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ON SOME POTENTIAL GHOST WORDS IN BALTIC¹

Abstract. In this paper, I discuss five words in the East Baltic languages which have a dubious history. (1) Lithuanian *kēmeras* ‘hemp agrimony’ has entered the standard language through botanical literature and derives ultimately from Nesselmann’s incorrect interpretation of an obsolete *kiemerai* ‘demon(s), incubus’; (2) *sálti* ‘to flow’ is known only from a single quotation deriving from K. Jaunius. It seems just as possible to interpret it semantically as ‘to creep’ and therefore as related to Lithuanian *selėti* ‘to creep’. Other forms attributed to this root also permit alternative interpretations; (3) *bālas* ‘white’ is known only from Juška’s dictionary, where it may represent a rationalization of *bālas* ‘anemone’. Only the latter can independently be verified from Žemaitian sources; (4) *uodėgis* ‘fox’, often quoted in the Germanicist literature, results from a misinterpretation of the gloss given in Kurschat’s dictionary. Furthermore, *uodėgis* ‘Fuchsschwänzer’ seems, in turn, to derive from Nesselmann’s misreading of Mielcke’s dictionary; (5) both Latvian *īls* (ihls) and *ikls* ‘stockfinster’ trace back to a lost manuscript dictionary by Fürecker; one is almost certainly an error, and it is further tempting to interpret *ikls* as an error for the otherwise attested *akls* ‘blind, pitch dark’.

Keywords: Lithuanian; Latvian; lexicography; nomenclature; ghost word; Nesselmann; Kurschat.

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The East Baltic languages have occupied a central place in Indo-European linguistics since the subfield's inception (Bopp 1833), but most scholars in the early years departed from a position of relative ignorance, relying heavily on the lexicographical works published in Prussian Lithuania, such as Mielcke (1800), Nesselmann (1851) and Kurschat (1883), and German-Latvian dictionaries such as Lange (1772–1773), Stender (1789) and Ulmann (1872). The blind trust often given to these lexicographical works, which to a great extent depend on even older lexica, has led to the propagation of many doubtful forms which have never been recorded in the living language.

As far as Lithuanian was concerned, the shift towards a more dialect-centred approach started in earnest with Kazimieras Būga, who made every effort to point out the errors present in the existing academic literature (e.g. Būga 1909, 30–31; 1922, 164–167; 1930 [1916], etc.). However, his most significant contribution to this endeavour, a comprehensive list of erroneous words appearing in academic sources, remained unpublished until long after his death (Būga RR 2 [1959], 695–725), and many of his suggested corrections have remained unnoticed by the wider scholarly community (cf. below on *kēmeras*). The accessibility of the Lithuanian lexical and dialectal material has greatly increased with the completion of the *Lietuvių kalbos žodynas*, but with this so has the task of verifying both the new and the old data. In its attempts at exhaustiveness, the LKŽ has often contributed to the further propagation, rather than repression, of doubtful forms from older lexica (see Urbutis 1990; Schiller 2006), as well as to the generation of new ghosts (Vitkauskas 2006). In this article, I will attempt to further supplement and elaborate on Būga's list by discussing a few potential ghost words in Lithuanian, as well as one (or two) in Latvian.

1. *kemerai* 'Eupatorium'

The Lithuanian word *kēmeras*, which means 'hemp agrimony, *Eupatorium cannabinum*', belongs to the modern standard language. It is recorded in the DLKŽ (s.v. *kēmeras*), and is the term officially recommended by the Lithuanian Language Commission (Protokolinis nutarimas Nr. PN-3, dated 9 May 2013). The earliest attestation of this word appears to be in Nesselmann's *Wörterbuch der litauischen Sprache*. His article was copied almost verbatim into the dictionary of Kurschat, who enclosed the entry in square brackets (indicating that he did not know the word):

“**Këmerai**, ū, *m.pl.* ein Kraut, Alpen, Alpkraut (Bd. Qu.) vielleicht Eupatorium, *Wasserdost*.” (Nesselmann 1851, 193)

“[**kemerai**, -ū, Subst. f.[sic.] ein Kraut, Alpen?, Alpkraut, Wasserdost.]” (Kurschat 1883, 177)

It was not long before the word found its way into the secondary literature, being noted in Fick’s *Wörterbuch der indogermanischen Grundsprache* (1868, 29–30; “lit. *këmera-s m.* Wasserdost”), with an attribution to Nesselmann, and equated with Skt. *kamala-* ‘lotus’, Gr. *κάμαρος* ‘Delphinium’ and OHG *hemera* ‘Niesswurz’. In the third edition of this dictionary (Fick 1874–1876 3, 64, now “*këmera-i m. pl.*”), a new comparandum appeared in the form of “ksl. *čëmerika*” (? = *чëмерица* ‘helleborus’, Miklosich 1865, 1113; see also Miklosich 1878, 246). The comparison between Baltic, Slavic and Germanic has become generally accepted, and the form *kemerai* ‘Alpkraut, Wasserdost’ is widely repeated in the academic literature (cf. Zupitza 1896, 113; Berneker 1, 142; ME 1, 302; Walde, Pokorny 1, 390).²

