

THE STRONG VERB SYSTEM IN THE
*PETERBOROUGH CHRONICLE**

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1. Introduction

The aim of the present paper is to analyse the strong verb system of Early Middle English as preserved in the MS. Laud, 636 of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. This manuscript, usually referred to as the *Peterborough Chronicle* after its place of origin, is one of the few surviving English texts from the first half of the 12th century. Therefore, it offers a useful insight into the processes reshaping the language during the so-called transition period between Old and Middle English.

The choice of the subject matter of this paper is by no means accidental. The demise of the strong verb as a functional category in the course of the history of the English language remains one of the unexplained and relatively unexplored issues.

Many scholars (e.g., Wright & Wright 1928; Baugh 1961; Fisiak 1968; Wełna 1991) observed a significant increase in the number of strong verbs being lost or shifted to the weak class in the 13th and 14th centuries, which processes had been accompanied by simultaneous disintegration of the ablaut system. Therefore, it seemed valid to ask whether or not these processes had started to operate already in the 12th century, insofar as it could be decided on the basis of the analysis of the written material available. No analysis of the *Peterborough Chronicle* dialect to date has come up with results comparable in accuracy to that provided by Sprockel (Sprockel 1965) for the *Parker Chronicle*, an earlier manuscript of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Most scholars restricted themselves to mere editing of the text, while Clark (Clark 1970) concentrated in the first place on establishing the exact geographical provenience of the manuscript. Consequently, she omitted those elements

* This is a part of a larger study on the shift of strong verbs to the category of weak verbs from Late Old English to the 15th century.

of the language (the strong verb category being one of them) that offered no help in achieving her task. Hence, this work constitutes an attempt at filling the gap at least to a certain extent.

However, before presenting the findings of this research, the reader's attention should be directed towards a few theoretical assumptions underlying this paper.

First of all, the notions of strong verb and shifted strong verb should be defined. For the purpose of this work these will be understood as follows:

- (a) a verb, irrespective of its origin, is assumed to be strong when it unexceptionally conforms, after taking into consideration the possible influences of various sound changes in the period, with one of the seven Old English ablaut series (Campbell 1959:307-20).
- (b) a strong verb is taken as shifted when it exhibits past tense and past participial formations characteristic of weak verbs, i.e., the dental suffix in the case of strong verbs with root final consonants other than the dental stops /d/ and /t/, or the dental suffix, followed by <-e>, attached to a present stem for roots with final dental stops. Apparently weak forms with preterite vowels cannot be decisively assigned as either strong or weak due to the emergence of the mute <-e> and to the phonetically unwarranted scribal practice of indiscriminately doubling consonants (e.g., *sætte* = **sæt*-<t>-<e> /sæt/ or **sæt-te* /sætə/?; *fuhtton* = **fuht*-(e)t-on or **fuht*-<t>-on ?). Finally, it should be noted that various dialectal features present in the text under discussion have been deliberately disregarded as not pertaining to the matter in question.

2. Data

The strong verbs forms found in the *Peterborough Chronicle* are presented according to their membership of one of seven ablaut classes. After each separate variant the year of the earliest entry it can be found in is given; if a form is a frequent one its first and last occurrence are noted. The frequencies of given forms as well as the preferences of individual scribes writing in different parts of the chronicle were not collected as being beyond the scope of the present paper.

CLASS I

<i>infinitive:</i>	abidan (1), awritan (1086), beswicon (1015), besuiken (1140), drifan (787), geridan (1042), geswican (1002), gewritan (1085), ofridan (877), swican (1087), writan (1086).
<i>inflected infinitive:</i>	to spiwenne (1003).
<i>1.sg.pres.:</i>	write (656).
<i>3.sg.pres.:</i>	not found.

<i>pl.pres.:</i>	not found.
<i>pres.pret.:</i>	ridendra (1085), ridend (1137), ridende (1114), scynende (1097), scinende (1097-1114).
<i>pres.subj.sg.:</i>	not found.
<i>pres.subj.pl.:</i>	write (656).
<i>pret.subj.sg.:</i>	oferbide (1101).
<i>pret.subj.pl.:</i>	geswicon (994).
<i>3.sg.pret.:</i>	abad (1091), adraf (380), aras (380), asah (1012), aseh (1123), astah (1110), aswac (1016), bedraf (709), belaf (1018), belæf (1131), beleaf (1070), berad (755), beswac (1003), beteah (1096), draf (963), fordrad (927), gerad (878), geswac (1048), gewat (E-1089), gewrat (656), rad (787), scan (678), wrat (87).
<i>pl.pret.:</i>	adrifon (E), adrifen (823), adrifan (1086), arisan (1087), awriton (1106), bedrifon (477), belifan (1047), belyfon (1085), biden (1131), drifon (1016), fordrifon (774), fordrifan (952), geflyton (777), geridan (878), geridon (878), geswicon (994-1118), geswican (1104), gewiton (885), gewriten (656), onbidedon (1006), onriden (871), ridon (755), ridan (999), ridone (1127), riden (1123), risen (1135), swicon (1118), suyken (1140), writen (963), uurythen (1137).
<i>pret.part.:</i>	adrifen (592-1104), adrifene (1075), beswicen (654), beswican (1014), beswikene (1093), fordrifene (1086), forðgewiton (963), gewriton (963), gewritene (1086), oferwrogen (1086).

CLASS II

<i>infinitive:</i>	abeodan (1091), abugan (1013), bedon (675), bedan (1011), beodan (1083), cesen (1123), forleon (1086), onbugan (979).
<i>inflected infinitive:</i>	not found.
<i>1.sg.pres.:</i>	bebeode (675), beode (675), forbede (656), forbeode (675).
<i>3.sg.pres.:</i>	not found.
<i>pl.pres.:</i>	abugað (979).

