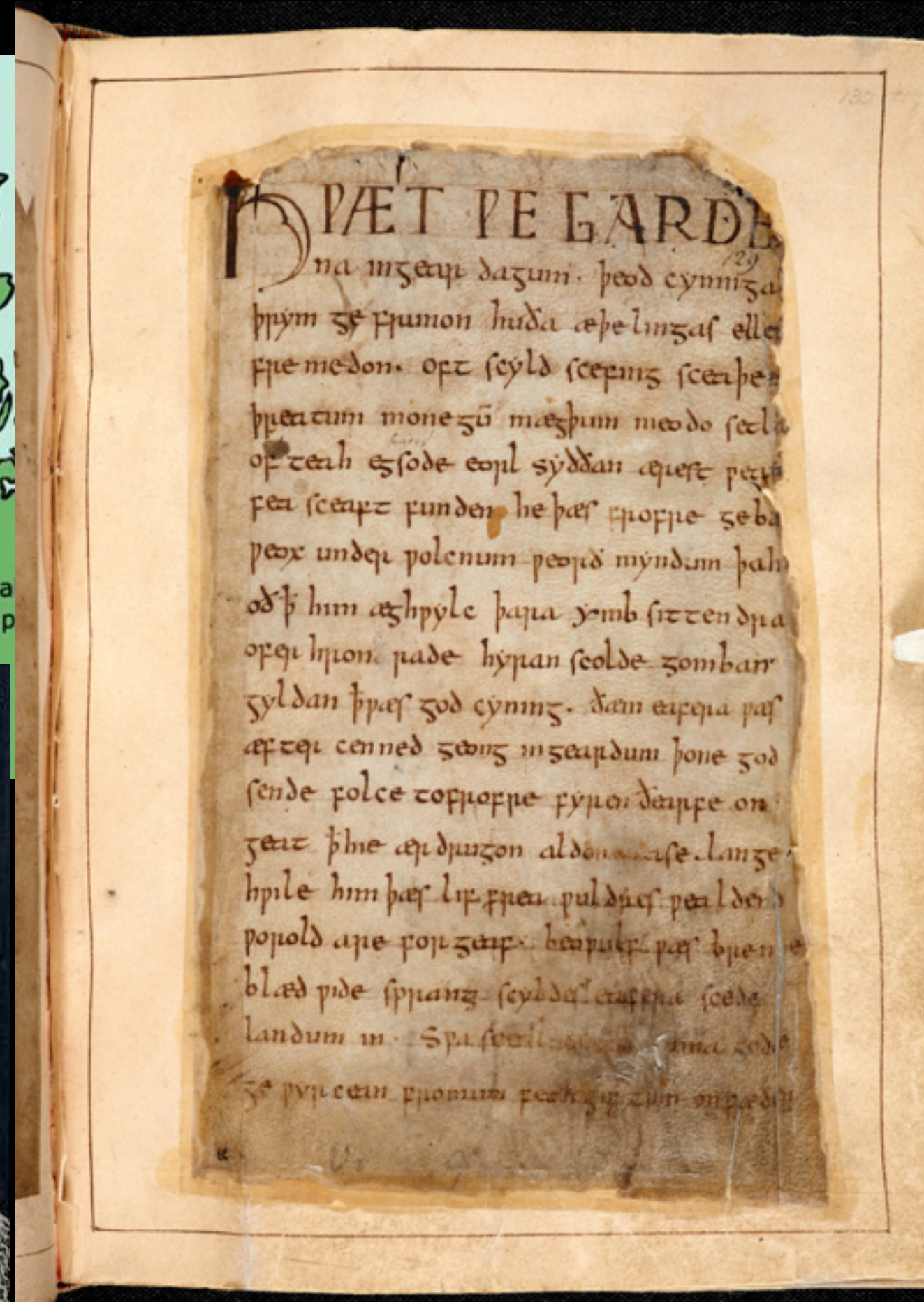
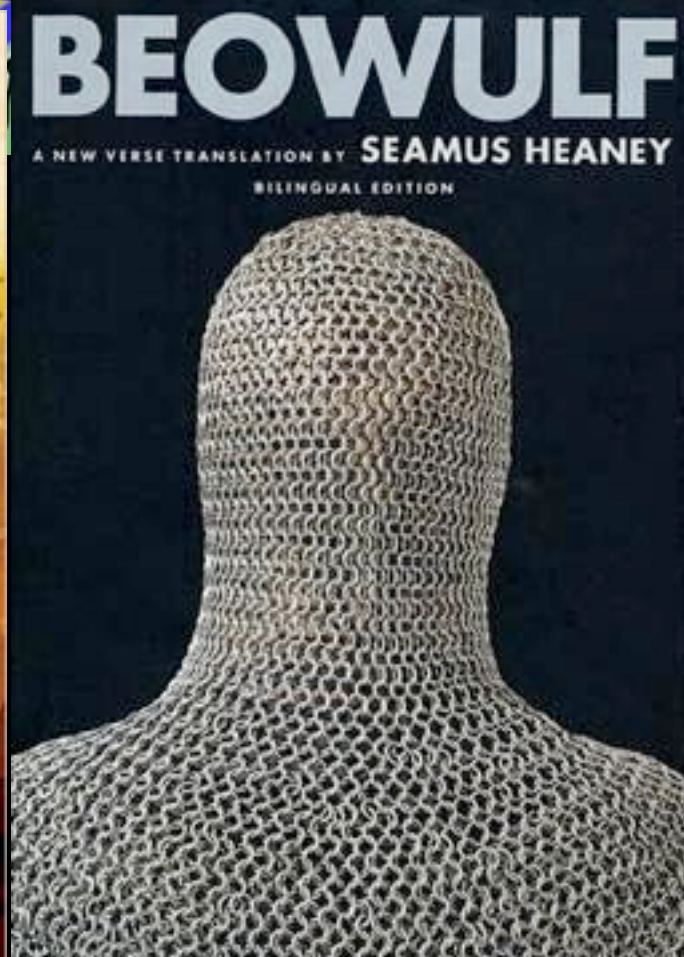
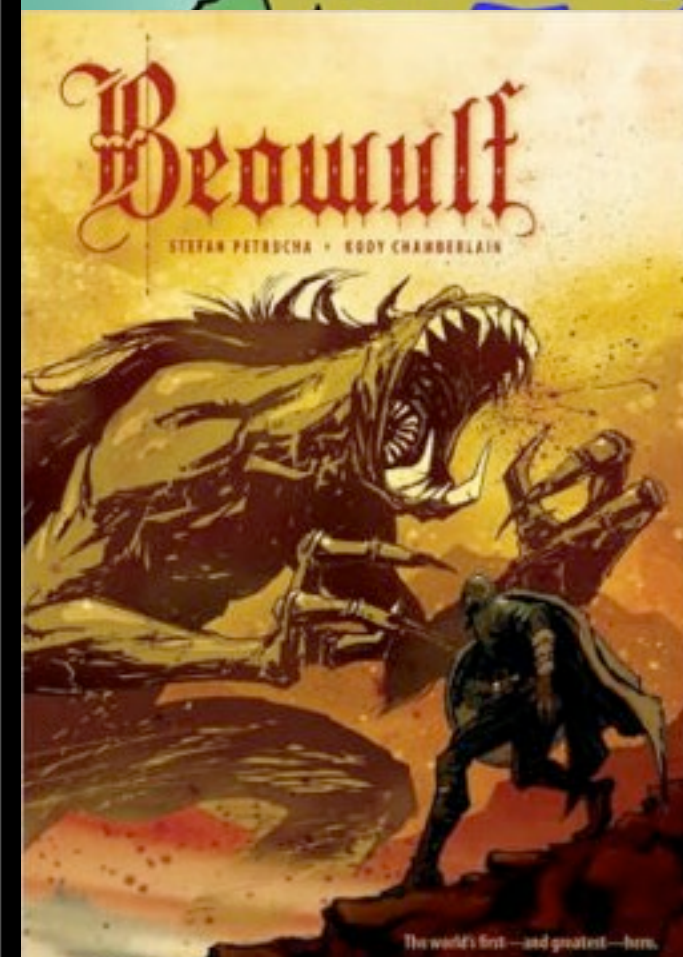
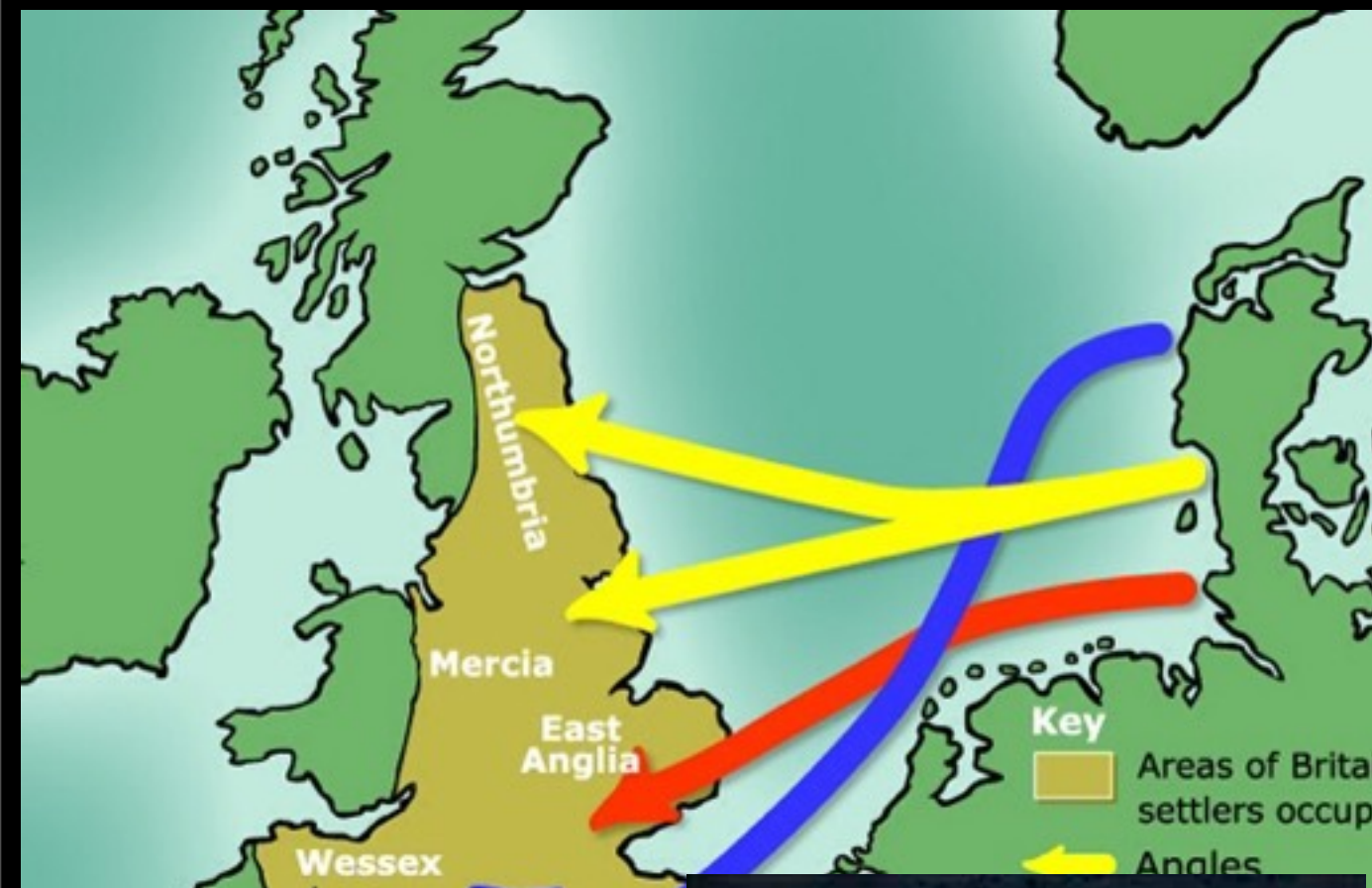




HISTORY OF ENGLAND, FALL QUARTER Week 5 Anglo Saxons and Beowulf

Institute for the Study of Western Civilization

The Anglo-Saxons and Beowulf



Poetry for Cats

*The Definitive Anthology of
Distinguished Feline Verse*

By
Henry Beard

Illustrations by
Gary Zamchick

A John Boswell Associates Book



VILLARD BOOKS
New York
1994

Grendel's Dog, from BEOCAT

by the Old English Epic's Unknown Author's Cat*

Brave Beocat, brood-kit of Ecgthmeow,
Hearth-pet of Hrothgar in whose high halls
He mauled without mercy many fat mice,
Night did not find napping nor snack-feasting.
The wary war-cat, whiskered paw-wielder,
Bearer of the burnished neck-belt, gold-braided collar band,
Feller of fleas fatal, too, to ticks,
The work of wonder-smiths, woven with witches' charms,
Sat on the throne-seat his ears like sword-points
Upraised, sharp-tipped, listening for peril-sounds,
When he heard from the moor-hill howls of the hell-hound,
Gruesome hunger-grunts of Grendel's Great Dane,
Deadly doom-mutt, dread demon-dog.
Then boasted Beocat, noble battle-kitten,
Bane of barrow-bunnies, bold seeker of nest-booty:
"If hand of man unhasped the heavy hall-door
And freed me to frolic forth to fight the fang-bearing fiend,
I would lay the whelping low with lethal claw-blows;
Fur would fly and the foe would taste death-food.
But resounding snooze-noise, stern slumber-thunder,
Nose-music of men snoring mead-hammered in the wine-hall,
Fills me with sorrow-feeling for Fate does not see fit
To send some fingered folk to lift the firm-fastened latch
That I might go grapple with the grim ghoulish pooch."
Thus spoke the mouse-shredder, hunter of hall-pests,
Short-haired Hrodent-slayer, greatest of the pussy-Geats.

*Modern English verse translation by the Editor's Cat.

