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## **Old English *Wendan* in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles***

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## 1. Introduction

As is general knowledge, the paradigm of *go*, one of the typical verbs of motion, represents twofold suppletion. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* [OED], the lost preterite of OE *gan* (> *go*) was replaced by *eode*, which becomes *yode*, *yede*, *yode*, etc. in the Middle English period.<sup>1</sup> Then, in the 15th century, these forms were superseded by *went*, the past tense of *wend* (< OE *wendan* 'to turn'). Lass (1992) explains about the replacement of *yede/yode* by *wente* as follows: "In the north, however, a new suppletive past developed quite early: *wente*, originally the past of *wendan* 'turn'. This spread south in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, gradually replacing *yede/yode*. Chaucer has *wente* as his normal form, though *yede* still occurs occasionally, always in rhyme positions (e.g. *Troilus* 5.843 rhyming with *Diomedes*). But *yede* occurs well into the next century along with *went(e)*."<sup>2</sup>

As for the distribution of *yede* (< *eode*) and *went* in the Late Middle English period, data collected from *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Medieval English* [LALME] show that *yede* spreads more in the south than *went* does (Unebe, 2000).<sup>3</sup> From a dialectal and chronological study of selected Middle English texts, Welna (2001)<sup>4</sup> suggests that the prevalence of *went* over *eode* becomes marked during the 14th century, although "15th century texts, except those from South Lancashire, reveal a relative balance between old and new forms, which seems to indicate a rather conservative character of West Midland morphology."<sup>5</sup>

As stated above, *went* derives from OE *wendan* 'to turn'. On the other hand, the OED defines *go* as "[a]n intransitive verb of motion, serving as the most general expression (I) for a movement viewed without regard to its point of departure or destination; (II) for a movement away from the speaker, or from the point at which he mentally places himself; and (III) for a movement to or towards a place which is neither in fact nor in thought that occupied by the speaker."<sup>6</sup> The OED also states that "it [i.e. *go*] had formerly a special application to walking as distinguished from other modes of progression; possibly this may be the primitive sense, but only faint traces of it remain in current English." Weman (1933) observes that OE *gan* gradually gains the general sense of *going* and finally overwhelms OE *faran*, *feran*, and *gewitan*, the chief meaning of which is, 'to set out, to go.'<sup>7</sup>

The above-mentioned now drives us to the question how the preterite of *wend* was integrated into the paradigm of *go*. For a possible answer to this, we must go to the examination from a semantic point of view. Accordingly the purpose of this paper is to trace the semantic extent of OE *wendan*, and consider the circumstances of the replacement of *eode* by *went*. The texts examined here are from the four manuscripts of the *Anglo-Saxon*

*Chronicles* (MSS. A, C, D, and E), because they can show the transition from Old English to Middle English.<sup>8</sup>

## 2. The manuscripts<sup>9</sup>

- (1) Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 173, ff. 1-56 (MS. A)

This contains the oldest manuscript of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and laws. This was written between the ninth and the second half of the eleventh century at Winchester. Then, by c. 1070, the manuscript was moved to Christ Church, Canterbury and numerous alterations were made there.

- (2) British Museum, Cotton Tiberius B. i (MS. C)

This manuscript holds King Alfred's translation of Orosius, the verse Menologium, gnomic verses, and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. This was written during the eleventh century at Abingdon.

- (3) British Museum, Cotton Tiberius B. iv, ff. 3-86, 88-90 (MS. D)

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* occupies ff. 3-86. This was made between the middle and the latter half of the eleventh century at Worcester. According to Swanton (1996), "[t]he body from a now lost north-country exemplar, perhaps compiled at York or Ripon. These northern scribes, unlike those at Abingdon, had not merely taken up and continued the Alfredian archetype but added material from the body of Bede's Ecclesiastical History and from a set of eighth-century Northumbrian annals."<sup>10</sup> He also observes that "[a]s we would expect, these scribes were well-informed about events in the north of England and on Anglo-Scandinavian relations in particular." It is important to note his remarks as we study the replacement of *eode* by *went*, because the Scandinavian influence seems undeniable for the phenomenon.

