

Singing tradition of the Klaipėda region preserved in Lithuania and in the émigré communities

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it was the Lithuanian songs of East Prussia that opened the way for Lithuanian language and culture into Western Europe. The elegiac folk poetry, with characteristically straightforward structure and plain subject matter, fascinated the enlightened minds of artists and scholars, kindling their imagination and providing inspiration for their own creative work. Certain ideas that originated in the Age of Enlightenment and gained currency in Western Europe, coupled with the nascent concern about the newly discovered yet already vanishing layer of traditional culture, lent an important impetus for preservation of that obsolescent culture. It was then that the Lithuanian songs were first recorded, published and researched. The network of Prussian clergymen who were the first collectors of folklore formed around Liudvikas Rėza (Ludwig Rhesa) (1776–1840), a professor at the University of Königsberg, amassed a priceless repository of Lithuanian non-material culture, which kept growing by the effort of countless devout enthusiasts during the coming two hundred years.

The present collection of *Songs and Music from the Klaipėda Region* is yet another contribution to this ever expanding repository. At long last we will have an opportunity to hear the real sound of what many of us have only known in the form of written down verses, notated melodies, and interpretations thereof. As a matter of fact, no sound recordings of authentic Prussian Lithuanian songs or instrumental music have been published in Lithuania in the course of the 20th century. On the other hand, there was no apparent lack of valuable materials preserved at folklore archives and informants who could have sung Lithuanian folk songs for the compilers of sound anthologies in the middle of

the 20th century. The prolonged absence of such publications is perhaps due to technical deficiencies, lack of concern, and unstable political environment in the Klaipėda region (Memel Territory) after 1920, which was ceded, in 1923, to the Republic of Lithuania and became part of the Soviet Union in the aftermath of World War II.

Perhaps the only previous sound recording that contained Prussian Lithuanian songs is an LP *A Garland of Rue*¹, released in Canada, in 1971, which has been compiled by the prominent 20th-century Canadian ethnomusicologist, Kenneth Peacock², featuring three songs sung by Elzė Jankutė from Lithuania Minor: *Negį rūstas augau* (I grew up far from surly), *Labs ryts, labs vakars* (Good morning, Good night), *Ei, žirge žirgeli mano* (Hey horse, dear horse of mine). This LP, containing quite decent recordings, is still virtually unknown in Lithuania. One more song – *Prieš kalną beržai, pakalnėj klevai* (Birches [grow] on this side of the hill, maples on the other) – that had been recorded by Elzė's father, Martynas Jankus, in 1935, was included in the collection of *Songs and Music from Suvalkija*³ released by the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore in 2003. The amplest selection of songs from the Klaipėda region that has been heretofore committed to disc is the CD *Eit mergeli pajūriais*⁴, released in 2006, where all songs are sung by Ana Mažeiva, one of the most famous folk singers in the region. The third edition of the *Anthology of Lithuanian Folk*

¹ *A Garland of Rue*. Lithuanian folksongs from the mating cycle. Collected by Kenneth Peacock. Ontario, Canada. Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies at the National Museum of Man, 1971.

² <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/kenneth-peacock-emc/>.

³ *Suvalkijos dainos ir muzika*. 1935–1939 metų fonografo įrašai (Songs and Music from Suvalkija. Phonograph records of 1935–1939). Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 2003.

⁴ *Eit mergeli pajūriais*. Anos Mažeivos padainuotos Klaipėdos krašto dainos (A Girl Was Walking by the Sea. Songs from the Klaipėda region sung by Ana Mažeiva); edited by Lina Petrošienė and Jonas Bukantis. Klaipėda: Klaipėdos universiteto leidykla, 2006.

*Songs*⁵ of 2007 features two songs recorded from Augustas Deivelaitis and one Lutheran Evangelical hymn.

Consequently, this album of authentic recordings that comes with the liner notes containing transcriptions of songs aims to fill up the lacuna in the studies and knowledge of authentic Prussian Lithuanian musical folklore. Among its primary goals is to publish valuable folklore sources characteristic of the Klaipėda region, to demonstrate the individual manner of various singers, and to put forward the description of features pertaining to Prussian Lithuanian spoken and musical dialect. The CD features 34 songs and 4 instrumental pieces that have been recorded between 1935 and 2000 in Lithuania, Canada, and the United States, along with the transcriptions and commentaries thereof in the liner notes.