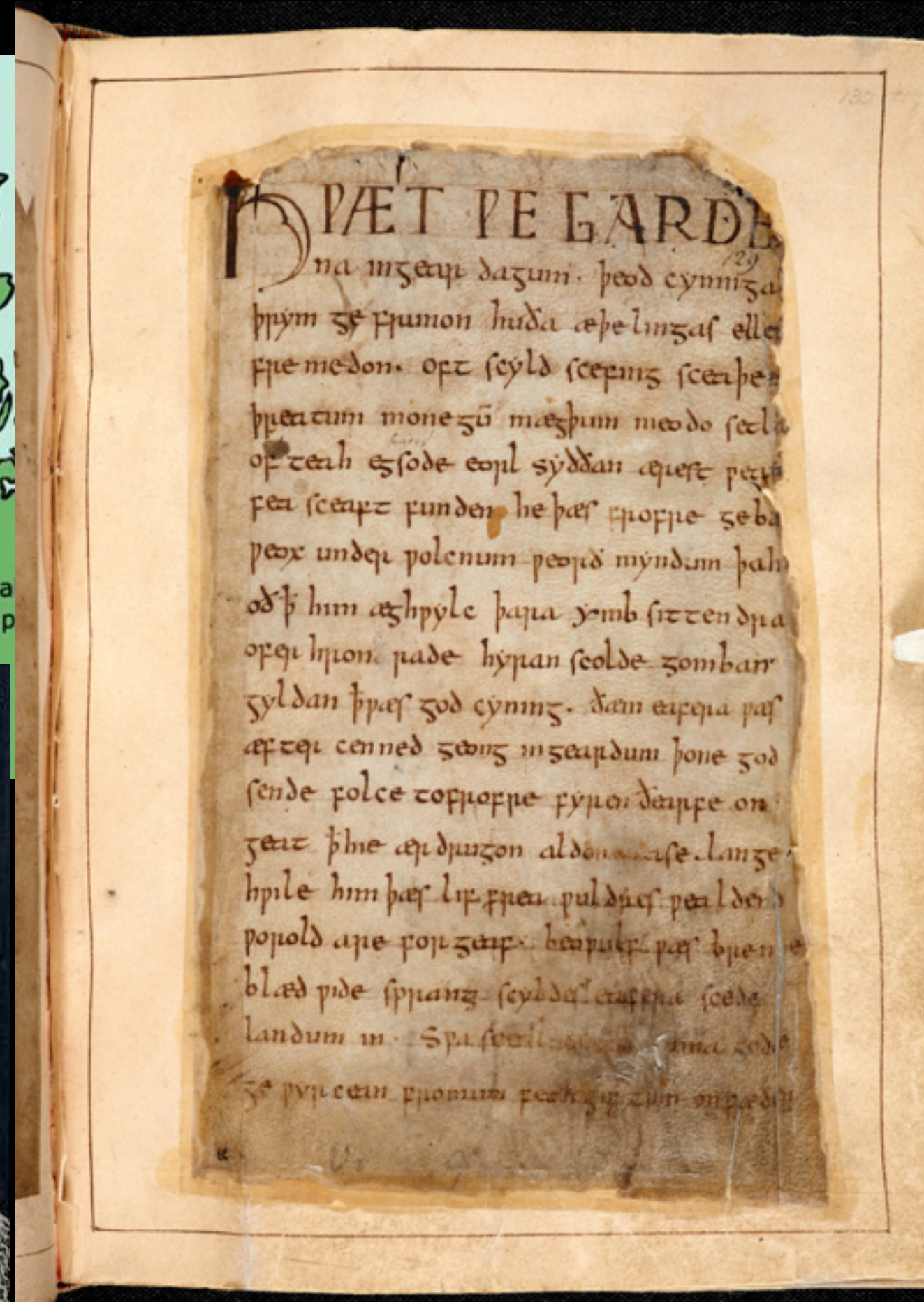
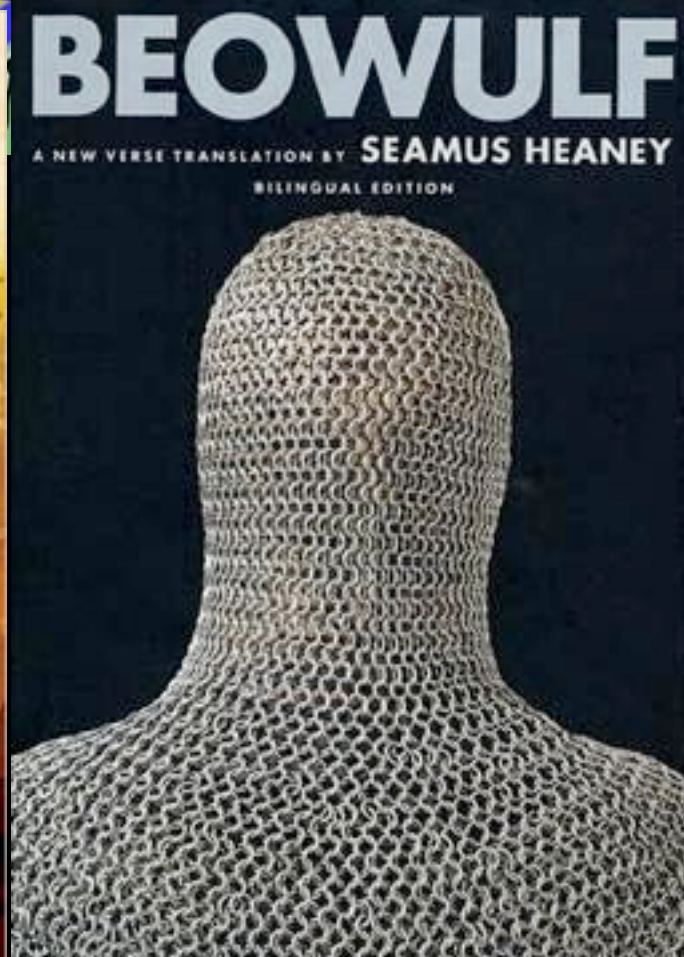
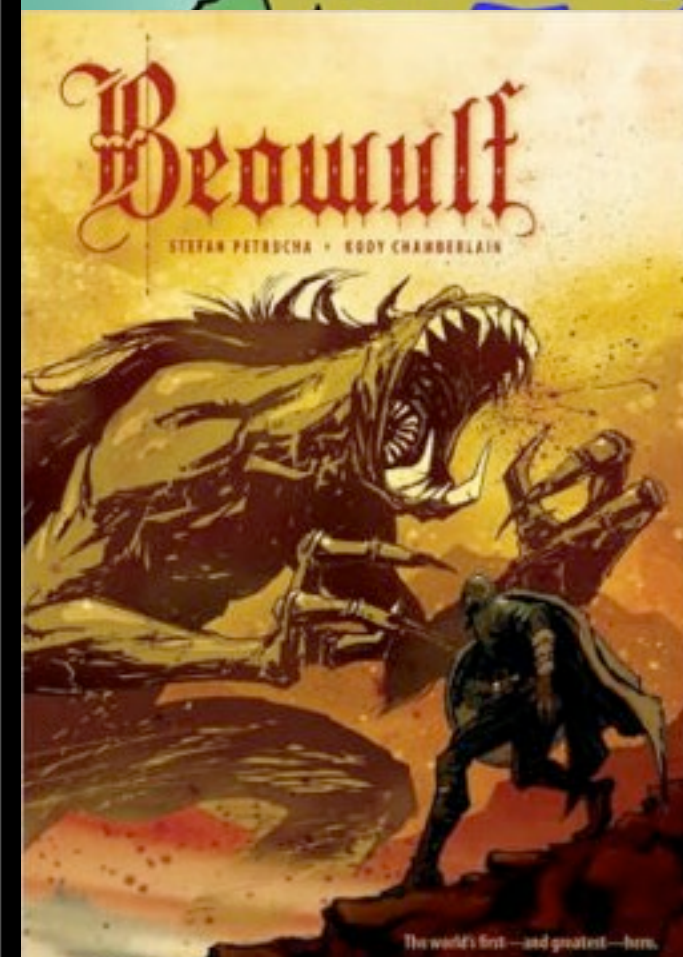
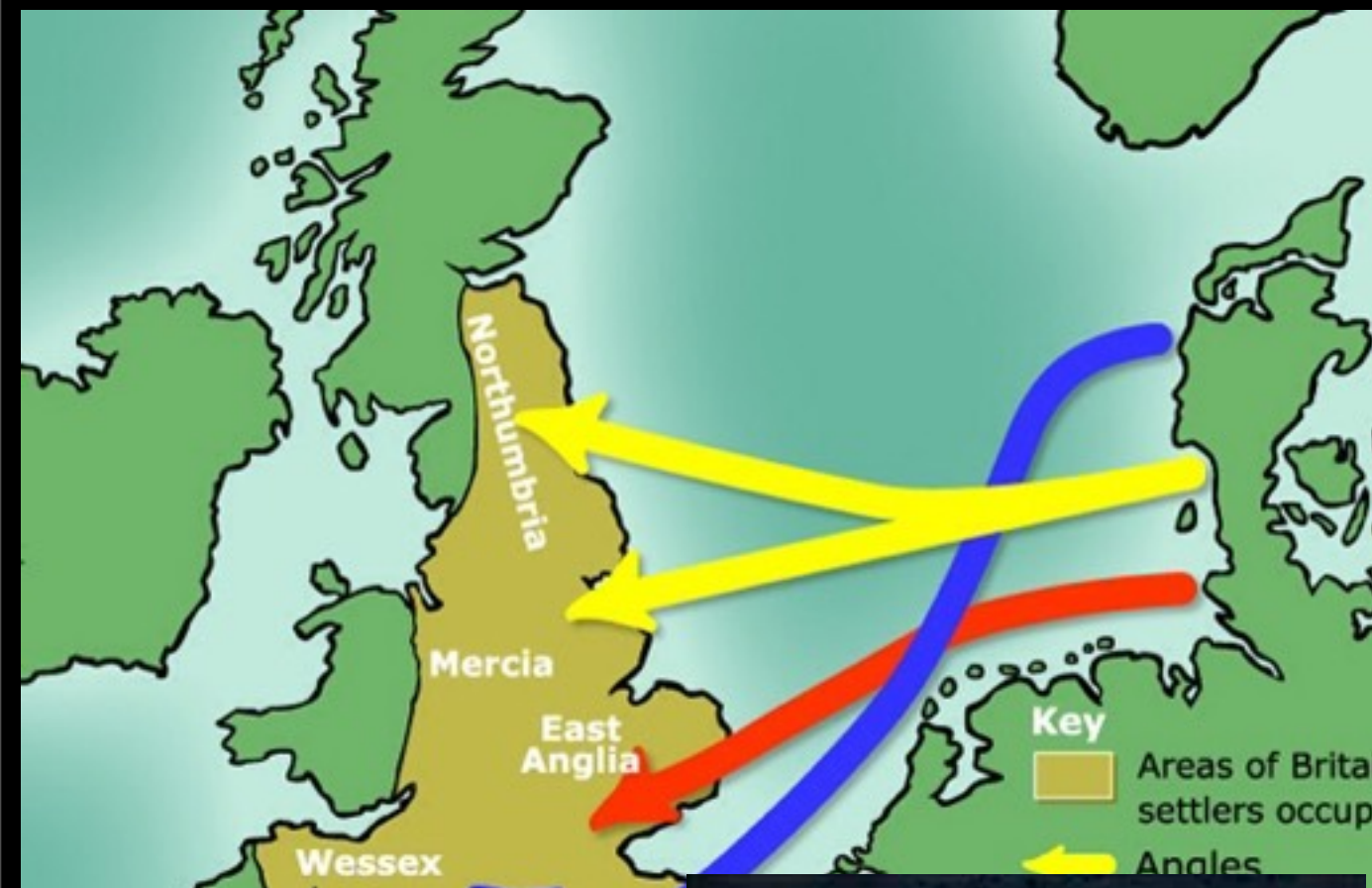
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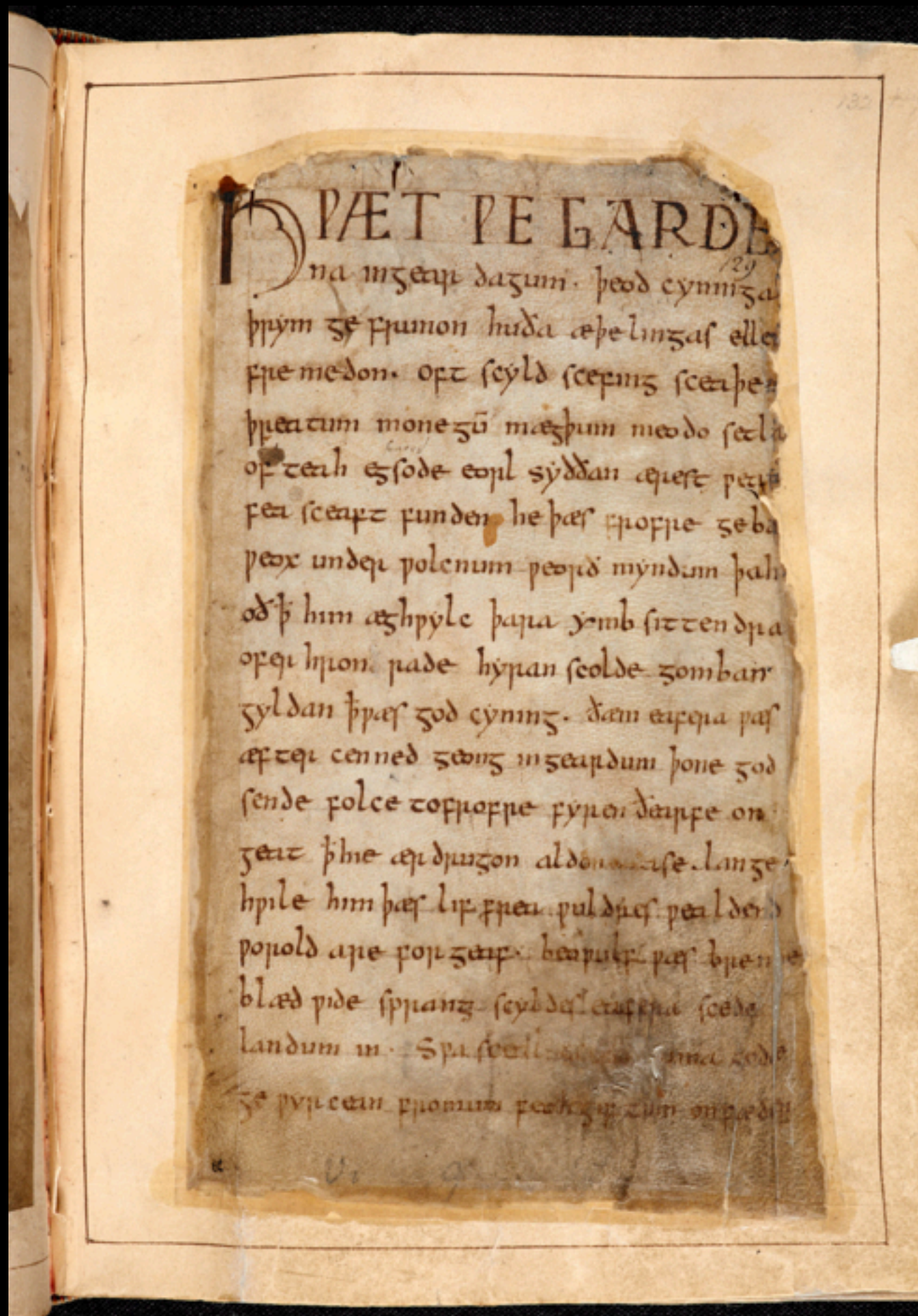
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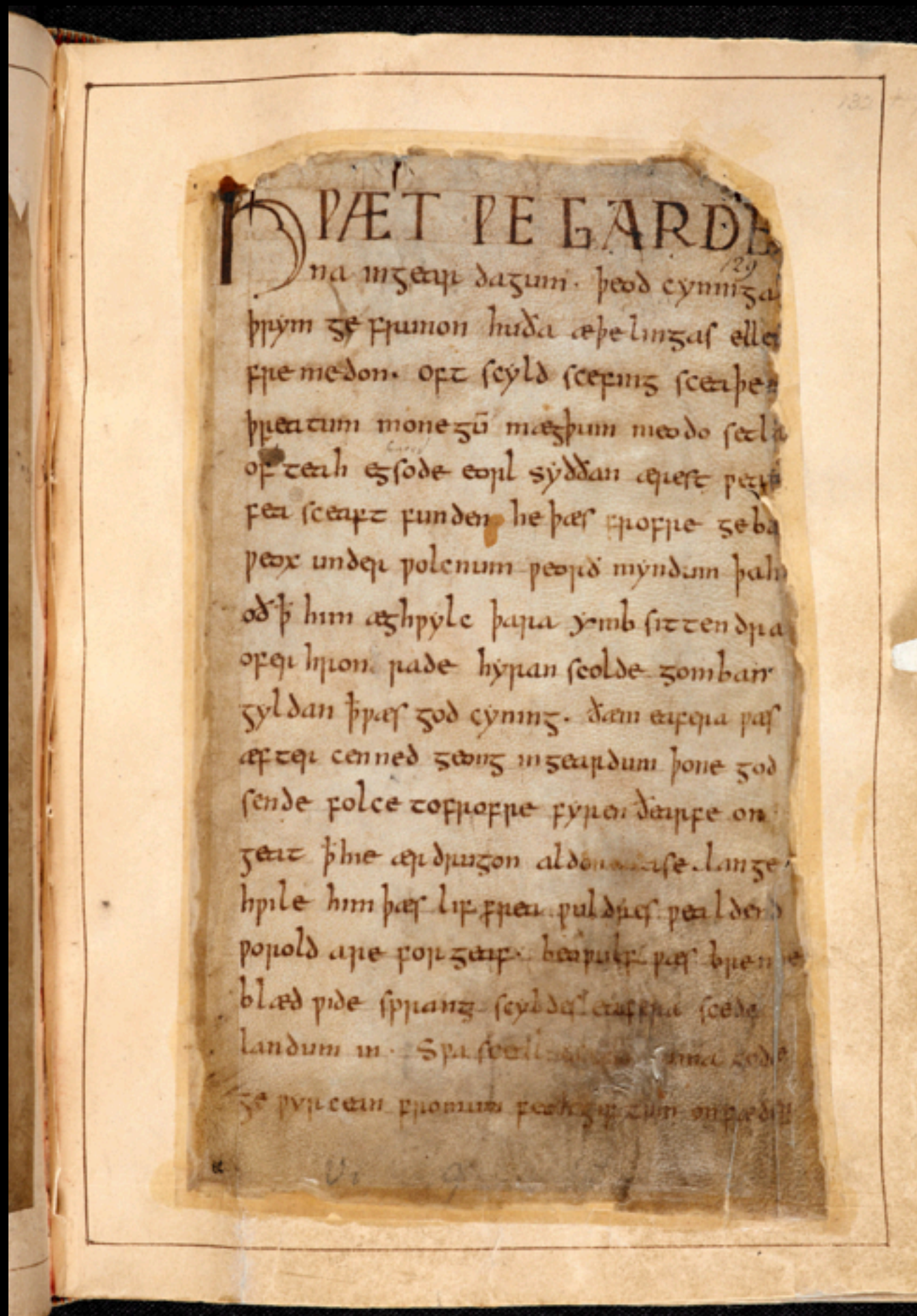
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The Anglo-Saxons and Beowulf





Beowulf is the longest epic poem in Old English, the language spoken in Anglo-Saxon England before the Norman Conquest. More than 3,000 lines long, *Beowulf* relates the exploits of Beowulf, and his successive battles with a monster named Grendel, with Grendel's revengeful mother, and with a dragon which was guarding a hoard of treasure.



Beowulf survives in a single medieval manuscript now in the British Library London. The manuscript bears no date, and so its age has to be calculated by analysing the scribes' handwriting. Some scholars have suggested that the manuscript was made at the end of the 10th century, others in the early decades of the 11th. The most likely time for *Beowulf* to have been copied is the early 11th century, which makes the manuscript approximately 1,000 years old. Nobody knows for certain when and where the poem was first composed, but it is likely it was composed in Denmark maybe in the 600s AD.

THE FIRST INVASION: Celts

THE SECOND INVASION: Romans

THE THIRD INVASION: Anglo-Saxon

THE FOURTH INVASION: Vikings

THE FIFTH INVASION: Normans

700/600 B.C.

Celts appear in Britain





Areas
That
Remain
The
Strong
holds
Of
Celtic
Britain



Parade helmet, gold, Agris,
France, 350 BC





Gauls 350 BC



Anglo-Saxons 600 AD

THE FIRST INVASION: Celts

THE SECOND INVASION: Romans

THE THIRD INVASION: Anglo-Saxon

THE FOURTH INVASION: Danes

THE FIFTH INVASION: Normans

• HAIL CAESAR •

THE ROMAN INVASION OF BRITAIN



Caesar: 55 BC

What the Roman Conquest Did to Britain

1. established southeast corner of Island as primary.
2. established the city pattern with their surrounding counties.
3. created main transportation routes of GB that endures to today.
4. built the main bridges at points that still dominate areas.
5. "Romanized" south east Britain up to York in north.
6. With Hadrian's Wall intensified the split betw Eng & Scot.
7. delayed the onslaught of the Anglo saxons across channel.
8. pushed surviving Celtic culture into 3 areas of England (Cornwall, Wales, Scotland) and across water to Ireland.



