THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH PODCAST TRANSCRIPTS

EPISODE 28: ANGLES, SAXONS, JUTES AND FRISIANS

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Welcome to the History of English Podcast - a podcast about the history of the English language. This is Episode 28 – Angles, Saxons, Jutes and Frisians. This time, we're going to turn our attention northward to the peoples of northern Europe who spoke the Germanic dialects which became Old English. These were the Angles, Saxons and Jutes, and we can probably add in the Frisians, as well as some Franks. All of these people spoke closely related West Germanic languages, and they all lived in the same general region near the North Sea before the migrations to Britain began around the fourth and fifth centuries.

It probably goes without saying that the historical events described over the next couple of episodes are some of the most important and significant events in the overall history of the English language. And that's because these events represent the origin of the language. If these events had not occurred, there would be no England or English language. The Germanic dialects of the early Anglo-Saxon tribes would have remained on the continent, and there, they would have likely blended into the modern Low German and Dutch dialects. And in fact that's what happened to the language of the Saxons who actually remained on the continent. And even if the language of the Anglo-Saxons had somehow survived as a distinct language on the continent , it wouldn't be a language that we would recognize today. Meanwhile, in the British Isles, the Celtic languages would have continued to dominate the entire region, at least until the arrival of the Vikings and the Normans. But of course, that's not what happened.

Instead, the Anglo-Saxons moved to Britain where there they developed a new culture and, eventually, a new language. So this basically marks the beginning of the transition to the second volume of the podcast – the period of the Anglo-Saxons and Old English. But before we make this transition, let me make a few preliminary notes.

First, up to this point we have explored the background of English – what we might call 'pre-English.' The basic idea of the first twenty-seven episodes was to explore the period from the original Indo-European language to the fall of the Roman Empire, and the impact that these events had on the languages of western Europe. So obviously, I've taken a very broad approach to the topic of English. And I'm going to continue to do that as we move forward. The emphasis will shift to the British Isles, but I'm going to continue to look at developments elsewhere, especially in continental Europe, and specifically within the region which we will come to know as France, because the developments there will have a huge impact on English after 1066. If fact, those developments will change English from an unrecognizable Germanic language into a language that we can actually read and understand today.

I will also continue to look at political and cultural developments as they impacted the language over time. But this is not going to be a full, proper history of England. I don't have the expertise to deliver that kind of history, and frankly, there are much better podcasts out there if you are interested in the overall history of England. In fact, let me recommend David Crowther's excellent History of England Podcast if you want a more complete history of England. Not only do I enjoy listening to David's podcast, but he was actually one of the first podcasters to reach

out to me when I began this podcast to give me some words of encouragement. And this is a good time to mention David's podcast since it begins with the arrival of Anglo-Saxons in Britain.

You might also check out The British History Podcast by Jamie Jeffers which begins with the arrival of the Romans in Britian. And if you want an enjoyable 'monarch-by-monarch' look at English history, you can try the Rex Factor podcast which I also recommend.

So with the plugs out of the way, let's turn to the ancestors of the Anglo-Saxons and the people who gave us the Old English language.

Over the past few episodes, most of our attention has been focused on southern Europe. It was in this region that th Goths challenged the Roman Empire and eventually established Gothic kingdoms in Italy and Spain. And we looked at other Germanic tribes like the Franks, the Alamanni and the Vandals. While these tribes were busy crossing the Rhine and the Danube into Roman territory, there was another group of Germanic tribes living in the north along the North Sea coast – basically the Netherlands, northern Germany and southern Denmark. And those tribes were sort of in the background – more focused on expanding along the North Sea than expanding southward down into Gaul. Obviously, geography was a factor here. These tribes had direct access to the North Sea, and the powerful Franks stood between them and the Rhine. So when the Roman Empire began to collapse, their focus was always going to be more on expansion by sea rather than by land.

So who were these people?

Well, remember that Tacitus had identified this group of West Germanic tribes as the Ingvaeones. And he placed them in this same North Sea region at the end of the first century.

