A New Role for the Primary Sources in Anglo-Saxon History

Introduction

For centuries historians have debated the nature of the Anglo-Saxon invasion into Britain and the nature of the subsequent culture. Recent developments in genetics and archaeology suggest that invaders were able to come into Britain and establish dominance with relatively small numbers. In light of these new discoveries the accounts of the primary sources from that era, particularly *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, essentially have been relegated to a secondary level of importance. Their story of a massive invasion which wiped out or completely expelled the Romano-British population does not fit with the large amounts of evidence for a continued biologically British population.

As a result, historians have turned to biological and archaeological studies to shed light on the situation. These processes have revealed a world in which the British and the Anglo-Saxons, also known as the English, lived together in the same communities. However, these studies have raised many new questions for historians concerning the nature of the relationship between the two groups. Many ideas have been put forward and virtually all have met heavy criticism. Each vision of the Anglo-Saxon period proposed to date contains a large amount of conjecture and opinion due to the limited knowledge available at present. Consequently, any consensus in the near future is unlikely.

Interestingly, the original sources may hold many of these answers or at least hints to the answers for the current disputes. The Law codes of Ine, King of Wessex and later Alfred the Great, King of all the Anglo-Saxons, offer some helpful insights into the legal standings of Britons compared to that of their Anglo-Saxon overlords. Even the *Chronicle* and the *Ecclesiastical History* which have been shown to be less than perfect in terms of their accuracy could have something to offer. Rather than wholly accepting or rejecting the accounts in the sources, historians may have much to gain from reexamining them in light of

recent discoveries. These sources may hold some keys to discerning the new objective evidence. Therefore, there is a need for a renewed effort to involve the primary sources in developing any future theories.

Past Debate

Despite their fall from prominence in recent years, an understanding of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and the Venerable Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* is foundational to any discussion of the Anglo-Saxons. Though not truly contemporary sources, the two works were compiled far closer to the events in question than most others. Bede most likely finished his *History* around the year AD 731, drawing on written and verbal accounts from parishes across the south of Britain as well older mentions of the events in sources like the Sermons of Gildas.[1] The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* was first compiled under Alfred the Great who reigned from AD 871 to 899. The record drew on many sources, including Bede's *History*, and was updated annually through the twelfth century.[2] Using the *Chronicle* can be difficult as the copies available differ greatly in the included information, undoubtedly a result of the many transcriptions and additions made over the years.

With this relationship, it comes as no surprise then to find that the two sources portray a very similar series of events concerning the Anglo-Saxons and their arrival. Unfortunately the events preceding that arrival are not well recorded. Though both mention the departure of the Romans, the sources differ greatly on the precise dates and even the circumstances of that departure and no other histories exist from the period after Roman withdrawal to provide the missing information. However, both are in agreement that the Romans had effectively abandoned the Britons before the Saxons arrived. In either AD 448 or 449, one of the British chieftains, Vortigern, sent to the tribes in northern Europe for help warding off the attacks of

[1] Bede the Venerable, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People: With Bede's Letter to Egbert and Cuthbert's Letter on the Death of Bede*, Penguin UK. Kindle Edition, 19.
[2] Swanton, Michael James, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, (New York: Routledge, 1998), xviii.

the Picts after the Romans withdrew from the island sometime around AD 410.[3] Two brothers named Hengest and Horsa arrived with their comrades in arms and did just that. They had several successes against the Celts before turning on their hosts. Seeing them as easier targets than the Celts, the brothers sent word back to their homeland between what is now Denmark and Germany. Over the subsequent decades, various groups began arriving on the island, driving out different groups of Britons and forming various petty kingdoms.[4] The total effect of these accounts gives the reader the sense that the Anglo-Saxons came to Britain en masse, transplanting their society onto the British landscape after driving out the native inhabitants.

For nearly a millennium, those facts constituted the foundation for any discussion of the Anglo-Saxon invasion. The persistence of this line of reasoning can be seen in Sir Frank Merry Stenton's acclaimed book, entitled simply *Anglo-Saxon England*. First printed in 1943, it provides the best researched and most nuanced argument for the traditional model of total Anglo-Saxon conquest. Stenton forms a very specific and believable world referring back to sources even older than Bede or the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Sources like the sermons of Gildas are at least two century closer to the Anglo-Saxon invasion, but are often cryptic and lacking detail.[5] Procopius only touches on the British Isles, but Gildas includes some important details that were taken as fact by both Bede and the compilers of *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.

Gildas wrote his work, De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae, translated On the Ruin and Conquest of Britain, as a homily to decry some of the abuses by local leaders and general moral crisis that he saw around him.6 As part of this message, Gildas included a brief history of the British-English interactions up to the current time. It was Gildas who first recorded

[3] Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, 62. *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 12-13.
[4] Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, 63. *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 12-13.
[5] Stenton, F. M., *Anglo-Saxon England*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1943), 2.
[6] Johnson, Stephen, *Later Roman Britain*, (New York: Scribner, 1980), 111.

that a tyrant, the one later identified as Vortigern by Bede, invited the Anglo-Saxons, who then started to conquer the very people who they were called to protect.7 Gildas' tale continues through a battle at a place he identified as Badon Hill which halted the Saxons until the time of the writing.[8] The difficulty with this source is that it was not meant to be used as a historical account as we know them today. It was meant to address the nation's moral failings, simply using history to provide examples. Moreover, there is no indication that Gildas was drawing from any source other than his own knowledge on the subject.[9] Due to the early date of his writing, Gildas was considered to be the best source for historians prior to the mid-twentieth century.