Despite this general agreement, the form *kemerai* is erroneous. The problem lies in Nesselmann’s unfortunate orthographical conventions, and in particular his use of the letter *e*. In the introduction to his dictionary (1851, X), Nesselmann expresses confusion as to the use of the digraph (ie) to represent what was, to him, the same sound as *é*, and recommends instead that *è* and *ie* be unified under a single symbol. He therefore distinguishes between a low ⟨*é*⟩ /*ě*/, and a high ⟨*è*⟩ /*ie*/ ~ /*è*/ (the latter graphically rather resembling *ē*). To add to the confusion, the symbol ⟨*è*⟩ is sometimes misused: compare e.g. *këli*, *këletas* ‘wieviele?’ (Nesselmann 1851, 191; for *këli*, *këletas*). As a result, while a reading *kemerai* cannot be ruled out, ⟨*këmerai*⟩ is more likely to represent *këmerai* or *kiemerai*.

Nesselmann attributes the form to two manuscript lexica, the *Lexicon Lithuano-Germanicum* of Jacob Brodowski (Bd.) and an ‘anonymous German-Lithuanian dictionary’ (Qu. = *Clavis Germanico-Lithvana*; cf. Drotvinas 1987, 103; Triškaitė 2007, 10 fn. 9). The attested forms in these two manuscripts are as follows:

“Alpen Kiemerai.” (Brodowski, 72)

“Alpen. Kiemerai, ū. Plur.M.” (CGL 1, 73) = “Alpen Kiemerai” (*Lexicon Lithuanicum*, see Triškaitė 2007, 29 for other manuscripts)

² An exception is Matzenauer (1880, 30), who copied *këmerai* directly from Nesselmann.

Nesselmann's sources thus point unequivocally to a form *kiemeraī*. This fact was, incidentally, already noted by Būga (1922, 402; cf. also RR 2, 702), who suggested a correction to *kiemeraĩ*, but this has largely gone unnoticed.³ In addition to this, the manuscript data reveal that the gloss 'Alpkraut' is nothing more than Nesselmann's own interpretation. In fact, it is not really clear why Nesselmann interpreted *kiemeraī* as a plant name at all. Marzell (2, 356) does indeed record *Alpkraut*, *Alpenkraut*, *Alpdost* as terms for '*Eupatorium cannabinum*', but I have been unable to find any attestation of the shorter *Alpen* in this sense. Furthermore, as CGL was commissioned to provide concordances for Luther's bible (Drotvinaš 1995, XV), it would be rather surprising for it to contain a designation of a herb of no biblical significance.

A much more obvious interpretation of *Alpen* is as the plural of *Alp* 'daemon; incubus' (cf. Triškaitė 2007, 29). As to the form of the plural, Grimm (DWb 1, 245) specifically notes "der pl. lautet alpe, doch bildet LUTHER alpen". This interpretation is proven correct by another, largely overlooked,⁴ attestation of *kiemeraī*. The first manuscript edition of Szyrwid's *Dictionarium trium linguarum* (dated c. 1620) contains an entry *Mára, Incubus ephi[a]ltes. Kiemeraī* (ALEW²). Based on this evidence, it becomes clear that *kiemeraī* should instead be translated as 'demon(s), incubus'.⁵

It remains to be explained how the term *kēmeras* 'hemp agrimony' came to be part of the standard language. It appears the answer must be sought in the botanical nomenclaturists. The earliest reference provided by the LKŽ is to Matulionis' *Žolynas* (1906, 27), which has *Eupatorium · kēmeras* (referencing Kurschat who, as we have seen, simply copied his entry verbatim from Nesselmann). Likewise, the LBŽ (p. 137) cite Nesselmann and Kurschat as their sources, and it is probably from here that the word

³ Būga's form *kiemeraī* is found in Vasmer, Trubačëv (4, 331), correcting Vasmer's original *kemeraī* (Vasmer REW 3, 315). Note that Fraenkel (LEW, 251) cites the word as *kemēras*, yet another ghost variant, apparently originating in an article by Nieminen (1951, 201). We can only assume Nieminen has confounded *kemeraī* with *kemēras* 'an unweildy person or thing'. The same form was copied into Frisk (1, 771, citing Fraenkel).

⁴ Note, however, Smetonienė 2020, 10.

⁵ Polish *mára* has been scrapped from the fourth edition, where Lat. *incubus* is equated with Pl. *Latáwec* and Lt. *Aytwaras*. See <https://seniejirastai.lki.lt/db.php?source=53&page=7>.

entered the standard language as a technical term. Another dubious word which seems to have entered standard Lithuanian through its inclusion in the LBŽ is *túopa* ‘poplar’ (Gliwa 2008).

