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COMMENTS ON A RECENT DEBATE ABOUT OLD PRUSSIAN STRESS PLACEMENT*

The purpose of this paper is to comment on several recent articles about Old Prussian accentuation. K o r t l a n d t (1999, 75) repeats his claim (1974, 300) that double consonants in Old Prussian may be an indication of stress on the following vowel. In 1974 he gave such examples as, *semmē* 'earth', *weddē* 'led, brought', *billīt* 'to say', etc. and suggested that not only the macron, but the double consonant alone may be enough to mark the position of stress on the following syllable, e.g., *giwemmai, giwammai* 'we live' where the vacillation between orthographic *-e-* and *-a-* is evidence of a phonemic neutralization in pretonic position. K o r t l a n d t (1974, 302; 1999, 75) claims then that the orthographic rules which he has adduced for Old Prussian demonstrate that in that language a stressed short vowel lost the ictus to the following syllable.

Since in his considerations of Old Prussian orthography Kortlandt relies to some extent on Bense's notions concerning the orthography of 18th century Prussian Lithuanian I consider it appropriate to summarize (I hope without distortion) and comment briefly on B e n s e's (1958, 657–658) conclusions:

I. The double writing is encountered in short open syllables under the stress and is retained in the various forms even during paradigmatic inflectional changes. This includes primarily substantives of the stress classes (2), (3ᵇ) and (4) with *-i-* and *-u-* in the root syllable, e.g., *wissas* (cf. cont[emporary] st[andard] Lith[uanian] *vìsas* 'all'), *szittas* (cf. cont. st. Lith. *šìtas* 'this'), *Buttas* (cf. cont. st. Lith. *bùtas* 'apartment'), *Pusse* (cf. cont. st. Lith. *pùsė* 'half'), the stem *kurri-* (except for the nom. sg. *kurs*), verbal nouns in *-imas* which belong to stress class (2) and the adjectives in *-innis* derived from substantives.

IIa. A single consonant is doubled before the stress when the immediately preceding vowel is short. If the vowel remains short even under stress in the inflectional forms the double writing is retained. Otherwise the single writing of the consonant is encountered. This theory is, in her opinion, best illustrated by the inflection of verbs

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in *-ėti, -yti, -oti* and *-auti*. The word-stress (acute) occurs on the initial syllable of the infinitive suffix and is retained in those verbal forms which are derived from the infinitives. Examples, inf. *žinnoti* (cf. cont. st. Lith. *žin-óti* 'to know'), 3rd pres. *žinna* (cf. cont. st. Lith. *žìn-o*); inf. *pa-darryti* (cf. cont. st. Lith. *pa-darýti* 'to do'), 3rd pret. *padare* (cf. cont. st. Lith. *padãrė*). (To me the analogical retention of the double writing of *žinna* and the lack thereof in *padare* seems difficult to motivate, a simpler explanation being that the double consonant merely denoted the brevity of the preceding syllable and was independent of the position of stress.)

IIb. Double writing is encountered when there is stress mobility in the paradigm and in principle the stress could fall on the syllable before the doubled consonant, but in fact does not. Examples, nom. sg. *swetimas* (cf. cont. st. Lith. *svẽtimas* 'another's'), gen. sg. *swétimo* (cf. cont. st. Lith. *svẽtimo*), acc. pl. *swétimus* (cf. cont. st. Lith. *svẽtimus*), nom. pl. *swettimi, swetimi* (cf. cont. st. Lith. *svetimì*), gen. pl. *swétimu, Swetimu* and *Swéttimû* (cf. cont. st. Lith. *svetimų̃*), acc. sg. *Métą* (cf. cont. st. Lith. *mẽtą* 'time'), loc. sg. *Mette* (cf. cont. st. Lith. *metè*).

III. The double writing is encountered after a short vowel in words with a fixed stress.

a. If the vowel in question is stressed. Examples, *Ubbagas* (cf. cont. dial. Lith. *ùbagas* 'beggar'), *luddyti* (cf. cont. st. Lith. *liùdyti* 'to bear witness').

b. If the vowel in question stands in a syllable immediately before the stressed syllable. Examples, *kadda* (cf. cont. st. Lith. *kadà* 'when'), *tadda* (cf. cont. st. Lith. *tadà* 'then').

