

Review Essay

The Dawn of Slavic: An Introduction to Slavic Philology. ALEXANDER M. SCHENKER. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995. Pp. xx + 346. \$55.00 (hardcover).

Reviewed by Ronald F. Feldstein, *Indiana University*

Alexander Schenker's recent book is a handsome volume, well bound, and printed on excellent paper. The book's appearance is much more attractive than the ubiquitous "camera-ready" volume; however, the cost is correspondingly higher. The book is not intended as a work of original research, but as a handbook, which can introduce the "beginning student of the earliest period of Slavic culture" (p. xv) to the field and its resources.

The work makes an interesting statement about the topics that should form the student's introduction to the subject, since it consists of three main sections, devoted respectively to the early history of the Slavs on the world stage (part one), the language of the Slavs from the Proto-Indo-European period through the disintegration of the unified Slavic language (part two), and a history and description of the early manifestations of the Slavic written language (part three). In addition, there are four appendices, containing a history of the Slavic philological discipline, a historical chronology, an Orthodox religious calendar, and a sample of early Slavic writing. Based upon my experience of teaching related subjects to graduate students, I would say that at least two semesters would be required to cover these diverse subjects in any detail. Such handbooks generally have emphasized only the linguistic aspect, which is covered in part two. The book's novelty can be seen in the fact that it provides very extensive discussion of both history and paleography, which are usually touched on in only a cursory manner in books intended to introduce the student to Slavic historical linguistics. However, even though the usual one-semester course would need to place its main emphasis on linguistic issues, the historical and cultural parts of Schenker's book could serve as useful background reading. Since the content of parts one and three is not nearly as technical as that of part two, the beginning student could readily read and assimilate the information in those sections on an independent basis. However, part two—the section devoted to historical linguistics—would most likely have to be covered under the supervision of an instructor, in view of the complexity of the subject and the need to know more background than is provided in the text.

In my discussion of this book, I will only briefly review the contents of parts one and three, but will attempt to discuss the linguistic section (part two) in more detail, with a focus on those points that I believe could be improved by the author.

In part one, the Slavic interaction with a number of other nations is presented in an interesting manner, using frequent citations of original sources to encourage the student to consult other, more detailed works. Many little-known but highly pertinent facts are presented about the background of the mission of Cyril and Methodius, and these can enliven the study of Old Church Slavonic and illuminate its historical context. Similar descriptions are given for the major branches of the Slavic zones. I would view the entire first section as a historical account that is all too often unknown to the graduate student of Slavic linguistics and that should become an integral part of our curriculum. I noted one serious error in section one, however. The Galician language of northwestern Spain, a Romance language transitional between Spanish and Portuguese, is confused with the Celtic language of ancient Gaul, which has been referred to as "Gaulish"; thus, Schenker incorrectly states, "Remaining on the linguistic map of Western Europe were several Celtic languages—Galician in northwestern Spain . . ." etc. (p. 12 n. 24). But since this error does not directly pertain to the Slavic facts, it does not detract from the usefulness of the first section of the book. The author refers to a number of zones using color names, such as "White Serbia" and "White Croatia" (p. 19). It would have been useful to explain the meaning of such color designations, which often refer to directions on the map.

Part two, devoted to the early Slavic language, presents a large number of topics. It is very useful to have the major issues laid out in such clear relief. In discussing the Proto-Indo-European background of Slavic, the author wisely includes information on both older and newer reconstructions of the system of stop consonants, reflecting both the neogrammarian concept of voiced aspirates and the more recent theories of glottalic consonants (pp. 75–76). However, I feel that part two could be improved in a number of ways, mostly related to its treatment of certain basic topics of Slavic historical phonology. I will now review the most significant areas that cause me to question the author's treatment. These topics include the use of the term "Late Common Slavic," rising syllabic sonority, palatal and palatalized consonants, diphthongs, and accentology.

