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IDENTIFYING AND DATING NORSE-DERIVED TERMS IN MEDIEVAL ENGLISH:

APPROACHES AND PROBLEMS

(SHORT TITLE: IDENTIFYING AND DATING NORSE-DERIVED TERMS IN ENGLISH)

The Norse-derived terms introduced as a result of the Anglo-Scandinavian linguistic contact during the Old English period are very important for the make-up of today’s English. However, it is not always easy to establish whether a term can be reliably identified as a loan, nor can the process of adaptation of all the loans into medieval English be straightforwardly studied. This paper analyzes some of the problems involved in the identification and dating of the terms and possible methodological approaches for minimizing those problems.¹

Introduction

¹ I am very thankful to the anonymous reviewers for their comments, suggestions and criticisms. They have contributed to making this paper much better than it would have otherwise been.

Historical linguists interested in the make-up and evolution of the English lexicon have been aware for many years of the significant role that Norse-derived terms played in the lexical expansion of medieval English, particularly as far as the Danelaw areas are concerned, and of their place in today's vocabulary. Albeit lower in number than Latin and especially French loans, the importance of the terms borrowed from Old Norse lies in their non-technical character.² As Otto Jespersen (1938: §78) noted, “[a]n Englishman cannot *thrive* or be *ill* or *die* without Scandinavian words; they are to the language what *bread* and *eggs* are to the daily fare”. All the words in italics have been attributed to Norse influence in one way or another. However, the level of certainty for each etymological derivation varies significantly, and these words can help us explore the various types of evidence that one can rely on when attempting to compile the list of terms that entered the English language as a result of the Anglo-Scandinavian linguistic contact during the Old English period.

Identifying Norse-derived terms in medieval English texts

Old English and Old Norse were typologically very close to one another, to the extent that there must have existed significant mutual intelligibility between the Anglo-Saxons and the Scandinavian newcomers (Nielsen 1985 and Townend 2002). This makes the identification of Norse-derived terms recorded in Old and Middle English texts particularly hard. There are,

² Hug (1987: 1) estimates that Norse-derived terms account for approximately 2% of the vocabulary of standard Present-Day English. In terms of actual numbers, Nielsen (1998: 181) calculates that there are between 600 and 900 Norse terms in the standard language (probably not many more than 600 if the list only included words whose Norse origin is absolutely certain). This number would be much higher if dialectal terms were also taken into consideration; thus, Denison & Hogg (2006: 2) count approximately 1,500 words of Norse origin in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (hereafter, *OED*; cp. Flom 1900, Thorson 1936, and Kries 2003).

however, various types of evidence that we can rely on for this purpose, such as the phonological and morphological structure of the term, its meaning, the date of its first attestation, its (initial) association with the Scandinavian newcomers, the frequency of its use in Old English and Old Norse texts and the existence cognates in other (West) Germanic languages. It is often the case that various issues need to be taken into consideration in order to make a decision.

Formal evidence

Some formal evidence can present us with the most robust data. As far as phonology is concerned, Björkman (1900-02: 30) explained more than a century ago that

[i]f a word in English has a form which cannot be explained by means of internal English sound-laws, but which is easily accounted for by assuming a Scandinavian origin, we are, for the most part, entitled to consider the word in question a Scandinavian loan-word.

As far as the words chosen by Jespersen are concerned, this type of evidence is particularly relevant for PDE *egg*. When analyzing this word, we need to bear in mind Holtzmann's Law, which refers to the different reflexes of the combination short vowel + glide + vowel in West Germanic on the one hand, and in East and North Germanic on the other. In West Germanic, the glides become geminated and the first part of the lengthened sound is vocalized, forming a diphthong with the preceding short vowel (thus, PGmc **ajja*- > OE *æg*, OS *ei* and OHG *ei*); in the other two Germanic branches we find occlusion besides gemination (-*ddj*-, -*ggw*-, and -*ggj*-, -*ggv*-, as shown in Goth. **addja*-, Crimean Goth. *ada* and OIc *egg*; Kroonen 2013: xxxviii-xl). Accordingly, PDE *egg* can be shown not to have followed the "internal English sound-laws", in Björkman's words.

Using the phonological structure of the other words as evidence for their foreign origin is more problematic, and, therefore, other types of evidence need to be brought into the discussion (see below):

(1) PDE *thrive* (cp. OIc *þrífask* ‘to thrive’): the etymology of the Norse term that this verb is commonly associated with is unknown, although Falk & Torp (1903-06: s.v. *trives*) and Kroonen (2013: s.v. *þrīfan-*) derive it from PIE **t(e)reip-*, which would give us a reflex *þrīf-* in both Old Norse and Old English on the basis of Grimm’s Law and the monophthongization of PIE **/ei/* to */i:/* (Kroonen 2013: xxii and xxvii-xxix).

