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Lindstedt, Jouko

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The Notational Fallacy in Common Slavonic Phonology

1. Confronted with such cognate words as Old Church Slavonic dědь, Russian ded, Polish dziad, Czech děd, Serbo-Croatian djed etc., the Slavist routinely reconstructs a Common Slavonic (CS) form *dědь ‘grandfather’. That this reconstruction seems to be identical with the attested OCS word is merely a coincidence, as it were: the Slavist knows that although OCS was still near to CS, it represents a later state of affairs. The OCS word gradь ‘town, castle’, for instance, is different from the CS *gordь – which is reconstructed just as routinely on the basis of its descendants in the modern Slavonic languages. The only thing the Slavist feels ill at ease with is the accentuation of these proto-forms. He or she knows that there were phonologically relevant tonal distinctions in CS, but this is left to the few initiates of the esoteric discipline called accentology; even the newest etymological dictionaries of CS do not indicate the accentuation of their lemmata.

Our reconstructed CS forms are generally supposed to be realistic to a certain degree; that is to say, our notation should tell us something about the ancient phonological structure of these words, as well as about the whole system of phonological oppositions in Common Slavonic. Although the exact pronunciations must remain beyond the reach of our methods, it is definitely not interesting only to consider the reconstructions as handy formulae for expressing the regular correspondences between related Slavonic words. As Samilov (1964: 60) writes in his monograph on the CS jat’, “if we should abandon the axiomatic certitude that at one time all the speakers actually shared a certain pronunciation of the correspondence *ě, it would be useless to go beyond our enumeration of the present-day Slavic correspondences.” Obviously, if our reconstructions are not realistic, they cannot be used to explain why the words in question later changed the way they did.

So far, so good. Unfortunately, the phonological interpretation of such proto-forms as *dědь has proved to be notoriously difficult. In his monograph mentioned above, Samilov (1964: 81ff) listed about ten proposed phonetic values of the (late) CS *ě – monophthongal and diphthongal, closed and open. His own proposal, viz. [e̞ː] in the lento style and [ě] in

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the allegro style, did not settle the issue, and new proposals continue to appear. The difficulty lies in the fact that "the present-day reflexes of the Common Slavic jat' range from [a] to [i], with every intervening degree of aperture represented by some Slavic dialect" (op.cit., p. 80). A vowel lower than /e/ could obviously not become higher than /e/ without merging with it and *vice versa*, unless a diphthongal value is assumed; but then it would have been the sole diphthong in late CS.

Even more than the jat' in *dēdō*, its word-final jer is part and parcel of the established CS notation. We can say so little about the phonetic value of the two Slavonic jers that we are accustomed to use Cyrillic letters for them even in a Latin-based notation. They are referred to as "reduced vowels", "ultra-short vowels" or even "half-vowels", because they have been lost in all the Slavonic languages in the so-called weak positions. It is less clear how they fit the overall pattern of CS vocalism – we only know that they were something doomed to disappear, as it were.

Originally, jat' and jer were names of certain Church Slavonic letters and not phonological concepts, but this should be of no importance: they have become conventional names for certain proto-phonemes that our methods of comparative reconstruction would yield in any case, whether or not we had ready-made names for them. At least we think so. But what would our reconstructions look like if not only the jat' and jer letters but even OCS itself had not come into being?

Let us take the OLA volume (OLA FG 1) called "Reflexes of *ē*" – of course, its very title begs the question, in a way. On map 12 we have a spectrum of some 300 local forms of the 'grandfather' lexeme (for the most part different, though not always in the vowel part of the word). Summary map 2 presents the "фонетические рефлексы *ē в позиции максимальной дифференциации" on more than 800 points in the Slavonic language area. The reflexes really range from [i] through [e], [e], and [a] (= [ä] = IPA [æ] or [a]) all the way to [a]. Before [a], however, a consonant is phonemically palatalized, as a rule (in Polish and East Bulgarian¹), so that we can at least be sure that the vowel to be reconstructed must have been a front vowel. In addition, there are diphthongal reflexes, mostly of the [ie] type.

The prevalence of such reflexes as [i], [e], [e], and [ie] would naturally lead a linguist not knowing OCS to posit a long *ē* as a proto-phoneme, and then to look for more evidence that there existed a quantity corres-

¹ As it happens all Bulgarian data are missing in OLA, but the overall system of its Eastern dialects is well-known.
tion in CS. Such evidence could be found at least in loan-words, as I will argue below. Comparison with other Indo-European languages would finally lead our linguist to the conviction that in CS, Proto-Indo-European diphthongs and long monophthongs were still represented by phonologically long vowels.