If *kēmeras* entered the Lithuanian botanical nomenclature as the result of an error, then what term should have been chosen for ‘hemp agrimony’? At first sight, Pabrėža’s (1834, 124) *Atlayba* ‘Eupatorium’ looks promising, but this is most likely a mere neologism based on the theonym *Atlaibos* (taken from Joannes Lasicius’ *De diis Samagitarum*; cf. Balsys 2009, 208; Kregždys 2012, 42). Under the same entry, Pabrėža notes a Prussian (Lithuanian) “Wandens Raudolêles”. The source of this form is apparently Hagen’s *Preussens Pflanzen* (1818 2, 174 “wandens raudolêlès”; cf. also Matulionis 1906, 27). This is evidently a calque of the German *Wasserdost*,⁶ perhaps even invented by Hagen’s informant when asked to translate the term. In any case, there is no clear evidence of its actual currency. As a result, there appears to be no genuine Lithuanian designation for this plant.

Nevertheless, the current term for ‘hemp agrimony’, *kēmeras*, undoubtedly originated as the result of a series of lexicographical errors, and ultimately represents a corruption of the obsolete word *kiemerai* ‘a kind of demon(s)’. Without the support of a Lithuanian cognate, Latvian *cemerīņš* ‘hellebore’ and *cemeris* ‘eine giftige Sumpfpflanze’ (EH 1, 265) are better analyzed as loanwords from Belarusian *чэмер*, Russian *чемерица* (cf. Old Russian *чемерь*) ‘hellebore’.

2. *sálti* ‘to flow’

Būga (1912, 244–245) argued for a derivation of Lt. *selėti* ‘to creep’ from a root **sel-* ‘to move’. As additional evidence, he adduced the following phrase from Kvédarna: *vanduō lig vařty at-sālo* ‘вода дошла до воротъ’ (i.e. ‘the water reached the gate’). This phrase was first published in press (Būga 1908a [No. 106] = Drotvinas 1969, 87) and originates from Būga’s mentor Kazimieras Jaunius.⁷ The entry reads:

⁶ For the second element, compare: *Dost*, herba, Raudolêles (CGL 1, 474), Raudodêlêš f.pl. *Dost*, ein rothes Faerbekraut (Ruhig 1747 1, 119), *Origanum*. / *Dosten*. / [...] *žem*: Raudoodielys. — pruus: Raudolêles. (Pabrėža 1834, 92), Raudolêle ‘gemeiner Dost, Origanum vulgare’ (Nesselmann 1851, 432), *Origanum vulgare* · Raudonelis (Matulionis 1906, 43 and LBŽ 240, citing Ivinskis).

⁷ As stated explicitly by Būga at the start of the article. Note also that any reference to Kvédarna found in Būga’s works implies Jaunius as his informant (Zinkevičius 1979, 29).

“Vanduo at-spīndo iki vartų = vanduo at-sálo „palengvo, vis daugyn eidamas, tekėjo” (= ‘[the water] flowed, gradually becoming more and more’)

In *Kalba ir senovė* (Būga 1922, 279–280), citing the same phrase, Būga translates *sálti* as ‘tekėti [to flow]’ and proposes a relationship with *salà* ‘island’ and Pr. E *salus* ‘Regenbach’. This etymology was supported and expanded upon by Endzelīns (ME 3, 664) whence it found its way into Walde, Pokorný (2, 505, s.v. 4 *sel-* ‘springen’) and other academic literature (Pokorný 1959, 899; Fraenkel LEW [1962], 774; Kuzavinis 1966, 179; Smoczyński 1982, 215; Derksen 2015, 388).

It is important to stress that, outside of this single isolated phrase,⁸ neither (*at*)*sálti* nor its alleged synonym (*at*)*spįsti* have been recorded in any sense approaching ‘to flow’. The usual meaning of *spįsti* is ‘beam, shine’; with the preverb *at-*, it means ‘shine back, reflect’. On the other hand, *sálti* means ‘to sweeten’, although it mostly appears to be used in technical senses such as ‘spoil (of flour)’⁹ and ‘modify (of malt)’, or in the metaphorical sense ‘desire, wish for’. As a metaphor from the context of beer-brewing, one could perhaps think of fermenting, bubbling water, although this seems quite far-fetched as a semantic motivation. Given that Jaunius’ gloss seems to emphasize the gradual nature of the water’s movement, the connection with *selėti* ‘to creep’ proposed by Būga does seem plausible. However, it is hardly inevitable that the underlying root meant ‘to flow’. In fact, the attested example sentence could just as effectively be translated as ‘the water crept up to the gate’. Compare, with the same vocalism, dial. (Alksnėnai) *salinti* ‘to creep’.

Two other forms are referred to this root in Būga’s 1912 article, both of which certainly derive from Jaunius: *āt-sala* Kvėdarna, Rietavas ‘sinulus aquae stantis, incisus in fluminis ripam’ (i.e. ‘a little bay of standing water cut into the bank of a river’) and *atsáldyti* in the phrase *šunis atsáldau* ‘palam vehementer repello’ (i.e. ‘I ward off [the dogs] forcefully’; cf. *Vos šunis at-sáldžiau* ‘atáginiau’, Būga 1908a). The latter can be understood as the result of a specific semantic development from *sáldyti* ‘to sweeten’, which is reflected in Juška (1, 144), s.v. *At-sáldyti*: 1) “перестать говорить

⁸ Repeated once again in Būga RR 2, 554; see also LKŽ s.v. *at-sálti*² and *at-spįsti*.

