

SCANDINAVIAN LOANWORDS DURING THE MIDDLE ENGLISH PERIOD: GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

The presence of the Scandinavian element in English has been often mentioned but not thoroughly studied since no real quantification of it has been issued. The present paper aims at providing an interpretation of one aspect of the linguistic system of Scandinavian England, namely, that concerning loan words. A detailed account of all the linguistic system of Anglo-Scandinavian would certainly need much time and I will not make such an attempt here. Instead, I will concentrate on the composition of the lexical level of English during the so-called Middle English period.

My main interest has long been to fix the proportion of this element as well as its distribution according to a series of variables. As a source of data I have resorted to the *Middle English Dictionary* first edited by Hans Kurath and Sherman Khun in 1956. Since my intention was to ascertain to what a degree did the Scandinavian lexical system penetrate into the Anglo-Saxon one, I have focused on the number of uses of Scandinavian loan words rather than in the number of words themselves.

The information extracted from the *MED* has been organised into a database and analyzed according to the different fields considered. I will concentrate on the distributional pattern of Scandinavian loanwords in Middle English as regards their presence in the dialects during the period comprising both the first and last occurrences of such loans in the corpus, namely 1107 and 1540 respectively. To this end, some examples have been selected by way of illustration.

1. THE CORPUS

To achieve a detailed analysis of the behaviour of Scandinavian loans in Middle English, we need a corpus that can be considered as representative of a great range of linguistic possibilities. At the same time, the selection has to be random so that the presence of this type of vocabulary can be studied approximately the way in which it occurred in common linguistic intercourse as it was recorded, corresponding to different dialects, types of text and periods. Our corpus has been made compiling all entries corresponding to words of Scandinavian origin. The choice of the entries has been carried out so that I only took into account those lexical items the authors of the *MED* themselves considered had been originated in Old Norse.

Only the entries for words whose first grapheme was <a>, or <c> have been checked (totalling 100,000 words), but many different variables have been taken into consideration for the making of the corpus. And though each record contains fourteen fields or variables, the ones I have examined for the purpose here are as follows:

Word: it contains the loan-word with its possible spelling variants as it is in the *MED*.

Meaning: the different meanings of the loans are recorded in each case followed by a quotation showing their use.¹

Period: two possible dates have been registered for each use of a loan. The first date of composition and the date of the manuscript when necessary. Of course these dates are not always exact, but a variation of around 25 years can be considered for almost all the cases.

Dialect: The ME dialect to which the text belongs is considered only in those cases in which any particular features indicate so. This means that texts showing no dialectal feature are considered as 'standard'.

2. THE DIALECTS

Two criteria have been followed for the assignment of texts to particular dialectal areas.

In the first place, the classification adopted here is not that by Kurath but the one by Robert Lewis. The edition of the *MED* carried out by Lewis and his team revised much of the information previously given by the former editors, including that concerning the dialectal distribution of the texts. This revision gave place to a more detailed classification, since some areas that had been considered as containing one single variety are further divided in two by Lewis. This way, texts such as *Amis and Amiloun* and *The lay of Havelok the Dane* belonged to the East Midland group according to the 1956 edition but are ascribed to different dialects (South East Midland and North East Midland, respectively) by the 1984 edition. Inside this same group, texts showing no special northern or southern features are left as belonging to the East Midland (this is the case of the *Romance of Emaré*).

In the second place, in those cases in which no information was provided, texts were ascribed to the dialect proposed by the editor of those same texts by the *Early English Text Society*.

Despite the tendency to believe that the dialects of the Danelaw area have been subject to a bigger influence from Norse dialects so that a corresponding higher number of loans should be found in them, the data from my corpus show that this assumption is not necessarily true. When analyzing the information available, I could establish thirteen different groups: twelve corresponded to the dialects of ME according to the criteria proposed by Robert E. Lewis, and the last one included all forms showing no especial dialectal feature under the label 'common core'. A list of the 13 groups has been thus configured.

¹ The way in which these meanings are considered is the one adopted by Kurath in his introduction to the *MED* (3). For the identification of the different meanings the following types of quotations have been preferred: a. -those containing an explicit definition by a medieval writer, without considering its validity or acceptance on the part of his contemporaries. b. -those containing synonyms and antonyms. c. -those containing words used to refer to coordinate, subordinate or unities of a superior entity in a system of classification, as in phylosophy, for instance. d. -those exhibiting the expression in a linguistic context or in a specific setting that restricts its meaning. e. -those giving a Latin or French equivalent of the ME expression, or for which the foreign equivalent is available.

