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0. The etymology of Old Frisian hir [hīr] ‘here’ offers a problem because the form appears to be at variance with the expected reflex attested in Gothic her [hēr], Old Norse hér, Old English hēr, Old High German hiar (Boutkan & Siebinga 2005: 174). Moreover, the front vowel in Old Frisian ther [thēr] ‘there’ and hwer [hwēr] ‘where’ is at variance with the back vowel in Gothic þar, þar, Old Norse þar, hvar, Old Saxon and Old High German thār, hwār. The apparent raising and fronting in Old Frisian call for an explanation.

1. Elsewhere I have proposed the following relative chronology (2008: 270f. = 2010: 279f.):¹

WG 0. Centralization of unaccented vowels before nasals in final syllables and subsequent loss of the nasalization in these endings.

AF 1. Centralization of stressed vowels before nasals.
AF 2. Loss of nasalization before f, ð, s, h.
AF 3. Retraction of *ō to ō.
AF 4. Monophthongization of *au to ā.
AF 5. Retraction of *ē to ā before w and before g plus back vowel.
AF 6. Fronting of *a to æ, which was blocked by a following l, r, h plus consonant and in open syllables by a back vowel in the following syllable.
AF 7. Palatalization of *k and *g before front vowels, also *g after front vowels.

WS 9. Breaking of *ǣ to *ǣa and of *ī to *īa before *h and raising of *ea to *ēa, which was simplified to *ē in *hēit, *lēæt, *fēah, *hlēup, *hrēop, *sēau, later hēt, lēt, fēng, hlēop, hrēop, sēow, but not in

¹. WG = West Germanic, AF = Anglo-Frisian, WS = West Saxon, A = Anglian, K = Kentish, E = English, F = Frisian.

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*fēll, *hēld, *spēonn, *gēong, where *ēo later (at stage E 13) developed into -ēo-.


WS 11. Fronting and breaking of *a to short *ea before anteconsonantal l, r, h, u and simplification of *eau to *ēu.

WS 12. Breaking of *e to *ēo and of *i to *īo before anteconsonantal l, r, h.

AF 9. Monophthongization of *ea to ē, e.g. North. fēll, fēng, also *eā to ēa in cnēaw, sēaw.


A 11. Fronting of *a to ē before anteconsonantal r, h, u with breaking to *e in eau, *eau to *ēi, *īi and monophthongization to ē, ī before velar consonants.


K 11. Raising of *ēo to e and of *ēu to ēu and breaking of *ē and *ī to ē, ī before r plus consonant.


E 14. Palatalization of *k and *g before front vowels.

E 15. Palatal diphthongization.


F 11. Fronting of *ā to ā, which was blocked by a back vowel in the following syllable.

F 12. Monophthongization of *au to ā.

F 13. Umlaut (i-mutation).


In this chronology, West Saxon separated from Anglo-Frisian as a result of the “Saxon” migration to Britain in the 5th century and the break-up of Anglo-Frisian resulted from the “Anglian” migration in the 6th century. The stages AF 1-10 can appropriately be called Anglo-Frisian. Kentish sides with Anglian in this chronology.
2. I have argued that Proto-Germanic *ē₂ was actually a diphthong *ea (e.g. 1991, 1994, 2006, 2010: 190, 209f., 290). In the class VII preterits of strong verbs, *ē₂ represents original *ea, which was preserved in Old High German geang ‘went’, feang ‘seized’, feal ‘fell’. The model for the development of this formation was provided by the preterits *eauk ‘increased’, *eaus ‘poured’, *eaud ‘granted’, *ear ‘ploughed’, *ealp, ‘grew old’, *eaik ‘claimed’, and especially *eaj ‘went’. The spread of *ea as a preterit marker yielded *hleauk ‘leaped’, *heald, ‘held’, *heait ‘called’, also *beauw ‘dwelt’, *feāh ‘seized’, *feēt ‘let’, plural *hleup-, *held-, *heit-, *beuw-, *feng-, *let-, Old Norse hlióp, helt, hét, bió, biogg-, fekk, fing-, lét, lit- (cf. Noreen 1970: 338-340).

In Old English, breaking (WS 9-12, A 11, K 11) preceded i-mutation (E 16) while the conditioning factor apparently blocked the fronting of *a to æ at an earlier stage (AF 6). This chronology suffices to show that the Old English breaking cannot be identified with the Scandinavian breaking. Moreover, the conditions of the two were quite different. Since the Old Frisian breaking “took place only before ht and hs, and not before intervocalic h, such forms as siucht (‘sees’) show that it must have taken place later than i-mutation, for the i of the 3rd pers. sg. pres. indic. was not syncopated till after it had caused mutation” (Campbell 1959: 105). Thus, we find similar, yet quite different developments in the three languages.

Fourquet has pointed out that in Old English “les produits de la fracture des voyelles brèves sont venus occuper dans le système des brèves la même place que les diphtongues d’origine ancienne occupaient dans le système des longues” (1959: 151), which is in accordance with Krupatkin’s observation that “every time the initial shifts in the field of the long vowels raised similar transformations in the field of the short vowels” (1970: 63). This explains the fact that the “fractured reflexes of i and e have rounded second elements in OE, in early OE -u”, and possibly “the second element of the broken reflex of æ was also -u at first” (Nielsen 1984: 76). Thus, io, eo, ea were the short counterparts of io, ēo, ēa from the time when these were still u-diphthongs. Nielsen can now explain the fact that the reflex of *a is not broken in Old Frisian: “Gmc. au was monophthongized to ā in OFr., and consequently there was no systematic pressure in terms of creating another short diphthong in the way that iu (io) was phonemized as a short counterpart of Gmc. eu/iu” (1984: 77f.).

The identification of *ē₂ as *ea now explains the Scandinavian breaking of *e to *ēä in accordance with these considerations. It is remarkable that there is no evidence for breaking before a front vowel in the following
syllable, where the model *ea was lacking, and that breaking is less frequent in light than in heavy syllables. Even more strikingly, breaking was blocked by a preceding *w, e.g. verpa ‘to throw’, huelpr ‘whelp’, while the preterit sueip, pl. suip- ‘swept’ shows absence of *ea after *w, which is a natural restriction because the form contains a triphthong already. The broken vowel *ăă either developed into ja “coinciding in its onset with the non-syllabic allophone of /i/” (Steblin-Kamenskij 1957: 91) or lost its diphthongal character and merged with the reflex of umlauted *a. The latter development may have been conditioned by the monophthongization of *ea to ē, which probably took place under the pressure of the rise of ā from umlauted *ā. It is probably no accident that *ea is best preserved in Old High German, where the umlaut of *ā was late.

3. The Proto-Germanic adverbs ‘here’, ‘there’ and ‘where’ can be reconstructed on the basis of Gothic her, þar, huar and Old Norse hér, þar, hvar as *hiar, *par, *hwar and compared with Lithuanian šia-, ta-, ka- from Indo-European *ki-o-, *to-, *kʰo-. This explains the difference between the long vowel in ‘here’ and the short vowel in ‘there’ and ‘where’. In West Germanic, the latter was lengthened so as to yield High German and Saxon -ār, Frisian and Anglian -ēr, and West Saxon -ǣr. As a result, the West Germanic forms are the following (cf. Stiles 2004: 388):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>West Saxon</th>
<th>Anglian</th>
<th>Old Frisian</th>
<th>Old Saxon</th>
<th>Old High German</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘here’</td>
<td>Hēr</td>
<td>Hēr</td>
<td>hēr/hier/hīr</td>
<td>hear/hiar/hier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘there’</td>
<td>þēr</td>
<td>þēr</td>
<td>thēr</td>
<td>thār/dār</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘where’</td>
<td>hwēr</td>
<td>hwēr</td>
<td>hwār</td>
<td>(h)wār</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stiles now reconstructs Proto-West-Germanic *þār and *hwar and concludes that *ēj had been retracted to *ā at the time of the lengthening and was fronted to *ē in North Sea Germanic and raised to *ē in Anglian and Frisian (2004: 389). As a matter of fact, the lengthening in *þar and *hwar could take place at any time before the Anglo-Frisian monophthongization of *ai to ā because there was no other long vowel than *ēj [æ, ā] corresponding to short *a [a, æ] in early West Germanic. The rise of *þēr and *hwar evidently preceded breaking and i-mutation, which belong to the period after the early migrations.

