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THE PROTO-SLAVIC METATONY¹

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Abstract

This paper deals with **-VRH̄i-* sequences in Proto-Slavic. Under certain conditions they probably yielded **-ṼR’-* sequences, thus introducing a new type of intonation – the so-called short neo-acute tone. If so, the evidence for Pinault’s law requires re-examination.

0. Introduction

The rejection of metatony as the basic source of Proto-Slavic neo-acute tones seems to be one of the main results achieved by Ch.S. Stang in his *Slavonic accentuation* (1957: 168–170): following S. Ivšić he proposed instead that it was a matter of retraction with only one possible case of metatony (though he failed to interpret it satisfactorily, see 2.1). The most vital among the attempts to integrate the hypothesis by excluding any metatony was made by F.H.H. Kortlandt (1975: 30, 40), who adopted C.L. Ebeling’s (1967: 587) reinterpretation of “van Wijk’s law” in accordance with “Dybo’s law”. Nevertheless, the criticism raised by some authors (cf. Johnson 1980: 491–494; Kapović 2007: 97–98; Langston 2007: 85–86; Babik 2012: 387) encourages me to make another attempt to amend Šachmatov–van Wijk formula of metatony (cf. also the latest attempt in Fecht 2010).

All reconstructed Proto-Indo-European verb roots are quoted after LIV (unless indicated otherwise), Lithuanian examples – after LKŽ.

¹ I am most grateful to Z. Babik for his inspiration and support.

1. Theoretical issues

The categories described below coincide with the ones considered in the previous studies devoted to the connection of the loss of yod with the rise of the neo-acute. The main difference lies in the choice of primary cases; unlike the predecessors I assume that, before the metatony, they contained acute vowels, in spite of the general assumption of the loss of laryngeals in certain environments, viz. “Pinault’s law” ($*-VC(H)_iV-$, Pinault 1982) and the “Saussure effect” ($*-oR(H)C-$, Yamazaki 2009 vs Pronk 2011). It is still possible that laryngeals were just analogically restored in some categories, as it was posited by Yamazaki (2009: 458).

I understand the term *the primary* (“short”) *neo-acute tone* as a new intonation that appeared after disintegration of acute sequences $*-\check{V}R-$ by palatalisation of coronal sonorants ($R = *r, *l, *n$) previously followed by $*_i$ (which was lost simultaneously). The quality of vowels was unified with that of short vowels, whereas posttonic (originally short or shortened) vowels were possibly lengthened:²

$$(*-VRH_iV-) > *-\check{V}R_iV-> *-\check{V}R'V-$$

The omission of $*_i$ as a case of R is rather obvious; labials ($*m, *_u > *v$) are more problematic.³ I leave the examples where later depalatalisation could have been involved aside (see Zaliznâk 1985: 135–136).

Such formula seems quite plausible for disyllabic forms with the original place of stress on $*-\check{V}R-$ sequences (in the first syllable), especially for the comparative (see 2.1), but not for oxytone disyllabic forms, since Hirt’s law probably did not operate there (cf. the weak cases of the primary $*vol'a$ -type nouns, 1 sg. of $*mel'e$ -type presents,⁴ the noun $*mol'b$?⁵). The analysis of the comparative suggests that the primary neo-acute tone was originally just an allotone of the old acute; it was only after retractions that it practically aligned its distribution with the long neo-acute (excluding the comparative). Most likely the same formula of metatony applies to the strong cases of the primary $*vol'a$ -type nouns (see 2.2). Certain facts indicate that such development could occur not only if acute diphthongoids were originally stressed, but also if they preceded word-internal short vowels (stressed or not); if so, the accentuation may be deduced directly from the segmental structure in those cases (2–3 sg., 1–3 du., 1–2 pl.

² I mark this subphonemic length by underlining the vowel, see below.

³ Cf. *l*epentheticum in Slavic. I have failed to identify any case of $*m$ in the “primary categories”. See below in this section about $*v$ as secondary.

⁴ 1 sg. $*mel'ò$: 2–3 sg., 1–3 du., 1–2 pl. $*mèl'è-$, 3 pl. $*mèl'òtb?$ to $*melh_2-$. The same holds for $*bor'e-$ ($*b^herH-$), $*kol'e-$ ($*kelh_2-$), $*pol'e-$ ($*pelh_1-$), $*por'e-$ ($*per-$). Most probably the latter was not a laryngealised root originally, but the acute in the infinitive is more significant here. All of these forms seem to have undergone one more phonetic change, viz. the lowering of the anaptyxis preceded by a labial or a velar and followed by a sequence *liquid + laryngeal + yod* in original zero-grade roots of “Verba des Schlagens” (provided that a front anaptyxis did not occur after a velar, which would be palatalised in that case).