In speaking of the two major phonological tendencies, known as "intrasyllabic synharmony" and "rising sonority," the author states, "Throughout its long history the Proto-Slavic sound system was affected by two fundamental tendencies" (p. 82). This, however, contradicts the usual notion that Early Proto-Slavic was **not** characterized by these tendencies and that the period in which they **begin** to function is known as "Late Proto-Slavic" or "Common Slavic." Van Wijk states this clearly: "Towards the end of the Proto-Slavic period two tendencies were in effect which significantly altered the phonetic system of Slavic" (1931:39). In Mel'nyčuk, we read that "the Late Proto-Slavic period is marked by especially intensive changes . . . the overwhelming majority of them were caused by the functioning of the tendency that is characteristic of the whole Late Proto-Slavic period" (1966:41). Thus, it would seem to make things clearer for the beginning student to designate changes such as $s > x$ and the

merger of *a* and *o* as Early Proto-Slavic, assigning the rules of synharmony and sonority to Late Proto-Slavic.

Speaking of the relative sonority ranking of the different classes of sounds in connection with the tendency to rising syllabic sonority, the author states, "the phonemes with the lowest sonority are voiceless spirants" (p. 82). This is obviously done in order to explain how it is that *s* can precede stop consonants at the beginning of a syllable, as in such typical Proto-Slavic cases as the first syllable of *straxz*, *spěxz*. However, such a comparison of obstruent classes in terms of sonority is very difficult to support, since stop consonants present a constriction of the airstream that obviously surpasses that of spirants. In fact, Jespersen (1926:191) specifically listed fricatives as **higher** in sonority than stops (also discussed in Zinder 1979:253). The solution for Slavic can be the one adopted by Avanesov (1956:42–43), who avoids the anomaly of *st-/sp-* groups by establishing the three global sonority classes of vowels, sonorants, and obstruents, since the internal division of obstruents does not appear to obey the rule of rising sonority. Bethin (1992:51) also presents a pertinent discussion of this phonological issue.

Unfortunately, the student is apt to be confused by Schenker's unclear treatment of palatal and palatalized consonants. The basic distinction between the two is very important for the linguistic treatment of Slavic, yet it often has been treated in a clumsy way. As stated by Lunt, "*palatal* consonants . . . have a single palatal . . . articulation," but "*palatalized* consonants . . . are characterized first by their labial, dental, or velar primary articulation and second . . . by the feature of *sharping*" (1956:306). In the first place, the book under discussion does not have an adequate means of transcribing palatal and palatalized consonants. The very same apostrophe after a consonant is used not only to represent both palatal and palatalized consonants, but occasionally for retroflex as well! A beginning student is likely to be very confused by this practice. Thus, we encounter the symbols *k'* and *g'*, initially defined as "palatalized velars" (p. 80). Later, the same symbols are used to represent the palatal stops of standard Macedonian, where *k'* and *g'* are said to correspond to the *št* and *žd* of Bulgarian (p. 164). Similarly, the symbols *t'* and *d'* are used to represent both palatal stops and palatalized dentals. In the consonantal chart (p. 85), as well as in the discussion of *tj* and *dj* reflexes (p. 95), *t'* and *d'* refer to palatal stops; yet, when referring to the South Russian dialectal third person *-t'* ending, the same symbol refers to a palatalized dental (p. 164). As the above cited forms make clear, there is the additional problem in that the very same sounds (palatal stops) are represented as *t'* and *d'* in reference to Proto-Slavic, but as *k'* and *g'* in reference to Macedonian. There is also a similar problem with the representation of retroflex sounds. Such sounds are first represented with the acute symbol, e.g., as *ś* (p. 80). However, the same retroflex sound later appears with an apostrophe in the forms *dōys'-ě* and *dōys'-ōs* (p. 83). Later, the sound appears with no apostrophe at all, in what apparently is a misprint (p. 84). In other words, there is a total

