

Lina Petrošienė

PhD, ethnologist;

Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of Klaipėda University

PhD, etnoloģe;

Sociālo zinātņu un humanitārā fakultāte, Klaipēdas Universitāte

E-mail / e-pasts: lina.petrosiene@ku.lt

ORCID: [0000-0003-0490-1327](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0490-1327)

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Musical Folklore of Lithuania Minor During the Soviet Era (1946–1989): The Voices Lost and the Forms of Revitalization

Mazās Lietuvas mūzikas folkloras padomju periodā (1946–1989): zaudētās balsis un revitalizācijas formas

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Summary

The article examines the musical folklore of Lithuania Minor and the forms and methods of its revitalization during the Soviet era (1946–1989). It aims to reveal the state of *Lietuvinkai* musical folklore after the Second World War, focusing on the specifics and outcomes of their collection, reconstruction, and revival within the broader context of the Sovietization of culture. The division of the territory, the emptying of the region, and its rapid resettlement by newcomers from across the USSR drastically altered the area's demographic composition. As a result, musical folklore entered the final phase of its organic existence; the last authentic examples were documented through folkloristic fieldwork during this period. However, two closely related developments in the 1960s and 1970s – the ethnocultural movement and the establishment of the Klaipėda Faculties of the State Conservatory – created the preconditions for a cultural revival in the region. The pioneers and key figures in this revival were the folklore ensemble *Vorusnė* of the Klaipėda faculties and the instrument maker Antanas Butkus, who laid the foundations for revitalizing the instrumental music of Lithuania Minor. The forms and methods employed in the revival of musical folklore indicate that, during the Soviet period, the musical traditions of Lithuania Minor were effectively reclassified as intangible cultural heritage.

Kopsavilkums

Rakstā tiek pētīta Mazās Lietuvas mūzikas folkloras un tās revitalizācijas formas un metodes padomju periodā (1946–1989). Raksta mērķis ir atklāt Prūsijas lietuviešu jeb lietuvinku mūzikas folkloras stāvokli pēc Otrā pasaules kara, pievēršot uzmanību tās vākšanas, rekonstruēšanas un atdzimšanas specifikai un rezultātiem plašākā kultūras sovjetizācijas kontekstā. Teritorijas sadalīšana, reģiona depopulācija un tā straujā apdzīvošana ar jaunpie- nācējiem no visas PSRS krasī mainīja apgabala demogrāfisko sastāvu. Rezultātā mūzikas folkloras nonāca savas organiskās pastāvēšanas pēdējā fāzē; pēdējie autentiskie piemēri tika dokumentēti, šajā periodā veicot lauka pētījumus. Tomēr divi cieši saistīti notikumi 20. gs. 60. un 70. gados – etniskās kultūras kustība un Valsts Konservatorijas Klaipēdas fakultāšu izveide – radīja priekšnosacījumus kultūras atdzimšanai reģionā. Šīs atdzimšanas pionieri un galvenās figūras bija Klaipēdas fakultāšu folkloras ansamblis *Vorusnė* un instrumentu meistars Antanas Butkus, kurš lika pamatus Mazās Lietuvas instrumentālās mūzikas atdzimšanai. Mūzikas folkloras atdzimšanas formas un metodes liecina, ka padomju periodā Mazās Lietuvas mūzikas tradīcijas tika efektīvi pārklasificētas kā nemateriālais kultūras mantojums.

Introduction

The folk singing tradition of Lithuania Minor (Prussian Lithuania, see Figure 1)¹, which the local *Lietuvinkai*² population had maintained for centuries, disappeared in the second half of the 20th century (Petrošienė 2003: 126–150; 2007: 238). Traditional instrumental music and dance had fallen into oblivion even earlier (Butkus, Motuzas 1994; Mačiulskis 2010). However, in the 1970s, the musical folklore of Lithuania Minor began to be reconstructed and revived, largely through the efforts of institutionalized folklore groups in the Klaipėda Region. These groups were composed of individuals from other parts of Lithuania who had settled in the region after the Second World War, as well as young people and educators who had come to study and work at the newly established institutions of higher education in Klaipėda. It was essentially a process of reconstruction and revitalization of ethnic music – a practice that originated in Europe during the Enlightenment and continues today in many parts of the world (Nettl [2024]; Boyes 1993; Baumann 1996; Cantwell 1996; Cohen 2002; Ramnarine 2003; Olson 2004; Bithell, Hill 2014: 3–42; Stavelová, Buckland 2018, among others).

1 Lithuania Minor is a historical and ethnographic region that emerged in the first half of the 16th century. It was located between the *Prieglius* (German: *Pre gel*) River and the lower reaches of the *Nemunas* (German: *Memel*) River and was inhabited by Western Baltic ethnic groups. In the early 16th century, the names *Klein Litau* and *Klein Litauen* appeared in Prussian chronicles (e.g. Simon Grunau, Lucas David). Later, the term *Preussisch Litauen* (Prussian Lithuania) became widespread in German historiography and is still in use today. In Prussian government documents from the 16th–19th centuries, as well as on Prussian maps from the 17th century onwards, the region was also referred to as the Province of Lithuania or the Lithuanian Domain (German: *Litauischer Kreis*). The area was part of the Prussian/German state from the time of the Teutonic conquest in the 13th century until the early 20th century.

Following the Great Northern War, the Great Plague and the livestock plague in the early 18th century, Prussian authorities resettled large numbers of Austrians (Salzburgers) and Germans in the depopulated homesteads. As a result, the region gradually became multicultural, though it remained dominated by the official Germanic order and culture. After the First World War, the Treaty of Versailles assigned the northern part of Lithuania Minor – the Klaipėda Region – to the Republic of Lithuania. After the Second World War, the Klaipėda Region was incorporated into the Lithuanian SSR, while the remaining territory was divided between the Russian Federation and Poland (VLE 1 [n.d.]; VLE 2 [n.d.]).

2 *Lietuvinkai* are Lithuanians of Lithuania Minor – also referred to as Lithuanians of Prussia (German: *Kleinlitauer*, *Preussische Litauer*), an ethnic and ethnocultural subgroup of western Lithuanians. The autochthonous population of the region referred to themselves as *Lietuvinkai of Lithuania Minor*, a designation that has appeared in Lithuanian writings as well as in official Prussian and German state documents since the 16th century (MLE [n.d.]).



Figure 1. The ethnographic regions of Lithuania with the northern part of Lithuania Minor, or Klaipėda Region, colored in red. It has belonged to the Republic of Lithuania since 1923.

The object of this research is the musical folklore of Lithuania Minor and the forms and methods of its revitalization during the Soviet period. The study aims to reveal the state of *Lietuvinkai* musical folklore – maintained by the region's autochthonous population – after the Second World War, examining the specifics and outcomes of its collection, as well as the reconstruction and revival movement within the broader context of the Sovietization of culture. Drawing on historical research, the article explores the historical and socio-political conditions that had a decisive impact on the fate of Lithuania Minor and its cultural heritage.

Due to its complex nature, the research object is approached in two distinct yet interrelated parts. First, it analyzes the reconstruction and revitalization of the region's singing traditions during the period 1971–1989 – an initiative that laid the foundation for a broader cultural revival. Second, it examines the subsequent restoration and use of traditional musical instruments between 1978 and 1989, a process that was, to a significant extent, inspired by the earlier resurgence of vocal folklore.

