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Foreword

Museum events – openings, conferences, political meetings, concerts – today are impressive performances, which confirm that over the last centuries the museum remains a particular site of enchantment invested with objects and secrets that appear to change the world, and serve as a testimony to the past and present. The museum as a ritual is a place where society speaks about itself, its relationship to its heritage, place, history, and culture. It is a site that cherishes its identity and offers future perspectives in symbolic and conventional forms. Anthropologists and ethnologists are particularly interested in the ways in which the museum reflects upon contemporary life, and in how society interprets and makes objective anthropological and ethnographic knowledge.

The volume 'Museum: Knowledge and Ethnography' of the journal 'Lietuvos etnologija: socialinės antropologijos ir etnologijos studijos/Lithuanian Ethnology: Studies in Social Anthropology and Ethnology', 2014, uses the theme of the museum to explore the multi-vocal and changing contexts of museums, and to examine the ways in which contemporary museums communicate to man and society today. Ethnography here is treated as a kind of knowledge and a method – it is recognized in the stories of museums that present the diversity of cultural worlds, and in the stories about the ways in which museums approach their visitors.

The theme of the museum and ethnography is analysed in the majority of the articles, discussions, and applied projects that are presented in this volume. The contributors examine the theme drawing on a variety of cases. It begins with the introductory article of Auksuolė Čepaitienė who approaches, although in fragmentary way, the current state of the theme, and discusses the contributions of the authors of the volume through a variety of settings – the museum, an idea, a place, meanings of history, an object, materiality and authenticity, museum practises and museum people. Jonas Mardosa analyses the idea of the local lore museum, which emerged in Lithuania in the Interwar period of the 20th century, the ways in which it was carried out in different museums, and the place of ethnography in such museums. Hubert Czachowski explores the personal contribution of the museum curator in the development of ethnographic museology, and in particular into its theoretical conceptualisation and practical implementation. He uses Maria Znamierowska-Prüfferowa and her work and research activities as an example. Eglė Rindzevičiūtė investigates two museum exhibitions of the Lithuanian National Museum and the Amber Museum as expressions of national identity and geopolitical dimensions. Drawing on the analysis of the Nordic idea, she shows the stability and dynamics of

the concept under the changing contexts of political circumstances and social regroupings. Rasa Račiūnaitė-Paužuolienė explores the aspect of the museum as a visual ethnographic narrative, constituted through the multi-voicing of its messages and forms as well as the exchanges and meetings that occur in the museum. Her experience at the Pitt-Rivers museum in Oxford is the basis of her discussion. Significantly, the contributors of the volume explore the structural and problematic specificity of ideas, the settings and themes that the museums present, their historical and cross-cultural contexts, local particularities and perspectives, their thoughts debate and intersect with each other, and invite further discussion.

The article of Vida Savoniakaitė placed in the section of 'Discussions' poses questions on the meanings of authenticity in the different and unrelated to a museum setting of folklore performances, and in a straightforward manner invites discussion. She enquires whether the issue of authenticity in the contemporary society of consumption and modern technologies still may be held or may be it is out-dated. Maybe this issue has already acquired different values, meanings, and forms? And finally what is authenticity? Those conceptual questions transfer the discussion across the walls of a museum.

The museum, first of all, is its exhibitions, events and practises, which make the museum visible and identifiable. Two articles of this volume present the applied projects. They are significant in the sense that they represent the ways in which contemporary Lithuanian society understands ethnography and its application. The museum curators from the Open Air Museum of Lithuania Janina Samulionytė and Sigita Žukauskaitė describe the making of the exhibition 'Lithuanian Bread. With Your Loaf You Will Find a Table Everywhere' – its idea and the ways it was carried out. They highlight how the exhibition story about one object consists of various small stories that come from different areas of life, and show not this particular object, but the lifestyles of the community. Inga Levickaitė-Vaškevičienė analyses the digitization of museum artefacts, and highlights the multitude of opportunities they open up. She suggests that the display of museum objects and the information in digital form enables novel understandings of what the museum is. These two presentations of applied projects bring a sense of reality to the theme of the museum, and reveal its ethnographic details.

Two more articles included in the volume do not directly belong to the museum theme although they tackle issues of cultural heritage and 'living memory'. Goda Palekaitė deals with the museology problematic in postcolonial Africa by focusing on the debatable representations of the heritage of the San people (formerly known as Bushmen) in Namibia. The article of Ainė Ramonaitė and Rytė Kukulskytė opens up a post-socialist perspective on 'living memory' as instrumental in inspecting critically the beginnings of the Singing Revolution

in Lithuania by following the path of resistance against the regime through the enactment of Lithuanian ethnic culture and ethnic nationalism.

The interview of R. Račiūnaitė-Paužuolienė with a head of the School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography professor Marcus Banks from the University of Oxford, Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology deals significantly with the theme of the museum and enlarges it in a particular way and underlines the importance of research in visual anthropology.

To conclude, it is expected that the readers of the volume 'Museum: Knowledge and Ethnography' will approach the problematic variability of the theme, which is discussed and illuminated by the contributors to this volume in their detailed cases.

Auksuolė Čepaitienė, Vytis Čiubrinskas