At first glance it may seem almost impossible to gain any information on prosodic categories and structures in non-informant languages. Still, quite a lot of evidence can be gained from a careful analysis of data from ancient Indo-European languages.

In the first part of my talk I illustrate the above claim by looking at graphic conventions in inscriptions and phonotactics. I present evidence for categories larger than the word, but also for word-like behavior of parts of compounds, incohering affixes, and even reduplicants.

In the main part of the talk, I narrow the view to Early Vedic vowel lengthening. Lengthening is attested at word edges, but also in compounds and before so-called pada suffixes. Taking up ideas of Wackernagel (1889) and Kuryłowicz (1956), I show that word-internal lengthening can be modeled along the lines of word final lengthening, thus rejecting the widespread assumption that long vowels in compounds stem from diachronic phonotactic developments. Giving additional evidence for the word-hood of pada suffixes I argue that vowel lengthening is a synchronic process targeting prosodic words within potentially recursive φ-phases. The status of pada suffixes as phonological words is explained as a transfer of an existing formal pattern within a lexical network.

Word-final lengthening is blocked at edges of φ-phrases, which is rather surprising, since final lengthening is typically more prominent at the edges of larger constituents. I give a functional account for this fact: The domain of syllabification in Early Vedic is the φ-phrase, meaning that word boundaries do not necessarily coincide with onsets or codas. Final lengthening is understood as a strategy counteracting this loss of information on word edges by reintroducing boundary signals and thus facilitating lexicon retrieval.

In the last part I extend this analysis to reduplicants, showing that their seemingly rhythmic patterning fits neatly into the model developed for word edges.

References
