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Lithuanians on the jubilee of the 125th birth anniversary of the great linguist Jan Szczepan Otrębski¹

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Abstract: This article draws attention to the jubilee scientific conference which was held on 28th November 2014 in Vilnius, in the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, on the occasion of the 125th birth anniversary of the great Polish linguist Jan Szczepan Otrębski. A one-day seminar in Vilnius was attended by Lithuanian and Polish linguists, as well as politicians who opened the conference, thus emphasizing importance and significance of this event. During the conference nine interesting papers were read out about the life and work of Jan Sz. Otrębski, a linguist who devoted a large part of his life to research of the Lithuanian language. In general, the papers highlighted inter alia the genius of this scholar and his great contribution to the study of both the Lithuanian language as well as the other Indo-European languages. In other words, let background anniversary be a good opportunity to recall the figure of this great scholar.

Key words: Jan Otrębski's life and work, Lithuanian studies, Indo-European studies

1. Introduction

The Lithuanians have their great Poles whom they both respect and are proud of, and whom they always commemorate. Amongst these respectable personages, celebrities such as Adam Mickiewicz, Czesław Miłosz and Jerzy Giedrojc, most certainly belongs Jan Szczepan Otrębski (1889-1971), a linguist referred to with the utmost respect in the milieu of Lithuanian science and culture.

On this occasion, I would like to draw attention to the Jubilee Scientific Conference which was held on 28th November 2014 in Vilnius, in the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, on the occasion of the 125th birth anniversary of Jan Otrębski. Solemn debates were devoted to him with the participation of official state guests: Mr. Jarosław Czubiński, the Ambassador of the Polish Republic; Ms. Irena Degutienė, the Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania; Ms. Ona Valiukevičiūtė, the Chairwoman of the Parliament Committee on the Lithuanian World Community; and Mr. Kęstutis Kaminskas, the Office Head of the Parliament Committee on Education, Science

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and Culture (the main initiator and one of the organizers of the conference); and Mr. Rimantas Stankevičius, the Deputy Director of the Parliament Department of International Relations.

During the conference, with the participation of representatives of both the older and younger scientific community members, have been presented numerous papers on the life of the great scholar.² However, before I begin to report on the jubilee event, I would like to recall some facts from the biography of Jan Szczepan Otrębski that associated him with the Lithuanian language and Lithuania, which is really the reason for the Lithuanian deep remembrance, pride, and gratitude to him.

2. A few remarks on the life and work of Jan Otrębski

It may have been destiny that guided the life and creative passion of unquestionably one of the greatest Polish linguists of the 20th century, a doyen of the post-war professorship at the University of Poznań, and the creator of possibly the first in the world, outside of Lithuania, the Chair of Baltic Philology. In addition, it should be stressed that Jan Otrębski is the founder of the international journal *Lingua Posnaniensis*. It seems very intriguing, but the man who was born into a family of Polish intellectuals, in Pili-ca in the Cracow-Częstochowa Upland, and had nothing in common with Lithuania, devoted his later life largely to the study of the language of such a small nation as Lithuania.

Jan Otrębski had his first contact with the Lithuanian language probably in his adult life, during his Slavonic studies at Warsaw University. There he met Yefemiy Karski, the Byelorussian linguist and supervisor of his first thesis who, in 1912, sent his young student to the Vilnius region to collect research material for his thesis concerning the Byelorussian dialects. There, in the ethnically multicultural region, the researcher could not help but come into contact with the rural Lithuanian-speaking population. It is interesting that for this work *Očerok narodnych belorusskich govorov Vilenskoj gubernii* 'Description of Byelorussian dialects in Vilnius Province' Otrębski received a gold medal and the title of „Primus Inter Pares”. The work fulfilled the criteria for his M.A. thesis (see: Gawrońska-Garstka & Walczak 2014: 9-10).

As it was metaphorically expressed during the conference by Algirdas Sabaliauskas, a dignified historian of Lithuanian and European linguistics³, “the medal opened to Otrębski the gates to the most famous center of Indo-European linguistics in Europe at that time, the German University of Leipzig”. Today it is just enough to mention the names of Ernst Windisch, Edward Siewers, Karl Brugmann and August Lesikien to understand that the famous scholars, the founders of modern Indo-European comparative linguistics, left their mark on the interests of the extremely skilled Polish student Jan Otrębski. The aforementioned Algirdas Sabaliauskas said: “It was less than one year, but

² Articles on Jan Otrębski will be published in *Acta Linguistica Lithuanica* -the research journal of the Institute of the Lithuanian Language in Vilnius.

