

## **IMAGE OF JEW IN LITHUANIAN FOLKLORE: REFLECTIONS OF MEDIEVAL SUPERSTITIONS**

LAIMA ANGLICKIENĖ

### **Summary**

The author of the article analyses the image of Jews, confessants of Judaism, as presented by the 19<sup>th</sup> century – the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Lithuanian folklore. Examples from nowadays folklore demonstrate the continuation of traditions. Creation of these narratives was influenced by certain specific reasons. Disparagement of strangers and their religion is an international phenomenon. The strange religion tends to be viewed and appreciated from the perspective of one's own. Rather than trying to understand the doctrine of other religions, people tend to renounce them as evil and wrong, and regard the strange religious rituals and customs as weird or funny. Such sometimes negative and sometimes – neutral constructions and interpretations of differing Jewish religious practices get reflected in folklore.

The popularity of the image of Jew in Lithuanian folklore was influenced by both international and local reasons: Jews, the sole believers of Judaism, are recognized for their cultural geniuses; this fact has always been and still is appreciated by all the other ethnic and religious groups. Therefore, international stereotypes and corresponding migration of folk motives contributed to the popularity of this personage in Lithuanian folklore.

The blood libel myths telling about Jews harming Christians and even killing them because of the Jewish religious rituals, could be named among the most popular folklore narratives. The stories describe ways of Jews killing Christian children or even adults, and explain the alleged reasons and purposes for the use of their blood.

Today, religious practices get rarely reflected in anecdotes; instead, humorous narratives describing sly and resourceful Jewish businessman are enjoying greater popularity. The Jewish practice of circumcision is the favorite theme of the obscene anecdotes.