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THE ACCENT AND GRAMMATICAL CATEGORIES OF THE *-A* STEMS IN SOUTH SLAVIC

Substantives of the *-a* declension exhibit in literary Serbo-Croatian certain types of accentual alternation which set them apart from the accent-patterns of other declensions and from the *-a* stems of other Slavic languages.

As opposed to the *-o* and *-i* stems which admit an alternation of accent only in one case of the singular, the locative, some *-a* stems allow a shift of accent in two cases of the singular, in the accusative and in the dative, while other stems limit the accentual alternation to the acc. sing. and nom.-acc. plural, or only to the nom.-acc. plural. The mobile accentuation of the *-a* stems thus presents in Serbo-Croatian three types of alternation which are illustrated by the following examples: 1) *nòga, dúša*: (dat. sg.) *nòzi, dúši*, (acc. sg.) *nògu, dúšu*, (n.-acc. pl.) *nòge, dúše*; 2) *gòra, strána*: (acc. sg.) *gòru, strānu*, (n.-acc. pl.) *gòre, strāne*; 3) *kòza, trāva*: (n.-acc. pl.) *kòze, trāve*.¹ For comparative purposes we can transcribe all forms with a rising accent stemming from the neo-štokavian shift as carrying the stress on the following syllable so that the accentual alternation of the quoted forms can be interpreted, in conformity with other Slavic languages and some Serbo-Croatian dialects, as a stress alternation between the ending and the stem of these substantives, e.g. 1) *nogá**, *dúšá*: *nozi, dúši, nogu, dúšu, noge, dúše*; 2) *gorá, strāná*: *goru, strānu, gore, strāne*; 3) *kozá, trāva*: *koze, strāne* (the falling accent is always initial and is left unmarked in this notation).²

¹ The vocative case, which as an appellative form (and not a case proper) presents special problems, is not discussed in this paper.

* For technical reasons the accent (´) will be marked further in this text as (´).

² The problem of transcription of phonemic pitch as stress is discussed in fuller detail in my study, „Slavic morphophonemics in its typological and diachronic aspects,“ *Current Trends in Linguistics*, 3, 1966, 495—520. Throughout the exposition I use eka-

The three types of alternating accent are not equally represented in other Slavic languages which have preserved a mobile accent, nor within Serbo-Croatian itself. Even literary Serbo-Croatian admits variation in the membership of the three types which differs according to region or to older definitions of what constitutes the literary norm. For Daničić, type one included the nouns *decá, medá, nogá, vodá, zemljá, dúšá, glāvá, rúká*, whereas the contemporary literary language allows variants with a desinence stress in the dat. sing. of such forms as *dasci, međi, glāvi, ruci, sredi*. The other Slavic literary languages lack this type of alternation, but exhibit instead alternations of type two (e.g. Russ. *zemljá: zemlju, zemli; golová: golovu, golovy*), which was not recognized as a part of literary Serbo-Croatian by such scholars as Budmani or Leskien, for whom the shift of accent in the acc. sing. always entailed a shift in the dat. sing.³ Types two and three, furthermore, are absent in some Serbo-Croatian dialects such as Dubrovnik, where some lexical items which are subject to alternations in the literary language carry a fixed oxytonic (i.e. desinential) accent; e.g. *gūjá (= (gúja)), slūgá, svīnjá, mazgá, smolá*. The existence of the above alternating accentual types has been widely recorded in Slavic linguistic literature, but there has so far been no attempt to explain the mutual relationship of the three types of accent, or to correlate their distribution to the grammatical categories of the *-a* declension.

I shall survey the types of accentual alternation in the *-a* stems of the various South Slavic languages and dialects with a view to the character and direction of accentual levellings and their relation to the oppositions of gender and case.

2. Type one, which allows a shift of accent in the dat. sing. in addition to the acc. sing. and nom.-acc. pl., is the least widespread of the mobile accents. It is often restricted (as in literary Serbo-Croatian) to a few nouns, and it appears often in free variation with type two. But it remains the only permissible type in some dialects, such as Dubrovnik [23] and Senj [16] (Čak.), where it occurs with inanimate and a few animate substantives designating small animals (e.g. Dubr.: *osá [= òsa], čelá, kozá, òvcá*; Senj: *buhá, muhá, čelá, gīstá*). In some štokavian dialects (Ortiješ [18], Plevlja [24], Eastern Hercegovina [34], Žumberak [22]) this alternation occurs

vian forms for literary Serbo-Croatian, and cite Bulgarian dialectal forms in a normalized (literary) spelling. Forms cited in their actual phonetic form are given (when there is a possibility of confusion) in brackets. The numbers and page numbers following the names of dialects refer to the *List of Sources* which is given at the end of the article.