inconsistency in representing palatal and palatalized sounds and in the use of a consonant with an apostrophe as a symbol. I have only cited a small sample of such instances, but they are quite numerous in the book, since discussions of palatals and palatalized consonants are a major topic in Slavic historical linguistics. I would suggest that it is not only necessary to provide consistent symbols for all of these sounds, but to clearly present the difference between palatals and palatalized consonants. Thus, the modern Slavic languages with palatalized consonants (e.g., Russian and Bulgarian) should be contrasted to those with palatal stops (e.g., Czech and Macedonian), so that the assumed phonological system of Proto-Slavic can be viewed in its proper context. The lack of clarity in dealing with this issue also detracts from the presentation of the reflexes of the second regressive and progressive velar palatalizations. We are told that the reflex of palatalized *g'* is "simplified to *z'* in most Slavic languages" (p. 89). Yet, if this is meant to refer to a **palatalized** *z*, then it is true only of East Slavic. Similarly, the author states that the South and East Slavic reflex of palatalized *x* is *s'*. Again, if the apostrophe means palatalization, then it is accurate only concerning East Slavic, but not South.

The author claims that the "monophthongization of diphthongs led" to the phonemic use of pitch in Slavic (p. 88). However, on the basis of the diphthongal reflexes, one can conclude that this must have occurred earlier, at the moment when long and short diphthongs began to be uniformly treated as two mora sequences. The author should have detailed the important neutralization of diphthongal quantity. Originally, first diphthongal components were opposed on the basis of quantity, at a time when the second component could not have constituted a mora (since it would have yielded a three-mora sequence). The shortening of the first component was concomitant with the inclusion of the second component as an intonable mora, and this is what made pitch phonemic, since the tonal peak could then have been on either component of the now uniformly two-mora diphthong (see Feldstein 1990:46–47). Jakobson's transcription and treatment of diphthongs is fully consistent with this point of view, as in Jakobson (1952), where we read that "the two morae group *ar* . . . as one whole carried the syllabic length and intonation" (1952:307). Thus, since originally short and long diphthongs all were uniformly monophthongized to two-mora vowels, it is reasonable to assume that the leveling of quantity, and the concomitant phonemicization of pitch, preceded that process.

In the field of accentology, the author accepts a view other than the one most widely accepted and held by Slavic linguists. Specifically, Schenker adopts Stankiewicz's position, according to which the Saussure accent shift (Saussure Law) operated not just in Baltic, but in Slavic as well (p. 96). The author starts by classifying Slavic accentologists on the basis of whether they accept the Saussure accent shift or not. Interestingly, the vast majority of those who accept the Saussure shift are linguists of past generations, in contrast to the contemporary status of those who reject it. It is strange, though, to group those who

reject the Saussure Law as coinciding in their views, since Kuryłowicz also rejected the possibility of establishing the genetic continuity of Indo-European stress into Slavic, while Stang, Dybo, and Illič-Svityč have vigorously represented the opposite viewpoint. This seems to be a much more fundamental difference than whether the Saussure Law is accepted, but the author does not mention it. One would have hoped that the Dybo Law would also be presented, since it is an important alternative to the Saussure Law for Slavic, based on the prosodic complementarity of barytonic and oxytonic root vowel quantity, and it solves many of the problems raised by the Saussure Law. At the very least, it seems to be the major accentological current at the present time (Feldstein 1990:43–46), and students should be informed of it, as well as the revolutionary aspects of Stang's work (1957), who was the first to both reject Saussure for Slavic and simultaneously claim that there is a provable genetic link between Indo-European and Slavic accent.

