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LATV. *āpša* 'DEER' – A REAL WORD OR A GHOST FROM DICTIONARIES OF THE 17th CENTURY

There are three different species of deer (Cervidae) living in Latvia today¹: elk (*Alces alces*) – Latv. *alnis*, especially in folksongs sometimes also called *briedis*; roe (*Capreolus capreolus*) – Latv. *stirņa*; deer (*Cervus elaphus*) – Latv. *staltbriedis*, *staltradzis*; in earlier texts also: *briedis*, *irsis*, *erškis*, *Vāczemes briedis*.

One can see that the elk and the roe have only one or two names in Latvian respectively, but that there are many more names for the deer. This fact is obviously connected with the history of this species in Latvia. In the 16th century when the first written Latvian texts appeared, there were a lot of elk and roe, but no wild deer in Latvia. Deer had lived in this territory at an earlier age but according to biologists disappeared in the beginning of the 2nd millenium AD². This fact is also reflected in the names of these species: roe and elk had their own specific names which were related to those in Lithuanian, but there was no name for deer in 16th century Latvian. In Lithuania, where deer were also found in the 16th century, they have always had their own name – *elnias* which is still used in Lithuanian today.

In the 16th and 17th century deer were introduced to Latvian estates where they resided in special parks. At the end of the 19th century, they spread to the forests. In connection with this introduction of deer, a number of new names for the species appeared in 17th century Latvian: *Vāczemes briedis*; *irsis*, *iršs iršis* (from German *Hirsch*³); *erškis*, *ersķis* (from Low German *Hērsch*⁴). The latter name was used also in the translation of the Bible.

The following names of deer are found in the Latvian dictionaries of the 18th and 19th century:

– in the anonymous *Manuale Lettico-Germanicum*: *Ehršchķis Hirsch. Eherschka Mah=te. Hirsch Hündin.* (MLG 18);

¹ Latvijas daba. Enciklopēdija, I, Rīga, 1994, 44, 161–162; V, Rīga, 1998, 151–153.

² Op. cit., V, 152.

³ Cf. J. Sehwers, Sprachlich-kulturhistorische Untersuchungen vornemlich über den deutschen Einfluss im Lettischen, Berlin, 1953, 42.

⁴ Op. cit., 33.

– in the *Liber Memorialis Letticus* by Caspar Elvers (1748): *hirsch, Ehrkšchkis, hindin, Ehrkšchu Mahte*. (CE 180);

– in the dictionary compiled by Jacob Lange (1777): *Hirsch der, tas ehršchķis*. (JacL 320), *Ehršchķis tas gen. Ehršchka. der Hirsch*. (JacL 111);

– in the dictionary of G. F. Stender (1789): *eršchķis, Hirsch. Bibl. eršchķu mahte, Hündin. Bibl.* (GFS 62, also 385), *Hirsch, wahzsemmes breedis, (eršchķis. Bibl.), [Hirsch] kuh, wahzsemmes breeschu mahte, [Hirsch] horn, wahzsemmes breeschu rags*. (GFS 331, also 754).

The same names are found in the dictionaries of the 19th century.

In Modern Standard Latvian the situation is slightly different. The name for deer (*Cervus elaphus*) is now *briedis* which until the beginning of the 20th century was used for another species – elk (*Alces alces*). The modern name of the elk – *alnis* which corresponds to Lith. *elnias* ‘deer’ didn’t exist in the earlier Latvian texts and was introduced into written Latvian in the middle of the 19th century by Juris Alunāns⁵ who used this word instead of the German loan word *iršs, irsis* for denoting a deer but not an elk. Alunāns probably borrowed the word from Lithuanian and not from the Latvian dialects although this is not absolutely impossible. The change in meaning of the words *alnis* and *briedis* took place in the beginning of the 20th century – first in scientific texts and then also in everyday language.

This issue has already been discussed in linguistic literature and I have nothing really new to say on this theme. I can only add that there is one more borrowing of a German name for deer into 17th century Latvian. Latvian *ērte* is borrowed from Low German *hēрте* ‘a deer’⁶ but in the Latvian dictionaries it doesn’t mean ‘a deer’ but ‘a camel’:

– in the dictionary by Georg Mancelius (1638): *ein Cameel / Mescha=Sirr̄x / Ehrte* (GM II 274);

– in the dictionary by Georg Elger (1683): *wielbląd. Camelus. Erte, mezze zyrks* (GE 583);

– in the anonymous German-Latin-Polish-Latvian dictionary of 1688: *Das Kamehl / Camelus. Wielbląd / Ta Ehrte* (VOC D1b-D2a);

– in the German-Swedish-Polish-Latvian dictionary of 1705 based on the previous dictionary and traditionally ascribed to Liborius Depkin: *Das Kamehl – Cameel – Wielbląd – Ta Ehrte. Mescha Sirgs. it. Kameelis* (WB E5b-E6a);

⁵ Cf. R. Bērtulis, *Par lietvārdu briedis un alnis semantiskajām attiecībām latviešu un lietuviešu valodā*, – *Latviešu leksikas attīstība*, Rīga, 1968, 162; K. Karulis, *Latviešu etimoloģijas vārdnīca*, I, Rīga, 1992, 67.

