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ORIGIN, TYPES, AND FUNCTIONING OF CHANDELIERS WITH SERPENT ARMS: FROM THE NETHERLANDS TO LITHUANIA

Summary. Chandeliers with serpent arms held at the National Museum of Lithuania and the Lithuanian Art Museum are among the earliest found in Lithuania. Previous efforts to find chandeliers of similar décor in Latvia or Poland while collecting material on lighting fixtures in Lithuania and the neighbouring countries were unsuccessful. Due to that reason, it was thought that the spread of these chandeliers of extraordinary décor was limited to the territory of Lithuania. A closer and more thorough look into collections of Western European museums has revealed that the motif of an elegantly coiled snake on chandelier arms should be related to Hans Rogiers, a founder who worked in Amsterdam in 1598–1638.

In the article, the origin of chandeliers with serpent arms in Western Europe and the ways they could have possibly reached Lithuania are traced back for the first time. Specimens that survived or did not survive in Lithuania, their development and problems of dating are analysed. Their functioning space is explored and the subject of their symbolism is addressed. The article aims to present and evaluate the surviving chandeliers with serpent arms in Lithuania. In the research, instruments of formal, comparative, iconographic, and reconstructive analysis were used.

Keywords: chandeliers, candleholders, serpent, snake, Hans Rogiers, Amsterdam, Netherlands, Lithuania.

INTRODUCTION

In Lithuania and other European countries alike, development of chandeliers has not received much attention from researchers, thus each new publication helps to fill in the gaps. Although, during the last two decades, more than one publication thoroughly presenting certain groups of European chandeliers has appeared and research on these artefacts of applied art is promoted by the European Light and Glass Society established in the Czech Republic in 2000, the European history of lighting still has quite many blank pages.¹

In Lithuania, complex research on chandeliers started in 2009.² In 2017, the virtual catalogue *Historical Chandeliers in Lithuania* was launched and is constantly updated.³ Lighting fixtures with serpent arms have caught my attention at the very beginning of my research, but, until now, their development and origin remained unclear. These chandeliers were only briefly described in the catalogue *Lighting Fixtures from the 16th to the Early 20th Century*, published by the Museum of History and Ethnography

of the Lithuanian SSR in 1980.⁴ The grass snake ornament is not extraneous to Lithuanian culture; on the contrary, it is highly prominent and frequent (found in jewellery of the Baltic tribes and Lithuanian folk applied art), which was one of the main reasons that encouraged me to look for the origin of these chandeliers and analyse them thoroughly.

After almost a decade of research, an article by historians Berend Dubbe and Frans van Molle on lighting fixtures made by Dutch artisan Hans Rogiers from Harelbeke in the late 16th–early 17th century gave me an impetus to study chandeliers with serpent arms and prompted to look at them from a different angle. The data presented in the publication allowed to trace a more significant origin of Lithuanian heritage objects, as well.⁵

ORIGIN IN THE NETHERLANDS

As the authors of the above-mentioned article noted, the earliest iconographic source in which a lighting fixture in the shape of a coiled snake is recorded goes back to the last quarter of the 16th century.⁶



Fig. 1. Boetius Adamsz Bolswert (?). *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary*. Print, 1590–1633. The National Museum of the Netherlands (Rijksmuseum), obj. No. RP-P-1906-2224

The British Museum holds an engraving *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary*, attributed to Flemish draughtsman and painter Joos Goeimare.⁷ Goeimare was born in the town of Kortrijk (West Belgium) and from 1586 until his death in 1610 lived in Amsterdam. Apparently, somewhat later, this work was replicated by his contemporary, engraver Boetius Adams Bolswert (1580?–1633) (Fig. 1).⁸ The biblical plot of *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary* (Lk 10, 38–42) takes place in the period interior of the late 16th century.⁹ The characters are shown surrounded by earthly treasures and serpent-shaped candleholders hang on the fireplace depicted on the right.

A hanging candleholder very similar to the one seen in the painting is held at Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum (Fig. 2). It is composed of a cartouche-shaped holder with a lion's head, into which a coiled serpent arm with a drip pan and a sconce is placed. An inscription with the founder's initials and the date is cast into the edges of the cartouche: *STERCK. ALSDEN. LEEV. / VOORSICTICH. VOORT. / .TSLANGHEN. VIER. / .FE. HANS. ROGIER. 1599* (literal translation: *Beware of the snakes' fire and be brave as lion, Hans Rogier, 1599*).¹⁰

As can be seen from the catalogue of the British Museum, researchers have not identified the exact date when Goeimare's engraving *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary* was created (presumably between 1574 and 1587). There are even doubts as to its exact authorship.¹¹ Yet it is quite likely that Goeimare depicted actually existing interior elements.

It is important to note that founder Hans Rogiers was born in the town of Harelbeke, very close to Kortrijk, Joos Goeimare's native place in today's West Belgium. In 1598, led by religious and financial intentions, Rogiers, just like his peer the painter, arrived in Amsterdam to live and work.¹² With his successful forty-year career as a founder (1598–1638), Rogiers significantly contributed to the Dutch Golden Age. Research data provided by Dubbe and van Molle, who closely analysed this artisan's work, allows to assert that the master cast not only candleholders but also chandeliers with serpent arms, called *slangenkroon* (*crowns of serpents*) in Dutch.¹³ Wall-mounted candleholders with serpent motifs created by this founder have survived in the Catholic Church of St Bartholomeus in Merksem, a suburb of Antwerp (North Belgium), and two wall-mounted candleholders are presently held at the

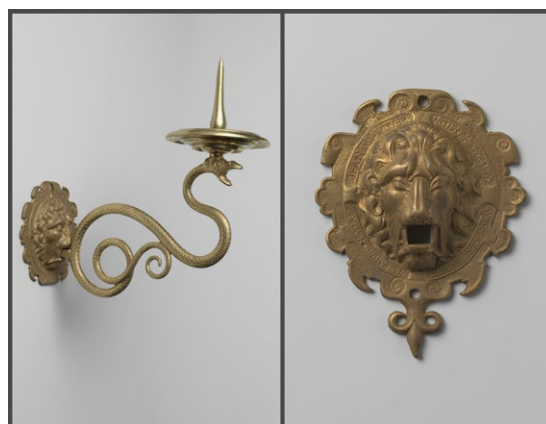


Fig. 2. Hans Rogiers. *Candleholder*, 1599. The National Museum of the Netherlands (Rijksmuseum), obj. No. BK-BR-946-S

