

LINGUISTICS

THE VOICING OF INITIAL FRICATIVES IN MIDDLE ENGLISH*

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The voicing of initial fricatives in English still poses important problems. There is no agreement as to when the voicing began to operate, how it spread, how far the process affecting particular fricatives was identical and so forth. The genesis of the initial fricative /ʒ/ raises special question.

For Modern English dialects an overall survey of the available material was presented by Ellis (1889). However, his treatment of the voicing of /θ/ is less systematic and hence less reliable than that of the voicing of /f/, /s/ and /ʃ/. The *Survey of English Dialects* (Orton et al. 1962—71) also records a number of instances of the voicing of all four fricatives in word-initial (*Anlaut*) position in the South and the South-West Midlands. On the basis of Ellis's material, as well as that collected by SED (some of it unpublished but recorded by field-workers in conversation with informants), Wakelin and Barry (1968) have provided us with an excellent up-to-date overview of the problem as it is reflected in contemporary dialects; this also has relevance for earlier stages of English.

As mentioned above, forms attesting the voicing of initial fricatives can be found nowadays in the South and South-West Midlands (see Map 1). Sporadic occurrences of voiced forms in other areas may suggest a boundary which once lay more to the north and east than the current one. Initial voiced fricatives also appear in place names from roughly the same area (Ekwall 1940

* This is a revised version of the paper published originally in Viereck, W., ed. 1985. *Focus on England and Wales*. Amsterdam: Benjamins. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Professor Viereck for his permission to reprint the paper here, to Professor Angus McIntosh and Professor M. S. Samuels for their permission to use unpublished results of their research on the occurrence of initial *v-* and *z-*, to Professor McIntosh for providing me with a map of the isogloss for *f-/v-* in the fifteenth century, and finally to Professor Gillis Kristensson for making available to me relevant results of his unpublished survey of the West Midlands in the fourteenth century.

and Smith 1970). One should be careful, however, with the onomastic evidence: some place names have appeared with the initial voiced fricatives only since the eighteenth century, e.g. *Vauxhall* from earlier *Faukeshale* since 1719 (Wakelin and Barry 1968:62).

The orthographic evidence from earlier English for the occurrence and geographical distribution of the voicing of initial fricatives, is unfortunately limited and gives no grounds for drawing even tentative isoglosses for the medieval distribution of /ð/, /z/ and /ʒ/; there is no early spelling evidence at all for /ð-/ and /ʒ-/. The abundant <u/v> spellings permit scholars to establish a genuine *f-/v-* line in medieval times, and the very limited <z> forms give some hints about the *s-/z-* line. Whatever can be said about the earlier distribution of the other fricatives must be based on evidence provided by Modern English dialects.

Standard accounts of the voicing of initial fricatives in the existing handbooks of early English deal with the dating of the process, its geographical distribution and spread, and (more rarely) its origin. With varying degrees of thoroughness these accounts usually deal only with the treatment of the change, affecting /f- θ- s-/. With the notable exceptions of Horn and Lehnert (1954) Flasdieck (1958), Brunner (1963) and Wakelin and Barry (1968) /ʒ/ is usually ignored. Below we shall take up each of the above mentioned problems connected with the voicing process and discuss the position in Middle English times.

Since the occurrence of /ʒ-/ as an alternative to /ʃ/ forms is rarer in Modern English dialects, and hence not usually considered to have been characteristic for Middle English, a crucial question has to be answered before any attempt is made to establish the situation about voicing in Middle English: what relation if any holds between the voicing of each of the four fricatives. In other words, we must try to establish whether we are in the presence of a unitary process which affected all four sounds or whether we are dealing with more than one process. There is no convincing evidence that there were four independent processes. On the contrary, as will be argued below, it would seem that a unitary interpretation is the most satisfactory one. The voicing is in each case a phonetic process of weakening (lenition). That the change may have affected each of the fricatives to a somewhat different extent is not surprising in any such historical process involving a spread through the complex inventory of a language and over the area where that language was spoken. The relationship between the patterns of distribution of forms showing initial voicing of /f- θ- s- ʒ-/ is revealing (see Map. 1). If one assumes that the change in question constitutes a unitary process, this will have obvious consequences for the reconstruction and interpretation of the ME dialect situation.

We may consider the matter of the date of this process. We shall see later that the postulation of a particular date for it has a bearing on matters relating

to the position of the interpretation of initial voiced fricatives in ME. For reasons which will become clear a little later the discussion of the voicing of /ʒ-/ will be postponed until the evidence of Modern English dialects has been discussed.

Views about the date when voicing of initial fricatives took place vary considerably. Sweet (1888:139) suggested that the process originated while the Germanic tribes who later invaded England were still on the Continent. This idea was later taken up by Bennet (1955), who argued that it was a Low Franconian process acquired by Juto-Frisians and English Saxons (who settled in Kent and the South-West) and brought to England. It should be mentioned here that the voicing of initial fricatives also occurred in Old High German and Old Low Franconian and was recorded in the 9th century and 11th century respectively. Samuels (1971) in a penetrating essay concerning relations between the Low Countries and Kent has pointed out that there is no compelling evidence for this change (among other changes) having originated on the Continent: on this basis the issue cannot be settled one way or another. If the Continantal hypothesis were to be accepted, the voicing would be a process which preceded the Germanic invasion of England but which did not find orthographic corroboration until much later and then only partially. The view of most scholars, however, is that the voicing only took place in Old English or even early Middle English. Brunner (1965³),¹ Berndt (1960) and Pinsker (1974) state that the voicing of initial fricatives dates back to the tenth century. Flasdieck (1958:364) would place it between the time of King Alfred and the Benedictine reform, i.e. between the second half of the 9th century and 10th century. These views are based on what seems to be the oldest spelling evidence for the voicing /f/ > /v/, i.e. the form *wif* for *ff* 'five' which appears twice in the Guild Statute of Bedwyn, Wilt., from about the year 950.

Ellis (1889:38), Kjederkvist (1903:94—6) and Luick (1914/1964:933) assumed that the change did not take place till the eleventh century. Jordan (1934/1974:154) concurs as regards the voicing of initial *f-* but points out that "with *s* it can be proved surely only in Kent since 14th century, with *þ* in the same period only in unaccented words like *this, that, then* in Kent and EML".

Jespersen (1909:42) would place the voicing still later in the 12th century; he gives no reasons for the dating. Nor do J. and E. M. Wright (1928), who rather vaguely place it as late Old English or early Middle English.

Dobson (1968, II :360), with reference to [θ], assumes that voicing took place first in unstressed words in the 14th century, and thereafter [ð] was also extended to stressed words.