Not knowing OCS and its jers, the linguist would encounter considerable difficulties in reconstructing the original nominative ending of, say, the Russian ded and its cognates. Actually the nominative could not be reconstructed as bisyllabic at all on the basis of the modern Slavonic forms alone. However, reconstruction “from above”, i.e. comparison with other IE languages, would probably make it possible to posit short i and u in largely the same positions where we now know the OCS jers to have occurred, though details might be different.

In all, the standard methods of reconstruction, comparison with other IE languages and loan-word studies would give the following reconstructed vowel system (excluding the possible nasal vowels)\(^2\):

\[(i)\]
\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
\ i & u & \ \ddot{i} & \ddot{y} & \ddot{u} \\
\ e & a & \ \ddot{e} & \ddot{a} \\
\end{array}
\]

This system is more aptly called “Proto-Slavonic” than “Common Slavonic”, since it is the common starting point for the subsequent development of the vocalisms of individual Slavonic languages. It is a quadrangular vowel system with a quantity correlation. The vowel \(*\ddot{y}\) does not have a short counterpart; the macron only shows that functionally, it is part of the long-vowel subsystem. The unrounded reflexes of the short \(*u\) in the greater part of Slavonic – that is to say, the reflexes of the back jer in a strong position, as we typically express it – show that in certain dialects, it became an unrounded vowel, hence the short counterpart of \(*\ddot{y}\). The two different types of the reflexes of \(*u\) in Slavonic languages, viz. labial and illabial, are perhaps best explained by the asymmetry between the long-vowel and short-vowel subsystems: there were two different slots in the pattern that \(*u\) could choose.

For the low front vowels, symbols like \(æ\) and \(ǣ\) would better show their position in the system,\(^3\) but I think traditional e and ē can be retained if

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\(^3\) In IPA, the front [a a:] and the back [a a:] would be opposed.

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their meaning is remembered: they are low vowels phonemically (and perhaps phonetically, too) since there are no mid vowels in this system.

An early Slavonic vowel system with quantity oppositions is certainly acknowledged in most modern treatments of the subject. But it is not usually considered the last common system of Slavonic languages since the old quantity oppositions became quality oppositions in every one of them. Changes like the following are presumed to have taken place:

\[ *\text{d}e\text{du} > *\text{d}e\text{d}r \]

It is now natural to ask, how was this vowel \( *\text{e} \) pronounced in CS – Samilov’s (1964) monograph is devoted to this problem – or how was the word-final back jer pronounced? Every treatise on Slavonic historical phonology will contain some speculation on these and similar questions. Few Slavists, such as Stieber (1964; 1979: 30–31),\(^4\) have come to realize that questions of this kind are wrongly posed: quantity did become quality in Slavonic, but it did not do so in the same way in every Slavonic dialect or language. The long \( *\text{e} \), for instance, became in certain dialects lower than its short counterpart (as in East Bulgarian or Polish); in other dialects, on the contrary, it became higher than \( e \) (this must have been the case at least in East Slavonic); in yet another set of dialects \( *\text{e} \) was diphthongized, and it cannot be excluded that somewhere it merged with \( *e \) at the outset.

It is a common fallacy in Common Slavonic phonology to assume that the notations \( *\text{d}e\text{du} \) and \( *\text{d}e\text{d}r \) are only chronologically differentiated, having otherwise identical theoretical status. This is not the case. The vowel \( *\text{e} \) was a Proto-Slavonic phone with a certain pronunciation – allowing for some dialectal variation, of course – and with a definite place in the Proto-Slavonic system of phonological oppositions. It has certain reflexes in the present-day Slavonic languages. But \( *\text{e} \), the so-called jat’, does not have “reflexes”: it is only a symbol for the different reflexes of \( *\text{e} \) in Slavonic dialects before the final merger of those reflexes with other vowel phonemes.