³ See: Sabaliauskas (1979; 1982; 2012), Schmalstieg (2013).

very busy. During his studies in Leipzig in 1914, Otrębski carefully prepared and in early 1915 he finished his doctoral dissertation on comparative linguistics, but with the outbreak of the war Otrębski's education ended. He was interned by the Germans and arrived as an ordinary worker to a German brick factory where he also proved to be the best". The owner of the brick factory allegedly urged his adept worker "to abandon this grammar" and to accept a lucrative job as a manager of the factory (see also: Gawrońska-Garstka 2014: 16).

It is likely that later on the Lithuanian studies interests of the great linguist imprinted its mark on Leipzig as a scientific center, where, in accordance with the contemporary trend at European universities, lasted a fascination in Lithuanian as the "oldest" of the living Indo-European languages recently discovered for comparative studies. The main researchers and supporters of Otrębski's interests in the Baltic languages at the aforementioned university were Karl Brugmann and August Leskien. Closing this thread of the biography of the jubilarian, I just want to emphasize the importance of assessing in future the archive materials of the University of Leipzig (probably located in *Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz* in Berlin).

There are many arguments in favor of the claim that Jan Rozwadowski, professor of the Jagiellonian University in Cracow (formerly also of the University of Leipzig) and the famous Indo-Europeanist, also interested in Lithuanian, played an important role in deepening Otrębski's interests in the Lithuanian language. Jan Otrębski maintained contact with Jan Rozwadowski on scientific matters even during the war, since 1916, when he began working as a teacher of classical languages at the secondary schools of Kalisz (today West Poland). Immediately after the war in 1919, Otrębski submitted to Professor Rozwadowski at the Jagiellonian University his doctoral dissertation *Przyczynki do gramatyki porównawczej języków indoeuropejskich*, 'Contributions to a comparative grammar of the Indo-European languages', which he defended in 1920. In 1924, under the tutelage of that same professor, also in Cracow, he defended his tenure on the basis of the thesis *Z dziejów języka łacińskiego. O zachowaniu się wygłosowego -s po samogłosce długiej*, 'On the history of the Latin language: The variation of the ending -s after a long vowel'. By this time he was already a professor at the Polish Stefan Batory University (USB) in Vilnius (see: Gawrońska-Garstka 2014: 38-39).

Jan Safarewicz (1973: 124-125) emphasizes that Jan Rozwadowski (with Jan Łoś and Kazimierz Nitsch) also stood behind the appointment of Otrębski at the USB, because he saw in this a strengthening of the Indo-European research and an implementation of the Lithuanian studies research as a regional task of the university. It was supposedly Professor Jan Rozwadowski who encouraged Otrębski to continue with the Lithuanian language as a field of research.

As far as the interest of the adept in the Lithuanian language is concerned, it is worth noting that in choosing a research discipline a significant role was played the personality of the scholar and his interests focused on linguistics. Since his studies at the University of Warsaw, Otrębski had been showing a huge motivation and striving towards the study of the puzzle of the Indo-European languages. He called science "a kingdom inhabited by God". He writes in his memoirs:

„Wychodząc z Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego [w 1913 r.] wiedziałem też, że jedną z najważniejszych gałęzi naukowych jest językoznawstwo i że ono to odpowiada moim potrzebom duchowym. Do językoznawstwa zapaliłem się tym bardziej, bo sądzę, że jeżeli kiedykolwiek uda się przeniknąć zagadkę duszy w człowieku, to centralna rola przypadnie językoznawstwu. Już jako student Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego uświadomiłem sobie potrzebę rozszerzenia horyzontu językoznawczego. Byłem przecież zaledwie slawistą, który na każdym kroku stwierdzał, że bez szerszego i gruntowniejszego przygotowania nie podobna omawiać głębszych zagadnień nawet z zakresu slawistyki. Temu pędowi do indoeuropeistyki miałem uczynić zadość dopiero później w Lipsku⁴⁴ (see: Otrębski 1932: 46-47; I quote from: Gawrońska-Garstka 2014: 14-15).

It is believed that the Lithuanian language helped Jan Otrębski in a measurable way to achieve this high niveau of Indo-European studies, the essentials of which the scholar learned at the University of Leipzig, as mentioned by Jan Safarewicz (1973: 124). As far as his deepening of his knowledge of Lithuanian is concerned, Otrębski certainly took advantage of the real availability of using Lithuanian dialects of the Vilnius region during his work at the USB. Here in the years 1928-1934 he studied the dialect of Tverečius and, as he says in the introduction to the first part of his paper *Wschodniolitewskie narzecze twereckie – Gramatyka* (1934), ‘East-Lithuanian dialect of Tverečius: Grammar’, he also learned the ins and outs of the language:

„Opracowanie niniejszej Gramatyki zajęło autorowi około 7 lat. Nie należy się temu dziwić. Oto, zabrał się do napisania o dialekcie litewskim człowiek, który do tego zadania nie był przygotowany: nie posiadał wykształcenia fonetyka i dialektologa, nie posiadał dostatecznej znajomości języka litewskiego. Właśnie dopiero z pragnienia, aby poznać żywą mowę litewską wyrosła niniejsza Gramatyka⁴⁵ (see: Otrębski 1934: IX-X).

