

ANGLO-SAXON SOCIETY

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HEPTARCHY

Settlement of **ANGLES**

- ▣ Northumbria
- ▣ Mercia
- ▣ East Anglia

Settlement of **SAXONS**

- ▣ Sussex
- ▣ Essex
- ▣ Wessex

Settlement of **JUTES**

- ▣ Kent



The Anglo Saxon migration took place over a period of about hundred and fifty years. They were **crude barbarians** who had no respect for culture. They destroyed all symbols of culture they came across in England.

They were divided into numerous tribal groups. Among them, the tie of blood relationship or **kinship** was very strong.

But they were **not nomads**. They settled down in an area. They also tended animals. They kept slaves, but their society was not based on slave labour. Like that of Athenians and Romans.

They lived in **villages**. Each village was self sufficient. It was encircled by a border land called mark, `which was a common property.



They were divided into various classes. The highest class were the class of **earls**. They were men of noble birth or people with large estates.

The second was the class of **Ceorls**. They were freemen of comparatively small holdings.

Another class that emerged was the class of warriors called **Thegns**. The presence of the enemies –the Danes at door caused the rise of importance of **thegns**. They got estates as reward for their bravery.

The last in the social ladder were **theowas**, servants or slaves. They were the earlier inhabitants of the land conquered by the AngloSaxons or men reduced to debth or crime.



- The judicial system of the Anglo-Saxons were primitive. Two kinds of trial **compurgation and ordeal** were in prevalence.
- In order to prove his innocence, the accused person had to do one of the following things. He could either bring **twelve honest men** of his locality as his **compurgators**, to swear his innocence
- or subject himself to a **divine test or ordeal**. In case of ordeal, the wrong doer had to perform a feat or ordeal. That is he had to dip his fingers in boiling water or walk on fire. If it healed within a prescribed time limit, the person was acquitted.
- Usually the punishments were fines, If a person was guilty of murder, he was required to pay **blood money** or *weregild* to the nearest relatives of the slain.



- The heathen Gods of the Anglo-Saxons were –Woden, Tiw, Thunor and Frig. Their days were Wednesday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday respectively.
- The Anglo-Saxons were heathens or non-Christians, when they came to the British isles. But gradually they were converted to Christianity., and this prepared the ground for several significant developments in later history. They were transformed to a set of peace loving people. The crude Barbarians cultivated the virtues of humility, charity and self-restraint.



- ▣ In Anglo-Saxon society, the women were not discriminated. They were held in high esteem. There were women land owners, regnant queens, and learned nuns. They could even participate in the proceedings of the assemblies. It was in later times that their status deteriorated.



