DISAMBIGUATION IN RECONSTRUCTION

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This problem comes out of Indo-European, specifically out of Germanic, but it may not be irrelevant to Oceanic languages, in some of which the relatively small number of segment types gives rise to possible clashes of homophony. In an excellent brief article (Indogermanische Fors chungen 73,1968, 133-5) Alfred Bammesberger eliminates from standard comparisons Old Frisian swāger and OFris and OSax kind 'child' (following W. Simon) by showing them to be loans from German to the south. In a footnote (No. 7) he is troubled by the IE accent and vocalism of *géntom, which would lie behind German kind; the same is true for the alternate possibility *génətom, which Bammesberger suggests and which is more in accord with the known shape of the IE root, *génə- or *génH- 'procreate'. I think we must view this form in the context of other Germanic forms and of the whole of early Germanic grammar.

Germ. kind is not the only such form; Bammesberger himself mentions Latin genitum. But there is also Gaulish geneta (beside gnatha 'daughter' and gnatus 'filius') and Welsh geneth <*genettā (with hypocoristic gemination); and Greek shows several derivatives in γενε - where one might expect a reflex of the zero-grade. These Greek forms have been remarked on by Frisk (Griechiesches etymologisches Wörterbuch I.307) as Neubildungen, but of course there must then be a source for the vocalism. In fact there are verbal forms in these last languages with clear surface shapes that would furnish such sources: OLat. genō, Lat. gignō genui; Welsh geni admittedly shows gan- in non-umlauted instances, but there are plenty of names in -gen (see D. Ellis Evans, Gaulish Personal Names, 1967, 204) and OIrish has -gena- in the subjunctive and gein for the verbal noun; Greek shows γενέσθαι. But as we shall see the question of surface shapes is not the same for Germanic; if the problem of motivation and means for refashioning is simple for Latin, Greek or Keltic, it is not so obvious for Germanic.[1]

If we consider, as Bammesberger clearly did, what the shape of kind once should have been, and if we further reflect on the other formations that must have coexisted with it, we see immediately that two homophonous forms would have arisen in Germanic which it would have been desirable to disambiguate. The exact nature of these two roots in IE has, I am afraid, been insufficiently dealt with to make the realization of the reconstructed dilemma as clear as it should have been to scholars. The participle 'begotten' yielded Lat. nātus, Skt. jāta-, Avestan zāta-; it should have given Germanic *kunđa-. The participle 'known' comes out in Latin as (ig)nōtus, but this must be regarded as the result of disambiguation, for *ĝnHtó- here should again give nātus. In fact, 'known' in OIr. is gnáth and in Welsh gnawd, and Gaulish has gnato- for both 'known' and 'born' (see above); but we cannot tell here

whether or not Keltic has refashioned 'known' as Latin has, since the result would have been the same. For the Gaulish forms see now Ellis Evans 207-9. Slavic znati also shows *$\bar{o}$.

There has been much discussion, which is not worth rehearsing here, whether IE had two roots *ǵen(ə)- (as they often are written) 'beget' and 'know' which would then be supposed to overlap in o-grade ablaut in certain forms, or whether this was at bottom but one root with some sort of semantic differentation. Frisk thinks that this problem cannot be resolved, and is even uninteresting; I believe that we can and must resolve it. In brief, there must have been two roots ending in two different laryngeals, which therefore were once simply not homophones: *ǵenHₑ- 'beget' and *ǵenH$_o$- 'know'. The Greek forms -γνητός and γνωτός are then the normal outcome of zero-grade *ǵenH$_ē$to- and *ǵnH$_o$to- respectively. Whether forms of the second shape in Greek meaning 'kinsman' are really a derived sense of the second or an o-grade derivative of the first need not concern us here. The participle 'known' *ǵnH$_o$tó- must therefore have given Germanic *kunða-, homophonous with 'begotten'. Actually what we find is *kunþa- (OE cúþ, OHG kund). Prokosch (CCG190) is troubled, like others, by the absence of Verner's Law, but his suggestion drawn from sentence rhythm in imagined Germanic is totally unacceptable- and skirts the real problem. He also suggests an impossible ablaut *ǵnē-, as have others, to explain OE cnāwan and related forms. But in my judgment it is just such forms that attest to the ambiguity that had arisen in early Germanic by the merger just touched upon: in other words, cnāwan etc. represents just another attempt to refashion a form which had become of unclear allegiance.

The regular traces of 'begotten' are seen in ONorse kundr and Gothic- kunds; however, ON ás-kunnr (*þþ) shows again a refashioning of the suffix as we see for 'known' in West Germanic. We see now that there was a clear motivation in West Germanic to refashion 'begotten, child' as long as *kunþa- was reserved for 'known'. The result was the *e-grade *kinþ-> kind and *kinð->OE cild> child, with intrusion of l from some other source. There is no problem of IE accent and vocalism: Our form arises within Germanic by the need for disambiguation as a result of regular phonological and partial paradigmatic merger.

We must now enquire into the sources of this vocalism. Where was it retrieved from? There do not seem to have been obvious forms persisting into Germanic with a vocalism *e. There was the causative OE cennan < *kanjan, a near-homophone with cennan to Goth. kannjan (:kunnan, German kennen). Even the cognate of Lat. genus etc. had been transferred in stem-class and had no surface *e: Goth. kuni, OE cynn> kin.

But we see that an underlying, lexical *e was retrievable from the causative (a productive class of verbs) kanjan. When we reflect on the IE background, we immediately

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realize that for a long time no such vocalism was retrievable for 'know'. Schematically, the background of the preterite-present <u>kann</u> may be displayed[2] starting from an old IE nasal present:

$$*sg. \quad \acute{g}n\text{-}ne\text{-}H_o\text{-}mi \qquad pl. \quad \acute{g}n\text{-}n\text{-}H_o\text{-}m\acute{e}s$$

$$\text{-->} \quad \underline{\acute{g}\underset{o}{n}neH_omi} \qquad \underline{\acute{g}\underset{o}{n}nH_om\acute{e}s}^{(3)}$$

$$= \quad \underline{\acute{g}\underset{a}{n}no\text{-}} \qquad \underline{g\underset{a}{n}n\partial\text{-}}^{(4)}$$

$$> \quad \underline{kunn\bar{o}\text{-}} \qquad kunnum$$

$$\text{-->} \quad \underline{kann} \qquad kunnum$$

It is clear that the underlying vocalism for 'know' within Germanic was <u>a(n)</u> or <u>n->un</u>. There just was no *e available, however deep within the grammar.

We observe, then, a disambiguation based not on Gilléronian replacement, but on the relative availability of reconstructed non-surface phonetics. [5]

Footnotes

[1]There are certain items listed by Porkony (IEW 374) that should be excluded from the above discussion because they are not really formations of the same type. OIr. <u>aicned</u> 'nature' *<u>ad-gen∂-tom</u> should be treated in relation to Welsh <u>anian</u>, discussed by me <u>Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies</u> 16,1956, 279f. Lith. <u>žéntas</u> OCS зетι Serbo-Cr. <u>zёt</u> must be a cross of *<u>ǵem∂</u>-, IEW 369-70, where by the way Albanian <u>dhёndёr</u> also goes.

[2]Here I follow somewhat Prokosch 188, but correcting what I believe to be his insufficient understanding of the structure of the IE verb and its present-formation. I do not find it necessary to posit an intervening stage with * <u>-n(e)u-</u>, even though OIr. <u>(ad)°gnin-</u> may show such an intervening vocalism; as Thurneysen has pointed out, there are possible internal Keltic explanations for this.

[3]Are such forms the source for the Greek vocalisms in short o?

[4]This schwa would have given Baltic short vowel which formed the basis for the fresh length-ening in <u>žinóti</u>, the Lithuanian form which would precisely result from the reconstruction here.

$^{(5)}$ A further disambiguation may be seen in the suffix *-ti-. For *ǵnH$_e$tí- we have Skt. jātí-, Lat. nāti-ō, OE (ge)cynd; but for *ǵnH$_o$tí- there is Goth. kunþi- (neuter!), but German kunst. I do not take this latter, as is usually done, as carrying yet another and unexplained suffix -sti-. We know that IE tt gave Germanic ss (wiss etc); but a *-ti- to a stem in þ seems to have freshly formed st by rule (*ss-t). Is this perhaps based on such analogies as OE wista originally? I have discussed another such case in fist beside the ordinal '5th' in both Germanic and Slavic elsewhere.