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ACCENTUAL MOBILITY

The prehistory of the
Balto-Slavic mobile accent paradigms

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Summary

In the Baltic and Slavic languages we find in all stem-classes a type of words where the accent is on the initial syllable in some forms and on the desinence in other forms, e.g. Lithuanian nom. sg. *galvà* 'head', acc. *gálvą*, gen. *galvõs* etc.; Russian nom. sg. *golová* 'head', acc. *gólovu*, gen. *golový* etc. The high degree of correspondence between the mobile accent paradigms of Baltic and Slavic makes it plausible that the accentual mobility found in the two language branches has a common point of departure. The purpose of the study is to determine the Proto-Indo-European origin of the Balto-Slavic mobile accent paradigms.

In the two Indo-European languages where the Proto-Indo-European position of the accent is still directly and unambiguously preserved, viz. Vedic Sanskrit and Ancient Greek, accentual mobility is limited to certain consonant stems. While some scholars assume that the general accentual mobility of Balto-Slavic represents an archaism with respect to the Vedic and Greek immobility in most stem-classes, others maintain that an innovation has taken place in Balto-Slavic by which the accentual mobility of the consonant stems was imitated by the remaining stem-classes. In this study the proposal is made that the Balto-Slavic innovation consisted in a pre-Proto-Balto-Slavic accent law. If a word-form was accented on a final short or hiatal syllable, it became unaccented:

$$\breve{V} > [-\text{accent}] \ / \ \_ \ (\breve{V})C_0\#$$

The study consists of five chapters. In the introductory Chapter I some methodological and terminological questions are addressed followed by a history of research and a detailed criticism of two of the most popular explanatory models for the origin of the Balto-Slavic accentual mobility. Chapter II contains a reconstruction of the prosodic system, the final syllables and the paradigmatic accentuation system of Proto-Indo-European based on data from Indo-Iranian, Greek and Germanic. In Chapter III a reconstruction is made of the prosodic system and the paradigmatic accentuation system of Proto-Balto-Slavic based on data from the three Baltic languages and Proto-Slavic. In Chapter IV an examination of the proposed accent law is undertaken on the basis of a comparison of the reconstructed Proto-Indo-European desinences and the corresponding forms of the Proto-Balto-Slavic mobile accent paradigms. In Chapter V the preceding chapters are summarised and the most important conclusions of the study are presented.