

WRITING AND LITERARY ACTIVITY IN THE VERNACULAR IN ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

У статті розглянуто процес виникнення і функціонування різних форм текстової фіксації на англійських територіальних діалектах давнього періоду розвитку англійської мови як наслідок розвитку суспільних функцій мови та розширення сфер функціонування її писемної форми в період формування англосаксонського суспільства. В історичній перспективі простежено становлення основних текстових категорій і видів текстів давньоанглійської писемності на основі функціональної класифікації писемних пам'яток давнього періоду. Описано формування англійської писемної традиції в соціолінгвістичному контексті та зазначено основні рукописні тексти-джерела деяких давньоанглійських писемних пам'яток.

The aim of the article is to show the process of development of the main social functions of Old English in its written form in Anglo-Saxon England and to demonstrate the origination of the basic text categories of Old English writing in the sociolinguistic context of the evolution of the Anglo-Saxon speech community.

The extant written records of Anglo-Saxon England refer to different aspects of writing activity of the Anglo-Saxons and represent literary types dealing with various topics. This wide range of miscellaneous text types is the realization of the main communicative functions of language in the Anglo-Saxon speech community: communication, information, influence and argumentation, as, for example, chronicles, laws, epic and lyrical poetry, sermons and homilies, religious texts, scholarly treatises, etc.

After the introduction of Christianity into the Anglo-Saxon society, the start of writing both in Latin and in the vernacular was primarily determined by utilitarian purposes of the administrative, legislative, religious, educational and other public activities in the Anglo-Saxon early feudal states. Later more literary pieces of writing appeared, some were translated from Latin and some were composed in Latin or in the vernacular on the Anglo-Saxon soil. The practice of writing was mostly confined to the church people and mainly bore a religious or state, official character, as clerical people, bishops, priests, and monks acted as royal officials and judges, besides their major functions as ecclesiastical men. From the X century charter evidence reveals the existence of a skilled writing office, composed of clerical people [1: 247]. The major important centers of learning and culture with famous scriptoria that produced a large number of Old English surviving manuscripts and to where the provenance of the remaining manuscripts can be traced were located at Winchester, Worcester, Exeter, Durham, Abington and Canterbury (St. Augustine Abbey and Christ Church).

A considerable amount of Old English texts that have come down to us shows a great scope of textual variability. In terms of the accepted traditional attitude a wide variety of the existing Anglo-Saxon pieces of writing in Old English territorial dialects falls into the next text categories: inscriptions (both in Latin and runic characters), interlinear glosses and glossaries, lists of names, prose and poetry. The basic text categories are prose and poetry with each division going further into text type differences and genre varieties depending on the functional frame within which the text was created. These were mostly written genres such as scholarly treatises, biblical translations or speech-based genres such as sermons and homilies, epic narrative poems. The genre attribution of Old English literary texts may seem to be rather a matter of convention as is the case with the literature created before the national literary language was established. Moreover, the dialect attribution and dating of some manuscripts may also present some difficulty in defining and it is very important to distinguish between the text and the manuscript which happens to represent it. Furthermore, the texts which are written in the four main territorial dialects sometimes show much regional variation.

The Anglo-Saxon written documents in Latin characters, found in all four principal dialects with the prevalence of West Saxon, mainly refer to the Alfredian and post-Alfredian times, although the earliest texts in Old English go back to the VII-VIII centuries. It is also important to note that many texts, which are thought to have probably been composed in other dialects than West Saxon or were written initially in Latin, were later rewritten in West Saxon so that sometimes their exact dating or the original dialects the works were written in can remain a matter of speculation and discussion.

Inscriptions in runes, sometimes mixed with Latin characters, more rarely only in Roman letters, are chronologically the earliest of Old English writing, dating back to the late VII century. Inscriptions in runic and Latin characters are found on the hard surfaces such as stone, metal, wood, bone (coins, weapons, amulets, rings, tombstones). Runic inscriptions had a restricted use as the runes were believed to have magic powers if used in the correct arrangement and a runic writing was looked upon as a magic art. These inscribed texts are mostly in Northumbrian or Mercian dialects as, for example, the texts on the **Bewcastle Column**, Cumberland (?670); on the **Ruthwell Cross**, Scotland (?680-750); on the **Franks Casket** (?700-800); on the **Lead Ring**, Northumberland (800-900); on the **Lancaster Slab** (?650-700); on the **Thames Knife** (?400 500); a biliteral inscription in Roman and in Runic characters on the **Falstone** (?700) in Northumberland and some others. An

example of a mixed inscription which is partially in Roman characters and partially in runes, is found engraved on **Æthred's Ring** (?700-800): *Æðred mec ah, Eanred mec agrof* *Æthred owns me, Eanred engraved (inscribed) me* [2: 124-125, 130]. Later it became rather usual to carve epigrammatic speeches on the sculptures and ornaments. The device of *prosopopoeia*, the speech of a personified object, can be found not only in the inscriptions of the earlier period, as, for example, on the **Ruthwell Cross** and **Æthred's Ring**, but also in later times as, for instance, the famous **Alfred Jewel** of gold, rock-crystal, and enamel, bears the inscription: *Ælfred mec heht gewyrcean* *Alfred had me made* [3: 85; 4: 97].

In some cases inscriptions in Latin characters can be found in manuscripts, as, for example, **Codex Aureus Inscription** which is an entry on folio 11 of the Latin Gospels, known as the *Codex Aureus*, in the Royal Library at Stockholm. It is dated back to the end of the IX century and is made at Canterbury, presumably in the Kentish dialect. The text records the act of donation of *Aelfred aldormon* and his wife to Christ Church, Canterbury and gives a side-light on the Viking ravages [2: 174-175; 5: 205]. Some scholars think that the language of the inscription is the variety of Mercian Old English which can be found in Surrey where presumably the donor, *Aelfred aldormon* and his wife lived [6: 449-450].

Lists of names are preserved in Saxon and (?) Northumbrian genealogies in which genealogies of kings, of churchwomen (abbesses) and of churchmen of different ranks are given, and also in the manuscript called **Liber Vitae Ecclesiae Dunelmensis** which consists of a list of benefactors to the Durham Church (the end of the VIII century or the first half of the IX century). Some Latin manuscripts of the famous work by Bede "**Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum**" [*The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*] are supplied by personal names and place names in their original Northumbrian form [2: 153, 167-170, 179].

Lists of territorial names are given in two most significant historical documents of the Anglo-Saxon past: the **Tribal Hidage** and the **Burghal Hidage**. Both texts are known by later copies.

The interlinear and marginal glosses found in the four principal dialects of Old English date from the VIII century up to the XI centuries. These are the earliest pieces of Old English writing in Latin letters found in manuscripts written in Latin. **Glosses** are usually defined as an explanation, a comment or a translation which can be added to a piece of writing to explain a difficult word or a phrase. They can be written under or above the lines of the original text (interlinear glosses), or in the blank spaces at the margins of the manuscript (marginal glosses). Glosses could be compiled into glossaries, lists of words and definitions or translations. **Glossaries** were compiled not only from literary sources, such as ecclesiastical books (commentaries on various religious works), they could also present lists of technical words, names of animals and plants, minerals, and other natural objects (class-glossaries). Besides these, there are many scattered words which do not fall into any distinct class with the others [2: 10].

In most of the cases the interlinear and marginal glosses are found in Anglian dialects (Northumbrian or Mercian) as, for example, glosses in the famous **Lindisfarne Gospels**, *Evangeliorum quattuor Codex Lindisfarnensis* (Cotton MS. Nero D. in the British Museum). These gospels were written by Eadfrith, bishop of Lindisfarne (698-721) in Latin, and glossed in the Northumbrian dialect by Aldred the priest in the second half of the X century, probably at Chester-le-Street, Durham. The **Rushworth Gospels** (MS. Auct. D.2. 19, ff., Oxford, the Bodleian Library) were written in Latin in the VIII century, and given a literal, word by word translation, that is, glossed in the X century by two scribes, Farmon and Owen (Owun). The glosses are believed to have been written in two dialects: in Mercian (East or North) by Farmon, probably, at Herewood, Yorkshire and in (South) Northumbrian by Owen [7: 56]. Some glosses occur in the early eighth-century psalter, the **Blickling Glosses**, called after its former location in the library at Blickling Hall, in Norfolk. These glosses are thought to be contemporary with the psalter itself and are, in Henry Sweet's opinion, in the East Mercian dialect [2: 122].

