

THE DEVELOPMENT OF OLD ENGLISH DIPHTHONGS

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The value of spelling evidence

In tracing the development of the Old English diphthongs /ie(:) io(:) eo(:) ea(:)/ the evidence of spelling is of primary importance. Old English orthography well attests to the phonemic independence of the diphthongs, as they are consistently distinguished in writing from each other and from the monophthongs¹. When such distinction is no longer made, the merger of separate diphthongs and, finally, the elimination of the whole subsystem may be easily inferred from this. Spellings, moreover, reflect numerous intermediate phonetic changes which later on may be observed to play a decisive role in the phonemic fate of diphthongs. As is known, spellings usually reflect only phonemic mergers, the rise of new phonemes, etc., i. e. phonemic changes, whereas phonetic changes regularly do not affect orthography in any way. But in the case of the Old English diphthongs, owing to their specific phonemic and phonetic nature, orthography gives ample evidence of phonetic changes too. Being gliding phonemes², the diphthongs were represented in writing by digraphs. By the choice of letters usually denoting monophthongs for the elements of gliding we may judge about the phonetic realization of diphthongs, as well as changes in it.

Of course, spellings cannot always be taken at their face values. The phonetic and phonemic inferences drawn on the basis of spelling data must be, naturally, consistent with the prehistory and later development of diphthongs.

¹ For other arguments in favour of the phonemic independence and integrity of Old English diphthongs see A. Steponavičius, *The English Vowel System in the Period of the Oldest Written Records (VIII–X cc.)*, — *Kalbotyra*, XXII (3), 1971, pp. 23–24.

² 'Gliding phoneme', or 'glide', is used here in that meaning of the term which is phonetically defined by J. S. Kenyon as "a sound, which by a gradual change in the position of the vocal organs, passes imperceptibly into another sound" and which is phonemically interpreted as a monophoneme. (See J. V a c h e k, *Some Remarks on "Glides" in Phonological Analysis*. — *Travaux Linguistiques de Prague*, 3, *Études structurales dédiées au VI^e congrès des slavistes*, Prague, 1968, p. 189). We, however, do not oppose the term 'glide' to the term 'diphthong', as it is done by K. Malone (*K. Malone, Diphthong and glide*. — *Mélanges de linguistique et de philologie: Fernand Mossé in memoriam*, Paris, 1959, pp. 256–266; *id.*, *Glides, diphthongs, and boundaries*. — *English Studies*, vol. 42, N 4, 1961, pp. 235–237).

The phonetics and phonemics of Old English diphthongs

Towards the end of the Primitive Old English period, i. e. approximately in the VIIIth century non-West Saxon dialects possessed three diphthongs, phonetically realized as diserial falling glides of three degrees of aperture, quantitatively long and short³. Judging by the origin of the diphthongs from the Germanic [ju eu au] and the results of their monophthongization, gliding began at, correspondingly, [i-e-æ-]. In Old English writings the conventional spellings for the diphthongs /io(:) eo(:) ea(:)/ were the digraphs *io*, *eo*, *ea*. Consequently only the spellings *io* and *eo* were in conformity with the phonetic nature of the first elements of the diphthongs denoted by them. For /ea(:)/ the symbols of the type *aa*, *aea* would seem more appropriate than *ea*. As a matter of fact, such spellings are actually found in the earliest writings, for example, *zēnaeot* (for *zēnēat*) 'companion' in the *Corpus Glossary*, *Aeostoruini* (*ēastor*- 'Easter') in the *Liber Vitae*, the personal names *Aeanfled* (*ēan*-), *Æanfled*, *Aeanheri*, *Aeodbaldum* (*ēad*- 'possession'), *Aeodbaldo*, *Æata* (*ēata*) in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*⁴.

Analogous spellings occur in the eight-century Kentish charters. Especially conspicuous for this is charter 6, where every /ea(:)/ is spelt *aea*: *Balthhaeardi* (*-heard* 'hard'), *Aethiliaeardi* (*-zeard* 'court'), *Aeanberhti* (*ēan*-)⁵. But in determining the first element of /ea(:)/ the Kentish evidence, however, should be viewed with reserve. At best the Kentish *aea* might be considered a conservative spelling reflecting an earlier pronunciation. Most probably the use of *ae* for the first element of

³ A diphthong is termed falling when its stronger element precedes the weaker one, and rising when the stronger element follows the weaker one. A diphthong is termed monoserial, if its elements are realized in the same series, and diserial, if its elements are realized in different series. Diphthongs may also be characterized as level, on the one hand, and as closing or opening, on the other. In level diphthongs the degree of aperture for both elements is the same. In closing diphthongs the second element is higher than the first, and in opening diphthongs, on the contrary, the second element is lower. We owe the idea of making such distinctions to Luigi Romeo. The terms 'diserial' and 'monoserial' are also his. But he introduces the terms 'ascending' and 'descending' instead of the traditional 'rising' and 'falling'. The terms 'rising' and 'falling' are also used by Romeo but in quite a new meaning. By 'rising' he means what we call 'closing', and by 'falling' he means what we call 'opening'. Such application of these well-established terms seems to us unnecessarily misleading. Romeo makes no mention of diphthongs of that kind which we call 'level'. See L. Romeo, *The Economy of Diphthongization in Early Romance*, The Hague — Paris, 1968, pp. 43, 44, footnote 27, 51.

⁴ K. Luick, *Historische Grammatik der englischen Sprache*, vol. I, Part 1, Harvard University Press, 1964, § 119, Anm. 1; E. Sievers-K. Brunner, *Altenglische Grammatik nach der angelsächsischen Grammatik von Eduard Sievers neubearbeitet von Karl Brunner*, Halle (Saale), 1951, § 75, Anm. 1.; A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, Oxford, 1962, §§ 275, 276.

⁵ А. Степонавичюс, Судьба древнеанглийских дифтонгов /ѣа/, /ѣо/, /іо/ в кентском. — *Kalbotyra*, XIII, 1964, p. 211.

/ea(:)/ is here a consequence of the indiscriminate use of *ae* (æ) and *e* in words with the original /æ(:)/ and /e(:)/⁶.

