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THE CONNECTION OF MYTHOLOGICAL STONES TO DEITIES OF THE EARTH AND LOWER WORLD, AND THEIR PLACE IN THE SACRED LANDSCAPE

Introduction

These stones are considered to be mythological stones that formerly had a definite place in Man's mythical world view. In many cases, cult rituals were carried out beside a mythological stone, folk-tales were told about it and the stone may have a name rooted in mythology. In the Latvian scientific and popular science literature the term 'cult stone' is often used for the designation of such stones, while in popular articles the designation 'holy stone' is frequently found. In our view, such terms do not apply to all mythological stones, only those beside which certain cult activities or rituals were carried out. At the same time, there were also stones at which activities of this kind were not carried out, but which nevertheless were significant in Man's mythical world view. They are the subject of folk-tales, or at least the name survives today. Thus, the plots of the folk-tales may indicate only the role of the stone in the mythical model of the world – a stone as entrance to the underworld, or the connection of a stone with primeval nature, in the opposition to the cultural space arranged by Man.

In the world model of ancient people, the stone appears as the world axis, as well as a symbol of its centre, and is connected with the conception of the boundary between the acquired universe and primeval nature, and with vertical links to the lower world, and horizontal links to the World Sea. Therefore the role of a stone in mythological concepts was twofold. It was connected with the fertile as well as the destructive essence of nature. This determined the relationship of a stone to deities of the earth and lower world, which control the cycle of life and death, and provide fertility.

Raw stones, stones with signs true to nature, notably footprint stones and relatively simply modified stones, as well as stones with trough-shaped hol-

lows, are more commonly represented in folk-tales, since a raw stone possesses important symbolic meaning as a natural element.

The beginning of the mythical world view refers to the time when the transition to a production economy took place, when cattle-breeding was the main branch of the economy for many tribes. At this time the common theme of Indo-European myth also developed about the celestial deity and its earthly and lower-world enemy, connected with stone, water, stock, money and the shades (*Mitoloģijas enciklopēdija*, 1994, 47). In the frame of this world vision, folk-tales also developed in connection with stones, reflecting the ancient mythological ideas. At the same time it should be understood that the mythical world vision has never been something completed and constant. Proceeding from the traditional world vision, continual collective creation took place, whereby a particular stone may be mentioned in folk-tales from the not-so-distant past.

The aim of this contribution is to show the link, characteristic of all the Indo-Europeans, between the earth or lower world and stones, based on Latvian folklore material and particular stones in the Latvian mythical landscape. A further aim is to substantiate that the celestial deities are connected with stones in the frame of Indo-European myth, where there is antagonism between celestial deities and those of the earth and lower-world, and to examine syncretic interpretation of myth, where the pagan and mythical Christian layers have mixed.

It should be recognized that in international research circles it has been generally accepted that the material of the Balts, first and foremost the Latvian material, most clearly reveals the relationship between stones and the Devil, and that the heathen layer of folk-tales is best-preserved in Latvia (*Курбатов*, 2000, 174). This is so, in spite of the fact that the material of our neighbours, the Lithuanians and Belarusians, includes a range and variety of folk-tales and beings relating to the earth and lower world. Because of the publications of archaeologist J. Urtāns from Latvia, this is the main motif of the folk-tales that is internationally recognized: the Devil carries stones and leaves marks on stones (*Уртанс*, 1986). However, the Latvians also have a considerable variety of folk-tales devoted to earth and lower world deities and other beings, revealing their various characteristics and functions.

Many researchers in Eastern Europe have attempted to develop classifications of mythological stones (*Urtāns*, 1990; *Дучиц, Винокуров, Карабанов*, 2006) and the associated folk-tales (*Виноградов, Громов*, 2006), and the opinion is also

represented that an unambiguous system is not possible (*Vaitkevičius*, 2003, 70–71). We agree with the opinion that the outward features of stones, as well as the range of folk-tales connected with them are so varied that it is better not to develop an unequivocal classification of mythological stones. We do not claim to build our version of such a classification, but to show the range and variety of folk-tales connected with stones, and with the deities of the earth and lower world.

This article has been prepared on the basis of studies of local history, also using material kept in the Archive of Latvian Folklore of the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art, University of Latvia (*Latviešu folkloras krātuve* – LFK) and at the Monument Documentation Centre of the State Inspection for Heritage Protection of the Republic of Latvia (*Pieminekļu dokumentācijas centrs* – PDC).

God and the Devil

In the folk-tales which consider the birth of stones, generally both God and the Devil appear. On the other hand, the Devil dominates in those folk-tales that refer to specific stones in nature. Only in certain unusual folk-tales is the origin of a stone related to God's action. For example, a sizable stone lying in the meadows of Slates Rītupe was thrown by God, because he became furious with the people of Slate. He hurled it at the shepherds of Geidāni (LFK, 2011, 8953).

A peculiar folk-tale, probably relating to the mythical aspect of salt, describes how women raking hay left a grain of salt in the meadows of Brizule Estate. God, in the form of an old man, picked it up and left a footprint on the stone (LFK, 1690, 1154). Another folk-tale describes how God, in the form of an old man, asks the rich and poor farmers for lodging. It was the poor farmer who granted his wish, and God rewarded him, and he left two big footprints in the stone at the waterside where he had stood (LFK, 1573, 3232).

There are a few folk-tales with a Christian interpretation, describing how footprints were left by God or a certain angel when they came down from heaven or ascended to heaven, as well as folk-tales telling that the footprints were impressed by the foot or hand of St George or the Saviour.

