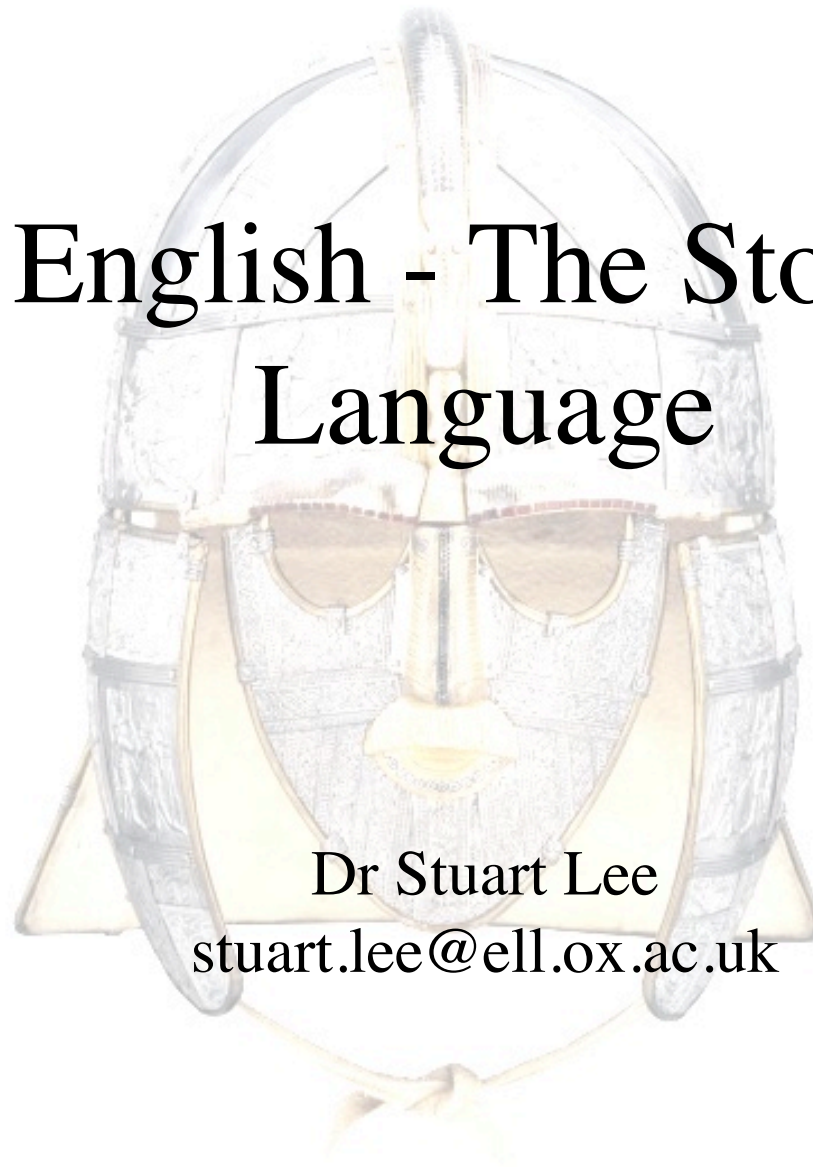


Old English - The Story of A Language



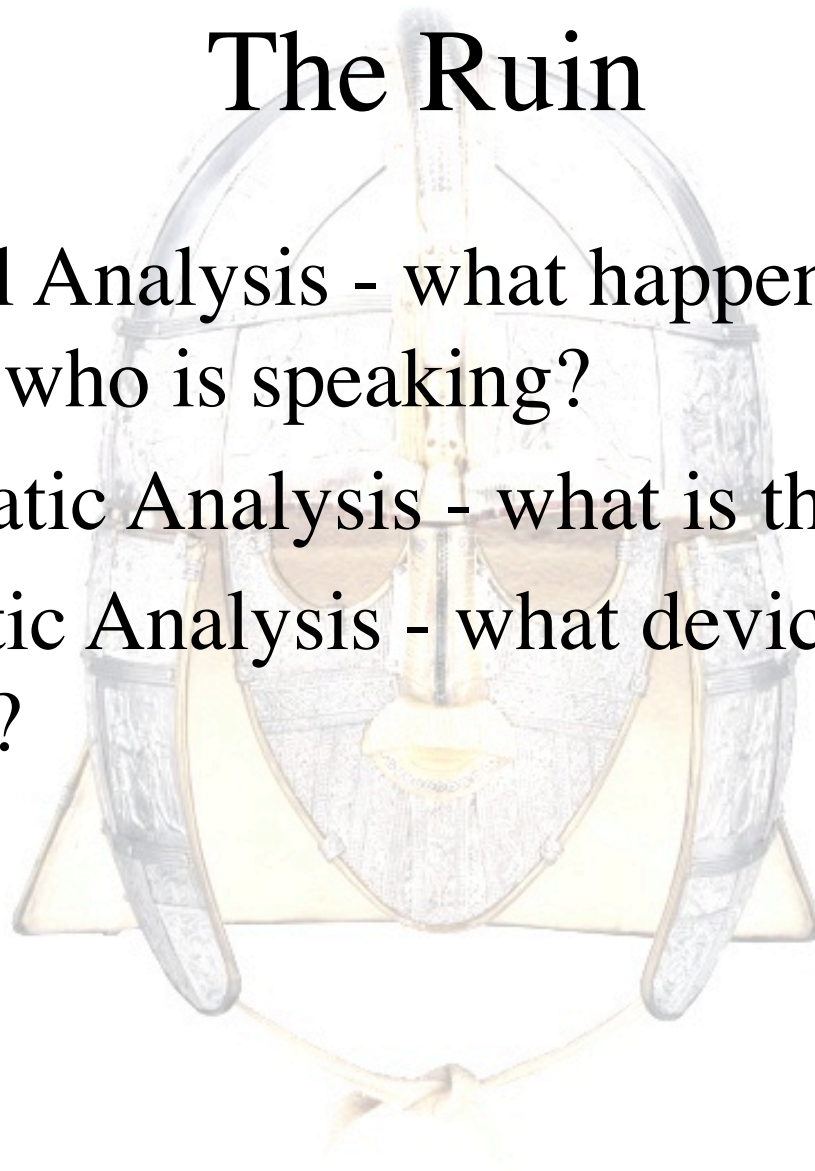
Dr Stuart Lee
stuart.lee@ell.ox.ac.uk

Aims

- Some literature - ‘The Ruin’
- Show where English comes from, and its relationship to other languages
- Why there are different forms of English
- How to pronounce Old English
- How Old English ‘works’

The Ruin

- 1. Literal Analysis - what happens, where is it about, who is speaking?
- 2. Thematic Analysis - what is the message?
- 3. Stylistic Analysis - what devices does the poet use?



The Ruin

Wrætlic is þes wealstān; wyrde gebræcon,
 burgstede burston, broснаð enta geweorc.
 Hrōfas sind gehrorene, hrēorge torras,
 hrungeat berofen, hrīm on lime,
 5 scearde scūrbeorge scorene, gedrorene,
 ældo undereotone. Eorðgrāp hafað
 waldendwyrhtan, forweorone, geleorene,
 heard gripe hrūsan, oþ hund cnēa
 werþeoda gewitan. Oft þæs wāg gebād,
 10 ræghār and rēadfāh, rīce æfter ðþrum,
 ofstonden under stormum; stēap gēap gedrēas.

 Mōd monade, myne swiftne gebrægd;
 hwætrēd in hringas, hygerōf gebond
 20 weallwalan wīrum wundrum tōgædre.
 Beorht wæron burgræced, burnsele monige,
 hēah horngestrēon, hereswēg micel,
 meodoheall monig mondrēama full,
 oþþæt þæt onwende wyrd sēo swīpe.
 25 Crungon walo wīde, cwōman wōldagas,
 swylt eall fornōm secgrōfra wera;
 wurdon hyra wigsteal wēstenstapolas,
 brosnade burgsteall. Bētend crungon,
 hergas tō hrūsan. Forþon þās hofu drēorgiað
 30 and þæs tēaforgēapa tigelum scēadeð

The Ruin

Splendid this rampart is, though fate destroyed it,
 The city buildings fell apart, the works
 Of giants crumble. Tumbled are the towers,
 Ruined the roofs, and broken the barred gate,
 Frost in the plaster, all the ceilings gape,
 Torn and collapsed and eaten up by age.
 And grit holds in its grip, the hard embrace
 Of earth, the dead departed master-builders,
 Until a hundred generations now
 Of people have passed by. Often this wall
 Stained red and grey with lichen has stood by
 Surviving storms while kingdoms rose and fell.
 And now the high curved wall itself has fallen.

 The heart inspired, incited to swift action.
 Resolute masons, skilled in rounded building
 Wondrously linked the framework with iron bonds.
 The public halls were bright, with lofty gables,
 Bath-houses many; great the cheerful noise,
 And many mead-halls filled with human pleasures.
 Till mighty fate brought change upon it all.
 Slaughter was widespread, pestilence was rife,
 And death took all those valiant men away.
 The martial halls became deserted places,
 The city crumbled, its repairers fell,
 Its armies to the earth. And so these halls
 Are empty, and this red curved roof now sheds

THE RUIN

- hrōstbēages hrōf. Hryre wong gecrong
 gebrocen tō beorgum þær iū beorn monig
 glædmōd and goldbeorht gleoma gefrætwed,
 wlonc and wingāl wighyrstum scān,
 35 seah on sinc, on sylfor, on searogimmas,
 on ēad, on æht, on eorcanstān,
 on þās beorhtan burg brādan rīces.
 Stānhofu stōdan, strēam hāte wearp
 wīdan wylme; weal eall befeng
 40 beorhtan bōsme þær þā baþu wæron,
 hāt on hreþre; þæt wæs hyðelic.
 Lēton þonne gēotan
 ofer hārne stān hāte strēamas
 under
 45 oppæt hringmere. Hāte
 þær þā baþu wæron.

