RECENZIJOS


We greet with great pleasure the appearance of the fourth and final volume of the Old Prussian etymological dictionary by the brilliant and productive Lithuanian Balticist, Vytautas Mažiulis. This last volume is particularly important, because this is now the only complete modern etymological dictionary of Old Prussian. Naturally one regrets that V. N. Toporov has not seen fit to finish his Prusskij jazyk, the fifth and last volume of which reached only the letter L. Toporov’s work will apparently find its place among many other great unfinished linguistic works.

Mažiulis’ (M.) new volume is distinguished by the scrupulous care in preparation, erudition and innovative etymologies which characterize the first three volumes. As examples I give some of the interesting and new etymologies below.

M. (p. 12) writes that Elbing Vocabulary (EV) (2) rapa ‘engel, angel’ is to be corrected to *rapā = *rapan an accusative singular which presupposes an o-stem nominative singular *raps < *rapas implying in turn an expression *engels *raps (or *engelis *raps) ‘guardian angel’, such that *rapas would have been a substantive with -o- grade ablaut from a verb root *rep- ‘to protect’ which would originally have had a meaning ‘to surround, to take up’, cf. Lith. rėpti ‘to embrace, to include’ and Old Prussian EV (520) raples ‘czange, tongs’. For this latter word M. suggests (p. 14) a possible reconstruction *replēs with a passage of *re > *ra-, cf. Lith. dial. rāplēs. I find what M. has to say about both these words completely convincing.

M. (pp. 20–21) derives rickawie ‘regieret, rules’ from a verbal root *rik-, *rick-, *reik- ‘to slice, to cut’ and then connects with Lith. riekšti ‘to slice (bread)’. Similarly the noun riki ‘reich, kingdom’ might be derived from the same root.

M. (p. 61) divides the word EV (200) sando ‘balke, beam’ into the elements san- ‘with, together’ and -do from the root *d(ē)- ‘dēti, to put’ (cf. sendittans ‘folded together’) and compares the formation to that of Lith. sijä ‘beam’ (F r a e n k e l 1955, 756), the first element of which may have been sa- ‘with, together’.

M. (p. 15) suggests that EV (691) raugus ‘lab, rennet’ was originally an *o-stem noun deriving from earlier *raugas. I consider this quite possible and although in such cases as EV (529) auwerus ‘sindir, metal dress’, EV (716) gandams (read as *gandaros) ‘storch, stork’, etc., it is difficult to see the reason for the ending -us, in the case of raugus, EV (633) kalmus ‘stok, stump’, EV (302) kalpus ‘rungestoc, supporting cross block on a wagon’, EV (120) grauvus ‘seyte, side’, EV (588) wangus ‘dameraw, uncultivated cleared land’, asmus ‘eighth’ one might see the influence of the preceding velar or labial in determining the German perception of the following vowel.

M. (p. 225) considers both EV (722) warne ‘kro, crow’ and EV (721) warnis ‘rabe, raven’ to be derivatives of an onomatopoeic interjection *var ‘kvar’ with the suffix *-na/-nā-. Curiously enough I find no mention of what seems to me to be the best etymology, viz. a derivative of an adjective meaning ‘black’, cf. OCS vran, Pol. wrony, Russ. voronof (T r a u t m a n n 1923, 343). This seems quite likely to me, although M a c h e k (1951, 98–100) derives the adjective ‘black’ (which is only applied to horses) from the noun and rejects the usual connection with Sanskrit varṇa- ‘color’ since in his view the ad-
jective would then mean ‘colored’, a meaning which one would not expect from a bird which was completely black. It would seem to me, however, that a word with the general meaning ‘colored’ could easily come to denote a specific color. Webster’s (1966, 449) gives as the third meaning of the adjective colored: ‘of some other race than the white; often Negro or having some portion of Negro blood’. On the other hand, the same dictionary (op. cit.) gives as meaning 7a of the verb to color ‘to take on the color of ripeness (as of grapes)’ and 7b ‘blush, flush’. I would point out also that Latin coloratus which literally means ‘colored’, had as one of its secondary meanings ‘red’, a meaning which developed into Spanish colorado ‘ruddy’. Thus I reject Machek’s notion that a general word for ‘color’ or ‘colored’ could not develop into the designation of a specific color.

