

ON THE BALTIC VERBAL ENDING *-ki*

1. V. Pisani, *Paideia* 18, 1963, 220, reports Toporov and Trubachev (Лингвистический анализ гидронимов верхнего Поднепровья, Москва 1962) as showing that Lithuanian *-k* (*dúo-k*) and Russian *-ka* (*daj-ka*) come from the imperative *-k* in Finnish (*anna-k*). It is not clear to me that this must be a direct and complete borrowing. It seems equally possible, and more probably paralleled in bilingual contact diffusional situations, that the Finnish model has encouraged the formation but that the substance of the suffix has been drawn from native material; cf. Stang VGBS 427.

This same explanation would also account for the Old Lith. third person use of *-k(i)*, which Gordon Ford would see as original here and later transplanted to the second singular. I find such a switch in application to persons unmotivated, and therefore suggest that a single explanation that embraces the two instances is by far preferable. Now it is to be noted that Finnish *-k ~ ka ~ ko* applies to the whole imperative; cf. L. Hakulinen, *Structure and Development of the Finnish Language*, Indiana University Press 1961, 160—161.

The last fact is to be coupled with the observation that the 3rd sing. *-:n* (*-sen ~ hen < *zen > :n*) is equated with the possessive suffix and the passive; the 3rd pl. corresponds with *-:t*, i. e. **-het < *-zet = -ze + pl. -t* as in nouns. One may find this set forth in SDFL 168—169.

We see then that these endings, both in Finnish and in Lithuanian, are not truly “personal endings”, in the well-known sense observed and elaborated by Benveniste. They thus agree in both languages in semantic and syntactic function.

2. The above argument attempts to envisage where a source or model might be found in Finnish in order to motivate a diffusional semantic and structural accounting for the presence of *-k(i)* in Baltic verbs. However, it has always seemed clear to me that the source for the phonological substance of the suffix must be sought in inherited native Baltic material.

Since formulating the above, I have now seen, thanks to the kindness of the author, Chr. S. Stang’s penetrating phonological analysis (Norwegian Journal of Linguistics 30, 1976, 127—31) of *-k(i)*, *-g(i)*, *-gu*, which builds upon Kazlauskas’s insightful derivation of OLith. *-mus* from a form equivalent to OPruss. *-ma(n)s*. It seems to me that Stang’s derivation of Lith. *-ki* and *-gi* from **-ke* and **-ge* is perfectly justified, offers an elegant simplicity in its source, and must be accepted; along with this, we must regard Kazlauskas’s suggestion of **-mas* as an acquired solution also. I agree, however, with the doubt expressed by Stang (*ibid.* 130) with regard

to **-ga > -gu*. I take this opportunity to state a bit more explicitly the results that I believe Stang's reasoning leads us to, and to draw a further conclusion.

It seems clear that, for those Baltic dialects where it holds, the development **-ke, -ge > -ki, -gi* was originally true only for absolute final; when followed by another element in close juncture *-ke-, -ge-* remained, and this provided the source of such dialect forms as have not suffered complete levelling in favour of the Auslaut form. We may regard this vowel raising as notably motivated phonetically by the palatality which the velars would have shown before front vowel; this matches the naturalness of the labiality noticed by Kazlauskas for *-mus*. This fate for final **-e*, moreover, contrasts with that observed for paradigmatic forms, where alternations in accent can understandably have protected and restored the earlier quality; while a normal undisturbed development for **-e* is less easy to test in Baltic, the case of **-as* is by no means difficult to observe.

This last observation leads us in turn to a new and interesting determination. It seems clear that we are here dealing with the phonetics (perhaps conditioned by certain consonants, and certainly involving absolute final position) of enclitics as Stang implies at the end of his argument (131). Thus we may strictly write ** +ke* and ** +ge*. On the same lines, regardless of whether or not *-gu* is really ** +ga*, we must certainly reconstruct Lith. *-ms < -mus < * +mas*. This affords us valuable independent confirmation of the original status of these oblique plural inflexions as postposed particles, which were therefore once separated from the noun stem by open juncture. We have here an interesting Baltic match for the well-known open sandhi observed in such cases in Indic.