

Apartheid and Economics in Anglo-Saxon England

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WHEN considering and discussing the fate of the Britons within Anglo-Saxon England, we invariably seem to find ourselves forced to choose between two hypotheses. The first of these, and perhaps currently the less fashionable, is that a 'mass migration' of Germanic peoples committed genocide against the inhabitants of the Insular territories they conquered, creating a situation in which all subsequent generations of Anglo-Saxons were descended entirely, or almost entirely, from fifth-century immigrants. The second, the 'elite emulation model', perhaps most clearly articulated in our editor's 1992 monograph *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons*, holds that incoming Germans supplied only an aristocratic elite who farmed large estates tilled by native Britons, who gradually aped their lords and became culturally indistinguishable from them over time.¹ Whilst the elite emulation model has become widely accepted amongst British archaeologists, who have, perhaps, become used to the concept of the diffusion of trends in material culture without recourse to models requiring large-scale population movement, it has proved less easy for historians and linguists to accept. This has largely been due to the perceived problem created by the Anglo-Saxon language: Old English seems far too close in both structure and form to its nearest Continental Germanic neighbours and to lack any substantive evidence of influence from either a Celtic or Romance substratum underlying it, which one would expect had large numbers of Britons switched language on passing acquaintance with their landlords then reinforced their competence only by practising amongst themselves. Archaeologists have tended to be dismissive of this evidence, Richard Hodges even describing language as an insoluble 'conundrum'.² To some extent this disciplinary divide is the result of natural selection. As youngsters beginning to show an interest in the past, most of us did not clearly distinguish between Archaeology and History, but at university, or shortly before, when we were forced to make the choice between the two, it was only natural that those of us who were more attracted to and had a greater affinity for material culture went down one route and those whose fascination lay with words down another. For this reason archaeologists and historians are likely to place different values upon linguistic evidence.

¹ Higham, *RBAS*.

² Hodges, *ASA*, pp. 65–8.

Of course one of the problems with the debate concerning the fate of the Britons is the presumption that a single model might apply across the whole country. England took longer to conquer than any of the Continental provinces taken over by the Germans in Late Antiquity. Even if we exclude the anomalous case of Cornwall, a frontier approximating to the enduring medieval and modern frontier between England and Wales was probably only reached in the 680s or thereabouts, while southern Dorset and much of Devon were probably conquered at about the same time. Thus, a period of more than 250 years was required to conquer England. In the early part of this conquest, the conflict was between pagans on the one side and Christians on the other and between Germanic speakers and Romance speakers,³ whilst in the west the later Anglo-Saxon conquerors were already Christian and the natives probably speaking British Celtic at the time of conquest and may well have lost much of the veneer of *romanitas*.⁴ These varying conditions will have almost certainly affected the nature of culture contact and interaction.

In a recent contribution to the debate concerning the ‘elite emulation’ model, Bryan Ward-Perkins intelligently rephrased the central question and asked not, ‘What happened to the Britons in Anglo-Saxon England?’ but rather ‘Why did the Anglo-Saxons not become more British?’⁵ This is indeed a better way of asking the question for it highlights the fundamental difference between Britain’s experiences of fifth- and sixth-century Germanic invasions and those of its Continental neighbours. In most of Gaul, political leadership, an ethnonym and most male personal names were adopted from, or maintained by, the conquering Franks, but otherwise most of the cultural practices of the Early Middle Ages, including language, religion, a monetary economy and at least some degree of urban survival, were inherited from native Gallo-Roman society. *Mutatis mutandi*, the same could be said for Visigothic Spain and Langobard Italy. Into the Central Middle Ages the people of these regions came to think of themselves as Franks, Goths and Langobards, but in reality they all shared a late Roman culture inherited from the Empire. In Spain the abandonment of a distinct, Arian form of Christianity by the Gothic ruling elite in the 580s is probably representative of the decline of ethnic segregation in the kingdom as a whole.⁶ In contrast Britain shares its post-Roman experience only with apparently marginal areas such as the Rhineland, Flanders and Bavaria.

To some extent we can think of early medieval linguistic replacement in terms

³ See Peter Schrijver, this volume.

⁴ Alex Woolf, ‘The Britons: From Romans to Barbarians’, in *Regna and Gentes: The Relationship between Late Antique and Early Medieval Peoples and Kingdoms in the Transformation of the Roman World*, ed. H.-W. Goetz, J. Jarnut and W. Pohl, with S. Kaschke (Leiden, 2003), pp. 345–80.

⁵ Bryan Ward-Perkins, ‘Why did the Anglo-Saxons not become more British?’, *EHR* 115 (2000), 513–33.

⁶ For the conversion of the Goths under King Reccared see Isidore of Seville’s *History of the Kings of the Goths* § 52 ff. Text in *Las Historias de los Godos, Vandalos, y Suevos de Isidoro de Sevilla: estudio, edición crítica y traducción*, ed. C. Rodríguez Alonso (Leon, 1975) and English translation in *Conquerors and Chroniclers of Early Medieval Spain*, ed. K. Baxter Wolf (Liverpool, 1990).

of upward and downward trends; that is to say the linguistic identity either moves up or down the social scale. In Anglo-Norman England and Ireland, Kievan Rus, Visigothic Spain, Langobardic Italy, much of Frankish Gaul and western Britain (where British Celtic replaced Latin in the course of Late Antiquity), replacement was upwards, the incoming rulers, or in western Britain the Romanised elite, being acculturated linguistically by the natives. In Anglo-Saxon England, Bavaria, Flanders, Alba (in northern Britain), the territories conquered by the Slavs in the Balkans and British-occupied western Armorica, replacement was downwards, the language and identity of the conquerors becoming, eventually, that of the general population.⁷ In both scenarios the process appears to have been drawn out rather than rapid.

