Signifying Kingship in Anglo-Saxon England: the visual languages of power and authority c. 500-1000

Vol. 1 of 2

Heidi Lea Stoner

Doctor of Philosophy

University of York

History of Art

September 2015

ABSTRACT

This thesis will determine what can be considered 'kingly' imagery before depictions of individual kings began to appear in the art of late Anglo-Saxon England. To accomplish this, contemporary texts, vernacular and Latin, are examined alongside the artefacts and materials that survive from the earlier period (*c*. 500-900) in order to inclue consideration of the widest possible corpus of what could be considered the image of a king. Thus close attention will be given to the objects associated with kingship: such as helmets, swords, rings and harps. Further, the places of the king – the sites where kingship was enacted – such as the Great Hall Complex and the (idea of the) throne, will be examined. Together these will enable the visual contexts of (secular) kingship in this early period to be reconstructed. In closing, these contexts will be further elucidated by consideration of the biblical ideals of kingship that circulated in the region at this time; here images of the Magi of the New Testament, the Old Testament figure David, and Christ will be examined and the ways in which they were appropriated to articulate power and authority in ways particularly appropriate to Anglo-Saxon concepts of kingship will be set out. Overall, it will be demonstrated that by examining the material and visual culture of kings, insight can be gained into the ways in which stylized concepts and abbreviated iconographies were used to express ideas of kingship as a constant throughout the period.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

VOLUME 1

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank Jane Hawkes for her unwavering support from early days to the completion of this thesis. If not for her encouragement, *frodum wordum* and care this thesis would not have been completed. Both the History of Art department and the Centre for Medieval studies have provided an excellent environment to foster this research in a challenging, yet collegial atmosphere. I have been privileged to write this PhD in such intellectually generous company.

I would like those scholars who have been kind enough to share their research with me thorough the course of my studies. Particular thanks are due to Elizabeth Alexander, Mike Bintley, Ellen Pilsworth, and Gabor Thomas. I would like to further thank Guy Halsall and Jeanne Nuechterlein for many conversations about my work and their support, this thesis is all the better for their advice. Special thanks are due to Meg Boulton, Dale Kedwards, Vicky Flood, Nik Gunn, Jennie England, Sam Barber and James Harland who all, at different stages, read parts of this work or answered frantic questions and provided feedback, engaged criticism and encouragement which have made me grow as a scholar, for which I will always be grateful.

My deepest thanks are owed to my family for their support and encouragement, allowing me to go far and always supporting my choices. But lastly, I would like to dedicate this thesis to the Harbor family, a chosen family, who are a source of constant support, love and reassurance.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis, and the research on which it is based, is my own work. Where reference is made to the works of others, the extent to which that work has been used is indicated and duly acknowledged in the text and bibliography. This work has not been already accepted in substance for any degree, nor is it being concurrently submitted in candidature at any other university, or for any other degree.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This study seeks to identify the ways in which kingship was signified and visualised in Anglo-Saxon England, *c.* 500–1000, during the period when recognisable kingdoms became established. Specifically, it will consider the visual articulations of the material culture associated with kingship, from high status burials to depictions of biblical kings.

The Early Middle Ages, in England as elsewhere in northern Europe, are characterised by transitions from the Roman Empire to medieval Christian kingdoms.[1] Thus studies often present the period as one of inevitable transition, and the movement from Empire to kingdom is treated as a teleological and directed process; while the paucity of evidence tends to favour overall grand narrative, rather than considering the situation in the various regions as discrete histories. The notions of kingship as it is understood within these scholarly traditions, is deemed to have developed almost simultaneously across medieval Europe, and while this overall trend, and its socio-political context, is important to the development of kingship, it belies the variety and difference that may have existed in an organic process of development.

Although the visual languages of kingship in England certainly emerged as part of these overall developments, their variety and individuality are integral to the process and the ways in which the notions of kingship developed? In the visual culture of Anglo-Saxon England, we encounter various types of kingship that were both fixed and subject to change, and. identifiable trends that can be seen to be developing and changing through time. These, of course, are not wholly representative of the ways in which kingship was

---

[1] Hunter-Blair, 1956; Campbell, 1982; Hooke, 1998; Hamerow, 2002; Charles-Edwards, 2003; Rollason, 2003; Davies, Halsall and Reynolds, 2006; Lees and Overing, 2006; Petts and Turner, 2011.

signified, but identifying and tracing them provides important insights: into the factors informing the manner in which kingship changed across this period, and its unique characteristics. These contribute to our understanding of not just how, politically, kingship was referenced, but also how it engaged with and emerged from a wider social consciousness. Kingship was a phenomenon of which members of Anglo-Saxon society, at its various levels, were aware, and with which they had a personal and positional relationship.

In order to identify and study these factors it is necessary both to negotiate the ways in which visual and material culture were manifested in public consciousness, and to come to some understanding of how they can therefore be identified. Visual languages do not exist in isolation. They are apparent within the written word, within histories, within the archaeological record as well as visual depictions. They can be diverse, abstracted, realistic, figural and non-figural. It is necessary to consider all these aspects in order to have a complete understanding of how the various trends of kingship were made manifest.

Visuality made up of things that can be seen, it is the appearance of material culture in combination with the process of seeing combined with the setting and placement of what is being seen. Visuality forms part of the seen context, or the conditions of seeing that is made up of the thing that is being seen and setting that the thing is seen in. Language is about communication and communicating ideas, this can be done through words and meaning, but also through the articulation of ideas through the means of the visual. Material culture is a physical record of the culture of a time and place; be that, objects or art.[2] Material culture contributes to our understanding of a culture by providing information about all the tangible aspects of life. Material culture also encompasses visual culture or visuality, the things that are seen that contribute to the defining of culture.[3]

---

[2] As defined by the OED.
[3] As defined by the OED.

Materiality is the physical and tangible aspects of something, while visuality is the thing being seen.[4]

This thesis intends to study objects within their visual context and that objects are both visually arresting and ideologically charged, and thus, this thesis will take the full spectrum of possibilities into account. Following this, the thesis will look at high-status objects and their ability, utilise visual language, to communicate to its contemporary audiences. In some instances this visual language is only identified in a seen context, which broadly defined is both the setting and environment that an object is seen in, as well as the set of cultural associations that a viewer has to be able to understand the language being presented. This thesis seeks to interpret and translate some aspects of this process gaining access to the visual language as it may have signified the idea of kingship in the medieval mind in the early medieval period. The medieval mind, has been extensively theorised by Mary Caruthers and it is through an extension of that work that this thesis, in the tradition of many other art historians, will take as a methodological beginning that objects are visual, have a visuality and thus can take part in a visual language.[5]

To do this it is necessary to access the culture and meanings that surround these objects, which for the purposes of this thesis, will be the texts of the contemporary period as well as the surviving material record. The limitations of this approach will be that the selection processes of case studies does not exhaust the complete archaeological record nor will it fully examine the entirety of culture presented in the textual record. This is a necessary disparity as neither the textual nor material record is complete, they are not always complementary and there is a limit to our ability to interpret a culture that we have no direct access to. This is not to say that we will be unable to access any aspect of the

---

[4] See Webster and Backhouse, 1991; Carrruthers; 2000; Webster, 2012; Boulton, unpublished PhD thesis, 2013; Boulton and Hawkes, 2013:1-30.

[5] Carruthers, 2000. Although this concept can be deemed problematic, this phrase is used by Carruthers, throughout her work on how memory, thought and conceptualisation functioned from antiquity and through the later middle ages. It is used here to emphasise the manner in which medieval thought is conceptualised, see also Hawkes, 2003. Boulton, Hawkes and Herman, 2015.

culture, but to recognise that there are limitations. The idea of kingship presents itself as a potential thematic approach to the period by means of the text; there is no archeologically certain evidence for kingship. It is for this reason much of this study into the idea of kingship is guided by the text.

To this end, this thesis will take a broadly art historical approach, focusing on the visuality of the early medieval period, considering the influences and impacts of visual languages articulating themes of kingship in Anglo-Saxon England. This will be undertaken, not as an exclusively (art historical) disciplinary approach, but rather one that crosses the boundaries of traditional disciplines, accessing material culture by means of the ways in which it was demonstrated in practice: in other words, through text, and visual and material presence and absence. It will thus consider evidence drawn from beyond the physical material culture and visual images of Anglo-Saxon England, in order to gain access to wider social meanings, from the more abstract concepts by means of which material culture and ideas were related to people's world view; to the means they adopt to grapple with their socio-political systems.

Furthermore, this study seeks to study kingship as an idea, not as a particular reality tied to any individual king or kingdom. It goes without saying, therefore, that individual lived experiences will differ greatly from those described here. This study does not seek to associate specific objects with specific individuals; rather it will explore notions of kingship that transcended individuals, but which were nevertheless linked by the fact that they were current within a shared geographical region and time period: that known collectively as Anglo-Saxon England. This approach is not without its flaws as geographic boundaries are permeable; ideas do not simply cease at any one border at any given point, but with this caveat in mind it does nevertheless offer some potential and is keeping with a number of studies of the time and region. The temporal boundaries therefore (*c.* 500–1000) encompass the material culture current before the end of the reign of Alfred (d. 899),

focusing specifically on the period before depictions of kings, as kings, began to appear in the art of early medieval England. This will allow full consideration of the varying development of kingship, as opposed to depending on standardised depictions based on wider European trends. For, by the time kings came to be depicted – initially within a manuscript tradition – a fixed and unvaried notion of kingship had already been formed. By focussing on the period before kings were depicted it is hoped that the origins and processes informing kingship as it came to be articulated in the tenth century can be elucidated.

For the purposes of this study, the idea of 'kingship' is treated as an abstract. It does not include consideration of actions undertaken by a 'king' in relation to phenomena such as governance or political structures; rather, it is treated as a concept, and so is more ambiguous in its definition. Many studies have, of course, sought to define kingship in terms of its practicalities, and these have informed understanding of how 'kingly' rule was practiced in the early medieval world.[6] Although indebted to these, in seeking to elucidate the idea of kingship, this study deemed it more useful to interrogate the primary sources and examine how the notion of kinship was variously conceptualised in this period, rather than offer a firm definition of what kingship is or is not when, or as practised by specific individuals. This choice, nor any scholarly methodology, is without criticism; in keeping with this, the implications of this choice might risk idealism that is inherently corruptible. However, what this study is interested in, therefore, is what the cultural significance of the role of king might have been as expressed and materialised through visuality, rather than what individual kings did.

Kings, for the purposes of this study, are those identified as such in the textual sources and the materials identified with them. For example, the settings of kingship discussed here have been chosen on the basis that they are those most often identified with

---

[6] See further below.

kingship in the poetic tradition; likewise, the materials selected are those that have been associated with kingship in the textual record. While it is acknowledged that this may take a fairly teleological bias, and does not necessarily address every aspect of the visual culture of kingship, it is guided by the primary sources (textual, material and visual) and the ideological definitions of kings that are implicit within this cultural record. One area where this is problematic is the archaeological record: burials, particularly, cannot necessarily be directly associated with individual kings and so are more often defined as 'princely' or 'high-status' by the excavators reporting their finds.[7] These labels are rightly and justifiably applied and equally are accepted with caution when considering the individuals buried, but they are not necessarily to be precluded from a discussion of the *idea* of kingship. Thus, when considering such artefacts, this study does not seek to definitively associate any object with an individual king named in the historical record, but rather argues, based on the material record, for that which might be idiomatic of the status of kingship, and related to the visual and material expression of that elite status. It is this that contributes to our understanding of the idea of kingship. Against this background this study culminates in a discussion of how biblical kings are depicted in light of the material culture of secular kingship. This is undertaken on the understanding that in the illustrations these identifiable biblical kings, the Magi, David and Christ, are not depicted as individuals, but rather as emblematic. Their visual representation therefore complements and further elucidates the view taken in this study that the presentations of the secular kings of Anglo-Saxon England are similarly emblematic and can be accessed through a wide variety of material culture.