Nowadays some scholars tend to reconsider the dialect attribution or the place of the creation of some Early Old English texts, attaching more importance to the idea of their probably Mercian origin. Thus, the **Lorica Prayer** (the first half of the IX century) and the **Lorica Glosses** (the end of the IX century) in a Cambridge manuscript (Cambridge, University Library, MS. LI. I. 10), which were assumed to be in the Kentish dialect by Henry Sweet, are now generally regarded as representing Mercian or Mercian-influenced varieties of Old English [2: 171-172; 6: 427; 7: 61]. The same seems to be true of some other Early English texts.

A very important sample of the Old English interlinear version of the Psalms and Hymns can be seen in the **Vespasian Psalter** (MS. Cotton Vespasian A. I in the British Museum). The Latin text of the Roman Psalter and Hymns, of the VIII century, was supplied by an interlinear gloss in the IX century. Some modern scholars believe that the language of the Vespasian Psalter represents a standard written variety of the Mercian dialect that can be associated geographically with the west midlands of England, and politically with the Mercian kings [8:44; 6:423, 426; 7: 60]. The glosses themselves are believed to have been written at Canterbury, which does not seem strange in view of close contacts between Canterbury and Mercia [9: 260].

The most famous of the glossaries are the six separate glossaries written in the four manuscripts, named after their present location and known as **Corpus** (MS.144 in the library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge); **Epinal** (MS. 72 in Bibliothèque Municipale, Épinal); **Leiden** (MS. Vossianus Lat.4^o 69 in Rijksuniversiteit, Leiden) all dating from the VIII century, and **Erfurt** (MS. 42 in the Amplonian Library at Erfurt), dated at the IX

century. All of the glossaries, except Leiden, are alphabetical, though with no strict abc-order and are based on interlinear glosses, Latin and English, in Latin books, and on Latin-English class-glossaries. The word forms shown in the glossaries are assumed to be in the Mercian dialect [7: 58-59] and are thought to represent the language of the oldest type [2: 5].

The best-known corpus of **prose writing** in Old English dialects consists mainly of prose pieces composed in the first part of the IX century up to the first part of the XI century and represents different literary text types. Part of this cultural heritage was translated in the IX–XI centuries from Latin or written after the Latin model. Not all of the four principal dialects are shown in all the text types equally widely because many documents perished in the calamities of the past and have not survived through the time. The functioning of Old English prose writing in territorial dialects was normally confined to the domains of religion, law, scholarship (theology, medicine, mathematics, etc.), education, administration, private business relations. This determined the character of the first Old English prose texts and the appearance of a wide variety of the Old English text types. The rise in writing activity seems to be clear proof of the prominent position of culture, a high level of administration and political life in the Anglo-Saxon society.

The Anglo-Saxon extant prose texts refer to different functional spheres not equally presented in all Old English dialects and show different text types, as, for instance, the Kentish dialect is represented mostly by legal and religious documents; Anglian (Mercian and Northumbrian) texts usually are religious in character. The West Saxon dialect is represented by more text types: legal, administrative documents, religious, scholarly (theological, professional) works, homilies, sermons, and others. This marked difference in the text type presentation can possibly testify to the rising in importance of the West Saxon dialect in the IX–XI centuries and to the formation of the West Saxon literary school. It can also be connected with the remarkable revival of the literary activity in the Alfredian and post-Alfredian time. Generally, it is mostly likely to have been the result of a substantial increase in the social, cultural functions of the society and of the expansion in its political activity at a more advanced stage in the development of the Anglo-Saxon speech community in the later period. Or this disproportion can be the result of the unfortunate political development of the rest of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms.

Old English texts in prose can generally be characterized as the ones which are closely connected with the Latin written tradition, as some of them are translations from Latin, and some are made up according to the Latin version or follow the Latin pattern (for example, legislative, judicial or religious texts). There is only a comparatively small portion of Old English prose writing which can testify to Anglo-Saxon innovations, or is original compositions of later periods.

In the prose text category a wide range of text types written in Old English in Latin characters is found in Old English manuscripts. **The secular prose** is represented by a great amount of legal documents and all kinds of official, administrative records (laws, wills, land grants, land sales, deals of purchase, land surveys, records of manumission (emancipation) and records of donations). Furthermore, there are annals (chronicles), medical texts, philosophical and didactic scholarly treatises, sets of tables for computing of the Church calendar and for astrological calculations, prognostics, penitential writings, handbooks, rhetorical writing and a classical romance. **The religious or Christian prose** is represented by collections of homilies and sermons, by biblical translations and Lives of Saints.

Charters, a collection of Old English miscellaneous official documents, preserved in different manuscripts, can be regarded as most valuable evidence of the historical past of the Anglo-Saxon times. Some of these documents were written in Latin, some with portions in Old English, and some in the Kentish, Mercian and West Saxon dialects. Some were originally written in Latin and translated from Latin into Old English, mostly into the West Saxon dialect, in later periods. The practice of using the vernacular for records (other than royal diplomas) was undoubtedly connected with the decay of Latin learning in the IX century [5: 197]. The majority of these documents have come down to our time in later copies but some duplicates are apparently preserved in contemporary manuscripts.

An entire absence of the earliest Northumbrian charters, stated by Henry Sweet in his famous book "The Oldest English Texts" [2: 422], could evidently be explained by the fact that official documents were usually collected and stored up in monasteries and cathedrals which turned out to be especially vulnerable and an easy target for Danish and Norwegian raids as the Vikings were looking for quick loot and plundered rich Northumbrian monasteries and cathedrals for their treasures during their first attacks on the island of Great Britain in the VIII–IX centuries.

The Anglo-Saxon Charters include legal public and private documents of a wide-ranging character. These charters recorded acts of donations to the church, to the royal family; royal grants, wills, private agreements, land sales, records of lawsuits, acts of selling, cases of litigation. There are **wills**, such as, the will of Abba, the Kentish dialect of the IX century (833-839) (MS. Cotton Augustus ii 64 in the British Museum, London); Ealdorman Alfred's will (871-888), presumably in the Kentish dialect (Stowe Charter 20 in the British Museum, London); the will of Æthelflæd and that of her sister Ælfflæd (the Suffolk Charter, Harley Charter 43.C.4, in the British Museum, London), written in West Saxon literary standard with forms of eastern dialect; **royal grants of land** to the church, to a bishopric or to a town, as, for example, Edward the Confessor's grant of land to the

monastery in Oxfordshire in the first half of the XI century (Paris, Archives Nationale, Cartons des rois, K.19, no. 6) or a land grant by king Offa of Mercia to Worcester, originally composed in Latin (the VIII century) and translated into West Saxon with certain Mercian features in the IX century in the times of king Alfred; **records of lawsuits** generally relating to land, as, for example, the famous case of a family dispute in Herefordshire in the XI century (1016-1035), recorded in the West Saxon literary dialect in a gospel-book (Hereford Cathedral MS. P. i. 2, f. 134); or a case of litigation over the land, as a case of Eadgifu against Goda over the land by her rights to inheritance of her father in Canterbury, recorded in the West Saxon literary dialect of the X century (961) (Stowe Charter 28 in the British Museum, London); **acts of private agreements**, as, for example, Ealdorman Oswulf's agreement, made in the first half of the IX century (805-810), with the church in Canterbury about turning over the land for a year to the church community on condition that he and his wife shall live there during this period of time (MS. Cotton Augustus ii. 79 in the British Museum, London, the Kentish dialect); some **records of rents**, as for example, rents due to Christ Church, Canterbury, recorded in the 9th century (850) in the Kentish dialect (MS. Cotton Augustus ii.52 in the British Museum, London); **records of various acts of donations**, as, for example, a grant of a book by king Athelstan of the English (924-939), which was made in 934 and recorded in late West Saxon with an admixture of Mercian forms [2; 5; 10].

Another historically and linguistically valuable collection of official documents is the surviving body of written **laws and statutes** issued by Anglo-Saxon kings, though they are mostly preserved not in the original manuscripts of the time of the reign of the kings, but in later copies.