⁶ Cf. K. Schiller, A. Lübben, *Mittelniederdeutsches Wörterbuch*, II. G–L, Bremen, 1876, 255.

– in the manuscript “Lettisches Wörterbuch” by Liborius Depkin: *Ehrte. Camel: mescha Sirgs. it: sed bibl. Kameeli* (LD 168).

Now I would like to turn to another strange word or more precisely, a strange meaning of a word. As pointed out in the title of the paper, another name for deer appears in the Latvian dictionaries of the 17th and 18th century, namely, *āpša*.

The meaning ‘a deer’ for this word can be found in several dictionaries:

– in both copies of Fürecker dictionary manuscripts: *Apšcha Ein hirsch it: der dachs* (CF I 12); *Apscha Ein hirsch it: der dachs* (CF II 19);

– in the manuscript of Johannes Langius (1685): *Ahpšcha, jo disch nhe ka Stirna, ar Raggeems, ein Dachß oder Hirsch* (JohL 288);

– in the manuscript “Manuale Lettico Germanicum” which is based on the previous dictionaries of Fürecker and Langius: *Apšcha | Ehršchķis Hirsch* (MLG 18); *Stirna ein Rehe. L. Ahpscha jo disch ne ka Stirna ar Raggeem ein dachshirsch. L.* (MLG 572).

The word *āpša* meaning ‘a deer’ is used also in two printed dictionaries of that time:

– in the anonymous German-Latin-Polish-Latvian dictionary of 1688: *Der Hirsch / Cervus. Los / Ta Apscha.* (VOC Db–D2a);

– in the German-Swedish-Polish-Latvian dictionary of 1705: *Der Hirsch / Hiort Łoś Ta Ahpscha. Eršchķis* (WB E3b–E4a).

The word *āpša* was undoubtedly used by Liborius Depkin (1652–1708) in some of his manuscripts:

– in his additional notes made in the copy of the anonymous German-Latin school vocabulary: *Ahpske. Ehrkschkis. Eršchķis* (VQQ 84);

– in different places of his vast manuscript “Lettisches Wörterbuch” but always next to another word for deer *ēršķis*: *Apšcha. der dachß. MS. Fiereker addit m. Hirsch... Ehrkschkis ist ein Hirsch* (LD 66); *Eršchķis. Hirsch... Fierk. et Mancel. placet Apšcha et Ahpscha.* (LD 166).

Latv. *āpša* with the meaning ‘a deer’ is mentioned in one more manuscript dictionary of the 18th century. Franz P. Waigel from Riga used it in his Latvian-German and German-Latvian dictionaries dated 1748: *Hirsch. erschkis, ahpscha; ahpscha, der Hirsch, dachs* (FPW). Later the words *āpša* and *Hirsch* respectively were struck out, probably by Weigel himself. It is clear that he had doubts about the use of the word *āpša*, and its meaning.

In the later dictionaries of the 18th and 19th century there are no traces of the meaning ‘a deer’ for the word *āpša*. Only the usual meaning is used – ‘a badger’ (*Meles meles*). The word is found in different texts of the 18th-20th century in various different stem forms: *āpšis, āpšis (iio- stem), āpša (iā- stem)* but nowhere in the

dialects does the word have the meaning ‘a deer’, only ‘a badger’⁷. This is understandable, because words of the same origin with the same meaning are also used in the other Baltic languages. The only meaning of Lit. *opšrus, opšras, opšrys* is ‘a badger’⁸. There is a word for badger in the Elbing vocabulary of Old Prussian – *wobsdus* (E 670). The word is obviously related to the East Baltic words mentioned⁹. So one can assume that the word or the root of Latv. *āpsis, āpša* is of Proto-Baltic origin and was used with the meaning ‘a badger’ already in Proto-Baltic.

So there is a question – where does the meaning ‘a deer’ for the word *āpša* in the dictionaries of the 17th and 18th century come from?

