt that a man climbed on a horse, sat behind his back and embraced him. At that time, the horse kept snorting" (Basanavičius 1998, p.278), "the horse was frightened by him, shied and started running as fast as it could. While running, the rider was bucked off the horse" (Buračas 1996, p.117). However, there are some legends that do not explain the reasons why horses shy. Despite this, the fact that

the horses behave in unusual way when they get near the mounds allows to make a presumption that it is related to an already mentioned archaic belief that horses can see the dead. In traditional culture, a mound and a hill in general is understood as the space of the dead, their dwelling place.

The motif of local legends, as of mythological ones, is related to the archaic belief that a horse can see supernatural objects – most often, the souls of the dead. In most cases, mythological legends mention the reaction of a horse, while local legends attach high importance to the place where an event happens.

A sign of a similar belief might be found in other genre of folklore also; there is a proverb „Snorts like a horse seeing a ghost“ (Grigas *et al.* 2000, p.672). Similar belief that horses can see supernatural beings existed in Slavic countries, too (Slavianskie drevnosti 1999, p.592).

### A horse as a predictor

In various genres of folklore, a horse as a special character is given the ability to predict the future. Either predictions are made according to a horse's behaviour, or, as in magic tales, a horse foretells the future itself.

*In mythological legends*, most of the predictions are related to death. We already noticed that horses are closely related to the dead and can even see ghosts. Yet in some mythological legends, a horse's behaviour seemingly predicted approaching death. Legends are not the only ones where this can be noticed.

A horse as a predictor of death is more prominent in the burial customs. For example, one legend tells that „participants of the funeral look at the horses which carry the coffin; they believe that the nearest death will come from the side the horse looks at first of all“ (Basanavičius 1998, p.104). When someone was sick, Lithuanians observed the horse which carried the priest; according to its behaviour, guesses were made if the patient will live or die. However, all these beliefs remained mainly in the form of superstitions, as a relic of a probably former belief that a horse, as a representative of the spiritual world or a messenger, can predict approaching death. In Slavic countries, there was a belief that if a lover thinks about horses, he is going to die; if a horse sniffs at a soldier, he is going to perish in battle; if someone dreams of a white horse, it brings death (Slavianskie drevnosti 1999, p.592). In our country, white horse was also valued negatively and associated with death (Racėnaitė 2006. p.196).

Some mythological legends tell about horses' reaction to some supernatural beings; this is a sign to a hero

about a quick death of his family member. In one legend, a horse reacts to a visible white silhouette of an infant; when the hero comes home, he finds out that his daughter is dead: „the horse raised his ears and snorted. <...> When he came home, found his daughter already dead“ (Basanavičius 1998, p.162). In another legend, a servant leads horses home and they start squirming near the cemetery. When back at home, the servant learns of his mistress death. „Near the graveyard, the horses did not want to go forward at any means, only stepped back and aside, snorting. <...> At home, he found his mistress was dead“ (Basanavičius 1998, p.162). In both legends, horses' anxiousness and snorting are understood not only as a sign of seeing something supernatural, but also as a suspicion of approaching death.

Horses' prediction of death is even more obvious in mythological legends where animals talking on the Christmas Eve are portrayed. These legends tell about a person who listens to the talking animals on the Christmas Eve and hears a conversation among horses: „a man climbed on the stable and listened when the horses would start talking. And they started. One says: „Tomorrow, in the early morning, I will carry a flock of people to the church. The second horse says: „I will carry the corpse of that man who listens, to the graveyard“ (Slančiauskas 1975, p.284), „a man wanted to know what his horses talk about, so he went to the door of the stable and listened. He heard that one horse said: - This night, at dawn, I will go to carry the priest, the others will bring the coffin to the cemetery, while the rest will carry the guests“ (Katkus 1965, p.17), „one older horse sighed as if a human being, while the younger horse asked him: - Why are you sighing? He answered: - What shall we work tomorrow? The third horse said: - One pair will bring the guests to the church, the other one will carry the corpse away from home“ (Davainis-Silvestraitis 1973, p.85), „one horse says: - Tomorrow I will have no rest at all, as I will carry the doctor for our master. <...> The second horse says: - For me, it will be no better: as soon as you leave, I will have to go for the priest <...> The third horse says: It's me who will have the most difficult day: I will bring the message to the relatives, will go to the church, and finally – will carry the very master to the graveyard“ (Vėlius 1979, p.293). In all these legends, a man who listened to the horses died. These stories are about a broken interdiction: it was prohibited to listen to the animals' talk on the Christmas Eve, while a man disobeys and is consequently punished. In this case, horses are portrayed as aware of the customs and punishments for the breach of traditions.

