Lithuanian Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases for Local and International Research

Card index, Publication and Database

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The Collection of Lithuanian Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases built by the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore in Vilnius is the largest compilation of this kind, presenting a thorough view of the corpus of Lithuanian traditional paremias. Including new proverbial phrases, although on a reasonably small scale, it provides data about continuity and changes of proverb usage as well.

The larger part of the Collection consists of archival data, which is paremias collected mostly from the Lithuanian Folklore Archive (LTR) and Lithuanian Scientific Society's Archive (LMD), with the oldest archive collections dating back to the 19th century. These texts are mainly samples of the spoken language and dialects. Their immense quantity is a distinguishing feature of the Collection. Another large part of this assemblage of Lithuanian paremias consists of texts collected from written sources ranging from archaic to modern examples of literature. It is worth mentioning that there are around 1,500 proverbs from the period of the 16th to the 18th centuries.[1]

The collection is accessible through three resources: the Card Index, the Publication "Lithuanian Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases" (LPP), and The Electronic Compilation of Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases (eLPP). The Card Index was the first organized and systematized resource of Lithuanian paremias and served as the foundation for LPP and eLPP. The Card Index was created in 1970–1990 following the initiative of the famed Lithuanian paremiologist Kazys Grigas, who was also the author of the system itself. There are around 50,000 proverb types and more than 200,000 variant texts in the Card Index.

The Card Index consists of proverb types and their variants. It is arranged in alphabetical order according to the first letter of the main word in the title of a proverb type (the main word is considered to be the first noun; in the case of the absence of a noun, it is the first verb; in the case of the absence of both, it is the first nominative word, etc.). The types that have the same main word are arranged in the alphabetical order according to the first word in the heading of the type. In our approach, the proverb type includes all proverb variants from different informants, times, or places. The variants are united by the same constructive motifs of the image of the proverb (Grigas 2000: 8).

The Publication *Lithuanian Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases*

After creating the systematic Card Index, at the end of the 20th century, the compilation of the Publication of Lithuanian Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases was initiated. The main aim was to make the Proverb Collection public and accessible to researches of different fields. Four volumes have been published so far, containing approximately half of the Card Index data. The first volume of LPP contains a Preface and a thorough article on the history of collecting and publishing of Lithuanian proverbs and proverbial sayings in Lithuanian, German and Russian (Grigas 2000).

In this publication, proverbs are presented by proverb type, with their variants, which are further subdivided into versions. The system of publication differs slightly from the Card Index system. Here, proverb types are arranged by semantically the main word; for example, the proverb *If you chase two hares, you will not even catch one* in the publication goes under the main word 'two', but in

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1 The publication of Lithuanian proverbs did not begin until relatively late: in sixteenth and seventeenth century publications. At that time, they were presented as linguistic examples and illustrations of the Lithuanian national character. The greatest store of proverbs from this period can be found in Jokūbas Brodovskis's (Iacobo Brodowsky) German-Lithuanian and Lithuanian-German dictionary (Brodowskÿ N.D.).
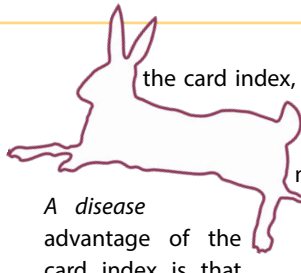
the card index, it stays under the word 'hare'. In many cases, the semantic main word corresponds to a formal main word, as in the example of *A disease rides, and health walks*. The advantage of the publication compared to the card index is that the publication presents carefully sorted data without duplicates, copies, and fakes.

At the very beginning of their work on the publication, the compilers decided to add some additional data – Lithuanian proverb equivalents in Latvian, Polish, German, English, Latin, and Russian. The equivalents are presented with the corresponding Lithuanian proverb. Proverb type titles are translated into English, German, and Russian. Translations are literal, and in some cases they are presented with explanations of usage or the meaning of the proverb. The translations are presented as indexes at the end of each volume.