Tacitus mentioned a tribe among these people called the Frisii who lived along the coast of the modern Netherlands. And this was the region that was the home of the Frisians during the later centuries. He also mentioned a tribe called the Anglii who lived around southern region of modern-day Denmark. If you're not familiar with the geography of Denmark, the mainland part of Denmark is a peninsula which sticks out into the sea. It basically forms the dividing line between the North Sea and the Baltic Sea. This peninsula is called Jutland, and the Angles lived in the southern part of that peninsula.

By the way, Louis Henwood has been kind enough to prepare a map for this episode which shows the locations of these various tribes in northern Europe. So check out the website historyofenglishpodcast.com if you want to see where the tribes were initially located.

So where did the name of the Angles come from? Well, the answer may lie in the geography of the Jutland peninsula where the early Angles lived. Now there is no universal agreement regarding the etymology of the name of the Angles. But the most prominent theory holds that the name comes from the fact that the peninsula where the Angles lived happens to stick out into the ocean – forming a hook shape. The early Germans called a fishhook an '***anga***.' So they may have used that term for the name the tribe that lived in that region which resembled a hook shape.

So '***anga***' meaning 'hook' came to mean the people who lived in the hook-shaped region of the Jutland peninsula – the ***Anglii***.

That Germanic word ***anga*** meaning 'hook' or 'fishhook' passed into Old English as ***angle*** where it retained its original meaning. And that word still exists in Modern English. We sometimes call a fisherman an ***angler***, and fishing with a fishhook as ***angling***.

By the way, you may be wondering what the connection is between this word ***angle*** meaning 'hook' or 'fishhook' and the use of the word ***angle*** in geometry as in '90 degree angle' or 'the angle of the Sun.' Well, ***angle*** is one of those words that comes to us in modern English from two completely different sources, but today they both have the same spelling and same pronunciation, and they have related meanings.

As I've noted, the use of ***angle*** as 'hook' comes from the Germanic languages. But the use of ***angle*** in Geometry comes from Greek via Latin and later French. And as you may have figured out by now, when we have two very similar words coming to us from different language families, we can suspect a common Indo-European origin. And that is the case here. Germanic ***angle*** and Greek ***angle*** both come from the same Indo-European root word ***ang***, which meant 'to bend.' So within the Germanic language family, it was used to described something 'bent or curved' like a hook. But within early Greek, it was used to describe something that was 'bent or crooked' like a 'crooked road or a corner.' And from there, it was used in early Greek Geometry to mean the 'measurement of intersecting lines.' So the curvy nature of the word ***angle*** as in 'fishhook' is Germanic, and the sharp nature of the word as in '45 degree angle' is Greek. But both come from the same Indo-European root word.

By the way, that Indo-European root gave us another word as well. The place where your foot protrudes from your leg is an ***ankle***. Again, this goes back to that same Indo-European root word meaning 'to bend,' and it comes to us via the Germanic languages. So in the same way that the bend where the Jutland Peninsula extends into the ocean is called the home of the ***Angles***, the bend where your foot extends from your leg is called your ***ankle***.

And that word ***ankle*** also shows us the close links between the Angles and the Frisians. The original Old English version of the word was ***ancleow***. And it appears that ***ancleow*** was a combination of that Indo-European root word ***ang*** meaning 'bend' and ***cleow*** meaning 'claw.' In fact, it's the original verison the word ***claw***. But at some later point, after the Viking invasion of Britain and the heavy influence of Old Norse, the pronunciation changed from ***ancleow*** to ***ankle***. This later pronunciation resembled the Old Norse pronunciation, but it was almost identical to the Frisian pronunciation. And many modern linguists still believe that the Frisian version of ***ankle*** somehow influenced this later pronunciation change in Middle English.

Both ***ankle*** and ***angle*** received their modern pronunciations after the English vowels shifted shortly before the time of Shakespeare. The pronunciation of the vowel 'A' shifted from the pronunciation in continental Europe, which was /ah/, to the modern long pronunciation /ay/. So ***ankle*** (/ahn-kul/) and ***angle*** (/ahn-gul/) became ***ankle*** (/ain-kul/) and ***angle*** (/ain-gul/).

So we've seen where the name ***Angles*** comes from. And, as I've noted, Tacitus mentioned both the Angles and the Frisii in the North Sea region. But he didn't mention the Saxons or the Franks at all.