⁹ This seems to indicate the result of using flour made from grain which has germinated: *Užlijo nupjautus kviečius, dabar sąla blynai* ‘our harvested wheat got soaked in the rain; now our pancakes *sąla*’ (Kupiškis), i.e. fail to rise? In Šatės, *užsálti* is recorded in the sense ‘fade (of a flame)’, while *apsálti* in several dialects means ‘become weak, faint’.

ласково, — дружески, охладѣтъ [stop talking sweetly to, cool to]” and 2) “оттолкнуть, отклонить, отстранить [push away, drive away]”.

Būga’s *ātsala* ‘bay of standing water’ also remains isolated (see LKŽ s.v.). The usual meaning of this word is ‘shallows, sandbank’ (cf. *Āt-sala* ‘отмель, мель; mielizna [shallows]’, Juška 1, 144; *atsalā* ‘отмель’, Šlapelis 1921, 49), which is supported by two attestations from written sources and one dialectal attestation in the *Papildymų kartoteka* (from Pakuonis, glossed as “sekluma”). The word is also found in the DLKŽ, where it is defined as ‘sekluma aplink salą ar iškyšulį’ (= ‘shallows around an island or promontory’). It seems quite plausible that this is a derivative of *salā* ‘island’ (Smoczyński 2018, 1127; for the formation, cf. *āt-šaka* ‘offshoot’ Skaudvilė < *šakà* ‘branch’; cf. *átbaka* ‘creek’ in Bythner’s bible).

As *selėti* ‘sneak, creep’ is no longer derived from the root **sel-* ‘to spring forward’ (cf. Walde, Pokorny 2, 505–506, s.v. 5 *sel-*; LIV, 528 s.v. 3 **sel-*) and is more plausibly reconstructed as **tsel-* (Kroonen, Lubotsky 2009; cf. Endzelīns 1911, 44), while *sal̃pas* ‘floodplain; small bay’ can only be connected by assuming a doubtful suffix **-pa-*, the evidence for a root **sel-* ‘to move’ in East Baltic that Būga sought is lacking. But there is still some hope: the South Aukštaitian verb *salvéti* ‘seep, ooze out’ (cf. Kuzavinis 1966; Smoczyński 2018, 1130) could well be related to the Prussian *u*-stem *salus* ‘Regenbach’.¹⁰

3. *bālas* ‘white’

A Lithuanian word *bālas* ‘white’ is known from Juška (1, 186, “Bālas, -lā, бѣлы́й; *biaty*”), but is otherwise unattested except in the secondary literature (e.g. Būga 1922, 246; Walde, Pokorny 2, 176; Fraenkel LEW [1955], 32; Otrębski 1965, 30; Derksen 2015, 78).

Jablonskis, in his afterword to the second issue of Juška’s dictionary (p. XIV), suspects that in several cases, Antanas Juška “старається придать [слову] не существующее въ языкѣ значеніе” (i.e. ‘attempts to give a word a meaning non-existent in the language’). Jablonskis draws attention to *gūdas* ‘привычка, навѣкъ [habit]’; ‘обыкновенный [common]’ (see Juška 2, 485) and claims that these meanings do not exist. Indeed, judging by the data of

¹⁰ Admittedly, the element *-v-* could be analysed as analogical after *varvéti* ‘trickle’, but we are still left with a common root **sal-*. Curious is *alvéti* (Pasvalys, Grūžiai; Alksnėnai) = *salvéti*. Is it an alternation of *almėti* ‘ooze out’ under the influence of *varvéti*? (Influence of *salvéti* is less likely for geographical reasons).

the LKŽ and *Papildymų kartoteka*, it does not appear that either the noun or the adjective have been attested elsewhere in the corresponding senses. Given that the sole illustrative example for *gūdas* ‘обыкновенный’ provided by Juška is *Gūdas kaĩklas vadinās gūdkarklis* ‘a *gūdas* willow is called a *gūd-willow*’, one is left with the impression that this word was rather an invention of Juška to explain the compound *gūd-karklis* ‘a kind of willow’ rather than a genuine word recorded in the dialects (Karaliūnas 2004, 167).

I have a similar suspicion regarding *bālas* ‘white’, for which Juška provides no illustrative example. One gets the impression that the gloss ‘white’ is merely an invention of Antanas Juška to explain the entry that follows: “*Bālas* –la, m. *подсньжникъ, первоувѣтъ, бѣлая буквица; pierwiosnek (rošlina).*” Significantly, the latter entry closes with a cross reference to *bāltas* ‘white’.

