



KAZIMIERAS BŪGA

November 6, 1979 marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of one of the most well-known Lithuanian linguists and the founder of Baltic studies in Lithuania, Kazimieras Būga.

Būga was born in the family of a farmer on November 6, 1879, in the village of Pažiegė, not far from the town of Dusetos. Having learned to read and write Lithuanian in secret (the teaching of Lithuanian was then forbidden in schools by the Tsarist government), for two winters he attended a Russian primary school. Then his father took him to their relative's house in St. Petersburg (now Leningrad). Having finished four classes, Būga entered the priests' seminary. To the great indignation of his parents, a year later he left the seminary and started an independent life. To earn his living, he went to work in an observatory.

Whilst in St. Petersburg, Būga was drawn into the social and cultural activity of the Lithuanian community there; he took part in the secret Lithuanian press (the printing of books and periodicals in Lithuanian was then banned by law). Yet, linguistics held the greatest attraction for him, and in his free time Būga started gathering Lithuanian words and studying linguistic literature. The greatest influence on Būga at this stage was exerted by a well-known authority on Lithuanian, Kazimieras Jaunius.

In 1905 Būga finished the gymnasium as an external student and went up to St. Petersburg University, where he studied Slavonic philology and comparative linguistics. His teachers were J. Bodouin de Courtenay, A. Shakhmatov, and A. Sobolevski. As a student, Būga started systematizing and publishing Jaunius' ideas on the Baltic languages under the title of „Aistiški studijai“ 'Aistian Studies'. The first volume of these studies appeared in 1908. However, realizing more and more the methodological weaknesses of Jaunius' studies, he gave up the idea of publishing other works by the scholar.

The hard life and independent scientific work postponed his graduation from the University a great deal. At long last he took his degree in 1912 and was appointed to work at the Department of Comparative Linguistics in the University. At first he edited Juška's Lithuanian Dictionary published under the auspices of the Russian Academy of Sciences. In 1914 Būga was sent to Germany (Königsberg) for two years to broaden his knowledge under a famous investigator of Baltic languages, Adalbert Bezzenberger. Soon, however, his studies were interrupted by the First World War. He was forced to return to St. Petersburg, where a hard life awaited him. In 1916 Būga moved to Perm, near the Urals, where he had been offered the position of private reader at the Department of Comparative Linguistics of the new-

ly organized University. In 1918 Būga was promoted an extraordinary professor. In Perm, he taught Comparative Indo-European grammar, Sanskrit, Polish and gave an introductory course on linguistics. In 1919 the University was evacuated to Tomsk (Siberia). However, he was not to stay long there. In 1920 he returned home to Lithuania, bringing with himself an extensive file of cards with Lithuanian names (over 120 kg in weight of the slips!) for a future dictionary of Lithuanian.

The then Ministry of Education of Lithuania commissioned Būga to compile a complete Lithuanian dictionary. He took up the work with tremendous enthusiasm, working day and night and collecting new words and writing new entries. By 1923 his dictionary file had grown to 600, 000 slips (they already weighed about a quarter of a ton!). Besides his work on the dictionary (he had no qualified assistants), Būga had to give lectures at the University of Kaunas set up in 1922 on all the major linguistic subjects, both on Lithuanian and general linguistics. He also spent a great deal of time writing and publishing articles. Būgas' health, worn out by the strenuous work and difficult conditions of life, began to fail and in 1924 he fell ill. He was taken to a hospital in Königsberg, where on the night of the first and second of December, 1924 he died. He was buried in the Kaunas cemetery.

Būgas' untimely death was a great calamity for Lithuanian linguistics. He died at the age of 45, having left a great deal of unfinished work and large files of Lithuanian words. Can there be a greater tragedy for a scholar than to die at a time when he is on the point of showing the world the most treasured fruits of his labour?

Although Būga's life was short, his services to Lithuanian linguistics and Balistics are very great. He was the initiator of many branches of this linguistic science in Lithuania, and his works laid down firm foundations for later studies.

The basic branches of linguistics to which Būga has contributed most of all are lexicology and lexicography. Having started his work on the Lithuanian dictionary while still only a child, he left large files with Lithuanian words-files, which marked the beginning of the contemporary Lithuanian Dictionary, 11 volumes of which have already appeared (letters *A – R*). The few pages issued by Būga himself (part of the words beginning with the letter *A*) are an excellent example of what a descriptive and historical-etymological thesaurus should be.

Būga wrote many articles and studies on Lithuanian and Baltic lexicology. He did an intensive research of words borrowed in the Baltic languages and Baltic words borrowed in other languages. Of great importance to Baltic studies are his works devoted to the chronology of these borrowings. Special mention should be also made of his study „Lituanica“ (ИОРЯС XVII), „Visų senieji lietuvių santykiai su germanais“ ‘The Oldest Relations of the Lithuanians with the Germans’ (Kalba ir senovė, 1922), „Die litauisch-weissrussischen Beziehungen und ihr Alter“ (ZfslPh I), and others. Būga published hundreds of successful etymologies: PФВ, ИОРЯС, Kalba ir senovė, and elsewhere. Part of them were issued posthumously. Especially important are the remarks and amendments he made to A. Preobrazhenski's Russian Etymological Dictionary.