You might remember that both of those groups were tribal coalitions or confederations which formed in the years after Tacitus. The first mention of a tribe called the 'Saxons' occurred in the middle of the second century. The Greek geographer Ptolemy placed them along the North Sea coast around modern-day Holstein in Northern Germany. So between the time of Tacitus and Ptolemy, several of the smaller tribes in the region had started to coalesce into this larger unified tribe known as the Saxons.

This coalition probably included a prominent tribe mentioned by Tacitus called the Chauci. And part of this coalition likely included the remnants of another tribe in the region called the Langobards or Lombards. Shortly after the time of Tacitus, the Lombard tribe began a general migration southward, but some of the Lombards remained in northern Germany. And those that remained were likely incorporated into this new Saxon confederation. This is actually a very important point because it means that the Lombards probably spoke a dialect which was very similar to the Saxon dialect during this early period. As we'll see in an upcoming episode, the other group of Lombards which traveled southward eventually settled in northern Italy and established a kingdom there after the fall of the Western Roman Empire. And that is actually the origin of the modern Lombardy region of Northern Italy. And by the time the Lombards reached Northern Italy, their language had changed significantly. And in fact, by that later date, in the 6th century, their language reflected the changes which had started to distinguish the Low German dialects in northern Germany from the High German dialects in the mountainous regions of southern Germany. So the migration of the Lombards provides some compelling evidence about the evolution of the Germanic languages shortly after the Anglo-Saxons headed to Britain. But again, I'll look at that in a little more detail in an upcoming episode. The key point here is that some of the remnants of the early Lombards in northern Germany likely became part of the original Saxon tribe.

Once the original Saxon tribe was formed, it continued to grow as other small neighboring tribes also joined the coalition. It's not known if these other tribes joined the Saxons voluntarily or if they were conquered, but most modern historians believe it was a combination of both. And that's because the Saxons were viewed as a war-like tribe and as a tribe which sought to expand into neighboring regions. And part of that tendency is reflected in the name ***Saxons***.

It's generally believed that the name of the tribe came from the type of sword they commonly-used which was called the ***saks***.

The word ***saks*** actually comes from an earlier Indo-European root word ***sek*** which meant 'to cut.' That word passed into the Germanic languages as ***saks*** meaning 'a knife or sword which cuts.' And a ***Sax-on*** was a swordsman – someone who wielded the ***saks***. By the way, that original Indo-European root word also passed into Latin and later French where it was used to mean 'something that had been cut off.' That word was ***section***. So ***Saxon*** and ***Section*** are cognate – both coming from the same Indo-European word meaning 'to cut.'

So those were the early Angles and Saxons, but early historical sources tell us that there were other people who joined in the later migration to Britain. Supposedly, these people included the Jutes. But who were the Jutes? Well, they actually remains a bit of a mystery.

The only evidence as to the identity of the Jutes is the Jutland peninsula in Denmark which I mentioned earlier. As I noted, the Jutland Peninsula extends into the North Sea and the Baltic Sea. The Angles lived in the southern part of this peninsula. And the Jutes were their immediate neighbors to the north. In fact, the name of the peninsula – 'Jutland' – basically means land of the Jutes. So if this region of modern Denmark was the home of the Jutes, were these the same Jutes who joined the Angles and Saxons in the migration to Britain? Well, maybe or maybe not.

Geography would suggest that the answer is 'yes.' They lived in Jutland. And they were neighbors of the Angles. And they had direct access to the North Sea along their western coast. But there are a couple of problems which have perplexed later historians.

First, the people who lived in the central and northern portions of Jutland probably spoke a North Germanic language. Remember that the Germanic languages had become divided into three distinct groups by this point. The East Germanic languages included the language of the Goths. The West Germanic languages included the languages of the Angles, Saxons, Frisians, Franks and other tribes further south. But in the north – in the Scandinavian homeland – a distinct North Germanic language family had emerged. This was the origin of Old Norse – the language of the Vikings, and it's the ultimate origin of the modern Scandinavian languages.

