

Some illustration of useful ways to compare and contrast the maps of early Middle English data in LAEME with those of late Middle English data in eLALME

For LAEME go to: <http://www.lel.ed.ac.uk/ihd/laeme2/laeme2.html>

Click on the title to get to the Main Page and then click on Maps in the menu on the left. Under ‘What do you want to do?’ click on ‘Browse/Search Feature Maps’. To access the maps discussed below type the item name, e.g. AFTER, ANY, SUCH, into the ‘Find maps that have in their title’ and the set of Feature Maps for that item will appear. The map titles are self-explanatory.

For eLALME go to <http://www.lel.ed.ac.uk/ihd/elalme/elalme.html>

Click on the title to get to the Main Page and then click on Dot Maps in the menu on the left. To access the maps discussed below type the item name, e.g. AFTER, ANY, SUCH, into the ‘Find maps that have in their title’ and the set of Dot Maps for that item will appear. The map titles are self-explanatory.

With over 1,850 maps in LAEME and over 1,700 in eLALME, there is obviously a great deal of scope for making your own comparisons. The eLALME Dot Maps are based on the original set of 1,200 that appeared in the printed version of the atlas. In the printed version some of the sets of maps originally envisaged for each item were left incomplete for lack of space and in eLALME this deficiency has now been made good. The choice of Feature Maps made for LAEME was strongly influenced by the importance of being able to compare distributions between the two different periods covered by the two atlases. The choice of items mapped is therefore largely confined to those appearing on the LALME questionnaire. The greater complexity of the spelling systems in the early Middle English period (e.g. the survival of Old English runic wynn, insular ‘g’ and edh into early Middle English) has necessitated the making of more maps to complete the sets for certain items.

When comparing maps from the two atlases, it is important to remember that for early Middle English far fewer manuscripts survive and the coverage is very patchy and much sparser. Both atlases include maps showing their survey points; comparison of those maps makes the problem very clear. For early Middle English, there are big gaps in certain areas where we have no linguistic information at all, especially in the north, central midlands and south. Also some texts are very tiny indeed, so don’t show

information for many items. The consequence is that when we compare the LAEME and eLALME maps there will always seem to have been a huge change from early to late Middle English, but this is often just a reflection of the much greater density of coverage in eLALME. We have to take a more course-grained view of distributions in LAEME. The following paragraphs give a few illustrative pointers about how the two sets of maps might be investigated for similarities and differences.

For purposes of comparison between the two atlases we might identify three contrasting types of distributions:

- (a) those where the regional pattern of selected features in the attested forms for a particular item is largely continued from early Middle English into late Middle English;
- (b) those showing how some features may be recessive and some emergent between early Middle English and late Middle English;
- (c) those that illustrate a comparatively mixed picture for early Middle English, while the late Middle English picture shows a clearer regional ‘consensus’.

To illustrate type (a) one can use the AFTER set of maps:

LAEME shows ‘after’ variants across the whole area of survey.

eLALME indicates that the spelling continues in widespread usage also in late Middle English

LAEME ‘efer’ spellings however, are strongly regional. This is interesting because the SE ones come about via what is known as the Kentish collapse: where [y], [e] and [æ] all fall together in [e]. The SW Midlands ones are almost certainly the result of second fronting, while the ones in the north and east midlands will probably be from Scandinavian influence (from the ON form *eptir*). So we have three different ‘efer’ areas from three different sources.

eLALME shows the ‘efer’ type spellings too seem to continue in much the same pattern.

To illustrate type (b) one can use

(1) the SHE set:

the forms of SHE with initial ‘h’ – the ‘heo’, ‘he’, ‘ho’ types from OE *hēo* are

confined in early Middle English to the southern half of the country. And this continues into late Middle English.

But look at the ‘s’-initial forms of SHE. These are first attested in the East Midlands in the second continuation of the Peterborough Chronicle in the mid 12th century. Whatever their origin, in early Middle English they become the preferred usage in the East Midlands and the north – where as we saw there are no ‘h’ spellings attested in LAEME. But look what happens in late Middle English. We know that the ‘h’ spellings in the southern half of the country continue to be found, but the ‘s’ spellings spread right across and in the south are used alongside ‘h’.

(2) the ANY set:

We have three main spellings: ‘an-’, ‘en-’ and ‘on-’ types. In Old English there was *ānig* and i-mutated *ǣnig*.

We see that the ‘an-’ type is widespread across the whole country both in early Middle English and in late Middle English.

In eLALME, the ‘an-’ type map shows the distribution of initial *a-* forms (presumably going directly back to OE *ānig*). Given that they are not confined to the north in late Middle English we can perhaps assume that there was at least variable shortening of the ‘a’ under reduced stress, because long ‘a’ [ɑ:] normally would round in the south to [ɔ:] as in ‘stone’ ‘home’.