In mythological legends, horses can predict the death of a human not only by their behaviour but also speech. In the ancient worldview, a horse might have been one

of the animals, which were believed to have supernatural abilities. Our folklore testifies that certain horses' behaviour was considered to be a sign of approaching death.

*In magic tales*, a horse takes a role of a helper which most often foretells a hero's **future or foresees** approaching misfortunes: „Don't do this. This forest was decorated by witchies. When you fall asleep, the witchies will attack and you will die” (Aleksynas 1985, p.109), „Trakimas, do not take this feather: it will bring you a huge trouble“ (Daukantas 1985, p.496), „Don't take it – bad things will happen” (Aleksynas 1985, p.94), „Little Ben, you better don't take this horseshoe – you will have hardships!“ (Slančiauskas 1974, p.89). Horses often warn a hero about approaching troubles or danger for life. Nevertheless, heroes almost never listen to horses and get into troubles: „So he took his brother together. [...] - Didn't I tell you: do not to take your brother – otherwise you won't survive!” (Daukantas 1985, p.512). There is also some kind of formula quite popular in magic tales: „Now you only have blossoms, but you will see what happens when the fruits come!“ (Daukantas 1985, p.496). The gift to foresee the future and misfortunes can only be possessed by extraordinary beings: in magic tales, these are witches, dragons and, as we can see, horses-helpers. The prediction of the future is understood as a special and sacred ability. It could only be performed by exclusive individuals who belonged to the class of soothsayers. Still, as it was mentioned earlier, in some countries the future was also predicted using horses (mostly white ones). There is a belief, which remained even nowadays, that a horse's snort, especially when climbing a hill, predicts misfortune (Beresnevičius 2004, p.68). In Russia, during the fortune-telling on festivals, there was a custom to blindfold a horse, to put a young lady on the horse backwards and to see where it goes – the lady's future husband lives on that side (Slavianskaia mifologija 1995, p.228).

Summarizing horse's role as a predictor of the future, it may be noticed that in mythological legends, a horse is related to prophecies of death: prediction are either made according to a horse's behaviour or a horse itself tells a hero about approaching death, that is an outcome of a breach of a custom. In magic tales, a horse is a helper of a hero and his fortune-teller, which warns about approaching threats. It is interesting to note that in both cases a horse is depicted as a predictor of unlucky future. In the recorded Lithuanian narrative folklore, there are no cases when horses would be predictors of fortune.

## A horse as a sign of welfare

In traditional culture, a horse was not only a useful animal but also had a high price: only rich farmers could afford to have more than one. Number of horses possessed was clearly related with a man's wealth and his social position. During various festivals, farmers used to show their best horses and were proud of them; horses were also often used in agrarian rituals. In some genres of Lithuanian folklore, there are mentions of a horse as a symbol of treasure (gold or money). Narrative folklore texts tell about haunting horses, which are considered to signify a place where a treasure is hidden. *Local/historical legends* tell about emerging horses or sounds of horses neighing, their hooves clip-clopping; these signs are understood as symbols of treasure: „I saw a horse coming to me. Then I saw five horses around the ship. <...> when I ran to the window, I saw a horse which, as if scared of me, started kicking and ran around the house three times“ (Basanavičius 1998, p.479ff), „on the very top of the hill, a horse neighs! The man whistled and the horse replied again. Then he climbed on a mountain and, instead of a lake, found a golden armchair and golden bells ringing!“ (Kerbelytė 1983, p.35). Horses also show up where a treasure is believed to be hidden: „Sometimes people see some fire burning there. Sometimes horses run on this hill or someone drives on it“ (Kerbelytė 1999, p.268).

Local legends also mention the colour of such horses. The most popular ones are white and red: „There is a stone near Krokulė. Once my relative Ona Labeikienė sat on it and saw a white horse running at her, its horseshoes glittering. <...> People say that this white horse could be turned into silver money, but she did not know how to do it“ (Buičėnienė 1996, p.265), „horseshoes clank and thunder, a horse neighs <...>. In the dark night, a red golden horse appears on a hill. <...>“ (Buračas 1996, p.250ff). These colours could be understood according to the explanations given in the legends: white colour was understood as symbolizing silver, red colour – as meaning gold.

