THE GRAMMATICALIZATION OF *DOWN*

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ABSTRACT

The present paper discusses the grammaticalization of down, focusing on when the process began and how it developed. The ultimate origin of down, both the adverb and the preposition, should be traced back to OE dūn 'hill, mountain', whose frequency of occurrence in Old English is comparable to those of beorg and munt. By means of grammaticalization the noun dūn came to function as an adverb meaning 'in a descending direction; from above, or towards that which is below; from a higher to lower place or position' already in Late Old English. The adverbial meaning of dūn is derived from OE of dūne 'off the hill or height' (glossing L de monte). The expression of dūne gave rise to the adverb adūne which was aphetized to dūn (doun, down) at the beginning of the twelfth century. By analysing the textual evidence, the present investigation is an attempt at verifying this date.

1. Introduction

Research into grammaticalization has a long history. The term itself was introduced by Meillet in 1912 but, as indicated by Lehmann (2002: 1-7), the sources of grammaticalization are to be sought in Condillac's *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines* of 1746, Humboldt's "On the genesis of grammatical forms and their influence on the evolution of ideas" of 1822, and in German Neogrammarian Georg von der Gabelentz's *Die Sprachwissenschaft* of 1891 (cf. Fischer – Rosenbach 2000).

   Grammaticalization is defined as the process by which major lexical categories, i.e. nouns, verbs and adjectives, become minor grammatical categories such as adverbs, prepositions or auxiliaries, which in turn are further grammaticalized into affixes, clitics and even inflectional markers (McMahon 1994: 160). Grammaticalization is a process triggered by semantic or pragmatic factors, followed by grammatical and phonetic changes. When viewed from his-

torical perspective, grammaticalization is a chain of changes "whereby a lexical item or construction in certain uses takes on grammatical characteristics, or through which a grammatical item becomes more grammatical" (Hopper – Traugott 2003: 2). It is important that a lexical item tends to go through a series of small transitions, rather than to shift from category to category abruptly.

The present paper is an attempt at identifying the path which led to the development of the adverb and preposition *down* in English, focusing on when the process began and how it developed. Yet another aim of the present study is to determine the causal relationship between the decline of *dūn* 'a hill, mountain' as one of the major nouns designating an elevation of land in Old English and the emergence of the adverb and preposition *downe* in Late Old English.

2. Old English *dūn*

The etymological roots of OE *dūn* 'a hill, mountain' are doubtful. Frequently regarded to be Celtic, related to OIr. *dún* 'hill, hill-fort', the word displays likeness to ODu. *dūna* 'sandhill' which, as emphasized by the *OED*, is potential proof that the word was brought by the Saxons from the Continent. Gelling and Cole (2000: 164) point out that "… there is no easy association to be made with *dūno-*, the Romano-British form of a word", meaning 'fortified place', whose Old English cognate was *tūn* rather than *dūn* because the evidence coming from place names excludes any association with fortification or enclosure. The hypothesis of the West Germanic provenance of OE *dūn* is supported by the fact of the exact correspondence in form and gender of the Old English and Old Dutch word. As explained by Kitson (forthcoming), the absence of the meaning 'mountain' for *dūn* in continental Germanic dialects confirms the hypothesis that the new sense was developed by the Anglo-Saxons in the British Isles, probably to fill the gap caused by a semantic change that affected *beorg*, the native word for a mountain. It seems that at a particular time the speakers of Old English felt that *beorg* did not properly express the concept of a higher eminence of land. This, in turn, is consistent with the fact that in literary Old English the noun *beorg* was used to designate hills, heaps, mounds and burial tumuli rather than mountains.

In literary Old English the noun *dūn* possessed two related meanings, that of 'hill' and/or 'mountain'. The high frequency of its occurrence in literary texts of all genres, including charters, constitutes proof that the noun enjoyed a strong systemic position among other names for elevations of land in Old English. It seems that *dūn* in charters as well as in literary Old English could be both the normal word for "mountain" and the most general word for an eminence in the landscape. Cf.:

1) a. … ða on *dunum* gesæt heah mid hlæste holmærna mæst, earc Noes, þe Armenia hatene syndon

> (*Genesis*, MS Junius 11: 1421-1423).

[… then on a mountain, which is called Armenia, sat high the most loaded ship, Noah's ark.]

b. … þætte cyning engla … munt gestylleþ, gehleapeþ hea *dune*, hyllas ond cnollas bewriþ mid his wuldre…

> (*Christ*: 715-718).

