

# LITUANUS

THE LITHUANIAN QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES  
VOLUME 61:2, Summer 2015





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**Lituanus: The Lithuanian Quarterly** (published since 1954) is a multi-disciplinary academic journal presenting and examining various aspects of Lithuanian culture and history. Authors are invited to submit scholarly articles, *belles lettres*, and art work. Manuscripts will be reviewed. Books are accepted for review purposes.

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**Editorial Office:** editor@lituanus.org  
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**Publisher:** Lituanus Foundation, Inc., Giedrius Subačius, President  
**Address:** 47 West Polk Street, Suite 100-300,  
Chicago, IL 60605-2000 Phone 312/945-0697

Articles are archived and accessible at [www.lituanus.org](http://www.lituanus.org) and in microform from University Microfilms ([www.proquest.com/brand/umi.shtml](http://www.proquest.com/brand/umi.shtml)). They are indexed in: MLA International Bibliography; PAIS International; International Political Science Abstracts; Historical Abstracts (EBSCO); Linguistic Bibliography (Netherlands); Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts; RILM Abstracts of Music Literature; Bibliography of the History of Art; OCLC Article First.

Worldwide circulation per issue – 1,700 copies.

Individual subscriptions \$30.00. Seniors/students \$20.00.

Institutional print subscriptions \$40.00. Electronic copy only \$20.00.

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Printed by Kingery Printing Company, Henry Division, Henry, IL

Cover Design by Vincas Lukas.

Periodical non-profit postage paid at Chicago, IL and other locations.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to LITUANUS, 47 West Polk Street, Suite 100-300, Chicago, IL 60605-2000

## The Religiosity of the Inhabitants of Dzūkija

AUŠRA KAIRAITYTĖ

### Introduction

Research into religiosity in contemporary Lithuanian society began after 1990, after the Republic of Lithuania regained its independence. Before that, objective research was impossible because of policies carried out during the Soviet occupation. However, religiosity did not wither away during the years of Soviet occupation. On the contrary, religious individuals, although forced to conceal their religious identity, strove to make secret visits to important Catholic religious centers such as Šiluva. They went to important centers of folk piety (places connected with the Virgin Mary or Jesus Christ), and they performed other actions important to their personal religious life, such as secretly visiting churches, receiving the sacraments of baptism and marriage, etc. According to investigators and the people themselves, religiosity became stronger in the late twentieth century, after Lithuania regained its independence, but it is now beginning to change from the effects of secularization and integration into Western European culture. Despite this change in religiosity, it remains important in the personal and social life of today's people. The author investigated mani-

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festations of religiosity and the cult of the saints in Dzūkija in 2013, and this investigation supports that conclusion.

The aim of this article is to examine the religiosity of Dzūkija's inhabitants through an analysis of the cults of the saints. To achieve this end, the article will consider: 1) how and which images of Christian saints appear in the religious worldview of the inhabitants studied, 2) what the inhabitants perceive the functions of the principal saints to be, and 3) what changes in religiosity have occurred during the period investigated (from the twentieth to the early twenty-first centuries).

The residents of Merkinė were not selected as the subjects of this study at random. Scholars who investigated Merkinė and its environs in the past have noted the special nature of this locality. Merkinė is a historically important center in southern Lithuania, and it retains a significant meaning in the consciousness of its inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> Those who have studied this area have noted that the Merkinė region of Dzūkija has an abundant material and spiritual cultural heritage, which includes archaic cultural elements, customs, and beliefs that have survived to the present day, as well as a consistent religious identity.<sup>2</sup> For these reasons, this locality was selected for the study of Dzūkija's religiosity.

The study was conducted using the ethnographic field research method. The author conducted a survey of respondents by using an ethnological questionnaire entitled "The Virgin Mary and the Saints in Lithuanian Culture," which the author created.<sup>3</sup> A total of twenty respondents were questioned. Sixteen were born and live permanently in Merkinė and its environs; four had moved to Merkinė from the Lazdijai, Druskininkai, and Alytus

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<sup>1</sup> Ragauskaitė and Daugirdas, "Dzūkijos kultūrinis regionas."

<sup>2</sup> See Šaknys, "Merkinės apylinkės: kultūrų sąveika ir turizmas"; Svidinskaitė, "Religingumas, tapatumas ir istorinis laikas"; Paukštytė-Šaknienė, "Merkiniškių gimtuvės ir krikštynos: tradicinių kultūros elementų sklaida XX amžiuje."

<sup>3</sup> Kairaitytė, *Švč. Mergelė Marija ir šventieji Lietuvos kultūroje*.

districts, but have lived in Merkinė for about four decades. Most of those questioned were Catholic female inhabitants of Merkinė. Female respondents were selected because females are considered to be the ones principally responsible for creating and maintaining religious identity within the family.<sup>4</sup> The research covers the religious worldview mostly of the older generation, but it also discloses the attitude of the generation born in the 90s.<sup>5</sup> Teachers at the Merkinė Vincas Krėvė High School in the Varėna District, assisted by teacher Rita Černiauskienė, head of the Merkinė Youth Ethnocultural Club, helped with some of the questionnaires. The author's personal archive preserves the research data.

The material was summarized using the historical-comparative method. The author used Bronislava Kerbelytė's card index found in the Catalogue of Lithuanian Narrative Folklore at the Lithuanian Folklore Archives of the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore (*Lietuvių tautosakos rankraštyno Lietuvių pasakojamosios tautosakos katalogas*, hereinafter the LTR). The work of several individuals, including Lithuanian folklorist Jonas Balys<sup>6</sup>, as well as Balys Buračas,<sup>7</sup> Angelė Vyšniauskaitė,<sup>8</sup> and Juozas Kudirka,<sup>9</sup> provided much useful material about traditional customs and beliefs in Dzūkija and other regions of Lithuania, especially customs and beliefs connected with the veneration of saints. The Lithuanian writer Vincas Krėvė-Mickevičius, who lived in Merkinė, wrote stories about Merkinė and its environs.<sup>10</sup> It is worth mentioning that another significant source of material was Petras Zalanskas, from the

<sup>4</sup> Svidinskaitė, "Religingumas, tapatumas ir istorinis laikas," 238.

<sup>5</sup> Two respondents were born in the 20s, three in the 30s, seven in the 40s, two in the 60s, one in the 70s, four in the 90s.

<sup>6</sup> Balys, *Lietuvių žemdirbystės papročiai ir tikėjimai*; Balys, *Raštai*, vol. 5, and others.

