

Luka Velić: “Long syllable development in Slav(on)ic and loss of a. p. b i-type noun declension in modern Croatian”

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Abstract

This article deals with a particular syllabic development in the Proto-Slav(on)ic language and its consequences for the declension of i-type nouns in Croatian.

Key words: syllable, root, vowel length, i-type nouns

This paper argues that the loss of a. p. b¹ *i*-type nouns in Croatian is due to an influx of nouns with developed long roots in the rest of the declensional system. The following comparative overview will serve as a brief introduction to the data that the paper will later work on.

Proto-Indo-European (PIE) nouns with diphthongs in the root seem to have predominantly been long. These nouns were more recent innovations or unchangeable in comparison with the root nouns, which were changeable by umlaut² and could be long³ as well. Some examples were apparently long or short, such as *h₃n[̄]ōm[̄] ‘name’,⁴ and that does not exhaust the whole system of lengths, as some might be hidden behind combined sequences of a vowel and laryngeal.⁵ Examples of opposition in changeable nouns include: *h₂rkto- ‘bear’ – *deywo- ‘god’, *gwen(e)h₂- ‘woman’ – *k^woyneh₂- ‘punishment’, *ǵ^hweh₁ri-⁶ ‘animal’, *med^hu- ‘honey’. From these examples it seems that the ancient *i- and *u-stems, at least superficially, lacked opposition and were merely short. Systems of long nouns are even newer if we deal with daughter languages instead of PIE. For example, Italian *scusa* ‘apology’ is of mixed accent descent – the formation stems from the most frequent conjugational forms in the present rather than the infinitive and is formed after the analogy of adjectives such as *diffuso* ‘diffused, infiltrated’, which had a long vowel by analogy in Latin.⁷ In German we have *Rede* ‘speech’ after *reden* ‘to speak, to talk’, whereas *Name* ‘name’ is arguably an archaism as it is an old PIE *n-stem of varied root length - see above.

In Balto-Slav(on)ic languages, but not in the Balto-Slav(on)ic proto-language, consonant development underwent an advanced stage by producing open syllables. This development is also visible in Old

¹ As categorised in Kapović (2007): 71.

² As distinguished in Matasović (1997): 131-32.

³ E.g. *pōds ‘foot’ (> G. (Dor.) πῶς, Goth. fōtus).

⁴ I would speculate that the length of the root vowel in this noun is in flux due to it being a part of a diphthong. Moreover, the final sonant of the word appears to be syllabic.

⁵ Laryngeals seem to have been important in the history of many languages and were in part responsible for vowel length or lengthening after phonological changes in the system of the three laryngeals – for examples in Balto-Slav(on)ic - Matasović (2008): 88-89.

⁶ Kapović (2009): 240.

⁷ Through borrowing English has *street* (< OEng. *stræte*) from Latin (*via*) *strāta* ‘a wide/long way’: for other Latin loanwords see Freeborn (2006): 79.

Church Slavonic, where it is said that an ‘open-syllable law’ was alive,⁸ and only partially in Lithuanian and more so in Latvian⁹, where it is regularly found in certain case endings, most notably in the accusative singular of all nouns, e.g. *vilka* ‘wolf’ (but Dpl. *vilkams* ‘two wolves’). Examples abound in Slav(on)ic in rather frequent words,¹⁰ e.g. *moka* (or *maka*)¹¹ ‘wheat’, *roka* ‘a hand’, *možb* ‘a man, a male, husband’, *srěda* ‘the middle; Wednesday’, *mlěko* ‘milk’, *vlastb* and so forth. The first three examples were potentially formed after the final vowels were shortened or reduced as a result of a compensatory lengthening, more so among the latter three where vowel-sonant switching, i.e. liquid metathesis (when a vowel in a new position becomes longer), has occurred. There is also a comparatively newer set of nouns such as *mastb* ‘fat; ointment’ and *rěčb* ‘thing; word’, which have arisen by analogy, either after synchronically similar but etymologically differing nouns (*vlastb*) or as a result of opposition to the verb, itself possibly the result of the innovative Balto-Slavic umlaut.¹²

Broadly speaking, it seems that any wider development of the analysed sorts has mostly avoided the *i-stems, i.e. i-type nouns in Croatian, for besides *vlastb* there is one other notable example, namely *pōtb* ‘way’, while the rest are comparatively new and widespread. The paragraphs that follow deal with the present state of such nouns in Croatian and more specifically their accentuation. Nominal declension in Croatian has been shortened in part through accentuation. There is no trace in the contemporary standard language of the once widespread accent paradigm *b* among i-type nouns. Traces can only be found in dialects, namely Kajkavian and Chakavian, *stvār* ‘thing’, although this has arisen through accent fixation upon the root as in a. p. *a* nouns.¹³ The accent seems to have shifted to the root rather early here, long before the time when any data from various dialects were analysed elsewhere by other authors as it is always present on the root. It had probably shifted

⁸ Damjanović (2003): 57.

