

**EAST BALTIC \**BALTAS*:  
NOT ONLY ‘WHITE’ BUT ALSO ‘DEAR, GOOD’,  
AND ITS CORRESPONDENCES IN SLAVIC<sup>1</sup>**

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**A. Evidence from dictionaries**

In some of the best dictionaries of Latvian and Lithuanian the adjective *balts* respectively *báltas* has not only the meaning ‘white’, but also ‘good, dear, kind’. Cf.:

I. The dictionary of Mühlenbach-Endzelin (ME I 258) notes under *balts*: 5. ‘lieb, gut, wert’ (‘good, dear, worth’). Examples given here are exclusively from the language of Latvian folksongs (*dainas*):

- (1) *ai, baltā māmuliņa! mani balti bāleliņi aiz kalniņa klausījās* (BW nr. 463) ‘Oh, dear mother (diminutive)! My good brothers (dim.) behind the hill (dim.) listen’;
- (2) *vai, māsiņa, mīļa, balta* ‘Oh, dear, good sister (dim.)’;
- (3) *pasaulīte mīļa, balta* ‘dear, good world (dim.)’;
- (4) *ai, saulīte, mīļa, balta* [Āronu Matīsa izdotas tautas dziesmas 1888] ‘Oh sun (dim.), dear, good’.

Konstantīns Karulis noted in his etymological dictionary of Latvian (LEV I 104) that the adjective *balts* in folklore sources developed the figurative meaning ‘labs, mīļš’ (‘good, dear’):

- (5) *Mana balta māmuliņa* (with the variant: *mīļa māmuliņa*) ‘my good (dear) mother’ (dim.).

II. The great Academic Dictionary of Lithuanian (LKŽ I, 2-nd ed., 610) distinguished among a lot of meanings of the word *báltas* the figurative meaning ‘mielas, brangus’ (‘good, dear’) with records only from Lithuanian folklore. But Ernst Fraenkel in his Lithuanian Etymological Dictionary (LEW I 32) doesn’t pay attention to this special meaning of Lith. *báltas* and Latv. *balts*.

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The examples cited by above-mentioned dictionaries are exclusively from folklore texts or in some cases from texts, which are under the influence of folklore language.

It seems there is one exception for Latvian: according to the information of a well educated native speaker in the epistolary style it is possible to use in address Latv. *balts*, *-a* with the meaning ‘good, dear’, but only in cases when the relationship between the partners of the correspondence is very narrow and cordial. Cf.:

- (6) *Mīļa balta Benitiņa* (diminutive of the first name *Benita*) ‘Dear, good Benita!’;  
 (7) *Mana balta māsiņa* ‘My dear (good) sister (dim.)’.

## B. Materials from Latvian folksongs

There is a great number of examples in Latvian folksongs concerning *balts*, *-a* in the sense of ‘good, dear’. For this reason it will be useful to describe the corresponding facts from the view-point of the connection of this adjective with substantives which are used with them. At the same time we get a clearly arranged classification of the material.

As the second part of word combinations with *balts*, *-a* in the above-mentioned meaning there appear designations for the closest relatives (mother, brother, sister, daughter, son) and for the sun and the world, mainly in the form of diminutives, i.e. for objects which are above all near, dear, worthy:

I. *balta* & *māte* (*māmuliņa*, *māmiņa*, *māmulīte*, *memmiņa*; Latgalian *mameņ*).  
 Very seldom in the folksongs the non-diminutive *māte* is used:

- (8) *Balta māte pirti kūre* Dear mother heated the bath  
*Baltajam dēliņam:* For the dear son (dim.):  
*Iela piena garu lēja,* She poured milk into the steam,  
*Liepiņa slotu lauza.* She broke branches of the linden-tree (dim.) for a broom.

BW nr. 1269,1

In the second line of this folksong there occurs a word-combination of the adjective *balts* with the designation for son (*dēliņš* – diminutive). The double use of *balts*, *-a* intensifies the relation of warmth, nearness, cordiality to the mother and to the son.

In the wedding ceremony, when the bride says good bye to her parents and near relatives, she utters such words:

- (9) *Ai, balta māmuliņa,* Oh, dear mother (dim.),  
*Vai tev mani žēl nebij?* Don't you feel sorry?  
*Citus bērņus gulēt sūti,* The other children you send to bed,  
*Mani sūti tautiņās.* Me you send into marriage (to a strange family).