The earliest Anglo-Saxon law code "written in the language of the English" was produced in Kent under the first Christian English king, Athelbert (Æthelberht, Ethelbert) of Kent (580-616) (a collection of manuscripts of the XII century called Textus Roffensis, Rochester). The law code by Ine, king of Wessex, (688-726) is the earliest piece of West-Saxon prose which has survived in later manuscripts (Textus Roffensis, Rochester and MS. 383, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, both manuscripts of the XII century).

King Alfred the Great of Wessex (871-899) issued a long elaborate law code in the vernacular, extensively revising that of Ine. In the famous Parker manuscript (MS 173) that is kept at Corpus Christi College in Cambridge and is the oldest manuscript, the copies of the laws of Alfred and Ine are bound in after the entry for 924 of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.

The famous manuscript (MS. 383) in Corpus Christi College, in Cambridge, contains Old English versions of two historically important texts: *Rectitudines Singularum Personarum*, a manual to guide the administration of a late Anglo-Saxon estate and the only systematic record of the obligations of tenants and workers before the Norman Conquest, with notes concerning the conditions of men, and *Gerefa*, a supplement as it were to the "Rectitudines", which is a literary discussion and comment about the functions and duties of the key manorial officer, the estate overseer or the reeve, in the style of a colloquy. The tract "Gerefa" gives much information of general importance to an understanding of the agrarian economy in the Anglo-Saxon society [11: 444-455; 1: 196-202].

A remarkable period of the intense activity in writing in the Anglo-Saxon England of the IX century was largely determined by the personality of King Alfred the Great, the most outstanding of the West Saxon kings. It is widely believed today that King Alfred the Great commissioned a compilation of earlier notes of the history of the Anglo-Saxons to be collected into the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle in the IX century for "his people to acquire some knowledge of themselves and their history" [12: 69]. The exact place of the composition is difficult to establish as there is no clear evidence as for the circumstances of the work undertaken in the compilation of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. About 890 copies of this original version were sent to a number of centers of learning at monasteries and later new entries to record the important events of the time were added [13: 218].

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, which is a collection of the late Anglo-Saxon annals and records made at various monasteries about important events in the history of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, is an impressive continuous narrative prose work originally written in Old English, and a historical document of the great social, political and cultural significance. The first introductory non-contemporary entries of the Chronicle, probably up to the VII century, when the contemporary records are thought to have begun, were based on the material from multiple sources, such as older annals in Latin, or sometimes in English, genealogies for Northumbrian and Mercian kings, and contained allusions to the world history events taken from Latin sources that were obtainable at the time the Chronicle was being compiled. The most notable historians of the past whose works influenced the compilers of the earliest entries of the Chronicle were the sixth-century British monk Gildas Sapiens and the eighth-century Anglo-Saxon monk the Venerable Bede. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle also includes the insertion of a few specimens of poetry following the oral saga tradition.

If at the start up to the mid-IX century the Chronicle was more like a list of brief notices, a list of enumerated items of information and facts of the "informed guesswork" character [3: 52], many later contemporary entries contained historical narratives of much value and significance under the year headings, as, for instance, the entries for year 871 (The battle of Ashdown); for years 892-896 [893-897] (Alfred's last wars with the Danes); for year 1013 (The Danish conquest of England by King Sweyne); for year 1087 (About William the Conqueror).

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle as a result of the isolated and independent character of later recording at various religious establishments has been preserved in several versions represented in the surviving manuscripts. Each

version contains passages peculiar to it, usually of local interest, as, for example, three of the extant manuscripts go back to a text which was kept at some northern centre, probably York, and had a large amount of northern material (the Worcester Chronicle, Cotton MS. Tiberius B iv (D), British Museum, London) [13: 218-219]. In some versions of the Chronicle another important document, **the Mercian Register**, was incorporated (Abingdon Chronicle II; Cotton MS. Tiberius B I (C), the British Library, London]. The Mercian Register was inserted after the entry for year 915. This short set of annals was written in Mercia and contains the material about the west of Mercia [1: 139].

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle exists in nine manuscripts differing in the state of preservation and referring to different dates of production, all except two in the British Library, London. The manuscripts are not original, but duplicates of the original work and represent copies of versions kept up at different religious houses. The earliest surviving and the most important manuscript of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle with the West Saxon character of the entries (MS.173, late IX-XI centuries), known by the name of its donor Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury (1559-1575) as **the Parker Chronicle** or, by the place where it was begun, as **the Winchester Chronicle**, is located in the library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. The manuscript of the XII century which contains another very important version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (MS. Laud Misc. 636 in the Bodleian Library, Oxford), **the Peterborough Chronicle**, so called after the monastery at Peterborough where it was kept in the XII century, or **the Laud Chronicle** after the name of its owner in the XVII century, William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury (1633-1654), is located in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. This version of the Chronicle gives records up to 1154 and, thus, the last entry in it is made in Early Middle English [4: 35; 5: 97].

The start of the flowering of public and official prose writing in West-Saxon in the IX century, called by some authors the Alfredian (or Alfred's) Renaissance, to which the existing enormous bulk of written prose evidence attests, was, by general recognition, triggered by the initiative of King Alfred the Great (b. ?847 – d. 899, ruled 871-899) and inspired by his personal encouragement. The development of a well-evidenced and continuous tradition in religious and secular prose writing is usually attributed to the translations from Latin associated with King Alfred's educational and cultural programme that he introduced through a circle of his supporters to correct the situation after almost irreversible decline and corruption of learning in the country, which were the immediate and evident aftermath of the Viking attacks at the northern and eastern parts of England. For the first time the broadscale translation campaign was conducted to present philosophical thoughts and theological ideas, biblical commentaries and explanations in vernacular prose, if, sometimes, much influenced by Latin tradition of writing.

The successful result of King Alfred's efforts to reform education and to promote scholarship in the country which is the most impressive cultural attainment of the last decade of the IX century was seen in the rendering of some important and notable treatises of Early Medieval authors into the vernacular. This widely known list of books includes at least six works.

(1) ***Liber Regulae Pastoralis* or *Regula Pastoralis*** (*The Book of the Pastoral Rule*), known as ***Cura Pastoralis*** [*Pastoral Care*] of Pope Gregory I (Gregory the Great) (ab. 540-604). Two versions of King Alfred's translation can be dated to the last decade of the IX century. The translation has come down to our times in several manuscripts of a different state of preservation. The contemporary copy of the translation that King Alfred sent to Worcester has been preserved at the Bodleian Library, Oxford (Hatton MS. 20, A. D. 890-897). The other important manuscripts are kept in Cambridge: MS. li. 2. 4., the XI century (Cambridge University Library) and MS. 12, the X century (Corpus Christi College). (2) ***Historiarum adversum paganos libri septem*** [*Seven Books of Histories against the Pagans*], or World History, of the Spanish monk Paulus Orosius (385-420). The translation has come down to our times in two manuscripts: Additional MS. 47967, also known as Lauderdale or Tollemache MS (the first half of the X century) and the eleventh-century Cotton MS. Tiberius B. i, ff. 12 ff., both in the British Museum, London. (3) ***De Consolatione Philosophiae*** [*On the Consolation of Philosophy*], of Boethius, a Roman statesman and philosopher (470-524). The oldest manuscript Cotton Otho vi of the mid-tenth century in the British Museum was badly damaged in the fire of 1731 and the translation has come down to our times in a non-contemporary transcript made when the manuscript was complete (Bodleian MS. Junius 12 and Bodleian MS. 180, both in the Bodleian Library, Oxford). (4) ***Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*** [*The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*] of Bede, the first English historian (673-735) who spent most of his life in Jarrow monastery in Northumbria. There are five manuscripts with the translation of which the following can be mentioned: MS. Kk.3.18, f.14, the second half of the XI century, in the Cambridge Library; Tanner MS. 10 of the first half of the X century in the Bodleian Library, Oxford and MS. 279, Corpus Christi College, Oxford, a transcript of the early XI century which was made of a mid-tenth-century manuscript. (5) **The Dialogues** of Gregory the Great, containing in its second book **The Life of St. Benedict**. (6) **The Soliloquies**, supplemented by *De Videndo Deo*, of Saint Augustine of Hippo (354-430) in the manuscript of the XII century.

