Learn Proto-Germanic

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Comment: Copied from the internet, 2005-11-27, by Evert Mouw <evert@germanic.info>. I’ve copied this text from Gary’s website, pasted it in Word, and converted it to PDF. I’ve added a few Dutch words in braces [ ] where the Dutch word was more similar to the Proto-Germanic word than the English one.
Example: krûdam n. herb [kruid]

About the author - Gary Taylor
I was born in Walthamstow in NE London in April 1971, so at time of writing I’m 33 (unfortunately very soon to be 34...) I lived in Woodford Green till I was 18, then went to Brighton to study - moved round lots since - lived in a few different countries, and am currently in Berlin where I’m studying for my PhD in Linguistics, concentrating on Historical Germanic phonology (title of PhD being Vocalisations in Germanic Dialects).

Key to Pronunciation

The vowels
In Germanic there are short vowels, long vowels and diphthongs just as in English.

The short vowels are:
i /i/ as in big
e /e/ as in bed
a /a/ as in a very short version of part
u /u/ as in bull

The long vowels are:
i /i:/ as in beat
ê /e:/ similar to the first part of the vowel in bait, but without changing the shape of your mouth, similar to a Northern English pronunciation
æ /æ:/ similar to the first part of the vowel in bear, but with no offglide
ō /oː/ as in bored
û /uː/ as in pool

The diphthongs are:
ai /ai/ as in bite
au /au/ as in foul
ei /ei/ as in bait
eu /eu/ this starts like the vowel in bed but then changes to a w-like sound, quite similar to London pronunciations of bell. Try not to say this as two separate vowels, it should sound as one fluid vowel, like the others mentioned above.

The consonants are:
b /b/ like English b when initial and followed by another consonant, preceded by m or when written double, otherwise /B/ more like English v but without any vibration and said completely between the lips.
d /d/ like English d when initial and followed by another consonant, preceded by n or when written double, otherwise /ð/ like English th in this but without any vibration.
f /f/ like English f.
g /g/ like English g in get when initial and followed by another consonant, preceded by n or when written double. Note that when ng is written the g should be pronounced as in finger. Otherwise /G/ (Greek lower case gamma) a sound we don’t have in English. It’s like a very light g, but more of a catch in the throat.
h /h/ either like English h in hot or /x/ like Scottish ch in loch - this is pronounced in all positions.
j /j/ this is like y in year.
k /k/ like English k.
l /l/ like English l.
m /m/ like English m.
n /n/ usually like n in now, but before g, k and h like ng in sing.
p /p/ like English p.
r /r/ tongue-tip rolled r.
s /s/ like s in sing, never like s in is.
t /t/ like English t.
þ /T/ (Greek lower case theta) like th in thing.
w /w/ like English w.
z /z/ very similar to English z, but not as much friction - probably not dissimilar to an English r.

If consonants are written double they should also be said longer, so dd should be said as in ‘bad day’. It should also be noted that because Proto-Germanic was unwritten any punctuation or capitals are not original. I have written capital letters in convention with many modern languages to indicate the start of sentences and names. Adjectives derived from names shall be written in lower case. I shall try to avoid commas apart from if there is great difficulty in understanding a sentence without them.

Stress
Word stress generally falls on the first syllable. If the word however contains a prefix then the stress is on the main stem of the word.

