Strong and Weak in the History of the Gutnish Verb System

By Caspar Jordan

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Gutnish has been spoken on the Baltic island of Gotland for over 1,000 years. For much of this time, the verb system of Gutnish was very similar to those of its close relatives on the North Germanic branch. However, in the 19th century, a number of significant changes transformed the Gutnish verb system from a typical Germanic system with a fairly strict lexical division into strong and weak verb classes into a system with a large number of mixed verbs, where paradigms contain parallel strong and weak forms. This article explores these changes and a number of possible explanations for them, including morphophonological changes, language contact and cross-linguistic overcorrection. All of these factors are woven into a scenario where a sudden wave of immigration hits a speaker community that is ready for change.

Keywords: Gutnish, verbs, historical linguistics, conjugations, language contact, sociolinguistics, morphology, morphophonology, cross-linguistic overcorrection.

1. Introduction

The division of verbs into strong and weak conjugations is a characteristic feature of the Germanic languages, illustrating the mixture of inheritance and innovation in the history of this branch of the Indo-European language tree.[1] The strong conjugations are the specifically Germanic adaptation of the Proto-Indo-European system of ablaut, i. e. the systematic alternation between different vowels in the same position (for a discussion, see Mailhammer 2007 pp. 1ff.). The weak conjugations, on the other hand, are a Germanic innovation where suffixes containing a dental consonant are used to form the preterite, past participle and supine (Harbert 2007 p. 276). Both classes of conjugations are present in all Germanic languages (with the exception of Afrikaans, see Donaldson 1994 p. 495) hence it can be assumed to have existed as early as in Common Germanic. Yet there is one Germanic language that is going a long way towards getting rid of the strong verbs: Gutnish, spoken on the Baltic island of Gotland.

[1] I am very grateful to two anonymous reviewers whose meticulous work greatly improved this paper.

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Generally, the weak conjugations in Germanic languages tend to be more productive than the strong ones, for example when it comes to loan words and neologisms (Fulk 2018 p. 256; Harbert 2007 p. 277). Thus, the preterite of the Swedish verb *bila* 'to travel by car' (from *automobil* → *bil* 'car') is not **bel* (with ablaut) but *bilade* (with a dental suffix). The same is true for most relatively modern loaned verbs in the Germanic languages, even if there are exceptions.[2] Similarly, weak verbs seldom become strong, whereas strong verbs sometimes become weak. Nevertheless, the shift from strong to weak is fairly uncommon in Germanic languages (Harbert 2007 p. 277) with the exception of English, where such shifts occurred in large numbers during the Late Middle Ages (Fertig 2009; Krygier 1994).

Being a Germanic language, Gutnish has strong and weak verbs. It seems, however, that there is an unusually marked tendency for historically strong verbs to have a parallel weak inflection in Gutnish. Out of 70 verbs investigated in this study which historically belonged to a strong conjugation, no fewer than 49 have both strong and weak preterite forms in Modern Gutnish, and it seems the weak forms are now preferred. Six verbs have shifted completely to a weak preterite, leaving 13 solidly strong verbs.

The aim of this paper is to outline the extent of the shift from strong to mixed and weak verbs, and to provide a historical explanation for this shift. This aim can be broken down into a number of questions:

- How common is it for historically strong verbs to become weak in Modern Gutnish?
- How common is it for historically strong verbs to have parallel strong and weak forms in Modern Gutnish?
- Is there any movement in the opposite direction, i. e. weak to strong?
- Are the developments systematic or singular?
- What explanation(s) can we find for the changes that led to the Modern Gutnish verb system?

These questions will be answered using methods from historical linguistics. I will map historical trends in 70 originally strong and 61 originally weak verbs, drawing on the existing sources on the historical stages of Gutnish, as well as a selection of sources on Modern Gutnish. In addition to the systematic comparison of textual sources, original fieldwork will provide a glimpse of the situation in contemporary Gutnish. The changes over time will then be investigated from a number of angles, including contact linguistics, geographic variation and earlier language changes.

A significant number of formerly strong verbs are either weak or more

[2] Early loans could also become strong verbs, e. g. Latin *scrībere* 'to write' which became strong in some Germanic languages. For a detailed discussion, see Tarsi 2019.

commonly mixed in Modern Gutnish. In fact, the Modern Gutnish verb system is so different from both its predecessor and its sister varieties that we may speak of a restructuring of the verb system as a whole. This restructuring can be explained as the result of several factors: pressure from Standard Swedish, influence from neighbouring dialects and language-internal dynamics, all culminating during the first half of the 19th century.

This paper is divided into the following sections: Section 2 offers an overview of the Gutnish verb, both the Old Gutnish and the Modern Gutnish system. Section 3 provides an insight into relevant previous research. Section 4 describes the sources and methods used in the present study. In Section 5, the results of the different parts of the study are reviewed, concluding with an overview. Section 6 contains a discussion of the results where explanations for the changes over time are explored, and finally, Section 7 presents the conclusions. An appendix lists the verbs used to compare Old Gutnish and Modern Gutnish.

2. Overview of the Gutnish Verb System

2.1. The Old Gutnish Verb

The Old Gutnish verb system is described in Noreen 1904, pp. 426–481. Old Gutnish had two inflected tenses, present and preterite, two voices, active and medio-passive, and three moods, indicative, imperative and subjunctive. Verbs were inflected for three persons and two numbers. In addition to the finite forms, there are a number of infinite forms, including the infinitive, the present participle and the past participle, the neuter singular of which also functioned as a supine in perfect constructions.

The present singular was formed using one of the suffixes *-ar*, *-ir*, *-r* or no suffix, as shown in Example 1. The choice of suffix depended on the verb's class. The plural persons, which are of no relevance to the present study, were formed using the suffixes *-um*, *-in* and *-a*.

(1) *biera* 'carry' : *bier* 'carries'
fylgia 'follow' : *fylg-ir* 'follows'
biauþa 'bid' : *biauþ-r* 'bids'
biþa 'wait' : *biþ-ar* 'waits'

Historically, the supine, an infinite form that was used in conjunction with a finite form of the auxiliary verb *hafa* 'to have' to form the perfect and pluperfect, was formed in different ways depending on the verb's class. In Old Gutnish, the supine of strong verbs was usually formed by means of the suffix *-it* which was added to an ablaut form of the verb root, most typically, but far from always, the zero grade. This can be seen in Example 2:

(2) *briauta* ‘break’ : *brutit*
biera ‘carry’ : *burit*
draga ‘pull’ : *dragit*
giefa ‘give’ : *giefit*

In contrast, the supine of weak verbs was generally formed using *-t*, whereas first weak conjugation verbs used the suffix *-at*, resulting in forms both with and without a vowel before the final *t*. This is demonstrated in Example 3:

(3) *kaupa* ‘buy’ : *kaupt*
fyra ‘bring’ : *fyrt*
gierþa ‘surround, fence in’ : *giert*
klappa ‘cut off’ : *klappat*
leggia ‘lay’ : *legt*

2.2. The Modern Gutnish verb

The Modern Gutnish verb system is briefly described by Gustavson (1977 pp. 33–34), Gustavson et al. (1918 pp. xlix-liii) and Klintberg & Gustavson (1972 pp. 1836–1847). Modern Gutnish has a two-fold division between Fårö Gutnish and the dialects of mainland Gotland (Mainland Gutnish) in terms of both the verb system and other features. Fårö Gutnish retains more features from Old Gutnish than the Mainland Gutnish dialects, including agreement for person and number and a strict division into strong and weak verbs. Table 1 presents some of the differences between Fårö and Mainland Gutnish, and shows the present and preterite forms of the strong verb Fårö Gutnish *biauda*~Mainland Gutnish *bjaude*[3] ‘to bid’ and the weak verb *kalla~kalle* ‘to call’.[4] Fårö Gutnish retains both inflection for person and number and the accent distinction in the singular forms of the present. Additionally, Fårö Gutnish only has strong preterite forms for the strong verb, whereas Mainland Gutnish has both a strong and a weak form. In other words, the changes described in this paper cannot be seen in Fårö Gutnish. The following overview of the verb system therefore excludes Fårö Gutnish.

The Mainland Gutnish verb system has two inflected tenses, the present and preterite, and a number of periphrastic tense constructions, including present perfect, past perfect and a number of future constructions. Generally,

[3] I have normalised the inconsistent spelling of the various sources mostly based on the spelling guidelines by the Gutnish Society (Gillets stavningsrekommendationer 2012), except when citing a specific form given in a specified source.

[4] Examples in Table 1 are based on Gustavson et al. 1918, Noreen 1879, Säve & Lindström 1854 as well as my own fieldwork on Fårö (Jordan 2011). The circumflex in Fårö forms denotes a tone accent, etymologically corresponding to the Standard Swedish grave accent following Noreen 1879 pp. 78–80 and Kock 1878 pp. 52–53, while the acute accent is akin to the Swedish acute tone accent.

Table 1. Differences between Fårö Gutnish and Mainland Gutnish.

		Strong verbs		Weak verbs	
Variety		Fårö	Mainland	Fårö	Mainland
Present tense	first sg.	*biáudur*	*bjáudar*	*kâllar*	*kállar*
	second sg.	*biáudort*		*kâllart*	
	third sg.	*biáudur*		*kâllar*	
	first pl.	*biâuda*		*kâlla*	
	second pl.	*biâude*		*kâlle*	
	third pl.	*biâuda*		*kâlla*	
Preterite	first sg.	*baud*	*baud*, *bàudede*	*kâllde*	*kàll(e)de*
	second sg	*baudst*		*kâllde*	
	third sg.	*baud*		*kâllde*	
	first pl.	*bûdo*		*kâlldo*	
	second pl.	*bûde*		*kâlldo*	
	third pl.	*bûdo*		*kâlldo*	

verbs do not inflect following person or number, but some verbs display a distinct form for the second person singular both present and preterite, using the suffix *-st* – although its use appears inconsistent.

The present tense is formed with the suffix *-ar*, except for verbs where the present stem ends in a long vowel, in which case it is *-r.* The suffix *-ar* represents the result of a merger of the Old Gutnish present tense suffixes *-ar*, *-ir* and *-r.* This was also added to verbs that had no suffix in the present tense in Old Gutnish. The tone accent distinction that is a marker of verb-class membership in many Scandinavian varieties (see the opposition of Fårö Gutnish *biáudur* and *kâllar* in Table 1) was also lost, probably as a result of the merger of the present tense suffixes. This merger led to the loss of the Old Gutnish connection between the form of the present tense and the verb class. The development is summarised in Example 4:

(4) OGut. *bier* ‘carries’ > MGut. *bjer-ar*
OGut. *fylg-ir* ‘follows’ > MGut. *fylg-ar*
OGut. *biauþ-r* ‘bids’ > MGut. *bjaud-ar*
OGut. *biþ-ar* ‘waits’ > MGut. *bid-ar*
OGut. *gro-r* ‘grows’, ‘sprouts’ > MGut. *gro-r*

The formation of the preterite originally depended on the verb’s class. This paper discusses three conjugations: strong, first weak and second weak; the

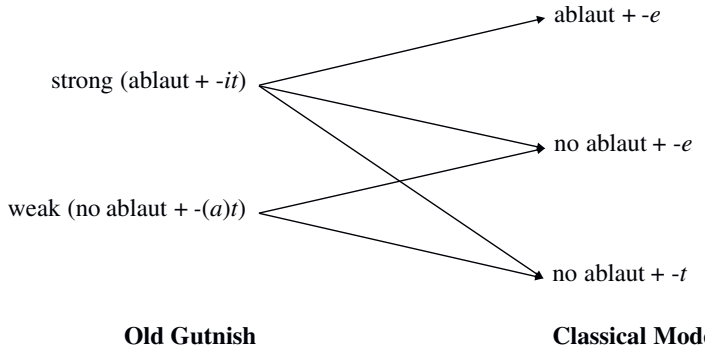

Figure 1. Development of the formation of the supine from Old Gutnish to Classical Modern Gutnish. The arrows refer to the migration of specific verbs from the two groups of Old Gutnish to the three groups of Modern Gutnish.

strong conjugation is actually a group of conjugations but for the purposes of this paper they will be treated together. The strong conjugation preterite is formed through ablaut, while the two weak conjugations are formed by means of the dental suffixes *-ede* and *-de* respectively:

(5) Strong: *simm-e* 'swim' > *sam* 'swam'
First weak: *kall-e* 'call' > *kall-ede* 'called'
Second weak: *ger-e* 'do' > *ger-de* 'did'

Both perfects are formed with a finite form of the auxiliary verb *ha* 'to have' followed by the supine which is formally identical to the neuter of the past participle. There are two moods, the indicative and the imperative, and two voices, active and passive.[5]

Infinite forms of the verb include the infinitive, the supine and the present and past participles. The present participle is formed from the present stem using the suffix *-nes.* The past participle, and consequently the supine, are traditionally formed differently in strong and weak verbs. Strong verbs have ablaut plus the suffix set masc. *-en*, fem. *-i*, neut. *-e*, while the weak verbs have the same root vowel plus the suffix set masc. *-dar*, fem. *-d*, neut. *-t.*

The three supine suffixes in Old Gutnish (*-at*, *-it*, *-t*) have developed in a way that made them lose their connection to verb classes. A combination of loss of final postvocalic *-t* and weakening of both *a* and *i* to *e* in non-stressed positions has resulted in a merger of *-it* and *-at* in *-e*, while weak verbs without the *-a-* have kept the *-t.* Figure 1 summarises the historical development of supine forms.