THE RUIN

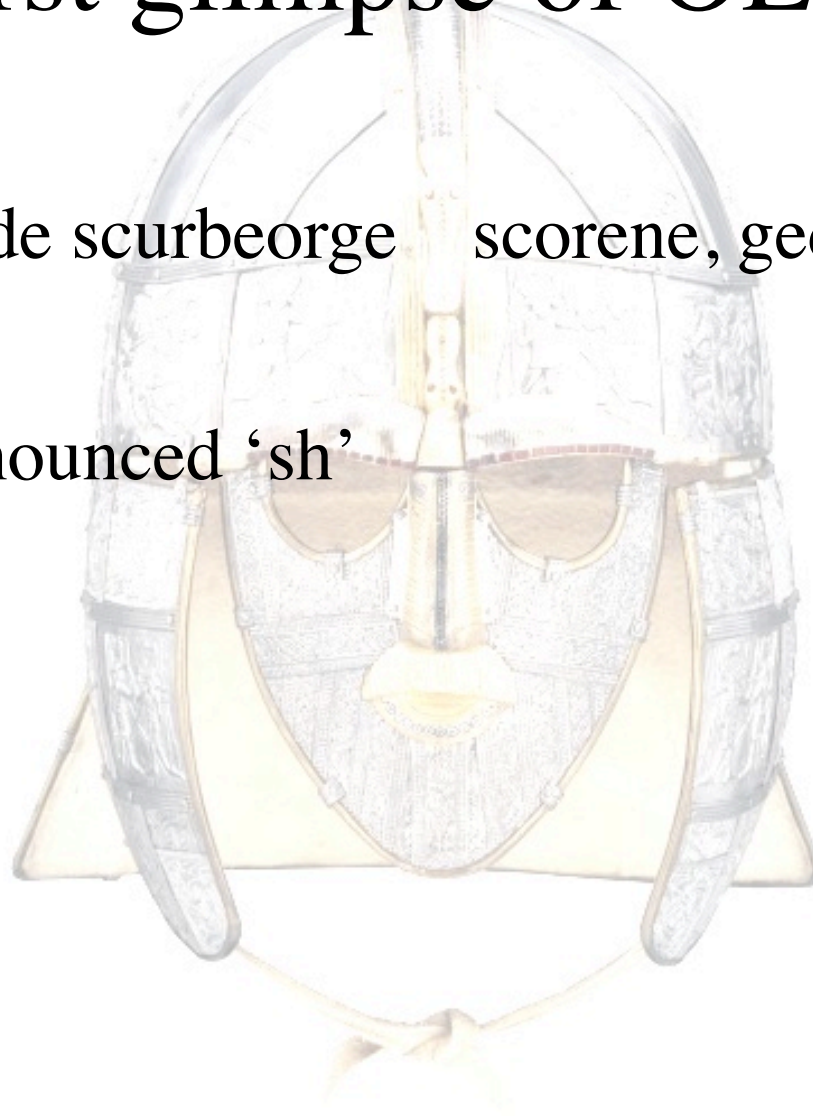
Its tiles, decay has brought it to the ground,
 Smashed it to piles of rubble, where long since
 A host of heroes, glorious, gold-adorned,
 Gleaming in splendour, proud and flushed with wine,
 Shone in their armour, gazed on gems and treasure,
 On silver, riches, wealth and jewellery,
 On this bright city with its wide domains.
 Stone buildings stood, and the hot stream cast forth
 Wide sprays of water, which a wall enclosed
 In its bright compass, where convenient
 Stood hot baths ready for them at the centre.
 Hot streams poured forth over the clear grey stone,
 To the round pool and down into the baths.

The Ruin

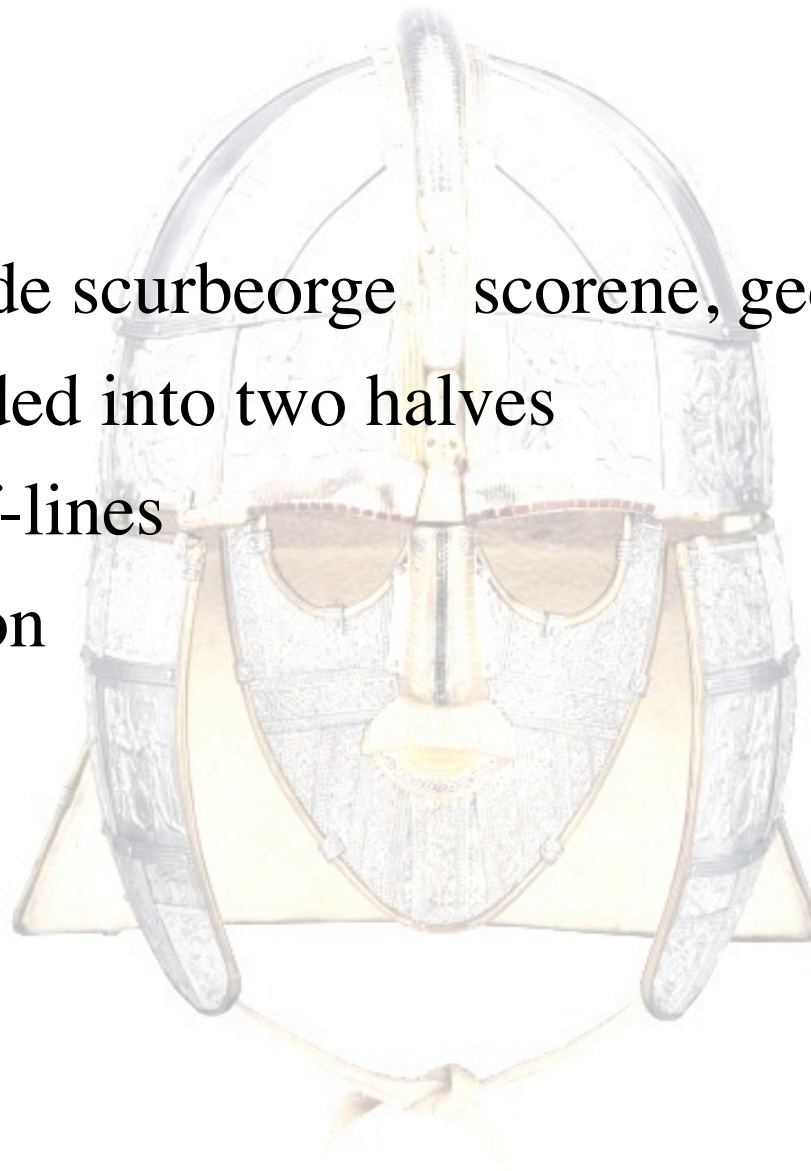
- 1. Literal Analysis - what happens, where is it about, who is speaking? *A single person looking at a Roman ruin, possibly Bath*
- 2. Thematic Analysis - *what is the message? That worldly glory passes away, 'lif is læne'*
- 3. Stylistic Analysis - what devices does the poet use? *Compares past with present using images of colour, sound, weather*
- 4. Language analysis - *for the future*

Our first glimpse of OE Poetry

- L5 ‘scearde scurbeorge scorene, gedrorene’
- ‘sc’ - pronounced ‘sh’



- L5 ‘scearde scurbeorge scorene, gedrorene’
- Line divided into two halves
- Short half-lines
- Alliteration
- Rhyme



84ap geonap. pond. tuc p. muri ge
 haupth. pelon. gumme
 ge. gumme. pan ha

[illegible]

[illegible]

of mind clear

Oft þæs wāg gebād,

rice æfter ðrum,

stēap gēap gedrēas.

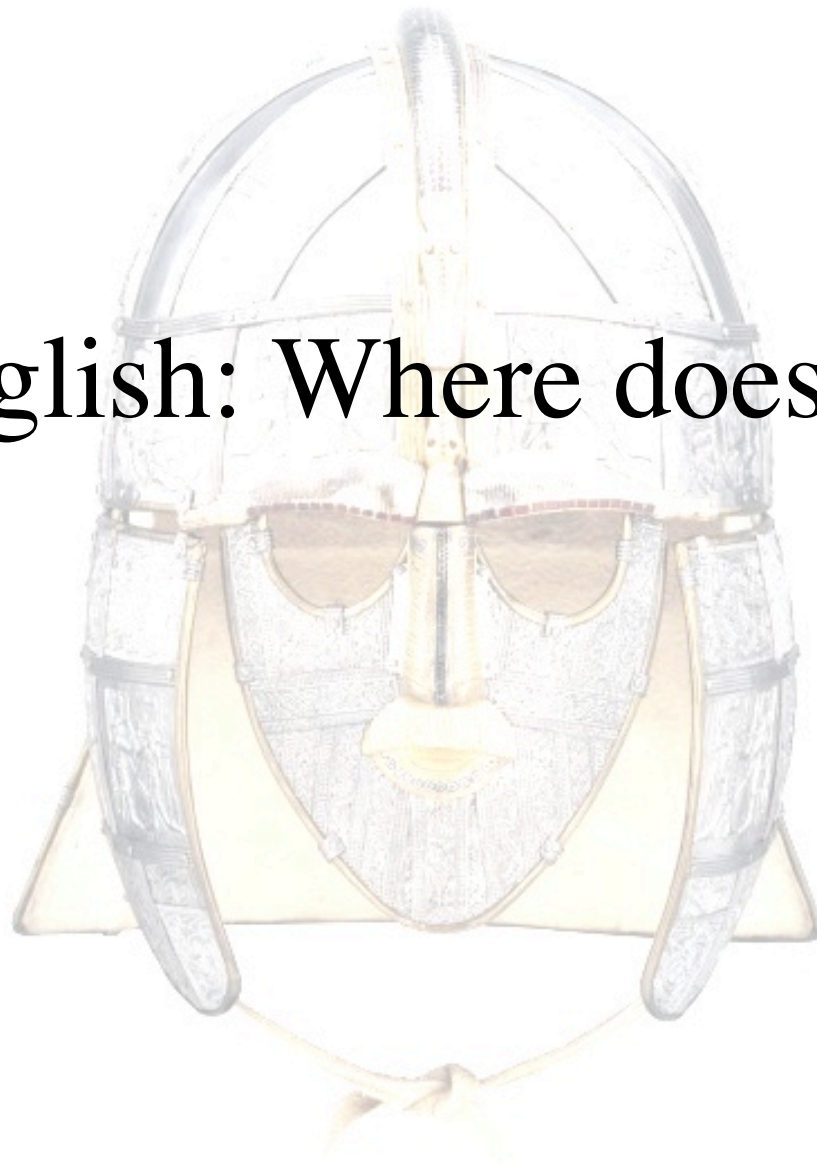
Mōd monade, myne swiftne gebrægd;

hwætrēd in hringas, hygerōf gebond

wundrum tögædre.



