

# DIE WELT DER SLAVEN

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# INCEPTIVE AND CONCEPTIVE VERBS IN SLAVIC

(With Special Emphasis On Church  
Slavonic)\*

## 1. The Problem

### 1.1. Inceptive and conceptive verbs

Ingressive or inchoative meaning is expressed in one of two ways in the Slavic languages. First, it may be expressed by attaching a prefix, often *vъz-* or *za-*, to an imperfective verb, as in OCS:

- 1a *vъzl'jubiti* 'begin to love',
- 1b *vъznenaviděti* 'begin to hate';

or Russian:

- 2a *загреметь* (= начать греметь),
- 2b *защевелить* (= начать щевелить)

Second, it may be expressed by a governing verb with the meaning of initiation or onset, generally from the root *-čę-/čĭn-*, and a complement naming the action, process or state which is begun. Other roots are also used to express ingressive or inchoative meaning, especially *sta-/staj-/stav-/stan-*, as in Russian *стать*, Serbo-Croatian *postati, nastati*, etc., or phraseologisms such as Russian *взяться (за дело)*, Serbo-Croatian *latiti se (posla)*, etc. In this paper, however, I will restrict my attention to verbs with the meaning of initiation or onset formed from the root *-čę-/čĭn-*. I refer to these as inceptive and conceptive verbs.

In the various Slavic languages at least seven prefixes are found with the root *-čę-/čĭn-*: *za-*, *na-*, *po-*, *vъ-*, *vъz-*, *u-*, and *sv-*, as well as combinations of prefixes such as *roz+po-* (Polish, Ukrainian, Belorussian and Russian) or *za+po-* (Bulgarian, Serbo-Croatian, Russian and the Sorbian languages). Most languages utilize several of these prefixes (plus combinations of prefixes), and local variation is common.

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\* I would like to thank Henrik Birnbaum and Ernest Scatton for their assistance in clarifying several of the concepts presented in this paper.



For Russian, most notably, Dal's dictionary (1880-1882) contains entries for *вчатъ* (defined as synonymical to *вс- за- по-* and *начать*), *всчинать* (variant of *вчатъ*, = *на-, по-, зачатъ, затевать, особ. об иске, тяжбе*), *зачать* (= *на-, в-, учать, стать; починать, обновлять почином*), *начать* (= *по-, за-, вчатъ*), *почать* (*пск. = за-, (на-в-) чинать*), and *учать* (= *начать, стать, вчатъ*), as well as the combinations *започать* (= *за-, по-, начать товар, припас, etc.*), and *распочать* (*цѣбик, тюк, разделять и почать*), and most are defined more-or-less identically, i.e. with reference to the others. Dictionaries of Contemporary Standard Russian contain fewer entries, but this clearly obscures some of the variation which would be observable in the dialects, and some overlap between the meanings of the registered verbs nevertheless remains. In *АНСССР*, for example, we find entries only for *зачать, начать, и почать*, with the last characterized as archaic and dialectal in the generic sense of 'beginning,' and substandard (*простореч.*) in the sense of beginning to consume some item. But *зачать* in substandard usage can also have the generic meaning of 'beginning' (= *начинать, затевать*, cf. s.v.).

Similar variation, though perhaps involving fewer prefixes, is reported from the remaining languages. In Serbo-Croatian, for example, *početi* is clearly the basic verb in the generic sense of 'beginning,' at least in the standard language. Yet all of the major dictionaries (*MS-MH, SANU* and *JAZU*) also report *začeti* in this generic sense (as well as in its more limited sense of conceiving life) with no indication that such usage, at least with an infinitive complement, is dialectal, substandard, or in any way limited (except that *JAZU* chooses to define *začeti* for the generic sense of 'beginning' by reference to *početi*).

We have a similar situation in Polish, in which along with basic *zacząć, począć* also occurs in the generic sense of 'beginning' (though it also denotes the more restricted sense of conceiving life), as well as *nacznąć*. In the Polish case *PAN* clearly labels *począć* as bookish, and *nacznąć* as archaic. Here, however, we have a further complication in that the basic deverbal noun correlated with *zacząć* seems to be *почątek*, though *zaczątek* also exists (as does *wszczętek*).

Significant variation occurs not only within languages, but between languages (and, as we shall see below, groups of languages) as well. In Contemporary Standard Russian *начать* is basic in the generic sense of 'beginning,' while archaic *зачать* expresses the sense of conceiving life, and *почать* is excluded (though in substandard usage it can

express the sense of beginning s.v.). In Serbo-Croatian, in con are in large part restricted to th *četi*) or beginning to consume s which is basic in the generic s *cząć* can express the sense of c exist in the standard language variation in its pan-Slavic persp

In order to understand this v would be useful to know how t in Late Common Slavic) distr already existed. An analysis o and redactional texts leads to t distribution of prefixes was determi factors. In this paper I will exa tors, with emphasis on Croatia Old Church Slavonic. Syntacti voice) and stylistic factors also the distribution, but space wil present paper. It will be seen t tive verbs in Church Slavonic dialect geography within the S also become apparent that Ch Old Church Slavonic, occupie guage family with respect to th and at least some redactional t mantic) category which is not I will refer to this category te ephemeral) state.' Furthermore the sense of beginning some Slavonic from all modern Slav

Two especially significant r it will be seen that the dialect verbs relates simultaneously t the Slavic world - that separat north and East South Slavic fr *jedinъ > jedьnъ* 'one'), and t

<sup>1</sup>*PAN* contains no entry for *nacz* archaic. Linde, however, and the *SI* in the generic sense of "beginning".



express the sense of beginning to consume some item, cf. *AHCCCP* s.v.). In Serbo-Croatian, in contrast, *početi* is basic, while *za-* and *na-* are in large part restricted to the specific senses of conceiving life (*začeti*) or beginning to consume some item (*načeti*). In Polish it is *zacząć* which is basic in the generic sense of 'beginning,' while bookish *po-  
cząć* can express the sense of conceiving life, and *naczać* has ceased to exist in the standard language<sup>1</sup>. We will return to a discussion of this variation in its pan-Slavic perspective in § 3.

In order to understand this variation, at least in its broad outlines, it would be useful to know how the various prefixes were originally (i.e. in Late Common Slavic) distributed, and what dialectal divergences already existed. An analysis of verbs formed from *-če-/čīn-* in OCS and redactional texts leads to the conclusion that the choice and distribution of prefixes was determined by semantic, syntactic and stylistic factors. In this paper I will examine the most important semantic factors, with emphasis on Croatian Church Slavonic (CCS) and canonical Old Church Slavonic. Syntactic (especially aspect and government or voice) and stylistic factors also played an important role in determining the distribution, but space will not allow a discussion of these in the present paper. It will be seen that an analysis of inceptive and conceptive verbs in Church Slavonic can indeed help us to understand their dialect geography within the Slavic language family as a whole. It will also become apparent that Church Slavonic, and especially canonical Old Church Slavonic, occupies a unique place within the Slavic language family with respect to these verbs. Most notably, canonical OCS and at least some redactional texts manifest a lexico-grammatical (semantic) category which is not attested in any of the Slavic vernaculars. I will refer to this category tentatively as 'onset of a persistent (non-ephemeral) state.' Furthermore, the generalized use of the prefix *na-* in the sense of beginning some action or process distinguishes Church Slavonic from all modern Slavic languages except standard Russian.

Two especially significant results will emerge from this study. First, it will be seen that the dialect geography of inceptive and conceptive verbs relates simultaneously to two of the oldest sets of isoglosses in the Slavic world - that separating East Slavic from West Slavic in the north and East South Slavic from West South Slavic in the south (e.g. *jedinъ > jedъnъ* 'one'), and that uniting the northwest periphery of

<sup>1</sup>*PAN* contains no entry for *naczać*, only for *naczynać*, which it characterizes as archaic. Linde, however, and the *Słownik staropolski* do contain entries for *naczać* in the generic sense of "beginning".



South Slavic with West Slavic (e.g. lenition of the reflex of \*dj, retention of \*tl \*dl)<sup>2</sup>. Second, we gain evidence of the most convincing variety in support of the thesis that Church Slavonic in at least some milieus represented a living language, rather than merely a *redaction* or imitation of the manner of the Cyrillo-Methodian sacred texts<sup>3</sup>.

