

Tonogenesis in Baltic and Slavic languages

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Some Slavic and Baltic languages have contrastive tones. Lithuanian, Slovene and Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian/Montenegrin combine contrastive lexical stress with two or more tones. Latvian combines fixed word-initial stress with two or three tones, depending on the dialect. There are three hypotheses about the origin of these tones:

1. The tonal contrast was inherited from Proto-Indo-European
2. The tonal contrast is a shared innovation of Baltic and Slavic languages
3. The tonal contrast arose independently in Baltic and Slavic

There is no consensus among proponents of the last two hypotheses about how the Baltic and Slavic tones would have arisen. Three scenarios have been proposed in the literature:

- a. Tonogenesis through reanalysis of an earlier vowel length contrast
- b. Tonogenesis through reanalysis of an earlier phonation contrast
- c. Tonogenesis through reanalysis of phonetic cues for stress

There are typological parallels for each of these scenarios and all scholars agree that at least two of these mechanisms played some role in the evolution of tone in Baltic and Slavic.

The evaluation of the proposed scenarios is hampered by the fact that the presence of stress has caused changes to the realization of the tones, often depending on whether they occur in stressed or unstressed syllables, as well as the rise of additional tones. This complicates a direct comparison of most of the attested tones across different languages. Instead, it is necessary to peel off layers of innovations in the individual languages first. This is illustrated in the table below, which shows the reflexes of what is generally considered to be a single original tone in 1. medial syllables, 2. initial syllables that are always stressed and 3. initial syllables that sometimes stressed and sometimes unstressed.

	Aukštaitian Lithuanian	Žemaitian Lithuanian	Latvian	Common Slavic	
1.	-i:-	-j:-	-j:-	-í-	denominal suffix
2.	sè:ti	sje:te	sé:t	sæ:ti	'to sow'
3.	gì:v-	gì:v-	dzj:v-	zì:v-	'alive'

In this paper it will be argued that scenario 3b explains the attested distributions best: a contrast between modal and laryngealized syllables can be reconstructed for the common ancestor of the Baltic and Slavic and oppositions that were exclusively tonal arose only after Baltic and Slavic had become separate entities.

Literature

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