The Origins of English.

1. The origins of human language. According to some calculations the capacity for language – which is surely one of the most clearly human features we have – emerged approximately 145,000 years ago (± 70,000) (Bickerton 1990: 175). The emergence of human speech depended on both suitable physiological change in what were to become the organs of speech and on changes in the structure of the brain to allow humans to work with the complexity of language neurologically (ibid.: chap. 8). Furthermore, widespread opinion (e.g. Bickerton 1990: 4; Bloomfield 1933: 3; Chomsky 1968: 100; Diamond 1992: 141; Sapir 1921: 23) sees the acquisition of language as a unique phenomenon. As such it was then passed on to the descendants of the first group of speakers.

Just how this mooted first language may have looked in detail is unknown, but the multiplicity and diversity of languages spoken in today’s world indicate one of the unchanging principles of human language – change: out of one many have developed. One of these many languages is English, itself a grouping of often very different varieties spoken all over the world by both native and non-native speakers. (Just how many speakers is a widely debated question, as is the question of what a native and what a non-native speakers is. See the discussion in chapters 7 and 13.) It is the aim of this book to explore how English came into being and developed the enormous amount of diversity which the label English covers.

2. Divergence, change, and the family model. Among those who study language (as such, i.e. not “just” individual languages) there are those who have tried to trace the development from the assumed first or proto-language to our own day with its 5000 to 7000 languages. This is done by extrapolating backwards from the known to the unknown in a process designated as reconstruction. It notes the similarities between, say, English and Dutch and Icelandic or between French and Spanish and Italian and tries to figure out what shared forms the three languages mentioned in each case might be expected to have had. In the case of French, Spanish, and Italian these languages are known as the Romance (or Romanic) languages, all of them having “descended” from the earlier “parent” language, Latin. (The name Romance is an indication these languages were spoken by the Romans.)

Latin is well documented by the many Latin texts still available today. Because of this we can make general assumptions about the kinds of change which are likely or unlikely. By tracing changes from Latin to its successor languages it has been possible to discover principles of language change and to classify the resulting languages accordingly. The following table is a highly simplified presentation of Latin and its daughter languages (mutual sisters). The division into a western and an eastern branch is only one way of distinguishing divergence. And, of course, the nine languages in the bottom line are not a complete list of the present-day Romance languages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latin</th>
<th>The western branch</th>
<th>The eastern branch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iberian</td>
<td>Gallic</td>
<td>Italic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>Galician</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalan</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Provençal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Sardinic</td>
<td>Romanian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.1: The Romance language family.

For English, Dutch, Icelandic (as well as other Germanic languages such as German, Yiddish, Frisian, Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, and Faroese) there is no documented earlier language. Yet historians of language make the assumption that the same kinds of principles apply here as to Latin and the Romance languages and allow us to reconstruct a language known as Proto-Germanic. This proto-language is labeled metaphorically as the mother of a language family and the sublanguages as its daughters (or, as it may be, granddaughters). In the table
below, as with the previous one, not every variety has been listed (and the East Germanic sub-
families has died out completely).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proto-Germanic</th>
<th>North Germanic</th>
<th>East Germanic</th>
<th>West Germanic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Swedish, Danish</td>
<td>Norwegian, Icelandic, Faroese</td>
<td>Gothic (various subgroups)</td>
<td>High German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>German</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.2: The Germanic language family.

The Germanic and the Romance language families themselves belong to a larger grouping
known as the Indo-European language family. This language family has, in the modern age,
spread widely throughout the world at the cost of other languages. In fact, today as much as
half the population of the world may well be (native) speakers of an Indo-European language.
The following table lists its nine families (two putative, unlisted sisters, Tocharian and Hittite,
are no longer spoken).

| Proto-Indo-European | | | | |
|---------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| Armenian            | Armenian       |                |               |
| Albanian            | Albanian       |                |               |
| Balto-Slavic        | Baltic: Latvian, Lithuanian; West Slavic: Czech, Polish, Slowak; East Slavic: Russian, Ukrainian; South Slavic: Bulgarian, Serbo-Croatianian, Slowene, Macedonian (etc.) |                |               |
| Celtic              | Welsh, Gaelic, Bretonnic (etc.) |                |               |
| Germanic            | Dutch, Frisian, English, German; Danish, Icelandic, Norwegian, Swedish (etc.) |                |               |
| Hellenic            | Greek          |                |               |
| Indian              | Bengali, Hindi, Marathi, Panjabi, Urdu (etc.) |                |               |
| Iranian             | Baluchi, Farsi (Persian), Kurdish, Pasto |                |               |
| Italic              | Catalan, French, Galician, Italian, Romanian (etc.) |                |               |

Table 1.3: The Indo-European language family.

The family model has played an important role in the historical study of language and is
based on assumptions about geographical distance as a factor which eventually leads to the
accumulation of differences between the varieties to the point where we may first speak about
dialectal differences (with continued mutual intelligibility). Eventually the differences are so
large that the speakers in the separate speech communities can no longer understand each
other. It is then usual to speak of different languages.

