# Lecture 1

Anglo-Saxon England

An outline

- Historical Linguistics. The Comparative method.
- The Concept of Proto-Germanic (PG)
- Grimm's Law. Verner's Law.
- Periods in the History of English.
- The earliest inhabitants of the British Isles
- OE Heptarchy. OE Dialects.
- Christianity and writing

Historical Linguistics. The Comparative method.

- **late 18th and**
- **19th centuries**

Sir William Jones (1746-1794)
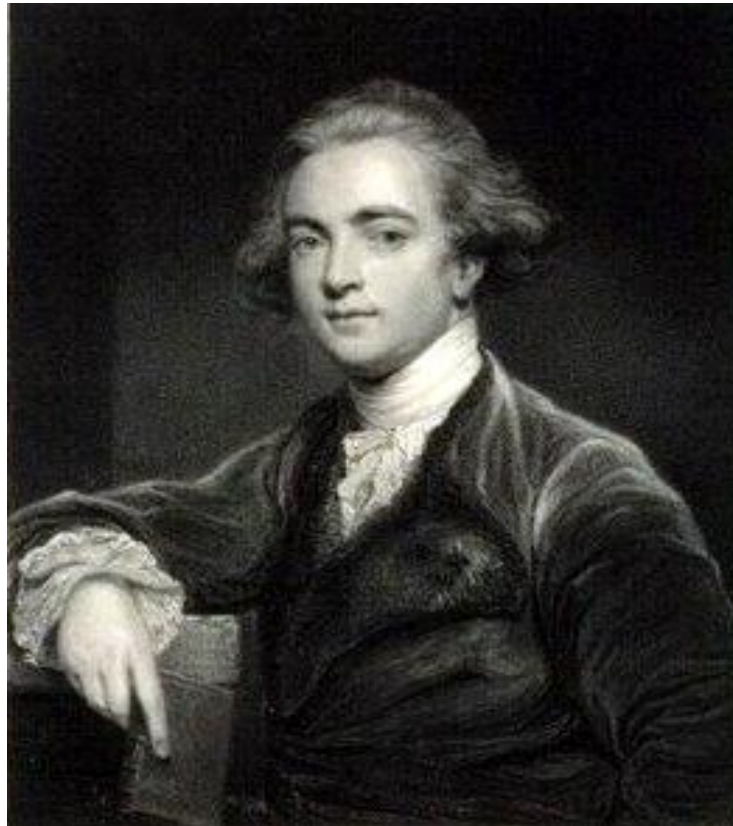
Sanskrit

Latin   Greek   Persian   Gothic   Celtic

- The English scholar and diplomat **William Jones (18th c.),** working in India as a British judge, noticed certain features in the vocabulary and grammar of **Sanskrit** (the ancient classical language of India) that were shared with **Latin** and **Greek** and **other European languages**.
- He asserted that these languages developed from a common source language. He identified the source language as **Sanskrit**

- Interest in the discovery mounted and, early in the 19th century, Sanskrit was being studied in the West.

- the **19th century** is the era of **historical-comparative linguistics**, led by German scholarship:
- the Dane **Rasmus Rask**
- the Germans **Franz Bopp** and **Jacob Grimm**

- The **comparative method** is a technique for studying the development of languages by performing a feature-by-feature comparison of two or more languages with common descent from a shared ancestor.

- The German scholar **Franz Bopp** was the first to work out some of the relationships between the languages, showing *how* they were related.

- The Danish scholar **Rasmus Rask** recognized that there were regular *sound shifts* between languages,
- but it was left to a German scholar **Jacob Grimm** who deduced regular rules of sound change

- **August Schleicher** (1821–68) set about reconstructing the hypothetical parent language from which most European languages were derived – ***the protolanguage***.

- He also devised the genealogical family-tree model of the Indo-European languages.

2. The Concept of Proto-Germanic (PG)

Scheme of Indo-European migrations from ca. 4000 to 1000 BC

- **the "Satem" languages**

- **the "Centum" languages**

- **The Indo-European family of languages**, has developed out of some **single language**, which must have been spoken thousands of years ago by some comparatively small body of people in a relatively restricted geographical area.

- This original language we can call **Proto-Indo-European (PIE).**

- The prefix ***proto-*** was introduced to indicate a *hypothetical language* that had left *no documentation*, but which could be **reconstructed** by the method of comparison

- **Proto-Indo-European (PIE)** - some single language, which must have been spoken thousands of years ago by some comparatively small body of people in a relatively restricted geographical area

- **Proto-Germanic (PG)** - a dialect of Indo-European all Germanic languages are descended from
- We have no records of the PG.
- We can reconstruct it by comparing the various daughter languages, especially valuable are languages with early literary records, **Gothic** in particular.

