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MICHAEL L. KOTIN. *Gotisch. Im (diakronischen und typologischen) Vergleich.* (= Sprache – Literatur und Geschichte. Studien zur Linguistik/Germanistik, Band 41.) Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2012. Pp. 553.

*Reviewed by BJARNE SIMMELKJÆR SANDGAARD HANSEN*

### **General remarks**

Most (historical) grammars of ancient languages generally tend to focus on the phonological and morphological systems of the language in question, less so on syntactic and typological issues. Kotin's monograph on the Gothic language accounts for virtually everything that one would expect from a general historical grammar of any language, and much more. Not only does it contain the usual sections on the phonological and morphological systems; it also includes an extensive section on syntax, and – what may be more spectacular for historical grammars – it treats the aforementioned linguistic levels of Gothic both diachronically and typologically. The readers are informed not only about, e.g., the outcome of the Germanic sound shift but also about the phonetic system underlying it and the factors that may have triggered its development (pp. 71-81).

Viewed against this background, I find Kotin's monograph ill-fitted as a primer: its level of discussion is simply too advanced for a beginner of Gothic language study to fully grasp it or indeed to learn Gothic from it, be it on a synchronic or a diachronic basis. This caveat should by no means be seen as criticism of Kotin or of his monograph. Needless to say, had the stated purpose of the book been a primer of Gothic, critical remarks would have been in order, but as Kotin himself states, the "Ziel der vorliegenden Studie ist es, das gotische Laut-, Formen- und Wortbildungssystem zu beschreiben sowie eine Analyse der Texte vorzunehmen, wobei vorwiegend bisher unerforschte bzw. ungelöste Probleme im Vordergrund stehen" (p. 10). Kotin's work fully meets these self-proclaimed criteria of success and is thus better suited as a contribution to the scholarly debate on the history and nature of the Gothic language.

There are few points of contention in the basics of this work, i.e. the outline of the immediate prehistory of Gothic. Thus, like virtually all other scholars working in this field, Kotin claims that, e.g., Goth. <ei> [ī] may have three different sources, viz. PIE \**e<sub>i</sub>*, \**i̯* or Pre-PG \**i* / *\_NH* (p. 42), that Goth. *sa, so, þata* derives from the PIE *so-/to*-pronoun (pp. 151-157), and that Goth. *-þ* (pres.ind. 3.sg.act.) derives from PIE \**-ti* (p. 274-275). What may cause dispute are Kotin's further

attempts to apply the methods of internal reconstruction to Proto-Germanic and Proto-Indo-European in order to uncover the nature of the pre-layers of these two protolanguages. Let it here suffice to mention Kotin's deliberations on the typological comparison of Proto-Indo-European consonantal derivational suffixes with the possessive suffixes of Uralic (p. 124), on the previous ergativity of Proto-Indo-European (e.g. pp. 132-135), and on the ultimately pronominal or deictic origin of several case markers and personal endings (e.g. pp. 139-146, 261-262). The relevance of such digressions in a monograph on the Gothic language is, in my view, questionable since they do not provide the readers with any new information concerning Gothic. Nonetheless, I grant that their presence may be partially justified by Kotin's intention of treating Gothic not only comparatively but typologically as well. To some extent, it seems relevant to the readers that, e.g., Pre-Proto-Indo-European had an ergative-absolutive system since it may explain some structural oddities of the Gothic as well as the Proto-Germanic and Proto-Indo-European nominal systems as originating from an earlier system that differed fundamentally from the younger nominative-accusative system usually reconstructed.

### *Structure and layout*

The initial chapter includes a general introduction where the author defines the Gothic language in time and space (pp. 13-20). Also, some of the main typological characteristics of Gothic are listed (pp. 21-24), leading up to a discussion (pp. 24-25) of the simultaneously archaic and innovative nature of the Gothic language when compared to the North and West Germanic languages, cf. e.g. Kotin's fine point that "das gotische Sprachsystem ein adäquates Spiegelbild der Frühentwicklung der Germania, einschließlich der Konstellation von Archaismen und Neuerungen sowie der Haupttendenzen des Sprachwandels in den germanischen Sprachen, darstellt [...] Das Gotische bietet daher ein mit keiner anderen altgermanischen Sprachen vergleichbares Forschungsmaterial, spiegelt es ja sehr häufig die Lage wieder, die in den Vorstadien des Germanischen noch nicht und in anderen altgermanischen Sprachen nicht mehr vorhanden ist oder aber bereits das Endergebnis von der entsprechenden Entwicklung präsentiert" (p. 25).