Based on these earlier sources and the linguistic history of Western Europe, Stenton postulates that Anglo-Saxons did indeed carve out a Kingdom separate from the other peoples of Britain. However, this kingdom was limited to the south of Britain, and did not spread into the central areas as earlier scholars believed.[10] He argues that, after their short burst of conquest in the latter half of the fifth century, the advance of the English had been checked by the middle of sixth century. Stenton cites evidence of Angle-Saxon migration after this period as evidence that the population of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom had begun to outgrow its limited area, forcing some inhabitants to take to the sea in search of a new home.[11]

In this regard, Stenton did an admirable job as a historian. Proximity to the events is a very important factor in a source's value in interpreting the past. Stenton goes to great lengths to dissect several difficult sources to find their value as works of history. From these nuggets of truth, he produces several rational and believable conclusions about the period, as

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[7] Ibid, 112.
[8] Ibid, 112.
[9] Johnson, *Later Roman Britain*, 111.
[10] Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 6.
[11] Ibid, 6.

had countless numbers of predecessors before him. However, Stenton, as well as all the rest, suffers from the same restriction, namely a lack of evidence. Despite his admirable evaluation of the written sources, he admits at the start of his argument that the circumstances leading to the Anglo-Saxons' first arrival in Britain represent "a long period of which the history cannot be written."[12] Though he most likely did not fully realize it, this statement stands as a direct result of another statement that Stenton makes on the same page, namely that at the time of his writing in 1943, "archaeological evidence is an unsatisfactory basis for an absolute chronology."[13] Remedying this would bring about a new set of revelations and controversies concerning the Anglo-Saxons.

The use of archaeology for interpreting the nature of the Anglo-Saxon presence first rose to prominence in the early decades of the twentieth century. This is not to say that Anglo-Saxon sites had not been excavated before that time. However, these earlier excavations were collecting artifacts en masse to present a general impression of the types of artifacts dating to the period. Researchers paid little attention to more subtle trends of artifact distribution, grave orientation, and kin groups.[14] The studies of the first half of the century focused on trends like these, utilizing new techniques to provide ever more detailed theories of the nature of Anglo-Saxon society. For all this innovation, the theories all sought to further illuminate the world described by men like Stenton, a world of homogenous ethnic groups with the social strata within them. The use of historical documents continued to dominate the field, with archaeology occupying a secondary role of providing visual examples of the historical accounts.

Though the early twentieth century saw great advances in the technology and techniques of archaeology, the study of the Anglo-Saxons was still slow to progress. To a

[12] Ibid, 1.
[13] Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon* England, 1.
[14] Arnold, C. J., *An Archaeology of the Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, (London: Routledge, 1988), 3-6.

large extent, this slow rate of innovation came from the fact that these years saw not one but two world wars and the rise of Nazism.[15] Because of this climate, theories of the English impact were more than a purely academic issue. They carried implications for the relative places of Great Britain and Germany in a time when the two were opponents in great wars. English scholars were no longer comfortable with the notion that the first truly unified English nation was made up of German invaders.[16] Feelings like this did much to reopen the debate on early British history, and even produced theories postulating an extremely limited Anglo-Saxon.[17] While the 1940s and 50s sparked great controversy over the place of the Anglo-Saxons, little new scholarship emerged during the height of the Cold War. The disputes raised during the 1940s and 50s would be largely put on hold until the 1980s when research resumed with a vengeance.

In the meantime, scholars began reassessing the conclusions of earlier studies in various arenas. One of the most influential for understanding the Anglo-Saxon past was the conclusions being drawn from studying place-names. In 1849, John Mitchell Kimble had actually been one of the first to critique the events described by Bede and the other ancient sources. In place of their grand narrative of invasion, he asserted that the variety of place-names with unique suffixes, such as –wick, –ham, –stead, and –tun, portrayed a landscape shaped by individual "tribal groups."[18] By the early twentieth century, scholars began to view place-names as indicating both the "social and administrative" history of the country.[19]

For instance, it was believed that sites whose name ended in either –ingas or –ingaham represented the areas of earliest occupation by the Anglo-Saxon, and, therefore,

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[15] Arnold, C. J., *An Archaeology of the Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1997), 22.
[16] Ibid, 22.
[17] Arnold, *Archaeology*, 2nd ed. 22.
[18] Ryan, Martin J., "Place-Names, Language and the Anglo-Saxon Landscape," in *Place-names, Language and the Anglo-Saxon Landscape* / edited by Nicholas J. Higham and Martin J. Ryan. n.p.: (Woodbridge ; Rochester, NY : Boydell, 2011) 6.
[19] Ibid, 7.

could be used to trace the areas of the earliest centers of English control.[20] In 1966, however, John Dodgson published a study that paired the –ingas sights with the earliest known Anglo-Saxon cemeteries and found no positive correlation. Instead, they seemed to follow the areas which retained paganism the longest.[21] In the 1970s, new research began to suggest that sites ending simply in –ham, but not –ingaham, represented areas where Anglo-Saxons had renamed Romano-British sites.[22] This correlation provided some measure of evidence for the nature of the Anglo-Saxon arrival, but the radical shifts in theories pertaining to place names convinced many scholars, including archaeologists, that it was not a helpful data set for determining the society of the past.[23]

This doubt almost certainly helped to fuel a new wave archaeological study in the late 1970s and 80s. This new archaeology of social identity focused on the goods placed in graves to follow the movement of materials across Britain. These considerations helped to form a picture of the political structure of the Anglo-Saxons which drove the movement of these goods. Such studies concluded that the world of early Anglo-Saxon England was one of small polities, each dealing with the other through exchange.[24] Noticeably missing from these evaluations is any discussion of the ethnic composition of these small enclaves. Instead, the researchers focused on grave deposits showing evidence of certain essential goods arriving in multiple areas by means of trade. These discoveries implied that the Anglo-Saxons came to Britain in small groups and remained separate for the opening years of occupation.[25] Despite not intending to address the ethnic compositions of the resulting society, these studies helped to define the structure of English society and therefore a

[20] Ibid, 8.
[21] Ibid, 8.
[22] Ryan, *Place-names, Language and the Anglo-Saxon Landscape*, 9.
[23] Ibid, 10.
[24] Bassett, Steven, *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, (London: Leicester University Press, 1989), 22-23.
[25] Ibid, 22-23.

framework for sequent studies of the people living within that framework. Moreover, these studies would eventually provide valuable data for further study.

Archaeologists focused on the grave deposits because of a sever lack of settlement data. By 1980 only two Anglo-Saxon settlements had been excavated entirely. These two settlements, Mucking and West Stowe, show a loosely arranged settlement of exclusively Anglo-Saxon structures, located near but separated from the Roman site.[26] The excavations at West Stow did yield one substantial discovery. Archaeologists at the site uncovered large quantities of Roman style pottery and coins.[27] Though only one site, this discovery opened the possibility that in some instances the Anglo-Saxons settled alongside the native Britons. This was even more direct evidence in opposition to the sources' narrative of conquest and further support for a model of cultural coexistence.

