

# MYTHICAL CREATURES, THE MAKING OF WEARING APPAREL, AND THE LANDSCAPE

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## Abstract

Stones where mythical creatures carry out work connected with wearing apparel appear in publications on the mythological stones of Lithuania and Belarus. This theme is not so widely considered in Latvian research literature. The aim of this work is to show that in Latvian folklore, by natural (stone, tree, stump, water, cave, etc) and man-made objects of the cultural space (threshing barn, cemetery, hill-fort, etc), mythical creatures tailor, spin, knit and mend for people or for themselves.

Key words: mythical landscape, tailor-stones, cobbler-stones, folklore.

There are stones appearing in publications about the mythological stones of Lithuania and Belarus where mythical creatures carry out work connected with wearing apparel. The aim of this paper is to show that in Latvia also there are objects of the mythical landscape where the devil or female mythical creatures tailor, mend or knit clothes or make footwear.

## The stone appears in legends to be a tailor

Many stones that tailor clothes are well known in Belarus, and are sufficiently well described in research literature (Duchyts *et al.* 2008). Such stones were located in Latvia too, but unfortunately nowadays they are not in their original locations. The majority of tailor-stones were located in the cultural and historical region of Latgale.

One of the tailor-stones was located in the present district of Rēzekne, in the parish of Nautrēni not far from Rogovka.<sup>1</sup> This big stone was situated on the bank of a small river that flows close to a hill-fort. We believe that it concerns Zušupe, the Ičas tributary, and Opinku hill-fort. In the legend, it is called a tailor-stone, in the Latgalian dialect *kraucis* (LFK 679, 239).<sup>2</sup> If somebody wanted to have something tailored, he had to put a piece of cloth and some money on the stone, and pray in the following way: 'Oh, sir, tailor me some clothes!' The next morning, the order would be accomplished. Nobody saw or knew where the tailor was.

<sup>1</sup> In this paper, we use the administrative territorial division of the Republic of Latvia which came into force on 1 July 2010.

<sup>2</sup> In this paper, the notation LFK N, M means the number (N, M) of a tale introduced in the Archives of Latvian Folklore or the University of Latvia Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art. The authors are grateful to the Archives of Latvian Folklore for the possibility to use the fund.

A redoubtable landlord who lived in the nearby manor of Zaļmuiža demanded that the stone tailor for him as for nobody else. Indeed, the next morning he found some wonderful clothes on the stone, but when he tried them on, it appeared that the sleeves were sewn to the back. Indeed, the landlord had clothes such as nobody else did. The furious landlord called his servants, and they dragged the stone to the river. Some dressmaker's scissors were found under the stone. The second legend (LFK 263, 1344) does not reveal the location of the stone; only the person who recorded the tale explains at the end of it that it was heard in Pintāni, the same parish of Nautrēnu. The legend says that there was a big stone in the field, under which a tailor-devil lived.

Two legends recorded in Latgale (Dagda (LFK 232, 1219) and Ludza (LFK 197, 997) tell about big stones located on the land of landlords that made different clothes, but there was also a misunderstanding with the landlords. One furious landlord threw the first stone into the maelstrom of a nearby river, but the stone did not disappear. It went about a hundred versts along the river, and continued to make clothes. In the second legend, the furious landlord started to push the stone into the river. He pushed it in in one go, but the stone climbed out on the opposite bank of the river. When he pushed it in a second time, the stone returned; but after it was pushed the third time, the stone did not come back, it sank.

There are two versions of a legend (LFK 1238, 1; 1472, 1582) recorded regarding a stone that was located near the River Iča, which separates the districts of Rēzekne and Balvi. They say that if somebody put cloth on the stone, then during the night a coat would be made. The landlord wanted to have clothes such as nobody else had. The stone complied by sewing one sleeve to the front and the other to the back. The landlord ordered

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the stone to be pushed into the river, and it flowed and growled for three days to Lake Lubāna. Later on, a frog and thread were found beneath the stone. A ditch formed in the place where the stone had been pushed. The second version of the legend says that scissors and a thimble were found beneath the stone.

Apart from the rest of the tailor-stones, another stone of this type was located in the cultural and historical region of Vidzeme (LFK 179, 1224). It was situated on the eastern side of Lake Alūksne, and was called a tailor-stone. If somebody needed to have something tailored, he or she brought cloth, and the next day the order would be finished. Once there was a case when somebody made an order according to the latest fashion in Riga. The legend says that the devil looked at the cloth, and said that he was unable to tailor something according to such requirements, and since then he stopped tailoring.

The two stones of Vidzeme that are linked with the middle basin of the River Aiviekste, which goes between Vidzeme and Latgale, were called tailor-stones, but there are no legends about cloth being left and clothes associated with them. One of these stones appears to be a huge boulder that can be seen in Kuja, a right tributary of the Aiviekste in the Madona district, in the parish of Prauliena, near the Jaunauziņas homestead, and is linked to stories by the devil himself sitting on it and sewing his trousers (Plate IV, Fig. 1). The other stone was one of the biggest Latvian boulders, and, before splitting during treatment of the river bed, it was located in Aiviekste. One version of the legend (LFK 1400, 32943) says that the tailor-stone was situated near the river of Saikava manor. There were needles-wattles presented to the stone by raftsmen in the spring in order to have a successful journey. In the second version of the legend (LFK 929, 24170), it is said that there is a white stone in Aiviekste, called a tailor-stone, and if the raftsmen passing nearby did not throw needles on it, then the rafts ran aground on the stone and were smashed to pieces.

