

RECENZIJS

Pietro U. Dini, *Le lingue baltiche*, *Lingue d'Europa*/5, series ed. by Emanuele Banfi, La Nuova Italia Editrice, Scandicci (Firenze), 1997, XXII, 531 pp.

The purpose of this book, which is a volume in the series *Lingue d'Europa* edited by Emanuele Banfi, is to present in Italian a general introduction to Baltic philology and linguistics (p. XVII). There are ten chapters, two appendices, a bibliography of the works cited and an index of names.

Chapter 1 entitled 'La Baltia e la preistoria linguistica' includes a discussion of the definition and origin of the term 'Baltic', the geographical extension of the Baltic culture, references to the Balts in antiquity (Herodotus, Ptolemy, et al.), Proto-Baltic and its linguistic fragmentation and a discussion of Wolfgang P. Schmid's view that the Baltic language area forms the center of the original Indo-European area. This view, which is comforting and agreeable to all of us in Baltic studies, has been characterized by Klimas (1988, 25) as a Trojan horse within the 'rather conservative academic community'. Dini ends his first chapter with a quotation from Klimas: '...it is not clear when its „soldiers“ [i. e., from the Trojan horse] will make the conquest'.

Dini begins chapter 2 'Lineamenti dell'unità linguistica baltica' with the correct observation that the objections to the hypothesis of a Proto-Baltic have not stopped the production of a vast scientific literature concerning the various aspects of the Baltic protolanguage. In addition to the traditional views of the development of Baltic vocalism, represented in the works of Kazlauskas and Mažiulis, Dini presents the views of Levin (1975) which are based on the chain shifts ascribed to William Labov. Dini (p. 62) characterizes Levin's views as the 'American school' (*Scuola americana*). I personally think that Levin's analysis is path-breaking and that this article of his is absolutely excellent, although I don't know how many other Americans would subscribe to it. In

any case I am delighted to see that Dini has seen fit to include Levin's views in his book.

Chapter 3 'Il contesto linguistico' takes up the relationships between the Baltic languages and other Indo-European languages and the surrounding Finno-Ugric languages. The much vexed problem of Balto-Slavic unity is discussed in this chapter. Among the phonological agreements between Baltic and Slavic is the fate of vocalic or sonant $*r$, $*l$, $*m$, $*n$ (p. 125) and such cognates as Lith. *miñti*, *minėti* 'to remember; to mention,' Old Church Slavic *mñěti* 'to think,' Latin *mens* 'mind,' Greek *mimnēskēin* 'to remind' etc. are quoted to illustrate the development of $*n$. But Dini mentions here also Russian *minovat'* ordinarily translated as 'to pass by' and Czech *minouti* ordinarily translated as 'to miss,' words which I have never seen in this context and which are ordinarily connected with Lith. *maĩnas* 'exchange' (see Fraenkel, 1955 ff., 396). In any case the Russian/Czech root *min-* could not be derived from $*mñ-$, only from Proto-Slavic $*mñ-$ or $*mein-$. Similarly Greek *mimnēskēin* does not reflect a root form $*mñ-$, but rather $*mn-$.

One possible agreement between Baltic and Slavic, which, I believe, has not been previously noticed is the fact that from the point of view of phonemic mergers involved the Slavic so-called 'first palatalization' might be considered a Baltic phenomenon as well, because in Baltic the velar before a front vowel, as in Lith. *kĩtas* 'other', *gėrti* 'to drink' (= Latv. *cits* and *dzert*) has merged with the etymological sequence of $*k$ plus $*j$, as in Lith. *tikiũ* 'I believe', *regiũ* 'I see' (= Latv. *ticu*, *redzu*). This is similar to the Slavic situation where $*k$ ($*g$) plus front vowel and $*kj$ ($*gj$) merge (e. g., 2nd sg. pres. $*mlkiši > *mlčiši$, just like 1st sg. pres. $*mlkjø > *mlčø$, cf. modern Russian *molčĩš* 'you are silent' and *molčũ* 'I am silent'). The Lithuanian orthography does not so readily register this phenomenon as do the Latvian and Russian spellings. On the other hand on the basis of phonetic similarity k plus front vowel and $k < *kj$ must be classed together phonemically as opposed to k before a non-front vowel as in, e. g., *kas* 'who'.