³ Budmani, P., *Grammatica della lingua serbo-croata (illirica)*, Vienna, 1867, p. 41; Leskien, A., *Grammatik der serbo-kroatischen Sprache*, Heidelberg, 1914, p. 351—2.

only in monosyllabic stems, with polysyllabic stems admitting only alternations of type two (in the acc. sing.). The shift of accent in the dat. sing. of inanimate *-a* stems has apparently the same function as the shift of accent in the loc. sing. of inanimate substantives of *-o* and *-i* stems: it serves to establish an opposition between the dat. and loc. sing. That is, the opposition *nozi: nozi, rüci: rüci*, is isomorphic with the alternations *nosu: nosú, sädu: sädü* and *kosti: kostí stvāri: stvāri*. The striking fact about these parallel alternations is, however, the expansive and productive character of the alternation in the *-o* and *-i* declensions, and the regressive, residual character of the alternation in the *-a* declension. Thus the former alternation is not only well preserved in all Slavic languages with a mobile accent, but encompasses now nouns which did not originally alternate in the singular, such as masculine nouns with an original fixed (acute) accent (as the S-Cr. *krāj: krajú, prag: pragú, mesēc: mesēcú*) and a certain number of neuter nouns (dial. S-Cr. *měso: mēsú, zlāto: zlatú, tēlo: tēlú*). The alternation in the *-a* stems, on the other hand, is found only in Serbo-Croatian and in peripheral North Russian dialects (e.g. Šenkursk [15]), with some residual forms being scattered in other East Slavic areas (e.g. dial. Byeloruss. *ruci, zemli*; dial. Ukr. *vodi, zimi*; Tot'ma [4] *zime, storone*). There are likewise many Štokavian and Čakavian dialects in which the alternation in the dative singular is limited only to a few or to a single substantive (mostly *decá: deci*). Assuming that the alternation in the dative singular of *-a* stems with its scattered and sporadic dialectal distribution is of an archaic, Common Slavic (or even Balto-Slavic) origin, it would follow that its limited, scattered occurrence and final disappearance is the result of inherent morphological factors which limit or exclude the opposition between a dative and locative case in the *-a* stems, but tolerate and strengthen the similar opposition in the *-o* and *-i* stems of inanimate substantives. The phenomenon accounting for this asymmetry between the *-a* stems and the *-o* and *-i* stems can be formulated as a rule of near or complete incompatibility of the opposition between the nominative and accusative case (which is obligatorily expressed in all *-a* stems) with that of the dative and locative.

This rule enables us to explain why the accentual alternation in the accusative singular of *-a* stems, which has only a redundant function, is in all Slavic languages more stable than the accentual alternation in the dative singular which carries a distinctive grammatical function. The above rule of the *-a* declension in the South Slavic languages is only a special case of a more general rule which applies to all declensions and which can be formulated as follows: *the opposition between the nominative and accusative (or subject and object case) is in the singular declension incompatible with the*

opposition between the dative and locative (or between the directional and limitational case). The reverse of this rule does not hold, for the lack of an opposition between the dative and locative does not imply the existence of an opposition between the nominative and accusative, as is apparent from those inanimate substantives which carry a fixed accent or from the neuter substantives which exhibit syncretism of both the nominative and accusative and the dative and locative. Within the hierarchy of cases, the opposition dative (locative is, in other words, subordinate to the opposition nominative) accusative, but not vice versa.

