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**TRADICIJA, IDENTITETAS IR DISKURSAS**

Sudarytojas VYTIS ČIUBRINSKAS

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# Foreword

“*Alternative Modernities: Tradition, Identity and Discourse*” is a special issue of *Lithuanian Ethnology: Studies in Social Anthropology and Ethnology* which focuses on revisiting social change from the anthropological perspective. Anthropologists and European Ethnology specialists are constantly dealing with the sociocultural change facing the world of today, which in many ways has become deformed, suffering from unbalanced development and, in that sense, is losing its certitude and stability. Thus, the research field of sociocultural change is under constant revision and its paradigms are worthy to be revisited once again. Such concepts as *evolution, development, transformation*, are no longer able to tell much about the post-traditional, post-colonial and post-socialist realities of change. On the other hand, despite examining the structural and institutional change of late modernity or post-modernity, anthropology is always eager to take culture and tradition, identity and discourses of everyday life as the most conspicuous arenas and means of sociocultural change. In that sense, local knowledge and local experiences, are constantly challenging progressivist conceptualizations of late modernity change. This provokes continuous quests for alternative understandings of that change and also for substitutes for those projects of hyper-modernity.

In this sense, the category of *alternative modernity*, proposed by Jonathan Hill (in this volume) is taken as focal to the understanding of the alternative ways of enactment and emplacement of the actual transformations, which employ culture and tradition, identity and discourse as major social resources and means of that change. Variety of cases of modern and postmodern change are presented in this special issue of papers written by Jonathan Hill, David Sutton, Neringa Klumbytė and Aet Annist. Informed by fieldwork conducted in Latin America and Europe, the contributions also include contemporaneous debates on analytical paradigms, such as identity (Ingo Schröder) and also moral obligations of anthropologists in the field (Jonathan Hill).

The issue begins with the conceptualization of *alternative modernities* by Hill who scrutinizes the cultural politics of identity of the indigenous population responding to the national identity politics of Venezuelan and Colombian nation states. It closes up with the explication of post-communist change in Estonia, presented by Annist, where regional NGOs, which control the funding of the cultural projects, impose cultural hegemony on the region of Seto, promoting one group’s heritage as exhibiting “authenticity” or *alternative modernity*.

The special issue part of the current volume of *Lithuanian Ethnology* is followed by “Studies of Ethnology in Lithuania in 1927–2005” written by Romualdas Apanavičius, ethnomusicologist at the Department of Ethnology and Folklore at the Vytautas Magnus University. In this paper he presents the whole panorama of almost eighty years of history of the discipline in Lithuania. By focusing mainly on the curriculum development and institutional changes at the two major universities of the period, Vilnius and Kaunas, he describes the organizational and formal matters of how the university-level studies were conducted in the fields defined as Folklore, Ethnography and Ethnology. Different definitions, actually, did influence and even subordinated the profile of the Study Programs in the discipline.

Apanavičius’ paper also provides an ample list of names of the scholars and those who were the builders of the discipline. One of them, Jonas Balys, a pupil of Wilhelm Schmidt, and internationally renown as the Lithuanian folklore and ethnology (during the 1920s – 40s known as the discipline of *Volkskunde*) specialist, since 1940s in the USA, is celebrating his centennial anniversary. Our congratulations and the best wishes are inscribed in the tribute article.

*Vytis Čiubrinskas*