<sup>7</sup> Buračas, *Lietuvos kaimo papročiai*.

<sup>8</sup> Vyšniauskaitė, *Mūsų metai ir šventės*.

<sup>9</sup> Kudirka, *Jurginės*.

<sup>10</sup> Krėvė-Mickevičius, "Padavimai apie Liškiavą ir Merkinę."

village of Mardasavas in Dzūkija. His memoirs contain much material about folklore. The work of his granddaughter, Modesta Liugaitė, is also important. It contains discussions of the attitude of the residents of this village towards religion and discussions of their beliefs and religious customs.<sup>11</sup>

The monograph *Merkinė* includes some information about the spiritual and material culture of Merkinė, but Communist censorship made it impossible to thoroughly explore the topic of religiosity in this book.<sup>12</sup> This topic was discussed more extensively after the restoration of Lithuanian independence, when a more comprehensive investigation of religiosity began. Several important investigations connected with the religiosity of Dzūkija's inhabitants were conducted during this period. Danguolė Svidinskaitė investigated the religiosity of parishes in Merkinė and Liškiava. She focused on the creators of religious identity, on the personal relationship people have with religion, on the religiosity of the family and the local community, and on religious identity and its dynamics during different historical periods (pre-Soviet, Soviet, and post-Soviet).<sup>13</sup> Žilvytis Šaknys discussed the cultural experiences of those living in the vicinity of Merkinė and manifestations of their religiosity (including the impressions people had of pilgrimages and the relationship local inhabitants have with pilgrims).<sup>14</sup> Rasa Paukštytė-Šaknienė has gained some acquaintance with religiosity in the vicinity of Merkinė through a study of the number of children baptized in the twentieth century.<sup>15</sup> Vita Ivanauskaitė investigated stories from Dzūkija connected with folk religiosity, particularly those that describe religious pic-

<sup>11</sup> Liugaitė, "Liaudies dainininko pasaulis. Petro Zalansko pasaulėjauta ir aplinka."

<sup>12</sup> Vėlius et al. (eds.), *Merkinė*.

<sup>13</sup> Svidinskaitė, "Religingumas, tapatumas ir istorinis laikas."

<sup>14</sup> Šaknys, "Merkinės apylinkės: kultūrų sąveika ir turizmas."

<sup>15</sup> Paukštytė-Šaknienė, "Merkiniešių gimtuvės ir krikščynos: tradicinių kultūros elementų sklaida XX amžiuje."

tures and speak of saints appearing in dreams.<sup>16</sup> Aside from these studies, images of Christian saints as manifestations of personal religiosity have not been investigated more thoroughly. Therefore, further investigation of religiosity in the selected region is needed to better understand the place of folk religiosity and piety in Lithuanian culture.

### *Religiosity and Reasons for Change as Seen by Respondents*

The respondents reveal several problems related to the portrayal of saints recognized and canonized by the Catholic Church. One problem is how a respondent perceives his or her own religiosity and how he or she attempts to explain changes in the traditions and the religiosity of the community. Thus, how respondents react to questions and how they answer them is significant in attempting to understand what influence the Catholic faith has on a person's spiritual life. The responses reveal the respondent's worldview at the moment of response, and at the same time they reveal how Catholic saints are treated in Lithuanian culture. Thus, to address the goal of the study, I will first discuss briefly the environment surrounding the respondents, and then I shall examine concisely their attitudes towards religiosity and changes in religiosity.

All surveyed respondents stated they are religious, are believers, regularly attend a Catholic church, and obey all of God's commandments. One of the respondents stated she and her family are very religious:

*Nuo mažų dienų... Mano motina, tėvas buvo labai religingi. Šventi žmonės. Mes visi ir mano vaikai visi su šliūbu. Visi buvo priversti pirmų komunijų.*

<sup>16</sup> Ivanauskaitė, "Folklorinės liaudiškojo pamaldumo raiškos: dzūkiškosios tikėjimo patirtys folkloristų akiratyje."

(From early days ... My mother and my father were very religious. They were holy people. All of us and all of our children have been married in church. All of us have received the sacrament of Holy Communion.)<sup>17</sup>

The respondents first acquired their knowledge of the lives and activities of the saints in childhood. Usually, parents and grandparents, who were religious themselves, supplied this knowledge and prepared them for First Communion. For instance:

*Mano tėtis buvo labai religingas. Būdavo gegužinės pamaldos. Tėtė atsiklaupė ir mus suklypdo ir turim melstis. Visam gyvenimui viskas man taip ir liko.*

(My father was very religious. There were services during the month of May. Father kneeled, and he told us to kneel, and we had to pray. All of this has remained with me my entire life.)<sup>18</sup>

The respondents later acquired knowledge by reading books, attending church, and listening to the radio:

*Truputį teko [skaityti] apie motinos Teresės [gyvenimą], apie visus [šventuosius] truputį [skaičiau]. Iš evangelijos kažką žinau. Pasiskaitai, išgirsti. „Marijos radiją“ klausau. Ypatingai gailėstingumo vainikėlių stengiuosi kiekvieną dieną išklaustyti per Marijos radiją.*

(I [read] a little about Mother Teresa's [life], [read] a little about all [the saints]. You learn something from the Gospel. By reading, by listening. I listen to "Radio Maria." I particularly try to listen to the "Chaplet of Mercy" on "Radio Maria" every day.)<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Respondent V. K., b. 1929 in Merkinė, Varėna District. The language of the cited respondents has not been edited or refined, and an effort has been made to maintain the dialect used.

<sup>18</sup> Respondent O. G., b. 1941 in Maksimonys village, Varėna District.

<sup>19</sup> Respondent E. S., b. 1939 in Kapčiamiestis town, Lazdijai District (She has lived in Merkinė since 1957.)

But their knowledge about the teachings of the Catholic faith is fairly superficial, as confirmed by the reflections of the individuals themselves. As one respondent stated, she attends church and listens to the sermons, but "does not delve" too deeply into it:

*Lankai bažnyčią, klausai pamokslų. Bet aš nei Testamento [neskaitau], nei... Nesigilinu per daug.*

(I go to church, listen to the sermons. But [I do not read the New] Testament, nor... I do not delve too deeply into it.)<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile, the younger residents of Merkinė acquire their knowledge of religion during religion lessons, preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation,<sup>21</sup> or youth outings on weekends.<sup>22</sup>

Today's religiosity differs from the religiosity of the interwar years. Danguolė Svidinskaitė, who has analyzed this topic more extensively, has observed that the pre-Soviet period is considered "the ideal of religiosity."<sup>23</sup> The respondents, many of whom were children during that time, perceive the religiosity of the people of the interwar period as ideal. They note that at that time people were especially religious and fervent believers: they treated church attendance, participation in religious feasts (*atšilimai*), observance of Christian customs, and compliance with canon law as manifestations of an ideal faith. The piety of parents, their religiosity, and the application of Christian values to real-life situations were considered important. But today, according to the respondents, the situation is not as good, because people no longer attend church. Some respondents note that, even in the Soviet era, when the authorities car-

<sup>20</sup> Respondent O. M., b. 1941 in Ilgininkai village, Varėna District.