### Stones on which the devil mends

In Belarusian folklore, tailor-stones mainly tailor for people. One more set of legends that is linked with the above story, and yet is a little different, is 'The devil sits on a stone and mends his clothes'. Besides the already-mentioned stone in Kuja, in the same region, in the Cesvaine district, there is a popular stone that is associated with several legends, the Vaļģu devil-stone (Plate IV, Fig. 2). These legends say that the devil sat on it and mended his trousers, shirt or even his collar with a thill, and in one version of the legend, for

some reason, also a harrow. In another legend (LFK 557, 8), it is told how the devil used to work in moonlight, occasionally shouting out the meaningless word 'eekshpydeeksh'. The devil was disturbed by a man who invoked God. Fleeing the place, the devil struck a stone with a needle, and left a scar on it.

A legend originating from the Salacgrīva district, in the parish of Liepupe in Vidzeme (LFK 1729, 1205), describes a stone that cannot be found in nature any more. It tells about a man who was on his way back home from Jelgavkrogs, and who saw the devil sitting on a big stone with rags and a thill.

Two legends about such stones also come from the cultural and historical region of Zemgale. One (LFK 929, 26) says that in the River Iecava opposite the church of Iecava there was a stone. The devil sat on it, mending his trousers with a thill and combing his hair with a harrow. Another devil poked his head out of the water, and shouted: 'Suk, suk, give it to me, too!' Another legend (LFK 1557, 2749) tells about a devil that lived beneath the stone. When the stone was blown up, the devil's trousers appeared to be torn. He stole a thill and some sacks from the manor of Trape, and began to mend his trousers. However, when the moon was covered by clouds, it was not possible for the devil to run the rope. The devil disappeared after the cock had crowed. It seems that the same stone is also described in another legend (LFK 1557, 13), where it is said that underneath a big stone in the Iecava district, in a meadow of the Ķīzu homestead, lived the devil. The stone was embedded in the Misa rectory. The devil frequently sat on Ķīzu hill mending his trousers.

In some legends, the devil does not do his mending sitting on a stone, and his link with it is mediated. The devil had to mend his clothes because he carried stones in them. When the clothes were torn, the stones were scattered. Sometimes the disturbed devil left traces in the stone when he fled. These legends reveal a wider mythical scenery, and the link between several objects of the mythical scenery becomes apparent.

A legend (LFK 81, 136) from the cultural and historical region of Kurzeme says that there was a small river in the Talsu district, in the parish of Vandzene, near the Ezerlejas homestead. The devil carried stones in a blanket in order to fill it up, but the blanket fell apart and the stones were scattered. The devil kept on mending until the thill fell out of his hands, and he was unable to find it because a cloud covered the moon. He shouted furiously at the moon: 'Shine, moonlight, shine, I lost the thill!' As the moon disobeyed, the devil threw a big stone at it, but the stone fell into the river. Immediately, the cock crowed and the devil had to go

to hell. The devil stepped on the big stone, and left big footprints on it.

Several legends about a devil-tailor come from Vidzeme. In the Vecpiebalga district, on the bank of the River Gauja downstream from Jaunviļumi, there was a pile of stones (and human bones) (LFK 1690, 11026). The devil brought these stones because he wanted to build a bridge over the Gauja. He carried the stones in the corner of a sheepskin coat, but the stones fell out because the coat was torn. The devil got on to a haystack, threaded a thill with a rope, and started to mend the torn coat.

### Other objects of mythical scenery linked with the devil-mender

Not only stones, but also other objects of Latvian mythical scenery are linked with the devil-mender, both from nature (a tree, a stem, a place in a river or on the bank) and created by humans (a house, a barn, a pub).

In Vidzeme in the Gulbene district, in the parish of Lizuma, on Knistu hill, two men coming back from a pub saw the devil sitting in a tall fir tree making parts for headgear from hooves (LFK 1098, 20422). Each man had carved a symbol of a cross in the fir tree while transporting a dead body over the hill. The devil shouted diabolically at the moon: 'Don't glimmer so weakly, because I need to see what I'm doing.' A legend recorded in Ērgļi tells us about a devil named Step, who was sitting on the top of a haystack and mending his sheepskin coat. When the clouds covered the moon, Step shouted at it to keep on shining. Being immersed too deeply in his work, Step did not notice his enemy the thunder approaching which later struck him (Šmits XIV, p.187).

There are colourful legends from Kurzeme about a devil who did his mending near or in barns. The link between the devil and the stones is weaker here than in other cultural and historical regions of Latvia. There is a legend recorded in the Saldus district, in the parish of Lutriņu, about a devil that was sewing a goatskin on a stem (LFK 739, 3487). When it grew dark outside, he cursed the moon. That made the thunder angry, and it struck the devil.

In Zemgale, in the Iecava district, in the forest of Dietlavu, the devil threaded a sledge thill and mended his trousers there (LFK 231, 2849). There are many other versions of the legend from Zemgale, where the devil does his sewing by a river bank or a place called the Devil's Depth, or near a bridge. In these legends, the devil does not communicate with the moon, but whis-

bles and talks about his tools (a thill as a needle) and what he does (mending, making trousers) (LFK 2128, 26; 1645, 3460; 1645, 3238).