BW nr. 17247

The next song shows two variants with the words *māmiņa* respectively *māmuliņa*:

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|--------------------------------|--|
| (10) <i>Tai savai māmiņai</i>  | Well I had loved                                 |
| <i>Gan es biju mīlējusi:</i>   | This my mother (dim.):                           |
| <i>Jau es tautu kamanās,</i>   | Now I am in the sled of my suitor,               |
| <i>Vēl uzsedza villainīti.</i> | They covered (me) with a turned-up scarf (dim.). |
- BW nr. 17941,4

The second line in this *daina* is unusual and unintelligible because of the Dative singular, but in one of the variants occurs the normal Accusative Singular.

2. *Savu baltu māmuliņu* (dim., Acc Sg).

Unnatural from the view-point of Standard language is the following line: *Savai baltai māmiņai* (dim., Dat Sg) ‘My dear mother’. Moreover the variants contain the determination *baltu*, *baltai* ‘dear’.

In some examples *balta* appears as a synonym of *mīļa* ‘good, dear, nice’:

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| (11) <i>Labāk man tēvs nomira,</i>     | It would be better if father died,    |
| <i>Ne kā mana māmuliņa:</i>            | Not my mother (dim.):                 |
| <i>Tēvs paņēma jaunu (citu) sievu,</i> | Father took a new (another) wife,     |
| <i>Es mūžam bārenīte.</i>              | I am eternally an orphan girl (dim.). |
- BW nr. 4090

In this *daina* the second line has two variants:

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|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 2. <i>Ne kā baltu māmuliņa:</i> | Not my dear mother (dim.) |
| 2. <i>Ne kā mīļa māmuliņa:</i>  | " " " " "                 |

The following song is characterized by an alternation of three word-combinations: *veca māmuliņa* ‘old mother (dim.)’ – *balta māmuliņa* ‘dear mother (dim.)’ – Latgalian *eista mōmuļeņa* (= *īsta māmuliņa*) ‘genuine, natural, true mother (dim.)’:

- |                                     |                                      |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| (12) <i>Ka man būtu savis tēvs,</i> | If I would have my own father,       |
| <i>Sava veca māmuliņa</i>           | My own old mother (dim.)             |
| Var.: <i>Sava baltu māmuliņa</i>    | My dear mother (dim.)                |
| <i>Sava eista mōmuļeņa</i>          | My true mother (dim.)                |
| <i>I man būtu klaji ceļi</i>        | I would have also a free (open) way, |
| <i>Izārdena valodiņa.</i>           | A clever tongue (= language) (dim.). |
- BW nr. 4711

In the next song the synonyms *mīļa*, *balta* stand immediately side by side. This combination is often used in the *dainas*:

- |                                     |                                       |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| (13) <i>Citi ļaudis mani teica,</i> | Some people praise me,                |
| <i>Citi mani nīcināja.</i>          | Others shame (despise) me.            |
| <i>Ai, māmiņa mīļa, baltu,</i>      | Oh, mother (dim.) dear, good,         |
| <i>Apsedz manu augumiņu,</i>        | Cover my growth (dim.) (i.e. my body) |
| <i>Apsedz manu augumiņu</i>         | [protect, keep me],                   |
| <i>No ļautiņu valodām.</i>          | From the gossip of people (dim.).     |
- BW nr. 9080

The following *daina* is built on the opposition of the unbeloved mother-in-law and the beloved, dear mother of the girl, who is singing the song:

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|--|--|
| <p>(14) <i>Svešai mātei slotu griežu</i><br/> <i>Pura bērza zemzarēs;</i><br/> <i>Sav' baltai māmiņai</i><br/> <i>Āra bērza pazarēs.</i><br/>         BW nr. 23645</p> | <p>For the mother-in-law I cut the lower branches<br/>         Of the swamp-birch-tree for the broom;<br/>         For my dear mother (dim.)<br/>         The lower branches of the birch-tree, which<br/>         grows in the field (in the open country).</p> |
|--|--|

The unbeloved mother-in-law gets from the daughter-in-law the worst branches for the broom; the beloved, dear mother, gets the better branches. In the dictionary of Mühlenbach-Endzelin (ME I 292) is mentioned the opposition of *purva bērzi* ('swamp-birch-trees') and *āra (āru) bērzi* or *zemes bērzi* 'birch-trees growing in the field, in the open, dry country'. This confrontation is characteristic for the language of folksongs.

