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THE INITIAL STAGE OF THE LOSS OF AFFIXAL PAST PARTICIPLE MARKING AND ITS RELATION TO ABLAUT

The Old English past participle form exhibited a redundant marking because apart from the attachment of the dental or nasal suffix, the past participles quite regularly attached the prefix *ge-*. Thus, Old English past participles of weak verbs were marked with two affixes, while those of strong verbs displayed an additional marker in the form of the vowel alternation (ablaut). The subsequent changes in the language resulted in the elimination of prefixal marking, leaving a suffix and occasional ablaut as markers of the form in the Present-Day English.

The loss of the prefix *ge-* is usually assigned to various periods of Middle English (e.g., Skeat 1912: 21; Mossé 1952: 80; Mincoff 1972: 284, Pyles—Algeo 1993: 161; and others) although some hypotheses suggest that the process was initiated earlier. While some scholars merely point out that already in Old English the attachment of the prefix was not regular (cf. Limar 1963: 170 and Reszkiewicz 1998: 42), Lass (1992: 147) claims that *ge-* “began to drop in Old English as early as the tenth century, especially in Northumbrian”. As the examination of the Old English sources shows, the prefixless forms are indeed present in the Northumbrian texts with a slightly increasing frequency towards the end of Old English. Still, the most numerous occurrence of the past participles lacking the prefix *ge-* is detected in the Mercian text, the gospel by Matthew from *The Rushworth Gospels* (Wojtyś 2008: 42-43). Thus, it seems that the elimination of redundant past participle marking was initiated in the central Anglian area rather than Northumbrian.

INTRODUCTION

The present paper focuses on the relation between various ways of marking the past participle in Anglian texts assigned to Late Old and Early Middle English, the period which witnessed the early stage of the loss of prefixal marking. In particular, the study is concerned with the past participles which lack either of the two affixes, the prefix *ge-* or the suffix. Such forms are analysed in order to reveal whether the absence of one of those markers could be attributed to other ways of signalling the form. Thus, the study is expected to show whether affixes, especially the prefix, were frequently dropped in forms displaying ablaut or whether the elimination of prefixal marking was a process independent of other ways of marking.

SOURCES

The data for the present study come from several Late Old and Early Middle English texts assigned to the Anglian and, later, the North East Midland dialect. The sources come from electronic base corpora such as, *The Dictionary of Old English Corpus* (DOE), *Chadwyck—Healey Literature Online* corpus and the *Innsbruck Corpus of Middle English Prose*, which is a section of ICAMET. The Old English data come from the collection of glosses to the *Rushworth Gospels* dated to the latter half of the tenth century and representing Northumbrian and Mercian dialects as well as *The Life of St. Chad*, the Mercian text with admixture of West Saxon (Mincoff 1972: 14). Early Middle English is represented by two texts, the *Ormulum* and the *Bestiary*. The former is the twelfth century homily (MS Junius 1) which is assigned to Southwest Lincolnshire, whereas the thirteenth century poetic *Bestiary* (MS Arundel 292) is from West Norfolk (Laing 1993: 68).

LATE OLD ENGLISH

The Rushworth Gospels contain glosses added by two scribes, Farmon and Owun, who used different dialects. Owun's part of the gloss is in South Northumbrian and is chiefly based on the earlier *Lindisfarne Gospels*, while Farmon used the Mercian dialect in his translation of the gospel by Matthew and the small sections of Mark and John (cf. Campbell 1959, Mincoff 1972). Thus, the collection is divided into two parts: *Ru*¹ (Mercian) including Matthew, Mark i.-ii.15 and John xviii.1-3 and *Ru*² (South Northumbrian) containing the remaining sections of Mark and John as well as the whole gospel by Luke. Due to that dialectal diversity, *The Rushworth Gospels* allows for the comparison of the marking of forms employed in very similar contexts in Northumbrian and Mercian.