(2) PDE *ill* (cp. OIc *illr* ‘ill, evil, bad’): the ultimate etymology of the Norse term this adjective is commonly derived from is also unknown. Bjorvand & Lindeman (2007: s.v. *ill*) argue that associating it with PGmc **ilhila-* (< **elhila-*) is the best explanation from both a formal and a semantic perspective (cp. Kroonen 2013: s.v. *elhja-*). This derivation would connect the word, through Verner’s Law, with PGmc **elg-*, present in OHG *ilgī* ‘hunger, fasting’. If this were the case, we would have the following phonological developments: **[-lhil-]* > **[-lhl-]* > *[-ll-]*.³ While syncope is common in Old Norse (Noreen 1913: §50), it also happens with some regularity in Old English (Campbell 1959: §345-54 and Hogg 1992: §§6.13-25) and, therefore, this phonological process would not point towards Norse derivation particularly strongly. Campbell and Hogg explain that, in Old English, the loss of a medial high vowel in an open syllable tends to take place after a heavy syllable and the case of PGmc **ilhila-* fits this context because Minkova & Stockwell (1994: 37) explain that */-VCC/* is always heavy, regardless of whether the consonants belong to the same or different syllables. This would associate the adjective, for instance, with OE *dryhten* ‘lord’ < PGmc **druhtinaz*, which exhibits syncope in all forms other than the nominative and accusative

³ The assumption that high vowel deletion would have taken place before the loss of medial [h] is based on Campbell (1959: §§394 and 489).

singular, because in these cases the syllable where vocalic loss would have taken place was no longer open (Campbell 1959: §§331.4 and 574.5). However, this explanation would suggest that the syncopated forms have been levelled to the rest of the paradigm, whereas the opposite tends to be the case (cp. LWS *drihtenes*; see Hogg and Fulk 2011: §§3.57, 3.64, 4.47-51). So, the origin of *ill* if we associate it with PGmc **ilhila-* remains unclear.⁴ De Vries (1961: s.v. *illr*) gives four other options for the possible etymon of the Norse adjective, two of which (the accusative singular forms **illan* < PGmc *īðlan* and **illan* < PGmc *īðlan*) involve the typically Norse process of assimilation PGmc **[ðl] > [ll]* (Noreen 1913: §§71 and 183; cf. OE *īdel* ‘worthless, useless’, OS *īdal* id., OHG *ītal* id.). Thus, while it might be the case that the form of the adjective points towards its foreign origin, we cannot be certain.

(3) PDE *die* (cp. OIc *deyja* ‘to die’): the suggested Norse etymon for this term derives from PGmc **daujan-* (cp. OS *dōian* ‘to die’, OHG *touwen* id.; Kroonen 2013: s.v. *daujan-*). The term is first attested in early Middle English texts written in dialects which descend from various Anglian varieties of Old English. Given that /e:/ is the common Anglian reflex of the *i*-umlauted Proto-Germanic diphthong (Campbell 1959: §200 and Hogg 1992: §5.82), we would expect to find this vowel in the root of a Middle English native verb, and this expectation can be said to be met by <de3enn>, the spelling of the term in *The History of the Holy Rood Tree* and the *Ormulum*. According to the latter text’s idiosyncratic spelling practices, this form indicates that we have either a short vowel in an open syllable ([e-j]) or a long vowel ([e:-j] or [e:j-]); Bennett & Smithers 1968: 360-361, and Anderson & Britton

⁴ We also need to bear in mind that recent research suggests that morphological and lexical factors also need to be taken into consideration when accounting for high vowel deletion in Old English (Thompson 2012).

1999). Thus, nothing in its phonological structure hints at the fact that the verb could not descend from OE (Angl.) **dēgan*.⁵

(4) PDE *bread* (cp. OE *brēad* ‘bread; piece, morsel of bread’ and OIc *brauð* ‘loaf’):

phonology is not important in this case because OE *brēad* is well attested in Old English texts (*Dictionary of Old English*, hereafter *DOE*, 1986-: s.v. *brēad*) and, therefore, any suggestions in favour of Norse influence have to be restricted to the semantic sphere.

