

GOTHIC GEN.PL. -e

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Don Ringe has recently published an article on the Gothic gen.pl. ending *-e* (2006) which is as peculiar for the author's self-confidence as it is illustrative of the lack of knowledge in some quarters of the Indo-Europeanist scholarly community. He postulates a sound change turning $*-\bar{e}N$ into $*-\bar{o}N$ (p. 193) in order to derive the 1st sg. weak preterit ending, e.g. Runic *-do*, from $*-d\bar{e}N < *-\bar{d}h\bar{e}m$. He then assumes that the alleged gen.pl. ending $*-\bar{a}N < *-\bar{o}m$ was reanalyzed as $*-\bar{e}N$ on the analogy of the 1st sg. weak preterit ending at a stage when $*-d\bar{e}N$ had a variant $*-d\bar{a}N$ on its way to $*-d\bar{o}N$ except in \bar{a} -stem nouns (p. 197) and that the front vowel was generalized in the Gothic gen.pl. ending *-e*. This is presented as “a sociolinguistically informed solution to an old historical problem”.

The Indo-European gen.pl. ending was $*-om$ (cf. Kortlandt 1978, with references). Like the Italo-Celtic gen.sg. form in $*-iH$, the form in $*-om$ became part of the inflexional system at a comparatively recent stage. It is formally identical with the neuter form of the possessive adjective, e.g. Vedic 1st pl. *asmākam*, 2nd pl. *yuṣmākam*, Latin *nostrum*, *vestrum*, Old Norse *vár* (without *u*-umlaut), *yþvar*, also Armenian *-c'* < $*-skom$ (cf. Meillet 1936: 72), cf. Old Persian *hyā amāxam taumā* ‘the family which is ours’ for the original syntax. The Hittite genitive in *-an* is a collective or non-referential rather than plural form (cf. Laroche 1965: 40, Pedersen 1938: 32). The ending $*-om$ is unequivocally preserved as a nominal gen.pl. ending in Umbrian (cf. Meillet 1922), Old Irish, Lithuanian and Slavic, and its reconstruction is fully compatible with the other evidence from Italic, Celtic, Germanic, Baltic, Greek and Indo-Iranian.

Following Jasanoff (1983), Ringe reconstructs $*-o(H)om$ for Hittite *-an*, Vedic *-ām*, Lithuanian *-ū* and Greek *-ōn* and claims that the reflexes in the other languages are compatible with this reconstruction (p. 169). This is unfortunate because the Hittite ending does not show length and has no plural meaning (see above) and because Jasanoff has a poor command of the Baltic and Slavic data and is not familiar with the pertinent scholarly literature (cf. Kortlandt 1983, 2004, 2005). The Lithuanian circumflex does not reflect contraction but the absence of a laryngeal in the Balto-Slavic ending $*-un < PIE *-\bar{o}m$ (cf. Kortlandt 1978: 286-290 and 1983: 173-183). The reconstruction $*-o(H)om$ is correct for the Greek and Indo-Iranian *o*-stems because these languages, unlike Italic, Celtic, Germanic, Baltic and Slavic, introduced the thematic vowel $*-o-$ before the ending $*-om$ in the gen.pl.

form of the thematic flexion. This innovation was more recent than the creation of dat.sg. **-oei*, abl.sg. **-oed*, loc.sg. **-oi*, nom.pl. **-oes*, inst.pl. **-oois*, which were contracted in Indo-Iranian (but not in Greek) at an early stage. In a similar way we may reconstruct **-aHom* for the Greek and Indo-Iranian *ā*-stems, with an analogical full grade before the PIE ending **-om*. Here again, the introduction of the full grade suffix in the gen.pl. form was more recent than in dat.sg. **-aHei*, gen.abl.sg. **-aHos*, nom.pl. **-aHes*, which show early contraction in Indo-Iranian. Since the intervocalic laryngeals were only preserved at morpheme boundaries in Indo-Iranian, we must conclude that the gen.pl. endings **-oom*, **-aHom* for earlier **-om*, **-Hom* were created at a stage when contraction had already taken place in dat.sg. **-ōi*, **-āi*, abl.sg. **-ōd*, **-ās*, loc.sg. **-oi*, gen.sg. **-ās*, nom.pl. **-ōs*, **-ās*, inst.pl. **-ōis*. At a later stage, new intervocalic laryngeals arose from the vocalization of the syllabic nasals, e.g. in **ma'as* 'moon', **va'atas* 'wind'. The highly distinctive gen.pl. ending *-a'am* then spread to the other flexion classes. The ending was eventually replaced by *-(ā)nām* on the analogy of the *n*-stems. It follows that the endings **-oom*, **-aHom* cannot be reconstructed for the Indo-European proto-language.