There are some *mythological legends* also which depict a horse as a symbol of money. For example: „a horse is hanged on a fir. A white horse hanged“ (Vėlius 1979, p.133), „a horse, red like a hot coal, ran out of a small lake“ (Vėlius 1979, p.144). Later it becomes clear that this horse was a treasure: „if I had hit it with some stick, that horse would have fallen into pieces. I would have a heap of money“ (Vėlius 1979, p.144).

It is still hard to answer why exactly a horse body were chosen as a substitute for a treasure. Perhaps it is related to the perception of a horse as a sign of plenty, wealth and fertility. For example, there is a tradition

to drive horses on the Shrovetide, believing that it increases future harvest or guarantess the welfare of the very horses (Vaicekauskas 2005, p.148ff). There are some mythological legends recorded which tell about *aitvarai* (mythical beings) which materialize into horse related things (a horse-lock, a swingletree, a piece of a carriage shaft) or even take care of the horses. Therefore, they can be associated with Indo-European twins *Ašvinai*, who possibly were divinities of fertility and plenty (Vėlius 1977, p.173ff). In this case, a horse could probably also be understood as a sign of plenty and wealth. On the other hand, these legends also show close relationship between a horse and the devil. Mythological legends depict the devil who gives to a hero a certain object, that later turns into horse legs or muck. The local legends analyzed are also very similar. It is interesting to mention that one legend tells how to take the money: „In the dark night, a red golden horse appears on a hill. <...> when the golden horse appears on a hill, some brave man has to be not afraid to hit this horse with a stick of rowan; then the golden horse would turn into a heap of golden money“ (Buračas 1996, p.250ff). A rowan is one of the trees considered to be sacred, having a special protective power; branches of rowan were hanged around the houses that witches would not get inside (Basanavičius 2001, p.75). Importance of a rowan and its magic powers are also known in other European countries: people used to pass under his branches, expecting some special effect (Dundulienė 1979, p.27).

There are some mythological legends also which tell about the devil giving to a man a present – some part of a horse body. In most cases, a useless and seemingly worthless thing is given: a belly, a skin, a peeled body: „from his shoulders, he threw a peeled mare into a boat“ (Basanavičius 1998, p.290), „A German [*devil*] appeared and threw a belly of a mare into his boat <...> what remained of that belly turned into 10 ducats, so the man happily rowed to the place where it happened, believing he would find golden money instead of a thrown away muck“ (Basanavičius 1998, p.289), „from his shoulders, he threw a peeled mare into a boat. The fisherman got scared and thrust the mare into the water at once. Then the one who threw it exclaimed before disappearing: „You shouldn’ have thrown it away, it was a sack of money!“ (Kerbelytė 1999, p.435), „Soon the servant took the whole basket of horse muck and dumped it into the boat as a payment. The fisherman thought it was a joke, so he threw them away. Crumbs that remained in a boat turned into golden money, that dissappeared when taken into hands“ (Kerbelytė 1999, p.436). A hero usually tries to get rid of this present as soon as possible. Only later it

becomes clear that the money is hidden inside the body of a horse.

Why do not the devil give the money in its natural form, but pack it into some disgusting shape? It probably had to be a certain test: a man is forced not to judge from the outside. There is a possibility that this depiction is related to the conception in traditional mindset that things existing in the spiritual world or sent from it have different outward; things that look nasty here, are totally changed in the spiritual world (Beresnevičius 1990, p.166). However, why exactly the body parts of a horse or, in most cases, of a mare are chosen, it is hard to explain.

Present depictions of horse or, rather say, horse – ghost seeing in some special places (hills, water, stone) and explaining it as a place of hidden treasure shows horse and welfare connections in traditional culture. Important place is given to such horses colour – usually white or red. Part of a horse body given by some person from the beyond also often happens being money or other wealth.

## Conclusion

There are certain genres of Lithuanian narrative folklore (mythological and local/historical legends) which claim that horses can see objects invisible for human beings. Sometimes horses are used for seeing the souls of the dead.

The texts analysed are related to an archaic belief that horses can see supernatural objects and souls of the dead.

