LITH. úostas, LATV. uōsta ‘PORT, HARBOUR’

0. The initial diphthong of Lith. úostas, Latv. uōsta (uōsta) ‘port, harbour, (dial., arch.) mouth of a river’ is etymologically ambiguous. It may be regarded either as a direct reflex of *ǭ (*eh₃, *oH) or as a special development of *au. As a consequence, this etymon has been linked to Skt. ās- n. ‘mouth, face’, Lat. ās ‘id.’, Hitt. aiš ‘mouth’, OIr. ṥōs ‘mouth of a river’, as well as to Skt. ṭōṣṭha- m. ‘(upper) lip’, OCS usta (NApl. n.) ‘mouth’, OPr. aust- (Elb. Voc.) ‘id.’. This does not necessarily mean that we are facing a straightforward choice between two completely different etymologies. An attempt to trace all forms to a single PIE etymon was made by Pukornt (1959, 784–785), Fraenkel (I 26–27) and others, while the Encyclopedia of Indo-European culture suggests that the East Baltic forms under discussion and Lat. āstium ‘entrance, door, mouth of a river’ represent a contamination of the two etyma mentioned above (EIEC 387). The aim of this paper is to clarify this confusing situation by taking into account the accentological aspects of the Balto-Slavic evidence.

1. Hitt. aiš n. ‘mouth’, Gsg. īššāš, probably continues a neuter s-stem. Eichner (1973, 84) suggested an original paradigm *h₃ōh₁-es₁, *h₃h₁-es₂, with loss of the initial laryngeal in the oblique cases. This analysis was in its essence accepted by various scholars, who have applied it to Skt. ās- n. (RV) ‘mouth, face’, Av. ah- n. ‘mouth’, Lat. ās n. ‘mouth, face’, Mlr. á² ‘mouth’ and OIr. ēs m. ‘mouth of a river’ (cf. KEWA I 181–182; Schrijver 1991, 55). Melchert (1994, 116), however, has argued that in view of the absence of initial h- the root must have been *h₁ēh₃- and that we should reconstruct *h₁ēh₃-s, *h₁h₃-ēs-. In Hittite, the suffix was subsequently replaced by *-is-. For our purposes the question which of these root structures underlies the pervasive o-vocalism reflected by the various languages is of no consequence, as any Balto-Slavic cognate with full grade of the root would be reflected as *HoH-(e)s.¹

¹ Judging by the other reconstructions in Eichner’s article, the NAsg. *h₃ōh₁-es has o-grade, not *h₃ōh₁- = *h₃ēh₁- (cf. Schrijver 1991, 55).

² In fer há ‘tooth’ (lit. ‘man of the mouth’).

³ My PIE reconstruction in the remaining sections will be *h₃eh₁-. This is not to be taken as a dismissal of Melchert’s reconstruction.
2. Skt. óṣṭha- m. ‘(upper) lip’ (RV+) and LAv. aoṣṭa(-ça), aoṣtra- NAdu. m. ‘both lips’ have mainly been connected with Balto-Slavic forms. Apart from the East Baltic material that will be discussed in the next section, these forms are OPr. austo (Elb. Voc.), austin Asg. (Ench.) ‘mouth’ and a number of Slavic forms with a root *us-, viz.

*ustonás, cf. OCS ustona, SCR. ùsna, Sln. ústna ‘lip’,
*uzda, cf. OCS uzda, Ru. uzdá, SCR. úzda, Čak. úzdá, OCz. úzda, Cz. uzda ‘bridle’.

Though Mayerhofer (KEWA I 282–283, but cf. EWAia I 133) qualifies the etymological relationship between the Indo-Iranian and the Slavic forms as “ungesichert”, I find it fairly convincing. I propose a provisional reconstruction **h₂eus-t- or **Hous-t-.

