The origin of the Old Latin *amāssō* type

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Sigmatic indicatives and subjunctives of the type *faxō*, *faxis*, etc. and *faxim*, *faxīs*, etc. are peculiar yet not exactly rare in literary texts and inscriptions from Old Latin (see the exhaustive collection in de Melo 2007b: 65–187). They gradually die out on the way to Classical Latin, where only a handful of fossilized forms (e.g., *faxō*, *ausim*, etc.) and – potentially – lexicalized items (e.g., *uīsō* 'I visit', *quaesō* 'I ask') survive. The type as such is certainly inherited and has been interpreted as either the subjunctive/optative of the *s*-aorist or the subjunctive/optative of an *-s-* desiderative, a long-standing debate that this talk will not intend to make any meaningful contribution to.

Instead, the focus will be on the corresponding forms of the first conjugation *amāssō*, *amāssis*, etc. and *amāssim*, *amāssīs*, etc. There is almost universal agreement that this type is a recent inner-Latin creation, though the exact origin of it has been obscure. If it had been formed by simply adding *-s(e/o)-* to the verbal stem, we would have expected a rhotacized outcome (i.e., †*amārō*), not a geminate *-ss-*. Previous explanations (see Leumann 1963: 344 ; de Melo 2007a: 315–21) fall mostly into one of two groups that one could dub the "phonological explanations" and the "morphological explanations", respectively. Within the first group, accounts range from expressive gemination (e.g., Benveniste 1922: 53–4) to invoking the (somewhat elusive) *littera* rule that would have operated on forms like **amā-s-* > **amăss-* with subsequent analogical restoration of the long vowel >> *amāss-* (e.g., Rix 1998: 625–6; Meiser 1998: 183–4; Meiser 2003: 40; the *littera* rule is unlikely to have operated in such a context, though, see Weiss 2010). In the second group, Leumann's account (Leumann 1963: 344), which seems to have gained most supporters (e.g., Sihler 1995: 558–9; de Melo 2007a: 314), departs from short perfect subjunctives of the type *amāssem* (for *amāuissem*) that might have encouraged an analogical *amāssō* and *amāssim* based on the model *dīxem : dīxō : dīxim*. However, the short perfect subjunctive type *amāssem* is itself a recent analogical formation (after *audīuissem* > *audīssem*, etc., where *-u̯-* was lost between like vowels; cf. de Melo 2007c: 53; Weiss 2020: 436–7), whereas forms in *-āssō* appear already in the *Lex Regia* and the Laws of the Twelve Tables (e.g., *plōrāssit*, *nuncupāssit*, *lēgāssit*, etc.), i.e., before 450 BCE.

This talk sets out to provide a new and synthesized explanation for the origin of the Old Latin *amāssō* type, based on an interplay of phonology and morphological analogy. The phonological groundwork to account for *amāssō* instead of †*amārō* was laid by Alain Christol's study on the exceptions of rhotacism (Christol 1996) and Brent Vine's subsequent refinement of Christol's ideas (Vine 2016). Taking inspiration from their approach, one may posit that there must have been a time when pre-Rhotacism Latin had two intervocalic sibilants: voiced /z/ (< **VsV*) and voiceless /ss/ (< **VTsV*), but no voiceless non-geminate /s/, and that when an intervocalic [s] newly entered the system (either in a borrowing or in a newly created word form) it surfaced as /ss/. On the morphological side of things, it is important to note (as has been done by, e.g., Rix 1998: 622) that for the vast majority of formations of the *faxō* type, the only possible synchronic analysis for the speakers would have been that a suffixoid *-[s]ō*, *-[s]is*, etc. was added to the stem of the supine or perfect participle (i.e., minus *-tum*, *-sum*). Therefore, when speakers of this pre-Rhotacism variety of Archaic (or Very Old) Latin wanted to create a form matching the meaning and function of *faxō*, *capsō*, and the like, from a verb of the *a*-conjugation (that originally did not provide a corresponding form), they were certainly tempted to analogically generate an *amā-* (i.e., *amātum* minus *-tum*) plus *-[s]ō*, *-[s]is*, etc. that needed to be realized as *amāssō*, *amāssis*, etc. with geminate *-ss-*, i.e., the only available voiceless intervocalic sibilant at that time. Additional evidence will be presented to support this scenario.

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