To address these questions, theoretical approaches from music revival and cultural heritage studies are applied (Livingston 1999; Ronström 1998, 2005, 2010;

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995, 1998, 2004, 2004a, 2006; Kockel 2006; Kockel, Craith 2007). These frameworks help to reveal how folk traditions and practices are transformed and integrated into cultural heritage discourse while preserving their vitality and meaning. The research employs qualitative content analysis, as well as interpretive and historical-comparative methods. The empirical basis of the study includes: 1) an analysis of the *Vorusnė*³ folklore ensemble's⁴ yearbook (1976–1980), which contains event descriptions, photographs, programs, press publications, and other documentation of the ensemble's activities from 1975 to 1997; 2) an analysis of publications, video, and audio recordings of folklore ensembles; 3) a review of online content related to folklore ensembles in the Klaipėda Region and the *Lietuvininkai* community *Mažoji Lietuva* [Lithuania Minor]; 4) semi-structured interviews with respondents.⁵

Ethnologists, folklorists, sociologists, and occasionally historians and philosophers from Lithuania and abroad have explored the development and revitalization of ethnic music traditions through the lens of their respective disciplines. The vast majority of publications addressing aspects of the folklore revival movement in Lithuania are descriptive, discussion-based, or applied in nature. These works often aim to regulate the character of folklore performance, and to utilize folklore for

3 From its founding in 1971 until 1980, the ensemble was known as the Folklore Ensemble of the Klaipėda Faculties of the LSSR State Conservatory. The name *Vorusnė* – derived from a river name in Lithuania Minor – first appeared in the ensemble's yearbook in 1983. According to the procedure in force at the time, such a name could be officially granted only after the ensemble had demonstrated significant merit. After a decade of activity, around 1981–1982, the then head of the faculties, Vytautas Jakelaitis, referred to the ensemble as *Vorusnė*. The name was officially assigned to the ensemble shortly thereafter, in recognition of its achievements (VM 1976–1980; phone interview with ensemble members R. G., March 29, 2921, and D. K., March 30, 2021).

4 The term 'folklore ensemble' refers to a group of people dedicated to preserving and performing traditional folk culture, with a focus on traditional music, songs, dances, instrumental music, and other elements of folklore. These ensembles play a crucial role in the transmission of cultural heritage, helping to maintain nation's traditions, uniqueness, and authenticity. Folklore ensembles differ from stylized song and dance ensembles, which interpret and adapt folk material in ways that often prioritize artistic expression over ethnographic authenticity. This second type of ensemble does not necessarily strive for authenticity but preserves elements of folk culture, adapting them to suit contemporary audiences or their own creative vision.

5 The project *Susitikimai+* [Meetings+], partly funded by the Lithuanian Council for Culture and Klaipėda City Municipality, was carried out in 2021–2022. During this period, the author of the article conducted in-depth interviews with individuals who participated in the movement to revitalize the culture of Lithuania Minor during the Soviet era and beyond. Based on the collected material, eight podcasts were produced, and audio recordings of *Vorusnė* from 1979 and 1993 were restored. The material has been made publicly available on the *Folklore. Klaipėda Region* YouTube channel (FKK 2022).

purposes such as national education and identity formation. Applying the theoretical concept of *folklorism*, which has been widely used in European scholarship, Stasys Skrodenis analyzed the folklore revival movement in Lithuania – particularly the use of folklore in staged performances (Skrodenis 2005). Aušra Zabilienė, meanwhile, examines the activities of Lithuanian folklore ensembles operating in Lithuania and Poland through the prism of ethnic identity (Zabilienė 2008: 67–77, 2010: 159–174, 2011: 168–189). One of the most recent scholarly works examining the ethnic music revival movement in Lithuania – from the 1960s to the early 21st century – and encompassing so-called authentic, stylized, and modern forms of folklore is the monograph by Romualdas Apanavičius and a team of authors (Apanavičius et al. 2015). This study, along with the more recent works of historians Vasilijus Safronovas (Safronovas 2008, 2009, 2018) and Odetta Rudling (Rudling 2023), is particularly relevant to the present research. Existing ethnological research does not fully address the period of reconstruction and revival of the musical folklore of Lithuania Minor during the Soviet era – particularly as it relates to the establishment of the Klaipėda Faculties of the LSSR State Conservatory, the formation of the first institutionalized folklore ensemble *Vorusnė* (active in Klaipėda from 1971 to 2000), its influence on the development of other folklore groups in the Klaipėda Region, and its role within the broader cultural and educational processes of Klaipėda. These issues have been partially addressed by the author of this article (Petrošienė 2021, 2023).

The period under study is regarded as the initial and, thus far, only limitedly studied phase of the reconstruction and revitalization of the musical folklore of Lithuania Minor, carried out under challenging historical conditions. Depopulation and the abandonment of territories after the Second World War, followed by their reconstruction and promotion through economic and cultural initiatives, is a phenomenon observed in many parts of the world. A comparable process – characterized by the depopulation of specific areas, and the deliberate revival of ethnic culture to support local vitality – occurred in other regions of the world following the Second World War, for example, on the west coast of Ireland (Kockel 2006: 87–100; Kaul 2009), Ishikawa Prefecture on the Sea of Japan (Hatanaka 2002: 51–70), and elsewhere. Intense economic growth, changes in value systems, and the destabilization of regional communities following the war, as well as the introduction of a law specifically aimed at supporting traditional arts and crafts were all factors that influenced both the decline of local traditions and their subsequent rediscovery. A new mechanism for the transmission and reception of tradition was established, enabling tradition to survive and adapt within a rapidly changing society (Hatanaka 2002: 68). Similar measures for the economic activation of regions in Europe have sparked heated debates regarding the value of these traditions, their authenticity,

commercialization, and related issues (Kockel 2006: 92–96). In studying the ethno-cultural processes at work in Lithuania – particularly in the case of *Lietuvininkai* culture – one must consider the influence of Soviet ideology, which persisted into the second half of the 20th century (LKSIN 2005: 11, 37–39, 283–284, 355–359; Rudling 2023). The regulation of culture and the process of Sovietization all but erased continuity with traditions from the pre-Soviet period. There was an effort, however, to pass on “folk wisdom” embedded in those traditions, to exploit the power of established value systems (Paukštytė-Šaknienė 2012: 208) and traditional forms deemed useful, by imbuing them with “new socialist content” (UŽS 1959: 1) and constructing new Soviet traditions.

According to Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, the revitalization of the musical folklore of Lithuania Minor in the 20th century and later can be considered as a transition of tradition into cultural heritage:

I define heritage as a mode of cultural production that has recourse to the past and produces something new. Heritage as a mode of cultural production adds value to the outmoded by making it into an exhibition of itself. [...] At the same time, the performers, ritual specialists, and artisans whose “cultural assets” become heritage through this process experience a new relationship to those assets, a metacultural relationship to what was once just *habitus*. *Habitus* refers here to the taken for granted, while heritage refers to the self-conscious selection of valued objects and practices (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004: 1).

