4TH INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM OF GENEALOGY, HERALDRY, AND VEXILLOLOGY (ICGHV4)

June 5 2025, Vilnius, Lithuania, www.icghv.com

Theme: "Heads of State: Ancestry, Coats of Arms, and Flags"

OLD PRUSSIAN LEADERS, NOBLES AND WITINGS

Prof. Dr. Grasilda Blažienė (Institute of the Lithuanian Language)

Summary (in English)
Questions and answers about the history of the Old Prussians will never be final, as the vast empirical material we have already learned to interpret, while also uncovering its distinctive aspects, ensures that work and studies based on a more comprehensive understanding will continue for many generations of scholars. What is particularly interesting is how the process of distinguishing ranks, posts, and titles, as recorded in sources, unfolded and when it began. There is an important mention from the year 1239 of the Prussian named *Codruno* (in the Latin dative), along with Balga Castle, where he was the commander. He switched allegiance to the Teutonic Order and assisted in capturing the castle by betraying his fellow Prussians. In the same year, the leader of the Warmians, *Pyopso*, is also mentioned, referred to as *Pruthenus capitaneus Warmiensium*. He was killed by an arrow while attempting to break through the siege of Balga Castle. By the way, the same personal name appears to be recorded as *Peyops* in 1396–1397 (OF 109 48) and around 1400 (OF 110 19r) in Sambia. In 1260, when the Teutonic Order weakened, the Prussians sensed the breath of freedom and chose their elders who were also military leaders: the Sambians – *Glande*, the Notangians – *Henricum Monte*, the Warmians – *Glappe*, the Pomesanians – *Auctume*, the Bartians – *Diwanus dictus Clekine, capitaneus Barthorum*. (SRP I 99). The ones listed above made history, and this must be calmly acknowledged.

The Old Prussian nobility also wrote their own history. A well-known noble from Pomesania, *Pippinus* (*nobilis de Pomesania Pippinus*), a loyal Prussian who lived near the lake named after him, *stagnum Pippini*, was killed while fighting for the independence of his people (SRP I 55–56). His son *Matto* was loyal to the Teutonic Order and generously rewarded with lands. There was also the nobleman from Pomesania, *Samile*, mentioned in 1271 (SRP I 121).

By carefully examining historical sources, we can speak more confidently about the so-called *witings* (OP vītingīs), whom Walther Ziesemer refers to as *Ordensdiener* 'servants of the Order', a kind of servants who were of Prussian origin. Perhaps those facts will help us clarify their concept of nobility.

CV: Prof. dr. Grasilda Blažienė received her PhD degree in Philology from Vilnius University in 1993 (thesis title: Sambia Prussian Proper Names). In 2007, she completed the habilitation procedure (thesis title: Old Prussian Place Names) at Vilnius University and obtained the title of Professor. Since 2014 Grasilda Blažienė is a full member of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences. Since 2008 till 2015 she held the position of a Vice-director for Science at the Institute of Lithuanian Language. Currently, Grasilda Blažienė is a senior researcher and the head of the Research Center of the Baltic Languages and Onomastics. Prof. dr. Grasilda Blažienė conducted her empirical research in the Secret State Archives of Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation in Berlin, Germany (2000, 2001, 2005, 2007, 2011, 2014); also, in the archives in Prague, the Czech Republic (2014, 2015, 2016) and Halle (Saale), Germany (2014). Fields of research: Prussian resp. Baltic onomastics, Prussian and Baltic studies, comparative linguistics, the history of linguistics, trends and methods of modern linguistics, the history of Lithuania Minor, palaeographic and linguistic analysis of old manuscripts, translation theory and practice.