Thus, it appears that Jasanoff misled Ringe in his reconstruction of the Indo-European gen.pl. ending and saddled him with a problem which was solved a long time ago. One gets the impression that American students do not read French any more because Ringe ignores the most important articles on the subject (Meillet 1922, Vaillant 1935, Laroche 1965) and misrepresents the position taken in the only French publication he mentions (Vendryes 1927), claiming that its author does not make clear what the source of the Gothic ending *-e* could have been (p. 172) while Vendryes makes it perfectly clear that the origin of the ending must be sought in the *i*-stems (1927: 368). It seems to me that Indo-European studies require a wider background and knowledge of the relevant languages.

The Gothic gen.pl. endings *-e* and *-o* represent the full grade suffixes **-ei-* and **-ā-* of the *i*- and *ā*-stems before the lost ending **-om*. The main piece of evidence is the absence of a formative suffix before the ending *-e* in the *i*-stems, e.g. *gaste* 'guest', *mahte* 'might', cf. *suniwe* 'son', *auhsne* 'ox', *broþre* 'brother', which implies that *-e* is the phonetic reflex of the formative suffix in the *i*-stems (see further Kortlandt 1983: 171). The spread of *-e* from the *i*-stems to other flexion classes so as to replace the zero ending which developed from PIE **-om* has a clear parallel in modern Russian, where *-ej* was generalized after soft stems at a recent stage. The introduction or restoration of the formative suffix before the PIE ending **-om* is found not only in Sanskrit *-ānām*, *-īnām*, *-ūnām*, but also in Greek *-āōn* < **-āsōm*, Latin *-ārum*, *-ōrum*, Old High German *-ōno*, etc. Ringe objects to my reconstruction **-eiom* for Gothic *-e* that "all the other evidence suggests that the regular outcome of such a sequence was PGmc. **-iją* > Gothic *-ei* (= /i/), which might even have been shortened to *-i*" (p. 173). In fact, there is no such evidence and there is no reason to suppose that **-eiom* ever merged with **-i(j)om*, as Ringe imagines. The lowered reflex of **ē* in *saian* 'sow' and *waiian* 'blow' as opposed to **ī* in *fijan* 'hate'

and *frijon* ‘love’ rather suggests that we may expect *-e* in **-eiom* versus *-i* in **-i(j)om*, as in acc.sg. *hairdi* ‘shepherd’, and I maintain that this is exactly what we find. Thus, I think that the phonetically regular development is attested in *kuni* ‘race’ < **-iom*, *hairdi* < **-iom*, nom. *hairdeis* < **-ios*, *bandi* ‘band’ < **-ī*, acc. *bandja* < **-iām* (cf. Beekes 1990), nom.pl. *gasteis* < **-eies*, *gaste* < **-eiom*, ipv. *nasei* ‘save’ < **-eie*, 3rd sg. *waurkeiþ* ‘work’ < **-ietī*, 3rd pl. *waurkjand* < **-ionti*, *nasjand* < **-eionti* (cf. Kortlandt 1986), ipv. *habai* ‘have’ < **-ēie*, 3rd sg. *habaiþ* < **-ēieti*, 3rd pl. *haband* < **-ēionti* (cf. Kortlandt 1990). The desyllabification before *-a-* in *nasjand* and *waurkjand* was more recent than the loss of intervocalic **-i-*, which was more recent than the loss of the final vowel in *nasei*, *gaste*, *habai*, cf. dat.sg. *þamma* ‘this’ < **-ē*.

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