BRETON ORTHOGRAPHIES AND DIALECTS VOL 2

THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY ORTHOGRAPHY WAR IN BRITTANY

Iwan Wmffre

This work is for comparative linguists and celticists who are keen to study Breton but may be too daunted to undertake such a venture by the wide variety of orthographical conventions which exist in Breton.

The chronological development of the Breton orthographical debates during the twentieth century is charted along with an attempt to discern the ideological, political and personal motivations which lay behind those debates. Based on a substantial corpus of hitherto unpublished original documents and personal interviews, the research throws new light on the nature of the political, ideological and linguistic divisions of the Breton movement of that period (not least the events that occurred during the 1939–45 war).

The historical and societal background of the language is succinctly delineated and points of orthographical contention are discussed, each in turn, so that their correlation to the spoken varieties of Breton can be judged by the reader.

The work should dispel once and for all the notion – boosted by the existing orthographical instability and variety – that Breton is too dialectally fragmented to be studied profitably without an inordinate amount of effort.

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Analysis

2.1 Analysing the particular spelling conventions of Breton

In this section of the second volume of the work, rather than focus on the general debate that has settled along partisan lines between two opposing sides (see pp.339ff) I look at particular orthographical features each in turn, isolated from considerations of orthographic affiliation. No established orthographic set of conventions is perfect, or even consistent, and each grapheme or sound should be treated as separately from others as is practically feasible.

The two principal approaches which guide the preferences of individuals concerned with Breton orthographic conventions are: (1) the 'traditional' approach which emphasises continuity with the written tradition that established itself in the KLT area in the nineteenth century, and (2) the 'supradialectal' or 'polyphonemic' approach which emphasises the possibility of representing all local varieties of Breton. These represent two logical poles which hardly anyone involved in suggesting changes to the orthography have followed unquestioningly. In adopting conventions which attempted to represent all dialectal variation, J. Le Roux, the most consistent follower of the second approach, almost managed to resuscitate a form of Middle Breton. Most individuals have been unwilling to ignore over three centuries of development since the mid-seventeenth century, a period that corresponds to the greatest number of extant written records of the language.

My own bias perhaps needs to be stated clearly to the reader, because of my concern in representing existing variation within the language through the orthography – whether colloquial, dialectal or idiolectal – I tend to favour orthographic conventions which endeavour to be 'phonetic'. For this reason and also because I am persuaded of the need for any orthographic convention to give the

appearance of literary continuity with what has gone before I am probably more attracted to the 'traditionalist' approach. Though pragmatically accepting the ascendancy of Léon features in the literary language, due to the inescapable historical momentum that variety has gained in the world of letters, I would nonetheless advocate a flexible multiregisterial standard capable of the inclusion of dialectal features other than those of Léon. I prefer not to adopt novel 'metaphysical' synthesised orthographic conventions which end up masking the traditional variety that is inherent in contemporary Breton.

Notwithstanding my own personal tastes, I hope that the following treatment of orthographic questions does give voice to all opinions. And if I have added some opinions of my own concerning the transcription of certain features, this was done in the spirit of offering an additional solution, not with the agenda of favouring any already established orthography. I urge readers to judge each of the features discussed below independently of the others, to come to their own conclusions, and whether or not they employ the conventions they believe best, then they may at least be aware of the arguments for and against any particular spelling convention. If a critical awareness of the complications of the spelling of Breton is furthered by this work, I shall be satisfied.

2.2 A note on some orthographic and phonetic transcriptions

The use of <y> for consonantal <i> as well <ɛ> for some varieties of <z> are mainly disambiguating graphemes to support the clarity of the discussion and are never used in emending forms given by other authors.

I have used [ɣ] for both the uvular [ʁ] and velar [ɣ] since I believe no Breton dialect contrasts the two nor has its actual quality been established carefully for most Breton varieties. The symbol [ɉ],

when used with Welsh, stands for the consonantal variant of the high central vowel [ɨ] and not for a palatal [ɡ].

There is only a dual vocalic contrast between long and short in Breton so that any differences in duration between half-long and long have no phonemic significance. I have opted to transcribe length by [ː] irrespective of the actual duration of the length (some examples of half-long [·] remain, but only in the maps – these should be interpreted as long [ː]).

A clarification of the term 'central Breton'. This I use in a general sense when referring to the colloquial Breton spoken in inland Cornouaille centred around the market town of Carhaix-Plouguer (the region once known as Poher). Most specifically – especially when particular phonetic forms are given – this refers to the Breton of the parish or commune of Plounévézel, which equates to the area lying directly north-west of Carhaix town, between that town and Poullaouen. However, in most cases, the forms quoted as 'central Breton' also represent a pronunciation common to a much wider area of central Brittany showing neither Léon nor Vannetais tendencies.

2.3 Spelling and pronunciation

The phonetic basis of the H standard is reasonably straightforward, it is based on a traditional literary pronunciation of upper (eastern) Léon. Likewise the basis of the SS standard is fairly clear in that it is based on the colloquial variety of any area of western Brittany with the understanding that the pronunciation is arrived at through the interpretation of – usually – one standard spelling. The relationship between the spelling and the pronunciation is quite clearly defined with these two orthographic systems, the one being a traditional dialect-based 'phonetic' orthography whilst the other is a synthetic 'supradialectal' orthography.[406] In contrast to these two systems, a

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406 Alternative terms for *supradialectal* are *polyphonemic*, *polynomic* and *poly-morphemic* (see pp.205 n.196, 269 n.241, 502–03).

weakness lying at the root of the ZH orthography was ambiguity as to how the merged unified spelling was to be interpreted; was it to be:

(1) a 'supra-orthographic' solution, with a uniformised pronunciation based on the merged orthography?; or
(2) a supradialectal solution, simply a uniformised spelling that allowed varying pronunciations (at the very least a Vannetais and a Léon pronunciation)?

A survey of the opinions of various practioners of ZH shows that there has not really been agreement as to the fundamental principle underlying the ZH orthography.

