

# **The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingship**

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Word Count: 85, 414

**List of Abbreviations**

- Abt.** *The Laws of Æthelberht I of Kent.* Edition and Translation: L. Oliver, *The Beginnings of English Law* (Toronto, 2002). Also F. Liebermann (ed.), *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, (trans.) F. Liebermann, 3 vols (Halle, 1903-16). References are to clauses in Oliver's edition with the corresponding clauses in Liebermann's edition indicated in brackets.
- Anon.VC** Anon, *Vita sancti Cuthberti auctore anonymo.* Edition and Translation: B. Colgrave (ed.), *Two Lives of St. Cuthbert: A Life by an Anonymous Monk of Lindisfarne and Bede's Prose Life*, (trans.) B. Colgrave (Cambridge, 1940). Narrative sources are referenced by book and chapter, as relevant, unless otherwise specified.
- Anon.VG** Anon, *Vita sancti Gregorii pape.* Edition and Translation: B. Colgrave (ed.), *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great*, (trans.) B. Colgrave (Cambridge, 1968).
- ASC** *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.* Edition: B. Thorpe (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, According to the Several Original Authorities*, (trans.) B. Thrope, 2 vols (London, 1861). Modern Translation: M. Swanton (trans.), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* (London, 2000). Referenced by year.
- Bede.VC** Bede, *Vita sancti Cuthberti auctore Beda.* Edition and Translation: Colgrave (ed.), *Two Lives of St. Cuthbert.*
- Beo** Anon, *Beowulf.* Edition: R. D. Fulk, R. E. Bjork, J. D. Niles, and F. Klaeber (eds), *Klaeber's Beowulf: And the Fight at Finnsburg* (Toronto, 2008). Translation: S. Heaney (trans.), *Beowulf* (London, 1999). Reference by line.
- Con.VG** Constantius of Lyon, *Vita sancti Germani.* Edition and Translation: R. Borius (ed.), *Vie de saint Germain d'Auxerre*, (trans.) R. Borius (Paris,

1965). English Translation: F. R. Hoare (ed.), *The Western Fathers: Being the Lives of SS. Martin of Tours, Ambrose, Augustine of Hippo, Honoratus of Arles and Germanus of Auxerre*, (trans.) F. R. Hoare (London, 1954).

*DEB* Gildas, *De excidio et conquestu Britanniae*. Edition and Translation: M. Winterbottom (ed.), *The Ruin of Britain and Other Documents*, (trans.) M. Winterbottom (London and Chichester, 1978).

*Epp* Gregory I, *Registrum epistularum*. Edition: D. Norberg (ed.), *Registrum epistularum*, 2 vols (Turnhout, 1982). Translation: J. R. C. Martyn (trans.), *The Letters of Gregory the Great*, 3 vols (Toronto, 2004).

*Felix.VG* Felix, *Vita sancti Guthlaci*. Edition and Translation: B. Colgrave (ed.), B. Colgrave (trans.) *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac* (Cambridge, 1956).

*HA* Bede, *Historia Abbatum*. Edition and Translation: C. Growcock and I. N. Wood (eds), *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow: Bede's Homily i. 13 on Benedict Biscop; Bede's History of the Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow; The Anonymous Life of Ceolfrith; Bede's Letter to Ecgberht, Bishop of York*, (trans.) C. Growcock and I. N. Wood (Oxford, 2013).

*HB* Anon, *Historia Brittonum*. Edition and Translation: J. Morris (ed.), *British History and the Welsh Annals*, (trans.) J. Morris (London, 1980).

*HE* Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*. Edition and Translation: R. A. B. Mynors and B. Colgrave (eds), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, (trans.) B. Colgrave (Oxford, 1992).

*HL* *The Laws of Hlothhere and Eadric of Kent*. Edition and Translation: Oliver, *Beginnings of English Law*. Also Liebermann (ed.), *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*.

## The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingship

- In. *The Laws of Ine of the West Saxons*. Edition: Liebermann (ed.), *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*. English Translation: F. L. Attenborough (ed.), *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, (trans.) F. L. Attenborough (Cambridge, 1922).
- S P. H. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters: An Annotated List and Bibliography* (London, 1968). An up-dated version is available from <http://www.esawyer.org.uk/>. Charters are cited by Sawyer number.
- VCeol Anon, *Vita Ceolfredi*. Edition and Translation: Growcock and Wood (eds), *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*.
- VW Stephen of Ripon, *Vita sancti Wilfridi*. Edition and Translation: B. Colgrave (ed.), *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus*, (trans.) B. Colgrave (Cambridge, 1927).
- Wht. *The Laws of Whitred of Kent*. Edition and Translation: Oliver, *Beginnings of English Law*. Also Liebermann (ed.), *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all figures, illustrations or tables are copyright of the author.



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### Abstract

The origins of kingship have typically been accepted as a natural or inevitable development by scholars. The purpose of this thesis is to question that assumption. This work will re-examine the origins of early Anglo-Saxon kingship through a coherent and systematic survey of the available and pertinent archaeological and historical sources, addressing them by type, by period and as their varying natures require.

The thesis begins with the archaeological evidence. ‘Elite’ burials, such as Mound One, Sutton Hoo, will be ranked according to their probability of kingliness. This process will point to elite burial as being a regionally-specific, predominately-seventh-century, phenomenon of an ideologically-aware, sophisticated and established political institution. Consequently, elite burial cannot be seen as an indication of the origins of kingship, but can instead be interpreted as a development or experiment within kingship. Analysis of ‘elite’ settlements, such as Yeavinger, and numismatic evidence, will lead to similar conclusions. Further, consideration of various other settlement types – former Roman military sites in Northern Britain, former Roman Towns, and enclosed settlements – will point to various potential origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship in the form of continuities with previous Roman, Romano-British or British power structures.

The thesis will go on to consider the historical sources. Those of the fifth and sixth centuries, primarily Gildas’s *De excidio et conquestu Britanniae*, point to several factors of note. The cessation of formal imperial rule over Britain following c.410 effectively created a power vacuum. Various new sources of political power are observable attempting to fill this vacuum, one of which, ultimately, was kingship. Through analogy with contemporary British kingdoms, it is possible to suggest that this development of kingship in England may be placed in the early sixth, if not the fifth, centuries. This would make the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship significantly earlier than typically thought. This kingship was characterised by the conduct of warfare, its dependence on personal relationships, and particularly by its varying degrees of status and differing manifestations of power covered by the term king.

Further details will be added to this image through the narrative and documentary sources of the seventh and early eighth centuries. These predominately shed light on the subsequent development of kingship, particularly its growing association with Christianity. Indeed, the period around c.600 can be highlighted as one of notable change within Anglo-Saxon kingship. However, it is possible to point to the practice of food rents, tolls and the control of resources serving as an economic foundation for kingship, while legal intervention and claimed descent from gods also provide a potential basis of power. Several characteristics of seventh- and early-eighth-century kingship will also be highlighted as being relevant to its origins – the conduct of warfare and the exercise of over-kingship – relating to the general propensity for amalgamation through conquest.

Other trajectories are also highlighted, specifically continuity from previous Roman and British entities and the development of ‘pop-up’ kingdoms. The overall result is one in which long-term amalgamation and short-term disintegration and re-constitution were equally in evidence, set against the wider context of broad regional continuities. Overall, therefore, the thesis will not fully resolve the issue of the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship, but it does offer a means to re-frame discussion, explore the social and economic underpinnings of kingship and assess its primacy as an institution within early Anglo-Saxon England.

**Declaration**

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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### **Acknowledgements**

The debts incurred in the production of this thesis are many and varied. Thanks in the first instance must go to the Arts and Humanities Research Council without whose financial support this thesis would not have been possible. Likewise, I would like to thank my erstwhile supervisors, Nicholas Higham and Paul Fouracre, for their patience, encouragement and unstinting generosity with their time and expertise over the past four years. Production of this thesis has only been made achievable through their guidance and support. Special mention must also go to Ann-Marie McCormack who has been instrumental in helping me organise my thoughts, my time, and actually get the thesis written, and to Simon Hall and Katherine Sheldrick who have generously accommodated me at unexpected and intermittent intervals over the last four years. I would also like to thank Jennifer Care, Lucy Care, Charles Insely, Luca Larpi, Stephen Mossman, Martin Ryan, David Rollason and Mary Winter, whom have variously read the thesis in whole or in part, discussed issues or ideas with me, or furnished me with their work in advance of publication. Together they have saved me from numerous errors or omissions and made the thesis far better than it would have been otherwise. Finally, I would like to thank my family for their unceasing support and forbearance, Jennifer Care for putting up with more conversations about kingship than anyone can be reasonably expected to tolerate, and all those who have taught me over the years, formally and informally: it was you who kindled my interest in the past and set me on the road to this point. All errors and omissions, of course, remain my own.

## Introduction

This thesis is concerned with the exercise of authority, how it becomes established and why it is accepted. It focuses on a specific historical context – early Anglo-Saxon England – and a specific form of authority – Anglo-Saxon kingship. Attempting such a study might be regarded as antiquated or inherently dated.<sup>1</sup> Certainly, recent historiographical trends have moved away from the exclusive study of kings and institutions – areas which have traditionally formed the core of Anglo-Saxon scholarship.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, early Anglo-Saxon society as it appears in the historical sources is dominated by two institutions: kingship and the Church. All of the written sources dating from this period are their products. Moreover, the written sources deal primarily with these two institutions, and their interface, only rarely or indirectly addressing broader society. As a result, early Anglo-Saxon England can only be fully appreciated through an understanding of these two phenomena. This thesis will focus upon the former, although due to the nature of the sources it will also necessarily touch upon the latter.

It is perhaps surprising, in light of its significance, that the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship, as opposed to the origins of kingdoms, have often been ignored by scholars. Kingship has typically been assumed to be a natural or inevitable political development. Scholars, while accustomed to thinking in terms of kingly authority, have not sought to question its beginnings or its nature. Moreover, interpretations of the period have often been based upon highly problematic theorisations, the single concept of invasion often serving as an all-encompassing explanation, extending even to the origins of kingship. It must be acknowledged that the source material germane to the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship is both sparse and highly intractable and that this has undoubtedly served as an impediment to its study. Nonetheless, it is not so sparse or so intractable as not to allow for a meaningful investigation. This thesis, therefore, sets out to survey systematically the available evidence in order to facilitate a coherent re-evaluation of the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship. This will also allow the limits of what it is possible or reasonable to know to be established. First, however, it is necessary to examine the

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<sup>1</sup> Upon detailing my research, one colleague, who shall remain nameless, described it as a ‘Proper Medieval Topic’, with all the pejorative overtones that might imply.

<sup>2</sup> As, for example, Higham and Ryan, *Anglo-Saxon World*; or the articles in Hamerow, Hinton, and Crawford (eds), *Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology*.

historiography of early Anglo-Saxon kingship. Only by doing so can previous problematic interpretations be transcended and a new understanding of the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship be reached.

### **Early Anglo-Saxon Kingship and the Historian**

The origins of what might be considered the academic study of the Anglo-Saxons lie with Turner's 1799 *The History of the Anglo-Saxons from Their First Appearance above the Elbe, to the Death of Egbert*.<sup>3</sup> Turner, originally trained in the legal profession, was a pioneering historian. He set out to establish a new paradigm for the study of Anglo-Saxon history, and to a large extent was successful in achieving this.<sup>4</sup> He brought new sources to public attention and emphasised the importance of the Anglo-Saxon period to the history of England.<sup>5</sup> Underpinning his work was a wide-ranging use and analysis of sources. Indeed, in his use of British sources, Turner was much in advance of many of those who followed him. This marked a notable shift from the previous century where works such as Hume's 1754-62 *The History of England* saw Anglo-Saxon history as nasty and brutish, leading to its treatment being correspondingly short.<sup>6</sup>

More problematically, Turner also saw the foundations of present-day institutions in the early Anglo-Saxon period. Institutions such as the *witan* were emphasised as part of a balanced constitution.<sup>7</sup> Turner saw this balancing of powers as continuing to underpin the English State.<sup>8</sup> This was perhaps the most influential aspect of his work, as this attitude can be seen throughout nineteenth-century scholarship, if not beyond.<sup>9</sup> It might be thought that given this premise Turner would have afforded the origins of early Anglo-Saxon kingship in-depth treatment, but he did not. He addressed the narrative and succession of early Anglo-Saxon kings in detail but barely theorised on the origins or nature of their power. Furthermore, what interpretation he did offer – that Anglo-Saxon kingship was ultimately Roman in origin, deriving from the conquest of independent

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<sup>3</sup> Subsequently expanded as Turner, *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, 4 vols.

<sup>4</sup> Turner, *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, vol I, pp. iii-vii; Lyon, 'Turner, Sharon'.

<sup>5</sup> Turner, *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, vol 4, pp. 399-408, for example, provided the first English translations of *Beowulf*.

<sup>6</sup> Hume, *History of England*, vol I, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Turner, *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, vol 4, pp. 273-87. Further: Wormald, *Making of English Law*, pp. 4-14.

<sup>8</sup> Turner, *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, vol 1, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> As Green, *History of the English People*, vol I, p. 13; Green, *Making of England*, pp. v-vi; Stubbs, *Constitutional History*, vol I, pp. v-vi; Freeman, *History of the Norman Conquest*, vol I, pp. 1-7; Kemble, *Saxons in England*, vol I, pp. v-viii.



kingdoms which had evolved from former Roman *civitates* – did not gain lasting currency.<sup>10</sup>

1849 saw the publication of Kemble's *Saxons in England*. As with Turner's work, Kemble saw the Anglo-Saxon period as explaining his own. *Saxons in England* would set the interpretative agenda for the following century, although rarely would the expertise or subtlety of its scholarship be matched. It provided another significant advance in Anglo-Saxon historiography, introducing German intellectual advances to an English-speaking audience.<sup>11</sup> The essential premise of the work was that early Anglo-Saxon England was settled by Continental Germanic peoples and that by understanding these peoples in their Continental homelands – in large part through Tacitus's *Germania* – early Anglo-Saxon England could also be understood.<sup>12</sup> Kemble envisaged these peoples as forming the population of early England through a complex process of trade, contact, intermarriage and settlement.<sup>13</sup> This held very different implications for the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship than those espoused by Turner, not least because Kemble saw kingship as innate to Germanic society. The origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship were thus directly linked to the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons. Its immediate origins lay in internecine strife between the small political entities established by the Germanic migrants.<sup>14</sup> More broadly, it was akin to Germanic kingship, seen by Kemble as the fusion of sacral, judicial and latterly military roles. These roles were originally elective, but over time had become hereditary.<sup>15</sup>

In less subtle hands aspects of this interpretation could become exceedingly problematic. Where Kemble had rejected early sources such as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, the *Historia Brittonum*, and even to an extent Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, as being so many insubstantial and unreliable origin myths,<sup>16</sup> they were enthusiastically embraced by many of those who followed him.<sup>17</sup> This transformed a complex process of interaction and settlement into a simplistic narrative of violent conquest.<sup>18</sup> Prime amongst such works were those of the late-nineteenth-century

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<sup>10</sup> Turner, *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, vol I, pp. 127-44, 162-77.

<sup>11</sup> Haigh, 'Kemble, John Mitchell'. More broadly: Arnold, *What is Medieval History?*, p. 11-12; Evans, *In Defence of History* pp. 17-18; Bentley, *Modern Historiography*, 36-42.

<sup>12</sup> Kemble, *Saxons in England*, 2 vols, passim.

<sup>13</sup> Kemble, *Saxons in England*, vol I, pp. 1-21.

<sup>14</sup> Kemble, *Saxons in England*, vol II, pp. 2-5.

<sup>15</sup> Kemble, *Saxons in England*, vol I, pp. 137-52.

<sup>16</sup> Kemble, *Saxons in England*, vol I, pp. 1-33, particularly 22-33.

<sup>17</sup> Typified by Freeman, *Old English History*, p. 33.

<sup>18</sup> As Green, *Making of England*, pp. 27-130.

triumvirate of Stubbs, Green and Freeman.<sup>19</sup> The work of these three was highly influential, both academically and popularly.<sup>20</sup> Their books tapped into the emerging ideas of race, natural selection and nationalism. The result was a racially-oriented developmental approach to early Anglo-Saxon history which saw the past as the direct precursor to the present and saw the Anglo-Saxons as a series of discrete and readily-identifiable ethnic units.<sup>21</sup> The origins of early Anglo-Saxon kingship were similarly incorporated into this all-consuming narrative. Kingship was treated as a natural by-product of the conquest of England by the Anglo-Saxons, their leaders becoming the earliest kings.<sup>22</sup>

This interpretation, especially those aspects concerning ethnicity and invasion/migration, has proved, and continues to prove, particularly influential within the then emerging field of archaeology. For much of the nineteenth century, with a few notable exceptions, archaeology was largely antiquarian in nature, seeking to describe artefacts rather than to offer broader explanations of material culture.<sup>23</sup> However, around the end of the nineteenth century archaeologists started to become increasingly ambitious. Typifying this was the work of Leeds – famous, amongst other things, for discovering the first Anglo-Saxon settlement at Sutton Courtenay – who attempted to offer archaeological interpretations of early Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>24</sup> However, rather than establishing new, archaeological, interpretative paradigms, Leeds adopted those of his historical counterparts. Thus he saw England as becoming Anglo-Saxon through a process of migration and the mapping of Germanic customs onto British soil.<sup>25</sup> Much as

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<sup>19</sup> Various Green, *Short History of the English People*, 2 vols; Green, *History of the English People*, 4 vols; Green, *Making of England*; Stubbs, *Constitutional History*, 3 vols; Freeman, *Old English History*; Freeman, *History of the Norman Conquest*, 6 vols; Stubbs (ed.), *Select Charters*. Further: Barlow, 'Freeman, Edward Augustus'; Campbell, 'Stubbs, William'; Brundage, 'Green, John Richard'.

<sup>20</sup> Stubbs (ed.), *Select Charters*, was particularly important in this regard. Further: Slee, *Learning and a Liberal Education*, pp. 90-91; Trevelyan, *An Autobiography and Other Essays*, p. 12; Tanner, 'Teaching of Constitutional History', p. 54.

<sup>21</sup> Wood, *Modern Origins*, pp. 199-217; Geary, *Myth of Nations*, pp. 15-40; MacDougall, *Racial Myth in English History*, pp. 89-103; Horsman, 'Origins of Racial Anglo-Saxonism'.

<sup>22</sup> Green, *Making of England*, passim; Stubbs, *Constitutional History*, vol I, pp. 75-77; Freeman, *History of the Norman Conquest*, vol I, pp. 23-27.

<sup>23</sup> As Faussett, *Inventorium Sepulchrale*; Bateman, *Ten Years' Diggings*; Wylie, *Fairford Graves*; Bateman, *Vestiges of the Antiquities of Derbyshire*; Akerman, *Archaeological Index*. But c.f. Wright, *The Celt, the Roman*; Kemble, *Horae Ferales*; Akerman, *Remains of Pagan Saxondom*. Further: Williams, 'Anglo-Saxonism and Victorian Archaeology'; Williams, 'Heathen Graves and Victorian Anglo-Saxonism'; Williams, 'Remains of Pagan Saxondom?'

<sup>24</sup> Leeds, *Archaeology of the Anglo-Saxon Settlements*; Leeds, *Early Anglo-Saxon Art and Archaeology*. On Sutton Courtenay: Leeds, 'Sutton Courtenay: Third Report'; Leeds, 'Sutton Courtenay (Second Report)'; Leeds, 'Sutton Courtenay'.

<sup>25</sup> Leeds, *Archaeology of the Anglo-Saxon Settlements*, passim; Leeds, *Early Anglo-Saxon Art and Archaeology*, pp. 20-40.

with Kemble, this was a gradual process of contact and settlement and consequently kingship did not feature substantially in his work. Typifying this approach were his distribution maps of Anglo-Saxon brooch types which he used to show the progress of Anglo-Saxon settlers across early England.<sup>26</sup> A precursor to this approach may be found in the work of Guest who, using historical geography and place-names, effectively plotted the narrative of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* in a series of maps.<sup>27</sup> Such maps, however, and archaeology generally, are hugely dependent upon their interpretation.<sup>28</sup>

This, in essence, is the difficulty of archaeology. It has the potential to reveal new and important insights concerning the past, but making sense of and contextualising its offerings is often challenging due to its mute nature. It is particularly susceptible to being absorbed into the historiographical debates and interpretative paradigms. Much of the recent history of archaeology has revolved around the insistence that it speak with its own voice, although there remains a tendency to resort to problematic historiographical paradigms for interpretative assistance.<sup>29</sup> Not at all helpful in this respect has been the tendency of historians to ignore or neglect archaeological information,<sup>30</sup> although it should be noted that there are exceptions to this pattern.<sup>31</sup>

The interpretation of migration and conquest reached its apogee in Stenton's 1943 *Anglo-Saxon England*.<sup>32</sup> This was undoubtedly a masterpiece of scholarship. It distilled the previous century-and-a-half's research across a range of sources and quickly reached canonical status.<sup>33</sup> Stenton's work also marked the culmination of a process of gradual re-assessment which had led to the teleological tones and excessive nationalism fading

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<sup>26</sup> Leeds, 'Distribution of Angles and Saxons'.

<sup>27</sup> Guest, 'Early English Settlements'; Guest, 'The English Conquest of the Severn Valley'; Guest, 'Boundaries that Separated the Welsh and English'. But c.f. Stevenson, 'Dr. Guest and the English Conquest'.

<sup>28</sup> A distribution map of Roman Britain, for example, shows two linear features: Hadrian's Wall and HS1! More broadly: Goffart, 'Map of the Barbarian Invasions?'

<sup>29</sup> Halsall, 'Archaeology and Historiography', pp. 26-38.

<sup>30</sup> Halsall, 'Archaeology and Historiography', pp. 38-48; Biddle, 'Archaeology and the Beginnings of English Society', pp. 391-92.

<sup>31</sup> As Higham and Ryan, *Anglo-Saxon World*; Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur*; Fleming, *Britain after Rome*.

<sup>32</sup> Along similar lines from the intervening period: Jolliffe, *Constitutional History of Medieval England*; Hodgkin, *History of the Anglo-Saxons*; Liebermann, *National Assembly*; Beck, 'Teutonic Conquest of Britain'; Oman, *England before the Norman Conquest*. Also, subsequently, Whitelock, *Beginnings of English Society*.

More innovative in their approaches: Collingwood and Myres, *Roman Britain and the English Settlements*; Chadwick, *Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions*; Chadwick, *Origin of the English Nation*; Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond*; Pollock and Maitland, *History of English Law*, 2 vols. This period also saw the inception of the *Victoria County History* series and the beginnings of the English Place-Name Society and associated publications.

<sup>33</sup> Holt, 'Stenton, Sir Frank Merry'; Campbell, 'Stenton's *Anglo-Saxon England*'.

from the levels seen with Freeman, Stubbs and Green. The reliance on the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* had similarly lessened, but the explanatory motif of invasion by Germanic peoples, and the consequent import of culture and institutions, still took centre stage in the interpretation.<sup>34</sup> This invasion was accomplished, much as with Kemble, by ‘bodies of adventurers’ who came with pre-existing ideas of kingship, potential kings being those able to claim divine ancestry.<sup>35</sup> Stenton saw the beginnings of early Anglo-Saxon kingship in this process of conquest and saw kings as developing from the war-leaders of this period. This picture was expanded by the idea of over-kings, who formed larger confederacies, although these lasted only as long as the over-king was alive and could maintain his power, it being a personal position.<sup>36</sup> Stenton’s conception of kingship, therefore, was both hierarchical and militaristic, although there are also implications of wider functions. However, such glimpses are relatively few. Stenton had much to say concerning the deeds of kings, but little about their actual position. He was interested in verifiable, ‘factual’ political history rather than more abstract theorising or reflection. Early Anglo-Saxon kingship, in his view, was simply a natural development.

Prior to the publication of *Anglo-Saxon England*, various dissenting strands had begun to emerge within Anglo-Saxon scholarship. These sought new ways of viewing early Anglo-Saxon England and, at times, Anglo-Saxon Kingship.<sup>37</sup> Subsequent to the publication of *Anglo-Saxon England* these dissenting voices only gained in strength. Blair, for example, in his 1956 *Introduction to Anglo-Saxon England*, although following similar interpretative channels to Stenton, afforded kingship a much more systematic and in-depth examination.<sup>38</sup> John, meanwhile, in typically iconoclastic style, sought to undermine and demolish Stenton’s work directly.<sup>39</sup> John focused primarily upon issues of land tenure, but the implications of his work, although underappreciated, went much further. Indeed, there was a general shift away from an emphasis on the Germanic origins of the Anglo-Saxons associated with a broader re-evaluation of the extant written records. Particularly important in this respect was the work of Dumville and Sims-

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<sup>34</sup> Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 1-31.

<sup>35</sup> Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 37.

<sup>36</sup> Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 33-36.

<sup>37</sup> As Seebohm, *English Village Community*, and the works of Maitland and Chadwick, note 33.

Specifically on kingship: Larson, *King's Household*. Although following historiographical paradigms, the disciplines of archaeology and place-name studies also offered new, challenging, perspectives.

<sup>38</sup> Blair, *Introduction to Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 194-222.

<sup>39</sup> John, *Orbis Britanniae*, p. v. Further: John, *Reassessing Anglo-Saxon England*; John, *Land Tenure in Early England*, passim.

Williams.<sup>40</sup> The ethnic assumptions of Stenton's thesis were similarly being challenged as the mutable and flexible nature of ethnicity became increasingly appreciated.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, archaeology was being placed on an entirely new footing, first by the advent of 'New Archaeology', and then by post-processual archaeology, which increasingly sought to separate archaeology from history as a discipline.<sup>42</sup>

Central to many of these interpretative shifts was the work of Wallace-Hadrill. His 1970 Ford Lectures, published as *Early Germanic Kingship in England and On the Continent*, undoubtedly represent the single most important piece of scholarship on Anglo-Saxon kingship of his generation. They demonstrated the validity, even the necessity, of approaching Anglo-Saxon history with a Continental awareness.<sup>43</sup> Its thesis regarding the origins of kingship, crudely put, was that whatever its potential German origins, kingship amongst the Anglo-Saxons and in the other post-imperial kingdoms was essentially a product of the Roman Empire.<sup>44</sup> As such it pointed to a very different conceptualisation of the early Anglo-Saxon past from that of Stenton. The greatest strength of the work was its skill in handling the available sources and its subtle unravelling of the interplay between ecclesiastical ideal and kingly reality. Although hardly an extensive treatment of kingship, it continues to reward the diligent reader. Similarly typical of this new approach was the work of Campbell, who, in his *The Anglo-Saxons*, avoided direct statements regarding the nature or number of Anglo-Saxon migrants, and emphasised the potential influence of England's British inhabitants,<sup>45</sup> together with its Roman legacy.<sup>46</sup> Kingship also received much greater attention, although Campbell's caution meant that he felt unable to theorise with regard to its

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<sup>40</sup> Sims-Williams, 'Gildas and the Anglo-Saxons'; Sims-Williams, 'Settlement of England'; Dumville, 'History and Legend'; with the essays in Dumville, *Histories and Pseudo-Histories*. Also Yorke, 'Contribution of Written Sources'; Yorke, 'Fact or Fiction?'

<sup>41</sup> Classically Geary, 'Identity as a Situational Construct'. Also, the essays in Pohl and Reimitz (eds), *Strategies of Distinction*. Further: Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Moreland, 'Ethnicity, Power and the English'; Sims-Williams, 'Genetics, Linguistics, and Prehistory'; Reynolds, 'What Do We Mean by "Anglo-Saxon"'

<sup>42</sup> Johnson, 'Theoretical Scene', pp. 74-82; Halsall, 'Archaeology and Historiography', pp. 26-38.

<sup>43</sup> In this it followed Levison, *England and the Continent*.

<sup>44</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship*, pp. 1-20. In this it was akin to the concept of Late Antiquity, as Brown, *World of Late Antiquity*, passim. Further, the essays in Johnson (ed.), *Handbook to Late Antiquity*.

<sup>45</sup> The role of the Britons had largely been ignored up until this period: Williams, 'Forgetting the Britons'; Lucy, 'Pots to People', pp. 148-49. This was changed by Morris, *Age of Arthur*; Alcock, *Arthur's Britain*. But c.f., Dumville, 'History and Legend'.

<sup>46</sup> Campbell (ed.), *Anglo-Saxons*, pp. 23-44.

origins.<sup>47</sup> Continuity and transition were thus incorporated alongside migration and change.

Modern scholarship on the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship can be dated quite closely to the years around 1989. This year saw the publication of the edited volume, *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*. In his introduction to the volume, Bassett laid out two models of kingdom formation.<sup>48</sup> It is these models which have come closest to theorising the origins of early Anglo-Saxon kingship and they have formed the basis for subsequent discussion. The first model posited that the early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms were based upon ongoing continuities with previous Romano-British governmental units. The second postulated a more complete societal breakdown following the cessation of formal Roman rule in Britain, creating a series of small tribal units. Kingdoms then emerged through a process of conquest and amalgamation between these units. It is the second of these models which has been by far the more influential.<sup>49</sup> Neither model, in fact, precludes the validity of the other. Equally, neither is without its flaws, especially when applied to the origins of kingship as opposed to the origins of kingdoms. The first model sits uneasily with much, if not all, of the archaeological evidence for early Anglo-Saxon England, which is suggestive of strong material discontinuities.<sup>50</sup> Both models, meanwhile, assume that kingship was a natural corollary of a certain political mass.<sup>51</sup> Nonetheless, they offer the most explicit historical theorisation regarding the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship to date. In theory it would be possible to import models of kingship and kingdom formation from ancillary disciplines to assist in this theorisation.<sup>52</sup> However, in practice, it is preferable for any such models to arise out of the available evidence rather than to be forced upon it.

Either side of 1989 was the publication of a series of works which also dealt with early Anglo-Saxon England and the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship. 1988 saw the publication of Arnold's *An Archaeology of the Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*; 1989,

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<sup>47</sup> Campbell (ed.), *Anglo-Saxons*, pp. 53-61. Further: Campbell, 'Bede's *reges* and *principes*'.

<sup>48</sup> Bassett, 'In Search of Origins', pp. 23-26.

<sup>49</sup> Various Fleming, *Britain after Rome*, pp. 102-19; Wickham, *Inheritance of Rome*, pp. 155-59; Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 313-14; Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, pp. 9-15 and 157-62. Also Hamerow, 'Earliest Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms', pp. 280-87; to a lesser extent Higham and Ryan, *Anglo-Saxon World*, pp. 137-44.

<sup>50</sup> Fleming, *Britain after Rome*, pp. 25-60; Faulkner, *Decline and Fall of Roman Britain*, pp. 158-80; Cleary, *Ending of Roman Britain*, pp. 131-61.

<sup>51</sup> Further: Falk, 'Dark Age Peter Principle'; Sahlins, 'Poor Man, Rich Man'.

<sup>52</sup> As Fukuyama, *Origins of Political Order*; Mann, *Sources of Social Power*; Carneiro, 'Theory of the Origin of the State'; Weber, *Social and Economic Organization*. These works inform what follows but have not been explicitly utilised.

Hodges's *The Anglo-Saxon Achievement*; 1990, Yorke's *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England*; 1991, Kirby's *The Earliest Anglo-Saxon Kings*; and 1992, Higham's *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons*. The interpretations offered, and indeed the areas covered, by these works differed substantially, but collectively they point to many of the trends which have dominated subsequent scholarship. Arnold and Hodges' works both adopted exclusively archaeological approaches and came out of what was then called 'New Archaeology'. Both eschewed migration as an explanatory concept and sought to understand the origins of Anglo-Saxon England through reference to internal developments.<sup>53</sup> The origins of kingship were linked to the increasing social stratification observable in the burial and settlement records from the mid-sixth century onwards, most notably at Yeavinger and Sutton Hoo.<sup>54</sup> A similar argument was put forward by Higham, although he differed in drawing equally on historical records, dating the origins of kingship somewhat earlier and linking its emergence more explicitly to war-leadership.<sup>55</sup> These three works, therefore, differed substantially from the ideas offered by Stenton and others. However, works by scholars such as Welch demonstrate that it continued to be possible to think along similar lines to Stenton.<sup>56</sup>

Yorke's and Kirby's books, as their titles suggest, addressed both Anglo-Saxon kingship and kingdoms directly, albeit in very different ways. Kirby's was a relatively traditional narrative history from the late sixth to ninth centuries. Kings were seen as the natural outgrowth of war-leaders, as various scholars had suggested previously.<sup>57</sup> Yorke's work represented a more innovative kingdom-by-kingdom survey, followed by a concluding synthesis. This had much to offer regarding the nature of early Anglo-Saxon kingship, addressing over-kingship, the material support of kings, the nature of royalty and royal families, and the relationship between kings and the Church.<sup>58</sup> However, with respect to the origins of kingship Yorke felt that the absence of available evidence rendered them effectively invisible.<sup>59</sup> Nonetheless, like Arnold and Hodges she

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<sup>53</sup> Arnold, *Archaeology of the Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, passim; Hodges, *Anglo-Saxon Achievement*, pp. 4-42. On migration as an explanatory concept: Hamerow, 'Migration Theory and the Migration Period'.

<sup>54</sup> Arnold, *Archaeology of the Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, pp. 197-221; Hodges, *Anglo-Saxon Achievement*, pp. 38-42, 58-61.

<sup>55</sup> Higham, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons*, particularly pp. 209-36.

<sup>56</sup> Welch, *Anglo-Saxon England*, passim; similarly Härke, "'Warrior Graves"'?. Further: Tys, 'Beyond Migration and Ethnicity?'; Halsall, 'Archaeology and Migration'; Halsall, 'Ethnicity and Early Medieval Cemeteries'.

<sup>57</sup> Kirby, *Earliest English Kings*, pp. 1-3, 14-17.

<sup>58</sup> Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, pp. 157-78.

<sup>59</sup> Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, pp.15, more broadly 1-24.

drew attention to settlements such as Yeavinger and burials such as those at Sutton Hoo as possible indications of the origins of kingship, as well as highlighting potential continuities with the Romano-British past whilst considering the distinctive contribution of the incoming 'Anglo-Saxons'.<sup>60</sup>

Subsequent to the publication of these works, the most significant developments regarding the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship have originated in the field of archaeology. As already alluded to, significant changes occur in the material record, particularly in settlement and burial archaeologies, from the 570s onwards. This has come into particular focus through the recent publication of Hines and Bayliss's *Anglo-Saxon Graves: A Chronological Framework*.<sup>61</sup> As above, these changes have typically been interpreted as symptomatic of wider societal changes, amongst which might be included the origins of kingship.<sup>62</sup> Building on these observations, scholars such as Scull have developed models of kingship formation based on 'peer competition' and 'competitive exclusion', whereby a decreasing number of progressively more powerful entities compete over prestige, status and access to resources.<sup>63</sup> In many ways this work is akin to Bassett's model of kingdom formation via conquest and amalgamation. It differs primarily in that it is based upon archaeological evidence; the underlying theorisation is still broadly comparable. Indeed, these contributions suffer from the same fundamental problem, namely that it presupposes that the development of kingship was the inevitable product of the attainment of a certain level of social complexity and political mass. It does raise to prominence, however, issues of access to and control of resources, which are only implicit in Bassett's theorisation. Although such issues are easier to trace in reference to the later development of Anglo-Saxon kingship - particularly through the potentially-royal trading settlements of the later seventh

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<sup>60</sup> Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, pp. 6-9.

<sup>61</sup> Further: Hamerow, *Rural Settlements*, pp. 72-83, 102-09; Welch, 'Mid Saxon "Final Phase"', pp. 266-73; Hamerow, 'Earliest Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms', pp. 269-80; Geake, *Grave-Goods in Conversion-Period England*, pp. 31-136.

<sup>62</sup> Hamerow, 'Earliest Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms', pp. 276-80. Further: Fleming, *Britain after Rome*, pp. 89-115; Carver, 'Kingship and Material Culture'. Also Thacker, 'England in the Seventh Century', pp. 467-69, 474.

<sup>63</sup> Scull, 'Archaeology, Early Anglo-Saxon Society and the Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms'. Also Scull, 'Anglo-Saxon Kingdom Origins'. Further: Carneiro, 'Political Expansion as Competitive Exclusion'; Carneiro, 'Theory of the Origin of the State'.



century<sup>64</sup> – this does add an important additional aspect to the investigation of the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship.<sup>65</sup>

Various other works of note have also been published in the intervening period. Lucy's *Anglo-Saxon Way of Death* was a masterful elucidation of what post-processual archaeology has to offer to the topic of Anglo-Saxon burial practices. Rollason's *Northumbria, 500-1100* explored ideas of kingdom and kingship formation in the context of a specific kingdom, Northumbria. Recent synthetic approaches may be found in Fleming's *Britain after Rome* and Higham and Ryan's *Anglo-Saxon World*, which in their different ways survey early Anglo-Saxon England. Yorke has also developed and refined her ideas in various contexts.<sup>66</sup> Wickham's *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, meanwhile, cogently re-iterated the importance of a comparative approach. This is perhaps particularly challenging for Anglo-Saxon scholars, who at times have been criticised for the insularity of their approaches.<sup>67</sup> Important as these works are, however, they have not shifted the parameters of the study of the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship. Certainly, some dissenting voices have been apparent. Halsall has urged caution and reassessment in various contexts.<sup>68</sup> Dumville, in an unrelated context, has posited 8 models conceptualising early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, although few actually address their origins.<sup>69</sup> But such voices only really emphasise the dominance of Bassett's, and by extension Scull's, models, and prompt the suggestion that they are due for revision. This is exactly what this thesis sets out to do.

### **Approach and Programme of Study**

This thesis, therefore, sets out to re-examine the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship. In so doing, it will also, indirectly, re-assess much of the existing theorisation regarding the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Fundamentally, the thesis seeks to question the

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<sup>64</sup> Often termed *Emporia*, although this thesis generally utilises the broader term 'productive site' as Pestell, 'Markets, *Emporia*, *Wics*, and 'Productive' Sites'.

<sup>65</sup> As Brooks, *Church, State and Access to Resources*, passim; Maddicott, 'Prosperity and Power'. Further: Harrington and Welch, *Beneath the Tribal Hidage*, passim. More broadly, the essays in Pestell and Ulmschneider (eds), *Markets in Early Medieval Europe*; and Hansen and Wickham (eds), *Long Eighth Century*; particularly Moreland, 'Production in Eighth-Century England'.

<sup>66</sup> Recently Yorke, 'Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms 600–900'; Yorke, 'Kings and Kingship'.

<sup>67</sup> As Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur*, passim. Scholars such as Kemble and Wallace-Hadrill are obvious exceptions to this pattern.

<sup>68</sup> Most provocatively: Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur*, pp. 270-307. Also Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations*, pp. 311-19.

<sup>69</sup> Dumville, 'Medieval Foundations of England', pp. 290-93.

perceived inevitability of the development of kingship, not least because various comparable and seemingly acephalous groups can be identified, *viz.* the Continental Saxons and the pre-thirteenth century inhabitants of Iceland.<sup>70</sup> This re-evaluation will also require examination of the nature of early Anglo-Saxon kingship. These twin questions of origins and nature will be addressed via a coherent and systematic survey of the pertinent archaeological and historical evidence. The thesis will re-assess the archaeological evidence dating to the period c.400-c.650 – thus addressing both the origins and the early development of Anglo-Saxon kingship – while a later date range of c.400-c.750 is adopted for the historical evidence – so as to benefit from Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* and the various hagiographical sources of the early eighth century. This discrepancy in date ranges is entirely deliberate. Not only is there very little incremental advantage in pursuing the archaeological evidence significantly beyond c.650, but to do so would overwhelmingly shift the balance of the thesis onto the development of kingship at the expense of the study of its origins. One consequence of this decision is to preclude any detailed archaeological examination of the potentially-royal trading settlements of the later seventh century, but such phenomena are relatively peripheral to the overall scope of the thesis.<sup>71</sup>

The principal areas of archaeological evidence – elite burial and elite settlement – will be examined first, so as to isolate them from historiographical paradigms. Numismatic evidence will also be briefly considered in this context. Wider archaeological patterns will also be touched on as relevant or required in these sections, but they are not addressed directly due to the relatively limited marginal gains they are able to offer. The historical sources – principally Gildas's *De excidio et conquestu Britanniae*, Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*, and various documentary sources – will then be analysed. These will be grouped by date and by type. The thesis will also be conducted within a broad awareness of comparable Insular and Continental developments, although the level of direct comparison will vary as the Anglo-Saxon evidence dictates.

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<sup>70</sup> *HE*, V.10; Vésteinsson, *Christianization of Iceland*, pp. 1-16. Further: Wormald, 'Kings and Kingship', pp. 571-73.

<sup>71</sup> Such sites are nonetheless addressed in passing, as required. A sustained and illuminating exploration of their relevance to the development of kingship in the North Sea Basin can be found in Nicolay, *Splendour of Power*, although this did not appear in sufficient time to be utilised in the production of this thesis.

Fundamental to the success of such an approach is the accurate identification of kings within the historical, and indeed archaeological, sources. With respect to the historical sources, as a general rule those individuals of whom the description *rex* is used are assumed to be kingly.<sup>72</sup> The same is true of those figures to whom *cyning*, or a variant thereof, is applied.<sup>73</sup> It cannot be taken as axiomatic, however, that the terminology of kingship, or the institution itself, was universally this transparent, consistent or unproblematic. Not only is the term *rex* often modified in the historical sources, potentially indicating varying grades of power *viz. subregulus, regulus*, but, as Campbell has been able to argue convincingly, it does not follow that every figure who would have been recognised as a king by their contemporaries would necessarily be described as such in the historical sources.<sup>74</sup> Alternative terms such as *comes, dux, iudex, or princeps* may potentially also suggest kingly status. Consequently, the thesis adopts a bi-part inductive approach to the definition and identification of early Anglo-Saxon kings. On the one hand, those figures who are explicitly described as *rex* or *cyning*, or some variant thereof, are taken as being kingly. On the other, figures described by alternative titles who seem to wield power akin to those described in these terms and are credible as being viewed as kingly by their contemporaries are also taken as potential kings, albeit with an inherent degree of uncertainty. The identification of kings through the archaeological evidence is more problematic. The difficulties surrounding this are discussed in detail in the relevant sections as they are directly connected to the nature of archaeological information.

The term kingship, by extension, as used in this thesis is, therefore, comparatively elastic in its application. Furthermore, it is deliberately left undefined at this juncture so as to avoid prejudicing the study and precluding avenues of enquiry. The study itself, in effect, will work towards a more precise definition. Indeed, so as to enable a full appreciation of the potential origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship, the thesis will also examine instances of coercive or political power more generally. Thus the potential relationships of various manifestations of coercive or political power to early Anglo-Saxon kingship can be evaluated and defined contextually. Nonetheless, some preliminary comments are required. Anthropological and sociological studies would suggest that there is an inherent difference between a generic solitary leader and a king,

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<sup>72</sup> Latham, Howlett, and Ashdowne (eds), *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British sources*, s.v.

<sup>73</sup> Bosworth, Toller, and Campbell (eds), *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, s.v.

<sup>74</sup> Campbell, 'Bede's *reges* and *principes*', pp. 85-92. Further: Dumville, 'Terminology of Overkingship'; Yorke, 'Vocabulary of Overlordship'.

the principle difference being that a king exists within a wider ideological framework which explains, justifies and contextualises their position.<sup>75</sup> By extension, kingship implies some sort of mechanism to transfer power or authority between individuals in order to perpetuate this wider system, as well as the at least implicit acceptance of the system and the king's role within it by the population at large. This need not necessarily be via inheritance or direct succession, although this is normative for kingship. Any examination of the origins of kingship, therefore, must include an examination of the ways through which such a system became established and accepted.

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<sup>75</sup> Bealey, *Dictionary of Political Science*, s.v. Further: Falk, 'Dark Age Peter Principle'; Sahlins, 'Poor Man, Rich Man'.

## **Section One**

### **Anglo-Saxon Kingship and Archaeology**

## Elite Burial

The later sixth and early seventh centuries saw a shift in the burial rites practiced in England, described for convenience as Anglo-Saxon.<sup>1</sup> This included an increased incidence of above-ground mortuary structures and the emergence of a small number of extremely wealthy, usually male, burials within a context of generally diminishing levels of grave goods. These wealthy burials, often termed 'elite', have typically been interpreted as indicative of an increasingly stratified Anglo-Saxon society. As such, they have frequently been linked to the emergence of Anglo-Saxon kingship.<sup>2</sup> This section sets out to examine the validity of this link in order to determine if these elite male burials can indeed be interpreted as an indication of the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship, and by extension, what, if anything, they reveal regarding its origins. It will achieve this by first exploring the issue of what an Anglo-Saxon kingly grave might have looked like, before compiling a list of conceivably kingly graves and examining them in detail.

There are problems, however, with using archaeological evidence to answer what are effectively historical questions. To quote Grierson's dictum: 'It has been said that the spade cannot lie, but it owes this merit in part to the fact that it cannot speak'.<sup>3</sup> In a general sense, as has been seen, it is all too easy for archaeological evidence to be filtered through inappropriate paradigms. This section, therefore, largely eschews historical information and attempts to address the archaeological evidence on its own terms so that its unique insights can be appreciated. More specifically, material objects do not necessarily have set interpretations, but can be malleable or negotiable in meaning.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, objects are an active part of the dynamic of society and can be used to create or convey meaning, resulting, in effect, in a material language. Objects cannot, therefore, be interpreted as passively reflecting society as they are part of its creation and definition.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Welch, 'Mid Saxon "Final Phase"', pp. 266-84, particularly 266-75; Lucy, *Anglo-Saxon Way of Death*, pp. 4-5; Geake, 'Burial Practice in Seventh- and Eighth-Century England', pp. 84-89. Further: Hines and Bayliss (eds), *Anglo-Saxon Graves: A Chronological Framework*, pp. 231-492; Geake, 'Persistent Problems', pp.144-46; Geake, *Grave-Goods in Conversion-Period England*, pp. 31-105, 123-36.

<sup>2</sup> As Thacker, 'England in the Seventh Century', pp. 474; Hamerow, 'Earliest Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms', pp. 276-80; Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, pp. 8-9; Carver, 'Kingship and Material Culture'.

<sup>3</sup> Grierson, 'Commerce in the Dark Ages', p. 127.

<sup>4</sup> The classic demonstration is Pader, 'Material Symbolism and Social Relations'. Her straw hat analogy, p. 144 – which can indicate an Eton school boy, a gondolier, a butcher, or a vaudeville performer, depending on the context – is particularly revealing. Further: Pader, *Interpretation of Mortuary Remains*.

<sup>5</sup> Halsall, 'Archaeology and Historiography', pp. 31-38.

Stemming from this, it cannot be established with certainty whether any given Anglo-Saxon burial is kingly or not. Bereft of written records, the identity of those interred must always remain enigmatic.<sup>6</sup> Status cannot be directly read from burial evidence.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, there is no inherent reason why the burial of a king should be any different from that of anyone else.<sup>8</sup> Alongside this, there has been an increasing appreciation within archaeology of the constructed nature of burials. As Carver has put it: 'Bodies and grave goods were not absent-mindedly dropped into holes, like broken pottery into a rubbish pit. The dead do not bury themselves, the grave assemblage has to be chosen by someone else; and if chosen, it is constructed, and if constructed, it becomes a creative or an active assemblage intended to have meaning.'<sup>9</sup>

If the burials of early Anglo-Saxon kings can be identified, therefore, then an appreciation of their intended meaning or meanings has the potential to shed light on the origins and nature of early Anglo-Saxon kingship. It is helpful in this respect that Frankish archaeology provides at least one, if not several, burials known to be of kings. These burials can, at least in part, be used to create a broadly contemporary comparative template so that the nature of an early Anglo-Saxon kingly burial can be approached. In 1653 workmen discovered a richly furnished grave under the church of Saint Brice, Tournai, containing: gold and garnet belt fittings, gold buckles, a gold arm ring, a golden fibula, a spear, a throwing axe, the fittings for two swords, the famous golden 'bees' (actually cicadas), a small golden bull, a seal ring and a collection of 300 hundred coins, 200 silver and 100 gold.<sup>10</sup> The seal ring featured the inscription CHILDERICI REGIS, allowing the burial to be identified as that of Childeric I. The association with Childeric I is further strengthened by the coin sequence, which ends with coins of the emperor Zenon (474-491). Assuming that Childeric was buried during Zenon's rule, this date range correlates with Gregory of Tours's date of c.481 for the death of Childeric I with pleasing exactness<sup>11</sup> Subsequent excavation in the 1980s revealed that the burial was

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<sup>6</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, 'Graves of Kings'. Also Campbell, 'Impact of Sutton Hoo', pp. 62-83.

<sup>7</sup> Pearson, 'Mortuary Practices, Society and Ideology'. Also Pearson, *Archaeology of Death and Burial*, pp. 21-44, 72-94; James, 'Burial and Status'; Hodder, 'Social Structure and Cemeteries'. A salutary warning against unwarranted assumptions is provided by Ucko, 'Ethnography and Archaeological Interpretation'.

<sup>8</sup> The recent burial of King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, buried in an unmarked grave in a public cemetery, typifies this: Marszal, 'Saudi Arabia Buries King Abdullah.'

<sup>9</sup> Carver, 'Burial as Poetry', p. 34. More generally Pearson, *Archaeology of Death and Burial*, pp. 1-20.

<sup>10</sup> Chifflet, *Anastasis Childerici*. Summarised in James, 'Royal Burials', pp. 245-47; James, *Franks*, pp. 58-64.

<sup>11</sup> Halsall, 'Childeric's Grave', pp. 169-73.

surrounded by at least three pits containing the remains of at least 21 horses, and further, suggested that the burial was once situated under a burial mound.<sup>12</sup>

It is also possible that two graves discovered in 1655 under Saint-Germain-des-Prés, Paris are also royal, although the account describing them is somewhat confused.<sup>13</sup> One was interred in a sarcophagus which bore the inscription CHILDR REX and based on this it has been suggested that the individuals were Childeric II and his wife Belechildis who were murdered in 675. This is called into question, though, by the fact that traditionally Childeric II and Belechildis are thought to have been buried at Saint-Ouen, Rouen. It is also possible that Salin's Burial Sixteen under Saint-Denis, Paris is Chlotar III, who is known to be buried there.<sup>14</sup> Other rich burials have also been found under both Cologne Cathedral and Saint-Denis for which royal status has been suggested but not demonstrated.<sup>15</sup>

Drawing meaningful patterns from these instances is problematic. They cover a range of dates and thus burial practices. The majority spring from a Christian context, although Childeric I's is assuredly pagan.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, the uncertainty of many details, and of royalty in some instances, makes conclusions difficult to come by. Nonetheless, certain similarities can be opined. The wealth of these burials is their most apparent unifying feature, exemplified most spectacularly by that of Childeric I. Arms, armour, personal adornment and vessels of various types are all also common to these burials. Strikingly, two of the graves were associated with sceptres.<sup>17</sup> In addition, all of these burials might be seen to have some religious association, while all are likely to have been associated with large above-ground structures, be they churches or burial mounds. However, with the possible, and problematic, exception of the sceptres, none of these features can be construed as exclusively royal. It is rather the extent of the wealth of these burials which distinguishes them. This is hardly a precise template, but it does

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<sup>12</sup> Brulet (ed.), *Les fouilles du quartier Saint-Brice*, 2 vols, passim; Brulet, 'La tombe de Childéric', pp. 59-78. Further: Effros, 'Grave Goods and the Ritual Expression', p. 191, who posits that the horse burials were products of on-going commemoration.

<sup>13</sup> This confusion was no doubt a product of the gap of several generations between its writing and the original discovery, combined with the fact that the grave goods had by that point been sold to purchase a new organ. Montfaucon, *Les Monuments de la Monarchie*, pp. 173-75; summarised by Wallace-Hadrill, 'Graves of Kings', p.45.

<sup>14</sup> Salin, *Les tombes Gallo-Romaines at Mérovingiennes*, pp. 25-45.

<sup>15</sup> Werner, 'Frankish Royal Tombs'. Also Wilson, 'Ring of Queen Arnegunde'; James, 'Royal Burials', p. 249-50.

<sup>16</sup> It is hard to conceive of any Christian context in which horse inhumation would be appropriate: Halsall, 'Childeric's Grave', p. 174.

<sup>17</sup> One at Saint-Germain-des-Prés and the child's grave at Cologne.



suggest a crude correlation between the wealth of funerary deposits, in terms of both their bullion value and the time invested in them, and the status of those interred. It was surely only the richest and most powerful in society who could be buried in truly lavish style. The very richest male burials, therefore, should be equated with kings, although not all kings need be buried in this way.

Using this as a basis, therefore, the early Anglo-Saxon elite male burials can be ranked according to their wealth. This allows them to be categorised into groups of probable and possible kingly status. The utilisation of a deliberately high wealth threshold minimises the risk of accidentally including non-kingly burials in the probable and possible kingly groupings. Such a process is, of course, innately subjective, but rather than being a flaw, this allows complex and multi-faceted phenomena to be dealt with sympathetically. Further, a ranking exercise is by its nature relative; a subjective approach, therefore, is not only more honest but also entirely appropriate. Additionally, while the rankings can never be entirely removed from doubt, the nature of the ranking process means that potential errors of judgement will be minimal and unlikely to have a significant impact on the overall conclusions.

This approach is complicated by a number of factors. In the first instance, many early Anglo-Saxon graves have been disturbed or excavated under less than ideal circumstances.<sup>18</sup> Additionally, variations in soil, climatic conditions and agricultural practices can have varying impacts on the levels of preservation observed. Deriving an accurate assessment of the wealth of a burial is, therefore, difficult. Further, the archaeological record as it currently stands cannot be assumed to be completely representative of early Anglo-Saxon mortuary practice. As recently as 2003, a previously-unknown elite burial was discovered at Prittlewell, in Southend-on-Sea, Essex;<sup>19</sup> similarly, a high-status bed burial was discovered at Street House cemetery, near Saltburn in Yorkshire in 2006.<sup>20</sup> There is no way to predict what further burials may be discovered. Any conclusions, therefore, need to be understood with these caveats in mind.

Nonetheless, following this methodology, a group of five probable kingly burials can be identified: Mound One, Sutton Hoo; Prittlewell Chamber Grave; Taplow Barrow; Mound Two, Sutton Hoo; and the Snape Ship Burial. Likewise, a group of five possible

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<sup>18</sup> Further: Marsden, *Early Barrow Diggers*.

<sup>19</sup> Barnham, Blackmore, and Blair, 'My Lord Essex'.

<sup>20</sup> Sherlock and Simmons, 'Royal Cemetery at Street House'.

kingly burials can be identified: Benty Grange; Broomfield Barrow; Asthall Barrow; Caenby Barrow; and Wollaston Barrow. These burials are addressed in detail in the following two sections. After establishing their natures and exploring the reasoning behind their attribution of probable or possible kingly status, the burials will be analysed in order to evaluate the validity of the commonly postulated link between elite male burial and the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship. This will involve situating the probable and possible kingly burials in the context of elite male burial more generally. The leading archaeological explanations for elite burial will be assessed as will their potential social and political contexts. Additionally, the material associations of the contents of the burials will be examined. Together, these will provide the basis for assessing the nature of early Anglo-Saxon kingship, and will also indirectly shed light on its origins.

### **Probably Kingly Burials**

Closest to the wealth found in Childeic I's grave is Mound One at Sutton Hoo, Suffolk. First uncovered on the eve of the Second World War, and subsequently excavated in 1965-71 and 1985-92, Mound One is one of around nineteen mounds in a barrow cemetery overlooking the River Deben in Suffolk.<sup>21</sup> Near to the modern county border with Essex, it is situated in an area of poor quality-soils, part of the larger 'Sandlings' which runs down the Suffolk coast.<sup>22</sup> It also lies close to a larger early Anglo-Saxon flat-grave cemetery sited on top of a small Bronze Age cremation burial and ring ditch, while both sites overlay prehistoric field systems and boundaries.<sup>23</sup>

The original dimensions of Mound One are not completely clear due to slippage and erosion. However, excavations in the 1960s suggested that the mound was originally near-circular, with a diameter ranging between 98 and 110ft (29.9 and 33.5m). The maximum height of the mound at this point was 10ft 6in (3.2m), although it could be seen to be slightly higher in photographs from 1939 at 10ft 8in (3.3m); the mound also seems to have had a flattened top and was not surrounded by a ditch or any other separate

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<sup>21</sup> Carver, *Burial Ground of Kings?*, pp. 2-92. Also Carver, *Sutton Hoo*, pp. 3-66, particularly 3-12; Bruce-Mitford, *Sutton Hoo Ship Burial*, vol I, pp. 137-344; Philips, 'Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial: Excavation'.

<sup>22</sup> Williamson, *Sutton Hoo and its Landscape*, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> Anon, 'Sutton Hoo's "Folk Cemetery"'; Carver, *Sutton Hoo*, pp. 447-58, 483-86; Newman, 'Sutton Hoo Before Raedwald'. Also Fern, *Before Sutton Hoo*.

structure.<sup>24</sup> The volume of Mound One can thus be estimated as being at least 1300m<sup>3</sup>, which can be equated to at least 4400 man-hours.<sup>25</sup>

Underneath the mound, at a depth of up to 10ft (3m) below the original ground level, lay an oak clinker-built long-ship (Fig.1). Built with 18 strakes and 26 ribs, the boat was symmetrical in design, with a wide but shallow keel and projecting cutwaters fore and aft. Both prow and stern had high end posts, at least as high as 12ft (3.7m)



Fig.1, Imprint of the Ship in 1939, Mound One, Sutton Hoo (© Trustees of the British Museum)

above the keel, if not higher. The boat was 89ft (27.2m) long and had a maximum beam of 15ft (4.6m). It would have been rowed by 40 oarsmen and while there were no indications that it had ever been fitted with a mast and sail, it is possible that a sail could have been fitted. The ship also showed clear signs of wear and evidence of several repairs.<sup>26</sup> In the central section of the ship, between the ninth and sixteenth ribs, a wooden chamber had been constructed, 17ft 6in (5.3m) long and the full width of the

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<sup>24</sup> Bruce-Mitford, *Sutton Hoo Ship Burial*, vol I, pp. 144-56, 303-29.

<sup>25</sup> See Appendices III-V for estimates for all probable and possible kingly burials.

<sup>26</sup> Bruce-Mitford, *Sutton Hoo Ship Burial*, vol I, pp. 345-424. More accessibly summarised in Evans, *Ship Burial*, pp. 23-28. On ship burial more generally: Müller-Wille, 'Boat Graves in Northern Europe'.

ship. The precise construction of this chamber remains uncertain due to its collapse and decomposition, although it had sufficient structural integrity to exclude sand from the chamber for a significant period of time.<sup>27</sup>

It was within this structure that the grave goods were deposited.<sup>28</sup> These included several items of jewellery, notably two gold and garnet shoulder clasps and a belt buckle with zoomorphic interlace (Fig.2); a purse containing 37 Merovingian tremisses, 3 coin blanks and 2 ingots; a helmet, shield and mailcoat (Fig.3); a sword, and a number of spears and angons; a series of vessels, buckets and cauldrons, including a Byzantine



Fig.2, Gold and Garnet Shoulder Clasp, Mound One, Sutton Hoo (© Trustees of the British Museum)

<sup>27</sup> Bruce-Mitford, *Sutton Hoo Ship Burial*, vol I, pp. 176-80, 484-86. Also Philips, 'Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial: Excavation', pp. 12-13; with Evans, *Ship Burial*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>28</sup> Bruce-Mitford, *Sutton Hoo Ship Burial*, vol I, pp. 439-57, provides a full inventory.



Fig.3, Reconstructed Helmet from Mound One, Sutton Hoo (© Trustees of the British Museum)

silver plate; a pair of large drinking horns, with gilt silver rims and vandykes, carved from aurochs horns (Fig.4); a 'sceptre', wood, bone or possibly ivory rod, axe-hammer and metal stand, all of whose purposes remain enigmatic (Figs.5-6); and finally, a series





Fig.4, Replica Drinking Horns Based on Artefacts from Mound One, Sutton Hoo (© Trustees of the British Museum)

of maple fragments that were eventually reconstructed as a lyre.<sup>29</sup> Traces of 26 different weave types, mostly found fused into the oxidation of various metal items, were also discovered.<sup>30</sup> Many of the items seem to be of a domestic manufacture, but a significant number point to various pan-European provenances.<sup>31</sup>

No body was found in the grave, although its position can be assumed to be roughly central, the only suitably-shaped gap being along the keel of the boat, between the Byzantine dish and the west wall of the chamber.<sup>32</sup> It was the opinion of the initial excavator that, given the absence of a body, the grave was in fact a cenotaph.<sup>33</sup> However, given the acidic nature of the soil and the presence of a significant quantity of phosphate residue – which is left behind when bone is dissolved by acid – in the space where the

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<sup>29</sup> Bruce-Mitford, *Sutton Hoo Ship Burial*, vol III; Bruce-Mitford, *Sutton Hoo Ship Burial*, vol II; Bruce-Mitford, *Sutton Hoo Ship Burial*, vol I, passim.

<sup>30</sup> Bruce-Mitford, *Sutton Hoo Ship Burial*, vol III, pp. 409-78; Bruce-Mitford, *Sutton Hoo Ship Burial*, vol I, pp. 458-61, 476-80.

<sup>31</sup> Carver, 'Sutton Hoo in Context', pp. 102-8.

<sup>32</sup> Bruce-Mitford, *Sutton Hoo Ship Burial*, vol I, p. 489.

<sup>33</sup> Philips, 'Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial: Excavation', pp. 20-21.

body is presumed to have lain, it would seem that a body was indeed originally present.



Fig.5, Replica Whet Stone 'Sceptre', Mound One, Sutton Hoo (© Trustees of the British Museum)



Fig.6, Iron Axe-Hammer, Mound One, Sutton Hoo (© Trustees of the British Museum)

This residue cannot be satisfactorily explained through reference to anything else known to have been in the chamber.<sup>34</sup>

Mound One was one of the later burials on the Sutton Hoo site.<sup>35</sup> The 37 Merovingian coins form the basis for dating Mound One. As these coins do not bear the name of a ruler, they must be dated based on the gradual debasement of Merovingian coinage. Kent dated the majority of the coins to the period c.585-615, although there were three coins that suggested a later date. Judging by the relatively close grouping of the coins, he tentatively placed these in the period c.615-c.625 and noted the absence of coins with characteristics of the period 625-635.<sup>36</sup> Others have argued for a revised *terminus post quem* of 613.<sup>37</sup> Radiocarbon dates derived from the site are not conclusive.<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, the burial can be dated to the first half of the seventh century, perhaps the first quarter.<sup>39</sup> Mound One, therefore, represents a considerable investment in terms of time, wealth and effort, and is thus likely to have had a kingly occupant.

Of closely comparable wealth to Mound One is the recently discovered chamber grave at Prittlewell, Essex. Situated in modern Southend-On-Sea, it sits on a slight rise, on the edge of the Thames Estuary. The site was first discovered in 1887, and re-excavated in 1923, although the chamber burial

<sup>34</sup> Bruce-Mitford, *Sutton Hoo Ship Burial*, vol I, pp. 493- 511, 529-43. Also Bethel and Carver, 'Inhumations at Sutton Hoo'.

<sup>35</sup> Carver, *Sutton Hoo*, pp. 307-12.

<sup>36</sup> Bruce-Mitford, *Sutton Hoo Ship Burial*, vol I, pp. 588-607.

<sup>37</sup> Stahl and Oddy, 'Date of the Sutton Hoo Coins'; Stahl, 'Sutton Hoo Coin Parcel'.

<sup>38</sup> Bruce-Mitford, *Sutton Hoo Ship Burial*, vol I, pp. 681-82.

<sup>39</sup> Carver, *Sutton Hoo*, p. 308.



itself was not discovered until 2003.<sup>40</sup> Like the Sutton Hoo cemetery, Prittlewell Chamber Grave is associated with a larger flat grave cemetery, but in this instance it is incorporated within it.<sup>41</sup> It is the only burial mound known from the site, although the continuous use of the area and the inferior quality of previous excavations mean that the former existence of other mounds should not be ruled out. At approximately 10m in diameter and of an unknown height – it seems to have rapidly disappeared – the mound was considerably smaller than that of Mound One. The mound covered a 4m square, 1.4m deep, wood-lined chamber, which had remained undisturbed. Much as at Sutton Hoo, the acidity of the sandy soil had a deleterious effect on wood, textile and bone remains such that all that was left of the body were a few fragments of tooth enamel.<sup>42</sup>

The scale and investment of Mound One, therefore, were not surpassed. Nonetheless, many of the objects found at Prittlewell were broadly similar to those unearthed at Mound One, and while the level of workmanship at Prittlewell was generally poorer, it still makes most sense in a kingly context. The body seems to have been interred wearing a triangular gold belt buckle, decorated with three embossed rivets of a similar design to the buckle from Mound One, albeit lacking the zoomorphic interlace; traces of gold braid were also found covering the chest area, which may once have formed part of the incumbent's clothing; two gold foil crosses were found in the head area, which may have formed part of a veil. A sword and two spear heads were also found, together with the remains of a shield. A large number of vessels, containers and buckets were discovered, including a pair of drinking horns decorated with gilded copper interlace together with other horn and glass drinking vessels and a Byzantine flagon. The grave also contained a metal folding stool, a 1.33m metal stand of uncertain purpose, a lyre suspended from the wall, and a set of 57 bone gaming pieces.<sup>43</sup> Stylistically, these artefacts allow the Prittlewell burial to be dated to the first half of the seventh century.<sup>44</sup>

Similar comments can be made of Taplow Barrow, Buckinghamshire. This again contained similar items, although the range and wealth of the items is a step below those found at Prittlewell. The excavation of this site was sadly cavalier, many of the items being damaged during the process of recovery, so it is only really through comparison

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<sup>40</sup> On the early excavations: Pollit, 'East Saxons of Prittlewell'; Pollit, 'Saxon Settlements, Southend-on-Sea'. A provisional guide for the 2003 discoveries has been released: Anon, *Prittlewell Prince*. Also Higham and Ryan, *Anglo-Saxon World*, pp. 120-25.

<sup>41</sup> Tyler, 'Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Prittlewell'.

<sup>42</sup> Anon, *Prittlewell Prince*, p. 23-24.

<sup>43</sup> Higham and Ryan, *Anglo-Saxon World*, pp. 120-25; Anon, *Prittlewell Prince*, pp. 27-37.

<sup>44</sup> Anon, *Prittlewell Prince*, p. 39.

with Mound One or Prittlewell that its original splendour can be appreciated.<sup>45</sup> It is also through analogy with Mound One and Prittlewell that Taplow can be dated to the first half of the seventh century.<sup>46</sup> Nonetheless, it was a singularly wealthy burial. Situated in the now disused churchyard in the grounds of Taplow Court, the mound commands an impressive prospect on a bluff overlooking the Thames Valley, with the chalk uplands of the Chilterns to the north.<sup>47</sup> The site lay adjacent to an iron-age hill fort,<sup>48</sup> and may have contained several earlier burial mounds which the early Anglo-Saxons possibly used to construct their barrow.<sup>49</sup> The site was first investigated in 1883, and at that point the mound measured some 240ft (73.2m) in circumference and 15ft (4.6m) in height, although it may once have been wider as it was reported that the edges had been cut away by subsequent medieval inhumations.<sup>50</sup> The mound, therefore, was of considerable size, although slightly smaller than Mound One at an estimated 1050m<sup>3</sup> equivalent to approximately 3450 man-hours.

The burial, as at Prittlewell, was in a chamber, measuring 12ft (3.7m) by 8ft (2.4m), below the original ground level. The body was found with the remains of gold edging from the incumbent's clothing and a large gold buckle at the left shoulder and further gold clasps at the waist. The grave also contained a pattern-welded sword, the remains of three shields, two spears and an angon. A bronze bowl containing two drinking horns decorated with gilt bronze at the tips and silver rims, two claw beakers, five wooden drinking vessels and another possible drinking horn were also found, together with other vessels of varying types including a cast bronze Coptic bowl and a set of 44 gaming pieces, as were the remains of what turned out to be a lyre, on comparison with similar maple fragments discovered at Sutton Hoo.<sup>51</sup> The skeleton was badly preserved, but numerous fragments of bone were discovered including vertebrae and a jaw bone.<sup>52</sup>

Mound Two, Sutton Hoo, can also be posited as kingly by analogy (Figs.7-8). The 1938 excavations found that Mound Two had been previously pillaged. The

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<sup>45</sup> Webster, 'The Rise, Fall and Resuscitation of the Taplow Burial'.

<sup>46</sup> Pollington, *Anglo-Saxon Burial Mounds*, p. 169.

<sup>47</sup> Webster, 'Death's Diplomacy', p. 78.

<sup>48</sup> Allen and Lamdin-Whymark, 'Taplow Hillfort'; full report Allen, Hayden, and Lamdin-Whymark, *Taplow Hillfort, Buckinghamshire*.

<sup>49</sup> Kerr, *Taplow Revisited*; cited in Pollington, *Anglo-Saxon Burial Mounds*, p. 168.

<sup>50</sup> Stevens, 'Anglo-Saxon Tumulus at Taplow', pp. 61-62. Also Burgess, 'Opening of a Tumulus'; in summary Pollington, *Anglo-Saxon Burial Mounds*, pp. 168-71.

<sup>51</sup> Bruce-Mitford and Bruce-Mitford, 'Sutton Hoo Lyre', pp. 190-93.

<sup>52</sup> Stevens, 'Anglo-Saxon Tumulus at Taplow', pp. 63-66; Burgess, 'Opening of a Tumulus', pp. 332-34.

excavations of the 1980s, however, provided indications that Mound Two, despite the previous removal of an indeterminable number of items, may once have been the equal of Mound One. Based on the volume of earth extracted from the quarry ditch, Mound Two had an estimated original volume of 543m<sup>3</sup>, although 790m<sup>3</sup> of soil had in fact been excavated during its construction, the unused soil being returned to the ditch. The original diameter of the mound was estimated to be 22.3m to account for slippage, with



Fig.7, Reconstructed Mound Two, Sutton Hoo

an original height of between 2.7 and 3.8m. The excavators, working with the rough estimate of 1m<sup>3</sup> equating to a man-day, suggested that 800 man-days were involved in the construction of Mound Two.<sup>53</sup> This estimation, however, is perhaps overly cautious and might be reduced to 2650 man-hours, or approximately 350 man-days, assuming an 8-hour day.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Carver, *Sutton Hoo*, pp. 169-71.

<sup>54</sup> Appendix IV.



Fig.8, Reconstructed Mound Two, Sutton Hoo, Viewed from Across the River Deben

Despite the disturbance of the burial, a number of ship rivets were uncovered. Reference to the discovery and removal of ‘a considerable number (nearly two bushels) of iron screw bolts’ can also, in all probability, be associated with Mound Two.<sup>55</sup> Re-excitation allowed these rivets to be interpreted as a ship of similar plan, construction and dimensions to that found in Mound One, overlaying a 2m-deep, 1.5m-wide and 3.8m-long wood-lined chamber. It was in this chamber that the body would have been placed. While little remained of the original contents, those uncovered included a gold-plated bronze disc decorated with interlace and other small bronze items; some fragments of silver foil with zoomorphic designs; the end of a sword blade and the remains of the wooden scabbard; several knives of varying designs; the remains of several buckles of varying types; and a vessel of blue glass. Subsequent analysis and further excavation has indicated that these items contributed to an assemblage that included a sword, a scramasax with a silver buckle, a shield, bowls, cauldrons, buckets, drinking horns and other drinking vessels.<sup>56</sup> Mound Two may be placed at a similar time period to Mound

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<sup>55</sup> Hoppitt, 'Sutton Hoo 1860'.

<sup>56</sup> Carver, *Sutton Hoo*, pp. 153-77, 256-62.

One as drinking horns found across the two burials shared a common die. The artefacts within Mound Two, however, suggest a slightly earlier date.<sup>57</sup>

17km from Sutton Hoo, Snape Ship Burial, like its better known neighbour, sits atop a ridge overlooking a river valley, although due to the gentleness of the slope, it is in fact 2.5km from the River Alde. It too is sited on the heath land of the ‘Sandlings’.<sup>58</sup> One of between ‘at least eight and ten’ mounds on the site, as was seen at both Sutton Hoo and Prittlewell, Snape is associated with a wider flat grave cemetery.<sup>59</sup> The flat graves were a combination of inhumation and cremation graves in roughly equal proportions, although due to modern plough damage, the exact location of the ship burial is unknown.<sup>60</sup> The site also contained at least one Bronze Age barrow – an upturned Bronze Age cremation urn was discovered under the ship burial, suggesting that the ship burial supplanted a pre-existing barrow.<sup>61</sup> Given this, the possibility exists that other barrows and ring ditches on the site may also be Bronze Age in date.<sup>62</sup>

The mound over the ship burial measured 72ft (22m) in diameter and 4ft 6in (1.4m) high. The barrow was thus relatively small, having a volume of approximately 250m<sup>3</sup>, equating to around 900 man-hours, despite the diameter of the mound being similar to that of Taplow and Mound Two.<sup>63</sup> The low estimated volume may, therefore, be a product of particularly high erosion on what is a relatively exposed site. The ship itself was clinker-built. Its excavator, Davidson, recorded that it measured 48ft (14.6m) long and had a beam of 9ft 9in (3m). The rivet pattern indicated nine strakes per side, and while the diagram produced in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries* indicated a flat transom stern, Davidson’s description would seem to suggest a more conventional ‘double-ended’ design.<sup>64</sup> Comparison with the ships found in Mound One and Mound Two, Sutton Hoo, would also suggest that a ‘double-ended’ design was the more likely,

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<sup>57</sup> Carver, *Sutton Hoo*, pp. 307-12.

<sup>58</sup> Filmer-Sankey and Pestell, *Snape Anglo-Saxon Cemetery*, p. 1.

<sup>59</sup> Davidson, ‘Antiquities on Snape Common’, quote at p. 177; Francis, ‘Recent Discoveries at Snape’. The 1862-63 excavations are summarised in Bruce-Mitford, ‘Snape Boat Grave’. On the 1985-92 excavations: Filmer-Sankey and Pestell, *Snape Anglo-Saxon Cemetery*; summarised Filmer-Sankey, ‘Snape Anglo-Saxon Cemetery: The Current State of Knowledge’. Also West and Owles, ‘Anglo-Saxon Cremation Burials from Snape’; Owles, ‘Archaeology in Suffolk’, p. 103.

<sup>60</sup> Filmer-Sankey and Pestell, *Snape Anglo-Saxon Cemetery*, p. 5-6, 193.

<sup>61</sup> Filmer-Sankey and Pestell, *Snape Anglo-Saxon Cemetery*, p. 233; Davidson, ‘Antiquities on Snape Common’, p. 179.

<sup>62</sup> Filmer-Sankey and Pestell, *Snape Anglo-Saxon Cemetery*, pp. 233, 236-38.

<sup>63</sup> Davidson, ‘Antiquities on Snape Common’, p. 178.

<sup>64</sup> Davidson stated that “All the rows [of rivets] terminated in two rivets lying parallel with each other – the one at the stem, the other at the stern”: Davidson, ‘Antiquities on Snape Common’, p. 181.

giving the Snape ship a longer length of approximately 54ft (16.5m).<sup>65</sup> Additionally, the iron strip included with the collection of rivets in Aldeburgh Museum may be an indication of the presence of a mast and sail, although the use of metal ‘chain plates’ is otherwise unattested in this period. Regardless, the craft would certainly have been capable of being propelled by oars.<sup>66</sup>

Prior to Davidson’s excavation, the site had been opened on at least two occasions. It is variously reported that a great many ‘vessels’ – presumably cremation urns – and ‘quantities of gold rings, broaches, chains *etc.*’ were removed from the site, the latter occurring in 1827. The site was also subsequently disturbed by the Ordnance Survey, but with entirely unknown consequences.<sup>67</sup> The true wealth of the burial is, therefore, unknowable, but as with Mound Two the suspicion exists that the burial was once impressive – two spear heads, a glass claw beaker and the so called ‘Snape Ring’, an intricate piece which made use of a Roman carved onyx, were found with the burial.<sup>68</sup> On the basis of this ring, which is unlikely to pre-date c.550, and the Evison type 3c claw beaker, the ship burial can be tentatively dated to the second half of the sixth century.<sup>69</sup> Little is known of the layout of the grave, nor was a body identified, explicable through either previous disturbance or the acidity of the soil.

### **Possibly Kingly Burials**

Other sites, found elsewhere in the country, exhibit broadly similar assemblages and structures. Few of these, however, are comparable to the wealth and opulence found or implied in the above burials. The barrow at Benty Grange, Derbyshire, is one such example. Sited on an escarpment overlooking the Roman Road that runs between Buxton and Ashbourne, the burial was placed upon the original ground level, under a low mound, reported as not more than two feet, but spread out over a large area and surrounded by a ditch.<sup>70</sup> The barrow may, therefore, have once been reasonably large, but this cannot be

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<sup>65</sup> Filmer-Sankey and Pestell, *Snape Anglo-Saxon Cemetery*, pp. 194-95.

<sup>66</sup> Filmer-Sankey and Pestell, *Snape Anglo-Saxon Cemetery*, p. 195. On ‘chain plates’: McGrail, *Ancient Boats in Northwest Europe*, p. 229.

<sup>67</sup> Davidson, ‘Antiquities on Snape Common’, p. 177. Exert taken from a letter published in *The Field* in March 1863, quoted in Filmer-Sankey and Pestell, *Snape Anglo-Saxon Cemetery*, p. 5.

<sup>68</sup> Filmer-Sankey and Pestell, *Snape Anglo-Saxon Cemetery*, pp.195-96; Davidson, ‘Antiquities on Snape Common’, pp. 179, 181.

<sup>69</sup> Filmer-Sankey and Pestell, *Snape Anglo-Saxon Cemetery*, p. 196.

<sup>70</sup> Bateman, ‘Contents of a Saxon Barrow’, p. 276. Subsequently expand as Bateman, *Ten Years’ Diggings*, p. 28.

verified. Only the hair of the individual interred remained. A leather cup decorated with silver rim and wheel and cross emblems was discovered, as was a mass of bone and gold fragments of finely worked nature, that Bateman, its excavator, felt were once attached to silk in some way. There were also several fragments of hanging bowl, while the most significant find from the site was the remains of a helmet made of an iron frame with bone panels, decorated with silver rivets and a silver cross, surmounted by a bronze plaque upon which stood a bronze boar decorated with silver studs. This is one of only three complete helmets of the period found in Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>71</sup> However, no weapons were discovered, which is perhaps surprising. Bruce-Mitford later asserted that the grave had been previously robbed.<sup>72</sup> However, Bateman was a skilled excavator, who was easily capable of identifying differing soil types and possible intrusions, and he gave no indication that the grave had been disturbed. The wealth is thus sufficient to suggest kingly status, but not to demonstrate it persuasively.

Comparable to Benty Grange in terms of wealth, but more akin to Taplow in terms of assemblage is Broomfield Barrow, Essex. Discovered by gravel diggers in 1888 who unearthed a sword, spear and knife, the grave was more thoroughly excavated in 1894 by Read. The grave cut seems to have been 8ft (2.4m) long, and possibly equally wide forming a square. The grave cut also seems to have been burnt at some stage, there being a layer of soot or charcoal on its sides. In addition to the items found in 1888, a bronze circular pan, a quantity of fabrics, 2 possible drinking horns, 2 blue glass bowls, two wooden cups with gilt bronze rims and two wooden buckets were also found. There were no remains of a body. Neither were there any indications of a mound, although that does not mean that there was not originally one.<sup>73</sup> The grave itself was sited overlooking the River Chelmer on the edge of a slight rise, close to the intersection of two Roman roads. Analogy with other similar burials would place both Benty Grange and Broomfield in the first half of the seventh century.

Of a similar nature is Asthall Barrow, Oxfordshire. The barrow was sited on the edge of a limestone spur on the southern edge of the Cotswolds, overlooking the Thames valley, adjacent to the route of the Roman Akerman Street. The barrow itself was singularly large, measuring 12ft (3.7m) high and 55ft (16.8m) in diameter, although by

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<sup>71</sup> Bateman, *Ten Years' Diggings*, pp. 28-33. Also Bruce-Mitford and Luscombe, 'Benty Grange Helmet', pp. 223-42.

<sup>72</sup> Bruce-Mitford and Luscombe, 'Benty Grange Helmet', p. 229.

