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; Welna 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 exceptionality 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-<e>-<e> ~ sæt/ or *sæt-te /sætə/?; fuhhton = *fuhht-(<e>)on or *fuhht-<e>-<e>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**

**infinitive:**

abidan (1), awritan (1086), beswicon (1015), besuiken (1140), drifan (787), geridan (1042), geswican (1002), gewritan (1085), ofridan (877), swiccan (1087), writan (1086).

**inflected infinitive:**
to spwenne (1003).

1.sg.pres.: write (656).

3.sg.pres.: not found.

**pres.:**

not found.

**pres.subj.sg.:**

ridendra (1085), ridend (1137), ridende (1114), scynende (1097), scinende (1097-1114).

**pres.subj.pl.:**

not found.

**pres.subj.pl.:**

write (656).

**pret.:**

ofrbeide (1101).

**pret.subj.sg.:**

geswicon (994).

**pret.subj.pl.:**

abad (1091), adraf (380), aras (380), asah (1012), aseh (1123), astah (1110), aswac (1016), bedraf (709), belaf (1018), belaf (1131), belaf (1070), berad (755), beswac (1003), beteac (1096), draf (963), fordraf (927), gerad (878), geswac (1048), gewet (E-1089), gewrat (656), rad (787), scan (678), wrat (87).

**pret.part.:**

adrifor (E), adriin (823), adriin (1086), arisin (1087), awrton (1106), bedrifan (477), belfian (1047), belyon (1085), biden (1131), drifon (1016), fordriofon (774), fordrifon (925), gefylton (777), geridan (878), geridon (878), geswicon (994-1118), geswicon (1104), gewit (885), gewron (656), onbiden (1006), oriden (871), ridon (755), ridan (999), ridone (1127), ridon (1123), risen (1135), swicon (1118), suyken (1140), writen (963), uurtythen (1137).

**pl.pres.:**

adriin (592-1104), adriin (1075), beswicen (654), beswicon (1014), beswicen (1093), fordrifone (1086), fordrifone (963), gewiton (963), gewitene (1086), oferwrogen (1086).

**CLASS II**

**infinitive:**

abeodan (1091), abugan (1013), bedon (765), bedan (1011), beodan (1083), cese (1123), forleone (1086), onbugan (979).

**inflected infinitive:**

1.sg.pres.: bebeode (675), bcod (675), forbede (656), forbede (675).

3.sg.pres.: not found.

pl.pres.: abugano (979).
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pres.part.:
dreogende (1104), fleogende (793), scotienda (744).
pres.subj.sg.:
not found.
pres.subj.pl.:
not found.
pret.subj.sg.:
crape (1131), forlure (81), ofsolute (1055).
pres.subj.pl.:
not found.
3.sg.pret.:
abeah (1013), ateah (1071), bebead (1008-1128), bebead (1129), beah (167-1129), beah (1001-1085), caes (963), caes (1041), fleah (1010), fleah (1140), forbead (1012), forleas (1076), forlas (1127), forlæs (1140), geceas (1041), misbead (1083), teah (1003).
pl.pret.:
abruðen (1004), abugon (1086), abugon (1100), belucan (1083), buden (755), headean (1170), bugon (959-1118), cused (1066), crupon (1083), drugon (634), flugon (E-1010), flugen (1137), flugon (1091), gebugon (1097), gebugon (1101), gebügen (1119), geicuron (1014-1097), geicuran (1100), losedan (1120), scotedon (1083), scufon (1048), tugan (892), tuscoton (1083).
pret.part.:
beboden (1125), begotan (734), beloean (755), coren (656), cosen (1123), cosan (1154), forboden (1048), forluren (1131), forluren (1137), geboden (755), gebogen (1013), geecoren (656-1119), ofsecoten (1100), toflotan (1097).

