

The Polychronicon

Ranulf Higden, transl. by John of Trevisa

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A Social and Cultural History of English

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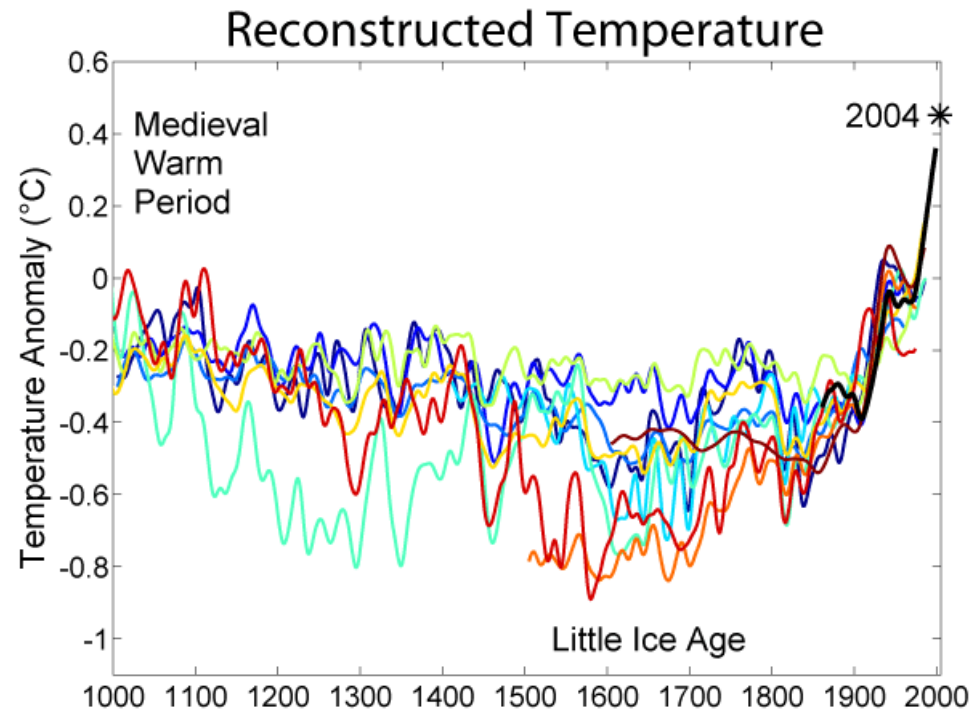
Presenters: Chris Lohse and Anja Bleicher

General Introduction

- England – after the Norman Conquest
- A melting pot of peoples
- A country torn and troubled
 - Medieval Warm Period / Little Ice Age /
Famine / War / the Plague

Environment

- MWP - ~AD 800 – 1300
- LIA – starting at beginning of 14th century



Environment 2

- Consequences of MWP / LIA
 - Population grows during MWP to a possibly critical size (population began to exceed the number that could be sustained by productive capacity of land and farmers – possibly Malthusian crisis) → High water mark
 - LIA starts with a span of wet and cold summers and extremely harsh winters
 - consequence: no harvest (grain and fodder) possible, livestock dies, people starve, health deteriorates, diseases occur more frequently (tuberculosis, bronchitis, infections)

Environment 3

- Agriculture is at an all-time low
- Food production is hindered
- Population of England decreases drastically

Dates / Events – Great Famine / The Plague's first outbreak

- Important dates / events:
 - 1315 – the *Great Famine*
 - 1337 – Beginning of the *100 Years' War*
1342 – Trevisa was born
 - 1348/49 – *The Plague* hits Weymouth / London
 - 1349 – Ordinance of Labourers (Edward III)
December: The first outbreak of The
Plague “ends”
 - 1351 – Statute of Labourers (Parliament
enforcing the Ordinance of Labourers)

Dates / Events 2 – Statute of Labourers

- Important dates / events:
 - 1351 – Statute of Labourers:
 - fixed wages (pre-Plague)
 - able-bodied men (i.e. people) have to work
 - restricting movement of labourers
 - Serfdom re-instated
 - ~ 1400 Serfdom was replaced by copyhold

Dates / Events 3 - Society

- Changes in society:
 - The labour force is extremely small, and has understood its importance → demanding better wages, better conditions, free movement
 - A lot of priests / monks died during plague
→ lay priests / public action / participation in church / revitalisation of “medieval church”
 - A lot of (French-speaking) teachers died
→ teaching in English → Wycliff’s translation of Bible
 - Omnipresent death leads to greater piety
→ foundings of colleges, churches, monasteries

