

BOOK REVIEW

A SUCCESSFUL AND FRUITFUL MODEL – A LITHUANIAN CHARMS COLLECTION AS A CONTRIBUTION TO THE RESEARCH OF VERBAL MAGIC

(Review of the book Daiva Vaitkevičienė, ed., *Lietuvių užkalbėjimai: gydymo formulės / Lithuanian Verbal Healing Charms*, Vilnius: Lietuvių Literatūros ir Tautosakos Institutas, 2008, 919 pp., ISBN 978-9955-698-94-4)

It is an honour and joy for me to share my thoughts on the collection of Lithuanian charms made by Daiva Vaitkevičienė. The first time I heard of this work was at the conference *Charms, Charmers and Charming* in 2010 in Bucharest. Then in Tartu in 2011, I had the opportunity to read the volume and to use it during my own research on Bulgarian medieval and early modern charms.

The book has eight chapters: 'Foreword' (in Lithuanian), 'Lietuvių užkalbėjimai' (in Lithuanian), 'Lithuanian Verbal Charms' (in English), 'Gydomieji užkalbėjimai' (in Lithuanian), 'The Corpus of Lithuanian Charm-Types' (in English), five indexes (of charm-types, of illnesses and situations, of informants, of collectors and geographical, all in Lithuanian), a glossary (in Lithuanian), and a list of abbreviations. The chapters 'Lietuvių užkalbėjimai' and 'Lithuanian Verbal Charms' discuss theoretical, methodological and historical aspects of Lithuanian charms. The two parts 'Gydomieji užkalbėjimai' and 'The Corpus of Lithuanian Charm-Types' are subdivided in ten sub-chapters, according to narrative function: 'Separation and Connection', 'Expulsion', 'Transmission and Reciprocation', 'Purification', 'Destruction', 'Locomotion and Cessation', 'Designation', 'Manuscription', 'Redemption' and 'Canonic Prayers'. The Lithuanian 'Gydomieji užkalbėjimai' section also contains a sub-chapter with Polish charms and a sub-chapter with Russian charms. The book contains also thirty-two black-and-white photographs of informants, collectors, and manuscripts. The texts of the charms are accompanied by detailed additional information referring to explanations and directions of the performance, the primary sources of the charms, the name of its recorder, the age and dwelling place of the charmer, and information on its scholarly publication.

The volume has only one disadvantage, namely that not all of the charms in the collection are translated in English. This is indeed a pity, especially in the case of charm No 374 (recorded in 1939), addressing the new moon and the kingdom of Perkūnas. The editor herself points out the uniqueness and signifi-

cance of this charm, but the lack of English translation impedes access to such a precious piece of verbal magic. Therefore an English translation of this important text (and of all the other untranslated charms in the book) would make render collection even more valuable. Here I would like to thank to my Lithuanian colleague Lina Sokolovaitė, who was so kind as to help me in overcoming the language barrier.

Undoubtedly, *Lietuvių užkalbėjimai: gydymo formulės / Lithuanian Verbal Healing Charms* is a very important book in our field, both thematically and methodologically. It represents an excellent model, in terms of both content and its organization. The book is a proper extensive corpus, offering a significant amount of charms. In this way, the charms are not only exemplary, but also representative for a whole tradition, with all its special features and nuances. At the same time, *Lietuvių užkalbėjimai: gydymo formulės / Lithuanian Verbal Healing Charms* positions the Lithuanian tradition among the other traditions of charms and charming. Being a solid extensive corpus, the book thereby encourages the contextualization and the comparison between different traditions. It also provides starting point for an interdisciplinary research in the fields of philology, ethnography, folklore, anthropology and popular religion. And finally, the bilingual form of the book helps a much broader audience to access charms from a vernacular tradition and to appreciate its uniqueness.

In conclusion, the book of Daiva Vaitkevičienė is an important collection to be studied, a useful tool to be applied, and an excellent model to be followed.

Svetlana Tsonkova
Central European University – Budapest