PASSIVE AND INSTRUMENTAL ADJUNCTS IN THE ANGLO-SAXON CHRONICLE TO YEAR 1000

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Introduction

Passive adjuncts in The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle[1] can be classified in several different ways. One might suspect that whether a sentence was a statal passive or an actional passive, which Marckwardt and Rossier state are indicated by means of the auxilaries bēon or weorþan, respectively, might govern which adjunct was used. However, although weorþan 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 auxilary. 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."[2]

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 þa cild on Bethlehem ofslagene wæron for ehtnesse fram Herode. (2)

He swealt ofsticod from his sylfum. (3)

Her wærð Aetelfrit Norðhymbra cining ofslagen fram Reodwalde East Engla cininge. (617)

Her wærð Eadwine cining ofslagen fram Cadwallan 7 Pendan on Hetfelda. (633)

Her wæs Oswald ofslagen Norðhymbra cining fram Pendan - Suðhymbrum on Maserfeld. (641)

7 AEþelred Norðanhymbra cyning wæs ofslægan fram his agenre þeode. (794)

Her Ecgbryht ealdorman wæs ofslægan from ægðrum 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 arcebisceope wæs gehadod Norþanhymbrum to bisceope. (625)

Her wes Eadwine cining gefullod fram Pauline. (627)

Honorius wes gehalgod fram Pauline on Lincollan. (627)

Her Kynegils wæs gefullod fram Byrine pam biscope on Dorcaceastre... (635)

Her wæs Brihtwald gehalgod to ærcebiscope fram Godune Galwala biscop... (693)

Her wæs Baldwulf gehalgod to biscop to Hwiterne•on XVI. Kl. Agustus•fram Eanbalde arcebiscop• 7 fram AEþelberhte biscop. (791)

7 he wæs syþþan gebletsod • 7 his cynestole ahafen on VII. Kl. Iunii • on Eoforwic • fram Eanbalde arcebiscop • 7 Æþelberhte. 7 Higbalde • 7 Badwulfe. (795)

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

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

7 Wilfert biscop wæs adrifen of his biscopdome fram Ecferte 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 þam papan to bodianne Scottum fulluht. (330)

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

7 in þas tid wæron Ærendracan gesend of Rome fram Adrianum papan 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,[3] 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 þ seo abbot beo gehealden for legat of Rome ofer eal þ iglande • 7 hwilc abbot þe beð þær coren of þe munecan • þ he beo gebletsod of þan Ærcebiscop of Cantwarbyrig. (675)

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

7 eac Streaclede Wala cinge • 7 of eallon Strecl⁊d Wealan. (924)

7 ÆEpelstan w⁊s gecoren to synge of Myrcum • 7⁊t Cyngestume gehalgod. (924)

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 w⁊s ⁊rost mid hegge betined • 7 þ⁊r ⁊fter mid wealle. (657)

7 Coludesburh forbarn mid godcundum fyre. (679)

To þan ylcan timan was þis land swype geswent mid gelomlican fechten. (870)

7 hi man eac mid oþrum folcum sohte • m⁊stra daga ⁊lce • oþþe on d⁊g oþþe on niht • ge of þ⁊re fyrde ge eac of þam burhgum. (894)

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

ta w⁊ron hi mid metelieste gew⁊gde. (894)

ac hi w⁊ron micele swi or gebrocode on pam prym gearum mid ceapes swylde 7 manna. (897)

These two are all the more notable since they represent the only abstract instruments in this portion of the Chronicles.

þurh

Though, as mentioned above, there were numerous examples only for from, of and mid, some observations can still be made about the other adjuncts. þurh, 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 þurh often alternate,[5] but this does not account for all of þurh's uses, because, unlike my examples of mid, þurh is also to indicate an agent. Vissar accounts for this briefly:

> In Old English passive constructions two different þurh-adjuncts occurred side by side, viz. (a) the agentive þurh-adjunct indicating the principal agent; (b) the agentive þurh-adjunct indicating medium, means, cause, reason and instrumentality. Whereas type (a) became obsolete by the end of the fifteenth century, type (b) has remained in use till today...[6]

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 · forðan he wæs beswican þurh his agen cwen on Estren tide. (655)

> 7 eac heora sycpu sume þurh ofereder wurton tobrocene. (794)

Note that incidentally, perhaps, the agentive þurh occurs with a bēon auxilary while the instrumental þurh occurs with a weorþan auxilary.

Ø

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 biscop of þam lande aforon· 7 Ecgfert feng to Myrcene rice · 7 þy ilcan geare forðferde · And Eadgriht onfeng rice on Cent · þam wæs oðer nama nemned Pæn. (794)

Visser suggests that the surest way to discover the qualities of

Conclusion

There were several agents that were not included in this text which were in general use in Old English. Most notably absent is *for*.

> Agentive adjuncts preceded by *for* have gained a very inconsiderable footing in the English language. Their use was already obsolete by 1500. In the majority of the small number of instances the meaning of the *for*-adjunct approaches -- yet not wholly attains -- that of an adjunct of cause and reason. Nevertheless inductible examples with *for*-adjuncts denoting what OED calls the "principal agent" are not totally absent.[9]

The most striking result of my investigation of passive agents in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is that the three most used adjuncts are 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 Language and Literature* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1972), pp. 99-100.

[2]F. Th. Visser, *An Historical Syntax of the English Language*, vol. 3, pt. 2 (Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1973), p. 2182.

[3]Visser, p. 2184.

[4]p. 2183.

[5]p. 2183.

[6]p. 2186.

[7]p. 2177.

[8]p. 2180.

[9]p. 2181.

the prepositionless adjunct is to find parallel constructions in which the adjunct is preceeded 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 shich 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 aceolde 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]

Be

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 ⁊ þ he wæs 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, motification."[8]

REFERENCES

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