Drawing on this and other discoveries, Richard Hodges produced a book entitled *The Anglo-Saxon Achievement*, in which he attempted to find the origins of the Medieval English identity in the Anglo-Saxon society rather than in the later Norman period.[28] In the portion devoted the earliest stages of Anglo-Saxon settlement, Hodges cites the unorganized arrangement of buildings at sites like Mucking as evidence that Anglo-Saxons arrived without a formal power structure in place despite the fact that such structures were already in place in the English homelands around Denmark.[29] Consequently, he concludes that the build-up of Anglo-Saxons was a gradual, spontaneous one in which the two populations, Anglo-Saxon and Romano British, grew beside one another. As a part of this model, he claims that many of the new timber settlements around the older Roman sites were actually founded by Britons not Anglo-Saxons.[30] Though he proposes a new sequence for the

[26] Johnson, *Later Roman Britain*, 128-129.
[27] Ibid, 129.
[28] Hodges, Richard. *The Anglo-Saxon Achievement: Archaeology & the Beginnings of English Society* /. n.p.:(London : Duckworth, 1989) 3.
[29] Ibid, 25.
[30] Ibid, 30-32.

invasion, Hodges still acknowledges that by its end the English had subjugated all the native peoples.[31]

Though very influential at the time of its publishing, *The Anglo-Saxon Achievement* offered only one possible explanation of the available evidence. While archaeology certainly was offering challenges to primary narratives, it also was providing support for the idea that the Britons were essentially eliminated from their Roman era settlements. The settlement remains in Roman sites were found to virtually disappear by the middle of the fifth century, precisely during the years when the English were arriving in the south of the island, and the new structures were in a distinctly Anglo-Saxon style.[32] Moreover, because of unclear stratigraphy, archaeologists were not able to find any kind of substantial evidence of continued occupation in the Roman sites by the native British inhabitants. If Hodges' model is correct, then why would the Britons abandon the Roman settlements so quickly? For this, Hodges does not have a meaningful answer, and this casts doubt on his vision of this period of history. So like so many innovations, this wave brought some answers about the past, but did not resolve the debate.

Hodge's vision, however, was only a prolog to a new era of academic inquiry which occupied the 1990s and centered on the emergence of migration theory. More scholars became increasingly interested in telling the story of Anglo-Saxon's arrival, not simply finding as many facts as possible.[33] The direction of Anglo-Saxon studies shifted so dramatically that new editions appeared of books published only a few years before. C.J. Arnold republished his book, *An Archaeology of the Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, after only nine years. Arnold says that the choice to publish the new edition was an attempt to update its information to reflect the reality that "research has greatly advanced some topics and in a

[31] Ibid, 34.
[32] Johnson, *Later Roman Britain*, 129.
[33] Arnold, *Archaeology*, 2nd ed. 7-9.

few areas there has been substantial rethinking."[34] It is no coincidence that the largest alteration to the book was a new chapter, "Migration Theory."

These two coinciding innovations in archaeology, both theoretical and technological, helped to bring the debate over the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons into the modern era. Archaeologists began to change the way that graves were analyzed, not so much in how the data was collected but in how it was used. Where preceding scholars had used grave goods to trace the relationships within the British Isles, researchers at the end of the 1990s were able to use that data, coupled with that found on the European continent, to link individual communities in Britain to their areas of origin. The most commonly used techniques included noting the types of pottery and metal work found in the graves along with the burial rites evidenced.[35]

From Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, historians knew that the invaders eventually known as Anglo-Saxons were a mixture of Angles, Saxons, and Jutes.[36] Increased data from improved excavation techniques began to show researchers more precisely when and whence these invaders came to southern Britain. Scholars found that Angles from the area is today Schleswig-Holstein and the island of Fyn were some of the earliest Germanic immigrants to arrive. They settled across what would become England early in the fifth century.[37] They were followed closely by the Saxons, who came during the same century from northern Germany around the River Elbe, eventually concentrated in what is today Wessex and Sussex.[38] The Jutes, unsurprising from Jutland, were the last to arrive, coming late in the fifth century.[39] For some reason, after settling in Kent, this last group

[34] Ibid, xvi.
[35] Arnold *Archaeology*, 2nd ed. 23.
[36] Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, 62.
[37] Arnold *Archaeology*, 2nd ed. 23.
[38] Ibid. 23.
[39] Ibid. 23.

assimilated relatively quickly into the broader Frankish culture.[40] This certainly had something to do with the Jutes being ignored in the naming of the immerging Germanic culture.

Current Disputes

Such were the momentous advancements made in understanding the Anglo-Saxon invasion during the twentieth century. At its beginning, most historians took the word of men like Gildas, Bede, and the Anglo-Saxon chroniclers as the primary source of knowledge, with all other information fitting beneath them. Their story of nearly total expulsion of the Britons to the fringes of the island through bursts of intense Anglo-Saxon conquest continued to be the accepted narrative. By the century's close, the focus had largely shifted away from textual analysis to the examination of material evidence. Analyzing cemeteries and settlement areas both in England and on the European continent provided a new wealth of information about the precise places of origin and times of immigration of individual Germanic peoples. The result was a view of the "invasion" as a more disjointed and piecemeal affair than the near constant warfare portrayed in the primary sources.

Improved analysis techniques developed in the middle of the twentieth century led to a tighter relationship between the work of archaeologists and historians and ultimately proved to be the key to unlocking the nature of the arrivals of the Anglo-Saxon groups and their patterns of settlement. The question facing scholars of the twenty-first century became discovering the sociopolitical relationships between the new Anglo-Saxon population and the native Romano British. To unravel this even more complex and nuanced subject matter would require incorporating an entirely new field of study, genetics.

As strange as it may sound, during these first two decades of the new millennium, some of the greatest strides in the study of the Anglo-Saxon society have come from the

[40] Ibid. 23.

study of human genetics. By determining the amounts of Anglo-Saxon and native British DNA in the modern population of England, researchers believe it is possible to see how much of a biological impact the English had on southern Britain.[41] The success or failure of a people to reproduce can inform scholars on issues such as relative social standing, with the upper class having more surviving children, and cultural mixing, evidenced through the relative amounts of DNA. By comparing the genetic impact of the Anglo-Saxons with the number of Anglo-Saxon immigrants and British natives, scholars hope see the nature and extent of intermarriage, concubinage, and other such relationships between the two groups.

