

HOOPOE AND CUCKOO IN LATVIAN FOLKSONGS AND FOLK BELIEF¹

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I. In the best and most detailed Latvian dictionary, Mühlenbach / Endzelin's "Lettisch-deutsches Wörterbuch" (ME III 414–415) the word *pupacīte* and its three variants (*pupaiksīte*, *pupetīte* and *pupuzīte*) are given no semantic description. The only items put in quotation marks there are the question marks. Cf.:

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| (1) <i>pupacīte</i> “?” | (3) <i>pupetīte</i> “?” |
| (2) <i>pupaiksīte</i> “?” | (4) <i>pupuzīte</i> “?” |

An additional variant (*pupucīte*) is described as a pet name (ein Kosenname).

II. These words are from the following folksong (from Kr. Barons' edition, BW no. 33078, 1):

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| (5) Jāņu (-ņa) diena, p u p a c ī t e, | 'On Jānis' day, hoopoe (Dim.), |
| Atved man brūtgāniņu; | Bring me a bridegroom (Dim.); |
| Ja ved jaunu, tad ved skaistu, | If you bring a young one, bring a good-looking one, |
| Ja ved vecu, tad bagātu. | If you bring an old one, bring a rich man.' |

The first line of this song has a very important variant:

Jāņu dienu, d z e g u z ī t e, 'On Jānis' day, cockoo (Dim.),'

The designation hoopoe (*pupucīte*) is replaced here by the designation cuckoo (*dzeguzīte*).

III. The song type BW no. 33078 runs as follows:

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|----------------------------|---|
| (6) Ai, bagāta Jāņa diena, | 'Oh, rich Jānis' day, |
| Atved man arājiņu... | Bring me a ploughman (a man; a bridegroom) (Dim.)...' |

In this song the maiden does not turn with her requests to the hoopoe or the cuckoo (as she does in BW no. 33078, 1), but instead, to the Jānis' day directly. It is well known, that Jānis was a deity of fertility².

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² See R. Eckert, Brauchtum und Folklore im Ostbaltischen. Zum Johannisfest (lett. *Jāņi*: lit. *Joninės*) und zu den Johannisliedern, in: *Baltistik: Aufgaben und Methoden*, herausgegeben von Alfred Bammesberger, Heidelberg, 1998, p. 427–451.

IV. In standard Latvian the word for hoopoe is *pupuķis* (ME III 415; LVV 657). In ME, variants like *pupikis*, *pupucis*, *puputis* and *pupute* are quoted. In form and meaning these are very close to the diminutives mentioned above in the folksongs: *pupacīte*, *pupucīte*, *pupuzīte*, *pupaūksīte* and *pupetīte*.

V. Several arguments can be presented to prove that the word *pupacīte* and its variants are indeed designations for the hoopoe:

Firstly, the closeness in form and meaning of *pupacīte* (and its variants) to the designation for the hoopoe in standard Latvian *pupuķis* cannot be coincidental.

Secondly, the connection between the two birds, the hoopoe and the cuckoo, seems evident:

- 1) Both can predict the future. Pēteris Šmits (in LTT I 400–401) mentions that the cuckoo can predict the girl's suitor to-be.
- 2) It is highly remarkable that *pupucīte* and *dzeguzīte* occur as variants in the same song BW no. 33078, 1.
- 3) The verbs derived from designations for hoopoe and cuckoo are in meaning very closely associated to the nouns: *aizpupināt* is used in connection to the cry of the hoopoe; *aizkukot* is used in connection to the call and predictions of the cuckoo.
- 4) The expression (known since Mancelius in the 17th century) *bada dzeguze* describing the hoopoe (literally, a 'hunger cuckoo') illustrates the close proximity between the designations of both birds.
- 5) In some folksongs the *pupucīte* is described as squatting on an oak- or a linden-tree:

(7) P u p u c ī t e	pupu prasa Ozolā tupēdama...	'The hoopoe (Dim.) inquires about a bean Squatting on an oak-tree...'
BW no. 2510		

The second line has the variant *L i e p i n ā sēdēdama* 'Sitting on a linden-tree'. In this case the use of the word *pupucīte* shows it must be a designation for a bird.

VI. In an excellent work "Latvian Folk Beliefs" by P. Šmits (LTT, 3 sēj., Rīga, 1940) about 20 examples were found related to crying of the hoopoe and calling of the cuckoo as bad omens for people hearing these birds early in the morning on an empty stomach. Here are only a few examples:

- (8) *Ja bada dzeguze aizkūko cilvēku tukšā dūšā, tad tai gadā jāmirst* (LTT III 1503) 'If the hoopoe squawks in the morning to someone on an empty stomach, that person must die within the same year';
- (9) *Ja dzeguze no rīta aizkūko, tad gaidāma nelaimē* (LTT I 388) 'If the cuckoo calls in the morning, there will be misfortune (bad luck)';
- (10) *Kad pirmo reiz dzeguze kūko, tad jāskaita. Precējušies pēc tik gadiem mirs un neprecējušies precēsies* (LTT I 389) 'The first time the cuckoo calls, one has to count. Married people will die after as many years as the cuckoo's calls could be counted, while single people will marry.'

Relationship between calling of the cuckoo and marriage of the young girl seems particularly interesting. See example under (5) and the following quotation from LTT I 401:

- (11) *Cik reizes dzird dzegūzi pirmo reizi kūkojam, pēc tik gadiem būs kāzas* ‘Whoever hears and counts out for how many times the cuckoo calls for the first time in spring, in so many years the wedding will take place.’

