Some Evidence Concerning the Orthography of the Late Old English
— As It Is Seen in Earl’s Two of the Saxon Chronicles

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The orthography of English is often criticized as it does not always show one-to-one correspondence between the letter and the sound. The problem mostly arises in the representation of some vowels: several combinations of letters representing one and the same sound e.g. “ie,” “ea,” “ee,” or “ei” for /i:/; a letter representing several sounds e.g. “a” for /æ/ or /ei/, etc. Historically speaking, however, the main difficulties concerning the correspondence of letters and sounds are seen in the stressed vowels, and they are mainly due to the Great Vowel Shift which began at the end of the Middle English Period. On the other hand, the relationship between the letter and its pronunciation has been quite stable throughout the history of the English language as far as some consonants (/b/, /p/, /t/, /d/, /l/, /v/, /s/, /z/, /m/, /n/, /t/, /l/) are concerned. The letters representing the other consonants (/k/ represented by “c,” “k” or “q”; /g/ or /h/ represented by “g,” “q” or “gh,” etc.), however, present some problems because each one of them has a complicated, confusing history behind it as we shall see in this paper.

One of the most interesting corpora in studying the discrepancies between sounds and letters in English consonants would be the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle which deals with the events taking place in England from the beginning of the Christian Era until the year 1154. This is important not only because it covers such a long range of English history but also the latter part of it is said to have been written by the authors who were contemporaneous with the events occurring at the time. Since the investigation of the orthography of the late Old English suffers the scarcity of materials because the Norman Invasion of 1066 almost eradicated the literary tradition of the Anglo-Saxons, survival of the Chronicle is priceless especially in looking into the practice of official writing in certain scriptoria in Winchester, Canterbury or Peterborough.

The text of the late Old English provides good examples of the chaotic state of the orthography of certain consonants, as stated above, as it is a period of transition into Middle English. At this time, conformity of the spelling as well as other aspects of the language into the London standard was taking place after several experiments including that of Orm. Coincident with these developments, however, dialects remained strong and various in local parts of the country. By looking at this stage of English spelling system in this crucial pre-Middle English period, we will gain some insight toward the nature of the English language.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle used for the purpose of analysis here is the printed versions of the text A (the Parker Manuscript) up to 1070 and the text E (the Laud Manuscript: Misc. 636) up to 1154 in Charles Plummer ed., Earl’s Two of the Saxon Chronicles. Plummer says in his intro-
duction that Earl had stated that “from 892... to 1001 the entries were made not very long after the events which they describe,”(4) but the copying of the manuscripts was done by several hands(5) at several different times and the latest part was written perhaps after 1120 as Scrugg describes the situation as follows:

“At Peterborough... the library was lost in a disastrous fire which swept through the monastery in 1116.(6) By 1121 it was rebuilt and stocked by the usual practice of borrowing books everywhere and copying them. One of the volumes which has survived from the restocking is a version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles.”(7)

In the two versions of this Chronicle several features of the late Old English orthography of those consonants stated at the beginning of this paper are observed.

We mainly deal with the letters “c” and “g” as Henry C. Wyld points out the importance of them. He says, “The chief inconsistencies in the use of O.E. graphic symbols are found in that of ‘g’ and ‘c’.”(8)

Barbara Strang states the situation about “c” in a different way. She says:

“The group least suited by the Latin alphabet is that loosely called palatal. There is a phoneme /k/, usually represented by “c” (rarely “k”), occurring after near back vowels, and always (as against /tʃ/) before consonants, as in “corn, weorc, cneo...,” and one /tʃ/, also spelt “ẹ,” often found near front vowels, as in “cirie, ċyse...” a following front vowel may be used as a diacritic of the quality of “c,” especially in environment where it might be ambiguous.”(9)

In the texts being dealt with in the present study, one of the most frequently used words which contains this letter is “micel” ‘much.’ In the nominative singular, it has the affricate sound /tʃ/ as it precedes the front vowel, e.g. :Da æfter þam þæs ilcan hærfestes gegadorode micel here hine of East.Englum ‘Yet again after this, the same autumn, a great host assembled from East Anglia.’(11) But when the word is used adverbially e.g. þær wearð para Deneascra micle ma of slungen ‘The Danish casualties were heavier...’ (#1001), or with the masculine noun in the accusative plural e.g. micle apas sworon ‘they... swore solemn oaths’ (#877), the “c” in “micle” has a velar /k/ as in the nominative masculine (weak) form “micla” (#894 etc.), the neuter nominative (weak) and female accusative forms “micle” (#671,867 respectively and elsewhere). In the dative in which the suffix “-um” is used and in the genitive and dative weak form in which “-an” appears, the “-c-” is often doubled as in “mid mycclum fyrdhe” ‘with great levies’ (#1079), “mid swa mycclan here” ‘with a vast host’ (#1085), or “æt þæs miclan wuda east ende” ‘at the east end of the great forest’ (#893). Thus it is due to the sound of the suffix, whether it begins with a vowel or consonant, that the letter “c” has the affricate or velar values.(13)