However, the concept of intangible cultural heritage has only recently been adopted in Lithuania to describe expressions of spiritual culture.⁶ It is associated with the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which Lithuania ratified in 2004. In 2015, the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania approved the national regulations for the Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage (NKPVS [n.d.]). Although the restored traditions of singing and instrumental music from Lithuania Minor have been cherished for over 50 years, they were only added to the national list of Intangible Cultural Heritage values in 2020 and 2022. This official status is intended to protect the practitioners of Lithuania Minor’s cultural heritage from lingering uncertainties related to the ‘legality’, ‘authenticity’, and similar concerns surrounding their activities. It is important to note that the terms ‘tradition(s)’ and ‘cultural heritage’ are often used interchangeably, though they are not synonymous. The renowned Swedish ethnologist Owe Ronström, drawing on the case of the island of Gotland and the city of

⁶ In Lithuania, the term ‘spiritual culture’ is commonly used to refer to folklore, customs, and traditions. In this context, ‘spiritual culture’ is what material culture is not, not necessarily religiosity only. A definition of spiritual culture by the prominent Lithuanian folklorist Bronislava Kerbelytė is available in the Universal Lithuanian Encyclopedia (VLE 4 [n. d.]).

Visby as designated World Cultural Heritage sites (1995), illustrates the key differences between tradition and cultural heritage:

Tradition produces a closed space, you cannot just move into it. Tradition works much like ethnoscapes or VIP-clubs: to enter you have to be a member, or to be invited by a member, and membership is genealogical, it comes with birth. Cultural heritage produces a much more open space that almost anybody can move into. Instead of membership by birth, the right kind of values – and wallets – are necessary, and acceptance of the master narrative of the domain, that of the importance of careful preservation (Ronström 2005: 9).

The musical folklore traditions of Lithuania Minor have become precious, acceptable, and worthy of support for the new settlers who uphold them. Adam Kaul, who studied traditional Irish music, said newcomers can never become "true" locals. Nevertheless, those who are able to merge with the local traditional music environment without tension and acquire the subtleties of the musical style are often accepted as people who understand the deepest cultural ties. Local traditions working together with traditions inspired by global processes (in this case, migration) are not a contradiction. On the contrary, the successful integration of musical traditions can also be viewed as a net increase in the local community's cultural capital (Kaul 2009: 259–268; Kockel 2006: 92).

The Klaipėda Region after the Second World War: Historical, Political, Social, and Demographic Changes

Lithuania Minor and the part of it that has belonged to Lithuania since 1923 – the Klaipėda Region – were geographical and cultural concepts that were used only in a limited way in public discourse during the Soviet era. The Klaipėda Region was officially recognized as Lithuania's fifth ethnocultural region, Lithuania Minor, only at the end of the 20th century. Until 1990, the Klaipėda Region was considered part of Žemaitija, historically known as Samogitia.

The settlements of Lithuania Minor were emptied following the dramatic consequences of the Second World War. According to estimates, the Klaipėda Region, which was incorporated into the Lithuania SSR, lost 80% of its population during the war, while the city of Klaipėda – its entire population. Residents were evacuated to the interior of Germany in 1944–1945. By the end of 1946, only a tiny fraction of the native population – around 3% – had returned to the region.

However, the population increased rapidly due to the USSR's Russification policy of encouraging both voluntary and forced migration from Lithuania and other parts of the USSR. For example, by 1947, the absolute majority of the population of

Klaipėda were settlers, of whom 60% were Russian-speaking and 40% Lithuanian (Kairiūkštytė 1995: 348; Truska 1989: 205; Safronovas 2018: 98, 2008: 60–61). In the districts of the Klaipėda Region, newcomers from the USSR formed small national minorities, many of whom settled in towns and cities. Even without the necessary qualifications, they often occupied leading positions in administrative, party and economic management bodies. Their role was significant in the Sovietization and Russification policies. Nevertheless, the largest group of settlers consisted of displaced people from various regions of Lithuania (Kairiūkštytė 1995: 349–352).

At the same time, between 1945 and 1952, the Lithuanian population was deported to the distant regions of Siberia and other areas of the USSR with harsh climates. Many of the autochthonous residents of the Klaipėda Region – both Lithuanians and Germans – were among those deported. Some returned in the second half of the 1960s. However, following the 1957 agreements between the USSR and the Federal Republic of Germany, former German citizens were permitted to repatriate to Germany. Some of the region's original inhabitants took advantage of this opportunity, resulting in the further loss of indigenous population from the Klaipėda Region (Kairiūkštytė 1995: 370–371).

There are no precise data on how many long-time residents of the Klaipėda Region remained in their homeland after 1958–1960. However, it was clear that they constituted an absolute minority of the region's population. The newly arrived Lithuanians perceived the distinctiveness of this land – its people's character, lifestyle, language and dialects, folklore, architecture, and religious differences. However, openly expressing interest in the region's past was risky due to the Soviet ideology, and the crimes of fascism also cast a shadow over the local population.⁷

In the post-war period, the Soviet authorities in the Klaipėda Region, as in the rest of Lithuania, targeted anti-Soviet elements – a category that automatically included people of German nationality as well as local Lithuanians. The persecution of the Klaipėda Region inhabitants served as a means to identify and eliminate so-called enemies of the people. As a result, relations between the region's long-time residents, especially repatriates, and the newly arrived settlers were often tense and, at times, openly hostile (Kairiūkštytė 1995: 365–369).

In the 20th century, the political affiliation of the Klaipėda Region changed as many as five times (Safronovas 2018: 14). These sudden and radical political and

7 In the first half of the 20th century, especially after the Second World War, the Soviet Union entered a period of pronounced anti-German antagonism. In the Klaipėda Region, Soviet propaganda promoted a Lithuanian-oriented identity. The region's German past was systematically erased, and the German role in its history was portrayed negatively: "The Germans are the eternal enemies of the Lithuanian nation" (Safronovas 2008: 59–84). Regardless of their actual nationality, the indigenous inhabitants of the region were largely treated and perceived as Germans.

administrative shifts influenced local identity dynamics, which during the Soviet period fluctuated between national/ethnic affiliations and a Soviet identity. The post-war period was shaped not only by the legacy of the war and a changed demographic landscape but also by the influence of Soviet ideology, which was often volatile and contradictory.

For example, before and after the war, the multiethnic Klaipėda – where Lithuanians were not the dominant group – began to be portrayed as a Lithuanian “hometown”. However, by the middle of 1946, the open expression of Lithuanian identity began to be suppressed. As military resistance to the Soviet regime intensified in Lithuania, the persecution of individuals accused by security structures of being “Lithuanian-German nationalists” also began (Safronovas 2008: 69).

However, the post-war period saw significant consolidation of Lithuanian identity on a broader scale in the Klaipėda Region. Following Stalin’s death and during the subsequent political thaw, the Soviet policy of promoting national identities across the USSR led to the withdrawal of Russian-speaking administrative workers and party members from Lithuania. At the same time, the number of Lithuanians in both party and administrative structures increased significantly. The Lithuanianization of the party apparatus, combined with the conformism of the intellectual elite – writers, film directors, historians, philologists, and artists from various disciplines – enabled these figures to build their careers by integrating into party structures while simultaneously maintaining their loyalty to the Lithuanian nation (Rudling 2023: 114–115).

