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The prehistory of the Balto-Slavic accent by Jay H. Jasanoff
(review)

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Jay H. Jasanoff. *The prehistory of the Balto-Slavic accent*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017. 268 pp.

Reviewed by Ronald F. Feldstein

Harvard Indo-Europeanist Jay Jasanoff's book, *The Prehistory of the Balto-Slavic Accent*, is primarily devoted to the question of how the Proto-Indo-European accent system evolved into that of Common Balto-Slavic, as well as Proto-Baltic and Proto-Slavic taken separately. I will discuss the book in terms of how useful it is for a student or specialist in the field of Slavic linguistics. In 1963 Horace Lunt wrote a well-known article about the field of Slavic accentology, in which he lamented the fact that "writings on the subject still are confusing and opaque and ... too often they lead off at once into recondite details of Lithuanian, Sanskrit, and Greek where not every Slavist is prepared to follow". Now, 56 years after Lunt's article, this very same situation makes it difficult to follow many of the points in Jasanoff's book for a person without expertise in Indo-European linguistics. The author does his best to make things comprehensible in the first chapters by presenting separate introductions to the accentuation of Proto-Indo-European, Indo-Iranian, Greek, Anatolian, and Germanic. The chapter on Proto-Indo-European introduces the various types of static and kinetic ablaut and accentual relations (5) based on the research of such scholars as Narten and Schindler. Suggestions for further reading are given, since a full treatment of this and similar topics is not feasible in this book. However, throughout the book one encounters complex argumentation based on particular aspects of Proto-Indo-European structure, which makes this book more difficult for me to read than accentological books or papers more narrowly focused on Slavic, such as Stang 1957, Jakobson 1963, or Dybo 1962. As a result, Lunt's comment strikes a responsive chord for the Slavist without extensive Indo-European training. On the other hand, an Indo-Europeanist should feel quite at home learning about the facts of Balto-Slavic in this book.

Following the brief chapters on non-Balto-Slavic languages, the author reviews the accentual systems of Lithuanian, as a representative of Baltic, followed by a chapter on the Slavic accentual system. There is a basic review of the accentual paradigms (APs) established by Stang (1957), known as types a, b, and c. There is also an appeal to a phonological feature that no longer exists but is necessary to maintain the existence of certain sound laws. Curiously,

both Jasanoff and Dybo (1962) appeal to such somewhat speculative features, but they do so in opposite ways. For example, the functioning of the Meillet and Dybo Laws requires an additional feature besides those normally recognized in Common Slavic. First, the Meillet Law specifies the Slavic accentual merger of both acute and circumflex syllables as circumflex in the first syllable of mobile accentual paradigms but not in the case of immobile paradigms. In the immobile accentual paradigms of Slavic, acute and circumflex do not merge and circumflex immobiles experience the rightward shift of the stress known as the Dybo Law. Why do the ostensibly identical circumflex (or short) first syllables of **mobile** paradigms behave differently from the analogous syllables of the **immobile** accentual paradigm? Dybo's answer (1962: 8) is that first syllables of mobile paradigms had a phonological feature on the order of the Latvian broken tone or *stød* ("in the mobile paradigm there was a special intonation—the analog of the Latvian broken tone"). Jasanoff, on the other hand, refers to the initial syllable of mobile paradigms as "left-marginal" accent and attributes a "low or falling" pitch accent (59) to such syllables, which differentiates them from initial syllables of the immobile paradigms, which he refers to as having "lexical" accent.