3. Lith. uöstas and Latv. uōsta (uōsta) ‘port, harbour’ are both attested with the meaning ‘mouth of a river, estuary’ in dialects and older texts (Büga 1921, 445 = 1959, 362; LKŽ XVII 496–497; ME IV 421–422). According to the LKŽ (l.c.), Lith. uöstas 1 has variants uōstas 2 and uöstā 2. Latv. uosta occurs with the accentuations uōsta, uōsta, uōsta² and uōsta² (ME l.c.). The two unambiguous variants are not limited to the area with a three-tone prosodic system. Thus, we find two accentual variants in West, Central as well as East Latvian. Though we must keep in mind that both uōsta² and uōsta² may reflect *uōsta, the Latvian situation most likely reflects a widespread variation between uōsta and uōsta. The masculine variant uōsts is only found with the accentuation uōsts in ME. On the whole, the East Baltic evidence clearly points to an acute root.

There are a few East Baltic forms with root vocalism au that have been connected with Lith. uöstas, Latv. uōsta. First, there is Lith. ausčioti⁴, Latv. aūšāt ‘gossip, talk nonsense’ < *aust-i-oti, which may be compared to OCS uśiti ‘persuade’. Here the original tone of the root cannot be established, as métagonie rude is common in this formation (cf. D e r k s e n 1996, 339–341). Then there is Latv. apaūši (apaū(k)ši) ‘halter’. This compound is sometimes thought to contain the root of aūss ‘ear’, but perhaps more convincing is the hypothesis that it contains *aust- ‘mouth’, cf. OCS uzda, Ru. uzdā, ‘bridle’ (E n d z e l i n 1929, where also aūšāt is mentioned). The broken tone of apaū(k)ši may be original or an instance of secondary broken tone (Y o u n g 2000, 201; D e r k s e n 2001, 84–85). The sustained tone of apaūši may continue either a sustained or a falling tone.

⁴ The verb in the Lithuanian expression āušytì (āušinti) bûrña ‘talk without necessity’ must probably be identified with āuštì, Latv. aūšt ‘cool’.
of Hirt’s law. If we start from a post-Hirt form *(H)óHus-to, the East Baltic accentual data could be explained along the lines sketched in section 4. It is the Slavic data that would present serious difficulties. PSl. *usta, i.e. *ūstā, belongs to accent paradigm (b), which is incompatible with a root *(H)oHu-.\(^5\)

In my dissertation (Derks en 1996, 96–128, 229–232) I have argued that there was a class of oxytone neuter o-stems which did not become mobile and survived into the separate branches of Balto-Slavic. These nouns are characterized by the fact that their first syllable is closed by an obstruent, which prevented the Balto-Slavic retraction of the ictus from final open syllables. In Slavic, the oxytone neuters eventually joined paradigm (b). Roots containing a laryngeal were affected by the loss of laryngeals in pretonic syllables. In East Baltic, the oxytone paradigm disappeared when the stress was retracted from final *-ā. This retraction produced metatony. In Lithuanian, the root stress and metatonical circumflex or acute were often generalized. In Latvian, we find a considerable number of metatonical falling and sustained tones. In both languages the original tone of the root is often restored.

The apparently non-acute root of PSl. *ūstā can only be attributed to the loss of laryngeals in pretonic syllables if we posit *(H)ouHs-tō because, as we have seen, *(H)oHus-tō would be affected by Hirt’s law. If we restrict ourselves to the accentual data, this reconstruction would also be possible for East Baltic. In that case the Lithuanian variants uōstas 2 and uostā 2 could be regular instances of metatony, even though in Latvian the retraction from *-ā has not left any traces. The problem is, of course, that the root vocalism *uo requires *oHu-. Furthermore, the development of stressed *oHu to *uo probably preceded the East Baltic retraction of the stress from *-ā and prevocalic *i. Here I must add that OPr. āustin, which in principle reflects a circumflex, is also in conflict with East Baltic *ūostas, -ā.