The motif of the battle between Thunder and the Devil, waters dammed and released

Thunder is the celestial deity most frequently connected with stones. He is the enemy of beings of the earth and lower world. Sometimes a hunter ap-

pears in the folk-tales as the helpmate of Thunder (in the manner of a mythical culture hero). He kills the Devil, shooting him with a silver ball, or using silver money or a wedding-ring, discovered during a thunderstorm on the stone, in the water or on the bank of a watercourse; he may sit, frolic or sometimes even taunt Thunder. Thunder needs the help of a boatman in order to reach the Devil, who is sitting on an island combing his hair. Thunder pursues the Devil and footprint stones come about where the Devil, fleeing, steps on a stone. Stones with hollows also appeared, where Thunder struck, leaving a hollow in the stone. Thunder can split the Devil's stone. Some Devil's stones are particularly targeted by Thunder. In one case he strikes the stone 99 times (LFK, 1667, 707), while in another case he throws down bolts of lightning around the stone (LFK, 891, 5722). The Devil, pursued by Thunder, appears as a snake in a folk-tale from Rencēni Parish (LFK, 891, 4676). An oak and a stone also appear in this folk-tale. This is a typical version of the basic Indo-European myth about Thunder and its enemy from earth and the lower world in the image of a snake associated with a stone and the roots of the World Tree.

A monkey sits on an island in the River Aiviekste, Thunder strikes it and cleaves the stone in two (LFK, 562, 1829). A certain devil living in Mārki Bog cannot meet his brother, because Thunder harries him during the daytime and wolves by night. Once, Thunder watches this devil when he sits on a stone at the margin of the swamp and strikes him so sorely that stinking liquid remains on the stone (LFK, 142, 742). Thunder split the Žākļi Stone in Vireši Parish because people worshipped earth deities on this stone (LFK, 910, 4). Some elongated stones are called 'coffins of the Devil', because devils killed by Thunder lie below (see: *Laime*, 2008).

Thunder prevents the Devil from sleeping. The Devil stole a little boy and kept him captive for years. The Devil once retired at a big stone on the bank of Lake Burtņieki. He ordered the boy to wake him if Thunder approached. The boy disobeyed and Thunder struck the Devil along with the stone, casting it into the lake (LFK, 585, 481).

A folk-tale about a stone where a certain Ludvigs lent money and collected debts has been recorded in Bērzgale Parish. Once when somebody repaid a debt Ludvigs was killed by Thunder. There is a mark of a horseshoe with six nails on this stone (LFK, 740, 23809).

In certain cases there is a relationship between Thunder and a stone not involving the Devil. Thus, Mellači Stone was situated at the boundary between

the lands of two neighbours, who were arguing over ownership of the stone. Thunder split this stone and the neighbours' argument was resolved.

It must be concluded that Thunder appears at stones mainly in connection with battles, and even if a stone is called Thunder's Stone, we cannot regard it as a holy place dedicated to Thunder.

Let us remember that in myth one of the causes of such a battle is water, the productive potency of which cannot be expressed while it is in the Devil's hands. Only when Thunder strikes rock (a parallel for stones) is it possible to express the fertile nature of water. Perhaps it is in connection with this myth that in the Latvian folk-tales the Devil annoys Thunder precisely during a period of rain or in a thunderstorm, and the stones very often lie in a water body or in its immediate vicinity.

In Belarus there is a widespread theme of folk-tales about a witch or Gipsy bewitching and cursing rivers, which dry up and cease to flow. In some cases there is a stone beside such a bewitched river, which starts to flow again if it is rolled away (*Зайковскуй*, 2006). It is possible that in the folk-tales an ordinary man devoted with certain supernatural abilities replaces the ancient chthonic being in charge of the waters of the earth. In connection with the mythical landscape, the motif does not appear in clear form, but certain parallels may be observed.

In former days there was a pool in Ruskulova Bog where Laima or Māra lost a key or a comb. This was the reason why the pool was bewitched and began to overgrow. At the place where the key or comb was lost the feminine deity created a sizable stone, which is now in the middle of the bog (LFK, 679, 2165; LFK 1341, 17022).

In Latvia some folk-tales have been written down in different places that could be connected with a stone and the motif of closing and releasing of waters, or the disappearance and reappearance of a water body. Let us mention a folk-tale from Launkalne Parish, where the protagonists are already people instead of mythical figures. The son of a Lithuanian chieftain drowned in a well. The father rolled up a giant stone (LFK, 875, 279). An interesting folk-tale about a stone at the River Aiviekste is connected with a fall in the water level. On the bank of the river there lived a giant who drank the water of the river, causing a vast environmental disaster. God put the giant into a hole and rolled up a stone. Once a man passing by the stone heard somebody calling out of the stone for a drink (LJ 1939).

A boy, in some cases a shepherd, removes a stone and water begins to flow, giving rise to a river or lake. In some cases this occurs if someone conceals money under a stone. This is told about a stone in Cibla Parish, where two boys went digging for money. They dug until water started to flow from the bottom of the stone so quickly and with such force that the boys scarcely escaped from the water and quicksand (PDC, 54526-121).

Folk-tales telling of lakes flying through the air also involve stones. For example, Lake Rustēgs came down in a place where a shepherd sat on a stone (LFK, 1000, 78).

Blue and white stones

The Fenno-Ugrians as well as the Indo-Europeans had very ancient myths relating to the World Sea. In this connection it is necessary to examine the symbolism of the colour blue, as well as such features of the mythical landscape as blue hills and blue stones.

In Latvia, exclusively in the south-eastern part of Latgale, we encounter stones with a designation mainly in Russian: *Sinij kamen* ('Blue Stone'). By analogy with such designations in Russia and Belarus, we can conclude that these are significant mythological objects. One such stone, in Kastuļina Parish, has given its name to a small village that is nowadays abandoned. Almost at the shore of Lake Duboļi is another stone – *Bolshoi sinij kamen* ('Big Blue Stone'). In Grāveri Parish near Lake Iteņka lies a stone with the same designation, which is also a footprint stone. It is said that the hole in the shape of a foot was left in this stone by God (*Kovaļevska, 1997, 173*). *Zilais akmens* ('Blue Stone') is a large stone near the village of Vamžečki in Andzeļi Parish. There is a very contemporary-sounding explanation for the name of such a stone in Černaja Parish. It is said that a drunkard once slept on this stone. Nevertheless, this explanation may be a contemporary interpretation of ancient motif, because the drunkard's connection with the stone derives from mythical logic.