Chapter 4 'L'area baltofona fra *Baltia pagana* e *Baltia christiana*' begins with a discussion of the differences between Latvian and Lithuanian, continues with an enumeration of all the Baltic languages and a discussion of the quality of their attestation. Unfortunately for those interested in Baltic studies, the East and West Galindian, Selonian, Curonian and Semigallian languages are known only through onomastic data, Jatvingian and Old Prussian only slightly better and indeed the only Baltic languages which are well attested are Lithuanian and Latvian. Although there is some linguistics in this chapter it is devoted primarily to a description of the cultural situation of the pre-Christian and immediately following periods.

Dini discusses Curonian, Jatvingian, Galindian, Selonian and Semigallian which he calls 'Lingue baltiche „minori“' in Chapter 5. Dini notes (p. 202) that the name *Cori* occurs for the first time in the *Vita Anskarii* by Rimbart, archbishop of Hamburg and Bremen. In later sources the Curonians are depicted as corsairs or pirates and even known as *gens crudelissima* 'a most cruel people' (Adam of Bremen). Dini then discusses various etymologies of the name including the possibility that it derives from a root **krs* and could then be related to Latin *currere* 'to run', *cursus* 'course', *cursarius* and eventually to Italian *corsaro* 'corsair, pirate'. Next he discusses the linguistic characteristics, e. g., the passage of **k* and **g* to *s* and *z* (as opposed to Lithuanian *š* and *ž*), thus, for example, *Talsen*, *Telse* as opposed to Lith. *Telšiai*. Some lexical items connect Curonian with Old Prussian, e. g., Curonian *Lindale* which can be compared with Old Prussian *lindan* 'valley' (as opposed to Lith. *slėnis* 'id.'). Dini also notes Wolfgang P. Schmid's (rather convincing to my mind) suggestion that the Lord's Prayer in Simon Grunau's *Preussische Chronik* (1526) might have been drawn up in Curonian rather than in Old Prussian as was previously supposed. Dini then discusses in similar detail all of the other 'minor Baltic languages' mentioned above.

Chapter 6 'Il prussiano e i prussiani' begins with the statement that the Old Prussian language unites the characteristics of a *Kleincorpussprache* 'a language with a small body of attested documentation' and a *Mischsprache* 'a mixed language', since there was undoubtedly a certain

amount of Old Prussian/German bilingualism and most, if not all, the Old Prussian documentation was written by Germans. Dini examines next the few medieval sources on the Old Prussians, notes their geographical spread and discusses the origin of the ethnic name *Pruze*, *Pruze*, *Pruzzorum*, *Prucorum*, *Pruciam* 'Prussian'. In the following pages there is a thorough examination of the orthography, phonology, morphology and syntax of the Old Prussian language.

Chapter 7 'Le lingue baltiche fra *Baltia catholica* e *Baltia reformata*' begins with a look at the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (1236–1795) which contained a number of different ethnic stocks among which the Lithuanians were a minority. This chapter takes up the dialects of Lithuanian and Latvian, the cultural and religious circumstances surrounding the production of the first texts in these languages and authors of these texts. After this Dini gives a brief description and history of the phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon of Lithuanian and Latvian.

In chapter 8 'Rinascità nazionale, indipendenza e sovietizzazione nella Baltia linguistica' Dini writes that the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw the beginning of the penetration of western European notions of democracy into the Baltic nations. In Lithuania Major the aristocracy, the intellectuals and the clergy had been gradually Polonized. The latter had distanced themselves from the linguistic traditions inaugurated by Daukša and Sirvydas and had adopted Polish. Still it was the Jesuits who contributed to the preservation of the Lithuanian national consciousness in the 17th and 18th centuries. In Prussian Lithuania (Lithuania Minor) at this time Kristijonas Donelaitis (1714–1780) wrote his famous poem *Metai* 'The Seasons', thereby giving literary status to the language of the people. With the establishment of the Baltic nations in 1918 a standard form of the language had to be chosen. For Lithuanian it was the southern variety of the western subdialect of High Lithuanian (Aukštaitish).