This study is one of kingship from *c*. 500–1000 and as such overlaps with the processes of conversion and the Viking Age. The thrust of this research examines the material evidence of kingship as shaped by the culture that develops over this period and in

---

[7] Webster, 1992:75-82; Carver, 1998: 53.

texts that are largely preserved in a fully Christian society. That being said many of the objects that will be discussed come from burial contexts that might be conceived as 'pagan' and some approaches to the early forms of kingship might be what is termed 'sacral' kingship.[8] Paganism, or pre-Christian beliefs are a difficult thing to access, as there is no textual evidence of actual practice, however pre-Christian beliefs have been well studied, and have been a consistent theme throughout the long historiography of the Anglo-Saxons.[9] Scholarship on practice such as Sanmark's reconstruction of wide-reaching ancestor cults has been moderated by Shaw's linguistic approach to the limitation of evidence.[10] Zoomorphic art has been given particular attention towards its possible pagan significances. Objects like the Sutton Hoo helmet have received particular attention, such as Price and Mortimer's recent argument about the unique construction of the eye on the helmet, as well as other eye based modifications relating to the narrative of the pre-Christian god Odin, while the axe-hammer from Sutton Hoo has been related to sacral leadership by Dobat.[11] While there is no reason to assume that the pre-Christian society did not have a sophisticated concept of kingship that was no doubt linked to their beliefs and identity, this has been subsumed and incorporated into a Christianized society, and as Carver argues, 'Christianity becomes the protector of the pre-Christian'.[12] However, kingship is neither Christian nor Pagan, rather it is both. It is too simplistic and heavy handed to suggest that kingship is 'secular' and thus completely divorced from all belief systems, and as this thesis will argue, it becomes intrinsically linked with the Christian worldview; but to suggest that it is entirely 'pagan', 'sacral' or 'Christian' in nature might also divorce the idea of kingship from its longer lasting social and political aspects. Carver identified the question of whether an individual king is Christian or pagan is a non-

---

[8] See Loyn, 1984; Enright, 2006.
[9] Content and Williams, 2010:181-196.
[10] Sanmark, 2010: 158–176; Shaw, 2011.
[11] Price and Mortimer, 2014: 517-38; Dobat, 2006: 880-893.
[12] Carver, 2010: 3.

question, and suggests that it 'begs of individualized identity politics', which this thesis wholly agrees with.[13] It is, thus, argued that while kingship necessarily has links to the Christian worldview in examples of depictions of biblical kingship this is not taken as the sole inspiration or an inherent necessity for the development of kingship. Rather, religious phenomena is a circumstantial reality of the middle ages which is ever present; Christianity has the distinction of being a editorialised, in contrast the 'pagan belief systems' which is largely inaccessible due both to not having religious texts and not being a belief system of dogma, having no know central authority prescribing a set of principals to be universally adhered to.[14]

Kingship, ruler-ship and lord-ship are terms often used interchangeably within the scholarship. Kingship is gendered as masculine and falls under the lexical umbrella of 'ruler-ship' which might, however, include queens in certain circumstances. This is the manner in which Karkov, for instance, has utilised the term.[15] While it might be argued that this term is more appropriate given is all-inclusiveness, and there are certainly words within the corpus of Old English that might cover this sort of neutrality, this is not a nuance that is necessarily representative of the culture of the Early Middle Ages when queens did not rule as individuals in their own right. Some certainly had considerable power, as in Karkov's example of Emma, but use of the term 'ruler-ship' imposes a level of vagueness that is not warranted. Kings held a specific social status, they are of a specific gender and while OE terms such as *Rice,* or authority, can be applied to kings these are generally invoked as synonyms required by the poetic demands of the alliterative line; they do not signify distinctions in the role of kingship. [16] Lord-ship, on the other hand, unlike ruler-ship, functions as a sub-set of kingship: all kings are lords but not all lords are kings. In the later medieval period lords were, of course, part of a more rigidly defined

---

[13] Carver, 2010: 3.
[14] See Carver, Sanmark and Semple, 2010; Shaw, 2011.
[15] Karkov, 2005: 1-10.
[16] As defined by Bosworth Toller Anglo-Saxon dictionary.

feudal system, which was, essentially, an economic system[17]. This, however, is not necessarily the case in Anglo-Saxon England where there is, furthermore, a received nuance to the term 'lord', largely born out of religious texts.[18] Thus, generally speaking, 'lord' is used when describing a personal relationship, specifically defining allegiance owed. Kingship, on the other hand, bears connotations of governance, systems of judgment, law or military leadership, and in Anglo-Saxon England this too could operate within a biblical frame of reference: Christ is called king, in several instances, but particularly, when he is enthroned in judgment. As these words are so intimately related in their frames of reference 'kingship' has been selected here specifically because a king is both a ruler and a lord.

Before turning to this, however, it is necessary to outline the current scholarship on the subject, as well as contemporary (Anglo-Saxon) accounts, in order both to clarify the (pre-) conceptions underpinning our current understanding of kingship, which it will be necessary to negotiate in the course of this study, and to establish how kingship was perceived in the literature of the time. Initially, therefore, the most recent studies of kingship in Anglo-Saxon England will be outlined,[19] followed by the scholarship on the contemporary textual sources of real (and imagined) kingship preserved in Anglo-Saxon texts.[20]

---

[17] Bloch, 1961; Hobsbawn, 1964: 9-66.

[18] The word derives from the OE *hlaford* (*hlaf*: loaf + *ord*: sword), meaning 'the one who cuts the loaf' – and so wields the power (in the household)

[19] A full historiography of kingship will not be presented here as the aim of this study is to present the material and visual evidence and situate it within the currrent scholarship. A full historiography of the subject would be a thesis in its own right.

[20] Ecclesiastical treatises, such as Bede's commentaries on the Temple, the Tabernacle, Genesis or Ezra, include many sections that might be considered commentaries on kingship, yet is difficult to identify which comments refer directly to the particular biblical individuals under discussion, as opposed to kingship in general. Thus, within Bede's *Thirty Questions on the Book of Kings*, written as a series of responses to questions put to him by Nothhel, a priest from London, Bede never seems to consider the kings within the Book as analogous to the figures he records in his *Historia Ecclesiatica*. This is perhaps best explained by the function of these works, which is primarily scriptural with an ecclesiastical leadership in mind, rather than 'secular', and produced for 'lay' readers.

1.2 Scholarly Approaches to Anglo-Saxon Kingship

1.2a 'The Art Historians'

The discipline of art history has historically studied the Anglo-Saxon styles, taxonomised and categorised them and placed them as antecedents to the arrival of classical traditions.[21] This study has been focused on form and rigidly defining styles, such as the work of T.D. Kendrick *on Anglo-Saxon Art to 900* and *Late Saxon and Viking Age Art.*[22] The study of the metal work has been dominated by the so-called Salin Styles– named for Bernhard Salin's work– with Speak taking on this tradition nearly eighty years on.[23] Kendrick preferred different names, ribbon and helmet, as opposed to style I and II, but to the extent of a differing interpretation the work focused on the taxonomising of the material culture as a scientific process rather than its symbolic significance or function within the culture. For sculpture, antiquarians often treated the source material as evidence for state formation, and the field of study is dominated by primacy and dating, and the dating of styles, like that of the metal work.[24] Collingwood, for example, while primarily focused on style, began to categorise scenes however it is only biblical and figurative scenes that are afforded complexity in their interpretation. Abstractions of pattern, zoomorphic imagery and form have historically been treated as decorative and not fully incorporated into the interpretation of the art. The catalogues of Anglo-Saxon art interpret objects according to the received historical narratives presenting a range of objects without treating these objects as capable of complex visual language, but rather divided them by geographic

---

[21] Boulton, Hawkes and Herman, 2015; Halsall, unpublished work, presented at the Portable Antiquities Scheme symposium on the Staffordshire Hoard, 2010 and the Sixth International Insular Arts conference, York, 2011 available in various forms on his academic blog: https://600transformer.blogspot.co.uk/2010/05/the-staffordshire-hoard-warfare.html.
[22] Kendrick, 1938; Kendrick, 1949.
[23] See Salin, 1904; Speake, 1982.
[24] See Collingwood, 0000 and Henri, 0000.

location, chronology or material.[25] Modern catalogues and assessments of the art of the Anglo-Saxons have begun to redress this by treating the art of the Anglo-Saxons as complex, and it is this treatment that has allowed for studies to develop in many complex ways.[26] However, in regards to 'secular' kingship and the idea of kingship there has been little study done in comparison with later medieval periods. The most recent exemption to this is a study by Catherine Karkov.

Karkov's work is not only the most recent art historical approach to kingship, it is one of the few devoted to the subject, but also focuses on ruler portraits in Anglo-Saxon England produced in the later period (871-1066), by considering and the image of the ruler in five manuscript 'portraits.' Through these she seeks to elucidate what the images reveal about the rulers of Anglo-Saxon England. She uses the term 'ruler' rather than king because one of the historical figures portrayed in this very limited source material is Emma / Ælfgifu, the wife of King Cnut (985/995-1035). She argues that these surviving portraits not only provide insight into the idea of kingship but also to that of ruling England. Emma (985-1052) had the unique experience of having been married to two kings of England and mother to two others, giving her a unique position of power or 'ruler-ship' in Anglo-Saxon England.

Karkov does invoke other images alongside the manuscripts miniatures, and other popular Anglo-Saxon artworks to help create a visual tradition of the late Anglo-Saxon period: the Alfred Jewel, the seals of Edith and Edward, and the Cuthbert embroideries, for instance. She also uses coinage to supplement her arguments about the images of kings but does not consider them individual 'portraits', the term she uses to refer to a visual representation or likeness, as well as texts related to a king, that create a characterization. At times, this

---

[25] See Hinton, 1974; Alexander, 1978; Wilson, 1984; Dodwell, 1982; Backhouse, Janet, Turner, and Webster, 1984; Backhouse and Webster, 1991.
[26] Hawkes, 1989; Hawkes, 1996; Nees, 2002; Karkov and Hardin Brown, 2003; Karkov and Orton, 2003; Brown, 2007; Karkov, 2011; Webster, 2012; Boulton and Hawkes, 2013; Boulton and Stoner, forthcoming; Bintley and Boulton, forthcoming.

leads to some confusion as the difference between visual or textual evidence is muddled. For instance, Karkov discusses a textual portrait that encompasses a 'reading' of how a set of texts associated with a king can enable deductions to be made or inferences to be drawn about him. In this way, she uses material objects, visual depictions and historic texts to elucidate a supposed 'ruler portrait', which together are intended to detail what we know historically about Anglo-Saxon kings. Karkov seems to use a definition of portrait that meets with a traditional definition: namely that it is a 'likeness' of an identifiably individual. The idea of a portrait is a fixed one in the discourse of art history. The degree to which a figure is considered a portrait is often made with a series of factors in mind: first, is this figure based on the genuine physical appearance of the individual meant to be depicted? Second, is this figure identified in some way? And, third, is this a 'real' person?[27] Karkov is effectively hamstrung by this point. Coins may feature portraiture, Roman coins are regularly identified as portraits as a single emperor's look will change over time: father and son are distinguishable from one and other. However, this is not the case in Anglo-Saxon England, while some might argue that a coin has a portrait by an Anglo-Saxon king, because they are not as 'well-crafted' in the classical sense, the features are not as distinct, many of them are copies of a type of image and this do not seem to be a 'likeness' of a 'real' person.[28] It is for this reason that Karkov focuses on the manuscript images; they have more detail that can be seen as identifiable, they follow traditional art-historically defined principals of being a 'likeness'.

Her argument proceeds chronologically, using many textual sources to explain the figures in her five main images. She begins, however, with Alfred, King of Wessex from

---

[27] This extends to figures like evangelists, who are not given a true likeness but are considered as historical figures (See N. Baker, unpublished PhD Thesis, 2012).

[28] See Gannon, 2003; 52. Gannon's argument is based on a similar definition of portrait to that Karkov uses in her introductory materials (See Karkov, 2005.) And while, this definition has been problematized seeking to redefine 'portrait' within the classical tradition is beyond the remit of this thesis. Gannon and Karkov's work does however challenge this stereotype, demonstrating that the notion of 'likeness' does not necessarily have primacy in various visual traditions.

871–899, who is not depicted in any manuscript, and discusses the possible representation of the figure in the Alfred Jewel, assuming it to be the king (Fig. 1), setting this alongside the images on the coins associated with his reign. She does not discuss how an inlaid jewel depicting a human form can be considered to be a specific likeness of a king; neither does she take an 'art-historical' or archaeological approach to this piece or the numismatic evidence. Furthermore, she does not discuss the object in an historical context and only briefly addresses the materiality of the Jewel, where it may have been placed, and how it may have been used. Instead, she uses the text of the *Regula Pastorialis* to create a literary portrait of Alfred. This allows Karkov to describe what kind of king he may have been – based on his use of book and text – and to set out the role of the king as an 'author' or promoter of a text.