[… that king of angels … rushes through a mountain, leaps over a high mountain/hill, binds hills and knolls with his glory…]

c. Eall eorþe bifaþ, and ealle *duna* dreosaþ and hreosaþ, and þa beorgas bugaþ and myltaþ…

> (Wulfstan, *Homilies*: 26).

[The whole earth trembles, and all mountains topple and shake, and the hills bow and melt…]

d. Sion is an *dun*: and heo is gecweden scawungstow…

> (Ælfric, *Catholic Homilies* I: 14.1).

[Sion is a mountain: and it is called place of observation…]

As is documented in the selected quotations, *dūn* was employed to designate not only the unspecified elevations of land (1b, c), but also particular biblical and classical hills and mountains (1a, d). This evidence makes *dūn* one of the key elements in the Old English semantic field HILL/MOUNTAIN. Moreover, *dūn* proved morphologically productive, giving birth to compounds and morphological derivatives like *dūn-ælf* 'mountain-nymph', *dūn-hunig* 'mountain-honey', *dūn-land* 'hilly country', *dūn-lēah* 'glade in the wood or clearing on a hill' (only in charters and bounds), *dūnlendisc* 'mountainous, hilly' (glossing L *montanus*), *dūnlic* 'of the mountain', *dūn-scræf* 'mountain-gorge' and *nēah-dūn* 'neighbouring hill'.

The analysis of Old English texts has shown that *dūn* was very frequently used in all kinds of texts: poetry and prose, religious or secular. Applied in various registers and writing styles it enjoyed a strong systemic position in the lexicon of Old English. Table 1 summarizes the results of findings (Sądej 2008):

Table 1. The number of occurrences of *dūn* in the selected Old English texts

Meaning	Number of occurrences
Independent word meaning 'hill, mountain'	334 (44,89%)
Place-name element meaning 'hill, mountain'	410 (55,11%)
TOTAL	744 (100%)

In the corpus of texts examined *dūn* is registered 744 times with the meaning 'hill, mountain', 334 times as an independent item (including proper names), and 410 times as a place-name element. All these data show that *dūn* was a frequent word in both positions and functions. Interestingly, the frequency of the occurrence of *dūn* is comparable to that of *beorg* (27%), which to a certain degree changes the composition of forces within the semantic field HILL/ MOUNTAIN.

The onomastic material shows that *dūn* was very frequently used in forming place names. The research of Old English texts has revealed that *dūn* appeared even more frequently as a place-name element than as an independent lexical item (cf. Table 1). Its significance is emphasized in Gelling and Cole (2000: 164): "This word [*dūn*] is consistently used in settlement-names for a low hill with a fairly level and fairly extensive summit which provided a good settlement-site in open country." It seems that in Old English it was *dūn* rather than *beorg* that was the key word designating a hill or, what is more important, a mountain.

3. Middle English *downe*

The semantic history of ME *downe* shows its gradual elimination from the body of synonyms of *hill*, *mountain*, which is reflected in a drastic decrease in its frequency of occurrence. The analysis of selected Middle English texts shows that it has approximately 5% share in the semantic field HILL/MOUNTAIN in Middle English (Sądej 2008). While the noun *downe* began to disappear, the adverb, and later also the preposition, deriving from *downe* spread. The noun was not immediately erased from Middle English, which is illustrated by the following quotations:

2)   a. He, and aaron, and hut ben gon
          Heg up to a *dune* sone o-non…

                                                   (*Genesis & Exodus*: 3379-3378).

      b. Dubbed wern alle þo *downez* sydez
          Wyth crystal klyffez so cler of dynde…

                                                   (*The Pearl*: 73-74).

c. Boldely owt of the borowe þey ryde
    Into a brode fylde.
    The *downe* was bothe longe and brode…

(*Octovian*: 1316-1318).

d. & wendeþ forþ wiþ gode wille
    Ouer þe *dounes* & þe dales snelle

(*The romance of Guy of Warwick*: 4037-4038).

As shown above, ME *downe* preserved its Old English sense 'a hill, an eleva-
tion' (2a, b), but it also developed an additional meaning, 'an open expanse of
elevated land' (2c, d) at the close of the thirteenth century. Yet, a new tendency
in the distribution of *downe* in Middle English could be observed. It seems that
the process of grammaticalization resulted in the gradual elimination of *downe*
from the body of the synonyms of *hill*, *mountain*. The reanalysis of the noun
downe as, first, an adverb and then a preposition, resulted in the loss of expres-
sivity of the noun. Yet, a different, although less probable, order of changes can
be postulated. The Old English semantic field HILL/MOUNTAIN enjoyed a rela-
tive balance between its three major elements: *beorg*, *munt* and *dūn*. This bal-
ance was overturned by the introduction of the loanword *mountaine*, which
seems to have affected the position of *beorg* and *dūn*. The two items could have
undergone semantic bleaching which, consequently, offered an opportunity for
dūn to grammaticalize.