The Lithuanian Folklore Archives that opened in Kaunas, in 1935, at the initiative of ethnologist Dr. Jonas Balys (1909–2011), who served as its director, organized collection projects throughout Lithuania. The phonograph records made in 1935 feature the voices of Martynas Jankus, a prominent social and cultural activist in Lithuania Minor of the time, and his eldest daughter Elzė Jankutė⁶. Unfortunately, a large number of records appeared to be damaged and unsuitable for digitization. Thus only twelve out of fifty phonograph records of the folk songs housed at the Lithuanian Folklore Archives remain extant to this day. Phonograph records of no other folk singer from the Klaipėda region have been made at the time. Perhaps this was due to the reasons adumbrated above, since melodies and verses of the folk songs collected by the local historians and

⁵ *Lietuvių liaudies dainų antologija* (Anthology of Lithuanian Folk Songs); edited by Genovaitė Četkauskaitė. 3rd extended edition with the CD. Vilnius: Lietuvos muzikos ir teatro akademija, 2007.

⁶ For more about Martynas Jankus and his daughter Elzė Jankutė see *Mažosios Lietuvos enciklopedija* (Encyclopaedia of Lithuania Minor), Vol. 1. Vilnius: Mažosios Lietuvos fondas, Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidybos institutas, 2000, p. 626, 630.



Nidos žvejai vynioja tinklus. Fotografavo Jurgis Dovydaitis 1935 m. LTRFt D 154.
The fishermen of Nida folding their nets. A photograph taken by Jurgis Dovydaitis in 1935.
Courtesy of the Lithuanian Folklore Archives at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore.

Dr. Balys himself have been published in two hefty volumes of the *Folklore Studies* (1937 and 1940, respectively). The folk materials existed in ample supply, indeed, which testifies to the fact that these folk songs were still alive in people's minds, in spite of various bans and fears. Collectors oftentimes had to overcome certain hesitancy on the part of the informants because of their old age ("it is not nice to sing for an old person"), supposedly negative opinions of their neighbours and relatives ("they would laugh," "my wife would scold"), religious convictions ("blessed be the Lord that secular hymns have been forgotten, or that those who still remember them do not dare to sound them off"), unsuitable environment ("can't sing at home, just in the dunes where no one would see and hear"), or misgivings about being punished by the authorities ("would fear penalties from higher up")⁷. Despite persistent attempts at unification of the Klaipėda region with Lithuania proper made by the Lithuanian government in Kaunas, the political situation of the inter-war period remained threateningly unstable.

After World War II, the folklore from Lithuania Minor continued to be collected in emigration. In the autumn of 1949, Dr. Balys who had recently immigrated to the United States and settled in Chicago, recorded 44 songs from the former residents of Klaipėda, Gertrūda and Martynas Lacytis, who had arrived in the United States just a few months ago. He published collected materials in two volumes of the *Lithuanian Folksongs in America* (1958 and 1977)⁸. The émigré folklorist

⁷ *Tautosakos darbai*, t. III. Iš Mažosios Lietuvos tautosakos (Folklore Studies, Vol. 3. From the folklore of Lithuania Minor); ed. by Dr. J. Balys. Kaunas: Publication of the Lithuanian Folklore Archives, 1937, p. 90.

⁸ *Lietuvių dainos Amerikoje*. Pasakojamosios dainos ir baladės (Lithuanian Folksongs in America. Narrative songs and ballads). Collected and edited by Jonas Balys. Boston: Lietuvių enciklopedijos leidykla, 1958; *Lietuvių dainos Amerikoje*. Antrasis rinkinys. Lyrinės meilės, papročių, darbo, švenčių ir pramogų dainos (Lithuanian Folksongs in America. Second Volume. Lyric songs of love, customs, work, feasts and entertainment). Collected and edited by Jonas Balys. Silver Spring, Md.: Lietuvių tautosakos leidykla, 1977.

recorded the Lithuanian folk songs on magnetic tapes, a novel medium at the time. These records had been preserved in the Library of Congress before the entire archives of Dr. Balys and copies of the recordings were brought back to Lithuania in 2010. Currently, they are stored at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore in Vilnius.

