Nominal Accent Classes in Lithuanian as Compared to Slavic and Indo-European

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Greek and Sanskrit nouns can be divided into those with accent on the stem (barityones) and those with accent either constantly on the ending or alternating between the ending and the stem final syllable (oxytones). For Balto-Slavic it is generally accepted that with some exceptions, long vowels in stems attracted the accent, eliminating any possible distinction between stem-stress and end-stress. In Lithuanian, if we eliminate the effects of De Saussure's Law, there are two classes of short vowel stems--those with fixed stem accent (classes one and two) and those with an accent alternation between the stem and the ending (classes three and four). In Slavic there are also two possibilities for noncompound stems with short vowels--accent on the ending (theme vowel) and an accent alternation like that of Lithuanian.

Since each of these languages has two accent classes for nouns, it is obviously tempting to try to relate them. Kuryłowicz (1968:315-6) found no relationship between the classes of Balto-Slavic and the other languages. He argued that all 'unmotivated' short-vowel stems became mobile, while the class of fixed accent in Lithuanian and theme-vowel accent in Slavic was secondary. He postulated a Balto-Slavic class of oxytones which, with accent retraction, is the major source of class two substantives in Lithuanian.

Iliš-Svityč (1923), in a detailed study of Baltic and Slavic accent, came to a different conclusion. For Lithuanian in particular, he proposed a simple relationship with Greek and Sanskrit, whereby stem-stress in those languages remains stem-stress in Lithuanian, while the class of end-stress/mobile nouns in Greek and Sanskrit corresponds to the Lith. mobile paradigm. He argued that Kuryłowicz was led to a wrong conclusion because he used data from literary Lithuanian, which is based on a dialect which tends to generalize mobile accent. When an I.S. cognate of a Lithuanian word has barityonic accent, the literary language often has mobile accent, but Iliš-Svityč was almost always able to find traces of fixed stem-stress in earlier manuscripts or in dialects.

Iliš-Svityč writes very convincingly, but there are some suspicious aspects of this study. We can often tell that two words in related languages are from the same I.S. root, but if we are to compare the accent, we must be sure that they are actually the phonetic des-
cendants of the same I.E. word. That is very hard to prove. Most of Illis-Svityč's examples are -o- and -s-
stems nouns, which were productive types of formations in all four languages. We can never be sure that a particu-
lar word has not been created anew by a prototypic process in the language after the break-up of I.E.

Furthermore, we must be very careful in using
dialect information to reconstruct the accent in Lith.
There is always some variation in accent systems, and if
we allow ourselves to pick and choose the data from
different dialects, we could prove anything. Illis-
Svityč seems to have used the data intelligently, but
there is always the danger that he overemphasized the
importance of the variants which fit his hypothesis.

Slavic and Baltic are lexically very close, and
their accent systems are closely related, so we would
expect to have a greater chance of reconstructing actual
words from Baltic and Slavic cognates. Illis-Svityč,
however, posits several accentual innovations for Slavic.
Only the -s-stems have a simple relationship to the I.E.
and Baltic classes. I.E. oxytone and Baltic mobiles
correspond in the -s stem to Slavic mobiles. The I.E.
barytones changed to an end-stress paradigm in Slavic.

Original o-stem masculines, he says, are all mobile.
But original o-stem neuters with stem stress have become
masculine with end-stress. Illis-Svityč proposes that
the merger of masculine and neuter endings took place in
unstressed position (=o-m → -um → -u), and then the
stress was shifted forward one syllable by Dybo's law,
which shifts the accent forward off a short or circumflex
syllable. I.S. end-stress neuters, according to Illis-
Svityč retain this pattern in Slavic.

We might mention that a different interpretation of
the o-stem pattern in Slavic fits Kuryłowicz's hypothe-
sis very closely. All the original o-stem masculines
are mobile, as he predicts. If we consider the end
stress masculines which have neuter cognates to be new
masculine formations rather than phonologically trans-
formed neuters, then we can trace their end-stress to a
derivational process. This leaves only the end-stress
neuters, and there I find at most two convincing etymo-
logies.