¹ Brunner is, however, less explicit and more careful about assigning a definite date to the change in his earlier work (1960²: 375—6), saying only that it is quite possible that the change occurred already in Old English but not too early; it had to take place, on the other hand, before the influx of French loanwords into English.

Which of these proposed datings, then is most feasible? Indeed can we adduce good grounds for any dating rather than another? There seem to be four types of evidence available to us whereby we might attempt to establish the date when the voicing took place: (1) typological-comparative evidence, (2) the distribution of voicing in the pre-Conquest lexicon, (3) the Old and Middle English spelling, and (4) the evidence of the dialects of modern England. Let us consider each of these types.

As has already been suggested, typological-comparative arguments that some related WG languages exhibit initial voicing and that this could have been brought over by the invaders of southern England are inconclusive: it is at least equally likely that the development of initial voiced stops was a parallel independent development rather than a borrowing.

The spelling evidence for earlier Middle English is weak. Copious examples of the voicing come only from the 13th century and later. Since written language in the 11th century was rather standardized it is quite likely that the orthodox orthography would reflect innovations in the spoken language only after certain other circumstances had arisen (such as the weakening or decay of the standard, e.g. in the hands of foreign or foreign-trained scribes). The fact that the spelling evidence comes in the main from the 13th century and after points to the likelihood of the voicing of initial fricatives already in England and at the time when the written standard had been formed. If one looks, however, at the geographical distribution of Middle English forms (both from localized MSS as well as locally attested place and personal names, e.g. as recorded in Lay Subsidy Rolls and other documents, see Map 2 and 4), one may hazard the suggestion that the spread of voicing follows the pattern of the spread of early Kentish innovations in the 7th century (see DeCamp 1959). In that case the voicing may be a phenomenon brought to England at the time of the Germanic invasion or it may have originated only in Britain and then spread throughout the South-West, the South-West Midlands in early Old English times (cf. place names in Essex, Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire) and further northwards in Middle English (see Map 4). In any event we believe that the process was still going on in Early Middle English times (cf. Wakelin and Barry 1968 on its even later productivity). But by second half of the 14th century and in the 15th century the distribution was beginning to recede southwards (see Map 6). Corroboration of this can be found in Sundby's (1963:201-7) discussion of the dialect of Worcester where initial *v*- is found four times in SWo and once in NWo in a. 1250, 34 times in SWo and 22 times in NWo between 1300 and 1349, but only five times in SWo and once in NWo between 1400-1449 and finally five times in SWo and not even once in NWo between 1450-1499.

There is no agreement as to whether the voicing process varied from one fricative to another. The spelling evidence, uneven as it is, does not offer possi-

bilities for resolving this problem unequivocally (cf. Jordan/Crook 1974). Some scholars, however (notably Sundby 1963:207), would consider that at least the voicing of *s*->*z*- was co-extensive with *f*->*v*-. Setting aside /*ž*/ for the moment, the distribution of forms in Middle English (see Map 6 and 7) and in Modern English dialects (see Map 1)² seems to lend support to this view, which is in keeping with what has already been postulated about the phonetic process involved.

The degree of spread of the voiced form varies nevertheless from one lexical item to another. Sundby (1963:206) observed that only <*f*-> spellings could be found in some Wo. names, e.g. those containing OE *fēo*, *feorþling*, *flæsc*, *frēond*, and a few others; this would indicate that the initial consonant remained voiceless in certain items while other items exhibited initial voicing (e.g. OE *fæder*, *fisc*, *fenn*, *fīn*, etc.).

Jespersen (1909:42) rejected the explanation of the origin of initial voicing as being due to borrowing resulting from contacts between Germanic speakers still on the Continent. According to him the voicing started as a conditioned (i.e. dependent) change in the 11th century. The initial fricative (he deals only with /*f*->/<*v*-/) was voiced if preceded by a word ending in a voiced sound, as in the *Ancrene Riwe* (1-25): *þe ueorðe* vs. *þet feorðe*, *þe vifte* vs. *þet fifte*, *mine uoan* vs. *his foan*. etc. It is true that this restrictor on the use of <*f*, *v*> is quite regular in this work but there are numerous examples from elsewhere which have <*v*> or <*u*> after graphemes representing voiceless sounds, e.g. *ibroht uorð* (also from the *Ancrene Riwe* quoted by Logan (1973:134)), *þat verst* (Robert of Gloucester 5/93 in Dickins and Wilson 1951:16), *to his vadere* (*I-hereþ ny one* 624, MED, s.v.), *of uayr* (Ayenb. 81), *he is ueir* (Lay. 15898), *þat ualþ* (Ayenb. 66), *woldest vachen* (Lyrics 8F 31, Bennet and Smithers 1974:117), *boeth uor ðe* (3.15. 18, Preston 1975, s.v.) *spek uor me* (3. 14.42, Preston 1975, s. v.), *zyft vrom* (3.18.3, Preston 1975, s.v.), and many more. Moreover, in many MSS <*f*> and <*u*, *v*> are interchangeable after words ending in a voiceless consonant which does not support Jespersen's claim.³

The geographical distribution of forms which had the voiced initial fricative voicing in Middle English is also a controversial issue though perhaps less so than the date of origin of the voiced forms.

Jespersen (1909:42) places the form south of the Thames, Luick (1914/1964: 933) and the Wrights (1928:107) in Kentish and in the south-western area of

² It is interesting to note that isolated examples of voicing occur in contemporary dialects as far north as S. Shropshire and S. Staffordshire (e. g. [ð] in *Thursday*; Wakelin and Barry 1968:56).

³ R. Lass has drawn my attention to the fact that assimilation in sandhi operates in the reverse direction of that suggested by Jespersen, cf. assimilations in compounds as recorded even earlier, e. g. *zesuntfulness* for *gesundfulness* in *Cura Pastoralis* (Brunner 1960:376).

England. Jordan (1974:192) is more specific adding after the listing of MSS which attest that the voicing "is indicated for Staf. (in part or with withdrawal) Heref., Worc., Glouc., Som., Wilts., Dev., Hants., Kent and probably also Dors., Sur., Sus.; in the present dialects it is more limited". His hypothesis is based on localized MSS, the position of which has in some cases been challenged.

Berndt (1960:178) has also taken into account place name evidence and suggested that "nach Ausweis von Ortsnamen ist der Übergang von *f*->*v*- aber auch in Essex sehr gewöhnlich gleichfalls in Buckinghamshire stark verbreitet und ebenso in Hertfordshire anzutreffen": the onomastic evidence employed by Berndt comes from Modern English. This would move the boundary of /v-/ from the Thames more to the north. This position has additional support adduced by Horn and Lehnert (1954:938) from early Modern English orthoepist sources, e.g. Langley (1546), who knew the forms *vox* 'fox' and *voure* 'four' as coming from Essex and Gill (1621) who wrote that *v*- for *f*- and *z*- for *s*- were found in the south and the east and according to Butler (1634) they appeared 'in the Western partes'.