With this introduction, the first substantive chapter concerns Æthelstan (924-939), the first Anglo-Saxon king to be depicted and identified in a manuscript (Fig. 2).[29] This shows Æthelstan presenting a manuscript to the figure of St Cuthbert, and so records the king's donation of the manuscript to the Cuthbert Community.[30] The link between king and book, introduced through Alfred, is thus continued here, and indeed forms the focus of Karkov's study, being identified by her as a key and unique factor of depictions of Anglo-Saxon kings. As far as the Æthelstan 'portrait' is concerned, she highlights the similarity of the corpus illumination to that of a missing picture illustrating a similar donation from an unknown figure to Cuthbert from British Library MS Otho B.ix, mentioned in an antiquarian record before its loss, and images of Carolingian kings. From these comparisons she is able to identify certain thematic differences and possible associations found in another manuscript, Cambridge, Corpus Christi MS 183, such as Cuthbert as a

---

[29] Cambridge: Corpus Christi College Library, MS 183, fol. iv, Bede's Life of Cuthbert, *c*. 934 (Temple, 1976: 37-38, cat. no. 6)
[30] Karkov, 2005: 55

Christ figure, the imperial role that the donation of books might illustrate, and the attributes of kingship.

She pursues these ideas by comparing the position of the depicted book held by Æthelstan to that illustrated in the *c.* 698-720 Matthew portrait in the Lindisfarne Gospels (Fig. 3).[31] This depicts three figures with books: the winged symbol in the upper left-hand corner, the evangelist symbol of a man; Matthew himself; and the much-debated figure behind the curtain, which scholars have recently identified as a potential Moses figure.[32] Citing Bonita Cox's unpublished PhD dissertation, Karkov claims that the positioning the open book and the pose of Matthew holding it are similar to those adopted by Æthelstan in presenting the book to Cuthbert. She then asserts that this is a potential reference to the evangelical nature of the gift of books. By this means, she claims for Æthelstan the position of earthy promoter of Christ, a claim she supports by identifying of the figure behind the curtain in the Mathew portrait as St Cuthbert.[33] This, she argues, allegorically relates Cuthbert to the figure of Christ as the one receiving the Lindisfarne Gospels and therefore, further implies that Æthelstan is an evangelical figure presenting a copy of the *Life of Cuthbert* to the saint, who Christ-like, receives the open book containing the details of his life.

The second substantive chapter is dedicated to Edgar (957-975), of whom there are two extant manuscript depictions. The first of these, in the *New Minster Charter*,[34] shows him directly beneath Christ in Majesty and presenting him with a gold book, the charter itself (Fig. 4). In this image Christ and Edgar are naturally compared, as they are visually related on the page, with Christ directly above Edgar, the two of them forming a vertical line through the middle of the composition. Christ is identified by his inscribed cruciform

---

[31] London: BL, Cotton Nero D. IV fol. 25v, Lindisfarne Gospel, *c.* 715-20 (Alexander, 1979: 40, cat. no. 9)
[32] For further discussion see Brown, 2003; Henderson, 1987.
[33] Karkov, 2005: 59-61; Cox, 1995, unpublished PhD thesis.
[34] London: BL, MS Cotton Vespasian A.viii, fol. 2v, New Minster Charter, *c.*966 (Temple, 1976: 44, cat. no. 16)

nimbus, while Edgar wears an earthly and royal crown. Turning to look up at Christ Edgar

holds out his book and gestures upward, taking much of the visual weight of the miniature;

Christ, also holding a golden book, is enclosed in a mandorla and blesses Edgar below

him. As the book Edgar presents is that which contains the miniature, the image creates a

visual pun in which the book is depicted within itself and juxtaposed against a book, which

might refer to another: the Book of Judgment. This creates a neat relationship between the

laws that Edgar presents within the New Minster Charter and the laws and Judgment of

Christ.

The second extant depiction of Edgar included by Karkov is contained within a

copy of *Regularis Concordia* (Fig. 5),[35] and depicts him sitting, possibly enthroned, within

an architectural setting alongside Æthelwold and Dunstan, Bishops of Winchester (963–

984) and London (*c.* 958), respectively. This depiction is identified as visually similar to a

depiction of Otto III enthroned within the Aachen Gospel of *c.* 975 (Fig. 6).[36] Both portray

the ruler seated with a scroll unfurled across their bodies. Karkov argues that Edgar in the

Cotton Tiberius depiction, is setting forth or 'authoring' the text of an earthly law, and so

can be considered as Christ-like; who as a Christ figure sets forth the eternal law in "a

union of temporal and spiritual".[37]

The final substantive chapter focuses on the two depictions of Ælfgifu / Emma and

Cnut. Karkov argues that the prominence given to Emma as a Marian figure in both British

Library MS Stowe 944, the New Minster and Hyde *Liber Vitae*,[38] and British Library MS

Add. 33241, the Encomium of Emma,[39] which Karkov argues parallels the manner in

which kings are shown as Evangelists or Christ. In the *Liber Vitae* (Fig. 7) Emma is shown

---

[35] London: BL, MS Cotton Tiberius A.iii, fol. 2v, *Regularis Concordia*: Rule of St Benedict
(Temple, 1976: 118-119, cat. no. 100)
[36] Munich: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 4453, fol. 16.r, Aachen Gospels of Otto III
[37] Karkov, 2005: 96
[38] London: BL, MS Stowe 944, fol. 6r, The New Minster and Hyde *Liber Vitae*, *c*. 1031 (Temple,
1976: 95-96, cat. no. 78)
[39] London: British Library, MS Add. 33241, fol. iv., The Encomium of Queen Emma, mid-eleventh
century

alongside Cnut, whereas in the Encomium (Fig. 8) she is depicted with her sons after his death. Cnut himself – despite his position as a king in Anglo-Saxon England – is given less attention by Karkov, although she does discuss how, through his image, a compelling reading of the following two illustrations of the Last Judgment might be possible, as the images that follow this miniature are of people lined up at the gates of heaven, and so Cnut could be potentially seen as joining into this line. She also notes that while Emma is given precedence, placed on Christ's right, it is Cnut who actively places the donated cross onto the altar and holds his sword so that it extends beyond the frame of the miniature; and, while Emma receives a veil, it is Cnut who receives a crown from angels pointing upwards to the figure of Christ above. Crucially for this study, Karkov regards the crown as an important symbolic trope that has no archaeological existence in Anglo-Saxon England, but is present in manuscripts and on coins.[40]

Emma's depiction in the Encomium is the last manuscript depiction of an Anglo-Saxon ruler discussed by Karkov, although she goes on to discuss the depictions and descriptions of Edward and the Godwins in the Bayeux Tapestry. She reads this miniature as a Marian image, based on the enthronement of Emma and the presence of her two sons. The image has many royal attributes, not generally directly associated with Anglo-Saxon queens, although there are no extant images of any other Anglo-Saxon queen; it is these that lead Karkov to liken it to the coronation of the Virgin. It is interesting that she does not fully investigate the presentation of the book to Emma by the author in this miniature as she has done in previous chapters. Focussing on the kings of later Anglo-Saxon England and the theme of dedication and 'authorship' as the means by which they created their own identity and associated themselves with Christ, Karkov concludes that:

> The surviving Anglo-Saxon ruler portraits do much the same thing, deliberately borrowing from the iconography and compositions of the portraits that precede

---

[40] See Chapter 3.

them to establish a visual genealogy of ruler-ship, which in the written version has its origins in Christ.[41]

Karkov's study, though being focused on the later Anglo-Saxon rulers, nevertheless opens up many questions about the idea of ruler-ship in throughout the whole Anglo-Saxon period. Her study focuses on kings in every chapter except that of the final one, in which she discusses Queen Emma. Therefore, it is clearly for this reason that she chose to use the title ruler-ship rather than kingship or lordship. While she takes the later Anglo-Saxon period (*c*. 899-1066, defined by her source materials) as her point of focus, for instance, because it is here that the extant portraits of kings and ruler are to be found, the discussion is somewhat arbitrary. If her definition of portrait as any depiction of a human form that refers to an individual king is accepted, it necessitates consideration of examples that predate the painted depiction of kings within manuscripts. Whether or not there are any 'portraits' prior to 934-9, is frankly however a reductive argument based on a set of aesthetic principles that are not necessarily applicable to traditions of art outside the classical canon. Karkov has a data set of clearly related images: five manuscript images of kings from late Anglo-Saxon England that all have similar composition. Whether or not they are an accurate likeness, and thus a 'portrait', falls more into the range of a value judgment than a critical response to the objects within their own context. Karkov successfully negotiates this barrier, but in forming her data set emphasises that the art of the Anglo-Saxons has not yet been fully engaged with outside the categorisation of the material culture. Scholars have begun this work, led by Karkov herself, for many aspects of Anglo-Saxon material culture but there is much more to be done particularly addressing questions that in classical traditions would be answered by the study of naturalistic depictions of rulers. The question of what did king's look like in Anglo-Saxon England, is not about a king's hair colour or cleft chin, but rather about what visual signifiers would

---

[41] Karkov, 2005: 175

have signified a king to his fellow Anglo-Saxons, what settings and objects form the aspect of kingship that is communicated visually, through visual language. Portrayals of rulers on coinage survive from well before 871, for example. So, if a survey of the visual tradition of Anglo-Saxon ruler-ship is desired, then it must, of necessity, include the entire tradition. It is not sufficient to look only at manuscript portraits to elucidate the visual culture associated with the kings of Anglo-Saxon England.

Anna Gannon's 2003 study of the iconography of early Anglo-Saxon coinage is the first art historical foray into the field of numismatics –while there have been many studies on the power and production of coins– and as such opened up the medium to an iconographic approach.[42] Coinage, as a portable medium that contains imagery has long been used as an historical and archaeological source that is of extreme value for typological studies and dating evidence; moreover, the study of prosopography is indebted to the small finds.[43] Further, evidence for the existence of individuals has long since relied on coinage. Gannon's approach, however, moves beyond classification to focus on the imagery providing a unique perspective that takes account of influences as well as conscious choices made in the construction of symbolic meaning. She limited her study by date (sixth to eighth centuries) and location (Anglo-Saxon England) and so provided detailed examination of the types of images depicted, discussing where the imagery might have come from, making suggestions as to why it was chosen, and further detailing the influences that may have influenced the coins and how they reflect a localised iconographic tradition.

Gannon's study is not focused on kingship, although it is a topic that she references frequently – unsurprisingly, as coins are exclusively high status objects and the vast

---

[42] Gannon, 2003; see also Dolley, 1965; Blackburn, 1986; Blackburn and Dumville, 1998; Williams, 2006; Williams, 2008; Naismith, 2012.
[43] The Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England, http://www.pase.ac.uk/index.html

majority of them were produced in connection to royalty as is demonstrated by Naismith.[44]

She notes that many of the coins from the early Anglo-Saxon period rely on Roman proto-types and often have imperial connotations; this she suggests is due to coinage production having imperial overtones as it co-exists with a bullion-type economy. These imperial connotations were not only monopolised by royalty but also the Church, the other main producer of coinage. Gannon's study emphasises the links with *Romanitas*, as well as other symbols that signify power, mainly focusing on how the uses of coinage as a canvas make these images potent political signifiers. To this end, her study, while not focused on kingship, provides a platform for an iconographic approach to kingship.

Naismith's approached to the numismatic evidence looks at the imagery the coins provide while, largely focusing on the historical evidence of monetisation and the differing uses of economies. He focuses on the power and propaganda that coins have to offer, specifically suggesting that the coins show "and idealised roman derived impression of royal authority."[45] He begins his discussion on the images of kings by saying "there were no portraits as such….They were a badge of kingship that had come to be expected"[46] Here he dismisses the categorisation as portraits, which, as noted above, are too narrowly defined to be helpful in discussion Anglo-Saxon art, and suggests that the images are intrinsically linked to kings, not due to their form but to the objects they are preserved on. He continues:

> When looking at images on coins, coin –users where presumably expected to equate their contemporary ruler with the ruler of Rome, and the authority they had wielded. This was the dominate visual association which numismatic images of rulers sought to convey, though it should be stressed that it was not the only influence on contemporary representations of rulers. The Repton Stone, for example, displays a figure – possibly to be identified as Æthelbald, king of the Mercians – in a martial role combining native Anglo-Saxon features with military symbols and imager from late antiquity. [47]

---

[44] Naismith, 2012.
[45] Naismith, 2012: 52
[46] ibid, 53.
[47] Ibid, 54.

This suggests that not only did the makers of the object have an idea of the Roman associations of coinage but also that those who used these coins would have also been aware of this linage. He further cites the Repton Stone as having a similar late antique derivation.[48] Naismith argues that the minting and use of coins contributes to the power of kingship discussing the nuisances of the various coinages of individual rulers and the establishment of royal mints.[49] This all contributes to the understanding of kingship in Anglo-Saxon England and the visuality that they themselves produced. It is, ultimately however, limited to a single medium and does not seek to look at visual culture of kingship beyond that.

