



glottothèque  
languages of Anatolia, Caucasus, Iran, Mesopotamia



# Georgian

## syllabic structures

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Göttingen, October 27, 2021

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# goals and contents

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## Goals

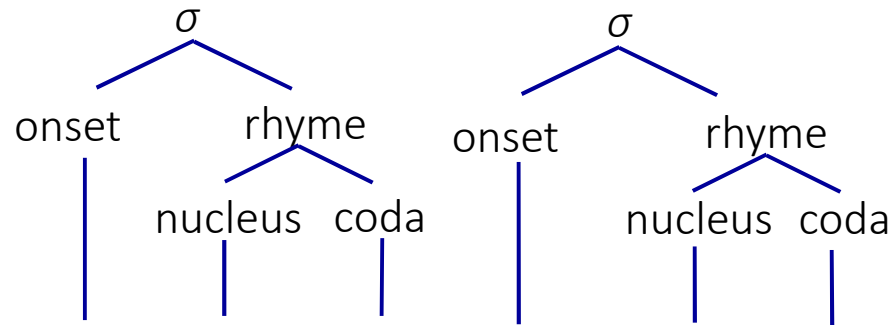
- syllabic structure of Georgian
- complex onsets

## Contents

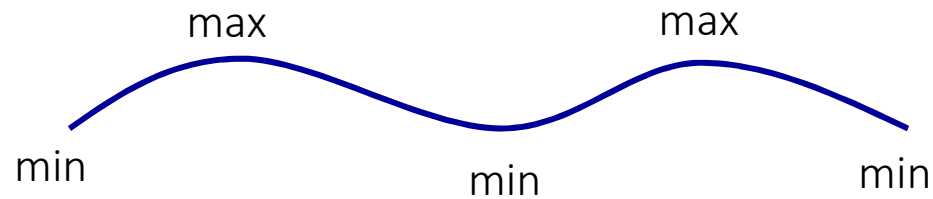
- background: syllable and sonority
- illustrative examples
- questions
- related research and ideas