<i>pres.part.:</i>	dreogende (1104), fleogende (793), scotienda (744).
<i>pres.subj.sg.:</i>	not found.
<i>pres.subj.pl.:</i>	not found.
<i>pret.subj.sg.:</i>	crape (1131), forlure (81), ofscute (1055).
<i>pret.subj.pl.:</i>	not found.
<i>3.sg.pret.:</i>	abeah (1013), ateah (1071), bebead (1008-1128), bebæd (1129), bead (167-1129), beah (1001-1085), cæs (963), ceas (1041), fleah (1010), fleh (1140), forbead (1012), forleas (1076), forlæs (1127), forles (1140), geceas (1041), misbead (1083), teah (1003).
<i>pl.pret.:</i>	abruðon (1004), abugon (1086), abugan (1100), belucan (1083), budon (755), beaden (1170), bugon (959-1118), cusen (1066), crupon (1083), drugon (634), flugon (E-1010), flugen (1137), flugæn (1137), forluron (1091), gebugon (1097), gebugan (1101), gebugen (1119), gecuron (1014-1097), gecuran (1100), losedan (1120), scotedon (1083), scufon (1048), tugon (892), toscuton (1083).
<i>pret.part.:</i>	beboden (1125), begoten (734), belocen (755), coren (656), cosen (1123), cosan (1154), forboden (1048), forloron (1131), forloren (1137), geboden (755), gebogen (1013), gecoren (656-1119), ofsceoten (1100), toflotan (1097).

CLASS III

<i>infinitive:</i>	ætbeorstan (656), bænnen (1087), feohton (449), findon (418), finden (656), findan (1046), forwurðan (605), gebeorgan (1006), gewurðan (1086), gewinnan (1085), gyldan (1006), gyldon (1002), ofstingan (626), towurpon (975), wurðen (1066), weorðan (1089), winnan (685), winnon (1070).
<i>inflected infinitive:</i>	to gewinnane (1087).
<i>1.sg.pres.:</i>	swelte (1123).
<i>3.sg.pres.:</i>	gewurðað (1086), renneð (656), reonneð (963), singað (1127).
<i>pl.pres.:</i>	belimpað (1102).
<i>pres.part.:</i>	byrnende (1098), bærnende (1131), feohtende (755), winnende (835).

<i>pres.subj.sg.:</i>	wurð (656), wurðe (675).
<i>pres.subj.pl.:</i>	wearðan (959).
<i>pret.subj.sg.:</i>	belumpe (1086), swulte (1091).
<i>pret.subj.pl.:</i>	gewurde (959).
<i>3.sg.pret.:</i>	acwanc (1110), adranc (933), ætbærst (605), ætbræd (1093), asprang (1099), began (1129), belamp (1116), bærnede (1014), bred (189), cearf (1014), feaht (552-1066), feoht (710), faht (1122), fand (963-1140), funde (1072), forbarn (679-1086), forbærnde (1009), forbearn (1067), forbearnde (1086), forbernde (1130), forwearð (189), gebræd (1003), gefeaht (485-1096), gefaht (607), gelamp (E-1124), gewearð (47-1111), gewarð (1089), gewann (740-1105), gewan (923), geald (994-1052), hwearf (813), ærn (1014), ofstang (626), onfand (1091), ongan (597-1016), oðbærst (1101), sang (1125), stærf (1124), swealt (2), swang (616), tohwearf (1094), toðræsc (1009), towearp (639), towærp (722), wearp (1009), wearð (465-1128), wærð (617-1129), werð (653), wærhð (833), warð (881), wærd (1129), weorð (1129), uuard (1135), warth (1135), ward (1154), wan (597), wann (1095), uuan (1137).
<i>pl.pret.:</i>	ablunnon (1097), adruncon (794), afundan (755), astuncon (797), belumpon (1097), bundon (1046), bærndon (684-1087), beorndon (870), brendon (1137), brenden (1137), clumben (1070), dulfon (1016), flugon <= fulgon > (755), fuhton (449-1124), fuhten (1138), fuhtten (1140), fundon (870), forbærndon (694-1072), forbearnndon (779), forburnen (1123), forcurfan (797), forguldon (1039), forwurdon (593), gefuhton (456-1030), gelumpon (1011), gewurdon (1009), gewunnon (1069), gewunnon (1086), guldon (1018), urnon (755), anfundon (E), ongunnan (654), ongunnen (656), sungen (1122), sturuen (1137), streddon (1010), swulton (1086), swulten (1130), tohwurfon (827-1106), wurpon (1046), wurdon (616-1120), wurden (959), wurðon (1070), weorðan (1125), wurthen (1140).
<i>pret.part.:</i>	adruncen (852), adruncene (1120), agunnen (656), aworpene (867), begunnon (1154), bærnede (687), druncene (1012), fundena (1120), forbærnd (1070), forbearnde (1086), gebundenne (796), gebroiden (1104), gefohten (871), gefohton (658), gefunden (963), geworden (1066),

gewordene (1086), gewunnon (1086), gewonnen (1105), ofstungen (948), ongunnen (656), ongunnan (1122).

CLASS IV

<i>infinitive:</i>	beran (1123), bæron (1137), beniman (1125), brecan (1003), cumon (656-1095), cuman (1048-1123), cumen (1070-1140), geniman (1002), nimon (1015), niman (1048), nimen (1126), ofercumen (1070), tobreacan (1047).
<i>inflected infinitive:</i>	to berene (1127), cumene (656).
<i>1.sg.pres.:</i>	not found.
<i>3.sg.pres.:</i>	breket (675), ofercumeð (1123), tobrekeð (656), tobreceð (675), tobreket (675), tobrecoð (963).
<i>pl.pres.:</i>	not found.
<i>pres.part.:</i>	not found.
<i>pres.subj.sg.:</i>	cume (675), nime (675).
<i>pres.subj.pl.:</i>	cumen (656), cumon (675), tobræcon (963), ofbreke (675).
<i>pret.subj.sg.:</i>	bare (1135), come (1016-1154).
<i>pret.subj.pl.:</i>	comon (1048).
<i>3.sg.pret.:</i>	bær (1052-1111), bar (1137), benam (755-1140), bestæl (865), bestæl (1004), brec (885), com (477-1154), genam (571-1119), nam (787-1140), ofercom (1066), stæl (1140), stal (1140).
<i>pl.pret.:</i>	abræcon (860), bæron (1137), bestælon (876), bræcon (851), bræcen (1083), breokan (1102), coman (E-1137), comon (449-1128), comen (870-1135), forbaren (1137), genamon (E-1094), genaman (530), genamen (1003), namon (501-1087), naman (870-1102), namen (1070-1140), stali (1140), tobræcon (1087).
<i>pret.part.:</i>	abrocen (1003), benumene (658), boren (1123), cumene (793), cuman (1048), cumen (1070), cumenum (792), forbroken (1127), forholen (1137), fornumene (1110), geboren (380), gebrocode (978), genumen (878), genumene (1116), numen (656), ofercumen (1096), ofgenumen (1006), ofgenumon (1072), tobrocen (409), to-

