

Report on my participation in the Symposium on Historical Phonology, Edinburgh, 13–14 January 2014.

(A symposium to celebrate Historical Phonology and the forthcoming publication of the Oxford Handbook of Historical Phonology)

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Here is the abstract of the poster presented by me:

Kluge's Law: its place among the Germanic sound shifts and consequences for the PIE obstruent inventory

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Kluge's Law (KL) of Proto-Germanic is traditionally described as a total assimilation of a pretonic nasal to a preceding voiced obstruent. It chronologically follows the spirantization and deaspiration parts of Grimm's Law (GL), as well as Verner's Law (VL), and precedes Occlusivization and the devoicing part of GL.

This traditional ordering is problematic, because:

- (i) GL's spirantization and deaspiration are chronologically separated from GL's devoicing, although GL is widely seen as a chain shift;
- (ii) there is a very complicated detour via GL's spirantization, VL (voicing), occlusivization and GL's devoicing ($tn > \theta n > \delta n > \delta \delta > dd > tt$) instead of a direct derivation $tn > tt$;
- (iii) in practice, *n* **only** assimilates to preceding **voiced** stops, whereas phonetic research shows that voiced geminates (especially voiced fricative geminates) encounter aero-dynamic difficulties (Dmitreeva 2012, Hayes & Steriade 2004, Jaeger 1978, Ohala 1983, Westbury & Keating 1986);
- (iv) original PIE sibilants do not assimilate to preceding obstruents and do not occlusivize either; this puts into question the validity of the fricative detour in the derivations.

This paper shows these problems disappear under the assumption of Glottalic Theory (where PIE D^h and D have been replaced by D and $T^?$, respectively). Under the same theory, GL and VL can be analysed as a single, bifurcating, chain shift (Noske 2012). I will show that KL applied chronologically before GL/VL (a stance taken on independent grounds by Luick 1940). In addition, the environments of KL and VL are essentially the same and can be expressed by a single constraint in an output-driven model of description.

References:

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I had very positive feedback from a couple of important people in the field, most notably Joe Salmons, Donka Minkova and Robert Murray and Ricardo Bermúdez-Otero. They found the poster very worthwhile and encouraged me to write an article about it, which I am currently in the process of doing during my present sabbatical leave.

Otherwise, the symposium was also very good. It put me into contact with the most important people working in historical phonology (a field that is relatively new for me). Many of the presented papers were of interest to me.