BORUSSICA 5: ROOT VOCALISM IN PRUSSIAN INFINITIVES

Pruss. lem̆t- / limt-

The form. There is different root vocalism in the infinitive form of the word „to break“ in 151 (lemb̆twe) in comparison with the K II (limtwei 517) and in the K III (limtwei 3117). J. Endzelins explains e in lembtwe as „transferred out of the present form“ (APG § 6c). It is not clear why Endzelins treats the optative-conditional form lemlai III 5114 as that of the present stem, since it is infinitive-formed as turélilmai III 11323 or pereilai III 4918. Besides, only those zero-grade roots have the e-grade present in Baltic which have the zero-grade in the preterite (cf. Lith. gêma – gîmê, gêna – gînê). However, the preterite form of lembtwe has the lengthened root-vocalism as seen in timaults III 753 thus pointing to the Baltic type with the high pitch in the root (cf. the same verb lêmti in Lithuanian: praes. lêmia – præt. lêmê). This fact confirms the idea that tautosyllabic units with the high pitch on their second component might have had occasionally reduced vocalism of the atoned first component (cf. menentwei I 57 [menorîtyei]), since the writings lembtwei, lemlai render the infinitive stem lim- with the high pitch on m and with the reduced i: [lorîtyei], [lorîlai].

The meaning. In the East-Baltic languages tautosyllabic roots with the lengthened grade in the preterite are usually transitive, often having intransitive counterparts with the zero-grade vocalism – cf. the Lithuanian high-pitch verb trans. skêli „to split smth.“, praes. skêlia – præt. skêlê, but skêli „to become split“, praes. skîla < skîla, præt. skîlo. The analysis shows, however, the secondary origin of such counterparts: the regular counterpart kêlî „to raise“, kêlia, kêlê - kêlî „to rise“, kûla, kûlo corresponds to the non-diathetic and more archaical (labile) meaning of the single kêlî „1. to raise; 2. to rise“. There are also verbs in Lithuanian which have full-grade vocalism and are always labile, e. g. virtû „to boil“, vërdâ, vîrê; sveîti „to weigh“, sveîria, sveîrê - it is interesting that such verbs are labile also in English which is very rich in labile verbs. Georgy Klimov (1983, 1977) considers the existence of the
verbal lability in a language to be a relic of the pre-accusative „active“ (I call it fientive) grammatical structure and this corresponds to the classical conclusion of the Indo-European linguistics about the subordinate character of the category of transitivity in Indo-European as well as of the category of tense which was subjected to that of the „Aktionsart“ kind of „action“ (cf. Meillet 5.1, Krahe II § 43 A 3). The same vowel-gradation, which expresses transitivity / intransitivity in Baltic, is destined to express tense in Germanic though both cases are the result of the independent development of the original common Balto-Germanic verbal system with no tense and no transitivity. Labile verbs are relics of that system. Comparing such Germanic verbal forms as Goth. steiga „I ascend“ – staig „I ascended“ – stigum „we ascended“ with Baltic Lith. steigia „sets up“ – staigiasi „is in a hurry“ – Lith. stigo(me) „we lacked smth. “ reveals „the first class of the Germanic vowel-gradation“ in the Baltic verb. Here the cited Baltic verbs, while intransitive, do not show any connection between the full – zero vowel-gradation and the transitivity / intransitivity: they are manifestations of some „Aktionsart“ differences of the Baltic-Germanic epoch. These differences are seen in Germanic in forming tense-number oppositions and in Baltic (probably through the temporal stage as well – cf. Karaliūnas 1987 98, 99) in forming transitivity / intransitivity oppositions as smeigia „sticks smth. into smth. “ – smīgo „sticked for itself in smth. “ with the newly constructed nasal present (cf. Germanic praeterito-presentia with the newly constructed preterite) smiņga „sticks for itself in smth. “. These comparisons show the former single paradigm of the labile Lith. kėlia „raises, ascends“ – intrans. kilo „rose“ with the newly constructed present kyla „rises“ (cf. non-nasal correspondences Engl. trans. raise – intrans. rise, OHG. trans. leiten – O.Sax. intrans. līthan showing that a Baltic-like development has facultatively taken place in Germanic, too).