Gutnish has a number of deponent verbs. These behave essentially like the passive of other verbs.

[5] The passive is commonly used in the infinitive, whereas finite forms tend to be expressed through periphrasis (Gustavson 1977 p. 36).

Table 2. Overview of the Modern Mainland Gutnish verb system (the rare second person singular forms are not included).

	Active	Passive	Deponent
Infinitive	*bjere* ‘carry’	*kalles* ‘be called’	*lyckes* ‘succeed’
Present	*bjerar*	*kalles* *bläir kallen*	*lyckes*
Imperative	*bjer!*	–	–
Preterite	*bar* *bjerede* *bjerde*	*kall(e)des* *blai kallen*	*lycktes*
Present perfect	*har bure* *har bjere* *har bjert*	*har kalles*	*har lyckes*
Past perfect	*hadd bure* *hadd bjere* *hadd bjert*	*hadd kalles*	*hadd lyckes*
Future	AUX *bjere*	AUX *kalles*	AUX *lyckes*
Present participle	*bjernes*	–	–
Past participle	*buren* *bjeren* *bjer si*	*kallen*	–
Supine	*bure* *bjere* *bjert*	*kalles*	*lyckes*

The division into strong and weak verbs can be seen in the preterite, the two perfects and the past participle. Table 2 presents an overview of the entire system. The table shows the variation in the preterite, past participle and supine forms as well as in the formation of the passive.[6] The variation in the preterite, past participle and supine are the subject of this paper, while the passive formation will be investigated, though from a different angle, in a forthcoming paper (Magnusson Petzell in prep., see also the popular summary in Magnusson Petzell 2022).

2.3. The Verb in Gotlandic Swedish

For most people who live on Gotland, Gutnish is not their daily language. Rather, they speak either Standard Swedish or what might be called Gotlan-

[6] The future is not mentioned in the overviews cited above, but as with Standard Swedish, it is formed using an auxiliary verb (e. g. *kummar* ‘come’, *skall* ‘shall’) together with the infinitive of the main verb.

dic Swedish, a variety of Swedish close to, but not identical with, Standard Swedish. I am currently unaware of any research that focuses on Gotlandic Swedish. However, non-systematic impressions suggest that its verbs do not at all line up with Gutnish verbs. Instead, it seems that there is a tendency for weak verbs to become strong in Gotlandic Swedish, a development that is diametrically opposed to the development of Gutnish verbs described in this paper. Examples include the preterites shown in Example 6:

(6) *slöt* 'stopped', 'finished' (Standard Swedish *slutade*)[7]
löt 'leaned' (Standard Swedish *lutade*)[7]
spek 'nailed' (Standard Swedish *spikade*)[7]
kreg 'waged war' (Standard Swedish *krigade*)[7]
spröt 'squirted' (Standard Swedish *sprutade*)[7]
ret 'drew' (Standard Swedish *ritade*)[8]
öl 'howled' (Standard Swedish *ylade*)[8]
skröv 'screwed' (Standard Swedish *skruvade*)[8]
töt 'honked' (Standard Swedish tutade)[9]

3. Previous Research

3.1. Research on Gutnish

There has been a great deal of research interest in Old Gutnish, particularly among historical linguists (e. g. Pipping 1901, 1904; Carlsson 1921; Vrieland 2011), and in editions of the texts (Hadorph 1687; Schildener 1818; Collin & Schlyter 1852; Pipping 1905; Pernler 1986; Peel 1999, 2006) and runic inscriptions (Lithberg & Wessén 1939; Jansson & Wessén 1962; Jansson et al. 1978; Snædal 2002; Gustavson & Snædal 2004). Noreen 1904 presents a systematic overview of the verb system, albeit somewhat cumbersome to use since the Gutnish forms are woven into a description of Old Swedish.

Neogard and Toftén first described the post-medieval Gutnish verb system in some detail in the 18th century (Toftén 1748; Neogard & Wollin 2009). Both authors focus largely on suffixes and there is no systematic investigation of the division into strong and weak. A somewhat later work by Almqvist (1840) suffers from the same lack of information. Hence, these works are of little interest to the present study in terms of their scientific content, but they are very interesting as sources of data; see Section 4.2.

Säve & Lindström (1854) make use only of forms from Fårö Gutnish which makes it less relevant for the present study. They mention strong verbs becom-

[7] Examples I have heard.

[8] Examples from Kapla & Ståhlberg 2010.

[9] Example from Johansson 2022, p. 3.

ing weak, but seem to indicate that this does not happen or only happens to a very small degree in Gutnish, which is true for Fårö Gutnish.

The dictionaries *Gotländsk ordbok* (Gustavson et al. 1918, henceforth GOB) and *Ordbok över laumålet på Gotland* (Klintberg & Gustavson 1972, henceforth OLG) each contain a brief chapter on grammar. The latter mentions that nearly all strong verbs also have weak forms (Klintberg & Gustavson 1972, p. 1836) but no additional information is given. Both dictionaries give more than just the infinitive for many verbs, although this varies depending on the verb listed. In summary, the alternation between strong and weak in the Gutnish verb system has not been subjected to any systematic research.

Gustavson's thesis (Gustavson 1940, 1948) is a thorough exploration of the historical phonology of Gutnish. It showcases the development of all phonemes that can be assumed for Old Gutnish (see also Vrieland 2011), including the development of unstressed vowels and consonants in word-final position.

3.2. Research on Strong and Weak Verbs

There has been quite some research into strong and weak verbs in other Germanic languages. A lot of this research is concerned with systematising and explaining the origins of the various classes of strong and weak verbs, but there is also a considerable number of studies trying to explain the shift of verbs from strong to weak conjugations (e. g. Karlsson & Sahlquist 1974; Strik 2015; Krygier 1994) and a few concerned with changes in the opposite direction (e. g. Wełna 1997; Bloch 2002). Dammel 2010 offers a detailed theoretical approach to conjugation-class shift in Germanic, exemplified with a number of case studies.

Dammel (2010 p. 4) argues that one verb normally belongs to one verb class: 'Flexionsklassen dagegen manifestieren sich nur **interparadigmatisch.** Ein und dasselbe Lexem gehört i. d. R. nicht mehreren Flexionsklassen, sondern nur einer an.'[10] Of course, having a paradigm with more than one form in one slot is problematic, and we can hardly assume two slots for the preterite since, as Dammel (2010 p. 5) points out, there is no functional distinction between the different verb classes.

Frequency and phonological form are often discussed as important factors in the shift from strong to weak conjugations. Strik (2015), for example, shows how the modelling of these shifts based on analogy (phonological similarity) can be improved by also including token frequency in the model. He also suggests (p. 185) that the inclusion of sociolinguistic and geographic factors might further improve the possibilities of accurately modelling verb-class shifts. Krygier's account of the breakdown of the English strong verb system

[10] 'On the other hand, inflectional classes only manifest themselves interparadigmatically. A specific lexeme usually belongs not to several but to one inflectional class.' (My translation.)

in the Middle Ages also takes various factors into account as possible partial explanations (Krygier 1994 pp. 248–253):

- The tendency for some stem structures to encourage a shift to a weak verb class.
- The breakdown of the tense-distinctive ablaut system due to sound changes and analogical levelling.
- The existence of semantically as well as formally similar parallel weak verbs.

However, Krygier sees the Norman invasion and the substantial societal changes it brought with it, not least in terms of the language situation, as the single most important cause for the changes; language contact is paramount.

The comprehensive Swedish grammar by the Swedish Academy mentions mixed verbs as well as weak verbs that follow more than one conjugation (Teleman et al. 1999 Vol. 2 pp. 574–579). They are described as having different stylistic or emotive value or as being geographically distributed or archaic. Several examples are given, but the phenomenon is treated separately from the weak and the strong verbs and is framed as an exception to the rule.

Bloch 2002 investigates the question of shift between strong and weak classes in Swedish and finds that, contrary to what is often assumed, there are several instances of weak verbs becoming strong. She also shows that it is not only the first weak conjugation that attracts verbs from other conjugations, there are also shifts to the second conjugation.

Lundberg 1921 is a study of the second strong conjugation in Modern Swedish and its dialects, while addressing the distribution of agreement in the verbs. Agreement with person and number in Swedish dialects has recently been investigated in great detail in Horn af Åminne 2022. The study shows how a number of Swedish dialects have retained person and/or number agreements longer than others. The dialects of south-western parts of Sweden were particularly conservative, and number and person agreement was still present around 1900. In contrast, Gotland lost this verbal agreement earlier.

There is no general study of strong and weak verbs across Swedish dialects. However, in Norwegian dialects there is a pattern behind the most common cases of formerly strong verbs becoming weak. Verbs where the present tense stem ended in a vowel or a consonant that easily disappeared, *ð* for example, were more likely to become weak (Venås 1967 p. 382). Venås also sees a tendency for the supine to become weak more easily than the preterite (p. 383), which is the opposite of the situation in Gutnish. The preterite forms of Norwegian dialects have generally remained strong (p. 348). The shift from strong to weak classes appears most common along the Norwegian coast, especially in the south, which Venås connects to the frequent contacts with other geographic areas such as Denmark (p. 385).

In a study of inflection class change in Norwegian nouns and verbs, Enger (2010) suggests that verbs in Norwegian change inflection class gradually (as opposed to nouns) since their 'basic form' contains information about the inflection class to which it belongs. This basic form is said to be the present tense that marks strongness both through the presence of a particular tone accent and suffix. Together, these formal properties anchor the verb in its inflection class, leading to a gradual class shift where forms that are not the present tense change earlier than the present tense form. This creates 'mixed inflections' (Enger 2010 p. 373).

Immigration to Gotland from Småland and Öland was substantial during the period relevant to this study. Lindroth (1925, 1946) investigated the dialects of Öland, as did Modéer (1929) and Torsund (1949). In these dialects, strong and weak verbs seem to be divided conservatively, more or less along the same lines as in Old Swedish and Old West Norse. In contrast, the strong verbs in dialects of eastern Småland show a much more chaotic mixture of conservatism and innovation. These dialects are investigated by Areskog (1936), who does not provide a synthesis of the verb system as a whole, but rather treats every conjugation separately, and in some sense even every verb. In addition, her material was collected from a large geographic area, making the verb forms very heterogeneous. This unsynthesised heterogeneity notwithstanding, it is clear that the dialects of eastern Småland showcase a large number of originally strong verbs that have either become weak or taken on some weak forms in their paradigms. The exact extent of this (partial) shift is unknown.