Being falling glides, the diphthongs /io(:) eo(:) ea(:)/ differed principally in their first elements. Their differences in the second elements were, naturally, less marked. Thus differences in the height of the second elements could be negligible. It may even be inferred that originally the diphthongs /io(:) eo(:) ea(:)/ were glides with the same second element [-u]⁷, i. e. they were phonetically realized as [iu eu æu]. In the earliest writings the spellings *iu*, *eu* for /io(:) eo(:)/ must have been quite common; cf. *uiurthit* 'he becomes' in Bede's *Death Song*; *Eumer* (from *eoh* 'horse'), *Hreutford* (*hrēod-* 'reed') in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*; *zēþiudde* 'joined', *þiustra* 'darkness', *ʒliū* 'glee', *trēu* 'tree', *trēuleasnis* 'faithlessness', etc., in the *Corpus Glossary*; *ʒliū* 'glee', *stēupfaedaer* 'step – father', *trēulesnis* 'faithlessness', etc., in the *Epinal Glossary*; *flēutas* 'estuaries' in the *Erfurt Glossary*; *Biulf* (*bīo-* 'bee'), *Friumon* (*friō-* 'free'), *Friubet*, *Iurminburʒ* (*iormin-* 'great'), *Iurmenric*, *Liutfrith* (*liod-* 'people'), *Scēutwald* (*scēot-* 'quick') in the *Liber Vitae*⁸. There are no spellings pointing to [æu]⁹, but this pronunciation seems highly probable in view of the origin of the long /ea:/ from the Germanic [au]. Later on the second element of /ea(:)/ was lowered to [-o], after what the diphthongs had to be realized phonetically as [iu eu æo]. The type [æo] prevailed in the period immediately before the earliest writings and is amply recorded in them; cf. the personal names *Aeodbaldo*, *Eodbaldo*, *Aeodbal dum*, *Eodfrid* in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*; *deothdaeze* (*dēaþ-* 'death') in Bede's *Death Song*; *Eoduulf*, *Eonmund*, *Eostoruini*, *Beodu-* (*beadu-* 'battle'), *Heoðu-* (*headu-* 'war') in the *Liber Vitae*; *zenaeot*, *dreote* (for *drēat* 'troop'), *ʒefreos* (for *ʒefrēas*

⁶ On this see A. Степанавичюс, Сужение /æ/ в кентском диалекте древнеанглийского языка. — *Kalbotyra*, XIII, 1964, pp. 193 ff. Cf. also the spelling *smūazenne* (for *smēazenne* 'consider') in the Kentish glosses to *Proverbs of Solomon* which reflect a similar confusion of *y* and *e*; A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, § 298.

⁷ H. M. Chadwick, *Studies in Old English*. — *Transactions of the Cambridge Philological Society*, vol. 4, part 2, London, 1899, pp. 216–218; A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, § 275; K. Brunner, *Die englische Sprache*, I, Tübingen, 1960, pp. 232–233; Sh. Kuhn, *On the Syllabic Phonemes of Old English*. — *Language*, vol. 37, N 4, 1961, pp. 529–531.

⁸ E. Sievers, *Grammatische Miscellen*. 7. Zur geschichte der ags. diphthonge. — *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur*, XVIII, 1893, pp. 412–415; K. Luick, *op cit.*, §§ 125, Anm. 1, 126, Anm. 1; E. Sievers – K. Brunner, *op cit.*, §§ 77, Anm. 4, 78, Anm. 1, 84, Anm. 5; A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, §§ 115, 137, 149, 154. 3, footnote 3, 275; Sh. Kuhn, *On the Syllabic Phonemes of Old English*, pp. 529–531.

⁹ A. Campbell quotes the following spellings which might be suggestive of the archaic pronunciation [æu]: the *Urswick Cross bæurnæ* (most probably for *bearn* 'child'); *arugeus* in the *Leiden Glossary* and *aerugeup* in the *Erfurt Glossary*, both glossing *arpa*, and the second element *-zeus* and *-zeup* possibly representing *ʒēat* or *-ʒēap*; *Heuuald* (*Heu-* possibly for *hēah* 'high') in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*. See A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, §§ 275, footnote 2, 276.

'froze'), etc., in the *Corpus Glossary*¹⁰. In some Northumbrian dialects the [æo]-type survived throughout the Old English period, but generally it lost the rounding of its second element and changed to [æa]¹¹. By the period of the earliest writings the phonetic realization of the diphthongs /eo(:)/ and /io(:)/ had also been changed from [eu iu] to [eo io]¹². Thus in the language of the first written records the dominating phonetic type of the diphthongs was [io eo æa].

From the phonemic point of view, gliding (irrespective of its direction), height and quantity were phonologically relevant features. By height and quantity the diphthongs contrasted among themselves:

	Short	Long
High	/io/	/io:/
Mid	/eo/	/eo:/
Low	/ea/	/ea:/

By gliding they contrasted with the monophthongs:

	Diphthongs	Monophthongs
High	/io(:)/	/i(:)/ /y(:)/ /u(:)/
Mid	/eo(:)/	/e(:)/ /ö(:)/ /o(:)/
Low	/ea(:)/	/æ(:)/ /a(:)/

Early West Saxon differed from other dialects by the presence of the diphthong /ie(:)/. The phonological interpretation of this diphthong is most problematic. Even its phonetic realization is rather obscure. Most probably it was realized phonetically as [ie], or [iü], [iö]. In any case the diphthong /ie(:)/ represented a type of gliding different from those discussed above. It may be interpreted as a relic of a diphthongal series which had arisen from i-umlaut (see below, pp. 64–65).

¹⁰ K. Luick, op. cit., § 119, Anm. 1; E. Sievers — K. Brunner, op. cit., § 35, Anm. 1; H. M. Chadwick, op. cit., pp. 178–179; A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, §§ 275–276; Sh. Kuhn, *The Dialect of the Corpus Glossary*. — PMLA, vol. 54, N 1, 1939, p. 7.

¹¹ According to Luick (op. cit., § 119), the second element of /ea(:)/ was unrounded in the seventh century. The type [æo] had survived in Southern Northumbrian. In *Rushworth*³, representing this dialect, *eo* as a symbol for /ea(:)/ considerably outnumbers *ea*; in the case of the long /ea:/ the proportion of *eo* to *ea* is three to one. See E. Sievers — K. Brunner, op. cit., § 35, Anm. 1; A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, § 278. a.

¹² It is reasonable to assume that the second element in the mid diphthong /eo(:)/ was lowered to [-o] earlier than in the high diphthong /io(:)/. In such a case there were really periods in the history of these Old English diphthongs when all of them were realized as level glides. Yet it is not true that the same height for both elements had always been one of the distinguishing features of the Old English diphthongal patterns; cf. K. Malone, *Diphthong and glide*, p. 261.

Mergers of diphthongs

The earliest written records bear evidence not only of different phonetic shifts, but also of some phonemic changes in the subsystem of diphthongs. The most important of these is the merger of the diphthongs /io(:)/ and /eo(:)/ which may be inferred from the indiscriminate use of the digraphs *io* and *eo*. Of all the writings from the VIII–IXth centuries only in Northumbrian monuments the diphthongs /io(:)/ and /eo(:)/ are still graphically discriminated. In the *Liber Vitae* /io(:)/ is consistently spelt *io* (*iu*) and /eo(:)/ is spelt *eo* (*eu*)¹³. The evidence of the personal names in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* is insignificant¹⁴, but it also confirms the retention of the opposition /io(:)/ – /eo(:)/.