### 1.2. Inceptive and conceptive meaning

I assume that inceptive and conceptive meaning represent a privative relation. Inceptiveness is the broader category, and includes the initiation of actions, processes, and states, as in the following OCS examples:

- 3a *i načbnetь biti raby i rabyne*, '(if that servant) ... shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens' καὶ ἀρξήται τύπτειν τοὺς παῖδας καὶ τὰς παιδίσκας (Marianus 257, 6-7; Luke 12:45)
- 3b *i zvězdy načbnoť sь neb(e)se padati*, 'And the stars of heaven shall fall' καὶ οἱ ἀστέρες ἔσονται ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ πίπτοντες (Zographensis 117b, 22-23; Mark 13:25)
- 3c *nače (petrь) potaplěti se, (ě sic!)* 'and beginning (Peter) to sink, ...' Καὶ ἀρξάμενος καταποντίζεσθαι, (Savvina kniga 41, 6; Matthew 14:30)
- 3d *i načeše veseliti se*, 'And they began to be merry' καὶ ἤρξαντο εὐφραίνεσθαι (Zographensis 191a, 6-7; Luke 15:24)

Conceptiveness may be considered a limited subcategory of inceptiveness, and refers to the "coming into existence" of some entity or concept, especially the onset of life:

- 4 *I se začbneši vь črěvě, i rodiši s(y)nb*, 'And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son,' συλήψῃ ἐν γαστρὶ (Assemanianus 145a 25-26; Luke 1:31)

<sup>2</sup> "Bundles" of isoglosses would be too strong a term (cf. Shevelov 1964:608). On both of these sets of isoglosses cf. Ivić 1958, esp. pp. 57-58, though little evidence is adduced for the latter. For a more recent discussion of one of the key features linking Slovene and the northwest periphery of Serbo-Croatian with West Slavic cf. Timberlake 1981.

<sup>3</sup> On the types of evidence which may be brought to bear in such discussions cf. Corin in press.

but also to extensions of languages this includes the texts<sup>4</sup>, e.g. OCS:

- 5a *i ti namь začbnetь*  
they will begin  
προσάξουσιν
- 5b *ibo otь pravedь*  
from the just  
compose the bi

The basic relationship would

Inceptive

Illustration A: Inceptive

1.3. Initiation of  
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semantic subcategory with  
In West South Slavic (C  
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<sup>4</sup> Cf. the examples in JAZ  
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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Dostál 1959:116:117

<sup>6</sup> No Greek original is kn

but also to extensions of this meaning. In at least some Slavic languages this includes the beginning of composition of music or literary texts<sup>4</sup>, e.g. OCS:

- 5a *i ti namъ začьnoť i ti proglasęť novojo (!) pęsnъ*, 'and they will begin (to compose) ...' presumably for προσάξουσιν (προάξουσιν<sup>5</sup>) (Clozianus 1a29-30)
- 5b *ibo otъ pravedьnyxъ dęanii začinaemъ blaženoe žitъe* 'for from the just deeds we begin the blessed life (i.e. to compose the biography)' (Clozianus 1b23-25<sup>6</sup>)

The basic relationship would therefore be:

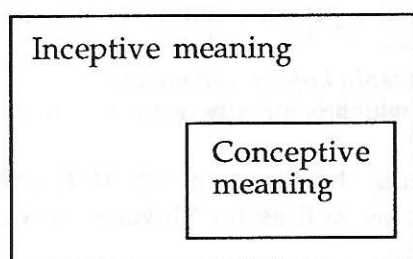


Illustration A: Inceptive and Conceptive Meaning in the Slavic Languages

### 1.3. Initiation of consumption

Before moving on to Church Slavonic, we must consider one more semantic subcategory within the larger category of inceptive meaning. In West South Slavic (plus Macedonian) and West Slavic (minus Polish) the transitive verb *načęti* expresses the specific sense of beginning to consume some item (especially of food) or the contents of

<sup>4</sup> Cf. the examples in *JAZU* s. *začinjati* (many) and *začęti* (fewer). It is also in this sense that the verb (actually the deverbal *nomen agentis*) is used in Marulić's much discussed reference to Dalmatian *začinjavci*.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Dostál 1959:116:117. Migne's text differs considerably at this location.

<sup>6</sup> No Greek original is known. Cf. Dostál 1959:10-11, 127-128.



some container. Dictionaries of West Slavic languages generally refer to beginning to cut or consume a loaf of bread or the contents of a jar:

- 6a **načať**, ... 1. oddelit' prvú čiastku z niečoho, z nejakého celku, porušiť celok odobratím čiastky: n. *chlieb*; *načatý sud* (Ráz.); *načatá dyňa* (Gab.); ... (*Slovník slovenského jazyka* s.v.)
- 6b os. [i.e. Upper Sorbian, A.C.] **načeć**, ... 'anschneiden (Brot)', ... ns. [i.e. Lower Sorbian, A.C.] **naceś**, ... 'anbrechen, anschneiden', z. B. Brot, im Topfe eingelegte Butter, Honig u. ä., ... (*naceta pokšyta* 'angeschnittener Laib Brot', ... (Schuster-Šewc s.v.)

Cf. similar examples for Czech (*Slovník spisovného jazyka českého* s. *načítí*). In this sense we also get such common SC sentences as:

- 6c *Donesi neku teglu koja je već načeta*  
'Bring a jar which is already open' (i.e. begun)

Similar examples may be found in *MS-MH*, *SANU* and *JAZU* (meaning b.) s. *načeti*, as well as for Slovene (*Slovar slovenskega knjižnega jezika* s. *načeti*).

In these languages, then, the field of inceptive and conceptive meaning would include at least the following subdivisions:

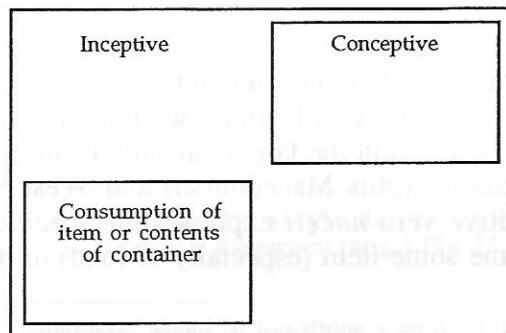


Illustration B: Inceptive and Conceptive Meaning in West Slavic and West South Slavic

2. Inceptive and Slavonic

2.1 Inceptive and tian Church Slav In analyzing the language noted partial synonymy and inchoative expressions. O with *vbz-* alternate (often location) with *vbčeti* + *infi* onset of a nonephemeral or

- 7 *Ače vshočete i*  
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On the other hand, no less /-čín- in CCS: *vb-*, *za-*, *na* conception of a child) we e

- 8a *Se počneši v' č*  
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- 8b *i ta začeti s(i)n*  
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In inceptive meaning prop action, process, state other encounter *na-* and *po-*:

- 9 *i načeti/poče i*  
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τοῦ εἰσελθεῖν

<sup>7</sup> My data are taken primarily from the Church Slavonic (Old and New Testament) for especially 33-35, and Corin in and the Acts of the Apostles as Slavonic breviary (on the original locations from Hrvoje's Missal Missal (vols. 1 and 2, see Liscription and facsimile, were al

## 2. Inceptive and conceptive verbs in Church Slavonic

### 2.1 Inceptive and conceptive verbs in Croatian Church Slavonic

In analyzing the language of biblical texts in CCS manuscripts<sup>7</sup>. I have noted partial synonymy and variation between various ingressive or inchoative expressions. On the one hand, ingressive verbs prefixed with *vbz-* alternate (often between manuscripts in a single textual location) with *vbčeti* + infinitive. These locations generally refer to the onset of a nonephemeral or persistent state, as in:

- 7 *Ače vshočete i poslušati me vīčnete/vsposlušate me* 'If ye be willing and obedient' (Isaiah 1:19); *Si volueritis, et audieritis me; εὐαν ... εἰσακούσητε*

On the other hand, no less than four prefixes are used with the root *-če-/-čin-* in CCS: *vb-*, *za-*, *na-*, and *po-*. In conceptive meaning (as in the conception of a child) we encounter the prefixes *za-* and *po-*:

- 8a *Se počneši v' črěvě i porodiši s(i)ni* 'thou shalt conceive in thy womb' concipies συλλήψῃ (Luke 1:31), but
- 8b *i ta začeti s(i)ni v starosti svoei* 'she (Elisabeth) hath also conceived a son in her old age' conceptit filium συνείληφεν (Luke 1:36)

In inceptive meaning proper (i.e. indicating the initiation or onset of an action, process, state other than life, or extensions of that meaning), we encounter *na-* and *po-*:

- 9 *i načeti/poče ijuna v'hoditi v' grad* 'And Jonah began to enter into the city' coepit ... introire καὶ ἤρξατο Ἰωνᾶς τοῦ εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν πόλιν (Jonah 3:4)

<sup>7</sup> My data are taken primarily from a comparative corpus of biblical readings (Old and New Testament) for the last two weeks of Lent from all of the Croatian Church Slavonic plenary missals (on the origin of this corpus see Corin 1991: especially 33-35, and Corin in press), and from the text of the first book of Samuel and the Acts of the Apostles as preserved in 15 manuscripts of the Croatian Church Slavonic breviary (on the origin of this corpus see Corin in press). Other textual locations from Hrvoje's Missal (*HM*, see the list of sources) and the New York Missal (vols. 1 and 2, see List of Sources), both of which are available in transcription and facsimile, were also taken into consideration.







