〈原著論文〉

Reconsideration of the Wipeout Theory and a Dialectological Assumption in Old English

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Abstract

This study aims to argue against the conventional assumption that all the dialects of Old English branched out after the development of Old English following the Anglo-Saxon invasion in 449 AD, and explain the dialectological differences between the Wessex dialect of Old English, which has been recognised as the standard language of Early Old English, and other dialects. First, this study argued against the "wipeout theory" indicating the extinction of the Britons in England after the Anglo-Saxon invasion. Second, this study analyses the dialectological differences between the Wessex and other dialects by comparing two versions of *Caedmon's Hymn*: that in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum* and its Old English version. The differences between the two texts can be explained by assuming the language contact that would have occurred in Wessex between the Saxons and Britons before the Anglo-Saxon invasion.

Key words: Development of Old English, Wipeout Theory, Old English Dialects, *Caedomon's Hymn,* Bede

0   Introduction

The conventional theory that the earliest ancestor of English, from which all dialects of Old English branched off, was formed immediately after the Anglo-Saxon invasion has been generally accepted, although many objections against this theory have emerged.

The theory that the extinction of Celtic languages also occurred because of the Anglo-Saxons is also very prominent. The problem with this linguistic version of the theory is that it depends on the wipeout theory, which Oppenheimer (2006) named and proved wrong, and thus it should be reconsidered from a linguistic point of view.

This study reviews Oppenheimer's theory and argues for and verifies it based on

dialectological evidence.

1　The Wipeout Theory

Bede and his predecessor Gildas provided us the history of the early age of Britain, which many linguists assume to be the basis of the development of English.　However, we should reconsider such view, which Oppenheimer (2006) criticises as follows:

> This is where one of the most deeply embedded of British roots myths comes in: namely, that the English story starts late in the day with Angles, Saxons and Jutes, as inferred from the illuminated writings of the Dark Age clerical historians Gildas (sixth century AD) and the Venerable Bede (seventh century).
>
> (Oppenheimer 2006: 9)

The Anglo-Saxons arrived in Britain in AD 449 and brought the English language with them. Bede recorded this event in *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* as follows:

> It was 449 years after our Lord's incarnation, when the emperor Martianus succeeded to the throne, which he occupied for seven years.　He was the forty-sixth from the emperor Augustus.　At that time the Angles and Saxons were called in by the aforesaid king, and arrived in Britain with three great ships.　They received settlements on the east side of the island by order of the same king, who had invited them here, to fight as for their country. They at once took the field against the foe, who had often before overrun the land from the north; and the Saxons won the victory.　Then they sent home messengers, whom they bade to report the fertility of this land, and the cowardice of the Britons.　Immediately a larger fleet was despatched here, with a stronger force of warriors; and the host when united overpowered resistance.　The Britons gave and assigned to them settlements among themselves, on condition of fighting for the peace and safety of their country and resisting their enemies, while the Britons also provided them with a maintenance and estates in return for their labours.
>
> (Miller (trans.) 1890: 51, 53)

Bede also specified the Germanic tribes that landed in Britain as follows:

The new-comers were of the three strongest races of Germany, namely, Saxons, Angles and Jutes. Of Jutish origin are the men of Kent, and the Wihtsætan; that is the tribe dwelling in the Isle of Wight. From the Saxons, that is from the people called Old Saxons, came the East Saxons, the South Saxons, and the West Saxons; and from Angle came the East Angles and the Middle Angles, Mercians, and the whole race of the Northumbrians.

(Miller (trans.) 1890: 51)

The Anglo-Saxons took control of Britain in a non-peaceful way. Bede recorded the destruction of cities and slaughter of Britons by the Anglo-Saxons as follows:

So then here almost every city and district w[ere] wasted by this impious people, though it was by the just judgment of God. Buildings both public and private collapsed and fell; by every altar priests and clergy were slain and murdered. Bishops and people, without regard for mercy, were destroyed together by fire and sword; nor was there anyone who bestowed the rites of burial on those so cruelly slaughtered. Many of the miserable survivors were captured in waste places, and stabbed in heaps.

(Miller (trans.) 1890: 53, 55)

According to Bede's articles, it is generally believed that, after facing some resistance, the Anglo-Saxons annihilated the Britons who had been native dwellers of Britain.

However, recently, an argument against the extinction of Britons has been made based on anthropological research. Oppenheimer (2006) calls this traditional view the wipeout theory against which he argues as follows:[1]

There is a reasonable linguistic evidence for the presumption that there were 'Celts' living in England before and during the Roman occupation. But then, in the absence of any other linguistic evidence, this firms up to the modern linguistic view that before the Roman invasion all rather than some Ancient Britons were 'Celts' and Celtic-speaking. . . . [T]he Celts were totally eradicated — culturally, linguistically and genetically — by invading Angles and Saxons. This sort of logic derives partly from the idea of a previously uniformly 'Celtic' English landscape . . .

(Oppenheimer 2006: 10, 11)

In the next section, we will further discuss the Celtic influence on Old English.