Dates / Events 4 – Language Act/ Peasants' Revolt

- Important dates /events:
 - 1361 – recurrent outbreak of plague
 - this time: mainly young males and children died
 - further decrease in the population
 - 1362 – Language Act: English becomes official language in court (Baugh and Cable - § 104)
 - 1381 – Peasants' Revolt: Lollard / Wycliffian teachings influence the discontented population
 - 1381 – Wycliffe expelled from Oxford, leaders of the Revolt executed

Dates / Events – First native-speaker on the throne

- Important dates / events:
 - 1384 – Wycliffe died
 - 1399 – Henry IV: first King of England who is a native speaker of English (House of Lancaster)
 - ~ 1400 Serfdom ended in England, replaced by copyhold tenure
 - 1401 – *De heretico comburendo* – forbids translation of Bible (into any vernacular, including English)
 - 1423 – all English court records are written in English

The Kings - Normans

- The Normans:
 - William I (a.k.a. The Conqueror) - 1066-1087
 - William II (Rufus)- 1087-1100
 - Henry I - 1100-1135
 - Stephen - 1135-1154
 - Empress Matilda (Queen Maud) - 1141

The Kings - The Plantagenets

- The Plantagenets:
 - Henry II - 1154-1189
 - Richard I - 1189-1199
 - John - 1199-1216
 - Henry III - 1216-1272 (B&C : § 97)
 - Edward I - 1272-1307
 - Edward II - 1307-1327
 - Edward III - 1327-1377
 - **Richard II - 1377-1399**

The Kings - House of Lancaster

- House of Lancaster
 - **Henry IV - 1399-1413**
 - Henry V - 1413-1422
 - Henry VI - 1422-1461

The Kings - House of York

- House of York:
 - Edward IV - 1461-1483
 - Edward V - 1483
 - Richard III - 1483-1485

The Houses of Lancaster and York were the main opponents in the Wars of the Roses 1455 – 1485. The Wars of the Roses finally ended when the first Tudor king took the throne: Henry VII - 1485-1509

The 100 Years' (War 1)

- 100 Years' War:
 - the Edwardian War 1337 – 1360
 - Battle of Crécy: 1346
 - Calais captured: 1347
 - Battle of Poitiers: 1356
 - Ends with Treaty of Brétigny: 1360
 - → The English seize land in France

The 100 Years' (War 2)

- 100 Years' War:
 - The Caroline War 1369-1389
 - Charles V of France re-kindles the war, by illegally summoning Edward III to Paris
 - The English lose many of their territories in France
 - Both leaders die during war: Their sons continue
 - The sons of Charles V (Charles VI) and Edward III (Richard II) sign a truce
 - →English territories lost

The 100 Years' (War 3)

- 100 Years' War
 - The Lancastrian War 1415 – 1429
 - Henry V invades Normandy, thereby completing his father's (Henry IV – first Lancaster King) plans.
 - Battle of Agincourt: St. Crispin's Day (25 Oct) 1415
(a replay of Crécy)
 - Caën (1417) and Rouen (1419) in English hand
 - Treaty of Troyes 1420
- Normandy back under English Rule (after 200 years)

The 100 Years' (War 4)

- 100 Years' War
 - Joan of Arc 1412 – 1431 (interlude)
 - Partly responsible for Charles VII inthronisation at Reims in 1429
 - Claimed divine guidance, to free her country from English rule.
 - Was executed; later canonised by Catholic Church
 - End of 100 Years' War: 1453
Treaty of Arras – loss of alliance with Burgundy

Peasants' Revolt

- Peasants' Revolt (1381)
 - Consequence of:
 - Great Famine
 - Plague
 - Lollard movement (John Ball's interpretation)
 - Taxation issues (poll tax, to finance the 100 Years' War)
 - Not a full scale riot, but aimed attacks
 - The Temple, the Savoy, Tower of London

Other important people

- (Other) important names:

John Wycliffe: (1320's – 1384)

- translated the Bible into vernacular (from vulgate)
- dissident (heretic/rebellious) doctor & teacher of theology
- considered the founder of the Lollard movement
- at times protected by John of Gaunt (Lancaster)
- criticised clergy, teaching, eucharist-theory and other issues; demanded reform of western Christianity
- influenced Jan Hus
- his teachings probably influential for the Peasants' Revolt

Other important people (2)

John Ball (1338 – 1381)

- lay priest / hedge priest (no parish)
- prominent leader of the Peasants' Revolt
- drew on John Wycliffe's teachings
- fanatic advocate of a kind of egalitarian world-view
 - Quote from Sermon in Blackheath: *When Adem delved (dug) and Eve span, who was then the gentle man?*
- executed in 1381

The Lollards

- acted against the corruption of Roman Catholic Church
- believed (amongst other things) in lay priesthood and that priests should not have secular offices / power
- influence on *Piers Plowman*
- were completely assimilated in Protestant Reformation

