A cognate bestiary

Dr. Nathan W. Hill, SOAS University of London

Abstract

The comparative method could be characterized as the method whereby cognates are detected and their history is traced from their earliest reconstructible form to their earliest attested form. But what is a cognate and how many types of cognancy are there? With reference to the major handbooks (Campbell, Trask, Anttila, Crowely, etc.) and the major theoretical works (Meillet, Hoenigswald), this paper attempts to make explicit the types of cognacy implicitly envisioned in traditional historical and comparative linguistics, and to pin down the interaction between these types of cognacy and the workflow of the comparative method both as it is theorized and practiced.