

# NATIONAL IDENTITY BY COMPARISON: FOCUS ON KLAIPĖDA REGION

Vida Savoniakaitė

## ABSTRACT

Contemporary humanities and social sciences often use to focus on mutual relationship between an individual and community for the search for “oneself” and attempts to understand “the other”, as well as on comparison of identities encountering each other. New research in the fields of ethnology claims that we should look for definitions of the contemporary national identities in Europe in their correlation with ethnicity. On the other hand, many interdisciplinary studies proved that it is increasingly more complicated to define ethnicity in the context of globalization. The goal of the paper is to analyze the local Klaipėda Region communities’ attitudes towards nationality in comparative perspective. It will focus on encounters in between dominant/state and local/regional discourses and identity politics.

KEY WORDS: community, nation, national identity, motherland, Klaipėda Region, *Lietuvinkai*, *Šišioniškiai*.

## ANOTACIJA

Šiuolaikiniuose humanitariniuose ir socialiniuose moksluose populiarūs tapatumo metmenų ar pagrindų tyrimai, individo ir bendruomenės abipusiai santykiai, ieškoma „savęs“ ir stengiamasi suprasti „kitą“, lyginamos prieštaringos tapatumo sampratos, ieškoma priešasčių, turinčių įtakos ir keičiančių visuomenes. Naujausiuose etnologijos ir socialinės antropologijos tyrimuose yra teigiama, kad šiuolaikinio europietiškojo tautinio tapatumo apibrėžimų reikia ieškoti jų sąsajose su etniškumu. Kita vertus, daugelis tarpdisciplininių tyrimų įrodė, kad apibrėžti etniškumą globalizacijoje darosi vis sunkiau. Straipsnio tikslas – analizuoti šiuolaikinio Klaipėdos krašto bendruomenių požiūrius į tautinį tapatumą. Bus atskleista: a) žmonių tapatumo prioritetai, b) požiūriai į tautinio tapatumo politiką.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: bendruomenė, tauta, tautinis tapatumas, gimtinė, Klaipėdos kraštas, lietuvininkai, „šišioniškiai“.

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Anthropologists use to compare such concepts as “nation” and “community”. These two and also the concept of “culture” involve different meanings, assumptions and images. According to Anthony Cohen<sup>1</sup>, the concept of “nation” is mostly politically-credible. It can attract anyone by its symbolic proximity, to hearth and home, personal and local experiences. The similarity of this concept with the concept “community”, as Gerd Bauman states, is in it’s strive to exploit positive meanings of “shared interests of community”<sup>2</sup>. Hereby the concept “nation” means more than “community” which becomes less useful and which has limited character if used as an analytical tool. Both concepts, according to Vered Amit’s opinion, are not emotional and if applicable for “a group”, they are instrumental concepts<sup>3</sup>.

Anthropologists aiming at community research in socio-cultural context have to examine the community in the way of observations of the community links with the locality, culture and iden-

<sup>1</sup> See: COHEN, Anthony. *Self Consciousness: An Alternative Anthropology of Identity*. London: Routledge, 1996.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, also see: BAUMAN (...) 1996, quoted from: AMIT, Vered & RAPPORT, Nigel. *The Trouble with Community*. London: Pluto Press, 2002, p. 13–14.

<sup>3</sup> See: AMIT, Vered & RAPPORT, Nigel (...) 2002, p. 13–14.

tity<sup>4</sup>. Newly-developed approach comes with Arjun Appadurai, who turns back to the studies of community culture, embraces culture with ethnicity. The idea of ethnicity becomes central and suggests a comprehension of “imagined” constructions of the exceptionality of communities. Thus research turns to be focused on relations in between culture, ethnicity and exceptionality<sup>5</sup>.

In the last decade, I was conducting research of local communities in Lithuania, Latvia and Poland by attempting to analyse the processes of how national identity reveals itself and intertwines with the other - personal and social - identities, as well as what distinguishes the so-called “imagined” communities. Actually the Lithuanian ethnologists use to relate national identity to ethnicity and culture in the majority of their studies<sup>6</sup>.