A white stone also appears in connection with cosmic waters in Indo-European myth (*Vaitkevičius, 2006, 12–13*). Presumably, the rare cases where a stone in Latvian folk-tales is connected with the colour white or where it has been given the name 'White Stone' are not fortuitous. One of the biggest stones in Latvia, Skrodera Stone, lay in the River Aiviekste. It is emphasized that the stone was white and raftsmen sacrificed needles there (LFK, 929, 24170). Unfortunately we cannot establish what colour the stone was in reality, because it has already

been split and removed. Examples from the neighbouring countries provide evidence that a stone called 'white' is not always white in reality.

A folk-tale from Kocēni Parish describes a big white stone lying by a curative spring: when you climbed on it your feet would be cold even in a warm weather (LFK, 23, 14470). In one folk-tale recorded in Ķirava Parish a white stone is connected with the motif of obtaining old money. One poor farmer dreamt of how he would get money, and found a money pot in the corner of the garden (LFK, 1008, 6316). In Mežole Forest District, in Launkalne Parish, there is a relatively large stone called *Baltais akmens* ('White Stone'). On the other end of Latvia, in Nīca Parish, there is also a big great stone called *Baltais akmens* ('White stone').

The connection of Devils and female chthonic beings to stones

There is a conspicuous connection between Devils or female chthonic beings and stones: they carry and throw stones, leave footprints on stones, and live under, in or at stones. It is said about many stones that Devil or witch sat, ate and slept on them. In some cases there are hollows in the stone, said to have been worn out by the mythical personages sitting there. Thus, at the bank of the River Mūsa was a stone on which a witch used to sleep. A hollow made by the witch sitting there could be seen on the stone (LFK, 1652, 4075). There is a stone on Kamenci Field in Laucese Parish, beneath which gold was kept by a witch. Every midnight she would make her supper on this stone (LFK, 848, 2821).

An un-emphasized, peculiar theme of folk-tales concerns stones on which the Devil lays down to sleep drunkards or belated travellers. Similar folk-tale themes are found in Belarus and Lithuania. Two stories about such stones have been recorded in Latgale. One such stone, in Nirza Parish, seems to have been of remarkable size, because it was said that shepherds could heal a hundred sheep on it. Someone offered a man who had lost his way a good sleep in his house. The man crawled up on the stove, but in the morning he awoke on the stone. It is additionally said about this stone that sometimes a lighthouse or barn was seen instead of it at night, where the clatter of a flail could be heard, and that drunkards always slept there (LFK, 1576, 5685). The second folk-tale on this theme has been recorded in Malta Parish. An old man lost his way, and somebody called out to him to come and warm himself. The old man took off his shoes and lay down on the stove. When the cock crowed he woke up on

the stone. Another belated walker had a similar experience. In the morning he woke up on the stone as if dazed. The bog in which this stone lay is called *Velna purvs* ('Devil's Bog') (LFK, 935, 38354).

In Beļava Parish a devil lived on the shore of a lake. He used to lure drunkards coming from the inn to stay with him. In the morning they were found dead on the shore of the lake. The stone on the shore of this lake, on which Thunder once stroke down the Devil, also features in this folk-tale (LFK, 142, 742). An interesting folk-tale comes from Jaunpiebalga Parish. It is described how the owner of the Zvejnieki homestead lost his way when coming from the estate. He saw a beautiful palace and went in to ask the way. Inside the palace he saw wedding guests. The bridegroom was the owner of a neighbouring farm. Seeing this, the man invoked God. At once, it all disappeared and the farmer found himself in his pasture sitting on the stone. In the morning it turned out that the neighbour had hanged himself (LFK, 17, 139, 296). The sleeping episode does not appear in this folk-tale, but the Devil's connection with suicides is significant, since the Devil as a being of the earth and a lower world deity is interested in suicides no less than in drunkards.

From Lubezere near the town of Valdemārpils comes a folk-tale about a stone in *Velna kalva* ('Devil's Hill') that may be included among the tales of the Devil's house and the witches' table. Men watching over horses at night had lost their way while looking for a lost horse and saw a beautiful palace. In the morning they found only a stone on which gnawed stones, bast footwear and horse dung lay. They called this stone the Witch's Table (LFK, 848, 2821). Also relating to a certain extent to the plots of the folk-tales mentioned above is a folk-tale about a big stone near the homestead of Svilumi in Renda Parish. If you climb onto the stone at midnight, then a coach will drive up with twelve horses and somebody will offer you to sit down in it. In the morning, you will find yourself in a strange place in the forest, lying naked on conifer branches (LFK, 993, 90).

Chthonic beings are also interested in games of chance. In Belarus and Lithuania a folk-tale theme is found where the Devil himself plays cards on the stone, whereas in Latvia it is people instead who play cards there. Thus, five men play cards at Bogmuiža Stone in Sece Parish, and a rouble falls into a hole that shines at night (LFK, 302, 1363). Russian princes played cards on a big stone in the bog of the former Abrene Parish. In the course of playing cards they began to fight. One suffered an injury to his head, and a red spot of blood appeared on the stone. The stone was called the 'Quarrel Stone' (LFK, 935, 32391).

