Dynamics of the Creation of Anglo-Saxon Societies in Central England C. AD 300-650

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Dynamics of the Creation of Anglo-Saxon Societies in Central England

c. AD 300-650

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Abstract

      This thesis examines the dynamics of the creation of Anglo-Saxon societies in the central transept of Britain from AD 300 to 650, focusing on two themes: treatment of the body and grave good provision in burial practice. The first theme, treatment of the body, includes burial attributes such as grave orientation, position of the body, cremation versus inhumation, and the structure of the grave. The second theme considered is the provision of grave goods, which entails examining the types of grave goods deposited and the frequency of furnished burials. The region examined includes the Isle of Wight, Hampshire, Wiltshire, Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire, Warwickshire, Staffordshire, and Derbyshire. This large region has been divided into three sub-regions in an effort to analyze and draw conclusions about both local and regional trends in burial practice. The data set for this study was derived from fourteen Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon sites, which includes a total of 1,773 burials. The sites chosen from each sub-region have been excavated to a high standard using modern archaeological theory and methodology, have sample sizes of fifty or more, and provide data that has enabled the author to pursue questions relevant to the aforementioned themes. The evidence from all three sub-regions indicates that the emergence of Anglo-Saxon societies in the south-central region of Britain was the result of a complex process that involved migration, acculturation, and integration. The Anglo-Saxon societies that were created from AD 300 to 650 preserved both Romano-British and Germanic characteristics, producing a new and unique society.

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Chapter I

Introduction

The primary sources concerning the end of Roman Britain may lead one to believe that the Romano-British experienced a sudden withdrawal of Roman troops stationed on the island in the fourth century A.D. These primary sources also suggest that Roman soldiers in Britain were swiftly relocated to frontier regions in the Empire that were under attack by barbarian invaders.[1] This Roman withdrawal left the island unprotected and exposed when indigenous tribes in the north and west ravaged what was left of Roman Britain. According to historical primary source material, the end of Roman Britain was complete when Germanic tribes invaded and conquered Britain, replacing Romano-British society with a Germanic, Anglo-Saxon society.

However, there is good reason to read these sources cautiously. A. S. Esmonde Cleary contends that Gildas' *De Excidio et Conquesa Britannia*, written c. 540 A.D. and most frequently referenced with respect to this period in British history, is "problematic." He argues that the text was written as a cautionary tale for contemporary kings and clerics, not an accurate history of events.[2] Catherine Hills has

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[1] Bede Venerablis. *A History of the English Church and People* (London: Penguin Classics, 1995); Gildas. J. A. Giles, trans. *De Excidio de Britaniae.* (Latham: British Amer Books, 1986).

[2] S. A. Esmonde Cleary, *The Ending of Roman Britain (*London: B. T. Batsford, 1989), 170.

described early medieval primary sources as "political and religious propaganda …

written centuries after the events they describe."[3] Another source commonly

referenced with regard to early medieval Britain is Bede. Bede wrote *A History of the

English Church and People* in the early eighth century, and it is evident that he

employed Gildas as a source for the early medieval portions of his work. Birte

Brugmann has observed that "Bede's tidy tribal geography oversimplifies a much

more complex situation that involved not only contacts between areas described by

Bede – apparently Denmark and northern Germany – but also connections to Frisia

and Frankia, and beyond."[4] In summary, although these primary sources are useful in

better understanding the society in which, or for whom, they were written, they do not

accurately inform the reader about actual historical events that occurred in early

medieval Britain.[5] The potential for unreliability in the primary sources means that

we must employ alternative means to construct evidenced-based interpretations of the

dynamics of societies. Such evidence may be gleaned from the archaeological

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[3] Catherine Hills, *Origins of the English* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 2003), 28.

[4] Birte Brugmann, "Migration and Endogenous Change," in *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology*, ed. Helena Hamerow, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 33.

[5] Hills, *Origins of the English*, 28-29; Samantha Lucy, *The Anglo-Saxon Way of Death* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2001), 156; Robin Fleming, "Recycling in Britain after the Fall of Rome's Metal Economy," *Past & Present* 217, no. 1 (2012): 3-4; Ellen Swift, *The End of the Western Roman Empire*: *An Archaeological Investigation*, (Stroud: Tempus Publishing, 2000), 17.

record.[6] As explained by Catherine Hills, the largest body of archaeological evidence available for the study of early medieval Britain is burial evidence.[7] For this reason, this project examines the material culture preserved through burial practice in an effort to better understand they dynamics of the creation of Anglo-Saxon societies, from A.D 300 to 650.

Late and Post-Roman Britain

Archaeological evidence suggests that the transition from Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon England was an extremely complex process. In the second half of the third century A. D., the Empire experienced challenges that jeopardized its security. Attacks on the frontier and internal wars left the military overextended, and the Empire experienced financial difficulties as well. However, the archaeological record indicates that Britain did not feel the effects of these complications as the rest of the Roman Empire did in the third century.[8] Britain was located in the northwestern corner of the Empire, far from the turbulent, eastern frontier, and the island remained relatively stable.

Economically, in the fourth century A.D., the Empire maintained a balance

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[6] Swift, *The End of the Western Roman Empire*, 14; Fleming, "Recycling in Britain after the Fall of Rome's Metal Economy," 4.

[7] Hills, *Origins of the English*, 95.

[8] Cleary, *The Ending of Roman Britain*, 5.

between "productive capacity, fiscal requirements, and the ability to levy tax."[9]

Maintaining these three factors was critical to the Empire's survival. It was not a period of economic expansion, as in previous centuries, but throughout the first half of the century this balance was well managed. By the second half of the century, the continental regions of the Western Empire saw a decrease in public works, buildings, and monuments. The archaeological record indicates that, in the late fourth century, aspects of Roman society were changing in Roman Britain as well. Public baths and other public works were no longer maintained, towns stopped expanding, burials in urban regions appear to have been carelessly executed and deviated from standard practice, pottery production deteriorated, and buildings at forts and fortresses indicate that they were accommodating fewer troops than they had in the third century.[10] There was a general shift in focus from a town-based economy to one that revolved around the villa. All of these factors reveal definite changes in Romano-British society, though there is no evidence that there was a population drop, or that agricultural practice ceased or was greatly altered.[11] This demonstrates that while there may have been changes, they did not have a significant impact on the survival of Britain.

In the early fifth century A.D., Britain would have been more likely to feel the

[9] Cleary, *The Ending of Roman Britain*, 12.

[10] David Mattingly, *An Imperial Possession: Britain in the Roman Empire* (London: Penguin Books, 2008), 340-342.

[11] Cleary, *The Ending of Roman Britain*, 131-134.

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growing unrest within the Empire. Constantine III was declared emperor in Britain, and the political instability and weakened military that resulted during the first decades of the century left the Empire unable to continue defending itself. Progressively, more of its territory was ceded to barbarians. This led to the gradual divestment of power in Britain.[12] Though Cleary contends that it is nearly impossible to assign an exact date to the end of Roman Britain, he has suggested that, if a date must be assigned, perhaps it should be A.D. 411, the year that the Empire ceased sending revenue to Britain, rendering it no longer part of the Roman Empire.[13] Ellen Swift has interpreted the changes of the fourth and fifth centuries throughout Western Europe as the end of "official Roman authority," rather than the end of the Roman Empire and influence.[14]

The evidence suggests that the end of Roman authority in Britain was a very gradual process. Military weakness was part of the problem, but not the entire problem, as has been thought. The only successful invasion of Britain was the Barbarian Conspiracy in A.D. 367; yet, Britain recovered quickly after this invasion. The sole reason that the "barbarian" tribes met success in A.D. 367 was that they

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[12] Hills, *Origins of the English*, 85.

[13] Cleary, *The Ending of Roman Britain*, 139.

[14] Swift, *The End of the Western Roman Empire*, 17, 136.

banded together, combining their forces and resources.[15] The fact that the

"barbarians" had to combine all of their efforts to pull off the feat, and Britain's swift

recovery, illustrates that Roman Britain, despite the overall decline of the Empire,

was relatively stable and well protected. Though many scholars have ascribed the

ending of Roman Britain to barbarian attacks, the Empire's growing negligence of its

territories was more central to the problem. Slowly, the support provided by Rome

disappeared, and this resulted in the changes in Romano-British society.[16]

Evidently, the dismantling of Roman authority in Britain "was rooted within

the Roman Period and must be seen within the framework of the demise of the

western part of the Empire, and certainly not attributed to the *deus ex machina* of

Germanic invasions."[17] Ellen Swift argues that incoming Germanic populations were

an integral part of the changes observed throughout late Roman provinces. However,

Swift suggests that a more accurate interpretation of the ways in which Germanic

populations most influenced late Roman society would place Germanic populations

within the Roman Empire, adopting Roman cultural traits and sharing aspects of their

own society and culture. The Germanic tribes that threatened the frontier borders had

less of an impact on the long-term changes observed from the fourth through the sixth

centuries in Western Europe than those who were being absorbed into and leaving an

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[15] Mattingly, *An Imperial Possession*, 235-237.

[16] Cleary, *The Ending of Roman Britain*, 142-144.

[17] Cleary, *The Ending of Roman Britain*, 131.

imprint on Roman society. This process occurred through recruitment of Germanic

soldiers and relocation of those soldiers, along with their families in some cases, to

military sites within the Empire, all this carried out by the Roman army in the fourth

century.[18]

In general, the Roman occupation had left Britain well connected to the

western European Continent, and with the Roman soldiers stationed throughout the

island came diverse populations, which would have introduced new social and culture

norms to the native population.[19] However, even before the Roman period, population

movement would have resulted in acculturation and the diversification of the native

British population. According to John E. Pattison, the modern British genome is the

result of a series of complex migrations that began in the Neolithic period, long

before both the Roman occupation and the fifth century, when Germanic populations

migrated to Britain.[20] Net percentages of immigrants during the Roman, Anglo-

Saxon, and Viking periods have been analyzed and compared. While there is slight

variation in the values produced by different studies, these studies have demonstrated

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[18] Swift, *The End of the Western Roman Empire*, 97, 119.

[19] H. E. M. Cool, "Which 'Romans'; What 'Home'? The Myth of the 'End of Roman Britain," in *AD 410: The History and Archaeology of Late and Post-Roman Britain*, ed. F. K. Haarer (London: Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, 2014), 14.

[20] John E. Pattison, "Is It Necessary to Assume an Apartheid-Like Social Structure in Early Anglo-Saxon England?" *Proceedings: Biological Sciences* 275, no. 1650 (2008): 2424.

that the Anglo-Saxon immigrant population was comparable to, possibly smaller in size than, that of the Roman period.[21] Pattison has also cited linguistic evidence in support of the theory that there was contact between the pre-Roman Celts and Germanic populations on the Continent, which may have led to the migration of the Germanic Belgae to southeastern Britain before the Roman occupation.[22]

In short, it is probable that the native Britons encountered foreigners from a variety of places long before the fifth century A.D., and from time to time adopted aspects of their culture and society. When the Germanic populations arrived in the fifth century, the Romano-British may very well have been familiar with some of their customs, even though they had not yet adopted them as their own. Swift argues that the Romano-British would have found Germanic culture familiar due to a " common Celtic heritage."[23] Although Swift's theory is compelling, it suggests that native, Celtic heritage was well preserved in Britain and that little acculturation occurred when native British encountered incoming Roman soldiers. While this argument could be made for the southwest of Britain and the regions of Britain north

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[21] Pattinson, "Is It Necessary to Assume an Apartheid-Like Social Structure in Early Anglo-Saxon England?," 2428. For further information concerning the genetic history of the British, see: S. Oppenheimer, *The Origins of the British: a Genetic Detective Story* (London: Constable and Robinson, 2006). Cristian Capelli, et al., "A Y Chromosome Census of the British Isles." *Current Biology* 13 (2003): 979-984.

[22] Pattinson, "Is It Necessary to Assume an Apartheid-Like Social Structure in Early Anglo-Saxon England?," 2424.

[23] Swift, *The End of the Western Roman Empire*, 135.

of the Firth of Forth, it seems less probable that southeastern Romano-British societies would have maintained such strong ties to their Celtic heritage over the course of several centuries.

It is more likely that both Romano-British and Germanic migrants would have found common ground in the influence that the Roman Empire had on both populations. The influx of Germanic people brought into the Roman Empire in the fourth century by the Roman army resulted in a great deal of acculturation. Swift argues that the exchanging of cultural traits was so intense, and the adoption of Germanic material culture became so widespread throughout the Empire, that it became difficult to differentiate between Roman and Germanic styles in the late fourth century. Former Germanic fashions became Roman, and this was also reflected in fourth century grave good provision in Western Europe.[24] Though the fact remains that there were differences between Romano-British and Germanic societies, this common ground and familiarity would have provided a solid foundation on which the two populations could begin to build relationships and, eventually, to co-exist. This co-existence would prompt the sharing of various aspects of culture, which would ultimately lead to the creation of Anglo-Saxon societies. Furthermore, the adoption of Germanic material culture in Britain appears less remarkable when trends in fourth, fifth, and sixth century material culture use in Britain are compared to the trends demonstrated in the rest of the western late Roman Empire.

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[24] Swift, *The End of the Western Roman Empire*, 96, 119.

The Emergence of Anglo-Saxon Societies

Early medieval Britain was a period of social and cultural transition. By the eighth century, Anglo-Saxon societies had emerged and elites had consolidated power into regional kingdoms, but how exactly did the transition from Romano-British societies to Anglo-Saxon societies occur? This has been and remains a topic of debate among scholars. Many scholars argue for one of two theories. The first theory favors a transition brought about by Germanic migration and invasion. The second theory maintains that the transition was a more nuanced and drawn-out acculturative process; that as Romano-British and incoming, Germanic populations exchanged cultural traits, new and unique societies were born that replaced those that preceded them. The latter hypothesis is accepted by the author of this project despite the fact that a small number of scholars do still argue for the former.

In the early twentieth century, the overwhelming consensus was that invasion and migration were the mechanisms by which "Anglo-Saxon" material culture replaced Romano-British material culture. In the 1970s and 1980s, hypotheses suggesting a peaceful co-existence and gradual transition to Anglo-Saxon societies became much more prevalent.[25] Presently, many scholars contend that the archaeological record demonstrates that the paradigm by which Anglo-Saxon

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[25] Christopher Loveluck and Lloyd Laing, "Britons and Anglo-Saxons," in *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology*, ed. Helena Hamerow, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 535.

societies came into existence was far less straightforward than first believed, and that

Germanic populations migrated to Britain in successive waves, which resulted in

gradual acculturation, integration, and, ultimately, the creation of Anglo-Saxon

societies.[26]

Researchers are now more likely to approach research pertaining to early

medieval Britain with the understanding that material culture does not necessarily

reflect biological actuality. When diverse populations are brought together, cultural

lines become less delineated and genetic origin becomes difficult to infer from

archaeological evidence. Andrew Gardner and Sian Jones define ethnicity as "a self-

conscious identification 'based on the expression of a real or assumed shared culture

and common descent."[27] The author of this study also accepts this definition of

ethnicity, highlighting the differences between ethnicity ("the *real or assumed* shared

culture and common descent") and actual biological kinship. Therefore, it is

important to establish that, throughout this study, reference to Anglo-Saxons and

Romano-British do not refer to an individual's or a population's genetic makeup,

which is outside the scope of this study. Instead these labels refer to the ethnic group

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[26] Fleming, *Britain after Rome*, 39; Barbara Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England* (London: B. A. Seaby, 1992), 7; C.J. Arnold, *An Archaeology of the Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms,* (London: Routledge, 1997), 20-21; Loveluck and Laing, "Britons and Anglo-Saxons," 535.

[27] Andrew Gardner, "Military Identities in Late Roman Britain," *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 18, no. 4 (1999): 404-405; Sian Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity: Constructing Identities in the Past and Present* (London: Routledge, 1997), 84.

with which an individual or community chooses to identify, regardless of whether or not there was an actual genetic link between the individual (or community) and the individuals who comprise that ethnic group. Ancestry aside, this study endeavors to understand the transformative process that occurred in societies, as evidenced by the ways in which individuals identified ethnically through burial ritual.

Christopher Loveluck and Lloyd Laing have argued that it is imperative that the development of Anglo-Saxon societies be understood in pluralistic terms, occurring at different times in different regions throughout Britain, as opposed to one single event in time.[28] In eastern Britain, the archaeological record reveals that Anglo-Saxon identities emerged more quickly. The material culture evidence from the eastern regions of Britain, namely Kent and East Anglia, demonstrates that these regions possessed Anglo-Saxon characteristics from the fifth century onward.[29] Conversely, western Britain remained virtually untouched by Germanic influence until the seventh century or later. According to Loveluck and Laing,

> There is little evidence for extensive contact between the British kingdoms of Wales and the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms in the fifth and sixth centuries, though

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[28] Loveluck and Laing, "Britons and Anglo-Saxons," 2.

[29] See Karen Nielsen's discussion of Scandinavian influence on brooch production in early medieval Kent. She suggests that the adoption of Scandinavian techniques and motifs occurred early, and quickly produced a uniquely Kentish style. Karen Hoilund Nielsen, "The Real Thing or Just Wannabes? Scandinavian-Style Brooches in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries," in *Foreigners in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. Dieter Quast (Mainz: Verlag des Romisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums, 2009), 101-102. Also, Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England*, 25-44.

there is epigraphic evidence showing travel, at least at the level of the social elite, between Wales and British territories in eastern Britain.[30]

There is also a paucity of evidence north of the Firth of Forth, in modern Scotland, of Anglo-Saxon material culture.[31] The dearth of Anglo-Saxon material culture in both western and northern Britain further supports the theory that the acculturative process transpired in a variety of ways and at different times throughout Britain. Additionally, consideration of societies at a local level enables the researcher to highlight differences between Romano-British societies, which also would have possessed unique and regional characteristics. Therefore, to begin to better understand the ways in which different regions developed distinctive variants of Anglo-Saxon society, one must examine this period of transition at a regional level.