To date there have been two extensive studies conducted in this new field. One was performed by a team headed by Michael Weale along with Deborah Weiss, Rolf Jager, Neil Bradman, and Mark Thomas in 2002.[42] The other was conducted a year later by Christian Capelli heading a team of 15 researchers.[43] Both groups studied Y-chromosome DNA, meaning that study only reflected the male lineage of the English people, since Y-chromosomes only pass from one man to another. The first study found a significant Anglo-Saxon footprint in central England with results that suggest that Anglo-Saxons may have contributed between 50-100% of the gene pool in the years following the invasion.[44] The Capelli study produced less dramatic but still significant results, showing an impact of 20-60%, after using a model for comparison which contained a greater number of variables.[45] (For a full discussion of these two studies see Appendix A.) In either case, it appears the Anglo-Saxons were quite successful in their attempts to produce offspring.

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[41] Härke, Heinrich. "Anglo-Saxon Immigration and Ethnogenesis." Medieval Archaeology 55, no. 1 (November 2011): 1-28. Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed September 19, 2012).
[42] Weale, ME, DA Weiss, RF Jager, N Bradman, and MG Thomas, "Y Chromosome Evidence for Anglo-Saxon Mass Migration," Molecular Biology And Evolution 19, no. 7 (n.d.): 1008-1021. Science Citation Index, EBSCOhost(accessed November 4, 2012).
[43] Capelli, Cristian, Nicola Redhead, Julia K. Abernethy, Fiona Gratrix, James F. Wilson, Torolf Moen, and David B. Goldstein, et al, "A Y Chromosome Census of the British Isles," Current Biology 13, no. 11 (May 27, 2003): 979. Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed November 4, 2012).
[44] Weale et al, "Y Chromosome Evidence", 1018.
[45] Capelli er al, "A Y Chromosome Census", 983.

The most important figures for both producing and interpreting the markers in the study are the populations of the Anglo-Saxons and native Britons.[46] Estimates for the British population interpolated from Roman sources and the Domesday Book point to a population between 1 and 2 million Britons at the time of the Anglo-Saxon arrival.[47] It would take between 250,000 and 500,000 male immigrants to have the impact observed in the Weale and Capelli studies.[48] This number is the total number of native Anglo-Saxons to arrive during the first century of immigration. This means that, even by the end of substantial migration, the Anglo-Saxon immigrants were probably less than half the population, but contributing more than half of the genetic material. The challenge for today's scholars is to somehow take these numerical results and translate them into a model which represents the social realities which produced them.

The opinions on Weale's and Capelli's studies have sparked a new and vigorous debate on the society created by the Anglo-Saxon invaders. One of the first and perhaps boldest claims came in 2006 from a team led Mark Thomas in an article entitled, "Evidence for an Apartheid-like Social Structure in Early Anglo-Saxon England."[49] Thomas and his colleagues believe that the genetics suggest a society where sex and marriage were tightly controlled across racial lines with the Anglo-Saxons having an advantage because of their position atop the social structure.[50] Higher status usually leads to more wealth which, in turn, brings more leisure time and higher standards of health. All these together contribute to a higher rate of reproduction. In this way, the modest numbers of English settlers were able to have a large impact on the British gene pool over only a century of immigration.

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[46] Härke, "Anglo-Saxon Immigration and Ethnogenesis", 8.
[47] Härke, "Anglo-Saxon Immigration and Ethnogenesis", 8.
[48] Ibid, 8.
[49] Thomas, Mark G., Michael P. H. Stumpf, and Heinrich Härke, "Evidence for an Apartheid-Like Social Structure in Early Anglo-Saxon England,"Proceedings: Biological Sciences 273, no. 1601 (2006): 2651-2657.JSTOR Life Sciences, EBSCOhost (accessed September 19, 2012).
[50] Thomas et al, "Apartheid", 2651.

However plausible the model presented by Thomas and his colleagues might be, it is not the only model for explaining the results of the DNA studies. One of the other prominent models is the one put forward by John Pattison. His model is one of more gradual integration without the strict regulation postulated by Thomas and his associates.[51] If the Saxons were intermarrying more steadily, however, it would require a longer period of time to produce the 50% seen by Weale and Capelli. To account for this Pattison believes that the German DNA seen could have come from the Belgae *foederati* (allied conscripts) who came with the Roman legions.[52] This would mean another entire century of intermarriage, bringing in more German DNA.[53] (For a full discussion of the Thomas and Pattison models see Appendix B).

Reapplying the Sources: An Example

Like the other contentions over the Anglo-Saxons, the visions of Thomas and Pattison rest on suppositions of the nature of Anglo-Saxon society. The only method of judging the accuracy of these models rests in determining whether the Anglo-Saxons willfully tried to preserve their identity or if they formed a new composite identity that becomes "Anglo-Saxon". At present there is not sufficient physical evidence to offer a definitive answer to this question. This is not to say that such evidence might not available in the future, but since it is not available today, other methods must be employed by today's researchers if our understanding is to move forward. In this capacity, it is time to turn again to the marginalized primary sources, despite their disagreements with the archaeological evidence. They put forward a domineering Anglo-Saxon culture that would not seem to be open to amalgamation except completely on its own terms.

The written sources for the Anglo-Saxon invasion have been criticized for their bias in favor of the Anglo-Saxon monarchs in power at the time. Recall, that it was on the basis

[51] Pattison, John E. "Integration Versus Apartheid in Post-Roman Britain: A Response to Thomas et al. (2008)," Human Biology 83, no. 6 (December 2011): 715-733. Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost(accessed September 19, 2012) 716.
[52] Pattison, "Integration Versus Apartheid" 717.
[53] Ibid.

of these sources that historians formulated the theory of a nearly complete removal of the native British population. When archaeology and other scientific studies showed that this was not the case, Bede and the other early sources largely fell from prominence. Simply because scholars relied too heavily on the sources in the past, ought not to cause them to under value these works today. If approached with the proper skepticism and discernment, these sources might prove valuable for the very biases which have pushed them to the periphery of modern scholarship. They could even be applied to the current arguments over the relationship between the Britons and Saxons.

