The etymology of Latvian nãkt 'to come'

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It is attractive to compare *nãkt* with *kakt* 'to come to an end', *kacêt* 'to try to reach', *tapt* 'to become', *rast* 'to find', Lith. *kàkti, tàpti* (preterit *tãpė* beside *tãpo*), *ràsti*, which Stang (1966, 346f.) has identified as original perfects.

In the new Latvian etymological dictionary (Karulis 1992, 616) we read about *nãkt* 'to come', Lith. *nókti* 'to grow ripe': "Vārda cilme ir neskaidra". A similar judgment is found in Stang's comparative grammar (1966, 335): "Die Etymologie des Wortes ist unsicher". Endzelīn's (1935) connection of the word with Gothic *nēhv(a)*, Old High German *nāh(o)* cannot be correct because the Baltic root vowel points unambiguously to $*-eH_2-$, which is incompatible with the Germanic vocalism. We must evidently start from a meaning 'to reach', cf. *bę̃rns jau nãca liels, viņš nãca it labi vęcs* (Mühlenbach 1925–27, 699), Lith. also 'to pursue', e.g. *Aš bėgau nuo tavęs, tu mane nokei ir ieškojai* (Žodynas 1970, 854).

From a morphological point of view, the verb *nãkt* differs from the usual pattern of intransitive verbs because it has an *ē*-preterit *nãca*, which is also found in Lithuanian dialects. It follows that the preterit cannot be derived from a thematic aorist (cf. Stang 1966, 379). As Lithuanian has a derived present *nóksta, nókia*, it is improbable that root of the verb represents an original present stem. It is therefore attractive to compare *nãkt* with *kakt* 'to come to an end', *kacêt* 'to try to reach', *tapt* 'to become', *rast* 'to find', Lith. *kàkti, tàpti* (preterit *tãpė* beside *tãpo*), *ràsti*, which Stang (1966, 346f.) has identified as original perfects.

The closest relative of the verb *nãkt* now seems to be the Old Irish preterit *t-ánaic* '(he) came', which represents a reduplicated perfect that can be identified with Vedic *ānāśa, āśur* '(he, they) reached' from $*H_2eH_2noke$, $*H_2eH_2nkr$ (cf. Beekes 1979, 18). The same verb may underlie the Old English perfect present *geneah, genugon* 'suffice(s)' (cf. Kortlandt 1992, 106). It must be separated from the Greek reduplicated aorist *ἐνεγκεῖν*, which represents $*H_1neH_1nke/o-$, the root of which is reflected in Latvian *nest*, Lith. *nèšti* 'to carry'. This leaves us with a number of questions.

First of all, it must be clarified why the final consonant of the root is reflected as *-k-*, not *-s-* (Lith. *-š-*). This does not seem to be a major problem. The original palatovelar was regularly depalatalized in Balto-Slavic before

the nasal present suffix which is attested in Vedic *aśnoti* 'obtains' (cf. Kortlandt 1978, 241). Since the root *H_2nek- 'reach' was in danger of merging with the root *H_1nek- 'carry' when the distinction between the initial laryngeals was lost, the generalization of the difference in the final consonant was an obvious analogical development.

A second question concerns the way initial *n*- was restored in a Proto-Baltic perfect sg. *$\bar{a}nak$-, pl. *$\bar{a}nk$-. I see three possibilities:

(1) The perfect stem could simply be replaced by *$n\bar{a}k$- on the basis of a full-grade alternant stem *nek-, which is attested in Vedic, especially because sg. *-*na*-, pl. *-*n*- looked like a nasal present infix. Note that the analogical elimination of an apparent nasal infix is in fact attested in *segt* 'to cover', Lith. *sègti* 'to fasten', cf. Polish *sięgać* 'to reach', Vedic *sajati* 'hangs', perfect *sasañja*, which has a non-initial nasal in the root.

(2) The initial nasal could be taken from a preceding prefix, as in *ņemt* beside *jemt* 'to take'. Here Old English *genugon* '(they) suffice' from *gan-*ung*- offers a parallel.

(3) The reconstruction of a paradigm *$\bar{a}nak$-, *$\bar{a}nk$- may be wrong. Since Gothic has full reduplication in *ga-staistald* '(he) possessed', *skaiskaidun* '(they) severed', we may have to start from *H_2neH_2noke, *H_2neH_2nkr, which yielded Proto-Baltic *$n\bar{a}nak$-, *$n\bar{a}nk$-. If this is correct, the initial nasal was never restored, but the apparent nasal infix was eliminated.

In fact, the forms with an apparent nasal infix may not have been eliminated immediately. It is equally possible that the paradigm was reinterpreted as a present tense beside a preterit without a nasal infix. The nasal present was then eventually replaced by the simple thematic present in Latvian and by the *sta*-present in Lithuanian.

A final point to be noted is the fixed stress in *nãkt* (cf. Būga 1924, 250f.). It is probable that the stress became fixed on the initial syllable when the alternating paradigm was eliminated. This accentuation is in accordance with the usual fixed stress in intransitive verbs.

The Lithuanian pair of derived presents *nóksta*, *nókia* has a perfect analogue in Latin *nancīscor*, *nanciō* '(I) obtain'. The medial nasal in these forms is usually explained from a nasal infix (e.g., Schrijver 1991, 491). The Baltic analogue now suggests that the present may have been built on a perfect stem *$n\bar{a}nk$-. This stem relates to Old Irish *t-ánaic* '(he) came', which reflects *H_2eH_2nonke, in the same way as Latvian *nãkt* relates to Vedic *ānāśa* '(he) reached' from *H_2eH_2noke. Thus, we may have to reconstruct an Italo-Celtic perfect sg. *$\bar{a}nok$-, pl. *$\bar{a}nk$- which developed like Baltic in Latin and like Vedic in Celtic; note especially the analogical replacement of Vedic *ānāśa* by *ānaṁśa*, which is seemingly identical with the Old Irish form.

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