Hemon consistently interpreted the 1941 agreement as being a means to ease the transition of Vannetais speakers to a pronunciation based on the spelling of the KLT standard, a standard which he had championed since the 1920s. Hemon had long ago stated:

> Since unified written Breton has been settled for good one cannot do better than accept it as guide to settle unified spoken Breton in turn. (Peogwir ez eo diazezet da vat ar brezoneg unvan skrivet, ne c'heller ket ober gwelloc'h eget e gemer da stur da ziazeza d'e dro ar brezoneg unvan komzet.) [Hemon 1928a: 3]

He would not countenance the proposition that discoveries of new facts about the spoken language would necessitate any revision of the orthography settled upon in 1941. And though Hemon had addressed the problem of the pronunciation of literary Breton to his own satisfaction in La Prononciation du Breton: Distagadur ar Brezoneg (1928) and at the end of his Grammaire Bretonne (1941), there remained many questions which meant that a comprehensive description of the pronunciation of ZH was wanting. Mordrel [1966: 25; 1968: 38] noted that the pronunciation rules given by Hemon for Breton were incomplete or false and that his recommendation that Breton should be read as it is written simply led to frenchified pronunciation[407] and he makes a point concerning Vallée and Hemon:

407 An illustrative example of Hemon's uncertainty as to how literary Breton should be pronounced is found in ABK [1963 Mar: 47]: to a reader who had written to ask him how 'close' (raised) or 'open' (lowered) were the pronunci-

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Il est compréhensible que les hommes de cabinet qui jusqu'à présent ont régenté le breton littéraire, qui parlaient toujours français entre eux et qui étaient sans contact avec le peuple, n'aient jamais été préoccupés par la prononciation d'une langue qui n'avait pour eux qu'une existence écrite. [Mordrel 1968: 37

Tim Saunders [1983: 257–58] makes a similar criticism of the form of Cornish established in the 1920s by the Neo-Cornish reviver Robert Morton Nance which was "restricted to oracular ceremonial utterances" and was rarely heard outside the circles of the Old Cornwall society and the bardic *Gorsedh*, pointing out that: "This changed during the 1970's (sic). The most significant innovation was the re-initiation of colloqu[i]al discourse."

Hemon's attitude to the pronunciation of Breton seemed to include dismissing the colloquial characteristics of native speakers, and we are justified in equating his view with that of Olier, a devoted follower, who when rubbishing Falc'hun's attempts to attempt to correlate the literary form to a language that had so much variation would comment: "It would be better to wait until the pronunciation of ZH Breton is firmly established." (Gwelloc'h e vefe gortoz ma vo diazezet da vat distagadur ar brezhoneg peurunvan.) [Olier 1960a: 78] which means that in 1960 Olier saw a standard pronunciation developing amongst those familiar with the ZH standard. Already since the late 1940s, Olier [1988: 191; 1993: 5] foresaw a standard Breton pronunciation which, with the exception of <*c'h*>, was wholly based on French pronunciation. In a 1954 diary entry he wrote that it was manifest destiny that Breton pronunciation was to disappear: "One must realise that some features of the language will be lost, the accents for example." (Dao eo gouzout avat e vo kollet perzhioù 'zo eus ar yezh, ar pouezmouezhioù, da skouer.) [Olier 1996: 54]. That a French accent in Breton did not disturb him is in stark contrast to his criticism that a fifty-year old Breton woman in Roscoff in 1961 spoke

ations of <*e*, *o*> in Breton, he responded that since there was dialectal variation he recommended an in-between pronunciation, not too raised and not too lowered. Hemon's lack of certainty here stands in stark contrast to his pronouncements on orthography (though it is true enough that dialectal variety in Breton would be disconcerting to someone who had not studied the question thoroughly).

French "with an appalling Breton accent." (gant ur pouezmouezh brezhonek mantrus.) [Olier 2000: 151]. Presumably Hemon and Olier expected the pronunciation to align itself on that employed by those prominent in the Breton literary movement, however many have expressed reservations to such an approach, and, in the mid 1960s, G. Le Menn argued:

> Every language has its own kind of cadence. That cadence is not to be found amongst the majority of Neobretonnants, and so once I thought the 'eminent people' of the Breton movement were speaking in French because I was far from them and all I could hear was the 'intonation' of their speech! (Pep yezh he deus ur seurt lusk dezhi hec'h-unan. Al lusk-se ne gaver ket gant an darn vrasañ eus an nevez-vrezhonegerien, ha setu ur wech e kaven e komze 'tud veur' eus an emsav e galleg o vezañ m'edon pell diouto ha ne gleven nemet 'kan' o frezeg!) [1966 HY: 47.37]

He added:

> Take an Englishman who has learnt French in books. You listen with amazement. As far as grammar is concerned there is maybe nothing to fault him but it is not French he is speaking: he is not thinking in French. That is what one finds with many Breton language militants. A number speak according to the [grammatical] rules and yet it is not Breton! (Kemerit ur Saoz desket gantañ galleg al levrioù. Selaou a rit gant souezh. E-keñver yezhadur n'eus netra da rebech dezhañ marteze met n'eo ket galleg a zeu gantañ: ne soñj ket e galleg. Kement-all a gaver gant ur bern emsaverien. Lod anezho a gomz hervez al lezennoù ha koulskoude n'eo ket brezhoneg!) [1966 HY: 47.37–38]

The above claim that pronunciation is linked to a way of 'thinking' is not, strictly speaking, correct, whereas it is indubitable that pronunciation is commonly linked with 'genuineness of origin' or lack thereof. Another young militant, Audinet [1982 AF: 37.23] stated: "En breton, *l'accentuation, le rythme, et l'intonation de la phrase sont fondamentaux*. On peut d'ailleurs se demander si certains de ceux qui niaient l'importance de ces phénomènes ne le font pas par incapacité à condescendre à imiter 'l'accent paysan'." Raude [1989 AF: 67–68.59] was caustic:

> Le fait est que la majorité des néo-bretonnants, diplômés ou non, jargonnent une caricature de breton où l'accent français (c'est-à-dire parisien) donne le ton

majeur dans un flot constellé de fautes de prononciation. Nous assistons au massacre de la langue.

