

LITUANUS

LITHUANIAN QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Volume 41, No.4 - Winter 1995

Editor of this issue: Robert A. Vitas, Lithuanian Research & Studies Center

ISSN 0024-5089

Copyright © 1995 LITUANUS Foundation, Inc.



Vaclovas Biržiška, **Lithuanian Publications in the United States 1874-1910 — Amerikos lietuvių spauda 1874-1910**, edited by Stasė Vaškėlis (Institute of Lithuanian Studies [5620 S. Claremont Ave., Chicago, IL 60636] 1994), soft cover, 280 pages, with author, title, and chronological indexes; \$9.50.

Bibliographers are probably the least appreciated scholars. They usually gain only posthumous plaudits. Yet the tedious toil of this rare breed provides essential reference data for colleagues in various fields of learning. The Canadian husband-wife Kantautas duo and the name of Julius Tamošiūnas in Lithuania immediately leap into one's mind. The roster includes other names such as: Balys, Dainauskas, Gaučys, and Remeikis.¹

This Biržiška catalogue now takes its place among the published sources, though somewhat superseded by Kantautas and Tamošiūnas. Nevertheless, each bibliography has its peculiar historical value and flavor, and usually contains some titles unknown in the other companion references.² In this genre, the Institute of Lithuanian Studies has been in the forefront, and merits plaudits for these ventures.

One of the few women bibliographers is the editor of this Biržiška tome. The credits of Stasė Vaškėlis (Vaidinauskaitė) include positions as Director of the Public Library at Klaipėda, 1954-57; and library Vice-Director at Vilnius University, 1957-64. In the United States, she continued her library profession at Lafayette College, Easton, Pennsylvania, 1970-1984.

As the preface explains, Biržiška completed his task in 1952 while working at the Library of Congress. One can easily picture him pecking away at his old typewriter as he toiled late into the night. He obviously inserted a fresh ribbon for this most important task, as is evident from the clear, thick letters in the original manuscript, housed at his place of employment. He had already compiled five volumes from 1924 to 1939, published in Kaunas as *Lietuvių bibliografija*, spanning the years 1547 to 1910.

A perusal of this new published bibliography reveals the fact that the first waves of immigrants had few original works in their native language. Thus, in those early days, journalists and clergy prepared translations from Polish, English, Russian, German, and French sources. The selections were wide-ranging, including novels such as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Upton Sinclair's work. *The Jungle*. Religion, drama, and history were among other topics.

The editor and her consultants deserve praise for bringing this isolated manuscript into print, despite the hazards of a formidable challenge. The preparation had to be executed with utmost care and accuracy. A close inspection of the text, though, regrettably reveals some flaws.

Judging from the title, one would expect Biržiška's data to be reproduced precisely according to the original, as historical accuracy and necessity would seem to demand. Of course, one grants considerable allowance to the editor's hand for necessary or useful notations. Still, any additions or variations should always be abundantly plain so that the reader knows if it is Biržiška or the editor who is speaking. On these premises, one finds some editorial liberties with which some bibliographers may not agree. Thus, certain puzzling features must be pointed out.

Some rare titles from the private archives of dr. Kazys Pemkus have wisely been added in an Addenda, especially listing constitutions and by-laws of fraternal-benefit societies — all correctly identified. Less care was shown in other significant matters. The editor chose to rearrange Biržiška's text whose original provides chronological order, by putting titles in alphabetical sequence. This major change is not revealed to the reader nor is any rationale given in the preface. Therein the reader is notified about "261 new books and periodicals," but there is no way to discern where these additions have been inserted, as e.g., by use of an asterisk. Reference in the preface to a Lithuanian press center (p. 15) in South Boston, Massachusetts, in 1894 is curious. The enclave was just taking shape in that decade, with no sign just yet of any publications.

There are also other editorial liberties to which bibliographers might take exception. In his title, Biržiška's starting date is 1875, now changed to 1874 without explanation. The entry about the St. Joseph Temperance Society of Shenandoah, Pennsylvania, on page 111, no. 607, is truncated. Biržiška (p. 4, no. 15 of the original) includes the roster of officers, i.e.,

Is this list not historically invaluable, especially since this information may not exist anywhere else? Biržiška uses (page 2, no. 7 of the original) upper case for "Augustynas Zeytz's Historyja Septiniu Mokitoiu." The editor (p. 78, no. 344) chose to reduce the second and third words to lower case, apparently to conform with present-day usage, instead of leaving the title in the original and offering a comment in brackets.

More than a few entries are entirely omitted for no apparent reason and without warning to the reader. Here are two instances. Among the five entries listed under Juozas Baltrušaitis (pp. 46-47, nos. 132-135), lacking is Biržiška's entry (p. 172), no. 1038 that reads:

Amerikiečių Cirkas arba Sorkės. Su paveikslais. (Priedas prie "Dilegėlių" N. II 1908.). Išleido "Dilgelės". Spauda "Kovos" Philadelphia, Pa. 1908 p. 16 18-18 cm.

Father Juozas Žebrys is another illustration. On page 43 of the original typescript, Biržiška provides the following:

"No. 241 - (Juozas Žebrys) [the check mark or paukštukas over the Z is added manually as are the other diacriticals] - Trumpas apraszymas apė žemė arba žemrašys. Tilžėje 1896 (spausdinta pas J. Schoenke) p. 64.