407 Rome leaves Britain
493 death of St Patrick
547 death of St Benedict
550 St Columba Ireland
563 Columba to Iona
565 death of Justinian
516 King Arthur

St Patrick, 385-493 AD
born during reign of Theodosius
Patrick="Patricius"=noble, patrician





August 24, 410, Sack of Rome



Romulus Augustulus
461-507 (?)

Emperor: 31 October 475 – 4 September 476



THE FIRST INVASION: Celts

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GREGORY
THE GREAT
540-604

600
Pope
Gregory
the Great
& St
Augustine
of Kent

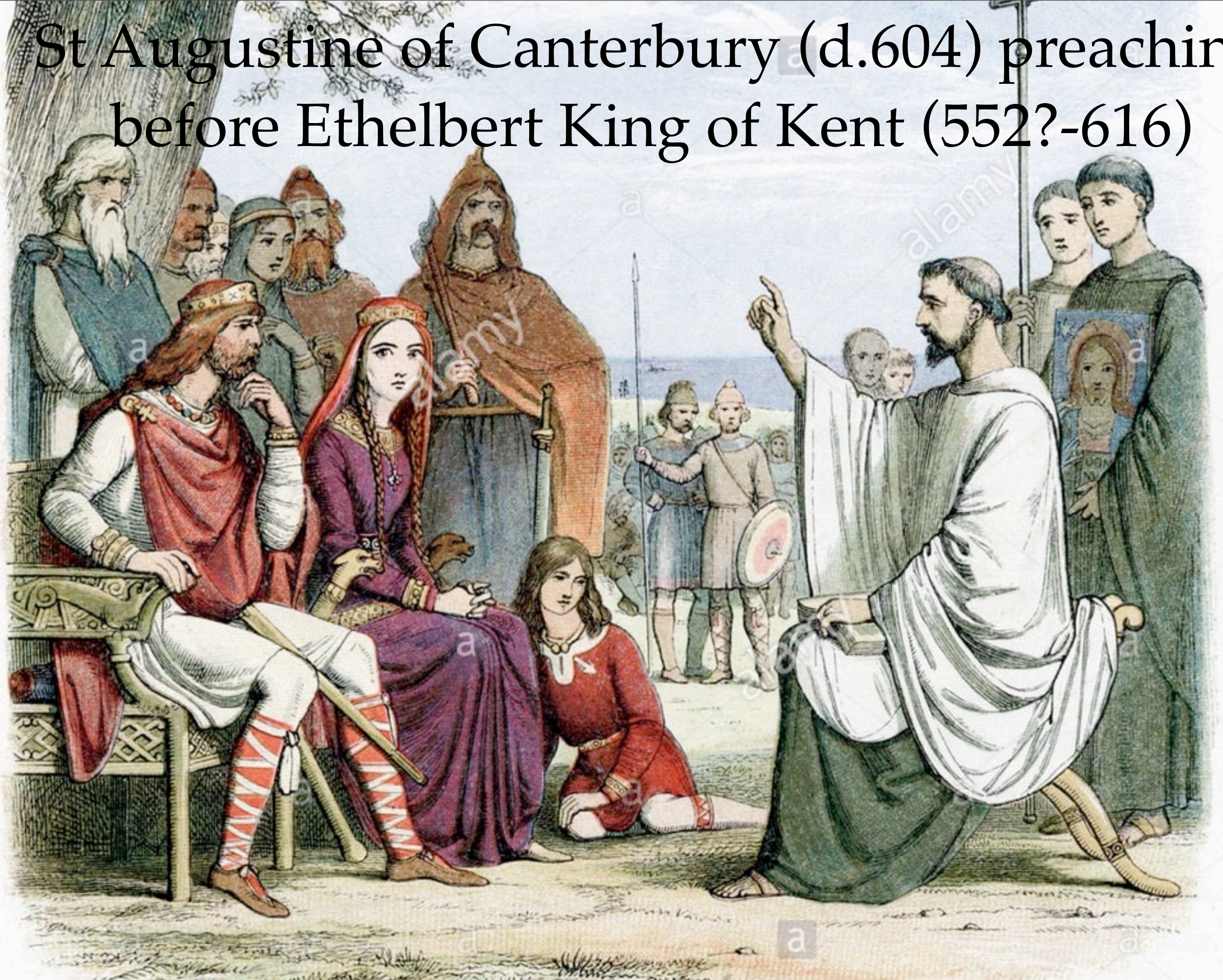


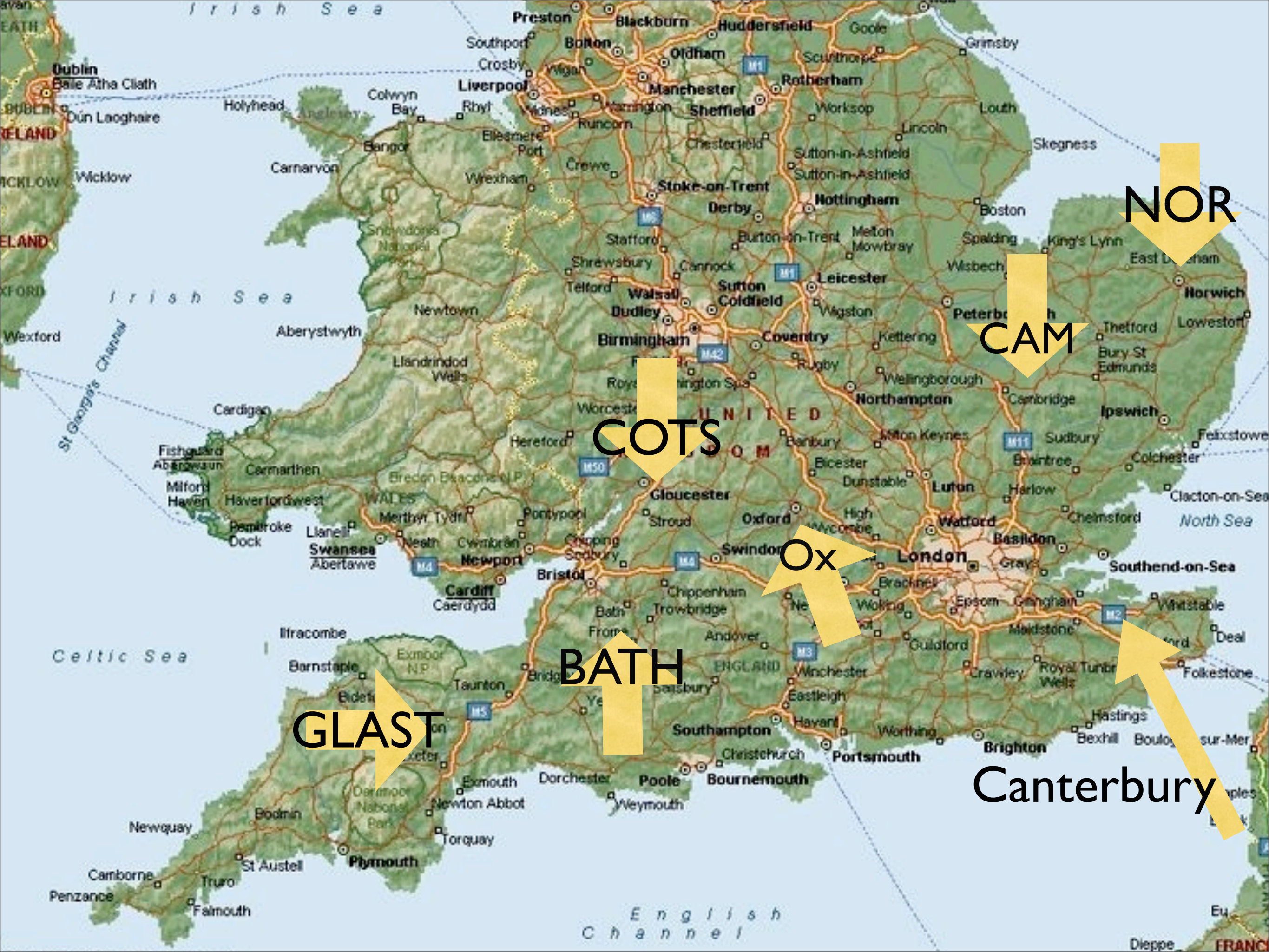


597 AD: Pope Gregory Sends Augustine to Britain



St Augustine of Canterbury (d.604) preaching before Ethelbert King of Kent (552?-616)





