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# The Treasure-bearer in East Slavic and Finno-Ugric Contexts

— Mare Kõiva, Elena Boganeva —

Namen tega članka je primerjalna in strukturalno-semantična raziskava narativov verovanja v leteče kače in zakladonoše na vzhodnoslovanskih (beloruskih, estonsko ruskih, drugih slovanskih) in ugrofinskih (estonskih, votskih, livonskih, finskih, vepskih) območjih ter povezanosti teh narativov z baltskimi in skandinavskimi verovanji. Gradivo je bilo zbrano med 19. in 21. stoletjem. Sodeč iz razpoložljivega gradiva, je bil lik ustvarjen z opisovanjem lastnosti leteče kače in zakladonoše: izvora (kako se je nadnaravno bitje rodilo in kdo ga je rodil), splošnih pojavnih oblik, časovnih in krajevnih vidikov, obnašanja (aktivno/pasivno; obredi) in žanrske pripadnosti (proces pripovedovanja zgodb, percepcija lika).

KLJUČNE BESEDE: zmaj, hut, škrat, magija, mlečna magija, zakladonoša, cmok

The goal of this article is to conduct comparative and structural-semantic research into belief narratives concerning flying serpents and treasure-bearers in East Slavic (Belarusian, Estonian Russian, other Slavic traditions) and Finno-Ugric (Estonian, Votic, Livonian, Finnish, Vepsian) regions related to Baltic and Scandinavian beliefs. The source material was collected between the 19th and 21st centuries. Based on the available materials, a character profile was created with respect to the following features while describing a flying serpent and a treasure-bringer: description of the origin (how and from whom the supernatural being originates), general forms of appearance, aspects of time and location, as well as the creature's behaviour (active/passive; rituals) and genre affiliation (the process of storytelling, perception of the character).

KEYWORDS: dragon, *khut*, *kratt*, magic, milk magic, treasure bearer, *tsmok*

## INTRODUCTION

The goal of this article is to conduct comparative research into belief narratives concerning flying serpents and treasure-bearers in East Slavic (Belarusian, Estonian Russian, other Slavic traditions) and Finno-Ugric (Estonian, Votic, Livonian, Finnish, Vepsian) regions related to other Scandinavian beliefs. Based on available materials collected between

the 19th and 21st centuries, we created a character profile with respect to the following features while describing a flying serpent and a treasure-bringer: terminology (names, designations), and the mutual actions of people and a supernatural being; the origin (how and from whom the creature originates), general forms of appearance, time and location and modality issues, as well as behaviour (active/passive; motivated/ritual, rituals and their functional alternatives), the genre affiliated with the message, notes and comments about the process of storytelling and the perception of the mythical creature.

Different belief complexes intertwine in the corpus related to a mythical flying serpent and a treasure-bearer. For example, there are motifs of a dragon, in Belarusian folklore named *tsmok* and *khut*, and texts about a serpent-lover<sup>1</sup> who, at the same time, was also a spirit-enricher.

Treasure-bearing spirits mostly take the form of a flying fiery serpent, except for the West Belarusian *khut*, which is not tied to a specific form and can take the appearance of either an animate or inanimate object, as well as entities of the Belarusian-Lithuanian border areas like *aitvaras/skalsininkas/kutas/hutas* whose appearance is distinctly polymorphic. Exterior polymorphism (zoomorphism, ornomorphism, or shape-shifting into an object) is also common in such Estonian, and Estonian Russian diaspora's, entities as *kratt*, *tont*, *puuk* etc. However, even shape-shifting treasure-bearing entities are often depicted as flying fiery serpents.

In the East (as well as the West and South) Slavic tradition, the treasure-bearing serpent can also be a supernatural lover, and which case he has a dual appearance, taking the form of a fiery serpent in the air, and that of a human on the ground (Levkiyevskaya 1999: 332–333). The serpent appears as a deceased husband (or groom) that a woman misses dearly, and engages in sexual activity with her. As a result, the woman either becomes ill or dies if she is unable to find a way to drive the dangerous visitor away<sup>2</sup>. In Belarus, texts about a serpent lover that also simultaneously function as a treasure-bearer were recorded from the rural oral tradition even more recently (Boganeva 2012: 30, No 15–17).

In Estonian, Finnish, Swedish and other Finno-Ugric and Scandinavian traditions, as a rule treasure-bearing spirits are never combined with the concept of supernatural lover. In these traditions, a supernatural lover is a separate entity whose origins are connected to dangerous, restless undead or demonic forces. According to information available in archives of the Estonian Literary Museum, treasure-bearing spirits are not supernatural lovers in the mythology of the Estonian Russian diaspora. As we show later, the beliefs of Estonia's Russian diaspora concerning treasure-bearers were heavily influenced by traditions among the native population: this includes both borrowing Estonian entity names not found in Russian (*kratt*, *tont*, *puuk*, *pisuhänd* etc.) and their visual representation, abil-

<sup>1</sup> The appearance of a flying fiery serpent in East Slavic traditions encompasses at least three functionally different mythological entities: a) a treasure-bearing spirit; b) a supernatural lover; and c) a spirit that heralds tragic social events or natural disasters. With different origins, each of these entities takes different forms and appearances.

<sup>2</sup> One such method used by Belarusians (and Russians) involves the use of hemp seeds: the woman places hemp seeds in her hair and later combs them out before eating them in front of the serpent. When the serpent asks what she is doing, the woman replies that she is combing lice out and eating them. This will cause the serpent to fly away and never return.

ities and actions. Therefore, since Estonian tradition has never combined treasure-bearing spirits with supernatural lovers, texts with similar occurrences are also not found in the Estonian Russian diaspora (there are 36 Russian texts featuring treasure-bearing spirits in the ELM archives). Our article about treasure-bearing spirits accordingly does not consider the supernatural-lover entities common in the *East Slavic* tradition.

The treasure-bearers and flying serpents were often polymorphic: anthropomorphs, zoomorphs, or animated objects.

We aimed to deconstruct these legends into sequences, plots and motifs so as to determine the consistency and details of the information concerned with these mythical creatures.

Ethnographic and folkloristic methods were used to explain the legends and other belief narratives about the supernatural being, with use of the semantic-structural method, which shares features with the ethnolinguistic-folkloristic approach of the Moscow School and its development in Belarus. Yet, our approach has features similar to comparative method and situation analyses used in Estonia (Loorits 1949, Laagus 1973). Nikita Tolstoi (2013: 19) formulated his direction, initiated in the 1970s, as follows: “Ethnolinguistics is a part of linguistics, a subdiscipline which orients the scholar towards investigating the correlation and coherence between a language and folk culture, language and archaic mentality, language and folk art, through their interrelations and diverse correspondences. Ethnolinguistics is not just a hybrid of linguistics and ethnology, or a mixture of certain elements, factual or methodological, of one discipline and another”. Our analysis entailed dividing the entire verbal text into categories, with each part of the text being analysed with respect to these categories. Since all text variants are analysed using a single category system, the texts are all comparable (Loorits 1949, Penttikäinen 1968, Laagus 1973, Kõiva and Boganeva 2021; Levkiyevskaya 1999).

The ethnic corpuses vary in size and are based on the level of intensity involved in the collection work. The amount of material collected from small nations is obviously smaller, and we operated with some corpuses through story catalogues, meaning that we did not pursue a more detailed statistical analysis.