<sup>73</sup> Read, 'Saxon Grave at Broomfield'.

the modern era the sides had been shorn by a 4 ½ft (1.4m) retaining wall. If the raised area to the south west can be interpreted as part of the original barrow structure, the diameter may once have been as much as 68ft (20.7m). This would give an original volume of as much as 650m<sup>3</sup>, equivalent to 2150 man-hours. Asthall Barrow is also unusual in that it was a cremation burial. Due to the cremation process, there were few finds, although there was a substantial layer of ash and cremated material discovered. This overlay a layer of clay that had been specially imported and covered the base of the centre of the barrow. Of the cremated material, two copper alloy bowls – one Byzantine – drinking vessels, a Merovingian pottery vessel and other vessels of various sorts have been identified, as well as the fragments of several strap-ends and a set of gaming pieces.<sup>74</sup> Leeds, Asthall's excavator, did not feel that the burial had been previously disturbed and although modern scholarship has suggested that this might have been the case, this is purely speculative.<sup>75</sup> Leeds also dated Asthall Barrow to the first half of the seventh century, which has been corroborated by subsequent study.<sup>76</sup>

Similar comments apply to other sites. The barrow burial at Caenby, Lincolnshire, for example, was sited adjacent to the line of Roman Ermine Street on an elevated spot. It had a circumference of 304ft (92.7m) and a height of 8ft (2.4m) giving a volume of around 850m<sup>3</sup>, equivalent to a total of 2750 man-hours. The grave contained a sword, a shield decorated with gilt bronze and a wooden stool similarly decorated. The incumbent was found seated on the stool in one corner of a much larger grave cut. The burial may also have contained the fragments of a helmet and of a horse's harness. Possible pieces of bone and parts of horseshoes were also found. It is possible, therefore, that a horse was included in the burial.<sup>77</sup> Sadly, any more detailed discussion is complicated by the fact that the site had been disturbed and the report is highly confused, although those items found do suggest reasonable wealth.<sup>78</sup> Stylistically, the artefacts found at Caenby date it to the first half of the seventh century.<sup>79</sup>

This pattern is echoed at Wollaston, Northamptonshire. Discovered in 1997, the site is directly adjacent to a Roman road. There was no trace of a mound, but as the site

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<sup>74</sup> Original report: Leeds, 'Cremation Burial in Asthall Barrow'. Cogently reassessed: Dickinson and Speake, 'Seventh-Century Cremation Burial'.

<sup>75</sup> Dickinson and Speake, 'Seventh-Century Cremation Burial', p. 101.

<sup>76</sup> Dickinson and Speake, 'Seventh-Century Cremation Burial', pp. 106-07; Leeds, *Early Anglo-Saxon Art and Archaeology*, p. 35; Leeds, 'Cremation Burial in Asthall Barrow', pp. 123-25.

<sup>77</sup> More broadly: Fern, 'Anglo-Saxon Horse Burial'.

<sup>78</sup> Jarvis, 'Caenby, Lincolnshire'.

<sup>79</sup> Speake, *Anglo-Saxon Animal Art*, pp. 39-42.



had been subjected to extensive ploughing, it could easily have been obliterated. The grave revealed sufficient skeletal data to point to a male occupant of around 25 years. Interred with him were a pattern-welded-sword, a bronze hanging bowl and a helmet. This was of similar construction to the one found at Sutton Hoo, although like the Benty Grange Helmet it had a boar mounted on the crest. Fragments of a leather lining remained and there are indications that it was placed on a feather pillow.<sup>80</sup> This burial would seem to be slightly later than the other burials discussed.<sup>81</sup>

In comparison to the graves previously discussed this is of a poor level of wealth. Yet even graves of this level of richness are relatively rare. Sites such as Rodmead Down, Wiltshire,<sup>82</sup> Lowbury Hill, Berkshire,<sup>83</sup> Cuddesdon, Oxfordshire,<sup>84</sup> Lapwing Hill, Derbyshire,<sup>85</sup> Coombe, Kent,<sup>86</sup> and others often feature barrows, although rarely of a size comparable to Mound One.<sup>87</sup> Indeed, there are a large number of Anglo-Saxon barrow burials which do not exhibit an exceptional degree of wealth, epitomised by the barrow cemeteries of Kent where the burial rite seems to have been accessible to all and the general level of wealth in the graves is relatively poor. Similarly, there are poor chamber graves, such as at Coombe, Kent, although these are rarer.<sup>88</sup> It is hard to conceive of these burials as kingly. All too quickly, therefore, one is left with graves where the level of wealth is so low that the probability that they are kingly is negligible.<sup>89</sup>

## Discussion

Immediately there is a problem with connecting these burials, and elite male burial more generally, to the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship. With the possible exception of Snape Ship Burial, all of the probable and possible kingly burials date from the first half of the seventh century. However, at this point the available narrative and documentary sources indicate that kingship was firmly established in early Anglo-Saxon England. By

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<sup>80</sup> Meadows, 'Wollaston'; Webster and Meadows, 'Helmet with Boar Crest'. The site remains unpublished.

<sup>81</sup> Webster and Meadows, 'Helmet with Boar Crest', p. 3.

<sup>82</sup> Hoare, *Ancient History of South Wiltshire*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>83</sup> Atkinson, *Lowbury Hill in Berkshire*, pp. 15-23.

<sup>84</sup> Akerman, *Remains of Pagan Saxondom*, pp. 11-12, 28-29; Anon, '[Untitled]'.

<sup>85</sup> Bateman, *Ten Years' Diggings*, pp. 68-70; Bateman, *Vestiges of the Antiquities of Derbyshire*, p. 27.

<sup>86</sup> Akerman, *Remains of Pagan Saxondom*, pp. 47-48, 53.

<sup>87</sup> Pollington, *Anglo-Saxon Burial Mounds*, pp. 106ff.

<sup>88</sup> Akerman, *Remains of Pagan Saxondom*, pp. 47-48.

<sup>89</sup> The best introduction to early Anglo-Saxon burial rites is Lucy, *Anglo-Saxon Way of Death*. Barrow burials are more fully addressed by Shephard, 'Anglo-Saxon Barrows', pp. 2.1-2.31 and vol II. Also Meaney, *Gazetteer*, which is invaluable if dated.

definition these burials, and by extension elite male burial more generally, cannot illustrate the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship. Alternative explanations of elite burial, and a revised understanding of the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship, are, therefore, required.

Moreover, kingship cannot be directly connected to lavish burial. None of the items or structures of the probable and possibly kingly graves, with one or two possible exceptions, seem exclusively kingly. This is only reinforced by the slightly later instances of elite female burial. Rather, there exists a continuous spectrum between the very richest Anglo-Saxon burials and the very poorest, all utilising a shared material language. The majority of the objects found in the probably kingly graves are also found in the possibly kingly graves. Indeed, it is not uncommon to find quite exceptional items in otherwise very modest graves, such as the exquisite brooch found in grave 205, Kingston Down with two other lesser items.<sup>90</sup>

Furthermore, the probable and possible kingly graves are only found in certain areas. Three graves were found in Suffolk, with two across the county border in Essex. There were also clusters in the Peak District, with a few in the Thames valley. This leaves large areas of Anglo-Saxon England without candidates for kingly burials. It is not that there was an absence of kings in these areas, as we know from historical sources that they were present. Nor can such gaps be entirely explained away by the haphazard nature of archaeological discovery, as these areas are often well provided with other forms of burial. It is simply that lavish burial was far from universal among early Anglo-Saxon kings. Lavish burial, therefore, was not innately kingly and cannot be used as an indicator of the origins of early Anglo-Saxon kingship.

Nonetheless, the fact remains that some kings were, in all probability, buried in this way. Insight into Anglo-Saxon kingship, and to an extent its origins, can thus still be derived from understanding these burials. In order to achieve this, the probable and possible kingly burials need to be seen in the context of elite burials more generally. This reveals that the distribution of probable and possible kingly burials strongly correlates with wider patterns in the burial record. East Anglia and Essex, as seen at Sutton Hoo and Prittlewell, seem to have had small numbers of burial mounds associated with larger flat grave cemeteries. Sussex, the Isle of Wight and most especially Kent, meanwhile, were dominated by large cemeteries made up entirely of relatively small barrow burials.

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<sup>90</sup> Webster and Backhouse (eds), *Making of England*, pp. 50-51.

Many of these graves contained a few quite exceptional items.<sup>91</sup> Burial in the Peak District (principally in Derbyshire) the Chilterns, and the North Wessex downs, as at Benty Grange and Taplow, was dominated by isolated barrows of either primary or secondary interments. Yorkshire, meanwhile, was notable for multiple secondary interments in barrows.<sup>92</sup> In western and northern Britain, furnished burial was not practiced at all in any meaningful sense, although mortuary structures such as barrows, cist graves and marker stones were all variously used.<sup>93</sup> The instances of probable and possible kingly burials can thus be seen as exceptional extensions of wider patterns of burial practice.<sup>94</sup>

These variations in burial practice might be taken to indicate wider cultural differences between different areas of early Anglo-Saxon England. This in turn might suggest that different origins or natures of kingship might be found in these areas, although this goes beyond the available evidence. It is nonetheless interesting to note that there is a secondary correlation between areas of Anglo-Saxon England with less-lavish burial traditions and areas whose subsequent kings or kingdoms held British-derived names.<sup>95</sup> While none of this is conclusive, it does raise the important possibility that various and varying origins of kingship were found across early Anglo-Saxon England.

A number of explanations of elite burial have been offered, which, to varying extents, can help develop an appreciation of the purposes of the probable and possible kingly burials. It has been relatively common, for example, to emphasise the ‘pagan’ associations of these burials. On a general level, barrow burial has often been associated with a defiant paganism in a rapidly Christianising world.<sup>96</sup> Such burials have been characterised as ‘flagships of the unconverted’.<sup>97</sup> More specifically, Carver has argued that Sutton Hoo should be seen as a statement of Scandinavian, pagan identity and allegiance, as a counter to the Christian Merovingian kingdom and its Kentish ally.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Webster and Backhouse (eds), *Making of England*, pp. 22-26, 48-51.

<sup>92</sup> Shephard, 'Anglo-Saxon Barrows', pp. 1.11-1.13, with fig.1.1ff, especially fig.2.2, 3.1 and 4.1.

<sup>93</sup> James, 'Cemeteries in Wales', pp. 92-94; Alcock, 'Burials in Scotland'; Close-Brooks, 'Pictish and Other Burials'.

<sup>94</sup> More generally: Williams, 'Death Warmed Up'.

<sup>95</sup> This was kindly brought to my attention by Higham.

<sup>96</sup> As Lutovsky, 'Sutton Hoo and Chernaya Mogila'; Van de Noort, 'Context of Early Medieval Barrows'; Carver, 'Ideology and Allegiance', pp. 180-82; Carver, 'Sutton Hoo in Context', p. 99.

<sup>97</sup> Carver, 'Meanings of Monumental Barrows', p. 140.

<sup>98</sup> Carver, 'Meanings of Monumental Barrows', pp. 139-41; Carver, 'Politics of Early Medieval Monumentality', pp. 5-9; Carver, 'Ideology and Allegiance'. Also Carver, 'Cemetery and Society at Sutton Hoo'.

Elements of this hypothesis are certainly plausible. The influence of Frankia in this period was pronounced, with some going as far as to suggest some form of Frankish hegemony over southern and eastern England.<sup>99</sup> The siting of Sutton Hoo on a riverine estuary facing Frankia and Kent would seem to accord with this (Fig.8). Snape and Prittlewell are similarly located. There are also compelling Scandinavian associations at Sutton Hoo, principally through the helmet, shield, sword and ship from Mound One. Similarly, pagan associations are found in other possibly kingly burials such as the horse burial at Caenby and the cremation burial at Asthall, cremation being extremely rare in Christian contexts.

However, there are difficulties with this interpretation. Christian associations can also be demonstrated at a number of these burials. The baptismal spoons from Mound One are a prime example. Even more telling are the gold trefoil crosses placed over the eyes of the individual interred at Prittlewell. Similarly, Scandinavian associations are readily found in Kentish mortuary archaeology, particularly through the incidence of bracteates.<sup>100</sup> The interpretation relies upon placing pagan and Christian in binary opposition. Calling this into question, Halsall has drawn attention to the fact that in Frankish archaeology grave goods reach their highest point in the generation *after* the conversion of the Frankish monarchy, while the emergence of barrow building also significantly pre-dates the major phase of Merovingian church building.<sup>101</sup> The interpretation also rests, at least implicitly, on the assumption that lavishly furnished burial is somehow innately pagan, which is demonstrably not the case.<sup>102</sup> The idea that these burials can be used to signal identities, allegiances and associations is plausible enough. But what is being signalled, deliberately or implicitly, should not be reduced to simple oppositions. Roman, Germanic and British associations can all also be posited.<sup>103</sup> These burials stand at the nexus of a variety of competing and overlapping associations which from our current perspective can only be partially untangled.

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<sup>99</sup> Wood, *Merovingian North Sea*; Wood, 'Frankish Hegemony'.

<sup>100</sup> Behr, 'Kingship in Early Medieval Kent', pp. 33-47; with Behr, 'New Bracteate Finds'. On the mortuary archaeology of Kent more generally: Welch, 'Kent to AD 800', pp. 209-35.

<sup>101</sup> Halsall, *Cemeteries and Society*, pp. 249-50.

<sup>102</sup> Halsall, 'Christianization of the Region of Metz', pp. 264-68; Young, 'Myth of the Pagan Cemetery'; Young, 'Paganisme, christianisation'.

<sup>103</sup> Variouslly Filmer-Sanke, 'Roman Emperor' in the Sutton Hoo Ship Burial'; Carver, 'Ideology and Allegiance'; Enright, 'Sutton Hoo Sceptre'. The hanging-bowls are also considered to be classic British items, although they may in fact have been made locally. Further: Bruce-Mitford, *Late Celtic Hanging-Bowls*.

Associated with this signalling is the siting of these burials. Again, interpretations vary. Shephard, for example, noted a correlation between marginal grazing lands and isolated barrows, and suggested that such monuments were a way of legitimising inheritance and enforcing land or resource claims in a pre-literate society.<sup>104</sup> Along related lines, Williams has argued that the frequent reuse of ancient monuments, as several of these sites do, was a way of linking the early Anglo-Saxon present to an imagined past, thus creating a sense of identity, community and shared history and in the process legitimating the present.<sup>105</sup> Both of these interpretations can be seen as having a socially cohesive effect, although it should be noted that the identity created may have been entirely new, perhaps even a deliberate over-writing of the past.<sup>106</sup>

Elite burials were also frequently sited on boundaries, communication routes or in liminal positions, suggesting signalling to an external audience.<sup>107</sup> Most suggestive in this context is Taplow Barrow. Sited in a liminal area between the territories of Wessex, Mercia, Sussex and Essex, it dominates the surrounding landscape. Strikingly, the goods in the assemblage have their most compelling associations with Kent; they are either of Kentish manufacture or have been transmitted through Kent. It has thus been suggested that Taplow represents an outpost of Kentish hegemony, a visible marker of an attempt at political ascendancy.<sup>108</sup> Sutton Hoo, Snape and Prittlewell can be seen in a similar light.<sup>109</sup>

None of these interpretations are entirely certain or provable. Indeed, our knowledge of early Anglo-Saxon cosmology is insufficient to test them satisfactorily.

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<sup>104</sup> Shephard, 'Anglo-Saxon Barrows', pp. 3.1-3.13.

<sup>105</sup> Williams, 'Monuments and the Past'; Williams, 'Ancient Landscapes and the Dead'.

<sup>106</sup> Halsall, *Cemeteries and Society*, pp. 257-60. The case for this seems particularly strong at Snape where the Bronze Age cremation urn was found, perhaps intentionally, upturned under the ship burial which 'swamped' the pre-existing Bronze Age barrow: Filmer-Sankey and Pestell, *Snape Anglo-Saxon Cemetery*, pp. 233, 266.

<sup>107</sup> Brookes, 'Walking with the Anglo-Saxons'. Also, Semple, 'Burials and Political Boundaries'; Goodier, 'Boundaries in Anglo-Saxon England'; Shephard, 'Anglo-Saxon Barrows', pp. 3.1-3.13; more broadly, Reynolds, 'Burials, Boundaries and Charters'; more problematically Bonney, 'Boundaries and Estates'.

<sup>108</sup> Webster, 'Death's Diplomacy', pp.78-81.

<sup>109</sup> This suggestion of an externally focused statement of identity and power is also echoed in the poem *Beowulf*, where after being mortally wounded by the Dragon, Beowulf asks Wiglaf to construct a barrow on a headland to preserve his memory and so that passing ships can see it, *Beo*, ll, 2802-08. Of course, the problems of using *Beowulf* to illuminate this period are manifold and it should not be relied upon, as Frank, 'Beowulf and Sutton Hoo', but the parallels are nonetheless suggestive. More generally: Lucy, 'Significance of Mortuary Ritual'.



Fig.9, View to the East of Sutton Hoo

The mechanisms that underpin them, however, are certainly plausible. While the precise purpose, or purposes, of these monuments must, therefore, remain elusive, they can be seen to be engaging in an interchange of territorial claim and counter-claim, local influence and power, identity and allegiance, across the Anglo-Saxon landscape.

As confirmation of this need for caution, it is noteworthy that the initial burials at Sutton Hoo would not have been visible from the river.<sup>110</sup> When it is remembered that Sutton Hoo was associated with an older flat grave cemetery, the reasons for its siting, and so what it communicated, seem very different. Williamson has drawn attention to the characteristics of the landscape around Sutton Hoo. The surrounding area is notably flat due to its geology; little land reaches more than 30m above sea level.<sup>111</sup> In the seventh century a considerable proportion of the area would have been open heath land, the majority of the currently wooded areas being modern plantations.<sup>112</sup> Rivers and estuaries, therefore, would have made notable breaks in the otherwise open

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<sup>110</sup> Williamson, *Sutton Hoo and its Landscape*, p. 105.

<sup>111</sup> Williamson, *Sutton Hoo and its Landscape*, pp. 29-33.

<sup>112</sup> Williamson, *Sutton Hoo and its Landscape*, pp. 53-66.



Fig.10, View to the West of Sutton Hoo, Across the River Deben

landscape. At Sutton Hoo this effect is amplified by the high escarpment which rises up from the east side of the River Deben upon which Sutton Hoo sits and the contrast with the flat open expanse of water below it and the comparatively flat expanse of land to the east (Figs.9-10).<sup>113</sup> Given this, it stands to reason that the flat grave cemetery and Sutton Hoo were sited so as to permit a view of the river, rather than the other way around. It was only at a later stage, with the construction of Mounds One and Two, that other issues potentially came to the fore.<sup>114</sup> Had visibility been a primary concern then other sites would have been preferable.<sup>115</sup> Similar arguments can also be made regarding Snape which inhabits a comparable landscape setting. Indeed, had visibility been a priority, Snape would have been located on the site of the current church of St. Botolph, which is sited much more prominently in relation to how the landscape was used (Fig.11).

Nor should the probable and possible kingly burials be addressed purely as monuments. The process of burial also needs to be considered, as it is this which contemporaries would have primarily experienced. The utilisation of ships, chambers

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<sup>113</sup> Williamson, *Sutton Hoo and its Landscape*, p. 31.

<sup>114</sup> Carver, *Sutton Hoo*, pp. 307-09, 490-92.

<sup>115</sup> Williamson, *Sutton Hoo and its Landscape*, pp. 101-06.





Fig.11, St. Botolph's Church, Iken and the River Alde

and mounds suggests that the processes involved in the probable and possible kingly burials were highly elaborate.<sup>116</sup> Certainly they were time-consuming. The effort involved in transporting at 27.2m oak ship up a 30m escarpment is immense, while the largest mound, Mound One, required an estimate 4400 man-hours simply to construct the mound.<sup>117</sup> Moreover, such features can be thought of as providing a setting, or series of settings, framing and situating the ceremonies or rituals enacted.<sup>118</sup> Such features, and indeed the contents, are thus suggestive of possible funerary rites although they hardly reveal them in detail.

It needs to be asked, therefore, why such choices were made. Burial on this scale was exceptional. What caused those who were burying the probable and possible kings to make such choices? Growing out of his research into Frankish mortuary archaeology, Halsall has developed the idea that lavish furnished burial can be linked to social instability and the difficulty of transferring power and authority from one generation to

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<sup>116</sup> As Williams, *Death and Memory*, pp. 137-41; Carver, *Sutton Hoo*, pp. 179-99; Carver, 'Burial as Poetry', pp. 42-47.

<sup>117</sup> Appendix IV.

<sup>118</sup> Williams, *Death and Memory*, pp. 117-44; with Halsall, *Cemeteries and Society*, pp. 242-47. Also Halsall, 'Burial, Ritual and Merovingian Society', pp. 205-11; Halsall, 'Burial Writes', pp. 215-24.



another.<sup>119</sup> This offers a potential explanation. Halsall has convincingly argued that the act of burial and any associated rituals would serve to create and maintain social bonds; these bonds would justify and support the position of those who would replace the dead. Furthermore, such an act can be seen as sending a message of competency and legitimacy to both internal and external audiences. Lavish burial, therefore, might be seen as a mechanism for ensuring succession.

This, however, needs to be qualified. As has been seen, elite burial was filtered through local custom. Such choices were undoubtedly circumscribed in this way. Moreover, non-political motivations are possible. Implicit in Halsall's idea is that death is socially disruptive, but that mourning rituals such as those associated with burial potentially help to mitigate this disruption.<sup>120</sup> Indeed, it is possible to transcend this disruption and create a positive social effect out of death.<sup>121</sup> Of course, it needs to be borne in mind that the social impact of the death of an individual is not uniform, nor is the sense of loss created by their passing. The death of a significant figure, or king, creates a much larger social problem than the death of someone with few personal connections or influence. Differing responses, depending on the personal or political circumstances, are thus to be expected. This is poignantly illustrated by the burial of the small boy under Cologne Cathedral who, along with a cot and child's chair, was found buried with adult arms and armour and other objects typically associated with adult graves.<sup>122</sup> Lavish burial, cannot, therefore, be taken as a direct proxy for the insecurity of political power. Nonetheless, a connection can be seen to exist.

These observations, therefore, add further complexity to the interpretations offered above. Halsall's idea of burial as a negotiator of the transfer of power also refines the light within which they should be viewed. They seem very much as tools of kingship as one generation seeks to inherit from its predecessors. Indeed, given this, and the variety of interpretations and factors discussed above, early Anglo-Saxon kings seem to be both sophisticated and ideologically capable. This sophistication, of course, together with the resources invested in the burials, reinforces the initial point that these burials cannot be seen as an indication of the origins of kingship. They were products of an

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<sup>119</sup> Halsall, 'Origins of the Reihengräberzivilisation'; Halsall, 'Burial, Ritual and Merovingian Society'; Halsall, 'Childeric's Grave', pp. 175-87. In a similar vein: Knüsel, 'Of No More Use to Men'.

<sup>120</sup> Durkheim, *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, pp. 557-75. Also Hertz, *Death and the Right Hand*, pp. 29-86, particularly 76-86.

<sup>121</sup> Davies, *Death, Ritual and Belief*, particularly pp. 40-54. More generally: Bloch, *Prey into Hunter*.

<sup>122</sup> Werner, 'Frankish Royal Tombs', pp. 205-08.

established institution. While not directly connected to kingship, therefore, the probable and possible kingly burials demonstrate the ability of early Anglo-Saxon kings to exploit existing practices for their own purposes. Developing Halsall's idea further, it can be suggested that the incidence of elite burial points to a development or change, perhaps even an experiment, in Anglo-Saxon kingship. It was these developments or changes that such burials sought to justify and legitimate. Nor was elite burial the only change that can be observed in this period. Extensive changes can be seen across early Anglo-Saxon society, and Europe generally, in social structure, the use of objects, settlement types, trade patterns and religious practices.<sup>123</sup>

The contents of these burials can also shed light on the nature of early Anglo-Saxon kingship. The suggested developments of kingship which these burials represent complicate this process, but they do not render it invalid. As previously discussed, a burial is the product of a series of choices. By understanding these choices it is possible to achieve an understanding of how those who buried the individual wanted them to be perceived.<sup>124</sup> When those individuals were kings these choices take on a particular significance. Thus, by examining a range of kingly burials – the probable and possible kingly graves – it is possible to appreciate the nature of kingship more generally by, in effect, 'reading' their material language.<sup>125</sup>

The first, and in many ways the most obvious, unifying feature of these graves is the wealth preserved and invested in them. Many of the items included are of exceptional quality. To take just one example, the shoulder clasps from Mound One are exquisite, exceptional works (Fig.2). They are made of gold with cloisonné garnet, millefiori glass and blue glass. On each side of the clasp there is an inner rectangle surrounded by zoomorphic designs. The inner rectangle is backed by gold leaf stamped with a grid pattern and features an arrangement of cloisons with varying inlays in a complex, regular pattern. The surrounding pattern is of gold with garnet inlay. The ends of the clasps are decorated by interlocking boars of a similar construction and gold filigree. All four

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<sup>123</sup> As Welch, 'Mid Saxon "Final Phase"', pp. 266-69, 277-84; Geake, *Grave-Goods in Conversion-Period England*, pp. 31-141; Halsall, 'Social Change Around 600 AD'.

<sup>124</sup> This approach has been developed particularly by Halsall, who has demonstrated how it is possible to 'read' funerary deposits, as Halsall, 'Burial, Ritual and Merovingian Society', pp. 204-11. Halsall's approach has developed over time, gaining in nuance. He is now at pains to emphasise the partial nature of the archaeological 'text' that is read: Halsall, 'Burial Writes'. Also Halsall, *Cemeteries and Society*, pp. 242-47; Williams, *Death and Memory*, pp. 117-44; Lebecq, 'Two Faces of King Childeric'; Carver, 'Burial as Poetry', pp. 37-48, particularly 37-38.

<sup>125</sup> What follows builds, at least in part, on Evans, *Ship Burial*, pp. 41-94.

halves of the two clasps are almost identical. The skill and precision involved in the construction of such items with contemporary technologies is phenomenal.<sup>126</sup>

Of potentially greater significance is the presence of a number of imported items. Filmer-Sankey has demonstrated that the Snape ring would most likely have had a Continental provenance.<sup>127</sup> Prittlewell included spoons and a flagon from the Byzantine Empire, as well as a Coptic bowl and two Merovingian tremisses. Mound One meanwhile featured items from all over Europe: the silverware came from the Eastern Mediterranean, as did the Coptic bowl; the coins came from Merovingian France; the combs from Saxony; and the helmet, shield and sword are of possible Swedish extraction.<sup>128</sup> Such items are, perhaps unsurprisingly, significantly more common in the coastal burials of the south east. Similarly, such items are indications of contact with Continental Europe, although by what route or mechanism is not evident. It might be speculated that access to such items was exclusively kingly, which would in turn lend kings power through the ability to control their distribution, but this goes significantly beyond the available evidence.<sup>129</sup>

Greater certainty is possible with respect to the arms and armour found across the probable and possible kingly burials. The burials usually included a sword and often one or more shields, spears or angons. Seaxes are also relatively common. Less common are helmets which have only been conclusively found at Mound One, Benty Grange and Wollaston.<sup>130</sup> Rarer still are mail coats which were only conclusively discovered at Mound One, although something which may have served a similar purpose may also have been found at Benty Grange. Such items were often highly decorative. The shoulder clasps, for example, seem to have been designed to connect two halves of a leather cuirass together.<sup>131</sup> The pattern-welding of many of the swords discovered, as well as decoration on many of the hilts, falls into a similar category, as do the helmets found in Mound One, Benty Grange and Wollaston.

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<sup>126</sup> Webster and Backhouse (eds), *Making of England*, pp. 29-30. It should be noted that given the methodology adopted, the presence of such objects is, to a large degree, to be expected.

<sup>127</sup> Filmer-Sankey and Pestell, *Snape Anglo-Saxon Cemetery*, pp. 195-96.

<sup>128</sup> Carver, 'Sutton Hoo in Context', p. 102; Bruce-Mitford, 'Sutton Hoo Ship Burial: Foreign Connections', pp. 149-75, 187-95. Also references to individual items in Bruce-Mitford, *Sutton Hoo Ship Burial*, vol III; Bruce-Mitford, *Sutton Hoo Ship Burial*, vol II. The direct importation of the Helmet, sword and shield are contested by Wilson, 'Sweden - England'.

<sup>129</sup> Pestell, 'Markets, Emporia, Wics, and 'Productive' Sites'. Also Moreland, 'Production in Eighth-Century England'.

<sup>130</sup> Another was possibly discovered at Newhaven Low, although this is otherwise a poor site: Bateman, *Ten Years' Diggings*, pp. 45-46. The Staffordshire Hoard also contains a number of helmet fragments.

<sup>131</sup> Bruce-Mitford, *Sutton Hoo Ship Burial*, vol II, pp. 523-33.

Such objects are naturally associated with war-leadership. The ability to command and lead forces can thus be posited as an aspect of the nature of Anglo-Saxon kingship. Moreover, the decoration associated with these items emphasizes the importance of such activities. War-leadership naturally has an offensive side, effective military leadership allowing kings to exert their authority and influence. War-leadership can thus be seen as a source of kingly power. Implicit in this, however, is its reciprocal defensive character. Successful war-leadership allowed kings to protect their territory and their followers. In what can be surmised as an uncertain and insecure context, protection would have proven highly appealing.

Various sorts of vessels were also found in many of these burials. These included drinking horns, cups and jars, as well as larger plates, bowls, cauldrons and buckets. Various associations can be derived from these vessels, but they all revolve around food production, provision, entertainment and hospitality. The inclusion of gaming counters in several of the graves, as well as lyres in two, might also be taken as supporting this supposition. The role of king as provider can also be seen as central to kingship. It is possible to go beyond this and tentatively suggest that such provision, in the context of the protection detailed above, provided the basis of personal relationships between kings and their immediate followers. Such relationships would in turn provide early Anglo-Saxon kings with a source of power and authority. Indeed, if the *Gododdin* of the poet Aneirin is to be credited, then the consumption of alcohol played a key role in the formation and maintenance of these putative relationships.<sup>132</sup> Further, the fact that the drinking horns found at Taplow and Mound One are too large and heavy to be practical personal vessels and are thus suggestive of some form of collective, perhaps ritualised, imbibing, reinforces this impression.<sup>133</sup>

Certain items are also suggestive of exclusively kingly purposes, although such are by their very nature uncertain. There is a range of items of uncertain purpose, which might fall into this category, but two require particular attention. These are the whetstone and axe-hammer (Figs.5-6).<sup>134</sup> The whetstone is hugely enigmatic, but it is hard to

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<sup>132</sup> Koch, *Gododdin of Aneirin*.

<sup>133</sup> Neuman de Vegvar, 'Sutton Hoo Horns'. More problematically: Enright, *Lady with a Mead Cup*; with the comments of Rollason, 'Protection and the Mead-Hall', pp. 26-35. Further: Bullough, *Friends, Neighbours and Fellow-Drinkers*.

<sup>134</sup> Arguments can also be made that the stools found at Prittlewell and Caenby are exclusively kingly: Anon, *Prittlewell Prince*, p. 30. Similarly with that metal stands of Mound One and Prittlewell if they are corruptions of Roman military standards, and analogous to the *tufa* that Bede records that Edwin had carried before him: *HE*, II.16; Bruce-Mitford, *Sutton Hoo Ship Burial*, vol II, pp. 403-31. Likewise, if the Snape ring can be considered a seal ring, then it too would be kingly: Filmer-Sankey and Pestell,

envisage it being used in anything other than a symbolic context; it has certainly never been used as an actual whetstone. Saying more than this requires venturing into excessive speculation, but the suggestion itself is enough. The Celtic-derived design of the whetstone is also highly suggestive, prompting ideas of British influence, origins or borrowings in early Anglo-Saxon kingship.<sup>135</sup> The axe-hammer is equally problematic. It is without parallel and there are no indications of carpenters or shipwrights using such a tool. Indeed, its geometry would make it almost useless as a wood-working tool. A battle usage has also been suggested, although problems with that are troubling for similar reasons. The most compelling suggestion to date has been that it was used in the ritual sacrifice of animals through pole-axing. This is, of course, hardly certain, but if correct it is suggestive of sacral kingship; certainly it implies a kingly involvement in religion.<sup>136</sup> To generalise, such items reinforce the supposition previously mooted that Anglo-Saxon kingship was ideologically capable and aware. Further, this exploitation provides another indication of the sources of power underpinning early Anglo-Saxon kingship.

One final area also needs to be addressed. Alongside the elite male burials, with their probable and possible kingly sub-set, there existed a class of elite female burials. These largely date to the mid or late seventh century and are not as grand as the richest male burials.<sup>137</sup> Consequently, it is not possible to adopt the same methodology as was used with the elite male burials. Nonetheless, allowing for the general trend towards progressively less-lavish graves, the elite female burials stand out by their exceptional wealth.<sup>138</sup> Confines of space mean that a full examination of the topic is not possible. Instead, a sub-set consisting of bed burials will serve as a proxy for female elite burials. This distinctive burial rite was almost exclusively associated with female burial and is characterised by generally high levels of wealth.<sup>139</sup>

A few examples must suffice to illuminate their character. Swallowcliffe Down, Wiltshire, is one of the better-known bed burials. The burial was that of a young woman between 17 and 25 years; the bed was placed in a chamber built inside a re-used Bronze

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*Snappe Anglo-Saxon Cemetery*, pp. 96-98. The helmets might also be interpreted as indicators of kingship: Ambrosiani, 'Regalia and Symbols', p. 25.

<sup>135</sup> Enright, 'Sutton Hoo Sceptre'.

<sup>136</sup> Dobat, 'King and his Cult'.

<sup>137</sup> Hines and Bayliss (eds), *Anglo-Saxon Graves: A Chronological Framework*, pp. 339-458. More broadly: Lucy, 'Gender and Gender Roles'; Crawford, 'Anglo-Saxon Women'.

<sup>138</sup> As Lucy et al., 'Burial of A Princess?'; Speake, *Bed Burial on Swallowcliffe Down*.

<sup>139</sup> Appendix II.

Age barrow. The burial contained glass palm cups, a yew bucket and a bronze mounted bucket, as well as knives, a skillet, items of jewellery and a bronze sprinkler or strainer amongst other items. It has been dated to the late seventh century by analogy with other similar burials, although this may need to be brought forward slightly in light of the recent re-assessment of early Anglo-Saxon archaeological chronologies.<sup>140</sup> A number of these elements are found elsewhere, such as at Trumpington, Cambridgeshire, which contained a pectoral cross, chatelaine, beads (possibly in a purse), and a knife,<sup>141</sup> or in Burial 42 at Street House, North Yorkshire. This burial was also most likely to have been under a burial mound. It contained, in addition to the bed and its presumed textile furnishings, an impressive gold and garnet cloisonné shield brooch, two gold cabochon pendants, and miscellaneous other items. The bed was also raised on some form of platform or bier and, unusually, was associated with some sort of structure. The cemetery at Street House has been dated to c.630-c.670, with burial 42 in the second half of this range.<sup>142</sup>

Many of the difficulties encountered with the elite male burials are also found in the elite female burials. It is not known who was buried in the burials nor what their status might have been. While it has been suggested that some of the burials are of royal women, this cannot be proven, and the lower levels of wealth at these sites mean that it cannot be considered as a probability.<sup>143</sup> It also might be suggested that these burials derive from monastic communities, but no direct or compelling spatial links have been established. The burials do seem to broadly respect the distributions observed with the elite male burials, but there are a number of outliers. In the context of Frankish mortuary archaeology, Halsall has demonstrated that power and status were often negotiated through female burials.<sup>144</sup> These burials may, therefore, represent a continuation of the issues and concerns seen in the elite male burials. It is not clear, however, why these concerns should shift from male to female burials.

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<sup>140</sup> Hines and Bayliss (eds), *Anglo-Saxon Graves: A Chronological Framework*; Speake, *Bed Burial on Swallowciffe Down*.

<sup>141</sup> Dickens and Lucy, *Anglo-Saxon Teen Buried in Bed*.

<sup>142</sup> Sherlock, *Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Street House*; Simmons, 'Bed Burial from Street House'.

<sup>143</sup> As Sherlock, *Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Street House*, pp. 126-32; or more obliquely Lucy et al., 'Burial of A Princess?'. A distinction needs to be drawn between kingship and the idea of royalty. Although they are clearly related, it is conceivable that kingship could exist without a concept of royalty. Royalty is a broader concept which subsumes ideas of kingship. However, the instances of elite female burial, and the possibility of queenship, allow ideas of royalty to be suggested.

<sup>144</sup> Halsall, 'Female Status and Power'.

It is appealing, therefore, to link these burials to female status.<sup>145</sup> This is not to suggest that these burials directly reflect the status of those buried in them, but rather to suggest that issues of female power and status were being negotiated through them. It needs to be borne in mind that these burials were broadly contemporary with the early flourishing of the early Anglo-Saxon church and the important role that aristocratic and royal women played within it.<sup>146</sup> Seen in this context, therefore, the elite female burials are suggestive of the potential power and authority of women in early Anglo-Saxon society.

Three further suggestions follow on from this. In the first instance, this potential female power leads naturally to the idea that one must look beyond kingship in order to fully appreciate the exercise of power and authority in early Anglo-Saxon society. Moreover, by extension, it is possible that an idea of queenship existed alongside that of kingship. As a final supposition, given the interpretation of elite male burial offered above, it might be taken that the instances of elite female burial point to a development or change in queenship and further, given the chronological relationship between male and female elite burial, that queenship followed on from kingship. Indeed, it might be possible to locate the origins of queenship within kingship. As they stand, these ideas are of course highly speculative, but they raise important possibilities.

### Conclusions

The perceived link, therefore, between elite male burial and the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship did not prove to be verifiable. Rather, it seemed that elite male burial was an indication of a change in the nature of Anglo-Saxon kingship. This was linked to much broader changes in Anglo-Saxon society. Elite burial was demonstrated to be a flexible and ideologically sophisticated tool at the disposal of early Anglo-Saxon kingship, albeit one which was filtered through local cultural, social and political contexts. Elite burials did not directly shed light on the origins of kingship. Insight was, however, gained into the nature of early Anglo-Saxon kingship. War-leadership and protection, feasting and personal relationships were all highlighted as being of significance, along with several more speculative suggestions. These ideas explain in part what the power of kings was

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<sup>145</sup> As Blair, *Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 230-33.

<sup>146</sup> Nicholson, '*Feminae gloriosae*'. Further: Ortenberg, 'Virgin Queens'; Pelteret, 'Bede's women'; Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*.

based upon, and in part why rule by kings became accepted. They thus cast light indirectly onto the origins of kingship and provide a basis upon which to progress.



## Elite Settlement

Following a similar trend to the burial evidence, changes can also be observed in Anglo-Saxon settlement patterns during the later sixth and early seventh centuries.<sup>1</sup> New forms of settlement emerge, including some 'elite' settlements characterised by notably large buildings and obviously planned layouts. As with the elite burials, these elite settlements have often been linked to the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship.<sup>2</sup> However, unlike the burial evidence, other potentially elite settlement types exist outside this relative narrow time-period, being identifiable across the entire period under consideration. As with the previous section the validity of this association between elite settlements of the later sixth and early seventh centuries and the origins of kingship needs to be re-evaluated. Additionally, possible links between kingship and other, typically earlier, forms of elite settlement will be assessed. The character and potential uses of these various elite settlement types will be used to cast light on the nature of early Anglo-Saxon kingship, and by association its origins. Where possible, the architecture of specific buildings on these sites will be examined. Through this it will be possible to create a new conception of the relationship between elite settlements and the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship.

Bede identified six sites as specifically royal in his *Historia ecclesiastica*:<sup>3</sup> *Ad Murum*, Bamburgh, *Campodonum*,<sup>4</sup> Milfield, Rendlesham and Yeavinger,<sup>5</sup> while he also implied that Catterick was a royal settlement site, it being compared to Yeavinger as the setting of a comparable instance of mass-conversion.<sup>6</sup> There are further references to royal settlements adjacent to the River Derwent, Yorkshire and near Bamburgh, as well as a later royal settlement near Leeds.<sup>7</sup> In turn, Stephen of Ripon's *Vita sancti Wilfridi*

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<sup>1</sup> Hamerow, *Rural Settlements*, pp. 72-83, 102-09; Ulmschneider, 'Settlement Hierarchy', p. 159; Hamerow, 'Earliest Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms', pp. 275-80. More generally: Rahtz, 'Buildings and Rural Settlement'; Hamerow, 'Archaeology of Early Anglo-Saxon Settlement'. As above, the term Anglo-Saxon is used as a term of convenience, referring to a chronological period and material culture, without ethnic prejudice or assumption: Hamerow, *Rural Settlements*, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Hamerow, 'Earliest Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms', pp 276-80, particularly 278-80; Thacker, 'England in the Seventh Century', p. 474; Hamerow, 'Anglo-Saxon Oxfordshire', pp. 29-32; Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>3</sup> Yeavinger, for example, is described as *villa regia*: *HE*, II.14.

<sup>4</sup> Potentially a Roman site near Dewsbury, Yorkshire: Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, p. 75.

<sup>5</sup> *Ad Murum*: *HE*, III.21 and III.22; Bamburgh: *HE*, III, 6, III.12 and III.16; *Campodonum*: *HE*, II.14; Millfield: *HE*, II.14; Rendlesham: *HE*, III.22; Yeavinger: *HE*, II.14. More broadly: Campbell, 'Bede's Words for Places'.

<sup>6</sup> *HE*, II.14.

<sup>7</sup> *HE*, II.9, III.23, II.14 respectively.

explicitly refers to Dunbar and an unidentified place, *In Broninis*, as royal.<sup>8</sup> It is also possible that the *Medilwong*, mentioned in the anonymous life of Saint Cuthbert, was a kingly settlement.<sup>9</sup> The recent discovery of pre-ecclesiastical settlement at Lyminge can similarly be posited as kingly in nature,<sup>10</sup> as can pre-ecclesiastical settlement at Coldingham, which has been located on St. Abb's Head, Berwickshire.<sup>11</sup> Later ecclesiastical sites occupying former Roman shore forts in southern England, as Dover and Reculver, might be thought of as possessing a similar profile. However, to-date, archaeological evidence of pre-ecclesiastical settlement has not been forthcoming from these sites.<sup>12</sup> Clearly not all of these kingly sites have been identified, fewer have been located, and fewer still have been excavated. Nonetheless, such sites provide a comparative basis upon which to identify other sites as potentially kingly through analogy with sites it has been possible to excavate.<sup>13</sup>

Of the sites which have been identified and located, two distinct categories can be proposed. Pre-ecclesiastical Lyminge, together with Milfield, Rendlesham and Yeavinger can be classified as rural settlements, while Bamburgh, pre-ecclesiastical Coldingham and Dunbar seem best described as enclosed sites.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, two further categories of elite settlement can be suggested on a purely archaeological basis: the utilisation of former military sites in northern Britain, particularly along Hadrian's Wall; and the potential continuities at several former Roman towns. These four categories form the basis of the following analysis. Each settlement type will be addressed in turn, in approximate chronological order. It should be acknowledged that such categorisations inevitably introduce problems and difficulties of their own. However, sub-division is essential in what is a highly heterogeneous body of information.

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<sup>8</sup> *VW*, 36, 38 respectively. It has been suggested that *In Broninis* can be identified with Fenwick, Northumberland, and the tidal island of Lindisfarne, although this is far from certain: Jones, "'Broninis'".

<sup>9</sup> *Anon.VC*, IV.6. This supposition rests on the fact that a Northumbrian king was killed there in 759 by his *familia*.

<sup>10</sup> Lyminge is known to have possessed a double monastery by c.700, although certain traditions would place this significantly earlier: Kelly, 'Lyminge Minster and its Early Charters'. Given that kings were the main source of ecclesiastical patronage, the most plausible explanation is that the earliest phases of settlement at Lyminge are kingly in nature. Drawing a chronological divide between royal and ecclesiastical phases remains difficult.

<sup>11</sup> A similar rationale applies here also. Coldingham was presided over by Aebbe, the sister of Oswiu of Northumbria, *HE*, IV.19; *VW*, 39, so there is a high probability that it utilised a pre-existing royal settlement. Additionally, Bede's description of the site as *Coludi urbs* implies that the pre-ecclesiastical royal settlement was a non-Roman, enclosed site, as Campbell, 'Bede's Words for Places', pp. 99-102.

<sup>12</sup> As Philp, *Anglo-Saxon Dover*; with Higham and Ryan, *Anglo-Saxon World*, pp. 136-37. More generally: Welch, 'Kent to AD 800', pp. 198-99.

<sup>13</sup> Further: Ulmschneider, 'Settlement Hierarchy'. Also Hamerow, *Rural Settlements*, pp. 98-101; Hamerow, 'Overview', pp. 124-26.

<sup>14</sup> Campbell, 'Bede's Words for Places'.

As with the previous section, various caveats apply. Historiographical paradigms are deliberately eschewed to ensure that the archaeological evidence can be appreciated on its own terms. Similarly, recent discoveries at Rendlesham and Lyminge underline the fact that future discoveries may also be forthcoming.<sup>15</sup> Further, in addition to the general difficulties associated with archaeological information and its interpretation, particular challenges are associated with settlement archaeology. Very few of the settlements have been excavated in anything approaching totality; it is thus difficult to determine how representative current understandings are.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, certain areas of the country are much better represented than others, while the discovery of settlements is itself highly prejudiced by soil type, settlements appearing more readily in aerial surveys of free-draining soils and gravels. Moreover, settlements are often extremely difficult to date with any precision as archaeologists frequently unearth little in the way of diagnostic finds, or even stratigraphy.<sup>17</sup> This is most problematic when such sites are known only from aerial reconnaissance. Further, typically only the foundations of buildings, or their imprints, remain, rendering any discussion of superstructure or architecture highly speculative.<sup>18</sup> Caution, therefore, needs to be exercised so as not to exceed the available evidence.

Finally, it is necessary to pause briefly and explore exactly what early Anglo-Saxon kings required from settlements. Various practical requirements can be opined such as the necessity of shelter and storage. This provision needed to extend to those who surround the king as well as the king himself. The ways in which these needs were met has the potential to reveal much regarding both the existence of kings and early Anglo-Saxon society more generally. More broadly, kingly settlements might be thought of as being designed to enhance kingly power. This may be through practical or tangible activities, such as the production of food or the manufacture of items, or more intangible ideological factors. They may also, more problematically, be thought of as centres of administration. Not all of these aspects will necessarily be readily apparent in the

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<sup>15</sup> Thomas, 'Life Before the Minster'; Minter, Plouviez, and Scull, 'Rendlesham Rediscovered'.

<sup>16</sup> Hamerow, 'Overview', p. 119.

<sup>17</sup> Hamerow, *Rural Settlements*, pp. 1-6; Hamerow, 'Overview', pp. 120-21.

<sup>18</sup> Smith, 'Inference from Archaeological Evidence'; Reynolds, 'Substructure to Superstructure'. Also Johnson and Waddington, 'Settlement Remains from Cheviot Quarry', pp. 256-69; Mills, '(Re)constructing Northumbrian Timber Buildings'; Charles, 'Construction of Buildings with Irregularly-Spaced Posts'; Fowler, 'Temporary Works'.

archaeological record but it is through examining such issues that these settlements can shed light on the origins and nature of early Anglo-Saxon kingship.<sup>19</sup>

### **Roman Military Sites of Northern Britain**

Formal imperial governance of Roman Britain ceased c.410. The political circumstances and implications of this cessation are addressed in the following section; at this juncture it is only certain archaeological aspects which are of relevance. It has, at times, been assumed that all imperial personnel – soldiers and bureaucrats alike – were withdrawn from Britain during the period leading up to c.409.<sup>20</sup> However, this, as will be demonstrated below, seems unlikely. Nor does the archaeological evidence from the military sites of northern Britain support the idea of a sudden or systematic abandonment.<sup>21</sup> Indeed a number of the sites, the evidence being strongest at Birdoswald,<sup>22</sup> Vindolanda,<sup>23</sup> South Shields,<sup>24</sup> Binchester,<sup>25</sup> and Piercebridge,<sup>26</sup> exhibit indications of ongoing settlement activity well into the fifth and possibly even the sixth centuries.<sup>27</sup> There are, broadly speaking, two explanations which can be offered for this continuity: firstly, that there continued to be some form of ostensibly, or originally, Roman presence at these sites; or secondly, that the sites were re-occupied or re-used almost immediately by other communities.<sup>28</sup> In either scenario, these settlements represented local centres of power and authority. Consequently, the power and authority wielded from these sites needs to be assessed so that any potential relationship to the

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<sup>19</sup> Campbell, 'Anglo-Saxon Courts'; Sawyer, 'Royal *Tun*', pp. 273-74. Larson, *King's Household*, continues to be of use. This section has also been greatly enhanced by various discussions with Rollason.

<sup>20</sup> As Wickham, *Inheritance of Rome*, p. 151.

<sup>21</sup> Collins, *Hadrian's Wall and the End of Empire*, pp. 74-110; in summary Collins, 'Military Communities and Transformation'. On Hadrian's Wall more generally: Bidwell and Hodgson, *Roman Army in Northern England*; Breeze, *Handbook to the Roman Wall*; Breeze and Dobson, *Hadrian's Wall*.

<sup>22</sup> Wilmott, *Birdoswald 1987-1992*, pp. 209-31. Also Wilmott, *Birdoswald Roman Fort*, pp. 113-26; Wilmott, Cool, and Evans, 'Excavations at Birdoswald (*Banna*)'.

<sup>23</sup> Birley and Blake, *Excavations of 2005 - 2007*, pp. 48-51; Birley, Birley, and Blake, *1998 Excavations at Vindolanda*; Bidwell, *Vindolanda at Chesterholm*. Vindolanda has been the subject of a series of research campaigns, for further references: Collins, *Hadrian's Wall and the End of Empire*, p. 173.

<sup>24</sup> Bidwell and Speak, *Excavations at South Shields*; also Hodgson, 'Arbeia', p. 82.

<sup>25</sup> Ferris, *Beautiful Rooms are Empty*. Excavations at Binchester are still ongoing, details of which can be found on the excavation blog: <http://binchester.blogspot.co.uk/>; and Petts, 'Military and Civilian', pp. 319-22.

<sup>26</sup> Cool and Mason (eds), *Roman Piercebridge*.

<sup>27</sup> Other sites: Collins, *Hadrian's Wall and the End of Empire*, pp. 101-06, 171-75, with summary bibliographic material; Wilmott, 'Late Roman Transition at Birdoswald', pp. 13-16. Carlisle, Catterick and York are addressed in the following section.

<sup>28</sup> Collins, *Hadrian's Wall and the End of Empire*, pp. 33-35.

origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship can be evaluated. Complicating such an evaluation are the difficulties surrounding archaeological dating in this period. The cessation of both significant new sources of currency and the mass-production of pottery types removes much of the dating framework utilised with respect to previous centuries.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, it is only in the last 30 years that fifth-century activity has been identified at these sites.<sup>30</sup>

Nonetheless, evidence is available. This is most explicit at Birdoswald, where excavations around the western gate have revealed strong indications of continuity of use. In the mid fourth century, the sub-floor of the south granary, building 197, was infilled and re-laid; around the same time, the roof of the north granary, building 198, collapsed, in two stages, and this building was used as a quarry. The south granary was occupied for some domestic function – it contained two successive hearths – while the north was used for intermittent dumping. The south granary itself collapsed after 388-95, as a coin of the Emperor Theodosius was sealed in its final deposits, the worn nature of this coin suggesting a later rather than an earlier date for this collapse.<sup>31</sup> Broadly contemporary with this activity was the modification of building 803, the *praetorium*, into an apsidal structure. This has been tentatively interpreted as a church. It is not certain how long it remained in use, although it did remain standing for longer than the other buildings in its vicinity.<sup>32</sup>

Following, and possibly overlapping, this phase was a series of timber structures. Building 199 was built on the former north granary, and another, building 4426, was built abutting the western wall of the fort immediately to the south of the western gate. Another timber structure, building 200, was subsequently built on top of building 199. At some point two further buildings, 4298 and 4299, were built against the eastern wall and gate, although it is not clear how these related to the other buildings on the site. The chronologies of these buildings are problematic. Building 199 was constructed later than 367-78, as a coin of the Emperor Valens was found in the deposits in building 198. The relationship between building 199 and the re-floored south granary is less clear, although it is conceivable that building 199 was intended as a replacement for this structure, pushing its construction forward by at least a decade. Given that the timber structures seem to have been well constructed, a sequence lasting into the mid fifth century seems

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<sup>29</sup> Collins, *Hadrian's Wall and the End of Empire*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>30</sup> Wilmott, 'Late Roman Transition at Birdoswald', p. 13.

<sup>31</sup> Wilmott, *Birdoswald 1987-1992*, pp. 203-09, 218-20.

<sup>32</sup> Wilmott, Cool, and Evans, 'Excavations at Birdoswald (*Banna*)', pp. 248, 395.

certain. With appropriate maintenance and a less literal view of the coin dates, this might be extended considerably further. Intriguingly, Collingwood-Bruce illustrated and discussed a small-long brooch, of sixth-century type, which had supposedly been found at Birdoswald, in the second edition of his *The Roman Wall*. This would strengthen the case for a longer chronology, although the veracity of this find has been doubted.<sup>33</sup>

Similar sequences can be suggested elsewhere, although the evidence is never as strong. At Vindolanda, there are slight indications that the defences of the fort were refurbished in the fifth century. The walls of the fort, as far as can be discerned, were reinforced with earth and rubble embankments.<sup>34</sup> An apsidal structure, again interpreted as a possible church, was discovered in the *praetorium* courtyard in 1998, which may be linked to a late-fifth- or early-sixth-century tombstone discovered nearby in the late nineteenth century.<sup>35</sup> A number of dry-stone structures of post-Roman date have also been discovered in various places on the fort site.<sup>36</sup>

Similarly, the fort at South Shields exhibits indications of both defensive remodelling and possible occupation in the fifth century. In the area of the southwest gate, the inner and outer defensive ditches, ditches F and G, were re-cut during the late fourth century. These ditches filled with silt before a new ditch, ditch H, of up to 3m in depth and 6m width, was cut through the deposits in ditch F. This ditch also cut the road leading to the southwest gate, which by this point was derelict. The surface of this road trapped a coin of Theodosius (388-402). This coin in combination with the silting deposits allows ditch H to be confidently dated to the fifth century, quite possibly after c.409. Ditch H was itself allowed to silt up. Subsequent to the excavation of this ditch, the southwest gate was brought back into use and remodelled in timber.<sup>37</sup> Four inhumation burials, with radio-carbon dates consistent with a fifth-century date, interred subsequent to the silting of ditch H, were also discovered in the vicinity of the southwest gate.<sup>38</sup> Internal evidence for fifth-century occupation was found tangentially in the form of a series of demolitions and quarrying, although to what purpose is not clear.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Wilmott, *Birdoswald 1987-1992*, pp. 209-18, 220-24. Summarised: Wilmott, *Birdoswald Roman Fort*, pp. 119-26.

<sup>34</sup> Bidwell, *Vindolanda at Chesterholm*, pp. 45-46, 76.

<sup>35</sup> Birley, Birley, and Blake, *1998 Excavations at Vindolanda*, pp. 20-23; with Jackson, 'Brigomaglos and St. Briog', p. 62.

<sup>36</sup> Birley and Blake, *Excavations of 2005 - 2007*, pp. 48-51; Birley and Blake, *Vindolanda, the 1999 Excavations*, pp. 9-10, 16-17; Birley, Birley, and Blake, *1998 Excavations at Vindolanda*, p. 24.

<sup>37</sup> Bidwell and Speak, *Excavations at South Shields*, pp. 138-43.

<sup>38</sup> Bidwell and Speak, *Excavations at South Shields*, pp. 143-44.

<sup>39</sup> Bidwell and Speak, *Excavations at South Shields*, pp. 101-06, discussion 45-47.

As with the other sites, it is also possible that a church once stood on the *principia* forecourt during the fifth century, although the evidence supporting this is thin.<sup>40</sup> These indications of continuity, however, need to be balanced against the discovery of two burials of seeming fifth-century date in the courtyard house.<sup>41</sup> Burial in a settlement context was not typical Roman practice; evidence suggesting continuity, therefore, may in fact be evidence of re-occupation.

South of Hadrian's Wall similar observations are possible. At Binchester, sequences extending into the fifth century have been found in the *praetorium*, the *vicus*, and in those barracks which have been excavated under controlled archaeological conditions. All three areas have produced extensive faunal remains and evidence of animal processing. Indications of industrial activity were also found. A radio-carbon date taken from a barrack block in the eastern corner of the fort points to this activity occurring at some point during the late fourth or early fifth centuries.<sup>42</sup> Likewise, at Piercebridge, as elsewhere, the defences were remodelled during the late fourth or early fifth centuries. Specifically, an inner ditch, to the south of the east gate, was dug, or re-cut so as to remove all traces of any preceding ditch, the earliest fills of which included a coin of Theodosius (388-402) and a late-type green bead. This ditch was subsequently remodelled.<sup>43</sup> The drainage system of the baths house was also remodelled, at the earliest in the very late fourth century.<sup>44</sup> More significantly, the ceramic evidence indicates that North African olive oil continued to be imported until the late fifth century.<sup>45</sup> A small amount of 'Anglian' pottery found on the site would reinforce this image of occupation continuing to the end of the fifth century.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, the small finds, including a pierced gold solidus of 467-72 and a silver pennanular brooch of fifth-century date, would also suggest sustained high-status occupation during the fifth century.<sup>47</sup>

Seen individually, few if any of these sites present a particularly compelling case for continuity. Certainly the intensity of settlement at these sites in the fifth century would seem to be significantly below that of the second or third centuries. This, however,

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<sup>40</sup> Bidwell and Speak, *Excavations at South Shields*, pp. 102-04.

<sup>41</sup> Hodgson, 'Arbeia', p. 82.

<sup>42</sup> Petts, 'Military and Civilian', pp. 319-22; Ferris, *Beautiful Rooms are Empty*, pp. 82-91, 553-55, 566-70.

<sup>43</sup> Cool and Mason (eds), *Roman Piercebridge*, pp. 73-77, 269, 308.

<sup>44</sup> Cool and Mason (eds), *Roman Piercebridge*, pp. 45-47, with discussion 308.

<sup>45</sup> Cool and Mason (eds), *Roman Piercebridge*, pp. 208-11.

<sup>46</sup> Cool and Mason (eds), *Roman Piercebridge*, pp. 231-33.

<sup>47</sup> Cool and Mason (eds), *Roman Piercebridge*, pp. 267-269, 308-11.

is also true of the fourth century, albeit to a lesser extent.<sup>48</sup> Seen collectively the overall image is much more persuasive. There is a distinct pattern of activity at these sites extending into the fifth century if not further in some instances. This is not to suggest that the activity at each of these sites was necessarily the same in nature, extent or duration, only that in their continuing activity they share certain features.

Archaeologically, it is difficult to determine the nature of this ongoing activity. The fact that these settlements occupy fort sites would perhaps suggest a military function. As has been discussed this has both offensive and defensive implications, although the relative importance of these two aspects is hardly clear from the archaeology. The faunal and amphorae remains at a number of these sites, similarly found at Carlisle and York, might also suggest a culture of feasting. The faunal remains at York, for example, contained a high proportion of suckling pigs.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, in his interpretation of the wooden hall-structures at Birdoswald, Wilmott suggested exactly that and drew a comparison with both later British and Anglo-Saxon parallels.<sup>50</sup> Without more information, historical or archaeological, it would be unwise to develop these ideas further. It is conceivable, for example, that the local power represented by these sites was wielded by individuals to whom the term warlord might be meaningfully applied, but this is not the only viable interpretation.<sup>51</sup> It is also possible, although less probable, that a more communal structure was in evidence whereby those occupying the former Roman forts looked after the defence of the surrounding area in exchange for materials and provisions.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, a variety of differing phenomena may have been in evidence at different times at different sites. Distinguishing between them is not possible with the evidence available.

At the outset, two differing models of continuity were proposed: continuous Roman occupation or abandonment followed by re-occupation. The archaeology is not sufficient to rule out either scenario. Certain indications, such as the burials at South Shields and the intentional destruction at various sites might point to the latter. Equally, the lack of an obvious break in any of the archaeological sequences would point to the former. The nature of the forces occupying Hadrian's Wall, the *limitanei* – the division

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<sup>48</sup> Collins, *Hadrian's Wall and the End of Empire*, pp. 51-54.

<sup>49</sup> Carver (ed.) *Excavations at York Minster: Volume I*, pp. 533-55.

<sup>50</sup> Wilmott, *Birdoswald 1987-1992*, pp. 226-28; also Collins, *Hadrian's Wall and the End of Empire*, pp. 164-66.

<sup>51</sup> As Smyth, *Warlords and Holy Men*; more problematically Laycock, *Warlords*.

<sup>52</sup> As Casey, 'End of the Garrisons on Hadrian's Wall', pp. 74-78.



of the late imperial army responsible for the Empire's frontiers – would also support this possibility. As a static force, the *limitanei* would have become increasingly integrated into frontier society over successive generations, increasing their viability in the absence of imperial superstructures of command and supply.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, it is possible that to a large extent the *limitanei* were supplied locally during the fourth century, as the abandonment of military granaries across northern Britain suggests that bulk storage was no-longer necessary.<sup>54</sup> Absolute continuity might, thus, be regarded as the most probable scenario, but it is not the only one.<sup>55</sup>

Nonetheless, the recognition of these settlements as centres of power is itself significant. It remains, therefore, to determine how they related to early Anglo-Saxon kingships. Certainly, in the crudest sense, the combination of feasting and military capabilities echoes what was previously seen in the burial evidence, but this combination is hardly unique to Anglo-Saxon kingship. More problematically, none of the settlements give any indications of continuing in use into the historical Anglo-Saxon period, although it is interesting to note that the lower Tyne Valley was also a centre of power for the later Northumbrian kings, while South Shields has been suggested as a royal settlement.<sup>56</sup> Various options can be proposed to explain this. The power present at these sites might simply have dissolved of its own accord over time. Equally, it might have relocated to places of greater geographic or economic convenience. The linear distribution of these settlements along Hadrian's Wall and key Roman roads can hardly be considered conducive to the establishment of stable governance.<sup>57</sup> The sites may also have been conquered, suppressed or subsumed by other entities. None of these scenarios is mutually exclusive. Nor, unfortunately, can they be evaluated. One is simply left with the existence of these power structures and the possibility that in some way they were related to early Anglo-Saxon kingship.

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<sup>53</sup> Collins, *Hadrian's Wall and the End of Empire*, pp. 54-57, 106-10.

<sup>54</sup> Collins, *Hadrian's Wall and the End of Empire*, pp. 57-66, 93-95, 96-101.

<sup>55</sup> Continuity is the interpretation favoured by Collins, who posits that Roman forces remained, but that political and military power became devolved on to individual forts: Collins, *Hadrian's Wall and the End of Empire*, pp. 106-10, 154-69. However, see also, the differing interpretations of Gerrard, *Ruin of Roman Britain*, pp. 161-68; Wilmott, 'Late Roman Transition at Birdoswald', pp. 16-18; Higham, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons*, pp. 86-97, 217-18; more problematically Dark and Dark, 'Reoccupation of Hadrian's Wall'; and Dark, 'Re-Defence of Hadrian's Wall?'

<sup>56</sup> Wood, 'Geography of Power'; Wood, *Origins of Jarrow*.

<sup>57</sup> Further: Petts, 'Military and Civilian', pp. 322-25, more problematically 325-30.

## Lincoln, Wroxeter and the Towns of Roman Britain

Contemporary with the elite activity at former Roman military sites are indications of possible elite associations at several former Roman towns. The evidence is most compelling at the former provincial capital of Lincoln,<sup>58</sup> but can also potentially be observed at Carlisle,<sup>59</sup> Catterick,<sup>60</sup> York,<sup>61</sup> Wroxeter,<sup>62</sup> St Albans,<sup>63</sup> and Canterbury.<sup>64</sup> The interpretative difficulties surrounding these sites are, if anything, even greater as the extant evidence is minimal. However, the implications of elite activity at these sites are potentially of great import. Unlike the military sites, all but two of the towns in question became places of demonstrable significance and royal associations during the seventh century.

To start with Lincoln, a sequence of three buildings was discovered in the Roman *forum* during the late 1970s. Little is known of the first building of this sequence, other than it was of timber and at earliest late fourth-century in construction – a coin of the emperor Theodosius was found trodden into what has been presumed to have been its floor.<sup>65</sup> The second building, also of timber, was formed of a semi-circular eastern apse and a rectangular east-west nave. On this basis, together with the later ecclesiastical use of the site, it has been convincingly interpreted as a church. A cist burial, which contained a hanging bowl, is also thought to have been associated with the structure, although there is no explicit connection. The third structure was significantly later, stone-built, and unconnected to the earlier two, the site being used as a burial ground in the interim period. It is on the basis of the burials and the hanging bowl that the potential church must be dated. The hanging bowl, which exhibited considerable wear, is a type

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<sup>58</sup> Gilmour, 'Sub-Roman or Saxon'; Steane, *Upper City and Adjacent Suburbs*, pp. 129-211; Vince, 'Lincoln in the Early Medieval Era'; Jones, 'Colonia Era', pp. 124-38; Steane, 'St Paul-in-the-Bail: A Dated Sequence?'. Also Jones, 'St Paul in the Bail'; and the papers in Vince (ed.), *Pre-Viking Lindsey*.

<sup>59</sup> McCarthy, 'Carlisle Cathedral'; Zant, *Carlisle: The stratigraphy*, pp. 327-70, 463-71; Howard-Davis, *Carlisle: The Finds*; McCarthy, *Blackfriars Street, Carlisle*. Also McCarthy, *Roman Carlisle*, pp. 134-40.

<sup>60</sup> Wilson, *Cataractonium*, 2 vols; Wilson et al., 'Early Anglian Catterick'.

<sup>61</sup> Carver (ed.) *Excavations at York Minster: Volume I*; Radley, 'Early Medieval Stone Tower'. Also Hall, 'Recent Research into Early Medieval York', pp. 71-74; Ottaway, *Roman York*, pp. 131-49.

<sup>62</sup> Barker et al., *Baths Basilica Wroxeter*. Also White, Gaffney, and Gaffney, *Wroxeter, the Cornovii, and the Urban Process: Volume 2*; White and Gaffney, *Wroxeter, the Cornovii, and the Urban Process: Volume 1*; White and Barker, *Wroxeter*, pp. 118-36.

<sup>63</sup> Frere, *Verulamium Excavations: Vol. III*; Frere, *Verulamium Excavations: Vol. II*; Frere, *Verulamium Excavations: Vol. I*. Also Niblett, *Verulamium*, pp. 128-46.

<sup>64</sup> The main site of relevance is the Marlowe Car Park: Blockley et al., *Excavations in the Marlowe Car Park*. Further bibliographic information can be found on the Canterbury Archaeological Trust website: <http://www.canterburytrust.co.uk/publications/>.

<sup>65</sup> Gilmour, 'Sub-Roman or Saxon', pp. 232-33.

which has been placed by Bruce-Mitford to the first half of the seventh century.<sup>66</sup> Six burials also cut the foundations of the second building. Radio-carbon analysis of these burials would suggest, contrary to the cist burial, that the latest date at which the church could have been in use was the early- to mid-seventh century. A *terminus ante quem* in the sixth century would, therefore, seem more credible, suggesting that the cist burial was not in fact associated with this building.<sup>67</sup>

Some form of elite presence can thus be assumed as occupying Lincoln during the fifth and sixth centuries. This presence seems to be religious rather than secular, but there are circumstantial indications that a secular element was present also. In the first instance, Lincolnshire features a large number of fifth-century Anglo-Saxon cremation cemeteries. These form a ring surrounding Lincoln and its hinterland, suggesting that there was some form of effective coercive or cultural power wielded from Lincoln which negated this Anglo-Saxon activity.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, the later Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Lindsey derives its name from the British name \**Lindēs*, which translates as ‘the people of (the territory of the city of) Lincoln’.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, the later genealogy of the kingdom of Lindsey includes the British name *Cædbæd*.<sup>70</sup> Individually, these indications are all open to question. The cemetery evidence relies upon a problematic archaeological interpretation of ethnicity;<sup>71</sup> the British provenance of the name Lindsey does not mean the kingdom shared that provenance; while genealogies are more revealing of perceptions of the past than the past itself.<sup>72</sup> Nonetheless, seen with the archaeology of Lincoln, they are suggestive of the emergence of a British polity based upon Lincoln in the fifth century.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Bruce-Mitford, *Late Celtic Hanging-Bowls*, pp. 34-40, 191-99.

<sup>67</sup> Gilmour, 'Sub-Roman or Saxon', pp. 232-54; Steane, *Upper City and Adjacent Suburbs*, pp. 153-63; Jones, 'Colonia Era', pp. 127-30; Vince, 'Lincoln in the Early Medieval Era', pp. 147-52; Steane, 'St Paul-in-the-Bail: A Dated Sequence?'. The dating of the first two buildings remains oddly contentious. For contrasting opinions, c.f. Green, *Britons and Anglo-Saxons*, pp. 65-67; and Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Lincolnshire*, pp. 226-30.

<sup>68</sup> Leahy, *Anglo-Saxon Kingdom of Lindsey*, pp. 33-56, particularly 50; Green, *Britons and Anglo-Saxons*, pp. 60-65.

<sup>69</sup> Bassett, 'Anglo-Saxon See of Lindsey', pp. 31-32; Green, *Britons and Anglo-Saxons*, pp. 57-60.

<sup>70</sup> Dumville, 'Anglian Collection of Royal Genealogies'. Discussion: Green, *Britons and Anglo-Saxons*, pp. 99-106; Foot, 'Kingdom of Lindsey', pp. 129-35.

<sup>71</sup> Stocker, 'Review [*Kingdom of Lindsey*]'; Pickles, 'Review [*Britons and Anglo-Saxons*]'.  
<sup>72</sup> Dumville, 'Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists'.

<sup>73</sup> Green, *Britons and Anglo-Saxons*, pp. 56-77; in summary Green, 'British Kingdom of Lindsey', pp. 1-30. Further: Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Lincolnshire*, pp. 32-46; Foot, 'Kingdom of Lindsey'; Yorke, 'Lost Kingdom Found?', pp. 141-43; Eagles, 'Lindsey', pp. 206-10.

A similar image can be derived from Wroxeter. Barker's excavation of the Bath's Basilica was once seen as a paradigm of intensive settlement continuity.<sup>74</sup> This is no longer credited to the same extent as revised interpretations and new discoveries elsewhere make this seem increasingly unlikely.<sup>75</sup> Nonetheless, it remains highly probable that the Baths Basilica remained standing well into the fifth century and subsequent settlement activity, including a number of timber buildings, can still be postulated. Slight indications of comparable activity elsewhere in Wroxeter have also been found.<sup>76</sup> Wroxeter did not survive into the historical Anglo-Saxon period. Nonetheless, a similar argument can be made to that at Lincoln if the activity at Wroxeter can be associated with the later polity of the *Wroecensæte*. Both names are linguistically linked with the name Wrekin, a hill adjacent to Wroxeter and the site of an Iron-Age hill fort associated with the *Cornovii*.<sup>77</sup> If correct, then Wroxeter can also be posited as the centre of a nascent British kingdom.<sup>78</sup>

A similar argument might also be created in the case of Canterbury.<sup>79</sup> The name Kent, itself linked linguistically to Canterbury, derives from the Roman name for the *civitas Cantium*.<sup>80</sup> Excavations in the Marlowe Car Park point to habitation continuing through the first quarter of the fifth century, if not further.<sup>81</sup> Canterbury differs from the previous two examples in that instances of early 'Anglo-Saxon' activity, predominantly in the form of sunken feature buildings dating to the mid fifth century onwards, have also been discovered.<sup>82</sup> These buildings were dug into dark earth deposits which overlaid the latest sub-Roman levels suggesting a period of abandonment, although the archaeology of Canterbury, albeit comparatively well excavated, is not sufficiently understood or dated so as to rule out continuous occupation entirely.<sup>83</sup> If the archaeological evidence for continuity between British and Anglo-Saxon entities can be accepted, it would point

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<sup>74</sup> White and Barker, *Wroxeter*, pp. 118-36; Barker et al., *Baths Basilica Wroxeter*, pp. 68-168, 221-48.

<sup>75</sup> Lane, 'Wroxeter and the End of Roman Britain'. Also Fulford, 'Wroxeter... and the 'Great Rebuilding' '. More broadly: Loseby, 'Towns in Late Roman Britain', pp. 331-45; Brooks, 'Continuity in British Towns'.

<sup>76</sup> Ellis and White (eds), *Wroxeter Archaeology*, p. 163.

<sup>77</sup> Gelling, *West Midlands in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 66.

<sup>78</sup> Higham and Ryan, *Anglo-Saxon World*, pp. 137-38.

<sup>79</sup> Higham and Ryan, *Anglo-Saxon World*, p. 137.

<sup>80</sup> Brooks, 'Early Structure of the Kingdom of Kent', pp. 57-58.

<sup>81</sup> Blockley et al., *Excavations in the Marlowe Car Park*, pp. 171-259.

<sup>82</sup> Blockley et al., *Excavations in the Marlowe Car Park*, pp. 280-329, 345-50; Welch, 'Kent to AD 800', pp. 201-02.

<sup>83</sup> Blockley et al., *Excavations in the Marlowe Car Park*, pp. 260-66; Brooks, 'Continuity in Fifth-Century Canterbury'; also Loseby, 'Towns in Late Roman Britain', pp. 338 and 340.

to a much earlier change-over to Anglo-Saxon control than was seen at Lincoln. In either case, Canterbury seems to have been a centre of early Anglo-Saxon activity.

Two further observations can be made here. Firstly, the street plan of Canterbury became re-aligned so as to converge on the former Roman theatre, which remained standing throughout the Anglo-Saxon period. This is suggestive of some form of ritual or ceremonial focus or importance for the monument. Certainly, similar instances of such significance can be found in Continental Europe.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, with the adoption of Christianity by Æthelberht I of Kent, Canterbury became an early focus of Christian activity.<sup>85</sup> Canterbury can perhaps be posited, therefore, as an ideological experiment by early Anglo-Saxon kings.

Residual occupation and possible indications of continuity can also be observed elsewhere. At St Albans, Insula XXVII, 2 was built c.380. This building went through a series of alterations and modifications which push its occupation well into the fifth century. The building was ultimately replaced by Insula XXVII, 1, for which the excavator felt the most plausible interpretation was a barn.<sup>86</sup> This sequence, however, seems to be something of an exception. Elsewhere, much of St Albans seems to have been largely abandoned, although it needs to be borne in mind that St Albans has been subject to substantial plough damage and more recent excavations have unearthed a variety of post-Roman timber structures, albeit of uncertain date.<sup>87</sup> The evidence is even thinner at York. Excavations under the Minster, the *principia* of the Roman fort, revealed a potentially fifth-century depositional layer which included large amounts of animal bones, and a particularly high percentage of juvenile pigs, although the dating evidence can be interpreted in more than one way. Evidence for metal working was also discovered. Interpretations as some form of market or a use for butchery activity have been suggested.<sup>88</sup> At some point prior to the Viking period the city walls were also repaired by the construction of the Anglian tower, although the date of this structure is unclear.<sup>89</sup> Evidence for fifth-century settlement has also been uncovered from elsewhere in the city.<sup>90</sup> Meanwhile, excavations at Catterick have uncovered evidence that stone

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<sup>84</sup> Brooks, *Early History of the Church of Canterbury*, pp. 24-25; c.f., Loseby, 'Towns in Late Roman Britain', p. 340, n. 54.

<sup>85</sup> Welch, 'Kent to AD 800', pp. 237-38; Brooks, *Early History of the Church of Canterbury*, pp. 22-27.

<sup>86</sup> Frere, *Verulamium Excavations: Vol. II*, pp. 214-26.

<sup>87</sup> Niblett, *Verulamium*, pp. 128-36, 140-43.

<sup>88</sup> Carver (ed.) *Excavations at York Minster: Volume I*, pp. 187-91, 533-55.

<sup>89</sup> Radley, 'Early Medieval Stone Tower'; Buckland, 'Anglian Tower'.

<sup>90</sup> Hall, 'Recent Research into Early Medieval York', pp. 73-74.

buildings continued to be constructed or repaired well into the fifth century.<sup>91</sup> Additionally, a number of sunken feature buildings and burials covering the late fifth/early sixth centuries onwards have also been discovered.<sup>92</sup>

Settlement activity at Carlisle correlates with these instances. Within the Roman fort, in and adjacent to the *principia*, extensive faunal remains have been discovered. These were associated with a large number of coins, including a coin of Theodosius dating to 388-92, which again suggests butchery or trading activity. The excavators felt that this activity continued into the fifth century.<sup>93</sup> Nor is this the latest activity on the site, as stray finds and the disturbance of these deposits point to continuing, if unquantifiable, subsequent activity. However, problematically, many of the fort buildings, including the *principia*, also seem to have been demolished.<sup>94</sup> Excavations elsewhere in the town of Carlisle, meanwhile, point to various settlement sequences extending into the fifth century, if not later, including in the vicinity of the current cathedral, although as elsewhere much of the town was also uninhabited.<sup>95</sup>

These observations cast Lincoln, Wroxeter and Canterbury in a very different light. The occupation at St. Albans, York, Catterick and Carlisle is minimal and the status of this occupation is at best equivocal. Indeed, former towns such as London or Winchester do not exhibit any indications of occupation at all, although Winchester may have been used as a market-place.<sup>96</sup> The activity at St. Albans, York, Catterick and Carlisle cannot be considered as characteristically 'urban' or as elite. Nonetheless, the archaeological evidence is comparable to that found in Lincoln, Wroxeter and to an extent Canterbury. The main difference between these two groups is that, unlike at Canterbury, Lincoln and Wroxeter, no suggestive place-name evidence is forthcoming. This clearly casts doubt on the continuity and political developments postulated for Lincoln, Wroxeter and Canterbury. However, it is also important to recognise that considerable variety is in evidence. Nor should it be assumed that all former Roman towns followed the same trajectory. The place-name evidence and other circumstantial indications that Lincoln, Wroxeter and Canterbury were places of particular significance

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<sup>91</sup> Wilson, *Cataractonium*, discussion vol II, pp. 73-75.

<sup>92</sup> Wilson et al., 'Early Anglian Catterick'.

<sup>93</sup> Zant, *Carlisle: The stratigraphy*, pp. 327-52, 463-67.

<sup>94</sup> Zant, *Carlisle: The stratigraphy*, pp. 352-69, 469-71; Howard-Davis, *Carlisle: The Finds*, passim.

<sup>95</sup> McCarthy, 'Carlisle Cathedral', pp. 191-92, 202-04, 240-42, 249-50; McCarthy, *Blackfriars Street, Carlisle*; Keevill, Shutter, and McCarthy, 'Solidus of Valentinian II'; also McCarthy, *Roman Carlisle*, pp. 134-40.

<sup>96</sup> Loseby, 'Towns in Late Roman Britain', pp. 342-44.

can thus be given credence, although this makes them the exceptions rather than the norm. Lincoln and perhaps Wroxeter and Canterbury, therefore, can be postulated as power centres of British polities which emerged following the cessation of formal imperial rule over Britain. How these entities became Anglo-Saxon is difficult to determine, although some process or combination of conquest, marriage or acculturation can be opined. Equally, the nature of power wielded from these settlements remains far from clear. Nonetheless, the recognition of the potential British origins of these later Anglo-Saxon entities is itself significant.

Canterbury, and to a lesser extent Catterick, meanwhile, can be inferred as sites of early Anglo-Saxon significance, Canterbury possibly being built on a previous or pre-existing British entity. Indeed, from the late sixth century onwards, Canterbury can be suggested as a site of ideological experimentation by the early Kentish kings. This, however, does not reveal the origins of early Anglo-Saxon kingship, only certain facets of its development. In all of this, it is important not to exceed the evidence. Putting these exceptions to one side, in the majority of cases former Roman towns do not seem to have been of particular significance during the fifth or sixth centuries. They may have seen some residual occupation, but it does not seem to have been elite in status. Suggestive exceptions aside, therefore, former Roman towns cannot be seen as being particularly important to the origins of early Anglo-Saxon kingship. Although future archaeological discoveries might disrupt this conclusion, on the available evidence that does not seem particularly likely.

### **Yeavinger and Rural Settlement**

As referred to above, Bede makes reference to Yeavinger,<sup>97</sup> Milfield,<sup>98</sup> and Rendlesham,<sup>99</sup> as specifically royal settlements. The pre-ecclesiastical settlement at Lyminge can also be added to this category.<sup>100</sup> By analogy, it is additionally possible to

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<sup>97</sup> Hope-Taylor, *Yeavinger*. Also Miket and Semple, *Landscape of the Northumbrian Kings*, pp. 12-24; Gates, 'Yeavinger and Air Photography', pp. 82-83; Tinniswood and Harding, 'Industrial Features in the Henge Monument at Yeavinger'; McCord and Jobey, 'Northumberland and Durham - II', p. 120, plate XII, 2. Identification: Gates, 'Yeavinger and Air Photography', pp. 65-70; Knowles and St. Joseph, *Monastic Sites from the Air*, pp. 270-72.

<sup>98</sup> Scull and Harding, 'Cemeteries at Milfield'; with Gates and O'Brien, 'Cropmarks at Milfield'.

<sup>99</sup> Minter, Plouviez, and Scull, 'Rendlesham Rediscovered'. Also Harrison and Williamson, 'Earthworks at Rendlesham'; Newman, 'Settlement Pattern in the Sandlings', pp. 36-38; Bruce-Mitford, 'Saxon Rendlesham'.