South
 South East
 South West
 Southeast Midland
 Southwest Midland
 Midland
 East Midland
 West Midland
 North
 North East Midland
 North West Midland
 Kent
 Common core

The data obtained have been organised in the two tables below. Table 1. displays the total number of occurrences of each loan according to the dialect in which it appears. Table 2. shows these same figures in percentages for a better illustration.

DIALECT	USES OF LOANS
South	9
South East	4
South West	149
Southeast Midland	1027
Southwest Midland	125
Midland	7
East Midland	213
West Midland	264
North	809
North East Midland	313
North West Midland	281
Kent	46
Common core	2048

Table 1

DIALECT	PERCENTAGES
South	0.16
South East	0.07
South West	2.81
Southeast Midland	19.39
Southwest Midland	2.36
Midland	0.13
East Midland	4.02
West Midland	4.98
North	15.28
North East Midland	5.91
North West Midland	5.3
Kent	0.87
Common Core	38.67

Table 2

Without resorting to a minute analysis, and contrary to the general assumption, it can be easily seen that it is not in the dialectal area of the Danelaw where the largest number of Scandinavian loans can be found. As can be seen in the numbers exhibited in table 1., it is the so-called 'common core' that contains most loans (38.67 %).

Except for the apparently striking case of the Southeast Midlands, most uses of loans have been registered in the Northern dialect with 809 cases (15.28 %). Some examples extracted from northern texts are shown in examples numbers (1) and (2). In (1), the verb *adlen* shows the dental suffix typical of weak verbs (the productive form in ME). It means 'to merit, deserve' and is still used nowadays in some areas with the meaning of 'earn'.

- (1) *An Alphabet of Tales*, 302 / 10: Pis trew man thankid Almiȝtty God, whome þat he adlid to serve in His awn presens.

Example number (2) provides an instance of the use of the preterit plural of the verb *ben*. These past forms are considered to be originated in ON **varon* and they often keep the original Norse vowel.

- (2) *Northern Homilies* (3) *Leg.* 10 / 504 It es a deuil. In wedis als it a woman wore.

If we move southwards we may find quite a number of Scandinavian loans in the North East Midlands (Danelaw area) where 5.9 % of the cases have been recorded. Nouns such as *carl* ('servant' or 'freedman') or *brath* ('anger') and verbs such as *biggen* ('build') are illustrated in examples (3) to (5):

- (3) *Ormulum* 19947: Nass itt nohht þurhh brapþe se33d, Ne þurhh niþþ ne þurhh wraþe.

- (4) *Towneley Plays* 70 / 205: Full hard halde ar we here, as carls vnder the kyng.

(5) *Peter Langtoft's Chronicle*, p. 67: Þar loges & þare tentis vp þei gan bigge.

As regards the North West Midlands, (5.3 %) example (6) contains the verbal form *atwappen* which seems to be peculiar to this area and has the meaning of 'slip away' or 'escape from somebody'.

(6) *Soul asked Cleanness*, 1205: Bot er þay atwappe ne nozt þe wach wythoute, Hiȝe skelt watz þe askry þe skewes anunder.

Example (7) illustrates the use of *brinie* ('coat of mail'), a noun also appearing in other dialects:

(7) *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, 2018: Þe rynggez rokked of þe roust of his riche bruny

Only 7 examples in our corpus have been left unspecified as belonging to the Midlands in general, being most ascribed to any of the four subgroups. Among our 'unspecified' seven examples it is worth mentioning the case of the adverb *ai*, *aȝȝ*, *ei*, *ay(e)* ('forever') in (8):

(8) *Ancrene Riwe*(Tit: W & H) 6: Almihti Godd. Beo he ai ihehet fram worlde into worlde.

Examples (9) and (10) correspond to the East and West Midland area (with no North-South distinction).

(9) *De Proprietabus Rerum*, 62 b / a: The hele ... is bounde to þe *ancle* bone with neische bondes. (ancle= ankle)

(10) *Ludus Coventriae*, 160 / 277: Downe I ley me vpon this *banke* Vnder this bryght sterre. (banke = hill)

If we now turn to those dialects showing less loans, it is also obvious that they are the ones covering the South and South East, with only nine (0.16 %) and four (0.07 %) uses respectively. Certainly, three of the four terms belonging to the Southeastern area are common and widely-used even nowadays. Thus, we come across *anger* ('suffering, problem'), *bond* ('a mutual obligation met with marriage'), and *brennen* ('burn or torture by means of fire'). The three instances recorded are the ones below:

(11) *The Abbey of the Holy Ghost*, 53 / 18: Owte ofe worldly noyse and of wordly angyrse and besynes.