<sup>21</sup> Respondent L. K., b. 1996 in Merkinė, Varėna District.

<sup>22</sup> Respondent B. E., b. 1995 in Merkinė, Varėna District.

<sup>23</sup> Svidinskaitė, "Religingumas, tapatumas ir istorinis laikas," 224.

ried out a program of forced secularization, people displayed greater religiosity:

*Anksčiau žmonės visi tikėjo, vis ejo bažnyčion, meldėsi. Dabar yra žmonių visokių."*

(Previously, all people believed; they all went to church, prayed. Now there are all kinds of people.)<sup>24</sup>

In the end, the respondents attempted to supply their own reasons or insights into why people do not attend church. Some thought that whether or not a person attends church depends on the personality of the priest, his values, or even his character. Some thought a sensitive priest who displays an inner warmth is better able to attract the faithful to church than one not inclined to interact with people:

*Žmonės kažkaip dabar labai nelanko bažnyčios. Bet čia gal priklausu ir nuo kunigo. Jei jisai jautrus, jis kitaip viską perduoda. Jeigu jis šilumą turi vidinė ir patraukia. [...] [Kunigas] turi bendrauti. Turi būt kažkoks tai gerumas akyse, šiluma.*

(Now, for some reason, people do not attend church very much. But maybe it also depends on the priest. If he is sensitive, he conveys everything differently. If he has inner warmth and can attract. [...] [The priest] has to interact with people. There must be some sort of goodness in his eyes, warmth.)<sup>25</sup>

In traditional culture, shared community norms, faith, and a morality based on hierarchical principles have a very important place, and a clear reverential faith in God is what guides religious contemplation. Meanwhile, in the words of Dovilė Kulakauskienė, modern man feels a sense of communi-

<sup>24</sup> Respondent S. M., b. 1935 in Pagilšys village, Varėna District.

<sup>25</sup> Respondent O. M., b. 1941 in Ilgininkai village, Varėna District.

ty to be somewhat unnecessary and inclines towards individualism and a personal experience of God, while modern culture abounds in new ideas, questions, and interpretations.<sup>26</sup>

As has already been mentioned, the respondents noted that they are believers, but "believe in their own way," frequently expressing critical opinions about phenomena they do not understand. They do not avoid criticizing the clergy. They stress both their positive and negative qualities; and in this way, they show signs of secularization. Other characteristics of personal religiosity permit a distinction to be drawn between traditional and modern thinking. The research of Stanislovas Juknevičius emphasizes the importance of religious tradition, and he notes that inert religiosity predominates in Lithuania.<sup>27</sup> Despite changes in the religiosity dominant in contemporary society, traditional religious thinking, which is characterized by a belief and trust in the will of God and by treatment of the saints as intercessors between God and man, occupies an important place in the lives of the surveyed respondents.

### *The Main Saints*

The cults of the saints were analyzed in order to study the religiosity of the inhabitants of Merkinė and its environs that developed in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The analysis compared the features of the cults of the saints as encountered in traditional culture with those encountered today. The field research first attempted to determine which saints take precedence in the everyday lives of the inhabitants of the region. The inhabitants were asked to name the saints most important to them, the saints about whom they thought more frequently and who are closer to them or have some particular meaning or importance in their personal

<sup>26</sup> Kulakauskienė, "Tradicinė ir modernioji kultūra," 10.

<sup>27</sup> Juknevičius, "Tarp inercijos ir tradiciškumo," 43.

and spiritual lives. In addition, the respondents were asked to name the saints who are more prominent in the activities of the community. It should be noted that respondents also named God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Virgin Mary as the most important companions in their religious lives.<sup>28</sup> After the respondents' answers were summarized, it became clear that several saints occupy a particularly important place in the private and public lives of the respondents. The discussion below describes how these saints are viewed.

### *Saint Roch (Šventas Rokas)*

Merkinė's inhabitants frequently mention Saint Roch.<sup>29</sup> Various sources state that Saint Roch was born in Montpellier in South France circa 1293 and lived until 1327. He traveled widely around Europe treating and nursing victims of plague and he is, therefore, considered a protector of the sick, especially of those with plague. People petition him to protect them from plague,

<sup>28</sup> Due to a lack of space in an article, there is no possibility of investigating the cult of the Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ or the phenomenon of the Merkinė pyramid more extensively.

<sup>29</sup> A. Vyšniauskaitė noted that praying to Saint Roch was especially characteristic of nineteenth-century Samogitia (Vyšniauskaitė, *Mūsų metai ir šventės*, 107). According to A. Motuzas, Saint Roch is especially venerated in Vilnius, Šaukėnai (Kelmė District), Kęstaičiai (Telšiai District), Daujėnai (Pasvalys District), Ylakai (Skuodas District), Gardamas (Šilutė District), Gruzdžiai (Šiauliai District), Kražiai (Kelmė District), Lauksodis (Pakruojis District), Merkinė (Varėna District), Palanga (Kretinga District), Semeliškės (Trakai District), Surviliškis (Kėdainiai District), Sutkai (Šakiai District), Varniai (Telšiai District), and the independent Church of Saint Gertrude in the Marian monastery in Kaunas (Motuzas, "Švento Roko garbinimas Gruzdžiuose," 12). In folklore texts, it is possible to discover narratives about Saint Roch as a protector of the sick; for example, Saint Roch is considered an intercessor for the sick in Gruzdžiai (LTR 1516/86); and the miraculous statue of Saint Roch in the church of Rozalimas is visited by various sick people (Buračas, *Pasakojimai ir padavimai*, 255).

cholera, and other infectious diseases. Saint Roch has been recognized as a saint by the Church since the first half of the seventeenth century. It is thought the cult of Saint Roch reached Lithuania, Vilnius first of all, through Poland.<sup>30</sup>

