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Laryngeal correction in Balto-Slavic and the other northwest Indo-European languages

The aim of this paper is to reestablish the direct relationship between pretonic “shortening” in **eH, *oH, *iH, *uH* sequences followed by resonants (**r, *l, *n, *ŷ; *m* and **j* are less certain) in the Germanic, Celtic and Italic languages and the acute mobility reconstructed for respective Balto-Slavic cognates.

The former phenomenon, posited by V.A. Dybo (thus called “Dybo’s law”; it was applied to Celtic and Italic in an extended formulation in Dybo 1961) and P. Schrijver (1991: 357), may be interpreted as deletion of a laryngeal in the syllable onset: cf. **ǵʰu̯e.h₁r̥V-* (weak cases), **ǵʰro.h_xnéh₂-*, **ǵʰi.h₃u̯ó-*, **su.h_xnú-*, etc., whereas the latter is based on later resyllabification which usually yielded a.p. 3 in Lithuanian, the broken tone in Latvian and a.p. *c* in Slavic (with the secondary circumflex due to morphophonological Meillet’s law):

	N sg. 1. <i>*su.h_xnús</i>	>	2. <i>*su.Hnús</i>	>	3. <i>*suǰ.nús</i>	>	4. <i>*sú:nùs</i>
but	A sg. 1. <i>*súh_xnum?</i>						
or		>	2. <i>*súH.num</i>	>	3. <i>*súǰ.num</i>	>	4. <i>*sú:nų:</i>
	A sg. 1. <i>*su.h_xnúm?</i>						

The strong cases were barytone either originally or due to some kind of retraction, possibly similar to that posited by F.H.H. Kortlandt (1975: 5-6); this development is not identical with Hirt’s law, which serves as a means of comparison between “secondary” Balto-Slavic acute barytona and their “primary” oxytone Old Indic and Greek cognates, for the stress in **sú:nų:* was possibly *retracted* onto an *open* syllable from a syllable of a *particular* structure, whereas within Hirt’s law it would be *attracted* (before the stage 3.) by a *closed* syllable, possibly *irrespective* of the structure of the following syllable.

The conclusion is that in the northwest Indo-European languages laryngeals in **-VHRV-* sequences of disyllabic words belonged to stressed syllables (**-V̆H.RV- : *-V̆HRV̆-*). “Hirt’s law” in Balto-Slavic and the “retention” of “pretonic” length in Germanic, Celtic and Italic may be either due to secondary barytone accentuation: **-V̆H.CV-* (derivational or generalised within mobile paradigms) or different syllabification: **-VH.CV̆-*, **-CR̆H.CV̆-* (> Balto-Slavic **-C̆R̆CV-*, Italo-Celtic **-CR̆āCV-*, none reflecting the old accentuation; however, Germanic seems to have had **-R.HRV̆-*/**-R̆.HRV̆-* at least in the cases where Cowgill’s law operated). Both for Balto-Slavic (e.g. Lith. *výras*, Latv. *vīrs*; Lith. *dúona*, Latv. *duõna*; Latv. *grīva*, Cr. *gr̆iva*; but also Cr. *dâr, stân*) and the other northwest languages (cf. Zair 2012: 145) some exceptions must be considered. But if the foregoing interpretations were rejected in general so should be Hirt’s law for Balto-Slavic, as it was actually done at first by Dybo (1961:19); one cannot explain the exceptions by assuming *ad hoc* “non-acute” lengthened grade (Kortlandt 1975: 54) or **-CHL.C-* structure (Kortlandt 1975: 2-3, 81), since the former is often indemonstrable and the latter could hardly have yielded length in Balto-Slavic.

Bibliography

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