Marginalia to the Baltic verb

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Abstract

This paper discusses two separate aspects of the Lithuanian verbal system: I. the Lithuanian 2nd singular present verbal ending and II. the Lithuanian preterit. In part I the author suggests that the Lith. 2nd sg. ending -i (reflexive -esi) may derive from such forms as *es-si which with the simplification of the geminate passed to Lith. esi 'you (sg.) are'. A second possible origin is in (Lith.) 2nd conjugation verbs (minēti type) in which an etymological Indo-European *men-.d > East Baltic *men-.t > *min-.te > Lith. 2nd sg. mini. Other notions concerning the 2nd sg. ending are discussed. In part II the author reaffirms his notion that (at least for certain verbs, e.g., Lith. vėsti, nėsti) the preterit ending *-t (Lith. -t) is to be connected with the Slavic aorist, e.g., vede, veste. The objection that one might expect *-a since the Baltic present tense thematic vowel is -a is shown to be invalid. The unification of the present tense thematic vowel as -a was introduced to keep the *je/o and *je/o stems apart. At least at an early date the *-f-suffix was not a preterit formant.

I. THE LITHUANIAN 2ND SINGULAR PRESENT VERBAL ENDING

The Lith. 2nd sg. ending -i (reflexive -esi) may derive from the athe- matic verbs. Thus the 2nd sg. *es-si (with the expected simplification of the geminate) would have passed to Lith. esi 'you (sg.) are', and by reanalysis the ending would have appeared to be -i (Kazlauskas 1968:299).
I have proposed elsewhere (Schmalstieg 1980a:121-123) that the Indo-European suffix *-e- encountered in Slavic verbs of Leskien’s class IVB (inf. stem -eti) and Lithuanian 2nd conjugation verbs (inf. stem -eti) is the result of an internal Indo-European monophthongization of the sequence *-oy- in pre-consonantal position. In pre-vocalic position this same diphthong was not monophthongized; in word final position the presence or the absence of the monophthongization was originally conditioned by sentence sandhi. If the following word began with a consonant the monophthongization took place. If the following word began with a vowel the monophthongization did not take place. Thus a word final *-oy- could be actualized as *-e- (if the following word began with a consonant) or could remain as *-oy- (if the following word began with a vowel).

I propose then that related to an infinitive *mŋ-o-y-tey > *mŋ-ē-tey (> Lith. mėti “to mention”) there existed the 2nd sg. and 3rd pres. *mŋ-ōy, not monophthongized preceding a word beginning with a vowel (similarly to the infinitive). I propose further that *mŋ-ōy was generalized and passed to East Baltic *mŋ-ē” with the specific East Baltic (NOT Indo-European) monophthongization of diphthongs and then it passed to *mēn- with the specific East Baltic diphthongization. This form is represented by Lith. 2nd sg. mēn and 3rd pres. mēn- (with loss of the final *-e). In verbs of this class the final -i of the Lith. 2nd sg., which was originally part of the suffix, came to be identified with the -i deriving from the athematic verbal ending -si (as in *es-si). The 2nd sg. pres. of this class of verbs may have had a zero ending *-min-o-y such that the 2nd and 3rd pres. were distinguished only by accentuation.

On the other hand if for 2nd conjugation (mineti type) verbs the primary 2nd sg. ending -si had been added later to the original *mŋ-ōy generalized from the etymological pre-vocalic position, then the verb would have had the 2nd sg. present form */(mŋ)-o-si (cf. Goth. mēn-si) finally passing to */(mēn)-i-esi which could have had the reflexive */(mēn)-i-esi. The simplification of the word final sequence */-esi could have led to the creation of */(mēn)-esi which was then reinterpreted as the reflexive, i.e., the form actually existing in contemporary Lithuanian. Perhaps then the non-reflexive form min-i arose as a back formation on this new reflexive.

This class of verbs could have furnished the model according to which the old 2nd sg. athematic dedi ‘you put’ developed the reflexive form dedėsi (with restoration of the root final -d on the basis of the 1st sg. dedi, because an original *ded-si would have developed into *desi). For another possible explanation see Schmalstieg (1974:150).