Bishop's Museum in Haarlem (West Netherlands) and Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum. Importantly, two wall-mounted fireplace candleholders that personally belonged to Rogiers and which he left to his wife by his will, drafted before his death in 1626, most likely had this particular shape and décor. Two chandeliers made by this master have survived in the Dutch Reformed Church in Buren, another two in the Dutch Reformed Church in Eck en Wiel, and one chandelier previously decorated the Church of the Augustins in Dordrecht (today it belongs to the house-museum of famous banker and collector Simon van Gijn in Dordrecht) (Fig. 3). It is known that the master made chandeliers for the Deventer municipal winehouse and the Amsterdam orphanage (the sources do not make it clear if they had serpent motifs). One of Rogier's largest commissions, testifying to his great professional mastery, was a twenty-arm chandelier cast in 1612. It was designed by well-known Amsterdam sculptor and architect Hendrick de Keyser and, along with other gifts representing the country, shipped to Constantinople by prominent statesmen as a sign of gratitude for beneficial trade deals. Dubbe and van Molle also mention surviving candleholders of somewhat cruder craftsmanship, most probably cast in another workshop, and chandeliers with serpent arms (a couple of arms at the Catholic Church of St Pieter in



Fig. 3. Hans Rogiers. Chandelier with four snake arms from the Church of the Augustins (*Augustijnenkerk*) in Dordrecht, ca. 1625. The Van Gijn House Museum (*Huis Van Gijn*), Dordrecht, Netherlands

Berlaar, Belgium, and a chandelier in the Evangelical Reformed Church of St Lawrence in Alkmaar, Netherlands).¹⁴ The fact that the ornament was copied testifies that it was, indeed, popular.

ROUTES TO LITHUANIA

It is obvious that chandeliers with serpent arms made their way to the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania from the Netherlands. There has been little research on chandeliers from the Renaissance and Baroque periods in the neighbouring countries, thus we can only hypothetically guess who and by what routes brought them to these parts.

Taking into account the fact that quite many chandeliers with serpent arms in Lithuania used to hang in synagogues, we can guess that the spread of these chandeliers in Lithuania might have been a result of the constant migration of Judaic people. Roots of the Jewish community in Amsterdam go back to the 16th century, when Sephardic Jews fled from persecutions in Portugal and Spain. Ashkenazi Jews from Central and Eastern Europe also moved to the city famous for its religious tolerance. Migration from Lithuania's historical lands to Amsterdam in the mid-17th century was caused by the pogroms conducted by Ukrainian Cossack hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky in 1648–1649 and the war of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth with Sweden and Moscow. The settling of Jews in Amsterdam coincided with the establishment of the United Provinces of the Netherlands and their final separation from Spain. With their commercial abilities and craftsmanship, Jews greatly contributed to the Dutch Golden Age. In the 17th century, Amsterdam became a centre of Jewish literature and printing.¹⁵ Jews based there maintained cultural and commercial contacts with their native places, and this might have played a part in the spread of serpent-shaped chandeliers in Lithuania.

Yet, according to Dubbe and van Molle, majority of the surviving serpent-shaped chandeliers in the Netherlands are found in Dutch Reformed (Protestant) and Catholic churches, and nothing is known about their presence in synagogues (except for an engraving depicting a chandelier in the Portuguese

Synagogue in Amsterdam, discovered by myself).¹⁶ A second hypothesis is possible: the appearance of these artefacts in Lithuanian lands is related to Dutch merchants and the noble Protestant Radziwiłł family that maintained close contacts with them.

Circa 1598, Dutch merchant Cornelius Winhold, who traded textiles and various other imported goods, moved to Vilnius. It was the subject of historian Aivas Ragauskas' article "Vilnensian Winholds as Clients of the Biržai Radvilas? On Nobleman-Burgher Contacts in the 16th and 17th centuries" ("Vilniečiai Winholdai – Biržų Radvilų klientai? (XVI a. pab. – XVII a. pr.). Kelios mintys apie didikų ir miestiečių ryšius").¹⁷ According to the historian's research, the Winholds were not ordinary merchants, as they were distinguished not only by their wealth (their house on Pilies Street had water

supply, Venetian glass windows, a library, and luxurious furniture) but also by their education and social standing.¹⁸ It is quite possible that Dutch merchants brought candleholders and chandeliers made by their compatriot, famous founder Hans Rogiers who worked in Holland at that time, to the nobles of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

COUNTERPARTS AND REPLICAS IN LITHUANIA

It is important to mention that in the 17th–19th century inventories of churches, manors, or private houses of Vilnius, chandeliers are described very laconically. Numbers of arms, materials, and placing of fixtures are mentioned, but data about their décor elements are very scarce.¹⁹ Descriptions of chandeliers with serpent arms have not been found in written sources so far, thus the development of these