My return to the analysis of national identities was stimulated by the state supported research programs focused on retention of national identity in the era of globalization. It was considered as a priority line by the Lithuanian State Science and Studies Foundation. My current project is titled “National Identity: The Comparative Perspectives of Local Communities in Globalization”<sup>7</sup>.

The aim of this paper (based on current project) is to prove that the national identity can not be studied separately from the ethnic, history oriented and cultural identity. It is an instrumental notion which rests on and reveals ethnicity, culture and self-awareness. I will refer to the newest ethnographic studies of inhabitants of Klaipėda Region. By comparing different cases I’ll discuss the national identity processes, focusing on (a) the features of a modern identity, (b) how local people accept identity policy in Klaipėda Region.

### The Identity of the People of Klaipėda Region

In the year 2008, 17 respondents were interviewed in Klaipėda Region (their age was as follows: 3 respondents were under 50, 6 were 70 years old, 8 were over 70). They were inhabitants of Judrėnai, Dovilai, Saugai, Šilgaliai (1 person each), Rusnė, Katyčiai, Vilkyškiai (3 people each) and Smalininkai (4 people)<sup>8</sup>. 6 respondents were Evangelic Lutherans (35%), 11 were Roman Catholics (65%). Some of them are local inhabitants; other came from different parts of Lithuania. The latter are the majority, why?

Historically, the inhabitants of the Klaipėda Region experienced the rule of different governors<sup>9</sup>. Some of current dwellers of the region still recall different stories about the outcome of the 1919 Treaty of Versailles when the Klaipėda Region was separated from Germany and temporarily passed to the supervision of Great Britain, France, Italy and Japan, though German laws were kept valid. When in 1923 the Klaipėda Region was returned to the Republic of Lithuania, there were 141.650 inhabitants in the region (according to the data of the 1925 census), the largest part

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, also see: GUPTA, Akhil & FERGUSON, James. “Beyond Culture”: Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference. In: Inda, Jonathan Xavier and Rosaldo, Renato (ed.). *The Anthropology of Globalization*. Oxford: Blackwell, p. 65–80.

<sup>5</sup> See: AMIT, Vered & RAPPORT, Nigel (...) 2002, p. 20–21.

<sup>6</sup> See: MERKIENĖ, Regina. *Etninė kultūra ir lietuviybės simboliai. Etninė kultūra ir tautinis atgimimas*. Vilnius: LII, 1994, p. 55–69; MERKIENĖ, R.; PAUKŠTYTĖ-ŠAKNIENĖ, R.; SAVONIAKAITĖ, V. & ŠAKNYS, Ž. *Pietryčių Latvijos lietuviai. Tapatumo išraiška. Etninės ir kultūrinės orientacijos*. Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2005.

<sup>7</sup> The project financed by the Science and Studies Foundation (C-08017) has been carried out at the Lithuanian Institute of History.

<sup>8</sup> Archive of the Department of Ethnology at the Lithuanian Institute of History (hereinafter – IIES).

<sup>9</sup> See: GLIOŽAITIS, Algirdas Antanas. *Klaipėdos kraštas. Visuotinė lietuvių enciklopedija*, T. 10. Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidybos institutas, 2006, p. 209.

of them, 50,8%, being Lithuanians, 24% of whom declared being *Klaipėdiškiai* (Memellanders) or bilinguals, stressing their difference from the inhabitants of Lithuania Major; 41,9% declared being Germans and 7,3% of other nationalities. Due to the ban of the Lithuanian language in schools until World War I, part of the inhabitants got assimilated. They were inclined to the German side, claiming there were two nations but just one culture. The national composition of the inhabitants did not overcome major changes until 1939, although many of them moved to Germany<sup>10</sup>. The next important demographical change took place after World War II. In 1945, there were only 10.000 inhabitants left in the region<sup>11</sup>. New dwellers came to the desolate homesteads.

