

# CHALLENGE OF IMAGINED SOCIETIES FOR POLITICAL ANTHROPOLOGY IN LITHUANIA

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of the article is to discuss the origins and issues of neo-tribalist and neo-pagan movements and their cultural, political, educational, international effect in Lithuania. The main object of our investigations is activities of modern neo-Semigallians (žiemgaliai) and Samogitians (žemaičiai). The main problem for analysis is the kind of impact Lithuanian ethnology has on supporting new imagined identities and modern consumer demands support for making new cultural, social, and historical identities.

KEY WORDS: socio-cultural anthropology, neo-tribalism, neo-pagans, historical visions, ethnographical visions, new mythologisation, pop cultural identities.

## ANOTACIJA

Straipsnio tikslas – aptarti neotribalistų ir neopagonybės sąjūdžio ištakas, jų veiklos formas, įvertinti šių subkultūrų veiklos kultūrinius, politinius, auklėjamuosius ir tarptautinius padarinius Lietuvoje. Tyrimo objektas – šiuolaikinių neo-žiemgalių ir žemaičių veikla. Analizės problema: kokie yra Lietuvos etnologijos poveikio rezultatai tenkinant naujųjų išivaizduojamų bendruomenių, tapatybių bei nūdienos vartotojų visuomenės poreikius? Aptariami procesai, darantys įtaką naujų kultūrinių, socialinių ir istorinių identitetų formavimosi raidai.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: sociokultūrinė antropologija, neotribalizmas, neopagonybė, istorinės vizijos, etnografinės vizijos, naujasis mitologizavimas, pop kultūros identitetai.

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Modern EU polity tends to provide “deliberative supranationalism” as a force which could resist traditional ethno-nationalism<sup>1</sup>. First of all, the identity of people of the Soviet Union was constructed as proletarian internationalism. In fact it was some form of imagined political supranationalism. The Soviet type of supranationalism was supported by its ideological apparatus and by the communist ideological doctrine. Real relations between the peoples of the Soviet Republics were developed as Soviet nationalism with some autonomous ethnic features. This situation became a precondition for spreading national dreams, literary style of magical-realism, and historical legends in native lands. As an opposition to the Soviet identity, Lithuanian writers developed national historical visions, literary mythology, national historical Utopias, especially stories about Lithuanian Grand Duke and mythological issues of Lithuanian thinking in the Soviet time. Independently a literary critic Violeta Kelertas<sup>2</sup> and an archaeologist Marija Gimbutas<sup>3</sup> notice that the specificity of Lithuanian postcolonial experiences was created by mythological fictions of world-feeling and historical dreams about heroic past and was transformed by the Soviet censorship and post Soviet

<sup>1</sup> Post-national nature of EU is discussed as supranationalism in: Weiler 1995; the question of deliberative supranationalism is analyzed in: Weiler 1995.

<sup>2</sup> Violeta Kelertas is an Associate Professor, holds endowed Chair of Lithuanian Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago. She is working on Lithuanian Prose Fiction and on compiling and editing an anthology of Baltic postcolonialist criticism with contributions both from the West and from the Baltic States. See: Kelertas 1992; Kelertas 1998; Kelertas 2006.

<sup>3</sup> For Gimbutas' studies on feminism and postcolonial being see: Moane 1990.

transition uncertainty and ambiguity (Sverdiolas 2006). From this point of view very important issues for mythological imaginations about Lithuanian identity were ethnographical investigations, reconstructions and folk stories about Lithuanian history that were very popular since the end of the 19th century. Lithuanian ethnography and stories about Lithuanian dukes become one of the leaders of the ideological struggle against the Soviet regime in the Baltic States. The works of ethnographers, some poets and writers often were interpreted as stories about 'secret' independent character and specific spirituality of Lithuanians in the period of Soviet occupation. For example, works of ethnographers Pranė Dundulienė, Norbertas Vėlius, Marija Gimbutas, linguist Julius Greimas, writer Justinas Marcinkevičius were commented on as a window to the true understanding of Lithuanian roots and essential interpreting of Lithuanian origins. Therefore the neo-mythological thinking, magical-realistic imaginations about historical or mythological heroes and creative activities of writers, painters, poets, ethnographers were read as liberation of a mysterious Lithuanian spirit. The growth of popularity of historical and ethnographical mythology stimulates the development of magical realism among Lithuanian writers and artists. The famous writers of magical realism were Antanas Vaičiulaitis, Saulius-Tomas Kondrotas, Gintaras Beresnevičius<sup>4</sup>, Jolita Skablauskaitė, Lithuanian Jewish writer Grigorijus Kanovičius, poet Sigitas Geda, painters Vidmantas Jusionis, Palemonas Janonis, etc.

Mythological fictions, ethnographical romanticism, historical legends and dreams became the background for the further construction of the Post Soviet imagined society and its identity. After the restoration of Lithuania's independence the stimulation and development of historical and ethnographical visions and fiction were not accomplished. Liberation of people means disengagement of thinking, free creation of new symbolical worlds, artificial final vocabularies (in Richard Rorty's sense), unusual language games (in Ludwig Wittgenstein's sense) and imagined forms of self identification. However it is important to remember that modern Baltic societies are consumer ones and depend on the supply and demands mechanisms and desires of consumer society. Therefore most of all modern imagination belongs to the market of images and identities.