I am not an etymologist, however, so I hesitate to
criticize Illis-Svityč's etymologies directly. What I
have done is take the predictions that Illis-Svityč makes
about the relationship between Baltic and Slavic and test
them. Since we have a better chance of reconstructing
Balto-Slavic words, generalizations based on Baltic and
Slavic should have a better chance of being true.

What I have found indicates a situation which
corresponds much more closely to the position of
Kuryłowicz than to that of Illis-Svityč. Instead of the
complex relationship between Baltic and Slavic, I find evidence for a simple relationship whereby mobility in Lithuanian corresponds to mobility in Slavic, and fixed stem-stress on the stem-final syllable in Lithuanian corresponds to these-vowel stress in Slavic.

This corresponds to what Ilili-Svitýt̄ postulates for 4-stems, but while I agree with it, I cannot say honestly that my data prove that. There is so much variation in the accent of 4-stems within Lithuanian and Slavic that I would hesitate to use them to prove anything. I will concentrate on the 0-stems.

We will begin with the Lithuanian-Slavic cognates which are neuter in Slavic. According to Iliili-Svitýt̄, only original end-stress neutrals survive as neutrals in Slavic, and these should correspond to mobile masculines in Lithuanian (Lith. has no neutral substantives).

I found only one cognate that fits this pattern: Lith. dūnas (4) ‘bottom’, which, if we can account for the Lith. /d/’, is cognate with Rus. duš ‘bottom’, S.C. duž, Sln. duž. The shortness of the /o/ in S.C. and Sln. indicate old end-stress.


There are five cognates which have end-stress in Slavic but stem-final stress in Lith. These are semantically good candidates for being Brs. words: Lith. pentinai ‘spur’, Rus. plátıno ‘spot’, Serb. Church Slavic pletıko ‘pur’; Lith. plantaitai (2) ‘lungs’, S.C. plida, Sln. plıča, Cz ploka ‘lungs’; Lith. vartai ‘gate’, Rus. dial vorota ‘gate’, Slv vratá, S.C., Sln. vratá. These forms indicate end stress in Slavic, but end stress in a neuter plural is ambiguous, since mobile paradigms have end stress in the plural. Iliili-Svitýt̄ quotes Cz. dial. vratá, Slv vratá, S.C. dial. vratá which favor end stress, while Lith. Cz. vratá, Pol wrotá favor mobility. Lith kĕfes (2) ‘cutting instrument’, Rus. tereš ‘plovehare’ are cognates, but the difference in meaning could allow us to doubt that they are the same word. Lith. pietesma (2) ‘drawing’ and Rus. pisı̆med ‘writing, letter’ are formal cognates, but tames is productive in Lith. and it is doubtful that pietesma should be compared to pisı̆med.

These data directly contradict the prediction of Iliili-Svitýt̄ and confirm a pattern of agreement for mobility, and Lith. class two corresponding to Slavic end stress.

We can now turn to the cognates which are masculine in both languages. There is general agreement
that there exist a set of cognates with mobile accent in both languages. Examples are: Lith. draugas (4) 'friend', S.C., sln. draž ‘friend’, Lith. dial. kažas

The cognates for maštis and mištas can hardly be taken as clear evidence of the existence of a single I.S. word as their precursor. Of the remaining three, tauras and vilkas are cognate with barztones. Illiš-Svítyû rejects Gr. ταῦτας as a cognate because of the /a/, a decision I cannot judge, but even so there is no good evidence that this class corresponds to Greek and Sanskrit oxytones.