It seems to me that the color of the crow is at least one of its most outstanding characteristics and it would not be surprising to me to derive the name therefrom. Many years ago I was told by a more advanced fellow student at the University of Pennsylvania that when Prof. Antanas Salys was just beginning to learn English at one time he could not think of the English word for ‘crow’ so he said: ‘the big black one that lives in the forest’. One can think of numerous examples of bird names derived from color in English, e.g., blackbird, bluebird, blue jay, yellow finch, redbreast, etc.

M. (p. 67) writes that EV (659) sasnis ‘hase, hare’ is to be read as *sasnis from a substantive meaning ‘grey’, which is in turn derived from an *o/ā-stem adjective which in West Baltic was šasna- ‘grey’. The feminine form of the adjective šasna- is represented in the Lithuanian (from Latvian) river name Šasna (in the Marijampolė region).

For EV (727) salowis ‘nachtgal, nightingale’, which could appear to be a Slavic borrowing, cf. Russian solovoej, M. (p. 49) suggests, however a reading *salavīs derived from a substantivum mobile West Baltic *salav(ī)a- ‘that (bird) which is characteristically grey or yellowish’. He notes that the noun is masculine and compares Lith. dialect masculine lakštiṅgalas (as opposed to the standard feminine lakštiṅgala). The word for ‘nightingale’ then is eventually derived from a Balto-Slavic deadjectival neuter substantive *šalu ‘greyness, yellowness’. Lithuanian dialect forms of the word for trout (also based on the color) are also noted: šalvas, šalva, šalvis, šaltė, šalvÿs.

M. (p. 89) quotes with approval Endzelins’ (1943, 244) comparison of EV (748) sealtmeno ‘wedewal, oriole’ with Latv. zēlts ‘gold’ and reconstructs an earlier *zēltemenā (with a circumflex *-ēl-)

For EV (738) sīneco ‘Meise, titmouse’, which could be a borrowing from Polish sīnica, M. (p. 111) suggests, however, the possibility of a reconstruction *sīnikā and the derivation with an -ik- suffix from a West Baltic/Slavic adjective *sīna- ‘blue, bluish’.

I would certainly applaud the etymologies for sasnis, salowis, sealtmeno and sīneco, which illustrate M.’s attention to morphology and at the same time show how animals (including birds) can come to be named for their color.

Regarding the accuracy (or lack thereof) in transcription I would quote Sever Pop (1950, 261) who has described the experience of three trained Swiss dialectologists, (Louis Gauchat, Jules Jeanjaquet and Ernest Tapolet) who transcribed the speech of the same individual differently even though all three were natives of the same country, had the same teacher, the same system of phonetic transcription and several years of experience in working with informants in their native place. Concerning dialect transcription Pop writes: ‘La transcription ne se réalise pas mécaniquement et l’esprit différencie des observateurs ne tarde pas à se refléter dans la manière d’interpréter les sons entendus, en les transcrivant par des signes divers de la liste fixée d’avance’. Of course, no two situations are ever exactly the same, so one could, naturally, claim that the transcription of Swiss dialects by trained phoneticians is vastly different from the transcription of Old Prussian, probably by Germans. It merely seems surprising to me that one could expect a higher degree of accuracy in phonetic rendition from a German scribe than from experts trained in dia-
lect transcription. Therefore I am suspicious of what seems to me to be an excessive reliance on the orthography.

M. (p. 10) writes that the enigmatic phrase sen senditmai ränkän is to be interpreted as an incorrectly translated singular construction meaning ‘with a [a] folded hand’. I rather prefer Smoczyński’s (1989, 181; 1998a, 114–117) explanation that sen senditmai ränkän ‘mit gefalten henden, with folded hands’ should be read rather as *sen sendit-ami ränkami, cf. Lith. su sudėtominis rānkomis ‘id.’. With regard to senditmai we encounter the transposition of the last two letters, but in the case of the final -än of ränkän the typesetter misunderstood the word-final written sequence of letters *-mi (possibly without a dot on the final -i) as -nn and thus set up in type ān to represent what he perceived as ann.