4. Grammaticalization of *down*

The grammaticalization of *down* began already in Late Old English. At the first
stage the preposition *of* preceded the noun *dune* to form the prepositional phrase
of dune (possibly glossing L *de monte*), which seems to have the adverbial
meaning 'off the hill, from the height', cf.:

3)   a.   Ðonne on ðone dic ðær Esne ðone weg fordealf ðonon *of dune* on ðæs

          wælles heafod ðonne ðær *of dune* on broc oð tiddesford

(847/846, Ch 298; London, British Library, |
MS Cotton Charters viii).

[Then to the ditch where the way Esne delves, then of down to the top
of the dike, then of down to the brook to Tid's ford.]

b.   Swa *of dune* on stream đat up of streame on hanan welle

(*Ch*: 364).

[So of down to stream, then up of stream to cock's well.]

c.   Ea *of dune* sceal flodgræg feran

(*Maxims* II: 30).

[River of a mountain (of down) shall grey as the sea flow.]

d.   Gyf him þince, þæt he *of dune* astige, broces del he onfehþ

(*Prognostics* 6.8: 40).

[If he thinks that he of down goes (descends), a great deal of brooks he joins.]

One of the most important semantic mechanisms at work in the process of grammaticalization is metaphor (Fischer – Rosenbach 2000: 14; Hopper – Traugott 2003: 84-87), which seems to have been applied at the initial stages of the grammaticalization of *down*. The spatial term *down* can be metaphorically derived from the noun designating an elevation of land, as shown in the quotations under (3). In addition, Fischer and Rosenbach (2000: 15) indicate that metaphorical change is related to analogy as "a word-sign used for a particular object or concept comes to be used for another concept because of some element that these two concepts have in common." The development of the meaning 'downwards, down' from the meaning 'of a mountain' seems to be a natural process.

This initial stage of grammaticalization of *down* is characterized by a high degree of ambiguity because such instances of the construction *of dune* could be interpreted both as 'of a hill, of a mountain' and 'downwards' (cf., e.g., 3c). Such ambiguity results from the process of reanalysis, which is understood as the modification of the syntactic, morphological and semantic properties of items undergoing grammaticalization. Hopper and Traugott (2003: 52) point out that in some contexts two interpretations are possible, which allows for the item to continue to be analyzed as before, and for a new analysis to be implemented. Finally, the two forms can coexist.

As the *OED* informs us, the expression *of dūne* underwent weakening and gave rise to the adverb *adūne*, and such forms are found already in Late Old English, cf.:

4) a. Of hris wege *adune* to þære dene andlang þære dene to ægan stane
            (777, Ch 145; London, British Library MS Cotton Tib. A. xiii).

        [Of bush way down to the valley, along the valley to (?) own stone.]

    b. Ærest uppan dune æt Achangran of Achangran *adune* on Sandford
        landgemære, þonne *adune* an þa ealdan dic, þanon oþ Sandford, þonne
        andlang þæs ealdan weges oþ Cytelwylle
            (c900, Ch 380; London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius E).

        [First up the hill at Achangran, of Achangran down to Sandford bound-
        ary, then down to the old ditch, then as far as Sandford, then along the
        old way up to Cytelwylle.]

    c. Moyses eode þa *adun* of ðam munte, & hæfde him on handa twa
        stænene tabulan (cf. L *reversus est Moses de monte*)
                                                              (*Exodus* 32.15).

        [Moses went then down of the mountain, and held in his hands two
        writing tablets made of stone.]

    d. … þær feoll *adune* swilce of ðam hrofe wearm hlaf mid his syflinge
                                        (Ælfric, *Catholic Homilies* II: 10 82.56).

        [… there fell down from the warm roof bread and his food.]

    e. … hig wæron ... on forclungenum treowe ahangene þa fet up and þæt
        heafod *adun...*
                                            (*Vindicta Salvatoris* 1 17.4, Cambridge,
                                            University Library, MS. Ii.2.11).