structure of inceptive and conceptive meaning in CCS would thus include at least the following:

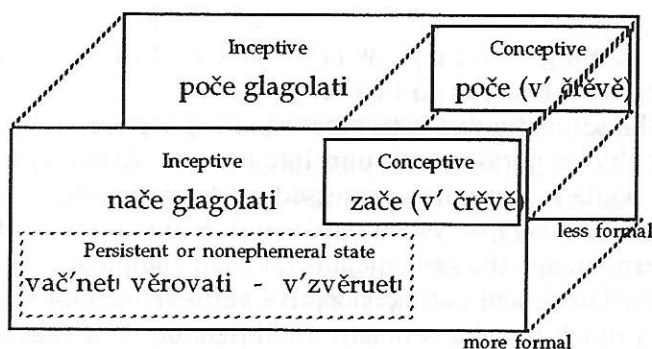


Illustration C: Inceptive and Conceptive Meaning in Croatian Church Slavonic

The evidence from CCS for a semantic subcategory of 'onset of a persistent state' within the larger category of inceptive meaning is suggestive, rather than conclusive. Nevertheless, it is striking and worthy of further investigation, in part because this appears to be a category which among the Slavic languages is unique to Church Slavonic. As a further step in attempting to establish the reality of this distinction, and in order to explore its origin (i.e. whether it originated in Croatian texts or earlier), an analysis of the use of inceptive and conceptive verbs in canonical OCS is therefore crucial.

## 2.2. Inceptive and conceptive verbs in Old Church Slavonic

### 2.2.1 Data

Using Aitzetmüller's *Belegstellenverzeichnis der altkirchenslavischen Verbalformen* (1977) as a guide, I excerpted from the published editions every reported attestation of the verbs *včeti*, *zčeti/zčinati*, and *načeti/načinati* with surrounding context. No examples of *početi/počinati* or forms with the prefix *včz-* (corresponding to Polish *wszczęć/wszczynać* or Ukrainian dialectal *вчаму*, Russian dialectal *вчамь*) or *sv-* (corresponding to Ukrainian dialectal *счаму*, cf. Rudnyc'kyj 1972 s. *вчаму*) were reported in the canonical texts by Aitzetmüller or the *Slovník* of the Czechoslovak Academy. A single example with the prefix *u-* (Luke 19:37, cf. example 13e), which may be assumed to stand



in place of *vb-* (Jagić 1913:284) is reported (Aitzetmüller 1977:686). I also noted the aspect of the inceptive/conceptive verb, its government/rection, and where available the corresponding Greek and Vulgate forms.

### 2.2.2. Congruency with inceptive and conceptive verbs in Greek

In Greek the semantic distinction between conceptive and inceptive is expressed by separate and unrelated roots (*συλλαμβάνω*<sup>9</sup> vs. *ἄρχομαι*), while in Latin it is expressed by distinct prefixes attached to a common root (*concipio* vs. *incipio/coepi*). Slavic seems to follow the Latin pattern, though the agreement is far from complete.

The basic Greek and Latin conceptive verbs (*concipio/συλλαμβάνω*) belong to a much broader semantic field than do their Slavic counterparts, and the conceptive meaning itself is clearly a secondary or minor sense of these verbs. In Church Slavonic, in contrast, conceptive meaning is the basic sense of *začeti*<sup>10</sup>, while the conceptive field also includes not only biological conception, but also extensions of this meaning such as the composition of artistic texts or music, or at least the beginning of the process of composition. It is in this sense that we encounter the verb *začeti* in examples 5a and 5b.

The inceptive fields in Slavic (excluding conceptive meaning), Greek and Latin seem to be much more congruent than are their conceptive fields, but divergences can nevertheless be noted<sup>11</sup>. First, *ἄρχομαι* in colloquial medieval Greek could apparently be used in a pleonastic construction, and in this sense (actually non-sense) it was

<sup>9</sup> In Biblical passages corresponding to Slavonic *začeti* and Latin *concipio* Greek has *συλλαμβάνω*, rather than *κύνω/κύω*.

<sup>10</sup> Most, if not all, Slavic languages also have verbs specifically referring to the onset of pregnancy (e.g. SC *zatrudi(j)eti*, Czech *otehotěti*, Russian *беременеть*), but in this sense they are similar to Greek (*ἐγκυμονέω*) and Latin (*gravidam fieri*).

<sup>11</sup> I leave out of account the example from Psalm 76/77:11:

*I rěhъ nyně načješъ, si izměna desnicje vyšbněgo*, (Psalterium Sinaiticum 98a7-9)

καὶ εἶπα Νῦν ἠρξάμην, αὐτὴ ἢ ἀλλοίωσις τῆς δεξιᾶς τοῦ ὑψίστου.  
Vulgate older: Et dixi: Nunc coepi;

Haec mutatio dexteræ Excelsi.

newer: Et dico: "Hic est dolor meus,

Quod mutata est dextera Altissimi."

'This is my infirmity'

in which *načeti* seems to render the sense of becoming ill. This example clearly reflects difficulties in interpreting the original Hebrew/Aramaic and translating it into Greek and through Greek into other languages such as Latin, Slavonic and English.

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introduced into the synoptic gospels and through them into their Slavic translations (for examples see the discussion in Birnbaum 1958 and Hunkin 1924). Such pleonastic usage seems to have been foreign to Slavic.

A second incongruity between Slavic, on the one hand, and Greek and Latin, on the other, concerns the use of inceptive verbs in *-če-* + infinitive as a periphrastic or complex future tense formation. Since at least the time of Miklosich (cf. 1926:865), it has been noted that perfective *načeti* + infinitive, or both *načeti* and *vъčeti* + infinitive, are in some instances used to express future tense along with or rather than their basic lexical meaning of initiation or onset. This usage is regularly discussed or noted in the specialized literature on the future tense in OCS (cf. especially Birnbaum 1958, but also Riedl 1986, Иванова-Мирчева 1962 and Křížková 1960, all of which contain references to earlier literature), as well as in most grammars, handbooks or surveys of OCS or aspects of its grammar (e.g. Leskien 1919:229, Weingart 1937:375, Селищев 1952:175, etc., etc.).

Nevertheless, expression of future tense is only one, and is in no way the basic meaning or function of these verbs in OCS. There are furthermore few examples in which it is possible to suggest loss of inceptive meaning and expression of just future tense meaning. Křížková, for example, can find only one such example with *načeti* in the canonical manuscripts (Mark 13:25, cf. ex. 3b), as well as the several with *vъčeti* in which (as I will argue below) we are dealing not with loss of inceptive meaning, but rather with a specific subcategory of that meaning (onset of a persistent state)<sup>12</sup>. In the following discussion I will therefore assume that the lexical meaning of these verbs is retained and expressed in all examples, regardless of the presence or absence of accompanying future tense meaning. It will be seen (for reasons parallel to those given in Note 8 for CCS) that this is a correct and necessary assumption even in those instances in which a Slavic

<sup>12</sup> Some authors (e.g. Потебня, Křížková) are indeed inclined to see a *trend* toward grammaticalization of the perfective present form *načьно* + infinitive. However, as pointed out by Křížková, "od lexikálně-gramatického zařízení pro vyjádření fázovosti je ještě daleko k čistému budoucímu času, tj. ke ztrátě např. ingresivnosti v přítomnosti . . ." 1960:75. Потебня, in a similar vein, asserts merely that "В этих последних [i.e. OCS and Old Russian, A.C.] действительно начьнж (= ну) (реже почьну, вьчьну) с неопределенным может быть настолько формально, что может заменять собою будущее других языков" (1958:362), which again is far different from asserting loss of the basic (lexical) inceptive meaning.



inceptive verb in *-če-/čin-* translates the Greek future tense without any indication of initiation or onset.

A third incongruity between Greek and Slavic (as will be clear from the examples in 13-15 below) is that the former does not distinguish a category of 'onset of a persistent state.'

In the existing literature on inceptive verbs in Slavic (and this literature is always concerned with their use for the expression of future tense), it is either assumed tacitly or in fact asserted (Birnbbaum 1958: 179, Иванова-Мирчева 1962:136) that *načeti* and *vbčeti* are synonymous, at least in this one function. There is thus no literature in which possible semantic, syntactic or stylistic divergence between the various verbs prefixed from the root *-če-/čin-* is discussed<sup>13</sup>. This paper is intended as a first step in remedying that deficiency.