2　Linguistic Evidence

There is some linguistic evidence that identifies traces of Celtic languages in Britain. Such evidence well matches the legend of the Anglo-Saxon ancestors as narrated in the *Battle of Brunamburh* in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* MS. Manuscript A (AD 937). This is a typical case that shows that the wipeout theory was well established among the English people in the period of Late Old English. This is shown in the following excerpt:

> . . . Never yet in this island was there a greater slaughter
>
> of people felled by the sword's edges,
>
> before this, as books tell us,
>
> old authorities, since Angles and Saxons
>
> came here from the east,
>
> sought out Britain over the broad ocean,
>
> warriors eager for fame, proud war-smiths,
>
> overcame the Welsh, seized the country.
>
> <div align="right">Swanton (Trans.) (2000: 109–10)</div>

The wipeout theory seems to be correct from the linguistic point of view, which is stated as follows:

> [A]t least in parts of England, contact between the two peoples (the Anglo-Saxons and the Celts) must have been fairly intimate and must have persisted over several generations. Nevertheless, the traces Celtic has left on the emerging Anglo-Saxon dialects are minimal . . . And as to loans, the number of those that have been identified with certainty is so low that we can afford to give a complete list. It is only in the domain of place-names that the influence is substantial . . .
>
> <div align="right">(Kastovsky 1992)</div>

Oppenheimer (2006: 333) shows that the distribution of place names was influenced by Celtic (British) and other languages as follows:
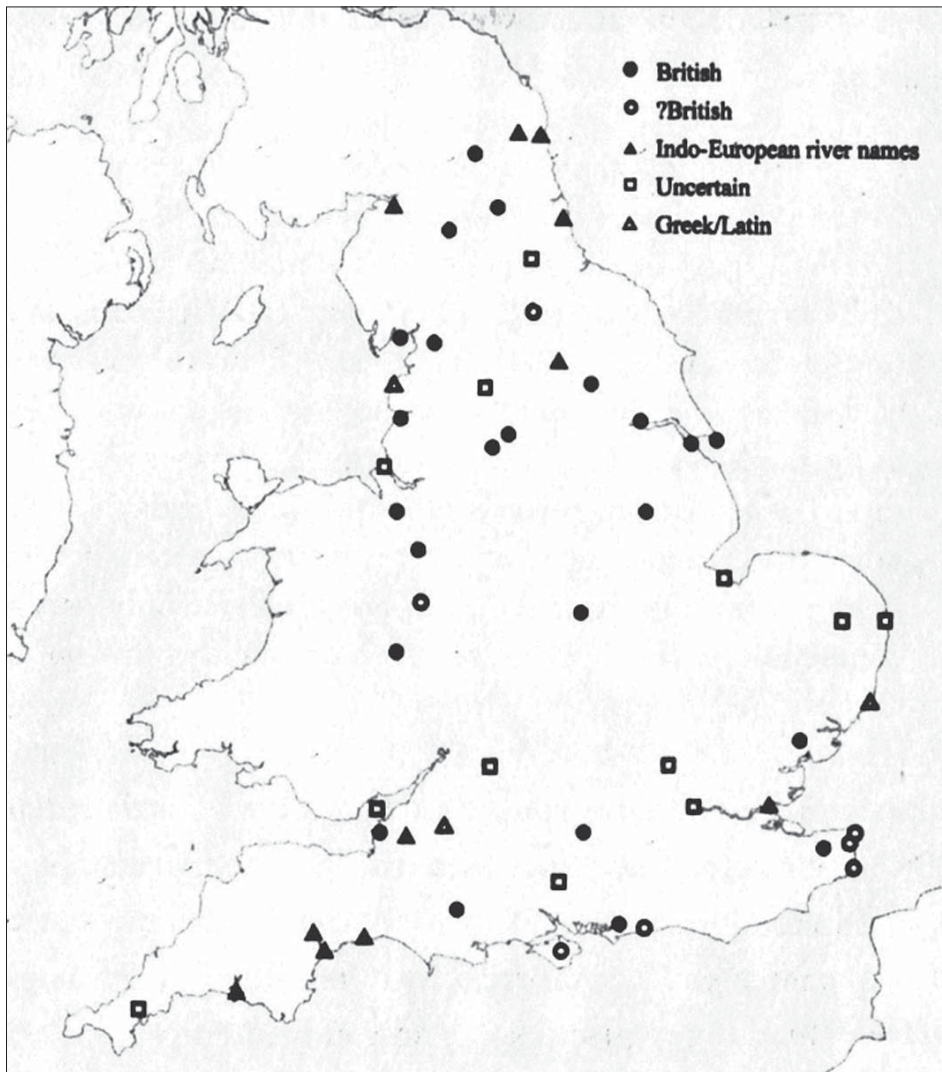
Figure 1 : Distribution of Place Names in England

(Oppenheimer 2006: 328, Figure 7.2)

According to his explanation, this map shows a comparatively low rate of Celtic (British) attribution in southern England. There are only six definitely British (i.e. Celtic) names in the south, excluding the West Country.

Oppenheimer (2006) gives another theory for the linguistic evidence of Celtic in Britain from an archaeological perspective, which is based on coinage and stone inscriptions; the distribution of such coinage is illustrated in Figure 2.

