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**Historical Morphology and Textual Criticism:  
The Transmission of Inflected Forms in the *Siete Partidas*.**

This paper (1982, revised 1992) was intended for a Festschrift which never materialized. The observations it contains concerning the transmission of inflexional morphology may retain some interest for textual critics and historical linguists alike.

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Historical Morphology and Textual Criticism: The Transmission of  
Inflected Forms in the Siete Partidas.

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Some time ago I worked with Professor Dwayne E. Carpenter, Boston College, on the text tradition of the seventh of the Siete Partidas, the great legal code compiled under the supervision of Alfonso X, King of Castile and Leon (1252-1284). The seventh Partida is a complete penal code, of great interest to literary scholars as well as to historians, jurists, and sociologists. Professor Carpenter was in the process of preparing a critical edition of title 24, "De los judios," a set of eleven laws that spell out the civil and religious disabilities of Jews living in 13th-century Castile and Leon (see his Alfonso X and the Jews: An Edition of and Commentary on "Siete Partidas" 7.24 "De los judios," U of California Publications in Modern Philology, 115 [Berkeley & Los Angeles: U of California P, 1986], in particular the jointly authored chap. 3, "The Text Tradition of Siete Partidas 7.24," 13-26).

Among the many intriguing problems presented by the fourteen textual witnesses, i.e., twelve manuscripts and two editions, the

difficulty of arriving at the theoretically original form of inflected verbs aroused my particular curiosity. All the extant MSS were copied in the 14th century or later. Internal and external evidence suggests that the first version of the entire code was completed in 1265, and subjected to two principal revisions between 1272 and 1284, the year of the Learned King's death (for a summary of my views on the chronology of Alfonso X's legal works, see "The Legislative Works of Alfonso el Sabio," in Emperor of Culture: Alfonso X the Learned of Castile and His Thirteenth-Century Renaissance, ed. Robert I. Burns, S.J. [Philadelphia: Pennsylvania UP, 1990], 182-97, 257-60). The seventh Partida, as we now have it, can be placed in the period of revisions, but much of its text, no doubt the greater part, already existed in 1265.

The collation of the MSS makes it abundantly clear that the 14th- and 15th- century scribes sporadically and independently modernized the inflectional morphology of the texts they were employed to copy. They were not, of source, systematic or thorough in their modernizations, so that more archaic forms often stand in the same line with more modern counterparts. Textual critics consequently find themselves bereft of any sure guide to the original, or authorial, paradigms, within the text tradition. If they call upon historical linguists to provide appropriate criteria for choosing the forms that should appear in the critical text, they are certain to be disappointed. The

historical development of languages is much more likely to suggest relative, rather than absolute, chronologies for the changes that arise. Linguists bold, or foolhardy, enough to provide dates for individual phenomena normally do so only in terms of centuries, and even then hedge their chronological speculations with such qualifiers as "possibly earlier in certain dialects", or "by chance maintained as a dialectal archaism in certain regions". In medieval Castile and Leon, the transition from the 13th to the 14th century was not characterized by profound linguistic upheavals. It is therefore a rather delicate task to decide which forms must necessarily be assigned to the post-Alfonsine period.

What historical linguists do very well is to construct a frame of reference within which the textual critic can operate. The preliterary basis of given paradigms has been reconstructed with a high degree of probability, and the types of changes that occurred as well as the circumstances that governed their emergence have been determined with great rigor. The forms that turn up in the collation of MSS can consequently be assigned to various stages in specific diachronic trajectories, an assignment that may prove to be a decisive advantage when the textual critic has been able to reduce the available choices to a pair, or a small number, of genetically related morphological variants.