Folklore texts and ethnographic materials attest to the spread of the cult of Saint Roch in Merkinė and to his connection with the plague that was widespread there. It is known Merkinė was devastated by wars and plague in the mid-seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.<sup>31</sup> Vincas Krėvė-Mickevičius has written about the events of this period; and in doing so, he used a folk narrative provided by J. Žekas from Gudakiemis village. The folk narrative begins fairly intriguingly with pagan gods. It relates that pagan gods were under the high altar of Merkinė's church, but were unable to leave because the Holy Sacrament was kept there. One night, thieves stole the Holy Sacrament. The next morning, the priests noticed that all the paintings of the saints had fallen down and those of pagan gods had taken their place. Earlier, the priests and the people had bricked up these paintings of pagan gods in the basement. The pagan gods punished the people for this desecration: People began to get sick, and a terrible plague appeared. But Saint Roch saved them, and now his miraculous picture hangs in Merkinė's church. The folk narrative adds that it is unclear where this painting of Saint Roch came from, but it mentions that a priest once dreamt that he needed to say Mass before a painting and then carry the painting around the city so the people would stop being sick. And so this is what he did, and the people stopped being sick.<sup>32</sup>

It is doubtful the narrator of a folk narrative recorded in the early twentieth century could have remembered "pagan times." A Romantic vision of Lithuania and an idealized desire to exalt Lithuania's pre-Christian culture, characteris-

<sup>30</sup> Motuzas, "Švento Roko garbinimas Gruzdžiuose," 13.

<sup>31</sup> Černiauskas (comp.), *Merkinės istorijos bruožai*, 168.

<sup>32</sup> Krėvė-Mickevičius, "Padavimai apie Liškiavą ir Merkinę," 332.

tics found in Vincas Krėvė's works, are perhaps the sources of this reference to "pagan gods." In addition, in constructing such a narrative, it is fairly easy to change the characters portrayed in the story.<sup>33</sup> Many scholars consider the folklore recorded by Krėvė to be more the creature of his folklore-influenced imagination than authentic folklore material.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, the part of Krėvė's folk narrative where he speaks of the actions the priest must undertake in order for people to stop being sick is more likely to be authentic. Other folklore narratives about dreams relate a similar story.<sup>35</sup>

The end of Vincas Krėvė's folk narrative notes that, once the people stopped suffering from plague, they began to celebrate the Feast of Saint Roch, and Merkinė parish has solemnly celebrated the Feast of Saint Roch ever since.<sup>36</sup> This last statement was confirmed by the 2013 research. When respondents were asked which feast was the most important and most solemn in Merkinė, the majority answered the Feast of Saint Roch, celebrated on August 16th. Other feasts celebrated are those of Saint George (April 23rd), Saint Anne (July 26th), and the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (August 15th). It is interesting that the parish church in the Merkinė Vicariate of the Diocese of Kaišiadorys is called the Church of the Assumption. It would be customary and natural for the titular feast to be the largest. However, as the respondents' answers demonstrate, the Feast of Saint Roch is more significant than that of the Assumption. The popularity of the Feast of Saint Roch may be explained by the

<sup>33</sup> See Kerbelytė, "Morė-deivė-laumė," *Lietuvinkų žodis*.

<sup>34</sup> More comprehensive information about the folklore activities of Vincas Krėvė, the features of the folklore he collected, and their evaluation can be found in the article by Vanda Daugirdaitė, "Ar jau įmintos visos Vinco Krėvės folklorinės veiklos mįslės?" (2007).

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Kairaitytė, "Religinės patirtys lietuvių folkloro naratyvuose"; Ivanauskaitė, "Folklorinės liaudiškojo pamaldumo raiškos: dzūkiškosios tikėjimo patirtys folkloristų akiratyje."

<sup>36</sup> Krėvė-Mickevičius, "Padavimai apie Liškiavą ir Merkinę," 332.





*Zervynos*

story of his life and the various functions assigned to him; even today images of Saint Roch are prevalent in Merkinė.

In an attempt to understand the functions of Saint Roch in the Catholic faith and in the worldview of parishioners, the respondents were asked which saint they associate with protection from plague and other infectious diseases. According to the data from the 2013 research, four of the twenty respondents indicated Saint Roch protects people from plague; one female, born in 1938, noted that today Saint Roch is considered to be the protector of those infected with AIDS and epidemic diseases. Another respondent indicated Saint Anthony protects people from plague.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, most of the surveyed respondents no longer associate Saint Roch with protection from plague, but treat him as an intercessor for those suffering from diseases in general and wishing to recover from them. They pray for health to be restored to a sick person during the Feast of Saint Roch or when the person is sick.

<sup>37</sup> Respondent G. Č., b. 1938 in Masališkės village, Varėna District.

The respondents' answers suggest the functions of Saint Roch have been adapted to the needs of today's society and to the diseases prevalent in it. The responses show individuals are not inclined to distinguish which diseases one saint or another can heal. The survey did not address the question whether the respondents believe saints in general can help people get better. However, the community studied has an affinity for Saint Roch, particularly because the Feast of Saint Roch is dedicated to people suffering from serious disease. Feasts also have other functions in the community: They help maintain kinship ties and they strengthen relations between the Church and parish communities. Additionally, the popularity of the Feast of Saint Roch can also be attributed to the fact that families often have members named after him:

*Šv. Rokaus atlaidas. Kadangi šeimoj buvo Rokas, amžinatilsj, tai visa vyro giminė nuo seno, kiek aš marčiose atėjus, visi suvažiuoja per atlaidus Merkinėn, ir čia pas mus susirenka, ir tas Rokas atvažiuodavo, ir visi bažnyčion [eidavo], visi kapus lankydamo, ir visi meldavosi. [...] Ir visi čia meldžiasi sveikatos. Visi sveikatos prašo. Visi eina per atlaidus čia. Jaunimas tai čia aplinkui daugiausiai pasirodyt rūbų ir pasivaikščiot, biški gal ir pasimeldžia, bet va vyresnio amžiaus žmonės... ir jaunų yra dabar... tai visi eina... ten yra Rokaus altorius šone kairėj, tai visi neša aukas ir visi meldžiasi visą laiką.*

(The religious Feast of Saint Roch. Because my family included a Rokas [Roch], may he rest in peace, all of the male relatives, for as long as I was there as a daughter-in-law, used to come; everyone would drive to Merkinė for the religious feast and gather there at our house; that Rokas used to come and everyone went to church [on foot], everyone used to visit the graves, and everyone used to pray. [...] And everyone here prays for health. Everyone asks for health. Everyone comes here during the religious feast. The young people come around here mostly to show off their

clothes and stroll around, and perhaps to pray a bit, but the older people ... and now there are young people too... everyone goes ... the altar to Saint Roch is there on the left side; everyone brings offerings, and everyone prays all the time.)<sup>38</sup>

This narrative about the Feast of Saint Roch perfectly illustrates the popularity of the cult of Saint Roch, explains aspects of his veneration and the reasons for it, and shows how the younger generation behaves.