So far I haven't mentioned one more Latvian dictionary of the 17th century – the first and the most popular German-Latvian dictionary “Lettus” compiled by Georg Mancelius and published 1638. This dictionary was not only very popular but also had a strong influence upon other dictionaries of the time. It was used by such authors as Georg Elger¹⁰, Christophor Fürecker¹¹, Johann Langius¹², Liborius Depkin¹³, and probably by the authors of the two anonymous dictionaries of 1688 and 1705. What can one find in Mancelius’ dictionary about the names for ‘a deer’ and the other *Cervidae*?

There is *stirna* ‘a roe’: *Reeh / Stirrna* (GM I 141), *eine Rehe / Stirrna* (GM II 275), *briedis* ‘an elk’: *Elend (Thier) / Briedis* (GM I 52), *Elend / Briedis* (GM II 271, 355) and there is also the word *āpša*: *ein Dachs / Ahpscha* (GM II 275). First of all it had an absolutely clear meaning ‘a badger’. But then in the next line of the second part of Mancelius’ dictionary – “Phraseologia Lettica” we can read: *Hirsch / idem*, i.e. – the same. So there is the meaning ‘a deer’ but there is no real Latvian equivalent for it. If we read the entry like in some other instances in the dictionary we could assume together with Fürecker, Langius and Depkin that these two lines in fact mean:

ein Dachs / Apscha
Hirsch / [Ahpscha].

It is now quite clear that the meaning ‘deer’ for the word *āpša* comes from the dictionary of Mancelius. But did Mancelius really want to say that *āpša* also meant ‘a deer’ and what did he intend to say with his “idem”? As we have seen there is no real evidence in Latvian that *āpša* could ever have had this strange meaning ‘a deer’.

⁷ Cf. ME I 239; EH I 194.

⁸ Cf. LKŽ VIII 1009.

⁹ V. Mažiulis, Prūsų kalbos etimologijos žodynas, IV, Vilnius, 1997, 261.

¹⁰ D. Zemzare, Latviešu vārdnīcas, Rīga, 1961, 64.

¹¹ Op. cit., 77.

¹² Op. cit., 84.

¹³ Op. cit., 106.

The two animals have actually nothing in common and such a metaphor seems to me incredible.

There remains a possibility to interpret the entry *Hirsch* / *idem* in a different way. I could provide two variants for the interpretation.

First: there is a possibility that *idem* in this entry is not connected with *Ahpscha* of the previous line but with the German word *Hirsch* of the same line. In this case we could read: *Hirsch* – *idem*. i.e. *iršs*, and it would not be improbable. But there are no other instances of similar use of “idem” in the dictionary, so the problem remains.

<p>gefattelt Pferd/saddtohis Siry. das da beisset/kas kofsch. ein Wffelgraw Hengst/farms Siry. ein Passganger/Eideneer. er gehet den Pass/wings Eideniste eet. das Pferd gehet wol für die Egde/aber nicht fürm Pfluge/kas Sirygo eet ghann Eveschopff/bett nhe Arlla. ein Cameel/Wescha-Siry/Ehrte. ein Hund/Sunnf. Spürhund/Haffhund/Queckschlis. Jagehund/Wind/Kurra. Wiche-Hund/Lohpofunnf. gewehne du den Hund beim Wiche/ vnd das er mit in die Hütung gehe / raddini (jau,eh) to Sunni pp Lohpceem/vnd laid wings liebe ghannohf eet. ein Umblänffer/Zackulis. ein großer Hund/leels Sunnf. ein zotichter Hund / Karrains / kafarains Sunnf. bind den Hund an die Ketten / per-feen to Sunni pp Stchdehm. Ein böser Hund/launs Sunnf. der heimlich beisset/pastäppane kofsch. je meer Dienstboten/je weniger aufficht/ jo dauds Sunni/jo mas Sähufarrgha. proverb. Ich</p> <p>274</p>	<p>Ich woll dich mit Hunden aufhegen / es töw ar Sunnim ihriedinahschu. der ein Halsband an hat / lam Kranz ap Kacku. Hündlein/Sunnies. Jungfraw-hündlein/ Jumprawas/Sun- nies. eine Zude/Hündin/ Kurra. eine Rehe/Stirrna. ein Dachs/ Ahpscha. Hirsch/ idem. Mährtaze/ Juhres-kaglis. Kammlchen/ Kanneves. Schwein-Igel/ Ehsis. eine Kaze/Kagle. die Kaze mauset wol/ta Kagle labbe meddi. eine Maus/Pelle. Ein Mäuflein/Pellie. eine Kaze/Schurka/Katte. eine große Kaze mit ein langē schwanze leela Schurka ar gharru Ast. eine Löwe/Lowis/bretshimex Swähro. eine Hase/Saglis. Hasen jagen/Saglus meddiel. die Hasen im Stricke fangen / Saglus Wallga sajembe. ein Wolff/Willy/Wully alibi. ein Wölffin/Willa-Wahlite. D ij etn: 275</p>
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Second: we can assume that there is a misprint in the dictionary. If we have a look at the page GM II 275, we can see three lines:

eine Rehe / Stirrna.
ein Dachs / Ahpscha.
Hirsch / idem.