Opinions as for King Alfred's authorship of the translation of these books from Latin into Anglo-Saxon differ. Though it seems to be commonly accepted that all notable translations of the IX century were made on King Alfred's initiative, with his special interest and under his royal guidance, it is now widely believed that King Alfred himself, or in collaboration with his closest assistants, was the author of the translation only of three

books: *Cura Pastoralis* [*Pastoral Care*] of Pope Gregory I; *De Consolatione Philosophiae* [*On the Consolation of Philosophy*] of Boethius; and *The Soliloquies* of Saint Augustine of Hippo [3: 85; 14: 84-88].

It has commonly been admitted for rather a long time that there is great doubt whether King Alfred himself translated *Historiarum adversum paganos libri septem* [*Seven Books of Histories against the Pagans*], or World History, of the Spanish monk Paulus Orosius, though two famous authentic accounts made directly to King Alfred by two voyagers (Ohthere and Wulfstan) and added to the Old English translation of the book have usually been attributed to King Alfred himself and are recognized as his most remarkable contribution. The translation of the Latin text is today ascribed to an anonymous translator of Mercian origin [6: 426, 513].

A thorough linguistic analysis of the text of the translated works shows that, although non-West Saxon spelling and grammatical forms can be found in nearly all Old English prose translations made during that period, the Old English translation of Bede's work gives a peculiar picture of the usage of West Saxon forms alongside with the Mercian forms. For all the prevalence of the West Saxon dialect in which the translation was primarily made, Mercian morphological forms, spelling and vocabulary units especially in earlier manuscripts, such as Tanner MS. 10 of the first half of the X century in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, are quite numerous in the text of the translation. As, for example, *þætte seolfan þā his lārēowas* (*that his very teachers*) (Tanner MS. 10) [5: 48, 1.73] and *ðæt þa sylfan his lareowas* (*that his very teachers*) (MS. 279, Corpus Christi College, Oxford, a transcript of the early XI century which was made of a mid-tenth-century manuscript) [4: 21, 1.68]. The translation of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* [*The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*] is currently thought to have been made by anonymous Anglian translators [1: 291; 6: 427, 513; 13: 216]. The book of Gregory the Great about the lives of the early saints of Italy, *The Dialogues*, is widely believed to have been rendered into Old English by the Mercian Bishop of Worcester, Werferth (Waerferth, Wærferth), who was expressly commissioned to the enterprise by King Alfred himself [1: 292; 14: 84].

King Alfred's education reform was evident success, though it was largely targeted at the recovery of learning primarily in Wessex. The importance of King Alfred's education reform lies in the fact that, firstly, it promoted learning and scholarship by distribution and circulation of written documents, official, religious and scholarly, from Wessex to the rest of Anglo-Saxon England. Secondly, the compilation and the further recording of historic events in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the translations of notable books of the past into the vernacular were used to raise the prestige of the vernacular and promote learning not only among the clerical men, but also among lay young people. And though literacy did not extend much beyond the clergy, their writing and literary activity promoted the spread of the West Saxon dialect and established it as the chief literary dialect [1: 293]. Inconsistency within the early written documents, a somewhat mixed dialectal character of West Saxon with Anglian admixtures, might easily be explained, as some scholars believe, by the fact that teachers came from Mercia and their own spoken dialect was Mercian [15]. Thirdly, by the aid of these books bishops re-educated themselves and trained their clergy in Latin and in scholarship and the clergy in their turn taught the secular people. Fourthly, schools were established where pupils set to learning. Fifthly, monasteries again became centers of learning with scriptoria where many scribes were taught and trained to make copies of the written documents of different types as in Latin, so in the vernacular.

But, for all its great achievement, the Alfredian reform was not followed by a steady literary activity and by a continuous stream of prose literary writing in the vernacular [1: 293; 13: 219].

A further promotion of education and scholarship was fostered by the Benedictine reform, the event of historical and cultural importance that made great impact on the restoration of the state of learning and arts. This monastic movement of the second half of the X century first and foremost aimed at the reorganization of the monastic life in Anglo-Saxon England and was the reaction to the ruin of monasteries after the Danish attacks and to the decline in Church, especially the degeneration of monastic routine life, also in the parts of England that were not taken by the Danes. The other objects of the Benedictine reform were the improvement of education, the encouragement of learning among the monks and the clergy, and the establishment of schools to satisfy their demands.

The key religious men in the Benedictine reform were Aethelwald (Æthelwold, Athelwold, Ethelwold) (904/9?-984), bishop of Winchester, the most energetic of all the reformers; Oswald, bishop of Worcester (d. 992) and archbishop of York, and Dunstan (909-988), an abbot of Glastonbury Abbey, a bishop of Worcester, a bishop of London, and an archbishop of Canterbury, later canonized as a saint (Saint Dunstan). The monastic reformers also invited some distinguished continental scholars, as, for example, Oswald, Bishop of Worcester, asked Abbo from Fleury (France) to come and to instruct his novices [13: 185].

The Benedictine reform turned out to be fruitful, especially, for the start of the XI century that became notable with the successful production of religious prose writing, and when great masters of Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical prose writing Ælfric, Abbot of Eynsham, (955-1020? or 1025?), a pupil of Aethelwald, and Archbishop Wulfstan (d. 1023?) emerged with their elaborate individual styles.

Both, Ælfric and Wulfstan, were greatly concerned to give not only to the congregations, but also to lay people, inevitably ignorant of Latin, the essentials of the Christian faith in their own language, thus, aiming for a wider public than those trained in the monasteries [1: 293; 13: 201]. Ælfric, for instance, wrote theological

treatises for ordinary men of the thane class, of no particularly distinguished position [13: 93]. Both Aelfric and Wulfstan in their sermons that can be perceived as early pieces of oratory work addressed themselves to a wide audience, thus revealing the public character of their major pieces of writing. Both were great public figures, who composed their speech-based homilies in the time of national crisis, or as a response to a national problem [6: 513-514]. Furthermore, a scholar of great ability, Byrhtferth of Ramsey (970-1020), educated by Abbo from Fleury, began to write his scientific works.

Ælfric of Eynsham is unanimously recognized as the most outstanding and the greatest religious prose writer of the later Anglo-Saxon period, also being acknowledged as the most distinguished Christian theologian, scholar and educator of the time. Ælfric wrote in both languages, Latin and English, though a great amount of his writing was based on Latin originals.

The list of Ælfric's major works includes: *Sermones Catholici* [*Catholic Homilies*], two sets of forty homilies; *Lives of the Saints* composed probably not later than 998 and extant in the Cotton MS. Julius E. vii of the early XI century in the British Museum in London and in Cambridge University Library MS li. i. 33 of the XII century; a *Latin Grammar* and *Glossary*; *Colloquium Aelfrici* [*the Colloquy*], of which only two manuscripts exist: Cotton Ms. Tiberius A. iii, fol. 60b-64b in the British Museum, London; Codex 154, f. 204a-221b, St. John's College, Oxford; a *version translation of Bede's De Temporibus Anni*; five *Pastoral Letters*; *translations of the Bible (the Old Testament)* (Laud Miscellany MS.509, the Bodleian Library, Oxford).

The most famous of Ælfric's homilies are: *On the Parable of the Vineyard*, extant in Bodley MS.340 of the beginning of the XI century, Oxford; Bodley MS 343, a twelfth-century manuscript, Oxford; MS.162 of the beginning of the XI century and MS.198 of the first half of the XI century, both manuscripts in the library at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge; Cambridge University Library MS. Gg. 3.28 of the X century; and *On the Nativity of the Innocents*, surviving in Royal MS.7 C xii of the late X century, in the British Museum, London; MS. 198 of the first half of the XI century; MS.188 of the X century, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and Cambridge University Library MSS. Gg. 3.28 and li. 1.33).

Wulfstan, who was Bishop of London (996-1002), Bishop of Worcester (1002-1016) and Archbishop of York (from 1002 until his death), a contemporary of Ælfric, is equally famous for his collection of passionate, highly rhetorical sermons, known as the *Homilies*, that he wrote in Latin and in the vernacular, in the West Saxon literary dialect, with intense feeling and the mastery of oratorical style.

Wulfstan's Old English homilies are extant in some manuscripts of which the following can be mentioned: MS. Corpus 201, a mid-eleventh-century manuscript in the Parker library at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge (all five homilies); Bodleian MS. Hatton 113 of the late XI century, the Bodleian Library, Oxford (all five homilies); Bodleian MS. 343 of the late XII century, the Bodleian Library, Oxford; Cotton MS. Nero A.I, of the late XI century in the British Museum, London. The best known of his homilies is *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* [*Wulfstan's Address to the English*].