⁵ I leave this noun aside, as it has no phonetic parallel within its category and could have been easily aligned to one of the standard accent paradigms (a.p.).

of **mel'e*-type presents; I sg. of **vol'a*-type nouns?). As I am not able to explain all the details of the processes that led to the supposed coincidence of **mèl'etv* (: **mèl'ǫtv*?) and **nòsĭtv*, **nòsĕtv*,⁶ I am forced to leave this problem unsolved; nevertheless the solution given by W.R. Vermeer (1984) seems to be under question. At any rate, it is not explicit that Croatian *mèljĕte* supports Pinault's law, as Kapović claims (2008: 246; cf. also Carrasquer-Vidal 2009: 10, 13).

I am inclined to assume that after the metatony the quantity of posttonic vowels was a subphonemic feature; it could be a part of a disyllabic intonation and for that very reason I mark it in a different manner. As a matter of fact, the question of posttonic length in each category needs further research, since even the evidence for its reconstruction is still not fully convincing and it could be easily interfered with by the later sequence of developments.⁷ From a typological point of view it is the lenition of *k* after liquids in Western Finnish that might be considered the closest phenomenon, if one compares both of its alternative results before front vowels: *-CjV-* : *-CṼ-* (cf. Kiparsky 2011: 45); I wish to emphasise that I am far from comparing any stage of the lenition of *k* in Western Finnish with any segmental reflex of Proto-Indo-European laryngeals. Anyway, the supposed lengthening in Slavic may have compensated not only for the loss of a consonant (yod) but also for the weighty loss in the nucleus of the preceding syllable.

Obviously, the chronological position of the metatony in the series of Slavic shifts in vowel quantity needs further research. In terms of chronology I assume that the development preceded the morphophonological change known as "Meillet's law" (see 2.2).

It should be noted that **-ṼRĭV-* sequences could not occur within one morpheme. That very circumstance may explain the later tendency to generalise their prosodic features in some categories, irrespective of the quality of (palatal) consonants that could later appear instead of *R'*. The assumption of a secondary spread of the accent curves that arose within the described development (**vol'a*-type nouns, probably **-ĭe-* presents, the comparative at the time of "*métatonie rude*") allows us to avoid a number of exceptions, which could not be explained by previous hypotheses. These morpho(phono)logical changes must have had different effects in each category: in the case of the comparative the prevalence of the **-CṼR'e-* pattern led to the rise

⁶ The types **stèl'e-*, **pĭšĕ-* are probably secondary with their **-a-* in the infinitives (**stblati*, **pvsati*) and, most likely, later than the retraction in 3 pl. **stèl'ǫtv*, **pĭšǫtv*.

⁷ A) The retraction from reduced vowels in weak positions and the introduction of parallel long neo-acute tones;
 B) The spread of the new opposition between the internal circumflex (a.p. *b*) and the neo-acute (a.p. *c*) in disyllabic endings of weak cases (mainly the long tones in L pl. of **-o-* stems) among monosyllabic endings containing shortened etymologically long vowels within certain inflectional types (most likely I pl., GL du. of **-o-* stems, NA pl. of neuter **-o-* stems, possibly L sg. of **-i-* and **-u-* stems as well) with a parallel spread of posttonic length in a.p. *a*. Thus the old final accent became a secondary allotone of the old acute;
 C) The retraction from non-initial circumflex vowels (possibly including "tense jers" in strong positions);
 D) The emergence of falling, rising and posttonic contracted vowels in individual languages.

of **drèv'è* (see 2.1), which seems to have no analogy in other categories (cf. **-úì-* in **čúìq* or **kupúìq*), if one does not take into account the secondary form of the nouns **krov'a*, **lov'a* etc. (see 2.2; cf. Shevelov 1965: 283).

2. The evidence

2.1. The comparative

In this category the complementary distribution **-V̇(R)C'-s* : **-V̇R'* is evident. One cannot rely on ambiguous Russian forms or the old neuter N sg. in Czech and reject the unequivocal forms of Serbo-Croatian or the masculine N sg. in Czech, thus Kortlandt's reconstruction of the long neo-acute instead of the old acute seems incorrect (1975: 40; cf. the material collected by Stang 1957: 104);⁹ both exceptional "metatonies" suggested by Stang (1957: 104–105, 172) seem to be proven by the data, however their nature has not been fully recognised.

The old acute was a feature of **-je-* comparatives derived from a.p. *c* adjectives with long root vowels (**mòld'e¹⁰*) and a number of similar suppletive forms (**vĕt'e*); the short neo-acute belonged to a few suppletive forms with short root vowels followed by palatal sonorants:

- **bòl'è* (ÈSSÂ II: 193–194; SP I: 316; Derksen 2008: 52),
- *?*dòl'è* (SP V 220),
- **gòr'è* (ÈSSÂ VII: 54–55; SP VIII:136–137; Derksen 2008: 179),
- **mòn'è* (ÈSSÂ XXI: 119–122; Derksen 2008: 341).