Artificial acquisition or making of self identities in the consumer societies has not only ideological but also pop cultural, material, legal, humanitarian preconditions. There are few new directions of identifications in post-modern consumer society: subcultures (punks, hip-hop, skinheads...), new religious movements (neo-pagans or new-natives and a lot of different synthetic types of Eastern-Western religious movements), neo-tribes and game groups (societies of Lord of Rings and so on), pop cultural consumers. Besides, there are a lot of social groups with mixed identities: punk-neo-pagans, hardcore-anarchists... Very interesting are miscellaneous nationalistic-neo-pagan movements.

The theme of imagined societies and communities as a form of nationalism was considered by a lot of philosophers, political scientists, anthropologists or sociologists. First of all, it was the new Marxist Benedict Anderson and his book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Anderson 1983). On the basis of economic and power analyses of political and social processes in Latin America he shows that new national identities were construed as something artificial and corresponded to the local economic, political and existential demands. Anderson pays a lot of attention to the forming of identity of Creoles as opposed to the native His-

<sup>4</sup> Beresnevičius was a religious scientists, non fiction and fiction writer at the same time. His example shows in the most brilliant way how Lithuanian identity imagination was concerned with ethnological, historical imagination and magic realism style of fictions writing (Beresnevičius 2005 a, 2005 b).

panic nationalism. He shows that national identities depend on social, economic, cultural conditions and forms of discrimination. A similar conception from the political economy point of view was developed by the Elizabeth Rata (see: Rata 2000; Rata 2004). However, the process of identifications is more liberal in post-modern consumer society and depends on the style of life, symbolical and discursive fashion. We support our assumption by investigations of Birmingham Centre of Cultural Studies, and first of all by the works of Dick Hebdige and Stewart Hall. In ethnography ideas about the imaginative origin of modern ethnic identities were developed by Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat. They emphasize that "The idea of States of Imagination was enthusiastically received at the seminar, which took place in Copenhagen in the midst of winter 1998" (Hansen & Stepputat 2001). The book "Ethnographic explorations of the postcolonial state" was completed on the basis of this fruitful seminar. A lot of articles of this book are analogous to the ideas of B. Anderson and E. Laclau about subconscious and symbolical creativeness of ethnicities, about new mythologies and their relations to the new ideology of state or the new process of identification. The ideas of Hansen are quite similar to the conceptions of anthropologist Jonathan Friedman. Both of them analysed the process of fragmentation and participation under globalisation and noticed the decline of universal forms of hegemony and discrimination<sup>5</sup>. First of all, it is the crisis of patriarchalism, Euro centrism, naturalism, decline of mythology of earth and blood, the end of industrial principles and disappearance of one dimensional man's ideologies.

Imagination of new societies and communities could be explained in terms of J. Lacan as a process of satisfaction (especially linguistic satisfaction) of the needs of individualization. The official Soviet and Post Soviet culture couldn't satisfy the needs of socialization and individualization. In general industrial cultures discriminate between free expression of processes of individualization, socialization and other self identification or building of the sense of life. Every industrial society strives to show and to provide the so called "rights forms" of processes of socialization and individuation. It works on traditional stratification and on all machinery of educational system, *panopticum* of power, mass-media propaganda, administrative legal system control of all forms of national, gender, class and social identification. After the restoration of independence of the Baltic States, the growth of democratization and benefits show the decline of the former control system of socialization, individuation and other self identification. Consumer society, post-modern values, and globalisation create, develop and supply a lot of possibilities and means for self-constructing and satisfaction of self-identity, for fulfilment of oneself through the creation of new communities, new social, gender and (pop)cultural bodies. However, a lot of local people in the Baltic States considered new processes of self identification not as a production of Creative industries or pop cultural manufactories, not as freedom of expression and self creation, not as simply the style of life, but as an essential development. There are some reasons for such assumptions. First of all, community life is analysed by modern philosophers and psychologists as essential actualization or construction of human beings. However, representatives of modern communities have tendencies to transform ideal of communities into a fetish or into new kind of mythology. They relate forming and construing of themselves with some missions, predestinations, emanations of divine power, cosmic consciousness, divine love and so on. There are typical features of new religious movement with a tendency towards religious fundamentalism or neo-tribalism with hopes to build a neo-tribal

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<sup>5</sup> Analogous conceptions are represented in the review of Hansen on the book of Friedman (see: Hansen 1996).

autonomy, a new political movement geared towards anti-globalism, with the tendency to change the infrastructure of the society.