It might seem that Gildas' *On the Ruin and Conquest of Britain* does not offer much for determining the nature of the Saxon society because the author focuses his attention on the native British population. Moreover, the work is a series of lessons, not a dedicated historic account, filled with metaphors that can obscure the message at times. Nonetheless, it mentions several important facts about British relations with the Saxons. First, it is quickly evident that the Saxons were noticeably pagan in comparison to the Christian Britons.[54] Though Gildas was a priest and more sensitive to this, it certainly would be a factor that would noticeable divide the two groups. Second, Gildas, writing in the middle of the sixth century, still recognizes that the Briton population was conquered by an invading Anglo-Saxon force which still exists as a ruling class.[55] This consciousness of the two groups would seem to hint at some measure of a divided society, but it does not provide much to indicate whether that society was divided along ethnic lines and not only socioeconomic ones. It is not only difficult but most likely unhelpful to look for greater clarity in Gildas since he wrote his work not so much to record history but to teach a lesson.

[54] "Strategies of Identity Construction: the Writings of Gildas, Aneirin and Bede." (2012):OAIster, EBSCOhost (accessed November 4, 2012) 105.
[55] "Strategies of Identity", 105.

Bede and the compilers of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* did seek to write a dedicated history of the British Isles. Even if the result is not completely accurate, Bede claims in the introduction to his *History* to have expended great effort to reconstruct the history of the church in Britain as accurately as possible.[56] Assuming this is true, the story that follows was at least the one believed by the people of the time and therefore instructive for determining popular opinions of the relationship between the native Britons and the Saxon invaders. With this in mind, several of Bede's statements take upon themselves an added measure of significance.

Bede's account is undoubtedly biased toward finding an unified Anglo-Saxon kingdom in the past, as there was one at the time of his writing. When addressing the invasion of the Anglo-Saxons, he writes that after the initial arrival of King Vortigern and his three long-ships, the king sent back to his homeland for "a great body of warriors, which, when joined to the original forces, constituted an invincible army."[57] In Bede's mind, even though the invaders came from different parts of Germany, they were unified in their desire to subdue the Britons.[58]

Their attitude toward the Romano British inhabitants was one of complete destruction, either of the individual inhabitants or at least of their culture. Bede recounts how the Angles, in particular, eventually "established a stranglehold over all the doomed island…bishops and people alike, regardless of rank, were destroyed with fire and sword, and none remained to bury those who had suffered a cruel death."[59] According to Bede, the prospects for the survivors were grim. Those Britons who remained alive after the initial attacks faced a choice between a life in slavery, fleeing to the continent or a hard life up in the mountains on

[56] Bede, "Ecclesiastic History", 41.
[57] Bede, "Ecclesiastic History", 62.
[58] Ibid, 62.
[59] Ibid, 64.

the marginal parts of the land.[60] Despite their later victory at Badon Hill, an account Bede most likely borrowed from Gildas, this state remained mostly unchanged according to his account.[61]

Where the Venerable Bede depicts the primary invasion of the English came in two stages, the initial party under Vortigern followed by a larger party of reinforcements. The story in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* more closely mirrors the model of piecemeal immigration currently postulated by today's scholars. The text tells of many different groups under various leaders arriving in groups of around three to four long-ships. Despite this difference, the situation is portrayed in much the same way. In the year AD 457, for instance, the *Chronicle* records that after losing 4,000 men at the battle of Crayford, "the Britons then abandoned the land of Kent."[62] Later, in 491, "Ella and Cissa besieged the city of Anderitum, and killed all who lived in there; there was not even one Briton left there."[63] As in Bede, the *Chronicle* portrays the Anglo-Saxons' primary policy towards the inhabitants as one of either annihilation or removal.

Even with their biases and flaws, these sources align with the archaeological evidence in several key areas. Recall that the limited archaeological evidence for settlement patterns seem to indicate that the Roman village are mostly abandoned during the Anglo-Saxon period with settlement shifting to nearby sites where the structure are all of Germanic style.[64] Additionally, the grave distributions in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries point to mixed households.[65] Both of these would be consistent with a population in which the Romano British were removed from their original way of life and integrated in some manner into that of the Anglo-Saxon invaders.

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[60] Ibid, 64.
[61] Ibid, 64.
[62] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 12.
[63] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 15.
[64] Johnson, *Later Roman Britain*, 131-133.
[65] Härke, *Anglo-Saxon Immigration*, 13.

Because of this agreement, it is possible to conclude that while *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* might have been overly simple in their description and chronology of the past events, the authors were well aware of the situation around them at that time. Both of these sources depict an English population which holds the native Britons in very low esteem and do not indicate that the invaders felt any remorse for the slaughter they inflicted upon the native population. Regardless of whether or not the slaughter of these populations was on the order described in these sources, it is clear that new rulers saw no place for Britons in the official narrative. If this is true, it most likely indicates a similar contempt for the remaining population as well. This would mean that even if there were not the formal proscriptions against intermarriage postulated by Thomas et al., there was most like a significant social divide between the two groups, which would seem to contradict Pattison's hypothesis.

This view is further borne out in another type of primary source. These are the Anglo-Saxon law codes, including the Laws of Ine, King of Wessex and the Laws of Alfred, King of the Anglo-Saxons. Dating to between AD 688 and 694, the Laws of Ine created a system in which most crimes were punished through the payment of fines.[66] Each fine was relative to the monetary value of an individual's life or his wergeld. This amount was set based on his place in society.[67] In the laws of Ine, one law states that "if a Welshman possesses a hide of land, his wergeld shall be 120 shillings'. If, however, he possesses half a hide, his wergeld shall be 80 shillings; if he possesses no land- 60 shillings."[68] In contrast, the wergelds of Saxons seem to have ranged between 200 and 1200 shillings even for vassals.[69] The only time that any Welshman is shown to have a wergeld of even 200 shillings

[66] Attenborough, F. L. *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings, ed. and tr. by F. L. Attenborough.* n.p.: Cambridge, University press, 1922., 1922. UNIV OF OKLAHOMA LIBRARIES's Catalog, EBSCOhost (accessed November 4, 2012).
[67] Ibid, 41.
[68] Ibid, 47.
[69] Ibid, 59

is if he is a trusted messenger of the king.[70] From these laws it is possible to see that not only were the native Britons, also known as the Welsh, a separate class, they were considered of lesser value than their Saxon neighbors.

