
BALTO-SLAVIC ACCENTUATION : AN UPDATE

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RÉSUMÉ : L’objet du présent article est d’étudier les arguments de nature accentuelle qui parlent en faveur d’une unité linguistique balto-slave. Après une discussion de différentes contributions récentes dans le domaine de l’accentologie balto-slave, l’auteur tire la conclusion que le baltique et le slave doivent avoir traversé une période d’innovations communes.

MOTS-CLÉS : Baltique ; Slave ; Balto-Slave ; Linguistique ; Indo-Européen ; Accent.

ABSTRACT : The subject of the article is the accentual evidence for a Balto-Slavic linguistic unity. Following a discussion of various recent contributions to the field of Balto-Slavic accentology, the author reaches the conclusion that Baltic and Slavic must have gone through a period of shared innovations.

KEY WORDS : Baltic ; Slavic ; Balto-Slavic ; Linguistics ; Indo-European ; Accent.

1. INTRODUCTION

The close resemblance between the Baltic and Slavic accentual systems is potentially a powerful argument for a Balto-Slavic linguistic community. In order to substantiate the claim that the core of these systems evolved in the course of a Balto-Slavic period, one must demonstrate a sequence of shared innovations. In his monograph on Baltic and Slavic nominal accentuation, Illič-Svityč reached the conclusion that the Baltic and Slavic accentual paradigms were originally identical (1963, p. 162 = 1979, p. 145). Though he pointed out a number of shared innovations, viz. the generalization of the mobile paradigm where PIE had a mobile-oxytone paradigm and the retraction which is commonly referred to as Hirt’s law, he was uncertain whether the Balto-Slavic mobile accentual paradigm was an innovation or an archaism which had not been preserved in Greek and Sanskrit. Since the publication of Illič-Svityč’s study, it has become increasingly clear that the system which can be reconstructed on the basis of the Baltic and Slavic accentual data results from a series of developments which are peculiar to these two branches of Indo-European. Those developments are the subject of the present article.
2. WINTER’S LAW AND BALTO-SLAVIC PROSODY

Winter’s law, which in its original formulation is vowel lengthening before PIE unaspirated voiced stops (Winter 1978), is without doubt a sound law of major importance. So far, however, it has not received the recognition it deserves. The main reason for this is probably the fact that a number of appealing examples seem to violate the law. Since a survey of the evidence clearly indicates that the law is essentially correct (cf. Young 1990; Rasmussen 1992a), the next logical step is to look for special circumstances which might provide an explanation for the apparent exceptions. For « water » (cf. OCS voda, vs. Lith. vanduō 3ª) and « fire » (cf. Lith. ugnis, OCS agnar), Kortlandt has proposed that the law did not affect the clusters ndn and ngn (1979, p. 61; 1988, p. 388-389). The nasal infix which may be reconstructed for Balto-Slavic must have developed from a nasal suffix in PIE times already (cf. Thurneysen, 1883). Another major exception is Slavic *xodǔ « going, course ». Here the absence of Winter’s law may originate from a reduplicated present stem *sizd-, where the law was blocked by an intervening z (Kortlandt, 1988, 394).

Rasmussen (1992a, 72) extends Kortlandt’s blocking rule to the position before a resonant, which formulation seems too general (cf. Derksen, 2003, p. 8). In addition, he subscribes to Shintani’s hypothesis that Winter’s law only applies to pretonic syllables 1 (Shintani 1985, cf. Kortlandt 1988, p. 393-394). Another reformulation of Winter’s law was proposed by Matasović (1995), whose untenable view that the law was limited to closed syllables I have recently discussed (o.c.). The most recent attempt to modify the formulation of Winter’s law was made by Holst (2003). In an in many respects peculiar article 2 the author claims that Winter’s law only operated under the ictus. Though Holst displays great confidence in the correctness of his solution, it is painfully clear that his knowledge of Balto-Slavic accentology is quite deficient. Suffice it to say that the 1sg. present of a Lithuanian verb does not really give an indication of its original accent paradigm. Since Holst’s conclusions are essentially based on ignorance, I see no point in discussing his views. Ironically, Holst wonders how it is possible that Rasmussen and Shintani’s view that Winter’s law only affected unstressed syllables was ever committed to paper (o.c. 155-156 fn.). Note that Holst did not even bother to read the above-mentioned articles by Rasmussen and Shintani, whose hypothesis he only knows from a reference in Poljakov (1995). In my opinion, Winter’s original formulation of the law, i.e. without additional conditions concerning stress or syllable structure, is still to be preferred. In any case, the

1. More precisely, Rasmussen claims that the law only affected the syllable immediately preceding the ictus.

2. Holst apparently enjoys lecturing the reader. Most of his digressions, however, are trivial, irrelevant or both.

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validity of Winter’s law, in whatever formulation, is an important argument for a Balto-Slavic linguistic unity, as it appears to be a sound law common to Baltic and Slavic (thus already Winter 1978, p. 445).