We should note, however, that the criteria which are applied in deciding whether two
varieties which have drifted apart in this fashion are separate languages or not are also
political. English is distinct from German, Dutch, and Swedish. But how distinct are English
and Scots or Dutch and Low German (spoken across the border from the Netherlands in parts
of Germany) or Swedish and Danish. Mutual intelligibility as well as questions of power and
(language) politics are questions of more and less and often cannot be answered definitively.
One of the problems with a simplistic family model is that it assumes divergence and
therefore does not take into account borrowing and other processes in which languages grow
more similar. Yet precisely this is what happens when speech communities come into
(renewed) contact with each other. In prehistoric times migrations of peoples often led to the
loss of contact and to divergence. But in that world as well as in the historically documented
world renewed contact – in the form of trade, military conquest, cultural and technical
diffusion, or whatever – has led to an increase in shared linguistic features (e.g. words,
structures, meanings and practices, pronunciations). In the present-day world of intense and
frequent long-distant travel and trade as well as of instant communication over long distances geographical remoteness has become less decisive as a motor for change.

3. The speech community. Users of a language may be viewed according to the attributes they share—be they location, gender, age, ethnicity, social class, or whatever else (including combinations—or intersectionalities—of these). In prehistoric times and, indeed, in early historical times location was probably the most significant feature which marked off speakers into separate communities. Speakers in a single community were very likely to speak like other members of the same community and more or less differently from people who, while speaking the “same,” mutually intelligible language lived farther away. This (spatial) distance led to the emergence of distinct dialects and eventually to distinct, no longer mutually intelligible languages.

It is the relatively more intense interaction between speakers which ensures that their language will be more or less homogeneous. While individual speakers will produce speech according to their own internal(ized) rules and may be said to have an independent language system, their system will be relatively more similar to the system of speakers they are in contact with than with speakers located further away. This closeness is based on the principle of accommodation, a basic principle of communication which dictates that we make our speech more similar to that of our communication partners when we want to:

- improve communication
- gain the listener’s social approval
- maintain a positive social identity
- minimize negative outcomes
- reduce social and psychological distance

In doing this we converge with our interlocutors, for example, in pronunciation, speech rate, and pauses. Of course, we may also diverge from those we are talking to thus by emphasizing linguistic differences in order to emphasize social distinctions or to maintain identities (cf. Winford 2003: 119). In both cases the motives may involve individual likes and dislikes or may be a matter of group identity.

4. Language change. Change in language is usually seen as one of two types. The first is termed internal change and covers variation in what might be called the normal “drift of language,” as when more and more people within a speech community do not pronounce /h/ in words which previously had an aitch. Another example, which will be elaborated below in §§4.2, 4.4, and 5.2, would be the increasing use of demonstratives before nouns (which until then had been preceded at most by adjectives, by an occasional demonstrative, but never by an article). At some stage the demonstratives become not only normal, but also systematic, and the result is an article system.¹ It is hard to provide the motivation for this kind of change. It is clear that variant forms will co-exist (i.e. forms with and without /h/ and nouns preceded or not by a demonstrative/an article). And presumably the spread of an innovation such as h-lessness can be credited to accommodation in the one form or the other.

4.1 Internal change. What is not easily explicable is, as said, why people begin to drop their aitches or to use more and more pre-nominal demonstratives. One speculative, but not completely implausible scenario is that such changes are closely connected with emphatic communication. Aitches have historically been lost first in combination with other consonants. Old English (OE) had words which began with the clusters /hl-/, /hn-/, /hr-/, and /hw-/ (cf. hláf (loaf), hnigan (lean), hring (ring), hwæt (what)). This /h/ represents strong

¹ This is a highly simplified explanation; it does not, for example, consider the indefinite articles.
aspiration and may well have gradually been associated with emphatic expression. Its loss in such combination would then be expected in non-frenetic speech. This would be a contribution to understanding why the combination /hw-/ has been retained longest: it is most frequent in question words and they are often uttered individually and therefore more emphatically (What! Why! When!). While clusters with /h/ have overall declined or disappeared, in some styles of English they have actually spread, as when the interjection Wow! is pronounced /hwao/ rather than historical /waU/ (Metcalf 1972: 33).2

The use of a demonstrative before a noun has a similar motivation: it had the effect of emphasizing (and specifying) the following noun. In emphatic speech styles this must have been common usage. From what initially were singular cases speakers would have generalized this usage. In this way the original deictic sense would then have become less prominent and the sense of specification would have been generalized to nouns in which spatial deixis was not prominent, i.e. not just deictic se fisc (lit. “that fish”), but also Þurh Þone hunger (“by that hunger”), a much more abstract usage.