However, it is difficult to distinguish those two sounds when the same word with the difference only in the appearance of “e” after “c” is used in the same function e.g. “micle” and “micle” are both used as modifiers of the feminine accusative singular nouns: hie þea micle þierd gegadorodon ‘nevertheless they gathered great levies’ (#867) and þ he wæs eald man and he ne mihte ðolen þa micle unrihte 7 þa micle unsibbe ‘that he was a broken-down old man, who could not endure the great injustices and disturbances’ (#1127). One of the other examples in point is the female accusative form “micle” quoted above. It has variants “micle,” “mycele” or “myccle” in other places in the Chronicle. When “c” is doubled as in the last example, the value of the sound is clear.

When the addition of medial “e” is an irregular form like the case in “ecere” (feminine dative form of “ece” ‘eternal’ as it appears in #855), we
wonder if the “c” should be /tf/ or /k/ because the regular form is “cre” without the front vowel after the “c.”

Although /k/ is usually represented by “c” in late Old English as we saw in the examples above and rarely by “k, n” this letter is sometimes found both in the initial and final positions in the Chronicle. An example in the word initial position is “cyning” ‘king,’ and in the Chronicle, the letter “k” is used in the description of as early as the year 651: Her Oswine kyning was ofslægen ‘In this year king Oswine was killed.’

This word begins with “c” in almost all other cases (except in # 878 and 887) before 1070 e.g. “se cyng,” “ponent cyng,” “pes cynges,” “pam cynge,” “pa cyngas,” etc. However, the initial “k” is used at least three times in the descriptions of the years between 1070 and 1110(15) and is increasingly used since then in the E text. For instance, in # 1123, the nominative singular “se kyng”(16) is found 13 times as against “se cyng” which is used only once. All other cases used for the description of this year i.e. accusative, genitive and dative, have “ponent kyng,” “pes kynges,” and “pam kyng” respectively. After that date, we find this word beginning with “c” only once in the passage of # 1127: he ferde mid þe cyng. It shows that the scribal practices changed considerably as the hands were changed from the scribes in the Parker manuscript into the ones in the Peterborough Chronicle.

The velar /k/ in the final position is also written with “c” in the earlier part of the Chronicle. A good example would be “munec,” which was spelled solely with “c” at least until 1200, according to the description in OED.(17) In the Chronicle the one with “k” is found only after the year 1137: hi... raedun muneces 7 clerkes... plundered monks and the clegy’ (# 1137); Martin... fand þe muneces 7 te gestes al þat heom behoed ‘Martin... provided everything necessary for the monks and the clergy’ (Ibid.); muneces him namen, ‘(the) monks took him’ (Ibid.); and ðe muneces... cusen ‘the monks... chose’ (# 1154), and all other examples of “munec” and its plural “munecas,” dative forms “muneece” and “munecum” are with “c” in the final position before the inflectional suffixes. The sound /k/ has another way of representation as seen in “monarch,” “patriarch,” “archaic,” “chaos” and so forth but these Latin and Greek loan words were used only after the time of the Chronicle.(18)

When “c” is followed by front vowels (disregarding suffixes), it has the sound /tf/ and does not of course come to be written with “k” as we see in “cierre” ‘occasion’ (# 918 etc.), “cierde” ‘turned’ (# 922A), “cesen” ‘to choose’ (# 1123), “cild” “child” (# 975A), etc.

In Old English the sound values of the letter “g” or “Þ” was /j/ when it occurs initially before front vowels and /j/ or /h/ before back vowels and medially. It became /g/ during the Old English period, probably by around 1000, as we see in the pronunciation of “god” or “gan.”(19) In the word final position it occurs after back vowels, we have the sounds /g/ or /h/ as the spellings “burg” and “burh” (or “buruh” or “burch”) show. They both appear in the Chronicle, meaning ‘borough’ or ‘Peterborough,’ though the former form is more frequently used particularly when the word is inflected e.g. the nominative and accusative plural “burga” (# 894A, 942A etc.), dative “burgum” (# 918A etc.), and “burgan” (# 1116). An irregular form “burch” appears in # 1140E revealing a hint for the pronunciation of this sound.

