

A little-known law on the radical and syllabic structure of Proto-Indo-European.

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This paper highlights a constraint that affected the syllable structure of Proto-Indo-European: the prohibition of a sequence of two sonantic segments (*y, w, r, l, m, n*) in the syllable coda. This constraint has been detected and established for the root structure, but its impact in the literature on PIE morphophonology continues to be very limited (see Szemerényi 1996). Assuming, in agreement with Keydana (2004), that the domain for the constraints on PIE root structure is in fact the syllable, this law can be easily taken as a restriction on PIE syllable structure. However, in the literature it is hard to find any mention of this constraint applied to syllables (one exception is Schmitt-Brandt 1973).

The aim of this paper is to show how this law can help to explain a set of apparently unconnected phenomena of Indo-European (morpho)phonology, like Stang's law or Asno's law. It is particularly interesting to compare and contrast this law with Meillet-Schindler's law of PIE syllabification, since the two make different predictions regarding the syllable structure of the Proto-language.

References:

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