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Small Genres of Folklore in Lithuanian Folkloristics: The Legacy of Kazys Grigas

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ABSTRACT. Since the early days of Lithuanian folklore studies, small genres of folklore or so-called ‘minor folklore’ (*smulkioji tautosaka*), united by their brevity, have been considered a distinct type of folklore alongside folksongs and folk narratives. It is only in the 21st century, however, that small genres have been categorised as a form of oral folklore (*sakytinė tautosaka*). Professor Kazys Grigas is one of the few Lithuanian folklorists to have undertaken the task of describing and publishing them. Over time, he also established himself as Lithuania’s leading paremiologist. He did all the essential work necessary for researching proverbs and proverbial phrases, such as collecting, systematising and publishing them. Advocating historical-geographical and aesthetic methods, Grigas established a strong tradition of comparative proverb research in Lithuanian folkloristics.

This article looks at the place of small genres in the wider system of Lithuanian folklore as it has developed over time in the context of Lithuanian folklore studies. It discusses the most significant research on small genres of folklore in Lithuania, with a particular focus on Grigas’ contributions to the field and his paremiological work.

KEYWORDS: Lithuanian folklore, Kazys Grigas, paremiology, proverbs, proverbial phrases, comparative studies.

Trumpieji tautosakos žanrai lietuvių folkloristikoje: profesorius Kazio Grigo palikimas

SANTRAUKA. Nuo pat folkloro tyrimų Lietuvoje pradžios trumpieji folkloro žanrai, arba vadinamoji *smulkioji tautosaka*, vienijama savo glaustumo, buvo laikoma atskira tautosakos rūšimi, greta dainuojamosios ir pasakojamosios. Tik XXI a. trumpuosius žanrus imta priskirti sakytinei tautosakai. Profesorius Kazys Grigas – vienas iš nedaugelio lietuvių folkloristų, pradėjusių juos aprašyti ir publikuoti. Laikui bėgant jis tapo žymiausiu Lietuvos paremiologu ir atliko visus būtinus darbus, reikalingus patarlių ir priežodžių tyrimams: rinko, sistemino

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ir skelbė šio tipo tautosaką. Remdamasis istoriniu-geografiniu ir estetiniu metodais, Grigas įtvirtino stiprią lyginamųjų patarlių tyrimų tradiciją Lietuvos folkloristikoje.

Šiame straipsnyje nagrinėjama trumpųjų žanrų vieta platesnėje Lietuvos folkloro sistemoje ir jų raida. Aptariami reikšmingiausi trumpųjų folkloro žanrų tyrimai Lietuvoje, ypatingą dėmesį skiriant Grigo indėliui į šią sritį ir jo paremiologinei veiklai.

RAKTAŽODŽIAI: lietuvių tautosaka, Kazys Grigas, paremiologija, patarlės, priežodžiai, lyginamieji tyrimai.

INTRODUCTION

“When I started working with proverbs, I realised that language and its complex figurative elements are an expression of the most essential features of a nation’s culture.”

(Grigas 1999, LTRV 17)

Kazys Grigas (1924–2002) belongs to the generation of Lithuanian researchers who defined the field of 20th-century Lithuanian folklore studies. His career as a folklorist began with an interest in the folklore historiography. In this field, Grigas’ work on Simonas Daukantas – one of the most prominent figures in 19th-century Lithuanian culture – stands out as the most significant.¹ Additionally, he is one of the few Lithuanian folklorists of his generation who undertook the task of distinguishing, describing and classifying various small genres of folklore.

However, both Lithuanian and foreign folklorists know Grigas best as a researcher of proverbs. His two studies, *Lietuvių patarlės. Lyginamasis tyrinėjimas* (Lithuanian Proverbs: A Comparative Study, 1976) and *Patarlių paralelės* (Proverb Parallels, 1987), are of utmost importance for Lithuanian folkloristics. These works laid the theoretical foundations for 20th-century Lithuanian paremiology, establishing its place in the international research field. Grigas’ scientific work primarily focused on the international and national characteristics of proverbs, the potential and limitations of using them to reflect a nation’s character and way of life, and the issues involved in categorising proverbs for comparative studies.

This article begins with a retrospective overview of the studies of Lithuanian small genres of folklore. The following sections provide a more detailed overview of the small genres of folklore most frequently studied by Lithuanian folklorists: proverbs and proverbial phrases, situational sayings, riddles, incantations, and beliefs.

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1 Daukantas (1793–1864) was a Lithuanian/Samogitian historian, writer and ethnographer. One of the pioneers of the Lithuanian National Revival, he is credited as the author of the first book on the history of Lithuania written in Lithuanian. His writings made extensive use of folklore, including proverbs and proverbial phrases. Grigas’ first notable contribution to this field was his doctoral dissertation in philology in 1958. Its title is “Daukantas: Collector and publisher of Lithuanian folklore”. After that, Grigas published over 20 works on Daukantas. These works range from scientific research to popular media articles (Grigas 2024 2: 9–128).

LITHUANIAN FOLKLORE STUDIES AND SMALL GENRES OF FOLKLORE: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Scientific research on Lithuanian folklore began to take shape relatively late, with favourable conditions emerging only in the 20th century. The field's origins can be traced back to the Lithuanian Scientific Society (*Lietuvių mokslo draugija*), founded in 1907, which undertook scientific, cultural and educational activities. The society devoted considerable attention to ethnoculture and was responsible for collecting folklore. It was not until Lithuania declared independence in 1918 that institutions dedicated to preserving and studying cultural heritage began to emerge. The Department of Ethnology (*Etnikos katedra*) was established at Vytautas Magnus University in 1934, thereby legalising folklore studies as an independent discipline (Daugirdaitė 2015). During this period, the theoretical direction of Lithuanian folklore studies became apparent: those who had studied abroad, such as Jonas Balys, were more influenced by Western European research and the Finnish school model in particular and considered folklore studies to be a branch of general ethnology. Others adopted the literary approach of the Slavs (ibid.: 32–33). The guidelines to the Folklore Collection, published in 1925 and 1930, were prepared in accordance with the programme established by the Russian Folklore Collection Commission (ibid.: 29). Meanwhile, the Lithuanian Folklore Archive was founded in 1935 by Balys with the aim of integrating Lithuanian research and material into Western folklore studies, particularly comparative studies (ibid.: 34). Although the main focus during this period was on collecting folklore, Lithuanian folklorists gradually started considering the theoretical and methodological principles of folklore, developing classification systems in the process.²

Interwar Lithuanian folklorists considered so-called 'minor folklore' (*smulkioji tautosaka*) to be a distinct type of folklore, in addition to folksongs and folk narratives. The 1936 Folklore Collector's Guide (*Tautosakos rinkėjo vadovas*) stated:

The term 'folklore' primarily refers to all metrical (rhymed) folk creations, such as songs, ditties (*dainuškos*), *sutartinės* and hymns, as well as their melodies. Next is the broad field of narratives, including fairy tales, legends, anecdotes, memories and 'happenings' (*atsitikimai*). Finally, there is a variety of so-called minor folklore, including proverbs, riddles, folk beliefs (such as spells, superstitions and incantations), folk medicine for people and animals, dream interpretations, children's folklore, shepherds' folklore, interpretations and observations of nature sounds, and folk humour, including tongue-twisters, quick-witted remarks, folk couplets and dirty jokes (Balys 1936: 2).

2 For more information on the origins and development of Lithuanian folklore studies, see Būgienė 2017; Sauka L. 2011.

Admittedly, various attempts have been made to classify folklore in different ways. For example, Petras Būtėnas³ categorised it as either ‘major’ or ‘minor’:

Major folklore includes songs, laments, fairy tales and stories. Minor folklore includes everything briefly described by the people or folk. Although it is small in size, it is significant in content and includes proverbial phrases, proverbs, sayings, expletives, riddles, puzzles or jokes, descriptions, games, place names, onomatopoeic interjections, and sentences and words altogether (1930: 39).