An important issue connected with Winter’s law is the reconstruction of the Balto-Slavic prosodic system. According to the traditional doctrine, the Balto-Slavic acute intonation, which is usually reconstructed as a rising tone, reflects length, i.e. original length or length resulting from the loss of a laryngeal. If Winter’s law is interpreted as vowel lengthening, the fact that the law yields acute long vowels and diphthongs is only to be expected. The regular reflex of a lengthened grade, however, is circumflex in Balto-Slavic, as Kortlandt has argued on several occasions (e.g. 1985, 1997). The main reason why this is not generally recognized is the ease with which some Indo-Europeanists postulate lengthened grades, thereby obscuring the original situation. Since both the presence of a laryngeal and Winter’s law generate acute syllables, one may try to link this observation to the hypothesis that the PIE voiced unaspirated stops were actually preglottalized (Kortlandt 1978; cf. de Lamberterie 1998). In Kortlandt’s interpretation, Winter’s law is the merger of the glottal element of the preglottalized voiced stop with the reflex of the Indo-European laryngeals, which had become a glottal stop in Balto-Slavic.

An advantage of Kortlandt’s interpretation of Winter’s law is the possibility to regard the Latvian and Žemaitian broken tones as direct continuations of a Balto-Slavic glottal element (cf. Young 1994; Derksen 1996a; Kortlandt 1998). This does not imply that already in Balto-Slavic glottalization existed as a vocalic feature. There are no indications that the Balto-Slavic glottal stop lost the status of a segmental phoneme which it must still have had when Hirt’s law operated (see below). The Balto-Slavic distinction between acute and circumflex syllables, which was clearly independent of the place of the (free and mobile) ictus, was originally the distinction between the presence and absence of a glottal stop. It most certainly was not a tonal distinction originating from PIE (cf. Kortlandt 1986; Nassivera 2000). The rise of tonal distinctions must probably be dated to the separate branches of Balto-Slavic. Considering the absence of a highly distinctive Balto-Slavic prosodic system (but cf. section 4), the question arises whether the situation which we have just reconstructed for Balto-Slavic might have arisen in Baltic and Slavic independently. This is theoretically conceivable, but Winter’s law and a series of developments which had an effect on the place of the ictus render the question immaterial.

3. HIRT’S LAW

The accent retraction known as Hirt’s law was proposed in order to account for the large number of correspondences between Baltic and Slavic barytona
and nouns which considering the Sanskrit, Greek and Germanic evidence had mobile/oxytone accentuation in PIE (Hirt 1895, p. 91-92; 1899, p. 52-55). In Hirt’s original formulation the stress was retracted to long root syllables. Following a suggestion of Bezzemenberger, Hirt added — at least for Baltic — the condition that the retraction did not affect sequences of a short diphthong plus schwa (1899, l.c.), which, in his view, had therefore not yet become long diphthongs as a result of compensatory lengthening. For Slavic, Hirt assumed that the retraction operated (exclusively or again) after the rise of secondary acutes as a result of vowel loss (1899, p. 55). Since 1895 the law has been reformulated a remarkable number of times, among others by Hirt himself. An important observation was made by Bonfante (1934, 1936-1937), who showed that the stress was only retracted to non-apophonic long vowels. Bonfante argued that original sequences of a resonant plus schwa did not attract the stress due to the fact that the schwa constituted an intermediate syllable (1937, p. 119 ff.). After a thorough investigation of the « Hirt-Bonfante hypothesis », Illič-Svityč (1963, p. 80 = 1979, p. 63) concluded that the retraction was indeed limited to non-apophonic long syllabic elements, i.e. to non-apophonic long vowels, long resonants and long diphthongs.