In addition to misinterpreting the emergence of Anglo-Saxon societies as a uniform event that occurred across southern Britain, many scholars have also misinterpreted Anglo-Saxon societies as already established societies that arrived with Germanic immigrants and supplanted Romano-British societies. This interpretation is misguided and is not supported by archaeological evidence. Rather, the archaeological evidence illustrates that the Anglo-Saxon societies that developed in early medieval Britain were the product of merging aspects of both Romano-British and Germanic societies. Furthermore, it is important to bear in mind that the

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[30] Loveluck and Laing, "Britons and Anglo-Saxons," 8.

[31] Loveluck and Laing, "Britons and Anglo-Saxons," 8.

native inhabitants of Britain had been exposed to foreign material culture and people

before the fifth century, and that the adoption of different material culture introduced

by a migrant population can occur by force, out of necessity, or by choice.

The archaeological data collected from Romano-British cemeteries suggests

that Romano-British burial rites were not completely uniform.[32] Before the fifth

century, there is evidence at several Romano-British sites of "exotic" burial practice

alongside that of the contemporary and local population.[33] Clarke, who led the first

excavation at Lankhills from 1967 to 1972, identified two groups of "intrusive"

graves at the cemetery, twenty-one in total. Booth has dated these graves from AD

350 to 410.[34] Based on the characteristics of the sixteen graves that comprised the

first group, Clarke determined that the individuals were native to the region around

the Danube, and likely arrived in Britain as mercenaries under the employ of the

Romano-British to reestablish order on the island. Clarke has interpreted the second,

smaller group as some of the earliest Germanic settlers in south-central Britain.

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[32] Booth, *The Late Roman Cemetery at Lankhills, Winchester,* 512.

[33] Sarah Hughes, et al., "Anglo-Saxon Origins Investigated by Isotopic Analysis of Burials from Berinsfield, Oxfordshire, UK," *Journal of Archaeological Science* 42 (2014): 81-92; Robert Baldwin, "Intrusive Burial Groups in the Late Roman Cemetery at Lankhills, Winchester – a Reassessment of the Evidence," *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 4, no. 1 (1985): 93-105; Paul Booth, "Lankhills: Ethnicity and Death in Late Roman Winchester," *Current Archaeology* 23 (2012): 20; Booth, *The Late Roman Cemetery at Lankhills, Winchester: Excavations 2000-2005,* 513.

[34] Booth, *The Late Roman Cemetery at Lankhills, Winchester,* 8.

Robert Baldwin has questioned Clarke's interpretation, describing artifact evidence employed to designate the twenty-one burials as foreign as "tenuous."[35] Baldwin has suggested that more evidence is needed to accurately interpret burial practice at Lankhills, and that the characteristics of the twenty-one "intrusive" graves could reflect endogenous change in the ways the local population at Lankhills displayed the religious ideology and/or status of their dead.[36] Whether the "intrusive" graves at Lankhills represent a local population adopting cultural traits of another population, or a foreign group of Germanic mercenaries that assimilated into the local community, these "exotic" burials demonstrate acculturation.

Recently, archaeologists have employed new methods to assign a place of origin to a deceased individual, using oxygen and strontium isotope analysis. The diet of a young individual determines both strontium and oxygen isotopes values, which are preserved in tooth enamel when the tooth is formed. These values are typically better preserved in tooth enamel than in bone. Researchers extract tooth enamel from premolars or molars, which are formed between two and eight years of age.[37] The strontium isotope ratio present in human tooth enamel reflects the strontium isotope ratio of the local bedrock in the environment in which an individual lived during tooth

[35] Baldwin, "Intrusive Burial Groups in the Late Roman Cemetery at Lankhills, Winchester – a Reassessment of the Evidence," 102.

[36] Baldwin, "Intrusive Burial Groups in the Late Roman Cemetery at Lankhills, Winchester," 102.

[37] Hughes, "Anglo-Saxon Origins Investigated by Isotopic Analysis of Burials from Berinsfield, Oxfordshire, UK," 85.

enamel formation. Oxygen isotope ratios found in tooth enamel demonstrate the individual's proximity to the sea, as well as the altitude and average temperature of the environment where the individual spent his or her early years.[38] This technique has been employed to investigate the origin of individuals identified as foreign at cemeteries in each sub-region included in this study.

Jane Evans, Nick Stoodley, and Carolyn Chenery's study concerning the "exotic" population at Lankhills employed isotope analysis to test the hypothesis concerning the individuals' origin, concluding that isotope analysis supports the hypothesis that the individuals were foreign; however, the authors of the study also highlighted that their research demonstrated that the origins of individuals varied. This suggests that the group was not a population from one specific region, but rather arrived from many different areas.[39] In "Oxygen and Strontium Isotope Evidence for Mobility in Roman Winchester," Eckardt, et al. describe that a further forty more enamel samples from individuals at Lankhills were collected to test Clarke's hypothesis. The authors of the study concluded that, though the isotope analysis demonstrated that approximately a quarter of the sample were incomers, the burial

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[38] Hughes, "Anglo-Saxon Origins Investigated by Isotopic Analysis of Burials from Berinsfield, Oxfordshire, UK," 83; Booth, *The Late Roman Cemetery at Lankhills, Winchester,* 421.

[39] Jane Evans, et al. "A Strontium and Oxygen Isotope Assessment of a Possible Fourth Century Immigrant Population in a Hampshire Cemetery, Southern England," *Journal of Archaeological Science* 33 (2006): 265-272.

practice associated with those individuals did not reflect continental practice. Therefore, the authors suggest that ethnicity was not as important in determining burial practice as other variables.[40] In his 2010 excavation report, Booth has concluded that, based on the isotope analysis of nineteen individuals as Lankhills, eight were local and eleven were foreign incomers. Of the eleven foreign individuals, ten were from regions with warmer climates and one was from a region with climate colder than that of Britain. However, Booth also pointed out that the isotope analysis and the archaeological evidence did not always align at Lankhills. For example, one male individual who was identified as local due to the nature of his burial was identified as originating in central Europe.[41]

Isotope analysis has also been used to examine the population at Wally Corner, Berinsfield, in the second sub-region examined in this study. Researchers have concluded that 5.3% of the individuals buried at Berinsfield could have been from continental Europe. This percentage is surprisingly low for an Anglo-Saxon cemetery and suggests that the Anglo-Saxon burial practice at Berinsfield could have been the result of acculturation, rather than population replacement.[42] In the third sub-

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[40] H. Eckardt, et al., "Oxygen and Strontium Isotope Evidence for Mobility in Roman Winchester," *Journal of Archaeological Science* 36 (2009): 2816-2825.

[41] Booth, *The Late Roman Cemetery at Lankhills, Winchester,* 427-428.

[42] Hughes, "Anglo-Saxon Origins Investigated by Isotopic Analysis of Burials from Berinsfield, Oxfordshire, UK," 90-91.

region analyzed int his project, isotope analysis was executed at Wasperton.[43]

Strontium and oxygen isotope values for twenty graves were compiled and analyzed,

and researchers concluded that twelve individuals were local, while the remaining

eight were from western Britain and the Mediterranean. Two of the incoming

individuals who, according to this study, originated in the Mediterranean, were dated

to the fourth century, one to the fourth and fifth century, and one to the seventh

century. Interestingly, at least two of the eight individuals identified as foreign were

buried at Wasperton before the first waves of Germanic migrants arrived in Britain in

the fifth century.

Though many isotope analysis studies have been conducted, some scholars

argue that it is not possible to actually differentiate between southern England and

northwestern Europe, using strontium isotopes. In "'Impious Easterners': Can

Oxygen and Strontium Isotopes Serve as Indicators of Provenance in Early Medieval

European Cemetery Populations?," Brettell, et al. have explained that individuals who

spent their adolescent years in places with similar geology, though in very different

regions of Europe, would have similar strontium isotope values preserved in their

tooth enamel.[44] This would mean that individuals described in the studies above as

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[43] Martin Carver, et al., *Wasperton: a Roman, British and Anglo-Saxon Community in Central England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2009), 48-49.

[44] Rhea Brettell, et al. "'Impious Easterners': Can Oxygen and Strontium Isotopes Serve as Indicators of Provenance in Early Medieval European Cemetery Populations?" *European Journal of Archaeology* 15, no 1 (2012): 136.

"local" could very well represent populations from northwestern continental Europe that are geologically similar, and vice versa.[45] While it seems that isotope analysis cannot yet conclusively demonstrate the geographic origin of an individuals, researchers do have hope that further research will prove useful in identifying markers that enable scientists to recognize disparate populations. Furthermore, it would seem that, whatever the geographic origin and genetic makeup of the populations described above, they were caring for their dead in a way that deviated from the wide-spread norms exhibited in the rest of the cemetery. This suggests one of two possibilities.

First, these deviant burials could reflect that local individuals had acquired these foreign goods and had assimilated these items into their own material culture for either symbolic or practical reasons. There are several theories that may explain how these exotic goods arrived in native British populations. For example, one of the theories proposed by Catherine Hills is that perhaps "barbarian jewelry could have been the 'in' thing for Romano-Britons to wear."[46] Depending on the region of Britain, a foreign material culture could be explained by proximity to and trade with the Continent, or an ethnically diverse body of Roman soldiers garrisoned nearby. These are just a few possible explanations. The evidence suggests that the migrations

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[45] Brettell, "'Impious Easterners'" 135-136.

[46] Catherine Hills, "Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon England," *History Today* 40, no. 10 (1990): 52.

from the Continent were not the sole method by which Germanic social and cultural norms were introduced to Britain. Romano-British who adopted different cultural traits may very well not have done so in response to force, but rather could have chosen to adopt these new social and cultural norms for practical or symbolic reasons. Alternatively, these unique burials could represent a foreign population that migrated to Britain and coexisted with the local population, but adhered to the native burial customs of their homeland. Importantly, both explanations suggest acculturation and assimilation.

Furthermore, there is evidence that societies in Britain, which were labeled Anglo-Saxon after the mid-fifth century, continued to use Romano-British material culture, as well as Romano-British burial customs. As explained later in this thesis, Romano-British material culture was deposited as grave goods after the fifth century at all three of the sub-regions explored below. In addition, burial customs in the early seventh century in the Peak District reveal that the local population continued to bury their dead in stone-cist graves, which was a "long-standing" burial custom of the native Britons.[47] Such examples of the survival of Romano-British customs and material culture in emerging Anglo-Saxon societies strongly suggest that those societies in the early medieval period were an amalgamation of Romano-British and

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[47] Loveluck and Laing, "Britons and Anglo-Saxons," 540.

continental characteristics (from various regions that possessed post-Imperial Roman identities).[48]

David Mattingly stresses that, throughout the Roman, post-Roman, and early Anglo-Saxon periods, there was no single identity in Britain; instead there were a variety of identities. Differences in socioeconomic status, regional location, kinship, and "spatial identities," such as those established within households or the local community, all shaped identity.[49] Mattingly has employed the term "discrepant identities," defining them as "the co-existence of very different perceptions of history, culture, and relationships between colonizer and colonized, which produces parallel histories," many of which go unrecorded.[50] However, despite the fact that one of those histories, which Mattingly described as "running in parallel," is usually accepted as authoritative, archaeological evidence is an alternate way by which the researcher can attempt to reconstruct the otherwise unrecorded histories of societies as well.

Despite wide acceptance of the acculturative theory, there remain some interpretations that strongly reflect those of the early twentieth century. Although smaller in number, some scholars argue for a complete cultural, and in some cases

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[48] Loveluck and Laing, "Britons and Anglo-Saxons," 544.

[49] Andrew Gardner, *An Archaeology of Identity: Soldiers and Society in Late Roman Britain* (Walnut Creek,: Left Coast Press, 2007), 236.

[50] Mattingly, *An Imperial Possession*, 17.

genetic, replacement of the Romano-British. One theory is that the similarities

between material culture in Germanic, northwestern regions of Europe and southern

Britain could be explained by the Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon societies living

separately, in an "apartheid-like" situation. Mark Thomas et al. argue that, after

Anglo-Saxon societies were established in eastern Britain, Romano-British societies

were impoverished by comparison. Citing empirical evidence and evolutionary

theory, Thomas argues that, applying the widely accepted correlation between

successful reproduction and prosperity, the wealthier Anglo-Saxons would have met

more success in reproducing than their Romano-British counterparts. According to

Thomas, over time, the Romano-British population would have decreased.[51]

Thomas' arguments are founded on evidence that is itself debatable. For

example, the hypothesis of Thomas' study is contingent upon acceptance that the

similarities between the material culture of northwestern, Germanic regions of

continental Europe and England indicate other commonalities, such as shared

ancestry. Furthermore, this theory relies on the assumption that the differences

between Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon material culture demonstrate that the

former population was impoverished, relative to the latter. Both of those factors are

open for debate. If one concludes that the current body of archaeological evidence

does not yet enable the researcher to draw conclusions about a population's genetic

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[51] Mark G. Thomas, et al., "Evidence for an Apartheid-Like Social Structure in Early Anglo-Saxon England," *Biological Sciences: The Royal Society* 273, no. 1601 (2006): 6.

makeup, and that a less lavish burial rite is not necessarily symptomatic of an impoverished society, Thomas' study is tenuous at best. John E. Pattison has provided an alternative interpretation of the historical, archaeological, and genetic evidence, concluding that it does not demonstrate that Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon societies lived in parallel, without any contact. Pattison argues that the cumulative effect of many migratory waves over the course of the last two thousand years must be considered when attempting to interpret the genetic origins of modern British.[52] Pattison posits that the hypothesis presented by Thomas et al. not only oversimplifies the migratory patterns to and from Britain over the last two millennia, but that it is also unnecessary in light of the extant body of evidence. In conclusion, Pattison stresses the importance in understanding that the early medieval Germanic migrations to Britain were a subset of migrations belonging to a larger series of migration movements, all of which contributed to the modern British gene pool.

The relationship between Germanic migrations and the creation of Anglo-Saxon societies need not necessarily be causal. It would be erroneous to suggest that no relationship whatsoever exists. However, it seems prudent to be extremely careful about how we define that relationship. Evidence suggests that the relationship has been oversimplified, and in some cases, inaccurately interpreted. Researchers do not attribute later changes in Anglo-Saxon burial practice to invasion and population

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[52] Pattison, "Is It Necessary to Assume and Apartheid-Like Social Structure in Early Anglo-Saxon England?" 2423, 2427-2428.

replacement (e.g., the princely burials, such as Sutton Hoo, or the appearance of Christian motifs in material culture), but rather understand these changes in burial practice as the result of ever-evolving belief systems and the introduction of new ideas to society. The author of this study does not support a model for the creation of Anglo-Saxon societies that defines invasion and population replacement as the mechanisms that produced Anglo-Saxon societies. Instead, this thesis theorizes that the process involved both migration and acculturation, and endeavors to demonstrate the latter by providing evidence of both Romano-British and Germanic attributes in early Anglo-Saxon societies.

Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon Burial Characteristics

By analyzing the ways in which societies cared for their dead, researchers can make deductions about the ways in which individuals expressed their personal and/or their community's ideology. This could result in said community expressing a variety of identities, not all of which may have reflected reality. For example, a society might care for their dead in such a way that reflects the ideal, not the actual, social structure of their society. A community may care for their dead in such a way as to highlight the positive attributes of its people, and downplay its shortcomings. Burial rites may be guided by local religious ritual that fogs the ability of the researcher to discern much about the individual, but instead to understand the local community's shared religious beliefs and rituals. Finally, the way in which a community treats its dead

may actually reflect the reality of the deceased individual's life. All of these possibilities must be observed and considered by the researcher, contextualizing archaeological evidence to produce a clear interpretation.

Having established that adherence to Romano-British or Anglo-Saxon social norms is not necessarily indicative of genetic makeup, it is pertinent to describe the widely observed attributes that have been identified as comprising Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon burial practice. The majority of Romano-British burials were extended, supine inhumations, though deviant burials did occur. The cremation burial rite was practiced in Britain before the Roman occupation. By the end of the third century A.D., inhumation was favored over cremation by the majority of the Empire, and this trend can be seen throughout Roman Britain as well.[53] However, the cremation rite continued to be used in Britain, though with much less frequency. As the data analyzed below reveals, of the Romano-British cremations in the first sub-region, five have been dated to the second half of the fourth century.[54] Crouched or flexed burials, which deviated from the extended supine norm, did occur infrequently. Burials were typically oriented west-east; however, smaller cemeteries reveal a high number of north-south or south-north oriented burials. The Romano-British often encased their deceased in stone-lined cist graves or wooden coffins. Elizabeth O'Brien posits that this practice could reflect either a Christian belief system (a

[53] Swift, *The End of the Western Roman Empire*, 14.

[54] Booth, et al., *The Late Roman Cemetery at Lankhills, Winchester*.

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practice meant to emulate the burial of Christ in a stone tomb) or it could simply reflect superstitious notions of encapsulating the dead so as to keep them from roaming after death.[55] Grave goods were not prevalent in late Romano-British contexts. When burials were furnished, they included items such as vessels, jewelry, coins, and hobnailed shoes, but furnished Romano-British graves were the exception, not the norm.