Apart from these few studies, the idea of Anglo-Saxon kingship and ruler-ship seems to have been neglected within the study of Anglo-Saxon art. The visual language of kingship developed and was intertwined with the imperial legacy and the conversion to Christianity in Anglo-Saxon England, yet it has only received very limited attention. The manner in which kingship developed in the region has, conversely, been the topic of much debate.[50] Martin Carver, for instance, has taken an archaeological approach in order to situate the finds from the early seventh-century graves at Sutton Hoo, in Suffolk, but without directly interacting with the visual appearance of the objects and Michael Enright, while considering the subject with more attention to this aspect, discusses only one piece from the Mound I burial: the sceptre.

1.**2b 'The Archaeologists'**

---

[48] See further below.
[49] Naismith, 2012: 87-117.
[50] See, e.g., Yorke, 1990; Wallace-Hadrill, 1971; or Sawyer and Wood, 1977

An entry point into archaeological viewpoints on kingship is most clearly synthesised in Martin Carver's review of the site of Sutton Hoo, *Burial Ground of Kings*, that presents a comprehensive and accessible overview of the site's interpretation, and has been reprinted twice since its original publication due to its public popularity.[51] He details not only the history of the excavations from the 1930s to the late 20th century but also some of the people and politics associated with it. Mrs Pretty and Rupert Bruce Mitford are thus integral to the history of the site. The suggestion that it is the burial ground of an Anglo-Saxon king has been fundamental to the scholarly understanding of the cemetery and this is Carver's position. While there have been suggestions that burials at Sutton Hoo could predate the establishment of kingship in England, to the early excavators this was untenable.[52] The wealth and nature of the finds indisputably identified the site, not only of high status, but the highest possible status. Carver thus leaves the debate about the genesis of kingship to one side, and reiterates the *c.* 600 date of the burial within Mound 1, proposing several historically identifiable kingly figures as candidates for the body interred in the grave.[53]

To situate his proposals, Carver addresses the layout of the site and how the burials may constitute a sequence. Discussing the ritual aspects of some of the larger burials, particularly Mound I, and how they might give rise to a tentative suggestion of the site as 'royal', he concludes that:

> [the site] could be termed 'royal' in so far as that word can be given precision in seventh-century England: it is the cemetery of an aristocracy (implied by its wealth), which was dynastic (implied by the suite of cremations in bronze bowls), which claimed regional supremacy (implied by the symbolic apparatus in Mound I), and international recognition (implied by the exotic objects). …
> Since the Earliest Kings of East Anglia are recorded to have died in the late

[51] Carver, 1998 [reprinted 2000, 2005].
[52] Bruce-Mitford, 1972; Bruce-Mitford, 1974; Bruce-Mitford, 1978; Bruce-Mitford, 1979; Farrell and Neuman de Vegvar, 1992; Kendel and Wells, 1992; Carver, 1998.
[53] Carver, 1998: 172. In 'Open Forum Question 38', Carver addresses this question by drawing on the works of Bede but admits that such conclusions can only be speculative when based on proposed archaeological datings.

sixth century, the Sutton Hoo cemetery was initiated at, or just before, the local adoption of kingship itself.[54]

While linking the site to the inception of kingship in East Anglia, Carver does not discuss how kingship and Sutton Hoo may be interpreted, nor how the objects themselves, the visual material, might be understood to have kingly associations.

Carver has returned to Sutton Hoo many times, but most notably in the final published field report of the 1983–93 field campaign in 2005, which he entitled *Sutton Hoo: a seventh century princely burial ground and its context*.[55] This report had many contributions from Angela Evans, Christopher Fern, Madeleine Hummler, Frances Lee and John Newman. Unlike his early monograph this book is much more measured in its interpretation, and focuses on the context of the site, is long history and focuses on the other mounds to a much greater extent, giving them the attention that they had not previously received. Missing from this book is the direct focus on the iconic materials that have come to be synonymous with Sutton Hoo, which follows from the purpose of the book to report on the latest field campaign. It is notable however, that without these materials at the focus the interpretation spends much less time on the high-status nature of the site, items, like the helmet, are hardly mentioned, so little so that it does not even get an index entry. This publication goes a very long way in understanding and interpreting the complex site that is Sutton Hoo, but is not a discussion of kingship, nor should it be expected to be. Carver, in comparing the ships from Sutton Hoo to those of Snape, suggests that unlike the 'folk' cemetery of Snape or the Tranmer house cemetery, Sutton Hoo is markedly different and demonstrates that it is an instance in which those buried as Sutton Hoo are differentiating themselves; but he moderates his interpretation and never suggests it is 'the burial ground of kings'. [56] Hope-Taylor, whose excavations of Yeavering offer much in terms of understanding of Anglo-Saxon settlement, similarly published his

[54] Ibid: 135-36
[55] Carver, 2005.
[56] Carver, 2005: 489-498; Fern, 2015.

site report on Yeavering focused on the site as a whole, but unlike Carver's 2005

publication, Hope-Taylor used his report to provide a narrative account of the site, relying

heavily on historical texts to provide a narrative of the site.[57] Hope-Taylor has since been

criticised for this over-reliance much like his contemporaries, such as Bruce-Mitford who

was equally criticised for his use of terms such as *bretwalda* in his own work on Sutton

Hoo.[58] Nevertheless, his interpretation of the Yeavering site as royal and its identification

with Edwin, provides a link to the study of kingship. These varying approaches to

archaeological interpretation demonstrate the difficulties in using the archaeological record

in the same manner as a historical text. The tendency to shy away from direct

interpretation and specificity in Carver's latest publication is perhaps a reflection of over

reliance on historical narratives.

In sharp contrast to Carver's various publications, Enright's study focuses solely on

the sceptre found within Mound I (Fig. 9), perhaps one of the most enigmatic objects to

give rise to a discussion of kingship.[59] He identifies it as specifically kingly, building on

the work of other scholars and the assumption that burial mound was indeed the grave of

an Anglo-Saxon king. He states plainly in the Preface that he believes "an enduring theory

of kingship to have existed", and moreover, that its roots lay "in a belief system that links a

solar/fire cult to metallurgical practices and then to the 'craft' of royal rule".[60] He goes on

to suggest that scholarship on the sceptre has needlessly looked beyond Britain and Ireland

for hypothetical explanations and analogous materials to elucidate its meaning and

significance, as there is a general lack of evidence or contemporary examples

contemporary with the find from within Anglo-Saxon England, or from the late Roman

period through that of the Germanic migration and settlement of Britain. This is not an

approach that he considers satisfactory as it ignores the 'Celtic' traditions of the region

---

[57] Hope-Taylor, 1977.
[58] Bruce-Mitford, 1974; See further below.
[59] Enright, 2006.
[60] Ibid: 10

which can elucidate the meaning and significance of the sceptre. For Enright, "the sceptre is a comprehensible object that makes a coherent statement consonant with its known insular provenance".[61] In constructing this argument, Enright includes known Celtic objects, and Celtic symbols that he considers to culminate with the sceptre, which he regards as the height of a motif 'tradition', not a unique object without precedent, nor as an object expressing new ideas.

One of Enright's most important comparisons with the sceptre is the Celtic Pfalzfeld Pillar of *c.* 400 BCE, (Fig 10) approximately 1000 years before the proposed date of the Sutton Hoo burial of the early-seventh century in the common era. By means of this comparison, he presents examples of 'similar' motifs (namely, the stylised heads) carved in stone, at the base of the pillar and around the top and bottom of the Sutton Hoo sceptre. Along with several other such examples, this enables him to make several assertions about the sceptre: those who made it, for instance, he identifies as the "Gaelic speakers from southern Scotland...[as] their perspective of kingship would not have differed much, if at all from that of their Irish kinsmen".[62] He ends with a discussion of the Irish deity Dagda, whom he considers has particular relevance to those elements of the sceptre that he deems to reference sun worship, through its material whetstone, which can produce sparks, and the ring shape that encircles the stag at its top.

> Dagda thus emerges as a God having pronounced associations with sun, Fire and knowledge, with the demarcating, and thus claiming, of forts and kingdoms, and with the bearing of a peculiar iron staff that may recall the upper and lower worlds of the two fires theory. It is more earthly counterpart; with whom he cooperates in battle is Goibniu. A plausible pattern thus evolves which suggests that Dagda, or a king God with strong solar connections very like him, is the deity invoked by the Sutton Hoo sceptre.[63]

Although less than convincing in its selection of comparative material, Enright's study does nevertheless focus on kingship, and seeks to provide a specifically Insular explanation

---

[61] Ibid: 84
[62] Ibid: 244
[63] Ibid: 345

for the sceptre, dismissing what he feels are unsatisfactory arguments that seek explanations in Byzantine or continental examples. Another problem lies in his exclusive focus on the sceptre as an individual object, with no consideration of the other objects found in the burial and the understanding they might bring to bear on the sceptre: such as the hanging bowls which are also of 'Celtic' origin. Nor does he explain why he feels the sceptre must be considered as expressing exclusively 'Celtic' traditions, while other finds such as the Merovingian coins or Byzantine silver bowls suggest an Insular focus may not have been exclusively relevant. While the sceptre is intriguing, particularly in the study of kingship – especially in Anglo-Saxon England – and quite possibly suggests the use of Celtic motifs, his examples seek an early mythological grounding that is relevant to neither the piece nor the burial site. More problematic is that despite his promise to argue for an "enduring theory of kingship", Enright does not address the idea of kingship as it relates to the actual burial site or the man who was buried with this object. Rather, his focus is on the mythological precedence for kingship within Britain and Ireland and early Celtic cultures.

Williams has taken an approach which looks at the Sutton Hoo Mound 1 ship-burial 'considering mnemonic agency of art' in which he identifies a thematic approach to link the prestige artefacts placed within the grave; specifically suggesting that the burial was a unique performance linked to site and seeing, or ocular effects.[64] The performance of this ideological statement is not only a 'feast for the eyes' but also a deeply symbolic and visual statement about the individual buried.[65] Furthermore, he asserts that the individual, and the group of people who created the Mound I burial, use the burial to demonstrate the dynastic claim to East Anglian kingly power; it is a public ritual that articulates that past and desired future of those involved. This study uses the artefacts and burial to demonstrate that kingship can be accessed through the material record presuming that

---

[64] Williams, 2011: 100.
[65] ibid:118.

these burial demonstrate visual language. Thus it can be argued, based on Williams'

assertions that, the objects all form an assemblage that creates the spectacle that emulates

the status of the individual.

These approaches to the field of Anglo-Saxon archaeology are by no means

exhaustive; there are many other studies that touch on the notions of kingship and its many

aspects.[66] However, as can be demonstrated with this abbreviated historiography the

subject of kingship, which has n ever been the direct aim of any of these studies, is a

central one and one that requires carefully nuanced discussion. While topics like settlement

patterns, work on the material culture of feasting, execution sites and coins all touch upon

kingship it is not the central theme, or often the question being asked. High-status burials

and large scale building sites present questions of kingship, particularly when high-status

objects are found; although the difference between high-status, princely or kingly is more

often sought in the nuisances of the textual records.

1.2c 'The Historians'

Focusing on this early period, but taking an historical perspective, Steven Basset has asked

the question: "How did kingdoms first come into Anglo-Saxon England?".[67] In this article

he focuses not on the evidence from Anglo-Saxon England, but on how much can possibly

be known about the migration and settlement periods in England following the fall of

Roman rule. To accomplish this he sets out the extents and the limitations of knowledge

about the subject. According to Bassett, the earliest information is contained in written

historical sources, which indicate that by the early-seventh century kingship had become

an established institution. In addition, other clues about the origins of kingdoms and kings

include place-name evidence, historically based evidence in genealogies, and comparative

---

[66] See further, Hammerow et al, 2011.
[67] Bassett, 1989

evidence. Yet none of these, Bassett argues, gives a detailed picture of the process emerging during the Migration Period, although they may help to create a general understanding of how and why kingship originated in Anglo-Saxon England.

With this in mind Bassett cautions scholars against assigning the labels of king or kingship to finds/evidence from the migration period, as it may not fit the ideas that are known to have evolved in later periods; likewise, he notes that later records could similarly be imprinting contemporary institutions onto the past. He further cautions against the use of these preconceptions by archaeologists:

> It is very easy to project our preconceptions about Anglo- Saxon kingship on to sites like Sutton Hoo and Yeavering- and to suspect nothing when the sites confirm them...To approach the archaeology of Kingship with an open mind, however, is to find how little it can yet distinguish early kings from their aristocrats, or the nobility in general from the rest of earlier Anglo-Saxon society. [68]

To illustrate his points, Basset takes the case of the kingdom of the Hwicce in the west of England, and examines how such geo-political arrangements seem to have developed from elements that grew and shrunk in an entirely fluid manner. He argues that there was a great shift in territories that appear to have been left within the landscape of this small would-be kingdom, but which, over time fell into obscurity. Thus Bassett concludes that the early kingdoms, or their equivalents, varied much more in size and political importance. Further, that the understanding of kingdoms changed significantly during the migration and settlement of England. Yet, he comes to no conclusion about the idea or origin of kingship within England.