Būga's Lithuanian etymological dictionary files, now stored at the Institute of Lithuanian Language and Literature of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, still await investigation.

Of his lexicological works one particularly original field of study is his work in Baltic religion and mythology, which appeared in „Lietuvių tauta“ and as a separate

edition, „Medžiaga lietuvių, latvių ir prūsų mitologijai“ ‘Materials for Lithuanian, Latvian and Prussian Mythology’ I–II (Vilnius, 1908–1909).

Būga gave a great deal of time and attention to the study of Lithuanian and Baltic names and laid down firm foundations for the study of Lithuanian personal names. He investigated a large number of old two-stem personal names and established the authentic forms of Lithuanian dukes’ names, which have reached us only in non-Lithuanian written documents. His study, „Apie lietuvių asmens vardus“ ‘Concerning Lithuanian Personal Names’, is a model of investigation. Place-names, however, interested Būga more than personal names. He left a file consisting of several thousand place-names. Būga tried to establish the correct Lithuanian and other Baltic place-names, which had been corrupted in non-Lithuanian writings, and special consideration was given by Būga to the investigation of hydronyms. His hydronymical works are classics of their kind in Baltic studies and a model for later investigations. Investigating hydronyms, Būga hoped to throw light on the distant past of the Balts. Although his Baltic migration theory is at present in the course of being amended, the chief conclusion that various Baltic tribes had formerly lived to the east of the territory of contemporary Lithuania and Latvia was later backed up by other researches. No Balticist can do without Būga’s studies, „Kann man Keltenspuren auf baltischen Gebiet nachweisen?“ (RSL VI), „Kalbų mokslas bei mūsų senovė“ ‘Linguistics and Our Past’ (Kaunas, 1913), „Upių vardų studijos ir aisčių bei slavėnų senovė“ ‘The Study of River-Names and the Past of the Aistians and Slavs’ (TiŽ I), „Lietuvių įsikūrimas šių dienų Lietuvoje“ ‘The Settlement of the Lithuanians in the Present-day Lithuania’ (TiŽ II), „Aisčių praeitis vietų vardų šviesoje“ ‘The Past of the Aistians in the Light of Place-Names’ (Kaunas, 1924) – the German translation, „Die Vorgeschichte des aistischen (baltischen) Stamme im Lichte der Ortsnamenforschung“ (Streitberg—Festgabe, Leipzig, 1924), „Lietuvių tauta ir kalba bei jos artimieji giminiųai“ ‘The Lithuanian Nation, Its Language and Near Relatives’, an extensive study placed in the introduction to Būga’s dictionary.

Of great importance to Baltistic studies are his works on Lithuanian and, in general, his Baltic historical grammar. Mention should be also given to his series of articles, „Baltica“ (PΦB LXV, LXVI), in which he investigates the history of the diphthong *ui* and the consonant *z*. However, a classical example of his work is his study „Priesagos *-ūnas* ir dvibalsio *uo* kilmė“ ‘The Origin of the Suffix *-ūnas* and the Diphthong *uo*’ (Kaunas, 1921).

Būga gave special attention to the study of the history of Baltic accentuation. His extensive study, „Kirčio ir priegaidės mokslas“ ‘The Study of Accentuation’, placed in the introduction to the dictionary, should be regarded as a classical example of this field. An extremely extensive amount of material on this subject is amassed in his German publication, „Die Metatonie im Litauischen und Lettischen“ (KZ LI, LII).

Būga was concerned not only with Baltistic studies. He did not forget practical problems of Lithuanian, either. Already his first article published in 1900 was devoted to the normalization of Lithuanian orthography. During his short life Būga came back to the problem of orthography on a number of occasions. Of special importance is his series of articles, „Kalbos dalykai“ ‘Language Questions’ (1907–1910) and „Kalbos mažmožiai“ ‘Linguistic Remarks’ (1914–1922), which were published in the

periodicals of that time. The latter series of articles, which were later considerably revised and added to, served as a basis for Būga's well-known study, „Kalba ir senovė“ 'Language and Antiquity' (Kaunas, 1922). Many of his recommendations for the improvement of Standard Lithuanian were accepted, and are not questioned even today. Of great significance in particular was his activity directed against extreme purism, which was then beginning to take root in Lithuanian linguistics. Thanks to Būga a number of beautiful words (e. g. *boba*, *kūdikis*, *labas*, *liaudis*, *marios*, *riba*, *sarmata*, *vilna*, etc.), which ignorant "purists" were trying to oust from Standard Lithuanian, have been saved.

Būga's linguistic heritage is both extremely prodigious and valuable. The linguists of Soviet Lithuania and the broad public have the greatest respect for him as a scholar and cherish his memory.

A large three-volume edition of Būga's works has been published (1958–1961) in Soviet Lithuania. The secondary school in Dusetos has been named after Būga. In his native Pažiegė, the house in which he was born has been turned into a museum and many a street in Lithuania now bears his name. In the Lithuanian Studies Centre in Vilnius University one of the finest lecture-rooms has been recently named after him.

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