Other important people (3)

Ranulf Higden (1280- 1363)

- Benedictine monk in St. Werburgh (Chester) (Lancaster)
- wrote the: *Ranulphi Castrensis, cognomine Higdon, Polychronicon (sive Historia Polycratica) ab initio mundi usque ad mortem regis Edwardi III in septem libros dispositum* (dubbed: the *Polychronicon*) up to 1342/44 – was continued by another monk (John of Malvern, Worcester) until 1357
- *Polychronicon*: summary/compilation of general history, became standard in 15th century
- *Polychronicon* was translated by John of Trevisa in 1387
- *Polychronicon* was printed by Caxton in 1482

Other important people (3a)

- World map with east at top, Jerusalem at center, and the Red Sea shown in red at upper right. Ranulf Higden.



Other important people (4)

John of Trevisa (1342 – 1402)

- translator,
educated at Oxford (where Wycliff worked / taught),
Vicar of Berkeley, Gloucestershire,
chaplain to the 4th Lord Berkeley (Maurice de Berkeley 1330-1368)
Canon of Westbury on Trym
- Richard Pencrych (mentioned in the text for today) and John of Trevisa were both Cornishmen, and were, together with John of Cornwall, responsible for keeping the English language from extinction
- May have contributed to Wycliffe's translation of the Bible

What Higden says:

- There are as many languages as there are different peoples in England.
- Welsh & Scottish remained pure (of what? French?)
- Scottish was influenced by Pictish input (contradiction?)
- Welsh have converted to Saxonlych – the Saxon way (English)
- There were three dialects: Northern, Southern and Middle
- Mixing with: first the Danes
 then the Normans
 led to some impairment/strange effects on the language
- School children were forced to speak / write French
- Non-nobles tried to learn/speak French to improve social standing

Higden (continued)

- Expresses surprise: the difference of the sound of language / dialects (North<-> South; East <->West) and the mutually unintelligible manner of speech / language / dialect
- Example: York dialect cannot be understood by people of the South. Claims that the mixing with foreigners (Danes?) is responsible for that – and the distance from the royal court.
- The kings (royalty / nobility) dwell in the south because of the better agriculture, more people, better harbours, and nobler cities.

Trevisa's comments

- Although French was the dominant language in teaching (grammar school), that changed after the Plague (1348)
- 1385 – all teaching in grammar schools is conducted in English (responsible: John of Cornwall / Richard Pencrych) (B&C: §§105f)
- Advantage: English children learn faster than before
- Disadvantage: if they cross the channel / go to the continent (France) or distant lands, the children do not know enough French to keep out of trouble's way. (cf: B&C: § 98 – quote from Martino da Canale: “because the French language is current throughout the world ...”)
- Teaching French is now the responsibility of the parents.

The East Midlands Triangle

Middle English dialects
&
East Midlands Triangle



Middle English became the most prominent / dominant dialect

because every other dialect-area shares borders with it, and

because of the concentration of wealth, power, education and administration in the triangle between Cambridge, Oxford and London. (Scotland ignored)

(B&C: §§ end of 104, 105, 109, 110)



De incolarum linguis

About the language of the inhabitants

- As hyt ys yknowe hou meny maner people buþ in þis ylond, þer buþ also of so meny people longages and tonges
- As it is known how many manner (*types*) of people are in this island, there are also as many languages and tongues

Present / Past form of *be*

- *ys*
- *bup*

- *is*
- *are*

- *was*
- *were*

- *was*
- *were*

Passive present

- Ys + pp.
 - ys yknowe
 - ys apeyred
 - be ytold
 - *ys ychaunged*
- buþ + pp.
 - buþ ymelled
 - buþ compelled
 - buþ yrokked
 - buþ ytau3t
 - buþ yturnd
- is + past participle
 - is known
 - is impaired
 - is told
 - is changed
- are + past participle
 - are mixed
 - are compelled
 - are rocked
 - are taught
 - are turned

Passive past

- *was / wer + pp.*

– *wer ywoned*

- Was / were + past participle

– Were used to

Present singular and plural of *have*

Passive with *have*

hap – present singular

Have / has – present singular

habbeþ – present plural

Have – present plural

hadde – preterite (simple past)

Had – (simple) past (preterite)

- *Habbeþ + pp.*
– *habbeþ yleft*

- Have + past participle
– Have left

Present tense, infinitive / first person

- Present
 - come
 - leue
 - construe
 - speke
 - lykne
 - *passe*
 - *trauayle*
 - *teche*
 - trowe
 - Modal verbs
 - may be
 - wol
 - *scholle*
- Present
 - come
 - leave
 - construe
 - speak
 - liken / compare to
 - pass / cross
 - travel
 - teach
 - trust (in) / believe
 - Modal verbs
 - may be
 - will
 - shall

