

VILNIUS UNIVERSITY
THE INSTITUTE OF LITHUANIAN LITERATURE AND FOLKLORE

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**REFLECTIONS OF THE LOCAL WORLD OF TRAKAI IN FOLK
NARRATIVES**

Summary of doctoral dissertation

Humanities, philology (04 H)

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The dissertation was prepared in 2010–2015 at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore

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Introduction

Trakai is a town well known by many people living in Lithuania, mainly because in the medieval times it was one of the most important strongholds in the territory of the Great Duchy of Lithuania. The reconstructed castle in the island of the Galvė Lake still reminds of this historical time. Multicultural character of the town's community is also a remarkable feature of Trakai, including in particular the ethnic group of the Karaites, who settled in Trakai at the end of the 16th century. The main problem raised in this thesis rests on the fact that Trakai seems to have two different faces. The first one is shaped by the image of Trakai as the *lieux de mémoire* of the Great Duchy of Lithuania and is based on the above-mentioned features. Such attitude can be noted in the literature since the 19th century (early travel guides, memory books). It also determined the scientific interest towards Trakai, governing the trends of the heritage preservation politics. Now it has great impact on the tourism as well. The second face is visible only from the perspective of the local inhabitants of Trakai. However, proper scientific attention was not yet paid to defining the Trakai culture from the inside perspective.

In this thesis, the *local world* of Trakai is regarded as the phenomenon based on the activities of the people, their practical mode of life, their ethnic and religious identity as well as the stories circulating in the community. Some elements of Trakai as a *realm of memory* affect this local world too, including: 1) the historically determined location in the peninsula (in the 16th century); 2) the lakes surrounding this peninsula (there are six lakes around the town); 3) the architectural signs, reminding of the activities of the great dukes of Lithuania in the 14–15th centuries (two castles, the church); 4) the ethnic diversity of the town, which is supposed to be the relic of the medieval period as well. On the one hand, all those attributes ensure stability and continuity of certain features of Trakai from the medieval period until the 21st century. However, the changes in the urbanistic, local economics, demographic, social and cultural life, taking place in the middle and in the second half of the 20th century, caused the challenge to the continuity of the local culture of Trakai.

The urbanistic headway of the last century changed the picture and the visual identity of many towns and villages. The southern part of the historically wooden settlement of Trakai was drastically changed in order to build a new district of blockhouses, which brought the new standards of daily living. However, people's

adaptation to the new urban landscape with the blockhouses is still under way. This drastic change of the landscape caused mental division of Trakai into two parts: the new one in the south and the historical part in the north of the peninsula. In people's minds, the blockhouses are also connected with changes in the structure of the local community. Historically, Trakai was a multicultural town; therefore, the local community is used to living side by side with people from different ethnic backgrounds and religions. However, the WWII, the Soviet and the Nazi occupations caused great loss of the entire ethnic groups. The Jewish community perished in the course of the Holocaust, the great part of the local Poles repatriated to Poland. Subsequently, the officers or soldiers from the Soviet Union, war refugees from Belarus, Lithuanians from the ethnic Lithuanian lands, and Poles from the surrounding villages inhabited the empty homes and the newly built multi-stored blockhouses. Therefore, the inhabitants of Trakai can be subdivided not only according to their ethnic or religious background, but also according to their birthplace, thus distinguishing the *locals* (indigenous people) and *non-locals* (the immigrants). The contemporary town's society can be treated as the social conglomerate comprising the old multicultural community and not less multicultural drove of the new settlers, who have for half of the century already been building together the new culture and the mutual relationship.

To compare the data of the population census from 1931 (see Tochtermann 1936: 8) and the recent one from 2011, it is obvious that the ethnic character of the community has changed considerably. E.g., the Jewish community has disappeared, the Karaite community decreased from 7.6 % to 1,6 %, the Polish community (which predominated in the interwar period) depopulated from 72,3 % to 19,0 %, while the dominant position was taken by the Lithuanians, whose number increased from 0,2 % to 66,5 %. There is also small percent of Tatars, the old-believers, gypsies and other minorities.

It is noteworthy that in the course of eighty years the population of the town almost doubled in number – from 2805 to 4933. According to the elderly people, earlier they used to know everyone in Trakai. However, after the new blockhouses appeared, they started recognizing that Trakai turned into a place of strangers. Nevertheless, the population is still small and all the people living there meet each other eventually. These meetings create the common sociocultural atmosphere,

traditions of communication, and the collectively recognizable world that can be analyzed using the sources of the oral culture.

The possibility to range the size of Trakai and the number of its dwellers, on the one hand, enables perceiving the completeness of the town. On the other hand, it shows the complexity of the notion of locality. The place can be transformed into a space and *vice versa*. The space can be divided into smaller spaces as well. The singular point of view does not exist, although scientific premises allow us recognizing the elements establishing the common cultural space. Careful analysis of the local contexts and the focus on the social aspect of the folklore origins and its transmission are among the priorities of the modern folkloristics.

The local world can be recognized via sources revealing links between the objects and the subjects. For this research, the stories and behavior of the elderly inhabitants of Trakai served as such source. Memories of those people link the 20th and the 21st century. Their stories reveal the network joining the epochs, various events, objects and persons. Testimonies on the urban and social changes help distinguishing symbolic borders and links between the past and the present.

The novelty and relevance of the research

If today we pass the central street of Trakai (Vytautas Street) and look at the human behavior from the anthropologic perspective, probably the first feature to mention would be the linguistic behavior. We are bound to hear words, phrases and various neologisms of both the Slavonic (Russian, Polish, and Belorussian) and the Lithuanian languages. This concerns two essential aspects of Trakai. The first one is the above-mentioned multicultural character of the town. The second one concerns the non-official region – the so-called Southeastern Lithuania. This region is *Vilnija* [‘Vilnius Land’] in Lithuanian, while in Polish – *Wileńszczyzna*. The common feature of the linguistic culture in this part of Lithuania is the mixture of languages, including obvious impact of the Slavonic languages and dialects. In the field of the Lithuanian studies, somewhat antagonistic approach formed mainly by linguists was (and still is to some extent) predominant towards this region for already several decades. However, nowadays the situation is changing. The current research work also belongs to the new academic discourse in Lithuania, regarding the Slavonic cultural elements as equal to the Lithuanian ones.