4.2 Typological change. The kind of change which the development of an article system represents is so fundamental that it is often referred to as typological change. In making a statement of this sort we are employing ideas about classes or types of languages, e.g. ones with and ones without articles. English has articles; Russian does not. Hence the two are typologically different (in this point). While this example seems clear, it conceals the question about what we are comparing when we make typological conclusions, i.e. what is an article? Basically, we can use either a formal or a functional approach (cf. Croft 1990 for more on typology). From the formal point of view we are looking for words which precede a noun. That would be the case for the and a/an in English and for la/el/lo and un/una in Spanish, but it would not include the particle added at the end of nouns in Swedish, e.g. the –et in huset (literally “house-the”). Consequently, functions clearly also play an indispensable role. We need to say something about (definite) articles as specifiers: they indicate that the noun which follows is a particular, individual example of the class indicated by the noun. Furthermore, the pragmatic (semantic-functional) motivation involved in using a particular structure cannot be neglected, as our speculation about the reasons for the emergence of the articles in English shows.

In the case of English the sheer quantity of structural changes that took place between the (pre-)Old English period and, say, Early Modern English (EModE) was so great that people (e.g. Strang 1970: 59; Barber et al. 2009: 26-29) speak of a typological change. Word order patterns changed, inflections were lost, subject pronouns became mandatory, new noun and verb categories emerged while older ones disappeared. Forms of address, expressions of politeness, structures of discourse – all “external” to the narrower linguistic system of the language – also changed. In the course of this book we will look at all of these points and more.

4.3 External change. When languages come into contact with one another, they are likely to have an influence on each other, sometimes quite significant, as in the case of creolization (see below §4.4 and chapter 9), and sometimes relatively superficial, as when words from one language find their ways into another language. In either case – or in any of the numerous stages that lie between these two extremes –the change within the receiving language may be traced back its source. Furthermore, this may be a major part of an explanation about why a particular innovation has come about. Very often this lies in the power or prestige of the source speech community or in the convenience of borrowing vocabulary for “new” things.

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2 No comment will be made at this point on the loss of initial /h-/ in many urban British accents nor on the loss on /x/, the allovariant of /h/, (spelled <gh> in, for example, though, right, etc.). See below chapter 8.
from the “new” language. In the following the two processes just mentioned, creolization and borrowing, will be explained and exemplified.

4.4 Creolization. When language communities in which mutually unintelligible languages are spoken come into contact with each other, communication is most often ensured by learning the language of the other group. In some, relatively extreme cases a large subaltern group, itself frequently polyglot, comes to be dominated by a group of powerful speakers of an “outside” language. The nature of the domination may be political, military, economic, religious, or whatever; it may last for a short time or for centuries; the contact between the dominant and the subordinate groups may be close or distant. All of these factors are likely to have an effect on language use, and one of the results of such language contact is the emergence of a creole.

A creole is most likely to come about in a situation in which there is imperfect language learning of the superordinate language, the superstrate, on the part of those speakers who will eventually contribute the basis for a creole. This is due to more distant contact with the superstrate. Such speakers are frequently dependent on devising a means of communication, both between themselves and the dominant group and among themselves. As a result, a great deal of lexical borrowing from the superstrate takes place, but this vocabulary is used, to a greater or lesser extent, according to the grammar of their native language(s), the substrate(s). This linguistic state of affairs is referred to as pidginization, whereby a pidgin is understood as a language which is nobody’s native language. There may be as many different grammars as there are native languages of the pidgin speakers. The children of pidgin speakers use the building blocks of the pidgin(s) to produce the language they use when they learn to talk. This is their own first or native language and is what is regarded as a creole.

Creolization has occurred at various times throughout the history of English (see esp. chapters 3, 9, and 11). In the case of pre-invasion Germanic we have no direct, documentary evidence of creolization; however, the rather striking changes in the pronunciation of Proto-Germanic in comparison to the other Indo-European languages may well be an indication of contact between Indo-European invaders and a non-Indo-European substrate of speakers (see below, 5. and 5.1).

Furthermore, the development of articles systems in the Romance languages and in the West Germanic languages is an indication of an influence that can hardly have just been “in the air.” What is more likely is that some of the substrate languages of the Italian and Iberian peninsulas, of Gaul (more or less present-day France), and of northwestern Europe exclusive of Scandinavia may have had article systems, thus reinforcing internal, pragmatically motivated typological shift to languages with article systems (cf. Crisma 2009). The definite article developed notably differently in the Scandinavian languages and in Romanian, viz. as a suffix added to the noun (see above). And in all the Slavonic languages (except Bulgarian, which patterns like Romanian) there is no definite article at all, suggesting a different set of conditions.

4.5 Borrowing. Cultural and linguistic difference may affect languages without bringing about any significant structural change. When new artifacts, new processes, and new ideas are adopted in a society previously without them, their designations are often the result either of the use of native elements in native word formation processes or of the borrowing of the words used in the donor language. OE eorþcr (literally “earth-craft”) is a combination of two native elements in a familiar process of compounding and is used to express the classical concept of geometry. More common in the pre-invasion period, however, was direct borrowing, giving us such present-day words as cheese, OE, cése (< Latin caseus), street, OE stræt (< strata), and mint; OE mynet (< moneta). Borrowing from Latin in the pre-invasion
Germanic period was a very productive way of expanding the Germanic word-stock and its effects will be dealt with below (see §5.3).