The key to this rather crude binary opposition would seem to lie in socio-economic structures. The relatively flat, early Anglo-Saxon society, as indicated by the lack of clear hierarchy in settlement morphology before the seventh century (and then only a clear distinction between royal sites and others) is in stark contrast to the situation in Merovingian Gaul, where the kings seem to have taken over the imperial estates, complete with tenants, slaves and administrators, and to have continued to receive tax revenues from the *civitates*.⁸ Whether or not the armed followers of the Frankish, Gothic and Langobard kings were given landed estates themselves⁹ or direct access to fiscal revenues,¹⁰ they were scattered relatively thinly across their territories, and the kings relied for their political hegemony not upon their corporate ethnic integrity but upon the continuity of rulership from the imperial regime which they represented.¹¹ The soldiers of the Frankish and Gothic kings differed little in their role within society from the soldiers of the last emperors. In Langobardic Italy similar conditions seem to have prevailed, although here continuity of authority may have lain, for the most part, with the *duces* rather than with the king.¹² By and large, late Roman society continued intact or gradually transformed itself as it did in south-east Wales.¹³

Interestingly, the portion of Gaul which became Germanic in speech and culture in Late Antiquity was that portion which the Franks won from the Romans in the first half of the fifth century. This is an obscure period terminated by the defeat of the Frankish leader Clodio near Arras by Aëtius and Majorian, probably

⁷ The situation in the Rhineland appears to have been more complex and to have resolved itself over a much longer time period.

⁸ Ian N. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450–751* (London, 1994), pp. 64–6.

⁹ Edward James, *The Franks* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 108–16.

¹⁰ Walter Goffart, *Barbarians and Romans, AD 418–584: The Techniques of Accommodation* (Princeton, 1980).

¹¹ Herwig Wolfram, 'The Shaping of the Early Medieval Kingdom', *Viator* 1 (1970), 1–20. P. Amory, *People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy* (Cambridge, 1997).

¹² Chris Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy: Central Power and Local Society, 400–1000* (London, 1981).

¹³ Wendy Davies, 'Land and Power in Early Medieval Wales', *Past & Present* 81 (1978), 3–23; Woolf, 'The Britons' and Chris Wickham, 'The Other Transition: From the Ancient World to Feudalism', *Past & Present* 103 (1984), 3–36.

in 448.¹⁴ Despite this defeat, however, and the halting of their advance, the Franks remained in possession of much of the territory between the Rhine and the Somme. It is not known for certain whether Clodio was, in his day, the sole king of the Salian Franks (as this northern, maritime branch of the nation were called), but between his time and the rise of Clovis (Chlodovech) in the years around 500, each of the *civitates* within the Frankish occupied territory seems to have had its own king, a situation paralleling that in Germanic Britain. These events in fifth-century Flanders may well be the most appropriate comparison for events in eastern England in the same period. The Franks remained pagan and do not seem to have attempted, or been able, to use the imperial administrative system, and they lacked political unity. This is the world of the *Pactus legis Salicae*, the most purely Germanic of the Continental barbarian law-codes.¹⁵ When Childeric and his son Clovis, successively kings of the Franks occupying the *civitas* of Tournai, rose to prominence they did so operating as agents and eventually rulers of what survived of the Roman government in Armorica beyond the Somme. Clovis only turned back to Belgica to extinguish the other Frankish rulers at the end of a long career as a sub-Roman general and ruler.¹⁶ The pattern seems clear. Those territories occupied by the Franks up to the defeat of Clodio ultimately became Frankish in character, with Germanic language and Germanic paganism superseding native tongues and cults, while those territories which Clovis added to his *imperium* retained their native, Gallo-Roman characters.

Unfortunately for the purposes of comparative research, the largest part of the Continent to switch to Germanic speech in our period, Bavaria, is particularly poorly documented. Wolfram has termed the Bavarians the ‘foundlings of the *Völkerwanderung*’, for they appear already settled in the old province of Raetia in the mid-sixth century, with no hint of whence they came.¹⁷ Their failure to adopt inhumation as a regular funerary practice has prevented archaeological analysis from shedding any light on their origins. They do not seem, however, to have possessed a centralised kingship, and the Agilolfing dynasty which provided their *duces* seems to have achieved its pre-eminent position through clientage to the Frankish kings.¹⁸ We may see here a parallel to the situation amongst the early Anglo-Saxons, particularly if we allow Wood’s suggestion that Kentish predominance in late sixth-century Britain owed something to Frankish patronage.¹⁹

To the west of the Bavarians dwelt the Alamanni, whose myriad kinglets crowd the pages of Ammianus Marcellinus and Gregory of Tours. They had seized

¹⁴ Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 36–8. This campaign occurred between the third consulate of Aëtius (446) and his death (452), and it may have been this restoration of Roman fortunes on the Channel coast that prompted the ‘Groans of the Britons’ reported by Gildas, *De Excidio Britanniae: Gildas: The Ruin of Britain*, ed. Michael Winterbottom (Chichester, 1978), chap. 20.

