

Title:
The root vocalism of Lithuanian *é*-preterit

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Abstract

There are two preterit-stem formations in Baltic: **-ā-*preterit and **-ē-*preterit. The **-ē-*preterit includes a category called long-vowel preterit that is characterized by the long root vowel. Jasanoff (2012) elaborates the idea (originally Weiss 1993: 178ff.) that the long-vowel preterit (including the Baltic and other IE long vowel preterits) may originate from the imperfect of Narten present. On the other hand, Larsson (2010: 71ff.) and Villanueva Svensson (2005: 239ff.) advocate the hypothesis (originally suggested by Schleicher 1856: 224ff.; Kurschat 1876: 280) that the preterit suffix **-ē-* should be a contraction of **-iyā-*, where the suffix is analyzed as the regular *ā-*preterit suffix added to a stem ending in **-i-*. Villanueva Svensson (2014) proposes that the long root vowels were introduced through Stang-Larsson's rule in the suffix, according to which a vowel (V) was lengthened and received a circumflex tone in a sequence **-V-íyā- > *-V̄-iyā (> *-V̄-ē)*. This hypothesis explains the tonal variations of the verbs in the root structure *°ERK-*, *°EUK-*, and *°ĒK-* that take *ia-* presents and *é-* preterits (e.g., *spr̄ėstis/spr̄ėsti*, *spr̄ėndžias/spr̄ėndžia*, *spr̄ėndė/spr̄ėndė* 'stretch' < **(s)prend-*).

Yet, this scenario can be investigated in more detail. This hypothesis works out only if the suffix is accented, although the input **-iyā-* is a Sievers-Edgerton's disyllabic variant that occurs under unaccented environment after a heavy syllable (cf. Barton 1980: 269). An examination of the interaction of the position of the tone and Sievers-Edgerton's variants of the suffix **(i)yā-* will explain why the tonal variants are more common among the *°ERK-*, *°EUK-*, and *°ĒK-* roots. Furthermore, this examination will enable us to analyze in more detail the distribution of the *é-* preterit forms that do not have the lengthened root vowel despite their root structure in *°ERK-*, *°EUK-*, and *°ĒK-* (e.g., *r̄augti*, *r̄augia*, *r̄augė* 'ferment').

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