To illustrate the sort of problem faced by the editor of the

seventh Partida, I have chosen the five occurrences in title 24 of the preterite stem of the verb meaning 'to live'. Its development in Castilian is just complex enough for it to serve as a useful example. The Latin verb uiuere /wi:'were/ was reshaped as a fourth conjugation verb in preliterate Castilian: \*/vivi're/. The latter was subsequently subject to a pair of dissimilatory tendencies such that the initial consonant /v/ became occlusive /b/ and the high front root vowel /i/ was opened to a mid vowel /e/. Consequently, beuir /bevir'/ was the most typical form of the infinitive in the Middle Ages. However, it always coexisted with rival forms in which only one of the two dissimilations, or neither, had taken place: ueuir /vevir'/ (lack of consonant dissimilation); biuir /bivir'/ (lack of vowel dissimilation); and, finally, uiuuir /vivir'/ (with neither dissimilation). Furthermore, in the preterite, the irregular root uisq-, as in uisquieron /viskje'ron/ 'they lived', existed alongside the more regular biu- as in biuieron /bivje'ron/, or undissimilated uiuieron /vivje'ron/. [1]

Among Old Castilian preterites of the -ir conjugation and of irregular verbs, mid vowels suffered the metaphonic effect of the glides present in the plural forms, and, in the case of regular verbs, the glide present in the 3sg as well, as I illustrate with the preterite paradigm of Old Castilian seruir 'to serve':

(1)	1sg	serui	1pl	seruiemos > siruiemos
	2sg	seruist(e)	2pl	seruiestes > siruiestes
	3sg	seruio > siruio	3pl	seruieron > siruieron

In this verb, the mid vowel of the root is etymological, cf. Lat. seruire. The metaphonic shift from mid to close vowel was well established in Alfonso X's time, i.e., the 2d half of the 13th century, but the metaphonic types failed to displace their non-metaphonic counterparts entirely until the threshold of the Renaissance. The persistence of the latter, or non-metaphonic types, was apparently an analogical phenomenon; the quality of the root vowel of, e.g., seruiemos 'we served' was supported by other members of the conjugation, in the preterite tense itself (1sg serui) and elsewhere (infinitive seruir). The crucial fact for the textual problem to be presented below is that verbs such as uisquieron/biuieron were drawn into the same sort of alternation, even though the high front root vowel is etymological.

The linguistic background of the Old Castilian verb meaning 'to live' would, consequently, lead one to expect, at least theoretically, no fewer than six types of preterite root: biu-/beu-/uiu-/ueu-/uisq-/uesq-ieron. Curiously enough, all six are indeed attested in the MSS that contain the 24th title of the seventh Partida. This fact might cause linguists to lose little sleep, but the textual critic, if he is preparing a traditional

critical edition, is forced to choose only one of the various possibilities that the manuscript tradition presents at any given point.

The first occurrences of the preterite stem of the verb beuir in title 24 are illustrated below in columns. The manuscript sigla are those used by Carpenter, with the approximate date of the manuscripts in parentheses. None of the MSS is dated, and, so far as I can judge, their relative age is of no consequence for the problem at hand. In the column headings, SP 7.24.0:4 reads out as Siete Partidas, seventh Partida, 24th title, prologue (i.e., law 0), line 4, of Carpenter's critical text. The manuscript readings are all included, even when quite aberrant; dashes mean that the text is defective at that point due to omission or damage.

(2)	MS (date)	SP 7.24.0:4	SP 7.24.0:15	SP 7.24.1:12
	E1 (14th c.)	veviessen	yog<ui>eren	veujessen
	E2 (14th c.)	ueuiessen	uisquiere<n>	uiuiessen
	E3 (15th c.)	binjesen	visq<ui>eren	oviesen
	E5 (14th c.)	uisq<ui>esen	uisquiere<n>	uiuiesen
	N1 (15th c.)	bjbjesen	visquiere<n>	bjbjesen
	N3 (15th c.)	biuiessen	uisq<ui>ere<n>	uiuiesse<n>
	H2 (15th c.)	biuiessen	uisq<ui>eren	biuiessen
	C (14th c.)	veujessen	veujeren	beuiessen
	P (15th c.)	visq<ui>eren	visquieren	biujesen
	E4 (14th c.)	viujese<n>	-----	viujese<n>
	N2 (15th c.)	vessq<ui>essen	bjujeren	bjujessen
	H1 (14th c.)	visq<ui>essen	-----	bjujessen