Note the following quotation from LTT III 1503 about the beans and the hoopoe and cf. the folksong mentioned under (7):

- (12) *Kad pupetes nāk uz laukiem, tai gadā būs maz pupu* ‘If hoopoes come out to fields, very few beans will be [harvested] that year.’

In this case it is important to take into account the similar sounds in the beginning of words for ‘bean’ (Latvian *pupa*) and in designation of the hoopoe both in standard Latvian (*p u p uķis*) and in folksongs (*p u p ucīte*).

And finally, yet another example of correspondence between hoopoe and cuckoo in Latvian folk belief should be quoted:

- (13) *Ja pupute aizdzied, tad dvaša smird* (LTT III 1503) ‘When the hoopoe cries, somebody’s breath stinks.’

This is of course related to the hoopoe’s filth and stench.³

Also note the following example regarding cuckoo in Latvian folk belief:

- (14) *Ja dzeguze aizkūko, tad aizkūkotajam smird dvaša* (LTT I 393) ‘When the cuckoo calls, the breath of the person to whom it calls starts stinking.’

By way of conclusion, it can be noted, that in case of these items, certain correlation exists between the semiotic system of Latvian folksongs and that of Latvian folk beliefs.

ABBREVIATIONS

- BW – K. Barons un H. Visendorfs. *Latvju dainas*, 6 sēj., faksimiltipa izdevums, Rīga, 1989–1994.
ME – K. Mühlbachs *Lettisch-deutsches Wörterbuch*, III. Bd., redigiert, ergänzt und fortgesetzt von J. Endzelin, Riga, 1927–1929.
LT – P. Šmits. *Latviešu tautas ticējumi*, sēj. I–III, Rīga, 1940.
LVV – *Latviešu valodas vārdnīca*, otrais izdevums, Rīga, 1998.

KUKUTIS IR GEGUTĒ LATVIŲ LIAUDIES DAINOSE IR TIKĒJIMUOSE

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Santrauka

Miūlenbacho-Endzelyno latvių kalbos žodyne žodis *pupacīte* ir jo variantai *pupauksīte*, *pupetīte* ir *pupuzīte* pateikiami be semantinės interpretacijos, t. y. prie jų pažymėti tik klaustukai (pvz., *pupacīte* „?“ – ME III 414–415). Variantas *pupucīte* traktuojamas kaip maloninis vardas.

³ Cf. “Wiedehopf m. Der Name des durch seinem Federbusch auf dem Kopf, durch Unsäuberkeit und Gestank, vor allem durch den Paarungsruf des Männchens (*hup, hup...pa*) auffallenden Vogels lautet ahd. *wituhopha, -hoffa*, mhd. *wit(e)hopf(e)*” etc. (*Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Deutschen*, Bd. III: (Q–Z), erarbeitet von einem Autorenkollektiv <...> unter Leitung von Wolfgang Pfeifer, Berlin, 1989, p. 1749).

Minētas žodis ir gausūs jo variantai aptinkami Kr. Barono ir H. Visendorfo išleistu „Latviu liaudies dainu“ (Petrogradas, 1915) V tomo 132 puslapyje esančioje latviu liaudies dainoje nr. 33078. Tarp variantu yra eilutė su žodžiu *dzeguzīte* ‘gugutė’. Pagrindiniame variante mergelē kreipiasi į Šv. Jono dieną (*Jāņa diena*), o variantuose – ī gegutę ir, atrodo, kukutį, kad jie atvežtų jai berneli, jauniklę. Gerai žinoma, kad Janis reprezentuoja senąjį latvių vaisingumo dievybę.

Latviu bendrinėje kalboje žinomas kukučio pavadinimas *pupukis* ir jo variantai *pupikis*, *pupucis*, *puputis* bei *pupute* yra labai artimi pirmiai minētiems žodžiams iš liaudies dainos.

Straipsnyje pateikiama įtikinamų argumentų, kad latvių folkloro *pupacīte* ir jos variantai yra kukučio pavadinimai. P. Šmito veikale „Latviu liaudies tikējimai“ (*Latviešu tautas ticējumi*) rasta 20 pavyzdžių, kuriuose gegutės ar kukučio riksmais yra blogas ženklas, o nevedusiems ir netekėjusioms reiškia vedybas. Apskritai tarp šių paukščių – kukučio ir gegutės – aptinkama įdomių ryšių. Kalbos semiotinė sistema atitinka liaudies tikėjimų semiotinę sistemą. Straipsnio pradžioje nurodytiems latvių liaudies dainos žodžiams galima patikimai nustatyti reikšmę ‘kukutis’.

Visai nesenai vokiečių kalbos posakių su figūratyvinėmis reikšmėmis istoriniame žodyne (žr. Keith Spalding. *An Historical Dictionary of German Figurativ Usage*, vol. IV, Oxford, 1984, p. 1561) autorius rado ankstyvosios naujosios vokiečių kalbos posakį kukučiu apibūdinti: *des Kuckucks Küster*, plg. (1592 m.) ...*der widehopfe sei des guckucks küster, denn wenn sich der widehopfe hören lest, so lest sich auch bald hemach der ander narr, der guckkug hören, denn ich halte die zweene vor narren unter den Vögeln <...>* ‘[kalbama], kad kukutis yra tarsi gegutės zakristijonas (psalminkas), nes jis praneša apie save riksmu, o netrukus atsiliepia ir kitas juokdarys, gegutė, todėl šiuodu aš laikau paukščių juokdariais <...>’. Šis pasakymas paliudytas ir kai kuriuose pietinių vokiečių arealuose: *der Kuckuck und sein Küster* ‘gegutė ir jos zakristijonas’.

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