

TERJE MATHIASSEN, *Old Prussian*. Ed. by John Ole Askedal. Oslo: The Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture—Novus Press, 2010. 99 p.
ISBN 978-82-7099-509-7.

Reviewed by DANIEL PETIT, Paris

The name of the Norwegian linguist Terje Mathiassen (1938–1999) is well known to all scholars concerned with the Baltic languages. Professor of Slavic and Baltic linguistics at the University of Oslo between 1971 and his death, Terje Mathiassen wrote many papers and monographs which are still considered today ‘standard works of reference’, as John Ole Askedal and Svein Mønnesland put it in the preface of the book under review (p. 13). Terje Mathiassen’s contribution to Baltic linguistics is immense. Most of his works are devoted to Lithuanian and Latvian; he in particular wrote reference grammars of the two living Baltic languages (*A Short Grammar of Lithuanian*, Columbus, Ohio, 1996, and *A Short Grammar of Latvian*, Columbus, Ohio, 1997). At the time of his death, Terje Mathiassen was intensively working on a grammar of the third Baltic language, Old Prussian, in order to complete a trilogy of reference descriptions of the whole Baltic linguistic family. At his death, he left to his widow a vast amount of material and even already written fragments of this ‘Outline of Old Prussian’. It is this material that has now been collected, carefully edited and seen through the press by John Ole Askedal and Svein Mønnesland.

Beside the ‘Outline of Old Prussian’, the book also contains a bibliography of Terje Mathiassen’s writings (p. 24) and two papers devoted to the Old Prussian language, ‘Zur Verbreitung der Pluralia tantum im Altpreussischen’ (p. 85–93, already published in the *Colloquium Pruthenicum Secundum*, 1998, 97–102) and a further, still unpublished manuscript ‘Die Form altpreussisch *dessimton* in *Stai dessimton Pallaipsai*’ (p. 95–99). Due to Mathiassen’s untimely death, the ‘Outline of Old Prussian’ is an unfinished text, which implies that some questions are only superficially (or not at all) treated; it would of course be unfair to reproach the author, or the editors, for this fragmentary redaction.

The ‘Outline of Old Prussian’ (p. 25–84) is divided into four parts. Part 1 (p. 31–34), dealing with Old Prussian phonology, is extremely

brief. The consonant and vocalic systems are described, with a strong focus on suprasegmental units. Mathiassen adheres to the traditional view that the macron in Old Prussian indicates stress position and tonal features of diphthongs. Part 2 (p. 35–66), dealing with morphology, is the most extensive part of the book. Some remarks are in order. Mathiassen discusses (p. 36) a contribution of Alessandro Parenti (1995) on the status and use of the articles in Old Prussian. Interestingly enough, he points out that discrepancies with the model of the German original are more frequent in the First and Second Catechisms than in the Third Catechism (Enchiridion), which could testify ‘to a certain degree of autochthonism in the Old Prussian article strategy’. It would be useful to go deeper into this intuition and to evaluate the position of the first two Catechisms vis-à-vis the Enchiridion more systematically; an attempt in this direction was made by Frederik Kortlandt (see Kortlandt 2009, 223–240). In the description of the verbal system (p. 46 sq.), Mathiassen expresses his adherence to Norbert Ostrowski’s classification (p. 47, referring to Ostrowski 1994), but still sticks to the traditional view that Old Prussian possessed reflexes of semi-thematic verbs (p. 50) and still faithfully preserved *ē*- and *ā*-preterites (p. 51). An interesting fragment deals with aspect contrasts in Old Prussian (p. 54–55): Mathiassen argues that the only clear trace of aspect in Old Prussian may be the use of the prefix *po-* with an ‘empty’, perfectivizing meaning, e.g. *quei stalle sta popeisāton?* ‘where is that written?’ III 49, 1 (Germ. *Wo stehet das geschrieben?*). The chapter on prepositions and conjunctions (p. 59–64) consists of a very useful list of the relevant forms with intra-Baltic comparisons. Part 2 ends with a brief chapter on word formation in Old Prussian. Part 3 (p. 67–71) is an outline of the main syntactic structures. It should be noted that Mathiassen (p. 70) adheres to the traditional view (e.g. Trautmann 1910, 207) that Old Prussian was on the way towards developing a *casus obliquus generalis*, opposed to a *casus rectus*. Mathiassen rightly underscores the influence of the German original on the Old Prussian declensional types (for more details see my presentation in Petit 2007). Part 4 (p. 73–74), devoted to the Old Prussian vocabulary, is a list of discrepancies between Old Prussian and East Baltic.

Even in such a fragmentary state, the ‘Outline of Old Prussian’ is an important contribution to Old Prussian philology. We have to

congratulate the editors on having made available this last testimony of Mathiassen's scientific production, both for those who knew him personally and may recognize in this book all his scholarly capabilities, and for those who, like the reviewer, never had the opportunity to meet T. Mathiassen, but who still admire his works.

Daniel Petit

École Normale Supérieure
Centre d'Etudes Anciennes
45, rue d'Ulm, F-75005 Paris
daniel.petit@ens.fr

REFERENCES

- KORTLANDT, FREDERIK. 2009. *Baltica & Balto-Slavica*. Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi.
- MATHIASSEN, TERJE. 1996. *A Short Grammar of Lithuanian*. Columbus: Ohio.
- MATHIASSEN, TERJE. 1997. *A Short Grammar of Latvian*. Columbus: Ohio.
- OSTROWSKI, NORBERT. 1994. Die Verbalstämme im altpreussischen Enchiridion. *Linguistica Baltica* 3, 163–176.
- PARENTI, ALESSANDRO. 1995. Dėl prūsų kalbos artikelio. *Baltistica* 30:2, 81–86.
- PETIT, DANIEL. 2007. Case system and translation strategy in the Old Prussian *Enchiridion*. *Baltistica* 42:3, 347–382.
- TRAUTMANN, REINHOLD. 1910. *Die altpreussischen Sprachdenkmäler*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht.