

The Foundations of English and the Formation of the Base Register II (Hughes p. 86 – 108)

The Anglo-Saxon tongue:

- Anglo-Saxon was a pure language apart from admixtures with a set of about 40000 words
- It featured a big capacity of compounding, which is distinctive for Germanic languages. The vocabulary could be extended affixing, e.g. *un-* or *-ful*, *-ness*, *-ness*.
- Anglo-Saxon contained an extensive lexicon of technical and poetry terms
- Anglo-Saxon was a synthetic inflected language: grammatical function is conveyed by its inflections, not, as we are used to, by auxiliaries or word-order

Sound and sense in the Germanic base:

- there are many examples of onomatopoeic words in the native English language, which give sense to words by their soundings, e.g. words with the initial combination of *wr-*, which has the meaning of “implying twisting and distortion”. Another examples: The initial *sp-* means “the physical act of enunciation” or the initial *sn-* for unpleasant actions.

The lower registers:

- There is hardly anything known about Anglo-Saxon colloquialisms, slang or taboo. The surviving literature is of a high moral tone.
- Words of lower register, as “arse” or “geweald” for the male genitalia, are used quite generally

The Scandinavian Invasions:

- 787 is set to be the year of the first arrival of a Danish ship in England. Over the following decades fleets and armies of Norwegians and Swedes followed. They were part of a big Viking expansion into all directions. Records of this invasion are only given by the Anglo-Saxon, because the Vikings did not write their own memoirs.
- The Danes settled in the north-east of the land permanently with sovereignty over an area called “Danelaw”, while the Norwegian colonies occur more in the north-west. This had major linguistic consequences. Three major processes are distinguished: 1) the displacement of basic Anglo-Saxon terms by Norse equivalents, 2) the establishment of Norse terms regionally in the Danelaw and 3) semantic changes undergone by

- surviving Anglo-Saxon terms which have adopted the meaning of the Norse cognate
- Old Norse forms are to be found in place-names, f.e. *beck*, meaning 'a brook', in Troutbeck
- The blending of Anglo-Saxon and Norse forms suggests that both parties interacted and the fact that place-names outside the Danelaw contain Norse forms, shows that there was an interactive life between Norse and Anglo-Saxon people

The Survival of Anglo-Saxon:

- Anglo-Saxon occupies the core of the lexis together with some Latin and Norse elements from the Old English period
- The examination of the first 100 words of the parable of the Prodigal Son in Anglo-Saxon shows us that more than a third of the words survived as clear or obscure descendants (e.g. "he, him, sele (give), minne (my)")

Language, literature and the word-hoard:

- Following two features of Anglo-Saxon society which were reflected in language:
 1. the verbal bond between people (loyalty, people belonging together); a key term for this tightly knit group was "cynn", the ancestor of kinsmann and next of kin
 2. language should be used sparingly in a disciplined and laconic way (the value to be discreet and reserved)
- The content of Anglo-Saxon poetry is quite various. (Riddles, battle poems, religious allegories, poems celebrating the lives of heroes)
- "Beowulf", epic poem, written in West-Saxon; this poem gives us great insight into the heroic age, its courage, manners, formal eloquence and irony.
- Anglo-Saxon poetry was built on an alliterative scheme, which means that in a line at least two words had to alliterate ("Wicinga werod, west ofer Pantan")
- This scheme made poets create compounds metaphors: **kennings** (mere-hengest : sea-horse : ship) (swanrad : swan`s road : sea)
- Lexical structure reflects certain social features:
Martial ethic: the notions of "man" and "warrior" overlap (garberend : spear-bearer)
The word-hoard for "sea" offers a wide range of terms (over 50) → semantic concentration