Brunner (1960:376), after noting the difficulty of establishing the border up to which the voiced forms occurred, proposes the following: "Die Grenze dürfte ungefähr längs der Themse verlaufen sein, im Westen aber auch nördlichere Gebiete eingeschlossen haben, so Gloucestershire, Hertfordshire und das südlich Worcestershire. ... Nach Ortsnamen wird auch Essex, Hertfordshire und Buckinghamshire wenigstens zum Teil zu dem Gebiet gehört haben, wo stimmhafte Reibelaute vorkamen ... Von diesem mundartlichen südenenglischen Lautwandel ist der Übergang zu einem stimmhaften Anlaut bei den Pronominalstämmen (*the, that, this* usw.) auseinander zu haften. Dieser ist gemeinenglisch und vielleicht bereits in ae. Zeit eingetreten".

Oakden (1930) was the first to draw an actual medieval isogloss (see Map 2) dividing the *v*-/*f*- areas; he produced it on the basis of a few literary texts from the 13th century and 14th century. The second attempt to delimit the same phenomenon on the map was made by Moore et al. (1935).⁴ The evidence was taken from "a corpus of definitely localized and dated literary texts and documents" (Moore et al. 1935:1). These covered three centuries although the emphasis was placed on 15th century material (22 literary texts out of 44, and 240 non-literary documents out of 266 are from the time after 1401). The isogloss (see Map 2 and 4) differs somewhat from that of Oakden in that it runs further north from approximately the northeastern border of Berkshire across the middle of Oxfordshire and Worcestershire and (tentatively) the southern border of Shropshire.

The pioneering work of both Oakden and Moore et al. had several shortcom-

⁴ The reliability of the accounts given by Oakden and Moore et al. has been discussed in Fisiak (1982; 1984).

ings (see Fisiak 1982, 1984). The major ones for the matter under discussion were the long span of time, despite the "emphasis" on a single century, and the use of a very limited number of localized forms. Moore et al. (1935) are aware of the tentative value of their *f*-/*v*- isophone, admitting that "the points upon which the isophone was based are scattered to be entirely convincing" (p. 47), and "although the evidence ... for this dialect characteristics is amply sufficient to prove its existence in ME and even to localize it with pretty definite limits, the boundary that is indicated is less certainly established than most other boundaries" (p. 16).

Comparing the isophones of Oakden (basically 14th century) and Moore et al. (15th century) one obtains a false picture of the situation, as will be demonstrated below, i.e. as if the *f*-/*v*- isogloss was still expanding to the north in the 15th century (see Map 2). The evidence adduced by Kristensson (a project in progress for 1290—1350) and McIntosh-Samuels (a project approaching completion for the 15th century) suggests later in the paper that the direction of the shift of this isogloss was the reverse. Additional corroborative evidence for this direction of the movement of the isogloss has been provided by Sundby (1963:201—7) for Worcestershire.

Both Oakden's and Moore's isoglosses as well as more loosely formulated suggestions by other scholars as to the shape of the *f*->*v*- line have been based on the ME spelling evidence coming from a rather limited number of literary texts and official documents and from Modern English dialects, sometimes supported by additional evidence from place names. Yet because of this the isoglosses have been drawn for [v-] alone since according to the scholars quoted above there is not enough orthographic evidence for [z-] and none for [ð-].⁵ As will be seen below, the distribution of [ð-] in Middle English will have to be based entirely on Modern English evidence.

The two recent ME dialect projects mentioned above have already thrown more light on the distribution of *v*- and *z*- and have considerably corrected our views. Before presenting the new evidence for a new distribution of the forms in question, a word or two about these projects seems in order.

G. Kristensson published results of his investigations covering the northern counties and Lincolnshire in 1967 and is currently working on the West Midlands. His work covers the span of sixty years (1290—1350) and is based on the examination of surnames and place names in Lay Subsidy Rolls⁶ (other local documents are used for Durham and Cheshire which as palatinates were

⁵ /z/ will be discussed separately later in the paper.

⁶ See Kristensson (1965, 1967, 1976, 1981) for more information concerning his project and the justification of the selection of Lay Subsidy Rolls as reliable source material in dialect research (cf. the critique of this approach by McIntosh (1969) and McLure (1973) and subsequent Kristensson's reply (1976).

exempt from the Lay Subsidy). The material investigated is quite extensive; e.g. the Lincolnshire Subsidy Rolls for 1332 alone contain the names of 20,597 tax-payers, and the rolls for 1327 as many as c. 40,000 surnames and 1,500 place names. Because of the nature of the data, the research necessarily concentrates on phonology and follows the principles laid out by Orton for the *Survey of English Dialects* (SED). The density of localities in Kristensson's survey, however, surpasses by far that achieved by Orton for living dialects.

The Edinburgh Middle English Dialect Project (MEDP)⁷ covers approximately the period of 100 years (1350–1450); the bulk of the material is from the second half of that century. The project has investigated several thousand MSS and maps some 1,150 of them. There are 270 items in the main questionnaire. The enquiry is basically oriented towards the cartographic presentation of written Middle English forms.⁸ Both literary texts and local documents have been used. The density of localities is much higher than in SED. In MEDP it is approximately one "informant" (=text) per 50 square miles and per 15,000 inhabitants estimated to have lived in England at the time; in SED the latter ratio is 1:50,000. Some individual maps and a number of papers based on the collected materials have been published so far. The complete *Atlas of Middle English dialects* is scheduled to go to press in 1984.

The evidence collected by Kristensson (unpublished private communication dated 11th Dec. 1981) moves the boundary of *v*- and *z*- considerably further to the north (see Map 4, line D).

Here are some examples illustrating /v-/ forms:⁹

Staffordshire

Robto *Atte venne* 1332:102 (Handsworth)

Warwickshire

Philip *Buluynch* 1332:15 (Honington)

Worcestershire

Adam *le Vrence* 1327:4 (Wolverley)

Simone *le Vythelar* 1327:5 (Piddle)

Willelmo *Bolvynch* 1327:16 (Droitwych)

Willelmo *Le Vithelere* 1327:33 (Ripple)

Forvelde 1327:39 (Fairfield, PNWo 275)

Johanne *Le Vynour* 1327:44 (Birtsmerton)

Roberto *Le Vynch* 1327:50 (Little Comberton)

⁷ See Benskin in Benskin and Samuels (1981: XXVII–XLI) and McIntosh (1963) for more details on the Edinburgh project.

⁸ On a wider application of its results see Kristensson (1981).