In both mythological legends and magic tales, a horse as a predictor warns about misfortunes; it tells about death or troubles approaching.

In several genres of narrative folklore, a horse is associated with wealth and material welfare. In mythological and local legends, a horse is often understood as a sign of wealth.

Translated by Eglė Naprytė and Giedrė Šukytė

## References

### Manuscripts

Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos instituto Lietuvių tautosakos rankraštynas (LTR, LMD).

### Literature

ALEKSYNAS, K., 1985. *Stebuklingas žodis: Lietuvių liaudies pasakos*. Kaunas: Šviesa.

## VIII

HORSES  
IN ETHNOAR-  
CHAEOLOGY  
AND FOLKLORE

- BALYS, J., 2003. *Raštai: Lietuvių mitologiškos sakmės*. T. 4. Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas.
- BASANAČIUS, J., 1998. *Iš gyvenimo vėlių bei velnių*. Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas.
- BASANAČIUS, J., 2001. *Lietuviškos pasakos*. Kn. 1. Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas.
- BASANAČIUS, J., 2001a. *Ožkabilių pasakos ir sakmės*. Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas.
- BRMŠ, 1996. *Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai*. T. 1 Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų l-kla.
- BERESNEVIČIUS, G., 1990. *Dausos: Pomirtinio gyvenimo samprata senojoje lietuvių pasaulėžiūroje*. Klaipėda: Gimtinė: Taura.
- BERESNEVIČIUS, G., 2004. *Lietuvių religija ir mitologija: sisteminė studija*. Vilnius: Tyto alba.
- BUIČENKIENĖ, L., 1996. *Utenos krašto padavimai*. Kaunas: Spindulys.
- BURACAS, B., 1996. *Pasakojimai ir padavimai*. Vilnius: Mintis.
- DAUKANTAS, S., 1985. *Žemaičių pasakos*. Vilnius: Vaga.
- DAVAINIS-SILVESTRAITIS, M., 1973. *Pasakos. Sakmės. Oracijos*. Vilnius: Vaga.
- DUNDULIENĖ, P., 1979. *Medžiai senovės lietuvių tikėjimuose*. Vilnius: Mintis.
- GIRININKIENĖ, V., 2001. *Veliuona*. Vilnius: Versmė.
- GRIGAS K., KUDIRKIENĖ L., KAŠĖTIENĖ, R., et al. 2000. *Lietuvių patarlės ir priežodžiai*. T. 1. Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas.
- KATKUS, M., 1965. *Raštai*. Vilnius: Vaga.
- KERBELYTĖ, B., 1983. *Kai milžinai gyveno: padavimai apie miestus, ežerus, kalnus, akmenis*. Vilnius: Vaga.
- KERBELYTĖ, B., 1999. *Žemės atmintis: lietuvių liaudies padavimai*. Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas.
- RACĖNAITĖ, R., 2006. Gyvūnai mirties pranašai senojoje kultūroje. In: *Senovės baltų kultūra: Gamta ir religija*. Vilnius: Academia.
- REMEIKIS, J., 1990. *Kai dar amžina ugnis ruseno: Mažosios Lietuvos padavimai*. Vilnius: LINK.
- SLANČIAUSKAS, M., 1974. *Šiaurės Lietuvos pasakos*. Vilnius: Vaga.
- SLANČIAUSKAS, M., 1975. *Šiaurės Lietuvos sakmės ir anekdotai*. Vilnius: Vaga.
- VAICEKAUSKAS, A., 2005. *Lietuvių žiemos šventės: bendruomenės kalendorinio ciklo apeigos XIX a. pab. – XX a. pr*. Kaunas: Spindulys.
- VĒLIUS, N., 1995. *Ežeras ant milžino delno: lietuvių liaudies padavimai*. Vilnius: Mintis.
- VĒLIUS, N., 1979. *Laumių dovanos: Lietuvių mitologinės sakmės*. Vilnius: Vaga.
- VĒLIUS, N., 1977. *Mitinės lietuvių sakmių būtybės*. Vilnius: Vaga.
- GOLAN, A., 1993. *Mif i simbol*. Moskva. *Slavianskie drevnosti: Etnolingvicheski slovar'*. In: M.I. TOLSTOI, ed. 1999, vol. 2. Moskva: Rysslit. *Slavianskaia mifologija*. 1995. Moskva.