The original distribution of /io(:)/ and /eo(:)/ is still traceable in the early Merician glossaries. It is true, instances of *eo* for the original /io(:)/ and, vice versa, instances of *io* for the original /eo(:)/ are found in them. In the *Epinal Glossary* *io* is used for /eo(:)/ in *criopunzæ* 'creeping', *butturfliozæ* 'butterfly', *cnioholen* (*cnēo*– 'knee'), *uandaeuiorpaæ* (*wande-weorpe* 'mole'); *eo* is used for /io(:)/ in *burzleod* 'citizen', perhaps also in *cleouuaæ* (*cleowen* 'clew')¹⁵. In the *Corpus Glossary* *io* is used for /eo(:)/ in *hlīor* (*hlēor* 'cheek'), *zetriowad* 'trusted', *tīonan* 'injuries', *criopunzæ*, *brīostbīorȝ* (*brēost-beorȝ* 'breast- defence'), *cnioholen*, *cniorisse* (*cnēo*– 'knee'), *tiorade* (*tēorian* 'fail'), *scripu* (from *screpan* 'scrape'); *eo* for /io(:)/ is used in *neopouard* 'lower', *zeonath* 'he yawns', *zeonzendi* 'yawning', *biheonan* 'on this side', *seotol* (for *sweetol* 'distinct')¹⁶. Nevertheless, these spellings are too few to infer from them the merger of /io(:)/ and /eo(:)/ in the language of the early glossaries. In the *Vespasian Psalter* the distinction between *io* and *eo* has been almost completely lost, viz. in the case of the short /io/ and /eo/ the digraph *eo* encroaches upon the digraph *io*, and in the case of the long /io:/ and /eo:/ the digraphs *io* and *eo* are used interchangeably; cf. *eorre* (< *iorre*) 'angry', *heorde* (< *hiorde*) 'shepherd', *sceopu* (< *sciopu* < *scipu*) 'ship', *lēof*, *līof* 'dear', *tēona*, *tīona* 'damage', *nīowe*, *nēowe* 'new', *hīow*, *hēow* 'shape', etc.¹⁷. In *Rushworth*¹ the digraph *eo* replaces the digraph *io* in many words with the original /io(:)/, for example, *eorre* 'angry', *leoman*, *lioman* 'limbs', *þēostre*, *þiostre* 'darkness', *nēowe*, *nīowe* 'new'. Cases of the replacement of *eo* by *io* are quite few here¹⁸.

¹³ E. Sievers, op. cit., pp. 412–413. Sievers points out only two forms, *streonberct* and *streonuulf*, containing the element *strēon*- with the spelling *eo* for the original /io(:)/, against one case of *eu* for /eo(:)/ (*sceutuald*), 152 cases of *eo* for /eo(:)/, 7 cases of *iu* for /io(:)/ and 31 case of *io* for /io(:)/.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 414.

¹⁵ E. Sievers, op. cit., p. 414; H. M. Chadwick, op. cit., p. 217; A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, § 294.

¹⁶ E. Sievers, op. cit., p. 416; H. M. Chadwick, *ibidem*; A. Campbell, *ibidem*.

¹⁷ A. Campbell, *ibidem*.

¹⁸ A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, § 295.

Early West Saxon writings still preserve the digraph *io*, but only as an occasional spelling. In *Orosius* and the Parker MS of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* it is especially rare. In late West Saxon *io* had practically gone out of use¹⁹.

In Kentish the indiscriminate use of *io* and *eo* is already characteristic of the charters dating from the ninth century²⁰. What distinguishes Kentish from the other dialects is the frequency of *io*-spellings. The digraph *io* is used both in words with the original *io(:)* and in words with the original */eo(:)/*. The digraph *eo*, on the other hand, is rare in words with the original */io(:)/*²¹. A similar position is found in the tenth-century *Kentish Hymn*, glosses to *Proverbs of Solomon* and *Psalms L*, as well as in Bede's *Glosses* (MS Cotton Tib. C. II)²².

As the survey of *io*- and *eo*- spellings shows the diphthongs */io(:)/* and */eo(:)/* coalesced in different dialects not at the same time. The coalescence in Kentish and West Saxon must have taken place in the eighth – ninth centuries, in Mercian a little later, to all probability in the ninth century²³. There is not enough evidence to prove the merger of the diphthongs */io(:)/* and */eo(:)/* in Northumbrian. It is quite possible that Northumbrian dialects (at least some of them) preserved the distinction between */io(:)/* and */eo(:)/* during the whole Old English period²⁴. It is equally possible that by the end of the Old English period, immediately before the monophthongization of diphthongs, this distinction had been lost in Northumbrian too.

The merger of the diphthongs */io(:)/* and */eo(:)/* in Mercian, West Saxon (and Northumbrian) is usually described as the change of */io(:)/* into */eo(:)/* (*/io(:) / > /eo(:)/*), whereas in Kentish it is described as the change of */eo(:)/* into */io(:)* (*/eo(:) / > /io(:)/*)²⁵. As a matter of fact, the phonological essence of the changes in

¹⁹ K. Luick, op. cit., § 216. 2; K. Bülbring, *Altenglisches Elementarbuch*, Heidelberg, 1902, §§ 112, 143; A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, § 296.

²⁰ For forms see A. Степанавичюс, Судьба древнеанглийских дифтонгов */ĕa/*, */ĕo/*, */īo/* в кентском, pp. 211–212.

²¹ In Campbell's estimate, in charters 34–44 the original */eo/* is spelt *eo* 30 times, *io* 3 times, *ia* 9 times, *ea* 3 times; */io/* is spelt *eo* 9 times, *ia* twice, *ea* three times; */eo:/* is spelt *eo* 19 times, *ea* once, *io* 17 times, *ia* 5 times, *ea* once; */io:/* is spelt *io* 11 times, *ia* 8 times, *eo* twice (A. Campbell, *An Old English Will*. — JEGPh, vol. 37, N 2, 1938, p. 149). The digraphs *io* ~ *ia* and *eo* ~ *ea* should be regarded here as variant spellings (See below, p. 69).

²² For forms see A. Степанавичюс, Судьба древнеанглийских дифтонгов */ĕa/*, */ĕo/*, */īo/* в кентском, p. 213.

²³ Cf. K. Luick, op. cit., § 261; K. Bülbring, op. cit., §§ 141, 142, 143; E. Sievers – K. Brunner, op. cit., § 38; Sh. Kuhn, *On the Syllabic Phonemes of Old English*, pp. 533–534, 538.

²⁴ K. Luick, op. cit., § 358; K. Bülbring, op. cit., § 111.

