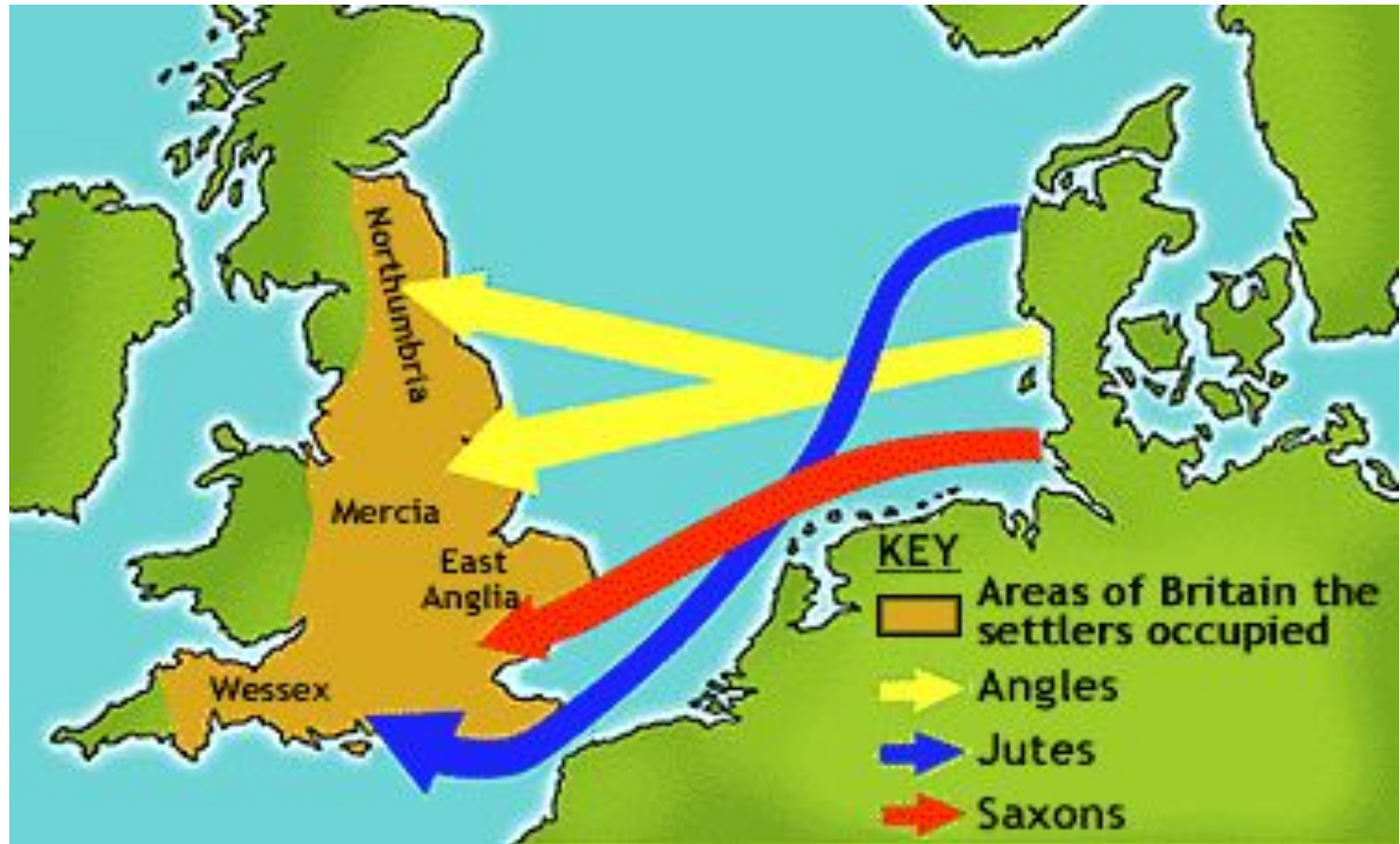

Anglo-Saxon England

Covers the history of early medieval England from the end of Roman Britain and the establishment of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms in the 5th century until the Conquest by the Normans in 1066.

Anglo-Saxon Settlers: where did they come from?



Historic Significance

The six centuries of Anglo-Saxon rule have had a lasting influence on England. Many places are still called by their Anglo-Saxon names, and many Anglo-Saxon words are still used today. Their system of law is also based on ideas that can be traced back to Anglo-Saxon times.

