

Romualdas Apanavičius
Uniwersytet Witolda Wielkiego, Kowno
[Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas, Lithuania]

Studia etnologiczne na Litwie w latach 1927-2005

Studies in Ethnology in Lithuania in 1927-2005

SUMMARY

Studies in ethnology as a separate university specialization in Lithuania began at universities in the two major Lithuanian cities, Vilnius and Kaunas: in 1927, at the Stefan Batory University (SBU) in Vilnius, and in 1934, at the Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) in Kaunas. Although at that time the two universities were situated in different countries, the SBU in Poland and the VMU in Lithuania, the areas and topics of studies in ethnology that developed at the universities were quite similar. At SBU, studies in ethnology had evolved from among the subjects offered within history studies, while at the VMU – from courses in philology. It was the special areas of research interests of the scholars engaged in those fields that led to the establishment of the Department of Ethnology and Ethnography at the SBU and the Department of Ethnic Studies at the VMU.

The programme of ethnology studies at the SBU was focused mostly on ethnology and ethnography, while the main topic of studies in ethnology at the VMU was folklore. In 1939, the activities of SBU were suspended by the Lithuanian legislature, Seimas, and a new university, Vilnius University (VU), was established in Vilnius, but the two currents in ethnology were not reunited, because although the decision of the Seimas also moved the Faculty of Humanities from the VMU to VU, the scholars of the humanities and ethnology at the SBU had left Lithuania.

After the Second World War, studies in ethnology continued to be pursued only at the VU, as in 1950 the Soviet authorities had merged the VMU with two other higher schools, the Kaunas Polytechnical Institute and the Kaunas Institute of Medicine, thus practically abolishing the VMU.

Ethnology at the VU was offered as a subject of studies at the departments of Ethnography, Museum Studies, Archaeology and Ethnography, and finally, from 1964 onwards, the Department of the History of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic, where history students could specialize in ethnography.

The content of the teaching of ethnology was largely influenced by the work of a SBU graduate of 1939, Franciszka Stukienasówna (Prané Stukenaitė), M. Phil., later – Prane Dundulienė, Professor at the VU. Due to her efforts, the tradition of studies in ethnology at the SBU was kept alive, because the main subjects at the VU had originated from the programme of studies in ethnology at the SBU.

The subjects dealing with folklore were transferred to the VU's Department of Lithuanian Literature, where they were included in the programme of studies in philology. Ethnology and folklore were taught as two distinct groups of subjects within studies of different disciplines at the VU.

The traditions of the studies in ethnology at the SBU and VMU came together in 1992, with the founding Department of Ethnology and Folklore at the VMU, re-established in 1989. Studies in ethnology embrace not only ethnology and folklore, but also ethnography, anthropology, ethnomusicology, mythology, religion, art and modern culture studies. The B.A. programme in Ethnology was started in 1992, and the M.A. programme in Ethnic Culture, as well as the Ph.D. programme of studies in ethnology, in 1993. According to the Statute of the VMU, two years of the B.A. studies are devoted to obligatory and optional (elective) subjects, while the third year to the student's specialization (major). The M.A. and Ph.D. programmes are focused mainly on specialist subjects, and the M.A. programme offers optional courses (electives) in ethnology, history and philosophy.

Those in charge of studies in ethnology at the VMU have been former students of Professor P. Dundulienė. Since 1992, instruction in the main subjects of the studies in ethnology, has been the responsibility of the distinguished ethnologists, Professor Irena Regina Merkie-nė, and Professor Vacys Milius, as well as a graduate of the VMU, Professor Angele Vyšnia-ukaitė. A graduate of the VU, the folklorist and mythologist. Professor Norbertas Vėlius, headed the Department of Ethnology and Folklore from 1992 until 1996, and taught courses in mythology and folklore until his premature death in 1996. Since 1997, the Head of the Department has been the ethnologist and ethnomusicologist. Professor Romualdas Apanavi-čius, who – since 1998 – has simultaneously held the post of Dean of the Faculty of Human-ities of the VMU.

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