It is clear that the Lithuanian 3rd person finite verbal form presents a stem on which all the forms of the dual and plural are based. This feature then explains the dual (1st) minēs, (2nd) minēta and plural (1st) minē, (2nd) minēta all of which are based on the 3rd person present mini. The present conjugation of this verb must be analogical since it shows zero-grade vocalism both in the root and the suffix.

Stang (1942:226) notes that in North-West Samogitian the 2nd sg. ending of the thematic verbs and the i-verbs ends in -i rather than -е which one of the reflexive ends would expect phonetically from an etymological final -i. The reflexive ends in -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is. According to Stang this shows that the etymological ending here was -is.

Old Latvian 2nd sg. pres. forms such as esig ‘you are’, dzirdi ‘do you hear’ (written esieg and dzirdi respectively) which have the added particle -g (cf. Lith. gi) if they do indeed have a long vowel as Endzelins (1951: para. 587) suggests, have this by analogy with other forms of the verb. The Latvian particle -g, with its Lithuanian counterparts -i, -gi functions as an enclitic just like the reflexive particle, thus, e.g., Lith. 2nd sg. pres. este-gu ‘you (sg.) are’ (Endzelins 1971:para. 329). Latvian also had various kinds of lengthened vowels in the reflexive depending upon various analogical remodeling processes, thus Endzelins (1951:para. 598) quotes 1st pl. reflexive endings -miēs, -mēs, -mēs, and (1951:para. 705) -mēs; (1951:para. 599) 2nd pl. reflexive endings -tiēs, -tēs, -tēs, and (1951:para. 708) -tēs. In my view all of these derive from some kind of inner Baltic or Latvian analogical lengthening.

Toporov (1961:62 and 1962:50) wrote that the East Baltic 2nd sg. ending
could be derived from *-ëi, cf. Old Irish beri < *berëi. In this case the Slavic thematic inflection could be a result of a contamination of the etymological thematic inflection with the ending with *-ëi. Similarly the Old Prussian endings -sei, -sai might be the result of a contamination. Rejecting such an extreme formulation Stang (1966:421) quoted the ending -s (in his view a secondary ending) in immais ‘take’ (an imperative derived from an old optative). Kazlauskas (1968:297) wrote that linguists who consider that the Old Prussian 2nd sg. ending -sei developed because of the influence of the 2nd sg. of the thematic verbs have not taken into consideration the fact that in Old Prussian there are no thematic verbal forms like those in -ei in Lithuanian. Such forms as Old Prussian tālninai ‘increase’, sātinei ‘satisfy’ and turei ‘have’ are rather 3rd person forms used in the meaning of the 2nd person, a phenomenon which most likely developed in translation because of the influence of the original. Kazlauskas agrees with Stang that the only inherited thematic 2nd sg. form is *givasi ‘you live’, givassi (2x), giwasi (1x), since in Kazlauskas’ view the forms seggēsi ‘do’ and draußē ‘believe’ may have been created on the basis of the 3rd person. Not believing very strongly in the accuracy of the Old Prussian orthography, I personally would phonemize these two forms as /seg̩ësi/ and /draussi/ respectively, thereby bringing them into line with the other 2nd singular endings mentioned above. Kazlauskas (1968:297) finds the ending -si also in the verb quotilaitai ‘that you might want’ (apparently a 2nd sg. optative, according to Trautmann 1910:413).

Ivanov (1981:45-46) quotes the entire phrases in which the verbs giwasi, etc. occur: (kai) ... ily giwasi nosmeni (auff das) du lange lebest im land, (so that) you live a long time on the earth’ (Trautmann 1910:25); (kai) ... ily giwasi nosmeni (Das) ... lange lebest auff Erden’ (Trautmann 1910:59); Sen Alkinisqua turei tou tien nostan pomaits kutilginai giwassi ‘mit kummer solist dicht daaruff nehten dein lebemand, with sorrow will you nourish yourself on it as long as you live’ (Trautmann 1910:65). Ivanov writes further (1981:46) that the grammatical interpretation of these passages remains debatable and refers to Trautmann (1910:339) who considered the first two occurrences to be 2nd sg. conjunctives and to Endzelins (1943:104) who had suggested that the forms might reflect a reflexive form similar to Russian živešča.