The main information sources about flying serpents in Belarusian folklore are ethnographic publications and modern field materials (BFELA; Avilin 2015: 172–177; Boganeva 2012: 27–31; Bogdanovich 1895: 73–74; Drevlyanski 1846: 3–25; Nosovich 1870: 213; PEZ 2011: 81–82; Pietkiewicz 1938: 11; Romanov 1912: 290; TMKB 2011: 485–488). The primary source for the Estonian and Estonian Russian lore is the folklore archive of the Estonian Literary Museum, the digital tool Skriptoorium, and publications (cf. Eisen 1895 and 1919; Kõiva and Boganeva 2021), whereas the main source for the Livonian, Votic, Finnish and Swedish lore is publications (Livonian: Loorits 1928; Votic: Arukask 1998, Västriik 1998, Ariste 1943; Finnish: Jauhiainen 1998; Swedish: Klintberg 2010).

References to these creatures can also be found in modern society in political or other discourse, or are again in the spotlight for cultural, political or other reasons. The aim of the article is to examine which creatures and what kind of notions are involved in a particular region’s lore, and any similarities and differences.

## BRIEFLY ABOUT TERMINOLOGY AND ACTION

The Belarusian mythical creature *khut* (*Xym*) is in many ways similar to the flying, fiery serpent of enrichment. The *khut* hatches from an egg laid by a 3- or 7-year-old rooster (typically a black one); it is a polymorphic demon with traits of both *domovoy* and *dvorovoy* (a house spirit; Salavei 2011: 503)<sup>3</sup>. In other Slavic narrative traditions, folktales talk of the dragon or dwarf treasure-bearer *Blagonič* that hatched from a rooster's egg (Kropej 2012: 109–111).

Another Belarusian demonological creature *tsmok* (*цмок*) – a dragon – finds many parallels in Slavic languages and mythologies (cf. Russian-Proto-Slavic *смокъ* (a serpent); in Bulgarian *смок* (a grass snake, deaf adder); in Czech *zmok* (a dragon); in Slovak *zmok* (*domovoy* a house spirit); in Polish *smok* (a dragon), in Slovenian *ses* (a serpent – the name *ses* derives from the verb *sesati*, meaning to suck; cf. Kropej 2012: 238). According to Brückner, *смокъ* originally meant ‘the one who sucks’, akin to *смоктать* (to suck) mentioned by Fasmer (1987: 303). The creation of the *tsmok* character was influenced by the Christian legend about the battle of St. George (St. Yuri) with a terrible dragon. In Belarusian folklore, the *tsmok* is a traditional character in magical and heroic fairy tales about serpent slayers as well as in a poem about St. Yuri (George) and Tsmok. Pavel Drevlyanski distinguished three types of *tsmoks*, one of which, *tsmok-domovik*, is very similar to a fiery serpent that brings riches (Drevlyanski 1846: 262–267).

The Belarusians and Lithuanians have many cultural connections, explaining why similarities can be detected among the Lithuanian *aitvaras*, a flying spirit that brings wealth; Lithuanian Belarusians in the north-west of Grodno region also know of *skalsininkas*, *kutas*, *khutas*, *skutas*, *sparyzius*, *paryzius* and *damavykas*. *Aitvaras-kutas* brings riches (grain, money, gold); it emerges from an egg, loves fried eggs, and burns a house down if it suspects that the master disrespects them. In short, it possesses many of the traits of domestic evil spirits, just like its Belarusian counterpart.

Quite different terminology concerned with flying (fiery) serpents can be found in the lore of Estonian Russians. We observe typical Russian/Slavic features: *Zmey* is the name given to a serpent usually referred to as “flying” by Russians (Belova 2012: 24–26; Makhracheva 2012: 19–21; Levkiyevskaya 2019: 434–459; Petrova 2012: 23–24; Skulachev 2012: 21–23), Belarusians (Boganeva 2012: 27–30) and Ukrainians (Belova 2012: 24–25; Levkiyevskaya 2019: 434–459). The names of the flying serpents given by Estonian Russians are largely influenced by their close proximity to Estonians and their mythology: *puuk* (a bearer, a tick), *nasok* (‘the one who carries’, probably derived from the word *носу́ть* meaning: to carry), *tont* (a ghost, a bearer), *lendva* (a flying object, a witch arrow, a mythical disease); *kratt* (a bearer); *haldjas* (a protector, spirit), *kratt*; *pyvsh/pyuch*, *põvš*, *puvchish/puktish*, *puksish*, *puksik* (different versions of *puuk* or bearer) – the terminology denotes treasure-bearers or spirit-protectors. According to Loorits, *pūķis* is

<sup>3</sup> *Domovoy* and *dvorovoy* (or *khlevnik* in Belarus) in Russian and Belarusian mythology may differ in regional traditions: *domovoy* is a spirit of the household that inhabits and exerts its power only within the house, whereas *dvorovoy* or *khlevnik* is a spirit of the farmyard, or barn, protecting the domestic animals in the barn (horses, cows etc.).

also known in the traditions of Latvia and Lithuania as well as in Western Russia close to the Baltic republics. A well-established Western Russian term about *puuk* or *pūķis* is *pyvsh/pyuch* (Loorits 1949: 208; cf. Karulis 1992). A couple of additional names recorded in Estonian are *täht* (a star) and *punane kukk* (a red rooster) – with both referring to its forms of appearance.

In the Estonian language, approximately 30 different terms or local names exist for the mythical treasure-bringer. Linguistically, one Estonian term – *pisuhänd* – refers to the image of a fire serpent, even though neither a serpent nor a flying serpent are mentioned in the Estonian descriptions as attention has been drawn to the sparking tail or fire tail that is described and by which the creature is identified.

Five terms are almost equally popular, with these terms and their variations in different dialects seeing wide use: *kratt* ('a bearer'), *pisuhänd* (a bearer, a fire tail, a sparking tail); *puuk* (a tick, meaning 'to suck'); *tont* (a ghost); *vedaja* (a bearer, a treasure-bearer) – which are all treasure-bearers, or sometimes referred to as grain-, dairy-, money- or fish-bearers. *Puuk* is a loanword from Swedish (*puke*) or from Low German (*spök*, *spük* – a ghost, a spook, an otherworldly creature). *Tont* is not only a term for a treasure-bearer but also for a vague supernatural being, an evil spirit, a monster, a ghost (EKSS 2009, ETY 2012; Skriptoorium; VMS 1996). Almost all of these terms are also used in compound words to denote sub-categories of mythical or symbolical creatures, to express a negative (less often also a positive) emotion; to mark the villain, the compulsion, the syndrome etc.; they are curse formulas, exclamations. Words like *kratt* sometimes hold a broader meaning in standard language, including stealing or something shabby, poorly dressed, naughty etc.