The imagination and construction of fancy communities, dreams about revelation of the divine human beings or historical tribes are popular ways for satisfaction of collective subconsciousness. So there are constructive and destructive elements in this process. The constructive element supports socialization and community life, self creation and creativity in general, cultural diversity and heritage. Diversity and discrepancies uphold the loyalty for Otherness and openness for dialogue, for social cooperation. The destructive element tends to transform the free process of individuation into compulsory for a number of people and to confirm this shape of self-construction as a part of educational and legal system of the State. Pop cultural elements of building of new identities, especially in the sphere of computer games, devalue community life and searching for a personal sense of life and transform all process of self identification into consumption.

We could suggest that the striving power of “new” and “neo” tribalism, new pagans (new natives) and new political ideologies are correlated phenomena. Different prefixes ‘neo-’ and ‘new-’ show various situations of novelty. Prefix ‘neo-’ shows a sort of reformation, transformation, artificial reconstruction (revelation) of the past. On the contrary, the ‘new-’ – emphasizes something born for the first time. New movements in Lithuania are various subcultures, such as different Eastern religious – Buddhism, Hinduism – and game-societies, especially participants of the internet system of PC games. On the contrary, ‘neo’ movements, for example neo-tribalism, are based on sentiments, dreams about revelation of the golden past. From this point of view, hopes and quasi-memory of participants of artificial projects of reviving imaginary heritage of Grand Duchy of Lithuania, neo-tribes (neo-Semigallians in Lithuania), neo-pagans, neo-shamans have structural similarities. All these groups try to stimulate different types of individualization and socialization by alluding to the attractive imaginary past and accumulate necessary symbolical capital for these purposes.

Neo-tribalism, neo-natives, neo-political ideologies are concerned with the system of education (persuasion, propaganda in the process of teaching) and with collective archetypes (through the stories of parents, grandparents and other authorities). Searching for the fulfilment of collective dreams and looking for the new forms of cooperation and solidarity, social hope and communitarian welfare often are grounded on the old mythologies, rituals and modern forms of needs, defiance and obedience. T. B. Hansen and F. Stepputat notice:

Another way of studying the myth of the state is to regard it as a form of “social fantasy” circulating among citizens and communities. This fantasy is produced and reproduced by numerous encounters, everyday forms of defiance and obedience, ranging from fantasies of the mighty and evil state hatching hyper rational designs (a genre popular among radical groups on the left as well as on the far right) to popular genres of conspiracy theories that often impute almost superhuman omniscience and omnipresence to political leaders and agencies of the state (Hansen & Stepputat 2001: 18).

Not only sentiments of the past and hopes for the future or obedience to tradition, but also everyday conflicts, the structure of thinking of masses (stereotypes, syndrome of conspiracy and victimization), the growth of the fragmentation of society - all these factors make pressure on the concrete participant of the post-communist society and influence the popularity of different neo-movements. In fact, it is not personal dreams. Probably it is social fantasy and regime of power that

are related to social hopes, to a belief in election and in the reason or spirit of history. Aletta Norval writes:

The myth of the state may be considered a form of “social fantasy” circulating among citizens and communities. Conceptions of nationhood form part and parcel of this social fantasy, and the TRC is a participant in the struggle for instituting a hegemonic conception of that fantasy or [...] social imaginary (Norval 2001: 183).

Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in the Republic of South Africa represents an example of institutionalisation and control of national intolerance, local dreams and social hopes based on tradition that is supported by ethnographical, anthropological research. Analogous commissions could be found in the Baltic States. There are different state commissions of restitution (rights and ownership) and cultural heritage, including non-material heritage: rituals, holidays, beliefs, mythology. However, there are many possibilities for institutional and heritage creativity, claims on intangible property. Yvonne R. Lockwood and William G. Lockwood considered the process of creative ritualisation and institutionalisation as an important part of inter-ethnic relations and regionalisation. Holidays, ritualising, collecting social and cultural property are important strategy in the construction of identity. The performativity of rituals and/or accumulation of different forms of ownership are developed in the context of the following instances of socialization, central for modern societies: family, school, the media and peer groups. For the neo-Semigallians one of the bases for meeting is activities in the so called “*Žiemgalos akademija*”, exhibitions, concerts, official holidays of towns in the land of *Žiemgala*, folk-holidays, common Latvian and Lithuanian expeditions, magazines.

Sentiments and dreams about golden past, expectations and hopes for some kind of revelation apply to underlying assumptions of legal-administrative practices and institutional research. The idea of the State commissions for national heritage, including non-material needs, opens to us the relation between the ideological apparatus, interpretation of tradition and feeling of moral obligations.

The collapse of the former Soviet Union opened a new sphere for ethnographic ideas. Ethnographic investigations of different traditions, models of old rituals didn't become a routine, but something fresh and enthusiastic. Ethnographic investigations became basis for popular ethnical, magical-realistic dreams and expectations. The ethnological discourse helps to construct a modern neo-pagan, neo-native subject, for example, new priests and leaders. Ethnologist Jonas Trinkūnas became the main priest of the native religious group *Romuva* and folk troupe “*Kūlgrinda*” that makes (rebuilds or creates in the authentic context) the most important rituals for neo-pagans. All similar neo-movements get support from regional commissions of heritage. This process is quite different from the situation with the so called neo-pagans or neo-natives.