*The Feast of Saint Roch in Merkinė in 2002. (Photo by Žilvytis Šaknys)*

### *Saint George (Šventas Jurgis)*

Another saint, which residents of Merkinė mention often, is Saint George, the second patron saint of Lithuania. There is little historical information about Saint George. It is said he died circa 303, was a warrior, served in the Roman emperor's army, and was a Christian martyr killed in Palestine. All other

<sup>38</sup> Respondent M. P., b. 1947 in Kaženiai village, Lazdijai District. (She has lived in Merkinė since 1968.)

information about him comes from myths and legends that appeared in the sixth century.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, this saint has become the patron saint of many states and cities. His cult reached Lithuania through the Eastern Church.

In traditional Lithuanian culture, Saint George was assigned several functions. First of all, he was portrayed as a dragon slayer.<sup>40</sup> Lithuanian folklore includes the image of Saint George as dragon slayer, and the dragon can be understood metaphorically. For example, during the Feast of Saint George, a resident of the Dzūkija region of Lithuania told Buračas: "Saint George has to be fervently venerated so he will defeat the dragon of virulent diseases, famine, plague, and other bad things. Therefore, people used to be unsparing with their fruit, offerings, and prayers."<sup>41</sup> The horse of Saint George, according to the same respondent, symbolizes the power of nature and is the personification of snow or winter: Snow that falls during the Feast of Saint George is called "Saint George's white horse."<sup>42</sup>

According to traditional Lithuanian folklore and customs, Saint George is associated with the protection of domestic and wild animals, and the beginning of spring. Customs associated with the Feast of Saint George (April 23rd) and folklore data show Saint George to be a protector of animals. For example, it was thought that bringing eggs to church on Saint George's Day would guarantee the health of animals (LTR 6241/1151). Similarly, the residents of Liškiava, a village in the Varėna District, used to request that Masses be said to Saint George for the health of animals.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Delaney, *Dictionary of Saints*, 259.

<sup>40</sup> The image of Saint George as dragon slayer was recorded for the first time in the *Golden Legend*. It is thought this legend appeared no earlier than the twelfth century and became popular after its publication in hagiographic literature in the thirteenth century. (Delaney, 259).

<sup>41</sup> Buračas, *Lietuvos kaimo papročiai*, 241.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Balys, *Raštai*, vol. 2. 149.

When asked to describe Saint George, almost all respondents surveyed in 2013 described him as the protector of animals.<sup>44</sup> The Feast of Saint George is associated with the first day animals are let out to pasture, when certain rituals are performed:

*Mama devyniasdešimt keturių metų numirė, tai jinai visą laiką pasakodavo, kad jau nuo seno per Jurgį [...] gyvulius išleisdavo. Jau po Jurgio leisdavo kap reikalas ganytis ganyklose. Dėdavo kiti po slenksčiu kiaušini. Kiti išleisdavo gyvulius ir aprūkydavo su verbu šventytū.*

(Mama was ninety-four when she died; she always said it was the custom from long ago to let animals out to pasture for the first time on Saint George's Day [...]. After Saint George's Day, they could be let out to pasture freely. Some people used to place an egg under the threshold. Others used to let out the animals and bless them with smoke from a palm blessed on Palm Sunday.)<sup>45</sup>

The respondent, however, admitted she no longer follows these customs.

As has been mentioned, in the past Saint George was considered the protector of animals, especially of horses. Several surveyed respondents also noted Saint George's Day is "Horse Day,"

<sup>44</sup> One Merkinė resident, born in 1935, associated Saint George with the protection of dogs: "Šv. Jurgis globotojas visokių gyvūnelių. Aš nežinau ar visokių. Šunelių, man atrodo, globotojas šv. Jurgis. Pavaizduota, kad šventas Jurgis – gyvūnų globėjas" (Saint George is the protector of all animals. I do not know whether he protects all animals. The protector of dogs, it seems to me, is Saint George. Saint George is depicted as the protector of animals.) (Respondent S. M., b. 1935 in Pagilšys village, Varėna District). It is possible the respondent has confused Saint George with Saint Roch, because in iconography Saint Roch is usually portrayed with a dog, which, together with a guardian angel, accompanied him on his trips.

<sup>45</sup> Respondent M. P., b. 1947 in Kaženiai village, Lazdijai District. (She has lived in Merkinė since 1968.)

a day when horses are not worked or harnessed.<sup>46</sup> A female born in Merkinė in 1928 associated an accident involving horses with someone who abolished the Feast of Saint George:

*Ir dar atsimenu. Tėvulis pasakodavo. Buvo išnaikinį kunigas [šv. Jurgio] atlaidus. Ir tas kunigas [...] pjovė arkliais pievų – nuskindo arkliai Merky. Tai tadu vėl atnaujino atlaidus.*

(I still remember. My father used to tell it. The priest had abolished the feast [of Saint George]. And that priest [...] mowed the meadow with horses, and the horses drowned in the Merkys [River]. Then he reinstated the feast.)<sup>47</sup>

Other customs mentioned during field research include an offering for animals on the Feast of Saint George. Eggs are brought to church and placed on the altar on Saint George's Day.<sup>48</sup>

*Tai, oi, ištisai kiaušinius nešdavo, aš matydavau, ir lašinius neša, kad padėtų, gyvulius globotų.*

(They always used to bring eggs; I would see that; and they also brought bacon, so he would help protect the animals.)<sup>49</sup>

One respondent noted that sheep had to first run past an egg placed under some straw, and only then would the people bring that egg (along with other eggs) to the altar.<sup>50</sup> She also remembers:

*būdavo toks krepšelis padėtas arba dėžė ir nešdavo kiaušinių, sūrį, kokio lašinuko, mėsos, kiti, jei neturi iš tų produktų, tai pinigėlių, bet jau visą laiką specialiai eidavo prie altoriaus ir pasimelsdavo.*

<sup>46</sup> Respondent D. C., b. 1948 in Dakučka village, Varėna District.

<sup>47</sup> Respondent B. A., b. 1928 in Pašilingė village, Varėna District.