Traces in the Language

Words used today

faether - father

sunu - son

dohtor - daughter

chese - cheese

Toponymic Evidence

Anglo-Saxon place-names

ford - river crossing

ham - settlement

den - hill

ton - farm or village

wic - farmstead

State System

- Most people in Anglo-Saxon society were either freemen or slaves. A freeman owned land and slaves. A slave owned nothing and was the freeman's property. Richer freemen were known as 'thanes'. The most important thanes helped the king rule.
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Legal System

One principle common to all Germanic tribes was the use of money power to regulate all the legal relations of men: for murder, for instance, there was the following taxation, or 'wergild': an eorl cost 300 shillings; death of a farmer was punishable by a fine of 100 shillings; a serf cost from 40 to 80 shillings; a slave – nothing (one could kill him but not steal – theft was the worst crime possible) People who ran away from their punishment were declared 'outlaws'. No one would be punished for doing harm to an outlaw.

Religion

New settlers were pagans; their pantheon gave names to English days of the week: **Tui** – the war god (Tuesday); **Woden** – the supreme god (Wednesday); **Thor** – the god of thunder – (**Thursday**); **Frigga** – the female deity (Friday).

Life-Style

Early Anglo-Saxons buried the dead with their belongings. This provides evidence of the different jobs done by men and women. Men's graves include knives and spears, which suggests they were involved in hunting, fighting and farming. Women's graves include tools used for sewing and weaving, which suggests they were involved in making clothes.



Dwellings



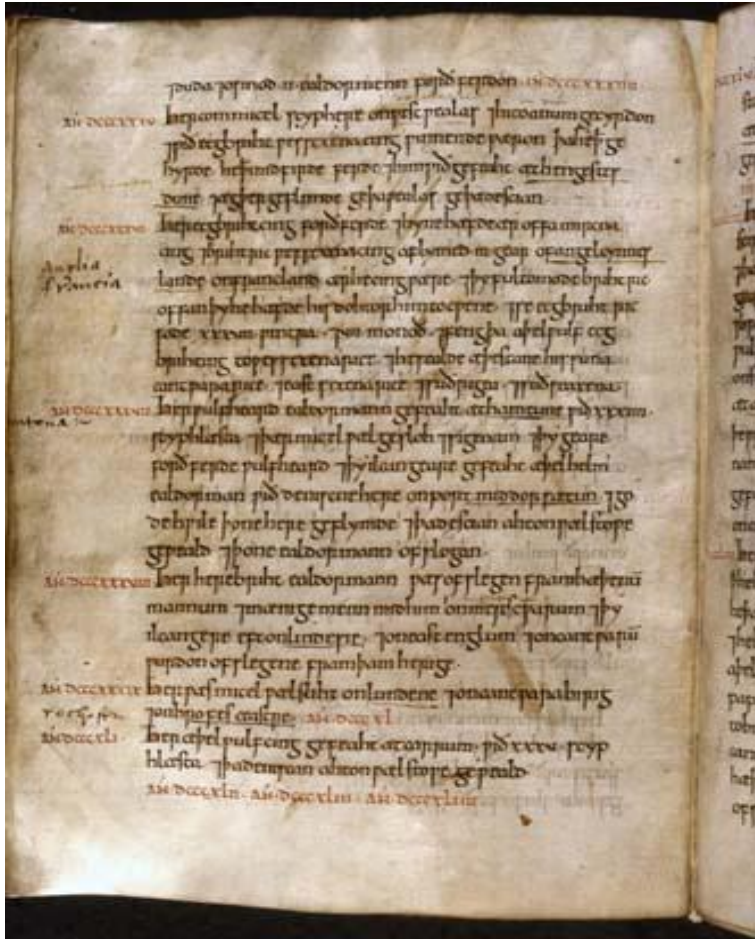
While kings and thanes lived in large halls (big wooden houses), free peasants or ceorls (churls) lived in small huts. Poor slaves were glad of a cowshed or barn to sleep in at night.