The Northumbrian part of the collection (*Ru*²) contains 440 past participles which could potentially attach the prefix *ge-* since they do not possess any other prefix, like *a-*, *be-*, *for-*, etc. The majority of forms employed exhibit redundant affixal marking attaching both *ge-* and the dental / nasal suffix, prefixal marking being less regular of the two. *Ru*² contains 51 forms lacking the prefix *ge-*, which constitutes 12% of all the forms (1a), whereas the suffix is absent in 2 forms only (1b):

(1a) Prefixless forms:

Mark: cweden, drysned, endade, losed, nemned(2), sald(3), sende

John: biden, cweden(5), doemed, nemned, sald(7), sended, spreccen, wunden

Luke: bodad, cneden, cweden(2), eowed, fyrhtede, losad, losed, nemned(2), sald(6), sended(5) strogden, swungen

(1b) Suffixless forms:

Mark: sende, gisende

As data in (1) show, the past participles without prefixal marking come from 17 different verbs which are listed under (2).

(2) *bidan*, *bodian*, *cneden*, *cweðan*, *deman*, *drysnan*, *endian*, *eowan*, *fyrhtan*, *losian*, *nemnan*, *sellan*, *sendan*, *sprecan*, *stregdan*, *swingan*, *windan*

Additionally, the past participle of the verb *sendan* 'to send' is employed twice in *Ru*² without suffixal marking (1b).

The list of verbs whose past participles lack affixal marking includes both strong and weak verbs. Interestingly, the instances of past participles from weak verbs failing to attach an affix are more frequent than those of strong verbs. There are 37 weak forms without *ge-* and two instances of such past participles lacking a suffix. Such forms are thus devoid of one of the two possible markers. In the case of several forms, it might be argued that the absence of the prefix does not determine exclusive suffixal marking. One of the most common prefixless form, *sald* 'given' (16 instances in the collection), displays the alternation of the vowel resulting from the lack of Anglo-Frisian breaking and retraction (see Weřna 1996: 54). Hence the difference in the corresponding vowels in the infinitive (*sellan*) and the past participle (*sald*).

The remaining prefixless forms (14 instances) come from strong verbs which mostly belong to Class 5 (i.e. *cnedan* 'to knead', *cweðan* 'to say', *sprecan* 'to speak') and as such exhibit vowel mutation in the preterite but not in the past participle. That leaves merely 4 verbs with ablaut present in the past participle: *bidan* 'to bide': *biden*, *stregdan* 'to strew': *strogden*, *swingan* 'to swing': *swungen* and *windan* 'to wind': *wunden*. In the case of the verb *bidan*, the difference in length between the vowel in the infinitive and the one in the past participle is obviously not reflected in spelling.

The gospels contain two past participles which lack the dental suffix, both from the weak verb *sendan*. Those two suffixless forms are matched in the text by 6 instances of redundantly marked *gisended* and 6 instances of prefixless *sended*. It is also that verb that yields the only unmarked form *sende* in the gospel by Mark. The form is employed in the phrase *hæbbe sende* which glosses the Latin phrase *habentem mitti*. It is worth mentioning that the same phrase is repeated in the text and then the translation is *hæbbe gisende* with the past participle attaching a prefix. Thus, it seems that the verb was quite prone to the alternations in marking.

To sum up, the past participles in *Ru*² are mostly marked redundantly with two affixes and, in the case of strong verbs, vowel alternation. Yet, the text also contains forms lacking prefixal or suffixal marking, which come especially from weak verbs. Thus, it seems that the affixes were more frequently eliminated when

they were a part of double and not triple marking. That relation between three ways of signalling the past participle in *Ru*² is presented in Table 1.