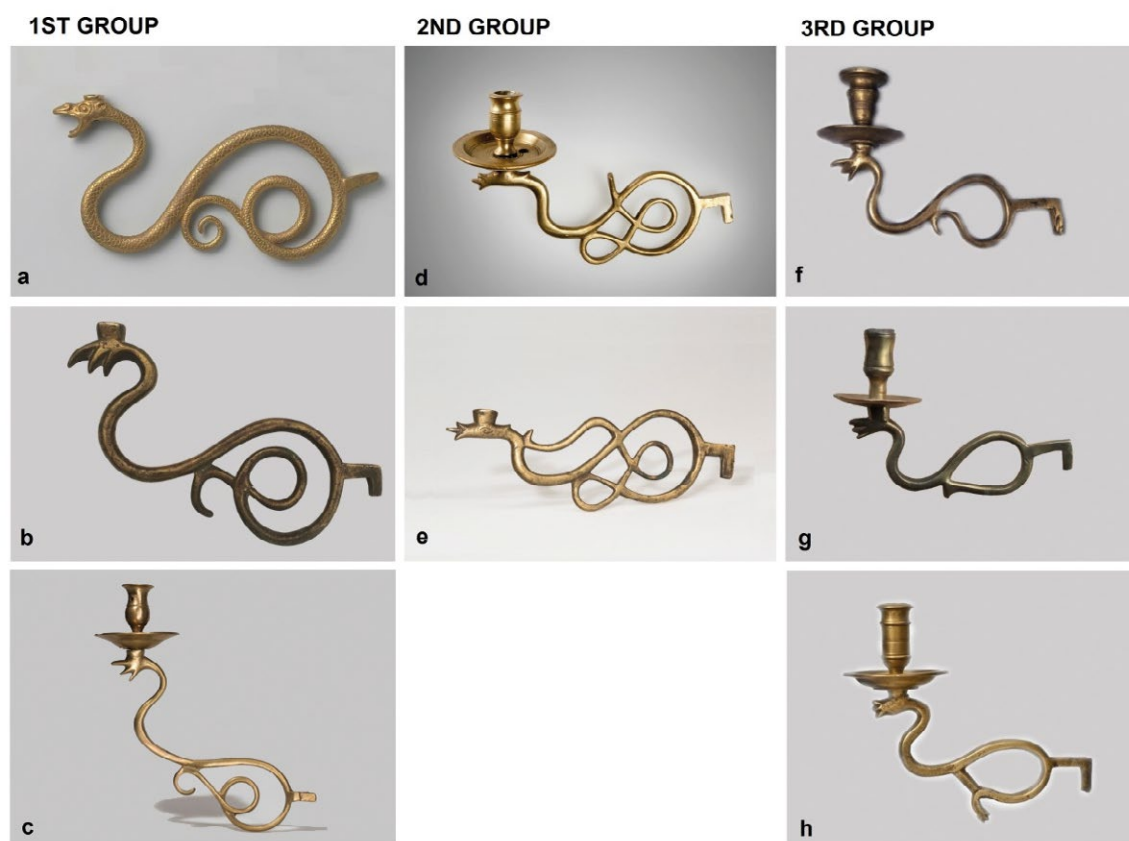


Fig. 4. Arms with two, three, and a single coil:
 a) Hans Rogiers. Arm of candleholder RP-P-1906-2224, L=25 cm, 1599. The National Museum of the Netherlands (Rijksmuseum)
 b) arm, L=28 cm, 17c. Private collection
 c) arm of chandelier IM-13029, L=30 cm, early 17c. (?). The National Museum of Lithuania
 d) arm of chandelier TM-2332, L=20.4 cm, 17c. The Lithuanian Art Museum

e) arm IM-4582, L=24 cm, 17c. The National Museum of Lithuania
 f) arm from the Bagaslaviškis church, 17c. (?)
 g) arm, L=18 cm, 17c. Private collection of Gintaras Kazlauskas
 h) arm of chandelier Tt-1699, L=21 cm, 19c. (?) The M. K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art

chandeliers in Lithuania has to be analysed on the basis of iconographic sources and surviving artefacts.

According to currently available data, individual serpent-shaped arms and chandeliers with 6–8 arms of this décor have survived in Lithuania. They are held at the largest museums, churches, and private collections of Lithuania. An overview of the surviving examples shows that the coiling of serpents in the arms is different. According to this feature, we can divide them into three groups (Fig. 4):

1. Arms with two coils from the early 17th century (closest to Rogier's artefacts) (Fig. 4 b, c).
2. Arms with three coils from the 17th century (Fig. 4 d, e).
3. Arms with a single coil from the 17th–18th century and their 19th century replicas (Fig. 4 f, g, h).

The first group. Four arms, dated to the 17th century and held in a private collection in Lithuania, are the most similar to candleholders cast by Rogiers (Fig. 4 b). Manually cast and polished details are not exactly alike; each arm was attached to a specially designed spot, thus their mounts are marked with a certain amount of punches (I–2, II–5, III–5, IV–6). Interrupted or duplicate numbering of arms allows one to assume that the arms may have belonged to two different chandeliers or one two-crown chandelier.



Fig. 5. Chandelier IM-4618, early 17c. The National Museum of Lithuania

The National Museum of Lithuania (hereinafter referred to as the LNM) holds two fully surviving chandeliers. The stem of chandelier IM-4618, dated to the early 17th century, is baluster-shaped and composed of several elements (Fig. 5). This shape is typical of the Renaissance period. A large hoop for hanging at the top of the stem and a disc under it are very similar to the ones seen in Rogier's chandeliers. The arms are set into a disc-shaped plate and fastened by plugs with oval heads. As is typical of early chandeliers, each arm, its place of fastening, and plug are marked by a certain number of punched



Fig. 6. Tadeusz Wróblewski's office. Photography by Jan Bułhak, 1932. The Wróblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, Rare Books Department SFg-2402/4/22



Fig. 7. Chandelier IM-13029, early 17c. (?) The National Museum of Lithuania

dents. Candleholder and chandelier arms made by the Amsterdam-based founder are engraved with imitation snakeskin scales and the serpent's head is elaborate: it has eye, nose, and ear openings and a tongue. Arms of the chandelier held at the LNM are smooth and the serpent's head is heavily stylised, without any details, and executed with great technical and visual craftsmanship. A two-coil ornament, composed from the serpent's body and tail, is almost identical to the one on Rogier's arms, only the serpent's head seems to be raised somewhat higher in the Lithuanian arm. The chandelier is electrified, thus original candle cups are removed and drip pans

have holes for wires. Rogier's dated candleholder confirms the assumption that the chandelier held at the LNM has a mannerist shape. According to the museum's inventory books, the chandelier was received from the Wróblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences. A photograph made by Jan Bułhak in 1932 testifies that it hung in Tadeusz Wróblewski's office (Fig. 6). Arms of the other exhibit of the LNM (Inv. No. IM-13029) also have two coils and can be attributed to the first group of arms that are the most similar to the ones produced by Rogiers (Fig. 7). There are eight of them in total. The stem of the chandelier is reminiscent of the ancient Greek vessel *lekythos* (ancient Greek *lēkythos*). The arms are connected to the stem by highly decorative retainers that repeat the shape of the stem, and each has a little bird with folded wings turned sideways on the top. Regarding the shape of the stem, it has to be noted that its lathed, elongated upper part is somewhat unusual. It is decorated with two crowns, which also puts to doubt the authenticity of this part of the chandelier. The chandelier has a cast figure of a spreadeagle at the top.

