

The Old Prussian Preterit

According to Bezzenger (1907: 103), the Enchiridion offers the following preterit forms:

- (1) *billē* 'nannte', *is-migē* 'entschlieť', *weddē(din)* 'führte (sie)', *per-traūki* 'überzog';
- (2) *bēi, bei, b <h> e* 'war';
- (3) *en-deirā* 'sah an', *eb-s[i]gnā* 'segnete', *billa, billāts* 'sprach', *imma, immats* 'nahm', *kūra* 'baute', *lasinna* 'legte', *laipinna* '(ich) gebot', *po-glabū* 'herzte', *teikū, teiku* 'schuf', *dīnkauts, dīnkauts* 'dankte', *līmauts* 'brach's';
- (4) *dai* 'gab', *driāudai* 'bedrohten', *per-pīdai* 'brachten', *po-stāi, po-stai* 'ward', *signai* 'segnete', *widdai* 'sah', *billai* '(ich) sprach'.

Van Wijk has argued that *lasinna* and *eb[s]ignā* are present tense forms and that *b <h> e* may be a mistake (1918: 147). Similarly, the forms *billē, imma(ts), laipinna, perpīdai, signai*, and perhaps *kūra* may be present tense forms and *līmauts* is probably a mistake under the influence of the preceding *dīnkauts* (cf. Van Wijk 1918: 148 and Endzelin 1944: 178–180). This reduces the number of reliable forms to thirteen etyma: (1) *-migē, weddē, -traūki*, (2) *bēi*, (3) *-deirā, billā-, -glabū, teikū, dīnkau-*, (4) *dai, driāudai, -stāi, widdai*. Elsewhere I have argued that we can add *stallā* 'stood' and *quoitā* 'would' here (1987: 108).

The following preterit forms are attested in the earlier catechisms, which represent a more archaic stage of the language:

- (1) I *ymmits, jmmitz*, II *ymmeits, ymmeyts* 'nahm';
- (2) none;
- (3) I *bela, belats* (2x), II *byla, bilats, bylaczt* 'sprach', I and II *prowela(din)* 'verriet (ihn)', I *limatz*, II *lymucz* 'brach', I *dinkowats, dinkowatz*, II *dinkautzt, dinkauczt* 'dankte';
- (4) I *daits, daitz*, II *daits, dayts* 'gab'.

Perhaps the most remarkable characteristic of these forms is that almost all of them contain a pronominal clitic. The high fre-

quency of clitics in the Old Prussian verb is also evident in the copy of the reflexive pronoun in the following instances:

- (37.30) *quai sien en mans grīkisi* «die sich ahn vnns versündigen»,
 (43.23) *wissans Grīkans sien shellānts dātunsi* «aller Sünden sich schuldig geben»,
 (55.25) *Turei sien essestan Ebangelion maitātunsin* «sollen sich vom Euangelio neeren»,
 (71.2) *sien ... priki stans malnijkikans waidinnasin* «sich ... gegen den Kindlein stellet».

Cf. also (55.17) *nostan kai tans sparts astits* «auff das er mechtig sey», (63.24) *kawijdan tans esse stesmu smunentin immats* «die Er von dem Menschen nam».

The identification of I *ymmi-ts*, *jmmi-tz*, II *ymmei-ts*, *ymmey-ts* as /imē / is difficult because the expected reflex would be I **ym-mets*, II **ymmyets*, **ymyiets*, cf. I *turrettwey*, II *turrietwey*, E *turritwei* 'haben', I *stenuns*, II *styienuuns*, E *stīnons* 'gelitten', I *penckts*, II *pyienkts*, E *piēncts* 'fünfter'. The correspondence between I *ymmi-*, *jmmi-* and II *ymmei-*, *ymmey-* rather points to original /imī/, cf. I *widekausnan*, II *weydikausnan*, E *wijdikausnan* /wīdikausnan/ 'Zeugnis', I *cixtits*, II *cixteits*, E *cixtits* /krikstits/ 'getauft', I *rekis*, *rickis*, II *rykyes*, *reykeis*, E *rikijs* (passim), *rikeis* (1x) /rikis/ 'Herr'. It follows that the verb *im-* 'take' had an *ī*-preterit in Prussian, not the *ē*-preterit which is found in East Baltic or the *ā*-preterit of Slavic *imati*. As the original root aorist is still reflected in the Prussian participle *immusis* 'having taken (masc.pl.)', we may wonder how the *ī*-preterit originated. The answer is provided by the development of causatives and iteratives in Balto-Slavic (cf. Kortlandt 1989: 110).