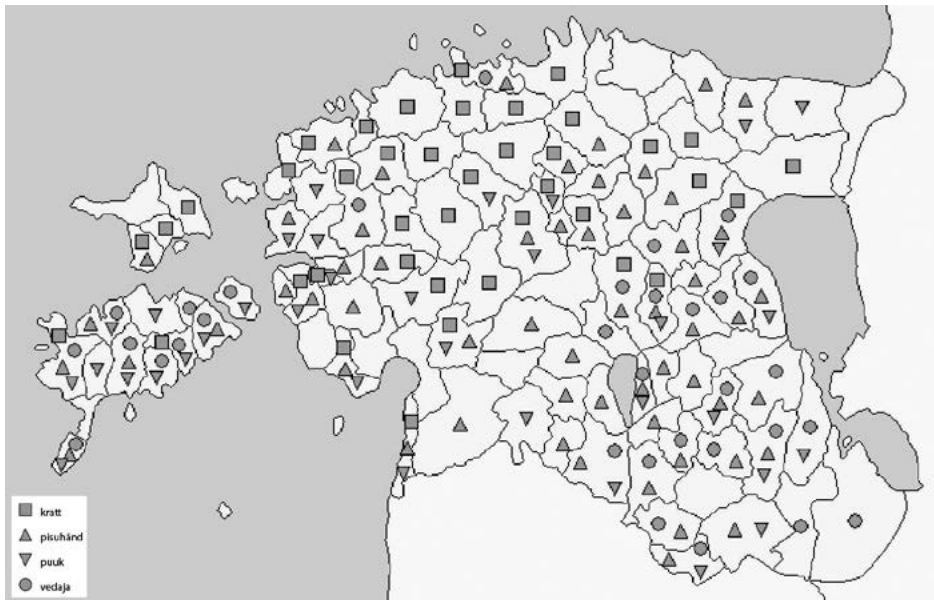


Fig. 1. Estonian terminology connected with a treasure-bearer; map by M. Kõiva 2021

Votian *lemmüs*, *para*, *lennos*, in some villages *kandashka* (‘a bearer’), is mostly connected with a human, especially a witch, and only scattered data exist about a flying serpent (Västriik 1998). The meaning of *lemmüs* was originally *noidannuoli* (a witch arrow), reconstructed as ‘flying, fluttering fire’ (cf. Estonian *lemmed*, *lembed* – sparks, fire particles; *pisu* has the same meaning) and also meant as a meteor, a ball of lightning, or some thunder-related phenomenon (Ariste 1943: 309).

The most typical Finnish names are *para* (*maitopara* – milk para, *voipara* – butter para) and *mara*. The Finnish *para* comes from the Swedish *bära* (cf. Estonian Swedish *päär*) and denotes a milk-stealer or milk-bearer (Jauhiainen 1998); the Karelian and Vepsian name is *para* (Vinokurova 2014).

The main task of the flying serpent or treasure-bringer is to steal from others and bring grain, bread, milk, beer or money to its master. In gratitude for the wealth the serpent brings, the master must constantly give work to or feed it. However, it is the butter topping in the *kratt*’s porridge bowl that triggers action in the most common Estonian narrative, as evidenced by hundreds of records: “A servant eats the *kratt*’s food and shits in the bowl instead” (Aarne 1918, Aarne S.53). The same motif is popular among Votians (Västriik 1998) and Finns (Jauhiainen 1998: H191).

#### ORIGIN OF THE SERPENTS OF ENRICHMENT

In all the traditions considered here, the masters of the flying serpent are partly associated with witchcraft and sorcerers, or a farmhand’s imitation of witchcraft. The traditional method for obtaining a serpent involves several steps and belongs to the mythical and fantasy dimension. In Belarus, an egg laid by a rooster (possibly a remnant of 16th-century myths about cockatrice-like creatures, a natural tiny, often yolkless egg reproduced before the hen is properly laying or after its reproductive period) must be carried next to one’s bosom for 1 to 7 years, and then a flying serpent will hatch out of it.

According to Pavel Shein, a cat, not a serpent/snake, hatches from the egg. The cat is invisible during the day but appears at night when everyone is asleep. The landlady feeds it with scrambled egg and in return the cat brings her grain or money stolen from others (Shein 1902: 303). Shein also refers to a story in which a cat comes at night to eat the scrambled egg and frightens the young daughter-in-law to death. The young woman had slept next the stove, which the cat crossed each time on its ice-cold paws (Shein 1902: 303-304). That is, even though in Shein’s description the cat is functionally identical to the enrichment snake, the last detail – the ice-cold paws – moves it closer to a ghost.

For Estonian Russians, the owners of flying enrichment serpents are typically associated with witchcraft and sorcerers, or demons, and thus their origin is referred to as the outcome of a deal between demons and knowledgeable people (sorcerers): *You will sell your soul, thus ‘puvchish’ carries money home* (ERA, Vene 11, 509 (115); Laura, 1928). According to Uno Harva (1948), the Finnish *para* also denotes a sorcerer while the devil



as a tick is an expression of *piritys* (< spiritus) in Finland; the same tradition is spread in Estonia and Livonia (Loorits 1928: 68–70, Loorits 1949: 167–168).

In Estonian belief narratives, the mythic being – a treasure-bearer – is associated with extremely diverse folklore:

– A self-made and animated *kratt*, which can make it self and be revived by verbal magic and magical actions, sometimes requiring the help of an evil force. Such a mythical being can also be purchased, but since it is a supernatural helper the relationship between the master and the mythical helper is complex. Magical helpers may appear upon reading the *Seventh Book of Moses* or the *Black Book*<sup>4</sup>, an ancient religious complex in itself, a famous book of knowledge and power (Eisen 1896; Ljungström 2015; Klintberg 2010: M 85, type P 41–43); Davies 2010; Kõiva 2011a). The self-made creature refers to a complex of witches possessing supernatural knowledge. The tradition of *kratt* has several parallels with the *spiritus*, especially legends about difficulties of doing away with a *spiritus* or *kratt*.



Fig. 2. *Kratt* in the 2017 fantasy drama film *November* by Rainer Samet. Photo from <https://www.filmfreakcentral.net/ffc/2018/02/november-2017.html>

– A human or their soul is a *kratt*, mostly an anthropomorphic figure. Especially in the Estonian and Livonian traditions, one finds the well-known image of a witch whose soul can fly, and acts as a treasure-bearer, while her body lies breathless on the ground. In Estonian and Livonian lore, both men and women can fly to collect treasures or suck milk.

– An animal-shaped *kratt*.

We must consider this variety and the ambivalent processes because folklore is not a clear-cut system. Based on the material analysed, we may say that in the Estonian texts in which the narrator is the protagonist of the story typically male and sometimes even concrete persons, known by their name, are mentioned. The *kratt* can be stopped by calling out to it: *If you called out the name of the person who acted as a kratt, it dropped all the treasures it was carrying* (E 36146/7 (15) Ambla, 1898). According to beliefs, the treasures carried by the *kratt* were usable. At the end of the story when the treasure-bearer is forced to throw its load away, the narrator concludes: *The treasure-bearer left its sack with peas in it. Women distributed the peas among themselves. My granny also ate those peas* (RKM II 68, 191 (13) Simuna, 1955).

<sup>4</sup> According to folk belief, this was a collection of magic that originally belonged to the Bible but was separated from it. The background to the beliefs and legends of the Black Book was the existence of both handwritten and printed books containing magical formulae and recipes. The clergymen and healers are the persons to whom the Black Book has most often been associated. A survey about the magical books or *grimoires* was written by Owen Davis *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Even though, according to the economic gender division, women were supposed to perform milk witchcraft, it is once again not uniform since the mythical milk stealing could be a job for either gender. In this respect, the Estonian and Livonian material differs from the Finnish and Swedish narratives where women are the main practitioners of witchcraft. The same pattern applies more generally in Estonian stories, for example, more men were accused at witch trials than women, which differs from European practice (Uuspõu 2001 [1938]). It is also evident that even in belief narratives young men are involved in various adventures and affairs more often than women, i.e. the young man is also more active in the storyworld (cf. Honko 1962).