Af Hällström-Reijonen (2018) has compared the use of the first and second weak conjugations by Finland-Swedish authors and the National Language Bank of Sweden corpora for 18th and 19th century Swedish (Borin et al. 2012). She shows that the authors Johan Ludvig Runeberg and Zacharias Topelius tend to use the second conjugation forms more often than their contemporary Swedish authors, especially in poetry where the shorter forms may fit better with the metre. Even more interestingly, she shows a number of verbs having parallel first and second conjugation forms in 18th century Swedish and almost completely dropping the second conjugation forms in the 19th century (af Hällström-Reijonen 2018 pp. 139 f.). This indicates that written Swedish was more accepting of parallel forms, until a normation of verb conjugation arose during the 19th century. This normative movement may very well have carried over into dialects, influencing the choice of verb forms.

3.3. Research on Language Contact

Language contact can play out in many different ways, as the extensive literature on the topic has shown (see for example the variety of cases in Braunmüller & House 2009 and Thomason 2001). According to Braunmüller (2009 p. 67), prolonged contact between closely related languages inevitably leads to code-mixing although whether this code-mixing eventually changes the

verb system is not certain, as the following summary from Knooihuizen et. al. (2018 p. 72) shows: 'Our results reveal that there is no pronounced influence of Dutch strong inflection forms on those of our Frisian speakers, despite the fact that all of them are bilingual.'

Migration is an important factor in language and dialect contact. Helgander (1996) has shown that in the Nordic countries, the proportion of mixed marriages is an important factor in determining how much influence immigrants will have on the language. In a family where only one parent speaks the local dialect, the children are likely to speak a standard variety instead of the dialect (p. 117).

A concept of some interest for the present study is that of cross-linguistic overcorrection as introduced in Kupisch 2014. The idea is that bilinguals tend to exaggerate the contrasts between their two languages when producing language under time pressure, i. e. when they do not have time to think about what they are saying. Kupisch argues that this happens because speakers are, to a certain degree, aware of the differences between their languages and when pressured for time, this awareness leads to overproduction of forms in one language that differ from those in the other.

3.4. Sociolinguistic Background

This paper focuses on the changes that took place from the 18th to the 20th century. During this period, the countryside was the locus of any changes in Gutnish, hence the situation in Visby will not be addressed in detail. Suffice to say, being the only town on Gotland, Visby has been an important hub for both trade and political power since the Middle Ages (Svahnström 1984). Agriculture was the most important source of income in the Gotlandic countryside (Öhrman 1991 p. 116) and major improvements were made to the previously conservative agricultural society on Gotland during the second half of the 19th century (Öhrman 1991 pp. 117ff.), which meant that the growing population could mostly be accommodated. In addition, rural families on Gotland had few children, meaning the group of rural proletariat was small (Siltberg & Åkerman 1991 pp. 75–76). During the 18th and 19th centuries, the population can be described as homogeneous and relatively wealthy (Siltberg & Åkerman 1991 pp. 77–78).

Levels of immigration to Gotland during the 18th and early 19th centuries were generally low (Siltberg & Åkerman 1991 p. 75), although the establishment of an artillery battalion in 1741 led to some immigration from the Swedish mainland (p. 100). The famine of 1772–1773 saw an influx of immigrants, mainly from Småland and Öland (Siltberg & Åkerman 1991 p. 100; Sandberg 1952). Many of these immigrants bought farms on Gotland and became farmers, mostly in the central parts of the island (Sandberg 1952 pp. 319–320). Papp (1988 p. 23) estimates that about 300 Estonians immigrated to Gotland between 1700 and 1860. Of these, a great number settled in Katthammarsvik

Figure 2. Map showing Gotland's position between Småland and Öland to the west and the Baltic countries to the east. Map based on public domain data from Natural Earth.

on eastern Gotland, where Estonian was probably spoken during the first half of the 19th century (p. 29). It is not known whether Estonian was spoken elsewhere on Gotland. The second half of the 19th century saw an increasing drainage of bogs for agricultural purposes, which led to the immigration of labourers (Öhrman 1991 pp. 128–129), predominantly from mainland Sweden. Census data for 1860 show that two thirds of immigrants living in the Gotlandic countryside were from Småland or Öland, and by 1900 half of the immigrants were from Småland (Siltberg & Åkerman 1991 p. 101). It is of some importance that the majority of immigrants in 1870 (and presumably in the following decades) settled in the north-western part of Gotland (Siltberg & Åkerman 1991 p. 102), which is the area with the fewest Gutnish speakers today. See Figure 2 for an overview of Gotland's geographic position between Småland and Öland to the west and the Baltic countries to the east.

Given the relative homogeneity of the countryside population, the strongest social division on Gotland was also geographic, namely the opposition between the countryside and the town. Even priests, who might be viewed as belonging to a higher class, were usually from Gotland (Lemke 1868) and were thus familiar with the relative equality. There was no nobility on the island, as is evident from the near absence of manor houses and castles (Gardell 1987 p. 128). The industrial age saw the emergence of a small working class in some rural areas, for example surrounding the lime industry in the north of the island (Gardell 1987 pp. 119f.; Söderberg 1955 pp. 91f.). The bourgeoisie were centred in Visby, with the exception of merchants in the harbour settlements along the coast (Gardell 1987 pp. 129f.; Söderberg 1955 pp. 92f.). Furthermore, Visby was the only seat of political power, at least from the

17th century onwards (Gardell 1987 p. 118). Some industrialists may have had countryside residences, but they were probably never numerous enough to form a community with its own distinctive language. There was certainly some social stratification within the countryside population, although it is difficult to see any division into smaller non-geographic in-groups that might develop their own linguistic varieties.

Social stratification on Gotland is evident in linguistic terms, but the divide is not so much within Gutnish as between Gutnish as the variety spoken in the countryside and other languages primarily used in Visby. The latter include, but are not limited to, Middle Low German, Danish and Swedish. Historically, there are few if any traces of Gutnish in Visby, but Danish seems to have been an everyday language in the 18th century (Lundell & Hesselman 1937 pp. 295–298; Neogard & Wollin 2009 pp. 165–166). Danish was later replaced by a local variety of Swedish, Gotlandic Swedish. When compulsory schooling was introduced through the 1842 Education Act, Swedish became common and Gotlandic Swedish has since spread over all of Gotland, replacing Gutnish to a large degree. Nevertheless, Gutnish is still spoken alongside Swedish in an area covering the coastal areas along the southern two-thirds of the east coast, the southern tip and some of the southern inland, and a few parishes along the southern west coast (Bosse Carlgren, p. c.).

Sandøy (1998, 2004) theorises that besides spreading from regional centres, language innovations are also frequently local, tied to 'new centres, i.e. subordinated nodes in the regional hierarchy' (Sandøy 1998 p. 83). In fact, settlement structure is an important factor in Sandøy's account of language change, where he contrasts the isolated farms of Iceland to village-based settlements in several other parts of the Nordic countries (Sandøy 2004). Isolated farms are said to be connected to linguistic conservatism (pp. 61–62), while villages and similar tight-knit communities are said to co-occur with a higher degree of innovation (pp. 62–63). The historical settlement structure is still being debated in the Gotland context. For example, Jonsson & Lindquist claim that there were never villages on Gotland (p. 164). Svedjemo (2017) criticises this statement, showing that in fact people lived in groups of farms, but these never came to be called 'villages' in cameral documents. Further research is needed to establish the possible existence of Sandøy's 'new centres' on Gotland. A starting point might be the settlements at the larger harbours as well as some of the railway stations.

4. Methods and Sources

4.1. Periods

This study uses several methods, given the heterogeneous character of the sources included (see Section 4.2). The largest number of verb forms were available for the High Middle Ages and the late 19th and early 20th centuries, hence these periods were the main focus for historical comparison. The lan-

guage of the High Middle Ages is referred to as Old Gutnish, in keeping with earlier research, while I will refer to the language reflected in the sources from the late 19th century and the early 20th century as Classical Modern Gutnish.

Sources are available for the period between the two focal periods, however they cannot provide samples that are strong enough for historical comparison. I refer to this period as Middle Gutnish, although we have yet to develop a set of defining characteristics. Here, the main characterising factor is the temporal placement between Old Gutnish and Modern Gutnish.

The final period includes my own fieldwork data for this study (2021). I refer to this period as Contemporary Modern Gutnish, grouping it with Classical Modern Gutnish as subgroups of Modern Gutnish, since the two are very similar.

4.2. Sources

This study is bound by the limitations of the available sources. Comparing different historical stages of Gutnish means comparing sources of different character, since there are simply no sources that are similar in scope, genre, etc. from the different periods (as specified in Section 4.1).

Peel's editions of the medieval texts Guta lag (Peel 2009) and Guta saga (Peel 1999), are used as sources for the medieval period, specifically the included glossaries, as well as two shorter and later texts (Gislestam 2019; Pernler 1986) and the runic inscriptions published in Gustavson & Snædal 2004, Jansson et al. 1978 and Jansson & Wessén 1962. Guta lag and Guta saga are the most substantial sources of medieval Gutnish, but they are very limited both in scope and in genre. Many more strong and weak verbs existed in Old Gutnish than those found in these texts. It is also possible that the verbs we have found may have been conjugated differently in their everyday use or on other parts of the island to what has been recorded in text. The editions used here include a glossary of all attested forms of each word, which I used to excerpt the verb forms relevant to the present study (see Section 4.3).

Between the end of runic inscriptions around the year 1600 (Snædal 2002 p. 11) and the beginning of systematic scientific documentation in the mid-19th century, there are a few sources including poems written in dialect (Lundell & Hesselman 1937) and early scientific works (Almqvist 1840; Neogard & Wollin 2009; Toftén 1748). The poems are particularly tricky for use as sources for two reasons: First, there is often very little information about the authors and their degree of language knowledge; second, the poems are usually written in a mocking or joking tone, which may have allowed a poetic licence to choose and possibly even invent forms. Neogard, Toftén and Almqvist reflect the very basic knowledge of the systematicity of language that was prevalent at the time, but they are nevertheless very important sources for our knowledge of 18th century Gutnish.

Gotländsk ordbok (GOB) and *Ordbok över laumålet på Gotland* (OLG) are used as sources for the 19th and 20th centuries. Complementary data were obtained from digital copies of the letters written by Jakob 'Fäi-Jakå' Karlsson, published in Karlsson & Klintberg 2000, 2012.

GOB is a dictionary of Gutnish which is based on an extensive material collected by several researchers during the 19th and 20th centuries. Whenever possible, the given forms are localised to a specific parish on Gotland, though information about the speaker(s) is not available. However, at least for the early collector P.A. Säve, who also provided the majority of the words, the focus in collecting words and word forms was to find the oldest and most genuine words rather than to give a representative sample. He viewed Fårö Gutnish as the desirable norm for all Gutnish variants, since it was perceived as being the most conservative dialect (GOB p. xi). For these reasons, Säve always provides Fårö forms where possible, sometimes normalising Gutnish from other parts of Gotland to Fårö Gutnish (Gustavson 1937 p. 57). This means two things for this paper: 1) There is an abundance of forms from Fårö, while forms from other parishes are inconsistent. 2) Forms given by Säve for parishes other than Fårö cannot be trusted. Forms indicating a strong conjugation may sometimes have been favoured while forms reflecting the often newer weak conjugations may sometimes have been ignored. Luckily, there are usually complementary forms by other collectors. The dictionary has information about the parish as well as the collector of each form, making it possible not only to see geographic variation but also to judge the quality of the collected form to some degree.

