

The Long Monophthongs of Old English

ī, ū (rīdan, fūr)

ū (hūs)

ē (swēte)

ō (fōda)

æ (hæp)

ā (stān)

The Long Monophthongs of Middle English

ī (ride(n), fyr)

ū (hous)

ē (swete)

ō (fode)

ē̄ (heeth)

ō̄ (ston)

The Short Monophthongs of Old English

i, y (drincan, fyllan)

u (sunu)

e (helpan)

o (oxa)

æ (pæet)

a (panc)

The Short Monophthongs of Middle English

i (drinke(n), fille(n))

u (sone)

e (helpe(n))

o (oxe)

a (panc, pat)

Lengthening of Short Vowels in 13th century ME

OE spelling	ME spelling	ME pron.
nama	name	nāmē
fæder	fadar	fādēr
mete	mete	mētē
stolen	stolen	stōlēn
EXCEPT before Ci:		
hefiġ	hevy	hevī
bodiġ	body	bodī

Simplification of Diphthongs in ME

diphthong	OE example	ME spelling	ME pron.
[ēa]	strēam	streem	strēm
[ea]	earm	arm	arm
[ēo]	bēon	bee(n)	bēn
[eo]	weorc	werk	węrk

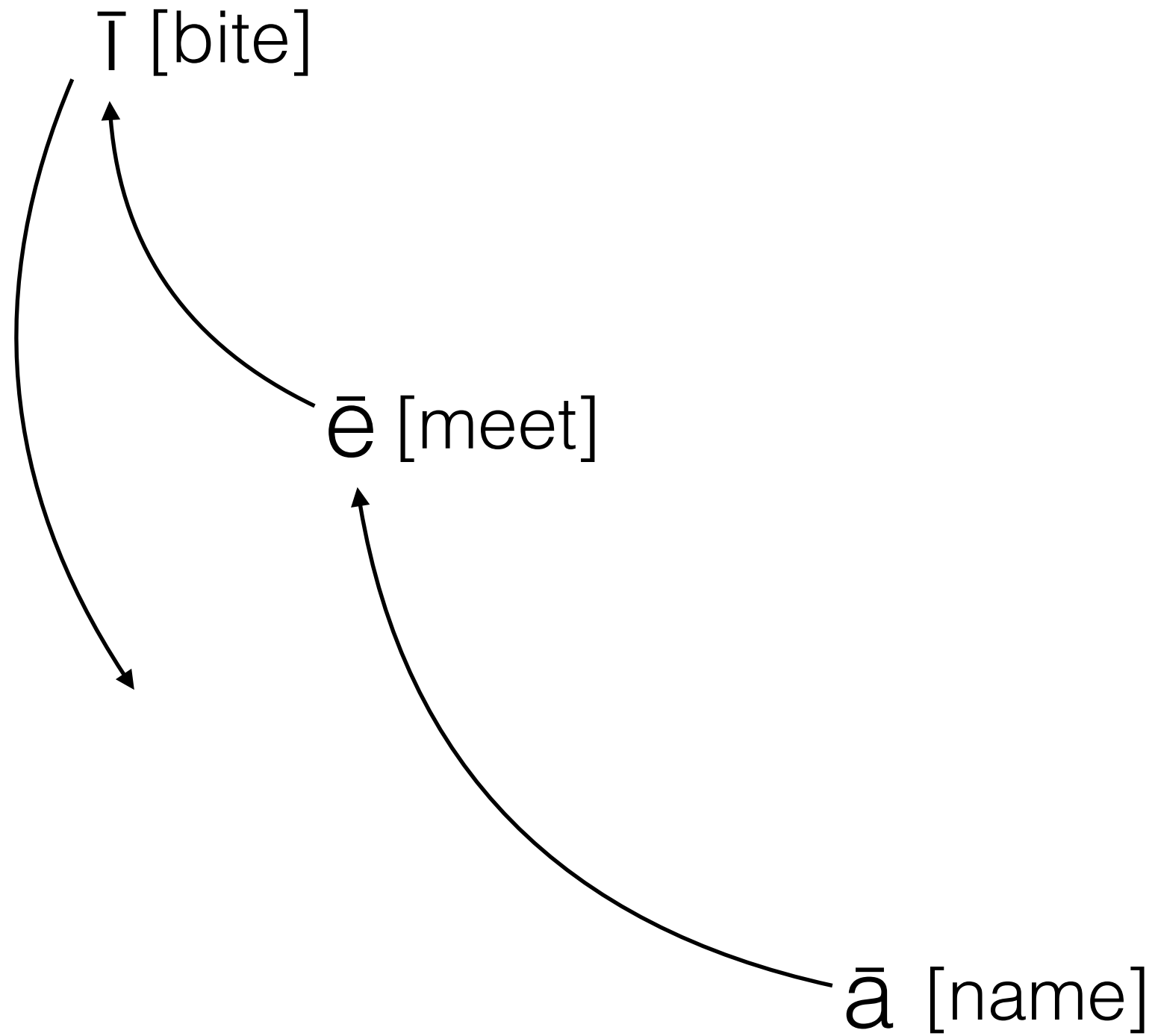
Development of New Diphthongs in ME

diphthong	OE example	ME spelling	ME pron.
[ai]	dæg	dai	dai
[au]	weg	wey	wɛi
[ɛu]	clawu	clawe	klaue
[iu]	stīweard	steward	steward
[ɔi]	from French	joie	jɔi
[ōu]	cnāwan	knowe(n)	knōuən
[ɔu]	bohte	boughte	bɔuhtə