Taking the historical discussion further, Loyn's earlier book, *The Governance of Anglo-Saxon England 500-1087*,[69] perhaps one of the most thorough texts on the subject, focuses on the way in which England was governed in the Anglo-Saxon period. This necessarily entails a consideration of the development of kings in England, and he suggests

---

[68] Ibid: 19
[69] Loyn, 1984

that kingship developed during the migration period out of a series of clear principles of lordship and kinship groups. He notes that although there had been precedents among continental German tribes, these were not universal.[70] Rather, dynastic kingship seems to have been uniquely linked to the experience of settlement in Britain, with only the Mercian dynasty claiming legacy with continental kings. He argues that as Roman institutions decayed, local kingship filled the void of political expression. Much of what is known about the expression of this kingship comes from historical sources, such as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and Bede's *History of the Church of the English People.* The kingdoms identified by these authors were relatively new, and were created in the first century of intensive migration.[71] While some kingdoms enjoyed temporary 'lordship' over other English communities at certain periods of time, such as the perceived pre-eminence of the Northumbrians in the fifth and sixth centuries, individual kingdoms and kings still had separate identities.[72] Loyn gives several textual examples of how the institution of kingship in England came to be regarded as "the most appropriate of political institutions".[73]

He argues that the term *cyning* itself seems to have been the only appropriate term for a leader during the period of invasion and settlement in England, a word with familial or dynastic associations, perhaps originally indicating a selected kindred. This is emphasized in the genealogies of many of the early kings, which look back to Woden as the originator of the familial line, and, following Christianization, were nearly seamlessly extended to include figures from Genesis and Exodus.[74] The genealogy of Æthelwulf (reg. 839-58), father of Alfred the Great, for instance, includes Woden, Noah and "Adam who is the Son of God".[75] Christianity further affected the institution of Kingship in Anglo-Saxon England, by providing biblical examples of Good Kingship. Thus, as Loyn puts it: "A king

---

[70] Ibid: 5-6
[71] Ibid: 8
[72] Ibid: 9
[73] Ibid: 14
[74] Ibid:13-14
[75] Ibid: 14, n. 6

was a fit and proper person to rule a settled Germanic people. Legitimate Christian authority over a settled people was unthinkable except in royal terms."[76]

Overall, the book focuses on the nature of kingship and its evolution up to the time of the Norman Conquest. Loyn identifies kingly attributes such as leadership in war, the ability to control wealth, and the possession of physical and visual distinction above other men. The king, according to Loyn, was a symbol of the power of a people. Here referencing a story told by Bede, in which an old king, Sigeberht of East Anglia, is brought to the battlefield, Loyn elaborates that the king's presence:

> … was required as a symbol, and we can be sure that he was dressed to look the part. The king was no modest, homespun governor, he was the visible, easily recognizable symbol of authority over the folk.[77]

Loyn goes on to argue that although kingship changed to involve specific duties, the nature of the 'office' of kingship remained symbolic and special in the later Anglo-Saxon period (which he defines as 899-1066). The duties of kingship at this time changed to follow closely continental practices, which favoured cooperation between the Church and Monarchy, giving power to both institutions. Thus the ritual of coronation and unction become central in the making of a king.[78] He cites the example of Wulfstan of York who compiled the *Institutes of Polity,* which discusses the earthly king in relation to the heavenly, and explains that as the true function of the earthly ruler was to purify the people before God he must possess certain qualities to be a good king.[79] Thus, while Loyn focuses on the evidence from textual sources of how kingship functioned and evolved in England, he makes several astute observations on the development of the ideological significance of kingship in Anglo-Saxon England.

Foot's discussion of Æthelstan (b.894-d.939), however, in *Æthelstan: the First King of England* presents a completely different approach to kingship. It takes the form of

---

[76] Ibid: 14
[77] Loyn, 1984: 21: Referencing Bede, *HE*, iii.18 (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 266-269)
[78] Loyn, 1984: 82
[79] Ibid: 86-87

a biography, attempting to reconstruct the details of the life of a single individual.[80] Foot's focus is entirely on what set Æthelstan apart, rather than the uniting nature of early medieval kingship. To this end, she separates her evidence thematically, looking at different aspects of Æthelstan's life – such as family, death and interactions with the Church. Underlining this, and as indicated by the subtitle of the book, "The First King of England", is the point that Æthelstan lacks recognition (unlike his grandfather 'Alfred the Great', or father 'Edward the Elder'), and his place in history has been largely forgotten, or associated with other figures. Foot thus regards his life as presenting an opportunity to consider figures from the Anglo-Saxon period by means other than the roles they held, implying that traditional studies of kingship do not adequately seek to understand kings. Æthelstan, therefore, with whom Karkov also opened her study as the first imaged king of (Anglo-Saxon) England, is considered worthy of study by Foot, as he presents the opportunity to redress an unbalanced attitude towards early medieval figures in an attempt to understand them as individuals. With this aim, the book does not provide any in-depth knowledge of kingship beyond Æthelstan, much less how the office he inherited was conceptualised when he came to power. In this sense Foot's work in fact follows in the tradition of other historical studies of Anglo-Saxon king's such as Abels' earlier study on Alfred, *Alfred the Great: War Kingship and Culture in Anglo-Saxon England*, which, while a chronological rather than thematic study, presents a narrative of one instance of kingship.[81]

Roach's very recent approach to kingship in *Kingship and Consent in Anglo-Saxon England, 871-978* is different yet again, being undertaken primarily through an assessment of the law and legal texts: specifically, the nature of assemblies.[82] With this focus he provides a detailed account of specific kings in a specific region at a very particular type of

---

[80] Foot, 2011
[81] Abels, 1998
[82] Roach, 2013

event. His approach is both documentary *and* visual, extrapolating ritual customs from a wide variety of textual evidence, including narrative and hagiographic accounts. This helps Roach to flesh out the details of the assemblies. While his study is limited to a relatively short period of time (just over a century) and to a very specific type of event, it does present a model that uses a detailed and holistic approach to kingship, one that utilises the extant textual evidence as a means of extrapolating both the visual effects of an event, as well as the sense of ritual encompassed by something like an assembly.

Alcock's earlier book, *Kings and Warriors, Craftsmen and Priests in Northern Britain AD 550-850*, takes an even more wide-ranging view in presenting a historical narrative. It is an historical study of kingship that dynamically attempts to readdress the traditional boundaries set in place by scholarship defined both by geography and perceived ethnicities.[83] With its focus on 'Northern Britain', it encompasses regions identified with the kingdoms of Northumbria and the Picts, and thus, unlike most histories of the Anglo-Saxons, includes Scottish areas and histories, and for this it should be commended as an invaluable resource. However, the lack of historical source material from the period and the breadth of the study yields only a brief introduction to a topic that is rich in its potential for further study. When introducing the kingdoms, Alcock relies on the Bedan account of the five languages of the *gentes*: the scriptural language of Latin as well as those of the Angles, Britons, Picts and Scots/scotti (or Irish). This suggests the presence, as Alcock notes, of four peoples in Northern Britain.[84] He goes on to note that while archaeological classifications using these terms define differences in material culture, Bede identifies the differences between his *gentes* as linguisti*c*. Each of these language categories, however, encompasses other possible divisions: the Angles encompass West Saxons, Mercians and Northumbrians, which Bede also refers to as *gentes*, but such divisions are not clear in the

---

[83] Alcock, 2003
[84] Bede, *HE*: i.1; Alcock, 2003: 37

regions further north, as Bede is less concerned with the political differences of those not of the *gentis Anglorum*.

Much of Alcock's book is devoted to in-fighting in the region and focuses on military tactics and specific battles, such as Catterick (*c.* 600) and Nechtansmere (*c.* 685). He thus examines military gear in archaeological excavations as well as that depicted on sculpted Pictish stones, such as that at Aberlemno (Angus) or Sueno's stone (Moray), and the types of hill forts and enclosed places that might have been used, to provide insight into how these northern armies fought and where they stayed, defining the latter as three categories of "building": high status, ecclesiastic and domesti*c*.[85] His discussion of architecture places special emphasis on the great enclosures, like that found at Yeavering, Northumberland, and their associated structures. Alcock suggests that these enclosures were indeed Anglian and primarily defensive, although does not and cannot reconcile the fact that the great hall structures do not lie within them. Instead, he concludes that "the function of the great enclosures was emphatically not to protect the great halls", without further comment.[86]

Thus, Alcock's book is an introduction to what he considers a logical area of study by means of an entirely holistic approach: looking at the crafts produced, the establishment of the Church, the built environment, and military history. This results in an exceptionally broad study that does not provide in-depth analysis of the material brought to bear; it provides a fascinating introduction to Northern Britain but reaches very few conclusions – particularly in relation to kingship.

1.2d Lacunae

---

[85] Alcock, 2003: 227
[86] Ibid: 241

Overall, it is clear that the recent scholarship on kingship in Anglo-Saxon England has tended to centre on historical evidence, while the archaeological accounts have tended to shy away from interpretations of kingship. Karkov's work on the artistic portrayal of kingship, therefore, provides an interesting counterpoint to these trends, along with Gannon and Naismith. She introduces a topic that has been under represented in the art historical scholarship, but fails to take effective account of how ruler-ship was portrayed in Anglo-Saxon England generally; she does not consider the art historical sources underpinning the images that form the focus of her study; she does not examine the evidence from Anglo-Saxon England as a whole; nor does she discuss how ideas of kingship were portrayed. Her work thus falls short of presenting an art historical examination of the visual representation of kings; she excludes coinage from her discussion and does not discuss the imperial prototypes on which much of the imagery is based. Anna Gannon, on the other hand, has produced an exhaustive survey of the early coinage in order to identify the typologies and iconographies of coins produced in early Anglo-Saxon England, and as part of this has identified imperial prototypes and tropes that were recycled by the Anglo-Saxons moniers.[87] Thus, Karkov opens an interesting avenue of enquiry that is nevertheless limited by its consideration only of the extant and identified pictures of kings in manuscripts, and thus discusses only the later Anglo-Saxon period. Because her source material dictated these limitations she was unable to address the development of kingship and the role of kingship in the wider context of Anglo-Saxon England. Further, by discussing only images of certain kings, she was unable to discuss kingship as an idea, and so had to focus on the role of individual rulers in relation to specific images. This results in an interesting study of kings and manuscripts, but it does not allow for engagement with the question of how and why imagery and visual culture reflect the developing role of Anglo-Saxon kingship during the entire period.

---

[87] Gannon, 2010

Despite these lacunae, the use of images and visual evidence in Anglo-Saxon England, considered alongside the contemporary written sources, can elucidate the topics surrounding ideas of ruler-ship in Anglo-Saxon England, which although discussed in historical and archaeological fields, arguably in some depth, have yet to be adequately discussed within the context of the visual culture of Anglo-Saxon England. Examining the idea of kingship over several centuries in what were not yet a fully developed set of kingdoms, might seem to be a questionable undertaking, but it is the *development* of kingship that is one of the many commonalities of the period. By looking at the period as a whole, it may be possible to find a common and unique visual language that can give insight into the idea of kingship and power in the region. In order to do this, however, it is necessary to expand the corpus of visual material that is considered to refer to kingship, and to situate it within a broad frame of reference articulated in a wide variety of extant contemporary texts.

1.3 Contemporary Anglo-Saxon Accounts

1.3a The Histories

Turning to consider this latter subject, it seems that the discussion of kings within Anglo-Saxon literature is primarily reverential. Bede's *Historia Ecclesiatica* (*c.* 731), is dedicated to a king and gives many accounts of kingship, but this is done in such a way that the images of kings presented provide an overall picture, not of how kings were, but how they ought to be: kingship, and the language of kings, for instance, is frequently used in relation to Christ as the King of Heaven. But Bede only addresses the theme indirectly; his aim in writing the *Ecclesiastical History* is, after all, to tell the history of the English Church. Nevertheless, his history of this Church links it intrinsically to those in power who both helped and hindered its establishment. It is for this reason that Bede writes about the early kings and rulers of England, but includes very little about topics such as the laws or

customs of these rulers and for many we are left with very little information. Despite this, there is much that can be inferred about kingship in early Anglo-Saxon England.

