

FOLKLORE SCHOLARSHIP [IN THE STRATEGY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES]

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Summary

The folklore scholarship comprises theory of folklore, methodology of folklore studies, and history of folklore. The folklore genealogy, poetics, systematics, archival work, tererial studies, the applied folklore research, etc. have also established themselves as separate disciplines.

Folklore scholarship aims at investigation of meaning, origins, functioning and understanding of folklore. The main spheres of studies include revealing peculiarities of this kind of verbal art, the basis of its existence, character of the visual patterning, and strata of themes, ideas and values; examining the changing role of folklore in the national history; studying peculiarities of structure inherent in pieces of folklore and principles of organizing an artistic text, its relationship with the cultural context and other kinds of art; examining the regional, national and international folklore processes.

The leading center of the folklore scholarship in Lithuania is the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore. The Department of Ethnomusicology, together with the Chair in Ethnomusicology (1989), situated at the Faculty of the Piano and Musicology, Lithuanian Musical Academy, is the leading center of ethnomusicological research and training of specialists in ethnomusicology. Teachers of the Ethnology and Folklore Department at the Faculty of Humanities, Kaunas University, along with teaching ethnology and ethnomusicology, also give a number of courses in folklore. The university also pursues the scheme for the bachelor and master studies in ethnology and folklore. The scholarly research strategy of the Department of Lithuanian Literature, Faculty of Philology, Vilnius University, includes folkloristics as well. Courses in Lithuanian folklore are also given at the Department of Lithuanian Literature, Faculty of Lithuanian Studies of the Vilnius Pedagogical University. Specialists in folklore work at the Department of Baltic Linguistics and Ethnology, Faculty of Humanities at the University of Klaipėda, together with linguists and ethnologists. This department also administrates the Folklore laboratory, which has 3 employees and functions as basis for accumulating the dialectological, folklore and ethnographical data as well as serving purposes of the education process.

The Lithuanian Folk Culture Center, which functions as an institution serving applied scientific and methodological purposes (there are no scientific researchers working there), should be mentioned separately. This Center collects information on the ethnic cultural heritage and modern forms of its existence, edits and publishes printed, audio and video publications on ethnic culture, as well as publishing the quarterly magazine "Folk Culture".

The *main activities* of Lithuanian folklore researchers include scientific research, studies, and the applied work. Various kinds of verbal and musical folklore investigations, especially pertaining to spheres of folklore theory, history, poetics and mythology, are continuously being carried out at the Lithuanian research institutions. Studies of the modern folklore processes, tradition and innovation, the role of the performer, relations between text and context, aspects of value and cultural environment of folklore are of special relevance. Among them, projects of both theoretical and applied character cannot be overestimated: these include editing and publishing of voluminous fundamental folklore publications. Such projects are carried out at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore: e.g., the publication of the "Lithuanian Folksongs' Book" is continuing (17 volumes have been published to date); paremiologists have published the first one of the planned five volumes of the fundamental edition of "Lithuanian Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases"; preparation of the first volumes of the planned "Lithuanian Tales and Legends" has also started. Publication of these fundamental works is closely related to folklore systematization, typology, textual criticism and verification; and partly, also to the studies of dissemination of certain pieces, examining levels of creativity, establishing worth and history of folklore items.

Preparing for the scholarly shift. At present, there are four doctoral candidates continuing their doctoral studies at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore, since the start of the reform of graduate studies in 2003 caught them in the middle of the process. Several graduate students in folklore are also studying at the universities. However, taking into consideration both the modern strategies of the cultural identity and the historically shaped peculiarities of Lithuanian folkloric

culture, sustaining and strengthening the education of philologically minded folklore specialists seems an urgent task, since lately it has been undeservedly shunted aside.

In conclusion, it must be stated, that studies in Lithuanian culture, including folklore, bear special importance for the social cultural development and sustaining of Lithuanian national identity. Yet, because of the urgent issues of high relevance and because of having to pay “historical debts”, as well as the small number of Lithuanian folklorists, the major part of the folklore researchers at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore has to engage themselves in preparing the volumes of fundamental publications. Meanwhile, other folklore disciplines receive only sporadic attention. Therefore many perceived mysteries of folklore creation, the accumulated experience in textual critique, the grasped tendencies in variation and its determining factors, as well as numerous other observations, which could facilitate solving theoretical and historical problems, remain unwritten. Although it is customary to publish the halfway research results in the form of scientific articles, the modern development of folklore scholarship requires theoretical summations and generalizations in the form of monographs. Comparative folklore studies, based on new methodological premises, are of special relevance, since they would enable us to grasp the European and global context of the folkloric culture.

Lithuania, like the whole Eastern Europe, boasts the traditional culture that is still functioning in a very special way. It also possesses resources of the verbal heritage that are unique in the whole European context (collections of the archived folklore being counted in millions, and the living folklore tradition still thriving). Therefore, against the backdrop of the modern research tendencies and challenges, the development of folklore studies should also find its place, pertaining to the studies of cultural identity, that seem to have priority in the modern strategy of developing the social sciences and humanities.