5. Changes in Germanic before the invasions of Britain. Some linguists have advanced the notion that Proto-Germanic differs from the other Indo-European (IE) languages because of the imposition of Proto-Indo-European on a group speakers with a different substrate language. This theory of creolization (and variations on it) has not been widely accepted. Yet it would go fairly far in explaining the rather long list of differences between the Germanic branch and the other IE languages: (1) the smaller number of tense and aspect distinctions of Proto-Germanic; (2) the presence of regular verbs (so-called weak verbs) with a {-d} or {-t} ending in the past; (3) the presence of weak adjective endings (see OE); (4) the shift of word stress to the root; (5) the presence of a fairly large number of words which do not seem to be derived from IE sources; and, of course, (6) the effects of Grimm’s and Verner’s Laws (see next; cf. also http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germanic_languages and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-Indo-European_roots_of_Germanic_languages).

5.1 Changes in pronunciation (sound change). Long before the invaders from the northwest of the European continent arrived in Britain, where they would establish the language that was to become known as English, a subgrouping of the speakers of Proto-Indo-European adopted changes in pronunciation that came to be known as the First Germanic Sound Shift.3 One part of this, Grimm’s Law4 describes the systematic shift in the way people pronounced certain consonants. IE voiced stops, the sounds /b/, /d/ and /g/ lost their voicing in Germanic and became /p/, /t/, and /k/. This means that IE /b/ as represented by Latin lubricus underwent a change to /p/ as seen in English slippery. Likewise /d/ became /t/ as in the pair Latin ad and English at. Finally, /g/ as in jugum became /k/ as in yoke. This would have led to a merger with words that already had /p/, /t/, and /k/ except that the latter three themselves changed to the corresponding fricatives /f/, /θ/, and /h/. (see table). As a result IE /p/ as in Latin piscus became /f/, as in English fish; the stop /t/ (tres) shifted to the fricative /θ/ as in three, and the /k/ of Latin cordis was pronounced as /h/ in English heart. Needless to say, there are very, very many other instances of this shift.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>voiced stops</th>
<th>become</th>
<th>voiceless stops</th>
<th>become</th>
<th>voiceless fricatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>&gt;</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>&gt;</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>&gt;</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>&gt;</td>
<td>θ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>&gt;</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>&gt;</td>
<td>h</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.4: Grimm’s Law (simplified).

Yet these changes do not occur in every case where they might be expected. Some of the exceptions turned out to be easy to describe. Germanic retained /p, t, k/ after /s/ as in Latin sparus and English spear, also stella - star, scorbus (“ditch”) - scrape. Likewise, /p ,t ,k/ remained unchanged after a voiceless stop, e.g. as is the case of the /t/ after the voiceless stop /k/ in both Latin octo and English eight, also noctis - night.5 But why, for example, did /t/ in IE as represented by Latin pater become not /f,θ,ç/ar/ but /f,θ,çθa/? At this point another 19th century linguist, Karl Verner in the second part of the First Germanic Sound Shift known as Verner’s Law, explained this by pointing out the effect of word stress. According to Verner

3 There was also a Second Germanic or High German Sound Shift. It does not concern us since it caused changes seen in present-day German vis-à-vis the Low German languages (Dutch, English, Frisian, etc.)
4 Named after the 19th century German linguist Jakob Grimm (also known for the fairy tales he and his brother Wilhelm collected.
5 Note, however, that the voiceless <ç> (pronounced /k/) became /h/ in Germanic (originally pronounced like a <ch> in German acht or <j> in Spanish hija.
both *pater* and *father* originally carried their stress on the second syllable, as did IE *phadēr*. Verner discovered that voiceless fricatives became voiced in Germanic if the preceding syllable was unstressed. As voiced phonemes they were not shifted to /θ/. However, this had been hard to discover because a later shift of stress to the root syllable\(^6\) had removed the original reason for the voicing shift.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IE</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>k</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grimm</td>
<td>φ</td>
<td>θ</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verner</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>δ</td>
<td>γ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.5: Verner’s Law (simplified).

5.2 Changes in grammar. Early Germanic was a language which marked nouns, adjectives, and demonstratives (words like *this* and *that*) for case, number, and gender. These are categories of grammar which have a very much reduced presence in ModE. **Number** is still a marked for count nouns like *apple(s)*, *banana(s)*, and *cucumber(s)* though not normally for abstract or mass nouns like *beauty*, *intelligence*, and *secrecy* or *snow*, *milk*, and *dirt*. **Gender** is marked grammatically\(^7\) only in the third person singular personal pronoun (*he*, *she*, *it*). **Case**, a marking of such sentence functions as subject (nominative), direct (accusative) or indirect (dative) object, and possessor (genitive) is marked today most clearly in the system of personal pronouns (e.g. possessive *my/mine, your(s), her(s), his, its, our(s), their(s)*), but the {-s} ending is also used to mark the possessive case of nouns (*the book’s cover, my family’s summer plans, two guys’ brilliant ideas*).