### Stones rolled by tailors

The particularity of the Latvian mythical landscape is revealed in the stones rolled by tailors. As far as we know, there are no similar legends found in neighbouring countries. One Tailors' Stone is situated on the left bank of the River Sesava, washed by water from one side, in the Dobeles district, in the parish of Naudīte (Plate IV, Fig. 3). There are several legends (LFK 1573, 1714; 1404, 4749; 759, 9123) recorded about this stone that have the same theme. Either all the tailors or a hundred of them gathered and rolled a stone uphill. The stone then rolled back downhill, and crushed the tailors' legs, and that is why the majority of tailors are lame.

In the Pārgauja district, in the parish of Raiskuma on Vitku Kurpniekkalns (Cobbler's Hill), there is a stone called a three tailors-stone (Fig. 4). This name appears to be more recent, originating from the shape of the stone. The stone has three cracks on the top, forming three small rises. The stone was rolled uphill for seven years by 70 tailors (LFK 1262, 14). Other leg-

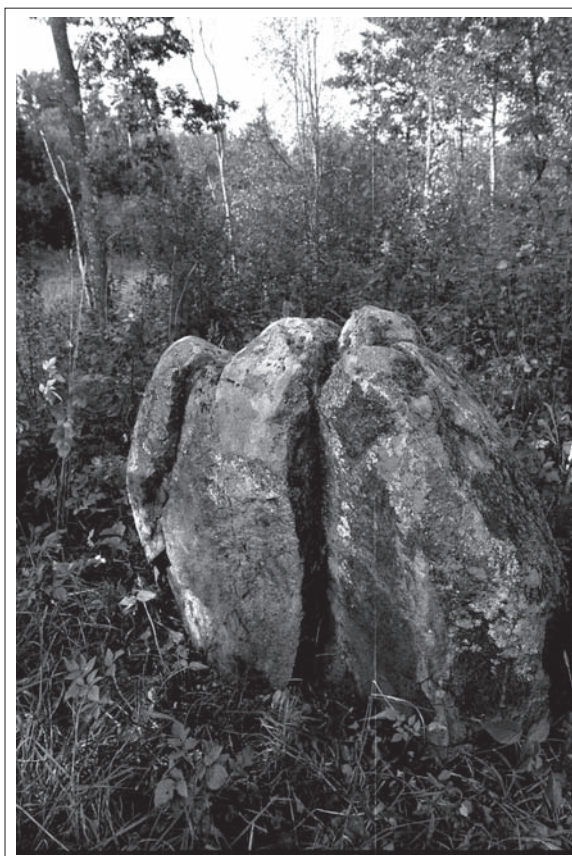


Fig. 4. The three tailors-stone on Vitku Kurpniekkalns (photograph by M. Zeltiņš).

ends speak of a larger number of tailors involved (LFK 1400, 5561). The stone was rolled uphill by weaker tailors, in order to prove that they were not so weak. Ninety-nine tailors could not manage to roll the stone uphill, but nine times 99 tailors did. A legend about Maizpeļu hill in Vidzeme is linked to the theme of tailors rolling a stone, yet without the stone itself (LFK 116, 9673). Seven tailors rolled it up a hill of mouse droppings. All the tailors involved were lame, blind or foolish.

### Cobbler-stones and the devil-cobbler linked with other objects of the mythical landscape

Not only tailor-stones, but also cobbler-stones are known both in Latvia and in Belarus. Cobbler-stones are also known in Lithuania. In Latvia, besides one fairly new report with regard to the aforementioned tailor on the banks of the Kuja where it not only made clothes but also shoes, there are only two stones known where the devil cobbled. Both of them are in Latgale. One is located in the Rēzekne district, in the parish of Puša (Jakubenoka 2001), in the former Virbuli homestead. A little devil, *chortik* in the Latgalian dialect, used to sit on it and make shoes out of birch bark. When a man hit him with a rowan stick, the little devil thought that the moon was to blame, and said: 'Shine, shine, but don't tussle!' There are two featureless hollows in the comparatively small stone, and it is said that the little devil made them. The other stone is not localised in nature. In the legend (LFK 709, 119), it is said that late one evening when the moon was shining, a man, on his way back home from Līvāni, saw the devil working on the stone. The devil spoke in Russian, and made a suggestion that was not typical of him: 'Say to me "God help" and I will give you boots.' Two wolves ran out of the nearby bushes. Being afraid of them, the devil fled and ripped up the meadow unevenly. The place where the devil fled is called the Devil's Ditch, but the meadow is called the Devil's Bog, because no plants grow there. Most Lithuanian and Belarusian cobbler-stones made footwear for people. The devil in Virbuli made footwear for himself. In Līvāni devil's direct speech, there was a certain offer to make shoes for people. In

Latgale also, a legend which describes the origins of a cobbler (LFK 253, 3) is written. The devil made boots. Someone hit him on the head, took away his tools, and made footwear himself.

In Vidzeme, there are also many legends about a cobbler, though they are not linked with a stone. One of them (LFK 1980, 2221) tells about a cooper on his way back home during the night, who heard a sound as if a cobbler was beating boots. When he approached him, he saw a cobbler smoking and beating a boot. They exchanged tobacco pouches. The exchanged tobacco pouch turned out to be a horse's hoof. That was the reason why the cooper hit him with a rowan stick. The other legend (LFK 72, 4657) tells about a man who was going home from a mill in the moonlight. He had to pass the cemetery of Ķinderi in the Cesvaine district. When he was in front of the cemetery, he saw a cobbler who was looking at the moon, making boots and cursing at the moon in a very crude way in Russian. In earlier times, the devil lived in the Priekuļi district, in the parish of Liepa, in the Lielā Ellīte sandstone cave (LFK 1081, 40.3). Every day, he sat by the roadside, and mended footwear with a sledge thill.