Starting from 1950, the Institute of Lithuanian Language and Literature (now Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore) and the Lithuanian State Conservatory (now Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre), together with its Faculty in Klaipėda (now part of the Klaipėda University), organised fieldwork expeditions in the Klaipėda region with an aim to collect folklore and dialectological materials. Bronislava Kerbelytė who took part in the expedition of 1960 reminisced that people they met were quite wary and difficult to get along with. Many of them still mourned for their families torn apart by war and loved ones who had been killed. Portable tape recorders used at the time were rather heavy to carry, with tapes running at varying speed, which often resulted in poor quality of the recordings. For this reason the folk songs collected from the region's best folk singer, Marija Klingerienė, who lived in Giruliai, have been recorded on a professional reel-to-reel audio tape recorder that was transported on a bus and plugged into portable electric generator. There were also individual enthusiasts involved in the fieldwork. Many valuable ethnographic data about the lifestyle and sung folklore of Lithuania Minor have been collected by journalist and local historian Vytautas Kaltenis.

An interest in the instrumental music of Prussian Lithuanians arose around the same time and appeared to be gravely belated. Although there was recorded evidence about the existence of string and wind ensembles formed by the local culture enthusiasts, who used to gather and play, say, during the Midsummer Night's festival on the sacred hill of Rambynas, no actual music has ever been

recorded. Participants of the field expeditions organised in the second half of the 20th century could only find single musicians. For example, Martynas Kavolis played on his handcrafted mandolin and presented around twenty instrumental pieces for collectors in 1960. Later on many local historians visited this luminary of Diegliai village, photographer and gardener; he was also encouraged to write down his recollections by Prof. Dr. habil. Domas Kaunas⁹. In the year 2000, folklorists seized the last opportunity to visit Martynas Dauskartas, a fiddler from the small town of Kintai, who played some traditional instrumental pieces on the violin and mouth organ. He also recalled how they used to play during village festivals, about leisure activities in the village community and playing together with his uncle and brother who was killed in war.¹⁰

Folk singers in the Klaipėda region

Information about folk singers in the Klaipėda region varies greatly in scope. In some cases, little more is known than the standard description of an informant. Others were esteemed figures in the local communities, or notable folklore informants, whose biographies and songs have been published in previous collections. Of special interest here are certain episodes in the lives of the folk singers, which allow capturing their personal features and sociocultural environment that had a decisive influence on the development of the locally specific singing tradition.

⁹ Kaunas, Domas. "Mažos kronikos autorius" (An author of the short chronicle). Kavolis, Martynas. "Iš mano amžiaus bėgio" (From the passage of my life). *Kraštotyra*, No. 23. Vilnius: Miintis. 1989, p. 93–100.

¹⁰ Kirdienė, Gaila. "Lietuvininkų ir žemaičių smuiko repertuaras" (Fiddling repertoire of Prussian Lithuanians and Samogitians). *Liaudies kultūra*, 2005, No. 4, p. 14–30.

While perusing the list of 20th-century folk singers from the Klaipėda region, the attention is first of all drawn to the unusually large number of male singers. In terms of scope and richness of the repertoire, however, many of them cannot equal female singers, especially those featured on this CD – namely, Marija Klingerienė, Ana Mažeiva, and Gertrūda Lacytienė. To a certain extent such predominance of men among informants may be due to the fact that the primary aim of most fieldwork expeditions was to investigate the material and immaterial culture in fishermen communities. On the other hand, fishing as a vocation was not entirely confined to men in this region: “Women would go fishing together with men. For some fishing was in their blood, to the degree that they would get truly sick without water. After all we have been fishing from time immemorial; we couldn’t live without the sea!”¹¹ In the summer of 1950, fellow workers of the Ernst Telman’s Fishermen Artel, a cooperative founded in Rusnė in the post-war years, told the collectors of folklore about their everyday lives and the revival of Lithuanian folk songs: “In the artel we have a bakery, a shop, a reading room, and a club. We also formed a choir. Old Lithuanian songs came back to life. If not the artel, these precious songs would have withered, too!”¹²

The establishment of the choir in the artel of Rusnė was a natural continuation of the long-lived choral tradition in Lithuania Minor rather than an exception, albeit in a different ideological context. Erčius Jurgenaitis¹³, a folk singer from Rusnė whose repertoire has been featured in many collections of Lithuanian

¹¹ Lietuvių tautosakos rankraštynas (Lithuanian Folklore Archives), LTR 2780.

