

***Aelfred mec heht gewyrca*n: sociolinguistic concepts in the study of Alfredian English**

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This study reconstructs the Alfredian network as consisting of twelve actors. This network is termed a *coalition*, within which a cluster of Mercian actors is further hypothesised. Historical sources and charter evidence suggest that Mercian scribes worked for West Saxon kings and may even have taken part in the establishment of a proto-chancery at the royal court. This writing office can be conjectured to have ties with the Alfredian coalition and described as a *community of practice*. The whole sociolinguistic reconstruction is supported by three case studies: *Angelcynn* ‘the English people’ and *here* ‘band, troop’ in historical-political genres, and *gretan freondlice* in epistolary genres. The diffusion of these Alfredian norms across time, place and genres is linked to the royal chancery and its distribution channels, as well as to the diachronic sustainability of linguistic practices within professional discourse communities and their archives.

1 Introduction

Sociolinguistic approaches to the study of Old English (OE) are clouded by so many problems and unknowns that to scholars working with contemporary languages, resources and methodologies they may appear to be a doomed enterprise (see Smith 1996: 17–19; Lenker 2000: 226–30; Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003: 2–6, 26–8; Bergs 2012; Nevalainen 2015a). Not only do we have to deal with a restriction to almost exclusively high registers of the upper educated strata of the Anglo-Saxon society, surviving in just above 3 million words, with dialectal variation subdued by several layers of West-Saxonisation, with heavy dependence on Latin in lexis, syntax, genre and style conventions, but also with historical bias that has favoured the survival of religious texts over secular, masculine heroic poetry over cradle songs and lamentations, privileged upper-clergy or kingly authors over commoners, and English speakers over speakers of any other vernacular. Moreover, major portions of the OE corpus are associated with highly specialised genres, with geographically and chronologically defined circles of writers and even with particular individuals. For example, according to the *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus (DOEC)* word counts, glosses constitute over 23 per cent of surviving OE. Within the prose portion of the *DOEC* (about 70 per cent of the corpus) religious writings account for 45 per cent, Alfredian translations for 18 per cent, and the works of Ælfric of Eynsham (c. 950 – c. 1010) for 23 per cent.

If a present-day British English corpus consisted of written texts produced mainly by male Oxbridge theologians, I assume that many linguists would call this corpus randomly specialised, unrepresentative or even biased. And yet, this is largely the

reality that scholars in OE linguistics have to contend with, sometimes without realising properly the restricted character of their data. Having said that, my aim is not to debunk OE as an area of linguistic study, but to suggest that even with its extremely limited resources, a point that cannot be made too strongly, there is still potential for a sociolinguistic agenda. As long as a corpus of male Oxbridge theological English is not taken to stand for British English as a whole, it may be a meaningful resource for the study of such a variety in its own right, as studies based on the *British Academic Written English* (BAWE) corpus will readily show (Nesi 2008). Moreover, historical texts can sometimes offer more direct social and personal data on ties, connections, hierarchies, and, especially, changing relationships between individual writers than corpora of present-day varieties. Thus the historical sociolinguistic analysis of speech communities and ties within them can both enlighten our understanding of language variation and change in distant historical periods and provide meaningful comparanda for the study of present-day social units and their linguistic output (Fitzmaurice 2000; Pratt & Denison 2000; Bergs 2005; Sairio 2009; Nevalainen 2015b). In the following section I present three sociolinguistic approaches which have been applied to historical texts (including OE texts): social networks and coalitions, discourse communities, and communities of practice. Critically evaluating these approaches, I aim primarily at describing one influential community in the history of the OE period – the Alfredian network – in sociolinguistic terms (section 3). My second aim is to see whether these approaches can throw some light on the vexing debate of Alfred’s authorship. My analysis is supported by case studies of three linguistic features which can be seen as originating in the Alfredian network and then disseminating both geographically and across genres: *Angelcynn* ‘English-kin, English-people’, *here* ‘band, troop’ in historical narratives and *gretan freondlice* ‘to greet in a friendly manner’ in correspondence and charters (section 4). My results are summarised in the conclusions (section 5).

2 Sociolinguistic approaches

2.1 *Social networks and coalitions*

The only attempt to apply social networks to OE data, so far as I am aware, is Ursula Lenker’s article on the ‘Winchester School’ (Lenker 2000), although it should be acknowledged that smaller (intellectual) communities of Anglo-Saxon England and their linguistic practices are often singled out and referred to by the names of their key figures: the ‘School of Theodore and Hadrian’ (Lapidge 1996), the ‘Alfredian Circle’ (Discenza & Szarmach 2014), the ‘School of Æthelwold’ (Lenker 2000: 225–6). Lenker, therefore, suggests that the concept as such is not exactly new to Anglo-Saxon studies, but its systematic application depends on the rigidity of definitions and analysis. If the term *social network* is defined broadly as ‘identifiable groups within a society’ (Preston 1987: 693) or as the aggregate of relationships

contracted by an individual with others (Milroy & Llamas 2013), its applicability to medieval data may look straightforward: as long as we can identify groups and individual actors within them, we can also use social networks as a concept. If, however, we introduce quantifiable parameters, such as frequency of interaction, degree of integration in a social network, network density, role-relations within a network, network clusters, etc. (Milroy 1987; Milroy & Milroy 1992; Milroy & Llamas 2013), we find ourselves confined to historical reconstruction and guesswork. Lenker reconstructs the ‘Winchester School’ as a monastic community with high density and multiplicity of ties – the monks know each other by direct contact being territorially attached to the same house, they share most of their activities, many are also connected by class and family ties, and all of them are expected to take part in their common goal: to serve God and to adhere to the Benedictine Rule. She concludes that the ‘Winchester School’ is a cluster within a wider network of other reformed monasteries (2000: 234).

The linguistic behaviour of this cluster is tested in a case study of ‘Winchester Vocabulary’ (2000: 231–3). It is shown that ‘Winchester usage’ is markedly selective: there are lexemes that display a strong correlation (up to 98 per cent) with the authors of the ‘Winchester School’ – Æthelwold and Ælfric – and there are lexemes that are avoided in Winchester texts. Contemporary texts from outside the cluster employ on average between 3 (*Blickling* and *Vercelli Homilies*, and the works of Wulfstan) and 18 per cent (two collections of glosses from Canterbury) of the ‘Winchester Vocabulary’, with the latter group testifying to a possible diffusion of Winchester features to a new locality. This spread can be accounted for by the relocation of monks to another monastery. Their role within the social-networks framework would be that of *innovators* with *weak ties*. Monks with central positions in the new scriptoria could qualify as *early adopters*; but, with both Canterbury texts being anonymous, it is impossible to say whether we are dealing with innovators’ or adopters’ features. Moreover, innovations could spread along with influential books, when these were borrowed, bought, donated or commissioned to be copied, in which case book migration created a special type of ties between human networks (Lenker 2000: 235). The concept of *discourse communities*, as argued below, may be relevant in this latter situation.

Summarising her analysis, Lenker defines the ‘Winchester School’ as a ‘closeknit, localised network cluster functioning as a mechanism of norm-enforcement’ (2000: 236). She elaborates that, given the dominant position of bishop Æthelwold within this network and the institutional support of the reform movement by King Edgar, a better term to describe the Winchester network may be *coalition*, i.e. ‘identifiable, apparently strategic, alliances of people, ... which are formed in order to achieve particular goals or to pursue a particular, common agenda’ (Fitzmaurice 2000: 266; 2010). Through *cultural focusing* the Winchester network engages in the ‘formation of recognisable sets of norms ... apparent in the standardisation of monastic life and the liturgy..., of manuscript art and, linguistically, of the “Winchester Vocabulary”’ (Lenker 2000: 237). These norms both emerge in and later on are maintained by the tight structures and links within the Winchester network, supported by its institutions

and hierarchies. They would originate in daily interactions, such as collective studies of glosses and glossaries or of older translations, and gradually crystallise in joint translation exercises and in new translations.