For several decades after the war, Klaipėda lacked significant Lithuanian intellectual potential. It remained a working-class port city with no institutions of higher education until 1970. The establishment of branches of higher education institutions in the 1970s – such as the Klaipėda Faculties of the State Conservatory, the Faculty of Preschool Education of the Šiauliai Pedagogical Institute, and the Department of Visual Agitation, Advertising, and Exhibition Design of the State Art Institute – played a decisive role in strengthening Lithuanian identity in Klaipėda and the surrounding region. Experienced and emerging specialists in education, culture, and the arts, along with students from various parts of Lithuania, revitalized the city and created conditions for the dissemination and consolidation of Lithuanian identity. Efforts to uncover and emphasize Klaipėda’s Lithuanian past gradually gained momentum, eventually challenging and overshadowing the Soviet identity orientation promoted by the regime.

Meanwhile, the region’s German past continued to be portrayed negatively in official discourse from the post-war period through to the 1990s (Safronovas 2008: 65, 84, 2009: 98). This official stance likely closed the door to folklorists seeking

access to many local residents who still identified with the German state⁸ and maintained close family ties in Germany – particularly with those who had chosen to leave their homeland during the repatriation of the 1960s. The Lithuanians who remained in the rural areas of the Klaipėda Region were the only group toward which the post-war Lithuanian identity of Klaipėda could be oriented (Safronovas 2008: 80).

The intensity of Soviet urbanization of Lithuania, which dismantled the traditional rural Lithuanian world, along with growing disillusionment with Soviet modernity, contributed to the emergence of an oppositional, anti-modernist ethnonationalist movement in the late 1950s. This movement placed particular emphasis on Lithuanian history, language, and culture. The collection and popularization of folklore became central to the ethnocultural movement or the local history movement (Rudling 2023: 185). In Klaipėda, the faculties of the State Conservatory became a significant center of this movement. These faculties trained specialists in Soviet mass culture – musicians, directors of Lithuanian folk theatre and mass cultural events, and choreographers. However, the study program also integrated field research, often conducted in the rural areas of the Klaipėda Region (Petrošienė 2006: 66–70). During these expeditions, lecturers and students became acquainted with the people of the Klaipėda Region and its distinctive cultural landscape.

Due to these circumstances, the ethnocultural movement in Klaipėda developed with a slightly different dynamic than in Vilnius or Kaunas. Its ideas were introduced by graduates of Vilnius University, the Vilnius and Šiauliai Pedagogical Institutes, the State Conservatory, and the Vilnius Art Institute, who later became lecturers at Klaipėda institutions of higher education and employees of various cultural and educational institutions.

In the early 1960s, the Communist Party, perceiving the ethnocultural movement – particularly the dissident activities of local history researchers and proletarian tourists – as increasingly difficult to control, began to impose restrictions. It emerged that some participants were also engaged in anti-Soviet activities, which led to the closure of local history and hiking clubs in Vilnius and Kaunas. Activists within the movement were prosecuted, and high-ranking state officials who were secretly or partially involved in the ethnocultural movement lost their positions.

One such figure was Vytautas Jakelaitis – a party cultural worker, director of the

8 Historian Nijolė Strakauskaitė emphasizes the attachment and loyalty of *Lietuvininkai* to the state: "Lutheran church and governmental policy, which was embodied by Prussian monarchy, not only determined survival of Prussian Lithuanian ethnic group, dispersion of Lithuanian literature in Prussia, but also influenced formation of a very distinct mentality of this group – respect for church and Prussian monarchy" (Strakauskaitė 2010: 136).

Society for the Protection of Monuments and Local Lore of the LSSR, and Deputy Minister of Culture. In 1973, he relocated to Klaipėda, where he began his academic career (Rudling 2023: 197–204). From 1973 to 1975, Vytautas Jakelaitis served as the Dean of the Klaipėda Faculty of the Šiauliai Pedagogical Institute. From 1975 to 1987, he was Vice-Rector of the Klaipėda Faculties of the Lithuanian Conservatory of Music (VLE 3 [n.d.]). To this day, he is remembered as a distinguished cultural figure who made significant contributions to both Lithuanian culture and the city of Klaipėda. Under his leadership, the Klaipėda faculties established and successfully ran the first folklore ensemble of students and teachers in the region, *Vorusnė*. Additionally, the Experimental Laboratory for the Repair and Improvement of Folk Instruments conducted important work that revived and reconstructed traditional musical instruments of Lithuania Minor.

The Collection of Musical Folklore in Lithuania Minor After the Second World War

As mentioned earlier, Soviet cultural policy was directed toward the cultivation and systemic collection of national languages and folklore, which were treated as tools of ideological influence (Rudling 2023: 47–55, 83–97). After the Second World War, the collection of musical folklore in the Klaipėda Region was initiated – or more accurately, the work that had been carried out in the previous centuries was continued – by official academic institutions such as the Institute of the Lithuanian Language and Literature, the State Conservatory of Music (as the institutions were then named), and the Faculty of Music in Klaipėda, established in 1975. This wave of local history research and proletarian tourism also drew in folklore enthusiasts from the Klaipėda Region – teachers, journalists, and others. The work was challenging, as the local population, now a minority, bore the traumas of war and remained reticent and distrustful of the new regime and government throughout much of the Soviet period.⁹ As public leisure activities became increasingly organized,¹⁰ new forms of Sovietized cultural

9 For many of the region's long-time inhabitants, the war – particularly its final years – left deeply traumatic memories: fleeing their homes into the unknown, the loss of property and relatives, violence at the hands of the Red Army, post-war famine, and more. After 1945, however, there were no opportunities for these memories to be publicly acknowledged or discussed for more than four decades, either in the Kaliningrad Region or the Klaipėda Region (Safronovas 2009: 91).

10 Every Soviet town was required to have its own House of Culture, and every settlement its own club. Reading rooms were established in all settlements, serving simultaneously as clubs, libraries, and “red corners” dedicated to Soviet propaganda literature and ideological agitation (Safronovas 2018: 122–123).

expression gradually took root,¹¹ while the organic transmission of local traditions diminished and eventually faded.

The first post-war recordings of *Lietuvinkai* songs date back to 20 July 1950 – the day before the Song and Dance Festival in Vilnius. Vilius Vestfolis, a member of the Ernst Thälmann fishermen's artel founded in Rusnė (Šilutė district) in 1948 during collectivization, was among those from whom folklore researchers wrote down a few songs. He recalled that the community had a mixed age choir that performed "old Lithuanian songs" accompanied by the button accordion. In 1950, part of the choir traveled to the republican Song Festival in Vilnius, where they were scheduled to perform four songs. However, they were ultimately not allowed to perform because "their songs are different" (LTR 1950: 2780). This could have meant that the songs reflected the unique cultural heritage of the Klaipėda Region, were ideologically unacceptable, or that the choir's performance did not meet the expected artistic standards.

This situation may also have been a result of the prevailing practice of stylized song and dance ensembles, which had already taken root in the state-supported mass culture of the time. These ensembles used modernized folk instruments and performed original compositions created by professional composers. The State Song and Dance Ensemble, founded in 1940 and renamed *Lietuva* in 1965, along with the many ensembles it inspired across Lithuania, represented the official face of folk music during this period. Folklore ensembles that did not include works glorifying Soviet life in their repertoire were typically excluded from the Song Festival programs (Apanavičius et al. 2015: 22–23, 109–110). Only institutional folklore ensembles affiliated with higher education institutions, factories, or other organizations were permitted to perform a folk song or circle dance at mass festivals.