⁹ It does seem possible that *ruoka* ‘a hand’ (~ Lith. *ranka*) was developed after some Russian influence, but that is too speculative and, in this author’s opinion, incorrect.

¹⁰ Even *srěda* ‘the middle; Wednesday’ was developed to signify a part of week.

¹¹ Root vowel marked as in Matasović (2008).

¹² See Matasović (2008): 128-29. Such etymologically altered nouns are considered in detail in Kapović (2009), whose stance is similar to the one taken here.

¹³ Kapović (2015): 769.

in other nouns such as *pūt*, which today is an *a*-type noun, until being superseded by the accent of nouns such as *vlâst* (see above), when it vanished or – as the modern language suggests – switched declension. While there are traces among long-root nouns, there are apparently none among short-root ones, although by the author's accounts there are local dialects, such as those of Kistanje and Knin in Dalmatia¹⁴, that make some use of such nouns, e.g. (*tê*) *nòci* 'that night', and *mutatis mutandis*, (*od*) *vlâsti* 'from the (city) government'. These forms may be old, but seeing as they are not attested elsewhere, one may more reasonably assume their more recent development. Indeed, a number of later processes may have determined their current accentuation.

The nouns cited are only rarely used with such accents, and perhaps only in certain contexts that the author has not yet identified. Given that they are predominantly used by the Serbs, they may have originated in different language uses. A case analogy seems rather obvious at times, e.g. (G/Lsg.) *nòci* and (I) *nòcu*¹⁵, and analogy after *a*-type nouns in a way seems inevitable, e.g. in (Gsg.) *šàha*, *màta*, *ràta* (from *šàh* 'chess', *màt* 'check-mate' and *ràt* 'war'), which are all new (compare [*pòsljē*] *šàha* 'after chess game'). It seems reasonable enough to suppose the influence of the growing a. p. *c* and a. p. *a* *e*-type nouns upon the accent in the paradigm therein,¹⁶ or even before that the influence of *a*- and *e*-type nouns in the simplification of the gender system of *i*-nouns. It is possible that later *e*-type a. p. *b* nouns, especially those with long roots, apart from the development discussed previously, conceived in part by analogical lengthening akin to the *kanovac* lengthening,¹⁷ and less frequently a. p. *c* nouns, influenced the fixing of accents to the endings. This remains to be considered in greater detail elsewhere, although it is quite possible that they influenced *i*-type nouns

¹⁴ The paper is dealing with the pre-war Serbian and Croatian dialects – Kistanje and to a greater extent Knin have very different populations now.

¹⁵ Two isolated local štokavian dialects, namely those of Sunger and Mrkopalj, show a similar accent in a number of nouns concerning the instrumental case, which may be commonly viewed as archaic (also in Prapatnice – all the data are from Kapović 2015: 769).

¹⁶ The accent in the foremost stage of influence, i.e. the first one, is supposed not to have been altered as among short-root a. p. *c* nouns by etymology (i.e. *nòc(ь) > *nòc* – for more see Kapović 2015: 231).

¹⁷ On the *kanovac* accent and *kanovac* lengthening see Kapović 2015: 741.

after the qualitative and quantitative accent shift of i-type a. p. b nouns towards the root, or the beginning of the word, namely before the latter ones completely abandoned the same declension. The two tendencies – the first one with a regressive, the second one with a progressive accent shift – may have produced the modern (Knin, Kistanje) *nòci* : *nòci*, *vlásti* : *vlâsti*.

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Sažetak

Indoeuropski je sustav imenskih osnovnih dugih slogova djelomice prenesen u baltoslavenske jezike koji su sami barem jednim dijelom stvorili otvorene slogove u određenim okružjima, a slavenski je sustav onda valjda zbog djelovanja takozvana ‘zakona otvorenih slogova’ utjecao na hrvatsku jezičnu građu, gdje su imenice i-vrste nova duga sloga potpunoma potisnule imenice i-vrste naglasnoga obrasca b, odnosno tako je glede standardnoga jezika dočim u mjesnim govorima tragovi postoje i gdje se glede imenica kratke osnove dade naslutiti niz utjecaja, i to u novije vrijeme onoga imenica nova duga sloga e-vrste.