<sup>100</sup> Thomas, 'Life Before the Minster', pp. 116-28. Also Knox, 'Discovering an Anglo-Saxon Royal Hall'.

identify sites at Atcham, Shropshire,<sup>101</sup> Cowdery's Down, Hampshire,<sup>102</sup> Foxley, Wiltshire,<sup>103</sup> Sprouston, Roxburghshire,<sup>104</sup> and Sutton Courtenay, Oxfordshire,<sup>105</sup> as being potentially royal. This deduction is based in the first instance upon the congruence of notably large buildings across these sites. Yeavinger, the most extensively excavated of the sites, featured a series of large, centrally situated, buildings: A2, A4 and A1(a), A3(a) and A1(b), and A3(b) and A1(c). The largest of these, A4, measured in excess of 280m<sup>2</sup> in interior floor plan, and all were of considerable size.<sup>106</sup> While it has not been excavated, aerial survey of Milfield would suggest comparable buildings there also.<sup>107</sup> Rendlesham has so far only been very briefly excavated. No information regarding significant buildings has been forthcoming, although some sunken feature buildings have been identified.<sup>108</sup> This situation is replicated at those sites which are not explicitly known to be kingly. Cowdery's Down featured a series of large buildings across several settlement phases, the largest of which, C12, measured c.22x8.5m.<sup>109</sup> Sutton Courtenay also contained at least six large buildings, in unknown phasing, the largest being c.25x10m.<sup>110</sup> The recently discovered hall at Lyminge similarly measured 21x8.5m,<sup>111</sup> while the indications are that similar structures also existed at Atcham, Foxley and Sprouston.<sup>112</sup> These sites may, therefore, be inferred as being kingly. This deduction is undoubtedly crude, but following a similar rationale as was employed with the burial evidence, it is arguably only the truly elite – kings – who could justify or afford such buildings.

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<sup>101</sup> St. Joseph, 'Air Reconnaissance: Recent Results, 39'.

<sup>102</sup> Millett and James, 'Cowdery's Down', pp. 192-261.

<sup>103</sup> Hinchliffe, 'Cowage Farm, Foxley'.

<sup>104</sup> Smith, 'Sprouston, Roxburghshire: An Early Anglian Center'; St. Joseph, 'Sprouston, Roxburghshire'.

<sup>105</sup> Hamerow, Hayden, and Hey, 'Drayton Road, Sutton Courtenay', pp. 109-23, 154-90; Hawkes, 'Early Saxon Period', pp. 88-89; Benson and Miles, 'Cropmarks near Sutton Courtenay'. Brennan and Hamerow, 'Great Hall Complex at Sutton Courtenay', did not appear in sufficient time for its insights to be utilised.

The site was first excavated in the 1920s and 1930s by Leeds who found a number of sunken feature buildings, but failed to recognise the full significance of the post-holes he uncovered: Leeds, 'Sutton Courtenay: Third Report'; Leeds, 'Sutton Courtenay (Second Report)'; Leeds, 'Sutton Courtenay'. Commentary: Radford, 'Saxon House: A Review', pp. 28-30, 36-38.

<sup>106</sup> Hope-Taylor, *Yeavinger*, pp. 46-69; with O'Brien, 'Great Enclosure', pp. 148-51.

<sup>107</sup> Gates and O'Brien, 'Cropmarks at Milfield', pp. 1-3, fig.1.

<sup>108</sup> Minter, Plouviez, and Scull, 'Rendlesham Rediscovered', p. 52.

<sup>109</sup> Millett and James, 'Cowdery's Down', pp. 215-18, more generally 201-46; with Alcock and Walsh, 'Architecture at Cowdery's Down'.

<sup>110</sup> Hamerow, Hayden, and Hey, 'Drayton Road, Sutton Courtenay', pp. 115, 160-67.

<sup>111</sup> Thomas, 'Life Before the Minster', pp. 126-27.

<sup>112</sup> St. Joseph, 'Air Reconnaissance: Recent Results, 39'; Hinchliffe, 'Cowage Farm, Foxley', pp. 241-47; Smith, 'Sprouston, Roxburghshire: An Early Anglian Center', pp. 276-80, respectively.



Likewise, Hope-Taylor, Yeavinger's excavator, was able to demonstrate a series of complex spatial relationships and alignments.<sup>113</sup> Indeed, he went so far as to postulate a unit of measurement specific to Yeavinger. This has subsequently been contested, but the fact remains that Yeavinger was laid-out with impressive levels of accuracy in the context of a wider spatial plan which self-evidentially required surveying.<sup>114</sup> Similarly, Milfield can be inferred as having a deliberate and potentially complex layout, being aligned between two pre-historic henge monuments.<sup>115</sup> The settlements known only from archaeological discovery again follow this paradigm. Cowdery's Down demonstrates a complex series of relationships with buildings both aligned and perpendicular to each other; the entrances to some of these buildings were also aligned with the entrances of certain enclosures.<sup>116</sup> The other settlements have not been excavated in sufficient detail to reveal such complicated relationships, but similar comments can nonetheless be made with respect to Foxley, Sprouston and Sutton Courtenay.<sup>117</sup> Arguing that such organisation automatically equates with kingly status would be unwise. Various settlements can be highlighted as possessing planned layouts but of otherwise seemingly low status.<sup>118</sup> Nonetheless, the existence of such alignments, in the context of the scale of the buildings on these sites, makes a strong case for their kingliness.<sup>119</sup>

Additionally, the construction of the buildings on these sites emphasises the probability of their kingly status. The care and attention with which they had been constructed is impressive.<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, the resources required to make such structures are considerable.<sup>121</sup> Indeed, it has been estimated that in order to build such structures the woodland resources of early Anglo-Saxon England would have had to be extensively,

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<sup>113</sup> Hope-Taylor, *Yeavinger*, pp. 124-47.

<sup>114</sup> Huggins, 'Yeavinger Measurements'.

<sup>115</sup> Scull and Harding, 'Cemeteries at Milfield', p. 3.

<sup>116</sup> Millett and James, 'Cowdery's Down', pp. 192-97, 247, fig.31.

<sup>117</sup> Hinchliffe, 'Cowage Farm, Foxley', pp. 240-41; Smith, 'Sprouston, Roxburghshire: An Early Anglian Center', p. 247, ill. 4; Hamerow, Hayden, and Hey, 'Drayton Road, Sutton Courtenay', pp. 187-89, respectively. More broadly: Reynolds, 'Boundaries and Settlements', pp. 105-10.

<sup>118</sup> As Chalton, Hampshire: Addyman and Leigh, 'Chalton: Second Report'; Addyman, Leigh, and Hughes, 'Anglo-Saxon Houses at Chalton'; as would be Pennylands, Buckinghamshire: Williams, *Pennyland and Hartigans*, pp. 49-97.

<sup>119</sup> More broadly: Hamerow, *Rural Settlements*, pp. 102-05.

<sup>120</sup> Particularly A2 and A4 at Yeavinger: Hope-Taylor, *Yeavinger*, pp. 51-53, 58-63, 125-41; and C12 at Cowdery's Down: Millett and James, 'Cowdery's Down', pp. 215-18, 229-46; with Alcock and Walsh, 'Architecture at Cowdery's Down'. More broadly: Leahy, *Anglo-Saxon Crafts*, pp. 15-52.

<sup>121</sup> Reynolds, 'Substructure to Superstructure', pp. 188-90.

and intensively, managed.<sup>122</sup> A number of the structures, such as the external buttressing of A4 at Yeavinger, also show indications of being deliberately structurally redundant. They thus over-use resources in what may be an example of conspicuous consumption.<sup>123</sup> Such features suggest, in all probability, that these settlements are the products of Anglo-Saxon kingship.

Dating these sites with any precision is an undoubted challenge. The most impressive phase of settlement at Cowdery's Down can be dated through a combination of Carbon 14 and thermoluminescence dating techniques to the period 609±57, while the earlier phase can be placed at 580±67.<sup>124</sup> Similarly, the settlement at Foxley gave a single Carbon 14 date of the period 555-660.<sup>125</sup> The pre-ecclesiastical settlement at Lyminge can be placed to approximately the first half of the seventh century.<sup>126</sup> Likewise, the high-status settlement at Sutton Courtenay can only be placed very generally in the late sixth or seventh centuries based on the small number of metal finds derived from the site.<sup>127</sup> On a similar basis, the numerous finds from Rendlesham indicate that the most intensive period of settlement activity fell in the sixth to eighth centuries.<sup>128</sup> Settlement activity at Yeavinger can be dated with the most precision, as according to Bede it was in use during the reign of Edwin of Northumbria, c.616-633.<sup>129</sup> Moreover, given the complexity of the settlement sequences at Yeavinger, activity in the reigns of Æthelfrith and Oswald can also be assumed. It is difficult to say any more than this with certainty. Hope-Taylor attempted a complex chronology of the site which integrated historical sources with the archaeological evidence.<sup>130</sup> This, however, suffers from the inevitable problems of such an approach leaving Yeavinger as a product of the late sixth and/or early seventh centuries.<sup>131</sup> Those which have not been excavated or at least archaeologically sampled cannot be dated except by analogy.

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<sup>122</sup> Grocock, 'Barriers to Knowledge'. On woodland in early Anglo-Saxon England more generally: Hooke, *Trees in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 113ff; in summary Hooke, 'Woodland Landscape of Early Medieval England'. Also Rackham, *History of the Countryside*, pp. 62-152.

<sup>123</sup> Millett and James, 'Cowdery's Down', p. 247; Barnwell, 'Anglian Yeavinger', p. 182.

<sup>124</sup> Millett and James, 'Cowdery's Down', pp. 197-200.

<sup>125</sup> Hinchliffe, 'Cowage Farm, Foxley', p. 249.

<sup>126</sup> Thomas, 'Life Before the Minster', p. 127.

<sup>127</sup> Hamerow, Hayden, and Hey, 'Drayton Road, Sutton Courtenay', pp. 184-86.

<sup>128</sup> Minter, Plouviez, and Scull, 'Rendlesham Rediscovered', p. 52.

<sup>129</sup> *HE*, II.14.

<sup>130</sup> Hope-Taylor, *Yeavinger*, pp. 276-324; with Raetz, 'Yeavinger Revisited', p. 210.

<sup>131</sup> Further: Scull, 'Phase 1 at Yeavinger', pp. 57-60. Also O'Brien, 'Great Enclosure', pp. 146-51; Gates, 'Yeavinger and Air Photography', pp. 71-75, 80-81. A slightly different chronology is offered by Blair, *Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 54-57. Additionally Higham, *Ecgrith*, pp. 53-55.

Despite the uncertainties involved, it is striking that these settlements can be placed in broadly the same period as the elite burials: the late sixth or first half of the seventh centuries. This raises exactly the same difficulty as was encountered with the burial evidence, namely that it is difficult to see the settlements as signs of the origins of kingship as there are indications that early Anglo-Saxon kingship was already in existence and established. Indeed, the evidence of the rural settlements themselves points to kingship being an established institution by this period. As with the burial evidence, therefore, established thinking needs to be re-evaluated and an alternative explanation is required. By analogy with the burial evidence, it might be suggested that such settlements represent a development or experiment within Anglo-Saxon kingship. In order to assess this the specific characteristics and potential uses of the sites need to be examined in greater detail.

Unfortunately, this approach immediately presents certain difficulties: with the exception of Lyminge and Rendlesham, these sites preserve very few artefacts. It is thus difficult to determine what sorts of settlement activity took place on these sites. The absence of settlement debris, however, may itself be of significance. While none of the sites have been excavated in totality, Cowdery's Down and Yeavinger have been extensively and systematically excavated. The sparseness of settlement debris should be considered as representative at both these sites.<sup>132</sup> Although this needs to be qualified in light of the innately friable nature of early Anglo-Saxon pottery, the most plausible explanation for this absence must simply be that these sites, despite the time, effort and resources invested in them, were not heavily utilised. Indeed, it would suggest that the sites were only occupied intermittently. Occasional use, in turn, is suggestive of a degree of itinerancy in early Anglo-Saxon kingship.<sup>133</sup> Indeed, at least in Northumbria, the variety of settlements, at least some of which can be deduced as being in use concurrently, would rather seem to confirm this suspicion.

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<sup>132</sup> Millett and James, 'Cowdery's Down', pp. 249-50; Hope-Taylor, *Yeavinger*, pp. 170-199. It seems likely that further settlement activity existed to the south of Yeavinger: Milet and Semple, *Landscape of the Northumbrian Kings*, p. 13; Gates, 'Yeavinger and Air Photography', pp. 81-83; Tinniswood and Harding, 'Industrial Features in the Henge Monument at Yeavinger'; McCord and Jobey, 'Northumberland and Durham - II', p. 120, plate XII, 2. Nonetheless, the debris from these sites is exceedingly sparse.

<sup>133</sup> Charles-Edwards, 'Early Medieval Kingships', pp. 28-33. Also Campbell, 'Bede's *reges* and *principes*', pp. 95-97. Later diplomas would seem to confirm the itinerant aspect of Anglo-Saxon kingship: Hill, *Atlas of Anglo-Saxon England*. Discussion: Keynes, 'Church Councils, Royal Assemblies', pp. 17-39.

Itinerancy can be seen as holding two principal advantages for early Anglo-Saxon kings. From a purely logistical perspective, itinerancy allowed for the provisioning and support of kings without the need to transport large volumes of foodstuffs and other materials long distances. This may have been through some sort of hospitality system, but the presence of kingly settlements would suggest that to a large extent early Anglo-Saxon kings looked after their own provisioning. Clearly for such a system to work, some form of estate and collection centres must have been in operation in order to collect and re-distribute resources from the surrounding area.<sup>134</sup> These were not necessarily the kingly settlements themselves.<sup>135</sup> While the specifics of such a system may be questioned, and must remain occluded, the occurrence of food rents in later royal law codes would seem to confirm the validity of the general inference. Itinerancy also allowed kings to exercise their power and authority in person over a relatively large area. This would have been particularly important in a kingdom such as seventh-century Northumbria, which at its greatest extent ran from the Wash to the Tay, with its influence extending even further.<sup>136</sup> By extension, this might be taken to imply some form of assembly function for these sites. However, the issue of assemblies, at least in this period, is at best nebulous and is beset by archaeological difficulties. Nor were assemblies necessarily associated with kings.<sup>137</sup>

None of these ideas should be assumed to apply consistently or evenly across early Anglo-Saxon England. The requirements of different kings in different areas may have been quite distinct. The more extensive settlement debris found at Rendlesham and Lydinge should not, therefore, be taken to undermine the general image of itinerancy. However, it should qualify it; in the relatively compact kingdoms of East Anglia and Kent, it would be expected that kings would spend proportionally more of their time at fewer sites, with a requisite decrease in time spent travelling. Rendlesham is also at one

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<sup>134</sup> This has been termed the 'multiple estate' model: Jones, 'Multiple Estates and Early Settlement'; with Brookes, 'Multiple Estate Formation'.

<sup>135</sup> Thirlings, Northumberland, for example has been suggest as just such a settlement: O'Brien and Miket, 'Thirlings, Northumberland', p. 90, although the absence of settlement debris here might suggest otherwise.

<sup>136</sup> Rollason, *Northumbria, 500-1100*, pp. 20-53, more broadly 57-208; Higham, *Kingdom of Northumbria*, pp. 43-104. Also Higham, *Ecgrith*, pp. 30-75.

<sup>137</sup> It has been suggested that Yeavinger served as an assembly site: Semple, 'Locations of Assembly', p. 137; also Blair, *Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 56-57, although this activity most likely pre-dates any royal presence. More generally: Pantos and Semple, 'Introduction', pp. 11-19; Pantos, 'Anglo-Saxon Assembly-Places'. With the ongoing work of the 'Landscapes of Governance: Assembly Sites in England, 5th-11th Centuries' project: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/research/projects/assembly/index>.

edge of the East Anglian kingdom, complicating any idea of centrally-located royal settlements. The everyday practicalities of kingship may, therefore, have differed considerably between different areas of early Anglo-Saxon England. Likewise, itinerant kingship would allow for a certain variety in kingly settlement. Thus, while it seems likely that Rendlesham saw both manufacturing and trading activity, other sites need not have.<sup>138</sup>

The nature of the architecture across these sites is also of relevance – as, indeed, is the nature of early Anglo-Saxon architecture more generally. There are clear similarities between early Anglo-Saxon and Continental building traditions, to the extent that they share certain architectural models.<sup>139</sup> There are nonetheless also distinct differences, such as the seeming absence of large buildings designed to accommodate both humans and animals from Anglo-Saxon England which are relatively common in Continental contexts.<sup>140</sup> Indeed, early Anglo-Saxon architectural practice seems to incorporate Continental elements into a pre-existing Insular tradition.<sup>141</sup> This distinctive, hybrid, nature is often subsumed into debates regarding migration and ethnicity, with its inevitable implication that the culture of early Anglo-Saxon England drew upon both Continental and domestic sources.<sup>142</sup> The important point in the current context is that the buildings on the kingly settlement sites are very much part of this mixed tradition. A similar hybrid nature of early Anglo-Saxon kingship might thus also be opined. This is clearly slim evidence upon which to base a hypothesis, but it is nonetheless suggestive.

A particularly strong case for such a hybrid nature can be made at Yeavinger. Indeed, Hope-Taylor explicitly made this case in his original report.<sup>143</sup> Although a number of the premises upon which this argument was based have subsequently been disproven,<sup>144</sup> indications of a degree of hybridity still remain. The burials found at

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<sup>138</sup> In this respect Rendlesham is perhaps more akin to Bamburgh, and some of the later trading settlements. Further: Pestell, 'Markets, *Emporia*, *Wics*, and 'Productive' Sites'; papers in Pestell and Ulmschneider (eds), *Markets in Early Medieval Europe*.

<sup>139</sup> Hamerow, 'Anglo-Saxon Timber Buildings'; also Hamerow, *Rural Settlements*, pp. 17-22. More broadly: Hamerow, *Early Medieval Settlements*.

<sup>140</sup> Hamerow, 'Anglo-Saxon Timber Buildings', p. 124.

<sup>141</sup> James, Marshall, and Millett, 'Early Medieval Building Tradition'. Also Marshall and Marshall, 'Differentiation, Change and Continuity'; Marshall and Marshall, 'Buildings of Early and Middle Anglo-Saxon England'; Dixon, 'Saxon House?'; Addyman, 'Saxon House: A New Review'; Radford, 'Saxon House: A Review'. More broadly: Hamerow, *Rural Settlements*, pp. 17-33.

<sup>142</sup> Hamerow, 'Migration Theory and the Migration Period', pp. 169-73.

<sup>143</sup> Hope-Taylor, *Yeavinger*, pp. 267-75, discussion 276-324. Further: O'Brien, 'Yeavinger and Bernician Kingship', pp. 207-18.

<sup>144</sup> Various Gates, 'Yeavinger and Air Photography', pp. 71-75; Scull, 'Phase 1 at Yeavinger'; Bradley, 'Time Regained'; Miket, 'Bernician Anglo-Saxon Burials', pp. 301-04. However, also Miket, 'Excavations on Yeavinger Bell'; Gates, 'Yeavinger and Air Photography', pp. 75-80.

Yeavinger, as with those recently discovered at Bamburgh, share as many affinities with their northern British neighbours as they do with their southern, more typically ‘Anglo-Saxon’ counterparts.<sup>145</sup> The name Yeavinger is itself British, translating as ‘Hill of the Goats’.<sup>146</sup> A ‘British’ strand to Northumbrian kingship, as the evidence of the enclosed settlements will also suggest, thus needs to be considered. The enclosure on the eastern side of the Yeavinger site is noteworthy in this context.<sup>147</sup> The purpose of this enigmatic structure is far from clear. Interpretations as a defensive structure, assembly site or perhaps most convincingly a cattle corral have all been suggested, although none are verifiable.<sup>148</sup> The closest parallels are found at both Sprouston and Milfield, while nothing comparable is found south of the Humber.<sup>149</sup> There is thus something distinctive about these structures. This cannot be directly translated into ‘British’ origins, as these structures have only been discovered in a Northumbrian context, but their distinctive nature is worthy of note.

It is possible to be much more specific with the prime diagnostic feature of these sites, the large halls. This is primarily due to Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica*. Here, Bede uses the hall as a metaphor for human existence:

‘mihi uidetur, rex, uita hominum praesens in terries, ad comparationem eius quod nobis incertum est, temporis, quale cum te residente ad coenam cum ducibus ac ministris tuis tempore brumali, accenso quidem foco in medio et calido effecto coenaculo, furentibus autem foris per omnia turbinibus hiemalium pluuiarum uel niuium, adueniensque unus passerum domum citissime peruolauerit; qui cum per unum ostium ingrediens, mox per aliud exierit, ipso quidem tempore, quo intus est, hiemis tempestate non tangitur, sed tamen minimo spatio serenitatis ad momentum excurso, mox de hieme in hiemem regrediens, tuis oculis elabitur.’<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Lucy, ‘Burial at Yeavinger’. The burials at Bamburgh are discussed below.

<sup>146</sup> Ekwall, *Dictionary of English Place-Names*, s.v.; Milfield similarly derives from a British root. Additionally Frodsham, “‘Stronghold of its own Native Past’”, pp. 27-29.

<sup>147</sup> Hope-Taylor, *Yeavinger*, pp. 78-88.

<sup>148</sup> Various Alcock, *Kings and Warriors*, pp. 237-38; Alcock, *Forts of the North Britons*, pp. 19-20; Hope-Taylor, *Yeavinger*, passim.

<sup>149</sup> Smith, ‘Sprouston, Roxburghshire: An Early Anglian Center’, pp. 272-74; Gates and O’Brien, ‘Cropmarks at Milfield’, pp. 1-3.

<sup>150</sup> *HE*, II, 13: ‘This is how the present life of man on earth, King, appears to me in comparison with that time that is unknown to us. You are sitting feasting with your ealdormen and thegns in the winter time; the fire is burning on the hearth in the middle of the hall and all inside is warm while outside the wintery storms of rain and snow are raging; and a sparrow flies swiftly though the hall. It enters in at one door and quickly flies out through the other. For a few moments it is inside, the storm and wintery tempest

If the layers of Christian symbolism are peeled away, the hall seems very much a place of warmth and shelter; a place to eat and socialise; a place to feast, drink and bond with the king. Although Bede's narrative would suggest that the hall described was akin to those found at Yeavinger, this passage and its wider context should not be taken literally as they are literary constructs. Nonetheless, the activities and relationships described in the passage should not be rejected simply because of this either.<sup>151</sup>

An ideological element might also be considered in relation to the hall structures. Careful analysis of the plans of these buildings suggests that they actively and intentionally controlled space.<sup>152</sup> Of course without knowledge of their superstructures it is not possible to be certain, but the extant substructures are strongly suggestive. This is particularly the case at Yeavinger and Cowdery's Down, where a series of enclosures and internal divisions controlled and presumably restricted access to certain areas. How these areas were used can never be known, but they are suggestive of the comparable ways in which seventeenth-century architects restricted space and access to the king at palaces such as Versailles and Hampton Court by manipulating the disposition of rooms and utilising an enfilade. Similar ideas can be found in both Roman villas and in contemporary British enclosed settlements. Certainly, such control can be surmised as amplifying and augmenting the power of kings.

Yeavinger also directly interacts with elements of its past. The settlement complex is aligned between a pre-historic stone circle and a Bronze Age Barrow. It also stands in the shadow of Yeavinger Bell and its singular hillfort.<sup>153</sup> It should be noted that Yeavinger Bell is a highly distinctive landscape feature; association with such a feature raises the prominence of Yeavinger in both the physical and the mental landscape (Figs.12-13). Furthermore, Yeavinger seems to have been a place of long-term significance and ritual focus.<sup>154</sup> How much actual continuity is represented here is

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cannot touch it, but after the briefest moment of calm, it flits from your sight, out of the wintry storm and into it again.'

<sup>151</sup> Further: Rollason, *Early Medieval Europe*, pp. 124-25, more broadly 117-34; Bullough, *Friends, Neighbours and Fellow-Drinkers*; more problematically Enright, *Lady with a Mead Cup*; also Pollington, 'Mead-Hall Community'. This section also benefits from my sight of the text of Rollason, 'Palaces, Mead-Halls, Cult-Sites, and Hunting Lodges'.

<sup>152</sup> Ware, 'Use of Space at *Gefrin*'. Further Walker, 'Recursive Structuring of Space'; Walker, 'Articulate Architecture?'

<sup>153</sup> Miket, 'Excavations on Yeavinger Bell'; Oswald and Pearson, 'Yeavinger Bell Hillfort'.

<sup>154</sup> Of Yeavinger Bell, Hope-Taylor, *Yeavinger*, p. 6 writes: 'It is Yeavinger Bell which is the key feature in the landscape. Its bulk, position and characteristic shape make it an instantly recognizable landmark from far off. At close range it dominates the site of the ancient township and establishes those qualities

questionable, but Yeavingering certainly appropriates and lays claim to its past.<sup>155</sup> Similar observations can be made at Milfield which, like Yeavingering, is aligned between two pre-historic henges. These also formed a focus for burials.<sup>156</sup> Suggestions of similar relationships might be posited at Cowdery's Down, Sprouston and Sutton Courtenay



Fig.12, View of Yeavingering Bell from the Yeavingering Settlement Site

where prehistoric monuments are also in evidence, but nowhere else are such relationships so detailed or explicit.<sup>157</sup> The layout and location of these sites thus demonstrate a notable degree of ideological awareness. They create links to the past, justifying the present, even if those links are imagined.

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of character and atmosphere which, though partially indefinable, are yet not wholly irrelevant to studies such as this. Local people still gauge time and distance, weather and the progress of the seasons by reference to the Bell; and its temporary excavating neighbours were not unaware that in December and January its broad, twin peaks occluded the sun for all but an hour of each day.'

Also Waddington, 'Yeavingering in Its Stone Age Landscape'; Frodsham, "'Stronghold of its own Native Past'", pp. 17-26, more broadly 13-63. People continue to have an emotional response to the site to this day: Frodsham, 'Forgetting *Gefrin*', 192.

<sup>155</sup> Bradley, 'Time Regained'. More broadly: Rollason, 'Tintagel to Aachen'; Driscoll, 'Picts and Prehistory'; Bradley, 'Monuments and Places'.

<sup>156</sup> Scull and Harding, 'Cemeteries at Milfield'.

<sup>157</sup> Millett and James, 'Cowdery's Down', pp. 159-72; Smith, 'Sprouston, Roxburghshire: An Early Anglian Center', pp. 266-71; Hamerow, Hayden, and Hey, 'Drayton Road, Sutton Courtenay', pp. 133-54 respectively.





Fig.13, View of Yeavinger Bell from Adjacent to the *Maelim* Heritage Trail

A general pattern of the activity at these settlements has, therefore, emerged. Nuance must be added to this image in the form of the variety and difference observed between different settlements and different regions. This variety would not seem to simply be a product of differential preservation and excavation but indications of real differences between the exercise and application of kingship in different areas. Perhaps the most significant implication of this pattern is the recognition of the ideological sophistication exhibited at many of these sites. This points to kingship being an established phenomenon by this period, meaning that the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship must be sought earlier than the flourishing of these settlements in the late sixth and early seventh centuries.

This insight can be developed in two ways. Firstly, it can be asked how the activity at these sites might be projected backwards. Secondly, it might be asked whether these settlements represent a development, or experiment, within early Anglo-Saxon kingship. With respect to the first question, several limited observations can be offered. The practice of itinerancy and food rents can be scaled up or down with relative ease. Likewise, the role of communal feasting is also flexible in nature. These aspects,

therefore, might be considered as being compatible with the nature of early Anglo-Saxon kingship, on a potentially smaller scale, in the period prior to the construction of the rural settlements. Greater certainty is possible with the second question, at least in the case of Yeavinger. Yeavinger stands as something of an exception, although a possible parallel might be found in Canterbury. A disproportionate amount of the ideological sensitivity so far observed has been drawn from its structural phases. Indeed, based on this, Yeavinger can be seen as a sophisticated ideological experiment. The sheer density of ideologically-tuned structures at the site is remarkable. Taken together, they create a sophisticated ideological programme. It is also interesting to observe that Yeavinger coincides with the period of Northumbrian history dominated by the expansion of Northumbria and its emergence out of the unification of Bernicia and Deira. The temptation to connect these two occurrences is strong.<sup>158</sup>

Further, in addition to the features and structures discussed so far, there are two further structures which need to be examined. The first is building E. The structural imprint of this building formed a series of eight expanding concentric rings oriented toward a series of post holes. Hope-Taylor ingeniously interpreted this structure as an amphitheatre or grandstand facing onto a largely enclosed stage.<sup>159</sup> Quite what this structure would have been used for is not clear from the archaeology. The amount of timber required to make it, though, is considerable; its construction was not undertaken lightly. The most obvious parallel is with Roman theatres, the nearest known prototypes being located at Chester and Aldborough. This Roman inspiration is perhaps an indication of an aspiration to Roman authority. Such structures were on occasion used in the process of local government in Frankia, and one can easily imagine that some sort of ceremonial or assembly function was carried out there, even if precisely what remains elusive.<sup>160</sup> The precise purpose of the structure is less important than the fact that this is experimental, aspirational, architecture pointing to a similarly experimental and aspirational kingship.

The second structure, building D2, is even more suggestive. This building contained a large number of animal bones – predominantly oxen, an unusually high proportion of which were skulls – which had been deliberately stacked.<sup>161</sup> Such an

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<sup>158</sup> As Higham, *Ecgrith*, pp. 53-55.

<sup>159</sup> Barnwell, 'Anglian Yeavinger', pp. 175-77; Hope-Taylor, *Yeavinger*, pp. 119-22.

<sup>160</sup> Barnwell, 'Anglian Yeavinger', pp. 178-84. A comparable usage might be suggested for the Roman theatre at Canterbury.

<sup>161</sup> Hope-Taylor, *Yeavinger*, pp. 97-102, 158-61, 277-79, 325-32.

occurrence would be entirely atypical of normal butchery activity, and rather suggests a more singular, ritual, interpretation. Animal sacrifice seems the most compelling explanation. In this context, it is striking that one possible interpretation of the axe-hammer found in Mound One at Sutton Hoo was for the pole-axing of cattle during ritual sacrifice. This reinforces the potential involvement of early Anglo-Saxon kings with religion. Similar structures, although lacking the faunal evidence, have been suggested as existing elsewhere, including at Cowdery's Down, but the evidence is far from compelling.<sup>162</sup> Further indications of this association with religion can also be found at Yeavinger. The cultic site seems to have been remodelled as a church in accordance with the recommendations of Pope Gregory I's letter to Bishop Mellitus concerning the conversion of pagan shrines into churches.<sup>163</sup> Another Church, building B1, has also been postulated.<sup>164</sup> Yeavinger, therefore, seems to provide evidence for an evolving and sustained engagement with religion by Northumbrian kings.

### Enclosed Settlements

As we saw earlier, Bede and Stephen of Ripon make reference to Bamburgh and Dunbar respectively as being specifically kingly enclosed Anglo-Saxon settlements.<sup>165</sup> Edinburgh might also be included in this category following 638 if the modern interpretation of the *Annals of Ulster* are credible. Certainly Northumbrian influence extended over the Lothian region by the mid-seventh century, which coincides with the disappearance of the Gododdin from the historical record.<sup>166</sup> Additionally, the later monastic site of Coldingham, on St. Abb's Head, Berwickshire, Bede's *urbs Colidi*, can be posited as having a kingly pre-history.<sup>167</sup> Doon Hill, Berwickshire might also

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<sup>162</sup> Blair, 'Anglo-Saxon Pagan Shrines'.

<sup>163</sup> *HE*, I.30; Hope-Taylor, *Yeavinger*, pp. 277-78.

<sup>164</sup> Hope-Taylor, *Yeavinger*, pp. 73-78, 164-68.

<sup>165</sup> Bamburgh: Groves, 'Bowl Hole Burial Ground'; Groves et al., 'Bowl Hole Cemetery'; Young, 'Digging the Home of Northumbria's Kings'; Wood, 'Geophysical Survey at Bamburgh Castle'; Hope-Taylor, 'Report for 1961 (Bamburgh)'; Hope-Taylor, 'Report for 1960, Bamburgh'. Also the intermittent updates on the Bamburgh Research Project website: <http://bamburghresearchproject.co.uk/>; and blog: <https://bamburghresearchproject.wordpress.com/>.

Dunbar: Blackwell, 'Anglo-Saxon Dunbar'; Moloney, 'Origins and Evolution of Dunbar'; Perry, *Castle Park, Dunbar*.

<sup>166</sup> Edinburgh would seem to have been the principal kingly settlement of the Gododdin, and following the Northumbrian takeover, it can be surmised as passing into the control of the Northumbrian kings. Historical discussion in Fraser, *Caledonia to Pictland*, pp. 170-71; Stancliffe, "'Most Holy and Most Victorious King'", p. 58. On the archaeology of Edinburgh: Driscoll and Yeoman, *Excavations within Edinburgh Castle*.

<sup>167</sup> Alcock, Alcock, and Foster, 'Excavations Near St Abb's Head', pp. 255-77.

conceivably be added to this group. Hall A is comparable in size to the largest buildings at Yeavinger, at nearly 23m long, but this is the only aspect of the site which suggests a kingly association.<sup>168</sup> It is, therefore, excluded from the ensuing analysis. There is thus a particularly small number of kingly enclosed settlements. Moreover, the limited nature of excavations conducted at them makes any discussion particularly challenging.

Bamburgh has been excavated on two occasions by Hope-Taylor, and is now subject to an ongoing campaign by the Bamburgh Research Project. Unfortunately none of these investigations have been satisfactorily published. Nevertheless, the Anglo-Saxon kingly settlement known from the written sources can be assumed to have occupied the same naturally defensible basalt outcrop as Bamburgh Castle, where archaeological sequences stretching back to the pre-historic have been uncovered.<sup>169</sup> The most notable product of the excavations conducted to date has been the re-discovery and partial excavation of the Bowl Hole cemetery 300m south-east of Bamburgh Castle. A number of the interments proved to be partial cist burials, placing the cemetery in a northern context, although a variety of burial rites seem to have been practiced. Osteoarchaeological analysis also revealed good levels of nutrition amongst the population and suggests access to high-status foods such as fruit, honey, meat and refined flour.<sup>170</sup> Excavations within the castle itself, although mostly uncovering later activity, point to the conduct of trade, manufacture and industrial activity.<sup>171</sup>

Even less is known concerning Coldingham. Reconnaissance excavations led by Alcock in 1980 identified two palisade structures and a clay and turf bank with a worked-stone foot enclosing a flat area of approximately 3 hectares. The relationship between the two palisades is not certain, but Palisade A, which is stratigraphically earlier than the subsequent clay and turf embankment, gave radiocarbon dates centring on the seventh century. In addition to the outworks, the site was flanked by sea cliffs to the east and a

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<sup>168</sup> Crone, 'Doon Hill'; Wilson and Hurst, 'Dunbar, Doon Hill'.

<sup>169</sup> Hope-Taylor, 'Report for 1961 (Bamburgh)'; Hope-Taylor, 'Report for 1960, Bamburgh'. On location: Alcock, *Forts of the North Britons*, p. 13.

It is also known that there was a second royal settlement adjacent to Bamburgh. It was at this settlement that Aidan ended his days. While the location of this settlement is not known, it is possible that the dedication of the church in the village of Bamburgh to Saint Aidan, the only known non-modern instance of such a dedication, indicates the location of this settlement and the subsequent cult site: *HE*, III.17; Cambridge, 'Archaeology of the Cult of St Oswald', p. 136.

<sup>170</sup> Groves, 'Social and Biological Status'; Groves, 'Bowl Hole Burial Ground'; Groves et al., 'Bowl Hole Cemetery'.

<sup>171</sup> This section also benefits from my presence at the 2012 Royal Archaeological Conference, Legacies of Northumbria: Recent Thinking on the 5th - 14th Centuries in Northern Britain, which included a paper by Young, 'The Anglo-Saxon Fortress of Bamburgh: The Archaeological Evidence'.

steep slope to the landward-west. The excavators preferred to associate the clay and turf embankment with the monastic site on the basis of its utilisation of worked stone, although this does not immediately follow. Nonetheless, the palisades make most sense in the context of a kingly, enclosed site.<sup>172</sup>

Slightly greater certainty is possible with Dunbar. As at Bamburgh, seemingly the most likely location for the kingly settlement would be the coastal rock stack currently occupied by Dunbar Castle.<sup>173</sup> Excavations have revealed the existence of a promontory fort to the south of the Castle, although this does not preclude the rock stack forming part of this larger settlement.<sup>174</sup> The stratigraphy of this site is problematic, making both dating and interpretation difficult. However, it is possible to observe a series of settlement phases, including some relatively substantial buildings, over a seemingly large area, during the period under investigation. There are also indications of industrial activities.<sup>175</sup> Similar observations are possible at Edinburgh also, although the only settlement activity located is in the form of middens. These middens, however, are significant in that they do not seem to exhibit a noticeable break in usage from the Roman period onwards. Moreover, in the early medieval period the faunal remains reveal a high incidence of game species such as deer.<sup>176</sup>

Drawing meaningful conclusions from such a limited sample is problematic. Nonetheless, certain observations are possible. In the first instance, these settlements all occupy naturally defensible sites. There are also indications that their natural defences were deliberately augmented, a supposition which the available historical sources would seem to confirm.<sup>177</sup> The inference that these sites served a defensive purpose can thus be drawn. This in turn, as has been seen previously, raises ideas of protection, and by implication warfare, as being associated with the conduct of early Anglo-Saxon kingship. The archaeology, however, would indicate that this was not their sole purpose. They also seem to have been centres of habitation, manufacture and trade. Such activities cannot

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<sup>172</sup> Alcock, Alcock, and Foster, 'Excavations Near St Abb's Head', pp. 265-66, 268-77.

<sup>173</sup> Alcock, *Forts of the North Britons*, p. 15.

<sup>174</sup> Perry, *Castle Park, Dunbar*, p. 312.

<sup>175</sup> Blackwell, 'Anglo-Saxon Dunbar', pp. 364-68; Moloney, 'Origins and Evolution of Dunbar', pp. 285-89; Perry, *Castle Park, Dunbar*, pp. 29-64.

<sup>176</sup> Driscoll and Yeoman, *Excavations within Edinburgh Castle*, pp. 28, 43-45, 201-12, 226-29. This might in turn suggest the potential significance of hunting and by extension hawking. The evidence connecting hunting to kingship in early Anglo-Saxon England is at best ambivalent, although its significance is much more apparent in later and continental sources. Further: Rollason, 'Forests, Parks, Palaces', pp. 428-49.

<sup>177</sup> As *HE*, III.16. Also Alcock, *Kings and Warriors*, pp. 198-202.

be assumed to have been directly associated with kingship, but kings can be assumed to have benefited from their presence. Moreover, the density of settlement activity points to a very different nature and usage to that exhibited by the majority of the rural settlements above. It is also interesting to note that enclosed settlements seem to be unique to Northumbria, specifically Bernicia, amongst the early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. By extension they imply a differing nature, origin, or simply differing practical requirements of early Northumbrian kingship.

The affinities of Bamburgh, Coldingham, Dunbar and Edinburgh allow this suggestion to be developed further. The Bernician enclosed settlements fit into a broader pattern of defended, usually hill-top, settlements in northern and western Britain. They are characterised by their readily defensible locations, fortifications, hierarchical arrangement, and their manufacturing, trading and habitation debris.<sup>178</sup> These settlements, therefore, place Bernician, and by extension Northumbrian, kingship in a British archaeological context. This in turn prompts two interrelated questions: how does this British context relate to the origins of Northumbria and, crucially, how does it relate to the origins of Northumbrian kingship?

Neither question can be completely answered. However, an attempt at framing the questions is itself revealing. In his recent book on Northumbria, Rollason proposed three distinct models for the origins of Northumbria, what he termed a continuity model, a controlled handover model and a conquest model.<sup>179</sup> This intellectual framework can be usefully borrowed. Rollason himself ultimately argued for a military conquest to explain the origins of Northumbria.<sup>180</sup> Edinburgh would certainly seem to have entered Northumbrian control in this way. Dunbar might also be seen as entering into Northumbrian control as part of the expansion of Northumbrian power during this period.<sup>181</sup> The *Historia Brittonum* ascribes a similar provenance to Bamburgh, positing an earlier British settlement conquered by Ida.<sup>182</sup> The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, by

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<sup>178</sup> Various Laing and Longley, *Mote of Mark*; Lane and Campbell, *Dunadd*; Alcock, *Cadbury Castle, Somerset*; Rahtz, *Cadbury Congresbury*. With the articles by L. Alcock and E. A. Alcock in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 117 (1987), pp. 119-47, 119 (1989), 189-226, and 121 (1991), pp. 95-149, on Dunoillie, Dundurn and Dumbarton respectively. In summary: Alcock, *Kings and Warriors*, pp. 179-233; Alcock, 'Activities of Potentates'.

<sup>179</sup> Rollason, *Northumbria, 500-1100*, pp. 65-66, discussion 57-109. Also Rollason, *Early Medieval Europe*, pp. 18-34, 37-59.

<sup>180</sup> Rollason, *Northumbria, 500-1100*, pp. 108-09.

<sup>181</sup> Rollason, *Northumbria, 500-1100*, p. 81.

<sup>182</sup> *HB*, 61. But also Fraser, *Caledonia to Pictland*, pp. 149-51; Dumville, 'Historical Value of the *Historia Brittonum*'; Dumville, 'North British Section of the *Historia Brittonum*'.

contrast, would suggest that Bamburgh was in fact built by Ida, but given the late composition of both these sources, and the problems associated with them, neither account can be relied upon.<sup>183</sup> Nonetheless, evidence can also be found to support the continuity and controlled handover models, although Bernicia does seem to have rapidly expanded from a relatively small entity to a supra-kingdom, in the form of Northumbria, in the relatively brief space of two generations.<sup>184</sup>

With respect to the origins of kingship in Northumbria it is likewise important to look beyond military processes. The British archaeological context of the enclosed settlements has already been noted. Additionally, the name Bernicia, and indeed Deira, both stem from British roots.<sup>185</sup> Using a similar argument to that employed with the former Roman towns, this would suggest some pre-existing British entity pre-dating Anglo-Saxon control. What affect this had on Anglo-Saxon kingship cannot be quantified, but it does need to be considered, raising issues of acculturation and intermarriage as well as outright conquest.<sup>186</sup> Moreover, a rapid expansion over such a large area would have presented Northumbrian kings with unique challenges. Such challenges would also have prompted changes within the exercise and nature of Northumbrian kingship. The enclosed settlements are thus symptomatic of broader differences between Northumbrian and other early Anglo-Saxon kingships.

## Conclusions

The overwhelming impression gathered from this section has been variety. Four quite distinct types of elite settlement have been explored. Each has provided their own implications for the origins of early Anglo-Saxon kingship. The ongoing activity at former military sites in northern Britain pointed to the emergence, or continuation, of a distinctive form of power. This was militaristic and local. It may or may not have been under an ostensibly Roman aegis, but it drew upon and utilised the infrastructure and the social and economic context created by the former imperial presence in northern Britain. How these enclaves of power related to the development of early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms

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<sup>183</sup> ASC [A, E], s.a. 547. But also Sims-Williams, 'Settlement of England', pp. 25, discussion 26-41. On the British origins of these sites generally: Alcock, *Forts of the North Britons*, pp. 3-7.

<sup>184</sup> Higham, *Ecgrith*, pp. 30-75.

<sup>185</sup> Jackson, *Language and History*, pp. 419-20, 701-05.

<sup>186</sup> As Dumville, 'Origins of Northumbria'. Further Higham, 'Britons in Anglo-Saxon England'; Higham, 'Britons in Northern England'. It is equally possible to see Northumbria through a northern, British, lens as it is an Anglo-Saxon one, as Fraser, *Caledonia to Pictland*, pp. 121-233, particularly 149-54; Alcock, *Kings and Warriors*.

in northern England could only be guessed at, but they provided an element in the dynamic of its emergence not found in southern England.

Contemporary with this were the much more ambiguous indications of elite activity at a number of former Roman towns. In no instance was the archaeology of these settlements conclusive in characterising the nature of the activity at these sites. However, by drawing on other evidence, primarily linguistic, it was possible to posit that some of these towns formed the basis of emerging British polities. Overall, the evidence of the former Roman towns was inconclusive, but they did point to the possibility of a quite different nascent power. Again, it was not possible to determine how these potential polities related to the origins or development of early Anglo-Saxon kingship, but their recognition was nonetheless significant.

A pronounced chronological gap separates these two types from the later rural settlements. These date from the late sixth century and are much less ambiguous in their royalty. Indeed, in many instances it is possible to be certain that they were kingly. These settlements are characterised by their large, well-constructed buildings and their obviously planned layouts. As such they seem very much the products of a stable and established institution. Certain inferences can be made regarding this institution. Kings seem to have been peripatetic; few of the settlements indicated intensive settlement activity, although they may have been in use for considerable periods of time. On this basis, some form of local provisioning can be surmised, although this seemed to be of a different nature in different places. Likewise, an element of collective feasting can be inferred at these settlements. These observations apply to all of the rural settlements examined. Certain settlements, however, most especially Yeavinger, stand apart. These show a sophisticated ideological awareness and a willingness to be associated with ritual activity. This sophistication emphasises the difference between these settlements and those of a century previous.

The final settlement type provides a potential link between these two periods. The enclosed settlements are again a distinctively northern phenomenon. They raise suggestions similar to those seen with the former military sites with respect to the protective and offensive aspects of kingship. Indeed, it might be possible that they arose out of similar needs and contexts. The enclosed sites are also part of a much larger pattern of enclosed and defended settlements in western and northern Britain during the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries. Again, therefore, this suggests a British strand to early Anglo-Saxon kingship and prompts a discussion of acculturation and conquest. These



## The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingship

settlements also differ from the majority of rural settlements in that they exhibit indications of manufacture.

Overall, it is not possible to construct a detailed archaeological plan of the development of early Anglo-Saxon kingship. The evidence is simply too sparse. Moreover, it is entirely possible that a future excavation will overturn any conclusion offered. Nonetheless, the evidence of elite settlement is sufficient to suggest that any simple or linear model is entirely artificial. Early Anglo-Saxon kingship seems to have been forged from divergent strands in various ways in differing places. It thus took different natures in different contexts. However, as responses to essentially the same situation, and through their mutual interaction, these natures and contexts ultimately also have much in common.

## Post-Script on Numismatic Evidence

Coinage is another area which typically invites discussion of kingship. By the mid eighth century, the relationship between kings and coinage was relatively clear-cut.<sup>1</sup> However, in the period in question the connection between kings and coinage is often uncertain. The minting of coins in this period was typically small-scale, relatively-sporadic, and is poorly-understood. What coinage has to offer with regards to the origins and nature of early Anglo-Saxon kingship is thus limited. Nonetheless, it does have some relevance. This section, therefore, will offer a brief survey of coinage in the period c.400-c.750, highlighting aspects of relevance to the origins and development of kingship.

Late Roman Britain was predominately dependent upon coins minted in and imported from elsewhere in the Roman Empire, mostly from northern Gaul. However, the supply of bronze coinage largely ceased c.402, while the large-scale importation of silver and gold issues seems to have terminated around c.410.<sup>2</sup> Although some coins continued to reach Britain, as the Patching Hoard demonstrates, the circulation of coinage in subsequent centuries was on a much lesser scale and based on the unregulated re-use of imperial or Continental issues.<sup>3</sup> The extent to which this situation can be considered a true monetary economy should be questioned, as many coin finds derive from graves where their function seems to have been as items of jewellery, as ornamentation or as weights.<sup>4</sup> However, recent metal-detectorist discoveries are countermanding this qualification, increasingly pointing to a much wider usage and circulation of coinage, albeit seemingly as part of a bullion economy.<sup>5</sup> It should also be noted that there are potential indications in both the writings of Saint Patrick and in Gildas's *De excidio* of ongoing monetary activity.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Further: Williams, 'Coins and Kingship', pp. 43-61.

<sup>2</sup> Reece, *The Coinage of Roman Britain*, pp. 62, more broadly 13-62.

<sup>3</sup> Williams, 'Coins and Kingship', pp. 37-39; Williams, 'Use of Coins in East Anglia', pp. 121-28; Williams, 'Anglo-Saxon Gold Coinage. Part 1', pp. 55-58; Williams, 'Circulation and Function of Coinage', pp. 158-61. C.f. the historiographically important, but dated, Kent, 'From Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon England', which posits a complete cessation in coin use. On Patching: White et al., 'Mid-Fifth Century Hoard'; White, 'Patching Hoard'.

<sup>4</sup> White, *Roman and Celtic Objects*, pp. 62-101.

<sup>5</sup> Williams, 'Circulation and Function of Coinage', pp. 150-54, 161-69; Williams, 'Anglo-Saxon Gold Coinage. Part 1', p. 59. Also the Corpus of Early Medieval Coin Finds, available from <http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/dept/coins/emc/>; Abdy and Williams, 'Catalogue of Hoards'; Abdy, 'After Patching'. A somewhat different perspective is offered by Moorhead and Walton, 'Coinage at the End of Roman Britain'; Moorhead, 'Roman Bronze Coinage'.

<sup>6</sup> Patrick, *Epistola*, 10 seems to indicate the existence of an active land market: Higham and Ryan, *Anglo-Saxon World*, p. 43. *DEB*, 67 makes reference to the purchasing of priesthoods and to the sale of worldly goods.

For present purposes, the most significant aspect of this period is the clipping of silver coinage during the early decades of the fifth century, highlighted particularly through the Hoxne Hoard.<sup>7</sup> This clipping, purely of the silver coinage, respects the iconography of the coins, seems to have been an iterative process, and is largely confined to Britain. Although the clipping of coinage is typically linked to privateer debasement, based on these factors it has been plausibly, if tentatively, suggested that such clipping may in fact represent official attempts to bolster and perpetuate the supply of money. The clippings would then be available to produce imitative coins, or more probably to be used as bullion. Such, if correct, of course implies the existence of organised forms of authority to orchestrate this clipping.<sup>8</sup> Based solely on this evidence, these putative power structures cannot be linked to the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship, but their potential existence will become relevant in the following section.

Coin-like objects – bracteates – were manufactured in Anglo-Saxon England, particularly in Kent, during the sixth century, but they cannot be considered as coinage.<sup>9</sup> A significant change – the minting of coins – is thus signalled by the Liudhard Medalet.<sup>10</sup> This development can be broadly linked to the adoption of Christianity, although the Liudhard Medalet pre-dates the Augustinian Mission.<sup>11</sup> Certainly there seems to be a notable correlation between the adoption of Christianity and the resumption of minting, with Churchmen also possessing the necessary literacy skills to facilitate the production of coinage.<sup>12</sup> Early issues can be linked to the kingdoms of Kent and Northumbria, as well as possibly to East Anglia and the East Saxons, their dates broadly mirroring the conversion of those kingdoms, although it should be noted that many of the early coins cannot be specifically linked to particular kingdoms.<sup>13</sup> Coin finds more generally, including imported coins which continued to circulate alongside the Anglo-Saxon, are

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<sup>7</sup> Johns, *Hoxne Late Roman Treasure*; Guest, *Coins from the Hoxne Treasure*.

<sup>8</sup> Abdy, 'Patching Hoard', pp. 109-13; Abdy, 'Patching and Oxborough'; Abdy, 'After Patching'. Further: Guest, *Coins from the Hoxne Treasure*, particularly pp. 102-15. Also Guest, 'Hoards from the End of Roman Britain'.

<sup>9</sup> Bracteates are nonetheless interesting in that they connect Kent to wider archaeological trends of the North Sea area, particularly Scandinavia. They might also be seen as imitative of the Imperial coinage tradition. Although a connection to kingship is possible, it is uncertain and almost impossible to evaluate. However, see further: Behr, 'Kingship in Early Medieval Kent'.

<sup>10</sup> Grierson, 'Canterbury (St. Martin's) Hoard', pp. 39-43; Sutherland, *Anglo-Saxon Gold Coinage*, pp. 31-32. Also Werner, 'Liudhard Medalet'.

<sup>11</sup> The burial of the St. Martin's Hoard can be date to sometime around c.580: Grierson, 'Canterbury (St. Martin's) Hoard', pp. 49-50.

<sup>12</sup> Williams, 'Coins and Kingship', pp. 39-40; Williams, 'Use of Coins in East Anglia', pp. 128-31; Williams, 'Circulation and Function of Coinage', pp. 186-88.

<sup>13</sup> Gannon, *British Museum Anglo-Saxon Coins I*, pp. 61-63, 85-98. Also Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage I*, pp. 159-64; Metcalf, *Thrymsas and Sceattas*, pp. 29-62.

most common in Kent, but are found in varying degrees across the south east and up the east coast of England, suggesting a correlation with economic and trading activity.<sup>14</sup> The early issues were exclusively gold and seem to have been relatively few in number, although there is no reason to feel that particular issues were unusually small. Over the course of the seventh century successive gold issues were steadily debased such that the issues of the 670s had as little as 15% gold content. These pale gold issues were replaced by fine silver issues in the 670s, broadly contemporary with a similar shift in Merovingian coinage. The silver coinage was also issued in significantly greater quantities than its gold precursors.<sup>15</sup>

Two questions need to be asked of this coinage, namely how it was connected to kingship and what was its function? With respect to the first of these, the majority of the issues, both gold and silver, do not bear the names of kings, in line with Frankish practice. Rather, many bear the names of the individuals, often ecclesiastical, by whom they were issued. A number also bear the names of the mints from which they were coined. There are, however, two exceptions to this. Five, possibly six, gold coins bearing the name of Eadbald of Kent have been discovered.<sup>16</sup> The five certain coins were issued in London, all sharing the same obverse die but with different reverse dies, while the possible sixth was issued in Canterbury. The second exception is the silver coinage attributable to Aldfrith of Northumbria which may have totalled as much as 2,500,000 coins.<sup>17</sup> Envisaging royal agency behind these two sets is relatively unproblematic; indeed it is difficult to explain their nature without it. By extension, they also raise the possibility that all Anglo-Saxon coins were kingly in inspiration, at least to some extent. This suggestion is strengthened by the appearance of busts on the many of the coins, both gold and silver. Furthermore, the level of organisation required, and the potential benefits that could be accrued from issuing coinage, are most explicable in a kingly context.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Williams, 'Anglo-Saxon Gold Coinage. Part 1', pp. 57-60. Also Williams, 'Use of Coins in East Anglia', pp. 131-36.

<sup>15</sup> Gannon, *British Museum Anglo-Saxon Coins I*; Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage I*, pp. 155-89; Metcalf, *Thrymsas and Sceattas*, 3 vols. Also Gannon, *Iconography of Anglo-Saxon Coinage*, pp. 10-13; Grierson, *Coins of Medieval Europe*, pp. 26-28; Abdy and Williams, 'Catalogue of Hoards'.

<sup>16</sup> Blackburn, 'Two New Types of Anglo-Saxon Gold Shillings', pp. 127-35; Williams, 'Gold Coinage of Eadbald'. Also Metcalf, *Thrymsas and Sceattas*, vol I, p. 61; Sutherland, *Anglo-Saxon Gold Coinage*, pp. 52-53.

<sup>17</sup> Metcalf, 'Coinage of King Aldfrith'.

<sup>18</sup> Metcalf, *Thrymsas and Sceattas*, pp. 10-25. C.f. Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage I*, pp. 158-59. Also Williams, 'Coins and Kingship', p. 42; Gannon, *Iconography of Anglo-Saxon Coinage*, pp. 23-63.

With respect to the function of the early Anglo-Saxon coins a single answer is inappropriate. Certainly with the later silver issues, which are commonly found on trading or 'productive' sites, and were issued in reasonable quantities, there is a strong argument for a monetary function. This might be extended to the earlier gold issues, although their usage would necessarily have been restricted to high-value transactions. Thus, the economic benefits of issuing such coins, particularly those in silver, would have been pronounced, facilitating and enhancing trade within early Anglo-Saxon England and with the Continent. Kings would have benefited both through greater access to goods and resources, but possibly also through increased revenue from tolls on shipping and trade as discussed below.<sup>19</sup>

This, however, is not the only possible function of coinage. It has been suggested that the gold issues in particular were used in various gift or symbolic exchanges.<sup>20</sup> This is perfectly compatible with a monetary function. Indeed, the benefit of coinage, as opposed to bullion, is that it is inherently more flexible in that it combines ideological communication with practical functionality. Early Anglo-Saxon coinage is no exception, as Gannon has demonstrated.<sup>21</sup> This, then, provides a second possible motivation for the issuing or control of coinage on the part of Anglo-Saxon kings. To do so was simply inherently kingly. It connected them to imperial and Continental models of ruler-ship, of which they would have been well aware, and allowed them to project an image of kingship. The issuing of coins, particularly the explicitly kingly ones of Eadbald and Aldfrith, thus represents a significant development or innovation within early Anglo-Saxon kingship. Not all kingdoms, however, seem to have issued coins, certainly not for all of the period in question. Finds of certain coin types are often concentrated in certain areas, allowing them, at times, to be connected to particular kingdoms. Thus, some kingdoms, particularly Kent, seemingly minted coins with relative frequency and consistency, while others such as Northumbria did so much more sporadically. Likewise, minting in Mercia and amongst the East Angles and West Saxons only began in earnest in the early eighth century.<sup>22</sup> The issuing of coinage was thus seemingly not an experiment or development which made equal sense across all of the early Anglo-Saxon

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<sup>19</sup> Williams, 'Use of Coins in East Anglia', pp. 131-35; Yorke, 'Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms 600-900', p. 80. Also Yorke, *Rex Doctissimus*, pp. 14-15; Metcalf, 'Coinage of King Aldfrith'.

<sup>20</sup> More broadly: Grierson, 'Commerce in the Dark Ages', pp. 130-39.

<sup>21</sup> Gannon, *Iconography of Anglo-Saxon Coinage*.

<sup>22</sup> Gannon, *British Museum Anglo-Saxon Coins I*, pp. 84-136. Also Metcalf, *Thrymsas and Sceattas*.

kingships. Indeed, the distribution of coins and minting would seem to suggest that it made most sense in conjunction with trade or contact with Continental Europe.

## **Section Two**

### **Anglo-Saxon Kingship and History**

## The Fifth and Sixth Centuries

The previous section focused on archaeological evidence, examining elite burial, elite settlement, and briefly coinage in turn. Although it did not allow for any comprehensive conclusions, it did provide a number of important insights with regard to both the origins and nature of early Anglo-Saxon kingship. Both the elite burials and the elite settlements seemed to be products of an established, sophisticated and ideologically aware institution; indeed it was possible, particularly in the case of the elite burials and particular royal settlements, to interpret these phenomena as indications of developments or even experiments within kingship. Similar interpretations were offered regarding the numismatic evidence, although the issuing of coinage could also be linked to more practical economic aims. As a result, it proved necessary to look for the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship in the sixth or possibly even fifth centuries. Two potential early power sources were identified, which may have been related to early Anglo-Saxon kingship, in the form of ongoing activity at former Roman military sites in northern Britain and at certain former Roman towns, but it was not possible to provide a direct connection in either case. Indications of potential British origins were also uncovered, but again these proved difficult to evaluate.

With regard to the nature of Anglo-Saxon kingship several observations were possible. Both the burials and the settlements provided evidence to suggest that the conduct of warfare, both offensively and defensively, was integral to kingship. The role of feasting and entertainment was also highlighted as being important. Additionally, it was observed that kings seemed to have been itinerant and that some sort of system for provisioning them was in operation. This, however, varied between regions. Indeed, regional variation was noted in a variety of contexts, with Northumbrian kingship looking particularly different.

In order to develop these ideas further it is necessary to turn to the written sources. Those pertaining directly to fifth- and sixth-century Anglo-Saxon England, however, are limited in the extreme.<sup>1</sup> It is thus necessary to look broadly across British and Continental contexts for sources which can illuminate early Anglo-Saxon England tangentially. Those of most relevance are: Zosimus's *New History*; Constantius of Lyons's *Vita Germani episcopi*; the writings of Saint Patrick; the *Gallic Chronicles of*

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<sup>1</sup> Yorke, 'Contribution of Written Sources', p. 26; also Yorke, 'Fact or Fiction?'. More broadly: Halsall, 'Sources and Their Interpretation'.



452 and 511; Gildas's *De Excidio*; and some brief passages in the eighth book of Procopius's *History of the Wars*. None of these address early Anglo-Saxon England in detail, but important insight can still be garnered, particularly by placing England in its Insular and, to an extent, Continental context. Various other sources which seemingly pertain to fifth and sixth century Britain, such as Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and the *Historia Brittonum*, can also be identified. However, these sources all date from much later periods and given this remove their testament cannot be relied upon with respect to the fifth or sixth centuries.<sup>2</sup> Each source will be examined in turn in approximate chronological order of the events recorded. Particular attention will be given to issues which may affect their interpretation and any indications of the exercise of power or authority. This will allow a framework for fifth- and sixth-century Britain and the origins early Anglo-Saxon kingship to be established and permit the observations of the previous section to be developed further.

In this respect, the current chapter is principally concerned with the interplay between two related issues: how Britain ceased to be imperial; and how Anglo-Saxon England came to be ruled by kings. At the beginning of the period, sources such as Ammianus Marcellinus' *Res gestae*,<sup>3</sup> and the purportedly administrative document the *Notitia Dignitatum*,<sup>4</sup> convincingly place Britain in the wider cultural and political structures of the Roman Empire. By the end of the period, by contrast, a new, non-imperial, ruling order had emerged and the political culture of England seems to have been rewritten. England was no longer part of a greater whole, but was instead ruled by kings, as testified by the comments of Gregory of Tours in his *Decem libri historiarum*, where he refers to Æthelberht I of Kent as 'the son of a certain king in Kent [sic]'.<sup>5</sup> Running through these two issues, is, of course, a third, namely the 'Anglo-

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<sup>2</sup> As Yorke, 'Contribution of Written Sources'; Yorke, 'Fact or Fiction?'; Dumville, 'Historical Value of the *Historia Brittonum*'; Sims-Williams, 'Settlement of England'; Dumville, 'History and Legend'.

<sup>3</sup> Seyfarth (ed.) *Rerum gestarum*. Translation: Hamilton (trans.), *Later Roman Empire*. With comments of Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, vol I, pp. 115-16; but also Barnes, *Ammianus Marcellinus and the Representation of Historical Reality*.

<sup>4</sup> Seeck (ed.), *Notitia dignitatum*; with the useful tables in Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, vol II, pp. 1429-50. The dating and status of the *Notitia* continues to be much disputed. In the current context, it is sufficient to note that an initial date of composition after c.395, with subsequent revisions, remains credible: Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, vol II, pp. 1417-28. Further: O'Hara, 'Assessment of the *Notitia*', pp. 17-29. With specific reference to Britain: Collins, *Hadrian's Wall and the End of Empire*, pp. 38-39; Mattingly, *An Imperial Possession*, pp. 238-47.

<sup>5</sup> *Libri historiarum*, IX.26. Bertha, Æthelberht's Frankish wife, is described as 'in Cantia regis cuiusdam filius matrimonio'. Krusch and Levison (eds), *Libri historiarum X*. Translation: Thorpe (trans.), *History of the Franks*.

Saxonification' of England.<sup>6</sup> This, while important contextually, can be put to one side for the current purposes as it is superseded by and subsumed into the twin issue of how Britain ceased to be imperial, and how Anglo-Saxon England came to be ruled by kings.

With regard to the first of these issues, scholarly approaches can be broadly characterised as adopting one of two interpretations: continuity or collapse. Notable proponents of continuity can be found in Dark,<sup>7</sup> and Barnwell,<sup>8</sup> who in different ways have both argued for the continuation of Roman cultural and political institutions, at least at a local and regional level, and their gradual transformation during the fifth and sixth centuries. Proponents of collapse, meanwhile can be found in the person of Cleary,<sup>9</sup> and to an even greater extent in Faulkner,<sup>10</sup> who have posited, broadly speaking, that late-fourth- and fifth-century Britain suffered a catastrophic societal and systems collapse. Naturally, various interpretations can be found between these two poles, which might be characterised as transformation interpretations, but the adoption of binary contrasts will help to clarify the interpretation and approach in what follows.<sup>11</sup>

With respect to the second issue, as has been observed previously, the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship have not been the focus of notable scholarly attention. The most relevant scholarly works, therefore, deal with the origins of kingdoms rather than kingship itself. Nonetheless, they form a useful point of departure. Two models are conventionally adopted in any discussion of the origins of kingdoms which map naturally onto the continuity and collapse models. These were set out by Bassett in his introduction to *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* where he proposed a continuity model – whereby ongoing former Romano-British administrative units formed the basis of subsequent early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms – and a model of gradual amalgamation and conquest – where, following a breakdown of the administrative and political structures of society the resulting small, tribal, units, through a process of competition, conquest

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<sup>6</sup> Contrast the views of Welch, *Anglo-Saxon England*; Higham, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons*, for maximal and minimal views of Anglo-Saxon migration respectively. Further: Halsall, 'Movers and Shakers'.

<sup>7</sup> Dark, *Britain and the End*, pp. 27-104; Dark, *Civitas to Kingdom*, particularly pp. 50-96.

<sup>8</sup> Barnwell, *Emperor, Prefects & Kings*. Also Barnwell, *Kings, Courtiers & Imperium*, pp. 133-71.

<sup>9</sup> Cleary, *Ending of Roman Britain*, pp. 131-61, 188-205. Cleary has drawn back from his more extreme ideas over recent years: Cleary, 'Study of A.D. 410', pp. 5-7. The poverty of fifth- and sixth-century Britain's material culture is well brought out by Fleming, 'Recycling in Britain'; Fleming, *Britain after Rome*, pp. 22-44.

<sup>10</sup> Faulkner, *Decline and Fall of Roman Britain*, pp. 158-80. Further: Faulkner and Reece, 'Debate About the End'.

<sup>11</sup> As Gerrard, *Ruin of Roman Britain*, pp. 245-62; Higham and Ryan, *Anglo-Saxon World*, pp. 41-56; Collins, *Hadrian's Wall and the End of Empire*, pp. 74-110, 154-69. Further: Cleary, 'Study of A.D. 410'; Higham, 'Debating the Insular Dark Ages'.

and amalgamation, gradually created early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms – which he termed the FA cup model.<sup>12</sup> It is primarily the second of these models, in conjunction with Cleary's *The Ending of Roman Britain* which has proved to be the more influential.<sup>13</sup>

Collectively these models are helpful, but they can only take the discussion so far. This, in part, is because of their conflicting natures. The previous section, for example, highlighted evidence supportive of both continuity and collapse. More particularly, none of the models is without its problems.<sup>14</sup> With respect to the two models specific to the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, a number of later kingdoms seem to exist without any obvious or discernible relationship to early Romano-British units of organisation. Likewise, neither model explains how their respective units came to be ruled by kings; they merely assume that once a certain political mass is reached, kingship is the inevitable result. This cannot automatically be held to be the case. It was established in the introduction that kingship requires the existence of a broader intellectual superstructure within which to situate itself. In the current context the failure of these models to address these issues is their greatest weakness. This chapter, therefore, will use the various models as a provisional framework through which to approach the period, but will alter the parameters of the discussion so that it is focused explicitly upon the origins of early Anglo-Saxon kingship. This in turn will inevitably lead to a re-evaluation of the original models, with the potential for conclusions of wider import, but it will remain the origins of kingship upon which this section is primarily focused.

### **Zosimus's *New History***

Several Roman writers address the final years of Britain's presence in the Roman Empire, but the most pertinent as regards current purposes is the *New History* of the Byzantine historian Zosimus.<sup>15</sup> The *New History* contains many demonstrable errors and misunderstandings. Additionally, many of the sources that it is based upon are no longer

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<sup>12</sup> Bassett, 'In Search of Origins', pp. 23-26. The term 'tribal' is used by Bassett to indicate a society of small units linked together primarily through bonds of kinship.

<sup>13</sup> As variously Fleming, *Britain after Rome*, pp. 102-19; Wickham, *Inheritance of Rome*, pp. 155-59; Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 313-14; Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, pp. 9-15, 157-62. Also Hamerow, 'Earliest Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms', pp. 280-87; to a lesser extent Higham and Ryan, *Anglo-Saxon World*, pp. 137-44.

<sup>14</sup> As Dark, 'Review [*Decline and Fall of Roman Britain*]'; Cleary, 'Review [*Britain and the End*]'; Cleary, 'Review [*Civitas to Kingdom*]'; Wood, 'Internal Crisis in Fourth-Century Britain'.

<sup>15</sup> Paschoud (ed.) *Historie nouvelle*. English Translation: Ridley (trans.), *New History*; based upon Mendelssohn (ed.) *Historia Nova*.

extant, potentially occluding further errors.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, the final section from which the passages of relevance are drawn was never fully revised.<sup>17</sup> Further, Zosimus wrote in the eastern Empire at some point after 498, most likely prior to 518,<sup>18</sup> and set out to narrate the perceived fall of Rome's Empire, much as Polybius narrated its rise.<sup>19</sup> The *New History*, therefore, needs to be understood as a retrospective rationalisation from the perspective of an early sixth-century Byzantine, rather than as the account of a contemporary witness.<sup>20</sup>

Despite these difficulties, there is little choice but to utilise the *New History*, as it contains two passages of principal importance. The first concerns the results of a barbarian rebellion, apparently deliberately incited by the general Gerontius in 409 to distract the usurper Constantine III.<sup>21</sup> It reads:

The latter [Constantine] was not able to oppose them [the barbarians] because most of his army was in Spain, which allowed the barbarians over the Rhine to make unrestricted incursions. They reduced the inhabitants of Britain and some of the Gallic peoples to such straits that they revolted from the Roman Empire, no longer submitted to Roman law, and reverted to their native customs. The Britons, therefore, armed themselves and ran many risks to ensure their own safety and free their cities from the attacking barbarians. The whole of the Gallic provinces, in imitation of the Britons, freed themselves in the same way, by expelling the Roman magistrates and establishing the government they wanted.<sup>22</sup>

The second passage, from 410, concerns the so called 'rescript of Honorius' which records:

Honorius sent letters to the cities in Britain, urging them to fend for themselves.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Paschoud (ed.), *Historie nouvelle (nouvelle édition)*, vol I, pp. xxxvi-lxxi, particularly lxix-lxxi, lxxiv-lxxx; Ridley, 'Zosimus the Historian', pp. 280-83, 288-89, 290-292, 296-302.

<sup>17</sup> Paschoud (ed.), *Historie nouvelle (nouvelle édition)*, vol I, pp. xxii-xxvi, particularly xxv.

<sup>18</sup> Paschoud (ed.), *Historie nouvelle (nouvelle édition)*, vol I, pp. ix-xvi; Ridley, 'Zosimus the Historian', pp. 278-80.

<sup>19</sup> *New History*, I, 57; Paschoud (ed.), *Historie nouvelle (nouvelle édition)*, vol I, pp. xx-xxvi.

<sup>20</sup> Snyder, *Age of Tyrants*, p. 34.

<sup>21</sup> On these events: Kulikowski, 'Barbarians in Gaul'; with Drinkwater, 'Usurpers'. Still of use, but more problematic: Thompson, 'Britain A.D. 406-410'; but with Thompson, 'Fifth-Century Facts?'; Bartholomew, 'Fifth-Century Facts'; Thompson, 'Zosimus 6. 10. 2'.

<sup>22</sup> *New History*, VI, 5.2-3.

<sup>23</sup> *New History*, VI, 10.2.

Superficially, the meaning of these two passages seems relatively clear. Barbarian invasion and lack of imperial assistance led, through necessity, to the establishment of Insular rule in Britain, this *de facto* situation being subsequently confirmed and legitimised by the Emperor Honorius. Britain had ceased to be part of the Roman Empire.

However, these passages need to be seen in their wider context and with the above comments regarding the *New History* in mind. In late 406, or perhaps more plausibly in late 405, a number of Alans, Sueves and Vandals crossed the Rhine into northern Gaul. In 406, the imperial forces in Britain elevated a series of three usurpers to the purple, the third of whom was Constantine III. Assuming the 405 date for the barbarian incursion is correct, these pretenders would make most sense as being raised in response to the perceived barbarian threat.<sup>24</sup> Constantine III then crossed to the Continent in 407 to pacify the region and support his imperial claim. During this process, in 409, his subordinate in Spain, Gerontius, rebelled against him. As the first passage records, Gerontius managed to persuade the now pacified barbarian peoples to once again become a nuisance in Gaul. This disturbance, however, was presumably in southern Gaul and northern Spain so as to play a part in Constantine and Gerontius's dispute.<sup>25</sup> Zosimus seems to imply that these same barbarian peoples were somehow in Britain as well, which seems unlikely. One must either suppose that the mere threat of invasion or political instability was sufficient to incite rebellion, or that there was a more direct threat to Britain from an alternate source. The *Chronicle of 452* might be taken to support the later scenario, although that source itself is not without its problems.<sup>26</sup> Either scenario is conceivable, although neither fits Zosimus's account.

The revolt itself is broadly credible – rebellion as response to political uncertainty had, and has, a long pedigree – even if the nature of the political authority it established is doubtful. From Zosimus's perspective the rebellion precipitated the cessation of formal imperial rule over Britain. However, hindsight can be misleading. It must be remembered that the rebellion was against Constantine III, and was, therefore, at least as likely to be for the Empire as it was for any attempt at self-rule. Indeed, although

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<sup>24</sup> Kulikowski, 'Barbarians in Gaul', pp.325-31.

<sup>25</sup> Kulikowski, 'Barbarians in Gaul', pp. 332-39; Drinkwater, 'Usurpers', pp. 275-80, 282-86.

<sup>26</sup> *Chronicle of 452*, s.a. 410. Burgess, 'Gallic Chronicle of 452'. Translation, Murray (ed.), *Roman to Merovingian Gaul*, pp. 76-85. With the comments of: Wood, 'Final Phase'. Also Thompson, 'Britain A.D. 406-410', p. 307; but c.f. Bartholomew, 'Fifth-Century Facts', pp. 261-70.

attempts at self-rule without the assistance of a usurping Emperor did happen, such as with the various Bacaudae uprisings on the Continent, they were rare.<sup>27</sup>

The second passage, if it in fact refers to Britain, would support this supposition.<sup>28</sup> The rescript of Honorius makes most sense as a response to a request for help; such a request would only be sent from an entity at least nominally allied with the Empire. Throughout his reign Honorius issued a number of temporary memoranda granting specific powers in times of wider imperial crisis – such as that associated with Constantine III. These memoranda usually granted the right to bear arms, allowing citizens to enforce the law more effectively in times of difficulty. The rescript, therefore, is highly unlikely to represent the entirely unprecedented recognition of a unilateral declaration of independence that it at first seems.<sup>29</sup> Thus, while from Zosimus's perspective it was clear that formal imperial rule of Britain ceased c.409, it is unlikely that this would have been apparent at the time.

Two important aspects emerge from this observation. Firstly, it would be perfectly possible to maintain a Roman identity or allegiance subsequent to c.409; indeed, the residents of Britain had every reason to believe, at least initially, that direct imperial rule would be restored. Secondly, Britain was faced with an unprecedented political crisis. Although it would not necessarily be immediately apparent, the cessation of formal imperial rule created, in effect, a power vacuum in Britain. How Britain responded to these twin issues, and their associated political instability, is thus essential to any understanding of this period. Additionally, as a corollary to these events, it can be surmised that Britain was removed from the imperial economic system. Although part of much longer economic trends, this would still have created a profound economic crisis.<sup>30</sup> This would only exacerbate the political and social instability which Britain faced after c.409. However, this crisis should not be taken as an automatic indication of

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<sup>27</sup> Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur*, pp. 179-80; Wood, 'Final Phase', pp. 432-33. Also Wood, 'End of Roman Britain', pp. 2-6.

<sup>28</sup> It is possible that the rescript was in fact addressed to the Italian province of Bruttium, which is also plausible in the context of c.410. This suggestion was first raised by Mendelssohn (ed.) *Historia Nova*, p. 291. Further: Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur*, p. 179; Bartholomew, 'Fifth-Century Facts', pp. 262-63. The counter argument is put convincingly by Paschoud (ed.) *Historie nouvelle*, vol III, 2, pp. 57-60. Also Thompson, 'Fifth-Century Facts?', p. 272; Thompson, 'Zosimus 6. 10. 2', p. 445-49.

<sup>29</sup> Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur*, pp. 179-80.

<sup>30</sup> Fleming, 'Recycling in Britain', pp. 22-44; Fleming, *Britain after Rome*, pp. 1-29, particularly 22-29; Mattingly, *An Imperial Possession*, pp. 530-32, more broadly 529-39. With the revisionist ideas of Cool, 'Which 'Romans'; What 'Home'?'; Gerrard, 'Roman Pottery in the Fifth Century'; Cleary, 'Study of A.D. 410', p. 6.

the absence of complex power structures, as the previously discussed systematic clipping of coinage well into the fifth century suggests the continued existence of such.<sup>31</sup>

### **Constantius's *Vita Germani episcopi***

Written by Constantius of Lyons at some point between the 460s and the 480s, the *Vita Germani* was composed relatively soon after Saint Germanus's death, whether that happened in c.437, or c.448.<sup>32</sup> Access to contemporary witnesses would still, therefore, have been possible, although even such a relatively short period allowed miracles and legends to develop and become associated with Germanus.<sup>33</sup> As Higham has recently put it: 'there is a *prima facie* case... to think Constantius comparatively well informed about Germanus.'<sup>34</sup> The *Vita* has also been described as 'a work in which literary and theological concerns may well triumph over factual accuracy', but that does not mean that the events described therein are necessarily fictitious; it is merely necessary to be aware of the innate limitations of hagiography as source material.<sup>35</sup>

The *Vita Germani* records two separate visits to Britain to deal with Pelagian heretics.<sup>36</sup> It was on the first of these visits that Germanus recorded his famous Alleluia Victory, leading a British ambush against a Pictish and Saxon force.<sup>37</sup> There seems little reason to doubt the truth of the first visit, not least because it is also mentioned in Prosper of Aquitaine's *Chronicle*, placing it in c.429.<sup>38</sup> The reality of the second visit has, however, been questioned. On literary grounds the account closely resembles that of

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<sup>31</sup> Also Higham and Ryan, *Anglo-Saxon World*, pp. 50-51.

<sup>32</sup> Borius (ed.) *Vie de saint Germain*. English Translation: Hoare (ed.), *Western Fathers*, pp. 283-320; based upon Levison and Krusch (eds), *Passiones Vitaeque Sanctorum Aevi Merovingici*, pp. 303-21.

A composition date of c.480 is traditional, as Wood, 'End of Roman Britain', p. 9; Thompson, *Saint Germanus of Auxerre*, p. 1; Harries, 'Germanus'. This has recently been challenged: Sharpe, 'Martyrs and Local Saints', pp.115-16, who put forth a date of as early as c.460. The date of Germanus's death is also contentious. This was traditionally placed in c.448, as Borius (ed.) *Vie de saint Germain*, pp. 45, 78, 99-106. However, an earlier date of c.437 has been suggested independently by Thompson, *Saint Germanus of Auxerre*, pp. 55-70; and Wood, 'End of Roman Britain', pp. 14-15. But see recent criticisms of Barrett, 'Saint Germanus and the British Missions', pp. 208-14; Mathisen, 'Last Year of Saint Germanus of Auxerre'.

<sup>33</sup> Harries, 'Germanus'; Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur*, p. 79.

<sup>34</sup> Higham, 'Germanus and Fifth-Century Britain', pp. 117-22, quote 118; but c.f. Barrett, 'Saint Germanus and the British Missions'.

<sup>35</sup> Wood, 'Fall of the Western Empire', p. 251. Further: Wood, 'End of Roman Britain', pp. 9-12. The uses and difficulties associated with hagiography are discussed in the following section.

<sup>36</sup> Con.VG, 12-18, 25-27.

<sup>37</sup> Con.VG, 17-18. In defence of its historicity: Jones, 'Historicity of the Alleluia Victory'. Also Jones, 'Historicity of the Alleluia Victory'; Higham, 'Germanus and Fifth-Century Britain', pp. 128-30.

<sup>38</sup> *Chronicle*, s.a. 429. Mommsen (ed.), *Chronica minora*, vol I, pp. 341-499. Translation: Murray (ed.), *Roman to Merovingian Gaul*, pp. 62-76. Prosper also mentions Germanus's visit in his *Contra Collatorem*, 21. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus*, vol LI, col. 211-76.

Germanus's first visit;<sup>39</sup> it is also difficult to account for the visit within the chronology of Germanus's life.<sup>40</sup> Nonetheless, the second visit contains information not present in the first which does differentiate the two, adding to its credibility.<sup>41</sup> Further, to posit that the second visit did not happen is to argue that Constantius not only made a fundamental error, but one that was detrimental to his overall purpose, a second visit implying the failure of the first; from an author who is generally well regarded, this is inherently problematic. Ultimately such questions cannot be put beyond doubt, nor, if it occurred, can the second visit be satisfactorily dated. Despite these uncertainties, however, the second visit remains plausible, if not verifiable.

That any such visit occurred is itself significant. It illustrates that at least in terms of the exercise and control of religion, Britain continued to exist within the orbit of Continental concerns. Indeed, it might be extrapolated from this that imperial power continued to have some meaning in Britain at this time.<sup>42</sup> Germanus is indirectly reported to have been able to enforce a 418 imperial edict granting the power to exile Pelagians.<sup>43</sup> Britain is further described as Roman in the Prosper's slightly later *Contra Collatorem*.<sup>44</sup> The plausibility of this statement might be questioned, but the fact that such a view was possible is significant in itself. Ties with the Continent were clearly ongoing. Britain was not isolated from Continental affairs and continued to have a role in them, even if it was a peripheral one.