IV. The double writing is not encountered between two vowels, the first of which is short, when the word stress is not on either of these two syllables. This is best illustrated by nouns in *-imas* which have the single writing when the stress is on the root and the double writing when the suffix is stressed as *-ìmas*. Examples, *Nussidawimas*, Kurschat *nusidãwimas* (although cont. st. Lith. *nusidavìmas* 'event'), *Atėmimmas* (cf. cont. st. Lith. *atėmìmas* 'taking away').

B e n s e (1958, 656) writes that there is a difference between the use of the double writing merely to denote a preceding short vowel and the use of the double writing to denote a short vowel which stands in some kind of relationship to the word stress. To the former category belong formations with the suffix *-ummas*, e.g., on the one hand *Paklusnummas* (cont. st. Lith. *paklusnùmas* 'obedience'), *Nemandagummas* (cont. st. Lith. *nemandagùmas* 'impoliteness'), but on the other hand *Skirtummas* (cont. st. Lith. *skìrtumas* 'difference'). It is difficult for me to see the motivation for making an orthographic difference between the manner of writing nouns with the suffix *-imas* (which may show the stress on the suffix initial syllable, cf., *Atėmimmas*) and nouns with the suffix *-umas*. What was different about these two suffixes that required the position of stress to be indicated in the case of nouns with the suffix *-imas*, but not in the case of nouns with the suffix *-umas*?

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It should be noted that Bense herself (1958, 656–657) mentions a few words with several sets of doubled consonants, e.g., *kettinnam* (cf. cont. st. Lith. *ketìname* 'we intend'), *ketturreis* (cf. cont. st. Lith. *keturiaîs* 'four'), *pajuddinnimą* (cf. cont. st. Lith. *pajùdinimas* 'moving'), which seem to be counterexamples to her theory.

Kurschat (1876, 48–49) wrote that the Lithuanian use of doubled consonants to denote a preceding short vowel is an imitation of the German custom, a custom which cannot be introduced consistently into Lithuanian. Kurschat gives the example, *manàʃʃiʃʃ vežžimmukkaʃʃ bùwwo paggaddìnntaʃʃ* for *manàʃis vežimukas bùwo pagadìntas* 'mein Wäglein war beschädigt, my wagon was damaged.' He mentions in addition that the paradigmatic shift of stress would require the writing of the same stem in different ways depending upon the position of stress in a specific form. (See IIb. above for exactly this phenomenon.) There would also be the problem that the doubling of consonants could not be used to denote a final open stressed syllable as in *gerà* 'good'. According to Kurschat, because of the impossibility of introducing any consistent system it is no wonder that there is no fixed scribal practice in Lithuanian. Everyone writes the way he wants to. I would comment that since this was the case for Prussian Lithuanian, it would seem that it would be likely for Old Prussian also.

Apparently Kortlandt (1999, 78) assumes a difference in at least some respects between the scribal practice of Prussian Lithuanian and Old Prussian. Bense (cf. item I above) assumes an initial stress in *Buttas* whereas Kortlandt assumes that in the Old Prussian cognate *buttan* (7x), *butten* (1x) the stress would have been on the final syllable.

I assume that Kortlandt's notion of the shift of stress from a short syllable to a following syllable is a phonetic law. Therefore unless there was some sort of unspecified later retraction of stress, there could have been no stressed open initial short syllables left in Old Prussian. (The accentual status of such monosyllabic words as *bhe* 'and; without' and *ni* 'not' is not clear, but it seems to me that at least *ni* might have been proclitic.) Since there should remain no initial short syllables, in disyllabic words at least, it would not have been necessary to mark the stress at all, if the text were intended for native speakers of Old Prussian. The standard orthographies of those northern European languages with which I am familiar do not usually mark the position of stress, although they commonly mark vocalic length. It seems fairly certain, however, that the Old Prussian text was prepared for native German clergy, (see Young's [1999, 9] quotation from Hartknoch [1684]). Consequently there would certainly have to have been some kind of preliminary instruction to explain to the German clergy that doubling of consonants denoted a stress in the following syllable. I agree with Young (1999, 9), who asks: 'Why would books intended for use by 16th-century German-speaking clergy (rather than for 20th-century linguists) adopt an orthographic convention presumably unfamiliar to the speakers?' Young (1999,

9–10) also notes parallels in Latvian and Estonian for the similar use of the double consonant to denote preceding short vowels. For me such parallels are appropriate, although apparently Latvian parallels do not appear appropriate to everybody. It seems to me, however, that the perception of parallels is an essential part of human thinking and that most Balticists would find Latvian parallels with Old Prussian useful. No two situations are ever exactly alike in every respect and it is always a matter of personal judgement as to whether one wishes to see a parallel or not. If an airplane loses power and falls on a house or if a slip of paper falls from the desk on the floor the situations are vastly different, but some people might see in both events the action of the law of gravity.