As far as morphology is concerned, the evidence in favour of Norse-derivation is most reliable when the term records an inflectional or derivational affix that is characteristic of Old Norse but not used in Old English (e.g. ME *wiht* ‘strong, courageous’ retains the nominative singular neuter adjectival suffix *-t*, cp. OIc *vígt* ‘in fighting condition, able to fight’). Had PDE *thrive* kept the medio-passive suffix of its suggested etymon, we would be wrong not to take it as a sign of its Norse derivation because that suffix is not part of the English inflectional system (consider ME *busken* ‘to make preparations’, cp. OIc *búask* id.). However, it is likely to be the case that the suffix dropped as part of the adaptation of the verb into English (Dance 2003b: 380, n. 359).

Less reliable, albeit also important, is the evidence originating from a match in verbal class or nominal stem, particularly when they are not shared by other West Germanic languages. For instance, Old Norse is the only Germanic language, other than English, to record a strong verb of the sixth class derived from an ablaut variant of PIE **dēg-* (cp. Go. *tēkan*, a strong verb of the seventh class), and this supports the fact that the Old English forms *tacan* – *tōc* – *tōcon* – *tacen* are likely to have been borrowed from Old Norse (Pons-Sanz 2013: 74-76). This type of evidence would encourage us to rule out the Norse-derivation of PDE *die* because, while its suggested Norse etymon belongs to the sixth strong

⁵ See Dance (2000), the source of this discussion, for a full explanation of the phonological structure of the verb and its relevance for its identification as a Norse-derived loan.

conjugation, the English verb should be associated instead with the first weak conjugation, on the basis of forms like <deide> recorded in texts written in the AB language.⁶ However, we cannot discount the possibility that, when the verb made its way into English, it became assimilated to some first class weak verbs. This type of change is not uncommon in the process of adaptation of a loan-word into the recipient language and, in this case, the change might have been facilitated by the fact that Old English speakers would not have been familiar with the ablaut variation of the Norse verb: /ey/ – /o:/ – /o:/ – /a:/ (Campbell 1959: §744, and Hogg & Fulk 2011: §§6.33 and 6.65-68). Yet, it is interesting that, if indeed a loanword, the term became part of the first weak class because, although that was the largest weak class in Old English, the most productive class was actually the second weak class (cp. OE *lagian* ‘to ordain’, coined on the basis of OE *lagu* ‘law’, cp. OIc *lög* id.; and *griðian* ‘to make a truce or peace’, coined on the basis of OE *grið* ‘protection, sanctuary’, cp. OIc *grið* pl. ‘truce, peace’; Stark 1982). We should not assume, though, that the first weak class was closed by the time of the Anglo-Scandinavian linguistic contact; Dance’s (2003b: 170-172) data show that new members, not all of which had a first weak class Scandinavian etymon, were incorporated into this class. Possibly, the verb under consideration here was attracted to it because of its similarity to native verbs such as OE (Angl.) *bēgan*, *cēgan* and *flēgan*. Indeed, that these verbs were treated together is suggested by the aforementioned <deide>, which indicates that, as was the case with the AB preterites of these verbs, the sound preceding the weak dental suffix was treated as part of the root (cp. OE (Angl.) *bēgde*, *cēgde*, and *flēgde*; DOE 1986-: s.vv. *bīgan*, *cīgan*, and *flīgan*, *flīan*, and Dance 2000: 374 and 2003b: 170-172). As we have seen, then, as far as formal evidence is concerned and with

⁶ On the AB language, which refers to the linguistic variety in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 402 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 34 (MSS A and B, respectively, in Hall 1920), see Tolkien (1929) and Dance (2003a).

regard to Jespersen's terms, only PDE *egg* can be safely said to have been borrowed from Old Norse.

Other types of evidence

Much less reliable than formal evidence is the information deriving from the comparison between the various Germanic languages, and the chronological, dialectal and sociological distribution of the attestations of the term in English texts. This type of evidence can never provide us with definitive answers because (1) textual survival is greatly affected by Fortune's whims; (2) there are many different reasons that might have led to the use (or absence) of a term in a text; and (3) there always exists the possibility that one day a text which alters this distribution might be unearthed. However, when formal evidence is not forthcoming, linguists often rely on these issues in order to argue in favour (or against) the possible Norse derivation of a term.