In view of the above limitation, accentual mobility is in the *-a* stems represented primarily by the accusative case of the singular, just as it is in the *-o* and *-i* stems represented by the locative case of inanimate substantives, except for a few animate substantives designating small animals which dialectally alternate the accent in all three declensions; e.g. (Piva [33]) *mrāv, crv, čūk, ōs : na mrāvú, crvú, čūkú, ōsú*; (Lepetane [32]) *buhá: buhu*; (Pocerje) *osa: osu*; (S. Timok [25]) *osá, čelá: osu, čelu*; (Hvar [7]) *muhá čelá, buhá: muhu, čelu, buhu*; (Šapčinovac [9]) *(na) kokoši*. The accusative singular exhibits an accentual alternation in all South Slavic languages (as well as in East Slavic), though it has in many of them been subject to various modifications. A common innovating feature of this alternation is that it tends, like the alternation of the other declensions, to become restricted to monosyllabic (or simple) stems, though in some Serbo-Croatian dialects (e.g. Pocerje [7], Novi [1]) such a restriction is not imposed. The alternation in polysyllabic stems is completely lost in Slovenian, with the exception of residual forms in some marginal dialects (e.g. Zilje [10, p. 56] [*səróata: sərúato*]). The central Slovenian dialects and literary Slovenian allow the alternation only in stems with a short vowel (*o, e*), since stems with originally long vowels have for phonological reasons merged with the originally acute stems; that is, the accent pattern of *brána, brázda, zíma* is now identical with that of *lípá, rána, bába*. But the alternation *kosá, nogá, gorá* [= *kósa, nóga, góra*]: acc. *kosô, nogô, gorô* is now, even in the short stems, in free variation with a fixed oxytonic stress: *goró, kosó, nogó* [= *góro, kóso, nógo*]. No similar levelling, it should be observed, takes place in the *-o* and *-i* stems where the accentual alternation has retained its distinctive function.

In Bulgarian the stress alternation is to be found only in those dialects where inanimate substantives preserve the nominative / accusative opposition; e.g. Tr̄sn [19] *bradá: bradu, ruká: ruku*; Thracian [12, p. 82] *ršká: goró: gorz*.

The third type of mobile accent, which carries the accent to the stem in the nominative-accusative plural and which includes animate as well as

inanimate substantives — e. g. S-Cr. *ose, koze, pčele, molbe, trāve*; Russ. *bloxi, ser'gi, xlopoty* (dat. pl. *bloxám, ser'gám, xlopotám*) — can from a historical point of view be treated merely as a *variant* of the more archaic type one, or of the innovating type two, if we assume that this type consisted originally only of animate substantives which precluded an alternation in the singular (cf. the parallel treatment of animate *-o* and *-i* stems which admit the alternation only in the oblique cases of the plural: S-Cr. *drugovi: drugová, vūci: vūká, svasti: svásti*; Russ. *vory: voróv, volki: volkóv, dočeri: dočeréj*). This hypothesis is borne out by the fact that in some Serbo-Croatian dialects this type still consists almost exclusively of animate substantives (e. g. Ortiješ: *buhe, čele, zmije, vile, svīnje*; Piva: *zmije, buhe, čele, snae*, as well as *vrbe, klūpe*), or contains predominantly such substantives (as in literary Serbo-Croatian where we find *koze, ose, muhe, buhe, pčele, zmije, gūje, drūge, šrne*, in addition to some inanimate substantives). The inclusion of inanimate substantives into this type can be accounted for, on the one hand, by the fact that some inanimate nouns were *pluralia tantum* or were used mostly in the plural (e. g. Dubr. *suze, kose*; liter. S-Cr. *načve*), and on the other hand by the greater conservatism of the accentual alternation in the plural (where all declensions exhibit a similar stem-desinence alternation) than in the singular. Thus certain stems (especially polysyllabic ones) which have lost the alternation in the singular, could still retain it in the plural. Examples of a vacillating (mobile or oxytonic) accent in the singular and a stem accent in the plural are found in most Serbo-Croatian dialects (e. g. Pocerje [17]: *vřbu | vřbú, brádu | brādú: vřbe, bráde*; Novi [1]: *strīlu | strīlú: strīle*).

The association of accentual mobility in the nominative-accusative plural with the animate gender of feminine substantives exerted, in turn, an influence on those animate substantives which carried originally an oxytonic (desinential) accent. Only thus can we understand why many substantives which carried originally a desinential stress (as they still do, for example, in Dubrovnik where we find the forms *žené, sestré, vilé, slūgé, gūjé*) have switched in many dialects to the mobile type (e. g. South. Timok [25] *žene, sestre, zmije, bļe, glīste, bašte*; Ortiješ [18] *vīle, slūge*), while in other dialects animate *-a* stems vacillate between the mobile and the oxytonic types (e. g. Ortiješ and East. Hercegovina [34]: *svīnje | svīnjé, gūje | gūjé*). The identification of the animate gender with a distinctive accent pattern has, finally, led in some dialects to a clearcut, formal distinction between substantives of the animate and substantives of inanimate gender. Thus accentual mobility may in some dialects become the distinctive mark of only animate (mostly personal) substantives, while in other dialects it is permissible only in inani-