This word, *bālas* ‘anemone’, does appear to be genuine: Pabrėža (1834, 88) has *Bals* ‘Anemone’, and the same word appears in a list of plant names compiled by K. R. Jacoby (“Balas, Buschrösen, Anemone”; Jacoby 1887, 135).¹¹ Furthermore, a feminine variant *bāla* [sic.] ‘die anemone’ was recorded by Bezzenberger in his *Nachträge zu Nesselmanns Wörterbuch* (1882, 98), citing two informants, which agrees with the plural form *balos* appearing in Žemaitė’s cycle *Laimė nutekėjimo* (1896–99). Thus, including Juška, we have five independent attestations, and it seems probable that the word did exist in spoken Žemaitian at the turn of the 20th century.

The fact that, according to Pabrėža and Jacoby, the word refers to the yellow wood anemone (*A. ranunculoides*) as well as to the white-flowered variety (*A. nemorosa*) might cast doubt on the idea that it is derived from the word for ‘white’, and in any case, if the adjective really is a creation of Juška, this word can no longer be used as an example to illustrate an adjective > noun derivation pattern not involving affixation (as in e.g. Būga 1922, 246; Hyllested 2004, 59).

There is other evidence for a root **bāl-* alongside **bāl-* in East Baltic: Lt. *bālinti* (= Lv. *balināt*) ‘bleach, whiten’, *balúoti* (= *bolúoti*) ‘be white’, Žem. *-balėti* ‘go pale, whiten’ and Lv. *bals* ‘bleach’ beside *bāls* ‘pale’. The preterite *bālo* to the root *bālti* ‘turn white’ need not be old, however, as it may have

¹¹ Jacoby continues by citing “baltieji und geltonieji balai”. This might encourage us to believe that he got the word from Pabrėža, since the latter likewise cites *balaa baltyyijy* ‘A *nemorosa*’ and *balaa geltoonyijy* ‘A. *ranunculoides*’. Jacoby is perhaps the source used for another list published in *Vienybė lietuvininkų* (Chronopolitanus 1893, 382: “Balai baltieji — Anemone *nemorosa*” and “Balai geltonieji — Anemone *ranunculoides*”).

been formed secondarily to the nasal-infixed present *bāla* < **ba-n-l-* (< **bā-n-l-* with Osthoff’s law; cf. Smoczyński 2018, 90). Other forms like *bālinti* could also theoretically be explained as secondary to *bālti* (idem, 87–88) – in any case, *bolúoti*, with its long root-vowel, strikes me as an archaism.

4. *uodēgis* ‘Fuchs(schwänzer)’

In the literature, one occasionally comes across a Lithuanian *uodēgis* ‘fox’. The first mention of this word I find in the academic literature is in the 15th edition of Kluge’s dictionary edited by Alfred Schirmer (Kluge, Schirmer 1951, 230),¹² where we find the phrase “Das der Fuchs nach seinem buschigen Schwanz gennant wird (auch lit. *uodēgis* ‘Fuchs’ nach *uodegà* ‘Schwanz’) is wohl Tabu-Erscheinung”. The form “lit. *uodēgis*” is still present in the 25th edition of this dictionary (Kluge, Seebold 2011, 321), and has been repeated elsewhere in similar contexts (e.g. Kutzelnigg 1980, 188; EWAhd 3 [2007], 442; Philippa et al. 4 [2009], s.v. *vos*; Kroonen 2013, 158). In each case, the Lithuanian word is used as a parallel for the semantic development ‘tail’ > ‘fox’.

The source of the confusion appears to be Kurschat:

“*ūdēgis*, fem. *-ė*, Subst. mob. *der oder die mit dem Schwanz; ein Fuchs; ein Fuchsschwänzer*; doch mehr in der Zstz. *ilgūdēgis*, *mit langem Schwanz*. | *trumpūdēgis*, *mit kurzem Schwanz*.” (Kurschat 1883, 480)

Kurschat’s presentation of this lemma is admittedly somewhat ambiguous, but it seems certain that the gloss “ein Fuchs” is not intended in its literal meaning, but rather as a (near) synonym to “ein Fuchsschwänzer” (cf. the gloss “ein listiger Mensch” s.v. *Fuchs* in Kurschat 1870, 473).¹³ This much was apparently evident to the compilers of the LKŽ, who do not cite the sense ‘fox’ s.v. *uodēgis*, and it seems very probable that this sense is indeed a figment.

However, I would go further, and contend that the word *uodēgis*, in all

¹² Cited according to the 16th edition (1953), which is merely a corrected reprint of the 15th and does not differ in content. This phrase is not in the 14th edition (1948).

