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The World-Yard
Germanic world-enclosure and its Baltic reflections

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 (homestead, town, citadel, city) can be conceived as an embodiment of this mythical world-enclosure representing self-contained microcosm. This time, the Germanic sample (as that of Germanic **midja-gardaz* 'world' > Gotic *midjun-gards*, Old Norse *miðgarðr*, Old English *middan-geard*, etc.) is added to the previously examined cases and its immediate Baltic connections are surveyed. On the one hand, the Old Norse *garðr* 'enclosure, court, yard' (as well as Gotic *gards*, English *yard* etc. < Germanic **gardaz* < Indo-European **ghor-dhos / *ĝhor-dhos*) has an etymological equivalent ir Lithuanian *gardas* 'enclosure, pen' and 'citadel, town'; on the other, the Old Norse *miðr* 'middle' (Gotic *midjis*, English *middle*, etc. < Germanic **midjas / *medjas*

< Indo-European **medhi̯os*) also has an etymological equivalent in Lithuanian, *medis* or *medžias*, yet its meaning is not the 'middle' but the 'tree, wood'. The connection of these same two meanings is confirmed also by the Germanic and Baltic reflections of yet another Indo-European root, as Old Norse *viðr* 'wood, tree', Old English *widu*, *wudu*, English *wood* (< Germanic **widuz*) and Latvian *vidus*, Lithuanian *vidurys* 'middle'. It is argued in the article by referring to some authorities and immediate mythological and religious material that the common ground for this connection is to be sought precisely in the mythological image of the world-enclosure fenced around the world-tree in the middle which, moreover, has secure historical embodiments. Such an enclosure around a tree could be named in Lithuanian as *medžio gardas* or, by virtual (not attested yet regular) compound, *mēdžia-gardis*, *medė́-gardis*, *mēd-gardis* 'fence or yard around a tree' perfectly equivalent to the Germanic **midja-gardaz*.

Keywords: world-enclosure, Midgard, fenced-around world tree, Germanic and Baltic mythologies.