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## THE PREHISTORY OF THE SLAVIC VOWEL SYSTEM (A REPLY TO MATE KAPOVIĆ)

The methodological differences between Kapović and myself are threefold:

- (1) He disregards the chronological aspects of linguistic developments. As a result, he mixes up elements from different stages of development.
- (2) He disregards the linguistic system in which developments take place. As a result, he reconstructs typologically improbable linguistic systems.
- (3) He multiplies the input criteria of his rules in order to arrive at the correct output. The larger the number of input distinctions, the easier it becomes to generate any desired output.

A combination of these devices renders his treatment opaque and confuses the issues at hand.

In a recent issue of *Rasprave* (2019), Mate Kapović continues his incessant cascade of personal insults. Here I will ignore his numerous unfounded allegations and offensive remarks and limit myself to the factual evidence under discussion. The basics can be found in my earlier little article (Kortlandt 2018), which may serve as an introduction to the following.

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It should be clear that my chronology (1989 and 2011a: 157–176, 277–309) is not “a preimagined wider hypothesis” (thus Kapović 2019: 76) but the result of an integration of the developments established during the past 150 years of historical linguistic research into a coherent chronological sequence. It is based on investigations by Leskien, Hirt, Saussure, Fortunatov, Meillet, Šaxmatov, Van Wijk, Dolobko, Vasil’ev, Pedersen, Stang, Dybo, Illič-Svityč, Ebeling, Winter and others. There is no need to repeat all the arguments or to adduce the complete data set, especially because the history of the problem has been competently reviewed by Collinge (1985) and Olander (2009).

Kapović (2019: 119) attributes to me the view “that the Moscow Accentological School approach to the issue of the origin of Balto-Slavic accentuation, which sees it as the most archaic reflex of the original Proto-Indo-European tonal system, is wrong”. This is not correct. In my view, the distinction between High and Low tones originated in Indo-Uralic before the development of Indo-European ablaut (cf. Kortlandt 2010: 67–72, 409–414, and Lubotsky 1988). The original system was to some extent preserved in Vedic, where a phrase could have any number of High and Low tones, e.g. RV 1.1.6 *távét tát satyám* on one hand and 10.75.5 *imám me gaṅge yamune sarasvati sútudri* on the other. The accentuation was in part syntactically conditioned and in part lexically. The Balto-Slavic system represents a further development of the Vedic system, with loss of the original tones and development of new tonal distinctions in East Baltic and Slavic. The accent patterns that resulted from the original tones were changed in consequence of various retractions of the accent (cf. Kortlandt 2009: 103–109 and 2011a: 319–327). The system can to some extent be described in terms of “dominant” versus “recessive” syllables, allegedly reflecting original High versus Low tones (thus Kapović 2019: 124). It is clear that the original High and Low tones cannot have coexisted with the newly developed tonal distinctions in Baltic and Slavic, contrary to Kapović’s anachronistic view (2017: 390f., cf.

also Kortlandt 2012). This exemplifies the three types of methodological error mentioned above.

2. Kapović again repeats his view that the length of S/Cr. *rúka* ‘hand’ is original whereas the shortening in Czech *ruka* is analogical. In fact, there never was an analogical development in Czech, which has faithfully maintained the distinction between the shortened pre-Dybo pretonic length in *malina*, *jazyk* and *ruka* and the preserved post-Dybo pretonic length in *zábava*, *národ* and *trouba*. In Serbian and Croatian, post-Dybo pretonic length was consistently preserved, e.g. in the paradigm of *trúba* (b) ‘trumpet’, but pre-Dybo pretonic length was restored in *rúka* (c) on the analogy of the barytone forms acc.sg. *rûku* and nom.acc.pl. *rûke*, though not in obl.pl. *rùkama*, Čakavian *rukàm*, *rukàh*, *rukàmi*, where the short vowel was preserved, as it was in Štokavian *màlina*, *jèzik*, *svjèdok*, *mùškī*. At a later stage, the analogy affected obl.pl. *glàvama* of *glàva* (c) ‘head’, which was in many dialects replaced by *glávama*, as Kapović notes himself (2019: 80). He does not explain the difference between the accent patterns of *rúka* (c) and *trúba* (b), nor the difference between the short vowels of *màlina* and *jèzik* and the long vowels of *zábava* and *národ*.