brocene (794), tobrocon (963), tobroken (1095), to-brokene (1125).

CLASS V

<i>infinitive:</i>	abiddan (626), agifan (1087), agyfan (1095), awrecan (1048), begytan (1009), beieton (1130), bigæton (1140), begeton (1131), besittan (1087), æten (1140), gebidden (656), gebiddan (605), geseon (797), giuen (777), gifen (852), gife (852), gifan (1103), gyuen (1132), iiuen (1140), licgan (1009), lien (1137), ongytan (979), sitten (1137), sprecau (797), sprecon (1114), ðicgan (755), wrecan (979), wrecon (1087).
<i>inflected infinitive:</i>	to besittanne (1094), to forgytane (1086), to gifene (1109), to sprecene (1103).
<i>1.sg.pres.:</i>	bidde (656), cwede (963), cweðe (963), gife (656-963).
<i>3.sg.pres.:</i>	liggeð (675), ligð (755), lið (784-963), seð (1124), seoð (1124), sitteð (1130).
<i>pl.pres.:</i>	cweðað (565), frett (1127), liggeð (656), liggen (656), liggan (656), lin (963), lien (1137), specað (1086), embespecað (1086).
<i>pres.part.:</i>	biddende (1083), cwæðend (656), cweðende (675), geseonde (1086), sittende (1085), sprecende (1123).
<i>pres.subj.sg.:</i>	bidde (675), gife (1085).
<i>pres.subj.pl.:</i>	not found.
<i>pret.subj.sg.:</i>	sæte (1036).
<i>pret.subj.pl.:</i>	not found.
<i>3.sg.pret.:</i>	abæd (1093), æftercwæð (1094), ageaf (1087), becwæð (1086), begeat (1052-1089), beiæt (1127), beiet (1127), begæt (1137), beset (1076), besætt (1087), besæt (1095-1140), besætte (1140), bed (675), bæd (1046), bead (167), cwæð (605-1052), cweð (656), cwæd (656), cwed (963), forgeaf (1052), geseah (633), gesæt (744-1048), geset (680), gef (449), geaf (777-1129), gaf (1123), iæf (1127), gæf (1127), iaf (1132-1154), læg (755-1086), læi (777), lai (1135), ongeat (755), sæt (865-1079), sætt (1014), spec (1046), spæc (1048), spræc (1083), spreac (1131), spac (1140), undergeat (1004), wiðcweð (1048), wiðcwæð (1119), wiðlæg (1046), wræc (755), ymbelæg (1072).

<i>pl.pret.:</i>	abædon (E), agefan (1087), ageafon (1087), agefon (1089), aiauen (1140), ageaton (1086), begeatan (1086), begeaton (1102), besæton (1016), besetton (868), bædon (E-1064), beadon (1083), beaden (1070), cwædon (E), cwedon (E), cweðon (755), cwæðon (887), drapen (1137), eoton (998), eten (1140), gecwædon (1014), gecwæðan (1094), gesegon (774), gesawon (1104), gesætan (E), gesæton (851), gauen (654), geafon (675), geafen (963), iæfen (1125), geauen (1128), iafen (1137), iauen (1140), lægen (963), lagen (998), lagon (999-1097), ræpon (1087), sawon (1106), sægon (1122), seagon (1122), sæton (855), sprecon (654), spræcon (1123), spæcon (1086), undergæton (1137), wiðcwædon (1086), wiðcwæðen (1123), ymb-sæton (491), ymbesætan (1011), ymbspræcon (892), ymbespræcon (1009), embespæcon (1086).
<i>pret.part.:</i>	agyfen (1095), begytan (1086), begiten (1091), beieten (1127), cweden (455), forgifen (718), forgifan (1014), forgyfan (1121), forgyfen (1121), forsegon (1066), gecweden (456), gecwæðen (1003), geseogene (774), geseowene (793), gesewen (1095-1117), geseogen (1122), gesæwen (1106), gewrecen (979), gifen (963), gyfene (1107), giuen (1126), seogen (789), segon (1127), sægon (1127), sprecon (675).
CLASS VI	
<i>infinitive:</i>	ahebban (1086), befaran (1009), dragan (1083), faron (E), faren (656-1154), faran (999-1106), gefaran (1048), offaran (1016), ofslean (650), slean (1086), standen (656), standan (1048), sweren (1127), tacen (1127), tæcen (1140), understanden (1123).
<i>inflected infinitive:</i>	to farenne (1048), to farene (1129), to swerene (1127), to understandene (1127).
<i>1.sg.pres.:</i>	not found.
<i>3.sg.pres.:</i>	dragað (1127), stent (1009), wiðstent (E), ofslæð (1124).
<i>pl.pres.:</i>	dragen (1127).
<i>part.pres.:</i>	not found.
<i>pres.subj.sg.:</i>	stande (963).
<i>pres.subj.pl.:</i>	not found.

