

**THE VERBAL  
ACCENT  
IN RUSSIAN**

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# The Verbal Accent in Russian.

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## Introduction.

It is a generally recognized fact, that the primitive Slavonic accent is of primary importance in the reconstruction of the Indo-European accent. The Ur-Slavonic accent has experienced a certain displacement owing as Sobolevskij<sup>1)</sup> states "to the disappearance of the semi-vowels ъ, ь and of i at the end of words and to the influence of the nominal and verbal forms upon each other." Of the Slavonic languages, Polish, Bohemian and Sorbish have a fixed accentuation; Russian, Serbian, Slovenian and Bulgarian are characterized by their movable accent. Fluctuating accent was also peculiar to the Ur-Slavonic accent and can be reproduced by comparing the modern Slavonic tongues. „Die Betonung des Altbulgarischen kennen wir nicht, dieser Schaden wird aber dadurch beseitigt, dass sich aus den modernen slavischen Dialekten, vor allem aus dem Russischen und Serbischen der urslavische Akzent z. T. rekonstruieren lässt. Da eine getrennte Entwicklung dieser Dialekte stattgefunden hat, so darf man dem erschlossenen urslavischen Akzent grösseren Wert beilegen als dem litauischen; denn es zeugt die Übereinstimmung zwischen Russisch und Serbisch für das Urslavische, das der indogermanischen Sprache viel näher liegt als das heutige Litauisch."<sup>2)</sup> From the fact that Serbian and Slovenian have still the falling and rising quality of the accent

<sup>1)</sup> cf. *Лекція по исторіи русскаго языка* 243.

<sup>2)</sup> cf. Hirt: *Der indogermanische Akzent* 15.

and that Russian has the falling accent in the dissyllables óro, ólo, ére, éle and the rising accent in oró, oló, eré, elé it is inferred that the Slavonic accent had the same accent qualities.<sup>1)</sup> The accent<sup>2)</sup> in Russian does not fall upon any particular syllable, but varies in position being placed upon the root, the prefix, the suffix and even upon flexional endings of a word. It follows that logical principles and even homonyms of different meanings and gender are not distinguished by the accent. While on the one hand, words of a certain ending, especially those in -nie, -ность, -ство and -тель are striving to unify their accentuation, others are shifting it to a new place without an apparent reason. The three Russian dialects, Great-, Little- and White-Russian often disagree in their accentuation. Little-Russian where it is spoken side by side with Great-Russian has in many cases adopted the latter's accentuation and again where the Little-Russians (Ruthenians) come in contact with the Poles as in Galicia, their language shows a marked tendency towards paroxytonization. The Little-Russian accent is perhaps more conservative than the Great-Russian, for the latter must certainly, have been influenced by the initial accentuation of the Finnish tongues with which it came into early contact. A considerable part of the Great-Russians are russified Fins as is proved by their physiognomy and the geographical nomenclature of their territory. This influence may not have been as strong as for instance in English in which Norman-French words have gradually changed their accent in agreement with the principles which governed the Anglo-Saxon. Words like vertú, parlémént are now accented virtúe, párlíament. For the purpose of reconstructing the Ur-Slavonic accent, Serbian and

<sup>1)</sup> cf. Leskien, Untersuchungen I 550 ff.

<sup>2)</sup> Comp Brandt: Лекція по исторической грамматикѣ русскаго языка 101 ff., and Начертаніе славянской акцентологіи 11 ff. Sobolevskij: Лекція по исторіи русскаго языка 23 and. Грозъ: Филол. разысканія 408 ff.

Russian are the most valuable languages. The latter is deficient in one point, it has lost the quantity which is still preserved in Serbian, Slovenian and Bohemian. Bulgarian until lately had also a fixed quantity and the Macedonian dialects have still preserved remnants of long syllables.<sup>1)</sup> The accented syllables in Russian are a little longer (about 2 moras) than the unaccented ones (1 mora) but this phenomenon is more of a rhetorical character<sup>2)</sup> and stands in no connection with the Ur-Slavonic quantity. The pre-tonic syllable receives an almost imperceptible secondary accent in Russian while in Serbian the post-tonic syllable bears this accent. Whilst Russian thus lacks an essential element, i. e. quantity, for the determination of the primitive Slavonic accent, Serbian "gewährt für unsere Aufgabe die reichste Ausbeute, da es die alten Betonungsverhältnisse fast nach jeder Seite unverändert erhalten hat. Es lässt sich nicht nur der Sitz des Akzentes feststellen, sondern auch die (Quantitäten) Qualitäten der Betonung lassen sich aus Quantitätsveränderungen durchgehends bestimmen, wobei sich eine fast völlige Gleichheit mit dem Litauischen ergibt."<sup>3)</sup> With regard to its accentuation, Serbian falls into the Western and Eastern dialects. The Western or ča-dialects (ča = what) have retained the original seat of the Ur-Slavonic accent whereas in the Eastern or što-dialects (što = what) it has moved one syllable to the beginning of the word. From this follows that the final syllable is always unstressed. In both dialects, the originally long quantities: a, ē, i, u, y, ą, ę, or, ol, er, el, ɛr, ɛr, ɛl, ɛl are varyingly long or short. Leskien in his "Untersuchungen über Quantität und Betonung in den slavischen Sprachen", I, 24, has thus formulated the respective rules: "Die in der ursprünglichen Hochtonsilbe stehenden alten Längen werden 1. ver-

<sup>1)</sup> cf. Oblak, Archiv XV. 306. <sup>2)</sup> cf. Brandt: Лекція 100.

