Linguistics 611

Internal Reconstruction Homework

Consider the following facts from Latin: there are two words for ‘sleep’, with slight differences in their connotations:

- somnus ‘sleep; drowsiness’
- sopor ‘(deep) sleep’

and also a related verb:

- so:pi:re ‘to cause to sleep’

a. Drawing on the fact that there are other nouns in Latin such as dolor ‘pain’ (cf. verb dole:re ‘to be in pain’), tumor ‘swelling’ (cf. verb tume:re ‘to swell’), propose a morphological segmentation of all of the above words for ‘sleep’, without worrying about the vowels. You should end up with two forms (“allomorphs”) of the root for ‘sleep’.

b. How do you reconcile the difference synchronically between these two root forms for ‘sleep’ (hint: figure out their distribution, looking at the phonological context in which each occurs).

c. Propose an account for the prehistory of these words for ‘sleep’ that is consistent with the synchronic distribution and which is based on your results in (b). You should give an explicit reconstruction for the root and propose a sound change (or changes, as the case may be) that will account for the synchronic facts above.

d. How does the existence of cognate forms in Greek and Sanskrit (hupnos and svapnas, respectively) affect your proposed reconstruction based on the Latin facts alone?

e. The Latin word for ‘river’ is amnis -- drawing the above facts and your account of them, propose a reconstruction for the pre-Latin form of this word. What would you look for in order to test this internally arrived-at reconstruction?