Unit 3. Old English and Anglo-Saxon England

History of the English Language (G5061322)

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3.1. The Heptarchy and its impact on language: Old English dialects

3.2. The advent of Christianity and its influence on language: The alphabet and further Latin borrowing

3.3. The Scandinavian invasions and settlements and their impact on the English language: Borrowing from Old Norse

3.4. Main features of the language in the Old English period

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3.1.1 The Heptarchy

Old English period

Germanic invasions (449 A.D.) – Norman Conquest (1066)

- Angles, Saxons and Jutes were very closely related and probably regarded themselves as one people → ***Engle*** 'the Angles'
- Their land came to be known as ***Engla-land***, 'the land of the Angles'.
- Angles, Saxons and Jutes brought with them a number of closely related Germanic dialects which would become the roots of English (***Englisc***) some generations after the settlement.
- One century after the invasions seven separate kingdoms were formed → **the Heptarchy**.

3.1.1 The Heptarchy

- The Anglo-Saxons were organized in a number of small kingdoms under local chiefs.
- **Seven kingdoms**:

Northumbria, Mercia, East Anglia, Essex, Sussex, Kent, Wessex

- The boundaries of these kingdoms were **not stable**. The balance of power fluctuated between them, and there was a gradual **southward shift** of the centres of power and civilization.

3.1.1 The Heptarchy

- **Before the 7th century**, East Anglia and Kent were centres of power.

7th century → period of **Northumbrian** ascendancy

8th century → period of **Mercian** ascendancy

9th century → leadership of **Wessex**

by the year 800 only four great kingdoms remained:
Northumbria, Mercia, East Anglia and Wessex

3.1.1 The Heptarchy

- The kings of Wessex finally unified the country:

King Alfred The Great (871- 899) saved the south and west of England from the Danes. The north and east were occupied by Scandinavian settlements (the Danelaw) (Section 3.3)

King Edgar (959-975) became king over the whole of England, including areas settled by the Danes, and was recognized as overlord of Wales and Scotland. Unification of the country.

3.1.2 Old English dialects

- The **earliest** extant **written records of OE** date from a **little before AD 700**. Thus, the late 7th c. or early 8th c. can be established as a convenient original moment for literary OE.
- Pre-literary or **Primitive Old English** (**PrimOE**) can be reconstructed by means of inscriptions.

The anklebone of a roe deer, found in Caistor-by-Norwich and dated to the 5th century. This is the earliest runic inscription yet found in England. The word written here means 'roe'.

https://www.arild-hauge.com/eanglor.htm

3.1.2 Old English dialects

- Old English has **four major dialects** which correspond to the areas settled by the different Germanic tribes:
  - Kentish → Kent and part of Hampshire
  - West Saxon → south of the Thames except Kent
  - Mercian → between the rivers Thames and Humber
  - Northumbrian → north of the river Humber

3.1.2 Old English dialects

- Mercian and Northumbrian share many features and are usually grouped together as **Anglian** dialects.
- In addition to regional variation, there must have been variation influenced by (**extra-linguistic**) **factors** such as social position, age and gender (cf. **Uniformitarian Principle**, i.e., the processes which we observe in the present can help us gain knowledge about processes in the past).

3.1.2 Old English dialects

Northumbriam:

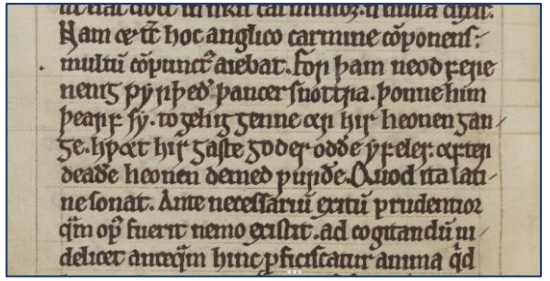
- Very few extant texts:
  - The runic inscriptions of the Ruthwell Cross
  - The runic inscriptions on Franks Casket

  - The two earliest Mss. of *Cædmon's Hymn* (8th c.; also kept in a West-Saxon version)

3.1.2 Old English dialects

Northumbriam:

- Very few extant texts:
  - The earliest Mss. of *Bede's Death-song*

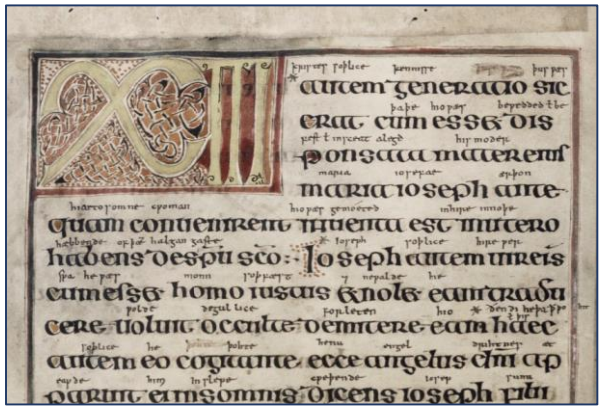


  - The 10th c. glosses on the *Lindisfarne Gospels* and the *Durham Ritual*

3.1.2 Old English dialects

Mercian:

- Very few extant texts. Mercian is kept mainly in:
  - the collections of charters of the Mercian kings and the 9th c. interlinear gloss on the *Vespasian Psalter*
  - the 10th c. gloss on the *Rushworth Gospels*



Kentish:

- Only written records: the *Kentish Charters* and some glosses.

