On the Suppletive Preterit of Old English *gan*

Noriko Unebe

In Old English, the preterit of *gan* was lost and supplied with *eode* from a lost form equivalent to Gothic *iddja*, the past tense of *gaggan* 'to go.' After the Old English period, *eode* became *ȝede, yede, yode*, etc., and these forms died out and were superseded by *went*, the past tense of *wend* (< OE *wendan* 'to turn'). This is called suppletion. The purpose of this paper is to show a possibility that the development of suppletive preterit of *gan* from *eode* to *went* is a result of Scandinavian influence.

Key words : Suppletion, *eode*, *went*, Scandinavian Influence

1. Introduction

Old English verbs can be classified into three kinds, namely weak, strong, and other. Strong verbs form their preterits and past participles "by changing the vowel of the root syllable according to fixed series."[1] Weak verbs form their preterits and past participles by adding a suffix containing - *d* or -*t* to the root syllable. It is interesting that some commonly used Old English verbs, such as *bēon* 'to be,' *dōn* 'to do,' *willan* 'to wish,' and *gān* 'to go,' which are also common in Modern English, are divided into the "other" group. Especially, the conjugations of *bēon* and *gān* were formed by an amalgamation of different verbs, which is called suppletion[2].

In this paper, we would like to focus attention on the suppletive preterit of *gān*. According to the *OED*, *go* is "[a] Com. Teut. defective vb., perh. originally existing only in the pres.-stem, though a strong pa. pple. occurs in some of the Teut. langs."[3] The *OED* states that the missing past tense form was supplied in Old English by éode (-dest, -de, -don) from a lost form equivalent to Gothic *iddja*, the past tense of *gaggan* 'to go.'[4] *Éode* became *ȝede, yede, yode*, etc. in Middle English. These Middle English preterits disappeared in the 15th century, and were superseded by the past tense form of *wend* (< OE *wendan* 'to turn'). The *OED* shows that Old English *wendan* is a common Teutonic verb, and the original forms of the past and past participle are respectively *wende* and *wended, wend*. From *c*1200, the forms *wente, went* appeared beside *wende, wended, wend*, and the former became more usual than the latter[5]. Then "in the refl. and intr. senses *went* finally replaced the older preterits belonging to *go*, and from *c*1500 is most naturally regarded as the pa. tense of that verb, while *wend* was provided with the new form *wended*." On the other hand, Lass (1992) explains that *wente* spread from north to south in the 13th and 14th century[6]. Welna (2001) shows

the prevalence of *went* became marked during the 14th century [7]. Such are outlines of the process how the paradigm of Modern English *go* was made, but it remains an unsettled question why such phenomenon happened.

   The purpose here is to explore a little further into the reason why suppletion happened to the verb go from the viewpoint of external influences on the English language.

2. The Foreign Influences on the English language

   English is one of the West Germanic languages, in which English, Frisian, Dutch, Flemish, Afrikaans, Modern Low German, Modern Standard German, Yiddish are included, but English has a unique position among them because of the cosmopolitan nature of its vocabulary [8]. The English language, needless to say, shares the grammatical structure and a lot of words with the West/North Germanic languages, and still its vocabulary consists of worldwide elements. According to Baugh and Cable (1984), not only is more than half of its vocabulary derived from Latin but also English has borrowed from the American Indian, Dutch, Italian, Spanish, Greek, Russian, Persian, Hebrew, Arabic, Hungarian, Hindi-Urdu, Bengali, Malay, Chinese, and so on [9].

   Among these elements, Pons Sanz (2000) points out that the loan words from Old Norse (the North Germanic) are of great significance [10]. Miller (2012) also refers that the Scandinavian influence affected the English lexicon [11].

   According to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, a Viking attack was recorded in the year 793 (MS. E) [12].

   Her wæron reðe forebecna cumene ofer Norðanhymbra land. 7 þ̄ folc earmlice bregdon; þ̄ wæron
   ormete lig ræscas, 7 wæron ge seowene fyrene dracan on þam lyfte fleogende. þam tacnum sona
   fyligde mycel hunger. 7 litel æfter þam þæs ilcan geares on · vi · idus Iañr earmlice heðenra
   manna hergung adiligode Godes cyrican. in Lindisfarena ee. þurh reaflac. 7 man sleht. 7 Sicga
   forðferde on vii 'í' k̄ Mr̄.