Geography would strongly suggest that the Jutes spoke a North Germanic dialect which would have been quite different from the West Germanic languages of the Angles and Saxons. This poses some problems for language historians who have assumed that the languages of the Angles, Saxons and Jutes were very closely related – so closely related that they could probably communicate with each other without too much difficulty. But if the Jutes were from Jutland in Denmark, they probably would have had spoken a language that was quite a bit different from the early Anglo-Saxon dialects. There are some explanations for this language issue. Maybe there was a transitional region in between the Angles and Jutes where the dialects were more similar, and maybe these were the 'Jutes' who accompanied the Angles and Saxons. Another possibility is that we're still close enough to the original Germanic language that the dialect differences were manageable.

But beyond the language issue, there's another reason why some scholars question whether the Jutes actually came from Jutland. Supposedly, the Jutes settled in Kent on the eastern coast of England. But archaeological research in this region has uncovered grave goods which are the type typically found in Frankish sites along the lower Rhine. So one modern theory holds that ***Jutes*** was a name given to Franks or a Frankish-Saxon hybrid group that settled in Kent. Linguistically this may make more sense because the Frankish language was closely related to the Anglo-Saxon dialects. And geographically, the area of Kent is located directly across the English Channel from the region where the Frankish tribes lived.

Now a variation of this theory is that a group of Jutes originated in Jutland, and then traveled along the North Sea coast down to the Frankish coast where they settled for a while. There they adopted some of the culture of the Franks, and their language evolved to become more like the West Germanic dialects spoken in that region. From there, they migrated across the English Channel to Britain directly from the Frankish territory, but they still retained the name ***Jutes***. This 'hybrid' theory would help to explain some of the archaeological evidence, but again, it's just a theory.

There are some other theories about the Jutes as well. Another theory links them with the Geats in southern Sweden who feature prominently in Beowulf. You might remember that Beowulf was a Geat, and was later the King of the Geats. For purposes of this episode, we can just assume that the Jutes originated in Jutland, but they may or may not have traveled directly from there to Britain.

Now, despite the uncertainty concerning the Jutes, we have a pretty good idea as to the origins and locations of the other tribes along the North Sea coast. And, at least in the case of the Saxons, these tribes actually extended pretty far inland as well. But beginning around the time of Tacitus in the first century, and continuing for a period of about 500 years afterwards, the sea levels began to rise in the North Sea coastal region. And that meant the region experienced a great deal of flooding. Archaeological research confirms that settlements in this region began to be built on elevated mounds during this period. And flooding would have meant that good farmland would have become more limited. And, as I mentioned last time, population growth in this region was another factor which was causing many of these tribes to look elsewhere for land. So the combination of flooding and population growth forced these tribes to expand outward in order to survive.

By the third century, there was another factor at work – the Imperial Crisis in Rome. The Alamanni and the Franks were making their first incursions across the Rhine into Gaul. And around this same time, there is strong evidence that the early Anglo-Saxons took to the sea to find places to raid and new places to settle. The ships which they used were not as advanced as the ships of the later Vikings about five or six centuries later. So they probably had to hug the coast as they traveled westward, and that meant they probably had to stop along the way in Frisia along the coast of the Netherlands. And this is part of the evidence that some Frisians were included in these excursions.

These North Sea people were not only exploring the coastal regions along Frisia and Northern Gaul, they were also making some brief excursions across the English Channel into southern Britain. And part of the evidence of this early period of expansion was a system of defenses constructed by the Roman Empire in the late third century. Those defenses were built along the shores on both sides of the English Channel. And the key is what the Romans called those defenses. They called them the 'Saxon Shore.' So that is pretty much a confirmation that the defenses were built to deal with Saxons who were exploring and raiding along the coasts.

Now we have to be a little careful with the use of that name 'Saxon Shore' coined by the Romans. We probably can't take the title too literally. It appears that the term ***Saxon*** was sometimes used a general reference to any migrant or raider from across the North Sea. So it could have included Angles, Frisians, Franks or Jutes.

There are some strong parallels here to the later Viking invasion from just a little further up the northern coast. The first Vikings came as raiders. Then they began to arrive in greater numbers as invaders. And then they began to carve out entire regions where they settled. Well, the earlier 'Saxons' did the same thing.