²⁵ Cf. E. Sievers – K. Brunner, op. cit., § 38; Joseph and Elizabeth M. Wright, *An Old English Grammar*, London, 1934, §§ 85, 135; id., *An Elementary Middle English Grammar*, Oxford, 1934, § 67; R. Quirk and C. L. Wrenn, *An Old English Grammar*, London, 1959, § 205. Some authors represent the Kentish fusion of the short diphthongs as the change */io/ > /eo/*, although

both cases is the same: what originally had been two phonemes, high /io(:)/ and mid /eo(:)/, now became one phoneme, the high diphthong /eo(:)/ (Kentish /io(:)/). The outcome of the merger was practically a new phoneme, not to be identified with either the original /io(:)/ or /eo(:)/: the status of the new /eo(:)/ (Kent. /io(:)/) in the subsystem of diphthongs is determined solely by its opposition to the *ow* /ea(:)/, whereas the original /io(:)/ was opposed to the mid /eo(:)/ and the low /ea(:)/, and the original /eo(:)/ was opposed to the high /io(:)/ and the low /ea(:)/. Otherwise it might be said that the merger of /io(:)/ and /eo(:)/ both in Kentish and non-Kentish dialects resulted in identical subsystems of diphthongs of two degrees of aperture²⁶.

Dialect differences, however, should be admitted in the phonetic realization of the diphthong into which /io(:)/ and /eo(:)/ had merged. The most important of these is a narrower first element of the Kentish diphthong. This may be inferred from the frequency of *io-* spellings in Kentish, as well as from the subsequent change of the first element of the Kentish /io:/ into /j/ (see p. 72). The presence of a narrow first element in the Kentish /io(:)/ (< /io(:)eo(:)/) may be explained by suggesting a possible link between the merger of the diphthongs and the raising of /æ₂: æ/ in this dialect. The raising took place within the frame of the following vowel system:

Diphthongs	Monophthongs		
/io(:)/	/i(:)/	/y(:)/	/u(:)/
/eo(:)/	/e(:)/	/ö(:)/	/o(:)/
/ea(:)/	/æ(:)/		/a(:)/

The system was well-balanced in that the three degrees of aperture in the subsystem of monophthongs corresponded exactly to the three degrees of aperture in the subsystem of diphthongs. In such a system the diphthongs were, naturally, closely linked to the monophthongs of the corresponding height. Thus the high diphthong /io(:)/ was distinctly opposed by gliding to the high monophthongs /i(:) y(:) u(:)/, the mid diphthong /eo(:)/ was opposed to the mid monophthongs /e(:) ö(:) o(:)/, and the low diphthong /ea(:)/ was opposed to the low monophthongs /æ(:) a(:)/. The principle of economy, on the other hand, determined the phonetic likeness between the diphthongs and some monophthongs. As we

the fusion of the long is represented as /eo:/ > /io:/. Cf. K. Luick, *op. cit.*, §§ 260, 261; A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, § 297; R. Jordan, *Handbuch der mittelenlischen Grammatik*, Heidelberg, 1925, §§ 70, 74, 85. K. Bülbring's interpretation is particular in that he suggests the merger of the Kentish short diphthongs in [i^o], i.e. in a diphthong whose first element is a kind of half-way sound, between [i] and [e]; see K. Bülbring, *op. cit.*, §§ 112, 141, 142, 143, 238.

²⁶ It would be even possible to use the same symbol, *io* or *eo*, for both the Kentish and non-Kentish diphthong. The use of different symbols, however, is justified in view of the quasi-phonetic characters of our phonemic notations.

know already, the phonetic character of the diphthongs /io(:) eo(:) ea(:)/ at that time was such that their first elements were phonetically identical with the monophthongs /i(:) e(:) æ(:)/. The first element of the diphthong /ea(:)/ was, roughly speaking, [æ-]. Now, when the monophthong /æ(:)/ was "raised", this could entail the raising of the first element in /ea(:)/ too: [æa] > [ea]. Otherwise the diphthong would have contained an isolated articulation, which would have been unjustified from the point of view of linguistic economy. The raising of the first element in the diphthong /ea(:)/ found no reflection in orthography. This is but natural, because the digraph *ea* was suited for [ea] even better than for [æa]. The raising of /ea(:)/ was graphically recorded only in the XIII – XIVth centuries when the spellings *ya, ia, ye, yea, iea* had made way into the Middle Kentish writings. These spellings indicate that the first element of the Old Kentish /ea:/ had already become /j/. It cannot be doubted that the first element of /ea:/ [æa] had to be raised before it became /j/. The suggested raising of the first element in /ea(:)/ can easily account for the phonetic peculiarities of the Kentish diphthong /io(:)/ (< /io(:) eo(:)/). The diphthong /ea(:)/, whose first element was [e-], could be easily confused with /eo(:)/. It was possible to preserve the opposition /ea(:)/ – /eo(:)/ having a significant functional load only by raising the first element in /eo(:)/ as well. This led directly to the coalescence of /eo(:)/ with /io(:)/, besides, in a diphthong with a high first element. The functional load of the opposition /io(:)/ – /eo(:)/ was too slight to resist it.

In West Saxon the merger of /io(:)/ with /eo(:)/ and the ensuing rearrangement of the diphthongal system are somewhat complicated by the presence of the diphthong /ie(:)/. The diphthong /ie(:)/ is usually interpreted as a high gliding phoneme:

High	/ie(:)/
Mid	/eo(:)/
Low	/ea(:)/

This scheme, however, reflects a rather late stage in the development of the West Saxon diphthongs. At an earlier stage /ie(:)/ must have represented quite a separate series of diphthongs. As is known, it had resulted from i-umlaut. Current handbooks in describing the i-umlaut of diphthongs make a sharp distinction between West Saxon and non-West Saxon dialects. The i-umlaut of /io(:) eo(:) ea(:)/ in West Saxon is described as resulting in /ie(:)/, whereas in non-West Saxon it is described as resulting in /io(:)/ (< /io(:) eo(:)/) and /e(:)/ (< /ea(:)/)²⁷. Nevertheless, it may be assumed that the initial results of i-umlaut were identical in

²⁷ Cf. K. Luick, *op. cit.*, §§ 191, 194; E. Sievers – K. Brunner, *op. cit.*, §§ 104, 107; A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, §§ 200–202; G. L. Brook, *An Introduction to Old English*, Manchester, 1966, § 40; R. Quirk and C. L. Wrenn, *op. cit.*, §§ 205, 210.

all dialects, and that differences appeared only in the course of later development. At the time of i-umlaut the diphthongs /io(:) eo(:) ea(:)/ were phonetically realized as [iu eu æu] (see p.59). The following /i j/ had to modify them to [iy (<iu, eu) ey]²⁸. These glides differed from, [iu eu æu] by their second elements, and the difference may be defined phonologically as front *versus* back:

Back	Front
/io(:)/ [iu]	/iy(:)/
/eo(:)/ [eu]	/ey(:)/
/ea(:)/ [æu]	

The further development of diphthongs proceeded in different dialects along different lines. In non-West Saxon dialects /ey(:)/ merged with /e(:)/, and /iy(:)/ merged with /io(:)/²⁹. In West Saxon the merger of /iy(:)/ and /ey(:)/ took place. The result was a front diphthong with a high first element, i. e. [iy] or [iö], which may be denoted phonemically already as /ie(:)/. After /io(:)/ and /eo(:)/ had fallen together, /ie(:)/ was reinterpreted as a new high diphthong, opposed by height to the mid /eo(:)/ (</eo(:) io(:)/) and the low /ea(:)/. Thus in spite of the merger /io(:)/ > /eo(:)/ West Saxon preserved for the time being a three-degree diphthongal system.

