Initial *a*- and *e*- in Old Prussian

FREDERIK KORTLANDT

Leiden

The phonetic reflex of Balto-Slavic *e- is a- in Old Prussian The instances where initial *e- has allegedly been preserved as e- in Prussian actually have reduced grade vocalism The prefixes ep- and et- must be identified with East Baltic ap-, at-, Slavic ob-, ot-, so that the initial e- must be due to analogy The distribution of initial a- and e- in Prussian is much more regular than is usually assumed

The phonetic reflex of Balto-Slavic *e- is *a*- in Old Prussian, cf. *addle* 'Fichte', *alne* 'Hindin', *aloade* 'Haspe', *as* 'ich', *asy* 'Rain', *asmai* 'bin', *astin* 'Ding', *assaran* 'See', *assegis* 'Kaulbarsch', *aswinan* 'Stutenmilch' (Trautmann 1910, 107f.). It is therefore probable that *esketres* 'Stör' and *estureyto* 'Eidechse' are recent borrowings from Lithuanian *erškėtras* and Old Polish *jeszczerzyca*, respectively. The instances where initial *e- has allegedly been preserved as *e*- in Prussian (Trautmann 1910, 108) actually have reduced grade vocalism:

(1) *emelno* 'Mistel' must be compared with Old Church Slavic *imela* and Czech *jmelí*, also Polish, Slovak, Slovene, Serbo-Croat, Bulgarian, Ukrainian, Russian *im-*, dialectal Czech, Slovak, Slovene, Serbo-Croat *m-* (cf. Andersen 1996, 134);

(2) *emmens* 'Name' must be identified with Old Church Slavic *imę*, Czech *jméno*, Old Irish *ainm*, Greek *ónoma*, Phrygian *onoman*, Armenian *anun*, also Sanskrit *nāma*, Latin *nōmen*, Gothic *namo*, all of which represent initial $*h_3n$- (cf. Kortlandt 1984, 42), with an *o*-coloring laryngeal which is incompatible with Balto-Slavic *e-;

(3) *en* 'in' is identical with Lithuanian *į* from *in*, which is the original pretonic variant of *en* < $*h_1en$ (cf. Kortlandt 1987, 222), which is preserved in the Latvian prefix *ie-*;

(4) *ennoys* 'Fieber' contains the prefix *en-*;

(5) *er, ergi* 'bis' is etymologically identical with *ir* 'auch', East Baltic *ir*, Slavic *i*;

(6) *erains* 'jeglicher' contains the prefix *er-*;

(7) *esse* 'von' must be identified with Lithuanian *iš* and Slavic *iz, z*, which is the original pretonic form of Balto-Slavic *ež* < $*h_1e\hat{g}^h$, cf. Latin *ex*.

Thus, *e*- is the reflex of the originally pretonic reduced grade vowel, the stressed variant of which is found e.g. in *ilga* 'lange', *īmt* 'nehmen', *īnsan* 'kurz',

irmo 'Arm' (Hirt's law), with original zero grade and Balto-Slavic epenthesis. It appears that *e-* was generalized in *en* and *er*, the latter of which merged with the German prefix *er-*, and in *esse*, also *esteinu* 'von nun an'. The preposition *en* is written 7x *an*, 1x *au*, 3x *en* (the latter before unstressed front vowels) in the First Catechism, 2x *an* (once initially and once before the article, which appears to have been enclitic), 1x *æn*, 8x *en* (all medially before nouns or adjectives) in the Second Catechism, and 148x *en*, 2x *em* in the Enchiridion. Similarly, the preposition *esse* is written 6x *assa* in the First Catechism, 1x *assa*, 1x *assæ* (both initially in titles), 1x *æsse*, 1x *æse*, 2x *hæse* (all medially in running text) in the Second Catechism, and 53x *esse* in the Enchiridion. It is important to be aware of the fact that this points to a real development and cannot possibly be the result of random errors.

Elsewhere (1988, 90) I have argued that the preposition and verbal prefix *po* 'under, after' represents the unstressed variant of the nominal prefix *pa-*, which was stressed before the Prussian accent shift yielded a distinctive opposition between the two vowels, and that the rounded vowel was subsequently generalized in the preposition, e.g. *pōstan* 'under the', *pōmien* 'after me'. Van Wijk had already demonstrated (1918, 51) that the preposition and prefix *na* 'on' was replaced by *no* under the influence of *po* in the Enchiridion. In a similar vein, I think that *en* and *esse* were the elliptic variants of the explicit forms *an* and *assa* which were ousted after the Prussian accent shift.

We must now reconsider the vocalism of *as* 'I' and *asmai* 'am'. The pronoun *as* is found twice in the First Catechism *as drowe* and 44x in the Enchiridion, while the form *es* occurs twice in the Second Catechism *es drowy* only. The form is evidently *as* (with secondary fronting in the Second Catechism, cf. Trautmann 1910, 101) from **es* with shortening from **ēź*, Slovene *jàz* < **h₁eĝHom* (Winter's law), Sanskrit *ahám*. The verb 'to be' is written 6x *as-* in the First Catechism, 4x *æs-*, 1x *est*, 1x *hest* in the Second Catechism, and 156x *as-*, 2x *es-* in the Enchiridion. While the phrase *Tāwa Noūson kas tu essei Endangon* may have been taken from the Second Catechism *Thawe nouson kas thou æsse æn-dengon*, the 2nd pl. form *estei*, which has an unexpected imperative ending (cf. Kortlandt 1988, 92), can only be an error for *astai*. Note that this form is preceded by *empijrint* and followed by *is Crixtiani(skun)*, which may have contributed to the apparent fronting. The stem of the verb is clearly *as-* (with secondary fronting in the Second Catechism) from Balto-Slavic **es-* < **h₁es-*.

The prefixes *ep-* and *et-* must be identified with East Baltic *ap-*, *at-*, Slavic *ob-*, *ot-*, not with Greek *epí*, *éti*. It follows that the initial *e-* must be due to analogy. I think that the model was provided by the variants *en*, *esse* beside *an*, *assa* discussed above. In the First Catechism we find *attskiwuns, atskisenna, atwerpeis, atwerpimay, attwerpsannan, etwerpsannan*, and in the Second Catechism 6x *et-* in the corresponding passages. In the Enchiridion we find

116x *et*-, but *at*- in the infinitive *attrātwei* 'antworten' and 7x in the formulaic plural imperative form *attrāiti*. All of these instances are found in the last few pages of the text (Trautmann 1910, 77–79), while we find 42x the singular imperative *ettrais* and 1x the indicative *ettrāi* in the earlier parts (Trautmann 1910, 23–49 and 63, respectively). Besides, the Enchiridion offers 2x *ab*- (33%), 4x *eb-/ep*- in deverbal nouns, 1x *ab*- (14%), 6x *eb*- in participles, and no *ab*- (0%), 5x *eb-/ep*- in verb forms. This supports the idea that the front vowel was first introduced in the finite verb and then spread through the lexicon.

I conclude that the distribution of initial *a*- and *e*- in Prussian is much more regular than is usually assumed.

Cobetstraat 24   Frederik Kortlandt
2313 KC L e i d e n
Holland
[fkort@mail.dsl.nl]

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