The next text is noted for a number of variants concerning the first line:

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|---|--|
| <p>(15) <i>Ai, māmiņa mīļa, baltā,</i><br/> <i>Ka tev manis žēl nebij?</i><br/> <i>Izšūpojse, izlolojse,</i><br/> <i>Dod' tautām(i) niecināt.</i><br/>         BW nr. 17250</p> | <p>Oh, dear, good mother (dim.),<br/>         Aren't you sorry for me?<br/>         Swung for a long time, spoiled,<br/>         You give me away from home<br/>         (into the Strange family of my husband)<br/>         abandon to contempt.</p> |
|---|--|

Cf. the variants of the first line:

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|---|---|
| <p>1. <i>Māmiņ' mana mīļa, baltā,</i><br/>         1. <i>Mana baltā māmūlīte,</i><br/>         1. <i>Memmiņ' mīļa, memmiņ' baltā</i><br/>         BW nr. 17250, 17250,9, 17250,10</p> | <p>Mother (dim.) my dear, good,<br/>         My good (dear) mother (dim.),<br/>         Dear mother (dim.), good mother (dim.).</p> |
|---|---|

In a similar song the young girl also addresses her beloved mother, when she has to leave her home and parents for marriage. She had to go to the strange family of her husband (in Latvian folklore language: *tautās* 'to the strangers'):

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|--|--|
| <p>(16) <i>Ai, māmiņa mīļa, baltā,</i><br/> <i>Kam tu mani tautās devi?</i><br/> <i>Ik rītiņā, ik vakarā</i><br/> <i>Slauku gaužas asariņas,</i><br/> <i>Slauku gaužas asariņas,</i><br/> <i>Pie tevīm domādama.</i><br/>         BW nr. 23662</p> | <p>Oh, dear best mother (dim.)<br/>         Why have you given me in marriage?<br/>         Every morning, every evening<br/>         I wipe bitter tears (dim.),<br/>         I wipe bitter tears (dim.),<br/>         Remembering you.</p> |
|--|--|

Similar situation is described in the next *daina*:

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|--|--|
| <p>(17) <i>Es gan redzu, es gan redzu,</i><br/> <i>Es pie mātes nepalikšu:</i><br/> <i>Sajāj tautu pilla sēta,</i></p> | <p>I already see, I already see,<br/>         I will not stay by (my) mother:<br/>         The courtyard is full of suitors,<br/>         who went on horseback,</p> |
|--|--|

<i>Saņem brāļi kumeliņus.</i>	The brothers take the horses (dim.).
<i>Es iemuku pie māmiņas</i>	I fled to (my) mother (dim.)
<i>Kā sarkana brūklenīte.</i>	Like a red cranberry (dim.) <sup>2</sup> .
<i>Vai, māmiņa mīļa, b a l t a,</i>	Oh, dear, best mother (dim.),
<i>Vai es tev apnikuse?</i>	Are you weary of me?

BW nr. 14538

A Latgalian folksong shows the same word-combination with *bolta* (*balta*):

(18) <i>Mameņ munu mīlu, boltu,</i>	My dear, good mother (dim.),
<i>Namilam man' atdevi:</i>	To an unloved you gave me:
<i>Syūrejam, ryūktejam,</i>	To a bitter, to a surly (man),
<i>Asareņu dzārōjam.</i>	To a drinker of tears (dim.).

BW nr. 21696,1

In the last line of the song there is an example of the nominative style in Latvian folksongs<sup>3</sup>.

The next song contains the adjective *balts* in different meanings:

(19) <i>Mana balta māmūlīte</i>	My dear mother (dim.)
<i>Mani baltu audzināja:</i>	Brought me up as a beautiful (girl):
<i>Pienu ēdu, pienu dzēru,</i>	I ate milk, I drank milk,
<i>Pienā muti nomazgāju.</i>	With milk I washed (my) mouth.