The Devil as a chthonic being is also interested in music and dances, and particularly in lively, vital, quick music. Devils dance on stones, sometimes leaving their footprints on them. In Lithuania and Belarus the origin of pit-marked stones is sometimes explained in this way. In Latvia it seems that only footprint stones and devil stones can be connected with the Devil's dancing. Thus, near Kazdanga Hill-Fort a stone with footprints lies in the river where a little devil danced (LFK, 1552, 27684). In Dunalka Parish seven red devils were seen dancing on a great stone (LFK, 1707, 1276). The pagan cults, unlike the Christian ones, did not require only penance and seriousness. Dances, pleasure, laughter, and incidentally also intoxicating drinks could be a manifestation of the cult, particularly with respect to deities of the earth and lower world. Therefore it is no coincidence that in Russia as well in Belarus and Lithuania young people gathered and rejoiced at the mythological stones on holidays. Collecting information about stones with cultural-historical significance in Latgale, we found *Danču akmens* ('Dance Stone') at Pakašova in Šķilbēni Parish and a stone near the village of Kaipi in Čornaja Parish. Even after the Second World War young people would gather at the Kaipi Stone for open-air dances and would dance on the stone. Kept at the State Inspectorate for Heritage Protection is a record that at the beginning of the 20th century young people used to dance an ancient Latgallian dance, the *Lancatka*, on this stone. Four couples could dance on it at the same time (PDC, 50094 – 31). It should be added that the Kaipi Stone lay not far from Baltiņi Hill-Fort and Baltiņi ancient burial ground. Probably the stone was a cult site already at the time when the hill-fort was inhabited. It is emphasized in a folk-tale about *Māriņkalna Velna akmens* ('Devils' stone') in Ziemeiris Parish that five pairs of dancers could dance on it (LFK, 1769, 15559).

A folk-tale about a footprint stone near the homestead of Budas in Jaunbērze Parish tells the following story. The Devil carried it to fill up a water-course that flowed out of Lake Gaurata. Finger imprints on the stone provide evidence that the stone was held by the Devil. Later, the stone was carried by floodwaters to the homestead of Budas. Then this stone was used by boys competing in lifting weights (LFK, 880, 3578). Significant is the last remark about the use of this stone in competitions among young people. In the same way, the Devil himself carries, lifts and hurls stones. The spirit of competition is something familiar to him. It is said in one of the folk-tales connected with a stone in Launkalne Parish that the Devil appeared at the stone and offered a man a

wrestling and running contest (LFK, 1640, 655). It is possible that the young people competing in lifting weights were in some way imitating the Devil, and that the origins of this entertainment as well as other youth games and entertainment may be sought in the rituals connected with myths. That the remark about the Budas stone is not fortuitous is indicated by a record that young people did likewise on a stone in Belarus, as well as in Russia (*Виноградов, Громов, 2006, 238*). Competition and the spirit of competition also feature in the next folk-tale, where a devil joins people in a game – beating discs. In Skrunda Parish on Sundays a stranger, a swift-handed beater, joined boys who were beating discs. Some people noticed that he had no nostrils. When a wizard struck him with a stick of rowan, the stranger turned to stone (LFK, 22, 2861).

The Devil himself combs his hair or beard on stones that often lie in water; witches and unnamed mythical beings likewise comb their hair on stones. Their long hair symbolizes their vitality and their connection with fertility cults. In previous publications we have already focused attention on hair and stones connected with chthonic beings (*Jakubenoka, 2006*). Here are some examples that do not appear in the previous publications. The popular Meļķitāri Stone in Aizkraukle Parish, with trough-shaped hollows, is the subject of a folk-tale about a witch who sat on the stone before sunset, combed her hair with a gold comb and dipped it into the water (LFK, 1173, 967). A woman with long fair hair is seen on a stone in the River Salaca (LFK, 1748, 1974). A folk-tale about the Gāja Big Stone in Brunava Parish tells how a girl herding cows beside the stone saw an old woman with very long hair. The woman asked the girl to plait her hair. The girl did not plait her hair and the old woman disappeared, saying “I slept for a hundred years, I shall sleep for a hundred years more” (LFK, 942, 405).

In Rauna Parish there was a big stone called *Velna akmens* (‘Devil’s Stone’). By the stone, the Devil watched a shepherd girl comb her hair, then found an old rake and combed his own (LFK, 711, 66). In the River Iecava opposite the church there is a stone on which the Devil sat and mended his trousers with a sleigh shaft. On another occasion he combed his hair with a harrow. A second devil crawled from the river and called to him to let him comb himself as well (LFK, 929, 26). The devil sat on a stone in the River Svēte and combed his hair with a golden brush (LFK, 17, 23016).

The limits of this article do not allow us to touch on all of the folk-tale motifs connected with the interaction of the Devil with stones. Significantly, in Latvia

and likewise in Belarus and Lithuania we encounter a folk-tale plot involving stones that sew themselves, as well as stones on which the Devil sews or makes footwear (*Jakubenoka*, 2001).

While many themes of the folk-tales connected with devil stones re-occur very frequently, there are also themes connected only with some stones, or even with just one stone in the mythical landscape of Latvia. The fact that such motifs are also encountered in folk-tales involving other natural features or in connection with other stones in the neighbouring countries provides evidence that the motifs are not fortuitous or invented by the tellers, but rooted in the mythical world vision and its logic. Let us consider examples of some unique motifs.

Popular in Latvia and neighbouring countries is the story called the 'Torture of flax'. Flax tells the Devil about all torture which it receives at the hand of Man, then a cock begins to crow and the Devil cannot achieve the aim he had in mind. Quite unique, in our view, is a folk-tale where this motif relates to a stone. The sizable stone was in *Akmeņpurvs* ('Stone Bog'); the Devil took it and brought it to the River Aiviekste in order to encumber raftsmen. He met flax, and while flax was telling him about the torture a cock began to crow. The Devil threw down the stone and ran away (LFK, 2020, 558).

So far only one folk-tale is known to us in Latvia in which the origin of *drīveldriķis* ('Devil's excrement') is connected with a stone. Near Vecsalaca Estate, the Devil left his excrement on a stone so that people would not seek his money under the stone. Apothecaries started to make use of it (LFK, 1735, 1029). There is a similar folk-tale from Žemaitija about a stone and the Devil being persecuted by Thunder, also involving *drīveldriķis*, and in this case, too, apothecaries use it for healing (*Vaitkevičius*, 1998, 431).

