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Enclosure of Paradise: An Image of the Fenced-Around Beyond in Baltic Mythology

Summary

Several articles by the author was already published recently on the mythical image of the world as cosmic enclosure, as fenced-around and created namely by fencing (cf. Lith. *su-tvėrimas* ‘fencing’ and ‘creation by fencing, world creation, cosmogony’). On the social level, every settlement (home-stead, town, citadel, city) can be conceived as an embodiment of this mythical world-enclosure representing self-contained microcosm. One of the vivid examples of such a world-image is the Germanic Midgard (**midja-gardaz* ‘world’ > Gothic *midjun-gards*, Old Norse *mið-garðr*, Old English *middan-geard*, etc.) which, with its Baltic connotations, was examined recently in the special article. Thus, the world can be represented as an all-embracing cosmic enclosure, a kind of a hudge fenced-in yard, whose inside amounts to the “this world”, and the outside, to the “beyond”, with particular cosmic fence between them.

Further on, this same fence, when looked from the other side, can be conceived as enclosing the “other world” as well. Anyway, the beyond is regularly represented as an enclosure too. This time, with reference to the Baltic and some akin traditions, with inevitable comparative data whatever, the image of the enclosed paradise is dealt with. Firstly – the paradise as fenced around pasture, a kind of pen, and the souls in it as herd (of sheep, for example), and the god of the dead as their shepherd, or pastor. This kind of paradise can be dedected under the Lithuanian oikonym *Rai-gardas*, by the way. Secondly, the paradise as fenced around garden, like the very *paradise*, Old Iranian *pairidaēza*, namely ‘enclosed, fenced around place, enclosure’. (Cf. both meanings, ‘garden’ and ‘pen’, in derivatives of the same Indo-European noun **ghor-dhos* / **ǵhor-dhos* ‘enclosure, ring-fence’, as English *garden* and Lithuanian *gardas* ‘pen’.)

Keywords: images of the beyond: pen, garden, paradise; oikonym Lith. *Raigardas*; Lithuanian mythology.