NOR

CAM

COTS

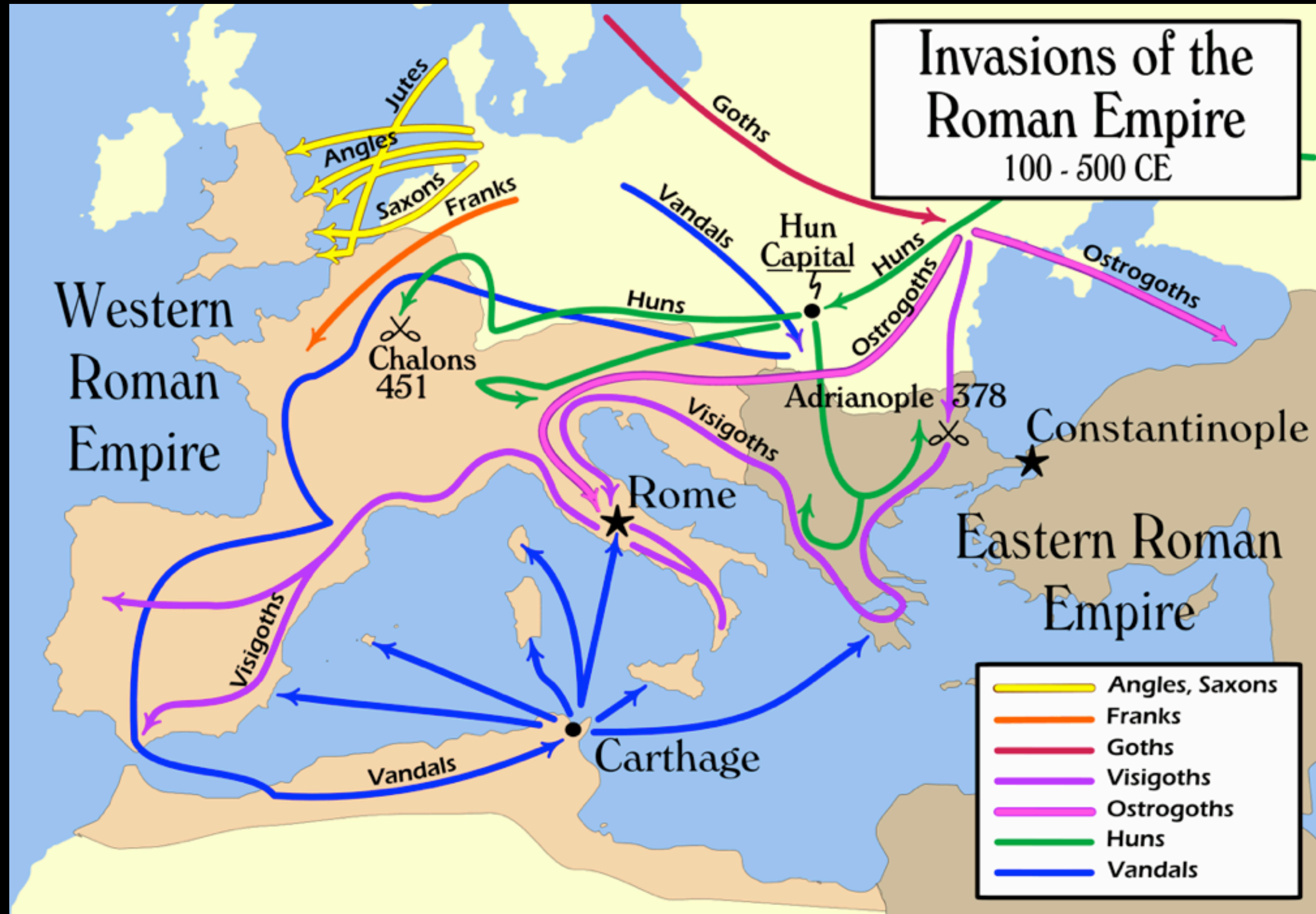
Ox

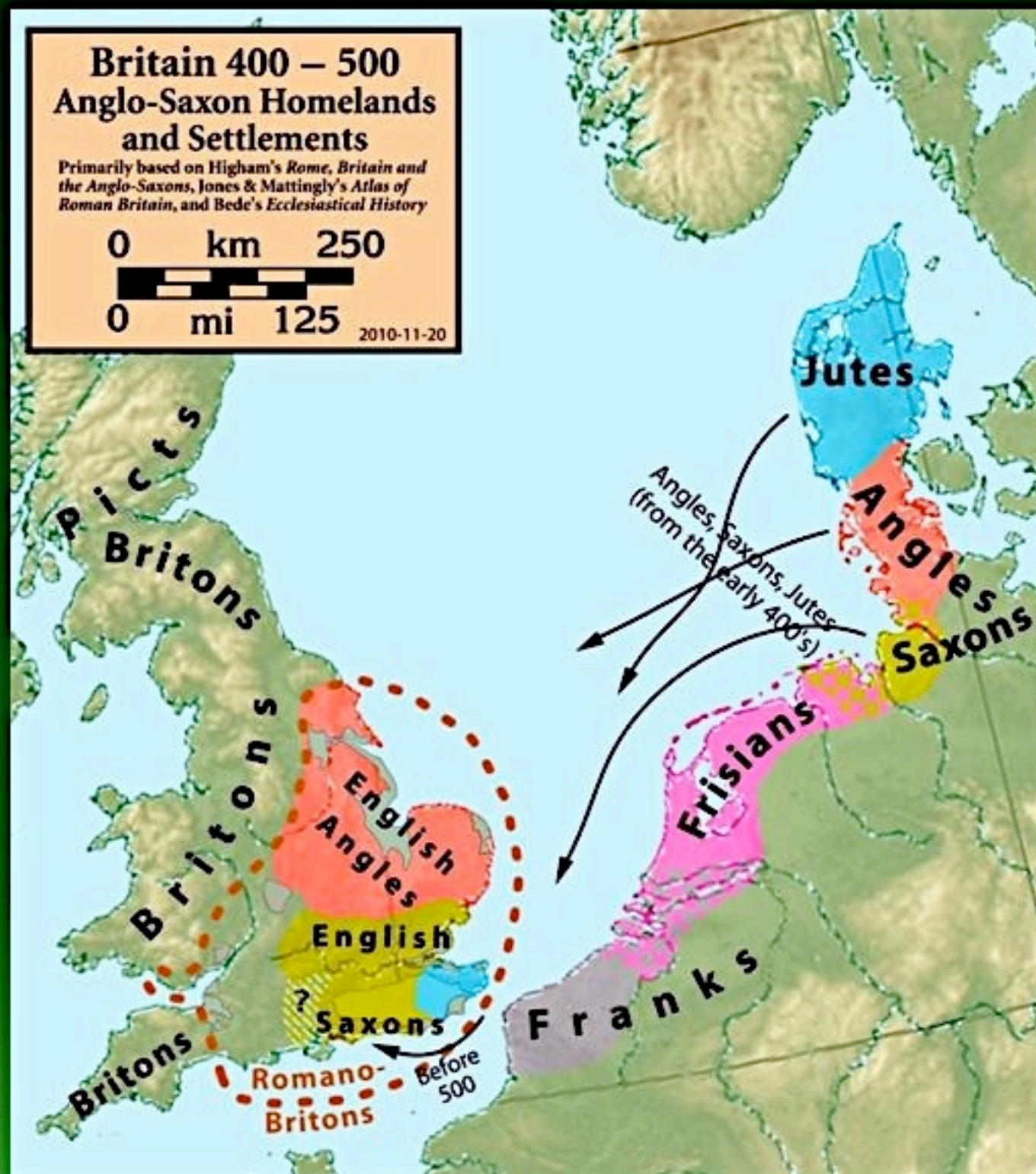
BATH

GLAST

Canterbury

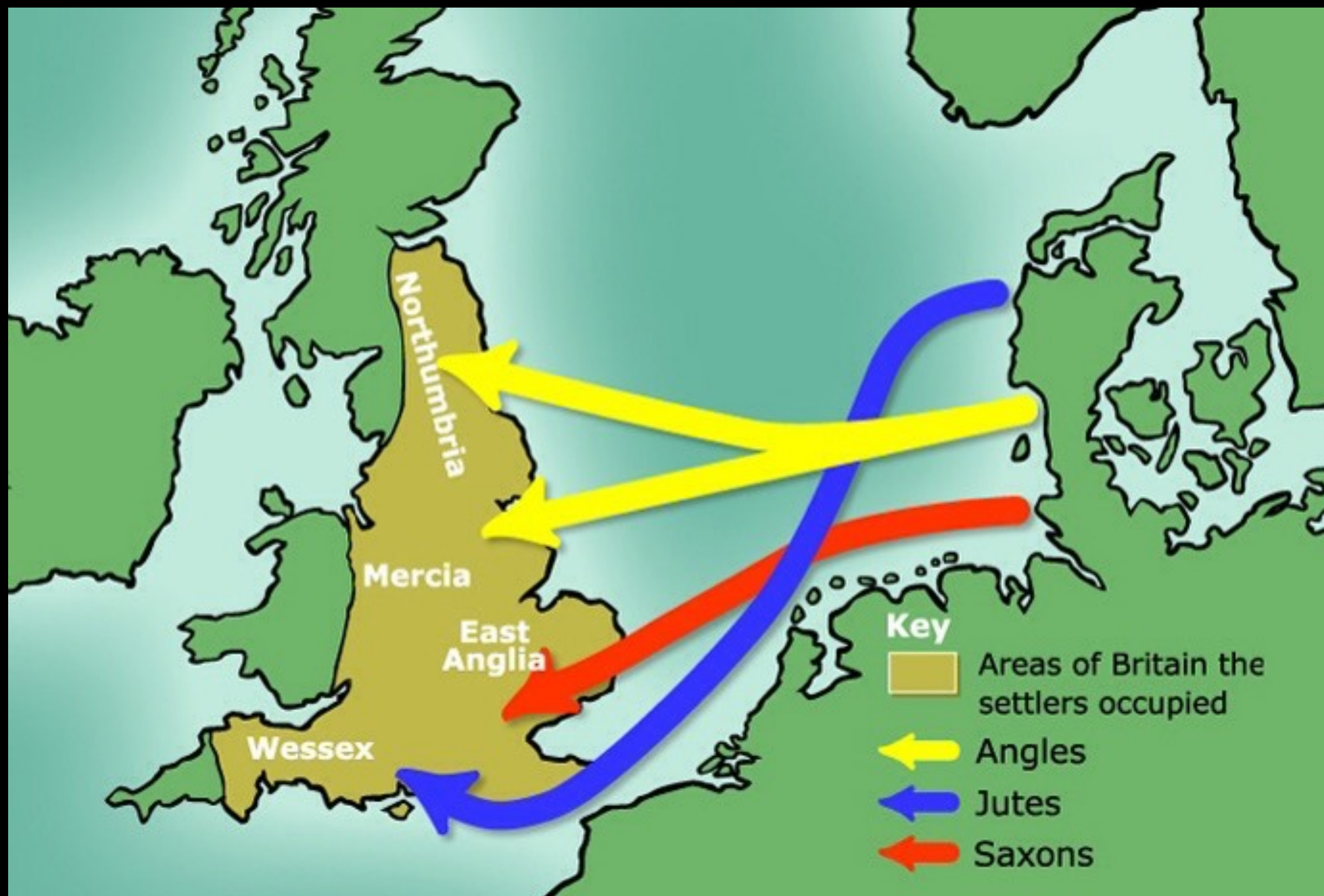
500-600 AD





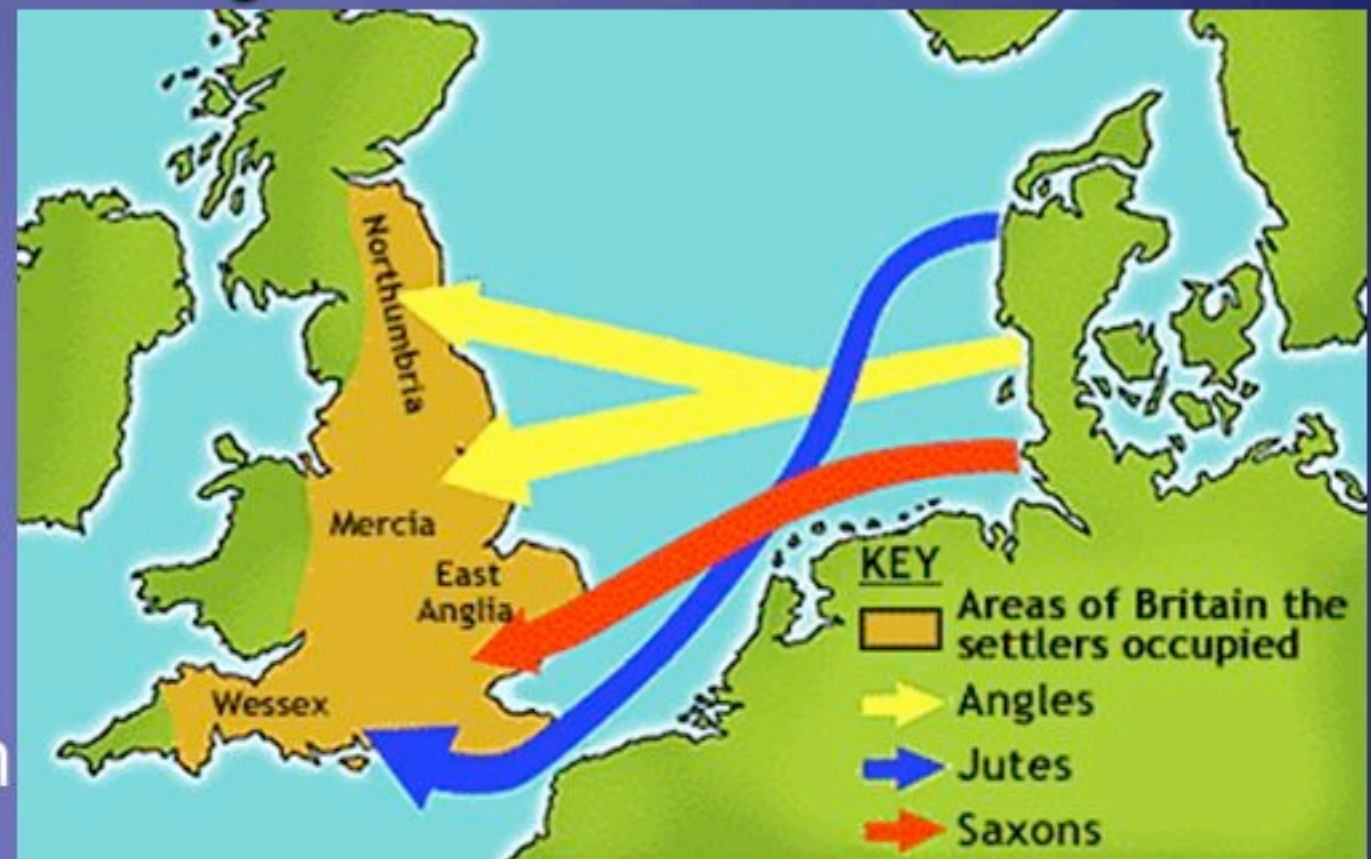
The Anglo-Saxon Invasions (400s AD)

- After Rome left, Britain was invaded by as many as 200,000 **Angles and Saxons** from Denmark and Germany, who brought new language to “Engla-land” (land of the Angles)



Who They Were

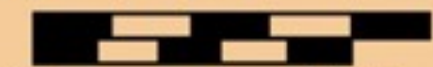
- Anglo Saxon means “war smith”.
- “Invaded” Britain from the **No Ger & Den.** countries
- The Anglo-Saxons took control of most of Britain
- Divided the country into kingdoms, each with its own royal family.
- As the Angles slowly interact with the Celts, their language, Angle-ish (English) begins to blend with the language of the Celts to form Old English.



Britain 400 – 500 Anglo-Saxon Homelands and Settlements

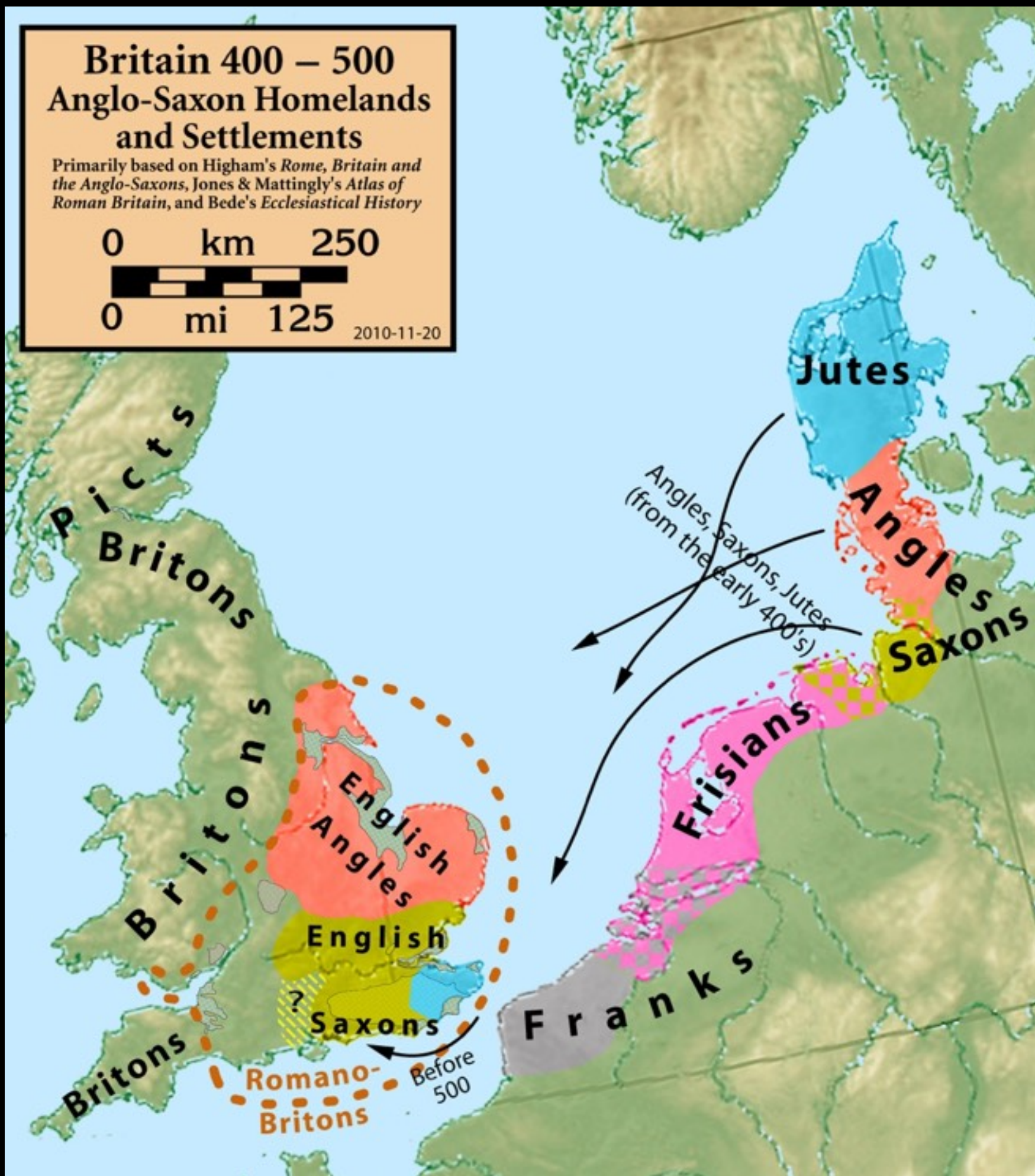
Primarily based on Higham's *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons*, Jones & Mattingly's *Atlas of Roman Britain*, and Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*

0 km 250



0 mi 125

2010-11-20



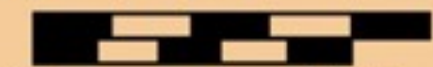
Angles