CLASS III

infinitive:
ætheorstan (656), bærnen (1087), feohten (449), findon (418), findon (656), findon (1046), forwurðan (605), gebeorgan (1006), gewurðan (1086), gewinnen (1085), gyldan (1006), gyldun (1002), oftingan (626), towurpon (975), wurðen (1066), weorðan (1089), winnan (685), winnon (1070).

inflected infinitive:
to gewinnane (1087).
1.sg.pres.:
swelte (1123).
3.sg.pres.:
gewurðan (1086), renneð (656), renneð (963), singað (1127).
pl.pres.:
belimpæð (1102).
pres.part.:
byrnde (1098), bærnde (1131), feohtende (755), winnende (835).

pres.subj.sg.:
wurðan (656), wurðe (675).
pres.subj.pl.:
wearðan (959).
pret.subj.sg.:
belumpe (1086), swulte (1091).
pres.subj.pl.:
gewurde (959).
3.sg.pret.:
acwanc (1110), adranç (933), æþærst (605), æþreað (1093), aspraeng (1099), began (1129), belampe (1116), bærnde (1014), breð (189), ceard (1014), feaht (710), faht (1122), fand (963-1140), funde (1072), forbarn (679-1086), foerærne (1009), forberend (1006), forbearnd (1086), forbernde (1130), forwarð (189), gebræd (1003), geefæt (485-1096), geøft (607), gelæpp (E-1124), gewærð (47-1111), gewærð (1089), gewann (740-1105), gewan (923), geald (994-1052), gwæaref (813), æ lære (1014), olstang (626), onland (1091), onan (597-1016), oðærst (1101), sæng (1125), sæft (1124), scwealt (2), swang (616), towærheard (1094), tofræse (1009), towearp (639), towærp (722), wearp (1099), wearm (465-1128), wear (617-1129), weor (653), weðer (833), warð (881), ward (1129), weorð (1129), uuar (1135), warth (1135), ward (1154), wan (597), wann (1095), uuan (1137).
ablunnon (1097), adruncon (794), afundan (755), astungon (779), belumpe (1097), bundon (1046), bærndon (684-1087), beoornd (870), brendon (1137), brenen (1137), clumen (1070), dułfon (1016), flugon <= fulgon > (755), fuhton (449-1124), fuhten (1138), fuhten (1140), fundon (870), forbærndon (694-1072), forbearndon (779), forburnen (1123), forcurfæn (797), forguldon (1039), forwurdan (593), gefuen (456-1030), gelumpon (1011), gewurðan (1009), gewunnan (1069), gewunnon (1086), gudon (1018), urdon (755), anfunden (E), ongunnon (654), ongunnon (656), sungen (1122), sturnen (1137), streddon (1010), swulon (1086), swulent (1130), tohwurron (827-1106), wurpon (1046), wurdon (616-1120), wurdon (959), wurdon (1070), weorðan (1125), wurthen (1140).

adrunen (852), adrunence (1120), agunnen (656), aworpene (867), begunnon (1154), bærned (687), druncene (1012), fundena (1120), forberden (1070), forberande (1086), gebundenne (796), gebroden (1104), goehton (871), goefoton (658), gefunden (963), geworden (1066),
gewordene (1086), gewunnon (1086), gewunnen (1105), ofstungen (948), ongunnen (656), ongunnan (1122).

**CLASS IV**

**infinitive:**
beran (1123), bærør (1137), beniman (1125), brecan (1003), cumon (656-1095), cuman (1048-1123), cumen (1070-1140), geniman (1002), nimon (1015), niman (1048), nimen (1126), ofercumen (1070), tobrecon (1047).

**inflected infinitive:**
to berene (1127), cumene (656).

**1.sg.pres.:**
not found.

**3.sg.pres.:**
broket (675), ofercumeð (1123), tobrekeð (656), tobrečoð (675), tobrekeð (675), tobrecoð (963).

**pl.pres.:**
not found.

**pres.part.:**
not found.

**pres.subj.sg.:**
cume (675), nime (675).

**pres.subj.pl.:**
cumen (656), cuman (675), tobræcon (963), ofbreke (675).

**pret.subj.sg.:**
bare (1135), come (1016-1154).

**pret.subj.pl.:**
comon (1048).

**3.sg.pret.:**
bær (1052-1111), bær (1137), benam (755-1140), bestæl (865), besteal (1004), brec (885), com (477-1154), genam (571-1119), nam (787-1140), ofercum (1066), stæl (1140), stal (1140).

**pl.pret.:**
broccon (860), bærør (1137), bestælon (876), bræcon (851), brecon (1083), brokon (1102), coman (E-1137), comon (449-1128), cumen (870-1135), forbaren (1137), genamon (E-1094), genamun (530), genamen (1003), namon (501-1087), namon (870-1102), nemen (1070-1140), stæl (1140), tobræcon (1087).