But again, even though the Romans called these defenses the 'Saxon Shore,' the invading tribes probably included the neighbors of the Saxons as well. For example, we know that the language and culture of the Angles was very similar to the Saxons. So it is almost impossible to distinguish the movements of the Angles from the movements of the Saxons. And the Franks were also expanding westward during this same time frame. So some of these Roman defenses were probably aimed at invading Franks as well.

These various tribes first appeared as a collection of raiders and war-bands with no centralized political organization. So these were not efforts to establish 'colonies' as we would come to know them in more recent history. A colony is established by a motherland and maintains a political connection to that mother country. But that wasn't the case here. These were individual raiders and settlers just looking for new lands in which to settle. Or in some cases, they were just looking for valuables to steal. The only real difference between stealing land and stealing goods is how long you intend to stay. You can take goods and leave, but if you're going to take land, you have to stay and defend it. And that takes a lot more people, especially in an era of hand-to-hand combat.

So early on, the Saxon focus was more on raiding and leaving and taking anything of value with them. But as the Roman Empire began to decline, the Roman troops began to be called back to the continent, and Roman defenses in northern Europe began to weaken and crumble. Well now it became increasingly possible to take some land as well. So we start to see a move from an era of raiding to an era of settlement.

By the late fourth century, the Saxon Shore defenses had been largely abandoned across northern Gaul as Rome increasingly withdrew troops from the region to deal with problems elsewhere. And with those defenses abandoned, Saxon settlements began to appear along the coast of Gaul. Over time, as the Franks expanded into this region, the Saxon coastal settlements were assimilated into the new Frankish kingdom. And this might help to explain the mystery of the Jutes. It's possible that some of these coastal settlements along the coast of Gaul included Jutes, and then some of those Jutes later migrated across the channel to Britain. That would explain why there are Frankish artifacts in the area supposedly settled by the Jutes in eastern England.

Now even though the Romans abandoned the Saxon Shore defenses in northern Gaul, they continued to maintain the defenses in southern Britain. Of course, somebody had to man those defenses, and that was an increasing problem for the Romans during this period. So they did

what they often did in these situations, they brought in Germanic mercenaries. This included the Franks and Alamanni, and it may have included Saxons as well. If Saxons were included as mercenaries, that would made them the first Saxon settlers in Britain.

Archaeology suggests that Saxons were present in eastern Britain during this period of the 4th Century. Archaeologists have excavated Roman cemeteries from this period in the region along the lower Thames. And they have discovered belt-fittings of the type and style typically worn by Frankish and Saxon mercenaries. And in the same region, sunken huts have been discovered which are believed to have been built around the year 400. These huts are constructed in a style typically associated with later Anglo-Saxon huts. So these may have been the first Saxon settlers in Britain. And they may have been in contact with other Saxons on the continent.

Roman records also indicate that Frisians were stationed in Britain during this period as well. They were also there as mercenaries in other parts of the island. These Frisians would have known about the weaknesses of the Roman defenses in Britain. And this information could have been communicated back to Frisia. So the general picture which is emerging in Britain during the fourth century is the gradual withdrawal of Roman troops to the continent and the gradual increase of Germanic mercenaries to deal with the local threats. These threats not only included the Germanic tribes who were threatening the coast, but included threats from northern Britain as well. In the regions north of the Roman territory in the area of modern-day Scotland, there was a native tribe called the Picts. And there was another tribe in the region with ultimate origins in Ireland called the Scots. As I said, the Picts were a native people who spoke their own language. We know virtually nothing abut that language other than a few place names with Pictish origins. Some modern scholars think that long-term Celtic influences may have resulted in a Pictish language which was basically Celtic or a pre-Celtic language with strong Celtic influences. At any rate, we'll probably never know much about their language. But the Scots did speak a Celtic language. And over many centuries, the power of the Picts declined as the Scots expanded throughout the region. So eventually, the Picts became assimilated into the Scots and basically disappeared as a distinct group. But for now, during the last few centuries of Roman Britain, the Picts were the major threat in northern Britain.

So Roman Britain had to deal with Picts and Scots invading by land from the north, as well as Saxons and other Germanic tribes arriving by sea from the east and the south.

