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On Medial *s* in Italic

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J. Untermann (Word 24, 1968, 484–7) has, with his customary precision and meticulousness, made a strengthened case for the voicing of internal spirants in prehistoric Oscan as well as in Latin and Venetic. It might be remarked parenthetically that the later devoicing of -*f*- etc. would also match the devoicing of -*s*- found in modern southern Italian dialects in contrast with the North.

It seems to me that when we consider Untermann's argument attentively a further fact regarding the development of *-*s*- fits in naturally with these other facts, and itself lends an additional support to the phonetic plausibility of the total argument. We know that *sr gives initial *fr*- and medial -*br*- in Latin; it is obviously desirable to fit these developments in with the others, and if we can do so with a minimum set of rules so much the better.

It is of course possible to suggest that in this position *s somehow merged with *f*, and that this latter at some point was voiced medially. But there are two defects to such an hypothesis. The phonetic distance between *s* and *f* is such that it is not an immediately obvious change, nor is it one supported by other known diachronic phonetic rules of Latin. Secondly, the voicing of *s* and the voicing of *f* etc. thereby remain two unrelated and mutually unexplained phenomena.

Let us instead accept Untermann's proposed chronology of positional voicing of *f* etc. Let us further assume that at the time when *þ- and *-*ð*- existed there was already -*z*- beside *s*-; that is to say, medial voicing of *s had already occurred. We assume that *s assimilated medially in voiced surroundings and that such voiced contexts included the resonants; later, most such resonants one way or another absorbed the sibilant, but not so with *zr. Thus in parallel positions we had at this time *þ/*ð*, *s*/*z*; these pairs were distinguished simply by the distinctive feature of stridency. Up to here these assumptions are required for any explanation of the presumed facts of Italic and Latin; we now add one simple rule involving but one phonetic feature:

$$[+\text{strident}] > [-\text{strident}] \ / \ \begin{bmatrix} +\overline{\text{obstruent}} \\ +\text{continuant} \end{bmatrix} \ r$$

That is to say, stridency is neutralized in position before *r*. The result is the dental spirant, voiced or voiceless respectively. This output later becomes labialized, according to the well known rule in the presence of *r*, etc.

We see that by observing this chronology the apparently complex developments of *s* are accounted for in a simple and well integrated way by the addition of but one rule with a single feature. Moreover, by assuming this chronology we now have an easy way open for understanding and motivating the early devoicing that is presumed to have occurred to yield *f* etc. For if **s* had already voiced medially by the assimilation rule assumed above, it would then have provided a model for the reverse development initially of *f* etc. Put in the form of rules, this last development would have been an instance of rule simplification. That is, in place of the temporally earlier contextual rule that imparted voicing (or lack of it) to the sibilant of underlying representations, there now came to be a rule of the same form that simply required the more general specification [+continuant]. In other words, the rule that once applied to the restricted class of sibilants now applied to the more general class of continuants, or spirants.

Again, the changes in Oscan-Umbrian of *s* to *f* which are alluded to by Untermann (§ 4.13) are best understood as having taken place via an interstage **þ*, a sound which may have actually persisted quite late in Oscan-Umbrian. Certainly a shift in stridency followed by a spectral movement between these two muffled spirants makes the best acoustic sense.

From all of this we see that the rhotacism, § 2.1(1), just completes a very old change.

Latin *dacrima, lacruma* and Indo-European 'tear'

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This Latin word is notoriously troublesome in various ways. It has been supposed that **dacruma* is a borrowing from Gk. δάκρῦμα, shortened to a Hellenistic δάκρῠμα; see, for example, Pokorny IEW 179, and LEW[3] 746. The initial variation has been referred to the familiar "Sabine *l*"; while there could be truth lying behind

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