In Germanic as in other Indo-European languages there was a complex system of inflectional endings. Whoever has learned Latin or modern European languages like Russian or German is familiar with such systems. If we look at (Classical) Latin\(^8\) we see a language which resembles undocumented, but reconstructed Proto-Germanic\(^9\) in many of its features. By the time Old English came to be written a process was well underway in which inflectional endings were no longer being clearly distinguished. Interestingly enough the same process was also taking place in the case of (Vulgar) Latin\(^8\), which was also now losing many of its case markers (but – like English – preserving some of these categories in the personal pronoun system), while maintaining distinctions of gender (e.g. French masculine *le livre*, feminine *la papier* or Spanish masc. *el libro*, fem. *la papel*), and marking number in the one or the other fashion.

As both the Germanic and the Romance languages lost more and more endings, there must have been difficulties in making the necessary grammatical distinctions. In both cases the system of demonstratives was used to mark gender (in the Romance languages) and case and gender in Old English. This was done by placing a demonstrative in front of the noun, as for example with the Latin words for *earth* and *fish*, where the definite articles\(^10\) used developed (in varying ways) out of the Latin demonstrative masc. *ille* and fem. *illa*:

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\(^6\) A second set of conditions was the effect of the voicing of the preceding and following sounds, which led to the voicing of IE /p, t, and k/ in Proto-Germanic. An example would be Latin *centum*, where the /t/ is preceded by voiced /n/ and followed by voiced /u/. This causes the /t/ to become a voiced /d/, as we see in *hundred*.

\(^7\) Distinctions such as *waitress* – *waiter* or *he-dog* – *she-dog* are lexical rather than grammatical in nature.

\(^8\) Classical Latin is the variety taught is school; it was decisively formed under the influence of Roman writers such as Cicero and preserved in the work of grammarians. Vulgar (or colloquial) Latin was the language of everyday life. It was the latter which changed, gradually turning into the vernacular languages French, Italian, Spanish, Catalan, Romanian, etc.

\(^9\) A proto-language is here meant to refer to an earlier form of a language (or group of languages) for which there is no documentary evidence, but which can be “reconstructed” by extrapolation.

\(^10\) The definite article (in English) is *the*; the indefinite article is *a(n)*.
Latin | French | Spanish | Italian  
---|---|---|---
terra | la terre | la tierra | la terra  
piscus | la pêche (le poisson) | el pez | il pesce  

| Table 1.6: The definite article in some modern Romance languages. |
---|---|---|---|---|
In the case of English the demonstrative also began to function as the definite article as we see for the words for fish and for earth: |
| Proto-Germanic | Old English | Gothic | Old High German |
---|---|---|---|
*erthō | thiu eorðe | so aīrþa | diu erda  
*fiskōjanan | se fisc | sa fisks | dé fisc  

| Table 1.7: The definite article in some older Germanic languages. |
---|---|---|---|
Not only did the two groups of languages develop article system at about the same time, they also used the same sources, the demonstratives. |

### 5.3 Changes in vocabulary
The sound shifts and the grammatical restructuring no doubt say a great deal about the typology of a language because they are of a very systematic nature. Vocabulary, in contrast, is more likely to say something about the world the speakers lived in. First we will look at the ancient world of the Germanic peoples and then at the nature of the contact between the Germans and the Romans and at the influence of the Roman Empire and of Latin as seen in some of the Germanic languages including Old English.

#### 5.3.1 The world of the Germanic peoples
As early Europe was moving out of the Stone Age into the Bronze and then the Iron Age, larger ethnic units began to form, and contact between them began to grow in significance, both warlike and trade-oriented. During the Bronze Age (roughly the first half of the first millennium BCE) La Tène culture, associated with Celtic peoples and territory, stood in a trade relation with Greek settlements at Marsalis (present-day Marseille) in the south and exercised influence on the Germanic peoples to the north and east. As the Iron Age set in (second half of the first millennium BCE) major changes in trade and in social organization took place, and Roman influence began on a course of expansion which would go well beyond its Italian basis not only to Africa and the Levant, but also to Gallia, Germania, and Britannia. Our focus will be first on Germania and eventually on Britannia as well.