First and foremost of these is that the power of the kings is such that their beliefs could dictate the beliefs and customs of a people. Bede makes it very clear that without the kings' acceptance of the Church and its belief systems, the country could not be Christian. Thus, within his Preface, addressed to King Ceolwulf of Northumbria (reg. 729-737), he indicates that he will "tell of good men and their good estate",[88] and to this end, he discusses both good and bad examples of kings. As one might expect from an ecclesiastical history, those kings who are not Christian are not described as good kings.

Within these accounts, although the kings (whether good or bad) are not visually described or given attributes that may be overtly related to their visual appearance, there are several passages that indicate how a king might be depicted. One obvious example is the account of how King Edwin (*c*. 586-12 October 632/633) had banners carried before him:

> So great was his majesty in his realm that not only were banners carried
> before him in battle, but even in time of peace, as he rode about among
> his cities, estates, and kingdoms with his thegns, he always used to be
> preceded by a standard-bearer. Further, when he walked anywhere along
> the roads there used to be carried before him the type of standard which
> the Romans called *tufa* and the English called *thuf*.[89]

This demonstrates that there was a precedent for the (by implication, wise or good) ruler to be visually distinguishable on the battlefield and, in this case, also during peacetime. The need for a visible presence in battle is further supported by Bede's account of the old king, Sigeberht, of the East Angles, which indicates that it was necessary for the king to be seen

---

[88] Bede, *HE*, *Præfatio*: Suie enim historia de bonis bona referat (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 2-3)
[89] Bede, *HE*, ii.16: Tantum uero in regno excellentiae habuit, ut non solum in pugna ante illum uexilla gestarentur, eds et tempore pacis equitantem inter ciutates siue uillas aut prouincias suas cum ministris semper antecedere signifer consuesset, necon et incedente illio ubilibet per plateas illud genus uexilli, quod Romani tufam, Angli appellant thuuf, ante eum feri solebat. (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 192-193)

on the battlefield in order to inspire the army.[90] Thus, while Bede highlights individual

kings and tells of their interactions with the Church, he also gives an impression of what

might have been considered a good (Christian) king who seeks peace and defends his

people, and it is as part of these presentations that insight is given to the visual appearance

of such rulers.

Bede begins his history with an account of Roman Britain, some early instances of

Christianity and the legendary story of Hengst and Horsa, but it is with the arrival of the

Augustinian mission that he traces the foundation of the 'English' Church and the various

interactions with it by the kings of Anglo-Saxon England. Thus, perhaps not surprisingly,

it is Augustine's first meeting with an English/Anglo-Saxon king that provides insight into

the role of a king in Anglo-Saxon England. He meets Æthelberht of Kent (*c.* 560-616),

who:

> after ruling his temporal kingdom gloriously for fifty-six years, entered upon the
> eternal joys of the heavenly kingdom. He was the third English king to rule all the
> southern Kingdoms … but the first to enter the kingdom of heaven." [91]

The meeting takes place on the island (of Thanet) where Augustine had landed and been

granted permission to preach, and Bede's account is worth citing in full:

> The King came to the island and, sitting in the open air, commanded
> Augustine and his comrades to come thither to talk with him. He took
> care that they should not meet in any building, for he held the traditional
> superstition that, if they practised any magic art they might deceive him
> and get the better of him as soon as he entered. … At the King's
> command they sat down and preached the word of like to himself and all
> his *gesiths* there present. Then he said to them: "the words and the
> promises you bring are fair enough, but because they are new to us and
> doubtful, I cannot consent to accept them and forsake those beliefs which
> I and the whole English race have held so long.[92]

---

[90] Bede, *HE*, iii.18 (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 266-269); see Loyn, 1984: 21

[91] Bede, *HE*, ii.5: Aedilberct rex Cantuariorum post regnum temporale, quod L et sex annis gloriosissime tenuerat, aeterna caulestis regni gaudia subiit. Qui tertius quidem in regibus gentis Anglorum cunctis australibus eorum prouinciis…sed primus omnium caeli regna conscendit. (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 148-149)

[92] Bede, *HE*, i.25: …uenit as insulam rex, et residens sub diuo iussit Augustinum cum sociis as suum ibidem asuernire colloquium, Cauerat enim ne in aliquam domum ad se introirent, uetere usus augurio, ne superuentu suo, siquid maleficaw artis habuissent, eum seperando deciperent. … Cumque ad iussionem regis residentes uerbum ei uitae una cum omnibus qui aderant eius

This passage gives insight into the customs of the English. Firstly, Bede tells us that strangers are not taken into the hall or other places of power for fear that they might best the king - this suggests that Bede considered the pre-Christian kings to be victims of superstition. Secondly, the details of the scene indicate that the king has the command of many men who had households of their own.[93] And finally, it suggests that as a ruler, a king cannot abandon the beliefs of a whole people. This is made especially clear as Æthelberht's wife, Bertha, a Christian, had it as a condition of her marriage agreement that she be allowed to continue in her faith with the support of a bishop at the Anglo-Saxon pagan court, yet, Æthelberht does not convert immediately because he must consider his people; the people are free to believe as they like. It is in this context that Æthelberht allows Augustine to preach and gain followers, and even promises to "receive [them] hospitably and provide what is necessary for [their] support… [and] gave them a dwelling in the city of Canterbury".[94] This indicates a relative good will on the part of the king towards the mission, and perhaps to Christianity. For Bede it is a victory when the Augustinian mission converts the king: "At last the king, as well as others, believed and was baptized, being attracted by the pure life of the saints and their most precious promises".[95] It is from this moment that the mission begins to be seen as successful by Bede, because it is the king who will be able to instil the religion into the land by his example. Thus, it is only with the conversion of the king, that (according to Bede) Christianity – from Rome – is able to establish a foundation in England.

comitibus praedicarent, respondit ille dicens;'pulchra sunt quidem uerba et promissa quae adfertis; sed quia noua sunt et incerta, non his possum adsensum triburere relictis eis, quae tanto tempore cum omni Anglorum gente seruaui. (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 74-75)
[93] Bede, *HE*, i.25 (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 75); n. 4 explains the difference of gesiths and thegns, which gives further evidence of Æthelberht as *bretwalda*
[94] Bede, *HE*, i.25:quin potius benigo uos hospitio recipere et, quae iictui sunt uestro necessaria…Dedit ergo eid mandionem in ciuitate Doruuernensi… (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 74-75)
[95] Bede, *HE*, i.26: At ubi ipse etiam inter alios delectatus uita mindissima sanctorum et promissis eorum suauissimis… (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 76-77)

This need for a Christian king is further emphasised in the story of Edwin, the king of Deira and Bernicia – which later came to be known as Northumbria (*c.* 617). Edwin was a thoughtful king, who apparently considered his conversion for many years both during his exile and after an attempted assassination. Indeed, Bede seems to belabour his indecisiveness to accept Christianity, taking eleven chapters to tell the story – in effect, more than half of Book II of his *Historia Ecclesiatica*.[96] Nevertheless, Edwin was eventually converted to Christianity and baptised in a hastily built wooden church in 627 in York, which was then rebuilt as a "greater and more magnificent church of stone".[97] This church, the site of the current Minster, was finished by Edwin's successor Oswald, after his death and formed the location for the burial of some of his children.[98] Edwin's baptism in York was very different from that of those who came for baptism at "the royal palace" (*in villam regiam*) at Yeavering, where Paulinus:

> … spent thirty-six days there occupied in the task of catechizing and baptising. During these days, from morning till evening, he did nothing else but instruct the crowds who flocked to him from every village and district in the teaching of Christ. When they had received instructions he washed them in the waters of regeneration in the river Glen, which was close at hand.[99]

The distinction between these two types of baptism emphasises just how important it was for the king, with those who were associated with him being baptised not in a church but on the royal estate.

Bede records that after Edwin's death his head was taken to York and placed in the church of St Peter which he had begun to build;[100] later, however, he mentions that his

---

[96] Bede, *HE*, ii.9-20 (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969)

[97] Bede, *HE*, ii.14: …in loco et augustiorem de lapide fabricare basilicam (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 186-187)

[98] Bede, *HE*, ii.14 (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 186-189)

[99] Bede, *HE*, ii.14: In villam regiam, quae uocatur Adefrin, xxxvi heibus ididem cum eis cathecizandi et baptizandi officio deditus moraretur; quibus deibus cunctus a mane usque as vesperam nil aliud ageret quam confluentem eo de cunctis uiculis ac locis plebem Christi uerbo salutis instruere, atque instructam in fluuio Gleni, qui proximus erat, lauacro remissionis abluere. (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 188-189)

[100] Bede, *HE*, ii.20 (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 204-205)

granddaughter Ælfflæd was buried with him at Whitby.[101] While this raises historical questions about Edwin's resting place, it does serve to demonstrate that Bede was concerned to connect him with the establishment of Christianity throughout Northumbria; so much so, that he included a copy of the letter written by Pope Boniface V to Edwin's Kentish wife, Æthelburh, to solicit her assistance in converting the king. Being Christian she was clearly considered to be in a position to assist in bringing both her husband and his people into the Church:

> We learned that he [King Edwin] was still serving abominable idols and hesitated to hear and obey the words of the preachers. This caused us no small grief, that he who is one flesh with you should remain a stranger to the knowledge of the supreme and undivided Trinity. Therefore we do not hesitate, in accordance with our fatherly duty, to send a warning to your Christian Highness; we urge you that, being imbued with the holy spirit, you should not hesitate, in season and out of season, to labour so that, through the power of our lord and saviour Jesus Christ, he may be added to the number of the Christians, so that you may thereby enjoy the rights of marriage in undefiled union. …The Almighty has seen fit to work through you, in the conversion of your husband and of the peoples subject to him.[102]

Together, these accounts of royal conversion show both the immense investment of the Papacy in the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons – through their most powerful figures – and, not coincidentally, the correlation between that power and a king's ability to influence the professed beliefs of his people.

Furthermore, as Bede presents his narrative as a series of positive and negative exemplars, he makes it clear that following the arrival of Christianity in Anglo-Saxon

---

[101] Bede, *HE*, iii.24 (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 292-293). This is discussed by Colgrave and Mynors (1969: 204, n. 2) as possibly indicative of the early veneration of Edwin as a saint.
[102] Bede, *HE*, ii.11: Cognouimus quod eatenus abominandis idolis seruiens. Ad suscipiendam uocem praedicatorum suam distulerit oboedientiam exhibere. Qua es re non modica nobis amaritudo congesta est ab eo, quod pars corporis uestri ab agnitione summae et indiuduaae Trinitatis remansit extranea. Vnde paternis officiis uestrae gloriosae Christianitati nostram commonitionem non distulimus conferendam, ashortantes quatinus, diuinae inspirationis imuta subsidiis, inportune et oporune agendum non differas, ut et ipse Saluatoris nostri Domini Iesu Christi cooperante potentia Christianorum numero copuletur, ut perinde intemerato societatis foedere iura teneas maritalis consortii… quae per uos superna potentia mirabiliter in conuersatione coniugis vestri summissaeque uobis gentis dignatue fuerit operari. (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 172-175)

England and the establishment of the Church, the only thing worse than a non-Christian, or (bad) pagan king was one who had been accepted into the Church and then renounced his faith and returned to the worship of pagan idols. While a pagan was someone who could be considered un-enlightened, or un-informed, a recidivist was one who knowingly and wilfully chose to ignore the message of the true faith. Rædwald , the fourth *bretwalda*, was for Bede the worst perpetrator of this type of sin.

> Rædwald had long before been initiated into the mysteries of the Christian faith in Kent, but in vain; for on his return home, he was seduced by his wife and by certain evil teachers and perverted from the sincerity of his faith, so that his last state was worse than his first. After the manner of the ancient Samaritans, he seemed to be serving both Christ and the gods whom he had previously served; in the same temple he had one altar for the Christian sacrifice and another small altar on which to offer victims to the devils … [Rædwald] was noble by birth though ignoble in his deeds.[103]

The abandonment of the Christian faith and the 'will to sin', evident in his worshiping pagan gods and Christ side by side, served not only to illustrate the "ignoble" deeds of Rædwald as an almost wilful renunciation of faith – that almost parodied Christ's 'will' to salvation – but also served to undermine the entire establishment of the Church in England (given the power of the king in relation to the faith of his people). While Bede sees these deeds as "ignoble", he traces their source to Rædwald's wife and councillors, or perhaps his *gesiths* – if these can be understood to be the "evil teachers". To a certain extent this reflects badly on Rædwald, perhaps providing a pun on his name – as a king he is susceptible to bad advice (OE *ræd*: advice) – but it also gives a clear insight into the extreme trepidation that could greet a leader's conversion to Christianity, implying again how crucial the role of the king was in this process and, by extension, how great was his power in Anglo-Saxon society.

