

Arturs Ozols. Veclatviešu rakstu valoda. Rīga: Liesma, 1965.
625, [3] pp.; portrait.

When a scholar dies, his manuscripts, often the labor of many years, tend to be set aside, and usually fail to reach ~~an~~ print. Veclatviešu rakstu valoda--a manual on Early Written Latvian by Arturs Ozols, who died at the height of his professional maturity in 1964--has had a better fortune: Ozols' materials, excerpts, and comments had been organized to the point where his colleagues could shape them into a publishable book, complete with appropriate indexes.

The above circumstances explain much of the unevenness encountered in the volume. The bulk of the book is a collage of citations, which, furthermore, have not invariably passed a final scrutiny by the late author. At least one more year of careful scholarly attention seems to be lacking; still, one can hardly demand that the editors (fully competent as they are, to name just the editor-in-chief Daina Zemzare) should have spent that much time to bring Ozols' posthumous ms. to a more nearly perfect state.

In examining the voluminous citations, it appears that some of them could have been dispensed with, had the late

author himself put the book in its final shape. Among such are the excerpts on V. Pantenius' school policy (p. 508), ^{on} the writings of Ansis Leitāns (524-526), etc., taken from Latviešu literātūras vēsture (Rīga, 1959). The same applies to the bulky excerpts ^{on} ~~about~~ the Lettisch-Literärische Gesellschaft from M. Ārons' book about the Society (527-530). It is quite open to question ^{whether} ~~if~~ Ozols would have retained the excursus on the beginnings of the Latvian public school system (454-460), all of the many quotations from Latvešņu Awiseis (477-492), etc. Missing, on the other hand, is a separate treatment of Early Written Latgalian, which, after all, constitutes a clearly defined parallel line of development. Some of the opinions ^h reported or quoted (from A. Birkerts, E. Blese, A. Augstkalns, and others) ~~have not been brought up to date,~~ ^{lack the appended critical comments that would bring them in line with current research.}

The problem of periodization of literary Latvian has often been discussed; Ozols goes along with the view that "Early Written Latvian" subsumes all that was written before ca. mid-nineteenth century, i.e. some 350 years in all (p. 11). Since the earliest surviving texts must have been preceded by others (rudimentary texts could have arisen in ^{the} thirteenth or even ^{the} twelfth century), Early Written Latvian could, conceivably, encompass a time span of some 600 years. It is difficult to imagine that this periodization will gain wide acceptance among Baltists.

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A major technical flaw is the difficulty, ^{one faces in} ~~with which one~~ can distinguish directly quoted excerpts from Ozols' own paraphrases, emendations, and critical commentary. One could find one's way through the volume with much greater ease, if different sizes of print, ^{and} possibly various kinds of quotation marks, or some other technical device had been used to indicate the precise ~~extent~~ relationship of quoted and other material (see pp. 323, 506).

In transliteration^{ed} passages ~~from~~ originally in a Gothic (black letter, Fraktur) type, ~~a~~ there is some lack of consistency and uniformity; ^{it} much of ~~has been~~ imported along with citations (cf. the excerpt [p. 184] from J. Zēvers' work on G. Mancelius' numerals, with the corresponding places in Phraseologia Lettica [1638]). Inconsistencies and vacillations occur in citing titles of books and articles as well. Most of these inconsistencies, to be sure, take the form of minor errata; still, a user in need of a precise title or exact citation, will have to consult ~~the~~ ^{original} originals and facsimiles.

To avoid serious gaps in coverage and ~~such~~ misinterpretations, Ozols has freely consulted, as one might expect, ^{the appropriate} ~~publications~~ literature published ~~outside~~ of Latvia. ~~farxsnax~~ Curiously enough, either Ozols or his editors, have decided (apparently out of some important considerations) to avoid mentioning the authors ~~a~~ by name. On p. 207 we are informed that J. Reiters' Oratio Dominica (1675) has been reprinted in facsimile (Copenhagen, 1954), ~~we~~ are told what the title of the

facsimile edition is, and are provided with some quotes from the Introduction--throughout all this, the name of Benj. Jēgers, the editor and author of the introductory remarks, is carefully avoided. Similar evasions occur elsewhere as well. This highly unusual practice becomes especially awkward in the bibliography, where a special section of works published abroad is created (618-620); items in that section are entered without the name of the author (among them Wolfgang P. Schmid, the Editor of Indogermanische Forschungen; Haralds Biezais, whose merits include a number of very important text discoveries [the oldest Latvian Lord's Prayer, for instance]; and others).

The positive contribution of Ozols' book is far from negligible, and is not likely to lose its value in the foreseeable future. Further scholars working with Early Written Latvian will not be able to ignore Ozols' own comments and observations. Fragmented ~~as~~ as they are and varying greatly in extent and incisiveness, they still amount to a considerable body of original scholarship. The "manual" aspect of the book is extremely useful; one can immediately locate references to discussions of any particular text, with the more important passages reprinted at length.

The value of the book could have been further enhanced by appropriate illustrations, plates, facsimiles, etc.

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