(12) *The Abbey of the Holy Ghost*, 51 / 13: Many walde be in religyon, bot thay¹ may noghte ... for band of Maryage.

(13) *Old English Homilies*, 243: Ye seneyden also lange also ye lefede and ye scule birne also longe as ic lefie.

Historical evidence demonstrates that, since the year 793, a heavy demographic pressure was exerted by the Danes from the northern and eastern coasts of England as they were looking for new settlements. This implies, subsequently, that the area where the continental population was less numerous was the Southern one. But this includes London, Cambridge and Oxford as well. The triangle formed by these three cities is not only the one producing a larger

¹ "Thorn" has been substituted for by the digraph <th> in this pronoun. The same has been done for letter "eth" in all the examples. Letter <y> stands for "Yogh".

number of all types of works and texts but also a source of cultural influence if we bear in mind that here we find two important universities and the city which will be capital of the kingdom. From the 13th century onwards most speakers of English tend to use this particular variety which finally becomes the standard. This is to say, it constitutes what I have labelled as 'common core'.

I have obtained a total of 1027 (19.39 %) uses of Scandinavian loans corresponding to what the editors of the MED have considered to be the SEM dialect, precisely the one corresponding to the Oxford-Cambridge-London triangle. If such instances have been separated from the 'common core' group it was done not only because of the lexical items but also because of the morphological peculiarities they exhibited. The items here included are the same as in other dialects. This is the case of *ai*, *algate*, *bagge*, *anger*, *amis*, *cake*, *brinie* and even *biggen* that though normally associated to the north appears in the *Siege of Troy*.

Only two verbs of Scandinavian origin appear as peculiar to this area as recorded in our corpus. They are *clippen* ('to cut off') and *couren* ('to hide, stay in seclusion') shown in:

(14) Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, 5. 5690: Out he clippeth also faste Hire tunge with a peire scheres.

(15) *Kyng Alisaunder*, 2053: Trewe herte in loue dureþ; At gode nede, coward by hynde coureþ.

Example (16) has been taken from a Southeastern text though the form *ado* is by no means exclusive of them:

(16) Trevisa. *Dialogs inter militem et clericum* 20 / 1: Kynges & prices haueþ muche ado wiþ 3oure temporalte'

A similar case is that of the Southwest Midland of which we will provide one single example (17) below from the *Brut* because it is our only instance of the term represented. In it *ær-witte* means 'foolish, unwise'.

(17) Layamon. *Brut* 22071: Pat na mon on worlde swa no iwurðe, no swa ær witte gume, pat his grið bræke.

According to the data obtained from the corpus, and though it seems that scholars traditionally tended to avoid this evidence, I believe that the paucity of Scandinavisms in those dialects of a bigger social and cultural importance is a consequence of their not being considered 'dialectal' because they are not very peculiar. This suggests that many other Scandinavian loans were being used in this part of England too, but they were not considered as geographically marked or stigmatised since its use was widely spread.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The above discussion offers some evidence of the distributional pattern of Scandinavian loans in Middle English. The conclusion that can be drawn from what has been said so far is that the presence of Scandinavian lexical items in English is, by no means, limited to one single kind of linguistic behaviour. On the contrary, after checking the material it seems to me

that Scandinavian loans in Middle English are distributed in such a way as to suggest that their use can be better observed in what we have termed the 'common core' of the vocabulary. The fact that this is so could be explained by a deeper penetration of the loans in English caused, from my point of view, by a close relation between the Scandinavian newcomers and the native speakers of English. Though several arguments have been given to support this idea, the one involving a social-determining factor should be borne in mind above all the rest. Thus, a socio-historical explanation of the phenomenon is preferred and the challenge now is to verify whether a method of socio-historical linguistics can be applied to other aspects of the English language and with what results.

