

[0532]

A Distinction for Schiermonnikoog

(-rt > -ts, -rd > -s)

Though never privileged to have known Arne Spenter personally, I was fortunate enough to have followed in his steps, however briefly, during my stay on Schiermonnikoog the summer of 1970. In the frequent affectionate reports of our mutual informants his personal esteem loomed on a linguistic horizon that seemed ever unattainable as I wrestled that summer with the idiosyncracies of that threatened dialect. My informants were eager to point out that even a foreigner from so distant a place as Copenhagen had wanted to master their dialect and done so, and thus was I immediately confronted with the fervent language loyalty of the islanders. Many were eager to demonstrate features that distinguished their dialect from that of the neighboring mainland: their *de kooi fan de daar* (Fokkema orthography throughout, except when otherwise noted) vs. the mainlander's *de kaei fan de doar*. However, one feature struck me as particularly noteworthy - a Schiermonnikoog distinction which is not, as far as I am able to tell in the rather limited sources available to me, specifically described in the literature. In final position etymological -rt is realized as -ts on Schiermonnikoog and nowhere else in West Frisian or any other dialects of Frisian for that matter. The following tabular selection of examples with equivalents from Old and Modern West Frisian is provided for comparison:

Old West Frisian (OWF)	Modern West Frisian (MWF)	Schiermonnikoog (Sch.)
<i>swart, swert</i> 'black'	<i>swart</i> [swat]	<i>swets</i> [swɛts]
<i>herte</i> 'heart'	<i>hert</i> [hɛt]	<i>hets</i> [hɛts]
<i>*smerte</i> 'sorrow'	<i>smert</i> [smɛt]	<i>smets</i> [smɛts]
<i>stert, stirt</i> 'tail'	<i>sturt</i> [stɛt]	<i>stets</i> [stɛts]
<i>sterta, storta</i> 'fling'	<i>stoarte</i> [stɔatə]	<i>stetse</i> [stɛtsə]

If -rt > -ts, then we would anticipate -rd > -dz, but such is apparently not the case; e.g. MWF *boerd* [bu.ət] with vocalization of the resonant = Sch. *búes* [by.əs], cf. Sch. *hes* 'hard', *bes* 'beard' and MWF *hurd*, *burd* resp. and note Sch. *bêzen* 'beards'.

-rt > -ts, while -rd > -s, realized as z before desinential schwa, in Schiermonnikoog. This development must be archaic and subsequently have ceased to have been productive, for we find adverbial Sch. *der't* [dɛt] = MWF *dêr't* [dɛt] and not **dets*: the -rt > -ts rule did not apply in later contractions, nor was the rule applied in loans, *maart* [ma:t] 'March'.

On the surface, the shift -rt > -ts is a quantum leap, and it remains for us to explain this innovation. Particularly noteworthy here are derivations of 'four': *fjitsien* [fjɪtsjən] '14', *fjitsich* [fjɪtsəx] '40', *fjisde* [fjɪzde]

~ fjizze [fjɪzə] '4th'. Cf. Sch. *ffitsien* and MWF *ffirtjin* [fjɪtjən] '14', which seem to retain intermediary stages in the transition, and the frequency and systemic pressures on the numerals as a 'closed' system make them a natural class for the preservation of older phases in graduated change. With reference to *-rd*, we infer that the initial phase in the transition consisted in vocalization of the resonant in intervocalic clusters and concomitant palatalization of the dental, particularly before yod as shown by MWF '14' with *-ty-* (*-tj̥*). Thereupon assibilation proper took place, yielding *-tsy-* as in Sch. '14'. Finally, yod-syneresis yielded *-ts-*, as in Sch. '40'. Thus, before yod or front vowels, Sch. *-rt-* > *-Vty-* underwent the same assibilation process as did *k* in these environments in mainland West Frisian, cf. OF *tsīse*, MWF *tsiis*, and Sch. *tjiis*.¹ That the change was environmentally restricted and displayed morphophonemic alternation is demonstrated by persistence of *der't*, not in a position to have such alternation. The citation form was presumably the last to change and then not by regular phonological process, but by interparadigmatic levelling. Finally, *-s/-z- < rd* is the result of lenition of *dz* and subsequent devoicing in weakly stressed final position.

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Note:

1. On assibilation as a composite process comprised of stages, see my "Societal, Phonotactic, and Paradigmatic Factors in Isoglossic Relations. Nordic Medial Affrication", *Dialectology and Sociolinguistics*, pp. 92-112, ed. by Elert, Eliasson, Fries, and Ureland. Acta Universitatis Umensis, 12. Umeå: Centraltryckeriet, 1977.