Wend in Early Middle English

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　　The Modern English word *go* undergoes twofold suppletion in its history.　In Old English, the preterite 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*eode* became *ʒede, yede, yode,* etc., and the *OED* states that these forms died out in the 15th century and were superseded by *went*, the past tense of *wend* (< OE *wendan* '*to* turn').　The purpose of this paper is to focus on the verbs of motion which mean 'to *go*' in the transition from Old English to Middle English, and to locate their distribution.　As a result, we may conclude that *wend* began to lose the connotation of 'turning' by the end of the Old English period.

　　Key words：Early ME *wend* semantic change

1．Introduction

　Among Modern English verbs of motion, go is quite remarkable when we trace its history.　It is clear that Modern English *go* was established after a series of changes.　In the first place, we should notice its semantic change.　As the *Oxford English Dictionary* [*OED*] states, *go* "had formerly a special application to *walking* as distinguished from other modes of progression; possibly this may be the primitive sense."[1]　In the course of time, however, Old English *gan* gains the general sense of *going*, and it wins a notable victory over *faran*, *feran* and *gewitan*, the primary sense of which is 'to set out, to go.'[2]　As for *feran* and *gewitan*, they ultimately disappeared from English vocabulary.　In the second place, we should not overlook the suppletive past tense form of the word go.[3]　That is, Modern English go undergoes twofold suppletion in its history.　In Old English, the preterite of *gan* was lost and supplied with eode from a lost form equivalent to Gothic *iddja*, the past tense of gaggan 'to go.'[4]　After the Old English period, eode became *ʒede, yede, yode,* etc., and according to the *OED*, these forms died out in the 15th century and were superseded by *went,* the past tense of *wend* (< OE *wendan* 'to turn').[5]　As for the replacement of *eode* by *went* and its development, Lass (1992) says that *wente* spread from north to south in the 13th and 14th centuries, and gradually superseded *yede/yode*.[6]　Wełna (2001) also argues that the prevalence of *went* over *eode* becomes marked during the 14th century.[7]　We can see from these arguments that *went* was regarded as the past tense form of *go* by the end of the 14th century.　In other words, *went* came to be included in the paradigm of *go* during the Middle English period.　However, the question of why *went* came to be adopted is still open.

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   The purpose of this paper is to focus on the verbs of motion which mean 'to go' in the transition from Old English to Middle English, and to locate their distribution. The primary texts examined here are the *History of the Holy Rood-tree* (c1175) by Napier[8] and the *Twelfth-Century Homilies* (c1175) by Belfour[9], both in MS. Bodley 343, and the *Vices and Virtues* in MS. Stow 34 (*olm* 240) (*a*1225) by Holthausen.[10] The results in MS. Bodley 343 are compared with those in MS. Stow 34.

   Ker describes that MS. Bodley 343 is a large collection of homilies, forty-eight of which are taken from Ælfric's two series of Sermones catholici.[11] The *History of Holy Rood-tree* is in art. 12 (ff. 14^v-20^v), and the *Twelfth-Century Homilies* in arts. 7-10 (ff. 4^v-11^v), 28-29 (ff. 56^v-60), 54 (ff. 107^v-110), 61 (ff. 121^v-122), 77-80 (ff. 155-164^v), 82-83 (ff. 166^v-167^v). Ker observes that all the homilies published by Belfour in 1909 probably date back to Anglo-Saxon times. Napier says that MS. Bodley 343 is a folio MS. containing 205 leaves, and it seems to have been written about the third quarter of the 12th century.[12] As mentioned above, this MS. is a collection of homilies, and nearly all of which are copies of preconquest originals. According to *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English*, the *Vices and Virtues* may have been composed 1175-1225.[13] Although in early studies some called the dialect Kentish and others Southwestern, the *Middle English Dictionary* [*MED*] places it in the East Midlands.[14]

   Miyabe (1980) states that the *Vices and Virtues* is a treatise on various subjects in a framework of dialogue. [15]