The curious thing is that we get the reverse attribution of pitch accent and broken tone in the works of Jasanoff and Dybo when we come to another thorny issue—the nature of acuteness in unstressed syllables. Just as an additional phonological feature is needed to make the Meillet and Dybo Laws work correctly, we also need such a feature to make the Saussure and Hirt Laws work. They make reference to acute syllables in unstressed position—either a pretonic acute in the case of the Hirt Law or a posttonic acute in the case of the Saussure Law of Lithuanian. However, Balto-Slavic is often assumed to have had an acute tone only under stress. As stated by Jakobson (1963: 671), "the word contained no more than one phonologically rising, acute syllable"; cf. Olander 2009: 110–11 for further discussion. In Jasanoff's third chapter, which is largely devoted to the origin and phonological properties of the acute, he claims that the acute was originally not a particular pitch accent in Balto-Slavic, but "a *stød* or passage of creaky voice" (102). Thus, we have a *stød*-like phonological description assumed for the mobile paradigms by Dybo but the assumption of virtually the same thing for acute syllables by Jasanoff. One wonders if this is a sort of *deus ex machina*. Of course, differences of interpretation are numerous in the specialized treatments of Balto-Slavic accentology. As noted by Lunt (1963: 83), "The fundamental assumptions and methods" of certain accentologists "are simply incompatible". Relative chronologies can also be very varied, depending on the given author's specific theory. For example, Jasanoff places Hirt's Law after the development of Balto-Slavic accentual mobility (106), while Olander, the author of another major book on Balto-Slavic accentology, regards Hirt's Law as "the first phonetic accent replacement in the prehistory of Baltic and Slavic" (2009:

25). It sometimes seems that each accentological treatment has its own different chronology, reflecting different assumptions about several processes. This compounds the difficulty for the reader, who must keep several different relative chronologies in mind while evaluating each new treatment of the subject.

Some of Jasanoff's main points of argumentation are the origin of acute syllables from long (but not hyperlong or hiatal sequences) vowels rather than only from lost laryngeals as assumed by other accentologists such as Kortlandt (1975). Jasanoff also emphasizes the original nonaccentual phonological nature of acute syllables, a feature called "acuteness", as mentioned above. However, the single most important focus of this book is the author's treatment of the origin of Balto-Slavic accentual mobility. This was also the main theme of Olander 2009, and it is important that the reader understand the reason behind this. The Balto-Slavic branch stands out among the Indo-European languages due to the fact that it has a mobile accentual paradigm in which forms of a single grammatical paradigm alternate between initial stress and end stress (as exemplified by the Russian nominative vs. accusative noun singular: *skovorodá* ~ *skóvorodu* 'frying pan' and the verbal plural vs. feminine singular of the past tense: *náčali* ~ *načalá* 'begin' etc.). Balto-Slavic is often compared to Greek and Vedic, in which oxytonic (end-stressed) forms generally correspond to the Balto-Slavic mobiles. Scholars have long attempted to answer the question of which type reflects the original Indo-European situation and which is an innovation—oxytonic or mobile. The Moscow School has often left the question unanswered, referring to the Proto-Indo-European accentual paradigm in question as "mobile-oxytonic", which covers both Balto-Slavic and Greek-Vedic bases. Some recent Moscow interpretations hint at mobility being the original Proto-Indo-European pattern, but this seems unlikely in view of the fact that the initial ~ end mobility of Balto-Slavic only occurs in that branch. Olander's 2009 monograph offers one of the first phonological explanations for the origin of Balto-Slavic mobility (2009: 155–56), which he calls the "Mobility Law". He assumes that there was a retraction from the final mora of oxytonic forms to the first syllable in specific phonological circumstances. This has direct relevance to Jasanoff's book, since the entire final half of the book (chapters 4, 5, and 6) is devoted to refuting Olander's Mobility Law and proposing another phonological interpretation of how mobility came to exist in Balto-Slavic.

Simply put, Jasanoff's thesis and the main thrust of the book derive from Saussure's original assumption that the internal syllable retraction from the second to first syllable in consonantal stems (e.g., in the Lithuanian *r*-stem *dùkterį* < **dùktērín* 'daughter', 118) analogically led to the mobile paradigms. Saussure was very hesitant about calling this an actual sound law, but Jasanoff's thesis is that this was really a true sound law (118). As a new sound law, Jasanoff refers to it with the combined name "Saussure-Pedersen's Law" (118), in recognition of Saussure's original observation (1922: 533) of the retraction

and Pedersen's 1933 interpretation of it as creating a new initial ~ final accentual type. However, there is an important second part of Jasanoff's thesis on the origin of Balto-Slavic accentual mobility. Retraction from a **medial** syllable in a three-syllable word can produce a new initial ~ final accentual paradigm, where final stresses remain in place. However, in a four-syllable word things get more complicated. Retraction from the third to the second syllable would produce a pattern that never came into existence as such. Therefore, Jasanoff proposes a companion to the Saussure-Pedersen Law (SPL), which he calls the Proto-Vasil'ev-Dolobko Law (Proto-VDL, 128), which automatically converted retracted stresses to oxytones in tetrasyllabic words with mobility (i.e., many four-syllable words became end-stressed).