Old English: Where does it come



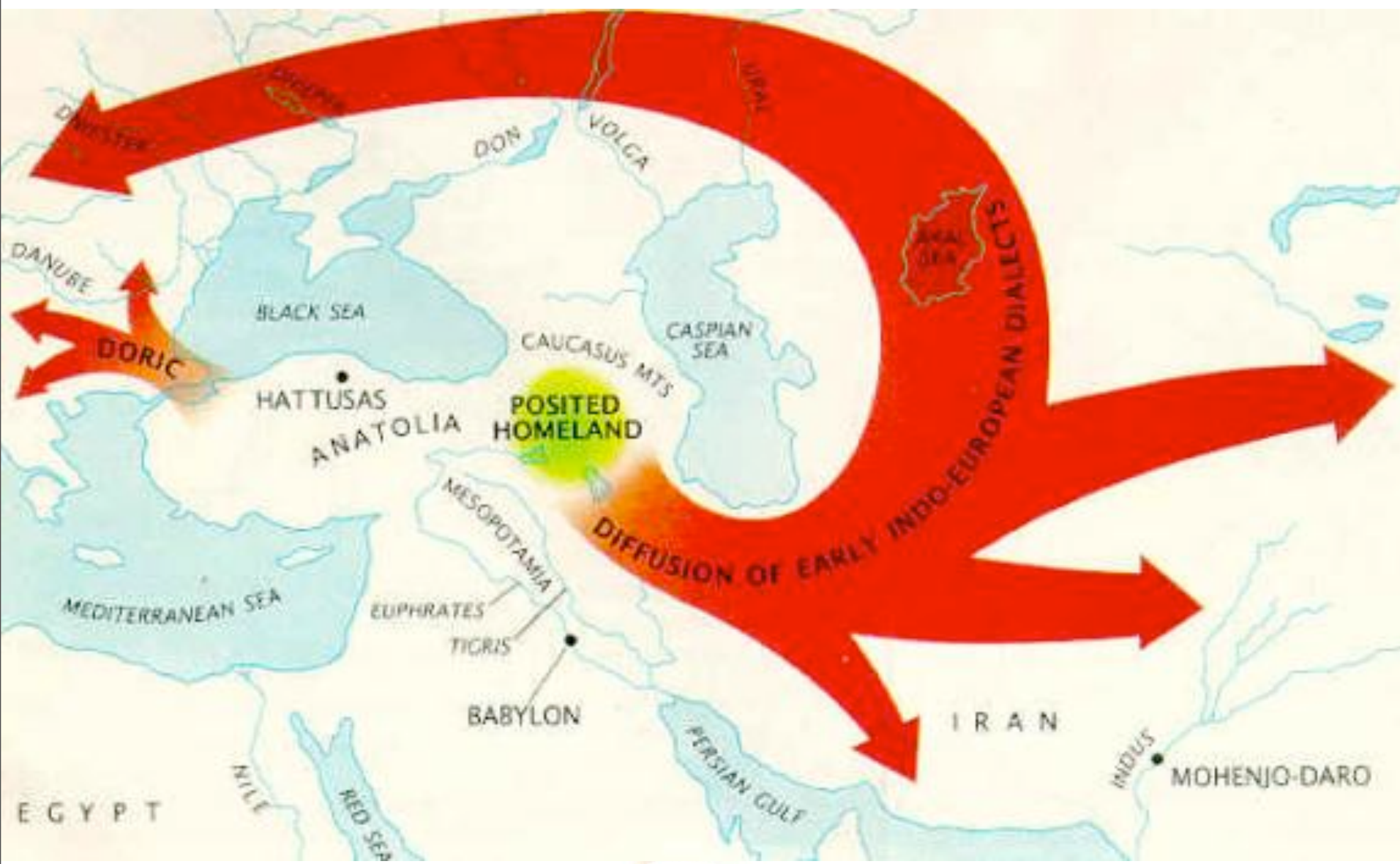
The Success Story of English

- No 'Germanic language' was spoken in Oxford or 'England' until 1,600 years ago.
- BUT English is now spoken by 3-400 million native speakers and used by millions more
- Of the c. 2,700 world languages and dialects it is the dominant language of commerce, international diplomacy, and the internet

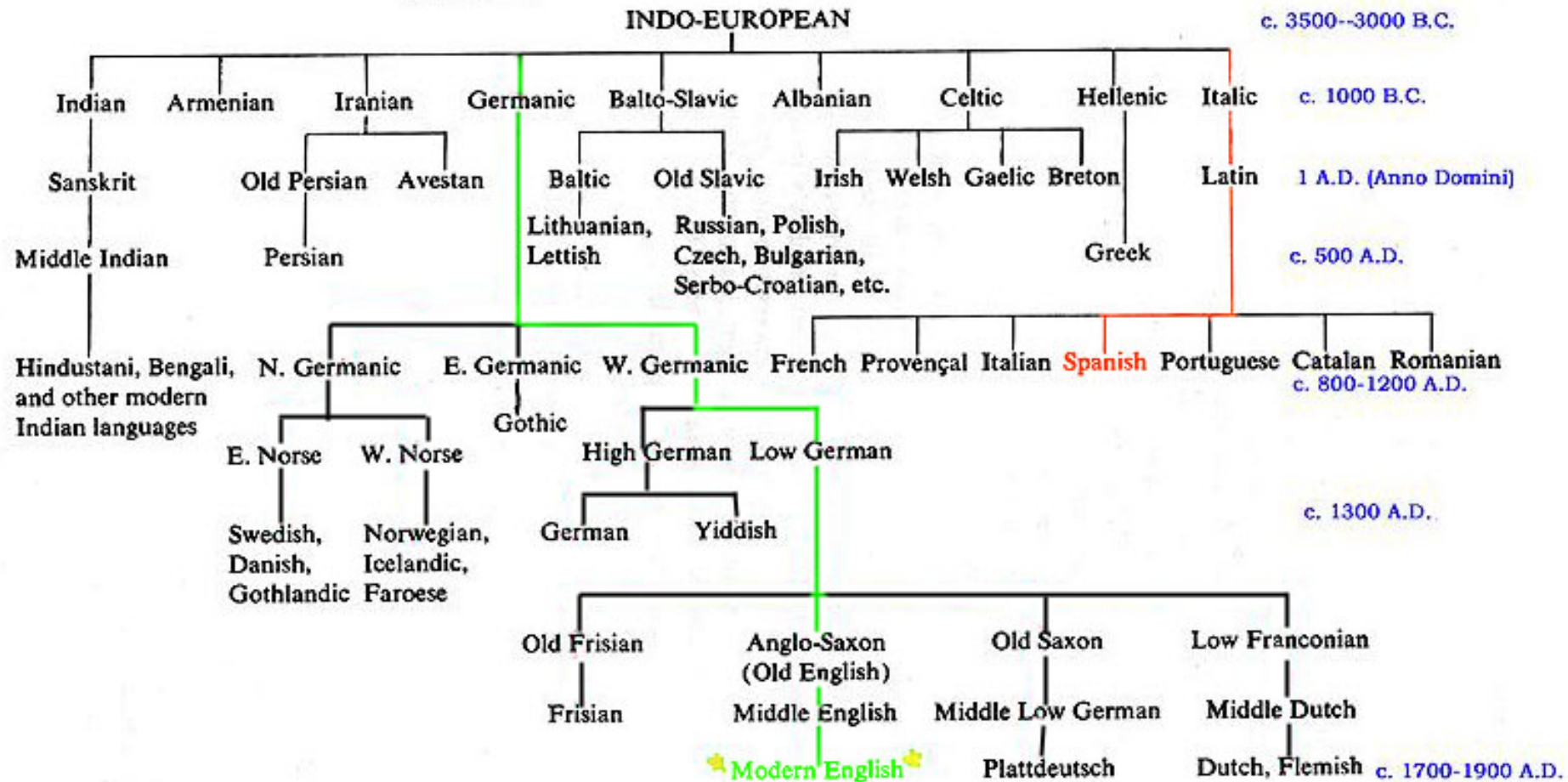
Once upon a time ...

