Review Article

The dark past of Balto-Slavic prosody
On Jay Jasanoff's book *The prehistory of the Balto-Slavic accent*☆

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Abstract

The relationship between the prosodic systems of Vedic Sanskrit and Ancient Greek on the one hand and those of the Baltic and Slavic languages on the other is among the more complicated questions of Indo-European comparative linguistics. A recent book by Jay Jasanoff examines the question in detail and presents a framework for interpreting it historically. Jasanoff assumes, uncontroversially, that Proto-Indo-European had a prosodic system similar to that of Vedic and Greek. In order to derive the attested Baltic and Slavic prosodic systems from that of Proto-Indo-European he proposes a combination of phonological changes and analogical restructurings. The present study discusses the main ideas proposed in the book, subjecting them to a detailed criticism.
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1. Background

In Lithuanian, a Baltic language, the word *galvà* 'head' is accented on the final syllable in the nominative singular; in the accusative, on the other hand, it is accented on the first syllable: *gálvą*.[1] In the genitive we have *galvõs* with final accent, and in the dative, *gálvai* with initial accent. Such mobile accentuation patterns, where forms with final accent alternate with forms with initial accent, characterise not only this word, but is an important characteristic of the Lithuanian inflectional system. And it is not only found in Lithuanian: some Slavic languages, like Russian, sport a system of accentual mobility very similar to that of Lithuanian. In fact, similar systems, or traces of it, are found in all Baltic and Slavic languages, so that we can be certain that the system of paradigmatic accentual mobility was present in Proto-Baltic and in Proto-Slavic as well as in Proto-Balto-Slavic, whether we regard this as a "true" proto-language in the technical sense (e.g. Matasović, 2017:23) or as a continuum of related dialects (e.g. Andersen, 1996:63–64, 187–188). The problem of how the Balto-Slavic mobile accent paradigms arose is often regarded as one of the more challenging questions of Indo-European historical linguistics.

In two articles from 2008 and 2011 Jay Jasanoff, professor of Indo-European Linguistics and Philology at Harvard University, outlined a new theory of the origin of paradigmatic accentual mobility in Balto-Slavic. In an earlier article, from 2004, he had presented his view on the prehistory of the problem of syllabic tones in the Indo-European proto-language and some of its descendants, including Baltic and Slavic. *The prehistory of the Balto-Slavic accent* is a major elaboration of those three studies.

The goal of the book is to ''provide an accentological interface between IE and Balto-Slavic'' (p. xii), i.e. to give an account of the development of the prosodic system of Proto-Indo-European into the attested Baltic and Slavic languages. While Jasanoff states that the book was written to ''fill a gap'' (p. xi), he also mentions a more personal reason, without which he might never have written the book (p. xii): the ''contested aftermath'' to the article from 2004, which was heavily criticised by Kortlandt (2004/2009a); the discussion continued in Jasanoff (2004b) and Kortlandt (2005).

The book enters the list of rather heterogeneous book-length treatments of various aspects of the diachrony of Balto-Slavic prosody, including Stang's *Slavonic accentuation* (Stang, 1957/1965), Illič-Svityč's *Imennaja akcentuacija v baltijskom i slavjanskom* (Illič-Svityč, 1963; translated into English as *Nominal accentuation in Baltic and Slavic*, Illič-Svityč, 1979), Garde's *Histoire de l'accentuation slave* (Garde, 1976), Dybo's *Slavjanskaja akcentologija: opyt rekonstrukcii sistemy akcentnyx paradigm v praslavjanskom* (Dybo, 1981), my own *Balto-Slavic accentual mobility* (Olander, 2009), Sukač's *Introduction to Proto-Indo-Europan and Balto-Slavic accentology* (Sukač, 2013) as well as the numerous publications by Kortlandt on the topic, most of which are (re)published in his *Baltica & Balto-Slavica* (Kortlandt, 2009) and his *Selected writings on Slavic and general linguistics* (Kortlandt, 2011).