Zigmantas Kuzmickis⁴ claimed that the most significant types of Lithuanian folklore are songs, fairy tales, riddles and proverbs. He also observed that riddles and proverbs share similarities in terms of both content and form (Kuzmickis 1931, see Kensminienė 2024: 41).⁵

The Soviet occupation of Lithuania had an inevitable impact on the development of Lithuanian folklore studies. Scientific research was influenced by ideological considerations. While some genres conflicted with Soviet ideology, others were more convenient and were therefore more widely published and researched (for more details, see Būgienė 2017: 33). In terms of so-called minor folklore, Soviet ideology favoured proverbs about lords and manors, as well as humorous sayings about priests and God. This made it possible to study proverbs and sayings in general. Incantations were not included in one of the first post-war collections of folklore, as it was claimed that they were uncharacteristic and that “in socialist Lithuanian villages, there was no longer any basis for various spells, incantations and superstitions to develop and survive” (Jonynas 1957: 17). Fortunately, incantations were soon returned to folklore collections.

Soviet folklore, much of which was artificially created, had to be collected and published. The published collections included proverbs about Germans, Hitler, landlords and collective farms. Attempts were made to establish a historical periodisation of folklore. The first post-war folklore collection, *Lietuvių tautosakos rinktinė* (Selected Lithuanian Folklore, 1954), categorised folklore by period, including “Before the Great October Socialist Revolution”, “After the Great October Socialist Revolution”, and “The Period of Bourgeois Nationalist Dictatorship” (Korsakas et al. 1954: 551–559).

While adapting to, and finding ways to navigate around ideological constraints, post-war Lithuanian folklorists continued to develop the theoretical principles

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3 Petras Būtėnas (1896–1980) was a Lithuanian linguist and public figure.

4 Zigmantas Kuzmickis (1898–1976) was a Lithuanian philologist and educator.

5 Later, Donatas Sauka observed that proverbs and riddles share more than just brevity: both are also rooted in empirical experience (Sauka D. 1970: 299).

of folklore studies. They classified folklore, began creating card file indexes, and addressed issues of genre classification, including so-called minor folklore. In the preface to the aforementioned 1954 collection of folklore, the editors stated that the collection “provides representative examples of Lithuanian folksongs and folk narratives, organised by genre” (ibid.: 5). Sound imitations, proverbs and proverbial phrases, riddles and puzzles were presented as independent genres without specifying their type.

The 1957 publication *Lietuvių tautosaka, užrašyta 1944–1956* (Lithuanian Folklore, Recorded 1944–1956), to which Grigas contributed, distinguished three types of folklore: songs, narratives, and ‘minor folklore’. The latter included proverbs and proverbial phrases, riddles and sound imitations (Jonynas 1957: 15).

The first substantial Soviet-era textbook on folklore, also presenting the types and genres of Lithuanian folklore, was *Lietuvių tautosakos apybraiža* (An Outline of Lithuanian Folklore) from 1963. Continuing the pre-war tradition of linking folklore research to literary studies and defining folklore as a form of verbal art, the book considered the object of folklore studies to be ‘poetic folk art’ and also distinguished three types of folklore: songs, narratives, and ‘minor folklore’ (Grigas et al. 1963). Grigas prepared the section on minor folklore. His classification of minor folklore was based on the criterion of brevity, while noting the conditional nature of this distinction: “All minor folklore is conditionally classified into one genre group: apart from length, this folklore material has almost no other essential features in common” (Grigas 1963: 393). The most abundant genres were proverbs and proverbial phrases, riddles, and incantations, all of which were presented in detail. Tongue twisters, parodies of prayers, counting rhymes and teasing rhymes were also included (ibid.: 393–433).

One of the most comprehensive publications of that period devoted to so-called minor folklore was the fifth volume of the five-volume series, *Lietuvių tautosaka* (Lithuanian Folklore, 1968). In the detailed introductory article, Grigas presented proverbs and proverbial phrases, riddles, sound imitations and incantations along with jokes, praise for certain products, merchants’ calls, shepherds’ cries, and curses (1968: 9–74).

Throughout the Soviet era, the principle of distinguishing between minor folklore, songs and narratives was upheld. Donatas Sauka, one of the most prominent Lithuanian folklorists of the second half of the 20th century, wrote:

The minor genres of folklore cannot be classified as either prose or poetry. There is no analogy for them in the classification of literary genres. Their aesthetic significance does not depend on their similarity to a larger artistic form; they constitute a separate type of artistic thinking and representation formed differently, which can only be evaluated according to its specific norms. The specific conditions of existence and functions of

these genres resulted in closer contact with non-artistic, everyday spoken language than anywhere else, resulting in various transitional forms with unevenly expressed main purposes (Sauka D. 1970: 272).

Following Lithuania regaining independence in 1990, the field of Lithuanian folkloristics experienced a period of crisis, and so “to survive, the discipline took pains in shaping itself as a modern and relevant field in the humanities – both in terms of its subject, interdisciplinary links and methods” (Būgienė 2017: 29). An attempt was also made to establish the most appropriate classification system for genres. Taking into account their mode of performance, genres of so-called minor folklore were considered part of oral folklore. However, there is still no consensus in Lithuanian folklore studies on what to call this type of folklore. An attempt was made to introduce the term *trumpieji pasakymai* (short sayings; Sauka L. 1998: 13–14), or *mažosios formos tautosaka* (small-form folklore; Sauka L. 2016: 443), but it only gained limited acceptance. Recently, these terms have been used interchangeably with ‘small/short genres of folklore’ or ‘short folklore forms’, terms common in international folklore studies.⁶

As well as folklorists studying small genres of folklore, these forms also fall within the scope of interest of ethnolinguists. From an ethnolinguistic perspective, proverbs, riddles and other small folklore genres such as greetings, jokes and curses are excellent material for studying a nation’s worldview (Snukiškienė 2019: 42). Researchers at Vilnius University have made significant contributions to this field by working according to the Lublin School of Ethnolinguistics methodology (Rutkovska, Smetona, Smetonienė 2017; Snukiškienė 2022). Birutė Jasiūnaitė’s ethnolinguistic works provide cultural information about the worldview of traditional phraseology, examining not only traditional phraseology, but also a considerable number of proverbs and proverbial phrases (Jasiūnaitė 2010). Works on traditional Lithuanian swearwords and etiquette formulas have also been published (Jasiūnaitė 1997, 1998, 1999a, 1999b, 2000, 2001).

PROVERBS AND PROVERBIAL PHRASES; SITUATIONAL SAYINGS

Until the 19th century, *p o v e r b* (*patarlė*) and *p r o v e r b i a l p h r a s e* (*priežodis*) were referred to by the single Lithuanian term *priežodis*.⁷ In Konstantinas Sirvydas’ dictionary *Dictionarium trium linguarum* (1631), it is presented as the equivalent of the Polish *przysłowie* and the Latin *proverbium*. Some 19th-century

6 Granbom-Herranen 2016; Krikmann 1997; Villers 2024: 155; Voolaid 2019.

7 The Lithuanian word *priežodis* literally means ‘next to/beside the word’.

Lithuanian publishers, such as Kajetonas Nezabitauskis,⁸ also used the term *priežodis* in a broad sense. However, the term *patarlė*, associated with the verb *patarti* (to advise), had already emerged by then. This term appears in the works of Daukantas, Motiejus Valančius⁹ and other authors. Laurynas Ivinskis¹⁰ used both terms, *priežodis* and *patarlė*, in his calendars. Būtėnas distinguished between proverbs and proverbial phrases, attempted to define them, and highlighted their differences. Būtėnas points out that one of the differences is that proverbs express a truth in the imperative mood, whereas proverbial phrases lack an instructive aspect (1930: 42).