Germanus's visits are particularly important for the glimpses they provide into British power structures. Problematically, governing structures are notable predominantly by their absence from the narrative.<sup>45</sup> The only figures of note are the *uir tribuniciae potestatis* – 'man of tribunary power' whose daughter Germanus cures of blindness in his first visit, and Elafius, a *regionis illius primus* – 'a leading man of the region' whom Germanus meets on the second visit.<sup>46</sup> The nature of these figures is not elaborated upon, but their descriptions are such as to suggest no more than local

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<sup>39</sup> First noted by Chadwick, *Poetry and Letters*, pp. 255-59. Also, Rees, *Pelagius*, p. 109.

<sup>40</sup> Barrett, 'Saint Germanus and the British Missions', pp. 206-14.

<sup>41</sup> Higham, 'Germanus and Fifth-Century Britain', pp. 131-34.

<sup>42</sup> Charles-Edwards, 'Palladius, Prosper and Leo', pp. 1-10. Also Wood, 'Fall of the Western Empire'.

<sup>43</sup> Con.VG, 27; with Thompson, *Saint Germanus of Auxerre*, pp. 28-30. Prosper, by contrast, in his *Contra Collatorem*, 21, associates this exile with Germanus's first visit. Discussion: Charles-Edwards, 'Palladius, Prosper and Leo', pp. 7-8; Wood, 'Fall of the Western Empire', pp. 251-52.

<sup>44</sup> Prosper, *Contra Collatorem*, 21. The *Contra Collatorem* can be dated to c.433 as Prosper makes passing reference to it being 20 years since the start of the Pelagian heresy, which he dates to 413 in his *Chronicle*.

<sup>45</sup> Thompson, *Saint Germanus of Auxerre*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>46</sup> Con.VG, 15, 26-27 respectively.



significance. There were also, presumably, secular authorities able to enforce the exile of the heretics. Some form of authority had also presumably communicated with the Continent leading to Germanus's visit in the first place.<sup>47</sup> Military leaders for both the Pictish and Saxon force and the opposing British force, despite Germanus's involvement, can also be assumed.<sup>48</sup> Despite all of this the absence of power structures remains striking. Elsewhere in the *Vita Germani Constantius* is most forthcoming concerning Germanus's interactions with secular authorities.<sup>49</sup> Instinctively, one feels that secular authorities ought to play a role in the British portions of the narrative also. Presumably such figures would either be Pelagian and therefore needed to be heroically corrected – a feat we might feel that Constantius was sure to report – or they were orthodox and presumably keen to assist Germanus in sorting out their internal heresy problem. One could plead ignorance on Constantius's part, but the links between Britain and the Continent identified above make this seem unlikely. Political super-structures are simply not apparent in the *Vita Germani*.

It is dangerous based on this testimony to suggest that political structures on a macro level were not in existence. Certainly there was sufficient organisational power in society to field and control armies, although it is not clear how large they or the entities who fielded them actually were. Moreover, Germanus presumably only visited the South East of the country – the most northerly point of the *Vita Germani* being St. Albans – so the political situation elsewhere cannot be extrapolated reliably. Nonetheless, the absence of any sort of large-scale or over-arching political power remains credible, at least in certain areas, with power negotiated and wielded at a local level.

### **The Writings of Saint Patrick**

In this respect, it is of great historical fortune that two writings, the *Confessio* and the *Epistola*, unquestionably authored by Saint Patrick, remain extant.<sup>50</sup> These writings offer direct, if obscure, insight into fifth-century Britain. Dating Patrick's life is unfortunately problematic, not least because the figure of Patrick has become conflated in later tradition

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<sup>47</sup> Con.VG, 12.

<sup>48</sup> Con.VG, 17-18.

<sup>49</sup> As Con.VG, 7, 28, 36, 38, 39, 42-44. Also Thompson, *Saint Germanus of Auxerre*, p. 26.

<sup>50</sup> Hood (ed.) *Patrick: Writings*. Also Bieler, 'Libri Epistolarum Sancti Patricii'; with Bieler, 'Libri Epistolarum Santi Patricii Episcopi: Part 2'.

with that of an earlier missionary to Ireland, Palladius.<sup>51</sup> Nonetheless, his early years tend to be placed in either the late fourth or early fifth centuries.

The *Confessio*, essentially a justification and an explanation of Patrick's missionary work in Ireland, can be dealt with relatively quickly. It reveals that Patrick was the son of a Christian deacon, Decurion and landowner – himself the son of a Christian Priest – from a place called Bannavem Tabernnae, possibly located in the West Country.<sup>52</sup> It relates how he was captured by Irish raiders at 16, held captive for six years escaping to return home, only to return to Ireland as a missionary and subsequently bishop.<sup>53</sup> Patrick seems to have existed within a context which still exhibited a number of 'Roman' characteristics. The fact that Patrick was seemingly able to sell his family estate prior to his consecration suggests the continuation of an active land market.<sup>54</sup> Likewise, although Patrick bemoans the state of his Latin, this can potentially be explained through simple rhetorical modesty; certainly Patrick received sufficient education to be competently literate and at the very least such comments would imply the existence of contemporaries trained to a high level.<sup>55</sup> Equally, the *Confessio*, and the *Epistola*, are directed at a broad, literate audience, again suggestive of the continuation of a literate society.<sup>56</sup> Further, both texts use the typically imperial terms *cives* – 'citizens' and *patria* – 'fatherland' as if they would have been widely understood by his audience.<sup>57</sup> The *Confessio*, therefore, reinforces the above comments regarding the continuation of Roman culture, identity and allegiance.

The *Epistola*, by contrast, is suggestive of the potential new power sources which emerged in the post-imperial power vacuum. It is an open letter, of sorts, sent to a certain Coroticus to remonstrate for the release of a number of Christian prisoners captured by his followers.<sup>58</sup> Coroticus has often been connected to Ceretic Guletic, king of Dumbarton, who appears in the Harleian genealogies, but this connection cannot be relied upon.<sup>59</sup> Certainly the name is British, although Thompson has argued that

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<sup>51</sup> First noted by O'Rahilly, *Two Patricks*, pp. 9-19. On dating Dumville, 'Floruit of St Patrick'. Further: Dumville, 'St Patrick's Missing Years'; Dumville, 'Death Date of St Patrick'.

<sup>52</sup> *Confessio*, 1. Also *Epistola*, 10; Dark, 'St. Patrick's uillula', pp. 21-23.

<sup>53</sup> *Confessio*, passim. Discussion: Stancliffe, 'Patrick'.

<sup>54</sup> *Epistola*, 10; Higham and Ryan, *Anglo-Saxon World*, p. 43.

<sup>55</sup> *Confessio*, 9-13; Hood (ed.) *Patrick: Writings*, pp. 18-19; Stancliffe, 'Patrick'. More generally: Lapidge, 'Gildas's Education', pp. 27-29, 48-50.

<sup>56</sup> Dumville, 'Verba militibus mittenda Corotici', pp. 117-20.

<sup>57</sup> *Confessio*; *Epistola*, passim. Also Snyder, *Age of Tyrants*, pp. 41, 58-65, 73-80.

<sup>58</sup> Dumville, 'Verba militibus mittenda Corotici', particularly p. 118.

<sup>59</sup> Dumville, 'Coroticus'.

Coroticus was in fact based in Ireland. This supposition is based on the fact that Patrick appears to excommunicate Coroticus in the *Epistola* and that Patrick would only have had the power to do so if Coroticus was under his episcopal jurisdiction, in Ireland.<sup>60</sup> It must be remembered that the *Epistola* does not explicitly state that Patrick was excommunicating Coroticus, and given the context of the letter it is hardly surprising that Patrick states that Coroticus has displeased both him and God.<sup>61</sup> Indeed, Patrick's seeming powerlessness – this was the second letter sent – would suggest that Coroticus was not under Patrick's direct jurisdiction, and instead in a British context.<sup>62</sup> It is perhaps safest, therefore, simply to locate Coroticus in an Irish Sea context.

This clearly limits the value of the *Epistola*'s testimony, but it is still worth examining the nature of Coroticus's rule. Coroticus, it seems, was a solitary leader supported by a number of military companions. Together they feasted, plundered and enslaved. Coroticus's power seems to have been based upon the power to control and dispense violence and the economic benefits that that brings. This economic power was used to reward his followers and ensure their continuing loyalty.<sup>63</sup> It is possible to say little more with confidence. Coroticus may represent an early kingly figure, although this is hardly certain. The *Epistola* does not give any indication of this, although it cannot be assumed that it necessarily would. Taken on face value, it might be opined that Coroticus's position ultimately depended upon his own skills as a leader, military and otherwise. This is an intriguing idea with much to recommend it, but it cannot be relied upon based solely on this evidence. It would also be illuminating to know the nature and number of Coroticus's contemporaries; were there many such figures? Ultimately interpretations of Coroticus must be left in a state of flux, but he is suggestive of the emergence of a class of militarily capable leaders who might be meaningfully, if perhaps overly grandiosely, be termed warlords.<sup>64</sup> The emergence of such figures would be in accordance with the fractured and unstable political context previously opined, and is certainly plausible.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> *Epistola*, 5-7; Thompson, 'Patrick and Coroticus'. Also Dumville, 'Coroticus'; Dumville, '*Verba militibus mittenda Corotici*', pp. 119-20.

<sup>61</sup> C.f. Dumville, '*Verba militibus mittenda Corotici*', pp. 118-20.

<sup>62</sup> *Epistola*, 3.

<sup>63</sup> *Epistola*, 7, 12-15.

<sup>64</sup> As Smyth, *Warlords and Holy Men*; more problematically Laycock, *Warlords*. Further: Falk, 'Dark Age Peter Principle'; Sahlins, 'Poor Man, Rich Man'.

<sup>65</sup> It should be emphasised that such a political system would represent a fundamental shift from Roman or imperial precedents. Further: Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship*, p. 1; Wormald, 'Kings and Kingship', p. 571.

### **The Gallic Chronicles of 452 and 511**

Two related Continental chronicles also have some bearing on fifth-century Britain: the *Chronicle of 452* and the *Chronicle of 511*, so called because they end in those years respectively.<sup>66</sup> Both are continuations of Jerome's *Chronicon* or Universal Chronicle and draw upon similar sources, while the *Chronicle of 511* also draws upon the *Chronicle of 452*. Both are also anonymous works and seem to make most sense originating from a location in southern France, although a location in Northern Spain has also been suggested for the *Chronicle of 511*.<sup>67</sup> The dating structures, and so the ultimate reliability, of the *Chronicle of 452* have been a source of controversy, exacerbated by the existence of three parallel dating systems – Olympiads, years of Abraham and imperial regnal years. Nonetheless, while opinions continue to differ as to certain specifics, a consensus seems to have emerged that the dates and chronology of the *Chronicle of 452* are broadly reliable given an understanding of the innate difficulties of chronicles as source material.<sup>68</sup> A similar position can be posited regarding the *Chronicle of 511*, although its dating system is quite different.<sup>69</sup>

The *Chronicle of 452* reports under the sixteenth year of reign of Honorius that:

Hac tempestate prae ualitudine Romanorum uires funditus attenuatae. Britanniae Saxonum incursione deuastatae. Galliarum partem Vandali atque Alandi uasta/uere; quod reliquum fuerat, Constantinus tyrannus obsidebat. Hispaniarum partem maximam Sueui occupauere. Ipsa denique orbis caput Roma depredationi Gothorum foedissime patuit.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Burgess, 'Gallic Chronicle of 452'; Burgess, 'Gallic Chronicle of 511'. Translation of both texts: Murray (ed.), *Roman to Merovingian Gaul*, pp. 76-85, 98-100, respectively.

<sup>67</sup> Burgess, 'Gallic Chronicle of 452', pp. 52-56; Burgess, 'Gallic Chronicle of 511', pp. 85-88.

<sup>68</sup> Burgess, 'Gallic Chronicle of 452', pp. 57-60; Burgess, 'Gallic Chronicle of 511', pp. 87-91. The controversy was initiated by Miller, 'Last British Entry in the *Gallic Chronicles*'. But c.f. Muhlberger, 'Gallic Chronicle of 452 and its Authority'. More recently: Jones and Casey, 'Gallic Chronicle Restored'; but note Burgess, 'Dark Ages Return'; also Jones and Casey, 'Gallic Chronicle Exploded?'; and Burgess, 'The Gallic Chronicle'.

<sup>69</sup> Burgess, 'Gallic Chronicle of 511', pp. 88-91.

<sup>70</sup> *Chronicle of 452*, s.a. 410: 'At this time, as the host of enemies grew stronger, the powers of the Romans were weakened to their very foundation. The British provinces were laid waste by an invasion of Saxons. The Vandals and Alans ravaged part of Gaul; Constantine the usurper took possession of what was left. The Sueves took over the greater part of Spain. Finally, the capital of the world, Rome herself, was most foully exposed to the sack at the hands of the Goths.'

According to the internal dating system, this equates to the year 410, although the events described actually occurred over the period 407-411.<sup>71</sup> Similarly, under the eighteenth and nineteenth years of the reign of Theodosius II, which correspond to the years 441 and 442, it says:

Brittanniae usque ad hoc tempus uariis cladibus euentibusque laceratae in ditionem Saxonum rediguntur. Alani, quibus terrae Galliae ulterioris cum incolis diuidendae a patricio Aetio traditae fuerant, resistentes armis subigunt et ex/pulsis dominis terrae possessionem ui adipiscuntur.<sup>72</sup>

This is put much more succinctly in the *Chronicle of 511* in an entry under the sixteenth year of Theodosius II and Valentinian III, which relates to either the year 440 or 441:

Brithanniae a Romanis amissae in ditionem Saxonum cedunt.<sup>73</sup>

The first of these entries is clearly part of a larger list of similar barbarian incursions which rhetorically culminates in Alaric's sack of Rome. The entry might, therefore, be doubted on these grounds.<sup>74</sup> However, all of the other incursions mentioned are known to have happened, even if not quite at the time specified. Additionally, as was seen previously, if problematically, a corresponding incursion was reported in Zosimus's *New History*. Some form of Saxon presence in Britain might, therefore, be deduced for the time period around c.410.<sup>75</sup> The second entry, by extension, could indicate the final result of these and other subsequent incursions, particularly when it is remembered that the *Vita Germani* also puts those of a Saxon identity in Britain during the intervening period. However, similar doubts have been aired concerning this entry also, although the underlying rationale is more tenuous.<sup>76</sup> It can certainly be deduced that there was a

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<sup>71</sup> Burgess, 'Gallic Chronicle of 511', p. 74.

<sup>72</sup> *Chronicle of 452*, s.a. 441, 442: 'The British provinces, which up to this time had endured a variety of disasters and misfortunes, were subjected to the authority of the Saxons. The lands of Farther Gaul were handed over by the patrician Aëtius to the Alans to be divided with the inhabitants. They subdued those who opposed them with arms, drove out the owners, and obtained possession of the land by force.'

<sup>73</sup> *Chronicle of 511*, s.a. [Honorius] XVI: 'The British provinces, lost to the Romans, yield to the power of the Saxons.'

<sup>74</sup> Muhlberger, 'Gallic Chronicle of 452 and its Authority', pp. 30-31. Also Wood, 'Fall of the Western Empire', pp. 255-56; Burgess, 'Dark Ages Return', 191-92.

<sup>75</sup> Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur*, pp. 81-82, although Halsall is perhaps overly sceptical.

<sup>76</sup> Muhlberger, 'Gallic Chronicle of 452 and its Authority', pp. 31-32. Also Wood, 'Fall of the Western Empire', pp. 255-56; Burgess, 'Dark Ages Return', pp. 190-92.

Continental perception that Britain was under Saxon control, although how accurate this perception was is difficult to assess.<sup>77</sup> It is possible that this may be taken further by the entry in the *Chronicle of 511*; its wording, and the use of *cedunt* the third person plural of *cedo* – ‘I yield, surrender’ is such as might imply the existence of some sort of formal treaty.<sup>78</sup> This is only really supposition, although it is intriguing. Ultimately, these notices are too brief as to support any particular interpretation, but they are suggestive of an increasing political currency associated with an [Anglo-]Saxon identity during the fifth century, at the very least in the south east of Britain, if not more widely. It is difficult to imagine that immigration did not play a role in the process, but it need not have been considerable, and nor do these sources require it as an interpretation.

### **Gildas’s *De excidio et conquestu Britanniae***

By far the most informative source from the fifth and sixth centuries is Gildas’s polemical *De excidio*.<sup>79</sup> Although hard to characterise, it is perhaps best thought of as an extended sermon.<sup>80</sup> The lengthy tract – covering 110 chapters – is a criticism of the, in Gildas’s opinion, current Godless state of society and a call to reform by religious and secular leaders alike. Structurally it can be divided into three sections, a historical introduction – chapters 1-26 – a section on civil authority – chapters 27-65 – and the most extensive section concerning religious authority – chapters 66-110. The historical introduction serves to contextualise Gildas’s wider aims, providing an historical rationalisation of the present; its purpose and priorities, though, are religious and rhetorical rather than historical. Gildas did not, therefore, set out to write history and *De excidio* should not be treated as such.<sup>81</sup> These issues are further compounded by the difficulties of locating Gildas either chronologically or spatially, neither of which can be satisfactorily achieved through external means.<sup>82</sup> Proposed dates for *De excidio* have ranged from c.480 to the

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<sup>77</sup> Jones and Casey, 'Gallic Chronicle Restored', pp. 396-97.

<sup>78</sup> I am grateful to Higham for bringing this to my attention.

<sup>79</sup> Winterbottom (ed.) *Ruin of Britain*; largely based upon, Mommsen (ed.), *Chronica minora*, vol III, pp. 1-90.

<sup>80</sup> As Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur*, pp. 54-55. Also, similarly, Snyder, *Age of Tyrants*, pp. 43-44; Higham, *English Conquest*, p. 9.

<sup>81</sup> Higham, *English Conquest*, pp. 7-29; Kerlouégan, *Les destinées de la culture latine*, pp. 31-37. Also Gardner, 'Gildas's New Testament Models'; Gardner, 'Gildas and His Friends'. Brooks, 'Gildas' *De excidio*'.

<sup>82</sup> Dumville, 'Gildas and Maelgwn'; Sims-Williams, 'Gildas and the Anglo-Saxons', particularly pp. 3-7.

more traditional c.550,<sup>83</sup> while a variety of locations have also been put forward.<sup>84</sup> It is perhaps best, therefore, to leave such issues unresolved and simply proceed with this uncertainty in mind. The characteristics and details of the text, both general and specific, can still be used to shed light on the origins and nature of early Anglo-Saxon kingship, albeit it principally through analogy with British exemplars.

The quality of Gildas's Latin prose is excellent, and while sometimes difficult, it sits comfortably in the company of Continental Late Antique authors.<sup>85</sup> There are suggestions that he had read or at least was familiar with a wide range of classical texts.<sup>86</sup> Indeed, Gildas gives every indication of being a highly accomplished author, frequently employing complex imagery, metaphor and structure amongst a variety of rhetorical techniques.<sup>87</sup> It is also perfectly credible that Gildas was a native Latin speaker. He was certainly writing for an audience which was at least functionally competent in Latin. In addition, there is every reason to suppose that Gildas had been educated in the traditional Roman fashion.<sup>88</sup> That Gildas could have received such an education might be considered surprising. The traditional Roman education was intimately connected to the needs of the imperial bureaucracy. The existence of one thus suggests the continuing

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<sup>83</sup> Traditional dating: Miller, 'Dates of Gildas's *De Excidio*', p. 173-74. This can also be reached based solely on the internal chronology of the text: Dumville, 'Chronology of *De Excidio Britanniae*'.

Any dating ultimately relies upon the interpretation of the appeal to 'Aetius' in chapter 20 and the description of the battle of Mount Badon in chapter 26. By discarding the appeal to 'Aetius' as a literary creation, a much earlier dating is possible: Higham, *English Conquest*, pp. 118-141. Dates in the middle of this period have also been proposed based on alternate readings of chapter 26: O'Sullivan, 'De *excidio* of Gildas', pp. 190-254; Wood, 'End of Roman Britain', pp. 22-23. But this has been strongly challenged: Wiseman, 'Date of the Badon Entry', pp. 3-6; Charles-Edwards, 'Review Article [*Gildas: New Approaches*]'. Unhelpfully, chapter 26 is quite possibly corrupt: Larpi, 'Prolegomena to a New Edition of Gildas', p. 16.

<sup>84</sup> The eleventh century 'Life' has been used to justify locations near Chester and on the Clyde, although the latter would seem implausible given Gildas's seeming ignorance of northern Britain: Breeze, 'Where was Gildas Born?'. Chester has also been proposed for quite separate reasons: Thompson, 'Gildas and the History of Britain', p. 225. As has, more generally, the West Country: Higham, *English Conquest*, pp. 90-113; Dark, *Civitas to Kingdom*, pp. 260-66; Higham, 'Light on the Dark Age Landscape'. A philological argument has also been made for South Wales: Kerlouégan, *Les destinées de la culture latine*, p. 5.

Gildas's geographical focus is also open to debate. The text can be read as applying to Britain generally or can be divided by region or section. A holistic interpretation is offered by Wright, 'Gildas's Geographical Perspective'. C. f. Daniell, 'Geographical Perspective of Gildas'; Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur*, pp. 14-16, 187-91.

<sup>85</sup> Kerlouégan, 'Le Latin du *De Excidio*'; Winterbottom, 'Preface of Gildas'; Lapidge, 'Gildas's Education'. Also Orlandi, 'Clausulae in Gildas'; Wright, 'Gildas's Prose Style', pp. 114-28.

<sup>86</sup> Wright, 'Gildas's Prose Style', pp. 108-14; Wright, 'Gildas's Reading'; Kerlouégan, *Les destinées de la culture latine*, pp. 71-100.

<sup>87</sup> Sutherland, 'Imagery of Gildas'; Lapidge, 'Gildas's Education', pp. 43-46; Kerlouégan, *Les destinées de la culture latine*, pp. 144-67. Also George, *Gildas and the Early British Church*, pp. 29-47, 57-64; Howlett, *Tradition of Biblical Style*, pp. 72-78.

<sup>88</sup> Lapidge, 'Gildas's Education', pp. 27-48.

relevance of the other, at least in some form.<sup>89</sup> Other indications within the text seem to confirm this idea. Gildas uses technical terms concerning the contracting, billeting and supplying of federate troops: *annonae* – ‘provisions, supplies’, *epimonia* – ‘monthly rations’, *foederati* – ‘federate troops’, *foedus* – ‘treaty’, *hospites* – ‘hosts (for billeted troops)’.<sup>90</sup> There are also references to Roman officials such as to imply that they continued to have meaningful roles, although these figures could equally be church officials who adopted such terms: *rectores* – ‘provincial governors’ and *speculatores* – ‘watchmen (who serve *rectores*)’.<sup>91</sup> As was seen in the writings of Saint Patrick, therefore, Roman culture, and by extension identity, continued to have meaning. Much more tentatively, it is possible that Roman power structures continued to have relevance and an imperial association may also have continued to be possible.

This, however, contrasts with other features of Gildas’s text. Gildas actively portrays a British identity, which would have been unthinkable in imperial Britain.<sup>92</sup> This identity is juxtaposed with that of the [Anglo-]Saxons. Gildas also refers to Picts and Scots.<sup>93</sup> Furthermore, a new political order has emerged, certainly among the Britons, in the form of kings. Gildas’s denunciation in chapters 27-65 allows the nature of this British kingship to be examined.<sup>94</sup> Chapter 27 reads:

Reges habet Britannia, sed tyrannos; iudices habet, sed impios;<sup>95</sup> saepe praedantes et concutiente, sed innocents; vindicantes et patrocionantes, sed reos et latrones ; quam plurimas coniuges habentes, sed scortas et adulterantes ; crebro iurantes, sed periurantes ; voventes, sed continuo propemodum mentientes ; belligerantes, sed civilia et iniusta bella agentes ; per patriam quidem fures magnopere insectantes, sed eos qui secum ad mensam sedent non solum amantes

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<sup>89</sup> Lapidge, 'Gildas's Education', pp.27-29.

<sup>90</sup> *DEB*, 23, 92; Thompson, 'Gildas and the History of Britain', p. 217-18; Morris, *Age of Arthur*, p. 132.

<sup>91</sup> *DEB*, 1, 14; Morris, *Age of Arthur*, p. 132-33.

<sup>92</sup> Plassmann, 'Gildas and the Negative Image of the Cymry', pp. 4-14. The Old Testament provides a clear template of nation and identity formation: Turner, 'Identity in Gildas'. Further: Weeks, 'Emergence of Ancient Jewish Nationalism'.

<sup>93</sup> Further: Turner, 'Identity in Gildas', pp. 31-36.

<sup>94</sup> The influence of the Old Testament upon Gildas’s thinking must also be borne in mind, especially as *De excidio* casts the Britons in the role of the Old Testament Israelites. In much of the Old Testament, as, for example, the Deuteronomistic History – Joshua to II Kings, excluding Ruth – kings are *ipso facto* the figures who led their people astray into apostasy and heresy and subsequently into conquest and downfall: Gerbrandt, *Kingship According to the Deuteronomistic History*. Further: Noth, *Deuteronomistic History*; qualified by Nelson, *Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History*; Person, *Deuteronomic School*.

<sup>95</sup> The term *iudex* had diversified its meaning by this period so that it encompassed a variety of officials, including ‘barbarian’ kings: Schaffner, 'Britain's *Iudices*'.



sed et munerantes ; eleemosynas largiter dantes, sed e regione inmensum montem scelerum exaggerantes ; in sede arbitraturi sedentes, sed raro recti iudicii regulam quaerentes ; inoxios humilesque despicientes, sanguinarios superbos parricidas commanipulares et adulteros dei inimicos, si sors, ut dicitur, tulerit, qui cum ipso nomine certatim delendi errant, ad sidera, prout possunt, efferentes; victos plures in carceribus habentes, quos dolo sui potius quam merito proterunt catenis onerantes, inter altaria iurando demorantes et haec eadem ac si lutulenta paulo post saxa despicientes.<sup>96</sup>

Gildas, therefore, holds his kings up to an exacting moral standard. Gildas would have his kings ruling justly and dispensing justice, protecting the weak and living personal lives of moral rectitude. Instead they fornicate and transgress against Gildas's Christian social mores.

Such criticisms are hardly unusual for a Christian author in this period.<sup>97</sup> This, however, does not automatically mean that they do not have a basis in truth nor that they cannot shed light on the nature of British kingship. Various aspects of the descriptions of these figures are reminiscent of the observations made concerning Coroticus, the main difference being that the five figures Gildas refers to are unambiguously kingly. Violence, for example, and the ability to dispense and control it can be seen as important. Further, in the following denunciation, Gildas criticises Constantine of Dumnonia for killing two royal princes and their protectors in front of an altar whilst disguised as a monk. The two princes themselves are, ironically, praised for their skill at arms.<sup>98</sup> Accusations of warfare and violence are also levelled at the other four kings, Aurelius

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<sup>96</sup> *DEB*, 27: 'Britain has kings, but they are tyrants; she has judges, but they are wicked. They often plunder and terrorize – the innocent; they defend and protect – the guilty and thieving; they have many wives – whores and adulteresses; they constantly swear – false oaths; they make vows – but almost at once tell lies; they wage wars – civil and unjust; they chase thieves energetically all over the country – but love and even reward the thieves who sit with them at table; they distribute alms profusely – but pile up an immense mountain of crime for all to see; they take their seats as judges – but rarely seek out the rules of right judgement; they despise the harmless and humble, but exalt to the stars, so far as they can, their military companions, bloody, proud and murderous men, adulterers and enemies of God – if chance, as they say, so allows: men who should have been rooted out vigorously, name and all; they keep many prisoners in their jails, who are often loaded with chasing chains because of intrigue than because they deserve punishment. They hang around the altars swearing oaths – then shortly afterwards scorn them as though they were dirty stones.'

<sup>97</sup> Gregory of Tours, for example, is critical of a number of Frankish kings in his *Decem libri historiarum*. Further: Goffart, *Narrators*, pp. 168-74.

<sup>98</sup> *DEB*, 28.

Caninus, Vortipor of the Demetae, Cuneglasus and Maglocunus, although they are all of a highly generalised nature.<sup>99</sup>

Alongside this violence needs to be placed the relationships between these kings, their followers and the wider population. The passage would suggest that those immediately surrounding these kings, perhaps unsurprisingly, received preferential treatment. They are protected, feasted and rewarded. Indeed, it seems that these kings and their followers are something of a law unto themselves. One gets the impression that they are 'hard' men leading 'hard' lives surrounded by 'hard' companions: men who occupy themselves by fornicating, feasting and fighting. With respect to the population at large some form of protective aspect is implicit in Gildas's diatribe. An involvement with justice can be similarly opined.

This image can be expanded by looking at the five kings mentioned by Gildas in greater detail. Vortipor, for example, is also addressed as the *boni regis nequam fili* (sic) – 'bad son of a good king'.<sup>100</sup> Some form of succession protocol, therefore, and possibly the existence of a concept of royalty/royal families might be surmised. This, however, needs to be qualified by the fact that two of the kings – Constantine of Dumnonia and Maglocunus – are reported as ascending the throne by dispensing with their relatives who occupied it.<sup>101</sup> A certain fluidity or negotiability to kingship, and kingly succession, might thus be opined. Further, differing levels of kingly power are also possible. The last of the five kings, Maglocunus, is given significantly more attention than the other four. He is described as *draco insulae* – 'dragon of the island' and seems to wield more power than the other figures addressed. This island has typically been assumed to refer to Anglesey. However, Gildas usually uses the term *insula* to refer to the whole of Britain. While it is unlikely that Maglocunus held sway over the whole of Britain, it is certainly possible that he held a degree of suzerainty over a significant part of it. Indeed, the rhetorical structuring and descriptions of the various kings would seem to reinforce this supposition.<sup>102</sup> A relatively complex, and established, if fluid, political system can thus be surmised.

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<sup>99</sup> *DEB*, 30, 31, 32, 34 respectively.

<sup>100</sup> *DEB*, 31.

<sup>101</sup> *DEB*, 28, 33. Aurelius Caninus is also accused of patricide: *DEB*, 30.

<sup>102</sup> Higham, "'Overkingship' in Wales", pp. 154-57; I am also grateful to Higham for discussing his subsequent thinking on this topic with me.

Ideally, it would be possible to locate these figures historically so as to develop this image further.<sup>103</sup> Gildas places Constantine as king of Dumnonia – roughly modern Devon and Cornwall – although no other information is forthcoming.<sup>104</sup> Little else can be said of Aurelius Caninus except that it is possible that a tombstone found in Carmarthenshire, and inscribed CVINIGNI, the British *Cunignos* – ‘hound’, may have been his.<sup>105</sup> Likewise, Vortipor, who is described as tyrant of the Demetae, or Dyfed – roughly modern Pembrokeshire, with Cardiganshire and Carmarthenshire – may well be associated with the tombstone inscribed VOTEPORIGIS PROTICTORIS – found to the north east of Narbeth.<sup>106</sup> This inscription clearly also opens the possibility that Vortipor held the Roman title of *protector*. It has been suggested, meanwhile, that Cuneglasus might be associated with Rhos, or even the eastern division of Gwynedd – equivalent to the north-west of modern Wales – as a *Cinglas* appears in the early stages of a genealogy of Gwynedd.<sup>107</sup> Maglocunus, meanwhile, also appears in a genealogy of Gwynedd.<sup>108</sup> However, little can be done with this information, interesting though it may be. Much of it is insecure or based upon supposition. Moreover, none of it can be dated satisfactorily.<sup>109</sup> It is preferable, therefore, to leave Gildas’s kings unidentified.

Rather than focusing upon the particular kings mentioned by Gildas, therefore, it might be better ask how kingship came to be established. This has the advantage of also potentially illuminating the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship. However, in order to approach this, the more problematic historical introduction to *De excidio* must be utilised. The historical introduction is not overly furnished with helpful information in this respect. In summary, *De excidio* relates that after being abandoned by the Empire, Britain became subject to various attacks from barbarian peoples, apparently the Picts and the Scots. The Britons requested assistance from the Empire to repulse these peoples, which was forthcoming on the first two occasions – leading to the building of two defensive walls – but not on the third time of asking. They thus took the step of

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<sup>103</sup> For what follows: Jackson, 'Names of the British Princes', pp. 30-35.

<sup>104</sup> It is possible that Constantine can be associated with Constantine of Cornwall of early Welsh literature: Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, pp. 315, 358.

<sup>105</sup> Nash-Williams, *Early Christian Monuments*, no. 142; with Jackson, 'Names of the British Princes', p. 31.

<sup>106</sup> The stone was also inscribed WOTECORIGAS in ogam: Nash-Williams, *Early Christian Monuments*, no. 138.

<sup>107</sup> Bartrum (ed.), *Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts*, pp. 10, 126; with Jackson, 'Names of the British Princes', pp. 33-34.

<sup>108</sup> Bartrum (ed.), *Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts*, p. 9.

<sup>109</sup> Dumville, 'Gildas and Maelgwn'; Dumville, 'History and Legend', p. 178.

employing [Anglo-]Saxon mercenaries to defend them; this decision was taken by a council of some sort, heavily influenced by one *superbus tyrannus* – ‘proud tyrant’. This system was successful in the short term, leading to the arrival of further Anglo-Saxon mercenaries. However, due to disagreements over payment and provisions, the Anglo-Saxons turned on their employers. This led to a prolonged period of warfare, the Britons being led by one Ambrosius Aurelianus – whose ancestors had apparently been high Roman officials. There was a notable battle at Badon Hill. In due course peace was achieved, which continued up until Gildas’s day.<sup>110</sup> The origins of kingship, British or Anglo-Saxon, are simply assumed as part of this narrative. Nonetheless, it can still be of use in shedding light on the context from which British and Anglo-Saxon kingship emerged.

Many of the problems with this account are immediately apparent, even in this cursory form. The two walls presumably refer to the Antonine and Hadrianic Walls, which were most definitely not built in the fifth century.<sup>111</sup> The two initial requests for assistance are also by implication suspect. The third appeal to one Agitius, presumably the Gallic commander Aëtius, hence the description *ter consuli* – ‘thrice consul’, stands a better chance of being based on something genuine.<sup>112</sup> Most problematic is the fact that *De excidio* cannot be seen as a viable historical narrative. Putting aside the issues of factual accuracy, it represents Gildas’s retrospective, polemical interpretation of events, and without any way of verifying his comments it is exceedingly problematic.

It makes sense, therefore, to dispense with the narrative framework and assess the different elements of Gildas’s account separately. To start with the incursions of Picts and Scots, similar events are recorded for other territories on the fringes of the Empire, so there seems little reason to doubt the inherent plausibility of this.<sup>113</sup> Their role in the causality of events, however, can certainly be questioned.<sup>114</sup> The appeal to Aëtius represents a fascinating possibility, and if true, eloquently underlines the ongoing links between Britain and the imperial Continent highlighted above. Regardless of its veracity, the employment of mercenary troops is a plausible occurrence or response. This was a well-attested policy in the late Empire; the inherent problems of this policy are equally

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<sup>110</sup> *DEB*, 13-26.

<sup>111</sup> Further: Thompson, 'Gildas and the History of Britain', pp. 206-08.

<sup>112</sup> As Higham, 'Gildas and "Agitius"'; Casey and Jones, 'Date of the Letter of the Britons to Aetius'; but c.f. Jones, 'Appeal to Aetius'.

<sup>113</sup> Halsall, 'Northern Britain and the Fall of the Roman Empire', particularly pp. 1-8.

<sup>114</sup> Halsall, 'Movers and Shakers'.

well attested, though, so the ensuing conflict is hardly surprising either.<sup>115</sup> A note of caution does need to be sounded. Gildas talks of these people arriving in three *cyulis*, usually translated as ‘keels’.<sup>116</sup> This sounds very much like some form of origin myth, the arrival of Germanic peoples in a specified number of boats being a common *topos* in Germanic origin stories.<sup>117</sup> Indeed, the words that Gildas uses for the three ships, as he acknowledges, are Germanic in provenance. Gildas, by inference, has been in contact with some Germanic speaking peoples from whom he has acquired the story.

The two most intriguing aspects of the story are the *superbus tyrannus* and Ambrosius Aurelianus. These two figures provide potential precursors of the kings of Gildas’s period. Little, however, can be said of them from Gildas’s account. Ambrosius, if he existed, was certainly a military leader. What else is not apparent. The *superbus tyrannus* is more suggestive. In some versions of the *De excidio* this description is replaced with the name Vortigern, or a variant thereof, although this itself may simply represent a play on a British term for an over-king.<sup>118</sup> A figure by the name of Vortigern features prominently in later narrative sources and was seen as an early British king.<sup>119</sup> The impression from Gildas, however, is that while he was a leading figure, he acted in conjunction with some form of council. A kingly interpretation might, therefore, be considered unlikely. Neither of these figures, therefore, can be directly equated with the origins of British kingship. They provide context but cannot be seen as origins.<sup>120</sup>

Where, then, does this leave the origins of early Anglo-Saxon kingship? It is certainly plausible that Anglo-Saxon kingship developed in those areas that saw the rebellion of Anglo-Saxon federates. Kingship may have been an immediate corollary of their rebellion – they may in fact have been led by kings as a number of Continental Germanic peoples were – although this does not immediately follow. It is possible that certain phrases of *De excidio* refer obliquely to Anglo-Saxon kings in Gildas’s period. Higham has suggested that where Gildas refers to the Britons buying priesthoods *a tyrannis et a patre eorum diabolo* – ‘from the tyrants and their father, the devil’, the devil

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<sup>115</sup> Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations*.

<sup>116</sup> *DEB*, 23.

<sup>117</sup> Yorke, 'Contribution of Written Sources', pp. 25-26.

<sup>118</sup> Discussion: Larpi, *Prolegomena to a New Edition of Gildas*, pp. 91-96. Also Jackson, 'Names of the British Princes', pp. 35-40; Dumville, 'History and Legend', pp. 183-87.

<sup>119</sup> Dumville, 'History and Legend', pp. 183-87.

<sup>120</sup> It is also in this period which King Arthur is commonly held to have flourish. However, Arthur cannot be considered a historical figure: Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur*, pp. 3-154, particularly 51-101; Higham, *King Arthur*, particularly pp. 98-169, 267-74.

he is referring to is an Anglo-Saxon king, or even over-king.<sup>121</sup> This is based, quite plausibly, on Gildas's frequent comparisons to the Anglo-Saxons with the devil. This, while clearly speculative, would be significant as it would place the origins of early Anglo-Saxon kingship, as suggested by the settlement and burial evidence, much earlier than conventionally thought. Furthermore, it should be noted that the presence of British kings necessitates some equally powerful form of leadership so as to provide for the protection of those peoples living under an Anglo-Saxon identity. This rule may have been kingly, although it admittedly need not have been. If kingly, the probability exists that it was comparable in nature to the British institution detailed above as it emerged from a similar context. Regardless, some form of Anglo-Saxon macro-power structure or structures can be inferred as existing in England by this period. The earlier the *De excidio* can be placed, the earlier their origins can in turn be situated.

### **Procopius's *History of the Wars***

The final source of significant relevance is Procopius's *History of the Wars*.<sup>122</sup> Despite revisionist trends, Procopius's *Wars* is generally given a high degree of credence.<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, Procopius was a member of the Byzantine court and aide to the general Belisarius, and can be expected to have experienced or been witness to much of what he describes.<sup>124</sup> The eighth book, written c.553, in what is effectively a digression from the main narrative to address conflict elsewhere, includes a section pertinent to early Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>125</sup> In this digression Procopius relates how Britain was inhabited by three peoples – the Angles, the Frisians and the Britons.<sup>126</sup> Each of these, apparently, was ruled by kings. This could be dismissed simply as a reasonable, but potentially inaccurate, assumption on Procopius's part.<sup>127</sup> However, while much of what Procopius relates about Britain is fantastical, there does not seem to be any particularly compelling reason to be pessimistic in this instance.<sup>128</sup> The same chapter as contains this digression, for instance, also relates how a Frankish embassy visited Constantinople, providing a

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<sup>121</sup> *DEB*, 67; Higham, *English Conquest*, pp. 160-61. The tyrants would be the British kings he previously castigated.

<sup>122</sup> Dewing (ed.) *Procopius*, vols I-V.

<sup>123</sup> Further: Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century*; with Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea*.

<sup>124</sup> Martindale, 'Procopius'.

<sup>125</sup> *Wars*, VIII.20.

<sup>126</sup> *Wars*, VIII.20; Thompson, 'Procopius on *Brittia* and *Britannia*', pp. 498-502.

<sup>127</sup> As Bartholomew, 'Continental Connections', pp. 26-27.

<sup>128</sup> Thompson, 'Procopius on *Brittia* and *Britannia*', pp. 504-07.

possible source for Procopius's knowledge.<sup>129</sup> Further, contact between the Byzantine Empire and Britain can be convincingly established through archaeological means.<sup>130</sup> Procopius can thus be credited with a basic understanding of the political situation in Britain. The reference to Frisians need not present a problem as trade, contact and migration between eastern England and Frisia are eminently credible. This passage in *Wars*, therefore, can act as at least partial confirmation of what was surmised in the discussion of Gildas, specifically that the Anglo-Saxons, as well as the Britons, were ruled by kings by the mid-sixth century.<sup>131</sup> This strengthens the case for seeing the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship as being firmly in the sixth century, if not even earlier in the fifth.

## Conclusions

These various sources, therefore, have provided a series of windows through which to view England in the fifth and sixth centuries. They do not permit a coherent political narrative to be established, but they do allow for a series of observations germane to the two questions at the heart of this section: how Britain ceased to be imperial; and how England came to be ruled by kings. With respect to the first question, in a direct sense, the cessation of formal imperial governance in Britain can be linked to Constantine III's election as a usurper and his abortive campaigns in France and Spain. This is hardly new or surprising. However, this perspective is only possible with the benefit of hindsight. Contemporaries had every reason to expect direct imperial rule to be restored. Furthermore, there are indications that imperial edicts continued to have relevance in Britain long after c.409 and that Roman culture and identities continued to have currency and meaning. The process by which Britain ceased to be imperial was, therefore, gradual, uneven and not necessarily apparent.

The events of c.409, however, did create certain immediate problems with regard to political authority. In effect, a power vacuum was created, exacerbated by the associated economic collapse. The difficulties and insecurities associated with this power vacuum would only have become more pressing over time. Pointing to responses to the power vacuum in the written sources was more of a challenge, although the

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<sup>129</sup> *Wars*, VIII.20. Further: Thompson, 'Procopius on *Brittia* and *Britannia*', pp. 504-05.

<sup>130</sup> Fulford, 'Byzantium and Britain', pp. 1-5.

<sup>131</sup> Higham and Ryan, *Anglo-Saxon World*, p. 142.

previously discussed clipping of coinage did indicate their inherent plausibility. The *Vita Germani* illustrated a society which seemed to have authority only at a local level, which may or may not have been continuation of local Roman power structures. The figure of Coroticus provides an alternative response, and a new source of power and authority in the form of military warlords. The previous section highlighted two further responses, based on the archaeological evidence of settlements, in the form of continuing power at northern military sites and at certain former Roman towns. Kings can also be observed amongst the Britons at a later date and it was argued that it would make sense to see kings amongst the Anglo-Saxons in England also, based jointly on the problematic testimony of Procopius and the potential British/Anglo-Saxon power imbalance had this not been the case. Various responses to the power vacuum following c.409 can thus be suggested. Further responses are also conceivable, although their outlines cannot be discerned. Ultimately kingship proved the most successful of these various responses. Further, given the observations regarding variety seen in the settlement section, it can be posited that kingship emerged from different sources and processes in different contexts.

Running through these two issues, as noted earlier, is the problem of the influence of Anglo-Saxon immigrants. Anglo-Saxon as well as Pictish aggression is mentioned in a number of the sources. Its nature and extent is impossible to quantify based on the written sources; nonetheless, it seems perfectly credible that federate troops were employed in fifth-century Britain, as reported by Gildas. Further immigration is also perfectly conceivable. In the context of the previously-mentioned power vacuum, this Anglo-Saxon presence provides additional potential power sources. These new migrants, of course, also presented an alternative, and politically viable, identity. It also needs to be remembered that a sense of Britishness also represents a new, or at least modified, identity. To generalise, therefore, imperial power structures continued to have some relevance and meaning beyond c.409 as did Roman culture and identity. However, new sources of power and identities were also emerging. Out of the confluence of these new identities and power sources emerged early Anglo-Saxon kingship.

This conclusion is both revealing and contextually useful. However, it does not fully address the specific issues of the origins of early Anglo-Saxon kingship. It was established in the introduction that kingship is more than singular rule by an individual. As such, it requires a broader ideological superstructure and acceptance, at least implicitly, by the population at large. The evidence of these sources does not allow these questions to be fully addressed. However, it must be noted that early Anglo-Saxon



England existed in a king-rich environment. Kingship was progressively becoming the political norm amongst the early Anglo-Saxon's immediate neighbours. The movement of both peoples and material culture demonstrates that the Anglo-Saxons did not exist in isolation. They thus would have been aware of kingly rule amongst their neighbours. This is not to suggest that they directly copied the political systems of their neighbours, but such contact would certainly have raised kingship as a possibility which could be pursued.<sup>132</sup> It might be possible to associate kingship directly with the incoming Anglo-Saxons. Acceptance of this position clearly depends on a specific interpretation of the nature of Anglo-Saxon immigration, rather ignores the contemporary development of kingship in the remainder of the British Isles, and takes a somewhat simplistic approach to causality. It is undoubtedly one particular route by which kingship may have emerged in early Anglo-Saxon England, but is certainly not the only one. Regardless, while the Anglo-Saxons adopted, and undoubtedly adapted, kingship, it cannot be said that they invented it. Even this does not address the more esoteric question of why the early Anglo-Saxons accepted the rule of kings, but this question may not be fully resolvable. Indeed, it is perhaps more a question of philosophy than history.

Where then, does this leave us with regard to the models with which this chapter began? Based on this analysis, neither of the extremes of continuity or collapse models seem entirely plausible, although a spectrum of possibilities between these two poles remains possible. Further, the mode of conceptualising the period between these diametrically opposed alternatives also seems inappropriate as change and transition are equally valid ways in which to approach the period; variety and regional difference also need to be acknowledged and emphasised. Similar observations make sense with respect to the origins of early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Both of Bassett's models continue to have validity, perhaps more than was expected, as the more philosophical aspects of the origins of kingship cannot yet be unravelled. It is, however, preferable to see the period as one of differing, sometimes regional, responses to a power vacuum out of which kingship, and kingdoms, ultimately emerged by various means rather than in the teleological terms of Bassett's models.

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<sup>132</sup> Ian Wood's idea of a Frankish hegemony of south-eastern England would allow it to be suggested that the origins of early Anglo-Saxon kingship might be found in direct continental influence: Wood, 'Frankish Hegemony'; Wood, *Merovingian North Sea*. However, the evidence used to support this hypothesis, while persuasive, is far from secure and it should not be allowed to negate the importance of other potential influences nor the importance of insular, Anglo-Saxon, developments, interpretations and modifications of kingship.

## The Seventh and Early Eighth Centuries: Narrative Sources

The previous section further highlighted the potentially varied sources of early Anglo-Saxon kingship as well as its regional character. It proved possible to locate kingship as one of various responses to a political power vacuum following the cessation of formal imperial governance of Britain in c.409, certainly in western Britain and in all probability in early Anglo-Saxon England also. Various aspects of the context of the emergence of early Anglo-Saxon kingship were discerned – the economic and political crisis following c.409; the continuing validity of an imperial association; the emergence of new identities, British and Anglo-Saxon; the potential role of migration and federate troops; the prevalence of kingship amongst the immediate neighbours of the Anglo-Saxons – but no one model could be established to explain or map the origins of early Anglo-Saxon kingship. In such circumstances, Bassett's two models of the origins of kingdoms – continuity or conquest and amalgamation – but shorn of their mutual exclusivity and inevitability, must continue to frame the discussion.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, as was likewise seen in previous sections, there seemed to be increasing reason to believe that rather than emerging in the late sixth or early seventh centuries, as has at times been suggested,<sup>2</sup> early Anglo-Saxon kingship emerged in the early sixth or even potentially sometime in the fifth century. While this cannot be treated as a certainty it is seeming increasingly plausible.

This and the following section seek to add further detail to and refine this understanding. This section will examine narrative sources of the seventh and early eighth centuries, while the following section will examine documentary sources from the same period. The principal narrative source is Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*. There are also a number of hagiographical works dating to the early eighth century. In addition to these, the *Historia ecclesiastica* also contains a number of papal letters and the records of two early church councils. Various other papal letters pertinent to early Anglo-Saxon England are also extant in the papal archives. Additionally, the Penitential of Theodore and the writings of Aldhelm are potentially revealing.

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<sup>1</sup> Bassett, 'In Search of Origins', pp. 23-26.

<sup>2</sup> As Fleming, *Britain after Rome*, pp. 102-15; Yorke, 'Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms 600–900', p. 77; Thacker, 'England in the Seventh Century', pp. 467-69; Hamerow, 'Earliest Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms', pp. 280-87; Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 339-43; Scull, 'Anglo-Saxon Kingdom Origins'; Carver, 'Kingship and Material Culture', pp. 152-58.

A similar methodology to the previous section will be adopted whereby each source, or group of sources, is addressed in approximate chronological order. Unlike the previous section, the sources will be addressed in order of composition so as to accommodate the long time-span of the events recorded in the *Historia ecclesiastica* and the hagiographical sources. Furthermore, rather than simply examining any indications of power or authority, the analysis will focus specifically upon the nature and development of early Anglo-Saxon kingship. This is not so as to understand kingship in the seventh and early eighth centuries, *per se*, but to facilitate a conception of the potential origins of early Anglo-Saxon kingship. The nature and development of kingship in the seventh and early eighth centuries will be used as a basis to extrapolate back in an attempt to shed light on what has hitherto remained occluded. Due to the exclusively Christian provenance of the sources, much of the discussion will centre on the relationship between early Anglo-Saxon kings and the Church. This is important in its own right, but other issues will also become apparent allowing for a broader understanding.

### **Papal Letters and Conversion**

The *Historia ecclesiastica* preserves copies of fifteen papal letters. Eight of these were written by Gregory I, three by Boniface V, two by Honorius I, one by John IV prior to the confirmation of his election and one by Vitalian I.<sup>3</sup> Six of the letters of Gregory I are also preserved in the *Registrum epistularum* – the collection of 854 letters ostensibly written by Gregory I – while the two letters of Honorius are also preserved in an eighteenth-century manuscript.<sup>4</sup> The remainder are transmitted solely through the

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<sup>3</sup> Gregory I: *HE*, I.23-24, I.27-32; Boniface V: *HE*, II.8, II.10, II.11; Honorius I: *HE*, II.17, II.18; John IV: *HE*, II. 19; Vitalian I: *HE*, III.29.

<sup>4</sup> Norberg (ed.) *Registrum epistularum*, 2 vols, whose numbering is adopted here. Also followed by Martyn (trans.), *Letters of Gregory the Great*, 2 vols. Ewald and Hartmann (eds), *Registrum epistularum*, 2 vols, remains important. On the two letters of Honorius: Story, 'Bede, Willibrord', pp. 783-84, 797-809.

*HE*, I.23 equates to *Epp*, 6.53; *HE*, I.24 equates to *Epp*, 6.54, although this letter does not appear in the *Registrum*; *HE*, I.27, usually referred to as the *Libellus Responsionum*, equates to *Epp*, 8.37 and is similarly not represented in the *Registrum*; *HE*, I.28 equates to *Epp*, 11.45; *HE*, I.29 equates to *Epp*, 11.39; *HE*, I.30 equates to *Epp*, 11.56; *HE*, I.31 equates to *Epp*, 11.36; *HE*, I.32 equates to *Epp*, 11.37. Bede only quotes around one quarter of *Epp*, 11.36: Martyn (trans.), *Letters of Gregory the Great*, vol I, pp. 66-72.

The genuineness of the *Libellus Responsionum* has been questioned: Martyn (trans.), *Letters of Gregory the Great*, vol I, pp. 61-66. But c.f. Meyvaert, 'Bede's text of the *Libellus Responsionum*'; with the convincing assertions of authenticity of Meens, 'Background to Augustine's Mission', pp. 6-11; and Meyvaert, 'Le Libellus responsionum à Augustin de Cantorbéry'.

*Historia ecclesiastica*. 22 other letters which directly pertain to early Anglo-Saxon England are also preserved in the *Registrum*.<sup>5</sup> These letters provide contemporary insight into early Anglo-Saxon England c.600. The extant collections, however, cannot be taken as representative without qualification. While it seems that some sort of system for duplicating and preserving papal letters had developed by the late sixth century, those letters that remain derive solely from a series of subsequent excerpts and collections taken from this initial repository.<sup>6</sup> In addition, Dag Norberg has identified different levels of papal involvement in the *Registrum* – those written by Gregory I himself and those produced by the papal chancery but issued under Gregory I's name.<sup>7</sup>

Six of the papal letters preserved are addressed to Anglo-Saxon royal figures – Æthelberht I of Kent,<sup>8</sup> his Frankish consort Bertha,<sup>9</sup> Edwin of Northumbria, who received two,<sup>10</sup> his Kentish consort Æthelburh,<sup>11</sup> and Oswiu of Northumbria.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, there are 19 letters in the *Registrum* addressed to Frankish royal figures which can serve as a point of comparison: 10 to Brunhilde, who served as regent for her two sons Theodebert II, king of Austrasia and Theoderic II, king of Burgundy and subsequently also Austrasia;<sup>13</sup> two to Childerbert II, King of Austrasia;<sup>14</sup> one to Clothar II, King of Neustria and subsequently Frankia;<sup>15</sup> three to Theodebert and Theoderic

<sup>5</sup> *Epp*, 6.10, 6.51, 6.52, 6.55, 6.56, 6.57, 6.59, 6.60, 8.4, 8.29, 9.214, 9.223, 11.34, 11.35, 11.38, 11.40, 11.41, 11.42, 11.47, 11.48, 11.50, 11.51. Also of relevance are those addressed to contemporary Frankish royal figures: *Epp*, 5.60, 6.5, 6.6, 6.51, 6.58, 6.60, 8.4, 9.213, 9.214, 9.216, 9.227, 11.46, 11.48, 11.49, 11.47, 11.50, 11.51, 13.5, 13.7.

<sup>6</sup> The *Registrum* was formed from three separate collections, the most substantial of which was carried out under the pontificate of Hadrian I (772-95): Martyn (trans.), *Letters of Gregory the Great*, vol I, p. 13; Markus, *Gregory the Great and His World*, pp. 14-15; Jasper and Fuhrmann, *Papal Letters in the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 70-72. Also Norberg (ed.) *Registrum epistularum*, vol I, pp. v-xii; Ewald and Hartmann (eds), *Registrum epistularum*, pp. vii-xxxii. The now extant letters are not evenly distributed chronologically, with a quarter of those in the *Registrum* coming from 598-9.

<sup>7</sup> Norberg, 'Style personnel et style administratif'. Certain stylistic differences can be perceived between these classes. As a general rule, those concerning temporal affairs were written by the papal chancery, often using highly formulaic language, while those concerning spiritual matters were written by Gregory I himself. There are, however, discrepancies to this pattern. The style of those addressed to the Frankish queen regent Brunhilde, for example, suggests that they were produced by the papal chancery, although their contents would lead one to expect Gregory I himself to have written them. Similarly, there are many administrative letters concerning temporal affairs that seem on stylistic grounds to have been produced by Gregory I himself.

<sup>8</sup> *HE*, I.32 (*Epp*, 11.37).

<sup>9</sup> *Epp*, 11.35.

<sup>10</sup> *HE*, II.10, II.17.

<sup>11</sup> *HE*, II.11.

<sup>12</sup> *HE*, III.29.

<sup>13</sup> *Epp*, 6.5, 6.58, 6.60, 8.4, 9.213, 9.214, 11.46, 11.48, 11.49, 13.5. On the Frankish political context: Van Dam, 'Merovingian Gaul and the Frankish Conquests', pp. 201-05; Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms 450-751*, pp. 88-101, 126-36.

<sup>14</sup> *Epp*, 5.60, 6.6.

<sup>15</sup> *Epp*, 11.51.

jointly;<sup>16</sup> one to Theodebert;<sup>17</sup> and two to Theoderic.<sup>18</sup> There is a notable similarity across how both Frankish and Anglo-Saxon royal figures are addressed in these letters. The letter to Æthelberht I opens with the address: *Domino gloriosissimo atque praecellentissimo filio Aedilbercto regi Anglorum Gregorius episcopus*.<sup>19</sup> Letter 9.214 similarly addresses Brunhilde as: *Dominae gloriossimaе atque praecellentissimae filiae Brunichildae reginae Gregorius episcopus seruus seruorum Dei*.<sup>20</sup> Similar terms of address are also employed in the later letters. Edwin is addressed as *Viro glorioso Eduino regi Anglorum Bonifatius episcopus seruus seruorum Dei* and *Domino excellentissimo atque praecellentissimo filio Eduino regi Anglorum Honorius episcopus seruus seruorum Dei salute*,<sup>21</sup> while Æthelburh is addressed as *Dominae gloriosae filiae Aedilbergae reginae Bonifatius episcopus seruus seruorum Dei*.<sup>22</sup> Likewise, Oswiu is also addressed as *Domino excellenti filio Ouiu regi Saxonum Uitalianus episcopus seruus seruorum Dei*.<sup>23</sup>

There are also similarities in the language used within these letters. They frequently, for example, feature paternal language. The letter to Æthelberht I addresses him as *glorioso fili* – ‘my distinguished son’ on two separate occasions while similar paternal expressions are found throughout the letters addressed to Frankish royal figures. A certain degree of variation is in evidence; letter 6.51 to Theodebert II and Theoderic II for example is noticeably patronising, but generally the mode of address does not seem to vary significantly according to the relative power, prestige or age of the monarchs addressed. This can most easily be explained through their shared papal origins, and

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<sup>16</sup> *Epp*, 6.51, 9.216, 9.217.

<sup>17</sup> *Epp*, 11.50.

<sup>18</sup> *Epp*, 11.47, 13.7.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Bishop Gregory to his most worthy son, the glorious lord Æthelberht, king of the English.’ It has often been suggested that this title reflects Æthelberht’s status as an *imperium* wielding king, as *HE*, II.5, or a *Bretwalda* – ‘controller of Britain’ in the term used by ASC [A], s.a. 827, as Colgrave and Mynors (eds), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, pp.112, 150; Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 33-35. This, however, is not the only conceivable explanation; nor is it necessarily the most obvious. The address could equally be interpreted as an attempt at flattery, a product of papal ignorance, or a product of the implicit assumption that kings and peoples were directly associated. The terms *imperium* and *Bretwalda* and discussed more fully below.

<sup>20</sup> ‘Bishop Gregory, servant of the servants of God, greets his most glorious and most excellent daughter, her Ladyship Queen Brunhilde.’

<sup>21</sup> ‘To Edwin, the illustrious king of the English, Bishop Boniface, servant of the servants of God’ and ‘To my most excellent lord and noble son, Edwin, king of the English, Bishop Honorius, servant of the servants of God, sends greetings’.

<sup>22</sup> ‘To his daughter the most illustrious lady, Queen Æthelburh, Bishop Boniface, servant of the servants of God.’

<sup>23</sup> ‘To the most excellent lord, our son Oswiu, king of the Saxons, Bishop Vitalian, servant of the servants of God.’

consequently their shared use of papal conventions and formulas. There are occasional possible indications of a more nuanced contemporary understanding of early Anglo-Saxon kingship in these letters, such as the suggestion in certain letters that the Franks claimed some form of hegemony over Kent, but such are rare and problematic.<sup>24</sup> Nonetheless, these letters and their terms of address are significant. They place early Anglo-Saxon kings alongside their Continental counterparts incorporating them into an ongoing European discourse of kingship. In all probability, therefore, kingship existed in early Anglo-Saxon England by this point, certainly in Kent and it would be reasonable to suppose elsewhere also. This reinforces the supposition of the previous section that kingship was well-established in early Anglo-Saxon England by the end of the sixth century, if not earlier.

Commonalities can also be observed in what these letters expect of kings, be they Frankish or early Anglo-Saxon. In short, there is a papal expectation that kings had certain responsibilities regarding religion. Indeed, the success of a ruler was equated with the effective promotion of Christianity in these letters.<sup>25</sup> Rulers were expected to care about and ensure the spiritual wellbeing of their people, although how they were expected to achieve this was necessarily different. There is an implication in this – not necessarily matched by reality – that kings were both interested in and capable of promoting the interests of the Church. It would at least seem that the impetus to convert can be attributed to the early Anglo-Saxon rulers themselves. Gregory I attributed the motivation to convert to Æthelberht I and a premium seems to have been placed upon royal sanctioning and support for Christianity in these letters.<sup>26</sup>

It, therefore, needs to be asked what early Anglo-Saxon kings hoped to gain from conversion.<sup>27</sup> The generic answer is surely that they saw some advantage in it, either temporal or spiritual. Certainly the figure of Constantine I was held out as an exemplar to Æthelberht I of all that he might hope to achieve by conversion. Likewise, the temporal power and prestige that he might gain through conversion was emphasised to

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<sup>24</sup> Wood, 'Augustine and Gaul', p. 69, drawing on *Epp*, 6.51, 11.51.

<sup>25</sup> Most clearly in *Epp*, 8.4, *HE*, I.32 (*Epp*, 11.37), *Epp*, 11.35, but commonly implied across the letters. More broadly: Straw, 'Gregory's Politics', pp. 47-63. Also Markus, *Gregory the Great and His World*, pp. 26-33; Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship*, pp. 73-74.

<sup>26</sup> *Epp*, 6.51; Wood, 'Mission of Augustine', pp. 9-10. More broadly: *HE*, I.32 (*Epp*, 11.37), *Epp*, 11.35, *HE*, II.10, II.11, II.17.

<sup>27</sup> In much greater detail: Higham, *Convert Kings*. Also Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship*, p. 31. On the conversion of England more generally: Yorke, *Conversion of Britain*; Campbell, 'Observations on the Conversion'; Campbell, 'First Century of Christianity'; Mayr-Harting, *Coming of Christianity*.

him.<sup>28</sup> Similar comments were also made by Boniface V to Edwin, but whether such arguments were actually persuasive is another matter.<sup>29</sup> With the aid of hindsight, it is possible to see that the adoption of Christianity brought certain benefits to early Anglo-Saxon kings. It connected them to a broader cosmology which had the potential to help to create that all-important ideological superstructure which justified and supported their positions.

There was also the distinct potential to exploit Christianity, and its rituals, for political gain. There was, for example, significant scope to utilise Christianity, and conversion, in the exercise of over-kingship. Bede reports how Æthelberht I was able to exert control over his nephew Sæberht of the East Saxons through the promotion of Christianity in his kingdom.<sup>30</sup> Æthelberht I may also have stood as godfather to Rædwald of the East Angles with all the ritual significance consequent upon this.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, the adoption of Christianity would have given Æthelberht I an increased political currency with his British, Christian, neighbours and allowed him to become much more integrated into Continental affairs.<sup>32</sup> Certainly the adoption of Christianity in Kent and Northumbria represents an important change in the nature of early Anglo-Saxon kingship, although not one that is necessarily quantifiable from the papal letters themselves. Intriguingly, this change, as was noted earlier, was broadly contemporary with both the elite burials and elite settlements such as Yeavinger, as well as a variety of much broader societal changes. It too, therefore, might be thought of as an experiment in kingship.

### **Church Councils and Reform**

The records of a church council held at Hertford in 672 and extracts from a creedal statement from a council held at Hatfield in 679 are preserved in the *Historia ecclesiastica*.<sup>33</sup> They illustrate a Church that has grown significantly from c.600, the council being attended by bishops of the East Angles, West Saxons and Mercians, together with the bishop of Rochester and the archbishop of Canterbury. The bishop of

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<sup>28</sup> *HE*, I.32 (*Epp*, 11.37).

<sup>29</sup> *HE*, II.10.

<sup>30</sup> *HE*, II.3.

<sup>31</sup> Higham, *Convert Kings*, pp. 102-03, more generally 90-119. Further: Higham and Ryan, *Anglo-Saxon World*, pp. 156-59; Campbell, 'Observations on the Conversion', pp. 74-78.

<sup>32</sup> Wood, 'Mission of Augustine', pp. 5-10; Wood, 'Augustine and Gaul'.

<sup>33</sup> *HE*, IV.5, IV.17 respectively.

Northumbria was represented by his proctors. They also provide further insight into the relationship between early Anglo-Saxon kings and the Church. The council of Hertford can be situated in a wider process of restructuring and reform associated with the figure of Archbishop Theodore.<sup>34</sup> Of particular interest is the Council of Hatfield, due to its use of the reigns of kings as a dating reference point.<sup>35</sup> The record states:

Imperantibus dominis piisimis nostris Ecgfrido rege Humbronensium, anno decimo regni eius sub die xv kalendas Octobres indictione octaua, et Aedilredo rege Mercinensium, anno sexto regni eius, et Alduulfo rege Estranglorum, anno septimodecimo regni eius, et Hlothario rege Cantuariorum, regno eius anno septimo.<sup>36</sup>

Kings of the Humbrenians (Northumbrians), Mercians, East Angles and [the people of] Kent are thus mentioned. The use of regnal years to date events is part of a longstanding tradition, but it is a tradition that is only effective if kings are an established part of the fabric of society. Moreover, by utilising kings in this way, the creedal statement is situating itself in the context of early Anglo-Saxon kingship; the power of kings was being implicitly appropriated to support the rulings of the Church. This again provides an indication of the existence of an ecclesiastical expectation of kingly support for the church. The description of these kings as being *dominis piisimis* – ‘most religious lords’ would seem to validate this potential relationship, although given its context this phrase may have little meaning beyond the formulaic. It is thus apparent that the relationship between early Anglo-Saxon kings and the Church had continued and developed since c.600, although its exact nature is not apparent.

Of potentially greater significance is the connection of these kings through their titles not to geographic areas but to peoples. The nature of early Anglo-Saxon kingship should perhaps, therefore, be sought in the relationships between leaders and their followers. This would correlate with the archaeological evidence and the earlier

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<sup>34</sup> *HE*, IV.1ff; Blair, *Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 79-80; Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils*, pp. 8-13. Also Lapidge, ‘Career of Archbishop Theodore’, pp. 26-28; Keynes, *The Councils of Clofesho*, pp. 1-4; Mayr-Harting, *Coming of Christianity*, pp. 130-39.

<sup>35</sup> Further: Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils*, pp. 10, 252-54.

<sup>36</sup> *HE* IV.17: ‘In the reign of our most religious lords, namely Ecgfrith, king of the Northumbrians, in the tenth year of his reign – 17 September and the eighth indiction – in the sixth year of the reign of Æthelred, king of the Mercians: in the seventeenth year of the reign of Ealdwulf, king of the East Angles; and in the seventh year of the reign of Hlothere, king of Kent.’



comments regarding the role of feasting and with the personal aspects of rule exhibited by Coroticus and Gildas's five kings. By extension, the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship might be situated in the emergence of specific regional identities, although testing this hypothesis is not possible.

### Archbishop Theodore and the Early Church

The relationship between early Anglo-Saxon kings and Christianity may also be explored through the writings of Archbishop Theodore (602-690).<sup>37</sup> Together with his contemporary Hadrian, Abbot of St. Peter's and St. Paul's Canterbury, Theodore established a religious school at Canterbury. A number of works, specifically the Leiden Family of glossaries, can be associated with this school.<sup>38</sup> A small number of works also survive which can be connected to Theodore directly. There remains a letter addressed to Æthelred of Mercia preserved in Stephen of Ripon's *Vita Wilfridi*.<sup>39</sup> Theodore also composed a six-line octo-syllable poem to Hæddi, bishop of Winchester; several other poems in a similarly unique style may also have been composed by him.<sup>40</sup> It is more than likely that Theodore was the author of the *Laterculus Malalianus*,<sup>41</sup> and in addition that he was the translator of the *Passio sancti Anastasii* from Greek into Latin.<sup>42</sup> It is also possible to connect the *Penitential of Theodore* to Theodore, although he himself is not the author of the text.<sup>43</sup> Of these texts, only the letter to Æthelred has any direct

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<sup>37</sup> Lapidge, 'Career of Archbishop Theodore'; Lapidge and Bischoff (eds), *Biblical Commentaries of the Canterbury School*, pp. 5-81, 133-89. Also Lapidge, 'Theodore of Tarsus'.

<sup>38</sup> Hessels (ed.) *Late Eighth-Century Latin-Anglo-Saxon Glossary*. This is one of a series of related texts, although it is Lapidge's opinion that the Leiden Glossary is most representative of the corpus of *glossae collectae* emanating from Canterbury: Lapidge, 'School of Theodore', pp. 67-72; Pheifer (ed.) *Old English Glosses in the Épinal-Erfurt Glossary*, pp. xxviii-li. More generally: Pheifer, 'Canterbury Bible Glosses'; Lapidge and Bischoff (eds), *Biblical Commentaries of the Canterbury School*, pp. 173-79, 190ff; Pheifer, 'Early Anglo-Saxon Glossaries'; Lapidge, 'School of Theodore', pp. 53-67.

<sup>39</sup> VW, 43.

<sup>40</sup> Lapidge, 'Theodore and Anglo-Latin Octosyllabic Verse'. Also Orchard, *Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, pp. 29-31; Lapidge, 'School of Theodore', pp. 46-47.

<sup>41</sup> Stevenson, *Laterculus Malalianus and Archbishop Theodore*, edition and translation pp.117-61, attribution to Theodore 8-15; in summary Stevenson, 'Theodore and the *Laterculus Malalianus*'.

<sup>42</sup> Franklin, 'Theodore and the *Passio S. Anastasii*'. The manuscript of the text has not been published.

<sup>43</sup> Finsterwalder (ed.), *Die Canones Theodori*. The text of the most widely circulated version, Finsterwalder's U, is more easily accessible to an English audience in Haddon and Stubbs (eds), *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents*, vol III, pp. 173-204. Translated McNeil and Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance*, pp. 179-215.

The *Iudicia Theodori*, or sometimes *Capitula Dacheriana*, Finsterwalder's D, and the *Canones Gregorii*, Finsterwalder's G, both represent slightly earlier variants of the text: Haddon and Stubbs (eds), *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents*, pp. 205-09. It is possible that Finsterwalder's U was based on the *Iudicia Theodori*: Charles-Edwards, 'Iudicia Theodori'.

Finsterwalder's U was compiled and edited by a certain *Discipulus Umbrensius*, based on an earlier text produced by one Eoda which seemingly preserved the answers to questions asked of

bearing on kingship, but if a broader approach is adopted, the works can shed light on early Anglo-Saxon kingship indirectly.

Collectively, these texts demonstrate the increasing complexity, learning, and sophistication of the early Anglo-Saxon Church in the final portion of the seventh century. The *Penitential* is particularly notable, seemingly indicating a significant degree of ecclesiastical control over early Anglo-Saxon society. Of course the probable effectiveness of its measures can and should be questioned, but the *Penitential* remains as a striking example of the ambition of the early Anglo-Saxon Church. Indeed, the *Penitential* demonstrates the ability of early Anglo-Saxon society to take-in complex ideas and attempt to realise them in social reality. This is precisely the intellectual context necessary for the development of the idea of kingship and its accompanying ideological framework. The extent to which this was actively exploited by early Anglo-Saxon kings is not apparent in this context, but the potential was most certainly there.

To this should be added Theodore's letter to Æthelred. This provides specific evidence with respect to the relationship between early Anglo-Saxon kings and the Church. The letter concerns the first reinstatement of Wilfrid to his Northumbrian see and monastic holdings, and urges Æthelred to offer Wilfrid his protection.<sup>44</sup> Theodore is seeking Æthelred's co-operation and support to effect this reinstatement, the implication being that early Anglo-Saxon kings, at least in some instances, held executive power over the affairs of the Church. There is evidently potential for conflict between kingly and ecclesiastical figures embedded in this relationship, as Wilfrid's earlier life would indicate. There is also the potential for conflict between royal and ecclesiastical figures contained within the *Penitential* should its dictates impinge upon kingly activities.<sup>45</sup> These potential difficulties, however, need to be seen in the wider context of notable material support for the early Anglo-Saxon Church on the behalf of Anglo-Saxon kings.<sup>46</sup> Further, Theodore and Æthelred seem to have had a positive ongoing

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Theodore by Eoda with the assistance of a certain *libellus Scottorum*. Also Fletcher, 'Cannons of Theodore'; Stancliffe, *Bede, Wilfrid, and the Irish*, pp. 12-13; Frantzen, *Literature of Penance*, pp. 63-69; Frantzen, 'Penitentials in Anglo-Saxon England', pp. 27-35.

<sup>44</sup> Thacker, 'Wilfrid'.

<sup>45</sup> One possible example might be Archbishop Theodore's mediation between Ecgrith of Northumbria and Æthelred of Mercia following the Battle of the Trent: *HE*, IV.21. The mediation limited further hostilities, and may have been welcome, but could be construed as constraining kingly action. Similarly, if Oswiu was the son of Æthelrith of Northumbria and Acha, then his marriage to Eanflæd, by this his first cousin through Acha, would have been rendered uncanonical by the *Penitential*. However, there is reason to feel that Oswiu was born of someone other than Acha: Higham, *Ecgrith*, pp. 77-79.

<sup>46</sup> Higham and Ryan, *Anglo-Saxon World*, p. 159; Blair, *Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 84-91.

relationship which might possibly be described as friendship.<sup>47</sup> Points of conflict, therefore, must not be allowed to occlude the mutual benefits of the relationship to both kings and the early Anglo-Saxon Church.

### **The Career and Writings of Aldhelm**

Heretofore, the sources have merely provided a series of windows onto the seventh century, primarily shedding light on various aspects of the relationship between early Anglo-Saxon kings and the Church. From this point onwards, this relationship will come progressively into focus as the sources available become increasingly discursive. Furthermore, as a result, it will also be possible to examine a greater range of issues pertaining to early Anglo-Saxon kingship. Helpful in this regard are the writings of Aldhelm (d. 709/10). Aldhelm was an Anglo-Saxon abbot, and subsequently bishop, and was arguably the foremost Anglo-Saxon scholar of his generation.<sup>48</sup> It is not known when Aldhelm was born.<sup>49</sup> It is thought, though, that he was of royal descent. Both of his subsequent biographers had access to Alfred's now lost *Handboc* which recorded that Aldhelm was the son of a certain Kenten.<sup>50</sup> Kenten is most plausibly a corrupt version of the Anglo-Saxon name Centwine. As Centwine is not a common Anglo-Saxon name, the most likely candidate is Centwine of the West Saxons, the fourth son of Cynegil of the West Saxons.<sup>51</sup> Aldhelm would thus also be connected to the Northumbrian royal family as Centwine was married to the sister of Eormenberg, Ecgfrith of Northumbria's second consort.<sup>52</sup> Thus, while a degree of uncertainty must remain, there is the distinct possibility that Aldhelm's writings can offer a royal perspective on early Anglo-Saxon kingship.

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<sup>47</sup> Lapidge, 'Career of Archbishop Theodore', p. 27.

<sup>48</sup> Claim by Lapidge and Herren (trans.), *Prose Works*, p. 1. Further, variously Orchard, 'Aldhelm's Library'; Lapidge, 'Career'; Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, pp. 178-91; Lapidge, 'Aldhelm'; Orchard, *Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, pp. 2-18; Lapidge and Rosier (trans.), *Poetic Works*, pp. 5-24; Lapidge and Herren (trans.), *Prose Works*, pp. 5-19.

<sup>49</sup> Details of Aldhelm's life come primarily from two twelfth-century biographies, one by Faricius, the Italian physician to Henry I, as the *Vita sancti Aldhelmi*, and one slightly later by William of Malmesbury as book five of his *Gesta pontificum Anglorum*. Winterbottom, 'Edition of Faricius'; Winterbottom and Thomson (eds), *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*.

*Gesta pontificum Anglorum*, V.188, states that Aldhelm was at least 70 when he died, which would place his birth around c.639 as it is known from Bede that he died in either 709 or 710: *HE*, V.18. However, as the *Gesta pontificum Anglorum*, V.231, states elsewhere that he does not know how old Aldhelm was, nor where he was born, this is surely only conjecture: Lapidge, 'Career', pp. 15-16; Lapidge, 'Aldhelm'.

<sup>50</sup> *Gesta pontificum Anglorum*, V.188; *Vita sancti Aldhelmi*, 1. Also Lapidge, 'Career', pp. 17-22.

<sup>51</sup> Lapidge, 'Career', p. 17.

<sup>52</sup> *VW*, 40.

Aldhelm's extant works include both a prose and a verse work on virginity – the *Prosa de virginitate* and the *Carmen de virginitate*; a series of *tituli*, or dedications, traditionally in the form of inscriptions, to altars and churches – the *Carmina ecclesiastica*; a lengthy poem describing a journey through the south-west of England – the *Carmen rhythmicum*; the *Epistola ad Acircium*, most probably addressed to Aldfrith of Northumbria, which included a treatise on the significance of the number seven, a treatise on metrics, a series of 100 metrical 'riddles', and a metrical *gradus* aimed at non-Latin speakers – *De metris*, the *Enigmata* and *De pedum regulis*; and a series of shorter letters or fragments of letters – the *Epistulae*. There are also several letters addressed to Aldhelm which are of relevance.<sup>53</sup> Dating these works with any precision is challenging. An absolute, or even a relative, chronology is not possible in many instances.<sup>54</sup>

Aldhelm uses the term *rex* extensively in his writings as a synonym for God. It should in theory, therefore, be possible to extrapolate from this a more complex and developed idea of Aldhelm's own personal ideology of kingship. This, however, is not the case. Aldhelm's use of the word is purely as a synonym. It reveals little more than the fact that his contemporaries clearly knew what a king was. Fortunately, specific references to kingship exist in his *Epistola ad Acircium*, his letter to Geraint of Dumnonia and his *Titulus III* for a church built by Bugga. The briefest of these is found in the *Epistola ad Acircium*. Aldhelm's opening address is notable; it is at once respectful but intimate, signalling both familiarity and Aldfrith's status as king.<sup>55</sup> This letter, therefore, provides a second instance of a friendship between a king and a high ecclesiastical figure.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, it highlights that Aldhelm and Aldfrith can be seen as part of the same cultural and social *milieu*. Indeed, both might be surmised as having pursued Christian learning as an alternative to kingly rule. However, Ecgfrith of Northumbria's unexpected, and heirless, death at the battle of Nechtansmere led to Aldfrith's succession. Aldfrith's rule seems to have combined elements of the scholar into his role as king,

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<sup>53</sup> Ehwald (ed.) *Aldhelmi Opera*. Translation and commentary: Lapidge and Rosier (trans.), *Poetic Works*; Lapidge and Herren (trans.), *Prose Works*. On the setting of the *Carmen rhythmicum*: Barker, 'Aldhelm's *Carmen rhythmicum*'.

<sup>54</sup> A commendable attempt is made by Lapidge, 'Career', pp. 66-69, although uncertainties remain.

<sup>55</sup> Further: Wright, 'Aldhelm, Gildas, and Acircius', XIV, pp. 19-24.

<sup>56</sup> The letter records that Aldhelm stood as sponsor, or possibly Godfather, to Aldfrith at his (re)baptism: Brooks, 'Introduction', pp. 5-6.. The most likely time and place for this to have happened would have been during their respective periods of study in Ireland (broadly conceived): Wright, 'Aldhelm, Gildas, and Acircius', pp. 20-28. On the Irish connection: Lapidge, 'Career', pp. 26-48. Also Lapidge, 'Aldhelm and the "Epinal-Erfurt Glossary"'; Yorke, 'Aldhelm's Irish and British Connections', pp. 169-75; Herren, 'Scholarly Contacts'.

which may also go some way to explaining the coinage issued in his name.<sup>57</sup> Christianity, and Christian learning, therefore, albeit in unusual circumstances, could potentially be a source of social power to both kings and ecclesiastics alike.<sup>58</sup>

The social power of Christianity could be exercised by kings in other ways also, as in Aldhelm's letter to Geraint of Dumnonia. This is an intricately-worded attempt to convince Geraint to adopt the 'correct' calculation of the date of Easter, and represents another example of a king, albeit in this instance a British king, wielding executive power with regard to the Church.<sup>59</sup> The expectation of such power on Aldhelm's part suggests that similar authority was wielded by early Anglo-Saxon kings also. More significant is the political context of this letter. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records battles between West Saxons and Britons in 658, 682 and 710.<sup>60</sup> While the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is suspect as a source in this period, the overall impression of border conflict is plausible enough.<sup>61</sup> A second West Saxon bishopric was also established in 705/6 at Sherborne. This was on the far side of the forest of Selwood, significantly removed from the traditional centre of West Saxon power, but directly adjacent to the kingdom of Dumnonia. In addition, the see appropriated and supplanted a previous British Christian site, the monastery and potential see of *Lanprobi*; nor is this the only example of West Saxon supplantation and appropriation of a British Christian site.<sup>62</sup> This letter, therefore, is located in the context of West Saxon power and expansion.<sup>63</sup> The adoption of the Roman calculation of Easter would have brought the kingdom of Dumnonia more securely into the West Saxon orbit. Aldhelm, a potentially royal West Saxon figure, may have been intentionally chosen as author to give the letter greater political weight. It is also interesting that Aldhelm was seemingly active in Dumnonian territory.<sup>64</sup> This might

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<sup>57</sup> Yorke, *Rex Doctissimus*, pp. 4-19; Cramp, 'Aldfrith'. Aldfrith's learning is mentioned explicitly by Bede, *HE*, IV.26, V.12, also by implication, V.15. Aldfrith is also held to have been a pupil of Adomnán at Iona, who gave him a copy of *De locis sanctis*, and is given the appellation *sapiens* in Irish sources: Ireland, 'Learning of a *sapiens*'.

