

Intensifying Prefixes in the *Etymologies*

by Thorsten Renk

General Considerations

The *Etymologies* (as found in *The Lost Road* and in the “Addenda and Corrigenda to the *Etymologies*” published in *Vinyar Tengwar* 45 and 46) include several examples of forms that are denoted as “intensified” by Tolkien, among them those that are formed by a prefix. The entry A- (VT45:5) is perhaps the best starting point for a classification of these intensified forms.

We learn there of an intensive prefix, “distinct in origin, though similar in function to the prefixed basic vowel The prefix *a-* was usually combined with dynamic lengthening of the original initial consonant ... and it could be applied to fully formed words.” From this, we may infer the following:

- There are two prefixes, “similar in function” (i.e. intensification).
- One of them is *a-* followed by dynamic lengthening of the first consonant, the other one is the prefixed basic (i.e. root) vowel (called in Quenya the *sundóma*).
- The prefix *a-* could be applied to fully formed words (it stands to reason that this is said by way of contrast with the prefixed *sundóma*, implying that this mechanism applied only to roots, not to fully-formed words).

In the following, we explore what is known about these two distinct prefixes in greater detail.

The Prefixed *Sundóma*

In most instances, we observe the prefixed *sundóma* as something applied to a CE root to form an intensified CE root. Thus, there is no difference in the application to Noldorin or Qenya forms. Nevertheless, there is some amount of variation to this concept found within the *Etymologies*. In particular, we can observe the following variations:

- Prefixed *sundóma* without modification of the following root-initial consonant, cf. **NAR**¹- (V:348) and **ANÁR**- (V:374).
- Prefixed *sundóma* with “fortification” of the following root-initial consonant, cf. **NIS**- (V:378) and **INDIS**- (V:361) (instead of ****INIS**-).

We find direct evidence for this mechanism in V:361, second entry I- — the gloss is “intensive prefix where *i* is base vowel” and from the examples **ITHIL**- ‘Moon’ (**THIL**-, **SIL**-) and **INDIS**- = **ndis**- ‘bride’ we learn that indeed this prefix doesn’t seem to be applied to fully formed words but to the roots **THIL**- (**SIL**-) or **NDIS**-. VT45:17 adds the additional information (confirming what has been said above) that the prefix is used “with or without fortified following consonant”.

What is meant by that remark is readily apparent from **NDIS**- (V:375) where we learn that this is a “strengthening of **NIS** ‘woman’”. So while it is permissible to use both the prefixed *sundóma* and the strengthening of the first consonant for an intensified form, it is not necessary. This is somewhat contradicted by the entry E- (VT45:11), likewise glossed “intensive prefix ... when base vowel is *e*” but with the additional remark “followed by

fortified consonant”. We find the example “*der, ndere* – *Enderō* ([?virile] young bridegroom’) > *Ender*, surname of Tulkas”. Although not written in capitals, this example seems to refer to elaborations of the roots **DER-** ‘adult male’ (V:354) and **NDER-** “strengthened form of *der*-man” (V:375) to ***ENDER** in parallel with **NIS-** > **NDIS-**, **INDIS-**; and *ndere* ‘bridegroom’ seems to be a form in primitive Elvish rather than Qenya or Noldorin – it doesn’t fit the phonology of either language.

No prefixes are listed for the base vowels **o** or **u** (or explicitly for **a** in fact), but we can infer their existence from roots listed in the *Etymologies* (see also Helge Fauskanger’s article *Primitive Elvish*).

V:348 has **ANÁR-** ‘sun’ derivative of **NAR**¹- (V:374) and **ANAK-** cf. **NAK** ‘bite’ (...) ‘jaw’, thus confirming the possible elaboration of a root with *sundóma a*. The intensification **NAR-** > **ANÁR-** seems to follow a similar idea as **THIL-** > **ITHIL-**. **ÉNE-** ‘centre’ (V:356) connects well with **NÉD-** ‘middle, centre’ (V:376), although no intensification as such is apparent from the translation. Note that we don’t find a fortification of the first consonant in this example. **ÓLOS-** ‘dream’ (V:379) is an elaboration of **LOS-** ‘sleep’ (V:370); and though no direct intensification of the root is apparent from the translation, the means used to derive the more particular from the more general notion is reminiscent of **DER-** ‘adult male’ > ***ENDER** ‘bridegroom’ or **NIS-** ‘woman’ > **INDIS-** ‘bride’. No example with a *sundóma u* can be found in the *Etymologies*, but in XI:389 we see **uruk-** as a variant of **RUKU**, indicating that probably **u** had no special role as such.

All in all, the idea that this particular formation pattern is mostly relevant for roots and not so much for “fully formed words” seems to work out, though. There is no clear line as to what the meaning of the intensification is supposed to be – the most common outcome seems to be “a particular out of the general class of objects denoted by the non-intensified form”, but even that is not always true.

