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THE GERMANIC FIFTH CLASS OF STRONG VERBS

1. As a rule, reduplication and qualitative ablaut are in complementary distribution in the Germanic preterit. There are two classes of exceptions to this. On the one hand, both reduplication and qualitative ablaut are found e.g. in Go. *lailot* 'let', *saiso* 'sowed', inf. *letan*, *saian*. This is obviously an archaism. It follows that no conclusions can be based on the absence of reduplication in verbs with qualitative ablaut for the reconstruction of the original state of affairs. On the other hand, neither reduplication nor qualitative ablaut is found e.g. in *for* 'fared', *stop* 'stood', inf. *faran*, *standan*. This is a heterogeneous class.

The qualitative ablaut in the strong preterit is usually accompanied by a quantitative ablaut distinction between sg. and pl. forms. The elimination of the latter alternation in *waiwoun* 'they blew', *lailoun* 'they despised' is evidently recent (cf. Kortlandt 1990:7). The sg. form *fret* 'devoured' will be discussed below. While the use of either reduplication or ablaut as a preterit marker has a clear motivation, the remarkable preservation of a quantitative alternation between sg. and pl. forms in ablauting preterits suggests the existence of a complex productive pattern for an earlier stage of the language. I cannot therefore agree with Bammesberger 'daß der Langvokal *-ē-* in der schwachen Präteritalalternante das Resultat einer analogischen Neuerung ist, wobei die Alternation *-a-*: *-ō-* in der VI. Klasse als Vorbild wirkte' (1986:56). Such a development would undoubtedly have replaced *nam* 'took', *gaf* 'gave' by ***nem*, ***gef*.

The expected direction of analogical change is actually clear from the perfect presents ('Präteriopräsentien'), where ablaut was not used as a preterit marker. Here we find generalization of the full

grade with preservation of the Verner alternation in *aih* 'has', *aigun* 'they have', also full grade in *magum* 'we can'. It follows that the long vowel of *gebum*, *gebun* 'we, they gave' can hardly be of analogical origin.

2. The largely complementary distribution of reduplication and ablaut gives rise to the question of how it originated because both seem to reflect the PIE. perfect. While ablaut is found with present stems of the type *CeRC-*, *CeR-*, *CeC-*, and *CēC-*, reduplication is found with present stems of the type *CaRC-*, *aRC-*, *CēC-*, and *CōC-*. This distribution suggests that the separation between ablauting and reduplicating preterits was triggered by the merger of earlier **a* and **o*, which obliterated the ablaut alternations in verbs with an original **a* in the present stem. As a result, ablaut became redundant in reduplicating preterits and reduplication could be abolished in ablauting preterits.

We may now wonder what happened to verbs with a present stem of the type *eR-*, *eC-*, *aR-*, *aC-*, *CaR-*, *CaC-*. Elsewhere I have argued that **eaj-* 'went' provided the model for restructuring the reduplicating preterits in North and West Germanic (1991). It is probable that this formation itself was fairly recent and replaced an earlier suppletive aorist (perhaps **lud-*, which may have been ousted because of its homonymy with the preterit of **leud-* 'grow'). Anyway, it is clear that reduplication was fairly recent in **eaih-* 'denied', **eauk-* 'added', **eaus-* 'poured', **eaud-* 'granted' because the initial sequence of vowels would hardly survive a longer period of time.

This brings us to the verb 'to eat'. It is highly improbable that Go. *fret*, ON. *át*, OE. *æ̃t*, OHG. *āz* reflect **eet-* (Flasdieck 1936:335), firstly because there was no motivation to create this form rather than **eat-*, and secondly because **eet-* would undoubtedly have yielded the same vowel as we find in ON. *lét* 'let', *hét* 'called', OE. *lēt*, *hēt*, OHG. *liaz*, *hiaz*. It is also highly unlikely that **ēt* replaced a

well-motivated earlier form **eat*, as Cowgill maintained (1960:492f.), especially in view of the MHG substitution of *az* for *āz*. I therefore think that we have to start from a paradigm **ōte*, **ētun* 'he, they ate', with substitution of **ēt-* for **ōt-* on the analogy of **ōk-* 'travelled', **ōl-* 'nourished', **ōn-* 'breathed', ON. *ók*, *ól*, Go. *uzon* 'expired', where the vowel length distinguished the preterit from the present stem **ak-*, **al-*, **an-*.

It follows that the long vowel of **ōk-*, **ōl-*, **ōn-* must be relatively old. The motivation for the replacement of **ōt-* by **ēt-* arose from the merger of earlier **ā* and **ō*, which eliminated the ablaut distinction between sg. and pl. forms in the preterit of verbs with initial *a-* and provoked the merger of this type with the root aorist of the verb 'to stand', Go. *stop*. The ancient character of the initial long vowel in the perfect is supported by the perfect present *og* 'I fear', *unagands* 'fearless', OIr. *-ágathar* 'fears', cf. Vedic *bibhēti* with reduplication from the perfect, OHG. *bibēn* 'tremble'. The separation of *og* from *agis*, OE. *ege* 'fear' (Cowgill 1960:489) is arbitrary.

It follows that **ear-*, OHG. *ier-* 'plowed' is a recent formation. This is indeed what could be expected because the verb has a *je-*present in Celtic, Germanic, Baltic and Slavic, which suggests that the root had aorist meaning in the northern IE. languages. I therefore think that **ear-* replaced an earlier aorist **ar-* by prefixation of **e-*. Since reduplication was more productive in the High German area than elsewhere at an early stage (cf. Kortlandt 1991), there is no evidence for the view that the form **ear* ever existed in the other languages, which may simply have replaced the aorist **ar-* by the weak preterit.