The most common narrative on the social processes in Klaipėda Region in the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is as follows:

This is a German land... Everything is mixed here. During the deportations to Siberia, many Dzūkians were brought here. [IIES b. 2333 (5): 38]

My informants were of diverse background, 7 individuals out of 17 (41%) were born in Lithuania Minor, the remaining 10 respondents (59%) – newcomers. An inhabitant of Rusnė nicely described the processes of migration:

Rusnė was conquered by Dzūkians, hospitable singers. [IIES b. 2333 (13): 106]

He considers himself a “Samogitian from Lithuania” who came to Rusnė in 1955. Here is what another respondent who has been living in Rusnė since 1952 told about the local inhabitants:

The *Šišioniškiai* were very nice people. They loved us, because my husband spoke German. The last *Šišioniškis* died in Rusnė some years ago. [IIES b. 2333 (14): 118]

The respondents were asked how they considered themselves: 82% (14 people) considered themselves as Lithuanians; others did as Evangelic Lutherans, Prussian Lithuanians and/or Samogitians – 6% each (1 person each). Those who claimed for themselves as Lithuanians also indicated their regional identity: six of them - as *Samogitians*, one - as *Dzukian*, one identified himself just as a local inhabitant, and the rest four pointed out that as they were Evangelic Lutherans.

All four Evangelic Lutherans and one Lithuanian related their backgrounds with the German language and also the links (even critically weakened) with the relatives, living in Germany, who departed from Lithuania Minor. These were the people of 70 and more years old. For instance, an inhabitant of Katyčiai noted that:

The parents of my father, grandparents and forefathers were born in Katyčiai and all spoke German. [IIES b. 2333 (20): 181]

After the Second World War they left for Germany and maintained relations with the family left in Katyčiai. He mentioned also that:

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 209–210.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p. 209–211.

At the border [of East Prussia and the Klaipėda region] mostly all were *Lietuvininkai* [local Lithuanians of Lithuania Minor]. [IIES b. 2333 (20): 181]

The Prussian Lithuanians were different from the Lithuanians of Lithuania Major for their religion, their way of life. People there felt German but not citizens of Germany<sup>12</sup>. It is assumed that the inhabitants who lived closest to the border with the Lithuania Major underwent the greatest germanisation because that part of the region was colonised the strongest<sup>13</sup>. Alongside with the modernisation of the society, religious and cultural differences softened and stimulated the unification of the Klaipėda Region with the Republic of Lithuania<sup>14</sup>. During 1920s-30s various public cultural societies in Klaipėda Region<sup>15</sup> called for the Lithuanian language, media and cultural traditions. The subsequent Soviet occupation, deportations, exile and economic changes did not cut the ethnic and cultural roots of the Klaipėda Region people, but rather injured them.

In the modern society, the assimilation processes in Klaipėda Region are influenced by various factors. Woman – informant, a faithful Evangelic Lutheran, referred to the fact that:

If the family is mixed – wife being Catholic and husband being Evangelical – children must certainly be Evangelical. [IIES b. 2333 (18): 165]

She does not know German. The local identity of Lithuania Minor was mentioned by two respondents, one said, she was *Šišioniškė* and another one self-identified as Prussian. Aldutė tells:

I meet *Šišioniškiai* in church. Elder people are friendlier. [IIES b.2333 (6): 46]

Consequently, elder people, the so-called *Šišioniškiai*, do not communicate a lot among themselves. This strongly supports their assimilation. Even those Evangelics who do not speak German, relate their identity to their homeland, family and family traditions.

### National Identity, Ethnicity and Historical Discourse

In the ethnographic research of the Klaipėda Region, my interest was to find out if people celebrate state holidays, the 16<sup>th</sup> of February and the 11<sup>th</sup> of March. Only 2 of the 17 respondents mentioned that they celebrate the 16<sup>th</sup> of February. That is 12%. A lady from Rusnė told that:

They are proud of being Lithuanian. The President [of Lithuania] used to congratulate her father on the occasion of the 16<sup>th</sup> of February – he used to get letters. My children celebrate the 16<sup>th</sup> of February thanks to me. They used to hide [during the Soviet regime] the father's [national] flag – it was an absolute necessity – it was put under a beam – and the mice ate it. [IIES b. 2333 (13): 109]

<sup>12</sup> See: LUKŠAITĖ, Ingė. *Reformacija Lietuvos Didžiojoje Kunigaikštystėje ir Mažojoje Lietuvoje. XVI a. trečiasis dešimtmetis – XVII a. pirmas dešimtmetis*. Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 1999.