- (4) Oxford, Bodleian, Laud Misc. 636 (MS. E)

This chronicle was written at Peterborough between the first half and the middle of the twelfth century. The annals from 1122 to the end were composed at Peterborough, but those up to 1121 were, to quote Clark (1970), "copied from an archetype of unknown origin."<sup>11</sup> She points out that "[t]he language of the copied annals is 'Standard Late West Saxon', demonstrating the persistence of the *Schriftsprache* rather than telling us anything about current speech."<sup>12</sup> The annals from 1122 to 1131 are the First Peterborough Continuation, and the language represents the features of the East Midland dialect, although it was influenced by the *Schriftsprache*.<sup>13</sup> The annals from 1132 to 1154 are the Final Continuation, and the language is no longer regarded as Old English but as a specimen of Early Middle English with some Old English traits.<sup>14</sup>

## 3. Germanic cognates

According to the *OED*, *wend* is common among the Germanic languages.<sup>15</sup> OE *wendan* is cognate with OFris *wenda*, Wfris *weine*, wine, Nfris *wên*, *wân*, MDu and Du *wenden*, 'to turn, to tack', OS *wendian*, MLG and LG *wenden*, LG *wennen*, OHG *wentan*, MHG and G *wenden*, ON and Icel *venda*, 'to wend, turn, change', Norw *venda*, Sw *vända*, Da *venda*, Goth *wandjan*. The preterite and past participle of OE *wendan* are respectively *wende* and *wended*, *wend*, but

the forms *wente*, *went* appear from c 1200 and become the more usual. In the reflexive and intransitive senses, *went* finally replaced the older preterites belonging to *go* [i.e. *eode*, *eodon*], and from c 1500, *went* is regarded as the past tense of *go*, while *wend* was provided with the new form *wended*.

#### 4. Definitions in *BT*<sup>16</sup> and *TOE*<sup>17</sup>

To begin with, let us clarify the meaning of OE *wendan* in order to recognize the verb precisely. *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary [BT]* defines *wendan* as follows:

- I. *trans.* (1) *To cause to move, alter the direction or position* of something (lit. or fig.).
- (2) *to turn round or over.*
- (3) *to turn* from one condition to another, *to change, alter, convert*:
- (3a) *to turn* from one language to another, *to translate, interpret.*
- II. *reflexive*, (1) *to move one's self, take one's way, go, proceed, wend* (lit. or fig.):
- (2) *to turn, direct the attention*:
- III. *intrans.* (1) *To wend, go, proceed* (lit. and fig.):
- (1a) *with reflexive dative*:
- (2) *to turn round*:
- (3) *to turn* from one condition to another, *to change, alter*:
- (4) *to change, shift, vary, be variable*:
- [BTSuppl.] add.
- II. (3) *with the idea of hostility, to turn on or against*:
- III. (5) *with idea of hostility, to turn on or against*:

*A Thesaurus of Old English [TOE]* gives us detailed semantic classification. The definitions of OE (*ge*)*wendan* are categorized as follows:

- 05.03.02.01.01 An event, occurrence: .To come to pass, happen
- 05.12.01 To go, progress, travel (usually on land)
- 05.12.02 To move set in motion: .To cause to move, alter direction/position
- 05.12.02.08 To give a different direction to, turn: .To move (something) in a circle
- 05.12.05 To move and change direction, turn: .To turn one's back on  
[*bæc... (to) wendan*]
- 05.12.05.03 To travel away (from)
- 05.12.05.03.03 To depart leave, set out
- 05.13 Changeableness, change: .To change vary, alter
- 06.01.01.02 Care, attention, observation: .To turn/direct attention [(*ge*)*wendan to*]
- 09.04.03.01 A translation: .To translate

From the above definitions, the core meaning of *wendan* is 'to change (one's) course, to turn in a different direction' ranging literally and figuratively.

Table 1

Main Category	Sub Category	Word	Date
Cause to rise	(.raise)	upawendan	OE
Change direction of movement of	(.cause to deviate from course)	awendan	OE
Change direction of movement of		onwenden	OE
Change direction of movement of	(..cause to deviate from)	onwenden of	OE
Return		agenbewendan	OE
Return		awendan	OE
Return		edwenden	OE
Return		gewendan	OE
Return		onwenden	OE
Revolve/rotate		(ge)wenden	OE
Revolve/rotate		(ge)wenden	OE
Travel/proceed/make one's way		i-wende<gewendan	OE-c1275
Travel/proceed/make one's way		i-wende<gewendan	OE-a1300
Depart/leave/go away		awend<awendan	OE-c1305
Go away		awend<awendan	OE-c1305
Depart/leave/go away		wend<(ge)wenden	OE-1603+1819-
Go away		wend<wenden	OE-1603+1819-
Travel/proceed/make one's way		wend<(ge)wenden	OE-1613/16+1775
Travel/proceed/make one's way		wend<wenden	OE-1635
Go away	(.go away in all directions)	to-wend	c1175-c1205
Rise/go up		upwend	c1200-a1400
Return		wend again	c1205-c1430
Move in a certain direction		wend	c1205-1622+1816-
Direct one's course		wend (one's) way	c1250-a1586+1810-
Move over/across/through/past		overwend	c1250-
Travel/proceed/make one's way		wend one's street	a1300-1481
Travel/proceed/make one's way		ywende	c1300-1393
Writhe/twist		wend	a1310-1561
Move the body/a member	(..in a certain state)	wend	1340/70-a1400
Fall	(..spec. of person/animal)	wend to ground	c1430
Return		rewend	1616

