

The origins of Balto-Slavic accentual mobility

Thomas Olander has recently (2013) published an eminently readable account of his “mobility law” in relation to other proposed explanations of Balto-Slavic accentual mobility. In order to stimulate the discussion I shall here specify the reasons which keep me from accepting his theory. The data lead me to a different reconstruction of both the (late Indo-European) system preceding and the (early Balto-Slavic) system following the alleged “mobility law”. I shall not discuss Jasanoff’s views (e.g. 2008), which are totally inadequate and full of mistakes because they are based on an insufficient knowledge of the data (cf. Kortlandt 2009: 81-86, 2010: 337-339, 2011: 119-133).

Olander claims that tones are “not a necessary component of the Proto-Indo-European prosodic system”, but also that “there were words with one accented syllable” and “words with no accent”, both polysyllables and monosyllables, and that the accent “was most likely realised as a high tone, which contrasted with the low tone of unaccented syllables” (2013: 130f.). It follows that there was a distinctive opposition between High and Low tones which in polysyllabic word forms had a limited distribution, e.g. Vedic *távét tát satyám* and *itthā yé prāg úpare* beside *imám me gaṅge yamune sarasvati sūtudri* and doubly accented infinitives such as *gántavái, étavái, ápabhartavái* (cf. Kortlandt 2010: 70, Pronk 2013: 153). This exemplifies a restricted tone system which can also be assumed for Proto-Indo-European.

In a contribution to the same volume where Olander’s article appeared (2013), Alwin Kloekhorst has shown, in his usual lucid style, that the Anatolian languages provide evidence for nominal paradigms with (1) fixed stress on the root, (2) “proterodynamic” mobility between root and suffix, (3) “hysterokinetic” mobility between suffix and ending, (4) “amphikinetic” mobility between root and ending, and (5) “hysterodynamic” mobility between root, suffix and ending, e.g. Hittite *keššar* ‘hand’, acc. *kiššeran*, gen. *kišraš*, reflecting PIE **ǵ^hesr*, **ǵ^hserm*, **ǵ^hsres*, cf. Greek *μήτηρ, μητέρα, μητρός* ‘mother’. He points out that the hysterokinetic and amphikinetic paradigms are younger offshoots of an earlier hysterodynamic paradigm which underwent morphological regularizations. In Vedic and Greek, similar regularizations largely eliminated accentual mobility (cf. Olander 2013: 137), though clear traces of the earlier mobility remain both in the accentuation and in the ablaut system, e.g. Vedic *pánthās, pánthām, pathás, pathíṣu* ‘path’, *ātmā, ātmānam, tmánā, tmáne* ‘soul’, Greek *πατήρ, πατέρα, πατρός, πατρί* ‘father’, *ὄργυια, ὄργυιας* ‘fathom’, also in monosyllabic stems such as Vedic *pāt, pādām, padás*, Greek *πούς, πόδα, ποδός* ‘foot’ and in the verbal system. Olander’s “mobility law” presupposes that Balto-Slavic shared the regularizations of Vedic and Greek as dialectal Indo-European innovations and that the remaining accentual mobility had no influence on the subsequent development of the Balto-Slavic system of accentuation.

When I started writing on Slavic accentuation in the early 1970-s, I adopted Pedersen’s view (1933: 22) that there is no trace of Indo-European accentual mobility in Balto-Slavic outside the nominal flexion of the consonant stems. This is in essential agreement with Olander’s position. Later I found numerous traces of accentual mobility in the Balto-Slavic verbal system (2010: 345). It then turned out that Ebeling’s rules for oxytonesis and barytonesis (1967: 580) which gave rise to the characteristic

lateral mobility of Balto-Slavic are largely superfluous if one starts from a strict comparative analysis of the Indo-European nominal flexion (cf. Kortlandt 2009: 104). The only remaining innovation is the barytonesis in the strong case forms of the masculine oxytone *o*-stems on the basis of the other flexion classes. It follows that both Olander's fixation of the stress on the second syllable in mobile paradigms (2013: 137) and his "mobility law" to restore accentual mobility are superfluous.

Olander reconstructs original fixed stress on the second syllable in Balto-Slavic mobile accent paradigms (2013: 132f.) followed by loss of a High tone (which became Low) on a short or contracted long vowel in final syllables but retention of a High tone elsewhere (2013: 141f.). Since I have shown in detail that this theory does not account for the data (e.g. 2009: 87-92 and 99-101, also 2010: 351-357), I shall not repeat the arguments here. However, it may be useful to emphasize that fixed stress on the second syllable of such words as Lith. *sūnūs* and Slavic *synъ* 'son' would yield fixed stress on the initial syllable as a result of Hirt's law and thereby eliminate the possibility of accentual mobility. Moreover, there is an essential difference between Baltic and Slavic accentual mobility. Baltic mobility is between the root and the ending of a word form, like the Indo-European "amphikinetic" type, whereas Slavic mobility is between the initial and the final syllables of a phrase, including clitics. The retraction of the stress to the pre-radical vowel in Lith. *nėveda* 'does not lead' and *prisimena* 'remembers' is evidently more recent than the lengthening of stressed **e* in *vėda* 'leads', which is limited to Lithuanian (cf. Kortlandt 2009: 9). The enclitic particles *n(a)* of the illative and *p(i)* of the allative were never stressed originally (cf. Kortlandt 2009: 91f.). In Slavic, the scope of lateral mobility was enlarged so as to include prepositions, prefixes and enclitic particles, e.g. Russian *ná vodu* 'onto the water', *né byl* 'was not', *pródal* 'sold', Slovene *lahkî* 'light', gen. *lahkegà*, dat. *lahkemù* (cf. Kortlandt 2011: 166). This development can be identified with the rise of distinctive tone in what I have called the Middle Slavic period (ibidem).