<sup>13</sup> VYŠNIAUSKAITĖ, Angelė. *Lietuviai IX a. – XIX a. vidurio istoriniuose šaltiniuose*. Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidykla, 1994, p. 94–101.

<sup>14</sup> MATULEVIČIUS, Algirdas. *Mažoji Lietuva. Visuotinė lietuvių enciklopedija*, T. 14. Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidybos institutas, 2008, p. 514–516.

<sup>15</sup> See: TOLEIKIS, Martynas. *Skaitiniai apie Klaipėdos kraštą. Ir žodžiai tapo kūnu*. Klaipėda: Vėjasparnis. 2008, p. 228–236.

It shows that the identity of a local community is orientated towards historical pasts.

Let us compare it with the research of the neighbouring Samogitia Region. 54% of questioned people celebrate the 16<sup>th</sup> of February, 18% do not celebrate, 28% have not responded to this question. In Samogitia, some people go to church on the 16<sup>th</sup> of February, some go to a commemoration event at the local culture house, and the third part raises a flag, while the others sing songs at local crosses, dedicated to the ancestors, to honour their patriotism. There are also certain people who consider this day just as a “red-letter day” or even a possibility “to saw wood” and “stay at home”.

The identity of the locals of the Lithuania Minor significantly differs from those respondents who came from Aukštaitija, Dzūkija and Samogitia. 12 out of the 17 interviewed individuals (i.e., 70%) told that their identity is defined by the element of *motherland* which by the some of informants has been comprehended as *homeland*, while for the others it was the country where they were born and lived in young days. Two individuals (11%) related their identity with “a nice place to live” and with their family. One woman did not reveal particularities of her identity. 5 of 12 respondents (29%) were born and still live in Lithuania Minor. One inhabitant of Katyčiai whose all relatives emigrated to Germany told us:

If I had not loved my homeland, I would be withdrawn. It is so dear to me that I could not change it for whatever treasure. [IIES b. 2333 (20): 179]

The other lady from Katyčiai also told us:

My homeland is dear and I will never leave it only in case of elderly home. [IIES b. 2333 (18): 163]

Emphasizing patriotism for her homeland, an inhabitant from the Dovilai village, Klaipėda Region, said that:

I love the Klaipėda Region a lot. Our motherland is not only villages and neighbours but all trees, grass and birds as well. We love our motherland because it belongs to our nation. [IIES b.2333 (16): 137]

A *Šišionišė* lady from Smalininkai, poetically defines her homeland:

How it could not be dear – all is mine – the air and forest. My mother was born here, my grandmother too... [IIES b. 2333 (6): 42]

A Catholic lady who was born and grew in Judrėnai characterizes this country in these words:

Homeland is dear to all – all were born here, grew up and grew old here, here all will be buried. [IIES b. 2333 (17): 149]

The people who have come to this land for living speak less about their homeland, only several mention their longing for homeland.

In the responses appearing through the all ethnographic research materials, the inhabitants of the Klaipėda Region relate their traditions to the family life, religious and other holidays and birthdays. In comparison to the inhabitants from Aukštaitija and Dzūkija, fewer birthdays are celebrated here (3 of 17 respondents), there are less family meetings (2 of 17 respondents):

We are all such Lithuanians. What can we be proud of, if we even do not communicate with Aukštaičiai [IIES b. 2333 (17): 149]

The community ideals defined by Ferdinand Tönnies as “a traditional face-to-face collectivism and friendliness”<sup>16</sup>, are remarkable to distinguish the features of the identity of the people from the Klaipėda Region. Firstly, local inhabitants of the Klaipėda Region do not identify themselves with the rest of Lithuanian compatriots and rarely mention about the celebration of state holidays. It speaks for the impossibility of the community’s identity to be created “only through *the act of imagination*”<sup>17</sup>. On the other hand it reveals that the definitions of national identity are peripheral. It is a community “recalling its past”<sup>18</sup>. So we have to agree with Joseph Llobera’s opinion emphasizing the importance of historical discourse in national identity<sup>19</sup>. We can also add that religion, culture and local land which, we can presuppose, partly relates to history and politics as well, are important to modern and sparse community of *Lietuvininkai* of the Klaipėda Region.