After the restoration of independence in Lithuania, the neo-pagan movement *Romuva* applied to reconstruct faith in native gods in order to recreate “native” religious, authentic style of life. They try to regenerate the cosmic structure of the world by the empowerment of native world feeling. “Native” mythological, religious imaginations are developed in the situation when the destruction of the system of beliefs in general and in the case when traditional Christian symbolism couldn't fill national, especially local, expectations. Relatively negative evaluation of Catholicism was related with the traditional historical negative evaluation of the role of late mediaeval Christian orders. Of course the Lithuanian Catholic Church takes an active part in the process of liberation of

Lithuania in the last decades of the 20th century. However, the role of the Church was not decisive in the process of “the singing revolution”. A lot of participants of the popular movement *Sąjūdis* were seculars, atheists, former communists. They argued their decision to support Lithuanian independence with other, not religious motives: by the indeterminate national dreams, economic visions, by the demands of the new forms of socialization and liberty for individualization.

In the Soviet times, Lithuanians supported both imaginative mythological and epical identity. Both of them were based on ethnographic evidences, literary and visual imaginations and on looking for new forms of socialization and individualization. However, the relations with official institutions were quite different. Neo-pagans were not supported by State departments; the ethnographic initiatives of neo-tribes were actively supported by local governments (municipalities, museums, different commissions of heritage). The reasons for neo-pagan and neo-tribalist activities are analogous with those in the Western Countries. It is the development of mobile identities and weak, artificial communities in the situation of spreading of sub cultural, multicultural, feminist, NGO, creative classes’ movements and different other communities. Mobile identities and weak communities mean that every individual could have some “soft” identities at the same time. Sometimes these identities are contradictory. The same person could participate in international societies (for example, natives, hardcore and Buddhism), to be neo-tribalist and at the same time - an active Catholic.

It is useful to take notice that the development of native religions and neo-tribes in Post Soviet Lithuania has five periods: 1) ethnographical and archaeological investigations and literary romantic dreams; 2) the movement of ethnographic societies – folk groups. In this period participants of different institutions of heritage to support Lithuanian culture, to revive Lithuanian folk-holidays and rituals emerged; 3) the appearance of first neo-pagans and neo-tribes with religious, moral or ethnic identity intentions in the folk and ethnographic groups, 4) the birth of first real neo-pagan and neo-tribal movements of people; 5) the development of archaeological, ethnographical investigations, poets’ and painters’ activities in support of neo-tribal programs.

Neo-tribalism as a “dream community” is a complex event and needs analyses of many components. They developed from the archaeological investigation and ethnographical interpretation of some folk materials, the establishing of local communities’ “ethnographical magazines”: *Žemaitija* (Samogitia), *Žiemgala* (Semigallia) where special ethnographic investigations, literary imaginations, ritual and holiday recommendations for the revived community were printed. In the case of neo-Semigallians’ magazine “*Žiemgala*” we could find the scientific works about the history of Semigallians, heroic historical and new historical poetry, stories about life and creations of imagined descendants and desired heroes... The activists have not only a historical interest for reconstruction of the past; they believe in the wonderful revelation of the tribes and begin to support and stimulate such kind of revelation of communities.

Other issues of new-tribalism in Lithuania are mythological imagination of the Soviet times. Magical realism was especially popular in Lithuania and it was quite different from the situation in Latvia or Estonia where national hopes had a more civic character. Lithuanian mythological studies were “bestselling” between painters and poets, writers and architects, lawyers and local administrators. Today the most active participants of neo-Semigallian movement are literati, painters, counsels, historians, ethnographers – quite educated people (Jusionytė 2004). Step by step the spread of the so called scientific facts or dreams among local farmers, teachers and bureaucracy construct the neo-tribe or, to be precise, the hope-tribe.

Actually, the process of revelation of imagined tribes is based on real historical teaching about tribal roots of Lithuanian history and Lithuanian thinking. Every textbook on Lithuanian history begins with an idealistic story about specificity and form of lives of heroic Baltic tribes. Historians often mention the Baltic Prussians, who lived between the Lower Vistula River, Mazovian Lakes, and Curonian Lagoon. They speak that “to the east, between the Mazovian Lakes and the Middle *Nemunas* River there lived their kindred Yotvingians (Sudavians)” (Kiaupa 2002: 21). Now it is northern part of Byelorussia. The so-called Neo-Yotvingians’ “revelation” is based on other processes of identification than in Lithuania. Byelorussians as a nation emerged from the Slavs and Yotvingians intercultural processes, however, former Yotvingians were a Baltic tribe. Modern Byelorussian nationalistic misinterpretation of Yotvingians as Slavs stimulates reconstruction of the dream visions of independence and pride and construction of the imagined nation. Elaborating Neo-Yotvingians as a tribe with Slavic historical background is similar to the imaginative construction of the modern Thracian world understanding and imaginations of antique Thracians as ethnic roots of modern Macedonians (former Republic of Yugoslavia) in opposition to Macedonia in Greece.