¹⁵ For an edition and translation see Katherine Fisher Drew, *The Laws of the Salian Franks* (Philadelphia, 1991), and for a discussion see Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 108–13.

¹⁶ James, *The Franks*, pp. 64–90 and Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 36–50.

¹⁷ Herwig Wolfram, *A History of the Goths* (London, 1988), p. 319.

¹⁸ Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, p. 117.

¹⁹ Ian N. Wood, *The Merovingian North Sea* (Alingsås, 1983) *passim*.

the *Agri decumates*, the region between the Danube and the Rhine, in 260.²⁰ In an account of the full Alamannic nation on a war-footing in 357, Ammianus describes an army comprising seventeen kings and 35,000 warriors.²¹ Some of these warriors are said to be mercenaries or allies from other tribes, which may suggest, if the figures are in the slightest bit trustworthy (and they are more likely to be exaggerated than under-estimated), that the average kingdom was capable of raising less than 1,500 warriors. Hummer argues that the leader of 'the *gens* in arms' was a temporary leader who rose up in times of crisis or through success as a leader of raiding expeditions.²² In the long term this region (essentially modern Baden-Württemberg) emerged as a thoroughly Germanic-speaking country to which Christianity had to be reintroduced. Once again we see linguistic replacement coinciding with a failure to adopt Roman governmental structures. The containment of the Alamanni within their own territory after the 260s, and of the Franks in theirs after the defeat of 448, may also have hindered the development of a strong dynastic kingship, for no one dynasty was able to provide a constant supply of booty and glory to their followers.²³

In Bavaria, Flanders and Britain, Germanic conquest was probably preceded by a break-down of Roman imperial control. In the *Agri decumates* that were to become Alammania, Romanization may never have fully taken root. As important as this, however, may have been the failure of temporary *Heerkönige* to establish dynasties, or at least traditions of centralised kingship, as Childeric and Clovis did for the Franks and as Alaric and Athaulf did for the Visigoths.²⁴ But assessing which of these two factors was more important may be something of a chicken-and-egg dilemma. To some extent the success of the Gothic and Frankish kingships was dependent upon access to revenues, through tribute or plunder, that were independent of the relatively simple dues and services which tribesmen paid and performed for their kings. This in turn was linked to the existence of tenurial structures and a monetary economy which could only be maintained within a highly stratified society.

The relationship between linguistic replacement, on the one hand, and centralised kingship and complex tenurial patterns, on the other, as outlined above, is one of correlation rather than of cause and effect. It can be tested at the other end of the chronological sequence with reference to the linguistic history of Cornwall. The West Saxons appear to have established a western frontier broadly similar

²⁰ Heiko Steuer, 'The Hierarchy of the Alamannic Settlements in the former *limes* region of south-western Germany to AD 500', *Journal of European Archaeology* 2.1 (1994), 82–96.

Hans Hummer, 'The Fluidity of Barbarian Identity: the Ethnogenesis of the Alemanni and Suebi, AD 200–500', *Early Medieval Europe* 7 (1998), 1–27.

²¹ Hummer, 'Fluidity of Barbarian Identity', p. 8.

²² Hummer, 'Fluidity of Barbarian Identity', p. 9.

²³ The history of the *Agri decumates* in antiquity is closely paralleled by that of Dacia which was seized by the Terving Goths. The subsequent history of Dacia, however, does not lend itself to comparison in the present case. See Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, pp. 57–64.

²⁴ Cf. Wolfram, 'Early Medieval Kingdom', pp. 7–8.

to the modern western border of Devon by the end of Ine's reign (688–726).²⁵ Expansion into Cornwall proper may have begun in Ecgbert's reign (802–39), but the Cornish certainly had their own king as late as 875, under which year the *Annales Cambriae* record the drowning of *Dungarth rex Cerniu*.²⁶ Some measure of independence may even have been maintained into the tenth century. This is one possible reading of William of Malmesbury's account of Æthelstan's expulsion of the British minority from Exeter and the setting of the frontier of their province at the Tamar, as he had set that of the 'North Welsh' at the Wye.²⁷ William at no point, however, explicitly mentions a Cornish king.

We can thus discern two distinct periods of English conquest: one, encompassing the greater part of Devon and all that lay to its east, concluded by about 730, and the other encompassing Cornwall and perhaps a few districts in west Devon, taking place after 850. The areas conquered in the first phase seem to have become fully anglicised within the Anglo-Saxon period whilst in Cornwall English remained a minority language, largely confined to the upper echelons and townspeople into the sixteenth or, perhaps, seventeenth centuries. This suggests, at a very conservative estimate, that the predominance of Cornish survived the English conquest for 600 years (i.e. 950–1550), the language itself surviving for a further 200 years after that. If language death had occurred at the same rate in East Anglia, for example, we might have expected British or Insular Romance to be still relatively healthy in the area around Norwich in the time of Cnut; this was clearly not the case.