With regard to the distribution of a term in the various Germanic languages, the fact that the root under consideration is only recorded in Old Norse and English could be taken as suggestive of the Norse origin of the term, particularly if the term is very common in Old Norse but much less so in medieval English. This is the case for Jespersen's *thrive*, which is described as an "exclusively Nordic word" by Kroonen (2013: s.v. *þrīfan-*) and is not attested until the Middle English period. Interestingly, in the *Ormulum*, a text from the East Midlands which includes a significant number of Norse-derived terms (Brate 1885), ME *thrīven* collocates with the native near-synonym ME *waxen* in all its occurrences, a collocation that might have a Scandinavian model (cp. early Swed. *threfs ok växste*; see Olszewska 1962: 125, n. 1). This collocation, which leads the discussion on to the various types of evidence

arising from the attestation of a term in English texts, could be taken as further (albeit not very strong) evidence in favour of the Norse derivation of the verb.

If a word, particularly one that refers to a concept that is commonly mentioned in the extant texts, is first recorded in a late Old English or a Middle English text in connection with the Scandinavian newcomers (be it their customs, their artifacts or the areas where they settled down), we can suggest that the word might be a Norse loan. This is the case, for instance, of OE *lagu*: it is first recorded in the tenth century and in its earliest attestations (King Edgar's, d. 975, fourth legal code; Wormald 1999: 313-320) refers only to the laws of the Scandinavian newcomers, not those of the Anglo-Saxons (Pons-Sanz 2013: 84-85).

As far as Jespersen's *ill* and *die* are concerned, only the fact that the terms, which verbalize important everyday concepts, are first recorded in Middle English texts can be taken as evidence of their possible Norse origin because their earliest attestations are not necessarily indicative of Norse origin: although they are recorded in the *Ormulum*, they are also attested in the corpus of South-West-Midland texts examined by Dance (2003b; see also the *Middle English Dictionary*, hereafter *MED*, 1951-2002: s.vv. *dīen* and *ille*).⁷ Thus, given the general unreliability of attestation as etymological evidence, the Norse origin of these terms is not completely beyond doubt, and, indeed, the foreign derivation of PDE *die* had to receive renewed support only a few years ago (see Dance 2000).

The identification of the current meaning of *bread* as 'article of food prepared by moistening, kneading, and baking meal or flour, generally with the addition of yeast or

⁷ It may, however, be the case that even by Chaucer's time the ME *ille* word-field was perceived as dialectally marked, as Chaucer attributes it to the northern students in *The Reeve's Tale* (I.4174 and 4184) in non-rhyming position, while the other occurrences of the field in his corpus (viz. *The Romaunt of the Rose* 2074, 2161, 2486) are restricted to rhyming position. After all, it is well-known that Chaucer commonly relied on contemporary dialectal variation for similar purposes (see Pons-Sanz 2014: 218-19). See further Welna (2010), although he does not pay any attention to the early South-West-Midland attestations of the field.

leaven' (*OED* 1989: s.v. *bread*, n., sense 2.a) as a semantic loan from Old Norse has faced even stronger opposition and, indeed, some of the most important etymological dictionaries of the English language do not mention this possibility at all (Skeat 1924: s.v. *bread*, *Chambers Dictionary of Etymology* 1988: s.v. *bread*, and *OED* 1989: s.v. *bread*, n.).⁸ The facts that this sense is already attested in the tenth-century glosses to the Lindisfarne Gospels and that the compound OE *bēobrēad* 'lit. bee bread; honeycomb with honey', which refers to food substance, is widely recorded in Old English suggest that the semantic change from 'fragment, morsel (of bread)' to the noun's current meaning is likely to have taken place by native means, although, admittedly, the presence of a number of Norse loans in the Lindisfarne glosses (Pons-Sanz 2000, and 2013: 134 and 253-57) compromises the significance of this attestation as evidence in favour of the native origin of the meaning.

Jespersen's words constitute a case study representative of the different approaches that we can take when trying to identify the Norse-derived terms recorded in medieval English and the problems that we are likely to face (cp. Durkin 2014: ch. 10). As it should be clear from the discussion presented in the lines above, in the end, it is up to the linguist's judgement and his / her willingness to accept the Norse derivation of a term without a formal Norse imprint that determines whether or not it will make it to the list of medieval English words with a Norse etymon. This, of course, is a serious problem for historical linguistics, given the central place of many Norse-derived terms in the English language.⁹

⁸ The Norse-derivation of the term is not discussed either by Björkman (1900-1902), Hofmann (1955) or Pons-Sanz (2013). Note, though, that occasional references to the possible semantic influence of Old Norse can still be found (e.g. Johannesson 2006: 69).

