

GIUSEPPE PEZZINI

# Early Latin

Phonology – Part 1: Phonemes, Phonological Changes

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# Roadmap

- Phoneme system of Early Latin
- Phonological changes, processes, variants

## Two premises

- Most phonological features of Early Latin are typical of Latin phonology in general
- Degree of ‘linguistic anarchy’ (of Early Latin and beyond): great number of optional variants, different forms, reflecting different stages of language change, attested at times in the same text, but often with different stylisation

## Consonant phonemes: plosives

- |             |             | voiceless  | voiced   | (aspirated)               |
|-------------|-------------|--|--|---------------------------|
|             | labial      | /p/ <p>  | /b/ <b>  | /p <sup>h</sup> / <p, ph> |
| ■ Plosives: | dental      | /t/ <t>  | /d/ <d>  | /t <sup>h</sup> / <t, th> |
|             | velar       | /k/ <c, <b>k</b> , <b>q <td>/g/ &lt;g, <b>c</b>,<b>k</b>,<b>q <td>/k<sup>h</sup>/ &lt;c, ch&gt;</td> </b></td></b> | /g/ <g, <b>c</b> , <b>k</b> , <b>q <td>/k<sup>h</sup>/ &lt;c, ch&gt;</td> </b> | /k <sup>h</sup> / <c, ch> |
|             | labio-velar | /k <sup>w</sup> / <qu, <b>q <td>/g<sup>w</sup>/ &lt;gu&gt; (?)</td> <td></td> </b>                                 | /g <sup>w</sup> / <gu> (?)   |                           |
- Velar /k/: (usually) spelled as *k* (before *a*), *q* (before *u*, *o*), *c* (before *e*, *i*)  
 -> difference in pronunciation anticipating Romance reflexes?
  - Velar /g/: originally spelled as *c* (or *k* or *q*): a Latin innovation first attested in 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BC (but cf. *cnatus* (*gnatus*) in CIL 1.1718, *gonlegium*, *Volgani* in CIL 1.364, c. 125BC)
  - Labio-velar /g<sup>w</sup>/, only reconstructed by analogy (and disputed)
  - Aspirated graphemes (*ph*, *th*, *ch*): imported from Greek (but cf. ILLRP 122 *Pilemo*), only in late 2<sup>nd</sup> c. BC become common and extended to Latin words (e.g. *Anchora*)

## Other consonant phonemes

- Continuants:
  - nasals                    /m/ <m> /n/ <n>
  - liquids                    /r/ <r> /l/ <l> (with two allophones)
  - labio-dental fricative       /f/ <f>
  - dental voiceless fricative   /s/ <s>(voiced [z], intervocalic 'rhotacised' (> /r/) by 4<sup>th</sup> c.BC)

- Semi-consonants (glides, approximants): /j/ <i> /w/ <u>

All above consonants may occur as geminates, always in the case of /j/ intervocalic (but gemination reflected in the spelling only after late 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BC (Greek influence? Cf. CIL 1.608 *Hinnad* = *Enna*), and only gradually standardised (cf. *Senatus Consultum* of 184BC, with no gemination)

## Some consonant changes

- Loss of *n* before *s*, presumably with nasalisation of preceding vowel (cf. the spelling *cosol* vs. *consul* = [kõsol]?)
- Velar pronunciation of *n* before velar sound (cf. the spelling *agcora*, apparently used by Accius)
- Loss of final *-d* (e.g. *tēd* vs. *tē* , both attested in Plautus)
- Loss of final *-s* before consonant (sigmatic ecthipsis)

## Other consonants

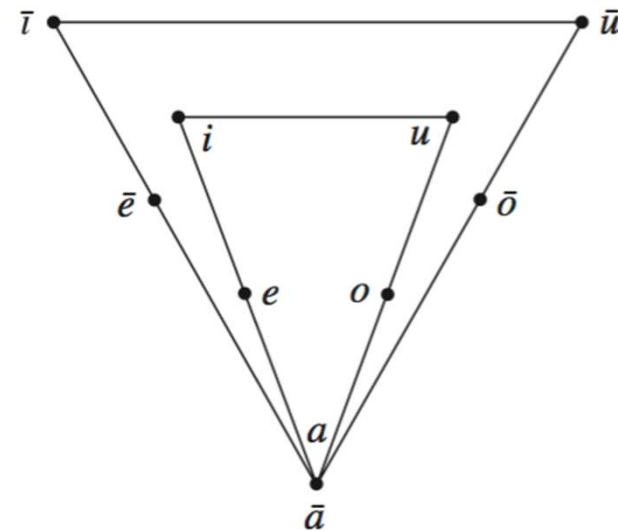
- Glottal fricative /h/      <h> (only in affected speech, otherwise a silent graphem)
- Double consonants      /ks/      <x>  
   [zd] or [ds]      <s, z>

> Both derived from Greek, and used to represent Greek sounds in Greek borrowings

# Vowels

- The (Early) Latin vowel triangle

(excluding *y* (= Greek *υ* i.e. [y]), only rarely attested, and in Greek borrowings (e.g. CIL 1.3558b *Dio]nysios*, dating to 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BC)





## Quantities

- Distinction between short and long vowels is phonemic, but not represented in spelling
- BUT cf. spelling *aa* etc., attested in inscriptions, e.g. CIL 1.582 *haac*
- Spellings with apex (CIL 1.679 *múrum* (104BC))
- *l longa* for *ī* (CIL 1.721 *fellcl*)

## Other ‘early’ vowel sounds (non-phonemic)

- The ‘middle-sound’ between *i* and *u*: a more fronted  $\check{u}$  ([i̯] or [ɯ̯])  
cf. e.g. c. 21 *proxum-* vs. 3 *proxim-* in CIL 1  
BUT 8 *maxum-* vs. 63 *maxim-*
- Long close  $\epsilon$ : an intermediate sound between  $\bar{e}$  and  $\bar{i}$ ,  
a stage in the monophthongization of *ei* ( $ei > \epsilon > \bar{i}$ )  
cf. \**ploirumei* > *ploirumē* > *plūrimī*

[+ occasional confusion  $\check{e}/\check{i}$  and  $\bar{e}/\bar{i}$ ]

## Diphthongs

- Many diphthongs attested in Early Latin, but all exposed to monophthongization:

/ai/ > /ae/ > /e/

/au/ > /u/

/ei/ > /e/ [ɛ] > /i/

/oe/ > /oi/ > /u/

/ou/ > /u/

- All the above forms attested in the early period, but monophthongized (in speech and/or writing) by the end of it

## Vowel weakening (still in operation in early Latin)

- Change of *o* (> *u*) and *e* (> *i*) in final syllables (cf. e.g. *Quinctio(s)* *probavet* > *Quinctius probavit*, both forms attested in inscriptions)
- Change of *o* > *u* before a consonant cluster beginning with *l* (cf. the duplet *volt* : *vult* i.e. [wult])
- Change of *u* > *i* in initial syllables before *l* and labial (e.g. *libet* : *lubet*)

Thank you!