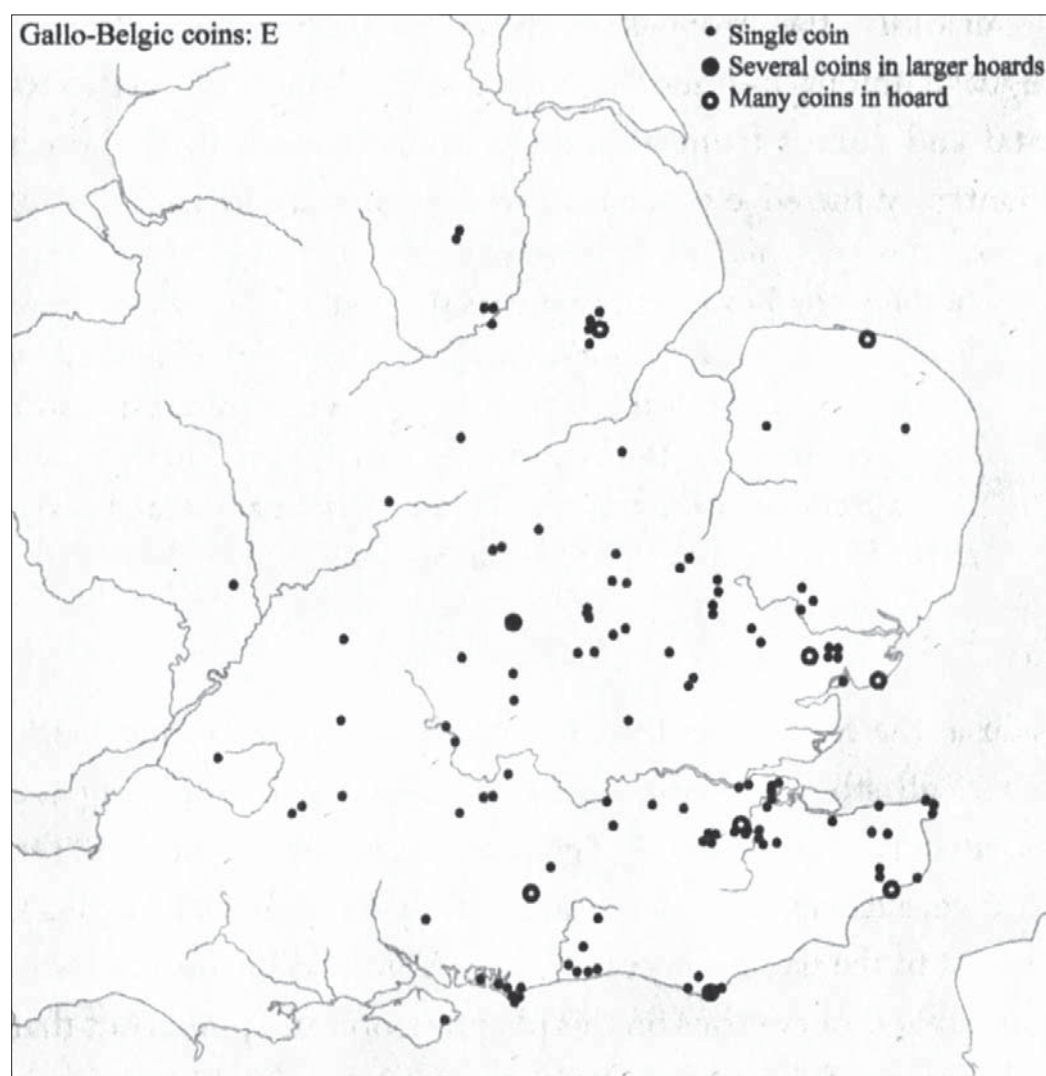According to Oppenheimer's description (2007: 333), the map illustrates the distribution of

Figure 2：Map of Gallo-Belgic type E coins

(Oppenheimer: 333, Figure 7.3b)

Gallo-Belgic type E coins, which appeared in southern England in 55 BC as payment for English support against Caesar's Belgic campaign.

　This archaeological evidence shows that native Britons had a strong connection with the Belgae on the Continent before the Anglo-Saxon invasion. Oppenheimer (2006) argues as follows:

　　The geographical distribution of the time-focused Gallo- Belgic E coins (and, to a lesser extent, of C coins) is nonetheless broad and matches the overall British distribution of Gallo-

Belgic coinage during the Roman period (Figure 〔2〕). . . . If both the Belgae and the British south-east were Celtic-speaking, that closeness might be expected, but if the Belgae were not Celtic-speaking or, as Caesar suggests, were largely descended from Germans, then it would make less sense — unless some tribes of south-eastern England also spoke Germanic

(Oppenheimer 2006: 331, 332)

The language of inscriptions in Roman Britain and afterwards that of words written in stone was Latin, not Celtic, in southern, central, and northern England, which is shown in Figure 3.

Oppenheimer (2006) recognises the almost non-existence of Celtic inscriptions as evidence that Celtic languages were not spoken in England during that time (AD 400–1100), which he describes follows:

During the Roman period, all inscriptions in south-east Britain were in Latin, none in Celtic. By the time they started up again in England after the Roman exit, they were in Medieval Latin or Anglo-Saxon. This leaves a near-total absence of Celtic inscriptions in England and also large parts of Scotland, at any time.