Kapović thinks (2019: 81) that the restoration of pretonic length in Čakavian 2nd sg. *trēsēs* and 3rd sg. *trēsē* can only be based on 1st sg. *\*trēsō*, disregarding the thematic aorist (original imperfect) paradigm with 2nd and 3rd sg. *trēse*, in compounds *-trēse*. The final stress in the present tense was taken from the athematic presents. Contrary to Kapović’s statement (2019: 83), the Slavic infinitive in *-ti* does not continue a loc.sg. form of the *i*-stems but a dat.sg. form in *\*-teiei* (with haplology), e.g. *piti* ‘to drink’, Vedic *pītāye*, cf. also Prussian *poutwei*, Vedic *pātave*. There was another infinitive of Balto-Slavic origin in *\*-ti*, Prussian *poūt*, Polish *róśc* ‘to grow’, *trząśc* ‘to shake’, *kląc* ‘to curse’ < *\*-tō*, with a long vowel from retraction of the accent from the final jer. Czech largely generalized the long vowel while Slovincian generalized the short vowel to some extent (cf. Stang 1957: 153). Kapović does not distinguish between the different types of infinitive.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The short infinitive in *\*-ti* was apparently created in Balto-Slavic times as a stem-stressed counterpart to the end-stressed infinitive in *\*-tei* after the haplology, cf. Lith. *nėšti*, *imīti* versus Russian *nesti*, *vzjati* (cf. Stang 1957: 152), with different generalization of the ending.

While pretonic long vowels were shortened before Dybo's law, which gave rise to new pretonic long vowels, posttonic long vowels were never shortened, except for the fact that acute long vowels were shortened with preservation of the timbre of the original long vowels. This is the origin of the new timbre distinctions: *i, ě, a, u, y* versus *ɨ, e, o, ɔ*. The original short vowels were subsequently lengthened as a result of Van Wijk's law, contractions in posttonic syllables, retraction of the accent from final jers, and lengthening in monosyllables. Kapović agrees that posttonic length is preserved in Serbian and Croatian, but not in West Slavic, where posttonic long vowels are allegedly shortened sometimes in accent paradigm (a) and always in accent paradigm (c). This is a peculiar opinion. It means that the shortening in words with mobile accentuation (c) was conditioned by the circumflex (falling) tone in the barytone forms of the paradigm and that the shortening in paradigms with an initial acute tone (a) was conditioned by High and Low tones in the posttonic syllables that had somehow survived since time immemorial (Kapović 2019: 87). This again exemplifies the three types of methodological error mentioned above. In fact, words with mobile accentuation (c) simply generalized the short medial vowel and words with fixed initial stress (a) partly joined the mobile type (c), as I had pointed out earlier.<sup>2</sup>

3. Beside the generally accepted gen.pl. ending *-ɔ* < PIE *\*-om*, Kapović (2019: 98) posits another ending *\*-ǭ* < *\*-ōm*, allegedly from PIE *\*-oom* and *\*-eH<sub>2</sub>om*, which disappears in West and East Slavic, as well as in Čakavian, Kajkavian, Posavian, and most of other Štokavian and Slovene, but was “originally preserved when under accent (thus in a. p. *c* only) in trisyllabic forms, where it yields *\*-ǭ*. This variant ending can then disappear in some dialects, linger on as remnant in others (...), while in some it may eventually secondarily and gradually spread to become the main ending in gen<sup>pl</sup> of *o-* and *ā-*stems”. Thus, he claims that the S/Cr. gen.pl. ending *-ā* spread from trisyllabic forms such as *\*sramotǭ* (c) ‘shame’ while the alleged long final *\*-ǭ* was shortened everywhere else. This theory again shows the three types of methodological error mentioned

<sup>2</sup> As to Old Polish *sędzić, przystąpić, żędać*, I may simply refer to what I have written earlier (2018: 291). The only reason why I did not mention the name of Mislav Benić in connection with the dialect of Kukljica is that this connection is common knowledge since the third IWoBA (Leiden 2007, cf. Kortlandt 2011a: 311, 2011b: 359). Do we have to mention the name of Aleksandar Belić every time we cite a form from the Novi dialect? The phrase “giving proper respect” (Kapović 2019: 90) sounds rather inappropriate in view of the author's style of debating.