The designation German is used for a variety of peoples who lived both in- and outside of the Roman Empire and whose unifying feature (from our point of view) is their use of some form of Germanic (as discussed above). The life styles of the Germans differed between the various groupings. Those within the Roman Empire adopted many features of Roman culture, and gradually even became essential to the survival of the Empire, supplying it as they did with slaves, soldiers, generals, and even emperors. The areas just outside the borders such as, for example, the Frisian (North Sea) coast, produced agricultural products for the Romans and were as such well integrated in the imperial economy and familiar with Roman life styles (Todd 1992: 68). The Germanic peoples who lived farther away participated in the luxury trade, but were hardly affected by Rome on a more common, everyday basis. The Germans lived principally from animal husbandry (esp. cows, pigs, sheep, and horses, in that order of importance). Hunting was of negligible importance, but there was substantial fishing at the coast. Crops included grain (barley, wheat/emmer, rye, and millet), legumes (beans, peas), and various vegetables (e.g. celery, spinach, dandelion, radishes, lettuce), furthermore, flax (for linseed oil and linen) was cultivated, but little or no fruit. The grain was also used for fermented beverages (ibid.: 76-79).
Germanic societies were regarded as relatively egalitarian, yet the power of the leader or king was indisputably great. Young men (warriors) had the possibility to break away from the tribe under the leadership of a strong leader, to engage in raiding and to found a tribe of their own (cf. Todd 1992: 31f; Price 1994), a feature which was significant for the Germanic invasions of England. Otherwise, it was the family (in which men might have more than one wife and in which slaves were held) which was the basic social unit (Todd 1992: 32f).

5.3.2. Germanic-Roman contact. Germans’ contact with the Roman world was often of a military nature, whether facing them as enemies or joining them as members of the Roman army. Many Germanic leaders such as, for instance, Arminius, gained military expertise while serving with the Roman army and then used this experience to install himself as a German leader and organize resistance to Rome. Yet even though the Empire expanded its territorial control by means of military campaigns, its most telling influence among the Germanic peoples was in the area of trade regardless of whether the groups in contact were within the Roman Empire (Germania superior and Germania inferior) or outside of it (Germania libera; on Map 1 Germania Magna).

Map 1: The Roman Empire. (source: http://www.unrv.com/roman-empire-map.php)

Perhaps most clearly evident was the use of money (archeologists have found numerous hoards of coins) in trade, which was built up along routes established before the rise of Rome and which had connected the Mediterranean world with Northern Europe and the British Isles. The major goods which were exchanged (originally without the use of money, though gold coins were introduced as early as 125 BCE) were metals. Celtic Britain, for example, was an important early source of tin, which was alloyed with copper to make bronze (see Cunliffe 1988, esp. chapters 7 and 8). Germania exported slaves, animal hides, meat, and amber in exchange for metallic vessels and pottery, jewelry, textiles, and perhaps some foodstuffs. Once the Germans were integrated in the Roman market world, money exercised considerable power over them and was an instrument of interference and control over areas not directly incorporated in the Roman Empire. Money, trade, gifts, and military aid even allowed Rome to exercise influence on the choice of leaders in Germania libera (cf. Todd 1992: chap. 5).
5.3.3 The influence of the Roman world and of Latin. As already mentioned German soldiers served in the Roman army. While most soldiers remained in the Empire, others returned home bringing not only weapons and goods but also raising expectations about lifestyles and new ways of organizing society. This may be seen in such varied spheres of life as social organization, religion, and craftsmanship.

Roman military structures were hierarchically organized while Germanic ones were largely democratic, allowing groups of young warriors to act independently of the clan. The military success of the Empire was surely a positive model for the Germans and was one of the factors which led to a more hierarchical organization, but also to an upgrading of Wodon, the Germanic god of war, to one of social order in general. Latin influence in the military area led to the adoption of words such as camp, mīl (“mile”), pīl (“javelin”), pytt (pit), segn (“banner,” cf. ensign), strāt (“street, road”), and weall (“wall”). Many of these words, like those listed in the following paragraphs, also found their way into other Germanic languages. Strāt, for instance, entered Dutch (straat) and German (Straße). Others listed here and below disappeared from English, but not necessarily from other Germanic languages, e.g. pīl has not been retained in English, but shows up as German Pfeile (arrow).

Trade was, as mentioned above, of great significance, and this can be seen in the adoption of words like cēap from Latin caupo “tradesman,” which had a multitude of meanings, e.g. purchase, sale, traffic, bargain (cf. present-day cheap), payment, goods, market, price. Other words in this area borrowed from Latin include mangian (to trade), mydd (a unit of dry measure), mynet (coin, cf. mint), pund (pound), or sēam (load, harness), but also in such southern goods as wīn (wine), must (grape mash undergoing fermentation), eced (vinegar), flasce (bottle) and cyle (leather bottle).

The Roman world did not greatly affect religion in the north, but those who settled in the Empire (or their children) converted to Christianity within a generation or two. It was only in the fourth century that any major change came, when the first Germanic people was Christianized, namely the Goths. In the long term, Christianity and its language, Latin, were to have an extraordinarily strong effect on the language. In this early period only Christian bispoc and pagan sæternesdag (Saturn’s day) can be mentioned in the domain of religion.