The Intensifying Prefixes A- and N-

In contrast to the prefixed *sundóma*, there is a second class of intensifying prefixes found in the *Etymologies* which is seen being applied to individual words (instead of roots). Thus, this class of prefixes acts in a different way on Noldorin and Qenya forms. Tolkien’s ideas involve not only prefixion of a vowel (in fact, a single vowel as prefix is never seen within this class) but also addition of a consonant or dynamic lengthening of the initial consonant of the intensified word. There is evidence that Tolkien changed the underlying concept during his work on the *Etymologies* (and we will try to establish a tentative chronology later).

For Noldorin, the following variations of this type of prefix can be found:

- Prefixion of **a** with dynamic lengthening of the following consonant, e.g. **angol** (**aññol-**) (VT45:5) from unintensified **ñol-** (V:378).
- Prefixion of the *sundóma* with dynamic lengthening of the following consonant, e.g. **ongol** (**oññol-**) (VT46:6) from unintensified **ñol-** (V:378).

In Qenya, the expression of this prefix is quite different. We can observe the following variations:

- Prefix **an, am, añ**, dependent on the initial consonant of the following word, e.g. **ankale** (VT45:5) from an unintensified ***kale**; cf. **kala** (V:362).
- A prefix with vowel and nasal determined by the initial consonant of the following word, e.g. **inkale** (VT45:36).

Let us now examine the evidence in more detail. Most information about this intensification mechanism is listed in VT45:5 entry **A-** and VT45:36 entry **N-**. The two entries apparently refer to the same final prefix, and in fact the entry **N-** includes a reference to the **a-** prefix, but no reference to **N-** is given under **A-**. While this would suggest that the **A-** entry reflects Tolkien’s earlier ideas, the tentative chronology of the entries outlined by Christopher Tolkien in V:344 would suggest that **A-** reflects in fact Tolkien’s later ideas on the subject (and we will provide supporting evidence for this interpretation from post-*Etymologies* sources later).

Under N-, Tolkien describes for Qenya an intensive prefix as a “blend of *a-* prefix + dynamic lengthening and a base-vowel + nasal initials and of the syllabic forms of nasal initials as *m̄bar*”. The resulting prefix takes the shape “*an-* before vowels (rare); *um* before *p*, *q*, *v* (*umb*); *an* before *t*, *l* (=d, *and*), *r* (*arr*), *l* (*all*), *s* (*ass*), *w* (*ū*) (*anw*); *iñ* before *k*, *g* and hence = before vowel (*ink*, *ing*)”. The entry ***l*** (=d) presumably indicates that when a Qenya word-initial ***l*** is derived from a root with ***D-*** that this consonant reappears when the prefix is added. In addition, the entry provides the examples ***umpano*** ‘build’, ***inkale*** ‘radiance’, ‘Sun’, ***antara*** ‘very lofty’, ***Antaro*** a name and ***unquale*** ‘agony’. Considering e.g. ***umpano*** and the root ***PAN-*** ‘place, set, fix in place’ (V:380) we see that this is indeed distinct from the simple prefixion of the ***sundóma***, which would yield ****APAN-***. Thus, the quality of the vowel of this intensive prefix depends on the quality of the initial consonant of the root.

In Noldorin this prefix “appears as *a* with dynamic lengthening *afarch*, *angol* (*aññol-*)”, referring to the unintensified ***park***, ***ñol***. The first of these Noldorin examples can be found under the entry ***PÁRAK-*** (V:380) meaning ‘dry’, the second under ***ÑOL-*** ‘smell’ meaning ‘stench’ (V:378). We will come back to the meaning of the dynamic lengthening shortly. Note that ***angol*** again shows development different from simple prefixion of the base vowel — the ***sundóma*** is ***o*** and yet ***a*** is used as the prefix.

We find a (possible) change in this scheme in VT46:6 where we learn that ***angol***, ***aññol-*** appear to have had their initial vowel altered, “possibly to *ongol* and *oññol-* respectively.” Thus, Tolkien here seems to have blurred the distinction even more and introduced a system in Noldorin in which the ***sundóma*** was prefixed, combined with a dynamic lengthening of the initial consonant of the root. However, if we look at entry ***A-*** (which according to Christopher Tolkien’s chronology would be the latest), ***aññol-*** reappears, so this was probably a transient idea. In this later entry we learn that the prefix is indeed ***a-*** (in Noldorin; for Qenya see below) and we learn how the dynamic lengthening proceeds, e.g. ***parkā*** ‘dry’, ON ***parkha***, N ***parch***, but ***apparkā*** ‘arid, very dry’; ON ***apparkha***, N ***afarch***. Thus, dynamic lengthening seems to imply that the consonant is doubled in the CE stage and the subsequent phonetic developments are carried through to Noldorin. We may thus e.g. expect ***c-*** > ***ach-***, ***t-*** > ***ath-***, ***p-*** > ***aph-*** > ***af-***, ***s-*** > ***ass-***, ***n-*** > ***ann-***, ***m-*** > ***amm-*** and possibly ***g-*** > ***ang-***, ***b-*** > ***amb-***, ***d-*** > ***and-***. This is confirmed by “N *angos* ‘horror’, *a* + dynamic *ñgoss-* where *ñg* is dynamic length[ening] = *gg*” (VT45:15). Owing to the relation with ***N-***, the prefix would conceivably become ***an-*** before vowels. Note that there is likely a similarity to the effects of nasal mutation for a prefix ****an-***.