<sup>48</sup> Respondent M. P., b. 1947 in Kaženiai village, Lazdijai District (She has lived in Merkinė since 1968.); respondent G. M., b. 1941 in Mikalavas village, Alytus District.

<sup>49</sup> Respondent O. M., b. 1941 in Ilgininkai village, Varėna District.

<sup>50</sup> Respondent B. A., b. 1928 in Pašilingė village, Varėna District.

(There used to be some kind of basket or box set out, and they used to bring eggs, cheese, some bacon, meat. Others, if they did not have those products, would bring money, but they always went specially to the altar and prayed.)<sup>51</sup>

The respondents gave different answers when asked about the last time foodstuffs were brought to church on Saint George's Day. Some said women still bring eggs to this day,<sup>52</sup> and the priest sets out a basket to collect food offerings;<sup>53</sup> others said people today offer only money.<sup>54</sup> These answers show changes in the tradition may depend on the needs of the community and the living circumstances in the village.

The respondents also shared recollections about the celebration of Saint George's Day on April 23rd. Saint George's Day is connected with a time of seasonal changes, and the respondents remembered that disturbing the soil on Saint George's Day was prohibited: "*Negalima žemės judinti su arkliais tą dieną – balandžio 23.*" (One could not plow the soil with horses on that day, April 23.)<sup>55</sup> Another folk narrative about Saint George's Day reveals changes in the tradition and an individual's distinct attitude that traditions must be maintained:

*Šv. Jurgis yra globėjas visų gyvulių ir pavasarį ir visą laiką. Čia pas mus ūkin... Nežinau, kad gal visur, bet jau gink Dieve, per Jurgį žemės... nei sodindavo, nei kasdavo. Nes čia va kiek kas dirbys ir susižeidį ir visa ko. Žodžiu, per Jurgį darbų, kad nebūtų žemės. Žemės ir su arkliais.*

<sup>51</sup> Respondent M. P., b. 1947 in Kaženiai village, Lazdijai District. (She has lived in Merkinė since 1968.)

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Respondent B. A., b. 1928 in Pašilingė village, Varėna District; respondent D. C., b. 1948 in Dakučka village, Varėna District; respondent E. S., b. 1939 in Kapčiamiestis town, Lazdijai District (She has lived in Merkinė since 1957.)

<sup>54</sup> Respondent B. A., b. 1928 in Pašilingė village, Varėna District; respondent E. S., b. 1939 in Kapčiamiestis town, Lazdijai District (She has lived in Merkinė since 1957.)

<sup>55</sup> Respondent D. C., b. 1948 in Dakučka village, Varėna District.

*Bet nepaiso, su traktoriais... Mes asmeniškai tai nuo vaikystės, atsime-  
nu, tai jokiu būdu per Jurgį.*

*Kl.: Taip ir laikėtės?*

*Ats.: Ir laikėmės, tos tradicijos ir po šiai dienai.*

(Saint George is the patron of all animals during spring and all of the time. Here on our farm ... I do not know, perhaps everywhere, but God forbid, on Saint George's Day...no one planted nor dug up the soil. Because here you worked and got injured and everything else. In other words, on Saint George's Day no one was to work the soil. The soil or with horses. But now they don't care, they plow with tractors ... I remember personally, from childhood, we would never do that on Saint George's Day.

Questioner: And what do you do now?

Respondent: We followed those traditions in the past, and we still do to this day.)<sup>56</sup>

It is interesting that no respondent described Saint George as the protector of wolves. Although Lithuanian folklore (legends, stories) makes it fairly clear that Saint George is the protector of wolves. In Lithuanian legends, wolves are the hounds (LTR 1288/36) or borzois (LTR 1580/428) of Saint George, while Saint George is portrayed as a hunter (LTR 1405/157). In addition, the respondents did not mention the custom, characteristic of traditional culture, of walking through fields of grain on Saint George's Day.<sup>57</sup> On the other hand, some respondents looked upon Saint George as a martyr or as the second patron saint of Lithuania, which is consistent with a Christian outlook.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Respondent M. P., b. 1947 in Kaženiai village, Lazdijai District. (She has lived in Merkinė since 1968.)

<sup>57</sup> Kudirka, *Jurginės*, 10-13.

<sup>58</sup> Respondent G. Č., b. 1938 in Masališkės village, Varėna District; respondent O. M., b. 1957 in Mikniūnai village Varėna District

### *Saint Agatha (Šventa Agota)*

Saint Agatha also has an important place in the religious worldview of Merkinė's residents. In traditional culture, Saint Agatha, like Saint Florian and Saint Lawrence, protects against fires.<sup>59</sup> The belief that saints can protect against fire exists even in the contemporary worldview of Merkinė's residents. The role of protector, especially against fire, has been bestowed on Saint Agatha and objects connected with her. Some respondents note that one must always have a slice of Agatha bread<sup>60</sup> and reverently keep it in the home the whole year, in a cabinet<sup>61</sup> or drawer, for example<sup>62</sup>. The slice of bread can be prepared so it will keep longer, i.e., by drying it in the oven to keep it from molding and then putting it aside,<sup>63</sup> or the slice of bread can be eaten after making the sign of the cross.<sup>64</sup>

A belief exists among Merkinė's residents that Saint Agatha directs fires away from residential buildings. Stories illustrate help received from Saint Agatha. According to the respondents, these events actually occurred to them or to those who told the stories, even though the events portrayed are incredible. For example:

*Mes degėm, o kur buvo duonukė padėta ir liko nesudegta.*

(Our [house] caught fire, but the spot where the bread had been placed remained unburnt.)<sup>65</sup>

*Mano mama pasakojo ir daug kas tep sako, jei gaisras, Dzieve sergėk, tai tadu su toj Agotos duona tris kartus apeina aplink tų gaisrų ir meta ugnėn. Tai tadu nekrinta ugniai į šonus, bet tiesiai eina in viršų.*

<sup>59</sup> Vyšniauskaitė, *Mūsų metai ir šventės*, 78-79, 105.

<sup>60</sup> Respondent V. K., b. 1929 in Merkinė, Varėna District.

<sup>61</sup> Respondent D. C., b. 1948 in Dakučka village, Varėna District.

<sup>62</sup> Respondent V. K., b. 1929 in Merkinė, Varėna District.

<sup>63</sup> Respondent B. A., b. 1928 in Pašilingė village, Varėna District.