Trakai can be described as a borderland – not only because of the multicultural character of the local community, but also because it is hard to determine the region that it belongs to. Officially, Trakai belongs to the Lithuanian ethnographic region of *Dzūkija*, but unofficially, to *Vilnija*. As the historical heritage site and the center of the district, Trakai always attracts the new inhabitants from various parts of Lithuania. Living in the borderland can cause misunderstandings and even conflicts based on the different memory, old stereotypes, too forthright positioning of one's own ethnic or religious identity. On the other hand, the coexistence of various communities can work out strategies to intercept the strife. Such patterns of behavior towards the “other” devised in the course of daily communication, are applicable in the field of the human rights or state politics. In-depth research of the localities reveals the ways that multiculturalism functions in everyday situations. This research is the first one applying the complex approach towards the multicultural character of Trakai. The earlier studies focused on the selectively chosen ethnic (Karaite, Polish) or social and occupational groups (e.g. fishermen). For this research, informants from different ethnic groups were interviewed.

The life stories recorded for this research can be analyzed as sources of oral history, producing contemporary evidence on such events as WWII, the Holocaust, repatriation of the Poles, or Sovietization. The empiric material is valuable from dialectological and sociolinguistic perspective as well.

The research subject

Seeking to understand the view of Trakai through the eyes of its dwellers, the folk narratives of Trakai inhabitants were examined. The study analyzes the ways in which the narratives reveal the local lore about the time, space, place names, natural and urban objects, people, historical events and personalities. Such kinds of folklore as place legends and folk belief legends, popular beliefs, dreams or anecdotes were analyzed as descriptions of the landscape as well the life experience of the interviewed people.

In this dissertation, the locality is treated *a priori* as the subjective dimension and only secondly, as a social and geographic realm. The stories of each person, their life experiences, character, occupation, sense of place and memory, are regarded as the essential means to distinguish Trakai as the mental space rather than simply as a

historical of geographical body. Considerable attention is paid to the emotions that people express when speaking about the town, nature, and life experiences.

The concept of *reflections*, which in the title of the dissertation is indicated as the subject of research, concerns scientific approach of this work to the life stories. Usually they consist of multiple narratives and themes, and the researcher has to recognize the common aspects that enable approaching the core of the research matter and building the basis for interpretation. It was one of the challenges for this research. Therefore, the paradigm of the relation was applied as an analytic tool to distinguish the natural and urban objects as well as the events with the deep semantic and symbolic value.

The aim of the research is investigating on the grounds of the stories of the local people the subjective and social aspects of their relations towards Trakai and revealing the variety of approaches to the same cultural space. The cultural specificities of the space perception are revealed via narratives about the town, nature, people and their activities, highlighting the role of imagination, and memory.

The objectives of the research:

1. Presenting theoretical and methodological guidelines relevant to the analysis of the concepts of subjectivity, dialogical approach, reflectivity, locality, spatiality and narration.
2. Discussing geographic, urban, historical, social and demographic aspects of the spatial perception of Trakai by its local inhabitants and the outsiders.
3. Describing the internal structure of the urban space delineated in the stories of the Trakai inhabitants from the subjective (individual), historical, ethnic, religious, and urban perspective, as well as introducing the five town areas discerned by the Trakai inhabitants.
4. Analyzing and interpreting the impact of memory, origin, life experience, beliefs and imagination on personal relationship with Trakai and the nature surrounding it.
5. Analyzing the attitudes and reactions of the Trakai inhabitants towards the urban, ecological, demographic and subcultural changes that occurred in Trakai in the second half of the 20th century.

The defended statements:

1. Trakai is a heterogeneous location, combining features of the cultural center and the periphery; there is sharp contrast between the old and the new town. The community

consists of people belonging to different nationalities, confessions and coming from various places of origin. The multiplicity is considered precisely the unifying feature of the community that establishes the spatial structure.

2. The second half of the 20th century was the time when important urban, social, demographic and life style changes took place in Trakai. This period is also the life span of the participants of the study. From their own experience-based perspective, the local people appreciate the changes as a breaking point between the past and the present. Nevertheless, they involuntarily bridge these periods linking the two time dimensions in terms of their own lives, memories and narratives.
3. The cognitive perception of the Trakai area by the older generation of its inhabitants is determined by the urban development of the town, jurisdictions existing until the 18th century, historical land-ownership, economic activities of the residents, and ethnic distribution of the population. Even in the 21st century, this historical heritage affects the notion of Trakai area and the surrounding locations.
4. The oldest citizens distinguish five parts of Trakai. These include *Rogatka*, *Miasto*, *Jursdyka*, *Karaimščyzna*, and *Zamostė*. As implied by the names, they have historically formed on the grounds of the previous jurisdictions, also reflecting the urban and administrative characteristics that formed at the time of the town's establishing and sporadically survive until nowadays.
5. The lakes that surround Trakai are regarded not only as the geographic object forming the landscape and the space, but also as a spiritualized element, which could not be obscured by the urban culture. Such assumptions are rooted in the popular belief about people that are required to drown in the lakes and other stories related to the threats emanating from water.
6. Local residents view Trakai as their property, their own yard. Such attitude affects their frequently critical regard to the urban development and various innovations.