Lesson 1

Frumôn Dailam - mînôn sebju


Notes

Verbs
It should be noted that verbs conjugate. Just as English verbs need an s when following he/she or it, Proto-Germanic verbs change depending on the person doing the verb. Unlike English the verb is different for each person speaking. So in the text we have the verb ‘to be called’. ‘I am called’ is ‘haitu’ (shown with 1s. to indicate it is the first person - so I - singular - not we), whereas ‘(it) is called’ is ‘haitiþi’ (shown with 3s. to indicate third person - so he, she or it - singular). Because the ending tells us which person is speaking it’s unnecessary to use the pronouns ‘I’ or ‘it’. These are only used if they need to be stressed. The breakdown of verbs will be dealt with as they appear.
Nouns and pronouns
It should also be noted that nouns change depending on which part of speech they refer to, cf. village = þurpam and þurpê. These changes are called cases. The 'doer' of a sentence is usually in the 'nominative' case, as is anything that refers directly to them in a sentence. The word þurpam is in the nominative case. The word þurpê is however in the dative case (indicated with dat). This is a case used after many prepositions, so that 'in the village' follows the preposition 'in'. Nouns also have a grammatical gender. Nouns can be masculine (m.), feminine (f.) or neutral (n.). The word 'þurpam' is neutral. The name 'Staines' is in the genitive, or possessive case. In English we would write Stain's daughter. This apostrophe s is an indication of the genitive (gen). In the first sentence the word 'þek' is given for 'you'. This is given in the accusative (acc) case. This means that the person is directly affected by the action (the object) and not the doer (the subject), much in the same way as we differentiate I (subject) and me (object). If a noun is unmarked for case then it is given as nominative. Plurals will be shown with pl., whereas singulars will be unmarked.

Adjectives
Just as nouns change depending on their role in a sentence, the adjectives need to 'agree' with the nouns they refer to, and also change for case and gender. 'The small village' (in nom.) is therefore 'smalôn þurpam' - both words being nominative, whereas 'in the small village' is 'en smalin þurpê'. If adjectives are not given in their masculine singular nominative form then they will be marked for where they differ from this.


Vocabulary
ahtau             eight
ake               but
aldiz m.          person
             aldîz (pl)
andí               and [ en(de) ]
dailam n.         part
duhter f.         daughter
en        in
fagraz             beautiful
        fagrôn (n.)
fagrô (pl)
frumaz             first
        frumôn (n.)
grôtjan           to greet
        grôtju (1s)
haitan             to be called [ heten ]
        haitu (1s)
        haitipi (3s)
Halêþagulþin f.   a name
hêr               here
hûsam n.          house [ huis ]
        hûsu (pl.)
ja        and / moreover
maizô            more
mînaz             my
               mînin (n. dat)
               mînôn (n.)
ne                not
sebju f.        clan / family
sebun           seven
sehs            six
smalaz          small
   smalôn (n.)
Stainaz m.      a name
   Staines (gen)
swô swa          than
teguz m.        ten
   tegjuz (pl.)
þû                you [ du, jou ]
   pek (acc)
Thurisagardaz m. a name
þurpam n.       village
   þurpê n. (dat)
wesan            to be [ wezen = zijn ]
   ist (3s)
   ezumes (3p)

Exercises

Translate
1  I have a brother and a sister.
2  In my village are eight houses.
3  Hello, I'm called Wulfaz Stainaz's son.
4  The people in my village are beautiful.
5  Our dogs don't live in the house.

Answers
1  Habu brôþar ja / andi swester.
2  En mînin þurpi ezumes ahtau hûsu.
3  Grôtju þek, haitu Wulfaz Staines sunuz.
4  Aldîz en mînin þurpê ezumes fagrê.
5  Unseranz hundôs ne bûwandì en hûsê.

Lesson 2

Anþaratô Dailam – Arbaiôz

En þurpê mînin eka andi mînôn swester helpôz unkerôn môdir. Mînôn
môder wabjîpi ja eka liznôm. Þwahamz ja bakômz. Eka melku kôw andi
fatôm wataru. Samnôm krûdu ja hrîsam fur fûiru.

Notes

Word Order
You've probably noticed by now that the word order is quite flexible. This is made possible by the highly inflected nature of Proto-Germanic. In English there is fairly rigid word order due to its lack of inflexions. The word order in Proto-Germanic is more dependent on which words are being stressed, with the most important parts moved to the front and rear of a sentence, less important aspects being left for the rest of the sentence.