### Constructed Identity

National identity depends on the national policy and on people themselves. It is too complex to comprehend a modern nation as “imagined community”, as people living in a state do not identify themselves in a same manner<sup>20</sup>. Comparing self-identification of people on the basis of a regional aspect, we can point out elements of culture, ethnicity and historic discourse in the Klaipėda Region. In our case, all current inhabitants of the Klaipėda Region relate their identity to the native land, family and kinship traditions. Speaking about cultural traditions, people also know a lot about their local cuisine dishes as compared to the inhabitants of other regions. Some of them speak for the native language as an important component of their identity; to others the language does not seem so important. The dwellers of the Klaipėda Region usually share their social memory. On the other hand, though National Holidays do not seem important for the majority of respondents, as if nationalism was meant only for large city-dwellers<sup>21</sup>, the national culture policy affects practically everybody.

According to the nationalism model of Ernest Gellner, nationalism is formed by three very important factors: government, education and common culture. A traditional agrarian society uses

<sup>16</sup> Quoted from: AMIT, Vered & RAPPORT, Nigel (...) 2002, p. 19.

<sup>17</sup> BARTH, Fredrik (...) 1994, P. 14. Quoted from: AMIT, Vered & RAPPORT, Nigel (...) 2002, p. 20.

<sup>18</sup> BROW & FUJITANI, Swedenberg (...) 1993. Quoted from: KEYES, Charles. Nation, Nationalism. In: Barfield T. (ed.). *The Dictionary of Anthropology*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008, p. 338.

<sup>19</sup> LLOBERA Joseph R. Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Nationalism in Europe. The Work of van Gennep and Mauss. In: Goddard Victoria A., Llobera Joseph R. and Cris Shore (eds.). *The Anthropology of Europe*. Oxford/ Providence: Berg, 1994, P. 110; LLOBERA, Josep R. *An Invitation to Anthropology. The Structure, Evolution and Cultural Identity of Human Societies*. Oxford: Bergham Books, 2003, p. 201.

<sup>20</sup> KEYES, Charles. Nation, Nationalism. In: Barfield T. (ed.). *The Dictionary of Anthropology*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008, p. 337.

<sup>21</sup> SMITH, Anthony. *Nacionalizmas XX amžiuje*. Vilnius: Pradai, 1994, p. 39.

culture or ethnicity to single out privileged groups. Gellner calls these factors “social markers”<sup>22</sup>. In our Klaipėda Region case, both local and national identities are singled out by the means of culture.

The attitudes towards national identity differ from region to region in Lithuania. For example, in Eastern Lithuania, especially in former Poland dominated Vilnius Region during the conflicts with Poles for the Vilnius Region and later through the struggle for the Lithuanian masses in churches national feelings were expressed through the retention of Lithuanian language and cultural symbols. The creation and retention of people’s cultural and political symbols is not detachable from their own wish to retain their ethnic and cultural identity and nationality<sup>23</sup>. In particular it is noticeable in those Lithuanian regions where national feelings sustain peculiarities which depend on local historic and political circumstances.

Clifford Geertz in his “The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States” disclosed a new approach in anthropology stating that “primordial” sentiments rooted in pre-modern exceptionalities – as language, religions and cultural heritage – divided people into new states<sup>24</sup>. Thus studying nationalism it is important to evaluate the role of the state in the construction of ethnicity<sup>25</sup>. For example, the Lithuanian minority in Poland, living at the Polish – Lithuanian border<sup>26</sup> cherish their language and culture and at the same time accept state imposed innovations of their life.