<i>pret.subj.sg.:</i>	fore (675), forstode (1125), oferfore (1105), sloge (1086), stode (1091).
<i>pret.subj.pl.:</i>	not found.
<i>3.sg.pret.:</i>	aspeon (1009), ætstod (978), awoc (449), bespeon (959), for (664-1140), forfor (1091), forstod (1129), forðfor (571), gefor (867-1057), gesloh (837), ofsloh (E-1093), ofstod (1097), sceoc (992), scop (688), sloh (605-1093), stod (656-1110), swor (874), suor (1140), toc (1127), ðurhfor (1097), wiðstod (1001).
<i>pl.pret.:</i>	aforon (794), ahofon (1094), awocan (1087), drogon (1016), foran (744-1101), foron (876), forforon (910), forforan (1096), forsocan (1066), geslogon (845), gesworan (1091), oferforon (1016), ofslogon (456-1094), ofslogen (885), ofslogon (1093), slogon (699-1087), sloghen (1138), speonan (1075), stodan (1100), sworon (876-1086), sworn (1094), sworan (1100), suoren (1137), tocan (1135), wiðstodon (1016), wiðstoden (1070).
<i>pret.part.:</i>	ætstandene (1085), afaren (1087), ahofen (795), faren (656), forfaren (1025), forsworene (1094), forsworen (1137), forsuoren (1137), forðgefaren (560), forðfaren (685), forðgefaren (1061), forðfarena (1101), gefaren (1013-1106), geslægen (823), geslagen (833), gesworene (1012), gesworen (1094), ofslagene (2-1095), ofslegen (465), ofslagen (617-1127), ofslagan (633), ofslægen (755-1010), ofslægene (852), ofslagenra (871), standen (1070).

CLASS VII

<i>infinitive:</i>	abannan (1006), æcon (675), ahon (1096), bannan (1048), behaten (1012), blawen (1127), fon (1016), forlæton (616), forleton (616), forlæten (1127), gegangan (E), gehealdan (1006), gehealden (1009), healdan (887-1106), healden (963), healdon (1087), halden (1140), leten (1140), onfon (878), rædon (675), rædan (1010), slepen (1137), toheawan (1004), wealcan (1036), wealden (1123), weallan (1100), wepan (1086), wexan (999).
<i>inflected infinitive:</i>	to fonne (1009), to healdenne (874), to healdene (1087).
<i>1.sg.pres.:</i>	not found.
<i>3.sg.pres.:</i>	eceð (656), forlet (1086), hæst (449), hælt (656), halt (675), læt (1124).

<i>pl.pres.:</i>	hatað (892).
<i>part.pres.:</i>	gangende (1097), gangendra (1085), wexende (1107).
<i>pres.subj.sg.:</i>	behete (994), ece (656), healde (1041), lete (675), ræde (1131).
<i>pres.subj.pl.:</i>	hælden (656), healden (675), healdon (963).
<i>pret.subj.sg.:</i>	behelde (1128), geheolde (1094), helde (1140).
<i>pret.subj.pl.:</i>	fengon (1002), heoldan (1036).
<i>3.sg.pret.:</i>	afeoll (1100), anfeng (994), behet (994-1131), beheot (1083), behet (1091), beheld (1123), beheold (999), beradde (887), bude (890), feoll (1012), feng (2-1124), fæng (740), forheol <=forheold> (1114), forlet (E-1101), forlæt (1093), gefeoll (1004), gefeng (875), gehet (626), geheold (167), gerædde (991-1052), hatte (E-1137), het (616-1129), heot (656), hæet (685), heold (565-1140), held (1123-1154), heald (1127), hleop (1087), leot (675-1127), let (777-1140), lett (1085-1086), læt (1137), onfeng (26-1120), rædde (959), slep (1135), tobeot (1009), underfeng (785-1135), wæx (656), weox (1094), weax (1122), weolde (1039), weold (1092), wealde (1123), weoll (1098).
<i>pl.pret.:</i>	ahengen (1124), beheton (865), behetan (1011), blewen (1127), feollan (1095), fengon (155-1087), forleton (456), gefeollan (978), gefeollon (1117), gefengon (795), geheton (878), geræddan (1014), gerædden (1039), geræddon (1052), heton (449), heoldon (E), heoldan (877-1106), helden (1123), healden (1124), heolden (1124), hlupon (1071), hinged (1137), hengen (1137), leton (999), lætan (1011), letan (1048), ondreddon (1013), onfengon (449), ræddon (1075), reowan (1046), underfengen (867-1107), weoldan (1107).
<i>pret.part.:</i>	ahangen (33), befeallan (1086), behaten (675), behatene (1093), forlæten (1130), gefangen (1016), gehaten (1154), gehalden (656), gehealden (675), gehealdon (675), gelæten (1091), geredd (675), gered (1016), geræd (1075), læten (1127), ofdred (1135), onfangen (1014), underfangen (1022-1154), underfangan (1103).

3. The conjugational system of strong verbs in the *Peterborough Chronicle*

3.1. The previous chapter contained all the strong verb forms found in the *Peterborough Chronicle*, divided according to their ablaut vowels. The following part of

the paper is devoted to analysing in greater detail the morphological irregularities discovered in the text.

3.2. The present system

- (a) *the infinitive*: the most common OE ending of the infinitive was *-an*, which also had a late WS variant in *-on*. Northern texts exhibited an early loss of *-n*, with much variation regarding the final vowel: *-a*, *-e*, *-æ*, and *-o*.

The infinitive, being in its origin a PG verbal noun, could originally be inflected according to the *-ja-* declension. OE preserved only one inflected form, namely the dative ending *-enne*, appearing after *to*. WS preferred *-anne*, with <a> introduced from the uninflected variant (Campbell 1959:302).

There are 123 different infinitival forms of the various strong verbs in the *Peterborough Chronicle*, irrespective of the actual frequency of their individual occurrence. The overwhelming majority of them, 121, maintain the *-n* ending. The most popular variant is *-an*, occurring in 64 cases. Relatively equally frequent are the *-en* and *-on* forms, with 29 and 20 occurrences respectively. Then there are 8 infinitives which belong to contracted verbs: *forleon*, *geseon*, *lien*, *ofslean*, *slean*, *ahon*, *fon*, and *onfon*. Of these 8 only *lien* exhibits deviation from the OE form (*licgan*), this being due to the extension of /j/ from past stems of the verb (cf. Fisiak 1968:50).