Characteristics identified as Anglo-Saxon differ from those of the Romano-British. Anglo-Saxon graves were most often oriented north-south, and sometimes west-east. The dead were generally not placed in stone-cist graves or in coffins as the Romano-British dead typically were, and the Anglo-Saxon burial rite incorporated a wide array of grave goods, including weaponry, jewelry, vessels, and sometimes domesticated animals. Relative to Romano-British burials, Anglo-Saxon graves were far more lavishly furnished. The general consensus among twentieth century scholars was that cremation was a Germanic burial rite. Through the 1990s, many interpretations have associated the cremation burial rite in Britain with the first waves of Germanic immigrants, who were un-Romanized, pagan, and continued to employ their native burial rites after arriving in Britain. However, a growing body of evidence

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[55] O'Brien, *Post-Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon England,* 13.

suggests that the cremation rite was neither exclusive to Germanic populations, nor was it pagan.[56]

Although much research has focused on the differences between Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon burial practices, it is worth noting similarities as well. Cremation, a pre-Roman and native burial rite in Britain, survived until the end of the Roman period. Both cremation and inhumation rites have been observed in Romano-British cemeteries in the south-central region of Britain. This demonstrates that regardless of what influence an incoming population and their burial practice may have had on the local population, both inhumation and cremation rites were employed in Romano-British burial practice, and it is wise to eschew the notion that the cremation rite would have been viewed as Germanic, pagan, and abhorrent to the Romano-British.[57]

In addition, though grave goods were deposited in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries far more frequently than in Romano-British cemeteries, this practice was not completely foreign to the native population either. As highlighted in this project, Romano-British burials in the first sub-region were more lavishly furnished than other contemporary Romano-British cemeteries. This demonstrates that, much like the Anglo-Saxon societies that emerged in the coming centuries, the Romano-British

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[56] Howard Williams, "Anglo-Saxon Cremation Rites," in *Burial in Early Medieval England and Wales*. ed. Samantha Lucy and Andrew Reynolds (Leeds: Maney Publishing, 2002), 54.

[57] Williams, "Anglo-Saxon Cremation Rites," 64.

societies that preceded them possessed different cultural traits as well. Some communities in Romano-British society may have conformed to social norms that were, in some ways, similar to those of the incoming Germanic populations; other Romano-British communities may have had very little in common with migrant populations. However, it would be rash to jump to the conclusion that the transition from Romano-British material culture to Anglo-Saxon material culture was the result of invasion, subjugation, and forced assimilation unless the evidence suggests so.

Conclusion

The evidence demonstrates that the process by which Anglo-Saxon societies emerged was quite complicated. It was a complex process in which the Romano-British, the Germanic, migrant populations, and other continental populations (in contact with Britain) played a part. This process varied extensively, both regionally and temporally, throughout Britain.[58] Anglo-Saxon societies developed more rapidly in the east, whereas the acculturative process was less pronounced the further west one travelled. For this reason, central Britain became a border region where the more firmly established Anglo-Saxon societies of the east encountered the Romano-British and British societies of the west. Many scholars have examined the eastern societies of the early medieval period, which demonstrate the emergence of Anglo-Saxon societies earlier, and the western British societies, which demonstrate social

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[58] Loveluck and Laing, "Britons and Anglo-Saxons," 2.

continuity in the early medieval period. However, examining the material culture of the central, border region may enable researchers to acquire more insight into the transformative process that occurred in south-central Britain, where the Anglo-Saxon societies of the east and the Romano-British strongholds directly west of those societies would have lived alongside each other, and, presumably, made contact. In an effort to understand the regionalized emergence of Anglo-Saxon societies, this project endeavors to compare and contrast mortuary practice in one clearly defined region of Britain. It analyzes cemeteries in south-central Britain, from 300 to 650 A.D., exploring what burial practice, specifically the treatment of the body and grave good provision, reveals about the acculturative process, which contributed to the creation of Anglo-Saxon societies.

Chapter II

Methodology

Examining the acculturative process in south-central Britain, as the more well-developed Anglo-Saxon populations in the east of Britain ventured further west and confronted the Romano-British populations, this project will focus geographically on the central transept of early medieval, southern Britain.

Data Sources and Sampling Strategy

This region runs from the Isle of Wight, in the south, through Hampshire, Wiltshire, Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire, Warwickshire, to the Staffordshire and Derbyshire in the north. As the earliest Anglo-Saxon societies were established in the east, knowledge of these new social and cultural norms would have spread in a western direction. Eventually, the people who comprised both Romano-British and early Anglo-Saxon communities would have encountered one another in the central transept described above. By focusing on the south-central region of Britain, this project aims to demonstrate the complexity of the acculturative process that was underway from the fourth through the seventh centuries. As previously mentioned, the evidence concerning early medieval Britain reveals a highly regionalized island. Defining three separate sub-regions enables the study to highlight local burial rites, while at the same time comparing and contrasting these practices within a larger

geographical framework of Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon communities in central England (See: **Map 1**). The goal of this study is to better understand the dynamics of the creation of Anglo-Saxon societies in the early medieval period.

Analyzing the changes in burial practice in the three defined sub-regions, as Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon societies encountered each other and continued to develop, this study demonstrates the acculturative process that led to more homogenous Anglo-Saxon societies, which would later establish kingdoms, dynasties, and ultimately the first united kingdom of England later in the medieval period. Importantly, throughout this study, the goal of the researcher aligns with that astutely espoused by Martin Carver, which is to say that the aim is not to neatly categorize burial practice as either Romano-British or Anglo-Saxon over all of central England. Rather, it is to observe the fluidity of a region's ever-evolving attitudes toward the treatment of the dead, as well as how this reflects a community's "current reality, past myth, future aspiration, as seen locally, … landscapes and their intellectual inheritance, as well as references to cultures that are exotic or remote in time."[59] This study aims to identify when communities chose to adopt new ethnic identities, which led to the development of Anglo-Saxon societies.

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[59] Carver, *Wasperton*, 3.

Map 1: South-Central Region of Britain.

A common misconception is that there is not a lot of data to examine with
respect to early medieval Britain. However, this notion could not be further from the
truth. According to John Pearce, due to the drastic increase in rescue archaeology in
the second half of the twentieth century (the result in large part of "modern
construction and infrastructure development"), there is a considerable amount of new
burial data to be analyzed.[60] For this reason, it was possible to identify a series of
Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon sites that have produced optimal data sets. Sites
that were identified as having been excavated to a high standard were then narrowed
down to a total of fourteen Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon sites, which include

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[60] John Pearce, "Beyond the Grave: Excavating the Dead in the Late Roman
Provinces," *Late Antique Archaeology* 9, no. 1 (2012): 445.

1,773 total burials. This focus on sites with optimal data has enabled the author to

pursue specific questions relevant to the themes examined in this thesis (treatment of

the body and provision of grave goods).

The first, and most southern sub-region includes the modern counties of

Wiltshire, Hampshire, and the Isle of Wight (See: **Map 2**). This region is important

because of its maritime orientation, its close contacts to the Continent across the

Channel, and because of the similarities in material culture that the sub-region shares

with Kent.
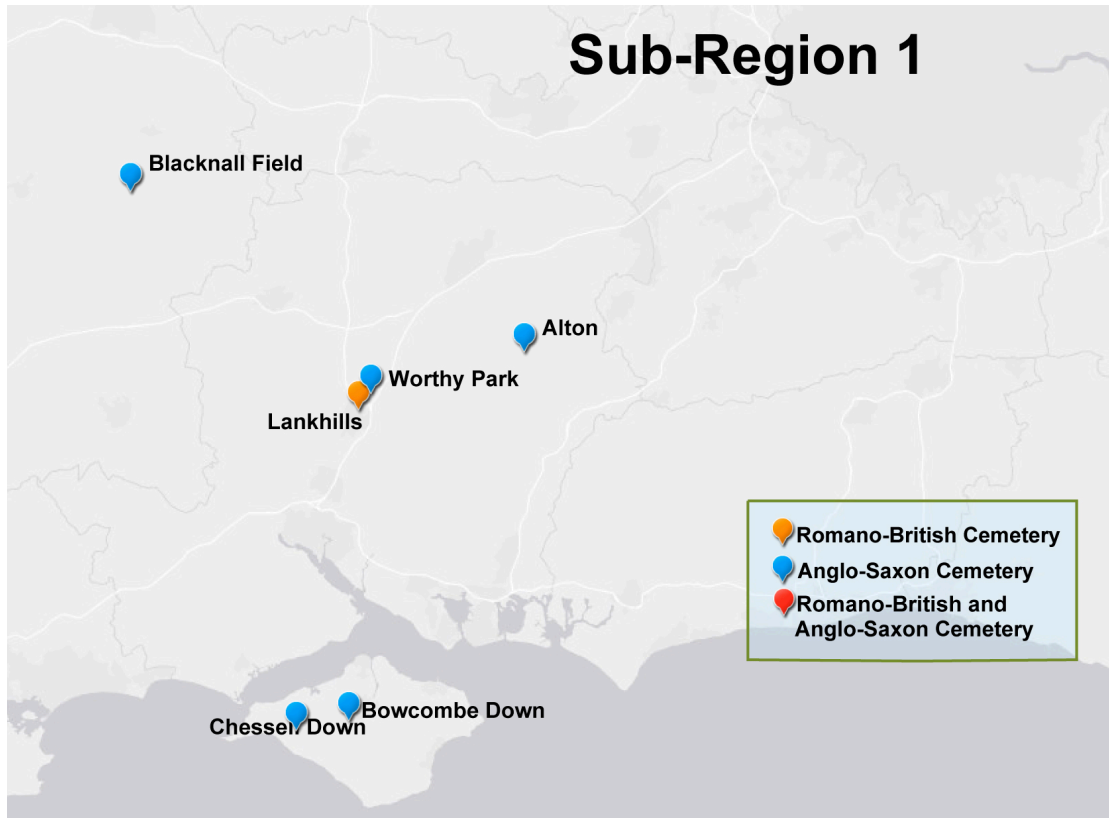
Map 2: Sub-Region 1.

The second sub-region includes modern Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire in the Upper Thames Valley (See: **Map 3**). It would have been well connected to the societies on the east coast of Britain via the Thames River. In this region there are examples of both late Romano-British sites, and the earliest Anglo-Saxon graves in the region, such as those at Dyke Hills. It is an ideal, interior region for consideration.
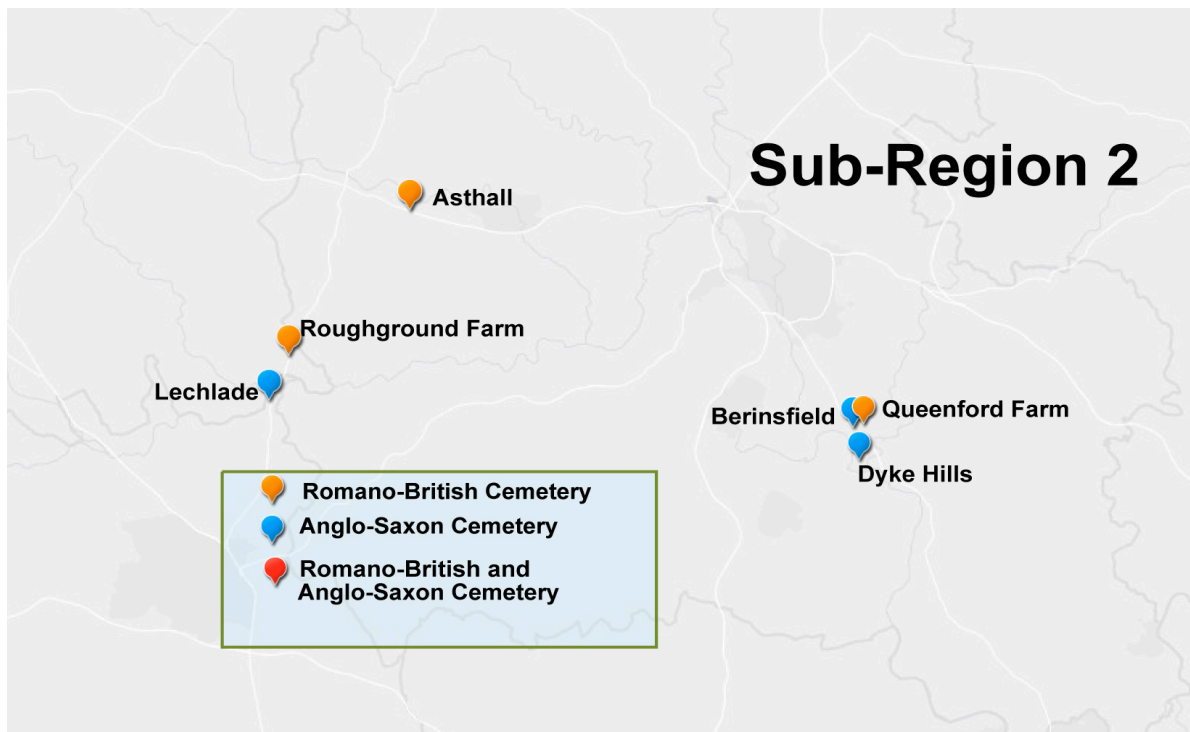
Map 3: Sub-Region 2.

Modern Warwickshire, Staffordshire, and Derbyshire comprise the third sub-region in central England (See: **Map 4**). There is less fifth century material culture evidence, but included in this area is the unique and continuously occupied Wasperton, as well as examples of barrow burials in the Peak District. Each sub-

region contains at least one site identified as Romano-British and one identified as
Anglo-Saxon, both of which have been excavated to a high standard since 1950,
employ modern archaeological theory and methodology, and have produced an
excavated population of fifty or more.
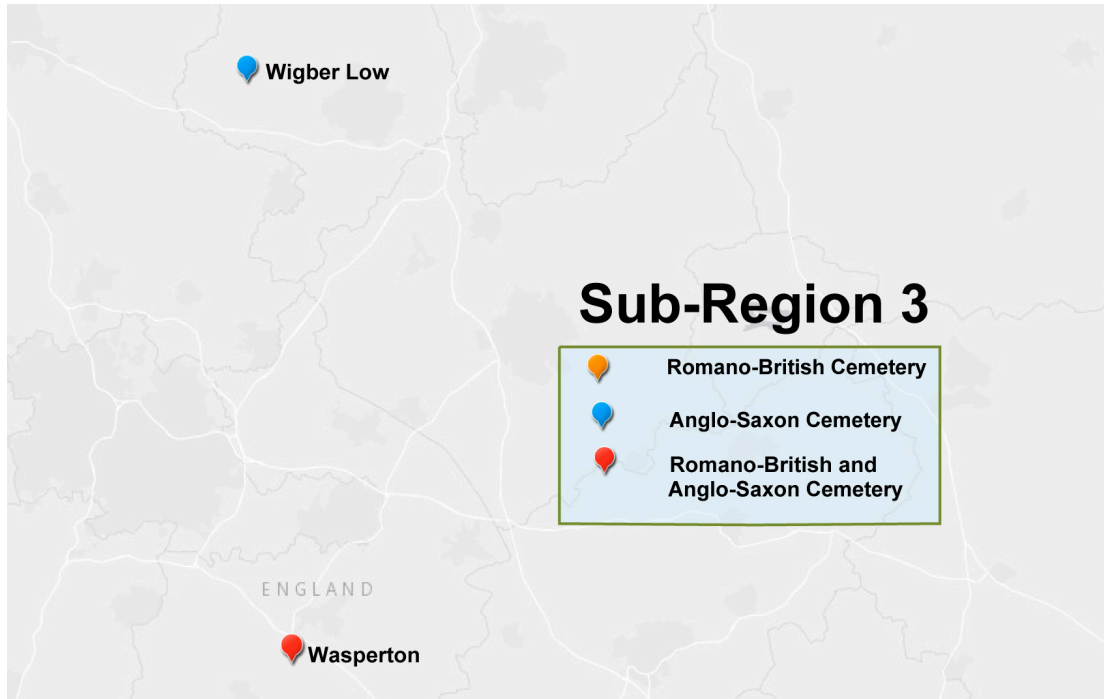
Map 4: Sub-Region 3.

The Romano-British data set included in this study is derived from Lankhills
in the first sub-region, Roughground Farm, Asthall, and Queenford Farm in the
second sub-region, and Wasperton in the third sub-region. Anglo-Saxon sites utilized
in this study include Chessell Down, Bowcombe Down, Blacknall Field, Worthy
Park, and Alton in the first sub-region, Wally Corner, Long Wittenham, and Lechlade
in the second sub-region, and Wasperton for the third sub-region. For Romano-British

and Anglo-Saxon sample sizes and sites in each sub-region, see **Table 1**. As explained, the sites that comprise the sample for this study were chosen because they have produced optimal data that are relevant to the thematic questions examined in this study (the treatment of the body and grave good provision). It is noted that there are many other sites in the south-central region; however, those sites were not targeted because they did not provide data needed to draw statically significant conclusions about the themes explored in this study.[61]

	Number of Burials	Number of Sites
Romano-British Burials (Sub-Region 1)	326	1
Anglo-Saxon Burials (Sub-Region 1)	493	5
Romano-British Burials (Sub-Region 2)	208	3
Anglo-Saxon Burials (Sub-Region 2)	498	3
Romano-British Burials (Sub-Region 3)	64	1
Anglo-Saxon Burials (Sub-Region 3)	184	1

Table 1: Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon Sites and Sample Sizes by Sub-Region.

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[61] See Audrey Meaney's Gazetter for an exhaustive list throughout Britain: Audrey L. Meaney, *Gazetteer of Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Sites* (Crow's Nest: Allen and Unwin, 1964).

A summary of all sites, both large and small, can be found below. Interpretations of the smaller sites will be used in conjunction with those interpretations constructed from the larger sites. The smaller sites are considered with caution for various reasons. Some sites were excavated at varying points in time over the last two centuries, using out-dated archaeological theory and methodology. Most of the smaller sites generally have data sets that are too small in size to provide stand-alone samples that would enable archaeologists to construct interpretations about burial rites of the local community with any accuracy. Despite the cautionary approach employed with regard to these sites of varying quality, the smaller cemeteries provide context to the larger, well-excavated sites. As part of the burial tableau of south-central, early medieval England, both the large and the small sites deserve careful consideration.