The sound /f/ was represented by “sc” throughout the Old English Period, and “sch” replaced it when “ch” chased the older “c” /tf/ in Middle English. The representation of /sk/ in Middle English varied between “sc” and “sk,” according to Scragg(21) so we wonder whether the words written in such a transitional period as late Old English should be pronounced /tf/ or /sk/. When it is followed or preceded by front vowels, it is easy to assume that the combination “sc” is pronounced as a single sound /f/ as we see in the Chronicle “scire” ‘shirre’ (# 1086 etc.), “scip” ‘ship’ (# 1135 etc.), “Englisc” ‘English’ (#
"Frincisce" 'French' ( # 1093 or "scynende" 'shining' ( # 1097 etc.). But in the case of "biscop" 'bishop' which appears many times in the text, it is not so certain whether the "sc" is pronounced /ʃ/ or /sk/, especially when we encounter the contracted form such as "pa bcoprices ( # 1100)."(22) Besides, we wonder if the inflected form of the final "sc" should have been pronounced /ʃ/, for instance in "Englisca" and "Frincisca" ( # 1093).

Finally, the dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ in the Chronicle is briefly discussed. Both thorn "þ" and eth "ð" are used for either voiced or unvoiced dental fricatives, and the combination of the letter "t" and "h", which was the grapheme used in Latin to transcribe Greek theta(23) was yet to appear regularly in the Chronicle. However, toward the end of the text, in the descriptions of the year 1130 onward, we find several examples of "th" instead of "þ" or "ð" to prove the inchoative stage of this spelling. There are at least two examples each in #1130 ("Bathe" and "dæleth") and # 1135 ("thre niht" and "warth") and sixteen in #1137.

Thus we find the fact that the practice of orthography changed considerably depending on the years in which the texts were written. In the latter part of the Laud manuscript (after 1070) more modernized forms, for instance, "k" instead of "c" to represent /k/, "g" instead of "h" for modern glottal sound or "th" instead of the thorn or eth are more numerous found. Although corpus is limited and there were many interpolations in such old materials,(25) we still discover some evidence about the changing state of English by looking into them.

Notes:
1. The period in which the Great Vowel Shift took place goes back to the beginning of the fifteenth century which falls into the period of Middle English. The division of three periods in the history of English is roughly as follows: Old English 700 — 1200; Middle English 1200 — 1500; Modern English 1500 — .
2. The editor of Earls Two of the Saxon Chronicles proved from internal evidence that the latter part of the Chronicle, from 1067 onwards, could not have been written earlier than 1100. Charles Plummer ed.: Earl's Two of the Saxon Chronicles, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1972, II, pp.xxxii-xxxiv.
3. For instance, Orm tried to distinguish between long and short vowels by placing double consonants after all vowels which were to be given a short pronunciation in his Ormulum (written about 1200). Philip L. Gerber ed.: The Growth of English, Seibido, Tokyo, 1984, pp.19-20.
10. The mark "#" here denotes the year in the Chronicle.
11. In the former citation, "micel" modifies "folc" which is neuter and in the latter one, it modifies "here" which is masculine.
12. The manuscript A has "miclaman" instead of "miclan" which is a standard form.
13. See the table at the end.
14. Strang, Ibid.
15. Da twegen kyngas Willem 7 swægn ( #
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1070E); wið Edward kyng (# 1075); feng to þe kynerce (#1076).
16. As for the forms “cyning” and “cyng,” we find the former in the descriptions of the events before 1000. And in the year 1001, we find an irregular form “cyningcas”. The form “cyng” (including the form with “i” instead of “y” medially in the years 993 and 1001) is used throughout the Chronicle since then. Also, the “y” in “kyng” is mostly replaced by “i” in the descriptions of the year around 1127.
18. The earliest citation in OED of “monarch” is c.1450, of “patriarch” is c.1175, of “archaic” is 1846 (“archaism 1612), and of “chaos” is c.1440 (“chaotic” 1713).
22. The contraction elsewhere in the Chronicle is either a barred “b” or “bi.sc.”
23. Scragg, Op. cit. p.2. Scragg also says that Latin “th” had always been recognized as an alternative to thorn by English writers and that even before the Norman Conquest, foreign names were spelled with either: Elizabeth or Elizebep, or Thomas or þomas. Ibid. note 2.
24. The year is 1153 in Garmonsway.


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(123)
Other “micel” appearing in the *Chronicle* are:

1. Dative used adverbially: miclum, mycclum
2. Genitive used adverbially: mycles
3. Instrumental used adverbially: micle

Instrumental used adverbially for a comparative adjective: micle, mycelne
4. Used substantively: micel, mycel

「古期英語後期における文字と発音の不一致の事実について」

小林 絢子
（平成2年9月27日受理）

英語の縦字と発音の間の乖離の問題は強勢のある母音に関しては大母音推移が主な原因と考えられるが、有史以後の子音に関してはそのような組織的な推移は認められない。ここでは特に縦字との関係が不安定だった軟口蓋破裂音や破擦音などを取り上げて、それらがどのような書記法によって古期英語後期から中期英語初期の文献（「アングロ・サクソン年代記」バーカー写本、ロード写本：アール及びブラマー編）に現われているかを調べた。

(124)