Even some older language militants were aware of frenchification in the accent of learners, such as Andouard [1972 AL: 155.510–11] relating the effect of the visit of the singer Youenn Gwernig with his guitar to entertain learners at a Breton summer school in Quimper in 1972:

> In a place like the Quimper camp, where a flat monotonous Breton rules the roost, upon hearing Youenn Gwernig no doubt many often felt the worth of the accent in a sonorous language like our own. So, may he be thanked for that lesson! (En ul lec'h, evel kamp Kemper, ma ren ur brezhoneg plat hag unton, alies e santas meur a hini, moarvat, o klevout Y. Gwernig, talvoudegezh ar pouez-mouezh en ur yezh heson evel hon hini. Ra vezo trugarekaet eta evit ar gentel-se!)

In stark contrast to Olier's views, Piette [1970 SC: 5.154], writing from Wales in 1970, countenanced a dismal future:

> Ironically, the dilemma may be solved in the not very distant future with the disappearance of the natural dialects and the survival of a little Breton spoken by a comparatively small number of non-speakers, with an execrable but fairly uniform pronunciation based on quasi-French interpretation of the standard literary spelling – hardly a happy state of things.

That the Frenchness of many learners is strikingly obvious was illustrated to me when during a tour of Brittany with a Welsh-speaking television crew in 1999 who had no French and were happily ignorant of Breton. One member of the crew (who even had trouble remembering the well-known Breton tokenism *kenavo* 'goodbye') commented that the Breton of the language activist in Rennes sounded French in comparison to the Breton they had heard from native speakers in Roscoff and Loctudy in Finistère. During the orthographic talks in the early 1970s P. Denez took umbrage at any call to change the spelling of some words in ZH by speciously arguing that that the ZH orthography was a phonological orthography (i.e. it took account of the underlying phonemic structure rather than the surface phonetic appearance) and that this was its advantage when compared with the

phonetic orthographies of H [Denez 1975: 24–25].[408] Since the pronunciation of ZH by most of its adherents was derived from the orthography it is hardly a matter of surprise that the orthography was seen as performing well.

It would be simplistic to suppose that all adherents of ZH frowned on the evidence of colloquial Breton speech. Kervella, the grammarian of the ZH camp and a native speaker, was more concerned than Hemon with the correspondence of literary to colloquial Breton. He had 54 pages on pronunciation in his <u>Yezhadur ar Brezhoneg</u> of 1947 and in his 1974 article 'C'hwez ha c'hwezh zo …' ('There is *c'hwez* and *c'hwezh* …') it is clear that he interpreted the ZH orthography as an attempt to reflect the common underlying basis of Breton rather than a surface merger of the KLT and Vannetais written traditions. In 1970 Kervella [1996: 6] expressed his intention to: "establish a unified or at least near-unified pronunciation for our language." (diazezañ un distagadur, unvan pe zamunvan da vihanañ, evit hor yezh.), the results of which were published posthumously in 'Distagadur ar Brezhoneg' ('The pronunciation of Breton') in <u>Hor Yezh</u> in 1996. Elmar Ternes, a German phonologist who had written exemplary monographs on Scottish Gaelic and Breton dialects, in his 1977 article 'Propositions pour un système de prononciation standard du breton' [1977: 36.180–98] (resumed later [Ternes 1992: 428–35]) also advocated an idealised standard pronunciation of Breton based on the ZH orthography and on the Breton he heard on the radio rather than any example of traditional speech [Ternes 1992: 384] (his description of the type of Breton heard on the radio as standardised Léon dialect [Ternes 1977: 181] is misleading as it fails to point out

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408   P. Denez [1974 HY: 94.48–49] rebutted Delaporte's preference to see *marv*, *barv*, *tarv* etc, written as *marw*, *barw*, *tarw* etc, by arguing that this clouded the relationship with their derivatives *mervel*, *barvek*, *tirvi* etc. He brushed off Delaporte's phonetic argument by stating that this went against the phonology: "He takes … a phonetic standpoint. But what he says about phonology, to my mind, is not correct." (Kemer a ra … ur savboent fonetikel. N'eo ket reizh, avat, da'm soñj, ar pezh a lavar diouzh ar fonologouriezh.) P. Denez was not strictly correct since the phonetic relationship between roots and their derivatives in linguistic is a morphophonological and not a phonological (phonemic) matter.

that such Breton, barring few exceptions, is in reality better described as frenchified literary Breton).

In stark contrast to Hemon are those Vannetais writers who have adopted ZH. Le Masson – who had explained the major features of ZH as adapted to Vannetais in his booklet Le Vannetais Unifié (1943)[409] – expressed a different view of ZH:

> Les particularités phonétiques principales sont figurées dans l'écriture et la même graphie convient à plusieurs prononciations distinctes. Ainsi *kuzh* se prononce tantôt *kuz*, tantôt *kuc'h*, *tadoù* se prononce tantôt *tadou*, tantôt *tadaw*, parfois *tado*. / La langue écrite est donc susceptible d'être comprise par tous et constitue dès maintenant un faisceau de dialectes, unis par le lien d'une orthographe commune. Ce lien permettra aux écrivains de l'avenir de totaliser les trésors des dialectes et d'atténuer les divergences actuelles. [Le Masson 1943: 5–6]

This supradialectal interpretation of ZH was anathema to Hemon who emphasised a single uniform pronunciation. In the 1970s with the loss of transmission of the traditional language becoming increasingly apparent amongst younger speakers, Kalvez [1974: 10] asked rhetorically whether the loss of traditional speakers was a reason to cease teaching Vannetais pronunciation and words, to which he answered: "Ce serait une erreur psychologique pour le moins vis-à-vis des gens qui continuent à utiliser le breton dans leur vie quotidienne, et se priver de l'apport des chansons, lieux-dits, noms de personnes … Et la

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409 One senses the difficulty which Olier – the ultra-conformist of ZH – had when confronted with Le Masson's authorship of a book to adapt ZH to a dialect. Olier [1999 Imb: 351–53.ix] forgives "his perhaps too ardent Vannetais conviction" (e c'hred (sic) gwenedek re entanet marteze) because of his signal services in establishing ZH as an orthography worthy of consideration amongst Vannetais writers. The views of ZH adherents regarding those Vannetais writers who agreed with ZH was sometimes ambiguous, Le Clerc [1974 BH: 81.40], for example, when describing L. Herrieu, wrote: "It is a shame that he had been much too influenced by Joseph Loth … and Joseph Loth, in fact, was a great erudite …" (Pec'hed eo e oa bet levezonet re gant Jozef Loth, betek re. … ha Jozef Loth, forzh penaos, a oa ur gouizieg meur…) seems to bewail the fact that Loth, also a Vannetais speaker, was able to furnish L. Herrieu with evidence of the venerability of the Vannetais dialect which strengthened the latter's conviction that Vannetais should not meekly submit to the prestige of KLT.

situation est-elle plus brillante dans les autres régions?" Kalvez [1974: 9] also noted that teachers in the Vannetais area generally tried to teach ZH whilst preserving the Vannetais interpretation of the pronunciation, as a result Neobretonnants in the Vannes and Lorient area, for the most part, have been used to putting Vannetais words and idioms in 'standard' phrases to give a "regional colouring" (liv giz ar vro) [Guehennec in 1995 AL: 290–91.286].