Proto-Germanic

- West Germanic
- North Germanic
- East Germanic

North Germanic
(Old Norse)

West Scandinavian:
- Icelandic
- Norwegian
- Faroese

East Scandinavian:
- Danish
- Swedish
- Gutnish

East Germanic:

- Burgundian
- Vandal
- **Gothic**:

Visigothic

Ostrogothic

- In the **4th c.** Goths were Christianized by a missionary named **Ulfilas** (311–383).
- Our knowledge of Gothic is almost wholly due to a translation of the Gospels and other parts of the New Testament made by Ulfilas.
- Except for some runic inscriptions in Scandinavia *it is the earliest record* of a Germanic language we possess.
- Gothic is important in giving information about early forms of Germanic.

West Germanic

- Old High German   High German
- Old Saxon   Low German
- Old Low Franconian   Dutch
- Old English   English
- Old Frisian   Frisian

- One important aspect of PIE is that it was **an inflected language**.

- PG is a highly inflected language, like PIE.

- **In PG the stress was put on the 1ˢᵗ syllable (fixed accent),** in PIE – it could fall on any syllable (*free accent*).

- The tendency in PG to stabilize the accent on the 1ˢᵗ syllable had profound consequences. It led to a weakening and often loss of unstressed syllables, especially at the end of the word

- *PIE verb "bheronom"*
- *PG beranan*
- *OE beran*
- *ME beren, bere*
- *PDE bear*

3. The First consonant shift. Grimm's Law

- "the 1st sound-shifting";

- after the early 19th c. **philologist Jakob Grimm**, who analysed it.

- Grimm began with the **assumption** that Sanscrit, Greek, Latin and other European languages had a common ancestor.

- This common ancestor, which we will call Proto-Indo-European, can be reconstructed by examining its descendants.

FATHER

- Sanskrit – pitar
- Latin – pater
- Ancient Greek – pāter
- English – father

- Because the "p" sound appears in a wider variety of languages, it is assumed to be ancestral and the "f" in English to be derived from a consonant shift.

Grimm's Law

- It consists of **3 major consonant changes.**

PIE aspirated voiced stops > Gmc voiced stops

- **Bh > b**

*Sans. **bh**arami – ModE **b**ear*

- **Dh > d**

*Sans. ru**dh**iras – ModE re**d***

- **Gh > g**

*Gr. **ch**en – Ger **G**ans*

PIE voiceless stops > Gmc voiceless fricatives

- **P > f**

L. __p__ater – ModE __f__ather

- **T > th**

L. den__t__is – ModE too__th__

- **K > h**

L. __c__ornu – ModE __h__orn

PIE voiced stops > Gmc voiceless stops

- **b > p**

*L. tur**b**a – ModE thor**p***

- **d > t**

*L. **d**ens – ModE **t**ooth*

- **g > k**

*L. a**g**er – ModE a**c**re*

Verner's Law.
The Second Consonant Shift (1875)

- Certain apparent exceptions to Grimm's Law were subsequently explained by **Karl Verner (a Danish scholar)** and others.

Verner's Law.

- **Karl Verner** showed that voiceless fricatives became voiced if the preceding syllable was unstressed, but otherwise remained unchanged.
- *Latin **c**en**t**um - English **h**un**d**red.*

Verner's Law.

- **PIE _f_ > Gmc _v_**
- **PIE _th_ > Gmc _d_**

Lat pa_t_er – Gth fa_d_ar

- PIE _k_ > Gmc _g_
- PIE _s_ > Gmc _z_ > _r_ in North and West Germanic) = _**rotacizm**_

Gth. raisjan – OE ræran

The **High German Consonant Shift**

- The **High German Consonant Shift** or the **Second German Consonant shift** was a series of sound changes which separates the **Upper High German** dialects from other West Germanic languages such as Modern English, Dutch, and Low German.

- There are three major steps of this sound shift,

- **The first stage** is where the *three voiceless stops* became weakened into the closest *fricative* equivalents:
- /p/ → /f/
- /t/ → /s/
- /k/ → /x/

Cf. English grip – German Griff

- **The second stage** of the shift involved the same *voiceless stops* as the first stage. However, this only affected *geminated*, liquid-adjacent (-l, -r) and nasal-adjacent forms. Those stops became *Affricates*.
- /p/ → /pf/
- /t/ → /ts/
- /k/ → /kx/

Cf. Gth. twai, OE twa – OHG zwei

- **The third part** of the stage involves the *Voiced stops* becoming *voiceless stops*. This involves the following:
- /b/ → /p/
- /d/ → /t/
- /g/ → /k/
- *Cf. English floo<u>d</u> – German Flu<u>t</u>*
- *for greater understanding go to the chart on p. 13* [Иванова И.П., Чахоян Л.П., Беляева Т.М. Практикум по истории английского языка. – Спб., 2005]

4. Periods in the History of English

- Traditionally, the history of the English language is divided into **3 major periods.**

- This division was first proposed by an English philologist, **Henry Sweet**, in 1873.