Isabel Moskowich-Spiegel Fandiño
Universidade da Coruña

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adamska-Salaciak, A. 1992: Language Change as a Phenomenon of the Third Kind. *Folia Linguistica Historica*, 12: 159-180.
- Ancrene Riwe* (text common to all extant versions): Photostat of MS Corp-C. 402; > MED.
- Arngart, Otto 1947: Some Aspects of the Relation between the English and the Danish Element in the Danelaw. *Studia Neophilologica*, 20: 73-87.
- Banks, M. M. ed. 1904-05: *An alphabet of tales*, EETS, 126, 127.
- Bjorkman, Erik 1900-1902: *Scandinavian Loanwords in Middle English*, Halle.
- Block, K. S. ed. 1922: *Ludus Coventriae or the plaie called Corpus Christi*, EETS, e.s., 120.
- England, G. & Pollard, A. 1897 (reprint 1925): *The Towneley Plays*, EETS 71. 1-396.
- England, G. & Pollard, A. eds. 1897: *The Towneley Plays*, EETS, e.s., 71.
- Furnivall, F. J. ed. 1896: *The English Conquest of Ireland*, EETS, 107.
- Gollancz, I. ed. 1940: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, EETS, 210.
- Hearne, T. 1725 (reprint 1810): *Peter Langtoft's Chronicle*.
- Horstmann, C. 1895: *Soul Asked Cleanness*. Yorkshire writers 1.
- Horstmann, C. 1875: *Altenglische legenden*, Paderborn.
- Iglesias Rábade, Luis & Moskowich-Spiegel Fandiño, Isabel 1993: Applied Historical Sociolinguistics: Network Analysis. *Papers from the IV International Conference of the Spanish Society for Medieval English Language and Literature*, University of Santiago.
- John de Trevisa, tr. Bartholomew de Glanville's *De Proprietatibus Rerum*: Photostat of MS Add. 27944; > MED.

- Ker, N. R. 1940: Unpublished parts of the *Ormulum* ptd from MS Lambeth 783. *MÆ* 9: 4-22
- Kniezsa, V. 1993: The Scandinavian Element in the Vocabulary of the Peterborough Chronicle. *English Historical Linguistics 1992. Papers from the 7th International Conference on English Historical Linguistics*. Ed. Francisco Fernández et al. Berlin: de Gruyter. 235-246
- Kristenssen, A. K. G. 1975: Danelaw Institutions and Danish Society in the Viking Age: Sochemanni, Liberi Homines and Könisfreie. *Mediaeval Scandinavia*, 8: 27-85.
- Kurath, Hans et al. 1956: *Middle English Dictionary*. Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press.
- Leach, M. ed. 1937: *Amis and Amiloun*, EETS, 203.
- López Morales, Humberto 1989: *Sociolingüística*. Madrid: Gredos.
- Macaulay, G. C. 1900: *Confessio Amantis, Third Recension: The English works of John Gower*, EETS, e.s., 81
- Madden F. ed. 1847 *Lazamon's Brut, or chronicle of Britain*.
- Milroy, James & Milroy, Leslie 1985: Linguistic Change, Social Network, and Speaker Innovation. *Journal of Linguistics*, 21: 339-384.
- Morris, R. ed. 1867-68: *Old English Homilies*, EETS, 29, 34.
- Moskowich-Spiegel Fandiño, Isabel 1993: *Estudio sociolingüístico de los escandinavismos en Middle English. Variación y distribución léxica*. Univ. de Santiago de Compostela.
- Moskowich-Spiegel Fandiño, Isabel (forthcoming): Language Contact and Language Change: The Danes in England. *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses*.
- Perry, A. J. ed. 1925: *Dialogs inter militem et clericum*, EETS, 167.
- Perry, G. G. ed. 1867 (re-ed. 1914): *The Abbey of the Holy Ghost: Religious Pieces in prose and Verse*, EETS, 26.
- Poplack, S. & Sankoff, D. 1984: Borrowing: the Synchrony of Integration. *Linguistics*, 22: 99-135.
- Raumolin-Brunberg, H. 1988: Variation and Historical Linguistics: A Survey of Methods and Concepts. *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 89: 136-154.
- Rickert, E. ed. 1908: *The Romance of Emaré*, EETS, e.s., 99.
- Serjeantson, Mary 1935: *A History of Foreign Words in English*, London.
- Skeat, W. W. ed. 1868 (rpt 1891, 1898, 1903): *The Lay of Havelock the Dane*, EETS, e.s., 4.
- Skeat, W. W. ed. 1886: *The Wars of Alexander*, EETS, e.s., 47.
- Smithers, G. V. 1952: *The Life of Alexander: Kyng Alisaunder*, EETS, 227.
- Zupitza, J. ed. 1875: *The Romance of Guy of Warwick*, EETS 25.

* * *