   In this year terrible portents appeared over Northumbria, and miserably frightened the
   inhabitants: these were exceptional flashes of lightning, and fiery dragons were seen flying in
   the air. A great famine soon followed these signs; and a little after that in the same year on 8
   January the harrying of the heathen miserably destroyed God's church in Lindisfarne by rapine
   and slaughter. And Sicga passed away on 22 February. (Translated by Garmonsway, 1953 [13])

   However, the mutual relations did not seem to be necessarily so miserable in reality. Frank (1989) states as follows.

   For most of the Anglo-Saxon period, the Danes and the English seem not to have formed
   discrete, mutually hostile communities. When the English-Scandinavians became literate
   it was in English; the coinage, inscriptions, sculpture, even poetry of the first Scandinavian
   settlers show them striving to be more Christian and English than the English [14].

   From this, it seems reasonable to suppose that the Anglo-Saxons and the Norsemen tried to communicate using the words, which were understandable to each other. Old English and Old Norse

(the Norsemen's language) were both Germanic and they had *wendan* and *venda* as cognates, and it is likely that Old English *wendan* was used for both parties as a verb of motion.

3. The Etymology and Definition of *wend*

The *OED* shows the etymological information of *wend* as follows: OE. *wendan*, = OFris. *wenda* (WFris. *weine, wine*, NFris. *wên, wän*), MDu. (and Du.) *wenden*, OS. *wendian* (MLG. and LG. *wenden*, LG. *wennen*), OHG. *wentan* (MHG. and G. *wenden*), ON. and Icel. *venda* (Norw. *venda*; Sw. *vⱥadotabⱦnda*, Da. *vende*), Goth. *wandjan*; f. *wand-, the preterite stem of *windan* WIND V.1, of which *wendan* is the causative." [15]

Weman (1933) defines the meanings of Old English *wendan* as follows [16]:

I. 'to turn round or over', 'to turn in a certain direction', expressing motion on a certain spot or within certain limits ('intra-local' motion).
  1. About actual motion.
    a) In a causative sense.
    b) In a reflexive sense.
  2. Figuratively, 'to bend one's course (to)'; 'to turn, one's mind, etc.'; 'to change'; 'to translate'.
II. 'To turn and go back to or from'; 'to turn and go aside, towards, against'.
  1. About actual motion.
    a) About human beings.
    b) In other contexts.
  2. Figuratively, 'to turn (from …) to'; 'to get back one's (its) original character'; 'to return'; 'to make a bend'; 'to take a new turn'.
III. 'To set out in certain direction', not necessarily with implied change of course.
  1. About actual motion.
    a) About human beings.
    b) About animals.
    c) In other contexts.
  2. Figuratively.
    a) About human beings, euphemistically for *die*, in prepositional expressions.
    b) In other contexts, 'to take a certain course, 'to change'; 'to disappear', 'to spread (somewhere)'; 'to fall to'.

To sum up, *wendan* means 'to set out in certain direction, without implying change of course,' which would be the key to an understanding of the replacement *eode* with *wendan*.

4. *Wendan* as an Equivalent to Latin Originals

There are five examples that *wendan* appears as an equivalent to Latin original in *Anglo-Saxon and Old English Vocabularies* [17].

(1) *Kentish Glosses of the Ninth Century*: Glosses referring to the Proverbs of Solomon, XXXI
86.13 (L) *et mutent*   (OE) *and hio wendan* (=and they would change)

mutent < mutare 3rd. person plural, present active subjunctive

Definitions [18] of *mutare* : 1 to give and receive, to exchange (esp. in trade). 2 to put in place of another, to substitute, replace: **a** (person); **b** (animal); **c** (artefact, esp. clothing); **d** (name, condition, or abstr.). 3 to change (feathers), to moult. **b** (pass.) to experience change of feathers. **c** to mew, to put (bird) into mew (in order to change geathers); **d** (absol.); **e** (intr.) to change feathers. 4 to change: **a** (natural phenomenon or event, also absol.); **b** (from or design of artefact, esp. coinage); **c** (text); **d** (term or condition). 5 to change (abstr.): **a** (orth. & gram.); **b** (log. & phi.). **c** (arith. & geom..); **d** (mus.); **e** (will, intention, or mind); **f** (counsel of behaviour, also absol.); **g** (*vitam ~are*) to change the form of life, to enter a religious order. **h** (*~atis ~andis*) with the necessary changes being made. 6 to change the position of, to transfer: **a** to remove (person from one place to another). **b** to transplant (plant). **c** to change (location). 7 to transform, mutate. 8 to translate. 9 (inf. pass. as sb.) change, act of being changed.