Otrębski’s Lithuanian studies contribution to Indo-European linguistics is really immense. In total, among his 350 publications, we find more than 100 publications devoted to the Lithuanian language or to other Baltic languages. I would like to mention here only his works of paramount importance to linguistics. These are: the two volumes of the aforementioned work *Wschodniolitewskie narzecze twereckie*: Część I: *Gramatyka*, 1934; Część III: *Zapożyczenia słowiańskie*, 1932, Kraków: PAU, and the three-volume fundamental work *Gramatyka języka litewskiego*: Tom I: *Wiadomości wstępne. Nauka o głoskach*, 1958; Tom II: *Nauka o budowie wyrazów*, 1965; Tom III: *Nauka o formach*, 1956, Warszawa: PWN, ‘Grammar of contemporary Lithuanian: Vol. 1: Introduction. Pho-

⁴ Translation: „Coming out of the University of Warsaw, I also knew that one of the most important branches of science is linguistics and that it corresponds to my spiritual needs. I got excited about linguistics even more, because I think that if we ever manage to penetrate the mystery of the human soul, the central role will be played by linguistics. Already as a student of the University of Warsaw I saw a need to expand my linguistic horizon. I was, after all, only someone with Slavic languages knowledge, who at every turn stated that without a broader and better grounding it is impossible to discuss deeper issues even in the field of Slavic studies. This urge towards Indo-European studies I was to satisfy only later in Leipzig.”

⁵ Translation: „It took the author about seven years to elaborate this Grammar. We should not be surprised about this. Here started to write about a Lithuanian dialect, a man who was not prepared for this job: He had no background in phonetics or dialectology, nor was his knowledge of the Lithuanian language sufficient. Just from his desire to learn the living Lithuanian speech aroused this Grammar.”

netics description; Vol. 2: Word-formation; Vol. 3: Inflectional Morphology'. Jan Otrębski also participated in the edition of the incomplete Lithuanian Bible translation by S.B. Chyliński from the mid-17th century: *Biblia Litewska Chylińskiego. Nowy Testament*, T. II, Poznań 1958 (eds. with Stanisław Kot and Czesław Kudzinowski). As far as other numerous works and articles concerning onomastics, dialectology or Balto-Slavic contacts, the reader should refer to the bibliography of the scholar's works, see: Otrębska (1966; 1973), Otremskienė (1966; 1971; 1973), Gawrońska-Garstka (2014).

In bringing to a conclusion the introduction of the scholar Jan Otrębski, in order to illustrate the measure of his research interests in the Lithuanian language, let me quote the scholar's biographer, Magdalena Gawrońska-Garstka:

„Wielopłaszczyznowość zainteresowań Jana Otrębskiego nie zmieniała faktu, iż jego pasją życiową były przede wszystkim badania bałtologiczne, reprezentowane w pracach z dialektologii, onomastyki, słowotwórstwa. Zagadnienia bałto-słowiańskie przez całe życie fascynowały profesora, który w tej dziedzinie nauki osiągnął najwięcej. Główne lituanistyczne dzieło Otrębskiego – *Gramatyka języka litewskiego* stanowi syntezę poglądów uczonego na ogół zjawisk charakterystycznych dla historii tego języka. W zbiorach archiwalnych Uniwersytetu Wileńskiego, w fondzie poświęconym Otrębskiemu zachowała się kartka zatytułowana: *Uniwersytet litewski 1939-1945*, na której profesor zanotował: „Uniwersytet Litewski winien troszczyć się równomiernie o wszystkie gałęzie nauki [...]. Nie ulega jednak wątpliwości, że wśród tych gałęzi nauki wyjątkowe miejsce zajmuje lituanistyka, jako nauka o języku litewskim. Język litewski wśród żywych języków indoeuropejskich jest językiem najważniejszym, jako najbardziej konserwatywny, najbardziej bliski prajęzykowi indoeuropejskiemu”⁶ (Gawrońska-Garstka 2014: 153-154).