⁹ All examples are from Lay Subsidy Rolls. The reference is to page or in the case of unprinted rolls to membrane.

Willemo *Vot'* 1332:10=Fot 1327:14 (Blackwell)
Yedeven 1332:17 (Evin Loach, PNWo 49)¹⁰

Oxfordshire

Alicia *Vouler* 1316m. 1 (Churchill)

Willmo *le Vole* 1316 m. 1 (Walcot)

Petro *le Vinch* 1316 m. 1 (Chastleton)

Isabella *Le Visschere* 1316 m. 1 (Cagingwell)

Walto *atte Venne* 1316 m. 1 (Shippenhull)

Johne *le Vole* m. 1 (Shippenhull)

Thoma *atte Venne* 1316 m.² (Sandford St. Martin)

Adam *atte Venne* 1316 m.² (Thrupp)

Robto *le Vrend* 1316 m.²=*LeFrende* 1327 m. 4 (King's End)

Walto *le Vouler* 1316 m. 2=Walto *le Foulare* 1327 m. 5 (Finnere)

Reginaldo *le Vithelere* 1327 m. 2 (Lyneham)

Johne *atte Vortheye* 1316 m. 1=Johne *atte Fortheye* 1327 m. 3 (Spelsbury)

Thoma *le Voul* 1327 m. 6=Thoma *Le Fowel* 1316 m. 3 (Bicester)

Rogo *le Voul* 1327 m. 7 (Blackthorn)

Johne *le Voul* 1327 m. 7=Johne *le Houwel* 1316 m. 4 (Forest Hill)

Clementia *le Vatte* 1327 m. 3 (Burford)

Robto *le Venner* 1327 m. 11 (Thame)

Johe *le Vatte* 1327 m. 12 (Lower and Upper Standhill)

Thoma *le Voul* 1327 m. 8 (Handborough)

Gloucestershire¹¹

Since voiced forms are numerous and occur throughout the county, we shall limit our presentation to listing different forms without identification of the locality. (Gloucestershire has been recognized by all scholars as incontrovertibly a /v-/ area).

Edith *la Vatte* 1327 m. 8

Nicho *le Visshare* 1327 m. 22

Johe *Vynch* 1327 m. 22

Willmo *atte Venne* 1327 m. 23

Henricus *le Veltre* 1312:248

Ricardus *le Volte'* 1313:253

Everardo *le Vrinch* 1312:242

Robertus *atte Vairoke* 1312:263

Alic *Vrewyne* 1312 m. 12

¹⁰ For more examples see Sundby (1963:201–4).

¹¹ No examples of /f-/>/v-/ have been found by Kristensson in Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Shropshire, Leicestershire or Cheshire. The examples from Herefordshire are limited in general and consist mostly of Celtic names.

As regards /z-/ forms, Kristensson has recorded the following instances:

Staffordshire

Roberto Zelymon 1327:199 (Ensen)

Robto Zelymon 1327:214 (Stafford)

Rob'to Zelymon 1327:216 (Rocester)

Rico Zalewey 1327:234 (Norton)

Worcestershire

Thoma Zely 1327:62 (Birlingham)

Clacc Zelimon 1332:21 (Church Honeybourne)¹²

Kristensson's research is still in progress and further facts may come to light to confirm or disprove claims concerning the course of the *f*->*v*- and *s*->*z*- border in the East Midlands (i.e. Essex, Hertford and Buckinghamshire).

The McIntosh-Samuels line (see Map 5 and 6) runs somewhat to the south of Kristensson's¹³ in the West Midlands. On the other hand it is to the north of the isogloss as drawn by Oakden and Moore et al.. The map (Map 5) reproduced here is slightly modified from the original provided by Professor McIntosh in that it does not include information on the frequency of occurrence ("normal", "less frequent", "rare") of forms as was indicated by Professor McIntosh. In the present study we are interested primarily in the geographical range of voiced forms and our isoglosses should be considered as outer boundaries of occurrence of the phenomenon (see Wakelin and Barry 1968:50-1 without regard to the related frequency of voiced and unvoiced form).

The McIntosh-Samuels line for the *f*->*v*- boundary has been drawn on the basis of 110 MSS out of something like twice that number which were scrutinized altogether¹⁴. This is quite a large number, which guarantees a high degree of reliability of the obtained result.

The information concerning <*z*> spellings for /z-/ has been drawn on the basis of only 10 texts (see Map 7) altogether.¹⁴ ME <*z*> is very much rarer than <*v*>.

The evidence from Modern English dialects does not actually show voicing in Kent, Surrey and Sussex (where it may have originally started). This, however, may well be due to the influence of Standard English. The ample Middle English evidence both from literary and other texts (see Map 5 and McIntosh (private communication of 22nd April 1982)) and from the onomastic material of local documents (see e.g. Rubin 1951 for Sussex) leaves no doubt about its existence in early English.

¹² Sundby (1963) does not give any examples of /z-/ in Worcester but assures the reader that his "material shows that it certainly occurred in this area. It may be assumed that [z-] was largely co-extensive with [v-] in ME. Onomastic material from other counties will perhaps bear out this assumption" (p. 207).

¹³ Line D in Map 4 is a cumulative isogloss relating both to *v*- and *z*-.

¹⁴ Private communication from 22nd April, 1982.

Modern place names further help us to establish a distribution of forms with voiced initial fricatives which goes beyond the boundaries delimited by modern dialects and attests its appearance further to the north and east. Smith (1970) lists among other forms such as *Vange* (Essex); *Vexour*, *Viney's Wood* (Kent); *Verdley*, *Vining* (Sussex); *Vernhurst* (Surrey); *Vowchurch*, *Vaulde*, *Venn* (Hereford), etc.

We have now attempted to show that the spelling evidence from Middle English and the Mod. E. onomastic evidence can help us to identify the area showing the voicing of /f-/>/v-/, and (with less material) also that of /s-/>/z-/ for the ME period. The more recent investigations (see Maps 5-7) have demonstrated beyond any doubt that the medieval border of the voicing of /f-/ and /s-/ must be placed much more to the north than has so far been accepted.

What still remains to be considered in relation to questions raised earlier in the paper is the voicing of /θ-/>/ð-/ and of /š-/>/ž-/ which are attested in Mod. English dialects but were not signalled by ME spelling.