The secular prose text types can be seen in the works composed by Byrhtferth of Ramsey, a master of scholarly works in rhetoric, mathematics, history, logic and astronomy, who was another writer of importance in the period. In 1011 Byrhtferth of Ramsey wrote his famous *Latin Enchiridion*, or *Manual* which is written in Latin and in Old English and survives in the manuscript: Bodleian Ashmole MS.328, Oxford. It contains treatises on computation, theology, rhetoric and also deals with some grammatical subjects. His treatise on the *computus*, as he said, (MS.17, St. John's College, Oxford) was written in English to help priests "to relax their dice-playing and obtain a knowledge of this art" [13: 186; 1: 295]. There are also some collections of manuscripts with Anglo-Saxon medical texts and prayers in prose and poetry (metrical charms and alliterative verse) presented in *Lacnunga* (*Remedies*), one of the oldest of the British medical manuscripts (MS. Harley, 585, of the X-XI century, the British Library, London); and in *Bald's Leechbook*, which was written in Worcester, probably under the influence of King Alfred the Great (MS. Royal 12, D xvii, of the X century, the British Library, London). Additionally, there are some Old English translations of medical works from Latin.

One more prose text of interest is a single example of an Old English secular prose romance, the Old English translation of *Apollonius of Tyre*, a fragment of late Greek romance which survived in a Latin version of about the V century and was translated into Old English, probably in the XI century (MS.201, of the XI century, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge).

Another basic text category of Old English writing is *poetry*. Poetic works in Old English territorial dialects can generally be characterized as the ones based on the oral Germanic tradition with the long-established and fixed structure, conventional constructions and formations. Though there are some poetry pieces that follow the Latin pattern, or are free metrical translations, paraphrases, of Latin texts, and are composed originally in written form, they still keep the basic language features of the Old Germanic oral poetic practice [16: 20].

In Anglo-Saxon England prose writings were mostly confined to the functional styles of jurisdiction, scholarship, theology, covering such public domains as administration, education, religion. And, thus, for the most part, prose writing in Old English dialects was public in its communicative function and formal, official in its character. The specific social function of poetry in the Anglo-Saxon speech community is emphasized by the interest which the Anglo-Saxon society took in the traditions and deeds of their forefathers. These memories of the

past were transmitted through heroic songs that seem to have been the only type of record and chronicles that the old Germanic people possessed. Poetry and song were part of the very fabric of their social life and poetry type was well suited to a society in which art of the poet was closely connected with the art of declamation, writes Henry R. Loyn [1: 286]. Commenting on Anglo-Saxon poetic traditions before the age of writing the Polish scholar Margaret Schlauch says that poetic creation was cultivated among the warriors as well as the peasants. Specially recognized and talented members of the military caste produced verses to glorify leaders, to commemorate events in tribal history, and to entertain their fellows at court [14: 17]. Heroic and epic lays, different poetic songs, metrical verses were performed at various social occasions such as feasts celebrating victories, marriages, funerals and could be epic legends, laments for fallen heroes, eulogies of kings, drinking songs, charms, or spells, memory or wisdom verses, transmitted by minstrels, or scop, who wandered throughout Anglo-Saxon England. It is but natural to suppose that pre-Christian poetry which was orally transmitted circulated in all parts of Anglo-Saxon England in the language form that was understood everywhere [12: 49].

Anglo-Saxon poetry writings, both religious and non-religious, present different text types, mostly original, authentic, and show a large textual variability, a wide range of various and varied subjects, as, for example, epic, heroic and historical narrative poems; religious, didactic poems; psalms, hymns; elegiac, lyrical poems; gnomic verses of wisdom; riddles and charms. Still, the genre attribution of a certain poetic piece of writing is connected with much difficulty as is the case with early pieces of writing before the genre distinctions were fully established.

In contrast to the prose works a striking peculiarity of Old English poetry, with a few exceptions, is its anonymous character and the difficulties connected with the ascertainment of the authors' identity. Only four names of Old English authors of poetry writing are known with any certainty: Bede, Caedmon and Cynewulf and King Alfred the Great. Except the poetical activity of the two Anglo-Saxon poets Caedmon and Cynewulf who composed early religious poems, there is no clear and reliable evidence of the development of poetic individual styles.

Anglo-Saxon poetry writing is remarkable in the uniformity of the vernacular verse based on the strength of the Germanic oral tradition, whereas the largest part of the prose writings presents translations from Latin, paraphrases of Latin texts or the texts that are written after Latin pattern. Though some original Anglo-Saxon prose works, such as based on speech-oriented forms of communication (for example, Aelfric's and Wulfstan's sermons) keep the basic features of the Anglo-Saxon language culture peculiar of poetry writing: metrical organization of the text, alliteration, they still seem to indicate to Latin influence. Poetry writings are authentic, bear a strikingly evident and unmistakable Germanic character and have an obvious national nature, being native poetry. The Anglo-Saxon poetic writing is characterized by a predominantly conservative and conventional character based on Germanic oral epic tradition, with low productivity of language innovations and with a certain degree of archaic and outdated usage. There are some peculiar language features that characterize the Anglo-Saxon poetic style and remain constant throughout the whole period: the rhythm, assonance, the alliterative form of the poetry, the character of the vocabulary, the choice of words and the word-forms and also the construction of sentences [16: 20-21; 17: 51-52].

On the whole, the language used in Old English poetry writing stands in marked contrast to the language used in Old English prose works and there is an obvious contrast in the function and in the character of the prose and the poetry writing in the Anglo-Saxon speech community.

Soon after the introduction of Christianity poetic pieces began to be written both in Latin and in the vernacular. Famous poets of these early times are Aldhelm (640-709), from the southern part of Anglo-Saxon England, and the Venerable Bede (673-735) from the North. No poetic pieces in the vernacular by Aldhelm are extant but by contemporary evidence he is reported to have been skilled in music, song and the composition of vernacular poetry which he performed himself as a minstrel to attract people to religious services out of doors [14: 28]. Aldhelm, a man of noble birth, being from the West-Saxon royal family, received good education at Malmesbury and at Canterbury, and later became Bishop of Sherborne. The translation of one of his riddles, of 14 lines, *De Lorica* that he wrote in Latin, is found in West Saxon in the Exeter Book and in the Northumbrian form in the manuscript of the early IX century, which is evidently a continental transcript and which is commonly known as **The Leiden Riddle** (MS. Voss. Lat. 4. 106, the University of Leiden in the Netherlands). It is clearly evident that Aldhelm's writing activity was certain to have influenced the development of vernacular literature.

It may sound bewildering enough, but a small amount of personalized poetic works in the vernacular that were undoubtedly written in a highly individual poetic style by known poets is the earliest extant datable Anglo-Saxon religious poetry of the VII-VIII centuries, created in Anglian territory in the kingdoms of Northumbria or Mercia by two famous personalities of the Anglo-Saxon world: the first English historian of Anglo-Saxons the Venerable Bede and the poet Caedmon.

The Venerable Bede, from Northumbria, a figure of far more impressive significance, with notable literary achievements, spent almost all of his life in the monastery at Jarrow, teaching and writing. His greatest achievement was the writing of the famous **Ecclesiastical History of English People** in Latin. Bede is also commonly assumed to be the author of the earliest piece of Old English verse which has survived in its original form, in the Northumbrian dialect. The only poetic piece of five lines traditionally attributed to him, the so-called **Bede's Death-song**, composed in the pre-Viking epoch, is found in a letter describing Bede's last hours, written

by one of his pupils, Cuthbert to a fellow pupil Cuthwine. The text survives in the oldest manuscript of the IX century, St. Gall 254, located in Switzerland and in a later version, in an English tradition, in manuscripts of Symeon of Durham, *Historia Dunelmensis Ecclesiae*.

Cædmon is the only Anglo-Saxon poet of the VII century of whom there is any definite and to some extent detailed information. His only poetic work which has come down to our times is an alliterative poem of nine lines, known as **Cædmon's Hymn**. The influence of Cædmon's poetic composition is well reflected in the large number of copies of his famous poem. Cædmon's Hymn is preserved in no less than seventeen manuscripts in the Northumbrian dialect and in West Saxon. The most widely known manuscripts with Cædmon's Hymn in the original Northumbrian form are The Moore MS., which is the oldest (MS. Kk.5. 16 in Cambridge University Library, written about 737), the Leningrad MS. in possession of the St. Petersburg Public Library, written not later than the forties of the VIII century (MS. Lat. Q.v. 1.18) and MS. 279, of the early XI century, Corpus Christi College, Oxford.