The two remaining forms are examples of the *n*-less infinitival ending:

- (1) *7 he sceolde gife ilca gear in to þe minstre sixtiga foðra wuda* (852:65).
- (2) *7 þær he let swere'n' ercebiscopes 7 biscopes 7 abbotes 7 eorles 7 ealle þa ðeines ða þær wæron his dohter Æðelic Engla land 7 Normandi to hande æfter his dæi* (1127:256).

The predominant form of the inflected infinitive is *-ene* (8 out of 15), with the simplification of the geminate consonant. *-enne* occurs three times, *-ane* twice, and *-anne* once. One occurrence, however, should probably be ruled out as being in fact a past participle, with *beon* omitted by the scribe:

- (3) *hi scoldon to him cumene* (656:30).

Alternatively, this form may be treated as a case of the mute grapheme <e> insertion.

- (b) *1.sg.pres.:* there are two main variants of this inflectional form, *-e* and *-u/-o*, *-e* being predominant in the West Saxon area and *-u/-o* prevailing in Anglian dialects.

The only ending to be found in the *Peterborough Chronicle* is *-e*. There are 10 forms of strong verb *1.sg.pres.* in the text.

- (c) *2.sg.pres.:* no examples of this form can be found in the *Peterborough Chronicle*.

- (d) *3.sg.pres.*: the historically correct form of the ending is *-ep*, yet forms in *-op*, *-æp* appear often in the North and in Anglian texts. As the PG proto-form of *-ep* was **-ipi*, stem vowels undergo i-mutation. The mutated vowel can then be levelled out in various dialects.

Out of the total of 24 various *3.sg.pres.* 12 forms display canonical endings of the shape *-Vp*: 7 *-ep*, 2 *-ap*, 2 *-et*, 1 *-op*. The *-et* ending can be accepted as a genuine phonetic variant (Campbell 1959:301) or else just a fluctuation in the spelling of the voiceless fricative /θ/.

The next five examples belong to verbs which are either contracted or subjected to phonological processes changing the shape of their stems. These are: *ligp*, *lip* (OE *licgan*: *lig(e)p*), *sep*, *seop* (OE *sēon*: *siehp*), *ofslæp* (OE *ofslagan*: *ofsliehp*).

The 7 remaining forms exhibit results of OE consonant assimilation:

- (i) *tp* > *tt*, later *t* – *hæt*, *forlet*, *læt*.
- (ii) *dp* > *tt*, later *t* – *stent*, *wipstent*, *hælt*, *halt*.

The umlaut of the root vowel is usually well preserved, with the following exceptions, which are treated by Clark as Anglian features:

- (i) *rennep*, *reonnep* – these are most probably forms of a verb borrowed from Old Norse.
- (ii) *breket*, *tobrekep*, *tobrecep*, *tobreket*, *tobrecop*.
- (iii) possibly also *sep*, *seop*, *halt* – the spelling rules of the transition period allow for both interpretations of these.

- (e) *pl.pres.*: The ending was *-ap* and it showed little variation outside the North (Campbell 1959:301-2).

There are fourteen variants of this inflectional form. Seven of these exhibit the proper OE ending *-ap*. One displays the effects of consonant assimilation, extended from 2., *3.sg.pres.*: *frett* (OE *fretap*), as in

- (4) *Eall þ þa beon dragen toward swa frett þa drane 7 dragað fraward* (1127:258).

The next five examples belong to the verb *licgan* and exhibit a number of stem contractions connected with the extension of the stem-final consonant from other inflectional forms: *liggeþ*, *liggen*, *liggan*, *lin*, *lien*. The *-n* variants, together with *dragen*, are probably subjunctival endings in their origin, and, according to Clark, show 'the opposition of pl. *-(e)n* to sg. *-(e)p*, which by the turn of the century characterizes all East-Midland dialects' (Clark 1970:xlvii).

- (f) *present participle*: the by far uniform ending for the OE period is *-ende*. The participle can be employed in the attributive function and its inflected forms follow the adjectival declension pattern.

16 out of 21 present participle forms found in the *Peterborough Chronicle* display the conventional ending *-ende* and function either as parts of periphrastic tense constructs or as quasi-adverbial verb qualifiers. There are three examples of altered endings:

- (5) *Gif twa men oþer iii coman ridend to an tun. al þe tunscipe flugæn for heom* (1137:265).
- (6) *7 steorran foran swyðe scotienda* (744:47).
- (7) *7 seo papa seonde þa his writ þus cwæpend* (656:33).

The traces of inflected participial forms can be seen in the gen.pl.:

- (8) *he ferde in to Englalande mid swa mycclan here ridendra manna. 7 gangendra of Fra'n'cricc and of Brytlande* (1085:215).

- (g) *imperative singular and plural*: no examples of these forms can be found in the *Peterborough Chronicle*.

- (h) *present subjunctive singular*: in OE it was formed from the present stem by adding the ending *-e* irrespective of the person. It exhibits some variation in late Northumbrian.

There is virtually no variation of this form in the *Peterborough Chronicle*: *-e* is employed in 12 cases, whereas the only other example, if not a scribal omission, exhibits the loss of the final unstressed vowel:

- (9) *Dancod wurð hit þon hæge Æl mihti God þis wurþscipe þ her is gedon* (656:30).

- (i) *present subjunctive plural*: the ending as derived from PG is *-en*. Late WS, however, tends to replace it with *-on* or *-an*, while Northern texts drop the *-n* altogether, thus obliterating the number distinction in the present subjunctive.

The *Peterborough Chronicle* displays a number of different pres.subj.pl. endings, the most common of which are *-en* (3) and *-on* (3). *-an* is attested only once, and there are two cases of the ending without *-n*:

- (10) *And ic bidde þe broðer Æðelred. 7 mine swustre Cyneburh 7 Cynesuith. for iure sawle alednesse, þet ge beon witnesse. 7 geo hit write mid iure fingre* (656:31).