### 5. Semantic shift of *wend*

Next, it is valid to examine the historical semantic shift of *wend*. In order to carry out a historical survey of the word, the *Historical Thesaurus of English* [HTE] are consulted.<sup>18</sup> Table 1 shows a part of data of *wend* inclusive of compound and phrases. From this table we notice that such significance as 'to change direction of movement of,' 'to return,' 'to revolve/rotate' is concentrated during the Old English period. On the other hand, the meanings such as 'to depart/leave/go away,' 'to move in a certain direction,' and 'to direct one's course' obtain long currency. These results suggest that in the Middle English period the old meaning of 'turning' in *wend* is rather weakened and the general sense of 'going' becomes common.

### 6. Reading *wendan* in the chronicles (MSS. A, C, D, E)

The simplex of *wendan* (*wende*, *wænde*, *wendon*, *wendan* (pret.), *wændon* (inf.)) occurs 141 times in total (140 preterite forms and 1 infinitive); 6 times in A, 45 times in C, 52 times in D, and 38 times in E. The oldest example (*wendon*) appears in the year 885 (A and D). The infinitive *wændon* occurs once in the year 1046 (E). On the other hand, the preterite forms of *gan* (*eode*, *eodon*, etc.) occur 90 times in the four manuscripts; 10 times in A, 21 times in C, 24 times in D, and 35 times in E. The oldest examples (*eode*, *eodon*) appear in the year 755 (A, C, D, and E). The occurrence seems scanty, but this does not mean that 'going' is not described. In the chronicles, *faran* and *feran* occur much more frequently than *gan* as verbs denoting 'going.'<sup>19</sup> In MS. A, for example, *faran* occurs 109 times and *feran* 10 times; in MS. E, *faran* 145 times, *feran* 149 times.

In many cases, the meaning of *wendan* can be regarded as 'to make one's way to,' 'to proceed.' When the verb co-occurs with some adverbs like *eft*, *abutan*, *wendan* entails 'to go back, return,' 'to go round, turn.'

- (1) A (894) þa wende he hine west wið Exanceastre mid ealre þære fierde,
- (2) A (895) þa hie ða eft ut of Norð Wealum wendon mid þære here hyðe þe hie ðær genumen hæfdon,
- (3) C (1013) and he ða wende syþþan suðweard mid fulre fyrde
- (4) D (1009) And se here þa sona æfter þam wende abuten oð he com to Wihltlande,
- (5) D (1050) and wendon eft ongean mid [vi] scypum,
- (6) E (1015) & wende sona abutan Centland in to West Seaxen oð he com to Fromuðan.
- (7) E (1046) & hi wendon heom þanon to East Seaxan.

Only one example in which *wendan* denotes 'to change, alter' can be found in MS. E.

- (8) E (1137) 7 he makede manie munekes 7 plantede winiærd. 7 makede mani weorkes. 7 wende þe tun betere þan it ær wæs.

*Middle English Dictionary* gives the following definition, and the example (8) is cited in

(b):<sup>20</sup>

**26.** (a) To change in state or condition change from one state, condition, etc. (into another); also, of a state or condition: change (into another); (b) to effect change [quot. a1325]; change the state or condition of (sth.) change (a certain state, condition, etc. into another); also, alter (a state); (c) ~on fir (a blase) to catch on fire, burn.

The following can be interpreted as 'to leave/go away from *sb.*,' 'to disobey.' These account for figurative development of *wendan*.

(9) E (1046) Ða bæd Swegen hine þet he sceolde faran mid him to his scipon, tealde þ his sciperes woldon wāndon fram him buton he þe raðor come.

(10) E (1123) Ða wæs se kyng eall þes geares in Normandie. 7 weax þa micel un frið betwux him 7 hise þeignas. swa þ se eorl Walaram of Mellant. 7 Hamalri. 7 Hugo of Mundford. 7 Willelm of Romare. and fela oðre wendan fram him 7 helden here castles him to geanes.

(11) E (1140) 7 hi of Normandi wenden alle fra þe king. to þe eorl Angæu. sume here þankes 7 sume here unþankes.

An adverb *hamweard* 'homewards' tends to co-occur with *wendan*, the meaning of which is interpreted as 'to return.' The frequency of verbs co-occurring with *hamweard* in the chronicles is *wendan* 12 times, *wesan/weorðan* 10 times, *faran* 3 times, and *gewendan* 2 times. This is natural because when a person goes to the place where s/he once belonged (i.e. home), the movement should be expressed as 'to return.'