¹² Quoted from the interviews conducted by dialectologist Elena Grinaveckienė with the inhabitants of Rusnė, for the most part with Vilius Vestfolas, see: LTR 2780. In various sources his surname is also spelt as Vestfolis and Westpfal. For example, see the book *Rusnė*, ed. by A. Matulevičius *et al.* Vilnius: Mintis, 1992, p. 85.

¹³ Full name Erdmann; surname has various spellings, but currently the most common is ‘Jurgenaitis’.

folk songs, was numbered among the most eminent fishermen from Lithuania's littoral region during the 1960s and 1970s, and even awarded the title of Merited Fisherman by the Soviet authorities¹⁴. But as a young man, since 1923 (when the Klaipėda region was annexed by Lithuania), he was active member of the 'Santara' Society¹⁵ and senior chorister of the 'Tiltas' Cultural Association of Lithuanian Youth in Rusnė¹⁶. Quite a few folklore collectors have recorded his songs, but some of them presented herein have never been published before. Several folk songs presented by another fisherman from the same island of Rusnė, Vilius Žemaitaitis, are likewise published for the first time.

Conscious preservation of Lithuanian traditional culture by speaking the language and absorbing local folklore has never been an easy option for the inhabitants of the Klaipėda region in different historical periods. One of the singers presented herein, Adomas Goberis,¹⁷ a fisherman and member of the above-mentioned choir in Rusnė, was a descendant of an old German family from Salzburg who had gradually found his way to get integrated into Lithuanian cultural environment. He continued speaking German with his son's family, neighbours and fellow fishermen, but used to sing Lithuanian folk songs. In all likelihood, his turn towards partial Lithuanization occurred as a result of his second marriage to a Samogitian woman.¹⁸ Bilinguality was a common feature in the daily life of yet another informant, Lutheran minister and cantor,

¹⁴ Op. cit. *Rusnė*, p. 84.

¹⁵ The Lithuanian Evangelical Lutheran Relief Fund and Society for Cultural Education that was established in Lithuania Minor, in 1905 [translator's note].

¹⁶ Kaltenis, Vytautas. *Ak, gražus dangau!* Klaipėdietiški pasakojimai (Ah, beautiful skies! Stories from the Klaipėda region). Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidybos institutas, 2008, p. 12.

¹⁷ Spelling variations of the same surname: Gobelis, Adam Gaber, Goberin. See *Rusnė*, p. 88, 90.

¹⁸ Kaltenis, Vytautas. *Ak, gražus dangau!*, p. 115–117.



Danutė Kuziniene užrašinėja tautosaką iš Rusnės žvejo Viliaus Vestfolio 1954 m. LTRFt 554.
Danutė Kuziniene collects folklore from Vilius Vestfolis, a fisherman of Rusnė, in 1954.

Courtesy of the Lithuanian Folklore Archives at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore.

herbalist and folk singer, Augustas Deivelaitis.¹⁹ The songs and hymns he sang were nonetheless Lithuanian. His manner of singing is easily distinguishable and immediately recognisable: he sang with a powerful, vibrant voice, articulating each line with emotional intensity that helps convey the meaning and mood of the verses being sung.

Folk singers Marija Klingerienė and Ana Mažeiva are probably the best-known of all because of a large number of songs and biographical details published in various collections of folk songs.²⁰ In 1986, Marija Klingerytė-Stankevičienė told about her late mother Marija Klingerienė, a folk singer from Giruliai, to dialectologist Jonas Bukantis and his students. She recalled that her mother liked reading newspapers and had a keen interest in politics, “could foresee everything what would happen during the war.” Speaking about her mother’s singing, she reminisced that her “mother was always busy, had to do the chores. While living in a village, she had to milk the cows. Then she would pick up a pair of buckets and ‘scream her guts out,’ as she would put it. Songs would resound in every place, they accompanied every move. The sound

¹⁹ Spelling variations of the same surname: Deivilaitis, Dėvilaitis, Dievelaitis. A name inscribed on his tombstone reads August Dewileit. See *Rusnė*, p. 91, illustration 22.