3.1.2 Old English dialects

West Saxon:

- the only OE dialect which is represented by a good number of texts.
- From the late 9th c., coinciding with the hegemony of Wessex with king Alfred, the West Saxon dialect reached the status of a **written standard language** or **literary koiné** (prestigious; supraregional).
  - This fact accounts, in part, for the abundance of West Saxon writings as compared to those showing other dialectal varieties.
  - This is also the main reason for the selection of West Saxon as the basis of study in most OE grammars.

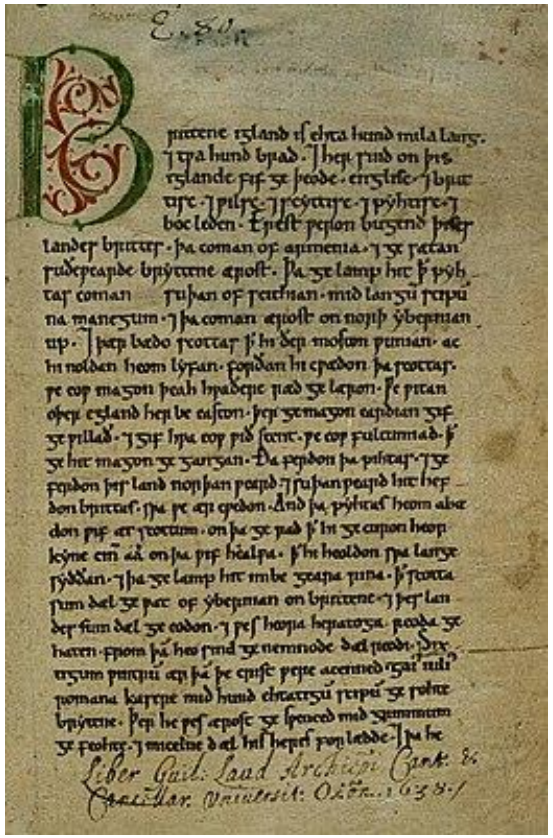
3.1.2 Old English dialects

West Saxon:

- Within this dialect, we can establish a further difference between:

a) **Early West Saxon** (eWS) or **Alfredian West Saxon**

- dialect used in the late 9th c. and the early years of the 10th c.
- dialect in which the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and the translations undertaken at the School of Alfred (e.g. translation of *Orosius*, *Cura Pastoralis*) were written



Peterborough Chronicle

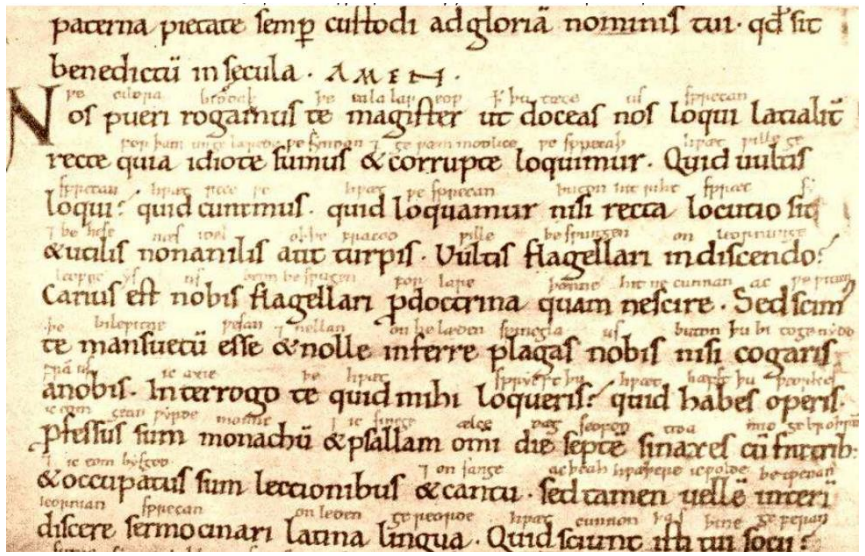
3.1.2 Old English dialects

West Saxon:

- Within this dialect, we can establish a further difference between:

b) **Late West Saxon** (lWS) or **Classical OE**

- dialectal variety found in documents from the late 10th c. and early 11th c.
- dialect of the prose works of Wulfstan and Ælfric. Ælfric was one of the most prolific writers in the period and adopted the West Saxon standard in his writings. He was concerned also with the revival of Latin learning (*Grammar*; *Colloquy of the occupations*).



Colloquy of the occupations

3.1.2 Old English dialects

Northumbrian, Mercian, Kentish, West Saxon

- The linguistic features distinguishing these four major OE dialect areas are slight in comparison with those that developed later from the ME period onwards.

- The **Old English material** from 600 to 1150 that have come down to us amount to **ca. 3,000 texts** and **over three million words**.