<sup>58</sup> The work of Peter Brown is particularly illuminating regarding the relationship between religious authority and secular power, classically: Brown, 'Rise and Function of the Holy Man'. Further, the essays in Howard-Johnston and Hayward (eds), *Essays on the Contribution of Peter Brown*.

<sup>59</sup> Probert, 'Aldhelm's Letter to King Gerent', pp. 115-16, 118-19. *HE*, V.18, reports that Aldhelm brought the British to the 'correct' calculation of Easter through the writing of a book, presumably this letter.

<sup>60</sup> *ASC* [A, E], s.a. 658, 682, 710.

<sup>61</sup> Probert, 'Aldhelm's Letter to King Gerent', pp. 123-25, although Probert takes his interpretation too far.

<sup>62</sup> Hall, 'Sherborne', pp. 133-40. Also Barker, 'Sherborne, Glastonbury and the Expansion of Wessex'.

<sup>63</sup> Yorke, *Wessex in the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 57-60, more broadly 52-93. Also Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, pp. 132-42.

<sup>64</sup> Barker, 'Aldhelm's *Carmen rhythmicum*'; Hall, 'Sherborne', p. 142.

suggest that the West Saxon kings exercised some form of over-kingship over Geraint.<sup>65</sup> Certainly Christianity can be seen as a key tool for the West Saxon kings, increasing their ability to exert power over their neighbours.

The third direct insight into early Anglo-Saxon kingship is found in *Titulus III*. This gives a brief summary of the careers of three kings of the West Saxons. The first, Centwine, is described as wielding kingly power justly (*sic*); his success in battle is also noted, as are his generosity to the church and his eventual adoption of a monastic life. Cædwalla is similarly praised for his ability in warfare and described as *potens regni possessor et heres* – ‘a powerful occupant of the throne and its rightful heir’; Cædwalla also ended his life with a pilgrimage to Rome. Little is said of the third king, Ine. Aldhelm, therefore, highlights the attributes of justice, legitimacy and military prowess as praiseworthy. These attributes are the very same that were associated with kings, in this instance British kings, in Gildas’s *De excidio*, although admittedly Gildas was criticising these figures for not possessing them sufficiently or correctly. This would rather suggest an essential continuity in the fundamental nature of kingship not just within early Anglo-Saxon England, but more broadly Britain also. Of course Gildas’s figures were also associated with less laudable characteristics and it should not be assumed that these three kings were any different, even if these aspects are not apparent from Aldhelm’s description. As the eminent scholar John Michael Wallace-Hadrill once remarked of early Anglo-Saxon kings, ‘they are none the less warrior kings with traditional appetites because they are haunted by the power of holy men.’<sup>66</sup>

What was less apparent in Gildas, although nonetheless hinted at, were the various relationships between these kings and the Church.<sup>67</sup> In this context, this took several forms: the donation of lands to support monasteries followed by the direct adoption of a Christian life through retirement to a monastery, in the case of Centwine; and a pilgrimage to Rome, in the case of Cædwalla. The most interesting aspect of this is that both these kings ostensibly gave up kingship in order to adopt a more fully Christian life. Nor is this choice confined to these two individuals; Bede in his *Historia ecclesiastica* reports a further six early Anglo-Saxon kings who adopted, or attempted to

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<sup>65</sup> Probert, ‘Aldhelm’s Letter to King Gerent’, pp. 117, 120-25; Orme, *Saints of Cornwall*, p. 4. This would seem to be supported by *HE*, V.18.

<sup>66</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship*, p. 62.

<sup>67</sup> Gildas reports that Maglocunus was previously a monk prior to becoming king, while Constantine of Dumnonia murdered two relatives in a church: *DEB*, 34, 28 respectively.

adopt, such a life.<sup>68</sup> It is possible to look at these instances in various ways. They can be seen as manifestations of profound belief, as strategic examples of early Anglo-Saxon *Realpolitik*, or as combinations of the two.<sup>69</sup> Certainly, it is possible to find political explanations for a number of these abdications. The retirement of Sigeberht of the East Angles, for example, may be linked to the collapse of the *imperium* wielding Edwin of Northumbria and the resulting political instability. The abdication of Centwine in 685, who may have been relatively old by this point having succeeded his brother, cleared the way for the increasingly powerful, and much younger, Cædwalla; again, this might also have been precipitated by Northumbrian affairs and Ecgrith's death, to whom Centwine was related through marriage, at the Battle of Nechtansmere.<sup>70</sup> Equally, various manifestations of belief should not be discounted. The option of retirement to a monastery was unlikely to have been seen as desirable without a certain base level of belief.

Similar patterns of activity can be seen in contemporary Ireland.<sup>71</sup> Likewise, related occurrences can be observed in contemporary Frankia. In the case of Frankia, however, monastic retirement does not seem to have been a preferred kingly choice, but rather served as an enforced alternative to regicide.<sup>72</sup> A similar fate seems to have befallen Ceolwulf of Northumbria in 731.<sup>73</sup> Potentially complicating this image are two important phenomena. The first is the incidence of early Anglo-Saxon royal saints, and the second the testimony of the Irish text, *De duodecim abusivis saeculi*. Oswald of Northumbria is widely known for his sanctification; his predecessor, Edwin, seems to have been similarly venerated.<sup>74</sup> Neither of these figures abdicated in favour of the monastic life, but were rather killed in battle. A number of early Anglo-Saxon royal women were also venerated as saints although this should not necessarily be thought of as the same occurrence. *De duodecim abusiuis saeculi*, meanwhile, amongst other things

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<sup>68</sup> Sigeberht of the East Angles *HE*, III.18; Oswiu of Northumbria *HE*, IV.5; Sebbi of the East Saxons *HE*, IV.11; Ine of the West Saxons *HE*, V.7; Cenred of Mercia *HE*, V.19, V.24; Æthelred of Mercia *HE*, V.19, V.24. Bede also reports that Offa, son of Sighere of the East Saxons, accompanied Cenred and joined him in receiving the tonsure in Rome: *HE*, V.19.

<sup>69</sup> Stancliffe, 'Kings Who Opted Out', has emphasised the role of belief. Higham, 'The Shaved Head', has recently drawn attention to the political dimensions of this phenomenon.

<sup>70</sup> Higham, 'The Shaved Head', pp. 10-14.

<sup>71</sup> Stancliffe, 'Kings Who Opted Out', pp. 161-66.

<sup>72</sup> Goosmann, 'Long-Haired Kings of the Franks', pp. 240-47.

<sup>73</sup> In Moore MS Continuation. Ceolwulf subsequently retired to a monastery in 737; strikingly this is directly associated with a drought in an alternate continuation of the *HE*: Colgrave and Mynors (eds), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 572-73, lxvii-lxix. Also Rollason, 'Ceolwulf'.

<sup>74</sup> Cubitt, 'Sites and Sanctity', pp. 60-63; Thacker, '*Membra disjecta*', pp. 97-107. Also Craig, 'Oswald'; Cramp, 'Eadwine'.

is notable for holding kings accountable for the physical wellbeing, productivity, and fertility of their kingdoms.<sup>75</sup>

Looking more broadly, an association between early Anglo-Saxon kings and religion has already been noted in various contexts. In addition to the specifically Christian instances detailed in this section, strong archaeological evidence supporting the ritual slaughter of cattle in a pre-Christian context at the Northumbrian royal settlement of Yeavinger has already been observed. Slightly more problematic were the bracteates found associated with a number of potentially royal sixth-century Kentish sites.<sup>76</sup> Additionally, Irish and Scottish kings can also be seen to have been involved in religious rituals, including royal inaugurations, and there are similar indications in areas of Irish settlement in Britain and amongst the Picts.<sup>77</sup> There is thus good reason to suppose that some form of association of early Anglo-Saxon kingship with religion existed prior to the adoption of Christianity. By extension, taking these various factors together, it might be possible to suggest that some form of sacral kingship was in evidence. This, in short, is where the king is a religious figure in some sense, who provides supernatural support, protection, and intercession on behalf of their kingdom. This idea was extremely popular with nineteenth-century, particularly German, historians and gained widespread currency through Fraser's *The Golden Bough*.<sup>78</sup> Were sacral kingship to be in evidence in early Anglo-Saxon England, this would suggest an entirely new origin for early Anglo-Saxon kingship.<sup>79</sup>

Unfortunately there is no evidence for this at all. The instances of royal veneration are perfectly explicable independently of any idea of sacral kingship. Such figures were simply inherently suitable candidates for veneration.<sup>80</sup> With regard to the *De duodecim abusivis saeculi* it firstly needs to be stated that despite the undoubted similarities between Irish and early Anglo-Saxon kingships, and pronounced cultural contact, they were different and distinct institutions. Furthermore, reassessment of Irish

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<sup>75</sup> Hellmann, 'Pseudo-Cyprianus *De XII abusivis saeculi*'.

<sup>76</sup> Behr, 'Kingship in Early Medieval Kent'.

<sup>77</sup> Campbell, 'Royal Inauguration in Dál Riata'; Foster, *Picts, Gaels and Scots*, pp. 38-39, 43-44; Wormald, 'Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Kingship'. Also Yorke, *Conversion of Britain*, p. 105. Dunadd, Argyll and Bute, is of particular importance: Lane and Campbell, *Dunadd*, pp. 18-23, 247-49.

<sup>78</sup> Fraser, *Golden Bough*.

<sup>79</sup> As in the hugely problematic Chaney, *Cult of Kingship in Anglo-Saxon England*.

<sup>80</sup> As Cubitt, 'Sites and Sanctity'; Nelson, *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe*, pp.69-74; Nelson, 'Royal Saints and Early Medieval Europe'.



kingship is painting it in a very different light.<sup>81</sup> Irish kings were involved in religious rituals but were not necessarily themselves religious figures. In addition, the connection made between the prosperity of a kingdom and the king in the *De duodecim abusiuus saeculi* fits comfortably within the context of Christian thought. Kingly involvement with religion might thus be connected to the broader role of the king as protector of their people, although it need not be solely connected to this. Regardless, it is clear that being responsible for the religious wellbeing of ones people does not make one a religious figure. The instances of royal involvement in religious rituals from the sixth century would suggest that religion played a role in the origins or early development of Anglo-Saxon kingship. However, these are not evidence of sacral kingship, but merely an involvement in and utilisation of religion by kings.

### **Bede and the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum***

Bede (673/4–735), like Aldhelm before him, was the foremost Anglo-Saxon scholar of his generation.<sup>82</sup> He spent the majority of his life in the twin foundation of Wearmouth-Jarrow, where he benefited from its tremendous library.<sup>83</sup> It has been suggested that, like Aldhelm, Bede came from a royal family, although this suggestion rests rather thinly on the premise that Bede is an uncommon name, and that a Bede [Bæda] is listed in a Lindsean genealogy.<sup>84</sup> Even if such were the case, his entry into the monastery aged seven rather undermines any royal perspective that might result from this.<sup>85</sup> Nonetheless, Bede should be expected to have known about and understood Anglo-Saxon kingship, at least in his native Northumbria. His writings betray an individual who was concerned about and interested in the wider world.<sup>86</sup> In addition, the Wearmouth-Jarrow foundation had strong links to the Northumbrian royal family.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Charles-Edwards, 'Celtic Kings: "Priestly Vegetables"?'; Wormald, 'Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Kingship'. C.f. the earlier ideas of Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings*; Binchy, *Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Kingship*.

<sup>82</sup> Campbell, 'Bede'; Brown, *Companion to Bede*, pp. 1-16. Further: Brown, 'Bede's Life in Context'; Ray, 'Who Did Bede Think He Was?'; Meyvaert, 'Bede the Scholar'.

<sup>83</sup> Love, 'Library of the Venerable Bede'; Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, pp. 191-231; Laistner, 'Library of the Venerable Bede'.

<sup>84</sup> Campbell, 'Secular and Political Contexts', pp. 25-26; Campbell, 'Questioning Bede', pp. 119-20. C.f. Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede*, p. 9, particularly n. 23.

<sup>85</sup> *HE*, V.24.

<sup>86</sup> Goffart, *Narrators*, pp. 235ff; Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform'. Goffart's location of the *HE* in a dispute in the Northumbrian Church surrounding the figure of bishop Wilfrid has proven particularly controversial. Further: Goffart, 'Bede's History in a Harsher Climate'; Goffart, 'Bede's Agenda and Ours'. A more satisfactory interpretation is found in Stancliffe, 'Disputed Episcopacy'.

<sup>87</sup> Wood, 'Foundation of Wearmouth-Jarrow'; Wood, *Most Holy Abbot*, pp. 4-5. Bede also corresponded with Ceolwulf of Northumbria, to whom the *HE* was dedicated.

The *Historia ecclesiastica* presents a history of the British Isles from the time of Julius Caesar to 731.<sup>88</sup> It focuses primarily on the English, or Anglo-Saxons, and particularly upon the emergence and establishment of the Anglo-Saxon Church.<sup>89</sup> The *Historia ecclesiastica* contains five books, the first of which narrates the period up until the Gregorian mission to Kent and the early seventh century, with the remaining four covering successive 30 year intervals.<sup>90</sup> It stands in the tradition of ecclesiastical history pioneered by Eusebius of Caesarea – as it is concerned with the progress of the Church and quotes verbatim from documents – but differs significantly from this exemplar in that it is not a universal but a predominantly ‘national’ history.<sup>91</sup>

As a work focused upon the early Anglo-Saxon Church, kings are not a dominant feature of the *Historia ecclesiastica*. Bede used early Anglo-Saxon kings as structural and chronological tools and as vehicles to express certain broader points, but he rarely discussed them directly for their own sake.<sup>92</sup> Such references to kings as exist, therefore, are often incidental. Nonetheless, by amalgamating these references important insights can be achieved. Indeed, the *Historia ecclesiastica* is fundamental to early Anglo-Saxon scholarship, so even if the insights gained from it regarding the origins of kingship are ultimately limited, it must be addressed regardless.

Various technical issues also present certain challenges. There is, for example, a distinct Northumbrian bias in the work. This exists in both the material covered and the way in which it is covered. After Book One, the following books are resolutely Northumbrian in concern. It is only natural that Bede had access to comparatively more information from his native Northumbria, but it is also evident that it was the Northumbrian kings who are his favoured kingly protagonists – Edwin, Oswald, and even the pagan Æthelfrith. Bede was also potentially constrained by the political

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<sup>88</sup> Colgrave and Mynors (eds), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*. Plummer (ed.) *Baedae Opera Historica*, also continues to be of worth. Further: Wright, *Companion to Bede*; Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*. The text may have been edited slightly after 731, but this is the date up until which it officially runs: Kirby, 'Ceolwulf and the *Historia Ecclesiastica*'; Kirby, *Bede's Historia ecclesiastica*, pp. 2-3; Goffart, *Narrators*, p. 242.

The best introduction to the *HE* remains Campbell, 'Bede I'; with Campbell, 'Bede II'. Also Brown, *Companion to Bede*, pp. 101-16; Thacker, 'Bede and History'; Levison, 'Bede as Historian'.

<sup>89</sup> Indeed, Bede can perhaps be credited with creating the idea of the English: Brooks, 'Construction of English Identity'; Brooks, *Bede and the English*; Wormald, 'Origins of the *Gens Anglorum*'; Wormald, 'Bede and the "Church of the English"'.  
<sup>90</sup> Further: Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede*, pp. 101-13.

<sup>91</sup> Campbell, 'Bede I', pp. 4-5; Barnard, 'Bede and Eusebius'; Markus, *Bede and the Tradition of Ecclesiastical History*.

<sup>92</sup> Although as a work dedicated to a King, the *HE* can be regarded as being concerned with kingship more broadly, or at least Bede's conception of it, as discussed below.

circumstances in which he wrote. The then Northumbrian king, Ceolwulf, to whom the *Historia ecclesiastica* was addressed, came from a different, and rival, branch of the Northumbrian royal family from all but one of his immediate predecessors. What is more, the same period during which Bede was completing the *Historia ecclesiastica* also saw an attempted royal coup.<sup>93</sup> The need for delicacy and tact may at least in part account for the cursory nature of the later sections of the *Historia ecclesiastica*. Bede is also known for his discretion more broadly.<sup>94</sup> For various reasons, therefore, it is thus impossible to know what Bede brushed over, ignored or omitted.

There are also distinct evidential problems with utilising the *Historia ecclesiastica*. Bede supplied a list of his principal sources in his preface, no doubt in an attempt to add credence to his work, but it is clear that the majority of the *Historia ecclesiastica* ultimately rests upon oral testimony. Indeed, Bede frequently acknowledged when he was drawing upon such accounts, and was content to invoke the authority, usually spiritual authority, of the testator, to support their stories. This often encompassed second-hand reports and stories whose point of origin was distant from Bede's actual time of writing. There are also those parts of the *Historia ecclesiastica* that rest upon unacknowledged oral testament or 'tradition'.<sup>95</sup> Given the propensity of stories to develop over time and the chronological remove from which Bede wrote, many of his sources seem little better than hearsay. Ultimately, it is important to recognise that Bede was not looking to compose literal truths but spiritual truths, and if precise literal truths had to be dispensed with in order to maintain this, then so be it.<sup>96</sup>

It should also be remembered that the *Historia ecclesiastica* does not exist in isolation. It was in fact one of over 30 works written by Bede which included various Biblical commentaries, homilies, tracts on time and language and a number of hagiographies.<sup>97</sup> It is increasingly being recognised that the *Historia ecclesiastica* needs to be seen in the context of these works as many of the issues that Bede addressed in the *Historia ecclesiastica* are also present in them.<sup>98</sup> Indeed, it is possible to conceive of his

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<sup>93</sup> Rollason, 'Ceolwulf'.

<sup>94</sup> Most apparent in his treatment of Wilfrid: Campbell, 'Bede I', pp. 19-22.

<sup>95</sup> Higham, *Bede as an Oral Historian*.

<sup>96</sup> Bede's use of the phrase *vera lex historiae* in his preface seems to indicate just this: Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede*, pp. 79-81. Also Goffart, 'Bede's *uera lex historiae* Explained'; Ray, 'Bede's *vera lex historiae*'.

<sup>97</sup> Brown, *Companion to Bede*, pp. 13-15, gives a list of Bede's works in approximate chronological order.

<sup>98</sup> DeGregorio, 'The New Bede', pp. 1-6.

works as a cohesive whole.<sup>99</sup> It should be possible, therefore, to use Bede's other works to illuminate the *Historia ecclesiastica*. However, in the context of kingship this is of limited use. References to kings are almost entirely absent from Bede's other works, although important insight can be gained from those few instances when Bede did address kingship as well as from more general commonalities.

It has long been recognised that Bede's *In primam partem Samuelis* has the potential to illuminate Bede's conception of kingship.<sup>100</sup> However, this commentary only covers the first book of Samuel – up until the death of Saul – and is almost unrelentingly allegorical. Bede was aware of the potential import of the ideas discussed in I Samuel for kingship of his own day, but did not feel the need to explore them explicitly.<sup>101</sup> Similarly, the potentially revealing *Quaestiones in Regnum Librum* also eschews literal or historical interpretations in favour of the allegorical.<sup>102</sup> Despite this, I Samuel and more generally the Deuteronomic History – Joshua to II Kings, excluding Ruth – can be seen to have influenced Bede's portrayal of kingship and the *Historia ecclesiastica*. Indeed, the structuring of history through regnal inserts, the consistent use of language for peoples and places, the importance of geographical features as political boundaries, the association of kings with peoples, the connection between the spiritual fidelity of kings and the wellbeing of their kingdoms, the importance of military prowess for exercising kingly power, and the subordination of history to a religious aim can all be found in the Deuteronomic History just as they can in the *Historia ecclesiastica*.<sup>103</sup> Evaluating such similarities is problematic. Certainly Bede's presentation of kingship was not solely dependent upon the Deuteronomic History. Equally, given Bede's undoubted knowledge of the Deuteronomic History, and the fact that his commentary on Samuel predated the *Historia ecclesiastica* by a considerable margin, the Deuteronomic History cannot but have informed his understanding of early Anglo-Saxon kingship. Indeed, Bede makes an explicit comparison to the Deuteronomic History in the *Historia ecclesiastica*, comparing Æthelfrith of Northumbria to Saul, making Edwin of Northumbria – his successor and the first Northumbrian to convert to Christianity –

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<sup>99</sup> Thacker, 'Bede and the Ordering of Understanding', pp. 46-63.

<sup>100</sup> Hurst (ed.) *Opera exegetica 2*. Variously Brown, 'Commentary on Samuel'; McClure, 'Bede's Old Testament Kings', particularly pp. 76-82; Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship*, pp. 76-78. The Hebrew Book of Samuel covers I and II Samuel and I and II Kings in modern translations.

<sup>101</sup> As *HE*, I.34. Further: Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship*, pp. 76-78.

<sup>102</sup> Hurst (ed.) *Opera exegetica 2*; Foley and Holder (trans.), *A Biblical Miscellany*, pp. 89-138.

<sup>103</sup> McClure, 'Bede's Old Testament Kings', pp. 82-98.

comparable to the symbolically charged figure of David.<sup>104</sup> Oswald of Northumbria might be cast in a similar light, with Cædwallon of Gwynedd fulfilling the role of Goliath.

A more direct point of comparative illumination comes from Bede's *In Ezram et Neemiam* where Bede draws explicit parallels between the kings of the Old Testament and those of his own day.<sup>105</sup> The books of Ezra and Nehemiah are primarily concerned with the building and establishment of the second High Temple after the Jewish return from Babylonian exile. The Temple in this context is allegorically interpreted as symbolic of the Christian Church.<sup>106</sup> Bede's line-by-line commentary often notes the role of the Persian kings Cyrus and Darius in this process; moreover, these figures are directly compared with the kings of his own day who patronise, support, and protect the Church. In fact, *In Ezram* is one of a triptych of works addressing the temple in its various Old Testament forms, together with *De tabernaculo* and *De templo*.<sup>107</sup> These are all associated with what has become known since the work of Alan Thacker as Bede's 'ideal of reform'.<sup>108</sup> In short, it has increasingly been realised that Bede was dissatisfied with the Northumbrian Church, and broader society, of his day and felt that it was in need of renewal and reform. Drawing upon Gregory the Great's idea of *doctores* and *rectores*, Bede envisaged a spiritual elite working in tandem with and supported by the secular elite to effect this reform. The spiritual elite would provide the crucially needed pastoral care and spiritual guidance, while the secular elite – kings – would provide the required authority and financial support. Similar ideas can be found in the *Historia ecclesiastica*, although they are more subtly expressed and do not predominate, as well as in his prose *Vita Cuthberti* and most especially in his *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*.<sup>109</sup> The existence of such ideas cannot but have coloured Bede's depiction of early Anglo-Saxon kings, further underlining the difficulties of using the *Historia ecclesiastica* to illuminate the origins of early Anglo-Saxon kingship.

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<sup>104</sup> *HE*, I.34.

<sup>105</sup> Hurst (ed.) *Pars 2, Opera exegetica 2A*; DeGregorio (trans.), *On Ezra and Nehemiah*.

<sup>106</sup> More Broadly: Connolly (trans.), *On the Temple*, pp. xx-xxxiii; Holder (trans.), *On the Tabernacle*, p. xvi.

<sup>107</sup> Hurst (ed.) *Pars 2, Opera exegetica 2A*; Holder (trans.), *On the Tabernacle*; Connolly (trans.), *On the Temple*. Further: DeGregorio, "Nostrum socordiam temporum", pp. 114-15; DeGregorio (trans.), *On Ezra and Nehemiah*, pp. xiii and xvii-xxx.

<sup>108</sup> Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform'. Thacker adopted a broader vision of reform than has typically been the case since: Higham, 'Bede's Agenda', pp. 480-81. Subsequently Higham, 'Bede's Agenda'; DeGregorio, 'Monasticism and Reform'; DeGregorio, 'Bede's *In Ezram*'; DeGregorio, "Nostrum socordiam temporum".

<sup>109</sup> Higham, 'Bede's Agenda'; Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede*, pp. 54-57; but c.f. DeGregorio, 'Monasticism and Reform'.

The preface to the *Historia ecclesiastica* takes on a particularly significant meaning in this context. It is addressed to Ceolwulf of Northumbria and explicitly frames the work as one of instruction, providing models of good and bad behaviour for the benefit of its reader.<sup>110</sup> The kings of the *Historia ecclesiastica* are very much a part of this instructional format. For example, Bede equates Eadbald of Kent's physical illness with his apostasy;<sup>111</sup> similarly, Bede links Ecgfrith's death at Nechtansmere with his attack on the Irish and his refusal to follow the advice of both Ecgberht and Cuthbert,<sup>112</sup> conversely, Bede relates how Edwin's power increased as an augury of his conversion,<sup>113</sup> similarly, he credited Oswald's victory over Cædwallon to the strength of his Christian faith.<sup>114</sup> By claiming divine approval or approbation Bede offered models of what he felt were good and bad kings. The kingship portrayed in the *Historia ecclesiastica* is thus a deliberate literary creation.<sup>115</sup>

Placing the *Historia ecclesiastica* in the context of Bede's other works, therefore, highlights further difficulties with utilising it as a historical source. The kings of the *Historia ecclesiastica* appear through a distorted lens. An innovative approach is thus required in order to use the *Historia ecclesiastica* to examine early Anglo-Saxon kingship. To this end, by aggregating incidental references to kings, broader patterns of kingly behaviour will be determined. This has been achieved through the creation of a series of spreadsheets containing every reference to early Anglo-Saxon kings in the *Historia ecclesiastica*. The primary spreadsheet is organised according to chapter of the *Historia ecclesiastica* and sub-divided by the kings mentioned in that chapter. The activities and events associated with each king in each chapter are recorded through a standardised categorisation of five broad areas: relationship to religion; extra-kingly relations; intra-dynastic relations; warfare; and other. A supplementary spreadsheet amalgamates this chapter-by-chapter information into a single entry for each king mentioned in the *Historia ecclesiastica*, including all the activities and events associated with them.<sup>116</sup> This information can then be manipulated to determine and examine patterns of kingly activity. The over-all selection of material in the *Historia ecclesiastica* will necessarily continue to reflect Bede's interests, but by divorcing such instances from

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<sup>110</sup> Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede*, pp. 69-82, 95-100 and more broadly 147-86.

<sup>111</sup> *HE*, II.5.

<sup>112</sup> *HE*, IV.26.

<sup>113</sup> *HE*, II.9.

<sup>114</sup> *HE*, III.1.

<sup>115</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, 'Gregory of Tours and Bede', pp. 108-11. Also Goffart, *Narrators*, pp. 3-19.

<sup>116</sup> Appendices VI-VIII. Also note 118 below.

their immediate context they are also removed from Bede's agenda as far as is possible. Furthermore, this approach minimises any potential issues associated with specific details; while any particular instance or anecdote may be rightly questioned, by looking across more general trends these uncertainties are mitigated. The success of this methodology is, of course, based upon the premise that much, if not all, of the material in the *Historia ecclesiastica* is in essence reliable and that while Bede manipulated his material he did not wilfully create it. While the *Historia ecclesiastica* has been proven to be extremely problematic, these are not unreasonable assumptions.

Upon compiling the tables, the extent of Bede's manipulation of his sources, and the incidental nature of his kings, became strongly apparent. As can be seen (Fig.14) by far the most common activity or event that kings are associated with in the *Historia ecclesiastica* is purely literary, serving as structural or chronological reference points for

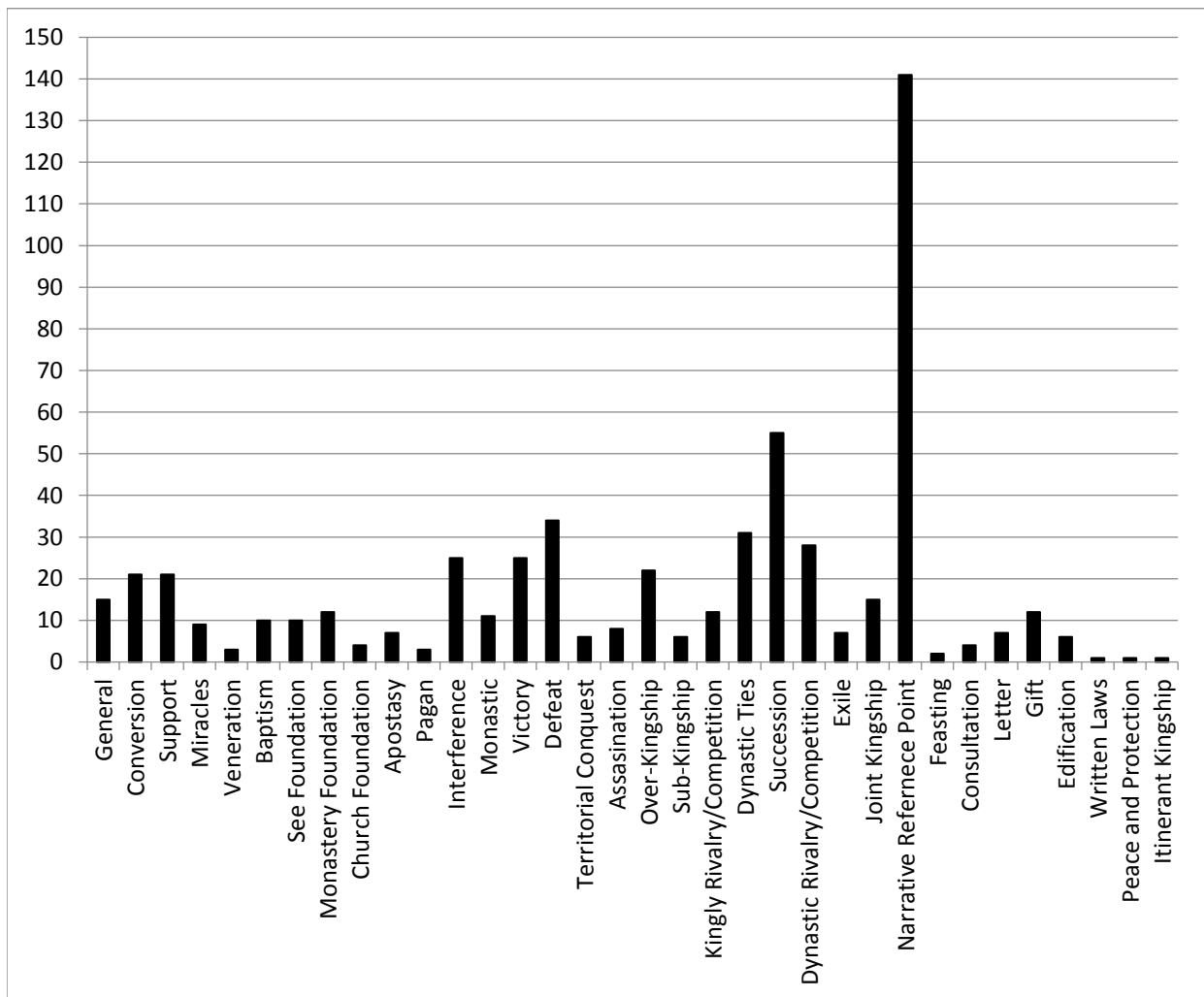


Fig.14, Activities of Kings in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*. N.B. Unless otherwise specified all graphs show activity along the x-axis and frequency of incidence along the y-axis.

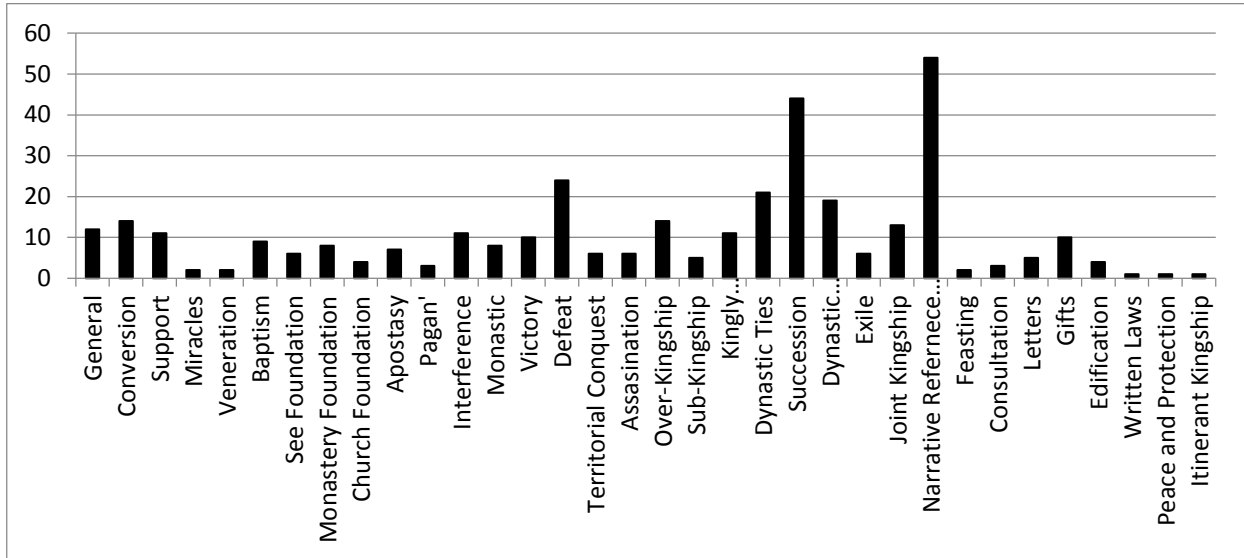


Fig.15, Activities of Kings in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* Grouped by King

Bede's narrative. Indeed, this one association is so frequently used that the category of 'other', of which it is a part, is in fact the largest (Fig.16). Even when the individual entries are grouped according to king (Fig.15), which helps to mitigate the incidental nature of many of Bede's references to kings, the sub-category of 'narrative reference point' continues to predominate. This dramatically illustrates the above comments concerning the incidental nature of many of Bede's references to early Anglo-Saxon kings. Indeed, 23 of the 72 kings mentioned in the *Historia ecclesiastica* appear only

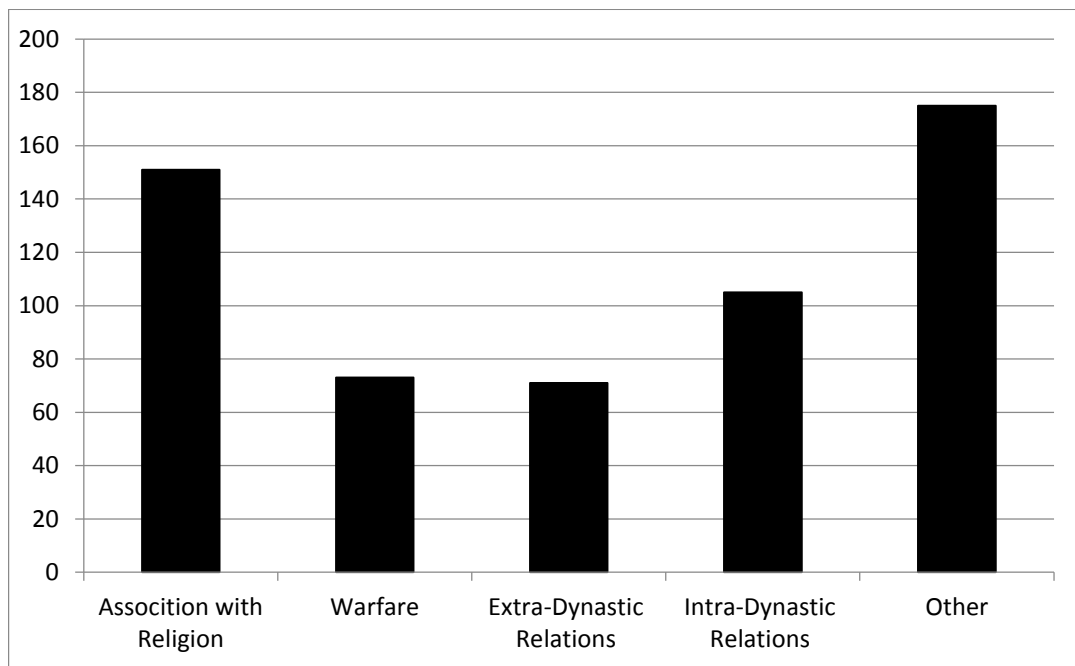


Fig.16, Categories of Activity Associated with Kings in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*



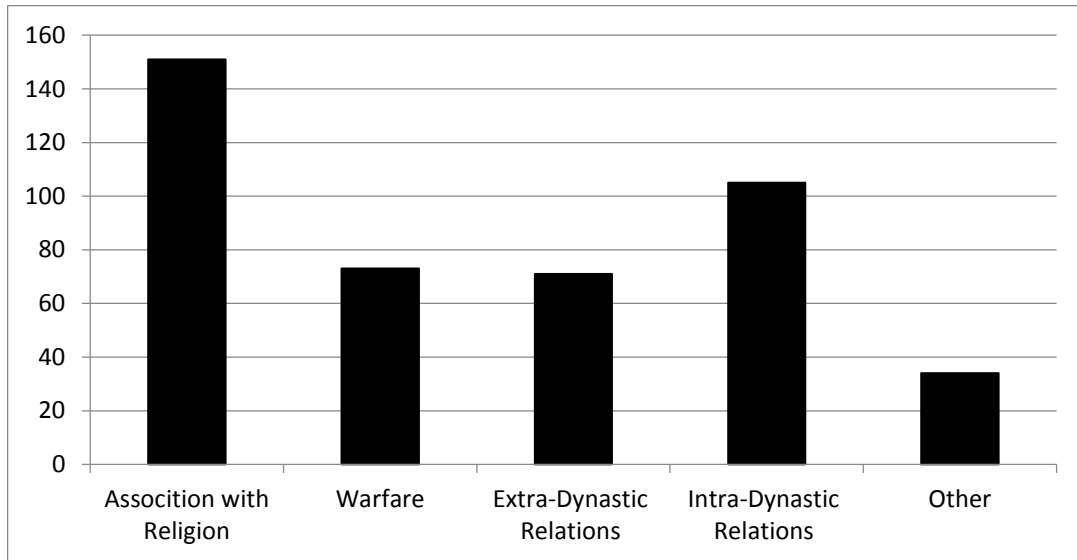


Fig.17, Categories of Activity Associated with Kings in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* (excluding the sub-category of 'narrative reference point')

once, as narrative reference points.<sup>117</sup> If this sub category is excluded then the category of 'association with religion' comes to the fore and 'other' takes up the anticipated rear (Fig.17). Again, however, this is likely to be a reflection of Bede's interests and agendas. Given the seeming extent of Bede's manipulation, therefore, it would be unwise to attempt to evaluate the relative importance of different categories or sub-categories to early Anglo-Saxon kingship. However, each category can still be meaningfully analysed so as to shed light on various aspects of the nature of early Anglo-Saxon kingship.

Starting with the category of 'association with religion', a wide range of different sub-categories are in evidence (Figs.18-19).<sup>118</sup> Many of these have been noted previously, although in most instances it is possible to approach them in more detail. As well as a general affiliation to religion, early Anglo-Saxon kings are commonly

<sup>117</sup> 29 unnamed *duces regii* killed at the Battle of Winwæd (as one entry), Ælle of Deira, Ælle of the South Saxons, Æthelberht II of Kent, Æthelhere of the East Angles, Arwald of the Isle of Wight, Ceawlin of the West Saxons, Ceorl of Mercia, Eanfrith of the Hwicce, Eanhere of the Hwicce, Eormenic of Kent, Hengist of Kent, Ida of Northumbria, Octa of Kent, Oeric of Kent, Osric of Northumbria, Osric of the Hwicce, Sæberht's successors (1 of 3, unnamed), Sæberht's successors (2 of 3, unnamed), Sæberht's successors (1 of 3, unnamed), Sigeberht I of the East Saxons, Sigeheard of the East Saxons, Swæfred of the East Saxons.

<sup>118</sup> Each of the five categories of activity associated with kings is represented by two graphs, corresponding to the two spreadsheets used to collate and amalgamate the information derived from the *Historia ecclesiastica*. The first graph illustrates the 'raw' chapter-by-chapter information, while the second groups these individual entries according to king so as to minimise the distorting effects of repetition and Bede's differential interest in certain figures. Generally, the pairs of graphs for each category of activity demonstrate similar ratios between their respective sub-categories, but some variation is at times in evidence.

associated with the process of conversion and the active support of the Church. It is thus hardly surprising that baptism and the foundation of episcopal sees and monasteries also often feature in Bede's narrative, as does a degree of interference or influence in the running and affairs of the early Anglo-Saxon Church. The retirement of kings to a

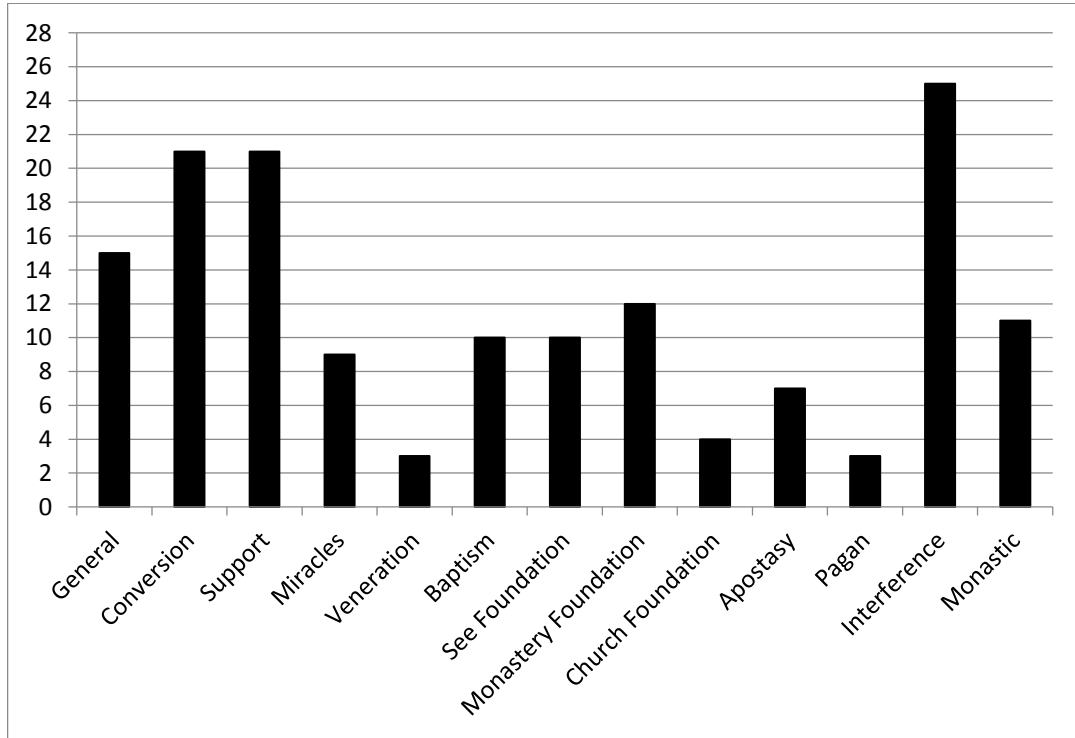


Fig.18, Activities of Kings in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* – Association with Religion

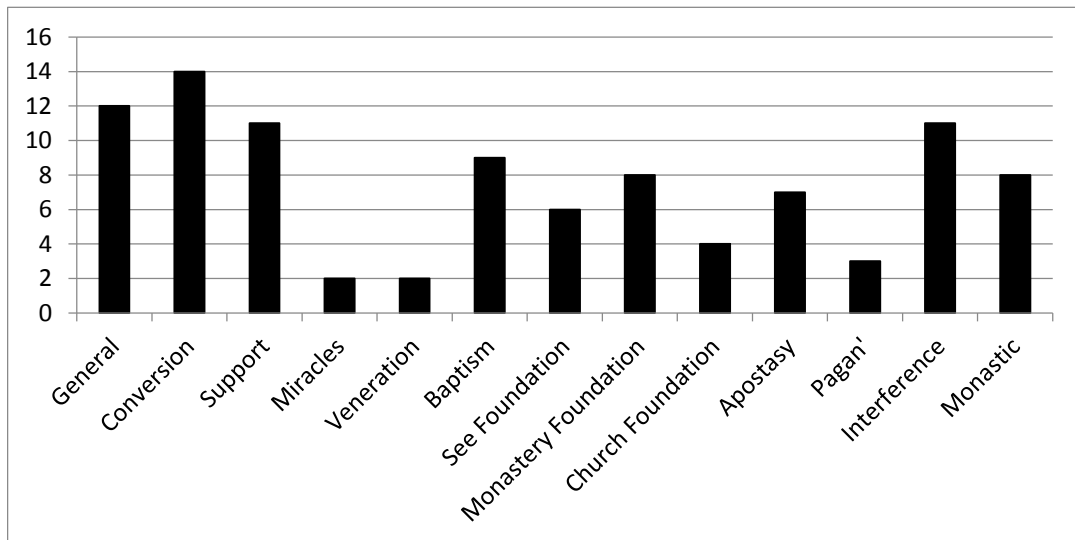


Fig.19, Activities of Kings in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* Grouped by King – Association with Religion

monastic life is also relatively commonplace. Less common, perhaps due to its greater mundanity, are references to the royal founding of churches. There are also a few references to kingly miracles, primarily those associated with Oswald of Northumbria, but also that of Sebbi of the East Saxons, and to the veneration of kings – Oswald and Edwin of Northumbria. Both the active pursuit of non-Christian religion or apostasy are also relatively infrequent, the only such individuals being Cenwalh of the West Saxons, Penda of Mercia, and Eadbald of Kent with the former, and Sæberht of the East Saxons' three successors, Rædwald of the East Angles, Osric of Deira, Eanfrith of Bernicia, and Sigehere of the East Saxons with the latter.

Many of the activities in the category of 'association with religion' are in accordance with Bede's reform agenda. This does not mean that these features should be discounted. Such instances are mirrored in both earlier and later sources and it is difficult to envisage how the early Anglo-Saxon Church could have flourished without royal support. However, it should be recognised that Anglo-Saxon kings presumably felt they were getting something worthwhile in exchange for this support, be it temporal or spiritual. Certainly, as already seen, the instances of royal interference surely indicate a kingly, and perhaps ecclesiastical, expectation of control and direction over the early Anglo-Saxon Church. The instances of monastic retirement or pilgrimage, with their often areligious motivations, can also be viewed as instances of royal entitlement and a sense of ownership over the early Anglo-Saxon Church.

It was also seemingly possible to gain political currency from an association with Christianity. While apostasy or the active pursuit of non-Christian religion were relatively uncommon occurrences in the *Historia ecclesiastica*, with two notable exceptions – Penda of Mercia and Rædwald of the East Angles – such instances are connected to the succession of a new king in a recently converted kingdom. They can perhaps be best explained by the incremental advantages to be accrued by differentiating oneself from one's predecessor; such a strategy would exploit any feelings of unease or discontent with the recent religious changes. The instances of veneration of royal figures, and the associated miracles, might also be seen in this broad context. Such cults were not necessarily directly promoted by the venerated king's successors, although they were nonetheless promoted by royal figures such as the cult of Saint Oswald at Bardney, Lincolnshire, which was sponsored by Osthryth, Oswiu of Northumbria's daughter, in

conjunction with her husband Æthelred of Mercia.<sup>119</sup> Nonetheless, they exploited the politically advantageous conjunction of royal and ecclesiastical spheres. Such instances exemplify what might be gained by early Anglo-Saxon kings by supporting and associating themselves with the early Anglo-Saxon church.

Unsurprisingly, the sub-categories of activities associated with kings in the *Historia ecclesiastica* fluctuate through the course of its narrative. Thus conversion, support of the Church, baptism, and see and monastery foundation all feature strongly in the early sections of the *Historia ecclesiastica*. By contrast, these features are largely absent from later sections, while interference with the workings of the Church and monastic retirement are much more common. A complex and maturing relationship between kings and religion can, therefore, be surmised. Projecting this image backwards into the fifth and sixth centuries, though, is difficult. It is true that there are a number of instances of kings gaining political currency from an association with non-Christian religion, but these only occur after early Anglo-Saxon kings have begun to adopt Christianity. It cannot be ascertained, therefore, whether these instances are indications of an ongoing association with religion or a change in response to Christianity. The only possible exceptions are the figures of Penda of Mercia and Rædwald of the East Angles. However, neither of these figures would fit into such a pattern. There are no indications that Penda actively used his non-Christian allegiance for political gain. Indeed, Bede notes his religious toleration and it must be remembered that he permitted his son, Peada of the Middle Angles, to convert to Christianity.<sup>120</sup> Rædwald meanwhile, as has been discussed, was seemingly converted through a show of Kentish power and so his partial apostasy is hardly surprising. It is simply not possible to examine the relationship between kings and non-Christian religion prior to the seventh century through the *Historia ecclesiastica*. If Bede knew about such things, he chose not to address them.

The next most common category of activity is that of ‘intra-dynastic relations’. There is a large number of references to the succession of kings, a significant number of references to instances of dynastic rivalry or competition, together with a lesser number of instances of exile or joint kingly rule (Fig.20-21). The successions of 43 kings, in addition to the unnamed successors of Cenwealh of the West Saxons, are mentioned, accounting for 60% of the kings in the *Historia ecclesiastica*.<sup>121</sup> This emphasis is

<sup>119</sup> *HE*, III.11. Further: Thacker, *Membra disjecta*, pp. 97-107; Kelly, ‘Osthryth’.

<sup>120</sup> *HE*, III.21. Peada subsequently ruled the southern portion of Mercia: *HE*, III.24.

<sup>121</sup> This excludes the 29 unnamed *duces regii* killed at the Battle of Winwæd: *HE*, III.24.

## The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingship

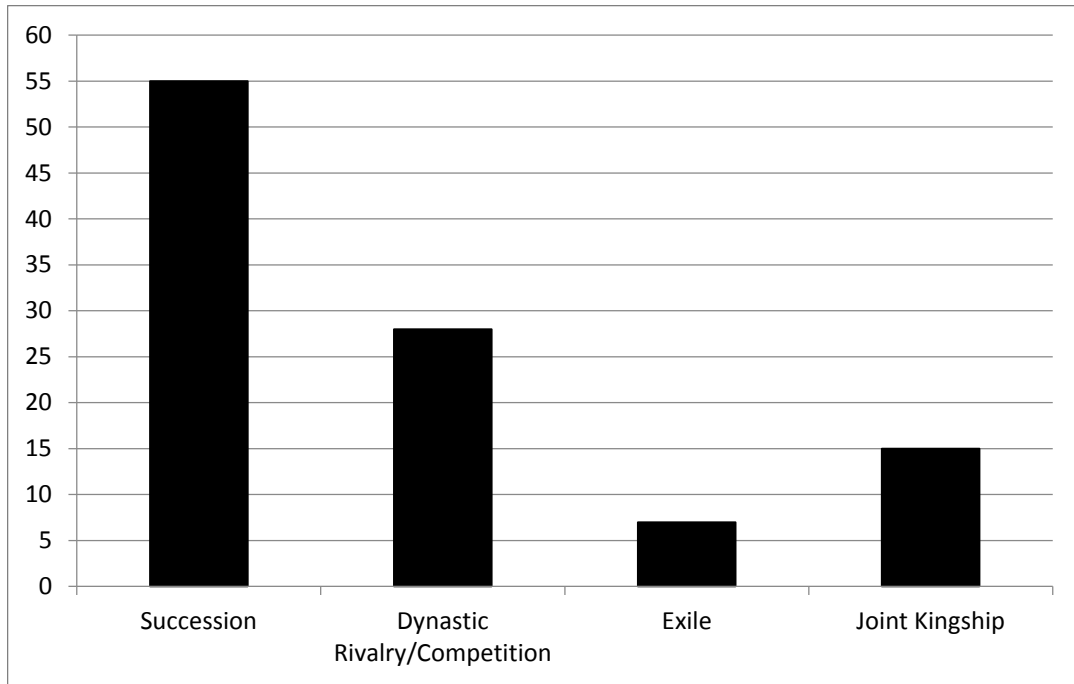


Fig.20, Activities of Kings in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* – Intra-Dynastic Relations

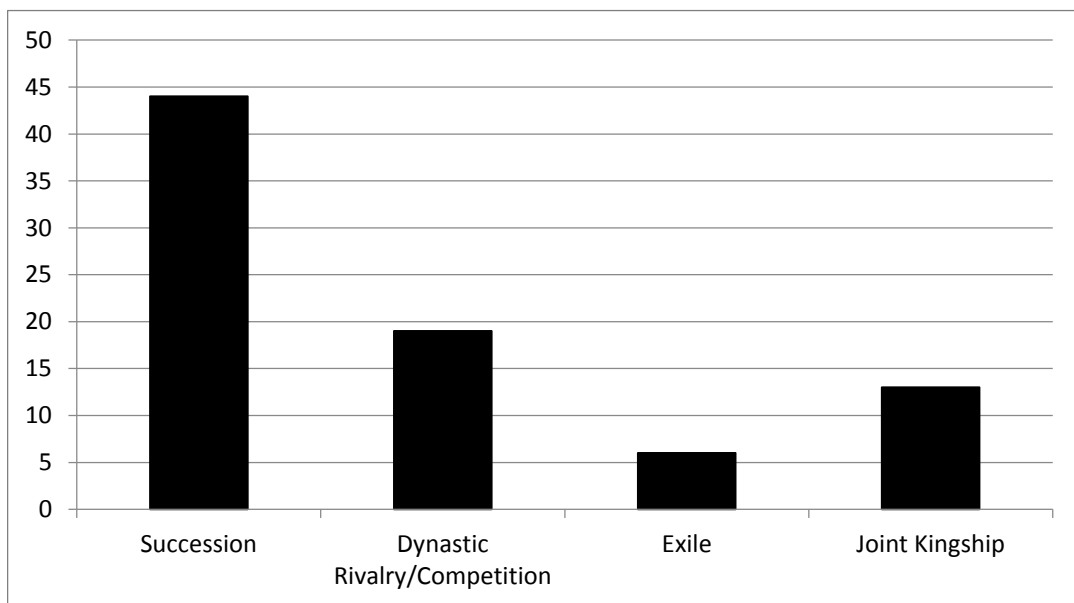


Fig.21, Activities of Kings in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* Grouped by King – Intra-Dynastic Relations

undoubtedly a product of Bede's use of the reigns of kings as chronological devices. However, succession has a broader significance. A clear succession protocol is central to kingship; it is the mechanism by which power and authority are passed from one individual to another. Bede's literary strategy is thus based on this essential feature of kingship. Where it is possible to tell, in 15 of the 44 recorded instances, a son inherited

from his father. In some kingdoms, such as Mercia and Kent, the patterns of succession seem remarkably orderly. For four generations of the kings of Kent, Æthelberht I to Ecgbert, sons succeeded their fathers. Similarly, the kingdom of Mercia was successively ruled by Penda, his three sons Peada, Wulfhere, and Æthelred, Wulfhere's son Cenred, and Æthelred's son Ceolred. Even amongst this seeming orderliness, though, there is no absolute succession protocol. Of the 44 successions mentioned by Bede, where such information is available, in four instances a brother, in one a brother-in-law, and in one a nephew succeeded instead of the son of the previous king.<sup>122</sup>

Age and potential experience, might, therefore, have been preferred at times over direct descent. There were certainly distinct advantages to having a capable and vital monarch, while there were notable disadvantages to having a minor as king. It has been suggested for example that Cenred of Mercia was initially too young to accede to the kingship and so his uncle Æthelred took on the kingship, although this is purely speculation.<sup>123</sup> It was equally possible to acquire kingship of a kingdom by force. Even in the seemingly orderly successions of Mercia and Kent, Wulfhere, Eadric and Whitred were established through armed conflict. Edwin of Northumbria came to the throne through similar means, as did Cædwalla of the West Saxons and Osred of Northumbria. Indeed, 19 different kings are referred to as being involved in some sort of dynastic dispute or rivalry while six kings are explicitly mentioned by Bede as being in exile prior to their succession and this may also be inferred in further cases.<sup>124</sup> In addition, Eorpwold of the East Angles, Oswine of Deira, Peada of Mercia and Sigeberht II of the East Saxons were all explicitly mentioned as having been murdered.<sup>125</sup>

Dynastic discord, therefore, seems to have been relatively commonplace and force seems to have been an effective way of securing the succession. Any concept of a succession protocol, therefore, was most certainly tempered by pragmatic *Realpolitik*. A number of the instances of royal abdication previously examined might also at times be situated in this context as attempts to engineer the succession or resolve disputes. In addition, it should also be borne in mind that it was possible for kings to rule jointly.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> The successions of Oswald of Northumbria, Oswiu of Northumbria, Æthelred of Mercia, Cenred of Mercia, Ewðin of Northumbria and Hlothhere of Kent.

<sup>123</sup> Kelly, 'Coenred'.

<sup>124</sup> Cædwalla of the West Saxons, Cenwalh of the West Saxons, Eanfrith of Bernicia, Edwin of Northumbria, Oswald of Northumbria, and Sigeberht of the East Angles. It is also possible to infer exile for Oswiu of Northumbria and Aldfrith of Northumbria amongst others.

<sup>125</sup> There was also an attempted assassination of Edwin by Cwichelm of the West Saxons, while Penda of Mercia murdered the Northumbrian prince Eadfrith.

<sup>126</sup> Further: Yorke, 'Kingdom of the East Saxons', pp.17-27; Yorke, 'Joint Kingship in Kent'.

Bede records instances of joint kingship amongst the people of Kent, the East Saxons, the West Saxons and the Hwicce. Thus, succession seemingly did not follow a rigid format, but was contextually determined and highly malleable. Nonetheless it would appear that only certain people could inherit the kingship, namely those from a recognised royal family.<sup>127</sup> Indeed, the concept of royalty was sufficiently well established by the early eighth century as to accommodate a minor king. Osred of Northumbria came to the Northumbrian throne aged eight after a coup engineered by Bishop Wilfrid, Abbess Ælfflæd, and ealdorman Beorhtfrith, and ruled until his death in 716.<sup>128</sup>

The concept of royalty, of course, potentially extends beyond kings to encompass royal women as well, and perhaps particularly the king's wife.<sup>129</sup> Indeed, royal women often appear in the *Historia ecclesiastica*, many of them as abbesses or saints.<sup>130</sup> Taking a broader view, royal women can be seen as integral to the furthering of dynastic interests through the exercise of such roles.<sup>131</sup> Royal women generally, and the king's wife in particular, also had important roles to play outside of a monastic environment. As with kings, they were involved in the exercise of religion and could also wield secular power, most notably in the case of Seaxburh.<sup>132</sup> In addition, royal women were significant in the links and alliances with other dynasties that they could bring through marriage. Royal women generally, therefore, had the potential to augment and greatly enhance the power of early Anglo-Saxon kings. Moreover, the concept of royalty forces one to look more broadly, beyond kingship, to fully appreciate the exercise of power in early Anglo-Saxon society.

The fluid nature of kingly succession as seen in the *Historia ecclesiastica* might lead one to assume that kingship was a relatively recent development in the seventh

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<sup>127</sup> There may be one or two exceptions to this. It is unclear, for example, who the successors to Cenwealh of the West Saxons were. This also distinguishes early Anglo-Saxon kingship from Roman Emperors where a stable succession protocol was never established. Indeed, in this early Anglo-Saxon kingship has more in common with inheritance practices amongst the Roman aristocracy. This would strengthen the comments of the previous sections regarding the continuation of Roman power structures in certain contexts as potential origins to Anglo-Saxon kingship. I am grateful to Higham for bringing this to my attention.

<sup>128</sup> VW, 59-60; Rollason, 'Osred'.

<sup>129</sup> The question of whether a distinct concept of queenship was in evidence in this period can be set to one side as outside of the scope of this study. On queens more broadly: Nelson, 'Queens'; Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe*, pp. 1-78; Stafford, *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers*, pp. 60-174.

<sup>130</sup> Appendix X; Ortenberg, 'Virgin Queens'; Pelteret, 'Bede's women'.

<sup>131</sup> Nicholson, *Feminae gloriosae*.

<sup>132</sup> Seaxburh's name appears in the West Saxon regnal list: Dumville, 'West Saxon Genealogical Regnal List'; discussion Dumville, 'Chronology of Early Wessex'. Also Yorke, 'Seaxburh'.

century. However, a degree of malleability and uncertainty regarding the succession can be seen throughout the Anglo-Saxon period, so this need not be the case. How the concept of royalty and its association with succession emerged is also fundamental. It might conceivably have developed out of war-leadership; had a war-leader managed to transfer their authority to a designated successor to whom they were related, then a precedent would have been set. The initial transfer of authority would have been potentially difficult to engineer but subsequent transfers would have been progressively easier. A war-leader is by definition dependent upon their own merits and abilities for their position and these cannot easily be transferred between generations; the designated successor, first and foremost, would have had to have been equally able to justify their position through such qualities. However, once a precedent had been set these qualities would potentially have been less significant. Conversely, had the concept of kingship been imported wholesale to early Anglo-Saxon England, then the idea of succession would have been part and parcel of this importation and such a precedent would not necessarily have needed to be set. These scenarios are not of course mutually exclusive, both finding support in the available evidence, nor should the same explanation be expected to apply universally.

Relationships between royal families also feature relatively strongly in the *Historia ecclesiastica* (Fig.22-23). Bede records 11 distinct kings who engaged in what might be termed kingly ‘one-up-man-ship’. Both Rædwald and Anna of the East Angles sheltered kings who were in exile, Edwin of Northumbria and Cenwealh of the West Saxons respectively. Instances of one king standing as godfather to another, or persuading a fellow king to convert to Christianity, can also be seen as examples of this behaviour,<sup>133</sup> as can one king inciting a fellow king to attack another king on their behalf,<sup>134</sup> as well as the attempted assassination of Edwin of Northumbria and Penda of Mercia’s assassination of Eanfrith of Northumbria.<sup>135</sup> All of these activities were designed to gain some form of advantage or leverage over another king. There is also a variety of instances where kings can be seen to be acting in concert. Often associated with these instances were the connections of kings and royal families through the marriages of royal women. 17 out of 44, or 44%, of the kings who are referred to in more

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<sup>133</sup> Oswald *HE*, III.7; Æthelwold III.22; Oswiu III.22; Wulfhere, IV.13.

<sup>134</sup> Eadric *HE*, IV.26; Penda II.20.

<sup>135</sup> The poisoning of Hereric, nephew of Edwin of Northumbria and father of Hild, Abbess of Whitby might also be placed in this category: *HE*, IV.23.



## The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingship

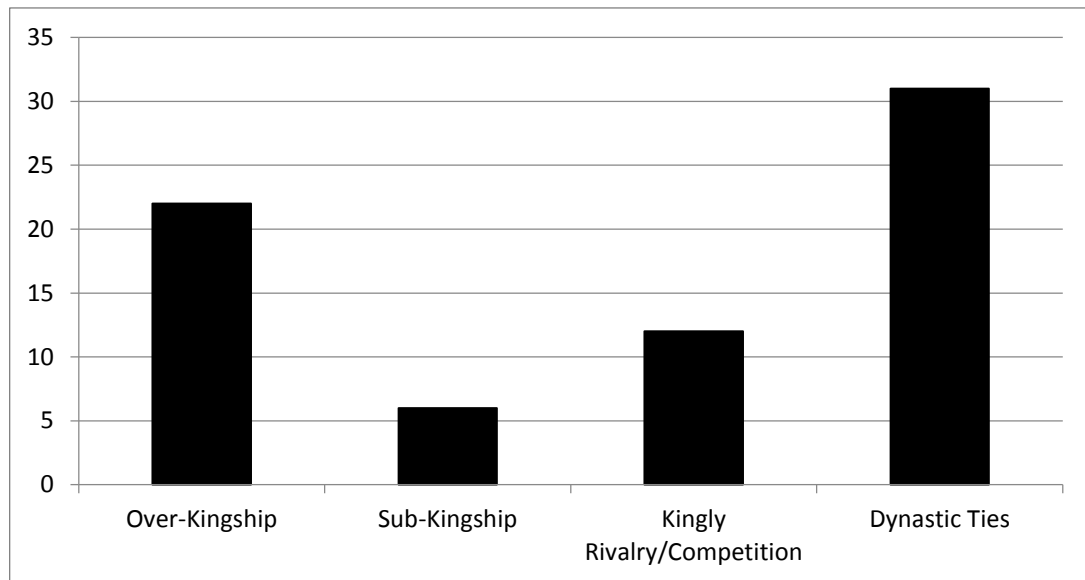


Fig.22, Activities of Kings in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* – Extra-Dynastic Relations

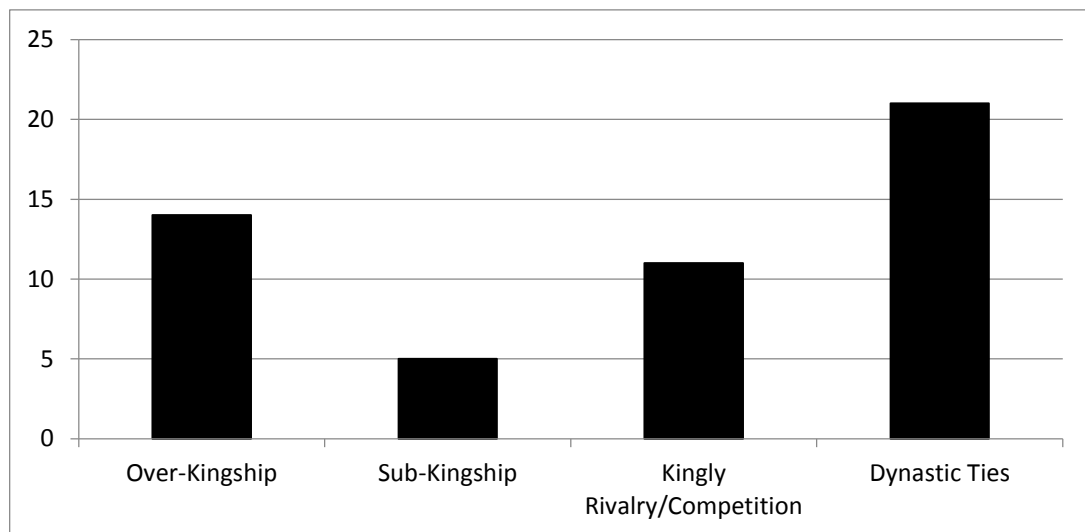


Fig.23, Activities of Kings in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* Grouped by King – Extra-Dynastic Relations

than one chapter of the *Historia ecclesiastica* are mentioned as being connected to other dynasties in this way. This in part reflects Bede's interests, as dynastic relations of this sort were often used to contextualise events. Nonetheless, such dynastic ties could be a source of rapprochement or discord, alliance or advantage, depending on the wider political context within which they existed.<sup>136</sup>

<sup>136</sup> Penda of Mercia reportedly attacked and defeated Cenwealh of Wessex, pushing him temporarily into exile, due to his repudiation of his marriage with Penda's sister: *HE*, III.7. Similarly, the Northumbrian and Mercian royal houses were united through the marriages of Penda's son Peada to Alhflæd, Oswiu of

Adding further complications to these kingly relationships was the existence of differing levels of kingly power. Bede records 13 separate kings who exercised a degree of control over other kingdoms or peoples and conversely five kings who were subordinate to the authority of others. Other over-kings might also be hypothesised, such as Penda of Mercia, based upon the range and extent of their influence. Indeed, the range of power wielded by kings in the *Historia ecclesiastica* varied enormously. Early Anglo-Saxon kingship was clearly sufficiently flexible to accommodate this variability. Bede uses the term *imperium* to describe the power wielded by these figures and provides a list of seven *imperium*-wielding kings in chapter five of Book Two of the *Historia ecclesiastica*.<sup>137</sup> This same list also appears in a later entry of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, with the addition of Ecgberht of Wessex, where these figures are described as being *Bretwaldas* in the A version and as *Brytenwaldas* in the other versions.<sup>138</sup> *Bretwalda* can now be seen as a scribal error, leaving *Brytenwalda* as the appropriate term.<sup>139</sup> Whether this should be interpreted as ‘wide-ruler’ or ‘Britain-ruler’ is a source of contention, although ‘Britain-ruler’ might be preferred.<sup>140</sup> In the current context this does not matter significantly, as in either respect it adds to the applicability of ideas of over-kingship and emphasises the variability in levels of kingly power.<sup>141</sup>

The role of warfare should also be included in this context as this formed a major part of the relationships between early Anglo-Saxon kings (Fig.24-25). There are 73

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Northumbria’s daughter and Oswiu’s son Alhfrith to Cyneburh, Penda’s daughter, and through Peada’s adoption of Christianity, much to Oswiu’s advantage: *HE*, III.21. This may in fact have proved ultimately provocative: *HE*, III.24; Craig, ‘Oswiu’.

By contrast, Edwin of Northumbria’s marriage to Æthelburh, daughter of Æthelberht of Kent, led to enduring ties between Northumbria, particularly Edwin’s immediate family, and Kent: *HE*, II.9, II.20. Likewise, Oswiu’s marriage to Eanflæd, Edwin’s daughter, gave Oswiu and his descendants a claim to both Bernicia and Deira that rested upon more than force of arms, effectively uniting the two royal houses and Northumbria: *HE*, II.15. There is in fact some doubt over Oswiu’s parentage, it having been suggested that he was only a bastard son of Æthelfrith. A marriage to Eanflæd would, therefore, have been particularly important, as in the absence of Æthelfrith’s Deiran wife’s, Acha’s, heritage he would have little claim to rule Deira: Craig, ‘Oswiu’; Fraser, *Caledonia to Pictland*, pp. 175-82.

<sup>137</sup> *HE*, II.5; Higham, *English Empire*, pp. 47-68. Adomnán in his *Vita Columbae*, I.1, also refers to Oswald as *imperator*, although Bede avoids the term. Edition and translation: Anderson and Anderson (eds), *Adomnán’s Life of Columba*.

<sup>138</sup> *ASC*, s.a. 827.

<sup>139</sup> Yorke, ‘Vocabulary of Overlordship’, pp. 171-75; and more decisively Dumville, ‘Terminology of Overkingship’, pp. 352-53.

<sup>140</sup> Charles-Edwards, ‘The Continuation of Bede’, pp. 141-42, 144-45. Also Wormald, ‘Origins of the *Gens Anglorum*’, pp. 131-32.

The idea that the term *Bretwalda/Brytenwalda* denotes some sort of formal title or position, note 19 this section, can no longer be sustained: Yorke, ‘Origins of Overlordship’; Wormald, ‘Origins of the *Gens Anglorum*’; Yorke, ‘Vocabulary of Overlordship’. This, however, does not negate the presence of individual kings who could claim suzerainty over much of early Anglo-Saxon England.

<sup>141</sup> Further: Higham, *Ecgfrith*, pp. 17-25. Also Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, pp. 522-23; Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, pp. 157-62.

## The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingship

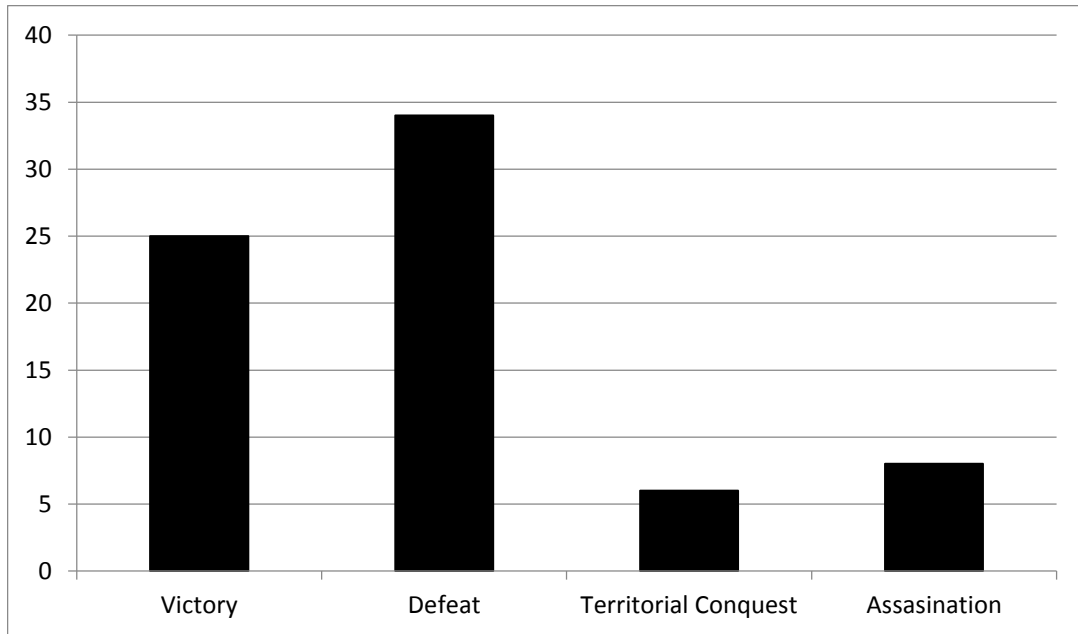


Fig.24, Activities of Kings in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* – Warfare

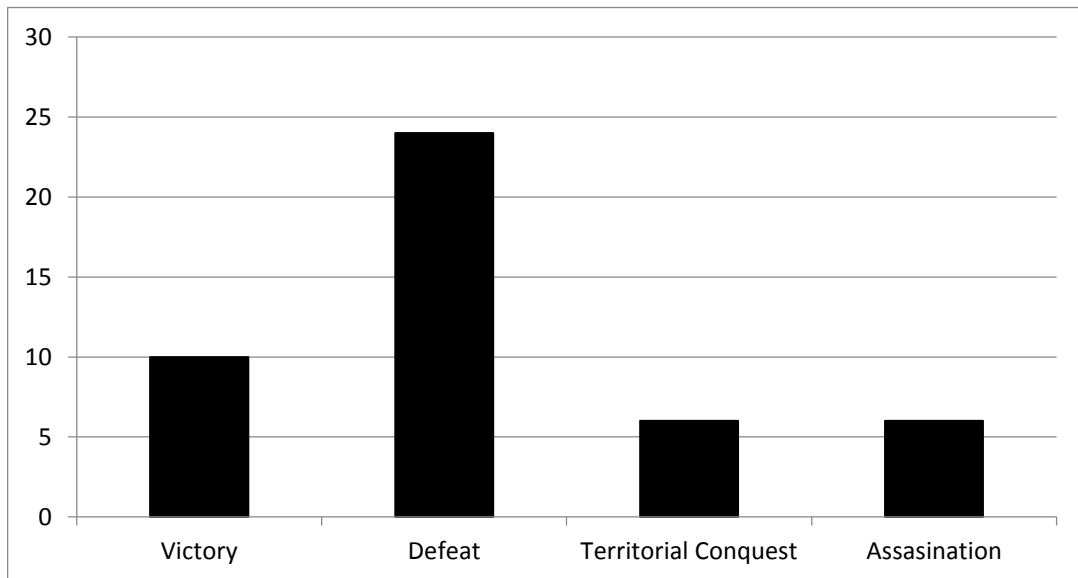


Fig.25, Activities of Kings in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* Grouped by King – Warfare

warfare-related references in the *Historia ecclesiastica* with which 32 of the 73 kings are associated, excluding the 29 unnamed *duces regii* who died at the Battle of Winwæd. There was the potential to make considerable gains through warfare in terms of territory – and thus access to resources – prestige and power, but the consequences of defeat were

high.<sup>142</sup> Success in warfare, and its implied reciprocal of protection, should thus be considered fundamental aspects of early Anglo-Saxon kingship. The kings of the *Historia ecclesiastica*, therefore, can be seen to exist in a complex, multi-layered and interconnected web of shifting relationships maintained by marriage, alliance, intrigue, suzerainty, and warfare.

Several facets of this complexity, namely over-kingship and the expansion of certain kingdoms, are particularly notable. Kent, Northumbria, Mercia, the East Angles and the West Saxons can all be seen exerting power over their neighbours at various points in the *Historia ecclesiastica*. This power varied from temporary subordination to permanent conquest and incorporation. This activity can be seen instructively in the light of Bassett's model of conquest and amalgamation.<sup>143</sup> Indeed, by this model the political units of the *Historia ecclesiastica* can be seen as the final stages of a much larger process whereby a series of small, 'tribal', units gradually amalgamated into larger units through conquest. In this view, the more successful of these kingships continued to expand at the expense of their neighbours resulting in a small number of regionally dominant kingships. It is this later stage which is observable in the *Historia ecclesiastica*. As previously discussed, there are difficulties with this model, but it remains broadly useful. It is certainly possible to see small political units, and occasionally their leaders, in the *Historia ecclesiastica*. Æthelthryth, the future consort of Ecgfrith of Northumbria and subsequently Abbess of Ely, was initially married to one Tondberht, *princeps* of the South Gyrwe.<sup>144</sup> The 29 *duces regii* killed at the Battle of Winwæd might also fit into this category. The kings of the Isle of Wight and the Hwicce can be similarly added, as might the British king mentioned in chapter twenty-three of Book Four, who if the *Historia Brittonum* can be believed on this point, would be the king of Elmet.<sup>145</sup> All of these figures existed under the power of another king, although they should not all be considered of equal status. Even the kings of the South and East Saxons do not seem to have been truly independent and thus might also be included in this list.

It is also possible to point to political units on a purely geographical basis. Northumbria was the product of the amalgamation of two smaller units, Bernicia and

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<sup>142</sup> Strikingly illustrated by Arwald of the Isle of Wight's defeat to Cædwalla of the West Saxons; he, his sons, and a great many of his people were exterminated in what seems very much like an act of genocide: *HE*, IV.16.

<sup>143</sup> Bassett, 'In Search of Origins', pp. 23-24.

<sup>144</sup> *HE*, IV.19. The South Gyrwe are also mentioned in the Tribal Hidage.

<sup>145</sup> *HB*, 63.

Deira, and both of these can also be seen to have expanded through conquest at the expense of other areas as previously discussed. Kent was similarly formed of two parts, East and West Kent.<sup>146</sup> Lindsey, as has also been discussed, can be seen as a coherent political unit, albeit under the control of larger kingships in this period. It might also be postulated that the distribution of bishoprics in the later seventh and early eighth centuries is indicative of previous, smaller, political units. Thus, Lindsey, the Middle Angles, the Hwicce, the Picts, East and West Kent, the South Saxons, the East Saxons, Bernicia, Deira and the former British kingdom of Rheged through the bishopric of Whithorn, all had their own bishops. The existence of these individuals and units would certainly seem to accord with Bassett's model.<sup>147</sup>

However, there are difficulties with this thesis in addition to those previously discussed. It is inarguable that the seventh and early eighth centuries were certainly characterised by the expansion of certain kingships at the expense of others and the consolidation of kingly power by certain kingdoms. It does not automatically follow, however, that this process can be projected backwards to atomised social beginnings in the fifth and sixth centuries. This is particularly true when the potentially early origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship are borne in mind and the various indications of a variety of early power structures previously highlighted are borne in mind. It also needs to be remembered that many of the periods of dominance by one kingdom over another were only temporary in nature. Thus while Æthelberht of Kent exercised over-kingship over the South Saxons, and may have had claims to wider suzerainty at the beginning of the seventh century, by the first half of the eighth century Kent and the South Saxons had been incorporated into the orbit of the Mercian kings.<sup>148</sup> Similarly, Northumbria reached an apogee of power under Oswiu and Ecgfrith to which it would never return. East Anglia, meanwhile, does not seem to have either expanded or contracted notably during the seventh or early eighth centuries, although it did wield significant power under Rædwald, and Æthelthryth's marriage to Tondberht of the South Gyrwe might be construed as an attempt to expand its influence.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Brooks, 'Early Structure of the Kingdom of Kent', pp. 67-74. Also Welch, 'Kent to AD 800', *passim*. Further: Suzuki, *Quoit Brooch Style*, *passim*.

<sup>147</sup> Further units are apparent in the Tribal Hidage.

<sup>148</sup> Archaeological affinities between Kent and Jutish Wight and Hampshire are also discernible in the sixth century, suggesting further possible Kentish influence. Further: Yorke, 'Jutes of Hampshire and Wight'.

<sup>149</sup> The promotion of the cult of St. Guthlac might be viewed in a similar light: Higham, 'Guthlac's *Vita*, Mercia and East Anglia'.

There is little reason to believe that the fifth and sixth centuries were any different in this respect. Indeed, Bede reports that Ælle of the South Saxons and Ceawlin of the West Saxons wielded over-kingship previous to Æthelberht I, although Bede's remove from this period renders this highly problematic. Imposing a linear developmental trajectory, as Bassett's model does, artificially simplifies a complex dynamic. Kingships fluctuated in power and kingdoms in size, but there was not an inevitable coherent outcome or a fixed point of origin. Indeed, in light of the previous section, various different entities of different sorts and sizes are exactly what one would expect to find in the seventh and early eighth centuries. Further, it is perfectly feasible that quite large units were also amongst those present in the fifth and sixth centuries. Kingship, therefore, may well have originated as a relatively large-scale phenomenon. While conquest and amalgamation had an important role to play they do not on their own form a viable developmental paradigm but need to be seen as part of a more complex system.

