

## Werk

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# Obituary

## In memoriam Even Hovdhaugen (1941–2018)

### Bernt Brendemoen

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Even Hovdhaugen was born in Oslo on 21 June, 1941, and passed away after a prolonged illness on 16 October 2018. His father was a farmer (and for many years a member of the Norwegian parliament) from Venabygd in the Gudbrandsdalen valley, a place to which Even felt closely attached throughout his life. He studied Latin, and then General Linguistics and Comparative Indo-European Linguistics at the University of Oslo, earning his master's degree in the latter subject in 1966 with a thesis on the Laryngal Theory and its reflexes in Greek and Armenian. This was the golden age of linguistic studies in Norway, thanks to scholars such as the Caucasiologist Hans Vogt, the Fenno-Ugrist Knut Bergsland, the Indologist Georg Morgenstierne, and the Indo-Europeanist Carl Hjalmar Borgstrøm, who had worked as a professor at Ankara University before the Second World War, where he had learned Turkish. After receiving his master's degree, Even went to Istanbul with the intention of learning Modern Armenian, but soon realizing that Turkish could be just as

attractive a field of study, he began his Turcological and Altaic studies, first (1967–1968) serving as an assistant professor of General Linguistics, and later (1968–1973) as a research fellow in Turcology. At that time, Turcology was not taught at any Norwegian university. The centre of Altaic studies in Scandinavia was the Institute of Central Asian Studies at the University of Copenhagen, which was headed by Kåre Thomsen and Iben Raphael Meier. Despite its noble scholarly traditions going back to Vilhelm Thomsen, this institution was not very productive when it comes to publications or examination of students; nevertheless the two scholars it employed were extremely learned in the field of Altaic studies, and Even must have received thorough training with them. Through the Danish scholars Even also came into close contact with international Altaistic circles, especially the Hungarian Altaists, and attended conferences and participated in expeditions in the Soviet Union and Mongolia. The subject of his doctoral thesis was the phonological correspondences between Old Turkic, Mongolian, and Chuvash, but even before completing his doctoral degree, he was appointed a professor of General Linguistics at the University of Oslo and slowly began devoting attention to other fields of linguistics. Before this, however, he had already published several articles on Turcology and Altaistics which remain relevant today, and which testify to Even's originality and clarity of mind. Some of these are the following:

- Turkish words in Khotanese texts. A linguistic analysis. *Norsk Tidsskrift for Sprogvidenskap* 24. 1971. 163–209.
- Some remarks on the development of nasal phonemes in Chuvash. *Ural-altaische Jahrbücher* 44. 1972. 208–212.
- A phonological problem in Chuvash. *Norsk Tidsskrift for Sprogvidenskap* 27. 1973. 53–56.
- The Chuvash dialect of Martinka. Phonological analysis and texts with translation and commentary. *Ural-altaische Jahrbücher* 45. 1973. 163–173.
- The Mongolian suffix *LIG* and its Turkic origin. In: Ligeti, Lajos (ed.) *Researches in Altaic languages*. Budapest. 1975. 71–77.
- The relationship between the two Orkhon inscriptions. *Acta Orientalia* 36. 1974. 55–82.
- The phonemic system of early 18th century Chuvash. *Central Asiatic Journal* 19: 4. 1975. 274–286.
- The structure and origin of the Turkish Runic alphabet. In: *1. Milletler Arası Türkoloji Kongresi. Tebliğler 2. Türk dili ve edebiyatı*. [International Turcological Conference 2. Turkish language and literature]. Istanbul. 1979. 470–478.
- (Together with Bernt Brendemoen:) *Tyrkisk grammatikk*. Universitetsforlaget. 1992.

Even was an extremely open-minded person, quickly adopting new ideas and showing sincere interest in new trends within linguistics. Inspired by Noam Chomsky and his ideas, for example, he published an introduction to transformational generative grammar in Norwegian already in 1969 (*Transformasjonell generativ grammatikk*, Norwegian University Press, Oslo). Another of his fields of interest was the history of linguistics, and he published several articles and books on the grammatical traditions from the Hellenistic and Roman grammarians up to our times. However,

Even will probably be especially remembered for his works on some of the indigenous languages of Peru and Chile, and especially Polynesian languages such as Samoan and Tokelau, which were based on intensive field-work performed by himself and his students during numerous expeditions.

Even also played an important role as a university administrator, especially when serving as a vice dean of the Faculty of Humanities between 1979 and 1981 and as a dean at the same faculty between 1997 and 2002. In this capacity he incessantly supported linguistic studies at the university, and several positions in language-related subjects were established under his aegis.

Even was highly respected by his colleagues and loved by his students. He was an outstanding representative of the Norwegian linguistic tradition, a tradition he fervently defended.