	Type	Total	One marker: suffix	One marker: ablaut	Two markers: suffix and ablaut	No markers:
Prefixless PPs	strong	14	11	--	3	--
	weak	37	36	--	--	1
	Type	Total	One marker: prefix	One marker: ablaut	Two markers: prefix and ablaut	No markers:
Suffixless PPs	strong	---	---	---	---	---
	weak	2	1	--	--	1

Table 1. Affixal marking and ablaut in *Ru*²

In the Mercian part of *The Rushworth Gospels*, the prefixless past participle forms are surprisingly frequent for such an early text. The prefix *ge-* is missing in 85 forms, as listed under (3), which amounts to more than 40% of all the past participles.

- (3) bodad(2), broht(2), brohte, clænsade, costad, cweden(5), cwæden(5), ðægnad, deped, depid, depte, doemde, doemed, fylde, haten(3), hongen, læded, læfed, meten, nægled(2), næmned, nemde(2), nemned(6), niðrad(2), sægd, sald(16), salten, sawen(2), sende, sended(6), styred(2), þrowad, umen, wæled, wælid, wærgad, witen, worht(4), worpen(2)

As the list shows, the gloss to Matthew contains prefixless past participles never encountered in *Ru*². Additionally, the forms attested in other glosses are employed here with higher frequency. The best example is the form *sald* with 16 occurrences, while other gospels contain max. 7 instances of that form (John). The prefixless past participles in *Ru*¹ come from 30 different verbs:

- (4) bodian, bringan, clænsian, costian, cweðan, depan, deman, fyllan, hatan, hon, iman, lædan, læfan, metan, næglian, nemnan, niðerian, secgan, sellan, saltan, sawan, sendan, styrian, ðegnian, þrowian, wælan, wirgan, witan, wyrcean, weorpan

Similarly to the *Ru*², the past participles without *ge-* in Matthew come mostly from weak verbs. There are 63 instances of such forms which represent 21 verbs, whereas strong verbs yield only 21 prefixless past participles. The remaining form lacking the prefix, *witen* 'known', comes from the preterite-present verb.

Strong verbs whose past participles are employed without *ge-* belong to four different classes. Four verbs included in Class 7 (*hatan* 'to call', *hon* 'to hang',

saltan ‘to salt’ and *sawan* ‘to sow’) show an identical vowel in the infinitive and the past participle. The verb *hon*, whose regular past participle ought to be *hangen*, is here employed with the vowel /o/ reflecting the one from the infinitive. Similarly, there is no vowel alternation in verbs from Class 5 represented here by *cwēðan* ‘to quoth’ and *metan* ‘to mete’. As regards the former verb, however, two past participle forms are found in the text, namely *cweden* and *cwæden*, each attested 5 times, with the latter past participle displaying the vowel [æ] from the preterite rather than the infinitival [e]. Thus, that form is treated in the analysis as showing ablaut. The remaining two strong verbs, *irnan* ‘to run’ and *weorpan* ‘to warp’, exhibit vowel alternation in their past participles, *urnen* and *worpen* respectively.

Among prefixless past participles of weak verbs, several forms have roots different from those in the infinitives, which is the result of various phonological processes such as retraction (*sellan* ‘to give’: *sald*), i-mutation (*secgan* ‘to say’: *sægd*), spirantisation (*bringan* ‘to bring’: *broht*) and others. The difference in vowel might have contributed to the recognition of the past participle forms although those cases obviously have to be distinguished from the presence of ablaut.

The past participles lacking suffixal marking are quite rare in the gospel. The text contains only 4 such forms: *gebunde* ‘bound’, *unbunde* ‘unbound’, *ge-sett* ‘sat’ and *sende* ‘sent’. As can be seen, in all cases the suffix is missing from forms marked by the prefix, with the exception of *sende*, the only unmarked past participle in the gospel. Additionally, two suffixless past participles, *gebunde* and *unbunde* from the verb *bindan* ‘to bind’, show vowel alternation. Thus, even without a suffix, those forms still exhibit redundant marking.

The relation between the loss of affixes and the presence of ablaut in Matthew is presented in Table 2.