2. Historical Development of *wend*

   Before taking up the main subject, we have to inquire into *wend* from several points of view. *Wend* is not a word peculiar to English but is common among the Germanic languages. OE *wendan* corresponds to OFris *wenda*, WFris *weine*, *wine*, NFris *wên, wän*, MDu and Du *wenden* 'to turn, to tack,' causal of *winden*, OS *wendian*, MLG and LG *wenden*, LG *wendian*, OHG *wentan*, MHG and G *wenden*, causal of *winden*, ON and Icel *venda* 'to wend, turn, change,' causal of *vinda*, Norw *venda*, Sw *vända*, causal of *vinda*, Da *vende*, causal of *vinde*, Goth *wandjan*, causal of *windan*.[16]

   Skeat explains that Modern English *wend* means 'to go, take one's way,' and the literal sense was originally 'to make to wind,' and it is the causal of *wind*.[17] He also says that it is "now little used except in the pt. t. *went*, which is used in place of the pt. t. of *go*. When used, it is gen. in the phr. 'to wend one's way[.]'" However, the British National Corpus [BNC] presents usage besides 'to wend one's way.'[18] Sixteen out of eighteen examples under *wend,* and thirteen out of sixteen examples under *wended* show the phrase 'to wend(ed) one's way,' but other examples are as follows:

wend
(1) They <u>wend off across</u> the dully shining floor of the ballroom, heading approximately for the stairs. (*Complicity*. Banks, Iain. 1993)
(2) Lady Usk watched him <u>wend a hasty path towards</u> his wife and turned back to the window to find that Miss Kyte was standing stock-still on the terrace, staring in at her. (*Hidden Flame*. Bailey, Elizabeth. 1993)
wended
(1) Indeed, only Occulobe-enhanced eyesight could perceive such traces of the medical sculpting which had once made them Marines, as if the thinnest of pink veins <u>wended across</u> their bulging

rock-hard melanchromic flesh, like a tracery in some golden marble which could become ochre-brown, which could become jet-black. (*Warhammer 40,000*: *Space Marine*. Watson, Ian. 1993)

(2) If news <u>wended to</u> Spittals that she had any more interest in the Mills murder she would be suspended immediately. (*A Midsummer Killing*. Barnes, Trevor. 1991)

(3) He <u>wended out</u> to gather flowers. (*Letters in the Dark*. Lomas, Herbert. 1986)

From the semantic classification of OE *wendan in A Thesaurus of Old English* [*TOE*][19], it is obvious that the core meaning of wendan pertains to 'change of things/situations,' in which 'turning' is included. Furthermore, *TOE* classification shows us that both (*ge*)*gan* and (*ge*)*wendan* are synonymous when they mean 'to go, progress, travel (usually on land)' [05.12.01] and 'to depart, leave, set out' [05.12.03.03]. In other words, *gan* and *wendan* semantically overlap each other to some extent during the Old English period, the fact of which may offer a key to the merger of *gan* and *wendan*.

In order to trace the historical semantic change of *wend*, *the Historical Thesaurus of English* [*HTE*] [20] data, especially the verbs of motion in the categories of Motion and Travel, are examined here. Table 1 shows the rearranged data of *wend* inclusive of compounds and phrases. 'Date' includes the first and the last date of use as recorded in the *OED*. A dash indicates continuous use and a plus mark is for dates separated by approximately 150 years. The words and meanings are arranged in chronological order based on the first date of use. From this table, we can find that *wend* 'to go away,' 'to depart/leave/go away,' 'to move in a certain direction' and *wend* (*one's*) *way* 'to direct one's course' have been used constantly for a long time. The meanings such as 'to change direction of movement (of)' and 'to revolve/rotate' in OE *on-, a-, agenbe-, ed-, ge-wendan* disappear after the Old English period. *Wend again and rewend* retain the old meaning 'to return' after the 12th century, but both of them are also transient; the last date of the former is c1430 and the latter occurs once in 1616. Instead, the senses for 'going away/departing/leaving,' 'travelling/proceeding,' 'moving in a certain direction,' 'directing one's course,' which we may regard as a part of Modern English *go*, survive much longer. To sum up, it seems reasonable to suppose that the core meaning of *wend* begins to deviate from the original one during the early transition period.

3. Verbs Denoting 'going' and 'turning (changing direction)' in Each Text
Here are listed the verbs denoting 'going' and 'turning' in each text. Numbers in parentheses show page and line.