Alfred the Great was another king of Wessex some two centuries later who united the various Anglo-Saxon petty kingdoms against the Danes.[71] He also produced a law code for his subjects, though it is unknown whether it was written while his was still on King of Wessex or after he became King of the Anglo-Saxons. As his title on the oldest copies only mentions Wessex, it is speculated that the laws date before his elevation sometime around AD 871 to 892, but there is evidence that he may have continued to use his old title later in life.[72] In this later law code, there is no mention of any distinction between subjects of different race. In fact the world Welsh does not appear at all.[73] It would seem by that time the culture had become more or less homogenous. Coupled with Alfred taking the title of King of the Anglo-Saxons, it seems that the Germanic invaders had succeeded in eliminating all discernible markers of Romano British identity from their society.

Considering this evidence, Thomas et al.'s model of racial interaction between the English and British appears far more likely than that of Pattison and his team. It is difficult to envision how a culture which holds such a high opinion of itself and such a low opinion of its neighbors would not have some measure of restriction regarding intermarriage. Though this judgment is not definitive, this reevaluation of the primary sources helps to at least prompt historians in one direction. In a broader sense, the reintroduction of sources like the Gildas' *On the Ruin and Conquest of Britain*, Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, and the Laws of Ine and Alfred, even with their biases and inaccuracies could serve to direct further study and provide historians with a measure for

[70] Ibid, 47.
[71] Ibid, 34-35.
[72] Attenborough, *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, 35.
[73] Ibid, 62-93.

their findings. In fact these very biases, in their own way, are yet another type of asset, giving today's scholars a look at the mindset of the times, and as investigations into the past move forward and hypotheses become ever more nuanced, this perspective will become even more helpful.

Conclusion

The nature of early Anglo-Saxon civilization has persisted as one of the divisive topics within European history. Because of its implications for England's place within the ethnic tapestry of Europe, this debate has only intensified since World War II. Corresponding advancements in technology and theory have allowed scholars to view of the early Anglo-Saxon period more clearly than ever before. In the past century, the academic community has moved away from relying completely on the word of sources like Gildas' *On the Ruin and Conquest of Britain*, the Venerable Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, and *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Over the years, scholars have brought new methods of investigation to bear on this issue, including archaeology and genetic studies. Each of these has brought new revelations and insights into the nature of the society. It has also brought new areas of debate as well.

The most recent of these debates has arisen over the results of genetic studies of the British populace conducted by the teams of Weale and Capelli. Scholars are currently divided over just what type of marriage interactions occurred between the English and the Britons. These new debates have opened a new role for the written sources, bringing them back into relevance after having been rarely utilized in recent scholarship. In the current debate over the relationship between the Anglo-Saxon invaders and the British natives, the sources offer crucial insights, if not a definitive answer. Their persistence in upholding the dominance of the Anglo-Saxon culture would seem to indicate that relationship of the invaders to those they conquered was one of forced submission, whenever possible. This resulted in the Britons

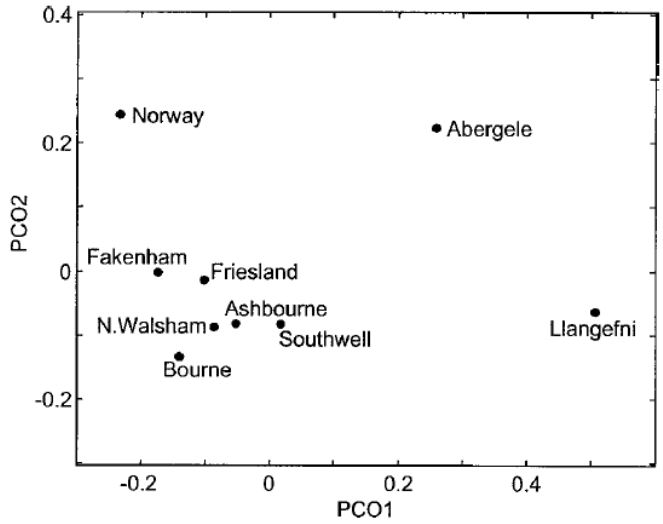
being treated as lesser subjects under earlier kings such as Ine until they were finally amalgamated into the English culture by the time of Alfred the Great.

This contribution serves to demonstrate just how bright a future the original sources of Anglo-Saxon England have in historical scholarship. With many scientific tests still waiting to be carried out, the coming years promise much more complex scientific data that will require discussion and evaluation. As that material becomes available, our image of the past will have the opportunity to become increasingly clear. As a result, it is important that scholars continue to look to the writings of the past as a guide for interpreting all future scholarship.

Appendix A

The first substantial study to use genetic markers in Anglo-Saxon studies was completed by the team of Michael E. Weale, Deborah A. Weiss, Rolf F. Jager, Neil Bradman, and Mark G. Thomas. This team was drawn from the faculty of University College London, University of California, Davis, and Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam.[74] The team was attempting to resolve the debate between large scale and small scale migration models for the Anglo-Saxon migration.[75] The researchers compared samples taken from males in each community. The comparison of the Y Chromosomal DNA analysis only pertains to the male lineage. They compared samples from small towns across a transection of England and Wales chosen because of their isolation from recent immigrations to samples taken from Norway, to represent Norse invasions, and Friesland in the northern Netherlands, to represent the Anglo-Saxon homeland.[76]