Research methods and sources

During fieldwork, the semi-structured in-depth interview frequently practiced by folklorists was employed, combined with anthropological observation. The study follows the principles of dialogical hermeneutic method, according to which the information provided by the interviewed people is definitely given priority over the preliminary attitudes and assumptions of the scholar. Therefore, the researcher does

not seek any “objective truth”, but rather attempts to discover subjective motives in the worldview of the interviewed people, and their relationship with Trakai. Each story is first appreciated as the individual personal expression and only subsequently as a collective phenomenon. According to this principle, within the in-depth interviews efforts were made to encourage the talkers to share memories of the most significant events of their lives, and only then posing questions directly related to Trakai. These questions were selected according to the topics previously elaborated on by other talkers, thus finding out the narratives that were recognizable to other members of the community.

The major part of the research sources consists of the fieldwork materials collected from 2007 to 2015. During interviews, life stories, legends, tales, anecdotes, beliefs, and dreams were collected. However, the focus was on the life stories. Some informants were born and raised in Trakai, others were born in the neighboring villages but resided in the town for many years, still others moved in from remote places in Lithuania or the former Soviet Union. Following ethical considerations, only the initials of the informants are given in the text.

Altogether 43 persons were cited in the thesis, and for the general research purposes, approximately 60 persons were interviewed, providing important information to assess the collective phenomena of the local culture. Not all the interviews could be audio recorded, since some participants of the study did not agree to that; besides, part of the conversations took place as informal communication. Several most important storytellers were selected among all the people participating in the study. The narratives by these storytellers formed the basis for the key interview questions and the thematic structure of the thesis. There were five such presenters. Their texts are most frequently cited in the thesis.

M.Z. proved to be an exceptional talker; his stories are the most quoted ones. He paid particular attention to the individual residents of Trakai, their mutual relationships, memories of their parents and grandparents, and the daily occupations. **M.Z.**'s daughter **R.K** thoughtfully complemented his stories, conveying the attitude and experience of the middle generation. She often helped to understand why her father used to remember one thing or another. Her stories were distinguished by her critical attitude towards the changes affecting the town. **M.Z.**'s peer **L.M.** provided very detailed memories of the

everyday life of her family and Karaites, as well as the town's development until the beginning of the WWII. Moreover, she vividly described functioning of various government institutions.

A fisherman **P.K.**, considering himself as Polish or *tuteišas* ('local'), inspired analysis of the area of the Trakai lakes. He knew a huge number of place-names related to the lakes and provided their folk etymologies and various corresponding legends. For some time he seemed to be the last representative of his trade, who knew the lakes so well, but towards the end of the research another fisherman **I.P.**, representing the younger generation, appeared. He supplemented not only the data on lakes and fishing, but also on the town and the community life during the postwar years.

The thesis combines descriptive method with data analysis and interpretation. Besides, statistical method was employed to identify the number of inhabitants and the ethnic and religious composition; while comparative method proved useful for examining materials reflecting different historical epochs.

The chronological boundaries of the study were determined by the age of the interviewed people and the time span reflected in their stories. Considering the age of the oldest presenters, such boundaries embrace roughly from the first half of the 20th century to the beginning of the 21st century. More exactly, the study covers the following historical periods: the interwar, the WWII, the Soviet times, and the Lithuanian independence. The major focus is on the interwar and the Soviet times – the periods on which the interviewed Trakai inhabitants talked most. Besides, by providing memories heard from their grandparents, the participants of the study told about events of the WWI and even the Tsarist Russia.

Collections of the Lithuanian Folklore Archive, manuscripts stored at the Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, documents of the Office of the Chief Archivist of Lithuania and the Lithuanian State Historical Archives, photos from the archive of the Trakai Historical National Park Management, and legends written down by Simonas Firkovičius were also used in the study.

The structure of the thesis

The dissertation consists of the introduction, theoretical and methodological part, empirical part, conclusions and the lists of literature, sources and illustrations. The

empirical part comprises four chapters, which in turn consist of smaller thematical sub-chapters.

The chapter “Trakai from the Outside Perspective” describes the geographic character of the town, its urban origins and changes taking place in the 20th century. The chapter “The Spatial Notion of Trakai in the Stories of the Local Inhabitants” presents five parts of the town discerned by the elderly locals: *Rogatka*, *Miasto*, *Jursdyka*, *Karaimščyzna* and *Zamostė*. The chapter “The World of the Trakai Lakes” deals with the ways that place, ethnicity, life experience, activities, profession, and gender influence the human attitude towards the surrounding landscape. The mythical, historical, and pragmatic aspects of the dialogue between humans and nature are presented. The chapter “Change and Continuity” highlights the ways that the local people deal with changes brought about by the 20th century, revealing how they affect the language, culture, relationships, and the general attitude towards the town.

Results and conclusions

The local world of Trakai is analyzed as a reality constructed by narrative means. Narrative data collected in the course of fieldwork comprises life stories and narratives related with Trakai, including places, people, events, episodes of everyday life, mutual relationships, ethnicities, the town’s development, as well as recorded place lore, legends, beliefs. Since most of the informants belonged to the elderly generation, events and phenomena reflected in their narratives enabled examining a relatively broad time span covering the interwar period, the World War II, the soviet times and the independence. The major focus was on the earlier phase of the mentioned period, since it coincided with a life phase reflected most frequently by the informants, i.e. their childhood and youth. This period could be characterized by reconstruction of the spatial worldview and the pattern defining the relationship with the locality. Its analysis and interpretation form the basis for the thesis, including: 1) the territory of the town, 2) the landscape shaped by the surrounding lakes and 3) the socio-cultural spatiality developed by the urban community.

1. Trakai is the area of contrasts. It combines features of village and town, cultural center and periphery. There is sharp contrast between the urban character of the old and the new town, as well as the townscape of the southern and northern parts of Trakai.

Heterogeneous social conglomerate now shapes the local community; the old multicultural inhabitants and the equally multicultural population of various settlers have been creating the culture of coexistence for half a century already. However, such factors as the boundaries of the Trakai Peninsula, the proximity of the lakes, the above-mentioned multicultural character of the community, and the visual urban features are elements establishing the spatial structure. In the popular stories and folklore, all this creates the unique system of perception of the urban space, investigated in the thesis in terms of territory, history, ethnicity, religion, memory, and folklore.