(1) *The History of Holy Rood-tree*
awiten (pret) (16.1): aweiȝ awat 'went away'
faren (inf) (4.22, 6.29, 12.12, 20.6, 20.21, 24.2, 30.29, 30.32): faren 'to go, pass, move, travel'
faren (ger) (34.24): farende 'travelling'

Table 1 *Wendan in the HTE*

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		onwendan	OE
Change direction of movement of	(..cause to deviate from)	onwendan of	OE
Return		agenbewendan	OE
Return		awendan	OE
Return		edwendan	OE
Return		gewendan	OE
Return		onwendan	OE
Revolve/rotate		(ge)wendan	OE
Revolve/rotate		(ge)wendan	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)wendan	OE-1603+1819-
Go away		wend<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	(.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		wend	1340/70-a1400
Fall	(..in a certain state)	wend to ground	c1430
Return	(..spec. of person/animal)	rewend	1616

faren (pret) (2.4, 2,13, 2.20, 4.31, 4.32, 14.9, 22.21, 28.29): ferde, ferden 'went, proceeded'

faren (pret) (18.34): ofer for 'crossed over'

gon (pret) (4.22, 6.30, 8.27, 10.19, 10.27, 18.4, 18.5, 18.17, 22.26, 24.9, 24.27, 26.8, 28.8, 30.4, 30.16, 32.31): eode, eoden 'went'

gon (imp) (6.11, 10.18, 14.5): ga 'go'

gon (inf) (24.36): gan 'to go'

iwiten (pret) (12.23, 22.1): ʒewat, ʒewitan 'departed, went'

wenden (pret) (18.4, 18.26, 20.8, 20.16, 20.21, 24.12, 24.32, 28.20, 30.15, 30.31, 34.2): wænde, wændon, wende, wenden 'went'

wenden (inf) (16.33, 24.21): wendan, wendon 'to go'

wenden (pret) (16.15): ham wende 'went homewards'

wharven (pret) (18.22): þonon hwurfon 'turned away'

witen (pret) (26.23): witan 'departed'

(2) The *Twelfth-Century Homilies*

awenden (pret) (104.20): awæʒ awat 'went away'

awiten (pret) (128.19): aweʒ awit 'went away (figurative) = perish'

bicomen (subj) (110.32): bicumen 'go'

charen (pres) (132.17): cerræð 'turn (to sth/sb)'

charen (inf) (44.1, 48.22, 24.30): cerræn, cyrræn, cyrren 'to turn'

comen (pret) (132.4, 132.4 (2), 132.5): com, comen 'went'

faren (pres) (6.12, 10.16, 14.1, 20.5, 20.15, 26.17, 102.12, 126. 27): fareð, færð, faræð, faræþ, fare 'goes'

faren (pret) (58.20): ʒeond land færde 'went through the land'

faren (pret) (2.8, 12.31, 16.33 (2), 22.13, 28.3): ferde 'went'

faren (imp) (16.1, 22.17, 22.18, 22.26, 26.9, 26.17, 26.19, 28.12): fare, far 'go'

faren (inf) (18.1, 26.22, 76.20): faren, faran 'to go'

faren (subj) (2.19, 8.4, 16.4, 38.16): fare 'go'

faren (ger) (54.24): farende 'going'

faren (to inf) (26.29): to farenne 'to go'

forthgon (inf) (26.6): forðgan 'to go forth'

forthsteppen (pres) (100.16): forþstepð 'proceedeth'

forthwiten (pret) (116.32): forðiwitene 'have gone away'

gon (pret) (60.1, 60.9, 66.31): eode 'went'

gon (pres) (84.2, 84.8, 84.15): gæð 'walk, go'

gon (inf) (58.32, 60.8, 84.15, 84.30, 140.4): gan 'to go'

iwenden (subj) (86.19): gewende 'return'

iwiten (imp) (68.20, 126.13): gewitæð 'depart'

iwiten (pret) (120.31): iwiten 'went'

overglidan (pret) (66.32): oferglad 'went over'

sithen (inf) (6.28): siðian 'to go'

sithen (pret) (24.19): siðode 'went'

sithen (pres) (126.28): siþiæð 'go'

steppen (pret) (82.1): stop 'went'

thrughfaren (pres) (46.28): þurhfærð 'pass through'

thrughfaren (inf) (46.12): þurhfaran 'to pass through'

tofaren (pres) (124.4): tofaræð 'goes'

wenden (pp) (86.1): iwende '(be) changed'

wenden (pres) (124.19): wendæþ 'return'

wenden (pret) (16.24, 18.5, 22.20, 72.13): wende 'turned away, went, turned, returned'

wenden (subj) (132.29): wende 'turn'

wenden (inf) (132.29): wenden 'to turn'

wharven (pp) (112.10): ihwærfod 'be changed'

yondfaren (pres) (48.12, 88.24): ʒeondfærð, ʒeondfaræð 'traverses, goes through'