In *An Outline of Lithuanian Folklore*, Grigas presented the international term ‘brachylogismus’ to refer to proverbs, proverbial phrases and riddles. He also stated that proverbs and proverbial phrases are also known as folk aphorisms and *paremias* (Grigas 1963: 393). Grigas made a distinction between proverbs and proverbial phrases, highlighting several characteristics that set them apart. One such characteristic is the length of the sentence: a proverb is usually a complete sentence. In addition, proverbial phrases differ from proverbs in that they respond to specific situations rather than generalising. Additionally, they are not didactic (*ibid.*: 397). Throughout this article and numerous times subsequently, Grigas emphasised that proverbs and proverbial phrases were very close, and that a slightly modified proverbial phrase that had acquired a generalising character could become a proverb (*ibid.*). Therefore, the modality of a sentence could determine whether a saying was considered a proverb or a proverbial phrase (*ibid.*: 408). It seems that Grigas, based on experience with other languages (1968: 10), established the practice of using the term *patarlės bei priežodžiai* (proverbs and proverbial phrases) as a genre designation in Lithuanian paremiology, with true proverbs being distinguished from proverbial phrases only when necessary at the theoretical level. The term *patarlė* is also often used more broadly than its literal meaning.¹¹ In defining proverbs and proverbial phrases within the context of other folklore genres, Grigas emphasised their characteristic “economy of words, brevity of thought, and concise expression” (1963: 408).

Similarly, Grigas described proverbs and proverbial phrases in his other works. Proverbs and proverbial phrases are characterised by consistency; they endure in tradition and are vivid and poetic. Proverbs can teach, advise, warn, summarise phenomena or draw conclusions. Proverbial phrases, on the other hand, describe

8 Kajetonas Nezabitauskis (1800–1876) was a Lithuanian bibliographer, literary scholar and historian.

9 Motiejus Valančius (1801–1875) was a bishop, writer, educator and public figure.

10 Laurynas Ivinskis (1810–1881) was a Lithuanian educator, writer and translator who pioneered the publication of Lithuanian calendars.

11 For this reason, it seems more appropriate to use the term ‘*paremia*’ to encompass proverbs, proverbial phrases and similar expressions (Zaikauskienė 2012: 16–17; Villers 2024: 162).

specific objects, phenomena or situations (Grigas 1968: 9). Grigas made a valuable observation that proverbs are more often international, while proverbial phrases are national.

In the preface to the publication *Lietuvių patarlės ir priežodžiai* (Lithuanian Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases, 2000), a proverb is defined as a general statement, and a proverbial phrase as a saying that describes the typical characteristics of particular people, objects or situations. Incidentally, in addition to proverbs and proverbial phrases, the publication also includes traditional verbal compounds, which linguists classify as idioms. These are also considered proverbial phrases, as are traditional comparisons (Grigas 2000b: 7–8).¹²

In the introductory article to the publication, Grigas assessed the development of Lithuanian paremiology and paremiography, identifying four distinct periods: 1) initial efforts to organise the collection of proverbs and proverbial phrases prior to World War I; 2) centralised collection during Lithuania's first period of independence (1918–1939); 3) decline in collection and research during the initial decades of Soviet rule; 4) shift towards international standards of paremiography and paremiology in the latter part of the 20th century (ibid.: 29).

The history of Lithuanian paremiography began with the emergence of the Lithuanian written language in the 16th century. From the 16th to the 18th century, paremias were used as examples in religious texts, grammars, dictionaries and ethnographic descriptions, such as Jonas Bretkūnas' *Postil* (1591), Mikalojus Daukša's *Postil* (1599), Daniel Klein's *Grammatica Livanica* (1673), Friedrich Praetorius' *Clavis Germanico-Lithvana* (17th century manuscript), Theodor Lepner's *Der Preusche Littauer* (1744), etc. The most significant source from this period is Jakob Brodowski's German–Lithuanian and Lithuanian–German dictionary (18th century). It contains numerous examples of Lithuanian word usage illustrated by proverbs and proverbial phrases, idioms, riddles and comments on Lithuanian customs and beliefs (Brodovskis 2009). The Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore's collection of Lithuanian proverbs and proverbial phrases comprises over 1,500 texts from the 16th–18th century period, all of which were written down in Lithuania Minor (Grigas 2000a: 26).

Lithuanian proverbs and proverbial phrases were actively collected in the second half of the 19th century, during the period of the national revival movement. Those working to promote Lithuanian culture paid increasing attention to folklore, mythology, folk customs and the way of life. When the Lithuanian press

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12 According to the established tradition of Lithuanian paremiology, proverbs and proverbial phrases are distinguished from idioms. However, the difference between the two is often relative. For more on the relationship between proverbs, proverbial phrases and idioms, see Grigas 1976: 33; Kudirkienė 1998: 137; Zaikauskienė 2009: 73; Zaikauskienė 2012: 19–20.

ban was abolished in 1904¹³, those dedicated to Lithuanian national identity began collecting paremias with renewed enthusiasm. Many of these collections were donated to the Lithuanian Scientific Society. During the first period of independent Lithuania, from 1918 to 1939, paremias were selected quite actively. In the early years of this period, more paremias were collected than in the previous three centuries combined. However, scientific thought was still in its infancy. In school curricula and textbooks, authors presented proverbs as sayings that conveyed the nation's wisdom and experience. Nevertheless, they did not offer any insights into the content or form of the proverbs themselves. The first serious theoretical work devoted to proverbs and proverbial phrases is Būtėnas' article "Patarlės ir priežodžio gyvenimas" (The Life of Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases, 1930). Although Būtėnas did not draw on the work of other European scholars, he offered perceptive descriptions of the defining characteristics of proverbs. He examined themes in Lithuanian proverbs, emphasised their universal nature and attempted to distinguish them from proverbial phrases (Grigas 2000a: 31). Notably, Būtėnas regarded proverbs and proverbial phrases as a living genre that is constantly renewed (1930: 42).

Grigas should be regarded as the father of Lithuanian proverb studies. In 1954, he began his career as a folklorist at the Institute of Lithuanian Language and Literature, later renamed the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore.¹⁴ According to Lithuanian folklore researchers, one of Grigas' initial steps in the direction of paremiology was the aforementioned article in *An Outline of Lithuanian Folklore* published in 1963 (Sauka L. 2016: 444). As with all publications from that era, this book inherently reflects the ideology of the Soviet period. However, this does not diminish its merits as an individual scientific review of Lithuanian proverbs and proverbial phrases. Much later, Norbertas Vėlius, a prominent Lithuanian folklorist and mythologist, emphasised the importance of this book for the study of Lithuanian proverbs:

Contemporary definitions were provided, and the essential qualities of the object were discussed. The main themes of the content were categorised and illustrated. For the first time, the issue of the national peculiarities of Lithuanian proverbs, as well as the international nature of some texts, was raised. The relationship between proverbs and national history, as well as the development of social relations, was demonstrated and the functions of proverbs in speech were specified (1991: 86).

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13 From 1864 to 1904, the Russian Empire prohibited the printing, import and distribution of Lithuanian publications written in the Latin script.

