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Two Old Prussian fragments

Frederik Kortlandt

Beside the Old Prussian corpus which was codified by Trautmann (1910, 1970, facsimile in Mažiulis 1966), there are a number of fragmentary texts (cf. Mažiulis 1981: 62-64), two of which are of major importance for the prehistory of the Baltic languages. These are an epigram (cf. Mažiulis 1975 and Schmalstieg 1976: 87-90, 93-97) and a proverb (cf. Sjöberg 1969). It appears that both texts represent the Pomesanian dialect of Prussian attested in the Elbing Vocabulary, the vowel system of which can be analyzed as follows (cf. Levin 1974: 5):

/i:/	i, y	/i/	i, e
/ä:/	e	/ä/	e, a
/ā:/	o, oa	/ā/	a, oa, e
/u:/	u	/u/	u, o

Writing *ī, ē, ō, ū* for the long vowels and *ɪ, e, a, u* for the short vowels, I reproduce the two short texts here with my own transcription and translation:

A Prussian Epigram (1369)

Kayle rekyse. thoneaw labonache thewelyse.
Eg. koyte. poyte. nykoyte. pe[^]negā doyte.

Kaile rikīs, tu nī jau labōnas tēwelis,
Ik kwai tu pōtwei, nī kwai tu penegā dōtwei.

Hello, mister! you are no longer a nice little uncle!
If you want to drink, you do not want to give a penny!

A Prussian Proverb (1583)

Deues: does dantes, Deues does geitka.

Deiwas dōs dantins, Deiwas dōs geitka.

God give teeth, God give bread.

My interpretation of the forms differs from earlier ones on the following points:

1. The timbre of the root vowel *-e-* in **rekyse** suggests that the original pretonic long vowel of **rīkijas* was shortened at an early stage. This idea is supported by the timbre *-e-* in the 1st catechism, where we find *rekis*, acc. *rekian*. The word is evidently a derivative of *rīki* 'Reich', which was borrowed from Germanic.
2. **thoneaw** may represent three syllables *tu ni jau*.¹
3. **labonache** may contain the suffix **-ān-*, cf. Lith. *geltónas* 'yellow', Russ. *velikán* 'giant'.
4. The timbre *e-* of **Eg** suggests a short vowel in *ik*.
5. I take **koyte** to be identical with *Quoi tu* 'wilstu' in the Enchiridion. The verb form is athematic and may represent the original perfect stem of Lith. *kviēsti* 'to invite' (cf. Kortlandt 1989: 110).
6. **poyte** and **doyte** represent the infinitives *pōtwei* and *dōtwei* (cf. Kortlandt 1990).
7. I agree with Schmalstieg against Mažiulis that **pe^ˆnega** is a gen.sg. form to be identified with the corresponding East Baltic and Slavic forms.
8. This view is supported by the gen.sg. form **geitka** in the proverb (cf. Kortlandt 1988: 93).

¹This renders the two lines isosyllabic. One could suggest the following metrical interpretation:

Kaile rikīs, tu ni jau labōnas tewēlis, — — — — —
Ik kwai tu pōtwei, ni kwai tu penega dōtwei. — — — — —

Alternatively, one could suggest:

Kaile rikīs, tu ni jau labōnas tewēlis, — — — — —
Ik kwai tu pōtwei, ni kwai tu penega dōtwei. — — — — —

In either case, the interpretation of *thewelyse* as **tewēlis* is questionable.

9. I take the form **does** to be neither a future nor a preterit but an aorist subjunctive (cf. Kortlandt 1982: 8). This formation is found as an imperative in the *Enchiridion*, e.g. *Teiks* 'stelle'.

Thus, I think that these two short texts offer a number of important clues to the prehistoric development of the phonology and morphology of the Baltic languages. There are a number of points which remain bothersome, however. In particular, the epigram offers the following problems:

1. Case forms seem to be mixed up in **Kayle rekyse**, where we should expect †*Kayles rekye* vel sim., cf. *Kayles* and *rickie* in other fragments (Mažiulis 1981: 64, 63).
2. The final *-e* of **rekyse**, **labonache**, **thewelyse** suggests that the scribe was not a native speaker of Prussian and perhaps had an optional *-e* (shwa) in his own speech.²
3. The spelling *-ch-* in **labonache** also points to a scribe who was not a native speaker of Prussian and may have perceived the Prussian **-s* as very different from his own because it was not opposed to a velar fricative.
4. The vocalism of **poyte** and **doyte** seems to reflect a form of umlaut which is alien to the Prussian language.
5. The vowel reduction in the final syllables of **koyte**, **nykoyte**, **poyte**, **doyte** is also unexpected for a native speaker of the language.
6. The interpunction of the second line is highly remarkable and suggests that it was dictated to the scribe.