<sup>64</sup> Respondent V. K., b. 1929 in Merkinė, Varėna District.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

(My Mama said, and so have many others, that if there is a fire, God forbid, they walk three times around the fire with that Agatha bread and throw it into the fire. Then the fire will not spread sideways, but go straight up.)<sup>66</sup>

According to other respondents, not only Agatha bread but also Agatha water protects against fires. One needs to sprinkle it everywhere and ask that the fire be directed in a different direction.<sup>67</sup> Or both bread and water are used together during the fire:

*Čia už dviejų namų buvo kooperatyvo sandėlis. Ir gaisras buvo. O kaimynas statėsi namą, mama sakė, gal pusantrą metro buvo nuo pastato, kuris degė. Kunigo sesuo atsinešė Agotos duonos ir vandens. Pašlakstė. Gal ten gaisrininkai užgesino ir sako biskį čiut paruseno kampas namo, bet neužsidegė. [...] Ir aš visą laiką turiu tos Agotos vandens, o kaip iš tikrųjų [...] aš nežinau, bet va taip yra.*

(A cooperative warehouse stood two houses from here. And there was a fire. A neighbor had built a house, my Mama mama said, maybe a meter and a half from the building that was on fire. The priest's sister brought some Agatha bread and water. She sprinkled it about. Fire fighters put out the fire there; and they say a corner of the house was charred a bit, but it did not catch fire. [...] And I always have that Agatha water. What the truth is [...] I do not know, but that's the way it is.)<sup>68</sup>

Some respondents note that Agatha bread protects not only from fire, but also from other misfortunes, such as theft, accidents, attacks, diseases, and the evil eye. For this reason, it is still customary to carry a slice of Agatha bread in a purse or in a car, but the ones who follow these traditions are usually

<sup>66</sup> Respondent B. A., b. 1928 in Pašilingė village, Varėna District.

<sup>67</sup> Respondent O. G., b. 1941 in Maksimonys village, Varėna District.

<sup>68</sup> Respondent O. M., b. 1941 in Ilgininkai village, Varėna District.

mothers or grandmothers worried about the welfare and success of their children or grandchildren.

According to some respondents, the image of Saint Agatha embodies the saint's protective power, and is itself treated as a protector from fire. It is said that during a fire a small image of Saint Agatha deflects the fire: If you walk around the fire with such an image or with some Agatha bread, the fire stops spreading and calms down.<sup>69</sup> The picture in a way shows the fire where to go and directs it away from residential buildings:

*Mama kalbėdavo, ten buvo miestelį taip: namas prie namo ir jau kada užsidegė vienas namas, visi galvojo, kad jau visa gatvė eis. Ir kažkas atnešė Agotos paveikslą, apnešė aplink visą namą ir pastatė link upės pusės ir vėjas pasisuko ir nunešė gaisrą. Neišdegė daugiau nieks, tik-tai, kad sudegė tas namas.*

(Mama used to say that this is how it was in the city: The houses were right next to each other; and when one house caught fire, everyone thought the whole block would catch fire. Someone would bring a picture of Saint Agatha, carry it around the whole house and place it facing the river, and the wind would turn and carry the fire away. No other house would catch fire, only that house would burn down.)<sup>70</sup>

Sometimes, the respondents' answers display some doubt about the power of Agatha bread; but, nonetheless, they act in accordance with tradition, or like other members of the community:

*Nuo gaisro tai—šv. Agota aceit. Šv. Agota padeda su ta duona. O kaip čia yra? Aš tai tep galvoju, kad gal kažkas ir pasidaro, stebuklai koki,*

<sup>69</sup> Respondent Z. S., b. 1963 in Druskininkai municipality (She lives in Merkinė, Varėna District).

<sup>70</sup> Respondent E. S., b. 1939 in Kapčiamiestis town, Lazdijai District (She has lived in Merkinė since 1957.)

*o gal vėjo kryptis kaip būna, tai Dievulis nuveda in kitą pusį, bet ką čia žinai kaip čia būna. Jau tep visi sako, kad šventa Agota, nuo gaisro, šventų duonelį apsišventini. Indedu ir vaikam in mašinu, kad juos saugotų Dievulis, o kap čia yra, tai sunku pasakyti.*

(From fire, well it is supposedly Saint Agatha. Saint Agatha helps with that bread. What about here? I think that maybe something happens, some sort of miracles; but maybe when the wind blows in one direction, God sends it away in a different direction; but who knows what the real situation is. Everyone says Saint Agatha protects from fire and you should have the bread blessed. I put it in the car for the children, so God will protect them, but what really happens is hard to say.)<sup>71</sup>

Saint Agatha is also portrayed as a Christian martyr, who was brutally tortured by her father. The respondents knew about Saint Agatha as a martyr from hymns, for example.<sup>72</sup> The surveyed respondents also indicated that other saints protect from fire, i.e., Saint Florian and Saint Lawrence. Saint Agatha, however, outranks the others as protector from fire and accidents because of the objects connected with her and their adaptation to everyday household situations.

#### *Saint Anthony (Šventas Antanas)*

Another saint prominent in the worldview of Merkinė's residents is Saint Anthony, whose feast is on June 13th. Saint Anthony is the patron saint of Padua, women, and fiancés; and he rescues people from ague, plague, and other diseases. His help is requested when something is lost.<sup>73</sup> Several Merkinė residents described Saint Anthony as a saint with great pow-

<sup>71</sup> Respondent S. M., b. 1935 in Pagilšys village, Varėna District.

<sup>72</sup> Respondent G. M., b. 1941 in Mikalavas village, Alytus District.

<sup>73</sup> *Krikščioniškosios ikonografijos žodynas*, 28.

er, who protects people during misfortune and is everyone's patron. He is invoked in the event of all sorts of misfortune.<sup>74</sup> Others pray to Saint Anthony as the "patron of the soul."<sup>75</sup> But usually, the power of recovering lost things is ascribed to Saint Anthony. People tell their family and friends about their experiences with lost things. The items lost, for the most part it seems, are very mundane (for example, a gold ring, a watch, keys, papers, or vehicle documents); but at the same time, are very important in a person's life.