The **Angles** (Old English: *Ængle*, *Engle*; Latin: *Angli*; German: *Angeln*) were one of the main Germanic peoples who settled in Great Britain in the post-Roman period. They founded a number of kingdoms of Anglo-Saxon England, and their name is the root of the name *England* ("land of *Ængle*"). According to Tacitus, before their move to Britain, Angles lived alongside Langobardi and Semnones in historical regions of Schleswig and Holstein, which are today part of northern Germany (Schleswig-Holstein) but previously were part of Denmark.

Britain 400 – 500 Anglo-Saxon Homelands and Settlements

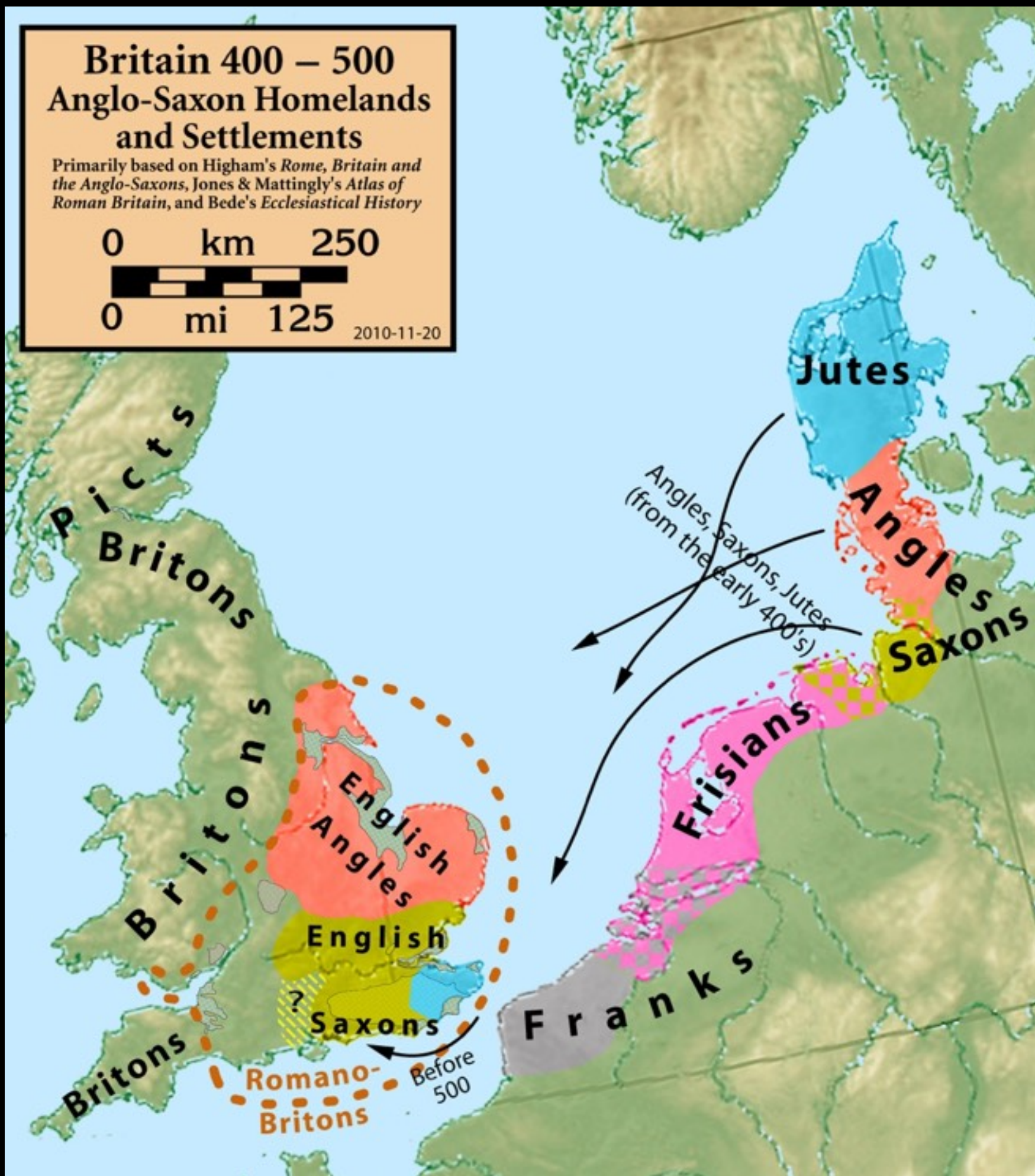
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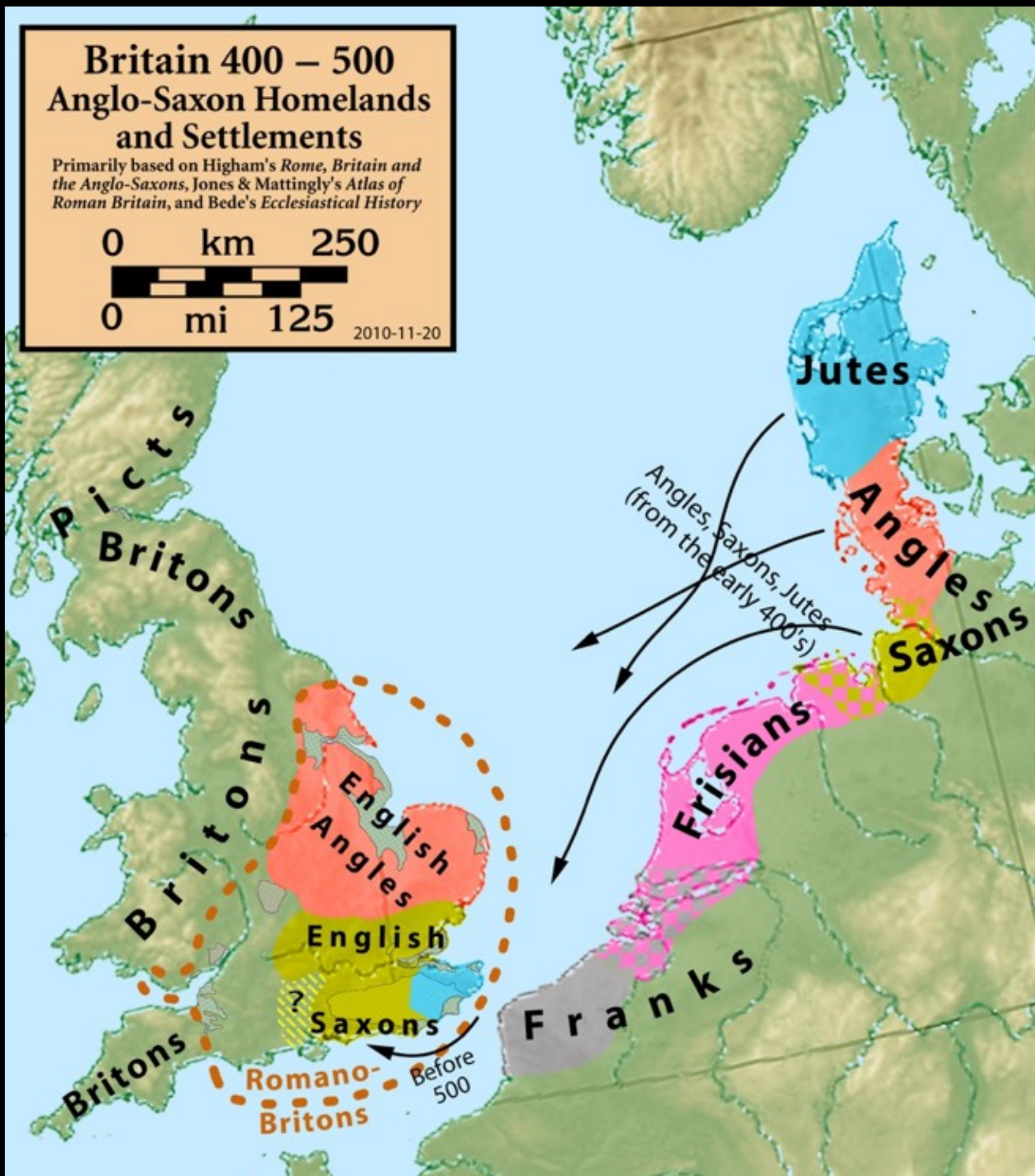
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The earliest recorded mention of the Angles may be in chapter 40 of **Tacitus's *Germania*** written around AD 98. Tacitus describes the "Anglii" as one of the more remote Suebic tribes compared to the Semnones and Langobardi, who lived on the Elbe and were better known to the Romans. He grouped the Angles with several other tribes in that region, the Reudigni, Aviones, Varini, Eudoses, Suarini, and Nuitones. These were all living behind ramparts of rivers and woods, and therefore inaccessible to attack they were **never Romanized** and so were similar to their Celtic cousins in Ireland and Scotland.