OLG on the other hand is expressly the dictionary of the dialect of one specific parish, Lau, on the south-eastern coast of the island. The choice to focus on this parish was made in the late 1800s, again based on the assumption that the dialect was old-fashioned (OLG p. vii). Once more, this indicates that the choice of words and forms included may to some extent depend on the perceived age of a certain form.

Both dictionaries are also marked by their makers' interest in rural society, economy and culture. The terminology in these areas is sometimes very detailed, whereas other uses of words may be largely foregone. This strong focus on ethnological matters is also evident from the widespread lack of grammatical information, including such basics as the gender of nouns or the conjugation of verbs.

There is no documentation of the contemporary spoken language, hence data was collected in the field and the fieldwork is described in the following section.

4.3. Data Collection and Analysis

For the two main periods Old Gutnish and Classical Modern Gutnish, data were collected by means of systematic excerption from the sources described in Section 4.2. The mode of selection is described in detail in Section 4.4, but

the objective was to obtain one comparative sample from each time period. Comparing these two samples then made it possible to describe the historical development of each verb included in the samples.

For the Classical Modern Gutnish period, it was possible to compare the information in the dictionaries to the use of verb forms by an individual. This was done by means of simple text searches in the letters of Jakob 'Fäi-Jakå' Karlsson.

It was not possible to obtain enough data for comparable samples for the shorter Late Old Gutnish and the Middle Gutnish texts. Instead, all strong verbs from these sources were used for a more loose comparison with the samples from the two main periods.

Contemporary Modern Gutnish data were obtained by means of original fieldwork. However, the scope of the fieldwork was reduced due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, and only includes six speakers. Speakers were found with the help of Gutamålsgillet, a society dedicated to the preservation of Gutnish. Participation was voluntary and to be included, participants had to be viewed as proficient speakers by Gutamålsgillet. All participants were over 60 years old.

Participants were interviewed individually by the author. The interviews were conducted in Swedish, as the author is not a native speaker of Gutnish. Originally, the plan was to enrol a native speaker as interviewer, but this plan was abandoned when the Covid-19 pandemic made meeting people difficult, and greatly reduced the time available for fieldwork.

The fieldwork was conducted using a three-step elicitation process. First, I showed the participants a number of photos of people performing certain activities and asked them to retell what they saw.[11] The photos were arranged in a way so that it would make sense for the participants to use past tense forms of the interesting verbs.

The second step was to ask participants whether alternative past tense forms of the same verbs were also acceptable to them, possible answers being 'yes' and 'no'. The alternative forms were taken from the dictionaries.

Finally, I asked them to put these forms into sentences in order to confirm that the forms were actually usable by the participant. The participants represent four of the salient dialect areas of Gutnish: extreme southern, south-western, eastern and north-eastern. See Figure 3 for an approximate geographic location of the four areas and the speakers.[12]

[11] 'Här är en serie bilder som hör ihop. Kan du återberätta, en efter en, vad som händer på bilderna?' / 'This is a series of images that go together. Could you retell, one after the other, what is happening?'

[12] The dialect areas are not based on earlier research and ought to be viewed as work-in-progress. The parish map is based on open data from Lantmäteriet ('Socken och stad Nedladdning, vektor' n. d.).

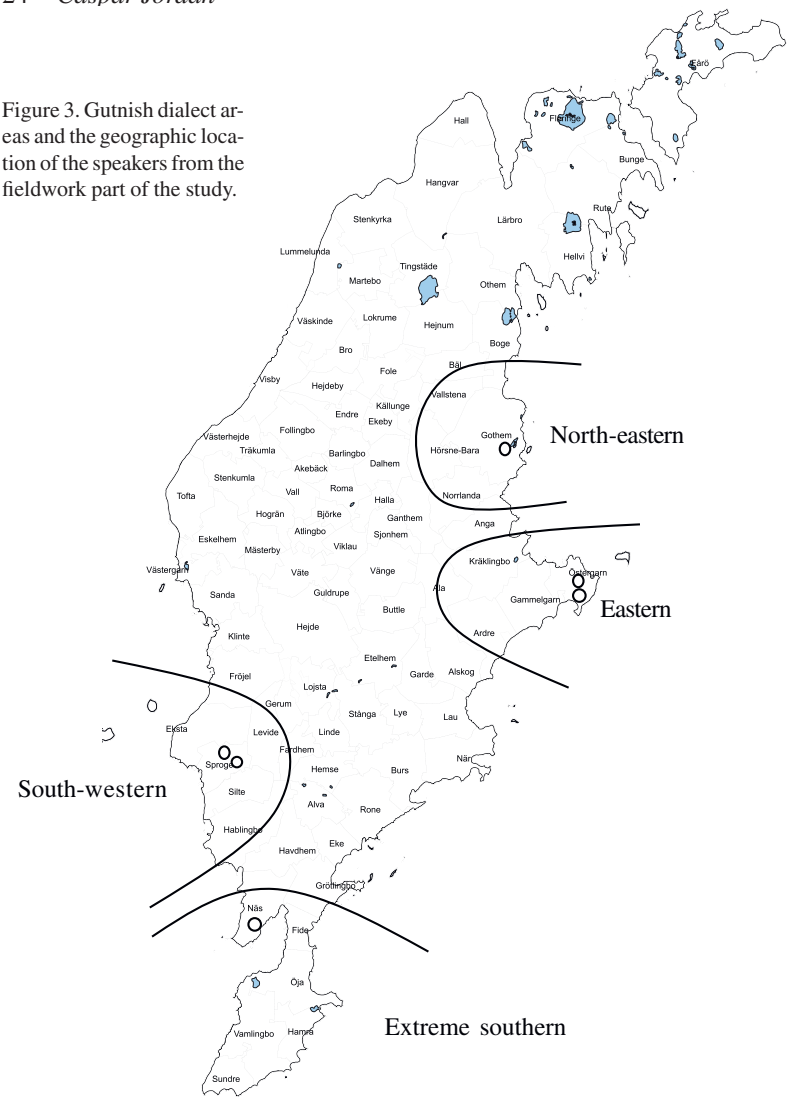

Figure 3. Gutnish dialect areas and the geographic location of the speakers from the fieldwork part of the study.

4.4. Selection of Verb Forms

The verbs investigated here were selected in two ways. First, I collected all verbs which have attested forms belonging to a strong conjugation in Old Gutnish using the glossaries for Guta lag and Guta saga. I then compared these verbs to GOB and OLG and removed the ones which did not have a modern cognate with attested preterite forms. Second, as many verbs in Modern Gutnish have strong forms, but the number of strong verbs attested in Old Gutnish is small (< 50), I thought it might be useful to include more verbs than only the ones attested in Old Gutnish. Assuming that the lexical distribution of strongness is fairly consistent throughout North Germanic (there are some exceptions), I collected the strong verbs from the verb chapter in an Old Icelandic

textbook (Heusler 1932) and treated them the same way as the Old Gutnish strong verbs. In other words, if I found a Modern Gutnish cognate of the Old Icelandic strong verb in one of the dictionaries and it had an attested preterite form, I used that verb as well. This yielded 70 Modern Gutnish verbs, 37 of which are also found in Old Gutnish.

In addition, I also included the weak verbs attested in Old Gutnish if they had attested preterite forms in GOB and/or OLG. This was done for two reasons: 1) to see if any weak verbs had become strong; 2) to get a broader basis for the discussion of the distribution of the first and second weak conjugations. 61 originally weak verbs were included.

There were few runic forms and they were only used to confirm the verb-class membership of those few verbs.

Forms from the Fårö parish were excluded from the present study, since the verbal system of this variety diverges strongly from the rest of Gutnish (see Section 2). Additionally, the sources available for Fårö Gutnish are very limited. This is especially true of earlier historical periods.

I only included the first and third person singular indicative forms of the Modern Gutnish preterite in the analysis. These forms are usually morphologically identical to the Contemporary Modern Gutnish present tense form, which does not inflect for person or number. Example 7 shows the oldest forms for the first and third person singular of the verb *ta* 'take' as they are found in GOB s. v. *taga.*

(7) *tok~to*

Older forms of the second person singular and of the plural persons are not directly comparable to the contemporary forms and thus are of no immediate use. Example 8 shows the oldest second person singular and general plural form of the same verb.

(8) Second sg. *tokst* 'took'
pl. *toko* 'took'

In addition to these preterite forms, I also included supines and past participles in the dataset since they traditionally contain information about verb-class membership. The present tense forms are irrelevant since Old Gutnish's *-ir*, *-r* and *-ar* had previously merged into *-ar*, removing any verb class distinctions from the present tense (see Section 2.2).

For comparison with Middle Gutnish, any verb form found for that period was considered relevant, since it was impossible to find all the verbs used elsewhere in the study in the few sources for this period.

I selected nine verbs to look at Jakob 'Fäi-Jakå' Karlsson's use of strong

and weak forms (see Table 6), each representing different classes of strong verbs. The verbs were also chosen because they could be assumed to be of relatively high frequency, which was important since the corpus of letters is fairly small (~500,000 tokens).

For the fieldwork, I selected a subset of verbs from the larger set used in the comparison between Old Gutnish and Classical Modern Gutnish because I could not ask participants to sit through all 131 verbs in the larger set. For methodological reasons, I selected verbs that could be depicted in photographs but I also aimed for each conjugation to be represented in the sample. Only preterites were elicited in the fieldwork. See Table 9 for a list of the verbs used.

5. Results

The discussion of the results is divided into five sections, preterites in Classical Modern Gutnish, supines in Classical Modern Gutnish, the data for Middle Gutnish, the results from the fieldwork and finally, an overview of the results. The developments for preterites and supines are different. The preterite of many formerly strong verbs allows for both strong and weak forms in Modern Gutnish, while the formerly weak verbs generally keep to weak preterites. The supines of both originally strong and originally weak verbs tend to have parallel forms, but it is no longer possible to classify these forms as being either strong or weak. The Middle Gutnish data give us an idea of when the Modern Gutnish system started to develop. The fieldwork data suggest a potential further development from the Classical Modern Gutnish period.

5.1. Strong, Weak and Mixed Preterites in Classical Modern Gutnish

70 originally strong verbs and 61 originally weak verbs were investigated. See Appendix A for a list of all the verbs. Comparing their preterite forms in Old Gutnish and Old Icelandic to the preterite forms in Classical Modern Gutnish yielded the following results: Of the 70 originally strong verbs, eight had only weak preterite forms in Classical Modern Gutnish, 13 had only strong forms and 49 were 'mixed', showing both strong and weak forms. Of the 61 verbs that were weak in Old Gutnish, two had acquired an additional strong preterite form in Classical Modern Gutnish (adding to the group of mixed verbs), while the remaining 59 were still decidedly weak. Synchronically, the 131 verbs from Classical Modern Gutnish were divided into 67 weak verbs, 13 strong verbs and 51 mixed verbs. These results are illustrated in Figure 4.

The 64 (13 strong and 51 mixed) verbs still showing strong preterites belong to all the strong conjugations traditionally described in Germanic, including reduplicating (although there is very little trace of the reduplication itself). In other words, there is little trace of analogical processes as discussed

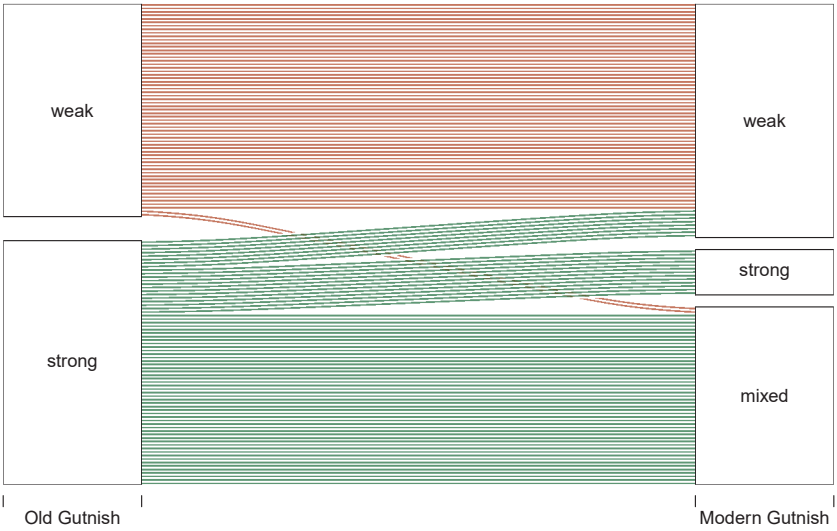

Figure 4. The flow of verb-class membership from Old Gutnish to Classical Modern Gutnish. 'Mixed' here refers to verbs that have both strong and weak forms attested, while those that have more than one weak form are still considered weak.

by Krygier 1994 and others. The possible exception is the absence of any solidly strong class II verbs, although the strong preterites are still present for this class alongside their weak counterparts. And while we have no data on the frequency of verbs in Gutnish, the selection process (see Section 4.4) is likely to have given us a considerable number of high-frequency verbs, since they are more likely to be represented in the Old Gutnish texts. See Table 3 for the numbers.

