Title:

Sievers-Edgerton's Law, Stang-Larsson's rule, and Narten Imperfects in Baltic

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Abstract

There are two preterit-stem formations in Baltic: *-$\bar{a}$-preterit and *-$\bar{e}$-preterit. The *-$\bar{e}$-preterit includes a category called long-vowel preterit that is characterized by the long root vowel. Jasanoff (2012) elaborates the idea that the long-vowel preterit in Baltic and in other IE languages may originate from the imperfect of Narten present. On the other hand, Villanueva Svensson (2014) proposes that the long root vowels were introduced through Stang-Larsson's rule operated on the preterit suffix *-$í y\bar{a}$-, where a vowel (V) was lengthened and received a circumflex tone in a sequence *-V-$íy\bar{a}$- > *-$\tilde{\bar{V}}$-$iy\bar{a}$ (> *-$\tilde{\bar{V}}$-$\bar{e}$ with the contraction *-$iy\bar{a}$ > *$\bar{e}$). This hypothesis explains the tonal variations of the verbs in the root structure °ERK-, °EUK-, and °$\bar{E}$K- (e.g., *sprę́sti/sprẽsti, spréndžia/sprendžia*, *spréndė/sprendė* 'to stretch' < *(s)prend-*).

Yet, this scenario works out only if the suffix is accented, although the input *-$iy\bar{a}$- is a Sievers-Edgerton's disyllabic variant that occurs under unaccented environment after a heavy syllable (cf. Barton 1980: 269). In fact the environment for the Sievers-Edgerton's disyllabic variant is found in the preterit in *-$iy\bar{a}$-stem formed to Narten imperfects (e.g., *bér-iyā̄-* 'bore') that are suggested by Jasanoff. The accentuation of the alleged Narten imperfects that are listed in Villanueva Svensson (2014: 242ff., e.g., *bérti / ber̃ti, bẽria, bérė / bẽrė* 'to scatter,' *rė́pti / rẽpti, -ia, -ė* 'to take,' *grébti / grẽbti, -ia, -ė* 'to snatch') is mixed. While Lithuanian acute variants generally point to the immobile paradigms, there are some Latvian forms that point to mobile paradigms, where the accent could be on the suffix still in the Proto-Baltic stage (cf. Majer 2017.). This study will show that the operation of Stang-Larsson's rule proposed in Villanueva Svensson (2014) was actually possible in a few Baltic descendants of Narten imperfects, and will describe the possible historical development of the category in the pre-Proto-Baltic time.

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