

## II. REVIEWS

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VALUES IN THE LITHUANIAN LINGUACULTURAL  
WORLDVIEW\*

Review of Kristina Rutkovska, Marius Smetona, Irena Smetonienė, *Vertybės lietuvių pasaulėvaizdyje*, 2017, Vilnius: Akademine leidyba, pp. 300. ISBN: 978-9955-33-715-7.

The volume contains analyses of eight cultural concepts (or values) entrenched in the Lithuanian language: FIRE and WATER (Marius Smetona), HOUSE and FAMILY (Kristina Rutkovska), LABOUR (Rutkovska, Smetona, Irena Smetonienė), EUROPE (Smetona), HONOUR and FREEDOM (Smetonienė). Values are understood here as timeless standards, handed down from generation to generation, encoded in language, and, thus, available to cognition via language. The volume includes five dictionary entries also published in their Polish versions in *LASiS*, plus three more that prove vital for Lithuanian culture: FIRE, WATER, and FAMILY. As the authors declare, the objective behind the publication is to promote an innovative new ethnolinguistic research methodology, as yet unknown in Lithuania, as well as to fill a gap in Lithuanian research on values. While values have been a broad research topic on the grounds of philosophy, sociology, and education, linguistically-oriented studies are still lacking in Lithuania.

The volume opens with a contribution from Jerzy Bartmiński. It was Bartmiński who initiated in 2001 the international project EUROJOS, and has coordinated it ever since, with a focus on values in the linguistic worldview.<sup>1</sup> At present, the project is pursued under the auspices of the Ethnolinguistic Section of the International Committee of Slavists, Institute of Slavic Studies at Polish Academy of Sciences, and Department of Polish Philology at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin,

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. the three volumes of *LASiS* published so far (vol. 1: HOUSE/HOME, vol. 3: WORK/LABOUR, and vol. 5: HONOUR). Two further volumes, on EUROPE (ed. by Wojciech Chlebda) and FREEDOM/LIBERTY (ed. by Maciej Abramowicz and Jerzy Bartmiński) will appear soon.

Poland. The main objective of the project is to propose, in various languages and in a comparative perspective, parallel descriptions of selected base concepts, of HOME, WORK/LABOUR, EUROPE, FREEDOM, and HONOUR to begin with. However, the first attempts to examine the world of values go back to the 1990s, which is when the concept of HOMELAND was researched in as many as twelve European languages (Bartmiński 1993). Before the appearance of LASiS, relevant interim contributions were published in this journal (*Etnolingwistyka*), as well as under the rubric of “Values in the linguacultural worldview of Slavs and their neighbours” (Abramowicz, Bartmiński, and Bielińska-Gardziel 2012; Bartmiński, Bielińska-Gardziel, and Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska 2014; Bielińska-Gardziel, Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska and Szadura 2014; Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska, Szadura and Żywicka 2018).

The theory-oriented chapter of the volume aims to present the EUROJOS methodology, which, incidentally, has for a long time been the basis of the Lublin-published Dictionary of Folk Stereotypes and Symbols (*SSSL*) but which in Lithuania is being made known only now. The Lithuanian authors have, then, followed the EUROJOS methodology, key terms included, and have also explored the compatible (systemic/lexicographic, textual, and questionnaire-derived) sources of data, with the objective of describing how language users understand the names of corresponding values (in compliance with the principles of cognitive definition).

In its first section, the analytical part of the volume presents descriptions of two key cosmological concepts, FIRE and WATER. The concept of FIRE proves to have been of a paramount value to Lithuanians (which is what it perhaps is for all ethnic communities as well), playing a major role in their everyday lives. Fire would be worshipped, respected, and protected. It was not a man’s foe, but, rather, an element that one was supposed to live with in harmony. Fire would be personified, fed, given offerings, and covered with ashes as if with a blanket. Before going to bed people would leave a mug filled with water so that fire could wash itself. It was believed that, if not taken care of properly, fire would set the house(hold) aflame. In Lithuanian, dictionaries, proverbs, and discourse-derived quotations were consulted, in order to reconstruct the view of FIRE. This produced a twofold picture of FIRE: (1) as fire from the sky, which is awe-inspiring, dangerous, and beyond one’s understanding, and (2) fire as hearth and home, which falls into two further subcategories as, respectively, (2a) good (sacred) fire (something that brings warmth, light, security, and facilitates cooking and, thus, conditions human survival), and (2b) evil fire (a destructive force that brings pain and suffering, punishes humans for evil deeds).<sup>2</sup>

For Lithuanians, water is a life-giving element because, as they believe, all life comes out of water. This is why water should be and is worshipped. Water was not only used in various practices and rituals, but it was also believed to function as a gate to the netherworld and to be populated with spirits and demons.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> It seems to be worth relating these Lithuanian-ingrained conceptualisations to Joanna Szadura’s (1996) lexicographic entry FIRE: even a cursory comparison bears witness to the primeval and supranational nature of fire-related images and practices.

<sup>3</sup> This picture seems to be akin to the Polish-entrenched stereotype of WATER, as discussed in Majer-Baranowska (1999) and Bartmiński (1999).