In his formulation of the law, Illič-Svityč (l.c.) contrasts syllables containing « new length » from laryngeal loss after a syllabic element with syllables containing apophonic length or an original sequence of a short vowel followed by a resonant and a vocalized laryngeal⁴, e.g. *káulós < *keHylós, cf. Gk. καυλός « stem », Latv. kāžš « bone » (Blt. *kāula) against *teṇṣ̌ós < *teṇHụṣ̌, cf. Gk. ταναός « outstretched, tall », Latv. tiēvs « thin ». This invites the conclusion that at the time of the retraction the laryngeals were still present, as has indeed been argued by some scholars (cf. Kortlandt 1975, p. 2; Rasmussen 1985, passim, 1992b, p. 174, 178-180). In that case one might simply say that the stress was retracted to an immediately preceding syllable containing a vocalic element followed by a laryngeal⁵. Though this option must have crossed his mind, Illič-Svityč apparently preferred a different formulation. That the position of the laryngeal plays an essential role was demonstrated by Kortlandt in connection with the accentuation of the Slavic l-participle (1975, p. 2-4). He suggested that in instances such as Ru. pild f. sg. « drank » the laryngeal must originally have preceded the i of the root. His reconstruction *pHiláH is supported by full grades of the type *pe/oh3i- or

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3. Hirt introduced his retraction in a paper presented at a conference in Vienna in 1893 (see Indogermanische Forschungen Anzeiger, 3, p. 164).
4. In his article on the development of the laryngeals in Balto-Slavic, Matasović rather surprisingly claims that the stress was also retracted if the root had vyalí (1998, p. 134).
5. According to Rasmussen (1985, p. 179; 1992b, p. 179), the stress was only retracted to consonantal laryngeals. His interpretation of the law is about syllabification rather than position of the laryngeal.
*pe/oh*3, e.g. Skt. pāyāyati. The opposition between *-HI-* and *-IH-* has a parallel in Greek and Italo-Celtic, where we find indications that pretonic *-HI-* yielded a short reflex (Schrijver 1991, p. 512-536). It may be clear that Hirt’s law is a strong argument for a Balto-Slavic linguistic unity.

4. PROGRESSIVE SHIFTS IN BALTIC AND SLAVIC

Employing the method of internal reconstruction, de Saussure (1896) demonstrated that at a certain point in the history of Lithuanian accentuation the stress shifted from a circumflex or short syllable to an immediately following acute syllable. This progressive shift was independently discovered by Fortunatov (1897), who applied the shift to Slavic as well. Hence, de Saussure’s law, when applied to both Baltic and Slavic, is sometimes referred to as Fortunatov’s law. Propagated by none other than Meillet 6, de Saussure’s law came to occupy an important place in classical accentology. The law was often considered a Balto-Slavic innovation, though Meillet regarded the progressive shifts in Baltic and Slavic as parallel developments (1900, p. 350-351; 1924, p. 145).

The decline of de Saussure’s law as a Balto-Slavic development may be said to have started with Kuryłowicz (1931, p. 75 ff; 1952), who denied its operation in Slavic. The final blow — or so it seemed — was delivered by Stang in his Slavonic accentuation (1957). In this revolutionary work (cf. Vermeer 1998) Stang showed that the neo-acute results from a retraction of the stress and established three Proto-Slavic accentual paradigms. Leaving a few minor subtypes aside, these paradigms are the following:

(a) Fixed stress on an acute stem syllable.
(b) The stress alternates between the final syllable of the stem and the first syllable of the ending. Forms with stem stress have neo-acute.
(c) The stress alternates between the first syllable of the stem and the final or penultimate syllable of the ending. Stem-stressed forms have a falling tone (circumflex) and lose the stress to a following or preceding clitic.

Since he was convinced that the neo-acute intonation resulted from a retraction of the stress, Stang concluded that AP (b) continues an oxytone paradigm. As the Baltic evidence unambiguously points to an earlier stage (before de Saussure’s law) with only two accentual paradigms, a paradigm with fixed stress on the stem and a mobile paradigm, the question arose as to how the Baltic and Slavics systems are related to each other, in other words: what is the origin of the Slavic AP (b)? A solution was proposed by Dybo and Illič-Svityč, who argued that the oxytone paradigm which must have existed prior to

6. Meillet first advocated the operation of de Saussure’s law in Slavic at the conference session where de Saussure presented his progressive shift (on September 8, 1894, see CIO, 1994, p. 89).
Stang’s retraction had been generated by a progressive stress shift (see especially Dybo, 1962; Illič-Svityč, 1963, p. 157-161 = 1979, p. 140-144). According to Dybo’s law, also known as Illič-Svityč’s law, a syllable which was neither acute nor falling lost the stress to the following syllable, causing a split of the Proto-Slavic immobile paradigm. The syllable which received the stress became falling, which provided the input for Stang’s law, the retraction of the stress from long falling vowels in final syllables.