Chapter 9 'Le lingue baltiche e la nuova indipendenza fra *Baltia autoctona* e *Baltia immigrata*' brings us up to the modern times beginning with Gorbachev's *perestroika*. The establishment of independence in the Baltic countries has led to the official use of the Baltic languages. Here Dini (p. 377) quotes the words of the famous Latvian linguist, V. Rūķe-Draviņa

(1977, 9): 'After more than 400 years of an uneven development process, contemporary Standard Latvian has reached the level of a modern many-sided cultural language. Its literary norms are today clearly distinct from both the dialects on the one hand and from colloquial style and forms in the spoken language on the other hand. These norms have crystallized from many grammars, dictionaries, intensive work on the establishment of terminology in all fields, as well as from the activities of various linguistic centers concerned with the purity of the language in printed texts, newspapers, in theatres and schools, in recent decades also in radio and television, and, of course, always from the works of many Latvian authors'. According to Dini the same could also be said for Lithuanian. The prestige which the Baltic languages have now reacquired has led to a situation where many of the children of ethnic minorities of Lithuania and Latvia now attend Lithuanian or Latvian schools (p. 380).

This chapter also contains sections on emigré Lithuanian and Latvian and ends with interesting speculations concerning the future evolution of the Baltic languages. Dini (p. 398) lists three general lines of possible development: a) (morpho)phonetic shortening and the increase of truncated inflectional morphemes both in the noun and the verb, e. g., Lith. dative plural *upėm* '(to the) rivers' <*upėms* < *upėmus*; b) reduction of the number of declensional classes, a decrease in the number of cases as a result of syncretisms and a leveling of the morphophonemic alternations in the verb, cf. the reliquary nature of the postpositional locative cases; c) the increase of prepositional constructions at the expense of functions originally expressed by cases, e. g., Lith. *dù kartùs dienojè* 'two times a day' which is archaic as opposed to the more modern *dù kartùs per diènaq*. One wonders if this latter tendency isn't found in all the Indo-European languages, cf., e. g., the replacement of Latin *īre Romam* 'to go to Rome' with the successors of *īre ad Romam* in the contemporary Romance languages.

Chapter 10 'Testi' gives samples of texts in the various Baltic languages, e. g., the Old Prussian *Basel epigram*, the Lord's Prayer from the three catechisms, the Lithuanian manuscript version, the Mažvydas, Daukša versions and the Latvian Hasentöter version. Other texts include brief selections from Donelaitis, Daukantas, Stenders,

Pumpurs and portions of a Lithuanian and a Latvian folk song. All texts are accompanied by an Italian translation and commentary.

The first appendix entitled 'Cultura e ignoranza baltistica in Italia' contains a very interesting description of the history and current state of Baltic studies in Italy, which Dini describes as 'disorganico vitalismo' (p. 431). It seems to me that Italians can be justifiably proud of their attention to Baltic studies which is, as Dini claims, superior to that of France, England and Spain and is on a par with that of other countries with a Baltistic tradition such as Germany, Poland, Russia and the Scandinavian countries. The second appendix, 'Orientamento bibliografico ragionato', contains, as its title suggests, brief but helpful comments about the various Baltistic periodicals, grammars, dictionaries and other sources of information.

This book is impressive with its many maps, complete and thorough treatments of linguistic, social and cultural aspects of the Baltic languages, and a bibliography numbering some 70 pages (pp. 445–515). I regret that there is nothing in English of similar scope and quality. Dini is to be congratulated on producing a first-rate introduction to the study of the Baltic languages.

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