

Rainer Eckert, Elvira-Julia Bukevičiūtė, Friedhelm Hinze. Die baltischen Sprachen: Eine Einführung. Leipzig, Berlin, Munich, Vienna, New York: Langenscheidt, Verlag Enzyklopädie 1994, pp. 416.

The book is divided into five main parts (1) an introduction (pp. 15-70), (2) Lithuanian (pp. 71-245), (3) Latvian (pp. 247-382), (4) Old Prussian (pp. 383-406) and (5) bibliographies, explanation of abbreviations and linguistic symbols (p. 407-416). In the foreword (pp. 5-6) Prof. Eckert writes that this introduction to the study of the Baltic languages is aimed at the broad circle of persons who are interested in the Baltic languages. The book has as its goal to familiarize people with the unusual cultures of the Baltic peoples through their languages. Therefore the main emphasis of the book is the presentation of the contemporary Baltic languages, Lithuanian and Latvian, languages which have retained an exceptional tradition of folk poetry and in which in the last century a belles-lettristic literature of European caliber has arisen. At the same time the languages are of interest for genetic, typological and areal linguistics.

The introduction notes first the ambiguity of the word *Baltic*, a word which in its linguistic meaning applies to the Indo-European Baltic languages (Lithuanian, Latvian, Old Prussian, etc.), but in its geographic meaning includes the non-Indo-European Estonians. The authors point out that in the linguistic sense the word *Baltic* was introduced by the German scholar G.H.F. Nesselmann (1811-1881) in his book about Old Prussian published in 1845 (*Die Sprache der alten Preussen an ihren Überresten erläutert* [Berlin]), the authors note further that the Baltic peoples at one time spread farther than they do today, in the west, for example, beyond the Vistula, although the view that at one time they extended as far west as the Elbe is not certain since many of the place names could be explained as being Slavic or belonging to the Old European hydronymy (p. 18).

The authors quote Mažiulis' view that there were originally two proto-Baltic dialects, a central dialect with proto-Lithuanian/Latvian and a peripheral dialect with a further subdivision into a southern West Baltic with proto-Old Prussian and Jatvingian and northern West Baltic with proto-Curonian and possibly Semigalian and Selonian (p. 19). The introduction also contains brief historical sketches of the Old Prussian, Lithuanian and Latvian nations (pp. 27-35).

In the chapter on the Balto-Slavic linguistic relationships the authors bring in the very latest material, from a September 1989 colloquium in Jena entitled 'Indogermanisch, Slawisch und Baltisch' (published in Munich in 1992). The authors give various views, but conclude (p. 39) that on the basis of the detailed contemporary knowledge of Baltic and Slavic it is difficult to accept a common proto-language. Rather one can say that both linguistic branches come from a single Indo-European dialect area, which surely showed differences and that a prolonged historical proximity of these branches led to the similarities between Baltic and Slavic. As examples of common innovations the authors cite the development of the Indo-European syllabic sonorants *r, r', l, l', n, n', m, m which developed into the diphthongs *ur, ir, ul, il, un, in, um, im* respectively, e.g., *r' gave *ir* in both Baltic and Slavic, cf. Old Prussian *kirsnan* 'black' and proto-Slavic **čirnu* (cf. Russian *čěrnij*) beside Old Indic *kr̥snā-*. As an example of *n' > in the authors give Lith. dialect *mintis* which they define as 'Rätsel, riddle' (p. 38). This is certainly correct, although one wonders why they didn't give the word as standard Lithuanian and define it as 'thought, idea.' But I should like to add here another Balto-Slavic parallelism which, as far as I can determine, nobody else has noticed. From the phonemic point of view the so-called Slavic first palatalization of velars could be considered a Balto-Slavic phenomenon. In Lithuanian the *g* of *geras* 'good' (where *g* occurs before the front vowel *e*), the *g* of gen. sg. *dāgio* '(of the) thistle' (where *g* occurs before a non-front vowel in the genitive singular of an etymological *-jo stem noun), the *k* of *kelias* 'road' and the *k* of gen. sg. *plākio* '(of a) kind of fish, (Blicca bjoerkna)' (where *k* occurs before a non-front vowel in the genitive singular of an etymological *-jo stem noun) are all palatalized as opposed to the *g* of *ganà* 'enough' and the *k* of *kalbà*. 'language.' In this way Lithuanian shows a phonemic merger of **g* before front vowels with **gj* on the one hand and **k* before front vowels with **kj* on the other hand, both of which mergers could theoretically be considered to date back to Balto-Slavic times.