The form **drèv'è* (ÈSSÂ V: 106–107; SP IV: 218–219; Derksen 2008: 116) with its **v'* seems to be secondary (see 1.); regarding **dòl'è*, the prosodic reconstruction is not obvious. There is no reason to reconstruct a form ***žest'e*, as it was apparently suggested by L. Micklesen (1974: 144).

The origin of the old acute in the comparative is not clear. According to V.A. Dybo (2000: 226) and Babik (2002), it was generalised from the forms that had not participated in Meillet's law. Indeed, iotated forms like **mòldje* (: **mòldĵ*) could be treated equally to **prĕdja* (: **prĕdĵ*), etc., cf. "Winter's law" in its various interpretations and so-called "Slaaby-Larsen's law" (Rasmussen 2009), which I am going to deal with elsewhere. However, it is not obvious that the spread of the acute could affect the suppletive forms (it is probably L. Micklesen who first assumed its transitional presence there, though his opinion about its fate is rather incomprehensible, cf. 1974: 149). It is possible that some of them belonged to *seĵ*-roots or a laryngeal

⁸ C – an obstruent.

⁹ If Slovene forms were to be explained as being of a phonetic origin, the conclusion would remain the same.

¹⁰ Cf. the alternative comparative suffix **-ĕje-* for a.p. *a* & *b* adjectives and a.p. *c* adjectives with short root vowels (Seliščev–Vaillant rule) and the verbal adjectives derived from the related fientives: **blĕd-l-ĵ* : **stâr-ĕ-l-ĵ* = **blĕd-je* : **stâr-ĕ-je* (but **blĕdĵ* : **stârĵ*). Note the parallel acute metatony in **blĕdlĵ* (beside **blĕdĕlĵ*) and **blĕdje* (!).

belonged (secondarily?) to the suffix; in this case the structure $*\text{-}\check{V}RH_iV\text{-}$ > $*\text{-}\check{V}R_iV\text{-}$ in suppletive forms could serve as a model for the spread of the old acute.¹¹

It should be borne in mind that the oxytonesis of the discussed suppletive forms in Old Russian (cf. Zaliznâk 1985: 148) may provide a basis for criticism of the whole theory.

2.2. The **vol'a* type¹²

This category has been recently analysed by R. Fecht (2010) in a monograph; the author has rightly remarked the residual mobility of the noun **vol'a* in Old Russian (also: **von'a*) and its reflexes in the Slovene dialect of Prekmurje (Fecht 2010: 126, 143–145, 176–177). Such accentuation is also attested (parallel to fixed stress on the root vowel) in contemporary North Russian dialects (AOS V: 75); cf. also the oxytonesis of the old N sg. in Torlak dialects (Dinić 2008: 78). Both “primary” nouns (**vol'a*, **von'a*) could be distinguished in Slovincian and North Kashubian by their root stress and optional “length” in desinences, as opposed to the oxytonesis and constant “length” in a number of younger nouns comparable to the Common Slavic “**vol'a* type” (cf. Fecht 2010: 136–137); the root stress was not necessarily original there, as opposed to Stang’s view (1957: 58) – it may have also occurred due to a later regular retraction.

Only scant facts allow us to reconstruct the Common Slavic accent curve; it is possible that I sg. joined the strong cases due to its structure (see 1.), as it may be indicated by Old Russian accentuation (cf. Fecht 2010: 144); the tendency to fix the stress on the root would be even more justifiable then, though, indeed, it could be determined by the lack of recessive stress in prepositional phrases alone. The rise of the mobile-stressed type with the neo-acute tone cannot be explained as a general transformation of the a.p. c, since a few nouns have preserved the original accentuation and the new type has no analogy among the other nominal categories where it would also be expected. The expansion of the type was possible only after the retractions and, eventually, the neo-acute (henceforth short and long) became the preferred tone for new (non-acute) $*\text{-}'a$ nouns, even if it had no support in basic words (cf. Vaillant IV: 524).¹³ The following nouns might be considered primary according to the concept of the Proto-Slavic metatony:

- **dol'a* ($*delh_1\text{-}$),
- **skor'a* ($*\text{(s)kerH}\text{-}$),
- **vol'a* ($*uelh_1\text{-}$),
- **von'a* ($*h_2enh_1\text{-}$),
- **(v)or'a* ($*h_2erh_3\text{-}$).

¹¹ One should also note that most forms of “short” comparatives were segmentally identical to active past participles of related causative verbs (!). The homonymy could be avoided by means of prosodic features.

¹² I have omitted the accent marks in this section intentionally.

¹³ If **vod'a*, **noša* are old nouns, the tone in the strong cases could have been changed under the influence of **vòdītъ*, **nòsītъ*.