The final category of kingly activity is that of 'other' (Fig.26-27). Putting aside the categories of 'narrative reference point' and 'peace and protection', which have already been addressed, this contained a wide variety of references to different activities. It is particularly difficult to evaluate the significance of these activities due to their incidental nature, although many of them do accord with information elsewhere. There is, for example, a reference to the issuing of written laws, four of which in fact remain extant from the period. Similarly, there is a single reference to itinerant kingship. There were also two passing references to the role of feasting which would certainly accord with what was seen in the discussion of both elite settlements and Gildas's *De excidio*. The role of letters has of course been previously discussed in this section as has the educated nature of certain kings. There are also four references to kings consulting their followers regarding important decisions. These may be disregarded as literary devices connected with Bede's conversion narrative although it is possible they also signify something of greater significance; with only four references, all in highly manipulated contexts, it is impossible to be certain. While suggestive, therefore, these various instances reveal little of the nature of early Anglo-Saxon kingship and so do not shed light on its origins. The only possible exception to this is the role of gifts. There were twelve references to gifts in the *Historia ecclesiastica*. These were in a variety of contexts emanating from a variety of different individuals, all given to kings.<sup>150</sup> It is thus

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<sup>150</sup> The instances of kingly support of the Church can be seen as gift-giving by kings.

## The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingship

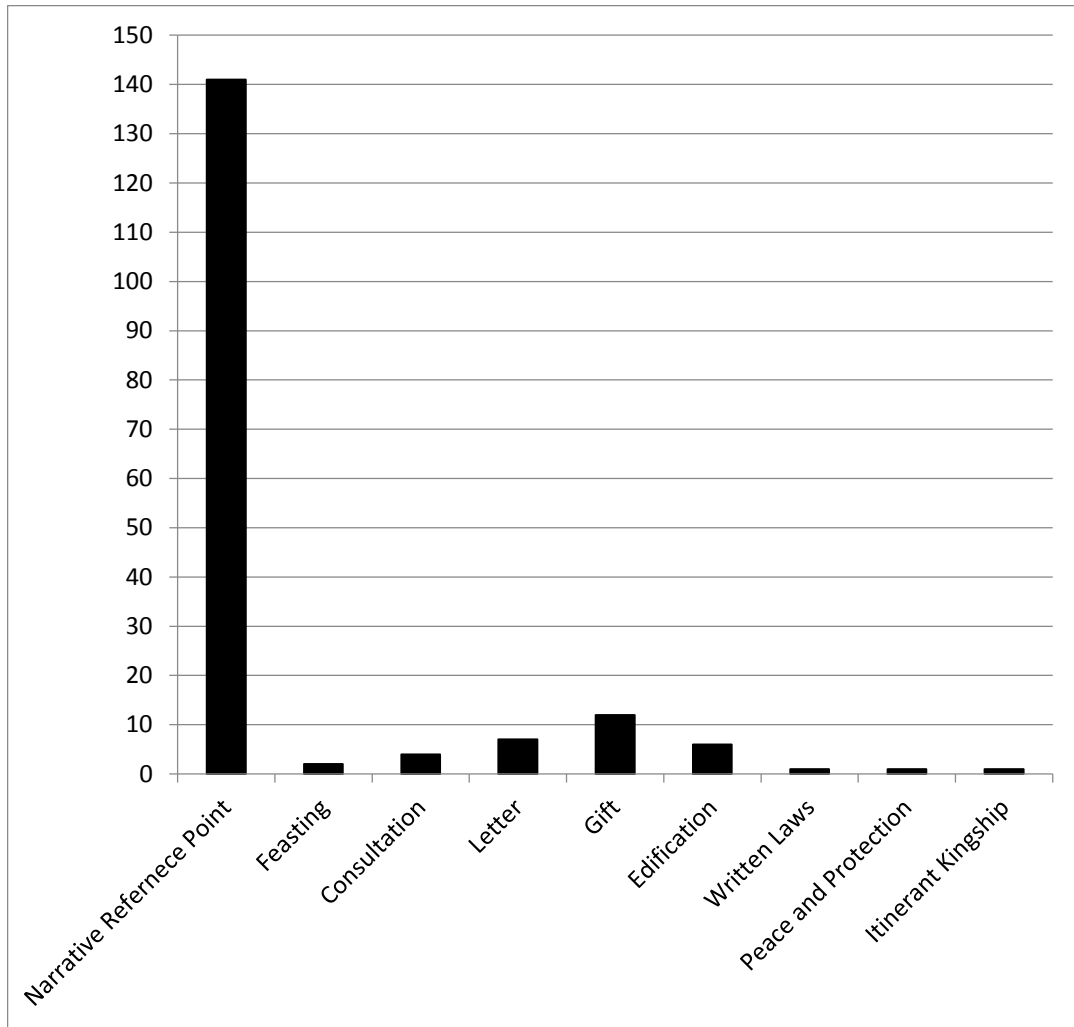


Fig.26, Activities of Kings in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* – Other

possible that gifts played a role in early Anglo-Saxon kingship, although the nature and extent of that role is not apparent in the *Historia ecclesiastica*.

One further issue needs to be addressed before moving on to the next section. As has been previously discussed, early Anglo-Saxon kings did not exist in isolation but rather alongside a range of Insular and Continental kingships. Indeed, emulation of these kingly exemplars was posited as one possible origin for, or at the very least influence on, early Anglo-Saxon kingship. Interactions between British and Anglo-Saxon kings have already been surmised, particularly through Gildas's *De excidio* and through Aldhelm's Letter to Geraint of Dumnonia, while the influence of particularly the Frankish kingdom upon early Anglo-Saxon England has also been posited. It is possible to develop these observations further through the *Historia ecclesiastica*. First, however, several more general observations need to be made. Bede actually had relatively little to say directly

relating to the Britons and other Insular groups, and even less concerning those of the Continent, his account being a history of *gens Anglorum*. Bede is often highly critical of the British; he uses Gildas's *De excidio* to accuse them of various shortcomings and in particular criticises them for their failure to introduce the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity.<sup>151</sup> The Irish – broadly conceived so as to include the inhabitants of Iona – by contrast, are frequently praised by Bede for their Christianity, sanctity, simplicity and particularly their missionary work in Northumbria.<sup>152</sup> Specific Continental figures are also praised for their work in Christianising Anglo-Saxon England, particularly Pope Gregory I, Augustine of Canterbury and Theodore of Tarsus, but Bede does not make broader value judgements in the same way as he does for the Britons or the Irish.<sup>153</sup>

Bede's comments regarding Insular and Continental kingship need to be seen in this context. Two examples are particularly pertinent. The first concerns Bede's portrayal of Cædwallon of Gwynedd and the second is Bede's editing and inclusion of Ceolfrith's letter to the Pictish king Nechtan.<sup>154</sup> Cædwallon is the anti-hero of the middle portion of the *Historia ecclesiastica*, only vanquished by the saintly Oswald. Cædwallon, in effect, epitomises Bede's interpretation of a 'bad' king. He is cruel and merciless – killing innocent women and children, ravaging Northumbria and ruling it as

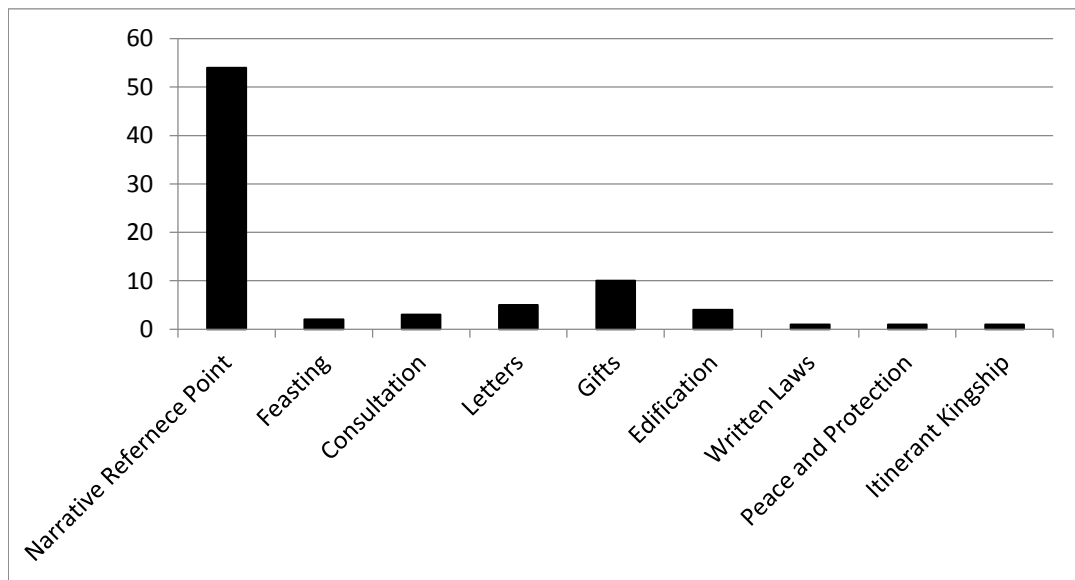


Fig.27, Activities of Kings in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* Grouped by King – Other

<sup>151</sup> As *HE*, I.12-16, particularly I.22, and II.2, V.23. Further: Foley and Higham, 'Bede on the Britons'.

<sup>152</sup> Various *HE*, I.1, III.4-5, 14-17, 19, 26 Further: Stancliffe, *Bede, Wilfrid, and the Irish*.

<sup>153</sup> *HE*, II.1, 3, IV.2 respectively.

<sup>154</sup> *HE*, II.20, III.1 and V.21 respectively. Bede may also have been involved in the original composition of the letter: Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, p. 196.



a tyrant – despite his Christian status; indeed, Bede was particularly critical of the juxtaposition between his Christian faith and his un-Christian actions. Bede’s editing and inclusion of the letter to Nechtan, meanwhile, forms a contrasting template of ‘good’ kingship. It advises Nechtan on the ‘correct’ calculation of the date of Easter, the nature of the tonsure and thus implicitly also asserts the primacy of Roman Catholicism. ‘Good’ kings are Roman Christians, instruct their people in Christian observance and listen to the advice of their leading clergy. Both of these examples can be construed as being part of Bede’s previously discussed wider instructional programme. As such, they are addressed to a contemporary Anglo-Saxon audience.

A further inference is, therefore, possible based on this observation. Bede’s portrayal of Cædwallon contrasts with his portrayal of Penda of Mercia, with whom Cædwallon acted in concert. Bede’s treatment of Penda is remarkably sympathetic; he praises him for his toleration of Christians and avoids overt criticism, despite his involvement in the undoing of Bede’s favoured protagonists Edwin and Oswald of Northumbria.<sup>155</sup> The deduction to be drawn is that Bede was reluctant to antagonise or offend current Anglo-Saxon kings, Northumbrian or otherwise, while he was less afraid of criticising British kings. It is also surely not a coincidence that Bede constructed his example of bad kingship amongst a group widely regarded as heretical – due to their calculation of the date of Easter – while the good example of Nechtan concerns an example of conversion to the ‘correct’ calculation.<sup>156</sup>

These observations once again reminds us of the extent of Bede’s manipulation of his source material and the constructed nature of the kings which appear in the *Historia ecclesiastica*. As with the rest of this section, therefore, Bede’s interpretation of events needs to be treated with caution. Nonetheless, meaningful insight remains possible by looking at Bede’s Insular and Continental kings removed from their literary contexts. This prompts several observations. Firstly, the *Historia ecclesiastica* provides details of the previously discussed expansion of Northumbria, at the expense of their British, Pictish and Dál Riata neighbours.<sup>157</sup> Similar observations were made with respect to the kingdom of the West Saxons, while a comparable expansion of Mercia can also be postulated through a conjunction of the *Historia ecclesiastica*, the Tribal Hidage and

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<sup>155</sup> *HE*, II.20, III.21.

<sup>156</sup> I am grateful to Higham for bringing this to my attention.

<sup>157</sup> See discussions in Higham, *Ecgrith*, passim; Rollason, *Northumbria, 500-1100*, pp. 20-43. Also Fraser, *Caledonia to Pictland*, pp. 121-99; Dumville, 'Origins of Northumbria', particularly pp. 219-21.

various royal diplomas.<sup>158</sup> Indeed, it has been suggested that this western and northern expansion underpins the differential success of these three kingships during the period under examination, in that it provided them with ready access to new territory and resources, particularly mineral resources, and provided an increased ability to exact tribute.<sup>159</sup> While more explicitly related to the development of early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, this does reveal an important facet of early Anglo-Saxon kingship, specifically that it was capable of encompassing and embracing a range of groups and territories beyond the explicitly Anglo-Saxon. Nor was this pan-regional model of kingship necessarily exclusive to the Anglo-Saxons. A comparable mode of rule can also be posited for British figures such as Urien of Rheged, although the sources required to do so are exceedingly problematic.<sup>160</sup>

Secondly, varying degrees of collaboration between Anglo-Saxon and neighbouring kingships can also be inferred through the *Historia ecclesiastica*. That Cædwallon of Gwynedd and Penda of Mercia acted in concert has already been mentioned.<sup>161</sup> A similar relationship can be suggested between Oswald of Northumbria and the kings of Dál Riata.<sup>162</sup> Many of the instances of royal exile previously noted also involved stays in non-Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, both Insular and Continental.<sup>163</sup> A degree of intermarriage between Northumbrian kings and their Insular neighbours can be postulated, although this does involve venturing beyond the *Historia ecclesiastica*.<sup>164</sup> Intermarriage with Insular kingships, certainly with respect to Mercia and the West Saxons, is also inherently credible, although the evidence to support this is largely lacking. Likewise, a marital link to a Continental kingship can be found in the marriage of Æthelberht I of Kent to Bertha, although given the respective sizes and statuses of Frankia and Kent Æthelberht I was surely the junior party in this relationship.<sup>165</sup> Taking

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<sup>158</sup> Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, pp. 103-17. Also Brooks, 'Formation of the Mercian Kingdom', pp. 164-70; but c.f. Higham, *Ecgrith*, pp. 72-73. Diplomas and the Tribal Hidage are addressed below.

<sup>159</sup> Maddicott, 'Two Frontier States'. Further: Maddicott, 'Wealth of King Alfred'; with Balzaretto and Nelson, 'Wealth of King Alfred'; and Maddicott, 'Wealth of King Alfred: Reply'. More broadly Maddicott, 'Prosperity and Power'.

<sup>160</sup> Fraser, *Caledonia to Pictland*, pp. 124-33. Also Higham, "'Overkingship" in Wales'.

<sup>161</sup> As *HE*, II.20; also *HE*, III.1.

<sup>162</sup> Higham, *Ecgrith*, p. 66. Further: Fraser, *Caledonia to Pictland*, pp. 157-58, 166-74.

<sup>163</sup> As Sigeberht of the East Angles, *HE*, II.15, III.18; Eanfrith of Bernicia, *HE*, III.1; Oswald of Northumbria, *HE*, III.3; Aldfrith of Northumbria, Anon.VC, III.6, Bede.VC, 24. Also *HE*, II.20. Further: Ó Cróinín, *Kings Depart*.

<sup>164</sup> It is possible that Eanfrith of Bernicia married a Pictish woman, and sired the Pictish king Talorcan. Oswiu of Northumbria also seems to have married a British woman, Rieinmell of Rheged, as *HB*, 57. Discussion: Fraser, *Caledonia to Pictland*, pp. 158, 176-79 respectively; also Dumville, 'Origins of Northumbria', p. 220.

<sup>165</sup> *HE*, I.25.

these points together, therefore, the distinction between British and Anglo-Saxon kingships does not seem to have been as great in practice as it appears in the *Historia ecclesiastica*. The previously noted regional variety of Anglo-Saxon kingships only strengthens this supposition. Furthermore, the links between Continental, Insular and Anglo-Saxon kingships suggest that they might profitably be seen as various points on a spectrum of differing but related kingships rather than in isolation from one another.

Developing certain aspects of this further, it is possible to suggest that several early Anglo-Saxon kingships may, in fact, have had British origins or underpinnings. This possibility has already been briefly explored with respect to Northumbria, amongst other kingships. The linguistic evidence regarding other kingships, including Mercia and the West Saxons, derived particularly from the genealogies, will be discussed in the following section. At this point it is simply necessary to note that various mechanisms were potentially involved in realising these origins or underpinnings. The development of Anglo-Saxon Northumbria, as was noted during the discussion of elite settlements, is arguably most explicable through the agency of conquest. The origins of Mercia, meanwhile, with its British allies and British names in its royal genealogy suggests a more direct, and peaceful, British origin, perhaps through some sort of 'Anglo-British' royal house.<sup>166</sup> Between these contrasting possibilities, further channels of influence are possible, ranging through ethnic re-identification, intermarriage or simple cultural borrowings. Although none of these channels dispel the impression of violence in Anglo-Saxon/Insular relationships implicit in the *Historia ecclesiastica*, they do highlight their complexity and the various ways in which Insular kingships informed the origins of early Anglo-Saxon kingship.

### **Hagiography in the Early Eighth Century**

There also exist a series of hagiographical texts dating to the early eighth century. The earliest of these are the *Vita sancti Gregorii*,<sup>167</sup> produced by an unknown author at *Streanæshalch*,<sup>168</sup> and the *Vita sancti Cuthberti auctore anonymo*, by a monk of

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<sup>166</sup> Higham, *Ecgfrith*, pp. 72-73.

<sup>167</sup> Colgrave (ed.) *Earliest Life of Gregory the Great*. Chapter 18 indicates a date of composition in the period 704-14 as when the text was written Abbess Æfflæd seemingly ruled over the *Streanæshalch* community, but Abbess Eanflæd did not. An earlier date range of 680-704 has been suggested by Lapidge, 'Anglo-Latin Background', p. 15, but this is not justified.

<sup>168</sup> *Streanæshalch* has traditionally been associated with modern Whitby where remains of an early high-status site would seem to confirm this. However, there are difficulties relating the name *Streanæshalch* to the Whitby site and the association rests on a reference in Domesday Book and another in Symeon of

Lindisfarne.<sup>169</sup> This was followed by Stephen of Ripon's *Vita Wilfridi*,<sup>170</sup> and two texts dealing with the abbots of the Wearmouth-Jarrow, Bede's *Historia abbatum* and the anonymous *Vita Ceolfridi*.<sup>171</sup> Slightly later was the *Vita sancti Cuthberti auctore Beda*,<sup>172</sup> while at the end of the period came the *Vita sancti Guthlaci*.<sup>173</sup> As it is convenient to address these texts together, the late date of the *Vita Guthlaci* necessitates that these texts are addressed after the *Historia ecclesiastica*.<sup>174</sup> These texts exhibit many of the problems previously seen with the *Historia ecclesiastica*, and the insights which can be gained from them are similarly limited. Nonetheless, as with the *Historia ecclesiastica*, they must be examined because of the important role they have played in historiographical debates.

The majority of these texts were written within a reasonable time-span of their subjects' deaths.<sup>175</sup> In such cases the authors seem to have known the subject personally,

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Durham's *Historia regum*. Strensall in North Yorkshire has also been suggested as the site of *Streanæshalch*, which is topographically plausible. Discussion: Barnwell, Butler, and Dunn, 'Confusion of Conversion'.

<sup>169</sup> Colgrave (ed.) *Two Lives of St. Cuthbert*. The text was written at least a year after the translation of Cuthbert's relics in 698 and before the death of Aldfrith of Northumbria, giving a range of 699-705.

<sup>170</sup> Colgrave (ed.) *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*. The *VW* can be dated to 712-14 as the lunar rainbow referred to in chapter 68 in all likelihood occurred in 712 but Abbess Æfflæd, referred to in chapter 59, was seemingly still Abbess of Whitby when Stephen wrote: Stancliffe, 'Dating Wilfrid's Death and Stephen's Life', pp. 22-25. It has been suggested that Stephen revised the text in the 730s: Kirby, 'Eddius Stephanus and the *Life of Wilfrid*', pp. 107-12; but this can no longer be sustained: Stancliffe, 'Dating Wilfrid's Death and Stephen's Life', pp. 24-25. On the ascription to Stephen of Ripon: Kirby, 'Eddius Stephanus and the *Life of Wilfrid*', pp. 102-04.

<sup>171</sup> Growcock and Wood (eds), *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, pp. 22-75 and 78-121 respectively; Bede's Homily I.13 on Bededict biscop, pp. 2-19 is also of relevance. The *HA* has traditionally been dated to between 725 and c.731. However, it has recently been suggested that the *HA* in fact dates to before the *VCeol* as it concludes its account at a slightly earlier point, excluding the papal letter carried by the returning monks who had continued to Rome. This would place the *HA* quite exactly to late 716 or early 717: Growcock and Wood (eds), *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, pp. xviii-xxii.

It has been suggested that Bede was the author of the *VCeol*, but the differing attitudes and subtly differing styles of the two works make this unlikely: Growcock and Wood (eds), *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, pp. lxii-xcv; c.f. McClure, 'Bede and the Life of Ceolfrid', pp. 71-84.

<sup>172</sup> Colgrave (ed.) *Two Lives of St. Cuthbert*. Bede.*VC* was written before 721 – when Eadfrith, Bishop of Lindisfarne, to whom it is dedicated, died – but is later than the *VW*, to which it in part responds.

<sup>173</sup> Colgrave (ed.) *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*. The prologue states that Felix.*VG* was written at the request of Ælfwald of the East Angles, giving a broader date range of 713-749. Bede did not make use of Felix.*VG* in the *HE*, putting the balance of probability in favour of the latter portion of this period.

<sup>174</sup> Bede's *Vita metrica Cuthberti* also dates to this period. Jaeger (ed.) *Bedas metrische Vita sancti Cuthberti*. Lines 552-55 make reference to Osred of Northumbria as ruling, placing the text to 705-16. However, due to duplication with both Anon.*VC* and Bede.*VC*, there is little additional benefit to be gained from this text.

The Mildrith Legends and Æthelwulf's *De Abbatibus* also touch on the period in question, but they are both too late to merit attention. Rollason, *Mildrith Legend*, pp. 15-51 with summaries and two editions of previously unprinted texts 73-143; Campbell (ed.) *De Abbatibus*.

<sup>175</sup> Various Rollason and Dobson, 'Cuthbert'; Stancliffe, 'Dating Wilfrid's Death and Stephen's Life', pp. 17-22; Mayr-Harting, 'Guthlac'; Coates, 'Ceolfrith'. The only exception is the Anon.*VG* which was written almost a century after Pope Gregory I's death in 604, and still a significant period after the death of Edwin of Northumbria, who is the main kingly protagonist of the work: Cramp, 'Eadwine'.

at least in their later lives, and to have had access to the accounts of others who similarly knew the subject or subjects.<sup>176</sup> The problems of oral history, as previously discussed, thus need to be borne in mind, but their testament can also be given some credence. The nature of these texts presents further problems. As hagiographies, they are designed to advertise the sanctity of their protagonists, often in conjunction with an attempt to establish or promote a cult, and are inevitably partisan in nature.<sup>177</sup> Further, conventionally, sanctity was established in hagiographical texts by making the subject conform to established patterns or models of holiness.<sup>178</sup> Accordingly, these texts are formulaic, follow similar narrative patterns, contain a series of *topoi*, and copy verbatim, or re-work, previous hagiographical texts.<sup>179</sup> They are thus complex creations which owe more to literary artifice than historical reality.<sup>180</sup> It is, therefore, when these texts depart from previous exemplars that they become most credible.<sup>181</sup> It is also possible in some instances to compare parallel but independent accounts.<sup>182</sup>

As with the *Historia ecclesiastica*, these texts are not primarily concerned with kings. Indeed, with the exception of the *Vita Wilfridi*, kings rarely feature. When they

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<sup>176</sup> Further: Cubitt, 'Memory and Narrative', pp. 29-66, particularly 39-43, 50-57. Of all the sources Felix.VG seems to rest on the thinnest selection of testimonies. It is also possible that Bede, for the *HA*, and Stephen of Ripon had access to charters and other documents, although their narratives do not require it.

<sup>177</sup> Hagiographic texts could be both circulated in written form or more commonly read out, in whole or in part, often at strategic liturgical occasions: Rollason, *Mildrith Legend*, p. 3-5. More broadly: Blair, *Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 141-49; Lapidge, 'Saintly Life in Anglo-Saxon England'; Rollason, *Saints and Relics in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 23-129.

The *VCeol* and the *HA* do not entirely fit this model and notably, with one exception, avoid the miraculous, but should nonetheless be considered as hagiography: Growcock and Wood (eds), *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, pp. xxii-xxiv.

<sup>178</sup> Fouracre, 'Merovingian History and Merovingian Hagiography', pp. 10-11; Rollason, *Mildrith Legend*, pp. 5-6. It was also this period in which hagiographical norms and conventions were being developed: Hayward, 'Demystifying the Role of Sanctity', pp. 131-39.

<sup>179</sup> Cubitt, 'Memory and Narrative', pp. 39-57; Colgrave, 'Earliest Saints' Lives'. These works also draw on and respond to each other. Thus, *VW* borrowed extensively from *Anon.VC*; *Bede.VC* responded to *VW* and re-worked *Anon.VC*; *Felix.VG* borrowed extensively from *Bede.VC*.

<sup>180</sup> Various illustrated by Laynesmith, 'Stephen of Ripon and the Bible'; Newlands, 'Bede and Images of Saint Cuthbert', pp. 82-106; Foley, *Images of Sanctity*; Eby, 'Bringing the *Vita* to Life'. Further: Howard-Johnston, 'Introduction', pp. 14-20; Cameron, 'Defining the Holy Man', pp. 34-43.

The contexts from which these texts emerged is also significant. The *HA*, for example, would seemingly be linked to the abdication of Ceolwulf in 716, which itself coincides rather suspiciously with the assassination of Osred: Growcock and Wood (eds), *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, pp. xxxix-xliii. The relationship between *VCeol* and the *HA* also suggested that the history of Wearmouth-Jarrow was also contested: Wood, 'Foundation of Wearmouth-Jarrow', pp. 88-91, 93-95; Wood, *Most Holy Abbot*, pp. 8-12. Likewise *Anon.VC* can be seen to emerge out of a contested legacy: Cubitt, 'Memory and Narrative', pp. 43-50. *Felix.VG* can also be posited as emerging from a contested political context, between Mercia and East-Anglia: Cubitt, 'Memory and Narrative', pp. 56-57; also the more satisfactory Higham, 'Guthlac's *Vita*, Mercia and East Anglia'.

<sup>181</sup> As Fouracre, 'Merovingian History and Merovingian Hagiography', pp. 11-27.

<sup>182</sup> The *HE* can be read in parallel to the *VW*. Likewise, the *HA* can be compared to the *VCeol*.

do, they themselves are often caricatured, as providers of the church or the persecutors of its leaders – the archetypal ‘good’ and ‘bad’ kings of Christian literature. A similar methodology to the previous section, has, therefore, been adopted. Every reference to a king in these texts has been collated and characterised using the same categories as previously.<sup>183</sup> Due to the duplication of events between these works, and the smaller number of instances, it has not been considered advisable or necessary to conduct graphical analysis. The analysis has also focused upon aspects of behaviour which were not readily apparent in the *Historia ecclesiastica*.

There are two broad areas of activity which come to the fore in these texts. First, there are the relationships between kings and various ecclesiastical figures. There are seven instances of friendships between early Anglo-Saxon kings and the protagonists of these works; similarly, there are seven instances of kings being advised by these figures. Indeed, the anonymous author of the *Vita Ceolfridi* explicitly states that Benedict Biscop was frequently required at the Northumbrian court to advise Ecgfrith of Northumbria.<sup>184</sup> This might be discounted as hagiographical common-place, however as previously seen, a close relationship between early Anglo-Saxon kings and churchmen can be surmised. Such an advisory role is thus perfectly credible. This, therefore, adds another element to the relationship between the early Anglo-Saxon kings and the church.

Of much greater significance are the references in various contexts to the relationships between lay persons and kings. Some of these individuals are described as *minister*;<sup>185</sup> others as *comes*;<sup>186</sup> others still as *praefectus*.<sup>187</sup> Other related labels are also used.<sup>188</sup> The range of meaning of these terms covers a spectrum between a seemingly formal official – *praefectus* – to an individual who is defined by their personal relationship to the king – *minister* or *comes*. It was possible to apply these seemingly different labels to the same person, suggesting a certain fluidity.<sup>189</sup> By extension, it is possible to suggest, as has been intimated previously in various contexts, that personal relationships were significant in the context of early Anglo-Saxon kingship. Indeed, it might be suggested that they determined how kings related to those around them and

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<sup>183</sup> Appendix IX.

<sup>184</sup> *VCeol*, 12.

<sup>185</sup> *Homily I.13*, 7; *HA*, 1, 8; *VW*, 2, 47.

<sup>186</sup> *HA*, 34, refers to Ceolfrith’s father as *comitatus ageret officium*; *VW*, 36; *Felix.VG*, 45; *Anon.VC*, IV.3, IV.7; *Bede.VC*, 25.

<sup>187</sup> *VW*, 36, 37, 38, 40, *VG*, 42, 45; *Bede.VC*, 15.

<sup>188</sup> *Sodalis, socius* *VW*, 2. Also *dux* *VW*, 36; *princeps* *VW* 60.

<sup>189</sup> *As* *VW*, 36.

those that served them, if there was in fact any meaningful difference between these two groups.<sup>190</sup> In this context, the role of gifts can be added to these relationships. One of the figures described in such terms is mentioned as having been given land in exchange for or as a reward for their services.<sup>191</sup> A further number are described as having served the king with military service.<sup>192</sup>

These figures take on a greater significance in light of Bede's comments in his *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*.<sup>193</sup> Here, in the context of a wider polemic on the impropriety of many of the *minsters* of his day, he directly connects the rewarding of individuals with land with the defence of Northumbria. The granting of lands for the founding of *minsters*, it would seem, was absorbing lands which would otherwise have been used to secure the loyalty and service of individuals. It can be deduced from this that, firstly, early Anglo-Saxon kings had significant powers over much, if not necessarily all, of the lands in their kingdom. Secondly, that they could use these lands to attract and secure the services of individuals (but that the land thus granted presumably reverted to the king after the recipient's death, otherwise the system would be unsustainable in the long term). Thirdly, that individuals were willing to travel between kingdoms in order to be satisfactorily rewarded for their services. Fourthly, that the requirements of monastic communities regarding property had altered the *status quo* with regard to land tenure which was proving problematic for early Anglo-Saxon kings.<sup>194</sup> And, fifthly, that the monastic style of land holding, held in perpetuity, was more attractive due to its greater degree of permanence.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> The relationship between Wilfrid and his followers might be cast in a similar light. As Patrick Wormald put it: 'Wilfrid was a great saint, of colossal spiritual energy and commitment, but his life retains much of the flavour of the Germanic warlord': Wormald, 'Age of Bede and Aethelbald', p. 83. This impression is bolstered by Aldhelm's letter to Wilfrid's followers, *Epistola*. XII, which urges them to remain constant and loyal to Wilfrid and his cause and allows this same analogy to be drawn. Further: Pelteret, 'Saint Wilfrid: Tribal Bishop', pp. 175-80; Farmer, 'Saint Wilfrid', pp. 39-40.

<sup>191</sup> *HA*, 1.

<sup>192</sup> *HA*, 1, 8; *VW*, 21

<sup>193</sup> Growcock and Wood (eds), *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, pp. 124-61. Patrick Sims-Williams has demonstrated that this letter fits into a tradition of Christian polemic stretching back to the early patristic era: Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, pp. 126-30, although this does not fundamentally undermine Bede's comments. More broadly: Growcock and Wood (eds), *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, pp. 1-lix; Foot, *Monastic Life in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 120-37; Blair, *Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 100-34; Wood, 'Land Tenure and Military Obligations', particularly pp. 7-10.

<sup>194</sup> Further: Wormald, 'Bede and the Conversion of England', pp. 153-58. It may be for this very reason that Aethelbald of Mercia, amongst others, re-appropriated lands previously given for the foundation of *minsters*: Growcock and Wood (eds), *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, pp. lvi-lviii.

<sup>195</sup> The nature of Anglo-Saxon land tenure, and the distinction between *bookland* and *folcland*, is a 'classic' issue of Anglo-Saxon scholarship: Williams, 'Land Tenure'; Ryan, 'Land, Property, and Power', pp. 124-30.

Building on this, it is possible to construct an image of early Anglo-Saxon kings surrounded by followers who owed them service, military or otherwise, and fealty as a result of landed holdings which they have previously been granted. Further individuals might also be surmised surrounding the king in the hope of gaining such lands. The early life of Guthlac is illuminating in this respect. According to Felix, Guthlac was from a lesser branch of the Mercian royal family, tracing his line back to Icel of Mercia. Prior to his conversion, Guthlac spent his time campaigning and plundering with a band of followers.<sup>196</sup> Opportunistic followers might also be posited as being drawn to Æthelbald of Mercia prior to his succession based on the *Vita Guthlaci*. It seems that royal figures existed at the apex of a web of personal relations. These could be formalised and fixed through the granting of lands, but could undoubtedly exist in more nebulous and informal forms also. This realisation is of crucial importance. Foremost it provides a practical, tangible mechanism through which early Anglo-Saxon kings could exert their power and authority. It also provides a connection to the more nebulous and opaque forms of authority identified previously through both archaeological and historical means, and thence the origins of kingship. Furthermore, it provides a possible rationale for the acceptance of kingship in early Anglo-Saxon England – self-interest – as it was not simply kings, but a range of individuals, who stood to gain from the existence of kingship.

## Conclusions

As in previous sections, only limited conclusions are possible. Kingship was not the primary concern of any of the sources examined and so it can only be viewed intermittently and tangentially through them. Nonetheless, a number of important conclusions are possible. In the first instance, kingship was the dominant political institution across the entirety of the period covered by these sources. Indeed, kingship is the only political power structure which it is possible to see in any detail and seems very much to have been a complex and established institution throughout the period in question. This naturally adds weight to the suggestions made in earlier sections that kingship may have developed relatively early in Anglo-Saxon England in the sixth or

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<sup>196</sup> There was hagiographic precedent for military activity provided by the figure of Saint Martin – whose *Vita Felix* was aware of – but it was hardly a necessary hagiographic trope and moreover Saint Martin notably avoided actual combat while Guthlac manifestly did not. These early campaigning years, therefore, should be seen as being credible.



possibly even fifth centuries. It does not confirm this early origin, it being possible that kingship emerged quickly at the end of the sixth century, but it suggests this as a possibility.

More specifically, various observations regarding the nature of early Anglo-Saxon kingship have become possible. A significant proportion of these centre around the relationship between kings and the early Anglo-Saxon church. A number of kings were observed actively promoting the church through personal conversion and material support for sees, monasteries and churches. It was also noted that both ecclesiastical figures and royal figures expected early Anglo-Saxon kings to have a certain degree of control over the affairs of the Church. A number of instances of ecclesiastical figures attempting to influence or advise kings were also present. The reasons behind this relationship were more difficult to establish. However, the introduction of Christianity to southern England via the mission of Augustine correlated strikingly with other changes or experiments in early Anglo-Saxon kingship previously observed, suggesting that a similar interpretation, as an experiment of kingship, might also be possible in this instance. It was also noted that Christianity provided a complex, and ready-made, intellectual superstructure which could be appropriated by early Anglo-Saxon kings. To this, of course, might be added the fact that early Anglo-Saxon kings would have been well aware that their Continental and Insular counterparts were Christian. As was suggested at the end of the previous section with respect to kingship itself, therefore, a degree of emulation may also be in evidence. Irrespective of these uncertainties, it is possible to see religion, Christian and otherwise, being used for political purpose and gain in this period. This was particularly evident in the *Historia ecclesiastica* and the various instances of royal retirement to religious institutions.

Moving beyond religion, the violent nature of early Anglo-Saxon kingship was inferred in previous archaeological contexts, and suggested in the foregoing section, was very much confirmed. After their association with religion, kings were most apparent engaging in warfare. Notices of their victories or defeats regularly punctuated the *Historia ecclesiastica*. Nor was warfare the only way in which the early Anglo-Saxon kings interacted. Various non-violent mechanisms – marriage, alliances, strategic support of rivals – designed to gain a fleeting or more permanent advantage were also highlighted. Further, differing levels of kingly power, as well as differing manifestations of kingship itself, ranging from powerful solitary over-kings such as Ecgfrith of Northumbria to the minor joint kings of the Hwicce, under the suzerainty the Mercian

kings, were perceived. Thus, a varied, complex and above all competitive institution was observed.

Similar observations applied to the relationships within royal families. A fluid and negotiable succession protocol was also demonstrated. Intrigue, competition and rivalry were present here also, but so were pragmatic and co-operative compromises. In this context, the role of royal women also needs to be highlighted. Although much less apparent, royal women were observed occupying important positions of power and responsibility both inside and outside of the Church. Indeed, the contribution of these figures needs to be seen in the same context as that of kings as part of more general patterns of early Anglo-Saxon ruler-ship. Supporting kings in their various endeavours were their followers. These relationships have finally started to come fully into focus. Protection, gifts and feasting all played a role in these relationships. The clearest indication of the nature of these relationships came in the section on hagiography where some sort of long-term service with an ultimate landed reward was indicated.

Kingship in the seventh and early eighth centuries was thus both established and complex, fluid and malleable. This complexity might suggest an earlier origin while its enduring fluidity might suggest a later one. Ultimately neither argument is conclusive and if one attempts to avoid teleological assumptions neither is compelling either. What, therefore, can this image of kingship reveal regarding its origins? With respect to the relationship between kings and religion, as was discussed earlier, this might be taken to suggest an earlier, possibly sacral, strand to early Anglo-Saxon kingship. Certainly a relationship with religion can be suggested as pre-dating their adoption of Christianity in some areas, though not necessarily that much earlier. However, a sacral interpretation of Anglo-Saxon kingship cannot be maintained.

The most persuasive conclusions derived from the violent and competitive aspects of early Anglo-Saxon kingship. A general trend towards larger kingdoms was identified through the mechanisms of conquest and amalgamation, in accordance with Bassett's model. However, notable fluctuations in the size, power and fortunes of particular kingdoms were also identified which complicated this image. In conjunction with the insights from the previous sections, it was deduced that early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms may have originated as relatively large-scale concerns and thus that a variability in kingly power and status was fundamental to early Anglo-Saxon kingship. This reduces Bassett's conquest and amalgamation model to one factor or influence amongst many. Furthermore, in this context, the identification of the relationships

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between kings and their followers whereby land was granted in exchange for military service provides a mechanism through which this might have been achieved.

## **The Seventh and Early Eighth Centuries: Documentary Sources**

The previous section highlighted various aspects of the nature of early Anglo-Saxon kingship in the seventh and early eighth centuries and its developing complexity and sophistication. It revealed a complex, if fluid, institution with differing levels and natures of kingly power together with the existence of royal families and accepted patterns of succession. Kings were most easily observed in the conduct of warfare and through their interactions with the church, although they could be perceived as existing within broader and more complex political contexts. The relationships between kings and their followers were also highlighted as a potential source of kingly power. The written sources did not prove as illuminating with respect to the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship as they did regarding its nature and subsequent development. Nonetheless, through an examination of these factors it was possible to make a number of suggestions germane to the origins of early Anglo-Saxon kingship. Foremost amongst these was the potential for early Anglo-Saxon kingships to have originated as a relatively large-scale concern. In this context, the processes of conquest and amalgamation were reduced to one factor amongst many influencing the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship. The previous suggestion that the origins of kingship might be found in the early sixth or possibly even fifth centuries was also supported by the unambiguously kingly nature of politics in the seventh and early eighth centuries. This section will address similar issues and attempt to develop and build on these ideas. It will examine four classes of documentary evidence: law codes, charters or diplomas,<sup>1</sup> genealogies and regnal lists, and the Tribal Hidage. As before, they will be addressed in approximate order of composition and will be examined in order to develop a greater understanding of the nature of early Anglo-Saxon kingship in the hope that it will be possible to extrapolate backwards to its origins.

### **Law Codes**

Four law codes remain extant from seventh-century Anglo-Saxon England, associated with Æthelberht I, Hlothhere and Eadric, and Wihtred, all of Kent, and Ine of the West

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<sup>1</sup> The term charter may refer to a wide variety of documents and memoranda whereas a diploma is a specifically royal (or papal) grant of land or privileges. The vast majority of charters from Anglo-Saxon England are in fact diplomas which has led at times to the two terms, somewhat misleadingly, being used interchangeably.

Saxons, respectively.<sup>2</sup> The prefaces to the latter three codes directly attribute themselves to royal agency. The former is attributed to Æthelberht based on Bede's comment in the *Historia ecclesiastica* that Æthelberht caused the law code to be written *iuxta exempla Romanorum* – 'according to the manner of the Romans'.<sup>3</sup> The reigns of these kings provide broad date outlines for the codes,<sup>4</sup> but more precision is possible. The prologue to Wihtred's code allows it to be dated to 695.<sup>5</sup> The laws of Ine refer to Bishop Erconwald as being present at their promulgation, placing them prior to his death in 694. However, stylistically, there is reason to suggest that Ine's laws were issued on successive occasions; the first section, therefore, can be placed in this period, but the remainder can only be located in the context of Ine's reign, 688-726.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Æthelberht I's code can be placed after 597 and the Augustinian mission, possibly in the years immediately following it, but only certainly prior to c.616.<sup>7</sup> Most problematic are the laws of Hlothhere and Eadric. These are often taken to have been issued jointly, placing them between 673 and 685, but it is also possible that the laws were originally solely Hlothhere's and subsequently reissued by Eadric, or alternatively that the code represents a later compilation of laws issued by both individuals separately.<sup>8</sup>

Utilising these law codes is beset with problems. There is a high incidence of *hapax legomena* – words which appear only once in the Old English corpus – in the Kentish codes,<sup>9</sup> which brings difficulties with regard to the interpretation, and translation, of the codes.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, the Kentish codes are only preserved in the twelfth-century manuscript, the *Textus Roffensis*.<sup>11</sup> Oliver has also highlighted the existence of both chronological and dialectal layers within the texts, pointing to a series of transcriptions

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<sup>2</sup> For the Kentish codes: Oliver, *Beginnings of English Law*. For Ine's code: Liebermann (ed.), *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*. Translated: Attenborough (ed.), *Laws of the Earliest English Kings*.

<sup>3</sup> *HE*, II.5. Further: Wormald, *Making of English Law*, pp. 40-44, 93-94; Wormald, 'Lex Scripta', pp. 3-6.

<sup>4</sup> Kelly, 'Æthelberht'; Kelly, 'Hlothhere'; Kelly, 'Wihtred'; Wormald, 'Ine'.

<sup>5</sup> Oliver, *Beginnings of English Law*, pp. 164-66.

<sup>6</sup> Wormald, *Making of English Law*, pp. 104-06; Wormald, 'Inter cetera bona...', pp. 188-92.

<sup>7</sup> The rubric states that the code was written during Augustine's lifetime, which would place the text prior to 604 or 609, depending on the tradition followed. However, the rubric is a later editorial addition. Further precision may be possible as Hough, 'Legal and Documentary Writings', pp. 170-73; or Liebermann (ed.), *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, vol III, pp. 2-3. It has also been suggested that the code pre-dates the Augustinian mission: Richardson and Sayles, *Law and Legislation*, pp. 7-9, but none of these ideas can be relied upon.

<sup>8</sup> Hough, 'Legal and Documentary Writings', pp. 173-74. Also Hough, 'Numbers in Manuscripts', pp. 128-9; Oliver, *Beginnings of English Law*, p. 120.

<sup>9</sup> Lendinara, 'Kentish Laws', pp. 219-24.

<sup>10</sup> The work of Oliver and Hough has been instrumental in providing revised interpretations of many of these *hapax legomena*, particularly Hough, 'Women and the Law'; Oliver, *Beginnings of English Law*.

<sup>11</sup> Sawyer (ed.), *Textus Roffensis*. Further: Wormald, *Making of English Law*, pp. 244-53.

and possible revisions.<sup>12</sup> The three texts seem to have entered the *Textus Roffensis* as a pre-existing group, but differences between the three texts with regard to the relative occurrence of lexical archaisms, the use of abbreviations and scribal practice suggest independent transmission prior to this.<sup>13</sup> There is thus considerable scope for the modification of these texts in transmission. Pessimism as to the extent of these revisions, however, is unnecessary.<sup>14</sup> The very existence of the lexical archaisms that Oliver uses to identify these layers demonstrate the probability of at least partial reliability. Furthermore, possible motivations for wholesale changes to the codes are hard to demonstrate. More certainty is possible with Ine's law code. It is preserved in a number of manuscripts due to its inclusion in Alfred's *domboc*, where it is incorporated as an appendix.<sup>15</sup> It does not seem to be modified at this point as a number of its clauses directly contradict those in Alfred's code, which surely would have been rectified had it been revised.<sup>16</sup>

Any attempt to utilise these codes must also confront the gap between theory and practice, or as it might be expressed, legislation and justice, which is implicit in the texts.<sup>17</sup> The earliest record of an Anglo-Saxon legal proceeding dates no earlier than 736 or 737. Nor does it reveal the process by which the settlement was reached, only the settlement itself.<sup>18</sup> Evidence for legal practice in early Anglo-Saxon England, therefore, has to be deduced from the law codes themselves.<sup>19</sup> As a result, the manner and extent to which the law codes were actually applied cannot be satisfactorily resolved.

This can be qualified both positively and negatively. On the one hand Æthelberht's code seems very much like a codification of existing, practised, oral, law.<sup>20</sup> It is well organised, comprising a series of thematic sections addressing infractions against the church, the king, nobles and commoners; this is followed by a section dealing with breaches of enclosures and personal injuries, followed by further sections on

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<sup>12</sup> Oliver, *Beginnings of English Law*, pp. 34-51, 120-23, 148-50; with Lendinara, 'Kentish Laws', pp. 217-19. C.f. Jurasinski, 'Origins of Æthelberht's Code', although Oliver's ideas are more persuasive than he credits.

<sup>13</sup> Wormald, '*Laga Eadwardi*', p. 122; Hough, 'Numbers in Manuscripts', p. 128; Oliver, *Beginnings of English Law*, pp. 120-21; Hough, 'Compilation of *Textus Roffensis*', p. 71-72.

<sup>14</sup> Hough, 'Women and the Law', p. 209, n. 10.

<sup>15</sup> Wormald, *Making of English Law*, pp. 265-77.

<sup>16</sup> Hough, 'Legal and Documentary Writings', p. 174; Wormald, *Making of English Law*, p. 278.

<sup>17</sup> Legislation, in Wormald's definition, being 'written decrees by secular authority with ostensibly general application', while justice is the conduct of law as practiced: Wormald, '*Lex Scripta*', p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> S 1429. Also S 1255; Wormald, 'Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Lawsuits'.

<sup>19</sup> Wormald, '*Inter cetera bona...*', p. 180.

<sup>20</sup> Wormald, '*Inter cetera bona...*', pp. 183-86.

infractions against women, the half-free and slaves. The code is also predominantly made up of simple conditional statements, which contrast with the progressively more complex conditionals of later codes.<sup>21</sup> The subsequent Kentish codes self-consciously built upon this foundation while Ine's code can also be situated in the context of customary law.<sup>22</sup> However, on the other hand, the codes are not workable documents. They are often ambiguous, hardly exhaustive, and in many instances clauses do not adequately deal with the situations they seek to resolve.<sup>23</sup> They cannot be seen as truly functional documents. In effect, therefore, the law codes speak to two different, if overlapping, issues. Firstly they allow justice as practiced in early Anglo-Saxon England to be inferred. Secondly, they allow the association between early Anglo-Saxon kings and legislation to be examined. The act of issuing legislation, together with the motivations for its issuance, can thus be separated from its actual contents.<sup>24</sup> These two issues will be approached in turn. In both instances the focus will primarily be upon Æthelberht's code as its greater antiquity makes it most germane to the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship.

In respect to justice as practiced, certainly as seen in Æthelberht's code, the king does not seem to have played a significant role in the legal system. The system for the settling of disputes lay instead with the community and individuals directly involved. Æthelberht's code refers obliquely to the responsibility of the friends (*freond*) of the victim to arbitrate in circumstances where the severity of injury is not clear.<sup>25</sup> Greater processual detail is revealed in Hlothhere and Eadric's code, although it is not clear if this is representative of procedures in Æthelberht's time. Cases were heard in assemblies and settled by arbitration. Evidence given was supported by oath. Judges are also

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<sup>21</sup> The obvious exceptions are the initial Christian clauses.

<sup>22</sup> The applicability of these codes might also be supported by the frequent occurrence of minor *cyning* place-names. The codes often stipulate the payment of fines to the king which Abt. 30 (30) would suggest were paid in-kind. These lands may, thus, represent lands forfeited to the king through legal process: Hough, 'Naming and Royal Authority', pp. 209-17.

<sup>23</sup> For example, Abt. 11 (5) stipulates that anyone who kills another in the king's hall has to pay compensation of 50 shillings. However, it is unclear who this fine is to be paid to, although comparison with 8 (2) would suggest that it is payable to the king. Furthermore, this cannot be considered to fully resolve the issue as the price of a *wergild*, even of a freeman, is considerably more than this. Particularly noteworthy are 32-71.1 (32-72.1) which stipulate fixed fines, *bots*, as restitution in the case of bodily injury. These provide some variation in accordance with severity, but it is not clear if they also vary with status as *wergilds* do. It is possible that such payments were standardised across society, but equally possible that they were only relevant to freemen as these clauses immediately follow the section of Æthelberht's code which deals with freemen: Rubin, 'Composition in Anglo-Saxon Law'. Also Jurasinski, 'Cultural Contexts of Æthelberht's Code', pp. 63-69.

<sup>24</sup> Hough, 'Naming and Royal Authority', p. 208.

<sup>25</sup> Abt. 65.1 (65.1).

mentioned, although their role is not apparent.<sup>26</sup> The primary focus of Æthelberht's code seems to be setting out appropriate restitution for various forms of theft, injury or death.<sup>27</sup> Such payments, although it is not directly stated, are seemingly paid to the injured parties, the victims, or in the case of death, their families. Payments varied according to the status of the victim. The *wergild*, or man-price – the price payable as restitution for death – of a freeman was 100 shillings; Hlothhere and Eadric's code adds that that of a noble was 300 shillings.<sup>28</sup> Payments could also vary according to circumstances; thus if the individual responsible for a death left the country, their kin were liable for the *wergild*, but must only pay half of it.<sup>29</sup> Compensation for theft varied depending upon whose goods had been stolen.<sup>30</sup>

The aim of such compensatory restitution, although this is only implicit in the laws, was presumably to limit recourse to more violent forms of restitution.<sup>31</sup> Certainly in later Anglo-Saxon England, as well as in Merovingian Frankia, where records are more plentiful, violent restitution was a viable alternative to a financial settlement.<sup>32</sup> It would be a mistake, however, to see violent and financial restitution as separate or mutually exclusive.<sup>33</sup> Rather, they should be seen as part of a broader system for maintaining social order. Equally, it would be mistaken to assume that violent restitution itself equated with disorder as even in acephalous systems such courses of action are typically constrained by what is socially acceptable.<sup>34</sup> The term feud is often used when describing such systems.<sup>35</sup> However, to the modern reader the term feud has misleading connotations of an ongoing series of reciprocal and potentially escalating consequences, violent or otherwise. Whilst a logical possibility of the above system, it should not be

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<sup>26</sup> HI. 6-6.3 (8-10), 11-11.3 (16-16.3).

<sup>27</sup> It must, however, be remembered that simply by being written Æthelberht's code represents a legal innovation and it is difficult to determine what other innovations this may mask: Wormald, '*Inter cetera bona...*', p. 180.

<sup>28</sup> Further: Hough, 'Wergild'. Payments in Wessex were considerably higher, although the currency was worth less.

<sup>29</sup> Abt. 24.2 (23).

<sup>30</sup> As Abt. 1-5 (1).

<sup>31</sup> This is also inherent in the early Frankish laws, the *Pactus legis Salicae* – a *pactus* being agreement to keep the peace. Eckhardt (ed.), *Pactus legis Salicae*. Translation: Rivers (trans.), *Laws of the Salian and Ripuarian Franks*.

<sup>32</sup> Hyams, 'Feud and the State'; Wallace-Hadrill, 'Bloodfeud of the Franks'.

<sup>33</sup> Roberts, 'Study of Dispute', pp. 8-9.

<sup>34</sup> Roberts, 'Study of Dispute', p. 10.

<sup>35</sup> As Wormald, 'Laws'.



considered normative; this is exactly what the system attempted to mitigate. Indeed, such eventualities should be considered the exception rather than the norm.<sup>36</sup>

Such a devolved legal system, or one similar to it, could easily have had a long pedigree, possibly pre-dating the origins of kingship. Those few clauses which do involve kings, therefore, particularly their financial compensation, are likely to be subsequent innovations.<sup>37</sup> One or two exceptions, however, are possible in those instances where the king is conceivably also an injured party through violation of his protection.<sup>38</sup> This of course provides a legal and institutional context for ideas which have already been seen as being important to the nature of Anglo-Saxon kingship. Ideas of protection also permeate the law codes more generally, not just with respect to kings, but also the clergy – admittedly also innovatory – nobles, freemen and widows.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, the system elucidated above is predicated on the application of the concept of protection; without such a concept, the motivation for recourse is lessened; further, without it, the disenfranchised – slaves, women, the semi-free, foreigners – are completely without recourse, which is self-evidently not the case in the law codes.

Of similar relevance is the issue of food rents.<sup>40</sup> Clause 17 (12) refers to *fedesl*, or feeding, of the kings and gives it a value of 20 shillings.<sup>41</sup> Although the precise interpretation of the clause is unclear, it has been plausibly suggested that it represents an early reference to the practice of *feorm*, or food rents, which is more readily observable in later sources. Thus, clause 70.1 of Ine's code states that the food rent from 10 hides was:

10 vats of honey, 300 loaves, 12 ambers of Welsh ale, 30 ambers of clear ale, 2 full grown cows or 10 wethers, 10 geese, 20 hens, 10 cheeses, a full amber of butter, 5 salmon, 20 pounds of fodder, and 100 eels shall be paid as food rent from every 10 hides.

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<sup>36</sup> Halsall, 'Violence and Society'. C.f. Hyams, *Rancour and Reconciliation*, pp. 3-33, although Hyams does not fully account for Halsall's critique.

<sup>37</sup> Various Abt. 8, 11, 12, 14, 15, possibly 16-16.2 (2, 5, 6, 8, 9, possibly 10, 11).

<sup>38</sup> Abt. 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16-16.2 (2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11). Also Lambert, 'Introduction'; Rollason, 'Protection and the Mead-Hall'.

<sup>39</sup> Abt. 6, 7, 18, 19, 20, 21-21.2, 26, 31, 74-74.3, 75, 77-77.2, 78, 79, 80, 81 (1, 13, 14, 15, 16, 25, 31, 75-75.1, 76, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87).

<sup>40</sup> Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, pp. 274-82; Charles-Edwards, 'Early Medieval Kingships', pp. 28-33. Also Gautier, 'Hospitality in Pre-Viking Anglo-Saxon England'.

<sup>41</sup> Oliver, '*Cyninges Fedesl*'; with Oliver, '*Fedesl* Revisited'.

This clause itself is not beyond doubt. Though purportedly it indicates what a king could expect to receive from 10 hides of land, Lavelle has highlighted the Biblical echoes of this passage, being related to the tribute rendered daily to Solomon from captive Egypt.<sup>42</sup> This naturally raises questions regarding the veracity of the list and is distinctly suggestive of idealisation. Nonetheless, the list has clearly been adapted for a western-European context and so may not be as fanciful as might be feared. Lavelle has calculated the food in the list would be sufficient to feed a group of 200-300 people.<sup>43</sup> If such an amount could be received from 10 hides, then an area of around 3600 hides would be needed to maintain this level of support over the course of a year. This, suggestively, is around the size of many of the shires of Wessex,<sup>44</sup> although it is much larger than many of the units observable in the Tribal Hidage, as discussed below.

The importance of food rents has already been touched upon in relation to the itinerant nature of early Anglo-Saxon kingship. The ability to extract surplus from the population allowed early Anglo-Saxon kings to support themselves and their immediate followers. In effect, food rents can be seen as the economic basis of early Anglo-Saxon kingship. The origins of the practice might thus be linked to the origins of kingship. It is conceivable that the practice developed organically as an institutionalisation and formalisation of the raiding and tribute exaction surmised during the fifth and sixth centuries. A more elegant solution, however, might be found in Goffart's hypothesis that 'barbarian' groups were settled in imperial territory and then were ceded the authority to collect the tax receipts of that area in exchange for its protection.<sup>45</sup> This theory has often been criticised.<sup>46</sup> However, something broadly of this nature is persuasive, especially if one considers that such revenues are most likely to have been paid in kind. It was previously seen that Gildas's *De excidio* supports the idea that *fedorati* troops were invited in to post-imperial Britain. The origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship might ultimately, therefore, be located in the late-Roman system of taxation. Nor need it be only foreign troops that benefited from such relationships. Following the cessation of formal imperial rule, such revenues as could be collected would be at the disposal of those in positions of power. It is possible, therefore, that this resourcing is what allowed

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<sup>42</sup> Lavelle, 'Ine 70.1', p. 263, in reference to I Kings 4:21-24.

<sup>43</sup> Lavelle, 'Ine 70.1', p. 268.

<sup>44</sup> Lavelle, "'Farm of One Night'", pp. 58-59; Brooks, 'Background to the Burghal Hidage', pp. 133-36.

<sup>45</sup> Goffart, 'Technique of Barbarian Settlement'; Goffart, *Barbarian Tides*, pp. 119-86; Goffart, *Barbarians and Romans*.

<sup>46</sup> Halsall, 'Barbarian Settlement in the Fifth Century'; with survey and discussion in Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations*, pp. 422-47.

settlements such as Lincoln and Wroxeter to continue as also those forts along Hadrian's wall which saw ongoing occupation. Naturally, such a theory should not be relied upon in isolation, but it remains as a suggestive and potentially compelling explanation of the economic origins of early Anglo-Saxon kingship.

With respect to the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship, a further factor also needs to be considered, namely the potential relationship between Æthelberht's code and the *Pactus legis Salicae*. It has long been recognised that there are similarities between the various 'barbarian' law codes.<sup>47</sup> Specifically, both codes share the word *leudes*, Old English *loede*, omit the upper aristocracy, and have the same differential payments in *wergilds* according to status.<sup>48</sup> It is also possible to point to contact between Æthelberht's Kent and Frankia, both legal and otherwise. Wood has used this to suggest that Kent, and the North Sea riverine systems more generally, was under some form of Frankish hegemony.<sup>49</sup> By extension, the origins of early Anglo-Saxon kingship, which was at its most precocious in Kent, could be attributed to this Frankish influence. However, one does not have to follow Wood in suggesting active Frankish influence, as previously discussed; simply neighbouring Frankia would have provided stimulation conducive to the development of kingship in the form of access to resources, models of rule, and political and ideological sophistication. In the context of Æthelberht's code, direct appropriation does not seem overly likely. Not only is Æthelberht's code in the vernacular in contrast to the Latin of the *Pactus legis Salicae*, but there are remarkably few Latinate legal borrowings.<sup>50</sup> Further, the more general commonalities of 'barbarian' law militate against an exclusive Frankish provenance.<sup>51</sup> However, broader emulation remains a probability.<sup>52</sup> It is perhaps this that Bede meant by his description of Æthelberht's code as *iuxta exempla Romanorum*.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Wormald, *Making of English Law*, pp. 97-99; Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship*, pp. 33-39. More broadly: Wormald, 'Leges Barbarorum'.

<sup>48</sup> Wood, *Merovingian North Sea*, p. 13. On *leudes*: Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship*, p. 38. It is not entirely clear how *leudes* should be translated, although it evidently relates to social class. Oliver translates it simply as person.

<sup>49</sup> Wood, *Merovingian North Sea*. Also Wood, 'Frankish Hegemony'; Wood, 'Franks and Sutton Hoo'.

<sup>50</sup> Oliver, 'Sick-Maintenance in Anglo-Saxon Law', p. 310, n. 27; c.f. Jurasinski, 'Origins of Æthelberht's Code', for a conflicting view.

<sup>51</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship*, p. 38.

<sup>52</sup> Wormald, *Making of English Law*, pp. 93-101.

<sup>53</sup> *HE*, II.5. Interpretations of this phrase vary; Bede could have meant that Æthelberht's code was Roman because it was written, or more specifically that it was directly inspired by specific (post-)Roman law codes: Jurasinski, 'Origins of Æthelberht's Code', p. 1.

The royal provenance of these codes, therefore, also needs to be considered. Early Anglo-Saxon kings, over the course of the four codes, become increasingly involved in legislative activities. There is a tendency towards increasing instances where compensation is paid to the king. After Æthelberht the kings are all directly associated with their codes. Significantly, the nature of the legislation issued changes over the four codes. While Æthelberht's seems very much like a codification of existing practice, those that followed were increasingly innovative. Indeed, Ine's code seems to have been issued on a number of occasions – it can be divided into six sections, has a repetitive aspect and actively addresses what seem to be popular concerns: theft, particularly of cattle, and the status of the Britons.<sup>54</sup> Alongside this activity, although it cannot be demonstrated, might also be placed a tradition of oral legislation. It needs to be asked, therefore, why early Anglo-Saxon kings chose to associate themselves with the conduct of law and issue law codes. On a purely practical level, the issuing of laws provided scope for increased revenue-raising opportunities. The issuing of laws also afforded early Anglo-Saxon kings the ability to act as patron to those around them. These factors, however, should not be considered the sole objectives. The law codes also allowed early Anglo-Saxon kings to put complex social ideas into practice. Particularly Wihtred's code, but also Ine's, attempted to enforce Christian strictures and morality through law. These codes, it must be remembered, are roughly contemporary with the Penitential of Theodore, with which similar ideas were discussed.<sup>55</sup>

The law codes might thus be seen as ideological documents.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, written laws were strongly associated with both biblical and imperial modes of rule, and so by issuing laws early Anglo-Saxon kings were casting themselves in that mode. Further, as already noted, the Anglo-Saxons' Continental contemporaries were also in the habit of legislating, although their British and Pictish contemporaries were not.<sup>57</sup> The issuing of written law was thus a signifier of kingship, perhaps specifically Continental kingship. Legislating was a logical exercise for an ambitious or ideologically-aware early Anglo-Saxon king. The terms of the codes were also significant in this respect. They communicated the nature of justice that was, in theory, available. As such they promoted

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<sup>54</sup> Wormald, '*Inter cetera bona...*', pp. 188-92.

<sup>55</sup> Further: Oliver, 'Royal and Ecclesiastical Law'.

<sup>56</sup> Further: Wormald, '*Lex Scripta*', pp. 12-43, with Wormald's comments in the preface to this volume pp. xi-xv.

<sup>57</sup> Nor was this the case in Ireland, where there was an extensive and well-established legal tradition very much separate from kingship.

and advertised the kingship of the issuer to both those under their authority and those not. This can be linked back to the practical aspects of the law codes. To return to Æthelberht's code, its concern with setting out reasonable levels of restitution would suggest that restitution was at times excessive. Æthelberht's code can, therefore, be seen as responding to and limiting these excesses and the destructive potential for cyclical redress which they entailed. This interventionist attitude becomes increasingly strong across the four extant codes as the issues addressed become more focused, the ambition of the codes that much greater, and the role of the king ever more prominent.

It might be possible to extrapolate backwards based on this trend to suggest that the origins of early Anglo-Saxon kingship lay in interventions in the processes of law, in the setting of appropriate levels of restitution, reining in excessive demands for compensation and requiring specific elements of payments to be paid not to the injured party and/or their relatives but to the king himself. Such intervention may have stemmed from the person of the king, but this does not preclude an element of popular invitation. Kings could in theory serve as mediator, arbitrator or judge.<sup>58</sup> In later Anglo-Saxon England, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that kings could occupy the position of judge, but this is much harder to support in reference to the early codes given the devolved nature of justice. The king's role might rather be likened to that of an arbitrator, although not necessarily one personally involved in every dispute and settlement. By setting the legal parameters through their law codes early Anglo-Saxon kings were fulfilling such a role at a distance. This, therefore, offers a further potential origin for Anglo-Saxon kingship.

## Diplomas

Of all the sources from early Anglo-Saxon England, charters, or more accurately diplomas, are perhaps the most technically problematic. Diplomas in early Anglo-Saxon England were usually granted to ecclesiastical institutions and typically gave the recipient the right to dispose of or alienate the land or privilege as they chose, thus creating perpetual possession.<sup>59</sup> Diplomas were originally issued on single sheets, but

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<sup>58</sup> Roberts, 'Study of Dispute', pp. 12-16.

<sup>59</sup> This is usually seen as the principal advantage of land held by charter, or *landboc* – hence *bookland*.

the majority of those now extant are preserved exclusively in later cartulary copies.<sup>60</sup> A great deal of diplomatic, therefore, has been devoted to determining the relative authenticity of given diplomas.<sup>61</sup> Much of this ultimately rests upon subjective judgements which naturally lends any study which draws upon diplomas an inherently problematic nature.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, questions of authenticity are not simply a matter of differentiating accurate copies from forgeries but unravelling a complex spectrum of improvement and modification. In recognition of the inherent uncertainties involved in utilising diplomas, therefore, every attempt has been made not to rely on individual diplomas, but rather on patterns which emerge from their grouping and collective analysis.

The earliest Anglo-Saxon diplomas that are plausibly ‘authentic’ as well as the earliest ‘originals’ date from the 670s onwards. As has been seen, this is a context in which early Anglo-Saxon kingship was firmly established. What diplomas can reveal concerning the origins of early Anglo-Saxon kingship, therefore, is limited. In theory, it should be possible to get closer to the origins of early Anglo-Saxon kingship by examining the history, provenance and origins of these documents prior to c.670. However, in practice this is both problematic and contentious. Diplomas are usually thought to have been adopted to cater for the landed needs of the church.<sup>63</sup> When they

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<sup>60</sup> Appendix XI. Also, Keynes (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Charters*; Cameron et al. (eds), *Facsimiles of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, vols II-III; Bond (ed.), *Facsimiles of Ancient Charters*, vols I-II. Alternatively, Bruckner and Marichal (eds), *Chartae latinae antiquiores*, vols III-IV.

<sup>61</sup> Summarised in Brooks, ‘Anglo-Saxon Charters’. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, is invaluable; an updated version is available from <http://www.esawyer.org.uk>. It has been suggested that as many as a third of all Anglo-Saxon diplomas are spurious, with this percentage even higher in the early period: Kelly, ‘Lay Society and the Written Word’, p. 40.

The basis of diploma scholarship, or diplomatic, is the comparison of known originals with cartulary copies in a paleographically and historically aware fashion: Chaplais, ‘Diplomas on Single Sheets’; Chaplais, ‘Diplomas of Exeter’; Whitelock (ed.), *English Historical Documents*, vol I, pp. 337-49 with comments for individual diplomas; Stenton, *Latin Charters*, pp. 1-30; Levison, *England and the Continent*, pp. 174-233; Napier and Stevenson (eds), *Crawford Collection of Early Charters*, pp. viii-x.

More recently: Woodman (ed.), *Charters of the Northern Houses*, pp. 6-16; Wormald, ‘Bede and the Conversion of England’, pp. 138-41; Kelly (ed.), *Charters of Selsey*, pp. xlv-lv; Kelly (ed.), *Charters of St Augustine’s*, pp. lxxi-lxxxv; Edwards, *Charters of the Early West Saxon Kingdom*. Further: Scharer, *Die angelsächsische Königsurkunde*; Keynes, *Diplomas of King Æthelred*, particularly pp. 4-13.

<sup>62</sup> Such judgements are best made after years of experience and once one has developed a ‘feel’ for early Anglo-Saxon diplomatic practice. For this reason, this section primarily rests upon the scholarship and judgements of others, particularly those in the on-going series of editions in the British Academy – Royal Historical Society series, specifically: Kelly (ed.), *Charters of Chertsey Abbey*; Brooks and Kelly (eds), *Charters of Christ Church*; Kelly (ed.), *Charters of Glastonbury*; Kelly (ed.), *Charters of Peterborough*; Kelly (ed.), *Charters of Bath and Wells*; Kelly (ed.), *Charters of Malmesbury Abbey*; Kelly (ed.), *Charters of St Paul’s*; Kelly (ed.), *Charters of Abingdon*; Kelly (ed.), *Charters of Selsey*; Kelly (ed.), *Charters of Shaftesbury*; Kelly (ed.), *Charters of St Augustine’s*; Campbell (ed.), *Charters of Rochester*. Further: Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*.

<sup>63</sup> Williams, ‘Land Tenure’.

appear in the historical record, Anglo-Saxon diplomas seem to be products of an established tradition, exhibiting a degree of variety suggestive of multiple strands within early Anglo-Saxon diplomatic practice. Logically, therefore, it makes sense to suggest that diplomas were introduced to England prior to c.670, more likely earlier than later.<sup>64</sup> The absence of originals from this early period might be explained by the use of papyrus – which is highly perishable in a damp, northern climate – in line with Frankish practice.<sup>65</sup> There is, however, no satisfactory evidence to support such a supposition as, naturally, the diplomas do not exist.<sup>66</sup> It is for this reason that an introduction c.670, often associated with the figure of Archbishop Theodore, has often been preferred.<sup>67</sup> Nor is the provenance of the early Anglo-Saxon diplomatic tradition clear. Early Anglo-Saxon diplomas have most in common with late imperial, specifically Italian, private land grants.<sup>68</sup> However, early Anglo-Saxon diplomas also indicate influence from both Frankish and potentially Celtic practices.<sup>69</sup> As they stand early Anglo-Saxon diplomas cannot be clearly linked to any one of these traditions – Italian, Frankish or Celtic – although they all ultimately derive from late imperial practice.<sup>70</sup>

Furthermore, when compared to their counterparts elsewhere, early Anglo-Saxon diplomas seem strikingly idiosyncratic. For example, Frankish royal diplomas, of which there are originals from the mid-seventh-century onwards, take their origin from the tradition of imperial rescripts. They are documents, quite possibly produced in a royal

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<sup>64</sup> This has often been associated with the figure of Augustine: Chaplais, 'Origin and Authenticity', pp. 28-33; Chaplais, 'Who Introduced Charters into England?'. If correct, this would connect early Anglo-Saxon diplomas to one of the key developments in early Anglo-Saxon kingship, the adoption of Christianity, and further demonstrate what early Anglo-Saxon kings stood to gain from Christianity.

<sup>65</sup> It is noteworthy, although possibly only coincidental, that it was in the 670s that the Merovingian royal charters switched from papyrus to parchment: Kelly, 'Lay Society and the Written Word', pp. 41-42.

<sup>66</sup> An earlier introduction, which opens up the possibility of greater Frankish influence, does raise the possibility that a number of the early charters issued in the name of Æthelberht I of Kent which have usually been discounted as spurious due to their Frankish borrowings, might have an authentic basis: Deanesly, 'Canterbury and Paris', pp. 101-04.

<sup>67</sup> Stenton, *Latin Charters*, p. 31; drawing heavily upon Levison, *England and the Continent*, pp. 174-233. This issue is well discussed in Ryan, 'Land, Property, and Power', pp. 116-23; Kelly, 'Lay Society and the Written Word', pp. 40-43.

<sup>68</sup> Chaplais, 'Origin and Authenticity', p. 29; Stenton, *Latin Charters*, p. 33; Levison, *England and the Continent*, pp. 224-33.

<sup>69</sup> Wormald, 'Bede and the Conversion of England', pp. 145-53; Scharer, *Die angelsächsische Königsurkunde*, pp. 56-7. On the Frankish and Celtic evidence: Kölzer, Hartmann, and Stieldorf (eds), *Die Urkunden Der Merowinger*, 2 vols; Davies, *Llandaff Charters*; with the references in the appendix to Wormald, 'Bede and the Conversion of England', pp. 159-60. The Celtic evidence is particularly problematic as it is universally preserved in later copies and making it difficult to determine the extent to which it has been modified or 'improved'. Further: Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, pp. 245-67; Brooke, *Church and the Welsh Border*, pp. 44-48; Davies, 'Latin Charter-Tradition in Western Britain'; Davies, *Early Welsh Microcosm*.

<sup>70</sup> Wormald, 'Bede and the Conversion of England', pp. 145-53.

chancery, authenticated by autograph and seal, which carry the force of law.<sup>71</sup> By contrast, early Anglo-Saxon diplomas were not sealed; while they claim to be signed, there are no marks that are conceivably autograph;<sup>72</sup> and they were produced in local ecclesiastical scriptoria rather than any form of royal chancery.<sup>73</sup> Consequently, they cannot be considered to be dispositive. In fact, early Anglo-Saxon diplomas seem more akin to Frankish private charters, whose authority derives not from the issuer but from the act of public witness: hence the inclusion of witness lists. However, while Frankish private charters stipulated financial penalties for their transgression, early Anglo-Saxon diplomas did not.<sup>74</sup> Likewise, while Frankish charters could be put to a variety of uses extending to the relatively mundane, early Anglo-Saxon diplomas remained the exception rather than the norm.<sup>75</sup> Frankish royal diplomas, therefore, point to at least a level of continuity with imperial structures in a largely functionally literate society, while early Anglo-Saxon diplomas demonstrate the reverse. Early Anglo-Saxon diplomas cannot be considered as instruments of royal governance, merely as records of royal actions. Indeed, their nature seems if anything ecclesiastical.<sup>76</sup> The sanctions they stipulate are solely religious. Their authenticity and the trust placed in them lies in the societal trust of the ecclesiastical figures who drew them up. Produced in the same scriptoria, using the same techniques and the same holy script, early Anglo-Saxon diplomas are akin to their more obviously religious cousins, the codices and pandects of the early Anglo-Saxon period.<sup>77</sup>

The inescapable conclusion to be drawn from this is that diplomas were at best peripheral to the functioning of early Anglo-Saxon kingship in this period. They appear as an ecclesiastical and literary veneer upon a predominantly oral Anglo-Saxon society and kingship. This is not to deny that Anglo-Saxon diplomas represent a significant

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<sup>71</sup> Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*, pp. 28-30.

<sup>72</sup> Wormald, 'Bede and the Conversion of England', p. 139. Also Chaplais, 'Diplomas on Single Sheets', pp. 76-77, 82 and 86. Bruckner and Marichal (eds), *Chartae latinae antiquiores*, vol III, pp. 29-31, 42-3 and vol IV, pp. 16-17, attempted to demonstrate that certain crosses on early Anglo-Saxon diplomas were in fact autograph; but c.f. Kelly, 'Lay Society and the Written Word', pp. 42-43.

<sup>73</sup> Chaplais, 'Origin and Authenticity', pp. 36-42; Brooks, *Early History of the Church of Canterbury*, pp. 168-70.

<sup>74</sup> Sato, 'La clause pénale'.

<sup>75</sup> The Frankish formularies indicate the wide variety of uses to which Frankish charters, private and royal, could be put. There is every reason to believe that these documents were compiled as working texts as scribal aids: Rio (trans.), *Formularies of Angers and Marculf*. More generally: Rio, *Legal Practice and the Written Word*, particularly pp. 7-40.

<sup>76</sup> Wormald, 'Bede and the Conversion of England', p. 142.

<sup>77</sup> Keynes, 'Church Councils, Royal Assemblies', pp. 137-39; Insley, 'Where Did all the Charters Go?', p. 19; Chaplais, 'Origin and Authenticity', pp. 33-42.



development in the practice of Anglo-Saxon kingship, nor that they would go on to become documents of great importance in Anglo-Saxon society, merely that they had not yet done so.<sup>78</sup> Nonetheless, early Anglo-Saxon diplomas can still prove revealing. The contrast with Frankish diplomas points to a break with the imperial past with regard to the administration of coercive power. An alternate system for granting land and privileges so that kings might provide patronage in the absence of diplomas might also be inferred. This would correlate with the previous idea that kingships may have originated as relatively large-scale phenomena and provides a mechanism for the previously discussed personal relationships and the granting of lands in exchange for military service. The diplomas also confirm the previously noted literary instances of material royal support for the church.

In this context, it is worth pausing to consider the circumstances surrounding the issuing of an early Anglo-Saxon diploma.<sup>79</sup> Each diploma will have its own specific context and underlying narrative. It should not be assumed that such grants necessarily represented spontaneous acts of royal generosity. An unrecorded process of persuasion, petition and negotiation may be surmised as underlying many, if not all, of these acts. Indeed, in certain instances this is implied in the extant diplomas.<sup>80</sup> Similarly, Bede's *Historia Abbatum*, makes reference to exchanges between both Aldfrith and Osred of Northumbria and the community of Wearmouth-Jarrow.<sup>81</sup> In such contexts access to the king takes on a particular significance as it is only thereby that such arrangements can be mediated.<sup>82</sup> The culmination of these processes was naturally the actual act of bestowal. This presumably occurred at some form of assembly.<sup>83</sup> This assembly also provided a forum for the event to be imbued suitably with ritual and symbolism, elements of which are hinted at in the diploma record.<sup>84</sup> Diplomas may also have been read out, and even

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<sup>78</sup> On diplomas in later Anglo-Saxon England: Keynes, 'Church Councils, Royal Assemblies', pp. 17-139.

<sup>79</sup> I am grateful to Insley who was good enough to discuss the following ideas with me.

<sup>80</sup> S 1170, S 1177, S 1252, S 102 are explicitly framed as exchanges while S 1429, S 20, S 1170 all mention some sort of discussion. Further: Naismith, 'Payments for Land'; Campbell, 'Economics of Power in Early England', pp. 227-33.

<sup>81</sup> *HA*, 9 and 15, 15 respectively. Chapter 15 also seems to suggest the issuing of a diploma for at least one of these exchanges.

<sup>82</sup> C.f. the restrictive use of space in the architecture of Yeavinger and Cowdery's Down.

<sup>83</sup> Further: Keynes, 'Church Councils, Royal Assemblies', pp. 17-139; Insley, 'Assemblies and Charters'.

<sup>84</sup> S 1164, S 239, S 1804-06 mention the placing of sods of earth on gospel books; S 14, S 15, S 1258 describe a similar act whereby sods of earth are placed on an altar. There are also instances of diplomas being bound or copied into gospel books: Chaplais, 'Origin and Authenticity', pp. 33-36. Further: Kelly (ed.), *Charters of Abingdon*, pp. 9-10; Kelly (ed.), *Charters of Shaftesbury*, p. 8; Kelly, 'Lay Society and the Written Word', p. 44; Whitelock (ed.), *English Historical Documents*, vol I, p. 343. More broadly Insley, 'Rhetoric and Ritual'.

issued, at the dedication of Wilfrid's church at Ripon.<sup>85</sup> Together, these various interactions afforded the king the ability to control, appease and influence those around him, providing channels through which royal power could be exercised.<sup>86</sup> The existence of diplomas undoubtedly would have added an extra dimension to these interactions, but they could also exist in an oral society. Similar interactions, therefore, might be projected back into the fifth and early sixth centuries and would correlate with the previous comments regarding the role of personal relationships in the exercise of early Anglo-Saxon kingship.

Of particular interest are those diplomas which concern trade or industry. Six diplomas remain extant concerning the remission of tolls on ships, and a further diploma grants the revenue of tolls to the bishop of London.<sup>87</sup> Six of these state or imply that the toll was levied at the port of London,<sup>88</sup> while one grants remission on tolls throughout the Mercian kingdom.<sup>89</sup> That such tolls existed, and remissions could be granted, implies a degree of sophistication and competence on the part of early Anglo-Saxon kings. There was by implication some sort of network of royal agents, however informal, not only in major ports such as London, but also across the Mercian kingdom more generally and in all probability other kingdoms as well.<sup>90</sup> There are indications in the extant law codes which support this supposition.<sup>91</sup> Such a system would undoubtedly be aided by the existence of diplomas but should not be assumed to be dependent on them.<sup>92</sup> It needs to be asked, therefore, how far back such activity can be traced. Archaeological evidence for economic expansion and royal involvement in trade can be found from this period onwards.<sup>93</sup> Activity at London corresponds with this pattern, there being no archaeological indications of activity prior to c.650, and significant activity from the 670s

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<sup>85</sup> VW, 17.

<sup>86</sup> Insley, 'Assemblies and Charters', pp. 50-51. More broadly Insley, 'Rhetoric and Ritual'.

<sup>87</sup> S 86, S 88, S 87, S 1788, S 98, S 91, S(Add) 103a respectively. Further: Kelly (ed.), *Charters of St Augustine's*, pp. lxxxv-xc; Kelly, 'Trading Privileges', pp. 4-6.

<sup>88</sup> S 86, S 88, S 1788, S 98, S 91, S(Add) 103a.

<sup>89</sup> S 87. Later diplomas relate to the ports of Sarre and Fordwich in Kent, S 29, S 1612. S 29 also stipulates that exemption is granted on condition that King Eadbert II of Kent is granted pre-emption rights over its cargo

<sup>90</sup> Kelly, 'Trading Privileges', pp. 16-26. Also Maddicott, 'London and Droitwich', pp.24, 41-43, and 49-51.

<sup>91</sup> There are mentions of both officials and physical toll infrastructure in the law codes: HI. 10-11.3 (15-16.3). Also Maddicott, 'London and Droitwich', p. 12.

