OLD PRUSSIAN *kērdan* 'TIME'

The Old Prussian word *kērdan* (kerdan) 'time' occurs four times in the Enchiridion. Excerpts with each of these occurrences are repeated below:

53,14. Wissas Ackis giēidi notien Rikijs bhe tu dāse stēimans tennēison landan prei swaiain *kērdan* — Aller Augen warten auff dich HErr und du gibst jnen jre Speyse zu seiner zeit. 'All eyes wait upon thee, Lord, and thou givest them their food on time.'

61,16. Stessepaggan laustineiti wans teinu pōstan warewingin rānkan Deiwas kai tans wans erlāngi prei swaiain *kērdan* — So demūtiget euch nun unter die gewaltige Handt Gottes das er euch erhōht zu zeiner zeit. 'So humble yourself now under the mighty hand of god so that he may raise you in his time'.

The Catechism here refers to Peter 1:5 where the Greek expression is ἐν κατο ο ἐν τῷ τελεσθέντι 'in the last time'.

63,3. ickai aintots ēnstan turīlai preiwaitiat stas segē stan en *kērdan* adder tussīse pandiseu — Und hat jemandxs darein zu sprechen der thue es bey zeit oder schweige darnach. 'And if any one has anything to say, let him do it at this time or forever remain silent'.

69,25. Ėnstan *kērdan* perpīdai tennei malnijkikans prei Jesum — Zu der zeit brachten sie Kindlein zu JHESU. 'At that time they brought children unto Jesus'.

The word is usually connected with Lithuanian *keřdžius* 'shepherd, herdsman', OCS črēda 'order, series; herd', Russian čeradā 'series', Polish trzoda 'flock, herd', etc.¹

One does, however, occasionally notice vacillations of e and a after k in Old Prussian. Thus we find both kelsāi and kaltzā 'sounds, purports' and key as well as kai 'as'. One also notes the occasional substitution of orthographic voiced consonants for the voiceless counterparts, e. g. OP boklusmans 'obedient', cf. OP po-

klusman, Lithuanian paklusnūs ‘id.’. Likewise the Elbing Vocabulary has agins ‘eyes’ (cf. Lithuanian akis) and accodis ‘vent’ (=Lithuanian akūtis).

The lack of aspiration in the Baltic voiceless stops may have led the Germanic speakers to interpret them as voiced on occasion. Or perhaps the lack of voicing in the voiceless stops was sometimes mistakenly equated with the delayed voicing typical of the Germanic voiced stops.

One might then suppose that kērdan is to be phonemicized as |kārtan|. Such a phonemicization would then fit exactly with Lithuanian kaštas in the sense of ‘occurrence, event’. In the German original it would appear that Zeit here could be understood as a ‘point of time’ rather than ‘an extent of time’. From the semantic point of view an etymological connection of kērdan (kerdan) with Lithuanian kaštas ‘time’ seems preferable to the traditional etymology which connects the word with Lithuanian kešūdis ‘shepherd’. The stress of the initial element of the OP diphthong agrees also with the Lithuanian circumflex.

The Pennsylvania State University

---

2 William R. Schmalstieg, —Baltistica, V(2), 1969, 166.