14 For Grigas' biography see Grigienė 2006; Zaikauskienė 2024.

In the section on proverbs and proverbial phrases, Grigas does not cite any research by foreign authors. While it is possible that he relied mainly on Russian authors for understandable reasons, when discussing the international nature of proverbs, he provides examples in Russian, Latvian, Polish and German (Grigas 1963: 400). In later works, Grigas corrected some of the inaccuracies in this book. For example, he had linked the proverb “*Ranka ranką plauna*” (Hand washes hand, lat. *Manus manum lavat*) to a similar Russian proverb, despite its classic origin.¹⁵

The fifth and final volume of *Lietuvių tautosaka* (Lithuanian Folklore), published in 1968, provided a much more detailed overview of Lithuanian proverbs and proverbial phrases alongside other small genres of folklore. While discussing the origins and spread of widely used proverbs, Grigas wrote:

It is often difficult to determine which prevalent proverbs around the world are genetically related, and which could have emerged independently in different places due to typological similarities in social life (1968: 11).

He linked Lithuanian proverbs to different areas of human activity, such as agriculture and craft, as well as to historical circumstances. Grigas drew attention to the existence of sayings of “literary origin” alongside folk proverbs. These included aphorisms by writers, biblical sayings, and phrases uttered by famous historical figures, such as warlords, politicians and philosophers, that have become widely accepted over time (ibid.: 11–12). When discussing the origins of Lithuanian proverbs, Grigas provided insight into their connections with other genres, such as the connection of proverbs with fairy tales, legends, anecdotes and riddles (ibid.: 12–13). In this article, he drew not only on the works of Russian authors and their translations, but also on the research of Archer Taylor, Bartlett J. Whiting, and Dimitrios Loukatos.

On Grigas’ initiative, a card file index of Lithuanian proverbs and proverbial phrases was set up at the Institute of Lithuanian Language and Literature between 1970 and 1990. The largest proportion of index data is comprised of proverbs and proverbial phrases included from the collections of the Lithuanian Folklore Archive (LTR) and the Lithuanian Scientific Society’s Archive (LMD). Moreover, the index includes proverbs and proverbial phrases collected from ancient Lithuanian written sources, early Bible translations and various 19th- and 20th-century publications. There are more than 54,000 proverb types and more than 200,000 proverb variant

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15 In 1987, in Proverb Parallels, Grigas cites sources which indicate that the proverb was penned by the Greek dramatist and philosopher Epicharmus. It also has counterparts in the writings of Seneca and Petronius (Grigas 1987: 426). In Gyula Paczolay’s *European Proverbs*, Menander is indicated along with Epicharmus (Paczolay 1997: 174).

texts in the index classified according to formal keywords.¹⁶ The index served as the basis for the Electronic Compilation of Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases (eLPP, [1]). Grigas initiated the creation of this database and oversaw its management from 1998 to 2002. The database was updated between 2018 and 2021.¹⁷

Having completed the card file index, Grigas took charge of compiling the aforementioned comprehensive publication *Lithuanian Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases* (2000).¹⁸

Grigas established a strong tradition of comparative research in Lithuanian paremiology in the second half of the 20th century and consistently adhered to the guidelines of the geographical-historical method (Sauka D. 2007: 420). He considered himself a staunch advocate of this method and in one of his later publications, described himself as a researcher of proverbs who was faithful to the historical and aesthetic trends in folklore studies (Grigas 2001: 118). As Arvo Krikmann noted, Grigas “appeared in his works as a bearer and developer of the best traditions of the Finnish method” (Krikmann 2005: 24).

From his earliest publications onwards, Grigas viewed Lithuanian proverbs and proverbial phrases as part of an international heritage. The international character of proverbs is only briefly mentioned in the introduction to *Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases*:

For example, the popular proverb ‘*Vilkq minim – vilkas keliu bėga*’ (Mention the wolf, and it runs in the road) is shared by Russians, Poles, Germans and French (Grigas, Jonynas 1958: 11).

In each subsequent paremiological work, Grigas devoted more and more attention to the international nature of proverbs. He provided more examples, relied on the work of his foreign colleagues, and offered deeper insights.

Unfortunately, Grigas has not published much work in languages other than Lithuanian and Russian. His first short publication in German was “Rapports

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16 In our approach, the proverb type includes all proverb variants from various informers, different times, and different places. Those variants are united by the same constructive motifs of the image of the proverb (Grigas 2001; Zaikauskienė 2021).

17 The Lithuanian Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases: Compiling, Research and Dissemination project was funded by the Lithuanian Research Council as part of the State Programme for Lithuanian Studies and Dissemination 2016–2024 (Agreement No. S-LIP-18-43).

18 There have been four volumes published to date: vol. 1 (A–D) in 2000, vol. 2 (E–J) in 2008, vol. 3 (K) in 2019, vol. 4 (L–M) in 2021. Here, proverb types are arranged by semantic keyword, which often corresponds to a formal keyword. Each volume contains around 3,000 proverb types. Each type consists of variants, which are divided into versions. Equivalents in Latvian, Polish, German, English, Latin and Russian are also included. The titles of the types are literally translated into English, German and Russian. In some cases, comments on the usage or meaning of a proverb are also included.

locaux: Litauen” in *Proverbium* in 1966. Grigas also published one of his early studies in *Proverbium*, in which he provided Germanic and Romance equivalents for Lithuanian proverbs. This study was based on Düringsfeld’s collections (Grigas 1970, 1971, 1972). Among articles presenting different issues related to comparative studies, the following can be mentioned: “Der Syntaktische Aspekt bei der Vergleichenden Forschung der Sprichwörter” (Grigas 1974), “Fragen der methodic bei vergleichenden Vorschung von baltischen und slavischen Sprichwort” (1978), and “Problems of the Type in the Comparative Study of Proverbs” (1986b in Lithuanian, 1996a in English).

Alongside Grigas’ numerous articles of a comparative nature¹⁹ it is worth discussing separately his two studies, *Lietuvių patarlės. Lyginamasis tyrinėjimas* (Lithuanian Proverbs: A Comparative Study, 1976) and *Patarlių paralelės* (Proverb Parallels, 1987).

Lithuanian Proverbs was published in Lithuanian (with an English summary) in 1976 and in Russian in 1987. Unfortunately, the study did not reach a wider international audience. Nevertheless, it was of the utmost importance for Lithuanian folkloristics (Sauka D. 1977; Sauka L. 2016: 440–441). Much later, on the occasion of Grigas’ eightieth birthday, Krikmann published a detailed analysis of Lithuanian Proverbs (2005).

The study consisted of a methodological introduction to the state of comparative proverb studies around the world at that time, as well as two sections. In the first part genetic relations and borrowings based on three Lithuanian paremias were considered: “*Nevyk Dievo į medį*” (Don’t drive God into the forest (tree)); “*Kur mūsų nėra, ten veršiai midų geria*” (The calves drink mead (honey) elsewhere, where we are not); “*Laukas akylas, miškas ausylas*” (The field has eyes, the forest has ears). The second part presents a study on the linguistic expression, versification and phonetic organisation of Lithuanian proverbs. In his monograph Grigas raised questions such as:

What are the laws of interrelation between the linguistic and extralinguistic factors which govern the origin, evolution, dissemination, longevity and death of proverbs and, finally, the penetration of their imagery into different languages? What are the levers which direct the movement of proverbs into one or another channel? What is the correlation of qualitative linguistic differences and similarities in proverbial texts? What elements reflect individual cultures – ethnic traditions and the mode of spiritual life –, and what has to be ascribed to phenomena typical of many cultures? What facts of language, linguistic stylistics and history of culture must be summoned up to investigate

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 19 “Parallels between international proverbs” (Grigas 1986a), “Lithuania and Lithuanians in the proverbs of neighboring nations” (Grigas 1993a), “One common feature of Indo-European languages” (Grigas 1996b), etc.

the national and international sources of proverbs and proverbial phrases of one's own people? And, finally, what is the ratio of internationally disseminated proverbs to proverbs of restricted distribution within the lore of one nation? (1976: 294).