In Old Prussian one encounters the 2nd sg. ending -sai (8x), -sėi (10x), -se (7x), -si (8x) (Kazlauskas 1968:296). One might connect the Old Prussian forms -sai (and perhaps its orthographic variant -sei) with the 2nd sg. middle endings represented by Gk. -sai and Old Indic -se, but more likely, if the orthographic evidence means anything, it reflects the use of the Baltic particle -ei added to final -s.

Hilmarsdottir (1978:23) suggests that a 2nd sg. reflexive *vedes-si would have passed to *vede-si leading to its identity with the 3rd singular. A reanalysis of the 2nd sg. *vedesi led to a new 2nd sg. *vede also identical with the 3rd singular. The 2nd sg. *vede was reinforced with the -i derived in athematic verbs such as es-i and a 2nd sg. *vedei was created which passed to *vedē > *vedje > *vedi. The reason for the creation of a new 2nd singular is according to Hilmarsdottir: “Identity of 2nd and 3rd person singular is usually not tolerated in any language.” This statement is rather surprising in view of the many counter-examples. Cf. the aorist tense forms represented in those Slavic languages which have retained that tense, e.g., in Bulgarian: 1st sg. pisach ‘I wrote’, 2nd sg. pisa, 3rd sg. pis, 1st pl. pisachme, 2nd pl. pisachte, 3rd pl. pisacha. Note modern French 1st sg. je suis, 2nd sg. tu es = /ɛ/, 3rd sg. il est = /ɛ/, 1st pl. nous sommes, 2nd pl. vous êtes, 3rd pl. ils sont. In the French and the Bulgarian paradigms the only two similar forms are indeed the 2nd and 3rd singular. Cf. also the Hittite preterit conjugation where the 2nd and 3rd sg. often coincide: 2nd/3rd sg. da-a-ás ‘took’ and the Old Indic 2nd/3rd sg. prejective bhāya (Toporov 1962:69).

Stang (1970:144) poissed a conjugation 1. *mēgstua, 2. *mēgstai, 3. mēgsta. The 2nd sg. form is assumed because of one occurrence of the form mēgstais, one occurrence of mekstais and four occurrences of mekstaisi, all of which are reflexive forms encountered in Bible translations by Brekšinas. Perhaps the 2nd sg. reflexive rupinasai ‘you (sg.) take care of’, also occurring in Brekšinas’ works, could also be considered as supporting evidence. The sentence in which this verb occurs is: be taves ner ne wieno Dievo, kuris rupinasai wissi ‘except for thee there is no God who (i.e., you) takes care of everything.’ The verb rupinasai, however, could be a perfectly regular preterit tense. Although Brekšinas probably knew Lithuanian very well, he may not have been a native speaker of Lithuanian. In fact Falkenhahn (1941:201) wrote that the elementary grammatical mistakes made by Brekšinas show that it was not his native language. Falkenhahn suggests further that Brekšinas spoke German at home and Old Prussian with relatives on his mother’s side.

My colleague Prof. Simas Karaliūnas of the Lithuanian Academy of Scı-
ences has suggested to me that the forms in question contain the emphatic particle ai, a particle which is very common in Lithuanian dialects. The particle -air is added directly to the iterative preterite suffix -dav in some dialects and there is no agreement with the subject in person or number. Note the following Lithuanian dialect examples: mūdu su viru dainodavai 'my husband and I used to sing'; tōks virūks nēčka būdavai 'I never used to be such a fellow' (Grinaveckienė 1962:164; Specht 1935:196; Schmalstieg 1980b:85).

II. THE LITHUANIAN PRETERIT

Stang (1966:379) has proposed that preterits of the type *degu 'burned', *kēpā 'baked', *tekal 'ran' replaced the thematic aorists *dege, *kepe, *tekē. Beside *degū, *kēpā which were intransitive there existed the transitive *dege, *kēpē which replaced the sigmatic aorist for dėgti and kėpti.

