

Book Review

A VALUABLE COLLECTION OF LITHUANIAN FOLKSONGS

Lietuvos TSR Mokslų Akademija, Lietuvių Kalbos ir Literatūros Institutas. UETUVIU TAUTOSAKOS. I: DAINOS (Lithuanian SSR Academy of Sciences. Institute of Lithuanian Language and Literature. Lithuanian Folklore, vol. I: Songs), edited by Amb. Jonynas. editor of the series K. Korsakas. Vilnius. 1962. 835 pp.

An impressive volume, bound in Lithuanian linen and tastefully illustrated, starts a new series of works on Lithuanian folklore. It is a collective work: material for this volume was compiled by V. Barauskiene, B. Kazlauskiene and B. Ugincius. The first volume of the series is part of a planned five-volume collection of selected Lithuanian folklore. The foreword to the first volume defines the purpose and scope of the series: "Although this publication is a selective collection in form, it is also intended for the use of folklore scientists and experts ... The first and second volumes will contain folk songs... The third and fourth — narrative folklore and the fifth volume — small folklore items. The texts are being edited according to the current usage of literary Lithuanian, although preserving the original vocabulary, the archaic dialectical and other morphological forms in order to safeguard the artistic structure of the works" (p. 5-6). In principle, the plan appears to be sound; whether it can be carried out satisfactorily is another matter. The lack of progress on other planned major works, like *The Dictionary of Lithuanian Language* or the *Soviet Lithuanian Encyclopedia*, suggest that certain scepticism concerning the completion of the planned series on folklore is in order. Certainly, there is no possibility, nor even reason, for publishing all the variants of recorded folklore. It is therefore necessary to make selections. Whether this will be well done remains open to question.

It may be mentioned here that a similar series on Lithuanian folklore, in eight volumes, even under the same title, were formulated by this reviewer. The project was begun in 1939 and only the first volume of Series A was published, — *Lithuanian Legends* (Kaunas, 1940). When the war began and the Soviets occupied Lithuania, the work was disrupted. It is heartening that this plan, even though in a modified form, is being carried out again after twenty years.

The first volume of the series contains 646 selected folk songs with melodies to many of them. Additional information, such as the names, age and residence of those who sang the songs, date of recording, the names of the recorders, the archive numbers of the songs, is also provided. At the end of the book we find alphabetical listings of the singers and the recorders (pp. 800-808), a dictionary of dialectic terms and words of foreign origin (pp. 809-810), and an alphabetical index of the songs (pp. 817-835). For obvious reasons, the editors did not find it necessary to mention in the explanatory notes that some of the songs (e. g. no. 555) had already been published in the collection *One Hundred Folk Ballads* (Kaunas, 1941), which this reviewer had prepared and edited.

Of the 646 songs published in this volume, only 86 have been recorded during the present regime; 18 are repeated from sources already in print; 44 are taken from manuscripts of the Lithuanian Scientific Society; all of the remaining 498 songs are taken from the Manuscript Funds of Lithuanian Folklore, which is none other than the former Archives of Lithuanian Folklore, established during the years of independence. This reviewer can not hide his satisfaction that the extensive work of recording Lithuanian folklore carried out by this institution, which he headed for nine years, did not go to waste. One may also note that 49 songs are taken from the collection of the Rev. Prof. T. Brazys. He recorded these songs and their melodies in 1918-1919 in Dzūkija (Southern Lithuania). The collection was subsequently purchased from Brazys by the Faculty of Humanities of the Lithuanian University and the collection was finally placed in the above-mentioned Archives, now known as the Manuscript Fund of Lithuanian Folklore.

The selection of folklore texts is not an easy matter. Often it is difficult to decide what to include in a collection, because there are so many arguments for or against a specific variant. Keeping all this in mind, few criticisms can be made in respect to the selections found in this volume. One can say that all of the songs are good and merit publication, and some are truly gems and rarities. Finally, there are no really worthless items or cheap manufacture of the propaganda machine.

These will certainly not be lacking in the second volume in which "revolutionary" or "socialistic" songs will unavoidably have to be included.

Some selections, however, were unwarranted. Why, for example, was it necessary to repeat several songs already in print elsewhere, when a rich manuscript fund is easily accessible? Nine songs are repeated from the collection of Réza, fourteen from that of Juska, seven from Niemi - Sabaliauskas. This could only be justified if it was impossible to find a good variant in the manuscript. The just-mentioned collections can be considered as exemplary publications of Lithuanian folklore. However, there is no good reason for the reprinting of several songs from such minor publications as M. Petrauskas' *Lithuanian Songs* (Boston, 1922), J. Gudavičius' *Songs of Žemaitija* (Tilžė, 1912) or St. Šimkus' *Songbook* (Kaunas, 1919). These are popular booklets, the melodies are harmonized, there is no data on the recording of the songs, and finally, these songs are rather common.