The same could be said of the back jer \( *\text{r} \), for instance: it only denotes the set of the reflexes of the short \( *u \). In some dialects these reflexes were labial (in East Slavonic and Macedonian, if we judge by the strong

\(^4\) Cf. Samilov (1964) and Stieber (1964) from the same year both discussing the jat’: in a short article, Stieber succeeds in reaching a much more convincing solution than does Samilov in a whole monograph, because Samilov has stronger presuppositions as to what CS phonology should look like.
positions), in some others they were illabial, and in still others (Pre-Serbo-
Croatian) the reflexes of the short *i and *u must early have merged into
*ə. To posit "ultra-short" or "reduced" ə and ə does not account for the
subsequent fate of those vowels. Such a special phonological value is not
plausible in the so-called strong positions (cf. Shevelov 1964: 435–6). Even
in the weak positions, "ultra-shortness" does not really explain anything:
given the fact that sound changes are gradual, as a rule, any sound that is
in the process of being lost must be somehow weakened first, but this is
not the reason for its loss.

I assume that the explanation for the jer loss should be sought in the
overall phonological system of CS, probably in the changing structure of
its phonological sequences (in the sense of Anderson & Ewen 1987). Here
I can only point out that as short high vowels, CS */i/ and */u/ were
phonetically the shortest vowels in the system, hence susceptible to be
syncopated and apocopated when closed syllables where re-introduced.

The CS notation we are accustomed to, with its jat’s and jers, has a
cross-dialectal character, each of its symbols representing historically re-
lated but different phonemes in the various dialects of the disintegrating
CS language. It is useful if it is properly understood – if it is interpreted
not as representing the Proto-Slavonic system, that is to say, not as the
reconstructed starting-point of all the different Slavonic phonological
systems, but as representing the end of the Common Slavonic period when
those systems were still partly isomorphic.

To clarify this terminology: I continue to use the term "Common Slav-
onic" (CS) in the broad sense in which it is customarily used, from the
prehistorical genesis of Slavonic as a separate group of Indo-European
dialects up to the time when the last sound change common to all these
dialects (the jer shift) ceased to operate. "Proto-Slavonic" (PS) is the last
system common to all Slavonic dialects, reconstructed by means of the
comparative method (and with internal reconstruction and loan-word
studies duly taken into account). Since common changes could occur (and
actually occurred) after the break-up of that system, PS does not coincide
with the latest stage of CS (nor with its earliest stage, obviously). From
another vantage point, late CS dialects can be called Pre-Polish, Pre-East-
Slavonic etc., but not Proto-Slavonic.⁵

The notational fallacy discussed here is partly due to a simplistic Stamm-

⁵ For other terminological proposals, cf. Andersen (1985), Birnbaum (1987); cf. also Garde

⁶ On the difference between proto-forms and pre-forms see Anttila (1972: 274–5).

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baum model whereby languages, once separated from a common ancestor, can share no further innovations whatsoever. Historically, it is also due to the central role of OCS in discovering early Slavonic phonology.

The traditional CS notation, with nine qualitatively different oral vowels and two nasal vowels, stems from a transliteration of the Cyrillic OCS alphabet with Czech letters. Through investigation of the OCS language, Slavists gained knowledge about the earlier stages of the Slavonic sound system – knowledge which was more certain than what would have been acquired by the comparative method alone. But as time went on, Slavonic historical phonology became a captive of OCS. Since the eleven-vowel system of OCS – a result of scholarly normalization in itself – appeared to be sufficient to describe the vowel oppositions found in the early forms of all Slavonic languages, the notation was considered to have more substantial content than was really the case.

We know that OCS and its Glagolitic writing system was originally based on South Slavic dialects spoken in and around the city of Thessaloniki in the Byzantine Empire. Its starting point was a regional dialect, but it soon come into use in different Slavonic lands and acquired a supraregional character. Some phonological features of the original dialect basis naturally vanished in this process, especially when the Glagolitic alphabet was gradually replaced by the Cyrillic in the First Bulgarian Empire; not until this stage was the “classical” 11-vowel system actually established. But the basic principles of the writing system remained the same from its beginnings, at least from the time of the Moravian mission.

The symbols of the Glagolitic alphabet did not possess any intrinsic sound value. It is of course true that most letters were conceived of as counterparts of existing Greek and Latin letters. The first letter was originally equated with the Greek α and Latin a, though it resembled neither of these, and it had to be used to represent a vowel sound that was felt to be the “same” as those denoted by the Greek and Latin letters in question. But no such constraints existed for the “specifically Slavonic” letters, i.e. letters designed to denote those sounds which were felt to have no counterparts in Greek and Latin. And even the other letters certainly

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7 It may seem superfluous to mention Latin beside Greek, given St. Cyril and St. Methodius’ Byzantine background. But it must be remembered that the Moravian mission is the earliest stage of the history of OCS of which we have direct information. Although Cyril and Methodius arrived in Moravia with a complete or nearly complete writing system, they also had to pay attention to the local Latin tradition.
lost part of their extra-Slavonic associations when the new script was consolidated and spread to various Slavonic lands.