D. Sauka praised the author for his ability to reveal the cultural layers typical of different nations or countries through the analysis of a proverb, for his masterly syntactic analysis of the texts and for his thorough study of the poetic means of the proverbs presented in this work (Sauka D. 1977: 175). Both Lithuanian and foreign folklorists draw attention to one of the special features of this study, the exclusive focus on the syntactic structure of the proverb as an indicator of its belonging among international proverbs:²⁰

In the rich material of proverbs, it is possible to see different syntactic and structural types. These are the traditional syntactic frames in which the image and idea of the proverb are contained. These types are generally common to proverbs of many nations and form a kind of pattern by which variants of proverbs that are internationally common can be identified (Grigas 1968: 56).

According to Krikmann, “[o]n the level of analysing the whole ‘national repertoire’ of proverbs, distinct correlations between certain syntactical formulae and certain geographic areas may be clearly noticed” (2005: 34).

In his many works, Grigas addressed the issue of defining the international type of proverb. He highlighted that, in addition to the syntactic structure, the image of the proverb is a key unifying feature of the international type. In the introduction to the monograph *Lithuanian Proverbs* he writes:

The most important factor in identifying related proverbs is the motifs of their poetic images. The identity of the poetic image is characteristic of many proverbs expressed in different languages. Common images connect whole groups of variants of the respective proverbs. In every proverb that has spread internationally, we find common images, symbols, similes, and other pictorial components (1976: 222).

From all this we can see that the proverbs and proverbial phrases of no nation have an isolated system of imagery specific to that nation, but in many cases draw material from the international arsenal of stylistic devices of language (ibid.: 224).

One of the main problems raised in the study was the relationship between the national and international, not only in Lithuanian proverbs but also in proverbs

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20 In 1974, Grigas published an article on the subject in German in “*Proverbium*” (Grigas 1974).

generally. Grigas vividly demonstrated the international nature of proverbs and the fact that some Lithuanian sayings belong to the global proverb repertoire. On the other hand, he drew attention to so-called national proverbs, which can only be understood in their original languages. According to Grigas, these proverbs are extremely helpful in researching the uniqueness of a nation's language and culture, as well as its mental and aesthetic characteristics (Zaikauskienė 2009: 70). In the book we find some intriguing ideas, such as this: "languages that adopt and use the expression later than the one from which it originated achieve greater euphonic effectiveness" (Grigas 1976: 29), or "in some cases, idiomatic phraseologisms can be indicators of the national distinctiveness of the proverbs to which they belong" (ibid.: 35).

A substantial book could be compiled from Grigas' studies of specific international proverbs. In addition to the proverbs discussed in the monograph *Lithuanian Proverbs*, Grigas delved into the international prevalence, origin and stylistic characteristics of proverbs such as "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush" (1968), "He who digs a pit for others, falls in himself" (1986b), "You can see a mote in another's eye but cannot see a beam in your own" (1995), "Don't look a gift horse in the mouth" (1996b), "Don't praise the day before evening" (1997 in Lithuanian, 1998a in German), "The Apple Doesn't Fall Far From the Tree" (2001), "A Rolling stone gathers no moss" (2001), and many others. In the introductory article "About International Proverbs" to *Proverb Parallels* (1987) Grigas argues that each proverb requires separate research in order to understand its socio-cultural and historical significance (here, we can recall Matti Kuusi's idea of writing a monograph for each representative proverb, Kuusi 1957: 46).

Proverb Parallels: Lithuanian Proverbs with Latvian, Belarusian, Russian, Polish, German, English, Latin, French and Spanish Equivalents (1987), another work by Grigas that is important both to Lithuanian and international paremiology, still serves to Lithuanian paremiologists as a main source of Lithuanian proverb equivalents. As introductions in Lithuanian, Russian and German were included, this publication reached a wider audience of paremiologists. Wolfgang Mieder in the review of the book in *Proverbium* in 1988 called it a "magnum opus" and an "exemplary model". He writes:

Grigas' essay on the nature of international proverbs with its many fascinating examples is of utmost theoretical importance and should be part of the required reading for any proverb scholar (Mieder 1988: 188).

Many of Grigas' insights are noteworthy. Mieder draws attention to Grigas' conclusion that Lithuanian versions of international proverb types occupy the middle position between the proverbs of Eastern and Western Europe. According

to Mieder, “[t]here is no doubt that Lithuania did play its role in getting many proverbs that now have and international distribution moved from West to East and vice versa” (ibid.).

In Proverb Parallels, Grigas published 611 international proverb types. Different Lithuanian versions and their equivalents from other languages are listed under the type number and type title. We can also find notes on the year of the earliest documentations of the texts along with comments about the possible origin, distribution and function of the proverbs. Given the limited possibilities of reaching foreign sources, one wonders how much material Grigas had collected for this book. He used data from collections such as *Proverbs, Maxims and Phrases of all Ages*, vols. 1, 2 by R. Christy (1888), *Dizionario comparator di proverbi e modi proverbiali in sette lingue* by A. Arthaber (1952), *Le livre des proverbes français...* by M. le Rouc de Lincy, vols. 1, 2 (1859) and many others.

It is clear that Grigas was an inquisitive scientist. Over time, his theoretical insights matured and his professional horizons broadened. Grigas had an excellent grasp of the international context of paremiological research and the methodologies employed by his peers. He would sometimes rely on their work and other times engage in reasonable debate with them. One such example is Grigas’ discussion with semioticians. When examining the semantic content of proverbs, he urged them to consider the additional information that the sources record alongside the texts in both their native language and other languages as important because semioticians use additional comments on the usage and meaning of proverbs only as an auxiliary control measure (Grigas 2001: 105–107). Grigas wrote:

The polemical remarks target certain semioticians who have compelled us to engage critically with their interpretations of the semantics of proverbial imagery. Semioticians view proverbs as a form of folklore that derives its existence from observations of the sign system. We strive to comprehend each traditional proverb as a living organism. We are interested in the age of proverbs, their place and time of origin, their migration, and the historical factors that have shaped them. To us, proverbs serve as a source of cultural-historical data and a repository of examples of linguistic stylistics. [...] We aim to encompass as much text and information as possible, in organising and publishing the holdings to facilitate our analysis and synthesis of national variants and their international counterparts, along with all the content encoded within. The goal is to gain a deeper understanding of the traditions of entire continents and narrower ethnic cultures, as well as the wisdom conveyed through the poetic nature of proverbs (ibid.: 118).

Grigas also disagreed with proponents of contextual studies of proverbs who claim that proverbs are ambiguous because their meanings change depending on

the context in which they are used. He highlighted the consistency of proverbs' semantic content as an essential feature (ibid.: 108). To substantiate this, Grigas drew on data from other countries and demonstrated how this data helps to avoid random and erroneous interpretations of the proverb meaning (ibid.: 113–114; for more see: Zaikauskienė 2009).²¹

As mentioned above, in the second half of the 20th century, Grigas and other folklorists of his generation encouraged researchers to view paremias as integral components of cultural history. They sought traces of a nation's worldview, mentality, experience, wisdom and poetic ingenuity in these sayings (Grigas 1998b; Sauka D. 2001: 130).²²

The few Lithuanian paremiologists who had the opportunity to work with Grigas and learn from him, as well as the younger generation of scholars, are continuing the ongoing paremiological research or are exploring new perspectives. Some continue comparative paremiological research, demonstrating the usefulness of the comparative method when studying the semantics and artistic imagery of Lithuanian proverbs, as well as searching for signs of mythopoetics in Lithuanian proverbs and proverbial phrases (Kudirkienė 2005, 2007; Buftenė 1997, 2007). The regularities in the relationship between the content and form of proverbs are discussed (Kudirkienė 1997; Buftenė 1998), as are the characteristics of their artistic worldview (for example their depiction of everyday life, their fragmented nature and their ideological contradictions; Buftenė 2000). Many works continue Grigas' approach of searching for reflections of folk culture in proverbs relating to history, everyday life, social life, community life, family life, old beliefs and traditional attitudes towards 'special' members of the community such as fools, beggars, old bachelors, old maids, illegitimate children and Jews (Kudirkienė 2001; Kadžytė 1997, 2003, 2004). Research into the contemporary use of Lithuanian proverbs only began in the second decade of the 21st century. Analysis focused on the principles of creating anti-proverbs, areas of contemporary proverb use, proverb functions, proverb dissemination and translation processes, and visual expression within proverbs (Zaikauskienė 2012, 2014, 2020).