### 2.2.3. Semantic factors

The conceptive field is expressed in OCS primarily by the prefix *za-*. This is true both in the narrow sense of conception of life (cf. examples 4, 8a and b), as well as in the extended sense of beginning the composition of music or artistic texts (cf. examples 5a and 5b). Exceptions, with another prefix for conception of a child, are not to be found, while in the sense of composing artistic texts we have the following apparent exceptions:

11a *Hristosъ mi da nač'netъ slovo*, (Suprasliensis 532,22<sup>14</sup>)

11b *ne oblěnihъ sę načeti, narečenaago sьčinen' bja*, (Suprasliensis 543,21-22<sup>15</sup>)

The examples under 12a-c, however, are not genuine exceptions:

12a *Poneže ubo mьnozi načęšę činiti povęstъ ... ἐπεχείρησαν ἀνατάξασθαι* (Marianus 189,1-2; Luke 1:1; similar in Assemanianus 147b8-9)

12b *i načęt sę mathei*, (rubric, Assemanianus 33c22-23)

<sup>13</sup> The short definitions of OCS *načeti*, *začeti* and *vbčeti* offered in Dostál 1954:380 cannot be considered a discussion.

<sup>14</sup> No Greek original is known.

<sup>15</sup> No Greek original is known.

12c *i načęt sę marko ev(a) ...*  
5)

In example 12a, the verb *načęti* is the name or term for the work, while in examples 12b and 12c reference is made rather than to the process of composition. *počętil/počinati* are not attested and should not be considered in discussing inceptive verbs.

Within the inceptive field (including *načęti*), of the three attested prefixes, *za-* is dominant. Against 12 reported examples of OCS, one probable example of *načęti* and 28 examples in all, we have the corpus of published canonical texts.

The prefix *vb-* occurs in 9 examples:

13a *a o družęmbъ ne bręšiti ...*  
10b20, Matthew 6  
and Savvina kniga

13b *a o družęmbъ ne bręšiti ...*  
193a10-11, Luke  
15)

13c *o crkvi ne roditi vbčęti ...*  
Matthew 18:17; similar

13d (*načęnetъ ... sto ...*  
*gl(agolj)očę ...*  
*тѣν θύραν* (Savvina kniga))

13e *učętv* (for *vbčętv*?) *v ...*  
*b(og)a, ἤρξαντο*  
*ροντες αἰνεῖν τὸν*  
19:37)

as well as in the following texts from the OCS and Suprasliensis:

12c *i načet se marko ev(an)d(e)listb*, (rubric, Assemanianus 74c4-5)

In example 12a, the verb *načeše* governs the infinitive *činiti*, rather than the name or term for the work being composed (*poněstb*), while examples 12b and 12c refer to readings or locations within a book, rather than to the process of composition. As noted above, the verbs *početi/počinati* are not attested in canonical OCS, and therefore need not be considered in discussing either the conceptive or inceptive fields.

Within the inceptive field proper (i.e. excluding conceptive meaning), of the three attested prefixes (*na-*, *za-* and *vb-*) *na-* is clearly predominant. Against 12 reported attestations of the verb *vbčeti* in canonical OCS, one probable example of *začeti/začinati* in inceptive meaning and 28 examples in all, we have 296 attestations of *načeti/načinati* in the corpus of published canonical texts.

The prefix *vb-* occurs in 9 examples from 5 biblical locations:

13a *a o družěmb ne brěšti vbčbnetb* καταφρονήσει (Zographensis 10b20, Matthew 6:24; similar in Assemanianus 36b 25-26 and Savvina kniga 33v 2-3)

13b *a o družěmb ne brěšti vbčbnetb* καταφρονήσει (Zographensis 193a10-11, Luke 16:13; similar in Savvina kniga 63v 14-15)

13c *o crkvi ne roditi vbčbnetb* παρακούση (Marianus 63,12-13, Matthew 18:17; similar in Assemanianus 33b 12-13)

13d (*načbnetb ... stojati*) *i tlěci vbčbnqtb* (q sic!) *vb dnvri gl(agolj)rcē ... ārξησθε έξω éstánoi, kai krouein tēn thūran* (Savvina kniga 60v18-19; Luke 13:25)

13e *učetb* (for *vbčetb*?) *v'se množbstvo učenikb ... hvalite (!) b(og)a, ģrξαντο āpan tō plēthos tōn mathētōn χαιροντες αίνειν τὸν θεὸν* (Zographensis 203b19-21; Luke 19:37)

as well as in the following three non-biblical passages from Clozianus and Suprasliensis:



- 13f *da ni edinoje že viny iměti včьnetь* ἵνα μηδεμίαν ἀπολογίας ἔχη πρόφασιν, (Clozianus 7b39-40; Suprasliensis 420:4 has *imatv izvēta*)
- 13g *da mr̃tvnyxь množьstvo, otṽnēta včьnetь ne iměti* Ἴνα γὰρ μὴ τῶν νεκρῶν τὸ πλῆθος ἀμφίβολον δείξῃ (Clozianus 12a4-5)
- 13h ... *sṽsqđtь tēlesi moliti prosti včьeti gospodevi ṽ isponṽdaniī, bogotṽ naučēnq̃p̃ ǣsñb*, ὅτι τῇ νέα καὶ ἀπειροκάκῳ τῶν νηπίων παιδῶν καὶ θηλαζόντων ἡλικία τὰ πρεσβεία συνεχώρησε τοῦ ἐξάρξαι τῷ Κυρίῳ ἐν ἔξομολογήσει τοῦ θεοδίδακτον ἄσμα, (Suprasliensis 320,9-11)

Of the examples with the prefix *včь-*, all but 3 (13 d, e, h) clearly fall into the category of onset of a persistent state. Of these, the example from *Savvina kniga* (13d) occurs in immediate juxtaposition to the verb *načeti*, and was likely being used in order to avoid repetition<sup>16</sup>. The remaining two (13e and h) occur in passages which are otherwise corrupted and difficult to interpret. The examples containing the verb *včьeti* do therefore suggest that a semantic contrast between *načeti* and *včьeti* (i.e. indication of the onset of a nonephemeral or persistent state) was indeed recognized by the scribes or translators of these texts.

It is interesting to note that in rendering Matthew 6:24, 18:17 and Luke 16:13 we have along with the examples cited above also:

- 14a *a o družětmь neroditi načьnetь*, (Marianus 17,10; Matthew 6:24)
- 14b *a o družětmь ne roditi načьnetь*, (Marianus 272,17; Luke 16:13)
- 14c *a o družětmь ne roditi načьnetь* (Assemanianus 65a17-20; Luke 16:13)
- 14d *ašte že i ot cr̃kvi ne raditi načьnetь* (Zographensis 43b1-2; Matthew 18:17)

<sup>16</sup> *Savvina kniga* diverges from both the Greek and the remaining OCS manuscripts, none of which have a second auxiliary or inceptive verb in this location.

in which *ne brěsti* has been replaced by *načeti*. It is significant that we encounter several examples in which a scribe might have used *načeti* as representing the active voice. This explanation seems less plausible than the one given only three examples with the verb *načeti* were the proposed d

15a *da ašte ne načnete ṽñs* (Suprasliensis 540,26-27<sup>17</sup>)

15b *i nenaviděti s̃e načьnetь* (Matthew 24:10)

15c *ñb jeda kako ṽskr̃stṽñtь m̃isoũsiv* (Suprasliensis 114,10-11)

In other superficially similar ex

16a *i t̃ogda načьnešī ...* (Suprasliensis 186b2-4, Luke 16:13; and S

16b *i načьnetь ṽñē stoētī* (Suprasliensis 185b10-11)

16c *dondeže čr̃ēva načьnetь* (Suprasliensis 114,10-11)

16d *os̃r̃pami nač̃e bolētī s̃*

16e *i nač̃eš̃e veseliti s̃e* (Zographensis 191a)

<sup>17</sup> No Greek original is known.

<sup>18</sup> The Greek original, according to the edition available to me for comparison, was not available to me for comparison.

in which *ne brěšti* has been replaced with the synonymous *ne roditi*. It is significant that we encounter the prefix *na-* in precisely those locations in which a scribe might have misinterpreted the infinitive (*ne*) *roditi* as representing the active verb meaning 'to give birth,' though this explanation seems less plausible for the last example. In fact, we find only three examples with the verb *načeti* in which we would clearly expect *včeti* were the proposed distinction real:

15a *da ašte ne načnete věrovati h(ri)s(t)ově věřě, ...* (Suprasliensis 540,26-27<sup>17</sup>)

15b *i nenaviděti se načьnотъ, μισήσουσιν* (Savvina kniga 47,2-3; Matthew 24:10)

15c *нъ jeda kako vьskrьsьđu jemu тьнѣти načьнот', jako ... во- μίσουσιν* (Suprasliensis 314,2-4)

In other superficially similar examples:

16a *i tьgda načьneši ... posledьn'ee město drъžati* (Zographensis 186b2-4, Luke 14:9 καὶ τότε ἄρξη ... τὸν ἕσχατον τόπον κατέχειν; also Marianus 264,5-6; Assemanianus 64a8-12; and Savvina kniga 62v1-2)

16b *i načьnetь vьнѣ stoěti, i tlěšti dnьri,* (Luke 13:25 καὶ ἄρξησθε ἔξω ἐστάναι καὶ κρούειν τὴν θύραν, Zographensis 185b10-11)

16c *dondeže črěva načьnотъ hьtěti izvaliti se na zemьjo, ἕως οὖν τὰ ἔγκατα αὐτῶν ἔμελλον πίπτειν ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν* (Suprasliensis 114,1-2)

16d *osьpami načь bolěti strana ta,* (Suprasliensis 45,3-4<sup>18</sup>)

16e *i načьše veseliti se,* (Luke 15:24 καὶ ἤρξαντο εὐφραίνεσθαι, Zographensis 191a6-7)

<sup>17</sup> No Greek original is known.

