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Sudarytojai VYTIS ČIUBRINSKAS ir JONAS MARDOSA

**FRAGMENTED IDENTITIES AND
SOCIOCULTURAL MINORITIES**

Edited by VYTIS ČIUBRINSKAS and JONAS MARDOSA

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Foreword

The processes of globalization and transnationalism open up a broader spectrum of understanding of cultural continuity and change as well as sociocultural interaction. Such seemingly 'stable' identities as national identity are increasingly being challenged by the 'Europeanization' of the member nation-states of the European Union and even more so in a global arena where, according to Jonathan Friedman (2004) conditions of national reproduction are more and more effected by global flows of capital. Since nation-states are oriented towards these flows of capital and consequently the state becomes separated from the nation. In this way the state itself appears to be transformed into an association of groups than as some sort of national entity. As a result national identity becomes challenged by fragmentation. Thus in the transnational circumstances of the nation-state particular agents, not only transnational business corporations but also sociocultural minorities, i.e. predominantly ethnic, choose to identify themselves as different vis-à-vis the majority.

The present special issue of *Lithuanian Ethnology: 'Fragmented Identities and Sociocultural Minorities'* edited together with my colleague Jonas Mardosa focuses on the aforementioned situation in the world of today by trying to address particular cases of ethnic minorities in their interactions with the majoritarian societies. Current research in this field was presented at the international conference 'Transnationalism and the Fragmentation of Identity', held November 2014 in Vilnius. The conference was the outcome of a three-year project: 'The Impact of Globalization and Transnationalism on the Fragmentation of the State and National Identity in Ethnic/National Minority, Borderland and Diasporic Cases' led by scholars from Vytautas Magnus University. Three presentations of the conference were turned into articles and are part of the present volume.

The first paper of this volume is written by Christian Giordano who has a long standing research interest and expertise in multiculturalism, particularly in comparative perspective. In this article he examines the Chinese minority in Malayan society by putting emphasis on the role of networks and corporate groups and the lack of uniformity and cultural unity in the identity of this diasporic community. The second paper is by Katarzyna Wójcikowska which concerns the ethnic identity of the Lithuanian minority in Poland. Following the historical and local modes of ethnic socialization she demonstrates that ethnification of this minority depends on the proportion of co-ethnics living in the area, the number of ethnic institutions (i.e. schools) and organizations, and upon borderland factor – i.e., closeness to the 'external homeland' (Lithuania). The third article is also concerned with the issue of borderland and its effects on the situation of minorities. Based on fieldwork among the Polish minority in Lithuania, Daukšas draws upon the issue of identity construction and the role of external influences – specifically that of the ethnic 'Polish Card' and its unexpectedly meager influence on the identity of this minority.

A very similar problematic regarding Polish and other minorities vis-à-vis the Lithuanian majority is the focus of Kristina Šliavaitė's article on inter-ethnic relations

in Southeastern Lithuania. The author comes to the conclusion that the politics of language among the local multicultural and rather mixed population is both – an expression of loyalty to the state as well as a marker of identity politics shared by the particular ethnic minority.

Another two articles, by Žilvytis Šaknys and Jonas Mardosa, deal with the ethnic and cultural particularities of the Karaim and Polish minorities in Lithuania, respectively. In the Karaim case the symbolic tension between ethnic calendar (Karaim ethnic religion based) and the state calendar is explored by Šaknys, who claims that the former stands firmly as culturally central to the identity of this minority although it has a long history of adapting to the state holiday system and successfully retaining its ethnic character. Mardosa's paper also draws on the issue of ethno-confessional identity. His argument is that the ritual meal of Easter firmly stands as a point of departure for distinguishing between the regional and ethnic identity of the Polish minority in the area.

Two more articles included in the volume do not belong to the theme of the special issue but actually are revealing cases of 'resistance' to globalization and, in the first paper, to Europeanization. Here Asta Vonderau focuses on the issues of economic anthropology by pointing to how Europeanization is perceived in the everyday practices along the 'margins of Europe' where specific norms and standards (seen by the author as some sort of 'ideology') are negotiated in the specific context of open-air markets that are traditionally perceived as being unruly spaces. Vonderau's research could be seen as re-visiting the study of the Danish anthropologist Pernille Hohnen (2003) who conducted a thorough study of the Vilnius 'market out of place' in the period of early post-socialism at the beginning of 1990s. Both studies indicate and explore the 'other spaces' inherent to this open-air markets and others like it. In these open-air markets the limits of the dominant political and economic rationality are clearly demarcated in contrast to the non-bureaucratic and informal manner by which the business of open-air markets is conducted.

The last paper by Gintarė Dusevičiūtė comes from the field of cultural engineering of the 'ethnic Lithuanian' and even of the ancient Baltic traditions and festivals, exemplified by the *Jorė* – spring festival of pre-Christian nature which from the *emic* perspective of its performers – neo-pagan groups – is perceived as a revivalist project. However, the author proves that the festival gains its popularity in the country because it fills the niche of a seasonal – spring festival, which in turn functions (and is commercialized) as a substitute for the former Christian holiday of St. George Day.

The *Review* chapter of the current issue includes Ainė Ramonaitė review of Guntis Šmidchens book 'The Power of Song', which examines the power of national identity forged through a massive engagement in singing. Also, Ida Harboe Knudsen reviews Neringa Klumbytė and G. Sharafutdinova edited volume on everyday life and social interaction towards the end of soviet socialism. This edited volume includes a chapter on Lithuanian socialism analyzed through an anthropological lens.

We hope that the materials included in this issue of *Lithuanian Ethnology* will be of interest to our readers and will lead to further discussions on such topics as the contemporary fragmentation of identities and intercultural interactions in diverse sociocultural contexts.