**pret.part.:**
abroccon (1003), benumene (658), boren (1123), cumen (793), cumon (1048), cumen (1070), cumenum (792), forbroken (1127), forholen (1137), fornurne (1110), geboren (380), gebrocode (978), genumene (878), genumene (1116), numen (656), ofercumen (1096), ofgenumen (1006), ofgenumon (1072), tobrocen (409), to-

brocene (794), tobrocon (963), tobroken (1095), tobrokene (1125).

**CLASS V**

**infinitive:**
abiddan (626), agifan (1087), agyfan (1095), awrecan (1048), begytan (1009), beieton (1130), bigæton (1140), begeton (1131), besettan (1087), æten (1140), gebydden (656), gebyddan (605), gescon (797), guen (777), gilien (852), gife (852), gifen (1103), guen (1132), iuen (1140), liegan (1009), lien (1137), orgytan (979), sitien (1137), spreca (797), sprecon (1114), ſicgan (755), wrecan (979), wrecon (1087).

**inflected infinitive:**
to besittan (1094), to forgytan (1086), to gisfe (1109), to spreccen (1103).

**1.sg.pres.:**
bidde (656), cweðe (963), cweðe (963), gife (656-963).

**3.sg.pres.:**
liged (675), ligð (755), lið (784-963), seð (1124), seoð (1124), sitede (1130).

**pl.pres.:**
cweðoð (565), tret (1127), liged (656), liggen (656), liggan (656), lin (963), lien (1137), specað (1086), embespæcað (1086).

**pres.part.:**
biddende (1083), cweðend (656), cweðende (675), gesconde (1086), sitende (1085), spreccende (1123).

**pres.subj.sg.:**
bidde (675), gife (1085).

**pres.subj.pl.:**
not found.

**pret.subj.sg.:**
sæte (1036).

**pret.subj.pl.:**
not found.

**3.sg.pret.:**
abæð (1093), æftercweð (1094), ageaf (1087), becwæð (1086), beget (1052-1089), beiet (1127), beiet (1127), beget (1137), beset (1076), besætt (1087), besæt (1095-1140), besætte (1140), bed (675), bæð (1046), bead (167), cweð (605-1052), cweð (656), cweð (656), cweð (963), forgeaf (1052), gesæh (633), gesæt (744-1048), gesæt (680), gef (449), geaf (777-1129), gaf (1123), iaeaf (1127), gaf (1127), iæf (1132-1154), iæg (755-1086), iæf (777), iæi (1135), ongenæf (755), sæt (865-1079), sæt (1014), speæt (1046), speæc (1048), speræc (1083), spreæc (1131), spæc (1140), underæaf (1004), wiðcweð (1048), wiðcweð (1119), wiðlæg (1046), wrec (755), ymbleæg (1072).
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pl.pret.: abædon (E), agefan (1087), agefon (1087), agefon (1089), aiauæn (1140), ageaton (1086), begeatan (1086), begeaton (1102), besætæn (1016), besættæn (868), bædon (E-1064), bædon (1083), bæden (1070), cweðon (E), cweðon (755), cweðon (887), dræpen (1137), eoton (998), eten (1140), gecwæðon (1014), gecwæðan (1094), gesecon (774), gesawon (1104), gesætan (E), gesætan (851), gæuen (654), gæfon (675), gæfen (963), iæfen (1125), gæuen (1128), iæfen (1137), iæuen (1140), iægen (963), lagen (998), lagon (999-1097), raenon (1087), sawon (1106), sægon (1122), seagon (1122), sætæn (855), sprecon (654), speæcon (1123), speæcn (1086), undergeæan (1137), wiðcwæðon (1086), wiðcwæðan (1123), ymbesætan (491), ymbesætan (1011), ymbesærcan (892), ymbesærcan (1009), ymbesærcan (1080).

pret.part.: agyfen (1095), begyten (1086), begiten (1091), beieten (1127), cweoden (455), forgilen (718), forgifæn (1014), forgéan (1121), forgilen (1121), forsegæn (1066), gecwæden (456), gecwæden (1003), gescogene (774), geswene (793), gesewen (1095-1117), gesægen (1122), gesæwen (1106), geswæcen (979), gifæn (963), gyfæn (1107), gyfen (1126), geægen (789), segæn (1127), sægon (1127), sprecon (675).