Returning to field research in the Klaipėda Region, available data show that folklorists and dialectologists visited the area from time to time. However, fieldwork reports often note that the majority of the population consisted of people who had relocated from other parts of Lithuania. The old inhabitants of the region were described as reserved and taciturn – many of them Evangelical Lutherans who cherished their religious hymns but knew few secular songs. As a result, very few secular songs were recorded (KTR 1955: 6).

¹¹ The new settlers took over the organization of artistic groups and cultural events according to Soviet standards. The history of the cultural center illustrates how cultural life in Šilutė was structured in the post-war period. Initially, a theatre, choirs, dance, and brass bands were established, forming the foundation for both local and republican Song Festivals. From 1963 onward, the number of groups representing folk traditions began to grow.

There was another reason why the people of the Klaipėda Region were reluctant to admit knowledge of secular songs. For example, on June 20, 1959, the Priekule district newspaper *Lenino keliu* (Lenin's Way) published the lyrics of two *Lietuvinkai* folk songs. However, the contributor, Kristupas Reizgys – a well-regarded and educated beekeeper from a collective farm – refused to have his name published. As an Evangelical, he felt uncomfortable appearing before his parishioners with the so-called "dirty" songs (LTR 1959: 3289). In the Klaipėda Region, a strict pietistic religious tradition remained strong. While this helped preserve the Lithuanian language, it also contributed to the decline of the region's musical folklore.

However, in various parts of the Klaipėda Region, valuable authentic songs continued to be preserved by *Lietuvinkai* singers such as Marija Klingerienė, Augustas Deivelaitis, Ana Mažeiva, Erčius Jurgėnaitis, Adomas Goberis, as well as by Curonians like Andreiš Balčius, Kersta Balčius, and others – individuals who are well known to folklorists and cultural revivalists today. No evidence has been found to suggest that Lithuanian folklorists conducted field research in the present-day Kaliningrad Region during the Soviet era.

As mentioned earlier, at the end of the Second World War, the Lithuanian population evacuated to the West with the advance of the Soviet army. Dr Jonas Balys, head of the Folklore Archive founded in Kaunas in 1935 and a renowned Lithuanian folklorist, who had paid particular attention to collecting and publishing the folklore of Lithuania Minor in the pre-war years, also withdrew to Germany during the war and later emigrated to the United States. While working at the Library of Congress in Washington, he continued collecting folklore and conducting field research. In 1949, in the vicinity of Chicago, he recorded *Lietuvinkai* songs performed by Gertrūda and Martynas Lacyčiai, who had recently arrived in the United States, using magnetic tape (Petrošienė et al. 2017: 30–31). He published this collected material in 1958 in Boston in the book *Lietuvių dainos Amerikoje* (Lithuanian Songs in America) (LDA 1958). The family of Martynas Jankus, the renowned public and cultural figure of Lithuania Minor, also withdrew to Germany during the war. Jankus died there in 1946, and his children later emigrated to Canada. His daughter, Elzė Jankutė, continued her Lithuanian cultural activities there. In 1971, three of her songs were included in the album *A Garland of Rue* (GR 1971).

Summarizing the state of Lithuania Minor's singing folklore during the period under study, it can be stated that this marked the final stage of the living *Lietuvinkai* singing tradition. Between 1948 and 1989, 40 singers from the Klaipėda Region performed 304 Lithuanian songs with melodies for folklore collectors.¹² The richest

12 For comparison – from 1922 to 1935, 69 songs with melodies were recorded by five singers, and from 1990 to 1998, 13 songs with melodies were recorded by seven singers.

repertoires were preserved in the memories of singers born at the end of the 19th century. However, this repertoire no longer functioned in the natural environment of the *Lietuvininkai* – family and community celebrations.

While the recordings of song melodies in Lithuania Minor date back to the early 19th century, instrumental music did not attract the interest of the clergy and linguists who acted as folklorists at the time. Moreover, there were no music professionals specifically focused on the instrumental traditions of Prussian Lithuanian music-making. Various written and ethnographic sources confirm that, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, cultural promoters of Lithuania Minor formed ensembles of string instruments, wind instruments, and *kanklės* performing at events such as the Midsummer Festival on Rambynas Hill and other occasions. In taverns, bands of various configurations played dance music, but no audio recordings of such performances have survived.

In 1960, during an expedition by researchers from the Institute of Lithuanian Language and Literature, approximately 20 pieces of music were recorded by photographer and mandolin maker Martynas Kavolis, performed on a mandolin he had crafted himself (Petrošienė et al. 2017: 31–32). This does not imply that there were no other local musicians. In 2000, folklorists recorded several additional pieces performed on the violin, mandolin, and mouth organ by local musicians from the Klaipėda Region, who also shared insights into their musical traditions (KKDM 2017).

Choreographers have also recorded dance and circle dance melodies during their field research in the Klaipėda Region. However, their primary focus was on choreographic specifics rather than instrumental music. Vidmantas Mačiulskis, a recent researcher of the ethnic choreography of Lithuania Minor, has collected and analyzed 91 examples of ethnochoreography from this region in various Lithuanian archives; 28 of these dances, circle dances, and dance songs include melodies (Mačiulskis 2010: 18, 44–45). Some of these melodies are now used by contemporary promoters of instrumental music from the Klaipėda Region.

The musical folklore of Lithuania Minor collected in the post-war period remained silent in practice for some time. The restoration of the region's sung folklore and instrumental music during the Soviet era, as analyzed in the following chapters, confirms what cultural heritage theorists would later write: "The repertoire is passed on through performance. This is different from recording and preserving the repertoire as documentation in the archive. The repertoire is about embodied knowledge and the social relations for its creation, enactment, transmission, and reproduction" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2006: 181).

The Revitalization of Lithuania Minor's Singing Folklore, 1971–1989

Between 1960 and 1970, a new wave of interest in folk songs and dances emerged across many European countries. This renewed attention was driven by multiple factors: significant population and economic growth following the Second World War; rapid urbanization, centralization, and modernization, which created tensions between tradition and modernity; a growing divide between academic folklorists and practitioners who continued to adapt folklore to contemporary needs; and a shift in attitudes towards using authentic sources (Apanavičius et al. 2015: 86–125; Ronström 1998: 39–41). All of these factors were also relevant in the Soviet Union and Lithuania.