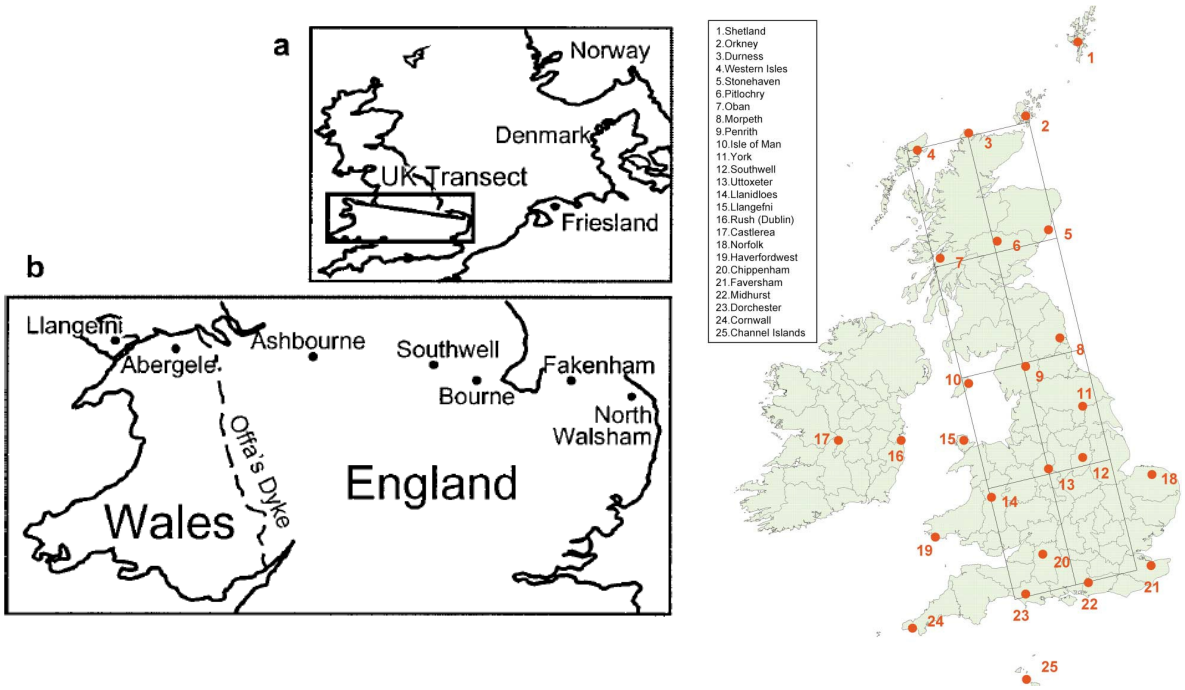
Several key genetic markers for each group were then identified from previous work on these populations and the percentages in the DNA samples were compared. Assuming that before the migration age each population area was mostly unique, the researchers theorized that higher levels of another group's markers would indicate a larger influx into that region. The results (see figure 1) show that, as expected, the villages in



(Weale et al, 1017) The two axes represent the values of two key genetic markers. Note the cluster of locations around Friesland.

[74] Weale et al, "Y Chromosome Evidence", 1008.
[75] Ibid, 1008-1009.
[76] Ibid, 1009-1010.

northern Wales retained a unique genetic makeup, but that the villages in England were virtually identical to the Friesland sample.[77] The research team's models for interpretation concluded that these levels would either require a large scale migration event or impossibly high levels of annual migration over the subsequent generations.[78] As a result, the team concluded that there must have been a large influx of males into the area of northern England. However, they could not tell whether this change was a significant addition to the native population or a replacement of the existing population.[79]



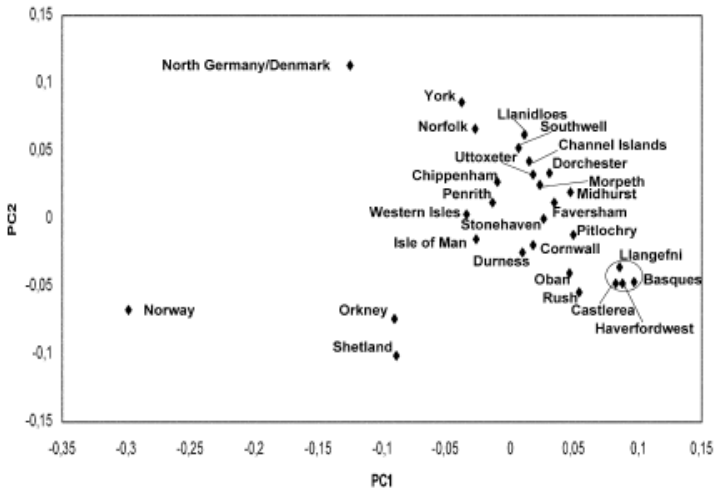
(Weale et al. 1010 & Capelli et al. 980) The 2002 Weale study (left) focused on a line of cities across center of England into Wales, while the 2003 Capelli study took samples from across Britain.

The following year, an even larger team consisting of Cristian Capelli, Nicola Redhead, Julia K. Abernethy, Fiona Gratrix, James F. Wilson, Torolf Moen, Tor Hervig, Martin Richards, Michael P.H. Stumpf, Peter A. Underhill, Paul Bradshaw, Alom Shaha, Mark G. Thomas, Neal Bradman, and David B. Goldstein addressed the issue. This team represented not only University College London, but Trondheim University, Norway,

[77] Weale et al, "Y Chromosome Evidence", 1018.
[78] Ibid, 1018.
[79] Ibid, 1019.

Haukeland University, Denmark, University of Huddersfield, London, Universita Cattolica di Roma, and Oxford University.[80] This study greatly expanded the amount of data collected, taking samples from multiple sources in Denmark and Northern Germany to represent the Anglo-Saxons and extending the study with samples across all of the British Isles (see Figure 2) including setting the communities of rural Ireland as the new baseline for native British DNA.[81]

With these additions, the studies did still show a significant percentage of continental influence, both from Scandinavia and from northern Germany, but only on the order of 20%-60% replacement, not the 50%-100% found by the Weale et al. study.[82] (See figure 3). Moreover, by expanding the study to cover more of Great Britain, the results show that the Anglo-Saxon immigration, and Norse immigration for that matter, was not a uniform affair. Different regions experienced different numbers of invaders. The numbers show a percentage of replacement that might not require the large-scale migration required by for the Weale et al. results.[83] Despite the larger sample size of this study, it left many issues open for debate. Both studies had to set a benchmark for what they considered a native population. In the case of the Weale study, the researchers took towns in Wales, while Capelli and his associates used



(Capelli et al 982) By adding more data points, the Capelli study showed a range of both Anglo-Saxon and Norse influences.

