

Atmospheric Phenomena as Mythological Beings and Agricultural Magic in Lithuanian Folk Tradition

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The paper deals with the perception of atmospheric phenomena in Lithuanian folk tradition. The research object includes Lithuanian oral narratives, folk beliefs and ethnographic material. It is characteristic of folk philosophy that the world is often interpreted in the anthropocentric context, when non-human things get a body and are complemented with dimensions of mind and will. In Lithuanian mythology, similarly, the atmospheric phenomena (wind, rain, cold) are perceived as personified mythological beings. The paper attempts to define the functions and the ways of ritual communication with atmospheric phenomena by means of magic

Nature-related spirits of the Bru (Central Vietnamese Highlands)

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The Bru, an ethnic minority in the Central Vietnamese Highlands divide their pantheon into two opposed groups: "spirits in the house" and "spirits in the bush", i.e. spirits of the inhabited cultural sphere and that of/in the nature. According to widely held opinions about "animism" amongst Southeast-Asian hill tribes, the number of these latter is unlimited, anything animate or inanimate may have a "spirit" influencing its proper functioning. However, the other side of the coin is that spirits have to be fed, appeased, entertained, i.e. a sacrificial relationship exists between the world of the humans and that of the superhuman entities. When seen from this angle, a hierarchy of the spirit world may be outlined: Bru "yiangs" may be aligned along a scale at one end of which there are recurrent "spirits" that feature in many sacrifices, while at the other, "yiangs" that receive offerings only occasionally. Thus, the theoretically unlimited list of virtual possibilities narrows down to a list of a few dozen important "nature spirits". In my paper based on one and a half year long participating fieldwork, I shall present a detailed account of Bru nature-related spirits and powers, their places in the landscape and the vernacular discourses they inspire.