(Oppenheimer 2006: 336-7)

If there are plenty of Latin and Celtic inscriptions from after the Roman collapse in all other Romanized regions of the British Isles, why are there no post-Roman inscriptions, Latin or Celtic, to speak of in England until the first runic (i.e. non-Celtic) stones, which appear later? Surely the Anglo-Saxon invasions were not a complete and instantaneous blitzkrieg. Even the most avid supporters of the Anglo-Saxon wipeout theory accept that it could have been possible only over several hundred years. If Celtic languages were spoken universally in England throughout the Roman occupation, surely they would have initially persisted, as in Cornwall and Wales, for several hundred years before succumbing to Anglo-Saxon? . . . Given that neither Latin nor Celtic words intruded much into Old English, there is the possibility that a third, pre-existing and more closely related (i.e. Germanic) language survived in England during Roman times, one which could hybridize more easily with the incoming Germanic influences from the Continent.
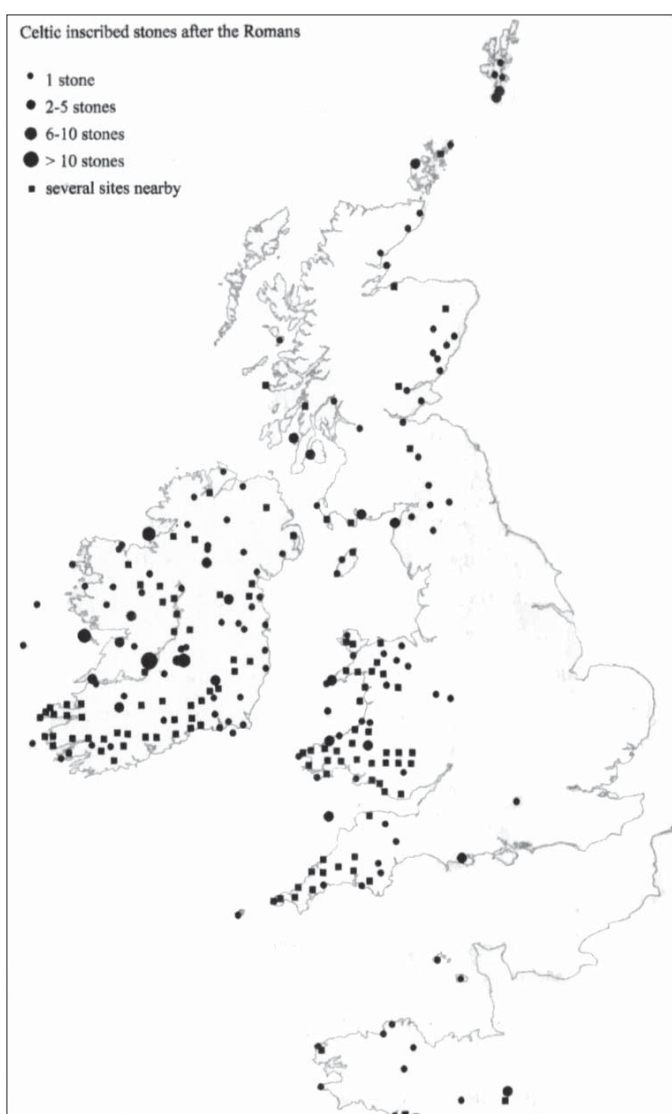
(Oppenheimer 2006: 337, 339)

**Figure 3：Distribution of over 1,200 Celtic inscriptions on stone
in the British Isles and Brittany (AD 400–1100)**

（Oppenheimer 2006: 336, Figure 7.4）

As we have seen in the linguistic evidence presented by Oppenheimer (2006), there is almost no linguistic evidence that the native Britons used Celtic languages during the Roman period and after the retreat of the Roman Empire but before the Anglo-Saxon invasion. Therefore, another theory is needed to explain the few traces of Celtic languages in England, instead of the wipeout theory of the Britons. If the theory deduced by Oppenheimer is correct, the Saxons' settlement in Britain did not begin with the invasion in the way that Gildas and Bede recorded.

The new theory leads to a change in the conventional explanation about the beginning of Old English, which will be discussed in the next section.

3　Reconsideration of the Age of Introduction of Old English

As seen in previous sections, there is no clear evidence of the great slaughter of Britons by the Anglo-Saxons. The age of introducing English in Britain should be reconsidered because the articles in Bede cannot be interpreted directly to describe the age of introducing English. Oppenheimer, quoting Foster, Polzin, and Röhl (2006), explains why there is no clear evidence of Celtic languages in England before AD 449.