Chandeliers from Tytuvėnai manor (Fig. 8), the Druya wooden synagogue (North Belarus), the Utena synagogue, the Great Synagogue of Vilnius (Fig. 9), and the Kelmė wooden synagogue (Fig. 10),



Fig. 8. Chandelier with serpent arms in Tytuvėnai manor, 1938. Reproduced from: Širkaitė, Jolanta. "Tytuvėnų dvaras ir dailininkė Sofija Romerienė". In *Tytuvėnai. Istorija, kultūra, meno paminklai*. Vilnius: Vilniaus dailės akademijos leidykla, 2006: 71

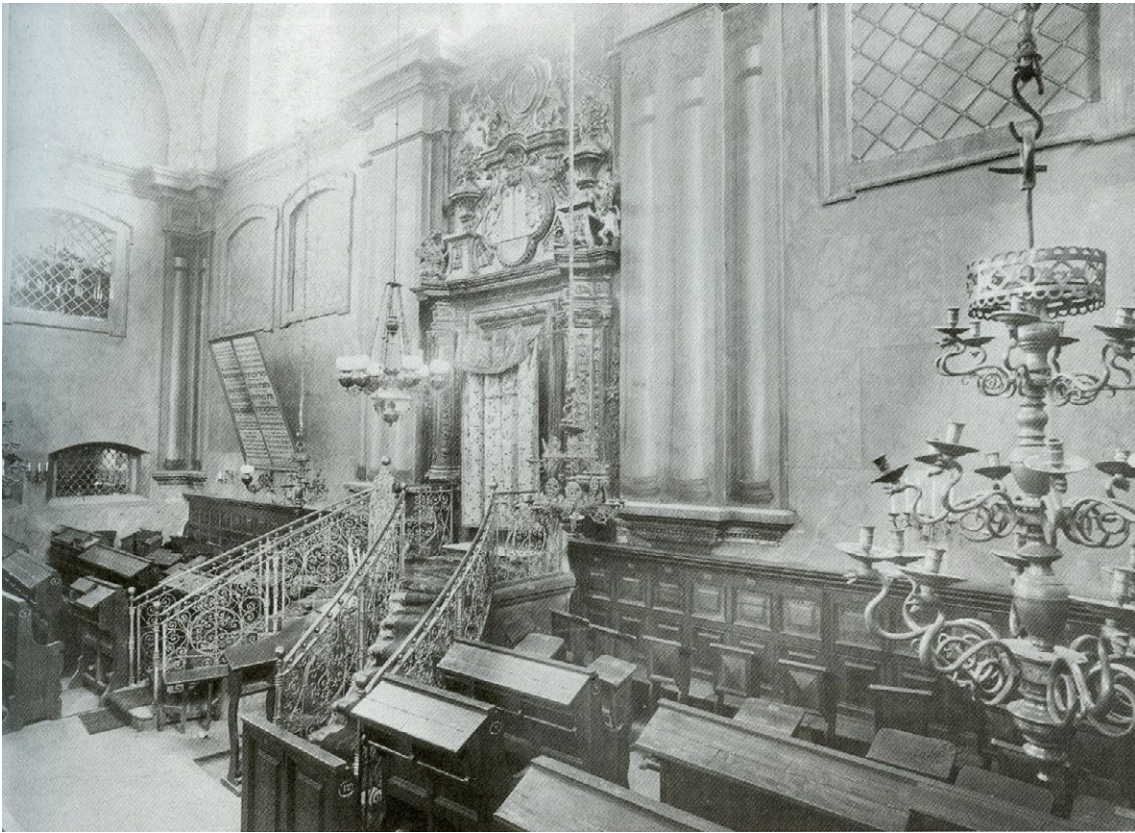


Fig. 9. Chandelier in the Great Synagogue of Vilnius. Photography by Icik Serebrin, ca. 1900. Reproduced from: Niunkaitė Račiūnienė, Aistė. Lietuvos žydų tradicinio meno ir simbolių pasaulis. Vilnius: Valstybinis Vilniaus Gaono žydų muziejus, 2011: 609.



Fig. 10. Chandelier of the Kelmė wooden synagogue. Photography by Chackelis Lemchenas, 1938. The Šiauliai "Aušros" Museum, Pos. No. 442/III and T-N2987

which are recorded in iconography but fates of which are unknown, should be attributed to the first group of chandeliers of the most archaic form.²⁰ Attention should be drawn to the fact that the chandelier of the Kelmė synagogue is composed of four crowns, to which more than thirty serpent arms were possibly attached. This chandelier was presumably very heavy and, probably because of that, its base was supported on a wooden column. The arms are engraved with imitation snakeskin pattern and the stem has a pattern of floral motifs. This item is one of the largest bronze chandeliers with serpent arms known to me.

The second group consists of horizontally aligned arms in which the serpent's body and tail form a three-coil ornament. A chandelier of this type is held at the Lithuanian Art Museum (hereinafter referred to as the LDM) (Inv. No. TM-2332) (Fig. 11). The small hung multi-arm bronze chandelier of warm yellow colour belongs to the baluster type, like the previous ones.²¹ At the top of the stem is an open-work crown that covers a trefoil suspension hoop. At the middle of the stem, there is a round "box" for inserting the arms, and there is a small orb finial at the base. Importantly, the stems of the Gothic chandeliers most often had a faceted downward spire, the Renaissance ones were baluster-shaped and sometimes had a lion's head at the base, and in the early 17th century in the Netherlands, and later all around Europe, chandeliers with a polished larger or smaller orb finial at the base were made. The finial of the chandelier held at the LDM is small, as if "undeveloped", thus the chandelier can be dated to



Fig. 11. Chandelier TM-2332, 17c. The Lithuanian Art Museum

the 17th century. There are ten round holes in the middle. Upon a closer look, it can be seen that they were not bored but cast while shaping the finial. So far their function is not exactly clear. The chandelier with serpent arms held at the LDM was conserved by Sigitas Domarkas at the Pranas Gudynas Centre for Restoration in 1984.²² Four broken arms were repaired, lost drip pans and sconces for candles were restored. The museum has no data as to where the chandelier originally hung.

An almost identical chandelier can be seen in the photograph of the Valkininkai synagogue (Fig. 12). An important fact is that its orb finial at the bottom of the stem also has holes, but the shape of the stem and the number of arms are different. Two arms held at the LNM (Inv. No. IM-4582) should also be attributed to this group of chandeliers. As can be seen from the scheme of the surviving arms (Fig. 4e), the tip of the serpent's tail is bent towards the head. Arms of the second group, in which the serpent's body is coiled into three circles, are less frequently found in Lithuania. Their counterparts in other countries have not been encountered so far.

The third group is comprised of chandelier arms of a simpler design, in which the serpent's body and tail form a single loop. Two arms of such chandelier were captured by photographer Aloyzas Petrašiūnas in the Bagaslaviškis church in 2005 (Fig. 4f). One of them was probably made in the late 17th or 18th century and the other has marks of having been repaired and is cast less elegantly, possibly in the 19th century. Two sets of arms (consisting of six pieces each) with grass snake ornaments found in a church or churches were rescued from decay by Father Stanislovas (Algirdas Mykolas Dobrovolskis) from the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin. Circa 1985–1988, he handed them over to conservator Gintaras Kazlauskas for further safekeeping. Six arms of the first set are similar to the ones seen in the Bagaslaviškis church, and the other six (Fig. 4g) have more static and regular lines. The arms are marked with punches and it can be seen that some of them were broken and later repaired by a skilled master. According to iconographic sources, a chandelier with single-coiled



Fig. 12. Chandelier of the Valkininkai synagogue. Photography by Szymon Zajczyk, before 1939. Yad Vashem (*The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority*), Jerusalem, 204CO2

serpent arms was held at the Karčiai synagogue (Jonava district) and the Vilnius Great Synagogue.²³ A photograph of the Senate Chamber of Vilnius University from 1933–1934 shows as many as two such chandeliers (Fig. 13). Their stems are baluster-shaped and closer to those of the chandeliers of the Renaissance period.