Roman influence on lifestyle was sure to have impinged on the area of food (cf. wīn, must, eced above), clothing, household, and building, as the following table of borrowings suggests:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>food</th>
<th>ModE</th>
<th>household</th>
<th>ModE</th>
<th>building</th>
<th>ModE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>butere</td>
<td>butter</td>
<td>cucler</td>
<td>spoon</td>
<td>cealc</td>
<td>chalk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ciese</td>
<td>cheese</td>
<td>cuppe</td>
<td>cup</td>
<td>copor</td>
<td>copper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cires</td>
<td>cherry</td>
<td>cycene</td>
<td>kitchen</td>
<td>pic</td>
<td>pitch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cisten</td>
<td>chestnut</td>
<td>disc</td>
<td>dish</td>
<td>tigel</td>
<td>tile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minte</td>
<td>mint</td>
<td>cytel</td>
<td>kettle</td>
<td>clothing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pipor</td>
<td>pepper</td>
<td>line</td>
<td>rope</td>
<td>gimm</td>
<td>gem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pise</td>
<td>pea</td>
<td>linen</td>
<td>linen</td>
<td>sigel</td>
<td>brooch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plūme</td>
<td>plum</td>
<td>mese</td>
<td>table</td>
<td>plice</td>
<td>skin robe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>senep</td>
<td>mustard</td>
<td>scamol</td>
<td>stool</td>
<td>other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spelt</td>
<td>wheat</td>
<td>teped</td>
<td>curtain</td>
<td>mül</td>
<td>mule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ynne</td>
<td>onion</td>
<td>pyle</td>
<td>pillow</td>
<td>pipe</td>
<td>pipe, flute</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.8: Latin words borrowed into the early Germanic languages (here: Old English).

Despite what seems to be an extensive list, there is evidence for few borrowings beyond these items. As we will see when we look more closely at Old English in the following chapters, its word stock contained only a small percentage of borrowings. Of course, it is not possible to come to water-tight conclusions since there are no texts available in a Germanic
language before the 3rd century, when Ufílas prepared a translation of the Bible into Gothic, fragments of which have survived. The only other early examples of Germanic language use are 2nd century CE runic inscriptions made on weapons and personal ornaments and found in the western Baltic area (Todd 1992: 120). The use of runes indicates a certain, though probably highly restricted, spread of literacy.

6. The Germanic migrations. In ancient times the peoples of Europe periodically moved from their homelands to the one or the other territory. Just why they migrated is a matter of conjecture and surely differed from case to case (cf. Pohl 2005: 24-26). The major reasons mooted are overpopulation, which led smaller groupings (rarely if ever a whole people) to move off to find sufficient land to settle on. On occasion pressure from outside invaders such as the Huns, who put pressure on the people further to the west and caused them to try to find lands in the Roman Empire. Drought or other natural catastrophes might also force groups to pull up stakes and look for (literally) greener pastures. All of these points might be understood collectively as push-factors. The migration of the Angles to Kent may well have been such a case since it seems that whole clans moved. Todd writes:

The stimuli to migrate were probably various, including a deterioration of living conditions in the coastal areas [not further specified], a rising population and, not least, a growing awareness of the opportunities for material advancement now opening across the North Sea. (1992: 221)

Pull-factors, as indicated in the preceding quotation (“opportunities for material advancement”) are also often seen as motivation for migration. Raids by bands of young warriors, perhaps younger sons without land, seem to have been quite frequent. While many of them were just that, raids, from which the men returned home with booty of all sorts, on other occasions they settled in the area invaded and, after removing the male competitors they had defeated, took the indigenous women as wives. This view may be attributed to the Saxons, whose pattern of settlement in the English Midlands with smaller and very equal allotments suggests a well regulated system of distributing the spoils. Furthermore, since the Saxons practiced primogeniture smaller allotments would suffice while the larger ones in Kent were more justified in the Angles’ system of gavelkind (cf. Price 1994: 77).

Other pull-factors may be found in the changing structure of Germanic society under the influence of Roman expansion and Roman culture. The Roman Empire represented a high standard of living with well established associations of power and prestige. In the case of England even after the withdrawal of the Roman legionnaires there would have been no abrupt change.

6.1 The Northern Peoples, the Saxon and Frisians. The Saxons were not mentioned in any of the extant Latin literature until the 2nd century CE, and they attracted greater notice in the late 3rd century as sea-raiders (along with the better known Franks). Ptolemy places them between the Elbe and the base of the Jutland peninsula. In the later Roman period the Saxons were the name for the inhabitants of the lower Weser and Elbe valleys and the adjacent coastlands. Their reputation as sea-raiders was justified inasmuch as they made attacks on northern Gaul and Britain which continued into the 4th century, intensifying toward century

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11 Runes were used by various Germanic peoples prior to the adoption of the Latin alphabet. The runic alphabet is also known as futhark (or fuþark) according to its first six letters, viz. f – u – Þ/th – a – r – k/c (in Old English <c> is used for <k>). The origins of the runic alphabet are uncertain. Some of the letters seem to have come from the Latin alphabet. Greater similarities to some early Northern Italic alphabets have been found, but it is not known how the Germanic users would have come into contact with these alphabets. See Todd 1992: chapter 6 and Wikipedia at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Runic_alphabet.