BW nr. 2929

*Balta* in the first line means ‘dear, good’, but in the second line *baltu* has the meaning ‘pretty, beautiful’. *Balta* is used in attributive function, *baltu* in predicative function. Krišjānis Barons in his famous *daina*-collection (BW I 469) makes a very interesting comment here: “The mother sprays some milk from her breast into the eyes of her child and wipes it up with a soft, white, little piece of cloth. Sometimes when washing the child she drips some milk into the water.” Washing one’s face in milk is a procedure for attaining beauty.

II. *balta meitiņa* ‘good, dear girl (dim.)’

(20) <i>Vai, memmiņa mīļa, b a l t a,</i>	Oh, dear, good mother (dim.)
<i>Kā es tevi aizmirsīšu?</i>	How can I forget you?
– <i>Gan, meitiņa, aizmirsīsi,</i>	– You will forget me, daughter (dim.),
<i>Neredzēsi staigājot,</i>	You won’t see me go,
<i>Neredzēsi staigājot,</i>	You won’t see me go,
<i>Nedzirdēsi runājot.</i>	You won’t hear me speak.

BW nr. 17248

In some variants in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> line the mother answers:

3. <i>Ai, meitiņa mīļa, b a l t a,</i>	Oh, dear, good daughter (dim.),
4. <i>Gan tu mani aizmirsēsi.</i>	You will even forget me.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Rainer Eckert. Stehende Vergleiche mit dem Wort für „Beere“ im Ostbaltischen und Ostslawischen, in: *Zeitschrift für Slawistik*, vol. 39, fasc. 2, Berlin, 1994, pp. 185–204.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Rainer Eckert. A Tendency of Nominalization in the Language of Latvian Folksongs, in: *Zeitschrift für Slawistik*, vol. 45, fasc. 2, Berlin, 2000, pp. 318–328.

III. *balta māsa, balta māsiņa* ‘good, dear sister’

The word-combination with non-diminutive is used more seldom:

- (21) *Balta zied kalniņā,*                      Something white is flowering in the hill (dim.)  
*Vai zied ieva, vai ābele?*              Is it the black alder, or the apple-tree?  
*Nezied ieva, ne ābele,*                  There is nothing flowering, neither  
*Pate b a l t a brāļu māsa*                  the black alder, nor the apple-tree,  
LT VII 105, nr. 26668                      (It is) the dear sister of the brothers.

In this song *balta* occurs in its direct meaning ‘white’ in the 1<sup>st</sup> line and in the figurative meaning ‘dear, good’ in the 4<sup>th</sup> line. Not infrequently the two types of meaning are confronted and this confrontation is connected with the opposition of the two parts of the song: The first two lines are dedicated to the nature, the second two lines the society – the typical case of negative parallel<sup>4</sup>.

- (22) *B a l t a māsa pirti kūra*              Dear sister heated the bath  
*B a l t a j a m bāliņam:*                  For the dear brother (dim.):  
*Liepu slotiņ' i sasēja,*                  The broom (dim.) from the linden-tree  
*Piena gariņ' i palēja.*                  is bound together,  
BW nr. 1269                                  The milk is poured into the steam (dim.).

This song is very similar to the song under (8).

The opposition of the two parts of the folksongs is very popular:

- (23) *Sirmi zirgi bāliņam,*                  Brother (dim.) has grey-white horses,  
*B a l t a māsa ecētāj'.*                  Dear sister is the harrower.  
*Staiģā tautu nelīets*                  The good-for-nothing from the tribes  
*Ežmalā raudādams.*                  of the suitors is sauntering  
BW nr. 10689                                  (And) crying at the field's end.

The first two lines form the positive part of the song (the wealthy brother, the diligent sister), while the second part reports the good-for-nothing suitor.

- (24) *B a l t a, b a l t a man' māsiņa*      My dear, dear sister (dim.)  
*Melnu ļaužu rociņā:*                  Is in the hand (dim.) of black (bad) people:  
*Par gadskārtu pirti kūra,*              She heated the bath periodically through the year,  
*Mēnešiem(i) velējās.*                  Every month (she) washed.  
BW nr. 21415

The first line occurs in two variants:

1. *Skaista, b a l t a man' māsiņa*      My beautiful, dear sister (dim.)  
1. *Smuka, b a l t a man' māsiņa*      My pretty, dear sister (dim.)

