Passive and instrumental adjuncts in 
The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle to Year 1000

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Introduction

Passive adjuncts in The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle can be classified in several different ways. One might suspect that whether a sentence was a stative passive or an actional passive, which Marcwardt and Rossler state are indicated by means of the auxiliaries beon or weorfan, respectively, might govern which adjunct was used. However, although weorfan was used more in early Old English than later in the language and I collected data only from entries prior to year 1000, only four of my forty passive sentences with adjuncts used this auxiliary. Further, there seemed to be no consistent pattern among the four adjuncts: three different prepositions were used (from, þurh, and of); three were agentive adjuncts and one was an instrumental adjunct.

A more productive way to classify the adjuncts proved to be by whether they were agentive or instrumental. Several of the prepositions were perfectly consistent. The rest, for which I found only one or two examples each, are less easy for me to generalize about their use. In this paper, I will discuss each of the six adjuncts that occurred in The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle to year 1000, beginning with those which are either only agentives or instrumentals.

From, fram, fra

From and its variants fram and fra were by far the most common adjuncts, composing twenty-three of my forty examples. Their abundance makes their consistency all the more striking: they are without exception agents. Visser mentions that from's "reference is only occasionally to a thing" and all of my examples refer to people, in fact, people directly, immediately the source of the action. This is also of particular interest, since Visser states that later in the language, when by-adjuncts are more frequently used, from begins to indicate a "distant source of action, esp. as a giver, sender, or the like."
Since fighting and the business of bishops are the most common subject matter of at least this portion of the Chronicles, one can imagine that an adjunct with from's qualities would be in frequent use. And indeed, when anyone was ofslagen or gehalgod, it was almost always from someone. From is the adjunct, in fact, for all manner of killings:

And Ḩa cild on Bethlehem ofslagene w.PARAM for ehtnesse fram Herode. (2)

He swealt ofsticod from his sylfum. (3)

Her wyrȣ Ætelfritt Northymbra cining ofslagen fram Reodwalde East Engla cininge. (617)

Her wyrȣ Eadwine cining ofslagen fram Cadwallan 7 Pendan on Netfelda. (633)

Her wes Oswald ofslagen Northymbra cining fram Pendan Suthymbrum on Maserfeld. (641)

7 AElhelred Northynymbra cyning wes ofslægan fram his agenre þeode. (794)

Her Ecgbryht ealdorman wes ofslægan from þpenum mannum. (838)

Hallowing, ordaining and baptizing, when stated passively, also took a from-adjunct. (Could this be considered a clue to the Anglo-Saxons' understanding of religion as being a very direct influence on their lives?)

Her Paulinus fram Iusto þam arcebiscope was gehadod Norþanhyembrum to biscope. (625)

Her wes Eadwine cining gefullod fram Pauline. (627)

Honorius wes gehalgod fram Pauline on Lincollan. (627)

Her Kynegils wes gefullod fram Byrine þam biscope on Dorcaceastré... (635)

Her wes Brihtwald gehalgod to arcebiscope fram Godune Galwala biscop... (693)

Her wes Baldwulf gehalgod to biscope to Hwiterne on XVI. Kl. Agustus fraþ Eanbalde arcebiscop • 7 fraþ AE þpelberhte biscop. (791)
7 he wæs sythran gebletsod • 7 his cynestole ahafen on VII. Kl. Iunii • on Eoforwic • fram Hæmabalde arcebishop • 7 Adegelberhte. 7 Higbalde • 7 Badwulfe. (795)

*From* is also used when someone is driven out of someplace by someone:

Her Cenwalh wæs adrifcen of his rice fram Pendan cininge. (644)

7 Wilfert bispoc wæs adrifcen of his bispocdome fram Ecferthe cininge. (678)

There were also in this early section of the *Chronicles* examples of what Visser claims becomes the exclusive use of *from*, the distant source of action, though these are few in number. These are primarily with verbs of sending and inviting:

Her Patricus wæs asend fram Celestine paman papan to bodianne Scottum fulluht. (330)

On hora dagum Hengest 7 Horsa • fram Wyrtgeorne gelapode • Brytta kyninge... (349)

7 in pas tid wæron ærendracan gesend of Rome fram Adrianum paman to Englalande. (785)

*Of*

Though there were only four clear-cut uses of *of* as a passive adjunct, they were all agents and in almost identical semantic environments. Visser states that *of* in Old English is used less than *from*, so my data may be a better indication of how the adjunct was used than the small number of examples might suggest.

