

## BOOK REVIEWS

### **Review of Senosios raštijos ir tautosakos saveika: kultūrine Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės patirtis**

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An international conference entitled "The Interaction of Old Literature and Folklore: The Cultural Experience of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania" was held on December 4-6, 1997, in Vilnius, Lithuania, at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore. This conference was dedicated to the 450th anniversary of Catechisms, the first Lithuanian book written by Martians Mažvydas. Participants in the conference came from Lithuania, Latvia, Russia, Belarus, Poland, Ukraine, Hungary and Germany and included historians, folklorists, scholars of mythology, literature scholars, library specialists, and linguists. The conference stressed interdisciplinary approaches to the multilingual written records of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL). The records are of great historical and cultural importance to the contemporary world, and twenty six papers focusing on the thematic, semantic, symbolic and contextual aspects of these records were presented. The conference papers have been published in book form in Senosios raštijos ir tautosakos saveika: kultūrine Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės patirtis, Vilnius, Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 1998. They are in four languages: English, Lithuanian, Russian and Polish. For purposes of this review, we will report on the folklore articles.

Most of the folklore papers treat Slavic themes. J. Novikov discusses Russian folklore texts which mention Lithuania and the Lithuanians. He reports that the ethnonym "*litva*" is found in Russian epic songs (*bylina*) and that Lithuanians are mentioned in legends, proverbs, and riddles. B. Kerbelytė analyzes the story about Algirdas' march on Moscow, as it is attested in the Yevreinov Redaction and in the Bykhovets Lithuanian Manuscript Chronicle, and concludes that, while this narrative shares many symbols with Russian oral tradition, it is nonetheless an independent legend. A. Nepokupnij, an author interested in the wedding songs of Ukraine, Belarus and Poland, observes that the ethnonym "*litva*" can sometimes be used in these songs to refer to the bridal couple. This would indicate that contact between the Lithuanians and the Slavs dates back to antiquity. The aim of O. Belova's article is to analyze apocryphal and folklore motifs in the Old Russian "Tale about the Birds." The author concludes that this literary monument absorbed local folk beliefs and preserved a

fragment of traditional folk culture. A. Semenčiuk discusses the attitude toward the Lithuanians reflected in Polish chronicles. He notes that the Polish chroniclers Dlugosh, Miechowski, Bielski, Strykowski were not only historians, but also geographers, ethnographers, folklorists. Approximately half of the papers deal with the acceptance of Christianity in the GDL.

Some papers cover mythological topics. V. Petruchin uses Slavic parallels to give a new interpretation the Sovij myth in the Johannes Meletius Chronicles. J. Laurušas engages in a polemic with other scholars on the topic of Duke Šventaragis and suggests that the etymology of Šventaragis indicates that the name means "burial fire." V. Voigt's paper is a comparative study of Baltic and Finnic gods. The author acknowledges the lack of similar studies and tries to awaken interest in this topic.

The cultural heritage of the GDL includes ethnic minorities and N. A. Morozova and V. N. Čekmonas discuss the contemporary folklore of Lithuanian Old Believers, focusing on the decline of oral tradition among them as people gradually forget real events and distort them. G. Miškinienė examines the manuscripts of Lithuanian Tartars which reflect ethnic and philosophical features characteristic of Muslim nations.

In sum, Senosios raštijos ir tautosakos saveika: kultūrine Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės patirtis helps us discover new facts and new faces in Lithuanian history and shows us that this field is still open to exploration and new interpretation.