

William R. SCHMALSTIEG  
 State College, Pennsylvania

**A NOTE ON THE PROTO-EAST BALTIC VOWEL SYSTEM**

The classical languages show us that the Indo-European vowels *\*ā* and *\*ō* were quite well distinguished, cf., e.g., Lat. *māter*, Gk. μήτηρ ‘mother’ representing *\*ā* in the initial syllable as opposed to Lat. *dōnum*, Gk. δῶρον ‘gift’ representing *\*ō* in the initial syllable. Now this distinction seems to have been maintained in East Baltic, cf. Lith. *móteris* ‘woman’ (< *\*māteris*), vs. *dúoti* ‘to give’ (< *\*dōtei*). A problem arises, however, because sometimes East Baltic *\*ā* seems to derive from Indo-European *\*ō*, e.g., Latv. *d-ā-sns* = Lith. *d-o-snūs* ‘generous’ apparently with the same root as etymological *d-úo-ti* ‘to give’ (see Mažiulis 1970, 23).

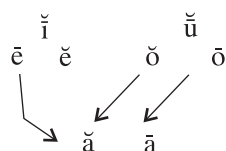
Mažiulis (1970, 21) explains this in the following way: stressed Indo-European *\*ō* gave Baltic *\*ō* which passed to Old Prussian *ō*, Lith. and Latv. *uo* whereas the unstressed variant of *\*ō* passed to Lith. *ō* = Latv. *ā*.

Mažiulis (2004, 19) presents a late Baltic vocalic system, which he characterizes as a vowel rectangle rather than a triangle:

*i	*u	*ī	*ū
		*∅	*ō
*e	*a (= *ɔ)	*ē	*ā (= *ō)

Under the influence of the outstanding Lithuanian phonetician, A. Girdenis (1977, 303) Mažiulis now writes *\*ā* where formerly he wrote *\*ō* and *\*a* where formerly he wrote *\*ɔ*, but it still seems likely to me that *\*ō* would correlate with *\*ē* rather than *\*∅*. Mažiulis' rectangular system still has more long back vowels than long front vowels and this seems to be a typological anomaly.

Levin (1975, 156) proposed as the latest Common Baltic dynamic system:

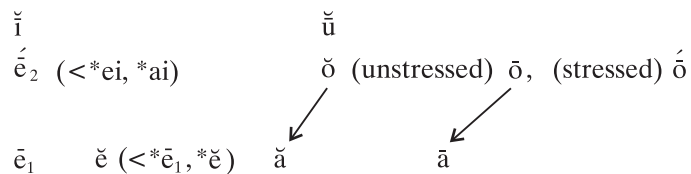


He writes then: ‘That is, \**ō* descended and merged with \**ǣ*, \**ō* descended and probably merged with \**ā* in unstressed position, \**ē* and \**ě* descended and became the front correlates of \**ǣ*. This correlation is an important feature of East Baltic morphonology; its antiquity in Lithuanian morphonology argues for the early time frame of the descent of the front vowel. It seems likely that the new low front vowel pushed back \**ǣ*, and that \**ǣ*, at least, was slightly rounded.’

Levin proposes then the merger of unstressed \**ō* with \**ā*, whereas Mažiulis talks only of the passage to Lith. *ō* = Latv. *ā*. On the other hand Levin’s proposal, like that of Mažiulis, would still seem to leave at least the stressed \**ō* without a front counterpart.

I suggest, however, that the vocalic system which both Levin and Mažiulis propose is only partially valid, and, indeed, partially valid only for East Baltic, not as Mažiulis proposes for Proto-Baltic. Although the original front counterpart of East Baltic \**ō* was \**ē*<sub>1</sub> (< Indo-European \**ē*) it later became that \**ē*<sub>2</sub> which derived from the monophthongization of the diphthong \**ei* (and perhaps \**ai*) in stressed position (see Schmalstieg 1968, 427; 1972, 162). The suggestion that only stressed \**ō* remained as such and did not merge with \**ā* would be strengthened by the supposition that likewise \**ē*<sub>2</sub> apparently arose only in stressed position, i.e., both of these phonemes could have originally been encountered only in a stressed syllable. A partial parallel for the neutralization of the Baltic \**ō* vs. \**ā* contrast in unstressed position is furnished by modern standard Russian where /*a*/ and /*o*/ contrast only in stressed position, the contrast being neutralized in favor of /*a*/ in unstressed position (A vanesov 1956, 106–120). The parallel does not, however, extend to the front vowel phonemes which are kept apart in Baltic but generally neutralized in Russian.

In East Baltic the introduction of \**ē*<sub>2</sub> (< \**ei* and perhaps \**ai*) which supplied a front counterpart for stressed *ō* was the cause (in a chain shift) of the lowering of the old etymological \**ē*<sub>1</sub> so I would modify Levin’s diagram in the following way:



The merger of *ō̄* with *ǣ* and unstressed *ō̄* with *ā* respectively would produce the following system with the stressed long mid vowels *ḗ*<sub>2</sub> (< \**ei*, \**ai*) and *ṓ*:

ĩ	ũ
ē <sub>2</sub>	ó
ē <sub>1</sub> ě      ǣ      ā	

At a later date, of course,  $\bar{e}_2$  and  $\bar{o}$  were diphthongized in Lithuanian and Latvian, apparently independently, see Levin (1975, 147–154). In derivative words the vowels  $*\bar{o}$  (> Latv., Lith. *uo*) and  $*\bar{e}_2$  (> Latv., Lith. *ie*) were analogically transferred to unstressed position, cf., e.g., Lith. *pérduoti* ‘to transfer’ (cf. *dúoti* ‘to give’), *dievótas* ‘devout’ (cf. *Diēvas* ‘God’).

Differently from Mažiulis, I suggest that the evidence for an etymological contrast of  $\bar{a}$  vs.  $\bar{o}$  in Old Prussian is weak and I would point to Levin’s (1975, 156) reconstruction of a vowel rectangle for Proto-West Baltic.

Although I continue to support most of what I presented in 1970 (Schmalstieg 1972, 161–163), I would now modify this to suppose it possible that the East Baltic chain shift lowering of  $*\bar{e}_1$  and  $*\bar{e}$  was caused by the introduction of  $*\bar{e}_2$  into the system and was possibly accompanied by the simultaneous merger of  $*\bar{o}$  with  $\bar{a}$  and unstressed  $\bar{o}$  with  $\bar{a}$ .

## PASTABA DĖL BALSIŲ SISTEMOS RYTŲ BALTŲ PROKALBĖJE

### *Santrauka*

Rytų baltų kirčiuotas  $*\bar{o}$  (iš ide.  $*\bar{o}$ ) visada turėjo priešakinės eilės atitikmenį. Iš pradžių tai buvo  $*\bar{e}_1$ , kilęs iš ide.  $*\bar{e}$ , vėliau –  $*\bar{e}_2$ , atsiradęs iš protobaltų  $*ei$  ir  $*ai$ . Naujosioms fonemos  $*\bar{e}_2$  atsiradimas vokalizmo sistemoje lėmė, kad  $*\bar{e}_1$  perėjo į žemutinę eilę, o paskui jį – ir nekirčiuotas  $*\bar{o}$ , sutapęs su  $*\bar{a}$ . Galbūt tuo laiku ir  $\bar{o}$  sutapo su  $\bar{a}$ .

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