On Likсна Estate there were devils living in the cellars. The estate servant Marcins made a bet with the devils as to who would be able to throw a stone further. Marcins won by pushing it into the river with one hand. The stone in the river is accordingly called 'Marcins' (LFK, 1308, 28). Several stones with this or a similar name are known in Lithuania. Likewise there is an analogy in terms of the motif (a competition in stone-throwing) and the name (Marks) of a character in a folk-tale from Belarus. Two young boys – Stepan and Mark – competed for the hand of their love. The girl made Mark, whom she did not love, throw a bigger stone than her beloved Stepan; nevertheless, Mark threw his stone further (*Дучиц, Винокуров, Карабанов*, 2006, 20).

In the village of Dorupe (Otaņķi Parish) there was a Devil's Stone. A young man came up to men who were watching over their horses near the stone. When they offered him tobacco he exclaimed: "I have no nostrils" and disappeared into the stone along with his horse (LFK, 1711, 5677). The lack of nostrils emphasizes the connection of a chthonic being to the realm of the dead.

There is a peculiar folk-tale about a certain stone in Sarkaņi Parish. It tells of a farmer who took a stone lying at the boundary with his neighbour's land and carried it far into the neighbour's land to extend his holding. After he died, his soul could get no further than this stone, until the neighbour's son redeemed it (LFK, 893, 450). This folk-tale has parallels with a plot from Norwegian folklore: farmers who move boundary-marks must carry them back each night after death (*В стране троллей*, 2008, 177).

Change-stones

Folk-tales which tell of how a mythical being, people, animals or even inanimate objects are turned into stones, called 'change-stones', occur in a wide region of Eastern Europe. Looking carefully at the collections of the LFK, we may conclude that in Latvia, too, they were widespread. Unfortunately, however, most of them have been destroyed or are not identifiable in the landscape any more.

Let us consider some folk-tales relating to petrified people, animals, mythical beings and inanimate objects. A folk-tale tells of the *Svētmeitu akmens* ('Holy Maids' Stone') in Mērsrags Parish that resembles a female figure, because God turned to stone a wicked woman who asked God to harm her neighbour (LKF, 924, 1). There was a stone at the boundary of the homestead of Ratnieki in Strazde Parish that resembles a crooked figure of a man. A gentleman (presumably a Devil in the guise of a man) molested a girl who was picking berries in the wood. She ran away, but the gentleman pursued and kicked her in anger, and the girl turned to stone, the place where she was kicked still being visible (LKF, 194, 736). A large stone lies in the River Svēte. It may be a girl turned to stone after she had been left by a bridegroom and had jumped into the river in sorrow (LKF, 17, 25755). A story about *Jostas akmens* ('Belt Stone') has been recorded in the town of Talsi. An old woman used to wash dishes and place them at the gate of the castle. Once she took one cup home. As a punishment she was tied to the stone with a belt. This is how the stone appeared (LFK, 1472, 3099).

A boy who guessed the name of the village of Dundaga was turned into a stone that for a long time was kept on the hill-fort *Puiša kalns* ('Boy's Hill') (LFK, 409, 206). Recorded in Mazirbe near Dundaga is a story about *Kartavu kalns* ('Gallows Hill'), where dwarfs used to hold their meetings, and turned to stone a chieftain who had stolen up to hear their talk (LFK, 955, 116). There is a stone having the appearance of a man in Strazde Parish. A swineherd went underground through an old well and had a meal. On the third day he emerged and was turned to stone (LFK, 981, 3). The Devil deals with a nobleman who crosses the bridge over the River Tērvete and invokes the Devil. The Devil pulls down the nobleman and turns him to stone in the river now called *Muižkungš* (LFK, 1667, 2389). There was a stone on Dignāja Hill-Fort. On the night of the summer solstice, when maids and boys taunted the stone with *Līgo* songs, the heart of the stone shivered and it rolled down to the foot of the hill (LFK, 17, 21589).

A child was born to the sorceress Ģertrūde, and she took it to the boundary of Ance and Pope Parishes and laid it down there. The child started to cry and turned to stone (LFK, 1722, 3428). A landowner ordered an overseer to beat an old man, and because of this his castle sank down into Puļķi Hill in Kalncempji Parish, the landowner turned into a piece of rotten wood, and the overseer turned to stone (LFK, 1552, 7734). There was a holy grove at the mouth of the Bērze stream, which enters the Daugava in Ķekava Parish, inhabited by two priestesses. A war with the Lithuanians broke out and, pursued by the enemy, the priestesses asked for help from Thunder: he turned one priestess into a stone with the appearance of a woman, and the other priestess into a well-spring (LFK, 1400, 15645; 17, 23277).

At the boundary of the estates of Dundaga and Pope there were two stones, one of them upright, the other horizontal. The landowners fought and were turned to stone (LFK, 1493, 6476). A husband and wife were returning from the town of Tālsi. In the grove by the homestead of Kulkampji they heard somebody moaning. The husband went to look, and when he came back neither his wife nor the horse were there: he saw only a big stone by the wayside (LFK, 1894, 1095). A certain woman used to tidy rooms in the sunken castle of Tukums Hill-Fort. She was ordered to tell nobody about it, but she told her husband. Both immediately turned to stone (LFK, 1108, 938). There is a tale about the origin of two big stones by the homestead of Viļumi in Gārsene Parish: an old man and his wife were turned to stone, because they ate apples from a bewitched apple-tree (LFK, 1895, 1774).

Lake Durbe travelled to its new location. A white horseman rode in advance of the lake and called people to move aside, but the people were raking hay and did not run away. The lake fell down and the people were turned to stone (LFK, 94, 3976). In ancient times a bewitched town sank into Brukna moorland. If the name of this town is guessed on Easter night, then the town will rise up and the people turned to stone will come to life (LFK, 456, 9).

