

*The 52<sup>nd</sup> volume of Tautosakos darbai / Folklore Studies starts with studies of the mythical worldview. Articles comprising the biggest chapter of the volume “Folklore, Language, Mythology” aim at systematizing and summarizing various data from linguistic, folkloric and historical sources, allowing for reconstruction of the Baltic mythical images. Nijolė Laurinkienė presents etymology of the word ‘sky’ in her article “Sky in the Ancient Baltic Worldview”. She also discusses the notion of sky as God, images of the stony sky, the heavenly “pastures”, the gates of the sky, reveals the possible mediators between sky and Earth and describes the general reverence that sky is endowed with in the traditional customs, taboos and rituals. Other articles in this chapter discuss images of plants in the Baltic and global mythology. Dainius Razauskas makes a step into a sphere of mythology hitherto neglected in Lithuania, namely, the dendromythology. Using the Baltic and Slavic data and taking into account other traditions of the world, he postulates the absence of strict boundary between a “simple” image (a poetic trope) and mythology in the proper sense of the word, since traditional poetic images can smoothly transfer into mythology and even corresponding religious rituals or vice versa. Further, Žydrūnas Vičinskis surveys and analyzes the mythical data directly related to oak presented in the work by the 17<sup>th</sup> century author Matthäus Prätorius Deliciae Prussicae oder Preussische Schaubühne, also discussing interpretations by the prominent researchers of the 20<sup>th</sup>–21<sup>st</sup> centuries analyzing the information on oak by Prätorius. The subject of analysis of the article by Aurelija Gritėnienė comprises over 200 illustrative sentences containing the word šermukšnis [‘mountain ash’], picked out from the twenty volumes of the “Dictionary of the Lithuanian Language”. According to this author, the linguistic material in the dictionary does not only serve to describe the external features of this tree, but also reveals its mythical, nutritional and medicinal qualities. The article by Jurgita Macijauskaitė-Bonda presents meticulously collected and systematized data on mistletoe (Viscum album) and describes its image in the traditional Lithuanian culture. This evergreen shrub growing on the branches of trees (or a dense mass of shoots caused by a parasitic fungus) was called the “witch’s broom” and endowed with symbolic meaning of enhancing vegetation, vitality and fertility. Vita Džekčioriūtė-Medeišienė focuses on the mythical notion of mushrooms in Lithuanian culture. According to her, people used to perceive mushrooms as mythical beings; some Lithuanian folk-belief legends and comparative Slavic*

material make grounds for asserting that *boletus* (*Boletus edulis*) could personify the guardian spirit of the forest – the master of the forest. The mythical notion of mushrooms also involves certain ritual aspects of mushroom picking, including having the “mushroom fortune”, which is associated with knowledge of good picking places and ritual practices (magic actions and prayers).

Recently, another rather neglected sphere of traditional culture enjoys increasing interest of ethnologists and folklorists – namely, the folk medicine. Two articles comprise the chapter of this volume dedicated to the folk notions of disease and treatment. Asta Skujytė-Razmienė focuses on the popular interpretation of the origins of plague and cholera, according to folklore recordings from the 19<sup>th</sup>–21<sup>st</sup> century. Analysis of folk-belief legends, vernacular beliefs and charms enables the author to relate the emergence of these epidemic diseases to the concept of God’s punishment and certain magic actions of the mythical beings. The author of the article also discusses the Reaper and deities of plague, cholera and other diseases, noting the connections between these epidemic diseases and the underworld. Jonas Tilvikas in turn concentrates on comparatively modern folk views, analyzing attitudes of the inhabitants of Lithuania Minor towards medical treatment in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Dwelling on the memoirs of numerous informants, he attempts establishing whether the official or the folk medicine received priority, and what caused social and cultural marginalization of folk medicine during the period in question.

The third chapter of the volume deals with issues related to folk music and focuses on personal experiences of creative individuals and their public and social expression. Modesta Liugaitė-Černiauskienė broadens her research to include not only lyrics and melodies of folk ballads, but also details from lives of their performers. This author draws a parallel between marginal life situations and hardships of widows and orphans reflected in the ballads and tough life experiences of the singers. According to the author’s assumption, personal life experience can shape the ballads’ perception. Ethnomusicologist Toma Grašytė describes in her study the views of folk musicians and other community members that took shape against the background of social and cultural life in the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Reflecting on the opinions expressed by the traditional musicians belonging to the younger generation and attitudes presented by the surrounding community, the author attempts to draw the picture of the contemporary traditional folk musician. She discerns the main personal qualities that are associated with music making and regarded as essential for a popular folk musician, also discussing his public attitude in general.

The 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the famous Lithuanian writer Balys Sruoga is celebrated in 2016. Folklorist Bronė Stundžienė dedicates her article to the studies of folksong poetics and other folklore-related activities of this prominent poet, writer, playwright and journalist. Gražina Kadžytė praises the high merits of the folklore collector and priest Antanas Valantinas, whose 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary is also this year.

*The “Pro memoria” chapter is dedicated to the memory of the folktales’ researcher Adelė Seselskytė, who recently passed away.*

*In this volume, several new publications are introduced. Jurgita Ūsaitytė discusses and compares two album studies: *The Garden of Remembrances* (2016) published by the Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, and the monograph *The Tradition of Autograph Albums in the Culture of Latvian Schoolchildren* (2013) by the Latvian folklorist Baiba Krogzeme-Mosgorda. Skirmantas Valentas reviews the monograph by Dainius Razauskas-Daukintas on the famous Lithuanian poet Maironis (2016).*

*This time, our chronicle of events starts with particularly joyful news: our colleague, researcher of Lithuanian mythology Dainius Razauskas received the Jonas Basanavičius’ Prize of the year, and Lina Leparskienė defended her thesis on “The Reflections of Local World of Trakai in Folk Narratives”.*