3. The official setting of the Conference

The first part of the conference *Jan Otrębski in the Vortex of Sciences and History*⁷ held on the 28th November 2014 in the Parliament of Lithuania and broadcast by the cultural channel of the Lithuanian TV was hosted by Professor Grasilda Blažienė, a well-known specialist in the field of the Baltic onomastics and concurrently the deputy director of the Institute of the Lithuanian Language (Lietuvių kalbos institutas =LKI) in Vil-

⁶ Translation: „The multidimensionality of the interests of Jan Otrębski did not change the fact that his life passion was primarily his research in Baltic studies represented in his works on dialectology, onomastics and word-formation. Balto-Slavic issues were a lifelong fascination for the professor, who in this field of science achieved the most. The main Lithuanian studies work by Otrębski – the “Grammar of contemporary Lithuanian” – is a synthesis of the views of the scholar on all the phenomena characteristic of the history of this language. The archival collections of the University of Vilnius, in a fond dedicated to Otrębski, preserved a card entitled: “The Lithuanian University 1939-1945” in which the professor noted: „The University of Lithuania should equally care for all branches of science [...]. There is no doubt, however, that among these branches of science a special place of Lithuanian studies, as the science concerning the Lithuanian language. The Lithuanian language is the most important among the living Indo-European languages, as it is the most conservative language, the closest to the Indo-European protolanguage.”

⁷ Oryg. Lithuanian: *Mokslinė konferencija žymaus lenkų kalbininko (indoeuropeisto, baltisto, lituanisto) Jano Otrębskio 125-ųjų gimimo metinių proga*: “Janas Otrębskis (1889-1971) mokslo ir istorijos verpetuose”.

nius. In her foreword, she emphatically stressed the aim of the conference stating that „we meet in order to honor the memory of the man and his deserved recognition for linguistics and for friendship between the two nations, the Poles and the Lithuanians”. She also stressed that Jan Otrębski remained all his life a faithful friend and a devotee to the Lithuanian language.

The solemn inauguration of the conference by the officials present was performed by the Deputy Speaker of the Parliament Ms. Irena Degutienė, concurrently the President of the Commission of Maintenance of Tradition and Heritage of the Lithuanian Language. In her speech she emphasized, apart from the symbolic significance of the conference, the importance of rediscovering the portrait and merits of such an eminent scientist whose works bear not only scientific value, but link in such a particular manner the two nations that are so close to each other. She ended her speech with a symbolic motto from a poem by the Nobel laureate – Polish poet Wisława Szymborska stressing that “The eternity of the defunct lasts as long as they are remunerated with remembrance.”⁸

The Ambassador of the Republic of Poland Ms. Jarosław Czubiński in his speech laid emphasis on the universal dimensions of culture and science in connecting nations, and he placed the event dedicated to Jan Otrębski in the context of important Polish-Lithuanian cultural events, mentioning, among others, the recent anniversary celebration of the 1st edition of the poem “Pan Tadeusz” by Adam Mickiewicz, which took place in the city of meetings and dialogue – Vilnius. Finally, the Polish Ambassador expressed his particular satisfaction with the participation in the conference of linguists from Poland and wished to all the participants a fruitful session.

The Director of LKI Dr. Jolanta Zabarskaitė stressed in her speech the timeless dimension of the influence of Jan Otrębski and thanked the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania for its support, and the LKI staff: Grasilda Blažienė, Jūratė Pajėdienė, Vilija Lukševičienė for their great efforts in organizing the conference. In particular, the speaker stressed the always important need to edit a Lithuanian translation of Otrębski’s “Grammar” made once by Juozas Balčikonis, and the significance of this fact for science. She also expressed her satisfaction with the continuation of the work done by Jan Otrębski at the Department of Baltic Studies of the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań.

4. Tracing papers and comments on Jan Otrębski

The scientific segment of the conference began with the doyen of Lithuanian linguistics, the retired Professor Algirdas Sabaliauskas, a scientist who personally knew Professor Jan Otrębski and his second wife Elena Samaniūtė. This specialist in the field of the history of Lithuanian and Indo-European linguistics gave a very interesting lecture based on his wide knowledge of the history of the Indo-European linguistics. Because his speech contained many interesting new facts and ideas I will present a slightly more detailed resume of it.

Algirdas Sabaliauskas first expressed his gratitude to the Parliament of Lithuania for the very venture which is “an expression of gratitude of the Lithuanians to a man from

⁸ Oryg. Polish: “Umarłych wieczność dotąd trwa, dokąd pamięcią im się płaci”.

