



**CURSO 2016 - 2017**

# **OLD ENGLISH GRAMMAR: THE VERBAL SYSTEM**



Anglo-Saxon king with his witan. Biblical scene in the illustrated Old English Hexateuch (11th century).  
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eten wam teapum eþeþe mætte þa thes tōde be

## INFLECTIONAL MORPHOLOGY OF OLD ENGLISH VERBS

✓ Jeremy J. Smith (2009)

- PDE three types of verb distinguished by their preterite:

1. Strong: *sing, sang*
2. Weak: *love, loved*
3. Irregular: *go, went*

- OE similarly distinguishes these types of verbs by their manner of forming various tenses:

- |               |                         |                             |                             |
|---------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Strong:    | <i>bindan</i> (to bind) | <i>hē band</i> (he bound)   | <i>hē bindeþ</i> (he binds) |
| 2. Weak:      | <i>lufian</i> (to love) | <i>hē lufode</i> (he loved) | <i>hē lufað</i> (he loves)  |
| 3. Irregular: | <i>wesan</i> (to be)    | <i>ic wæs</i> (I was)       | <i>ic eom</i> (I am)        |

- Both strong and weak verbs follow regular paradigms or conjugations and take account of the categories:

1. Person
2. Number
3. Tense
4. Mood

# THE VERBAL SYSTEM

## ✓ *Bindan*: Typical strong verb

- Infinitive: *bindan* (to bind)
- Indicative mood, present tense:
  - 1) Singular:
    - *binde* (1<sup>st</sup> person)
    - *bindest/ bintst* (2<sup>nd</sup> person)
    - *bindep/ bint* (3<sup>rd</sup> person)
  - 2) Plural:
    - *bindap* (all persons)
- Subjunctive mood, present tense:
  - 1) Singular:
    - *binde* (all persons)
  - 2) Plural:
    - *binden* (all persons)
- Indicative mood, preterite tense:
  - 1) Singular:
    - *band* (1<sup>st</sup> person)
    - *bunde* (2<sup>nd</sup> person)
    - *band* (3<sup>rd</sup> person)
  - 2) Plural:
    - *bundon* (all persons)

# THE VERBAL SYSTEM

- Subjunctive mood, preterite tense:
  - 1) Singular:
    - *bunde* (all persons)
  - 2) Plural:
    - *bunden* (all persons)
- Imperative:
  - *bind* (2<sup>nd</sup> person singular)
  - *bindaþ* (2<sup>nd</sup> person plural)
- Participles:
  - *bindende* (present)
  - *(ge)bunden* (past)

## ✓ *Lufian*: Typical weak verb

- Infinitive: *lufian* (to love)
- Indicative mood, present tense:
  - 1) Singular:
    - *lufi(g)de* (1<sup>st</sup> person)
    - *lufast* (2<sup>nd</sup> person)
    - *lufaþ* (3<sup>rd</sup> person)
  - 2) Plural:
    - *lufiaþ* (all persons)

# THE VERBAL SYSTEM

- Subjunctive mood, present tense:
  - 1) Singular:
    - *lufi(g)e* (all persons)
  - 2) Plural:
    - *lufi(g)en* (all persons)
- Indicative mood, preterite tense:
  - 1) Singular:
    - *lufode* (1<sup>st</sup> person)
    - *lufodest* (2<sup>nd</sup> person)
    - *lufode* (3<sup>rd</sup> person)
  - 2) Plural:
    - *lufodon* (all persons)
- Subjunctive mood, preterite tense:
  - 1) Singular:
    - *lufode* (all persons)
  - 2) Plural:
    - *lufoden* (all persons)
- Imperative:
  - *lufa* (2<sup>nd</sup> person singular)
  - *lufiap* (2<sup>nd</sup> person plural)
- Participles:
  - *lufiende* (present)
  - *(ge)lufod* (past)