M. (p. 11) argues that a spelling ranguns ‘gestolen, stolen’ assures us that the word could not be transcribed as *rankuns (which I have done [1974, 171] and thereby connected it with Lith. riňkti ‘to gather’, etc.) yet he wrote (1988, 49) that the correction of EV (80) agins ‘ouge, eye’ into *akins is quite possible since in Prussian writings there are cases of the confusion of voiced and voiceless consonants. One can compare also EV (629) sagnis ‘wurzelle, root’ which M. (p. 36) reads as *saknis and EV (125) lagno ‘leber, liver’ which M. (1996, 18) reconstructs as *jaknā. The German confusion of voiced and voiceless consonants is well known, so it is unclear to me why it was possible in the case of agins, sagnis and lagno but not possible in the case of ranguns.

M. (p. 38) proposes that Simon Grunau’s word saika (sayka) ‘sack’ is an incorrectly written Old Prussian acc. sg. masc. *zakan and notes the Lithuanian dialect word zākas. The Middle Low German sequence -ai- (-ay-) could indeed merely denote anā (see Lasch [1914, 25] who quotes the examples raid ‘Rad, wheel’ and jair ‘Jahr, year’). The word saika could conceivably be a neuter noun in -a, but the unusually poor transcriptions encountered in Simon Grunau’s Vocabulary make it even more difficult to interpret than other Old Prussian documentation.

For EV (755) warnycopo ‘warkringel, shrike, butcher bird’ M. (p. 225) suggests a metathesis of the second -a- and the -y-, such that the reading should be *warnyacopo a form which should be phonemized as *warnakapą. The second element -copo reflecting *kap- is to be connected with Lith. kapoti ‘to hew, to chop’ and denotes something like värny kapotoja ‘crow chopper’. While agreeing with the etymology, I wonder if the orthographic -ay- might not really reflect a long vowel and that the word should be transcribed as *värnākapą. The stem vowel is sometimes retained in Lithuanian compounds, cf., e.g., varnolėša (beside varnalėša) ‘kind of thistle plant’.

M. (p. 64) argues that EV (425) sarxtes ‘scheide, sheath’ is a nominative plural feminine form to be read as *sarkstēs. In his view this e-stem form replaces an earlier i-stem nom. pl. fem. *sarkstis which is to be derived from the nom. sg. fem. *sarkstis ‘a means of keeping, watching over something’. This word has the suffix -stis, can be compared with the Enchiridion word absergisnan ‘Schutz, protection’ and may derive from a verb *sarg- (with a different ablaut grade) or (without a change in ablaut grade) from a verb *sarg-, cf. Lith. dialectsargioti ‘to watch over’. I would quote also from the Lithuanian Academy Dictionary (XII, 160) sargstis ‘security’ and I propose that orthographic sarxtes merely reflects phonemic/sarkstis/ and that M.’s analysis of *sarkstis is correct. Marchand (1970, 114) writes: ‘As a typical Middle German dialect, our document [i.e., the Elbing Vocabulary – WRS] confuses i and e of whatever provenience: ...3 hemel (Himmell) ‘sky’, 6 sebengestne (Siebenestern) ‘Pleiades’, 246 schene (MHG schine) ‘prow iron’ ‘...”.

It is therefore unclear to me why a scribe who didn’t always distinguish between orthographic e and i in his native German would be inclined to do so in the foreign language which he is transcribing. M. himself writes (p. 114) that it is better to consider EV (554) sirmes ‘louge, lye’ as *sirmis, since in the Elbing Vocabulary i (particularly when unstressed) is sometimes written with the letter e. Likewise M. (1996, 225) writes that EV (79) passoles ‘nacke, neck’ is an i-stem
nominative singular and he suggests a reading *pažulis. It is not completely clear why M. would accept a reading with final */-is/ for these words, but would apparently reject it for sarktēs.