<sup>18</sup> The Greek original, according to Marguliés in Cod. Vaticanus Graec. 1169, was not available to me for comparison.



we are dealing with an ephemeral state. 16a, for example, refers to seating at a specific feast, 16b to a specific incident in which a person will stand at a door and knock, and similar for the remaining examples. Still, given the genuine exceptions in 15, we may consider the evidence for a semantic distinction between *vbčeti* and *načeti* in OCS and redactional texts suggestive, but nevertheless not quite compelling if we wish to express the distribution as resulting from a *rule* governed by the category of 'onset of a persistent state.' What we have is rather a tendency, and I would suggest that the proper way to account for such a tendency is through markedness conventions

Expressed in terms of markedness relations, of the three prefixes (*na-*, *po-*, *za-*), *na-* was clearly basic or unmarked. Inceptive meaning was therefore also unmarked in relation to conceptive meaning (and thus might more properly be referred to as nonconceptive meaning), while 'onset of a persistent or nonephemeral state' was also a marked subcategory.

Stated slightly differently, for inceptive meaning, the prefix *na-* is unmarked, while *za-* and *vb-* are marked (i.e. used toward some specific stylistic end or to express some specific nuance). For conceptive meaning, in contrast, *za-* is unmarked (markedness reversal), while *na-* would be marked (though in an attenuated sense, since it is the unmarked member in the larger system), while for expression of onset of a persistent or nonephemeral state *vb-* would be unmarked (markedness reversal), while *na-* would be marked (though again in an attenuated sense).

Given these relations, we would expect occasional use of *načeti* in contexts in which *vbčeti* or *začeti* would be appropriate (in such contexts *načeti* is [<sub>inceptive</sub> unmarked [<sub>conceptive</sub> marked]] or [<sub>inceptive</sub> unmarked [<sub>persistent state</sub> marked]]), but more limited use of the latter prefixes outside of their expected domains (in which they are simply [<sub>inceptive</sub> marked]). This is overall the situation which obtains.

As in CCS, we do not expect the sense of 'initiation of consumption of some item or the contents of some container' to be expressed overtly in OCS, at least by the prefix *na-* with the root *-čę-/čín-*, since in OCS this is the unmarked prefix for expressing inceptive meaning.

The system of inceptive and conceptive verbs in OCS may thus be assumed to have been as in Illustration D:

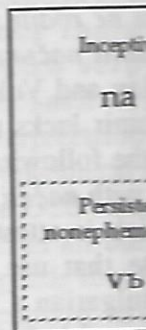


Illustration D: Inceptive and

### 2.3. Inceptive and conceptive redactions

At the present time it is possible to identify a category of 'onset of a persistent or nonephemeral state' in Church Slavonic. One problem is the identification of the locations in which we find this category (Matthew 6:24 and 18:17, and the canonical OCS manuscript of Luke 8:12). Once with *nenaviděti se* (*vbznenaviditě*). In addition to Luke 8:12 (ἐξεί το φῶς τῆς εἰς αὐτόν), which contain this category in canonical ones, but I do not know of any other. The remainder of the locations in which this function in either canonical or redactional Old Testament readings of Luke 8:12. Suprasliensis for which I have no comparison. If we examine the readings of Banica, Dobromir and Plovdiv, and Vukan gospels (Serbian), we find the following. For Matthew 6:24, Dobromir lacks *roditi načnetě*, and Ostrogon has *roditi načnetě*. For Luke 16:13, Banica, Plovdiv have *ne raditi načnetě*, and Vukan has *prěobiditě*, w

<sup>19</sup> I ignore here minor orthographic variations.



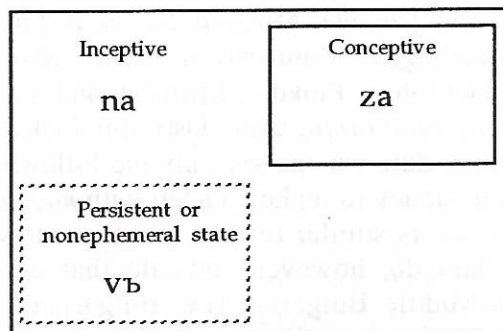


Illustration D: Inceptive and Conceptive Meaning in OCS

### 2.3. Inceptive and conceptive verbs in other redactions

At the present time it is possible to say very little concerning the category of 'onset of a persistent state' in other regional varieties of Church Slavonic. One problem is that there are only four New Testament locations in which we expect such a category to be manifested (Matthew 6:24 and 18:17, and Luke 16:13, which have *vbčeti* in some canonical OCS manuscripts, and Matthew 24:10, which is attested once with *nenaviděti se načbnōtъ* in Savvina kniga, otherwise with *vbznenaviditъ*). In addition to these, there are locations such as John 8:12 (ἐξεῖ το φῶς τῆς ζωῆς) and 11:48 (πάντες πιστεύουσιν εἰς αὐτόν), which contain *vbčeti* in some Croatian manuscripts but not in canonical ones, but I do not know how many such locations exist. The remainder of the locations which contain *vbčeti* in its expected function in either canonical OCS or my corpus of CCS text come from Old Testament readings or from nonbiblical texts in Clozianus and Suprasliensis for which I lack published redactional texts for comparison. If we examine the four New Testament locations in the Banica, Dobromir and Plovdiv gospels (Bulgarian), the Miroslav and Vukan gospels (Serbian), and Ostromir Gospel (East Slavic), we find the following. For Matthew 6:24 Banica and Plovdiv have *ne raditi vbčnet*<sup>19</sup>, Dobromir lacks this passage, Miroslav and Vukan have *ne roditi načnetъ*, and Ostromir has *ne raditi načnetъ*. In the parallel location in Luke 16:13, Banica has *ne raditi načnetъ*, but Dobromir and Plovdiv have *ne raditi vbčbnetъ*; Miroslav has *ne roditi načnetъ*, but Vukan has *prěobiditъ*, while Ostromir has *ne brěči vbčbnetъ*. For

<sup>19</sup> I ignore here minor orthographic differences.



Matthew 18:17 Banica and Plovdiv have *ne raditi vьčnetь*, while Dobromir lacks this passage; Miroslav has *ne roditi načnetь*, and Vukan lacks this reading; Ostromir has *ne roditi načьnetь*. For Matthew 24:10 Banica, Dobromir, Plovdiv, Miroslav and Vukan all have *vьznenaviditь* or *vьznenavidetь*, while Ostromir lacks this verse. From these very minimal data we can say only the following. For Bulgarian there may be a tendency to replace *vьčeti* with *načeti*, though the variation which we see is similar to that which is attested in canonical OCS. Riedl's data do, however, indicate that use of *vьčeti* soon disappeared in Middle Bulgarian (i.e. Bulgarian Church Slavonic) manuscripts. It would seem that a category of 'onset of a persistent state' either was absent or very early disappeared in vernacular Bulgarian. For Serbian, the situation appears to be clearer. In each case canonical *vьčeti* has been eliminated by the end of the twelfth century. Ostromir presents a mixed situation, similar to that in Bulgarian. The dialectal attestations in Dal's dictionary, as well as two of the attestations reported by Sreznevskij (intransitive *гласъ вчиняющихъ силою* = ἐξαρχόντων mistakenly attributed to Isaiah 32:18, 14th century; and *калятися вьчьнемъ* from the Izbornik of 1073) suggest that, as in Bulgarian, a category of 'onset of a persistent state' was either absent or disappeared early.