(12) A (885) þa hie þa ham weard wendon mid þære here hyþe, þa metton hie micelne sciphere wicenga,

(13) C (1052) 7 þ lið wende agen to Sandwic. 7 swa hamwerd to Lunden byrig.

(14) D (905) 7 wendon þa east ham weard.

(15) E (1006) þet hi næfre to sæ gan ne sceoldan. wendon þa oðres wāges hamweard.

The following is rendered into 'to cross (the sea).' There are several examples for this expression.

(16) E (1013) 7 seo hlafdige wende þa ofer seo to hire broðor Ricarde.

## 7. Conclusion

From the preceding argument, we may reasonably conclude that by the end of the Old English period, the connotation of 'turning' or 'returning' came to be weakened in *wendan*, which enabled the verb to bear the general sense of 'going.' The meaning of 'returning, turning,' on the other hand, was reinforced by the use of adverbs, which implies that *wendan* itself does not necessarily carry the sense. As *wend* gains the meaning of 'going'

irrespective of mode of progression, we may say that the verb covers a wider range of use as a verb of motion. It seems reasonable to suppose that the evolution of *wend* itself is one of the reasons for the replacement of *eode* by *went*.

<sup>1</sup> *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., on Compact Disc for Apple Macintosh (OUP, 1993), *go*. v.

<sup>2</sup> Roger Lass, "Phonology and Morphology," in Norman Blake ed., *The Cambridge History of the English Language*, vol. II, 1066-1476 (CUP, 1992), 143.

<sup>3</sup> Noriko Unebe, "On the Past Tense Forms of *go* in Late Middle English," *Journal of Tokyo Kasei Gakuin University, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 40 (2000), 91-116.

<sup>4</sup> Jerzy Welna, "Suppletion for Suppletion, or the Replacement of *éode* by *went* in English," *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia*, 36 (2001), 95-110.

<sup>5</sup> Welna (2001), 103.

<sup>6</sup> *OED*, *go*, v, B. Signification, *gen*.

<sup>7</sup> Bertil Weman, *Old English Semantic Analysis and Theory with Special Reference to Verbs Denoting Locomotion* (1933; Kraus, 1967), 12-70, 77-109.

<sup>8</sup> I have used *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, 2 vols., edited by C. Plummer and J. Earle (1899; rpt., OUP, 1972). I have also consulted Antonette diPaolo Healey and Richard L. Venezky eds., *A Microfiche Concordance to Old English* (Toronto, 1980).

<sup>9</sup> As for the description of the manuscripts, I have referred to *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* edited by N. R. Ker (1957; Oxford, 1990) and Michael Swanton, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Dent, 1996).

<sup>10</sup> Swanton (1996), xxv.

<sup>11</sup> Cecily Clark, *The Peterborough Chronicle 1070-1154*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1970), xlii.

<sup>12</sup> Clark (1970), xlv.

<sup>13</sup> Clark (1970), xlv.

<sup>14</sup> Kikuo Miyabe ed., *A Middle English Prose Reader* (Kenkyusha, 1974), 131.

<sup>15</sup> *OED*, *wend*, v<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> Joseph Bosworth and T. N. Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Based on the Manuscript Collections of the Late Joseph Bosworth*, edited and enlarged by T. N. Toller (1898; OUP, 1980). T. N. Toller with Revised and Enlarged Addenda by A. Campbell, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Based on the Manuscript Collections of Joseph Bosworth., Supplement* (1921; OUP, 1980).

<sup>17</sup> Jane Roberts and Christian Kay with Lynne Grundy, *A Thesaurus of Old English in Two Volumes* (King's College London, 1995).

<sup>18</sup> Christian J. Kay, Jane Roberts and Irene Wotherspoon, *The Historical Thesaurus of English* (University of Glasgow, forthcoming). I wish to express my gratitude to the editors for permission to use their database.

<sup>19</sup> Noriko Unebe, "OE *Gan*, *Faran*, *Feran* in the Transition Period" in Koichi Jin et al. eds., *Studies in English Philology in Honour of Shigeru Ono* (Nan'un-Do, 1990), 285-98. Noriko Unebe, "On the Rivalry and Merger of Old English *faran* and *feran*," *Journal of Tokyo Kasei Gakuin University, Humanities and Social Sciences* 38 (1998), 55-62.

<sup>20</sup> H. Kurath and S. M. Kuhn et al. eds., *Middle English Dictionary* (University of Michigan Press, 1954-2001), *wenden* v.