In terms of the earlier history of the type one ought to notice the correspondence between Slavic **vol'a* and Lithuanian *valià* || *vālė*. Whatever would be the original suffix in each case, such correspondence (originally a.p. *c* : a.p. *2*) is confirmed by the following two juxtapositions, in spite of the incumbent Illič-Svityč's opinions (1963: 106–108; cf. Babik 2012: 346–347, 368, 371):¹⁴

- **med'a* : *mēdē* (Old Indic adj.: *mādhya-*, EWA II: 303),
- **zem'a* : *žēmė* (Old Indic adj. *kṣāmya-*, EWA I: 425).

To exhaust the correspondences between Slavic and Old Indic one should add **svět'a* (a.p. *b*) : adj. *śvetyá-* (EWA II: 679; cf. Babik 2012: 339). Generally, I accept the view that „it is highly indicative that all **-ja* stems in Slavic are either a. p. *a* nouns, a. p. *c* nouns or **vòl'ã*-type nouns with only one reliable example against this general picture – **svět'ã* with a fixed end-stress” (Kapović 2007: 102), for it was probably not the small group of unproductive oxytone deverbal adjectives (**svět'a*, **struja*¹⁵) that founded the new category of *nomina actionis*, which was either barytone (transformed into mobile if originally non-acute¹⁶) or even mobile (**dol'a* ~ Greek *μοῖρα*?¹⁷). Unlike Illič-Svityč (1963: 142–143) I am not inclined to recognise the secondary nature of the stress in Slavic adj. **tòščb* (a.p. *b*, compared to Old Indic *tuchyá-*, EWA I: 652; cf. Derksen 2009: 17); if **šujb* was mobile indeed (cf. the reservations made by Babik 2012: 346, 349), its original oxytonesis (Old Indic *savyá-*, EWA II: 716) could be easily changed under the influence of a barytone (i.e. later a.p. *a* or *c*) antonym **pravb* or **desnb* (see Shevelov 1965: 40 for parallel phenomena in Slavic languages).

In parallel to **vol'a* one might compare Slavic **skor'a* (only in Slovene, Pleteršnik II: 494) and Lithuanian *skārė*, though it is not easy to prove their common origin. Slavic **or'a* (see also below) resembles Lithuanian **arė* (a.p. 4; also secondary *orė* and *ōrė*) on the contrary, like **dol'a* : *dalià* (a.p. 4). The latter has parallel morphological variants in both groups (SP IV: 82), though there are no traces of the form **dol'a* in the South Slavic languages, whereas the ones in Czech and Slovak are rather doubtful (SP IV: 81).

Regarding **von'a*, it is highly problematic how to explain its initial **v-*. If it may be a trace of the first element of a neo-acute diphthong (see Kortlandt 1975: 17), it should be apparent in **or'a* too: Czech *vuře* and Slovincian/Kashubian *vořáú*, *vořáq*, *uórw* could acquire the prothesis later, but, on the other hand, Czech *oře* and Slovene *órja* could have had it deleted by generalisation of the allomorph taken from the weak cases (cf. ÈSSÂ XXXII: 166 for the material).

It seems that **krov'a* and **lov'a* are secondary because of the sequence **-ov'-* (see 1); **krov'a* (**kreuH-*) is attested only in the East Slavic languages (ÈSSÂ XIII: 20), while the root in **lov'a* is uncertain (**leh₂u-?*, cf. Smoczyński 2003: 109).

¹⁴ The reconstruction of a.p. *b* should be problematic for those scholars who assume its regular transformation into the “**vol'a* type”.

¹⁵ Slavic **struja* (a.p. *b*) : Lithuanian *sraujà* (a.p. 4), cf. the adjective **srou-ĩó-* ← **sreu-* (Lithuanian *sraūjas*).

¹⁶ I.e. with no **-VH.C-* or **-V̇C.C-* sequence in the root.

¹⁷ However both types of mobility were genetically and chronologically unrelated.

3. Closing remarks

Any further conclusions require an extensive discussion. Although the above interpretations do not fit into the mainstream of modern (Balto-)Slavic accentology, I suppose that some of them may be still accepted by the followers of Illič-Svityč.¹⁸ Irrespective of one's views on the history of Slavic accentuation, there is a clear need to reexamine the evidence for Pinault's law on the basis of Slavic data.¹⁹

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¹⁸ Actually, at the time of the proofreading I am no longer inclined to maintain the above "(pre-) Stangian" correspondences directly but I still consider it necessary for modern accentologists to face this inconsistency.

¹⁹ I have not focused here on a number of examples where there was no laryngeal (*-VRĭ-) or at least no allomorphs of *-VRH-C- structure (C ≠ ĭ) as a foundation for its analogical restoration: *gor'e, *mor'e, *pol'e, (*zem'a), *zor'a?; suffice it to say that none of those nouns had the neo-acute in the strong cases.

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