However, Odeta Rudling, in her analysis of the development of folklore during the Soviet period, argues that the ethnocultural movement in Lithuania was particularly connected to the proletarian tourism promoted by the Soviet regime, which developed an ethnonational current of the local studies movement (Rudling 2023: 185–228). Many collectors of Lithuania Minor's folklore were not involved in music revitalization efforts. As mentioned earlier, they were professional folklorists, dialectologists, ethnomusicologists, and enthusiasts of ethnic culture from various fields, who did not directly inherit the tradition from *Lietuvinkai* singers and musicians. This created a critical and lasting gap: *Lietuvinkai* themselves were almost entirely excluded from both the collection of their folklore and from the practices of its revitalization – a situation that, to a large extent, persists to this day.¹³

As mentioned earlier, the creation of folklore ensembles and the revival of a Lithuania Minor identity in the Klaipėda Region is closely linked to the establishment of the Music Faculty of the Šiauliai Pedagogical Institute in 1971, which became the Klaipėda Faculty of the Lithuanian State Conservatory in 1975. A pioneer in the folklore revival movement was the linguist Audronė Jakulienė (later Kaukienė), who taught Lithuanian philology and music, and later, Lithuanian philology and drama. In the autumn of 1971, Jakulienė formed a girls' folklore group, which later became the first institutionalised student folklore ensemble in Klaipėda and the entire region (see Figure 2) – eventually known as the folklore ensemble *Vorusnė*. In 1980, the *Alka* folklore ensemble was established, and by 1985, ten folklore ensembles were already active.¹⁴ Later, the *Kamana* folklore ensemble of the Pagėgiai Municipality

13 A study by Aušra Zabilienė states that from 1990 to 2008, no *Lietuvinkai* participated in folklore ensembles in the Klaipėda Region (Zabilienė 2008: 70).

14 The Kretinga Regional Folklore Ensemble of the Klaipėda Inter-Regional Palace of Culture of the Lithuanian Association of the Blind (1977), the folklore ensemble of the Third Clinic of the Klaipėda City Hospital (1981), the folklore ensemble of the Museum of the Sea and Aquarium (1982),



Figure 2. Folklore Ensemble of the Klaipėda Faculties of the LSSR State Conservatory, 1977.
Photo by Elena Matulionienė.

Cultural Centre was founded in 1986, followed by the *Verdainė* folklore ensemble at the Šilutė Cultural and Entertainment Centre in 1988, and the children's folklore ensemble *Vorusnélė* of the *Mažoji Lietuva* community in 1989.

The activity of the *Vorusnė* ensemble was intense and multifaceted. From the very beginning of the ensemble's work at the Klaipėda faculties, the director brought together and trained students with a deliberate focus on preserving Lithuanian ethnic culture. Both teachers and students sought contacts with the *Lietuvininkai*

the folklore ensemble of the teachers at the Klaipėda Music Faculty of the State Conservatory of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic (1982), the children's folklore ensemble of the Klaipėda Medical Workers' club (1982), the ensemble of folk musicians from community household utility institutions (1982), the folklore studio of the Folk Music Department of the Klaipėda Faculties of the State Conservatory of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic (1983) and the children's folklore ensemble of the Palace of Educational Workers (1984) were all active. Other folklore collectives from Klaipėda city municipal enterprises and agencies were mentioned but not described, including the folklore ensembles of the specialized auto-transportation enterprise, the combine of community domestic utility enterprises, the restoration workshops, High School No. 22, and the Commerce Club (Sliužinskas 1988: 16). Notably, that publication does not mention the establishment of the *Alka* folklore ensemble in 1980.

community, collected and researched local history and dialect data from archives and fieldwork, organised thematic folklore performances based on academic, written, and ethnographic sources, held concerts in Lithuania and abroad, and collaborated with the folklore ensembles in schools and higher education institutions (FKK 2022). Nonetheless, as the ensemble director recalled: "Members of the *Vorusnė* ensemble received the greatest attention in the land of the *Lietuvinkai*; when we travelled there, we became something like the preservers, revivalists and propagators of its culture" (Kaukienė 2000: 136).

We can only infer how the *Lietuvinkai* spoke and sang from descriptions, hints, and even hearsay recorded in written sources, as well as from the very few audio recordings of singers and storytellers from this region. At the very beginning of the ensemble's existence, the primary source of songs from Lithuania Minor was the fourth edition of pieces collected and published in 1825 by Liudvikas Réza (Rhesa), entitled *Lietuvių liaudies dainos* (Lithuanian Folk Songs, 1958, 1964). The musical material of this publication became a benchmark in the 20th century, representing the ethnic musical style of Lithuania Minor.

Ensemble director Audronė Jakulienė, dialectologist Jonas Bukantis, and their students conducted field research in villages in the Klaipėda Region, systematically documenting the information they collected. By that time, there were already very few remaining *Lietuvinkai* singers. The most remarkable among them was Ana Mažeiva, whom they visited in 1979 and 1980. She was one of the last individuals who still knew many of the old Lithuanian songs. Other *Lietuvinkai* at that time could recall only a few songs or remembered just the titles of traditional Lithuanian pieces.

The performance programs of the *Vorusnė* ensemble were based on songbooks, Lithuanian literary classics, and collected ethnographic material. The titles of these programs usually reflected their central theme – the land adjacent to the Curonian Lagoon and the culture of its local residents. These included *Jūry-marių dainos* (Songs of the Sea and Lagoon, 1979), *Lietuvinkų vestuvės* (Lietuvinkai Wedding, 1979), *Mažvydas ir lietuvinkų dainos* (Martynas Mažvydas and the Songs of the Lietuvinkai, 1979), *Treji gaideliai giedojo* (The Three Cocks Crowed, 1981), *Lietuvinkai* (1985), *Žodis ir giesmė* (Word and Hymn), *Lietuvinkump ir žemaičiump* (Among the Lietuvinkai and the Žemaitijans).

The ensemble's director acknowledged the challenges of presenting *Lietuvinkai* folklore and ethnography – not only due to the specific demands of stage performance, but also because of the lack of a direct connection to the living tradition (Kaukienė 2000: 137).

In the 1970s and 1980s, the *Vorusnė* ensemble was invited almost weekly to



Figure 3. Folklore Ensemble of the Klaipėda Faculties of the LSSR State Conservatory at the Open-Air Museum of Lithuania in Rumšiškės, 1980 (VM 1976–1980).

perform concerts and participate in various events commemorating *Lietuvininkai* and Lithuanian culture. These events took place in libraries, city halls, dinner parties, meetings, and gatherings organized by enterprises, agencies, institutions, and school communities (see Figure 3). The nature of the events was diverse – ranging from informal gatherings and the initiation of new ensemble members¹⁵ to official concerts in formal settings, as well as radio and television recordings.¹⁶ These activities contributed to a broader understanding of Lithuania Minor among both Lithuanian and Soviet audiences. The ensemble's special focus on *Lietuvininkai* culture culminated in its first performance outside Lithuania, held in Kristijonas Donelaitis's home village of Tolminkiemis, in East Prussia.¹⁷

15 Escorting into domestic life, wedding congratulations, and bachelorette parties often included the reenactment of wedding customs from the regions of the bride and groom, accompanied by the performance of corresponding song genres.

16 According to the Yearbook of *Vorusnė* folklore ensemble, five programs – *Kelionės po Lietuvą*, *Jūry-marij dainos*, *Lietuvininkų vestuvės*, *Trejigaideliai giedojo* and *Lietuvininkai* – were recorded. However, these recordings have not been preserved in the Lithuanian National Radio and Television archive.

17 The village now known as *Чистые Пруды* (Chistye Prudi) in the Kaliningrad oblast of the Russian Federation was historically known as *Gut Tollmingkehmen*, and after 1938, as *Tollmingen* in German.

The *Vorusnė* ensemble maintained contact and collaborated with folklore ensembles from other schools and institutions of higher education. In 1978, the Folklore Ensemble of the Klaipėda Faculties performed alongside the ensembles of Vilnius University and Vilnius Pedagogical Institute at the seventh *Gaudeamus* Song and Dance Festival of Baltic States students, held in Vilnius (*Gaudeamus VII* 1978: 45–46).