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21 The idea of the semantic core of proverbs being determined by tradition was later developed by Lilija Kudirkienė (2007) and Dalia Zaikauskienė (2021).

22 D. Sauka's reviews of proverbs and proverbial phrases in the chapters of his monograph *Tautosakos savitumas ir vertė* (The Uniqueness and Value of Folklore, 1970) and his textbook for university students *Lietuvių tautosaka* (Lithuanian Folklore (2007 [1982])). D. Sauka evaluated proverbs and proverbial phrases primarily from an aesthetic point of view. He provided a detailed description of the artistic imagery used in proverbs, subtly revealing the peasant worldview they express. Notably, D. Sauka drew attention to the humor and its variations – wit, irony, and jokes – that illuminate, clarify, and renew the often crude, everyday images of proverbs (Sauka D. 2007: 270–273).

In the 21st century, as part of a rethinking of the system of Lithuanian small genres, it was decided that a specific subgenre of paremias should be distinguished, namely, *s i t u a t i o n a l s a y i n g s*. As stated in *Vilkq mini, vilkas čia* (Speak of the Wolf and You See His Tail, 2016), a collection of Lithuanian situational sayings

[situational sayings] emerge as a reaction to a situation that was somewhat exceptional or did not comply with the established norms of life. The nature of the situation, the occasion or the reason to use a saying is one of the key criteria of the definition and classification of situational sayings (Kudirkienė 2016: 11).

Until then, expressions such as “various retorts, reactions to situations, and distortions of etiquette formulas”, as well as parodies, tongue twisters and reverse speech were classified as so-called jokes (Grigas 1968: 53) according to area of life: various situations; questions, requests, comments; greetings, thanks, congratulations; exclamations; misunderstandings (Aleksynas et al. 1968: 838–868).

The boundaries of this subgenre are blurred, making it difficult to determine whether a saying should be classified as a proverb, proverbial phrase or situational saying. Situational sayings are similar to proverbs and proverbial phrases in terms of their characteristics, i.e. they are short, have a declarative nature and are expressive. The conditionality of genre boundaries and the importance of usage situation, context and the function of the saying become particularly apparent when discussing situational sayings (Džekčioriūtė 2021: 223). A proverb or proverbial phrase becomes a situational saying when its sphere of use narrows and it becomes associated with specific cases (Kudirkienė 2016: 20).

A similar relationship exists between situational sayings and beliefs. The origins of artistic images of proverbs, proverbial phrases and situational sayings often date back to the distant past. These images are sometimes associated with magical practices and beliefs. According to Kudirkienė, situational sayings based on beliefs should be linked to textual beliefs (ibid.: 18; about action and textual beliefs see Vaitkevičienė 1998: 90). We could argue that situational sayings no longer have magical content. Beliefs express mythological consciousness, whereas situational sayings belong to the everyday – often humorous – realm where mythical laws no longer apply. To put it simply, it is the speaker’s relationship that determines which genre the saying is assigned to.

Situational sayings could be classified according to the verbal or nonverbal situation in which they are used (Kudirkienė 2016: 11). One of the most prominent groups in this category are phrases related to old household chores, which are not used in any other context. Other examples of non-verbal situations are when somebody does shoddy work or is lazy, or behaves or looks at something or

someone inappropriately, bangs doors, obstructs the light; when somebody has not been rewarded for work done; when somebody sleeps too much, does not return home until very late or has unexpectedly fallen over, tripped or hurt themselves; or when someone sighs, sneezes, laughs or cries, and the like (Kašėtienė, Kudirkienė 2016: 535).

The sayings arising from situations of verbal communication are different. These are retorts to a request, order or accusation, responses to inappropriate forms of address, humorous replies to thanks, greetings or farewells, retorts to someone who has not caught what was said or is asking something, mockery of braggarts and liars, squealers or cowards, and so on. Different again are the sayings that are used as a response to something heard but not to the situation: these are responses to a word or a short phrase taken out of context (ibid.: 535–536).

The aforementioned publication, *Speak of the Wolf and You See His Tail*, features situational sayings belonging to the traditional folklore repertoire. It is gratifying that research into contemporary folklore is also being conducted. Most of the contemporary research in this field has been carried out by professors and students at Vytautas Magnus University. According to Laimutė Anglickienė, “[s]ome of the situational expressions used by young people today are traditional, and the tradition of using and creating them has certainly not been broken” (2025: 75). Another category of situational expressions used by children and young people is new and was created in recent decades. They reflect the realities of modern life. Like traditional expressions, modern situational sayings have a distinct national character, partly determined by their origin. Many are based on specific linguistic elements, such as unique word combinations and puns (Kudirkienė 2009: 144; Anglickienė 2025: 76).

RIDDLES

Compared to proverbs and proverbial phrases, Lithuanian riddles have been collected and published less frequently. However, according to riddle researcher Aelita Kensminienė, riddles were published fairly consistently in both scientific and popular publications. Theoretical works on riddles that emerged in the 20th century focused on their poetics, themes, semantics, functions and origins (Kensminienė 1999: 193).

The first significant study of Lithuanian riddles was *Mįslių knyga* (Book of Riddles) by Kleopas Jurgelionis,²³ which was published in Chicago in 1913. According to Kensminienė, Jurgelionis was the first to distinguish riddles from

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23 Kleopas Jurgelionis (1886–1963) was a Lithuanian writer who lived and worked in the United States.

proverbs, define them, classify them, explain their origin and highlight their poetic features (Kensminienė 2018a: 42–43). Jurgelionis identified three categories of riddle: riddles (*mįslės*), pure riddles (*grynosios mįslės*) and allegorical riddles (*alegorijų mįslės*; Jurgelionis 1913: X; see Kensminienė 1999). Jurgelionis did not provide a definition of true riddles. According to him, they originated from allegorical riddles, which constitute the majority of riddles in the collections of all nations (Jurgelionis 1913: XIV). Kensminienė notes that some of Jurgelionis' allegorical riddles are a synthesis of fairy tales and riddles (1999: 179). Jurgelionis' Book of Riddles is also a comparative study. It compares Lithuanian riddles with Polish, German, English, Greek, Russian, Scottish and Roman riddles, with the introduction discussing the riddles of the Sphinx and Samson. Jurgelionis organised the riddles according to the category of object they refer to. His ideas were later recounted by authors writing before the Soviet occupation of 1940 (*ibid.*: 180).