A fully surviving chandelier held at the M. K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art (hereinafter referred to as the NMKČDM) (Inv. No. Tt-1699) (Fig. 14) should be attributed to the third group. Comparing the arms of this chandelier (Fig. 4h) with the ones discussed earlier, we can see that they were crudely cast by a master that was not highly skilled. The stem and the orb finial of the chandelier are almost identical to those of the 17th-century dated chandelier held at the LDM (Fig. 11), but the crown of the chandelier held at the NMKČDM is rather roughly perforated and only imitates 17th-century openwork forms. Taking this into account, the chandelier held at the NMKČDM could be regarded a 19th-century replica.

SYMBOLISM AND FUNCTIONING

Dubbe and van Molle discovered that chandeliers cast by Hans Rogiers used to hang and still hang in Roman Catholic and Dutch Reformed churches.²⁴ Though it is not exactly clear from the sources, chandeliers with the décor under discussion might have adorned secular interiors as well.

Not a single functioning chandelier with serpent arms in Lithuania is known. All surviving chandeliers or their fragments are held at museums, private collections, or sacristy closets of Catholic churches. As can be clearly seen from iconographic sources, chandeliers with this décor were mainly used in Lithuanian and Belarusian synagogues. They were also captured in 20th-century photographs of private interiors and interiors of public institutions. Fragments of these chandeliers are sometimes found in church attics.

In the interpretation of symbols, there hardly is an animal that is viewed more contradictorily than the serpent / grass snake. Due to its presumed



Fig. 13. Chandeliers with serpent arms in the Senate Chamber of Vilnius University, 1933–1934. Reproduced from: Supruniuk, Anna, and Miroslaw Adam Supruniuk. *Uniwersytet Stefana Batorego w Wilnie w fotografiach 1919–1939*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, 2009: 75

rejuvenation related to skin shedding and living in crevices, this animal symbolises sliness and immortality, light and darkness, good and evil. Representation of the serpent in Christian art is often closely intertwined with that of the dragon. The Latin word *draco* means both a snake and a dragon, both of which symbolise the devil in the Christian tradition.²⁵ Combination and overlapping of these symbols can be noticed in the 16th century iconography of St John the Evangelist. *The Dictionary of Christian Iconography* reads: “The high priest of the Temple of Diana at Ephesus challenged St John the Evangelist to drink from a poisoned chalice to test the power of his faith. Two condemned men had already died. But John survived, restored the men to life and converted the high priest. The chalice came to symbolise

the Christian faith, and the dragon—Satan.”²⁶ One can notice that some 15th–16th century engravings depict a snake in St John’s chalice, while others show a long-tailed winged creature more reminiscent of a dragon (Fig. 15).

One of the earlier known chandeliers with serpent arms is held at the Museo del Bargello in Italy (Fig. 16).²⁷ As is common for mediaeval suspended lighting fixtures, it belongs to the ring-shaped type and is dated by Italian researchers to the 15th century. The didactic meaning of the serpent motif in this artefact is not obvious.

Christian interpretation of the serpent/dragon can be seen in bronze chandeliers made by masters in the Gothic period. New York’s Metropolitan Museum holds a replica of a chandelier produced



Fig. 14. Chandelier Tt-1699, 19c. The M. K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art



Fig. 15. Poisoned Chalice of Saint John the Evangelist. Fragments of a 16c. painting (The City of Paris Museum of Fine Arts, obj. No. PPP2541) and a print by Martin Schongauer (?), 1470–1490 (The National Museum of the Netherlands (Rijksmuseum), obj. No. RP-P-OB-1026)

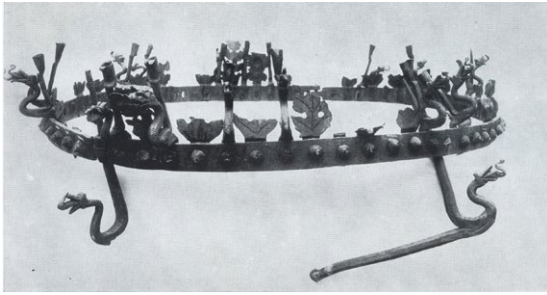


Fig. 16. Chandelier, 14c. Tuscany, Italy. The Bargello National Museum. Reproduced from: Mariacher, Giovanni. *Lampade e lampadari in Italia: dal Quattrocento all'Ottocento*. Milano: A. Vallardi, 1981: 95



Fig. 17. Copy of chandelier made in Dinant region (Belgium) in 1450. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, obj. No. 1975.1.1421

in the Dinant region (Belgium) in 1450 (Fig. 17). The stem of this lighting fixture is reminiscent of an openwork shrine with a sculpture of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Infant Christ at its centre. Twelve arms, representing the narrative of victory over sin, are arranged under her feet. Lower elbows of the arms contain figures of long-tailed winged dragons (their heads stick through the openwork décor of little candleholders) fighting fire bearers, fire protectors—deer—and warriors with swords in the upper spires of the arms.

Going back to the subject of the article, it should be remembered that Rogiers, who lived from the late 16th century to the 1630s, worked in a Protestant environment. In the 16th century, the Reformation spread in Northern Europe, paving the way for iconoclasm that resulted in ravaging of Catholic churches and destruction of pictures of saints, sculptures, and décor elements. Protestantism thrived in the North of Holland, where Catholics constituted a minority. One of the basic principles of Protestant Reformation religious art was expressing the didactic meaning of the work through simple

composition. For the analysis of chandeliers with serpent arms, the inscription *Beware of the snakes' fire and be brave as lion*, found on a suspended candleholder held at Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum, is of great importance. In this allegory, the lion as a symbol of courage, strength, and nobility is clearly opposed to the negative and sly image of the serpent. When comparing the above-discussed Gothic chandelier with the sculpture of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Rogier's suspended candleholders and chandeliers, one can notice that the works seek to convey a similar idea, but the form of expression differs. Candleholders and chandeliers cast by Rogiers had minimal décor and impeccably pure forms and, thanks to their inscriptions, also performed a didactic function in addition to lighting. Besides, the message conveyed by the artefact was quite universal, which is confirmed by the functioning of these chandeliers in the interiors of both Catholic and Dutch Reformed churches in the Netherlands.

