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Elene, the mother of Emperor Constantine, is the central figure in the Old English poem entitled *Elene* by modern editors. The Emperor's army following the sign of Christ's Cross was successful against its opponents:

Ða wæs modigra mægen on luste,
ehton elþeoda oð þæt æfen forð
fram dæges orde. Daroðæsc flugon,
hildenædran. Heap wæs gescyrded,
laðra lindwered. Lythwon becwom
Huna herges ham eft þanon

Elene, lines 138–143 (Krapp 69)

"Then the army of the brave was gladdened, they pursued the foreigners from morning till night. Javelin (and) spear flew, battle arrows. The troop was destroyed, the army of enemies. Few of the army of the Huns afterwards returned home."

With regard to *daroðæsc* (line 140b), Krapp (134) notes that in the manuscript "*daroð* stands at the end of a line, *æsc* at the beginning of the following line".[1] The predicate *flugon* indicates a plural subject. Both *daroð* and *æsc* are masculine substantives meaning "javelin, spear", neither can therefore "properly be the subject of *flugon*" (Gradon 32). Krapp's commentary is quite similar: "A compound *daroðæsc* as subj. of *flugon* is questionable only because *æsc* is masc. and the plur. should be *æscas*" (Krapp 134).[2] Various changes of the manuscript reading have been proposed. In Swaen's suggested reading *daroð* [*ond*] *æsc*, the plural verb would be regular. Cook (7) emended *daroð æsc* to *daroð*[*as*]; see also Cook's note (88). In the entry *daroþæsc*, Campbell (18) suggested reading "*daroþas* or *daroþ, æsc*". The reading *daroðæs* is offered by Gradon (32),[3] with further references to Zupitza, Holthausen, and Klaeber. With reference to the *Elene* passage, the *Dictionary of Old English*, s.v. *daroð*, notes "taken here as irreg. sp. *daroðas* in agreement with pl. vb." An asyndetic sequence *daroð æsc* 'javelin spear' would not require any change in the

manuscript reading, but this stylistic feature usually has the longer, more emphatic and often compounded word in second position.

In this context it is worth examining whether *daroðæsc* can represent the category of the so-called "dvandva" compounds. The Indic term *dvandva*, meaning "pair", refers to a unity of two entities strictly belonging together: mother and father (parents), father and son are common pairs of this kind. Fritz (74) provides a succinct account of the history of this construction. As shown by the ancient instances provided by Sanskrit, in constructions of this type we expect the dual of the respective nouns.

Old English has special forms for the dual in the personal pronouns for first and second person: *wit* "we two" and *git* "ye two" (you two),[4] but there are no special forms for the third person, nor do we encounter distinct dual forms in the verbal paradigms. Evidently, the dual was losing ground and being replaced by the plural. In the synchronic system of Old English nominal declension, however, some traces of the dual may be detected. Thus, we encounter the at first sight surprising phenomenon that in the adjectival paradigm the neuter of the plural is used when the respective subject is a pair of man and woman. The explanation for this lies in the fact that the dual of Germanic *a*-stem adjectives ends in *-ō and falls together with the feminine singular of nominal ō-stems. The regular reflex of Gmc. *ō is in Old English *-u*, which is lost after a long root syllable.[5] A relevant example of this rule is offered by the following passage from the Old English *Genesis*. The passage *and wit her baru standað* (*Genesis B*, l. 811b) "and the two of us (Adam and Eve) stand here naked"[6] offers the adjective *bær* "naked" in what appears to be neuter plural but, in fact, *baru* reflects the dual ending of Germanic. After a long syllable, *-u* dropped off, and we find *worht* "wrought" referring to Adam and Eve in the following lines: *þær geworht stondað/ Adam and Eue on eorðrice/mid welan bewunden* (*Genesis B*, l. 418b–420a) "there stand wrought Adam and Eve on the earthly kingdom encircled with happiness' (*Genesis*, l. 418b–420a). An example of the dual with loss of final *-u* may also be recognized in the form *Scilling* in the following passage from *Widsith*, l. 103-104: *Ðonne wit Scilling sciran reorde/for uncrum sigedryhtne song ahofan* "then we two Scillings, namely I and Scilling, raised a song for our victorious lord".

It is therefore admissible to interpret OE *daroðæsc* as a dvandva compound referring to "javelin (and) spear". With a zero-ending, due to the loss of the final *-u* after a long syllable, *daroðæsc* is the regularly expected dual form. Old English lacks special conjugational forms for the dual, therefore the plural *flugon* is used. The manuscript reading at *Elene*, line 140b, can be defended, and no changes are required.

Notes

1. Kemble (9) printed the half-line as *daroðæsc flugon* and translated "the ashen darts flew".

2. Grein (112) gave the gender of *daroðæsc* "hasta fraxinea" as "m. (n.?)", but neuter is quite improbable because *æsc* is consistently masculine.
3. OE daroðæs could be explained as a "late spelling" (Gradon) for daroðas.
4. The paradigmatic forms are discussed by Fulk (202–206), see also Brunner and Campbell.
5. In the context of the numeral for "2", the dual forms in the nominal system are discussed in detail by Cowgill.
6. Old Saxon offers the corresponding dual form *bara*: *uuit hier thus bara standat* (Taeger, 241).

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