Extreme English

Origins of English and its Sibling, Frisian

“Out of this world Yoda’s syntax always has been.”

Chicago Tribune, May 17, 2005  By Nathan Bierma

Eric Gilleland
National Center for Atmospheric Research

April 23, 2009 -- IBM Take Our Children to Work Day
Does Frisian sound similar to English?

In âld folksrymke seit:

len, twa, trije
De boer dy soe my krije
Ik sprong oer de hikke
Doe koe er my net berikke

len, twa, trije, fjouwer, fiif, seis
Wy telle oan seis ta. Telle jo mei?
Earliest Record of English

“This she-wolf is a reward to my kinsman”

Anglo-Frisian, C.E. 450-500 From Undley Common near Lakenheath, Suffolk, England

Image from The British Museum

gæ gō gæ – mægæ medu

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First writing of the early history

The English People
– by The Venerable Bede
– Written nearly 300 years afterwards

The Frisian People
“It Oere Linda Boek”?
– Alternate world history (pre BCE 2193)
– Hoax?
– (e.g., Scrutton, 1979)
Whence the English?

According to Bede

OE

Saxons

Jutes

Angles
Whence the English?

New evidence: 2 major revisions to Bede
Who were the English?

Anglo-Saxon?

Or...
OE  

Who were the English?

Franco-Fries

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Which one is Englisc?

Fadar usa firiho barno,
Thu bist an them hôhon himilia rîkea,
Geuuîhid sî thin namo uuordo gehuuilico

Tha thi koning Karle and thi koning Redbad fan Danemerkum in thet land komen, tha bisette aider sine wei ina Franekra ga mith ene hereskilde, and quath aider thet land were sin.

---

OE

...sona swa hi ut of þam in eodon þa gesegon hi þone hræfn mid þan sweartan nebbe þa glofe teran uppe on anes huses þæce...
## Coarse-scale history of English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Event/Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5th century</td>
<td>First (large-scale) Germanic groups in Britain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late 8th century</td>
<td>Viking Raids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-to-late 9th century</td>
<td>Danish invasions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late 11th century</td>
<td>Norman Conquest (1066)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mod-to-late 15th century</td>
<td>“Chancery Standard” and printing press give rise to MnE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15th, 16th, 17th century</td>
<td>The Great Vowel Shift</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Coarse-scale history of Frisian

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Era</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6th to 9th century</td>
<td>Various runic inscriptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13th century</td>
<td>Earliest surviving Frisian text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17th century</td>
<td>Gysbert Japicx, poet and writer who elevated Frisian to a <em>literature</em> language</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### English and Frisian

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Frisian</th>
<th>Dutch</th>
<th>German</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>little</td>
<td>lyts</td>
<td>klein</td>
<td>klein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wet</td>
<td>wiet</td>
<td>nat</td>
<td>naß</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>jo</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>Sie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sheep</td>
<td>skiep</td>
<td>schaap</td>
<td>schaf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>think</td>
<td>tinke</td>
<td>denken</td>
<td>denken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cheese</td>
<td>tsiis</td>
<td>kaas</td>
<td>käse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bûter, brea en griene tsiis…
Bûter, brea en griene tsiis…

…Wa dat net sizze kin,
Is gjin oprjochte Fries!

--Pier Gerlofs Donia
(aka Grutte Pier)

Etching of Grutte Pier, from 'Chronycke ofte Historische Geschiedenis van Frieslant' published in 1622

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Tanke wol! Oant sjen!

Skûtsjesilen

Fierljeppen

Keats

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Some references

• Old English
  Mitchell and Robinson (2001), Robinson (1992)
• Middle English
  Burrow and Turville-Petre (2000)
• Old Frisian
  Bremmer (2009)
• Modern Frisian
• Entertaining
• English Word Origins
  Ayto (1990)
References used for this presentation