¹³ The meaning of the two words is slightly different (cf. Kurschat’s Lithuanian glosses: *Fuchs* is rendered with Lt. *kytrōlius*, while *Fuchsschwänzer* is translated “*buñs ūdegà. fub̃nlaizis*”), but close enough that Kurschat could plausibly have seen them as near-synonyms.

of its alleged senses, is a ghost word. For *uodėgis* ‘Fuchsschwänzer’, another error of Nesselmann is to blame. On p. 32 of his dictionary, he cites: “Ūdėgis, io, m. gė, ės, f. ein Fuchsschwänzer. (M.)”. The abbreviation M. refers to Mielcke (1800), whose dictionary is essentially a second edition of Ruhig (1747). The relevant entry is limited to the German–Lithuanian part of both dictionaries:

“Fuchsfchwänzer, Szuns Ūdega, Ūdėgis, gė, Subft. mob.” (Mielcke 1800 2, 199)

“Fuchsfchwänzer, Szunsūdega, ūdėgis, gė, *subft. mob.*” (Ruhig 1747 2, 160)

It seems evident that “ūdėgis” in Ruhig’s text is not intended to be read as a self-standing word. This is supported by the fact that *Szunsūdega* is not accompanied by any grammatical information, the fact that the second ⟨ū⟩ is not capitalized, and the fact that there is no entry for **Ūdėgis* in the Lithuanian–German part of the dictionary. The most probable reading is “[Szuns]ūdėgis”, and indeed, a word *šunsuodegis* is attested in Lalis’ Lithuanian–English dictionary (1915 2, 210, s.v. *Ducker*, 660, s.v. *Spaniel*, 770, s.v. *Toadeater*).

In terms of word-formation, *šunsuodėgis* is quite unique. The usual combining form of *šuō* ‘dog’ is *šun-*, and the expected variant, *šunuodėgis* ‘flatterer’, is both widespread dialectally (LKŽ s.v.) and encoded in the standard language (DLKŽ, s.v. *šunuodėgis*, *šunuodegiąuti*). The only reliable parallel for a genitival *-s* appended to the first member of a compound appears to be *šunskumpis* ‘rogue, rascal, scoundrel’ (Lalis 1915 1, 374).¹⁴ The combining form *šuns-* can be explained in two ways. On the one hand, *šunskumpis* could be an *ad hoc* univerbation of *šunīs kuņpis* (cf. LKŽ s.v. *kuņpis*, *šuō*).¹⁵ On the other, *šuns-* could have been resegmented from the synonymous *šunsnukis* ‘scoundrel’ (with *snūkis* ‘snout’; cf. the spelling *szunsnukis* in Miežinis 1894, 249). For *šunsuodėgis*, only the latter explanation can apply provided **uodėgis*, as I have argued, is not a stand-alone word.

¹⁴ Cf. подлѣц [...] *šunskuņpis* (Baronas 1967 2, 181), *šunskumpis* ‘Taugenichts, Schlingel; niederträchtiger Schmeichler’ (Kuršaitis 4, 2445).

¹⁵ The LKŽ cites quotations from A. Venclova and V. Pietaris under both *šunskumpis* and *šunīs kuņpis* (s.v. *šuō* and s.v. *kuņpis*), implying both authors hesitated between a one-word and two-word spelling. A similar analysis could apply to Ruhig’s *Szunsūdega* (= Mielcke’s *Szuns Ūdega*; cf. LKŽ s.v. *šuō*, *uodegà*).

Finally, *uodēgis* ‘someone with a tail’, while being a theoretically possible formation,¹⁶ is only recorded lexicographically in the LKŽ, where it ultimately derives from Kurschat’s dictionary. Considering that his other glosses are merely carried over from Nesselmann, it is possible that “der oder die mit dem Schwanz” is a constructed literal sense, which would not be uncharacteristic of Kurschat’s lexicographical style.¹⁷ We might interpret Kurschat’s qualification “doch mehr in der Zstz.” as implying that he had in fact only heard the word as a second member of compounds. Regardless, it must be admitted that Garšva (1996, 145) does report a form *vuodēg’ai* ‘skētēs’ (cf. DLKŽ s.v. *sketē* = a kind of dragonfly, *Libellula*) from the extinct dialect of Ciskodas in Latgalia.¹⁸

In conclusion, even if the possible existence of a form *uodēgis* ‘someone with a tail’ cannot strictly be rejected, it seems clear that the senses ‘flatterer’ and ‘fox’ have both resulted from misunderstandings, the former on the part of Nesselmann, and the latter, apparently, on the part of A. Schirmer.¹⁹ In any case, even without *uodēgis*, there still remain some convincing examples for the semantic shift ‘tail’ > ‘fox’: Welsh *llostog* (“Llostawg *a.* (llost [‘tail’]) Having a tail, or trail; also an epithet for the fox”, Owen Pughe 1832 2, 292), Torwali *pūš* ‘fox’ (< **pucchin-* ‘tailed’, according to CDIAL, 467) and probably Castilian *raposa* ‘fox’ (~ *rabo* ‘tail’); see Palmér et al. (2021, 16).

¹⁶ Although common gender nouns in *-is/-ė* are rarely denominative, some parallels can be found, e.g. *kūpris* (beside *kuprỹs*) *-ė* ‘hunchback’ (< *kuprà* ‘hump’), *rāgis*, (Suvalkija) *rāgis -ė* ‘horned animal’ (< *rāgas* ‘horn’). See also Ambrazas (2000, 131).

¹⁷ Compare, for instance, *faulėpūlis* ‘eigentlich *Sonnenfall*, nach Ruhig: *Abend.*’ (Kurschat 1883, 367, listed in square brackets), *fkribìnis* ‘eigentlich etwas *Raschelndes*’ (idem, 383; otherwise unattested in this sense, according to the LKŽ), etc.