  - digitized in the *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus*, an online database consisting of at least one copy of every surviving Old English text. In some cases, more than one copy is included, if it is significant because of dialect or date. This corpus is the basis of the *Dictionary of Old English*: https://www.doe.utoronto.ca/pages/index.html

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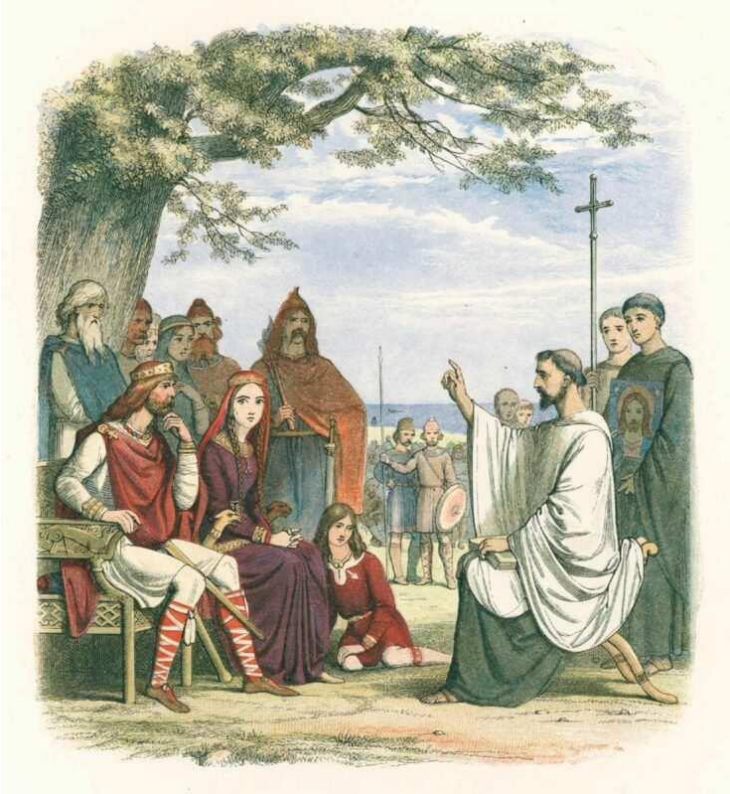
The advent of Christianity and its influence on language

- Christianity had been introduced to parts of Britain during the times of Roman Rule on the island, but no great impact.

- Two directions:
  - **Celtic church** (St. Columba's mission, ca. 630 → Iona, bishop Aidan) penetrating from the north-west.
  - **Roman church** (St. Augustine's mission, ca. 597 → Thanet, Kent) penetrating from the south-east. Conversion of the king of Kent, Æðelbirht



Augustine preaching to King Æðelbirht

The advent of Christianity and its influence on language

- Angles and angels, as reported by the Venerable Bede:

> Walking one morning in the marketplace at Rome, [the man who later became Pope Gregory the Great] came upon some fair-haired boys about to be sold as slaves and was told that they were from the island of Britain and were pagans. […] He therefore again asked, what was the name of that nation and was answered that they were called Angles. 'Right,' said he, 'for they have an angelic face, and it is befitting that such should be co-heirs with the angels in heaven.
>
> (Baugh & Cable 2000: 80)

The advent of Christianity and its influence on language

- The introduction of Christianity had a number of significant **effects**:
  - (i) the building of **churches** and the establishment of monasteries, which became **centres of culture**;
  - (ii) the introduction of the **Roman alphabet**; and
  - (iii) the adoption of **Latin as the language of religion and ecclesiastical learning**
    - ➢ many **borrowings** entered the English language: loanwords, loan-translations, and loan-renditions and semantic borrowings (native words acquiring new meanings in imitation to Latin words)

3.2.1 Introduction of the Roman alphabet

- Before the introduction of the Roman alphabet, the Anglo-Saxons used the **runic alphabet** or **futhork/futhark**, probably an adaptation of the Etruscan alphabet (cf. unit 2, inscription on Golden Horn of Gallehus; below 3.2.). Runes had angular shapes, devised to be carved (cf. OE *wrītan* 'scratch, write') on stone, bone or wood (cf. OE *bōc* 'book, beech').

The runic alphabet (Older Futhark), from Findell (2014: 18)

Rune	Transliteration	Sound value
ᚠ	f	[f]
ᚢ	u	[u]
ᚦ	þ	[θ]
ᚨ	a	[a]
ᚱ	r	[r]
ᚲ	k	[k]
ᚷ	g	[g]
ᚹ	w	[w]
ᚺ	h	[h]
ᚾ	n	[n]
ᛁ	i	[i]
ᛃ	j	[j]
ᛈ	p	[p]
ᛇ	ï	[i] (?)
ᛉ	z	[z]
ᛊ	s	[s]
ᛏ	t	[t]
ᛒ	b	[b]
ᛖ	e	[e]
ᛗ	m	[m]
ᛚ	l	[l]
ᛜ	ŋ	[ŋ], [ŋg], [iŋg]
ᛞ	d	[d]
ᛟ	o	[o]

3.2.1 Introduction of the Roman alphabet

- The original Gmc. futhark consisted of 24 characters or runes. In the **Anglo-Saxon runic alphabet**, the original series of 24 runes was extended to **31** by several new runes added at the end of the series. The name **'futhark'** is an **acronym** of the first six letters of the runic alphabet or rune-row. Each rune had its own individual name, which contained the sound represented by the rune (i.e. they have acrophonic names).

e.g.

**fehu*	'cattle, wealth'
**uruR*	'shower'? 'aurochs'?
**þunsaR*	'ogre'
**ansuZ*	'god'
**raiðu*	'ride'
**kauna*	'boil'

- futhark or futhork?

3.2.1 Introduction of the Roman alphabet

- The corpus of English runic inscriptions is small. The most famous of English runic inscriptions are those on the **Franks Casket** (c. 700) and on the **Ruthwell Cross** (Dumfriesshire; c. 8th c.).