The key to this problem may lie in the transformation of the nature of English society as a whole over time. What happened between 750 and 950 was a tremendous change in tenurial practice and in the hierarchy of social and economic relations within Anglo-Saxon society. This transformation has been reviewed by David Pelteret.²⁸ As can be seen from the archaeological evidence, a settlement hierarchy indicative of differential access to resources had begun to develop amongst the Anglo-Saxons in the seventh century. At first, however, the high status settlements seem to have been relatively few in number and to have been for the most part royal residences, the centres of redistributive chiefdoms rather than proprietorial estates. Although the term 'estate centre' is often used for such *villae regales*,²⁹ one should be careful to distinguish clearly between the use of the term 'estate' to denote two quite different phenomena. On the one hand, it has been used to describe the tenurially diverse territory exploited through

²⁵ Herbert P. R. Finberg, 'Sherborne, Glastonbury and the Expansion of Wessex', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5 (1953), 101–24, M. Todd, *The South-West to AD 1000* (London, 1987), pp. 267–75.

²⁶ *Annales Cambriae, AD 684–954: Texts A–C in Parallel*, ed. David N. Dumville (Cambridge, 2002).

²⁷ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, ed. Roger A. B. Mynors, Rodney M. Thomson and Michael Winterbottom (Oxford, 1998), II, 134.6.

²⁸ David Pelteret, *Slavery in Early Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 1995), pp. 24–37.

²⁹ E.g. Martin Welch, 'Rural Settlement Patterns in the Early and Middle Anglo-Saxon Period', *Landscape History* 7 (1985), 13–25 at p. 16.

extensive lordship, identified by Jones as a 'multiple estate'³⁰ but perhaps best thought of as a 'shire',³¹ and essentially the same as Steven Bassett's supposed 'embryonic kingdoms'.³² On the other hand it is used for an alienable, divisible property of the sort with which we are familiar from late Roman land-law and the Domesday Survey of eleventh-century England.

Within the 'shire' the ordinary land-holders (*ceorlas*) probably inherited, divided and exchanged their allodial holdings with very little interference from the king.³³ There may have been tenants on lands immediately attached to the shire's *caput* and perhaps even on other large holdings, but the shire itself was not an 'estate' of this sort. Such 'manorial' estates probably began to proliferate after the establishment of the Church, when the kings were placed in a position in which they had to provide economic support for the new institution. The development of alienable 'book-land', granted by charter and able to be passed on as a discrete block of territory not subject to partition at inheritance, may have had a role in encouraging their growth,³⁴ though not all such estates need have been held by book.³⁵ The key period for the study of the growth of the manor appears to be the ninth and tenth centuries, a period for which we are lamentably short of settlement archaeology. If we were to base our judgement upon sites excavated, and published, to date, we should be obliged to confine ourselves to two East Midlands sites, Goltho and Raunds.³⁶ Both these sites seem to have experienced the development of two features which would come to typify manorial estates in southern and midland England: the nucleated village and the lordly residence.³⁷ Whilst the initial reports date this change to the mid-ninth to early tenth centuries, Martin Welch (pers. comm.) tells me that at both sites the sequences may

³⁰ Classically in 'Multiple Estates and Early Settlement', in *Medieval Settlement: Continuity and Change*, ed. Peter H. Sawyer (London, 1976), pp. 15–40, but see also Wendy Davies, *Wales in the Early Middle Ages* (Leicester, 1982), pp. 43–7 and Nicky Gregson, 'The Multiple Estate Model: some critical questions', *Journal of Historical Geography* 11 (1985), 339–51 for important critiques.

³¹ Geoffrey W. S. Barrow, *The Kingdom of the Scots* (Edinburgh, 2003), pp. 7–56.

³² 'In Search of the Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms', in *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, ed. Steven Bassett (Leicester, 1989), pp. 3–27 at p. 19. For a critique of Bassett's view that such units were indeed 'embryonic kingdoms' see Alex Woolf, 'Community, Identity and Kingship in Early England', in *Social Identity in Early Medieval Britain*, ed. W. O. Frazer and A. Tyrrell (Leicester, 2000), pp. 91–110.

³³ Patrick Wormald, *Bede and the Conversion of England: The Charter Evidence* (Jarrow, 1984), pp. 21–2. The use of the term 'shire' here, and in Professor Barrow's work (see n. 31), does not of course refer to the tenth-century shires of the Midlands and the South which became the pre-1974 English counties.

³⁴ Wormald, *Bede and the Conversion of England*, pp. 22–4.

³⁵ I am grateful to Patrick Wormald for discussing this with me.

³⁶ Guy Beresford, *Goltho: the Development of an Early Medieval Manor, c.850–1150* (London, 1987). Raunds is not, so far as I am aware, fully published but the relevant aspects of the site are reported in *South Midlands Archaeology* 18 (1988) 50–1, and 19 (1989) 34–5.

³⁷ For a textual description of relations on just such a manor see the *Rectitudines singularum personarum*, in *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, ed. Felix Liebermann (Aalen, 1960) I, 444–53.

be consistently slightly later than the published work would lead one to believe. This would mean that we are looking at the mid-tenth century for the significant developments. Pelteret, rightly in my view, links the growth of the manor (with its more specialised and intensive lordship, geared towards surplus production rather than the cementing of social relations) to the growth of towns and a rural market which could now supply needs that in previous centuries would have been catered for within the more varied and extensive landscape of the 'shire'.³⁸ This picture is reinforced by the massive increase in charter material and wills from the late ninth and tenth centuries.³⁹ As a rough indication of this, we might note that in Sawyer's hand-list of *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, 357 royal diplomas are listed from the 295 years between 604 and 899, while 806 are listed from the 167 years between 899 and 1066.⁴⁰ John Blair concurs, suggesting that a 'concomitant of this tighter definition and exploitation was that much of the land was administered in smaller units: the "classic manor", containing one or two village communities rather than many, became normal in the two centuries after 850'.⁴¹