Kortlandt (1974, 303) explains some of the exceptions to his rule of stress shift as follows. For example, *widdewū* 'widow' shows "the strongly reducing effect of the *w* on the preceding pretonic vowel". In such apparent counterexamples as *aūpallai* 'find', *pērgimmans* 'creatures', *prēipīrstans* 'rings', *buttantāws* 'father of the household' he suggests (1974, 304) the possibility of the existence of two accent frames similar to Dutch. I would assume that compounds such as *labbasegīsnan* 'kindness' and *Wissemusīngis* 'omnipotent' could be explained the same way. Kortlandt (1999, 78) explains the existence of *tennen* 'him' (2x) for expected *tennan* by quoting the context of each occurrence: *stēimans maldans Warnins quai tennen enwackē* 'Den jungen Raben die jhn anruffen, to the young ravens who call him'; *ainan pogalban teckint kawida surgi tennen boūsei* 'einen Gehülffen machen die vmb jn sey, to create a helper who would care for him'. Both instances, according to Kortlandt, reflect syntactic positions in which they are unstressed.

Parenti (1998, 136) has noted the exceptions to Kortlandt's rule afforded by the example *kaden* (9x) 'when' vs. *Kadden* (2x), but Kortlandt (1999, 78) counters that *kaden* (with the exception of two times at the beginning of a paragraph, where we may expect an explicit spelling) occurs elsewhere in the middle of a sentence, where, I presume, the stress might nor be marked by the doubling of the consonant.

Young (1999, 7) notes that, contrary to Kortlandt's expectation that there might be vacillation of *e* and *a* in pretonic position, there are some fairly high frequency words which never show an alternation *e* vs. *a* in actual or purported pretonic position: *tebbei* 'you' (11x), *mennei* 'me' (9x), *pallaips* 'commandment' (25x), *labban* 'good' (25x), etc. Young writes (1999, 7, fn. 5) that he has reservations about the view that in Old Prussian, as in Lithuanian, there was no contrast of /e/ vs. /a/ in post-consonantal position. The view that /e/ and /a/ might not contrast in post-consonantal position depends, of course, on whether in Old Prussian there was a contrast between palatalized and unpalatalized consonants as there is in principle in contemporary standard Lithuanian. If such a contrast existed, it seems unlikely to me that German ears were attuned to it and if they rendered palatalized

consonants at all it was in a haphazard fashion, e.g., *etwiērpt* 'to forgive' vs. *etwērpimai* 'we forgive', *penckts* 'fifth' vs. *pyienkts*. In fact [e] and [a] were most likely phonetically different, as they are, indeed, in modern Lithuanian where they are apparently just barely phonemic. Thus G i r d e n i s (1995, 172) writes that there is complementary distribution between the Lithuanian vowels /a/ and /e/, /a·/ and /e·/ in all positions except [#-] and perhaps [t/d-]. After hard consonants one encounters only /a a·/ and after soft consonants only /e e·/. Without context most speakers of cont. st. Lithuanian cannot distinguish between the short final vowels in (acc. pl. noun) *gilès* 'acorns' and (acc. pl. fem. adj.) *giliàs* 'deep' nor between the long final vowels in the corresponding singular forms *gìlę* and *gìlią*. In my view possibly presaging an eventual complete phonemic merger of Lithuanian /a a·/ and /e e·/ is the common very open pronunciation of initial /e e·/. In Old Prussian there is at least some vacillation in the spelling of etymological initial **e-*, cf., e.g., *astai* 'you are' vs. *estei* 'id.'. The most frequent spelling of the root **es-* is with initial *as-*, so one might guess that in the Samland dialect of Old Prussian a phonemic merger was *in statu nascendi* (but perhaps already completed in the Pomesanian dialect, cf., e.g., EV 60 *assaran* 'lake' beside Lith. *ẽžeras* 'id.', EV 241 *asy* 'boundary' beside Lith. *ežià* 'id.' [but also dial. *ažià*]). In some cases in the catechisms the vacillation between Old Prussian orthographic *e* and *a* may be a result of the German inability to determine an appropriate orthographic rendering of Old Prussian [æ] (see Y o u n g 1999, 7–8). One might think that the rendering *æst* 'is [has]' in Catechism II would be an example of a more appropriate rendering but in Catechism II this digraph is also encountered in post-consonantal position, e.g., *bhæ* 'and'. I think it must be constantly emphasized that the Old Prussian sound system was rendered orthographically through the filter of a native German phonemic system.