As mentioned earlier, iconographic sources show that, in Lithuania, lighting fixtures with this kind of décor were used mainly in synagogues. It is possible that a chandelier with similar décor may have hung in the Portuguese Synagogue in Amsterdam (1675, architect E. Bouman). In 1695, a three-crown chandelier with serpent arms above the bimah was depicted in Romeyn de Hooghe's engraving (Fig. 18). The engraving has not received any attention from researchers, thus it is not clear if it was a client's whim or a precise depiction of an already existing object.

Before analysing the phenomenon of the spread of chandeliers with serpent arms in synagogues, it is important to remember that Jews use standing and suspended Shabbat candleholders and standing Hanukkah candleholders. These candleholders are considered ritual and, since ancient times, have had a certain shape and characteristic symbols. And yet the serpent motif was not noticed among the elements of their décor.

Synagogues in Lithuania used to have not one but several or even a dozen chandeliers which were not ritualistic but performed the lighting and decorative function. Some of them were decorated with symbols typical of Jewish art. One such chandelier is held at

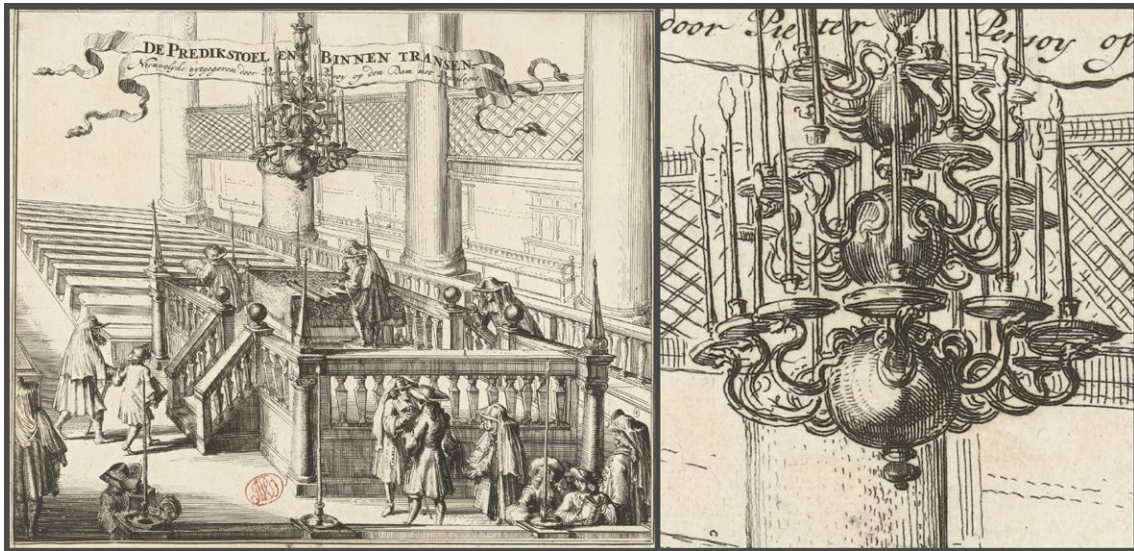


Fig. 18. Chandelier with snake arms in the Portuguese Synagogue in Amsterdam. Print by Romeyn de Hooghe, 1695. The National Museum of the Netherlands (Rijksmuseum), obj. No. RP-P-AO-24-31-2

the NMKČDM (Inv. No. Tt-1707) and another one at the Trakai History Museum. The latter has been described in the virtual catalogue *Historical Chandeliers in Lithuania*.²⁸ However, universally fashionable chandeliers were also used to light synagogues. As can be seen from the valuable catalogue of iconographic sources of synagogues compiled and published by Aistė Niunkaitė Račiūnienė, in the early 20th century photographs of the Great Synagogue of Vilnius, an excellent 19th century crystal chandelier, hanging next to the Aron Kodesh, is captured; later photographs show an *art nouveau* chandelier; an ornate kerosene lamp is seen hanging in the Zabludov Synagogue; and a 1900 photograph of the Great Synagogue of Vilnius shows a factory-made chandelier, most probably brought from Poland, and a large crown-shaped chandelier decorated with a great many strings of crystal/glass beads (quite many of them have survived in Catholic churches).²⁹ These examples confirm that Jewish sanctuaries were often decorated with lighting fixtures characteristic of secular interiors.

Niunkaitė Račiūnienė devoted much attention to explaining the symbols of Jewish traditional art in Lithuania. In her book *The World of Traditional Art and Symbols of Lithuanian Jews*, she extensively discussed the architectural, floral, zoomorphic, and emblematic images used in synagogue interior decoration.³⁰ However, the serpent motif,

predominant in the décor of synagogue chandeliers, is not explained in this monograph. To understand why chandeliers with serpent arms, created for West European Roman Catholic and Reformed churches, took root and became widespread in Lithuanian synagogues, it is worth remembering a story from the Old Testament. The Book of Numbers (Sk 21, 4–9) tells how, led by Moses, the people of Israel “travelled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, but grew impatient on the way. They spoke against God and against Moses. So, the Lord sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and asked him to pray that the Lord would take away the snakes. Instructed by the Lord, Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole, so that when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived.” (Fig. 19).³¹ In this narrative, the bronze snake made by Moses in the desert becomes an image of the Saviour.³² Both the venomous snakes and the life-saving bronze snake are the Lord’s instruments. Chandeliers with multiple serpent arms in synagogues might have served as symbolic messages, reminding people to be conscious and have strong faith.

One of the basic questions concerning the functioning of chandeliers with serpent arms is if lighting fixtures with this décor (wall-mounted candleholders or chandeliers) may have hung in Lithuanian Catholic



Fig. 19. *Moses And The Brazen Serpent*. Plaque, 1160. The Victoria and Albert Museum, London, obj. No. M.59-1952

churches. As mentioned earlier, church inventories and visitation acts contain little information about applied art décor elements. All chandeliers with serpent arms surviving in Lithuania and discussed in this article are made from bronze. Two chandeliers have six arms, and the other two have eight. An overview of a considerable number of church documents revealed that the 17th century was a period of bronze (brass) chandeliers; six-arm chandeliers were the most widespread and eight- and twelve-arm ones were also quite popular.³³ Most lighting fixtures mentioned in the 17th century sources did not survive. Unlike Protestant, Catholic churches were constantly redecorated and their interior and furnishings were refurbished. With the appearance of electric lighting, newer and more fashionable chandeliers adapted for electric bulbs were bought, whereas the older ones were permanently moved to attics or other auxiliary premises. These factors were crucial for the survival of chandeliers in Catholic churches and that is why there are hardly any 17th century chandeliers surviving *in situ*. Production materials and the number of arms of the analysed chandeliers, as well as the fact that in Western Europe these chandeliers carried a didactic Christian message, allow to assume that chandeliers with serpent arms may have hung in Lithuanian Catholic churches.