2. The locality is a multi-faceted phenomenon. In the narrowest sense, it could describe the individual personal world, while in the broadest sense – the entire region. The study of Trakai takes into account four dimensions of the locality: i.e. the individual, communal, urban, and geographic ones. On the individual level, the focus is on the place that individuals identify with, and their general attitude towards their place on Earth. According to the analysis, huge impact on the individual spatial relationship with Trakai is made by the early life experiences, the first impression left by Trakai (in case of persons arriving there to live), the location of home (both the native one and the one in which people live at the time of the study), personal activity, and gender. On the communal level, Trakai appears to be a socio-cultural space. Such communicative aspects of oral culture as rumors, mutual relationships, ethnicity, and linguistic culture are in the focus of analysis, as well as narratives of ethnic and religious tolerance covering both positive and negative sides of viewing the “other”. The locals generally view such things as the Holocaust, repatriation and immigration negatively. On the urban level, the impact of various urban elements, individual objects and their complexes on perception of the spatial structure of Trakai in general and on the separate parts of the town in particular is established. On the geographic level, it appears that scope and limits of spatial perception are chiefly affected by the nature of human activities, ethnic background, religion, age, gender, and place of residence. Besides, the territory of the Trakai Peninsula and the surrounding lakes proves to shape the notion of the local people regarding the boundaries of the urban cultural space.
3. Each person, depending on their place of residence, ethnicity, generation, education, and life experience, have their own criteria to establish the local character of Trakai and attitudes on the issue of its identity. One part of the town is associated with “real

Trakai”, another one is visited only in rare cases, and thus the latter seems to be a strange town. Individual perception is also interlaced with collective topological system. It could be considered as a heritage of cultural memory, but it would be more precise to say that this is also a daily reality, which is suggestive at least to some inhabitants of Trakai when thinking about their town. Each local resident sees Trakai in his/her own way. An access to the town is assessed upon the following principle: “already Trakai”, “almost Trakai”, “still Trakai” and “no longer Trakai”. Areas of the peninsula itself are also not equivalent: it could be “more Trakai”, “less Trakai”, “real Trakai” and even “not Trakai”. The size of Trakai is also a significant factor for such evaluations. The town is too small not to grasp it as a whole. On the other hand, it is too large to know all its places and spaces to the same extent.

4. The local world of Trakai comprises separate places of the Trakai Peninsula and places closely related to it, as well as the area of the lake. Based on the stories of the oldest inhabitants, five constitutive parts are listed: *Rogatka*, *Miasto*, *Jursdyka*, *Karaimščyzna* and *Zamostė*. Each of these parts may be viewed as a micro-local territory of Trakai, which influences the attitude of its residents towards other parts of the town and the town as a whole. On the other side, their content is best revealed when investigating them interdependently. An assumption is made that part of these territories were historically formed based on jurisdictions that existed in the 15th –18th century. All of them reflect those urban administrative characteristics, which formed when the town was first established and sporadically survive until nowadays (cf. *Jursdyka*, *Karaimščyzna*, *Miasto*). According to the research results, the social and cultural human interactions help integrating into the Trakai perception system also such territories beyond the boundaries of the Trakai Peninsula, which were considered as suburban (cf. *Rogatka*, *Zamostė*). Next to the boundaries, dictated by the natural barriers, i.e. the Trakai Peninsula, the following could be added according to the stories of the inhabitants: 1) the roundabouts (in the southern and northern parts of the town); 2) the cemetery (Catholic and Orthodox cemetery in the southern part, and the Karaite cemetery on the northwestern side); 3) locations inhabited by people of nationalities historically related to Trakai (Tatars in *Rogatka*, Karaites in *Zamostė*).
- a) Analysis of *Rogatka* situated in the southern part of Trakai uncovered different possibilities of interpreting the boundaries of Trakai. In some cases, the town ends with

the Trakai Peninsula, in other cases – far beyond its boundaries. This is largely related to the size of *Rogatka*. In most cases, this name is applied to a road junction at the entrance of Trakai Peninsula, which is nowadays associated with a transport ring and station. Thus, *Rogatka* is primarily related to the beginning of Trakai – the entry into the town. Nevertheless, some residents apply this name to a bigger territory beginning at the Orthodox Church situated almost at the center and ending at the Catholic cemetery. From the ethnic perspective, *Rogatka* is mostly related to Tatars.

- b) The name *Jursdyka* is not popular nowadays. Historically, it corresponds to a jurisdiction of Trakai parochial church. This is obvious in the folkloric name of the location – *Jursdyka*. According to the participants of the study, they used to apply this name to the part of town surrounding the church, which reached as far as the Bernardine Hill. Investigation of *Jursdyka* uncovered Trakai as an important center of cultural attraction to the Catholics. Namely, due to the mass, the church festivities and markets related to them the major part of Trakai inhabitants and residents of surrounding villages started considering the church of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin as the most important object of the town.
- c) *Miasto*, *Miestas*, or *Centras* is historically related to the right of self-governing granted to the town of Trakai in the 15th century. The most important administrative institutions (municipality, post office, police, etc.) and public spaces (the market square, the park, the Cultural Center, restaurants, etc.) are in this territory. In memoirs, it is related to the Jews, the huge fire that took place after the WWII, and the Chapel of St. John of Nepomuk.
- d) *Karaimščyzna* is historically related to the Little Town of the 15th century, or the Karaite town. Only after the WWII, people of other nationalities started settling there. Due to the tourism, in summer *Karaimščyzna* becomes the liveliest part of the town. Karaites consider this part of the town as the real Trakai. Its boundary is drawn between the Chapel of St. John of Nepomuk in the west and the bridge situated in the northern part of the Trakai Peninsula. In the Karaite stories, the mental map of Trakai rests on the knowledge of where people of the same nationality live. Karaites can enumerate all their nationals living outside the boundaries of *Karaimščyzna*. Other ethnic groups describe Karaites as smarter and richer, skillful in growing cucumbers, and very sedentary.