An interesting result can be found among the weak forms, of 118 verbs with weak preterite forms in Classical Modern Gutnish (weak and mixed verbs), 68 have both first and second conjugation forms, while 29 have only a first and 21 have only a second conjugation form.[13] In other words, using the forms from both weak conjugations is the norm.

Geographically, weak forms of strong verbs are found in parishes all over Gotland.[14] There is, however, a geographic division when it comes to the distribution of first and second weak conjugation forms. This can only be seen in the data from GOB, as OLG only represents the dialect of one single parish. The 42 first conjugation preterite forms taken from GOB

[13] Conjugations are based on *Svenska akademiens grammatik* (Teleman et al. 1999). However, verbs where the infinitive ends in a stressed vowel were not categorized under a third conjugation, instead they were included with the second conjugation. This is because Gutnish forms its preterite in the same way, by adding the suffix *-de*. Two possible exceptions are *gidde* 'gave' (besides *gide*) and *hadde* 'had'. These will not be discussed in any detail as they have little impact on the problems in focus.

[14] See the map in Figure 3 for the location of the parishes.

Table 3. Strong verb-class membership for the 64 verbs that have strong preterites in Classical Modern Gutnish, divided over strong and mixed verbs. Verb classes are based on Noreen 1904, but his four reduplicating classes were combined into one class VII.

Strong verb class	Strong	Mixed
I	1	7
II	0	10
III	3	9
IV	1	7
V	3	5
VI	3	6
VII	2	7

clearly come from southern parishes,[15] whereas the 64 second conjugation weak forms taken from GOB come from both northern[16] and southern parishes,[17] as well as a few in the central parts of the island.[18] Hence, southern parts of Gotland have both first and second conjugation weak forms, while northern Gotland has only second conjugation forms. In the southern dialect of the Lau parish represented in OLG, there are more first than second weak conjugation forms, but the overlap is large, as can be seen in Table 4.

These results are based on the GOB and OLG dictionaries, and so represent a temporally and geographically heterogeneous sample. The study of Jakob 'Fäi-Jakå' Karlsson's language shows us the variation in one individual's language. Of the nine verbs investigated, only two show strong forms in Karlsson's letters. Of the seven verbs with only weak forms, six have both first and second conjugation forms, although the frequency of these forms differs from verb to verb. Karlsson's use of weak forms is in line with what we would expect based on the data from the dictionaries. However, the scarcity of strong forms is somewhat surprising given that all nine verbs have strong preterites in the dictionaries. See Table 5 for a summary of the results.

[15] Eksta, Grötlingbo, Hablingbo, Lau, När, Näs, Rone, Sundre, Vamlingbo, Öja.

[16] Boge, Bro, Fleringe, Gothem, Hellvi, Lärbro, Stenkyrka.

[17] Burs, Eksta, Grötlingbo, Hablingbo, Hamra, Lau, När, Näs, Rone, Sundre, Vamlingbo.

[18] Alskog, Anga, Atlingbo, Gammelgarn, Garde.

Table 4. Number of verbs with preterite forms belonging to the two weak conjugations according to OLG.

Only first	Both	Only second	Total first	Total second
41	53	20	94	73

5.2. Strong, Weak and Mixed Supines in Classical Modern Gutnish

As with preterites, supines were formed in different ways in Old Gutnish, depending on whether they belonged to a strong or a weak verb (see Section 2.1). In Modern Gutnish, it is no longer possible to cleanly divide the supines into strong and weak forms, since two formal factors vary more or less independently: the root vowel and the suffix. The root vowel may be either the same as in the infinitive, or different. The suffix may be either *-e* or *-t*. Hence, knowing whether the verb was originally strong or weak is not enough to predict the form of the supine. See Table 6 for examples.

Of the 131 verbs in this study, 45 had supines with both suffixes, 42 had only *-e* and 32 had only *-t*, while 12 verbs had no attested supine forms. 33 of the verbs had a different root vowel compared to the infinitive while 86 had the same vowel. Figure 5 shows how the root vowel in the supine, the suffix of the supine and the Modern Gutnish preterite correlate in the 119 verbs with attested supines.

Table 5. Summary of Jakob Karlsson's use of strong and weak preterite forms.

Verb	No. of strong	No. of first weak	No. of second weak
bide 'to ask', 'to bid'	58	0	0
blase 'to blow'	0	42	28
dåi 'to die'	0	0	113
frause 'to freeze'	0	3	12
hagge 'to chop'[a]	0	32	16
heve 'to heave'	0	1	20
jelpe 'help'	0	25	31
singge 'sing'	3	18	1
skrive 'to write'	0	2	126

[a] *Hagge* has two stems, *hagg-* and *hugg-*. Here, they have been combined so that *haggde* and *huggde* are included in the same column, since they are both second weak conjugation forms.

Table 6. Examples of the complicated relationship between verbs and their supine.

Originally strong/weak	Infinitive	Supine
Strong	*frause* ‘to freeze’	*fruse*, *frause*, *fraust*
Strong	*klaue* ‘to cleave’	*kluge*, *klaue*
Strong	*sime* ‘to swim’	*sume*
Strong	*halde* ‘to hold’	*halde*, *halt*
Weak	*aige* ‘to own’	*aige*, *aigt*
Weak	*hitte* ‘to find’	*hitt*
Weak	*sigle* ‘to sail’	*sigle*

While the exact numbers behind Figure 5 may not tell us very much, we can see the complex relationship between the supine vowel and the supine suffix and the relationship between the preterite and the supine. Verbs with strong or mixed preterites may have the same or a different vowel in the supine, and they may have either supine suffix or both. Verbs with a weak preterite generally have the same vowel in the supine but may have one of the suffixes or both. There is one exception where a weak verb has supine forms both with the same and with a different vowel. A weak preterite generates a very high

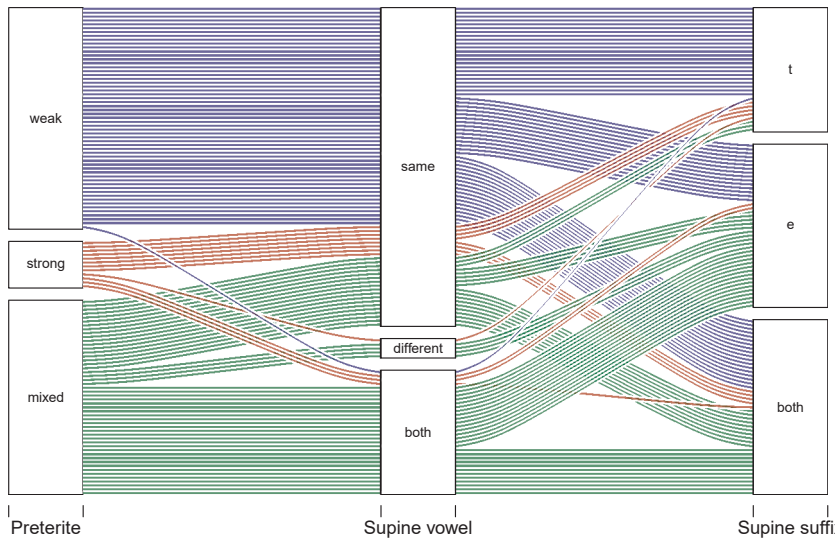

Figure 5. Correlations between Modern Gutnish preterite, supine root vowel and supine suffix. Figure includes the 119 verbs with attested supine forms.

likelihood of the vowel in the supine being the same, but other than that, the preterite does not predict the supine form.

Finally, it should be mentioned that most of what has been said about supines here may also be said about past participles. The details of how they are formed are not exactly the same, but the complications surrounding strong and weak are certainly similar to what has happened with the supines.

5.3. Results from the Middle Gutnish Data

Almqvist (1840) is the first to present weak forms of strong verbs in Middle Gutnish, including *bliddä* 'became' and *sifdä*/*svifdä* 'slept' which are given as alternatives to the strong forms *blai*(*f*) 'became' and *svaf* 'slept'. There is also *skriffdä* 'wrote', but this verb can be either strong or weak in Germanic languages (Tarsi 2019). These forms are given without any explanation of their respective uses, but the fact that they are given at all is interesting enough since it gives us an approximate date for (the beginning of) the change. All preterites found in the Middle Gutnish sources are collected in Table 7.

Table 7. All preterite forms of strong verbs found in the sources written in or on Middle Gutnish.

Source	Preterite forms attested
Lundell & Hesselman 1937 (1717–1771)	*kraup* 'crept'; *knaip* 'pinched'; *stajg* 'stepped'; *sag* 'saw'; *sat* 'sat'
Neogard & Wollin 2009 (1732)	*do* 'died'; *saig* 'sank'; *blaif* 'became'; *gaf* 'gave'; *flaug* 'flew'; *jägg* 'chopped'; *swaf* 'slept'
Toftén 1748	*raid* 'rode'; *swaf* 'slept'; *hjagg* 'chopped'; *sang* 'sang'; *skop* 'created'; *jog* 'hunted'; *wrok* 'heaved'; *mol* 'milled'; *rod* 'counselled'; *stod* 'stood'
Almqvist 1840	*blai*(*f*), *bliddä* 'became'; *gat* 'could'; *jägg* 'chopped'; *jög* 'hunted'; *qvam* 'came'; *ok* 'went'; *svaf*, *sifdä*, *svifdä* 'slept'; *skriffdä* 'wrote'; *stratt* 'splashed'

Table 8. Number of produced and accepted preterite forms of the seven verbs used in the fieldwork sessions, divided over speakers. NB that one of the verbs was an originally weak verb.

Speaker	Strong produced	Weak first produced	Weak second produced	Strong accepted	Weak first accepted	Weak second accepted
1 (NE)	2		5			
2 (E)	2	1	4			
3 (E)	2	1	4			
4 (S)	1	2	4	1		
5 (SW)	1	2	4			1
6 (SW/SE)	1	2	4	1	3	1
Total	9	8	25	2	3	2

5.4. Fieldwork Results

The small dataset from the fieldwork suggests a further development. The results of the fieldwork are summarised in Table 8 and Table 9. Table 8 shows us that the second weak conjugation forms were clearly the favourite among speakers, while the strong forms and the first weak conjugation forms were approximately equally common. Only the more southern speakers accepted alternative forms to the ones they volunteered, and those forms were mixed.

Table 9 shows the individual forms of each verb that I expected to find based on the dictionary entries for each verb. The first four verbs, *frause*, *dåi*, *hagge* and *bere*, all have one weak form, the shorter one, that is preferred by all six speakers. For three verbs, one speaker accepted an additional first conjugation form as well as the strong form of *bere – bar.* It is interesting to note that this speaker is the only one to have mixed geographic background (south-western and south-eastern Gotland), both areas representing different Gutnish dialects.