Jurkāni Stone was in Taurene Parish. A toad went to the homestead of Jurkāni to offer his hand to a girl, but she refused the toad, and this stone appeared on the site where they had stood (LFK, 1600, 27730). In *Akmeņpurvs* ('Stone Swamp') in Ance Parish the Devil asked a cowherd to give him cows, but he refused. The Devil turned the cows and cowherd to stone. The stone that had been a cowherd grew bigger every year (LFK, 1493, 644). Lake Babīte obtained its name from the herder Babīte. A cloud turned into a lake and fell on the site where Babīte was herding cows. A big stone on the shore of this lake is Babīte; the little ones are cows (LFK, 1965, 1482).

In folk-tales about ploughmen the stratum of Christian mythology is evident, whereas the plots of folk-tales about carts are more connected with the ancient mythical stratum. There is an exception – the Devil turning carts to stone. This exception is Lazdiņi Carriage Stone in Mazozoli Parish. In two versions of the folk-tale the Devil in the form of a beggar asked the governor to take him in his carriage, but the governor would not take him. The Devil turned the governor together with the carriage and horses to stone (LFK, 1730, 82318; 1400, 1896). In the third version of this folk-tale it is said that the carriage stone looks like a real carriage on which a coachman sits. A governor was punished by God, who taking on the guise of an old man, asked to be taken along in the carriage, but was refused (LFK, 929, 24371). In the remaining versions of the folk-tale not the man's carriage, but the Devil's carriage was turned to stone. The main reason for this was delay after midnight and the cock's crowing. Near homestead of Diriķi in Birzgale Parish a stone nowadays submerged was called *Velna pajūgs* ('Devil's Cart') (*Urtāns*, 2007, 26). In the north of Vidzeme is *Ramatas Velna kariete* ('Devil's Carriage'), and nearby is another stone called the 'limber'. A common folk-tale relating to both stones tells about the Devil's unsuccessful journey across the bog (PDC, 578671). A Devil's carriage also lay in Buži Pond in Jaunlutriņi Parish (LFK, 7180, 2131). The Devil was at the inn carousing with drunkards, and tarried until the cock crowed. Then, in a hurry, he went straight through the forest and Buži Pond, where he

sank. The Devil, his coachman and both horses disappeared; the carriage in the pond turned to stone (LFK, 877, 276). In Kroņmuiža Bog in Ārlava near the town of Valdemārpils was a stone that looked like a carriage. The Devil was going about his affairs in the carriage, then for some unknown reason he disappeared, and the carriage turned to stone (LFK, 88, 11–12).

On the shore of Lake Āraiši lay a large stone. Once a man was walking by the lake and a big black swan attacked him and started to strangle him. When the man called for God's help he turned to stone (LFK, 1700, 2154). A similar folk-tale has also been recorded about Ukri *Velna akmens* ('Devil' Stone') in Zemgale (LFK, 553, 990) and a certain stone near a lake in Gārsene Parish (LFK, 17, 25589). In Birzgale Parish, at a place called *Velna lauks* ('Devil's Field'), a white sheep appeared. A man wanted to take this sheep home. While he was carrying the sheep, it became heavier and heavier, and when he threw it down, it turned into a white stone (LFK, 1177, 21537). There are several recorded folk-tales about a cow of Māra or Laima that went from Vidzeme to Latgale along the River Piestiņa, but was turned by a witch into a big stone by the bank of the river. There is a imprint of a cow's hoof on the stone, not far from which there are three smaller stones, called the *Raganas laipas* ('Witch's Footbridges') (LFK, 744, 42; 744, 88–89; 861, 605). The next folk-tale tells of an ordinary horse that turned to stone. The stone horse is connected with a mythical event – the emergence of a lake. Lake Remte arose when a water spout fell on the homestead of Lāči. The horse, which was grazing in the meadows not far away, was thrown onto the shore and turned to stone (LFK, 1594, 1060). It must be emphasized that stones connected with folk-tales about horses are usually situated in water or in the immediate proximity of water.

The Devil once became bored of life. He jumped into the River Salaca to drown himself. The soul of the drowned Devil turned into a stone now called *Velna akmens* ('Devil's Stone') (LFK, 1086, 6). It is told about the famous Ģevrāni *Velnapēdas akmens* ('Devil's Footprint Stone') in Rubene Parish that the Devil, together with a wicked foreign robber, crossed the river to escape from a thunderstorm, but a strong bolt of lightning turned them both into a big stone (LFK, 1800, 1633). Recorded in the area near the rock Staburags is a folk-tale about *Jodakmens* ('Devil's Stone') in the River Daugava. The Devil, pursued by Thunder, turned into a stone in the river (LFK, 1955, 14834). On the hill near the homestead of Spulgas in Jaunpiebalga Parish the harvest was bad, because

the Devil was smoking, and it burned. God sent a thunderstorm at night and in the morning the people found a big stone on this hill, which sometimes shines at night (LFK, 828, 17002). *Skrodera akmens* ('Tailor's Stone') in the River Aiviekste should also be included among change-stones. A tailor walking at night from Saikava Estate saw a black man in the river and heard splashing. In the morning a big stone was seen in the river (LFK, 1400, 32943). The popular *Badakmens* ('Hunger Stone') in Jumurda Parish is essentially a change-stone. In the past the stone itself moved and spoke. It looks like a huge man without a head, which soldiers cut off and which now lies beside it. A red line on the side of the stone is blood from the time when the head was cut off (LFK, 17, 19550–19550a; 910, 2760). *Velna nags* ('Devil's Fingernail') in Zalve Parish appeared when the Devil ran away from God in the guise of an old man (LFK, 861, 70). A story about the Devil's cap has been recorded in Vecpiebalga Parish. The Devil suffered from a head cold, so he put on a stone as a cap and went out, and then he met Jesus Christ and threw the cap. The stone cap lay near the homestead of Mūrnieki (LFK, 1400, 10611). A story connects the origin of the big stone near the homestead of Kuīļi in Lestene Parish with the Devil stealing peas. The peasant pursued the Devil, the peas spilled from one sack and turned into little stones, while the Devil's second pea sack turned into a big stone (LFK, 1400, 11539). The Devil brought a pot of cream stolen on Lonaste Estate to Ance Parish, but he slipped and the cream that poured out became a crumbly stone (LFK, 1722, 3428).