- e) *Zamostė* (*Užtiltė* in Lithuanian) is not associated with any territory of the town in the peninsula. If *Rogatka* can be considered a marginal zone, where features of the town and suburb intertwine both in the peninsula and beyond, *Zamostė* should primarily be treated as the outside zone; when falling within the social and mental range of the town, it expands the geographic criteria defining the boundaries of Trakai. Karaites appropriate this part of the town because several families of their nationals used to live there, and because their cemetery is nearby. Meanwhile inhabitants of other nationalities indicate that mostly Polish and Russian people used to live there. *Zamostė* and *Rogatka* are often associated with teenage fights that have previously taken place in the town.
5. Trakai is surrounded by interconnected lakes of *Galvė*, *Bernardinai*, *Totoriškės*, *Nerespinka* and *Skaistis*. Historical sources and traditional oral data suggest that in the past it was one lake called *Galvė*, which upon establishment of the town acquired the common name of *Trakai Lake*. The town invaded the world in which the lake and cultural meanings of the territory associated with it predominated. The emergence of Trakai supplemented and altered these meanings, but did not entirely obscure them. Thus, the lake became the representative of the past, a medium of another culture and time. This aspect is highlighted in a folk legend particularly popular in Trakai, according to which every year at least one person has to drown in the lake. Such belief can be associated with pre-Christian times. In Trakai, it is obvious how the urban culture expands the meaning of this legend, incorporating it into a larger narrative, covering also other motives associated with drowning, victims, or punishment. The realm of this narrative involves legends describing activities of the duke Vytautas the Great and stories about the sculpture of St. John of Nepomuk who was considered the guardian of Trakai, protecting against drowning. The legend also impressively reveals human relationship with the lakes. Fear of drowning is mixed with understanding that this is how things are meant to be.
6. Regarding formation of the joined physical space, the lakes surrounding Trakai play the most important role. On the one hand, they frame the town within the peninsula, but on the other hand, they extend it to the distant shores. Stories collected for this study describe various activities in the lakes, showing the impact made by the proximity of the lakes on the life style of the Trakai inhabitants and their relations with

nature. Even though six centuries have passed, Trakai remains the town among the lakes. Such geographic situation is crucial to the local economics related to the lakes. The trade of growing cucumbers used to be a special one, of which the old local residents tell many stories, thus describing not only their childhood, but also the daily life of the Trakai inhabitants in general, their dependence on the vegetable harvest and their relationships. For farming, bigger islands of the *Galvė* Lake were used: there, the land was mowed and livestock grazed. People liked feasting, celebrating and spending their leisure time there as well. The lakes were travelled across; this is evident because the “winter roads” or “roads” exist, transgressing both the territory of the town and the lakes. During fieldwork, men had more to say on the place-names or activities pertinent to the lakes than women, while the old fishermen knew most: they could actually enumerate not only the names of the lakes, but also hundreds of small hydronyms. Place-names known to them not only represent the cultural memory, but also reveal the natural conditions of the location that are important for fishing, and help orienting in the space.

7. The so-called Trakai Castle standing on the island in the *Galvė* Lake is analyzed in the study as part of the lake area. The stories of participants of this research reflect how people used to regard this place when there were ruins. It appears that it was viewed just as one of the islands of the *Galvė* Lake (*Papilė*) without any particular emphasis on the importance of it. This is obvious in the legends describing punishments carried out by Vytautas: the action takes place not only in the castle, but also on other islands of the lake or on the coast. However, there are such legends and folk tales, in which the castle stands out as the center of the historical space and the starting point of time. These include legends on the tunnel allegedly connecting the castle with other places of Trakai or Lithuania at large, and a folkloric idea supplied by some people that *Galvė* is a lake of princely origins. The cultural memory related to the castle endows the whole space of the lakes with exceptional folkloric character.
8. In the second half of the 20th century, Trakai experienced massive changes affecting its urban image, community, and everyday culture. The particularly great losses included destruction of the Jewish community during the Nazi German occupation, repatriation of the Polish people in the postwar period, demolition of the wooden homesteads. The most important changes are the following: construction of multi-stored dwellings in

the southern part of the town, the landscape alteration by digging away the hills, immigration of people of new nationalities – Lithuanian, Russian, and Polish. Along with urban changes, forms of the traditional life style also changed: the subsistence farming disappeared along with the calendar rhythm related to it. According to our analysis, the human consciousness perceives the changes not on the factual grounds, but rather dwelling on various phenomena and spiritual experiences. The above-mentioned changes are described in people's stories as the boundary between the past and the present. However, people often tell of such things that exist nowadays, thus integrating into the old spatial structure the heritage of past and present times. This enables concluding that changes of the modern times, although altering, did not upstage such Trakai, of which the research participants of the elder generation related: the new inhabitants met with the old-timers, the new constructions emerged in historical spaces, the blockhouses were inhabited not only by the newcomers, but also by the locals. Even now, the town incorporates everyday household items noted by visitors in the 19th–20th centuries, or of which the old inhabitants of Trakai used to tell. This primarily applies to the central street – the present Vytautas Street and Karaimai Street, following one another. This street sometimes becomes a nuisance for the Trakai inhabitants in the sense that residents of Vilnius or other bigger cities sneer at them, implying that a single street indicates the poverty of the town. Nevertheless, according to our research, it is one of the most important indicators of the continuity, a backbone connecting two ends of the town and local people for many centuries, and the channel for spreading the information.

9. The local community was mostly affected by the dialectic relationship of the local *vs.* non-local and Polish *vs.* Lithuanian. Both the Polish and Lithuanian nationals did not *a priori* comprise united communities. Socializing with insiders on the ethnic grounds was easier because of the native language, as other languages were simply unknown or spoken poorly. In such situation, Karaites are an exception, since like a litmus paper they absorbed, coped with and creatively adapted the cultural changes of the unstable 20th century. Many Karaite families could speak all the local languages. Together with old-timer Polish and some Tatars, they became the bridge between the previous and the present Trakai.