The Franks Casket, as displayed in the British Museum

The Ruthwell Cross

Decode, by transliterating, the messages below written in Present Day English using the Older Futhark alphabet:

1. ᛟᚴᛞ᛫ᚠᚱᛁᛈᛁᚠᚾ᛫ᛁᛈ᛫ᚠᚢᚾ

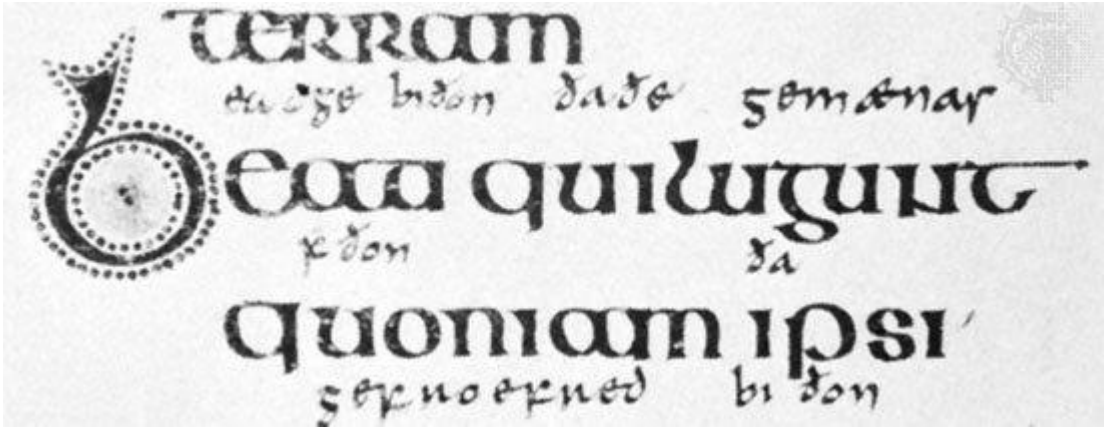
2. ᛁ᛫ᛇᛘᛘ᛫ᛞᛘᚠᛞ᛫ᛈᛘᛟᛈᚴᛘ

3. ᚦᛘ᛫ᛏᚱᚢᚦ᛫ᛁᛈ᛫ᛟᚢᛏ᛫ᚦᛘᚱᛘ

4. ᛟᚾᛘ᛫ᛇᛗᚠᚴᚴ᛫ᛇᛏᛘᛈ᛫ᚠᛟᚱ᛫ᛗᚠᚾ

3.2.1 Introduction of the Roman alphabet

- In the 7th c. the **Roman alphabet** and the **insular script** or hand were introduced into Britain by the Irish monks who converted Northumbria. Very soon, the Roman alphabet became widely used and futhork disappeared. The letters were adopted with the sound value associated to them in medieval Latin.



Insular script *(Lindisfarne Gospels)*

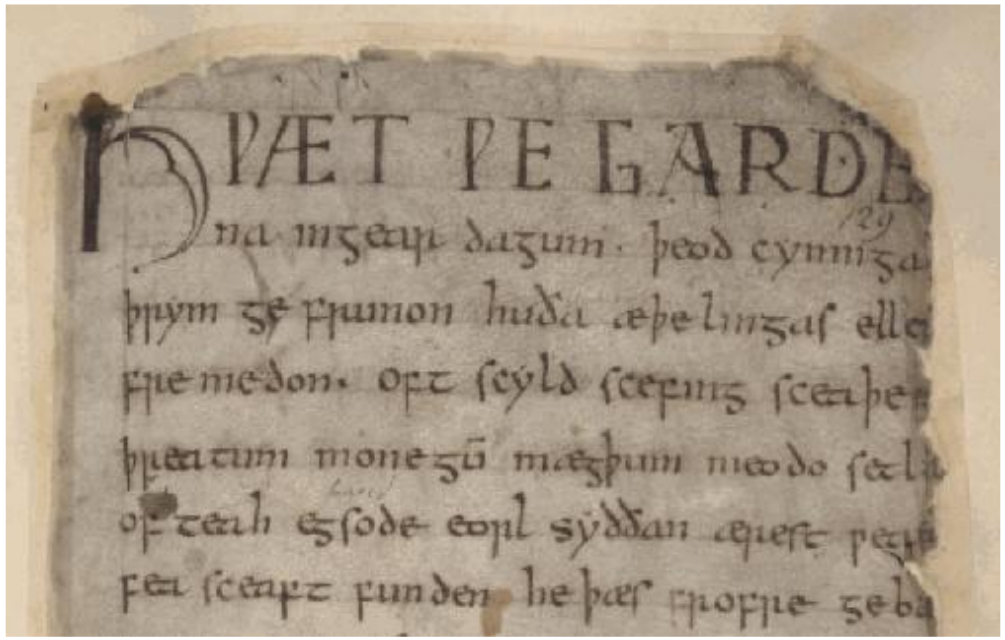
3.2.1 Introduction of the Roman alphabet

- The **Roman alphabet** used in Britain showed, however, certain **peculiarities**:

1. Three letters were rarely used: <q>, <x> and <z> for /kw/, /ks/ and /ts/.
2. Two runes were adapted to supplement the Roman alphabet:
   - <þ> 'thorn' [Θ] / [ð]
   - <ƿ> 'wynn' /w/ (normally regularized to <w> in modern editions of Old English texts)
3. Some letters had especial forms in the insular script:
   - <æ> 'ash'. The ligature (combining of two symbols) is an adaptation of Latin <ae>. 'Ash' is the name of the runic symbol that represented the same sound, *æsc*.
   - <ð> 'eth', 'edh', 'crossed or barred <d>', of unknown origin.
   - <ȝ> 'yogh' or 'open <g>'. It is the Irish variant of the Latin or Carolingian <g>.
   - <r> and <s> had special shapes.
4. Some letters and digraphs had values different from PDE:
   - <**c**> for /k/ or /tʃ/; <**g**> for /g/ or /j/; <**sc**, **cg**> for /ʃ, dʒ/; e.g. *disc* 'dish', *brycg* 'bridge'