6. It appears that the etymology which derives Lith. ūostas and Latv. uōsta from a neuter *(H)oH-s-to is less problematic than the one advocating a connection with OCS usta and OPr. austō. A reconstruction involving a root containing u is possible but I see no convincing way to reconcile the Baltic and the Slavic (and Old Prussian) accentological evidence, which deprives such a reconstruction of its main objective. If *(H)oH-s-to is the correct proto-form, the closest relative of the East Baltic etymon under discussion would be Lat. ātium. Mallory and Adams (EIEC 387) suggest that the initial vowel of the Lithuanian, Latvian and Latin forms, which they ultimately derive from *h₂oust-eh₁- ‘mouth, lip’, has been influenced by *h₁u₁óh₁/os\(^6\)

---

\(^5\) There is also strong evidence for *ūzdā (b) and *ūstīje (b). In the case of *ustīna, the South Slavic forms rather point to (a), which may be secondary.

\(^6\) Since in *h₂eh₁-e/os the medial laryngeal would be lost, thus yielding a circumflex, the paradigm of the Balto-Slavic word must have contained forms with zero grade of the suffix.
‘mouth’. For East Baltic, the weak point of this in itself plausible theory seems to be the fact that the latter noun has not survived. There is a possibility, however, that Lith. uokas 1 ‘Öffnung, Hohlraum, Höhling in einer Baumstamm, Bienenstock, -körb, Nest der Waldbienen, Flugloch im Bienenstock’ (Fraenkel II 1165) derives from an s-stem meaning ‘mouth, opening’. Its Latvian counterpart uoksts ‘die Vertiefung zwischen den Hüften, die Scham, (uoksts) ‘die vom Specht für die Brut im Baum gemachte Höhling’ (ME IV 415) has a t-suffix. With respect to Lat. ōstium, it should be noted that the evidence of the Romance languages points to *ūstium. This is usually attributed to i-umlaut (Von Wartburg 1955, 439).

7. Theories which derive Skt. ás- ‘mouth’, óṣṭha- ‘lip’ and their respective cognates from a single PIE root usually involve loss of u after a lengthened grade. The relevant entry in Pokorny’s dictionary, for instance, is *ōus- : *əus- (1959, 784). These two shapes of the root are supposed to cover all forms. Even if we update Pokorny’s entry to *h₃ōh₁us- : *h₃oh₁us-⁹ (*h₃ēh₁us- : *h₃eh₁us-), the absence of u in Skt. ás-, Lat. ōs etc. cannot be accounted for. In a constellation *ČēHu, the medial laryngeal was possibly already lost in PIE times, but u would only drop before final m (cf. Schrijver 1991, 129). The closest approximation between the forms with and without u is *h₃eh₁-s-(t-) vs. *h₃euh₁-s-t. It is doubtful, however, whether such an analysis makes much sense. If we accept the fact that Lith. ūostas and PSI. *ūstå cannot be identified, it would be logical to derive *ūstå and its cognates from a root without a medial laryngeal, e.g. *h₃eus- or *h₂eus-. In the latter case we might even consider a connection with the word for ‘ear’ (cf. EIEC 387).

REFERENCES

Būga K., 1921, Priesagos -ūnas ir dvibalsio uo kilmė, – Lietuvos mokykla, 10/11, 420–457.
Derksen R., 1996, Metatony in Baltic, Amsterdam–Atlanta.

⁷ It is unclear if uoksts or uoksts ‘Spüriene, suchende Biene’ also belongs here. This word is perhaps more convincingly connected with uöst, uō(k)stīt (uōkstīt) ‘smell’.
⁸ The form austium (Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum I, 2219) is now generally regarded as an instance of hyperurbanization. Meyer-Lübke (1901, 357ff), however, proposed that the *ū found in Romance arose from an original *au in syntagms containing a preposition and was subsequently generalized.
⁹ Pokorny’s root shape *əus-, which he uses to account for Skt. óṣṭha- etc., has become obsolete.
Ilić-Svityč V. M., 1963, Imennaja akcentuacijja v baltijskom i slavjanskom. Sud’ba akcentuacionnyx paradigm, Moskva.
Melchert C., 1994, Anatolian Historical Phonology, Amsterdam–Atlanta.