Some of the most cherished and meaningful events were encounters with *Lietuvinkai* themselves. Kaukienė's personal connections with the *Lietuvinkai* community, along with her ensemble's accomplishments, enabled them to participate in a particularly special family celebration. On October 7, 1984, *Vorusnė* was entrusted with organizing the golden wedding anniversary of Grėtė and Martynas Bastijonas, members of *Lietuvinkai* fishing families from the village of Kukuliškiai near Klaipėda.

The ensemble members and the author of this article recall director Audronė Kaukienė's deep passion for the culture of Lithuania Minor, particularly its language and folk songs. She gave presentations at conferences on the songs of Lithuania Minor and the distinctive features of their performance. Often, she would invite ensemble members to the stage to illustrate her points, and she frequently sang herself. For many years, at conferences focused on the challenges of preserving and interpreting folk heritage, she was the only speaker addressing the interpretation of sung folklore from Lithuania Minor (MPKP 1987: 4).

Other folklore ensembles active during the Soviet period engaged in a wide range of activities. Their creative styles varied, depending largely on the makeup of the group, the conductor's level of understanding, and the ensemble's collective musical abilities. One common thread noted by all ensemble directors was that, in their early stages, the ensembles performed songs, music, and dances representing the folklore of all Lithuanian ethnographic regions (Čeliauskaitė 2004; KEKC 2004: DVD33/1–2).

This was primarily for two reasons: first, the ensembles included members from various regions of Lithuania, while *Lietuvinkai* were rarely among them; and second, folklore as a field was still relatively unfamiliar to many participants. They felt a strong desire to learn as much as possible, yet it was practically impossible to learn *Lietuvinkai* songs directly from tradition bearers.

The folklore ensemble of the Klaipėda Marine Museum and Aquarium, since its inception in 1982, has focused on the marine folklore of the Baltic Sea and Curonian Lagoon. Folklore from the coasts of the lagoon and the sea was of primary importance to them. Their first performance program was called *Ant žvejo kiemužio* (At the Port of the Fishers).¹⁸ However, the ensemble included many members from the

18 *Kiemužis* or *kaimas* means "outport" in the local dialect, compared to the standard Lithuanian meanings of "village" or "small village".

neighboring Žemaitija ethnographic region, who also served as informants, resulting in a significant portion of the repertoire being drawn from Žemaitijan folklore. The ensemble featured a strong instrumental section composed of accomplished folk musicians (Sliužinskas 1988: 6–9).

The priorities of many other folklore ensembles differed. For instance, the folklore collective of the Lithuanian Association of the Blind, which operated in Kretinga beginning in 1977 but was officially affiliated with the Inter-Regional Palace of Culture of Klaipėda, performed exclusively folkloric songs and dances from their native Žemaitijan environment. Similarly, the folk musicians' ensemble of public utility institutions (established in 1982) featured a comparable repertoire, playing entirely by ear and from memory. Other ensembles primarily based their programs on songbooks and organized them based not according to regional traditions but rather around calendrical and family holidays, festivals, and their associated rituals and customs.

The folklore studio for folk music students at the Klaipėda faculties (established in 1983) focused on teaching and learning songs and dances from all regions through evening gatherings and ethno-instrumental field research conducted throughout Lithuania. The first children's folklore ensemble affiliated with the Klaipėda Medical Workers Club was established in Klaipėda in 1982. This ensemble also performed songs from all the ethnographical regions and learned to play authentic Žemaitijan *kanklės* and the multiple flute pipes (*skudučiai*) used in the ethnographic region of Aukštaitija (Eastern Lithuania including Vilnius and areas to the north).

The repertoire of *Lietuvinkai* children's songs remained modest: in 1984, the children's ensemble prepared a program of oral folklore titled *Pamario krašto pasakos* (Tales from the Land of the Curonian Lagoon) in 1984 (Sliužinskas 1988: 12–13). The folklore ensembles *Verdainė*, *Kamana* and the children's ensemble *Vorusnélė*, based in the Klaipėda Region between 1986 and 1989, also alternated between folklore from all Lithuanian ethnographic regions and the repertoire of Lithuania Minor. Over time, initiatives to promote Lithuania Minor's culture helped establish these ensembles as representative of the region's ethnic music.

The folklore ensembles of the Klaipėda Region performed at Sea Days festivals, in the Fishermen's Farmstead at the Marine Museum, at the Rumšiškės Open-Air Museum of Lithuania, and, from 1975 onward, took part in reviews, competitions, and other events involving folklore ensembles. In retrospect, the activity model of these ensembles during the Soviet period resembled that of song and dance ensembles performing a stylized form of folk music – except for their direct access to folklore, their relationship with living traditions, their performance practices, and similar aspects. The folklore revitalization in the city and region of Klaipėda unfolded in

much the same way as in other areas and towns of Lithuania, with one major difference: the autochthon – the indigenous inhabitants of the Lithuania Minor ethnographic region – were almost entirely absent from active participation.

The Reconstruction of Traditional Folk Instruments of Lithuania Minor

After the Second World War, settlers from other regions of Lithuania who moved to the Klaipėda Region brought their own musical traditions with them. Loreta Augėnaitė's research shows that, in the second half of the 20th century, 80% of the musicians living in the Klaipėda Region came from other parts of Lithuania. Folk music was typically played on standard classical instruments, while traditional Lithuanian instruments were almost entirely absent. The most popular instruments in the region were accordion-type instruments (such as the diatonic button accordion, bandoneon, and concertina), followed by string instruments (violin, balalaika, mandolin, guitar, double bass) and wind instruments (cornet, clarinet, trumpet, French horn, tuba, and mouth organ). The majority of the repertoire consisted of Lithuanian folk dance tunes, with a smaller proportion of music drawn from other national and popular entertainment music (Augėnaitė 2001: 77–85). *Lietuvinkai* musicians often joined mixed-ethnic instrumental ensembles formed as needed.

The reconstruction of musical instruments from Lithuania Minor began with the establishment of the Experimental Laboratory for the Repair and Improvement of Folk Instruments at the Klaipėda Faculties of the Lithuanian State Conservatory in 1978. The laboratory's founder, *birbynė* [reed-pipe] player Antanas Butkus – an outstanding researcher and master of historical musical instruments from Lithuania Minor – initiated the idea of reconstructing the *kanklės*-harp. This instrument, which eventually became known as the Lithuanian Minor *kanklės*-harp, is unique and distinct from other Lithuanian and even Baltic psalteries. Unlike the typical horizontal playing position of Baltic psalteries, it is played vertically (see Figure 4).

The Royal Society of Prussian Antiquities in Königsberg purchased the instrument in the first half of the 19th century from a man living in Šeidiškiai (present-day Lesnoje, Kaliningrad Oblast) near the Lithuanian border. In 1847, Königsberg music theorist Friedrich A. Gotthold described and sketched the instrument in his article *Ueber die Kanklys und die Volksmelodien der Littauer* (On the *Kanklės* and the Folk Melodies of the Lithuanians), published in the magazine *Neue Preussische Provinzial Blätter* (New Prussian Provincial Newspaper) (Gotthold 1847: 241–256; Petrošienė 2023: 101).