The Vannetais adherents of ZH were not simply mistaken in their interpretation of ZH as a supradialectal orthography. It is clear that for L. Herrieu, the Vannetais writer most prominent in signing to the 1941 agreement, that what he sought was not a simple merger of the KLT and Vannetais standards into a single unified 'national' standard, but simply to get rid of discrepancies between the orthographic conventions of each existing standard. He never envisaged a miraculous overnight solution towards a unified orthography, but a gradual evolution through agreement and mutual concessions, as can be seen from a piece written by him in 1937:

> God be thanked that there is amongst our KLT brothers, young and old, writers and others whose minds are more open. They have studied Vannetais, just as we have studied their Breton, in order to at least be able to read what is written, and these people think, like us, that it is a disgrace to see Breton written with different lettering conventions, (Trugèré Doué, bout e zo émesk hor bredér a G.L.T., ré iouank ha ré goh, skriùagnerion ha réral hag e zo digoroh a spered. Studiet ou des er guénedeg, èl ma hramb-ni ou brehoneg, aveit gellout ahoel lénn er péh e skriùèr, hag en dud-man e chonj èldomb é ma ur véh guélet er brehoneg skriùet get lettrad dishaval,) [Herrieu 1937: 258]

> May there be a similar orthography throughout Brittany, at least for similar words, so that the reader may go easily from one Breton to another and that the Breton variants may converge little by little with children through the schools. (Revo eit Breih abéh ur skritur haval, ahoel eit er girieu haval, aveit ma hello el lénnour monet és ag ur brehoneg d'en aral ha ma tei, a nebedigeu d'er vugalé tostat dré er skol, er brehonegeu en eil d'égilé.) [Herrieu 1937: 259]

Thus despite their both having agreed to the 1941 orthography it is easy to see that L. Herrieu and Hemon's concept of what this agreement entailed differed markedly.[410]

The ambiguity in the principles underlying the ZH orthography is evident in the case of the <zh> grapheme. Press's interpretation [1995: 81] of ZH as a supradialectal orthography remains a view which whilst being debatable is not controversial. The basis of the ZH orthography was a compromise between the literary standard of KLT and that of the Vannetais area. Morgan [1979: 302], probably reporting a consensus amongst the supporters of ZH in the 1970s, wrote: "The unification of 1941 was not meant to produce a supradialectal orthography: it was, quite simply, the union of two literary languages, or rather the absorption of Gwenedeg by KLT with some concessions." This gives a truer reflection of the actual construction of the ZH orthography (the reason for which Hewitt [1987: 41] judged the merger had been made "quelque peu méchaniquement" and that Éliès [1949 AL: 16.19] reported Vallée's criticisms of the ZH merger as "a superficial complete unity, which [view] is quite true." (ur beurunvanidigezh a-ziwar c'horre. A zo gwir a-walc'h.)). Nevertheless, initially, in defending ZH, Hemon had referred to the historical sound that underlay <zh>, in the presentation of the 1941 agreement to the readers of Gwalarn:

> The consonant written <z> according to the rules of the [1907] agreement and <h> according to the rules of the Vannetais people, coming from a dental consonant in Old Breton, will be written <zh>. (Ar gensonenn skrivet *z* hervez reolennou an Emgleo ha *h* hervez reolennou Gwenediz, o tont eus eur gensonenn-dent e brezoneg koz, a vo skrivet *zh*.) [1941 Gwalarn:138–39.67]

And in criticising the upper (eastern) Léon dialect bias of the H orthography Hemon enunciated the principles that guided him:

> What is the commonest variant? It is not stated. Does it exist? It does not. What has been done, in truth, is to take the patois of eastern Léon as a basis. Why that

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410   Likewise in the 1950s it was not Falc'hun's intention to proscribe the existing orthographies, but rather to make the orthographic conventions of KLT and Vannetais compatible with each other. He envisaged a literary standard only finally establishing itself through its own momentum in succeeding generations.

patois rather than another? … / Here one goes against a fundamental rule in the formation of literary Breton since for more than a hundred years: *take from each dialect the most correct feature according to history*, and not at all the most common corruptions. (Petra eo an eilstumm boutinañ? Ne lavarer ket. Daoust hag ez eus anezhañ? N'eus ket. Pezh a zo bet graet e gwirionez eo kemer trefoedach Gorre-Leon da ziazez. Perak an trefoedach-se kentoc'h eget un[an] all? … / Amañ ez eer a-enep ur reolenn-stur e furmidigezh ar brezhonek lennek abaoe ouzhpenn kant vloaz: *kemer e pep rannyezh ar pep reishañ hervez an istor*, ha tamm ebet an trefoedadurioù boutinañ.) [Hemon 1956: 125]

Since Hemon himself had referred to historical antecedent in justifying the ZH orthography, it is hardly surprising that others wanted to respell a number of words to accord with historical origin. There was a certain discrepancy between words containing KLT <z> and Vannetais <h> and those that reflected OB.<th>, so that it was possible to write (1) *kouezhañ* (if one wanted to reflect KLT *koueza* and Vannetais *koehein*), but (2) *kouezañ* to reflect a historical [ð] and not <th> (which not only reflected the historical situation, but also the [∅] pronunciation of the greater part of the Breton-speaking area). Hewitt [1987: 49] draws attention to this:

> On comprend mal pourquoi ses partisans insistent tellement sur l'ébauche de solution supradialectale qu'est le *z*, *zh*, et rejettent avec autant de véhémence toutes les autres propositions allant plus loin dans ce sens.