2.2 *Discourse communities and communities of practice*

Since genres are central for our understanding of language dynamics in the OE period (see Introduction; cf. Görlach 2001), it seems necessary to consider sociolinguistic approaches that take them more into account. Among these the concept of *discourse communities* is particularly relevant (see Diller 2001: 19–24). A discourse community is defined by the following criteria: (i) *a communality of interest*, a public goal; (ii) *participatory mechanisms*, which, together with (iii) *information exchange*, provide both information and feedback through meetings, correspondence, or newsletters; (iv) *genre-specific discursal expectations* (a discourse community which utilises and owns one or more genres); (v) *a dynamic towards specialized language*, controlled by the expert members; and (vi) *a critical mass of expertise* (Swales 1987: 4–6; Fitzmaurice 2010: 108–11). For example, a scholarly community like that of historical linguists is a discourse community. Its members own several academic and bureaucratic genres and have a very clear idea of what constitutes an article, presentation, grant application, lecture or project report. Importantly, discourse communities ‘are perceived as medium-neutral and unconstrained by place or time’ (Sairio 2009: 33). Indeed, historical linguists can work at different universities, live in different countries, be in the early stages of their doctoral research or act as professors or work in retirement, and still belong to the discourse community; even when they die their professional writings continue to be part of the discourse community. I think this later ‘distant’ aspect of discourse communities is quite relevant for the kind of incomplete data and poorly reconstructable social ties that we encounter in early medieval material. And yet we know that the surviving texts from, for example, the OE period were produced by a clearly delimited professional community. Reconstructing Anglo-Saxon clergy as a discourse community may look inevitable – after all, the whole OE and Anglo-Latin (AL) corpus was produced by them, they owned all the available written genres (including secular ones), and they controlled education and production of all written texts (Timofeeva 2010). And yet discourse practices were not the only practices that united them, just as historical linguists are united by a lot more than conference papers, referee statements and peer reviews. At our local levels we engage in the life of an office, department or faculty, we have joint meals, we celebrate communal feasts and public holidays; at an international level, too, we engage with colleagues in many different professional and social ways.

An approach that takes ‘a range of social practices’ into account is that of *communities of practice* (CoP) (Meyerhoff 2002: 526). In a series of recent publications I have suggested that Anglo-Saxon monastic communities can be reconstructed as communities of practice (Timofeeva 2013). This suggestion is based on three important premises adopted in the definition of a community of practice in

cognitive anthropology: such communities are characterised by mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire (Wenger 1998; Meyerhoff 2002; Eckert 2006). One would imagine that monastic life, which consists of many communal activities (studying, working, taking part in religious observances), could easily foster a feeling of mutual engagement, establish collaborative relationships and local monastic norms. The monastery, its locality, its rule all create a shared understanding of the joint enterprise that binds the monks (or nuns) together. As they engage in joint activities, maintaining old and inventing new ones, members of monastic communities also produce a shared repertoire of practices (Timofeeva 2013, 2016a, 2016b). These practices also include linguistic norms.

Even though monasteries seem to be clearly defined and localisable units, one could also see them and their members as taking part in a wider community of practice, one that involves larger administrative units (sees or kingdoms) or larger ideological units (monasteries that adhere to the Rule of St Benedict), with church synods and councils, and the mobility of clergy promoting the exchange of ideas and practices between monasteries, between provinces, and ultimately even between countries. To an extent one could argue that the church of Anglo-Saxon England as a whole is a community of practice with mutual engagement, joint enterprise and a shared repertoire of practices. Taking this approach, Timofeeva (2013 and in press) shows how Anglo-Saxon lexical and syntactic practices of constructing the notions of 'Latinity' and 'Romanity', and 'Greek' and 'the Greek language' are shaped by the common Christian ideas about the role of Romans and Greeks in history and the role of the Latin and Greek languages in Christian schooling and written culture more generally. These common ideas are first adopted by the Anglo-Latin writers of the late seventh century and, as the vernacular tradition develops in the late ninth century, they are re-coded in OE creating almost identical meanings and connotations. I claim that several cultural movements – the school of Theodore and Hadrian, the Alfredian revival, and the Benedictine movement – can also be reconstructed as communities of practice (2013). The advantage of the CoP approach in the description of these communities is that it allows us to take their agenda into account. Indeed an educational programme or a religious reform movement can be envisaged as a joint enterprise that recruits the best among the literati, brings them together and encourages them to collaborate with each other for the shared goal. The practices that they adopt and cherish both confirm their membership and distinguish the CoP as a social unit (Eckert 2006: 683–5).

As Lenker (2000) has observed, it is impossible to separate diffusion of features due to weak ties through the relocation of actors from diffusion of features due to the circulation of manuscripts. Similarly, in his study of communities involved in grammar writing in eighteenth-century Britain, Richard Watts remarks that on the one hand they develop 'astounding structural and conceptual similarities across time, space and between authors' (2008: 44), yet on the other hand they demonstrate no mutual engagement with fellow grammar writers (2008: 51). Whatever similarities of practices they have are conditioned by the circulation of grammar books, by publishers' practices of copyright and book marketing, by classroom reproduction

of grammar rules, but not by face-to-face discussion and collaboration. Quite the contrary, grammar writers competed against each other for a share of the market. Thus ‘the grammarians had a common, but not a shared enterprise, ... they developed a common but not a shared repertoire of discursive moves, and ... they were commonly engaged rather than mutually engaged in grammar writing’ (Watts 2008: 54) – in other words, they constituted a discourse community.

These characteristics can to an extent be applied to Anglo-Saxon religious communities. Although market competition is not a concern here, reproduction of common language practices over time can be explained both by mutual engagement by fellow scribes working within the same scriptorium and by common engagement in similar or adjacent practices by scribes working in different scriptoria in terms of both geographical location and time. Below I will argue that a few practices of professional communities can remain quite stable over a period of about 200 years (see [section 4](#)). However, it would be wrong to assume that they are necessarily preserved by several generations of professionals working within the same scribal office. Rather these norms can be picked up from monastic and royal archives by potentially any scribe who has access to relevant documents regardless of his provenance, affiliation and degree of bureaucratic training. Thus perhaps what has to be distinguished is synchronic communities of practice that have all the ‘mutual’ characteristics plus the face-to-face interaction factor and conscious involvement in the joint enterprise, and diachronic discourse communities that can maintain ‘common’ characteristics and norms without the requirement of physical and social proximity to their colleagues and sometimes with the impossibility thereof. Both approaches differ from social networks in that discourse communities and CoPs bring people together (literally or metaphorically) for a purpose, a common/shared goal that is known to their members, while social networks exist without them. ‘[M]embership in a social network may be involuntary, characterised by chance or circumstance’ (Sairio 2009: 33; cf. Meyerhoff 2002: 531). To an extent social networks may just happen to their actors, when they are born into a certain family or brought up in a certain neighbourhood; access to the other two types of communities is more restricted and regulated. In the following section I show how social network, discourse community and CoP approaches can be harmonised to achieve a better understanding of the influence of the Alfredian circle and its successors in the history of OE.