A weaker process of tribalisation is going on in Lithuania. There were a lot of different tribes on the modern territory of Lithuania in antique times. Historians mention:

The Nadruvians settled around the Upper *Pregel* River, and the Skalvians at the Lower *Nemunas*. The Curonians lived to the north from the Lower *Nemunas* district as far as Lower *Venta* on the Baltic shores, as well as in the *Venta* river-basin. Their neighbours to the west were the Semigallians recorded as Semigallians in Danish chronicles at the end of the ninth century – who occupied the *Yelgava* river-basin. Even further east were the Selonians, who lived south of the Middle *Dvina*, and their northern neighbours, the Latvians. Living at the Upper *Nemunas* and in the river basin of its right tributaries were tribes known as Lithuanians (Kiaupa 2002: 21).

Samogitians (*žemaičiai*, жмудь) as well as semigalians (*žiemgala*, ziemgala) were a specific tribe with autonomous cultural, linguistic and political self-consciousness. They had a definite history, language, traditions, religion. Modern posterity and followers have saved a live memory about the heritage. Today on the basis of former Samogitians emerged Samogitians national movement that is larger than expected of the revelation of the tribe’s cultural movement and has expectations of some form of cultural autonomy. Followers of the neo-tribes support imagined posterity and create new cultural communities. Samogitians didn’t have any more developed independent state experience or separate history from the other parts of Lithuania and as a result modern Samogitians don’t have serious political expectations. Their historical visions are based on retrospective evaluation of the process of Lithuanian history. Imaginative form of cultural autonomy and real specificity of local traditions especially in villages of ethnic lands of Samogitia, modern dialects became the reason for some cultural and political demands of modern Samogitians: supporting revelation of quasi tribal memory, rituals, language, tombs, vocabulary, language and interpretation of some historical events in Samogitia.

Samogitians’ historical imaginations in Lithuania and New-Yotvingians’ dreams in Byelorussia become a precondition for some Byelorussian historians’ speculation that Samogitians are the real subject of Lithuanian history and that other Baltic Lithuanians were not important. Therefore some nationalist Byelorussian historians consider Yotvingians and modern Byelorussians true Lithuanians (*Litvins*) and Grand Duchy of Lithuania real Grand Duchy of Byelorussia.

So historians' and ethnographers' interpretation of the history of different tribes and new-tribes movements (Curonians, Scalvians, Selonians, Sudovians, Highlanders, Lithuanians, Samogitians and Semigallians) on the territory of present Lithuania creates basis for a lot of different political speculations, historical misinterpretations and poetic dreams about Lithuanian roots, borders of state, state language and other symbols of identification.

Semigallians inhabited the territory of the rivers' *Mūša-Lielupē* basin. On the present territory of Lithuania there remained only the edge of the southern territory of the Semigallians. The culture of the Semigallians both in northern (Latvia) and southern (Lithuania) parts was identical until 13th century. Another name of Semigallians, much more popular in Latvia and Lithuania, is the name of their land: *Žiemgala*. Today one of the regions of Latvia – near the towns of *Jelgava* and *Bauskē* has the name of *Ziemgala* and a lot of cultural Southern Latvia institutions have this name. From the view point of neo-Semigallians, they are neither Lithuanians nor Latvians. For Lithuanian neo-Semigallians and Samogitians, the construction of the Lithuanian identity on the basis of one tribe – the Lithuanians – is not sufficient and doesn't tally with historical facts and needs of modern Lithuanian diversity. On the other hand, neo-Semigallians of Lithuania (small part) and Latvia (basic part) consider each other the same tribe. It could be the basis for more intensive neighbourly relations between the two EU states: Latvia and Lithuania. Unfortunately, the two parts of the former or quasi Semigallians don't have a common language: they speak either Latvian or Lithuanian. Of course, scientists from both parts try to find and gather examples of old dialects on the former territory of *Žiemgala*, place-names and historical evidence about language, traditions, folk holidays of neo-Semigallians.

According to historian Edvardas Gudavičius, Semigallians remained independent until 1250. Between 1250 and 1290 there were a lot of battles between Livonian Order and the tribe. The Semigallians, the only ones of all Livonian tribes, resisted the Germans most obstinately and for the longest time. After the war Semigallians slowly disappeared in Livonia or in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (Gudavičius 2000).

Revelation of neo-Semigallians is coherent with the mythologisation of the roots of Lithuanian identity at the end of the Soviet Union. Political and historical mythologisation is common for Eastern and Central Europe. For example, Slovenian political scientists Ljubica Jelusič, Marjan Malesič discussed military mythologisation of the heroic episodes of history as part of military propaganda:

The promoters of the glorification and mythologisation – the two phenomena much needed by the military establishment - were some of the key actors of the military resistance together with a part of nationalistically oriented intelligentsia (Jelusič & Malesič).

