

## Note on terminology

During the writing of this book, an interesting question was raised for Anglo-Saxon scholars to consider: 'Is the term Anglo-Saxon racist?' This question was made international when the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists (ISAS) voted to change its name following accusations of racism, elitism, sexism and bigotry. *BBC History Magazine* (December 2019), *British Archaeology* 170 and several pieces in *The Times* covered this in the UK. In the United States in particular, the term Anglo-Saxon has been associated with white supremacists, who have been known to build identity around early medieval mythology and imagery, with a particular fascination for the Vikings as well as the Anglo-Saxons. I have witnessed this first-hand when rather unpleasantly I received death threats for writing popular articles about the biological diversity evident within early medieval peoples.

As archaeologists, our prehistoric colleagues might describe the study of the Anglo-Saxon period as 'culture-historical', because it appears to take its name from the name of a people. Importantly, however, the people themselves did not think of themselves as Anglo-Saxons, and the term describes a cultural and political situation. Nether Gildas, writing in the sixth century, nor Bede in the eighth century, used the term. In the ninth century, Alfred the Great described his unified realm as 'Anglo-Saxon' in opposition to the Dane Law, which was made up of people from Scandinavian countries, Ireland and Britain, as well as others from further afield. However, the Anglo-Saxon regions also consisted of a complex mix of people, and ancient DNA evidence points to that diversity. Importantly, the post-Roman people did not define themselves in biological terms; that is a more modern phenomenon and manifest from colonialism, apartheid and racial segregation. As Howard Williams pointed out in *British Archaeology* 170, 'abandoning the term Anglo-Saxon would not help us reach an audience beyond academia, and it would concede intellectual and historical territory to extremists and fringe narratives.'

This book does not use the term Anglo-Saxon to describe a race; it uses it to describe the cultural phenomenon of furnished burial that occurred in the fifth to eighth centuries AD across regions of England, a phenomenon related to a comparable Merovingian practice. Most importantly, this book is not about race; it is about cultural diversity, and this can be seen in the variations evident in localised expression of gender, status and identity in these burials.