Similarly, M. (p. 161) writes that EV (582) stroysles ḥalbfischz, flounder’ derives from a feminine nom. pl. *skrāsľēs. Why not reconstruct a nom. sg. masc. *skrāislēs?

M. (p. 120) writes that EV (626) skerptus rūstere, ‘elm’ should be transcribed as *skirptūs which could have been the result of a dissimilation of Old Prussian *skirptūs (cf. Lithuanian dialect skirptūs ‘beech [Fagus silvatica]’). Old Prussian *skirptūs is then a remodeling from *skirptūs (= Lith. skirptūs ‘elm’). The words are eventually to be derived from Baltic *karp-/*kerp- ‘to cut’. This seems to me to be a convincing etymology, but again we have to do apparently with the rendering of phonemic /i/ by orthographic -e-.

M. (p. 94) suggests for EV (124) seyr ‘hercze, heart’ a reading *sēr, which would seem to make sense since orthographic -ey- could apparently render an-ē- in Middle Low German (see L a s c h 1914, 72–73) and the Old Prussian word would seem to correspond exactly to Gk. kē:rô. For me, however, this presents a problem. In Greek such sequences with a long vowel plus resonant are quite normal, cf. métēr ‘mother’, kýōn ‘dog’, but for Baltic they are quite unusual, cf. Lith. móte ‘wife, woman’, šūō ‘dog’. A Lithuanian counterpart such as *sēr ‘heart’, which would seem to correspond to Old Prussian *sēr, is, however, hardly imaginable. A word such as Lith. melēti ‘to become blue’, which contains a long vowel plus resonant is surely an innovation.

M. (p. 131) suggests that EV (740) smicuto swalštē, swallow’ is to be corrected to *smituco, reflecting earlier *smitukā (or *smītukā) and that the word is onomatopoetic in origin. He assumes an Old Prussian interjection *smi (or *smī) with a diminutive suffix *-ukā. H i n z e (1996/7, 161) reads the same word as *snekuto and connecting it with Lith. šnekēti ‘to talk’ also assumes an onomatopoetic formation.

T r a u t m a n n (1910, 431) suggests that EV (307) slayo ‘sleke, sled’ is a neuter nominative plural of EV (309) slayan ‘sletekuffe, runner (on a sled)’. M. (pp. 126–127) suggests that slayo is a collective feminine nominative singular denoting etymologically ‘the object with runners’. This could be compared directly with Lith. šlajà = (plurale tantum fem.) šlajōs ‘sleigh’ (LKŻ XIV 997). One notes also the (plurale tantum masc.) šlajai with the same meaning (LKŻ XIV 996). Thus in my view slayan could easily be the accusative singular of *slayas = Lith. *šlajas and, as Mažiulis has suggested, slayo could be cognate with Lith. šlajà. Or would slayan merely be the accusative singular of slayo supplied with a different meaning to satisfy the German scribe?

S m o c z y ń s k i (1983, 175) has written that a glance at the photocopy of the Elbing Vocabulary M a z i u l i s (1966, 64) shows us that the macron on word EV (237) samē ‘ack’r, (cultivated) field’ is a single stroke on the last two letters, viz. not just the final letter. Thus this word is to be read as samē-ne and to be phonemized as zemēnē. From the orthographic point of view one can compare of EV (321) malūakēlē ‘mill wheel’ which is to be read as malunakēlēn. From the point of view of word formation one can compare EV (304) graw-yne ‘tunchret, side board of a wagon’ and EV (120) grauwus ‘seyte, side’. (M. [1988, 403–404] suggests a reading *gravis or *grav’s and writes that *gravinē is an adjectival derivative of *grava- ‘side’ [cf. grauwus]). Smoczyński compares his Old Prussian reconstruction zemēnē with Lith. žem-inē ‘dug-out’. M., however, writes that Smoczyński’s reconstruction *samynē is not justified from the semantic-word-formation point of view. Still I personally could imagine that the name for an agricultural field might be derived from an adjective meaning ‘earthen’. It would have been useful for me, at least, to have a fuller explanation as to exactly why Smoczyński’s explanation is not possible. What is obvious to one person is frequently not obvious to another. Otherwise presumably there would never be differences of opinion about anything or any need for teachers.