### Female mythical creatures that work near stones and other objects of the mythical landscape

Stones near which female mythical creatures spin, knit and sew should be considered unique, due to the small number of them. In Latvia, only in relation to Mērsrags holy maid-stone (Fig. 5, 6) is there a set of legends that describe a sacred woman spinning, or a drone of yarn cart is heard in this stone. At midnight, a sacred woman used to come out and spin flax (LFK 924, 3)



Fig. 5. Mērsrags Holy Maid stone (photograph by A. Opmanis).

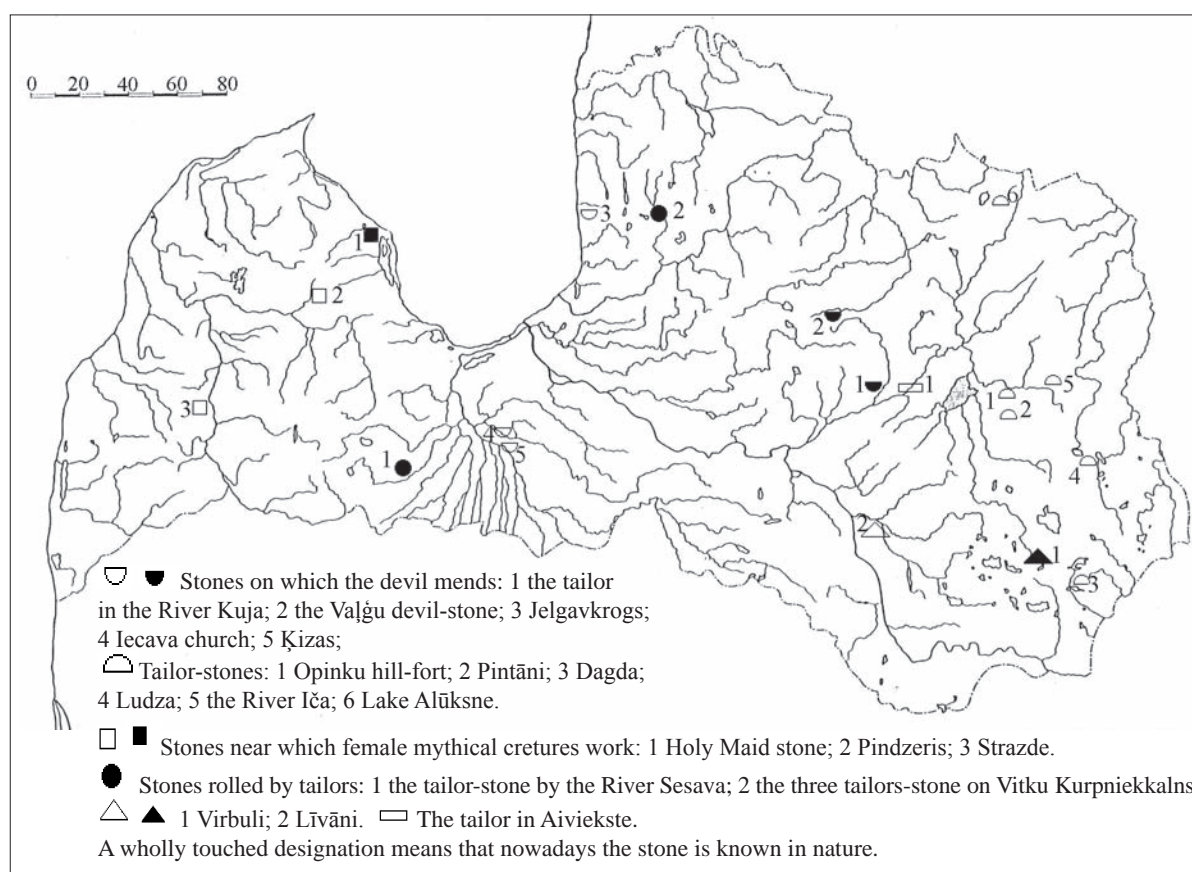


Fig. 6. A map of Latvia, with the stones mentioned.

here. One end of the stone appears to be cut off, and a rather thin quadrangular stone is placed there. That is the door used for the maid or her soul to enter the stone (LFK 622, 208).

There are at least two stones in Lithuania where female mythical creatures used to spin. The Raganas stone is mentioned in the Biržai region where Ragana (witch) used to spin (Matulis 1990, p.50), but in the Akmenė region there is a stone brought by the devil on which female elves used to spin (Vaitkevičius 1998, p.346).

Female mythical creatures not only spin in the legends coming from Kurzeme. In the Skrunda district, in the parish of Raņķi, Mucenieki Pindzeris was a big stone called the Devil's Bath, and witches used to splice manacles there (LFK 1148, 1). In the Talsi district, in the parish of Strazde, a legend has been recorded about a boulder on which an old woman dressed in red sat and knitted socks for the devil's children (LFK 1686, 1114). When the old lady finished knitting, the stone opened and she entered it together with a little dog.