The subsequent unwillingness to adjust even the grossest of its errors has preserved this uncertainty as to the justification for its form, and, of course, for many of the advocates of ZH the unchanging form of the orthography is its strength, and indeed with the passing of years the commonest justification for ZH has been that it has become traditional.

Kervella's interpretation of a standard pronunciation has been adopted and put into practice in a number of recently published ZH reference books such as the Dictionnaire Élémentaire Breton–Français / Français–Breton [1993] by Kadored et al. and in Geriadur Brezhoneg: gant Skouerioù ha Skeudennoù [1995] by Lagadeg & Menard. However, this standard pronunciation advocated by Kervella is not much different from the 'reading' pronunciation as advocated

by Hemon in 1928 and masks pronunciations that are much commoner in the Breton-speaking areas.

The truth is that the ZH 'tradition' has never, except on its fringes, emphasised the need for learners to perfect their acquired Breton amongst native speakers, as a result of which imperfect learners are teaching learners, and the language of learners becomes a dialect more and more divorced from what can pass as genuine Breton, to become what some observers term a 'xenolect'. This is all due to the weakness of the Breton language community, in exponential decrease since the 1950s, for how else can we explain the number of learners with imperfectly acquired Breton passing themselves off as authorities on what constitutes modern colloquial Breton? More than one Breton speaker might feel that this is the last step in the domination of Breton speakers by French speakers.

In the absence of the influence of native Breton speakers in the Breton militant and educational movement, the chasm between learner Breton and traditional Breton has nowadays becoming glaringly obvious. Whoever will want to learn or study Breton will need to strictly distinguish between the traditional Breton – "the Breton of always" ([ar] brezoneg a viskoaz) to quote Madeg [2002: 18] or "pur jus" Breton to quote Morvannou [1975: 437] – and the Breton of Neobretonnants – the "hors dialectes" Breton to quote Morvannou [1975: 523].

2.4 Transcribing final consonants

Falc'hun's main linguistic achievement was to demonstrate beyond doubt, in his 1951 doctorate presented to Rennes University, how exactly many of the final consonants of Breton (stops and fricatives) varied in accordance to their environment.[411] Before his study, this

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411   French doctorates in this period necessitated a main thesis ('thèse principale') and a complementary thesis ('thèse complémentaire'). Falc'hun's main thesis, entitled Histoire de la Langue Bretonne d'après la Géographie Linguistique,

variation was not understood fully, witness Vallée's explanation: "La variation des consonnes finales n'est point, comme les mutations initiales, un procédé essentiel de la grammaire, soumis à des lois rigoureuses." [Vallée 1909: 160]

In Breton, in word final position, stops and fricatives vary between being voiced or unvoiced according to the following sound, e.g. *deg all* **deg al** 'ten others' vs. *deg ti* **dek ti** 'ten houses' (phoneticians have resorted to demonstrating this underlying variation by noting 'ten' as **deg-k**).[412]

The general rules for realising voiced or unvoiced stops and fricatives in final position are tabulated below:

Figure 15: Phonological contexts for voicing or unvoicing
final stops and fricatives

unvoiced final:	before a pause & *p, t, k, f, s, ch,* & *h, c'h*
voiced final:	before vowels & voiced *b, d, g, v, z, j,* & *r, l, m, n, y, w*

Variation of final consonant can be illustrated by the word *kig* **kig-k** 'meat':

> *kig* **kik** 'meat'
> *kig treud* **kik txøt** 'lean meat'
> *kig bevin* **kig be·vən** 'beef'
> *kig mad* **kig ma:d** 'good meat'
> *kig yar* **kig ja:ɣ** 'chicken meat'

was to prove controversial because of his over-dependence on contemporary rather than historical data, but his complementary thesis Le Système Con-sonantique du Breton avec une Étude Comparative de Phonétique Expéri-mentale (published in 1950 both separately as well as in AB) has stood the test of time. Indeed, Falc'hun's complementary thesis had been intended to be his main thesis – in 1941 in the Sorbonne and in 1944 in the Institut Phonétique in Paris – but Vendryes and Pierre Fouché, respectively, had in both instances refused to support his candidacy, despite later actually congratulating him in 1951 when they both were examiners of his thesis [Falc'hun 1971].

412 Another method is to transcribe such variation by writing the final consonant as a capital, e.g. **deG**.

413 I use [ɣ] for a voiced guttural (velar or uvular) similar if not identical to the French <*r*> 'grasseyé' that is usually transcribed as [ʁ]

However, these general principles of final consonant variation need to be qualified:

(1) In monosyllables before a pause this variation is less systematic than some linguistic descriptions would lead readers to believe, with long vowels tending to go with voiced finals, e.g. *goad* **gwa:d** 'blood', *biz* **bi:z** 'finger', and short vowels with unvoiced finals, e.g. *koad* **kwat** 'wood', *miz* **mis** 'month'.[414]

(2) The final voiced fricative [ɣ] resists variation and remains voiced, e.g. *hanter kant* **hãntəɣˈkãn** '50'. This is because [ɣ] is only a fairly recent development of [r] which was not affected by the rule as it was originally not a stop or fricative.[415]

(3) When derived from French, final unvoiced stops [p, k, t] and fricatives [f, s, ʃ] tend to resist variation and remain unvoiced, in central Breton, for example we find: *tap unn* **tap øn** 'take one', *stok unn* **stɔk øn** 'bump one', *chet unn* **ʃet øn** 'throw one', *ur c'hoef eo* **oɣ hwef e** 'it is a coiffe', *dous eo* **dus e** 'it is sweet', *droch eo* **dyɔʃ e** 'he is peculiar' (the vowel in such words is invariably short and the final consonant long). Even when they derive from voiced French [v, z, ʒ], the following examples of non-variation of the final [f, s, ʃ] in derivatives are found in central Breton: pn. *Nif* **nif** hypocoristic der. *Nifig* **nifik** (← F.pn.