- (11) *ic amansumie ealle þa þær aniping of breke* (675:37).

3.3. The preterite system

- (a) *1.,2.sg.pret.*: no examples of these forms can be found in the *Peterborough Chronicle*.

- (b) *3.sg.pret.*: OE strong verbs produce this form solely by means of ablaut, no inflectional ending is attached to the stem (cf. Campbell 1959:307-20, Ramat 1981:165).

Changes in the stem vowel:

Class I: *aseh* (*asīgan: asāh*); *belæf*, *beleaf* (*belīfan: belāf*); *beteah* (*betēon: betāh*) – influence of **Class II** *tēon*.

Class II: *bebæd* (*bebēodan: bebēad*), *cæs* (*cēosan: cēas*), *forlæs* (*forlēosan: forlēas*) – influence of **Class V** or results of the monophthongisation *ēa* > *æ*; *fleh* (*flēogan: flēah*), *forles* (*forlēosan: forlēas*).

Class III: *ætbræd* (*ætbrēgdan: ætbrægd*), *bred* (*bregdan: brægd*), *gebræd* (*gebregdan: gebrægd*) – effects of the change *-æg-* > *-æ-*; *faht* (*feohtan: feaht*), *gefaht* (*gefeohtan: gefeaht*), *gewarþ* (*geweorþan: gewearþ*), *ærn* (*iernan: earn*), *stærþ* (*steorfan: stearþ*), *towærþ* (*toweorþan: towearþ*), *wærþ*, *werþ*, *wæhrþ*, *warþ*, *wærd*, *uuard*, *warth*, *ward* (*weorþan: wearþ*) – effects of the change *ea* > *æ*; *feoht* (*feohtan: feaht*), *weorþ* (*weorþan: wearþ*) – extension of the present stem vowel.

Class IV: *besteal* (*bestelan: bestæl*); *brec* (*brecan: bræc*).

Class V: *beiet* (*begietan: begeat*), *beset* (*besittan: besæt*), *bed* (*biddan: bæd*), *cweþ*, *cwed* (*cweþan: cwæþ*), *geset* (*gesittan: gesæt*), *gef* (*giefan: geaf*), *spec* (*sprecan: spræc*), *wiþcweþ* (*wiþcweþan: wiþcwæþ*); *beizæt*, *begæt* (*begietan: begeat*), *gaf*, *iæf*, *gæf*, *iaf* (*giefan: geaf*) – effects of the change *ea* > *æ*; *bead* (*biddan: bæd*) – influence of **Class II** *bēodan*; *spreac* (*sprecan: spræc*) – possibly a spelling variant.

Class VI: *speon*, *bespeon* (*spanan: spōn*) – influence of **Class VII** *spannan*.

Class VII: *heald* (*healdan: hēold*) – extension of the present stem; *hæt* (*hātan: hēot*), *fæng* (*fōn: fēng*), *læt* (*lātan: lēot*); *wæx*, *weax* (*weaxan: wēox*) – influence of the following consonant.

Changes in the stem consonants:

Class III: *wærd*, *uuard*, *ward* (*weorþan: wearþ*) – influence of other past stems; *wærhþ* (*weorþan: wearþ*).

Class V: *cwæd*, *cwed* (*cweþan: cwæþ*) – influence of other past stems; *spec*, *spæc* (*sprecan: spræc*) – loss of *-r-* in the initial cluster *spr-*.

Addition of the empty <-e> grapheme:

Class V: *besætte* (*besittan: besæt*).

Class VII: *weolde* (*wealdan: wēold*).

Weak forms:

Class III: *bærnde*, *forbærnde*, *forbearnde*, *forbernde* (*birnan: barn*); *funde* (*findan: fand*).

Class VII: *berædde*, *gerædde*, *rædde* (*rādan: rēd*); *bude* (*būan: bude*); *wealde* (*wealdan: wēold*).

Pret.sg. of *weorþan* displays an unusual number of variants, which may be explained by an extremely high frequency of its occurrence, allowing for more scribal errors and isolated dialectal forms to be entered into the manuscript.

Bēodan (**Class II**) and *biddan* (**Class V**) had assimilated each other's meaning into their individual semantic scopes; as a result, forms of both verbs appear more or less indiscriminately throughout the chronicle.

The <g> ~ <i> variation in *gietan* and *giefan* is caused by the Scandinavian influence: the original Old English words have /j/, whereas the forms borrowed from Old Norse display /g/ in the initial position.

Class VI *tacan* is a Scandinavian borrowing and not a native strong verb.

Class VII *būan* was a defective verb already in the Old English period, with weak preterite forms and a strong past participle.

(c) *Pret.pl.*: the commonest OE ending of this form is *-on*, though *-un*, *-en* appear sporadically. The stem vowel depends on the ablaut class a given verb belongs to.

The ending:

-on is by far the most often employed ending (126 out of 230), *-en* and *-an* are relatively equally frequent (56 and 45); two other cases represent various transformed or reduced endings:

(12) *Gif twa men oþer iiii coman ridend to an tun. al þe tunscipe flugæn for heom* (1137:265).

(13) *þa stali hi ut 7 flugen* (1140:267).

while the last one seems to be another example of the addition of the empty <-e> grapheme:

(14) *hi ridone on swarte hors 7 on swarte bucces* (1127:258).

Changes in the stem vowel:

Class II: *beaden* (*bēodan: budon*) – the influence of **Class V** *biddan*, or the extension of the pret.sg. vowel.

Class III: *weorþan* (*weorþan: wurdon*) – the extension of the present stem vowel; *streddon* (*stregdan: strugdon*) – the extension of the vowel from the present stem combined with effects of the change *-eg-* > *-ē-*.

Class IV: *breokan* (*brecan: bræcon*).

Class V: *beadon*, *beaden* (*biddan: bædon*) – the influence of **Class II** *bēodan*, or a scribal variant; *spæcon*, *embespæcon* (*sprecan: spræcon*) – the loss of *-r-* in the initial cluster *spr-*; *eoton* (*etan: æton*); *seagon* (*sēon: sāwon/sēgon*).