The “locals” who live in the Klaipėda Region define their identity on the basis of the notion of the “native land”, family relations and narratives, historic memories about their particular language and culture. On the other hand, neither the modern national holidays that commemorate the facts of the statehood of the Republic of Lithuania nor the festivities of the other historic periods are important for them. It seems that they do not speak about the national politics and take lesser interest in it and their views are very different.

## Conclusions

The modern identity of the local Klaipėda Region inhabitants is as a combination of different identities related to the region’s historical factors rooted in people’s self-consciousness. At the same time being members of the “imagined community”, they accept some of politically imposed national symbols spread over the entire Lithuania. The historical and cultural symbols of their own ethnic minority are dear to them. That is why we have to accept Llobera’s point in order to search for the features of national identity looking back to history.

The research done in 2008 demonstrated that the national identity and self-consciousness of the people from the Klaipėda Region differ from the ones of the people living in other Lithuania’s regions. When describing their identity, everybody in Klaipėda Region use to tell a lot about their love for their country, home and land. Mother tongue is not so “important” for them, as for instance, for an *Aukštaičiai* people. In remembrance of their cultural traditions, people know considerably more about their particular meals, in comparison to the inhabitants of other regions. If

<sup>22</sup> GELLNER, Ernest. *Tautos ir nacionalizmas*. Vilnius: Pradai, 1996, p. 157–164.

<sup>23</sup> See: SAVONIAKAITĖ, Vida. Lietuviybės simbolių perteikimai. *Lituanistica*. 2002, Vol. 2 (50), p. 39–48.

<sup>24</sup> Quoted from: KEYS, Ch. (...) 2008, p. 338.

<sup>25</sup> See: BANKS, Marcus. *Ethnicity: Antropological Constructions*. London and New York: Routledge, 1999, p. 122; ERIKSEN, Th. H. (...) 2002; MERKIENĖ, R.; PAUKŠTYTĖ-ŠAKNIENĖ, R.; SAVONIAKAITĖ, V. & ŠAKNYS, Ž. (...) 2005.

<sup>26</sup> See: SAVONIAKAITĖ, Vida. Lietuviškosios tapatybės ženklai: etnografinis tyrimas Punske ir Seinuose. *Punsko ir Seinų krašto lietuviai: etnis ir kultūrinis tapatumas*. Punksas: Aušra, 2006, p. 64–76.

we compare the national identity of the local *Šišioniškiai* or *Lietuvinkai* in the Klaipėda Region, as of the ethnic minority, with the one of Lithuanians living at the border of Latvia and Poland, we would notice that all of them are unified by an emphasis of the relation to their ethnic background, language, and elements of family culture. Although modern assimilation brings diversity and historical, ethnic and specific local cultural identity forms use to change in the conditions of globalization. The attachment to the native home is almost exceptional among the local Klaipėda Region dwellers and this is perhaps why it is even more stressed by the few survivors considering themselves as *Šišioniškiai* or *Lietuvinkai*.

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## TAUTINĖ TAPATYBĖ LYGINAMOJOJE PERSPEKTYVOJE: KLAIPĖDOS KRAŠTO ATVEJIS

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Lietuvos istorijos institutas

### Santrauka

Šiuolaikiniuose Lietuvos regionuose žmonės tautinį tapatumą išreiškia šiek tiek skirtingai. Tautinio tapatumo savitumą globalizacijoje palaiko individų ir bendruomenių aktualijos ir interesai. Globalizacijoje atsiranda naujų situacijų, kai „įsivaizduojamos bendruomenės“ yra susijusios su visiškai naujais tarptautiniais dėmenimis ir ryšiais. Tautinis tapatumas suvokiamas naujai. Grįžti prie tautinio tapatumo tyrimų paskatino Lietuvos mokslo ir studijų fondo remiami prioritetine kryptimi laikomi tautinio identiteto išsaugojimo globalizacijoje tyrimai – vykdomas šios krypties projektas „Tautinis tapatumas: lokalių bendruomenių lyginamosios perspektyvos globalizacijoje“<sup>27</sup>.