In Northumbrian it is the diphthongs /eo(:)/ and /ea(:)/ that are extensively confused in writing. In Northern Northumbrian (the *Lindisfarne Gospel* and the *Durham Ritual*) /eo(:)/ as well as /ea(:)/ may be spelt *ea*, and in Southern Northumbrian (*Rushworth*²) /ea(:)/ as well as /eo(:)/ may be spelt *eo*. K. Luick supposed that in Northern Northumbrian not only /ea(:)/, but also /eo(:)/ had unrounded their second elements to [-a], whereas in Southern Northumbrian not only /eo(:)/, but also /ea(:)/ had preserved [-o] as their second element. K. Luick, however, held that the diphthongs /ea(:)/ and /eo(:)/ remained distinct in both cases, for their first elements were correspondingly [æ-] and [e-]³⁰. K. Luick seems to be right, and we may phonetize the diphthongs as [æa] and [ea] or [eΛ] in Northern Northumbrian, and as [æ o] and [e o] in Southern Northumbrian. As is known, Karl Bülbring³¹ took quite a different view of the problem. He explained the predominance of *ea*-spellings as evidence for the merger /eo(:) / > /ea(:)/ (Northern Northumbrian), and the predominance

²⁸ Cf. H. Pilch, *Altenglische Grammatik*, München, 1970, § 15.2.

²⁹ As is known, high rounded vowels are more stable than the lower ones. Therefore the merger /iy(:) / > /io(:) / may have occurred at a later date than the merger /ey(:) / > /e(:) /. The occasional *ie*-spellings in the early Anglian glossaries may be viewed as evidence of the one-time presence of the relic diphthong /iy(:) / in Anglian. Cf. Sh. Kuhn, *On the Syllabic Phonemes of Old English*, p. 530.

³⁰ K. Luick, *op. cit.*, §§ 119, 127, 133, 136, 228, Anm. 2, 356, 357.

³¹ K. Bülbring, *op. cit.*, §§ 108, 114.

of *eo*-spellings as evidence for the merger /ea(:)/ > /eo(:)/. (Southern Northumbrian). K. Bülbring's interpretation, refuted by K. Luick, has been recently revived by J. W. Watson³². In proving the merger of the long /eo:/ > /ea:/ Watson relies not so much on spelling, as on the evidence of modern dialects. Just like Luick, he even argues that in the earliest monuments (Bede's *Death Song*, the *Falstone inscription*, the *Liber Vitae*) the confusion of /ea:/ and /eo:/ was merely graphic³³. Watson believes that the final proof of the merger lies in the fact that the reflexes of /ea:/, /eo:/ and /æ:/ have been recorded as identical, differing at the same time from the reflexes of /e:/. Thus in the dialect of Lorton, Cumberland, the reflex of /ea: eo: æ:/ is [eɪ], while /e:/ is reflected as [i], a fact K. Luick was perfectly aware of³⁴. When Watson suggests the merger of the short /ea/ and /eo/, a reference is made to spellings, as well as to the parallelism of the long diphthongs³⁵. The falling together of the long diphthongs /ea:/ and /eo:/ has been suggested by Sh. Kuhn³⁶. In addition to Watson's evidence of the Lorton dialect, Kuhn points out the peculiarity of the *Cursor Mundi* to rime the reflexes of /ea:/ and /eo:/, e. g. *leme* (OE *lēoma*) : *bem* (OE *bēam*); *leue* (OE *lēaf*) : *leue* (OE *lēof*); *leue* (OE *lēaf*) : *thef* (OE *þēof*); *ded* (OE *dēad*) : *yede* (OE *ȝe-ēode*); etc. As, moreover, the reflexes of /ea:/ in the *Cursor Mundi* show a tendency to rime with the Middle English long close /e:/, e. g. *dede* (OE *dēad*) : *red* (Anglian *rēd*), the merger is described as the change of /ea:/ into /eo:/, "rather than the reverse"³⁷. The attempts to define the coalescence as the change /eo(:)/ > /ea(:)/ or /ea(:)/ > /eo(:)/ are important only from the viewpoint of the phonetic realization of the diphthong into which the original /ea(:)/ and /eo(:)/ are supposed to have merged. From the phonemic point of view the result in both cases would be identical, i. e. a new low diphthong (cf. pp. 62 – 63, the phonemic interpretation of the merger of /io(:)/ and /eo(:)/).

It might be, of course, assumed that some Northumbrian dialects had developed a two-degree diphthongal system in result of the merger of /ea(:)/ and /eo(:)/. From the functional point of view, however, the falling together of /eo(:)/ with /ea(:)/ rather than with /io(:)/ is not very likely. We have already advanced a hypothesis that in some Northumbrian dialects both /ea:/ and /eo:/ had monoph-

³² J. W. Watson, Jr., Northumbrian Old English *ēo* and *ēa*. — *Language*, vol. 22, N 1, 1946, pp. 19–26; id., Smoothing and Palatalumlaut in Northumbrian. — *English Studies in Honor of James Southall Wilson*, Charlottesville, 1951, pp. 167–174.

³³ J. W. Watson, Northumbrian Old English *ēo* and *ēa*, p. 20.

³⁴ J. W. Watson, Northumbrian Old English *ēo* and *ēa*, pp. 22–23; K. Luick, *op. cit.*, § 357, Anm. 4.

³⁵ J. W. Watson, Smoothing and Palatalumlaut in Northumbrian, p. 168.

³⁶ Sh. Kuhn, On the Syllabic Phonemes of Old English, p. 535.