Jelusič and Malesič discussed strong mythologisation of the past in the Former Republic of Yugoslavia. Lithuanian and Byelorussian mythologisation and glorification have a weaker character partly because the modern authoritarian president of Byelorussia V. Lukashenko supports only Russian orientations and discriminates, persecutes local nationalistic movements. However, in the case of Balkan states and in the case of Baltic states and Byelorussia we have very similar issues of mythologisation. It is ethnographic and historical quasi scientific imaginations. Søren Birkvad notices that historical portrait documentary is much related to mythologisation:



A main premise in connection with media's "portraying" is a notion of an equally vague character, namely "mythologisation". Nevertheless "mythologisation" is in my view a key epistemological factor if one is to comprehend the genre history, as it up to a crucial point has been laid out above, and a typology of the portrait documentary, as it even more sketchily will be laid out in the following (Birkvad 2000: 15).

I would like to emphasise that often portraits of ethnic persons are mythologized and transformed into legends. Every neo-tribe goes by the similar way: they strive to find (in fact – to create, to mythologize) 'saint' ancestors, creators of neo-tribes. For neo-Semigallians it was Juozas Šliavas, the ethnographer (1930-1979)<sup>6</sup>.

The specificity of this wonderful, imaginative revelation of the tribe is a relative opposition to the modern Lithuanian nationalism; it is similar to the more popular idea of autonomous Samogitia. Ethnical specificities of Samogitians were observed by ethnographic investigations from the middle of 19th century. Modern Samogitian language is a dialect of normative, standard Lithuanian. Samogitians have some feeling of cultural autonomy and history. On the basis of historical heritage, live memories, a lot of legends and historical mythologisation they build nationalistic visions of autonomous Samogitia. They issue passports, create "state" symbols and develop the shadow structure of the imagined state. Another situation is with neo-Semigallians. The cultural and language memory of neo-Semigallians are based only on ethnographic and archaeological (for example, expeditions and works of Ilona Vaškevičiūtė) investigations, linguistic reconstructions, legends; therefore political requirements are less obvious.

Semigallian tombs and other discoveries of archaeologists are signs for the reconstruction of modern territory: jumping-off ground for revelation. An archaeological excavation is considered as the basis for legal spreading of the wave of a new identity. Latent archaeological wars between Lithuanian and Semigallian or Samogitian identities and their representatives could be seen in the modern Semigallians magazines (for example – "*Žiemgala*"). The new archaeological discovery is considered by neo-Semigallians as stages of the 'secret' battle for their native land.

The process of imaginative revelation of the tribe and real cultural practices of its possible representatives looks like an artificial reconstruction neo-paganism in Lithuania. The last pagan temples were destroyed in the middle of 15th century, while the popular native religious practices and form of life disappeared about the middle of 17th century. There is no documentary or other evidence about later existence of the pagans. Lithuanian neo-pagans appeared as an imaginative society on the basis of the specific interpretation of ethnographic works. However, later, approximately between 1990 and 1998, ethnographic reconstructions were gradually substituted by native religious creativity and feelings. The feeling of belief, hierophany, creative rituals, activities and solidarity of neo-pagan communities became more important than the ethnographical canons or archaeological witnesses. The process of revelation was finished and the new religious group begins specific type of religious activity, original creativity and community life. Now the rituals and customs of neo-pagans don't depend directly on historical witnesses and are free for the structural construction of the church, communities and even villages. However, freedom from power of historical witnesses, groundlessness is dangerous and stimulates the emergence of heresies. Therefore ethnographic authorities and institutions should be changed and developed by powerful neo-pagan insti-

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<sup>6</sup> Considerations and development of legends about Juozas Šliavas are reflected in journal: *Senosios Žiemgalos istorinis ir etnokultūrinis paveldas*. Vilnius, 2004. There are some publications about Šliavas (see: Nekrašas 2004; Salatkienė 2004; Bėčius 2004; etc.).

tutions and their legacy. This explains why ethnological education is so important for neo-pagans and neo-tribalists.

There are a lot of reasons to become neo-Semigallian in Northern Lithuania. First of all, they offer more live national symbols than the official state and so enable a more active new-identity (sub-identity). The neo-tribal identification is more historically grounded than new subcultures, such as bikers, punks, hardcore and they are more secular than religious identity of neo-natives (neo-pagans). Besides, the process of cultural identification of neo-Semigallians is the reason for the new forms of solidarity, cooperation, neighbourly relations, cultural and social motivation. They support institutions that develop new identity of people: libraries, museums, local municipalities and local newspapers, clubs at schools, local theatres, folk troupes. All of these activities and other social and cultural programs stimulate the growth of trust, solidarity and collaborative activity and are new challenges for educational processes and heritage politics.