One is tempted to connect the Cornish question (outlined above) with this development of the manor and to suggest that it is this socio-economic development which brings an end to, or slows down, linguistic replacement in medieval Britain; the border between Cornwall and Wessex, in effect, marks the point which Anglo-Saxon political expansion had reached before the full development of the manorial economy. West of here, and the same applies for the border of the same period to the north of the Bristol Channel, linguistic change did not follow on rapidly after conquest, and when it did come, slowly and grudgingly, the shift-speakers maintained their own sense of non-Englishness. Indeed, in the first centuries of 'post-manorial conquest', it seems to have been as likely that the new aristocracy would switch to the language of the people, as the Normans did in Ireland, Wales and England and as the Varangians seem to have done in Russia, as the other way around. In the latter case the parallel is exceedingly close to what happened in England between, say, 650 and 950, with royal tribute-collecting regions being carved up and distributed amongst the ruler's retainers.⁴² This does not of course mean that no features of the classic Domesday manorial economy had developed prior to the mid-eighth century,⁴³ but simply that the manorial mechanism of exploitation had not become the dominant form and had not begun to drive the development of society to the extent which it later would. Before the Viking Age there may have been islands of manorialism but these were surrounded by a sea of kin- and client-based social relations.

³⁸ Pelteret, *Slavery*, p. 37.

³⁹ Pelteret, *Slavery*, p. 36.

⁴⁰ Peter H. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters: an Annotated List and Bibliography* (London, 1968).

⁴¹ John Blair, *Anglo-Saxon Oxfordshire* (Stroud, 1994), 132.

⁴² Jerome Blum, *Lord and Peasant in Russia: From the Ninth to the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, 1971), pp. 40–2.

⁴³ See Trevor H. Aston, 'The Origins of the Manor in England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series 8 (1958), 59–83 and Anthony R. Bridbury, *The English Economy: From Bede to the Reformation* (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 56–85.

Such a view is entirely at odds with the vision of Anglo-Saxon society presented by Higham in 1992 in which he argued that the archaeologically visible Anglo-Saxons made up only a small, aristocratic proportion of the population supported by an agrarian labour force, both free and unfree, made up of Britons.⁴⁴ He went on to argue that:

the bulk of the Anglo-Saxon community could have been recruited internally from Britons, some of whom were able to take advantage of the transitional period to slough off the role of unfree peasant, while others continued to occupy the lower and less privileged strata in the social hierarchy.⁴⁵

Higham was aware that the linguistic evidence posed a major problem to this model, particularly noting that even words associated with low status activities and experience were Germanic. Like many archaeologists and historians, Higham focused on lexicon (words), but the story is the same with regard to morpho-syntactical features.

By analogy with other studies of large-scale language shift, we ought to expect morpho-syntactical structure to be the most favourable field in which to identify indigenous substrate interference in English. Here the most significant work appears to have been that of Walther Preussler who identified a number of features which he claimed indicated such interference.⁴⁶ Most significantly he argued that the periphrastic use of the verb 'do' and the progressive tense in English have their origins in Celtic interference but neither of these points has been accepted in their entirety. The origin of the periphrastic use of 'do' in the period of pre-Viking Age Anglo-British contact has not been widely accepted,⁴⁷ although this position has been championed recently by Poussa.⁴⁸ The problems with the Preussler/Poussa position fall into two categories: firstly, there are alternative explanations for the origin of the periphrastic use of 'do' in English, which do not require a substrate explanation and secondly, this particular phenomenon is only visible in texts from the late thirteenth century onwards, when it is initially confined to verse and is very rare.⁴⁹ It becomes common only in the modern period, and then it is largely confined to western dialects of English. This last point is, perhaps, the more significant objection, since if we could not establish that an alternative method of generation had occurred, we could at least ask why there was no evidence of this form in Old English or early Middle English texts. Poussa argues that it had remained a low register form in the pre-Norman period,

⁴⁴ Higham, *RBAS*, pp. 183–8.

⁴⁵ Higham, *RBAS*, 189. Later in his text Higham suggests that 'the mass of unfree population was probably indigenous. In important respects, this society was one which practised apartheid': 193. It might be argued, however, that a slave society is not the same thing as one which practised apartheid.

⁴⁶ Walter Preussler, 'Keltischer Einfluss im Englischen', *Revue des Langues Vivantes* 22 (1956), 322–50.

⁴⁷ David Denison, *English Historical Syntax* (Harlow, 1993), pp. 255–91.

⁴⁸ Patricia Poussa, 'A Contact-universals Origin for Periphrastic *Do*, with Special Consideration of OE-Celtic Contact', in *Papers from the 5th International Conference on English Historical Linguistics*, ed. Sylvia Adamson *et al.* (Amsterdam, 1990), pp. 407–34.

⁴⁹ Denison, *English Historical Syntax*, pp. 255–91.

and this is possible, but it is also possible that, even if it is of Celtic origin, it is the result of late medieval language shift in south-east Wales and Cornwall and of immigration from Celtic-speaking parts of Britain into England in the later Middle Ages.⁵⁰ Poussa has also argued that the use of the words ‘as’ and ‘what’ as relativizers (e.g. ‘That is the dog as bit me’ and ‘He is the man what done me wrong’) in some modern English dialects is the result of ‘Celtic’ substrate interference, but the same problems of very late attestation occur here.⁵¹ I must stress that it is the lateness of attestation rather than the Celtic origin of these features which is the main obstacle to accepting them as evidence for events in Late Antiquity.

