

[0656] A VEXED QUESTION IN OLD EAST FRISIAN RELATIVE CLAUSES

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I. A relative clause in Old Frisian can be introduced by a particle (*the*, *ther*), an originally demonstrative pronoun (particularly *thi* and *thet*), or an adverbial word (either adverb *ther*, very rarely another adverb, or a pronominal adverb). A difficulty may arise when *ther* and *thi* or *thet* are used in the same context so that it becomes problematic to decide what their grammatical function is. Take for example

H₂ X. 4-5: *Althet ther* hi thenne fuchten heth an dolge...

Is *al* the antecedent, *thet* the relative pronoun, and *ther* a local adverb; or is *althet* the antecedent, to which the relative particle *ther* refers? What about

E₁ III. 126-7: thenna ielde *hi* alle liudem to thonke. *thi ther* hongat?

Is *hi* a determinative pronoun serving as the antecedent to the relative pronoun *thi*, which makes *ther* a local adverb, or is *hi* repeated in *thi*, which is referred to by the relative particle *ther*? Or is there even a third possibility, for example that *thi ther* is a relative combination, either referring to the antecedent *hi*, or serving as an independent relative? In order to find out about this it seems advisable to draw up a list of relevant passages in a number of Old Frisian texts and subject them to a careful scrutiny.

Rephrasing what has been said so far we might say that it is not easy sometimes to determine where a relative clause begins. This is, for example, the case when the boundary between (part of) the main clause and its relative clause is contained within the group of contiguous, independent words *al(le) thet(h) ther*. The following section consists of passages in Old Frisian texts that are relevant in this context.

2.

R₁

XV. 42-4: ... Theti prestere hach to wetande ur sthereka and ur stherek hof. and *alle thetter* binna there withuma sketh.

XV. 55-6: ... Thet thi aldirmon ak hach to wetande. *alle theter* sketh anna ena wrpena warue...

B₂

p. 24. 5-6: *Althet ter* tha redieua thes erra ieris duath. thet skel stonda.

p. 46. 8-10: *Althetter* sken is erma tha kera bi kas..... thet skel lidsza.

- p. 46. 10-1: *althetter* efter sketh thet skelma riuchte bi tha brewe.
 p. 76. 3-5: *alle thet ther* tha fiuwer nawet ne endegie. thet endegie thi u mene
 acht...
 p. 78. 14-7: Vverther en mon slain ieftha vndad..... thrimne further. *althetter* sketh
 iefthi redieua thet on let.
 p. 16. 6-7: *althetter* breszen. ioftha berned. ioftha rawad werth. thet skel thi
 redieua bi swera...

E₁

- VII. 246-7: Sit hi thenna firra bistridech sa scel hi fella and betha bi eider sida and
alle theth ther him thi frana keth.
 VII. 248-9: *Alle theth therma* frouuen deth and ma mith saxe deth. al is hit
 thrimene furthera. A botem and a riuchte.
 VII. 283-4: Sit hi thenna firra bistridech sa scel hi fella and beta alle thethma
 urfiucht bi eider sida. and *alle thet ther* him thi frana keth.
 VIII. 22-4: ... *al thetther ther* gheden is mith bruddene suerde..... sa isteth alsa
 iechtha.

E₂

- III. 337-8: Sit hi ac ferra bi stridich sa brecht hi ac *alle thet ther* vr fuchten werth
 bi aijder sida And *alle thet ther* him thi frana keth
 IX. 33: ... sa nime ma *alle thet ther* ma driwa and dregtha mughe...

H₂

- VII. 216-7: *Althet ther* tha prestere den is buta tha engleska wede and buta houe.
 al en bete ti betane achta sethen
 X. 4-6: *Althet ther* hi thenne fuchten heth an dolge. enda dadele sa scel hit na
 scriueres worde aiechta alle beta...

F

- XI. 417: Sa achma tha walwaxa to scriwane. and *alle thet ther* hire folgat.
 XI. 627-8 : Istet fort ekemen thruch thene wach. in thet lif. sa scelma ther on
 scriwa *alle thet ther* riucht is.
 IV. 108-9: And *alle thet therma* vt fiucht. of ther ned were. thet scol alle e fretha
 wesa...
 XII. 126-7: Sa bete hi *alle thet. ther* hi to schatha den heth binna huse.
 III. 156-7: *alle thet therma ther* fiucht. in dolghum. Jef in daddelum. thet scol alle
 iechta wesa.