# syllable as rhythmic unit

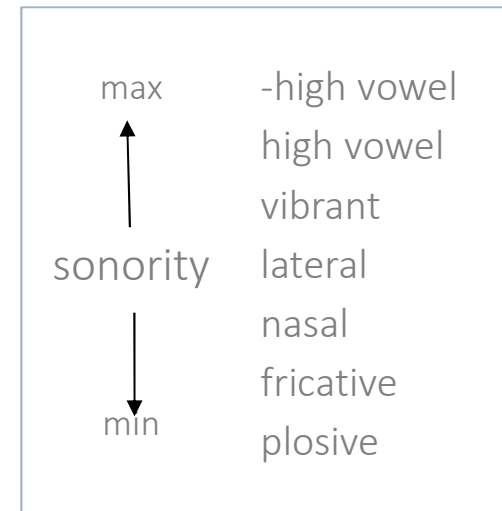
syllables



sonority

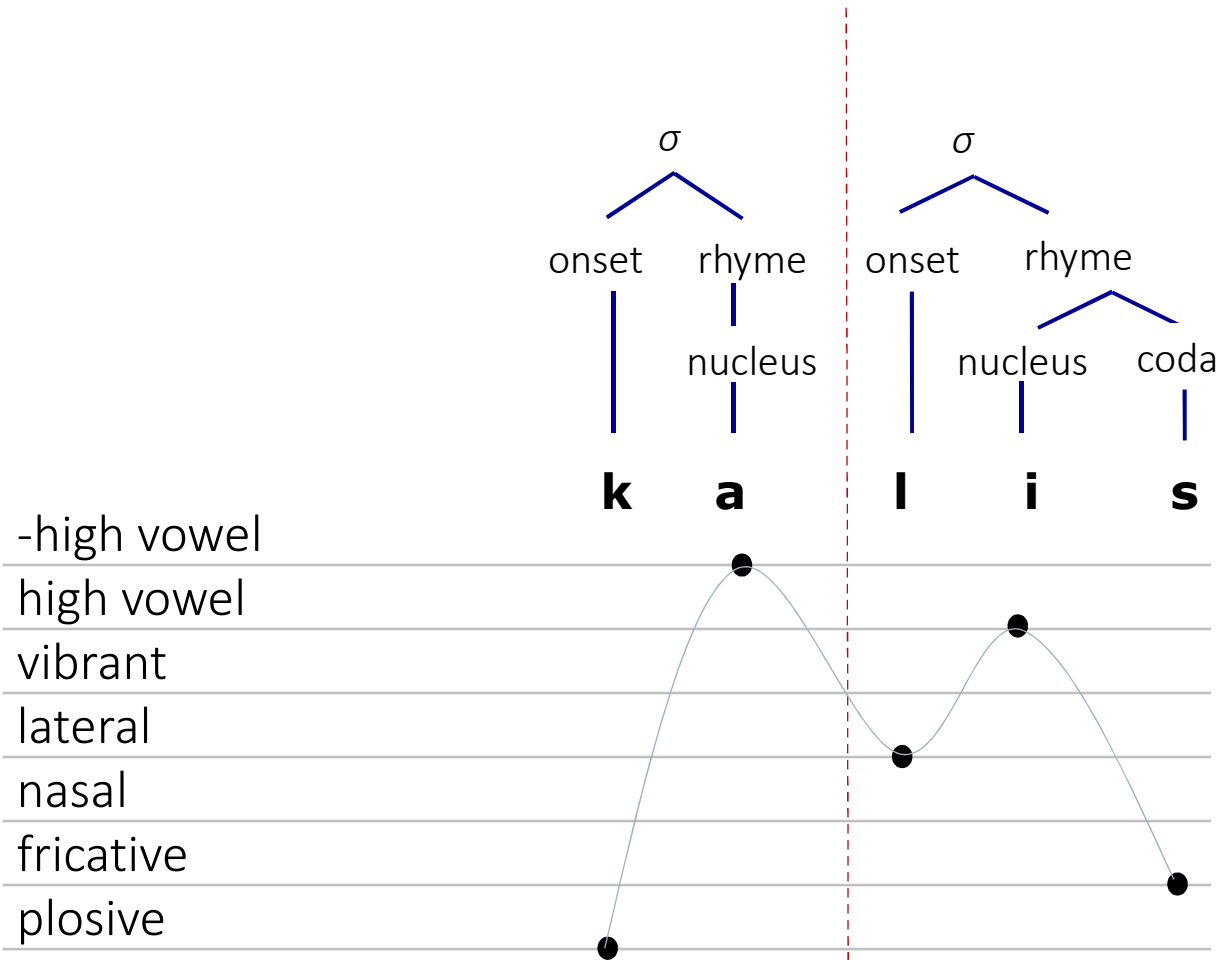


premise I: Sonority  
increases towards the nucleus  
decreases after the nucleus  
premise II: Onset maximization



# illustration 1: 'girl (genitive)'

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## illustration 2: 'sweet'

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-high vowel

high vowel

vibrant

lateral

nasal

fricative

plosive

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## illustration 2: 'sweet'