And in a fascinating little piece of Dark Age history, it actually appears that all of these various tribes somehow coordinated a universal attack on Roman territory in the year 367. Again, the details are unclear, but in that year, invaders descended from all directions. Picts and Scots from the north, and Saxons and Franks from the east. There was a period of looting and pillaging. The Romans dispatched troops from the continent to take back control and impose law and order. And the Romans repelled the invaders. They rebuilt the damaged forts and repaired the damaged towns. Perhaps it was just a big coincidence that all of those invaders descended at the same time, but Romans sources report a general belief that the attacks were somehow coordinated. Remember there were a lot of Germanic tribes in Britain as mercenaries, and many of them had contact with the tribes back home. So maybe they were able to coordinate their attacks.

Of course, the threat of barbarian invasions in Britain was only a small part of the overall threat to the Roman Empire, as we've seen in the past couple of episodes. As we know, the Romans had to deal with Goths, and Franks, and Alamanni, and Vandals, and the other continental tribes around this same time. And those threats were actually much closer to home for the Romans.

So in the first decade of the fifth century, the Romans began to withdraw more troops from Britain to deal with the problems on the continent. The Romans also stopped sending money to Britain to pay the mercenaries that remained there. Alarmed for their own safety, and despairing the lack of help and money from Rome, the mercenaries in Britain rose in rebellion and appointed three successive leaders or 'tyrants' as later historians called them.

The last of the three tyrants calling himself Constantine III took his troops to Gaul where they were defeated, and he was eventually executed. But when these troops left for Gaul, there was a vacuum of power in Roman Britain. Around the year 408, the Saxons apparently became aware that the Roman army had vacated Britain, and they launched another major raid along the British coast. Two years later, in the year 410, the Goths invaded and sacked Rome. And as you may recall from the last episode, at the same the Goths were invading Rome, the Roman Britons were asking for help from Rome to deal with the increasing threats coming at them from the south, the east and the north. The Romans basically said, "Sorry, you're going to have fend for yourselves." And that effectively ended official Roman rule of Britain.

But some Roman troops still remained in Britain. And in the next episode, I'm going to look at what happened in the fifth century as they tried to defend the island from invaders coming at them from all directions. Of course, they ultimately failed, and the Anglo-Saxons soon came to control the area of Roman Britain. But the details of that part of the story are still the subject of ongoing debates.

So that takes through the year 410, when Britain effectively ceased to be part of the Roman Empire. And in the decades that followed, especially after the year 450, the Anglo-Saxon invasion of Britain began in earnest. In fact, most general histories of England tend to focus on the invasions which began around the year 450 and continued for the next couple of centuries.

But in this episode, I wanted you to see that the arrival of the Germanic tribes was actually much more gradual than that. The Anglo-Saxons didn't just wake up one day and decide "Hey, let's all go to Britain." It was actually a continuation of an on-going process. And once the Romans pulled out, that process was accelerated.

And when the Romans pulled out, that meant that writing went them. As we've established by now, the Germanic tribes were illiterate except for a few occasional runic inscriptions. For purposes of our story, that will become a problem as we move forward. It basically means that we don't have any contemporary written accounts of what happened for first century or so after the Romans left. And even after then, the accounts are very limited. Next time, we'll try to piece together what happened as the Anglo-Saxons began to carve out their own region of Britain – the region which will eventually become known as England with a language which will come to be known as English.

But for the rest of this episode, I want to explore what the languages of the North Sea tribes sounded like when the first tribes began to settle in southern Britain. These languages were not written down at the time, but based on later versions of the languages that were written down, like Old English, Old Saxon and Old Frisian, linguists have been able to compare the languages and determine just how similar they were early on.

For example, all three languages had continued to simplify the Germanic system of inflections on the end of words. As we know by now, the original Germanic language had lots of different word endings which we call inflections. And over time, English has gotten rid of most of those endings. And that process actually began within this family of North Sea languages before Old English emerged as a distinct language.

And we can see this process of simplifying the word endings in the way all of these North Sea languages handled verb endings. In English, when we have a verb, it stays the same in all of its plural forms.

So let's look at the verb ***jump***. In first person plural, we have 'we jump.' In second person plural, we have 'you jump' – or 'you all jump.' In third person plural, we have 'they jump.' But notice that the verb ***jump*** stays the same in all of the these cases.