The correspondence between OPr. *laikūt* 'to hold', *perbandāsnan* 'temptation', *maysotan* 'mixed' and Lith. *laikyti*, *bandyti*, *maišyti* shows that the stem of the *ā*-present ousted the stem of the *ī*-preterit in the Prussian paradigm. This is an understandable development if an original *ī*-aorist was replaced by an *ā*-imperfect at an early stage. The threefold distinction between present, imperfect and aorist advocated here is the same as can be reconstructed for Slavic before the rise of the aspectual dichotomy, when the (imperfective) *ā*-preterit **ima-* became separated from the thematic present **ime-* and the (perfective) root aorist **em-* by the creation of a new (imperfective) present **em-je-*. Note that the assumption of an *ā*-imperfect in Prussian is supported by the *e*-grade root vowel of *teickut* 'to create', preterit *teikū*, and *endeirā* 'saw', as opposed to the zero grade in the infinitives *tickint*, *endyrītwei*.

Van Wijk has suggested the possibility of explaining «sämtliche Präterita auf *-ai* als Analogiebildungen nach *-stāi*, *-stai*, *dai* und vielleicht noch einigen andern Mustern» (1918: 149). This would explain *billai* and *signai* as recent forms beside *billā-* and *eb[s]i]gnā*, especially because we find I *belā*, II *byla* in the earlier catechisms. However this may be, it is clear that *dai* and *-stāi* represent original root aorists, and the same holds for I *dai-*, *ymmi-*, II *dai-*, *ymmei-*. It thus appears that the root aorist adopted **-ī* from the *ī*-aorist, perhaps for clear differentiation from the *ā*-imperfect. While Slavic derived *je*-presents from root aorists for the creation of aspectually marked presents, the Prussian forms in *-ai* are typical aorists and cannot possibly have arisen in the same way (cf. already Van Wijk 1929: 153).

Van Wijk eventually derived the final *-i* of the ending *-ai* from an enclitic particle (1929: 154). This raises the question of its original function. While *dai*, *-stāi*, I *ymmi-* are typical aorists, the final *-i* is also found in the imperfect *bēi* 'was', where it may have been taken from the lost root aorist **bū*. As all of these stems are monosyllabic, it seems possible that the final *-i* adopted the function of the original augment, especially because the East Baltic sigmatic future appears to reflect the injunctive of the Slavic sigmatic aorist. Note that in Classical Armenian the augment was preserved before monosyllabic stems only and that a similar rule holds for Modern Greek.

This brings us back to the frequent clitics in the Old Prussian preterit. Van Wijk has made clear that the Slavic element *-tŭ* which can be added to 2nd and 3rd sg. monosyllabic aorist forms with circumflex tone (reflecting mobile stress) cannot possibly represent an enclitic subject pronoun (1918: 114). If it can nevertheless be identified with OPr. *-ts*, which seems probable, it follows that the latter must have been reanalyzed as a subject pronoun at a recent stage. The original form of the enclitic particle was probably **tu* 'then', cf. OPr. *tit* 'thus', *stwi* 'there'. It therefore seems that the augment was replaced by the clitic **tu*, not by a particle which underlies the final *-i* of the ending *-ai*. Note that OPr. *-ts* is found no more than three times in the present tense, viz. E *astits* (2x) 'ist, sei' and *poquoitēts* 'begehrt', whereas it is found with 18 of the 22 preterit forms in the earlier catechisms, where two of the other forms have the enclitic object pronoun *-din*.

This leaves the origin of the Balto-Slavic *ī*-aorist to be explained. The formation is a Balto-Slavic creation because causatives and iteratives did not have an aorist in the Indo-European proto-language. I

think that the key to the solution of this problem is the OPr. participle I *palletan*, II *praliten*, E *pralieiton*, *prolieiton* (2x), *proleiton* 'vergossen', which can only have taken its vocalism from an aorist /l̄ei/ < *l̄ēi. This form is evidently a contamination of full grade *l̄ē- < *leH₁- and zero grade *l̄i- < *lH₁i-, cf. Vedic 3rd sg. *á-pāt* 'drank' < *peH₃- and participle *pītá-* 'drunk' < *pH₃i-, OPr. *poūton* beside Slavic *piti* 'to drink'. Other verbs which may be derived from this type are Latvian *dēt* 'to suck', Slavic *viti* 'to wind', OPr. *etskīuns* 'auferstanden', all from *CeHi-roots. The model of Vedic *dháyati* 'sucks', *vyáyati* 'envelops', past participle *dhītá-*, *vītá-* suffices to motivate the introduction of *-ī- outside the present in the Balto-Slavic paradigm of causatives and iteratives. In Prussian, the spread of *-ī from *l̄ēi and *pōi to *dōi, *stāi and *imī is a trivial development.

Thus, I think that crucial independent evidence for the reconstruction of the Balto-Slavic proto-language has remained hidden in the Prussian texts because scholars have been reluctant to draw conclusions from the data as we have them.

References:

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