---

**t' k' b i l i**

-high vowel

high vowel

vibrant

lateral

nasal

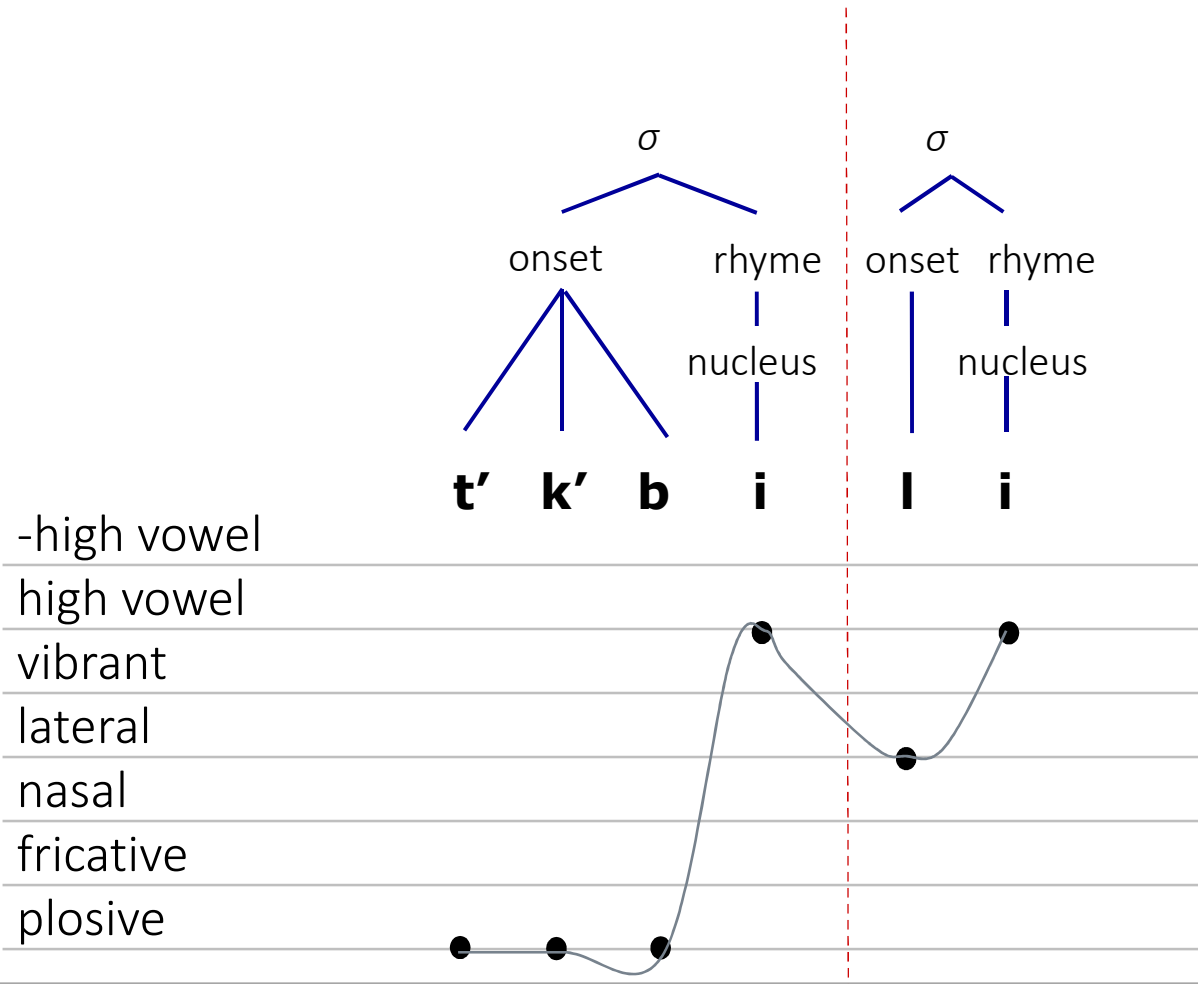
fricative

plosive

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# illustration 2: 'sweet'

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## illustration 3: 'researcher'