# THE VERBAL SYSTEM

## ✓ *Fremman*: Typical weak verb

- Infinitive: *fremman* (to to perform)
- Indicative mood, present tense:
  - 1) Singular:
    - *fremme* (1<sup>st</sup> person)
    - *fremest* (2<sup>nd</sup> person)
    - *fremeþ* (3<sup>rd</sup> person)
  - 2) Plural:
    - *fremmaþ* (all persons)
- Subjunctive mood, present tense:
  - 1) Singular:
    - *fremme* (all persons)
  - 2) Plural:
    - *fremmen* (all persons)
- Indicative mood, preterite tense:
  - 1) Singular:
    - *fremede* (1<sup>st</sup> person)
    - *fremedest* (2<sup>nd</sup> person)
    - *fremede* (3<sup>rd</sup> person)
  - 2) Plural:
    - *fremedon* (all persons)

# THE VERBAL SYSTEM

- Subjunctive mood, preterite tense:
  - 1) Singular:
    - *fremede* (all persons)
  - 2) Plural:
    - *fremeden* (all persons)
- Imperative:
  - *freme* (2<sup>nd</sup> person singular)
  - *fremmap* (2<sup>nd</sup> person plural)
- Participles:
  - *fremmende* (present)
  - *(ge)fremed* (past)

## ✓ *Wesan/bēon*: Irregular verb

- Infinitive: *wesan*/ *bēon* (to be)
- Indicative mood, present tense:
  - 1) Singular:
    - *eom/bēo* (1<sup>st</sup> person)
    - *eart/ bist* (2<sup>nd</sup> person)
    - *is/ biþ* (3<sup>rd</sup> person)
  - 2) Plural:
    - *sind(on)/ bēop* (all persons)

# THE VERBAL SYSTEM

- Subjunctive mood, present tense:
  - 1) Singular:
    - *sīe/ bēo* (all persons)
  - 2) Plural:
    - *sīen/ bēon* (all persons)
- Indicative mood, preterite tense:
  - 1) Singular:
    - *wæs* (1<sup>st</sup> person)
    - *wære* (2<sup>nd</sup> person)
    - *wæs* (3<sup>rd</sup> person)
  - 2) Plural:
    - *wæron* (all persons)
- Subjunctive mood, preterite tense:
  - 1) Singular:
    - *wære* (all persons)
  - 2) Plural:
    - *wæren* (all persons)
- Imperative:
  - *wes/ bēo* (2<sup>nd</sup> person singular)
  - *wesap/ bēop* (2<sup>nd</sup> person plural)
- Participles:
  - *wesende* (present)
  - *(ge)bēon* (past)

# THE VERBAL SYSTEM

- ✓ **Bindan** can be taken as the general model for all **strong verbs**
- ✓ The defining characteristic of the strong verb is **ablaut variation** in the root:
  - PDE:
    1. *rise, rose, risen*
    2. *choose, chose, chosen*
    3. *drink, drank, drunk*
    4. *come, came*
    5. *shake, shook, shaken*
  - There are **seven classes** of strong verbs in the Germanic languages
  - The range of possible alternations in strong verbs is indicated by the forms of:
    - 1) The infinitive
    - 2) The 3<sup>rd</sup> person present singular indicative
    - 3) The 1<sup>st</sup> person preterite indicative
    - 4) The preterite plural
    - 5) The past participle
- ✓ Of these forms: (1), (3) and (4) are derived from Proto-Indo-European **ablaut variation**
- ✓ (2) is a later development derived through **mutation**

# THE VERBAL SYSTEM

✓ **Classes of strong verbs** can generally be recognized by their infinitive form

- Class I verbs have **ī** as the stressed vowel followed by a single consonant
- Classes III and VII present special difficulties
- There are some exceptions elsewhere in the system

➤ **Class I**

- *sīnan* (shine)/ *scīnp/* *scān/* *scinon/* *(ge)scinen*

➤ **Class II**

- *crēoþan* (creep)/ *crīepp/* *crēap/* *crupon/* *(ge)crope*

➤ **Class III**

- *bregdan* (pull)/ *brītt/* *brægd/* *brugdon/* *(ge)brogden*

➤ **Class IV**

- *beran* (bear)/ *bi(e)rp/* *bær/* *bæron/* *(ge)boren*

➤ **Class V**

- *tredan* (tread)/ *tritt/* *træd/* *trædon/* *(ge)treden*

# THE VERBAL SYSTEM

## ➤ Class VI

- *faran* (go)/ *færþ*/ *fōr*/ *fōron*/ *(ge)faren*

## ➤ Class VII

- *healdan* (hold)/ *hielt*/ *hēold*/ *hēoldon*/ *(ge)healden*

✓ **Weak verbs** in Old English fall into three classes:

➤ **Class I** which conjugates like *fremman*

➤ **Class II** which conjugates like *lufian*

➤ **Class III** consisting of the verbs *habban* (have), *libban* (live), *secgan* (say) and *hycgan* (think):

- |                          |                 |                         |                         |                          |
|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| • <i>habban</i> (have)/  | <i>hæfþ</i> /   | <i>hæfde</i> /          | <i>hæfdon</i> /         | <i>(ge)hæfd</i>          |
| • <i>libban</i> (live)/  | <i>leofaþ</i> / | <i>leofode, lifde</i> / | <i>leofode, lifde</i> / | <i>(ge)leofod, -lifd</i> |
| • <i>secgan</i> (say)/   | <i>sægþ</i> /   | <i>sægde</i> /          | <i>sægdon</i> /         | <i>(ge)sægd</i>          |
| • <i>hycgan</i> (think)/ | <i>hogap</i> /  | <i>hog(o)de</i> /       | <i>hog(o)don</i> /      | <i>(ge)hogod</i>         |

- The OE weak verbs are in general “derived verbs”, with stems consisting of roots from other lexemes with a following theme, to which endings may be added

## THE VERBAL SYSTEM

- ✓ **Irregular verbs** in OE are few in number of paradigms, but very common in occurrence

### ➤ Preterite-present verbs:

1.	<i>witan</i> (know)/	<i>wāt</i> /	<i>wiste</i> /	<i>wiston</i> /	<i>(ge)witen</i>
2.	<i>āgan</i> (own)/	<i>āh</i> /	<i>āhte</i> /	<i>āhton</i> /	<i>āgen</i>
3.	<i>cunnan</i> (know)/	<i>can(n)</i> /	<i>cūpe</i> /	<i>cūpon</i> /	<i>(ge)cunnen</i>
4.	<i>magan</i> (be able to)/	<i>mæg</i> /	<i>meahte, mihte</i> /	<i>meahton, mihton</i> /	no pp.
5.	<i>sculan</i> (be obliged to)/	<i>sceal</i> /	<i>sc(e)olde</i> /	<i>sc(e)oldon</i> /	no pp.
6.	<i>mōtan</i> (be allowed)/	<i>mōt</i> /	<i>mōste</i> /	<i>mōston</i> /	no pp.
7.	<i>þurfan</i> (need)/	<i>þearf</i> /	<i>þorfte</i> /	<i>þorfton</i> /	no pp.

### ➤ Anomalous verbs:

1.	<i>willan</i> (want to)/	<i>wil(l)e</i> /	<i>wolde</i> /	<i>woldon</i> /	no pp.
2.	<i>nyllan</i> (not want to)/	<i>nyle</i> /	<i> nolde</i> /	<i>noldon</i> /	no pp.
3.	<i>dōn</i> (do)/	<i>dēþ</i> /	<i>dyde</i> /	<i>dydon</i> /	<i>(ge)dōn</i>
4.	<i>gān</i> (go)/	<i>gāþ</i> /	<i>ēode</i> /	<i>ēodon</i> /	<i>(ge)gān</i>



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# **OLD ENGLISH GRAMMAR: SYNTAX**

## THE OLD ENGLISH NOUN PHRASE: FUNCTIONS

- ✓ Jeremy J. Smith (2009)
- Understanding the syntax of the OE noun phrase depends on understanding the operation of some key **grammatical categories**:
  1. Case
  2. Number
  3. Gender
  4. Agreement
  5. Person
- **Numerals** form a special category of word and fall into two main groups: cardinal (one, two) and ordinal (first, second)
  - Cardinals 1-3: *ān*, *twā*, *þrēo* inflect like adjectives
  - Cardinal numbers from *fēower* (four) onwards are generally undeclined, but cause the noun they modify to appear in the genitive case
  - Cardinals 4-12 can be declined when not immediately before the noun they modify
  - ✓ *fela* (many) causes the noun it modifies to appear in the genitive
  - ✓ *bā* (both) which is declined in the same way as *twā* (two)
  - Ordinal numbers (*forma*, *ōþer*, *þrida*, etc.), like adjectives, agree with the nouns they modify, and are always declined in accordance with the weak adjective paradigm
  - The exception is *ōþer* which is always declined strong

