

## Les Laryngales ennemies de l'Ablaut

This presentation first shows that the distribution of the three markers used in Indo-European (IE) in order to express aspect, i.e. Ablaut, Quantity (so-called quantitative Ablaut) and Reduplication, is not arbitrary. Indeed, the choice of the marker for each verb is determined by its root vowel. This is witnessed by Germanic which, unlike most other branches of IE, has conserved homogeneous sets of each of the three verb groups using Ablaut, Quantity and Reduplication.

Reconstruction of the root vocalism of Germanic verbs along the known correspondences reveals the following complementary distribution for the mother language (R = right sonorant context, i.e. glides, liquids or nasals): all and only those verbs with the root vowels [e, eR] ablaut, all and only those verbs with the root vowels [a, o] use Quantity, while all and only those verbs with the remaining root vowels [aR, oR, ē, ā, ō] reduplicate. The obvious affinity of Ablaut and the vowel colour [e] raises the question why verbs with long [ē] express aspect through Reduplication, rather than through Ablaut. This question may be answered when Saussure's laryngeal theory is applied to the result: at the PIE stage, the long vowels present in IE reduplicating verbs were [eH<sub>1</sub>, eH<sub>2</sub>, eH<sub>3</sub>], respectively. Therefore, it turns out that verbs with [e] always ablaut unless they are followed by a laryngeal. In other words, "laryngeals kill Ablaut".

This result has an obvious echo in Semitic. In Classical Arabic, which also presents a context-free root vowel alternation exploited for the purpose of aspectual opposition, it is well established fact that neighbouring gutturals inhibit Ablaut. This striking parallel of the conditions under which IE and Semitic Ablaut does not take place may lead to two kinds of conclusions: a Nostratic perspective, or a more general impossibility for Ablaut to survive in a guttural context. In the light of work that has been carried out on various Ablaut systems, I advocate the latter hypothesis.

Finally, the identical behaviour of IE and Semitic Ablaut leaves give a clear indication regarding the oft-debated phonetic identity of laryngeals: laryngeals fully deserve their name; they are postvelar consonantal articulations (i.e. uvular, pharyngeal or glottal fricatives, or the glottal stop).