(2) *Anglo-Saxon Glosses of the Tenth Century* (British Museum, Cotton Tiberius A. vii, ff. 165-6 [19])

254.5 (L) *uertebat*   (OE) *wende* (=he turned)

vertebat < vertere 3rd person singular, imperfect active indicative

Definitions of *vertere* : 1 (trans., also refl. or pass. in intr. sense) to turn, revolve, rotate (also fig.). **b** (pr. ppl., intr., of period of time) coming round. **c** (*pons ~ens*) swingbridge. 2 to turn over or the other way up, invert (esp. soil by ploughing, hay or sim. for drying). **b** to overturn. 3 to give a curved or rounded form to, bend. 4 (also dep., or pass. w. acc. of respect) to turn (thing) to face (towards or in spec., esp. new, direction), to present by turning; b (w. *terga, dorsum*, or sim., in flight; *v. et. tergiversari*); **c** (transf., of land). **d** (intr.) to face (*cf. et. vergere* 2). **e** (trans.) to face, have an aspect towards. 5 to turn or move this way and that or in all directions (also transf. or fig.), (pass., or dep. intr.) to be or go about, exist (in spec. esp. adverse or uncertain, conditions or state). **b** (= *~ i in dubitum*) to be in doubt. **c** (pass., or dep. intr.) to revolve (critically around), to hinge or depend (on). **d** to be at issue, to be at stake. 6 to set the (new) course or direction of movement of (esp. w. ref. to diversion or complete reversal of direction), to direct (also absol. or intr.), (also pass., or dep. intr.) to set course, go (also transf. or fig.); **b** (refl.); **c** (into flight). **d** (esp. w. ref. to hostile action or sim.) to set the (new) target of (also transf.). **e** to address (words to audience or sim.) 7 (refl.) to turn for help or protection (to). 8 to turn or apply (to purpose or use); **b** (refl. or intr.). 9 to turn, direct (one's mind or attention). **b** to direct the mind or attention of. 10 to turn over in the mind, ponder, consider. **b** to carry on, conduct (discussion, dispute, debate, lawsuit, or sim.) 11 (of action, event, or sim., pass., or dep. intr.) to turn, lead, or progress (towards or to spec. end or conclusion). 12 to transfer (property or sim.), (also refl., of property) to pass, transfer. 13 to make a change to, alter. **b** (w. *in*, esp. pass., or dep. intr.) to convert, turn, transform (into). **c** to digest, process (food). **d** to translate. 14 (dep., intr., of coinage) to change. 15 (*vice versa* or sim.) conversely.

(3) *Glosses, Latin and Anglo-Saxon, from a Manuscript of the Eleventh Century* (British Museum, Cotton Cleopatra A. iii) = Ker (1990), s. X med.

449.1 (L) *metitur* (Note 14; An error for *mutatur?*)   (OE) *wende* (=he is changed)

mutatur < mutare 3rd person singular present passive indicative

Definitions of *mutare* : See above.

(4) *Miscellaneous Anglo-Saxon Glosses* (British Museum, Cotton Cleopatra A. iii)

489.12 (L) *uertigo*   (OE) *wendend* (=dizzily turning about you)

vertigo (fem.) < *vertere*

Definitions of *vertere* : See above.

(5) *Glosses, Latin and Anglo-Saxon, from a Manuscript of the Eleventh Century* (British Museum, Cotton Cleopatra A. iii) = Ker (1990), s. X med.

377.18 (L) *conuoluens*   (OE) *wendende* (=rolling together)

convolvens (present participle) < *convolvere*

Definitions of *convolvere*: to roll : **a** (refl.); **b** (fig.). **c** to revolve mentally. **d** to bring round, cause to recur. 2 to enfold, entwine, plait; **b** (fig.).

　　From the above list, *wendan* occurs as an equivalent to Latin originals, which imply turning or changing.

5. Semantic development of *wendan > wend*

　　We can comprehend the semantic development of *wendan > wend* by the *Historical Thesaurus of English* [*HTE*] [20]. Table 1 shows a part of the data of *wend* inclusive of compounds and phrases. From this table we can see that Old English *wendan* and its compounds mostly means 'to change direction, return, revolve.' After the Old English period, *wend* and its compounds come to mean 'to proceed, depart, go away.' The results in Table 1 suggest that the meaning of 'turning' in Old English *wendan* gradually weakens, and the general sense of 'going' like Modern English *go* is gaining power.

