

The question of freedom that the current 53rd volume of Tautosakos darbai / Folklore Studies focuses on is a legacy from the academic experimental 11th Seminar on the Local Culture. For many authors this question presented a challenge, appearing too general and too broad to apply to the research materials, which folklorists and ethnologists usually investigate. However, scrutinizing the sources together with philosophers, historians, literary and art critics revealed so many possible new approaches that we would gladly continue discussing the issue of freedom for several volumes onwards. This alone presents substantial proof that no culture, even the one considered traditional, would be self-sufficient without the component of freedom.

The journal starts with the text by Viktorija Daujotytė-Pakerienė, who encouraged the participants of the seminar by marking out the problematic field related to freedom. However, as the reader will find out, this volume could cover only part of this field.

Three freedom-related subtopics received attention here. The first one focuses on daily attitudes and modes of being, questioning the extent and ways that personal freedom and dignity can manifest there. The authors revisit their experiences of meeting decidedly free people and attempt to detail the grounds for their initial intuitive notion of this freedom. However, although pursuing the same task, the authors choose different paths. The literary scholar Daujotytė-Pakerienė discusses modes of silence, discovering them in folklore and classical literature, as well as remembering seeing them in her childhood environment. Having sketched out the paradigm of silent and seemingly idle sitting and looking at nothing, this author reveals the inner meaning of such peaceful moments and their importance to all kinds of culture and creativity. Philosopher Jurga Jonutytė turns back to her memories of the lives of three people connected by the image of alleged poverty and alleged marginality. However, considering these lives beyond the concepts of lack and prosperity, she reveals them as cases of obviously achieved freedom, although this freedom is hardly the matter of conscious choice or struggling. Ethnologist Giedrė Šmitienė describes the easy consciousness of a village woman that she used to be closely acquainted with, pointing out the possibilities of freedom against the level of passivity. Art critic and historian of photography Margarita Matulytė meets the challenge of highlighting the issue of freedom and dignity in the case of people posing for ethnographic photos. Her attempt of penetrating deeper through the surface of photograph also results in formulating methodological prerequisites of such an investigation.

The second subtopic of the volume focuses on creative freedom, which appears in a couple of rather unexpected spheres. An art historian Skaidrė Urbonienė turns to the “god-making” in the end of the 19th – the first half of the 20th century Lithuania to reveal the extent to which the wood-carver can be perceived as a free artist, as well as factors and reasons limiting his creative freedom. Historian Rimvydas Laužikas sets out to analyze the relationship of tradition and creative freedom in the Lithuanian gastronomy. Tracing changes in the recipes through cooking books written in the 17th – 19th centuries in Lithuania, this author proves creative freedom to be impossible without profound knowledge of tradition, as well as creative approach to be the way of ensuring the vitality of tradition.

The inherent human freedom constantly has to face various modes of captivity. By denying freedom, occupation creates exceptionally acute conditions to appreciate its value. The volunteer fighting in the beginning of the 20th century and the partisan resistance after the WWII can be viewed as challenging the local culture. This issue constitutes the third subtopic discussed in this volume. The article by Vykintas Vaitkevičius and Algimantas Stalilionis deals with the story of volunteers joining the Lithuanian army to fight for the national freedom in 1918. The newly accumulated written and oral data from Pumpėnai rural district helps reconstructing the intentions and motives lying behind the volunteer fighting. The subject of the article by Aistė Petrauskienė is partisan resistance after the WWII. Aided by the theoretical model of the underground state developed by Dawid Fajnhauz, this author substantiates her new interpretation of partisan fighting, defining the phenomenon as the Lithuanian partisan underground state. This historian of the new generation focuses not only on the partisan fight for freedom, but also on the meaning of the narrative of this fight to the young generation, which currently just explores the concepts of history and fighting for freedom. Algis Mickūnas rounds up the subtopic with a controversial text on partisan consciousness. Having first depicted the historical situation when making the choice of opposing the occupation involved retreating to the woods, the philosopher reveals the universal quality of the partisan consciousness, i. e. questioning the situation and accepting the responsibility. We are already used to studies in oral history comprising parallel narratives by collaborators, partisans, KGB activists, and dissidents, with everyone disclosing their own motives. The philosopher rejects the situational logic, rebels against the perpetual justification by circumstances, advocating instead for the inseparable nature of freedom, humanism and responsibility. Mickūnas’ speculation may seem all too rectified, but at the same time, it prompts uncomfortable realization of the contemporary pervasive tendency of shrinking from giving things their real names.

The chapter of source publications comprises nine letters by Kazimiera Kai-riūkštytė-Galaunienė written from Yercevo prison camp in Archangelsk oblast, in 1953–1955. Having been selected from substantial collections by deportees, these