

*The first four chapters of the 56th volume of Tautosakos darbai / Folklore Studies comprise research articles covering different topics of folklore research and employing various scholarly approaches. The articles present new insights into the human coexistence with nature, the historical memory of the cities, or further discuss such topics as the traditional Baltic worldview or problematic contacts between oral and written cultural heritage.*

*The first chapter focuses on the human relationship with nature resting on the traditional local worldview. Following the contemporary ecophilosophers, Mantas Antanas Davidavičius analyzes various aspects of human attitude towards nature in the Białowieża Forest, which has become the site of ecological and political tensions and which has recently seen dramatic growth of the European spruce bark beetle population. Further elaborating on the topic of coexistence between humans and nature, Daiva Vaitkevičienė discusses the attitude towards certain wild animals living in the peasant homestead: namely, the grass snake, the weasel, the white stork, and the swallow. The varied relationships between people and animals comprise also the topic of interest for Jurga Sadauskienė, who adopts this point of view to investigate the traditional folktales.*

*The second chapter introduces works on the Baltic mythology. Rokas Sinkevičius examines the motive of the thunderstruck tree in connection to wedding customs. Žydrūnas Vičinskas surveys and evaluates the mythological information on the celebrations of Midsummer herb fest and driving the cattle out to pasture, presented by Matthaeus Praetorius in his work “Deliciae Prussicae or Prussian Theater”, written in the end of the 17th century.*

*The third chapter addresses the problem of interactions between oral tradition and written culture, which constantly attracts the folklorists’ attention. The extensive study by Bronė Stundžienė presents a sociocultural survey of the folksongs created by peasants that had for many centuries survived without literacy and largely ignored by the enlightened part of the society, and discusses changes in the folksong development occurring along with the subsequently launched publication of folklore. This chapter also includes the article by Rasa Kašėtienė revealing the importance of the small folklore forms in the life of Petras Klimas (1891–1969) – the signatory and co-author of the Act of Independence of Lithuania, a lawyer, historian, journalist, editor, diplomat and the minister of Foreign Affairs of the interwar Lithuanian Republic.*

*Klimas keenly used proverbs in his works, and while still studying at Marijampolė Gymnasium he compiled a collection of small folklore forms, which ended up in the archives of the Lithuanian Science Society.*

*The fourth chapter focuses on investigation of the peculiarities of the urban identity. Lina Leparskienė analyzes the perception of Karaim space in Trakai, which is unique in ethnoconfessional terms and plays an important role in the local lore. Next two articles discuss the theme of the Lithuanian capital presented in the autobiographic narratives of the post-war Vilnius inhabitants. Lina Būgienė elucidates the ambivalent identity of the post-war inhabitants of the city, which incorporates different realities from the urban and the rural ways of life, habits, and skills. The chapter concludes with the article by Radvilė Racėnaitė, who investigates peculiarities of the relationship to the past with special emphasis on the aspect of nostalgia as revealed by the memoirs, in which it simultaneously manifests both as a specific feature of personal memory and as a way for impressive recreation of the past.*

*The chapter of "Anniversaries" is very rich this time. The colleagues from the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore congratulate Lina Balčiūtė-Būgienė on the occasion of her birthday, wishing her many long and fruitful years of creative work.*

*The text by Ilya Lemeshkin is dedicated to the famous folklorist and researcher of the byliny songs Yury Novikov celebrating his 80th birthday. The text outlines the celebrant's biography, his scholarly achievements and the main results of his numerous research works. Besides, the uniqueness of Professor Novikov being the last performer of the byliny songs from northern Russia is taken into account.*

*Further publication by Gražina Kadžytė is dedicated to the 100th anniversary of Antanas Mockus – the famous Lithuanian folklorist, pedagogue and cultural figure, discussing his numerous merits to the Lithuanian culture.*

*Just attention is given to the cultural figure from the Lithuania Minor and folklore collector Vilius Kalvaitis on his 170th anniversary. Konstantas Algirdas Aleksynas wrote a lengthy introduction to the publication of letters by Kalvaitis to Jonas Basanavičius, which he edited together with Irena Žilienė, and which clearly reveals the kind of cultural engagements that brought those two prominent people together.*

*Already 200 years have passed since the birth of another prominent person – Adam Honory Kirkor, writer and publisher, historian and archeologist. Libertas Klimka reminds us of his social activities and his great merits to Vilnius.*

*This autumn, the community of the Lithuanian culture enthusiasts has suffered a tragic loss, as one of the most important figures in the field of regional studies and ethnic culture, promoter of cultural policies Irena Seliukaitė passed away. Gražina Kadžytė in the "Pro Memoria" chapter presents the summary of her most significant achievements and ceaseless cultural activities.*

*As usual, the volume concludes with the chronicle presenting concise survey of the important folklore events and other significant academic developments taking place in the second half of 2018.*