The legends coming from Latgale are linked with hill-fort and a woman knitting and living in the underworld with a dog. Sometimes, a stone marks the border between a real and a mythical space. The legend about the Zamkys hill-fort, in the parish of Višķu in the Daugavpils district, deals with a big stone on which about

ten people could stand (LFK 1945, 3592). Through a cavity under the stone, a man went down to the underworld and saw many rooms, and in one of these rooms a beautiful woman was knitting with a big dog beside her.

Female mythical creatures doing woman's work may appear not only near stones but also near other objects of the mythical landscape. In accordance with the story (LFK 1692, 535), Dižante in the Dundaga district is the Holy Maids cave, where holy maids used to spin so productively that the drone of the yarn cart was heard even outside the cave. In the Stepju Māras cave, which is located on the bank of the River Abava in the Talsi district, in the parish of Ģibuļi, holy maids spin, weave and make beautiful clothes (LFK 1909, 103), (LFK 1909, 119). The legend about the Liede hills, in the Gulbene district, in the parish of Jaungulbene (Šmits IV, p.211), tells how there was a metal door with a cave behind. There was an old woman who sat in the cave, she was a witch, and she used to spin. In the legend about Greitas hill, in the Daugavpils district, in the parish of Ambeļu, it is said that once this mountain opened (LFK 940, 4). A man saw Greita sitting and knitting socks with knitting needles, and two dogs were beside her. In the Staburags cave in the Jaunjelgava district, in the parish of Staburaga, a virgin used to spin for the peasants, because they themselves were unable to

do so due to the pressure from their landlords (Laima 2009, p.183). The latter legend is interesting for the fact that the mythical creature, almost like tailor-stones, helps to tailor clothes for people. Objects of the mythical landscape are found both in Latvia and Lithuania, and are linked with female mythical creatures and tailoring. In Žemaitija, in the Šilalė region, at Lauma hill, Laumas used to seed flax, weave cloth, give presents to poor children and punish the rich (Vaitkevičius 1998, p.409). In the Mažeikiai region, on Darata hill, some girls used to spin and weave clothes (Vaitkevičius 1998, p.164). In Aukštaitija, in the Ignalina region, female elves (Laumas) would spin (Vaitkevičius 2006, p.358).

### Thread, yarn, filament: connectors of various objects of mythical and real spaces

In the Monument Documentation Centre of the State Inspection for Heritage Protection, we found a story that can be found about a hill, most likely a hill-fort, in Latgale (PDC 1950, 4931).<sup>3</sup> It describes an old man who sat down to relax on a hill, and felt as if he was in a house. He was offered some expensive tobacco and told that a sunken town could be brought back above ground. It needed a cart and coil with enough flax to be spun around the hill in one go. Another legend (Urtāns *et al.* 2008, p.177) deals with a sunken church in the Sprīņģi hill-fort in the Rēzekne district, in the parish of Ozolmuiža. A woman's husband and child had also sunk together with the church. The woman had to spin enough yarn to be able to twist it around the church 300 times. Then the church would come back itself above ground. The woman died when she was spinning. In the Ilūkste district, in the parish of Eglaine, a shepherd girl was knitting a sock on the Laši hill-fort, and the ball of yarn fell down and disappeared when she disentangled it (Urtāns 2006, p.103). The hill opened up, and showed a sunken castle down beyond the thread. The shepherd girl was disturbed by an old woman who brought her breakfast. Similar themes of legends are also found in Belarus (Zaikouski, Duchyts 2001, p.63). There was a sunken village in a lake. A shepherd saw a floating ball of yarn in the lake. When he started to take it out, a whole church came out together with it. The shepherd was frightened, and the church sank.

<sup>3</sup> In this paper, the notation PDC N, M means the number (N, M) of information in the Republic of Latvia's Monument Documentation Centre of the State Inspection for Heritage Protection. The authors are grateful to the Monument Documentation Centre for the possibility to use the fund.

### Protective functions of clothes and their raw materials

In our opinion, there is a unique legend linked with the motif 'flax life torture', where the story is linked to a stone (LFK 929, 56940). In the Madona district, in the parish of Barkava, there was a big stone in Akmeņpurvs. The devil was carrying it in the direction of Aiviekste, in order to disturb the raftsmen. Flax was following the same route in the opposite direction, and they met. While the flax was telling the devil about the anguish caused by humans, a cock crowed, and the devil discarded the stone and fled. In Kurzeme, in the Ventspils district, in a stone that is located in the barn of the manor at Pope, a footprint is visible that was left by the devil (LFK 929, 56940). The landowner had sold his soul to the devil. When the devil came to claim it, the landowner was sitting on flax and praying to God. Several legends about digging up old money are linked to the sacred role of cloth made from wool and flax. In order to dig up money, flax thread has to be twisted around the Raganas (witch) stone in Vidzeme (LFK 169, 2). In one legend coming from Latgale, it is said that a person has to take an unused towel and a black cat with him in order to find some money in a pile of stones (PDC 15450, 1). The cat has to be wrapped in the towel and then killed. Another legend (LFK 291, 171) from Bumbišķi, in the Rēzekne district, in the parish of Ozolmuiža, tells about a stone under which some old money has been placed. The devil stabbed the digger in the stomach, but he had oakum behind his belt and flax brake on his legs.

### Different and common motifs in legends from Latvia and neighbouring countries

In Latvia, as in neighbouring countries, there is quite a number of mythological landscape objects, which in one way or another are connected with the making of clothes and footwear. The motifs of corresponding legends include characteristics of the folklore of neighbouring countries, with local variations.