– A specially made and animated *kratt* was a four-legged creature, yet a three-legged milk tick also existed, with two legs at the front and one at the back. There were also two-legged and one-legged creatures. In southern Sweden, *mjölkhare* (a milk hare) was well known (Klintberg 2010: 289); after being shot with a silver bullet, it is transformed into its original components: burned sticks, threads, and fur.

One of the standard plots in Estonia describes a farmer who goes to Riga with the intention of buying a *kratt* for himself from the Riga fair. On his way back, he looks at the creature he got from the seller and only sees a bunch of unnecessary clutter on his sleigh and then throws it all to the side of the road. Later on, the farmer travels the same road and discovers that the creature he had bought was still a *kratt* because it had carried grain and other valuable stuff there (cf. Jauhiainen 1998 in the Finnish tradition).

The parallel noticed in connection with the Slavic tradition is remarkable: the treasure-bearer's relationship with the house spirit (cf. Latvian *mājas gars* (~kungs), in German (Haus-) *Kobold*, in Russian *domovoi*, in Votian *maja-elukas*, and in Estonian *tont*, who originally was probably also a house spirit (cf. Loorits 1949), and had features in common with the *spiritus*.

Estonian folklore demonstrates that each household had one or two of these creatures; it was chiefly farm owners who had them, or at least people considered to be wealthy. In a humorous tale, a servant imitates his master by making a *kratt* and, in the absence of suitable material, makes it with one leg. However, the latter is very agile yet also somewhat lazy and does not feel like going far from the house, so it starts to steal the grain the master's *kratt* brought for him (E 15897 (25) Võnnu).

The way the *kratt* is animated also varies. The Estonian treasure-bearer was made on three consecutive Thursday nights in the same month at the intersection of three roads. The materials used were pieces of worn-out fabric, pea stalks, ropes, old wooden bowl halves (for buttocks), an old hank (for the tail), a piece of glowing coal for the heart, pieces of iron for the teeth etc. In order to give it a soul, one had to steal sacramental wine from a church, keep it in one's mouth and bring it home to animate the *kratt* (ERA II 12, 289 (1) Simuna, 1931). In general terms, the same tradition spread among Estonian Russians.

It is often necessary to give three drops of blood to animate it, and in the stories the devil sometimes himself appears at the crossroads (cf. Klintberg 2010: 290).

In many versions, people try to cheat the devil: blood is withdrawn from the paw of a cat or from a piglet. All of these elements add humour and excitement to the stories (RKM II 169, 407/9 (706) Sangaste, 1963).

Verbal magic as well as the spells used to make the *kratt* were widely employed in Estonia (Kõiva 2011b), although some spells find parallels in the narratives about making a supernatural creature (a werewolf) and/or from metamorphoses:

*A fire tail or ghost*

*In the olden days, people used to make fire tails or ghosts. On three Thursday nights, all sorts of old litter were put together. To breathe life into it, you read:*

*Kiuh, kauh hair on your head!*

*Siuh, sauh tail behind!*

*Piuh, pauh head on you!*

*An old man had made his own [kratt]. His son secretly went to see and heard the words uttered. As later also told to others. (ERA II 14, 247 (32) Anna, 1929)*

The corpus of charms is rich (over 50 texts); some ask the treasure-bearer to bring grain and promise to feed the treasure-bearer:

*Come, dear krätt,*

*Come next door to me,*

*Bring my grain,*

*Back from the neighbours' granary!*

*Feed you with bread then*

*And give you the joy of milk,*

*Shall not make you carry a heavy load*

*Neither gold, nor silver. (ERA II 159, 506/7 (85) Martna, 1937)*

The Belarusian *khut* is closest in appearance and function to the *kratt*. However, *khut* is not made from old things or objects but has the ability to metamorphose; it can turn into any creature or thing, including a fire serpent.



Fig. 3. Making of a *kratt* treasure-bearer. Performance by Maret Ubaleht, photo by Siiri Kumari 2018. <https://www.siirikumari.com/the-smell-of-cinders-and-rain/creation-of-the-kratt>



Fig 4. *Kratt*, an example of community art, 2018 <https://www.flickr.com/photos/46785534@N06/15028865166>

A milk *kratt* or a milk tick (*piimapuuk*) could also act imperceptibly and only ‘tick drops’ or drops of milk or excrements remained in the well, on the table, wall or trees (cf. Sweden: Klintberg 2010: 289; Latvia: Laime 2013).

When a treasure-bearer was punished, it was believed that the person who had brought the milk in this form became ill (the same motifs are known in Belarus). A custom in Saaremaa was to throw the found excrement of the mythical creature into the fire, leading the perpetrator to suffer stomach-ache (constipation), which could only be relieved when a member of the victim’s family gave them something (water, food, tools or utensils).

Another aspect typical of modern legends about the treasure-bearer is a change in explanation. The observed phenomenon may be interpreted according to the old tradition in the periphery of Estonia, like in Setomaa and on the islands of Muhu and Saaremaa. Still, we can also find a new model of interpretation – aliens. This model began to emerge in the 1970s in connection to the attention being paid to unusual atmospheric phenomena and the expansion of UFO folklore. The latter mainly spread through a variety of lectures, translations, or handwritten pamphlets, and helped instil knowledge about aliens, not only in Estonia but in Belarus as well (Kõiva 1996; Butov 2021). This broadened the explanatory model and drew attention to different light phenomena, for example, the descriptions of flying serpents – something resembling a fire wheel – by Russians living in Estonia during the 1930s. Again, this is a process entailing changes, retranslations, and a set of vernacular perceptions.

## VISUAL CHARACTERISTICS OF FLYING SERPENTS

Belarusian and Ukrainian traditions contain stories of serpents that walk instead of fly (Levkiyevskaya 2019: 439; TMKB 2011: 486–487). In Belarusian tradition, we find the appearance of a serpent depicted as “shaggy, scary and tall”, yet most importantly it does not fly; it walks, and walks upright, that is, in this description, the serpent possesses the features of both zoomorphic and anthropomorphic creatures. Ukrainian folklore also includes stories of serpents that walk instead of fly (Levkiyevskaya 2019: 439, No. 9). Some remarkable features are attributed to the flying serpents as they appear in flight, emphasising their fiery, luminous nature. Certain changes can be noticed in descriptions of the serpent’s colour, the brightness of its glow, and its shape based on the way it flies and what it is carrying.



Fig. 5. Tsmok. Monument in Lelepe, Belarus. Photo from <https://www.toursoyuz.by/2018/08/14/18-zhniunya-proy-dze-festyival-u-gostsi-da-lepelskaga-tsmoka-pragrama/>

Estonian Russians say that it glows yellow when it is carrying milk, and when it is carrying money it glows red (ERA II 109, 107 (48)). In Estonian lore, most forms of *kratt* – the self-made and human-shaped ones – are visible as fiery streaks.

