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A NOTE ON THE SPREAD OF THE INTRANSITIVE SUFFIX -e IN BALTIC LANGUAGES

I have proposed the following explanation of the origin of the preterit of the following primary e/o-stem verbs: (Lith.) *nèšti* 'to carry', *vèžti* 'to transport', *vèsti* 'to lead', *mèsti* 'to throw', *dègti* 'to burn', *kèpti* 'to bake', *lèsti* 'to pick up by pecking' (see Schmalstieg, 1961, 93—97; 1966, 123—126; 1974, 160). The Slavic cognates to this category have the 2nd/3rd sg. thematic aorist, e.g., *nes-e, vez-e, ved-e, met-e, žьž-e, peče* (no cognate for *lèsti*). On the basis of the Slavic comparative evidence we may assume then an etymological Baltic thematic aorist for these verbs: (1st sg.) *neš-am*, (2nd sg.) *neš-e(s)*, (3rd) *neš-e(t)*. The thematic vowel was soon unified giving (1st sg.) *neš-em*, etc. At the same time there may have existed forms with the *-ā- preterit conjugated thus: (1st sg.) *pirk-ā-m*, (2nd sg.) *pirk--ā-(s)*, (3rd) *pirk-ā-(t)*. With the shortening of the long diphthongs the 1st sg. *pirk-ā-m* passed to *pirk-a-m*, establishing a contact between the short* -a- of the 1st sg. vs. the long *-ā- elsewhere in the conjugation. In other words *pirk-a-m : *pirk-ā-(t) :: *neš-e-m : x and x=*neš-ē-(t)*. According to a second and perhaps more likely variant of the same theory the thematic aorist forms adopted a unified vocalism throughout the conjugation and then the 1st sg. ending -u and the 2nd sg. ending -i were added giving (1st sg.) *neš-eu*, (2nd sg.) *neš-ei*, (3rd sg.) *neš-e(t)*. The same endings were added to verbs of the type *pirk-ā-m giving the attested conjugation: (1st sg.) *pirkaũ (< *pirk-ā-u)*, (2nd sg.) *pirkaĩ (< *pirk-ā-i)*, (3rd) *pir̃k-o (< *pirk-ā-[t])*. The proportion was then: *pirk-a-u (pirk-a-i) : neš-e-u (neš--e-i) :: *pirk-ā-(t) : x and x=*neš-ē-(t)*, thus contemporary Lithuanian, 1st sg. *neš-iaũ*, 2nd sg. *neš-eĩ*, 3rd person *nẽš-ė*.

Since the suffix *-j- marked transitivity in the Baltic verb one might suspect that it was transferred to the preterit giving originally the conjugation: (1st sg.) *gér-iau* 'I drank' *(< *-jāu)*, (2nd sg.) *gér-iai (< *-jāi)*, (3rd sg.) *gér-iā(t)* *(< *-jā[t])*. This conjugation was then assimilated to that *-ē (> Lith. -ė) conjugation which derived from the thematic aorist. Thus the attested *gér-iau, gér-ei, gér-ė*, etc. was created.

In that way proto-Baltic was provided with two preterits in *-ē which had rather different functions. The new preterit in *-ē (either from a lengthening of the old aorist ending in *-e or from the post-consonantal *jā which had been assimilated to the *-ē preterit) had a transitive meaning as opposed to the old preterit in *-ē which was intransitive (i.e., representing verbs with the Indo-European stative suffix known, e.g., in Slavic as Leskien's class IVB verbs such as *mьněti* 'to believe, to think', *bъděti* 'to be awake', etc.). In other words the transitive verbs of the type *nešē, *gērē had developed a new preterit which looked like the old preterit in the stative verbs *minē and *budē.

In order to remove this morphological homonymy when the new transitive preterit in *-ē was created, the old intransitive preterit in *-ē (corresponding to Slavic aorist type [1st sg.] *mьněxъ, [2nd/3rd sg.] *mьně) was hypercharacterized by the addition of the preterit suffix *-(j)ā. Thus Baltic *minējā (= Lith. *minėjo* 'mentioned') and *budējā (= Lith. *budėjo* 'was awake') replaced earlier Baltic *minē and *budē (corresponding to the Slavic aorists *mьně* and *bъdě* respectively). In other words as the preterit *neše (corresponding to Slavic *nese*) passed to *nešē the preterits *minē, *budē (corresponding to Slavic *mьně, bъdě*) passed to *minējā (= Lith. *minėjo*) and *budējā (= Lith. *budėjo*).

Now the Baltic preterit *tekē can be derived from *teke (corresponding to Slavic *teče*) just like *nešē can be derived from *neše. One may assume that the Baltic verbal root *mag- 'want, like' was cognate with the Slavic root *mog- 'to be able' which also had a 2nd/3rd aorist *može (< *moge)*. Just as we derive *tekē from *teke we can derive *magē from *mage. But differently from *nešē the preterits *tekē and *magē were further characterized by the addition of *jā giving them preterits similar to *minējā, viz. *tekējā (= Lith. *tekėjo*) and *magējā (= Lith. *magėjo*).

I suggest that the reason for the hypercharacterization of these preterits is that *tekěti* 'to run' and *magěti* 'to want, to like' (with a dative experiencer, e.g., *Mán* [dat.] *tõs kriáušes* [nom. pl.] *mãga...* 'I like those pears, those pears please me... [Lith. Acad. Dict., VII, 728]) are intransitive as opposed to the verbs *nèšti, vèžti, vèsti, mèsti, dègti, kèpti, lèsti* which can all be transitive. Originally I suspect that they may have had simple preterits *tekē and *magē just like the transitive verbs mentioned above, but they became hypercharacterized because of their intransitive meaning. Once the parallelism with the old intransitives became complete they also adopted the same infinitive ending giving the attested *tekěti* and *magěti*. Thus an entire class of thematic verbs with a second stem in *-ē became possible.

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