Besides these variants are known two following variants of the first two lines:

<sup>4</sup> See: Vaira Viķis-Freibergs. The Negative Parallel or Negative Simile in Latvian Folk Poetry, *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 1995, vol. XXVI, No. 1.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. <i>Māsiņ manu skaistu, baltu</i>             | My beautiful, dear sister (dim.)                  |
| 2. <i>Melnu ļaužu noveduma (= novedama)</i>     | Was taken away by black people<br>(i.e. bad men). |
| 1. <i>Māsiņ' mana mīļa, balta</i>               | My good, dear sister (dim.)                       |
| 2. <i>Tev noveda melli (&lt; melni) ļaudis!</i> | Black (Bad) people took you away!                 |

IV. *balts bāleņiņis (bāleliņš, bāliņš, brāleliņš)* ‘dear brother’ (dim.)

The word combinations of *balts* with the designation of brother (diminutives) are wide-spread in Latvian folksongs:

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|------------------------------------|---|
| (25) <i>Mans baltais bāleņiņis</i> | My dear brother (dim.)                  |
| <i>Ik piektdienas Tukumā,</i>      | Is every friday in Tukums,              |
| <i>Ik piektdienas Tukumā,</i>      | Is every friday in Tukums,              |
| <i>Smuku meitu lūkoties...</i>     | To look at a pretty girl...             |
| BW nr. 13297,6                     | (Or: To find, reach a pretty girl...)   |
| (26) <i>Vai, manu mīlo</i>         | Oh, my dear                             |
| <i>Balto bāliņu,</i>               | Good brother (dim.),                    |
| <i>Pie tādas melnaces</i>          | To such a person (girl) with black eyes |
| <i>Piesēdināja!</i>                | (They) gave you!                        |
| BW nr. 21401,3                     |   |

In this *daina* the sister addresses some words of lamentation to the beloved brother because he must sit beside a girl with dark eyes, cf. *melnācis, -ce* ‘der, die Schwarzäugige, Brünette’ (ME II 596). Now and then *melnācis* has a negative connotation, e.g. in songs, when it replaces *miglācis* ‘a person or animal who cannot see clearly’ (BW nr. 7211).

In another folksong the young girl praises life at home by her beloved brother:

- |                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| (27) <i>Kas man kait nedzīvot</i> | What do I lack in my life                     |
| <i>Pie baltā bāleliņa?</i>        | With my dear brother (dim.)?                  |
| <i>Stikla durvis, vara vārti,</i> | Doors of glass, gates of copper,              |
| <i>Paši verās neverami.</i>       | They open themselves, which cannot be opened. |
| BW nr. 23960                      |   |

In the next two *dainas* the young wife remembers the merry life at home by her brother(s):

- |                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| (28) <i>Lustītē es uzaugu</i> | In pleasure (dim.) I grew up                               |
| <i>Baltajos bāliņos:</i>      | With (my) dear brothers (dim.):                            |
| <i>Kokles skan namiņā,</i>    | The <i>kokles</i> <sup>5</sup> sounds in the house (dim.), |
| <i>Pijolītes istabā.</i>      | The fiddles (dim.) in the room.                            |
| BW nr. 23972,8                |  |

<sup>5</sup> The *kokles* is the Baltic variation of the Baltic psaltery or board zither. See: Valdis Muktupāvels. On Some Relations Between *Kokles* Styles and Contexts in the Twentieth Century, *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 2000, vol. XXXI, fasc. 4, pp. 388–405.

- (29) *Uz lustītes es uzaugu*  
*Baltajos bāliņos:*  
*Rijā kokles, namā ģēgas,*  
*Maltuvēs stabulītes.*  
 BW nr. 23972,11
- In delight (dim.) I grew up  
 By (my) dear brothers (dim.):  
 In the drying kiln of grain kokles,  
 in the house violins,  
 In the grind-house – shawms (dim.).