Straipsnio autorė nori įrodyti, kad žmonių tautinio tapatumo negalima tirti ir vertinti atsietai nuo jų etninio, istorinio ir kultūrinio tapatumo. Tai instrumentinė sąvoka – konstruojama ir savitai atskleidžianti etniškumą, kultūrą, savimonę. Autorė remiasi naujausiais etnografinių tyrimų duomenimis. Išsamiau nagrinėja buvusio Klaipėdos krašto žmonių tyrimą, lygina su kitų Lietuvos regionų tyrimais, stengdamasi atsakyti į klausimus: kokie yra šiuolaikinio tautinio identiteto bruožai ir kaip žmonės priima identiteto politiką.

2008 m. Klaipėdos krašte iš 17 žmonių 82 % (14 žmonių)<sup>28</sup> laikė save lietuviais, o po 1 žmogų (po 6 %) save vadino evangeliku, lietuvininku ir žemaičiu. Minėti lietuviai dar išskyrė ir savo regioninę tapatybę – 6 buvo žemaičiai, 1 – dzūkas. Vienas lietuvis apibūdino save vietiniu, o keturi žmonės dar išskyrė esą evangelikai. Visi evangelikai ir vienas lietuvis sieja savo praeitį su vokiečių kalba ir labai susilpnėjusiais ryšiais su Vokietijoje gyvenančiais iš Klaipėdos krašto išvykusiais giminaičiais. Tai žmonės, kuriems daugiau nei 70 metų.

Šiuolaikinėje visuomenėje buvusiame Klaipėdos krašte nutautėjimui turi reikšmės daugelis veiksnių. Pavyzdžiui, labai religinga evangelikų tikėjimo moteris (IIES b. 2333 (18): 165) teigia, kad jei šeima mišri – žmona katalikė, o vyras evangelikas – vaikai būtinai turi būti evangelikai. Vokiškai pati nemokanti. Lietuvininkėmis save įvardijo dvi pateikėjos, o „šišioniške“ ir prūse – tik viena. „Su šišioniškiais susitinku bažnyčioje. Seni gyventojai draugiškesni“, – pasakoja Aldutė [IIES b. 2333 (6): 46]. Vadinasi, vyresnio amžiaus žmonės, vadinamieji „šišioniškiai“, tarpusavyje mažai bendrauja. Tai iš dalies spartina jų tautiškumo asimiliaciją. Klaipėdos krašto situacijai apibūdinti nėra tikslus ir gerai žinomas Benedicto Anderseno teiginys, kad visiems „naujiesiems nacionalizmams“ svarbiausią ideologinę ir politinę reikšmę turėjo „nacionalinė spaudos kalba“<sup>29</sup>. Šiuo atveju svarbi ir religija. Evangelikai, nemokantys vokiškai, savo tapatybę sieja su gimtuoju kraštu, šeimos, giminės tradicijomis.

Vykdydama Klaipėdos krašto etnografinį tyrimą autorė domėjosi, ar žmonės švenčia valstybines šventes Vasario 16-ąją ir Kovo 11-ąją. Iš 17 pateikėjų tik 2 paminėjo, kad švenčia Vasario 16-ąją. Tai sudaro 12 %. Moteris iš Rusnės pasakojo: „didžiuojasi, kad lietuviai. Tėvą sveikindavo

<sup>27</sup> Lietuvos istorijos institute 2008–2010 m. yra vykdomas MSF finansuojamas projektas (C-08017).

<sup>28</sup> Remiamasi 2008 m. atlikto tyrimo duomenimis, kurių dalis yra saugoma Lietuvos istorijos instituto Etnologijos skyriaus archyve (IIES) b. 2333.

<sup>29</sup> ANDERSON, B. (...) 1999.

Prezidentas su Vasario 16-ąja – gaudavo raštus. Vasario 16-ąją vaikai švenčia pagal mane. Tėvo vėliava slėpė – reikėjo labai slėpti – po balkiu pakišta – pelės suėdė. Karda turi nuo tėvo savanorio“ [HIES b. 2333 (13): 109]. Šie faktai rodo, kad lokaliuos bendruomenės tapatumas yra orientuotas į istorines vertybes.