³⁷ As to the short diphthongs, Kuhn remarks that their confusion "may have been purely orthographic and due to the parallel confusion of their long counterparts" (*ibidem*, p. 530). As an alternative he suggests the merger of the short diphthongs in the tenth century and their split between 1000 and 1300 (*ibidem*, p. 535), which is not a very likely hypothesis.

thongized to /æ:/ without any previous falling together³⁸. It might be similarly assumed that in some other Northumbrian dialects both /eo:/ and /ea:/ had been monophthongized to /e:/, directly or through the stage /ō:/. The latter hypothesis would account for the above-mentioned rimes of the *Cursor Mundi*. In the latter case, however, the evidence is very tenuous, as we do not know how perfect the rimes used in the *Cursor Mundi* were.

Monophthongization of /ie(:)/

The West Saxon diphthong /ie(:)/ must have been monophthongized at a comparatively early date. The process of monophthongization is unambiguously attested by the parallel use in early West Saxon writings of the spelling *ie* (e. g. *hierde* 'shepherd', *wiersa* 'worse'), on the one hand, and the spellings *i*, *y* (*hierde*, *wyrsa*), on the other³⁹. The latter spellings may testify only to a monophthongal pronunciation. The reverse spellings *ie* for the etymological /i(:)/ seem to be indicating the same, for example, *briengan* for *bringan* 'bring', *tiema* for *tīma* 'time', etc.⁴⁰ It is true, some contrast between /ie(:)/ and /i(:) y(:)/ is still to be found in writing: in words with /ie(:)/ the symbol *ie* considerably outnumbers the symbol *i*, whereas in words with /i(:)/ the symbol *ie* is scarce. Most probably the early West Saxon writings (IX c.) reflect such a stage in the monophthongization of /ie(:)/ when this diphthong could still be found at least as a free variant of monophthongs. The interchange of *ie* mainly with *i* suggests that the monophthongization resulted in an [i]-like sound. The diphthong /ie(:)/ was evidently falling together with /i(:)/. Only in the neighbourhood of labial sounds the falling was with /y(:)/ (cf. the spellings of the *wyrsa*-type).

In contrast to the early records the late West Saxon writings give evidence of the merger of /ie(:)/ with /y(:)/ (cf. *yldra* 'older', *yrmþu* 'poverty', *yrra* 'angry', *hȳran* 'hear', *cȳse* 'cheese', *frȳnd* 'friends', etc.)⁴¹. The merger with /i(:)/ has been recorded only before palatals (cf. *miht* 'might', *niht* 'night', *sihd* 'sees', *zinzra* 'younger', etc.)⁴². How the early West Saxon *i*-forms are related to the late West Saxon *y*-forms is rather obscure. From the viewpoint of the fate of /ie(:)/ the early and late West Saxon writings are usually regarded as representing two different parts of the West Saxon dialect. In one part of the dialect /ie(:)/ is supposed to have regularly changed to /i(:)/, whereas in the other part it had to be changed to /y(:)/⁴³. This suppo-

³⁸ See A. Steponavičius, *The English Vowel System in the Period of the Oldest Written Records*, pp. 28–29.

³⁹ H. Kügler, *Ie und seine Parallelförmern in Angelsächsischen*, Berlin, 1916, pp. 27 ff.

⁴⁰ K. Luick, *op. cit.*, § 263, Anm. 2; A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, § 300.

⁴¹ H. Kügler, *op. cit.*, pp. 27 ff; K. Luick, *op. cit.*, § 263; A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, § 301.

⁴² H. Kügler, *ibidem*; K. Luick, *op. cit.*, § 281. 2; A. Campbell, *ibidem*.

⁴³ Cf. K. Luick, *op. cit.*, § 263; A. Campbell, *ibidem*.

sition seems to us most probable, especially in view of some late Old English monuments from Devonshire which, retaining /y(:)/, reflect the monophthongization of /ie(:)/ to /i(:)/⁴⁴.

Monophthongization of /ea(:) eo(:) io(:)/

The monophthongization of /ea(:) eo(:) io(:)/ took place in the X-XIth centuries. This is the almost universally accepted dating of the final loss of the Old English diphthongs in non-Kentish dialects⁴⁵. The loss is clearly attested by spellings. In early Middle English the words with the original /eo(:)/ are spelled not only with *eo*, but also with *oe*, *o*, *ue*, *eu*, etc.; the words with the original /ea(:)/ are spelled with *e*, *æ*, *ea*. Besides, the same spellings *e*, *æ*, *ea* are used for the original /æ(:)/⁴⁶. In Kentish, however, the survival of the long diphthongs is often assumed as late as the XIII-XIVth centuries⁴⁷. Such assumptions are based upon the peculiarity of the Middle Kentish texts to express the reflexes of /ea:/ with the symbols *ea*, *ia*, *ya*, *yea*, *iea*, and the reflexes of /io:/ (< /io: eo:/) with *ie*, *ye*⁴⁸.

In order to better understand the process of monophthongization it is necessary to bear in mind the structural and functional peculiarities of Old English diphthongs, as well as their phonetic realization.

As the process of late Old English monophthongization is about to begin, the main phonetic types of diphthongs could be represented as in the following chart:

Phonemic Symbols	Phonetic Transcription					
	Northumbrian		Mercian		West	Kentish
	Northern	Southern	West	East	Saxon	
/ea(:)/	[æa]	[æo]	[æa] or [ea]	[æa]	[æa]	[ea]
/eo(:)/	[eə] or [ea]	[öo]	[öo]	[öo]	[öo]	
/io(:)/	[io] or [iɔ]	[io]				[iɔ]

⁴⁴ See P. Graddon, *Studies in Late West-Saxon Labialization and Delabialization. — English and Medieval Studies*. Presented to J. R. R. Tolkien on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, London, 1962, pp. 63 ff.

⁴⁵ Cf. K. Luick, *op. cit.*, §§ 355–358; R. Jordan, *op. cit.*, §§ 58, 65, 81, 84; A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, § 329.

⁴⁶ K. Luick, *op. cit.*, § 356, 357.

⁴⁷ On this see our article Судьба древнеанглийских дифтонгов /ĕa/, /ĕo/, /i^o/ в юнском, pp. 222–225. Here it may only be added that H. Hallqvist argues for the Middle English survival of a diphthongal pronunciation not only in Kentish, but also in some other parts of the Southern area; see H. Hallqvist, *Studies in Old English Fractured ea*, Lund, 1948, pp. 9–77; Sh. Kuhn, *On the Syllabic Phonemes of Old English*, p. 537.

⁴⁸ For forms see A. Степановичюс, Судьба древнеанглийских дифтонгов /ĕa/, /ĕo/, /i^o/ в кентском, pp. 215–220.

As the chart shows, there were two main types of the low diphthong /ea(:)/: the type with an open first element, i. e. [æa], found in the majority of dialects, and the Kentish type with a raised first element, i. e. [ea]. In some West Mercian dialects in which the raising of /æ/ had taken place at least the short /ea/ could also be realized as [ea]. Besides, in Southern Northumbrian /ea(:)/ had a rounded second element, and, consequently, was realized phonetically as [æo]. Yet later on this phonetic peculiarity turned out to be of no consequence for the phonemic fate of the Southern Northumbrian diphthong.