From this point of view it is possible to explain why businessmen of Northern Lithuania support imaginative creativeness of artists of neo-Semigallians. Social hope, trust, social motivation for activities, openness for discussion, micro conflicts and dialogue, more life symbols and neighbourhood cooperation are enough reasons for applied and pragmatic anthropology to support these processes. The other reason for pragmatic approach is attempts to control ultra-nationalistic imaginations and strives. The challenge of neo-tribes for political anthropology is the necessity to transform the so called objective standpoint on the process of neo-tribalisation into active programmes of local and federal cooperation. The other forms of applied participations in the development of different forms of mobile and imagined identities could be educational methodologies such as Service learning or Cooperative education that includes applied field research. Applied anthropology and cooperative education could be supported by ethnographical and linguistic reconstruction of rituals, language, folk cuisine of neo-Semigallians or other new-tribes and teaching of people of Lithuania. The examples for such cooperation are real history of ethnical imaginations of neo-Semigallians. We mentioned that at the beginning of revelation neo-Semigallians supported ethnographical, archaeological investigations, historical analyses of texts of 13th – 14th centuries, especially witnesses of Livonian Order and Scandinavian countries. Later the growth of identification and consciousness as a tribe became visible. Today people who call themselves Semigallians begin the process of free creation of tribe and persuasion in local mass-media and schools. However, the successful development of the new form of solidarity needs support from universities, institutes, national TV and newspapers. Participants of neo-tribal movement see some dangers for the development of these soft forms of identities. First of all it is a risk of losing all authenticity and as a consequence – a schism, confrontation between participants of neo-tribes and local government. However, it is a very weak proposition; besides, there are only a few hundred more or less active participators of the imagined tribe in Northern Lithuania. Much more influential is Samogitian movement that includes several thousands of activists.

Neo-tribalists try to find acceptable forms of institutionalisation. Neo-Semigallians founded the society of Semigallians with different levels of beliefs into tribe revelation. There are hundreds of participants who simply have historical interests without any political or identity aspirations. The development of the common systems of symbols, the growth of trust among the participants and social hopes open the doors for beliefs into marvellous revelation especially in the time of holidays. Besides, society supports attempts to find old and new forms of rituals, feasts, new poetry and

songs, new language and feelings of landscape. They try to reconsider the history of local cities and villages, to personalise historical memory.

The community of people who considered themselves Semigallians creates different cultural products. Especially important are their literary works and paintings that make live symbols and spread cultural beliefs. For example, the poet of *Žiemgala* Jonas Ivanauskas. Tries to create monumental poetry (see: Ivanauskas 2000; Ivanauskas 2002): spread of mythological visions about sacral lands of the tribe, salvation of old and modern heroes of the tribe. Translating Semigallian poetry from Lithuanian into Latvian and vice versa is very important for them. Another side of creative activities is consideration of *Weltenschaung* of the tribe. Modern Lithuanian Semigallian philosopher Stasys Simaitis has aspirations to recreate religious feelings and world views of Semigallia. According to him, *Weltenschaung* of Semigallians doesn't coincide with pagan or neo-pagan. The native religious movement in Lithuania was rebuilt as a common, national native religion, without any tribe specificities. Semigallians considered Lithuanians and Samogitians as cultural otherness, first of all on the basis of world feeling. Philosopher Simaitis tried to express the landscape feeling of Semigallians on the basis of other conception of geographical schemes (he doesn't use meridian but antique equinox system), other agricultural traditions, specific cultural landscape.

An attempt to reconstruct elements of former life of the tribe is observable in the case of musical instruments and holidays for the new representatives. According to the ethnographer and ethnomusic critic R. Apanavičius, classical *kanklės* (a Lithuanian string instrument) is heritage of Semigallian culture. In the district of North Lithuania, near the towns of Joniškis, Radviliškis, Pakruojis, people played traditional and modified *kanklės* from the 19th century. The traditional *kanklės* were the musical instruments of Semigallia in Latvia and Lithuania and were very near to the *kanklės* of Samogitians. Semigallian *kanklės* differ from Samogitian only in decoration and ornamentation and they are quite different from Lithuanian. According to R. Apanavičius, the traditional *kanklės*:

(...) most probably reflected the primitive culture and could be even the remains of totemism because their shapes reminded of the early fish. The *kanklės* from pike bones were sung in the Karelian epos "*Kalevala*" and its main character, old Veinemeinen, has lots of features of the *kanklės* players of the Baltic nations of the 19th century and the first half of 20th century. The modified *kanklės* reflected the change of the traditions of all Lithuanian ethnic culture (Apanavičius).

The specific holidays of Semigallians are *Ligo* (especially in the Latvian part) and "*sambariai*" (especially in the Lithuanian part). *Ligo* (*Joninės* is its "soft" analogue in Lithuania) is one of the main festivals in all Latvia. However, *Ligo* in Semigallian part of Latvia is much more important than in Lithuanian part of Semigallia; probably all Latvians in this part of Latvia celebrate this holiday for three days. Every family has an individual fire in the holiday in Latvia and representatives of families, communities or groups of friends go to salutes of the neighbourhood fires. Another specific holiday of neo-Semigallians is "*sambariai*", especially popular in the Lithuanian part of Semigallia. *Sambariai* is the festival of ale drinking during Whitsunday. There are witnesses of the celebration of this holiday in the lands of former Semigallians from the end of 19th century. *Sambariai* festival was already mentioned in various church sources from the 16th century.

Recreation material (for example, music instruments) heritage, common symbolical system (holidays) and trust help the representatives of imagined tribes in solving the new problems of

building self-government and stimulate economic and social development of lands of imaginative Semigallia.