MS	SP 7.24.2:2	SP 7.24.11:8
E1	viujere<n>	viujere<n>
E2	uisq<ui>eren	visquiere<n>
E3	biujere<n>	biujesen
E5	uisquiere<n>	biuiere<n>
N1	uisquieren	biujeren
N3	uisq<ui>ere<n>	biuiere<n>
H2	biuieren	biuiere<n>
C	ueujere<n>	-----
P	-----	beujeren
E4	viviere<n>	viviesen
N2	bevieren	veuieren
H1	visquieren	bjujeren

As a first glance reveals, the preferences of the scribes vary wildly. In the second example, SP 7.24.0:15, uisquieren predominates, but in the third, SP 7.24.1:12, uisquiessen is entirely wanting. A general observation can be made at once: the forms containing a mid front root vowel are significantly less frequent. Nevertheless, I believe most, if not all, textual critics would be uncomfortable with a decision to generalize a single type of root in all five cases. After all, one can point to cases where poorly or marginally attested forms turn out to be the most likely originals. Just to give two examples: the adverbial conjunction cuemo 'how' has virtually disappeared from

the text tradition of the Siete Partidas except in the case of the one MS that was copied in the royal scriptorium (British Library Add. 20787; ed. Juan Antonio Arias Bonet, Primera Partida [Valladolid: U de Valladolid, 1975]); similarly, the preposition pora 'for' appears only occasionally in the extant Partida MSS, other than the one just mentioned. In both cases, the more modern forms como and para predominate in an overwhelming manner. Yet in a critical text of the Partidas one could justify adopting the older forms. At any rate, the textual critic's reluctance to introduce, with perhaps a certain amount of arbitrariness, a single type of verb root in the passages under consideration amounts to an implicit claim that Alfonso X and his jurists themselves vacillated in their use of the preterite of the verb beuir. While the assumption of such vacillation is perfectly reasonable, one would like to be able to do more than speculate on the matter.

Fortunately, scholars possess a research tool that permits them to test their assumptions about Alfonsine usage on a broad scale. The Concordances and Texts of the Royal Scriptorium Manuscripts of Alfonso X, published in microfiches by the Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies (eds. Lloyd Kasten and John J. Nitti [Madison, Wisc.: HSMS, 1978]), include only such MSS as are known to have been copied during Alfonso X's reign or immediately thereafter, so that post-Alfonsine linguistic phenomena are necessarily excluded. With regard to the root of the preterite

paradigm of the verb beuir, Alfonso X and his pundits preferred the type uisq- by a wide margin:

(3) The preterite of OCast. beuir in the Concordances and Texts.

preterite subjunctive					
3sg	uisquiesse	32	3pl	uisquiessen	88
3sg	biuiesse	4	3pl	biuiessen	3
3sg	uiuiesse	1	3pl	uiuiessen	6
future subjunctive					
3sg	uisquiere	10	3pl	uisquieren	3
3sg	biuiere	4	3pl	biuieren	2
3sg	uiuiere	2	3pl	uiuieren	2
pluperfect					
3sg	uisquiera	6	3pl	uisquieran	4
3sp	[biuiera]	0	3pl	[biuieran]	0
3sg	uiuiera	1	3pl	[uiuieran]	0
preterite indicative					
3sg	uisco	154	3pl	uisquieron	38
3sg	[biuio]	0	3pl	[biuieron]	0
3sg	uiuio	6	3pl	uiuieron	1