another country who devoted a greater part of his life to our language.” Professor Sabaliauskas proudly stressed the great interest of many Indo-Europeanists in the language “of such a small nation” throughout the entire history of 19th and 20th century linguistics. He presented intriguing facts from the history of linguistics, namely that many famous scholars joined this field of research due to various kinds of coincidence (e.g. Swiss linguist Jan P. Locher and German linguist Viktor Falkenhan). However, he did not discover such facts in the biography of the jubilee and he pointed out with firm conviction that Jan Otrębski came to linguistics and to the Lithuanian language with full consciousness as a scholar who first began his medical studies and four months later gave them up in favor of Slavic philology. He presented most interesting facts from the biography of the linguist that built up his great passion. Sabaliauskas mentioned Yefemiy Karski and the first work by Otrębski concerning the Byelorussian dialectology. A decisive impact upon Jan Otrębski had been, in his opinion, the great figures (the aforementioned professors) from the University of Leipzig, and especially the the guidance and care received from the disciple of Jan Baudouin de Courtenay –Professor Jan Rozwadowski. The researcher emphatically and repeatedly stressed the unusual language skills of the jubilee, his diligence and versatility involving the participation in all scientific activities. Sabaliauskas emphasized that Otrębski was particularly willing to consider the well-being of science, but he did not avoid participation in a variety of intellectual and cultural events. For instance, in 1935 he held lectures at the Lithuanian Scientific Society in Vilnius about Lithuanian linguists: Kazimieras Būga and Antanas Baranauskas. In his opinion, such details confirm the good relations between Otrębski and the Lithuanians. In addition, he mentioned Otrębski’s efforts to launch Lithuanian studies at the pre-war Polish Stefan Batory University in Vilnius. He emphasized that during the difficult Polish-Lithuanian relations he managed to bring about a language course of Lithuanian at the Polish university. Besides neglecting stereotypes, he employed Lithuanians to teach the language, among others the priests: Wincenty Zajączkowski, and Petras Kraujalis, who previously had been imprisoned by Polish authorities for anti-Polish activities.

Sabaliauskas also threw original light upon the scientific achievements of Jan Otrębski. He put special emphasis upon the particular importance of the first work by Otrębski – the above mentioned description of the dialect of Tverečius which, in the opinion of the researcher, „was a big jump done by Otrębski in his Lithuanian studies.” He also mentioned the words of Jan Otrębski from the Introduction to the above mentioned work, which I quote:

„Praca niniejsza wyrosła przede wszystkim z zainteresowań naukowych autora. Ale jest ona także wyrazem szacunku i sympatyj polskiego pracownika naukowego dla narodu litewskiego i kultury litewskiej. Oby ten wysiłek syna narodu polskiego, mający na celu pogłębienie w świecie nauki znajomości języka i ludu litewskiego, znalazł należyte zrozumienie u braci Litwinów i przyczynił się, choćby w drobnej mierze, do ożywienia na nowo stłumionego wprawdzie, lecz niewątpliwie w głębi serc istniejącego poczucia łączności obu narodów!”⁹
(Otrębski 1934: XII).

⁹ Translation: „This work grew out above all of scientific interest of the author. But it is also an expression of respect and sympathies of the Polish researcher for the Lithuanian nation and Lithuanian culture. May

Professor Sabaliauskas mentioned one more generally little known circumstance of Otrębski's life. Prior to World War II, Otrębski was appointed the president of the Abitur examination commission and the examiner of the Polish language at the Lithuanian Vytautas Magnus Gymnasium in Vilnius. Because was very demanding, he was often disliked by the former graduates. Nevertheless, the speaker did not spare efforts to defend the "image" of the scientist saying simply that "great people are like this" – they require pretty much from themselves as they demand from others. To support this statement he cited a similar example of the German linguist August Schleicher from Prague. Sabaliauskas brought out from his own archival research yet another little known fact from the life of Jan Otrębski. It turns out that Jan Otrębski's linguistic project to write a Comparative vocabulary of the Indo-European languages was unexpectedly placed on the list of „useful *university* fields” made by the German occupation authorities during World War II (of course, from the point of view of the interests of the German state in the conditions of war), though ultimately this project was not accomplished. In the opinion of the speaker, decisive in this was a remarkable coincidence. Namely, the curator for higher education institutions in the occupied countries of the so-called "Ostland" was Kurt Stegmann von Pritzwald, a linguist who was interested in Indo-European languages, and at the same time as Otrębski worked on the Baltic languages. In addition, reviews of the works of both linguists: K. Stegmann v. Prizwald's *Das Attribut im Altlitauischen* (Heidelberg, 1934) and J. Otrębski's *Wschodniolitewskie narzecze twereckie* (Kraków, 1934) appeared in the same issue of the pre-war Lithuanian journal *Archivum Philologicum* (edited in Kaunas). Therefore, probably a common research interests and "professional" solidarity were decisive factors, certainly in addition to Otrębski's scientific prestige in the contemporary European linguistics.

The next lecture by Dr. Valdas Selenis, a historian at the Lithuanian University of Educology in Vilnius, focused on the biographical facts concerning Jan Otrębski, related to the 24 years of his life in Vilnius and to his work at the USB. Apart from the course of his career, the speaker stressed the remarkable language skills of the investigator of Indo-European languages (for instance, he knew Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, Hittite, Gothic, Old Prussian and other languages), his genuine interest in the Lithuanian language, his continual relationships with Lithuania and the Lithuanian linguists even after leaving Poznań (he corresponded with among others Juozas Balčikonis and Kostas Korsakas), but also his real Polish patriotism and love for Vilnius.

