

FOREWORD

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The 36th volume of Tautosakos darbai / Folklore Studies, as the whole year 2008, is marked by the anniversary of Norbertas Vėlius. This prominent scholar, researcher of Lithuanian folklore and mythology, professor, initiator of the folklore collectors' movement, and person of immense activity and ceaseless energy, listing of whose areas of interest and merits for Lithuanian culture would alone take several pages, would have celebrated his 70th birthday this year. That presents a good opportunity of reflecting once again on what was lost more than a decade ago, when Vėlius so unexpectedly passed away, and taking one more intent look at professor's scientific heritage, appreciating the research directions that he had indicated and works that he had started. In 2008, a number of events were organized to celebrate the anniversary of Vėlius, among which "Readings of Professor Norbertas Vėlius" organized at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore and promising to become traditional, seem to be worth special mentioning.

The first chapter of the 36th volume of Tautosakos darbai / Folklore Studies is directly devoted to appreciation of Vėlius' scientific heritage. Folklorist Bronė Stundžienė, having lifted from the archives and leafed through the huge amount of folklore that Vėlius had recorded, analyzes the observations resulting from such a close glance at the folklore collector's laboratory: what ideological traces of the time and reflections of the folklore collector's creativity she was able to discern, and how the picture of Vėlius himself is reflected in his manuscripts. Further, ethnologist Petras Kalnias employs quite another perspective of viewing Vėlius' heritage, namely, in terms of his activities within the framework of Council for Safeguarding the Ethnic Culture and by analyzing the concept of ethnic culture that professor had attempted to establish.

The following research articles continue Vėlius' investigations in folklore, mythology and language in one way or another, thus making his heritage all the more relevant. Vykintas Vaitkevičius combines data from folklore, history, archeology and language in his attempt to reconstruct myths that had been associated with Perkūnakiemis, a place that does not exist any more. Saulius Bagočiūnas is in turn interested in the topography of the tale "Eglė – the Queen of Serpents", both in Lithuania and much further abroad. Nijolė Laurinkienė attempts to discuss various names for the Lithuanian goddess of earth, scattered in different historical sources and folklore, while Dainius Razauskas seeks to reveal unexpected semantical connections of the Lithuanian word laukas. An article by Daiva Vaitkevičienė deals with a sphere of Lithuanian traditional culture that has hitherto almost avoided

scholarly attention, namely, the ethno-entomology; the author describes a creature that is characterized by peculiar functions in popular beliefs and folk medicine, i.e. an insect called the mole-cricket (Latin Gryllotalpa gryllotalpa).

The chapter “Folklore Nowadays” comprises articles focusing on the contemporary processes of folklore development, on transformations and adaptations of tradition in the modern times. Thus, on the basis of folklore materials collected during recent fieldwork sessions in Dzūkija region and on her personal observations, Vita Ivanauskaitė sketches a sphere of research hardly yet at all approached by folklorists, i.e. the realm of folk piety. While the famous researcher of modern folk narratives Gražina Skabeikytė-Kazlauskienė concentrates on popular anecdotes, establishing traits of the archetypical mythic trickster in the image of their main character Petriukas. Boundaries and possibilities of classification of yet another genre of modern folklore, rapidly disseminated and growing increasingly more popular by use of the modern media, i.e. the chain-letters, are the subject of attention in the article by Povilas Kriščiūnas.

Further publications of modern folklore are as good as illustrations for the previous articles: anecdotes about Petriukas (edited by Gražina Skabeikytė-Kazlauskienė) and chain-letters (edited by Povilas Kriščiūnas) are published here. Also, one more genre of modern folklore is represented, namely, the scary stories and their parodies (edited by Laima Anglickienė).

Publication of the archived folklore comprises a handful of hitherto unpublished military folksongs, edited by Kostas Aleksynas.

We are honored to be able to celebrate another four significant anniversaries in this volume. First is the 80th anniversary of Vladimir Toporov, teacher and an acknowledged patron of Vėlius, a Russian humanitarian of unparalleled erudition, a researcher in Baltic philology and a good friend of Lithuania (on this occasion, we publish an essay by Tomas Venclova “In the Community of Semiotics”, based on the memoirs from the author’s youth). Also, the prominent French scholar, coryphaeus of structural anthropology Claude Lévi-Strauss holds his 100th jubilee this year (Ieva Rusteikaitė presents a survey of his life and work). Centenary of the German folklorist Kurt Ranke is also celebrated (Magdalene Huelmann writes about his activities and merits in the field of folkloristics). And last but not least, the 150th anniversary of Vincas Kudirka is celebrated (Živilė Ramoškaitė presents an exhaustive study of the epochal significance of the first collection of harmonized Lithuanian folksongs “Kanklės” that he had edited and its importance to the Lithuanian ethnomusicology).

In the 36th volume of Tautosakos darbai / Folklore Studies, the nice annual tradition of sharing the most recent impressions and experiences from the folklore fieldwork sessions, is continued. Here, a handful of experiences and thoughts by participants of the fieldwork sessions taking place in Veisiejai (Lazdijai district) are published.

The chapter of reviews starts with Daiva Račiūnaitė-Vyčiniienė introducing an eagerly awaited event of Lithuanian folklore – the bulky volume of calendar ritual songs, edited by Jurgita Ūsaitytė and Aušra Žičkienė. Lina Būgienė in her

turn reviews a study by Mirjam Mencej on the Slovenian witches, also seeking to establish parallels of this image in Lithuanian tradition. Rūta Žarskienė discusses a publication of the Vienna phonogram archive edited by Austrian scholars Gerda Lechleitner and Julia Ahamer and devoted to summarizing the many decades-long fieldwork experiences in their global context. Romualdas Apanavičius in turn presents an exhaustive evaluation of publication of sound records from the revived phonograms, edited by the researchers of the Folklore Archives at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore Rūta Žarskienė and Austė Nakienė.

Short annotations of three more publications follow: Lilija Kudirkienė discusses the volume edited by Juris Urtāns at the Latvian Culture Academy; Giedrė Bufiienė introduces the volume 25 of the yearbook of international proverb scholarship *Proverbium*, while Jurga Sadauskienė describes in short yet another publication edited by Mirjam Mencej at the University of Ljubljana, i.e. a collection of articles on space and time in European culture.

The volume concludes with a chronicle of numerous events, important to Lithuanian folklore and culture in general, the most joyful of which seems to be the Jonas Basanavičius Prize being awarded to professor Stasys Skrodenis.