

## THE GERMANIC SIXTH CLASS OF STRONG VERBS

1. In an earlier article (1992), I argued that Go. *nam*, *nemun* 'took', *gaf*, *gebun* 'gave', *-et*, *etun* 'ate' represent original *\*ōme*, *\*ēmunþ*, *\*ōfe*, *\*ēbunþ*, *\*ōte*, *\*ētunþ*. Similarly, Go. *-on* 'breathed', ON. *ól* 'nourished', *ók* 'traveled' continue reduplicated preterits *\*ōn-*, *\*ōl-*, *\*ōk-*, where the long vowel arose from the merger of earlier *\*ō-* in the singular and *\*ā-* in the plural. This development eliminated the apophonic distinction between sg. and pl. forms in these preterits and provoked the merger of the type with the root aorist Go. *stop*, *stopun*, OE. *stōd*, *stōdon* 'stood'. This root aorist correlates with a *d*-present with nasal infix *stand-*. Another verb which apparently combines a root aorist with a *d*-present is Go. *-hlaþan*, OE. *hladan* 'to load', cf. Lith. *klóti*, Slavic *klad-*. Thus, the sixth class of strong verbs seems to have originated as a distinct category from the merger of the reduplicated preterits of IE. *\*an-*, *\*al-*, *\*ak-* with the root aorists of IE. *\*stā-* and *\*klā-*.<sup>1</sup> Since the resulting class lacked the usual apophonic difference between sg. and pl. forms in the preterit, it provided a convenient model for analogical extension to verbs with a present stem of the types *CaR-* and *CaC-*. This raises a number of questions.

2. First of all, we may wonder why *\*ar-* 'plow' did not join the sixth class of strong verbs but developed a seventh class reduplicated preterit *\*ear-* in Old High German and joined the first class of weak verbs in the other North and West Germanic languages. As I pointed out already (1992:103), I think that *\*ear-* replaced an earlier root aorist *\*ar-* at a recent stage because the *je*-present of this verb in Celtic, Germanic, Baltic and Slavic suggests that the root had aorist meaning in the northern IE. languages. We must therefore ask ourselves if the vocalism in the preterit of the other Germanic *je*-presents points to an earlier aorist or to a perfect formation.

In Gothic, six out of the seven verbs with a *je*-present and a strong preterit belong to the sixth class: *bidjan* 'to pray', *hafjan* 'to lift', *hlahjan* 'to laugh', *fraþjan* 'to understand', *skapjan* 'to harm', *gaskapjan* 'to create', *wahsjan* 'to grow'. It appears that strong verbs with a root in a velar stop and a *je*-present created a weak preterit on the basis of the past participle in *\*-htas* (Kortlandt 1989:107): *bugjan* 'to buy', *waurkjan* 'to work', *brukjan* 'to use', *þugkjan* 'to believe', preterit *bauhta*, *waurhta*, *bruhta*, *þuhta*. The earlier strong preterit is still evident from OE. *brēac* 'used' and *warhte* beside *worhte* 'worked', also *þōhte*, Go. *þahta* 'thought', which gave rise to a secondary present *\*þankeje-* in Proto-Germanic times already. The new formation gave way to a regular first weak class preterit in the case of *sokjan* 'to seek' and *faurhtjan* 'to fear': *sokida* 'sought', *faurhtidedun* 'they feared', OE. *sōhte*, OHG. *suohta*, *forahtun*. The vocalism of OE. *brēac*, *warhte*, *þōhte* points to an earlier perfect formation while *sōhte* is ambiguous because it represents the IE. root *\*sāg-*.<sup>2</sup>

From an Indo-European point of view, Go. *hafjan*, *bugjan*, *waurkjan*, *þugkjan*, *faurhtjan*, and *þaursjan* 'to thirst' (cf. Schmid 1963:97) belong to the flexion type of Latin *capiō* 'I seize' with a zero grade root vowel and a *ya*-present in Indo-Iranian. The same probably holds for *wahsjan* 'to grow', *hazjan* 'to praise', and *\*safjan* 'to perceive'.<sup>3</sup> The verbs *bugjan* and *sokjan* can hardly be separated from *biugan* 'to bend' and *sakan* 'to quarrel', respectively. If *sokjan* is a secondary formation on the basis of the preterit stem *\*sōk-*, it is possible that *sakan* had a *je*-present at an earlier stage and that we may compare the relation between the two verbs with that between *þagkjan* and *þugkjan*. This is in accordance with the fact that Old Irish *saigid* 'seeks' has a *je*-present which may be identified with the flexion of Latin *capiō* (Thurneysen 1946:354).<sup>4</sup>

I conclude that there is no evidence for an original aorist among the sixth class preterits of *je*-presents while all of them may represent earlier perfects. The vocalism of *\*hōf* and *\*sōk* is ambiguous and the other verbs have an *o*-grade vowel. Since *\*ar-* 'plow' did not develop a sixth class preterit, it is probable that *\*an-*, *\*al-*, *\*ak-* joined the sixth class at a recent stage and never served as a model for other verbs. It follows that we may regard the sixth class preterit

as the regular outcome of the root aorist of IE. roots in  $*\bar{a}$ -, which may have served as a model long before the merger of  $*\bar{a}$  and  $*\bar{o}$ .