¹⁸ A Google search reveals a couple of instances of *uodegis* ‘tailed one’ as a nonce back-formation from *beuodegis* ‘the one without a tail’ (e.g. “mūšų uodegiai ir beuodegiai” in a dog interest group on Facebook).

¹⁹ LKŽ has an additional word, *uodēgius*, which it identifies with *uodēgis* ‘flatterer’, but the sole illustrative sentence, quoted from Juška, does not seem to attest to the meaning ‘flatterer’ at all, but rather ‘loiterer’: *Eik, uodēgiau, tu tik vėpsai kaip uodegos skylė* (Juška *apud* LKŽ s.v. *uodēgius*). “Go away, *uodēgius*, you’re just standing there like a tail-hole(?)”. The form *uodēgiau* may well have been a spontaneous creation of the speaker.

5. Lv. *īls* and *īkls* ‘stockfinster’

In Ulmann’s *Lettisches Wörterbuch*, we find two remarkably similar entries:²⁰

“*ihls*, -a, ftockfinfter, *Neik*.” (Ulmann 1872, 84)

“*īkls*, -a, (f. ihls), ftockfinfter, *E*. (akls?)” (Ulmann 1872, 85)

It seems very suspicious that we find two graphically similar words with exactly the same gloss (not ‘finster’, nor ‘dunkel’, but specifically ‘stockfinster’), both of which are given on the authority of another author, so were probably unfamiliar to Ulmann himself.²¹ It seems *a priori* likely that at least one of the two has resulted from an error.

Despite this, both have been taken over uncritically in the secondary literature. Lv. *īkls* was already cited by Fick (1870a, 255–258; 1870b, 336) as a cognate of Lt. *āklas* ‘blind’ (cf. also Leskien 1884, 329; “lies īkls?”), and the Latvian word would go on to be featured in debates on the outcome of the Indo-European schwa in Baltic (e.g. Mikkola 1904, 99; Endzelīns 1923, 33).²² On the other hand, *ihls* was compared by Bezenberger (1902, 164) with Gr. ἰλύς ‘mud, slime’, Russian *ил*, Slovene *il* (etc.) ‘silt, clay’, with the semantic difference bridged by the Hesychian gloss εἰλύ (= *ἰλύ?) · μέλαν ‘black’. Latvian *īls* has since routinely been included in this cognate set (e.g. Trautmann 1923, 103; ME 1, 836; Pokorny 1959, 499; Derksen 2015, 357).

Both forms seem to trace back to the German-Latvian dictionary of Fürecker (dated 1650, cited according to the editions available at senie.korpuss.lv). The two surviving manuscripts of this work contain an entry “*ihls*, Stockfinster”. However, since the second manuscript depends on the first, with errors mechanically copied from one to the other (Urbutis 1998,

²⁰ I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for drawing my attention to some additional data which has led to a considerable revision of this discussion.

²¹ The word *ihls* also appears in the German-Latvian part of the dictionary under the entries ‘finster’ (Ulmann 1880, 287, beside *tūmfchs*) and ‘stockfinster’ (p. 675) and under ‘stockdunkel’ (p. 204, s.v. dunkel), but apparently never in the usage examples. Under ‘stockdunkel’, yet another form – *ikrs* – is listed. This is clearly an error and has not, to my knowledge, appeared elsewhere.

²² In *Aistiški studijai* (Būga 1908b, 98–99), *īkls* is presented as evidence for a sound law **a* > *i* in unstressed syllables.

310), these attestations cannot be regarded as independent. The form *ikls*, on the other hand, can be traced back as far as the 17th century *Manuale Lettico-Germanicum*, which reads “ikls stockfinster J.” (Fennell 2002, 168), in which the abbreviation “J.” refers to Fürecker (idem, 3). This form is also found in Elvers’ *Liber memorialis Letticus* (1748, 147, where we read “Stockfinfter ikls”), which was Ulmann’s cited source.

Whether *ikls* or *ihls* should be given priority is not clear. In the surviving first manuscript of Fürecker’s dictionary, the word *ihls* appears in a section of the work written in a “careless, untidy hand” (Fennell 1997, 3, cited according to Schmalstieg 1998). Moreover, it is quite possible that the author of the *Manuale* had access to Fürecker’s original manuscript rather than one of the copies known to us. On the other hand, Fennell (2002, 4) remarks that occasional instances of confusion between ⟨k⟩ and ⟨h⟩ are indeed known from the *Manuale*. At any rate, the form *ikls* is unattested elsewhere, with Stender (1761, 52) already noting the word as unfamiliar to him (cf. also Wellig 1828, 49).