3 Towards a definition of the Alfredian network in sociolinguistic terms

In this section I apply the sociolinguistic concepts discussed so far to the Alfredian network. I first rehearse a list of its members based on the information in the contemporary late-ninth-century sources and then establish relations and hierarchies among them. After taking into account the individual people, I also address their links to the anonymous body of clerks working for King Alfred in an office roughly equivalent to the later chancery. In the final step I discuss these two communities (court and proto-chancery) and draw tentative conclusions as to their sociolinguistics

roles, with an eye to how these can contribute to our understanding of whether King Alfred authored, co-authored, supervised, commissioned or inspired the *Pastoral Care* and other texts associated with his canon (Bately 2003, 2009; Godden 2004, 2007; Discenza & Szarmach 2014).

3.1 Individual actors

Alfred, famously, names four of his teachers-advisers in the preface to the *Pastoral Care* (CPLetWærf 58), stating that he has learned (the interpretation of) the text (Gregory the Great's *Regula pastoralis*) from

1. Archbishop Plegmund (d. 914), of Canterbury;
2. Bishop Asser (d. 909), of St David's, Wales;
3. Mass-priest Grimbald (d. 901), of St Bertin, Flanders;
4. Mass-priest John (fl. c. 885–904), the Old Saxon.

As is suggested by the opening lines of the surviving manuscripts with the preface, mentioning the name of the recipient of an individual copy, and a note to the same effect formerly to be found in one of the manuscripts of the *Pastoral Care*, the translation was circulated to at least five people (Keynes & Lapidge 1983: 293–4; Lapidge 2004; Schreiber 2014: 175–8):

5. Werferth (d. 907x915), bishop of Worcester;
6. Heahstan, bishop of London (867x896–7);
7. Wulfsgie, bishop of Sherborne (879x889–890x900);
8. Swithulf, bishop of Rochester (868x880–894x897);
1. Plegmund, archbishop of Canterbury (already mentioned in the preface).

It is conceivable that five or more manuscripts were prepared and distributed to the remaining bishops and other important monastic centres (Keynes & Lapidge 1983: 294). Further, Asser's account of the educational project in the *Life of King Alfred* (ch. 77–8) gives the list of advisers as largely overlapping with that in the *Pastoral Care* (indicated by numbers 1, 3, 4, and 5) and also adding two more names (9 and 10):

1. Plegmund;
3. Grimbald;
4. John;
5. Werferth, identifying him as the translator of Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*;
9. Æthelstan, priest and chaplain, probably bishop of Ramsbury from c. 909;
10. Werwulf, priest and chaplain, a friend and associate of Werferth (according to charter S 1279; Keynes & Lapidge 1983: 259, fn. 166).

Asser claims that all of them had a reputation as scholars and intellectuals, describing Plegmund, Werferth, Æthelstan and Werwulf as *luminaria* 'luminaries' (ch. 77) and Grimbald and John as *magistros* 'instructors' (ch. 78). Since Wulfsgie, Heahstan and Swithulf (and possibly other bishops) are mentioned only as recipients of the *Pastoral*

Care, they are probably only marginally relevant to the immediate Alfredian network, attesting however to the intention to circulate the core texts of the educational reform widely (Keynes & Lapidge 1983; Schreiber 2014; Irvine 2014a). The remaining seven names – Plegmund, Asser, Grimbald, John, Werferth, Æthelstan, and Werwulf – pointed out in the preface to the *Pastoral Care* and by Asser explicitly as advisers and associates emerge as more relevant. They come from a variety of places, where education and scholarship were in a better state than in Wessex. As Asser testifies, Werferth, Plegmund, Æthelstan and Werwulf are from Mercia, Asser himself is from Wales, Grimbald and John come from Gaul (*Galliam*), although their home places are identified as Flanders and Saxony, respectively. What is conspicuous is that not one of the actors, except Alfred himself, is a West Saxon (I return to this point below). Moreover whether Grimbald's vernacular was Germanic or Romance is not exactly certain (Pfaff 2004). Thus in the centre of this community we have King Alfred connected in multiple ways to seven scholars, three of them being foreigners and four Mercians. Within the Mercian group friendship and monastic-community ties have been suggested (Keynes 1998: 28–9), so we might be dealing with a cluster of closer ties within a bigger network of the Alfredian court. Socially all the advisers bear asymmetrical ties (in terms of social rank and economic resources) to King Alfred, who can summon them from other places, pay compensation for their services and promote them to key positions (e.g. the appointment of Plegmund as Archbishop of Canterbury in 890). He is probably also older than his associates as most of them survive him by 5–15 years. Given the various ecclesiastical obligations the actors of the Alfredian network had to perform both in Winchester and in their respective sees and monasteries, with frequent and prolonged absences (e.g. Asser was expected to be in Winchester only six months of the year (*Life of Alfred*, ch. 79)), it seems difficult to imagine that the frequency of interaction within the network was stable. Even though its members continued to stay in touch through correspondence and messengers, periods of intensive interaction at the court (when the translations were selected, discussed or even produced?) probably alternated with periods of reduced interaction. Before any further conclusions are drawn, it is necessary to consider one more important actor, the proto-chancery.

3.2 *Proto-chancery as actor*

Although traditional school education, and hence literacy, in Anglo-Saxon England was only available in monastic schools, Anglo-Saxon written documents were not necessarily produced by monastic scribes alone; at least not all the genres were produced by them. Those whose circulation could have emanated from the royal quarters are charters¹ (Snook 2015) and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (*ASC*; Brooks 2010), with the same hands sometimes being responsible for both (Ker 1957: lix). The origins of the royal chancery are traced to Winchester and the court of King

¹ The hypothesis about the royal chancery or scriptorium is over a century old. For a brief survey of the debate, see Keynes (1980: 14–19).

Alfred, with its Carolingian precursor and likely model being based on similar institutions employed by the Merovingian kings and Roman emperors (Keynes 1980: 30–1). Charter material shows that the issue of these documents becomes increasingly centralised, especially in the first half of the tenth century. In the Alfredian period Winchester charters display strong influence of the Mercian diplomatic tradition, but towards the 930s new norms develop that reflect both their Mercian origins and West Saxon adaptation. During the reigns of Edward the Elder (899–924) and Æthelstan (924–39) stylistically flamboyant charters become potent symbolic manifestations of the effectiveness of the West Saxon political and administrative machine that controls both landed property and the legal means of its regulation (Snook 2015: 5–7, 30–3, 41–6). Although it is impossible to say where royal scribes came from, with the Mercian connection being obvious only for the first generations, where they were trained, whether or not they were obliged to stay at the chancery for their entire career, etc., the existence of a professional bureaucratic community employed more or less permanently by the West Saxon kings is very important for our understanding of the production and circulation of not only functional but also of literary texts (see Dumville 1994: 186–7). In particular, common royal-chancery provenance has been suggested for the *ASC* (Brooks 2010). This central office was responsible both for the annals of the Common Stock, i.e. material in all the surviving manuscripts of the *ASC* as far as c. 892, and, significantly, for the subsequent continuations. Nicholas Brooks argues that the *ASC* was written centrally in Winchester and disseminated in instalments to other important localities, in an attempt to control public opinion of prominent social leaders across the West Saxon dependencies (Brooks 2010: 49–62; Timofeeva 2016a, 2016b).