Latvian legends regarding tailor-stones bear a strong similarity to Belarusian legends. This is manifested both in tailors' dislike of being told how to sew, and in the reason why the stone has stopped sewing. If in the case of the Belarus stone, the image of scissors could be visible in the structure of the stone, then our heroes had to search for them under the stone. A distant similarity can be seen even between Belarus tailor-stones in which a snake lived who was able to turn into a human being and sew, and the frog that was found under the Iča stone, as both the snake and the frog are crea-

tures that are related to chthonic deities. In the Latgale dialect, sometimes the word 'tailor' is replaced by the word *kraucis*, which is a borrowing from Belarusian. Consequently, legends from Latgale, in two cases, have named tailor-stones. Some of the Latvian legends end up a little differently: namely, a stone that has been rolled into a river by a landlord possesses self-propellant properties. So one stone has not lost its ability to sew, but has just altered its location, moving 100 versts up. We can find partial parallels between these legends in Lithuanian and Belarusian material. In Belarus, in the Miori region, a stone had the ability to turn from a stone into a strong man and travel across the world (Volodina 2009, p.49). Mokas, a group of stones in Lithuania, is related to the phenomenon of swimming across a river (Vaitkevičius 2006, p.179).

Regarding the Belarus tailor-stones, it has been said that, as a rule, they are big and located on low surfaces, sometimes in the close vicinity of water (Duchyts *et al.* 2008). The same could be said about the size of the Latvian stones, and their location. Many of these are to be found either close to a river or a lake, or even on the riverbed. Belarusian research has emphasised that tailor-stones are associated with the devil, and are included in the basic myth pattern, which is especially vividly manifested in the legend about the Snake tailor-stone (Volodina 2009, p.48). In the Belarusian legend about the Snake tailor-stone, an important motif is that until the tailor-snake has been buried, rain will fall (Kashkurevich 2005). In Latvia, the motif of a duel is expressed profoundly in the legend about the devil-mender relating to stones and other natural objects alike. In this context, it is worth mentioning the haystack devil-mender named Steps. During a thunderstorm, it is stolen by Thunder. In its turn, in Belarus, tailor-stones by the name of Stepan are known. In one paper (Zaikouski 2002), this Belarusian archaeologist has substantiated the connection of the name Stepan with Velez (a Slavic pagan deity). In Indo-European mythology, the reason for the duel is either the female deity or water and cattle, which are subjected to the power of chthonic deities and are freed by Thunder. It appears that the Lithuanian and Latvian legends should also be regarded within the context of the basic myth and release of water, as well as being related to the devil-mender, and those where the main storyline is as follows: the devil, sitting on a stone, usually in water or close to it, during a thunderstorm teases Thunder. It is either struck by Thunder, or shot by a hunter. In Latvian legends about the devil-mender, the hunter appears as a mere onlooker of the duel between Thunder and the devil. In their turn, in legends about the devil-cobbler as the cultural hero, who struggles against the devil armed with a rowan stick, a night-herdsman

appears. In the legends, a wolf also emerges, fighting against the devil, attacking the Līvānu devil-cobbler.

Unfortunately, the tailor-stone in the Aiviekste riverbed has been destroyed. In the legend, the emphasis is put on its whiteness. We will never know whether whiteness was the real colour of the stone, or whether it was only called that, as required by the mythological world-view. In Lithuania, white stones are found which in fact are not white at all (Vaitkevičius 2006, p.17). Let us recall the Slavic and Baltic incantation ladies, who sit spinning on a stone in the sea. The stone and a tree, which mark the centre of the world, are interchangeable symbols. In Belarus, a popular motif is rivers enchanted and darned by a witch or a gipsy woman, as result of which the rivers dry up or stop flowing. Sometimes there is a stone by such an enchanted river, and on rolling it the river resumes its flow (Zaikovski 2006). It is possible that in these legends an ordinary man, however, who has some supernatural or paranormal abilities, replaces the chthonic personage who is in charge of the waters of the Earth. In relation to the Latvian mythological landscape, this motif does not appear in its pure form; however, we may draw some parallels between the motifs of the Latvian and the Belarusian legends.

The place where the Ruskulova swamp is in Latgale was previously the sea. On it rode either Laima or Māra, depending on the legend's motifs. In one version of the legend, the deity has lost its comb; whereas in another one a key has been lost. Therefore, she had to put a spell on the sea, and it became overgrown. In the place where the key disappeared, the godhead conjured up a big stone, which is said to be located in the middle of the swamp (LFK 679, 2165; 1341, 17022). According to these cases, we can conclude that a connection emerges between the centre of the mythological domain in the midst of water, marked by a tree or a stone, and a particular object of nature. The snake and the female deities are connected to that centre, manifesting itself as a link to wool and fabric-making, and the water closing motif. The folklore material serves as proof of the fact that mythological creatures relating to water, stone and female work often show themselves to human beings at a full moon. A pronounced feature of the Latvian legends is connected with the devil-mender or the devil-cobbler. In Lithuania, stones are also known at which a cobbler has not appeared, although it has been narrated that on these stones the devil was sitting, looking at the moon. The stone-sitting devil is struck by thunder (Vaitkevičius 1998, p.421). From Belarus, the only connection between the devil and a stone known to us is obtained by verbal information supplied by Aleksandr Zaicev, a researcher into local history and folklore. It states that in the Vileika district,