Interestingly enough, as transpires from the questionnaires, present-day Lithuanian youth no longer see any correspondences between water and mythology or religion. Religious dimensions of water are now clearly not central.

The next chapter brings accounts of HOUSE and FAMILY. On a more general level, the place of dwelling has been considered the greatest value since the ancient times. Despite changes in architectural styles, designs, and human lifestyles, the very relation between humans and their houses has remained the same. In reference to the Lithuanian data, Kristina Rutkovska has identified two profiles of the Lithuanian HOUSE. The first one has to do with a typically country house and, as such, it relates very closely to nature and to the family, whose members trust, help, and support each other. On this reading, a house should be cosy, warm, comfortable: it should emanate a unique fragrance, and by definition there should always be someone waiting for us there. The other profile reflects a modern perspective and is characterised by openness and a more relaxed attitude to one's place of habitation. The house is associated with the past, with one's parents and ancestors, with the place where one likes to return, although only temporarily. The family is understood as a group of people held together by emotional bonds, common objectives, shared work, and mutual support. Rutkovska's reconstruction also shows the deeply patriarchal nature of the Lithuanian concept of the family.

Equally important as a value is work or labour in its individual, social, physical, and mental dimensions. Although it is associated with toil and exhaustion, it nevertheless occupies a central position in people's lives. That this is so must be attributed to the sources of influence such as the family, the church, the media, i.e. the agents responsible for young people's upbringing and education. The view of work has been changing along with socio-economic transformations. Work and marriage are the preoccupation of adults. If in the past, people would farm for their whole lives, now one is in a position to continue education, upgrade one's skills and knowledge, and be prepared for changes in one's career.

The analysis of EUROPE is the first linguistically oriented attempt of that kind in Lithuania. First, the concept of EUROPE is examined in the sense 'European Union'. The further associations have to do with Europe in the geographical sense, as 'a continent situated close to Asia and away from the other continents'. The author of this chapter (Marius Smetona) notes an interesting dependence of the profile of the concept on the kind of discourse being examined. The image of EUROPE entrenched in Lithuanian is deeply rooted in historical memory, school education, reading lists, although, it must be admitted, the most powerful source of influence comes with the media.

The next concept in focus is that of FREEDOM. That concept seems to have two profiles: personal and public. Freedom was won by the ancestors and embraces the right to hold opinions, to create, seek self-fulfilment, discover, and travel. Freedom is also related to the respect of and responsibility for others. The data show that the concept of FREEDOM is both very capacious and dynamic: on the one hand, gaining, aspiring to, or fighting for freedom seem to be permanent characteristics of the concept; on the other hand, once the public freedom has been won, it is backgrounded for personal freedom to come to the fore.

Similarly, the concept of HONOUR is undergoing constant changes under the pressure of a vast number of factors. Lithuanians identify honour with public trust, disinterested labour, high moral standards, and a fulfilling, satisfying life. However, honour is not mentioned frequently in the questionnaires, which suggests that the concept (and value) is no longer as important as it used to be. Still, the attributes ascribed to the Lithuanian honour include: sincerity, justice, keeping promises, moral integrity, respect for others, sacrifice for the homeland, patriotism, and heroism.

The volume closes with a Polish summary, an extensive English resume, and a list of references. The general impression is very positive; it is a solid and coherent work, where three authors have researched as many as eight different concepts. Having offered useful generalisations and identified general patterns and tendencies, the authors claim that the traditional Lithuanian system of values is jeopardised, with the once dominant values being backgrounded or neglected. Lithuanians are now becoming pragmatically-minded, and are yielding to a consumerist, westernised lifestyle that they perceive as novel and attractive. In the view of the authors, this attitude does not foster the cultivation of traditional values. The specific contributions bear witness to, on the one hand, the evolution in the understanding of value terms, and, on the other hand, to the ethnic (ancient) Balto-Slavic origin of the values behind these names. Yet another merit of the volume lies in the data collected for individual contributions: the authors have explored historical data (derived from dictionaries, for example), various current discourses, as well as empirical (questionnaire-derived) data. These multifarious analyses disclose the mentality of Lithuanian languaculture in both individual and collective dimensions. Those are linguistic accounts and as such can well supplement sociological and historical investigations of the same concepts. The methodology adopted in the volume, especially the notion of cognitive definition, is applied with great precision and accuracy. The analyses have clear structures, each chapter concluding with a brief, synthetic summary definition of a given value term. Last but not least, the book's graphic design is impressively beautiful.

Let us conclude by saying that this volume is the second of the publications that have emerged from the experience gained by compiling *The Axiological Lexicon of Slavs and their Neighbours*: the authors have been participating in the EUROJOS project, the basis for the lexicon, since it was launched. The first publication was the similarly-structured volume *O vrednostima u srpskom jeziku* [Values in the Serbian language] (Ajdačić 2015), whose editor had collected all the concepts prepared for publication in *LASiS* and incorporated several new ones.

*Translated by Przemysław Łozowski*

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