As has been pointed out above the only available evidence for voicing of /θ-/ is that provided by modern dialects. But modern dialects may only suggest this by giving some indication regarding the occurrence and distribution of /ð/. Map 1 shows that the present distribution of /v-ð-z-/ is roughly the same. Because of this general similarity it has been assumed by most scholars that the voicing process affected all three fricatives to more or less the same extent in Middle English although there would be some differences of opinion as to the dating of /θ-/>/ð-/.¹⁵ The voicing of all three fricatives, however, can be accepted only if it is treated as a phonetic process of weakening (lenition) affecting all spirants in the initial position (the fact that it does not look this way in Modern English and that some words exhibit the voicing whereas others do not is irrelevant since various analogical and other factors have operated over centuries, cf. fluctuation of forms /f-/ ~ /v-/ already in the 14th c. in some of the examples provided by Kristensson).

If this reasoning is accepted for /θ/, there is no ground not to investigate the possibility of regarding the change /š-/ > /ž-/ as having operated by Early English times. After all there is evidence in Mod. E. dialects (see Map 3) and the distribution of forms, although more limited, still correlates in an interesting way with the voicing of the other three fricatives. Map 3, it is worth noting, has been based not on rare lexical items, limited only to rural vocabulary, but on the following words of wide currency: *she*, *shallow*, *shelf*, *shears*, *sheath*, *shell*, *shirt*, *shoulder*, *shovel*, *shilling*, *shut* and *shy*. The line dividing /š-/ and /ž-/ more

¹⁵ Dobson's (1968) and Brunner's (1960) suggestions mentioned earlier in the paper do not look convincing. There is no reason why the voiced /ð/ should be analogically transferred from unstressed positions to stressed ones and the voicing of /f-/ not, as e.g. in *from*, *for*, *fro*, etc..

or less parallels the other instances of voicing at a certain, not too large, distance (see Map 4). As with /θ-/ > /ð-/ there is no early spelling evidence. Such comes only from the 16th century and later, but this is not surprising. Unlike the other three fricatives /š/ is not a 'primary' consonant; it simply derives from the combination [sk] which became a single palatal fricative between the end of the 9th c. and the middle of the 10th c. (Flasdieck 1958: 362-3)¹⁶. Its voicing, thus, could only be after that date and voiced forms would not be likely to reach as far north as did those of the other three sounds. It would also be likely to affect, under the circumstances, fewer lexical items than the voicing of /f- s- θ-/. There is then no convincing argument to prevent us from placing the change /š-/ > /ž-/ some time in the Middle English period. The fact that Smith mentions it in 1568 as a rural development (Horn-Lehnert 1954: 937) and that it is used in Renaissance and Restoration drama (where <zh> = /ž/) to imitate dialect speakers, as in *zhrink* for *shrink* (*Bartholomew Fair* 1614), *zhrode* for *shrewd* (Preston's *Cambises* 1560), *zhalt* for *shalt* (1635), *zheepe* for *sheep* (1636), *zhift* for *shift* (1636), etc.,¹⁷ together with the evidence from Modern English dialects, can only support the assumption made earlier by Horn and Lehnert (1954) and hinted at by Flasdieck (1958), Brunner (1960) and Wakelin and Barry (1968) that the change /š-/ > /ž-/ had already taken place in Middle English. Also if we accept the voicing of all the initial fricatives as a unitary process, the conclusion automatically following from this is that /š-/ should undergo voicing initially if it existed at the time when the process was operating.

From what has been said in the present paper it is possible to draw the following conclusions:

1. the medieval distribution of the voiced forms was somewhat further to the north than hitherto accepted;
2. further research is necessary to establish more firmly and convincingly when the voicing occurred;
3. /š-/ > /ž-/ is a process which had already taken place in Middle English.