Kotin devotes his second chapter to the phonological system of Gothic (pp. 27-89). In addition to the expected outline of the historical developments and synchronic systems of vowels (pp. 27-61) and consonants (pp. 62-89), Kotin also

elaborates on prosody (pp. 27-36) and on the phonetic and systemic catalysts triggering the Germanic sound shift (p. 75).

Gothic morphology and morphosyntax constitute the pivots of the third and by far longest (pp. 91-315) chapter. The chapter is divided into subchapters, the first of which contains a few preliminary remarks. The second subchapter deals with the nominal system. A further subdivision is made into substantival (pp. 93-140), pronominal (pp. 150-166), numeral (pp. 166-178) and adjectival (pp. 178-193) declension on the one hand and adjectival (pp. 193-212) and pronominal (pp. 212-224) determination on the other. In the third subchapter, the verbal system is treated in terms of conjugation (pp. 224-280), infinite forms (pp. 280-284) and the categories of the verb (aspect, voice, tense and mood) from a diachronic-typological perspective (pp. 284-315).

What scarcely escapes the readers' attention is Kotin's notation of (nominal and verbal) stems. Instead of speaking of, e.g., *i*-stem nouns or *ōn*-stem verbs, Kotin, heavily inspired by Darski (2004), introduces a trichotomy of referential root, constant exponent and variable exponent more or less – but not entirely – equivalent to the standard notational system of root, derivational suffix and inflectional ending (esp. pp. 95-101, 180-181, 224-227). A difference between the standard system and that proposed by Kotin is seen, e.g., in the notion of *nasj-* as the referential verbal root (pp. 231-234) of Goth. *nasjis* 'you save' to which the constant exponent *-i-* is added in order to create the referential verbal stem *nasji-*. Consequently, *nasjan* is analysed as belonging to the same verbal class as the strong verbs, viz. to Kotin's "RVS-1th: RVW + KE-1th idg., germ. \*E",<sup>1</sup> and the focus is shifted from (diachronic) derivation to (synchronic) inflection in a way not entirely dissimilar to the inflectional classes introduced by Kürschner (2008: 20ff.) and Thöny (2013: 15-20).

Contrary to many historical grammars, Kotin lists not only the grammatical forms and contemplates their prehistory; he also discusses their use, cf. especially the paragraphs on adjectival (pp. 193-212) and pronominal (pp. 212-224) determination or on the categories of the verb (pp. 284-315) where he provides his readers with numerous, syntactic examples from the Gothic corpus in order to support his claims.

In his fourth chapter of some 58 pages (pp. 317-374), Kotin touches upon several aspects of Gothic syntax, discussing not only the foreign, mainly Greek,

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1. Referential verbal stem no. 1 (thematic), i.e. a verbal stem consisting of a referential verbal root plus thematic, constant exponent no. 1, which is PIE and PG \*E (manifested as PG \*e/i, a, u, Ø > Goth. i, a, u, Ø).

influence (pp. 317-321) which is at least briefly mentioned in most standard Gothic grammars, but also – and this is considerably less often seen in historical grammars of Gothic and other ancient languages – dependency and the relative frequency of finite and infinite verb forms (pp. 324-338), sentence types and sentence connectivity by means of conjunctions and other connectors (pp. 338-350), and sentential and phrasal topology – e.g. word order and constituent order (pp. 350-374).

Most historical grammars of a given language tend to treat word-formation only formally – and mainly diachronically – in that they provide their readers with information on the prehistory and function of the derivational suffixes, compounding processes and other word-formation patterns of the language in question. In his fifth chapter on word-formation, Kotin does so, too (pp. 380-396), but he adds a range of theoretical considerations on the typology of the Gothic word-formation processes (esp. pp. 375-380). Also, he deserves much praise for his recognition of the pivotal basic conditions of word-formation processes, including derivational morphology, viz. that it is situated in the dynamic, transitional zone between grammar and lexical semantics (pp. 396-398).