To give an example: if the word for ‘measure’ was written měra (in Glagolitic or later in Cyrillic) in one Slavonic dialect, it could be written thus in all the dialects which possessed the same word with an isomorphic structure, relative to the total system of phonemic oppositions and phoneme distribution in those dialects. The spelling měra tells us that the first vowel, for instance, was somehow opposed to, say, the vowel e in the word medř ‘honey’; it does not tell us whether this opposition was quantitative or qualitative in a given dialect, and if qualitative, whether ê denoted a vowel higher or lower than e.

There never existed a single standard pronunciation of OCS. Cyril and Methodius certainly did not attempt to teach Moravians or Pannonians the Thessalonian pronunciation! The spelling of the words only needed to be changed when the distribution of phonemes was different; hence such Moravisms as podazb ‘give (imperative sg. 2)’ in the Kiev Folia instead of podaždb. The possibility cannot be excluded that the old phonemic vowel quantities still prevailed in the majority of Slavonic dialects at Cyril and Methodius’ time, or that the vowel systems were based on concomitant quantitative and qualitative differences, much as in several English or German dialects of today. It is understandable why Cyril and Methodius chose the qualitative differences as the basis of the new alphabet: there existed no model for them to mark vowel length in writing and, moreover, the process of old quantities becoming new qualities may have been more advanced in Thessalonian Slavonic than in many other dialects since it was a peripheral dialect, used by largely bilingual speakers.

In reconstructing Proto-Slavonic forms, it is customary to deviate from the OCS forms only insofar as the latter are markedly South Slavonic. The word ‘castle, town’, for instance, is reconstructed as *gorbo on the basis of familiar correspondences between West, South and East Slavonic forms reflecting PIE liquid diphthongs. But this reconstruction is in fact anachronistic: at least in South Slavonic, the liquid metathesis preceded the rise of new quality distinctions in vowels. This is seen from the vowel lengthenings in *CâRC > *CRAČ and *CëRC > *CRêC, preserving the bimoric value of the syllables: had the new qualities already become phonemic, there would have been no reason to metathesize *CôRC into *CRaC, since both *CROC and *CRaC were phonotactically possible (cf.

8 This is not meant to imply that such Moravisms are as old as the Moravian mission. Besides, the traditional term “Moravism” may well be far too narrow geographically.

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OCS grozdь ‘grape’ and gradь ‘hail’, with original *CRāC and *CRāC). Hence we should use the notation *gardu in PS (or *gārdū, to show the quantities explicitly).

Although I have mainly confined myself to vocalism in this article, an analogous example from consonantism may further clarify the issue. The Moscow Этимологический словарь славянских языков (ΕSSJa) not only omits all information about the accentuation of the reconstructed PS words, it also neglects the opposition between dental *l *n *r and palatal *l’ *n’ *r. Thus we have two identical lemmata *kopьcь I ‘end’ and *kopьcь II ‘little horse’, though even the traditional notation would allow us to distinguish between *kopьcь and *kopьсь. As a matter of fact, ΕSSJa tells us less than certain OCS codices (such as the C. Zographensis) which consistently distinguish between, say, ne ‘not’ and ňe ‘it’ (acc. sg. neuter used with prepositions, as in za ňe ‘because’). The dictionary quotes OCS kopь ‘horse’ but sets the lemma as *kopь as though the palatal arc were redundant.9 Prevailing OCS and later Russian Church Slavonic orthography, without the palatal arc, has here been projected onto the PS level, disregarding an opposition which Serbo-Croatian has preserved to this day: kőnač ‘thread; end’ vs. kőnjć ‘little horse’.

Above, I have tried to show that what I call the “notational fallacy” of CS phonology has created pseudo-problems, such as the question about the “original” pronunciation of the jat’ or the two jers. My main point was that the last vowel system shared by all Slavonic dialects still preserved the old quantity oppositions. Similar views have been presented earlier, to be sure (Stieber 1979, Andersen 1985), but they are still far from being intergrated into Slavonic historical phonology. Yet the correction I am proposing is not only notational but has a more “substantive” side as well: it is more consistent with several known facts about the CS sound system. I shall now try concisely to demonstrate this with results from loan-word studies.