Grigas's overview of riddles in *An Outline of Lithuanian Folklore* (1963) and his subsequent introductory article in the fifth volume of *Lithuanian Folklore* (1968) are significant contributions to the study of Lithuanian riddles. These contributions were later supplemented by Grigas' contemporaries L. Sauka and D. Sauka. Grigas characterised riddles as a genre, identifying their types and discussing their themes, content, structure and stylistic devices. He defined riddles as short phrases that indirectly describe objects or phenomena that must be guessed (Grigas 1968: 26). Grigas emphasised the metaphorical nature of riddles. His poetic description of them as "the poetry of objects" was later adopted by other riddle researchers. Grigas distinguished three main categories: true riddles (*tikrosios mįslės*), riddle questions (*minklės*), and riddle tasks (*mįslės-uždaviniai*). He described riddle questions as riddles in the form of questions which, compared to classic riddles, "are not as poetic or vivid" (*ibid.*: 38). The important thing about riddle questions is not the characteristics of referents, but the wit and deceptiveness of the questions. The wit of a riddle question is best understood from the answer, which is often more detailed and motivated than the answer to a true riddle. Riddle tasks require both guessing and calculation. The introductory part is usually longer and more complex (*ibid.*: 39–40). Grigas also added riddle-based letter games to the category (*ibid.*: 40).

The essence of riddle-making and -solving lies in the logical and associative connections between the depicted objects and the encoded object. Grigas observed that "riddles rarely contain abstract concepts or phenomena that are difficult to grasp and lack easily recognisable forms", a fact that has led riddle researchers to refer to them as "object riddles" (*ibid.*: 27). Grigas also discussed the origins of riddles, the challenges of categorising them by period, international similarities, the artistic expression of proverbs, and their style. In the fifth volume of *Lithuanian Folklore* (Aleksynas et al. 1968), riddles are categorised by the type of object or

phenomenon they refer to. Grigas therefore discussed these in detail, saying they are generally related to the peasant environment and way of life. Additionally, Lithuanians have many riddles about natural phenomena, such as the sun, thunder, rain, fire and dew. The most common plants featured in riddles are agricultural crops, and quite a few riddles concern fruit and berries. Domestic animals and birds feature much more frequently than wild ones. Lithuanians also have many riddles about people, their bodies, clothing and food (Grigas 1968: 29–31).

While studying proverbs and riddles, Grigas emphasised the importance of syntactic constructions. He drew attention to the peculiarities of riddle structure and its connection with referent. He suggested that “the structural types of riddles usually depend on the nature and characteristics of the referent. Therefore, some objects are usually referred to using one type of construction, while others use another”.²⁴ Grigas also noted that introductory and concluding formulas are uncommon in Lithuanian riddles, and that extended formulas are generally not a characteristic feature (*ibid.*: 32–34). The latest research on Lithuanian riddles partially confirms this statement. According to Kensminienė, riddle texts with beginning and ending formulas are characteristic of true riddles only. The current Lithuanian riddle database contains around 500 such texts with start and/or end formulas (Kensminienė 2024: 97–100). When discussing the images in riddles, Grigas notes that there is a tendency to spiritualise and humanise nature and its phenomena, while humans are objectified (1968: 35). Grigas mentions the obscenity of riddles very laconically, associating it with humour (*ibid.*: 36).

In his monograph *The Uniqueness and Value of Folklore* Donatas Sauka discussed the form and functions of riddles, as well as their importance in the past. He compared riddles to games:

Bringing the object closer changes its perspective, proportions, nature and essence, transforming the ordinary into the extraordinary, the living into the dead, the separate into the collective or universal, and often the aesthetic into its opposite – the low into the high, the unattractive into the beautiful, the obscene into the innocently simple (Sauka D. 1970: 301).

In his opinion, riddles and proverbs are similar genres not only because of their brevity, but also because of their empirical understanding of reality based on experience (*ibid.*). In his textbook, D. Sauka later highlighted several aspects of the development of riddles. In the initial stage, a riddle was a test or a task that formed part of a competition. It was also associated with magic and myth. The next

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 24 Riddles about wooden objects, for example, tend to begin with the formulaic statement “Born in the forest...” (Grigas 1968: 33).

stage in its development was when it became an intellectual game. According to D. Sauka, the intellectual function determines the principles of riddle composition. The important thing is for a riddle to mask an object rather than describe an image (Sauka D. 2007: 273–281).

In turn, Leonardas Sauka drew attention to a poetic feature of Lithuanian riddles, i.e. the use of specific, seemingly incomprehensible words based on phonetics (Sauka L. 1984). According to Kensminienė, one of L. Sauka's key insights concerns the distinction between the world depicted in riddle texts and the world portrayed in their answers. While riddles depict concrete objects and phenomena, the world of answers is a fantasy realm with its own laws of life (Kensminienė 2024: 47).

L. Sauka began creating a riddle card file index in the 1970s, a project that was continued by Kensminienė at the end of the 20th century. The index contains more than 100,000 Lithuanian riddles. Between 2006 and 2014 a digital database was created based on the card file index (Kensminienė 2018a: 7–8; [2]).

Several riddle publications appeared abroad in the second half of the 20th century (Velička 1961; Mingirdas Puikūnas 1971; Balys 1989). Some Lithuanian riddles have been published in comparative works by authors from other countries. These include Antti Aarne (1918–1920), Archer Taylor (1951) and the *World Encyclopedia of Riddles*, which was published in Japan in 1984 (for more see Kensminienė 2018a: 46–48).

The latest research on Lithuanian riddles has expanded and delved more deeply into many aspects that Grigas only touched upon, including publication of the first systematic, typological collection of Lithuanian riddles (ibid.). Kensminienė identifies three main categories of Lithuanian riddle: riddles (*mįslės*), riddle questions (*minklės*) and puzzles (*galvosūkiai*). Riddles are grouped into true (object) riddles; riddles about a specific event (neck riddles); and riddles about letters, sounds and words. Riddle questions are object riddle questions, true riddle questions, and riddle jokes (Kensminienė 2018b: 458). The collection includes the titles of riddle types in English and a detailed summary in English.

The latest study of Lithuanian riddles is the monograph *Lietuvių mįslės. Funkcionavimas ir poetika* (Lithuanian Riddles: Function and Poetics), published in 2024 by Kensminienė. The monograph presents the history of the collection and publication of Lithuanian riddles within a broad international context. It summarises and critically evaluates research on riddles and provides a detailed analysis of the genre's theory and contemporary usage. It also examines the system of poetic images in riddles and the means of linguistic expression. Of particular interest is the study of several riddle motifs, such as the 'series of tortures': flax, bread, quill; clay pots, 'black and white' (riddles about writing) and horses (Kensminienė 2024).

INCANTATIONS, BELIEFS

Alongside proverbs, proverbial phrases, situational sayings and riddles, 20th–21st century Lithuanian researchers studying small genres of folklore focus on incantations and beliefs.

I n c a n t a t i o n s were traditionally classified as a small genre of Lithuanian folklore. Genres associated with folk magic, such as incantations, charms, prayers and beliefs form a distinct category that often lies at the intersection of folklore and mythological studies. According to Grigas, incantations are “one of the most widely practiced and poetically significant types of magic”, in which verbal formulas and specific actions go hand in hand (1968: 67). It seems that Grigas based his classification on Sergei Tokarev’s (Tokapev 1957) categorisation of incantations and magical rituals according to their purpose: healing, harmful, love, agricultural, and secondary types of magic, as well as preventative magic. These are further subdivided according to the method of magical action (*ibid.*: 68–69). Grigas’ most important publications on incantations are the introduction to the fifth volume of Lithuanian Folklore (1968) and an article dedicated to Viljo Johannes Mannsika (1998c). In this article, Grigas introduced Mansikka’s publication *Litauische Zaubersprüche* (Mansikka 1929). Grigas observed that, as a proponent of the Finnish geographical-historical method, Mansikka viewed incantations as a widespread phenomenon in human culture, evaluating Lithuanian incantations from a comparative perspective (Grigas 1998c: 293–294). In conclusion, Grigas expressed regret that “research into the Lithuanian variant of this rare phenomenon has been neglected to date. Since the work of V. J. Mansikka, no progress has been made” (*ibid.*: 294).