Two significant conclusions can be drawn from these data: (1) The forms with the mid front root vowel /e/ are definitely post-Alfonsine and may be disregarded in establishing the critical text, though they are of considerable interest to the historical linguist as part of a temporary reaction against the closing of

root vowels in the -ir conjugation which was extended to cases where the high front root vowel /i/ was etymological, a datum not recorded in the historical grammars I have consulted (for an otherwise excellent overview of vocalic alternations in -ir verb forms, see Ralph Penny, A History of the Spanish Language [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991], 158-61). (2) Despite the predominance of uisq-, the two rivals biu- and uiu- cannot be ignored, since they too are genuinely Alfonsine. In fact, if one takes into account the figures for the only Alfonsine MS that belongs to the text tradition of the Siete Partidas (British Library MS. Add. 20787, mentioned above), the proportions between the frequencies of uisq- and biu-/uiu- are reversed: there are 13 forms in biu-, 5 in uiu-, and only two in uisq-. Indeed, in the entire Alfonsine corpus, the stem biu- (with consonantal dissimilation) is documented only in this MS.

(4) The preterite of OCast. beuir in MS. Add. 20787

biuiere	4	biuieren	2
biuiesse	4	biuiessen	3
uiuiere	1	uiuieren	2
[uiuiesse]	0	uiuïessen	2
[uisquiere]	0	[uisquieren]	0
[uisquiesse]	0	uisquiessen	1
3sg pret. ind.: uisco (only form attested)			1

Armed with the data drawn from the Concordances and Texts, let me now return to the five instances of preterite forms in title 24 of the seventh Partida. The relevant choices have at least been reduced to three: uisq-, biu-, and uiu-. In the second case (SP 7.24.0:15), there seems to be no reason to dispute the scribes' preference for uisquieren; the same may be said for biuiessen or uiuiessen in case three (SP 7.24.1:12), but only a weak statistical argument can be adduced in favor of the former vis-à-vis the latter (i.e., biu- 13 vs. uiu- 5). Otherwise, if any significant proportion of the manuscript witnesses shows the stem uisq-, I would be strongly inclined to adopt it for the critical text, since it is my conviction that scribes did not deliberately archaize the texts they copied. Their specialty was modernization. Consequently, for the first (SP 7.24.0:4) and fourth (SP 7.24.2:2) instances, I would opt for uisq-, fully cognizant of the purely probabilistic nature of my preferences. On the other hand, an isolated variant unsupported by corroborating evidence cannot normally prevail against the readings of a large number of witnesses. Ergo, in the fifth instance (SP 7.24.11:8), my choice would go to biuieren. [2]

The foregoing is yet another corroboration of the often observed fact that the notion of a mechanically, or absolutely, determined critical text is an illusion. As in the physical sciences, we are faced with a margin, albeit narrow, of irreducible uncertainty. The best that the textual critic can hope for is to

reduce the number of variables, to avoid arbitrariness, and to aim at solutions that do not offend too gravely either the common sense of modern scholars or the linguistic spirit of the original authors.[3]

## Endnotes

1. I have proposed that the irregular preterite uisco /vi'sko/, rather than stemming directly from Lat. uixit, is analogical to the Old Spanish preterite nasco 'he/she was born', see "Cast. ant. nasco 'nacio', uisco 'vivio'", forthcoming in Homenaje a Juan M. Lope Blanch.

2. This paper was composed without direct reference to Carpenter's critical text. It occurs to me that readers may be curious as to how well I scored with regard to his textual preferences:

locus	Craddock	Carpenter
7.24.0:4	uisquiessen	biuiessen
7.24.0:15	uisquieren	uisquieren
7.24.1:12	biuiessen	biuiessen
7.24.2:2	uisquieren	biuieren
7.24.11:8	biuieren	biuieren

Well, a 60% agreement is perhaps not so bad in this troubled world. Carpenter's version requires one to believe that Alfonso X's jurists were capable of switching verb forms in the middle of the same paragraph; but that, after all, is not an unreasonable assumption.

3. A briefer and more informal presentation of this paper was made at Ninth California Convocation in Romance Philology, meeting at the University of California, Davis, October 23, 1982.