Going back to secular interiors in Lithuania, chandeliers with serpent arms are captured in a

photograph of Tadeusz Wróblewski's (1858–1925) office from 1932; a photograph from 1933–1934 shows three chandeliers with serpent arms hanging in Vilnius University above the Senate's meeting table; and a huge hanging chandelier was captured in a 1938 photograph of Tytuvėnai manor that belonged to the Römer family. As can be seen from these examples, chandeliers with such décor hung in the interiors of cultural figures' houses and important cultural institutions in the early 20th century. According to Polish chandelier researcher Jerzy W. Hołubiec, Dutch-type chandeliers with figurines of crowned eagles—a symbol of the Kingdom of Poland—were very popular in interwar Poland.³⁴ In interwar independent Lithuania, baluster-shaped bronze chandeliers were also considered a valuable element of secular private and public interiors, but it can be seen from iconographic sources that in Lithuania they had a unique décor detail—a coiled grass snake. At the level of theoretical speculations, we could assert that this décor motif was valued and possibly associated with Lithuania's past or perhaps even the Baltic roots and the search of cultural identity in the interwar period of independence.

CONCLUSIONS

Aesthetic views of different eras that coincided with discoveries of new materials often determined the appearance of new types of chandeliers. Certain or, one could say, most successful types of chandeliers, established in the visual culture of each period, were exported and would become highly popular in the elite environment.³⁵ Artefacts imported from other countries, when possible, were imitated and interpreted by local masters. As the article shows, bronze baluster-type chandeliers with serpent arms, so far insufficiently analysed by European researchers, are among these “successful” examples.

Elegant chandeliers and hanging candleholders of harmonious proportions and pure forms, created by founder Hans Rogiers in the Dutch Golden Age of the late 16th–early 17th century, are works of extraordinary artistic value. Separate pieces found in European auctions and antique shops, attributed to Northern Europe and occasionally Sweden,

only confirm that the area of distribution of these chandeliers has not been sufficiently explored and the subject is still waiting for further research.

Referring to research data of foreign historians and surviving iconographic material in Lithuania, it is obvious that chandeliers with symbolic serpent arms were not specially meant for interiors of a single specific type, but were used in different sacral and secular public and private interiors both in the Netherlands and in Lithuania. The functioning of these chandeliers in prayer houses of various denominations was possibly determined by the universal interpretation of the serpent symbol.

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- Notes**
- ¹ In 2001, Dr. Käthe Klappenbach published a catalogue of glass and crystal chandeliers before 1810 (Käthe Klappenbach, *Kronleuchter: Mit Behang aus Bergkristall und Glas sowie Glasarmkronleuchter bis 1810* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2001); in 2003, Igor Sichev published his research on bronze workshops that operated in Russia, devoting much attention to chandeliers produced there (Игорь Сычев, *Русская бронза: Энциклопедия русского антиквариата* (Москва: Трилистник, 2003); a book presenting an overview of uniquely designed chandeliers in the period of design formation and development by Charlotte and Peter Fiell appeared in 2005 (Charlotte & Peter Fiell, *1000 Lights: 1878 to Present* (Cologne: Taschen, 2005); a comprehensive book-catalogue about horn chandeliers, widespread in the Middle Ages, came out in 2011 (*Artefakt und Naturwunder: Das Leuchterweibchen der Sammlung Ludwig* (Germany: Kerber Christof Verlag, 2011); in 2018, an extensive booklet on restored chandeliers from the late 19th–early 20th century in Hünegg's Palace in Switzerland was published (*Schloss Hünegg. Restaurierung Der Leuchter 2016–2018* (Hünibach: Jost Druck AG, 2018); and in 2019, Dr. Käthe Klappenbach published a catalogue of chandeliers from the collections of the Prussian Palaces and Gardens Foundation Berlin-Brandenburg, dating from the 17th to the 20th century and made of brass, gilded bronze, zinc, porcelain, wood, antlers, amber, and glass (Käthe Klappenbach, *Kronleuchter des 17. bis 20. Jahrhunderts aus Messing, „bronze doré“, Zinkguss, Porzellan, Holz, Geweih, Bernstein und Glas* (Brandenburg, Regensburg: Herausgegeben von der Generaldirektion der Stiftung Preußische Schlösser und Gärten Berlin, 2019). LIGHT and GLASS European Society and Documentation Centre for Chandeliers, Light and Lighting <https://www.lightandglass.eu/>
- ² Alantė Valtaitė-Gagač, "Sietynai Europoje ir XVII–XX a. pirmosios pusės sietynai Lietuvoje," *Kultūros paminklai* 14, (2009): 82–99; Alantė Valtaitė-Gagač, "Lietuvos sietynai XVII a. dokumentuose," *Kultūros paminklai* 17 (2013): 144–155; Alantė Valtaitė-Gagač, "XIX a. antrosios pusės – XX a. pirmosios pusės sietynų gamyba pramoninėse Europos dirbtuvėse ir jų paveldas Lietuvoje," *Acta Academiae Artium Vilnensis* 61 (2011): 63–74; Alantė Valtaitė-Gagač, "XIX a. papjė mašė sietynai: nuo istorijos iki atribucijos ir rekonstrukcijos," *Kultūros paminklai* 22 (2018): 112–121; chandeliers of interwar Lithuania as general interior elements were quite thoroughly analysed in the book: Lina Preišegalavičienė, *Lietuvos tarpukario interjerai 1918–1940* (Kaunas: Vox altera, 2016), 131–146.
- ³ Virtual catalogue *Historical Chandeliers in Lithuania* www.sietynupaveldas.lt
- ⁴ Klaudija Kačinskienė and Ona Mažeikienė, *XV–XXa. pr. apšvietimo priemonės* (Vilnius: Lietuvos TSR istorijos ir etnografijos muziejus, 1980), 33, 133.
- ⁵ Berend Dubbe and Frans van Molle, "De Amsterdamse Geelgieter Hans Rogiers van Harelbeke (†1638)," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 22 (1971): 21–40.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, 32–33.
- ⁷ *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary*, Print. 1574–1587. Object No. 1877,0811.1053, The British Museum, accessed October 2, 2018, http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1518409&partId=1&people=131814&eoA=131814-2-23&page=1

