

PIE. Lengthened Grade in Balto-Slavic

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As I have pointed out on several occasions (cf. 1985, 1988a), PIE. lengthened grade is reflected as a circumflex tone in Balto-Slavic. The evidence comprises seven categories:

- (1) The nom. sg. form of stems in a resonant, e.g. Lith. *akmuō* 'stone', *duktē* 'daughter', Latvian *ābuōls* 'apple', SCr. *žērāv* 'crane', Czech *žeráv*, reflecting **akmōn*, **duktēr*, **abōl*, **gerōu*.
- (2) The sigmatic aorist, e.g. SCr. 1st sg. *dōnījeh* beside *donēsoh* 'brought', *ūmrijeh* 'died', *zāklēh* 'swore', infinitive *rījet* (Dubrovnik) beside *rēčā* 'say'. This category is reflected in the East Baltic long vowel preterit, e.g. Lith. *bēr̃* 'strewed', *lėk̃* 'flew', *srėb̃* 'sipped'.
- (3) The 2nd and 3rd sg. form of the sigmatic aorist, where a laryngeal was lost after a lengthened grade vowel, e.g. SCr. *dā* 'gave' < **dōs*, *lī* 'poured' < **lēis*, as opposed to 1st sg. *dāh* < **doHs*, *līh* < **leHīs*-, cf. Vedic injunctive *stoṣam* 'I praise', *jeṣam* 'I conquer', with full grade vocalism (cf. Kortlandt 1987).
- (4) The metatony in the Lithuanian future, e.g. *duōs* 'will give', *liēs* 'will pour', as opposed to *būs* 'will be', *lis* 'will rain', dialectally also *žinōs* 'will know', *stovēs* 'will stand', *kalbēs* 'will speak' beside *rašīs* 'will write', *darīs* 'will do', *sakīs* 'will say' (Zinkevičius 1966: 361). The metatony reflects the loss of a laryngeal after a lengthened grade vowel in the aorist injunctive, e.g. **dōs*, **lēis*.
- (5) Original root nouns, e.g. Lith. *g.lā* 'pain', *žolė* 'grass', *m.sà* 'meat', SCr. *rījēč* 'word', *čār* 'magic', *sām* 'alone', Czech *čár*, *čára*, *sám*. The circumflex tone of the lengthened grade vowel contrasts with the acute of laryngeal origin in the verb, Lith. *gėlti* 'ache', SCr. *žālti* 'mourn', similarly Lith. *žėlti* 'grow'.
- (6) Root nouns with loss of a laryngeal after a lengthened grade vowel, viz. Latvian *sāls* 'salt', *gūvous* 'cow', cf. Lith. *sólymas* 'brine'.
- (7) The Lithuanian nom.sg. ending *-ė*, which was generalized from the root noun which is represented in *arklėd* 'stable', *avėd* 'sheepfold', *ahūd* 'pub', *pelūd* 'chaff store', cf. Vedic *-dhā*, Latin *-dēs*. Here again, the laryngeal was lost after the lengthened grade vowel.

Most of the alleged lengthened grade vowels which do not belong to the categories listed above are the result of Winter's law, according to which the unaspirated voiced stops of the proto-language have the same reflexes as sequences of laryngeal plus voiced aspirate (cf. Kortlandt 1988b). As I have nothing to add to my earlier discussion of Winter's law, I shall leave the material where an unaspirated voiced stop of the proto-language is involved out of consideration in the following.