3.2.1 Introduction of the Roman alphabet

- Initial lines of *Beowulf*:



Hwæt. We Gardena in geardagum,
þeodcyninga, þrym gefrunon,
hu ða æþelingas ellen fremedon.
Oft Scyld Scefing sceaþena þreatum,
monegum mægþum, meodosetla ofteah,
egsode eorlas. Syððan ærest wearð
feasceaft funden, he þæs frofre gebad,

Manuscript: https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/beowulf
Reading and translation: https://www.bl.uk/medieval-literature/articles/old-english
Original version and three different translations: http://drmarkwomack.com/pdfs/beowulf-opening-lines.pdf

3.2.2 Borrowings from Latin

- As Latin became the language of religion and learning, a number of **Latin loanwords** were borrowed into English. Most of them have to do with the new religion. They were introduced **through the spoken language**.
- The common Germanic vocabulary already contained some Latin words connected with **religion**: E.g., *angel* (Lat. *angelus* < Gk. αγγελοζ); *devil* (Lat. *diabolus* < Gk. διαβολοζ), and probably *bishop* (?), *monk* and *minster* (OE *biscop*, *munuc*, *mynster*).

3.2.2 Borrowings from Latin

- Some of the Latin loanwords introduced after the 7th century were fully **assimilated** into the language, came to be **inflected** as Old English words and combined with native elements in **hybrids** (e.g. *sacerd-hād; cristen-dōm; biscop-rice*). [Hybrid: word which contains material from different languages]

CHURCH **ranks**: OE *pāpa > pope*; OE *biscop* (?)*> bishop*; OE *abbud > abbot*; OE *preost > priest*; OE *nunna > nun; sacerd* 'priest'; *decan* 'dean'

things: OE *scrin > shrine;* OE *alter > altar*; OE *salm > psalm*; OE *pæll > pall* (Lat. *pallium*); OE *mæsse > mass*

actions: *offrian > offer*

EVERYDAY names of trees, plants or herbs, such as *fennel, lily, pea, lentil* names of domestic animals, such as *cock* or *cat*

3.2.2 Borrowings from Latin

LOAN TRANSLATIONS AND SEMANTIC LOANS

- Loanwords are not the only type of loan that appears in this period: **loan translations**, **loan renditions** and **semantic loans** are frequent especially in the semantic field of religion/church.

> If we stop to consider the situation of the missionary faced with the task of introducing the concepts and institutions of an entirely new religion to a pagan people, the transfer from the source language of totally unfamiliar concepts together with the linguistic forms that represented them must clearly have appeared a less attractive solution than that offered by the alternative possibility, which was to adopt the languages of his audience to meet the situation. This he could do by means of two types of indirect loaning, namely, loan translation and semantic extension. (Bynon 1977: 232)

3.2.2 Borrowings from Latin

LOAN TRANSLATIONS AND SEMANTIC LOANS

loan translations *Hælend*, lit. 'healer' < *Salva-tor* (Latin *salvare* 'heal'); *mildheort* 'mild-heart' < Lat. *misericors; þryness* < Lat. *Trinitas; in-liht-nes* < Lat. *il-lumina-tio*; *gōd-spell* 'good-news' < Lat. *euangelium*; *longmōd* 'patient' < *longanimis* **things**: OE *scrin > shrine;* OE *alter > altar*; OE *salm > psalm*; OE *pæll > pall* (Lat. *pallium*); OE *mæsse > mass*

loan renditions *handbōc* 'handbook' < Lat. *liber* manualis

semantic loans *God*, orig. neu. 'pagan god' > *God* masc. only sg. 'God of christianity'
synn, orig. 'crime' > 'crime against God'
Easter 'pagan spring festival' > 'festival of death and resurrection of Christ'
OE *husl* 'pagan sacrifice' > 'eucharist'
OE *bōdian* 'send a message' is used to gloss Latin *praedicare*
OE *bletsian* 'sprinkle with blood' > 'bless'
OE *dyppan* 'dip' > 'baptize'

3.2.2 Borrowings from Latin

LOAN TRANSLATIONS AND SEMANTIC LOANS

- Latin culture and the flourishing state of the church was disrupted by the Scandinavian invasions (see Section 3.3).
- The **Benedictine Revival**, that is, the reformation of monasticism following the same lines established by St. Benedict, re-establishes learning and scholarship in Britain.
- The linguistic effect of the reform was the introduction of more Latin loanwords (Classical Latin vs. Vulgar Latin) mainly through the written medium → **RELIGION and LEARNING**.

3.2.2 Borrowings from Latin

- These new loanwords are not well integrated. Polysyllabic.