M. (p. 187) derives tawisches ‘nechsten, of one’s neighbor’ from an adjective *tava- ‘near’
which in turn comes from an adverb *tau (attested, e.g., in OCS tu ‘here’) which had also the ablaut grade *tu attested in Latv. tuva- ‘close’. I had previously connected this with the root *tav- meaning ‘your (sg.)’, cf. also Lith. taviskis which as a noun can mean ‘your husband’. I wonder now if the root *tav- contained the seeds of both the meaning ‘your’ and ‘here, close by’.

Other scholars (e.g., Trautmann 1910, 453) have derived EV (553) twaxtan ‘queeste, bath-switch’ from an Indo-European root *tyak- ‘to bathe’ (cf. Gothic þwahan ‘to bathe’), but M. (p. 208) compares rather Lith. tvasketi ‘to beat (of the heart, etc.)’ and tvoki ‘to beat’. Twaxtan is then to be derived from a root *tvak- plus a noun of instrument suffix *-sta-. This seems somewhat similar to Nesselmann’s (1873, 193) notion that the word should be connected with Lith. tvoksti ‘to hit hard; to slam’, a causative of tvasketi ‘to thunder, to crack’. Fraenkel (1955, 1149) connects tvasketi with tvoti ‘to hit’ and (1151) compares further tvosketi.

I have suggested (1973, 153), however, that the word is to be read as *c waxtan, the confusion between the writing of t and c being well known, e.g., EV (509) turpelis ‘leiste, shoemaker’s last’ usually corrected to curpelis and EV (780) trupeyle ‘vrosch, frog’ usually corrected to crupeyle. (M. [1994, 58] writes that in the Elbing Vocabulary c is very similar to t, thus to correct, if necessary [reikalui esant], c to t [and vice-versa] is very easy.) Therefore *cwaxtan could be phonemicized as /kvakstan/, the second /k/ being epenthetic as with EV (333) klexto ‘kerwisch, swimming rag’ beside Lith. klaisčklu ‘feather duster’. Thus the noun /kvakstan/ could be considered a borrowing from Slavic xvost which is well attested with the meaning ‘bathing switch’. A borrowing from Slavic could not be ruled out because of gender cosiderations, the final -an of /kvakstan/ reflecting probably a masculine accusative singular ending. One can compare EV (792) swetan ‘world, world’ which, according to M. (p. 173) has a masculine accusative singular ending and is a borrowing from proto-Polish, cf. Slavic světa, a masculine noun (see Levin 1974, 53 and Trautmann 1910, 444).

M. suggests (p. 174) that EV (736) swibe ‘vincke, finch’ is to be corrected to *swile and read as *zvile, the origin of the name being in the color. This presupposes an Old Prussian root zvil- ‘to shine’ which would be cognate with Lith. žvilr ‘id.’ The semantics and the derivation are quite credible (i.e., the occurrence of a bird name based on color), but it seems to me that one must assume a scribal error, since to judge by the facsimile (Mažiulis 1966, 74) the letter b in swibe differs at least somewhat from the letter l in other words with l on that page, e.g., the preceding EV (735) cizilx ‘ciziske, siskin’ where M. (p. 272) corrects the l to s and reads the word as *cizisix = *ciziks < *cizikas so that the relationship to Pol. czyżyk, from which it is borrowed, becomes more obvious. Hinze (1996/7, 159–160) suggests, however, that swibé is to be read as *zvibe and is an onomatopoeic formation which he compares with the Serbo-Croatian onomatopoeic verbs cvi-fj-k-a-tt, cvi-li-k-ov-a-tt, cvi-k-a-tt and cvi-lj-e-ti ‘to twitter; to squall’. M. (p. 162) would read EV (595) stuckis ‘leynbom, maple’ as *scuckis = *skuksis and this latter in turn from *skuts in which the *-i- before the front vowel *-i- was turned into *-k-, thus the *skuksis would be that tree with clipped leaves, cf. Lith. skutas ‘scrap of rag, cloth’, skusti ‘to shave’, etc. This is in my view a good etymology, but in the reversal of the position of the dental and the velar, an etymology which requires some orthographic acrobatics.