It is often said that the progressive aspect found in Middle and Modern English (i.e. ‘While I was walking’ rather than the simple past ‘While I walked’) derives from external influence, and this was Preussler’s other main example of Celtic substrate interference. Gerhard Nickel, however, demonstrated that the Old English progressive was internally generated.⁵² The possibility that at least some aspects of the Middle and Modern English progressive was generated by contact with outside languages, including perhaps Celtic, was considered by Mossé, though he stressed that this was a modern phenomenon.⁵³ A more recent champion of the substrate hypothesis for the progressive tenses has appeared in Braaten, but his defence of the position has not met with widespread acceptance.⁵⁴ The idea that Modern English might be influenced by Celtic>English shift dialects should not surprise us when we consider the kind of figures for immigration from Ireland and Wales in the last two centuries, marshalled by Ewen.⁵⁵ We should therefore be wary when it seems that significant evidence for syntactical features which *may possibly* reflect Celtic usage are not clearly evident before the period when large-scale immigration from countries in which Celtic languages were still spoken and in which local Englishes undeniably contained Celtic interference. It should be stressed that caution here is urged on chronological not linguistic grounds.

Recently Peter Schrijver has produced an interesting phonological study

⁵⁰ Chris Hall, *Periphrastic Do: History and Hypothesis* (Ann Arbor, 1983). I am grateful to Dr Hall for discussing this topic with me and confirming that he still holds the views expressed in his thesis.

⁵¹ Patricia Poussa, ‘Origins of the non-Standard Relativizers WHAT and AS in English’, in *Language Contact in the British Isles*, ed. Per Sture Ureland and George Broderick (Tübingen, 1988), pp. 295–316.

⁵² Gerhard Nickel, *Die Expanded Form im Altenglischen: Vorkomme, Funktion und Herkunft der Umschreibung ‘beon/wesan’ +Partizip präsens* (Neumünster, 1966). For an English discussion see B. Mitchell, *Old English Syntax* (Oxford, 1985) §§ 682–701.

⁵³ Fernand Mossé, *Histoire de la forme périphrastique ‘être + participe présent’ en germanique, II, moyen-anglais et anglais moderne* (Paris, 1938).

⁵⁴ Bjørn Braaten, ‘Notes on the Continuous Tenses in English’, *Norsk Tidsskrift for Sprogvidenskap* 21 (1967), 167–80. His views are dismissed by Denison, *English Syntax*, pp. 370–412.

⁵⁵ Cecil L’Estrange Ewen, *The British Race – Germanic or Celtic?* (Paignton, 1945).

which has some bearing on these issues.⁵⁶ Schrijver's basic premise is that Old English and Coastal Dutch (OCstDu.) share a number of phonological innovations with each other and with British Celtic, which mark them out from the other Germanic languages as a whole and even from other Ingvaenic dialects such as Old Saxon. His study focuses on the vowel systems of these languages and comprises a survey of the fate of each of the Proto-Germanic (PGm.) vowels within North-Sea Germanic (NSGm). His conclusion is as follows:

The earliest of the common developments of the NSGm. languages (OE, OFris., OCstDu.) show the hallmarks of being adaptations of the PGm. system to the system of British Celtic or a closely related Celtic dialect on the Continent around the fifth to ninth centuries A.D. The presence of a British Celtic substratum or a substratum closely cognate to it, in early Medieval Britain, along the Dutch coasts and in Frisia would account for the observed phenomena. The most specific phenomenon that receives an explanation is the difference between Kentish, CstDu. and OFris. on the one hand and the other OE dialects on the other in the treatment of rounded front vowels, which appears to follow an isogloss separating West British [i.e. proto-Welsh] from South-West British [i.e. proto-Cornish and Breton].⁵⁷

Central to Schrijver's interpretation is that the region in which Old Coastal Dutch and Old Frisian came to be spoken in the Early Middle Ages had previously been occupied by peoples speaking a dialect of Celtic close to British. He justified this assumption on the basis of an admittedly historical, rather than linguistic, argument that suggested plausibly that Belgic Celtic may well have been closer to British than to the normative reconstructions of Gaulish produced on the basis of data largely drawn from central and southern France.⁵⁸ One detail of this argument worth noting is his suggestion that the ancient *Frisii* were in fact Celtic speakers rather than Germanic speakers (he cites Seebold in support of this hypothesis).⁵⁹ Schrijver's observation that the OCstDu. vowel system was especially close to that of Kentish and South-West British would seem to further justify his suggestion of the existence of a distinct 'Belgic Celtic' influencing the dialects of northern Gaul and south-eastern Britain. It is also significant to note that few if any of these 'British' features appear in Old Saxon. Had they done so one might have argued that Germanic speakers could have brought them to Britain, but this seems, if his analysis is to be trusted, to be unlikely. It is also worth noting that, unlike the scholars putting forward the other tentative examples of substrate interference discussed above, Schrijver has placed a great deal of emphasis on chronological development within the Middle Ages.