---

[103] Bede, HE, ii.15: Reduald iamdudum in Cantia sacramentis Christianae fidei inbutus est, sed frustra; nam rediens domum ab uxore eua et quibusdam peruersis doctorubus seductus est , atque sinceritate fidei deprauatus habuit posteriora peira prioribus, ita ut in morem antiquorum Samaritanorum, et Christo Seruire uideretur et diis quibus antea seruiebat, atque ad uictimas daemoniorum… Erat autem praefatus rex Raduald natu nobilis, idisse testabatur. (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 190-191)

This incident also provides insight into contemporary perceptions of the Church as an institution. Rædwald's conversion may have been regarded as having less to do with the worship of Christ, as he kept an altar to Christ (albeit in unacceptable circumstances), than with the perceived implications of joining a hierarchical institution with the Pope (and Christ) at its head, leaving even a *bretwalda* second in importance. Such inferences about the motives of the "evil teachers" are, of course, entirely conjectural, but this story does give cause to those seeking to ascertain the nature of kingship in Anglo-Saxon England. It demonstrates that it was neither straight forward or inevitable that Christianity was accepted through Anglo-Saxon kings or the role of kingship in early medieval society. With hindsight and Bede's derisive commentary of a king like Rædwald, it might be easy to see him as a 'bad king', but it nevertheless provides insight into the popular opinion of those caught up in such events.

While Rædwald provides an example of 'wrong-minded' kingship, the presentation of Penda of Mercia (d. 15 November 655) is more ambiguous. On the one hand he is invoked as an example of a ferocious warrior king, criticised by Bede for not being Christian and for ravaging (papal) 'Christian' Northumbria.

> A hostile army of the Mercians, under the leadership of Penda, which had been cruelly devastated the kingdom of Northumbria far and wide, reached the royal city. … [leading Bishop Aiden] to raise eyes and hands towards heaven and said with tears 'Oh, Lord, see how much evil Penda does'.[104]

Although he is ferocious and causes great mischief in Northumbria, he is not, however, considered a bad king. For on the other hand, he eventually allows the conversion of his people, starting with his own children, and while he never becomes Christian himself (something that does not endear him to Bede), he is considered admirable for allowing this conversion and further for criticising those who were not faithful to their chosen god:

---

[104] Bede, *HE*, iii.16: Eius hostilis Merciorum exercitus Penda duce Nordanhymbourum regiones impia clade longe lateque deuastans peruenit ad urbam usue regiam… fertur eleuatis ad caelum oculis manibusque cum lacrimis dixisse: 'Vide, Domine, quanta mala facit Penda. (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 262-263)

Now King Penda did not forbid the preaching of the Word, even in his own Mercian Kingdom, if any wished to hear it. But he hated and despised those who, after they had accepted the Christian faith, were clearly lacking in the works of Faith. He said that they were despicable and wretched creatures who scorned to obey the God in whom they believed.[105]

This said, it is only the death of Penda and succession of a Christian king that allows Mercia to be truly Christianized:

When he [Penda] was killed and the Christian King Oswiu had gained the throne of Mercia… Diuma, one of the four priests already mentioned, was consecrated bishop of the Midland Angles and the Mercians by Bishop Finan.[106]

And so Bede is confirmed in his belief that a Christian king was the only way for the Church to succeed and thrive in England.

While Bede is quite clear in his judgment of the early kings of Anglo-Saxon England, it is clear that the king is ultimately reliant on his people and those *thegns*, *gesiths* or councillors that support him. In his view, this explained the fraught nature of the conversion, both Edwin and Rædwald hesitating to accept Christianity and Penda, while allowing the conversion of individuals, never abandoning his own faith. His view is further underlined by the fact that Bede speaks only of those kings who played an active role in the conversion, omitting any mention of those who did not. Thus, for example, he lists the names of all the *bretwaldas* (kings of all England), but only mentions in passing those who held the title before the arrival of the Augustinian mission. A complete account of kingship in Anglo-Saxon England cannot therefore be gleaned from the *Historia Ecclesiatica*, but some small insight can be gained about how the role of a king in the conversion of a country was perceived; this might well have wider implications for understanding the

---

[105] Bede, *HE*, iii.21: Nec prohibuit Penda rex, quin etiam in sua, hoc est Merciorum natione Verbum, siqui ullent audire, praedicaretur. Quin potius odio habebat et despiciebat eos, quos fide Christi inbutos opera fidei non habere deprehendit. (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 280-281)

[106] Bede, *HE*, iii.2: Ipso autem occiso, cum Osuiu rex Christianus regnum | eius acciperet, ut in seqerdotibus episcopus Mediterraneorum Anglorum, simul et merciorum, ordinatus a Fiano episcopo. (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 280-281)

nature of kingship in Anglo-Saxon England, albeit from an eighth-century Northumbrian perspective.

Further evidence is provided by the later *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* that draws in part on the work of Bede. It is generally thought that the *Chronicle,* of which all nine surviving manuscripts are a copy, was initially composed during the reign of Alfred (871-899) in Wessex. The copies are also attributed to the reign of Alfred, having been produced for distribution to monasteries where they were then maintained individually. Thus, while all versions of the *Chronicle* share similar openings, they subsequently vary; this is particularly the case with the Peterborough Chronicle (Chron. E), a twelfth-century copy and continuation that ends with a Middle English entry for 1154.[107]

Attributable to the reign of Alfred, the *Chronicle's* early references to ruler-ship and kings must reflect ideas surrounding these concepts current in the later ninth century. The early entries, beginning with the year 60 BCE when "the Emperor Julius Caesar was the first of the Romans to come to Britain",[108] are formulaic, detailing battles, the death of kings, the duration of reigns and genealogies. While this information is formulaic, it nevertheless provides some insight into the role of kings as leaders in battle, how crucial kinship and familial relations were to the process of royal accession, and what were thought to be important and unique events.

The opening of the Parker Chronicle (Chron. A) records how the kingdom of Wessex was won in 494:

> Cerdic and Cynric his son landed at cerdicesora with five ships…Six years after they conquered the kingdom of Wessex. These were the first kings who conquered the land of the Wessex from the Welsh. He held the kingdom sixteen years, and when he died is son Cynric succeeded him to the kingdom and held it seventeen winters.[109]

---

[107] For a fuller discussion, see e.g. Swanton, 1996; Whitelock, 1968; Yorke, 1990; Ables, 2005; Irvine, 2004.

[108] Chron, A, 494: Gaius Iulius se Casere Romana Breton Lond gesohte. (Whitelock, 1961: 4)

[109] Chron. A: þa Cerdic ond Cynric his sunu cuom up æt Cerdices oran wid .v. schipum…Ond þæs ymb .vi. gear þæs þe hie up cuomon ge eodon West Seaxna rice ond þæt uuærun þa ærestan

It is only after this that the earliest entry (60 BCE) is listed, before the entry for 519 CE

explains that "this is the year Cerdic and Cynric obtained of the East Saxons the

Kingdom".[110] It is interesting that they are described as the first kings who conquered

Wessex, rather than the first kings. Kings of the Britons are also mentioned, most notably

Vortigern, who is mentioned in the entry for the year 449, which records the legendary

story of Hengest and Horsa, the first Saxons to come to Britain: "Hengest and Horsa,

invited by Vortigern, King of the Britons, came to Britain to a place which is called

Ypwinesfleot ". [111]

The *Chronicle* entry for the year 827 provides the first recorded use of the term

'*bretwalda*', and the list names all the kings who, according to Bede, held "imperium" over

Britain, with the addition of Egbert of Wessex (771/775–839), who post-dated Bede:

> King Egbert conquered Mercia, and all that was south of the Humber, and
> he was eighth king to be bretwalda: the first to rule so great a kingdom was
> Ælle, king of Sussex; the second was Caewlin, king of Wessex; the third
> was Æthelberht, king of Kent; the fourth was Rædwald, king of East
> Anglia; the fifth was Edwin, king of Northumbria; the sixth was Oswald,
> who reigned after him; the seventh was Oswy, Oswald's brother; the eighth
> was Egbert, king of Wessex. [112]

Many scholars have discussed the meaning of this term and whether it was a contemporary

title or a later creation giving precedence to a select list of kings. It has been noted, for

instance, that Mercian kings who held considerable power are not included – such as Offa

– something that may be due to the West Saxon bias of the Chronicle. However it is

---

cyningas þe west seaxno lond on Wealum ge eodon; ond he hfde þæt rice .xvi. gear ond þa he gofor
þa feng his sunu Cynric to þam riche and heold .xvii. winter. (Whitelock, 1961: 2)

[110] Chron. A: Her Cerdic ond Cynric West Sexnea rice fengun. (Whitelock, 1961: 16)

[111] Chron. A: Hengest ond Hrsa from Wyer georne geleaþade Bretta Kininge gesohton Bretene on
þam staþe þe is genemned Ypwines fleot. (Whitelock, 1961: 12)

[112] Chron. A (E): Ecgbryht Cy(i)ning Mierena (Myrcena) rice ond al þæt be suþ(ð)an Humbre wæs,
on he wæs se eahteþ(ð)a Cy(i)ning se seþe Bretwal'd'a (Bryten wealda) wæs: ærest Ælle suþ(ð)
Seaxon Cy(i)ning, se þus mi(y)cel rice hæfde, se æftera (oþær)wæs Ceawlin Wessseaxna
Cy(i)ning, se þridda wæs Æþelbry(i)ht Cantwara Cy(i)ning, se feorþ(ð)a wæs Rædwald east Engla
Cy(i)ning, fifta was eadwine (Ædwine) Norþan hymbra Cy(i)ning, siexta wæs Oswald se æfter him
ricsode (rixade), seofoþa(ðe) wæs Oswio (Oswiu) Oswaldes broþer, eahtoþa wæs Ecgbryht
Wesseaxna (west Seaxna) Cy(i)ning (Whitelock, 1961: 60-61)

unclear, even in Bede's list, why some kings were given the title and others were not; Penda, for instance, is acknowledged by Bede as having considerable control over other kings, yet is not granted "imperium". It is nevertheless generally accepted that the *bretwaldas* were considered to be, in some way, particularly powerful rulers.[113]

While the *Chronicle* focuses largely on events that take place in Anglo-Saxon England, some peripheral events, and others deemed to be important are also included. Popes are thus occasionally mentioned, but generally when they have a direct influence on an Anglo-Saxon event. Nevertheless, in an exception to this general trend, the death of Charlemagne is recorded in the same way in Chron. A and E for the year 812: "In this year King Charlemagne passed away: he reigned forty-five years".[114] Furthermore the Peterborough Chronicle entry for the year 800, which is missing in the Parker Chronicle, includes an account of Charlemagne being made Emperor, which is recorded in Latin rather than Old English, the principal language of the text:

> King Charlemagne was made Emperor, and by the Romans called
> Augustus; who (the Romans) had dishonestly condemned to death Pope
> Leo, and cast him into exile. That same Pope Leo consecrated him Emperor.
> [115]

This said, Charlemagne's death is mentioned in the same format as the kings in England, and it is not suggested that his reign is in any way different than that of the kings who have died in England. This is notable for two reasons: one, that he is not given preferential treatment, either linguistically, with the exception of the Latin entry in Chronicle E, or by way of explanation; and second, that his inclusion does not appear to pertain to events of Anglo-Saxon England. The entry may be included because the status accorded Charlemagne, even beyond Gaul, meant that his death did in fact have an effect on Anglo-

---

[113] For a fuller discussion, see e.g. Stenton, 1971; Sawyer, 1977; Wormald, 1983; Loyn, 1984; Fanning, 1991.
[114] Her C(K)arl Cy(i)ning Forþ(ð)ferde ond he ricsode .xvl. wint.(ra) (Chron A (E), Whitelock, 1961: 58-59)
[115] Chron. E: Karolus rex imperator factus est, et a Romanis appellatus Sugustus: qui illos qui Leonem papam dehonestauerant morte damnauit sed prececibus papæ morte indulata exilio retrusit. Ipse enim pap Leo imperatorem enum sacraurat. (Whitelock, 1961: 59)

Saxon England, or perhaps because Alfred considered his kingship worthy of mention, forcing a comparison to be made between the Emperor and Alfred, king of the Anglo-Saxons.