This citation is lacking in Žebrys' writings on pp. 206-207 of the edited version. Nevertheless, one wonders if Biržiška missed another version of Žebrys' geography, i.e. *Trumpas Apraszymas Žemės arba Žemeraszstys*, printed by L.M.D. Demereckas at Tilsit, East Prussia early in 1896 in a run of 4,000 copies. Perhaps Biržiška's information was defective, and is meant to refer to the same brochure. My citation is taken from advertisements for the geography in Žebrys' own newspaper, *Rytas*.

Furthermore, should not the priest's surname be properly given in a bracketed explanation? Though Biržiška erred in spelling the priest's surname as Žebrys, historical accuracy requires that he be identified as Žebrys, the spelling he used in his letters to his priest-brother, Kazimieras, at Želva, Lithuania, and in correspondence with the Chancery Office of the diocese of Hartford, Connecticut, where Father Juozas served at Waterbury and later at New Britain. Thus, he should be correctly identified as Žebrys, not Žebrys as given on p. 206, no. 1289; p. 213, no. 1324; p. 224, no. 1369;

and in the index, p. 250. According to the *Chicago Manual of Style*, use of brackets indicates an interpolation, correction, explanation, translation, or comment from an author or editor to the reader. This norm was observed inconsistently in this Biržiška work. Take his original entry (p. 4, no. 17) that gives place of publication as: (New Yorkas 1885), whereas the published version reads: [New York, NY, 1885] on page 173, no. 1062, incorrectly implying that the editor added this information.

Inexplicable alterations seem to abound. The printed text, no. 1222 on page 196, deviates from Biržiška's (p. 1, no. 3) Patrono and Paloku by switching to lower case. Also, the original notation "Druku Kurjero New Yorke pas T. Janocki Brooklynie N.Y. p. 16" is reduced to "Brooklyn, NY. T. Jaockio sp., 1877. 16 p."

Another instance of rearrangement and abbreviation without a word to the reader is Biržiška's original entry (p. 4, no. 18) about Šliūpas' newspaper, *Unija*. The typescript reads as follows:

18) Unija 1885 N. 1-25 [with New York inserted manually above the date]

[Then in handwriting the following data] Publisher Mykolas Tvarauskas. Editor N. 1-14 Jonas Šliūpas, N 15-25 Mykolas Tvarauskas. [End of handwritten data.] Mit. d. Lit. Lit. gesel. II p. 383; Jr. *Jonas Suskaita* p. 27; S. *Baltramaitis* N. 1319; J. *Šliupas* Jaunatvė p. 27; V. Biržiška N. 2546.

The editor (p. 228, no. 1382) adds — Lietuwiszkas nedelinis laikrasztis - a helpful phrase, but without brackets, giving the impression that it is found in the original. At the same time, the section beginning with "Mit d. Lit. gesel.... V. Biržiška N. 2546" is omitted without explanation.

Happily, typographical miscues are few: e.g., p. 13 — "illegally" instead of "illegally;" p. 15 — "Shamokine" instead of "Shamokin;" p. 25 — "Minersville" instead of "Minersville;" p. 227 — "Lithuanica" instead of "Lituanica." Sad to say, a folio in the back of the poorly glued book came loose after only ten minutes of handling.

Reluctantly I must point out these troublesome aspects lessen the value of this publication, despite the earnest intentions of the publishers and editor. (This is a volume that suffered too long a period of gestation, reputedly ready for the press in 1985, according to the entry about the editor in *Lietuvių enciklopedija*, Vol. XXXVII, p. 636). An effort to solicit one or two more referees in library science would have overcome these difficulties. Biržiška has been honored, but he deserves better.

Notes

1. Adam & Filomena Kantautas, *A Lithuanian Bibliography* (Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: The University of Alberta Press, 1975) and its *Supplement of 1979*; Julius Tamošiūnas, *Lietuviškų periodinių leidinių bibliografija 1832-1982* (Kaunas, 1991) and a second volume for the ensuing decade, 1983-1993, also published in Kaunas in 1994; Jonas Balys, *Lithuania and Lithuanians* (New York, 1961); Povilas Gaučys, Jonas Dainauskas, Tomas Remeikis, *Lietuvių išėivijos spaudos bibliografija 1970-1974* (Chicago: Institute of Lithuanian Studies Press) and the further work of Gaučys and Dainauskas for 1975-1979 under the same name. Dainauskas also prepared data entitled *Lietuvos istoriografija* in the 1970s, printed in photo-copied form by the now inactive Lithuanian Historical Society.

2. Every so often, a researcher comes upon a title in some unexpected archive. E.g., I found Fr. Petras Saurusaitis' English-language, 29-page pamphlet on Lithuanian family names (p. 165, no. 1003) at the State Library of New York at Albany, possibly the only known extant copy. Also, during a trip to Mynooth, Ireland, a few years ago, I found a copy of Fr. Petras Saurusaitis' Lithuanian grammar, bound together with another unrelated book!

William Wolkovich-Valkavičius
Norwood, MA