## THE OLD ENGLISH VERB PHRASE: FUNCTIONS

✓ Jeremy J. Smith (2009)

- There are special **grammatical categories** associated with verb phrases:

1. Agreement	6. Mood
2. Person	7. Aspect
3. Number	8. Voice
4. Finiteness	9. Transitivity
5. Tense	10. Negation

- The range of inflexions marking **agreement** in OE is much more extensive than in PDE:

<i>ic lufige</i>	(I love)	<i>þū lofodest</i>	(you –singular- loved)
<i>hēo lufað</i>	(she loves)	<i>wē lufodon</i>	(we loved)
<i>hīe lufiaþ</i>	(they love)		

- **Future time** was generally expressed in OE simply through the present tense, and futurity was inferred from the context of the phrase
  - The ancestors of PDE will, shall, OE *willan* and *sculan* could be used to express futurity as part of a complex verb phrase, so we will see ***willan/ sculan* + infinitive**
  - ✓ However, *willan* and *sculan* are more prototypically used with a **lexical meaning**, to express **volition** and **obligation** respectively
- ✓ Although OE expressed subjunctive mood through inflections, complex verb phrases were used to express further grammatical categories, notably **aspect and voice**

## SENTENCE STRUCTURE: ELEMENT ORDER

- ✓ Jeremy J. Smith (2009)
- It has been noted that the OE inflectional system was much more extensive than that of PDE, so OE element-order was much flexible than that of PDE:
  - However, the flexibility of OE element-order should not be exaggerated
  - Examination of the surviving corpus of OE suggests that there were prototypical usages from individual authors could depart for stylistic reasons
  - These prototypical usages were clearly necessary when, as commonplace, there were no inflectional means of distinguishing, for example, subject and object:

*þæt wīf bindeþ hit*  
the woman binds it

- Three types of OE element-order are usually distinguished:
  1. **SP**, where the predicator (verb phrase) immediately follows the subject
  2. **S...P**, where other elements of the clause come between the subject and the predicator
  3. **PS**, where the subject follows the predicator

# SYNTAX

- 1) **SP** is the usual order in main clauses
- 2) **S...P** is most commonly found in subordinate clauses
- 3) **PS** occurs often in questions and also commonly in main clauses introduced by certain adverbials, notably *pā* (then), *pāer* (there) and *pider* (thither)

1) *Se cnapa lufode pone gōdan hlāford*

The servant loved the good lord

- with a SP in a main clause

2) *For pāem þe se cnapa pone gōdan hlāford lufode, hē fērde tō pāem dūnum*

Because the servant loved the good lord, he travelled to the hills

- with a S...P in a subordinate clause (*For pāem þe...lufode*)

3) *pā fērde hē tō pāem dūnum*

Then he travelled to the hills

- with PS in a main clause beginning with *pā* (then)

✓ However, OE writers frequently departed from these norms for stylistic effect

## SYNTAX

- When the predicator consists of a complex verb phrase, in both main and subordinate clauses, the two parts of the predicator may be separated:

1) The auxiliary verb can follow directly after the subject

1) The lexical verb may be left to the end of the clause

1) ***Þā se ealda wer wæs tō þære stōwe gecumen, þā band hē his sunu***

When the old man had come to that place, he bound his son

2) ***Se ealda wer hæfde his sunu gebundenne***

The old man had bound his son

- However, other patterns are also possible:

3) ***Þā se ealda wer tō þære stōwe gecumen wæs...***

When the old man had come to that place...