(3) The *Vices and Virtues*

biwenden (imp) (101.21): bewænt 'turn'

bouen (pres) (19.18): buʒeð 'turn'

bouen (inf) (65.13): buʒen 'to turn'

comen (imp) (113.27): cume 'go'

comen (pres) (9.3): cumeð, cumen 'go'

faren (pres) (5.27, 15.2, 17.29, 27.10, 35.5, 45.7 (2), 55.31, 57.11, 61.22, 73.20, 79.13, 89.23, 103.21, 127.5): farð, fare, fareð, faren, farð 'go'

faren (subj) (23.22, 137.40): fare 'go'

forleten (inf) (23.23): forlaten 'let go'

gon (pret) (69.3, 83.11, 85.16, 121.5): ʒiede 'went'

gon (imp) (3.2, 11.17, 17.9, 19.30, 53.34, 69.2, 91.14, 105.13, 109.27, 109.31, 109.32, 127.32, 139.4, 143.2, 143.5): ga, gað, go 'go'

gon (pres) (89.3, 85.3, 89.18, 127.4, 139.17, 139.19): gað, go, goest 'go, goes'

gon (inf) (143.23): go, to gonne 'to go'

igon (pp) (121.25): ʒegan 'gone'

skillen (pres) (57.10): scelie 'departest'

skillen (inf) (17.25): skelien 'to go away'

stein (pret) (143.11): steih 'went up'

utfaren (subj) (73.24): ut-faren 'go out'

utgon (pret) (119.22): utʒiede 'went out'

wenden (pret) (19.14, 23.12, 23.16, 27.20145.1): iwant, wænte, wante, wanten, 'went, turned'

wenden (imp) (13.18, 19.14, 59.30, 81.5, 89.22 (2), 147.25): wænd, wændeð, wand, want, wandeð 'go, turn'

wenden (inf) (29.14, 31.12, 47.2, 83.29, 99.20, 145.5): wænden, wanden 'to turn, to go'

wenden (pres.part) (71.23): wædinde 'turning (to the world)'

wenden (pres) (33.17, 53.7, 65.15, 145.5, 127.30): wand, want 'turn, turneth, turns'

witen (imp) (19.32): witeð 'go'

From the list above, we can observe the following:

(1) In the *History of Holy Rood-tree,* there are no significant differences between the occurrences of the preterite of *gon* (i.e. *eode, eoden*) and that of *wenden.*

(2) Faren appears as frequent as *gon* and *wenden* in *Holy Rood-tree*.

(3) In the *Twelfth-Century Homilies*, varieties of verbs of motion denoting 'to go' increase, but the frequency of wenden is still high.

(4) In the *Vices* and *Virtues*, ȝiede occurs four times.

(5) In the *Vices* and *Virtues*, *faren* is not used in the past tense.

(6) In the *Vices* and *Virtues*, *wenden* occurs more frequently than gon.

(7) *Wenden* as '*going*, moving' seems to be established in three texts.

4. Conclusion

In the preceding argument, we have traced the semantic shift of wend, and explore its distribution in the text during the transition period. We may conclude as follows: 1) Wend began to lose the connotation of 'turning' or 'returning' by the end of the Old English period. 2) Wend came to mean 'to go' irrespective of mode of progression, and at the same time, its frequency increased.

Needless to say, there remains much vestige of Old English in the transition period, and we should not conclude in haste. However, it is likely that Modern English went comes to the fore in the very early stage of Middle English.

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[4] *OED, go*, v. For further details about *iddja* and *eode, see Warren Cowgill* (1960) "Gothic *iddja* and Old English *eode," Language* 36, 483-51.

[5] *OED*, go, v. It also describes in the entry of wend as follows: "The original forms of the pa. tense and pple. [of *wendan*] are respectively *wende* and *wended*, *wend*, but the forms *wente*, *went* appear beside these from c1200, and latterly become the more usual; 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 the new form *wended*."

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