<sup>3)</sup> cf. Hirt: D. indogerm. Akzent 75.



kürzt, wenn ursprünglich der Ton steigend war und 2. erhalten, wenn ursprünglich der Ton fallend war.“ The rising accent corresponds to the sharp (rude intonation, Stosston), and the falling to the soft (douce intonation, schleifend) accent in Lithuanian. Before the accent, the old quantities remain intact. The old Serbian accent is preserved in those words in which it originally bore upon the first syllable. It is marked  $\grave{}$  to designate the brevity of the stressed syllable and  $\hat{}$  is the mark for the long, stressed syllable which kept its original quantity because the tone was falling. The mark  $\grave{}$  therefore designates both the originally short, stressed syllable and the originally long, stressed syllable which was shortened if the accent was rising. Both  $\hat{}$   $\grave{}$  are now falling:  $\hat{a}$  ( $\bar{a}$ ) =  $\acute{a}a$ ,  $\hat{\alpha}$  ( $\bar{\alpha}$ ) =  $\acute{\alpha}a$ . While the old accent  $\hat{}$  which remained in its original position is falling, the new secondary accent is rising. The mark  $\acute{}$  is used to specify the long accent and  $\grave{}$  characterizes the short accent:  $\acute{\alpha}$  =  $\acute{a}\acute{a}$ ,  $\acute{a}$  =  $\acute{a}\acute{a}$ . Both may strike any syllable except the last. “The falling accent has, as a rule, kept its original position and quantity; the rising accent has taken the place of an older falling accent whose primary position was upon the following syllable, f. i.:  $gl\acute{a}va > gl\grave{a}v\grave{a}$ ,  $gov\grave{o}riti > gov\acute{o}riti$ .”<sup>1)</sup>

The originally long syllable following  $\hat{}$  and  $\acute{}$  is therefore either long or short according as its accent was falling or rising, as Leskien has proved. With the accentuations  $\acute{}$  or  $\grave{}$  we find the original accent on the following syllable. In Serbian, the accentuation is therefore either original, old: Falling  $\hat{}$ ,  $\grave{}$  or secondary, new: Rising  $\acute{}$ ,  $\grave{}$ . The numerous reconstructions which I have made will illustrate the shift which the old Serbian accent has carried out. In Serbian, the accent in its old form does not always agree with the Russian accent and this fact will be noticed in each case. — In the following pages are treated

<sup>1)</sup> cf. Rešetar, Archiv, XVII, 199.

the changes which the accent of the simple and those verbs undergoes which are felt to be simple verbs. Of the verbal forms, the present passive participle in -мый, -мая, -мое, the past gerund active in -въ, -вши and the past active participle in -вшии, -вшая, -вшее are disregarded for they retain, almost without an exception, the accentuation of the infinitive. Questions concerning the Indo-European accent will not be touched upon, my immediate object being to present the material in a comprehensive form. The reader's attention is called in a footnote to the few verbs treated by Dr. Hirt in his very valuable book: "Der indogermanische Akzent". The comparisons with Serbian and Little-Russian are given as far as they could be obtained from the only two monographs treating of the verbal accent of the respective languages, viz.: *Akcenti u glagola* by Damičić and: *Über den Accent der Verba im Kleinrussischen*, Archiv II, 289 ff., by Hankiewicz. As regards the verbal accent of Slovenian and modern Bulgarian, such representations are wanting and therefore these languages could not be used for the purpose of this thesis. It is to be hoped that the accent of these languages be soon investigated for as Jagić truly remarks: "Ein tieferes Eindringen in die slavischen Betonungsverhältnisse ist für die endliche Lösung der Frage über die indo-germanische Betonung von grosser Wichtigkeit" and at another place: "Man muss vor allem an der slavischen Betonung und ihren Entwicklungsphasen die Einsicht in das Wesen des Accentes, in sein Verhältnis zur musikalischen Tonhöhe und Expirationsstärke, zur Quantität der Silbe zu gewinnen trachten."

In conclusion, it is my pleasant duty to express my warmest thanks to the following gentlemen: Professors Roman Brandt and Ph. Fortunatov of Moscow, Jan Baudouin de Courtenay and Lucian Malinowski of Cracow, Joseph Kallenbach and Wilhelm Streitberg of Freiburg i. S., for the valuable aid and instruction given me.

Common Abbreviations.

Obulg.	stands for	Old Bulgarian,
s.	" "	Serbian,
lr.	" "	Little-Russian,
sing.	" "	singular,
pl.	" "	plural,
part.	" "	participle,
act.	" "	active,
pass.	" "	passive,
pers.	" "	person,
pres.	" "	present,
1st	" "	first,
2nd	" "	second,
3rd	" "	third,
inf.	" "	infinitive,
reg.	" "	regular.

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