A characteristic shared by all the regions under investigation is the anthropomorphic figure of a flying serpent or treasure-bearer. For instance, modern Belarusian lore contains purely anthropomorphic descriptions of a serpent of enrichment. It may be observed that, even with such an anthropomorphic appearance, the serpent is still flying, despite it looking like a man and wearing shoes that need to be dried (Boganeva 2012: 29, No. 8).

In Livonian folk belief, a witch or a witch's soul in the form of a *kratt* is seen flying in the sky, carrying milk or cream to its family. According to beliefs, it used to milk cows or suck milk, take cream from others and bring full barrels of milk back to its family. Besides the anthropomorphic and artificial *kratt*, zoomorphic ones also fly as fiery streaks. The mythical being is described as follows: it flies under the sky like a streak of fire; sparks are flying; it flies through the air, has fire in its mouth; like a stripe it goes through the air, a flame of fire in its wake; flies like a fire, leaving a tail behind; flies like a big bird overhead; comes like fire; a bird comes and fire appears in the yard; through the air like a black ball or a pile of wood or a haystack. A toad is seen sucking on the cow in a barn, leaving like a streak of fire through the air etc. (Loorits 1928: 40 ff.).

Like the Estonians, the Livs describe the anthropomorphic treasure-bearer as an ordinary person, but when they practice witchcraft they turn into a streak of fire, a broom, or a bird, flying through the sky. Again, narrators refer to real people by their names, speaking about how they acted as milk ticks. It is said that the body of a person lay lifeless on the ground until the soul acted as a tick. Here we can see an overlapping with the tradition of a whirlwind (Est. *tuulispask*) that steals grain and other things. Some reports in Livonian folklore state that only the witch that escapes through the chimney, with an oven broom between her thighs, milks cows. Some stories specify that the witches have a vessel with them – for example, a bladder, a large one like a pig's bladder, into which they put milk to take it home; however, they cannot take butter. In some descriptions, the witches are black while the vessel into which they milk is also black, but the red tail behind them is like fire.

The Livonian witches can be invisible when they are sucking milk from a cow, while their shadow can be seen on the barn wall. Loorits gives an example where the storyteller's mother understood that somebody had been sucking on her cow every night. One morning, she went to milk it and on the wall saw a naked man with big balls, which were decreasing; then there was a flash like a flame



Fig 6. Kratt-bearer, Kristjan Raud, 1927. Wikipediia.

of fire and he disappeared, but that morning the cow had not been milked (Loorits 1928: 42, Loorits 1926: S 152).

In Estonian tradition, the zoomorphic *kratt* figures were known as milk-bearers: a toad, frog, (black) dog, (black) cat, bird, crow, (black) rooster, chicken, duck, eagle, squirrel, or a snake, or commonly known as a milk sucker and a demonic creature. At the same time, the snake shares features with the house snake, which was fed and banned from killing.

A ‘fish-bearer’ was widespread in the Estonian inland, but not along the coast or on the islands where fishing was a daily activity. The *silgukratt* could be a person, yet it was common for it to take the form of a cat (grey or black, and rarely also a yellow one), sometimes a large bird or a chicken. The money-bearer, or *rahakratt*, was a lesser-known character tasked with bringing money to the master. Records of *rahakratt* originate from different parishes, with it mainly appearing as anthropomorphic or artificial creatures.

Votian tradition mentions *para* primarily as a human (often a witch) who milked cows (Västrik 1998). The Finnish *para* appeared in the form of an animal (rat, toad, frog, bird), a ball of fire, or a woman. It is the owner or the milk stealer (cf. Jauhiainen 1998: H1-300). A woman was also the owner or the “milk bearer” in Sweden (Klintberg 2010: 289).

## ACOUSTIC CHARACTERISTICS OF FLYING SERPENTS

In Belarus folklore, flying serpents of enrichment lack specific acoustic characteristics, which is not typical of mythological creatures. *Rusalka*, *pharaonka*, *domovoy*, *lesovik*, *bannik* and other demons usually possess certain auditory characteristics, sometimes very diverse, reflected in their respective tales. *Rusalki*, for instance, make vague sounds, entice and call people, laugh, cry, and sing, among others, insightful and enlightening songs. *Domovoy* and *dvorovoy* (*khlevnik*) can talk with their masters and answer questions; evil spirits make terrible noises (Vinogradova 2000: 179-199). Although the acoustic image of Belarusian spirits-enrichers is generally uncertain, some texts about a flying serpent published by Pavel Shein in the early 20th century say the serpent’s flight is accompanied by noise (Shein 1902: 302). Shein also presents the image of a spirit-enricher in the form of a cat whose movement is always associated with a slight noise and a buzz (Shein 1902: 304).

The flying serpent is an exceptional, silent character, although its visual characteristics are vibrant and detailed. If the serpent is unhappy with its master, it does not chastise him or make its disapproval known with sounds, but burns the house down and flies away to serve another master.

Although the flying serpent lover is visually similar to the serpent of enrichment, it has a distinctly different auditory image. In a famous tale about the serpent lover, hemp and lice, the serpent asks a woman eating hemp seeds what she is doing. The woman answers that she is eating lice and the serpent leaves her forever.

In the Estonian corpus, acoustic parameters indicate that the treasure-bearers communicate with the master or has discussions with them and they also communicate with each other. *Para* also communicates with humans in the Votian tradition (Västrik 1998).

In legends, the milk-bearer and the fish-bearer vomit up milk or fish and thus make corresponding sounds.

The way the master calls the creature is interesting as the human employs typical onomatopoeia: calls, imitation of a sound made by or associated with an animal or a bird, or imitative and suggestive words for a greater effect.

The treasure-bearer's speech is remarkable, often using distorted foreign words and expressions or baby talk. In the legends under study, two *kratt* discuss the quality of food using baby talk:

*In a household the hostess put food in the attic for the kratt. The farm servant was not given as good food as the kratt. [One day he followed the hostess to the attic.] The servant ate the porridge left for the kratt and did his thing in the bowl instead. Kratts came to eat. One of them said: "Kuku pupp!" ['Good porridge' in baby talk], the other one: "Äka pupp!" [äka = kaka, 'bad, shit porridge' in baby talk]. The second kratt won the argument. Then they set the house on fire. (ERA II 30, 65/6 (4) Torma, 1930)*

Tactile experiences are very rare, which is why they are not addressed here.

#### TEMPORAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SERPENT OF ENRICHMENT

Unlike with the mythological *khut* and *tsmok*, the events in the texts take place in real historical time and usually in the time of the narrator, or in the recent past. The image of the treasure-bearer or flying serpent is associated with certain workflows, e.g. harvest and other periods related to winter supplies. This means the mythical creature's image is situational. The least known in Estonian tradition is a *kratt* who moves about in wintertime.

In Belarusian tales about a serpent of enrichment, it can be seen during the winter months (one informant recalled she had seen the serpent while sledding downhill as a child), in autumn, in late summer during grain threshing, and during the off-season in spring and autumn (the mistress is "drying the serpent's shoes") (Boganeva 2012: No. 5, 7, 8).

In Estonia, the most common time for milk stealing and milk magic was the period from the day the cattle were let out (around 1 April) until Midsummer Day (24 June). The motifs of milk magic are more closely related to spring (Easter, St. George's Day) when it is done either by means of dust picked from the tracks of a neighbour's herd, by the symbolic milking of junipers or fences, or by calling for milk while sitting on the branches of a tree (the same in Sweden; see Klintberg 2010: type P24 ff.). It was believed that butter made from the stolen milk had blood cells in it; the same motif appears in Swedish legends (Klintberg 2010: type P22).