According to Illiš-Svítyû, the I.S. barzytonic masculines should have stem accent in Lithuanian, mobile accent in Slavic. We have just seen that tauras and vilkas are possible exceptions to that generalization. He proposes three candidates for Balto-Slavic words which have cognates in Greek or Sanskrit. None are without problems. They are: (1) Lith. pûdas ‘prick’, S.C. pûd ‘prick’, Slt. bûnas ‘pressure’. Even if we forget the problem of the Sanskrit length, we can easily doubt that the cognates are actually the same I.S. word. Furthermore, there is another equally good Sanskrit cognate—with end stress: bûnas ‘oppression’ (2) Lith. žambas ‘edge’, S.C. žub, sln. žûb, Rus. žûb ‘tooth’, Slt. žambas ‘tooth’, Gr. γλυκός ‘tall, thorny’. Again semantics is a problem. Even if we agree that žambas was originally a class two substantives, it could easily be a newly derived noun from žëbë ‘cut’, rather than an ancient I.S. word. (3) Lith. vëkaras ‘evening’, Sln. vëkar, Rus. vëker ‘evening’, Gr. ἡμέρας ‘evening’. This etymology may be correct, but there are problems with the consonants and it is dangerous to use the Greek form as proof of the original accent (cf. Hamp 1994).

To our doubts about the etymologies we can add doubts about the accents. In each of these cases, Illiš-Svítyû has had to resort to dialectal or documentary evidence that the Lithuanian forms had fixed accent. Žëba is mobile throughout the dialects, according to Illiš-Svítyû, but shows up as fixed in some eighteenth century documents. Žëbaas and vëkaras are both preod-
nantly mobile, but have dialectal variants with fixed accent.

It turns out that all the stems which Illiū-Svirč proposes to put in the class of Baltic-Slavic barytones are predominantly mobile in Lithuanian. The only which are not mobile are the stems from western dialects, Lankas 'arch' cognate with S.C. lūk 'arch', which is mobile except for an adverbial use in one dialect area. Rėgas 'horn', cognate with S.C. rūg 'horn', is mobile throughout Lithuanian, but shows up in some early documents with fixed accent, and snižgas 'snow', cognate with S.C. sneg 'snow', which is predominantly mobile, but has fixed accent in at least one dialect. Having established a relationship between Slavic mobility and Baltic mobility in accent, we might use the Slavic accents to justify discounting the dialect variants, but first we must establish the normal relationship between reasonably clear class two substantives and corresponding Slavic words.

We will begin with a set of cognate suffixes. The suffix -inikas/-inkas forms agent-instrument nouns in Lithuanian, and is cognate with the Slavic suffix -iniku-, which has identical function and surprisingly parallel accentual behavior. When the suffix is added to a stem with fixed accent, the accent stays on the stem, but when it is added to a stem with mobile accent, the accent shifts forward. In Lithuanian the accent shifts to the last syllable of the stem (the suffix), while in Slavic it shifts onto the ending. An example of a parallel formation is Lith. naktininkas (2) 'night person, night worker', Rus. nočnik, nočnika 'night worker'.

The cognate pair Lith. -skas, Slavic -ak also form class two substantives in Lithuanian, oxymons in Slavic. Parallel formations are: Lith. sial. paršikas 'piglet'; Pol. prosiak, Lith. baliokas 'calf', Pol. ciełak 'calf'. Compare also S.C. strýka, strýka 'red wine', Lith. žuodžia 'black horse'.

Dialuitives and other types of substantives of accent class two are formed with the suffixes -ikas, -ukas, in Lithuanian. The corresponding Slavic nouns in -isko-, -isko- form end-stressed substantives, but only when added to mobile stems, so the accentual correlation is inexact. There are, however, a few cognate pairs: Lith. sial. strypkas 'shoemaker', Rus. sypka 'shoemaker'; Lith. vainikas 'crown', Rus. ramka, ramka 'crown', Lith. sventikas 'saint', Bulg. svetel 'saint'.

Nouns which belong to class two in Literary Lithuanian show evidence of end stress in Slavic are: Lith. būbras 'beaver', Sl. žabër, žabra. The open /a/ in Slovenian indicates old end stress. Lith. kaftas 'time', Slovak kôťat, with length, indicates end stress, as does the length with preceding
rising pitch in S.C. ćurkšt ‘twice’, but Sln. krát indicates acute fixed accent.