In fact, things are more complicated: “The explanation of the Old Frisian and Old Saxon <hir>-forms is unclear, whether they represent an earlier
state or have developed from *[hē₂r]. […] It is uncertain whether a pre-form *hē₂r is needed at all for Frisian. The Old Frisian texts, which represent the West and East Frisian branches, show spellings consistent with hīr, with the exception of a few instances in late West Frisian texts that are subject to Dutch influence. […] Old Saxon hīr is found both in the Bible Poetry and the Minor Texts, whereas her occurs only in Bible Poetry manuscripts (cf. von Unwerth 1915). Modern Low German dialect evidence points to a pre-form *hīr […]” (Stiles 2004: 388). While the vowel of Old English and Old Saxon hēr and of Old High German hear/hiar/hier can be identified with *ē₂ < *ea, with lowering of *i to e before a in *hiar (cf. Kortlandt 1994: 16), the high vowel in Old Frisian and Old Saxon hīr points to restoration of *hi- on the basis of cognate forms, cf. OF hiu-dega, OS hiu-diga, hiu-du, OHG hiu-tu ‘today’, hī-naht ‘tonight’, OE hēo-dæg, heonan beside hine, hi(o)man ‘from here’, hider ‘hither’. The restoration of *hi- in the form *hēr was probably an innovation of Old Saxon that spread from the Low German area to Frisia after the Anglo-Saxon migrations, following the innovations that spread from the same area to Anglo-Frisian but did not reach West Saxon (cf. Kortlandt 2010: 259-263).

Thus, we arrive at the following scenario. After *ā merged with *ō in Proto-Germanic, symmetry could be restored by lowering *ē₁ to ā, and this is what happened in High German and Scandinavian. This development was forestalled by the monophthongization of *ai to ā in Anglo-Frisian, where short *a was fronted to æ instead unless it was followed by a blocking environment. These developments preceded the Anglo-Saxon migrations. Symmetry in the vowel system was again restored in North and West Germanic by the monophthongization of *ē₂ to *ā except in High German, where *ō was diphthongized instead. I conclude that there is no reason to assume a general retraction of *ē₁ to ā in North-West Germanic and that Stiles pays insufficient attention to the structural aspects of the developments. After the late Proto-Germanic raising of *ā to ō but before the monophthongization of *ai to ā in Anglo-Saxon, lengthening of the short vowel in *par and *har could only lead to a merger with *ē₁ [æ] because there was no other low vowel. Besides, the following retraction of *ē₂ to ā and fronting of *a to æ under special conditions show that the distinction between the two vowels was a quantitative one only. After the Anglo-Saxon migrations, the form hēr < *hear < *hiar was replaced by hīr in Old Saxon.

2. “As expected, the hēr variant frequently occurs in the ‘Frankish spelling’ <hier>” (Stiles 2004: 388) in the Old Saxon Bible Poetry manuscripts, but not in the Minor Texts, which exhibit the genuine Low German form hīr only.
on the basis of cognate forms with *hi-, and the new form spread to Old Frisian.

4. In a recent article (2017), Eugen Hill argues that the long vowel of West Germanic *þār and *hʷār resulted from Proto-Germanic monosyllabic lengthening and that the form hēr represents *kīr with Proto-Germanic lowering of *i before *-r followed by monosyllabic lengthening. He acknowledges that the alleged lengthening is contradicted by the Scandinavian data in view of Old Norse hér, þar, hvar and Old Swedish hār, þar, hwar but does not regard these forms as conclusive evidence. He also rejects Gothic her [hēr], þar, hwar as evidence because the letter <a> could also represent a long ā in the Gothic alphabet. However, Gothic *ā originated from the denasalization of long *ă, e.g. in brahta, þahta, which was not a common development of East and West Germanic because it was more recent than the centralization and rounding of the nasal vowel in Old English brōhte, þōhte. Hill’s rendering of my view is not correct. Of course, I do not claim that “the Proto-Germanic pronoun for ‘this here’ was not the traditionally assumed i-stem PGmc *hi- but rather an io-stem PGmc *hia-” (thus Hill 2017: 140) but that Proto-Germanic *hīar took -ar from *par and *hʷar < PIE *to-,. *kʷo-,. just as *kī- is being replaced by *kī-o- in the Baltic languages (cf. Kortlandt 2009: 140f.). Hill finds this development “implausible” (ibidem, fn. 6) in spite of the fact that it is actually taking place before our eyes in Baltic.

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