The diphthong /eo(:)/ in the majority of dialects was realized as [öo], i. e. its first element was a front rounded vowel. Such phonetic character of the diphthong should be inferred from its subsequent monophthongization to /ö(:)/⁴⁹. The Northern Northumbrian /eo(:)/, spelt *ea* and later on monophthongized to /e(:)/ and /æ(:)/, must have been realized as [eʌ] or [ea]. In those Northumbrian dialects in which the opposition /io(:)/—/eo(:)/ had been preserved, /eo(:)/ should be phonemically defined as the mid diphthong. In the other dialects from the phonemic point of view it was the high diphthong.

In Kentish the high diphthong, which is phonemically marked with the symbol /io(:)/, was phonetically realized as [ɪʌ]. The second element of the Kentish diphthong was unrounded. This may be inferred from the frequent spellings *ia* (*ea*) for /io(:)/ (< /eo(:) io(:)/)⁵⁰. Besides, the monophthongization or split of the Kentish /io(:)/ did not result in a rounded vowel. This diphthong, just like the Kentish /ea(:)/, was an opening one. A more open second element may be inferred from the monophthongization of /io(:)/ into /e(:)/. It is also very important to note that a more open second element in the diphthong /io(:)/ did not impair in any way the opposition /io(:)/—/ea(:)/, for the second element in /ea(:)/ was also more open than the first.

In those Northumbrian dialects in which /io(:)/ had been preserved it must have been realized phonetically as [io] or [ɪʌ].

The monophthongization of /ea(:) eo(:)/ led to results highly predictable by the peculiarities of the general system of vowels and the phonetic character of the diph-

⁴⁹ K. Brunner, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

⁵⁰ The use of the digraphs *ia*, *ea* for the Kentish diphthongs /io(:) eo(:)/ has been pointed out long ago, cf. H. Sweet, *A History of English Sounds*, Oxford, 1888, §464; E. Sievers-K. Brunner, *op. cit.*, § 35, Anm. 2; K. Bülbring, *op. cit.*, § 112; K. Luick, *op. cit.*, §§ 127, 260, Anm. 1. Many authors take this to be an evidence of a separate sound change, which is sometimes specified by such terms as the unrounding of the second elements of diphthongs, delabialization, etc., cf. A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, §§ 46, 280; *id.*, *An Old English Will*, p. 149; *id.*, *Some Old Frisian Sound Changes*, TPS, 1939, London, p. 86; R. Huchon, *Histoire de la langue anglaise*, I, Paris, 1923, p. 171; H. M. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, p. 188. The change, of course, was purely phonetic.

thongs. The mechanism of monophthongization was rather simple. It consisted in assimilation and reduction of the element of the diphthongs. As a rule it was the second element that was assimilated, reduced and, finally, lost⁵¹. This explains why in West Saxon, Northumbrian and in the greater part of Mercian the diphthong /ea(:)/, phonetically [æa], monophthongized to /æ(:)/. Yet the assimilatory influence was to some degree reciprocal. The assimilation of the first, dominating, element by the second, weak, element has to be assumed in the case of the diphthong /eo(:)/. Originally realized as [eu], later on as [eo], in the end it became [öo], [öə]. With the loss of the second element it became /ö(:)/. In Northern Northumbrian the diphthong /eo(:)/, phonetically [eʌ] or [ea], must have been monophthongized to /e(:)/. The long /eo:/ here could also be monophthongized to /æ:/. In those Northumbrian dialects in which /io(:)/ had been preserved it may have been monophthongized to /i(:)/⁵².

In contradistinction to the widely held opinion that the Kentish dialect preserved the Old English diphthongs as late as the XIII-XIVth centuries, we suppose that the Kentish diphthongs were lost already in the X-XIth centuries, i. e. approximately simultaneously with the loss of the diphthongs in the other dialects.

We even are of the opinion that the final results of the development both in Kentish and non-Kentish dialects were strikingly similar. Kentish differed from the other dialects not so much in the outcome as in the manner of development.

In the first place, the second elements of the Kentish diphthongs /ea(:) io(:)/ were fronted: [ea] > [eæ], [iʌ] > [iɛ]. Thus the Kentish diphthongs became monoserial, i. e. they were realized in the same front series, whereas non-Kentish diphthongs remained diserial, i. e. they glided from front to back series. In addition, they became rising diphthongs, i. e. their second elements became stronger than the first.

The fronting of [ea] to [eæ] was due to the absence of the front open vowel /æ(:)/ in the Kentish system of monophthongs:

Diphthongs	Monophthongs
	/i(:)/ /u(:)/
/io(:)/	/e(:)/ /o(:)/
/ea(:)/	/a(:)/

At the lowest degree of aperture the system of monophthongs contained only the vowel /a(:)/. In other words, tongue position was phonemically irrelevant here. Nevertheless, as is indicated by its subsequent change to /ɔ:/, the long /a:/ was phonetically a back vowel. The short monophthong /a/ could also be phonetically back.

⁵¹ Cf. K. Luick, *op. cit.*, § 355.

⁵² Cf. K. Luick, *op. cit.*, § 358.

Under such circumstances the second element of /ea(:)/ could be freely fronted without impairing the phonemic security of any other phoneme. This phonetic change but increased the margin of tolerance for /ea(:)/ and /a(:)/. The absence of the phoneme /æ(:)/ also explains why in the course of time the second element of /ea(:)/ became more prominent. The rising diphthong /ea(:)/, moreover, was more distinctly opposed to the monophthong /e(:)/. Had the Kentish /ea(:)/ remained a falling diphthong, it would have merged, in all probability, with /e(:)/. Here it is necessary to note the high frequency of the Kentish /e(:)/, into which the phonemes /æ₁:/, /æ₂:/, /æ/, /y(:)/ and /ö(:)/ had already coalesced. The diphthong /ea(:)/ was also a frequent phoneme. Therefore it was important to preserve distinction between /ea(:)/ and /e(:)/ (and between their reflexes as well)⁵³.