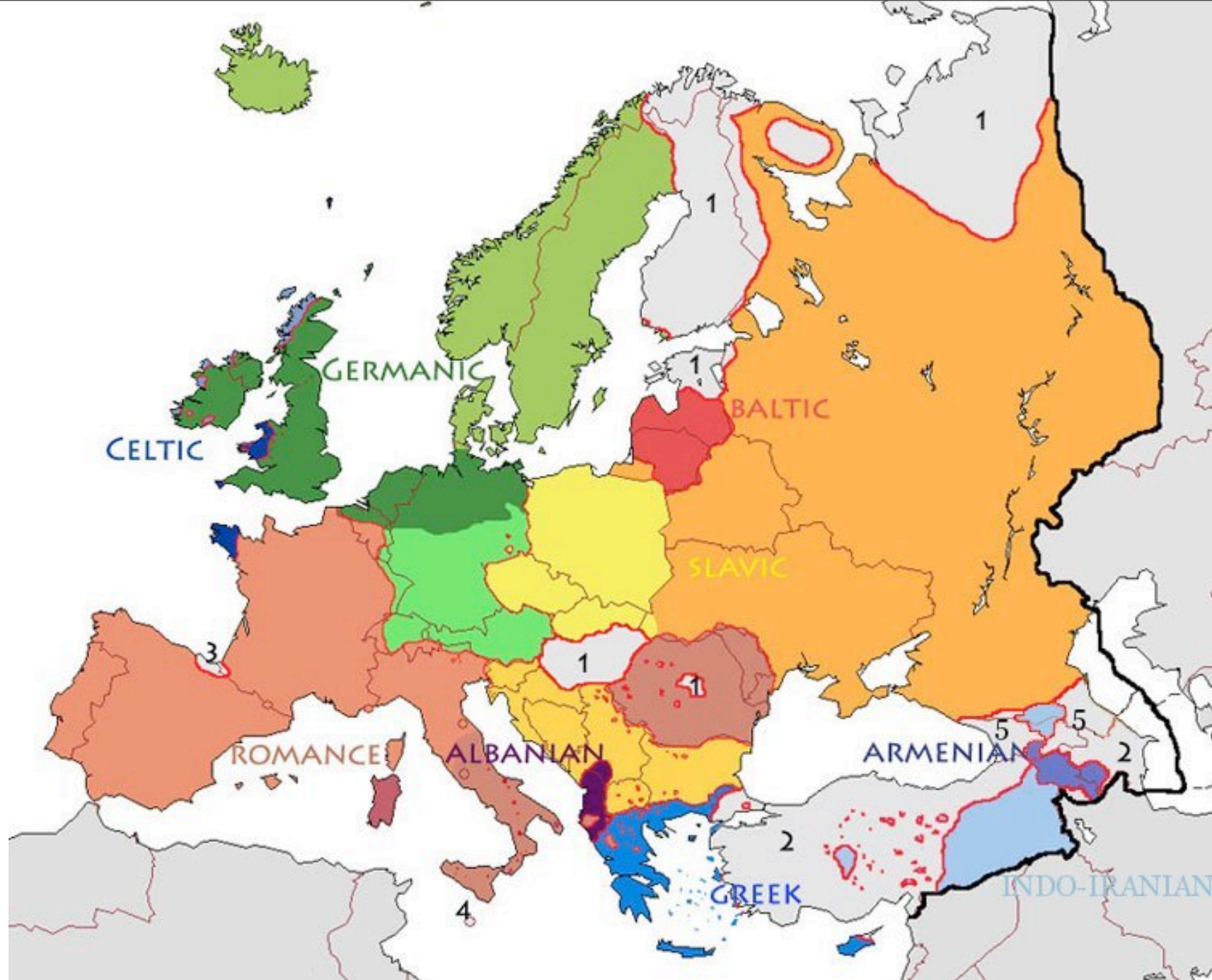
... about 1,800 BC





THE INDO-EUROPEAN FAMILY OF LANGUAGES









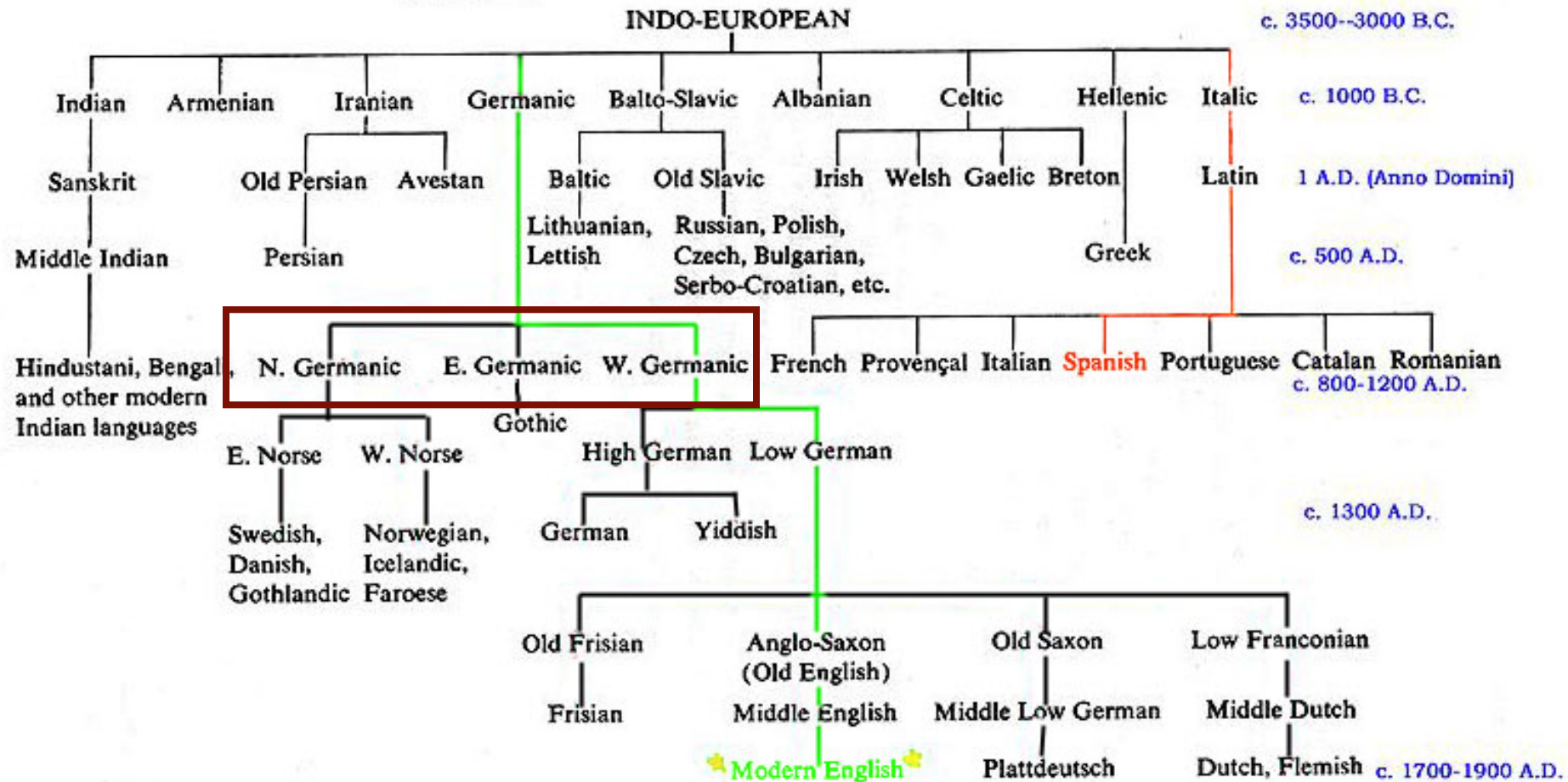
BL, Cotton Tiberius B.v, f.56v



middangeard between heaven
or hell or linked to Old Norse *midgard*

BL, Cotton Tiberius B.v, f.56v

THE INDO-EUROPEAN FAMILY OF LANGUAGES



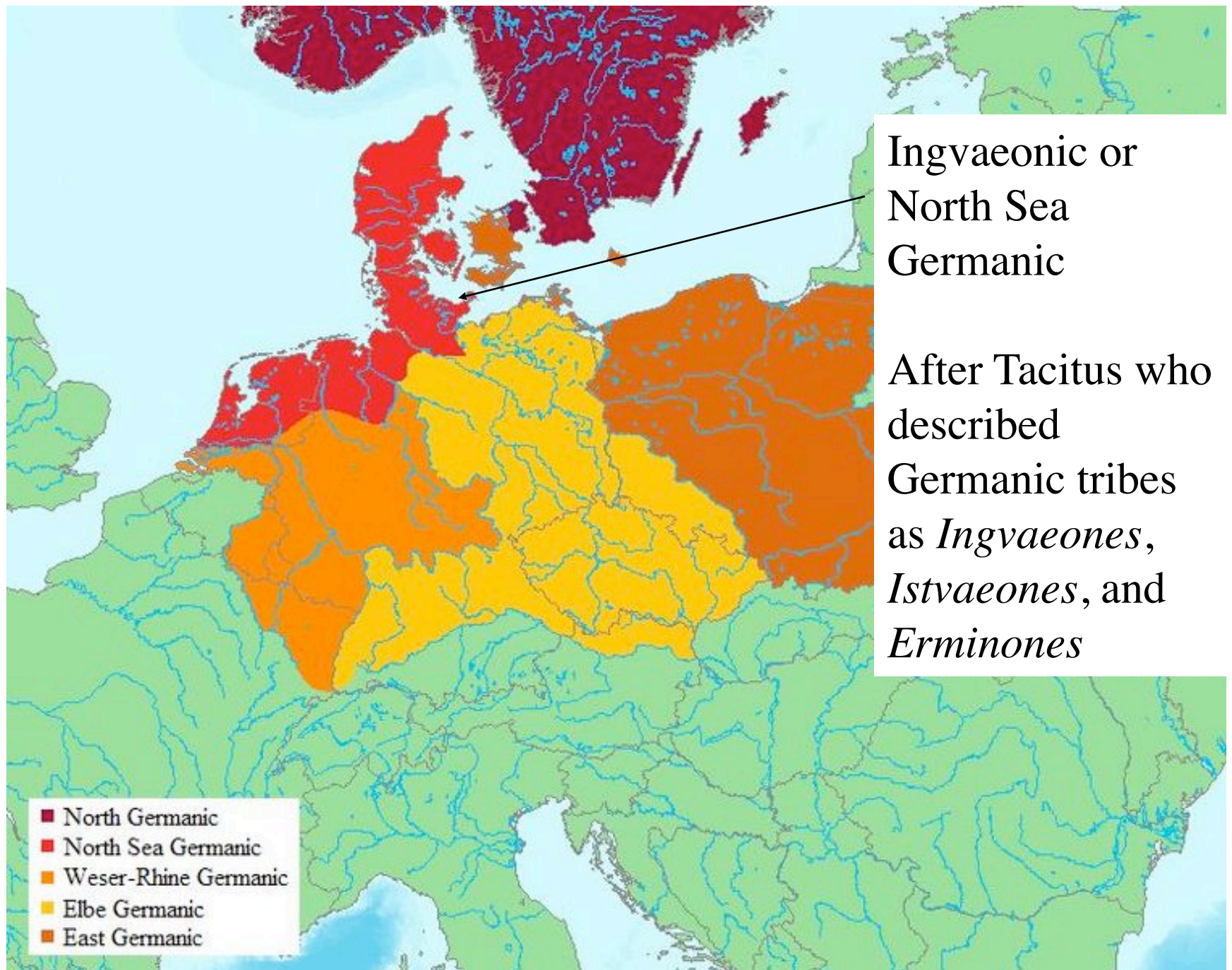
So where were they speaking



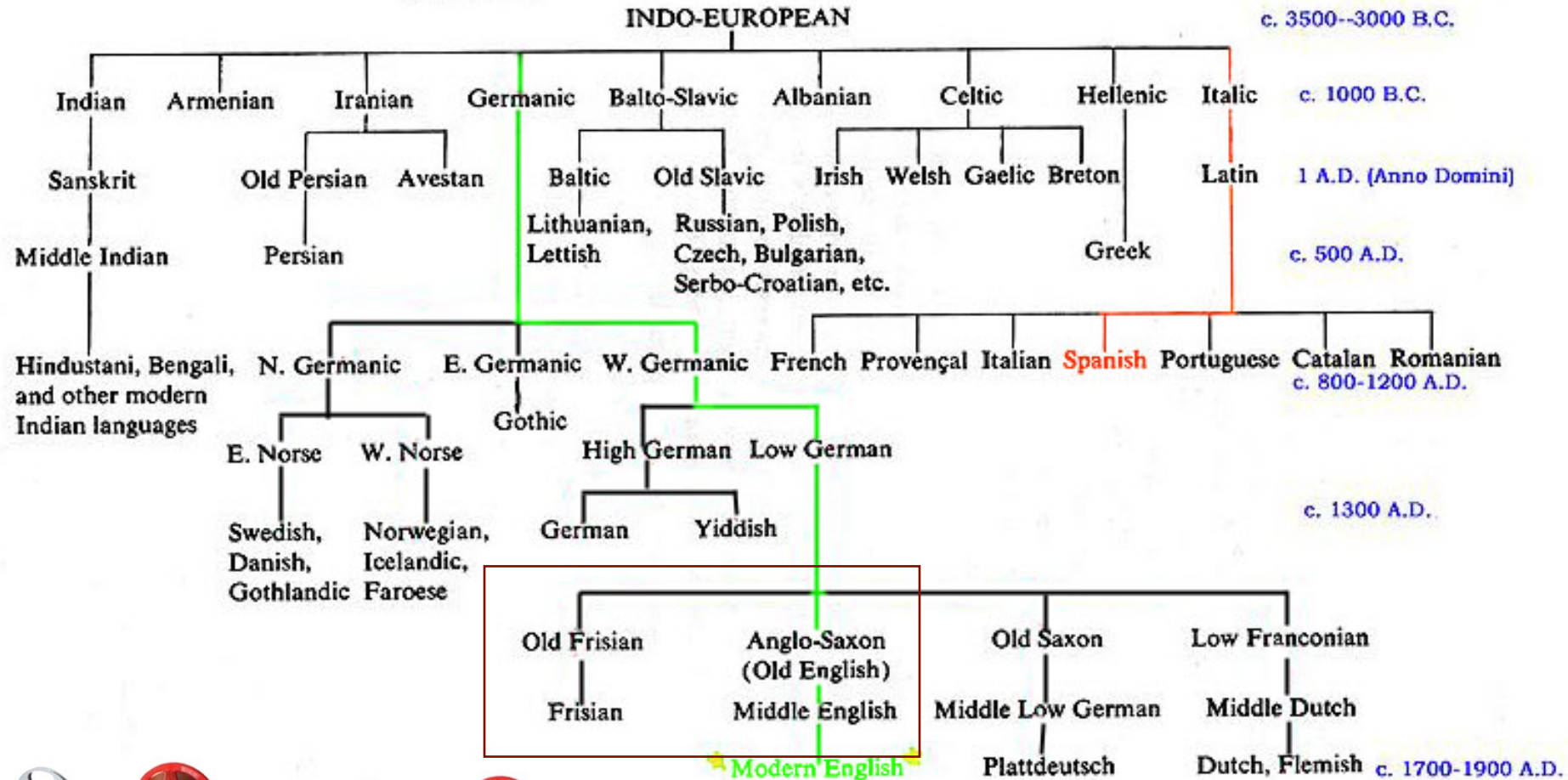
Angles = Angeln
Saxons = Lower Saxony
Jutes = Jutland

Thus English = German

- The first 'English' was spoken in an area near southern Denmark/northern Germany
- Part of the languages spoken around that area hence the term 'Germanic'
- Mann/man, Maus/mouse, haben/have, singen/sing, Hund/hound, Herz/heart ...



THE INDO-EUROPEAN FAMILY OF LANGUAGES



A Bit of Old Frisian

God made Adam and

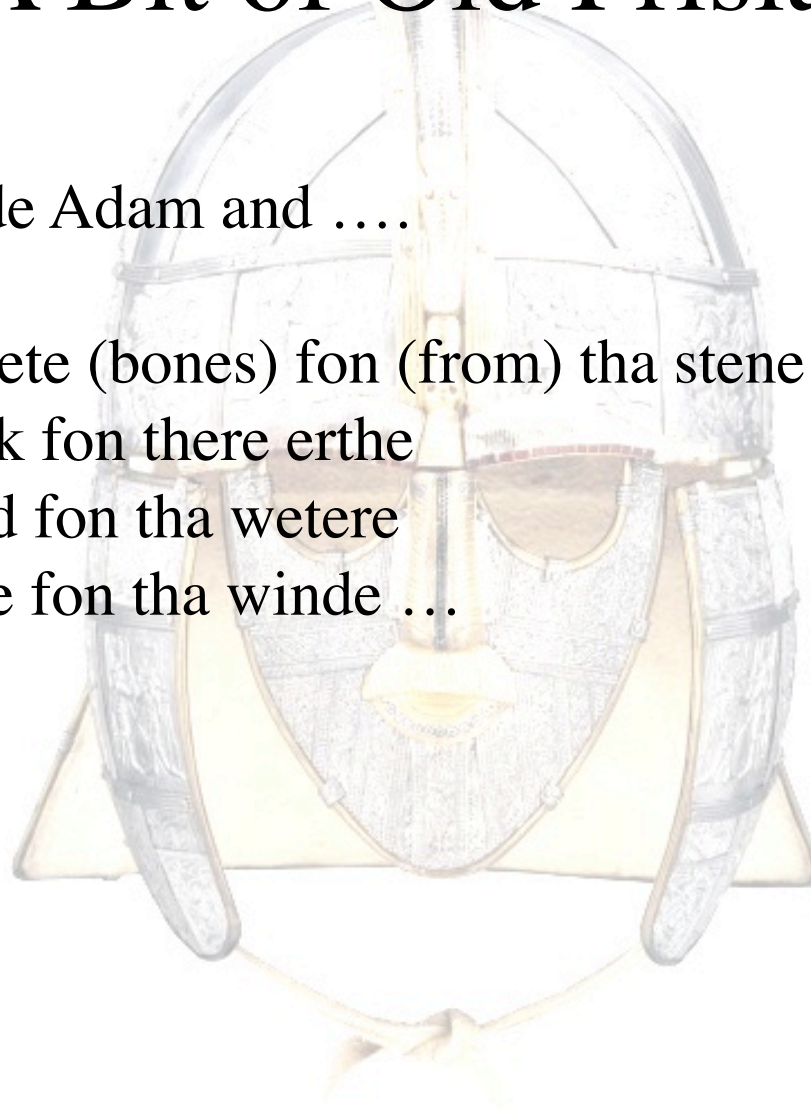
Thet benete (bones) fon (from) tha stene

Thet flask fon there erthe

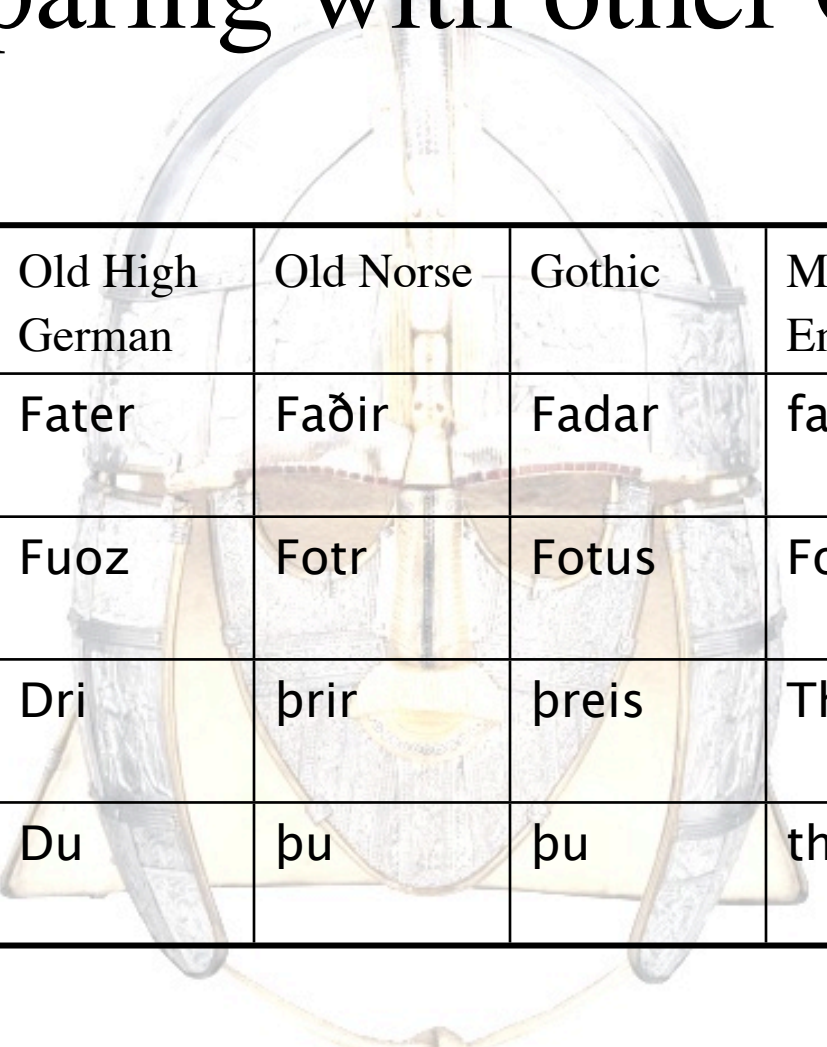
Thet blod fon tha wetere

Tha herte fon tha winde ...

c. 1300



Comparing with other Older



Old English	Old High German	Old Norse	Gothic	Modern English
Fæder	Fater	Faðir	Fadar	father
Fot	Fuoz	Fotr	Fotus	Foot
þrie	Dri	þrir	þreis	Three
þu	Du	þu	þu	thou

O.W Robinson, *Old English and its Closest Relatives* (Routledge, 1992)

Note:

Latin - pater / Germanic 'father'

Latin - pes, Sanskrit - pada etc/ Germanic 'foot'

So 'p' to 'f'

Also 't' to 'th'

Latin 'tertius', Greek 'tritos',
Sanskrit 'treta', Irish 'tri' / Germanic 'three'

WHY? See [Grimm's Law and Verner's Law](#)

O.W Robinson, *Old English and its Closest Relatives* (Routledge, 1992)

‘The Pity of It’ (1915)

‘I walked in loamy Wessex Lanes, afar
From rail-track and from highway, and I heard
In field and farmstead many an ancient word
Of local lineage like ‘Thu bist,’ ‘Er war’
‘Ich woll,’ ‘Er sholl,’ and bytalk similar
Nigh as they speak who in this month’s moon gird
At England’s very loins...’