⁹ Richard Dance is currently working on a more sophisticated and transparent way of classifying the evidence for Norse derivation (see Dance 2013 and Forthcoming). Yet, this approach, which is based on the general principles outlined above, still leaves the final decision of which words to accept and which ones to dismiss up to the individual linguist, as it could not be otherwise.

Dating Norse-derived terms recorded in medieval English texts

The dating of the loans is equally, if not more, problematic. Some of the issues that we have to face in this respect are:

- (1) It is generally agreed that by the late twelfth century Old Norse was no longer spoken in England (Parsons 2001), which means that all the Norse-derived terms recorded in medieval English texts would have made their way into the language mainly at some point during the Old English period. However, given the existence of the West Saxon pseudo-standard (Gneuss 1972) and the scarcity of Old English texts originating from the Scandinavianized areas, many terms (as is the case for most of the words chosen by Jespersen to highlight the significant influence of Norse-derived terms in English) do not surface in the written language until the Middle English period. Therefore, their initial process of integration into the language, from a temporal, dialectal and semantic perspective, is not available to us.
- (2) It is very difficult to know exactly when (and where) many medieval English texts were composed and written down, and this makes following the chronological evolution of a term very difficult. This is the case, for instance, of two scribbles recording drinking formulas in Arras, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 764: *wes æil* ‘be in health’ and *drinc hæil* ‘drink in health’. The presence of the diphthong in the root of OE *hæil* ‘healthy’ seems to point towards its Norse origin (cp. OE *hāl* ‘whole, healthy’, OIc *heill* id.), although it might represent instead continental influence (cp. OHG *heil* ‘whole, healthy’) because Ker (1990: no. 4) attributes the scribbles to an Anglo-Saxon scribe who may have been trained in a continental scriptorium. Further support for its Norse origin comes from the fact that, while OE *wes hāl* (sing.) / *wesað hāle* (pl.) is recorded as an ordinary salutation (cp. OIc *verið hail*,

pl.), its use as a drinking formula is not attested in any other Germanic language and may, therefore, have developed amongst the Scandinavian settlers in England (*OED* 1989: s.vv. *drink-hail* and *wassail*, n., and Dance 2003b: 190, n. 6). The two scribbles, then, might be an early pointer to Anglo-Scandinavian culture and might provide earlier attestations of the form than those recorded by the *OED* (cp. *OED* 1989: s.v. *hail*, adj.). Yet, their dating is not straightforward: Ker (1990: no. 4) assigns them to ‘s. x (?)’, while Förster (1932: 24, n. 107) dates them to c. 1080 (Pons-Sanz 2013: 29 and 392).

(3) It is well-known that medieval authors and scribes did not share our concerns with authenticity, accuracy and plagiarism, which produces a multiple array of possibilities in connection with the various linguistic layers that might be present in a text. The following lines discuss some examples.

As noted above, the main source of evidence in favour of the Norse derivation of OE *lagu* is the fact that in its earliest attestations this noun refers only to the laws of the Scandinavian newcomers, and it is not until the reign of King Æthelred (978-1016) that it becomes fully naturalized as a legal term, referring to any secular law. However, we also encounter it with this wider meaning in a poem on King Edgar recorded in the 959 D- and E-annals of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. This would suggest that the strong initial association of the noun with Scandinavian legal practices cannot be sustained and that, therefore, we need to reconsider the Norse origin of the term. However, this is not the best course of action. In all likelihood, the poem was composed either by Archbishop Wulfstan II of York (d. 1023), who extended the uses of OE *lagu* further by applying it to religious laws as well, or by someone in his circle. It was probably included in the northern set of annals represented by the two versions during the time when Wulfstan held in plurality the dioceses of York and Worcester, whence the D-manuscript is likely to originate (Pons-Sanz 2007a: ch. 3 and 2007b).

We know that Old English texts retained a significant status in the early Middle English period, which led to them being copied and recopied.¹⁰ The copying process often went hand in hand with linguistic updates, not only in terms of spelling, phonology and morphology, but also in connection with the lexis used in the original texts. This makes dealing with the various textual layers particularly difficult. Consider, for instance, the legal documents recorded in Cambridge, University Library, MS Ff.2.33, the Sacrist's Register of the abbey of Bury St Edmunds (Suffolk), from the late thirteenth century. Many of the texts in this manuscript are also present in London, British Library, MS Add. 14847, the White Register of the abbey. The wills in the latter manuscript are most likely copies of those in MS Ff.2.33, which, in turn, were copied from the now-lost register of John of Northwold (abbot of Bury between 1279 and 1301); it is not clear whether the writs in the two manuscripts derive independently from the lost register or whether MS Add. 14847 relies on MS Ff.2.33 in this case as well (Lowe 1992 and 2004). As noted by Laing (1993: 44 and 60; cp. Lowe 1990: 78-104 and 2010), the texts are written in "modified OE", with forms that "probably represent E Anglian language at a mid or latish C13 stage rather than *ca.* 1300)." For our purposes, there are no significant lexical differences between the two registers (see Lowe 1992).