        [… they were hanged feet up and the head down on a withered tree…]

The adverb *adune* was very frequent in charters where it was commonly em-
ployed to delimit the estate boundaries (e.g. 4a, b). Note that the quotation un-
der (4b) exemplifies the co-occurrence of the adverb *adune* and the noun *dune*,
which indicates that grammaticalization was in progress. It should be empha-
sized that, according to some scholars (Sweetser 1990; Traugott – König 1991),
grammaticalization in its early stages, involves an increase in pragmatic mean-
ing because a term fits into a greater number of contexts. The example (4c)
shows that *adune* was employed as an equivalent of L *de monte*, which con-

firms the aforementioned *OED* explanation of the origin of the adverb *down*. The citations (4d, e) demonstrate the two main meanings of *adune*, that of 'movement from a higher to lower position in space' and 'in a lower place'.

The appearance of the aphetised form *doune* completes the adverb formation process. One of the elements of grammaticalization, the aphesis, constitutes a proof for the phonetic reduction in progress. Such aphetised forms were employed already in Late Old English, cf.:

5)   a. …and swa *dæon* on bære leage

                              (c765, Ch 50; London, British Library, MS Add.
                                       33182 & , Lambeth Palace 1212)

        [… and so down to the pasture meadow]

      b. … swa *dun* æfter þæs biscopes gemere on bennancumbes ford
                  (938, Ch 440; London, British Library, MS Add. 15350)

        [… so down after the bishop's boundary to Bennancumb's ford]

      c. … ðis gewrit soðlice in ðam halgan burh Hierusalem of heofenum
          dun afeal

                                                   (*HomM*: 6, 2).

        [… this letter truly fell down from heaven to the holy town of Jerusalem.]

      d. an.1070: Clumben upp to þe stepel, brohton dune þet hæcce þe þær
          wæs behid

                              (a1121 Peterborough Chronicle (LdMisc 636)).

        [Climbed up to the tower, brought down the hatch that there was hidden.]

The above quotations show that the adverb *dun* co-existed with the full lexical item *dūn* 'hill, mountain', already in Old English, although it was not very frequent at that time (*DOE* attests 25 occurrences, compared to approximately 300 occurrences of *adun*). Although not very common, *dun* could accompany verbs such as OE *cuman, gan, feallan, bugan* to indicate the downward movement (cf. 5c, d). In addition, from Old English onwards it appeared in compounds with verbs, e.g. *dūne-āstīgan* 'to descend', *doun-comen, doun-casten, doun-fallen*, which shows the broadening of its distribution.

The final stage in the grammaticalization process of *down* is the emergence of the preposition. The sources do not provide the exact date when the preposi-

tion down was attested, the first quotations in the *MED* dating back to the late fourteenth century, but those in the *OED* to the fifteenth century, cf.:

6)   a. Whanne he renneþ and fleeþ *doun* hille, he renneþ … aslonte by þe hulles syde

> (a1398 Trevisa *Bartholomaeus's De Proprietatibus Rerum* (Add 27944), 291b/b).

   b. I saghe chafe on þe water flete..bot *doun* þe water hit come gode spede

> (a1400 Cursor Mundi (Frf 14): 4786).

   c. That gon *doun* the se [L *qui descendunt mare*] in shipis, doende werching in many watris

> (a1382 *Wycliffite Bible (1)* (Dc 369(1), Ps.106.23).

   d. She looketh bakward to the londe ... and walketh *doun* the stronde Toward the ship

> (c1390 Chaucer *CT.ML.*(Manly-Rickert), B.864).

   e. Than rynis thow *doun* the gait

> (1508 Dunbar *Flyting w. Kennedie*: 225).

The distribution of the preposition *down* in Late Middle English is limited to a number of collocations: *doun hill*, *doun the plain*, *doun the water*, *doun the strond*, *down the se*, *doun the wode*, which shows that the change from adverb to preposition was not completed at that time yet. The fully grammaticalized preposition came to be used regularly in the early 16th century (cf. 6e).

5. Concluding remarks

The following tentative conclusions can be formulated as regards the grammaticalization of *down*:

1)   The process began already in Old English and involved a number of stages: OE *dūn* (noun) > *of dūne* (prepositional phrase with literal interpretation) > *of dūne* (adverb) > *adūne/adoune* (adverb) > *doune* (preposition). Yet, the co-existence of the noun and the adverb in Old English points to the ambiguity of the forms, especially in the early stages of grammaticalization.
2)   The emergence and spread of the grammatical form resulted in the semantic bleaching of the noun *doune* and its gradual elimination from among the synonyms of *hill, mountain*. It is really surprising that a noun of

such high frequency lost almost all of its semantic force only because of grammaticalization, and thus the influence of other factors, for example change in the semantic field HILL/MOUNTAIN caused by borrowing, cannot be excluded.

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