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## NORTH SLAVIC PRESENT PARTICIPLES AND CASE ENDINGS OF SOFT STEMS

This article posits a regular sound change of final \*-in(s) to \*-ē(s) in the group of Slavic dialects from which East and West Slavic later developed. This change accounts for the origin of some case endings of the "soft" stems (the nominative and accusative plural and the genitive singular of *jā*-stems, as well as the accusative plural of *jo*-stems). This change never occurred in the ancestors of the South Slavic dialects, but it still preceded some Common Slavic sound changes, such as the change of Proto-Slavic \*ē to \*ā after \*j. This accounts for the origin of the North Slavic present participles in *-a* (e.g. Old Russian *nesa*, *bera*) which spread analogically from the verbs in which *-a* developed regularly from \*ā after *j* (e.g. Old Russian *znaja*).

KEY WORDS: *Slavic dialects, North Slavic, sound change, present participles, case endings.*

Proto-Slavic inherited the PIE present participles in \*-nt-, parallel to the Latin forms like *ferens*, *ferentis* "carrying", Greek *phérōn*, *phérontos*, and Sanskrit *bhārā*, *bhāratas*. The OCS forms like *bery*, *berqšta* "carrying" and *prose*, *prosešta* "begging" can be derived directly from the PIE prototypes \*b<sup>h</sup>er-ōnts, \*prok'eyents (Matasović, 2008: 125). However, Old Russian verbs of the first conjugation have the mysterious ending *-a* in the Nominative singular of the masculine and neuter form of the present active participle, cf. ORuss. *nesa* "carrying", *veda* "leading"; the forms in the palatalized stem-final consonant do not appear until the 15-16<sup>th</sup> centuries (Vinokur, 2004: 96), hence the Modern Russian forms *nesja*, *vedja*. These forms are, without any doubt, due to the analogy with the forms of the active present participle (N sg. m. and n.) of the second conjugation, where we find *prosja* "begging", *kolja* "stabbing" already in Old Russian. Of course, in the second conjugation, the ending *-ja* is the regular reflex of the PS. nasal \*-ǵ (cf. OCS *prose*, *kolje*).

However, the origin of the Old Russian *-a* in *nesa*, *veda* is disputed. Some linguists assumed that the ending is based on the analogy with the verbs of the second conjugation *prosja*, *kolja* (Černyx, 1962: 279f.). If this were correct, the ending *-a* would be taken from the verbs like *prosit'*, *kolot'*, and the non-palatalized stem-final would be generalized from the oblique cases of the verbs like *nesti*, *vesti*. But the same ending *-a* is found in Czech, cf. Cz. *nesa* "carrying",

*reka* "saying", *moha* "being able", etc., and in Czech, no such analogy is possible, since verbs of the second conjugation have the ending *-e* (*prose*), which could not have triggered the change of the expected *\*-y* to *-a*. Likewise, the ending *-a* found in Old Polish (e.g. *reka* "saying" in "Kazania Świętokrzyskie") cannot be due to the analogy with the second conjugation verbs. The parallelism between Czech, Old Polish and Old Russian points to the existence of a common North Slavic innovation. With this in mind, we propose a new solution to the problem of the North Slavic ending *\*-a* of the present participle.

North Slavic participles in *-a* can be explained if we posit one simple sound law operating in late dialectal Proto-Slavic, namely in the precursor of the North Slavic dialects:

- (1) PSl. *\*-in(C)* > *\*-ē* after *\*j*

This sound law (1) never reached the South Slavic area, but it still predated several Proto-Slavic sound developments, such as the change of *\*ē* to *\*ā* after palatals and *\*j* (see below), as well as the jotation of consonants. To understand fully how and when the law operated, it is necessary to place it in the relative chronology of Proto-Slavic sound changes affecting the end of the word ("Auslautgesetze", cf. Matasović, 2008: 123-127). Therefore, we posit the following developments:<sup>1</sup>

- (2) *\*prasī-nts* > South and North Slavic *\*prosīns* > OCS *prose*, ORuss. *prosja*