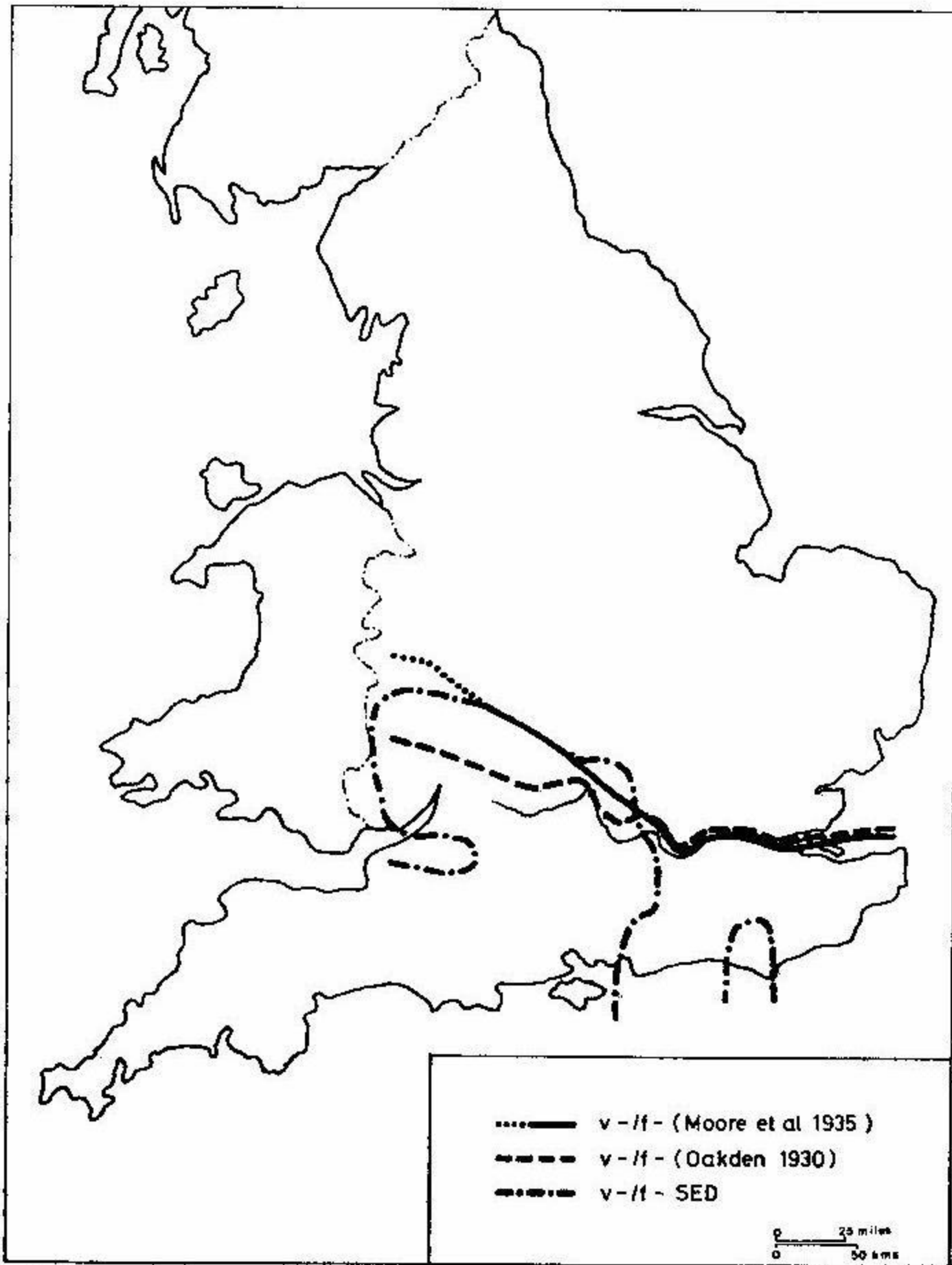
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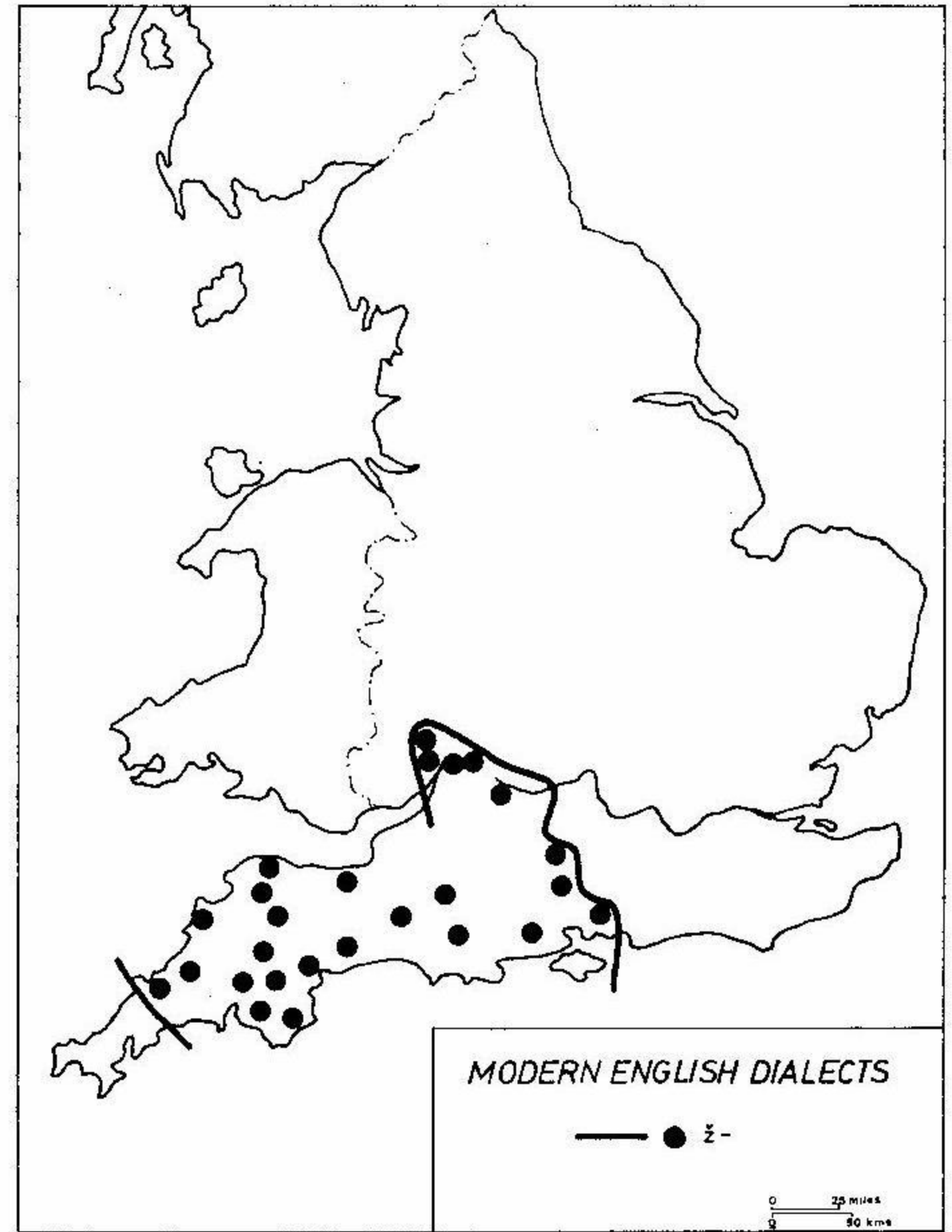
¹⁶ But cf. West (1936) and Schubel (1942).

¹⁷ See also Weiss (1924).