This study will thematically examine two characteristics of burial practice in the aforementioned sub-regions. The data derived from sites in each sub-region will be compiled and analyzed, focusing on these themes, highlighting various attributes of burial practice at the local level, as well as comparing and contrasting contemporary burial practice at sites in neighboring sub-regions throughout the period examined. The first burial characteristic, treatment of the body, compares and contrasts the ways in which Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon societies were caring for their dead. Variability in the orientation of graves, the position of the body,

cremation versus inhumation, and the structure of the grave (i.e., use of coffin, stone cysts, no grave structure, etc.) are all considered. The second theme considered is the provision of grave goods, and how this did or did not vary at sites identified as Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon. This study will consider the relationship between Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon cemeteries in each sub-region. Is there continuity between any of the cemeteries? Is there evidence of the two ethnic groups coexisting? If so, was burial inclusive, or exclusive? Finally, is there any evidence to suggest the survival of aspects of Romano-British culture and society at Anglo-Saxon sites? This comparative analysis aims to construct an interpretation of the acculturative process in south-central, early medieval Britain, which contributed to the creation of Anglo-Saxon societies in central England.

Summary of Large and Small Sites

Large and small sites are summarized and organized according to the sub-region in which they fall.

Sub-Region 1 (The Isle of Wight, Hampshire, and Eastern Wiltshire)

1. Chessell Down and Bowcombe Down. Chessell Down and Bowcombe Down are the two largest Anglo-Saxon cemeteries on the Isle of Wight. Both were in use from the late fifth century through the late sixth century. George Hillier and John Skinner first excavated the sites in the early nineteenth century. C. J. Arnold, who produced

an excavation report in 1982, reappraised the burial data, providing what

interpretations could be constructed, using the recorded data. There were inhumations

and cremations. Both cemeteries were mixed rite. The majority of the graves were

oriented northeast-southwest, and bodies were typically supine, extended with arms at

the side. The sexing of the burials in the Hillier/Skinner report remains unreliable.

Arnold highlights the antiquated theory employed when attempting to sex skeletons,

quoting the original report, which documented that the excavator assumed a skeleton

was female because of the small skull size.[62] Although Hillier and Skinner's sexing

methods are questionable, it is often possible to determine the sex of the individual

based on the grave goods provided.

Though researchers have highlighted the many similarities between the Isle of

Wight and Kent, Arnold convincingly argues that the similarities observed in material

culture are the result, not of Kentish migration to the Isle of Wight, but rather a

common, Scandinavian origin with the settlers of Kent. Arnold's theory is supported

by Karen Hoilund Nielsen's research. Nielsen argues that, although at first the

prevalence of Nordic-type brooches seems to imply that Scandinavian brooches were

simply en vogue, they actually reflect strands of migrant populations intent on paying

respect to their Scandinavian origins and heritage. Nielsen also suggests that Kent and

Anglia in Britain may represent stronger, elite family ties to Scandinavia, hence the

distribution of Scandinavian square-headed brooches and gold bracteates in both

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[62] Arnold, *Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries on the Isle of Wight*, 102.

regions.[63] With the exception of bracteates, this argument could also be made for the

Germanic population that settled on the Isle of Wight. What the material culture of

fifth and sixth century on the Isle of Wight makes apparent is that the island seemed

to have much stronger connections with the rest of Europe than it did with southern,

coastal Britain.[64] An examination of the types of Anglo-Saxon grave goods deposited

on the Isle of Wight will be analyzed in Chapter IV in the context of the wider

changes demonstrated throughout the south-central region of Britain in the early

medieval period.

2. Lankhills. The Cemetery at Lankhills, Winchester was a Romano-British cemetery,

used from fourth through the fifth centuries. Giles Clarke first excavated it from 1967

to 1972, during which time 444 inhumations and seven cremations were excavated.

Later excavations by Oxford Archaeology from 2000 to 2005 produced a further 307

inhumations and 25 cremations (See: **Map 5**). Most of the burials were aligned west-

east, positioned supine and extended, and confined in coffins. Lankhills stands out

from other contemporary Romano-British sites in the entire region because of its

lavishly furnished burials. The comparatively extravagant burial rite at Lankhills

makes it an important site in analyzing the ways in which early medieval societies

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[63] Nielsen, "The Real Thing or Just Wannabes?," 107.

[64] Arnold, *Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries on the Isle of Wight*, 107.

were providing grave goods in the first sub-region.[65] Explanations for the abundance

and types of grave goods deposited at Lankhills will be analyzed in Chapter IV.
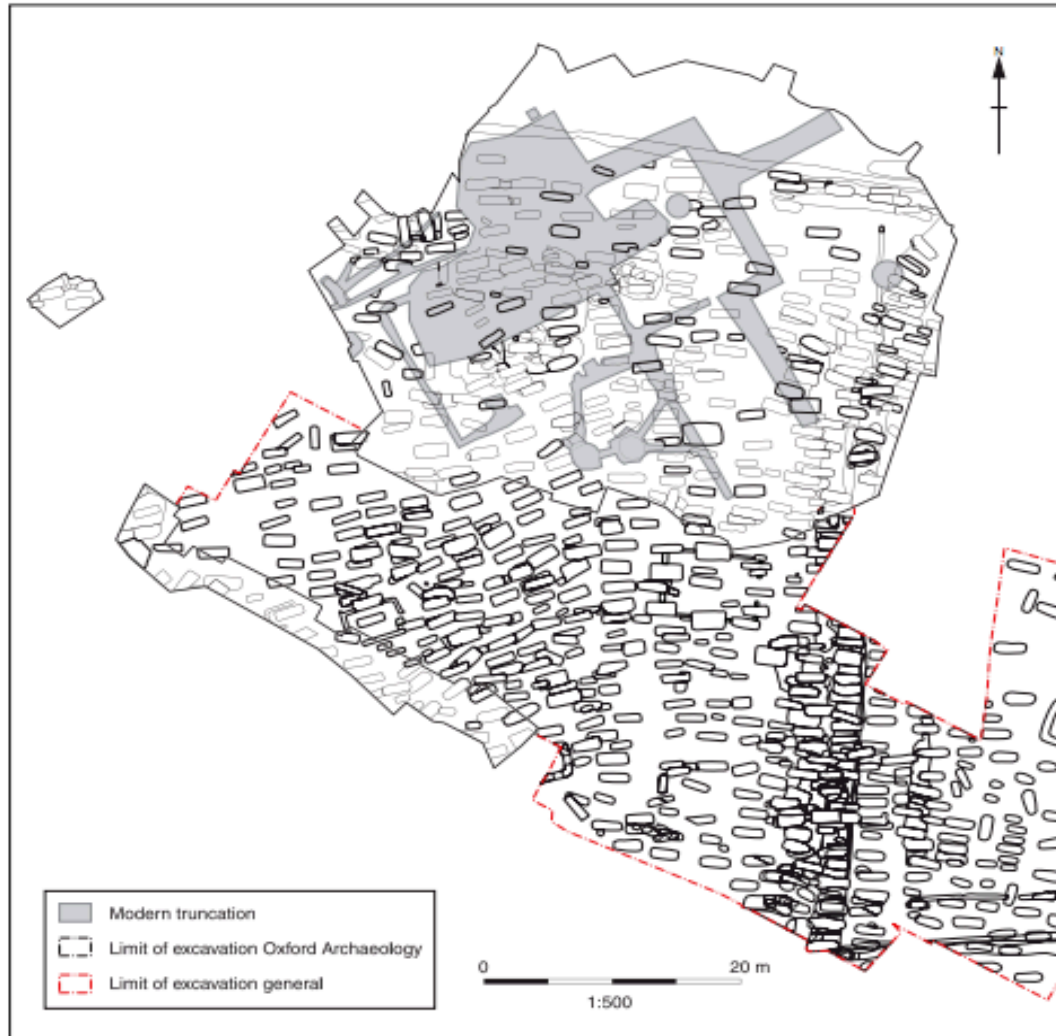

Map 5: Excavation at Lankhills Cemetery (☐ 2010 Oxford Archaeology Ltd.).

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[65] Booth, *The Late Roman Cemetery at Lankhills, Winchester,* 517.

3. Worthy Park. In 1961-1962, Sonia Chadwick Hawkes led the excavation of an Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Worthy Park, Kingsworthy, which is approximately five kilometers north of Winchester and was in use from the fifth through the seventh centuries. During the excavations, 94 inhumation burials and 46 cremation burials were discovered, though Chadwick Hawkes has suggested that the total cemetery population may have been twice that total number. The majority of graves were oriented west-east and placed in graves supine and extended. A wide variety of grave goods, analyzed in Chapter IV, reflect typical Anglo-Saxon material culture. The well-documented report provides detailed information on both the treatment of the body and grave good provision at Worthy Park, making it an ideal site for consideration.

4. Blacknall Field. From 1969 to 1976, the curator of the Devizes Museum led excavations at Blacknall Field, Pewsey, in Wiltshire. Archaeologists discovered 102 graves; 98 of these graves were inhumations, the remaining four were cremation burials. The cemetery dates to the fifth and sixth century. Interestingly, F. K. Annable suggests that the site of Blacknall Field was within 10 kilometers of the region that was considered the "frontier" of the Britons in the fifth century.[66] There was a high percentage of richly furnished burials, and overall the graves were oriented west-east and bodies positioned supine and extended. Blacknall Field is an important site due

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[66] F. K. Annable and B. N. Eagles, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Blacknall Field, Pewsey, Wiltshire* (Trowbridge: Cromwell Press Group, 2010), 1.

to its location near the frontier zone, as well as the high standard to which the

excavation was documented.

Map 6: Grave Distribution at Blacknall Field Cemetery in the Late Fifth, Early Sixth , and Later Sixth Centuries (⬜ F. K. Annable and B. N. Eagles).

5. Alton. Alton, in Hampshire, is an Anglo-Saxon cemetery that was in use from 450

to 650 A.D., and during excavation 95 inhumations and cremations were discovered

(See: **Map 7**). The majority of inhumations were supine with legs extended. The

graves were oriented in a number of different combinations, suggesting no uniform

practice. Graves were richly furnished, exhibiting a wide variety of goods. Vera

Evison speculates that the earliest individuals buried in the cemetery may have been

contemporary with those individuals buried in the latest phase at Lankhills, in the

same sub-region.[67] The optimal data from the excavation at Alton makes the site an

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[67] Vera I. Evison, *An Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Alton, Hampshire* (Winchester: Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society, 1988), 44-45.

important one in analyzing the themes relevant to this thesis: treatment of the body

and grave good provision.
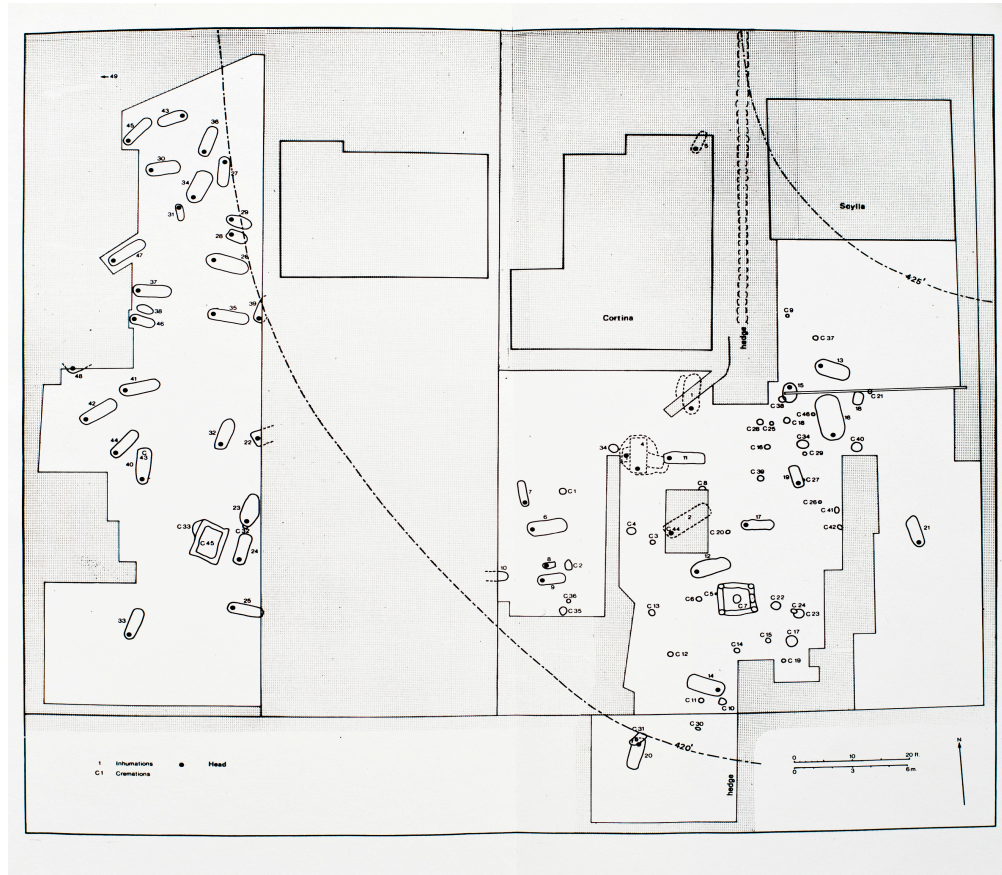
Map 7: Burial Distribution at Alton Cemetery.

Sub-Region 2 (Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire)

1.Dyke Hills. In 2010, Paul Booth and the organization "Discovering Dorchester"

began to excavate Dyke Hills after a fruitless search for a lost dog led to the discovery

of a late Roman burial. A bone from the individual was radiocarbon dated with 95%

accuracy to A.D. 240-430.[68] Three burials were analyzed, one of which contained a

belt set, comparable in style to one found at Lankhills. Booth suggests that the set

would have been imported from the Continent after A.D. 370. One of the burials also

contained the skeleton of a child. Booth speculates that the burials very likely date to

the first three decades of the fifth century. It was not possible to determine the

orientation of the burials. According to Booth, a few nails were found, indicating a

possible coffin; though, he also concedes that these nails could be from a later period,

as well. Booth has argued that Dyke Hills could potentially be a very important site in

understanding the transition that occurred in the second sub-region. Although the a

continuous occupation chronology has not yet been demonstrated, it is very possible

that future evidence will reveal continuity, enabling archaeologists to better interpret

the emergence of Anglo-Saxon society and culture in the region. Booth describes

several possible explanations for the burial of what appear to be late Roman military

individuals. However, the theory Booth believes to be most likely is that the burials

represent former Roman troops who accepted authoritative roles in the Dorchester

region as Roman Britain was progressively more neglected by the Empire.[69] The

types of grave goods recovered at Dyke Hills are important to the analysis of grave

good provision in the entire second sub-region.

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[68] Paul Booth, "A Late Roman Military Burial from Dyke Hills, Dorchester on Thames, Oxfordshire," *Britannia* 45 (2014): 245.

[69] Booth, "A Late Roman Military Burial from Dyke Hills," 269.

2.Queenford Farm. The excavation at Queenford Farm was executed in 1972 as an emergency excavation. During the project, 102 graves were identified and 82 of those graves were excavated. The majority of the inhumations were oriented west-east, and bodies were positioned extended and supine. The cemetery was in use from the fourth through the early sixth century. In "New Light on the Anglo-Saxon Succession: Two Cemeteries and Their Dates," Hills and O'Connell compared and dated burials from Queenford Farm and nearby Wally Corner (See: **Map 8**). Based on stratigraphical evidence, they chose late burials from Queenford Farm and early burials from Wally Corner. Samples from each burial were radiocarbon dated, using Accelerator Mass Spectrometry technique. The successfully dated and calibrated ten samples from Queenford Farm were dated to the periods AD 254-426 and AD 240-531. Only five samples from Wally Corner were dated successfully. Those samples fell in the time range of AD 385-538 and AD 344-556.[70] Hill and O'Connell's findings suggest that there was a brief period of overlap, during which time both Queenford Farm and Wally Corner were both in use.[71]

Very few grave goods were found in the excavated graves at Queenford Farm. In the report, two iron plates, some nails, a few potsherds, and a bone comb were the only recorded findings. Both the location and dating of the site at Queenford Farm

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[70] Catherine Hills and T. C. O'Connell, "New Light on the Anglo-Saxon Succession: Two Cemeteries and Their Dates," *Antiquity* 83, no. 322 (2009): 1101.

[71] Hills, and O'Connell, "New Light on the Anglo-Saxon Succession," 1106.

make it an important site in understanding the transition from Romano-British to Anglo-Saxon societies in the second sub-region. Grave good provision and treatment of the body will be examined in Chapters III and IV, as well as compared to the nearby, and briefly contemporary, site of Wally Corner.
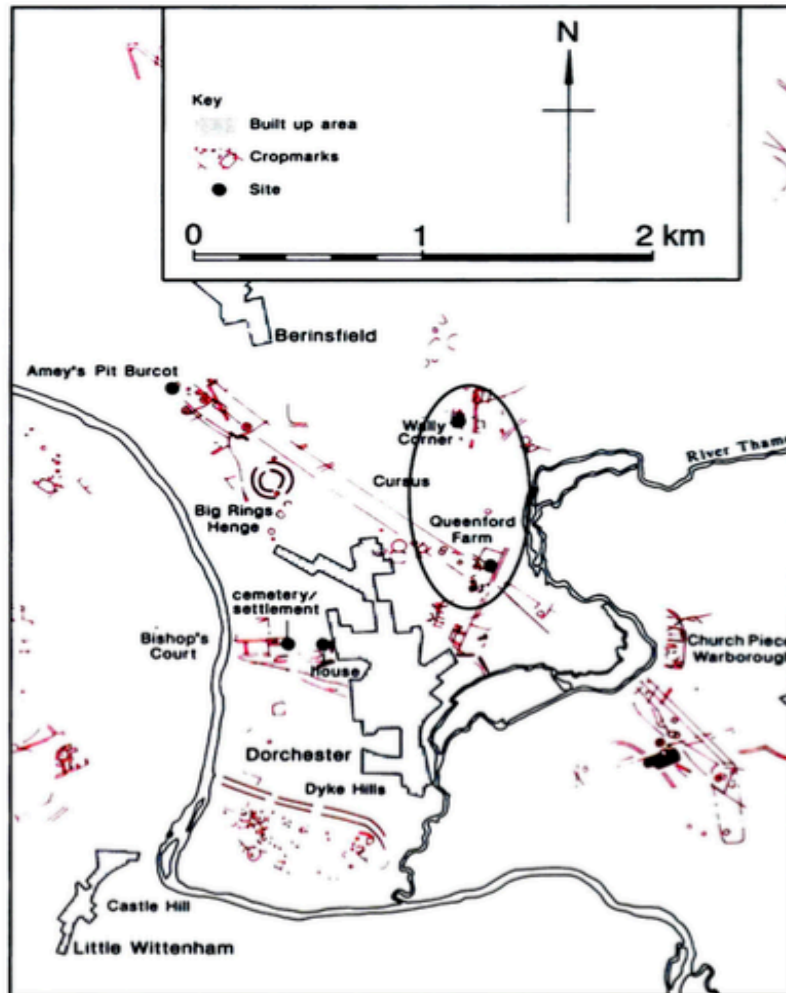
Map 8: Map of the Dorchester Area, Depicting Dyke Hills, Queenford Farm, and Wally Corner (□ Catherine Hills and T. C. O'Connell).