there was a stone on which the devil was sitting and murmuring something at the moon. It is possible that tales about these stones are pieces of some voluminous plot comprising the figure of the devil-cobbler, which has survived until today. The Lithuanian and Latvian devil-mender or the devil-cobbler and tailor-stones fit into a broader stone group: people who turned into stones (Vaitkevičius 2003, p.123). In Latvia, there are widespread legends narrating how some mythological personage has turned into a stone, a human being, an animal, or even an object. However, these plots are not typical of the stone group in question. Theoretically, they may be attributed to the Mērsraga Holy Maid stone and the Aiviekste tailor-stones. Regarding the Mērsraga Holy Maid stone, alongside the spinning holy maid, there is a legend about an evil woman who, as a punishment for asking God to perform evil acts upon her neighbour, has been turned into a stone (LFK 924, 1). The Aiviekste tailor-stone has appeared on the river bank in a place where a tailor saw a black man splashing. It is appropriate to note that in the Vileika district in Belarus there is a cobbler-stone, about which, according to one version of the legend, it is said that the cobbler's house was turned into a stone on a clap of thunder. According to another version of the legend, in the place where the house stood, burnt by the thunderstorm, later on a big stone emerged (Duchyts *et al.* 2008).

In Latgale, there are numerous legends unrelated to tailor-stones and cobbler-stones, which end up with the story that a stone has emerged, where paranormal events took place, on the site of a house or a bath-house. One Belarusian researcher has stressed (Volodina 2009, pp.50-51) that in various East Slavic areas, modern field research notes are made regarding the large number of referrals to stones which appear to travellers like a stove or a house. In legends, people are often lured by the devil and invited to take a rest there. A man thinks that he is in someone's house. He takes his shoes and clothes off, and lies down on a stove, only to wake up in the morning on a stone. Volodina observes that a stone in Belarus was called both a tailor's and a devil's stone, and the aforementioned motif of undressing on the stone relates to that. Motifs of legends about a traveller undressing in a house, but waking on a stone, are familiar also in Latvia, mostly in Latgale. Although there is not one stone known in Latgale in relation to which both motifs are present, namely, sewing and undressing, there is an obvious similarity between Latgale and Belarusian motifs of legends about stones.

Belarusian researchers have noted (Duchyts 2005) that the cult of the stone in Belarus concerning the stone groups in question, and in general terms, is inherited

from Baltic tribes. Tailor-stones in Belarus are found in areas represented by Dnieper-Daugava culture. In their turn, cobbler-stones are widespread in areas of Striated Pottery culture. In Latvia, both known tailor-stones and the majority of tailor-stones pertain to the area of Striated Pottery culture. Among the tailor-stones, the tailor-stone by Lake Alūksne remains outside the area of Striated Pottery culture. For their part, legends about the devil-mender in the area of Striated Pottery culture and in north Vidzeme are alike; in their time, when Striated Pottery culture existed, they were populated by Finno-Ugric tribes that used textile-impressed pottery, which was typical for them.

Speaking about stones which sew by themselves, Belarusian academic literature has communicated on numerous occasions the idea that such stones served as altars in pagan sanctuaries (Volodina 2009, p.48). The connection between the stones and the tradition of sacrifice is signified by the fact that these stories feature a window, through which an order is delivered. In Latvia the motif regarding tailor-stones and cobbler-stones is not as pronounced. Legends from Kurzeme tell about female deities who spin and twist, and either feature the door motif, or it is said that the stone opens up and a mythological creature comes into the stone.

Occasionally, a window and door motif is encountered at devil-stones. Thus, windows and doors are mentioned in stories about the Ģevrāni devil-stone in the Jēkabpils district, and the Māteri devil's foot-stone in the Ventspils district. In these legends however, the stone is emphasised as the devil's dwelling, rather than the place of sacrifice. Latvian tailor-stones and cobbler-stones are neither particularly associated with the tradition of sacrifice nor with information regarding people gathering by them on holidays. The only exception is the Aiviekste tailor, to which raftsmen gave needles.

The landlords' actions, rolling Latgale tailor-stones into rivers, create certain associations with the Christian fight against paganism, and may signify indirectly that tailor-stones were cult stones. Nevertheless, the statement that all stones were used as cult stones is not unambiguous. In our opinion, there may have been such tailor-stones, at which rituals were held, including sacrifices, as well as those which took only a certain place relating to the mythological scenery in the worldview of ancient people. The fact that not only stones but also other objects within the mythological scenery, such as a haystack, are related to the devil-mender, supports the latter assumption.

In mythology, a tailor, typically portrayed in legends as a lame man, is related to chthonic deities. Lameness as a trait of a chthonic personage, such as a tailor, is usually true, as physically weak people became tai-



lors, since they were obviously unable to perform the difficult work of a farmer. Motifs of legends related to the Latvian mythological landscape where tailors performed stone-rolling activities, interpret causes of the tailors' lameness in a peculiar way. In Belarusian writings, a hypothesis has been put forward concerning the possible identity of tailor-stones and pagan priests, highlighting it as the master's role in the creation of something new (Kashkurevich 2005). It must be said that there is a certain gap between the tailor as an unimportant, mocked person, and the tailor as a demiurge.

## Conclusion

Some questions remain unanswered as to why in some legends a tailor makes an excellent garment, but in others a poor devil-mender can never succeed in completely mending his own trousers. Neither does this research provide an answer as to why in one case female deities appear in connection with objects of the mythological scenery, whereas only males are closely linked to tailor-stones and cobbler-stones. These questions currently remain as food for thought and further research. The objective of our article is to show that, as in neighbouring countries, there are many objects of nature in Latvia where mythical creatures deal with the making of wearing apparel.

