Selected Topics in IE Phonology

Selected Bibliography
(with comments)

Introductory handbooks:

   To quote Weiss (2009: 10) “a presentation of the views of the Leiden school with excellent illustrations”.
1.1. PIE Ablaut

I see no reason to present any references on the standard theory, the one you all have familiarized with during your studies, which is introduced in all of the above handbooks, except for Beekes 2011 (= Leiden approach).

‘Phonological’ theory:

(2) Kortlandt, F. *Slavic Accentuation. A Study in Relative Chronology*. Lisse. (Available online)

Pp. 84–86, “The Origin of IE Lengthened Grade”.

And, of course


Some criticism:


Especially pp. 5–8.


Kortlandt’s response to Kümmel 2012:

1.2. Szemerényi’s Law

The idea is as old as IE linguistics (Weiss 2009: 47)15. For the earliest explicit formulation see


The book is also available in English (Oxford–New York, 1996; online!) and Russian (Moscow, 1980) translations. The rule at hand is introduced in the chapter on ‘the Long Grade’ (pp. 113–119 of the English edition).


On pp. 129ff. we find an amendment of Szemerényi’s original proposal (VRH > V:R), though such a development had been anticipated already in Szemerényi 1970.

There are numerous case studies basing their argumentation on SL (here are only some of them):


GAv. PRF.3PL ending -araš goes back to PIE *-raš. The full grade must be reconstructed as *-er in view of Lat. -ère (< *-ēr-i) and YAv. -āire (< *-ēr-oī). J. argues that the discrepancy is easily and convincingly resolved by SL: *-ēr vs. *-raš < *-ers vs. *-rs. The idea was initially presented in


The scenario was invoked once again in


The oblique cases of this Old Irish substantive point to an earlier *h₂*-stem. This being so, the NOM.SG form *gʷēn can be analyzed as reflecting *gʷen-h₂.


See also:


In the latter article, Kim explains the PIE o-stem **ACC.PL** ending -ōns starting with an earlier *-ons (< *-o-ms), which was subject to SL, yielding *-ōn. The final *-*s would have been restored from C-stems, where we had *-*ms (Skt. -as). Since Lith. -us is acute (as it triggers Saussure’s Law, cf. Lith. *pištās* 2 ‘finger’ [a root-stressed circumflex stem], **ACC.PL** *pištūs*), he believes (section 4.2) that the ‘acuteness’ of the ending must be ascribed to this length. However, that IE non-laryngeal length is reflected as acute in BSl. is not universally agreed on.

**Rejection of the Law:**


p. 186: “Some scholars are of the opinion that all nom.sg. forms originally had *-*s, which was assimilated to a preceding resonant and caused compensatory lengthening of the suffix, e.g. *ph2-ter-*s > *ph2tēr*. This lengthening is now often referred to as Szemerényi’s Law. However, Szemérenyi’s Law does not explain why a sequence *-en-*s is retained e.g. in the archaic gen.sg. of n-stems, or why there is no -*s in the nom.sg. of h2-stems. We will therefore assume an original s-less nom.sg. in all flexion classes, with lengthening of a suffix vowel *-o or *e by phonetic development* (emphasis mine; by “phonetic development”, B. refers to the obligatory lengthening before a word-final sonorant, the main tenet of what we used to call ‘the Phonological Theory of PIE Ablaut’ on the course.)


K’s reaction to Jasanoff’s 2017 monograph on Balto-Slavic accentology (also available online). Cf. on p. 70: “[...] Szemerényi’s law [...] is an instance of circular reasoning: the long vowel is allegedly explained by the supposed loss of the consonant that is postulated in order to account for the long vowel. It is hard to see how Szemerényi’s law can account for such instances as Greek ōḍwop ‘water’, ἥξιῖ < *-ōi ‘echo’, Vedic loc. sg. aṃnā < *-ēi ‘fire’, sāṇāu ‘son’. In my view, the Proto-Indo-European long vowels *-ē and *-o originated from phonetic lengthening in monosyllables and before final resonants (cf. Wackernagel 1896, 66–68; Kortlandt 2015a).” (As mentioned on one of the classes.) (For Gr. ōḍwop and collectives see Nussbaum 1986 [2], Jasanoff 2004 [6])

“Endungslosigkeit samt Dehnstufe ist regulär im Nom. Sg. mf. von Stämmen auf -r, -l, -m, -n; im übrigen sind die Bedingungen für die Verteilung unklar.” (p. 118; emphasis mine) If I understand the passage accurately, Rix seems to be somewhat reserved about the validity of the Law.

A moderate approach:


Kümmel’s talk delivered at the Lengthened Grade Conference (Leiden, 2013). To appear in IF. On p. 2 we read: “There are some problems with this approach: The lengthened grade is also found in some “sigmatic” nominatives [...], so one has to assume further spreading. There is also little independent evidence for the assimilation Rs# > RR#. Apparent “counterexamples” like *déms ‘of the house’ have also been mentioned, but these are not really problematic, since they are the result of a recent syncopation and can thus be explained by a different relative chronology. There is no doubt that “Szemerényi’s law” was not a living synchronic rule in PIE.” (Emphases mine)

For a similar opinion, cf.


Note a mistake (possibly a typo) on p. 91: the abbreviation Szemerényi 1979, which cannot be found in the List of References, actually references to Szemerényi 1970 (see this list, item 1).