My theory of the lengthened grade has recently been criticized by Jens E. Rasmussen (1989: 161 and 1992: 186–192). Rasmussen subscribes to the traditional doctrine, “die Akut als den Normalakzent im Bsl. vorschreibt” (1992: 186). He adduces four examples to support his view (1989: 161):

- (1) Lith. *súolas* ‘bench’, Latvian *suôls*, which he regards as a vrddhi derivation of Gr. *sélmata* ‘planks’, Hes. *hélmata*, Old Saxon *selmo* ‘bed’ (cf. Pokorny 1959: 898). This comparison seems quite useless to me. The Greek word cannot be separated from *selís* ‘cross-beam’, which may represent **twel-* (cf. Frisk 1973: 692) if it is of Indo-European origin at all. The Baltic acute tone can easily have been taken from the verb ‘to sit’, where Winter's law operated.
- (2) Lith. *voŭis* ‘ulcer’, Latvian *vâts* ‘wound’, which actually has a circumflex tone in Lithuanian. Rasmussen regards this word as a vrddhi derivation **H₃wâtH₂i-* of Gr. *ôterlê* ‘wound’ < **owatelnâ*, aor. *oûta* ‘wounded’ < **H₃utH₂-* (sic). This again seems quite arbitrary to me. The Greek words may not be of Indo-European origin. I find it impossible to separate the Baltic words from Lith. *vôjes* ‘suffering’, *pavôjus* ‘danger’, *vôjus* ‘weak’, Latvian *vâjš*.
- (3) Latvian *smiēnēs* ‘to laugh’, *smejuôs* ‘I laugh’, for which Rasmussen adduces Skt. *smitam* ‘smile’. The Sanskrit form is Epic and therefore inconclusive. Anyway, the absence of the acute tone from the Baltic present shows that we have to start from **smer-*, which agrees with Vedic *smáyate* ‘smiles’, and that the broken tone of the infinitive cannot have been taken from a present tense stem **smēr-*, for which there is simply no evidence.
- (4) Lith. *lokŭs* ‘bear’, Latvian *lâcis*, which Rasmussen regards as a vrddhi derivation of Lith. *lâkti* ‘lap’, though the most dangerous animal of the Baltic forest should hardly be thought of as a lapping pet. The comparison is disproved by Old Prussian *clokis* ‘bear’, which points to **tlā-*, also found in names with *Tlok-*. The word may be cognate with Lith. *tīl(k)t* ‘become silent’ if it is of Indo-European origin at all.

Another instance which can be adduced here is SCr. *sjěci* 'cut' (cf. Rasmussen 1992: 187), for which a short vowel is attested in OCS. *sekyra* 'axe'. The verb belongs to the same flexion class as SCr. *pěci* 'bake', *rěci* 'say', *těci* 'flow', but adopted the long root vowel for disambiguation from the root which is preserved in Lith. *sėkti* 'watch, follow' and Slavic *sočiti* 'indicate, pursue' (cf. Vaillant 1966: 163). The shortened length of SCr. *sjěci* was original in the infinitive and the *l*-participle, which had final stress before they adopted the accent pattern of *jěsti* 'eat' and *sjěsti* 'sit down'. It may be recalled here that Slavic does not distinguish between acute and circumflex in originally pretonic syllables.

Rasmussen claims "daß einsilbige Wortformen nur fallende Intonation (Kürze oder Zirkumflex) haben können" (1992: 188). The grain of truth in this statement is that lengthened grade vowels in original monosyllables have circumflex tone. This covers most of the categories adduced above. For instances which do not have a lengthened grade vowel, Rasmussen's statement is simply false. Besides, the Balto-Slavic circumflex was not falling but developed into a rising tone both in Slavic and in Lithuanian.

In support of his statement, Rasmussen adduces the "unerwartete" circumflex of Lith. *tiẽ* 'these' as opposed to the acute in *gerėjai* 'the good'. This presentation of the evidence disregards the following data:

- (1) The circumflex tone of *tiẽ* is limited to a part of the Lithuanian dialects, including the literary language. Elsewhere the form has an acute tone, as it has in Latvian *tiē*. It follows that the circumflex tone is the result of a recent local development and cannot be projected back into the Balto-Slavic proto-language.
- (2) The nom. pl. ending of nominal *o*-stems is circumflex *-ai* in Lithuanian. The same ending is found with derived adjectives in *-is*, e.g. *auksiniai* 'golden', *jaunučiai* 'very young', which have no neuter, no definite forms, and no mobile stress. It is also found dialectally as an unstressed pronominal ending, e.g. *šitai* 'these', *mažieji* 'the small'. It thus appears that circumflex *-ai* is the phonetic reflex of unstressed **-oi* in Lithuanian.