	Type	Total	One marker: suffix	One marker: ablaut	Two markers: suffix and ablaut	No markers:
Prefixless PPs	strong	21	13	--	8	--
	weak	63	62	--	--	1
	Type	Total	One marker: prefix	One marker: ablaut	Two markers: prefix and ablaut	No markers:
Suffixless PPs	strong	2	--	--	2	--
	weak	2	1	--	--	1

Table 2. Affixal marking and ablaut in *Ru*¹

The data show that, similarly to the other three gospels, also in Matthew the loss of affixal marking does not seem to be connected with the presence or absence of ablaut. The prefix is eliminated mainly in forms which possess only a suffix and not in those marked redundantly with a suffix and ablaut. On the other hand, suffixal marking is absent when the past participle attaches the prefix and displays vowel alternation. Still, the last conclusion is definitely too far-fetched because suffixal marking is very regular in the text and only 4 items lack it.

The last among the Late Old English texts examined is *The Life of St. Chad*. The source offers less data than the gospels, since it contains only 32 past participles capable of attaching *ge-* as a prefix. Suffixal marking is exceptionless in the text, whereas the prefix is absent in two forms, *sald* (2) 'given' and *wegen* 'weighed'. The former past participle, it seems, was a frequent prefixless form found in Old English texts, since it is not only one of the most common forms without *ge-* in the *Rushworth Gospels* but it is also attested in other Old English texts such as the *Lindisfarne Gospels*, *Durham Ritual* or *Vespasian Psalter*. The form *wegen* comes from the strong verb *wegan* representing Class 5 with no ablaut in the past participle. The past participles lacking prefixal marking in *The Life of St. Chad*, although small in number, constitute around 10% of all the forms in the text, which is a ratio similar to that of the Northumbrian part of *The Rushworth Gospels*.

The Late Old English data show that prefixal marking is eliminated especially in Northern Mercian represented by Matthew from *The Rushworth Gospels*. The other texts from the Anglian dialect contain forms without *ge-* but they constitute around 10% of all the forms, as compared to 40% found in *Ru²*. In all texts examined, the prefix is dropped in forms coming especially from weak verbs which results in the exclusive suffixal marking of the past participle. Strong verbs also yield prefixless past participles but they are less common than those of weak verbs. One also should not overlook the fact that the majority of prefixless past participles of strong verbs do not show ablaut. Additionally, although the past participles with exclusive prefixal or suffixal marking can be found, there are no instances of forms whose only marker would be ablaut. All that points to the weak position of ablaut as a marker of the past participle.

EARLY MIDDLE ENGLISH

The Early Middle English is represented here by texts assigned to the Northern part of the East Midland area, the *Ormulum* and the *Bestiary*. Those sources contain a very small number of the past participles marked with the prefix *ge-* and thus they seem to illustrate the final stage of the elimination of redundant past participle marking in the area.

From around two thousand past participles in *The Ormulum*, only 68 forms possess the prefix *ge-* (3%). Incidentally, all but one prefixed forms come from the same verb, *haten* ‘to name’, which belongs to Old English strong verbs (Class 7). That prefixed past participle, *gehaten*, spelt as *gehatenn* and *yehatenn* in the text, is invariably marked with the nasal suffix with no alternation in the root vowel. It is quite surprising that it is the past participle of the verb *haten* which attaches the prefix, since that form was often employed without prefixal marking in earlier sources, such as *The Rushworth Gospels* or *Orosius*. Except for *gehaten*, only one form is marked with *ge-*, *istaned*, representing the weak verb *stonen* ‘to throw stones’, whose northern form contained the vowel [a] rather than [o]. Thus, that past participle also shows double affixal marking, attaching both *ge-* and the dental suffix.

All other past participles attested in the *Ormulum* lack prefixal marking and are thus marked only with a suffix (1347 instances). In the case of some past participles of strong verbs, e.g. *borenn* ‘born’, *drunnkenn* ‘drunk’, *fundenn* ‘found’ or *worppenn* ‘thrown, scattered’, the forms also exhibit ablaut (418 instances), although numerous past participles representing that type of verbs, *risenn* ‘risen’, *drifenn* ‘driven’, *shapenn* ‘created’, etc., show vowel alternation in the past participle (140 instances). The text contains only one form which is completely unmarked, *openn* ‘opened’, in the phrase *þatt heffness yate uss open be*.