The form again. Quite different ways of forming Lithuanian, Latvian and Prussian infinitives [Lith. -tie(s) < „dat./loc." i-stem *-tei, Latv. -t (not as with the generalized -ies, cf. Lith. steigis but Latv. stēgīes) < „dat./loc." i-stem *-ti, Pruss. „dat./loc." u-stem -twai < *-ty-ei and -tun < supine *-tu-n] show absence of the Common-Baltic infinitive. Therefore, it is not excluded that in some Baltic dialect the paradigm of the above-mentioned type *kelia – *kilo developed its infinitive in accordance with the zero-grade form and that such infinitive was being used with a full-grade form after the latter had begun to be used independently with its own paradigm *kelia – *kėlė. This seems to be the situation with the Prussian infinitive limtwei beside the preterite limauts < lim- < *lēm-.
The preterite passive participle form *palletan I 1319 „shed“ corresponds to *praliten II 1319 in the II Catechism and to *pralieten III 7511, proleiton III 7517, proleiton III 773 in the III Catechism. It is quite natural to expect the same grammatical form of the same verb in all the instances. V. Mažiulis supposes the root *lī- with the regular reflection of the long ĭ as of the diphthongized ĭi in the III Catechism. Therefore, he offers the single possible explanation for this instance in the I 1319 as if the accent were retracted on the prefix pa- in *palletan, the root vowel ĭ being regularly shortened ĭ in the unstressed position and then rendered as ĭ in a way so typical especially for the I and the II Catechisms (PKP II 298ı 166). This opinion may be backed by the Latv. lièt with the „broken“ pitch so typical for the Baltic movable accentual paradigm. Nevertheless, at the same place in the II Catechism one has *praliten, but not *pralietan expected in the instance of the supposed retraction (it is hardly creditable the accent could be retracted on the prefix pa-, but not on the prefix pra-). Even the „synharmonism“ ĭ – e in *praliten (cp. with the *palletan) shows the accent being on the root vowel which then must be undoubted ĭ < ĭ ĭ thus well corresponding to the e [ê] in the I Catechism. If so, the root can be only *leī- and not *lī-. Thus ĭ of the III Catechism demonstrates the real root diphthong and not the diphthongized ĭ. How could then the forms *palletan I 1319, *praliten II 1319 with the root vocalism ĭ, ĭ < ĭ ĭ appear?

I think, it is due to the late morphonemic alternation -e/-ei (unstressed), -ē/-ēi (stressed). The latter came into being because of the assimilation of ĭ in the diphthongs ĭi, ĭi with the circumflexal length on their first component: *palapsaui I 51 [palsâ|--] < *palâpsâ-- < *palâpsâï, semo E 15 [zêmô] < *zêmô < *zêimô – the same must have taken place in the case of the metatonical circumflex in stems with dropped endings *-ēja, *-ēja > *-ēi > -ē, -ēi (stressed), -e, -ei (unstressed) with the occasional generalization on the cases with the original high pitch in ultima (if not metatonized as in Lithuanian garbë – cf. the super-corrected nom. sing. fem. giwei III 7521 „life“ with the shortened ĭ pointing to the stressed termination: giwëi = giwë – for the oxytone form cf. Latvian dzīve with the broken pitch on ĭ) – cf. also the Prussian *turrei III 6316 < *-ēja having nothing in common with the parallel derivate (cf. Lith. dūlēja / dūlyja) turii III 2713 < *turija (the Prussian *turi is not any correspondence to the Lithuanian form turę, since short vowels could not be preserved at the end of the word; the only correspondence to the Lithuanian turę in
Prussian is the form *tur of the First Catechism; the alternation of the unstressed (short) -a/-ai, -e/-ei seems to be the latest result of the accent retraction, analogy etc. (cf. etwerpe / etwiërpe, swintina / swintinai III etc.). The sonantal verb pr. *lei- must have had the present form *lei-i-a corresponding to the Lith. lēja, lėja which after the reduction of the short final vowels must have produced the form *lei of the 3rd person singular in Prussian of the Catechisms.

Thus the Prussian participles palleian I 1319, praliten II 1319 have the root vocalism ė, ĩ < ė because they were constructed according to an innovative infinitive *palēwei (I suppose the high pitch in accordance with Lith. lējo, lėjo < *lēi-) corresponding to the shorter variant (without -i) of the present-preterite form *palēi / *palē.

References

*Endzelin J., 1944, Altpreußische Grammatik [APG], Riga: Latvju grāmata.
*Krubas ‘Prūsai’.

1 As for the forms of the 3rd and the 1st persons pracs. billē III 619, billē III 5912, billā III 378, billa III 1034 = pract. billai III 1059, billa III 1019, billē III 9314, they correspond to the 1st pl. pracs. billēmai, the inf. billēwei, the præt. part. act. billūns, the præt. part. pass. billitone in the Third Catechism. The latter three forms, supported with the forms billē and billēmai, point to the eja-stem with the infinitive *bilēwei > billēwei and with the present form *bilēja (after the reduction of the short endings) > *bilēi = bilē. These are also the forms of the preterite, the same reduction having taken place also in the preterite in the suffixal as well as in the root thematic verbs because of the coincidence of the temporal endings. The long ending of the 1st person singular in the present *-ē > *-ā > *-a coincided with the 3rd person preterite *-ā > -a as well as with the 3rd person present of the ā-stems *-ā > -a on the one hand, and it was generalized in the 3rd and then the 2nd person in the present on the other hand with the subsequent generalization of the -a also in the 2nd and the 1st persons in the preterite. The relic of the temporally different verbal forms remained represented only by the infixed and similar verbs with the strongly different temporal stems (those stems which differed from each other in the root vocalism began to level it) but this could not stop the spread of the participal temporal forms outsting the definite personal forms. As for the verb billēwei, its forms recorded with the letter ą point to the single fact that the Prussian ē was palatal since the neutralization of ā and ė after the palatal consonants took place in Prussian similarly to Lithuanian. Such forms do not point to any ā-stem verb *bilēwei in Prussian similar to Lithuanian bylēti. The single recorded verb is *bilēwei, clearly represented also in the plural billēmai III 13115 [bilēmai = bilēmai (cf. the writing waitiantins III 87121)] < *bilējamai. The occasional form billi III 10723 is the ija-stem (Klusiš 40) counterpart as in Lithuanian dūlēja / dalyja.