CHAPTER 8

A New Approach to Proto-Indo-European Sonorant Syllabicity

8.0 Introduction

In this chapter we undertake to develop an analysis of sonorant syllabicity in Proto-Indo-European more comprehensive in scope than its predecessors. Unlike these previous accounts, our approach will take none of the generalizations concerning syllabicity in Proto-Indo-European for granted. Rather, we will seek to formally encode all of them in our constraint ranking, so as to leave no room for illicit extension or overgeneration. Furthermore, we will also strive to avoid the pitfalls of relying on a dispreference for coda consonants as a means of generating right-hand vocalization of sonorants, while seeking to incorporate our findings from the first half of this book, suggesting the heterosyllabification of medial consonants.

We begin in 8.1 by introducing the constraints and ranking necessary to restrict variable syllabicity to sonorants alone. We then proceed in 8.2 to the issue of right-hand vocalization, and, building on work in the theoretical literature on directionality in the assignment of prosodic structure, introduce an additional constraint into the hierarchy to account for this phenomenon, a constraint that we claim plays a more empirically satisfying role than any restrictions on codas could. In 8.3 we turn our focus to heterosyllabicity, and propose a formal mechanism for generating medial consonant heterosyllabification in Proto-Indo-European that does not conflict with the priorities of nucleus selection in this language. Finally, in 8.4 we extend our analysis to account for a wide array of phonological configurations, so as to demonstrate its overall effectiveness at capturing the Proto-Indo-European system. We conclude in 8.5, reviewing the make-up of our analysis in its final form.

Before proceeding to the first steps of building the account, we first list the constraints we will see fit to refer to over the course of the discussion. The relevant markedness constraints are given in (1), while the relevant faithfulness constraint is given in (2); in the former, constraints are arranged according to their order of appearance. Indeed many should be familiar from the Optimality-Theoretic analysis we developed for Vedic in Chapter 3.
(1) Markedness Constraints for a Phonological Analysis of PIE Sonorant Syllabicity

a. *Peak/X
   No syllable peaks of category X.

b. *Margin/X
   No syllable margins of category X.

c. NoCoda
   Syllables may not have a coda.

d. *Appendix
   No appendix (i.e. non-moraic coda) segments.

e. *μ/Consonant
   Consonants must not be moraic.

f. Sonority-Sequencing
   Complex onsets rise in sonority, and complex codas fall in sonority.¹

g. Onset
   Syllables have onsets.

h. *ComplexOnset
   Syllables may not have more than one onset segment.

i. Coincide (complex onset, initial syllable)
   A complex onset belongs to an initial syllable.²

j. *ComplexCoda
   Syllables may not have more than one coda segment.

(2) Faithfulness Constraint for a Phonological Analysis of PIE Sonorant Syllabicity

Dep-IO
An output segment has a correspondent in the input. (‘No epenthesis.’)

A few words about these constraints are perhaps in order. The *Peak/X and *Margin/X constraints in (1a.–b.) are actually schemata for families of constraints targeting the various manner of articulation classes; they will be introduced in more detail in 8.1. With respect to Sonority-Sequencing in (1f.), the main importance of this constraint will emerge in the word-initial domain; as such, while the definition we give here will basically be adhered to in its deployment (assuming as we did in Vedic that the relevant distinction

¹ For a more technical definition, see n. 11 in Chapter 1.
² For a more technical definition, see n. 10 in Chapter 1.