²⁰ *Lietuvinių žodis* (Word of Prussian Lithuanians), ed. by Kazys Grigas, Zita Kelmickaitė, Bronislava Kerbelytė, Norbertas Vėlius. Kaunas: Litterae Universitatis, 1995, p. 11–16; *Bėgau jūružēm*. Klaipėdos krašto dainos (I Sailed the Seas. Songs from the Klaipėda region), ed. by L. Petrošienė, J. Bukantis. Klaipėda: Klaipėdos universiteto leidykla, 1997; Petrošienė, Lina. “Klaipėdos krašto XX a. antrosios pusės liaudies dainų pateikėjai ir kai kurios jų dainų melodijų ypatybės” (Informants of the folk songs from the Klaipėda region in second half of the 20th century and some melodic properties of their songs). *Tiltai*. Appendix. 2001, Nr. 7, p. 28–35; *Eit mergeli pajūriais*. Anos Mažeivos padainuotos Klaipėdos krašto dainos (A Girl Was Walking by the Sea. Songs from the Klaipėda region sung by Ana Mažeiva), compiled by Lina Petrošienė and Jonas Bukantis. Klaipėda: Klaipėdos universiteto leidykla, 2006, p. 3–19.

filled the fields all around.”²¹ Stankevičienė herself had no knowledge of the songs her mother used to sing.

Ana Mažeiva (Ona Mažeivienė)²² learned her songs in her native environment in Karklė, from her parents and neighbours who used to sing after finishing their work in the fields. Someone would start the song; others would pick up the tune and accompany: “You would listen up to that song. I loved those songs very much. I liked to brood over a tune for a while and then we all used to join in singing. That was beautiful.”²³ She would gladly sing for collectors of folklore and feel very pleased about their interest in her songs; she would usually strain to remember as many songs as she could.

There is also a certain amount of extant information about folk singers in emigration. In the autumn of 1949, Dr. Balys, as he himself had put it, ‘toured’ the Lithuanian diaspora in Chicago and found a couple of singers from Klaipėda – Gertrūda Lacytienė and Martynas Lacytis, “both newly-arrived DPs.”²⁴ Another valuable find awaited him in the Chicago home of pharmacist Kulys from Kupiškis: a collection of songs *Klaipėdiškių dainos* (Songs by the inhabitants

²¹ Quoted from the recording preserved in the audio library of the Klaipėda University Folklore Archives, KUTRF 111.

²² In the Klaipėda region family names of married women were the same as men’s. The use of feminine suffix for a married woman *-ienė* does not predate WWII. Given names and family names of unmarried girls were usually differentiated by adding a suffix *-ikė*. Some sources, though, mention Ona Mažeivienė, a variation of Ana Mažeiva, styled according to the tradition of Lithuania proper.

²³ *Eit mergelį pajūriais*, p. 10.

²⁴ Displaced persons (DPs) are persons who have experienced forced displacement or had to flee their home country during WWII or the immediate post-Second World War period. Many of such ‘nonrepatriable’ refugees from Eastern Europe found themselves in the so-called DP camps, from which they later migrated further to Western Europe, both Americas, or elsewhere [translator’s note].

of the Klaipėda region), published by Jonas Pakalniškis (Ansas Broožis) in 1908. This little book proved to be very useful, since Lacytienė remembered most of the songs by reminding her some opening motifs and thus could perform them entirely for recording on ‘ribbons.’²⁵ She learned many songs from her friend Anelė Bidžautaitė-Kopūstienė who was four years older and lived in Jogučiai village, in the parish of Kretingalė.²⁶ Her husband Martynas Lacytis, who sang four songs to Balys, was a social activist, professional musician and teacher. After settling in the United States, he was also active as a precentor in Evangelical Lutheran parishes.²⁷

Melodic and linguistic features of the songs

Almost the entire corpus of Prussian Lithuanian songs has been published in various collections of folk songs. What has not yet been done is the publication of the finest recordings. The selection of these recordings was not an easy task.

²⁵ Jonas Balys used to call the magnetic tapes ‘ribbons,’ which he had to use sparingly during his first expeditions: “I would only record four opening strophes and jot down the remaining verse into my diary. If the song appeared very interesting or well performed, then I would record it entirely.” See *Lietuvių dainos Amerikoje*. Antrasis rinkinys. Lyrinės meilės, papročių, darbo, švenčių ir pramogų dainos (Lithuanian Folksongs in America. Second Volume. Lyric songs of love, customs, work, feasts and entertainment); collected and edited by Jonas Balys. Silver Spring, Md.: Lietuvių tautosakos leidykla, 1977, p. xvi.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xxiii.

