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O PRUSS. (*w*)*uschts*: LITH. *ušės*

The Old Prussian ordinal (*w*)*uschta-* has been discussed in numerous works both in its comparative Baltic context and with reference to the Indo-European problem of the original form of '6'. The most complete recent review of the Baltic debate is to be found in Chr. S. Stang VGBS 279. Apart from mention in the discussions of (*w*)*uschta-*, the earlier views advanced regarding Lithuanian dialectal *ušės* 'šėšios' are to be found reflected in that entry and s. v. *šeši* in Fraenkel's LEW. The descriptive standing of (*w*)*uschta-* as well as a résumé of earlier views is presented by W. R. Schmalstieg, *An Old Prussian Grammar* (1974) 111 and 335-6 (footnote 103). I find myself obliged to differ with each of these accounts in a number of particulars, whereby I reach a considerably different result for the Baltic and Indo-European reconstruction.

Schmalstieg phonologizes (*w*)*uschta(a)-* ~ *usts* as [ust-]. I agree completely with him that the orthographic *w-* probably reflects a perceptible rounded onset before an initial back rounded vowel; cf. *wosee* 'goat': *ožỹs*. But I cannot agree in assuming that the nearly unanimous spelling in this stem with *sch* should be dismissed as a simple [s]. In fact, for forms where Schmalstieg apparently envisages the possibility of a derivation from **sj* he allows (27) a tentative interpretation of instances of *sch* as [š]. I therefore feel that, to be consistent in principle, we must interpret the stem of '6th' as [ušt-]. Thus I write (*w*)*uschts* [ušt(a)s], *uschtai* [uštã] (see Schmalstieg 14 on *ai*), *uschtan* [uštãn].

I have already taken issue with Stang 1966 on the Indo-European background of (*w*)*uschta(a)-* in my article on IE '6' in the *Festschrift for Archibald A. Hill* (1979) 85-6; that article was actually written in 1971, though the volume has appeared only recently. I repeat here the main points that affect our present concern. The explanation which I have offered for Armen. *veç* has, I hope, removed that form as a possible close comparandum to [ušt-]. The O Pruss. *u* as a zero-grade to the earlier IE **u* in '6' is anomalous with respect to the other Baltic attestation and yet is the expected ablaut state for such an archaic ordinal; thus this *u* must be old. The earliest recoverable Baltic shape for **ksueks* '6' was **kšeš-* > **šeš-*, and for **ksuk(s)to-* '6th' it was **šušta-*. Because within a morpheme **s* always appeared as **š* after *u*,

the latter could easily have been revised to **sušta-* > **schushta-*. I did not at that time have a principled way of explaining the loss of the initial **sch-*.

In that article I accepted the speculation going back to Būga and transmitted by Endzelīns, Stang, and Schmalstieg that Lith. *ušės*, *ušios*, *uszininkė*, Bretkun *uszau-nikes* might stem from borrowing from Old Prussian. But on reflection I feel that such an argument must be rejected on more than one ground. The speculation is really purely hypothetical; we do not possess the supposed source form. Since the institution is old and vital to a basic aspect of life there seems no reason, without strong indications, to look for a borrowing here. Moreover, why would such an opaque form replace the clear *šėšios*, *šešiáuninkė*, etc.? Finally, we shall see that this is an expectable archaic formation. Thus in the absence of any reason beyond a mechanical paradigmatic preconception on the part of modern philologists we must accept this stem as old and residual, regardless of the problems it may offer us in finding a plausible rule of formation.

Let us now consider more attentively the semantics of *ušės*. Latvian *sešas* 'child-bed' is an obvious derivation in sense from Lith. *šėšios* 'the six weeks of lying-in' = *ušės*; the semantic unity of East Baltic on this point is clear. Now formally we have in *ušės* (as also in *šėšios*) an *-jo/ā* derivative which would carry the meaning 'that which pertains to (is characterized by) what is denoted by the primary stem'; in this case the underlying stem can plausibly be glossed 'a total of six (weeks)'. We may therefore recover a simple thematic **uša-* 'which makes up six'.

As I have had cause to elaborate (Вопросы языкознания 1971, 1, 91–3), Benveniste has established (Noms d'agent et noms d'action en indo-européen 1947, 145f.) that the fundamental sense of the IE ordinal formation was 'that which completes a group or a series'. Therefore the sense of **uša-* is precisely that of an ordinal to '6'.

If we turn now to the stem formation of ordinals, I would refer to my discussion, Foundations of Language 1974, 11, 463, where I reconstructed for Baltic inter alia **pnk^w-to-* → **penk^w-to-* and **ks(u)ek(s)-to-*; I further noted that the placement of '6th' in the formational series was ambiguous. I now see that I decided for '6th' at that time in the wrong direction. Let us suppose rather that O Lith. *schestas* reflects an innovation modelled on *penktas*. Instead, we shall prefer as conservative the simple thematization seen in Gaulish *suexos*; yet this may well have been renewed with an unvarying full-grade root vocalism¹. Schematically we must now reconstruct **pnk^w-to-*, **ksuk^s-o-*. The latter would have yielded directly **suša-*.

¹ As is seen in Balto-Slavic **deunó-* '9th', which I have discussed in Zbornik za filologiju i lingvistiku (Novi Sad), 1976, t. 19, p. 13–14.

Although we have not yet reached our goal, it must be clear by now that there are good reasons for deriving the observed Baltic formations from **uša-* as a basis, since we have seen that this form carries precisely the requisite semantics. Certainly the obscure initial was remodelled in East Baltic to produce the transparent root in *šėšios* so as to match the meaning. On the other hand, while East Baltic invoked a radical revision to produce Lith. *šėštas*, Latv. *sestais*, Old Prussian was content with a much milder suffix substitution, **uš-a- → uš-ta-*. It is therefore on sound methodological grounds, Meillet's principle of the archaism of irregularities, that we view **uš-a-* as the oldest reachable Baltic ordinal '6th'. From that form all other relevant formations are derivable by known rules.

I must therefore revise my earlier reconstructed pair to read **kšeš-* > **šeš-* '6': **uš-a-* '6th'. The problem now is to explain the apparent loss of **(k)š-*, i. e., **šuša-* > **uša-*.

First we must observe that through an originally perfectly normal ablaut alternation the anomalous vocalic alternation seen in **šeš-* : **šuš-a-* would have arisen. Now I have already supposed (see above) that because of the **s → š* rule the sequence **šuš-* may have arisen; on similar lines, both assimilation and the relative rarity of initial **š-* could have yielded **šeš-*. It may even be that an early palatalization correlation favoured **š-* before **e*. At any rate, it seems that **šeš-* survived, while **šuš-* or **šuš-* lost its initial. One wonders whether perhaps at this stage a simple phonetic masking of the retracted sibilant in the presence of the back vowel took place. This is a very weak and unconfirmed explanation, but at present I can see nothing further that imposes itself. I have already (1979) remarked that ordinary dissimilation, invoked by Vaillant and Stang, is a poor argument. One may yet speculate that **šuš-* might have been adjusted to **[suš-]* = phonemically dominant *[sus-]*. But that seems to lead only to an ad hoc assumption of *s*-mobile.

I leave the matter at the farthest point that I have been able to bring it.