2. The two traditional methods of historical linguistics, i.e. comparative and internal reconstruction, are complemented by the study of loan-words. As a matter of fact, words borrowed from Slavonic to other languages, and vice versa, often give us more concrete information about prehistoric phonology than could be attained by means of reconstructional methods alone. Loan-word studies are difficult as they require data from the history of at least two languages, as well as the external history of their

9 Cf. the non-palatal ň in OCS iskoni ‘from/in the beginnings’, presupposing an i-stem *kopь.

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speakers. Still it can be argued that a great many of substantive results have already been reached in this field, only they are not always properly taken into account in descriptions of CS.

In research into the phonology of CS during the second half of the first millennium, particular importance must be attached to the Slavonic loan-words in Baltic Finnic languages, Hungarian and Greek. Baltic Finnic and Greek represent the two extremes of the Slavonic language territory of the time; Hungarian makes it possible to check the situation near the centre, in the Pannonian Slavonic dialects. Baltic Finnic and Hungarian both possess a fairly rich vowel system with a quantity correlation. Baltic Finnic, especially Finnish, has been quite conservative in its sound structure.

The earliest Slavonic loans in Baltic Finnic date approximately from the 6th century: Kiparsky (1963: 13, 76) posits the terminus post quem in the 6th or 7th century; the archaeologist V. V. Sedov assumes that the Slavs reached the lakes Ilmen and Pskov "bereits im 6., vielleicht schon im 5. Jh." (1986: 193). Slavonic loans in Greek can be approximately dated with the help of Byzantine historical sources (Fine 1983: 59–64) and, as regards toponymy, their geographical distribution. The most precise terminus post quem can be assigned to the Slavonic loans in Hungarian as the Hungarians (Magyars) did not arrive at Pannonia before the last years of the 9th century (Erdélyi 1986: 156–7).

The standard source for Slavonic loans in Greek is Vasmer (1941). The significance of Baltic Finnic and Hungarian for Slavonic is summarized by Kiparsky (1963) and Chelimskij (1988), respectively (for more complete material, I refer to their bibliographies). Kiparsky’s results can be fruitfully compared with Stang’s (1963: 52–5) discussion on the old Slavonic loans in Baltic.

On the basis of loans in Baltic Finnic, Kiparsky (1963: 82) reconstructs the following vowel system for Pre-Russian (“Urrussisch”):

(ii)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ɪ}, & \quad \text{i}, \quad \text{u} \\
\text{æ}, & \quad \text{æ} \quad \text{o} \\
\text{ā}, & \quad \text{a}
\end{align*}
\]

This is fairly near to what I proposed above in (i) as the PS system. Details such as the short *a instead the traditional *o ought to be so well-known that I need not comment upon them. Notice that both of the lower front vowels are reflected in Baltic Finnic as an open sound (Kiparsky’s æ, æ >

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Finnish ä, ää), e.g. Fi. pätsi ‘oven, furnace’ < Sl. *peči (traditionally *pečь) and Fi. määrä ‘amount’ < Sl. *měra (traditionally *měra). This points to a quadrangular vowel system rather than to Kiparsky’s triangular arrangement. Only in later Russian loans in Baltic Finnic languages do we find e or ie corresponding to e, ē.

The rounded back vowel (from PIE tautosyllabic *au, *ou) is here marked as *ö rather than *ū. This is what the earliest loans really indicate, e.g. Fi. kuomina ‘threshing floor’ < *kōmina < Sl. ?*gōmina (trad. *gumъno). Some parallels can be found in Greece: Gr. place-name Στρομηνη < Sl. ?*Strōmeni (trad. *Strumenь, Vasmer 1941: 117, 239). The rendering of foreign ō with this vowel is a well-known phenomenon in Baltic Finnic, Germanic, Balkan Latin and Greek words borrowed into Slavonic (see e.g. Shevelov 1964: 276), but this material is not so unambiguous if we assume that there may have only been this single long rounded vowel in the Slavonic system. Yet, taken as a whole, the available evidence suggests that in early CS, the diphthong *au (no *ou existed as there was no /o/!) first changed into *ö and only thereafter into *ū, after the old PIE *ū had been delabialized into *ŷ. The change au > ō is often observed in the history of various languages. The changes *ū₁ > *ŷ and *ö > *ū₂ form a typical chain change, whose rationale in Slavonic was to preserve the vowel system with only two degrees of aperture.