The 'fish-bearer' acts during spring and summertime, the 'grain-bearer' in summer and also in autumn, when it is darker. The animated creature is connected with Thursday, namely, the most popular time for magic rituals.

As for the time of day when the act was accomplished, in Estonia this depended greatly on the type of bearer. They can act in the evening, in the morning, or at night, but certainly at a time when the grain has been winnowed.

*The treasure was carried by the kratt also during the day. If there is nothing else to carry, they carry hay from meadows. (EKS 2, 161/2 Torma, 1890)*

As for the time of day, in most cases the Belarusian tales and the legends found in the Russian archive of the Estonian Literary Museum do not explicitly mention it; still, based on the information collected it may be concluded that night is the serpent's preferred time. The tale of a shimmering luminous serpent suggests a darker time of day. In some cases, night time is explicitly mentioned (ERA, Vene 4, 64 (7); Boganeva 2012: 29, No. 6, 7, 8).

#### TYPICAL LOCI FOR THE SERPENT OF ENRICHMENT

The vast majority of narratives under investigation talk about a village environment; the activities take place on farmland or between farms and villages, in meadows, on village or inter-village roads, in which case the narrator, being on the outside, sees a *kratt* flying in the sky. The making and acquisition of the treasure-bearer occur in a space of magical significance such as a crossroads or a forest road outside the village. The treasure-bearer is often bought in the city of Riga (see above), the administrative centre of Livonia. Riga represents a more distant space/city where miraculous cases are possible from the storytelling point of view.

Moreover, the structure of the farmstead is revealed in via legends. In both Estonian and Estonian Russian legends, the most typical loci for the serpent in the house are the attic and the threshing floor, or a storehouse for milk or grain, or a barn. The grain carriers lived in the attic, under the roof, and were given food there. They went in and out through a hatch, a gable end window. This was also considered to be the reason that a tail of fire was seen entering a house. Even today, people believe that a streak of fire that goes into a house but does not cause a fire is a *kratt*. In Votian tradition, the porridge for the treasure-bearer is put in an oven, on a rake, or in a barn (Västriik 1998).

#### METHODS USED TO WARD OFF THE TREASURE-BEARER

In Belarusian texts, including modern ones, the spirit-enricher in the form of a flying serpent is often envisioned as an *au pair* and is not associated with evil spirits. In this case, as a rule the owners do not protect themselves from it, and try to please it with their favourite food. Yet, when the snake threatens a person's life or property they employ typical methods of protection from evil spirits: a cross, prayers, sharp iron objects etc. (Boganeva 2012: 29-30).



However, one Belarusian ethnographic description by Alexander Dembovetski from the 19th century gives a curious ‘instruction’ regarding the destruction of the serpent-enricher. The owner must find out where the snake sleeps, then take a rope, cover it with tar, and hit the serpent with it. The serpent takes different guises and asks to be hit again (which cannot be done), and then dies. If the owner listens to the snake and hits it again, the snake will kill him and burn the property down (Dembovetski 1882: 498-499). Estonian lore stipulates that, while punishing the treasure-bearer, numbers must not be counted in the correct order:

*Volmer grabbed it, took a whip and gave the treasure bearer a good beating, counting: ‘One, two, four; one, two, four’. The treasure bearer was screaming: ‘Say one, two, three!’. As soon as Volmer had said one-two-three, the treasure bearer vanished. (E 45211/2 Paistu, 1905)*

In Estonia, we can find verbal charms against the treasure bearer and all the usual methods of protection against evil spirits like crosses, prayers, and sharp iron objects, but a common belief is:

*Then undo all the cords and buttons around you and the fire tail will drop its load. And if you put a silver bullet in the gun and you shoot it in the direction of the fire tail, it will also drop its load. If you see a fire tail and throw a lit match or an ember at it, it will set the master’s house in fire (E 16787 (1) Pärnu-Jaagupi, 1895).*

## PERCEPTION OF THE FIERY SERPENT

Legends and belief narratives usually address the viewpoints of the narrator and the listener. In rituals, a distinction is made between the viewpoints of the spectator, the ritual leader, and the ordinary participator. Also in our cases, a distinction is first and foremost made between the stories and experiences of the narrator or transcriber, and those that they have heard from their friends and relatives as to which the narrator has no direct experience. There is a considerable number of people’s own experiences in the Estonian corpus, and among the texts of Estonian Russians and also in the more recent Belarusian texts. We even have eyewitness accounts (ERA, Vene 11, 445 (9); ERA, Vene 11, 445 (9)). Such experiences are distinguished by emotional evaluations and often lead to new arguments and interpretations. Doubts about the existence of flying serpents are much less common.

Estonian Russians at the start of the 20th century generally considered flying serpents to be evil spirits.

*Tont is a serpent. It brought goods to its master. It was Satan himself, they said. (ERA, Vene 1, 699 (3))*

One Estonian Russian narrator reflects on whether the flying serpent comes from God or Satan, and concludes that it does not come from God.

*The flying serpent... I don't know if it was sent by God or the Evil One. Probably by the Evil One. God would just give it to man if he wanted to make him rich, and it [the serpent] wouldn't have been necessary.* (ERA, Vene 1, 218/9 (22))

In modern Belarusian lore, the narrators rarely state that they themselves have witnessed flying serpents, and mainly refer to the stories told by their relatives and friends (Boganeva 2012: 28, No. 2, 13, 30).

Not all modern narrators living in Belarusian villages believe in the existence of flying serpents:

*There used to be legends about a serpent that brought riches to a wealthy man. He had storehouses, this and that... We didn't have this. ... Well, they were just fairy tales.* (Boganeva 2012: 28, No. 4)

The perception of the character described by the Belarusian narrators is far more ambiguous than that of the Estonian Russians. In contemporary records, the serpent that brings wealth has a dual interpretation. On one hand, it is a household deity, similar to that described by P. Shpilevsky<sup>5</sup> and A. Bogdanovich, which contributes to the enrichment of its master (not necessarily a sorcerer). It is only about such a serpent that the following could be said: *You know, daughter, if only we had such a serpent ...* (Boganeva 2012: 28, No. 1). This kind of serpent, a serpent of enrichment, is not usually referred to as an evil spirit. In this regard, the text that was recorded as told by Maria Seliverstovna Kokhanovskaya (b. 1927) is especially telling. When asked whether the serpent is an evil spirit, she answered affirmatively, yet sounded very uncertain: “Well, yes, it’s probably an evil spirit ...”. And then she immediately changed her opinion, stating that “it does exist since bats exist...” (Boganeva 2012: 28, No. 2). On the other hand, the serpent can be clearly presented as an evil spirit, a means of enrichment for its masters – sorcerers.

<sup>5</sup> The work of Pavel Shpilevsky under the pseudonym P. Drevlyansky “Belarusian Folk Traditions” has been repeatedly criticised because many characters were almost completely invented by the author (see Toporkov 2002: 245-254; Levkyevskaya 2002: 311-351). However, as E. Levkyevskaya correctly notes, not all the characters described in the “Belarusian Folk Traditions” are fictions invented by Drevlyansky himself. Some belong to characters that really exist in Belarusian mythology and are described with sufficient correspondence to folk ideas (Levkyevskaya 2002: 318). One of these characters is Tsmok or an enrichment serpent.