**Verbs**

Verbs in the present tense, as mentioned in lesson one, change depending on who is doing the action. There are three different types of verbs, strong, weak and irregular. Weak verbs such as grötjan keep the same root throughout - here grötj-. Strong verbs change this although this is not usually very evident in the present tense. There are subdivisions within each category. Irregular verbs will be dealt with later. The root of a verb is found by missing off the last two letters (-an, -æn, -ôn). The following is a list of endings added to the roots for verbs ending first in -an, then -æn, then -ôn:

**singular:**

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>-u</td>
<td>-u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>-izi</td>
<td>-aizi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he/she/it</td>
<td>-iþi</td>
<td>-aiþi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dual:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we two</td>
<td>-ôz</td>
<td>-ôz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you two</td>
<td>-aþz</td>
<td>-aþz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plural:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we</td>
<td>-amz</td>
<td>-amz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>-iþi</td>
<td>-aiþi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they</td>
<td>-andi</td>
<td>-andi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It should be noted that there is an extra form for 'we two' and 'you two'. From now on the inflected forms of the verbs will only be shown if they differ from this pattern.

**Nouns**

The nouns also change depending on what role they play in the sentence. The possible cases are nominative (to describe the subject or doer of the action), the accusative (to describe the object or what the action is done to), the genitive (to describe possessions), the dative (to describe the indirect object or what is indirectly affected by the action), the locative (to describe place or location), the instrumental (to describe what the action is done with) and the vocative (in addressing). The locative, instrumental and vocative were all in the process of dying out, the former two in favour of the dative, and the latter in favour of the nominative, they are also not present in all nouns. The first noun group we will look at is the masculine nouns ending in -az, and the neutral nouns ending in -am and -az. These are referred to as a-class nouns.

**hundaz m. hûsam n. kalbaz n.**

**singular:**

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nom</td>
<td>hundaz</td>
<td>hûsam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc</td>
<td>hunda</td>
<td>hûsam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen</td>
<td>hundes</td>
<td>hûses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat</td>
<td>hundê</td>
<td>hûsê</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loc</td>
<td>hundi</td>
<td>as dative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instr</td>
<td>hunde</td>
<td>as dative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>voc</td>
<td>hund</td>
<td>as nominative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**plural:**

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nom</td>
<td>hundôs</td>
<td>hûsu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc</td>
<td>hundanz</td>
<td>hûsu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From now on nouns of these classes will not show inflections.


Vocabulary

*anparaz*  
second  

*anparatô (n.)*

*arbaïpiz f.*  
work [ arbeiden ]

*bakôn*  
to cook

*eka*  
I [ ik ]

*fatôn*  
to fetch

*fûir n.*  
fire [ vuur ]

*fur*  
for

*helpan*  
to help

*hrîsam n.*  
twigs

*kalbaz n.*  
calf

*krûdam n.*  
herb [ kruid ]

*lîznôn*  
to learn

*melkan*  
to milk [ melken ]

*môder f.*  
mother

*môdir (dat)*

to gather [ (ver)zamelen ]

*bwahan*  
to wash (something)

*unkeraz*  
our (two people)

*unkerôn (f.)*

to weave

*wabjan*  
to weave

*watar n.*  
water

*wataru (acc)*

*ainanô (m strong)*  
one (strong used when indefinite - see later lessons)

*allaz*  
every [ alle ]

*allanu (acc)*

*dreugan*  
trade / work with / serve with

*efþan*  
or

*fiskarjaz m.*  
fisherman

*gangan*  
to go [ gaan ]

*jagôn*  
to hunt [ jagen ]

*laguz m.*  
waters / lake / stream

*lagu (dat)*

*managaz*  
some

*managu (n pl)*

*melam n.*  
time / period

*menôp m.*  
month

*mînnumz (dat pl)*  
my

*murgana m.*  
morning [ morgen ]

*næhwistaz*  
next

*næhwistin (n dat)
Exercises
1 Hwar (where) gangibi fader allanu murgana?
2 Hwat (what) wurkibi (do / work) Halêpagułpin?
3 Andi hwat wurkibi möder?
(For answers compare the texts)

Translate
1 I go to the local parliament with my brothers.
2 My sister and I weave every day.
3 My (paternal) grandmother milks the cow.