The high praise of the dear brother by the young still unmarried sister is the object of the following *dainas*:

- (30) *Kura priede, kura egle*  
*Bez zariņa uzaugusi?*  
*Kur māsiņa uzaugusi*  
*Bez balta bāleliņa?*  
 BW nr. 18069
- Which pine-tree, which fir-tree  
 Is grown up without a branch (dim.)?  
 Which sister (dim.) is grown up  
 Without a dear brother (dim.)?
- (31) *Sēd', meitiņ, gaidi godu*  
*No balta bāleliņa;*  
*Labāk godu gaidījusi*  
*Ne kauniņu redzējusi.*  
 BW nr. 6595
- Sit down, girl (dim.), wait for honour  
 From the dear brother (dim.);  
 Better to wait for honour  
 Than to see shame (dim.).
- (32) *Nedzirdēju tā vārdiņa*  
*No balta bāleliņa:*  
*Ej tu maltu, līgaviņ',*  
*Lai māsiņa pūru šuj!*  
 BW nr. 7686,3
- I don't hear such words (dim.)  
 From the dear brother (dim.):  
 Go grind, bride (dim.),  
 May the sister (dim.) sew the trousseau!
- (33) *Kājām, tautas, nenāciet,*  
*Drauga zirga neņemiet,*  
*Man auguma neviliet*  
*No balta bāleliņa.*  
 BW nr. 15690
- Don't come on foot, suitors,  
 Don't take away the friend's horse,  
 Don't wish (me) away  
 From the dear brother (dim.).

#### V. The word-combination *balta saulīte* 'dear, good sun' (dim.)

- (34) *Labi bija labiešam*  
*I(r) lijot, i(r) sniegot;*  
*Man nebija labas dienas*  
*I(r) baltā saulītē.*  
 BW nr. 4098
- The rich man lived well  
 In rain, in snow;  
 I didn't have good days  
 Even in the dear sun (dim.).

*Labietis, labitis* has the meaning 'a rich man; aristocrat' (ME II 396). Cf. Middle Low German *gude lude*.

An informative example for the use of Latvian *balts*, *-a* in the sense of 'dear, good' (here the verbal abstract noun *baltumiņš* dim.) was found in Alfrēds Gāters's remarkable monograph about the syntax of Latvian folksongs (GLS 117):

- (35) *Man' māmiņa ar saulīti*  
*Abas viena baltumiņa a...*  
 T II 3265
- My mother (dim.) and the sun (dim.)  
 Are both of the same goodness (dearness) (dim.)...

VI. *Balta pasaulīte* ‘dear world (dim.)’

The sole example was found in the Excellent Latvian–German Dictionary of Mühlenbach-Endzelin (ME I 258), see under (3).

**C. Materials from Lithuanian folksongs**

In Lithuanian folksongs there are a lot of exact correspondences to the above-mentioned use of Latvian *balts*, *-a* in the sense ‘good, dear’. Lithuanian *báltas*, *-a* in this special meaning appears in combination with the substantives *mamužėlė*, *mamužė*, *motinėlə* ‘mother (dim.)’; *dukrelė* ‘daughter (dim.)’; *broleliai* ‘brothers (dim.)’; *vaikeli* ‘child (dim.)’; *sveteliai* ‘guests (dim.)’ and *svotuliai* ‘bride-woosers; realtives by marriage (dim.)’. Only the last three words don’t have correspondences in word groups with the adjective *balts*, *-a* in Latvian.

I. Lith. *mamuže baltoji*, *balta mamužėlė*, *motinėlə baltulytė* ‘dear mother (dim.)’  
(36) *Kelk, mamuže, kelk, baltoji* (PKD 51; cf. LKŽ I 498) ‘Steh auf, Mütterchen, steh auf liebstes’ – ‘Get up mother (dim.), get up, dear!’

(37) *Jau sudievu tėvužėliui ir šiai balta i mamužėlei* (PKD 34; cf. LKŽ I, 2-nd ed., 610) ‘Farewell already to father (dim.) and to this dear mother (dim.)’

(38) *Motinėle mano, baltulyte mano* ‘My mother (dim.), my dear (dim.)’  
The last example is taken from the writings of Antanas Baranauskas (see: LKŽ I, 2-nd ed., 610). In his work the influence of the folklore language is remarkable.

II. Lith. *dukrelė baltoji* ‘dear daughter (dim.)’

(39) *O ko verki, dukrele, o ko verki, baltoji?* (JLD 1, nr. 502; cf. LKŽ, ibidem) ‘Why are you weeping, daughter (dim.), why are you weeping, dear?’

III. Lith. *balti broleliai* ‘dear brothers (dim.)’

(40) *Tavo sveteliai balti broleliai balnoj bėrus žirgelius* (SDŽ nr. 20; cf. LKŽ, ibidem) ‘Your guests the dear brothers (dim.) are saddling the brown horses (Dem.)’