3. Wally Corner, Berinsfield. Wally Corner, Berinsfield was an Anglo-Saxon

cemetery in use from the late fifth through early seventh century, near Dorchester-on-

Thames. It was excavated in 1975, when an early Anglo-Saxon cemetery was

discovered. This cemetery contained 100 inhumations (with 114 individuals) and 4

cremations. 70% of the inhumation graves were oriented south-north, and the bodies

were more often than not placed in the grave supine and extended. Typical of Anglo-

Saxon burial practice, graves were furnished. A very high percentage of the graves

contained Romano-British items. As provision of grave goods is one of the two

themes explored in this study, these Romano-British goods in an Anglo-Saxon

cemetery will be considered in Chapter IV. As previously mentioned, recent

radiocarbon dating indicates a brief period of overlap between Wally Corner and the

nearby Romano-British site of Queenford Farm (See: **Map 8**). The two sites will be

compared and discussed at length below.

4. Long Wittenham. Long Wittenham is an early Anglo-Saxon cemetery that lies

approximately four kilometers west of Dorchester. Interestingly, the site demonstrates

that its Anglo-Saxon inhabitants incorporated late Roman material culture into that of

their own.[72] Excavations, conducted by John Akerman in 1859, led to the discovery

of 188 inhumation and 46 cremation burials. The majority of adult graves were

oriented west-east, but Akerman has noted that the most of sub-adults buried in the

cemetery were oriented north to south. Bodies were placed supine. There were many

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[72] Booth, "A Late Roman Military Burial from Dyke Hills," 266.

grave goods, as per other contemporary Anglo-Saxon cemeteries; however, archaeologists have noted a significant number of Romano-British items included alongside Anglo-Saxon goods.[73] This abundance of Romano-British grave goods at Long Wittenham renders it an important site in pursuing the questions relevant to this thesis

5. *Lechlade.* Butler's Field, Lechlade is an Anglo-Saxon cemetery excavated in 1985 by the Oxford Archaeological Unit. The cemetery was in use from the mid fifth century through the late seventh century, and 219 individuals in 199 inhumation graves and 29 cremations were excavated. Graves at Lechlade were lavishly furnished, the majority of graves were oriented southwest-northeast, and bodies were supine and extended. The well documented report, containing detailed information about both treatment of the body and grave good provision, made Lechlade an ideal site for the research conducted in this study.

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[73] John Akerman, "Report on Researches in an Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Long Wittenham, Berkshire, in 1859," *Archaeologia* 38, no. 2 (1860): 337-348.

Map 9: Cemetery at Butler's Field, Lechlade (Ⓒ A. Boyle and Dido Clark).

6. *Roughground Farm.* Roughground Farm is a Romano-British site that was

excavated in 1957-1965 by Margaret Jones, and from 1981 to 1990 by Tim Allen.

Excavation revealed a Roman villa, in use through the fourth century, as well as late

Roman burials that were placed within the Roman enclosure. Twenty-four late Roman burials were discovered, seventeen extended inhumations were uncovered during the 1957-1965 excavations, six had been discovered and recorded in 1928, and one during the 1984 excavation. The majority of burials were oriented northwest-southeast, and bodies were positioned supine and extended. Two coffin nails were recovered, suggesting that at least some of the individuals were placed in coffins, and the only grave goods found included a bracelet and shoe plate.[74] Allen's excavation report provided data recorded to a high standard, concerning both treatment of the body and grave good provision.

7. Asthall. Asthall is a Romano-British site just northwest of modern Oxford. Oxford Archaeological Unit completed excavation of the site in 1992. There is evidence of a prehistoric, Roman, and post-Roman settlement at the site, but no evidence suggesting an Anglo-Saxon settlement in the immediate vicinity. During excavation 16 inhumation burials were found and two cremations, dating to the fourth century. The majority of inhumations were supine, extended in coffins, and grave goods included items such as a brooch, a pin, and an anklet.[75] Asthall was an ideal site to

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[74] T. G. Allen, *Excavations at Roughground Farm, Lechlade, Gloucestershire – a Prehistoric and Roman Landscape*, (Oxford: Oxford University School of Archaeology, 1993), 170.

[75] Paul Booth, *Asthall, Oxfordshire, Excavations in a Roman "Small Town," 1992 Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph* (Oxford: Oxford University School of Archaeology, 1997), 139.

include in the second sub-region due to the fact that the treatment of the body and grave good provision for all burials was well documented.

Sub-Region 3 (Warwickshire, Leicestershire, Derbyshire, Staffordshire)

1. Wasperton. Wasperton is unique as compared to other sites in the south-central region of Britain. It was in use from the fourth through the seventh centuries, and evidence shows that populations who identified as both Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon were buried at the site (See: **Map 10**). The site was excavated from 2000 through 2005, led by Martin Carver. The burial population of Wasperton has been divided into three distinct cultures. The fourth century culture contained 23 burials. Barrow burial, un-urned cremation, decapitation, and some grave goods comprised the burial rituals practiced throughout this phase. There was a lot of variation in orientation, but the largest group was oriented north-south.

Carver has identified two "Anglo-Saxon cremations" that fall within this early, fourth century phase of burial. Evidence does not support the theory that Anglo-Saxon societies had emerged in the third sub-region by the fourth century, and these cremations described as "Anglo-Saxon" are more likely representative of incoming, foreign individuals or local Romano-British who chose to employ the cremation rite. The second phase as fifth century, and included 37 inhumations, all of which had grave goods. Most of these graves were oriented southeast-northwest, and many of the graves were lined with stone or timber. This increase in lined graves in

the fifth century could reflect endogenous change or influence from Christianized Wales or Ireland. This phase also included 23 cremations in an enclosed space, which Carver dates to approximately 480 A.D. Carver further speculates that these cremations belong to a family of incomers.[76] Toward the end of this second phase, inhumations are more commonly oriented southwest-northeast. It has been noted that these later inhumations are grouped together and could also be indicative of a second wave of migrants.

The cemetery at Wasperton is unique in the entire south-central region examined in this thesis, as it is the only cemetery identified as inclusive. This means that the site provides an example of a society continuously burying its dead in one cemetery as it transitioned from Romano-British society to Anglo-Saxon society. The excavation was recorded to a very high standard, providing a detailed burial catalogue with information about both treatment of the body and grave good provision, in Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon contexts. Wasperton is an important site in the research of the acculturative process in the entire south-central region of Britain, and will be thematically analyzed in full below.

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[76] Carver, *Wasperton*, 135.

4th century

5th century

5-6th century

6th century

later 6th century

6-7th century

0   50m
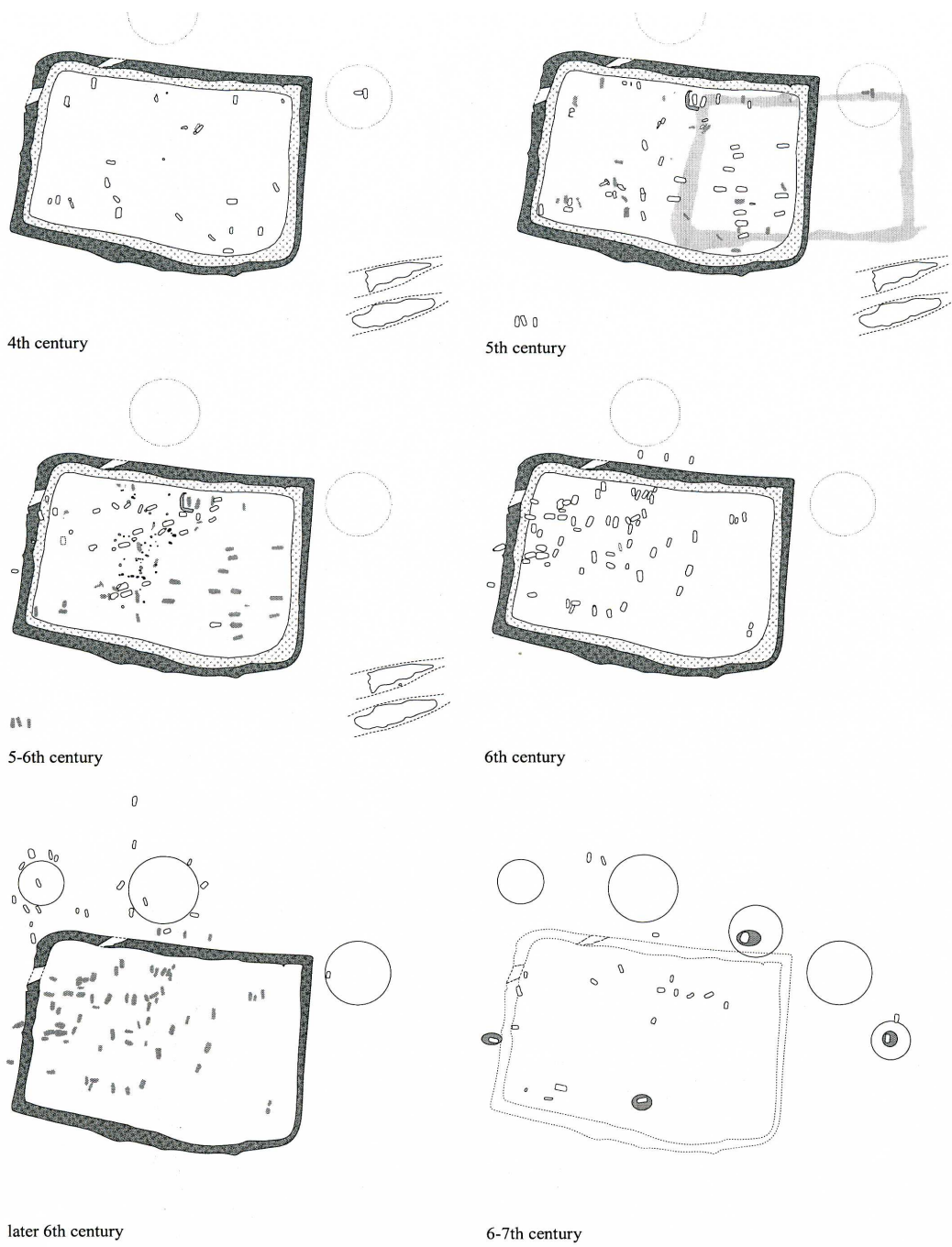
Map 10: Wasperton Grave Distribution by Period (© Professor Martin Carver).

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2. Wigber Low. In 1975-1976, Wigber Low in Derbyshire was the first Anglo-Saxon burial site to be excavated in the Peak District after the main phase of barrow excavations in the mid nineteenth century. During excavation, the archaeologists encountered six Anglo-Saxon burials. The burials contained grave goods, including spears, knives, a leaf-shaped arrowhead, a sword, a buckle, a purse with a side of beef, and an amber bead. However, Collis has concluded that the seventh burial was more difficult to date. The only evidence found that aided in dating the grave was a sherd of Roman pottery.[77] Though Collis has suggested a late or post-Roman date for this grave, it seems more likely that the sherd of Roman pottery was unintentionally discarded and preserved in the backfill, and is unrelated to the seventh burial. In addition to the site at Wigber Low, other barrow burials in the Peak District will be referenced.[78]

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[77] John Collis, *Wigber Low, Derbyshire: A Bronze Age and Anglian Burial Site in the White Peak* (Sheffield: Department of Prehistory and Archaeology, University of Sheffield, 1983), 22 and 101.

[78] T. Bateman, *Vestiges of the Antiquities of Derbyshire and the Sepulchral Usages of Its Inhabitants* (London: John Russell Smith, 1848); T. Bateman, *Ten Years' Digging in Celtic and Saxon Grave Hills*, *in the Counties of Derby, Stafford, and York, from 1848 to 1858* (London: John Russell Smith), 1861.

Chapter III

Treatment of the Body

Treatment of the body includes several aspects of burial practice. The first

characteristic of burial practice considered is whether or not individuals were

inhumed or cremated.

Cremation vs. Inhumation

As previously discussed, cremation is a characteristic that has often been

associated with early Anglo-Saxon burial practice. However, the data demonstrates

that it existed in the Romano-British context in south-central Britain as well.

Cremation was used throughout Britain both during the Iron Age and in the early

Roman period.[79] This burial method was also the norm throughout the Roman

Empire, and continued to be used until the end of the third century A.D., when most

of the Empire began to adopt inhumation as a way to dispose of its dead instead.

Despite this shift in burial practice, there is evidence that the cremation rite continued

to be used throughout the Roman period, though inhumation was clearly favored.

In the first sub-region, 8% of the fourth and fifth century Romano-British

burials in this excavated population continued to use the cremation burial rite to

dispose of their dead. Of the Anglo-Saxon sites considered in the first sub-region

(derived from Chessell Down, Bowcombe Down, Worthy Park, Alton, and Blacknall

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[79] Lucy, *The Anglo-Saxon Way of Death*, 119.

Field), 23% of the Anglo-Saxon population sample in the first sub-region was

cremated (See: **Figure 1**). The data demonstrates a 15% increase in cremation burials

in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries in the first sub-region. In the second sub-region, the

Romano-British cemeteries (data derived from Queenford Farm, Rough Ground

Farm, and Asthall) were in use from the fourth through the early sixth century. Of the

excavated burials, only 0.5% of the population was cremated. At the Anglo-Saxon

sites in the second sub-region (Berinsfield, Long Wittenham, and Lechlade), 7% of

those burials were cremations, an increase of 6.5%. In the third sub-region, 3% of the

excavated Romano-British burials were cremations. 15% of the burials identified as

Anglo-Saxon were cremations. In the third sub-region, the data also demonstrates an

increase in the cremation rite. In this case, the increase was 12%. The continued use

of the cremation rite in Romano-British cemeteries suggests that cremation was not

something foreign or novel to the Romano-British population when Germanic

populations began to arrive in the fifth century.

Initially, the especially low percentage of Anglo-Saxon cremation burials in

the second sub-region (7%) was surprising, and was thought to perhaps be the result

of the smaller sample size employed to pursue specific thematic questions relevant to

the thesis. Therefore, it seemed wise to consult Audrey Meaney's Gazetteer of Anglo-

Saxon sites, specifically the sections on Oxfordshire, Glouchester, and Derbyshire

(the modern counties that comprise the second sub-region). In her Gazetteer, Meaney

identified cemeteries as cremation, inhumation, mixed rite, or questionable sites.

Considering only the sites which were definitively identified as cremation, inhumation, or mixed rite, 90% were inhumation cemeteries, 4% were cremation cemeteries, and 6% were mixed rite cemeteries.[80] According to Meaney, the trends observed in the use of the cremation burial rite in the counties that comprise the second sub-region align with the data sample for the second sub-region in this study. Evidently, the cremation rite was not widely used in the second sub-region.

The model accepted by many scholars has for long been that Germanic settlers in Britain introduced and adhered to the cremation rite in the fifth century, and that the cremation rite gradually lost dominance and was replaced by the inhumation rite in the sixth century. However, as Howard Williams has argued, a reappraisal of the evidence suggests that this model is outdated and flawed.[81] Specifically for the region examined in this thesis, the cremation rite is not discontinued in the sixth century; with the exception of the third sub-region, the cremation rite persisted through the seventh century. The evidence demonstrates that cremation was not the dominant burial rite in either Romano-British or Anglo-Saxon cemeteries in south-central Britain. However, it also suggests that cremation was not an exclusively Germanic or pagan burial rite in the early medieval period. To the contrary, it occurred in both Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon contexts.

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[80] Meaney, *Gazetteer of Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Sites*, 72-80, 90-93, 203-214.

[81] Williams, "Anglo-Saxon Cremation Rites," 61.

Williams has produced a distribution map of fifth and sixth century cremation, inhumation, and mixed rite cemeteries. While in East Anglia there were cremation and inhumation cemeteries, there are no recorded mixed rite cemeteries. In Kent, the majority of fifth and sixth century cemeteries were inhumation, with the exception of one mixed-rite cemetery. However, in the south-central region examined in this study, Williams has identified at least fifteen mixed rite cemeteries of varying size, in addition to approximately 25 inhumation cemeteries and five cremation cemeteries, the latter of which are concentrated in the third sub-region in the north.[82] The data collected from the entire south-central region of Britain illustrates that the cremation rite was used through the seventh century in these mixed-rite cemeteries. Interestingly, the mixed rite cemeteries on Williams' distribution are concentrated in areas west of Anglia and Kent, regions where in the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries Romano-British and Germanic populations continued to encounter each other, sharing cultural traits and creating new Anglo-Saxon societies.

Williams has posited that, rather than associating the cremation burial rite with pagan, Germanic settlers, the rite could demonstrate a "powerful statement by individuals and groups of their ideological and political affiliations with parts of northern Europe."[83] Furthermore, Williams suggests that this could explain the

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[82] Williams, "Anglo-Saxon Cremation Rites," 65.