We jump – you jump – they jump.
We sing – you sing – they sing.
We study – you study – they study.
We think – you think – they think.

The verb doesn't change. There are no specific endings to put on the end. Well, this feature of English was also found in Old Saxon and Old Frisian. But within other Germanic languages, there verbs varied in each of those plural forms. So this indicates that the Angles, Saxons and Frisians were not only using similar words, they were also sharing a similar Grammar.

The similarities between the languages of the Angles, Saxons and Frisians can also been seen in certain sound changes that happened very early on within all three languages, and which were unique to those three languages. For example, the three languages dropped the 'm' or 'n' sound in certain words, specifically when the 'm' or 'n' sound appeared between a vowel on one side and an 'f' sound or a 'th' sound or an 's' sound on the other side. In those cases, the 'm' or 'n' sound was dropped. Again, this was a very specific change, and it happened within all three North Sea languages:

So, for example, the Old High German word for 'five' was ***fimf*** with a 'm' sound in the middle. The word was basically the same in Gothic. But the word was ***fif*** in Old English and Old Saxon without the 'm' in the middle.

We can also see it in the word for 'us.' In Old High German, the word was ***unsih*** with an 'n' sound. And the Gothic version was ***unsis*** also with an 'n' sound. And you might remember from the Gothic version of the Lord's Prayer that it began with 'Atta unsar' which meant 'Father

Our.' So in ***unsar*** for 'our' we can also hear that 'n' sound in Gothic. Well, in Old English and Old Saxon the word became ***us*** (/oos/) – without the 'n' sound. And of course, it later became ***us*** after the English vowel sounds shifted around. But again, we can hear in that example how the early English, Saxon and Frisian dialects dropped that middle 'n' or 'm' sound.

We can also look at a word like ***goose***. For example, modern German pronounces the word as ***gans*** (/gahns/). In Dutch, it's ***gans*** (/hahns/). Both have that 'n' sound at the end. But English has dropped it. In English, it's ***goose***. And in modern Frisian, it's ***goes*** (/goo-es/). So the word is almost identical in English and Frisian, and both have lost the 'n' sound.

Well, we haven't completely lost the 'n' sound. We still do have a version of the word with the original 'n' sound. Of course that's ***gander*** meaning a male goose as in "What's good for the goose is good for the gander." That later verison of the word retained the 'n' sound, but the more generic English word ***goose*** has lost it.

Now these sound changes may seem like technical points, but the reason they're important is because they show us the similarity between early English, Saxon and Frisian. These languages not only made many of the same changes to their respective grammars, but they also made many of the same changes to their words.

The strong similarities between these old languages is still reflected in the modern versions of those languages – Modern English and Modern Frisian. In fact, many linguists place those two together in their own unique branch of the West Germanic languages.

Now over time the two languages have become much more distinct. English was heavily influenced by Old Norse and Norman French, and Frisian was heavily influenced by Dutch. And of course, all languages evolve over time on their own. But despite these changes and outside influences, the two languages still have some remarkable similarities.

For example, many Germanic languages have a 'g' or 'k' sound in many words. These are sounds that are called velar consonants by linguists. But it basically refers to consonants produced in the back of the mouth or throat region. Well, both English and Frisian have dropped those sounds in many words and replaced them with a vowel sound like /ay/ or /eye/.

So for example, take the English word ***day***. In German, it's ***Tag*** (/tahg/). In Dutch, it's ***dag*** (/dah*x*/). By the way, as is always the case, my pronunciations are intended to be approximate – not necessarily exact. I just want to illustrate the point. So both the German and Dutch versions of the word end with a velar consonant – that 'g' or 'k' sound. But in English, that consonant is gone, and it has been replaced with the /ay/ sound – ***day***. In Frisian, that consonant is also gone, and it's been replaced with an /eye/ sound, so the word is ***dei*** (/die/). So whereas ***Tag*** (/tahg/) and ***dag*** (/dah*x*/) sound foreign to us, ***day*** and ***dei*** (/dye/) are much closer to each other and the Frisian version sounds more familiar us.

