Frederik KORTLANDT
Universiteit Leiden

PARAGOGIC -*e* IN THE OLD PRUSSIAN EPIGRAM

Elsewhere I have proposed the following interpretation of the Old Prussian epigram (K o r t l a n d t, 1998, 115):

Kayle rekyse. thoneaw labonache thewelyse.
Eg. koyte. poyte. nykoyte. pe ^ nega doyte.
Kaile rikīs, tu ni jau labōnas tēwelis,
Ik kwai tu pōtwei, ni kwai tu penega dōtwei.
Hello, mister! you are no longer a nice little uncle!
If you want to drink, you do not want to give money!

I argued that the text was written by a German scribe who noted down the words of a Prussian colleague. This view was based on the following arguments:

(1) Case forms seem to be mixed up in **Kayle rekyse.**

(2) The final -*e* of **rekyse, labonache, thewelyse** suggests that the scribe was not a native speaker and may have had an optional -*e* in his own speech.

(3) The spelling -*ch*- in **labonache** also points to a scribe who was not a native speaker and perceived the Prussian *-*s* as very different from his own.

(4) The vocalism of **poyte** and **doyte** seems to reflect a form of umlaut.

(5) The vowel reduction in the final syllables of **koyte, nykoyte, poyte, doyte** is also unexpected for a native speaker.

(6) The interpunction of the second line suggests that it was dictated to the scribe. Here I want to pursue the second argument, which may be supported by the text **Jesus ich leid** for *leide* in the accompanying drawing.

The apocope of Middle High German -*e* has been the subject of a detailed study by Kaj L i n d g r e n (1953). It turns out that the apocope can be dated to the 13th century in Bavarian, to the 14th century in East Franconian and Swabian, to the second half of the 14th century in Alemannic and Bohemian, and to the first half of the 15th century in Rhine Franconian (L i n d g r e n, 1953, 178). It affected Middle Franconian at the end of the 15th century and did not reach East Middle German at all. The spread of the apocope was slow in the beginning and became faster in the course of time until it had fully affected Upper German and East Franconian in the first half of the 15th century, but the development never reached its completion in Bohemian and Rhine Franconian. It is largely contemporaneous with the Middle

High German diphthongization of long high vowels (L i n d g r e n, 1953, 208) and with the early expansion of Habsburg power. Perhaps the most interesting feature of the apocope is that while it seems to have petered out along the Rhine toward the northwest, we find a sharp boundary between the East Franconian area, where the process was early, and the East Middle German area (Thuringia, Upper Saxony, Silesia), which was not affected at all, probably because the latter was Slavic territory at the time. Since the Old Prussian epigram is part of a text which „can be placed in a group of codices that emanated from the University of Prague in the last third of the 14th c." (S c h m a l s t i e g, 1976, 90), it must have originated in an environment where some (Bavarian) speakers of German apocopated consistently and other (East Middle German) speakers did not apocopate at all. One can easily imagine that the absence of apocope served as a shibboleth to distinguish northern from southern speakers here.

Paragogic -e in Middle High German is „selten sowohl vor dem eigentlichen Einsetzen der Apokope als nach ihrer vollständigen Durchführung; nur in der Zeit, wo der Gebrauch des -e auch sonst schwankt, erscheint es in grösserer Zahl. Auch unter den einzelnen Denkmälern herrscht darin starkes Schwanken, am häufigsten ist es in denjenigen, die für ihre Entstehungszeit auffallend viel -e enthalten. In dem nichtapokopierenden Omd. [=East Middle German] sind solche Formen beinahe unbekannt" (L i n d g r e n, 1953, 201). This is best explained by the hypothesis that a scribe who apocopates in his own speech consciously strives to restore traditional -e in his writings. The paragogic -e is therefore an indication of the discrepancy between spoken and written language of the time: „Ein Denkmal mit vielen solchen Formen stammt demnach wahrscheinlich von einem Schreiber, der in der mündlichen Rede stark apokopiert aber beim Schreiben der Tradition folgt" (L i n d g r e n, 1953, 202). I therefore think that the Old Prussian epigram was written by a Bavarian scribe who aimed at characterizing the northern speech of his Prussian informant in a jocular way.

REFERENCES

K o r t l a n d t F., 1998, Two Old Prussian fragments, – Baltistik: Aufgaben und Methoden, Heidelberg, 115–119.
L i n d g r e n K. B., 1953, Die Apokope des mhd. -e in seinen verschiedenen Funktionen, Helsinki.
S c h m a l s t i e g W. R., 1976, Studies in Old Prussian, University Park.