Periods in the History of English

- **Old English** (Anglo-Saxon) (5 c.-1066) = *the period of full inflexions;*
- **Middle English** (1066 – 1485) = *of levelled inflexions;*
- **Modern English** (1485 - ...) = *of lost inflexions.*

5. The earliest inhabitants of the British Isles.

- The earliest inhabitants of the British Isles, whose language we can reconstruct, were **Celtic** speakers.

- The Celts had been living in England until being invaded by the **Romans (the Emperor Claudius)** in **43 AD**
- **But,** Latin never overtook the Celtic language.

- It was inevitable that the military conquest of Britain should have been followed by the **Romanization** of the province.

Scotland

Ireland

North Sea

JUTES

BRITAIN

Wales

ANGLES

England

Germanic invasions of the 5th century

SAXONS

Germany

N

France

Modern countries are shown in green

- By the beginning of the **5th** century the Roman Empire was under increasing pressure from advancing barbarians, and the Roman garrisons in Britain were being depleted as troops were withdrawn to face threats closer to home.

- In A.D. **410**, the same year in which the Visigoths entered and sacked Rome, the last of the Roman troops were withdrawn and the Britons had to defend themselves.
- Facing hostile Picts and Scots in the north and Germanic raiders in the east, the Britons decided to hire one enemy to fight the other: they engaged Germanic mercenaries to fight the Picts and Scots.

- Germanic mercenaries were from three Germanic nations: **the Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes.**
- The mercenaries succeeded quickly in defeating the Picts and Scots and then being attracted by the British fertile lands began to conquer England —a slow-moving conquest that would take more than a century.

- About the year **449 AD** began the invasion of Britain by certain Germanic tribes, the founders of the English nation.
- The Anglo-Saxon settlement of Britain mustn't be thought of as the arrival of a unified invading army, but rather as the arrival and penetration of various uncoordinated bands of adventurers in different parts of the country, beginning in the mid 5th c. and going on all through the 6th c.

- **But by about 700,** the Anglo-Saxons had occupied most of England and a considerable part of southern Scotland (the exceptions being Cornwall and an area in the North West). **Wales** remained a British stronghold

- **The language** of Anglo-Saxons became the dominant one. The failure of Celtic to influence OE doesn't mean that the Britons were all killed or driven out.
- The Britons were a defeated people whose language had no prestige compared with that of the conquerors.

6. OE Heptarchy.

- **In the 7th c.** Germanic tribes set up seven kingdoms called the Anglo-Saxon **Heptarchy**, *rule of the seven kingdoms* .

- Kent
- Northumbria
- Mercia (West Midlands)
- Wessex (central Southern England)
- East Anglia
- Essex
- Sussex

- At first, **Kent** was probably of major importance. It was to Kent that the first Roman Christian missionaries came, notably St. Augustine in 597
- In **the 7th** c. the **Northumbria** was very powerful, and was a great center of learning. The monasteries of Northumbria produced beautiful manuscripts of the Bible.
- In the **8th** c. this leadership passed to **Mercia**

- In the 9th c. = **Wessex**, centred at Winchester; and it was the kings of Wessex who finally unified the country : (in the late 9th c., the kings of Wessex, notably **King Alfred,** saved the South and West of England from the Danes **((*The Scandinavian Invasions of England. The Viking Age IX-XI c.),***
- **886**, the ***Treaty Wedmore: king Alfred*** established a truce with the Danish leader . The Dane Law.
- and in the 10th c. Alfred's successors reconquered the North and the East.

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The Viking Invasions

- **793,** the Vikings, from Scandinavia, sacked and burned the monastery of **Lindisfarne**, beginning a century of destruction and cultural collapse.

- in **850**, large Danish fleet began to arrive in England, and the Vikings began to conquer as well as pillage.
- Eventually almost all of northern and eastern England was under their control.

- Alfred, the king of Wessex, was able to rally his kingdom and defeat the Vikings. This led to a treaty between the Viking king Guthrum and Alfred, **The Treaty of Wedmore (878).**

- The treaty defined the territory (from Chester to London) which was to be subject to Danish law and is hence known as the **Danelaw**.
- In addition the Danes agreed to accept Christianity,

King Alfred

- **Wessex** became the seat of A-S *intellectual, literary, and political life*;
- ruled from 871 to 899;
- brought together scholars to begin a project of *educational reform*;
- commissioned the *translation* of key works of Latin learning into OE

OE dialects

The surviving texts form the OE period are in
4 main dialects:
- ***West saxon! (the literary standard)***
- *Kentish*
- *Mercia*
  Anglian
- *Northumbria*

- Although *West Saxon* became the *literary standard of unified England*, it is not the direct ancestor of **modern standard English**, which is mainly derived from **an Anglian dialect**

Christianity and writing

- The conversion of the English to Christianity began in **597 when Pope Gregory the Great** sent the missionary **St Augustine** to England, and took a century to complete.
- England underwent a remarkably bloodless conversion over the next 70 years.