Present tense, third person

- Root + (e) + ꝑ

– holdeꝑ	He/she/it/	hold
– woneꝑ	–	live
– spekeꝑ	–	speak
– vseꝑ	–	use
– <i>leueꝑ</i>	–	leave
– <i>construeꝑ</i>	–	construe
– <i>lurneꝑ</i>	–	learn
– <i>habbeꝑ</i>	–	have
– <i>conneꝑ</i>	–	can
– semeꝑ	–	seem
– acordeꝑ	–	agree
– vndurstondeꝑ	–	understand
– goꝑ	–	go

Strong verbs vs. weak verbs

As a general rule:

all verbs: first pers. sing. pres. end with: –e
 sec. pers. sing. pres. end with: -(e)st
 third. pers. sing. pres. end with: -(e)þ

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------|
| • Strong Verb | • Weak Verb |
| • Past tense: | • Past tense: |
| – Change stem vowel | – Add: ed , ed(e), or t(e) |
| – →ytau3t (teche) | – →chayngede |

Prefixes: i- / y- / bi- for past tense (preterite / simple past)
past tense + prefix, but without personal ending
→ past participle

Middle English differences from Old English

- reduction of inflected forms
- verbs simplified by analogy; strong verbs re-analyzed as weak verbs; loss of OE patterns
- word order / sentence structure became more rigid
- all case endings lost (apart from genitive, i.e. possessive)
- fixed location of stress; unstressed vowels realized as /ə/ (schwa)
- “new” loanwords now from Central French, while earlier they had come from the Norman French dialect.

Gerunds / Nominal verbs

root + yng

Gerund / nominal verb

- mell+yng → mixing / mingling
- wlaff+yng → stammering
- chyter+yng → chattering
- harr+yng → snarling
- garr+yng → growling
- grisbitt+yng → gnashing (of teeth)
- tech+yng → teaching
- soun+yng → sounding

The gerund is a very typical Latin grammatical feature.

Loanwords

- maner
- people
- longages
- nacions
- confederat
- Germania
- commyxstion
- Normans
- apeyred
- scole
- vsage
- compelled
- gentil
- OF – mannier
- OF – pople / L populus
- OF – langage
- OF – nacioun
- L – confoederatus
- L – germania
- L – commixtionem
- OF – Norman / L
- OF – ampairier
- L – schola
- OF – usage
- OF – compeller
- OF – gentile / L

Loanwords

- *moreyn* – OF – moraine / L mori
- *chaunged* – OF – changer
- *lesson* – OF – leçon
- *gramere gramer* – OF – grammaire / L
- *mayster* – OF – maitre
- *construccion* – OF – construcioun / L
- *secunde* – OF – seconde / L secundus
- *Conquest* – L – conquere / OF
- *avauntage* – OF – avantage
- *desavauntage* – OF – disadvantage
- *trauayle* – OF – travailler
- *passe* – OF – passer

Loanwords

- acordeþ
- dyuers
- Mercii
- parteners
- contray
- cytés
- profytable
- OF – accorder
- OF – divers
- L – Mercianus / Mercianii
- OF – parçonier
- OF – cuntrée, contrée
- OF – cité
- OF - profitable

Bits and pieces

- for to
- because þat
- Saxonlych
- oplondysch
- Englysch / Frensch / Freynsch
- to (German: *um zu*)
- because (conjunction)
- adjectives with ending: -lych / -lysch
- spelling differs (chancery spelling not yet accepted)

Nouns

Loss of inflection: (ending simplified)

Baugh & Cable (§ 113): Early Middle English: two methods of indicating the the plural remained;

strong verbs: (e)+s

weak verbs: (e)+n

	- sg		- pl	
- Nominative (common)	- -	-	- s	n
- Accusative	engel	name	engles	namen
- Genitive	- s	-	- (ne)	n
-	engeles	name	engle(ne)	namen
- Dative	- -	-	- (s)	n
-	engle	name	engle(s)	namen

Pronouns in Middle English

Personal pronouns in Middle English							
		singular			plural		
		S	O	Possessive	S	O	Possessive
first		I	me	mi(n)	we	us	ure
second		thou	thee	thy	ye	you	your
third	impersonal	hit	it/ him	his	he / they	hem / them	hir / their
	masc	he	him	his			
	fem	sche	hire	hir			

Examples from Hidgen / Trevisa:

here speche

techyng of hym

þerefore hyt ys þat

Thank you for your attention and
patience!