Table 1 Semantic Development of wendan in the *HTE*

Main Category	Word	Date
Cause to rise	upawendan	OE
Change direction of movement of	awendan, onwendan, onwendan of	OE
Return	agenbewendan, awendan, edwendan, gewendan, onwendan	OE
Revolve/rotate	(ge)wendan	OE
Travel/proceed/make one's way	i-wende<gewendan	OE-*c*1275
Travel/proceed/make one's way	i-wende<gewendan	OE-*a*1300
Depart/leave/go away	awend<awendan	OE-*c*1305
Depart/leave/go away	wend<(ge)wendan	OE-1603+1819-
Travel/proceed/make one's way	wend<(ge)wendan	OE-1613/16+1775
Travel/proceed/make one's way	wend<wendan	OE-1635
Go away	to-wend	*c*1175-*c*1205
Rise/go up	upwend	*c*1200-*a*1400
Return	wend again	*c*1205-*c*1430
Move in a certain direction	wend	*c*1205-1622+1816-
Direct one's course	wend (one's) way	*c*1250-*a*15861810-
Move over/across/through/past	overwend	*c*1250-
Travel/proceed/make one's way	wend one's street	*a*1300-1481
Travel/proceed/make one's way	ywende	*c*1300-1393
Writhe/twist	wend	*a*1310-1561
Move the body/a member	wend	1340/70-*a*1400
Fall	wend to ground	*c*1430
Return	rewend	1616

6. The Frequency of *Wendan* in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, MSS. A, C, D, E

In the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* (MSS. A, C, D, E), *wendan* occurs 141 times in total. Among them, the past tense forms (*wende, wænde, wendon, wendan*) occur 140 times and the infinitive (*wændon*) occurs once in the year 1046 (E). The occurrence of *wendan* in each manuscript is as follows: 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). In many cases, the meaning of *wendan* can be regarded as either 'to make one's way to,' or 'to proceed.' When *wendan* co-occurs with some adverbs like *eft, abutan*, the verb entails the meaning 'to go back, return, go round, turn.'

The descriptions of MSS are as follows [21]:

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

This contains the oldest manuscript of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and laws. This was written between the 9th and the second half of the 11th century at Winchester. Then, by *c*1070, the manuscripts was moved to Christ Church, Canterbury and numerous alterations were made there.

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

This manuscript holds King Alfred's translation of Orosius, the verse Menologium, gnomic verses, and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. This was written during the 11th century at Abingdon.

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

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* occupies ff. 3-86. This was made between the middle and the latter half of the 11th century at Worcester.

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

This chronicle was written at Peterborough between the first half and the middle of the 12th century. The annals from 1122 to the end were composed at Peterborough, but those up to 1121 were, to quote Clarke (1970), "copied from an archetype of unknown origin." [22] 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." [23] 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* [24]. 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 [25].

Swanton (1996) mentions as for MS. D that "[t]he body from a now lost north-country exemplar, perhaps compiles 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." [26] 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." [27] 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.

7 Conclusion

The English language has developed under various external influences, in which Scandinavian impacts are of great importance. We have a lot of traces of Scandinavian influences in the vocabulary of English, such as the use of pronouns of the third person plural, the verbs derived from Old Norse, and so on. From what we have seen above, we can draw the tentative conclusion that it would not unreasonable to suppose that the Scandinavian influence affected the paradigm of *go – went*. As direct evidence is exiguous so far, the further investigation should be necessary to understand the reason why *eode* was replaced by *went*.

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[20] Christian Kay, Jane Roberts and Irene Wotherspoon (2009) *The Historical Thesaurus of English, 2 vols*. University of Glasgow.

[21] The descriptions of MSS. are taken from Ker (1957; Oxford. 1990).

[22] Cecily Clark (1970) *The Peterborough Chronicle 1070-1154, 2nd ed*. Oxford. p. xlii.

[23] Clark (1970). p. xliv.

[24] Clark (1970). p. xlv.

[25] Kikuo Miyabe ed. (1974) *A Middle English Prose Reader* . Kenkyusha. p. 131.

[26] Michael Swanton (1996) *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. J. M. Dent. p. xxv.

[27] Swanton (1996). *ibid*.