P a r e n t i (1998, 136) also notes that the example *dabber* 'noch, still' adduced by Kortlandt does not correspond to Lith. *dabař* 'now', but rather to Lith. *dãbar* (> *dár* 'still'). But there would even be other words to be explained away. In *labbatīngins* 'haughty' the position of the stress would appear to be ambiguous, i.e., either on the second syllable or on -*ī*-. In *isspressennien* 'reason', *pertengginnons* 'sent', *potickinnuns* 'made', *saddinna* 'puts', *preistattinnimai* 'we present', etc. one might ask which set of double consonants is supposed to show the following stress. Y o u n g (1999, 8) notes also forms where the double consonants are not immediately pretonic, e.g., *Pallaipsītwei* 'to covet', forms where the expected double consonants are lacking, e.g., *ismigē* 'fell asleep' and instances of vowel reduction after a double consonant (suggesting an unstressed syllable), e.g., *tickars* 'right'. With a reference to S t a n g (1966, 46) Y o u n g (1999, 8) writes, however, that the forms such as *semmē* 'earth' and *weddē* 'led, brought' are somewhat suspect because etymological long -*ē*- is otherwise represented by -*ī*- in the Enchiridion. But S t a n g, loc. cit.,

quoted van Wijk (1918, 5) who wrote that in the Enchiridion $\bar{e}$ passed to $\bar{\imath}$ except in stressed final position. I myself am more inclined to see in $\bar{e}$ a representative of the etymological vocalic system and in $\bar{\imath}$ a representative of the innovating vocalic system. In any case the Lithuanian evidence points to a long *-$\bar{e}$ in these words, so I see nothing suspect here at all. Of course, Slavic evidence might suggest an etymological *zemj'ā corresponding to *semmē* and a 3rd sg. aor. *v'ede corresponding to *weddē*, but, at least in the case of the latter word, the Old Prussian stress would be in the wrong position (see Stang 1957, 129). Although I think that for the root *ved-* 'to lead' the preterit in -$\bar{e}$(-) does indeed eventually derive from the Indo-European thematic aorist or imperfect, the Old Prussian stress is secondary. Since *weddē* is a hapax occurring only with the following (apparently) enclitic *din* 'her', if one does not accept Kortlandt's notion concerning the shift of stress, one could perhaps hypothesize that the enclitic pronoun had something to do with the unexpected occurrence of the macron on the word final -$\bar{e}$.

Parenti (1998, 137) quotes Lysius' Catechism to show the possibility that the double consonant denoted stress on the preceding syllable, e.g. *Atleidим̃as* = *atleidìmas* 'forgiveness', *Paßwentim̃ą* = *pašventìmą* 'consecration', etc. (the same view was expressed by Bense, see IV above). Parenti uses this as evidence that the double consonant may have denoted the stress on the preceding syllable in Old Prussian derivatives with the suffix *-sennis* comparing *aulausennien* 'death', which lacks a macron on the -*u*-, with *aulāut* 'to die'. Parenti (1998, 137–138) quotes one counterexample, viz., *boūsennien* 'state, condition'), where the macron may be a misprint, perhaps called forth by the -$\bar{u}$- in the preceding word *salaūbai* 'marriage' or *boūuns* 'be(ing)' earlier in the text.

Finally then, Kortlandt's (1999, 77) examples of Old Prussian *weddē* 'led', *semmē* 'land', *āusins* 'ears', *rānkans* 'hands' vs. Lith. *vēdė*, *žēmė*, *ausìs*, *rankàs* respectively seem to show that Old Prussian accentual system does not necessarily replicate that of Lithuanian. (But for an interpretation of *weddē* and *semmē* which would place the stress on the initial syllable see Smoczyński 1997, 46–47.) Nevertheless, I suspect that in Prussian Lithuanian and Old Prussian the doubling of consonants merely denoted (in a rather haphazard manner) a preceding short vowel and had no relationship to the position of stress. Still it is indicative of the ambiguity of the evidence that such excellent scholars as Kortlandt, Parenti and Young should come to such different conclusions about the nature of Old Prussian accentuation. The data of Old Prussian remain unclear and contradictory.

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