For EV (432) sweykis ‘pflugpfert, plough horse’ M. (p. 172) suggests a reading *sveikis (Lith.) asivienis, hard-working horse’ < *asveikis with loss of the initial vowel. This seems also to be a very good and original etymology. One might suggest, however, a connection with Lith. sveikas ‘healthy’ followed by nominalization of the original adjective. The same reasoning could then be applied then to EV (585) sweikis ‘dorsch, cod’. M. has shown how the root *salu ‘greyness, yellowness’ could function both as the root for a fish and a bird name, so it seems quite possible that an adjective with a broad or very general meaning could be applied to both a horse and a fish. Fraenkel (1955, 950) suggests that Lith. svel-
kas derives from the prefix *su- 'good' plus -ei- 'to go' such that *su-eikas meant 'going, moving briskly'. Another possibility would be that the element -eik- is the second element of a compound. A notion of 'moving well' or 'being healthy' would seem to be desirable characteristics for any living being.

Like Trautmann (1910, 462) M. (p. 242) writes that EV (390) winis 'wyn, wine' is borrowed from German, but gives no reason for preferring the German to the Slavic source vino (neuter). Is it because the German word, ending in a consonant (and being masculine) would presumably have to become masculine in Old Prussian? On the other hand M. (1996, 289) writes that (383) piwis 'bier, beer' is from Pol. piwo. But why would the Old Prussians have gotten their beer from the Slavs, but their wine from the Germans? Certainly Germans are better known for their beer than the Slavs.

M. (1994, 59–60) has rejected my (1969, 166) derivation of EV (214) accodis 'rochloch, hole in the wall for the elimination of smoke' as a diminutive *akutis of *akis 'eye' since the latter word is of feminine gender and the Old Prussian counterpart should then be *akutē, cf. (fem.) Lith. akis 'eye' dim. akutė, kārve, dim. karvutė, (masc.) vaikas 'child', dim. vaikėlis, etc. M. does not mention, however, Lith. (fem.) ūpē 'river' and its common diminutive (masc.) ūpėlis. In my view, if a phenomenon is observed even once in one language, the possibility of its occurrence in another language cannot be ad hoc excluded on statistical grounds. I would point out also that it is only an assumption that since akis is feminine in Lithuanian it must be feminine in Old Prussian also (cf. the neuter Slavic oko, Skt. aksi, Goth. augo, masc. Lat. oculus). Shift of gender is well known even within Lithuanian dialects, as we have seen, e.g., in the etymology of EV (727) salowis discussed above.

M. (p. 267) considers EV (59) wundan 'wasser, water' a nom. (acc.) sg. neuter word, but since we encounter in the Enchiridion an apparent nom. sg. masc. unds 'water' he finds the Enchiridion word undan to be an accusative singular masculine. I suspect that wundan is also an accusative singular form, but if M. considers that two dialects of Old Prussian might have the word for water in different genders, it seems to me to be inconsistent to expect that Old Prussian EV (80) agins would necessarily be feminine just on the basis of East Baltic cognates. My general comment on the field of etymology is that it is very difficult to limit the possibilities for shift of meaning or gender by some kind of automatic discovery procedure or assumed scientific method.

As I have written in my reviews of the previous three volumes M. is to be congratulated on completing an indispensable tool for Old Prussian and Baltic etymology. In this review, I have expressed primarily points where I disagree with M., leaving unmentioned many points where I am in full agreement. All Balticists are in debt to this one great Balticist and Prussianist for providing so many important insights into Baltic philology in the course of his life time.

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