Cædmon's small poem of creation with an already well-matured poetic technique shows within its nine lines many of the general characteristics of Anglo-Saxon verse such as alliteration, patterns of scansion, the use of carefully chosen epithets, poetic "parallel" synonyms, metrical organization and rhythmical types. Cædmon's Hymn with its conservative and well-established poetic techniques of Germanic pre-Christian poetical composition is a literary innovation since it presents a new theme and expresses new beliefs and values. This fusion of two cultures would become the dominant and the significant feature of all Anglo-Saxon poetry.

In the late VIII century or in the IX century another notable Anglo-Saxon poet Cynewulf, the only named poet of the period from whom there is a certain quantity of poetry, composed his religious poems. There was a difference in opinion as to his exact place of birth and the dialect of his original poetic works, but nowadays Cynewulf seems to be commonly recognized to have been a Mercian monk. Cynewulf indicated his name in runic characters towards the end of four religious narrative poems: **Elene** (in West Saxon in the Vercelli Book), **Juliana** (in West Saxon in the Exeter Book), **The Ascension** (or **Christ II**) (in West Saxon in the Exeter Book), and **The Fates of the Apostles** (in West Saxon in the Vercelli Book). Cynewulf's poetic works, originally probably composed in either a Mercian or a Northumbrian dialect, are distinguished by a graceful mastery of poetic technique, by a logical clarity of the style and demonstrate early Christian epic poetry of the bookish theological culture [13: 210; 18: 174].

The impressive importance of the poetic activity of Bede, Cædmon and Cynewulf is so great that today's approach to the problem of individual styles in Old English poetry is the recognition of the development of the Northern school of Old English Christian poetry and of the appearance of individual styles of Cædmon (Cædmonian style, to characterize poetry in the same vein) and of Cynewulf (Cynewulfian poems, to characterize poetry which shows similarity to his style).

Compared to the bulk of Old English prose texts, the amount of Old English poetry is not presented in an impressive corpus of works: there are four major collections of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts with poetry texts preserved in the four famous codices all dated back to the X-early XI centuries and written in the West Saxon dialect of the late Anglo-Saxon age. Several small religious and non-religious poetic works written in West Saxon, Northumbrian and Kentish dialects are scattered in some other manuscripts.

The first manuscript collection is called the *Codex Vercellensis* or the *Vercelli Book*, a mix of miscellaneous poetry and prose religious texts, written in the latter part of the X century and now kept under the index Codex CVII at the S. Eusebio Cathedral Library at Vercelli near Milan, Italy. The Vercelli Book contains 23 homilies (the Vercelli Homilies) in prose and poetic works following the Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse: **Andreas**, a long religious epic poem of saints' lives that has as its ultimate source an extant Greek prose narrative of the deeds of St. Andrew and St. Matthew, of 1,722 lines; **Fates of the Apostles**, a religious mnemonic poem by the poet Cynewulf; **Address of the Soul to the Body (A Soul's Address to its Body)**, a religious-didactic poem in the form of discourse; **The Dream of the Rood**, a religious poem probably originally composed in the Northumbrian dialect in the late VII century or the first half of the VII centuries, judging by some lines of the poem inscribed in runic letters on the Ruthwell Cross, and completed later; **Elene**, a long narrative poem of saints' lives by the poet Cynewulf.

The second manuscript collection is called the *Codex Exoniensis* or *Exeter Book*, an anthology of religious and non-religious poetic works of different genres, written about the end of the X century and now located at the Chapter Library of Exeter Cathedral since it was donated there in the XI century. The Exeter Book contains a series of poems entitled **Christ** (Christ I, The Ascension or Christ II by the poet Cynewulf, Christ III); **Guthlac**, a piece of hagiography in verse, a narrative poem of saints' lives; **Azarias**, a variant form of the prayer spoken by Azarias, a character from the biblical book of Daniel; **Juliana**, a long narrative poem of saints' lives by the poet Cynewulf; **The Wanderer**, a rather long elegiac poem of 115 lines, dated presumably from the X century; **The Seafarer**, an elegy of 124 lines; **Widsith**, a heroic poem of 42 lines; **Gnomic Verses**, of 205 lines; **Address of the Soul to the Body (A Soul's Address to its Body)**, a version of the poem of the Vercelli Book; ninety four **Riddles**, closely related to those written in Latin; **Wulf and Eadwacer**, a dramatic monologue, supposedly an elegiac poetic piece; **The Wife's Complaint (Lament)**, an elegy or a "wisdom poem" in the form of a dramatic

monologue; **The Husband's Message**, an elegy or a "wisdom poem"; **The Ruin**, a lyrical poem, an elegy probably originally composed in the VIII century; and several small poetic pieces, such as **Deor**, or **The Lament of Deor**, perhaps from the X century, supposedly an elegy, a lyric of 42 alliterative lines dealing with Old Germanic heroic material; **The Phoenix**, a descriptive-symbolic poem of 677 lines, the first part, lines 1-380, is a loose paraphrase of a Latin philosophical poem, lines 381-677 are an interpretation of the story of the Phoenix as a Christian allegory; **An Exile's Prayer** (or **Resignation**), an elegy; **The Riming Poem**, an elegy; **The Descent into Hell**, a religious and didactic poem, and some moral pieces.

The third manuscript collection is called the *Codex Junius* or the *Junius manuscript*, or the *Cædmon manuscript* (MS. Junius 11 in the Bodleian Library at the University of Oxford). It has been presumed on paleographical grounds that compilation of the codex began in the X century. The codex contains **Genesis**, a religious narrative poem of 2,936 lines, which consists of two originally distinct parts referred to as **Genesis A**, a close paraphrase of the first part of the Biblical book of Genesis, from the Creation, and **Genesis B**, or **The Later Genesis**, a very free treatment of the legend of the Fall of the Angels and of Man in an epic style, which appears to be a translation from an Old Saxon original of the early IX century; **Exodus**, a religious poetic paraphrase in a traditional "heroic style" on the biblical subject; **Daniel**, a short close paraphrase of the biblical book of Daniel, in a hand of about the X century, and **Christ and Satan**, a three-part religious debate poem in a rather later hand of the early XI century.

The fourth is the manuscript Cotton Vitellius A. xv, called the *Nowell Codex*, and sometimes the *Beowulf manuscript*, a mixture of poetry and prose works, written about the X century, in the British Museum, London. It contains the only existing copy of the heroic epic poem of anonymous authorship **Beowulf** of 3,182 lines long, traditionally thought to have been composed late in the VIII century, and **Judith**, a Biblical epic poem, of which only the last cantos and a fragment of the ninth have been preserved, a poetic paraphrase of 348 lines long that retells the Biblical story of Judith.

In addition to these codices Anglo-Saxon poetical writing is preserved in several other manuscripts. Various heroic poems are inserted in the manuscripts of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. The most notable of them is **The Battle of Brunanburh**, which is the earliest (year 933 / 937). There are also some shorter poems such as, for instance, **Coronation of King Edgar** (year 973), **Death of King Edgar** (year 975), an elegy on King's Edgar's death, and **Death of King Edward the Confessor** (year 1066). A fragment of 325 lines of the heroic poem **The Battle of Maldon** (year 991) is extant only in the Bodleian MS. Rawlinson B. 203, John Elphinston's transcript of the manuscript Cotton MS. Otho A. xii burnt in 1731. Two more heroic poems of an epic character have survived in fragments: **The Fight at Finnsburh**, (**Finnsburg**), a fragment of 50 lines, the original manuscript of the poem is now lost, and **Waldere**, (**Waldhere**) fragmentary texts of 31 and 32 lines that contain a version of the events of the life of Walter (Waltharius) of Aquitaine in two manuscript passages both in the Royal Library at Copenhagen, Denmark. Both heroic poems are thought to have been composed in the early VII-VIII centuries.

