

INDO-EUROPEAN *E-, A-, O-* IN SLAVIC

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The expected reflexes of original **e-*, **a-*, **o-* in Baltic and Slavic are the following:

	Prussian	Lithuanian	Latvian	Slavic
<i>*e-</i>	<i>a-</i>	<i>e/a-</i>	<i>e-</i>	<i>je-</i>
<i>*a-</i>	<i>a-</i>	<i>e/a-</i>	<i>e/a-</i>	<i>je/o-</i>
<i>*o-</i>	<i>a-</i>	<i>e/a-</i>	<i>e/a-</i>	<i>je/o-</i>

For Prussian I refer to Kortlandt 2000 and for East Baltic to Derksen 2002. The Slavic doublets developed from the rise of an epenthetic *j* before back vowels after a preceding word-final front vowel (cf. Kortlandt 1979: 267f., 1989: 49). It follows that an original **e-* is incompatible with Latvian *a-* or Slavic *o-* and that an alternation between Latvian *e-* and *a-* or between Slavic *je-* and *o-* points to an original **a-* or **o-*, not **e-*. The matter is complicated by the secondary development of *je-* to *o-* and of *ju-* to *u-* in East Slavic, e.g. Russ. *ózero* ‘lake’, *útro* ‘morning’, SCr. *jězero*, *jútro* (cf. Kortlandt 1989: 50).

This account has been challenged by Henning Andersen (1996), who assumes a general change of **o-* > **a-* followed by an early development of **a-* > **e-* (“Rozwadowski’s change”) in the larger part of Slavic and Baltic and a later development of **e-* > **a-* in the central dialects of Slavic and Baltic before the rise of prothetic *j-* in Slavic. If this theory is taken seriously, it predicts a central area where we find **a-* surrounded by an area where we find **e-* surrounded by a fringe area where we find the original distribution of **a-* and **e-*. This is not what we find.

The number of lexemes with *je-* or *o-* and the ratio of *o-* to *je-* in non-alternating lexemes in the separate dialectal areas of Slavic are the following according to Andersen’s table (1996: 34):

	<i>je-</i>	<i>je/o-</i>	<i>o-</i>	<i>o- : je-</i>
East Slavic	4	16	4	1.00
Bulgarian & Macedonian	10	9	1	0.10
Serbo-Croatian & Slovene	11	10	2	0.18
Czech & Slovak	13	5	3	0.23
Sorbian	14	1	3	0.21
Lekhitic	14	7	4	0.29

It appears that East Slavic differs qualitatively from South and West Slavic. These figures support the traditional view that *je-* became *o-* in East Slavic under certain conditions. There is no question of an area with **a-* surrounded by an area with **e-* surrounded by an area with **a-* and **e-*. The large number of doublets point to different generalizations of sandhi variants and require a detailed chronological analysis instead of indiscriminately lumping all the data together and presenting general considerations as a new methodology.

In my earlier account I dated the rise of prothetic *j-* and concomitant loss of /j/ as a phoneme before front vowels to stage B11 (7.1), the delabialization of high rounded vowels and concomitant phonemicization of prothetic *w-* to stage B12 (7.8), the raising of **ē*, **ō* to **ī*, **ū* and the retraction of initial **jā-* /e-/ and **jū-* /jū-/ to **a-*, **ū-* in East Slavic to stage B13 (7.9-7.10), the metathesis of liquids and the rise of the new timbre distinctions to stage B14 (7.12-7.13), and the final loss of the phoneme /j/ to stage B15 (7.15), all of these belonging to what I have called the Late Middle Slavic period VII (cf. Kortlandt 1979: 263-270 and 1989: 49-52). Original **ja-*, **jā-* had merged with **je-*, **jē-* as a result of the umlaut at stage B6 (6.1) and with original **e-*, **ē-* by the rise of prothetic *j-* at stage B11 (7.1) whereas original **ju-*, **jū-* merged with **i-*, **ī-* as a result of the delabialization at stage B12 (7.8), e.g. in *igo* ‘yoke’, cf. Skt. *yugám*. After the rise of new **jū-* from original **jau-* at stage B13 (7.9), there were non-alternating lexemes with **jā-* /e-/, **jā-* /ē-/, **jū-* /jū-/ beside alternating lexemes with **a-*, **ā-*, **ū-* which had fronted variants after word-final front vowels. After palatal consonants, there had been a distinctive opposition between /ē/ and /ā/ since the second palatalization at stage B9 (6.6), but not between the corresponding short vowels, where the distinction was neutralized in **ä*. Now initial /j/ was lost in East Slavic and **jā-* and **jū-* were rephonemicized as /a-/, /ū-/ so as to eliminate the phonemic alternation in the initial vowel (7.10). In the case of **jā-* the situation was different because there was a distinctive opposition between /ē/ and /ā/ after palatal consonants, so the alternation was eliminated by generalizing the fronted variant /ē-/ here, e.g. Russ. *jábloko* ‘apple’ < **ā-*, cf. *jásnyj* ‘clear’ < **ē-* < **ai-*. This /ē-/ became /ä-/ while /a-/, /ū-/ became /o-/, /u-/ by the rise of the new timbre distinctions at stage B14 (7.13). New /e-/ and /a-/ thus received a marginal status, being limited to absolute initial position. When the phoneme /j/ was lost altogether at stage B15 (7.15), earlier