> In terms of OE we find that these new loans are not always well assimilated into the language, so that they retain most or all of their Latin structure. Furthermore, it is sometimes the case that a new word in fact replicates an earlier loan of the same original word, but showing a Classical, rather than a Vulgar, Latin form and without most of the changes which occurred in the transition to OE. E.g. *tabele* 'table' alongside earlier *tæfl*. Although many of these new loans are religious in nature (e.g. *apostata* and *sabbat*) others reflect the general world of learning and in particular curiosity about foreign lands (e.g. *cucumer* 'cucumber' and *delfin* 'dolphin'. (Hogg 2002: 110-1)

RELIGION *acolitus, apostata, cruc, demon, discipul, creda.*

LEARNING *biblioþece, declinian, grammatic-cræft, capitol.*

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3.3.1 The Scandinavian invasions of England

Viking < ON *vikingr* ‘creek dweller’, ‘pirate’

- ca. 750-1050 Scandinavian invasions in Europe
- **reasons**: cf. causes of the Germanic invasions
  - overpopulation in Scandinavia
  - land was inherited by the eldest son political unrest
  - Scandinavia was poor in natural resources
  - development of ship-building
- **Where?**
  - Swedes established a kingdom in Russia
  - Norwegians colonized parts of the British Isles, the Faroe Islands, Iceland, and from there Greenland and the coast of Labrador
  - Danes founded the dukedom of Normandy in France

3.3.1 The Scandinavian invasions of England

Map of Viking raids

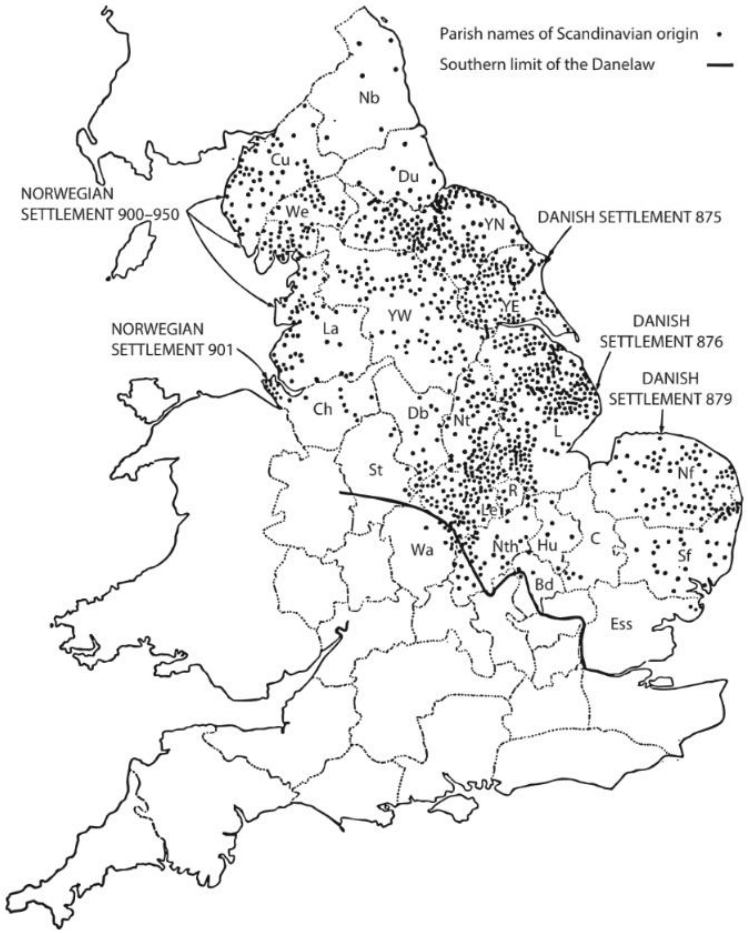
3.3.1 The Scandinavian invasions of England

Map of Viking raids

- 787: first attack to England. Portland.
- up to 878: the Danes are defeated by Alfred and are forced to sign the treaty of Wedmore. Establishment of the Danelaw (*Denalagu*, area of Danish jurisdiction). From that time until the middle of the 11th century, period of political adjustment.
- Alfred's victory was not the end of the Viking attacks: attacks from other Viking bands continued throughout the 9th/10th c. The Scandinavians and the Anglo-Saxons must have lived in proximity and there must have been mixing between the two ethnic groups.
- Cnut, king of Denmark and Norway, put an end to the Danish raids, but not to Danish claims to the throne. Succeeded by Edward the Confessor (1042-1066; last Anglo-Saxon king).

3.3.2 Borrowing from Old Norse

- Old Norse and Old English were closely related, structurally very similar and therefore **mutually intelligible**. There must have been a fair amount of bilingualism among the population.



Areas of Scandinavian settlement in Britain and Ireland (van Gelderen 2014: 101)

3.3.2 Borrowing from Old Norse

Effects:

(i) Extensive borrowing of **open-class lexical items** (i.e. nouns, adjectives and verbs). Two stages:

(a) **early borrowings** (already present in OE): typically technical terms, related to war, to Danish law and administration and to shipbuilding (e.g. *targe* 'small shield', *dreng* 'warrior'; *husting* 'tribunal', *lagu* 'law', *wrang* 'wrong'; *barda* 'beaked ship').

(b) **later borrowings** (recorded in ME texts): everyday words: nouns like *bank, birth, brink, bull, guess, hap, kid, leg, sister, skill, skin, skirt, sky*, *slaughter, want, window*; adjectives like *awkward, flat, ill, low, meek, odd, rotten, rugged, tight* or *weak*; verbs like *call, cast, crave, crawl, die, gasp, get, give, lift, raise, scare, take*.

These two different kinds of loanwords require different language contact situations.

Estimations: ca. 400 Scandinavian loanwords in the standard; some 2,000 more in dialects.

3.3.2 Borrowing from Old Norse

Effects:

(ii) Borrowing of **closed-class items**.

Third person plural pronouns (*they, them, their* < ON *their, theim, theirra*), but c. Cole (2018); other pronouns (*both*); conjunctions like *though* or prepositions like *till* and *fro* 'from'.