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## MITINĒS BŪTYBĒS, DRABUŽIŅ SIUVIMAS IR KRAŠTOVAIZDIS

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### Santrauka

Straipsnyje kalbama apie tai, kad Latvijoje, kaip ir kaimyninėse šalyse, prie kraštovaizdžio objektų (pirmiausia akmenų) mitinės būtybės verpiančios, siuvančios ir adančios drabužius, gaminančios avalynę.

Baltarusijoje gerai žinomi akmenys siuvėjai, t. y. akmenys, kurie patys geba siūti. Rytų Latvijoje, Latgaloje, tokių paminklų yra keletas, dar vienas – Vidžemės šiaurės vakaruose, Alūksnės ežero pakrantėje. Du akmenys Vidžemės ir Latgalos paribyje, Aiviekstės baseine, vadinami Siuvėjais, tačiau apie juos pasakojami padavimai nemini nei drobės, nei drabužių. Apie vieną iš šių akmenų sakoma, kad ten sėdėdavęs ir sau kelnes lopydavęs velnias. Apie antrąjį Siuvėju vadinamą akmenį, buvusį Aiviekstės upėje, pasakojama, kad pavasarį, tikėdamiesi laimingos kelionės upe, sielininkai jam aukodavę „adatas“ arba karklų vyteles.

Baltarusių folklore akmenys siuvėjai pirmiausia siuva žmonėms, o Latvijoje paplitę panašūs padavimai turi savitų bruožų – velnias, atsisėdęs ant akmens, adas savo drabužius. Beje, su adančiu velniu susiję ne vien akmenys, bet ir kiti Latvijos mitologinio kraštovaizdžio elementai: medžiai, kelmiai, tam tikros upių vagos ir pakrančių vietos, taip pat klėtys ir daržinės; o ypatingas latvių folkloro bruožas – padavimai apie siuvėjus, kurie kitados ant kalno priridenę akmenų.

Baltarusijoje ir Lietuvoje plačiai paplitę akmenys, kurie, anot padavimų, siuvantys batus. Latvijoje žinomi tik du tokie akmenys, abu Latgaloje. Vidžemėje užfiksuoti analogiški padavimai nesiejami su akmenimis: vienu atveju velnias siuva batus miške, antru – kapinėse, o trečiu – netoli Velnio olos.

Unikaliu laikytinas padavimų motyvas apie tai, kad prie kai kurių akmenų pasirodančios mitinės būtybės moterys ir verpiančios, vejančios arba siuvančios. Latvijoje, Mėrsrags vietovėje, žinomas vienas toks akmuo; esą šventa laikoma mergaitė šalia akmens verpianti, arba verpimo ratelio užesį galima išgirsti pačiame akmenyje! Ne mažiau kaip du analogiški akmenys yra Lietuvoje – ten verpiančios nepaprastos moterys. Viename padavime iš Latvijos Kuršo pasakojama, kad raganos šalia akmens vejančios virves, kitame – kad ant akmens sėdėdama močiutė mezganti velnio vaikams kojines.

Nepaprastos moterys verpėjos regimos ne vien prie akmenų, jos taip pat pasirodo greta olų, kalvose ir ant piliakalnių.

Latvių padavimų motyvai apie akmenis siuvėjus labai panašūs į baltarusių. Baltarusijos akmenys siuvėjai –

tai paprastai dideli rieduliai, gulintys žemose vietose, kartais – vandens pakrantėje. Tokie patys Latvijos akmenys siuvėjai – daugelis jų yra upių arba ežerų pakrantėse, kartais – net upės vagoje. Panašumo esama ir kalbant apie tai, kad siuvėjai nepatenkinti, kai kas nors imasi juos mokyti siūti. Tačiau latvių padavimai turi savitą pabaigą – čia akmenys siuvėjai gali judėti iš vienos vietos į kitą. Antai vienas iš šių akmenų siuvėjų, pamokytas kaip reikia dirbti, ne prarado siuvimo galia, o upe persikėlė į naują vietą už šimto varstų! Tokia pasakojimo eiga primena Lietuvoje esančią akmenų Mokų šeimyną, kuri susirado sau naują vietą persikėlusį per upę.

Baltarusijos tyrinėtojai nurodo, kad straipsnyje nagrinėjamų ir apskritai visų šventų akmenų kultas yra baltų genčių paveldas. Akmenys siuvėjai Baltarusijoje paplitę ten, kur egzistavo Dniepro-Dauguvos archeologinė kultūra, o savo ruožtu akmenys, siuvantys batus, būdingi brūkšniuotosios keramikos kultūros teritorijai. Abu Latvijoje esantys akmenys, siuvantys batus, taip pat sietini su brūkšniuotosios keramikos kultūra. Iš akmenų siuvėjų tik Alūksnės ežero pakrantėje esantis akmuo yra toliau nuo brūkšniuotosios keramikos kultūros arealo.

Padavimai apie ant akmens adantį velnią žinomi ir minėtosios brūkšniuotosios keramikos kultūros teritorijoje, ir Šiaurės Vidžemėje, kur tuo metu gyveno ugrosumių gentys, pažįstamos iš būdingos joms tekstilinės keramikos.

Vertė Vykintas Vaitkevičius