In some cases the text of the song was taken from one source and the melody from another. Since the editors annotate such cases, not much harm is done; however, the text and melody, published under the same entry, should be from the same locality if the collection is to have scientific value.

A folklore collection without a system of classification defeats its purpose. The songs in this volume are arranged under the following categories: work songs (plowing, hay-harvest, rye-harvest, oat-harvest, buckwheat-rooting, flax and hemp picking, grazing, grinding, spinning, weaving, washing, fishing, hunting, berry-picking, and mushroom-picking); mythological songs; songs for the calendar festivals of the people (New Year, a term used instead of the popular "Advent" or "Christ mas"; Shrovetide; St. George's Day, the visiting of the corn fields, and St. John's Day), christening songs, wedding songs (with a list of subcategories); songs about family life (about parents and children, brother and sister, husband and wife, the fate of the daughter-in-law, the songs of orphans); songs about tragedies (these are ballads, but for some reason the use of this term is avoided); children's songs; songs about the flora and fauna.

Several years ago this classification system for folksongs, of which only a part has been presented here, already appeared in print as the guideline for the cataloguing of the songs in the Manuscript Fund (see the article by B. Kazlaukiene, "The classification system for the texts of sung Lithuanian folklore," in *Works of the Academy of Science of the Lithuanian SSR*, Series A, No. 2 (7), 1959, pp. 233-254). The collection reviewed here does attempt to utilize this system, but it is considerably modified and simplified — practical work with folklore always forces one to change the theoretical framework. It is claimed that this system was set up on a thematic-functional basis. However, these two principles rarely coincide, for in numerous cases the theme has nothing to do with function. Therefore, many songs with the same theme were placed under different headings when songs were classified according to their purpose or function. It is very difficult to maintain a strictly drawn framework in the classification of folklore. Folklore creations are as many-sided as life itself; they are many-faceted and complex. It is often very difficult to decide which cause is primary.

One may question why choral rounds ("sutartinės") are placed so far towards the end in this classification system, when most of them are work or dance songs, belonging to the most primitive and primary class of Lithuanian songs? Quite a number of choral rounds are placed in the chapter of work song and in other categories. In essence, choral rounds do not represent a distinct type of songs but only a unique form of singing. All kinds of songs can be sung in this manner — songs of work, dance, ceremonial songs, and narratives.

Every classification system has its weak spots; however, any classification system is better than none. If the folksongs in manuscripts will be classified according to the system devised by Kazlaukiene, with various unavoidable modifications of course, it will be a considerable aid to folksong researchers in the utilization of the voluminous manuscripts.

Amb. Jonynas provides an introductory survey which is superficial and obviously intended for the general public. Jonynas does not quote theoretical works on folklore or, suprisingly, not even Marx and Lenin, though Marxist terminology is unavoidably utilized (feudalism, capitalism, class struggle, etc). The use of Marxist theoretical framework in the interpretation of the folksongs is one of the most glaring weaknesses of Jonynas' essay, since a Marxist interpretation of Lithuanian history constitutes a gross distortion of the true historical way of our people and the development of the Lithuanian culture.

Several specific points in Jonynas' survey merit attention. Among other things he writes: "Socialist folklorists, having become more familiar with L. Reza's manuscripts, concluded that Reza had edited rather freely or even rewritten several of the songs (among them the mythological songs published in his collection). Therefore, the authenticity of these mythological songs is dubious" (p. 19). "Non-socialist" folklorists knew this long ago, moreover, they knew a few more facts, namely, that the Latvians have numerous and more authentic variants of the same mythological songs. Reza spoke both Lithuanian and Latvian fluently; he could have easily translated these songs from the Latvian language into related Lithuanian.

It is untrue that "little is known about *Laimė* or *Laima* (Luck or Fate), which is mentioned in one of the songs" (p. 19). In folklore, *Laima* or *Laimė* is vividly depicted as the guardian of the destinies of men. She is the goddess of fate. In addition, one cannot agree with numerous other statements made by Jonynas, for example that "There are not too many songs about flora and fauna in Lithuanian folklore" (p. 33). When all the recorded folksongs will be completely classified,

the close ties between nature and man, even to the extent of pantheism, inherent in our folklore, will be apparent to everyone.

It would truly have been a major accomplishment if all variants, already published or still in unpublished form in the manuscript funds, would have been listed for each song. This certainly would be a gigantic endeavor, but it could have been accomplished by a state -supported institution. Besides a considerable amount of the work has already been done. For example, a book by this reviewer, *Lithuanian Narrative Folksongs* (Washington, 1954), contains an almost complete bibliography for all narrative folksongs (ballads and others) published up to 1954. Included among these songs are as many as 115 types of songs, examples of which we find in this volume.

In general, the first volume of this ambitious undertaking contains much useful raw material for the students of Lithuanian folklore.

Dr. JONAS BALYS