(3) *\*znājānts* > *\*znājūns*<sup>2</sup> > *\*znājīns*<sup>3</sup> > North Slav. *\*znājēs* > *\*znajē* > ORuss. *znaja*<sup>4</sup> > South Slavic *\*znajēs* > OCS *znaje*

(4) *\*nesānts* > *\*nesūnts* > *\*nesūs* > North Slavic (analogically) *\*nesā* > ORuss. *nesa* > South Slavic (regularly) > *\*nesūs* > OCS *nesy*

In Proto-Slavic, *\*-ē* was regularly changed to *\*-ā* in participles formed from the roots ending in *\*-j-*, e.g. *\*čōjēs* > *\*čōjē* > *\*čuja* "hearing", *\*pajēs* > *\*pajē* > *\*poja* "singing", *\*znājēs* > *\*znajē* > *\*znaja*. This process was Proto-Slavic, but it occurred rather late in the relative chronology of Proto-Slavic sound changes (Matasović, 2008: 103);<sup>5</sup> the forms in *-a* were subsequently lost in South Slavic, but preserved in North Slavic, where the ending *-a* was analogically extended first to masculine singular of the stems in *\*-j-*, and then to all (masculine and neuter) stems of the first conjugation, e.g. to *\*nesā* > ORuss. *nesa* "carrying". One could object that Czech has the suffix *-e* rather than *\*-a* after the stems in *\*-j-*, e.g. *znaje* "knowing", *kryje* "hiding", rather than expected *\*znaja*, *\*kryja*. However, both *znaje* and *kryje* must

<sup>1</sup> For the conventions in representing phonemes of (Early) Proto-Slavic see Matasović, 2008 and Holzer, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> The low vowels were raised in the final syllables before nasals. This is quite generally accepted (see e.g. Kortlandt, 1979; Matasović, 2008: 123); if the rule is extended to all the same change accounts, e.g., for the final *-i* in OCS *dvšti* "daughter" < *\*duktēr* (Lith. *duktė*), but this is not strictly relevant to the present discussion.

<sup>3</sup> This change (*\*ū* > *\*ī* after *\*j*) is generally accepted (Matasović, 2008: 146). It is independently motivated by the developments seen, e.g., in PSl. *\*sjūtej* "to sew" (Lith. *siūti*) > *\*sjitej* > OCS *šiti*, Croat. *šiti*.

<sup>4</sup> The final change of *\*ē* to *a* is discussed below.

<sup>5</sup> Early Slavic loanwords in Lithuanian have *ė* for Proto-Slavic *\*ē* which changed into *\*ā* after *\*j* and palatals, cf. Lith. *časas* "time" vs. Old Russian *časъ*.

be analogical anyhow, since \*VjV would have been contracted by the great vowel contraction around the year 1000 (Matasović, 2008: 163-164). Thus, we may freely posit original \*znaja and \*kryja for Early West Slavic.

The sound law (1) posited for North Slavic does not have any exceptions, as far as we are able to tell. Moreover, it is not *ad hoc*. It can be independently motivated by developments observed in North Slavic genitive singulars and nominative-accusative plurals of the *jā*-stems, as well as in the accusative plural of the *jo*-stems. Here the developments were as follows:

(5) PSl. \*dōsjāns > \*dōsjūns > \*dōsjīns > North Slavic \*dōsjēs<sup>[6]</sup> > ORuss. *dušě* > South Slavic \*dōsjē > OCS *duše*

(6) PSl. \*kanjāns > \*kanjūns > \*kanjīns > North Slavic \*kanjēs > ORuss. *koně* > South Slavic \*kanje > OCS *konje*