I have suggested, however, a somewhat different view of the origin of the preterit of certain primary *e/-em verbs among which are (Lith.) nėšti 'to carry', vėšti 'to transport', vėšti 'to lead', mėšti 'to throw', dėgti 'to burn', kėpti 'to bake', lėsti 'to pick up by pecking'. The 3rd sg. aorist forms of the Slavic cognates of these verbs are respectively nes-e, nez-e, ved-e, met-e, šne-e, pe-e (no cognate for lėsti). For such verbs I propose then an early Baltic aorist: (1st sg.) *nēs-ām, (2nd sg.) *nēs-e(s), (3rd) *nēs-e(t). The unification of the aorist thematic vowel gave then (1st sg.) nēs-em, etc. These old thematic aorists existed side by side with the early *

*-air preterit: (1st sg.) *pirk-ā, (2nd sg.) *pirk-ā(s), (3rd) *pirk-āt. When the long diphthongs were shortened the 1st sg. *pirk-ā-m > *pirk-ā-m, such that short *

-a- of the 1st sg. contrasted with *e- elsewhere in the conjugation. Therefore *pirk-ā-m: *pirk-ā-t := *nēs-e-m := x and x = *nēs-e-t. The unification of the quality of the thematic vowel as *e

in *nēs-em was also a result of the analogy with *pirk-ā-m: *pirk-ā-t which maintained the same vowel quality (but NOT quantity) throughout the conjugation.

My second variant of this theory proposes also a unification of the quality of the thematic aorist vowel, again a result of the analogy with *pirk-ā-m: *pirk-ā-t. When the 1st sg. ending -u and the 2nd sg. ending -i were added the result was: (1st sg.) *nēs-ēu, (2nd sg.) *nēs-ēi, (3rd sg.) *nēs-ē(t). When the 1st sg. ending -u and the 2nd sg. ending -i were used with verbs of the type *pirk-ā-m the resulting conjugation was: (1st sg.) pirkau (< *pirk-ā-u), (2nd sg.) pirkai (< *pirk-ā-i), (3rd) pirk-o (< *pirk-ā-t). The proportion was then: pirk-a-u (pirk-ā-i): nēs-e-u (nēs-e-i) := *pirk-ā-t : z and x = *nēs-e-t, thus contemporary Lithuanian, 1st sg. nēs-iau, 2nd sg. nēs-ē, 3rd person nēs-ē (Schmalstieg 1961; 1965; 1974:160).

Michelini (1977:254) writes that the * of the iterative-causative presents was extended at an early date to a position before the suffixes used to form other tenses, giving a preterit stem *jā-, e.g., for the Lith. matjūti type verb. There was then a preterit formation for verbs of the type of Lith. (mat)-jūti 'to see', e.g., sg. (1) *maciu < *mat-jāu, (2) mat-ē < *mat-jāi, (3) *mat-jā, pl. (1) *mat-jāme, (2) *mat-jāte, etc. One would have expected the Lith. 3rd pret. to be *macō, pl. (1) *macome, (2) *macote, but because of the identity of the formation of the 1st person mac-i and nēs-ē and perhaps the 2nd person mat-ēi and nēs-ēi, the preterit of verbs of the (mat)-jūti type was fully assimilated to that of the nēs-ē type, giving the attested maciu, matē, matēme, matēte.

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

Michelini (1990:845), objecting to my theory of the origin of the Baltic preterit in *-ē-, writes that it is difficult to prove why the short vowel of the (themetic aorist) suffix could be lengthened and why the lengthening of the thematic vowel did not give ā (Lith. o) which would be expected on the basis of the ā in the thematic present. The lengthening of the thematic aorist suffix would seem to be no problem; as I have explained above, it took place when the old *-ā- suffix was shortened in the 1st sg. either as *-ām to *-am or as *-āu to *-au. To this day this 1st sg. preterit form nēs-ēi 'I carried' is of phonologically ambiguous origin, since phonologically it could derive from *nēs-em just as well as from *nēs-ēu. Similarly the Lith. 2nd sg. nēs-ēi could derive phonologically from *nēs-ē just as well as from *nēs-ēi.

The neutralization of the contrast between *(C)ja and *(C)a in the present tense led to the introduction of the thematic vowel —a— throughout the paradigm, so that there could be a contrast between *(C)ja and *(C)a, thus Lith. ruōšia 'prepares' vs. nēša 'carries'. But originally there was
no *-je/-o- stem thematic aorist contrasting with the etymological *-e/o-
thetic aorist so the original aorist *-e did not have to be replaced by *-a
as was necessary in the present tense. The generalization of the *-e-
thematic vocalism in the thematic aorist provided an additional means for some
classes of verbs to distinguish between the preterit and the present in the 1st
present neš-a-va, neš-a-me.

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