

Inflectional allomorphy and syllable-weight opacity in Old English

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1. *The role of syllable weight in OE: received wisdom*

(1) Definitions of High Vowel Deletion (HVD):

(a) *i* and *u*...were lost in Prim. OE in final unaccented syllables after a long accented syllable, or a short accented syllable and another syllable.

(Campbell 1959: § 345); *i* and *u* are also lost in open medial syllables after a long stressed syllable. (Campbell 1959: §351)

(b) A high vowel deletes following a foot, provided the vowel is in an open syllable. (Keyser and O’Neil 1985: 10)

(c) Short high vowels undergo deletion in unstressed open syllables immediately preceded by a bimoraic foot. (Bermúdez-Otero in prep: 3)

(2) Weight-sensitive allomorphy in OE:

(a) Nouns, adjectives

	Neuter <i>a</i> -stem nouns		Neuter adjectives	
Nom. Sg.	wīf	hof	wīs	trum
Nom. Pl. (< -ō/-u)	wīf-∅	hof-u	wīs-∅	trum-u
Gloss	‘woman’	‘dwelling’	‘wise’	‘firm’

(b) Weak verbs Class 1

Infinitive	dēman ‘deem’	fremman ‘do’	erian ‘plough’
2 nd Pers. Sg. (< -i-st)	dēm-∅-st	frem-e-st	er-e-st
Imperative Sg. (< -i)	dēm-∅	frem-e	er-e
1 st Pers. Sg. Pret. (< -i-d-e)	dēm-∅-de	frem-e-de	er-e-de

2. *The problematic nature of HVD*

(3) Some inconvenient facts (from Hogg 2000: 355-6):

- Opacity (underapplication) of HVD (WS *hēafdu* ‘heads’)
- Systematic morphologization (nom/acc.pl.masc. *hālige*)
- Dialectal variation (WS *brȳcð*, *fylst*, Angl *brūceð*, *fyllest*)
- Apparent deletion of non-high vowels (nom. acc. pl. *scipa*, *hēafda*)
- Incompatible derivations (1st pe.sg. pres. Angl. *fearu*, *bīdu*)

3. Classifying the OE weak verbs

(4) Class 2 weak verbs: *-ian /-ode*

ārian, -ode ‘honor’

blētsian, -ode ‘bless’

lōcian, -ode ‘look’

rīxian, -ode ‘rule’

bodian, -ode ‘announce’

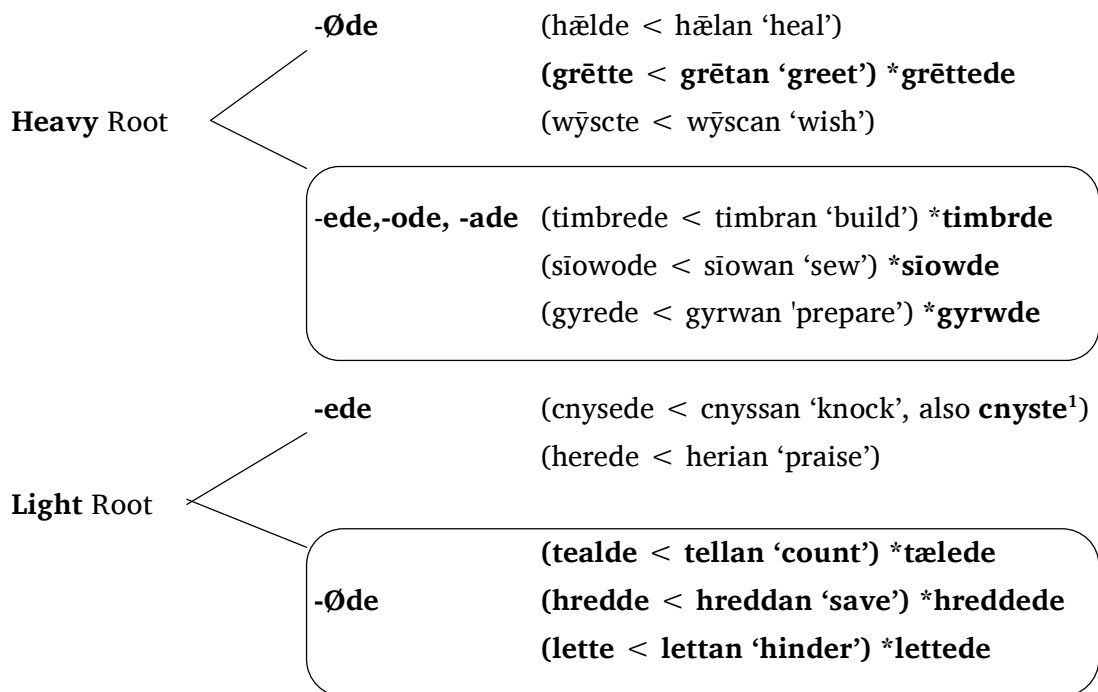
hatian, -ode ‘hate’

lofian, -ode ‘praise’

polian, -ode ‘suffer’