10. To some inhabitants, Trakai is the center of the universe and their home, while to others – a place of exile or a harsh destiny, which they have to accept. People having deep relationship with Trakai are usually born there, with several generations of their family living in this town. Their most important life stories relate to Trakai, with numerous place-names and human names mentioned in them. During the conversation, they typically make jokes, tell anecdotes, or depict some extraordinary events. They also more frequently stress the importance of peaceful coexistence. People not born in Trakai have either adapted to this location or not. The latter lack words to talk about Trakai, often emphasizing the negative features of the town, and traumatic narratives are predominant in their life stories.

DISERTACIJOS REZIUMĖ

Trakai tarytum turi du veidus: vieną jų formuoja Trakų, kaip Lietuvos didžiosios kunigaikštystės *lieux de mémoire* vaizdiniai, o kitą – kasdienis žmonių pasaulis. Pastarasis egzistuoja pagal savo vidinius dėsnius, kuriuos lemia žmonių veikla, buitis, etninė ir religinė tapatybė, komunikuojami pasakojimai. Vis dėlto ir jam turi įtakos kai kurie Trakų, kaip atminties vietos, vaizdinio atributai. Pirmiausia – istoriškai sąlygota lokacija pusiasalyje, antra – ežerų apsuptis, trečia – kunigaikščių veiklą primenančios pilys, ketvirta – vietos bendruomenės daugiatautiškumas. Visa tai tarytum užtikrina dalies kultūrinių vietos savybių stabilumą ir tęstinumą. Tačiau XX a. antrojoje pusėje, kaip ir daugelis mažųjų Lietuvos miestų, Trakai patyrė daug urbanistinių, socialinių, demografinių ir kultūrinių pokyčių, kurie tapo iššūkiu vietos kultūros tradicijų tęstinumui.

Disertacijoje tiriama, kaip Trakai, viduramžiais svarbus gynybinis miestas ir dabartinis rajono centras, yra suvokiami vietos gyventojų, su kuo jie tapatinasi, kokie istorinės ir kultūrinės atminties dėmenys atsiskleidžia jų gyvenimo pasakojimuose ir atsiminimuose, t. y., kaip skleidžiasi lokalinis šio krašto žmonių tapatumas. Dažnas turi išankstinę nuostatą, kad Trakus galima tapatinti su Lietuvos istorijai svarbiu viduramžių paveldu. Šios nuostatos akivaizdžios XIX a. intelektualų eseistiniuose tekstuose (kelionių aprašymuose, atsiminimuose), jos nemaža dalimi lėmė akademinis Trakų tyrimus, darė įtaką paveldosaugos kryptims. Trakų ežerai, pilys ir vietos gyventojai karaimai yra tapę pagrindiniais Trakų atributais, reprezentaciniais Trakų dėmenimis, tačiau žvelgiant iš trakiečių perspektyvos, tie patys dalykai netenka dominuojančios pozicijos. Jie yra įpinami į sudėtingą kolektyvinių ir asmeninių patirčių lauką, kuris ir steigia būtent vietos gyventojų suvokiamą *lokalinį pasaulį*.

Dydžiu ir gyventojų skaičiumi Trakai yra veikiau miestelis, nei miestas, todėl visi čia gyvenantys žmonės anksčiau ar vėliau susitinka. Šie susitikimai kuria bendrą sociokultūrinę erdvę, bendravimo tradicijas, kolektyviai atpažįstamą pasaulį, kurį galima analizuoti pasitelkiant sakytinės kultūros šaltinius. Trakų erdvė nesunkiai aprėpiama, kaip ir gyventojai – kiekvieną jų galima pakalbinti, tai palengvina visumos suvokimą, bet sykiu parodo, kokia kompleksiška ir įvairialypė yra lokalumo samprata. Vieta gali transformuotis į erdvę ir atvirkščiai. Taip pat viena erdvė gali būti suskaidyta

į mažesnes erdves. Vieno žiūros taško nebūna, tačiau visuomet egzistuoja prielaidos, leidžiančios atpažinti bendrą kultūrinę erdvę steigiančius elementus. Atidi lokaliųjų kontekstų analizė bei dėmesys socialinėms folkloro atsiradimo ir sklaidos priežastims yra vienas iš šiuolaikinės folkloristikos prioritetų.

Tyrimo objektas

Disertacijoje siekiama suprasti vietos žmonių požiūrį į Trakus, todėl nagrinėjami sakytinės kultūros tekstai – vietos gyventojų pasakojimai. Analizuojama, kaip pasakojimuose perteikiamas lokalinis žinojimas apie vietas, vietovardžius, gamtos ir miesto objektus, žmones, istorinius įvykius ir istorines asmenybes, laiką. Remiantis lauko tyrimų rezultatais išskirti trys Trakų mentalinę erdvę kuriantys faktoriai: miesto teritorija, ežerynas ir bendruomenė.

Empiriniai šaltiniai

Pagrindinę tyrimo šaltinių bazę sudaro nuo 2007 m. iki 2015 m. rinkta lauko tyrimų medžiaga. Daugiausia dėmesio skirta gyvenimo pasakojimams. Interviu metu taip pat užrašyti gyvenimo pasakojimai, padavimai, sakmės, anekdotai, tikėjimai, sapnai. Dalis informantų – gimę ir auge Trakuose, kiti gimę netoli Trakų esančiuose kaimuose, bet jau daug metų gyvenantys šiame mieste, tretį čia atsikraustę iš tolimesnių Lietuvos ar buvusios Sovietų Sąjungos vietų.