3. Theoretically the group *al(le) thet(h) ther* can be analysed in four different ways:

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|-----------------------|---|------------------------------|---|-------------------|
| 1. indefinite pronoun | + | relative pronoun | + | adverb |
| 2. indefinite pronoun | + | combination relative pronoun | + | particle |
| 3. indefinite pronoun | + | determinative pronoun | + | relative particle |
| 4. adverb | + | determinative pronoun | + | relative particle |

So it appears that the essential question to be answered is: what is the function of *thet(h)*? In other words *thet(h)* is either a relative pronoun referring to the indefinite pronoun *al(le)* for its antecedent; or it is a determinative pronoun serving as the antecedent to a following relative clause opening with the particle *ther*; if the latter possibility is correct, it is of minor importance whether *al(le) thet(h)* is seen as a collocation, or as an adverb followed by a pronoun.

Let us first have a look at the two R1 passages (XV. 42-4, 55-6). If *thet* is a relative pronoun, *alle* must be its antecedent, and enclitic *ther* probably has a vaguely adverbial meaning, although there is a theoretical possibility that it is the second element in the combination pronoun + particle, which serves as the relative marker. For reasons that I have given elsewhere (*Us Wurk* 35, 1986, pp. 70-1) I consider it practically certain that this is the correct analysis of the function each of the three words under discussion has in these two contexts. The fact that the finite verb in these two relative clauses is *sketh* (present of *skia*) makes the possibility that *ther* is anything but an adverb remote. Buma, the editor of the first *Riustringer Codex*, also went on the assumption that analysis number 1 mentioned at the beginning of this section is the correct one, as appears from his vocabulary to R₁, and from the punctuation and translation of these passages in Buma-Ebel, *Das Rüstringer Recht* (Altfriesische Rechtsquellen, vol. 1).

The six B₂ passages show considerable likeness to the R1 passages just mentioned. In all but two *ther* is added enclitically to the preceding *thet*; in p. 24. 5 *ter* is only graphically apart from *thet*, as appears from its spelling; it is only in p. 76. 3-5 that the three words are used separately and with their full form. In the six corresponding passages in B₁ the form invariably used is *althetter*, also for p. 75. 3-4 (the parallel passage is p. 76. 3-5). This makes it very likely that in B₁ and B₂ *al* is intended to be the antecedent, *thet* the relative pronoun, and *t(h)er* a local adverb (with little meaning of its own). Again, this is the way Buma sees it: see his

vocabulary on pp. 154, 276 and 273 of B₁ and B₂. See also Van Helten (*Altostfriesische Grammatik*, section 262ß). This view is corroborated by punctuation and translation in Buma-Ebel, *Das Brokmer Recht* (Altfr. Rq., vol. II).

- Note 1: In three of the passages the relative clause contains a form of the verb *skia*. In the other three clauses we find *duâ*, *endigia*, *breka*, *berna* and *ravia*, in their contexts all verbs of action, like *skia*.
- 2; Buma, in his translation in B₁ and B₂, consistently separates *alles*, *was* (= *althe*) by a comma, which - in English at any rate - is wrong. BuEb are not even consistent: in their translation they have a comma five times, but they leave it out in section 16c.
- 3: Buma (B₁ and B₂, p. 273) gives as translation for the combination *thetter* = *thet ther*, *das da*. However, this *da* appears in only two of the six translations. Each of the six is entered on p. 273 under *ther* as the adverb *da*, *dort* (46,8 is in the wrong place, though).

4. The editors of all the other passages that have been collected: Sipma (E₁), Fokkema (E₂), Hoekstra (H) and Sjölin (F) consider *thet(h)* in these passages a demonstrative (determinative) pronoun, and *ther* a relative particle, although Sipma calls it a relative adverb, which must have meant for him: *ther*, originally an adverb and often used as such in Old Frisian, can also be used as a relative marker with a complete loss of its adverbial connotation. Buma-Ebel confirm this opinion, as appears from their punctuation and translation in their series *Altstfriesische Rechtsquellen* (volumes 3, 4 and 5).

What strikes one when comparing the passages from R₁ and B mentioned in the preceding section with the relevant passages in E₁, E₂, H and F, is that in the latter the enclitic combination *thetter* does not occur. In E₁ VIII.22 *thet* and *ther* form a graphic unity, but *ther* has kept its full form, and consequently *thetther* is not to be considered an enclitic combination. In passing one notices that the verb *skia* does not occur in these clauses.

A crucial passage in this context might be E₁ VIII. 22-4 (... *al thetther ther gheden is* ...). This occurs in *thi forma wend* (= the first exception to the seventeenth Privilege), which refers to a misdemeanour or crime for which a man is not allowed to profess his innocence of what he is charged with by swearing an oath. Sipma (E₁ p. 89 note 22) suggests that the second *ther* should be left out. In Borchling (*Die niederdeutschen Rechtsquellen Ostfrieslands*, vol. I, Aurich, 1908), p. 36. 12-3, the corresponding passage, reads: ...*al dat daer ghedaen is of wert ghedaen myt blodighen sweerden....* This is not the view held by BuEb, which sees this *ther* as an adverb (denoting location or time). Comparison with the

equivalent passages in F (III. 156-7) and H₂ (X. 4-6) gives a strong indication that this is the correct reading. In both *alle thet*, *althet* is the antecedent, *ther* the relative particle, which is separated from the adverb (*ther* and *thenne* respectively) by the subject of the relative clause. In principle the E₁ text is the same, but with this difference that relative *ther* is the subject of its clause, which makes relative *ther* and adverbial *ther* contiguous. From these F and H₂ passages in particular, and by analogy from the E₁ passage it is irrefutably clear that *al thet* as a collocation occurs as the antecedent to the relative marker *ther*.