Lith. pédas ‘bottom of stove’, S.C. dial. péd, podà pédà, podà, sln. pod, pédas ‘floor’ all indicate end stress.
S.C. podà means nothing, since it is not a possible original form. East Slavic forms show stem stress in the singular (rus. podà, podà, UK. péd, pédó, B.R. podà, podu,) but Illīcī Svityc quotes UK. dial. péd, podà and
Sln. dial. pod, which should indicate end stress.
Lith. priédas ‘addition’; S.C. péd, pédà ‘addition’.

Lith. pléštas ‘pizzle’, Rus. pest, pasté ‘pizzle’.

Lith. pirštas ‘finger’, Rus. перст, перст ‘finger’, Ilić-Svityc quotes forms with end stress from Serbo-
Croatian and Slovenian dialects, but literary S.C. prst, sln. pršt disagree. However, since the variant
forms are inconsistent, and forms with end stress are
found in the three areas which preserve accent alterna-
tions, we can tentatively classify this as a Slavic end-
stress form.


Lith. stubas ‘post’, Rus. стол, стол ‘post’.
In this case the Lithuanian form may be borrowed.


Lith. skėtas ‘weaver’s reed’ is related to Rus.
мёт, мёт ‘shield’, S.C. мёт, жёт, sln. ёт, but it is
certainly doubtful that it was once the same word.

The only clear class-two nouns that are related to
clearly mobile Slavic words that I found are three nouns
from nekti ‘spawn’; Lith. nektas (2) ‘spawning,roe’,
Lith. nartas ‘roe’, Rus. норост ‘frog roe’.

If we allow ourselves to use dialect variants, we

 can add another example of a Lith. class two substantiv
which corresponds to end stress in Slavic. Trautmann
gives a variant žig (2) of žig ‘hedgehog’, which is
cognate with Rus. жиг ‘hedgehog’.

The justification of the proto-Slavic accent in
some of the above words is less than crystal clear, but
it seems to me that the data show a pattern of stem-final
accent in Lithuanian corresponding to end-stress in Slavic.

My interpretation of the individual words does not
differ from that of Ilić-Svityc, but my interpretation of
the pattern does. Ilić-Svityc believes that the
correlation between Lith. stem-final accent and Slavic
end-stress is limited to a class of original neuters. I
think that this is the only pattern there is for Lith.
nouns with stem-final accent. It is significant that we

do not have to use dialectal evidence to discern this
pattern. Furthermore the group of nouns with this pat-
tern includes nouns which one would expect to be masculine, not neuter, e.g. agent-instrument -inikas, šamas 'sheep-fold', šīlis 'hedgehog'.

Before proposing a specific correlation between Lithuanian class two stems and Slavic oxyynes, we should look at the cognates of Slavic oxyynes which are not of class two. Aside from sporadic examples such as Rus. kust, kustá 'brush', Lith. kūkstas (1) 'brush'; S.C. plast, plāsta 'hay stack', Lith. plūkstas (1) 'tussock', there are a set of words with similar shape which have end stress in Slavic and mobile stress in Lithuanian. These words are exceptions to both Ilič–Svitčić's and Kuryłowicz's proposals. They are disyllabic stems whose second syllable contains a short *a* or *u*. Those that I found are:

Lith. švinas (3) 'ram', Rus. ovën, ovné 'ram', S.C. ovén, ovna, Sl. ové, ovna, Bulg. ovan, ovan.

Lith. kastinas 'cattle prod', Rus. ostén, osté 'spike', Bulg. ostén, S.C. ostan 'cattle prod', Sln. östen 'spike'.

Lith. ėstalis (3) 'donkey', Rus. osob, osé 'donkey', S.C. ūzal, ūza, Sln. ūzal, Bulg. ūzal, ūža.