Disertacijoje cituojami 43 asmenys, o viso tyrimo metu kalbinta apie 60 asmenų, kurių pateikta informacija buvo svarbi vertinant kolektyvinius lokalinės kultūros reiškinius. Ne visi interviu buvo užfiksuoti garso įrašymo priemonėmis, nes ne kiekvienas tyrimo dalyvis su tuo sutiko, be to, dalis pokalbių vyko neformaliai bendraujant. Iš visų tyrime dalyvavusių žmonių buvo atrinkti keli svarbiausi pateikėjai, kurių pasakojimų pagrindu buvo suformuoti svarbiausi interviu klausimai bei disertacijos teminė struktūra. Tokių pateikėjų buvo penki. Jų tekstai disertacijoje cituojami dažniausiai.

Tyrimo metu taip pat naudotasi Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos instituto Lietuvių tautosakos rankraštyno rinkiniais, Lietuvos mokslo akademijos, Lietuvos centrinio valstybės archyvo bei Lietuvos valstybės istorijos archyvo dokumentais, Trakų istorinio nacionalinio parko direkcijos fotografijų archyvu, Simono Firkovičiaus užrašytais padavimais.

Tyrimo metodai

Empiriniuose lauko tyrimuose taikytas pusiau struktūruoto giluminio interviu metodas, kuris derintas su antropologinio stebėjimo metodu. Tiriant vadovautasi hermeneutinio dialoginio metodo principais, pagal kuriuos prioritetas teikiamas ne išankstinėms mokslininko nuostatomis ir prielaidoms, bet tai informacijai, kurią pateikia kalbinami žmonės. Todėl tyrimo metu neieškota „objektyvios tiesos“, o siekta suvokti kalbintų žmonių pasaulėžiūrą, atrasti subjektyvius kalbintų asmenų pasaulėžiūros ir jų ryšio su Trakais motyvus. Kiekvienas pasakojimas pirmiausia vertintas kaip individualus konkretaus žmogaus kūrinys ir tik po to – kaip kolektyvinis reiškinys. Remiantis šiuo principu giluminio interviu metu buvo stengiamasi skatinti pokalbininką dalintis atsiminimais, svarbiausiais jo gyvenimo įvykiais, ir tik tuomet užduoti konkrečius, su Trakais susijusius klausimus. Šie klausimai būdavo pasirenkami išanalizavus ankstesnių pokalbininkų plėtotas temas, pasitikrinant, kokius naratyvus atpažįsta ir kiti bendruomenės nariai.

Daugeliu atvejų kalbinami žmonės buvo pasirenkami taikant „sniego gniūžtės“ metodą. Vienas informantas nurodydavo kitą, o šis – dar ką nors. Neretai pokalbininkai buvo atrandami tiesiog užkalbinus gatvėje. Kartais asmenys, jau žinantys, kad vyksta toks tyrimas, patardavo, pas ką dar galima būtų nueiti. Pokalbininkų amžius svyravo nuo 50 iki 90 metų. Kadangi Trakai yra daugiatautis miestas, stengtasi kalbinti skirtingų tautybių asmenis. Interviu vykdavo jiems priimtina kalba – lietuvių, rusų arba lenkų. Darbe cituojamos pasakojimų ištraukos originalo kalba, o išnašose pateikiamas jų vertimas į lietuvių kalbą. Tekstai yra neredaguoti, atspindintys vietos kalbinę situaciją. Todėl juose dažnai pasitaiko netaisyklingų linksnių, giminių, kitos kalbos intarpų, žargono. Tekstai lenkų kalba pateikti pusiau fonetine rašyba (parengė Agata Adamaitytė). Lauko tyrimų medžiaga perduota saugoti į Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos instituto Lietuvių tautosakos archyvą.

Disertacija rašyta derinant aprašomąjį, analizės ir interpretacijos metodus. Gyventojų skaičiaus ir tautinės-religinės sudėties nustatymui taikytas statistikos metodas, analizuojant skirtingas istorines epochas atspindinčią medžiagą – lyginamasis metodas.

Tyrimo tikslas – remiantis trakiečių pasakojimais iširti subjektyvius ir bendruomeninius santykio su Trakais aspektus, atskleisti, kaip skirtingai gali būti

suvokiama ta pati kultūrinė erdvė. Kultūrinius erdvės suvokimo ypatumus siekta parodyti pasitelkus pasakojimus apie miestą, gamtą, žmones ir jų veiklą, išryškinant vaizduotės, atminties vaidmenį.

Tyrimo uždaviniai:

1. Pristatyti teorines ir metodologines darbo gaires, nagrinėjant tyrimui aktualias subjektyvumo, dialogiškumo, reflektyvumo, lokalumo, erdviškumo ir naratyvumo sampratas.

2. Aptarti geografinius, urbanistinius, istorinius, socialinius ir demografinius Trakų erdvės suvokimo aspektus.

3. Aprašyti trakiečių pasakojimais perteikiamą vidinę miesto erdvės struktūrą pasitelkus skirtingas perspektyvas: subjektyviają (individualią), istorinę, etninę, religinę, urbanistinę ir pristatyti penkias trakiečių įvardijamas miesto zonas.

4. Analizuoti ir interpretuoti atminties, kilmės, gyvenimo patirties, tikėjimų ir vaizduotės poveikį Trakų gyventojų santykiui su Trakais ir juos supančia gamta.

5. Analizuoti Trakų gyventojų požiūrį ir reakcijas į XX a. antrojoje pusėje įvykusius urbanistinius, ekologinius, demografinius ir gyvenamosios pokyčius.