Gotthold's publication provided essential information that made the restoration of this unique instrument possible. However, instrument maker Butkus went



Figure 3. Musical instrument maker Antanas Butkus with the Lithuania Minor *kanklės*-harp. Klaipėda, 1984. Photo by Bernardas Aleknavičius (SPB [n. d.])

further, carefully studying musical instruments preserved in museums, written sources, the melodies of the Lithuania Minor folk songs and gospel hymns, as well as the structure and acoustic qualities of classical musical instruments. After analyzing all the information available at the time and identifying and justifying the optimal sound range of the *kanklės*-harp, he undertook a scientific reconstruction of the Lithuania Minor *kanklės*-harp (Butkus, Motuzas 1994).

The Lithuania Minor *kanklės*-harp, crafted by Antanas Butkus in 1984, was a completely new instrument at the time. The master showcased its sound at exhibitions in Lithuania and abroad, presented it at conferences, and participated in discussions, demonstrations, training sessions, and other events promoting instrumental music. He also performed with the instrument in the programs of the ensembles *Vorusnė*, *Alka*, and *Vorusnélė*. Later, Butkus reconstructed other historical instruments of Lithuania Minor mentioned in written sources, including the *psalterium* (1989), the horn-trumpet, drum, violin, and whistle (1990), and the *kanklės*-harp of the Klaipėda Region (1995), shepherd's pipe (2003), and Jokūbas Stikliorius's *kanklės* (2007).

After 1990, the restored instruments were gradually included in the programs of the folklore ensembles in Klaipėda city and the surrounding region, as well as in the activities of the *Lietuvinkai* community *Mažoji Lietuva*, and the broader cultural life of the Klaipėda Region. Folklore ensembles used these instruments to perform melodies of songs and dance music drawn from an extremely limited repertoire – often based solely on the names of dances mentioned by informants or found in

written sources from Lithuania Minor. These dances were reconstructed using only sparse descriptions of ethnic *Lietuvinkai* choreography, publications of East Prussian dances, or were simply the result of the authors' imagination and creative interpretation.

Conclusions

The Second World War and its aftermath had a dramatic impact on the inhabitants of Lithuania Minor and their culture. The division of the territory, the depopulation of the region, and the rapid resettlement by newcomers from across the USSR completely altered its demographic structure. Very few indigenous inhabitants remained, and those who did were viewed by the Soviet authorities as "hostile elements". Cultural life was taken over by the Soviet regime, and controlled popular culture became an ideological tool for shaping the identity of the "new Soviet man".

During the Soviet era, musical folklore was collected in Lithuania and in exile communities in North America in an organized and professional manner. The last valuable examples of living *Lietuvinkai* singing and instrumental music traditions were recorded. However, these recordings were not included in the representative anthologies of Soviet-era folk songs and music. Publications issued in the United States and Canada were not readily accessible in Lithuania and became available only after 1990. As a result, this distinctive musical dialect lost its voice during the Soviet period, along with broader opportunities to learn about it through folklore collections.

The data collected indicate that, in the second half of the 20th century, the centuries-old traditions of Lithuania Minor were fading or had already disappeared. At least two closely related developments in the 1960s and 1970s – the ethno-cultural movement and the establishment of the Klaipėda faculties of the State Conservatory – created the preconditions for the revival and promotion of Lithuania Minor's cultural heritage. The pioneers and leading figures in this revival were the folklore ensemble *Vorusnė*, affiliated with the Klaipėda Faculties of the State Conservatory, and instrument maker Antanas Butkus, who laid the foundations for the revitalization of instrumental music from Lithuania Minor. However, during the Soviet period, it was rather difficult to establish contact with the indigenous people of the Klaipėda Region. In general, they did not participate in the folklore revitalization movement and largely remained passive observers of these processes.

From the outset, the forms and content of recovered musical folklore became a new cultural heritage product – funded, maintained, and protected by the state – built on the knowledge, traditions, and artifacts of the past. It no longer possessed

the exclusivity or birth-based membership that Rönström identified as characteristic of traditional culture. Instead, it could be responsibly reproduced and creatively developed by anyone who found meaning and value in it.

Abbreviations

FKK 2022 – Folkloras. Klaipédos kraštas. *YouTube*.

Available: <https://www.youtube.com/@folkloras.klaipedoskrastas> [Accessed 26.06.2024].

Gaudeamus VII 1978 – *Mezhrespublikanskij studencheskij prazdnik pesni "Gaudeamus-78"*, Ministerstvo vysshego i srednego special'nogo obrazovaniya Litovskoj SSR, Vil'njus.

GR 1971 – *A Garland of Rue. Lithuanian Folksongs of Love and Betrothal* (1971). Collected by Kenneth Peacock. Ontario, Canada. Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies at the National Museum of Man.

NKPVs [n.d.] – Intangible cultural heritage globally. *Nematerialaus kultūros paveldo vertybių svadadas*.

Available:

<https://savadas.lnk.lt/en/about-the-inventory/intangible-cultural-heritage/worldwide/>

[Accessed 26.06.2024].

KEKC 2004 – Archive of the Ethnocultural Center of the City of Klaipėda.

KKDM 2017 – *Klaipédos krašto dainos ir muzika. 1935–2000 metų jrašai*, sudarė Austė Nakienė, Lina Petrošienė, Gaila Kirdienė. Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas.

KTR 1955 – Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre Research Centre, Department of Ethnomusicology, Archive of Musical Folklore manuscript, Collection No. 6.

LDA 1958 – *Lietuvių dainos Amerikoje* (1958). Pasakojamosios dainos ir baladės. Sud. Jonas Balys. Boston: Lietuvių enciklopedijos leidykla.

LKSIN 2005 – *Lietuvos kultūra sovietinės ideologijos nelaisvėje 1940–1990*, dokumentų rinkinys, sudarė Juozapas Romualdas Bagušauskas, Arūnas Streikus. Vilnius: Lietuvos gyventoju genocido ir rezistencijos tyrimo centras.

LTR 1950 – Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore Lithuanian Folklore Archive, Collection No 2780.

LTR 1959 – Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore Lithuanian Folklore Archive, Collection No 3289.

MLE [n.d.] – Matulevičius, Algirdas. Lietuvininkai. *Mažosios Lietuvos enciklopedija*.

Available: <https://www.mle.lt/straipsniai/lietuvininkai> [Accessed 19.02.2025].

MPKP 1987 – *Mokslinės praktinės konferencijos "Liaudies kūrybos palikimas dabarties kultūroje" programa ir metodinių rekomendacijų projektas*. Vilnius: Lietuvos TSR Kultūros ministerija, Lietuvos TSR Mokslinis metodinis kultūros centras.

SPB [n.d.] – Klaipėda Country leva Simonaitytė Public Library. Europeana. Available:

<https://www.europeana.eu/en/item/2021803/C160000667713> [Accessed 11.07.2024].

UŽŠ 1959 – *Užgavénės – žiemos šventė* (metodinė medžiaga), ats. redaktorius P. Dabulevičius. Vilnius: LTSR Kultūros Ministerija, Respublikiniai liaudies kūrybos namai.

VLE 1 [n.d.] – Matulevičius, Algirdas; Kaunas, Domas. Mažoji Lietuva. *Visuotinė lietuvių enciklopedija*.

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