²⁷ For more about Martynas Lacytis see *Mažosios Lietuvos enciklopedija*, t. 2 (Encyclopaedia of Lithuania Minor, Vol. 2). Vilnius: Mažosios Lietuvos fondas, Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidybos institutas, 2003, p. 446; Petrauskaitė, Danutė. *Lietuvių muzikinė kultūra Jungtinėse Amerikos Valstijose 1870–1990. Tautinės tapatybės kontūrai* (Lithuanian Musical Culture in the United States between 1870 and 1990. Outlines of the national identity). Vilnius: Vilniaus dailės akademijos leidykla, 2015, p. 611, 1009–1010.

We aimed to include as many singers as possible, but at the same time keep a coherent thematic thread running through the songs, highlight their unique melodic features, and take into account the quality of records made at different times. The album begins with a number of East Prussian war songs that make a distinctive variety within the context of Lithuanian war songs. Working songs are naturally represented here by the fishing songs, which best characterize the folklore of the littoral region. There are also quite a few wedding songs and related youth and love songs, some children, humorous songs, and one or two songs of literary origin.

Comparing the songs collected in the Klaipėda region in the second half of the 20th century with their counterparts found in the song collections published by Liudvikas Rėza and Christian Bartsch in the 19th century, similarities are commonly found on the level of poetics, while melodies differ significantly. Rėza's *Dainos oder Littauische Volkslieder* (1825) contains not a single melody that would match any variant of the same song included herein. A slightly different situation occurs when we compare the songs from the Klaipėda region recorded in the 20th century with those published in the two volumes of *Dainu Balsai. Melodien litauischer Volkslieder gesammelt und mit Textübersetzung, Anmerkungen und Einleitung herausgegeben von Ch. Bartsch* (1886 and 1889). This collection features quite a few melodic variants of the same songs, which demonstrate matching characteristics or close kinship through certain formal parameters.

Most of the melodies that have been recorded in the Klaipėda region are built on major scales. Some melodies also display minor modes or modal mixture. The same modes were characteristic of the melodies in this territory in the 19th century, thereby distinguishing them from the melodies collected in the southern part of Lithuania Minor (currently, part of Kaliningrad Oblast), which

displayed greater modal variety.²⁸ Melodic lines of the folk songs from the Klaipėda region demonstrate wide-ranging expressive qualities, contained both in conjunct melodies of narrow ambitus (not exceeding a fifth or a sixth) and those of wide ambitus (of an octave and sometimes even reaching a major tenth or a perfect eleventh), with only occasional leaps. Trichordal and tetrachordal species of the melodies are encountered very rarely. So far as it is known, Prussian Lithuanians used to sing their songs in unison even in large gatherings. When this tradition was not observed and a parallel second voice was added, the resulting combination seemed to lose its distinctiveness altogether and assume a generic Lithuanian character.

Melodies of the songs from the Klaipėda region, like in the rest of East Prussian territories, are of heterogeneous origin. Perhaps their most striking stylistic feature is the intertwining of monophonic and homophonic melodic layers. Prussian Lithuanians, probably relying on their perception of modern music influences coming from the church hymns and urban popular music, oftentimes elaborated and altered the melodies of ancient songs to make them more Western-sounding. The influence of popular dances of the time is noticeable in the melodies of instrumental pieces performed by musicians from this region. The songs demonstrate rhythmic diversity and clarity, close ties with the intonation patterns of the local dialect. Both folk songs and instrumental music from this region characteristically demonstrate triple metre, even though the impression of metric modulations is often created by emotional delivery of a single performer, his or her penchant for improvisation.

²⁸ Petrošienė, Lina. *Lietuvininkų etninė muzika: identiteto problemos* (Ethnic Music of Prussian Lithuanians: Identity Issues). Klaipėda: Klaipėdos universiteto leidykla, 2007.

Two sub-dialects coexisted in the Klaipėda region. Western Samogitian sub-dialect (Samogitian sub-dialect of the region around Klaipėda) that has some common features with the Samogitian dialects despite significant differences is spoken in the northern part of the region from the line of Nemirseta-Kretingalė to the line of Juknaičiai-Šilininkai. The inhabitants of the southern border zone from the boundary of Western Samogitia and then along the right bank of the Nemunas River to Smalininkai, speak the Western Aukštaitian sub-dialect of the Klaipėda region, which is fairly close to the Western Aukštaitian dialect of the Kaunas region and sounds very similar to standard Lithuanian.

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