

2 FOREWORD

Johannes Bobrowski's *Pruzzische Vokabeln* is a collection of 583 Old Prussian words apparently compiled by the author between 1962 and 1965, and entered into a copybook on two or three separate occasions. The collection escaped the attention of the editors of Bobrowski's complete works, who possibly did not see any intrinsic value in including the *PV* in their edition. They possibly did not see any value in publishing what may have appeared to have been the product of a spare time hobby, with questionable literary or linguistic merit. Bobrowski, a writer and not a linguist, did not include comparisons with other related languages. Anyone, who is interested in Johannes Bobrowski's avowed love of Old Prussian history, culture and language, may view this as an oversight and / or genuine omission. However, even those who are more interested in Bobrowski as a promoter of the German literary tradition, will probably agree that Bobrowski's worldview includes an appreciation of other traditions, including, for example, Lithuanian culture and folklore (*Litauische Claviere*). Thus, as we embark on a journey, which includes an examination of the Old Prussian lemmata, we discover analogous forms in related Baltic and Indo-European languages. A journey well worth the effort, not least because it allows us to renew our focus on the writings of Johannes Bobrowski.

The subject of *Pruzzische Vokabeln* is the Old Prussian language, one of the West Baltic group, closely related to both Lithuanian and Latvian. Although to all appearances of modest proportions, Bobrowski's collection is nevertheless comprehensive, and includes roughly 25% of the available OP corpus. It demonstrates well that Bobrowski included a sizable cross-section of representative lemmata and that he must have attached considerable importance to his collection. His primary interest was of an ethnological nature. He showed an interest in words for humans and for the sphere of the human being (family members, parts of the body, society and products of human endeavour). He was fascinated by disparate terms for all forms of fauna (animals, birds, fish and other 'creepy crawlies') and flora (trees, plants and grasses). Nor did remote meanings or translations (*naricis* 'Teufelskind', *pistwis* 'Hundsfliege') escape his attention. However, not only concrete but also abstract concepts fill the pages of his ring book, which contains many functional

words (verbs, pronouns and prepositions). The copy book also reflects his reading of available Old Prussian literary sources. These included words listed in the *Elbing Vocabulary* as well as those taken from available religious literary works (*Katechismus III*), of which he had a demonstrably intimate knowledge. They relate to diverse religious Rites (*Sacraments of Baptism, Confession, Eucharist and Matrimony*). Bobrowski's interests finally extend to proper names, be these based on his personal knowledge and / or experience within the close proximity of his birthplace and place of education (Tilsit and Königsberg, today's Russian Sovetsk and Kaliningrad) or from maps available to him. At times he includes between two and eight identical names of localities, which are found either in East or West Prussia (cf. *Levins Mühle*) or both.

In the compilation of the present edition of the *Pruzzische Vokabeln*, considerable attention has been paid to tracing the sources of Bobrowski's lexical collection. This edition, styled *Old Prussian Glossary (OPG)*, includes in sequential order from 1–583 the headwords, meanings and the proper names, exactly as Bobrowski entered these in his ring book. Following are three main divisions: the first pertains to the Presumed source (such as the *Elbing Vocabulary* or *K III*), followed by a consideration of the sources of the Proper nouns (mostly names of localities). The final, third, section includes comparative OP, Lithuanian and Latvian forms of the OP headword, followed by the Indo-European root. Finally, an editorial comment in a different style has been included on the possible relevance of the OP headword for Bobrowski's writings.

I hope that this will be a useful addition to an already large body of Bobrowski research. The current work is primarily aimed at Bobrowski specialists, trusting it will give an added dimension to the existing publications and will assist in broadening their interpretation of his literary works. It should also be of interest to both Germanists and Baltists as well as to the general reader, especially when interpreting Bobrowski from a comparative cultural point of view.

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