3. Chr. Stang has proposed for verbs with an *o*-grade present such as Lith. *bárti* 'to scold', *kálti* 'to forge', *málti* 'to grind', *kásti* 'to dig', OCS. *brati* 'to fight', *klati* 'to chop', *bosti* 'to stab', Latin *fodiō* 'I dig', 'dass in diesen und anderen Verben mit den Bedeutungen "stechen, graben, schlagen, mahlen, zermahlen"', wo neben *e*-stufigen auch *o*-stufige Formen vorkommen, die letzteren auf einen alten intensiven Präsensstypus mit *o*-stufiger Wurzelsilbe zurückgehen. Ich verweise auf skt. *jañghanti*, (Präs. Part.) *ghánighnat*, die wegen der Erhaltung von *gh* gegenüber *h* in *hánti* einmal *o*-Stufe gehabt haben dürfen' (1966:333, cf. already 1942:41-2). Here belong Gothic *graban* 'to dig', *slahan* 'to strike', *malan* 'to grind', *ga-draban* 'to hew out', *ga-dragan* 'to heap up', *skaban* 'to shave', *swaran* 'to swear', *þwahan* 'to wash', also *faran* 'to travel', cf. Dutch *doorsteken* 'to pierce, to cross', *oversteken* 'to cross'.<sup>5</sup> It is clear that not all of these verbs are equally ancient. Since they constitute the bulk of the sixth class of strong verbs, we may regard this class as the reflex of the IE. intensives.

This raises the question of why the intensives followed the pattern of the root aorist in  $*\bar{a}$ - rather than the perfect ubiquitous in the formation of new preterits in the other strong verb classes. Since the intensives were a reduplicated *o*-grade formation, the perfect was not suitable as a clear model for an analogical preterit. As the original preterit of the intensives was an athematic imperfect, the root aorist was a much more likely candidate from the outset. Thus, I think that the imperfect took the place of an aorist at an early stage and came under the influence of the pattern which is reflected in OE. *hladan* 'to load', *hlōdon* 'they loaded' after the merger of short  $*a$  and  $*o$ . This model was not available to present stems of the type *CaRC*-, which joined the seventh class of strong verbs, e.g. Go. *stautan* 'to strike', *skaidan* 'to separate', *blandan* 'to mix'.

Apart from the *o*-grade thematic presents and zero grade *je*-presents, there are a few *o*-grade *je*-presents, viz. Go. *frapjan*, *skapjan*, *hlahjan*.<sup>6</sup> These are probably old denominatives, cf. *frapi* 'understanding', *skapis* 'harm', and Russ. *xoxot* 'laughter', *je*-present *xoxóčet* 'laughs'. They adopted the strong preterit as if they were

primary verbs. Besides, there are three *o*-grade *je*-presents of roots in *\*-w-*, viz. ON. *deyja* 'to die', *geyja* 'to bark', *kleyja* 'to scratch', preterit *dó*, *gó*, *kló*. These may represent earlier intensives, cf. Lith. *káuti* 'to strike', where the root-final laryngeal yielded gemination in ON. *hoggva*, OE. *hēawan*, which therefore joined the seventh class of strong verbs.

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### Notes

1. For the root aorist of IE. *\*dhē-* see Kortlandt 1989:102.
2. Elsewhere I suggested that Go. *brahta*, OE. *brōhte* 'brought' represents an original root aorist which adopted the pattern of a perfect formation (1992:106).
3. For *wahsjan* cf. Avestan *uxšyeiti* 'grows'. I think that the full vowel was generalized on the basis of the *o*-grade perfect stem. Though it is conceivable that the long vowel of the preterit *wohs* was taken from the reduplication syllable of *\*wōwahs-*, this is improbable for chronological reasons. The *je*-present was replaced by the regular thematic flexion in North and West Germanic for differentiation from the causative *\*wahseje-*, cf. ON. *vaxa* vs. *vexa*, Avestan *vaxšaiti* 'causes to grow'. It seems to me that *hazjan* must be identified with Indo-Iranian *\*śās-* 'instruct'. On *\*saffjan* see Seebold 1970:383, Schrijver 1991:93.
4. Cf. again *wahsjan*, ON. *vaxa* vs. *vexa*. Differently *swaran* 'to swear', ON. *sverja*, which belongs to the next category, cf. Latin *susurrō* 'I whisper'.
5. Go. *ga-daban* 'to be suitable' (on which see Schrijver 1991:102) may also belong here, cf. German *treffend* 'apt, apposite'.
6. OE. *stæppan* 'to step' is probably an original nasal present, cf. *wæcnan* 'to waken', preterit *wōc*. Similarly Go. *ga-skapjan* 'to create', which can hardly be separated from *skaban* 'to shave'. On *wahsjan* see above.

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