The proto-chancery offers itself most readily for the CoP analysis, with mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared norms being easily envisaged and reconstructed for a small localisable professional community employed to carry out a definitive scope of tasks. Founded under the auspices of Alfredian reforms to provide copies of charters and the *ASC* for circulation, it may well also have been responsible for copying other Alfredian texts. With the Mercian influence being strong in Latin charter material, it seems reasonable to assume that the four Mercian advisers of King Alfred (Plegmund, Werferth, Æthelstan and Werwulf) were also somehow involved in the organisation and work of the proto-chancery. Further, if the royal office was capable of producing eloquent and sophisticated Latin documents (Snook 2015), its scribes may also have been employed to perform other literary tasks such as OE translations. To what extent their influence can be felt in surviving texts is demonstrated in the case studies in section 4.

3.3 Discussion of the Alfredian network and its ties

In this section I highlight what insights can be gained from the application of social networks, CoP and discourse communities for a more informed vision of the Alfredian network. Section 3.1 described it as a social network with King Alfred as its central

figure. Socially superior to other actors, he promotes his ‘own’ people to key positions and contracts ties with foreign advisers. From the educated discussions within this network spring the translations of the *Pastoral Care*, *Boethius*, Augustine’s *Soliloquies*, and *Prose Psalms*, and, possibly, *Orosius*, Gregory’s *Dialogues*, *OE Martyrology* and Bald’s *Leechbook* (see Discenza & Szarmach 2014). The assumption that we are dealing with a network of actors and a network of texts allows us to reunite the social structure of this community with the problem of individual authorship, for ultimately it does not matter who wrote what and whether Alfred translated anything or offered his patronage to a group of scholars who decided to sanction their own work with his name. Importantly, copying provisions were made to circulate some ‘authorised’ texts to other cultural centres (Canterbury, London, Rochester, Sherborne, Worcester and maybe others), thus extending the ties beyond the immediate group named in the prefatory letter to the *Pastoral Care*. Similar provisions were made for the distribution of the *ASC* and other official texts. With the social ties between the key members being contracted for a particular goal (political consolidation and religious revival) and for a limited period of time (Fitzmaurice 2000, 2010), it emerges that the most fitting term to define the Alfredian network is *coalition*. The first two case studies, in section 4.1, show that some of their linguistic norms (politically important terminology) may be a product of *cultural focusing*, in that politically motivated terms are selected, invested with partly new meanings and promoted in the texts circulated by the coalition.

To return to the problem of the first language of the coalition members, as has been remarked, only Alfred was a speaker of the West Saxon variety, while other actors spoke Welsh, Mercian and continental Germanic varieties. Is it conceivable that such a heterogeneous group would produce a corpus of idiomatic texts in West Saxon? In his *Life of King Alfred*, Asser describes the Mercians Æthelstan and Werwulf as *sacerdotes et capellanos* ‘priests and chaplains’ (ch. 77). Stevenson suggests that the second term may be applied to clerks of the royal chapel² (1959 [1904]: 305–6; cf. Barrow 2015: 241–5), which would make the connection between the Alfredian network and proto-chancery straightforward, with Æthelstan and Werwulf most likely also being responsible for the introduction of Mercian norms into the chancery Latin. It follows that Alfred’s scholarly advisers may have coordinated their work with the chancery scribes: Æthelstan and Werwulf and their West Saxon colleagues. The West Saxon variety that emerged from this collaboration must have undergone a degree of accommodation, resulting in a mixed and, possibly, somewhat levelled language that was adopted as a new norm (Schreiber 2014).

If the main advisers and Alfred constituted a close-knit network, Æthelstan and Werwulf might have provided the weak ties to a wider scribal community, necessary for the diffusion of Alfredian norms. The proto-chancery itself is probably best described as a CoP. Charged with the production and copying of legal and literary texts in Latin and OE, its members developed a distinct professional identity, a sense of a shared

² Although this use is rare before the mid eleventh century (see *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* (DMLBS), s.v. *capellanus*).

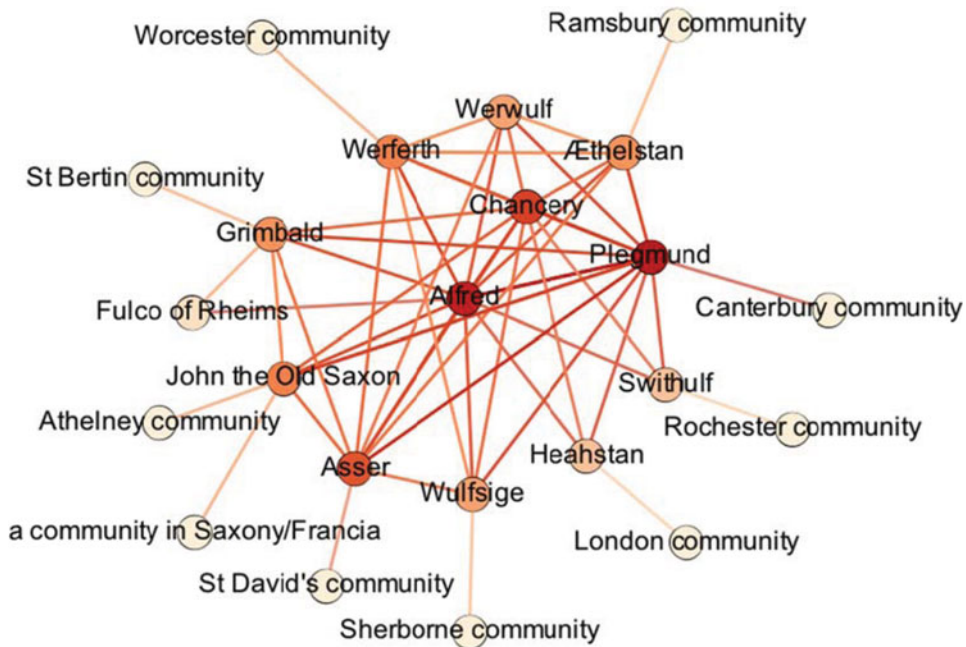


Figure 1. (Colour online) Alfredian network and its actors

enterprise and mutual engagement in the tasks and duties entrusted to them. Their shared repertoire must have included many practices related to their professional duties, and codicology may be able to reconstruct some of them (Dumville 1994). Other language-related practices may be deduced from the textual and historical context, e.g. writing to dictation (Russell 2011) or copying English boundary closes into a Latin charter from a locally produced draft (Schendl 2011). If taken synchronically, perhaps every writing office would qualify as a CoP on similar grounds. In the diachronic perspective, however, discourse communities is a more appropriate term. Even though some practices may survive generations upon generations of scribes (as the third case study, in section 4.2, shows), and even though they may continue to exhibit mutual engagement at every subsequent stage, over time the individual CoPs would not have the same loyalties (Brooks 2010) and their vision of the joint enterprise would depend on political and cultural developments of the respective period.

Figure 1 (generated by Gephi software) summarises this discussion by giving a visual representation of the Alfredian network. The darker shades indicate the prominence of individual actors, as reconstructed from the sources. The pale circles in the periphery of the figure mark monastic and episcopal communities, to which the actors belonged or which they headed, pointing to potential paths of contact with other networks. I have grouped the Mercian cluster and the proto-chancery a bit apart from the rest of the network to mark their prominence in the diffusion of Alfredian

norms. Alfred's decisive social role in the network merits central position in spite of the doubts about his authorship (Godden 2004, 2007). Its best epitome is the inscription on Alfred's Jewel, used in the title of this article: *AELFRED MEC HEHT GEWYRCAN* 'Alfred ordered me made'. Would we have the jewel without that order?

4 Case studies

This section explores three linguistic norms that arguably originate within the Alfredian network. They were chosen to illustrate two things: political lexical norms (*Angelcynn* and *here*) selected by the members of the court coalition and bureaucratic lexical norms (*gretan freondlice*) adopted by the scribal CoP at the proto-chancery. Thus the case studies relate to two units within the Alfredian network and show how sociolinguistic approaches can illuminate our understanding of the diffusion of features both within and beyond this network. The data for the case studies come from the *DOEC*, *DOE* and *Electronic Sawyer*.

4.1 *Angelcynn* and *here* in historical narratives

The Alfredian network produced most of the surviving early OE prose (see Introduction). A lot of their efforts went into translations of popular medieval classics from Latin, with major non-translated works including the compilation of the *Laws of Alfred* and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Keynes & Lapidge 1983: 39–41; Irvine 2014b; Richards 2014). In this section I concentrate on historical narratives of the Alfredian period, because this is where most of the data on *Angelcynn* and *here* come from; I also allude to legal texts (laws and charters) both contemporary with Alfred and later, and discuss several more occurrences of the two terms in Ælfric's works, with my aim being to trace their spread and development across time and genres, testing the sustainability of Alfredian norms within discourse communities that continued to be associated with Winchester and the proto-chancery.

It has been observed that historical and legal texts of any period inevitably have a political agenda (Wodak *et al.* 2009). Together with a canon of vernacular literature they are often seen as a prerequisite of national self-identification and a statement of community's place in political history and geography (Anderson 1991 [1983]; Wodak *et al.* 2009). It is not surprising that a period of great political turmoil and direct military threat to the survival of an 'English' identity and polity, such as the Viking age in England, triggered historical and legal writing on a so far unseen scale. It can be envisaged as an act of political and cultural identity, an attempt to secure a legitimate place in history and also to account for the contemporary situation (Timofeeva 2016a, 2016b). Common loyalties and enemies also had to be clearly defined to pronounce the boundaries of the ingroup and its position vis-à-vis outgroups (most importantly the Scandinavian outgroup). In this situation, having distinct terminology for the ingroup and outgroup in a community's rhetorical arsenal is always important (Duszak 2002). I will argue that the Alfredian network did in fact develop the lexical norms of

their political-historical discourse so as to promote a notion of commonality (both historical and contemporary) among subjects under West Saxon rule and separate them from the otherness of the Scandinavians. The terms that I discuss are *Angelcynn* ‘English-kin, English-people’ (to refer to the ingroup) and *here* ‘band, troop’ (outgroup).

4.1.1 *Angelcynn*

Simon Keynes observes that *Angelcynn*, literally ‘Angle-kin, the race of the Angles’, ‘was one of the buzz words of King Alfred’s court’ (1998: 25). First attested in a Worcester charter of 855,³ in the 880s it came ‘to signify the amalgamation of two political entities, namely the “Anglian” kingdom of Mercia ... and the “Saxon” kingdom of Wessex and its eastern extensions’ (ibid.; cf. Foot 1996: 29, n. 25; Rowley 2011: 11; Irvine 2014b: 344). The *Dictionary of Old English (DOE)* defines *Angelcynn* primarily as ‘the English race, English people, England’,⁴ recording some 225 occurrences of the lexeme in its corpus, mainly in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (ASC)* and the *Old English Bede (Bede)* (s.v., 1; cf. Molyneaux 2015: 201–6). My analysis briefly surveys these two prominent sources.

One of the examples used in the *DOE* to illustrate the generalised sense ‘the English people’ (1), which I reproduce here with its OE punctuation and emphasis, refers to one of the momentous events in Anglo-Saxon history, recording the 886 occupation of London and subsequent submission to King Alfred of ‘all the English’:

- (1) ChronA 886.2: þy ilcan geare gesette Ælfred cyning Lundenburg, & him all **angelcyn** to cirde, þæt buton deniscra monna hæftniede was (E *angelcyn*, C 887.4, F *angelcynn*, D *angelcyn*).
 ‘The same year King Alfred occupied London fort, and all the English-kin turned to him, except those captured by Danish men’

Sarah Foot emphasises that the immediate implication of the new political term *Angelcynn* was to reflect the hegemony of Wessex over Mercia and Kent, which is also seen in Alfred’s adoption of the title *rex Angul-Saxonum* in charters (in contrast to the previously common *rex Saxonum*) (Foot 1996: 27–8). Indeed, example (1) demonstrates that the inclusion in *Angelcynn* is a matter of loyalty to King Alfred.⁵ Interestingly, though, the vernacular term that is chosen to convey the idea of West Saxon hegemony has explicit Anglian connotations. Keynes proposes two possible

³ Charter S 207 of Burgred of Mercia records a grant of the minster at Blockley to the church of Worcester, ‘freeing it from various obligations including that of lodging all mounted men of the English race (& *ealra angelcynnnes monna*) and foreigners’ (Foot 1996: 29, n. 25).

⁴ Exceptionally (the *DOE* quotes only three examples, s.v., 1e and 2), *Angelcynn* can refer to the divisions among the Germanic peoples of the settlement and insular periods (e.g. ChronA 597.1).

⁵ Having been controlled by the Mercians and Vikings intermittently over the 870–880s, London is now occupied by Alfred and his men, and the locals formally affirm their allegiance (Keynes 1998: 24–5; Wormald 1999). The West Saxons take over and all-English claims are sealed by the entrustment of London to the control of Ealdorman Æthelred, ruler of the Mercians (d. 911), and his marriage to Alfred’s daughter Æthelflæd (d. 918), marking ‘the emergence ... of a new political order’ (Keynes 1998: 35).

reasons for this: the authority of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* and his generic use of *gens Anglorum* (cf. Molyneaux 2015: 203), and the influence of the 'Mercian' or Anglian culture in Wessex in general and at King Alfred's court in particular (1998: 25, n. 112). Both factors may explain a high number of Mercian lexical items in the vernacular version of the *Historia*, the *OE Bede* (Rowley 2011: ch. 2). Over 20 per cent of all attested mentions of *Angelcynn* come from this text, typically rendering *gens Anglorum*⁶ of its Latin original:

- (2) Bede 1 16.74.21: all þas þing þære neowan ðeode **ongolcynnes** in Godes geleafan gedafenað cuð habban (CaO *ongelcynnes*, B *angelcynnes*; cf. BEDA. Hist.eccl. 1.27, 88 *quae omnia rudi Anglorum genti oportet habere conperta*).
'all the things that are necessary to be known to the race of the English-kin, (still) new in the faith of God'

In this particular instance *Anglorum genti* is rendered by a tautological phrase *ðeode ongolcynnes* 'the race of the English-kin'. *þeod*, *folc*, *mægðe* and even *cynn*, all frequently collocate with the genitive form *ongolcynnes* in *Bede*, which contrasts markedly with other contemporary texts where *Angelcynn* can stand on its own (Rowley 2011: 67–8). What seems to be even more important is the presence of two other *Angel-* compounds in *Bede*: *Angelþeod* and *Angelfolc*. Although the frequencies of *Angelcynn* and *Angelþeod* (with spelling variants) in *Bede* are roughly the same (48 and 54 respectively), it is *Angelþeod* (without collocates) that stands most often for *gens Anglorum* (Rowley 2011: 68). Given that *Angelþeod* occurs only once outside *Bede* (in a spurious charter S 914), its use appears to be author-specific.⁷ The second compound, whose use is also restricted to *Bede*, is *Angelfolc*. This term occurs only two times in the entire text, both of them rendering *populus Anglorum* of the source. Sharon Rowley has observed that these two terms are not the only discrepancies between *Bede* and Alfredian texts. The translator of *Bede* also prefers *Breotone* 'Britain' (95 occurrences) to *Engla land* 'England, the land of the English' (2 occurrences) (Rowley 2011: 67). She concludes that together with the lack of any contemporary documentary evidence that would connect the *Bede* to Alfred (prefaces or mention in Asser's *Life of King Alfred*), these terminological idiosyncrasies mark its text as independent of the Alfredian network (Rowley 2011: 68–70).

In the *ASC Angelcynn* is used independently of any Latin source (exx. 1, 3–4). Example (3) suggests that *Angelcynn* as a political entity may reach farther back in history than the times of King Alfred, to the period of the Anglo-Saxon settlement:

⁶ Bede's implication was a religious rather than a political one – 'the unity of a Christian [English] people in the eyes of God' (Keynes 1998: 25).

⁷ Interestingly though, *Angelþeod* has a single attestation in the Middle English period, in the *Ormulum*: & tatt daz3 iss New Zeress daz3 / Mang Enngleþeode nemnedd (4230–1) 'and that day is called New Year's day among the English people'. I am grateful to Anne Gardner for this observation. Orm also uses exactly the same spelling *enngleþeod* for the 'host of angels, angel-folk', 13 occurrences.

- (3) ChronE 979.4: ne wearð **angelcynne** nan wærsa dæd gedon þonne þeos wæs syððon hi ærest Brytonland gesohton (ref. to the murder of Edward; DF *angelcynne*).
 ‘a more horrible crime than this one had never been committed among the English-kin, since the time they had first sought Britain’

Even at that early stage the English had a common destiny, a common role to play in their conquest of the land from the Britons, emphasised nicely by the juxtaposition of the terms *Angelcynn* and *Brytonland* in (3).

After the time of Alfred, the surviving copies of the *ASC* continue to use *Angelcynn* well into the eleventh century, with its application being extended to account for the unification of England under West Saxon rule (Foot 1996: 46–8). The last annal to employ this term is found in the Peterborough version of the *ASC* for the year 1096 (thirty years after the Norman Conquest):

- (4) Dis wæs swiðe hefigtime gear geond eall **Angelcyn**, ægðer ge þurh mænigfealde gylda & eac þurh swiðe hefigtymne hunger þe þisne eard þæs geares swiðe gedrehte. (ChronE 1096.23)
 ‘This was a very heavy-timed year for everyone among the English-people, both through the manifold tributes, and also through the very heavy-timed hunger that severely oppressed this earth in the course of the year.’

Moreover, William the Conqueror uses the same term to address his English subjects in one of the statutes issued soon after the Conquest, known as *Willelmes cyninges asetnysse* (Bates 1998: 445–7):

- (5) Wilhelm cyng gret ealle þa þe ðys gewrit to cymð ofer eall Englaland freondlice & beot & eac cyð eallum mannum ofer eall **Angelcynn** to healdenne, þæt is. (LawWILad 2)
 ‘King William greets all those throughout England to whom this writ comes in a friendly manner, and enjoins and instructs everyone among the English-people to observe the following.’

Thus the generic reference to ‘all the English’ continues to be a prominent feature of the political discourse long past King Alfred’s reign. The centrality of *Angelcynn* as a term for ‘the English’ is also evident in other key texts of the Alfredian network: the *Laws of Alfred* (LawAfEl 49.7–9) (Richards 1997: 48–9), the prefatory letter to the *Pastoral Care* (7 occurrences) (cf. Foot 1996: 30–6), and the *Treaty of Wedmore* (LawAGu 1) (Richards 1997: 49; Timofeeva 2016a, 2016b). But the two genres that attest to the sustainability of this lexical use diachronically are historical writings and laws.

Outside these texts, *Angelcynn* is also employed in religious writings (23 occurrences, with 16 featuring in Ælfric’s texts) and in charters (5 occurrences). One charter in particular, S 1508 from Christ Church, Canterbury (ex. 7), written between 871 and 899, may in fact attest to the spread of the term *Angelcynn* from Winchester to Canterbury, perhaps via royal chancery and scribes in Archbishop Plegmund’s service, unless indeed the term had been used in charters on a wider basis than surviving evidence would suggest.

- (6) Ond sio ðis lond gewriten & unbefliten efter Eadredes dege in Aelfredes rehtmeodrencynn ða hwile þe fulwihte sio on **Angelcynnes** ealonde. (Ch 1508 (HarmD 10) 44)
 ‘And let this (piece of) land be ascribed and without dispute after Eadred’s day to (ealdorman) Ælfred’s direct maternal kin, as long as there be baptism on the English people’s island.’

In Ælfric *Angelcynn* comes up in his homily on St Gregory and the mission of St Augustine (e.g. 7 occurrences in ÆCHom II, 9) and in lives of English saints (e.g. 4 occurrences in the lives of St Swithun and St Edmund). This, on the one hand, may suggest that Ælfric was familiar with Alfredian lexical norms – as a student of the Winchester School he would have had access to all of its archives (Hill 2009: 44–51). MS A of the *ASC* was present at Winchester during Ælfric’s time there. His debt to other Alfredian writings is explored by Malcolm Godden, who concludes that Ælfric ‘knew at least four of the Alfredian works and seems to have been so familiar with them that he could recall particular sentences and passages and even quote them unconsciously. Possibly these were texts on which Ælfric had been trained in his youth’ (Godden 1978: 104–5; cf. Huppé 1978).⁸ On the other hand, it also demonstrates that the term was spreading from political genres to religious ones, although some political, or national, agenda is probably unavoidable even in religious texts, if they deal with Christianisation of English kingdoms or with English saints and martyrs.⁹

On the whole it appears that *Angelcynn* as a lexical norm for ‘the English people’ was enforced among the Alfredian network, in particular among the coalition formed around the Mercian cluster. This term served the political agenda of their period but later on could also be adjusted to new historical circumstances to include greater territories and more peoples; e.g. when Cnut addressed his English subjects in 1018 (in a text that is traditionally referred to as his proclamation), *Angelcynn* must also have included ‘not only the East Anglians and Northumbrians but men of Danish parentage, born or settled in England’ (Foot 1996: 47). Its attestation in a Canterbury charter (S 1508) may suggest that the norm spread outside Wessex together with the manuscripts of the *ASC* and other Alfredian texts, possibly along with several scribes who had relocated to new monastic communities and scriptoria.¹⁰ This lexical norm proved to be rather robust diachronically, surviving the Norman Conquest into the

⁸ The four works are translations of Gregory’s *Dialogues* and *Pastoral Care*, Boethius’ *Consolatio*, and Bede’s *Historia* (which Ælfric also attributes to Alfred). In his recent reassessment of Ælfric’s use of Alfredian works, Godden adds the *ASC* to the list, suggesting that ‘[t]here is a clear debt to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle in Ælfric’s *Grammar*’ (2009: 141).

⁹ Foot observes that Ælfric ‘showed signs of national pride’ when he wrote about the saints from among the English nation.

¹⁰ The influence of the *Angelcynn* term outside Wessex may also be supported by the occurrence of the term *Angligena* ‘English-kin’ in Latin charters between 941 and 1018 (14 instances mostly in charters preserved in Abingdon and Shaftesbury), as searches in the *Electronic Sawyer* database reveal. Of these, 8 come up in collocations *rex Angligenarum* ‘the king of the English nation’. With the conventional title being *rex Anglorum* (cf. over 250 occurrences in *Electronic Sawyer*), it appears that the use of *Angligena* may be triggered by first-language transfer based on the *Angelcynn* model.

late OE period. It was probably forgotten only in the twelfth century when English as a language of political and legal documents was largely abandoned in favour of Latin (Kibbee 1991: 5–8), in which domain, again, English scribes could still offer their services and did not have to be replaced all at once. Whatever their employment may have been, the norm of using *Angelcynn* to designate ‘the English people’ was abandoned at some point in the early Middle English period, the *Middle English Dictionary* (*MED*) recording no attestations of the term.