The history of the neoacute stress is one of the most important chapters in the field of Slavic accentology. The author refers to Jakobson's groundbreaking paper (1963:98), the fundamental tenet of which is that the neoacute never represented a third tonal entity in Slavic, in opposition to the original rising and falling, but was variously merged with either of the original pitches in the different zones of Slavic. In the words of Jakobson, "in none of these dialects did the so-called neoacute constitute a third prosodic unit, phonologically opposed to the old tonic rising and falling" (1963:174). Yet the author tells us "With the appearance of the neoacute . . . a ternary opposition became possible" (p. 98), although it is stated that this was only a temporary phenomenon. In stating an apparent contradiction to Jakobson's thesis, the author should indicate his opinion as to how this "ternary" prosodic opposition (of *parg-*, *karl-i-*, *gard-*) was realized in phonological terms. The author speaks of the original acute "yielding a short fall" in Serbian-Croatian and Slovene, yet the pitch of short vowels is not a relevant feature of Slovene, which does not have the pitch opposition on short vowels. The statement is only true of the modern-day reflexes of Serbian-Croatian, due to the fact that Neoštokavian has new short rising vowels as the result of a much more recent retraction. In historical terms, which is what the author intended, it would have been more accurate to state that the old acute first simply shortened, with no change in pitch. As Ivić demonstrated on the basis of Serbian-Croatian dialect data, "the loss of short vowel pitch . . . obviously did not occur before jer-fall and the positional lengthening of vowels in the newly closed syllable" (1965:136). The author's factually correct statement (p. 98) that Czech merged the old acute and neoacute, while Slovak and Polish merged old acute and circumflex, can be explained on the basis of the chronology of pitch loss, since the common denominator of the Czech development is rising pitch (old acute and neoacute), while that of Slovak and Polish is nonfinal stress (old acute and circumflex) (cf. Lehr-Splawiński 1917:74; and Feldstein 1975:72).

Finally, a general suggestion for the book's section on historical phonology

would be that it attempt to interrelate the fundamental tendencies and changes that mark the disintegration of Late Proto-Slavic unity. Jakobson's work (especially Jakobson 1929) considerably advanced our understanding of the interconnection between a given Slavic language's choice of either consonantal or vocalic tonality (i.e., consonant palatalization or vocalic pitch), depending on the system at the differing chronological moments of jer-loss in each zone. A modern and accessible account that could reflect these insights would be of immense value to the student. The listing of isoglosses of the various Slavic zones (pp. 162–64) is a step in the direction of tying together the disparate facts. Yet, the transcriptional inconsistencies already alluded to, and the general absence of a discussion of the tonality changes imposed by jer-fall, detract from the maximum usefulness of this treatment. Perhaps, the importance of jer-loss for the succeeding systems is not dealt with since it postdates the author's conception of "Proto-Slavic." Yet, jer-fall can be and has been considered as the "last event of Common Slavic" (cf. Trubetzkoy 1922:218).

Having dwelt in some detail on the author's treatment of certain topics of Slavic historical phonology, some comments can now be made on the remaining parts of part two, which are primarily devoted to morphology. The major paradigms are presented in tabular form, which can be very handy for the student. The list of suffixes (pp. 112–23) is very useful reference material. However, the intriguing question of why there is a series of alternate front and back vowel suffixes (e.g., *rǫč-ǫk-a*, but *měr-ǫk-a*; *krǫž-ǫk-z*, but *list-ǫk-z*; *oč-ǫk-o*, but *kol-ǫk-o*) is answered by the statement that "the front-jer variant occurred after soft consonants" (p. 119). This does not really answer the question, since the above examples of "soft consonants" were originally hard. Bernštejn (1974: 83–86) provides an interesting discussion of this issue in terms of the differing vowels that preceded *k*, linked to the various original stem-types.

In the discussion of the verb (pp. 130–49), there might have been some discussion of the competing ways of treating the verbal stem, based either on the historical two-stem approach, or on an adaptation of Jakobson's one-stem Russian system to the earlier period, as found in the work of Lunt (1974).

Part three, devoted to Slavic alphabets and early writing, as well as the book's appendices, provide very valuable reference material of the type glossed over all too quickly in most courses on Old Church Slavonic. It could form the basis of a specialized course on Slavic writing and culture, especially in conjunction with part one. A knowledge of this material would certainly enable the Slavic graduate student to deepen the knowledge that is gained through the reading of original texts.

In conclusion, I must say that I have a very positive impression about the concept of this book, and, especially, about the valuable cultural and historical material presented in the first and last sections. My main reservations concern the aforementioned aspects of the linguistic treatment of Proto-Slavic, found in part two. In particular, I feel that the treatment of palatalization and its

transcription should be improved, along with several sections that deal with diphthongs and accentuation. It should be noted that the book contains a vast number of topics that rarely appear within a single volume, and it has not been possible to even mention a large number of these in a single review.