Saxons

The **Saxons** (Latin: *Saxones*, German: *Sachsen*, Old English: *Seaxe*, Old Saxon: *Sahson*, Low German: *Sassen*, Dutch: *Saksen*) were a Germanic people whose name was given in the early Middle Ages to a large country (Old Saxony, Latin: *Saxonia*) near the North Sea coast of what is now Germany.^[1] In the late Roman Empire, the name was used to refer to Germanic coastal raiders, and also as a word something like the later "Viking".^[2] Their origins appear to be mainly somewhere in or near the above-mentioned German North Sea coast where they are found later, in Carolingian times



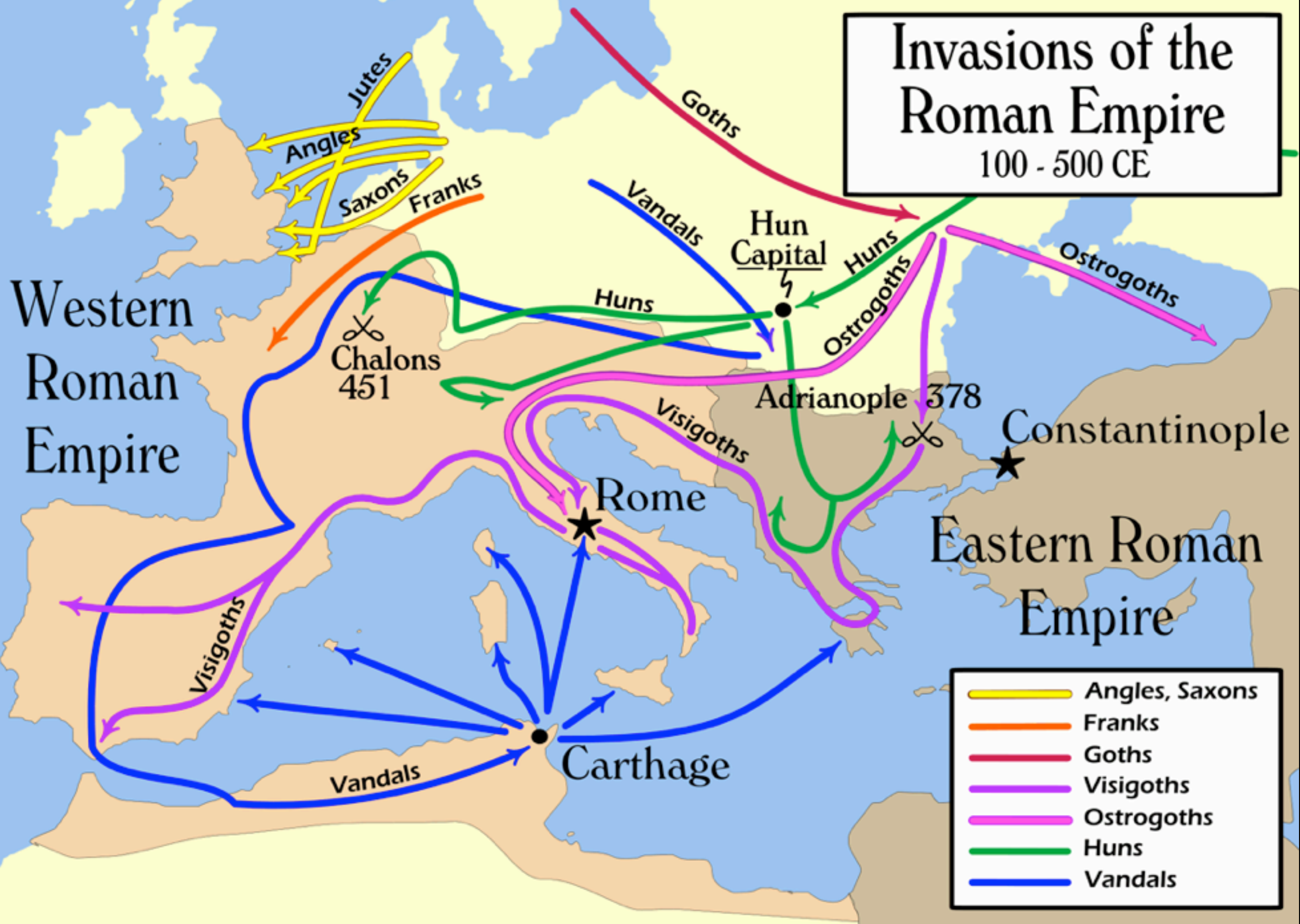


Invasions of the Roman Empire

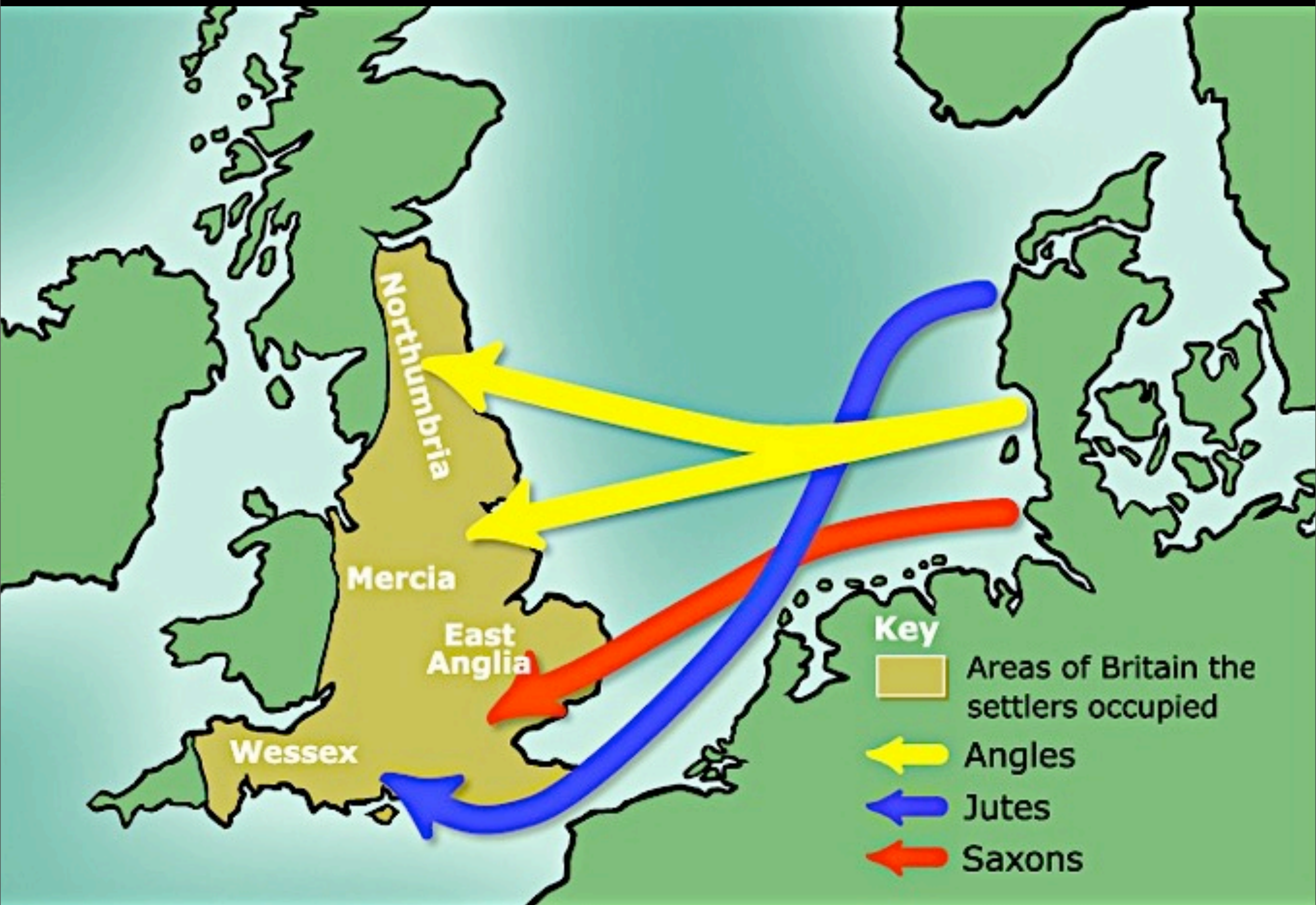
100 - 500 CE

Western Roman Empire

Eastern Roman Empire





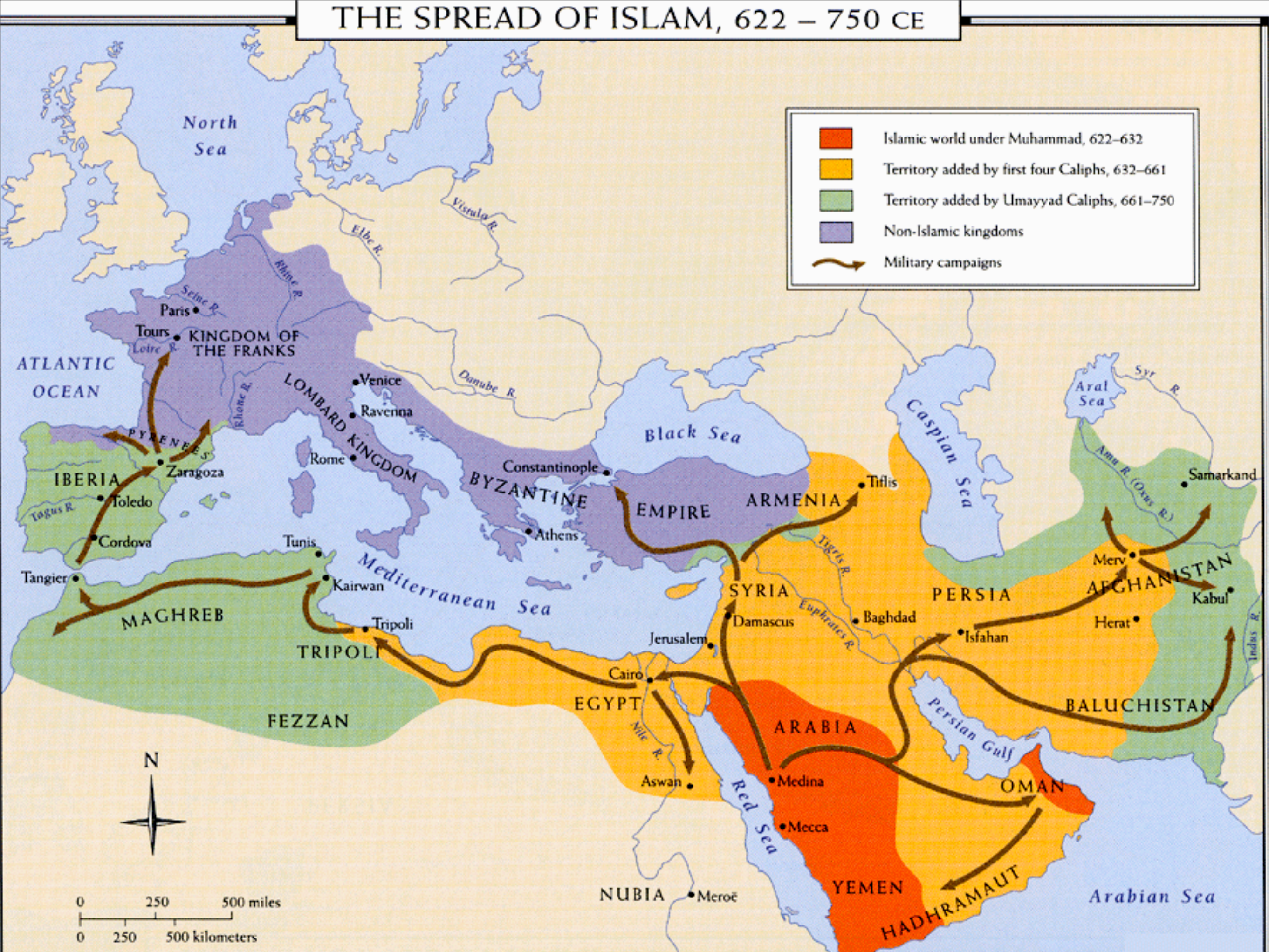


The Barbarian Kingdoms about 500

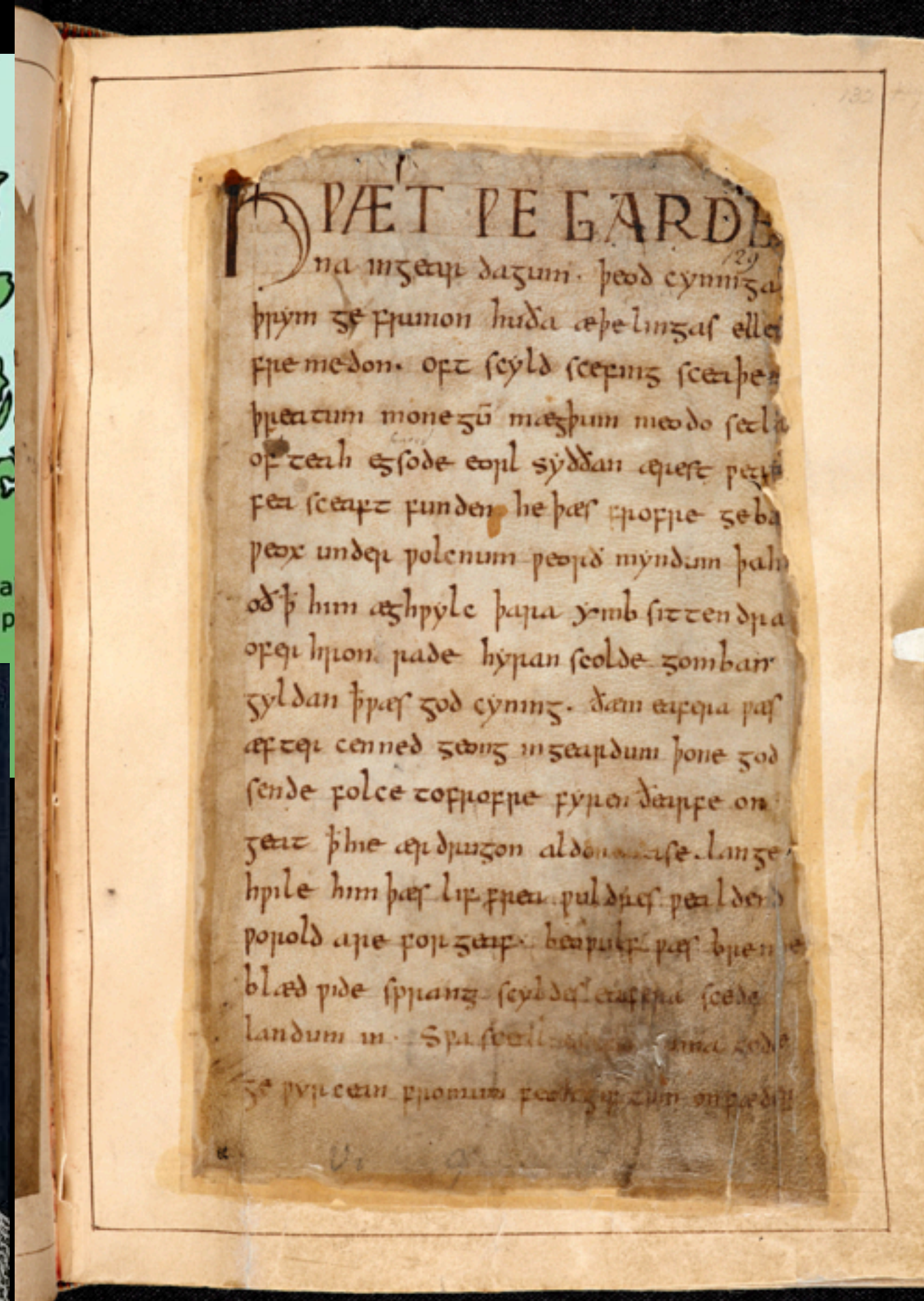
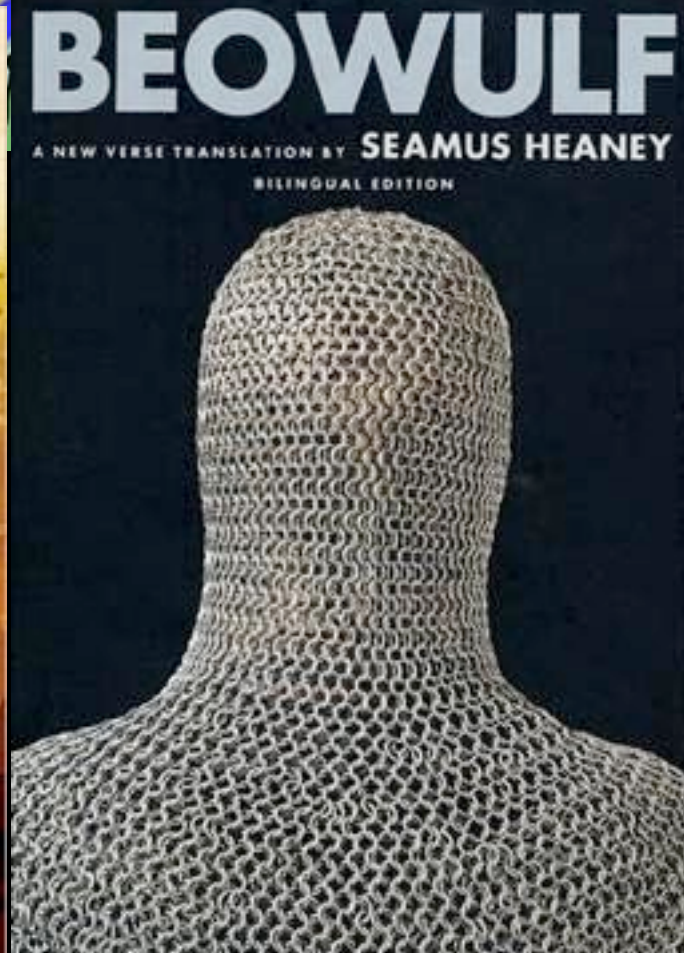
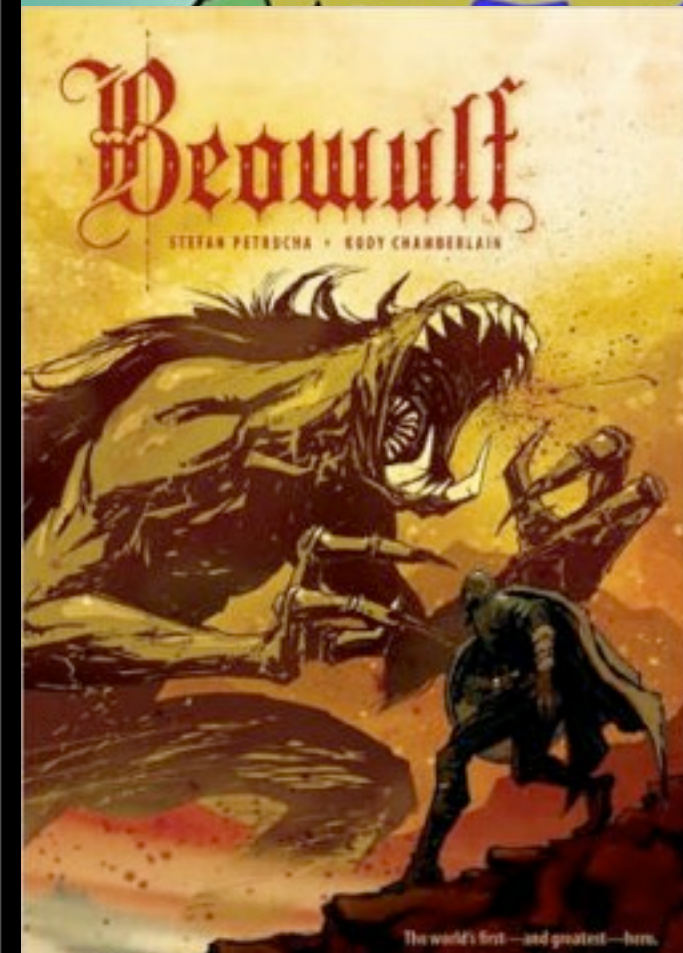
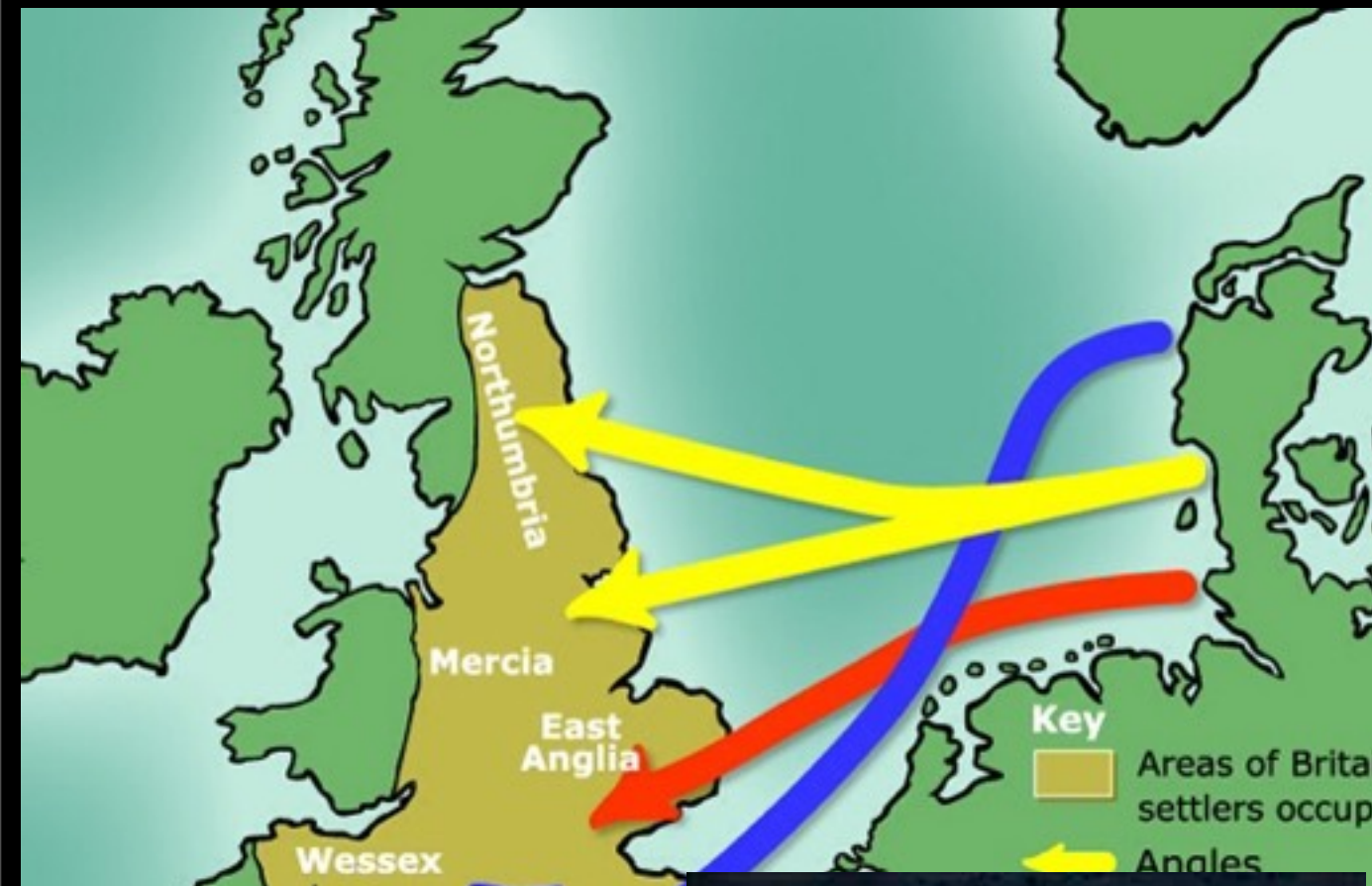
Arthur