Prisimindami bendruomenės idealus, apibrėžtus Ferdinando Tönnies – „tradicinį veidas į veidą kolektyvizmą ir draugiškumą“<sup>30</sup>, – galime išskirti šiuolaikinius Klaipėdos krašto žmonių tapatumo bruožus. Pirma, Klaipėdos krašto vietiniai gyventojai nesitapatina su lietuviais ir retai mini, kad švenčia valstybines šventes. Tokios detalės rodo, kad bendruomenės, kalbėdamos apie savo tapatybę, negali būti sukurtos paprastai „vien tik per išsivaizdavimo aktą“<sup>31</sup>. Antra, tautinio tapatumo apibrėžimai žmonėms yra antraeiliai. Šiuo atveju reikia sutikti su Josepha Llobera nuomone, pabrėžiančia istorinio diskurso svarbą tautinio tapatumo tyrimuose<sup>32</sup>. Tai bendruomenė, „atsimenanti praeitį“<sup>33</sup>. Pridurkime, šiuolaikinei negausiai Klaipėdos krašto lietuvininkų bendruomenei svarbi yra religija, kultūra ir žemė, kuri, galime numanyti, iš dalies siejasi ir su istorija.

Pritarkime ir didėjančiam interesui antropologijoje<sup>34</sup> tirti nacionalizmą kaip kultūros simbolių išraišką, o ne vien kaip politinę doktriną, kadangi šiuolaikinėje globalizacijoje daug kas priklauso nuo savitų politinių, istorinių, demografinių ir kitokių situacijų. Šiuolaikinis Klaipėdos krašto vietinių gyventojų tautinis tapatumas egzistuoja demokratinėje Lietuvos Respublikoje. Tai įvairių tapatumų darinys. Jis siejasi su žmonių savimonėje išsiskiriančiais kultūriniais istoriniais elementais. Būdami „išsivaizduojamos bendruomenės“ nariai, visoje Lietuvoje paplitusių politinių tautinių simbolių jie priima mažai. Žmonėms svarbesni yra jų, kaip etninės mažumos, istoriniai kultūriniai simboliai. Dėl to turime sutikti su Llobera, ir tautinio tapatumo bruožų reikia ieškoti atsigręžiant į istoriją.

2008 m. tyrimai parodė, kad Klaipėdos krašto gyventojų tautinis tapatumas ir savimonė skiriasi nuo kitų Lietuvos regiono gyventojų. Nusakydami savo tapatumą visi daug kalba apie meilę savo kraštui, namams, žemei. Gimtoji kalba nėra tokia „svarbi“ kaip pavyzdžiui, aukštaičiui. Prisimindami kultūrinės tradicijas, žmonės dar daug žino apie savo išskirtinius patiekalus palyginti su kitų regionų gyventojais. Jeigu lyginsime Klaipėdos krašto „šišioniškių“ ar „lietuvininkų“ tautinį tapatumą, kaip etninės mažumos, su lietuviais, gyvenančiais Latvijos ir Lenkijos pasienyje, pastebėsime, kad juos visus sieja ryšys su etninėmis šaknimis, kalba, šeimos kultūros elementais. Asimiliacija vyksta įvairiausiai. Klaipėdos krašte išsiskiria žmonių prisirišimas prie savo namų, gal dėl to, kad „šišioniškiais“ ar „lietuvininkais“ save laikančiųjų čia gyvena mažai, ir dažniausiai jų šviesi galva jau žila.

<sup>30</sup> Cit. iš AMIT, Vered & RAPPORT, Nigel. *The Trouble with Community*. London: Pluto Press, 2002, p. 19.

<sup>31</sup> Fredrik Barth (...) 1994, p. 14, cit. iš: AMIT, V. & RAPPORT, N. (...) 2002, p. 20.

<sup>32</sup> Žr.: LLOBERA, J. R. (...) 1994, p. 110; LLOBERA, J. R. (...) 2003, p. 201.

<sup>33</sup> BROW & FUJITANI, Swedenberg (...) 1993. Cit. iš: KEYES, Ch. (...) 2008, p. 338.

<sup>34</sup> Žr.: SPENCER, J. (...) 2007, p. 391–392.