[80] Capelli et al, "A Y Chromosome Census", 979.
[81] Ibid, 979-980.
[82] Ibid, 983.
[83] Ibid, 983.

populations in Ireland.[84] With records of immigration often scarce throughout history even more recently than the Anglo-Saxon invasion, it is difficult to determine all the genetic contributions to a population. As a result, the choice is still only an educated guess. Similar choices had to be made for determining the Anglo-Saxon homeland. Choices and assumptions like this have left space for continued debate.

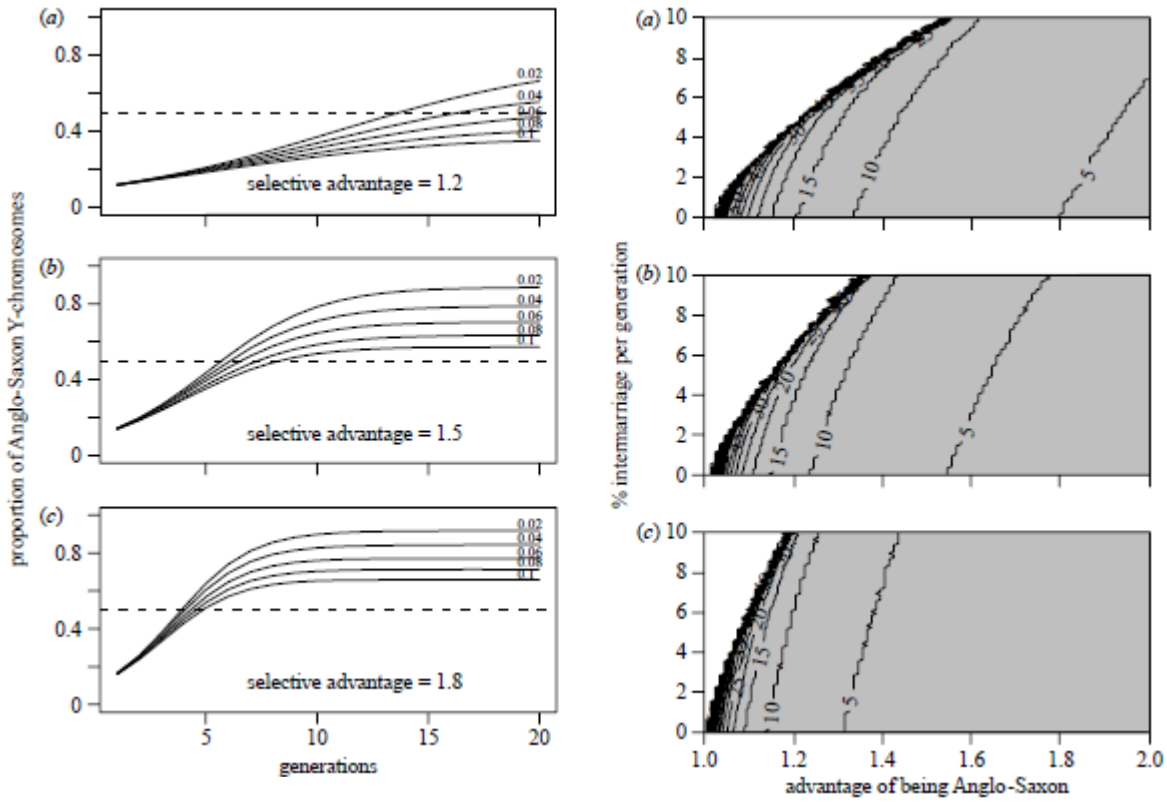
[84] Weale et al, "Y Chromosome Evidence", 1009. Capelli et al, "A Y Chromosome Census", 979.

Appendix B

The results of the Weale and Capelli studies have sparked serious debates about the intermarriage situation between the arriving Anglo-Saxons and the native Britons. The studies' results point to a significant genetic impact on the British population, one that seemed to require too large a population influx given the means of transportation in place at the time.[85] In response to this, scholars have had to develop models to reconcile these two facts.

The most influential model was proposed in a paper by Mark G. Thomas of University College London, Michael P. H. Stumpf from Imperial College London, and Heinrich Härke from the University of Reading.[86] The team believed that the abnormally high results could be explained if the Anglo-Saxons established conditions which gave them a reproductive advantage.[87] As the incoming invaders, the Anglo-Saxons would control the wealth and political power in the communities where they lived. If they established a set of restrictions prohibiting marriage with the British women, this advantage in resources would remain concentrated, giving the Anglo-Saxons a sustained reproductive advantage and therefore a magnified genetic impact.[88] The team modeled this by creating an equation with the variables of economic advantage and intermarriage rates. Basing their models of racial segregation on the Apartheid situation present in South Africa, the researchers found that certain values would produce sufficient levels of genetic impact. (See Figure 4).

[85] Thomas et al, "Apartheid", 2651.
[86] Ibid, 2651.
[87] Ibid, 2651-2652.
[88] Ibid 2652.



(Thomas et al 2653) These two graphs show that even with moderate percentages of intermarriage, the Anglo-Saxon percentage of the population rises quickly because of the advantage of belonging to that class.

This interpretation of the genetic data however, has its opponents, perhaps none more influential than John Pattison. Pattison argues that Thomas and his colleagues are neglecting a significant source of Germanic DNA, namely, the Belgae immigrants who came to Britain before the Roman occupation.[89] Under Pattison's model, the people encountered by the Anglo-Saxons were not in fact purely British in their genetic code. If this is true, neither an implausibly massive Anglo-Saxon invasion nor an Apartheid-like society would be required to yield the DNA replacement observed in the studies. Rather than having only around a century of Anglo-Saxon immigration to bring in the DNA, Pattison claims that the models should span at least another 500 years. This would mean that there was more than sufficient

[89] Pattison, "Integration Versus Apartheid" 717.

time for the slower process of assimilation to produce the observed results.[90] To see if Pattison could be correct will require studies of the Belgian and German populations and there genetic signature, adding even more cost and complexity to this already complicated issue. Issues like this make it clear that not only is the current evidence in dispute, but that all the necessary evidence needed for a definitive answer has yet to be assembled.

[90] Pattison, "Integration Versus Apartheid" 720-721.

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