Thomas Hardy

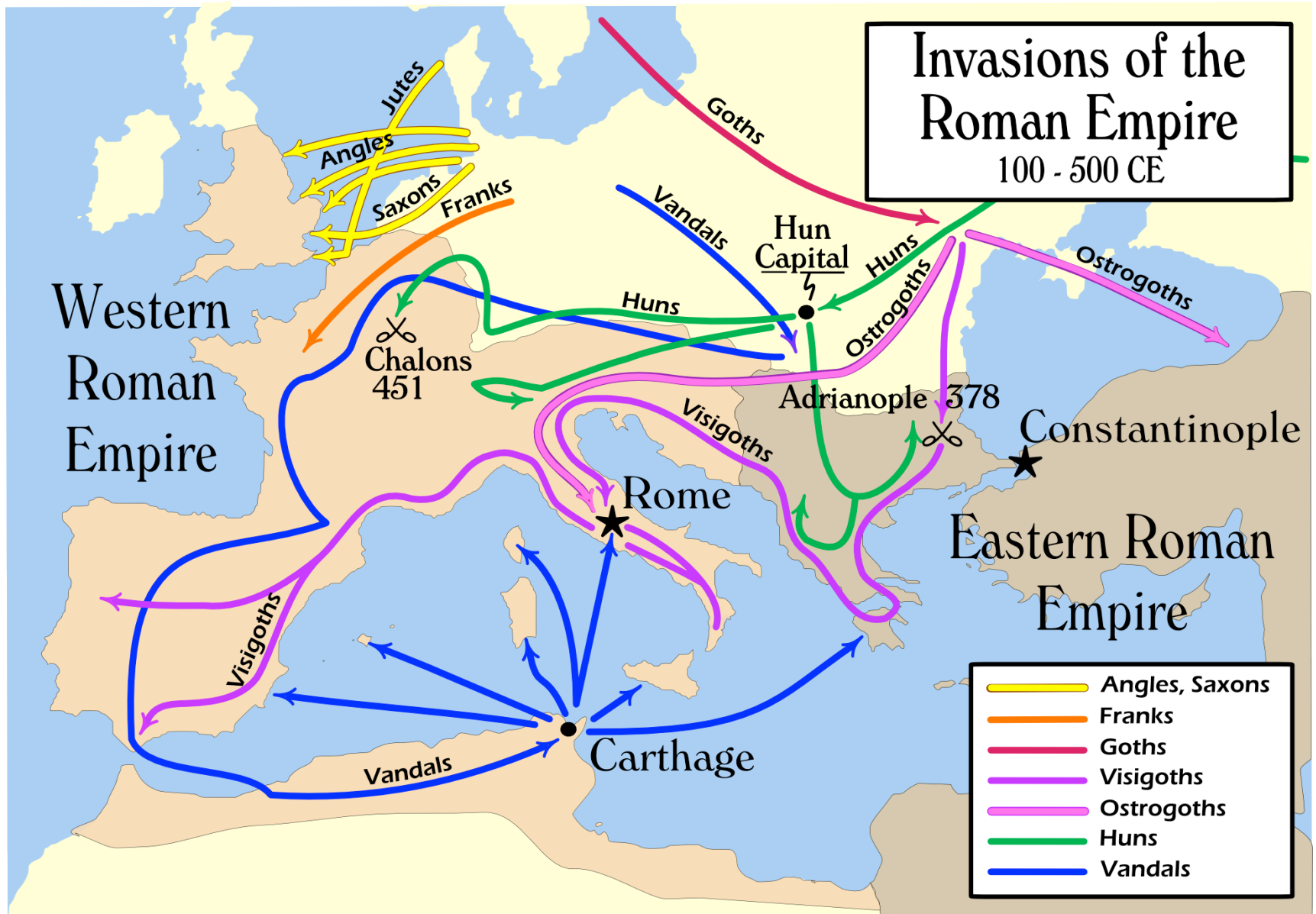
A bit of history ...



The 'migration' period

- Collapse of Roman Britain (early 5th century) > raids by Picts, Scoti, Saxons
- Romano-British isolated
- 'adventus Saxonum' 449 AD (Bede)
- 'migration' not invasion - but not how the 'British' saw them > Gildas *De Excidio Britanniae*

Beowulf, Bede's Ecclesiastical History, ASC ...



Tribes to Kingdoms

- e6th century sees expansion into Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Lincolnshire, and North East Yorkshire - the time of *Beowulf*?
- 597 St Augustine arrives
- British Resistance (**Mons Badonicus**)
- 16th century expansion into Staffordshire
- War bands > tribes > amalgamation into 'kingdoms'
- e7th century 12 'kingdoms' > heptarchy (Northumbria, Mercia, Kent, Sussex, Wessex, Essex, East Anglia) > 9th century only East Anglia, Mercia, Northumbria, and Wessex survive
- e7th century - Sutton Hoo burial
- BUT where they settled has a direct effect on LANGUAGE



Dialects in Old English

- Northumbrian (‘north of the Humber’)
- Mercian (Humber to the Thames, not Essex), *nawiht* and *owiht*
- West Saxon (southern England, not Cornwall or Kent)
- Kentish (Kent and Surrey)
- Late West Saxon (LWS)

Dialects/Accents in Modern English

- London/Cockney
- Liverpool/Scouse
- Newcastle/Geordie
- Birmingham/Brummie
- Scots, Welsh, West Country, Cornish, Manx, Irish, etc etc
- Pronounce 'house'

Northumbrian dialect words

Bearn	Bairn	Child
Gan	Gan	Go
Geomrian	Yammer	Complain
Micel	Muckel	Big
Na	Nah	No
Ocusta	Oxter	Armpit
Stæþ	Staithe	Jetty
Tom	Toom	Empty

And remember - toon (OE tun), hoose (OE hus), knaa (OE cnawan)

The story continues ...

- Pre-migration from Latin *belt, butter, street*
- From the 'British' *avon, combe, brock*
- During the Anglo-Saxon period from Latin *candle, angel, cowl*
- During the Anglo-Saxon period from the Danes and Norwegians *awe, call, outlaw*
- In the late Anglo-Saxon period from French *capon, proud*
- Post-conquest from French *castle, crown*
- Keeps doing this - Americanisms, and
C U L8R

Après Le Deluge: French Battle Anglo Terms in Web Age

Experts struggle to create equivalents for terms like 'cloud computing'

Posted Oct 14, 09 4:27 AM CDT in [Business](#), [Technology](#), [World](#) |     Share

[IMAGES \(2\)](#) [[QUOTES \(1\)](#)]



Our citizens have a right to communicate without speaking English.

- Xavier North, head of France's General Commission of Terminology and Neology

(Newser) – Defenders of the French language are fighting a rear-guard action against a flood of Anglo-Saxon computing terms. In a process that lags far behind advances in technology, experts are tasked with finding French equivalents for new computing technology. The terms must then be passed by a panel of linguists and professors, who are often puzzled by the concepts involved. The new term must *then* be approved by the Academie Française, the official authority on the French language.

4

tweets

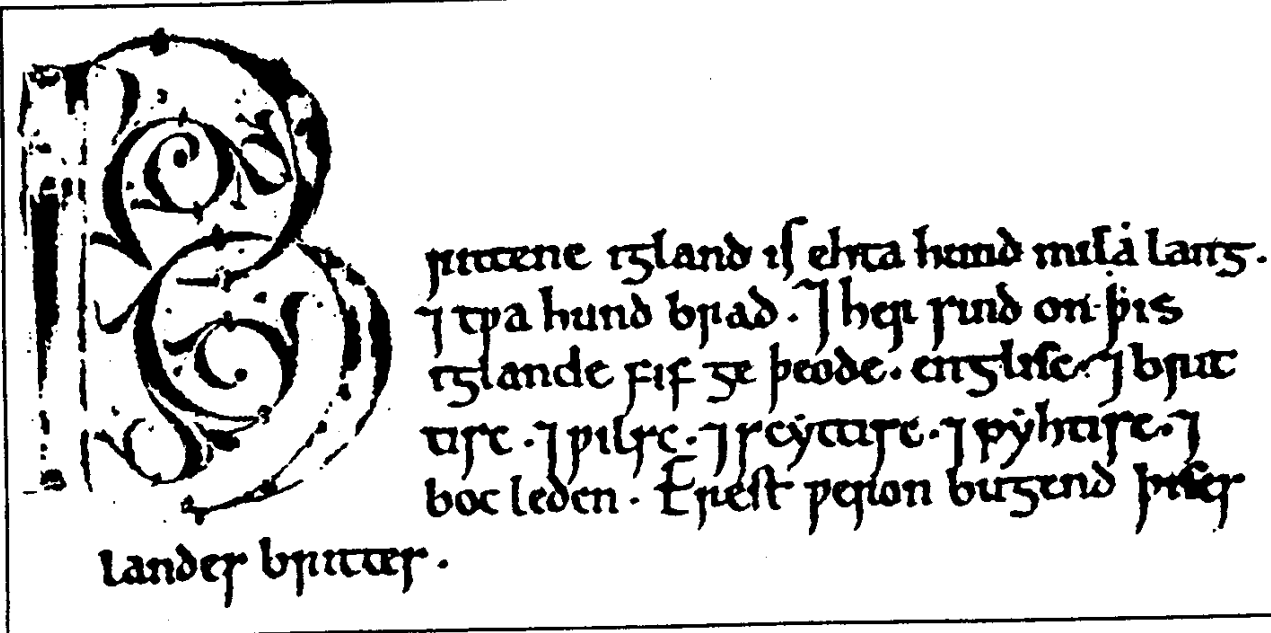
retweet



post

But remember ...