Kiparsky (ibid.) is not sure whether the phonological difference of, say, *a and *ā in “Urrussisch” really was quantitative or qualitative but admits that the old quantities were present at least phonetically. He considers it possible (“sehr möglich”) that the opposition of ě and æ, for instance, was phonologically /æ/ : /e/ even though Finns perceived it as quantitative. But notice that Kiparsky has to postulate a very implausible system with two open front vowels qualitatively opposed and with the middle [e]-level not occupied at all; this is because the [e]-series would naturally have been reflected in Finnish as e and *ē (>ie). I find it hard to believe that the

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10 Stieber (1979: 24–25) whose willingness to consider loan-word material is laudable, makes a mistake here, assuming that such Fi. words as kuomina or kuoma ‘companion, friend’ (cf. Ru. kum) reflect the old diphthongal stage *au in CS: he is not aware of the fact thatuo (a descending diphthong, not yo as S. believes) only arose in Finnish after the break-up of Baltic Finnic and goes back to an older *ö, preserved in Estonian, for instance (Hakulinen 1979: 38). Shevelov (1964) makes several mistakes of this kind, too, in assessing Baltic Finnic and Hungarian material – Chelimskij (1988: 352) writes: “[...] не менее половины ссылок на эти [венгерские] данные содержит серьезные неточности.” In using loan-word material, the Slavist often has to deal with languages totally beyond his or her own schooling.

11 It is furthermore strange that Kiparsky ascribes a more open sound value to *ē than to *e in
Finns would have got all the old CS quantity distinctions right in their Pre-Russian loans if those distinctions had not been phonological any longer (cf. Stang 1965: 53–4).

The old quantities can be observed in words borrowed into Baltic Finnic right up to the time when specifically East Slavonic traits begin to emerge. Notice that in Fi. pätsi quoted above, the combination ts points to an affricate in place of PS *t' (=*kt before i).

Stang (1965: 52–55) arrives at a similar conclusion when considering the old Slavonic loans in Baltic. His main goal is to establish the time of the shortening of PS long vowels in certain positions – a change which implied the phonemization of new quality distinctions. He asks: “But if at the same time as streams of Russian loan-words began to be taken up by Finnish, Latvian and Lithuanian, the old lengths were preserved in all positions, is it in fact at all possible to speak of a proto-Slavonic shortening?” (p. 55, in the original all spaced out). He defines (p. 52) PS as the “essentially pre-dialect stage”, so his answer must be negative. But I would add that while the shortenings in question certainly were not PS, they may still have been CS: they affected all Slavonic dialects in some way or other, though conditions and especially results differed.

The early Slavonic loan-words in Greek (mainly toponyms) are less suited to shed light on CS vocalism than are the loans in Baltic Finnic and Baltic, for Greek had already lost its quantity opposition. Yet Greek does confirm that in the PS pairs *a : *ā and *e : *ē, the qualitative phonetic distinctions cannot have been great as both members of these pairs correspond to the same Greek vowels, viz. α and epsilon, respectively. Only in younger loans do we find Gr. o for what had been the PS short *a, and Gr. α or iα showing the specifically (East) Bulgarian open reflex of PS *ē (Vasmer 1941: 267ff).

Chelimskij’s (1988) useful survey presents some interesting facts about Slavonic dialects spoken in Pannonia in the last years of the 9th century and in the 10th century – at the time when the Hungarians arrived and adopted a great number of Slavonic words into their language. The earliest loan-words show that weak jers had already disappeared (perhaps except for the first syllables, p. 354). Nevertheless, the old quantity distinctions are still correctly reflected in Hungarian. Chelimskij (ibid.) shows that in Pannonian Slavonic, “с достаточной полнотой сохранились в X–XII вв. количественные различия между первичными долг-

spite of the reflexes of the former in East Slavonic. This does not affect his overall argument but is, nevertheless, indicative of its ad hoc-ness.

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Phonemically, this can be interpreted to be identical with the PS system I proposed in (i), though it need not be – obviously dialects spoken as late as the 10th century cannot be called PS. At any rate, it is interesting to see the old lengths still reflected in the Hungarian of the time. A concomitant quality distinction can only be observed for certain in the pair [ɛ] : [e].

