Sturtevant's law of Waterloo

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- By about 600 BCE, before the classical period, Latin underwent rhotacism of /s/ [z] (> r):

  nefās vs. *nefārius* 'impious'

  flōs vs. *flōris* 'flower'

  querī vs. *questus* 'complain'

  ūrō vs. *ūstus* 'burn'

  erit vs. *est* 'to be (fut./pres.)', etc.

- Thus, we can enunciate this process as:

All /s/s between vowels became /r/ in Latin.

- Edgar Sturtevant compared this historical event to another possible historical event which he called "The Law of Waterloo":

All Prussian soldiers 6 feet tall were killed in the battle of Waterloo.

- *BUT*

  dīvīsus 'divided'

  causa 'cause'

  vīsus 'seen'

  nisi 'unless'

  dēsinō 'desist', etc.

  maintained the /s/ in intervocalic context.

- Why?

- Some words had a double <ss>, as in <caussa>.
- Later, /ss/ became /s/ after long vowels and diphthongs, but it was too late for rhoticism to affect them.

- Other words, such as *nisi* and *dēsinō*, are compounds that were formed later:

$$sī \text{ 'if' and } sino \text{ 'allow'}$$

…they are Prussians that were not yet born at the time of the battle of Waterloo.

asinus 'donkey'

casa 'hut'

rosa 'rose'

genesis

basis

- They are loans from other Italic languages:

they are Prussians that were naturalized after the battle of Waterloo.

miser 'miserable'

caesariēs 'hair'

except when followed by /r/

- These instances of /s/ did not become /r/, so we must conclude that

  they are Prussians under six feet tall.

- *soror* 'sister' was previously *sosor (cf. sister)

except when also preceded by /s/.

this Prussian is six feet tall (although his posture appeared bent).

nāsus 'nose'

??????