[83] Williams, "Anglo-Saxon Cremation Rites," 70.

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continued use into the seventh century, when the cremation rite became an important

component of the princely barrow burials of the seventh century. The trends

demonstrated by the data collected for this study align well with Williams'

continental allegiance hypothesis. The sub-region with the highest percentages of

both Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon cremations is the first sub-region, the

southern most area considered in this study. As previously discussed, the maritime

orientation of the first sub-region, as well as its close contacts to its continental

neighbors across the Channel make it the strongest candidate of the three sub-regions

for aligning its "ideological and political affiliation with northern Europe." This is

also reflected in the material culture, as referenced on the Isle of Wight.[84] Therefore,

the data analyzed in this study - specifically regarding cremation burial rite - supports

Williams' hypothesis.

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[84] Arnold, *Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries on the Isle of Wight*, 103; Nielsen, "The Real Thing or Just Wannabes?," 107.
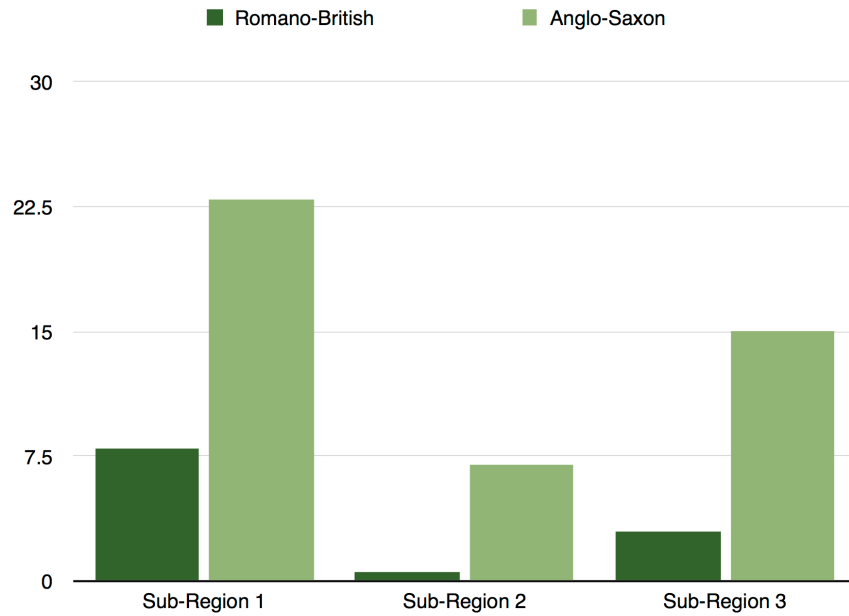
Figure 1: Percentages of Cremation Burials in Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries.

Grave Orientation

The way in which graves were oriented is another burial attribute worth consideration. In the first sub-region, at all but one cemetery (this includes both the Romano-British and the Anglo-Saxon sites) graves were oriented west-east. The Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Alton is the exception, where 37.5% of the burials were oriented south-north, 33% were oriented north-south, 25% were oriented east-west, and 5% were oriented west-east. In the second sub-region, there is more diversity in the ways in which graves were oriented. At Queenford Farm, burials were

overwhelmingly oriented west-east. At the smaller Romano-British cemetery of

Roughground Farm, the majority of the graves were oriented northwest-southeast.

Similar variation in burial orientation was observed at the Romano-British site of

Asthall, there was again variation in the orientation of the burials. 27% were aligned

west-east, 36% were aligned east-west, 27% were aligned north-south, and 9% were

aligned south-north. Both Roughground Farm and Asthall were much smaller in size

than Queenford Farm, which provides a larger sample size.

At the Anglo-Saxon cemeteries in the second sub-region, there was a great

deal of variation in orientation. At Berinsfield, 70% of the graves were oriented

south-north. At Long Wittenham, 48% of the burials were oriented west-east, but

45% of the graves were also oriented south-north. At Lechlade, 64% of the graves

were oriented southwest-northeast. The evidence suggests that in both the Romano-

British and Anglo-Saxon cemeteries the second sub-region, there was more variation

in the ways in which communities oriented graves than in the first sub-region. At

Wasperton, in the third sub-region, 50% of the inhumations dated to the post-Roman

period were buried north-south, 36% were oriented west-east, and the remaining 14%

were aligned east-west or south-north. Of the graves that were dated to the Anglo-

Saxon period, 70% were oriented south-north. At Wasperton, there is a shift from

north-south oriented graves (identified as Romano-British) to south-north oriented

graves (identified as Anglo-Saxon). While there are trends within each cemetery,

there do not appear to be common trends that can be seen in Romano-British or

Anglo-Saxon cemeteries throughout the entire region. It is possible that pre-existing features in the landscape may have been most influential in determining burial orientation.

Position of the Body

The position of the body is another important burial attribute. Supine burials are burials in which the deceased is lying on his or her back, face toward the sky. Prone burials are graves in which the individual was placed in the grave face down. The body could also be placed in a crouched or flexed position, which closely resembles the fetal position. The latter two positions, prone and crouched, occurred with less frequency in both Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon contexts. Of those crouched/flexed burials that did occur (153 in all three sub-regions at both Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon cemeteries), 75% of the Romano-British crouched burials were sub-adults, most of which were identified as infants or neonates. At the Anglo-Saxon sites, 52% of the crouched burials were sub-adults. This suggests that in the Romano-British context it was a burial position more commonly used for sub-adults, where as, though still not very common in the Anglo-Saxon period, when this body position was employed, it was used for adults more often than it was at the Romano-British cemeteries.

At the Romano-British sites, prone burials were quite rare. In all three sub-regions combined, there are only 13 examples of Romano-British burials in which the

individual was placed prone. In the region examined, prone burials were even less common in the Anglo-Saxon contexts. In all three sub-regions there are only five examples of prone burials. Individuals buried in the prone position deviate from standard burial practice in both Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon contexts, and may be indicative of individuals who were considered outsiders of the community, or had behaved in such a way that their society felt it important to display their displeasure.

Elizabeth O'Brien suggests that the prone burials and north-south/south-north oriented burials are evidence of the survival of native British population who did not conform to Romano-British east/west or west/east orientation and supine, extended position, which was the norm in the larger Romano-British cemeteries. O'Brien has also hypothesized that north-south/south-north aligned and prone burials in later Anglo-Saxon cemeteries may indicate Romano-British burials.[85] It seems reasonable to theorize that burials that deviated from standard practice were meant to make some sort of statement, in terms of setting those individuals apart from the rest, or that these outliers reflect a strand of society that adhered to different burial practice. However, the data for the south-central region of Britain neither demonstrates that north-south/south-north oriented burials nor prone burials were the norm in Roman Britain. To the contrary, the evidence suggests that the orientation of burials varied from cemetery to cemetery. As for prone burials, Lucy has suggested that "it seems to be

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[85] Elizabeth O'Brien, *Post-Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon England: Burial Practices Reviewed* (Oxford: Hadrian Books, 1999), 5.

just one of the alternative rites which could be employed."[86] Therefore, the evidence does not support O'Brien's theory that these deviant burials are examples of surviving Romano-British or British burial customs in Anglo-Saxon societies.

Grave Structure

The final aspect of body treatment considered is the structure of the grave. As previously explained, evidence demonstrates that some sort of grave structure was an important component of Romano-British burial practice. In the first sub-region, 85% of the inhumed Romano-British burials contained evidence of coffins (See: **Figure 2**). Only 2% of the Anglo-Saxon burials in this sub-region contained evidence of coffin use. This evidence of coffin use is observed in the form of stains in the ground from wood, or, most commonly, coffin nails positioned in a fashion that illustrates placement in a grave structure. Interestingly, at Chessell Down on the Isle of Wight, there was an example of an inhumation surrounded by slabs of sandstone. At Bowcombe Down, also on the Isle of Wight, a flint barrier surrounded one individual. Of the Romano-British burials in the second sub-region, 27% contained evidence of coffins, a much lower percentage than in the first sub-region, while 0.5% of the Anglo-Saxon burials in the second sub-region yielded evidence of coffin use.

In the third sub-region, the 26% of the graves identified as Romano-British contained evidence of coffins, whereas 11% of the graves identified as Anglo-Saxon

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[86] Lucy, *The Anglo-Saxon Way of Death,* 80.

had evidence of coffin use. Two of the Anglo-Saxon graves in the third sub-region contained stone slabs. In the first example, the top of the grave was lined with stones. As for the second example, the entire grave was lined with stone slabs. Trends in grave structure can be identified throughout the entire region. When comparing the Romano-British cemeteries to Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, it is evident that there was a significant decrease in coffin use at Anglo-Saxon cemeteries in all three sub-regions. Worth noting is the fact that the first sub-region had the highest percentage of coffin use (85%), and, as later discussed, the majority of Romano-British burials at the same site were richly furnished, uncharacteristically so when compared to other contemporary Romano-British cemeteries. Could these two variables be indicative of a wealthier population in the first sub-region? It is also possible that the population had easier access to necessary resources. Finally, perhaps the ubiquity of coffins in the first sub-region merely reflects localized burial custom.
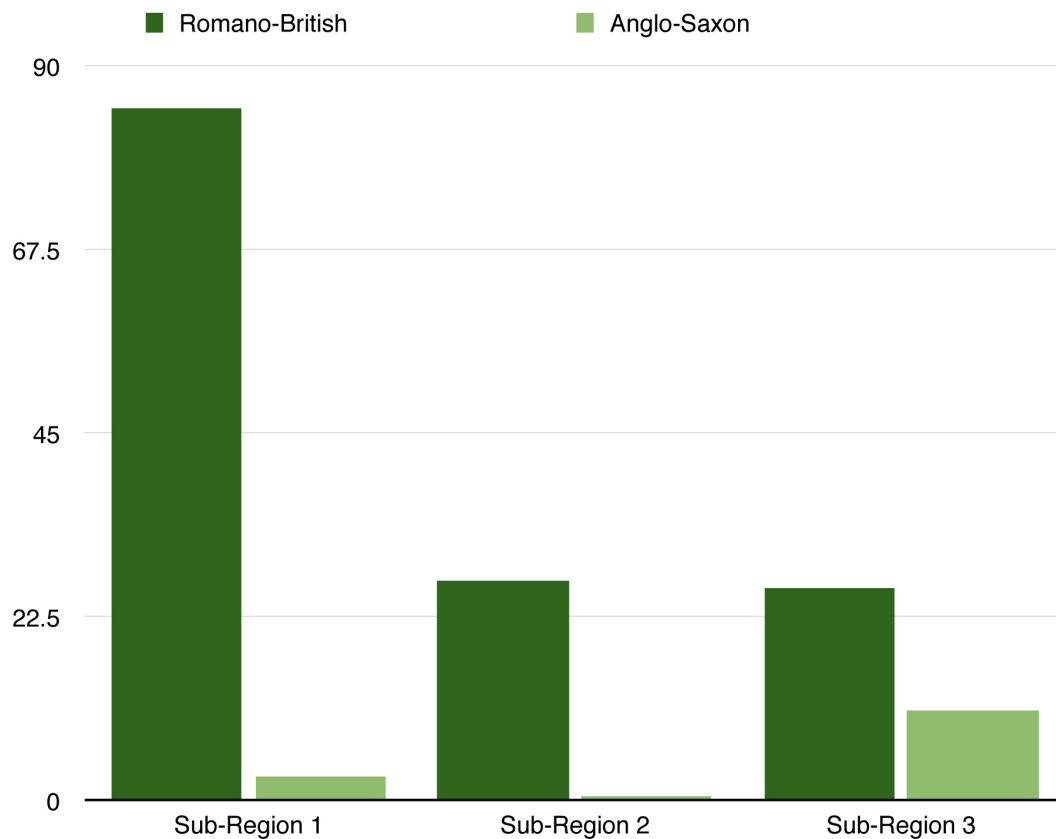
Figure 2: Percentages of Graves with Coffins or Stone Lining in Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries.

Another aspect of grave structure worth considering is barrow burials. Christopher Loveluck has investigated the practice of barrow burial in the Peak District, which falls in sub-region three. Loveluck argues that the Peak District barrow burials, identified as Anglo-Saxon, actually reflect a native burial practice that re-emerged in the third and fourth centuries and survived until the seventh century in the Peak District. Barrow burials that possess both native and Germanic burial

characteristics, demonstrate the influence that the native population had on emerging Anglo-Saxon societies.[87] Native barrow burial attributes include rock-cut graves, east-west alignment, quartz pebbles, and antler tines deposited as grave goods, though there is some uncertainty concerning the origin of the latter characteristic.[88] In modern Derbyshire and Staffordshire, which lie within the third sub-region examined in this project, there are examples of seventh century Anglo-Saxon barrow burials that fit Loveluck's description, such as the barrows at Alsop-in-the-Dale and Wredon Hill.[89] According to Loveluck's interpretation, the combination of both native and Germanic burial traditions observed at Alsop-in-the-Dale and Wredon Hill suggest acculturation.

However, while Loveluck has identified barrow burials that possess native and Germanic attributes, there are examples of barrow burials that have only Anglo-Saxon traits as well. Loveluck suggests that the latter burials indicate an incoming population. For example, the burial site at Wigber Low, also in the third sub-region, is comprised of seventh century barrow burials that do not possess any native

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[87] Christopher Loveluck, "Acculturation, Migration and Exchange: The Formation of an Anglo-Saxon Society in the English Peak District, 400-700 A.D.," In *Europe between Late Antiquity and The Middle Ages,* British Archaeological Reports, Oxford, 1995, 85.

[88] Loveluck, "Acculturation, Migration, and Exchange," 87.

[89] Bateman, *Ten Years' Digging in Celtic and Saxon Grave Hills*, 20-22.

characteristics. At Wigber Low, Samual Carrington and Fossick Lucas excavated two

furnished Anglo-Saxon inhumations in 1870, which were dug into a Bronze Age

cairn.[90] Later in 1975-1976, the Department of Prehistory and Archaeology at

Sheffield University and the Derwent Archaeological Society excavated six more

seventh century Anglo-Saxon burials at Wigber Low, which contained spears, knives,

a leaf-shaped arrowhead, a sword, a buckle, a purse with a side of beef, and an amber

bead.[91] The Anglo-Saxon inhumations at Wigber Low suggest the presence of an

established seventh century Anglo-Saxon population, or small group of elites, that

migrated to the Peak District from elsewhere in Britain.[92] This variation in barrow

burial in the third sub-region demonstrates comparatively late migration and

acculturation in the seventh century.

Summary

Having surveyed the evidence in south-central Britain, what can we deduce

about the ways in which treatment of the dead in burial practice differed in Romano-

British and Anglo-Saxon cemeteries? Is there any indication that Romano-British

practices continued in Anglo-Saxon contexts? Of the attributes examined in this

chapter, there is a great deal of continuity between the ways in which both Romano-

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[90] Collis, *Wigber Low, Derbyshire,* 3.

[91] Collis, *Wigber Low, Derbyshire*, 101.

[92] Loveluck, "Acculturation, Migration, and Exchange," 88-89.

British and Anglo-Saxon populations treated the body in burial practice. When comparing Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, there is a definite increase in the use of cremation as a burial rite in the entire south-central region; however, it is worth considering how significant the increase is. In the first sub-region the data illustrates a 15% increase, in the second sub-region a 6.5% increase, and in the third sub-region a 12% increase. An increase in the use of the cremation burial rite from the fourth century onward could have occurred for a number of reasons. For example, a shift in the population's belief system could have made cremation a more suitable rite, the introduction of a Germanic population with different burial practices may have influenced Romano-British societies, or a combination of the two variables could have impacted the frequency with which the cremation rite was used.

There are no discernable patterns in the orientation of graves. Orientation choice seemed to be dictated by the local environment, and the pre-existing features within that environment, which varied from site to site. The region examined illustrated continuity in position of the body in the burial context. Both Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon populations most frequently employed the supine, extended position.

The structure of the grave has revealed interesting information about burial practice throughout the entire south-central region. In the Peak District, which falls in the third sub-region, an examination of barrow burials demonstrates the survival of Romano-British burial practice in Anglo-Saxon contexts, and relatively late

acculturation. In Romano-British cemeteries across the entire region, individuals were most often buried in coffins, whereas coffin use was very rare at the Anglo-Saxon sites. The shift away from coffin use could be explained by a voluntary shift in burial practice, it could have been instigated by exposure to the burial practice of an incoming Germanic population, or it could be that local populations were adopting burial trends common in northwestern continental Europe. It has been argued by some scholars that the shifts in burial practice described demonstrate the ascendency of an elite population, whose Germanic society and culture supplanted that of the native Romano-British. However, there are alternative explanations. While the incoming Germanic settlers undoubtedly played a role in the changing burial practices observed from the fourth through the seventh century, other variables that influenced change deserve consideration as well. The evidence from all three sub-regions suggests the survival of Romano-British societies in the emerging Anglo-Saxon societies.

Chapter IV

Grave Goods

Researchers have long differentiated between Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon burial practice by analyzing differences in the ways that societies deposited grave goods. There are two ways in which Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon grave good provision differed. Quantity of grave goods was the first characteristic that set Romano-British cemeteries apart from Anglo-Saxon. Romano-British burials typically did not include a plethora of items, but Anglo-Saxon graves were often lavishly furnished. The second way in which provision of grave goods differed in both contexts was the type of grave goods offered. When Romano-British graves were furnished, they included goods such as coins, hobnailed shoes, and, on rare occasion, jewelry and vessels. Anglo-Saxon grave good provision made use of a more extensive catalogue of goods, which were deposited with more frequency than grave goods were in Romano-British cemeteries. Anglo-Saxon grave goods included items such as weaponry, jewelry, vessels, and domesticated animals.