The scenario proposed by Dybo and Illič-Svityč allows us to derive the Baltic and Slavic accentual systems from a stage when there were only an immobile barytone and a mobile or oxytone paradigm. As later publications from the Moscow Accentological School (henceforth MAS) have shown (see especially Dybo 1968), it is possible to distinguish between dominant (« strong ») and recessive (« weak ») morphemes at this stage. The place of the stress is governed by the valency of the morphemes that constitute a given form (cf. Dybo 1981, p. 260-262; 2000a, p. 10-14; Lehfeldt 2001, p. 67-69). Whether a morpheme is dominant or recessive cannot be predicted on the basis of its phonological structure: the distribution of morphemes over the two classes is « traditional » (Dybo 2000a, p. 10). Even without taking developments such as Hirt’s law and Winter’s law into consideration, I consider it hardly plausible that the stage for which a distinction between dominant and recessive morphemes is possible was not Balto-Slavic, the alternative being that Baltic and Slavic inherited identical systems from PIE.

The above-mentioned view of the relationship between the Baltic and Slavic accentual systems is essentially the one expressed in the standard version of the theories of the MAS (see especially Dybo 1981). In the last few decades, however, the concepts of the MAS have undergone significant modifications. In the late eighties, Stang’s law was reformulated as a retraction which affected dominant long syllables only and supplemented by a complex of more recent retractions which operated in different areas and under different conditions. More recently, the conditions of Dybo’s law were modified in such a way that in many cases it became possible to generate the correct place of the stress without having to resort to retractions at all. The progressive shift, which is assumed to have operated at different stages and is connected with early dialectal differentiation, is now simply designated as pravostoronnyj drejč. According to Dybo (2000a, p. 94), the only truly Proto-Slavic progressive shift is the transfer of the ictus from a circumflex or short syllable to a following dominant acute syllable. This is, of course, strongly reminiscent of de

7. The designation Illič-Svityč’s law is also used to indicate the transfer of masculine o-stems belonging to AP (b) to the mobile accentual paradigm.
8. This is actually the formulation of Stang’s law as it appears in publications of Dutch accentologists. The somewhat elusive status of Stang’s law in publications of the MAS has recently been discussed by Hendriks (2003).
Saussure’s law, which Dybo (1997, p. 57 ; 2000a, p. 94 ; 2000b, p. 75) has recently reformulated as the transfer of the ictus from a circumflex or short syllable to an internal acute if both syllables have the same valency and to a final acute irrespective of valency. In Old Prussian as well a version of de Saussure’s law is assumed to have operated (Dybo 1998). Here the stress was shifted to a following dominant acute and in those cases where the valency of the accented syllable was not higher than the valency of the following acute syllable. In my opinion, this assumption is highly questionable (see Andronov and Derksen 2002, p. 216-217).

It may by now have become obvious why the recent developments in the MAS are relevant to the topic of this paper. If a progressive shift is assumed to have operated under slightly varying conditions everywhere in Baltic and in Slavic, these branches must have formed one dialect area. The suggested scenario, which comes close to a rehabilitation of de Saussure’s law (or Fortunatov’s law) as a Balto-Slavic development, is comparable to the way in which the retractions which were supposed to have followed Stang’s law divided the Slavic territory into four dialect areas. Whether the revolution in the MAS constitutes an improvement remains to be seen. The modus operandi in the more recent publications of the MAS was subjected to harsh criticism by Willem Vermeer (2001), whose objections include the reliability of the — often spectacular — data and a lack of attention to the role that may have been played by Post-Proto-Slavic developments. In addition, I would like to call into question the usefulness of the notion of valency in definitions of sound laws. Phonetic developments are bound to disrupt a system where the place of the ictus in a given form can be predicted on the basis of the inherent properties of its constituent morphemes. The inclusion of these very properties in the definition of a particular sound law suggests that there is somehow a causal relationship between the valency system and the operation of the law, which does not seem correct to me (cf. Vermeer 2001, p. 155-156). I therefore regard the MAS’s reformulations of the various progressive shifts with suspicion. Another example of a definition involving a reference to the valency system will be presented in the next section.

5. EBELING’S LAW AND BALTO-SLAVIC METATONY

There can be little doubt as to the historical identity of the Baltic and Slavic mobile accentual paradigms. It is less clear to what extent the accentual curve of the mobile paradigm was inherited from PIE. If the mobile paradigm can be traced directly to PIE, it may in principle have been preserved in Baltic and Slavic independently, but hitherto an Indo-European origin has not been demonstrated. Traces of PIE mobility in Balto-Slavic seem to be limited to the flexion of the consonant stems. According to de Saussure (1896), the Balto-Slavic mobile paradigm developed from a columnar oxytone paradigm. The Balto-Slavic opposition between barytona and mobilia was assumed to
continue an opposition between barytona and oxytona. The comparative proof for de Saussure’s hypothesis was provided by Illič-Svityč (1963). Though in individual cases it is not always evident that a direct comparison between a Baltic or Slavic form and its Greek or Sanskrit cognate is warranted, the picture emerging from this study is quite clear.