In the context of my discussion of Schenker's book, I would like to briefly address the question of what other current choices exist and what such an introductory text should ideally offer the student. I would say that there are two primary desiderata for such a book: first, scholarly acceptability, and second, accessibility to the student in terms of volume of material and language.

The teacher of Slavic historical linguistics is confronted by the problem of finding an introductory textbook that is linguistically acceptable, yet elementary enough so that it can be fully assimilated in the semester that is traditionally allotted to this purpose. Often, in the United States, accessibility is taken to mean a book written in English, since most beginning graduate students are not able to easily understand complex scholarly discussions in other languages, even Russian. From this point of view, the choices have been very few in number. One of the most prominent treatments of the subject in English, Shevelov (1965) has been criticized for being far too detailed for a beginning semester of introductory Slavic linguistics, in addition to which it deals only with phonology, and not morphology or syntax. Since an introductory course is usually called upon to touch on the basics of morphology, and perhaps syntax, Shevelov's book can be viewed as even more difficult to complete in the less than one semester that must often be devoted to introductory Slavic historical phonology. A more recent book in English, by Carlton, suffers from some of the traditional inaccuracies concerning palatal and palatalized consonants, such as the incorrect statement that Czech has "palatalized t, d, n" (1991:26, 237). The book abounds in minute detail, with too much attention paid to complexities of orthography and not enough to real structural patterns.

Traditional textbooks in languages other than English include those of Meillet (1965) and Braeuer (1961), which are rather dated, but at least present the facts in a rather straightforward manner. I find that one of the more interesting and accurate recent textbooks is the recent book in Russian by the reputable linguist Čekmonas (1988), who previously wrote under the name Čekman. An example of his refreshing accuracy can be seen in his treatment of Czech palatals, where we read, "They are pronounced differently than Russian t', d', n', since they are palatal" (1988:70). This book, written for students of Slavic linguistics at Lithuanian universities, also incorporates valuable information about Baltic and its relation to Slavic. Written in an uncomplicated style that is accessible by beginners, its only limitation for use in the United States may be the fact that it is in Russian, which may not be too great of a barrier in this case.

The ideal textbook would capture the brilliance and excitement of the Prague School, as represented by Jakobson and Trubetzkoy, so as to give the student much more than a mere catalogue of reflexes. The facts would not only

be depicted accurately, but structural patterns and their ramifications would be demonstrated fully. When concepts are introduced, such as the tendencies toward rising sonority and syllabic synharmony, they would be presented so that the full listing of phonological changes could be readily grasped. Slavic frequently presents patterns in which there are two extreme zones, such as the Northeast and the Southwest, where one zone possesses feature A, but not B, and the other zone is the opposite. Moreover, between these zones there is often a transitional zone in which the dialects present neither A nor B in their exact form. I feel that learning would be enhanced if the student could be taught, or at least shown, as many such patterns as possible. For example, as taught by Jakobson, phonemic consonantal palatalization and phonemic vowel tone are mutually exclusive; the former is found throughout East Slavic and the latter in many Slovene and Serbian-Croatian dialects. Between these extremes lie zones including Macedonian, West Bulgarian, Czech, and Slovak, in which neither of the two features exists. Such patterns are frequent not only in the sphere of phonology, but in such morphological domains as the nominal and verbal paradigms, the use of the copula and clitics, etc.

Morris Halle (1986) wrote that the brilliant lessons of Jakobson (1929) have not been learned and exploited as much as might have been hoped. It is certainly true that these insights have still not been incorporated in textbooks of Slavic historical linguistics, in contrast to the more successful attempts to reflect Jakobson's synchronic teachings. Our discipline is sure to benefit greatly when and if the contributions of Jakobson and Trubetzkoy can be made accessible as part of an introduction to the discipline of Slavic historical linguistics.

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