Their study is a very interesting contrast to the widespread theory that English was made in AD 449, which is recorded as the year of the Anglo-Saxon invasion into Britain. Their theory is based on the distances between German languages, including Old English, by measuring the degree of similarity in their basic vocabulary. The result of their study is illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4 illustrates that the language of Ælfred's circle, which has been recognised as the standard of Early Old English, is distant not only from that of *Beowulf* but also Late Old English, from which English developed into Middle and Modern English through many processes. Oppenheimer (2006) reviews their study as follows:

> Germanic vocabulary network suggests English as a fourth Germanic branch. Based on vocabulary similarity, Forster's network groups all Continental West Germanic languages close to each other and relatively near to Old German (Heliand poem). However, Old English (Beowulf / Æ[l]fred) was already diverse, and as Far from Old German as the latter is from Frisian — even beyond the Gothic branch. English appears to form a fourth branch splitting off closer to Scandinavian languages than the others.
>
> (Oppenheimer 2006: 342)

Oppenheimer proposes modifying the conventional tree of Germanic languages, as shown in Figure 5, and proposes in Figure 6 as an alternative. In Figure 5, the date of making the earliest English is assumed to be around the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons in AD 449. In contrast with Figure 5, Figure 6 assumes that pre-Old English branched off from Common Germanic as well as the ancestors of other Germanic languages.
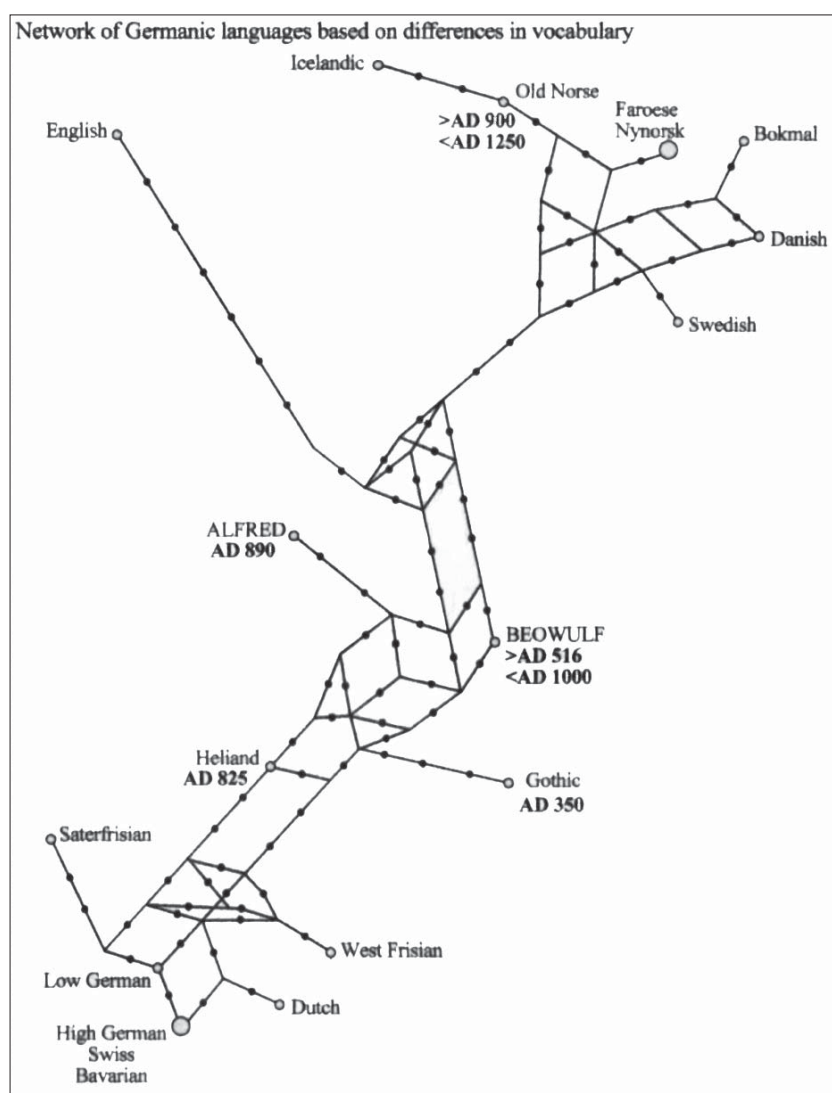
Oppenheimer explains Figure 6 as follows:[4]

Figure 4：Germanic Vocabulary Network

<div align="right">(Oppenheimer 2006: 342, Figure 8.1b)[2]</div>

When the Germanic network is viewed as a tree, there are four branches rather than the conventional three, with a new pre-English 'Island Germanic'. Forster argues that the break-up of these four can be no younger than the Gothic Bible (ad 350), and thus older than the 'Anglo-Saxon invasion', and possibly as much as 4,000 years old.