We can be certain that some of the Norse-derived terms recorded in the documents included in MSS Ff.2.33 and Add. 14847 go back to the Old English period. S 1084, a writ of King Edward datable to 1065 x 1066, includes the Norse-derived terms *eorl* 'official of the shire' (cp. OIc *jarl* 'subordinate of a king' and OE *eorl* 'nobleman, warrior'), *griðbryce* 'breach of peace, penalty for such breach' (cp. OIc *griðabrek* 'breach of truce') and *hāmsōcn* 'offence of attacking a man in his own house; the privilege to judge that crime and to receive the fine to be paid for it' (cp. OIc *heimsókn* 'inroad, attack on one's home; visit'). We are

¹⁰ See Irvine (2000) and the results of the project *The Production and Use of English Manuscripts 1060 to 1220* (see <www.le.ac.uk/english/em1060to1220/index.html>).

very lucky to have a contemporary copy (London, British Library, MS Cotton Augustus ii.49). A comparison between the various versions of the writ shows full agreement with regard to the Norse-derived terms they use. *Griðbryce* and *hāmsōcn* appear in a formulaic list of privileges that King Edward granted to the abbey following the appointment of Abbot Baldwin.¹¹

Yet, that the vocabulary of the pre-Conquest texts recorded in these manuscripts has been updated is suggested by the fact that, as pointed out by Whitelock (1930: 99-100), in the will of Bishop Theodred (S 1526), probably datable to 942 x 951,¹² the Norse-derived *marc* (cp. OIc *mork*) has been substituted for OE *mancus*, a change that is fully in keeping with the replacement of the mancus by the mark as the English weight for gold during Cnut's (d. 1035) reign (Nightingale 1983 and 1984). The mancus does not seem to have been frequently used during the Middle English period: the *MED* (1952-2001: s.v. *manke*) only records two attestations of the term, the last one being in the *Poema Morale*, which is already recorded in London, Lambeth Palace, MS 487, in a hand from c. 1200 (Swan 2010). The mark, on the other hand, was widely used as a monetary unit for both gold and silver throughout the period (*MED* 1952-2001: s.v. *marke*, n.2).¹³

Having both original terms and later substitutions problematizes the dating of some of the Norse-derived terms in Old English texts recorded for the first time in MS Ff.2.33 (and, if applicable, MS Add. 14847):

¹¹ On the list of privileges commonly granted during the eleventh century, see Harmer (1989: 79-82). I am very thankful to Dr Kathryn Lowe for having provided me with the transcripts of various documents included in MSS Ff.2.33 and Add. 14847.

¹² S + number refers to the number given to the document in the *Electronic Sawyer*; this database is also the source for the dating of the legal documents referred to in this way.

¹³ For similar examples of replacement of a native term with a Norse-derived term in early Middle English copies of Old English texts, see Dance (2011 and 2012).

