

## The Origin of the Function Word *there*

Ryuichi Sugiyama

### 0.1 Introduction

It is very interesting when, how and under what conditions the function word *there*<sup>1)</sup> construction has developed which has so many grammatical peculiarities now. Studies about this problem however are very few. Curme and Mr. G. Maejima recognize the existence of 'empty word' *there* construction in OE period.<sup>2)</sup>

Though OE and PE are the same language, there is a great difference in the system of language between the two. Even if there are certain things which are quite the same in their form, it is quite possible that there occurs some difference between them when they are put in their own system of language. Standing on this point of view, we are going to search for the origin in OE.<sup>3)</sup>

### 0.2 Patterns of the Existential Construction

The contrast between *there was a woman sitting on the chair* and *a woman was sitting on the chair* is striking enough. In this connection we may suspect that the origin of the existential construction<sup>4)</sup> cannot be sufficiently elucidated only by tracing back the formative process of the FW*there* construc-

---

1) An abridged form, FW*there*, will be used hereafter.

2) Curme: *Syntax*. Boston (D.C. Heath) . 1931. p.13

3) Our data is from the following texts:

*The Battle of Maldon; Sweet's Anglo-Saxon Reader*. Oxford (Clarendon). 1959.  
*Beowulf and Judith; The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records IV*. E.K. Dobbie (ed.).  
New York (C.U.P.). 1953.

*The Blickling Homilies*. EETS. Pt. I - III. R. Morris (ed.).

*King Alfred's Orosius*. EETS. Pt. I. H. Sweet. (ed.)

*The Exeter Book*. EETS. Pt. I - III. I. Goilancz and W.S. Mackie (ed.).

*AElfric's Lives of Saints*. EETS. Pt. I - IV. W.W. Skeat (ed.).

*The Old-English Version of Bede's Ecclesiastical History*. EETS. Pt. I. 1, 2,  
Pt. II. 1, 2. T. Miller (ed.).

*Two Saxon Chronicles Parallel*. C. Plummer (ed.). Oxford (Clarendon) 1892.

*King Alfred's West-Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care*. EETS. Pt. I

II. H. Sweet. (ed.).

4) A sentence that describes existence of something by the substantive verb *wesan* or *beon*.

tion, and that we must take into consideration the analogous constructions in OE.

Our data show the following OE patterns of the existential construction.

- (1) Subject + Wesan/Beon
- (2) Wesan/Beon + Subject
- (3) Numeral + Wesan/Beon + Noun
- (4) Ðær/Ða + Wesan/Beon + Subject
- (5) Adverbials + Wesan/Beon + Subject

There are some little differences in minor details, but they are negligible from the viewpoint of the construction. In OE these patterns coexist, and of course the frequency of each is quite different. We should understand these patterns are used with their own descriptive effect based mainly upon the idea of disjunction.<sup>5)</sup> Roughly speaking, the most frequent pattern of these is (5), and (1) and (4) are the next whose frequency is about the half of (5), and (2) shows about the half frequency of (4) and (5), in our data.

From these constructions, we might build up a story of the chronological order as to the formation and development of these patterns.

### 0.3 Word Order

Before we examine our data, we should refer to word order, which is a very important element in this study. Considering that generally language cannot avoid the limitation of being linear, the distinctiveness of the initial position in a sentence is not to be denied. This is completely true even in OE, if not so obviously formalized as in PE. By this reason it is very natural that the subject which is the base of the whole statement comes first and then the verb follows which is the core of the description about the subject. And it may be reasonable to think that at least concerning subject and verb the word order 'S + V' was basic, even in OE where word order is generally said to have been comparatively free.

---

5) The common order SVO is disrupted when the first place is taken by an element which has special significance or importance in the context. (Quirk & Wrenn: *An Old English Grammar*. 146). So also, Mossé: *Manuel de l'anglais du moyen âge*. p.172.

It is generally understood that

En vieil-anglais, l'ordre dans lequel se placent les divers éléments de la phrase, sujet, verbe, objet, compléments, est beaucoup plus libre qu'en anglais moderne par exemple. La flexion est encore suffisamment riche pour permettre d'apercevoir le rôle joué par chacun de ces éléments, quelle que soit sa place.<sup>6)</sup>

In fact, the English language was originally rather synthetic like Latin, although it works with a highly analytic syntax today. And it is said that roughly till the end of the eleventh or twelfth century, it lost the great part of the word declensions and developed its analytic character.

However we must recognize there was one basic pattern even in OE. Quirk and Wrenn say,

The prose and to a lesser extent the late verse display a considerable tendency towards the order SVO/C in non-dependent clauses.<sup>7)</sup>

Other grammarians are almost of the same opinion as this.<sup>8)</sup> Also there is an information by Mr. G. Maejima; the percentage of the order 'Subject+Predicate' in the simple sentences in *Beowulf* is 63, whereas that of the order 'Predicate+Subject' is 37.<sup>9)</sup> Although this investigation is limited to the simple sentences, the figures may be convincing of the order 'S+V'.

Judging from this it is quite possible to regard the various patterns except 'S+V' as its variations based upon disjunction. From this viewpoint we can say the pattern without *þær* or *þa* reveals in the end far greater frequency than the one with them in this stage. In cooperation with the tendency towards the fixation of the word order 'S+V', there gradually arose the unfitness of an indefinite subject in the initial position. This is one of the great elements to induce the development of the FW*there* construction.

However, we must also keep in mind that the hierarchy of the positional

---

6) Moss: *Manuel de l'anglais du moyen âge; I. Vieil-anglais*. Paris (Aubier). 1950. p. 167.

7) Quirk & Wrenn: *An Old English Grammar*. London (Methuen). 1955. p. 92.

8) e.g. cf. Andrew: *Syntax and Style in Old English*. New York (Russel & Russel). 1966. p. 1. Mitchell: *A Guide to Old English*. Oxford (Basil Blackwell). 1965. p. 60.

9) G. Maejima: "The Development of *There* as an Empty Word", *Eibungaku Kenkyu (Studies in English Literature)*; X III. 1933.

distinctiveness in OE is rather different from that in PE. The subject holds a greater positional freedom in OE than in PE, and according to what position the subject keeps, the word order of other grammatical elements is defined.

## 1 The Construction Without *þær/þa*

### 1.1 Subject+Wesan/Beon

#### *Beowulf*:

992 Fela þæra wæs, /wera ond wifa

#### *Exeter*:

St. Guthlac, 923 nænig forþum wæs

#### *Orosius*:

218, 1 monega land binnan þære byrig wæron butan ælcum ierfwearde.

#### *Bede*:

68, 2 Forðon sume syndon þa ðe habbað woruldspede hwæðre stale fremmað

#### *Lives*:

XXXIV, 63 An ælmihtig god is and an geleafa.

#### *Blickling*:

175, 19 An ceaster is on Iudea lande, hatte Nazare

#### *Chronicle*:

782 seonod wæs at Aclea.

#### *Pastoral*:

15, 14 Monige menn siendon, sua sua we ær cuædon, ðe beoð geweorðode mid mielu

As we have surveyed in the last section, this pattern, namely 'S+V' may be considered as a basic form of description in OE, though not so much fixed as in PE. And it is natural that this pattern is quite common even in the description of existence of something indefinite, which is of course quite rare in PE. When the construction appears in PE, there is always some special purpose in the description.

This is a great difference between OE and PE. In OE it does not matter at all whether the subject in this pattern is definite or indefinite.

### 1.2 Wesan/Beon + Subject

#### *Exeter*:

*The Phoenix*, 305 is ymb þone sweoran swylce sunnan hring beaga

beorhtast bregden feþrum

*Maldon:*

106 wæs on eorþan cyrm

*Bede:*

182,15 Is æþele mynster in Lindesse

*Lives:*

XXXII,145 Wæs eac micel wundor.

*Blickling:*

209,29 wæron norþ of þæm stane awexene swiþe hrimige bearwas

*Chronicle:*

1099 wæs þæs ylcan dæges luna puima

*Pastoral:*

69,4 Swa sindon well monege ðara

When the word order 'S+V' is a basic form this pattern is naturally the inverted order by disjunction. In this case by placing the verb at the sentence-initial position one tries to call attention to the substantive verb. According to Curme this type of sentence was quite common in oldest English narratives because 'the idea of action often becomes prominent' and, especially in the case of the verb *be*, it is 'to call attention to a past state of things.'<sup>10</sup> There is one disputable point about this explanation. Seeing the examples above, it is clear that the tense of the verb *bes* is not 'past state' only.

This construction is hardly possible in PE. In this connection we must notice that this pattern shows so high frequency as mentioned before that it might not have had such speciality as we feel now by inversion in general. But it should be understood that emphasis is put on the substantive verb rather than the subject.

### 1.3 Adverbial + Wesan Beon + Subject

*Beowulf:*

2910 Nu ys leodum wen / orleghwile

*Orosius:*

10,28 On þæm londe is xxxii þeoda

*Bede:*

308,34 In þæm .sæ beo twegen sæflonas

10) Curme : *Syntax*. p.13.

Sugiyama : The Origin of the Function Word *there*

cf.284,30 wæs in þæm ilcan mynstre cneohtcild sum

*Lives:*

XXXII,231 On þam lande wæs sum man leofstan gehaten

*Chronicle:*

1137 In mani of þe castles wæron lof grin.

*Blickling:*

61,21 On helle beoþ þeofas, & flyte ras, & gitseras

*Pastoral:*

87,2 On ðæs sacerdes hrægle wæs toeacan golde & iacinc ðe pur[pu]-  
ran, dyrodine twegeera bleo.

This is another case of the word order 'V+S', at the initial position of which an adverb or adverbial phrase appears. This pattern however should be strictly distinguished from the above-mentioned 'V+S' order, the one without an adverb at the initial position. The latter is a form in which the verb is emphasized being placed at the initial position. But the former is the inverted order induced by putting an adverb to emphasize it. As adverbials are directly connected with verbs, it is very natural that they are closely situated in their position too. The typical example may be found in negative sentences with *wesan*.

*Beowulf:*

949 Ne bið þe nænigra gad / worolde wilna

*Exeter:*

*St. Juliana*,518 Næs ænig þara

Here the negative is often combined with the verb into one word. It may be, of course, greatly because of their phonetic reason but also the close connection between the two might not be denied there.

1.4 Numeral + Wesan/Beon + Noun

*Exeter:*

*St. Guthlac*;30 Moage sindon geond middan-geard hadas under heofonum

*St. Guthlac*,242 An is ælmihtig god

*An Adomotion*, 8-10 An is geleafa an lifgende

an is fulwihte an fæder ece

an is folces fruma se þas foldan gesceop

*Riddle*, 58, 14 þry sind in naman / ryhte runstafas

*Blickling*:

249, 21 An is Drihten God

cf. *Lives*: XXIII, 365 twegen ðær wæron hisceop-hades men

This pattern is peculiar to OE and impossible in PE. Of course the verbs here are all complete intransitive verbs. There is not any mentioning to this in OE grammar books at hand. These examples are all we got from the nine texts. As the examples show the adjectives are all numeral adjectives or the like, that is, *monge* (=many). It may follow that the number of the existing subject is emphasized here by putting numeral ahead separated from its modifying noun. This peculiar disjunction in OE may also tell us the distinctiveness of the first position. That it is found with numeral adjective is never without reason.

## 2. The Construction with *þær/þa*

### 2.1 *þær* and *þa* — The Etymology

The OE adverbs *þær* and *þa* have the same etymon, pre-Gmc. demonstrative stem\* *to-*. In *OED* the etymology of *þær* and *þa* is explained as follows;

OE. *þær*, *þār*, *þēr*, cognate with OS. *thār*, OFris. *thēr*, *dēr*, MLG. *dārt* MDu. *d̄ar*, Du. *dear*, OHG. *dar* (MHG. *Odār*, *dā*, Ger. *da*); cf. also Goth. *þar*, ON. *þar* (Sw., Da. pre-Teut. *to-* (That, The) . The adverbial suffix *-der*); all derivatives of the demonstrative stem *þa-*, pre-Teut. *to-* (That, The) . The adverbial suffix *-r* appears also in OE. *hwær*, *hwer*, *hwar*, WHERE.<sup>11)</sup>

OE. *þá*, *þá* ON. *þá* (Norw. *daa*. Sw. *da*, Da. *da*) then, when; orig. a case-form of the demonstr. stem *þa-* of THE, THAT: either the actual acc. sing. fem., OE. and ON. *þa*, or (as some think) a stressed form of the orig. acc. masc.; meaning 'that time', the sb. being omitted;<sup>12)</sup>

Both of these adverbs, though one expresses time, and the other place, have the demonstrative function, which suggests the possibility of gaining its nature of a function word.

11) *OED*, s. v. *There*

12) *ibid.*, s. v. *Tho*

## 2.2 The Functions

The OE *þær* had some functions different from those in Mod E. *there*, e.g. as a conjunction (=when, where, etc.). But as an adverb it was almost equivalent to Mod E. *there*, a demonstrative adverb.

The formation of the function word *there* is, therefore, the process where the demonstrative adverb *there* weakened its demonstrative function, on one hand, and its adverbial function, on the other. By weakening the demonstrative function, we mean the expansion of introducing function, and by weakening the adverbial function, is meant its positional fixation, or its gaining the sentence-initial position. Thus, in order to consider the origin and the development of the FW*there*, we must notice more than anything else, two aspects, the functional change, and the positional.

t

## 2.3 *þær* / *þa* + Wesan / Beon + Subject

Considering the etymon, it is quite natural that there is a strong tendency to put the adverbs, *þær* and *þa*, at the initial position both in OE verse and prose. And in this case the word order usually follows the inverted order 'V+S'.

*Beowulf*:

2105 *þær wæs gidd ond gleo.*

*Maldon*:

231 *þær wæs stið gemot.*

*Exeter*:

*Christ*, 537 *þær wæs wopes hring*

*Orosius*:

20, 18 *ac þær bið medo genoh.*

*Blickling*:

61, 24 *þær beoþ eac yfele gerefan*

*Chronicle*:

654 *forþan þet ðær is an wæl þe is gehaten Medeswæl.*

*Pastoral*:

269, 11 *Ðær wæs sui ðe sui ð lic gesuinc*

These should be analysed as 'Adverb + Wesan/Beon + Subject'. In other

words, an adverb is presented at the initial position in order to emphasize it and this induces the inversion between S and V. The adverb *þær* here has the demonstrative, full local meaning being accompanied by no other local adverbials in the same sentence and indicates some place adverbials shown before. It is quite the same about the adverb *þa*, an adverb of time, this time. The examples are as follows.

*Beowulf*:

2982 Ða wæron monige þe his mæg wri ðon.

*Maldon*:

103 þa wæs feohte neh

*Exeter*:

St. Guthlac ða wæs wop and heaf

*Orosius*:

78, 33 þa wæs mid him an wræcces of Læcedamania, Creca byrg, se wæs haten Damera.

*Bede*:

126, 29 Ða wæs sum cyningas þegn

*Lives*:

XXVLLL,160 þa wæs langsum lif

*Blickling*:

113, 7 þa wæs his neh maga sum & his worldfreonda

*Chronicle*:

1070 þa wæs þære an cyrce weard Yware wæs gehaten

Both *þær* and *þa* are a demonstrative adverb so that they cannot exist without any preceding local or temporal adverbials respectively. If they are used quite independently, they would be entirely meaningless. In other words the adverb *þær* or *þa* is as it were a medium between the preceding adverbials and the succeeding verb. And it must be noticed that the demonstrative function in this case is anaphoric.

#### 2.4 *þær/þa* + *Wesan/Beon* + Subject + Adverbials

It is however quite different when *þær* or *þa* is accompanied by local or temporal adverbials respectively in the same sentence.

*Beowulf*:

2231 þær wæs swylvra fela/in ðam eorð hu se ærgestreona

*Orosius*:

19,3 þær sint swi ðe micle meras fersce geond pa moras

*Lives*:

XXII,38 Ðær wæs sum forð þegen on þære fore-sædan byrig

*Blickling*:

239,12 And þær wæron on þæm carcerne twa hund and'eahta and feowertig wera, and nigon and feowertig wifa

*Chronicle*:

1140 þer wæs inne micel hungær

*Beowulf*:

837 Ða wæs on morgen mine gefræge/ ymb þa gifhealle guðrinc monig

*Bede*:

56,25 Ða wæs on þa tid Æ ðelbyrht cyning haten on Centrice, mihtig

*Lives*:

XXXI,1309 þa wæron on þa timan æt condatensem mynstre þa preostas ungehware

*Blickling*:

199,26 Ða wæs on þa ilcan tid on þære heora byrig se wæs haten Sepontus halig biscep.

*Chronicle*:

1070 Ða wæs mycel hunger þæs geares.

Here the adverbs *þær* and *þa* appear with adverbial phrases with a local meaning. And there is tautology in this pattern. In the *þær/þa*-sentence without adverbials of the kind, which we dealt with in the last section, the adverbs *þær* and *þa* are anaphoric in their demonstrative function. But if they are anaphoric also in this pattern, the relation between the adverbials and them cannot be explained. It should be understood that the *þær* or *þa* is mainly deictic, lightly indicating the later appearing adverbials.

The fact that the demonstrative adverbs which were originally used with anaphoric meaning are accompanied by the local or temporal adverbials may be showing that they weakened the demonstrative function to a great extent becoming rather pleonastic. Here is a possibility towards a function word. And in

this case *þær* or *þa*, in cooperation with its initial position, gains an introducing function. We must, however, pay attention to the fact that the words did not lose the demonstrative function at all. We still admit the anaphoric function though almost potential, in addition to the newly obtained deictic one. Context, this is the thing that we must now pay attention to. We are going to examine some examples from this point of view.

## 2.5 On the Records in *OED*

Consulting *OED*, we see the first record of the FW*there* with the substantive verb *wesan* or *beon* recorded in *King Alfred's Orosius*.

893 K. Alfred *Oros.* *þær* is mid Estum an mægð

1297 R. Glouc. (Rolls) *þer* nas prince in al þe world of so noble fame.

1300 *Cursor M.* Vp risen [he] es, dut es *þar* nan.

Ne was tar noiþer seke ne fere.

These are the first three records in *OED*. The first and only one record in OE is recorded as in 893 and the second one in 1297, long after that. The condition in form to be the FW*there* construction seems to be enough with a place adverb phrase. But how about the context? We will quote here the passages around the sentence quoted in *OED* from *King Alfred's Orosius*.

∇ *þæt* is mid Estum þeaw *þæt þær* sceal ælces geðeodes man beon forbærned; gyf *þar* man an ban findeð unforbærned, hi hit sceolan miclum gebetan. ∇ *þær* is mid Estum an mægð *þæt* hi magon cyle gewyrca; ∇ þy ðær licgað þa deadan men swa lange ne fuliað, þoet hy wyrca þone cyle him on. ∇ þeah man asette twegen fætels full ealað oððe wæteres, ...<sup>13)</sup>

It seems to have no direct connection with the previous sentence and an indefinite subject is introduced in the narrative tone. In addition the head word *þær* is used rather redundantly in its adverbial function because of the succeeding adverbial phrase 'mid Estum'. Considering these facts the *þær* in question seems to be a complete function word. But we cannot deny on the other hand the connection of the *þær* as a local demonstrative adverb to the context, that is, a potentially working anaphoric and deictic function. It may be called, as it

13) *King Alfred's Orosius*, p. 21, ll. 10-16.

were, a situational function. In the passages cited above the first *þær* and the second *þær* are indicating the previous local adverbial phrase 'mid Estum'. The *þær* in question is also in such a stream of the narrative, even if it introduces a new character into the story, which is one of the great characteristics of *FWthere* in PE.

Moreover the beginning of the paragraph which contains the sentence is as follows:

Þæt Estland is swyðe mscel, ⁊ þær bið swyðe manig burh, ⁊ on ælcra byrig bið cyningc. ⁊ þær bið swyðe mycel hunig fisc(n)að; ⁊ se cyning ⁊ þa ricostan men drincað myraa meolc, ⁊ þa unspedigan ⁊ þa þeowan drincað medo. Þær bið swyðe mycel gewinn betweenan him. ⁊ ne bið ðær nænig ealo gebrowen mid Estum, ac þær bið medo genoh. ⁊ þær is mid Estum ðeaw, ponne þær bið man dead, ...<sup>14)</sup>

We find there is a succession of *þærs* here. The *þærs* without local adverbials obviously indicate the previous adverbials. But the *þærs* underlined seem to be also added rather redundantly by the influence of the context. And reading along the stream of the context, we feel there a vague anaphoric thread as well as a deictic one. And the passage with an underline quite resembles the sentence quoted in *OED*. In both cases the local adverb phrase 'mid Estum' is ahead and it is shown again in the sentence. Though in the latter a new character is introduced in a little different story, the *þær* is not out of the influence of the phrase 'mid Estum' that precedes it. It should be however regarded as quite a developed function word. This may be the limitation of a function word in OE.

We will examine another example which is a little different from the above-mentioned one:

For ðæm, ðonne mon ða fæstrædnesse his modes innan forlist, ðonne bið he hwilum swiðe ungestæðð iglice astyred utane on his limum, & gekkyðð on ðære styringe ðara telgena utane ðæt ðær ne bið nan fæstnung on ðæm wyrtruman innan.<sup>15)</sup>

14) *ibid.* , p. 20 , 11 . 14-20.

15) *Pastoral* , p. 359, 11 . 5-9.

The *ðær* in the underlined part, for example, might be almost a perfect function word, if it is taken out from the context. Because the *ðær* in the initial position does not seem to play any important function in meaning. But, as we have pointed out before we must examine the sentence in the context, not taking it out alone. There is no succession of *þær* here. But there is a contrast between 'innan' and 'utane' instead and so the local adverbials are heavy in meaning here. Thus induced by the contrast, the *ðær* in this case is added here with indication to the succeeding place adverb phrase.

## 2.6 *þa*+*Wesan/Beon*+*þær*

Those discussed above are the patterns whose initial position is occupied by either *þær* or *þa*. But in the following examples both *þær* and *þa* appear at or near the beginning of a sentence.

*Lives:*

XVII, 191 *þa* wæs *ðær* gehende anheord swina

XXII, 13 *þa* wæs *ðær* mid petre sum arwur *ðe* godes man

*Blickling:*

215,8 *Ða* wæron *þær* manige men

*Pastoral:*

125,20 *ðonne* sceal *ðær* bion gierd.

This pattern is found only in the three texts. And in all cases except one, *þa* or *þonne* precedes *þær*. There are adverbial phrases of place in almost all the sentences, but none of time. *þa* or *þonne*, in this case, should be regarded as a demonstrative adverb. *þær* which comes after *wesan* might be ahead of the substantive verb if there was not adverb *þa* or *þonne*. It works also in this case quite like a function word with deictic function.

## .7 *þonne*+*Wesan/Beon*+Subject

When *þonne* comes first, it should be also classified as the structure 'Adverb + *Wesan/Beon*+Subject'. It is an inversion caused by the adverb *þonne* coming to the initial position. The examples are as follows:

*Orosius:*

19,10 *þonne* is an port on suðewardum *þæm* lade, man hæð Sciringes heal

*Bede:*

292,14 þonne is sum wundor hælo

*Blickling:*

179,9 þonne syndon on þyssum Simone twa speda, mannes & deofles

*Pastoral:*

47,8 Ðonne siendon monige ðe fleoð for eað modnesse anre

We must notice here that there is not an example with adverbial phrases of time in this pattern, at least in our data. This is a great difference between *þa* and *þonne*. In the sense that *þonne* had also the demonstrative function, it could have been also a function word, at least to the extent that *þa* could be. But we cannot find in *þonne*-sentences the duplication of the adverbial function with adverbial phrases of time which is a strong proof to be a function word. It may be therefore quite a possible presumption that *þonne* is stronger in its adverbial function than *þa*. In fact the word *þonne* sounds heavier than *þa* and so it might not have been suitable for a function word.

### 3.1 The Origin

We have surveyed the pattern ‘*þær/þa* + *Wesan/Beon* + Subject + Adverbials’ and recognized there the possibility towards the *FWthere* construction as we have now. It might not be denied that this pattern is the prototype of the *FWthere* construction. Then how did it come about? The process is the process of the originating of the construction.

As we have seen the characteristics of this pattern is the tautology of *þær* or *þa* and adverbials. This is surely an important clue to considering the origin of the *FWthere* construction. Since *þær* and *þa* were originally demonstrative adverbs with full meaning, it is not reasonable to think that the tautology is original, not derivative. It is, therefore, very natural to presume that either *þær* or *þa*, or adverbials were added to an original pattern.

The most possible presumption is that the adverbials might be added to the pattern ‘*þær/þa* + *Wesan/Beon* + Subject’. The basic form might have been the one inverted by disjunction, with its first place taken by adverb in order to emphasize it. And in the course of time the pattern was established as a form of the existential construction, when the demonstrative adverb *þær* or *þa* natural-

ly weakened its demonstrative function by its formalization. Then it was possible to accompany some adverbials of place or time respectively, or it may be better to say that the necessity of the other adverbials came about. Thus the adverbials came to be added to the original pattern 'þær þa + Wesan Beon + Subject'. This may be the prototype of the FW*there* construction.

þær and þa in this pattern therefore gained the introducing function in inverse proportion to its weakening their demonstrative function. This is proved by the fact that in ME the place of the FW*there* was sometimes taken by another function word *it*. *OED* gives us some examples:

*CursorM.* 22169 *It* es na land at man kan neuen.

*Gaw. & Gr. Knt.* 280 *Hit* arn aboute on þis bench bot berdle chylder.

The *it* or *hit* is a function word, which has no other function but introducing. In our corpus also we can find out an example of it, in which the *hit* can be þær, which should be *there* if in PE.

*Pastoral*:

467, 31 Is hit lytel tweo ðæt ðæs wæterscipes welsprynge is on hefonrice.

These examples may show us how near the word þær had approached to the function word.

We have traced back the origin of the FW*there* to the adverbs þær or þa at the initial position of a sentence in OE. And we have recognized that some of them were almost a function word. We cannot however admit them as a perfect function word yet in OE. Because the word þær, for example, often appears with local adverbials and þa with temporal. This means that they still had the originally owned demonstrative function; þær was local and þa was temporal. Moreover, as we have pointed out before, there is a function in context, namely a situational function, which works like a lightly added conjunction under the influence of the preceding adverbials. In short they could not be free from the context, and under the restriction they were like a function word.

Thus it is not till the þær or þa can be used quite independently of its context that we can admit the word as a complete function word. It is then that

the pattern is established as a form of the existential construction. In this sense we say, though we can admit the prototype of the *FWthere* construction in OE, it is not complete yet.

### 3.2 On Curme's Study

About the *FWthere* there are very few historical studies. We will see next Curme's study. Curme explains the process of the coming about of the *FWthere* construction as follows:

In oldest English it was quite common in narrative to put the verb in or near the first place, since in narrative the idea of action often becomes prominent, or a form of the verb *be* was brought forward to call attention to a past state of things.<sup>16)</sup>

The point is that the bare construction of the order 'V+S' was quite common since oldest English period.

Since, however, this word-order with the verb in the first place had even in Old English become intimately associated with idea of a question, it gradually became normal usage to place an adverb before the verb to differentiate narrative from interrogation.<sup>17)</sup>

Originally, he thinks, the word order 'V+S' in 'Adverb+V+S' was not the inversion caused by the coming of adverb in the initial position but adverb was placed at the head of the original pattern 'V+S' by the reason quoted above. But this explanation of his is for adverb in general. It is not satisfactory for the historical necessity of the *FWthere* and why the word order has settled only in this existential construction.

Standing on this study, Mr. Maejima concludes his study about the origin of the empty word *there* as follows:

- (1) The construction '*There*+Verb of Existence+Subject' is not simply constructed by putting the adverb *there* at the head of a sentence. And the inversion of subject and verb is not because of the preceding of the adverb.
- (2) In this case the original word order was 'Verb of Existence+Subject',

---

16) Curme: *Syntax*, p.13.