The most striking fact about the four examples is that they are all used with the verb "to choose" except for one example which is used with the verb "to bless" in the sense of designating or choosing:

And ic wille þe seo abbot beo gehealden for legat of Rome ofer eal þe iglante • 7 hwilc abbot þe beor þær coren of þe munecan • þe he beo gebletsod of þæn arcebishop of Cantwarbyrig. (675)

Her wearp Eadward cing gecoren to ðexere 7 to hlaurde of Scotta singe 7 of Scotton • 7 Regnolde cinge • 7 of eallum Norðhumbrum
Mid

All seven of the examples of mid in the text were used to indicate an instrument rather than an agent in passive sentences. This is consistent with what Visser says about this adjunct:

In most of the subjoined instances the mid-adjunct expresses instrumentality or means. Only in a very small number of cases does it refer to the 'principal agent' in such a way that nowadays a by-adjunct would be possible in its stead. 4

Five of the examples use mid to indicate concrete but inanimate instruments:

7 he getimbrade Bebbanburh • sy was xrost mid hegge betined • 7 Ψχξ χfter mid wealle, (657)

7 Coludesburh forbarn mid godcundum fyre. (679)

To ιan ylican timan was ιpis land swype geswent mid gelomlican fechten. (870)

7 hi man eac mid θprum folcum sohte • mystra daga xlice • otte on deg of ye on niht • ge of xpare fryrde ge eac of xam burhgum. (894)

However, my two latest examples indicate more abstract instrument for the condition or action:

ta xφxron hi mid metelieste gewxgde. (894)

ac hi xφxron micle swi or gebrocode on xam prygm gearum mid ceapes xwylde 7 manna. (897)

These two are all the more notable since they represent the only abstract instruments in this portion of the Chronicles.
Though, as mentioned above, there were numerous examples only for from, of and mid, some observations can still be made about the other adjuncts. *purh*, for instance, behaves characteristically in its two occurrences in this passage, according to how Visser describes its general use.

Visser cites Dansheb (1970) as stating that mid and *purh* often alternate, but this does not account for all of *purh*'s uses, because, unlike my examples of mid, *purh* is also to indicate an agent. Visser accounts for this briefly:

In Old English passive constructions two different *purh*-adjuncts occurred side by side, viz. (a) the agentive *purh*-adjunct indicating the principal agent; (b) the agentive *purh*-adjunct indicating medium, meané, cause, reason and instrumentality. Whereas type (a) became obsolete by the end of the fifteenth century, type (b) has remained in use till today...

My data provided a clear-cut example of each, but since there is only one example for each type, there is no suggestion of either type becoming obsolete:

Oc se kining Peada ne nixade nane hwile, forwan he wæs beswican *purh* his agen cwen on Esten tide. (655)

7 eac heora sycpu sume *purh* ofereder werton tobrocene. (794)

Note that incidentally, perhaps, the agentive *purh* occurs with a bēon auxiliary while the instrumental *purh* occurs with a weorpan auxiliary.

Despite its rarity in this text, the most curious adjunct I found was the prepositionless one. I have two examples, one of which is suspect because it is so much like the constructions used with verbs of speaking which Visser is careful to separate:

Eadbald bispoc of *am* lande aforon. 7 Ecgfert feng to Myrcene rice, 7 by ilcan geare forðferde. And Eadgriht onfeng rice on Cent, *am* wæs āter nama nemned Pæn. (794)

Visser suggests that the surest way to discover the qualities of
The most striking result of my investigation of passive agents
in The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is that the three most used adjuncts are not
consistently either agentive or instrumental. This fact was not
commented on in any source that I checked. Future research is
needed to determine if other sources use the adjuncts in the same
way and when, if ever, the adjuncts are used both as agents and
instrumentals.

NOTES

1 Albert H. Marckwardt and James L. Rossier, Old English Lan-

guage and Literature (New York: M.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1970),

pp. 99-100.

2 F. Th. Visser, An Historical Syntax of the English Language,


3 Visser, p. 218.

4 2185. p.

5 2186. p.

6 2187. p.

7 2188. p.

8 2189. p.

9 2190. p.
the prepositionless adjunct is to find parallel constructions in which the adjunct is preceded by a preposition. My other example of a prepositionless adjunct follows the same verb as many of my from examples, but unlike the from examples, the agent is a collective noun rather than a single person:

7 hine ofslogan his hiwan... (757)

The not-quite-parallel nature of this example seems to be not unusual:

This is a ticklish subject, because active forms precisely corresponding to the passive constructions one wants to analyse are hardly ever available and one has to rely on translations into modern English, in which the synthetical clusters are replaced by their analytical 'equivalents'. Then questions like the following arise: 'Is w tere = by water or with water' in 'he acelode w tere apw gen beon'; 'is wyrum = by worms or with worms' in 'hit wearp wyrmum acreopod'; ... In the existing grammars only a very small number of Old English examples is given of the use of the noun in the dative or instrumental as the agent in the passive construction... 7

There was only one example of be in the text I chose, and that was quite late. In this case be is used as an agent-adjunct:

Be Eadweardes cinges unoran • 7 be ealra his witena, 4p he wys to arcebisceope gehalgod. (971)

According to Visser, if I had found more examples, they may have caused some difficulty in categorization:

In collecting the examples no attempt has been made to distinguish rigorously between by-adjuncts in passive constructions that refer to actual 'agents' and those that according to one interpretation can be viewed as intermediaries. That their discrimination is difficult appears from the fact that in MMED (s.v.bi) all relevant instances are heaped together in two sections headed: "Of an agent or intermediary", "Of an agency, mediation, means, motivation." 8
REFERENCES

