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THE GERMANIC SEVENTH CLASS OF STRONG VERBS

1. The Proto-Germanic reduplicated preterit has a threefold reflex in the attested languages (cf. Bech 1969:3):

(1) reduplicated preterits, e.g. Gothic *haihait* 'called', *lailaik* 'leaped', OE *heht* 'called', *leolc* 'played', also *reord* 'advised';

(2) *r*-preterits, e.g. ON *sera* 'sowed', *grera* 'grew', *snera* 'turned', OHG *steroz* 'struck', pl. *biruun* 'dwelt', OE *leort* 'let', also *reord* 'advised';

(3) *ē*-preterits, e.g. ON *hét* 'called', *fell* 'fell', *hlióp* 'leaped', OE *hēt, fēoll, hlēop.*

Bech derives the latter two types from *ez*-infixation before the root vowel and syncope. This accounts nicely for such forms as ON *snera,* OHG *steroz,* OE *leort,* but less satisfactorily for the *ē*-preterits. The main drawback of Bech's theory is the narrow basis for the analogical development of the *ez*-infix, which he derives from **sezō* 'sowed' and **sezalt* 'salted' (1969:21). It is hardly possible that these two verbs provided the model for a pervasive restructuring of the reduplicated preterit.

2. R.D. Fulk has now demonstrated in a conclusive way that the *ē*-preterit must be derived from *e*-infixation before the root vowel of the present stem (1987). The apex of his explanation is the disyllabic interpretation of OHG *geang* 'went', *feang* 'seized', *feal* 'fell'. The following remarks are intended to supplement Fulk's theory.

3. As in the case of Bech's proposal, the model for the analogical development of *e*-infixation is not obvious. Fulk adduces ON *auka* 'increase', *ausa* 'pour', OE *eaden* and OS *ōdan* 'granted', OHG *erien* 'plough', and Gothic [*af-aikan* 'deny' and] *us-alþan* 'grow old' (1987: 162), for which we can reconstruct the preterits **eauk, *eaus, *eaud, *ear* (OHG *ier*), **eaik, *ealþ*. It is not evident that these forms sufficed to generate a wholesale restructuring of the reduplicated preterit. We may therefore have to look for a more powerful model, which can only have been supplied by a high frequency verb.

4. In his discussion of OE *ēode* 'went', Cowgill assumes a development of 3rd sg. **eaje* to **eae*, then contracted to **eō*, which yielded West Germanic **eu*, then **euda* (1960:494, 499). This theory meets with a number of difficulties. First of all, the loss of intervocalic **j* can hardly have preceded the loss of final **-e* because the 2nd sg. imperative ending **-eje* yielded Gothic *-ei* /*-ī*/, not ***-ē* (cf. Kortlandt 1986:28 and 1990:6), so that we would expect **eaj* instead of **eae*. Secondly, the alleged contraction of **-ae* to **-ō* is not very probable in view of Gothic *haba* /*-ā*/ 'I have' from **-ējō* (Kortlandt 1990:5). Thirdly, it is not evident that a form **eō* should escape remodeling to **eaj*. These difficulties can be removed if we identify the stem vowel of OE *ēode* with that of *fēoll* and *hlēop*.

5. If **eaje* yielded **eaj* and 3rd pl. **eijun* was remodeled to **eajun*, the loss of intervocalic **j* in the latter form yielded **eaun*, which developed into OE **ēon*, cf. *rēon* 'rowed' from **reōun*. The stem form *ēo-* then served as a basis for the creation of a weak preterit while *rēon* was replaced by *rēowon* on the basis of other forms in the paradigm of *rōwan*. The difference between *ēode* on the one hand and *sēow* 'sowed', *mēow* 'mowed', *blēow* 'blew', *cnēow* 'knew' on the other shows that the 3rd sg. form 'went' cannot have been **eō* at an earlier stage.

6. It follows from Fulk's theory that disyllabic *ee, *ea, *eo yielded OE $\bar{e}$, $\bar{e}o$, $\bar{e}o$ in $l\bar{e}t$ 'let', $h\bar{e}t$ 'called', $f\bar{e}oll$ 'fell', $h\bar{e}old$ 'held', $sp\bar{e}onn$ 'clasped', $g\bar{e}ong$ 'went', $hl\bar{e}op$ 'leaped', $hr\bar{e}op$ 'shouted'. The rounding in the reflex of *ea must evidently be attributed to the influence of the following consonants. The unrounded reflex is found in $f\bar{e}ng$ 'seized', $h\bar{e}ng$ 'hung', which must be derived from disyllabic *feah, *heah. Fulk assumes 'either a chronological or a morphological discrepancy in the formation of the etyma of OE $g\bar{e}ong,$ on the one hand, and $f\bar{e}ng$ and $h\bar{e}ng$ on the other: the latter may have been formed at a later date' (1987:172). This view is unsatisfactory because these verbs would be the only exceptions to the rule of *e*-insertion, and a phonetic explanation is therefore more probable. I think that *eah yielded *eeh instead of *eoh, which implies that the disyllabic pronunciation was preserved at the stage when posttonic long vowels were shortened and that the latter development preceded the retraction of *$\bar{a}$ to $\bar{o}$ in stressed syllables.[1]

7. Fulk's theory does not account for the *r*-preterits in a satisfactory way. As Bech observed, the geographical distribution of the forms suggests that they represent an older process. The original formation is attested in ON *sera* 'I sowed', *rera* 'I rowed', also *snera* 'I turned' if the nasal resonant in *seznōw* was subject to metathesis, and OE *reord* 'advised' < *rerōd-, cf. *beoft* 'beat' < *bebaut-. It appears from ON *grera* 'I grew' that the reduplication $C_1eC_1C_2$- was replaced by $C_1C_2eC_2$-, cf. Gothic *gaigrot* /*gegrōt*/ 'wept'. This substitution, which is reminiscent of Latin *stetī* 'I stood' and *spopondī* 'I vowed', accounts for OE *speoft* 'spat' and OHG *screrot* 'cut'. While ON *gnera* 'I rubbed' was evidently built on the analogy of *snera* and *grera,* dissimilation of *l-l* to *l-r* yielded OE *leort* 'let' and OHG *pleruzzun* 'they sacrificed'. Since the vowel of OE *leolc* 'played' cannot be the result of either breaking or umlaut before *lc*, we have to assume a form *lelōk-* on the analogy of *lelōt-*. The furthest extension of the *r*-preterit is found in Old High German, where it is attested in *biruun*

'they dwelt' (cf. ON *snera* and *gnera*), *steroz* 'struck' (cf. *screrot* and *pleruzzun*), and even *scrirun* 'they cried', which does not belong to the seventh class of strong verbs.

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Note

1. I withdraw the reconstruction *eoe (1990:9), which was based on the idea that the hiatus yielded breaking before a back vowel. This possibility is disproved by *fēng* and *hēng*.

Bibliography

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