A very interesting paper *On the relations of Jan Otrębski to Juozas Balčikonis* – the editor of the first volumes of the 20-volume dictionary of the Lithuanian language (*Lietuvių kalbos žodynas* =LKŽ) – was presented by the well-known Lithuanian linguist Professor Aldonas Pupkis. The speaker in his speech brings to daylight many interesting facts about both the influence of the Polish scholar as well as about his long-standing cordial relations with his Lithuanian colleague. The cooperation between the two scien-

this effort done by a son of the Polish nation, aimed at deepening the knowledge of the language and the people of Lithuania in the world of science, find proper understanding by the Lithuanian brothers and contribute, even in a small measure, to revive again a sense of community between both nations, although suppressed, but certainly existing in their hearts!"

tists, mainly for the editorial LKŽ, was noteworthy fruitful. Equally fruitful was the subsequent exchange of ideas, already after Otrębski's trip to Poznań, when Balčikonis with enthusiasm translated into Lithuanian the third volume of Otrębski's "Grammar".

The lecture contains a large number of unknown facts (it is worth noting that Aldonas Pupkis is an expert on the subject, the author of an exhaustive monograph on Balčikonis, see: Pupkis, 2013), of which I will mention the most interesting. Here Pupkis emphatically stresses that Otrębski, who in the years 1940-44 actively participated in the activities of the Auxiliary Scientific Commission (Mokslinė pagalbinė komisija) on editing the dictionary mentioned above, not only constituted its important scientific advisory unit, but he was also an important mediator in the Lithuanian inner conflict about the implementation of an orthography reform (Juozas Balčikonis was a hard opponent acting against the reform of the Lithuanian orthography proposed by Pranas Skardžius). Emphasizing the humanity of Jan Otrębski, A. Pupkis mentions a particularly noble deed of the Otrębski family during the war, as they supplied with "goods" from their garden the Lithuanian lexicographer Bronė Vosylytė who did beneficent work completing the lexis to the LKŽ dictionary. Furthermore, it turns out that Balčikonis, who since 1944 had been the director of the Lithuanian Language Institute, had his post-war scientific future linked to Jan Otrębski, despite the changed geopolitical situation (in place of the Polish university the Lithuanian University of Vilnius is founded, the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic comes into being). Into the preliminaries of the scientific plans for 1944 and 1945, Balčikonis put projects linked to Professor Otrębski. He planned, among others, to edit the third part of *Wschodniolitewskie narzecze twereckie* (a vocabulary of the dialect and texts), he intended to elaborate together with the Polish scientist *Lithuanian ethnological dictionary*, and to edit M. Daukša's "*Postilla catholica*" (1599), an important monument of the Lithuanian language.

The speaker mentions an unknown manuscript by Jan Otrębski that is in some private archive of the Balčikonis family. In a 4-page article dated 13 March 1945, written on the occasion of the 60th birth anniversary of Juozas Balčikonis, Professor Otrębski analyses the functions of the contemporary Lithuanian language (unification of the Lithuanian nation and scientific function in diachronic linguistics); he also highlights the contribution of Balčikonis to Lithuanian culture and language. The scholar emphasizes that Balčikonis was an invaluable Lithuanian translator, especially of the folklore of other nations (among others, the fairy tales by Hans C. Andersen and Grimm brothers), and the creator and editor of the great Dictionary of the Lithuanian Language (LKŽ). Finally, Aldonas Pupkis quotes an expressive passage from a letter of Balčikonis to Otrębski, dated 12th November 1945, in which he urged him to return to Vilnius. The letter was written when its recipient had already went to Poland due to its changed political situation. I quote him in English translation: "The faculty is waiting for you, cigars, cigarettes and other goods. I am sending a sample for your trip to Vilnius. I wish you a happy return"¹⁰. If we add that Balčikonis was a declared vegetarian and a sworn enemy of any stimulants, this was a wonderful expression of loyalty and friendship. Aldonas Pupkis ends his speech

¹⁰ Oryg. Lithuanian: „Tamstos laukia fakultetas, cigarai, papirosai ir kitos gėrybės. Trupuči siunčiu kelionei į Vilnių, kad būtų linksmau. Laimingai grįžti!”.

with a wish that the archive of Jan Otrębski at the University of Vilnius lives to see an honorable researcher, suggesting that in this manner the Lithuanians could express their gratitude to the “great friend of the Lithuanian language and Lithuania, and at the same time of Juozas Balčikonis”.