When we speak about the diphthong /ea(:)/ as undergoing fronting and becoming a rising diphthong, we also assume an analogous development for /io(:)/. The second element of /io(:)/ may have jumped series (i. e. [iʌ] > [ie]) by analogy with the series jump in /ea(:)/. This must have been greatly facilitated by the absence of rounding in the second element of /io(:)/. The acoustic effect produced by the back unrounded second element in [iʌ] must have been rather similar to that of front vowels. For this reason [iʌ] could easily become [ie]. Then /io(:)/, just like its counterpart /ea(:)/, changed into a rising diphthong. Here it will be interesting to note that the contrast between the short /io/ and /ea/ with their change into rising diphthongs became more distinct. The frequency of *eo*-spellings for the short /io/ may well suggest a lower front element⁵⁴. Consequently, the difference between the first elements of /io/ and /ea/ must have been rather insignificant, much less than the difference between the first elements of the long /io:/ and /ea:/. The second elements of /io/ [ie] and /ea/ [eæ] must have differed in height no less than the monophthongs /e/ - /a/ did. Therefore the short diphthongs /io/ and /ea/ could be better distinguished by their second elements.

In the course of further development the first elements of the rising diphthongs /ea(:) io(:)/ lost their sonority and, finally, disappeared or changed into the semivowel /j/. The result was the monophthongization of the diphthongs or their split into the biphenemic complex /j/ + vowel.

⁵³ Eadwine's *Canterbury Psalter* contains relic spellings like *bearn* (OE *bearn* 'child'), *eæzæ* (OE *ēaze* 'eye'), *deæþe* (OE *dēap* 'death'). These clearly manifest the fronting and, possibly, the prominence of the second element. R. Huchon interprets the spelling *eæ* as indicating the palatalization of the second element before its reduction. From our point of view such modification of the traditional spelling *ea* might suggest the phonetic distinctness and phonemic importance of the second element, rather than its reduction. See R. Huchon, op. cit., pp. 46-49.

⁵⁴ Just for this reason K. Bülbring phoneticized this Kentish diphthong not as [io], but as [i°o], see p. 63, footnote 25.

The long /ea:/ either monophthongized to /æ:/, or split into /j/ + /æ:/. It split only in definite positions. Most regularly the split occurred initially. The split could also occur medially. Here it is most likely after single consonants, especially dental stops. Medially after groups of consonants the monophthongization to /æ:/ was the rule.

The short diphthong /ea/ irrespective of its position was monophthongized to /æ/. By the time of the Middle Kentish written monuments this /æ/ had fallen together with /a/.

The long /io:/ either monophthongized to /e:/, or split into /j/ + /e:/. The long /io:/, just like the long /ea:/, split initially. Medially the split took place only in rare cases, mainly after single dental stops. Most often the diphthong was monophthongized here to /e:/. Finally the rising diphthong /io:/ changed to /i:/. The short diphthong /io/ irrespective of its position was monophthongized to /e/.

Schematically all this may be shown as follows:

/ea(:)/	[eæ] > /ea(:)/	[ɛæ] > /ea(:)/	[jæ] > /j/ + /æ:/; /æ(:)/;
/io(:)/	[ie] > /io(:)/	[iɛ] > /j/ + /e:/;	/e(:)/.

Such an interpretation of the Kentish diphthongs in the final stage of their development is in full accord with the spelling evidence of the Middle Kentish writings⁶⁵. On the whole, the biphonemic complex /j/ + /æ:/ is to be assumed for the spellings *ya, ia, yea, iea, ye*, alone or in interchange with the traditional spelling *ea*; cf. the spellings of the reflexes of such Old English words as *ĕare* 'ear', *ĕast* 'east', *ĕald* (< *eald*) 'old', *dĕad* 'dead', *bĕatan* 'beat', etc. in the *Ayenbite of Inwyt*. The single vowel /æ:/ is to be expected in those forms in which the spellings *ea* and *e* are found, alone or in interchange with each other; cf. the spellings of the reflexes of such Old English words as *grĕat* 'great', *strĕam* 'stream', *hĕaw* 'custom', etc. in the *Ayenbite of Inwyt*. It is more difficult to determine by spellings the presence of the biphonemic cluster /j/ + /e:/. It is clear that the digraphs *ye, ie* could be used for /e:/; cf. the *Ayenbite of Inwyt* spellings *hyer, hier* (OE *hĕr* 'here'), *hyere, hier* (Anglian *hĕran* 'hear'), *zuyetnesse* (OE *swĕtnes* 'sweetness'), *clier, clyer* (Old French *cler* 'clear'). Yet in such cases *ye, ie* often interchange with *e*. The biphonemic cluster /j/ + /e:/ is to be expected in those forms in which such interchange is not found; cf. the *Ayenbite of Inwyt* spellings of the reflexes of such Old Kentish forms as *iode* 'went', *diŋfol* 'devil', *diŋp* 'deep', etc. In final positions the spellings *i, y* are extensively used, indicating the change of /io:/ into /i:/: cf. *by, bi* (OE *bĕon* 'be'), *ury, uri* (OE *frĕo* 'free'), etc.

Thus the monophthongization of /ea(:) eo(:) io(:)/ resulted in the loss of a whole series of phonemes the distinctive feature of which was gliding. The monophthongi-

⁶⁵ The spelling evidence of the Middle Kentish writings is treated at greater length in А. Степонавичюс, Судьба древнеанглийских дифтонгов / ĕa/, /ĕo/, /ĕo/ в кентском, pp. 230–234.

zation, moreover, had affected the inventory of phonemes or at least their frequency. First and foremost, with the change /eo(:)/ > /ö(:)/ the series of front rounded vowels had been restored in many dialects. Thus in the eleventh century, immediately after the monophthongization, the vowel patterns in West Saxon, East Mercian and in the greater part of the Northumbrian dialects were as follows:

/i(:)/	/y(:)/	/u(:)/
/e(:)/	/ö(:)/	/o(:)/
/æ(:)/		/a(:)/.

This pattern fully coincides with the pattern of monophthongs in earlier Old English, but the front rounded vowel /ö(:)/ is of new origin here, i. e. from the monophthongized /eo(:)/. The total number of phonemes, however, remained the same, as a new monophthong, /ö(:)/, was substituted for the lost diphthong /eo(:)/. There was no restoration of /ö(:)/ in Northern Northumbrian, in which /eo(:)/ fused with /e(:)/ or /æ:/, increasing the incidence of these phonemes. Similarly the system of monophthongs was not affected by the monophthongization /eo(:)/ > /ö(:)/ in those few dialects in which the original /ö(:)/ had been preserved. Here the loss of the diphthongal phoneme /eo(:)/ but increased the incidence of the front rounded vowel /ö(:)/. In Kentish, in which both front rounded vowels were lost already in the IX-Xth centuries, the loss of the diphthong /io(:)/ increased the incidence of the vowel /e(:)/ (and the semivowel /j/).

The monophthongization and split of /ea(:)/ restored the front low vowel /æ(:)/ in the Kentish system. In the other dialects the monophthongization /ea(:)/ > /æ(:)/ was important in that it increased the incidence of the front low vowel /æ(:)/.

The most important factor that determined the loss of the Old English diphthongs was their insufficient integration in the general system of vowels.

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