(41) *Pamaži jokit, balti broleliai, per varinį tiltelį* (PKD 226; cf. LKŽ I, 2-nd ed., 498) ‘Ride slowly, dear brothers (dim.), over the copper bridge (dim.)’

(42) *Sudievu seserėlėms ir baltiem siems broleliams* (JLD 1, nr. 42; cf. LKŽ I, 2-nd ed., 610) ‘Farewell to the sisters (dim.) and dear brothers (dim.)’

IV. Lith. *vaikeli baltasai* ‘dear child (dim.)’

(43) *Vaikeli baltasai, jau visas dainas užmiršau* (Tverečius, LKŽ, ibidem) ‘Dear child (dim.), I already forgot all the songs.’

V. Lith. *balti sveteliai* ‘dear guests (dim.)’

(44) *Mes pas tėvelį balti sveteliai* (PKD 223; cf. LKŽ I, 2-nd ed., 498) ‘We are at the father’s (dim.) dear guests (dim.)’

VIII. Lith. *svotuliai baltučiai* ‘dear bride-woosers (dim.)’

(45) *Jūs svotuliai, jūs baltučiai, kur jūs buvot, kur užtrukot?* (Rimšė, LKŽ I, 2-nd ed., 498) ‘You bride-woosers (dim.), you dears (dim.), where have you been, where have you stayed?’

In his letter of the 10<sup>th</sup> of January 2003 prof. Steven Young (Baltimore) kindly sent me a very important reference which shows that the word *baltassis* in the Lithuanian language of East Prussia already in the 17<sup>th</sup> century had the meaning ‘good’ Cf. William Pierson’s excerpts from Matthäus Prätorius *Deliciae Prussicae*: “...Und wenn sie einen loben wollen, nennen sie ihn *baltas*, d.i. weiß, *baltassis kunnige*, d.h. ‘weißer Herr’. Sie gebrauchen auch das Wort noch vor einen gutten Mann und Freund, da sie im Gegentheil ihren Feind *ne baltas* nennen, i.e. ‘der nicht weiß ist’<sup>6</sup>. *Baltassis kunnige* is the vocative and means ‘good man (Sir, master)’.

## D. Correspondences in Slavic

I. Vladimir Dal' cited in his well known Dictionary (Dal' I 153) the following expression:

(46) *Белая барыня* (used in St. Peterburg) – a friendly address of the salesmen, hawkers (pedlars) to the ladies, who are buyers, purchasers [*приветливое обращение продавцов, разнощиков к покупательницам*]. Not: ‘white lady (mistress, Miss)’, but: ‘dear (good) lady (mistress, Miss)’.

II. In the dictionary of Mühlenbach-Endzelin (ME I 258) there is a reference to “Mitteilungen der Litauischen Litterarischen Gesellschaft” (vol. 3., Heidelberg, 1893, p. 515) concerning correspondences for Latvian *balts*, -a ‘good, dear, worthy’ in Lithuanian, Bulgarian and Russian. In the above-mentioned “Mitteilungen” Eduard Wolter pointed out that Alexander Potebnja in the 2<sup>nd</sup> volume of his work “Объяснения малорусских и сродных песен” (*колядки и щедровки*, Варшава, 1887) wrote at length about *báltas* in the sense ‘pretty, good, dear, graceful’ in the language of folksongs: Lithuanian *balta mergelė* (‘dear girl (dim.)’), *balti brolyčiai* (‘dear brothers’), *balti žmonės* (‘honest people’); Latvian *balta māmulīte* ‘dear mother (dim.)’ and similar in Russian and Bulgarian. Unfortunately I did not up to now received Aleksandr Potebnja’s work.

## E. For a conclusion: Thoughts about the development of the meaning ‘white’ to ‘good, dear’

1) The word designating ‘white’ in Latvian and Lithuanian has a very rich and complicated semantic structure. For example, for Latvian *balts*, -a the dictionary of Mühlenbach-Endzelin (ME I 258) points out nine different meanings, the Lithuanian Academy Dictionary (LKŽ I, 2-nd ed., 609–611) for Lithuanian *baltas*, -a emphasizes also nine different meanings.