Although as far as I know little or no research has been done in Old Frisian word order, it seems to me that considering *thet(h)* a relative pronoun and *ther* an adverb would lead to un-Frisian word sequences, e.g. in E₁ VII. 248-9, E₂ IX. 33, F IV. 108-9, F XII. 126-7.

It is on the analogy of the passages that have been discussed so far in this section that we can safely assume that the rest of the passages with similar combinations in E₁, E₂, H and F should be analysed correspondingly.

Corroboration of this opinion can be obtained by approaching this problem from another angle. *Thet(h)*, as a determinative and as a relative pronoun, has a neuter singular referent, either in a nominative or an accusative function. If the word were used in another case and/or number, the form of the pronoun would point to its function, which might make it clear to which clause (main clause or relative one) the word belongs and consequently where the relative clause begins. Take for example F IV. 108-9 (see above). If *thet* is a determinative pronoun it is part of the main clause, in which it functions as its subject, but if it is a relative pronoun it serves as the direct object in the relative clause. In either case the word is *thet*. Compare now for example

R₁ III. 32-3: hia skilun helpa *alla tham ther* hiam seluon nauwet helpa ne mugu.
Tham can only be part of the main clause, for in the relative clause it would serve as its subject, which is incompatible with the dative form *tham*. In other words: *tham* is a determinative pronoun and serves as the antecedent to the relative clause, whose opening-word is the relative particle *ther*. (see also *Us Wurk* 35, 1986, p. 70). The same is true for *tham* in

R₂ VIII.41-3: Ac skillath *ther alle pretera ther* send binna tha londe. bi hiara lenon
 and bi *alle tham ther* hia hebbath opa tha weruon alle sunnandega
 bidda fori alle riuchtera.

In this passage *tham* has a dative singular neuter referent, which makes it unambiguously clear that it cannot be part of the relative clause. It is on the analogy of examples like these that we conclude that the boundary between main clause and relative clause lies between *tha* and *ther* in e.g.

R₂ VII. 39-40:... and *alle tha ther* mithi to hilperon emacad wer that tha skilun thrithich merka sella. Also in E₂ VIII.51-2, 52, 92-3; A II. 51-2, 52-3, 87-9; H₂ XXIII. 71-3; F XXII. 64-5.

Note: A difficult passage is F II. 8-9: And alsa god sine liude latte fon egyptra londe. alsa lat hi *alle thone* to tha himele *ther* tha riuchte fulgiat. There are three corresponding passages in other texts:

R₁ I. 45-6 : Alsa lat vse hera god *alle tha* to tha himulrike *ther* tha rivchte folgiath.

E₁ II. 18-9 : Alsa lette vse hera thi elmechtiga god *alle tha* to himelrike. *ther* tha riuchte folgiat.

H₁ IX. 12-3 : alsa let use drochten *alle tha* to himelrike *ther* tha riuchte folgiat.

Sjölin, according to his vocabulary (p. 88, see under *thenna*) considers *thone* (= *thene*, *thenne*) an adverb, meaning *then*, *at that time*, *after that*, *thereafter* (*dann*, *danach*). As appears from the quotations above F is the only text to differ from the 'regular' pattern found in the other texts. Borchling in his Low German version of this passage has

(p. 149. 12-4): Alsz so leyde ock vnse leue here goth to dem hymmelrike *alle de ghenne de* dem rechte volgen;

I have no solution to offer for this F passage. It would be an easy way out to resort to a scribal error or a contaminated text, but the solution chosen by Sjölin has the definite disadvantage that it really makes no sense ("So führt er hinfort alle in den Himmel, die das Recht befolgen"). Holthausen-Hofmann's dictionary gives for *thinne* only *dann* as translation.

BuEb (p. II. 3) reads: And alsa God sine liude latte fon Eyptra londe, alsa lat hi *alle thene* to tha himele, *ther* tha riuchte fulgiat. (Und ebenso wie Gott sein Volk aus Ägypten hinausführte, so führt Er einen jeden zum Himmel, der das Recht befolgt).

This interpretation is in accordance with what the other texts except F) have, but the combination *alle thene* (and this in itself is the result of a changed text) is a hapax legomenon in Old Frisian, as far as I know.

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