4.1.2 *here*

The word *here* ‘band, troop’, too, is not an Alfredian coinage as such, as the availability of Old Germanic cognates (of both *here* and such derivatives as *heretoga* ‘the leader of an army, herzog’) and attestations in the OE poetry would suggest (*OED*; *DOEC*); rather it is appropriated by the Alfredian network and invested with new political meanings (Timofeeva 2016a, 2016b). We can trace the first Alfredian use back to several texts: the *Laws of Ine* (selected and copied at the court of Alfred), the earlier portions of the *ASC*, and the *Treaty of Wedmore*. The *Laws of Ine* define *here* as consisting of more than thirty-five thieves. Those guilty of taking part in a *here* were subject to wergeld redemption or slavery (§§13–15), which marks the crime as one of the heaviest offences (Wormald 2014: 127 and n. 58). In the *ASC* (especially in pre-1016 annals), *here* refers to Scandinavian war-bands, West Saxon troops and their allies being distinguished from them by the term *fyrð* ‘army; expedition’.

- (7) Her hiene bestel se **here** into Werham Wesseaxna **fierde**, & wip pone **here** se cyning friþ nam ... (ChronA 876.1)
 ‘This year the *here* stole away from the West Saxon *fyrð* into Wareham. And the king (afterwards) made peace with the *here*’

This example illustrates two discourse strategies that are quite consistent in the descriptions of military encounters with the Vikings, particularly in the annals of the Common Stock: the first is to employ *here* instead of any ethnic or religious label to designate the outgroup (Timofeeva 2016a), and the second is to use circumlocutions and euphemisms to talk about the defeat of the ingroup, e.g. *friþ nam* ‘took peace’ means that King Alfred lost the battle to the Vikings and had to pay them a tribute (Konshuh 2015; Timofeeva 2016a). Given the strong association between the legal texts and the *ASC* – the *Laws of Ine* are appended to the *Laws of Alfred* and preserved in the same manuscript as the earliest surviving copy of the *ASC*, MS A – the choice of a term with criminal connotations and its consistent application to the Scandinavian outgroup appears to be a deliberate strategy (Timofeeva 2016a, 2016b).

Another legal text (8), the *Treaty of Wedmore*, stipulated that the border between the lands controlled by Alfred and the Danish leader Guthrum might not be passed without special permission:

- (8) & ealle we cwædon on <ða> dæge ðe mon ða aðas swor, þæt ne ðeowe ne freo ne moton in ðone **here** faran butan leafe, ne heora nan ðe ma to us. (LawAGu 5)

‘and we all pronounced on the day when the oaths were sworn that neither slave nor freeman is allowed to go to the *here* without permission, no more than any of them (is allowed to go without permission) to us’

Thus the term *here* also refers metonymically to the lands under Danish control, once again emphasising the distinction between *here* and *us*.

The strategy of contrastive juxtaposition of Scandinavian *here* and English *fyrð* is consistent until the early eleventh century. In post-1016 annals *here* becomes less unequivocal, e.g. it can refer to the Anglo-Saxons raiding Scotland and Wales (1054 and 1056; see Swanton 1996: xxxiv), with its meaning shifting towards ‘any army intended for attack rather than defence ... not merely to hostile viking armies’ (Swanton 1996: xxxiv; cf. Pulsiano & McGowan 1990: 6–7). Were the criminal connotations of *here*, originally linked only to the Viking outgroup, obscured by later semantic developments? Or did the proto-chancery somehow abandon this lexical norm in favour of new more straightforward or more powerful terminology? In fact both factors seem to play a role. On the one hand *here* and *fyrð* become interchangeable, with both English *here* and Scandinavian *fyrð* being attested in the latter portions of the *ASC* (Pulsiano & McGowan 1990). Pejoration of *fyrð* has also been suggested as contributing to the erosion of semantic distinctions between *here* and *fyrð* (Kiernan 1986). On the other hand, new norms evolve: eleventh-century annals refer to the Vikings as *flota* ‘fleet’ (a term that was seldom used before) or as *unfriphere* ‘hostile army’ (a redundant precision by Alfredian standards) (Timofeeva 2016a). ‘Additional evidence of this ambiguity in the use of the words *here* and *fyrð* can be found in various other places in the corpus of Old English’ (Pulsiano & McGowan 1990: 5). Pulsiano & McGowan quote several examples from Ælfric’s letters and homilies, and from poetic texts to support this point (1990: 5–12), with the most conspicuous perhaps being *heofonengla here* ‘the host of heaven-angels’ from *Christ III* 1277a (second half of the tenth century). Ælfric’s *Life of St Maurice* offers an interesting case in point. On two occasions Ælfric’s usage seems to conform with Alfredian norms: *here* refers to the heathen army of Emperor Maximian (9), while *fyrð* denotes the Christian legion of St Maurice (10):

- (9) Ða wæron on þære **fyrde** fela Cristene men (ÆLS (Maurice) 8)
 ‘There were many Christian men in that army’
- (10) and se manfulla wolde ... his hæþengild habban, and het him to clypian ealne þone **here** (ÆLS (Maurice) 23)
 ‘and the wicked one [Maximian] wanted to perform his heathen-worship and told his men to gather all his army’

However, as soon as Ælfric departs from the basic lexemes and uses derivatives instead, we find the same ambiguity as in other late OE sources: *fyrðinge*, a derivative of *fyrð*, is commanded by the persecutor of the Christians Maximian (ÆLS (Maurice) 1). Pulsiano & McGowan (1990) observe a similar tendency in their data on *here* and *fyrð* in derivatives and compounds.

This section has shown that Alfredian texts sought to appropriate the term *here* and to construe the outgroup associated with it as criminal. Although this norm was sustained within the discourse community of the proto-chancery for a few generations after Alfred, eventually it did not survive the Second Viking Age. This can partly be accounted for by the changing political circumstances of the tenth and, especially, early eleventh century. With the Scandinavian kings established on the English throne and with settled and Christianised Scandinavians living across the Danelaw, the distinctions between the in- and outgroup were not as clear-cut as before (see Pulsiano & McGowan 1990). On the other hand, evidence from outside the *ASC* and other Alfredian sources, e.g. from Ælfric’s homilies and from poetic texts, may suggest that this norm failed to spread beyond the genres produced and controlled by the royal scribes. Even those who, like Ælfric, had access to Winchester archives and could imitate their practices were probably unable to resist the pressure of uncensored and, quite likely, evolving vernacular usage and to stay consistent in their own use of *here* and its antonyms and/or synonyms.

4.2 *gretan freondlice* in OE and AL correspondence and writs

This section analyses a politically neutral phrase *gretan freondlice*, tracing its emergence within the Alfredian proto-chancery and later use in epistolary OE. The collocation of the verb *grētan* ‘to approach; salute’ with the adverb *freondlice* is attested for the first time in Alfredian English (*OED*, s.vv. *greet* and *friendly*). According to the *DOE*, *freondlice* ‘in a friendly manner, amicably’ (c. 150 occurrences) occurs almost exclusively in the salutation formula *gretan freondlice* ‘to greet in a friendly manner, greet in friendship’ (*DOE*, s.v. *freondlice*, a.i). The first occurrence is in the prefatory letter to the *Pastoral Care* attributed to King Alfred:

- (11) Ælfrēd kyning hateð **gretan** Wærferð biscep his wordum luflice & **freondlice**.¹¹(CPLetWærf 1)
 ‘King Alfred bids greet Bishop Werferth with his words, affectionately and in friendship.’