## SENTENCE STRUCTURE: CLAUSES

- **Subordinate clauses** are generally classified by grammarians as *noun clauses*, *adverb clauses*, *relative clauses* and *comparative clauses*
- Similar constructions appear in OE, although there are some interesting differences
  - The element-order in coordinated clauses is sometimes more characteristic of subordinated clauses, with the lexical verb in final position
  - Several of the subordinating conjunctions are composed of a number of words, but they may be considered as single units
  - Some require the finite verb to be inflected according to subjunctive mood in the subordinate clause involved
  - Indicative mood is generally used when the event in the subordinate clause is complete or certain
  - Subjunctive mood is used when the action in question has not yet happened or is hypothetical
- ***Gif*** meaning *if* or *whether*, can be used to introduce a noun clause, but is generally used to introduce a conditional adverb clause with the verb in the subjunctive
- A particular kind of noun clause is the so-called **accusative and infinitive construction**, where the subject of the subordinate clause is in the accusative case and the verb of the subordinate clause is in the infinitive

# SYNTAX

- An important group of OE clauses, equivalent to PDE adverb clauses, are those which occur in **correlative constructions**, whereby two clauses are linked together by correlative words:

1. *forþon... forþon...* (because)
2. *þonne... þonne...* (than)
3. *þā...þā...* (when or then)

- If *þā* is followed by the subject of the clause and the clause's verb is in final position, it may be interpreted as a subordinating conjunction
  - If *þā* is followed by the lexical verb and then the subject of the clause, it may be interpreted as an adverb functioning as an adverbial meaning *then*
  - Sometimes the PDE translation of these constructions seems rather redundant, so the OE liking for repeating the “same” word possibly relates to certain devices of cohesion favored in oral delivery (Mitchell 1985)
- **Relative clauses**, are constructed distinctively in OE
    - The indeclinable relative particle *þe* (whom, which, that, etc.) is frequently used on its own to introduce a relative clause
    - However, there are alternative usages which seem to be constrained by a whole series of factors (Mitchell 1985)
      - ✓ *þe* is often accompanied by a defining determiner declined according to its function in the relative clause
      - ✓ Commonly and especially when the noun being modified by the relative clause is not preceded by a determiner or adjective, a determiner is used in place of *þe*
      - ✓ Sometimes, no relative particle or determiner is used at all

## SENTENCE STRUCTURE: SPECIAL FEATURES

- **Cohesion** is to do with the range of stylistic devices, or cohesive ties, which are used to connect words, phrases, clauses and sentences in a piece of discourse (Halliday and Hasan 1976)
  - ✓ Patterns of cohesion change over time
  - ✓ One cohesive tie in OE is the use of **recapitulation and anticipation**
  - ✓ It has been argued that this pattern of recapitulation and anticipation, as with correlation, derives from a “feeling of insecurity in the face of the complicated sentence” (Mitchell and Robinson 1992)
- Another characteristic of OE syntax, **the splitting of heavy groups**, may arise from a similar “insecurity” (Mitchell 1985)
  - ✓ It is characteristic of OE to *split* long phrases and modifiers, which were apparently regarded as clumsy
- A characteristic feature of OE writing, more common than in PDE formal usage, is the habit of employing **parataxis**
  1. **Syndetic** parataxis: with coordinating conjunctions
  2. **Asyndetic** parataxis: without such conjunctions
  - Parataxis has been regarded by some scholars as more “primitive” than hypotaxis
  - However, the use of parataxis in quite sophisticated prose such as that of *Ælfric* suggests otherwise
    - ✓ It is perhaps more plausible to see parataxis as relating to the author-audience relationship, since parataxis places responsibility for the interpretation of a speech or passage on the listener/reader
    - ✓ Whereas **hypotaxis** characteristically allows the author rather than the reader/listener to make clausal connections

ðe þa gyt hie him a setcon segen  
ðame heah ofer heafod letan holm beo  
searfon on gar secg him þa seomor sefa  
munende mod men ne cunnon. segan a  
sode sele we ðonne hæled under heofen  
þa þam hlæste on fens

Ða þa on byrigum beowulf se ylðing a to  
leod cyming longe þraze folcum sefre  
se fæder ellor hwearf aldon of earde  
of þe him eft on poc heah healf dene heold  
þenðon lifde samol 7 sud weow glæde se yl  
dingas ðam feower bearn forð se unmed in  
porold pocum weoroda weassa heoro gar 7  
hmod gar 7 halga til hyrde ic þelan eow  
hearo seilfingas healf sebedda þa þa hmod  
gare hie sped sypen rigeas weorð mynd þe  
him his pine magas seorne hyrdon odd þe  
se seo soð se weox mago drowe micel he  
on mod bearn þe hail weced hatan wold

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