Discussions by Oppenheimer (2006), Forster *et al.* (2006), Gray and Atkinson (2003) makes clear the distinctive character of Early Old English literature by the Ælfredian circle, which has
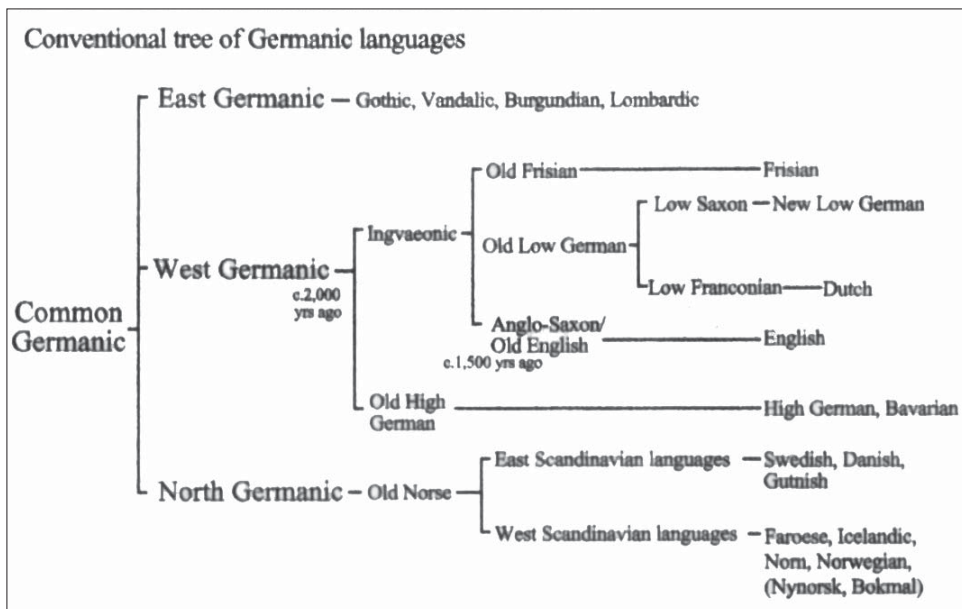
Figure 5 : Conventional Germanic language tree
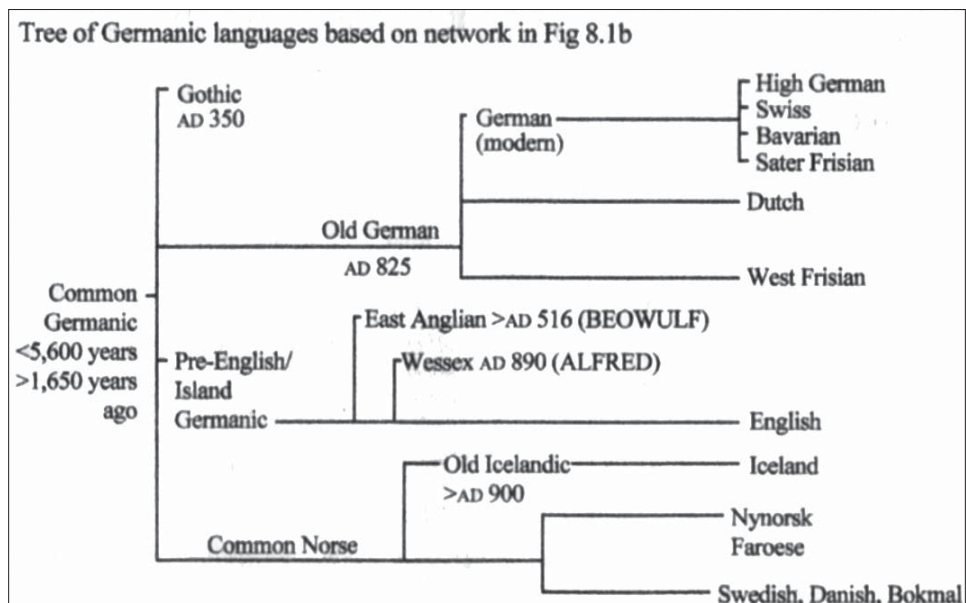
（Oppenheimer 2006: 341, Figure 8.1a）

Figure 6 : Germanic tree four-branch reconstruction based on Figure ［4］

（Oppenheimer 2006: 343, Figure 8.1c)[3]

been treated as the chronological ancestor of Late Old English. If their analysis is correct, Ælfredian literature should be assumed to reflect the Wessex dialect, which can be traced back to before the Anglo-Saxon invasion in AD 449.

Oppenheimer (2006) claims that Old English is not descended from Old Saxon, which was brought to Britain through the Anglo-Saxon invasion, as follows:

> This might mean that the connection between Old English and the ancestral Common Germanic root predated the arrival of the Angles and Saxons. English would then be neither directly descended from Old Saxon nor from Scandinavian (i.e. Old Norse).
>
> (Oppenheimer 2006: 354)

Oppenheimer (2006) does not discuss the connection between pre-Old English and the language of Ælfredian literature in detail. This problem will be discussed from a dialectological point view in the next section.

4   A Dialectological Assumption in Old English

It is impossible to directly compare Ælfredian literature in the Wessex dialect from the ninth century with other literature written in other dialects from the same period because there is almost no literature left in Mercia and Northumbria, where Danes, who had invaded after the end of the eighth century, carried out major destruction.

However, comparison of the Wessex dialect with other dialects in literature is possible using the limited materials, among which is *Caedmon's Hymn* in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*. The original version was written in Latin in the early eighth century; it was translated into Old English by the Ælfredian circle in the tenth century. The original version of *Caedmon's Hymn* is written in the Northumbria dialect and that in the Old English version in the Wessex dialect.

The Wessex version (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Tanner 10) is shown with a Modern English translation by Smith (2009: 135), as follows:[5]

> Nū sculon herigean heofonrīces weard,
> meotodes meahte ond his mōdgeþanc,
> weorc wuldorfæder, swā hē wundra gehwæs,

ēce Drihten, or onstealde.