Æ

B

landeſ britteſ.

rittene ȳsland iſ ehta hund mila lang.
 7 tpa hund brad. 7 her ſind on þis
 ȳslande fif ȝeþeode. engliſc. 7 brit
 tiſc. 7 wilſc. 7 ſcotiſc. 7 pyhtiſc. 7
 boc leden. Ereſt peron buزند þiſeſ

(See section 3.1.2.1 for a description of the letter shapes.)

WW

of-Britain island is eight hundred miles long.
 & two hundred broad. & here are in this
 island five languages. english. & brit-
 ish. & welsh. & scottish. & pictish. &
 book latin. First were inhabitants of-this
 land britons.

Manuscript

To

Transcription

To

Modern English

Which of the following are not found in Old English?

His, he, him, it, the, that, this, come,
go, why, who, quick, where, ride,
choose, drink, fall, kiss, fill, over, under,
in, bath, beam, bear, bid, fast, flood,
fiend, little, most, lust, many, queen,
soul, sea, sharp, other, often, new, old,
mead, gate, wall, gem, young, friendly,

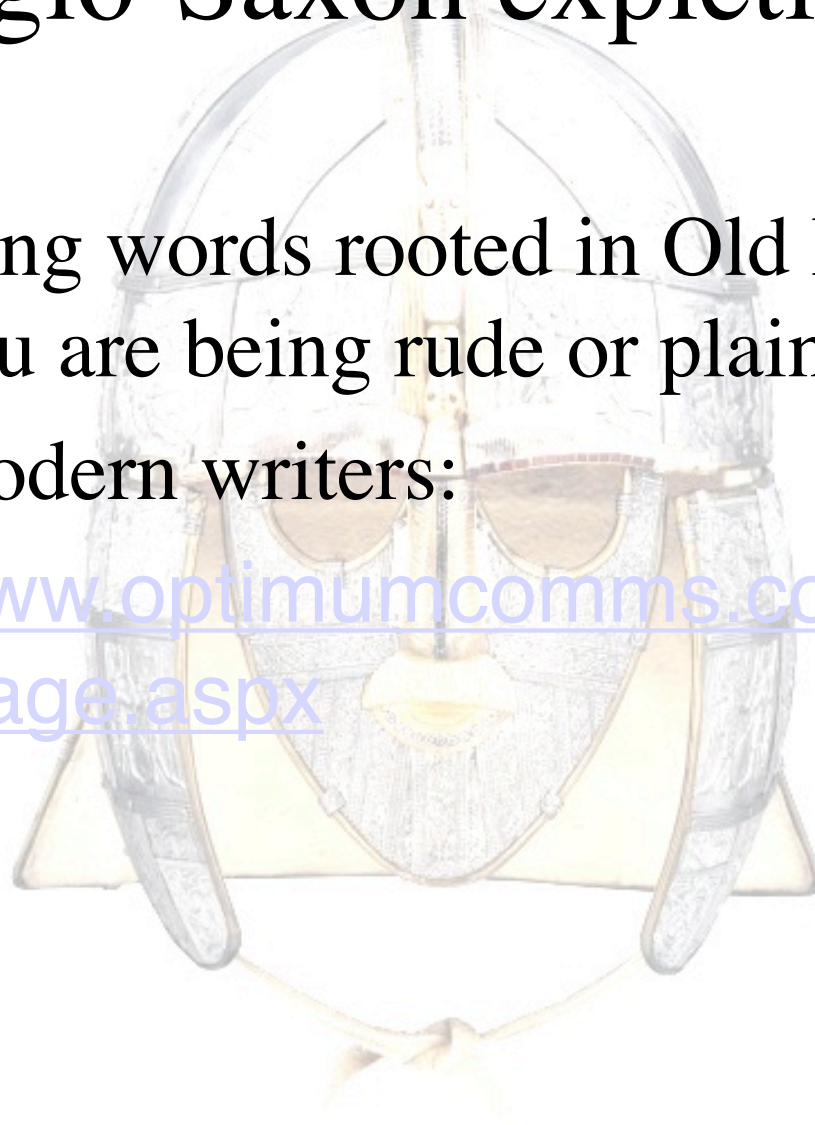
Which of the following are not found in Old English?

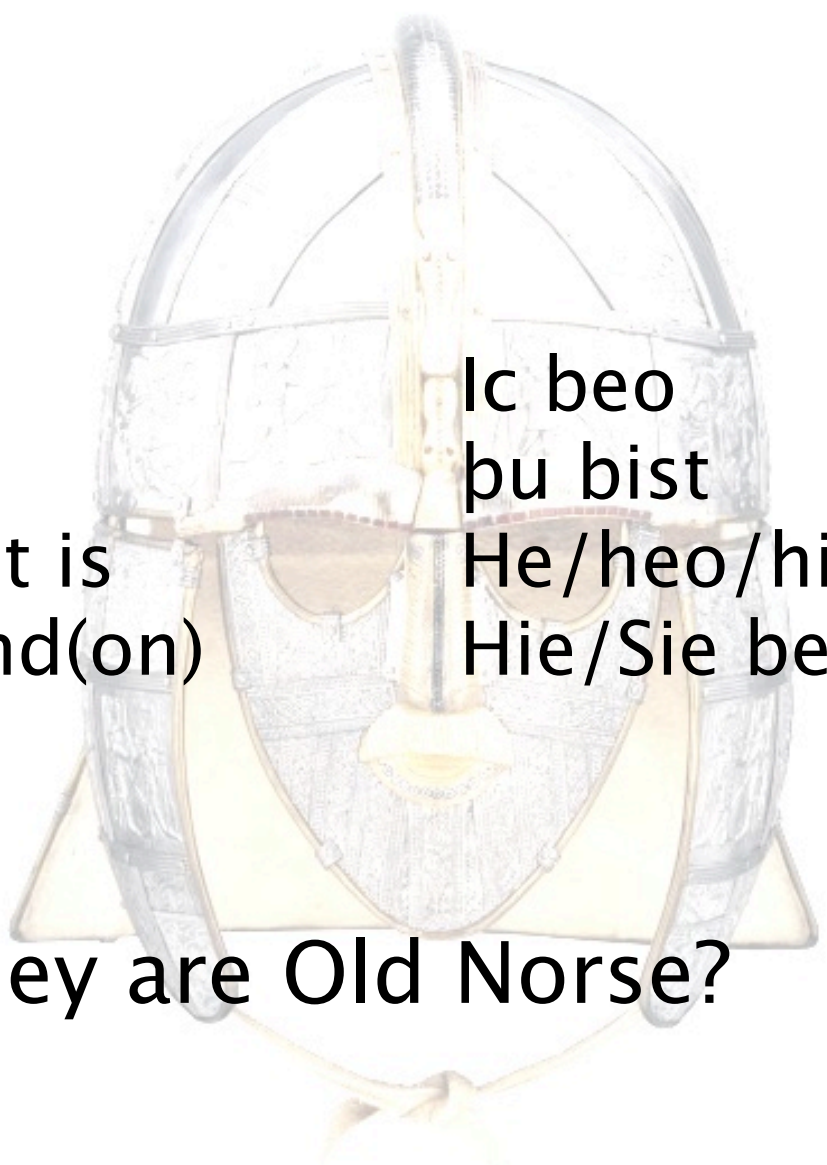
His, he, him, hit, se/þe, þat, þis, cume,
ga, hwy, hwa, cwic, hwær, ride,
geceose, drince, fealle, cysse, fyllle, ofer,
under, in, baþ, beam, bera, bidde, fæst,
flod, feond, litle, mæst, lust, mænig,
cwen, sawol, sæ, scearp, oþer, oft,
niwe, eald, mede, geat, weal, gimm,



Anglo-Saxon expletives!

- Does using words rooted in Old English mean you are being rude or plain talking?
- Some modern writers:
- <http://www.optimumcomms.co.uk/Homepage.aspx>





Ic eom
þu eart
He/heo/hit is
Hie/Sie sind(on)

Ic beo
þu bist
He/heo/hit biþ
Hie/Sie beoþ

They are Old Norse?

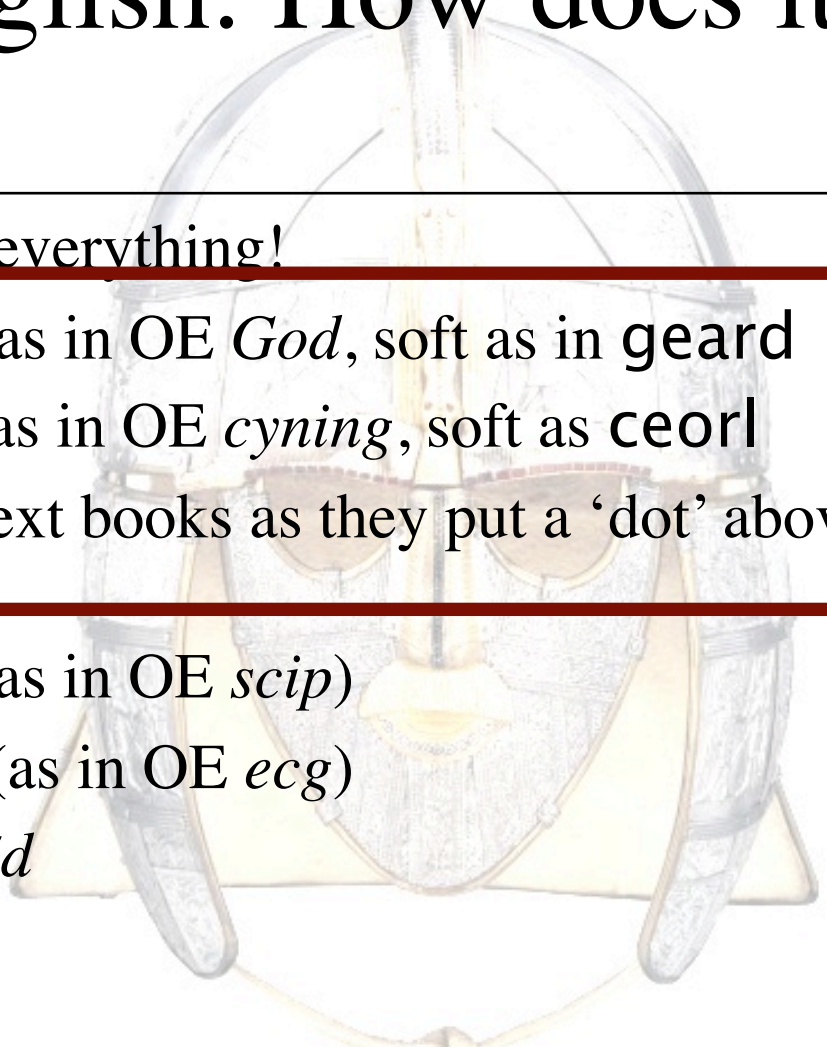
Speaking Old English



Old English: How does it sound?