Class VI: *speonan* (*spanan*: *spōnon*) – influence of **Class VII** *spannan*.
Class VII: *blewen* (*blāwan*: *blēowon*), *helden* (*healdan*: *hēoldon*) – Anglian dialectal feature; *healden* (*healdan*: *hēoldon*) – the extension of the present stem vowel; *hlupon* (*hlēapan*: *hlēopon*) – influence of **Class II**; *lætan* (*lātan*: *lēton*).

Changes in the stem consonant:

Class II: *cusen* (*cēosan*: *curon*) – the extension of the consonant from the infinitive and pret.sg..

Class III: *wurpon*, *weorpan*, *wurpen*, *wurthen* (*weorpan*: *wurdon*) – the extension of the consonant from the infinitive and pret.sg..

Class V: *cwepōn*, *cwæpōn*, *gecwæpan*, *wiþcwæpen* (*cwepan*: *cwædon*) – the extension of the consonant from the infinitive and pret.sg.; *besetton* (*besittan*: *besetton*).

Class VI: *sloghen* (*slēan*: *slōgon*).

Weak forms:

Class I: *onbidedon* (*onbīdan*: *onbidon*).

Class II: *losedan* (*lēosan*: *luron*); *scotedon* (*scēotan*: *scuton*).

Class III: *bærndon*, *beorndon*, *brendon*, *brenden*, *forbærndon*, *forbearndon* (*birnan*: *burnon*; *brinnan*: *brunnon*); *streddon* (*stregdan*: *strugdon*).

Class VII: *geræddan*, *gerædden*, *geræddon*, *ræddon* (*rædan*: *rēdon*); *ondredon* (*ondrædan*: *ondrēdon*); *henged* (*hōn*: *hēngon*).

Flugon is suggested by Plummer (1892:331) to belong to *fēolan* (**Class III**):

(15) *hi þa ymb ða gatu feohtende wæron oð hi þær in flugon.* (755:49).

which is further confirmed by the correct (i.e., *fulgon*) reading of other manuscripts.

The forms of *sēon* (both in pret.pl. and in pret.part.) are an interdialectal mixture of West Saxon and Anglian variants (cf. Quirk and Wrenn 1965:129).

(d) *pret. participle*: the usual OE ending is *-en*, whereas the stem vowel depends on the ablaut class a given verb belongs to. The passive participle can be declined as the adjective.

The ending:

in keeping with the OE pattern, *-en*, both inflected and uninflected, is the most common variant (109 out of 138); *-on* is found 13 times and *-an* 11 times.

The adjectival inflection of the participle:

dative absolute: *-um*

(15) *Osred þe wæs Norþanhymbra cining æfter wræc side ham cumenum ge læht wæs* (792:55).

(16) *Ælle feng to Norðhymbra rice Idan forð ge farenum* (560:19).

acc.sg.masc. *-(n)e*

(17) *hi hæfdon heora cining aworpene Osbriht* (867:69).

(18) *(he) ge fengon Præn heora cining. 7 ge bu'n'den(ne) hine læddon on Myrce* (796:57).

(19) *(he) hæfde hine Penda adrefedne. 7 rices benumene forþan þ he his swustor forlet* (658:33).

(20) *butan se cyng ge læstan wolde eall þet hi on forewarde hæfdon ær ge wroht. 7 uppon þ hine for swornenne 7 trywleasne clypode* (1094:228).

nom.pl. *-e*

e.g., *adrifene*, *gewordene*, *fornumene*, *ætstandene*, etc.

gen.pl. *-ra*

(21) *7 þær wearð Sidrac eorl of slægen se ealda. 7 Sidrac se geonga, 7 Osbeorn eorl. 7 Fræna eorl. 7 Harold eorl. 7 þa hergas begen ge flymde. 7 feala þusenda of slagenra. 7 on feohtende wæron oð niht* (871:71).

wk.nom.pl. *-a*

(22) *7 loc hweðer 'þæra ge' broðra oþerne ofer bide. wære yrfe weard ealles Engla landes 7 eac Normandiges buton se forð farena yrfe numan heafde be rihtre æwe* (1101:237).

Changes in the stem vowel:

Class I: *oferwrogen* (*oferwrēon*: *oferwriegen*) – the influence of **Class II** *wrēon*.

Class II: *ofsceoten* (*ofscēotan*: *ofscoten*) – the influence of palatal /ʃ/.

Class VII: *gehalden* (*gehealdan*: *gehealden*) – the result of the change *ea* > *æ* <*a*> or a dialectal variant.

Changes in the stem consonant:

Class II: *cosen*, *cosan* (*cēosan*: *coren*) – the extension of the consonant from the infinitive and pret.sg..

Class V: *gecwepēn* (*gecwēpan*: *gecweden*) – the extension of the consonant from the infinitive and pret.sg..

Weak forms:

Class III: *bærned, forbærnd, forbearnde* (*birnan: burnen*).

Class IV: *gebrcode* (*gebrecan: gebrocen*) (?).

Class VII: *geræd, geredd, gered* (*gerædan: geræden*), *ofdred* (*ofdrædan: ofdræden*).

There is much variation with regard to the passive participle of *-slēan* (*-slægen, -slagen, -slegen, -slagan*), which is due to the existence of two alternative suffixes in PG, **-in-* and **-an-*, the former of which regularly caused umlaut of the stem vowel.

The weak form of *gebrecan* – *gebrcode* – is somewhat dubious; though it overlaps in meaning with the strong verb, it might as well belong to a parallel weak verb *brocian*.

(e) *preterite subjunctive singular*: the ending is almost invariably *-e*; the stem vowel is identical with that of the pret.pl.

All 18 examples of this form exhibit the proper ending *-e*, and there is little variation in the stems themselves: *behelde* and *helde* display effects of the monophthongisation $\bar{e}o > \bar{æ} <e>$. The only curious form is *crape* (*crēopan: crupe*), which, if not a scribal mistake, can be interpreted as being identical with the monophthongised vowel of the 1.,3.pret.sg. (i.e., $\bar{e}a > \bar{æ} <a>$).