## ACTORS IN THE BELIEF NARRATIVES

Belief narratives convey behavioural instructions for how to cope with the situation, while a noticeable part of the narratives concerns how to make a *kratt* (which components are needed, what must be done, in what chronological order the actions have to be performed, and which verbal techniques to use). Some texts describe the behaviour of a servant or maid who discovers the *kratt* and either scares them away, insults them verbally, kicks them, or kills them. There are more characters in the story of spoiling the *kratt*'s porridge: the *kratt*'s feeder and the master or lady of the house, the servant, and the *kratt*. The *kratt* is active in both bringing in goods and breaking the contract and starting fires. Sometimes, in the final phase, the servant re-enters the game, throwing the *kratt(s)* who had escaped from the house into the fire as well, thereby destroying the evil creature.

One of the characters may be a mysterious merchant or salesman from Riga, and certainly the devil or a representative of evil forces in stories about acquisition of the *kratt*, as well as about the treasure-bearer as a miraculous and dangerous helper who constantly demands work; its appearance is connected with, for example, a book of witchcraft or *The Seventh Book of Moses*.

Different actions hold various functions in the stories. The links between an action and an object are contrasting, and it is already clear from what was mentioned above that distinct characters are either active or passive in the stories.

1. Activities related to acquiring a mythical creature are connected with a spatial location. In most cases, there is a short introduction to present the setting, characters, and period of time. More often, the mythical being's activities are related to a farm and the economy; some stories see it as working in the open air, in a barn, or in a shed.
2. There are many texts in which a person passively observes the actions of a treasure-bearer.
3. A person observes the actions of a treasure-bearer and actively tries to stop them: performs magical activities to stop a hostile action (cuts shoelaces, undoes buttons etc.) so that the treasure-bearer falls or drops what it is carrying.
4. Texts in which a person and the treasure-bearer take turns being active (making the treasure-bearer a story of spoiling the *kratt*'s porridge; if the conditions of the 'agreement' are not met, the serpent destroys the farmer's property).

Many stories describe fantastical elements of the tradition: a person who can turn into a treasure-bearer or a whirlwind, moves like light or in a physical form across the sky and cover distances quickly. The peculiarity of East Slavic and Finno-Ugric folklore is that unusual abilities can also be used by ordinary people either by imitating others or through the influence of new skills.

## THE TREASURE-BEARER AS PART OF THE CULTURAL SPACE

The participation of mythical characters in professional culture and various art forms is a topical question. St. George, the patron saint of many Christian cities and countries, and especially his struggle with the dragon, which also symbolises the struggle of Christianity with non-Christianity, paganism and evil, is depicted in both monuments and icons in many countries. In Estonia, such a monument, depicting St. George's fight with the dragon, was erected near the Tori Church in Pärnu County in 2006 to mark Estonia's victory in the War of Independence and the country's regained independence. However, a large monument in the centre of Minsk has now become a memorial to those killed in the 2020 struggle for freedom, and has become an important national symbol. The statues of a *tsmok* (in a provincial town) and a dragon in a green area of Minsk in Belarus are related to different mindscapes. The statue of the dragon has a good-natured appearance and resembles recent media figures. This figure has also been painted as a sign of protest in the colours of the unofficial flag of Belarus.

The mythical treasure-bearer, especially the *kratt*, holds a special role in Estonian professional culture where it is depicted in all media and art forms: ballet, musical forms, literature (including children's books), productions, art, films, community art sculptures from handy natural materials, and staged performances captured in professional photographs. The *kratt* is reflected in company names, computer-software names etc. In other words, although its shape has changed, it is still part of today's culture, having both humorous and serious roles.

## LIMITED GOOD AND THE TREASURE-BEARER

In our analysis, we proceeded from legends and the storyworld and discarded the idea of placing the action in a concrete social environment. The purpose of a legend is not to provide a truthful description of events and experiences but to present an unusual experience and sometimes also moral dilemmas. While describing the material, we also considered the anthropologist George M. Foster's theory of a limited good (1965), which was supplemented by John Kennedy (1966).

In the second half of the 19th century serfdom was abolished in Estonia and people's economic opportunities were improved. Peasants started to buy freehold title to farms. On their land lived cottagers who worked for the farmers, as well as the 'farm's proletariat' – maids, farmhands, seasonal workers, herders, craftsmen etc. If we analyse the *kratt* stories from a social aspect, the *kratt* is usually owned by a farmer or his wife who communicate directly with them, yet in stories they are also made and obtained by poorer peasants and farmhands.

The corpus of stories is implemented in very many registers: in addition to the serious discourse of legends, stories in the style of fantasy, humour, sarcasm etc. can also be heard. The voices heard also vary: young and old, women and men, representing various social strata. To some extent, the stories reveal the labour division between genders: milk

magic on the farm is women's sphere and women are more connected to it, whereas the grain-bearer is chiefly made by men, who also operate it. The fatal blow is delivered by young people – a farmhand or a maid. Either out of ignorance or dislike for the things seen (a cat vomiting milk into a pot), they ruin the magic practice, frighten the spirit off, kill it, or spoil its food. This kind of behaviour is displayed when a supernatural creature is encountered whose existence young people cannot interpret because they lack knowledge of the olden world and, even if some links emerge, they reprehend the use of witchcraft and magic. The postulate of many stories seems to be the warning that if you use a magic helper you can lose your life and riches following a brief period of wealth.

Narratives and beliefs about treasure-bearers are ambivalent as is the attitude to the treasure-bearers, yet there are no records of a documented boom in making treasure-bearers and treasure-seeking, nor can we witness any economic development in the *kratt* stories (cf. Taylor 1986). Treasure-hunting stories are quite realistic, at the same time the treasure-bearers like *kratt* are attributed with highly fantastic capabilities of shape-shifting, soul-wandering and witchcraft. The action still takes place in the village and on an old-fashioned farm. The dwelling has only one floor, which in the 20th-century modern village became a sign of wealth, and the creature does not choose a town as its habitat. During the 200-year period when the stories were written down, technological development was at a standstill. There are no novel materials, the *kratt* is still made from old junk, and no laws of robotics are applied.

In most cases, several explanations are possible. For example, moral choices, but also cases in which the motifs convey experience yet do not link the phenomenon with acquiring wealth and other benefits; the treasure-bearer has no immediate connection with any person, and its existence is self-evident like snow or rain, an unexplained phenomenon.

E. Boganeva recalls: "In 2013 I wrote down a story about the narrator's mother walking through the forest and a black rooster following her. And the mother knew that if she threw something at the cock, it would crumble into a heap of gold. Although they led a shabby life, the mother decided that she did not need this gold as it would come from evil spirits. She came out of the forest without throwing anything at the cock, and the latter disappeared. The narrator said that her mother was very religious, a Catholic. It means that the moral conflict let her give up wealth". M. Kõiva added a conversation with her great-aunt's husband, a miner, who was pondering some coloured balls of light moving about just above the ground in his home village near a town, heading for the attic of a wealthy farmhouse. "*Kratts*", he guessed. "But they did not bring wealth. Cold light!". In 1998, a female Setu singer described a treasure-bearer in the form of a window frame, a frame of light that followed her and then suddenly changed direction.