⁸ *Christus bij Maria en Martha*, Print. 1590–1633. Object No. RP-P-1906-2224, Rijksmuseum, accessed 2 October, 2018, <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/collection/RP-P-1906-2224>

⁹ “On the day that Jesus visited, Martha’s desire was to be a good hostess—to serve the best meal with the best possible presentation, for Jesus’ sake. Her sister Mary, however, was taking some time out to listen to Jesus. As Martha ‘was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made, she became a little cross with Mary. But, instead of backing her up in her demand, Jesus rebuked her: ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things, but one thing is needed.’” *Krikščioniškos ikonografijos žodynas*, ed. Dalia Ramonienė (Vilnius: Vilniaus dailės akademijos leidykla, 1997), 193.

¹⁰ Hans Rogiers van Harelbeke, *Wandluchter met leeuwenkop en slang*. 1599. Object No. BK-BR-946-S, Rijksmuseum, accessed October 2, 2018, <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/search/objects?q=hans+rogiers&p=1&ps=12&st=Objects&ii=7#/BK-BR-946-S,7>

¹¹ *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary*.

¹² Dubbe and van Molle, 30.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 24–28.

¹⁵ Jan Jaap de Ruiter, “Jews in the Netherlands and Their Languages,” *Tilburg Papers in Culture Studies* 116 (2014), 8; Paul G. Hoftijzer, “Dutch Printing and Bookselling in the Golden Age,” in *Two Faces of the Early Modern World: The Netherlands and Japan in the 17th and 18th Centuries* (Kyoto: International Research Center for Japanese Studies, 2001), 61.

¹⁶ With the exception of the 1695 engraving of the Portuguese Synagogue in Amsterdam, representing a chandelier with serpents, discovered and mentioned by Alantė Valtaitė-Gagač; although it is unclear if such chandelier indeed existed. Dubbe and van Molle, 24–28.

¹⁷ Aivas Ragauskas, “Vilniečiai Winholdai – Biržų Radvilų klientai? (XVI a. pab.–XVII a. pr.). Kelios mintys apie didikų ir miestiečių ryšius,” *Mūsų praeitis* 7 (2001): 5–21.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁹ Alantė Valtaitė-Gagač, “XVII a.–XX a. 4 dešimtmečio sietytų paveldas Lietuvoje” (PhD diss., Vilniaus dailės akademija, 2015), 184–212.

²⁰ Aistė Niunkaitė Račiūnienė, *Lietuvos žydų tradicinio meno ir simbolių pasaulis* (Vilnius: Valstybinis Vilniaus Gaono žydų muziejus, 2011), 417, 580, Fig. 88, 750.

²¹ For more on the types of chandeliers, see: Valtaitė-Gagač, “XVII a.–XX a. 4 dešimtmečio...”, 26–34.

²² *Chandelier TM-2332*, rest. prot. Nr. 398/1509. 1984. Pranas Gudynas Centre for Restoration of the Lithuanian Art Museum.

²³ Niunkaitė Račiūnienė, 449, 615, Fig. 203, 896.

²⁴ Dubbe and van Molle, 24–28.

²⁵ Ramonienė, 81.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 118–119.

²⁷ Giovanni Mariacher, *Lampade e lampadari in Italia: dal Quattrocento all'Ottocento* (Milano: A. Vallardi, 1981), 95.

²⁸ <http://www.sietynupaveldas.lt/cards/113>, Inv. No. GEK-3514.

²⁹ Niunkaitė Račiūnienė, 611, 615, Fig. 874, 875, 896.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 183–385.

³¹ Ramonienė, 81.

³² Hans Biedermann, *Naujasis simbolių žodynas* (Vilnius: Mintis, 2002), 138.

³³ Valtaitė-Gagač, “XVII a.–XX a. 4 dešimtmečio...”, 59–62. In the dissertation, in the table of materials of church chandeliers, the Polish term *mosiądz*, frequently found in sources, is translated as *brass*, although a considerable number of chandeliers might have been cast from bronze. Similar inaccuracies also occur in written sources in reference to glass/crystal chandeliers.

³⁴ Jerzy W. Hołubiec, *Polskie lampy i świeczniki* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolinskich Wydawnictwo, 1990), 42.

³⁵ In 16th century Germany, court dining rooms were decorated with wooden and horn chandeliers called *Lüsterweibchen* in German; a 17th century interior of a wealthy Dutch household was unimaginable without the bronze baluster-shaped chandeliers with large polished bronze orb finials; and in the 18th century, glass chandeliers produced in Bohemia decorated all the most famous dance halls of European courts.

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SIETYŅŲ SU GYVATĖS FORMOS ŠAKOMIS IŠTAKOS, RAIDA IR PАПЛИТИМАС: NUO NYDERLANDŲ IKI LIETUVOS

Santrauka

Lietuvos nacionaliniame ir Lietuvos dailės muziejuose saugomi sietynai su gyvatės formos šakomis yra vieni seniausių tarp išlikusių Lietuvoje. Anksčiau, renkant medžiagą apie Lietuvos ir kaimyninių šalių apšvietimo priemones, analogiško dekoro sietytų nepavyko aptikti nei Latvijoje, nei Lenkijoje. Dėl šios priežasties manyta, kad išskirtinio dekoro šviestuvai buvo paplitę tik Lietuvoje. Dar kartą nuosekliai peržvelgus Vakarų Europos muziejų kolekcijas

paiškėjo, kad elegantiškai susirangusios gyvatės motyvas sietynų šakose turi būti siejamas su Amsterdame 1598–1638 m. aktyviai dirbusio liejiko Hanso Rogierso pavarde.

Straipsnyje pirmą kartą atskleidžiamos sietynų su gyvatės formos šakomis ištakos Vakarų Europoje ir galimi jų keliai į Lietuvą, analizuojami Lietuvoje išlikę ir neišlikę pavyzdžiai, jų raida ir datavimo niuansai. Nagrinėjama sietynų su gyvatės dekoru funkcionavimo erdvė, paliečiama simbolikos tema. Straipsniu siekiama įvertinti ir pristatyti Lietuvoje išlikusius gyvatės formos sietynus.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: sietynai, gyvatė, žaltys, Hansas Rogiersas, Amsterdamas, Nyderlandai, Lietuva.

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