If we compare the Bulgarian, Serbian and East Slavic situations to that which obtains in the Croatian texts, we sense the possibility of a different direction of development. On the one hand, the textual locations which contain *vьčeti* in canonical manuscripts retain it in the Croatian manuscripts (HM has Matthew 6:24 *ne roditi vьčnetь*, Matthew 18:17 *Aće li i cr(b)k(b)ve ne poslušati v'čnet'*, though Zographensis has *ašte že i ot crьkьvi ne raditi načьnetь*, while Luke 13:25, 16:13 and 19:37 are not preserved in the CCS missals). On the other hand, we can see a tendency to expand the use of *vьčeti* in Croatian texts. For example, in HM we have not only the example from Matthew 6:24, but also *Čto ěsti vьčnete ili piti* Matthew 6:25 (Zographensis *čьto ěste ili čto piete*), and *čto ěsti vьčnete ili piti* Matthew 6:31 (Zographensis *čьto ěть li čьto piemь*). Alongside the example already cited from Matthew 18:17 we have also *Aće li te poslušati v'čnetь* Matthew 18:15 (Zographensis *Ašte tebe poslušatь*), *Aće li te ne poslušati v'čnetь* Matthew 18:16 (Zographensis *ašte li tebe ne poslušatь*), and *Aće li i tihь ne poslušati vьčnetь* Matthew 18:17 (Zographensis *ašte že ne poslušatь ihь*). The verb *vьčeti* also occurs within my corpus in three further locations distant from those in which

it is attested in canonical 8:12 (Zographensis *ima* 11:48 (Zographensis *vě* (Zographensis *načьneđi* fact implies reinterpretati envisaged as an epheme in CCS. As in the OCS ex grammaticalized. In all b infinitive corresponds to of onset. The exception, a responds to Greek ἀρξή grammaticalization does meaning.

3. Inceptive an Slavic language Clearly, we cannot ex languages and their diale verbs prefixed from -če- and adjectives. Though viewed in its pan-Slavic chaotic, some generaliza to focus on the most imp be considered marginal only from Ukrainian, and derived from earlier vь- (though in Russian texts indeed widespread, cf. limited to Polish, Ukrain either dialectal or second

At the other extreme t or almost all of the Slavi or at least two of these t expressing some meanin to Russian and Church function in the latter.

<sup>20</sup> We must bear in mind and other modal/auxiliary v This caveat applies to virtua older stages of East Slavic.



it is attested in canonical manuscripts: *iměti vičneti světi života* John 8:12 (Zographensis *imatv světa životnago*); *věrovati vičnuti* John 11:48 (Zographensis *věro imotv*); and *vbčneši ... držati* Luke 14:9 (Zographensis *načbneši ... drbžati*). The passage from Luke 14:9 in fact implies reinterpretation of what in canonical OCS was still clearly envisaged as an ephemeral state (cf. example 16a) as a persistent state in CCS. As in the OCS examples, use of *vbčeti* + infinitive is partially grammaticalized. In all but one example in my corpus, CCS *vbčeti* + infinitive corresponds to a Greek future tense with no overt indication of onset. The exception, as might be expected, is John 14:9, which corresponds to Greek ἄρξῃ κατέχειν. As explained in footnote 8, this grammaticalization does not imply that *vbčeti* had lost its inceptive meaning.

### 3. Inceptive and conceptive verbs in the Slavic languages

Clearly, we cannot explore here all variation in all of the Slavic languages and their dialects (as illustrated in § 1.1.) between all of the verbs prefixed from *-če-/čin-*, as well as among their deverbal nouns and adjectives. Though the distribution of prefixes in these words, viewed in its pan-Slavic perspective, may seem at first to be nearly chaotic, some generalizations are readily inducible which will allow us to focus on the most important points. First, several of the prefixes may be considered marginal from a pan-Slavic perspective. *s-* is reported only from Ukrainian, and there only dialectally. *u-* (where probably not derived from earlier *vb-*) is reported only from Great Russian dialects (though in Russian texts from a period of several centuries *učeti* was indeed widespread, cf. for example Wytrzens 1953:23-24<sup>20</sup>). *vbz-* is limited to Polish, Ukrainian and Russian dialects, in all of which it is either dialectal or secondary.

At the other extreme the prefixes *na-*, *po-* and *za-* can be found in all or almost all of the Slavic languages, and in each of these languages all or at least two of these three prefixes represent the primary means of expressing some meaning. The prefix *vb-*, while it appears to be limited to Russian and Church Slavonic, plays a central role by virtue of its function in the latter.

<sup>20</sup> We must bear in mind, however, that these statistics reflect the use of *učeti* and other modal/auxiliary verbs *only in their function as future tense auxiliaries!* This caveat applies to virtually all discussions of prefixed verbs from *-če-/čin-* in older stages of East Slavic.



If we focus our attention on the standard languages, and on the *basic* prefix used to express a particular meaning or sense (ignoring for the moment other prefixes which may secondarily express the given meaning, as well as combinations of prefixes such as *roz+po-* and *za+po-*), a relatively simple pattern emerges. This is shown in Illustration E:

<b>Sorbian</b>	<b>Pol., Cz., Slovak, Slovene</b>	<b>East Slavic East South Slavic</b>
inceptive: <i>po</i> ( <i>zapo</i> ) conceptive: -- consumption: <i>na</i>	inceptive: <i>za</i> conceptive: <i>po</i> consumption: <i>na</i>	inceptive: <i>po/na</i> conceptive: <i>za</i>
	<b>Serbo-Croatian</b>	<b>Church Slavonic</b>
	inceptive: <i>po</i> conceptive: <i>za</i> consumption: <i>na</i>	inceptive: <i>na</i> conceptive: <i>za</i> persistent state: <i>въ</i>

Illustration E: Expression of Inceptive and Conceptive Meaning in the Slavic Languages

In Serbo-Croatian *početi*<sup>21</sup> (deverbal noun *početak*) is basic or most widely used in inceptive meaning, with *začeti* (*začeće*, *začetak*) used primarily in conceptive meaning. In the standard Sorbian languages *po-* (or *zapo-* or *spo-*) is again basic in inceptive meaning (deverbal *spočatk*, *započatk*, less commonly *počatk*, etc., cf. Jentsch et al. s. *Anfang*), but *začeti* is not preserved (according to Muka s. *\*-ceš*, it is preserved only dialectally), and conceptive meaning is indicated by *podjeć/podješ* (< *-jeti*, deverbal U. Sorbian *podjeće*, etc., L. Sorbian *podješe*, cf. Schuster-Šewc s. *podjeć*). In Czech, Slovak, Polish and Slovene, in contrast, *začeti* seems to be the basic inceptive verb, with *početi* used to specify conceptive meaning (though deverbal nouns do not necessarily follow this pattern, e.g. Polish basic deverbal *początek* plus derivatives, along with *zaczątek* plus derivatives and *wszczątek*; note however, that the noun meaning 'conception' in the biological sense is only *poczęcie*). In West Slavic (minus Polish) and West South Slavic languages (plus Macedonian) *načeti* expresses the meaning of

<sup>21</sup> To aid in comparison, I use the Common Slavic forms *početi*, *začeti* and *načeti* for all languages in the following discussion.

<sup>22</sup> Ernest Scatton, personal communication.

<sup>23</sup> The basic Polish deverbal noun is *zaczęty*.

beginning to consume some  
seem therefore to have a bi  
Slovene group (inceptive  
languages (Serbo-Croatian  
*po-* vs. conceptive *za-*), or

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ceptive meaning, as in mo  
ing we find both *početi* (*zap*  
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or *почвам* (cf., for exam  
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are basic *започване*, but a  
ing, and *начеваи* cf. s. *be*  
(deverbals *почеток*, *поч*  
venkovski and Gruik 198  
meaning of initiating cons  
inceptive sense of beginni  
*кот на макед. лутеран*  
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East Slavic, though there i  
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od, *po-* is widespread or e  
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verb for expressing ince  
and more specialized for  
affect the Sorbian langua



beginning to consume some item or the contents of some container. We seem therefore to have a bifurcation between the Polish/-Czech/Slovak/Slovene group (inceptive *za-* vs. conceptive *po-*) and the remaining languages (Serbo-Croatian, Upper and Lower Sorbian, with inceptive *po-* vs. conceptive *za-*), or a reversal in one of these groups.

In East South Slavic, including OCS, *začeti* is the basic verb in conceptive meaning, as in modern Serbo-Croatian, but in inceptive meaning we find both *početi* (*započeti*) and *načeti* vying for the role of basic verb in inceptive meaning. Modern standard Bulgarian has *за-почвам* or *почвам* (cf., for example, Atanasova et al. s. *begin*), but *начевам* also exists (though it is considered dialectal or archaic<sup>22</sup>; the deverbals are basic *започване*, but also *наченки*, cf. Atanasova et al. s. *beginning*, and *начеващ* cf. s. *beginner*). In standard Macedonian *почнувам* (deverbals *почеток*, *почетник*, etc.) is basic (cf., for example, Crvenkovski and Gruik 1988 s. *begin*). *начнува* (*начне*) exists in the meaning of initiating consumption, but apparently also in the broader inceptive sense of beginning any action, process or state (cf. *Речникот на макед. литературен јазик* s. *начне*). In OCS, as we have seen, *načeti/načinati* is clearly basic in inceptive meaning.