**jä-*, **jā-*, **jū-* became /e-/ , /ä-/ , /ü-/ in South and West Slavic, where they remained phonemically distinct from /o-/ , /a-/ , /u-/ . In these languages, too, analogical reanalysis gave rise to doublets, but not on the same scale.

After the loss of /j/, new long vowels arose from contractions in posttonic syllables (8.1) and from retraction of the stress from final jers (8.2). Then postconsonantal **ä* was raised to **ie* in the larger part of the Slavic territory (8.3). This development did not affect initial or postvocalic **jä* /*ä*/, which was rephonemized as /ja/ after the rise of new /j/, e.g. Russ. *jásnyj* ‘clear’, *stoját* ‘to stand’. New **ie-* was subsequently introduced into simplex verbs, e.g. Russ. *éxat* ‘to ride’, *est* ‘to eat’ (cf. already Pedersen 1905: 312). It appears from the large-scale restoration of uncontracted adjective and verb forms in East Slavic that the rise of new /j/ was earlier here than in South and West Slavic. We therefore expect a substantial number of doublets with restored *je-* beside *o-* in East Slavic, and this is indeed what we find (see above). Conversely, we expect few doublets with *o-* beside *je-* in dialectal areas where contractions are plentiful and the rise of new /j/ was presumably late, especially in Czech and Sorbian, and this is again what we actually find. Thus, it is clear that Andersen’s data are wholly consistent with the traditional view and offer no indication whatever of dialectal differences antedating the rise of prothetic *j-* in Slavic.

We may now again question the reliability of Slavic *je-* versus *o-* as a reflex of original **e-*, **a-*, **o-*. On the basis of Andersen’s data I tentatively reconstruct **e-* in **jedinь* ‘one’, **ješče* ‘still’, **jedva* ‘hardly’, **jedľь* ‘spruce’, **jelьць* ‘whitefish’, **jelito* ‘intestine’, **jelenь* ‘deer’, **jelькь* ‘bitter’, **jemela* ‘mistletoe’, **jerębь* ‘hazel-grouse’, **jese* ‘look!’, **jesenь* ‘ash-tree’, **jesenь* ‘autumn’, **jesetrь* ‘sturgeon’, **jesmь* ‘am’, **jezero* ‘lake’, **ježь* ‘hedgehog’, **jemešь* ‘coultter’, and **a-* in **olovo* ‘lead’, **olьxa* ‘alder’, **opsa* ‘aspen’, **orьль* ‘eagle’, **osera* ‘awn’, **osetь* ‘harrow’. This yields the following numbers of correspondences:

<i>*a- : *e-</i>	<i>je-</i>	<i>je/o-</i>	<i>o-</i>
East Slavic	0 : 4	1 : 13	4 : 0
Bulgarian & Macedonian	1 : 8	2 : 7	1 : 0
Serbo-Croatian & Slovene	1 : 9	1 : 8	2 : 0
Czech & Slovak	0 : 12	1 : 3	3 : 0
Sorbian	0 : 13	1 : 0	3 : 0
Lekhitic	0 : 14	2 : 3	4 : 0

It appears that the distinction was never fully lost, not even in East Slavic, and that the analogical developments affected South and West Slavic to a limited extent. Note that all of the words with **o-* have good etymologies while half of the words with **je-* do not even have cognates in Baltic. We can now identify “Rozwadowski’s change” of **a-* to **e-* with the rise of variants with a prothetic *j-* after word-final front vowels (7.1) and Andersen’s later change of **e-* to **a-* with the

analogical reanalysis after the rise of new /j/ discussed above. Limiting ourselves to the lexemes with Baltic cognates, we arrive at the following numbers:

	*e- > je- >> o-	*a- > o- >> je-
East Slavic	9 7	5 1
Bulgarian & Macedonian	9 3	4 3
Serbo-Croatian & Slovene	9 3	4 2
Czech & Slovak	9 3	4 1
Sorbian	8 0	4 1
Lekhitic	9 1	6 2

It follows that the distinction between *e- and *a- is best preserved in West Slavic, especially Sorbian, not very well in South Slavic, where reanalysis was frequent, and hardly at all in East Slavic, where retraction of *e- to *a- was the rule. The geographical distribution of je- and o- is explained by the chronology of the rise of new /j/ in recent prehistoric times.

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