## CONCLUSION

A general rule is that the imagery of mythical creatures has changed over the centuries. The description of a demonic character (flying fire, a burning sheaf, various anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figures) is based on what it is carrying, or sucking. It is possible that

different creatures have merged into one. Estonian Russians also associated the flying serpent with *kratt*, *tont*, *haldjas* – the Estonian demonic characters. The *kratt* here was made of various items and old junk, and then animated with sacramental wine secretly brought from a church.

The perceptions of fiery serpents among Belarusians and Estonian Russians are similar to the Lithuanian beliefs about *aitvaras*, a flying spirit that brings wealth and emerges from an egg laid by a 3- or 7-year-old rooster.

The imaginations and stories associated with these names have changed following the development of the lived folk religion and are changing, developing local circumstances and new international motifs like UFOs to replace the treasure-bearer.

When we compared the traditional Belarusian perceptions of flying serpents of enrichment with those of Estonian Russians reflected in archival records from the 1920–1940s preserved by the Estonian Literary Museum, we found several similarities in the description of: (a) the appearance of the demonic character (flying fire, a burning sheaf etc.; the serpent changes its colours, brightness and shape based on what it is carrying); (b) the mutual actions of the serpent of enrichment and the master it serves (the man feeds the serpent, the serpent enriches its master; if the conditions of the ‘agreement’ are not met, the serpent destroys its master’s property). As concerns the origin of the serpent of enrichment, some texts from Estonian and Votic narratives contain an ancient mythical layer of motifs about the serpent having emerged from a rooster’s egg that a person had to carry beneath their clothing for 1 to 3 years. In the tales of Estonian Russians and Estonians, the serpent usually appears as a result of a man’s deal with evil spirits (selling their soul to the devil, signing their name in blood etc.). In addition, Estonian Russians identified the flying serpent with a *kratt*, an Estonian demonic character. In this case, the animated *kratt* was made from various items of old junk, and then brought to life with sacramental wine secretly brought from a church. In Estonian tradition, one of the most important hypostases is the animated treasure-bearer and helper. This creature finds parallels in many cultures, including in Northern Europe. Further, the complex of Estonian milk magic as well as the ‘milk tick’ or ‘milk-bearer’ has a wide cultural background. Estonian lore is characterised by close relationships with the Baltic-Finnic and Swedish lore as well as the Slavic and German traditions; yet, there are also considerable historical and cultural differences in the gender aspect or differences in animal-shaped treasure-bearers.

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## ДУХИ-ОБОГАТИТЕЛИ В ВОСТОЧНО-СЛАВЯНСКОМ И ФИННО-УГОРСКОМ КОНТЕКСТАХ

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Целью статьи является представление результатов сравнительного и структурно-семантического исследования верований и текстов о духах-обогатителях, в том числе в образе летающего/огненного змея, в восточнославянском

фольклоре и финно-угорских традициях (эстонской, водской, ливонской, финской, вепсской) в связи с прибалтийскими и скандинавскими верованиями об этих персонажах.

Статья опирается как на опубликованные фольклорные тексты 19-21 вв. белорусов, русских, в меньшей степени украинцев, так и на не публиковавшиеся ранее архивные коллекции записей 19-20 вв. русских Эстонии, эстонцев, финнов, ливонцев, водов, вепсов, которые содержатся в Эстонском литературном музее.

Огненный змей в белорусских традиционных представлениях существует до сегодняшнего дня в двух воплощениях: духа-обогаителя и мифического любовника, при том нередко змей в роли мифического любовника выступает одновременно и в качестве духа-обогаителя. В области терминологии (названий) у белорусов преимущественно преобладают описательные номинации: *огненный/летающий (летучий) змей*, но чаще всего — просто «змей». На северо-западе Беларуси встречается мифологический персонаж *хут*. По своим функциональным характеристикам хут во многом подобен змею-обогачителю (летающему, огненному), однако хут — полиморфный демон, с чертами домового и хлевника. Еще один белорусский персонаж, близкий к огненному змею и хуту — *цмок* — дракон. Белорусский огненный змей также близок к литовскому *айтварасу* — летающему огненному змею, носящему богатство. Айтварас — полиморфный демон, может являться в образе огненного петуха, вороны, реже кошки. На северо-западной Гродненщине среди белорусских литовцев он известен под именем *айтварас*, а также под именами *скальсиникас*, *кутас*, *хутас*, реже — *шкутас*, *спарыжус*, *парыжус*, *дамавікас*.

На имена летучих змей у эстонских русских, во многом повлияла их близость к эстонцам и их мифология: *пуук* (носитель, клещ), *насок* («тот, кто несет»), *tont* (призрак), *lendva* (летающий предмет, ведьмина стрела, мифическая болезнь); *кратт* (носитель); *алдыас* (защитник, дух); *пывш/точ*, *пывш*, *пувчши/пуктыш*, *пукшиш*, *пуксик* (разные варианты пуук или носитель). Пукис также известен в традициях Латвии, Литвы, Западной России, близкой к прибалтийским республикам.

В эстонском языке для мифического обогаителя существует около 30 различных терминов или местных названий. Эстонский термин — *pisuhänd* — относится к образу огненного змея. Почти одинаково популярны пять терминов, причем эти термины и их вариации в разных диалектах широко используются: *kratt* («носитель»), *pisuhänd* (носитель, огненный хвост, искрящийся хвост); *puuk* (сосущий); *tont* (призрак); *vedaja* (носитель, клад) — все они являются носителями сокровищ, или иногда их называют носителями зерна, молочных продуктов, денег или рыбы. *Пуук* — заимствование из шведского (блевать) или из нижненемецкого (*spök*, *spük* — привидение, привидение, потустороннее существо). *Tont* — это термин не только для обозначения духа-обогаителя, но и для неопределенного сверхъестественного существа, злого духа, чудовища, призрака.

Происхождение летающих змеев-обогатителей у белорусов и русских Эстонии обычно связывается с колдовством и колдунами. У эстонских русских змей-обогатители в основном отождествляются с бесами, поэтому об их происхождении говорят как о результате сделки между бесами и знающими людьми (колдунами).

Что касается Кратта, то он является рукотворным произведением человека из хлама и негодных вещей. Для того, чтобы оживить это изделие человека, выполняют магические манипуляции с причастием, принесенным из церкви. Последний мотив имеет распространение у эстонцев, финнов, эстонских русских.

У белорусов до начала 21 века сохранился древний пласт представлений о змеях-обогатителях, которые часто считаются разновидностью домашних духов. Так, происхождение змея связывается с петушиным яйцом, которое вынашивается человеком. Такой мотив происхождения леучих змеев широко известен также в других славянских ареалах. В терминологии западных украинцев, верования которых близки к белорусским, змей-обогатитель называется «годованец» или «вихованок», что дословно означает «воспитанник».

Кроме того в статье составлено описание духов-обогатителей (летающих/огненных змеев) по следующим признакам: внешний вид, темпоральные характеристики, локус обитания, действия персонажа по отношению к людям (активные/пассивные) и действия людей по отношению к персонажу (в том числе предписания, запреты, обереги). Рассматривается диапазон восприятия персонажей (от нечистой силы, inferнального существа до духа-помощника), образы духов-обогатителей (летающих змеев) в современном культурном пространстве.

Ключевые слова: летающий/огненный змей, дух-обогатитель, кратт, магия, молочная/рыболовная магия

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