Received 1 February 2009; Revised: 11 April;  
Accepted: 12 June 2009.

Giedrė Šukytė  
Taikos pr. 67–42  
LT-50436, Kaunas  
E-mail: ziemgale@yahoo.com

## ARKLIŲ ELGESIO STEBĖJIMAS LIETUVIŲ PASAKOJAMOJOJE TAUTOSAKOJE

### Giedrė Šukytė

#### Santrauka

Arklys – vienas populiariausių gyvūnų, vaizduojamų lietuvių folklore. Arklis svarba tradicinėje kultūroje aiškiai pastebima ir kalbant apie materialų, ir apie dvasinį pasaulį. Senojoje pasaulėžiūroje buvo tikima, kad kai kurie gyvūnai gali matyti daugiau nei žmogaus akis. Buvo manoma, kad jie mato anapusinio pasaulio būtybes. Vienas tokių gyvūnų buvo arklys. Iš arklų elgesio taip pat buvo spėjama ateitis, numatomos gresiančios nelaimės. Puikūs, geri arkliai buvo pasididžiavimo objektas, brangus ir saugomas gyvūlys, rodantis jo šeiminkų gerovę. Įvairiose šventėse ūkininkai rodydavo savo gražiuosius arklius, jais puikuodavosi, arkliai neretai būdavo naudojami agrariniuose ritualuose. Šiame straipsnyje aptariama pasakojamosios tautosakos žanruose vaizduojamo arklis reakcija į nepaprastą aplinką, arklis kaip pranašo funkcija bei arklis – turto ženklas – atvejai.

Tikėjimas, jog arkliai gali matyti dvasias, fiksuojami mitologinėse sakmėse ir padavimuose. Iš tekstų matyti, kad arkliai dažnai baidosi šalia jų vietovių, kur, kaip tikima, esančios dvasios – kapinių, kareivių kapų, tiltų, pakaruoklių namų. Toks arklis elgesys rodo jo artimą ryšį su mirusiųjų pasauliu ir laidotuvių apeigomis. Arkliai kartais pasitelkiami tuomet, kai norima pamatyti dvasias. Padavimuose didesnė reikšmė skiriama vietovėms, kur pastebimas neįprastas arklis elgesys. Kai kuriose mitologinėse sakmėse ypatingas dėmesys skiriamas mirusio žmogaus arkliai. Šiuose tekstuose pastebimas ypatingas ryšys tarp arklis ir jo šeiminko.

Skirtinguose pasakojamosios tautosakos žanruose arklys neretai vaizduojamas pasiuntiniu ar pranašu. Mitologinėse sakmėse arklis reakcija į antgamtinę būtybę praneša apie greitą artimojo mirtį. Arkliai taip pat praneša apie gresiančią bausmę, kai žmogus sulaužo draudimą – klausosi Kūčių naktį kalbančių gyvulių. Herojaus laukiančių bėdų išpranašavimas pastebimas ir stebuklinėse pasakose: herojaus pagalbininkas arklys perspėja apie nelaimės, kurios išstiks, jei herojus nesielgs tinkamai. Žinoma, jog arklys kaip pranašas ateities būrimams buvo naudojamas ir kitose tautose.

Arklis sąsajos su turto, materialine gerove juntamos ne viename tautosakos žanre. Padavimuose ir mitologinėse sakmėse arklys neretai suvokiamas kaip turto

išraiška. Buvo tikima, kad matyti arklį, girdėti kanopų kaukšėjimą ar žvengimą tam tikrose vietose (ant kalvos, prie vandens) reiškia toje vietoje esant paslėptą lobį. Anapusinio pasaulio atstovų dovanojamos iš pažiūros atgrasios dovanos – arklio kūno dalys taip pat pasirodo esantys pinigai ar kitas turtas. Tokie tikėjimai, egzistavę tradicinėje kultūroje, sieja arklį su turtu, sėkme. Svarbi vieta šiuose tekstuose skiriama arklių spalvai – dažnai besivaidenantys arkliai vaizduojami baltos arba raudonos spalvos. Tuo galbūt parodomas jų ryšys su užkastomis gėrybėmis – auksu, sidabru.

Užfiksuoti tekstai turi ryšį su archajiniais tikėjimais, kuriuose arklys vaidina gana svarbų vaidmenį.