Chelimskij also sees a quality distinction in the pair [â] : [ā], but here I am not quite convinced by his conclusions. The symbol ă, denoting a back low rounded vowel, has been used by some Slavists to reconcile the [a]-type evidence from loan-words with the traditional assumption that CS had an *o from PIE short *a and *o. Now Hungarian seems to lend support to this view: the Slavonic vowel in question is reflected as Hu. a, which has a labialized pronunciation. The problem here is that Hu. a [â] is not as old as the oldest Slavonic loans: it arose from the merger of the Old Hungarian illabial a and labial o, and this process had not taken place yet in the 10th century (Papp 1968: 118–20). Consequently, the Hungarian evidence can be used neither to support nor to refute the assumption that the opposition between PS *ă and *a had become qualitative at that time.12

At least it seems certain that the process of old quantities becoming new qualities had not been completed in Pannonian Slavonic when it lost its weak jers (i.e., its short *i and *u in weak positions). This relative chronology does not necessarily hold for all Slavonic dialects, but certainly the jer shift and the quantity-to-quality change must be regarded as parts of the same overall process which was reshaping late CS vocalism. Moreover, the mere fact that in some Sl. dialects old quantities were preserved up to the jer shift, the traditional terminus ad quem of CS, excludes any

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12 While the lowering of Old Hu. o only reflects the general lowering which affected several Hu. vowel phonemes, it is perhaps still possible that the change a > ă was at least reinforced by the substrate influence of the Slavonic change *a > o. Both in Slavonic and Hungarian, the long ă retained its old quality (though only Slavonic thoroughly reshaped its system of quantity distinctions). But this is merely a suggestion that somebody must have put forward before me.

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possibility of a PS system without phonemic quantity distinctions – by the logic of reconstruction.

3. Notation is only notation, but it always brings certain presuppositions with it. In the case of the traditional CS notation, some of those presuppositions are obviously wrong, as I hope to have shown, if this notation is used to represent the phonological reality from which the sound systems of the different Slavonic languages descend. This notational fallacy has to do not only with the mere force of tradition; it is also due to the compartmentalization of Common Slavonic studies. Loan-word studies simply adopt the established notation, in spite of the odd appearance of statements like “Fi. pappi < Sl. popa” or “Sl. popa < OHG pfaffo (or Gr. παράζ)”. Since no /o/ was involved here, it should not be written thus. And the results from loan-word studies, showing the sound system of various stages of CS, ought to be integrated into the CS notation, however non-OCS it may then appear.

The compartmentalization problem also concerns the relation between CS segmental phonology and Slavonic accentology, an area which cannot be dealt with here in greater detail. Some short remarks may, however, be appropriate.

Accentology operates with two kinds of CS vowels, those which can express the tonal opposition between acute and circumflex and those which cannot – the CS long and short vowels, respectively (see e.g. Stang 1963, Garde 1976, Kortlandt 1978, Dybo 1981). Now, it is difficult to see how this fundamental distinction between two prosodic types of vowels could have been maintained right to the end of the CS period, if the old quantity distinctions really had become quality distinctions in PS: there would have been no synchronic motivation for the fact that a and ě could be accented in two ways, but o and e in only one way. Moreover, the CS tonal distinctions are still partly reflected by the new quantity distinctions in those Slavonic languages which possess phonological quantity. The disintegration of CS is thus characterized by two parallel processes:

(old) quantity > quality (timbre)
tone > (new) quantity

Since the two changes overlapped, there was no time for, say, the old *a : *ā opposition first to become *o : *a and only thereafter to expand into o : č : a : ā in individual Slavonic languages. Some of the long /ă/ phonemes in

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Czech or Serbo-Croatian have been long all the time, and some of the short /o/ phonemes preserve the old shortness of PS *a; the short /a/ and the long /o/ are new members of the system. Accentology traditionally operates with the notions of "shortening" and "lengthening", two groups of changes which phonemized those quality distinctions which had only been subordinate to the old quantity distinctions. But since these shortenings and lengthenings did not operate in the same way in all Slavonic dialects, they are post-PS; consequently, the old quantity opposition in vowels is PS.

These consequences of accentological studies have not been fully taken into account in overall presentations of CS phonology. Slavonic accentology is reputed to be an esoteric discipline an honest Slavist can well manage without. On the other hand, accentologists themselves (with the exception of Stang) seem to have isolated their discipline by neglecting a truly phonological approach and by heavily relying on internal reconstruction, with no reference to loan-word studies. Common Slavonic phonology is sorely in need of studies integrating external history, loan-word studies, accentology and traditional reconstruction.

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