Other poetic forms include short verses, miscellaneous wise sayings generally called gnomes that represent an early literary type, mnemonic poems for remembering long lists of names. There are some short poems composed after the Latin bestiary tradition, such as **The Panther**, **The Whale** and **The Partridge**. Some traces of the religious poetry of the non-Christian times, largely transformed through Christian influence, can be seen in the form of different metrical **charms**. The extant corpus of Anglo-Saxon texts contains hundreds of Old English charms which are scattered around about two dozen manuscripts. Most charms have been preserved along with medical prescriptions. The two principal manuscripts are the mid-tenth-century Royal MS. 12 D. xvii, commonly referred to as **Bald's Leechbook**, also known as *Medicinale Anglicum* and the early-eleventh-century Harley MS. 585, known as the *Lacnunga* ("Remedies"), both in the British Museum (British Library), London. **Gnomic verses** that are probably an early form of poetry have come down to our times in two collections: in the manuscript of the Exeter Book and in the Cotton MS. Tiberius B. i in the British Museum, London. Some mnemonic poems are designed to help memorize lists and sequence of names, such as **The Rune Poem** in the later transcript of the XVIII century; **The Seasons for Feasting** and **The Instructions for Christians**.

In addition to these there are about one hundred Psalter Psalms, the Lord's Prayer as well as a number of hymns and proverbs. There is a **Kentish Psalm**, of 158 lines, a free paraphrase of a Latin verse, written in the late Kentish dialect with a considerable admixture of West Saxon forms, dating probably from the X century. The only manuscript that contains it is in a mid-tenth-century hand (Cotton MS. Vespasian D. vi, the British Library, London).

Generally, there are three closely interrelated and much debatable problems concerning Anglo-Saxon poetry. The first is the problem of dating, that is, the time of composition of major poetic works; the second is the type of language Anglo-Saxon poetry was composed in, and the third is the problem of provenance and the dialectal attribution of important poetic pieces of writing. The solution to these problems can evidently face several difficulties, as it is not easy, and sometimes not even possible, to definitely ascertain the time of composition of some poetry works, or to ascribe them to a certain dialect in which they were presumably originally composed in view of the fact that the vast bulk of Old English poetry has survived in later written fixation in the time when there was evident political and cultural supremacy of the West Saxon dialect. The major part of Anglo-Saxon

poetry is extant in manuscripts which probably were compiled towards the end of the X century or early in the XI century, and is written in the West Saxon dialect of the later period with earlier forms and with dialectal admixtures, mostly from Anglian dialects [6: 496].

It is traditionally assumed that a larger part of Anglo-Saxon poetry seems to have been composed much earlier than the manuscripts that have come down to our times, and the compilation of these pieces of poetic writing may show a desire on the part of the Anglo-Saxons to preserve the poetic work of the past [6: 496, 509; 8: 41; 13: 213;]. A very cautious approach to the problem of dating is to recognize a considerable span of time that covers over nearly four hundred years within which Anglo-Saxon poetic works were probably made up [1: 286; 15: 323]. Some authors admit that the problem of the dating is probably unlikely to be acceptably and satisfactorily resolved [18: 173].

There are great and still unsolved difficulties in the identification of the type of the language in which Anglo-Saxon poetry was written and of the dialect in which it was originally composed. With a wide range of text genres Anglo-Saxon poetry pieces are characterized by remarkable uniformity of the language and show the relatively homogeneous poetic language variety with a single metrical form sustained with only minor variations over the whole corpus, regardless of date and genre [6: 492]. It is commonly admitted that the four surviving codices show a similar dialectal mixture, predominantly Late West Saxon but with elements of other dialects and earlier forms [6: 496; 18: 173].

The traditional viewpoint about the provenance of Old English poetry, especially supported by scholars of older generation, is to believe that a larger part of Anglo-Saxon poetry was firstly composed in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of Northumbria and Mercia, and later, after the fall of those kingdoms under the Viking attacks, when writing became concentrated in Wessex, poetry was written down or copied in Late West Saxon. Professor Loyn writes that the predominance of West Saxon may perhaps be held to indicate scribal and social custom rather than to point to the origin of the poems [1: 289].

As a matter of fact, a peculiar and remarkable role of Anglian kingdoms (Northumbrian and Mercia) can quite easily be acknowledged on the account of the distinct and peculiar political, social and cultural situation which arose in the North in the VII – VIII centuries and resulted in the political and cultural predominance of these kingdoms. Moreover, in the pre-Viking epoch the development of culture in the North of Anglo-Saxon England was for a while much influenced by highly educated Irish missionaries with varied and wide cultural background. They brought with them great achievements in learning, education and religion [12:38-39; 14:23, 25]. Furthermore, the most significant poetic personalities of Anglo-Saxon England, Bede, Caedmon and Cynewulf, those who contributed much to the development of specific Anglo-Saxon poetic style lived and composed their poetical works in Anglian territory, in the North of Anglo-Saxon England. What follows from these arguments is the general and widespread belief that the most significant poetry pieces which might have been originally made up in Mercia or Northumbria were later transcribed, modified linguistically in the South and remained in late West Saxon copies with Anglian forms, words which were not replaced by West Saxon forms. On the basis of this assumption some modern scholars introduce the idea of the Anglian dialectal substratum of Anglo-Saxon poetry [8: 41].

The long-established and orthodox thesis of the Anglian origin of the Anglo-Saxon poetry was greeted with skepticism already by the famous Danish linguist Otto Jespersen (1860-1943): "The language of poetry seems to have been to a certain extent identical all over England, a kind of more or less artificial dialect, absorbing forms and words from the different parts of the country where poetry was composed at all, in much the same way as Homer's language had originated in Greece. This hypothesis seems to me to offer a better explanation of the facts than the current theory, according to which the bulk of Old English poetry was written at first in Northumbrian dialect and later translated into West-Saxon with some of the old Anglian forms kept inadvertently – and translated to such an extent that no trace of the originals should have been preserved" [17: 51].

One of the widely known scholars who advocated and elaborated this hypothesis seems to have been Kenneth Sisam who in the fifties of the XX century actually supported Otto Jespersen's thought by saying that there was "the probability that there was a body of verse, anonymous and independent of local interest, which was the common stock for the entertainment or instruction of the English people" and that a poet might produce poems from this common stock "that do not belong to any local dialect, but to a general Old English poetic dialect, artificial, archaic, and perhaps mixed in its vocabulary, conservative in inflexions that affect the verse-structure, and indifferent to non-structural irregularities, which were perhaps tolerated as part of the colouring of the language verse" [19: 138]. Though Kenneth Sisam's theory received some critical reception, his statement of the probability of a general Old English poetic dialect that echoes the assumption and observation made by Otto Jespersen seems to have found more support among modern scholars.

The further elaboration of the idea is to admit the existence of a special type of language peculiar of Anglo-Saxon poetry and to develop the theory of a poetical *koine* or standard language prevailing in the time when Old English poetry flourished, about the possibility of which O. Jespersen wrote, by making assumptions about the formation of a poetic literary standard with the Anglian dialectal basis [18: 173], or of a poetic *koine* that has a distinctly Mercian substratum [8: 41]. Some philologists accept "the concept of a general dialect, a dialect

associated with verse of poets and audience alike and bearing features that in prose and speech would be limited in region or period but in poetry were of general and continuing currency" [6: 497]. B Strang writes about a special variety of Old English which was used for poetry: "Poetry, however composed, was designed for oral performance, and needed to be in a variety of English free from such localisms as would limit a listening audience. ... Anglian rather than Saxon, seems to have been the medium of poetry, wherever composed" [15: 323].

There are no easy solutions to the problem of authorship same as to the problem of provenance of the most part of the Old English poetry because of its anonymous character. Several possibilities can be regarded here. Some poetic pieces might have originated in Anglian territory and were composed in the Northumbrian or Mercian dialect. Later they were transcribed into the West-Saxon dialect with Anglian admixtures by educated monks. Thus, the poetic works such as **Genesis**, **Daniel**, **Exodus** are thought to have been preserved in late and modified West Saxon versions embedded with different dialectal admixtures based on the lost Anglian originals [14: 53]. Still, the existence of Anglian forms, as such, can indicate not only to the original provenance of poetic sources or poetic pieces of writing, or to the dialect of those who transmitted or transcribed them, but also to other possibilities such as to a mixed character of the West Saxon dialect of the later period, to the influence of great personalities of Bede, Cædmon and Cynewulf who lived in Anglian territory and elaborated their own individual styles, to the custom of preservation of the long-standing and strong oral poetic tradition. O. A. Smiritskaya writes that neither the Northumbrian elements nor the archaic features of the poetic language of the written records tell anything of their provenance, as these characteristics became a conventional, qualifying indication of poetical style and are typical of all verses in the four codices [18: 173].