mate substantives. The former solution is found in some Torlaki and Bulgarian dialects where inanimate substantives carry a fixed accent on the stem or ending (e. g. Kriva Feja [3, p. 215]: *ruka, ruku*, pl. *ruke*, but *žená, žení*, pl. *žene*; Tvrđica: *zima*, pl. *zimi*; *gorá, glavá*, pl. *gorí, glaví*, but *sestrá, ovca, svihá*, pl. *sestri, svihi, ovci*), while the other solution is characteristic of some Bulgarian dialects where animate (mostly personal) substantives carry a fixed, desinential accent and non-personal substantives carry a stem accent which shifts to the ending in the forms with an article, or a desinential accent which moves in the plural to the stem; e. g. Dobroslavci [6, p. 49]: *žená, momá, sestrá, kozá, ovca* vs. *glava, daska, brada*; Teteven [27]: *žená, blxá, sestrá, snaxá, momá* vs. *glava, voda, réka; polé, peté, igle*; pl. *žení, blxi, sestri, snaxi, momí*, but. *glavi, vodi, réki, poli, peti, igli*.

3. The opposition between the inanimate and animate gender of *-a* stems has further repercussions on those Slavic dialects in which the nominative singular of inanimate substantives is accentually influenced by the form of the accusative or is completely replaced by the accusative. As a result of such a development the inanimate and animate substantives yield complementary systems in which the accusative is the primary or basic form of the former, and the nominative the basic form of the latter. Such a development in which the accusative becomes the *casus generalis* of inanimate, and the nominative the *casus generalis* of animate substantives has taken place in various Bulgarian dialects, though analogical levellings have in some of them led to the generalization of one or the other ending.

The accentual influence of the accusative on the nominative of inanimate substantives is, however, a widely spread South Slavic phenomenon, though it is not represented in all South Slavic areas to the same extent.⁴ Consistent levelling of the accent of the nominative with that of the accusative was observed in the Slovenian dialect of Rezija one hundred years ago by Baudouin de Courtenay [2]. This levelling applies here, of course, only to inanimate substantives with a short thematic vowel, since stems with a thematic long vowel have, for phonological reasons, retracted the accent from any final syllable. Thus we find in this dialect on the one hand the forms [*kösa, nöga, smöla, wöda, jigla*], and on the other hand the forms [*sastrá, žaná, tatá, norá, kozá*]. To the former type belong the names of small animals [*ösa, bolha, müha, öpca, svyha*] which are used mostly in the accusative, whereas the latter include a few inanimate substantives which are used

⁴ The levelling of the acc. sing. accent in inanimate substantives is found also in East Slavic. For examples from North Russian dialects, cf. Obnorskij, S. P., *Imennoe sklonenie v sovremennom russkom jazyke*, 1, 1927, p. 67—73.

mstly in the nominative [*mahlá, rosá* or *rōsa*]. The morphological origin of the „shift“ of accent in the inanimate forms is clearly shown by the fact that no such shift has taken place in other grammatical forms (e. g. the adjectival and verbal forms [*dobrá, zelená, bodlá, naslá*], in addition to the above listed animate substantives). The morphological and phonological shifts of accent are not, however, totally independent, for as Baudouin de Courtenay cogently observed [2, p. 74], the former is most likely to occur in areas which exhibit a tendency to shift the accent also phonologically, so that the retention of a final stress should be viewed rather as a case of a morphologically motivated resistance to phonemic change. This interaction of phonological and morphological factors explains best why the levelling of the stem accent in the nominative singular of inanimate stems is most consistently carried through in South Slavic areas which also exhibit a tendency to eliminate the accent from a final syllable, whereas the same levelling is only sporadically represented in other areas of South Slavic.

The generalization of the accusative singular accent in the singular declension of inanimate substantives (with the possible exception of the genitive and instrumental, which have long vowels in their endings) is attested in most Serbo-Croatian dialects. Ivšić quotes such Slavonian forms as *zmija, smola, soja* (= *soha*), *muva, sjerota*, and the Čakavian *budala, gospoda, sirota, slepota, slezena* [8, p. 22]. In other dialects we find the forms *metla, snaha, stopa, ospa* (Dubr.); *suza, krčma, izba, batina, ledina* (Ortiješ); *daska, stopa, rđa* (Plevlja); *globa, igla, buva, tōrba* (East. Herc.). The generalization of the initial accent in inanimate substantives is best known from those Southern dialects which show a tendency to shift the accent from a final open syllable though the substantives of animate gender resist consistently the phonemic shift; e. g. Prčanj [23]: *voda, noga, gora, zemlja, meda* vs. *kozá, sestrá, žená; vilá, gūjá, zmijá*; Ozrinići [23]: *duša, brada, ruka, zima* vs. *svinjá, [= svinja], slūgá, vilá*; Piperi [26]: *zemlja, meda, igla, ruka, glāva, strāna* vs. *sestrá, gūjá, vilá, sviná*; Lepetane [32]: *buha, deca, zemlja, gora, ruka, brada* vs. *čelá, slūgá*.