17) *ibid.*, p.13.

which dates from the age of PIE.

(3) Anticipatory *there* (or *it*) was already used as an empty word since the age of OE or before that.

(4) *Beon* in the initial position is rare in OE.<sup>18)</sup>

There are some disputable points about these conclusions. He distinguishes severely the empty word *þær* and adverb *þær*. But even *þær* in 'þær+Verb of Existence+Subject' is very often obviously an adverb with the full local meaning. It is not mentioned what is the difference between the two, on which we can distinguish them. According to him, it may follow that the word *þær* was added to the original pattern 'Wesan/Beon+Subject' as it were, a mere marker to avoid the confusion. But it is often very hard to distinguish one from another. There remains a question if there existed the two sentences which are quite the same in their construction and still different in meaning, in spite of its frequent appearing.

### 3.3 The Rivalry of *þær* and *þa*

As we have seen, the adverbs *þær* and *þa* had originally equal possibility towards a function word and in fact there are many records in which they should be considered to be a function word, showing almost equal frequency, at least in our data. In short there were two prototypes of function word coexisting in OE. And it naturally follows that the two words had their own reason of existing respectively in that stage. This is a strong proof too that the two words still bore their originally owned meaning to some extent as we have pointed out.

At any rate they had quite an equal possibility to grow into a perfect function word. We have however only one function word, *there*, today. What is the inevitability of surviving of *þær*? There was another word *þa* in OE which was a varied form of *se*, a personal or demonstrative pronoun. And when it was used as a nominative plural, the form and the position it occupied in a sentence quite resembled the FW*þa*. There was always the danger of confusing between the two words. Then naturally enough the FW*þa* became gradually obsolete because there were two function words in rivalry. The FW*þær* thus

18) G. Maejima: "The Development of *There* as an Empty Word", *Eibungaku Kenkyu* (*Studies in English Literature*), X III, 1933. p. 409. (translated from Japanese)

became predominant in the course of time.

#### 4. Conclusion

We have surveyed the origin or the prototype of the construction and the analogues in OE and traced the process towards a more developed form of it.

Comparing each frequency, the *þær*-, or *þa*-construction is far fewer than the ones without them concerning the existential construction. In this case however we must keep in mind that the data are in both constructions confined to the sentences with an indefinite subject. The function of the FW*þær* or *þa* was mainly to introduce a sentence so that the subject could be both definite and indefinite (e.g. indefinite(8): definite(5) in *Orosius*). In short the prototype of the FW*there* construction coexisted with other existential constructions. It was not yet given the predominant position in the existential statement in OE.

As we have examined the only one record of the FW*there* in OE in the last chapter, it cannot be denied at all that even the *þær* bears potentially an anaphoric function as well as deictic one. Therefore there were two function words in OE, that is, *þær* in the local context, *þa* in the temporal one. In the sense that the function words cannot be entirely free from those restrictions, we can say, at least from our materials, that there was not a complete function word yet in OE and that the origin of it was obviously the adverb *þær* in the initial position of the sentence of the existential statement in OE.

We can easily presume the later process of the construction concerned. That is to say, when the pattern was established more firmly and in proportion to that the word *þær* became empty, it approached to the more complete form. But here is another important element to be taken into consideration: the tendency towards the fixation of word order. The development of the FW*there* construction cannot be without the fixation of word order, for the peculiarity of this pattern is, in a word, to empty the ordinary subject position. Therefore we can presume that the existential constructions without *þær* or adverbials at the head became gradually unsuitable because the subject at the initial position increased its weight in description by the union of its being central in description and the distinctiveness of the initial position. In other words, one came to feel an awkwardness to place an indefinite subject at that position, when one wanted to express existence of something indefinite. Up to this, the discussion may be

true of other construction, that is, 'Indefinite Subject+Verb(except *Be*)'. But we must notice here the peculiarity of existential *be*, its vagueness in description. This is why only this pattern has developed and why the pattern 'Indefinite Subject+Wesan/Beon' has become fewer in spite of the far greater frequency in OE.

At any rate we must wait for the appearance of the genuine FW*there* construction until ME onward. We must continue our study through ME and Mod.E and the process will be clarified more in detail.