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-high vowel

high vowel

vibrant

lateral

nasal

fricative

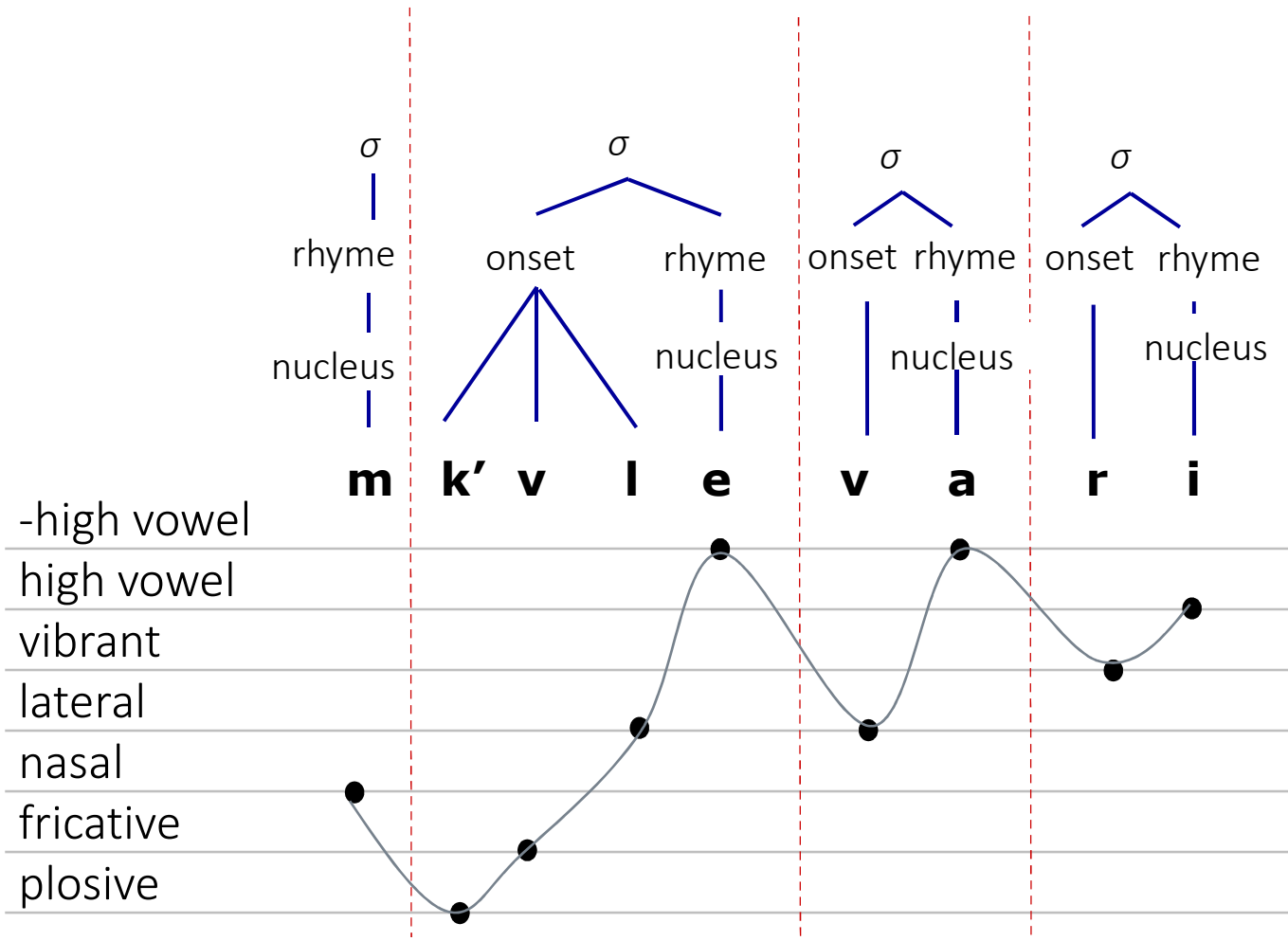
plosive

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# illustration 3: 'researcher'