The introduction to this book also gives seven characteristics of the proto-Baltic language: (1) the existence of only a single form for the third person of all numbers in the finite verbs; (2) preterite stems in *-a* and *-e*; (3) the existence of the thematic vowel *-a* in all the persons of the present tense; (4) the extension of *e*-stems in the substantives, e.g., Lith. *žemė*, Latv. *zeme*, Old Prussian *semme* 'earth'; (5) the presence of a large number of similar methods of word formation, for example,

the nouns of action with the formants *-s-* and *-n-*, e.g., Latv. *iešana*, Lith. *eisena* 'gait,' Old Prussian *bousennis* 'condition, state'; (6) old two-element personal names, such as Lith. *Butgeidas*, Old Prussian *Butigede*, etc.; (7) a special Baltic vocabulary, e.g., Lith. *ąžuolas*, Latv. *ozols*, Old Prussian *ansonis* 'oak,' Lith. *genys*, Latv. *dzenis*, Old Prussian *genix* 'woodpecker,' etc. (pp. 39-40).

The introduction contains also a brief survey of the older writings in the Baltic languages (pp. 47-56), the history of the East Baltic standard language (pp. 56-60), East Baltic folklore (pp. 60-64) and a survey of the research on the Baltic languages (pp. 64-70). The authors seem to be fully aware of recent work completed outside of Europe, because we find reference to V. Vikis-Freibergs' and I. Freibergs' studies of the Latvian *dainas* published in 1988 in Montreal (p. 62), T. Inoue's monograph on the lexical correspondences of Balto-Slavic published in Kobe, Japan in 1986 (p. 70) and T.G. Fennell's editions of Rehehusen's *Manuductio ad linguam lettonicam* (Melbourne, 1982) and G. Dressel's *Gantz kurtze Anleitung zur Lettischen Sprache* (Melbourne, 1984) (p. 55).

The major portions of the book, however, are devoted to scientific descriptions of Lithuanian (pp. 71-245) and Latvian (pp. 247-382). These descriptions are so thorough that they could be used in lieu of a text-book, the only drawback perhaps being the lack of student exercises and readings. Since they were prepared primarily for a German-speaking audience a good deal of effort has gone into a comparison of these languages with German. For example, the authors explain that in contrast to the articulation of German which is characterised by heavy aspiration and a strong articulatory tension, Lithuanian has a relatively small amount of aspiration and a low degree of tension of the articulatory muscles. This is noted particularly by the lack of the glottal stop before initial vowels, in a gradual shift from one sound to another, in the primarily unaspirated formation of voiceless stops, in a less intense friction in voiceless fricatives as well as a stronger tendency to assimilation than in German (p. 77). In my view English seems to occupy a position somewhat between that of German and Lithuanian. Those of us with German-speaking ancestors even though the German language has been lost for generations sometimes use a glottal stop before initial vowels, but many Americans do not. On the other hand native speakers of English do tend to have the delayed voicing of voiced consonants, not typical of the Romance, Baltic or Slavic languages. In addition this delayed voicing is expressed by the heavy aspiration characteristic of both English and German voiceless stop consonants, an aspiration which is also lacking in the Romance, Baltic or Slavic languages.

German has a contrast between long and short vowels in the stressed syllable, but Lithuanian has this contrast in unstressed syllables as well, e.g., nom. sg. *nósis* 'nose,' but nom. pi. *nósys* 'noses.' Similarly the ace. sg. of the noun *kalbą* 'language' (with a long final vowel) vs. the 3 pres. verb *kalba* 'speaks' (with a short final vowel). According to the authors native speakers of German must practice carefully the pronunciation of long unstressed vowels (p. 81).

In addition to the carefully prepared tables of vowels (p. 80) and consonants (pp. 94-96) according to articulatory distinctive features there is a relatively detailed analysis of the method of production of each sound with particular attention to how the sound differs from its closest German analogue. Thus, for example, in Lith. *mėilė* 'love' the pronunciation is [m'æ'il'è], quite different from the diphthong in German *Meile* 'mile' which is pronounced [maele] (p. 86). Or, for example, the authors write that differently from German the sequences *-ng-* and *-nk-* are pronounced as two sounds in Lithuanian, i.e., a velar nasal continuant plus a voiced or voiceless stop respectively, thus *liñksmas* 'happy' is pronounced [l'in-ksmas] whereas in German *links* 'left' is pronounced as [lins] and the orthographic *-nk-* denotes only a single sound n (p. 101).

Sections on Lithuanian nominal and verbal morphology are equally carefully prepared and numerous helpful examples are given. Probably for the beginner one of the hardest aspects of learning Lithuanian is the mastery of the four Lithuanian nominal accent classes and the relationship of these classes to the nominal stem types. Although essentially there are only an immobile class (with exceptions for de Saussure's law if the stem is short or circumflex) and a mobile class (with similar exceptions for de Saussure's law if the stem is short or circumflex), the system seems complex to the beginner. Complete paradigms of all nominal classes with all possible accent classes are given on pp. 126-131. Class 3a (with acute stem) and class 3b (with circumflex or short stem) have numerous subclasses designated according to the number of syllables. I was impressed that the authors were able to find a six syllable noun (class 36b) *pageležinkelė* 'place along the railroad' in the accusative singular of which the stress shifts forward to *pāgelezinkelę*.