(5) Class 1 weak verbs and HVD:

Class 1 (<1 & 3 pers. sing. < *-i-da)



(6) A new taxonomy of the Old English weak verbs: preterite formation *stem + d-*:

Type -C (Consonantal):		Type -V (Vocalic):	
<i>Infinitive</i>	<i>1 & 3 pers. sg.</i>	<i>Infinitive</i>	<i>1 & 3 pers. sg.</i>
hǣl-an ‘heal’	hǣl-d-e	heri-an ‘praise’	here-d-e
grēt-an ‘greet’	grēt-d-e	lōci-an ‘look’	lōco-d-e
hredd-an ‘save’	hred-d-e	losi-an ‘lose’	loso-d-e
lett-an ‘hinder’	let-d-e	endi-an ‘end’	endo-d-e
cenn-an ‘give birth’	cen-d-e	leorni-an ‘learn’	leorno-d-e

¹ A count in the *Old English Word Wheel* shows past tense *cnysde/cnyste* (x3), *cnysd-an/-on* (x3); also *cnysede* (x2), *cnys(s)ed-an/-on* (x7); the ratio of attested syncopated to unsyncopated forms is 6:9.

4. Transitions: Class 1 and Class 2 mergers in OE

(7) Class 1 weak verbs in *-rian*:

<i>amerian</i> 'purify'	<i>ferian</i> 'carry'	<i>spyrian</i> 'pursue'
<i>berian</i> 'bare'	<i>herian</i> 'praise'	<i>styrian</i> 'stir'
<i>bescierian</i> 'deprive'	<i>nerian</i> 'save'	<i>werian</i> 'defend'
<i>byrian</i> 'pertain to'	<i>onhyrian</i> 'emulate'	<i>werian</i> 'clothe'
<i>derian</i> 'injure'	<i>scierian</i> 'allot'	
<i>erian</i> 'plough'	<i>snyrian</i> 'hasten'	

(8) Class 2 weak verbs in *-rian*²

<i>ārian</i> 'honor'	<i>gaderian</i> 'gather'	<i>sparian</i> 'spare'
<i>ceorian</i> 'grumble'	<i>sārian</i> 'grieve'	<i>warian</i> 'beware'

(9) Expectations for *-rian* infinitives

		Present			
		Class 1	Class 2	Subjunctive	Imperative
Infinitive:		-rian			
Indicative					
Sg.	1.	-rie			
	2.	-res(t)	-ras(t)	-rie	-re -ra
	3.	-reþ	-raþ		
Pl.		-riap		-rien	-riap
Participle:		-iende			
				Preterite	
Sg.	1.	-rede	-rode	-rede	-rode
	2.	-redes(t)	-rodes(t)		
	3.	-rede	-rode		
Pl.		-redon	-rodon	-reden	-rodon
Part.		(ge) -red	-rod		

² In addition, there are *-Crian* Class 2 verbs: *earnian* 'earn', *geomrian* 'lament', *hwearfian* 'wander', *offrian*, *sorgian* 'sorrow', *wandrian*, *wundrian*.

5. Scribal attestations of *-rian* verbs in OE³

(10) Non-identical scribal forms of *-rian* verbs:

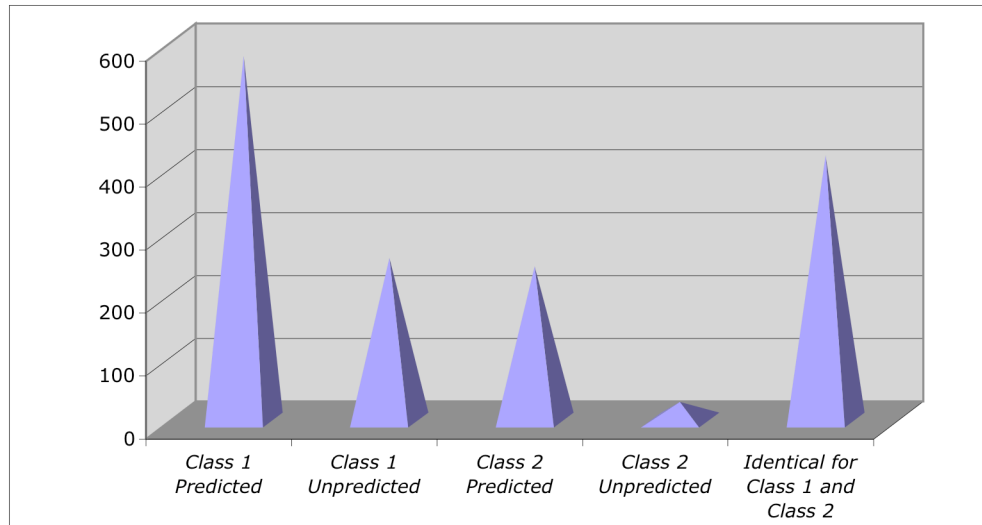
	-rV- + infl.	Class 1		Class 2	
		predicted	unpredicted	predicted	unpredicted
2sg	-rest/-rast	8	10	6	0
3sg	-reth/-rath	155	75	28	2
Imp.	-re/-ra	19	5	18	2
1,3sg	-rede/-rode + -rade	141	88	118	15
2sg.	-redest/-rodest + -radest	6	2	2	0
Ind.	-redon/-roden + -raden	72	21	22	2
Subj.	-redon/-rodon + -raden	4	1	1	0
Part.	(ge)-red/(ge)-rod + -rad	173	56	63	8
	Totals	578	258	258	29

(11) Identical paradigmatic forms of *-rian* verbs

	Class 1	Class 2	Total
-rian	213	62	275
-rie	6	6	12
-riath	80	27	107
-rieth (-rien?)	10	3	13
-riende	11	2	13
Total	320	100	420

(12) An overview of *-rian* attestations

³ Data from the *York-Toronto-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Prose*. I am grateful to Sherrylyn Branchaw for assistance with the data-collection and to UCLA's Council for Research for making her work possible.



6. The spread of syllable weight opacity in OE

(13) Weight-sensitivity in Old English:

		Yes	No	Comments
<i>Allomorphy</i>	Weak verbs		√	
	Adjectives	?	√	Thompson (2009)
	Neut./Fem. nouns	√	?	Bermúdez-Otero & Hogg (2003)
<i>Stress</i>	Primary		√	
	Non-primary	√		
<i>Minimal word</i>		√		Excludes function words
<i>Meter</i>		√		Fulk (1992, 2002)
<i>Compensatory lengthening</i>		√		<i>ferh-fēres</i> ‘piglet’, <i>ēorod</i> ‘cavalry’
<i>Syllable template</i> ⁴			√	CVVR(O) (<i>hūnd</i> , <i>wīld</i> , <i>cōmb</i>)

6.1. Factors contributing to prosodic opacity in the weak verb system

(14) Weak verbs and transitivity:

PDE (based on Dixon 2008): nouns > verbs (*bully*, *butcher*, *tailor*, *doctor*, *boss*, *host*, *pilot*, *referee*, *shepherd*, *parrot*, *dog*, *mother*, *baby*, *fool*, *price*, *name*; see also *-(i)fy*, *-ize*, and *-en*).

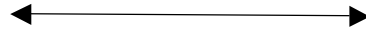
⁴ No lengthening in closed syllables; CVC indicates the reality of CVC as heavy, but note lengthening in CVRO (*hūnd*, *wīld*, *cōmb*); also CVVC(C) syllables are OK: *wýscan* ‘wish’, *ȳþ* ‘wave’, *lēoht* ‘light’, *Crist* ‘Christ’, *frēond* ‘friend’.

OE (see Kemenade and Los 2003): *ge-*, *be-gesittan* ‘inhabit’, *bewepan* ‘bewail’ etc.

7. *Process-specific weight and the weight of CVC in OE*

(15) Hierarchy of weight

...(C)VV > (C)VC > (C)V...



Heavy

Light

(16) The status of CVC syllables:

- *Light*: Campbell 1959, Lass (1994: 36), Lahiri (2000: 100)...
- *Heavy*: Bliss 1962: 9, Russom (1987: 154), Fulk 1992...
- *Light or heavy* depending on function: Minkova & Stockwell (1994:41)

(17) Phonological simplicity:

“Languages treat natural and symmetrical classes of sounds uniformly with respect to weight” (Gordon 2006:128)

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