Folk-tales connected with money also indicate a connection with the chthonic world. A Devil's Stone near Asīte in Priekule Parish looks like a box with the lid open. The Devil was fleeing from Thunder, and his money box turned to stone (LFK, 1722, 3428). There is a Money Stone on the way to Jaunjelgava in a pine forest in Sērene Parish. According to a folk-tale, travellers saw a white figure by a fire in the pine forest not far from the road. They asked it for a light for a cigarette, and the figure gave them a coal. When they looked they saw money instead of coal. They went there again, but the white image had disappeared along with the fire. Instead, there was a big stone covered with moss (LFK, 361, 72). The money of the bad-tempered overseer of Mātra Estate turned to stone. The Devil carried it and threw it into the *Dižakmens* ('Great Stone') Meadow in Ēdole Parish (LFK, 1010, 3339). In another version of these folk-tales the stones in *Dižakmens* Meadow originate from jewels that the Devil had stolen from God (LFK, 1010, 2080).

There is a folk-tale recorded in Baltinava Parish about a man lying in the bathhouse who saw a huge soldier of the Russian army coming in, and picked him up with a fork. The soldier turned into horse dung that had been thrown onto coals in the stove. In the morning there was a big stone on the site of the bathhouse (LFK, 1400, 681). There was an Apiņkalts Inn on the shore of Lake Lubāna. Here, devils and witches would dance in the attic at night. Once they burned down the inn, and today there is a big stone on the site (LFK, 878, 29).

From Latgale there is also a folk-tale about the Preijs' Stone. Farmer Preijs' barn burned down. A big black stone appeared in place of this barn. The Devil lives under the stone and burns candles at night (LFK, 1237, 5). Interestingly, when gathering information recently about stones in Stabulnieki Parish in Latgale, we encountered such names for the stone as *Lielais akmens* ('Big Stone') or *Velna kantoris* ('Devil's Office'). Presumably the name 'office' is rather new, but what folk-tales connected with the stone in the past could have given rise to such a name?

In most cases the cause of transformation is interaction with mythical time and space, and with its residents: the appearance of a lake, visiting a sunken castle and exposing its secrets, or appropriating an object. In one case a dish is tasted. It may be an encounter with Devil or the invocation of his name, or sometimes the casting of a spell.

In the folk-tales it is sometimes emphasized that a stone resembles a figure of a man or part of a man's body or features of clothing. Even the Holy Maiden's stone, where no resemblance with a woman's figure can actually be distinguished, is said to resemble the figure of a woman.

The name of a change-stone may derive from the folk-tale about it. In some cases human features appear on the stone – blood appears, a heart beats or the stone grows. At least theoretically the process of change is irreversible. If somebody could guess the name of the town, people turned to stones would come to life, or if a maid were to kiss the stone at the summer solstice then a young man would come to life.

In several folk-tales, there is a striking link between the stone and a hill-fort or holy place. There was a stone on Dignāja Hill-Fort with a heart that began to beat faster at the summer solstice. A woman who had been washing the dishes and tidying rooms in the castle turned to stone. A boy guessed the name of a castle, *Dundaga*, and so raised up the sunken castle, but was himself turned to stone. Later his image was placed on Boys' Hill, a possible cult place.

Dwarfs bewitched a chieftain, turning him to stone on Kartavas ('Gallows') Hill, also a possible holy place. Priestesses lived in a holy grove by the River Daugava. Unfortunately, most of the change-stones cannot be identified on the ground, so it is not possible to determine the precise relationship of the change-stone to the holy place. In two cases the stones had served as boundary markers. There is an observable connection between these stones and waters (rivers, lakes) or wet places (bogs).

Judging by the content of the folk-tales, most of the stones are rough and lie on the site where the glacier deposited them. Concerning a few stones, particularly those occurring as pairs, it is emphasized that one stone is standing, while the other is recumbent, and it could be suggested that these were specially erected by people. Most cases of people being turned to stone are encountered in Kurzeme and Zemgale; the authors are not aware of such stones in Latgale. This can be explained by the less intensive collection of folklore in Latgale than in the rest of Latvia, but also indicates some differences in the plots of the folk-tales connected with mythological stones between the West Balts and East Balts. A connection with water is more typical in stories of petrified animals than in stories about petrified people. Most of these are close to a river or lake, or even in a river or lake. Also, most of the stone carts and carriages are connected with water: a river, bog or pond.

Many of the folk-tales involve domestic animals: a cow, horse or sheep. The connection of stones in folk-tales with the Devil, domestic animals or water could indicate that the origin of the vision of the world on the basis of which the particular folk-tales developed may be sought in the Indo-European community at the time when a food-producing society with cattle breeding as the dominant branch of the economy developed, and when there were chthonic deities that were responsible for cattle-breeding and were connected with water and stone.