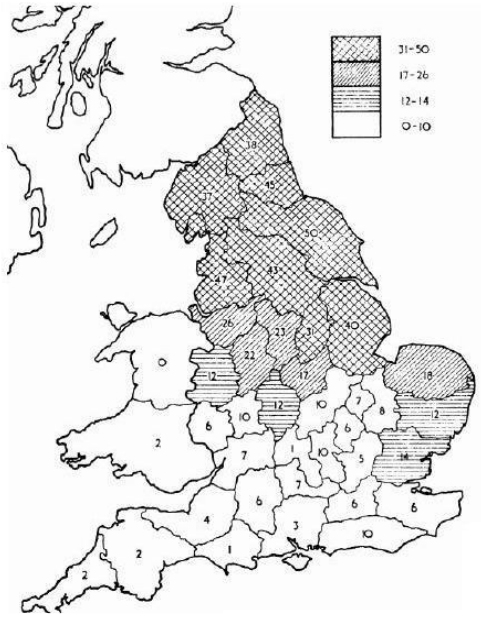
(iii) Extensive influence on **onomastics**:

place-names (*-by* 'farm, town' *Derby*; *-thorp* 'village' *Althorp*) more than 1,400 placenames of Scandinavian origin.

Influence on **family names**: *-son*, *Johnson*, *Wilson*.

(iv) Syntax:

phrasal verbs, *as-* and zero relatives, preposition stranding??



The distribution of English family names ending in -son. Numbers indicate how many such names originated in each county. These names are thought to reflect the Scandinavian system of patronymics.

3.3.2 Borrowing from Old Norse

Effects:

(v) Morphology:

-(e)s of the 3rd person singular?? *are*?? Scandinavian influence may have supported the loss of inflectional endings, the loss of grammatical gender. Pidginization and subsequent creolization?

> **Pidgin**: "a language with a markedly reduced grammatical structure, lexicon, and stylistic range. The native language of no one, it emerges when members of two mutually unintelligible speech communities attempt to communicate" (Crystal 1994: 302)
> **Creole**: "a pidgin language which has become the mother tongue of a speech community" (Crystal 1994: 87)

We cannot say for sure that a process like pidginization caused the abandonment of the Anglo-Saxon system of inflexions. But it would not be surprising if the process was at least hastened in the first instance by contact between the English and their Scandinavian neighbours and subsequently by contact with the Normans. (Leith 1983: 103)

3.3.2 Borrowing from Old Norse

Characteristics of Scandinavian loanwords:

→ **lack of palatalization** of velar plosives and the group /sk/.

- **Gmc /k/ + front vowels > OE /tʃ/ ←→ ON /k/**
  Gmc **kirkja* > OE *cirice* /'tʃɪrɪtʃe/ > ME *chiriche* > PDE *church*
  Gmc **kirkja* > ON *kirkja* > ME *kirke* cf. dialect *kirk*
- **Gmc /g/ preceding or following front vowels > OE /j/ ←→ ON /g/**
  Gmc **ifan* > ON *gifen* /g/ > ME *given* > PDE *give*
  Gmc **gifan* > OE *giefan* /j/ > ME *yiven*
  Gmc **weg* > OE *weg* /wej/ > ME *wei* > PDE *way*
  Gmc **lagjo* > ON *leggr* > ME *legg* > PDE *leg*
- **Gmc /sk/ > /ʃ/ only in native words; Scandinavian words retain /sk/**
  Gmc **skyrta* > ON *skyrta* > ME *skirte* > PDE *skirt*
  Gmc **skyrta* > OE *scyrta* > ME *shirte* > PDE *shirt*

3.3.2 Borrowing from Old Norse

Characteristics of Scandinavian loanwords:

→Sometimes it is not possible to tell whether a given English word comes from Old English or from Old Norse because both forms would have evolved in the **same direction**.

→**Semantic criteria** may sometimes help to distinguish Scandinavian and native words (e.g. *bloom* could go back to OE *bloma* or ON *blom*, but the meaning here helps: *bloma* 'ingot of iron', *blom* 'flower').

→Many Scandinavian loanwords had a **native counterpart**. Sometimes one of the forms (the ON or the OE word) dies out after a period of **competition** (e.g. OE *æg* vs. PDE *egg*); some other times, **both survive** after a change in meaning (e.g. *shirt* vs. *skirt*), sometimes there is some sort of **'contamination'** (e.g. *dream*, *bread*: native form, Scandinavian meaning). Traditional dialects from the area of the Danelaw still have a higher number of Scandinavian words in the present day (e.g. *garth* vs. *yard*; *nay* vs. *no*; *kirk* vs. *church*). Sometimes different origins depending on dialectal areas: *-gate* in placenames < ON *gata* 'street' or OE *gæt* (plural *gatu*) 'gate‘.

3.1. The Heptarchy and its impact on language: Old English dialects

3.2. The advent of Christianity and its influence on language: The alphabet and further Latin borrowing

3.3. The Scandinavian invasions and settlements and their impact on the English language: Borrowing from Old Norse

3.4. Main features of the language in the Old English period

What are the **Present-Day English equivalent**s of the following Old English words? Don't use a dictionary, simply guess. Comment on the spelling and pronunciation differences.

1. æsc
2. bedd
3. cynn
4. dæg
5. fisc
6. hyll
7. mann
8. miht
9. ofer
10. scip
11. ðorn
12. þorn
13. þynn

Phonology

→**vowels** could be long or short: e.g. *rīse* 'I rise' vs. *risen* 'risen'.