Education



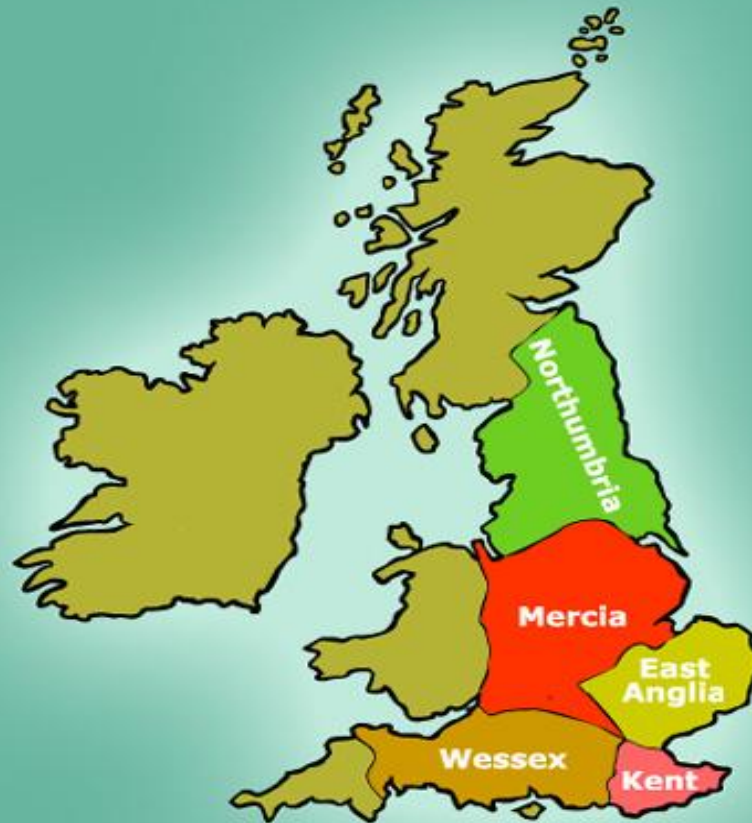
- The monasteries were centres of learning, where monks and nuns devoted themselves to studying the Bible.
- The only children that went to school in Anglo-Saxon times were those who lived in monasteries. Years were spent in prayer, copying out manuscripts and writing books.

Literary Evidence



There is a wide range of source material that covers Anglo-Saxon England. The main narrative sources are **Bede's Ecclesiastical History** and the **Anglo-Saxon Chronicle**. (Bede, the famous chronist, was the first to start counting years from the birth of Christ: BC and AD)

Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms of 7-8 A.D.



Famous Kings

Offa was King of Mercia from AD 757 to 796. Mercia was the strongest kingdom in Anglo-Saxon England, and Offa was the most powerful English king. His fame spread to Europe. Offa was treated almost as an equal by Charlemagne, the greatest ruler in Europe at the time.

Offa's Legacy

Offa issued England's first penny coins, in silver - known as 'Offa's pennies'. He built an earth wall and ditch for defense along the border with Wales. This bank is called Offa's Dyke. About 80 miles/129 km of it can still be seen.



Viking Raids



- 793 is the date given by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for the first **Viking** attack in Britain, at Lindisfarne monastery.
- Military success of the Vikings can be attributed to military mismanagement of England: local lords had no standing army; they could summon able-bodied men for 40 days, after that their army simply dispersed.

Norse Traces in the Language

- *Brook, hill, ridge, ravine; parts of the body: calf, leg, skull; roof, window, tidings; adjectives - awkward, loose, low; verbs – glitter, scare, take, scout; and, a unique case – pronouns **their** and **them**.*
 - Similarly, many place-names in areas of Norse and Danish settlement have Scandinavian roots (e.g. Sutherland).
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King Alfred



An important development of the 9th century was the rise of the Kingdom of **Wessex**. Though with a number of setbacks, the West Saxon kings came, by the end of Alfred's reign (899), to rule what had previously been Wessex, Sussex and Kent. Cornwall (Kernow) was subject to West Saxon dominance, and several kings of the more southerly Welsh kingdoms recognized Alfred as their overlord, as did western Mercia under Alfred's son-in-law Aethelred.

Alfred's Legacy

- He reorganized the army or 'fyrd', dividing it into 2 classes which practiced a rotation service;
 - he made great efforts in ship-building;
 - population of Celtic, British and Norse origin was equal in rights in his realm.
 - He created a system of laws, actually the customary law of shires, respected even after Norman conquest.
 - He encouraged religion and learning; he reformed monastic life and started the compilation of 'Anglo-Saxon Chronicles'.
 - He sought to integrate Danish war leaders whom he defeated by baptizing them.
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For Conclusion

Anglo-Saxon England was probably the most 'developed' kingdom of the period; one has only to look at the way coinage was managed in the period to realize that 10th century Anglo-Saxon kings wielded far greater royal authority than their European counterparts.

Check Yourself

- Explain: What is 'Heptarchy'?
- What is 'wergild'?
- What is 'Danegeld'?
- What sources are there at the disposal of historians that allow to reconstruct Anglo-Saxon period?
- In which way are the names *Bede*, *Offa*, *Athelstan*, *Aethelred* important for this historic period?
- Enumerate King Alfred's accomplishments, which earned him the title 'Great'.
- Comment on the effect Viking raids must have had on the cultural development of the country. Why were the raids so successful?
- Comment upon the origin of the weekdays' names.
- Speak about the Viking influence on the English language; which cases of borrowings are unique?
- Write out 3 dates that you consider most important for the period. What happened?
- Find English equivalents for: *племя, престолонаследие, грабить, регулярная армия, военная добыча, расширение территории, перемирие, потомок, историческое свидетельство (подтверждение)*.