The discussion of the verb is no less exhaustive than that of the noun and one finds complete paradigms of all verbal classes. The Lithuanian section concludes with a survey of the published research on the Lithuanian language beginning with Nesselmann's *Wörterbuch der Littauischen Sprache* (Königsberg 1851) and ending with B. Panzer's edition of *Der Kleine Catechismus D.M. Lutheri. Mažas Katgismas D. Mertino Lutteraus. Besorgt van D. Henrich Lysius. Tillsitt 1719* (Frankfurt am Main... 1993).

The section on Latvian is slightly shorter than the one on Lithuanian, but seems to contain an equally thorough account of that language. In the description of the Latvian alphabet (pp. 247-248) the authors give both the modern orthography and the orthography according to the famous Latvian linguist Janis Endzelins. I think that this is justified because of Endzelins' profound importance for Baltic linguistics (in my view he was probably the greatest Balticist who has ever lived). Tables of vowels (p. 255) and consonants (pp. 267-268) prepared according to their articulatory distinctive features are to be found in the Latvian section also and individual descriptions of each sound are to be found, but with less attention to the contrastive German than in the Lithuanian section. One exception to this is the note that for Latvian k one might pronounce German *tja* with a more or less coalesced or amalgamated enunciation of the t and the j. Fennell and Gelsen (1980, xxv)

describe this as 'a dorsal plosive, with no counterpart in English... English speakers are likely to perceive it as an odd kind of *t*.'

Since Latvian lacks the accent classes characteristic of the Lithuanian noun it was possible to give a more or less exhaustive treatment of the declension in fewer pages. The Latvian verb, on the other hand, is at least as complex as the Lithuanian verb and has at least one formation completely unknown to Lithuanian, viz., the debitive, examples of which are given by the authors in all tenses (p. 319), e.g.: (present) *man jābūt* 'I must be,' (preterite) *man bija jābūt* 'I had to be,' (future) *man būs jābūt* 'I shall have to be,' (perfect) *man (ir) bijis jābūt* 'I have had to be,' (pluperfect) *man bija bijis jābūt* 'I had had to be,' (future perfect) *man būs bijis jābūt* 'I shall have had to be' and (conditional perfect) *man būtu jābūt* 'I would have to be,' (conditional perfect) *man būtu bijis jābūt* 'I would have had to be' all of which forms also exist in indirect speech as well so that one might have, e.g., an indirect future perfect *man būšuot bijis jābūt* 'I shall have had to be (they say)' (p. 319-320). Similarly to the Lithuanian section the Latvian section also contains a survey of the published research on the Latvian language. This begins with A. Bielenstein's *Die lettische Sprache nach ihren Lauten und Formen erklärend und vergleichend dargestellt...* (Berlin. 1. Theil: *Die Laute. Die Wortbildung*, 1863 and 2. Theil: *Die Wortbeugung*, 1864) and concludes with V. Vikis-Freibergs' *Linguistics and Poetics of Latvian Folk songs. Essays in Honour of the Sesquicentennial of the Birth of Kr. Barons* (Kingston, Montreal 1989).

The Old Prussian section (pp. 383-406) is, of course, much shorter than the Lithuanian and Latvian sections. The authors write, correctly in my view, that the establishment of the phonological system of Old Prussian is extraordinarily difficult as a result of the limited material available, dialect differences about which we know too little and finally as a result of the poor quality of the transcription. The latter stems from the fact that the Old Prussian of the catechisms, the only extended texts, was supplied with a writing system by German pastors, who knew the language poorly. In addition it must be taken into consideration that at that time Old Prussian itself was under heavy pressure from the German language. Nevertheless the authors do an excellent job of presenting in a nutshell the essential points of what we know about Old Prussian grammar.

I have noticed very few misprints. On p. 81 a *-t-* is missing in *wesenlicher*. On p. 382 we find *Freibergis* for *Freibergs* and on p. 406 the name T. *Inue* is Latinized differently from the way it appears in the references, viz., T. *Inoue*.

It is interesting to note that the title of this book is almost the same as that of the book by the distinguished deceased German Balticist, Ernst Fraenkel. Fraenkel's book, entitled *Die baltischen Sprachen: Ihre Beziehungen zu einander und zu den indogermanischen Schwesteridiomen als Einführung in die baltische Sprachwissenschaft* (Heidelberg, 1950) contained only 126 pages, was much more limited in scope and, I believe, is much more difficult to read for the non-linguist. Nevertheless Fraenkel's book remains a classic in the field and it is my opinion that the book under review here is of similarly high quality and that the authors have followed the best tradition of careful and exhaustive German scholarship.

A vast amount of hard work has gone into the preparation of this book and the authors are to be admired for their patience and care. The book can be highly recommended to anyone interested in the Baltic languages.

Reference:

Fennell, T.G. and H. Gelsen. 1980. *A Grammar of Modern Latvian*. Vol. 1. The Hague, Paris, New York: Mouton.

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