→**consonants** of OE are parallel to those of PDE. Some differences:

/f, ð, s/ → voiced sounds were allophones of these in medial position (e.g. *drīfan* 'to drive' [v] vs. *drāf* 'I/he drove' [f])

/h/ had three allophones [h, x, ç] *hūs* 'house', *þōhte* 'thought', *niht* 'night'

/hl-, hr-, hn-, hw-/ *hlūd* 'loud', *hring* 'ring', *hnutu* 'nut', *hwāt* 'what' /kn-, gn-, wr-/ *cnāwan* 'know', *gnornian* 'to be sad', *wrītan* 'write'

Geminate or double consonants e.g. *hoppian* 'to hop' vs. *hopian* 'to hope'

Morphology

→OE was a **highly inflected language:**

The **noun** was inflected for ***gender*** (masc., fem., neu.), ***number*** (sg., pl.) and ***case*** (nom., acc., gen., dat.).

The **verb** was inflected for ***person*** (1, 2, 3), ***number*** (sg., pl.), ***tense*** (present, preterit) and ***mood*** (indicative, subjunctive, imperative), and there are some relics of a passive conjugation.

→**syntactic function** was marked through the cases:

Se$_{NOM}$ *guma slōh þone*$_{ACC}$ *wyrm* 'the man slew the dragon'

Se$_{NOM}$ *wyrm slōh þone*$_{ACC}$ *guman* 'the dragon slew the man'

þone$_{ACC}$ *guman slōh se*$_{NOM}$ *wyrm* 'the dragon slew the man'

Morphology

→**Adjectives** could follow two different declensions (**strong** or **weak**), depending on whether they are in predicative or in attributive function and the structure of the NP, and were inflected for ***gender***, ***number*** and ***case.***

Se man was ***gōd*** 'the man was good' (strong declension, nom. sg. masc.)

þone ***gōda*** *guma* 'the good man' (weak declension, acc. sg. masc.)

gōdne *guma* 'good man' (strong declension, acc., sg., masc.)

Syntax

Major tendencies in word-order

- **V2** order in main clauses:

  Se guma slōh þone wyrm S V DO
  the man slew the dragon

  Þā becōm he to Westseaxan A V S A
  then came he to West Saxon

- **V-final** order in subordinate clauses:

  *<u>þā</u> se Hælend acenned **wæs**, <u>þā</u> comon þry tungelwitegan to Hierusalem.*
  when the Saviour born was then came three astrologers to Jerusalem
  conj. S V aux adv. V S A

  'When the Saviour was born, then three astrologers came to Jerusalem'

- In clause combining, **parataxis** was more frequent than subordination.

Vocabulary

The OE vocabulary that has come to us represents a fairly **restricted spectrum** of the overall vocabulary. We know virtually nothing about OE colloquial language, slang or taboo words. However, the surviving vocabulary is very rich. Its main features are:

- **Homogeneous:** OE is a thoroughly Germanic language, only 3% loanwords (from Celtic, **Latin** and Norse).
- **Extensive use of word-formation** strategies (derivation, compounding). It was transparent (i.e. the meaning of the composite form can be gathered from the meaning of its parts). The vocabulary consists of word families which are related both semantically and morphologically.
  - **compounding**: *hēah-burg* lit. 'high city' > 'capital'. Some OE compounds have become lexicalized: *wīfmann* lit. 'female human being' > *woman*; *gārlēac* 'spear leek' > *garlic*.
  - **derivation** by means of prefixes and suffixes: ***for****niman* 'destroy' (*niman* 'take, capture'), *cild* 'child' vs. *cild****hād*** 'childhood', *blind* 'blind' vs. *blind****līce*** 'blindly'

Vocabulary

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eard	'earth, native place, country'
eardbegenga	'inhabitant'
eardbegegnes	'habitation'
eardgeard	'place of habitation'
eardgyfu	'gift from one's homeland'
eardian	'to inhabit, dwell'
eardiend	'dweller'
eardiendlic	'habitable'

Dialects

- Old English dialects do not show marked differences in comparison with Middle English dialects.
- There are however, some **distinctive dialectal features**:
  - WS has diphthongs where Anglian dialects have monophthongs:

    e.g. WS *eald* vs. Anglian *ald* 'old'

    WS *giefan* vs. Anglian *gefan* 'give'
  - Anglian dialects usually have <o> for [å] (allophone of /a/ in contact with nasals), while WS has <a>

    e.g. WS *man* vs. Anglian *mon*
  - 3rd p. sg. *–s* in Anglian dialects vs. *–eþ* in the other dialects

Further reading: Crystal (2004: 43-47)

The sound of Old English

Se wisa wer timbrode his hus ofer stan.
Þa com þær micel flod, and þær bleowon windas, and ahruron on þæt hus, and hit ne feoll: soþlice, hit wæs ofer stan getimbrod.

The wise man built his house on stone.
Then a great flood came there, and winds blew there, and fell down upon the house, and it did not fall: truly, it was built on stone.

Þa timbrode se dysiga wer his hus ofer sandceosol. Þa rinde hit, and þær com flod, and bleowon windas, and ahruron on þæt hus, and þæt hus feoll; and his hryre wæs micel.

Then the foolish man built his house on sand [lit sand-gravel]. Then it rained, and a flood came there, and winds blew, and fell down upon the house, and the house fell; and its fall was great.

https://www.arts.gla.ac.uk/stella/readings/OE/MAN.HTM

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Unit 3. Old English and Anglo-Saxon England

History of the English Language (G5061322)

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