After establishing SPL and Proto-VDL as the main engines of his innovative Balto-Slavic mobility process in chapter 4, Jasanoff analyzes a copious number of nominal and verbal forms in chapters 5 and 6, respectively. It turns out that many forms do not follow the proposed sound law and have been subject to analogical changes. This appeal to analogical change is not only true of Jasanoff, of course. As first described by Illič-Svityč, the accentual evolution of masculine nouns is replete with analogical processes in which non-acute barytones become mobile instead of oxytonic (e.g., *zobъ 'tooth'), neuters change to masculines (e.g., *dvorъ 'courtyard'), and oxytones do not become mobile but become barytones, subject to the Dybo Law (e.g., *pero 'feather'); cf. Illič-Svityč 1963: 109–40; 1979: 94–123 and page 165 of Jasanoff's book.

Jasanoff points out that many of Olander's sound laws were also subject to the same issue of analogical, rather than phonological, change and he compares his and Olander's solutions to a large number of accentological problems. In the end, we are left with the impression that these are interesting competing theories, but each with phonological rules that often do not apply and yield to analogical generalizations. Thus, much accentological work dealing with the transition from Proto-Indo-European to Proto-Balto-Slavic still appears to be a work in progress, awaiting a final determination in the future as to whether unassailable phonological rules will ever explain how Proto-Indo-European oxytonesis evolved into the mobile accentual paradigms of Balto-Slavic.

Jasanoff gives credit to Jakobson's groundbreaking 1963 paper for its application of the concept of *enclimomena*—accentless words—to Slavic linguistics (25). However, there are other brilliant concepts in Jakobson's paper that are contradicted by certain theses of the book. One prominent example of this is the nature of the neoacute stress in Slavic. The author refers to the neoacute (234) as "a special rising accent, the neoacute, which came to characterize AP b in the same way that the acute accent characterized AP a". This is at odds with Jakobson's statement that "the so-called neoacute did not constitute a third prosodic unit, phonologically opposed to the old rising and falling tone, in any one of these dialects". Jakobson showed that in every Slavic dialect there

could be no more than one rising pitch accent from the old acute and neoacute and that the old acute could either lose its rising pitch or merge with the neoacute, but it could not constitute a second rising pitch. If the author does not agree with Jakobson, one would have expected some discussion, rather than the statement that the neoacute is a “special rising accent”. What I also miss in this book is any mention of Jakobson’s brilliant interpretation (1929, 2018) of how Slavic accent evolved on the basis of systemic choices in favor of either vocalic tonality (the Slavic southwest) or consonantal tonality (the Slavic northeast), but this is probably due to the fact that the book stops at the point of Proto-Slavic.

This book may serve a useful purpose for Slavic scholars who wish to become more knowledgeable about Indo-European and its relation to Balto-Slavic. It is definitely not an easy introduction to the field and should be read together with an introduction to Indo-European linguistics and the comparable accentological volumes by such scholars as Dybo, Stang, Olander, and Kortlandt, since each accentologist takes a critical look at the works of others and only this approach can elucidate the lasting discoveries and separate the wheat from the chaff.

I would like to point out two misprints in the dates of publications. On page 62, footnote 65 refers to Stang 1967, but it should be corrected to 1966. On page 163, footnote 91 refers to Dybo and Nikolaev 1978, but it should be 1998. The book would benefit from a topic and author index. It now only has a word index. Curiously, the electronic edition allows any word or phrase to be searched, but the hard copy edition does not.

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