Professor Norbert Ostrowski from the Department of Baltic Studies of the Institute of Linguistics of the Adam Mickiewicz University focused on two threads of Jan Otrębski's biography, one social and one scientific. In the first part the speaker pointed to the hard post-war living conditions which the linguist had in Poznań, first in a one-room apartment in Matejki Street, then in two rooms in an apartment in Rogalińskiego Street. Quoting the paper by Gawrońska-Garstka (2014), the researcher described poor acclimatization of the scientist to the new environment, totally different from his pre-war Vilnius place and status (the Otrębski family had in Vilnius a beautiful villa with a garden and they lived there in prosperity). This is undoubtedly why both spouses had recurring thoughts about going back to Vilnius (a motif known from the letters).

In the second part of his lecture the speaker highlighted facts from Otrębski's scientific biography and his scientific work at the University of Poznań, putting emphasis on the two major achievements during “the period in Poznań”, i.e. the founding of the world-renowned journal *Lingua Posnaniensis* (edited from 1949) and the writing of his opus magnum, i.e. the 3-volume “Grammar”. The speaker pointed particularly to the strictly scientific nature of the periodical *Lingua Posnaniensis* and its wide range of topics (multiplicity of described languages). Moreover, he proposed to edit Otrębski's “Grammar” into Lithuanian, but with a critical commentary reflecting the scientific achievements 50 years later. A question was asked about the place where materials are stored concerning the 4th (syntax) volume, which J. Otrębski did not manage to bring about.

The lectures of the second part of the conference, led by professor of literature Algis Kalėda, began with Józef Marcinkiewicz, author of this article, representing the Department of Baltic Studies of the Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznań. In his speech under the title *Jan Otrębski and his Lithuanian studies works*, he presented an outline of the facts of the scientific career of the great linguist which had an impact on the focus of his interests concerning the research on the Lithuanian language. The following facts turned out to be important: the role of the philological studies at the University of Warsaw, a scholarship at the University of Leipzig, and the influence of world-famous Indo-Europeanists, in particular of the soul mate of Jan Rozwadowski met upon the path of his life. Other dimensions are: fitting into the scientific-didactic mission at the Polish Stefan Batory University (1921-1939), and later at the Lithuanian University of Vilnius (1940-1944), and after his trip to Poznań, founding the Chair of Baltic Languages at the University of Poznań (1947). The speaker presented both the general framework of the scientific research done by Otrębski and the importance of his most famous works in linguistics, particularly of the aforementioned 2-volume description of the dialect of Tverečius, his 3-volume grammar of the Lithuanian language, his contribution to the collective work the Bible of Chyliński, and the founding of the aforementioned journal *Lingua Posnaniensis*.

Dr. Daiva Kardelytė-Grinevičienė (LKI) presented in her speech the context of the emergence of the aforementioned first big work by Jan Otrębski and characterized the

content of this two-volume book *Wschodniolitewskie narzecze twereckie*, introducing the researcher as a dialectologist. As far as the scientific methodology is concerned, in characterizing the first volume she stressed the applied traditional, but very precise description of (the methodology of the so-called “school of young grammarians”) with the detailed characteristics of the vocalic and consonantal systems (phonetics), of word formation and of the inflection of particular parts of speech (morphology). An important feature of the description by Otrębski were the quite frequently quoted examples drawn from the spoken language and from written sources, including a large number of collected archaisms. Due attention was drawn to the universal importance for linguistics of the 2nd volume – a large collection of Slavic loanwords (1193 lexemes), collected almost 100 years ago; these loan words are nowadays a perfect background for comparative studies. Generally, the imperishable importance of the work by Otrębski for the contemporary dialectology was emphasized.

The well-known Lithuanian literary critic, translator and lexicographer Professor Algis Kalėda (University of Vilnius), in his speech *The literary aspects of the activities of Jan Otrębski*, immersed himself in literary and sociolinguistic contexts, asking, for example, the question: why Jan Otrębski wrote “Grammar of Lithuanian” in Polish, and not in another European language. In response to this question the researcher is trying to bring this fact to the emotional plane of Otrębski’s personality and his special sense of mission of building bridges between Polish and Lithuanian and Polish-Lithuanian reconciliation. In the same light, the speaker presented a literary episode of Jan Otrębski linked with the publication in 1927 (together with Michał Bernstejn) a contribution about special *Lithuanian folk songs called “dainos” recorded by Adam Mickiewicz (Dajny litewskie zapisane przez Adama Mickiewicza, Wilno, 1827)*. In this work Otrębski analyzes the language of the Lithuanian dialect in which allegedly A. Mickiewicz himself made a record of this written folklore monument.