## illustration 4: 'we take care'

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-high vowel

high vowel

vibrant

lateral

nasal

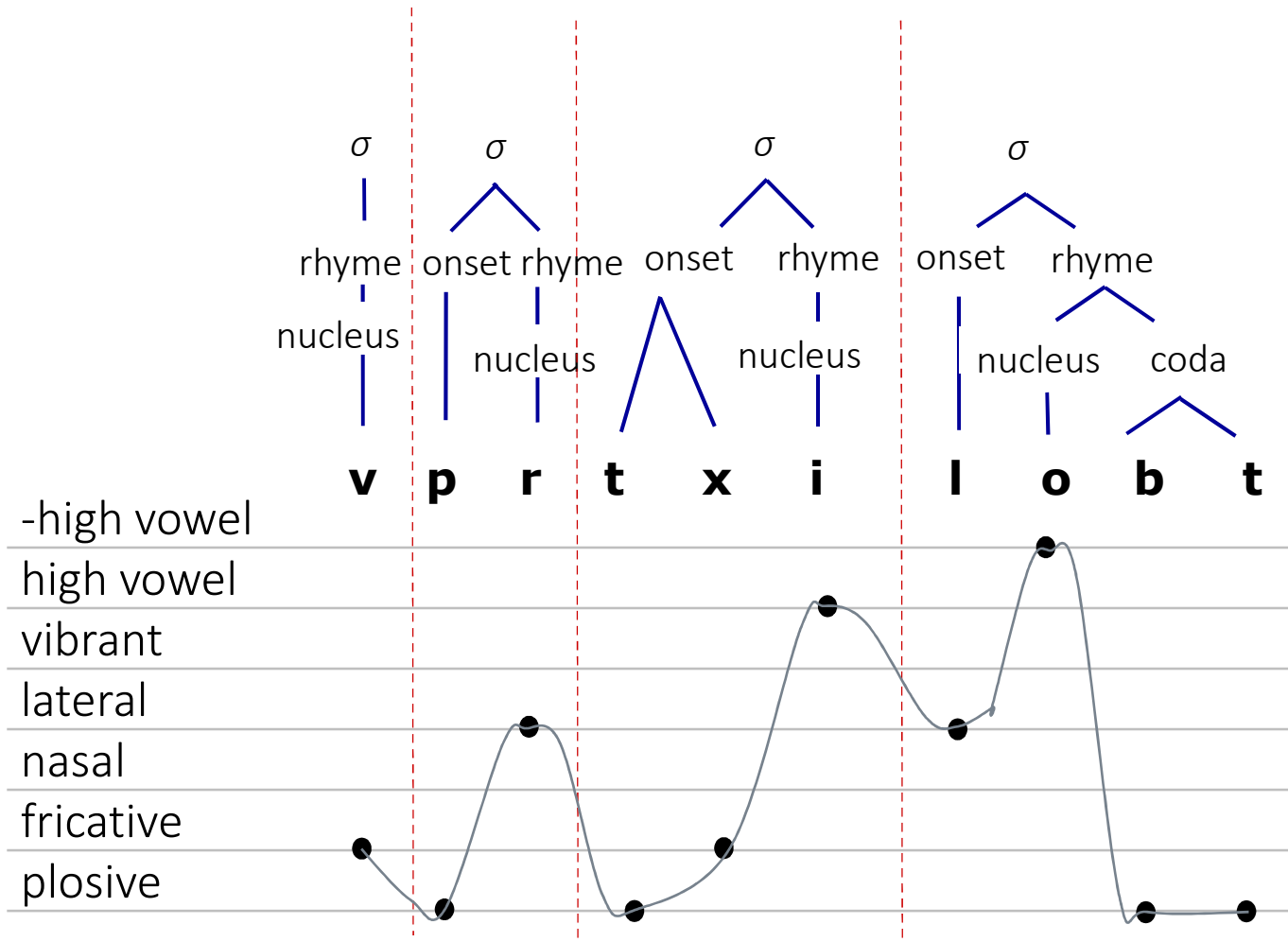
fricative

plosive

---



# illustration 4: 'we take care'



## illustration 5: 'trainer'

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-high vowel

high vowel

vibrant

lateral

nasal

fricative

plosive

---

# illustration 5: 'trainer'

---



**m ts' v r t n e l i**

-high vowel

high vowel

vibrant

lateral

nasal

fricative

plosive

---

## illustration 6: 'he trains us'

---



-high vowel

high vowel

vibrant

lateral

nasal

fricative

plosive

---



# illustration 6: 'he trains us'

---

**g v ts' v r t n i s**

-high vowel

---

high vowel

---

vibrant

---

lateral

---

nasal

---

fricative

---

plosive

---

# questions

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The syllabic structures that we obtained in these exercises are the result of two premises: syllables as sonority waves and onset maximization. A large array of questions arise that have been the subject of numerous studies on Georgian syllabic structure:

- Are the consonantal peaks  
*syllabic nuclei* (as in the illustrations so far)  
*onsets of headless syllables* or  
*extrasyllabic entities*?
  - Are the consonantal peaks metrically relevant (e.g., for word stress)?
  - What do phonological processes, especially metathesis, reveal about the rhythmic structure of Georgian onsets?
