

The 44th volume of Tautosakos darbai / Folklore Studies starts with the words of greeting: folklorists from the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore congratulate their colleague, an outstanding folklore researcher, head of the Folksong department and member of the editorial board of our journal, Bronė Stundžienė, on her jubilee.

The research articles forming the basis of the present volume have been divided into three chapters of different thematic and represent current research tendencies in folklore, mythology, ethnolinguistics, ethnology, and ethnomusicology. The first, biggest chapter deals with issues of traditional world-view and classical folklore. The majority of publications here are joined together by various aspects of mythological images related to earth and its surface, underground, and analysis of telluric and chthonic beings. In her article “Žemyna – Earth and Goddess” Nijolė Laurinkienė discusses connections of the common word žemyna both with its direct meaning ‘earth’ and the supposed meaning ‘deity’, elucidating the concept of personified Žemyna as patron deity of earth and crops, destining their vegetation. Our guest author from Ljubljana University, Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology Mirjam Mencej in her article “Spaces of Passage into Supernatural Time” employs broad comparative parallels with Oriental folklore in her analysis of connections between spaces endowed with underworld symbolics and time characterized by a different flow (i. e. slower or faster than is common in our reality), found in European folklore pieces from various genres. Dainius Razauskas in his article “The World-Dream: Hints of Mystical Cosmogony in Lithuanian Folklore” also employs rich comparative material, which allows the author to present interesting insights regarding some cosmogonic motifs of Lithuanian etiological legends. In her article on “Bodily Defects as Motivating Qualities of the Devil’s Denominations” Birutė Jasiūnaitė uses ethnolinguistic perspective to discuss those names of the devil that could have been prompted by various physical defects of this popular mythical being: shortness, thinness, flaws of speech, hunchback, lameness, or absence of certain joint, etc. The image of devil is also discussed in the article by Martynas Vingrys “Interpretations of Tobacco Origins in Etiological Legends”, which focuses on those types of etiological legends that depict this plant as having grown up from the grave of a sinner, most commonly – a woman. The first chapter is concluded with the article by Rolandas Petkevičius “Offering in the Traditional Lithuanian Medicine of the 16th–21st

Centuries”. The author analyses rituals of the therapic offering described in the old written sources and the structural relics of such archaic rituals surviving and rather frequently encountered in the practices of Lithuanian traditional healing, recorded in the course of several recent centuries.

In the second chapter main attention is focused on the phenomena of contemporary folklore. Publications by Lina Būgienė (“Experience and Reflection of History in Life Stories of Valkininkai People”) and Jurga Jonutytė (“Memories of the Political Conflicts and Their Impact on Autobiographical Narratives: A Case of One Family”), based on recent fieldwork materials recorded by the authors in parishes of Valkininkai and Vilkyškiai, concentrate on analysis of autobiographical narratives and the dramatic historical shifts of the middle of the 20th century, as well as personal experiences of those political conflicts, reflected in them. Meanwhile Povilas Krikščiūnas in his article “The Chain-Letters: From History of the Manuscript Tradition” surveys origins of such letters, as a vivid form of contemporary internet folklore, traces back their long-time development tendencies and confirms the notion that in order to understand modern folklore expressions, profound knowledge of the old folklore tradition is indispensable.

In the third chapter on ethnomusicology, one finds the article by Rimantas Astrauskas “Music for Pianola: Aspects of International Musical Cooperation in Exile” dealing with comparatively little investigated repertoire of recreational music – dances and marches – for pianolas (i. e. automatic piano-players) that supports the idea of cooperation between the Lithuanian and foreign composers, and its impact on the development of both the popular musical culture and the national identity of the American Lithuanians.

Further, the traditional rubrics mark a publication of folklore source materials, commemorations of significant anniversaries, reviews and annotations of the new books relevant to folklorists. Having summarized the fieldwork data accumulated during the recent years, Rita Balkutė and Nijolė Laurinkienė edited a particularly interesting publication of valuable folklore and ethnographic materials connected with traditional Lithuanian rituals of rye harvesting. To commemorate the 150th anniversary of the prominent Lithuanian poet and priest Jonas Mačiulis-Maironis, Kostas Aleksynas discusses the textological nuances of the poem “Mary Song” that has become a folksong. Among reviews, Aušra Žičkienė publishes a detailed discussion of a recent fundamental publication of the Ukrainian laments, while Laima Burkšaitienė introduces a collection of folklore from Suvalkija region, recorded by Jaunius Vylis and published last year. Austė Nakienė in turn reviews the “Encyclopedia of Lithuanian Ethnology and Anthropology” that also reached the readers last year in the form of both a book and an internet site. Radvilė Racėnaitė discusses a collection of research articles dealing with portrayal and image of the Blessed Virgin Mary in

Lithuanian culture, in which, along with art criticism, also publications by historians, ethnologists, and folklorists have been included. Further, Laima Anglickienė presents an annotation of an anthology of Slavic folklore, edited by Bronislava Kerbelytė and meant for students, while Dainius Razauskas – an annotation of a recent book by Jonas Vaiškūnas.

In the usual manner, the volume is concluded with a chronicle of important events related to folklore and traditional culture, in which researchers of our Institute have also taken part. Numerous conferences and seminars are discussed in detail, and the dissertation on paremiology by Dalia Zaikauskienė, defended last June is presented. Also, the activities of the Lithuanian Folklore Archives are introduced, the Folklore Day is remembered and the 6th prize of “Folklore Honey” awarded this year, is presented.

The editorial board and the special editor expect this volume of the journal to interest our inquisitive and exacting readers and to fulfill their expectations by offering new research articles and other publications, presenting interesting ideas and insights.