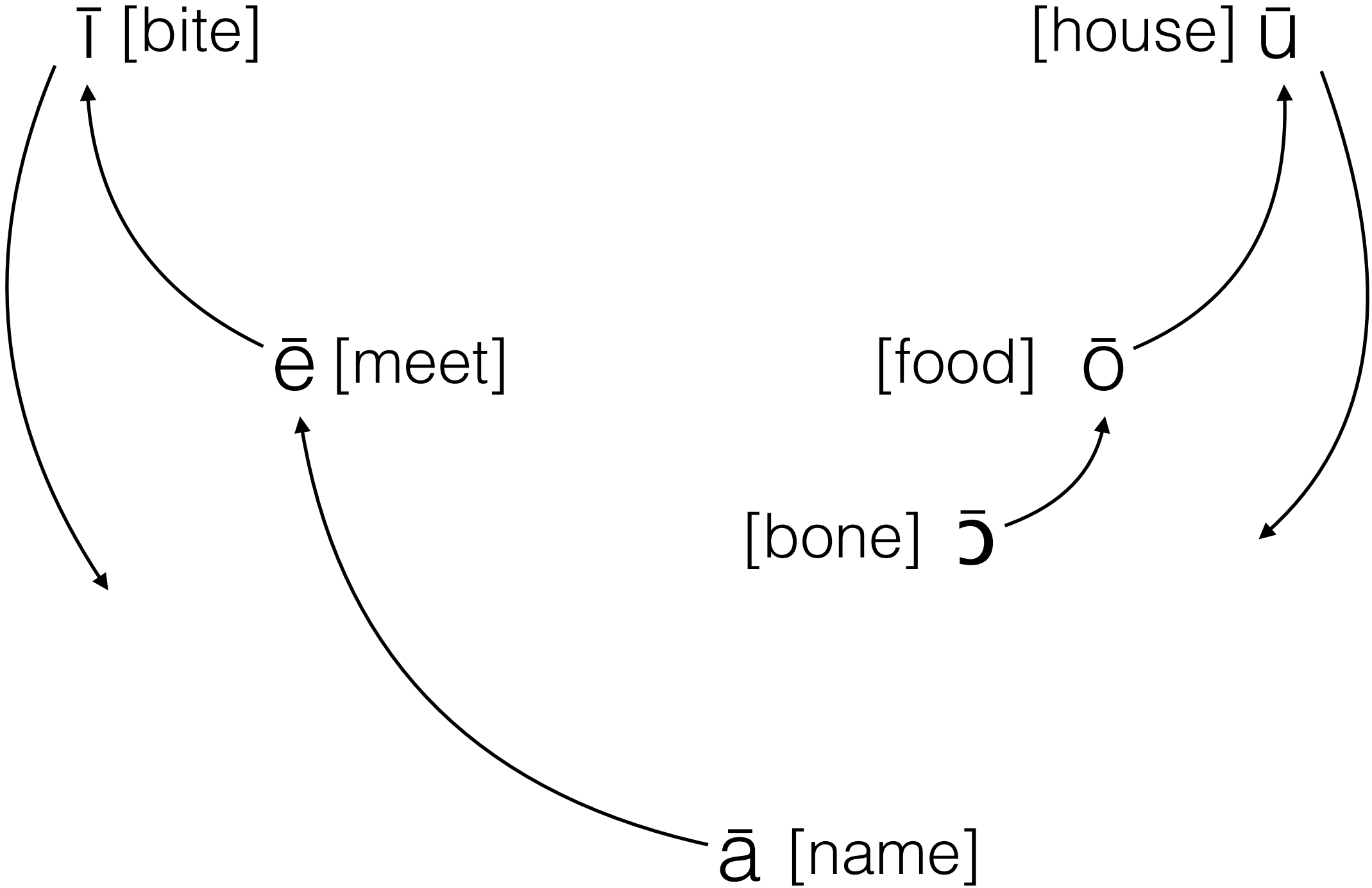
Shortening of Long Vowels in 12th century ME

OE spelling	ME spelling	ME pron.
shortening before a consonant cluster:		
cēpte	kepte	kɛptə
wīsdōm	wisdom	wisdōm
lædde	ledde	lɛddə
læssa	lesse	lɛssə
tri-syllabic shortening:		
ċīcenu	chikene	ċikɛnə
hāligdæg	halidei	halidei

Great English Vowel Shift I



Great English Vowel Shift II



Great English Vowel Shift III

	ME	1569	1653	1687	19th c.
bite	ī	ei	əi	ʌi	bite
meet	ē	ī	ī	ī	meet
name	ā	ā	ē̄	ē	name
house	ū	ɔū	əu	ʌu	house
food	ō	ū	ū	ū	food
bone	ō̄	ō̄	ō	ō	bone