In the next section I briefly present the contents and structure of the book (Section 2). Then I discuss some general aspects of the book (Section 3) and the two main topics, viz. the outcome of plain long vowels in Balto-Slavic (Section 4) and the origin of accentual mobility (Section 5). The final section contains the main conclusions of my assessment (Section 6).

As Jasanoff's notation of reconstructed forms differs from mine in several respects, I should point out that, outside direct quotations, I use the principles of Olander (2015:26–31) (see also Olander, 2009:127–128), including a distinction between Proto-Slavic (PS), the actual ancestor of the Slavic languages, and Common Slavic (CS), a later, dialectally differentiated stage of Slavic. Note that Jasanoff uses the term ''Proto-Slavic'' to refer to a ''chronologically hybrid dialect'' (p. 43) that roughly corresponds to my Common Slavic at the segmental level, but to my Proto-Slavic at the prosodic level (pp. 42–43).

2. Outline of the book

Following the preface and a list of abbreviations, ch. 1, ''The Indo-European Background'' (pp. 1–30), presents the background of Jasanoff's theory of the prehistory of the Baltic and Slavic prosodic systems. Jasanoff provides an analysis of the segmental and prosodic systems of the reconstructed Indo-European proto-language (pp. 1–7), which is in most respects identical with the standard view as seen in Mayrhofer's handbook (Mayrhofer, 1986), including the view held by Hoffmann (1976:615 n. 12) and Schindler (*apud* Mayrhofer, 1986:161 with n. 267) that Proto-Indo-European had a phoneme **/i/* contrasting with a phoneme **/i̯/*, a view I consider in more detail in Section 3. Jasanoff then discusses various segmental and prosodic problems in individual non-Balto-Slavic languages that are relevant to the question of Balto-Slavic prosody: Indo-Iranian (7–10), Greek (10–15), Anatolian (15–16) and Germanic (16–20). He posits one ''ordinary fricative'', **s*, for the phonemic system of Proto-Indo-European (p. 2); as far as I can see, he does not reveal his opinion on the phonological properties of the laryngeals, some or all of which are often regarded as fricatives. This question is of potential relevance to the discussion of the effects of the laryngeals in Balto-Slavic in ch. 3. The chapter is concluded by a discussion of ''Theoretical Issues'', where Jasanoff criticises Kiparsky's generative approach to accentology.

Ch. 2, ''Balto-Slavic: The Descriptive Picture'' (pp. 31–73), proceeds to descriptions of the prosodic systems of the attested Baltic languages (Lithuanian, pp. 32–42; Latvian, pp. 62–64; Old Prussian, pp. 64–67), of ''Proto-Slavic'' (pp. 42–62; roughly corresponding to what I refer to as ''Common Slavic'', see Section 1) and of the ancestor of these languages, Proto-Balto-Slavic (PBS; pp. 67–73). It is important to note that Jasanoff explicitly takes the existence of a Balto-Slavic proto-language for granted, referring to the shared accentual innovations of Baltic and Slavic as being ''among the most telling proofs of their special relationship'' (p. 1 n. 2). While this view is certainly the most common among Indo-Europeanists (see e.g. Villanueva Svensson, 2014:162), for Jasanoff's theory of Balto-Slavic prosody it is indispensable: as we shall see, the prosodic innovations – phonetically regular as well as analogical – Jasanoff assumes for pre-Proto-Balto-Slavic are numerous and non-trivial to an extent that makes parallel developments in the two branches unimaginable (see Olander, forthcoming).

In ch. 3, ''The Origin of Acuteness'' (pp. 74–103), Jasanoff elaborates on some of the hypotheses he put forward in the article from 2004 already mentioned. One of the sections (''Jasanoff 2004: Acuteness from Length'', pp. 76–80), presents his hypothesis that Balto-Slavic and Germanic have passed through a stage with three distinctive vowel quantities in final