CLASS VI

infinitive: ahebban (1086), befaran (1009), dragan (1083), faron (E), faren (656-1154), faræn (999-1106), gefaran (1048), offaran (1016), ofsfæan (650), sleæn (1086), standæn (656), standæn (1048), sweren (1127), täcæn (1127), tæcen (1140), understandæn (1123).

inflected infinitive: to farene (1048), to farene (1129), to swerenæ (1127), to understandæn (1127).

1.sg.pres.: not found.
3.sg.pres.: dragað (1127), stent (1009), wiðstænæ (E), ofslæð (1124).
pl.pres.: dragen (1127).
part.pres.: not found.
pres.subj.sg.: standæn (963).

CLASS VII

infinitive: abænan (1006), æcon (675), ahon (1096), bænan (1048), behæten (1012), bławen (1127), bon (1016), forætnæ (616), forætnæ (616), forætæn (1127), gegæganæ (E), gehældæn (1006), gehældæn (1009), gehældæn (887-1106), gehældæn (963), gehældæn (1087), haldæn (1140), læctæn (1140), onænon (878), radæn (675), reædnæ (1010), sleæn (1137), toheæcwænæ (1004), weaelænæ (1036), weældænæ (1123), weællænæ (1100), wæpanæ (1086), wæxænæ (999).

inflected infinitive: to fonænæ (1009), to heældænæ (874), to heældænæ (1087).

1.sg.pres.: not found.
3.sg.pres.: eccæd (656), forælænæ (1086), Hàt (449), Hæt (656), hålænæ (675), læt (1124).
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, -e, 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 -an 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, lian, ofselean, slean, ahon, fon, and onfon. Of these 8 only lien differs deviation from the OE form (liegan), this being due to the extension of ʃʃ from past stems of the verb (cf. Fisiak 1968:50).

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

(1) ʃhe sceolde gefe ilca gear in to þe minstre sixtiga fode wuda (852:65).
(2) ʃær he leot swere n ercebisopes þis biceps ʃabbotes ʃeoles ʃealle pa ðeines ʃa þær waron his dohter Aedelic Engla land ʃNormandi to hande xfer his þrei (1127:256).

The predominant form of the inflected infinitive is -enne (8 out of 15), with the simplification of the genitive 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 boon 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 Old English 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.
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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 oper iii coman ridend to an tun. al þe tunscipe flugan for heom (1137:265).

(6) Þ þe stearan foran swyde scotienda (744:47).

(7) Þe 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 Englændan mid swa myclan here ridenda manna. 7 gangendra of Fra'ncrice 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 wuð hit þon hægæ Àel mihte God þis wurþscipe þer 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 -er (3) and -en (3). -an is attested only once, and there are two cases of the ending without -n:

(10) And ic bidde þe brouðer Àedeldred. 7 mine swustre Cyneburh 7 Cyneswuith. for iure savile alesedesesse, þet ge beon witenesse, 7 geo hit write mid iure finge (656:31).

(11) ic amansumie ealle þa þær anipting of breke (675:37).

3.3. The preterite system

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

(b) 3.sg.pres.: 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: ase (astgan: asāh); belaf, beleaf (bellfan: belaf); beteah (betóon: betāh) – influence of Class II téon.

Class II: behad (bebódan: behád), cæs (cæsan: cæas), forles (forlesan: forlesas) – influence of Class V or results of the monophthongisation ea > æ; fleh (fleogan: fleah), forles (forlesan: forlesas).


Class IV: bestel (bestelan: bestel); breac (brecan: bræc).

Class V: belit (beigitan: begeist), beset (besitan: beset), bed (biddan: bæd), cwe, cwe (cwepan: cwæp), geset (gesitan: geset), gef (giefan: gæf), spec (spécan: spræc), wipcwe (wipcwepan: wipcwæp), beiset, beiget (beigitan: begeist), gef, if, gef (giefan: gæf) – effects of the change ea > æ; bead (biddan: bæd) – influence of Class II bódan; spræc (spécan: spræc) – possibly a spelling variant.

Class VI: speon, bespeon (spanan: spæn) – influence of Class VII spanan.

Class VII: heal (healdan: heold) – extension of the present stem; hat (hatan: hæt), faen (fon: fæn), leat (lætan: lœt); waex, weax (weaxan: wæox) – influence of the following consonant.

Changes in the stem consonants:

Class III: wærd, uuard, ward (weorpan: wearp) – influence of other past stems; warh (weorpan: wearp).