Although there are no recorded uses of the phrase before this widely circulated letter, *gretan freondlice* may in fact rely on an earlier oral tradition of delivering king’s notices to shire courts (Harmer 1952: 14–15; Sharpe 2003; Timofeeva forthcoming). The salutation as such has prototypes in Latin Christian correspondence, but salutations augmented with an adverb seem to be an OE convention (Harmer 1952: 21–7; Lanham 1975: 13–55), with *freondlice* marking the superior social status of the sender in relation to the addressee and being restricted mainly to the royal vernacular correspondence (Timofeeva forthcoming). The genre that preserves the phrase most fully is writs. The first of them to use the formula is S 945 (12), written between 978

¹¹ Both here and in writs *gretan freondlice* collocates with another formula *cyðan ðe/eow þæt* ‘to let you know that’. I limit my discussion to the former here. A more detailed study of the co-occurrence of both formulas is offered in Timofeeva (forthcoming).

and 1016 to record the privileges of the king's priests in St Paul's minster, London, granted by King Æthelred II.

- (12) Æþelred kinc **grete** mine <biscopes> & mine eorles & ealla mine þeinas of þam sciram þær mine preostas on Pales mynstre habbað land inne **freondlice**. (Ch 945 (Harm 52) 1)
 '[I] King Æthelred greet my <bishops> and my earls and all my thegns in the shires where my priests in St Paul's minster have land in friendship.'

Both quoted examples (11)–(12) use the salutation similarly, in the opening lines of the royal notification. Even though there is a gap in the record of about a hundred years between the first two attestations of the formula, we need not doubt that royal writs and notices saluted their addressees in this fashion throughout the tenth century, and that their protocol followed the established practice (Harmer 1952; Sharpe 2003). Here my reconstruction of the proto-chancery as a synchronic CoP and a diachronic discourse community is particularly relevant. Although the salutation formula must represent an oral tradition of delivering notices via a messenger (Timofeeva forthcoming), it may well be that the royal notice was written down for the first time (as so many other things) in the Alfredian period. The prefatory letter was copied by the royal scribes and circulated to about a dozen bishops (see section 3.1). Royal writs, although not as grand and in fewer copies, were also likely to be produced by the proto-chancery and circulated to shire courts to inform local assemblies of changes in the ownership of land and grants of privileges. Routine practices, like the salutation, came to be shared by the chancery scribes. Their successors in the tenth century preserved the formula as belonging to and constituting the royal notices and passed it on as one of the vernacular bureaucratic templates (Timofeeva forthcoming). Over the course of the next hundred years the formula survived not only several kings but also two conquests, being remarkably robust in the writs issued in the name of King Cnut (5 occurrences; ex. 13), Edward the Confessor (91 occurrences), Harold Godwinson (1 occurrence) and William the Conqueror (29 occurrences; ex. 14).

- (13) Cnut cyncg **gret** ealle mine biscopas & mine eorlas & mine gerefan on ælcere scire ... **freondlice**. (Ch 986 (Harm 28) 1)
 'King Cnut greets all my bishops and my earls and my reeves in each shire ... in friendship.'
 (14) Willem king **gret** mine bissupes and mine eorles and mine sirreven and alle mine þeines ... **freondliche**. (Ch IWm (Dugdale 10) 1)
 'King William greets my bishops and my earls and my reeves and all my thegns ... in friendship'

As can be clearly seen, both the salutation formula and the sequence of the addressees are fairly conventional and, given the time frame, stable. If English is at all used as a medium in eleventh-century charters, the formula is inevitably there. If Latin is chosen to preserve the writ instead, the formula can still affect the phrasing:

- (15) Ego Edwardus gratia Dei rex Anglorum omnibus episcopis ... **amicabiliter salutem**. (S 1086)

‘I King Edward, by the grace of God, king of the English, [send] all the bishops my greetings in friendship’

Whether or not these writs are genuine is not an issue here; for even though the formula appeared in spurious documents, it must still have been associated with the writ genre; and even though the royal chaplains avoided it or supplied idiomatic Latin equivalents, variants of the old formula – *we greet you heartily*, *we greet you well* – survived in their discourse community far beyond the Norman Conquest and continued to be preserved in the officialese of the State Papers and departmental instruments into the nineteenth century (Hall 1908: 210, 275–6; Timofeeva forthcoming). For the OE period, I suggest that *gretan freondlice* as a written bureaucratic template originates within the Alfredian writing-office CoP and comes to be associated with official royal documents and errands. It re-emerges in the written record largely in the eleventh century and remains in use after the Norman Conquest, as long as English continues to be used by the proto-chancery.

5 Conclusions

This study has reconstructed the Alfredian network as consisting of at least twelve actors (see [figure 1](#)), although the number of its more immediate members should probably be reduced to nine. Within this later group, defined as a *coalition*, a cluster of Mercian actors is further discerned. Historical sources and charter evidence suggest that Mercian scribes worked for West Saxon kings and may have taken part in the establishment of the proto-chancery at the royal court. This writing office can be conjectured to have ties with the Alfredian coalition, but a more relevant term to describe it is a *community of practice*. Across space, Alfred and his men aimed at reaching a wider community (e.g. the *Pastoral Care* may have been sent to ten monastic centres; Keynes & Lapidge 1983: 294, n. 1), and provisions for the circulation of the *ASC* and other translations may have been equally wide-reaching (Brooks 2010). In this reconstruction Alfred’s role is seen primarily as that of the social leader whose patronage of a network of Winchester-based scholars gave them the means and stimulus to embark upon a cultural programme that included several extended translations (no matter how many and by whom) and a number of vernacular texts. Their aims were educational and political, the effects of the attempt to create an OE prose canon and to control the public opinion of regional ecclesiastical and secular leaders resulted, among other things, in the distribution of Winchester-adopted discourse norms to other localities. Of these *Angelcynn* and *here* seem to be associated with political and legal discourse, and *gretan freondlice* with official notifications, the way we find them in writs, and perhaps with correspondence more generally. Throughout the OE period, monastic and chancery archives play as important a role in maintaining linguistic norms as the discourse communities themselves; for even if communities discontinue or abandon old norms, they can still be restored by people who have access to the archives. This seems to be the case with Ælfric’s use of

Alfredian norms and with post-1066 survival of writ templates among the discourse community of royal scribes.

Thus, however fragmentary the surviving record of OE, and of Alfredian English in particular, sociolinguistic reconstruction of this remote language period seems to be both possible and meaningful. Is this reconstruction free from anachronism though? Alexander Bergs warns that sociolinguistic descriptions (including social networks approaches) of pre-standard stages of language must remain tentative, as overtly prestigious language norms were simply unavailable; so the degree of innovation cannot be determined in relation to a conservative standard (Bergs 2012: 93–6). He remarks, however, ‘close-knit networks must have had norm-enforcing power in their very small, local communities such as villages and parishes, or perhaps even guilds or religious groups’ (Bergs 2012: 95). This assumption seems to reflect in Alfredian English quite accurately: Alfredian norms are the norms selected, enforced and promoted by the Winchester elite network.

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