When the normal daily rhythm is disrupted, i.e., when something is lost, a person is disoriented. Such a state forces him or her to undertake various measures to help regain the established routine. One of those measures, as respondents have stated, is praying to Saint Anthony. Some respondents, when asked what actions should be performed to recover a lost item, answer that one needs to say the Litany of Saint Anthony. Even those respondents who do not believe "this superstition," as they call it, report that, after they have said the aforementioned litany or prayer, have found the lost item:

*Yra ta maldelė švento Antano, kad padėk susigrąžinti pamestus daiktus. Ir žinokit tikrai. [...] buvo mano auksinis žiedas, bet buvo laisvas. Ir aš maišydama tešlon ir suvertiau tvartan ir paskui po kiek česo aš užsižiūrėjau, kad neturiu žiedo. Aš, žinok, eidama, Dieve, Dieve... Šventasis Antanai, būk geras. Ir a š taip va maldavau. Ir aš parėjus greičiau nulėkiau tvartan ir radau lovin tu žiedu.*

(There is a prayer to Saint Anthony — help me get back my lost things. And know this for a fact, [...] there was my gold ring, but it was loose. After mixing dough, I shuffled off towards the barn; and after some time, I saw that I did not have my ring. I, you know, while walking, "God, God ... Saint Anthony, be good

<sup>74</sup> Respondent V. K., b. 1929 in Merkinė, Varėna District.

<sup>75</sup> Respondent S. M., b. 1935 in Pagilšys village, Varėna District.

to me." And I prayed like that. And after coming back, I sped back to the barn and found that ring in the feed trough.)<sup>76</sup>

Traditional culture not only depicts Saint Anthony as one who helps recover lost things, but also as one who helps women find suitable husbands. According to traditional Lithuanian legends and customs, a girl who wants to get married must pray to Saint Anthony. In proverbs, he is called the "patron" of girls and, in some beliefs, the protector of children. By helping women find a suitable or desirable husband, Saint Anthony ensures a harmonious life. Such folk narratives are now also being recorded in other regions of Lithuania. However, a Merkinė resident born in 1941 mentioned charms associated with Saint Andrew's Day as helping to predict whether two people will become a couple.<sup>77</sup> Irena R. Merkienė studied the customs of the Feast of Saint Andrew. She has linked rituals practiced on that day with vestiges of female initiation rites.<sup>78</sup>

It is also worth mentioning that traditional Lithuanian folklore (legends, humorous tales), includes stories about Saint Anthony as the patron of protection from the thieves. Folk legends speak of people who pray to Saint Anthony after losing money or in cases of horse theft. But if they who prayed have made promises they have not kept, punishment is meted out. Legends of this nature illustrate the consequences of suitable and unsuitable behavior and allow one to understand that Saint Anthony punishes people for failing to keep their promises. Nevertheless, this latter image of Saint Anthony was not encountered during the 2013 field research.

<sup>76</sup> Respondent O. G., b. 1941 in Maksimonys village, Varėna District.

<sup>77</sup> Respondent G. M., b. 1941 in Mikalavas village, Alytus District.

<sup>78</sup> Merkienė, "Apaštalo Andriejaus šventės papročių savitumai. Baltų ir slavų merginų iniciacijų XIX a.–XX a. pirmojoje pusėje pėdsakai."

## Conclusions

The ethnological research showed that religiosity and the cults of the saints remain important in the consciousness of the inhabitants of Merkinė and its environs. However, a change is noticeable in their attitude towards the functions and cults of the saints, and in their religiosity. The reasons for such a change can be traced to modern society, secularization, and individualistic thinking. Religious habits acquired in childhood or later by reading books, attending church, etc. help to maintain religiosity in contemporary society. However, traditional and modern thinking, as seen in the attitude of Merkinė's residents, also determines how the residents treat the cults of the saints.

The cult of Saint Roch, which formed and spread in Christian countries and includes such functions as protecting people from plague and other diseases, has a particular significance in the consciousness of Merkinė's residents at the present time, as does the celebration of the Feast of Saint Roch. Saint Roch can be considered a saint who occupies an exceptional place in the worldview of Merkinė's residents, especially during celebrations of the Feast of Saint Roch in this city.

For the inhabitants of Merkinė and its environs, Saint George continues to be seen as a protector of animals to this day, but the customs associated with Saint George's Day (bringing offerings to church on behalf of animals, a prohibition on disturbing the soil) are losing their meaning and are observed only in very rare instances. Meanwhile, other traditional characteristics of Saint George (such as being the protector of wild animals, especially wolves), are no longer mentioned. Thus, the altered realities of contemporary life affect the way in which Saint George is perceived and the way in which the customs of the Feast of Saint George are observed. On the other hand, there continues to be a strong belief among

Merkinė's residents in the protective powers of Saint Anthony as one able to help find lost things, as well as in the protective powers of Saint Lawrence, Saint Florian, and especially Saint Agatha. However, devotion to these saints and belief in the help they provide can be attributed to a simple human desire to ensure a safe life in various situations.

Folk narratives, such as stories about a fire being controlled thanks to Agatha bread or lost things being found thanks to Saint Anthony, ensure the successful continuation of traditions among members of the community. The narratives also help to explain events whose meaning and direction are perhaps not completely understood. The worldview of the people, which combines Christian and folk beliefs, customs, and various practices, gives meaning to the cults of the saints.

*Note: The research was conducted in accordance with a postdoctoral project. The postdoctoral fellowship was funded by the European Union Structural Funds Project, Postdoctoral Fellowship Implementation in Lithuania, within the framework of the Measure for Enhancing Mobility of Scholars and Other Researchers and the Promotion of Student Research (VP1-3.1-ŠMM-01) of the Program of Human Resources Development Action Plan.*

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## ABSTRACTS

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### **Two Patterns of Lithuanian-American Behavior: The Political Refugee and the Economic Immigrant**

EGIDIJA RAMANAUSKAITĖ

This paper analyzes and compares the behaviors of the Lithuanian political refugees who came to the United States after World War II with the economic immigrants who arrived after 1990. The comparison suggests that the agents, even when they experience negative influences from their environment, retain their original state of political refugee or economic immigrant. The paper discusses the immigrants' relationship to the U.S. government, to American society and their work environment, to their relatives in Lithuania, to their immigrant cohorts, and to the previous generation of Lithuanian immigrants.

### **The Religiosity of the Inhabitants of Dzūkija**

AUŠRA KAIRAITYTĖ

Personal religiosity has various components. It includes personal religious practices and personal religious experiences. Other components include the attitude people have towards the saints and the practices they follow in connection with their veneration. The aim of this article is to examine the religiosity of the inhabitants of Dzūkija (an ethnocultural and historical region located in southeast Lithuania) by analyzing how the cults of the more popular saints have manifested themselves there during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The article presents ethnographic field research into the cultural heritage of the city of Merkinė in Dzūkija. Con-

ducted in 2013, the research showed that, despite rapid secularization and changes in attitude towards religion, today's inhabitants of Dzūkija have a religious worldview in which it is not unusual to pay attention to activities and functions associated with saints prominent in traditional culture or to pray to certain saints for assistance.