Chapters six and seven concentrate on the Gothic texts. Thus, a brief introduction to the texts and their nature as biblical translations is given in chapter six (pp. 399-406), and this is followed by an extraordinarily meagre collection of text samples from the Gothic corpus (pp. 407-417). Only four samples are given, viz. Gospel of Matthew 8, 1-34, Gospel of John 10, 1-16, First Epistle to the Corinthians 1, 17-24 and Skeireins V, 1-9, and even if they may be well-chosen as representatives of the different literary styles and genres in the Gothic biblical corpus (pure narrative, narrative with reflexions and interpretations, argumentative discourse, and argumentative description), I cannot help wondering if a book like Kotin's, which in its outline of, e.g., Gothic syntax draws heavily on minor text samples, would not have benefited from the inclusion of a much larger selection of excerpts, following the procedure of some of the previous monographs on the Gothic language, e.g. Lambdin (2006).<sup>2</sup>

One feature of Kotin's monograph that may cause some annoyance to the readers is the division of main text and annotations into two separate sections, i.e. the use of endnotes (pp. 419-506) rather than footnotes. Even if the author's intention of making the text more accessible to a wider audience by omitting in-

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2. Lambdin (2006: 140-226) includes all extant portions of the four gospels together with the extant parts of the Epistle to the Romans and the First Epistle to Timothy in his primer of the Gothic language.

depth discussions of the most recent research from the main text (pp. 10-11) is indeed laudable, most trained scholars, who – in view of the high academic level of Kotin’s work – will probably constitute the vast majority of the readers, will undoubtedly soon tire of constantly consulting two sections in turn.

When addressing the matter of layout and structure, one may level a moderate point of criticism at the editorial team of the publishing house for not letting the clear and logical structure of the work appear from its layout. Above all, additional spacing between the individual parts and paragraphs of the subsections would have been most welcome. As it is, blank lines between subsections are provided until the fourth level, e.g. “3.2.1.1. Das Substantiv” (p. 93) and “3.2.1.2. Das Pronomen” (p. 150), but in the intermediate more than 50 pages, no additional spacing is provided between the subsections on the fifth level and beyond. Consequently, the graphical layout of the book hardly facilitates the readers’ chances of easily locating, say, subsection IIb on the genitive plural ending (pp. 140-142) and distinguishing it from the preceding subsection IIa on the genitive singular (pp. 139-140) or the following subsection IIIa on the dative singular (pp. 142-144).

### *Eastern European bias.*

A conspicuous aspect of Kotin’s book is the vast number of references offered throughout. One gets the impression that Kotin has consulted more or less every relevant publication on the subject of discussion, and his 40-page-long list of references would seem to confirm that first impression. However, on closer inspection, one cannot help noticing an occasional bias in Kotin’s in-text references in favour of Eastern European scholarly literature (cf. e.g. pp. 121-122, 133, 143-144), above all of Prokosch (1939)<sup>3</sup> whose ideas are given a disproportionate amount of space when compared to alternative ideas advanced by other scholars.

Academically raised in a more Western tradition of comparative Germanic and Indo-European linguistics, I am likely to find myself in a situation of throwing stones while living in a glass house. In other words, I, too, cannot deny a certain

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3. Prokosch’s comparative grammar of Germanic may have been written in English, but Prokosch was Bohemian by nationality. More importantly, his grammar was translated into Russian (Prokosch 1954) and has thus been extraordinarily influential within the field of Germanic (and Indo-European) linguistics in Eastern Europe in particular.

bias in my academic work in favour of Western scholarly literature, and it may well be that the very reason why I cannot help noticing Kotin's bias is my own Western bias. In fact, Kotin's inclusion of Eastern European literature should rather serve as an eye-opener to many scholars in the West, myself included, to the undoubtedly equally valid hypotheses and claims of another scholarly tradition. Still, a considerable number of obviously basic references are wanting, e.g. references to Boutkan (1995) in the discussion concerning preservation of vowel length in unstressed syllables (p. 47) or to Rasmussen (1999[1990]: 383-384) in the treatment of Holzmann's Law (pp. 83-84, 426).