However, many researchers have argued that, due to the similarities between late Roman and Germanic material culture, differentiating between Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon grave goods in an effort to demonstrate surviving Romano-British

populations in Anglo-Saxon societies is no meant feat.[93] Sam Lucy has called into

question the dating techniques of different art styles, as well as the historical

significance, explaining that manufacture dates need not correspond with burial

dates.[94] Some have argued that despite the utility of classifications is describing

artifacts, the study of material culture patterns tells us "nothing of migrant and native

relationships."[95] However, the author of this study believes that a survey of the

quantity of grave goods deposited, as well as analysis of specific types of grave goods

deposited in the south-central region of Britain is relevant to understanding the

dynamics of the creation of Anglo-Saxon societies.

In addition to consideration of the quantity and types of deposits, this chapter

will examine grave good evidence for acculturation at Romano-British sites before

the fifth century migrations, as well as Romano-British material culture deposited in

Anglo-Saxon graves. Scholars have suggested that there are some Romano-British

grave good customs that may be demonstrated in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries. Roger H.

White has argued that "provision of hob-nail boots by the feet, […] and the placing of

a coin in the mouth or hand" are definite Romano-British characteristics, and if found

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[93] Hills, *Origins of the English*, 102-103; Arnold, *An Archaeology of the Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms,* 24.

[94] Lucy, *The Anglo-Saxon Way of Death*, 18-19, 26.

[95] Roger H. White, *Roman and Celtic Objects from Anglo-Saxon Graves: A Catalogue and an Interpretation of Their Use,* (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1988), 165-166; Arnold, *An Archaeology of the Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms,* 26.

in an Anglo-Saxon cemetery would suggest the survival of native burial practice.[96]

All of these components are examined below.

Quantities of Grave Goods

In the first sub-region, 54% of Romano-British burials contained grave goods and 59% of the Anglo-Saxon graves contained goods. In the second sub-region 5% of the Romano-British graves and 83% of the Anglo-Saxon graves were furnished. In the third sub-region 41% of Romano-British graves and 85% of the Anglo-Saxon graves had deposited goods. It is evident that grave good provision was much more common in Romano-British burial practice in the first sub-region than in other contemporary Romano-British cemeteries in the second and third sub-regions. When comparing Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon grave good provision in the first sub-region, it is noteworthy that there was only a 5% increase in frequency, while the second sub-region saw a 78% increase, and the third sub-region experienced an increase in grave good provision of 55% (See: **Figure 3**). Although all sub-regions demonstrate an increase in the amount of burials with grave goods in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, the first sub-region stands out, demonstrating continuity in the frequency with which both Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon societies provided grave goods.

What might explain the continuity in the frequency of Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon grave good provision in the first sub-region? Ellen Swift has analyzed

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[96] White, *Roman and Celtic Objects from Anglo-Saxon Graves*, 152-153.

archaeological evidence from all over the former Western Roman Empire in an effort

to better understand the developments of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries. In the

fourth century, the late Roman army began to recruit Germanic individuals, who

sometimes brought their families with them. As the Roman Army relocated Germanic

populations throughout the Empire, late Roman and Germanic populations began to

share cultural traits. Swift has explained that many of these Germanic individuals

achieved high rank in the Roman army, and German fashions and material culture

quickly became so "wide-spread" that it grew difficult to differentiate between

Roman and Germanic identities.[97] Both Swift and Andrew Gardner have explained

that the late Roman military cemeteries in Western Europe demonstrate that burial

practice was changing from the fourth through the sixth centuries. Namely, furnished

burial became much more common.[98] At Frénouville on the Continent, there was a

significant increase in weapon burials in the early sixth century; however, all

evidence suggests continuity in the population burying its dead at the cemetery from

the third through the seventh centuries.[99] This means that this changes in burial

practice cannot be attributed to an immigrant population. Other cemeteries such as St.

Martin de Fontenay and Furooz, further east near the Rhine, demonstrate similar

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[97] Swift, *The End of the Western Roman Empire*, 96.

[98] Heinrich Harke, "Grave Goods in Early Medieval Burials: Messages and Meanings," *Mortality* 19, no. 1 (2014): 42; Lucy, *The Anglo-Saxon Way of Death,* 4.

[99] Gardner, *An Archaeology of Identity*, 258.

trends in burial practice.[100] This indicates that the late Roman military communities in northwestern Europe began to furnish graves with more frequency. The frequency and lavishness of furnished Romano-British burials in the first sub-region appear to reflect trends demonstrated in late Roman military communities in northwestern Europe.

In addition, a number of crossbow brooches were offered as grave goods in the first sub-region. These brooches were associated with the late Roman army in the fourth century. By the fifth century, crossbow brooches became rare; at which point, elite civilian members of society predominantly wore them.[101] Swift has described a "distinctive and widespread male burial rite used by the [Roman] military."[102] This rite entailed furnishing graves with crossbow brooches and certain styles of belt sets, which indicated a high-ranking member of the Roman army or an elite civilian. These crossbow brooch and belt set combinations have been deposited at Lankhills as well.

The material culture, the frequency with which graves were furnished, and the "intrusive" burials at Lankhills described by Booth all point to a strong military presence in the first sub-region. Gardner has compared the sixth century shift in burial practice at Frénouville on the Continent to the "intrusive" burials at Lankhills,

[100] Gardner, *An Archaeology of Identity*, 259.

[101] Swift, *The End of the Western Roman Empire*, 31, 108.

[102] Swift, *The End of the Western Roman Empire*, 43.

arguing that the small number of those burials demonstrates that Britain did not see

the same changes in burial practice that its neighbors on the other side of the Channel

did.[103] Although the population burying its dead at Lankhills did not begin to deposit

weapons, as did the population at Frénouville, the frequency of lavishly furnished

burials suggests that the first sub-region remained in contact with societies across the

Channel and was influenced by them as well. Furthermore, Gardner's comparison of

the burial practice at the fourth and fifth century site of Lankhills to the sixth century

burial practice demonstrated at Frénouville is not an analogous comparison. A fairer

comparison would be to ask whether the increase in sixth century weapon burials at

Frénouville could also be demonstrated in sixth century cemeteries in Britain. Of

course, we know that weapon burial in sixth century Britain was occurring frequently,

as at Frénouville.

Although the comparison of fourth century Lankhills to sixth century

Frénouville is problematic, Gardner was trying to demonstrate that "transition from

empire to what came after was everywhere a locally negotiated phenomenon."[104]

When one considers the Romano-British burial practice of the first sub-region to that

of the second and third sub-regions, the importance of understanding Britain, and

Europe for that matter, as comprised of highly regionalized societies becomes very

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[103] Gardner, *An Archaeology of Identity*, 259.

[104] Gardner, *An Archaeology of Identity*, 259.

clear. The evidence for Romano-British cemeteries in the first sub-region certainly demonstrates changes in burial practice that are unique in the entire south-central region of Britain.

In *The End of the Western Roman Empire: an Archaeological Investigation*, Ellen Swift analyzed what trends in material culture throughout Europe reveal about Western Europe as Roman authority ceased. As previously mentioned, in the fourth and fifth centuries the influx of Germanic populations led to acculturation throughout Western Europe. An increase in furnished burials can be demonstrated throughout Europe, and incoming Germanic and Roman material culture became so intertwined that it became difficult to distinguish between the two. In this context, the material culture trends demonstrated in fifth, sixth, and seventh century Britain seem less remarkable and more consistent with those observed in the rest of Western Europe.
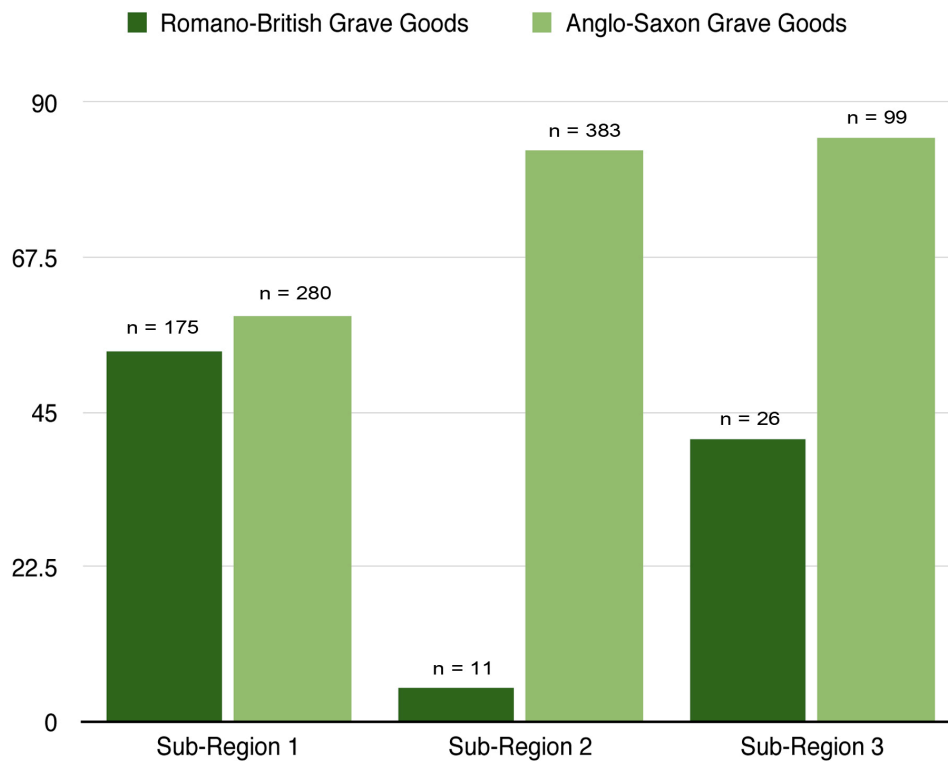
Figure 3: Percentages of Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon Burials That Contained Grave Goods

Late-Roman and Germanic Material Culture

In addition to analyzing the amount of grave goods deposited in each sub-region, it is worth considering the types of goods deposited in both the Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon contexts. As explained by Lucy and Hills, there has not been enough focus on the similarities that exist between late Roman and Germanic

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material culture.[105] Scroll patterns and zoomorphic motifs found on Anglo-Saxon material culture, have their roots in regional Roman identities that developed their own unique traits before Roman authority began to disintegrate. These identities would have been the result of acculturation, in much the same way that this thesis argues Anglo-Saxon societies were created.

Therefore, it is more accurate to understand the material culture that arrived with German immigrants in Britain as one of many late-Roman identities, rather than purely Germanic. With this in mind, it is important to note that there would have been a common, Roman element in all of these regional Roman identities, which supports the theory that the Germanic material culture that arrived in fifth century Britain would not have been entirely unfamiliar to its native inhabitants. Roger H. White has stressed the "close technologies and artistic links between later Roman metalwork and the early Anglo-Saxon products."[106] Despite the potential challenge in distinguishing between late-Roman and Germanic material culture, researchers have identified some clear differences.

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[105] Hills, *Origins of the English*, 102-103; Lucy, *The Anglo-Saxon Way of Death*, 150.

[106] White, *Roman and Celtic Objects from Anglo-Saxon Graves*, 25.

Romano-British Material Culture in Anglo-Saxon Burials

In the first sub-region, 8% of the Anglo-Saxon graves contained Romano-British goods. In the second sub-region, 16% of the Anglo-Saxon graves had Romano-British deposits, and in the third sub-region less than 1% of the Anglo-Saxon graves contained Romano-British material culture. How significant are these percentages? The second sub-region has the highest percentage of Romano-British goods in Anglo-Saxon contexts. Within this sub-region, at Wally Corner, Berinsfield, 48% of the graves contained Romano-British goods. At Long Wittenham, 6% of the graves had Romano-British goods, and at Lechlade, 7% had Romano-British goods. Perhaps the relatively high percentage of Romano-British goods at Wally Corner should come as no surprise, considering that the site was briefly in use at the same time as the Romano-British cemetery at Queenford Farm, only 600 meters away. Recent radiocarbon dating places the latest burial phase at Queenford Farm and the earliest burials at Wally Corner within the same time period.[107] This, in concert with the high percentage of Romano-British items offered as grave goods at Wally Corner, suggests that the population burying its dead at Queenford Farm adopted new burial practices and shifted the cemetery a mere 600 meters away to the site at Wally Corner. The relatively high percentage of surviving Romano-British material culture, the proximity of the two cemeteries, and the contemporary dates for the cemeteries all demonstrate acculturation in the second sub-region.

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[107] Hills and O'Connell, "New Light on the Anglo-Saxon Succession," 1106.

Scholars have long struggled with the paucity of fourth and fifth century

Romano-British material culture. What appears to have been a decrease in pottery

production has led researchers to conclude that the pottery industry in Britain saw a

significant decrease in production.[108] However, H. E. M. Cool has argued that, when

placed within a longer trajectory of material culture use in Roman Britain, the

changes in material culture reflect social change consistent with the "normal Western

empire patterns," rather than the imagined abrupt disappearance of these industries

due to catastrophic economic decline.[109] Cool has described that analyzing long-term

trends in late Roman glass and pottery use indicates that the Romano-British stopped

producing a wide arrive of glass goods in the late second and early third centuries, at

which point glass drinking cups were one of the few glass items still in use.

Therefore, the Anglo-Saxon glass that is found in fifth and early sixth century

contexts appears to replace Romano-British glass. However, Cool argues that glass

vessels were simply rarely used by fourth century Romano-British.[110] Similarly, Cool

explains that the apparent decrease in fourth century Romano-British pottery can be

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[108] Cleary, *The Ending of Roman Britain.* 155-157; Swift, *The End of the Western Roman Empire*, 132.

[109] Cool, "Which 'Romans'; What 'Home'?," 14, 16.

[110] Cool, "Which 'Romans'; What 'Home'?," 14.

explained by a social shift to more hand-made pottery in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, when there was less of a demand for "fine china."[111]

Robin Fleming's interpretation of what she describes as "the collapse of Rome's metal economy in Britain and the related and subsequent deskilling and impoverishment of people living in its eastern half" argues that the demise of the Romano-British metal industry led to the comparative paucity of Romano-British goods at Anglo-Saxon sites.[112] Fleming argues that following Rome's divestment of power in Britain, the metal industry began to disintegrate in the late fourth century. Although it is likely that smiths were able to continue to produce metalwork using scavenged scraps of metal in decreased quantities, by the second decade of the fifth century, Fleming argues that there was a significant decrease in the amount of iron-smelting communities.[113] She asserts that the metal industry did not fully recover until the sixth and seventh centuries, at which point it began to influence important social and economic change.

Interestingly, Fleming explains that, although there was a general decrease in iron production in the rest of northwestern Europe as well, the smelting sites across

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[111] Cool, "Which 'Romans'; What 'Home'?," 16.

[112] Fleming, "Recycling in Britain after the Fall of Rome's Metal Economy," 5.

[113] Fleming, "Recycling in Britain after the Fall of Rome's Metal Economy," 9-10.

the Channel continued to produce metal goods. Fleming stresses that these continental

sites were producing less than their Roman predecessors, but in the fifth and sixth

centuries large-scale sites existed in "France, Italy, Switzerland, the Netherlands,

Schleswig-Holstein, and Scandinavia." For example, Fleming describes a 35-hectare

site in Snorup, Denmark where archaeologists excavated "eight thousand early

medieval iron-smelting furnaces."[114]

Contrary to Fleming's interpretation, there is evidence that the Romano-

British metal industry did survive through the fifth century and was later incorporated

into the emerging Anglo-Saxon material culture.[115] According to Sam Lucy, "Quoit

brooches are annular-like brooches, with a broad flat metal band and a pit hinged on

the inner edge, with a notch cut opposite (though not all the way through the width of

the band) for the pin to pass through."[116] Although some scholars have argued that the

Quoit-brooch style is a later iteration of already existing Germanic styles, more recent

scholarship advocates for a British or Romano-British "insular" origin.[117] According

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[114] Fleming, "Recycling in Britain after the Fall of Rome's Metal Economy," 14.

[115] Loveluck and Laing, "Britons and Anglo-Saxons," 537.

[116] Lucy, *The Anglo-Saxon Way of Death*, 66.

[117] In support of a Germanic origin: Sonia Chadwick Hawkes, "The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Finglesham, Kent: A Reconstruction," *Medieval Archaeology* 2 (1958): 1-71, 69-70. In support of an insular origin: Vera Evison, "Quoit Brooch Style Buckles," *Antiquaries Journal* 43 (1968): 231-246; Martin Welch, "The Archaeological Evidence for Federate Settlement in Britain within the Fifth Century,"

to Peter Inker, both the contemporary military belt sets on the Continent and the Classical motifs that comprise the Quoit-brooch Style suggest an early fifth century, Romano-British origin.[118] Inker has explained that perhaps the hybrid Quoit-brooch Style, containing both Romano-British and Germanic motifs is representative of the complex dynamics of early medieval Britain as Anglo-Saxon societies were established.[119]

Despite what appears to be a decrease in available goods during the fifth century in Britain, Swift argues that archaeologists have been conditioned to believe that Roman Britain abruptly ended in A.D. 410, and therefore are less likely to assign fifth century dates to artifacts. Inker has similarly lamented that even modern Quoit-brooch finds have not been recorded to a high standard.[120] Optimistically, Swift theorizes that "as archaeologists become more confident about assigning a fifth-century date to apparently fourth-century material, we may find that there is not such a dearth of fifth-century 'post-Roman' activity as has always been supposed."[121] In

in *L'Armee Romanine et les Barbares du IIIe AU VIIe Siecle*, ed. F. Vallet and M. Kazanski (Saint-Germaine-en-Laye, Musee des Antiquities Nationale), 269-278, 273; Peter Inker, "Technology as Active Material Culture: the Quoit-Brooch Style," *Medieval Archaeology* 44, no. 1 (2000): 25-52.

[118] Inker, "Technology as Active Material Culture," 49.

[119] Inker, "Technology as Active Material Culture," 28.

[120] Inker, "Technology as Active Material Culture," 49.