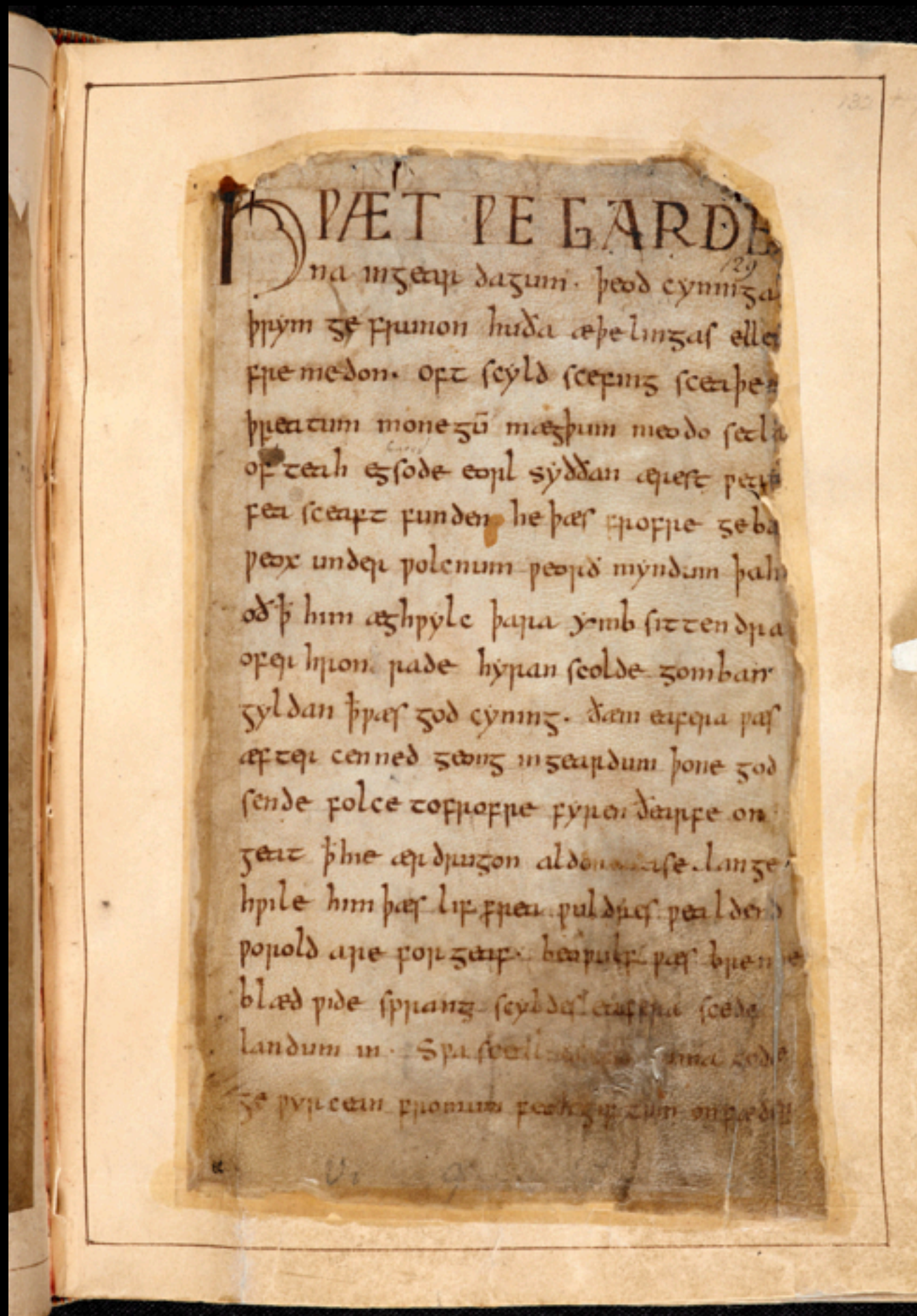


THE SPREAD OF ISLAM, 622 – 750 CE

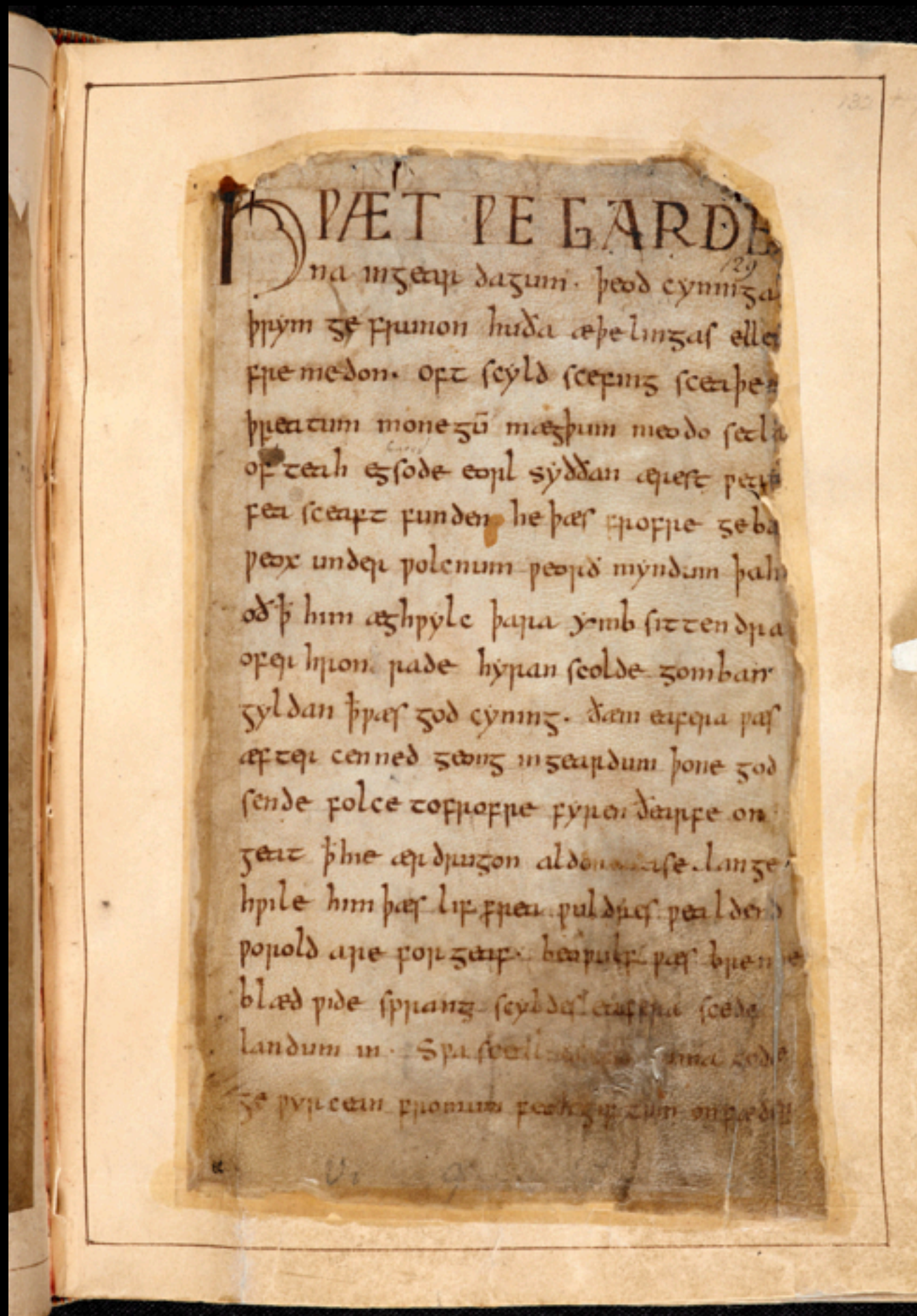


The Anglo-Saxons and Beowulf





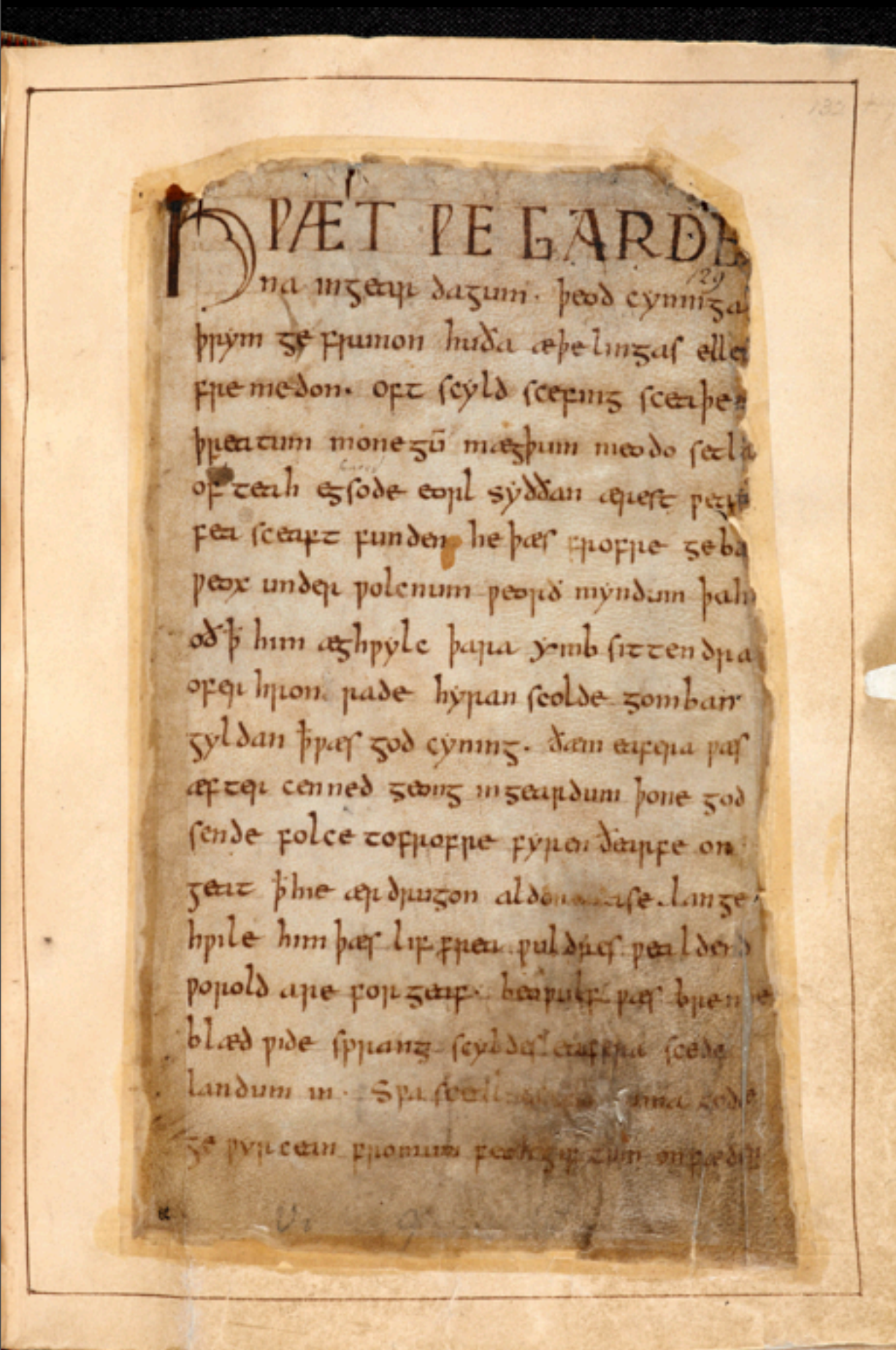
Beowulf is an Old English epic poem consisting of 3,182 alliterative lines. *Beowulf* is the longest surviving epic poem in Old English, the language spoken in Anglo-Saxon England before the Norman Conquest. *Beowulf* relates the exploits of Beowulf, and his successive battles with a monster named Grendel, with Grendel's revengeful mother, and with a dragon which was guarding a hoard of treasure.



Beowulf survives in a single medieval manuscript now in the British Library London. The manuscript bears no date, and so its age has to be calculated by analyzing the scribes' handwriting. Some scholars have suggested that the manuscript was made at between 975 and 1000 AD. which makes the manuscript approximately 1,000 years old. Nobody knows for certain when and where the poem was first composed, but it is likely it was composed in Denmark maybe around 700 AD. The author was an anonymous Anglo-Saxon poet, referred to by scholars as the "*Beowulf* poet".^[4]

The Medieval Scribes who copied the poem

The *Beowulf* manuscript was transcribed from an original by two scribes, one of whom wrote the prose at the beginning of the manuscript and the first 1939 lines before breaking off in mid sentence. The **first scribe** made a point of carefully regularizing the spelling of the original document by using the common West Saxon language and by avoiding any archaic or dialectical features. The **second scribe**, who wrote the remainder, with a difference in handwriting noticeable after line 1939, seems to have written more vigorously and with less interest. As a result, the second scribe's script retains more archaic dialectic features, which allow modern scholars to ascribe the poem a cultural context. While both scribes appear to proofread their work, there are nevertheless many errors. The second scribe was ultimately the more conservative copyist as he did not modify the spelling of the text as he wrote but copied what he saw in front of him.



So. The Spear-Danes in days gone by
and the kings who ruled them had courage and greatness
We have heard of those princes' heroic campaigns.

There was Shield Sheafson, scourge of many tribes,
a wrecker of mead-benches, rampaging among foes.
This terror of the hall-troops had come far.
A foundling to start with, he would flourish later on
as his powers waxed and his worth was proved.
In the end each clan on the outlying coasts
beyond the whale-road had to yield to him
and begin to pay tribute. That was one good king.



Beowulf

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and the kings who ruled them had courage and greatness
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and begin to pay tribute. That was one good king.

Afterwards a boy-child was born to Shield,
a cub in the yard, a comfort sent
by God to that nation. He knew what they had tholed,
the long times and troubles they'd come through
without a leader; so the Lord of Life,
the glorious Almighty, made this man renowned.
Shield had fathered a famous son:
Beow's name was known through the north.
And a young prince must be prudent like that,
giving freely while his father lives
so that afterwards in age when fighting starts

steadfast companions will stand by him
and hold the line. Behaviour that's admired
is the path to power among people everywhere.

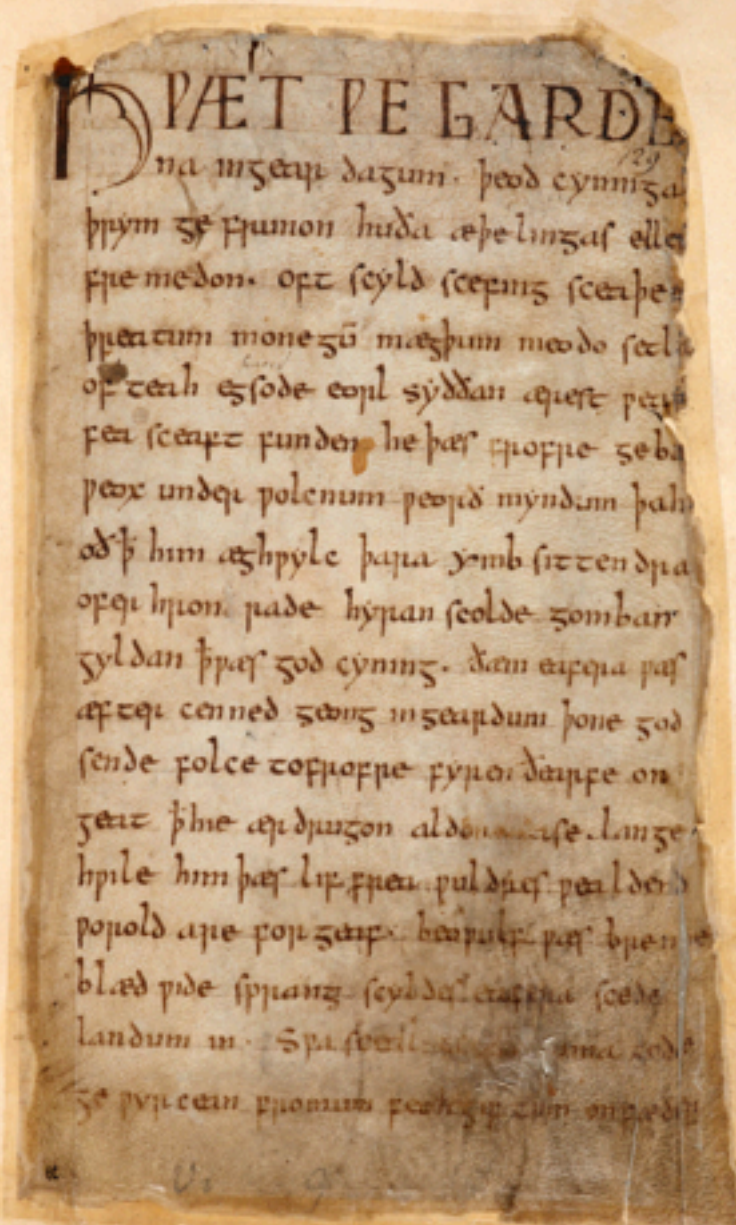
Shield was still thriving when his time came
and he crossed over into the Lord's keeping.
His warrior band did what he bade them
when he laid down the law among the Danes:
they shouldered him out to the sea's flood,
the chief they revered who had long ruled them.
A ring-whorled prow rode in the harbour,
ice-clad, outbound, a craft for a prince.
They stretched their beloved lord in his boat,
laid out by the mast, amidships,
the great ring-giver. Far-fetched treasures
were piled upon him, and precious gear.
I never heard before of a ship so well furbished

the great ring-giver. Far-fetched treasures
were piled upon him, and precious gear.
I never heard before of a ship so well furbished
with battle tackle, bladed weapons
and coats of mail. The massed treasure
was loaded on top of him: it would travel far
on out into the ocean's sway.

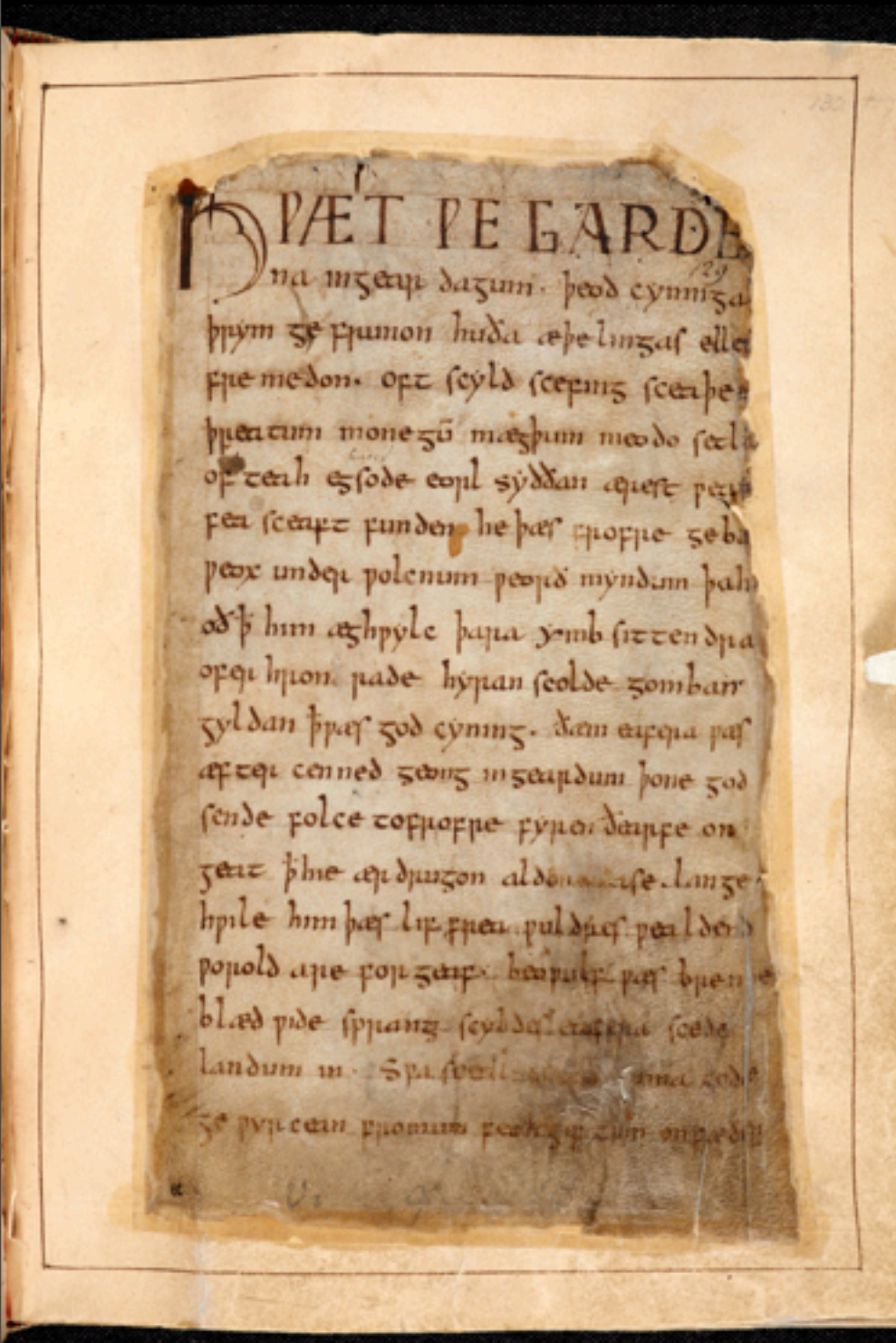
They decked his body no less bountifully
with offerings than those first ones did
who cast him away when he was a child
and launched him alone out over the waves.
And they set a gold standard up
high above his head and let him drift
to wind and tide, bewailing him
and mourning their loss. No man can tell,
no wise man in hall or weathered veteran
knows for certain who salvaged that load.

" In contrast with the Mediterranean glitter of The Odyssey, plagued by fatigue and melancholy, Beowulf takes place in an atmosphere of semidarkness—the gloom of fire-lit halls, stormy wastelands, and underwater caverns. It is full of blood and fierceness. Its rhythms have the sounds of the clang of iron. Men exult in their conflict with one another and the elements. The sea is not a jealous, cantankerous, senile deity. It is a cold, thrilling antagonist."

—Kenneth Rexroth, Classics Revisited



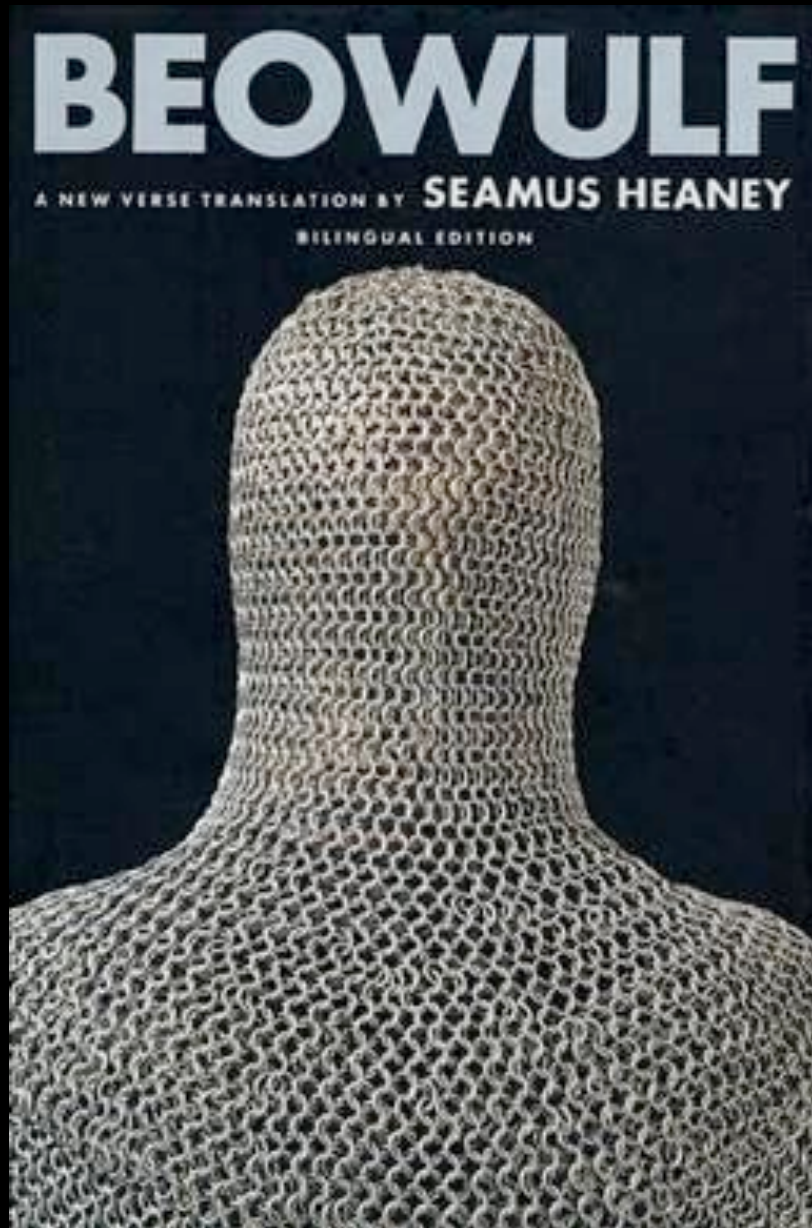
Beowulf fights in a non Classical non Christian world.



Harold Bloom

"Beowulf fights primarily for glory, to increase his fame, to show that he occupies the foremost place among all Germanic heroes. It is true that Grendel and his even more monstrous mother are portrayed for us as descendants of Cain, but neither they nor the fatal dragon of the poem's end can be said to fight against Christ, or the things that are Christ's. When Beowulf goes forth to battle, he is in quest of reputation and treasure, but not of Christ or God."

Chief values are courage, prowess in war, loyalty and generosity.



An aristocratic society: a society ruled men, by chiefs or kings, each with his own hall, in which a company of followers can gather.