(f) *preterite subjunctive plural*: *-en* is the standard ending for this form, yet there is some variation. Late WS prefers *-an* and *-on*, while Northern dialects drop the *-n*, thus nullifying the number distinction in the past subjunctive. The ablaut grade is the same as in the singular.

There are only 5 instances of the past subjunctive plural, none of which takes the accepted OE suffix. Three of them have *-on*, *-an* occurs once, while the remaining form is a case of the subjunctive without *-n*:

(23) *swiðost þara cyninga, þe ær him ge wurde* (959:114).

There are no irregular ablaut vowels found in this form.

4. Summary

4.1. General

There are 243 strong verbs attested in their various forms in the *Peterborough Chronicle* and they belong to 117 strong OE stems. This means that only one third of OE strong verbs were used by the authors of the chronicle. Some of these verbs are borrowings and not native words (e.g., *rennen, tacen*) and, moreover, 11 stems display present tense forms only, which makes it impossible to say anything about their actual status.

4.2. Inflectional endings

There is ample evidence for the rise of /ə/ from vowels in final unstressed syllables. The variation in spelling is quite high as the graphemic representation fluctuates between <a>, <o>, and <e>. This is most striking in those cases where the original vowel was a back one, i.e., /ɑ/ or /o/. Here the number of altered spellings is as high as that of the expected ones. However, <-e> and <-en> are much more stable: <-e> displays virtually no variation, while in the case of <-en> it is relatively small.

Apart from this, there is almost no reflection of other changes affecting unstressed syllables in the transition period. The evidence for the loss of the final *-n* consists of four examples: two from the infinitive and two from the present subjunctive plural, which is far too little to draw any conclusions. The isolated case of the dropping of the final unstressed /-ə/ in the present subjunctive singular is most probably a mere scribal error.

The present and passive participles display a number of case endings which constitute a well-preserved system of adjectival declension inasmuch as their shape is concerned. As the pattern is incomplete and the evidence scarce, nothing more can be said about it.

4.3. Tense system

(a) *ablaut preservation*: irrespective of various phonetic changes taking place in the transition period the vowel gradation system is to a large extent operational. The transformations that can be observed are usually continuations of processes already begun earlier in Old English (e.g., the merger of Class I *wrēon* with Class II *wrēon*, transfer of Class I contracted verbs to Class II, the tendency to occasionally extend one grade vowel to another grade) or else operate along the same lines (e.g., the emergence of Class V forms in Class II preterite singular forms).

(b) *consonantal interchange preservation*: there are a number of verbs that display consonantal alternations resulting from the operation of Verner's Law in the PG period. These alternations were more or less regular in Old English, though some hesitancy could be observed even then. The *Peterborough Chronicle* gives support to the claim that they were on their way to extinction in the transition period as forms with both alternants can be found alongside each other (e.g., pret.pl. *curen* – *cusen*).

(c) *weak forms*: The following Old English strong verbs display weak forms in the *Peterborough Chronicle*: *-bīdan, birnan, -brecan, būan, drædan, findan, hōn, lēosan, rædan, scēotan, stregdan, and wealdan*. Some of these already displayed weak forms in the OE period (*-bīdan, būan, drædan, findan, rædan, stregdan*). Others, though weak only in the *Peterborough Chronicle*, cannot be treated as evidence for some new development, as their shifted forms are most probably results of the influence of their weak counter-

parts (-*bīdan*: *bidian*, *birnan*: *bærnan*, -*brecan*: *brocian*; *findan*: *fundian*, *hōn*: *hangian*, *lēosan*: *losian*, *scēotan*: *scotian*). Some of them record occasional weak forms (*findan*) and others merge with their weak congeners, thus becoming partially shifted (*birnan*, *hōn*, *lēosan*, *scēotan*). Consequently, the weak forms of only two OE strong verbs, -*brecan* and *wealdan* (one, if one discards -*brecan*, the weak form of which is quite dubious), cannot be explained in terms of processes well known to OE proper. This does not constitute a breach large enough to posit any significant breakdown of the strong verb system. In fact one can suspect that individual strong verbs had passed into the weak system in earlier periods of the language history as well, yet this process had been countered by new strong verbs entering into the language through borrowings and analogy. The acceptance of, e.g., *tacen* or, later, *ringen* as strong verbs proves this tendency to be still present in the period discussed. Therefore, it has to be assumed that the strong verb system did not undergo any major transformation in the first half of the 12th century.

4.4. Mood

The subjunctive mood is still widely used throughout the chronicle and its area of application is not at all diminished as far as it can be observed. Two factors, however, point towards the forthcoming disintegration of the subjunctive: (a) the general tendency to replace final unstressed vowels with /ə/ is bound to blur contrasts which are vital for the subjunctive's preservation, and (b) the loss of final -*n* in inflectional morphemes not only further obliterates the distinctive shape of the subjunctive but also destroys the number category as operational for this mood. As a result, subjunctive forms will look more and more like their indicative counterparts which will lead to their almost complete abandonment.

5. Conclusion

The 12th century strong verb system of the English language as evidenced in the *Peterborough Chronicle* is a close continuation of that of earlier Old English. The occurrence of no less than one third of the total number of strong verbs (quite a few of which are hardly attested for the OE period) in a relatively short text confirms complete acceptability of vowel gradation as a tense marker at that time. Ablaut distinctions are by and large intact and the disintegration of the inflectional system is due to general phonological processes and not to the gradual rejection of the strong verb as a category. No more than 12 out of 143 strong verb roots present in the chronicle display weak forms, and, moreover, only one of them could be safely assumed to be a 12th century innovation. As a development in the opposite direction, Class VI *tacan* was borrowed from Old Norse and behaves as a native strong verb.

Therefore, one can safely assume that the OE strong verb system did not undergo any significant transformation in the transition period to Middle English.

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