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414 Loth [1897: 405] noted this fact, and Kervella [1996: 23] is unequivocal as to the correlation of vowel length with the voicedness or not of the consonant: "However, many linguists have said the contrary and transcribe [t] [s] etc. But for one accustomed to Breton there is no danger: if the vowel is *long* the following consonant will be *voiced*," (Meur a yezhour koulskoude o deus lavaret ar c'hontrol hag a verk [t] [s], hag all. Evit unan boas ouzh ar brezhoneg n'eus avat arvar ebet: mar deo *hir* ar vogalenn e vo *blot* ar gensonenn goude,).

415 In some dialects, especially in south-western Cornouaille, unvoicing of such a [ɣ] (derived from [r]) to [x] occurs. Thus, in Douarnenez the noun *c'hwezer* 'blower' is pronounced **fe:zax** [p.c. Cloarec] and in Saint-Yvi the derivative of *berr* **be:ɣ** becomes unvoiced to *berra* **bexõ** [p.c. G. German] (contrasting with central Breton *berr* **be:ɣ** and *berra* **be:ɣə**). Such a difference suggests that [r] became [ɣ] much earlier in south-western Cornouaille than in other regions such as Carhaix (and certainly more so than in Léon, Trégor and the Vannetais where the [ɣ] pronunciation is hardly known amongst the oldest speakers and is directly attributable to the influence of French education).

'Yves'), *betis* **betəs** Pl. *betisou* **be'tisʊ** (← F. 'betise'), *loch* **loʃ** Pl. *lochou* **loʃʊ** (← F. 'loge'). However, in some other dialects, for example Bothoa (Côtes-d'Armor), such French-derived finals can voice, e.g. *chik* 'posh' (F. *chic*) but *or chig a blac'h yaouank* 'a lovely young woman'; *propr* 'clean' (F. *propre*) but *prob eo hoh roched* 'your shirt is clean'; *sklas* 'class' (F. *classe*) but *sklaz ar re vyàn* 'the little ones' class' (though the plural *sklasaou* retains the <*s*>) [p.c. Humphreys]. Voicing is more commonly found with [**-p**, **-k**, **-t**] when they are the final component of consonant clusters which contain initial [**w-**, **n-**, **r-**] (for details, see pp.526–27).

There are qualifications of various sorts to be added to the above description of the variation of final consonants in Breton, not least: (1) dialectal variation (some instances above); and (2) indications that a change in the system is in progress in some dialects of Breton.[416] More detailed studies on variation of final consonants would be a welcome addition to our knowledge of Breton phonology.

Unsurprisingly, all this variation in the realisation of consonant endings – or to give the technical term *sandhi* – is rather complicated to memorise, and, since the KLT agreement of 1907, Breton orthographies have tended to generalise either the voiced or the voiceless form (previous orthographies had been inconsistent regarding this variation tending to write *frouez mat* 'good fruit' and *mad eo ar froues* 'the fruit are good' [Falc'hun 1953: 61]). In the H and SS orthographies the final consonant was transcribed according to which variant appears in derivatives so that the identical endings of **tok** 'hat' and **kxok** 'grip' are written *tok* and *krog* because of the derivatives *tokeyer* 'hats' and *kroga ~ kregi* '(to) grip', whilst **jɔwən** is written *yaouank* because the derivative is *yaouankiz*. This is certainly an improvement on the KLT and ZH orthographies which enshrined a chimerical convention that nouns should be written with voiced

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416 In Central Breton this variation has led in certain cases to the emergence of new lexical doublets [Wmffre 1999: 5]:
   oᵛ **gwa:z** 'a husband'   vs.   oᵛ **gwas** 'an ace (outstanding man)'
   ma:d 'good'   vs.   **mat** 'very' (postposed)

consonants, and adjectives should be written with an unvoiced consonants, e.g.

> ar brez(h)oneg 'Breton'   vs.   (e)ul levr brez(h)onek 'a Breton book'

This was pure invention which did not accord with the reality of Breton, since any noun can become an adjective, e.g. *ar baner so toull* 'the basket is holed' (← *toull* 'hole') [Raude in 1989 AF: 67–68.61]. Jackson [1967: 831] described this convention as "needless confusion". The convention differentiating nouns from adjectives was first spelt out clearly by the 1907 KLT agreement [Vallée 1909: 161; Le Clerc 1911: viii]. It had been inspired by a similar convention – stated simply as "on est convenu de préférer" – given in the 1902 Grammaire Bretonne du Dialecte de Vannes [p.6] of Guillevic & Le Goff, the standardisers of the Vannetais literary language. However, that Guillevic & Le Goff had not established this convention as methodically as the 1907 KLT agreement is clear from the forms *mad*, *benag* in the 1902 edition, which became *mat*, *benak* in the revised 1912 version of the Vannetais grammar (in accordance with the rules of the 1907 KLT agreement). With Guillevic & Le Goff, L. Herrieu had adopted the principle differentiating the treatment of nouns from adjectives, he explained to his readers:

> The following was an easy to understand rule adopted by the writers of the [1907] agreement: In order to know how to write a word, lengthen that word with a suffix. / Thus: ta*d* and not ta*t* because ta*d*eu is said and not ta*t*eu; bra*s* and not bra*z* because it is bra*s*oh and not bra*z*oh; ma*t* (adj.) and not ma*d* because it is ma*t*oh and not ma*d*oh; ma*d* (subst.) and not ma*t* because it is ma*d*eleh and not ma*t*eleh; Fran*s* and not Fran*z* because it is Fran*s*izion; Bourhi*z* and not Bourhi*s* because it is Bourhi*z*ion; Pontkelle*g* and not Pontkelle*k* because it is Pontkelle*g*ig; etc. … The words that cannot be lengthened should be written by the hard letters they have (<*f, k, p, s, t*>). There is a rule that is always easy to remember! Those who do not follow that rule can sometimes write the word in one manner, at other times in another manner. And when they are asked why they write a word in that way, they have no rule to explain. They write, *bourc'hiz*, *bourc'his*; … *gueled* (past participle) and *guerzet*; *goapuz* and *poblus*; *Pariz* and *Jézus*, like Jaffrennou. (Ul lézen és de gonpren ha digeméret get skriùagnerion en *Emgleu* e zou honnen: / Aveit gouiet penaus skriù ur gir, hireit er gir-sé get ur lost-gir. / Elmen: ta*d* ha nann ta*t* rak ma vé laret ta*d*eu ha nann ta*t*eu; bra*s* ha nann bra*z* rak bra*s*oh ha nann bra*z*oh; ma*t* (adj.) ha nann