The ‘en-’ type is non-northern at both periods. It presumably comes from OE *ǣnig* with [æ:] and if there was any shortening of the vowel this must have been after long aesc fell in with long open ‘e’ [ɛ:] and came to be spelled ‘e’. If the vowel shortened earlier, one would expect it to have fallen together with ‘a’ like other short aesc words.

Then there’s the ‘on-’ type, which is not attested in Old English and which in LAEME appears very, very sporadically in the SW Midlands, Norfolk and the London area – just one or two in each but not in a single cluster. In these cases it could possibly be from rounding of [ɑ:] where it failed to shorten. But look at what happens in late Middle English. In LALME it is all over the country – not quite as dense as ‘an-’ but not absent from anywhere. As it is so widespread in the north as

well as the midlands and south, it seems unlikely that it reflects rounding of [a:] to . [ɔ:]. In the north at least, it presumably comes from prenasal rounding of a shortened ‘an-’ type, which we know was also in use all over the country. But it is rather mysterious how it emerges and spreads so suddenly.

There is a little corollary to ANY and that is the minority forms ‘ei’ and ‘ein’, which are not attested in Old English, and are confined to the SW Midlands in early Middle English. They occur mostly, but not entirely, within the *Ancrene Riwe* and Katherine Group complex of texts – in any case they are very local. ‘ein’ disappears completely in late Middle English. There are two texts in LALME that show *ei-* or *ey*, one is the CUL Gg.IV.27 MS of *Floriz and Blanche flour* which is on the cusp between early Middle English and late Middle English; the other is in the language of William Herebert in Herefords, whose usage is very conservative in a number of ways. There is also one text with *ay*: London, British Library, Add. 4698, also in Herefords. So this is a form that emerged briefly and seems to have had a rather short life.

Another very strange and possibly related phenomenon is in the item MANY. In LALME the ‘many’ type is the default, with the ‘mony’ type primarily in the west half of the county but with also a scattering into the east midlands. The ‘meny’ type is common but confined to the southern half of the country. In LAEME the ‘mony’ type is entirely confined to the west (though this distribution is perhaps just a function of not having so many surviving texts at this period). The ‘many’ type is across the board, though less common in the west. But – and here's the surprising thing – there are *no* examples of the ‘meny’ type at all. Since OE *mænig* has a short aesc both *manig* and *mænig* variants would give rise to the Middle English ‘many’ type. The ‘mony’ type would develop from *manig* via pre-nasal rounding. There are attestations of *menig* in Old English, presumably as a result of i-umlaut. One might assume that this variant gave rise to the late Middle English ‘meny’ type variants in the south, but why is this type entirely unattested in early Middle English?

To illustrate type (c) one can use the SUCH set:

There is a huge number of variants for the item SUCH in both early and late Middle English, and indeed the vocalism was varied already in Old English with *swylce*, *swilce*, *swelce* types (with respectively [y], [i] and [e]) all found. And in Old English

both the weak and strong declensions of the word had both [tʃ] and [k] variants – with [tʃ] presumed to occur before inflexional endings with front vowels and [k] (spelled with ‘c’ normally) before inflexional endings with back vowels. So the variation is built in from the earliest attestations.

Varied spellings (and presumably pronunciations) of the tonic vowel continue all through Middle English, but gradually there begins to emerge a consensus about the [tʃ]/[k] alternation. The ‘ch’ forms in early Middle English are confined to the southern half of the country. You can see that this is continued in late Middle English with a certain amount of extension, perhaps because ‘such’ was the form of the emerging London standard and ultimately the modern standard.

For the [k] forms we’ll start with the late Middle English picture. The eLALME map ‘SUCH: all spellings with *-lk(-)*’ shows there’s a strong consensus about where they occur, with the [k] parts of the paradigm being levelled across the board perhaps with further reinforcement from Scandinavian *slikr*. Note that the eLALME map ‘SUCH: all spellings with *-lc(-)*’ shows very few dots and only along the border of the *-lk(-)* line. You would perhaps expect from what we’ve already seen that this would be a continuation of the (admittedly sparser) early Middle English picture. And the LAEME ‘SUCH: all spellings with *-lk(-)*’ map shows what you’d expect with one exception (matching some exceptions also in eLALME) in the SW Midlands. BUT if you look at the LAEME map ‘SUCH: all spellings with *-lc(-)*, excl *-lch(-)*’ (which we can assume in most cases indicate [lk] rather than [ltʃ]) then we see that the picture is still rather mixed and that the levelling of the [tʃ] parts of the paradigm in the south is still not complete. The same sort of thing is true in the WHICH set and the EACH set and to a messier extent in the MUCH set.