The Qenya evolution likewise undergoes a revision — the prefix is now said to be ***an***, ***am***, ***añ***, a generalized form. We see this in action in ***amparka*** ‘very dry’ (where the historical form ****apparka*** is rejected), ***antara*** ‘very high’ and ***ankale*** ‘radiance’. The last example is especially interesting, as it apparently replaces ***inkale***, confirming that Tolkien abandoned the concept of having a different vowel dependent on the initial consonant. There are still some traces of this phenomenon left, though — we learn that ***un***, ***um*** appear before ***q***, ***p***, ***b***, “but owing to the influence of *ū-* ... used only in an evil sense, as *unquale* ‘agony’”, a strengthened form to the root ***KWAL-*** ‘die in pain’ (V:366).

Intensification in Post-Etymologies Sources

Tolkien seems to have stuck with prefixing the ***sundóma*** to the CE root vs. an intensive prefix ***a(n, m, ñ)***. The clearest example is Quenya ***ancalima*** (LR:704, L:278–79) ‘exceedingly bright’ rather than *****incalima*** or *****akkalima***, and thus following the formation seen in *Etym.* ***ankale*** rather than ***inkale***, and supporting the idea that ***A-*** represents Tolkien’s later decision.

In XI:415 Tolkien makes an interesting distinction between an inflectional prefix seen in ***ekwē***, which is said to be a primitive past tense “marked by the “augment” or reduplicated base vowel and the long *sundóma*”; cf. ***akāra*** ‘made, did’ (ibid.) and the extension or intensification seen in ***akwā*** (from ***kwā***). Like the intensifying prefix ***a-***, this past tense prefix appears to be applied to fully-formed words, not to CE roots.

Sindarin and Quenya ***estel*** ‘hope’ are said to be derived by prefixion of the ***sundóma*** to the root ***stel*** (whence e.g. S ***thel*** ‘intend, mean, purpose, resolve, will’; XI:318).

In XII:358 we find ***Aran Einiór***, translated ‘the Elder King’. This can conceivably be derived from OS ****anjāra*** with subsequent *i*-affection of the prefix vowel ***a*** > ***ai*** (which in certain

environments as here further > *ei*, cf. the plural pattern *alph* > *eilph*, UT:265) and would hence involve a prefix *an*. The same prefix may be seen in *Cuio i Pheriain anann!* (LR:932) ‘may the Halflings live long!’ (L:308) — that is, if *anann* is not to be interpreted as dative *an* + *and* ‘for [a] long [time]’ but instead as an intensified form *anann* ‘exceedingly long’. Neither interpretation is supported over the other by the actual translation.

XI:311, 315 has the forms *thent/estent*, possibly meaning ‘short’/‘very short’. If the latter is indeed an intensified form, it clearly is interesting. Should we assume that this reflects a prefix *e* with the consequent re-emergence (actually, preservation) of the original initial root consonants *st-* in internal position? This would not be a straightforward development, since the root is apparently *STINTĀ-* and so the *sundóma* would be *i* and the historically correct form would seem to be **istinta* > *istent* (as *a*-affection doesn’t occur throughout the whole word, cf. *silimā* > *silef* not ***selef*, V:385). But the prefixed vowel could then well be subject to analogical leveling, patterned after forms like *thel/estel*, XI:318 or *thanc/nestegi*, V:388 which show that the re-emergence of the original root consonants in the presence of a prefix is not uncommon. Tolkien also considered the fully analogical form *#ethen* ‘shorter’ in V:192 in which the original cluster did not re-emerge. On the other hand, an original *a-* prefix might be *i*-affected by the *sundóma i* before itself being changed by *a*-affection, i.e. **astinta* > **estinta* > *estent*; but this is not a likely explanation as it would require that *i*-affection and *a*-affection did not act in the usual order. Thus, the most likely conclusion is that we observe an intensification of the CE root here. The pair *thâr* ‘stiff grass’ and *gwastar* ‘hummock’, V:388, with the re-emergence of the original consonant cluster in the presence of the prefix *gwa-* which is used only “in old cmps.”, V:399, seems to support the idea that the re-emergence of root consonants is typical for old formations and that *estent* would therefore not be recent.

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See also the general *Tengwestië* Bibliography.

Change Log

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