ma*d* rak ma*t*oh ha nann ma*d*oh; ma*d* (subst.) ha nann ma*t* rak ma*d*eleh ha nann ma*t*eleh; Fran*s* ha nann Fran*z* rak Fran*s*izion; Bourhi*z* ha nann Bourhi*s* rak Bourhi*z*ion; Pontkelle*g* ha nann Pontkelle*k* rak Pontkelle*g*ig; etc. … Er girieu ne hellér hirat e zeli bout skriùet get lettrad start én devé anehé (f, k, p, s, t). Chetu ul lézen és de ziskein ataù! Er ré ne héliant ket el lézen-sé e hel skriù girieu guehavé én ur mod, gueharal én ur mod aral. Hag a pe houlenér geté perak e skriànt ur gir elsé, n'ou des lézen erbet de zispleg. Ind e skriù, èl Taldir, Bourc'hiz, Bourc'his; … gueled (part.p.) ha guerzet; goapuz ha poblus; Pariz ha Jézus.) [1911 Dihunamb: 230]

This principle of differentiating nouns from adjectives in this way was justified by its proponents by the fact that the derivatives of most Breton nouns showed the final consonant as voiced, e.g. *degou* **de:gʊ** 'tens' (from *deg* **deg-k** '10'); *tadou* **ta:dʊ** 'fathers' (from *tad* **ta:d-t** 'father'), whereas the commonest derivatives of adjectives, the comparatives *<-oc'h>* and superlatives *<-a(ñ)>*, showed the final consonants as unvoic-ed, e.g. *kaletoc'h* **ka'lɛtəx** 'harder', and *ar c'haleta* **aˠ ha'lɛtə** 'the hardest' (from *kaled* **ka:ləd-t** 'hard').

That the unvoicing of consonants had nothing to do with the fact that they were adjectives is demonstrated by the derivative verbs in *-ha* of the nouns *merc'hed* 'girls' and *pesked* 'fish' which are *merc'heta* and *pesketa*. Furthermore the Welsh series *caled* 'hard', *caletach* 'harder', *y caleta(f)* 'the hardest' demonstrates that both the comparative and superlative suffixes cause unvoicing of a final voiced consonant.[417] Having demonstrated that these derivative suffixes are exceptional in that they provect final consonants, there remains no logical reason for the preservation of unvoiced final consonants in Breton in most adjectives. Falc'hun commented on the rule differ-entiating nouns from adjectives:

417 The underlying form of the superlative suffix was not *<-a(ñ)>*, but *<-ha(ñ)>*, which explains the unvoicing of final consonants. The comparative suffix *<-oc'h>* (W. *<-ach>*) did not originally unvoice final consonants, but gradually came to do so – in both languages – by analogy with the superlative suffix. The unvoicing of *kreñv*, *klañv*, *teo* in comparative and superlative derivatives such as *kreñfaad* 'strengthening', *klañfoc'h* 'sicker', *tefa* 'fattest', restricted to western Léon, was treated as a dialectism by Falc'hun [1956: 18] (as it had been in KLT and ZH).

> Le défaut le plus voyant de toutes les orthographes actuelles, … qui provoque les plus nombreuses et les plus graves fautes de prononciation, c'est la notation inadéquate des consonnes finales. [Falc'hun 1953: 60]

> Les auteurs de cette distinction étaient imbus de l'esprit des grammairiens français du XVIIe siècle, qui avaient entrepris de faire cadrer la grammaire avec la logique, une certaine logique. [Falc'hun 1953: 61]

> Ils ont créé une complication inutile, qui à l'usage se révèle néfaste. [Falc'hun 1953: 62]

Furthermore the noun/adjective contrast of voicedness adopted by KLT and ZH left numerous exceptions to this rule, e.g. *gouez* 'wild', *ruz* 'red' etc [Géraud 1954: 349] and *stag* 'bound', *goustad* 'slow', *nevez* 'new', *koz*(*h*) 'old' [Hewitt 1987: 42].

In addition to derivation (which tended to favour using the voiced variant of the consonant rather than the unvoiced one) Falc'hun [1953: 61] also adduced phonetic reasons for choosing the voiced variant in H:

> La meilleure solution eût consisté à écrire *mad*, 'bon', ce qui eût évité les fautes de liaison, et n'eût pas empêché l'assourdissement à la finale, qui est automatique et inconscient chez la plupart des bretonnants: ils disent *le sut* pour *le sud*, *fromache* pour *fromage*, etc.

P. Denez [1958: 8] argued – logically – if *evid* was the better spelling in *evid an den* 'for the man', then it was *evit* which was the better spelling in *evit kerzout* 'for walking', but Falc'hun [1953: 61] pointed out that Breton speakers – unaware of orthographic rules – generally wrote *mad* rather than *mat* in popular sayings such as: *blavez mad* 'happy new year', *yec'hed mad* 'good health', and in the few advertisements seen in Breton such as: *marhad mad* 'reasonably priced', *gwin mad* 'good wine' (this is confirmed by the spelling *marc'hadourez marc'had mad* and *difennet mad eo …* in nineteenth-century examples of commercial publicity [2001 ParlBret: 6–7] and what Keravel [1977: fol.2] referred to when he stated that the conventions of H "se rapprochent des graphies spontanées du peuple"). Boché [p.c.] adds the argument that it is commoner for a

voiced final consonant to unvoice than vice-versa, illustrating this by examples from a number of languages:

Figure 16: Phonological contexts for voicing or unvoicing
in some other languages

German ɣaːt *Rad*	vs.	ɣaːd-/ɣɛːd- in *radeln*/*Räder*
Russian ja rat я рад 'I'm glad (m.)'	vs.	ja rada я рада 'I'm glad (f.)'
French gʁɑ̃t in *grand enfant*	vs.	gʁɑ̃d- in *grandir*, *grandeur*

P. Denez's further argument [1958: 8] that by writing *kalet* for *kaled*, that agreed with the common derivatives *kaletoc'h*, *kaleta*(*ñ*) "on assure donc la simplification de la construction", simply ignores other nominal and verbal derivatives of *kaled* such as *kaledenn*, *kaledi*(*ñ*), and did nothing for common adjectives such as *kozh* 'old' and *ruz* 'red' whose comparative and superlative derivatives were *koshoc'h*, *koshañ* and *rusoc'h*, *rusañ* in ZH. Le Mercier [1989: 20] points out that the adoption of the unvoiced consonant in writing would intuitively lead, when adding the common diminutive suffix -*ig*, to the incorrect *treutig*, *aliesig* rather than the correct *treudig*, *aliezig*.