3. Thus, I think that the *ē*-vocalism in the plural forms of the strong preterit reflects the reduplication syllable of *eC*-verbs, as in Go. *etun* 'they ate'. It is clear that the type could never have spread if this were the only verb with initial **e-*, as it is in the oldest Germanic languages. Note that in German 'fast alle starken verba des ger-

manischen, die vocalisch anlauteten, untergegangen sind: *aikan*, *akan*, *alan*, *alþan*, *anan*, *arjan*, *audan*, *aukan*, *ausan*; *agan*, *igan* und *innan* sind nur noch in den präsensisch gewordenen *og*, *aig* und *an* vorhanden. Einzige ausnahme das unentbehrliche *etan'* (Behaghel 1924:129). We must therefore ask ourselves what happened to the original *eC*-verbs in Germanic.

It is important to realize that the elimination of verbs with an initial vowel in Germanic is closely connected with the existence of a productive ablaut pattern in the strong preterit. If the root vowel served to distinguish the preterit from the present stem, the lexical meaning was carried by the root-final consonant, which was itself subject to phonetic variation under the influence of a following consonant or the place of the stress, cf. Go. *þarf*, *þaurbum* 'I, we need', OE. *geneah*, *genugon* 'it, they suffice(s)'. Since the ablaut pattern remained productive in *CeC*-verbs, the annexation of an initial consonant could solve the problem. I think that this is indeed what happened. The process may be compared with the generalization of triconsonantal roots in the Semitic verb, where a similar problem existed.

It has long been recognized that it is difficult to separate **nem-* 'take' from Latin *em-* and its cognates in Celtic, Baltic and Slavic. The root can easily be explained from a reanalysis of the compound **gan-em-* as **ga-nem-*, which is attested all over the Germanic area. The same reanalysis is found in Latvian *nemt* beside *jemt* 'to take' and in Slavic. Note that OE. *nōm*, *nōmon* 'took' beside more recent *nam*, *nāmon* may actually reflect **-ōm*, **ēmūn*.

The usual connection of **geb-* 'give' with Latin *habēō* 'hold' and OIr. *gaibid* 'takes' must be rejected because the vocalism is incompatible. The verb can be derived from the Germanic prefix *ga-* plus the root of Hitt. *epzi* 'seizes', Latin *apīscor* 'reach', *coēpī* 'have begun'. Note that the meaning 'reach' offers a suitable basis for the seman-

tic development. Interestingly, the consistent spelling of Go. *gaf* 'gave', as opposed to *grob* 'dug' and *gadob* 'was fitting' (cf. Roberge 1983:129), supports the derivation proposed here. I therefore reconstruct sg. **ōf*-, pl. **ēb*-.

A third example is the verb 'to eat', where we find OHG. *gezzan* beside *ezzan* in Otfrid and Notker (cf. Seebold 1970:179), also modern German *gegessen*, Dutch *gegeten* 'eaten'. A fourth example is MHG. *gan*, *gunnen* 'grant' and *-bunnen* (with *-b-* from *ab-* instead of *ga-*), also *gunst* 'favor', cf. OHG. *an*, *unnun*, *unst*, *abunst* 'grudge'. These instances exemplify the general tendency to eliminate initial vowels in ablauting paradigms.

A fifth example may be the preterit of the verb 'to be'. It is not immediately clear why the root aorist **bū-* should have been replaced by the preterit of **wes-* 'stay'. Elsewhere I have argued for an original perfect **ōs-*, **ēs-* which is reflected in Indo-Iranian, Greek, Slavic, and Celtic (1986). I therefore wonder if we have to start from a Germanic preterit **ubōs-*, **ubēz-* 'was, were'. For the prefix cf. Gr. *ὑπείμι* 'subsist', Latin *subsum* 'am present', beside OIr. *foid* 'spends the night' from **upo-wes-*. This would explain the alternation in **was-*, **wēz-*. Moreover, it seems possible that Anglian *(e)arð*, *(e)aron* 'art, are' and OSw. *aru* represent a back-formation from **ōs-* on the analogy of **ōk-*, **ōl-*, **ōn-*.¹

The high frequency verbs adduced here provide a suitable basis for the spread of *ē*-vocalism in the plural forms of the strong preterit. The Balto-Slavic evidence suggests that **sat-*, **sēt-* and **lag-*, **lēg-* replaced earlier aorists **set-* 'sat down' and **leg-* 'lay down' belonging to presents with a nasal infix, cf. Go. *standan*, *stop* 'stand, stood', OPr. *sindats* 'sitting'. These aorists were eliminated because they were nearly homonymous with the stative presents **seti-* 'sit', **legi-* 'lie' (cf. Kortlandt 1990:7f.). There is no reason to assume the existence of reduplicating preterits ***sesat-*, ***lelag-* at any stage in

the development of Germanic. The incorporation of original aorists into the system of strong verb classes supported the elimination of reduplication in the ablauting preterits.

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Note

1. A sixth example may be the verbs 'to suffice' and 'to bring'. The ablaut of OE. *geneah*, *genugon* points to an earlier alternation **ga-nah*, **gan-ung-*, which in its turn suggests a paradigm **bra-nah-*, **bra-ng-* from **pro-n(e/o)k-*. The preterit evidently replaces an earlier root aorist, cf. Vedic *ánaṭ* 'attained'. The present stem **brenḡ-* was probably created to replace the earlier suppletive present **ber-*, cf. Go. *atbairan* 'to bring'. Gr. *προφέρω* 'bring forward', Latin (*prō*)*ferō*. Note that the Old Irish cognates *con-ic* 'can' and *r-ic* 'reaches' also suggest secondary ablaut on the basis of a zero grade formation.

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