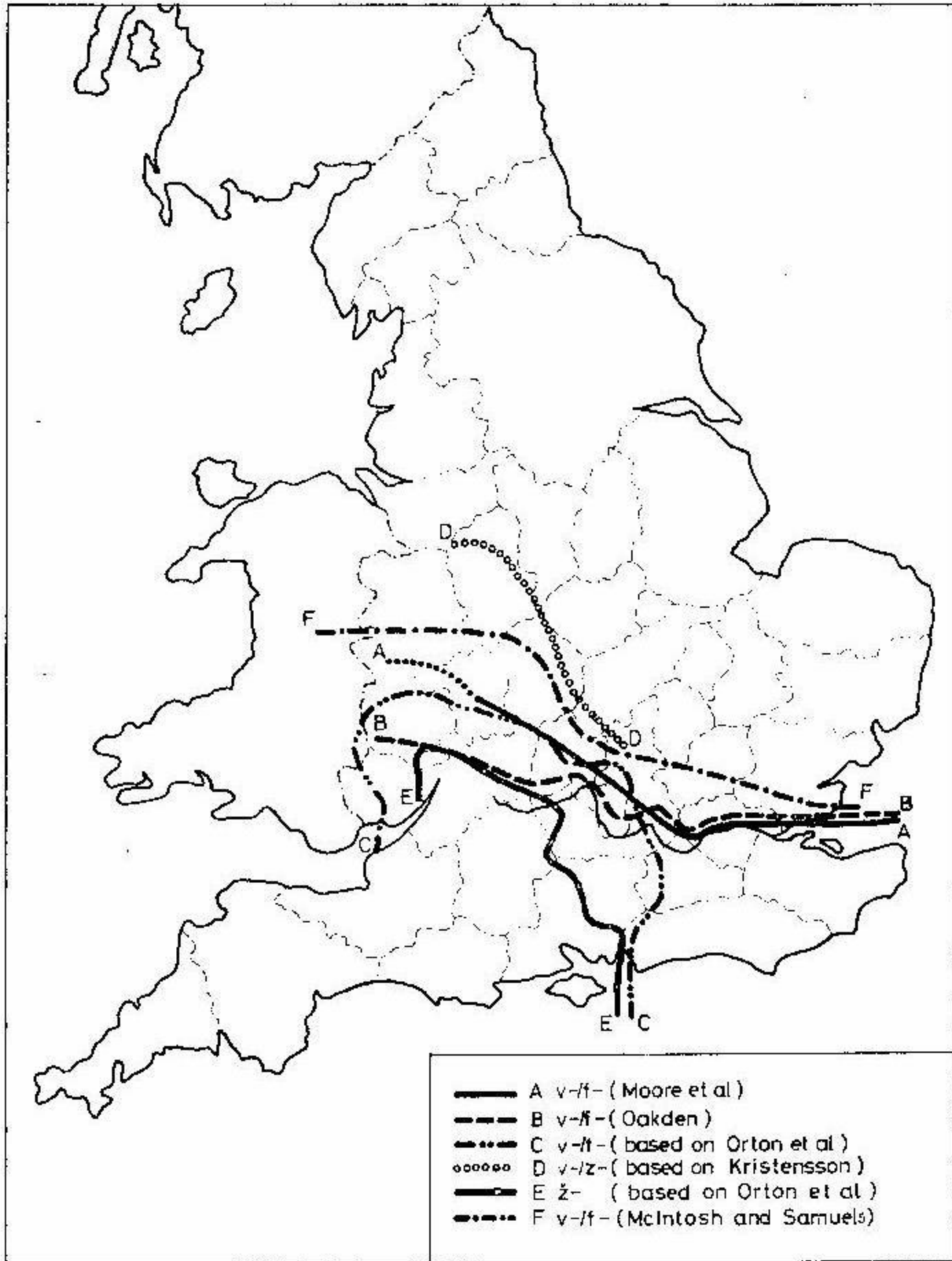
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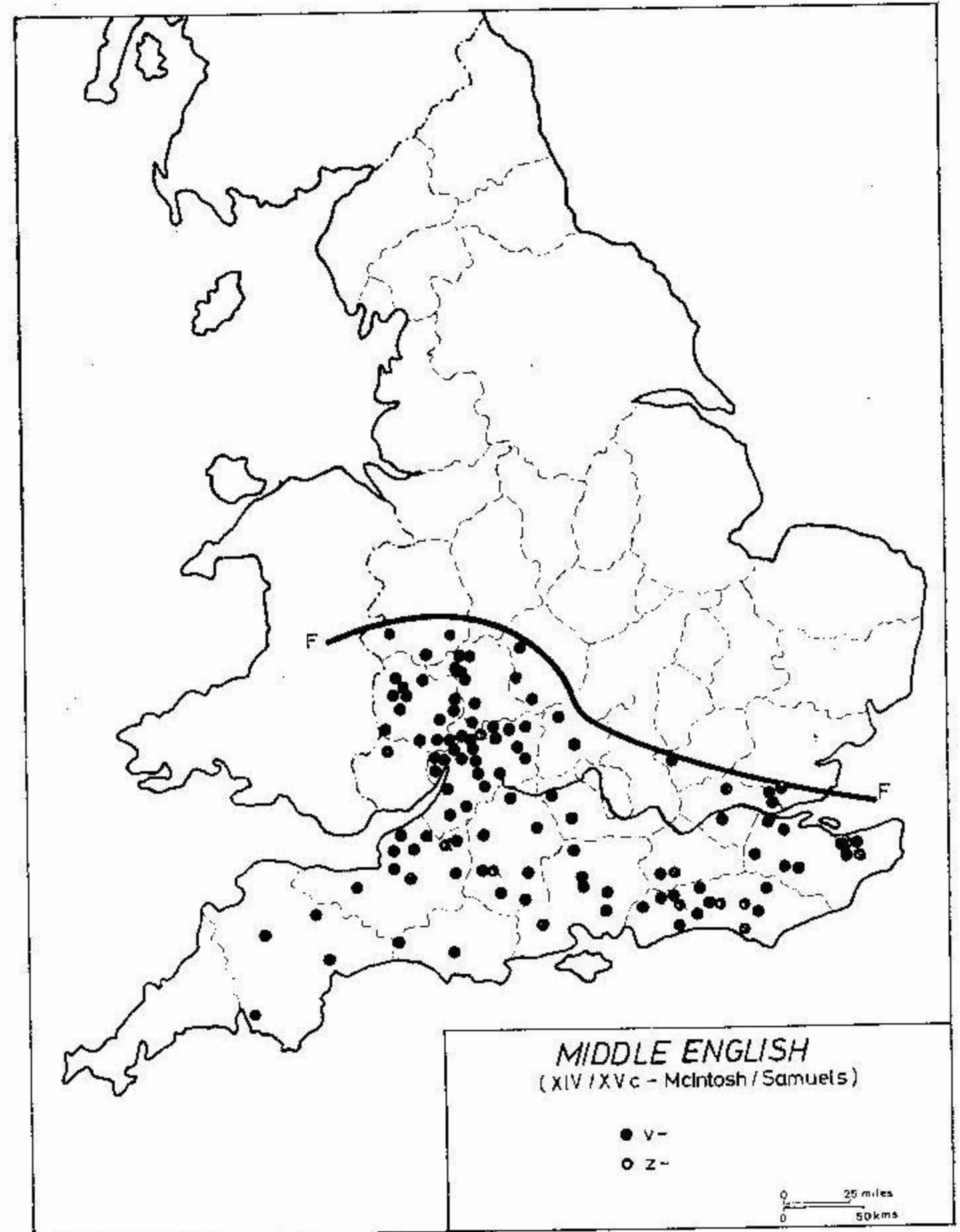
Map 2