SL as Compensatory Lengthening:


Presentation delivered at the 89th Annual Meeting of the Linguistic Society of America.
1.3. Stang’s Law

Apart from the attention the Law has received in handbooks (cf. Fortson 2004: 63f.; Weiss 2009: 114f.), some of the essential readings are:


Reprinted in:


Unfortunately, there is no pdf version available. I have photos (not really good though) of Stang 1970, so in case you need the article but cannot get hold of it, please contact me.


It should be noted that the alternative solution proposed by these two authors (monosyllabic lengthening in *gʷōum, *dēum followed by the loss of *u in front of the tautosyllabic nasal; K 2017: 74) rests on their understanding of the origin of IE lengthened grade (Wackernagel’s Phonological Theory).

As Kortlandt points out, Stang’s Law in PIE should not be confused with a Common Slavic accent retraction (also named after Stang).
1.4. PIE *å

The question is in no way controversial. The references mentioned during the lecture are:


One of the incorrect etymologies Brugmann’s argumentation was based on is that of Arm. hay, on which now see

1.5. No *a in PIE


Lubotsky’s Law:

2. The Glottalic Theory

1. General Remarks

2. Kortlandt’s empirical evidence (Lachmann’s Law and “Kortlandt-effect”)

2.1. General Remarks


The only book-length treatment dedicated to the Theory.

See also:


The ‘ejective’ model:


English translation of the Russian original (Moscow–Tbilisi, 1984).
Although there are some differences between Hopper (1973) and Gamkrelidze, Ivanov (1973) (cf. Kümmel 2012: 293), Weiss labels both of their approaches as the ejective model, so do I.

The model involving ‘preglottalization’ (Kortlandt)

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2.2. Kortlandt’s Comparative Evidence

Bear in mind that we managed to address only two pieces of comparative evidence adduced by K in favour of his model of the Glottalic Theory. For the remaining ones, see


2.2.1. Lachmann’s Law

LL has puzzled scholars for well over a century but it goes without saying that this list cannot pretend to be exhaustive. For a detailed list of references, see Sukač 2012.

**Glottalic interpretations**


The first article in which a striking resemblance between Lachmann’s Law in Latin and Winter’s Law in Balto-Slavic has been brought to light.


Both are reprinted in:


Kortlandt’s scenario has subsequently been accepted by the following scholars:


The importance of these articles is that they address (and ultimately refute) the arguments adduced by Jasanoff (2004), so does Kortlandt in:


"Jasanoff completely disregards the comparative evidence [in favour of the Glottalic Theory, A.M.] except in the case of Lachmann’s law, where he rejects the evidence on the basis of a mistaken analysis of Ukrainian dialectal material with imperfect voicing assimilation, e.g. in vežť ‘to carry’." (p. 71)


The way I see it, there are two major differences between Baldi and Kortlandt, as they base their explanations on different glottalic models, and account for some alleged exceptions to LL in incongruous ways. Please bear in mind that I had no access to Baldi’s article, so my presentation of his ideas was primarily based on Sukač’s review article, pp. 31–32 (item 4 on the list).

Kortlandt’s glottalic scenario is briefly addressed in


P. 301: “The distribution rather favours the latter [Jasanoff’s] solution, since a compensatory lengthening before a lost *ʔ* would be more natural in open syllables than solely before clusters.”

**Non-Glottalic Approach**


A nice summary of what appears to be the mainstream treatment of the Law. Accepted by Weiss (2009: 175): “Since regressive voicing assimilation was a rule of Proto-Indo-European it is hard to see how the voiced and voiceless stops could have behaved differently in a neutralized context. This suggests that the voiced stops must have been restored on the basis of related forms at some point in the prehistory of Latin and that the lengthening occurred when these were again devoiced.”

But notice J’s ignorance with respect to the glottalic interpretation: he takes a single sentence (in footnote 10) to reject Kortlandt’s theory without having previously addressed his arguments, and does not even mention Baldi 1991.
2.2.2. “Kortlandt-Effect”


The first work on the topic, attributing the unexpected phonemic properties of Gr. ἑκατόν, Dor. ἱκατί etc. to the supposed sound law

*\( ^*d > ^*t (\text{i.e. } ^*h_1) / \_C. \)

Reprinted in:


Beware the criticism presented in


On p. 302 Kümmel addresses some of the cases of Kortlandt-Effect, and offers alternative solutions. This is the only overt rejection of the “Law” I know of.

To my knowledge, the term “Kortlandt-Effect” was coined by Romain Garnier in


Some case studies:


On p. 532 (s.v. *vētōr*), Skt. *vārām ‘again, further’, Av. *vāram ‘further’, and PSl *vītorū* (next to OCS *vītorū*) ‘second’ (> Rus *vtorōj, Pl. wtóry ‘id.’) are explained as reflecting PIE *h₁ytorō-, which ultimately derives from *dytor-.

Talk delivered at the 2nd International Conference on Greek Etymology, Thessaloniki.


(10) **Ligorio, O.** (2019b). *Further Evidence for PIE *d > *h1? PIE ‘mouth’, ‘to mill, grind’, & ‘to sit’.*

Presentation delivered at the IG Arbeitstagung, Ljubljana, June 2019. To appear in the conference proceedings.