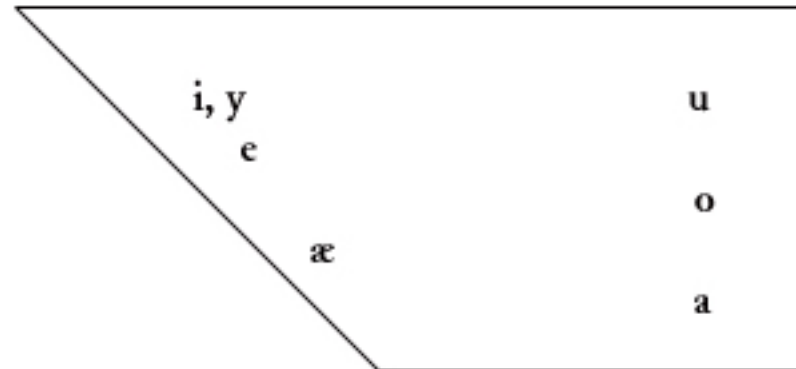
- Pronounce everything!
- G g = hard as in OE *God*, soft as in *geard*
- C c = hard as in OE *cyning*, soft as *ceorl*
- Helped in text books as they put a ‘dot’ above soft letters e.g. *ċild*
- ‘sc’ = ‘sh’ (as in OE *scip*)
- ‘cg’ = ‘dg’ (as in OE *ecg*)
- *God* and *gōd*

Old English: How does it sound?

- 
- Pronounce everything!
 - G g = hard as in OE *God*, soft as in *geard*
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e.g. *ċild*
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 - *God* and *gōd*



Front
or
Light



Back
or
Dark



Nose (OE nosu)

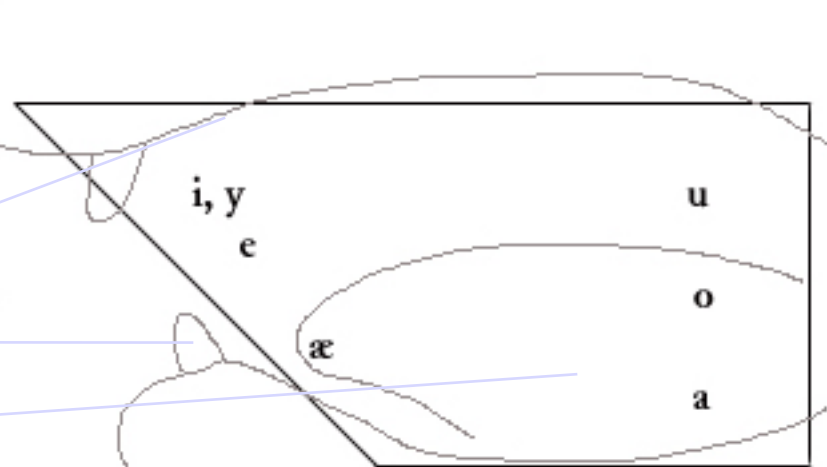
Lips (OE weler)

Gums (OE goma)

Tooth (OE toþ)

Tongue (OE tunge)

Throat (OE þrotu)



* Front vowels tend to collocate with soft c's and g's

* Back vowels tend to collocate with hard c's and g's

Problems with Old English

- Apart from the endings there is the issue of syntax (word order)

‘So much only in this hour of doubt I may now say’
‘If any of the Wise should with this Ring
overthrow the Lord of Mordor...’

Last Updated: Friday, 4 June, 2004, 16:31 GMT 17:31 UK

[E-mail this to a friend](#)

[Printable version](#)

Yoda 'speaks like Anglo-Saxon'

By Finlo Rohrer
BBC News Online staff

Star Wars character Yoda's sentence structure is similar to old Anglo-Saxon, a linguistics expert has said.

Author David Crystal also says a number of characters in the Lord of the Rings are excellent examples of non-standard English for children to study.

In his book *The Stories of English*, the academic even discusses the effect on pronunciation of the BBC and on vocabulary by the Sun.

He said he wanted to attack purists who would not tolerate non-standard English



'A speaker of non-standard English I am'

• Ap
syr

e of

‘So n
‘If ar
overt

Problems with Old English



- Apart from the endings there is the issue of syntax (word order)
- More importantly there are problems of ‘semantics’, what does a word mean?
- Meaning = survival, similar languages, Latin glosses, context > Dictionaries
- [Corpus of Old English](#)
- [Thesaurus of Old English](#)

Harold is swift. His hand is strong and his word
grim.

Late in life he went to his wife in Rome

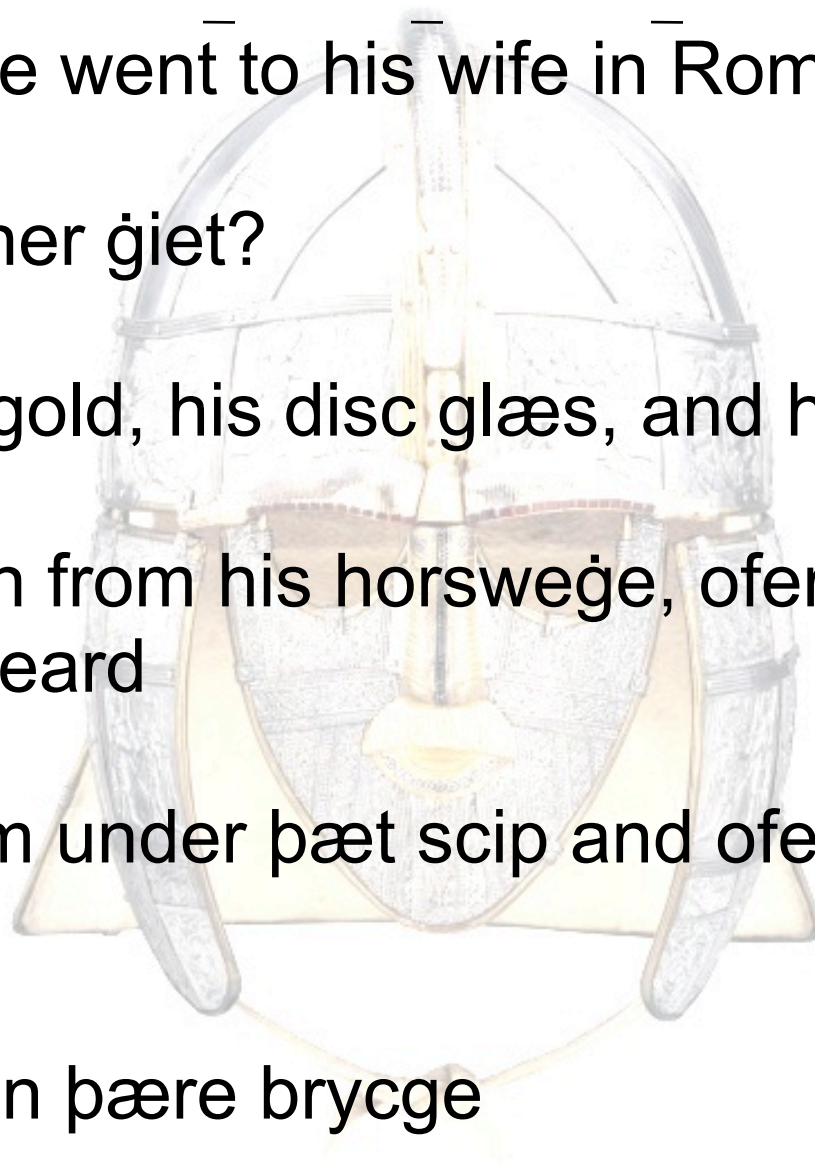
Is his þegn her giet?

His hring is gold, his disc glæs, and his belt leper

His cīcen ran from his horswege, ofer his pæþ,
and in his gearð

Se fisc swam under þæt scip and ofer þone
sciellfisc

Se cniht is on þære brycge





*And English lived
happily ever after ...*

... The End

84ap geonap. pond. tuc p. muri ge
 haupth. pelon. gumme
 ge. gumme. pan ha

on þone drihten
 samunum þaȝ moð mo
 ne sƿiſtne gebægd hƿat neo inhungar
 ſƿe neo geboro ƿeall ƿalea ƿiſum ƿunƿum to ge
 ope. beſihte ƿaſion þaȝ ƿateo būm ƿe moige he
 ah lœm geſenon hƿe sƿiȝ micel mæce haall monȝ.
 Ne gifa ma ƿeall oþæt þæt on ƿiſe ƿeo ƿe sƿiſe
 cunȝon ƿe ƿeo cƿoman ƿe ƿeazur sƿiſe all ƿeo
 nom ƿeazur neo ƿeazur ƿeazur hƿe ƿeazur ƿeazur ƿeazur
 ƿeazur hƿeazur beazur beazur cunȝon hƿeazur
 hƿeazur hƿeazur hƿeazur hƿeazur hƿeazur hƿeazur
 hƿeazur hƿeazur hƿeazur hƿeazur hƿeazur hƿeazur.

Summary



- Old English is a Germanic Language, most akin to Frisian
- It borrowed words from other languages and had dialects
- Many Old English words are used today
- Old English was an inflected language
- We need to know a few rules to help us pronounce Old English

Next week



- Second translation workshop!
- Look at the web site and discussion area
- What Old English poems are there?
- Where do they survive?
- How does Old English poetry work?
- How was Old English poetry performed?
- Old English ‘flow’ and ‘da homies in da hood’, it’s ‘bumping’



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