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A COMMENT ON THE ABSENCE OF \*ž IN PRUSSIAN<sup>1</sup>

In the following, attention is drawn to the fate of palatal sibilants in Old Prussian, rather than to positional palatalization of sibilants in the current speech of Old Prussians (not *sien* beside *mien*, *tien* = Pol. *się*, *mię*, *cię*, not *etwērpt* III 117 / *etwiērpt* III 55, or *betten* I 13 / *bietis* I 13 etc.<sup>2</sup>).

Old Prussian monuments preserve enough indication of a historical palatalization of voiceless \*s + \*j > \*š before any back vowel, which is a development we know from Latvian too, cf. Pr. *Schuwikis* E 496 ‘shoemaker’ = Lith. *siuvikas* / *siuvikis* ‘tailor, siuvėjas’, Cz. *švec* ‘shoemaker’ < Sl. \*švъvъc < Balto-Slavic \*sjū- ‘to sew’, cf. Lith. *siūti*, but Latvian *šūt*. Cf. also Pr. gen. sg. *Tawischas* III 33 ‘neighbour’ < \*-is-ja-(s).

This means that the voiced sibilant z in Prussian, in turn, was to be palatalized as ž (cf. Latvian nom. sg. fem. *dzeguze* ‘cuckoo’ but gen. pl. *dzegužu* < \*geguzjōn).

My teacher Vytautas Mažiulis emphasized that no instances of Pr. \*zj > ž are attested, and that for some unknown reason, Prussian “evaded” the sound ž.

Indeed, we find 1x 3rd Sg. Present *līse* III 107 ‘crawl(s)’ = \*līz’a < \*lēzja, a development that is similar to usual positional palatalization (with the opposition a : e being neutralized after a palatalized consonant<sup>3</sup>). In other words,

<sup>1</sup> First touched upon in Letas Palmitis (ed.), *Dictionary of Revived Prussian*, Kaunas: Lithuanians’ World Center, 2007, 17.

<sup>2</sup> As can be seen, the palatalization of consonants before front vowels was felt, but not necessarily marked by the letter *i* in the Polish manner in Old Prussian written monuments.

<sup>3</sup> When speaking about neutralization of phonemes, a phonologically relevant position should also be defined. In Lithuanian this usually is the initial position, all the other being weak positions (not a single contrasting pair of the phonemes /e/ and /a/ exists and the phonemes /e/ and /a/ are neutralized): a broad open [e] palatalizes preceding consonants and merges with [a] after palatals. In dialects such a neutralization takes place in the initial position too. If the variation of initial e- and a- in the Catechisms (*ast* / *est*, cf. also the spelling *æst* II 7) is of the same origin, this points to a strong palatalization at least in Samlandian. The variation of spelling in post-palatal endings -ian(s) / -ien(s)

we find \*z'a < \*zja, not \*ža (possibly written in German as *sch*, or *sz*,  $\beta$  etc.) < \*zja, as is theoretically to be expected.

However, why should Pr. *sch* be phonetically identified with Lith., Latv. *š*? The Prussians seem to have had an intermediate hissing-hushing pair of voiceless–voiced fricatives *ś*, *ž*. For a German ear, the first of them sounded like *sch* [š], therefore \**śuvik*'s was spelled as *Schuwikis*. On the other hand, its voiced counterpart was perceived by Germans as similar to German *s* before vowels, i. e. [z], therefore \**līža* was spelled as *līse*. These hissing-hushing *ś*, *ž* (deriving historically from \**sj*, \**zj* before back vowels) eventually became different from \**s*', \**z*' which had become positionally palatalized before front vowels. Owing to this development, the difference between *sch(uwikis)* and *s(ien)*, *(ste)ssias* (not °*steschas* !) was preserved.

## PASTABA DĖL \*Ž NEBUVIMO PRŪSŲ KALBOJE

### *Santrauka*

Atvejai E *schuwikis*, la. *šūt*, bet lie. *siuvikas*, *siūti* < bl.-sl. \**sjū*- rodo, kad prūsų kalboje ne tik duslusis \**s*, bet atitinkamai ir skardusis \**z* + \**j* + užpakalinės eilės vokalizmas savo ruožtu sistemaiškai turėjo išvirsti į *ž*.

Tačiau ne tik nėra paliudyta nė vieno pr. *ž* (vok. *sch?* *sz?*  $\beta$ ?) < \**zj* atvejo, bet priešingai, 3 sg. praes. *līse* III 'lenda' = \**līz'a* < \**lēzja* panašu į įprastą pozicinę palatalizaciją (opozicijai *a* : *e* neutralizuojantis po palatalizuoto priebalsio), t. y. \**z'a* < \**zja* vietoj laukiama \**ža* < \**zja*.

Matyt, prūsai turėjo tarpinius sargiuosius-žvarbiuosius *ś*, *ž*. Pirmasis vokiečių ausiai buvo panašesnis į *sch* [š], antrasis – į *s* [z] (prieš balsius).

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in all monuments (cf. *etwepsennien* III 61 / *etwepsennian* III 45 etc.) shows that Prussian *-e* was a broad open vowel similar to that of Lithuanian. As for (E) *kraclan*, *ladis* in Pomezanian, this reminds us of the depalatalization (velarization) of *r* and *l* in East-Lithuanian dialects. In other words, Pomezanian \**ladis* < Balt. \**ledas* vs. Samlandian \**ʔads* < Balt. \**ledas* (but Pomezanian *Peadey* E 482 \**[pēd'ai = pēdei]*). For this feature cf. also *tawischan* III 33 / *Tawischen* III 31, *mayiey* \**[majai]* II 13 etc., especially *stesses* III 111 / *stessies* III 123 / *stessias* III 125!