- B 36 (writ by William the Conqueror; 1066 x 1070):¹⁴ *eorl*
- B 37 (writ by William the Conqueror; 1066 x 1070): *eorl, orrest* ‘battle, combat; legal battle’
(cp. OIc *orrosta, orrasta, orresta* ‘battle, strife’)
- S 1076 (writ of King Edward; 1051 x 1052): *eorl*
- S 1077 (writ of King Edward; 1052): *eorl, unlagu* ‘injustice, bad law’ (cp. OIc *úlög* id.)
- S 1078 (writ of King Edward; 1052 / 1053 x 1057): *eorl, griðbryce, hāmsōcn*
- S 1079 (writ of King Edward; 1051-53 x 1057): *eorl*
- S 1080 (writ of King Edward; 1051-53 x 1057): *eorl*
- S 1081 (writ of King Edward; 1051-53 x 1057): *eorl*
- S 1082 (writ of King Edward; 1051-53 x 1057): *eorl*
- S 1083 (writ of King Edward; 1065 x 1066): *eorl, fra / fro* ‘from’ (cp. OIc *frá* id.), *lagu*
- S 1085 (writ of King Edward; 1065 x 1066): *eorl*
- S 1483 (will of Ælfgar; 946 x 951): *bōthe* ‘both’ (cp. OIc *báðir* id., OE *bā* ‘both’ + *ðā* ‘those’)
- S 1468 (agreement between Æthelmær, Ufi, who was the abbot of Bury St Edmunds, and the community; 1043 x 1044): *marc*
- S 1490 (will of Ælfric Modercope; 1042 x 1043): *marc*
- S 1499 (bequest of land by Æthelmær, bishop of Elmham; 1047 x 1070): *marc*
- S 1519 (will of Ketel; 1052 x 1066): *brynige* ‘coat of mail’ (cp. OIc *brynja* id.), *eorl, fēolagscipe* ‘partnership, fellowship’ (cp. OIc *félagskapr* id. and OE *feoh* ‘cattle, possessions), *marc*
- S 1521 (will of Leofgifu; 1035 x 1044): *marc*
- S 1525 (will of Sifflæd; s. x²-s. xi): *toft* ‘homestead, site of a house’ (cp. OIc *topt, tupt* id.)

¹⁴ B + number refers to the number given to the document in Bates (1998); this edition is also the source for the dating of the legal documents referred to in this way.

S 1527 (will of Thurketel; s. xi, probably before 1038): *toft, fra / fro*

S 1529 (bequest of land by Thurkil and Æthelgyth; s. xi med.): *l̥ysing* ‘freedman’ (cp. OIc *leysingi / leysingr* id.)

S 1531 (will of Thurstan; 1043 x 1045): *brynige, eorl, sadelfæt* ‘trappings’ (cp. OE *sadel* ‘saddle’ and OIc *fat* ‘vessel; luggage, baggage; pl. clothes’), *fēolaga* ‘partner, fellow’ (cp. OIc *félagi* id. and OE *fēo*), *fēolagscipe, healfmarc* ‘half a mark’ (cp. OE *healf* ‘half’ and OIc *mørk*), *mund and mǣldæg* ‘the sum which the bridegroom had to pay for his bride and an agreement’ (cp. OIc *mundr ok mǣldagi* id.), *marc, toft*

S 1537 (will of Wulfsige; 1022 x 1034): *brynige, goldwrecen* ‘inlaid with gold, made with gold’ (cp. OIc *gullrekinn* id.), *marc, ōra* ‘a unit of account of Danish origin’ (cp. OIc *aurar*, pl. of *eyrir* ‘ounce of silver, the eighth part of a mark’).

When trying to decide whether the terms recorded in these texts should be associated with the Old or the early Middle English period, we can rely on various types of evidence in order to make a (necessarily tentative!) decision one way or another: e.g. the dating of the original text, its use of other Norse-derived terms, the general distribution of Norse loans in Old English texts and the apparent familiarity with particular terms in Middle English. For instance, it seems fairly likely that OE *l̥ysing* was part of the original composition of S 1529 because this term is not recorded in texts (English or otherwise) written during the Middle English period and, therefore, this option is more likely than the possible suggestion that it might have been newly introduced into MS Ff.2.33 (or its immediate source; see below). Admittedly, it might simply be the case that the term was otherwise unattested rather than unused.¹⁵ However, we need to bear in mind that the legal differentiation between ordinary

¹⁵ Cp. *ōra* (S 1537): it is not recorded in the *MED* (1952-2001), but it is included in the *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* (1975: s.v. 2 *ora*), which shows that the term was used at least as late as the fourteenth century, when it refers to a gold coin.

freemen and those who were free after having been manumitted seems to have stopped being of much significance in late Anglo-Saxon law (see Pelteret 1995: 48).

The use of *bōthe* in S 1483, on the other hand, is suspicious on the basis that no other mid-tenth century text records a Norse-derived grammatical term and that this Norse loan really stands out because it is the only one in the text. This, then, casts some doubt over the other uses of the adjective in the (originally) eleventh-century documents S 1519, S 1531 and S 1537, because it appears in the same structure in all the documents: (preposition +) anaphoric personal pronoun + *bōthe* + *day / time / soul*. It may of course be the case that the use of the adjective in the later texts was the model for its later introduction in S 1483 (cp. the case of *marc* in S 1526 discussed above). However, the possibility that a later reviser might have introduced the term in all the documents cannot be easily discounted.¹⁶ It is difficult to know whether the change(s) should be associated with Northwold's lost register or with the writing of MS Ff.2.33, although the latter option might be more appealing on the basis of what we know about the lost register. Lowe (2001 and 2004) has shown that the copies (by the same scribe) of S 1527 and S 1219 (the will of Ulfketel; 978 x 1016) recorded in the fifteenth-century manuscripts London, British Library, MSS Add. 45951 and Add. 14850, respectively, are much closer to the texts that we would have found in the Northwold's register (probably in fols. 66 and 68; see Lowe 2004: 523) than the copies in MS Ff.2.33.¹⁷ On the basis of the script and linguistic forms in the later manuscripts, Lowe (2004) is able to