Indeed, this is potentially the most difficult part of his argument with which to come to terms. Schrijver is not claiming simply that certain phonological

⁵⁶ Peter Schrijver, 'The Celtic Contribution to the Development of the North Sea Germanic Vowel System, with Special Reference to Coastal Dutch', *NOWELE* 35 (1999), 3–47.

⁵⁷ Schrijver, 'Celtic Contribution', p. 33.

⁵⁸ Schrijver, 'Celtic Contribution', pp. 9–11.

⁵⁹ Elmar Seebold, 'Wer waren die Friesen? – sprachlich gesehen', in *Friesische Studien* II, ed. Volkert Faltings, Alastair Walker and Ommo Wilts (Odense, 1995), pp. 1–17.

features present in fifth- and sixth-century British influenced the pronunciation of Germanic in shift dialects but that certain sequences of phonological development continued in tandem in both North Sea Germanic and British Celtic over a sustained period of time. If I have understood Schrijver's proposals correctly this is most likely to have occurred if there were fairly sustained bilingualism amongst a significant proportion of the population. This said, my impression is that linguists do not currently feel secure in identifying what factors govern processual phonological shift in languages. Nevertheless, Schrijver's phonological observations deserve serious consideration.

Hildegard Tristram's contribution to the debate is more wide-ranging and holistic.⁶⁰ She argues that British interference has been understudied due to prejudicial pre-assumptions inherited by successive generations of historians going back to Bede. She also believes that British did not survive, in the 'English' zone, for more than six generations after the Anglo-Saxon conquest, although she does not give her reasons for believing this.⁶¹ She recognises, however, that if rapid and widespread language shift took place, we should expect to find 'significant typological changes in morphosyntax', and indeed claims that these can be found. Her linguistic study is divided into two main sections: firstly, an analysis of converging morphosyntax in English and Welsh (mostly using late medieval and modern examples),⁶² and secondly, a legitimisation of using such late evidence for inferring historical processes in Late Antiquity.⁶³

Tristram admits that the examples of similarities between English and Welsh she identifies may not be exhaustive and have not themselves been exhaustively analysed. Most of them are only visible in the later medieval period or later, and one or two of them, at first sight, do not seem exclusive enough to bear the burden she suggests might be put on them. Others may, however, and a great deal depends upon whether her arguments for accepting 'latency' can be held to be generally sound. Before going on to discuss these arguments, it should be noted that Tristram is to a large degree interested in 'Present Day English' (her preferred term) and for her purposes it is not so important when English 'became a Celtic language' as whether it is or is not one now. Thus, for her purposes both latency, that is the failure of linguistic interference to show up in the record until long after its appearance in the spoken language, and continued contact are valid mechanisms for introducing Celticisms into English. For our purposes in contrast it must be stressed that interference subsequent to c.800 is largely irrelevant.

The argument for latency depends upon a literary norm covering up real innovation and variation within the spoken language. No one could argue with this position in principle and similar situations certainly occur elsewhere. Old Irish remained a standard for 300 years (c.600–900) and Classical Irish for 500 (c.1200–1700), and at the end of each period quite radical innovative features

⁶⁰ Hildegard Tristram, *How Celtic is Standard English?* (Petersburg, 1999), and her contribution to this volume.

⁶¹ Tristram, *How Celtic*, p. 16.

⁶² Tristram, *How Celtic*, pp. 19–27.

⁶³ Tristram, *How Celtic*, pp. 27–30.

emerged suggesting that they had been developing for some time. This is precisely what did happen to English during the century or so when French became the normal literary language in England. Most famously, of course, we have the sudden emergence of written Romance from under the wings of literary Latin in the ninth century, after nearly a millennium of divergent development.

In the case of English, however, we are faced with the problem that the development of a standard, early West-Saxon, literary form almost certainly dates to the decades around AD 700, after, presumably, nearly 300 years of shift of British-born individuals into English-speaking communities. So why did no, or at most only an extremely small number of, 'Celticisms' make it into standard Old English despite the fact that regional dialects are discernible?⁶⁴ For much of that time, even amongst the Germanic-speaking groups, there was no cohesive sense of shared English identity and significant dialect variation.⁶⁵ This may only have preceded writing by about a century.

The key to understanding Anglo-British relations in the crucial early centuries of Anglo-Saxon England is the law code promulgated by Ine, king of the West Saxons, at some point between 688 and 694.⁶⁶ Ine 24.2 states that a Welshman who owned five hides of land had a *wergeld* of 600 shillings. 23.3 states that a Welsh taxpayer (*gafolgelda*), or owner of a single hide of land, has a *wergeld* of 120 shillings and that his son has one of 100 shillings. This compares unfavourably with the equivalent English ranks which have *wergelds* of 1200 and 200 shillings respectively.⁶⁷ The property qualification of five hides is that which was required to qualify as a member of the nobility, and one of the most significant pieces of information we are given here is that there were Welsh nobles within Ine's *imperium*. Although the Welsh noble's *wergeld* is only half that of the English nobleman's it is, nevertheless, three times as high as that of the English *ceorl*. This should immediately alert us to the fact that we are not looking at a society in which the Britons are uniformly regarded as lower status than the Anglo-Saxons. It should also be pointed out that any society which strictly regulates on the basis of ethnic affiliation is unlikely to be one in the process of transforming its ethnic identity en masse. If firm legal distinctions existed between Britons and Anglo-Saxons, individuals and communities will not have slipped

⁶⁴ Alistair Campbell, *Old English Grammar* (Oxford, 1959), §§ 6–22, 4–11.

