ANIMATES IN -g-

There are at least three types of derivatives in -g- which can be easily distinguished. There are some nouns formed from verbs, such as Lith. eigá ‘a mode of going’ and nespēgā ‘lack of time’, which do not interest us here.

Then there are certain nouns in -eg- and -ag- which may be semantically classed as predominantly names of objects: Lith. uodegā, Latv. uodega ‘tail’, Lith. veđegā ‘adze’, Latv. škinaga ‘rod’; or as defining certain species: Lith. eżegēs ‘acerina cernus’, OPruss. assegis ‘perch’, Lith. kadağēs, Latv. kadēgs, OPruss. kadēgis ‘juniper’, Latv. maugajas ‘myosotis palustris’, Lith. vānagas, Latv. vanags ‘hawk’. It is not clear whether these two semantic classes have separate origins. It should be noted however that in these nouns a preceding syllabic is a Baltic short.

In contrast with these, we have two classes of nouns that are specifically marked [+animate]. The first is the small class which defines the age of animals: Lith. treigys = OCS trizs ‘3-year old’, ketvērgis ‘4-year old’, etc. The second is that which defines characteristics of persons; the formal mark here is -(i)ągas, -(i)ągā: seniūgas ‘old man’, vylīugas, vylīgūa ‘deceitful person’, etc. This has been equated with Russ. kosyga ‘squint-eyed person’ etc. Note that in these the preceding syllabic is a Baltic long or acute.

By W. Winter’s recent formulation the suffix(es) with preceding short must represent $g < *gh$, while the last pair of suffixes with preceding long must reflect $g < *g$.

It therefore seems clear that these [+animate] suffixes in *-g- are to be related in origin to the Germanic suffix seen in OHG alticha, -o ‘die Alte, Greisin; der Alte, Greis’ and armich ‘unglücklich’, derived respectively from alt and arm by a Germanic -k- suffix marked [+animate] which also gave hypocoristics and ultimately -(i)kn> Germ. -chen.