2) There is a connection between Russian *белая барыня* ‘dear, good lady (Miss)’ and the honourable address in Lithuanian *baltieji* ‘Reverend; Ehrwürden’ (DLW I 267), which is now absolute, and the exclamation, cited also by Alexander

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<sup>6</sup> Matthäus Prätorius’ *Deliciae Prussicae oder Preußische Schaubühne*, im wörtlichen Auszuge aus dem Manuskript herausgegeben von Dr. William Pierson..., Berlin, 1871, p. 40.

Kurschat (ibidem) *baltas Dieve*. But I cannot agree with Kurschat who supposed here the meaning ‘holy’ (‘heilig’), cf. the German expression *ach du lieber Gott!*

3) In Latvian the adjectives *balts*, *-a* ‘white’ and *melns*, *-a* ‘black’ occur in an opposition, with the figurative meaning ‘good’: ‘bad’, cf:

(47) Latvian *baltas dienas* ‘happy days’ (ME I 258): *melnas dienas* ‘unhappy, unlucky days’ (ME II 595).

(48) Latvian *ne baltu, ne melnu vārdu nesacīt* ‘neither say a good word nor a bad word’, i.e. ‘do not speak at all’.

(49) Latvian *vai atsakies nuo baltā (der Gute, Gott) un palikusi visu mūžu pie melnā (der Böse, Teufel)?* (the examples cited under 47 and 48 are from ME II 595) ‘Do you want to break with the white (the good; God) and to remain all your life with the black (the bad; devil)?’

The above-mentioned opposition convincingly shows the development of the meaning from ‘white’ to ‘good’ and from ‘black’ to ‘bad’<sup>7</sup>.

#### ABBREVIATIONS

- BW – *Latvju dainas*, Kr. Barona un H. Wissendorff izdotas, sēj. I–VI, Jelgavā–Petrogradā, 1894–1915 (faksimiltipa izdevums, Rīga, 1989–1994).
- Dal’ – Владимир Даль. *Толковой словарь живого великорусского языка*, т. 1–4, 2-ое издание, С. Петербург–Москва, 1880–1882 (изд. Москва, 1955).
- GLS – Alfrēds Gāters. *Lettische Syntax. Die Dainas*, herausgegeben von Hildegard Radtke, Frankfurt am Main–Berlin–Bern–New York–Paris–Wien, 1993.
- JLD – Antanas Juška. *Lietuviškos dainos*, t. I–III, Kazanė, 1880–1882.
- LDW – Alexander Kurschat. *Litauisch-deutsches Wörterbuch*, Bd. I–IV, Göttingen, 1968–1973.
- LEV – Konstanfins Karulis. *Latviešu etimoloģijas vārdnīca divos sējumos*, sēj. I–II, Rīga, 1992.
- LEW – Ernst Fraenkel. *Litauisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Bd. I–II, Heidelberg–Göttingen, 1962–1965.
- LKŽ – Lietuvių kalbos žodynas, t. III–XX, Vilnius, 1956–2002, t. I–II, second edition, Vilnius, 1968–1969.
- LT VII – *Latviešu tautasdziesmas*, 7. sējums, Rīga, 2000.
- ME – K. Mühlhensbachs *Lettisch-deutsches Wörterbuch*, redigiert, ergänzt und fortgesetzt von J. Endzelin, Bd. I–IV, Rīga, 1923–1932.
- PKD – *Klaipėdiškių dainos*, surinko Jonas Pakalniškis, išleido A. Bruožis, Vilnius, 1908.
- SDŽ – *Daynas žemaycziu suryntas yr ysžduotas par Symona Stanewicze Mokslynyka Lyteraturas yr Gražiuju Prytiryumu*, Wylniuje, 1829.
- T – *Latviešu tautasdziesmas*, sēj. I–III, Rīga, 1955–1957.

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<sup>7</sup> I would have liked to express my deep gratitude to Ms. Dr. Benita Spielhaus (Berlin) for her helpful advice. Unfortunately, she died on Sept. 6, 2009.

**RYTŲ BALTŲ \**BALTAS*:  
NE TIKTAI ‘BALTAS’, BET IR ‘MIELAS, GERAS’  
BEI JO ATITIKMENYS SLAVŲ KALBOSE**

REINER ECKERT

**Santrauka**

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