In conclusion it is necessary to say that the growth of different identities and new cultural demands depends on various processes: ethnographic imagination, folk festivals and revelation of old rituals, historical dreams, consumer needs and variety of supply. In the context of legal cultural and social processes, educational and scientific control such self interpretation, glorification and mythologisation of the past is a normal, peaceful and useful process. However, when multicultural conflicts emerge and develop the new symbolization and mythologisation of the world supports illegal compulsion. On the contrary, modern Creative industries build weak identities and timeless communities without essentialistic visions that better correspond consumer demands and don't have dangers in international conflicts.

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## ĮSIVAIZDUOJAMŲ BENDRUOMENIŲ IŠŠŪKIAI POLITINEI ANTROPOLOGIJAI LIETUVOJE

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### Santrauka

Straipsnyje kalbama apie postkolonializmo situacijos ir šiuolaikinės vartotojiškos visuomenės paskatintą įsivaizduojamų bendruomenių kūrimą bei jų ekonominius, kultūrinius, politinius poreikius ir reikmes Lietuvoje. Baltiškasis ir ypač lietuviškasis postkolonializmas yra tiesiogiai siejamas su etnografinė, mitologine ir magine-menine vaizduote, kuri buvo plėtojama sovietinėje Lietuvoje ir kuri tapo dvasinės rezistencijos šaltiniu. Skirtingai nei sovietų režimo konstruotas supranacionalizmas ir sovietinis identitetas, rezistencinė asmens tapatybė buvo siejama su Lietuvos rašytojų ir tapytojų kūriniais, istorikų ir etnografų darbais. Jų kūrinuose buvo plėtojamos nacionalinės istorinės vizijos, aukštinama pagoniškoji Lietuva, jos įsivaizduojami papročiai, literatūrinė mitografija, sentimentalios politinės utopijos, ypač apie LDK, maginio realizmo žanras poezijoje, prozoje, dailėje. Straipsnyje remiamasi M. Gimbutienės, V. Kelertas, A. Sverdiolo įžvalgomis apie postkolonializmo dvasią kai kuriuose lietuvių rašytojų ir menininkų kūrinuose plėtojant emocines praeities vizijas ir taip retrospektyviai konstruojant naujuosius tapatumus. Taip pat remiamasi B. Andersono, E. Laclau samprotavimais apie geismo, lūkesčio ir simbolinės politinės kūrybos santykį bei asmens ir bendruomenės tapatumus, apeliuojama į T. B. Hanseno bei J. Friedmano antropologines pastabas apie tapatumo vaizduotės pokyčius postmodernioje, globalioje, vartotojiškoje visuomenėje. Svarbų indėlį formuojant neotribalistinę vaizduotę ir kūrybą Lietuvoje padarė etnografų darbai, pirmiausia P. Dundulienė, N. Vėlius, J. Greimas, bei daugelio kraštotyriminkų raštai. Pažymėtina ironija: autorių, tyrinėjusių ikirikščiškąją lietuvių pasaulėžiūrą, kūriniai vėliau tapo baltų religijos (pagonių) ir neotribalizmo atgimimo šaltiniu, vienu svarbiausių jų ideologijos impulsų. Tiesa, šalia lietuviškosios etnografijos čia taip pat buvo pasitelkiama ir pasaulinė mitologija bei neošamanizmo kūriniai. Atkūrus nepriklausomybę Lietuvoje buvo plėtojamas neotribalistinis žemaičių, žiemgalių nacionalizmas bei jotvingių, kuršių vizijos, atkuriamos bajorų sąjungos, gaivinamos imaginacinės LDK kultūros versijos, kurių ryškiausia figūra tapo atstatomi/kuriami buvę/dabartiniai Valdovų rūmai. Pagaliau šiuolaikinė vartotojiška kultūra palaiko ir platesnį įsivaizduojamų bendruomenių spektrą, siejamą su naujosiomis religijomis, jaunimo subkultūromis, fantastų klubais, skonio ir stiliaus draugijomis ir t. t. Politinės antropologijos požiūriu, šis neomitologijos ir naujųjų įsivaizduojamų identitetų plitimas yra įdomus kaip naujas ekonominis, gamybinis stimulus, vartotojiškas ir postmodernus visuomenės struktūravimas bei kaip nauji bendruomeniniai politiniai reikalavimai, susiję su kitokiu teritoriniu-administraciniu Lietuvos padalijimu. Pavyzdžiui, buvęs LR prezidentas R. Paksas skelbė idėją, kad įprastines apskritis reikėtų keisti padalijimu į žemaičių, aukštaičių, dzūkų, suvalkiečių žemes. Šis įsivaizduojamas padalijimas yra tiek pat mitologiškas kaip ir žiemgalių reikalavimai atsižvelgti į istorinę genčių patirtį ar į baltų reikalavimą atsižvelgti į baltų religijos žmonių ritualinius ar šventinius poreikius. Straipsnyje taip pat nagrinėjamos baltų religijos atstovų ir neotribalistų opozicijos religiniu ir politiniu požiūriu.

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