- (3) The Slavic evidence confirms that the stress was retracted from the masculine nom.pl. ending **-oi* at an early stage, e.g. SCr. *vŭci* 'wolves'. Moreover, stem-stressed neuters became masculines in Balto-Slavic while end-stressed neuters preserved distinct endings, as is clear from the agreement of the Old Prussian material with the Slavic evidence (cf. Kortlandt 1983: 183). As a result, there was a complementary distribution between unstressed **-oi* and stressed **-aH* in the nom.pl. ending of the *o*-stems. As the neuter ending **-aH* was disambiguated into nom.pl. **-aHi* and acc.pl. **-aHns* and stressed *i*-diphthongs were monophthongized in East Baltic and subsequently became *ie* in the literary languages, the generalization of circumflex *-ai* in nouns and acute *-ie* in pronouns and most adjectives was a natural development (cf. Kortlandt 1993). Thus, the acute tone of the pronominal ending ultimately continues the laryngeal of the original neuter ending **-aH*.

Another piece of evidence which Rasmussen adduces in support of his claim is the personal pronoun Lith. *jūs* 'you', Slovene *vî*, also *mî* 'we', *tî* 'thou'. Here again, his presentation of the data is inadequate. As in the case of *tê*, the circumflex tone is limited to a part of the Lithuanian dialects, cf. Latvian *jūs*, Old Prussian *ioūs*, also *toū*, which have an acute tone. The Slavic pronouns have a falling tone in Slovene but a rising tone in Posavian and southern Čakavian (e.g. Hvar, Vrgada, cf. Jurišić 1973: 78, 215). This points to secondary lengthening of an originally short vowel, which is the phonetic reflex of an acute tone. Slovene *krî* 'blood' has a falling tone because it has mobile stress (Meillet's law). The expected reflex of the acute tone is actually preserved in the original consonant stems *mîš* 'mouse' and *nît* 'thread', which Rasmussen does not mention. It is also found in the pronoun *jâz* 'I', where the acute tone is a result of Winter's law.

Another set of data which clearly invalidate Rasmussen's position is provided by monosyllabic aorist forms without a lengthened grade vowel. Here we find two accent patterns of verbs with an acute root vowel (cf. Stang 1957: 134):

- (1) SCr. *bîti* 'beat', *gnjîti* 'rot', *čûti* 'hear', *krîti* 'hide', aor. *bî*, *gnjî*, *čû*, *krî*. These words have fixed stress on the root in all Slavic languages.

- (2) SCr *bǫti* 'be', *luti* 'pour', *piti* 'drink', *viiti* 'twist', aor. *bī*, *lī*, *pī*, *vī*. These verbs have mobile stress in all Slavic languages. Unlike the first category, these verbs take the ending *-tŭ* in the 2nd and 3rd sg forms of the aorist in Old Church Slavic, which yields the opposite distribution of the one predicted by Rasmussen (1992: 191). The second category was evidently productive in Serbo-Croat, e.g. *šiti* 'sew', *miti* 'wash', aor. *ši*, *mī* beside *mi*. These verbs have fixed stress in all Slavic languages. There is no reason to assume an analogical development in the first category.

Thus, I conclude that Rasmussen's criticism does not stand up to scrutiny. It is based on a highly selective use of the evidence and on a wealth of unwarranted premises. The 19th century tradition of positing a lengthened grade for any unexpected long vowel should be abandoned. A correct evaluation of the accentual evidence from Balto-Slavic requires a detailed examination of the data and their structural relationships. Such an evaluation is of particular importance because Balto-Slavic is the only branch of Indo-European which distinguishes between lengthened grade vowels and long vowels of laryngeal origin.

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