Fortunately, research into Lithuanian incantations has advanced considerably since then. The most important studies of Lithuanian incantations from the late 20th and early 21st centuries are those by Daiva Vaitkevičienė. She published a substantial compilation of healing incantations (Vaitkevičienė 2008) and an electronic compendium of Lithuanian incantations (Vaitkevičienė 2005). She also addressed the challenges associated with defining the genre and terminology in her publications (Vaitkevičienė 2024a, 2024b), as well as exploring the regional characteristics of Lithuanian incantations (Vaitkevičienė 2022, 2023). Publications by Rita Balkutė (2019, 2003, 2004) and Marija Zavjalova (1998, 2000, 2020) supplement research on Lithuanian incantations.

As some of them are related to magical attitudes, predictions and omens, beliefs are frequently referenced in folklore literature alongside incantations, prayers and fortune telling. The distinction between beliefs and superstitions is particularly difficult to define. These terms were often used synonymously: “Folk beliefs and superstitions are various concepts of irrational phenomena that are

unsystematic and stereotypical” (Sauka L. 2004: 13). During the Soviet era, the term ‘superstition’ acquired a negative connotation, coming to refer to beliefs associated with ancient religions and Christianity.

Beliefs in Lithuania were most actively collected and studied in the 1930s and 1940s. At the instigation of Balys, folk beliefs were collected using questionnaires, classified by theme and published in the United States (Balys 1951). However, due to ideological restrictions during the Soviet era, few beliefs were collected and those that were collected were not studied. Following the restoration of Lithuania’s independence, the 12th volume of J. Basanavičius’s Folklore Library, *Juodoji knyga* (The Black Book, Basanavičius 2004), was published – the first large-scale publication of the 21st century to feature beliefs that Basanavičius collected alongside spells, incantations and folk medicine from the late 19th and the early 20th centuries. One of the motivations for collecting this folklore was probably the visit of Viljo Mansikka to Lithuania (Sauka L. 2004: 5).

Folk beliefs are considered to be ‘texts of ethnic knowledge’, encompassing weather forecasts, folk remedies, traditional behavioural recommendations, elements of etiquette, explanations of customs, ethnobotanical and ethnozoological knowledge, prophecies, spells and fragments of mythical worldviews. They are considered a synthetic genre of folklore and ethnology [4]. Due to this duality, they are sometimes overlooked by folklorists.

Grigas did not describe folk beliefs in isolation, but rather mentioned them alongside other small genres, primarily situational sayings and imitations of bird calls (1968: 46). He used the concepts of belief and superstition separately (Grigas 1993b: 105; Grigas 1992a in: 2024 1: 521).

The Digital Belief Index, comprising texts from manuscript sources dating from the late 19th to mid-20th centuries, was created in 2015. These texts were selected from the Lithuanian Folklore Archive at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore. The Index contains more than 8,000 full-text data items, which are linked in the information system to the Lithuanian Folklore Archive’s archival files (scanned images and audio recordings) [3].

The issue of belief is one of the topics explored by folklorists and mythologists Vaitkevičienė and Vita Džekčioriūtė. According to Vaitkevičienė, beliefs (superstitions, spells, charms) are short texts that are usually considered fragments of traditional customs and convictions. They are magical and mythical relics with no clear structural basis (Vaitkevičienė 1998: 90).

Quite often these texts contain taboos, warnings, guesses, e.g. “When cutting off one’s nails, one must not drop them on the ground, lest the devil picks them up and carries them to hell, and one will have to go searching for them there after the death”; “Whoever has a blunt knife, will marry a lazy wife”; “If Easter is late, spring is late too”.

Such regulations might be defined as certain rules of interpretation or behavior, devised with regard to mythical or mystical, and sometimes even real causality linking various phenomena [4].

Beliefs fall into two categories: action and textual. Action beliefs are based on the logical connection between an action and its result. They typically specify whether an action is recommended or prohibited, and what the consequence of that action is. Whether the consequence is positive or negative depends on whether the action complies with social conventions or contradicts them. These conventions stem from ritual or magical behaviour. Action beliefs are often associated with special circumstances, such as transformation, maintaining a stable state, or the beginning of something, as well as special spaces and times (Vaitkevičienė 1998: 90–91).

The beliefs contained within the text provide information about past or future events. They are expressions of mythological codes rather than ritual or magical practices. Textual beliefs are semantically related to things revealed in legends, songs, incantations and traditional customs. Folklore researchers often consider these beliefs to be secondary to the aforementioned genres, providing clarification. However, textual beliefs have a stable structure based on identification,²⁵ and can therefore be considered a genre in their own right (*ibid.*: 95).

According to Džekčioriūtė, the interaction between action and textual belief can be found in proverbs and proverbial phrases. She distinguishes several clusters depending on how beliefs can be related to proverbs and proverbial phrases, and the topics to which they relate: weather; predictions; maturity rites; success, fortune, harmony and wealth; or animal characteristics (Džekčioriūtė 2021). L. Sauka drew parallels between beliefs, superstitions, spells and proverbs, highlighting their shared form and purpose. These concise texts serve as reminders of how individuals should conduct themselves and the potential consequences of their actions (Sauka L. 2004: 16).

CONCLUSION

Summarising the research on Lithuanian small genres of folklore in the 20th and 21st centuries, we can see that the focus was primarily on researching individual genres and attempting to define them, as well as identifying their distinguishing features. Researchers have paid a lot of attention to some genres, such as proverbs and proverbial phrases, riddles, incantations and beliefs. The necessary card file

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 25 For example “Stars are stones in the sky”, “Butterflies – Jewish souls that do not ascend to heaven” (Vaitkevičienė 1998: 95).

indexes and online databases have been compiled, and research has expanded into the international field. Research into other genres, such as sound imitations and tongue twisters, remains in its early stages.

It is evident that contemporary studies of small genres of folklore are being conducted in two directions. Firstly, research into traditional (or so-called old) folklore is advancing and gaining depth. Conversely, Lithuanian folklorists, who in this regard are perhaps slightly behind their colleagues from other countries, are conducting research into contemporary folklore. The upcoming generation of young researchers, who are undertaking contemporary folklore studies while also focusing on traditional folklore, give us hope that even neglected genres will also receive attention.

Recent studies of small genres of folklore reveal a tendency to abandon attempts to categorise folklore within strict genre boundaries. Instead, folklore is studied as a common system, while affiliation to a particular genre of its items is determined by the context and function of its use.

The professional career of folklorist Grigas shows how important a single scholar's contribution can be to a national science. He belongs to a generation of folklorists born in interwar Lithuania. Many of these scholars came from rural backgrounds and were familiar with folklore through personal experience. In secondary school, alongside classical education, they gained knowledge of folklore and were encouraged by their teachers to collect it and recognise its value. This is likely to have provided moral support for the collection, organisation and study of national heritage during the Soviet era. Alongside his colleagues Donatas Sauka, Leonardas Sauka, Norbertas Vėlius, Kostas Aleksynas, Bronė Kazlauskienė, Pranė Jokimaitienė and others, Grigas established the foundations of Lithuanian folklore studies upon which subsequent generations of folklorists could build.

SOURCES

LTRV – Lietuvių tautosakos archyvo videoteka (Lithuanian Folklore Archive Video Library).

INTERNET SOURCES

- [1] Lithuanian Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases (<https://elpp.archyvas.ilti.lt/en>).
- [2] Mįslių kartoteka (<https://ekalba.lt/misliu-kartoteka/>).
- [3] Liaudies tikėjimų kartoteka (<https://ekalba.lt/liaudies-tik%C4%97jim%C5%B3-kartoteka/>).
- [4] Aruodai: Beliefs/Superstitions (<https://old.aruodai.lt/tautosaka/aprasai/beliefs.htm>).

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