above: the S/Cr. gen.pl. ending  $-\bar{a}$  is attested several centuries after the loss of final  $*-\bar{v}$ , the alleged long  $*-\bar{v}$  has no place in the phonological system between the rise of the new timbre distinctions and its earliest reflexes, and its supposed marginal existence is only postulated in order to arrive at the desired outcome in accordance with the theory. For a full discussion of the gen.pl. ending I refer to my earlier work (Kortlandt 1978, 2009: 111–127, and 2014a).

According to Kapović (2019: 101), “it is clear that the lengthening in the  $k\bar{d}k\bar{o}t$  type cannot be separated from the lengthening in the  $b\hat{o}g$  type”, in spite of the fact that we always find a short vowel in forms like  $k\bar{d}k\bar{o}t$  beside  $k\bar{d}k\bar{o}t$  in the former type and never such forms as  $*b\bar{d}g$  beside  $b\hat{o}g$  in the latter. In my earlier studies I have made clear why the Proto-Slavic lengthening in  $*b\hat{o}g\bar{v}$  was a logical consequence of Dybo’s law (Kortlandt 1989: 53, 2011a: 171, 2018: 292) whereas the lengthening in S/Cr.  $k\bar{d}k\bar{o}t$  was an analogical development that did not reach all of the dialects. Kapović rejects Dybo’s law “in forms like 2<sup>sg</sup>  $*m\bar{o}z\bar{e}š\bar{y}$  ‘you can’,  $*n\bar{o}siš\bar{y}$  ‘you carry’, definite adjective  $*n\bar{o}v\bar{y}j\bar{y}$  ‘new’, etc.” (2019: 102) and maintains that the latter lengthening was “due to a simple compensatory lengthening caused by the fall of final yers” in all forms with an initial circumflex (falling) tone, and that the long vowel was later eliminated in polysyllabic words by a large number of different local developments. Here we find again the same disregard of chronology, disregard of structural features, and multiplication of rules in order to arrive at the desired result. It again suggests the preservation of ancient High and Low tones in posttonic syllables that lengthened (instead of shortened, as in West Slavic) the corresponding vowels in accent paradigm (c). Note that the lengthening in such forms as S/Cr.  $p\bar{o}m\bar{o}c$  ‘help’ can easily have arisen on the analogy of forms like  $p\bar{o} m\bar{o}c$  ‘for the power’.

According to Kapović (2019: 111f.), “pre-Dybo forms like  $*z\bar{a}stava - *\bar{o}borna - *p\bar{r}i\bar{r}oda$ ” [with  $\bar{\sim}$  for a long rising tone, i.e. my  $*z\bar{a}-, *p\bar{r}i-$ ] would yield “post-Dybo forms  $*zast\bar{a}va - *ob\bar{o}rna - *p\bar{r}i\bar{r}oda$ ” [with  $\bar{}$  for the acute], which was simplified to “innovative  $*zast\bar{a}va - *ob\bar{o}rna - *p\bar{r}i\bar{r}oda$ . [...] The same kind of generalization occurred in other prefix derivatives like  $*nar\bar{o}d\bar{b}$ ,  $*p\bar{r}i\bar{r}od\bar{b}n\bar{b}$ ,  $*zasl\bar{u}z\bar{b}n\bar{b}$  ‘deserving’ (cf.  $*zasl\bar{u}ga$ ),  $*pov\bar{o}rt\bar{b}k\bar{b}$  ‘return’ (cf.  $*pov\bar{o}rt\bar{b}$  ‘return’), etc. Thus, almost all nominal/adjectival derivatives of this type generalized the innovative synchronic rule that the first syllable after the prefix (and after  $*-o-$  in compounds) is always stressed and the accent is either  $*$  if the syllable