  - What is the phonological status of harmonic clusters?
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# references

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Marika Butskhrikidze 2002

The Consonant Phonotactics of Georgian

including a summary of earlier research

(chapter 7)

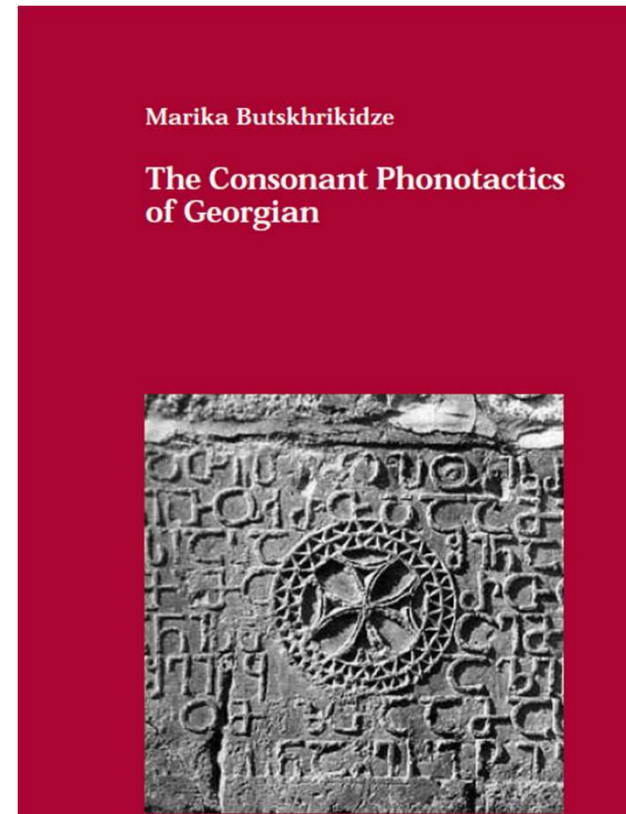
evidence from speech perception

(chapter 4)

proposing the *Gradual Consonant Analysis*

for the consonant clusters of Georgian

(chapter 6)



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# ideas

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- Phonological accounts and instrumental phonetic evidence.

Various relevant questions: does schwa epenthesis occur in complex onsets and if so at which places? Are prosodic events associated with the first syllable of long words (hosting secondary stress) temporally aligned with the vowel nucleus or with the initial consonantal peaks of the complex onsets?

- Complex onsets in Georgian and Eastern Armenian.

Complex onsets appear in both languages but they are not treated differently. Armenian pervasively uses schwa epenthesis. Developing a systematic account treating the common properties and differences between languages is challenging. A starting point for Armenian phonology is Vaux, B. 1998. *The phonology of Armenian*. Oxford: Clarendon.

# this lecture

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