It therefore seems probable to me that the text was written by a German scribe who noted down the words of a Prussian colleague.

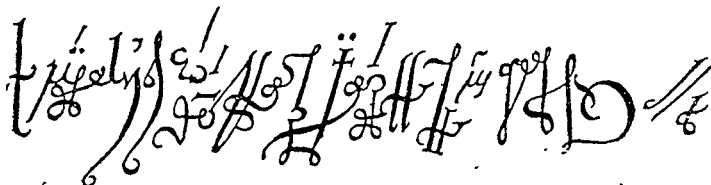
²Cf. the text *Jesus ich leid* for *leide* in the accompanying drawing.

Leonhart Thurneyssers zum Thurn.

141.

Diß ist die fünffte Türckische vnd ein Geistliche art Schrift/ vnd bedeutet so viel/ als
Michaël Eleo I ben Patriarchia tis Megalis Antiochias.

Das ist/ *Michaël* von Gottes gnaden Patriarch oder Erzhvater zu groß Antiochia.



Item diß ist so viel als das hie obgesetzte doch in einer Arabischen Schrift/ deren
 sich die Geistlichen Türcken auch gebrauchen.



محمد اناس

Dmanes: Ist bey den Arabiern ein Gewicht gewesen/ Etliche Belarten haben
 diß für *man* *del Maneb* (welches 16. *Pricias* helt) geachtet/ Vnd möchte vielleicht
 das Gölnische oder Nürnbergrische Pfundt/ welches 32. loth/ oder 16. Unzen helt/ sein/
 wiewol doch die Araber eigentlich ein Pfundt von 12. Unzen/ das sie *دولوم*
Rotulura heißen/ hetten. Vnd ist dieses das künige/ welches die *Latini Libram* nennen/ vnd
 128. *Drachmas*/ oder Quintleu/ deren 4. ein Loth/ vnd 8. ein Unz im haltend ist.

PARPETH

Doffrehel: Diß ist Alt Gödtisch geredt vnd geschrieben/ Ist ein sehr hoher
 Berg/ welcher Schweden vnd Nordwegen von einander schidet/ Gleich wie das Py-
 renisch Geburg/ Hispanien vnd Frankreich vntermarchet. Oder wie der *Apenninus*
Apallum vnd *Calabriam* *disiungiret*. Oder das Risengebirg die Schlesien von dem
 Behamerlande vtergrenzet. Besiehe *Ola. Magnum lib. 2. Cap. 14.*

دابة

Dab: Ist Syrisch/ est animal simile lacerto, seu liguro, est tamen maius illo, et re-
 peritur in Oriente, et versus Meccam in desertis arenosis. Ist ein Thier gleich einer Eydeck-
 sau doch ist es etwas größer/ vnd wird gegen Aufgang gefunden/ sonderlich aber bey
Mecca/ in den Wüsten/ Einöden vnd sandechtigen driten.

DE VES.

Deues: does danter, Deues does geitka: Diß ist rechte Preussisch geredt/ vnd bedeu-
 tet so viel/ als/ Gibt einen Gott Drot/ so gibt er ihm auch Zehne darzu/ darnut er
 beissen kan.

دکابر

Dakaber: Ein Brunn/ der verendert/ ein vrsprung der nicht mehr in seinem
 vorigen twesen ist/ Wie der Brunn bey *Hierico*/ der vortzu/ nicht allein die Menschen/
 Sondern alle Viehe/ vergiftet hat/ Zehet aber allen Früchten vnd dem Menschen
 sehr angenehm vnd gesundt ist. Item/ wie der bitter Brunn/ in der Wüste/ den *Moses*
 gut vnd gesundt machet/ *Exod. 15.* Oder wie der Brunn zu *Matarea* im Balsam-
 garten welcher 48. *stadia* von *Alkeir*/ der etwan gar sauer/ Da über *Christus/ Ioseph*
 vnd *Maria* daraus getruncken haben/ sol er gut vnd heilsam worden sein.

نن

دوگر

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[Abbildung S. 118 aus: *München BSB, 2 Alch. 12/1.*]