Disertaciją sudaro įvadas, teorinė dalis, kurioje pristatyta tyrimo metodologija, empirinis tyrimas, išvados, literatūros ir iliustracijų sąrašas. Empirinę dalį sudaro keturi skyriai, kurių kiekvienas suskaidytas į smulkesnius teminius skyrius. Skyriuje „Trakai: žvilgsnis iš šalies“ aprašoma geografinė Trakų aplinka, urbanistinė miesto raida ir XX a. pokyčiai, pristatoma Trakų bendruomenė, pateikiami statistiniai duomenys. Pagrindžiama pasirinktoji empirinių tyrimų analizei skirtų skyrių logika. Skyriuje „Trakų miesto erdvės samprata vietos gyventojų pasakojimuose“ aprašytos penkios seniesiems trakiečiams žinomos Trakų miesto erdvės – *Rogatka*, *Miasto*, *Jursdyka*, *Karaimščyzna* ir *Zamostė*. Nagrinėjami jų urbanistiniai, kraštovaizdžio, etniniai, religiniai, mikrolokalumo ypatumai. Skyriuje „Trakai – ežerų pasaulis“ analizuojama, kokią įtaką žmonių santykiui su gamtine aplinka turi gyvenamoji vieta, tautybė, gyvenimo patirtis, veikla ir lytis. Nagrinėjami mitologiniai, istoriniai, pragmatiniai dialogo tarp žmogaus ir gamtos aspektai. Skyriuje „Kaita ir tęstinumas“ Trakai nagrinėjami iš bendruomenės perspektyvos, analizuojami Trakų gyventojų tarpusavio santykiai, kalbos, komunikacija.

Ginamieji teiginiai:

1. Trakai yra heterogeniška vieta. Ji turi ir kultūros centro, ir provincijos bruožų, ryškiai kontrastuoja senas ir naujas miestas. Trakų bendruomenę sudaro įvairių tautybių, konfesijų ir kilmės žmonės. Būtent daugialypumas laikytinas bendruomenę vienijančiu ir erdvę steigiančiu kriterijumi.

2. XX a. antroji pusė – tai urbanistinių, socialinių, demografinių pokyčių Trakuose laikas, keitęs ir gyvenimo būdą. Kita vertus, tai tyrimo dalyvių gyvenimo laikas. Vietiniai žmonės, žvelgdami per savo patirties prizmę, pokyčius vertina kaip skirtį tarp praeities ir dabarties. Tačiau jie patys nevalingai tampa ir jungiamąja grandimi, savo gyvenimu, atmintimi bei naratyvais susiedami šiuos du laiko matmenis.

3. Vyresniosios Trakų gyventojų kartos kognityvinis miesto erdvės suvokimas yra sąlygotas urbanistinės jo raidos, iki XVIII a. egzistavusių jurisdikų, istorinės žemėvaldos, ūkinės gyventojų veiklos, etninio gyventojų susiskirstymo. Net ir XXI a. šis istorinis paveldas daro įtaką Trakų erdvės ir vietų sampratai.

4. Seniausi miestiečiai skiria penkias Trakų dalis. Tai *Rogatka*, *Miasto*, *Jursdyka*, *Karaimščyzna* ir *Zamostė*. Iš pavadinimų matyti, kad jos yra istoriškai susiklosčiusios buvusių jurisdikų pagrindu ir išsaugojusios miestui kuriantis susiformavusias urbanistines–administracines ribas, kurios fragmentiškai išliko iki šių dienų.

5. Trakus supantys ežerai vertintini ne tik kaip erdvę steigiantis geografinis kraštovaizdžio elementas, bet ir kaip sudvasintas gamtos gaivalas, kurio nepajėgė užgožti miesto kultūra. Daryti tokias prielaidas skatina iki šiol paplitęs tikėjimas apie ežeruose skęstančius žmones ir kitokie su vandens keliamomis grėsmėmis susiję pasakojimai.

6. Vietos gyventojai į Trakus žiūri kaip į savo nuosavybę, savo kiemą. Tokia nuostata lemia kritišką miesto raidos, naujovių vertinimą.

CURRICULUM VITAE

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Education

- 2001 – 2005** **Bachelor degree.** University of Vilnius, Faculty of History, Department of Archaeology.
“Folklore and Archaeology. Analysis of so-called *Swedish graves*”
- 2005–2008** **Master degree.** University of Vilnius, Faculty of History, Department of Archaeology
„Cultural Space of Trakai. The Study on Historical Memory”
- 2013** **Post diploma studies** „Cultural Diplomacy of XXIst Century. E-learning“. Collegium Civitas and Institute of Adam Mickiewicz”
- 2010– 2015** **PhD studies.** University of Vilnius and the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore.

Work experience

- 2006** History teacher in the Vytautas Magnus Gymnasium in Trakai
- 2006 – 2011** Cultural manager of the Trakai Historical National Park Management
- 2013** Tourism and travel manager in “Ditmos projektai ir Ko”.
- From 2014** Private guide, lecturer, research project manager
- From 2008** Public voluntary worker. Trakai Land Culture and Craft Association.
- From 2016** Senior editor of the magazine „Liaudies kultūra“

Scientific publications

1. *Onomastics of the Great Lakes of Trakai*, [Editor L. Sokolovaitė], Vilnius, 2010.
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2. *Folkloric Memory: in Search of the Concept Meaning*. Seminar in the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore. 30 October, 2011.
3. *Polyphony of the Local Culture of Trakai: Subjective and Collective Experience of Places*. The 2nd Seminar of the Indigenous Culture “Places and People”. 5 March, 2012.
4. *Folkloric Implication in the Natural Flow of Memory. Discussion on Fieldwork Theory*. 2st International Conference of the Young Folklorists “Theoretical Frames and Empirical Research”. 17 April, 2012.
5. *Folk Narrative Research: Disciplinary Focus on Forgetfulness?* The 16th International ISFNR Congress in Vilnius „Folk Narrative in the Modern World: Unity and Diversity“. 29 June, 2013.
6. *Zoja Michailovna: The Witness of the Apocalypse*. 4th International Conference of the Young Folklorists “The Informant in Folklore Studies“. 4 June, 2014.
7. *Growing Cucumbers in Trakai: the Notions of the Past Époque in the Life Stories of Trakai Citizens*. 7th Seminar of the Indigenous Culture “Lore, Knowing and Knowledge”. 29 June, 2014