A situation similar to that in East South Slavic seems to obtain in East Slavic, though there is widespread local variation, judging at least from the attestations cited in Dal's dictionary. In Belorussian and Ukrainian *po-* is the basic prefix in inceptive meaning, and *za-* in conceptive meaning. In Great Russian *na-* is today the predominant prefix in inceptive meaning, but in earlier texts, especially from the medieval period, *po-* is widespread or even predominant in inceptive meaning (along with *u-*). As in the remainder of East and South Slavic (minus Slovene), conceptive meaning is indicated by the prefix *za-*.

Two possible explanations for the observed variation present themselves. Under the first, at an early stage of development *početi/počinati* was the basic means of expressing inceptive meaning throughout Slavic, while *začeti/začinati* tended toward conceptive meaning. A process of partitioning or repartitioning the usage of *početi* and *začeti* in central Slavic led to a reversal of roles, with *začeti* displacing *početi* as the basic verb for expressing inceptive meaning, and *početi* coming to be more and more specialized for conceptive meaning<sup>23</sup>. This process failed to affect the Sorbian languages, though in time *začeti* tended to drop out of

<sup>22</sup> Ernest Scatton, personal communication.

<sup>23</sup> The basic Polish deverbial noun *początek* would be a relic of the earlier situation.



usage in them. Another innovation affected parts of East Slavic and East South Slavic. In these areas *začeti* remained specialized for conceptive meaning, but *načeti* tended to displace *početi* as the primary verb for expressing inceptive meaning. This innovation was apparently well advanced in the dialect underlying OCS.

An inevitable side-product of the generalization of *načeti* as the basic verb for expressing inceptive meaning would be the loss of overt expression of the semantic category (subcategory) of 'beginning to consume some item or the contents of some container,' at least by the prefix *na-*. It is interesting that expression of such a category with *na-* is not reported even for Belorussian and Ukrainian, in which *na-* has failed to become generalized as the basic prefix for inceptive meaning. It is possible that this results from an earlier situation in which the prefix *na-* had indeed been in competition with *po-* for the role of basic prefix in inceptive meaning in these languages. A more thorough study of early documents would certainly provide evidence for or against this hypothesis. In Great Russian the meaning of 'beginning to consume' is expressed substandardly today by *почать* (cf. АН СССР s.v.), *распочать*, and *започать* (cf. Dal' s. v.). This would represent a shift undergone precisely in order to maintain overt expression of this meaning.

In Polish it is possible that the two major innovations intersected. Clearly, *za-* seems to have displaced *po-* as the basic prefix in inceptive meaning, as in much of West Slavic and Slovene. However, as already noted, in earlier phases of development *na-* also appeared in inceptive meaning. It would probably be due to this fact that the prefix *na-* lost its function of expressing the category of 'beginning to consume.' We would conclude, therefore, that this function was taken over by *napočeti* in a process similar to that which transpired in Russian (cf. PAN s. *napoczac*).

The place of Macedonian in this scheme is also questionable. *po-* clearly remained the predominant prefix in inceptive meaning and the prefix *na-* retained its meaning of 'beginning to consume,' as in Serbo-Croatian, but *na-* is also attested in the generic inceptive sense, as in Bulgarian. It is reasonable to expect that this apparent incompatibility results from dialectal diversity within Macedonian.

To summarize, under this account we seem to have at least three sets of isoglosses (see Illustration F). One separates Czech, Slovak, Polish and Slovene from the remaining Slavic languages (reversal of roles of *početi* and *začeti*), while a second separates East Slavic and East South

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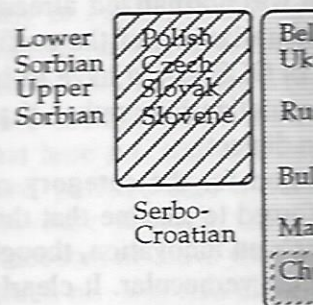


Illustration F: Isoglosses

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Slavic from the remaining Slavic languages (tendency, though by no means consistently promulgated, for *načeti* to replace *početi* as the basic verb for inceptive meaning, and concomitant loss of expression of the semantic category of 'beginning to consume some item or the contents of some container' by *načeti*):

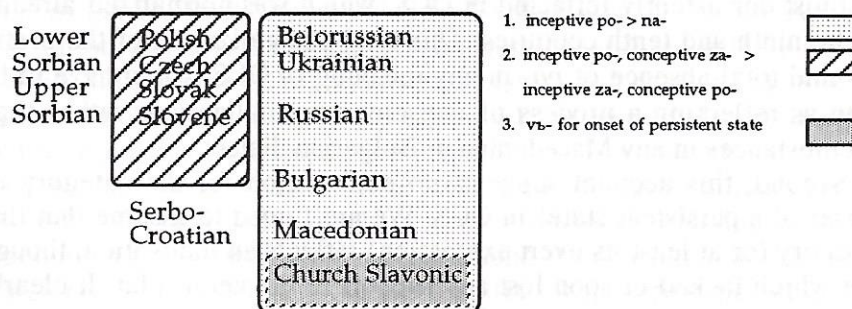


Illustration F: Isoglosses of Expression of Inceptive and Conceptive Meaning

Polish may have been marginally affected by the latter innovation, while Macedonian (at least western Macedonian), may have been only marginally affected.

This explanation accords well with many facts. Most importantly, it accounts for the variation in basic prefixes in terms of dialect geography, such that the hypothesized isogloss boundaries correspond to others which are well known in the literature on early dialectal divergence in Slavic. Other secondary facts are also encompassed. For example, in all Slavic languages combinations of prefixes which appear with the root *-čę-/čín-* invariably have *po-* has their second (internal) member (*roz+po-*, *za+po-*, *na+po-*, *s+po-*).

Nevertheless, there are difficulties with this explanation which are equally striking. First, the oldest isoglosses which divide West Slavic and peripheral northwest South Slavic from the bulk of South Slavic, and those dividing West and West South Slavic from East and East South Slavic, generally involve an innovation in the northern or western group. This has led Shevelov to identify East Slavic and East South Slavic as the two typical peripheral zones of Slavic dialect geography (possibly also including Polabian; cf. Shevelov 1964:610). This rule of northern and western innovation vs. southern and eastern conservatism is not without exception (*tl, dl > l* involves precisely the



opposite direction of innovation). Nevertheless, we should be far more comfortable with an account which does not assume innovation in precisely the two most peripheral areas of Slavic, especially since the supposed innovation of *po-* > *na-* was later suppressed in East South Slavic in favor of the "archaic" *po-*, and was very slow to develop in East Slavic. It should be especially surprising that the innovation would be most consistently reflected in OCS, which was normalized already in the ninth and tenth centuries. This total generalization of the prefix *na-* and total absence of *po-* in any meaning in OCS would have to be seen as reflecting a process of conscious normalization, rather than circumstances in any Macedonian or Bulgarian dialect.

Second, this account suggests no explanation for the category of 'onset of a persistent state' in OCS. We are forced to assume that this category (or at least its overt expression) reflects an innovation, though one which lacked or soon lost any support in the vernacular. It clearly does not imitate any category of Greek.

Finally, under this account we have to assume that the innovation of *na-* in inceptive meaning penetrated into Polish from East Slavic, (only to be later suppressed), though it never became generalized even in Belorussian and Ukrainian. This would be especially surprising inasmuch as there are indications that the innovation of *za-* in inceptive meaning has apparently penetrated from West Slavic into Ukrainian (cf. *Словник української мови s.v.*), as well as at least some northwestern Belorussian and western Great Russian dialects (cf. *Слоўник беларускіх гаворак . . .*, Немченко et al., Валюсінская et al.).

Under the second account, the expected periphery of the Slavic language territory is just that. We assume an initial situation in which *na-* was the basic prefix in inceptive meaning. Conceptive meaning was expressed by the prefix *za-*, while the category of 'onset of a persistent state' was indicated by *въчѣти* + infinitive.

A series of innovations begun well before the southward migration of the ancestors of the East South Slavs included the loss of the category of 'onset of a persistent state' (expressed by *въчѣти* + infinitive), and later a shift of *na-* > *po-* as basic prefix for inceptive meaning. By the time of the establishment of OCS and of literacy in Russia, expression of 'onset of a persistent state' by *въчѣти* + infinitive was retained only in some peripheral dialects of the Macedonian Slavs (as well as perhaps in some other areas from which we lack texts in Slavic until much later). Under this account, the moribund category was literally saved from extinction by Constantine and Methodius and their followers, and

was restored almost to a full tradition. In East Slavic, the free variant for expressing g

The shift of *na-* > *po-* as generalized in much of the literacy, so that traces of *na-* only in Polish, East Slavic innovation was advancing, and twelfth centuries. Progress have been slowed not only that here *po-* was in compete (and perhaps also *u-* and Slavonic literacy (mid-ninth Macedonian Slavs would have which *na-* was still clearly reemergence of *na-* as the b Russian may to some extent Church Slavonic.