Hē ǣrest sceōp eorðan bearnum

heofon tō hrōfe, hālig scyppend;

Þā middangeard monncynnes weard,

ēce Drihten, æfter tēode

fīrum foldan, frēa ælmihtig.

'Now we must praise the guardian of the heavenly kingdom, the power of God and his conception, work of the father of glory, in that he, eternal lord, appointed the beginning of every marvel; he, holy creator, first created heaven as a roof for the children of men; eternal lord, lord almighty, afterwards adorned the earth for living beings.'

Subsequently, the Northumbria version is as follows:[6]

Nū scylun hergan hefaenrīcaes uard,

metudæs maecti end his mōdgidanc,

uerc uuldurfadur, suē hē uundra gihuaes,

ēci Dryctin, or āstelidæ.

Hē aērist scōp aelda barnum

heben til hrōfe hāleg scepen;

thā middungeard monncynnæs uard,

ēci Dryctin, æfter tīadae

fīrum foldu, frēa allmectig.

Notable differences in phonology between Wessex and Old Anglian are observed. They are *uard* for Wessex (WS) *weard* and *barnum* for WS *bearnum*, which are the differences in the First Fronting and subsequent Breaking; *suē* for WS *swā*, which reflects the Proto-Germanic ǣ in Old Anglian, and *uerc* for WS *weorc*.[7]

The theory of the immediate making of English after the invasion as suggested by the wipeout theory should be reconsidered from a dialectological point of view. Although the Wessex dialect has been recognised as the canonical language in Early Old English, there is a possibility that the Wessex dialect was established in another way. This possibility should be inferenced from the history of the Saxons' settlement in Britain in the Latin version of Bede as follows:

The 449th year of the incarnation of our Lord, Marcian having with Valentinian obtained the kingdom, the 46th in succession from Augustus, held it seven years. In whose time the nation of the English or Saxons[8], being sent for of the said king into Britain, landed there in three long ships, and by the same king's commandment is appointed to abide in the east part of the island, as to defend the country like friends, but indeed, as it proved afterward, as minded to conquer it as enemies. Encountering therefore with the enemy who had come to battle from the north, the Saxons had the better. Whereof they sending word home, as also of the batfulness of the island and the cowardice of the Britons, the Saxons forthwith sent thither a larger navy with a stronger band of men-at-arms, which being now joined with the former company, drew to a stronger army than the Britons were able to overcome. They then who came were allowed by the Britons a place to dwell among them, with that condition that the one should war for the peace and safety of the country against the enemy, the other should pay them due wages for their warfare. Now the strangers had come from three of the more mighty nations in Germany, that is, the Saxons, the Angles and the Jutes. Of the Jutes came the people of Kent and the settlers in Wight, that is the folk that hold the Isle of Wight, and they which in the province of the West Saxons are called unto this day the nation of the Jutes, right over against the Isle of Wight. Of the Saxons,[9] that is, of that region which now is called of the Old Saxons, descended the East Saxons, the South Saxons and the West Saxons. Further, of the Angles, that is, of that country which is called Angeln[10] and from that time to this is said to stand deserted between the provinces of the Jutes and the Saxons, descendeth the East Angles, the Uplandish Angles, the Mercians and all the progeny of the Northumbrians, that is, of that people that inhabiteth the north side of the flood Humber, and the other nations of the Angles.

(Translation by King 1930: 69–70; emphasis added)

The first underlined part, *the nation of the English or Saxons*, is translated from *Anglorum sive Saxonum* in the Latin version, which is slightly, but crucially, different from the Old English version, *the Angles and Saxons*, in Miller's translation in section 1. The expression in the original Latin version implies that Saxons were the only settlers from the Continent to Britain in the early stages of the settlement, as illustrated in King's notes on this section.

The second underlined part of the Latin says that the Angles came to Britain with the Saxons and the Jutes after the Saxons, who came to Britain for the first time when word was

sent to their country in the Continent. The Angles did not take part in the first expedition and joined the second expedition for the invasion.

It is generally believed that the Saxons had already settled in Britain before the Anglo-Saxon invasion in AD 449. It is not unthinkable that there was language contact between the Saxons and native Britons in the area called the Saxon shore.

It is a difficult know which language the Saxons spoke in their settlement area. It is quite plausible that their language was influenced by contact with the Britons' language, which would cause the difference between the dialects of the Wessex and Anglia.

One difference in phonology is illustrated as follows:

Proto-Germanic $\bar{æ}$ (so-called $\bar{æ}$) is reflected in WS as $d\bar{æ}d$ 'deed' $str\bar{æ}t$ 'road, street', Old Anglian $d\bar{e}d$, $str\bar{e}t$.[11]

We have seen the same dialectal distinction of $sw\bar{a}$ versus $sw\bar{e}$ in the two versions of *Caedmon's Hymn*.[12] It is remarkable that the WS word $str\bar{æ}t$ apparently comes from the Latin *strata*, of which the vowel pronunciation resembles the WS $str\bar{a}t$ more than Old Anglian $str\bar{e}t$. The contrast that the WS *scyppend* 'creator' versus the non-WS *scepen*(d), from which the former is derived by rounding, may represent the influence of language contact.[13]

Trudgill (2016) discusses the language the Britons spoke as follows:

British Latin, Schrijver [(2009)] suggests, was extremely widely used by Celts, especially the upper classes, as a native language or second-language lingua franca. Schrijver's argument for this is based on a detailed phonological from the island in 410, an independent Romano-Celtic Britain continued to maintain Roman civilization for a number of decades (see further below). Then external threats led to invitations from the British to small groups of Anglo-Saxons to assist in the defence of the nation, probably in the late 420s. By about 442 many more Anglo-Saxons had arrived, and they had become numerous enough to revolt against their British hosts.