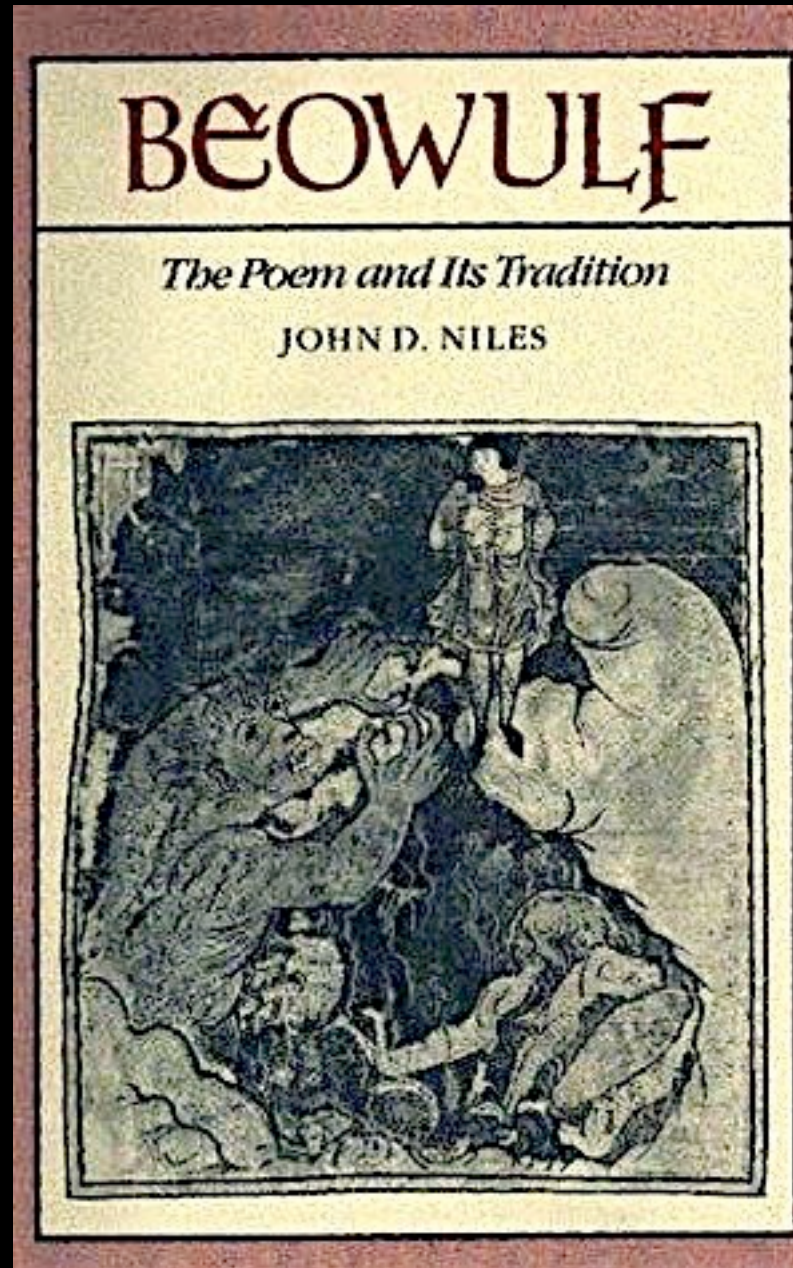
Source of the king's power and prestige, depends on his capacity to inspire friends, relations, and guests and to gather them around him in his great hall. (Personal power, not admin state)
And also on his capacity to lead them successfully in war and reward them with princely gifts.

The King and his tribe.



In the great hall the king and his followers gather for their evening banquets, accompanied by the distribution of gifts and the telling or perhaps singing of tales. Gold is the symbol greatness: the king must be able to display gold in his hall, on his armor, or on his wife; he must be able to lavish gifts of gold on his followers and still remain wealthier than they. This meant a constant scramble by the king to provide himself with adequate supplies, by loot, tribute, or trade. The famous Sutton Hoo treasure, a gravesite filled with precious objects and metals excavated in 1939, gives us a very good idea of what King Hrothgar's material world was like.

John Niles:



"The end to which Beowulf's actions are directed is **community**—peaceful human community among kin and neighbors—and much more of the poem deals with this collective issue than with any individual heroics."

The **digressions** that take us away from Beowulf's story provide examples of the **breakdown of society** through greed, anger, or selfishness, through natural disasters or deliberate acts of war. Hrothgar's sermon is a warning of what can happen if fortitude exists for its own sake rather than for the common good.

The Good and the Bad; the Hero and the Monster

Grendel, is all **malice**, a horrid **solitary** being whose only ways of relating to others are through **violence** (against Heorot) or incest (with his dreadful mother). "Men ne cunnon,/hwyder helrunen hwyrftum scipao" ("Men do not know,/whither hell-demons turn their footsteps").

Evil in the poem is associated with **mystery** and **secrecy** (the Grendel-mere, the dragon's barrow), **the solitary, the anti-social**. While Grendel is an intruder whose raid is a horrible violation of boundaries (between inside and outside, hearth and wilderness, culture and barbarity, human and inhuman, familiar and unknown), Beowulf approaches Heorot with a delicate series of negotiations and transitions-social cohesion.

Again, like Cain, **Grendel** "represents the denial of bonds that hold society together. He hates Heorot and the noisy merriment that fills it. He knows nothing of human language, joy, or gift-giving, and he refuses to settle his feud by wergild. He and his mother dwell alone in their mere, a kind of anti-Heorot, like an incestuous primal couple who have no further need of companionship" (John Niles) They represent the archaic past, devourers of men and inhabitants of subterranean depths.

The positive, optimistic, energy of Beowulf

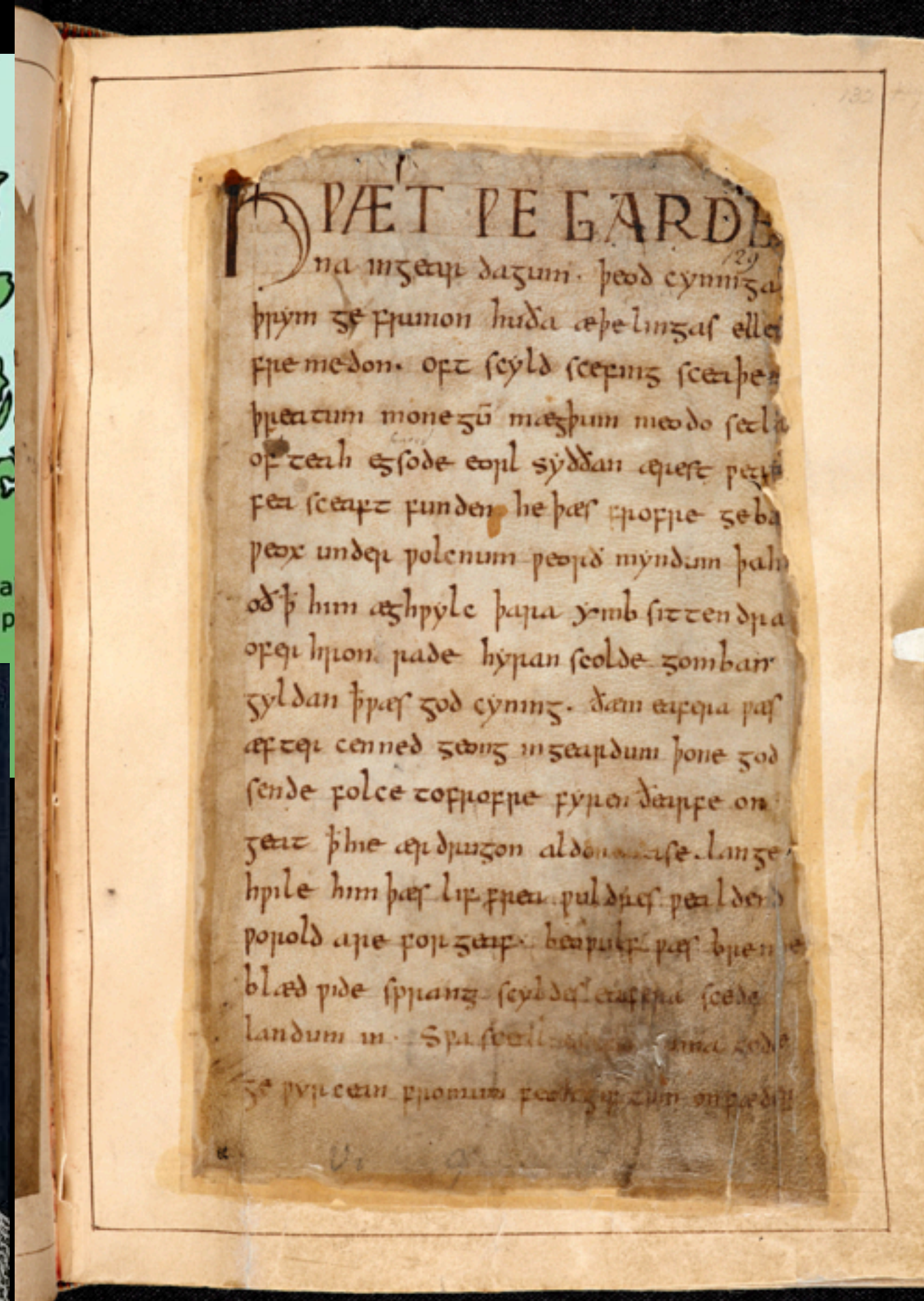
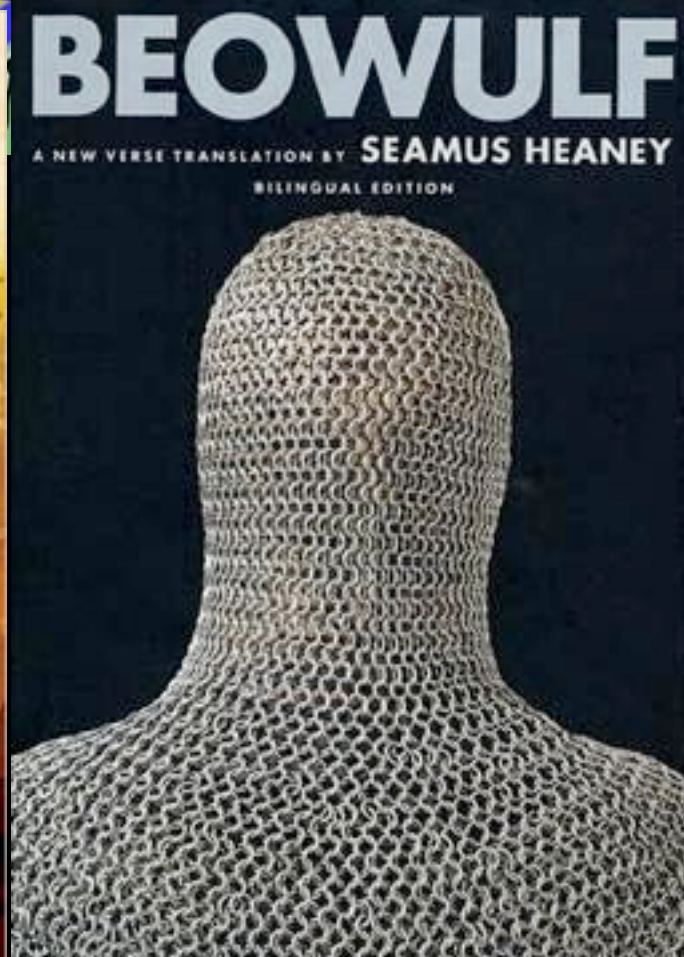
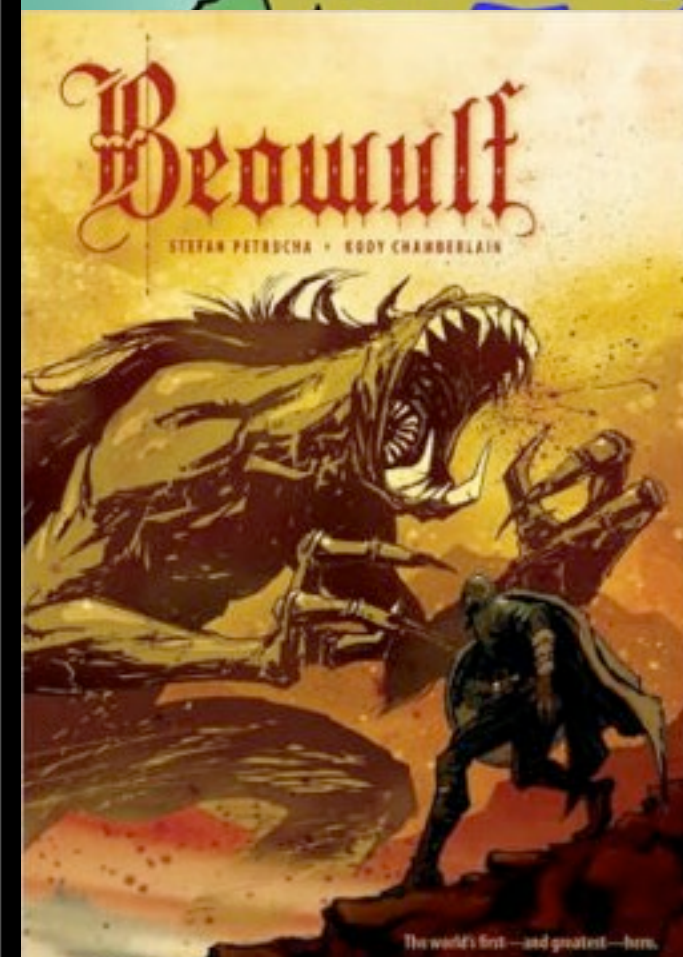
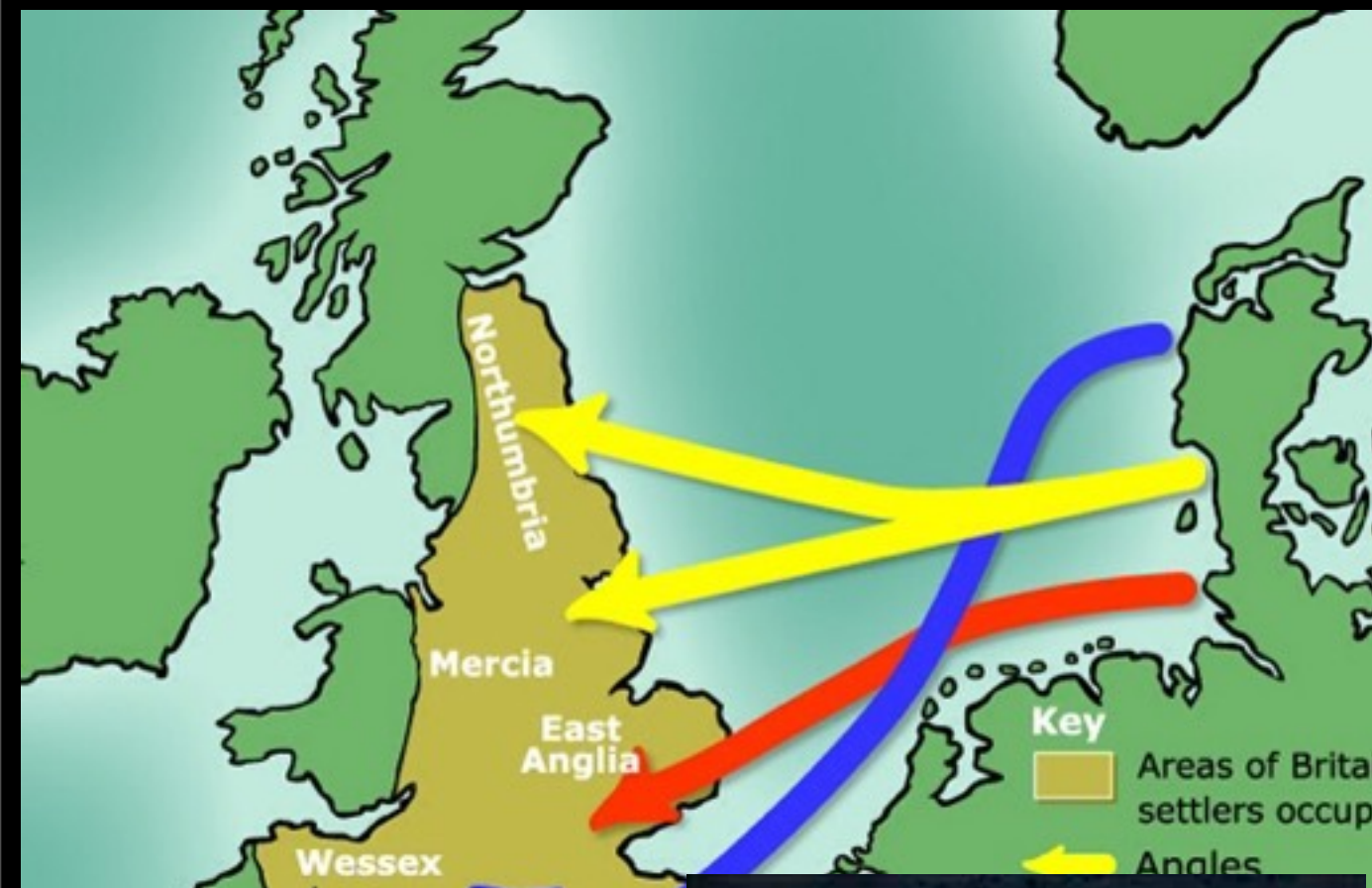
"Every part of the poem," writes Niles, **stresses the joys of harmonious living among the group,**

or brings out the gloom of life lived apart from the group, or develops the ways in which people can contribute to the stability of the group by leading lives free from arrogance and greed and by directing their energies against external threats.

One sees Beowulf's energy turn outward, away from trivial displays, until it is directed against forces that threaten the social order. Just as important, one also sees this energy held in check when the crisis that provoked its use has passed.

He shuns unnecessary violence, makes no raids and starts no feuds, and ends his mature life as he had begun it years before at Hrothgar's court, with acts of splendid and uncompromising devotion to a code of conduct that places the good of others above oneself."

The Anglo-Saxons and Beowulf





HISTORY OF ENGLAND, FALL QUARTER Week 5 Anglo Saxons and Beowulf

Institute for the Study of Western Civilization