12 Primogeniture assigned the inheritance of land to the oldest son. Gavelkind provided for the division of land among the sons. Daughters had no title to land on their own.
end. In the 5th century they began to establish settlements in southeastern Britain (as well as in Gaul). On the Continent the Saxons remained a potent force until they succumbed to Frankish control under Charlemagne in the 8th century.

As a “people” they were not centrally organized, but consisted of individual war-bands (3rd and 4th centuries). For the 5th century it can be said: “Many settlements were abandoned in the first half of the century and not reoccupied. This was partly due to migration to Britain and elsewhere, partly to a major redistribution of settlement in the Saxon region” (Todd 1992: 217). With the movement to Britain in the 5th and 6th centuries the Anglii, probably a subgrouping of the Saxons, disappeared from the scene, “their land in Angeln deserted for a time and then colonized by Danes and Slavs” (ibid.: 218)

The Frisii were seldom mentioned in the later Roman Empire. Although subsumed under the generic designation Saxon, “a Frisian identity was maintained and in the fifth century they again emerge, though into a twilight” (ibid.: 219). Eventually, it seems they came under Frankish control. “However that may be, there is no doubt about the extent of Frankish cultural influence among them, and the political weakness of the Frisii, as well as their restricted space, may have been a spur to their more adventurous sons to seek their future in trade far from their homeland. For others, migration beckoned, to Britain, according to Procopius, and to northern Gaul.”

6.2 The Saxons, Angles, Jutes, and Frisians in Britain. The earliest evidence we have of Germanic settlement in Britain consists of the Anglo-Saxon cemeteries and settlements in the region between the lower Thames and Norfolk. Others possibly lay in Lincolnshire and Kent. In Caister-by-Norwich there was a large cremation cemetery outside the town dating from about 400. Similar settlements were found near Leicester, Ancaster, and Great Chesterford. One of the most likely explanations for these settlements, virtually always outside the city walls, was that the Germans were invited there to protect the British settlements, esp. after the Romans withdrew. Much as in other western provinces, the Empire relied on barbarian troops and officers from the later third century on. The formal ending of Roman rule by 410 did not mean the end of all efforts to protect Britain from external attacks, the most serious of which came from the Scots and the Picts to the north and the sea-borne Saxons among others. It may well have been that the British leaders continued to use Germanic troops after 410 and perhaps even to increase their numbers. For the Germans it was probably of no importance who recruited them. They were simply doing what their fathers before them had done. However, without any central power to coordinate defenses the German forces would soon have realized they had a free hand to do as they wished. Soon more would be coming from the Continental coast near the Elbe and Weser estuaries (the Saxons), from Schleswig-Holstein, especially the region of Angeln (the Angles), from northern Holland (the Frisians), and probably from Jutland (the Jutes). Todd’s general description is instructive:

“Frontiers maintained for centuries between tribal societies and an advanced centralized state were bound to have impact on both sides in a variety of ways. … What is observable on and beyond the northern Roman frontiers, from the third century onward, is the emergence of frontier societies, neither purely Roman provincial nor entirely barbarian. Typically, such societies on long-established frontiers develop a material culture which draws on elements from both sides while remaining part of the dominant political order. When that order weakened or collapsed, a frontier society often remained in being and filled the political vacuum. (1992: 147)

This was the probable background against which the writings of Bede may be understood. Writing long after the fact, in 730, he describes how two Germanic leaders, Horsa

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13 Known widely as the Venerable Bede, author of the Ecclesiastical History of the English People (written in 730 in Latin).
and Hengist, were invited by the Celtic king Vortigern to defend his kingdom against the Picts. Horsa and Hengist and their troops were given the Isle of Thanet (in Kent) as their pay. But to the dismay of the Britons, they expanded into all of Kent. In Gildas’s \[14^{th}\] -century account they went home, but this hardly seems credible in the overall context of the Germanic conquest of England. On the other hand, the figure of Hengist, who is claimed to be the descendant of Wodon (Uoden – Udecta – Uitta – Uictgisl – Hengist) serves more the need for a divine founding myth than historical fact (cf. Brooks 1989: 58).

Just which Germanic tribe actually settled in Kent is debatable. The Venerable Bede’s claim is that Kent was settled by Jutes, and this is confirmed by archeological evidence: esp. jewelry and thin metal, decorative bracteates. Despite closeness of Gaul and Frankish artefacts (brooches; glass; pottery flasks; weaponry), there is no evidence of Frankish settlements. Conclusions based on the size of land-holdings and settlement patterns also points to the Angles (Price 1994: chap. 9). More important than distinguishing which group was involved is their reason for migrating. The motivation for leaving may have been a worsening of living conditions and the pressure of a growing population as push-factors and the wish to profit from the opportunities for material betterment on the other side of the North Sea as a pull-factor.

**Bibliography.**


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\[14\] Gildas, a 6th century historian; cf. *De excidio Britanniae*. Bede drew on his account in his own work.