(root) is short or \*<sup>u</sup> if the syllable (root) is long”. This again shows Kapović’s disregard of chronology, his disregard of structural features, and his multiplication of rules because the metathesis had already taken place in South and West Slavic and the acute had already been lost in posttonic syllables before Dybo’s law, yielding a short vowel in the first posttonic syllable (cf. Kortlandt 1989: 51–53, 2011a: 168–171). Thus, we must reconstruct \**zāstāvā*, \**obrānā*/*\*obrōna* (East Slavic \**obōrna*), \**prīrōdā*, with \**-ā* reflected in the Slovene neo-circumflex and shortened elsewhere. The long vowel in Čakavian *črnina* ‘blackness’, *ravnica* ‘plane’, *dvorīšće* ‘courtyard’ etc. is clearly analogical (cf. already Dybo 1968: 172–174 and 213). Kapović’s reference to Hirt’s law (2019: 115) again betrays the same methodological errors. The differences between S/Cr. *dvōrište* (b) ‘yard’ and *blātīšte* (a) ‘mud-pit’ and between Czech *pekař* (c) ‘baker’ and *rybář* (a) ‘fisherman’ reflect the original distribution.

4. I have reconstructed \**è* and \*<sup>u</sup>*ò* for those instances of \**è* and \**ò* that received the accent as a result of Stang’s law though the distinction is not reflected in most languages (cf. especially Kortlandt 2014b and 2016). In Kajkavian, \**è* and \*<sup>u</sup>*ò* merged with long \**é* and \**ó* that had originated from the retraction of the accent from final jers, e.g. *òsmi* ‘eighth’, *širòki* ‘broad’, *zelèni* ‘green’, pl. *rešèta* ‘sieves’, loc.sg. *stòlu* ‘table’, gen.pl. *nòvih* ‘new’, distinct from the short vowel in *kònj* ‘horse’, *òsem* ‘eight’, *dòber* ‘good’, *mògel* ‘could’, *selò* ‘village’, gen.sg. *potòka* ‘brook’. The short vowel in the present tense *nòsi-* was introduced on the basis of the other forms of the verb (not merely on the basis of the original 1st sg. form, as Kapović suggests). The postulation of “super-long” vowels from contraction in order to explain the difference between *nòsiš* and *nòvih* (Kapović 2019: 78) again exemplifies the third type of methodological error.

Kapović maintains (2019: 117) “that Czech *ů*, Slovak *ô* is the phonetic reflex of \**ò* in monosyllables”. This is contradicted by Czech *osm*, Slovak *osem* < \**òsmь*, *oheň* < \**ògnь*, *mohol* < \**mòglь*, as opposed to *òsmy* < \*<sup>u</sup>*òsmy* < \**osmy*̂ (Stang) < \**òsm̃y* (Dybo), like Kajkavian *òsem* versus *òsmi*. I therefore think that the root vowel of nom.sg. Czech *kůň*, Slovak *kôň* was taken from the case forms where Stang’s law had operated before the general retraction of the accent in the other case forms that restored initial *o-* in polysyllables (see further Kortlandt 2011a: 345f.). Kapović substitutes \**ò* for my \*<sup>u</sup>*ò* (“I have adapted Kortlandt’s notation here”, 2019: 117), which renders the problem incomprehensible and the discus-

sion vacuous. He ignores the rule that short rising vowels were lengthened under certain conditions in Czech and Upper Sorbian (e.g. Kortlandt 2011a: 341f.). It must be regretted that his way of presenting the evidence misinforms his readers and obscures the issues. One can only hope for a more civil encounter of opinions in the future.

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## **Pretpovijest slavenskoga samoglasničkog sustava (odgovor Mati Kapoviću)**

### *Sažetak*

Metodološke su razlike između Kapovića i mene trojake:

- (1) On zanemaruje kronološki aspekt jezičnoga razvoja. Posljedica je toga miješanje elemenata iz različitih razvojnih etapa.
- (2) On zanemaruje jezični sustav koji se razvija. Posljedica je toga rekonstrukcija jezičnih sustava koji su tipološki malo vjerojatni.
- (3) On umnožava ulazne kriterije svojih pravila kako bi dobio točan rezultat. Što je više ulaznih razlika, lakše je generirati bilo koji željeni rezultat.

Kombinacija tih postupaka čini njegov pristup nerazumljivim.

**Ključne riječi:** akcentuacija, vokalska dužina, slavenski

**Keywords:** accentuation, vowel length, Slavic