Class V: cwe, cwe (cwepan: cwæp) – influence of other past stems; spec, spræc (spécan: spræc) – loss of -r- in the initial cluster spr-.

Addition of the empty <e> grapheme:

Class V: besette (besitan: beset).

Class VII: weolde (wealdan: wæold).

Weak forms:

Class III: bærnde, forbærnde, forbærnde, forbernde (birnan: barn); funde (findan: fund).

Class VII: berædde, gærrædde, rædde (rædan: ræd); bude (büan: bude); wealde (wealdan: wæold).

Pret.sg. of weorpan 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. Bódan (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 /i/, whereas the forms borrowed from Old Norse display /i/ in the initial position.

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

Class VII bænan 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 oper iii coman ridend to an tun. Al þe tunscipe flægen for hom (1137:265).
(13) þa stælic hi ut 7 flægen (1140:267).
while the last one seems to be another example of the addition of the empty <e> grapheme:

(14) hi riðan on swarte hors 7 on swarte buckes (1127:258).

Changes in the stem vowel:

Class II: beaden (béadan: budan) – the influence of Class V biddan, or the extension of the pret.sg. vowel.

Class III: weorpan (weorpan: wurdan) – the extension of the present stem vowel; streddan (stredgan: strugan) – the extension of the vowel from the present stem combined with effects of the change -æg. > -æ-

Class IV: brekkan (breccan: breccan).

Class V: beadon, beaden (biddan: bædan) – the influence of Class II béadan, or a scribal variant; specon, embespcon (spécan: spræc) – the loss of -r- in the initial cluster spr-; eoton (etan: étan); seagon (séon: sáwonségon).
The strong verb system in the Peterborough Chronicle

The adjectival inflection of the participle:

dative absolute: -um
(15) Ósrêd þe wæs Norðanymbra cining æfter wæs cünum ge læþt was (792:55).  
(16) Ælle feng to Nordymbra ricæ ðidan fordæ 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 buñ†den(ne) hine læddon on Myrce (796:57).
(19) (he) hæfde hine Penda adrededne. 7 rices bænumere forþan þ he his swustor foræt (658:33).
(20) butan se cyng ge læstæn woldæ eall þet hi on forewarde hæfðon þær ge wroht. 7 uppon þ hine for sworrenæ cyðpe (1094:228).

nom.pl. -e

e.g., adrifene, gewordene, fornæmene, ætstandene, etc.

gen.pl. -ra
(21) 7 þær weard Sîdæc eorl of slægen se ealdæ. 7 Sîdæc se geonga, 7 Os- 
bearn eorl. 7 Fræna eorl. 7 Harold eorl. 7 pa hærge begen ge flynde.  
7 feala pusenda of slægenra. 7 on feothende wæron od niht (871:71).

wk.nom.pl. -a
(22) 7 loc hwæter 'þæra se' broдра operne ofer bide. wære yrfe weard elalles  
Engla lanettes 7 eac Normændiges buten se ford færena yrfe numan hæfðe  
be rihtre æwe (1101:237).

Changes in the stem vowel:

Class I: oferwrogon (oferwro: oferwro) – the influence of Class II  
wrōn.
Class II: ofseotan (ofseotan: ofseoten) – the influence of palatal /f/.
Class VII: gehældan (geheældan: gehælden) – the result of the change ea > æ <a> or a dialectal variant.

Changes in the stem consonant:

Class II: cosen, cosan (cōsan: coren) – the extension of the consonant from the infinitive and pret.sg.
Class V: gcwepen (gcweþan: gcweden) – the extension of the consonant from the infinitive and pret.sg.
4.2. Inflectional endings

There is ample evidence for the rise of /æ/ 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., /a/ 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 /-a/ 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 wroéon with Class II wroéon, 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 Verker'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: -bidan, birman, -brecan, bían, dřédan, findan, hón, lésan, rán, sceotan, streðdan, and wealdan. Some of these already displayed weak forms in the OE period (-bidan, bían, dřédan, findan, rán, streðdan). 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 (-bidan: bidian, birman: bærman, -brecan: brocian; findan: fundian, hön: hangian, lēosan: losian, scēotan: scotian). Some of them record occasional weak forms (findan) and others merge with their weak congeners, thus becoming partially shifted (birman, hön, lēosan, scēotan). Consequently, the weak forms of only two OE strong verbs, -brecan and wældan (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.

REFERENCES