At a later time, but still Slavs and the northwest periphery of innovation would have been and *za-* in what would become as in the first account.

A schematic representation of the situation is shown in Illustration G:

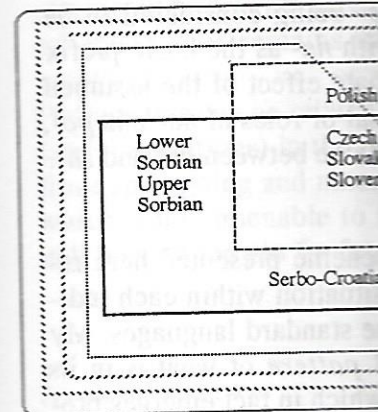


Illustration G: Probable Slavic language territory.



was restored almost to a full life only in the Croatian Church Slavonic tradition. In East Slavic, the verb *vbčeti* remained in usage, though as a free variant for expressing generic inceptive meaning.

The shift of *na-* > *po-* as the basic prefix for inceptive meaning was generalized in much of the Slavic world before the advent of Slavic literacy, so that traces of *na-* in generic inceptive meaning can be found only in Polish, East Slavic and East South Slavic. In East Slavic the innovation was advancing, but was far from generalized in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Progress in East Slavic (as indeed in Polish) may have been slowed not only by peripheral location, but also by the fact that here *po-* was in competition not only with *na-*, but also with *vbz-* (and perhaps also *u-* and *sv-*). By the time of the establishment of Slavonic literacy (mid-ninth century), peripheral dialects of the Macedonian Slavs would have been among the few remaining areas in which *na-* was still clearly the basic prefix for inceptive meaning. The reemergence of *na-* as the basic prefix in inceptive meaning in standard Russian may to some extent have been influenced by the prestige of Church Slavonic.

At a later time, but still before the loss of contact between West Slavs and the northwest periphery of the South Slavs, a second wave of innovation would have led to the reversal of roles of the prefixes *po-* and *za-* in what would become Polish, Czech, Slovak and Slovene, just as in the first account.

A schematic representation of the second account is given in Illustration G:

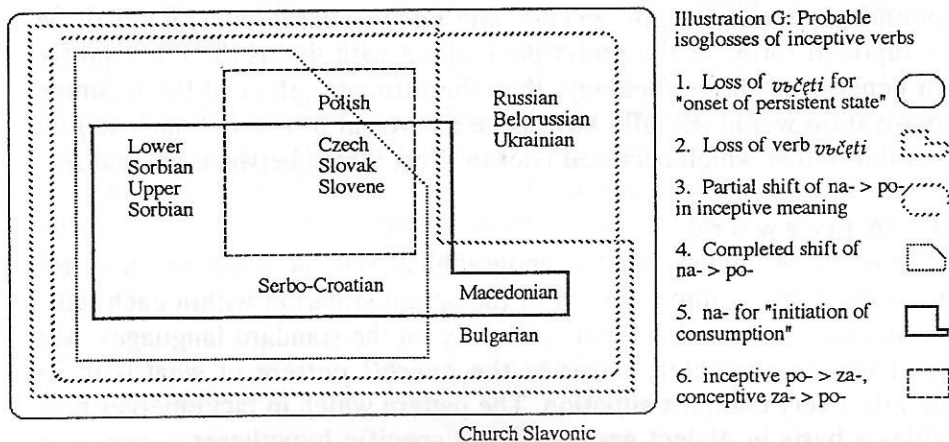


Illustration G: Probable Isoglosses of Inceptive and Conceptive Verbs



This second account is superior to the first in that it agrees with our general conceptions concerning early Slavic dialect geography. East and East South Slavic are seen as peripheral and archaic in contrast to the innovating western regions. Furthermore, the two striking features of the system of inceptive verbs in Church Slavonic result in an expected way from the doubly peripheral position of that language within the Slavic linguistic territory – both geographically and in terms of the time of its establishment and normalization. The retention of the prefix *na-* in inceptive meaning in Older Polish would also be an archaism.

Under the first account, loss of overt expression of the category of 'beginning to consume some item or the contents of some container' (at least by the prefix *na-*) receives a natural explanation. Under this second account, we assume that in those areas in which the change of *na-* > *po-* in inceptive meaning was earliest and most completely promulgated (Sorbian, Czech, Slovak, Slovene, Serbo-Croatian, but also Macedonian), *na-* was reinterpreted as expressing only the restricted meaning of 'beginning to consume ...' In other areas (Belorussian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Macedonian) it tended to drop out of usage altogether. This implies a connection between the two innovations, just as in the first account, but the nature of the connection is not so clear. It may be significant that in dialectal and substandard Russian *почать*, *распочать* and *започать* have been noted in this same meaning of 'beginning to consume ...,' while in Polish this meaning is expressed by *napocząć*. If we assume that this represents an archaism (the compound prefixes *roz+po-*, *za+po-* and *na+po-* being considered to be compound forms of the prefix *po-*), along with *na-* as the basic prefix in generic inceptive meaning, then the ultimate effect of the assumed innovation would actually have been a reversal of roles of *na-* and *po-*, similar to that which occurred later in West Slavic between *po-* and *za-*.

#### 4. A f t e r w o r d

It must be reiterated that the geographical scheme presented here represents a gross simplification of the actual situation within each individual language, and is based primarily on the standard languages. My goal was to accurately describe the *overall pattern* of what is in its details a very complex situation. The pattern which in fact emerges provides a basis in dialect geography for specific hypotheses concerning the origin of the variation which can be observed across the Slavic language family.

The ultimate significance of the changes we have uncovered varies among the various isoglosses in the Slavic family. West South Slavic forms are more peripheral in the south as it passes into East South Slavic (inceptive *po-*). Second, the 'persistent state' from the parent expansion in the north provides evidence of the language was a living language, perpetuating a stillborn form.

I have not attempted to compare among inceptive and compound prefixes (*po-*, *na-*, *za-*, and *roz-*) (*vbz-*, *sb-*, and *u-*, as well as *na+po-*). Moreover, forms are etymologically distinct from the original *vbčeti*), though the depth. Furthermore, I have not examined the distribution, while in some cases even some semantic issues, as *vs. započeti*, as well as other verbs with ingressive forms. I attempted to provide an account of the changes. It remains to be seen whether *po-*, *na-*, and *za-* would prefer *po-*, *na-*, and *za-*. Perhaps this can be related to the (and prepositions) in the family from an ongoing and narrow perspective which is not amenable to a generalization will have to remain for future research.

Dictionaries

Академия Наук СССР. Иллюстрированный словарь русского языка. Академия Наук СССР. Иллюстрированный словарь русского языка. Академия Наук СССР. Иллюстрированный словарь русского языка.



The ultimate significance of this investigation is thus twofold. First, we have uncovered variation which follows two of the oldest sets of isoglosses in the Slavic world – that which divides West Slavic and West South Slavic from East Slavic and East South Slavic, dispersing in the south as it passes through the Macedonian dialects (*po-* : *na-*), and that which unites West Slavic with the northwestern periphery of South Slavic (inceptive *po-* and conceptive *za-* : inceptive *za-* and conceptive *po-*). Second, the apparent viability of the category of ‘onset of a persistent state’ from canonical OCS into (at least) CCS, and its apparent expansion in the latter while having no support in the vernacular, provides evidence of the most convincing type that Church Slavonic was a living language, rather than simply a series of textual traditions perpetuating a stillborn literary contrivance.

I have not attempted to account for all relevant aspects of variation among inceptive and conceptive verbs. I have concentrated on four prefixes (*po-*, *na-*, *za-*, and *vb-*), while ignoring the distribution of others (*vbz-*, *sv-*, and *u-*, as well as combinations *za+po-*, *roz+po-*, *s+po-*, *na+po-*). Moreover, for Russian I have assumed that *učeti* and *vbčeti* are etymologically distinct (rather than various dialectal reflexes of original *vbčeti*), though this issue deserves to be explored in greater depth. Furthermore, I have restricted my analysis to semantic factors in the distribution, while ignoring most syntactic and stylistic ones, and even some semantic issues are overlooked (e.g. Serbo-Croatian *početi* vs. *započeti*, as well as the relation of verbs prefixed from *-če-/čin-* to other verbs with ingressive or inchoative meaning). Finally, I have not attempted to provide an explanatory model or teleology for the observed changes. It remains unclear why one group of Slavic languages would prefer *po-*, *na-*, or *za-* as its basic prefix for inceptive meaning. Perhaps this can be related to variation in the general system of prefixes (and prepositions) in the languages. Perhaps, however, it results simply from an ongoing and natural process of renewal of the vocabulary, one which is not amenable to further analysis. The answer to this question will have to remain for future research.

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