We see the same relationship in the various words for ***rain***. In German, it's ***Regen*** (/reagan/). In Dutch, it's ***regen*** (/ray-*x*un/). Both have two syllables with a velar consonant in the middle. But in English, we have ***rain***. One syllable and no consonant in the middle. And in Frisian, the word in ***rein*** (/rhine/). Again, one syllable and no consonant in the middle.

In some other words, the Germanic languages have retained a hard 'g' sound where English and Frisian have developed a 'y' sound. So for example the German word for ***yarn*** is ***Garn*** (/gar-en/). But in English it is ***yarn***. And the Frisian version is ***jern*** (/yearn/).

So as we compare words, we can see that Frisian and English made the a lot of the same sound changes over time. And there are many, many more of examples of these common changes, but I just wanted to give you a few examples here.

And as I noted back in Episode 3, the modern similarities between English and Frisian are so strong that we can read entire sentences the same way in both languages. You might remember the saying "Bread, butter and green cheese is good English and good Friese." That phrase remember is read almost identically in English and Frisian.

Here are some more words that are very similar in both languages today. I'll read the English word first, then the Frisian equivalent.

Book	- boek (/boo-ek/)
is	- is
in	- yn (/een/)
ice	- iis (/eesh/)
out	- ut (/oot/)
ear	- ear (earrr)
hundred	- hundert (houn-dert)
honey	- huning (hoo-ning)
salt	- salt
good	- goet (gou-et/)
blood	- bloed (/blou-et/)
foot	- foet (/fou-et/)
fish	- fisk (/fish-k/)
young	- jong (/yoh-ng/)
heart	- hert (like 'wear')

So these are just a few examples.

We can also see that the Frisians still tend to use the 'e-n' suffix to makes word plural which Old English once used much more prominently. So we had one ***ox*** an several ***oxen***. And we have one ***brother*** and several ***brethren***. Well, modern Frisian still tends to do this.

So one lion is a ***liuw*** (/lyoo/). But several are a ***liuwen*** (/lyoo-wuhn/).
And one calf is a ***keal*** (/kih-uhl/). But several are a ***keallen*** (/kih-uhl-uhn/).

Comparing English and Frisian also presents us with some interesting etymology.

Take the word ***sky*** in English. The Frisian word is ***loft***. And in that word ***loft***, we can see a connection to our modern English word ***loft***. In fact both words are spelled exactly the same, we just have a different vowel pronunciation. But ***loft*** once meant 'sky' in Old English, just like it does in Modern Frisian. Over time, the meaning has changed to mean an upstairs room, like a hayloft in a barn. But we still have that original meaning when we speak of something being ***aloft***. Of course, the German word is also very similar – ***luft*** – as in the WWII air force Luftwaffe or Lufthansa Airlines. By the way, we also get the word ***lift*** from that same Germanic root word. And of course, we ***lift*** something in the air toward the sky.

Another interesting example is the Frisian word for 'flower.' The Frisian word is ***blom***. Again, if we listen closely, we can hear the connection to English. Of course, we have essentially the same word ***bloom*** which means 'a flower blossom' or, as a verb, 'the process of a flower blossoming.' But that word came into English thanks to the Vikings and their Old Norse language. The original Old English version of the word was ***blostma*** which gave us the word ***blossom***. So ***bloom*** and ***blossom*** are synonyms in Modern English. Oone comes from Old English (***blossom***) and one comes from Old Norse (***bloom***). And both are very similar to the Frisian word for 'flower' – ***blom*** (/bloam/).

Let me also take this opportunity to mention a great blog if you're interested in comparing English and Frisian. It's funwithfrisian.blogspot.com/

So in concluding my look at English and Frisian, the main point I wanted to make was that both languages are very similar today, but they were even more similar in the distant past. And during the time of the first Anglo-Saxon invasions of Britain, the languages of the Angles, Saxons and Frisians were so close that they could settle in the same general region and, over time, their languages could quickly meld together into a new more-or-less common language. And of course, that's exactly what happened.

And next time, we're going to look at how these tribes became permanent residents of Britain – not just raiders or temporary mercenaries. And we'll explore how they began carve out their own regions, and in the process, how they laid the foundation for many of the Modern English dialects in Britain. And we'll also keep a close eye on the events which were taking place at the same time back on the continent.

So until next time, thanks for listening to the History of English Podcast.