The second possibility can be that some poetical compositions might have been created in the existing poetic language standard by anonymous educated West Saxon monks who followed existing poetic tradition of the later period. It is rather often observed that dialectal admixtures were not a rare thing in the language of the West Saxon prose writing in the later part of the period, but a special type of the language used in poetry became distinct from the language type used in prose [20: 70-71, 75]. To what is stated above it might be added that nowadays scholars are reconciled to the idea that Wessex also produced its poets [1: 289]. This assumption can indirectly be supported by the textual evidence of the manuscripts of the four codices. The West Saxon versions in them can show not only the chronologically restricted frames within which they were written down, or transcribed, and which coincide with the dominant development of Wessex, but they probably can also be a mere indication to the area, to the place of their composition, or compilation, not only of the copying. If so, then the poetic language of these codices can bear a local regional character. Already late in the VIII century and especially in the IX-XI centuries more poetic pieces of writing in West Saxon are likely to have appeared as a result of the rising in the predominance of the West Saxon kingdom and the development of writing activity, with the appearance of a rather substantial layer of highly educated men, especially clerical people, with the increasing influence of the West Saxon literary dialect. Original creation of some new poetic works on the basis of the long-established oral poetic tradition with the usage of the fixed and elaborate poetic clichés, with archaic language features may have been highly probable in the IX – XI centuries. The same as some poetical works might have been originally composed in West Saxon on the basis of pieces of old poetry in oral circulation in Anglo-Saxon society. It may be that most of the poems in the Exeter Book, for instance, if not all, were initially composed in the West-Saxon dialect and only slightly modified when transcribed into the Exeter Book which now preserves them [14: 68].

A modern and quite an unorthodox approach to the much disputed problem of the provenance of the epic poem **Beowulf** is to recognize that "As we have it this is a relatively late and sophisticated work, perhaps written for a clerical audience. Yet it lays before us the heroic, essentially pagan world of the seventh-century aristocracy, transmitted by Christianity but not effaced" [3: 64]. This view seems to be supported by Professor Henry Loyn, who writes that elaborate poems, particularly **Beowulf** itself in final form, must have been written in the quiet of the study [1: 286].

The third possibility could be that poetic pieces were compiled, elaborated and modified by West Saxon or non-West Saxon educated monks with the idea of their preservation. Some of these poetical works could most probably have been the ones that circulated orally throughout Anglo-Saxon England and the written fixation of which was made by monks and scribes in the scriptoriums; some could have been modified versions of the lost originals remade with the elaboration of new poetic devices. Professor Dorothy Whitelock writes about the preservation of works that are without ecclesiastical interest that it was not by the scribe, but by the minstrel, whether professional or amateur, whether king's thane or humble singer in taverns, that this poetry was normally transmitted, and the bulk of it has not come down to us. Early national poems, such as **Deor** and **Widsith** must have been the creation of minstrels rather than literary men [13: 206].

The indirect evidence to a comparatively later development of the functional type of homogeneous, regular poetic language which is known from the surviving manuscripts of the X-XI centuries can possibly be seen in the fact that **The Leiden Riddle** was put from Latin into Northumbrian and West Saxon, the texts which are found in the manuscripts of the IX century (the Northumbrian version in a continental transcript) and in the Exeter Book about the end of the 10th century (the West Saxon form). Another fact of interest is that Cædmon's

Hymn, originally composed in the Northumbrian dialect in the late VII or early in the VIII centuries was later put into West Saxon and is extant not only in the comparatively contemporary Northumbrian versions of the VIII century, but also in the thirteen West Saxon copies of later centuries. It seems that the poetic language before the IX century represented the dialectal character of the area and was distinguished to a certain extent by independent functioning and there was not yet a uniform, homogeneous poetic type of language which was widely accepted in writing as a functional variety.

To summarize recent (and not recent) scholarly opinions on the provenance of Anglo-Saxon poetry it seems possible to assume that the early Anglo-Saxons kept up Germanic poetic traditions of composing epic, heroic poetic narrations as well as non-narrative verse, essentially lyrical poetry, in oral circulation. After the introduction of Christianity Anglo-Saxon poetry that manifested the fusion of two cultures, Germanic and Christian, evolved in two forms: oral, which was the direct continuation of the older Germanic poetic traditions, sometimes with new Christian elements; and written, which was an innovation based on the Christian culture, with the Germanic ethnic character. The written works were initially composed purposely on religious themes with the aim of providing copies of the basic texts of the new religion and of religious instruction, and, with the rising social needs and the development of the social functions of writing in the Anglo-Saxon speech community, written compositions appeared on non-religious themes. From the late VII and early VIII centuries the written poetry composition was evidently produced in Latin and in the vernacular, but chiefly Latin literary writing pieces of the early period have survived. The later development shows not only the preservation of originally Germanic genres and literary forms, such as heroic, epic narrative poems or charms and gnomic verses, but also the origination and the expansion of Christian religious poems of didactic and narrative nature, or Christian religious poems with lyrical, elegiac tones [18: 174].

Literary activity in the vernacular, as it is shown by the remaining written evidence is clearly characterized by the existence of two functional trends in composition, both in prose and poetry: the development of the Christian writing, that was a new dynamic system, and the preservation of the Old Germanic epic narrative poetry that was, in fact, a rudiment of the former language culture. The epic functional variant of the literary form was later stopped by the Church activity against pagan customs and old poesy [16: 24].

The basic distinctive features of Old Germanic poetic language form, such as alliterative verse, metrical rhythmical organization of the text began to characterize the best examples of Christian literary prose writing, such as homilies of Aelfric and Wulfstan, and developed into the basic features of Old English individual character of literary culture of writing.

As the factual state of things looks, in view of scanty, inconsistent and sometimes misleading evidence, the language form of the Old English poetical pieces of writing found in the extant manuscripts of the X – XI centuries can probably be perceived as a special functional variety formed on the basis of the language of older orally circulating poetry and limited in its social function, the variety which was used mostly in poetry and which reflected a mixed dialectal character of the West Saxon dialect of the later period.

On the whole, it can be said that Anglo-Saxon writing shows language variation within the functional frames of the basic text categories, prose and poetry, and covers the public domains of social, cultural and political aspects of the Anglo-Saxon society. In the later period it is perhaps possible to speak about the rise of two basic stylistic systems in the frames of the functional varieties of the literary written form of later West Saxon [16: 25]. It should also be stated that there are indications to the early development of functional varieties according to the domains of the language functioning, such as the language of jurisdiction or oratory style of the homilies [20: 76; 35-36].

It can be summed up by saying that Old English writing developed into a complicated communicative system, the evolution of the basic forms of which was motivated and stimulated by the expansion of public functions of the written form of the language as the result of the development of social, political and cultural aspects of life in the Anglo-Saxon speech community.

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Евченко В. В. Письменность и литература на древнеанглийских территориальных диалектах в Англосаксонской Англии.

В статье рассматривается процесс возникновения разных форм текстовой фиксации на английских территориальных диалектах древнего периода развития английского языка как результат развития общественных функций языка и расширения сферы функционирования его письменной формы в период формирования англосаксонского общества. В исторической перспективе прослеживается становление основных текстовых категорий и видов текстов на основе функциональной классификации письменных памятников древнего периода. Описывается формирование древнеанглийской письменной традиции в социолингвистическом контексте и указываются основные рукописные тексты-источники некоторых древнеанглийских письменных памятников.

Yevchenko V. V. Writing and Literary Activity in the Vernacular in Anglo-Saxon England.

The article focuses on the origination and functioning of different forms of textual fixation in Old English territorial dialects as a result of the evolution of social functions of the language and the expansion of public spheres in which the written form of Old English began to function in the Anglo-Saxon speech community in the period of the formation of the Anglo-Saxon society. The development of the basic text categories and text types of Old English writing is historically viewed and described on the basis of the functional classification of Old English written records. The process of the formation of the Old English literary tradition in writing is described in the sociolinguistic context and basic manuscripts that are taken as textual sources of Old English written records are given.