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On the origin of Proto-Slavic neo-acute tones

The aim of this paper is to reconsider some issues connected with the origin of those instances of the so-called neo-acute tones which are likely to go back to the Proto-Slavic language.

1. Given the complementarity of the old acute and the short neo-acute in **-ĭe*-comparatives (e.g. long-stem **mǫld'e* vs. short-stem **bòl'e* ended in a coronal sonorant), it seems appropriate to amend the original Šachmatov–van Wijk formula of metatony, viz. **-ŭRĭ- > *-ŶR'-* (cf. **bòl'e*, **dòl'e*, **gòr'e*, *mòn'e*, while **drèv'e* – instead of ***dr'ŭje* – is probably secondary). Therefore, the evidence for Pinault's law also requires re-examination, cf. **mel'e*-type presents (a.p. *b*) and primary **vol'a*-type nouns (a.p. *a* or a.p. *c*), where syllables reflecting **-VRHĭ*-sequences, laryngeals of which might have appeared due to leveling as well, could probably receive the stress secondarily if they preceded internal short vowels – stressed (3 sg. **mèl'etb*) or not (1 sg. **vòl'eĭĭ* – if a.p. *c*, as it may be suggested by Old Russian); no retraction occurred in disyllabic oxytone forms, cf. 1 sg. **mel'ŏ*, N sg. **vol'á*. Both accentual patterns became more widespread within their respective categories after stepwise retractions known as Ivšić–Stanglaw. The original quantity of vowels preceded by **-ŶR'-* sequences was interfered with by later developments.
2. The first of the Proto-Slavic retractions was carried out from reduced vowels in weak positions; it introduced parallel long neo-acute tones, e.g. N sg. **stòlč*, **sòdč*. The new opposition between the internal circumflex (a.p. *b*) and the neo-acute (a.p. *c*) in disyllabic endings of weak cases (mainly the long tones in L pl. **-ěχč* of **-o*-stems: **stolěχč* : **goděχč*) tended to be imitated within certain inflectional types in monosyllabic endings containing shortened etymologically long vowels (most likely I pl., GL du. of **-o*-stems, NA pl. of neuter **-o*-stems, possibly L sg. of **-i*- and **-u*-stems as well): e.g. I pl. **stolý* : **godý* instead of **stolŏ* : **godŏ*, while A pl. **stolŏ* (: **gòdy*) was preserved as such with a secondary allotone of the old acute; a parallel spread of posttonic length occurred in a.p. *a* (I pl. **brátrŏ* instead of **brátry*, cf. L pl. **brátrěχč*, but A pl. **brátry*). However, there is no reason to consider the homonymy between I pl. and A pl. or other doublets of case forms to be the motive force of those changes.
3. The second of the Proto-Slavic retractions was carried out from non-initial circumflex vowels, e.g. L sg. **stòlěχč*, **sòděχč*, I sg. **stòlŷ*, **sòdŷ* (possibly including “tense jers” in strong positions, cf. N sg. of masculine adj.: **dòbrčjč/-jŷč*, **bělčjč/-jŷč*); its effects could be, in turn, subsequently blurred by the emergence of falling, rising and posttonic contracted vowels in individual languages (including those which exhibit oppositions in pitch or quantity in historical times).