The maximal polarization of animate and inanimate *-a* stems in the singular is accomplished in Bulgarian dialects, though in some of them, like in literary Bulgarian, such a distinction is absent. Some Rhodopian and Banat dialects distinguish the nominative and accusative both in animate and inanimate nouns, while other dialects (Misian and Banat)⁵ carry this distinction only in animate (or rather personal) nouns; e. g. *sestrá, baštá, čičá* | *sestró, baštó, čičó* vs. (one genera' case) *glavó, rakó, vodó, zimó*.

⁵ Stojkov, S., *Bulgarska dialektologija*, Sofija, 1962, p. 138.

The ending of the non-personal substantives may be stressed or unstressed, whereas the personal endings are generally stressed. The nominative / accusative distinction is often neutralized (as in Banat [28, p. 181] and Gabare (21, p. 142-3]) when the personal noun is used with an article, enclitic or preposition (e. g. *ženóta, sestráta, sestrá si, baštré mu*). In a further simplification of the declension, personal substantives employ the *-a* ending of the original nominative (which is generally stressed), and the non-personal substantives use the stressed or unstressed ending of the original accusative.⁶ In the Rhodopian dialects of Smoljan [30] and Momčilovci [11] the latter ending is generally unstressed; e. g. *voda, gora, glava, kosa, noga* vs. *sněhá, žená, sestrá, momá, čičá* (the ending of the inanimate substantives is morphophonemically that of the old accusative which appears under stress as *ó* (< *o*) in the forms with article: *vodó'ta, goró'ta, glavó'ta, kosó'ta, nogó'ta*). This double distinction of accent and ending is not maintained, however, in other dialects which generalize one of the two distinctive features of the *-a* declension. Thus the dialects of Kriničnoe [35], Krisovo [20], or Silistra [13] use a stressed *-á* ending with personal substantives (e. g. *momá, slugá, sestrá, žená*) and a stressed *-ó* ending with non-personal substantives with a mobile accent (e. g. *bradó, idló, koró, kozó, glavó*), while the dialects of Old Krim (Crimea) [5] or Tvardycja [14] generalize the stressed *-á* ending in the personal, and the unstressed *-a* (but sometimes *-o*) in the ending in the non-personal substantives; e. g. *žená, momá, sestrá* vs. *voda, gora, rěka (rěkátá), zima | zimó, but nogó (nogó'ta) glavó, (glavó'ta)*. In other dialects (e. g. Teteven [27]) personal substantives admit only a fixed oxytonic stress, while inanimate substantives allow a mobile accent which falls in the base form (i. e. in the singular without article) on the stem or on the ending. (See the examples from Teteven given above on p. 9). Many Bulgarian dialects exhibit, however, considerable variation from village to village and, across generation lines, even within the same village, so that the neat distinctions of gender tend to become blurred.⁷

The personal / non-personal opposition is completely neutralized when the substantives of either gender use the same ending and are subject to the same accentual alternations, as in Kjustendil [31] where personal and non-personal substantives alike shift the accent to the stem in the plural; e. g. *sestrá, momá, žena; budá, ovčá, pčelá; zvezdá, metlá, maglá*: pl. *sestri, momi, pčeli, zvezdi*, etc., or when the place of stress and accentual pattern

⁶ For the existence of such a polarization, see Lj. Miletič, *Das Ostbulgarische*⁸ (*Schriften BKLA* 2), 1903, pp. 49 and 215.

⁷ On this variation of types in nearby villages, see the statement by Miletič in *Das Ostbulgarische* (op. cit.), p. 104—5.

show no correlation to gender. The last situation prevails in literary Bulgarian where *-a* stems with an originally mobile accent pattern have been levelled with the acentually immobile stems in which the accent falls either on the stem or, which is more frequent, on the ending (e. g. *gŭba, izba, srjada, zima; ovcá, kozá, muxá, sestrá, vodá, bradá, dušá, glavá*).

The above exposition, I think, has shown that the distinction between an inanimate / animate (or personal) gender plays an important role in the *-a* stems of all Slavic languages. This distinction finds its formal expression in stems which are subject to accentual alternations and exerts an influence on the various types of case-syncretism which appear most clearly in the South Slavic languages and dialects.

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