The remaining three verbs, *jeite*, *hitte* and *ligge*, from the admittedly small sample included in the fieldwork demonstrate a different, yet unchaotic, pattern. The distribution is geographic, but the distributed forms and the exact distribution vary from verb to verb. For *jeite*, the north-eastern and eastern speakers only gave and accepted the strong form *åt* – loaned from Swedish – whereas the speakers in the south west and extreme south used the domestic first conjugation weak form *jeitede.* For *hitte*, which was originally a weak verb, all but the north-eastern speaker used the first conjugation weak form *hittede*, while the north-eastern speaker only accepted the second conjugation weak form *hitte.* The south-western speakers accepted the second conjugation

Table 9. Verbs used in the fieldwork with the elicited and expected but not elicited forms and the number of speakers who found the respective form acceptable.

Verb	Conjugation	(Expected) form	No. of users
frause ‘to freeze’	First weak	*frausede*	1
	Second weak	*frauste*	6
	Strong	*fraus*	0
dåi ‘to die’	First weak	*döede*	0
	Second weak	*döde*	6
	Strong	*do*(*g*)	0
hagge ‘to chop’	First weak	*haggede*	1?[a]
	First weak	*huggede*	1
	Second weak	*haggde*	0
	Second weak	*huggde*	6
	Strong	*jegg*/*jågg*	0
bere ‘to carry’	First weak	*berede*	1
	Second weak	*berde*	6
	Strong	*bar*	1
jeite ‘to eat’	First weak	*jeitede*	3
	Second weak	*jeite*	0
	Strong	*at*	0
	Strong	*åt*	3
hitte ‘to find’	First weak	*hittede*	5
	Second weak	*hitte*	3
	Strong	*hatt*	0
ligge ‘to lie’	First weak	*liggede*	0
	Second weak	*liggde*	0
	Strong	*lag*	2
	Strong	*låg*	5

[a] See the note in Table 5.

form as an alternative. Finally, for *ligge* the Swedish loanword *låg* was given by all but the south-western/south-eastern speaker, while the Gutnish strong form *lag* was given by that speaker and accepted by the extreme southern speaker. No weak forms were accepted for this verb. Even though the exact isoglosses differ, there is a clear division along the north-south axis.

While we cannot rely completely on the results from such a small sample, the results from the fieldwork seem to be more or less in line with both the dictionary data and the data from Jakob Karlsson's letters. The speakers generally preferred weak forms of the originally strong verbs, although there were exceptions, including one verb that only elicited strong forms. This verb has no weak preterite forms in the dictionaries either. There are some geographical differences, but given the small sample size, they should be interpreted with caution.

5.5. Overview of Results

Despite its relatively small amount of data, the discussion of Old Gutnish alongside Old Swedish by Noreen (1904) suggests that the Old Gutnish verb system is very much in line with Old Swedish system in the sense of dividing verbs fairly consistently into a strong group and a weak group. This view was confirmed during the collection of Old Gutnish verbs for this study.

The data for Middle Gutnish are very small, although a number of strong verbs can be seen. The first weak forms of strong verbs are from 1840, meaning we can assume that the changes began roughly around this time.

Classical Modern Gutnish, as it is represented in the dictionaries, shows the results of massive changes, shown here in a sample of 131 verbs where 70 are originally strong and 61 originally weak. Only a relatively small number of the originally strong verbs remain strong while a large number now belong to a new group of mixed verbs, which have both strong and weak preterite forms. This is partially confirmed by a study of the letters of Jakob 'Fäi-Jakå' Karlsson, who mostly uses weak forms, often both first and second conjugation of originally strong verbs. There are no obvious patterns as to which strong verbs stayed strong and which became weak. When it comes to the choice between the first or second weak conjugation in the preterite, there is clearly a geographic component, but geography alone cannot be used as an indicator to determine which preterite is preferred. In other words, it is impossible to predict the preterite based on the infinitive, nor can knowledge of historical verb-class membership be relied upon. Additionally, the formation of the supine is also mixed, but does not follow the same patterns as the preterite. The results of this study suggest that the supine cannot be predicted based on the preterite, or from the infinitive or present.

By expanding the group of mixed verbs to include any verb that has both strong and weak preterites, both the same and different supine vowel, or both of the available supine suffixes, we get 77 mixed verbs out of a total of 131.

The changes from Old Gutnish to Classical Modern Gutnish resulted in a situation where it was no longer possible to divide verbs into strong and weak. The results in this paper do not suggest any clear new system of verb

classes, rather they point to an unpredictable distribution of the morphemes involved. Nevertheless, we must remember that the sample investigated is not representative of all Gutnish verbs as it contains a majority of originally strong verbs, while the strong verbs are only a small proportion of all verbs in the language. An investigation of all verbs could find regularities that cannot be seen in the present material.

The fieldwork revealed that the system of mixed verbs prevails to a degree, even though it seems that the second weak conjugation may be gaining ground at the expense of both the strong and the first weak conjugations.

6. Discussion

The results of this study enable us to answer the first three research questions:

- How common is it for historically strong verbs to become weak in Modern Gutnish?
- How common is it for historically strong verbs to have parallel strong and weak forms in Modern Gutnish?
- Is there any movement in the opposite direction, i. e. weak to strong?

Looking at preterites, during the period from Old Gutnish to Classical Modern Gutnish a majority of the strong verbs became mixed, while only a few became weak and a few remained strong. In other words: it is common for strong verbs to become mixed but not very common for them to become weak. The supines cannot be used to answer these questions since it is not possible to say which Modern Gutnish supines are strong and weak respectively.

The use of preterites by individuals, both the Classic Modern Gutnish speaker Jakob Karlsson and the speakers interviewed during the fieldwork sessions, suggests that weak forms may be preferred to a higher degree than reflected in the dictionaries. This is in line with the process behind the making of GOB, where one goal was to find the oldest forms for each word rather than the form most used (see Section 4.2).

In our sample of 61 originally weak verbs, two had acquired strong preterite forms in Classical Modern Gutnish. Movement in the opposite direction (i. e. weak to strong) is present, albeit uncommon. This is in line with Bloch's (2002) results for Standard Swedish and contrary to the common assumption that verb-class membership changes only from strong to weak.

Let us now turn to the remaining two questions:

- Are the developments systematic or singular?
- What explanation(s) can we find for the changes that led to the Modern Gutnish verb system?

The discussion of previous research on strong and weak verbs in Section 3.2 shows that changes in verb-class membership are not uncommon in the Germanic languages. But the numbers shown in this study, as well as the seemingly random selection of first and second weak conjugation forms (in the southern parts of the language area), are indicative of the restructuring of the whole system rather than the class shift of certain low-frequency verbs or verbs belonging to a strong class with a strong analogical connection to a weak class (as discussed by e. g. Bloch 2002, Krygier 1994 and Strik 2015). There is a system-wide change, which is one way of answering the question about the systematicity of the developments.

By looking at each verb within the system-wide change, we have seen that there is no obvious system behind the changes, except for the variation between first and second weak conjugation preterites, which is partly tied to geography. In the following sections of the discussion we will look closer at the geographic variation across Gotland since there is clearly some connection to geography. We will also search for explanations for the changes we found in two common areas of investigation within historical linguistics, 'internal' factors, and language contact. Some internal factors discussed are geographically distributed and will be dealt with in the subsection on geographic variation. Language contact is of course also geographically distributed, and so the section on language contact will connect back to the section on geographic variation. I will summarise the discussion at the end of Section 6.

6.1. Geographic Variation

Data collected from both the dictionary and fieldwork show that the mixed verbs are fairly evenly distributed over the investigated area, i. e. Gotland excluding Fårö. The fieldwork data are small and geographically limited, nevertheless, it should be noted that they cover a significant part of the area where Gutnish is still spoken. The northern, western and central inland parts of Gotland are now dominated by Gotlandic Swedish, where, as we saw in Section 2.3, verbs seem to be strong to a larger degree than in Standard Swedish. But since this can no longer be said to be Gutnish, this variation will not be investigated further although it will be raised in the continued discussion.

As stated in Section 5.1, 68 verbs have preterites belonging to both the first and the second conjugations in Classical Modern Gutnish. Due to the shortcomings of the sources as described in Section 4.2, this may also apply for more than these 68 verbs. Gustavson attributes the variation to geographic differences, stating that the first conjugation is used in the south, whereas the second is used in the north of Gotland (Gustavson 1977 pp. 33–34). It should also be noted that Gustavson does mention a number of verbs which belong to the second weak conjugation in the south of Gotland (ibid.). The geographic

division is thus not complete but there are other factors at work as well. His interpretation is that the northern system is more simplified than the southern and, as I understand it, this is in line with his and other earlier researchers' idea that the areas most remote from Visby are the linguistically most conservative, and thus the least simplified.

Fårö – that was excluded from this study – is another example with its much more complex verb system (see Section 2.2) that includes both of the weak conjugations examined and which likely are lexically distributed (as is the case for most North Germanic languages).

In his doctoral thesis, Gustavson (1948 p. 9) presents a possible explanation for the dominance of the second conjugation in the north, namely a northern tendency towards syncope of the Old Gutnish first conjugation suffix *-aþi* which would mean that the first conjugation suffix would merge with the second conjugation suffix. This explanation has the advantage of fitting very neatly with the fact that the south has kept both weak conjugations. There are also some possible parallel developments such as the present participle suffix *-andi* > *-ṇdi* and the agentive noun suffix *-ari* > *-(a)re*, although these are not perfect cases of syncope as one resulted in a syllabic consonant and the other uses an optional vowel. As far as I understand, the confinement of this syncope to the northern parts of Gotland is also not entirely substantiated.

The overlap between first and second weak conjugation forms is substantial in OLG, with 53 verbs having preterites belonging to both conjugations. This points away from a lexical distribution in the south, which in turn means that, even though the northern system may be simpler, the southern system has also undergone a shift from the traditional lexical distribution of the weak conjugations.

The geographic patterns described above may be indicative of a situation where innovation in the form of simplification of the weak verb system spread throughout the north and middle parts of Gotland, leaving the extreme north (Fårö) and south with more complex systems. The centre of innovation might be assumed to be Gotland's only town Visby which has been an important seat of both commercial and political power throughout most of the past 1,000 years of Gotlandic history and which is situated in the northwest of the island.

In summary, the verbs mixing strong and weak forms are found all over the Gutnish language area. In contrast, verbs mixing first and second weak conjugation forms are mostly found in the south of the area, although fieldwork suggests that this may be changing at present. The lack of first conjugation weak forms in the north may be due to a merger between the first and second weak conjugation suffixes. In the south, the original lexical distinction between verbs with first conjugation weak preterites and those with second conjugation weak preterites has almost been lost and there is now a great overlap between the two conjugations.

6.2. Internal Factors

Gutnish has undergone a number of sound changes and related processes that may have paved the way for the rise of the mixed verbs. These changes may have originally been motivated by contact with other languages, at least some of them appear similar to changes in southern Swedish dialects and Danish, but this will not be further explored here. Instead we will focus on the effects these changes have had on the Gutnish verb.

As mentioned in Section 6.1, the patterns governing the choice of weak conjugation may be based on the syncope in the northern parts of Gotland of the Old Gutnish first weak conjugation suffix *-aþi.* The syncope would have led to a merger between the first and second weak conjugation suffixes. When this syncope happened is not mentioned directly but Gustavson believes it happened after the *a* had turned into *e* (Gustavson 1948 p. 9), a change which took place around the end of the 17th century (pp. 12–13). Whether this syncope was as systematic as Gustavson states is not entirely clear and so this explanation remains an unverified possibility.

