Linguistics 611

SOME CASES OF ABUNDANTLY EVIDENCED REGULAR SOUND CHANGES

1. Directly Observable (involving two attested stages of a language):

1. Middle English (ME) #kn- —> Modern English (NE) #n- (& = from Old English (OE) < cn- >)

- knakke —> knack ‘specific talent for something’
- knappen —> knap ‘break or chip stone’
- knopwed —> knapweed ‘variety of thistle’
- & knarre —> knar ‘burl in tree’
- & knave —> knave ‘crafty fellow’
- & kneden —> knead ‘mix and work a mass’
- & knee —> knee
- & knelen —> kneel
- & knellen —> knell ‘ring bell slowly’
- & knif —> knife
- & kniht —> knight
- & knitten —> knit
- knobbe —> knob ‘rounded protuberance’
- & knokken —> knock
- & knol —> knoll ‘hillock’
- & knop —> knop ‘small decorative knob’
- & knotte —> knot
- & knowen —> know
- knowlech —> knowledge
- knockel —> knuckle
- knor —> knur ‘bump or knot’

(NB, some loan words “join in”, e.g. knout ‘leather sorgue used for flogging criminals in Russia’, from Russian knut; or knavel ‘low-growing weedy plant’, from German Knäuel; but cf. recent loans knish ‘cooked dough stuffed with potato or other filling’ (from Yiddish) and Knesset ‘Israeli Parliament’ (from Hebrew), with [kn-] according to First edition (1969-1981) of American Heritage Dictionary, but [kan-] in later edition (1990); so also Scandinavian name Knut (earlier form Canute) with [kan-]

2. Old English ð —> Middle English orthographic < ou > (phonetic [əʊ]), later [aw] (OE and NE only shown here):

- bogan —> bow ‘to bend; stoop’
- chud —> cloud
- cū —> cow
- hlūd —> loud
- hu —> how
- hūs —> house
- lūs —> louse
- lūt —> lout ‘to bow, bend’
- mūs —> mouse
- mūth —> mouth
- nu —> now
- onbutan —> about
- scrūd —> shroud ‘burial cloth’
- scūr —> shower
sū → sow 'female hog'
suth → south
thū → thou 'you'
ūre → our
ūt → out

NB: ME loans from French with < ou > also develop to NE [aw], e.g. flour → flower, tour → tower, etc., though there is some “messiness” (e.g. ME variant spellings flor, tor, etc.). Note also, as a possibly complicating factor, NE [ar] as a variant of our.

3. Early Latin (pre-600BC) s /V_sV/ became r by mid-4th century BC; early inscriptions show -VsV-, Roman grammarians cite old forms with -VsV-, contemporary writers remark on spelling innovations involving using < r > for earlier < s > in order to better reflect pronunciation, morphophonemic alternations point to s as a source of (some) r's (e.g. quaer-ō 'I ask' vs. quaes-tus 'having been asked'), closely related languages (e.g. Paelignian coisga- = Latin cura- 'care for') show reflexes of s, etc. Cf. Sturtevant’s description of regularity with this change, via Antilla 1972/1989 (and note Plautus has nassus for ‘nose’, with “expressive gemination” but a -ss- that allows for full regularity, once details of conditioning environment are attended to). QUERY: how to fit aurora ‘dawn’, from earlier *ausōsa, into Sturtevant’s formulation?

4. Early Slavic (as represented by Old Church Slavonic) nasal vowels (back) q and (front) e end up denasalized in all occurrences in Russian, mostly ending up as [u] for the back vowel and [ja] ([a] after palatals) for the front vowel.

5. All instances of h- in early Greek (actually the sound only occurs in initial position) end up as ɬ (“zero”, i.e. deleted) by Medieval Greek.

6. All instances of #sT- in Latin end up as esT- in Spanish, e.g. scribere → escribir ‘to write’, sponsa → esposa ‘wife’, etc.

II. Inferrable (via Comparative Method):

7. All instances of u in pre-Greek end up as [ii] in Attic Greek (cross-dialectal and cross-language comparisons provide evidence here).

8. All unaspirated stops in Avestan (ancient Iranian) spirantize when occurring before another consonant (effectively, however, only r, Ł, and m), suggested by correspondences of Avestan ɿr / ɿr / xu = Sanskrit pr / tr / kr

9. All final stops (effectively only t, d, and k) are deleted between pre-Greek and attested Greek, suggested by correspondences of Greek -V# to, e.g. -VT# elsewhere, as in ephere = Sanskrit abharat ‘(s)he carried, meli = Hittite milit ‘honey’, gala = Latin lac ‘milk’, etc.

10. All final -m in pre-Greek end up as -n in attested Greek, suggested by correspondences of Greek -n# to -Vm# elsewhere, e.g. hén ‘one/NTR’ = Latin sem-(el) ‘once’; accusative singular -on = Latin -um, 1SG past -on = Sanskrit -am, etc.