Le Mercier believed that the modernisers of KLT in the 1920s and 1930s had not given much attention to the pronunciation of Breton because they lived in a period when much more Breton was spoken:

> It does not matter how Breton was written, they read well when they were true Bretons and when they were learned. They would hear the proper pronunciation resonating in their ears as they read. Thus in French we pronounce 'pietater' whilst we read <d> with our eyes (*pied-à-terre*). (N'eus forz penaoz e vefe bet skrivet ar brezoneg, e lennent mad, pa oa *brezonegerien wirion anezo*, *ha pa oant tud desket*. Klevout a reent o tassoni en o diouskouarn an distagadur mad tra ma lennent. Evel-se, e galleg, e tistagom 'pietater', tra ma lennom d gand on daoulagad (*pied-à-terre*).) [Le Mercier *c*.1974–75: 1]

He thought the advent of Breton on the radio since the 1940s and television in the 1970s and the increasing numbers of young learners meant that the bad effect of transcribing final consonants as unvoiced when they were mostly voiced could no longer be ignored.

Hemon voiced his objection to this aspect of Falc'hun's attempts to change the orthography in 1954:

> The 1907 rule to mark the final consonants of words is not very good (writing the noun *brezhoneg* and the adjective *brezhonek*). It is not very good, but it is simple enough, and there is no need to change. Trying to transcribe word-final changes makes for complications and difficulties in the orthography. (Reolenn 1907 e-keñver an doare da verkañ kensonennoù-dibenn ar gerioù n'eo ket mat-mat (skrivañ *brezhoneg*, anv-kadarn, ha *brezhonek* anv-gwan). N'eo ket mat-mat, hogen eeun a-walc'h eo, ha n'eus ket ezhomm kemmañ. Klask merkañ ar c'hemmadurioù dibenn-ger a zo luziañ ha diaesaat ar skrivadur.) [24/01/1954 ABK]

Hemon's assertion that recognising variation of final consonants needlessly complicated the orthography failed to notice that Falc'hun had advocated a blanket adoption of the unvoiced variant which, of course, *is* simpler than the orthographic duality between nouns and adjectives found in KLT and ZH. After the establishment of the H orthography in 1956, Hemon let his vitriolic disdain against the new orthography govern his arguments at the expense of reasoning:

> The rule adopted in 1907 is neither good nor bad, and it was kept in 1941. Here another rule is given, no doubt for the pleasure of publishing an elegant table showing 'voiced' opposing 'unvoiced' consonants. Elegant but FALSE. The opposition between 'voiced' and 'unvoiced' is nothing but one of the professor's 'structural' phonetics' dreams, disputed completely by a careful study of the language; a daydream to throw on the rubbish dump along with the fable of the influence of Carhaix etc. At least, the people who elaborated the 1907 rule knew the history of Breton and they were not hoodwinked by whims concerning the structure of the consonants of the language. (Ar reolenn degemeret e 1907 n'eo na mat na fall, ha miret eo bet e 1941. Amañ e roer ur reolenn all, moarvat evit ar blijadur da embann un daolenn goant o tiskouez kensonennoù 'blot' e-keñver re 'galet'. Koant, hogen FAOS. An enebadur etre 'blot' ha 'kalet' n'eo nemet unan eus huñvread-ennoù soniadouriezh 'strukturel' ar c'helenner dislavaret krenn gant studi aketus istor ar yezh: ur sorc'henn da deurel d'ar blotoù gant mojenn levezon Garaez hag all. An dud o deus graet reolenn 1907 a ouie da vihanañ istor ar brezhoneg, ha ne vezent ket touellet gant faltazioù a-zivout frammadur kensonennoù ar yezh.) [Hemon 1956: 125]

Raude [1955: 1–2], in strong language, also decried the application of sandhi to the stops, and in a quasi-libellous tone described this

phonological opposition introduced to the scientific community by Falc'hun as "… son propre hobby-horse, cet embryon de phonologie qu'est la doctrine des oppositions *fortes-douces*." Raude [1955: 3–4] continued with what is plainly a totally misleading portrayal of Falc'hun's work on the consonants of Breton:

> La révolution invraisemblable qu'apporte cette réforme dans l'orthographe ne repose que sur une interprétation simpliste de faits mal observés et n'a pour effet que de camoufler les véritables règles qui gouvernent la prononciation du breton. [Raude 1955: 3]

In 1958 Olier [1998a: 10] wrote of Falc'hun's "miraculous hypotheses in the field of Breton phonology" (e zamkanadennoù marzhus war dachenn ar soniadouriezh vrezhonek) and noted that Professor Vendryes of Paris, the doyen of Celtic studies in France, had never mentioned Falc'hun's 'great discoveries': "Why would he have kept silent about them if they were so obvious?" (Perak en dije tavet diwar o fenn ma oant ken anat?). [Olier 1960a: 42]. Falc'hun would later reveal that in 1941 Vendryes had been reluctant to accept his research as valid for a doctoral thesis:

> Je croirais plutôt qu'il a vite compris que mon explication des mutations consonantiques s'accommoderait mal d'une théorie phonétique qu'à la suite de Grammont et de Meillet il enseignait depuis trente ans. [Falc'hun 1971: 25]

Notwithstanding Vendryes's reticence, by the time the adoption of the H orthography was made public in 1955, he had approved Falc'hun's thesis and had even sent him a letter approving his treatment of voicing-unvoicing in final consonants and <*c'h*> [Dujardin 1956: 8]. Jackson's view – who is quite rightly regarded as the main authority on the historical developments of sounds in Breton due to his <u>Historical Phonology of Breton</u> (1967) – was quite opposed to Falc'hun's detractors on this point:

> … the reform of 1911 introduced a further needless confusion by its distinction between nouns and adjectives, etc. [1967: 831]