A morphophonological development that may have facilitated the mixing of strong and weak verbs was mentioned in Section 5.2, namely the confusion in the formation of the supine that resulted from the merger of the Old Gutnish suffixes *-it* and *-at* into Modern Gutnish *-e.* This development made it less obvious whether a supine belonged to a strong or a weak verb class. The loss of final *-t* started happening before the 18th century (Gustavson 1948 p. 208) and the same is true of *a* > *e* (pp. 12–13). According to Gustavson, the *i* in *-it* was lowered to *e* after the *t* was lost, in other words somewhat later than the other two changes (p. 33). In fact, the *i* was not lost over all of Gotland, a few parishes on northern and north-eastern Gotland kept the *-i* (ibid.). However, the supine usually acquired the suffix *-e* by analogy to the infinitive, while other words ending in the Old Gutnish *-it* kept the *-i* (ibid.). We can assume that the merger of the supine forms was completed, or at least well under way, by the end of the 18th century.

Another historical development that may have contributed to the mixing of strong and weak verbs is the merger of the various Old Gutnish present tense forms into the two Modern Gutnish ways of forming the present tense. See Section 2.2 for details.

Dating this merger is not straightforward. As mentioned, according to Gustavson (1948 pp. 12–13) the change of unstressed *a* to *e* did not take place any earlier than the end of the 17th century. Neogard (Neogard & Wollin 2009) still has *-a* in 1732, as does a poem written in 1726 (Lundell & Hesselman 1937 p. 160). However, another poem from 1724 (Lundell & Hesselman 1937 pp. 517–519) uses the infinitive *vridä* ‘twist’ where *ä* stands for *e.* Furthermore, the poem from 1726 includes the masculine adjectives *gilda* (<**gilder*) and *fijna* (<**finer*), where the *e* has already turned into *a* before (a subsequently lost) *r.* The adjective forms are more similar to the present tense forms both in having an *r* follow the vowel and, not in all but in many cases, having the

Table 10. Number and person agreement on verbs in northern Halland, according to Horn af Åminne (2022 p. 152). The singular and plural have different root vowels.

	Singular	Plural
First person	*ga* 'gave'	*gôvum*
Second person	*ga*(*st*)	*gôven*
Third person	*ga*	*gôve*

acute accent which is likely to facilitate the weakening of *a* to *e* compared to the infinitive with its grave accent (Kock 1878 pp. 108–117). What we can take away from this is that the merger of the present tense suffixes was likely complete by the early 18th century, although some dialects may have taken longer.

A possible mechanism for the retainment of strong conjugations is mentioned by Areskog (1936 p. 181, based on Lundberg 1921). In the south-western dialects of Swedish, verbs continued being inflected for plural persons longer than in the north-eastern dialects (see also Horn af Åminne 2022), and since the plural preterite forms of strong verbs usually had an ablaut vowel different from the singular (see Table 10), the whole ablaut system in these south-western dialects was less likely to break down.

Within Gutnish, the dialect of Fårö is the only one that kept separate plural forms of verbs into the 19th century (see Section 2.2) and indeed the strong verbs in Fårö Gutnish have remained strong to a much larger degree than the other Gutnish dialects.

All of the historical changes mentioned here seem likely to have happened sometime between the end of the 17th century and the beginning of the 19th century. In other words, they all happened during the century and a half leading up to the emergence of the mixed verbs in Modern Gutnish, and they may well have contributed towards this development.

6.3. Language Contact

During the period of interest, the 18th and 19th centuries, Gotland's strongest ties were with Sweden and especially the neighbouring areas of Sweden, Småland and Öland. Standard Swedish became the language of administration and schooling, as well as of the Church, and so was an important contact language for Gutnish, which is clear by looking at the spread of Gotlandic Swedish from Visby outward. Swedish is now the single-most important language on Gotland and there are no monolingual Gutnish speakers; af Hällström-Reijonen (2018) has shown how 18th century Standard Swedish was more accepting of variation between the first and second weak conjuga-

tions than later Standard Swedish (see Section 3.2). But Standard Swedish became more rigid in its division into verb classes during the 19th century and so seems like a less likely candidate for a role model for the changes in the opposite direction in Gutnish. Nevertheless, the more liberal approach taken in earlier Standard Swedish may have been found in contemporary Gutnish. In other words, we cannot be sure that 18th century Gutnish had a strict division between the two weak classes.

Other instances of language contact during the relevant period are connected to immigration, mainly from the Swedish mainland but also to some degree from the east (see Section 3.4). Immigrants from the Swedish mainland often came from Småland and Öland (Sandberg 1952, Siltberg & Åkerman 1991). A small number of immigrants from Estonia settled on Gotland and seem to have left some linguistic traces (Papp 1988).

In the dialects of eastern Småland – that is of the coastal area facing Gotland – described by Areskog (1936), we find a situation that is in many ways similar to the one on Gotland: Many verbs have mixed paradigms containing both strong and weak forms, often parallel, and there is a strong tendency for weak verbs to have past participles formed with the strong suffix *-ən* (Areskog 1936 pp. 268f.).[19]

In Areskog's section on weak verbs (1936 pp. 198ff.), we find another parallel to Gutnish. We learn here that in some northern parts of eastern Småland, verbs formerly belonging to the first conjugation have shifted to the second conjugation (example 10), unless this would result in clusters that were too hard to pronounce (example 11; forms from Areskog 1936, pp. 198ff.):

(10) *ànədə ~ àndə* 'had a hunch'
sìnədə ~ sìntə 'dried up'
hỳrədə ~ hỳrḍə 'rented'

(11) *jìstnədə ~ *jìstndə* 'became leaky'
*rìklədə ~ *rìkldə* 'shook'
*nỳtjədə ~ *nỳtjdə* 'used'

A few cases of class shift in the opposite direction are also mentioned, this time from the south of Småland. The geographic distribution is surprisingly

[19] Areskog gives what she thinks is the obviously most important reason for the mergers ('föreningar') between strong and weak conjugations, namely the influence of the causative verbs caused by the merger of the present stems (Areskog 1936 p. 183). What this means in practice is that many inchoative strong verbs come paired with a derived causative weak verb, for example Sw. *brinna* 'to burn' (strong, inchoative) and *bränna* 'to burn' (weak, causative). In Småland, the usual phonetic distinction between these two categories of verbs has often been eradicated by some vowel change and so the present stem is identical and the verbs differ only in past tenses. This would then lead to speakers increasingly mixing the two verbs that are now similar not only in semantics but also in form. Since the Gutnish stressed vowels have not merged to any significant degree (see Gustavson 1940, 1948), this explanation does not in itself work for Gutnish.

similar to the situation on Gotland as described by Gustavson (see Section 6.1), with the second conjugation dominating in the north and the first dominating in the south. This similarity, however, is surely coincidental since the migration from Småland to Gotland did not follow a north-to-north and south-to-south pattern.

The class shift seems to mostly have affected the preterite forms, while it seems the supine forms with either *-ə* or *-t* are not geographically distributed in Småland. This again is similar to Gutnish, probably because the supine in traditional Småland dialects developed in a similar way to Gutnish, with historical sound changes blurring the covariation between the supine and other forms marking verb-class membership.

We have to assume that there were both children and a considerable number of immigrated adults learning Gutnish during the 19th century, the children as a first language (L1) and the adults as a second language (L2). In cases where the children's parents were immigrants, the L1 learners would have received input both from native speakers and from the adult L2 learners. In other words, children of mixed parents as well as children of two immigrated parents were likely to receive input in both Gutnish and Småland dialects.

As mentioned in Section 3.3, Braunmüller (2009 p. 67) claims that prolonged contact between closely related languages inevitably leads to code-mixing. We can assume that the children whose input came from traditional Småland dialects and Gutnish, closely related varieties, did indeed mix their two languages to some degree. As Knooihuizen et al. (2018) showed, such mixing need not necessarily lead to changes, even though it often does.

Since the adult immigrants spoke Swedish dialects, closely related to Gutnish, there was probably little incentive for most to learn the new language perfectly and so we can very well assume that many adult learners also mixed their two varieties. The verbs of the Småland dialects might then be a source for weak forms of strong verbs in the mixed variety spoken by both adult immigrants and their children.

But immigration levels were unlikely to have been high enough to break down existing language communities, and so it seems less likely that a majority of children at the time would have learned Gutnish as imperfectly as the immigrated adults. It is certainly plausible that children of immigrants struggled to integrate into the existing Gutnish-speaking community and so might never have learned 'proper' Gutnish, but there were still many children who only received Gutnish input and who would have had little motivation to adopt the mixed variety of the immigrants. Thus, immigration is unlikely to have caused the pervasive changes in the Gutnish verb system. Instead, we need to look for additional mechanisms.

Nineteenth century Gotlanders were subjected to both Standard Swedish, in schools and churches, and Småland dialects, through new neighbours and family members. It is possible to imagine how these two varieties may have pushed Gutnish in the same direction but through different mechanisms. Småland dialects were presumably present in the everyday lives of many Gut-

nish speakers through neighbours, spouses, etc., and there were also a considerable number of speakers who had Småland dialects as their only L1 or as one of two L1s. To all these Gutnish speakers, weak preterite forms of many historically strong verbs were available as an alternative to the strong forms that prevailed in Gutnish. Likewise, the partial mix up of the first and second weak conjugations was available to these speakers.

Standard Swedish, being less present in everyday conversations but still familiar to the Gutnish speakers, may have had a 'mirror' function, enabling speakers to discover what was typical in their own language when compared to Standard Swedish. The tendency to use weak forms of strong verbs would then have stood out as typical of the language spoken on Gotland, since this tendency was not seen in Standard Swedish. In a process of cross-linguistic overcorrection (Kupisch 2014), speakers then began using weak forms of strong verbs in Gutnish in order to keep their own way of speaking separate from Standard Swedish. This image is further supported by the observation that Gotlandic Swedish goes in the opposite direction, adding strong preterites to historically weak verbs. Speakers of Swedish on Gotland may then, mutatis mutandis, also be said to overcorrect in order to avoid the mixed forms of the local language.

Whether we are actually dealing with a case of cross-linguistic overcorrection in the sense of Kupisch (2014) is not obvious from the results of this study, but it is certainly a possibility. Some circumstantial evidence for this interpretation can be provided: Firstly, a very proficient speaker, Jakob 'Fäi-Jakå' Karlsson, who lived during the period when the change seems to have begun, can be seen using the innovative forms, sometimes in addition to the old forms. In other words, the systematic change is happening in the centre of the speech community and not (only) at its fringes. Secondly, it is the innovative forms that were transmitted to the following generations of speakers, at least if the small number of informants in this study can be used as evidence. Thirdly, the timing of the change is also of interest. Prior to 1842, schooling was optional, but became compulsory for all children in this year. Even though most children could probably already read and write prior to this, the compulsory schooling may have increased the exposure to Standard Swedish.

6.4. Summary

This paper has presented a number of possible explanations for the Modern Gutnish verb system with its numerous weak forms. Now it is time to combine this information into a coherent understanding of what has happened.

First of all, what is described here is in fact at least two different but possibly interconnected developments: 1) The large-scale shift of verbs from a strong verb class to a weak verb class with the possibility of retaining the strong forms as alternatives. 2) The tendency for both originally weak and originally strong verbs to belong to two parallel weak conjugations. A possi-

ble third development expresses itself in the way supines and past participles are formed more or less independently of verb-class membership.

These developments need not necessarily be due to the same causes. However, it is clear that when combined, they constitute a major change with systemic implications for the Modern Gutnish verb, especially if we also take the simplification of the present tense into consideration, as mentioned in Section 2.2.

The Swedish dialects of Småland appear to provide a suitable role model. They have many strong verbs with parallel weak forms, as well as weak verbs with forms from two conjugations. Additionally, we know that there was significant immigration from Småland to Gotland around the time when the Gutnish verb system began to change. Hence, contact with Småland dialects seems to be the perfect catalyst.

But as we saw in the example of Frisian and Dutch language contact (Knooihuizen et al. 2018), close contact between two languages does not necessarily lead to major changes, and the situation with the immigrants from Småland does not seem particularly extreme. It would thus be desirable to include conducive factors in order to arrive at a more convincing explanation for the facts. And indeed, several such factors present themselves, both sociolinguistic and morphophonological.