Other past participles encountered in the text, i.e. *ben* ‘been’, *don* ‘done’, *gan* ‘gone’ and *witen* ‘known’, come from verbs classified in Old English as anomalous or preterite-present. Thus, they are not included in the statistics.

As Table 3 shows, the majority of past participles in the *Ormulum* possess only suffixal marking indicating that *ge-* was easily eliminated when it was part of double marking. Hence, the presence of ablaut does not seem to have had any influence on the loss of affixal marking in the text. As in earlier sources, there are no instances of elimination of prefixal marking which would leave vowel alternation as the only marker of the form.

	Type	Total	One marker: suffix	One marker: ablaut	Two markers: suffix and ablaut	No markers:
Prefixless PPs	strong	558	140	---	418	---
	weak	1208	1207	--	---	1
	Type	Total	One marker: prefix	One marker: ablaut	Two markers: prefix and ablaut	No markers:
Suffixless PPs	strong	--	--	--	--	--
	weak	1	--	--	--	1

Table 3. Affixal marking and ablaut in the *Ormulum*

Similarly, the data from the much shorter text, *Bestiary*, indicate that prefixal marking was eliminated when it was part of double affixal marking rather than triple marking with ablaut. The majority of the past participles in the poem do not possess prefixal marking. In fact, there are only two forms with *ge-* attested in the text, *idigt* ‘prepared’ and *ikindled* ‘born’, both representing weak verbs and marked redundantly with two affixes. Contrary to those forms, other past participles of weak verbs possess only suffixes with occasional alternation in the vowel resulting from various phonological processes, as in *tellen* ‘to tell’: *told*.

	Type	Total	One marker: suffix	One marker: ablaut	Two markers: suffix and ablaut	No markers:
Prefixless PPs	strong	14	9	--	4	1
	weak	11	11	--	--	--
	Type	Total	One marker: prefix	One marker: ablaut	Two markers: prefix and ablaut	No markers:
Suffixless PPs	strong	1	--	--	--	1
	weak	--	--	--	--	--

Table 4. Affixal marking and ablaut in the *Bestiary*

As regards strong verbs, several of their past participles, such as *broken* ‘broken’, *bunden* ‘bound’, *doluen* ‘dug’, display suffixal marking with ablaut (4 instances), whereas others, e.g. *fallen* ‘fallen’, *sinen* ‘shone’, *written* ‘written’, etc. attach a suffix exclusively. The text contains also one form which is left unmarked, *bred* from the Old English strong verb *bredan* ‘to grow’. The results of the analysis of the data from the text are presented in Table 4 above.

CONCLUSIONS

The data examined show that the elimination of redundant affixal past participle marking affects the loss of the prefix *ge-*, whereas suffixes are very rarely absent in the form. At the initial stage of the process, assigned to Northern Mercian, the prefix is absent in forms representing different types of verbs, but most frequently those of weak verbs. The Early Middle English sources from the North-East Midland contain merely several instances of the past participles marked with *ge-* thus proving that prefixal marking is already in decay at that time. Obviously, the majority of the past participles in the texts come from weak

verbs, since such verbs were more numerous. Yet, the fact remains that the prefix is dropped both in the forms representing strong and weak verbs. Thus, prefixal past participle marking was not eliminated because the form possessed two other markers, suffix and ablaut, but rather independently of the presence or absence of vowel alternation. Such a hypothesis is further supported by the lack of prefixless forms with ablaut as the only marker, although the prefixless past participles with exclusive suffixal marking are quite common. Thus, it seems that the relationship between various ways of marking exists only between the two types of affixal marking, since the absence of *ge-* usually entails the presence of the suffix.

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