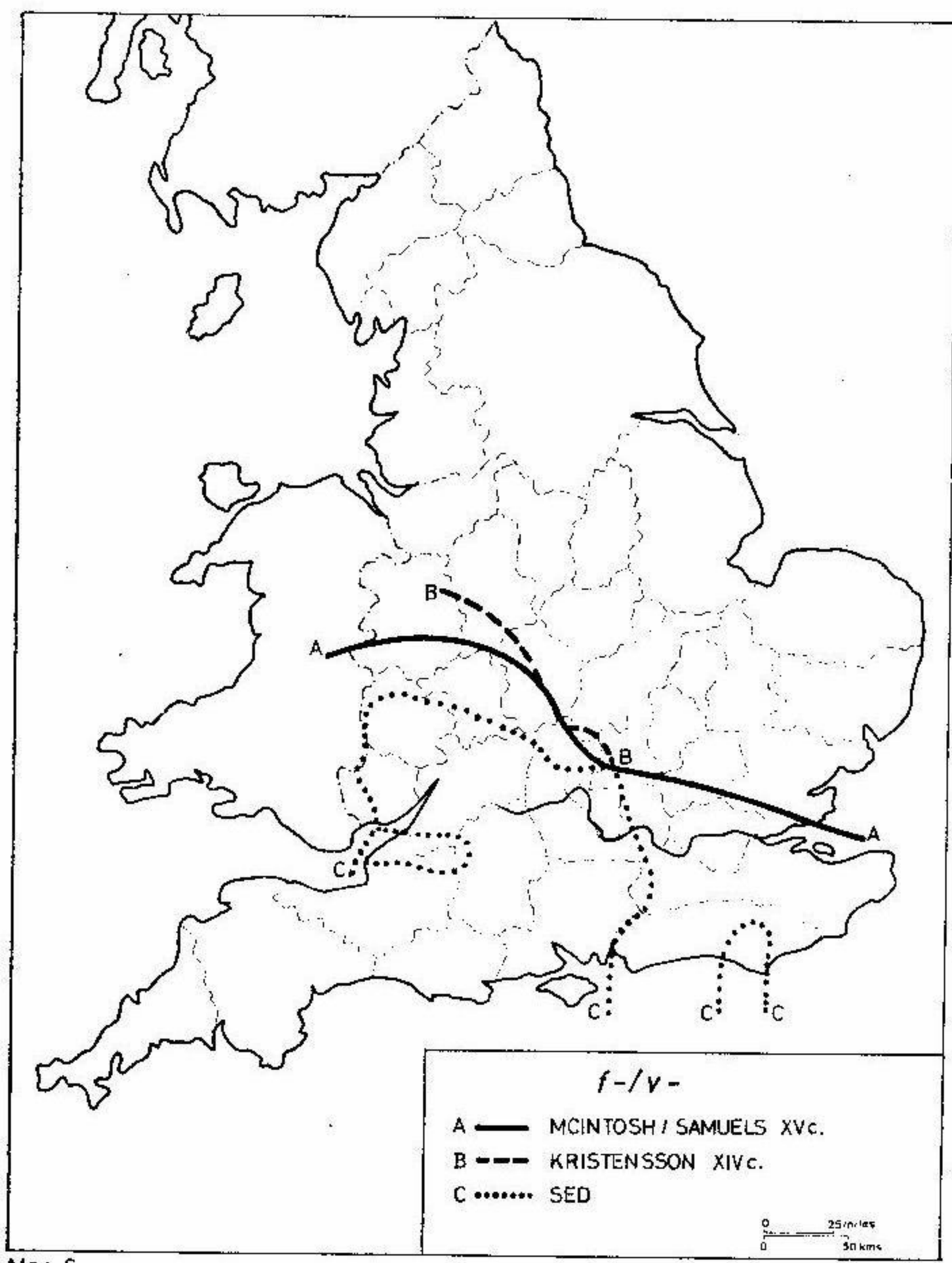
Map 3



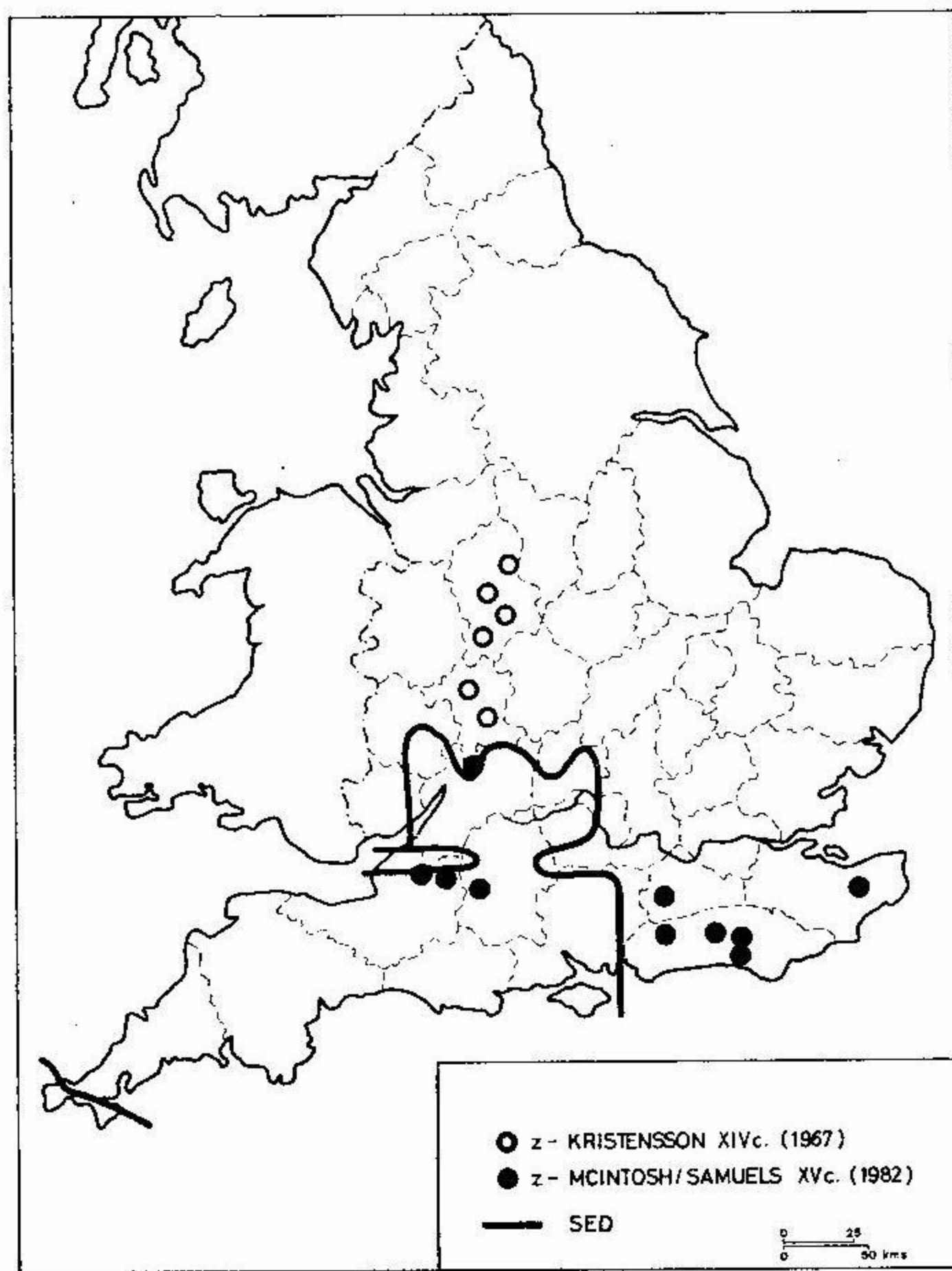
Map 4



Map 5



Map 6



Map 7