

is the most literary offshoot of this branch, as a body of heroic poetry is preserved by settlers from Norway around 874. Prominent are the **Prose Edda** and the **Poetic Edda** compiled in the 12th century by **Snorri Sturluson**.

The **West** branch is of most significance to us, for it is from this branch that English descends. The West branch is subdivided into two branches due to a **Second (or High German) Sound Shift**. Analogous to Grimm's Law, this sound change entailed [p,t,k,d], which were changed to other sounds in the mountainous Southern regions, but not in the lowlands. **High German**, popularized by Luther's translation of the Bible, became the literary language of Germany. **Low German** included **Old English**, **Old Frisian** (closely related to Old English), **Old Franconian** (the basis of modern Dutch, Flemish, and Afrikaans), and **Old Saxon** (modern Low German).

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### CHAPTER 3: Old English

Perhaps England has been inhabited for 50,000 years, yet English has been spoken for only 1,500.

Time Line

up to 5000 B.C. --> Palcolithic Man

2000 B.C. - 1500 B.C. --> Neolithic Man (may have been the Basques)

1500 B.C. - 500 B.C. --> Bronze Age (Celts are the first Indo European speakers in England that we know of).

55 B.C. --> Julius Caesar attacks England after conquering the Celts in Gaul. He doesn't succeed in conquering the Celts in England.

43 A.D. --> Emperor Claudius gradually conquers the Celts in England.

61 A.D. --> Celtic uprising led by Bodicae, widow of a Celtic chief.

75-85 A.D. --> Conquest was said to have been completed under the Roman governor Agricola.

410 A.D. --> Approximate date of Roman withdrawal.

449 A.D. --> Approximate date of the Germanic invasions coming from continental Denmark and the low countries. The tribes included the Angles, Jutes, Saxons and Frisians. We have this date and know a little about their culture through Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, completed in 731. The entries in the Chronicle indicate only in a general way the succession of settlements which extended over a century. We know that the nature of the Germanic invasion was different from the Roman one, as the former displaced the Celts, while the latter ruled them.

#### Anglo-Saxon Civilization

This civilization was founded on **comitatus** relationship between lord and theign, and it was organized according to **earls** and **ceorls**. In times, various tribes combined and allied in small kingdoms, seven of which were eventually recognized as the **Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy**. The Heptarchy included Mercia, East Anglia, Northumbria, Kent, Essex, Sussex and Wessex. Of these, Wessex became the dominant, first under the Egbert (800-839) and more prominently under **King Alfred (871-889)**.

#### Language

The various dialects spoken by the Germanic tribes are known as **Pre-Old English**. The

term *England* developed later from the tribal name *Angles*, possibly because this kingdom was dominant. The term *Anglo-Saxon* referred to the West Germanic tribes generally. Old English was not entirely uniform and four main dialects were predominant: Northumbrian, Mercian, West Saxon, and Kentish. Nearly all of Old English literature is preserved in the West Saxon dialect.

#### **Periods in History of English**

Old English: 449-1066

Middle English: 1100-1500

Modern English: 1500 on

#### **Characteristics of Old English**

Spelling and Pronunciation:

1. the long vowels have undergone extensive change due to the Great Vowel Shift.
2. different letters.
3. there were no unstressed syllables; primary stress usually occurred on the first syllable.

#### **Wordstock**

Nearly 85% of Old English words are no longer in use. Those that remain are basic elements of our vocabulary. Also absent are many borrowings from Latin and French. However, language was still poetic mainly through the use of compounds called **kennings**.

#### **Grammar**

Old English was primarily a synthetic language whereas Modern English is primarily analytic. As a result, Old English is a highly inflected language.

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### **CHAPTER 4: Foreign Influences**

There were three: Celtic, Latin & Scandinavian.

#### **I. Celtic**

Very meager. Celtic words are preserved primarily in place names. There are two main groups of words:

1. Popular words that the Anglo-Saxons learned through everyday contact with Celtic natives, and
2. those that were introduced through Irish missionaries in the North.

#### **II. Latin Influence (three main period in Old English)**

*Influence of the 0 Period:* occurred on the continent before Germanic tribes penetrated into England. Borrowing reflect early contact between Germanic tribes and Roman Empire.

*Influence of the First Period:* acquired via the Celts after invading England.

*Influence of the Second Period:* when Roman missionaries introduced Christianity. Can be broken into two periods: early and late.

EARLY: 597, *St. Augustine* sent to Christianize the Anglo-Saxons. The conversion was gradual and lots of churches and monasteries were built.

LATE: *Benedictine Reform* because of Danish invasions at the end of the 8th century.

How do linguists determine when a Latin word entered the language?

1. Frequency in Old English texts.
2. the character of the word.
3. phonetic form of the word:

A. *i-umlaut*

- B. palatal diphthongization
- C. sound changes of vulgar Latin
- D. breaking

### III. Scandinavian Influence

Three main attack periods:

1. The period of the early raids: recorded by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle in 787 and continuing intermittently until 850.
2. The work of large armies; widespread plundering. In 850, a Danish fleet arrives, captures Canterbury and London, and ravages the countryside. A West Saxon army defeats them, but soon they resume attacks. Short after Alfred's accession to throne, Wessex is attacked. At one point, Alfred has to hide in the marshes. He regathers troops and later attacks and defeats Guthrum and the Danish army. After this defeat, the Danes agree to sign the Treaty of Wedmore (878), which defined the line to the east of which the foreigners were to remain. Their designated land was known as the Danelaw.
3. The period of political adjustment and assimilation from 878-1042. Guthrum frequently broke faith, but situations improved under the reign of Alfred's son, Edgar (900-25) and grandson Athelstan (925-39).

Toward the end of the century, new invasions begin. A Viking fleet arrives in 991 and is recorded in the Battle of Maldon. In 994, Olaf became King of Norway and was joined by the Danish King Svein in a new attack on London. Svein succeeds in conquering England, as they can no longer buy him off. In 1014, he seizes the English throne and becomes king, driving off Aethelred the Unready. The OE period ends with Svein's son, Cnut, as King of England.

The blending of the Danish and the English was not so difficult because:

1. The Danish were adaptable,
2. The Danish were not really foreigners, and
3. Many of them accepted Christianity early and readily.

We must infer the relation of the two languages because we don't know much. Their similarity makes it difficult to date many words.

1. OE [sh]>Danish [sk] shirt > skirt
2. Scandinavian had hard pronunciation of [k] and [g]
3. Vowels may be a sign of borrowing [o] OE > [e] Danish
4. We can look to meanings of words.
5. Scandinavian place names.

Words were borrowed gradually. During the first attacks, borrowings were meager and were associated with sea-roving people. Later, after Danelaw, words relate to law and government.

Scandinavian and English coexisted. Which words survived?

1. where words coexisted and were similar, the modern word stands for both the OE and the Scandinavian.
2. where there are differences, the OE most often survives.
3. sometimes the Scandinavian word replaces the OE.
4. occasionally, both words survive but with different meaning or use.
5. a native word not in common use was sometimes reinforced by Scandinavian.
6. An OE word might be modified, taking on some character of the corresponding Scandinavian word.

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## Chapter Five: "The Norman Conquest"