Answers
1 Gangu þengázê medi mînnumz þrôþrumz.
2 Mînôn swester andi eka wajôz allanu daga.
3 Mînôn faderz möder milkiþi kôw. (melkan is a strong verb and sometimes changes the vowel to i)

Lesson 3a

Pridjôn Dailam - mînôn þurpam


Notes

Verbs
It was mentioned in the last lesson that melkan ‘to milk’ was a strong verb. There are three different types of verb in Proto-Germanic. There are weak verbs which never change their root, strong verbs like melkan where the root vowel sometimes changes, and irregular verbs like wesan ‘to be’. At this stage it’s important to notice that strong verbs like melkan which have an e in the root change this to i in the 2nd and 3rd persons singular, so you (sing) milk is milkizi and he / she milks is milkiþi, otherwise in the present the root is melk-. From now on strong verbs will be shown with (str.). The verb ‘to be’ wesan is irregular and conjugates as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>1st sing.</th>
<th>2nd sing.</th>
<th>3rd sing.</th>
<th>1st dual</th>
<th>2nd dual</th>
<th>3rd dual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sing.</td>
<td>im</td>
<td>is</td>
<td>ist</td>
<td>ezu</td>
<td>estz</td>
<td>ezumes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>you are</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>he / she / it</td>
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<tr>
<td>dual</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>we are</td>
<td>ezumes</td>
<td>ezup</td>
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<tr>
<td>you are</td>
<td>ezumes</td>
<td>ezup</td>
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<tr>
<td>plur.</td>
<td>ezumes</td>
<td>ezup</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Nouns
The next noun class to be looked at is the -ô class. These nouns are always feminine. In the first lesson we learnt the word sebju meaning clan. This word was given in the nominative case. It is customary in literature about Proto-Germanic to show these nouns in the accusative form sebjô. This practise will be used here too.

sing.
nom sebju
acc sebjô
gen sebjôz
dat sebju

plur.
nom sebjôz
acc sebjônz
gen sebjôm
dat sebjômz

Adjectives
It has also been mentioned that adjectives change to agree with the noun that they refer to. There are also two different ways of saying the adjectives depending on if the noun is known to us, or if it is unimportant or unknown, in much the same way as we now use the definite (the) or indefinite (a) articles. This is best shown with an example. 'The boy went shopping' - it's assumed we know who we're talking about, so we use 'the'. 'There's a boy outside' - here we don't know him. In the first case, when we would now usually use 'the', the declension of adjectives used is called the weak declension. This is given below for the adjective smalaz:

weak masc fem neut
sing nom smalôn smalôn smalôn
acc smalanu smalônû smalô
gen smalînz smalônôz smalînz
dat smalîn smalôn smalîn

plur.
nom smalânz smalônûz smalônû
acc smalanunz smalônunz smalônû
gen smalanôm smalônôm smalônôm
dat smalunmz smalumz smalumz

Vocabulary

auk also [ ook ]
bergaz m. mountain [ berg ]
bi at / by
dalam n. valley [ dal ]
Græwaferþuz m. a name
         Græwaferþôz (gen)
hîwaz m. family
lagu m. (dat) lake
mariz m. sea [ meer ]
marê (dat)
ripaz m. stream
sa this
pammu (m. dat)
sînaz his / her [ zijn ]
smîpaz m. blacksmith
til from / to
şengahûsam n. assembly house
şrijdaz third
uber over / above
under under / beneath
weidaz far [ weid ]
weitagôn f. seeress
widuz m. forest [ wold, woud ]