¹⁶ Notably, structures such as *for uncre bēgre sawle* 'for the soul of both of us' are not uncommon in Anglo-Saxon charters (e.g. S 1487 and S 1498).

¹⁷ In fact, interestingly, the copy of S 1527 in MS Add. 45951 records <fram> rather than <fro>, the Norse-looking version of the preposition in MS Ff.2.33. That is the case as well for the copy of S 1083 in Cambridge, University Library, MS Ff.4.35, a mid fifteenth-century manuscript; this text does not rely on the version of the document in MS Ff.2.33 (Kathryn Lowe, personal communication). This could be taken as a suggestion that the use of the preposition without a final nasal consonant should be attributed to the MS Ff.2.33 scribe.

show that the scribe who was responsible for at least this part of the lost register was extremely careful, copying both the language and the script of the single-sheet charters that he would have used as his originals. He was a *litteratim* scribe, thus less likely to introduce the change(s) under consideration here. In any case, what is clear is that it is difficult to know whether *bōthe* is first attested in the eleventh (in S 1519, S 1531 and S 1537) or the twelfth century (in the First Continuation of the *Peterborough Chronicle*, annals for 1124 and 1127; Pons-Sanz 2013: 89-90 and 471).

The dating of some of the other terms, though, remains even more uncertain, as their initial use could be attributed either to the late Old English or to the early Middle English periods. Think, for instance, about the formula *mund and mǣldæg*. It is only attested in S 1531; moreover, this is the only attestation of *mǣldæg* in English texts, while it is not clear at all whether the meaning of *mund* here, probably a reference to some type of dowry paid as part of a wedding ceremony, should be associated in any way with the use of the term in l. 93 of the Old English poem *Christ II* (or *The Ascension*) meaning ‘virginity’ (Pons-Sanz 2013: 87-88 and 184). Whatever the case, the dating of the formula is very difficult because we cannot rely on Old or Middle English attestations, or on intertextual comparisons because S 1531 has been preserved only in MS Ff.2.33. This means that any potential information that we could derive from this formula in connection with wedding practices in Anglo-Scandinavian territories is somewhat compromised.

Equally puzzling is the use of *orrest* in B 37. According to the *OED* (2000-: s.v. *orrest*),¹⁸ the term is otherwise recorded in annal 1096 of the *Peterborough Chronicle*, the *Ormulum* and two Latin documents (S 1036, a document in favour of Waltham Abbey, Essex, attributed to King Edward but likely to be a post-Conquest fabrication, and a fifteenth-century document which repeats some of the traditional privileges granted by Anglo-Saxon

¹⁸ The term does not seem to be recorded in the *MED* (1952-2001).

kings). Notably, it is only in B 37 and the *Ormulum*, which, as noted above, is also from the East Midlands, that *orrest* means ‘battle, conflict’ generally (i.e. it has the same meaning as its suggested Norse etymon), whereas in the other documents it seems to have the narrower, more legalistic, meaning ‘trial by combat; the right or prerogative of jurisdiction in a trial by combat’. Thus, it has to remain unclear whether the term was originally used in the Old English text or it was a later substitution; whether it was originally borrowed with the narrower meaning and then underwent semantic widening or whether the opposite is the case; and whether it was restricted to the East Midlands or was used more widely (a possibility that would arise particularly if its presence in the text were attributable for the king’s secretariat rather than the beneficiaries).

Conclusion

This paper has analyzed some of the problems involved in the identification and dating of the Norse-derived terms recorded in medieval English texts and some of the ways in which those problems can be solved or, at least, diminished. It is important to put these problems into a wider context, in connection with the very significant role of these terms in today’s English, both standard and dialectal varieties, and the amount of fairly reliable information that we have about many of them in connection with their attestation in Old and Middle English. In this respect, it is only desirable that nuanced and careful studies continue to be produced in order to increase our knowledge about these terms and their process of introduction and adaptation into the English language.

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