When it comes to the citation of cognate forms and typologically parallel examples, Eastern European entries are also more heavily represented in Kotin's book than in comparable works on Gothic and Germanic linguistics. In cases where most historical-comparative grammars would cite forms only from the earliest attested stages of extra-Germanic branches, such as Vedic or Avestan for Indo-Iranian, Ancient Greek for Hellenic, Latin for Italic or Old Church Slavonic for Slavic, Kotin chooses to list forms from multiple Slavic languages in addition to – or in a few cases even instead of – these (cf. e.g. pp. 146, 152, 156, 159, 161-162, 167-178). Again, this should not necessarily be seen as a point of criticism. As long as a wide array of forms are provided in order to support the author's claims, the Slavic forms should be regarded as a most welcome supplement; when, however, only forms from the Slavic languages are provided and not forms from, e.g., Vedic or Ancient Greek as well, the author runs the risk of producing less convincing arguments in favour of his claims.<sup>4</sup>

### *Misspellings and erroneous citations of linguistic forms*

So far, I have found little reason to raise any heavy points of criticism against Kotin's monograph. In one respect, however, criticism is definitely called for. I find it beyond dispute that misspellings and, in particular, erroneous citations of

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4. One of several examples of this state of affairs is seen on p. 146 where Kotin, besides the Gothic examples, lists only OCS *есмь*, Pol. *jestem* 'I am' in order to support the reconstruction of the PIE personal ending *\*-mi* (primary, 1.sg.act.) and only Pol. *gramy*, Russ. *узпаем* 'we play' in support of the PIE personal ending *\*-mes* (primary, 1.pl.act.). Other scholars might have chosen to list also, say, Skt. *asmi*, Gr. εἰμί 'I am' and Skt. *smah*, Gr. εἰμέν, ἐσμέν 'we are'.

linguistic forms occur much too frequently. Suffice it here to mention a handful of examples from the first couple of chapters of the book: *wáirpan* [...] *wáurpans* (for *wairpan* [...] *waurpans*; p. 24), *geb-ô-s* (presumably for *geb-ô*; p. 29), *piskus* (for *piscis*; p. 38), *gast-é-s* (presumably for *gast-é-sa*; pp. 30, 38), *jünsten* (for *jüngsten*; p. 40), *Aphophonie* (for *Apophonie*; p. 49), *piscus* (for *piscis*; p. 71) or (Swedish) *dat* (for *det*; p. 153). Such misspellings and errors occur most frequently in the early sections of the book; consequently, not that many more examples could be added to the list above.

Still, some of the examples are of a rather aggravating nature. One can only hope that they are the results of time pressure combined with deficient and inadequate editing rather than a manifestation of Kotin's scholarly level in the disciplines of Gothic and Germanic linguistics. Given the incontestably excellent and extraordinarily detailed character of the diachronic and typological outlines and discussions in Kotin's book, I prefer to interpret them in the former way and would strongly recommend the author and the publishing house to produce a list of corrigenda at their earliest convenience.

### *Summary*

Despite the relatively large number of misspellings and erroneous citations, no one can deny that Kotin's monograph on the Gothic language contains virtually everything that one would expect from a general historical grammar of any language, and much more. It is fully packed with pivotal, diachronic information and thought-provoking, typological digressions, for which reasons discussions of or comments on every (main) claim and observation made in Kotin's book would greatly exceed the spatial limits of this review. Consequently, I have, in numerous cases, refrained from mentioning when I question or directly disagree with passages in Kotin's book, e.g. when Kotin designates the alternation of the thematic vowel as ablaut (p. 51) or when he puts forth the standard claim that the root-noun class is unproductive in Germanic (p. 128); cf. the almost opposite view presented in Hansen (2012: esp. 13-14, 19).

By focusing on diachrony as well as typology, Kotin's monograph runs a minor risk of losing focus in that its direct audience is neither exclusively one of historical nor of general linguists. On the other hand, this double focus gives it the advantage of introducing a breath of fresh air into the long series of primers and grammars dealing with the Gothic language. I therefore believe that Kotin's monograph should be available on the shelves of every library



that claims to cater for Germanicists as well as for linguists and philologists of related disciplines.

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