Another paper was read by one of the organizers of the solemn event, Professor Grasilda Blažienė (LKI), who deals with onomastics and historical linguistics. In an interesting and comprehensive manner, she presented the spectrum of *Otrębski’s studies concerning generally the Baltic languages and onomastics*. She pointed out the most important branches of the linguistics passion of the researcher: Balto-Slavic linguistic common features (the concept of the origin of these languages from one Indo-European dialect), Germanic loanwords in the Baltic and Slavic languages, the Yatvingian language (a dialect of Old Prussian), widely understood onomastics (the etymology: of hydronymy, of local and personal names, of ethnonyms and others). Grasilda Blažienė pointed out that Otrębski, on the basis of the form of the name of town *Alytus* (on the *Nemunas river*), created the very interesting hypothesis of the name of Lithuania on the model reconstruction: *Lietuvà* < **Leituvā* < **Leitū-s* < **Lēitā*, connecting with the reconstructed hypothetical old name of the *Nemunas river* (see: Otrębski, 1958; 1967). In addition, the researcher suggested that in onomastical papers on the Baltic substrate even nowadays in many cases the source papers by Jan Otrębski should be quoted in the first place (due to the priority and importance), and proposed a creation of an index of his etymologized names.

The wide range of topics of the presented papers was closed by Dr. Jurate Pajėdienė (LKI) with her paper *The particular nature of the “Grammar” by Jan Otrębski*. She went

with reverence deep into a detailed analysis of the content of the three volumes of Otrębski's work. She explained the uniqueness of the *Grammar* in the following words (here translated): "The *Grammar* has its specific way of describing which is not normative but has a historic-synchronic nature, and in terms of language description it is complete, panoramic, coherent and compact, illustrative (in the sense of numerous examples), and exudes the author's erudition".

It should be mentioned again that the first volume of Jan Otrębski's *Grammar* contains preliminary knowledge about the Lithuanian language with reference to the history of the language and the relationship to other languages, a description of dialects and of the most important language monuments; it also contains a detailed description of the phonetic system. The 2nd volume presents word-formation, and the 3rd volume a classically described morphology of the Lithuanian language. In the latter the author presents complete inflectional paradigms of parts of speech and a description of indeclinable parts of speech, numerous and carefully accented examples (also from dialects), given without exceptions equivalents translated into Polish, variants of use, references to diachronic (examples drawn straight from monuments such as the *Postilė* by Mikalojus Daukša). It was also suggested that the work might still be useful for linguists (frequently cited so far), and in particular for dialectologists, baltologists and slavists, as well as for teachers of Lithuanian as a foreign language. Finally, J. Pajėdienė supported the earlier demand by Norbert Ostrowski for a critical edition of the Lithuanian translation by Juozas Balčikonis of the 3rd volume of "Gramatyka języka litewskiego", even on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the first edition of this work. The manuscript of this translation is preserved in the Library of the University of Vilnius.

All presentations were completed by Prof. Algirdas Sabaliauskas who particularly stressed the need to complete the picture of the scientific career of Jan Otrębski with the invaluable role of his wife Helena Samaniūtė (true family name: Horodničiūtė) who, being Lithuanian and having a linguistic background, provided invaluable help, especially, in the opinion of the professor, in the formation and rectification of the famous *Grammar*. Moreover, the professor recollected with pride his meeting in person (together with Vytautas Mažiulis) with the famous researcher of Indo-European languages and his wife, and a dinner shared with them at the International Congress of Slavic Studies in Moscow in September 1958.

At the end of the conference devoted to Jan Szczepan Otrębski, Grasida Blažienė cordially thanked its organizers and its participants from Lithuania and from the Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznań.

5. In lieu of a conclusion

A friend of the Otrębski's family, Vlada Pajaujienė, having received from the professor the last part of the *Grammar*, wrote to him in 1965: "Your *Grammar* is a particular contribution also to the culture of the Lithuanian nation, in which it will be enshrined/written in golden letters. I am convinced that today, as well as in the future, our more enlightened society will have for you the very same feelings of gratitude which I have

for you today”¹¹. In connection with this metaphor, the conference closed with the beautiful words of Dr. Juratė Pajėdienė: “Let us hope that at least one of a gold letters we have written today”¹².

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¹¹ Oryg. Lithuanian: „Jūsų Gramatika yra nepaprastas indėlis ir į lietuvių tautos kultūrą, kurioje bus aukso raidėmis atžymėta. Esu įsitikinusi, kad su tokiu pat jausmu, kaip aš dabar, dėkos Jums mūsų šviesesnioji visuomenė dabar ir ateityje“ (1965 02 12 Vlada Pajaujienė letter to Jan Otrębski) -quoted following the paper of Jūratė Pajėdienė.

¹² Oryg. Lithuanian: „Tikėkime, kad kažkokį auksinės raidės blizgesį mes šiandien padėjome“.

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