⁶⁵ John Hines, 'The Becoming of the English: Identity, Material Culture and Language in Early Anglo-Saxon England', *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 7 (1994), 49–60.

⁶⁶ The code was printed by Liebermann, *Gesetze*, and again, with modern English translation, in *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, ed. Frederick L. Attenborough (Cambridge, 1922 and Felinfach, 2000) and has been described by Patrick Wormald in *The Making of English Law* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 103–6. The code is discussed thoroughly by Martin Grimmer in this volume.

⁶⁷ It should be noted that a similarly low *wergeld* for Britons is recorded in surviving manuscripts of the eleventh-century Northumbrian code text known as *Norðleoda Laga*. This clause, however, 7, is one of a group of clauses, 6–8, which list *wergelds* in southern denomination *scillingas* rather than the Northumbrian *þrymsas*. Since the first of these clauses, 6, is explicitly a citation of Mercian law, otherwise unrecorded, we should perhaps view the other *scillingas* clauses, including that dealing with Britons, in the same light.

from one identity to another with ease. Indeed, there are strong economic incentives to preserve this segregation when viewed from an English perspective.

It is important to note that the presence of a Welsh nobility within Wessex implies the existence of British-dominated districts within West Saxon jurisdiction, though whether large *regiones* or smaller, more strictly local territories it is impossible to tell, and, indeed, conditions presumably changed over time. Since both Welsh and English law practised the subdivision of allodial lands between agnates,⁶⁸ it is unlikely that Welsh nobles would have lived isolated amongst the Anglo-Saxon population rather than surrounded by kinsmen of a similar status, and the Welsh tax-payers are also most likely to have been their clients. Taken in its context of tenurial practice and clientage, it is almost certainly the case that Ine's law code is *not* presenting an image of late seventh-century Wessex as a heterodox, multiethnic state but as a patchwork of separate *regiones*, some at least of which were dominated by Britons, held together by the overall supremacy of an English redistributive chieftaincy. It may be that it was one of the predominantly British *regiones* whose dead were commemorated by the inscribed stones now located at Lady St Mary Church in Wareham.⁶⁹ This said, the imbalance in *wergelds* between the two groups may hold within it the very key to the disappearance of the Britons. The *wergeld* provided the basic honour price for an individual and represented the compensation that would be paid to his kin on his death. Other legal compensations, for injury to self or property, however defined, were computed as a proportion of one's *wergeld*. The long term effects of Britons being valued at about half the *wergeld* of their English counterparts was that, in the normal course of things, large amounts of property would gradually pass from the British community to the English. If, for example, a hypothetical English and British nobleman each owning five hides of land got into a series of disputes with one another and were dealt with fairly by the courts, sometimes giving judgement in favour of the one and sometimes of the other, then all compensations paid by the Briton to the Englishman would be twice the value of those paid to him by his opponent. The end result would be that the property and finally the land would pass to the Englishman.

By giving the Britons protection under the law and by preserving their basic civil rights – indeed, by giving them access to the courts, the Anglo-Saxons were able to reduce the risk of wholesale and persistent resistance which a policy of naked aggression would inevitably have aroused. The likelihood would be that in the short term the system would protect most individual Britons and that the erosion of their economic base would generally be so gradual as to be barely perceived on the basis of individual experience. It is interesting to note that *Lex Salica*, the Frankish law code drawn up in precisely those territories where the Frankish language, religion and cultural identity replaced Gallo-Roman, utilised

⁶⁸ Thomas M. Charles-Edwards, 'Kinship, Status and the Origins of the Hide', *Past & Present* 56 (1972), 5–35.

⁶⁹ David A. Hinton, 'The Inscribed Stones in Lady St. Mary Church, Wareham', *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society* 114 (1992), 260.

a precisely similar mechanism of apartheid.⁷⁰ In the long run individual British households would, one by one, become bankrupt and break down, with children being sold into slavery or sent to live with relatives as prospect-less hangers-on. The apartheid of the law codes would also doubtless be compounded by the partial patronage of redistributive chiefdoms. Whilst Britons might be *gafolgeldas*, it is unlikely that many of them were the beneficiaries of royal largesse. In comparison to English districts, British areas would be regions of high production and low consumption, tribute and disproportionate legal costs flowing out and few gifts flowing in. The lack of opportunities for young British males to become retainers of chieftains would, perhaps, have encouraged them to leave for British-controlled kingdoms or led to increasing poverty as inherited farms became subdivided between co-heirs. In this long drawn-out process of economic decline, many individual Britons may have found themselves drifting into Anglo-Saxon households, as slaves, hangers-on, brides and so forth, but they would have come into these communities as one among many. Their ability to impact on the cultural or linguistic identity of the community would have been minimal, and such households would have become ethnic sausage machines, recycling stray biological material in such a way that it would not carry its ethnicity with it into the next generation. Cumulatively, however, the biological contribution of this steady trickle of Britons into English households will have been enormous over several generations. Such a model allows us to escape the problems of both the genocide and the elite emulation models and complies with all the constraints left us by the evidence, archaeological, linguistic and textual.

⁷⁰ Katherine Fisher Drew, *Laws*, and discussion by Wormald, *Making*, pp. 105–6.