Lith. ėšutas 'horse hair', Rus. osot, osté 'thistle', D.S. osotā, Sln. osē, Bulg. os, osē.

Lith. katilas (3) 'kettle', Rus. kotlā, kotlā 'large copper kettle', S.C. kotā, kotā, Sln. kotā.

Lith. staburas (3) 'pillar, tree trunk' (Skol 1973) S.C. stabar, stabra 'tree trunk', Sln. stabær, stabā 'pillar'.

Katalas and ėstalis are borrowed, perhaps independently, from Germanic, but they fit the pattern and might be Baltic–Slavic borrowings.

All of these words had stem-final syllables with jers in Slavic--vowels which weakened and eventually disappeared. It seems logical to try to link the behavior of these words to that fact. Slavic shows a tendency to interpret a stem-final stressed jer in the nom. sing. masculine at a sign of end stress. Rus. zandž, zamža 'look'

S.C. zāžan, zāžmā 'loan' both show reflexes of end stress in a derivational pattern which normally does not allow it. (Compare Rus. zandž, zandža 'factory', S.C. zāža, zāža 'cut'.) In fact there is no suffix which contains a jer which allows suffixal accent in derived masculine o-stems. This may reflect an original prohibition, or it may reflect a reinterpretation of these words as having end stress. We could at least consider the possibility that words like ovën originally had the stress on the suffixal jer. The Slavic stress would then be one syllable to the right of the Baltic stress, which is the pattern we find when Lithuanian stem-final stress corresponds to Slavic end stress. It is also the pattern we find in the disyllabic borrowing from Slavic: Lith. gatavas (3)
'ready', Rus. gotýv 'ready'. If we then assume that the accent mobility in Lithuanian is secondary—which in this case it has to be—we have a coherent relationship. Whether or not this explanation is correct, these forms are so similar in shape that we must assume that something special happened to them, and we can put them aside in determining the overall relationship between Lithuanian and Slavic.

The relationship which seems to hold most clearly is that mobile accent in Lithuanian corresponds to mobility in Slavic, and stem-final stress on a short or circumflex syllable (class two) in Lithuanian corresponds to end stress in Slavic. This is exactly what Illis-Svityc proposed for the other stem classes (mainly A-stems), but he was led to reject this relationship for the O-stems in an attempt to establish a simple relationship between Lithuanian accent classes and those of Greek and Sanskrit. This study shows that for the O-stems at least there is no demonstrable relationship between the accent classes of Balto-Slavic words and those of other I.E. languages. We are then left with the conclusion that Kuryłowicz was much closer to the truth than was Illis-Svityc.

This should lead us to suspect the relationship that Illis-Svityc proposes for the A-stems. I am not ready to make any specific claims about the relationship within Balto-Slavic, but I can note that if we apply strict criteria of formal identity, there is not a single example proposed by Illis-Svityc which has stem-final stress in Lithuanian, end stress in Slavic, and any cognate in Greek or Sanskrit. This would fit Kuryłowicz's hypothesis that these forms represent a Balto-Slavic derived class. Here, as with the O-stems, I may be distorting the data by insisting on using only words that are demonstrably Balto-Slavic, but if I have erred, it is on the side of caution. I hope that this will encourage Indo-Europeanists to take a hard look at the etymologies where Illis-Svityc relates Lithuanian or Slavic words directly to Greek or Sanskrit.

FOOTNOTES
1) An excellent survey of the literature is found in Illis-Svityc (1963).
2) I am indebted to Eric Hamp for pointing this out, and for other aid and advice in preparing this paper.
3) The indications of old end stress are: UK., B.R., Rus. end stress; S.C. rising pitch on the stem-final syllable (A, 4), and when there is no ending, retained length on the stem-final syllable with rising pitch on the preceding syllable, dialectal end stress or neo-acute (A) on the stem-final syllable; Slm. rising pitch on an open vowel (6, 2) or preserved end stress; West Slavic preserved
length on long syllables in stem-final position.

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