anglo saxonism us history

Anglo Saxonism has played a significant role in shaping American history and identity. This concept, which emerged from the traditions and beliefs of Anglo-Saxon England, has influenced the way Americans view race, culture, and national identity. Understanding the historical context of Anglo Saxonism in the United States is essential for comprehending the complexities of American society, including issues related to immigration, ethnicity, and nationalism. In this article, we will explore the origins of Anglo Saxonism, its influence on American culture, and its implications for contemporary society.

Understanding Anglo Saxonism

Anglo Saxonism is a belief system that emerged in the 19th century, rooted in the idea that Anglo-Saxon people, primarily those of English descent, were superior to other races and ethnic groups. This ideology was often used to justify colonialism, imperialism, and racial segregation, claiming that Anglo-Saxon cultures were more advanced and civilized.

Historical Origins

The origins of Anglo Saxonism can be traced back to several key historical developments:

- **Anglo-Saxon England:** The Anglo-Saxon period in England lasted from the 5th century to the Norman Conquest in 1066. During this time, the Anglo-Saxon culture developed distinct legal, political, and social structures that were romanticized in later centuries.

- **19th Century Nationalism:** As the United States expanded and developed its national identity, the 19th century saw a rise in nationalist ideologies. Anglo Saxonism became intertwined with the belief in Manifest Destiny, the idea that Americans were destined to expand across the continent.

- **Scientific Racism:** The 19th century also saw the rise of scientific racism, which attempted to classify races based on perceived biological differences. Proponents of Anglo Saxonism used these ideas to argue for the superiority of Anglo-Saxon people over other ethnic groups.

The Influence of Anglo Saxonism on American Culture

Anglo Saxonism significantly influenced various aspects of American culture, including politics, literature, and social norms.

Political Implications

The political landscape of the United States has been heavily influenced by Anglo Saxonism in several ways:

1. Immigration Policies: Throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, restrictive immigration policies were enacted, often targeting non-Anglo-Saxon groups. The Immigration Act of 1924, for instance, severely limited immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe while favoring Northern and Western Europeans.

2. Racial Segregation: The ideology of Anglo Saxonism was used to justify racial segregation and Jim Crow laws in the South. These laws enforced a social system that privileged whites, particularly those of Anglo-Saxon descent, over African Americans and other minority groups.

3. Nationalism and War: Anglo Saxonism also played a role in American nationalism during times of war. In World War I and World War II, the notion of Anglo-Saxon superiority was used to rally support for the war efforts against perceived threats from non-Anglo Saxon nations.

Literature and Cultural Representation

Anglo Saxonism has also seeped into American literature and cultural representation:

- Literary Romanticism: Many writers of the 19th century, such as Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper, romanticized Anglo-Saxon culture and history, portraying it as noble and virtuous. This literary tradition contributed to the idealization of Anglo-Saxon heritage in American society.

- Cultural Narratives: The concept of the "noble savage" versus the "civilized Anglo-Saxon" became prevalent in American cultural narratives. This dichotomy reinforced stereotypes of Indigenous peoples and other non-Anglo-Saxon groups as inferior.

- Popular Media: Films, television shows, and other forms of popular media have often perpetuated Anglo Saxon ideals, portraying Anglo-Saxon characters in positive lights while marginalizing or demonizing characters from other ethnic backgrounds.

The Legacy of Anglo Saxonism in Contemporary Society

The legacy of Anglo Saxonism continues to shape contemporary American society in various ways, particularly in discussions surrounding race, identity, and nationalism.

Modern Nationalism and White Supremacy

In recent years, there has been a resurgence of nationalist movements that invoke the principles of Anglo Saxonism. These groups often espouse white supremacist ideologies, claiming that the preservation of Anglo-Saxon culture is essential for the future of the United States. This has led to

increased tensions surrounding immigration, race relations, and national identity.

Racial and Ethnic Identity

The impact of Anglo Saxonism on racial and ethnic identity remains evident today. Many Americans continue to grapple with issues of privilege, racism, and cultural appropriation. Understanding the historical roots of these issues, particularly the influence of Anglo Saxonism, is crucial for fostering a more inclusive society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, **Anglo Saxonism** has played a pivotal role in shaping American history and culture. From its origins in Anglo-Saxon England to its influence on politics, literature, and contemporary society, this ideology has left a lasting legacy that continues to impact discussions of race, identity, and nationalism in the United States. As we navigate the complexities of modern society, it is essential to critically examine the historical narratives that have shaped our understanding of who we are as a nation and how we can move toward a more inclusive future. Understanding the implications of Anglo Saxonism is a vital step in addressing the challenges we face and promoting equity and justice for all individuals, regardless of their racial or ethnic background.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Anglo-Saxonism and how did it influence U.S. history?

Anglo-Saxonism is a belief that the Anglo-Saxon race is superior and destined to dominate other races. In U.S. history, it influenced policies and attitudes towards immigration, colonization, and the treatment of Native Americans, promoting the idea of Manifest Destiny and justifying expansionist policies.

How did Anglo-Saxonism manifest in American foreign policy during the 19th century?

During the 19th century, Anglo-Saxonism influenced U.S. foreign policy by justifying imperialism and expansionism. This ideology was used to rationalize actions such as the annexation of territories like Hawaii and the Philippines, portraying them as necessary for the spread of 'civilization' and democracy.

What role did Anglo-Saxonism play in the immigration policies of the early 20th century?

Anglo-Saxonism played a significant role in shaping immigration policies that favored Northern and Western Europeans over those from Southern and Eastern Europe. This led to restrictive immigration laws, such as the Immigration Act of 1924, which aimed to preserve the 'racial purity' of the United

States.

How did Anglo-Saxonism contribute to racial discrimination in the United States?

Anglo-Saxonism contributed to racial discrimination by promoting the idea of white supremacy and justifying discriminatory practices against non-Anglo-Saxon groups, including African Americans, Native Americans, and immigrants. This ideology supported segregation, disenfranchisement, and systemic racism.

In what ways has the legacy of Anglo-Saxonism evolved in contemporary U.S. society?

The legacy of Anglo-Saxonism persists in contemporary U.S. society through ongoing debates about immigration, nationalism, and racial identity. While overt expressions of Anglo-Saxonism have diminished, its influence can still be seen in some political rhetoric and movements that emphasize 'American' cultural and racial identity.

What are some historical figures associated with the promotion of Anglo-Saxonism in the U.S.?

Historical figures associated with the promotion of Anglo-Saxonism include John Fiske, who advocated for Anglo-Saxon superiority in the late 19th century, and politicians like Theodore Roosevelt, who embraced the idea of American exceptionalism rooted in Anglo-Saxon heritage.

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