With a clear aim to show the intertextuality of Lithuanian paremias in folkloristics, links between paremias and other folklore genres are more clearly spelled out in the recent volumes. This reflects a new direction of research in Lithuanian paremiology. This data, along with the main corpus of proverbs and their variants, is included in the Electronic Compilation of Lithuanian Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases.

Electronic Compilation of Lithuanian Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases

The development of the first version of the Electronic Compilation of Lithuanian Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases (eLPP) began in 1998 after receiving funding from the State Commission of the Lithuanian Language. This database, which was one of the first databases in the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore, was initially constructed as a backup file for the card index. Approximately one-third of the proverb types and their variants have been transferred to the database, along with some additional data, such as the informant, the date and place the proverb was recorded, etc. The next step was to create a full digital index of Lithuanian paremias, which was required for the compilation of LPP (2006–2007).

Over time, it became clear that this version of the database had some technical deficiencies and lacked some information. While compiling the publication and the database, it was observed that it might be supplemented with additional material, such as equivalents in other languages, type title translations into English, and various contextual aspects. So, in 2018, after receiving funding from the Lithuanian Research Council (LMTLT), the database was updated.[2]

The new version of the Electronic Compilation of Lithuanian Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases has both a Lithuanian and an English version and is available to the public as a website (http://archyvas.llti.lt/eLPP/en). The website contains short introductory articles on characteristics of proverbs genre, the history and structure of the card index, the publication *Lithuanian Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases* (*Lietuvių patarlės ir priežodžiai*), the Electronic Compilation of Lithuanian Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases and also a short history of the collection and publishication of Lithuanian paremias. Moreover, it contains a section dedicated to the bibliography of Lithuanian paremiology research.

The search engine contains the functions of a simple search, advanced search, and selection lists. The simplest way to search in Lithuanian is to type a word, part of a word, parts of words, or a phrase into the main search box. There is also the possibility to search by the proverb's main word, which can be chosen from a list. An additional search box (in the column on the left side) allows for more English search options, such as by an equivalent English, German, Latvian, Polish or Russian proverb or an English translation of the title of the Lithuanian proverb type.

As mentioned above, the updated database contains both the card index and the publication data. In the description of proverb types, the user can see the *heading (title) of the type* in Lithuanian, the *number* allocated in the publication, and *translations* of the heading of the proverb type into Russian, German, and English. The links to similar proverbs types are also provided. Popular *equivalents* of a proverb in Latvian, Polish, German, English, Latin, and Russian, and the sources of the equivalents were added as well. The database has a larger number of equivalents compared to the publication, as it includes all possible variants from different sources – even analogous texts.

Due to the recently observed increasing need for an explanation of a saying, the category *interpretation* has been introduced. Explanations of variants of a proverb are provided in this category. If there is an absence of recorded explanations, the researcher compiling the database provides a possible interpretation of a saying, based on its traditional usage. Grigas's approach is followed, which says that one of the proverb's main features is the stability of its semantic content (Grigas 2001: 108). In some cases, the help of linguists, senior ethnolinguists, and folklorists, who are *not only* researchers but also carriers of tradition, is indispensable. The interpretation of proverbs and small scale linguistic-folkloristic research on individual proverbs

help in the translation of proverbs into foreign languages. The interpretations of the most popular Lithuanian proverbs have been translated to English.

Variants of proverbs that have been transferred into the database are not yet visible to the public, as they still need to be further processed. At this moment, users can see the number of variants (with their sources), which is an indicator of the proverb's popularity.

The database noticeably improved the accessibility of Lithuanian proverbs to the international research community and hopefully in the future it will fulfill the contemporary demands for data of local and international folklorists, as well as of the general public.

The present eLPP is still not the final product of the work being done by Lithuanian paremiologists. The database is constantly updated with new proverbial types, variants of types, equivalents in other languages, translations into English, and the contextual material of paremias. The updating of the database has become a platform for its new informational development. Like any unfinished product, this database may have some deficiencies and there is more work to be done. This is why the team working on the Lithuanian paremias would very much appreciate the comments, remarks, suggestions, and any other form of feedback from the members of the international community of folklorists.

Where to find us

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eLPP

**LITHUANIAN
PROVERBS AND
PROVERBIAL
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