Bohemia, Moravia and the basins of the Vistula and the Warthe have always remained mainly Slavonic. In the British Isles the Teutonic element, in spite of temporary checks, eventually became dominant everywhere. Lastly, from the very beginning of the 9th century bodies of Scandinavian warriors began to found kingdoms and principalities in all parts of Europe. The settlers, however, were not sufficiently numerous to preserve their nationality, and in almost all cases they were soon ab­sorbed by the populations (Teutonic, Celtic, Latin or Slavonic) which they had conquered. Their settlements in Greenland and Canada likewise came to an end, but Iceland, which was formerly uninhabited, remained a Scandinavian colony. The permanent expansion of the Teutonic peoples outside Europe did not begin till the 16th century.

2. *Form of Government.—*From the evidence at our disposal it is difficult to determine how far the Teutonic peoples were under kingly government in early times. Tacitus speaks of tribes which had kings and tribes which had not, the latter apparently being under a number of *principes.* On nearer examination, however, it appears that kingship was intermittent in some tribes, while in others, which had no kings, we find mention of royal families. All such cases were perhaps peculiar to the western peoples; in the east, north and centre we have no evidence for kingless government. Further, while Tacitus represents the power of Teutonic kings in general, with reference no doubt primarily to the western tribes, as being of the slightest, he states that among the Goths, an eastern people, they had somewhat more authority, while for the Swedes he gives a picture of absolutism. It is quite in harmony with these statements that many Northern and probably all the Anglo-Saxon kingly families traced their origin to the gods. The Swedes, indeed, and some of the eastern peoples seem to have regarded their kings themselves as at least semi-divine (see below, § *Religion).* As the west was the side most open to foreign influence during the Roman period, it is likely that the form of government which prevailed here was less primitive than the other, especially as we know that kingship had by this time died out among the Gauls. In later times we very fre­quently find a number of “ kings,” generally belonging to one family, within the same tribe; and it is not improbable that the early *principes* were persons of similar position. The kingless state may therefore have arisen out of kingship through divisions of the royal power or through failure on the part of the leading men to agree on a head acceptable to all. On the other hand the conditions of the migration period were doubtless favourable to monarchical government, and from this time onwards kingship appears to have been universal, except among the Old Saxons and in Iceland.

The *concilium* or tribal assembly figures largely in Tacitus’s account of the Germani, and he represents it as the final authority on all matters of first-rate importance. Further, it was here that the *principes* were chosen, serious charges brought against members of the tribe and youths admitted to the rights of warriors. The duties of opening the proceedings and maintaining order belonged not to the king but to the priests, from which we may probably infer that the gathering itself was primarily of a religious character and that it met, as among the Swedes in later times, in the immediate neighbourhood of the tribal sanctuary. Such religious gatherings were no doubt common to all Teutonic peoples in early times, but it may be questioned whether among the eastern and northern tribes they were invested with all the powers ascribed to them by Tacitus. After his time tribal assemblies are seldom mentioned, and though we hear oc­casionally, both in England and elsewhere, of a concourse of people being present when a king holds court on high days or religious festivals, there is no evidence that such concourses took part in the discussion of state affairs. Indeed, consider­ing the greatly increased size of the kingdoms in later times, it is improbable that they were drawn from any except the immediately adjacent districts. When we hear of deliberations now they are those of the king’s council or court, a body con­sisting partly of members of the royal family and partly of warriors old and young in the personal service of the king. Such bodies of course had always existed (see below) and exer­cised at all times a powerful influence upon the kings, frequently even forcing them into war against their own wishes. That they appear more prominently now than in earlier times is due to the fact that owing to the increased size of the kingdoms, they had become both more numerous and more wealthy. The principle of representation for the unofficial classes, *i.e.* for those not under the immediate lordship of the king, scarcely begins before the 13th century.

Of all the institutions of the Teutonic peoples probably none exercised a greater influence on their history than the *comitatus.* From Caesar we learn that it was customary at tribal assemblies for one or other of the chiefs to propose an expedition. He had generally no difficulty in gathering a following, and those who embraced his service were held bound to accompany him to the end, any who drew back being regarded as traitors. Incidents illustrative of this custom are of frequent occurrence in early history and tradition. Moreover, kings and other distinguished persons kept standing bodies of young warriors, an honour to them in time of peace, as Tacitus says, as well as a protection in war. Chiefs of known prowess and liberality attracted large retinues, and their influence within the tribe, and even beyond, increased proportionately. The followers (called by Tacitus *comités,* in England “ thegns,” among the Franks *antrusliones,* &c.) were expected to remain faithful to their lord even to death; indeed so close was the relationship between the two that it seems to have reckoned as equivalent to that of father and son. According to Tacitus it was regarded as a disgrace for a *comes* to survive his lord, and we know that in later times they frequently shared his exile. Perhaps the most striking instance of such devotion was that displayed at the battle of Strassburg in 357, when the Alamannic king Chonodomarius was taken prisoner by the Romans, and his two hundred *comites* gave themselves up voluntarily to share his captivity. In return for their services the chief was expected to reward his followers with treasure, arms and horses. If he were a king the reward might take the form of a grant of land, or of jurisdiction over a section of the population subject to him—in early times a village, in later, perhaps, a considerable district. Further, since the grantees as a rule naturally sent their sons into the service of their own lords, such grants tended to become hereditary, and in them we have the origin of the baronage of the middle ages. The origin of the earls or counts, on the other hand, is to be found in the governors of large dis­tricts (Tacitus’s *principes),* who seem at first generally to have been members of the royal family, though later they were drawn from the highest barons.

3. *Social Organization.—*As far back as the time of Tacitus we hear of three social classes, viz. nobles, freemen and freed­men. The same classes are met with in later times, though occasionally one of them disappears, *e.g.* the nobility among the Franks and the freedmen (as a distinct class) in the Anglo- Saxon kingdoms, except Kent. Each of these classes was, to a large extent at least, hereditary and had separate rights and privileges of its own. Among the chief of these must be reckoned the wergeld or “ man-price.” When homicide took place vengeance was regarded as a sacred duty incumbent on the relatives, and sometimes at least the lord also, of the slain man; but, as in the case of any other injury, compensation could be made by a fixed payment. From the evidence of later custom it is probable that the normal payment for a freeman was a hundred head of cattle. The sums paid for members of the other classes were more variable; for the freedman, however, they were always lower, and for the noble higher, sometimes apparently three or four times as high. Similar gradations occur in the compensations paid for various injuries and insults, in fines and, among some tribes, in the value attached to a man’s oath. There is a good deal of uncertainty in regard to both the exact position and the numbers of the nobles and freedmen of Tacitus’s age. It is probable, however, that the latter, like