(Trudgill 2016: 324-5)

It is natural that the Wessex dialect in Old English reflects the result of the language contact if Saxons began to settle before the Anglo-Saxon invasion and communicate with the Britons there. Oppenheimer (2006: 371-6) argues the problem that British runes were limited to eastern

territories of the Jutes and Angles, who seemed to keep their ethnic identity by using runes. The Anglian dialect was probably not as influenced as that of Wessex because of their attitude towards the Britons, which is assumed to cause dialectological differences in Old English.

5　Conclusion

The wipeout theory has been used to explain not only the extinction of the Britons in England but also the few existing traces of Celtic languages in Britain after the Anglo-Saxon invasion. However, "the wipeout theory" was proved wrong by recent anthropological studies. Reconsideration of Early Old English literature written in the Wessex dialect is needed to explain the differing features of the language from other dialects, which may seem as obstacles[14] to relating it to the development of Late Old English.

Notes

(1)　Sykes (2006: 337) also argues from the anthropological point of view as follows:
　I estimate that approximately 10 per cent of men now living in the south of England are the patrilineal descendants of Saxons or Danes, while above the Danelaw line the proportion increases to 15 per cent overall, reaching 20 per cent in East Anglia. ⋯ The roughly twofold excess of Saxon/Danish Y-chromosomes compared to their maternal counterparts hints at a partially male-driven settlement with some elimination or displacement of the indigenous males. But the slaughter, if slaughter there was, was not total and still there are far more people with Celtic ancestry in England, even in the far east, than can claim to be of Saxon or Danish descent.

(2)　This figure was simplified from Foster, Polzin, and Röhl (2006, Figure 11.3).

(3)　This figure was made by Oppenheimer based on the research by Gray and Atkinson (2003) and others.

(4)　Oppenheimer (2006: 351) quotes Foster *et al.* (2006) as follows:
　Secondly, we have added four extinct lexical [vocabulary] sources from the first millennium AD (*Beowulf*, Alfred [three Latin texts personally translated by King Ælfred], *Heliand*, and the Gothic Bible) into the analysis along with modern Germanic languages to investigate whether their inclusion would change the deep branching of English reported by Dyen *et al.* (1992), Gray and Atkinson (2003) and McMahon and McMahon (2003).

(5)　I quoted the transliteration of the Wessex version of *Caedmon's Hymn* in MS Tanner 10, Oxford, Bodleian Library by Marsden (2004: 80–1).

(6)　I revised the transliteration of the Northumbria version of *Caedmon's Hymn* in Marsden (2004: 80, Footnote 31), consulting the manuscript (MS. Kk 5.16 in Cambridge University Library).

(7)　There are some graphical differences, for example, c for h, u for w, and <th> for <ð>.

(8)　Footnote 2 in King (1930: 68–9) notes the following: The coast from Hampshire to the Wash was known in Roman times as the Saxon Shore, and there may well have been Saxon settlements in Britain before 450.

(9)　King (1930: 70) notes Holstein on *Old Saxon*.

⑽　King (1930: 70) notes Slesswick on *Angeln*.

⑾　See Smith 2009: 52.

⑿　The form *swǣ* is sporadic alongside the more usual *swā* (Smith 2009: 136).

⒀　Fippula, Klemola and Paulasto (2008: 28) comment that Schrijver (1999), who examines the contact background of front-rounded vowels in different dialects of Old English as features that might exist due to early substratal influences.

⒁　For example, verb-final word order in the main clauses, which Kiparsky (1995) claims that it reflects a stage of the syntactic development of Germanic languages.　I have discussed this in Kobayashi (2017).

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古英語における Wipeout Theory（全滅説）と方言の仮説の再考

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　当研究は，全ての古英語の方言が 449 年のアングロ・サクソンの侵入による古英語の成立後に分岐したという定説に反論し，初期古英語の標準語と目されてきた古英語のウェセックス方言と他の方言の間の相違について説明することを目的とする。当研究は，最初に，アングロ・サクソン侵入によるイングランドのブリトン人の絶滅を指し示す「全滅」説（"wipeout theory"）に反対して論じる。次に，ベーダの『英国民教会史』とその古英語版の中の『カドモンの賛美歌』の二つの版を比較することによって，ウェセックス方言と他の方言との相違を解析する。二つの版の相違は，アングロ・サクソン侵入以前に起きたウェセックスにおけるサクソン人とブリトン人との間で起こったであろう言語接触を想定することから説明できる。

キーワード：英語の成立，ワイプアウト（全滅）説，古英語方言，『カドモンの賛美歌』，ベーダ