It might be objected that the sound change posited in (1) is phonetically unnatural, but this is besides the point, since the law is formulated in terms of Proto-Slavic phonemes, the exact phonetic realization of which is quite uncertain. Thus, it may well be that, phonetically, the sequence \*-īn was realized as a special nasal vowel already in Proto-Slavic, but the important thing is that this nasal vowel should not be confused with the later Proto-Slavic (and OCS) *ę*. Positing the sound law (1) differs from postulating Fortunatov's "nasal yat" because no new phonemes are reconstructed in Proto-Slavic; moreover, if the law is placed in the exact position in the relative chronology of the Early Slavic sound changes, many of the problems facing earlier derivations of the North Slavic participles and deviant case endings disappear.<sup>[7]</sup>

Thus, the North Slavic participles in *-a* and the aberrant case endings in *-ě* represent common innovations, due to a sound law that occurred in the precursor of the East and West Slavic languages (the sound change of \*-īn to \*-ē after \*j, posited above). This sound change pre-dated at least some sound changes that must be posited for Proto-Slavic, e.g. the change of \*ē to \*ā after \*j, but this does not present a problem for our hypothesis. We know that there were other common innovations that affected all Slavic languages even after some dialectal changes had occurred. For example, the "j-Umlaut" (the change of back vowels into their front counterparts) was posterior to the third palatalization, which is dialectal Proto-Slavic (it never affected the Novgorod dialects, and its results are partially different in the West Slavic languages): PSl. \*juga became \*jъgo > OCS *igo* rather than \*jъdzo > \*idzo, which we would have expected if \*u had become \*i (> ъ) before the third palatalization (Matasović, 2008: 146).

<sup>6</sup> The jotation of the consonants is Common Slavic, but it post-dates the Proto-Slavic period, since it affected some early Latin/Romance loanwords, cf., e.g., Lat. *Arsia* (name of a river in Istria) > Slavic \*arsjā > \*arša > Croat. *Raša*.

<sup>7</sup> The lack of chronological perspective is the main difficulty for all earlier accounts of the North Slavic participles and unexpected case endings of the soft stems; this applies equally to the early attempts (e.g. Van Wijk, 1916) and modern ones (Mareš, 1996: 92). Many handbooks simply ignore the problem and state the morphological correspondences (North Slavic *-a* vs. South Slavic *-y*, viz. North Slavic *-ě* viz. South Slavic *-ę*) without any discussion (e.g. Rospond, 1971: 246; Borkovskij & Kuznecov, 2006: 66-67; Townsend & Janda, 1996).

Therefore, we may simply assume that the sound law posited in this paper was, like the third palatalization, a change that affected only some Slavic dialects (namely, the precursors of North Slavic) and never reached the South Slavic area, but that this change occurred during the period when some common innovations were still able to expand throughout the whole Slavic-speaking area. The fact that the South Slavic area preserved the archaic endings (-y) rather than innovative ones (-a, -ě) only confirms our thesis, formulated elsewhere (Matasović, 2008), that there are no South Slavic common innovations, and that South Slavic is therefore not a valid genetic branch of the Slavic languages.

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## SJEVERNOSLAVENSKI PARTICIPI PREZENTA I PADEŽNI NASTAVCI "MEKIH" OSNOVA

## SAŽETAK

U radu se pokazuje kako glasovna promjena po kojoj je završno \*-īn(s) postalo \*-ē(s) u skupini dijalekata iz kojih su potekli zapadni i istočni slavenski jezici objašnjava postanak nekih padežnih nastavaka "mekih" osnova (nominativ i akuzativ množine i genitiv jednine jā-osnova, te akuzativ množine jo-osnova). Ta se promjena nije dogodila u dijalektima iz kojih su potekli južnoslavenski jezici, a prethodila je nekim općeslavenskim promjenama, npr. prijelazu praslavenskoga \*ē u \*ā iza \*j. Time se objašnjava postanak sjevernoslavenskih participa prezenta na -a (npr. staroruski *nesa*, *bera*) koji su se analoški proširili iz glagola kod kojih je završno -a pravilno nastalo iza *j* (npr. staroruski *znaja*).

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: *slavenski dijalekti, sjevernoslavenski, glasovne promjene, particip prezenta, padežni nastavci.*