<sup>92</sup> Ships themselves, for example, could potentially have been marked in some way: Kelly, 'Trading Privileges', pp. 24-25.

<sup>93</sup> Pestell, 'Markets, *Emporia*, *Wics*, and 'Productive' Sites'; with the papers in Pestell and Ulmschneider (eds), *Markets in Early Medieval Europe*; and Hansen and Wickham (eds), *Long Eighth Century*. Also the historiographically important Hodges and Hobley (eds), *Rebirth of Towns*; Hodges, *Dark Age Economics*; Sawyer, 'Kings and Merchants'.

onwards.<sup>94</sup> Such a correlation is suggestive of a coeval relationship between tolls, the expansion of trade, and royal exploitation. Certainly it is hard to argue for the existence of tolls prior to the establishment of such trading centres and the exchange of notable levels of goods. This, however, needs to be balanced by an awareness of the long-standing nature of tolls in European economic culture, stretching back to the Iron Age. Thus, while there is little reason to postulate wide-scale continuation of imperial toll exaction into the fifth and sixth centuries, some continuity is possible.<sup>95</sup> It should be considered, therefore, that these diplomas indicate an intensification of pre-existing toll extraction rather than evidence for a completely new system.

Similar arguments are possible elsewhere where they rest upon much firmer foundations. Diplomas S 102 and S 23 concern the saltworks at Droitwich. These natural brine springs, the most saline and therefore most valuable in the country, were a significant economic asset.<sup>96</sup> Excavation has demonstrated that these works were in more or less continual production, although with discontinuities, varying intensities and at shifting sites, from the Iron Age onwards.<sup>97</sup> The springs had been exclusively controlled by the Roman Army, and possibly by the Dobunni before them. When the springs re-emerge in the historical record they are firmly under the control of the Mercian kings.<sup>98</sup> The intervening period can only really be speculated at, but it does not seem too fanciful to continue to associate the saltworks with coercive authority. The production of salt, after all, requires significant levels of organisation and resourcing that few are in a position to provide.<sup>99</sup> It may be suggested, therefore, that the control of the Droitwich saltworks lies at the origins of the kingdom of the Hwicce. The saltworks were situated in the probable heartland of the kingdom and the control and exploitation of such an

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<sup>94</sup> Maddicott, 'London and Droitwich', pp. 8-13. London was an ecclesiastical and possibly royal centre prior to this. Further: Cowie, 'Royal Sites in Middle Anglo-Saxon London'; Cowie, 'Mercian London'.

<sup>95</sup> Middleton, 'Early Medieval Port Customs'. Also Brooks, *Church, State and Access to Resources*, pp. 11-13.

<sup>96</sup> The salinity levels are as much as ten times that found in sea water, although in reality contamination of the springs from fresh ground meant that the brine was unlikely to be much more than three times as saline as sea water. The salt produced was also fine-grained and extremely pure making it highly prized: Maddicott, 'London and Droitwich', p. 25; Hurst (ed.), *Excavations at Upwich*, pp. 1-3; Woodiwiss (ed.), *Salt Production and Droitwich*, pp. 1-5.

<sup>97</sup> Hurst (ed.), *Excavations at Upwich*, pp. 9-32; Woodiwiss (ed.), *Salt Production and Droitwich*, pp. 8-26, 115-22. Evidence for fifth-century activity is limited, but a coin of Honorius dating to c.420 was found sealed under the floor of the Bays Meadow Villa, probably the headquarters of Roman salt production, which would suggest fifth-century activity: Maddicott, 'London and Droitwich', p. 28, n. 89. Also Hooke, 'Droitwich Salt Industry'.

<sup>98</sup> Maddicott, 'London and Droitwich', pp. 28-43.

<sup>99</sup> Brooks, *Church, State and Access to Resources*, p.22; c.f. Maddicott, 'London and Droitwich', p. 28.

important asset would grant significant power and resources.<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, the boundaries of the kingdom as reconstructed by Della Hooke, equivalent to the boundaries of the Anglo-Saxon diocese of Worcester, seem designed to maximise the exploitation and dissemination of salt.<sup>101</sup> Clearly not every saltworks facilitated the establishment of a kingship as many fell into disuse.<sup>102</sup> Nonetheless, the association of the Hwicce with Droitwich raises the important possibility of an economic basis and origin for some early Anglo-Saxon kingships.<sup>103</sup>

Some comment also needs to be made concerning the titles given to these various early Anglo-Saxon kings. These should be treated with caution as the scope for aggrandisement, flattery and literary conceit was high. Nonetheless, the Ismere diploma, which extravagantly describes Æthelbald of Mercia as *rex non solum Marcersium sed et omnium provinciarum quæ generale nomine Sutangli dicuntur* – ‘king not only of the Mercians but also of all provinces which are called by general name “South English”’ actually correlates with what is known concerning the extent of his power.<sup>104</sup> Differing levels of kingly power can also be discerned in the diplomas.<sup>105</sup> This is reminiscent of what was previously seen concerning the varying levels of kingly power and the ability of one king to exert their authority over another. Such instances are reinforced by those diplomas where one king confirms or adds to the grant of another.<sup>106</sup> In light of the above comments concerning the scope for ritual and symbolism surrounding diplomas, the expression of relative kingly status and royal hierarchies in such a public context seems particularly suggestive. Diplomas, therefore, add another strand to the interactions between early Anglo-Saxon kings.

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<sup>100</sup> Maddicott, 'London and Droitwich', pp. 26-27.

<sup>101</sup> Maddicott, 'London and Droitwich', pp. 43-48; Hooke, *Anglo-Saxon Landscape*, pp. 12-20.

<sup>102</sup> As Andrews, 'Saltmaking and Settlement in Parson Drove'. The Cheshire wiches would form a similar example, although the Domesday survey does indicate that they were being worked by the late Anglo-Saxon period: Higham, *Frontier Landscape*, p. 22. Further: Harris and Thacker (eds), *County of Chester: Volume I*, pp. 222-24, 328-29.

<sup>103</sup> It was also possible to raise revenue through taxing the transportation of salt. The first such levies are recorded in documents of the ninth century, but these same documents state that such taxation rights were ancient by this point raising the possibility that such tolls might be relevant to the period in question: Maddicott, 'London and Droitwich', pp. 38-43.

<sup>104</sup> S 89. Translation: Whitelock (ed.), *English Historical Documents*, pp. 453-54. The subscription further describes Æthelbald as *rex Britanniae* – ‘king of Britain’ while an addition on the reverse of the diploma describes Æthelbald as *rex suutanglorum* – ‘king of the South English’. Further: Wormald, 'Origins of the *Gens Anglorum*', pp. 111-17, particularly 111-12; Yorke, 'Vocabulary of Overlordship', pp. 179-83. Bede ascribed suzerainty over all of the early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms south of the Humber to Æthelbald, *HE*, V.23.

<sup>105</sup> As the *subreguli* in the witness list of S 1165. Further: Campbell, 'Bede's *reges* and *principes*', pp. 88-89. Also S 8 with Brooks and Kelly (eds), *Charters of Christ Church*, p. 266.

<sup>106</sup> As S 1165, S 1169, S 1248, S 65.

The final issue that needs to be addressed is that of the actual lands granted by these diplomas. This involves two separate, but related, aspects. The first concerns the situation of the lands. Later Anglo-Saxon diplomas are unusual in often including quite extensive boundary clauses.<sup>107</sup> Adopting a long-term perspective highlights the striking continuities in land organisation throughout the Anglo-Saxon period and possibly earlier.<sup>108</sup> Such continuities allow for the reconstruction of small political units such as Surrey and the kingdom of the Hwicce.<sup>109</sup> Of course it is not clear how far back these units can be pushed. Nor is their political status necessarily apparent. Such units are often used to support Bassett's model of kingship formation through conquest and amalgamation. However, as with the model itself, it is not clear if this is appropriate. One particular diploma speaks directly to these issues. S 1165 records the grant of extensive lands by one Frithuwold, *subregulus* of [the province of the men of] Surrey, to Eorcenwold Abbot of Chertsey, and later Bishop of London.<sup>110</sup> This diploma is not without reproach, and Kelly, its most recent editor, has made a strong case for the text as it currently stands having been substantially modified. Nonetheless, she feels that it is based upon an authentic diploma and that the witness list in particular can be given credence.<sup>111</sup> This, together with the body of the charter, suggest that Frithuwold, together with the other *subreguli* – Osric, Wigheard and Æthelwold – listed at the end of the diploma, was a lesser king under the sway of Wulfhere of Mercia. Blair has demonstrated that a variety of potentially overlapping interpretations of this implied political context are possible, ranging from a long-standing kingship coming under Mercian hegemony at the time of this diploma, through a 'heterogeneous group of *regiones*' with fluctuating politics and allegiances, to the construction of an ultimately transitory political unit by Wulfhere of Mercia and its delegation to Frithuwold.<sup>112</sup> Despite Kelly's editorial cautions, these possibilities continue to be credible. If nothing else, they underline the complexity of the origins of early Anglo-Saxon kingship.

The second issue concerns the measurement of land in diplomas. This was done in hides, described by Bede as the land required to support one *familia* – 'family,

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<sup>107</sup> Lowe, 'Development of the Anglo-Saxon Boundary Clause'.

<sup>108</sup> Oosthuizen, *Tradition and Transformation*; with Higham, 'Review [Tradition and Transformation]'. Also Everitt, *Continuity and Colonization*, pp. 17-18, 93-117; with wider discussion in Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 8.

<sup>109</sup> As Blair, *Early Medieval Surrey*, pp. 12-34; Hooke, *Anglo-Saxon Landscape*, pp. 12-20, 75-106.

<sup>110</sup> Translation: Whitelock (ed.), *English Historical Documents*, pp. 440-41.

<sup>111</sup> Kelly (ed.), *Charters of Chertsey Abbey*, pp. 89-104. Also Blair, 'Frithuwold's Kingdom', n. 1;

Wormald, 'Bede and the Conversion of England', pp. 142-45.

<sup>112</sup> Blair, 'Frithuwold's Kingdom', quote p. 107.

household'.<sup>113</sup> The various Old English terms for the hide can be linked to a number of cognate words in the Indo-European family which revolve around marriage and sexual union, particularly in the Germanic languages.<sup>114</sup> Building on this, Charles-Edwards has persuasively argued that the hide was directly linked to status and specifically that the hide was the landed qualification for a freeman or *ceorl*.<sup>115</sup> The hide was thus a measure of value, and indirectly status, rather than area.<sup>116</sup> The specifics of this relationship are not important in this context; what is important is its origins. Charles-Edwards felt that the hide derived from shared Celtic and Germanic roots.<sup>117</sup> It has also been suggested, drawing on different evidence, that the hide derived from late imperial taxation and dependency practices.<sup>118</sup> Bede, however, felt that the hide was peculiarly Anglo-Saxon.<sup>119</sup> Within these three scenarios are embedded three broad origins for early Anglo-Saxon kingship – foreign influence, inherited Roman legacy, or Insular development. There are undoubtedly similarities between Celtic and Anglo-Saxon practice as Charles-Edwards has demonstrated. On the other hand the previous comments concerning tolls caution one from completely rejecting any Roman influence, although in this instance such origins are based purely on coincidence and speculation. Bede's comments are the most difficult to reject. Thus, while there may have been influence from outside of early Anglo-Saxon England, the resulting kingship was nonetheless peculiar to early Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Faith, 'Hide'; Bosworth, Toller, and Campbell (eds), *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, s.v; further discussion Ryan, 'That "Dreary Old Question"', pp. 208-12. Also Ryan, 'Land, Property, and Power', pp. 78-90 for what follows.

<sup>114</sup> Charles-Edwards, 'Origins of the Hide', pp. 6-7.

<sup>115</sup> Charles-Edwards, 'Origins of the Hide', pp. 5-14. The size of the *familia* of the *ceorl* has been the cause of some controversy. By the late Anglo-Saxon period, a hide was typically equivalent to c.120 acres, leading to the suggestion that the *familia* represented a household of extend family and slaves: Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond*, pp. 357-520. The relationship of this measurement to the period in question is uncertain, but it is nonetheless clear that a hide represented a considerable area: Higham, *English Empire*, pp. 242-43. Charles-Edwards preferred to view the hide as the land of one couple, but given its size was forced to postulate the assistance of dependent individuals to facilitate its cultivation: Charles-Edwards, 'Origins of the Hide', p. 14. However, recently it has been cogently argued that the Anglo-Saxon *familia* should indeed be seen as an extended household rather than a single nuclear family: Stanley, 'Familia in Anglo-Saxon Society'. Also Higham, *English Empire*, pp. 240-43.

<sup>116</sup> Higham, *English Empire*, pp. 241-50.

<sup>117</sup> Charles-Edwards, 'Origins of the Hide', pp. 4-5.

<sup>118</sup> Barnwell, 'Hlafaeta, ceorl, hid and scir'. Also Yorke, 'Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms 600–900', p. 78; Finberg, 'Continuity or Cataclysm?', pp. 8-9.

<sup>119</sup> *HE*, I.25.

<sup>120</sup> Further: Ryan, 'That "Dreary Old Question"', pp. 216-23.

## Genealogies and Regnal Lists

Genealogies are documents giving an individual or individuals' heritage through generations of descent.<sup>121</sup> A regnal list gives a list of kings of a particular kingdom or area irrespective of genealogical relationships. Examples of both date from the period under examination. Bede gives the pedigrees of both Æthelberht I of Kent and Eorpwald of the East Angles in his *Historia ecclesiastica*.<sup>122</sup> He also seems to have had access to regnal lists for Northumbria, Kent, East Anglia and possibly Mercia.<sup>123</sup> There is in addition a list of Northumbrian kings which was appended to the version of the *Historia ecclesiastica* preserved in the Moore Manuscript.<sup>124</sup> There are also a number of other documents dating from the late eighth century onwards which can be used to assist with analysis. The most important of these is what has become known as the Anglian Collection, which contains genealogies from Bernicia, Deira, Lindsey, Mercia, Wessex, East Anglia, and Kent.<sup>125</sup> Together, these texts can be used to shed some, albeit limited, light on the origins of early Anglo-Saxon kingship.

At first glance, these texts are not particularly illuminating. They are simply lists of names. What is more, they do not precisely correlate with what is known from other sources. The *Moore Memoranda*, for example, includes only those individuals who ruled Bernicia or united Northumbria, omits the apostate Eanfrith, the brief rule of Cædwallon of Gwynedd, and ignores Eadwulf. Much of the complexity of rival families, sub-kings, and kingly intrigue has been omitted or elided. What the *Moore Memoranda* presents is a sanitised, predominantly Bernician, *post hoc* rationalisation of Northumbrian history. It represents the concerns of the contemporary elite and is ideological rather than historical in nature. Bede also makes references to sanitisation of this nature. Apparently

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<sup>121</sup> Genealogies are particularly common amongst the Irish and Welsh: Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, pp. 359-64; Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, pp. 600-29; but much less common, certainly as discreet entities, in continental Europe: Dumville, 'Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists', pp. 76-77.

<sup>122</sup> *HE*, II.5, II.15 respectively.

<sup>123</sup> Various *HE*, I.15, II.5, II.15, III.1, III.9, possibly V.24. Further: Thornton, 'Regnal Lists'; Blair, *Moore Memoranda*, pp. 247-49.

<sup>124</sup> Blair, *Moore Memoranda*, p. 246. Traditionally, the manuscript has been dated to c.737: Blair, *Moore Memoranda*, pp. 251-57. This has recently been amended to 748, although the regnal list may indeed date to 737: Dumville, 'Earliest Manuscripts of Bede's Ecclesiastical History?', particularly pp. 59-66.

<sup>125</sup> Dumville, 'Anglian Collection of Royal Genealogies'. This, in all probability, was compiled in Northumbria in the period 765x774, although the extant manuscripts are later in date. There is also related genealogical material included in the *HB* as well as material in Asser's *Vita Alfredi* and in other independent documents: variously Thornton, 'Genealogies, Royal'; Thornton, 'Regnal Lists'; Sisam, 'Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies', pp. 146-56; Dumville, 'West Saxon Genealogical Regnal List'.

both Eanfrith of Bernicia and Osric of Deira were deliberately omitted from the official list of Northumbrian kings.<sup>126</sup>

Similar issues are apparent in the genealogies. In fact as a class of document they provide even greater scope for ideological expression, allowing political ties and kin relationships to be manufactured to suit contemporary circumstances.<sup>127</sup> The purpose of such documents, therefore, is not so much to remember the past, but to justify the present. It may thus be deduced that descent and genealogical relationships mattered to early Anglo-Saxon kings. This would accord with the previous observation that only individuals from families which could be considered royal were eligible to rule. The relationships in genealogies, and also to an extent in regnal lists, therefore, can be surmised as justifying and legitimising the position of early Anglo-Saxon kings, demonstrating their right to rule. Indeed, the manipulation of these texts underlines the importance of these relationships in this respect. Such documents thus provide insight into the cosmology of early Anglo-Saxon kingship; they are products of the elusive superstructure of ideology and ideas which surrounded and supported early Anglo-Saxon kings.

The termination of these genealogies – tacitly acknowledged in the *Historia ecclesiastica* and directly stated in the Anglian collection – in the figure of Woden adds another level of legitimation.<sup>128</sup> Wodenic symbolism is also found on some items at Sutton Hoo, and may possibly be connected to Anglo-Saxon kings through the Kentish bracteates also.<sup>129</sup> Nor is Woden the only figure of divine or mythical provenance in these genealogies. The East Saxon genealogy terminates in Seaxneat, while various legendary figures – Geat, Finn, Hengist and others – also appear. Early Anglo-Saxon Kings are thus connected to an array of figures who lend them status and prestige and serve to legitimate their position. Crucial amongst these figures are the eponymous founders of the Mercian, Kentish and East Anglian royal families, Icel, Oisc and Wuffa respectively. Hints of origin legends, although little more, can be surmised associated with these figures.<sup>130</sup> The royal genealogies, therefore, justify the position of early

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<sup>126</sup> *HE*, III.1, III.9.

<sup>127</sup> Davies, 'Cultural Assimilation in Royal Genealogies'; Dumville, 'Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists', pp. 72-88.

<sup>128</sup> *HE*, I.15; Dumville, 'Anglian Collection of Royal Genealogies', pp. 29-37.

<sup>129</sup> Behr, 'Kingship in Early Medieval Kent'. Also Yorke, 'Anglo-Saxon Origin Legends', pp. 25-26. More broadly: Hedeager, 'Myth and Art'; Hedeager, 'Cosmological Endurance'.

<sup>130</sup> Yorke, 'Origins of Mercia', p. 15. The only origin myth to survive from this period is that concerning Henigst and Horsa, traces of which can be potentially found as far back as Gildas's *De excidio*: Brooks, 'Early Structure of the Kingdom of Kent', pp. 58-60; Yorke, 'Anglo-Saxon Origin Legends', pp. 19-21.



Anglo-Saxon kings through reference to both the immediate precedent and more distant divine and legendary figures.

It needs to be asked how these ideas relate to the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship. It should also be recognised that there is a natural tendency for development in such documents. Thus, the earlier stages of the genealogies, logically, are less reliable than the later.<sup>131</sup> However, in the forms in which they survive, they are also universally products of an ecclesiastical *milieu*. The presence of Woden and Seaxneat in the genealogies, therefore, allows them to be placed, in some form, prior to the Augustinian mission.<sup>132</sup> Although early Anglo-Saxon church men would not have viewed Woden or Seaxneat as divine, they would have been aware that others saw him as such. Claiming descent from such a figure is unlikely to have originated in the increasingly Christianising setting of the seventh or early eighth centuries. By extension, the idea of divine descent, the connection to a wider body of myth, the interest in genealogy and descent, and the existence of royal families, can all be placed prior to c.600. Early Anglo-Saxon kingship, therefore, can be seen as an ideologically sophisticated institution of some antiquity.

Following a similar line of argument, the presence of linguistically British names in the genealogies is also significant. Such names are particularly common in the genealogies of Mercia, Wessex, and Lindsey and are unlikely to have been later inventions – although the gradual normalisation of British names into Anglo-Saxon usage means that this cannot be entirely ruled out. Their presence would suggest that at some point it was necessary or strategic to claim a British association or identity.<sup>133</sup> More than this cannot be said with any certainty, but it does strengthen the previous suggestion that there were British polities, units or even royal families underpinning or incorporated within several early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms.

Given that there are reasons to give the genealogies credence, despite their manipulation, it is worth determining the extent to which these records can be seen as being historically accurate prior to c.600. Logically, the further into the sixth century

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More broadly: Brooks, 'English Origin Myth'. The account in the *HE* conceivably represents the conflation of two separate origins myths one centred on Hengist and one on Osic: Sims-Williams, 'Settlement of England', pp. 21-24.

<sup>131</sup> Davies, 'Cultural Assimilation in Royal Genealogies', pp. 28-36.

<sup>132</sup> Yorke, 'Anglo-Saxon Origin Legends', p. 25. More broadly: Moisl, 'Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies'.

<sup>133</sup> Yorke, 'Anglo-Saxon Origin Legends', pp. 17-19. Also Coates, '*Gewissae/Gewissei, Cerdic and Ceawlin*'; Parsons, 'British \**Caraticos*, Old English Cerdic'.

historically credible figures can be pushed, the greater the antiquity of early Anglo-Saxon kingship. To take the example of Æthelberht I of Kent (d. 616),<sup>134</sup> as has been discussed, his father, Eormeneric, is attested independently. It is then only two generations to the eponymous founder of the dynasty, Oeric Oisc. There are thus, at most, three generations (excluding Æthelberht) of plausible kings of Kent prior to c.600.<sup>135</sup> A similar pattern is observed with the genealogy of Eorpwald of the East Angles. His father, Rædwald (d. 616x27),<sup>136</sup> was a near contemporary of Æthelberht, although probably somewhat younger, and Bede gives a further two generations back to the eponymous Wuffa. The confidence one can place in these figures naturally progressively lessens as we move back in time.

Given the manipulation of these documents, determining the point of origin of Kentish or East Anglian kingship it is not simply a case of dating the *floruit* of Oeric Oisc or Wuffa. Further complications are provided by Bede's chronology. Bede dated the coming of the Anglo-Saxons to England to 449 and states that the Anglo-Saxons were led in the first instance by Hengist. This, rather implausibly, leaves a gap of c.150 years to be filled by just four generations. It is useful to consider the mnemonic systems underpinning the genealogies in this context. Bede implies that there was a class of people who were responsible for maintaining such information, although the antiquity, or indeed nature, of such individuals cannot be determined from his account.<sup>137</sup> Ecclesiastical figures might be plausibly suggested but secular persons more directly connected to early Anglo-Saxon kings should also be considered a possibility.<sup>138</sup> Clearly the second option opens up the possibility of such individuals existing prior to c.600. Non-literate cultures are capable of impressive feats of remembrance, particularly of lists, but this does not guarantee that they did so in every instance. It is also possible that the genealogies were deliberately curtailed if what was most important was recent precedent and divine descent.<sup>139</sup> A full genealogy would be simply unnecessary. There may well, therefore, have been additional generations between Eormeneric and Oeric Oisc, and Eorpwald and Wuffa, if such figures ever in fact existed. One can only

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<sup>134</sup> Kelly, 'Æthelberht'.

<sup>135</sup> The name Oisc may also be derived from a pre-Christian god, reducing this to a further generation: Sims-Williams, 'Settlement of England', pp. 22-23.

<sup>136</sup> Campbell, 'Rædwald'

<sup>137</sup> *HE*, III.1.

<sup>138</sup> Dumville, 'Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists', pp. 102-04. More problematically: Moisl, 'Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies'. With respect to the second option, the important cautions of Frank, 'Search for the Anglo-Saxon Oral Poet'.

<sup>139</sup> Dumville, 'Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists', pp. 85-89.

conclude that kings, within a potentially sophisticated ideological context, existed in Anglo-Saxon England in the sixth century and that Anglo-Saxon kingship may have been, although was not necessarily, of some antiquity.

### **The Tribal Hidage**

The Tribal Hidage, as it is known to historians, is a short document which comprises a list of 34 ‘peoples’ each with an associated hidage.<sup>140</sup> A provisional summation of hides is given after the 19<sup>th</sup> entry, while an inaccurate total is given at the end of the text. The entries are given in the genitive case presupposing an omitted nominative. The text survives in three versions, the earliest of which – Recension A – dates from the first half of the eleventh century.<sup>141</sup> A putative exemplar can be suggested to underpin the various manuscript traditions, but this cannot be dated or resolved.<sup>142</sup> Internal evidence, therefore, must be relied upon to date the text. The text is self-evidently from the period after c.600 and it can be stated with confidence that it represents the political situation prior to the Scandinavian settlements of the late ninth century.<sup>143</sup> However, where the text dates within this period is much less certain. The immediate context, or contexts, of the text as well as its nature and purpose are also unclear. These issues matter intensely because, as has been seen, the Tribal Hidage lies at the heart of much recent scholarship surrounding the origins of early Anglo-Saxon kingship. It is thus necessary to address these issues before examining the wider implications of the text.

Unfortunately this is easier said than done. It has commonly been held that the Tribal Hidage represents a tribute list.<sup>144</sup> This would fit with both the assessment in hides and the omitted nominative – presumably something along the lines of ‘[the tribute (*feorm*)] of X is Y hides’.<sup>145</sup> This, however, is not the only possible explanation. The

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<sup>140</sup> Appendix XI; Dumville, 'Tribal Hidage'; Rumble, 'Recension C of the Tribal Hidage', pp. 18-23.

<sup>141</sup> Dumville, 'Tribal Hidage'; Davies and Vierck, 'Contexts of Tribal Hidage', pp. 288-92.

<sup>142</sup> Davies and Vierck, 'Contexts of Tribal Hidage', pp. 289-90.

<sup>143</sup> Keynes, 'England, 700-900', p. 23.

<sup>144</sup> Variousy Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 10; Rumble, 'Recension C of the Tribal Hidage', pp. 18-23; Higham, *English Empire*, p. 74; Brooks, 'Formation of the Mercian Kingdom', p. 159; Loyn, *Governance of Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 34; Sawyer, *Roman Britain to Norman England*, p. 110; Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 297; Davies and Vierck, 'Contexts of Tribal Hidage', p. 225; Hart, 'Tribal Hidage', p. 133.

Some scholars, while acknowledging this possibility, have preferred to leave its purpose more open: Featherstone, 'Tribal Hidage and the Ealdormen of Mercia', p. 23; Keynes, 'England, 700-900', pp. 21-25; Kirby, *Earliest English Kings*, pp. 9-12; Campbell (ed.), *Anglo-Saxons*, pp. 59-61; Dumville, 'Middle Anglia, and the Expansion of Mercia', pp. 129-34.

<sup>145</sup> Higham, *English Empire*, p. 75.

Tribal Hidage could equally represent an esoteric exercise in ecclesiastical scholasticism. Bede can certainly be seen to have had an interest in political geography in his *Historia ecclesiastica*. He employed geographical features to elucidate political boundaries and territories as well as giving hidal assessments for Thanet, Anglesey, Man, Iona, North Mercia, South Mercia, the South Saxons, the Isle of Wight, and Ely, in addition to the lands granted to various ecclesiastical institutions and figures.<sup>146</sup> It must be acknowledged that Bede's awareness of some of these figures, certainly in the case of Anglesey and Man, ultimately derived from royal tribute assessments, written or otherwise.<sup>147</sup> Tribute lists are plausible enough, but it does not automatically follow that the Tribal Hidage was one. Without further information or the immediate manuscript context of the Tribal Hidage this issue cannot be satisfactorily resolved.<sup>148</sup>

Similarly, it has often been assumed that the text is Mercian in provenance.<sup>149</sup> The Tribal Hidage certainly shows an interest in the geo-politics of what is now described as the Midlands. Such an interest would make most sense in a Mercian context. The kingdom of Mercia also provided a series of powerful kings who exercised suzerainty over large parts of early Anglo-Saxon England south of the Humber.<sup>150</sup> If the Tribal Hidage can be seen as a tribute list, then figures such as Æthelred, Æthelbald or Offa of Mercia become persuasive candidates for authorship. However, the territories included in the Tribal Hidage do not correspond exactly to the known areas of influence of any of these figures, the most problematic being Elmet, of which, from Edwin of Northumbria onwards, there are no indications that it was under the influence of any overlord other than Northumbria. Additionally, if the Tribal Hidage was indeed a tribute list, then a Mercian context becomes much less likely. Mercia is the first entry in the Tribal Hidage,

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<sup>146</sup> As *HE*, I.25, II.9, III.4, III.24, IV.13, IV.16, IV.19. Also Keynes, 'England, 700-900', pp. 24-25; Kirby, *Earliest English Kings*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>147</sup> An assessment of a British territory in an Anglo-Saxon unit, the hide, would only result from an Anglo-Saxon attempt to extract tribute: Hart, 'Tribal Hidage', p. 147. The most likely candidate for such an assessment was Edwin of Northumbria, whom Bede states exercised *imperium* over Anglesey and Man, *HE*, II.9, but other Northumbrian kings were also potentially placed to make such assessments. Further: Higham, *English Empire*, pp. 77-82.

<sup>148</sup> Wormald, 'Cotton MS. Otho B. xi', p. 64.

<sup>149</sup> Featherstone, 'Tribal Hidage and the Ealdormen of Mercia', p. 29; Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 10; Keynes, 'England, 700-900', p. 23; Dumville, 'Middle Anglia, and the Expansion of Mercia', p. 129; Loyn, *Governance of Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 34; Davies and Vierck, 'Contexts of Tribal Hidage', p. 225; Hart, 'Tribal Hidage', p. 133; Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 296.

Kirby, *Earliest English Kings*, p. 11; Sawyer, *Roman Britain to Norman England*, pp. 110-11, suggest a variant on this interpretation, positing an early Mercian sub-strata in a later West Saxon document. Further references can be found in Rumble, 'Tribal Hidage: An Annotated Bibliography'.

<sup>150</sup> Keynes, 'Kingdom of the Mercians in the Eighth Century'; Keynes, 'England, 700-900', pp. 27-38. Historiographically important, but no-longer credited: Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 202-38; Stenton, 'Supremacy of the Mercian Kings'.

and it would be highly unusual to exact tribute, as opposed to extracting surplus, from one's own kingdom. As the only major kingdom not mentioned in the Tribal Hidage, Northumbria then becomes a possible source for the text. This would require the Tribal Hidage to be very early in date, certainly pre-685, with Edwin of Northumbria perhaps fitting the available evidence best.<sup>151</sup>

Further complications are presented by the two totals included in the list. This is suggestive of a multi-stage development. These putative stages could conceivably have been at some remove from each other and in quite different contexts.<sup>152</sup> There may not, therefore, be one particular context into which the text can be fitted. Further, given the chronological remove between the earliest version of the text and the period it pertains to it is possible that the Tribal Hidage has been revised in transmission. Certainly, the differences between the three recensions, particularly between Recension C and the other two, and the corruption of a number of the names in the list, suggest some modification. On balance, however, such manipulation does not seem to be extreme. There is reason, therefore, to be confident that the text is pertinent to the period in question even if its precise context (or contexts) is not clear.<sup>153</sup>

Putting the suggestion of multiple contexts to one side, it is possible to speak of two schools of thought regarding the date of the Tribal Hidage – early and late.<sup>154</sup> Unfortunately, the same information from within the text can be used to justify various dates. The large number of small geopolitical entities might suggest an early date prior to the formation of groupings such as the Middle Angles, although there is no *a priori* reason to conclude that they were not sub-divisions of a larger unnamed whole. Equally,

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<sup>151</sup> Brooks, 'Formation of the Mercian Kingdom', p. 159; Higham, *English Empire*, pp. 74-99. C.f. Featherstone, 'Tribal Hidage and the Ealdormen of Mercia', p. 29, although this fails to take into account the potentially different ways in which surplus and revenue were extracted from differing political structures.

<sup>152</sup> Sawyer, *Roman Britain to Norman England*, p. 111, who posits a Mercian origin with subsequent West Saxon modification in the ninth or tenth century. Also Featherstone, 'Tribal Hidage and the Ealdormen of Mercia', pp. 29-31; Kirby, *Earliest English Kings*, p. 11. For a quite different interpretation, without a significant chronological caesura: Higham, *English Empire*, pp. 83-94.

<sup>153</sup> The presence of Recension A in a manuscript of the early eleventh century is of note in this context. This was a period of high fiscal pressure and any text seemingly related to tribute or land assessment was inherently of interest: Keynes, 'Context of the Battle of Maldon', pp. 88-102. However, interest does not seem to have translated into modification.

<sup>154</sup> On the early side are Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 10; Higham, *English Empire*, pp. 76ff; Dumville, 'Middle Anglia, and the Expansion of Mercia', pp. 132-33; Davies and Vierck, 'Contexts of Tribal Hidage', pp. 225-27. More generally: Loyn, *Governance of Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 34.

Later dates are proposed by Hart, 'Tribal Hidage'. Also Kirby, *Earliest English Kings*, p. 11; Sawyer, *Roman Britain to Norman England*, pp. 110-11. Further references can be found in Rumble, 'Tribal Hidage: An Annotated Bibliography'. A broader perspective is adopted by Keynes, 'England, 700-900', pp. 23-25; Campbell (ed.), *Anglo-Saxons*, p. 59; Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 297.

the large hidation (100,000 hides) ascribed to Wessex might indicate a later date, after the West Saxon kings had expanded their power and influence during the later seventh and eighth centuries, but might also be explained as being a deliberately punitive assessment. Various arguments can be put forward, but our understanding of early Anglo-Saxon England is not sufficiently nuanced or detailed to support them adequately. Additionally, the various issues of context, date and purpose are intertwined such that any assumption regarding one typically leads to certain conclusions regarding the other two. However, in the absence of satisfactory independent information, none of these initial assumptions can be relied upon. Ultimately, therefore, the Tribal Hidage is not sufficient to provide firm conclusions as to its own stages of development, provenance or purpose. This rather unfortunately means that the Tribal Hidage must be left without an associated political, chronological or geographical context except in the broadest sense.

Nonetheless, the Tribal Hidage can still be of use. The information contained within the Tribal Hidage speaks to longer-term issues which do not need a specific context. Foremost amongst these are the potential insights into early Anglo-Saxon political geography. Not all of the 34 entries in the Tribal Hidage are identifiable, but a great many of them are.<sup>155</sup> These ‘peoples’ may be broken into three rough sizes: small (under 1,000 hides), medium (1,000 to 7,000 hides) or large (7,000 hides and over). All but one of the large units are positively identifiable from other historical sources – the Mercians (30,000 hides), Wroecensæte (7,000 hides), Lindsey with Hatfield (7,000 hides), the Hwicce (7,000 hides), East Angles (30,000 hides), East Saxons (7,000 hides), Kent (15,000 hides), South Saxons (7,000 hides), and West Saxons (100,000 hides). The identity of the *Westerna* (7,000 hides), meanwhile is contested. They have often been conflated with the Magonsæte of the West Midlands but other peoples and areas have also been suggested. It can only really be said with confidence that they are a grouping on the west of Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>156</sup> The locations of two of the medium-sized entries can also be identified – the Peak Dwellers (1,200 hides), and Chiltern Dwellers (4,000 hides) – although the *Herefinna* (1,200 hides), *Noxgaga* (5,000 hides), *Ohtgaga*

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<sup>155</sup> For what follows: Hill, *Atlas of Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 76-77; Davies and Vierck, 'Contexts of Tribal Hidage', pp. 227-36; Hart, 'Tribal Hidage'. Also Featherstone, 'Tribal Hidage and the Ealdormen of Mercia', pp. 24-27; Keynes, 'England, 700-900', pp. 21-23.

<sup>156</sup> C.f. note 153 with Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 296; and Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, p. 18, who both postulate a location in Cheshire meaning that the Magonsæte were either omitted or included in a total given elsewhere. Further: Gelling, *West Midlands in the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 80-85.

(2,000 hides), *Hendrica* (3,500 hides), and *Unecung(a)ga* (1,200 hides) remain unidentified.

Similarly, a number of the small units can be identified – Elmet (600 hides), the South Gyrwe (600 hides), and by association the North Gyrwe (600 hides), Isle of Wight (600 hides), and based on place-name evidence locations for the *East* and *West Wixna* (300 and 600 hides respectively), *Sweord ora* (300 hides), *Gifla* (300 hides), *Hicca* (300 hides), *Arosætna* (600 hides), *Færpinga* (300 hides), and *Widerigga* (600 hides) can be suggested as the areas around Wisbech in Cambridgeshire, Sword Point, Huntingdonshire, River Ivel, Buckinghamshire, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, River Arrow, Warwickshire, Charlbury, Oxfordshire,<sup>157</sup> and Wittering and Werrington, Northamptonshire. This only leaves *Spalda* (600 hides), *Wigesta* (900 hides), *Bilmiga* (600 hides), and *Eastwilla* and *Westwilla* (600 and 600 hides respectively).

It is apparent that all of the hidations are given in round numbers. They are thus likely to be nominal figures of convenience rather than the products of exact or detailed surveys. The implications of this differ depending on the purpose of the Tribal Hidage. If the Tribal Hidage can be seen as some sort of academic exercise, then the figures can be treated as broadly credible, although the possibility of vanity inflation should be noted. If, however, the Tribal Hidage is viewed as a tribute list, the hidations become more problematic as they are connected to desired surplus extraction rather than size. Clearly, however, there remains a link to size as there is only so much it is possible to extract from a small entity. With this in mind, it is possible to map the Tribal Hidage based on the above identifications.<sup>158</sup> This reveals not only that much of the Tribal Hidage is a seemingly systematic clockwise survey centred upon Mercia but also allows the early peoples to be visualised. This in turn highlights the fact that the smallest units seem to be predominantly grouped in the East Midlands and the Fens.<sup>159</sup> Furthermore, it underlines the variation in the sizes of the various ‘peoples’ of the Tribal Hidage. Early Anglo-Saxon England clearly consisted of much more than the major kingdoms which appear in Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica* and other sources. The various units which make

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<sup>157</sup> This identification rests upon the association of *Færpinga* with the *Feppingas* mentioned in *HE*, III.21.

<sup>158</sup> Hart, 'Tribal Hidage', p. 137; Davies and Vierck, 'Contexts of Tribal Hidage', p. 235; Hill, *Atlas of Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 76-77.

<sup>159</sup> It is interesting to speculate concerning the geographical limitations of this region with regard to the formation of large groupings due to the inherent difficulties of transport and communication.

up this patchwork of historical kingdoms and smaller entities, therefore, need to be examined.

Of primary concern is the nature of these ‘peoples’. Their names, as given in the Tribal Hidage, are potentially instructive in this respect. They may be divided into three main categories: seemingly ethnic names, names derived from geographical features, and names linked to previous Romano-British usage – in addition to those that cannot be classified. In the first category may be placed the East Angles, the East, West and South Saxons, as well as potentially the North and South Gyrwe, the *East* and *West Wixna*, and the *Eastwilla* and *Westwilla*. Those units whose names derive from geographical features include the Peak Dwellers, Elmet, the Chiltern Dwellers, those who take their names from rivers, as well as, in the broadest sense, Mercia – meaning ‘borderers’ – and the *Westerna*. In turn Lindsey (with Hatfield), Kent, and the Wroecensæte – potentially linked to Roman *Viroconium*, modern Wroxeter, from which the River Wrekin also takes its name – can all be linked to Roman and/or British terms.

Ethnic names do not, therefore, represent a majority. What is more, those ethnic names that do exist are not absolute, but mutually-referential, and thus indirectly positional in nature. The names of these groupings, therefore, seem to be linked to place, as much, if not more, than to ‘peoples’. It cannot be assumed, therefore, as has been traditionally the case, that the groups of the Tribal Hidage represent discrete ‘peoples’ or individual tribal identities. It can only really be said with confidence that these ‘peoples’ represent geo-political or ‘governmental’ entities. The political status of these units, therefore, needs to be determined. This can be done with reasonable certainty with regard to the large units. All of those identified, with the exception of the Wroecensæte, have known traditions of kingship. In addition, if the *Westerna* can be equated with the Magonsæte, then they too possessed a tradition of kingship, even if it only appears in much later sources.<sup>160</sup> They may thus be thought of as kingdoms, although it should be noted that some of these kingdoms were under the suzerainty of neighbouring kings. Nothing can be said of the medium-sized units, but both Elmet and the Isle of Wight also had kings.<sup>161</sup> They too, therefore, should be viewed as kingdoms, even though they are of much smaller size. Additionally, it is known that Tondberht, a *princeps* of the South

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<sup>160</sup> On the Magonsæte more broadly: Pretty, ‘Defining the Magonsæte’; Gelling, ‘Early History of Western Mercia’.

<sup>161</sup> *HE*, IV.23, IV.16. Also, *HB*, ch. 63. On Elmet more broadly: Taylor, ‘Elmet’; also Jones, ‘Gwynedd and Elmet’.



Gyrwe married Æthelthryth, the daughter of Anna of the East Angles.<sup>162</sup> Such a marriage might suggest that the South Gyrwe should also be seen as a kingdom; certainly it gives these two entities a degree of equivalence. Indeed, given this it is perfectly conceivable, although hardly provable, that many if not all of the units of the Tribal Hidage were ruled by kings or similar figures.<sup>163</sup> It might thus be suggested further that the term 'king' in fact covered a group of related levels of status to accommodate these divergent sizes.

It is instructive at this point to pause and consider the significance of the numbers of the hidations given to these geo-political units. All of the small, and many of the medium, units, for example, are given in multiples of 300 hides. It is possible, therefore, that the 300 hide threshold was of some significance. It may, for example, have been the point at which a territory was considered sufficiently large to be considered as an independent unit. Equally it could have been a convenient or accepted base unit of account.<sup>164</sup> Along similar lines, it has been argued that the 7,000 hides of several of the large units can be equated with the gifts of land, hall and throne given to Beowulf by Hygelac after his return to the Geats following his defeat of Grendel and Grendel's Mother.<sup>165</sup> This, it has been speculated, could be construed as an appropriate area for an independent kingdom led by someone of Beowulf's power and stature.<sup>166</sup> Indeed, developing this, it might be possible to use the hidal assessments of the Tribal Hidage as a proxy for power and influence. It is all too easy to become overly speculative when making such suggestions. Nonetheless, one is left with an impression of a hierarchy of size and power from these assessments. It is certainly possible to demonstrate varying levels of power and authority. As has previously been demonstrated, at various points the rulers of Northumbria, Mercia, Kent, the East Angles, and the West Saxons all wielded significant control over their neighbours. Of those units present in the Tribal Hidage, Elmet, Hatfield Chase, and at times Lindsey were all subject to Northumbria. Similarly, Lindsey, the Hwicce, the *Westerna* if they are indeed the Magonsæte, the Wroecensæte, and the units in the East Midlands and the Fens were subject to Mercia at various points during the seventh and early eighth centuries. The East Angles, South Saxons, Kent and even the West Saxons can also at times be shown to be under Mercian

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<sup>162</sup> *HE*, IV.19.

<sup>163</sup> Campbell, 'Bede's *reges* and *principes*', p. 89-91. For a somewhat differing view: Yorke, 'Political and Ethnic Identity', pp. 82-86.

<sup>164</sup> Much as 300 is a common unit in Welsh literature.

<sup>165</sup> *Beo*, ll 2194-9.

<sup>166</sup> Sawyer, *Roman Britain to Norman England*, pp. 110-11.

influence. At other times, the South Saxons can be seen to be under Kentish or West Saxon influence, while the East Saxons can also at times be placed under both Kentish and Northumbrian influence.

Further layers can be added to this picture. Intermediary levels of authority also existed. It was common, for example, particularly amongst the kings of Northumbria, to delegate authority over certain areas to a junior relative and potential successor. Similarly, Wulfhere of Mercia is known to have granted control of the Isle of Wight and the Meonware to Æthelwealh of the South Saxons, his godson. What is more, these hierarchal relationships were of varying natures. Mercia's interactions with Lindsey or the Hwicce, who both became incorporated into greater Mercia over time, were of a different nature to those with Kent, the East Angles, or particularly the West Saxons who generally retained much greater independence and maintained a distinct political identity.<sup>167</sup> In addition, a tradition of joint kingship existed in early Anglo-Saxon England, particularly amongst the Hwicce, the East Saxons, and in Kent. Such hierarchies, therefore, were not just one-to-one, but at times one-to-many, and many-to-one. A complex, and varied, hierarchy of kingdoms, and kingships, can thus be observed with the term 'king' having different implications at each level.<sup>168</sup>

It is on the basis of this hierarchy and the ultimate incorporation of many of the small units of the Tribal Hidage into several of the larger that Bassett's model of kingdom formation via a process of conquest and amalgamation is ultimately based.<sup>169</sup> This hypothesis is significantly strengthened by the realisation that the larger units of the Tribal Hidage, such as Mercia, were also composed of a series of smaller units.<sup>170</sup> The model has already been extensively addressed, and while given credence, it has been seen to be one factor amongst many in a complex process.

Other factors are also present in the Tribal Hidage. Roman and British continuities have been suggested previously for Lindsey and for the Wroecensæte. Related continuities might also be found in the various units for which British origins or influences can be surmised. Elmet was certainly a British kingdom prior to its annexation by Edwin of Northumbria and British strands have also been noted with the Hwicce, in Mercia with the West Saxons and possibly in Kent. Further complexity must also be

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<sup>167</sup> In the period in question, it is only Penda and to an extent Wulfhere who exercised authority over the West Saxons.

<sup>168</sup> Further: Campbell, 'Bede's *reges* and *principes*', pp. 85-92.

<sup>169</sup> Bassett, 'In Search of Origins', pp. 26-27.

<sup>170</sup> Dumville, 'Middle Anglia, and the Expansion of Mercia', pp. 129-30.

added. It was possible for powerful kings effectively to create kingdoms for others. The best known example of this is Penda's creation of the kingdom of the Middle Angles for his son Peada.<sup>171</sup> This welded many of the smaller units in the East Midlands and the Fens which are present in the Tribal Hidage into a single entity. It is unlikely that this would have displaced the pre-existing kingly or similar figures of these units, merely placing another level of authority above them.<sup>172</sup> Similar examples have been plausibly suggested for the Middle Saxons, and possibly for Surrey also.<sup>173</sup> Some scholars have sought to explain many of the units of the Tribal Hidage by reference to such activity, prior to which such units were presumably kingless, but this does not seem likely.<sup>174</sup> This almost instantaneous creation of supra-kingdoms reinforces the idea that kingdoms and kingships might originate as relatively large-scale phenomena. Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* highlighted a number of kings and kingdoms who achieved significant power and extent over relatively short spaces of time. These territories were sometimes transferred to a successor, but often collapsed. Individual kingships oscillated in power, sometimes to a remarkable extent. Taking this a stage further, a rapid series of strategic victories would be sufficient to raise a relatively minor leader to the control of a significant area. Such a position may or may not have lasted, but it could be achieved relatively quickly and easily given appropriate circumstances. Such entities might be described as 'pop-up kingdoms' and explain how kingships can originate as large-scale phenomena without requiring long-term continuities.

## Conclusions

Further insights, therefore, have been added to the evolving understanding of the nature and origins of early Anglo-Saxon kingship. With respect to the nature of Anglo-Saxon kingship, several discrete observations are possible. Diplomas, although not actually necessary to the functioning of early Anglo-Saxon kingship, were highlighted as having a role to play in the exercise of over-kingship, as well as ultimately developing into a powerful and flexible tool of later Anglo-Saxon kings. They also pointed to the presence of a pre-existing system for the granting of lands and suggested a complex dynamic of

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<sup>171</sup> *HE*, III.21; Dumville, 'Middle Anglia, and the Expansion of Mercia', pp. 130-32; Davies, 'Middle Anglia', pp. 18-20.

<sup>172</sup> Dumville, 'Middle Anglia, and the Expansion of Mercia', p. 132.

<sup>173</sup> Blair, 'Frithuwold's Kingdom', p. 107; Bailey, 'Middle Saxons'.

<sup>174</sup> Davies and Vierck, 'Contexts of Tribal Hidage', pp. 237-241.

negotiation, reward and favour between early Anglo-Saxon kings and their followers, adding colour to previous observations in this respect. The role of the king as regards the exercise of justice was also demonstrated as being minimal. Indeed, the early Anglo-Saxon legal system, such as it was, was seemingly able to function irrespective of kings. However, over the course of the four extant law codes, early Anglo-Saxon kings could be observed taking an increasingly active role in shaping and issuing legislation. This had a practical aspect, responding to the needs and concerns of their subjects, but was also ideological in nature, the issuing of laws, common in both Biblical and Continental contexts, allowing early Anglo-Saxon kings to develop their own image of kingship. The genealogies were also understood as primarily ideological documents. They demonstrated the importance of descent for the legitimation of early Anglo-Saxon kings and emphasised the earlier comments regarding the existence of royal families. The Tribal Hidage, meanwhile, proved to be ultimately undefinable. Nonetheless, it pointed to a complex hierarchy of kings ruling entities of varying sizes.

It was also the Tribal Hidage which proved most revealing with respect to the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship. Crucially, it facilitated an appreciation that kingdoms could 'pop up' over a relatively short space of time following a few strategic victories. This reinforced the previous supposition that it was possible for kingship to emerge as a relatively small-scale phenomenon. Warfare and military power could thus be inferred as being fundamental to the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship. In conjunction with the Frithuwold diploma, the Tribal Hidage also highlighted the ability of powerful kings to manufacture kingdoms from smaller pre-existing units. It also again raised, as did a number of the genealogies, the possibility of British political units, possibly themselves linked to previous Roman governmental units, as the basis of subsequent Anglo-Saxon kingships. A series of oscillating and fluctuating units could thus be observed. The origins of kingdoms and kingship could not be explained through a linear process of conquest and amalgamation but required a more variable explanation rooted in the interplay between fleeting military gains and lasting political units played out amongst both newly emerging entities and more established governmental structures.

Alongside these observations could be placed a number of insights concerning the economic basis of kingship. The ability of kings to extract surplus in the form of food rents, extract tolls on trade and shipping, and profit from monopolies in the production of salt gave early Anglo-Saxon kings access to notable resources, and thus power. Moreover, these were all sources of power of potential antiquity, possibly

## The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingship

providing points of continuity with the imperial past. These observations, however, need to be understood in the context of indications of discontinuity. The nature and usage of diplomas and the usage of hides both pointed to fundamental discontinuities with previous Roman practice. Thus, while certain facets of the imperial legacy survived they did so in the context of new emerging political units, identities and practices. Further, the possibility was also raised that the origins of kingship might be found in the context of legal interventions. This is perfectly compatible with the observations offered above.

## **Section Three**

### **The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingship?**

## Conclusions

This thesis set out to re-examine the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship. It sought to uncover the nature of early Anglo-Saxon kingship, how it became established and, if possible, why it was accepted. It was observed in the introduction that the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship, as opposed to the origins of kingdoms or the origins of England, had not been studied in a sustained or rigorous fashion. Those works which came closest, particularly Bassett's introduction to *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* and Yorke's *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England*, were either focused specifically upon kingdoms or for reasons of scholarly rigour did not attempt to venture prior to c.600 to examine the origins of kingship. Instead, typically, kingship has been assumed as a natural or inevitable political development by scholars. Even in recent works such as Fleming's *Britain after Rome*, which drew on and synthesised various recent innovative archaeological approaches to the period, this assumption has continued.<sup>1</sup> Further, particularly in older scholarship such as Stenton's *Anglo-Saxon England* or Kemble's *Saxons in England*, this assumption was associated with other, more problematic, ideas regarding the role of migration and conquest in determining the nature of early Anglo-Saxon England. These ideas have continued to be influential, particularly amongst archaeologists, although a wider variety of perspectives are now put forward following works such as Arnold's *An Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England* and Higham's *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons*. These works stressed the importance of internal factors and demonstrated that large-scale migration cannot necessarily be relied upon as an explanatory paradigm for the period. This conclusion can be extended to apply also to the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship.

The neglect of the origins of kingship, in part, can be explained by the relative lack of evidence available to facilitate its study. However, scarcity is not the same as a complete absence. The thesis, therefore, has systematically surveyed and re-evaluated what evidence is available and pertinent, archaeological and historical, from the period c.400-c.750.<sup>2</sup> This process uncovered the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship in greater and more systematic detail than previously has been possible. It also helped to define what is knowable, and what is not, regarding early Anglo-Saxon kingship. By extension

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<sup>1</sup> Such works as relate to kingship and kingdoms are typified by Scull, 'Anglo-Saxon Kingdom Origins'.

<sup>2</sup> A *terminus ante quem* of c.650 was adopted for the archaeological evidence for the reasons discussed above.

it has resulted in a greater, and potentially different, appreciation of early Anglo-Saxon England.

The first major area of evidence to be examined was that of elite burial – notably elaborate graves of the late sixth and early seventh centuries, characterised by extensive grave goods and involved mortuary structures, including such well-known examples as the burial mounds at Sutton Hoo and the recently discovered chamber grave at Prittlewell. Through probabilistic reasoning, linked to the resources and time invested in these burials, a number were identified as being probably or possibly royal.<sup>3</sup> An exploration of the material associations of their contents and structures pointed to war-leadership, hospitality, personal relationships and protection as forming key aspects of early Anglo-Saxon kingship. Looked at in a broader context, these burials were also revealed as being a regionally-specific, flexible and ideologically-sophisticated phenomenon. As such they indicated the existence of an established institution. In light of this, the traditional link between these burials and the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship no longer seemed credible and it was instead suggested that they might profitably be viewed as an experiment or development within Anglo-Saxon kingship.

A similar argument was offered with respect to elite rural settlements – rural settlements of the late sixth and early seventh centuries characterised by notably-large buildings and obviously-planned layouts. Several of these settlements are explicitly known to have been royal – as Yeavinger and Rendlesham – due to various references in historical sources, particularly Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*. Further potentially royal examples were identified through a process of comparison based on the archaeological profile of the explicitly royal sites. The complexity of this group of sites prompted the suggestion that they made most sense as the products of an established and sophisticated political institution, again refuting the traditionally-perceived link between these settlements and the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship. It was possible to push this further in certain instances, particularly with Yeavinger and its distinctive ideological sensitivity, to suggest that these sites could be viewed as experiments or developments within early Anglo-Saxon kingship. Additionally, as well as confirming many of the observations regarding the nature of kingship derived from the burial evidence, the striking lack of settlement debris at the majority of these sites also suggested that an itinerant aspect, with

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<sup>3</sup> Listed in Appendix I.



an associated system of estates, must have formed part of the nature of early Anglo-Saxon kingship, although regional differences were also apparent.

Other elite settlement types allowed the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship to be approached more closely. The ongoing elite presence at a number of former Roman military sites in Northern Britain raised the possibility of some form of continuity with Roman power structures. Although these sites could not be connected directly to any early Anglo-Saxon kingships, the material evidence indicated that feasting, warfare and protection were all important to the power wielded from these sites, highlighting important similarities with the nature of early Anglo-Saxon kingship. More compelling continuities were evident at certain former Roman towns, particularly at Canterbury, Lincoln and Wroxeter. Continuing activity at these sites allowed it to be suggested that a substantial British or Romano-British element underlay the subsequent kingdoms of Kent, Lindsey and the *Wroecensæte*. The British derivation of their names strengthened this supposition. However, evidence from other such settlements was much more ambiguous, while many former towns, including London and Winchester, have yet to provide any indications of settlement continuity at all. Complicating this further, Canterbury and Catterick were also sites of early Anglo-Saxon archaeological activity. The most convincing settlement continuities were found in the kingdom of Northumbria. Settlements such as Bamburgh and Dunbar tied into a wider pattern of enclosed settlements across northern Britain. They also possessed much more extensive settlement debris, including evidence of trading and manufacture, emphasising the impression of regional variety. Furthermore, by their very nature, they asserted the importance of warfare and protection to early Anglo-Saxon kingship.

Attempting a resolution as to how these seemingly British or Romano-British settlement types became Anglo-Saxon did not prove possible, such issues being essentially historical questions. However, in conjunction with the historical sources, certain suggestions are now possible. Given the importance of warfare to the early history of Northumbria, particularly the career of Æthelfrith, conquest looks like the most explicable mechanism to explain how Northumbria became Anglo-Saxon, although it would be imprudent to suggest that it was the only factor at work. Indeed, greater Northumbria can be construed as being formed by a series of key strategic, decisive, victories. By contrast, more peaceful mechanisms such as intermarriage and acculturation seem more likely in places such as Lindsey. Regardless of the validity of

these hypotheses, the settlement evidence was sufficient on its own to underline the potential variety and complexity of early Anglo-Saxon kingship.

Concluding the examination of the archaeological evidence was a brief foray into the field of numismatics. Although the minting of coins was primarily a feature of centuries beyond those under consideration, some important conclusions could be offered. Firstly, while the systematic importation of coinage to Britain ceased around c.402, coinage did continue to circulate in Anglo-Saxon England. Moreover, particularly the Hoxne hoard indicates that the remaining coins were systematically clipped for at least a generation, presumably in an attempt to extend the supply of money. By extension, this implies the presence of some form of central authority, possibly one of those suggested by the settlement evidence or implied by the historical sources of the second section. While coin-like objects – bracteates – may have been made during the sixth century, the minting of coins only resumed with the introduction of Christianity (with which it is strongly correlated). Explicitly royal coins are known bearing the names of Eadbald of Kent (r. 616-640) and Aldfrith of Northumbria (r. 685-704/5), while the complexity and level of organisation implied by the consistency of the coins and their manufacture suggests that royal involvement extended significantly beyond these examples. The minting of coins by kings was, therefore, placed alongside elite burials and elite rural settlements as another development, or experiment, within early Anglo-Saxon kingship, although as with these previous instances, the practice seemingly did not extend evenly across early Anglo-Saxon England.

Turning to the historical sources of the fifth and sixth centuries, imperial control collapsed owing to the usurpation of Constantine III in 607 and was not re-established following his death in 411. This, with the associated economic collapse, was inferred as creating a power vacuum in fifth-century Britain. Understanding how this power vacuum was filled proved central to understanding the following centuries and the origins of kingship. Various potential responses were identified, in addition to those already noted archaeologically. The presence of warlords was deduced based on the figure of Coroticus in St. Patrick's *Epistola*. Likewise, figures of local significance were observed, such as the *uir tribuniciae potestatis* – 'man of tribunicary power' in the *Vita Germani*. Other possible responses could not be ruled out, while the inherent plausibility of some form of governance was bolstered by the previous observations regarding the systematic clipping of coinage. The role of Anglo-Saxon migrants, federate troops or otherwise, also needed to be appreciated in this context, not least because they brought a new ethnic

identity and represented a new source of political power. In addition, at a slightly later date kings could be observed amongst the British through Gildas's *De excidio*. By analogy kingship was suggested as also being present in England. This was the only satisfactory way to resolve the power imbalance which would have resulted otherwise. Taking a step back, new identities were also observed – British and Anglo-Saxon – within a context informed and influenced by the imperial past.

On its own, these observations did not allow for a coherent political narrative to be established – the available evidence was simply insufficient – but they do illustrate some of the influences which tended towards its establishment. Nonetheless, several important insights were prompted. Of prime importance was the inference of the existence of kingship in Anglo-Saxon England, certainly in the sixth century if not earlier. This was supported, if problematically, by the rather generic comments of Procopius in his *Wars*, and also correlates with the archaeological evidence and its indication that kingship was an established phenomenon by the end of the sixth century. Further correlating with the varied nature of the archaeological evidence was the suggestion that early Anglo-Saxon kingship had varied origins in differing political contexts. Perhaps the most important observation, however, was that early Anglo-Saxon kingship did not develop in isolation, but within a wider kingly context – Insular and Continental. Thus, imitation, adoption and emulation all have to be considered alongside actual innovation and creation as explanations for its origins.

Adding to and developing this understanding through work on the later narrative and documentary sources proved challenging. The sources of the seventh and early eighth centuries predominantly provided insight into developments within Anglo-Saxon kingship. Nonetheless, it became apparent that the political culture of Anglo-Saxon England from the early seventh century onwards was unequivocally kingly, supporting the idea that its origins were to be found much earlier. Not only did the papal letters of Gregory I demonstrate a Continental perception of kingship in Anglo-Saxon England at the end of the sixth century, but Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* revealed an unambiguously kingly Anglo-Saxon political world throughout the seventh and early eighth centuries. Some of the later developments identified also potentially held important implications for early Anglo-Saxon kingship before their appearance in the historical sources. The references to food rents in the law codes of Kent and Wessex, as well as the presence of tolls in charters issued by Mercian and Kentish kings, for example, provided an economic foundation for early Anglo-Saxon kingship. This correlates with the observations of the

settlement section regarding itinerant kingship. Elements of both of these practices may have stretched back to imperial practice, if not further, although it was not possible to verify this. Of a similar nature was the practice of early kings of rewarding their followers with lands in return for their long-term support and service. This was most apparent in Bede's *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* – where he complained that such lands were being diverted to 'false' monasteries leaving Northumbria under-defended – but was also inferred from several of the hagiographic sources. This can be seen as the practical underpinnings of early Anglo-Saxon kingship and provides a concrete mechanism to support the earlier comments, highlighted particularly though the archaeology evidence, of the importance of personal relationships to the functioning of early Anglo-Saxon kingship. By extension, this also implies significant access to and control of landed wealth on the part of kings, providing a further, long-standing, economic foundation for early Anglo-Saxon kingship.

Likewise, an ideological foundation for kingship was identified in the claimed descent of early kings from gods – Woden and Seaxneat – and other legendary figures, found across the royal genealogies. This could be related to other concepts such as the importance of succession and the existence of royal families which became apparent through the tabular analysis of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*. Although fluid and malleable, these concepts formed a crucial part of the ideological superstructure of early Anglo-Saxon kingship. It was not possible to discern how far back these concepts could be pushed, but the presence of non-Christian gods in the royal genealogies certainly allows them to be placed prior to the widespread adoption of Christianity in the early seventh century. Two other factors can also be considered in this context, although both seemed more like later developments of kingship. The first relates to the role of kings in respect to the law. Legal intervention became increasingly prominent across the four extant law codes, while the role of the king as the giver of law is itself highly symbolic, especially given the essentially ideological nature of the law codes themselves. Moreover, the giving of written laws is linked to both Continental and Biblical exemplars of kingship. Developing this further, it was suggested that a potential origin for kingship may, in fact, have been legal intervention – the act of serving as mediator, judge or arbitrator, and finding mutually acceptable levels of restitution, creating a precedent for wider applications of kingly power.

The second factor concerns the relationship between early Anglo-Saxon kings and religion. This was apparent across all of the narrative sources, although it was most

strongly present in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*. Early Anglo-Saxon kings heavily patronised the church and supported early missionaries in their work. Indeed, some went so far as to attempt to institute Christian morality through law. Through this association they also tied themselves to a broader intellectual superstructure and provided themselves with various opportunities to augment their position through ritual and patronage. Further, an expectation of kingly control over the church was identified, even amongst church figures, as in Archbishop Theodore's letter to Æthelred of Mercia. The adoption of Christianity, therefore, represents a significant enhancement of the power and status of early Anglo-Saxon kings. There are hints that some kingly relationships with religion pre-dated the adoption of Christianity. Prime examples are the evidence for the ritual slaughter of cattle at Yeavinger, possibly echoed in the axe-hammer from Mound One at Sutton Hoo. The incidence of bracteates in Kent, with their Wodenic symbolism, has also been suggested as a possible instance of such activity. Such associations would again have linked early Anglo-Saxon kings to a wider cosmology, providing implicit, even explicit, ideological support for their positions and status. However, it is important not to misconstrue these relationships. A relationship with religion does not equate to sacral kingship and all of the evidence encountered pointed to this not being in evidence in early Anglo-Saxon England. Furthermore, uncertainties abound, while the activity at Yeavinger was broadly contemporary with the adoption of Christianity in Kent. These relationships to non-Christian religion cannot, therefore, necessarily be seen as a potential origin for kingship, although it was certainly a factor in its early development.

Regardless, the adoption of Christianity by kings from the very late sixth century onwards had a transformative effect on early Anglo-Saxon kingship. In addition to its immediate impact, as above, it also made possible the development of written laws, the minting of coins and the production of charters, with all the symbolism, ritual and ideological potential congruent upon them. The experiments in kingship inherent in elite burial and elite rural settlement were also dated to this period. Indeed, the period around c.600 – although charters may have been a later development – would seem to be a period of notable change within Anglo-Saxon kingship, much as has been argued for society more broadly. This may in part explain the difficulty of identifying kingship prior to c.600. Just when early Anglo-Saxon kingship was coming into focus in the historical and archaeological sources, it was at a point of transition.

Warfare has already been highlighted as a key feature of the nature of Anglo-Saxon kingship. This was apparent from both the burial and settlement evidence, but

also emerged particularly strongly from the tabular analysis of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*. The importance of warfare with respect to the origins of kingship, although also alluded to in passing, needs to be directly considered. This was particularly important to the second of Bassett's two models of kingdom formation – his model of collapse followed by kingdom formation via conquest and amalgamation – in conjunction with the phenomenon of over-kingship. Significant evidence was located to support this model, particularly through the series of small political units identified in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* and the Tribal Hidage. Many of these could be discerned as being or becoming regions or sub-kingdoms, as part of broader kingships, through the agencies of warfare and over-kingship. Key examples include: Elmet, Lindsey and Rheged, which together with the original lands of Deira and Bernicia and conquered British and Dál Raitan lands, formed greater Northumbria; likewise, Kent was formed of two parts, East and West Kent; Mercia also encompassed or exercised suzerainty over a number of smaller units including the Hwicce, the South Saxons, the Middle Saxons, Lindsey and a significant number of the small units of the Tribal Hidage. Warfare itself, however, cannot be seen as a direct origin for early Anglo-Saxon kingship – to argue thus would require kingship simply to be a product of a certain political mass, which given the ideological component of kingship, cannot be held to be the case.

Rather, therefore, it is more appropriate to see warfare as a facilitator of the development of Anglo-Saxon kingship. The merits of this perspective become further apparent when Bassett's first model of kingdom formation – through continuity with Roman governmental units – is considered. Ample evidence was also located to support this model. Particularly the evidence of settlements and place names provided a number of instances of later Anglo-Saxon political units linked to earlier Roman or Romano-British ones. The settlement section highlighted both Lindsey and the *Wroecensæte* as key examples of this phenomenon. Place name evidence allowed Kent, or at least East Kent, Deira and Bernicia to be added to this list. The presence of linguistically British names in the genealogies of Wessex and Mercia would prompt a similar deduction, while Elmet is an additional important example. Warfare may have been involved in the passing of control of some of these units into Anglo-Saxon control – as has been argued for Northumbria and also seems to be the case for Elmet and Lindsey – but other agencies such as intermarriage and acculturation were also raised as being significant. Although its causal status should not be overplayed, therefore, warfare can be seen as being

important to the development of Anglo-Saxon kingship irrespective of which of Bassett's two models of kingdom formation are under discussion.

The issue of acceptance of kingship needs to be considered in this context. This provides a very different way of approaching the origins of early Anglo-Saxon kingship, and while it proved particularly difficult to address in the thesis, it does relate directly to the ideological component of kingship. Certain aspects of the nature of Anglo-Saxon kingship might be raised as a partial answer. The rewarding of the kings' followers, for example, was seen as being advantageous to those rewarded as well as to kings themselves. On a broader scale, the protective role of Anglo-Saxon kings was also seen as being inherently desirable. Likewise, the role of kings in legal intervention provided another aspect which may have led to their acceptance. Ultimately such inferences represent little more than informed supposition, but they are important in that they serve as a reminder that the establishment of Anglo-Saxon kingship was not simply an issue of imposition from above, through warfare or otherwise, but also of acceptance from below.

It is also possible to push Bassett's models further. Indeed, the thesis uncovered indications of quite different patterns of kingdom, and kingship, formation which caused them to be entirely re-cast. For example, it was not at all apparent that a pattern of gradual amalgamation could be projected prior to c.600. Indeed, it was established that there was no compelling evidence to support the commonly assumed absence of large-scale kingdoms in sixth century. Similarly, oscillating levels of power between kingdoms were identified as being as much a feature of the seventh century as was amalgamation, *viz* the alternating and fluctuating fortunes of Kent, East Anglia, Northumbria, Wessex and Mercia. Particularly significantly, it was observed that it was possible to create a kingdom in a short space of time, either through the active intervention of another, more powerful, king – as with the Middle Angles and possibly the Middle Saxons – or through a series of strategic, decisive, victories – as was arguably the case with Northumbria. The existence of such 'pop-up' kingdoms completely alters the way in which the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingship, and of kingdoms, should be conceptualised. Thus, two competing, but not mutually exclusive, trajectories can be simultaneously posited. There is the pattern of small political units developing into larger ones, following Bassett, but also a pattern of large units becoming smaller before becoming larger again. This is paralleled by the political history of the Merovingian kingdoms, suggesting that in Anglo-Saxon England, as in Frankia, partible inheritance may have been practiced,

although there is no actual evidence to support this.<sup>4</sup> New units of Anglo-Saxon, or British, construction, as well as older entities deriving from previous Roman units, can all be observed or inferred as following these trajectories. The result is a varied and fluctuating political mass. This, therefore, creates a model not of amalgamation or continuity but of uncertainty and instability followed by gradual stabilisation where both amalgamation and continuity as well as fragmentation and discontinuity all have a role. This cannot be considered as a complete model of the origins of early Anglo-Saxon kingship, primarily addressing, as it does, the origins of kingdoms, but taken together with the previous comments regarding the fifth century it does provide an appreciation of the context within which kingship emerged and an outline of its development.

However, not every aspect of this outline is necessarily relevant to the development of every early Anglo-Saxon kingship. In part this is a result of the inconsistent nature of the evidence drawn upon in this study, but primarily it is because many of the factors identified and discussed were of varying significance in different areas. This can be illustrated by two contrasting examples, the kingships of Northumbria and Kent. The name Kent is derived from the Roman term for the *civitas* capital of Canterbury – *civitas Cantium* – implying perhaps a degree of Roman or Roman-British continuity of governance or organisation. In turn, the kingdom of Kent was made of two sub units, East and West Kent, suggesting that it was the product of the amalgamation of two smaller units, correlating with Bassett's amalgamation model. This impression is re-enforced by their respective material cultures. However, while Kent experienced a brief period of supra-regional dominance under Æthelberht I, it was not able to maintain this size or influence. Of all the early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, Kent was most directly exposed to Continental ideas and practices; indeed, Frankish writers at times claimed a degree of over-lordship in the later sixth century. Although difficult to quantify, these cannot but have had some influence on the development of kingship there. It is also in Kent that certain developments in kingship appear first – indeed it is in Kent that Kingship is first historically verifiable – specifically the introduction of Christianity and associated features such as law codes and the minting of coins. Like many early Anglo-Saxon kingships, the Kentish kings sought to associate themselves with the figure of Woden; this may find a pre-Christian parallel in the high incidence of bracteates in Kent

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<sup>4</sup> Van Dam, 'Merovingian Gaul and the Frankish Conquests', pp. 198-205; Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms 450-751*, pp. 55-60, 88-101.



and their correlation with potentially royal sites, although this is far from certain. Creating links between these various observations rapidly results in undue speculation; nonetheless, it is clear that kingship developed in Kent under a specific set of cultural influences – Continental, Anglo-Saxon and Romano-British – within a seemingly relatively stable geographical context.

The development of kingship in Northumbria is different in a number of respects. The influence of the Continent is only apparent from the seventh century onwards through the conduit of Christianity. Rather, Northumbria was very much part of a northern, Insular world. Like Kent, Northumbria was also formed through the amalgamation of two smaller units – Bernicia and Deira, each with their own traditions of kingship – but in addition incorporated lands previously under the sway of other kings, including the British or probably British lesser kingdoms of Elmet, Lindsey and Rheged. Bernicia and Deira themselves seem to have had a strong British character, suggested both through their material cultures and through their names, which are British in derivation, but unlike Kent cannot be linked to any Roman governmental units. The indications are that Northumbria expanded rapidly through a series of decisive victories, being more akin to a ‘pop-up’ kingdom. It also notably waned in power, size and influence following Ecgfrith’s death in 685. An association with religion can also be found in Northumbria, through the ideologically-charged settlement at Yeavinger, although Yeavinger was not Christian in the first instance, rather uniquely providing explicit evidence of Anglo-Saxon royal exploitation of non-Christian religion. Nor are Northumbrian kings known to have issued law codes, although there are textual references to the royal usage of diplomas. Close ties were also observed between Northumbrian and Dál Riata kingships, particularly through Oswald of Northumbria and his sponsorship of Ionan missionaries, during the middle portion of the seventh century. Northumbrian kingship, therefore, developed in a very different cultural context to that of Kent and as a result was seemingly of a different character. Of course it held many essential features in common – such as the foundation on personal relationships and the importance of food rents, protection and warfare – but these characteristics were filtered and moulded by their respective contexts and developments. The patterns and generalities above, therefore, might best be thought of as a framework which can be used to approach the origins of early Anglo-Saxon kingship in both a general and a specific sense, but which must always be applied with an awareness of very variable local conditions.

What, therefore, was the nature of the kingship created through these varying trajectories? This is not easily answered on account of the considerable variety observed throughout the thesis. The term 'king', as has been seen, was applicable to figures of significantly differing powers, ruling entities of significantly different sizes, and covered a range of different manifestations of kingship. Over-kings and sub-kings, in various arrangements and contexts, as well as joint kings, were all observed. Certain common features could be discerned – the prime importance of war-leadership, together with personal relationships and the existence of royal families – but this does not negate the impression of variety. This variety, even ambiguity, is hardly surprising. Given the uncertain context within which Anglo-Saxon kingship developed, a fully articulated institution should not be expected. Any definition of kingship, therefore, needs to be sufficiently broad to encompass these various manifestations. All that can safely be said of early Anglo-Saxon kingship was that it was a form of hereditary ruler-ship where the leader(s) was/were drawn from a recognised family. It might also be possible to define a king as anyone who claimed the title of king and who persuaded others to follow them and accept that claim. Early Anglo-Saxon kingship might, in fact, be better left undefined if unarticulated variety and inherent flexibility was its dominant feature. Indeed, it was this flexibility which was perhaps its greatest strength; it allowed it to adapt to varied circumstances. Moreover, its structures allowed it to function without the need for an elaborate bureaucracy. It is perhaps this, above all else, which explains why kingship became established in early Anglo-Saxon England: it was ideally suited to the post-Roman fifth-century context, shorn of formal political or governmental structures, from which it emerged.

## Appendices

### I: Probable and Possible Kingly Burial Sites

Fig.28, Probable Kingly Burial Sites

Burial (highest to lowest)	County <sup>1</sup>	Grid Reference	Site Type <sup>2</sup> (Number of Barrows)	Disturbed (Y/N)
<b>Mound One, Sutton Hoo</b>	Suffolk	TM 288487	Type Two/Three (~19)	No
<b>Prittlewell Chamber Grave</b>	Essex	TQ 878873	Type Three	No
<b>Taplow Barrow</b>	Buckinghamshire	SU 906821	Type One	No
<b>Mound Two, Sutton Hoo</b>	Suffolk	TM 288487	Type Two/Three (~19)	Yes
<b>Snape Ship Burial</b>	Suffolk	TM 403593	Type Three (8-10)	Yes

Fig.29, Possible Kingly Burial Sites

Burial (highest to lowest)	County	Grid Reference	Site Type (Number of Barrows)	Disturbed (Y/N)
<b>Benty Grange</b>	Derbyshire	SK 146642	Type One	No <sup>3</sup>
<b>Broomfield Barrow</b>	Essex	TL 710096	Type One	No
<b>Asthall Barrow</b>	Oxfordshire	SP 289101	Type One	No
<b>Caenby Barrow</b>	Lincolnshire	SK 970889	Type One	Yes
<b>Wollaston Barrow</b>	Northamptonshire	SP 885627	Type One	No

<sup>1</sup> Pre-1974 counties are used throughout so as to be compatible with Meaney, *Gazetteer*.

<sup>2</sup> For classification purposes the six types established by Shephard, 'Anglo-Saxon Barrows', pp. 1.11-1.12 are adopted. Namely: Type One – Isolated Barrows; Type Two – Barrow Groups; Type Three – Barrows in Cemeteries; Type Four – Barrows in Cemeteries; Type Five – Collective Primaries (in barrows); Type Six – Collective Secondaries (in barrows). An Isolated Barrow has fewer than three barrows in its immediate vicinity. Shephard defined a Barrow Group as having between three and approximately seventeen barrows but this should be raised to twenty to accommodate Sutton Hoo's nineteen barrows; a Barrow Cemetery, therefore, has more than twenty barrows.

<sup>3</sup> This is contested, c.f. Bruce-Mitford and Luscombe, 'Benty Grange Helmet', p. 229; Bateman, *Ten Years' Diggings*, pp. 28-33.

**II: Female Bed Burials<sup>1</sup>****Fig.30, Female Bed Burials<sup>2</sup>**

County	Burial	Grid Reference
<b>Cambridgeshire</b>	Cherry Hinton (Grave 4) <sup>3</sup>	TL 484555
	Edix Hill, Barrington (Graves 18 and 60) <sup>4</sup>	TL 373495
	Shudy Camps (Grave 29) <sup>5</sup>	TL 604444
	Trumpington (Grave 4) <sup>6</sup>	TL 439547
<b>North Yorkshire</b>	Street House <sup>7</sup>	NZ 739196
<b>Suffolk</b>	Shrublands Quarry, Coddendam (Grave 30) <sup>8</sup>	TM 120538
	Stanton, Ixworth <sup>9</sup>	TL 935701
<b>Wiltshire</b>	Collingbourne Ducis <sup>10</sup>	SU 246541
	Swallowcliffe Down <sup>11</sup>	ST 967254

**Fig.31, Further Possible Female Bed Burials**

County	Burial	Grid Reference
<b>Cambridgeshire</b>	Shudy Camps (Grave 24) <sup>12</sup>	TL 604444
<b>Derbyshire</b>	Galley Low <sup>13</sup>	SK 214564
<b>Dorset</b>	Woodyates, Pentridge <sup>14</sup>	SU 039195
<b>Suffolk</b>	Sutton Hoo (Mound 14 and Burial 16) <sup>15</sup>	TM 288487
<b>Wiltshire</b>	Roundway Down <sup>16</sup>	SU 006647

<sup>1</sup> Identification of bed-burial as a distinctive Anglo-Saxon funerary rite can be attributed to Speake, *Bed Burial on Swallowcliffe Down*, pp. 98-115. Further, the discussions in Sherlock, *Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Street House*, pp. 109-113; Penn, *Cemetery at Shrubland Hall Quarry*, pp. 57-58.

<sup>2</sup> In addition, Bateman discovered a bed burial on Lapwing Hill, Derbyshire (SK 166717): Bateman, *Ten Years' Diggings*, pp. 68-70. However, the presence of a sword in a leather sheath in the burial would suggest that its occupant was male.

<sup>3</sup> Meaney, *Gazetteer*, p. 63.

<sup>4</sup> Malim, Hines, and Duhig, *Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Edix Hill*, pp. 52-53, 67-68.

<sup>5</sup> Lethbridge, *Cemetery at Shudy Camps*, pp. 10-12.

<sup>6</sup> Dickens and Lucy, *Anglo-Saxon Teen Buried in Bed*.

<sup>7</sup> Sherlock, *Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Street House*, pp. 31-33, 89-100, 109-113

<sup>8</sup> Penn, *Cemetery at Shrubland Hall Quarry*, pp. 24-31, 41-56.

<sup>9</sup> Smith, *Collectanea Antiqua: Volume IV*, pp. 162-64.

<sup>10</sup> Stoodley and Schuster, *Collingbourne Ducis, Wiltshire*.

<sup>11</sup> Speake, *Bed Burial on Swallowcliffe Down*.

<sup>12</sup> Lethbridge, *Cemetery at Shudy Camps*, p. 8.

<sup>13</sup> Bateman, *Vestiges of the Antiquities of Derbyshire*, pp. 37-39.

<sup>14</sup> Hoare, *Ancient History of South Wiltshire*, p. 235.

<sup>15</sup> Carver, *Sutton Hoo*, pp. 107-114, 143-44.

<sup>16</sup> Semple and Williams, 'Excavation on Roundway Down', with references therein.

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County	Burial	Grid Reference
	Winklebury Hill (Grave 9) <sup>17</sup>	ST 950212

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<sup>17</sup> Pitt-Rivers, *Excavations in Cranborne Chase: Volume II*, pp. 257-58, 264-7, 281, 286.

### III: Calculation for Estimating the Volume of a Burial Mound

In general, a burial mound may be considered to be the following shape in radial section (Fig.32).<sup>1</sup>



Fig.32, Burial Mound in Radial Section

This can be thought of as a segment of a circle, i.e. the portion of a circle cut off by a cord, in this case the base of the burial mound. In three dimensions, this is the portion of a sphere cut off by a chordic plane, known as a spherical cap (Fig.33).