There is no logic in this sequence of entries. Instead, we could expect the following sequence:

eine Rehe / Stirrna,
Hirsch / idem, [i.e. – Stirrna].
ein Dachs / Ahpscha.

First would be the two cervidae: *eine Rehe, Hirsch*, and only then *ein Dachs*. In this case, the “idem” is read in a different way.

This seems to me a more probable explanation of the puzzle because roe and deer are quite similar and it is possible to use the name of one thing or creature for another one which is only slightly different. Cf. *briedis* ‘elk’ and *Vāczemes briedis* ‘deer’.

Moreover there is real evidence of such a use of the word *stirna* from the 17th century. Georg Elger who also based his dictionary on the “Lettus” of Mancelius wrote in his dictionary: *Jeleń, Cervus, Stirna* (GE 114).

So I would like to assert that *āpša* in the meaning ‘a deer’ was never used in spoken Latvian and is only a ghost from the dictionaries of the 17th century.

SOURCES

- CE – Liber memorialis letticus Oder Lettisches Wörterbuch... von Caspar Elvers... Riga, 1748.
- CF I – Lettisches und Teutsches Wörterbuch zusahmen geschrieben und mit Fleiß gesamlet von Christopher Fürecker. (Quoted from: T. G. Fennell, Fürecker's dictionary: the first manuscript. Rīga: Latvijas akadēmiskā bibliotēka, 1997).
- CF II – Christoph Füreckers Candidat des Predigtamts in Kurland lettisch-deutschen Wörterbuchs erster theil A–P. [and] zweyter Theil: R–Z. (Quoted from: T. G. Fennell, Fürecker's dictionary: the second manuscript, Rīga: Latvijas akadēmiskā bibliotēka, 1998).
- FPW – Der Anleitung zur Lettischen Sprache anderer Theil, bestehend in einem deutsch-lettischen Wörter-Buch, ... dritter Theil, bestehend in einem lettisch-deutschen Wörter-Buch, ausgefertigt von Frantz Philipp Weigel, der Dom-Schule in Riga Sub-Conrectore, 1748. (Manuscript in Latvian Academic Library).
- GE – Dictinarivm Polono-Latino-Lottaucum. Opus posthumum. R. P. Georgii Elger... Vilnae, 1683.
- GFS – Lettisches Lexicon. In zween Theilen abgefasset... von Gotthard Friedrich Stender, Mitau [1789].
- GMI – Lettus, Das ist Wortbuch, Sampt angehengtem täglichem Gebrauch der Lettischen Sprache... verfertigt, durch Georgivm Mancelivm... Erster Theil, Riga... M.DC.XXXVIII.
- GM II – Phraseologia Lettica, Das ist: Täglicher Gebrauch der Lettischen Sprache. Verfertigt durch Georgium Mancelium... Ander Theil... Riga, 1638.
- JacL – Vollständiges deutschlettisches und lettischdeutsches Lexicon, nach den Hauptdialecten in Lief- und Curland ausgefertigt von Jacob Lange... Mitau, 1777.
- JohL – Lettisch-Deutsches Lexicon... außgegeben von Johanne Langio, Pastoren zur Ober vnd Nieder-Bartaw in Curland. (Quoted from: E. B l e s e, Nīcas un Bārtas mācītāja Jāņa Langija 1685. gada latviski-vāciskā vārdnīca ar īsu latviešu gramatiku, Rīga, 1936.)
- LD – Liborius Depkins Lettisches Wörterbuch. (Manuscript in Latvian Academic Library).
- MLG – Manuale Lettico Germanicum. (Manuscript in Latvian Academic Library).
- VOC – Vocabularium wie etzliche gebräuchliche Sachen auff Teutsch, Lateinisch, Polnisch und Lettisch auszusprechen seynd, Riga, 1688.
- VQQ – Depkin's handwritten notes in the: Vocabularium pro quinta et quarta classe scholae Rigensis... Rigae, Sumptibus Nöllerianis. MDCCIV. (Manuscript in Latvian Academic Library).
- WB – Wörter=Büchlein, Wie Etzliche gebräuchliche Sachen auff Teutsch, Schwedisch, Polnisch und Lettisch, Zu benennen seynd, Riga... 1705.