On the other hand, it is difficult not to remark on the conspicuous similarity of the form *ikls* to Lv. *akls* ‘lichtlos, finster, dunkel’ (ME 1, 63; cf. Ulmann’s note “(akls?)”). True, as an anonymous reviewer points out to me, the antiquity of this sense in Latvian is not confirmed: the oldest attestations I have found are “Akls mēfchs, ein dunkler Wald” (Ulmann 1872, 7), and a riddle adduced by Bielenstein (1881, 36; attributed to a Lehrer Ahbel from Valka) where *akla meita* ‘eine blinde Tochter’ stands for the night: “Akls ist doppelsinnig, und heißt nicht bloß: blind [...], fõndern auch: finster”. However, the latter attestation does lend some credibility to this word’s dialectal use in this sense, and we can add that the polysemy ‘blind, dark’ is characteristic of the area, with Estonian *pime* and Livonian *pi’mdõ* carrying both meanings (cf. Estonian *pime õõ* ‘dark night’, *pime mees* ‘blind man’).

To summarize, it seems that *ikls* and *ihls* derive from the same source, and at least one of them is bound to be erroneous. It is possible, however, that both are: if we take the form *ikls*, given in the *Manuale*, as original, it is tempting to interpret this as an error for *akls*, which is reliably attested in this sense since the 19th century. At any rate, it is clear that the reliability of either form should not be taken for granted.

The examples discussed in this paper reveal the many different ways in which a ghost can be born. First, there are the errors of copyists: Latvian *īls* and *īkls* ‘pitch dark’ both trace back to a lost manuscript dictionary by Fürecker, and perhaps ultimately represent an error for Latvian *akls* ‘blind, pitch dark’. Second, we have the lexicographers: Lithuanian *kēmeras* ‘hemp agrimony’ appears to derive from Nesselmann’s incorrect interpretation of the obsolete term *kiemerai* ‘demon(s), incubus’, *uodėgis* ‘Fuchsschwänzer’ appears to be miscopied from Mielcke’s dictionary, and *bālas* ‘white’ may merely be Juška’s rationalization of *bālas* ‘anemone’. Finally, the fault may lie with the etymologists: even a scholar of the calibre of Būga may be susceptible to overinterpretation. His translation of *(at-)sālti* as ‘to flow’ may have been driven more by his wishful thinking than by the context of its attestation, while Schirmer’s eagerness to support the Germanic etymology of the word for ‘fox’ led him to incorrectly read Kurschat’s *uodėgis* as a term for the animal.

Most academic dictionaries are based on compilations of previous lexica. The broader their scope, the more useful they are to comparative linguists, but at the same time, the less feasible it is for the individual forms to be verified. As a result, erroneous data tend to be copied uncritically from dictionary to dictionary, and in some cases, have survived until the modern day. Unfortunately, once a form appears in a respected reference work, it is rather difficult to prevent its further propagation. The Lithuanian ghost word **nuodu* ‘us two’, 28 years after it was debunked by Sabaliauskas (1976), still resurfaced in Fortson’s well-loved handbook (2004, 127), and with it has undoubtedly entered the classrooms and minds of a whole generation of Indo-Europeanists. In this spirit, even if the conclusions in this paper are accepted, I imagine that we will continue to see the ghosts discussed herein for many years to come. Whatever the case may be, I hope that this modest contribution will serve as a motivation for other scholars to join in the reevaluation and refinement of the East Baltic lexicon.

DĒL KELETO POTENCIALIŲ ŽODŽIŲ NEBUVĖLIŲ BALŲ KALBOSE

Santrauka

Straipsnyje nagrinėjami penki rytų baltų kalbų abejotinos kilmės žodžiai. (1) Lie. *kēmeras* ‘toks augalas (Eupatorium)’ atsiradęs dėl Nesselmanno neteisingos nebevarojamo žodžio *kiemera* ‘kaukas, slogutis’ interpretacijos ir patekęs į bendrinę kalbą per botaninę literatūrą; (2) *sálti* ‘tekėti’ žinomas tik iš vienintelio K. Jauniaus pavartojimo. Semantiškai jį galima interpretuoti ir kaip ‘šliaužti, sėlinti’ bei sieti su *selėti* ‘sėlinti’. Alternatyvias interpretacijas leidžia ir kitos su šia šaknimi siejamos formos; (3) *bālas* ‘baltas’ žinomas tik iš Juškos žodyno, kur jis gali atspindėti bandymą paaiškinti žodį *bālas* ‘plukė’, patvirtinamą nepriklausomų žemaitiškų šaltinių; (4) *uodėgis* ‘lapė’, dažnai cituojamas germanistinėje literatūroje, atsiradęs iš klaidingos glosos Kuršaičio žodyne. Savo ruožtu *uodėgis* ‘meilikautojas (Fuchsschwänzer)’, regis, atsiradęs Nesselmannui klaidingai perskaičius Milkaus žodyną; (5) tiek la. {ihls}, tiek *ikls* ‘labai tamsus (stockfinster)’ pėdsakai veda iki neišlikusio Füreckerio rankraštinio žodyno; vienas jų beveik neabejotinai yra klaida, o užrašymą *ikls* maga interpretuoti kaip klaidą vietoj kitur paliudyto *akls* ‘aklas, labai tamsus’.

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