Kupisch's (2014) concept of cross-linguistic overcorrection offered a sociolinguistic motivator for the changes, the (unconscious) desire to keep one's languages separate. Multilingual Gutnish speakers used the means available to them to keep Gutnish – their everyday language – separate from the more formal but also familiar Standard Swedish. As regards morphophonology, several historical developments may have facilitated this process by loosening the ties between verbs and their verb classes. Together, these factors form a formidable growing ground for the changes outlined above.

In his account of the breakdown of the Old English strong verb system, Krygier (1994 pp. 248–253) draws similar conclusions (see Section 3.2). He sees several morphophonological conducive factors but views the Norman invasion and the substantial societal changes it entailed, not least in terms of the language situation, as the single most important cause for the changes. Of course, in this case, the Normans spoke an imperfect English where originally strong verbs had become weak and this then trickled down into the general population, presumably because the Norman way of speaking was of high prestige. In other words, the situation is different from the Gutnish one in terms of sociolinguistics but it is very similar in its complexity regarding causation and conductivity.

7. Conclusions

We have seen how the Old Gutnish verb system, which was very similar to other Old Norse verb systems, continued its strict division into strong and

weak verb classes until the end of the 18th century. The system then fairly rapidly underwent substantial changes, resulting, by the end of the 19th century, in a system with a large share of mixed verbs and the possibility of using both the first and the second weak conjugations for the same verb. During the same time, the formation of the supine also underwent changes that led to a blurring of the boundaries between strong and weak. This may have since developed into a system where most verbs have a weak preterite, although the data are too small to be certain. It is also uncertain what has happened to the supine since the late 19th century.

These changes were driven by several different factors, including the onset of immigration from Småland and increased exposure to Standard Swedish, but also a number of earlier morphophonological changes. The interchangeability of the two weak conjugations may be explained solely as the result of these morphophonological changes, but it may also be part of a larger, systemic change that also included the shift of verbs from strong to weak classes. The sociolinguistic mechanics behind the changes described were based on a (unconscious) tendency amongst Gotlanders to keep their native Gutnish different from the language they learned in schools and churches, Standard Swedish.

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Sammanfattning

I den här artikeln undersöker jag de starka verbens utveckling genom gutniskans historia och letar efter förklaringar till de förändringar som iakttas. Undersökningen av verbens utveckling över tid bygger på en jämförelse mellan forngutniska, närmare bestämt Gutalagen (Peel 2006) och Gutasagan (Peel 1999), och 1800-talets gutamål såsom det finns bevarat i *Gotländsk ordbok* (Gustavson m. fl. 1918) och *Ordbok över laumålet på Gotland* (Klintberg & Gustavson 1972). Som ytterligare stöd används ett antal kortare texter från tiden mellan dessa två hållpunkter. Det visar sig att det finns en omfattande övergång av starka verb till svag preteritumböjning, mer omfattande än vad som är känt från de större germanska språken. Det går också att datera förändringen till 1800-talet och hos en dialektskribent från senare delen av 1800-talet, Jakob »Fäi-Jakå» Karlsson, ser vi en blandning av starka och svaga preteritumformer, delvis inom samma verb. Supinum och particip genomgår en delvis annan utveckling där starka former förekommer även hos ursprungligen svaga verb. Uppdelningen i starka och svaga verb är alltså inte lika tydlig i 1800-talets gutamål. En (pga. Covid 19-pandemin väldigt liten) fältstudie tyder på att utvecklingen fortsatt i samma riktning sedan 1800-talet.

Diskussionen kring drivkrafterna bakom dessa förändringar handlar både om språkinterna faktorer och om språkkontakt. Jag utgår ifrån en dokumenterad invandring av smålänningar och ölänningar till Gotland från 1700-talets slut och framåt och hittar i östra Smålands dialekter en situation som påminner om den på Gotland: många ursprungligen starka verb har parallella svaga preteritumformer. Kontakt i sig är dock inte en drivkraft för förändring. Jag utgår ifrån att de småländska svaga formerna utgjort en förebild för gutamålstalare i vardagen medan rikssvenska starka former fungerat som en »spegel» som visat gutamålstalarna hur språket på Gotland skiljer sig från »fastländskan». Gutamålstalarna plockade sedan upp de svaga preteritumformerna i ett (omedvetet) försök att hålla sitt språk åtskilt från rikspråket (»cross-linguistic overcorrection», Kupisch 2014). Detta finner vidare stöd i »gotländskan» (det gotländska regionala standardspråket) där man istället

finner starka preteritumformer hos en rad ursprungligen svaga verb. Slutligen konstaterar jag att en rad morfofonologiska förändringar under gutniskans historia underlättat för förändringarna hos de starka verben genom att börja sudda ut gränserna mellan starka och svaga verb i presensformerna och i supinum.

Appendix A. List of the 131 Verbs Compared between Old Gutnish and Classical Modern Gutnish

Sub verbo	English gloss	Old Gutnish infinitive	Weak, strong, mixed		Weak conjugation
			Old Gutnish	Modern Gutnish	
baka	bake	*baka*	weak	weak	both
bedja	bid, ask for	*biþia*	strong	mixed	first
binda	bind	*binda*	strong	mixed	first
bita	bite		strong	mixed	first
bjuda	bid, invite	*biauþa*	strong	mixed	first
blåsa	blow		strong	mixed	both
bo	live (somewhere)	*boa*	strong	weak	second
brinna	burn		strong	mixed	first
brista	burst		strong	strong	none
bryta	break	*briauta*	strong	mixed	first
bränna	burn	*brenna*	weak	weak	both
bygga	build	*byggia*	weak	weak	both
byta	exchange	*byta*	weak	weak	both
bära	carry	*biera*	strong	mixed	both
draga	pull	*draga*	strong	mixed	both
dricka	drink	*drikka*	strong	mixed	both
drypa	dribble		strong	mixed	both
drömma	dream	*droyma*	weak	weak	both
dö	die		strong	mixed	both
falla	fall		strong	mixed	second
fara	go	*fara*	strong	mixed	both
finna	find		strong	strong	none
flytta	move	*flytia*	weak	weak	both
fresta	entice, tempt	*fresta*	weak	weak	first
frysa	be cold		strong	mixed	both
få	receive	*fa*	strong	strong	none
fälla	fell	*fella*	weak	weak	both
föda	feed	*fyþa*	weak	weak	both
följa	follow	*fylgia*	weak	weak	both
föra	lead	*fyra*	weak	weak	both
gifta	get married	*gipta*	weak	weak	first

Sub verbo	English gloss	Old Gutnish infinitive	Weak, strong, mixed		Weak conjugation
			Old Gutnish	Modern Gutnish	
gitta	have to	*gieta*	strong	mixed	second
giva	give	*giefa*	strong	mixed	second (and third?)
gro	grow	*groa*	strong	weak	second
gå	go	*ganga*	strong	strong	none
gälda	pay	*gielda*	strong	weak	first
göda	fertilise, cram	*gyþa*	weak	weak	both
göra	do, make	*giera*	weak	weak	second
hava	have	*hafa*	weak	weak	second (and/or third?)
heta	be called	*haita*	strong	mixed	first
hindra	prevent (someone)	*hindra*	weak	weak	first
hitta	find	*hitta*	weak	weak	both
hjälpa	help	*hielpa*	strong	mixed	both
hugga	chop		strong	mixed	both
hygga	have fun	*hyggia*	weak	weak	first
hålla	hold	*halda*	strong	mixed	both
häva	lift		strong	mixed	both
höra	hear	*hoyra*	weak	weak	second
kalla	call	*kalla*	weak	weak	both
klappa	pat, clap	*klappa*	weak	weak	both
klippa	cut	*klippa*	weak	weak	second
klyva	cleave	*kliaufa*	strong	mixed	both
komma	come	*kuma*	strong	strong	none
känna	know	*kenna*	weak	weak	second
köpa	buy	*kaupa*	weak	weak	both
le	laugh		strong	mixed	second
leva	live	*lifa*	weak	weak	both
lida	suffer	*liþa*	strong	mixed	first
ligga	lie (down)	*liggia*	strong	strong	none
ljuda	sound		strong	mixed	both
ljuga	lie		strong	mixed	both
lotta	draw lots	*luta*	weak	weak	first
lova	promise	*lufa*	weak	weak	both
lycka	lock in, conceal	*lykia*	weak	weak	first
lyda	obey	*lyþa*	weak	weak	first
lysa	shine	*lysa*	weak	weak	both
låta	let	*lata*	strong	mixed	both
lägga	lay, set	*leggia*	weak	weak	both

Sub verbo	English gloss	Old Gutnish infinitive	Weak, strong, mixed		Weak conjugation
			Old Gutnish	Modern Gutnish	
lända	land	*lenda*	weak	weak	both
löpa	run		strong	mixed	both
lösa	solve	*loysa*	weak	weak	both
mista	lose	*mista*	weak	weak	first
märka	notice, mark	*merkia*	weak	weak	both
niga	curtsey		strong	mixed	both
rinna	run, flow		strong	strong	none
rödja	clear (forest)	*lagryþia*	weak	weak	first
se	see	*sia*	strong	strong	none
segla	sail	*sigla*	weak	weak	first
simma	swim		strong	mixed	first
sitta	sit	*sitia*	strong	mixed	first
sjuda	boil	*siauþa*	strong	weak	first
sjunga	sing		strong	mixed	both
sjunka	sink	*sinqua*	strong	mixed	both
skilja	differ	*skilia*	weak	weak	second
skola	shall	*skulu*	weak	weak	second
skriva	write	*skrifa*	weak	mixed	both
skämma	become bad, spoil	*skemma*	weak	weak	first
skära	cut	*skiera*	strong	mixed	both
slå	hit	*sla*	strong	strong	none
släppa	let go	*sleppa*	weak	weak	both
sova	sleep	*sufa*	strong	mixed	both
spilla	spill	*spilla*	weak	weak	second
springa	run		strong	mixed	first
spritta	startle		strong	mixed	first
spy	vomit		strong	weak	second
stiga	rise		strong	mixed	both
stjäla	steal	*stiela*	strong	mixed	both
stå	stand	*standa*	strong	strong	none
städja	stabilise	*steþia*	weak	weak	second
suga	suck		strong	mixed	both
supa	drink, eat soup		strong	mixed	both
svara	answer	*suara*	weak	weak	both
sviga	give way, sag	*suiga*	strong	mixed	first
svika	fail (someone)		strong	strong	none
svära	swear		strong	mixed	both
säga	say	*segia*	weak	weak	second
sälja	sell	*selia*	weak	weak	both

Sub verbo	English gloss	Old Gutnish infinitive	Weak, strong, mixed		Weak conjugation
			Old Gutnish	Modern Gutnish	
sända	send	*senda*	weak	weak	both
sätta	sett	*setia*	weak	weak	both
söka	try, seek	*sykia*	weak	weak	both
taga	take	*taka*	strong	strong	none
tigga	beg		strong	weak	both
tro	believe	*troa*	weak	weak	second
träda	tread		strong	mixed	both
tvinga	force	*þuinga*	strong	mixed	first
tycka	think (opinion)	*þykkia*	weak	weak	both
tälja	tell, count	*telia*	weak	weak	both
vara	be	*vara*	strong	strong	none
veta	know	*vita*	weak	weak	second
viga	marry	*vigia*	weak	weak	both
vika	fold		strong	mixed	both
vilja	want	*vilia*	weak	weak	second
vräka	throw away, force away	*reka*	strong	weak	both
vänja	get used to	*venia*	weak	weak	second
värja	defend	*veria*	weak	weak	both
väva	weave		strong	mixed	both
växa	grow		strong	weak	both
yrka	work, concern with	*yrkia*	weak	weak	first
äga	own	*aiga*	weak	mixed	both
äta	eat	*ieta*	strong	mixed	first
öka	increase	*auka*	weak	weak	both