If the Balto-Slavic mobile paradigm continues an oxytone paradigm (or a mobile-oxytone paradigm), we are apparently dealing with a Balto-Slavic innovation. Starting with de Saussure himself, several scholars have tried to explain the rise of the mobile paradigm. A chronological account of the developments that may be involved was given by Kortlandt (1975). Since I have written on this matter elsewhere (Derksen 1991), I shall limit myself to a concise description of Kortlandt’s relative chronology:

- Loss of PIE accentual mobility and rise of paradigms with columnar stress.
- Pedersen’s law: the stress was retracted from internal syllables in accentually mobile paradigms (de Saussure 1896, p. 163; Pedersen 1933, p. 25). The retraction chiefly operated in polysyllabic consonant stems, where columnar stress on a non-initial syllable means that the stress may be on the suffix or on the ending. The preservation of accentual mobility in root nouns must have contributed to this development.
- Barytonesis: the stress was analogically retracted in oxytona with a vocalic stem in those cases where Pedersen’s law applied (de Saussure 1896, p. 164; Pedersen 1933, p. 25).
- Oxytonesis: The stress shifted from an internal syllable to a final syllable in paradigms with end-stressed forms (cf. Ebeling 1967, p. 580).
- Hirt’s law (see above).
- Ebeling’s law: the stress was retracted from final open syllables unless the preceding syllable was closed by an obstruent. This is Kortlandt’s reformulation of Ebeling’s law of maximal contrasts and his reshuffling of mobile paradigms (Ebeling 1967, p. 580, 584; Kortlandt 1975, p. 4-7). Note that in Kortlandt’s view the laryngeals were still ordinary consonants when the law operated.

This section focuses on the effects of Ebeling’s law. In my dissertation (1996b, p. 96-128, 229-232), I tried to link Ebeling’s law to the metatony in East Baltic nouns in -klas and -(s)tas as well as to the fact that Slavic nouns in *-dlo and *-to (*-tů) with an originally acute root often belong to AP (b). In my view, both phenomena are ultimately connected with the condition that the stress was not retracted to syllables closed by an obstruent, a circumstance which led to the survival of a marginal Balto-Slavic class of oxytone neuter o-stems. In Proto-East Baltic, the stress was retracted according to my retraction of the ictus from word final *-á, yielding metatony. In Lithuanian, the instances of métatone douce outnumber the cases of métatone rude, whereas in Latvian, where the original tone of the root was often restored, the distribution is more even. In Proto-Slavic, the « metatony » originated when the laryngeals were lost in pretonic position. The fact that length was preserved in the roots of these
originally oxytone neuter *o*-stems shows that in Slavic the marginal oxytone type must have joined the barytone type prior to the shortening of pretonic long vowels. Final stress was subsequently restored by the operation of Dybo’s law. Oxytone neuter *o*-stems with an acute root containing a vocalic element followed by a laryngeal had already become barytone in Balto-Slavic as a result of Hirt’s law. As a consequence, these forms remained unaffected by the East Baltic retraction from *-dą and the Slavic loss of laryngeals in pretonic syllables.

Nikolaev’s solution for the above-mentioned phenomena is characteristic of the MAS. He assumes that recessive roots followed by a dominant suffix were transferred to the dominant class. The process was accompanied by metatony (1989, p. 91). This is merely a way of saying that instead of the expected stress on the suffix we find root stress and metatony. The merit of Nikolaev’s rule lies in the fact that it correctly suggests a connection between metatony and unexpected root stress. No attempt is made, however, to formulate a phonetic rule, which I find unsatisfactory. Nothing can be said about the plausibility of rules involving a change of valency.

Unlike Nikolaev, whose metatony rule is Balto-Slavic, I do not believe that there ever was a Balto-Slavic metatony. There is, however, a connection between the metatony in certain East Baltic *o*-stems which were originally neuter and the fact that certain Slavic neuter *o*-stems which derive from an originally acute root unexpectedly belong to AP (b), viz. the fact that these formations once belonged to an end-stressed paradigm⁹. In this sense the observed phenomena do have a Balto-Slavic origin.

6. CONCLUSION

The similarities between Baltic and Slavic accentuation were already noticed more than a century ago, but the exact nature of their relationship was only clarified comparatively recently. The discovery of new sound laws and more accurate formulations of familiar ones have made it clear that Baltic and Slavic must have gone through a period of common innovations.

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9. The situation is more complicated in the case of nouns in *-to-*, where I assume an accentual redistribution on the basis of the valency of the root.
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