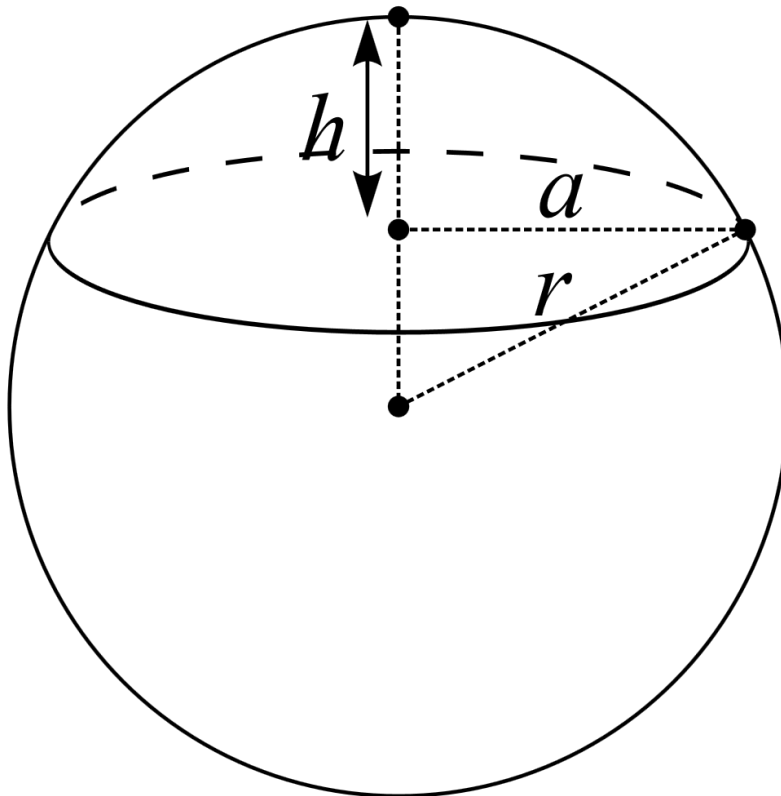


Fig.33, Burial Mound Modelled as a Spherical Cap

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<sup>1</sup> This does not account for flat topped mounds. Any estimate gained will, therefore, provide a slight overestimate, although as any mound will have inevitably eroded considerable over time this is not deemed to matter.

The size of the sphere and the position of the chordic plane can be varied to accommodate the basal diameter and height of any given burial.<sup>2</sup> Thus all shapes and sizes of burial mounds can be accommodated. The volume of a burial mound may, therefore, be estimated by calculating the volume of the spherical cap which it can be modelled as.

The volume of a spherical cap is:

$$V = \frac{\pi h}{6} (3a^2 + h^2)$$

This is derived by integrating  $\pi x^2$  between  $r$  and  $r - h$ , where  $r$  is the radius of the circle,  $h$  is the height of the spherical cap or burial mound and  $a$  is the radius of the base of the spherical cap or burial mound.

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<sup>2</sup> The basal diameter may not always be consistent. In these instances, where the information is available, an average diameter derived from the basal circumference will be used. In such instances the estimated volume will tend towards being a slight, but not significant, over estimate.

#### **IV: Coefficient to Estimate Man-Hours**

There is no standard estimate for early medieval worker productivity. Archaeologists have conducted experiments using pre-historic implements in order to estimate pre-historic earth moving capabilities; estimations of Roman work rates are derivable from military manuals and archaeological evidence; estimates are also available from workers in various modern contexts. Unsurprisingly the latter two are significantly in advance of the former. An early Anglo-Saxon would be expected to perform better than a worker furnished with prehistoric tools but less well than someone equipped with Roman or modern tools. This can be equated to an earth moving ability of between 0.25 and 0.3m<sup>3</sup>/hour/person.<sup>1</sup> As top soil is easier than heavier sub-soils, and this is predominately what early Anglo-Saxon burial mounds are made of, the higher estimate of 0.3m<sup>3</sup>/hour/person will be adopted.

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<sup>1</sup> Grigg, pers. comm., June 12, 2012. Also Grigg, 'Early Medieval Dykes'.



**V: Estimated Volumes of Kingly Burial Mounds**

**Fig.34, Estimated Volumes of Probable Kingly Burial Mounds**

<b>Burial (highest to lowest)</b>	<b>Basal Diameter<sup>1</sup> (m)</b>	<b>Height<sup>2</sup> (m)</b>	<b>Estimated Volume<sup>3</sup> (m<sup>3</sup>)</b>	<b>Estimated Total Man-Hours<sup>4</sup></b>
<b>Mound One, Sutton Hoo</b>	31.7 <sup>5</sup>	3.3	1300	4400
<b>Prittlewell Chamber Grave</b>	10	-	-	-
<b>Taplow Barrow</b>	23.3	4.6	1050	3450
<b>Mound Two, Sutton Hoo</b>	22.3 <sup>6</sup>	2.7 / 3.8	550 / 750	1800 / 2550
<b>Snape Ship Burial</b>	22	1.4	250	900

**Fig.35, Estimated Volumes of Possible Kingly Burial Mounds**

<b>Burial (highest to lowest)</b>	<b>Basal Diameter (m)</b>	<b>Height (m)</b>	<b>Estimated Volume (m<sup>3</sup>)</b>	<b>Estimated Man-Hours</b>
<b>Benty Grange</b>	-	-	-	-
<b>Broomfield Barrow</b>	-	-	-	-
<b>Asthall Barrow</b>	16.8 (20.7) <sup>7</sup>	3.7	450 (650)	1450 (2150)
<b>Caenby Barrow</b>	29.5	2.4	850	2750
<b>Wollaston Barrow</b>	-	-	-	-

<sup>1</sup> To nearest decimal place.

<sup>2</sup> To nearest decimal place.

<sup>3</sup> To nearest 50 m<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> To nearest 50 man-hours.

<sup>5</sup> Average of 29.9 and 33.5.

<sup>6</sup> Basal diameter and height derived from Carver's re-constructed dimensions: Carver, *Sutton Hoo*, p. 171. Carver calculated the volume of the Mound Two as 543 m<sup>3</sup> based on the soil excavated from the quarry ditch, which is reassuringly close to the estimated volume from the lower height. As 790 m<sup>3</sup> was actually loosened during the construction process the total man-hours required was approximately 2650. Assuming an 8-hour day, this equates to 350 man-days.

<sup>7</sup> The first figure is derived from the size of the mound, including the effective cylinder contained by the retaining wall. The second figure estimates the volume of the original mound based on Leeds's suggested original diameter.

## **VI: Categories of Kingly Activity in the Narrative Sources**

### **Association with Religion**

General – a generic link between a king and the practice of religion, where none of the below elements are referenced.

Conversion – the association of a king with the conversion of the people of his kingdom.

Support – the active kingly support of the activities of the church through legislation, money, lands or others means.

Miracles – the reporting of miracles associated with a king.

Veneration – the posthumous veneration of a king as a saint.

Baptism – the specific mention of the baptism of a king in Anglo-Saxon England.

Church/Monastery/See Foundation – the giving of lands or other resources by a king for the foundation of a specific church, monastery or see.

Apostasy – the active reversion of a king to non-Christian religious practices.

Pagan – the active pursuance of non-Christian religious practices where a king has not apostatised.

Interference – the active involvement of a king in the affairs of the church.

Monastic – the retirement of a king to a monastery or a similar abdication for ostensibly religious reasons.

Advice – the active advisement of a king by an ecclesiastical figure.

Friendship – the pursuance of a relationship which might be categorised as friendship between a king and an ecclesiastical figure.

### **Warfare**

Victory – the winning of a battle or military engagement.

Defeat – the loss of a battle or military engagement.

Territorial Conquest – the acquisition of territory as a result of military activity.

Assassination – the loss of life by a king through activities other than warfare or natural causes.

### **Extra-Dynastic Relations**

Over-Kingship – an indication that one king has power or suzerainty over another.

Sub-Kingship – an indication that one king is under the power or suzerainty of another.

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**Kingly Rivalry/Competition** – the attempt by one king to gain some form of advantage over another king of a different kingdom through means other than warfare.

**Dynastic Ties** – the association of one king with another from a different kingdom through marriage or other familial relationships.

### **Intra-Dynastic Relations**

**Succession** – the succession of one king by another.

**Dynastic Rivalry/Competition** – an indication that a succession was disputed by a rivalry or discord within a royal family.

**Exile** – the exile of a king during the reign of a rival.

**Joint Kingship** – the sharing of the kingship by two or more individuals.

### **Other**

**Narrative Reference Point** – the use of a king to make the narrative of the text more explicable.

**Feasting** – the engagement of feasting by a king and his followers.

**Consultation** – the discussion of a topic between a king and his followers.

**Letters** – the receipt of letters by a king.

**Gifts** – the receipt or offering of gifts by a king

**Edification** – the active pursuance of education by a king.

**Written Laws** – the production of written laws by a king.

**Peace and Protection** – the association of the peace of a kingdom with its king.

**Itinerancy** – an indication that travel was necessary to the execution of kingly power.

VII: Activities of Kings in the *Historia ecclesiastica*Fig.36, Activities of Kings in the *Historia ecclesiastica*

<i>HE</i> Reference	King	Activity or Event Associated With
Preface	Ceolwulf of Northumbria	Association with religion (general); other (edification)
<b>Book One</b>		
I.25	Æthelberht I of Kent	Extra-dynastic relations (over-kingship); association with religion (support)
I.26	Æthelberht I of Kent	Association with religion (baptism; conversion; see foundation, Canterbury; support)
I.27	Æthelberht I of Kent	Other (letter from Pope Gregory I; gifts from Pope Gregory I)
I.33	Æthelberht I of Kent	Association with religion (see foundation, Canterbury; monastery foundation, Canterbury; support)
I.34	Æthelfrith of Northumbria	Warfare (victory; territorial conquest)
<b>Book Two</b>		
II.1	Ælle of Deira	Other (narrative reference point)
II.2	Æthelberht I of Kent	Association with religion (support)
II.2	Æthelfrith of Northumbria	Warfare (victory, Battle of Chester)
II.3	Sæberht of the East Saxons	Extra-dynastic relations (sub-kingship; dynastic ties); association with religion (conversion)
II.3	Æthelberht I of Kent	Extra-dynastic relations (over-kingship; dynastic ties); association with religion (see foundation, London and Rochester; support)
II.4	Æthelberht I of Kent	Other (letter from Pope Boniface IV, not reproduced)
II.5	Æthelberht I of Kent	Extra-dynastic relations (over-kingship); association with religion (general); other (written laws; consultation)
II.5	Ælle of the South Saxons	Extra-dynastic relations (over-kingship); other (narrative reference point)
II.5	Ceawlin of the West Saxons	Extra-dynastic relations (over-kingship); other (narrative reference point)

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<b>HE Reference</b>	<b>King</b>	<b>Activity or Event Associated With</b>
II.5	Rædwald of the East Angles	Extra-dynastic relations (over-kingship); other (narrative reference point)
II.5	Edwin of Northumbria	Extra-dynastic relations (over-kingship); warfare (territorial conquest); other (narrative reference point)
II.5	Oswald of Northumbria	Extra-dynastic relations (over-kingship); association with religion (general); other (narrative reference point)
II.5	Oswiu of Northumbria	Extra-dynastic relations (over-kingship); warfare (territorial conquest); other (narrative reference point)
II.5	Eormenic of Kent	Other (narrative reference point)
II.5	Octa of Kent	Other (narrative reference point)
II.5	Oeric of Kent	Other (narrative reference point)
II.5	Hengist of Kent	Other (narrative reference point)
II.5	Eadbald of Kent	Intra-dynastic relations (succession); association with religion ('pagan')
II.5	Sæberht of the East Saxons	Other (narrative reference point)
II.5	Sæberht's successors (1 of 3, unnamed)	Intra-dynastic relations (succession; joint kingship); association with religion (apostasy); warfare (defeat)
II.5	Sæberht's successors (2 of 3, unnamed)	Intra-dynastic relations (succession; joint kingship); association with religion (apostasy); warfare (defeat)
II.5	Sæberht's successors (3 of 3, unnamed)	Intra-dynastic relations (succession; joint kingship); association with religion (apostasy); warfare (defeat)
II.6	Eadbald of Kent	Association with religion (baptism; support; conversion; church foundation); extra-dynastic relations (over-kingship, absence of)
II.7	Eadbald of Kent	Other (narrative reference point)
II.9	Edwin of Northumbria	Extra-dynastic relations (over-kingship; dynastic ties); association with religion (conversion); warfare (assassination, failed; victory); other (edification; consultation)
II.9	Æthelberht I of Kent	Other (narrative reference point); intra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties)

<b>HE Reference</b>	<b>King</b>	<b>Activity or Event Associated With</b>
II.9	Eadbald of Kent	Other (narrative reference point); association with religion (support)
II.9	Cwichelm of the West Saxons	Extra-dynastic relations (kingly rivalry/competition); warfare (defeat)
II.10	Edwin of Northumbria	Other (Letter from Pope Boniface V)
II.11	Edwin of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
II.12	Edwin of Northumbria	Association with religion (conversion); intra-dynastic relations (succession; dynastic rivalry/competition; exile); warfare (victory)
II.12	Rædwald of the East Angles	Extra-dynastic relations (kingly rivalry/competition); warfare (victory)
II.12	Æthelfrith of Northumbria	Intra-dynastic relations (dynastic rivalry/competition); warfare (defeat); other (gifts, attempted)
II.13	Edwin of Northumbria	Association with religion (conversion); other (consultation; feasting)
II.14	Edwin of Northumbria	Association with religion (baptism; conversion; see foundation, York; church foundation; support); extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties); warfare (defeat)
II.14	Oswald of Northumbria	Association with religion (support); intra-dynastic relations (succession)
II.14	Ceorl of Mercia	Other (narrative reference point); extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties)
II.14	Penda of Mercia	Other (narrative reference point); warfare (victory)
II.15	Edwin of Northumbria	Association with religion (support)
II.15	Eorpwold of the East Angles	Intra-dynastic relations (succession; dynastic rivalry/competition); warfare (assassination); association with religion (conversion)
II.15	Rædwald of the East Angles	Other (narrative reference point); association with religion (baptism; apostasy, partial)
II.15	Ealdwulf of the East Angles	Other (narrative reference point)

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<b>HE Reference</b>	<b>King</b>	<b>Activity or Event Associated With</b>
II.15	Sigeberht of the East Angles	Intra-dynastic relations (succession; exile; dynastic rivalry/competition); association with religion (conversion; see foundation, Dunwich); other (edification)
II.16	Edwin of Northumbria	Association with religion (general); other (peace and protection; itinerancy)
II.17	Edwin of Northumbria	Other (Letter from Pope Honorius I)
II.18	Edwin of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
II.20	Edwin of Northumbria	Extra-dynastic relations (over-kingship); warfare (defeat, Battle of Hatfield Chase); association with religion (see foundation, York; veneration); intra-dynastic relations (dynastic rivalry/competition)
II.20	Penda of Mercia	Extra-dynastic relations (kingly rivalry/competition); warfare (victory, Battle of Hatfield Chase; assassination, Eadfrith)
II.20	Oswald of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point); intra-dynastic relations (dynastic rivalry/competition)
II.20	Eadbald of Kent	Other (narrative reference point); association with religion (interference); extra-dynastic relations (kingly rivalry/competition)
<b>Book Three</b>		
III.1	Edwin of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point); warfare (defeat)
III.1	Osric of Deira	Intra-dynastic relations (succession); association with religion (apostasy); warfare (defeat)
III.1	Æthelfrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
III.1	Eanfrith of Bernicia	Intra-dynastic relations (succession; dynastic rivalry/competition; exile); association with religion (apostasy); warfare (defeat)
III.1	Oswald of Northumbria	Intra-dynastic relations (succession); association with religion (general); warfare (victory)

<b>HE Reference</b>	<b>King</b>	<b>Activity or Event Associated With</b>
III.2	Oswald of Northumbria	Association with religion (miracles)
III.3	Oswald of Northumbria	Association with religion (conversion; see foundation, Lindisfarne; church foundation; monastery foundation; support); intra-dynastic relations (succession; exile)
III.5	Oswald of Northumbria	Association with religion (conversion); other (narrative reference point; feasting)
III.6	Oswald of Northumbria	Extra-dynastic relations (over-kingship); intra-dynastic relations (succession; dynastic rivalry/competition); association with religion (conversion; veneration; miracles); warfare (defeat); other (gifts)
III.6	Edwin of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
III.7	Cynegisl of the West Saxons	Association with religion (baptism; see foundation, Dorchester; conversion; church foundation); extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties)
III.7	Oswald of Northumbria	Association with religion (general); extra-dynastic relations (kingly rivalry/competition; dynastic ties)
III.7	Cenwalh of the West Saxons	Intra-dynastic relations (succession; exile); association with religion ('pagan'; conversion; see foundation, Winchester; interference); extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties); warfare battle (defeat)
III.7	Penda of Mercia	Extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties); warfare (victory)
III.7	Anna of the East Angles	Extra-dynastic relations (kingly rivalry/competition); association with religion (general)
III.7	Wulfhere of Mercia	Other (narrative reference point)
III.8	Eadbald of Kent	Other (narrative reference point)
III.8	Eorcenberht of Kent	Intra-dynastic relations (succession); association with religion (support); extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties)
III.8	Anna of the East Angles	Other (narrative reference point); extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties)
III.9	Oswald of Northumbria	Warfare (defeat); association with religion (miracles)



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<b>HE Reference</b>	<b>King</b>	<b>Activity or Event Associated With</b>
III.9	Penda of Mercia	Other (narrative reference point); warfare (victory)
III.10	Oswald of Northumbria	Association with religion (miracles)
III.11	Oswald of Northumbria	Association with religion (miracles); extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties)
III.10	Oswiu of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point); extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties)
III.11	Æthelred of Mercia	Association with religions (support); extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties)
III.12	Oswald of Northumbria	Association with religions (miracles); warfare (defeat)
III.12	Penda of Mercia	Warfare (victory)
III.12	Oswiu of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point); intra-dynastic relations (succession)
III.13	Oswald of Northumbria	Association with religion (miracles)
III.14	Oswald of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
III.14	Oswiu of Northumbria	Intra-dynastic relations (succession; dynastic rivalry/competition); warfare (victory); association with religion (monastery foundation, Gilling)
III.14	Penda of Mercia	Warfare (defeat)
III.14	Alhfrith of Deira	Intra-dynastic relations (dynastic rivalry/competition); warfare (defeat)
III.14	Oethelwald of Deira	Intra-dynastic relations (dynastic rivalry/competition); warfare (defeat)
III.14	Æthelberht I of Kent	Other (narrative reference point); association with religion (see foundation, Rochester)
III.14	Oswine of Deira	Intra-dynastic relations (dynastic rivalry/competition); other (gifts); association with religion (general); warfare (assassination)
III.14	Edwin of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
III.14	Osric of Deira	Other (narrative reference point)
III.15	Oswiu of Northumbria	Extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties); intra-dynastic relations (dynastic

<b>HE Reference</b>	<b>King</b>	<b>Activity or Event Associated With</b>
		rivalry/competition); other (narrative reference point)
III.15	Edwin of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
III.16	Penda of Mercia	Warfare (defeat); other (narrative reference point)
III.17	Penda of Mercia	Warfare (victory); other (narrative reference point)
III.18	Sigeberht of the East Angles	Intra-dynastic relations (succession; dynastic rivalry/competition; exile); association with religion (support; monastery foundation; monastic); warfare (defeat)
III.18	Eorpwold of the East Angles	Other (narrative reference point)
III.18	Rædwald of the East Angles	Other (narrative reference point); intra-dynastic relations (dynastic rivalry/competition)
III.18	Ecgric of the East Angles	Intra-dynastic relations (succession); warfare (defeat)
III.18	Penda of Mercia	Warfare (victory); other (narrative reference point)
III.18	Anna of the East Angles	Intra-dynastic relations (succession); warfare (defeat)
III.19	Sigeberht of the East Angles	Association with religion (monastery foundation); other (narrative reference point)
III.21	Peada of Mercia	Intra dynastic relations (succession); extra-dynastic relations (sub-kingship; dynastic ties); association with religion (baptism; conversion)
III.21	Penda of Mercia	Extra-dynastic relations (over-kingship; dynastic ties); other (narrative reference point); association with religion ('pagan'); warfare (defeat)
III.21	Oswiu of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point); extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties); warfare (victory)
III.21	Alhfrith of Deira	Extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties)
III.21	Wulfhere of Mercia	Other (narrative reference point)

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<b>HE Reference</b>	<b>King</b>	<b>Activity or Event Associated With</b>
III.22	Oswiu of Northumbria	Extra-dynastic relations (kingly rivalry/competition); association with religions (support)
III.22	Sigebert II of the East Saxons	Association with religion (baptism; conversion); other (consultation); intra-dynastic relations (succession; dynastic rivalry/competition); warfare (assassination)
III.22	Sigebert I of the East Saxons	Other (narrative reference point)
III.22	Swithelm of the East Saxons	Intra-dynastic relations (succession); association with religion (baptism)
III.22	Æthelwold of the East Angles	Extra-dynastic relations (kingly rivalry/competition); association with religion (general)
III.22	Anna of the East Angles	Other (narrative reference point)
III.23	Oethelwald of Deira	Extra-dynastic relations (sub-kingship); association of religion (monastery foundation, Lastingham)
III.23	Oswald of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
III.24	Oswiu of Northumbria	Warfare (victory, Battle of Winwæd); other (gifts); association with religion (monastery foundation, 12 and Gilling; support); extra-dynastic relations (over-kingship)
III.24	Penda of Mercia	Warfare (defeat, Battle of Winwæd); extra-dynastic relations (kingly rivalry/competition)
III.24	Oswald of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
III.24	Oethelwald of Deira	Intra-dynastic relations (dynastic rivalry/competition); warfare (defeat, Battle of Winwæd)
III.24	Æthelhere of the East Angles	Intra-dynastic relations (succession); warfare (defeat, Battle of Winwæd)
III.24	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point); extra-dynastic relations (kingly rivalry/competition)
III.24	Alhfrith of Deira	Warfare (victory, Battle of Winwæd)
III.24	Anna of the East Angles	Other (narrative reference point)

<b>HE Reference</b>	<b>King</b>	<b>Activity or Event Associated With</b>
III.24	Edwin of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
III.24	Oswine of Deira	Other (narrative reference point); intra-dynastic relations (dynastic rivalry/competition); warfare (assassination)
III.24	Peada of Mercia	Intra-dynastic relations (succession; dynastic rivalry/competition); warfare (assassination); extra-dynastic relations (sub-kingship)
III.24	Wulfhere of Mercia	Intra-dynastic relations (succession; dynastic rivalry/competition); association with religion (general)
III.24	30 kings (unnamed)	Other (narrative reference point)
III.25	Oswiu of Northumbria	Intra-dynastic relations (dynastic rivalry/competition); association with religion (interference, Council of <i>Streanæshalch</i> )
III.25	Alhfrith of Deira	Intra-dynastic relations (dynastic rivalry/competition); association with religion (monastery foundation, Ripon)
III.26	Oswiu of Northumbria	Association with religion (interference); other (narrative reference point)
III.28	Alhfrith of Deira	Association with religion (interference)
III.28	Oswiu of Northumbria	Association with religion (interference)
III.28	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
III.29	Oswiu of Northumbria	Association with religion (interference); other (letter from Pope Vitalian)
III.29	Egbert of Kent	Association with religion (interference)
III.30	Sigehere of the East Saxons	Intra-dynastic relations (succession; joint kingship); extra-dynastic relations (sub-kingship); association with religion (apostasy; conversion)
III.30	Sebbi of the East Saxons	Intra-dynastic relations (succession; joint kingship); extra-dynastic relations (sub-kingship); association with religion (general)
III.30	Swithhelm of the East Saxons	Other (narrative reference point)

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<b>HE Reference</b>	<b>King</b>	<b>Activity or Event Associated With</b>
III.30	Wulfhere of Mercia	Extra-dynastic relations (over-kingship); association with religion (support)
<b>Book Four</b>		
IV.1	Eorcenberht of Kent	Other (narrative reference point)
IV.1	Egbert of Kent	Intra-dynastic relations (succession); association with religion (interference); other (gifts; narrative reference point)
IV.1	Oswiu of Northumbria	Association with religion (interference); other (gifts)
IV.3	Wulfhere of Mercia	Association with religion (interference; monastery foundation); extra-dynastic relations (over-kingship)
IV.3	Oswiu of Northumbria	Association with religion (general); extra-dynastic relations (over-kingship)
IV.5	Oswiu of Northumbria	Association with religion (monastic); other (gifts)
IV.5	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Intra-dynastic relations (succession)
IV.5	Egbert of Kent	Other (narrative reference point)
IV.5	Hlothhere of Kent	Intra-dynastic relations (succession); other (narrative reference point)
IV.6	Sebbi of the East Saxons	Other (narrative reference point); intra-dynastic relations (joint kingship)
IV.6	Sigehere of the East Saxons	Other (narrative reference point); intra-dynastic relations (joint kingship)
IV.11	Sebbi of the East Saxons	Association with religion (monastic; miracles)
IV.11	Sigeheard of the East Saxons	Intra-dynastic relations (succession; joint kingship); other (narrative reference point)
IV.11	Swæfred of the East Saxons	Intra-dynastic relations (succession; joint kingship); other (narrative reference point)
IV.12	Cenwalh of the West Saxons	Other (narrative reference point)
IV.12	Un-named successors of Cenwealh of the West Saxons	Intra-dynastic relations (succession; joint kingship; dynastic rivalry/competition); warfare (defeat)
IV.12	Cædwalla of the West Saxons	Intra-dynastic relations (succession; dynastic rivalry/competition); warfare

<b>HE Reference</b>	<b>King</b>	<b>Activity or Event Associated With</b>
		(victory); association with religion (monastic)
IV.12	Æthelred of Mercia	Warfare (victory; victory, Battle of the Trent)
IV.12	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Association with religion (interference); warfare (victory; territorial conquest; defeat, Battle of the Trent); other (narrative reference point)
IV.12	Wulfhere of Mercia	Warfare (defeat); other (narrative reference point)
IV.13	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Association with religion (interference); other (narrative reference point)
IV.13	Æthelwealh of the South Saxons	Association with religion (baptism; conversion; monastery foundation, Selsey); extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties)
IV.13	Wulfhere of Mercia	Extra-dynastic relations (kingly rivalry/competition); association with religion (support); other (gifts)
IV.13	Eanfrith of the Hwicce	Other (narrative reference point); intra-dynastic relations (joint kingship); extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties)
IV.13	Eanhere of the Hwicce	Other (narrative reference point); intra-dynastic relations (joint kingship); extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties)
IV.14	Oswald of Northumbria	Association with religion (miracles; veneration)
IV.15	Cædwalla of the West Saxons	Intra-dynastic rivalry (exile); warfare (victory); extra-dynastic relations (over-kingship)
IV.15	Æthelwealh of the South Saxons	Warfare (defeat)
IV.15	Ine of the West Saxons	Intra-dynastic relations (succession); extra-dynastic relations (over-kingship)
IV.16	Cædwalla of the West Saxons	Warfare (victory; territorial conquest); association with religion (conversion; support)
IV.16	Arwald of the Isle of Wight	Warfare (defeat); other (narrative reference point)
IV.18	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Association with religion (monastery foundation, Wearmouth-Jarrow); other (narrative reference point)

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<b>HE Reference</b>	<b>King</b>	<b>Activity or Event Associated With</b>
IV.19	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties); other (gifts)
IV.19	Anna of the East Angles	Extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties); association with religion (general); other (narrative reference point)
IV.19	Eorcenberht of Kent	Other (narrative reference point)
IV.21	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Warfare (defeat, Battle of the Trent); extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties)
IV.21	Æthelred of Mercia	Warfare (victory, Battle of the Trent; territorial conquest); extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties)
IV.21	Ælfwine (of Deira ?)	Warfare (defeat, Battle of the Trent); extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties)
IV.22	Ælfwine (of Deira ?)	Other (narrative reference point)
IV.22	Æthelred of Mercia	Other (narrative reference point)
IV.22	Hlothhere of Kent	Other (narrative reference point; gifts); extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties)
IV.23	Edwin of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point); extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties)
IV.23	Ealdwulf of the East Angles	Other (narrative reference point); extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties)
IV.23	Osric of the Hwicce	Other (narrative reference point)
IV.23	Æthelred of Mercia	Association with religion (interference); other (narrative reference point);
IV.26	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Warfare (victory; defeat, Nechtansmere); extra-dynastic relations (over-kingship)
IV.26	Aldfrith of Northumbria	Intra-dynastic relations (succession); other (edification)
IV.26	Oswiu of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
IV.26	Hlothhere of Kent	Warfare (defeat); Intra-dynastic relations (succession)
IV.26	Egbert of Kent	Other (narrative reference point)
IV.26	Eadric of Kent	Intra-dynastic relations (succession; dynastic rivalry/competition); extra-dynastic relations (kingly rivalry/competition)

<b>HE Reference</b>	<b>King</b>	<b>Activity or Event Associated With</b>
IV.26	Wihtrud of Kent	Intra-dynastic relations (succession; dynastic rivalry/competition); association with religion (general)
IV.27	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Association with religion (interference); other (narrative reference point)
IV.28	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Association with religion (interference); other (narrative reference point)
<b>Book Five</b>		
V.1	Aldfrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point); intra-dynastic relations (succession)
V.1	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
V.2	Aldfrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
V.7	Aldfrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
V.7	Cædwalla of the West Saxons	Association with religion (monastic)
V.7	Ine of the West Saxons	Intra-dynastic relations (succession); association with religion (monastic)
V.8	Cædwalla of the West Saxons	Other (narrative reference point)
V.12	Aldfrith of Northumbria	Other (edification); association with religion (interference)
V.13	Cenred of Mercia	Intra-dynastic relations (succession); association with religion (general); other (narrative reference point)
V.13	Æthelred of Mercia	Other (narrative reference point)
V.15	Aldfrith of Northumbria	Other (edification; gifts; narrative reference point)
V.18	Aldfrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
V.18	Osred of Northumbria	Intra-dynastic relations (succession); other (narrative reference point)
V.19	Osred of Northumbria	Association with religion (interference); other (narrative reference point)
V.19	Cenred of Mercia	Association with religion (monastic)
V.19	Ceolred of Mercia	Intra-dynastic relations (succession)
V.19	Æthelred of Mercia	Other (narrative reference point)



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<b>HE Reference</b>	<b>King</b>	<b>Activity or Event Associated With</b>
V.19	Sigehere of the East Saxons	Other (narrative reference point)
V.19	Eorcenberht of Kent	Association with religion (support); other (narrative reference point)
V.19	Alhfrith of Deira	Association with religion (support; monastery foundation, Ripon; interference)
V.19	Oswiu of Northumbria	Association with religion (interference); other (narrative reference point)
V.19	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Association with religion (interference); other (narrative reference point)
V.19	Aldfrith of Northumbria	Association with religion (interference); other (narrative reference point; Letter from Pope John VI)
V.19	Æthelred of Mercia	Other (narrative reference point; Letter from Pope John VI); association with religion (monastic; interference)
V.19	Cenred of Mercia	Association with religion (interference); other (narrative reference point); intra-dynastic relations (succession)
V.19	Osred of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
V.20	Osred of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
V.22	Osred of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
V.22	Cenred of Northumbria	Intra-dynastic relations (succession; dynastic rivalry/competition); other (narrative reference point)
V.23	Osrice of Northumbria	Intra-dynastic relations (succession); other (narrative reference point)
V.23	Cenred of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
V.23	Wihtrid of Kent	Other (narrative reference point)
V.23	Æthelberht II of Kent	Intra-dynastic relations (succession; joint kingship)
V.23	Eadberht of Kent	Intra-dynastic relations (succession; joint kingship)
V.23	Alric of Kent	Intra-dynastic relations (succession; joint kingship)

<b>HE Reference</b>	<b>King</b>	<b>Activity or Event Associated With</b>
V.23	Ceolwulf of Northumbria	Intra-dynastic relations (succession); other (narrative reference point)
V.23	Æthelbald of Mercia	Extra-dynastic relations (over-kingship); other (narrative reference point)
V.24	Ida of Northumbria	Intra-dynastic relations (succession); other (narrative reference point)
V.24	Sæberht of the East Saxons	Association with religion (conversion); other (narrative reference point)
V.24	Æthelberht I of Kent	Other (narrative reference point)
V.24	Edwin of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point); association with religion (baptism)
V.24	Eadbald of Kent	Other (narrative reference point)
V.24	Oswald of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
V.24	Oswine of Deira	Other (narrative reference point); warfare (assassination)
V.24	Peada of Mercia	Other (narrative reference point); association with religion (conversion)
V.24	Penda of Mercia	Other (narrative reference point)
V.24	Eorcenberht of Kent	Other (narrative reference point)
V.24	Oswiu of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
V.24	Egbert of Kent	Other (narrative reference point)
V.24	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point); association with religion (interference)
V.24	Wulfhere of Mercia	Other (narrative reference point)
V.24	Æthelred of Mercia	Other (narrative reference point); intra-dynastic relations (succession); warfare (victory); association with religion (monastic)
V.24	Hlothhere of Kent	Other (narrative reference point)
V.24	Cædwalla of the West Saxons	Other (narrative reference point); association with religion (monastic)
V.24	Cenred of Mercia	Other (narrative reference point); intra-dynastic relations (succession); association with religion (monastic)

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<b>HE Reference</b>	<b>King</b>	<b>Activity or Event Associated With</b>
V.24	Aldfrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
V.24	Osred of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
V.24	Ceolred of Mercia	Other (narrative reference point)
V.24	Wihtrud of Kent	Other (narrative reference point)
V.24	Æthelbald of Mercia	Other (narrative reference point)
V.24	Ælfwine (of Deira ?)	Other (narrative reference point)

VIII: Activities of Kings, by King, in the *Historia ecclesiastica*<sup>1</sup>

Fig.37, Activities of Kings in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* Grouped by King – Association with Religion

King	Gen eral	Conve rsion	Sup port	Mira cles	Vener ation	Bap tism	See Foundation	Monastery Foundation	Church Foundation	Apost asy	Pag an	Interfe rence	Mon astic
30 kings (unnamed)													
<b>Ælfwine (of Deira ?)</b> <sup>2</sup>													
Ælle of Deira													
Ælle of the South Saxons													
<b>Æthelbald of Mercia</b>													
<b>Æthelberht I of Kent</b>	x	x	x			x	x	x					
Æthelberht II of Kent													
<b>Æthelfrith of Northumbria</b>													

<sup>1</sup> The categories of association with religion (advise) and association with religion (friendship) do not appear in the *HE* and so in the interests of space are omitted from the tables in this section.

<sup>2</sup> Emboldened Kings appear in more than one chapter of the *HE*.

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King	Gen eral	Conve rsion	Sup port	Mira cles	Vener ation	Bap tism	See Foundation	Monastery Foundation	Church Foundation	Apost asy	Pag an	Interfe rence	Mon astic
Æthelhere of the East Angles													
<b>Æthelred of Mercia</b>			x									x	x
<b>Æthelwealh of the South Saxons</b>		x				x		x					
Æthelwold of the East Angles	x												
<b>Aldfrith of Northumbria</b>												x	
<b>Alhfrith of Deira</b>			x					x				x	
Alric of Kent													
<b>Anna of the East Angles</b>	x												
Arwald of the Isle of Wight													
<b>Cædwalla of the West Saxons</b>		x	x										x
Ceawlin of the West Saxons													
<b>Cenred of Mercia</b>	x											x	x

<b>King</b>	<b>Gen eral</b>	<b>Conve rsion</b>	<b>Sup port</b>	<b>Mira cles</b>	<b>Vener ation</b>	<b>Bap tism</b>	<b>See Foundation</b>	<b>Monastery Foundation</b>	<b>Church Foundation</b>	<b>Apost asy</b>	<b>Pag an</b>	<b>Interfe rence</b>	<b>Mon astic</b>
<b>Cenred of Northumbria</b>													
<b>Cenwulf of the West Saxons</b>		x					x				x	x	
<b>Ceolred of Mercia</b>													
<b>Ceolwulf of Northumbria</b>	x												
Ceorl of Mercia													
Cwichelm of the West Saxons													
Cynegisl of the West Saxons		x				x	x		x				
<b>Eadbald of Kent</b>		x	x			x			x		x	x	
Eadberht of Kent													
Eadric of Kent													
<b>Ealdwulf of the East Angles</b>													
Eanfrith of Bernicia										x			

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<b>King</b>	<b>Gen eral</b>	<b>Conve rsion</b>	<b>Sup port</b>	<b>Mira cles</b>	<b>Vener ation</b>	<b>Bap tism</b>	<b>See Foundation</b>	<b>Monastery Foundation</b>	<b>Church Foundation</b>	<b>Apost asy</b>	<b>Pag an</b>	<b>Interfe rence</b>	<b>Mon astic</b>
Eanfrith of the Hwicce													
Eanhere of the Hwicce													
<b>Ecgrith of Northumbria</b>								x				x	
Ecgric of the East Angles													
<b>Edwin of Northumbria</b>	x	x	x		x	x	x		x				
<b>Egbert of Kent</b>												x	
<b>Eorcenberht of Kent</b>			x										
Eormenic of Kent													
<b>Eorpwold of the East Angles</b>		x											
Hengist of Kent													
<b>Hlothhere of Kent</b>													
Ida of Northumbria													
<b>Ine of the West Saxons</b>													x
Octa of Kent													

<b>King</b>	<b>Gen eral</b>	<b>Conve rsion</b>	<b>Sup port</b>	<b>Mira cles</b>	<b>Vener ation</b>	<b>Bap tism</b>	<b>See Foundation</b>	<b>Monastery Foundation</b>	<b>Church Foundation</b>	<b>Apost asy</b>	<b>Pag an</b>	<b>Interfe rence</b>	<b>Mon astic</b>
Oeric of Kent													
<b>Oethelwald of Deira</b>								x					
<b>Osred of Northumbria</b>												x	
<b>Osric of Deira</b>										x			
Osric of Northumbria													
Osric of the Hwicce													
<b>Oswald of Northumbria</b>	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x				
<b>Oswine of Deira</b>	x												
<b>Oswiu of Northumbria</b>	x		x					x				x	x
<b>Peada of Mercia</b>		x				x							
<b>Penda of Mercia</b>											x		
<b>Rædwald of the East Angles</b>						x				x			
<b>Sæberht of the East Saxons</b>		x											



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<b>King</b>	<b>Gen eral</b>	<b>Conve rsion</b>	<b>Sup port</b>	<b>Mira cles</b>	<b>Vener ation</b>	<b>Bap tism</b>	<b>See Foundation</b>	<b>Monastery Foundation</b>	<b>Church Foundation</b>	<b>Apost asy</b>	<b>Pag an</b>	<b>Interfe rence</b>	<b>Mon astic</b>
Sæberht's successors (1 of 3, unnamed)										x			
Sæberht's successors (2 of 3, unnamed)										x			
Sæberht's successors (3 of 3, unnamed)										x			
<b>Sebbi of the East Saxons</b>	x			x				x					
Sigeberht I of the East Saxons													
Sigeberht II of the East Saxons		x				x							
<b>Sigeberht of the East Angles</b>		x	x				x	x					x
Sigeheard of the East Saxons													
<b>Sigehere of the East Saxons</b>		x								x			

<b>King</b>	<b>Gen eral</b>	<b>Conve rsion</b>	<b>Sup port</b>	<b>Mira cles</b>	<b>Vener ation</b>	<b>Bap tism</b>	<b>See Foundation</b>	<b>Monastery Foundation</b>	<b>Church Foundation</b>	<b>Apost asy</b>	<b>Pag an</b>	<b>Interfe rence</b>	<b>Mon astic</b>
Swæfred of the East Saxons													
<b>Swithelm of the East Saxons</b>						x							
Un-named successors of Cenwealh of the West Saxons													
<b>Wihtrud of Kent</b>	x												
<b>Wulfhere of Mercia</b>	x		x									x	x

**Fig.38, Activities of Kings in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* Grouped by King – Warfare**

<b>King</b>	<b>Victory</b>	<b>Defeat</b>	<b>Territorial Conquest</b>	<b>Assassination</b>
30 kings (unnamed)				
<b>Ælfwine (of Deira ?)</b>		x		
Ælle of Deira				
Ælle of the South Saxons				
<b>Æthelbald of Mercia</b>				

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<b>King</b>	<b>Victory</b>	<b>Defeat</b>	<b>Territorial Conquest</b>	<b>Assassination</b>
<b>Æthelberht I of Kent</b>				
Æthelberht II of Kent				
<b>Æthelfrith of Northumbria</b>	x	x	x	
Æthelhere of the East Angles		x		
<b>Æthelred of Mercia</b>	x		x	
<b>Æthelwealh of the South Saxons</b>		x		
Æthelwold of the East Angles				
<b>Aldfrith of Northumbria</b>				
<b>Alhfrith of Deira</b>	x	x		
Alric of Kent				
<b>Anna of the East Angles</b>		x		
Arwald of the Isle of Wight		x		
<b>Cædwalla of the West Saxons</b>	x		x	
Ceawlin of the West Saxons				
<b>Cenred of Mercia</b>				
<b>Cenred of Northumbria</b>				

<b>King</b>	<b>Victory</b>	<b>Defeat</b>	<b>Territorial Conquest</b>	<b>Assassination</b>
<b>Cenwalh of the West Saxons</b>		x		
<b>Ceolred of Mercia</b>				
<b>Ceolwulf of Northumbria</b>				
Ceorl of Mercia				
Cwichelm of the West Saxons		x		
Cynegisl of the West Saxons				
<b>Eadbald of Kent</b>				
Eadberht of Kent				
Eadric of Kent				
<b>Ealdwulf of the East Angles</b>				
Eanfrith of Bernicia		x		
Eanfrith of the Hwicce				
Eanhere of the Hwicce				
<b>Ecgfrith of Northumbria</b>	x	x	x	
Ecgric of the East Angles		x		
<b>Edwin of Northumbria</b>	x	x	x	x

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<b>King</b>	<b>Victory</b>	<b>Defeat</b>	<b>Territorial Conquest</b>	<b>Assassination</b>
<b>Egbert of Kent</b>				
<b>Eorcenberht of Kent</b>				
Eormenic of Kent				
<b>Eorpwold of the East Angles</b>				x
Hengist of Kent				
<b>Hlothhere of Kent</b>		x		
Ida of Northumbria				
<b>Ine of the West Saxons</b>				
Octa of Kent				
Oeric of Kent				
<b>Oethelwald of Deira</b>		x		
<b>Osred of Northumbria</b>				
<b>Osric of Deira</b>		x		
Osric of Northumbria				
Osric of the Hwicce				
<b>Oswald of Northumbria</b>	x	x		

<b>King</b>	<b>Victory</b>	<b>Defeat</b>	<b>Territorial Conquest</b>	<b>Assassination</b>
<b>Oswine of Deira</b>				x
<b>Oswiu of Northumbria</b>	x		x	
<b>Peada of Mercia</b>				x
<b>Penda of Mercia</b>	x	x		x
<b>Rædwald of the East Angles</b>	x			
<b>Sæberht of the East Saxons</b>				
Sæberht's successors (1 of 3, unnamed)		x		
Sæberht's successors (2 of 3, unnamed)		x		
Sæberht's successors (3 of 3, unnamed)		x		
<b>Sebbi of the East Saxons</b>				
Sigeberht I of the East Saxons				
Sigeberht II of the East Saxons				x
<b>Sigeberht of the East Angles</b>		x		
Sigeheard of the East Saxons				
<b>Sigehere of the East Saxons</b>				
Swæfred of the East Saxons				

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<b>King</b>	<b>Victory</b>	<b>Defeat</b>	<b>Territorial Conquest</b>	<b>Assassination</b>
<b>Swiithelm of the East Saxons</b>				
Un-named successors of Cenwealh of the West Saxons		x		
<b>Wihfred of Kent</b>				
<b>Wulfhere of Mercia</b>		x		

**Fig.39, Activities of Kings in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* Grouped by King – Extra-Dynastic Relations**

<b>King</b>	<b>Over-Kingship</b>	<b>Sub-Kingship</b>	<b>Kingly Rivalry/Competition</b>	<b>Dynastic Ties</b>
30 kings (unnamed)				
<b>Ælfwine (of Deira ?)</b>				x
Ælle of Deira				
Ælle of the South Saxons	x			
<b>Æthelbald of Mercia</b>	x			
<b>Æthelberht I of Kent</b>	x			x
Æthelberht II of Kent				
<b>Æthelfrith of Northumbria</b>				
Æthelhere of the East Angles				

<b>King</b>	<b>Over-Kingship</b>	<b>Sub-Kingship</b>	<b>Kingly Rivalry/Competition</b>	<b>Dynastic Ties</b>
<b>Æthelred of Mercia</b>				X
<b>Æthelwealh of the South Saxons</b>				X
Æthelwold of the East Angles			X	
<b>Aldfrith of Northumbria</b>				
<b>Alhfrith of Deira</b>				X
Alric of Kent				
<b>Anna of the East Angles</b>			X	X
Arwald of the Isle of Wight				
<b>Cædwalla of the West Saxons</b>	X			
Ceawlin of the West Saxons	X			
<b>Cenred of Mercia</b>				
<b>Cenred of Northumbria</b>				
<b>Cenwalh of the West Saxons</b>				X
<b>Ceolred of Mercia</b>				
<b>Ceolwulf of Northumbria</b>				
Ceorl of Mercia				X



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<b>King</b>	<b>Over-Kingship</b>	<b>Sub-Kingship</b>	<b>Kingly Rivalry/Competition</b>	<b>Dynastic Ties</b>
Cwichelm of the West Saxons			x	
Cynewisl of the West Saxons				x
<b>Eadbald of Kent</b>	x		x	
Eadberht of Kent				
Eadric of Kent			x	
<b>Ealdwulf of the East Angles</b>				x
Eanfrith of Bernicia				
Eanfrith of the Hwicce				x
Eanhere of the Hwicce				x
<b>Ecgrith of Northumbria</b>	x		x	x
Ecgric of the East Angles				
<b>Edwin of Northumbria</b>	x			x
<b>Egbert of Kent</b>				
<b>Eorcenberht of Kent</b>				x
Eormenic of Kent				
<b>Eorpwold of the East Angles</b>				

<b>King</b>	<b>Over-Kingship</b>	<b>Sub-Kingship</b>	<b>Kingly Rivalry/Competition</b>	<b>Dynastic Ties</b>
Hengist of Kent				
<b>Hlothhere of Kent</b>				x
Ida of Northumbria				
<b>Ine of the West Saxons</b>	x			
Octa of Kent				
Oeric of Kent				
<b>Oethelwald of Deira</b>		x		
<b>Osred of Northumbria</b>				
<b>Osric of Deira</b>				
Osric of Northumbria				
Osric of the Hwicce				
<b>Oswald of Northumbria</b>	x		x	x
<b>Oswine of Deira</b>				
<b>Oswiu of Northumbria</b>	x		x	x
<b>Peada of Mercia</b>		x		x
<b>Penda of Mercia</b>	x		x	x

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<b>King</b>	<b>Over-Kingship</b>	<b>Sub-Kingship</b>	<b>Kingly Rivalry/Competition</b>	<b>Dynastic Ties</b>
<b>Rædwald of the East Angles</b>	x		x	
<b>Sæberht of the East Saxons</b>		x		x
Sæberht's successors (1 of 3, unnamed)				
Sæberht's successors (2 of 3, unnamed)				
Sæberht's successors (3 of 3, unnamed)				
<b>Sebbi of the East Saxons</b>		x		
Sigeberht I of the East Saxons				
Sigeberht II of the East Saxons				
<b>Sigeberht of the East Angles</b>				
Sigeheard of the East Saxons				
<b>Sigehere of the East Saxons</b>		x		
Swæfred of the East Saxons				
<b>Swithelm of the East Saxons</b>				
Un-named successors of Cenwealh of the West Saxons				
<b>Wiltred of Kent</b>				
<b>Wulfhere of Mercia</b>	x		x	

Fig.40, Activities of Kings in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* Grouped by King –Intra-Dynastic Relations

King	Succession	Dynastic Rivalry/Competition	Exile	Joint Kingship
30 kings (unnamed)				
<b>Ælfwine (of Deira ?)</b>				
Ælle of Deira				
Ælle of the South Saxons				
<b>Æthelbald of Mercia</b>				
<b>Æthelberht I of Kent</b>				
Æthelberht II of Kent	x			x
<b>Æthelfrith of Northumbria</b>		x		
Æthelhere of the East Angles	x			
<b>Æthelred of Mercia</b>	x			
<b>Æthelwealh of the South Saxons</b>				
Æthelwold of the East Angles				
<b>Aldfrith of Northumbria</b>	x			
<b>Alhfrith of Deira</b>		x		
Alric of Kent	x			x

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<b>King</b>	<b>Succession</b>	<b>Dynastic Rivalry/Competition</b>	<b>Exile</b>	<b>Joint Kingship</b>
<b>Anna of the East Angles</b>	x			
Arwald of the Isle of Wight				
<b>Cædwalla of the West Saxons</b>	x	x	x	
Ceawlin of the West Saxons				
<b>Cenred of Mercia</b>	x			
<b>Cenred of Northumbria</b>	x	x		
<b>Cenwalh of the West Saxons</b>	x		x	
<b>Ceolred of Mercia</b>	x			
<b>Ceolwulf of Northumbria</b>	x			
Ceorl of Mercia				
Cwichelm of the West Saxons				
Cynegisl of the West Saxons				
<b>Eadbald of Kent</b>	x			
Eadberht of Kent	x			x
Eadric of Kent	x	x		
<b>Ealdwulf of the East Angles</b>				

<b>King</b>	<b>Succession</b>	<b>Dynastic Rivalry/Competition</b>	<b>Exile</b>	<b>Joint Kingship</b>
Eanfrith of Bernicia	x	x	x	
Eanfrith of the Hwicce				x
Eanhere of the Hwicce				x
<b>Ecgrith of Northumbria</b>	x			
Ecgric of the East Angles	x			
<b>Edwin of Northumbria</b>	x	x	x	
<b>Egbert of Kent</b>	x			
<b>Eorcenberht of Kent</b>	x			
Eormenic of Kent				
<b>Eorpwold of the East Angles</b>	x	x		
Hengist of Kent				
<b>Hlothhere of Kent</b>	x			
Ida of Northumbria	x			
<b>Ine of the West Saxons</b>	x			
Octa of Kent				
Oeric of Kent				

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<b>King</b>	<b>Succession</b>	<b>Dynastic Rivalry/Competition</b>	<b>Exile</b>	<b>Joint Kingship</b>
<b>Oethelwald of Deira</b>		x		
<b>Osred of Northumbria</b>	x			
<b>Osric of Deira</b>	x			
Osric of Northumbria	x			
Osric of the Hwicce				
<b>Oswald of Northumbria</b>	x	x	x	
<b>Oswine of Deira</b>		x		
<b>Oswiu of Northumbria</b>	x	x		
<b>Peada of Mercia</b>	x	x		
<b>Penda of Mercia</b>				
<b>Rædwald of the East Angles</b>		x		
<b>Sæberht of the East Saxons</b>				
Sæberht's successors (1 of 3, unnamed)	x			x
Sæberht's successors (2 of 3, unnamed)	x			x
Sæberht's successors (3 of 3, unnamed)	x			x
<b>Sebbi of the East Saxons</b>	x			x

<b>King</b>	<b>Succession</b>	<b>Dynastic Rivalry/Competition</b>	<b>Exile</b>	<b>Joint Kingship</b>
Sigeberht I of the East Saxons				
Sigeberht II of the East Saxons	x	x		
<b>Sigeberht of the East Angles</b>	x	x	x	
Sigeheard of the East Saxons	x			x
<b>Sigehere of the East Saxons</b>	x			x
Swæfred of the East Saxons	x			x
<b>Swithelm of the East Saxons</b>	x			
Un-named successors of Cenwealh of the West Saxons	x	x		x
<b>Wihtried of Kent</b>	x	x		
<b>Wulfhere of Mercia</b>	x	x		

**Fig.41, Activities of Kings in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* Grouped by King – Other**

<b>King</b>	<b>Narrative Reference Point</b>	<b>Feasting</b>	<b>Consultation</b>	<b>Letters</b>	<b>Gifts</b>	<b>Edification</b>	<b>Written Laws</b>	<b>Peace and Protection</b>	<b>Itinerancy</b>
30 kings (unnamed)	x								
<b>Ælfwine (of Deira ?)</b>	x								



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<b>King</b>	<b>Narrative Reference Point</b>	<b>Feasting</b>	<b>Consultation</b>	<b>Letters</b>	<b>Gifts</b>	<b>Edification</b>	<b>Written Laws</b>	<b>Peace and Protection</b>	<b>Itinerancy</b>
Ælle of Deira	x								
Ælle of the South Saxons	x								
<b>Æthelbald of Mercia</b>	x								
<b>Æthelberht I of Kent</b>	x		x	x	x		x		
Æthelberht II of Kent									
<b>Æthelfrith of Northumbria</b>	x				x				
Æthelhere of the East Angles									
<b>Æthelred of Mercia</b>	x			x					
<b>Æthelwealh of the South Saxons</b>									
Æthelwold of the East Angles									
<b>Aldfrith of Northumbria</b>	x			x	x	x			
<b>Alhfrith of Deira</b>									
Alric of Kent									
<b>Anna of the East Angles</b>	x								

<b>King</b>	<b>Narrative Reference Point</b>	<b>Feasting</b>	<b>Consultation</b>	<b>Letters</b>	<b>Gifts</b>	<b>Edification</b>	<b>Written Laws</b>	<b>Peace and Protection</b>	<b>Itinerancy</b>
Arwald of the Isle of Wight	x								
<b>Cædwalla of the West Saxons</b>	x								
Ceawlin of the West Saxons	x								
<b>Cenred of Mercia</b>	x								
<b>Cenred of Northumbria</b>	x								
<b>Cenwalh of the West Saxons</b>	x								
<b>Ceolred of Mercia</b>	x								
<b>Ceolwulf of Northumbria</b>	x					x			
Ceorl of Mercia	x								
Cwichelm of the West Saxons									
Cynegisl of the West Saxons									
<b>Eadbald of Kent</b>	x								
Eadberht of Kent									
Eadric of Kent									
<b>Ealdwulf of the East Angles</b>	x								

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<b>King</b>	<b>Narrative Reference Point</b>	<b>Feasting</b>	<b>Consultation</b>	<b>Letters</b>	<b>Gifts</b>	<b>Edification</b>	<b>Written Laws</b>	<b>Peace and Protection</b>	<b>Itinerancy</b>
Eanfrith of Bernicia									
Eanfrith of the Hwicce	x								
Eanhere of the Hwicce	x								
<b>Ecgrith of Northumbria</b>	x				x				
Ecgric of the East Angles									
<b>Edwin of Northumbria</b>	x	x	x	x		x		x	x
<b>Egbert of Kent</b>	x				x				
<b>Eorcenberht of Kent</b>	x								
Eormenic of Kent	x								
<b>Eorpwold of the East Angles</b>	x								
Hengist of Kent	x								
<b>Hlothhere of Kent</b>	x				x				
Ida of Northumbria	x								
<b>Ine of the West Saxons</b>									
Octa of Kent	x								

<b>King</b>	<b>Narrative Reference Point</b>	<b>Feasting</b>	<b>Consultation</b>	<b>Letters</b>	<b>Gifts</b>	<b>Edification</b>	<b>Written Laws</b>	<b>Peace and Protection</b>	<b>Itinerancy</b>
Oeric of Kent	x								
<b>Oethelwald of Deira</b>									
<b>Osred of Northumbria</b>	x								
<b>Osric of Deira</b>	x								
Osric of Northumbria	x								
Osric of the Hwicce	x								
<b>Oswald of Northumbria</b>	x	x			x				
<b>Oswine of Deira</b>	x				x				
<b>Oswiu of Northumbria</b>	x			x	x				
<b>Peada of Mercia</b>	x								
<b>Penda of Mercia</b>	x								
<b>Rædwald of the East Angles</b>	x								
<b>Sæberht of the East Saxons</b>	x								
Sæberht's successors (I of 3, unnamed)									

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<b>King</b>	<b>Narrative Reference Point</b>	<b>Feasting</b>	<b>Consultation</b>	<b>Letters</b>	<b>Gifts</b>	<b>Edification</b>	<b>Written Laws</b>	<b>Peace and Protection</b>	<b>Itinerancy</b>
Sæberht's successors (2 of 3, unnamed)									
Sæberht's successors (3 of 3, unnamed)									
<b>Sebbi of the East Saxons</b>	x								
Sigeberht I of the East Saxons	x								
Sigeberht II of the East Saxons			x						
<b>Sigeberht of the East Angles</b>	x					x			
Sigeheard of the East Saxons	x								
<b>Sigehere of the East Saxons</b>	x								
Swæfred of the East Saxons	x								
<b>Swithelm of the East Saxons</b>	x								
Un-named successors of Cenwealh of the West Saxons									
<b>Wihtrred of Kent</b>	x								
<b>Wulfhere of Mercia</b>	x				x				

**IX: Activities of Kings in the Early Hagiographies****Fig.42, Activities of Kings in the *Vita sancti Cuthberti auctore anonymo***

Reference	King	Activity Associated With
III.6	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Warfare (defeat)
III.6	Aldfrith of Northumbria	Intra-dynastic relations (exile; succession)
IV.1	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Association with religion (interference); other (narrative reference point)
IV.3	Aldfrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point; relationship to followers)
IV.7	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point; relationship to followers)
IV. 8	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Warfare (defeat)

**Fig.43, Activates of Kings in the *Vita sancti Gregorii pape***

Reference	King	Activity Associated With
9	Ælle of Deira	Other (narrative reference point)
12	Æthelberht of Kent	Association with religion (conversion; baptism)
12	Edwin of Northumbria	Association with religion (conversion); extra-dynastic relations (over-kingship)
12	Ælle of Deira	Other (narrative reference point)
13	Ælle of Deira	Other (narrative reference point)
14	Edwin of Northumbria	Association with religion (general)
14	Ælle of Deira	Other (narrative reference point)
15	Edwin of Northumbria	Association with religion (baptism); other (narrative reference point)
16	Edwin of Northumbria	Association with religion (conversion); intra-dynastic relations (exile; dynastic rivalry/competition)
16	Rædwald of the East Angles	Other (narrative reference point)
16	Æthelfrith of Northumbria	Intra-dynastic relations (dynastic rivalry/competition); other (gifts)
18	Edwin of Northumbria	Association with religion (miracles; other (narrative reference point); warfare (defeat)

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18	Æthelred (of ?)	Other (narrative reference point)
19	Edwin of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)

**Fig.44, Activities of Kings in the *Vita sancti Wilfridi***

Reference	King	Activity Associated With
2	Oswiu of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point; relationship to followers)
3	Erconberht of Kent	Association with religion (support)
7	Alhfrith of Deira	Extra-dynastic relations (sub-kingship); association with religion (support); other (edification)
7	Oswiu of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
7	Cenwalh of the West Saxons	Other (narrative reference point)
8	Alhfrith of Deira	Association with religion (support, <i>Stanforda</i> and Ripon)
9	Oswiu of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
9	Alhfrith of Deira	Other (narrative reference point); association with religion (support; interference)
10	Oswiu of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point); association with religion (interference)
10	Alhfrith of Deira	Other (narrative reference point)
11	Unnamed Kings (infer Oswiu of Northumbria and Alhfrith of Deira)	Other (consultation); association with religion (interference)
12	Unnamed Kings (infer Oswiu of Northumbria and Alhfrith of Deira)	Association with religion (support; interference)
14	Oswiu of Northumbria	Association with religion (interference)
14	Wulfhere of Mercia	Association with religion (friendship; interference; support; monastery foundation)
14	Ecgbert of Kent	Association with religion (interference)
15	Unnamed King (Oswiu of Northumbria)	Other (narrative reference point)
15	Wulfhere of Mercia	Other (narrative reference point); association with religion (friendship; see foundation, Lichfield)
16	Unnamed King (Oswiu of Northumbria)	Other (narrative reference point)

<b>Reference</b>	<b>King</b>	<b>Activity Associated With</b>
16	Edwin of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point); association with religion (general)
17	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Association with religion (general; support); other (feasting)
17	Ælfwine of Deira	Association with religion (general; support); other (feasting)
19	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point); association with religion (general; advice); warfare (victory; defeat, Nechtansmere); extra-dynastic relations (over-kingship)
20	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Association with religion (general; advice); warfare (victory; territorial conquest; tribute)
20	Wulfhere of Mercia	Warfare (defeat)
21	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Warfare (territorial conquest); association with religion (general); other (narrative reference point)
21	Unnamed (generic) king	Other (relationship to followers)
24	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point); association with religion (interference; support, previous); warfare (defeat)
24	Ælfwine of Deira	Warfare (defeat)
33	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
34	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Association with religion (interference)
36	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Association with religion (interference; support); other (relationship to followers)
37	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point; relationship to followers)
38	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Association with religion (interference); other (relationship to followers)
39	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Other (itinerancy; feasting); association with religion (interference)
40	Æthelred of Mercia	Other (narrative reference point; relationship to followers); extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties); association with religion (interference)
40	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point); extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties)



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<b>Reference</b>	<b>King</b>	<b>Activity Associated With</b>
40	Centwine of the West Saxons	Extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties); association with religion (interference)
41	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Extra-dynastic relations (over-kingship)
41	Æthelwealh of the South Saxons	Association with religion (conversion; support; see foundation, Selsey)
42	Cædwalla	Warfare (victory); intra-dynastic relations (dynastic rivalry/dispute; succession); association with religion (support)
43	Aldfrith of Northumbria	Other (letters)
43	Æthelred of Mercia	Other (letters); association with religion (friendship; interference)
43	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point); association with religion (interference)
44	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Warfare (defeat, Nechtansmere)
44	Aldfrith of Northumbria	Intra-dynastic relations (succession); association with religion (interference); other (edification)
45	Aldfrith of Northumbria	Association with religion (interference)
45	Æthelred of Mercia	Association with religion (friendship; interference)
46	Aldfrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point); association with religion (interference)
47	Aldfrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point; relationship to followers); association with religion (interference)
47	Æthelred of Mercia	Other (narrative reference point)
48	Æthelred of Mercia	Association with religion (support)
51	Aldfrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
51	Æthelred of Mercia	Other (narrative reference point); association with religion (monastery foundation, various)
51	Wulfhere of Mercia	Other (narrative reference point); association with religion (monastery foundation, various)
54	Aldfrith of Northumbria	Other (letters)

Reference	King	Activity Associated With
54	Æthelred of Mercia	Other (letters)
55	Aldfrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
55	Æthelred of Mercia	Other (narrative reference point)
57	Æthelred of Mercia	Association with religion (friendship; monastic, implied; interference); other (letters)
57	Coenred of Mercia	Intra-dynastic relations (succession); association with religion (interference)
58	Æthelred of Mercia	Other (narrative reference point)
58	Aldfrith of Northumbria	Other (consultation); association with religion (interference)
59	Aldfrith of Northumbria	Association with religion (interference)
59	Oswiu of Northumbria	Narrative reference point
59	Eadwulf of Northumbria	Intra-dynastic relations (succession; dynastic rivalry/competition); association with religion (interference)
59	Osred of Northumbria	Intra-dynastic relations (succession; dynastic rivalry/competition)
60	Osred of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point; relationship to followers); association with religion (interference)
60	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point); association with religion (interference)
60	Aldfrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point); association with religion (interference)
64	Ceolred of Mercia	Association with religion (advice); other (narrative reference point)

**Fig.45, Activities of Kings in *Homily I.13 On Benedict Biscop***

Reference	King	Activity Associated With
7	Oswiu of Northumbria (inferred)	Other (relationship to followers)
8	Ecgrith of Northumbria (inferred)	Association with religion (monastery foundation, Wearmouth)

**Fig.46, Activities of Kings in the *Historia Abbatum***

Reference	King	Activity Associated With
1	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Association with religion (monastery foundation, Wearmouth; general); other (narrative reference point)
1	Oswiu of Northumbria	Other (relationship to followers; gifts)
2	Alhfrith of Deira	Association with religion (pilgrimage)
2	Oswiu of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
3	Ecgbert of Kent	Association with religion (interference)
4	Cenwalh of the West Saxons	Association with religion (friendship)
4	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
6	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Association with religion (support)
7	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Association with religion (monastery foundation, Jarrow)
8	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point; relationship to followers)
9	Aldfrith of Northumbria	Association with religion (support)
9	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
15	Aldfrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point; edification); association with religion (support)
15	Osred of Northumbria	Association with religion (support); other (narrative reference point)

**Fig.47, Activities of Kings in the *Vita Ceolfridi***

Reference	King	Activity Associated With
7	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point); association with religion (monastery foundation, Wearmouth; support)
7	Unspecified other kings (Aldfrith and Osred one suspects)	Association with religion (support)
11	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Association with religion (monastery foundation, Jarrow)

12	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point); association with religion (general; advice)
17	Aldfrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
34	Unspecified king	Other (feasting; relationship to followers; itinerancy); warfare (battle)

**Fig.48, Activities of Kings in the *Vita sancti Cuthberti auctore Beda***

Reference	King	Activity Associated With
7	Alhfrith of Deira	Other (narrative reference point); association with religion (monastery foundation, Ripon)
10	Oswiu of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
15	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point; relationship to followers)
24	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point); warfare (defeat); association with religion (interference)
24	Aldfrith of Northumbria	Intra-dynastic relations (exile; succession)
25	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point; relationship to followers)
27	Ecgrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point); warfare (defeat)

**Fig.49, Activities of Kings in the *Vita sancti Guthlaci***

Reference	King	Activity Associated With
Prologue	Ælfwald of the East Angles	Other (edification, commissioned work)
1	Æthelred of Mercia	Other (narrative reference point)
2	Icel (of Mercia?)	Other (narrative reference point)
34	Ceonred of Mercia	Other (narrative reference point)
40	Æthelbald of Mercia	Other (narrative reference point); association with religion (advice)
42	Æthelbald of Mercia	Other (narrative reference point; relationship to followers)
45	Æthelbald of Mercia	Other (narrative reference point; relationship to followers)
48	Aldwulf of the East Angles	Other (narrative reference point)

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49	Æthelbald of Mercia	Other (narrative reference point); intra-dynastic relations (exile; dynastic rivalry/competition); association with religion (general; advice)
49	Ceolred of Mercia	Other (narrative reference point); intra-dynastic relations (dynastic rivalry/competition)
51	Æthelbald of Mercia	Association with religion (support)
52	Æthelbald of Mercia	Association with religion (friendship; advice; general); intra-dynastic relations (exile; succession)

**X: Activities of Royal Women in the Narrative Sources<sup>1</sup>**

**Fig.50, Activities of Royal Women in the *Vita sancti Cuthberti auctore anonymo***

Reference	Royal Woman	Activity Associated With
II.3	Aebbe, sister of Oswiu of Northumbria, Abbess of Coldingham	Association with religions (general); other (narrative reference point; relationship to followers)
III.6	Ælflæd, daughter of Oswiu of Northumbria, Abbess of <i>Streatnæshalch</i>	Association with religion (general; interference); intra-dynastic relations (dynastic rivalry/competition); other (narrative reference point)
IV.10	Ælflæd, daughter of Oswiu of Northumbria, Abbess of <i>Streatnæshalch</i>	Association with religion (general); other (narrative reference point; feasting)

**Fig.51, Activities of Royal Women in the *Vita sancti Gregorii pape***

Reference	Royal Woman	Activity Associated With
18	Eanflæd, wife of Oswiu of Northumbria, Abbess of <i>Streatnæshalch</i>	Other (narrative reference point)
18	Ælflæd, daughter of Oswiu of Northumbria, Abbess of <i>Streatnæshalch</i>	Association with religions (general); other (narrative reference point)

**Fig.52, Activities of Royal Women in the *Vita sancti Wilfridi***

Reference	Royal Woman	Activity Associated With
2	Eanflæd, wife of Oswiu of Northumbria, Abbess of <i>Streatnæshalch</i>	Association with religions (support); other (relationship to followers)
3	Eanflæd, wife of Oswiu of Northumbria, Abbess of <i>Streatnæshalch</i>	Association with religions (support); extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties); other (relationship to followers)
10	Hild, daughter of Hereric of Deira, Abbess of <i>Streatnæshalch</i>	Association with religions (general); other (narrative reference point)

<sup>1</sup> This section utilises the same categories of activity as those detailed with respect to the activities of kings, Appendix VI, in the interests of comparability. The implications of certain categories, however, are at time slightly different. Thus, for example, with respect to the category of advice, it is not royal women being advised, but royal women advising, typically through their roles in the Church. Likewise, the category of interference often has different implications given than many of these figures held positions of authority within the church.

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Reference	Royal Woman	Activity Associated With
19	Æthelthryth, wife of Ecgfrith of Northumbria, Abbess of Ely	Association with religion (general; miracles); other (narrative reference point)
22	Æthelthryth, wife of Ecgfrith of Northumbria, Abbess of Ely	Association with religion (general; monastery foundation, Hexham)
24	Iurminburg, wife of Ecgfrith of Northumbria, Abbess	Association with religion (general; interference)
34	Iurminburg, wife of Ecgfrith of Northumbria, Abbess	Association with religions (interference); other (narrative reference point)
39	Iurminburg, wife of Ecgfrith of Northumbria, Abbess	Other (narrative reference point; itinerancy; feasting)
39	Aebbe, sister of Oswiu of Northumbria, Abbess of Coldingham	Association with religion (general; advice); other (relationship to followers)
40	Osthryth, wife of Æthelred of Mercia	Extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties); other (narrative reference point)
40	Iurminburg, wife of Ecgfrith of Northumbria, Abbess	Extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties); other (narrative reference point)
40	Wife of Centwine of the West Saxons	Extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties); other (narrative reference point)
41	Eafe, wife of Æthelwealh of the South Saxons	Other (narrative reference point)
43	Ælflæd, daughter of Oswiu of Northumbria, Abbess of <i>Streanæshalch</i>	Association with religion (general; interference); other (narrative reference point; letters)
54	Hild, daughter of Hereric of Deira, Abbess of <i>Streanæshalch</i>	Association with religions (general; interference); other (narrative reference point)
59	Ælflæd, daughter of Oswiu of Northumbria, Abbess of <i>Streanæshalch</i>	Association with religion (general); other (narrative reference point)
59	Æthelburh, possibly daughter of Anna of the East Angles, Abbess of Faremoutier-en-Brie	Other (narrative reference point)

Reference	Royal Woman	Activity Associated With
60	Ælfflæd, daughter of Oswiu of Northumbria, Abbess of <i>Streanæshalch</i>	Association with religion (general; interference); other (advice)

**Fig.53, Activities of Royal Women in the *Vita sancti Cuthberti auctore Beda***

Reference	Royal Woman	Activity Associated With
10	Aebbe, sister of Oswiu of Northumbria, Abbess of Coldingham	Association with religion (general); other (narrative reference point; relationship to followers)
23	Ælfflæd, daughter of Oswiu of Northumbria, Abbess of <i>Streanæshalch</i>	Association with religions (general); other (narrative reference point; gift)
24	Ælfflæd, daughter of Oswiu of Northumbria, Abbess of <i>Streanæshalch</i>	Association with religion (general; interference); intra-dynastic relations (dynastic rivalry/competition); other (narrative reference point)
34	Ælfflæd, daughter of Oswiu of Northumbria, Abbess of <i>Streanæshalch</i>	Association with religion (general; church foundation); other (narrative reference point)

**Fig.54, Activities of Royal Women in the *Historia ecclesiastica***

Reference	Royal Woman	Activity Associated With
<b>Book One</b>		
I.25	Bertha, wife of Æthelberht I of Kent	Association with religion (general); extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties)
<b>Book Two</b>		
II.3	Ricula, sister of Æthelberht I of Kent	Other (narrative reference point)
II.5	Bertha, wife of Æthelberht I of Kent	Other (narrative reference point)
II.9	Æthelburh, wife of Edwin of Northumbria	Association with religion (general); extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties); other (narrative reference point)
II.9	Eanflæd, wife of Oswiu of Northumbria, Abbess of <i>Streanæshalch</i>	Association with religions (baptism); other (narrative reference point)



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Reference	Royal Woman	Activity Associated With
II.11	Æthelburh, wife of Edwin of Northumbria	Other (letter)
II.14	Cwenburh, wife of Edwin of Northumbria	Extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties); other (narrative reference point)
II.14	Æthelburh, wife of Edwin of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
II.14	Æthelthryth, daughter of Edwin of Northumbria	Association with religion (baptism)
II.20	Æthelburh, wife of Edwin of Northumbria	Extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties; kingly rivalry/competition); intra-dynastic relations (dynastic rivalry/competition; exile)
II.20	Eanflæd, wife of Oswiu of Northumbria, Abbess of <i>Streanæshalch</i>	Other (narrative reference point)
<b>Book Three</b>		
III.6	Bebbe, wife of Æthelfrith of Northumbria <sup>2</sup>	Other (narrative reference point)
III.6	Acha, wife of Æthelfrith of Northumbria	Extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties); other (narrative reference point)
III.8	Eorcengota, daughter of Eorcenberht of Kent	Association with religion (general; miracles)
III.8	Sæthryth, step-daughter of Anna of the East Angles, Abbess of Faremoutier-en-Brie	Association with religion (general)
III.8	Æthelburh, daughter of Anna of the East Angles, Abbess of Faremoutier-en-Brie	Association with religion (general, church foundation; miracles)
III.8	Seaxburh, wife of Eorcenberht of Kent, Abbess of Ely	Extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties); other (narrative reference point)
III.11	Osthryth, wife of Æthelred of Mercia	Association with religion (support); extra-dynastic relations (kingly rivalry/competition; dynastic ties)
III.15	Eanflæd, wife of Oswiu of Northumbria, Abbess of <i>Streanæshalch</i>	Extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties); intra-dynastic relations

<sup>2</sup> According to *HB*, 63.

Reference	Royal Woman	Activity Associated With
		(dynastic rivalry/competition; exile); other (narrative reference point)
III.16	Bebbe, wife of Æthelfrith of Northumbria	Other (narrative reference point)
III.21	Alhflæd, wife of Peada of the Middle Angles	Extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties)
III.21	Cyneburh, wife of Alhfrith of Deira	Extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties)
III.24	Ælflæd, daughter of Oswiu of Northumbria, Abbess of <i>Streanæshalch</i>	Association with religion (general)
III.24	Cynewise, wife of Penda of Mercia	Other (narrative reference point)
III.24	Hild, daughter of Hereric of Deira, Abbess of <i>Streanæshalch</i>	Association with religion (monastery foundation, <i>Streanæshalch</i> ); other (narrative reference point; relationship to followers)
III.24	Eanflæd, wife of Oswiu of Northumbria, Abbess of <i>Streanæshalch</i>	Association with religion (support); other (narrative reference point)
III.25	Eanflæd, wife of Oswiu of Northumbria, Abbess of <i>Streanæshalch</i>	Association with religion (general); other (relationship to followers)
<b>Book Four</b>		
IV.3	Æthelthryth, wife of Ecgrith of Northumbria, Abbess of Ely	Other (narrative reference point; relationship to followers)
IV.13	Eafe, wife of Æthelwealh of the South Saxons	Association with religion (general; baptism); extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties)
IV.19	Æthelthryth, wife of Ecgrith of Northumbria, Abbess of Ely	Association with religion (general; monastery foundation, Ely; miracles; friendship); extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties)
IV.19	Aebbe, sister of Oswiu of Northumbria, Abbess of Coldingham	Other (narrative reference point)
IV.19	Seaxburh, wife of Eorcenberht of Kent, Abbess of Ely	Association with religion (support); extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties)

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Reference	Royal Woman	Activity Associated With
IV.20	Æthelthryth, wife of Ecgfrith of Northumbria, Abbess of Ely	Association with religion (general; miracles)
IV.21	Osthryth, wife of Æthelred of Mercia	Extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties); other (narrative reference point)
IV.22	Æthelthryth, wife of Ecgfrith of Northumbria, Abbess of Ely	Other (narrative reference point; relationship to followers)
IV.22	Seaxburh, wife of Eorcenberht of Kent, Abbess of Ely	Extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties); other (narrative reference point)
IV.23	Hild, daughter of Hereric of Deira, Abbess of <i>Streanæshalch</i>	Association with religion (general; conversion; support; monastery foundation, <i>Streanæshalch</i> ; miracles); extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties)
IV.23	Hereswith, wife of Æthilric of the East Angles	Association with religion (general); extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties)
IV.23	Breguswith, wife of Hereric of Deira	Other (narrative reference point)
IV.25	Aebbe, sister of Oswiu of Northumbria, Abbess of Coldingham	Association with religions (general); other (narrative reference point)
IV.26	Ælflæd, daughter of Oswiu of Northumbria, Abbess of <i>Streanæshalch</i>	Association with religions (general); other (narrative reference point)
IV.26	Eanflæd, wife of Oswiu of Northumbria, Abbess of <i>Streanæshalch</i>	Other (narrative reference point)
<b>Book Five</b>		
V.19	Wife of Offa of the East Saxons	Other (narrative reference point)
V.19	Eanflæd, wife of Oswiu of Northumbria, Abbess of <i>Streanæshalch</i>	Association with religion (support); extra-dynastic relations (dynastic ties); other (relationship to followers)
V.24	Eanflæd, wife of Oswiu of Northumbria, Abbess of <i>Streanæshalch</i>	Association with religion (baptism); other (narrative reference point)

Reference	Royal Woman	Activity Associated With
V.24	Hild, daughter of Hereric of Deira, Abbess of <i>Streanæshalch</i>	Other (narrative reference point)
V.24	Osthryth, with of Æthelred of Mercia	Intra-dynastic relations (dynastic rivalry/competition); other (narrative reference point)

**Fig.55, Activities of Royal Women in the *Vita sancti Guthlaci***

Reference	Royal Woman	Activity Associated With
48	Ecgburh, daughter of Aldwulf of the East Angles, Abbess	Association with religion (general); other (gift)
50	Pega, Guthlac's sister	Association with religion (general); other (narrative reference point)
50	Ecgburh, daughter of Aldwulf of the East Angles, Abbess	Other (narrative reference point; gift)
51	Pega, Guthlac's sister	Association with religion (general; support); other (narrative reference point)
53	Pega, Guthlac's sister	Other (narrative reference point)

**XI: Names and Associated Hides in the Tribal Hidage**

<i>Myrcna landes</i> <sup>1</sup>	Mercia <sup>2</sup>	30,000
<i>Wocen sætna</i>	Wroecensæte	7,000
<i>Westerna</i>		7,000
<i>Pecsætna</i>	Peak Dwellers	1,200
<i>Elmed sætna</i>	Elmet	600
<i>Lindesfarona mid Hæth feldlande</i>	Lindsey with Hatfield	7,000
<i>Suth Gyrwa</i>	South Gyrwe	600
<i>North Gyrwa</i>	North Gyrwe	600
<i>East Wixna</i>	Wisbech, Cambridgeshire	300
<i>West Wixna</i>	Wisbech, Cambridgeshire	600
<i>Spalda</i>		600
<i>Wigesta</i>		900
<i>Herefinna</i>		1,200
<i>Sweord ora</i>	Sword Point, Huntingdonshire	300
<i>Gifla</i>	River Ivel, Buckinghamshire	300
<i>Hicca</i>	Hitchin, Hertfordshire	300
<i>Whit gara</i>	Isle of Wight	600
<i>Noxgaga</i>		5,000
<i>Ohtgaga</i>		2,000
<i>Hwinca</i>	Hwicce	7,000
<i>Ciltern sætna</i>	Chiltern Dwellers	4,000
<i>Hendrica</i>		3,500
<i>Unecung(a)ga</i>		1,200

<sup>1</sup> The spellings given, and used elsewhere, are those of Recension A. Recension B differs to Recension A in respect to a number of spellings, the order of the *Eastwilla* and *Westwilla*, and the attribution to the *Hendrica* of 3,000 instead of 3,500 hides. Recension C differs more substantially, again reversing *Eastwilla* and *Westwilla*, and providing variant spellings, as well as omitting entries for the *West Wixna*, *Widerigga*, and the West Saxons, giving alternate hidages for the *Pecsætna*, *Wigesta*, *Herefinna*, *Hendrica*, and attributing the assessment of the West Saxons at 100,000 hides to the South Saxons. Recension C, and probably also B, are Latin texts: Rumble, 'Recension C of the Tribal Hidage', pp. 14-23; Dumville, 'Tribal Hidage', pp. 225-30.

<sup>2</sup> The identifications are based upon: Hill, *Atlas of Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 76-77; Davies and Vierck, 'Contexts of Tribal Hidage', pp. 227-36; Hart, 'Tribal Hidage', pp. 135-56. Further: Featherstone, 'Tribal Hidage and the Ealdormen of Mercia', pp. 24-27; Keynes, 'England, 700-900', pp. 21-23. Those omitted indicate the instances where no identification is possible.

<i>Arosætna</i>	River Arrow, Warwickshire	600
<i>Færpinga</i>	Charlbury, Oxfordshire	300
<i>Bilmiga</i>		600
<i>Widerigga</i>	Wittering and Werrington, Northamptonshire	600
<i>Eastwilla</i>		600
<i>Westwilla</i>		600
<i>East Engle</i>	East Angles	30,000
<i>Eastsexena</i>	East Saxons	7,000
<i>Cantwarena</i>	Kent	15,000
<i>Suthsexena</i>	South Saxons	7,000
<i>Westsexena</i>	West Saxons	100,000

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