Tijmen Pronk has proposed that the tonal opposition in Slavic may continue the one reconstructed for Proto-Indo-European (2013: 155-157). This cannot be correct for various reasons. First, there is in Slavic no clear correlation between tones and root structure of which Lubotsky (1988) has found traces in Vedic and Greek. Second, "unstressed" word forms in Vedic (i.e. with Low tones only) are syntactically conditioned variants of accented word forms (with a lexically conditioned High tone). Third, there are no "unstressed" word forms in Baltic, where the rise of distinctive tone can be identified with the split between Latvian and Lithuanian (cf. Kortlandt 2009: 7-12). Prussian never had a tonal opposition, though it developed a quantitative distinction in the first component of diphthongs (cf. Kortlandt 2009: 265-267). Fourth, the rise of distinctive tone in Slavic was more recent than the generalization of accentual mobility in the masculine *o*-stems without an acute root vowel, e.g. Serbo-Croatian *zûb* (c) 'tooth', where Greek *γόμεφος* 'bolt' points to fixed stress on the root syllable. The problem with this development is that it affected neither masculine *o*-stems with an acute root vowel nor original root-stressed neuter *o*-stems which had become masculines in late Balto-Slavic. It also did not affect polysyllabic stems. It follows that the original paradigm of root-stressed masculine *o*-stems without an acute root vowel must have resembled the mobile paradigm more closely than either the corresponding paradigm with an acute root vowel or the original neuter paradigm which differed only in the nom.acc.pl. ending *-*a*?. I conclude that the mobile paradigm must have been identical with the affected paradigm in the barytone case

forms. The generalization of accentual mobility can therefore be dated between Meillet's law, which eliminated mobile paradigms with an acute root vowel, and the rise of distinctive tone, which eliminated the accentual identity of the barytone case forms in paradigms with fixed and mobile stress. If the barytone case forms of the mobile type had a different accentuation, it would be incomprehensible why the generalization of accentual mobility affected only one of the three types of root-stressed masculine *o*-stems and did not affect polysyllabic words such as Russian *narod* 'people' and *potók* 'stream' which received fixed root stress as a result of Dybo's law at a later stage.

The concept of "unstressed" or "unaccented" word forms has caused much confusion (e.g. Kortlandt 2009: 94-98, 2011: 80-82, 138-143, 241-243). Most types of misunderstanding can be avoided by reformulating the relevant statements in terms of High versus Low tone because these terms refer to inherent (paradigmatic), not configurational (syntagmatic) features (cf. Kortlandt 2011: 242). According to Olander's mobility law, "final high pitch became low, possibly as a result of contact with speakers of a language with fixed initial accent" (2013: 142). This is based on a misunderstanding. In those instances where this type of development has been recorded, such linguistic contact gave rise to an initial High tone which either replaced the original High tone under certain conditions or yielded doubly accented word forms with two High tones (cf. Kortlandt 2010: 353f. and 2011: 349-352, with examples from Russian, Polish, Kashubian, Polabian, Podravian, Slovak and Pannonian Slavic). It never yielded "unaccented" word forms with Low tones only, which originated in Vedic under certain syntactic conditions and arose in Kyōto Japanese as a result of an accent retraction, e.g. pre-accented *ki* L < H 'tree', *umi* LL < HL 'sea' (cf. Kortlandt 2011: 372). The latter development may be compared with the rise of "unaccented" word forms in Slavic.

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Summary

Vedic had a restricted tone system which can also be assumed for Proto-Indo-European. Various proposed rules generating the characteristic lateral mobility of Balto-Slavic accentuation are superfluous if one starts from a strict comparative analysis of the Indo-European nominal flexion. There is an essential difference between Baltic and Slavic accentual mobility: Baltic mobility is between the root and the ending of a word form whereas Slavic mobility is between the initial and the final syllables of a phrase, including clitics. The rise of distinctive tone in Slavic was more recent than the generalization of accentual mobility in the masculine *o*-stems without an acute root vowel. Linguistic contact with speakers of a language with fixed initial accent gave rise to an initial High tone which either replaced the original High tone under certain conditions or yielded doubly accented word forms with two High tones. It never yielded “unaccented” word forms with Low tones only, which originated in Vedic under certain syntactic conditions and arose in Kyōto Japanese as a result of an accent retraction. The latter development may be compared with the rise of “unaccented” word forms in Slavic.