In most cases the Devil turns to stone as a result of a conflict with the celestial deity God or Thunder. In essence, this is a survival from Indo-European myth about a fight between Thunder and its chthonic enemy. One of the causes of the conflict are waters in the hands of the chthonic deities, which the celestial deities struggle to release for people. In the folk-tales this plot does not appear directly, although the proximity of water often marks the place of the conflict: Devil and robber were turned to stone by Thunder while crossing a river; Thunder struck down the Devil in the Daugava. A folk-tale

tells of the Devil's Nail in Zalve: as a result of the conflict stones also appear – parts of the Devil's body. Accordingly, it can be considered that those stones about which no folk-tale plots have been found, but which have been given a name such as 'Devil's Heel' or 'Devil's Horn' also had a mythological connection with the theme of a particular conflict. While the story itself has already been forgotten, the name of the stone has survived. Certainly, the possibility also exists that people gave the stone its name simply on the basis of similarity. We might consider that a striking outward similarity of a stone to a heel motivated people to call it the Devil's Heel, and that there has never been a developed folk-tale plot about it. Even so, such associations could only appear for people who lived according to the mythical world view, in which case they should be included among change-stones, and among mythological stones in general.

Sometimes the Devil can also turn to stone after contact with a man, and in one case even with a dog. We see the influence of Christianity in stories where the Devil turns to stone when the person appeals to God. In a story where the owner of a kiln pours lead in the Devil's eyes, the man can be seen as having the role of culture hero, helping the celestial deity in its struggle with the chthonic enemy. It is recorded in one folk-tale that the Devil became bored of life and drowned himself in the River Salaca. Here a similarity is suspected with the theme occurring in the folklore of many nations where a deity or culture hero ends its life by turning into a feature of the mythical landscape, such as a stone.

In the folk-tales, petrified objects are generally connected with activities of the Devil. Significant are the folk-tale themes where the Devil is engaged in stealing. The Devil's interest in peas as well as his inclination towards stealing are generally rooted in mythical logic. The folk-tales also point to a connection with the chthonic world, in which a man's or the Devil's money turns to stone.

There are unusual folk-tale motifs, previously not highlighted in the literature, involving a big stone that appears on the site of a building where events occurred that are beyond ordinary experience. From the whole of Latgale there are only a few folk-tales about change-stones, whereas all the folk-tales on this subject come from Latgale.

On the whole it can be concluded that in Latvia the Christian stratum is considerably less prominent in the folk-tales connected with change-stones than in the neighbouring countries. At the same time, the folk-tales are very fragmentary, their plots to a certain extent even contorted and not fully developed. In some cases we can sense the influence of the trends of romanticism

in the literature of their time on those recording the folk-tales, and there is a certain influence of Western European literature, for example, in those folk-tales involving dwarfs, priestesses, a chieftain and the Devil. This provides evidence that these folk-tales were written down at a time when the connection with the mythical world view had essentially disappeared from man's consciousness. At the same time, the existence of the folk-tales and the emphasized connection with features of the landscape indicate that there were change-stones in Latvia, just as in the neighbouring countries. It is only that in Latvia paganism continued longer than in neighbouring countries, promoting in particular the preservation of the mythical themes in the folk-tales. At the same time, in most of Latvia in recent centuries the dominant religion has been Lutheranism, which did not promote such an extensive development of folk religion where pagan and Christian beliefs merged as was the case with Catholicism or Orthodoxy in the neighbouring countries, where the folk-tales, albeit interpreted in the frame of Christian morality, could be kept alive in longer and more complete form.

The killing of children and other tragic events

Some of the stones mentioned in the folk-tales seem on the surface to be memorial stones rather than mythological stones, because they relate to tragic events. Nevertheless, it must be concluded that the relationship between tragic events and stones frequently has its roots in the mythical world view, rather than in the reality of events, because tragic events relating to the death of children, beggars, and sometimes strangers or shepherds, tend to have a special relationship to the earth, lower world and the Devil. Such a stone is one of the stopping points where their souls can take refuge. In reality, a Jewish pot trader (*Jule*) could indeed have been killed at the stone. Belonging to the mythical realm are the folk-tales describing how a cock is heard or a light is seen at this stone (LFK, 949, 738).

Mythical in character is a folk-tale about an old man who was picking grass by the stone and heard a voice saying: "Why do you tear my long hair at sunset." In another case a sheep with lambs was seen near the stone (LFK, 1975. 377). In the former case the deceased has merged with the Devil, whereas in the latter case the soul appears as a domestic animal.

Murdered children cry at the stones, appeal to be christened, or keep watch over the Devil's money. Near such stones it is possible to meet an evil spirit or

ghost. One folk-tale involving a murdered child relates to a footprint stone in Kocēni Parish. A girl killed a child at this stone, the father found out, carved the child's foot in this stone and drowned himself (LFK, 23, 5435).

Conclusions

Mythological stones served as points of reference for arranging the relationship of ancient Man both with nature and with the sacred world. They were integral elements of the Latvian mythical landscape. It is a pity that nowadays most of the stones mentioned in the article are not to be found in the Latvian cultural landscape. They have been destroyed or cannot be identified on the ground. Nowadays, the stones mentioned in folk-tales that are still preserved in the cultural landscape should be regarded not only as a subject of investigation by archaeologists and researchers of mythology, but also as an essential element of the Latvian cultural landscape. As with folk songs, the stones retain not only a value for scientific research, but also a spiritual value, because they provide an insight into the world view of our ancestors. Being attached to a particular geographic environment, stones bear witness to the inseparability of notions of *Man*, *earth* and *myth* in ancient times.

Summary

The earth and the mythical beings of lower spheres connected with it relate to stones in the Latvian mythical landscape. These stones are connected with basic Indo-European myth, involving conflict between the celestial and chthonic deities, or with a syncretic interpretation of the myth, where pagan and Christian strata have mixed.

The folk-tale motifs connected with all of these are varied. Some motifs, for example, about the Devil making men sleep on the stones, are emphasized for the first time in this study. The connection between stones and the cult of dead is also identified. A stone is considered a boundary between this world and the next, and as one of the points of reference in the natural world where the souls of those who had died an untimely death found shelter. In the mythical landscape it is possible to observe the connection between a stone and other natural objects, particularly mythical waters, as well as features of Man's cultural space, such as hill-forts and burial sites.

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