[121] Swift, *The End of the Western Roman Empire*, 20.

summary, the state of the fifth century Romano-British metal, glass, and pottery industries is open for debate. Whether or not Swift's theory will one day prove correct, the current body of burial evidence does indicate that there was a decrease in the available goods in fifth century Britain. Bearing this in mind, it is hardly surprising that so few Romano-British goods survived in Anglo-Saxon burial contexts. Importantly, even thought the number of Romano-British goods in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries was small, any presence at all demonstrates that the Romano-British material culture survived in some capacity and was incorporated into emerging Anglo-Saxon societies.

<center>Types of Grave Goods</center>

Finally, the types of grave goods recovered on the Isle of Wight, in the first sub-region, are noteworthy. Arnold's careful analysis of the grave goods excavated at both Chessell Down and Bowcombe Down has demonstrated that there are examples of grave goods on the Isle of Wight that differed greatly from the rest of the south-central region. The material culture of the Isle of Wight is very similar to that found in Anglo-Saxon Kent. It has been argued that the Isle of Wight was subsequently settled by migrants from the established Anglo-Saxon society in Kent; however, Arnold has provided an alternative interpretation, proposing that the Isle of Wight's material culture was similar to that of Kent's because the migrant population on the Isle of Wight shared the same homeland as the population that settled Kent. In

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addition, the population on the Isle of Wight likely maintained close and long-lasting

ties with the Continent, which enabled the population to keep up with material culture

trends seen in other continental populations. Nielsen has theorized that specific types

of Scandinavian goods found throughout Europe demonstrate immigrant populations

paying homage to their homeland.[122] Considering the material culture on the Isle of

Wight, this theory is an attractive one.

Furthermore, Robin Fleming has highlighted the fact that large amounts of

sixth and seventh century English glass and metalwork have been discovered in

cemeteries "in a coastal zone running from lower Brittany all the way to

Scandinavia," suggesting that the English were engaging trade across the Channel.[123]

All evidence indicates that the Anglo-Saxon societies on the Isle of Wight traded with

their neighbors across the Channel and maintained ties with their homelands. In

conclusion, the grave goods recovered from Chessell Down and Bowcombe Down

indicate that the maritime Anglo-Saxon societies on the Isle of Wight maintained

close relationships with neighboring societies, both on the Continent and southern

regions of Britain.[124]

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[122] Nielsen, "The Real Thing or Just Wannabes?," 107.

[123] Robin Fleming, "Elites, Boats, and Foreigners: Rethinking the Birth of English Towns," in *Citta E Campagna Nei Secoli Altomedievali,* (Spoleto: Fondazione Centro Italiano di Studi Sull'Alto Medioevo, 2009), 405-406.

[124] Arnold, *An Archaeology of the Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms,* 103-109.

The Position of Goods in Anglo-Saxon Graves

As explained, placing coins in the mouth or hand of an individual and placing hob-nail boots by the feet of the deceased are uniquely Romano-British burial customs. Therefore, White has argued that identifying these practices in an Anglo-Saxon cemetery would demonstrate the survival of native burial customs.[125] There are examples of Roman coins being deposited. In the first sub-region there are eight Anglo-Saxon burials that contain deposited Roman coins. These were excavated at Chessell Down, Bowcombe Down, Worthy Park, and Blacknall Field. In the second sub-region, there are seventeen examples of deposited Roman coins in Anglo-Saxon graves at Wally Corner, Long Wittenham, and Lechlade. In the third sub-region there is only one example of a Roman coin being offered as a grave good in an Anglo-Saxon burial. Although the examples of Roman coins having been deposited in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries are few and far between, they do exist, most frequently in the second sub-region. The data analyzed in this thesis contains no examples of hob-nail boots having been deposited in Anglo-Saxon graves; however, according to Swift, by the end of the fourth century, hob-nailed shoes were abandoned for leather shoes, which were sewn. This has been observed throughout the Empire and is demonstrated in early medieval mosaics.[126] If hob-nail boots were no longer in use at the time when Anglo-Saxon societies were being created in Britain, it would not be

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[125] White, *Roman and Celtic Objects from Anglo-Saxon Graves*, 152.

[126] Swift, *The End of the Western Roman Empire*, 119-121.

reasonable to expect to find them deposited as grave goods in Anglo-Saxon

cemeteries.

Some researchers have posited that the position of brooches in graves can be

analyzed in an effort to differentiate between Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon

burials, explaining that Romano-British wore a single brooch at the shoulder, while

early Anglo-Saxon societies wore brooches in pairs.[127] However, this method is

problematic. Nick Stoodley has demonstrated that there was variation in brooch use

within populations. This variation was often dictated by status and age. The pairs of

brooches demonstrated in Anglo-Saxon burials are generally representative of

females in the second stage of their lifecycle. According to Stoodley, biological age

did not always correlate with defined cultural lifecycles; however, females in the

second stage of their lifecycle were young adults in the prime of their youth.[128]

In addition to variation in use dictated by age and status, there were

chronological changes in the ways in which brooches were worn. The single brooch

worn at the shoulder has been demonstrated as a Romano-British custom on third and

fourth century coins, as well as in late-Roman sculptures.[129] According to Gale R.

Owen-Crocker, early Anglo-Saxon female dress has been "reconstructed with some

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[127] White, *Roman and Celtic Objects from Anglo-Saxon Graves*, 152.

[128] Nick Stoodley, "From the Cradle to the Grave: Age Organization and the Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Rite," *World Archaeology* 31, no. 3 (2000): 462-465.

[129] White, *Roman and Celtic Objects from Anglo-Saxon Graves,* 155.

confidence" due to extensive sculptural and burial evidence. Anglo-Saxon women wore tubular dresses that were fastened with two brooches at the shoulder. However, Owen-Crocker also explains that, though the garment was often held in place with a pair of brooches, which were also sometimes used to hang strings of beads, the garment could be affixed with a single brooch as well.[130] In addition, Lucy argues that in the late sixth century, there was a shift in brooch use. While in the fifth and sixth centuries pairs of brooches and colorful strings of beads were commonly deposited, in the late sixth and seventh centuries, single brooches were *en vogue*.[131] This sixth /seventh century Anglo-Saxon shift in brooch use would make it exceptionally difficult to differentiate between single brooch Romano-British use and later Anglo-Saxon single brooch use.

Summary

Archaeologists and historians who argue that a Germanic population invaded and supplanted the native Romano-British population have supported this argument by explaining that the material culture wealth from the fifth century on demonstrates

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[130] Gale R. Owen-Crocker, "Dress and Identity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology*, Helena Hamerow, David A. Hinton, and Sally Crawford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 98.

[131] Lucy, *The Anglo-Saxon Way of Death*, 25.

that a new population replaced the Romano-British.[132] However, if the Germanic

population possessed such abundant wealth, there would be no reason to reuse the

material culture of the impoverished, native population that they supplanted; yet the

data demonstrates that, in varying amounts, the native material culture did survive. In

the first sub-region, there is remarkable consistency between the percentages of

furnished Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon graves. This demonstrates that the

societies in the first sub-region were in close contact with northwestern, continental

Europe, and assimilated some of the burial trends observed in these regions into their

own fourth and fifth centuries burial practices.

In terms of Romano-British material culture being deposited as an Anglo-

Saxon grave good, the second sub-region demonstrates this most frequently,

particularly at Wally Corner, Berinsfield, which was located only 600 meters away

from the Romano-British cemetery at Queenford Farm. Overlap between the latest

burials at Queenford Farm and Wally Corner suggests that the latter succeeded the

former, demonstrating acculturation as Anglo-Saxon societies emerged in the area.

Though the grave good evidence is not abundant, that which does exist supports the

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[132] Thomas, "Evidence for an Apartheid-Like Social Structure in Early Anglo-Saxon England," 2651-2657; Mark G. Thomas, "Integration Versus Apartheid in Post-Roman Britain: A Response to Pattinson," *Biological Sciences* 275, no. 1650 (2008): 2419-2421; Heinrich Harke, "Kings and Warriors: Population and Landscape from Post-Roman to Norman Britain," in *The Peopling of Britain: the Shaping of a Human Landscape*, ed. P. Slack and R. Ward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 145-175.

theory that, throughout the entire south-central region in Britain, aspects of Romano-British society were preserved in the emerging Anglo-Saxon societies. This preservation occurred as Romano-British and Germanic populations encountered each other and shared cultural traits, creating new, unique societies. As Ellen Swift has observed, "whenever people move from one place to another, the interaction of different cultures over a period of time results in the transformation of both."[133]

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[133] Swift, *The End of the Western Roman Empire*, 96.

Chapter V

Discussion and Conclusions

In conclusion, the data surveyed from the south-central transept of Britain

from the fourth through the mid seventh century A.D. has yielded interesting

information about the creation of Anglo-Saxon societies. Though the inhumation

burial rite remained the dominant rite, the cremation burial rite became more popular

in the fourth century, and continued to be used with varying levels of frequency

throughout the time period analyzed in this thesis. It is likely that the increased

frequency in the use of the cremation rite reflects the wider trends in burial practice

throughout northwestern Europe.[134] Of the three sub-regions, the first sub-region has

the highest percentages of both Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon cremations. In

addition to the migration of Germanic populations in the fifth century, the evidence

demonstrates that the coastal, maritime societies that comprised the first sub-region

maintained close ties to continental societies across the Channel and North Sea.

The evidence for the entire south-central region of Britain has demonstrated

that there was a great deal of variation in the orientation of burials. It is likely that the

existing environment, including structures that were part of the landscape, determined

the orientation of graves. Presence of grave structures in burials did see a significant

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[134] Williams, "Anglo-Saxon Cremation Rites," 70.

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change from Romano-British to Anglo-Saxon contexts. In Romano-British

cemeteries, it was common for the dead to be buried in a wooden coffin. In the fifth

century, the entire south-central region saw a significant decrease in the use of

coffins. This occurred at the same time that the data shows an increase in cremation.

It seems plausible that a dearth of available metal from the later fourth through the

sixth century could have had an impact on coffin use in that period.[135] Considering

Fleming's interpretation of the collapse of the metal industry in Britain during the

fourth century, it may be that the decrease in coffin use could be attributed to a lack

of access to iron nails, which would have been used to build the coffins. In addition, it

is probable that sharing cultural traits with incoming Germanic populations, or

shifting belief systems, could have also played a role in these changes in burial

practice.

The burial evidence from the entire south-central region of Britain

demonstrates that, though less prominent, native Romano-British burial practice did

survive in the form of material culture offered as grave goods as well. In the entire

south-central region, 10% of the Anglo-Saxon cemeteries that comprise the whole

data set contained Romano-British grave goods. Again, it must be stressed that the

frequency with which those native burial attributes occur is low. However, changes in

the fifth century metal, glass, and pottery industries may have resulted in a decrease

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[135] Fleming, "Recycling in Britain after the Fall of Rome's Metal Economy,"
14.

in available Romano-British goods.[136] In light of this, the disproportionate percentage of surviving Romano-British material culture may be understandable. Albeit small, the percentage of Romano-British goods demonstrates that both Romano-British and Germanic cultural traits were preserved in the emerging Anglo-Saxon societies in the south-central region of Britain.

The first sub-region is especially noteworthy, in terms of continuity in provision of grave goods. The data from Romano-British burials in the first sub-region show that the population was providing grave goods with more frequency than Romano-British cemeteries in the second and third sub-regions. As with the frequency in the use of the cremation rite observed in the first sub-region, the consistency between Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon grave good provision reflects the late military burial practice demonstrated across the Channel.[137] This suggests that the acculturative process that led to the creation of Anglo-Saxon societies may have been underway earlier in the first sub-region. In addition to the consistency in Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon furnished burials in the first sub-region, the types of goods deposited, specifically on the Isle of Wight, illustrates that the Anglo-Saxon societies burying their dead at Chessell Down and Bowcombe Down remained in

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[136] Fleming, "Recycling in Britain after the Fall of Rome's Metal Economy," 4.

[137] Gardner, *An Archaeology of Identity*, 259; Swift, *The End of the Western Roman Empire*, 43; Harke, "Grave Goods in Early Medieval Burials: Messages and Meanings," 4.

close contact with northwestern Europe in general. These close ties were likely fostered through trade as well as a desire to maintain links with societies' native homelands, as suggested by Nielsen.[138]

In the second sub-region, the Romano-British cemetery at Queenford Farm and the Anglo-Saxon cemeteries at Wally Corner and Dyke Hills were located within approximately two kilometers of each other. Paul Booth has explained that Dyke Hills could be one of the earliest examples of an Anglo-Saxon community in the second sub-region. It contains evidence for Germanic material culture, and is dated to the early/mid-fifth century, the time when the first Germanic migrants would have begun to arrive. There is some debate over whether or not the individuals represent late Roman soldiers who were incorporated into a group of militarized, local elites in the early fifth century.[139] Either way, Dyke Hills illustrates that Germanic material culture was present in central England in the early/mid-fifth century.

Employing radiocarbon dating, Catherine Hills has demonstrated that the cemetery at Wally Corner succeeded the site at Queenford Farm.[140] The radiocarbon dating from Hill's study also suggests that the two sites were briefly in use at the same time. In addition, there was a remarkably high percentage of Romano-British goods excavated at Wally Corner. The provision of Romano-British goods at Wally

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[138] Nielsen, "The Real Thing or Just Wannabes?," 107.

[139] Booth, "A Late Roman Military Burial from Dyke Hills," 268.

[140] Hills and O'Connell, "New Light on the Anglo-Saxon Succession," 1099.

Corner, along with the overlaps in dating and close proximity of the two sites all

support the interpretation that the two sites were contemporary and demonstrate

acculturation in the area.

Catherine Hills argues that, despite the fact that Queenford Farm and Wally

Corner are very close, there currently is not sufficient evidence to conclude that the

two sites comprised a single cemetery.[141] However, both the northern boundary of

Queenford Farm and the southern boundary of Wally Corner have yet to be

archaeologically defined.[142] Perhaps further investigation would enable archaeologists

to determine whether or not boundaries separated the cemeteries, yielding insight into

the acculturative process that occurred in the immediate vicinity. If it could be

demonstrated that the two sites did comprise a single cemetery, it would be the only

inclusive cemetery of its kind in the central transept region, with the exception of

Wasperton in the third sub-region.

In the first sub-region there is evidence of Germanic material culture in

Romano-British contexts, as well as Romano-British material culture in Anglo-Saxon

contexts. In the second sub-region, there is no evidence of Germanic material culture

at the Romano-British sites, but Romano-British materials were buried in Anglo-

Saxon cemeteries. This could suggest that the acculturative process began later in the

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[141] Hills, "New Light on the Anglo-Saxon Succession," 1099.

[142] Hills, "New Light on the Anglo-Saxon Succession," 1099.

second sub-region; whereas in the first sub-region, the local military presence may have fostered an environment in which continental connections and its maritime location resulted in more intense acculturation, as early as the fourth century. After Germanic populations migrated to Britain and Anglo-Saxon societies began to emerge, Anglo-Saxon elites would have attempted to consolidate power. At that point, the native communities may have made a more concerted effort to adopt the customs and material culture of their well-established Anglo-Saxon neighbors in an effort to assert their own community's place within the larger and developing Anglo-Saxon network of societies, all of which would have been vying for respect and supremacy.[143] This interpretation aligns well with the archaeological evidence in the third sub-region, which remained relatively isolated from emerging Anglo-Saxon societies in the east. The continuity and inclusivity of the cemetery at Wasperton demonstrates one community's gradual transition from Romano-British to Anglo-Saxon society.

Despite the evidence for the earlier adoption of burial practices in the first sub-region that were comparable to those in continental, northwestern Europe, the current body of evidence demonstrates that cemeteries in both the first and second sub-regions were exclusive. The Anglo-Saxon sites were all established separate from nearby Romano-British cemeteries. It is possible that further archaeological

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[143] Loveluck, "Acculturation, Migration, and Exchange," 85.

excavations could change our interpretation of Wally Corner and Queenford Farm;

however, for now Wasperton is the only example of an inclusive cemetery in the

entire south-central region examined in this thesis. The inclusivity of the cemetery at

Wasperton is, in and of itself, evidence of acculturation between the Romano-British

and Germanic populations in the third sub-region. At Wasperton, the Anglo-Saxon

society that emerged continued to bury their dead alongside Romano-British.

There are two theories that attempt to explain the unique cemetery at

Wasperton. One possibility is that the native population at Wasperton incorporated

Germanic settlers, who were assimilated into the community. Alternatively, as Martin

Carver suggests, another theory is that Wasperton was continuously inhabited by "a

people living on the banks of the Avon and interacting with [their] neighbors."[144]

While it is currently impossible to definitively say what the genetic makeup was of

the community at Wasperton, the genetic makeup of the population does not change

the fact that the burial evidence at Wasperton demonstrates acculturation. The Anglo-

Saxon society at Wasperton may very well have continued to bury their dead in a

cemetery occupied by Romano-British because those Romano-British were their

ancestors, or because the coexisted with and assimilated into the society of the

descendants of those native Romano-British. In either case, the burial practice at

Wasperton illustrates how Romano-British burial practice transformed into Anglo-

Saxon burial practice in a single community.

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[144] Carver, *Wasperton*, 136.

For long, historians and archaeologists have been keen to establish differences between the native Romano-British societies and the Anglo-Saxon societies in an effort to identify the native population, which was replaced by that of the colonizer. While these differences are vastly important in understanding the dynamics of the creation of Anglo-Saxon societies, due attention must be given to all of the variables at work in creating those societies. This is not to say that Romano-British societies contributed more to Anglo-Saxon societies than the migrant, Germanic populations did, or even that the acculturative process was equitable. However, evidence in the south-central region of Britain demonstrates that a Romano-British element did survive as Anglo-Saxon societies were created. Therefore, the author of this study concludes that the evidence indicates that Romano-British societies were an important part of the transition from Romano-British to Anglo-Saxon societies, which was the result of migration, acculturation, and integration. Through more long-term investigation of local and foreign burial trends, it may be possible to better understand the origins of various cultural traits, and ultimately how those traits contributed to the creation of Anglo-Saxon societies in south-central, early medieval Britain.

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