Apart from such information, the *Chronicle* has little to say about the objects and material culture surrounding the many kings listed. Furthermore, the kings are rarely given the poetic kennings with which they are associated in other sources – except in the poetic entries. The Parker Chronicle entry for 975, for instance, includes a poem lamenting the death of Edgar where he is described as "the grey-haired hero, wise and sage in counsel".[116] While this describes the king, investing him with an apparently kingly attribute (wisdom), it gives no further insight. Æthelstan on the other hand, who is described in a poetic entry (*The Battle of Brunanburgh*) for the year 937 in the Parker Chronicle is described as 'ring-giver of men',[117] suggestive of a rich and generous ruler. Most references to physical objects are about riches won, but no description of them is provided. The entry for the year 584, for instance, records that "Cutha was slain and Ceawlin captured many villages and countless booty".[118] Or there are the mythic treasures left by the Romans in 418: "In this year the Romans collected all the treasures which were in Britain and hid some in the earth so that no one afterward could find them, and some they took with them into Gaul". [119]

One object that is mentioned as an individual item is recorded in the entry for 876 in both the Parker and Peterborough Chronicles: "and they [the (Viking) host] swore him oaths on the sacred ring".[120] This anecdote, while giving no indication of the material or appearance of the ring, does give insight into how oaths and loyalty might have been

---

[116] Chron. A: gamol feax hæleð, wis ond word snotor (Whitelock, 1961: 120)
[117] Chron. A: Beorna beah gifa (Whitelock, 1961: 106)
[118] Chron. E: Cuþan man of sloh ond Ceawlin maniga tunas gen am on unarimedliche here reaf. (Whitelock, 1961: 21)
[119] Chron. E. Her Romane ge samnodan eall þa gold hord ðe on Brytene wæron. Ond sume on eroðan be hyddan þætheo non man syððan findon ne mihton ond sume mid heom on Gallia læddon. (Whitelock, 1961: 11)
[120] Chron. A (E): him þa aþ(ð)as sworon on þam halgan beage (Whitelock, 1961: 74-75)

sworn to the king in practice and how a physical object played an important role in such rituals of kingship. A ring, often mentioned in the context of gift-giving, is here shown to have a function that is not part of such exchanges. The use of a sacred ring also shows that the lines between secular and heavenly power was not one that was clear cut. Rings, therefore, as personal objects might have played a large role in the visual language of kingship. In this entry, where an oath is sworn, a material attribute of kingship functions not only as a 'treasure', but also as a symbolic object identified with honour and oath-giving.[121]

Another such object is the throne – albeit ambiguously.[122] The entry for the year 979 records: '*and her feng Æðelred to rice*';[123] this can be translated as 'In this year Æðelred came to the throne.'[124] However, the Old English word *rice* can be translated as pertaining to: rule, authority and ascendance to the throne, nation, or kingdom;[125] it does not, therefore, explicitly refer to a throne, and even if this is implied, no indication of its materiality or appearance can be gleaned. The earliest such mention is found in the entry for the year 795 when "Eardwulf came to the throne of Northumbria".[126] In Old English this is rendered: "*Eardwulf feng to Norþahhymbran cine dome*",[127] where c*ine dome* can be translated as: royal authority, sovereignty, kingship, to succeed to the throne or to have sovereignty.[128] *Dome* on its own, however, is often supplied as the Old English translation of the Latin *iudicium* (judgment), and when combined with 'seat' (*domsetl*) takes the meaning: judgment-seat, seat or throne from which a judge pronounces judgment.[129] The only mention of a physical seat occurs in conclusion to the poetic entry from the

---

[121] See section 3.4.
[122] See section 2.3
[123] Chron E (Whitelock, 1961: 123)
[124] Swanton,1996: 122-123.
[125] As defined by the Bosworth-Toller *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*
[126] Garmonsway, 1953: 57.
[127] Chron E (Whitelock, 1961: 57)
[128] As defined by the Bosworth-Toller *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*
[129] As defined by the Bosworth-Toller *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*

Peterborough Chronicle (Chron E) for the year 975: "…in England, while that noble king [Edgar] occupied the royal throne".[130] Here the word *cynestol* means explicitly, king-seat. While any further physical description is still absent, in this instance the idea of a throne, or king-seat, is mentioned directly and unambiguously.

A later source that is worth including here is Wulfstan's *Institutes of Polity*, which is contains five chapters on kingship: 1. *Concerning the Heavenly King*; 2. *Concerning the Earthly King*; 3. *Concerning Kingship*; 4. *Concerning the Throne*; and 5. *Concerning the Nations Councillors.* In these chapters Wulfstan (d. 1023) defines the role of the earthly king in relation to God and does so by giving very clear indications that the king is the direct servant of God. In the third chapter, *Concerning Kingship*, he sets out that:

> There are eight columns which firmly support lawful kingship: truth, patience, liberality, good council, (*veritas, patientia, largitas, persuasibilitas*): formidableness, helpfulness, moderation, righteousness (*correction malorum, exultation bonorum, levitas tribute, equitas iudicii*). And seven things benefit a righteous king: first that he have very great awe of God; and second that he always cherish righteousness; and third that he be humble before God; and fourth that he be resolute against evil; and fifth that he comfort and feed God's poor; and sixth that he advance and protect the church of God; and seventh that he order correct judgment for friend and stranger. [131]

This presents a very clear image of how a king ought to be, and the understanding that an ideal king is a just ruler and judge of his people.

Overall, the histories, and Wulfstan's later political treatise, share many features in their accounts of kings across the Anglo-Saxon period: their belief systems, and subsequently their relations with the Church, were considered crucial to the tenor of their rule, as were those with their kin and advisors, while their impact on their people was deemed absolute; they were valued for their wisdom, gift-giving and the extent to which

---

[130] þa hwile þe se æþela Cyning
cynestol gerehte (Chron E, Whitelock, 1961: 121)
[131] Swinton, 1993: 189; Wulfstan's discussion of the throne does not address the physical throne but what it symbolically comprises: prayer-men (*oratores*), workmen (*laboratores*) and soldiers (*bellatores*)

they inspired loyalty; while occasionally it is suggested that material objects may have played a highly visible role in the rituals associated with kingship.

1.3b Saints Lives

Hagiography provides another invaluable source of information about kings – usually in relation to specific figures in a Christian context. The *Life of Wilfrid* for instance, includes many references to kings, while both the *Life of Guthlac* and the *Life of Cuthbert* provide accounts of God's role in the succession of kings. Thus the *Life of Cuthbert* recounts how Abbess Ælfflæd of Whitby (d. 713) consults with Cuthbert (d. 687) about who would succeed to the throne following the predicted death of King Ecgfrith, her brother. When asked where an heir would be found Cuthbert responds:

> You see how this great and spacious sea abounds in islands? It is easy for God to provide from any of these a man to place over the kingdom of the English.[132]

This gives considerable insight into the process of royal succession. While primogeniture was considered the regular process of succession, it was by no means the only way by which to inherit the throne; the conditions of succession were developing during this period. In pre-Christian Anglo-Saxon England, although kinship was relevant to succession, the process is generally accepted as being much more fluid and based as much in warrior culture, generating a system of succession by might, not necessarily by right.[133] The statement or prediction of Cuthbert makes it clear, nevertheless, that he considered the position of the king to be provided by God. Despite the provisions of men, the matter of succession was directly influenced by the heavenly ruler.

The *Life of Guthlac* was commissioned by King Ælfwald of East Anglia (*c.* 713-749) although Crowland Abbey (the site associated with the saint) lay within the realm of Athelbald of Mercia (reg. 716-757). It was written by the monk Felix in Latin and was

---

[132] Colgrave, 1940: 236-237
[133] Loyn, 1984

later translated into Old English and 'abridged', although Michael Swanton considers it to

be "by no means a pedestrian translation of the Latin original".[134] Both *Lives* include a

chapter devoted to the episode in which the exiled King Athelbald goes to see Guthla*c.*

When relating his troubles to Guthlac, the saint exclaims:

> O, my child, I am not without knowledge of your afflictions: I am not
> ignorant of your miseries from the beginning of your life: therefore, having
> had pities on your calamities, I have asked the Lord to help you in His
> pitifulness; and He has heard me and has granted you to rule over your race
> and has made you chief over the peoples; and he will bow down the necks
> of your enemies beneath your heel and you shall own their possessions;
> those who hate you shall flee from your face and you shall see their backs;
> and your sword shall overcome your foes. And so be strong, for the Lord is
> your helper; be patient lest you turn to a purpose which you cannot preform.
> Not as booty nor as spoil shall the kingdom be granted to you, but you shall
> obtain it from the hand of God.[135]

Some of the linguistic variations between the Latin and Old English versions of this

account are revealing. The Latin *Life* promises Athelbald "*principium populorum*", which

translates literally as '(first) leader of the people'; the Old English *Life,* on the other hand ,

grants Athelbald "*he þe syleþ rice and anweald þinre þeode*", which is most often

translated as 'he will give thee kingdom and rule over thy people'.[136] As already noted, the

Old English word *rice*, although translated as 'kingdom', connotes rule, authority and

---

[134] Swanton, 1993: 88; the Old English translation is preserved in an eleventh-century manuscript (London: BL, MS. Cotton Vespasian Dxxi, fols 18-40v London: BL, MS Cotton Vespasian Dxxi, fols 18-40v) and there is no evidence of when or where it was translated.

[135] Felix, *V.Guth*. ch. 49: O mi puer, laborum tuorum non sum expers, miseriarum tuarum ab exordio vitae tuae nonsum inscius; propterea misertus calamitatis tuae et posuit te principium populorum, et cervices inimicorum tuorum subtus calcaneum tuum rediget, et possessiones eorum possidebis, et fugient a facie tua qui te oderunt et terga eorum videbis, et gladius tuus vincet adversaries tuos. Et ideo confortare, quia Dominus adiutor tuus est; patiens esto, ne declines in consilium quod non potest stabiliri. Non in praeda nes in rapina regnum tibi dabitur, sed de manu Domini obtinebis.' (Colgrave, 1985: 148-149)

[136] Goodwin, 1848: 76-76. The full Old English passage that follows the Latin original: Eala min cniht þinra gewinna and eatoða ic eom unforgitende; ic forþon þe gemiltsode, and for þinum earfoðum ic bæd God þæt he þe gemiltsode and þe gefultomode; and he þa mine bene gehyrde, and he þe syleþ rice and anweald þinre þeode… (O! my son, I am not forgerful of thy conflicts and thy troubles; for this cause I took pity on thee and for thy troubles I prayed God that he would have pity on thee, and support thee; and he has heard my prayer, and he will give thee kingdom and rule over thy people); Swanton (1993: 108) translates "*he þe syleþ rice and anweald þinre þeode*" as "he will grant you dominion and power over your nation"

ascendance to the throne, as well as nation and kingdom.[137] The use of this word thus gives the Old English account a more king-focused frame of reference that includes through its linguistic connotation all the issues concerned with kings and their rule.

Apart from this response, the saint is clearly sympathetic to the plight of the exiled king and prays for God to return him to his rightful throne, reinforcing the idea that kings who have favour with God and God's holiest subjects are the rightful rulers of England. The *Life of Guthlac* has specific royal connections, not only in terms of its commission but also in terms of Guthlac himself, the son of Penwald, a noble of Mercia. With these associations it is broadly signifying that these lives give insight to Anglo-Saxon kingship.

1.3b The Poetry

Old English poetry is often uncertain in its dating, which, when covering a period that lasts as long as that of Anglo-Saxon England, can be problemati*c*. However, despite their uncertain chronology, these sources give insight into the material record in a way that many of the art historical and archaeological sources cannot, providing a record of how some of the objects found may have been perceived or functioned in their wider societal context. Further, objects that do appear in the textual record (be it as part of kennings, in description, or just as an obscure mention), indicates the relative importance these objects themselves might have had within the visual and material culture of Anglo-Saxon England. But similarly to the art historical and archaeological records, absence and presence in the textual accounts still present problems; there are, for instance, no inventories, or lists of goods or wills that detail the type of objects relating to rulership circulating in Anglo-Saxon England. However, if a common thread running through many different types of sources is identifiable, it might be possible to discern some sense of an object's importance or trends that were shared across the varied sources.

---

[137] Defined by Bosworth-Toller, *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*

Within the poetic corpus, the *Battle of Maldon,* perhaps most famously, provides an example of a heroic history composed deliberately as such in Anglo-Saxon England and as such includes reference to rulership. The death of Byrhtnoth, the hero, is recorded in several additions to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for the year 991, where it is juxtaposed with the payment of Danegeld made later that year, the very thing that Byrhtnoth was fighting to prevent.[138] As the action unfolds, a Viking spokesman asks for tribute and Byrhtnoth vehemently undertakes to fight rather than to pay:

> 'Bold Seaman have sent me to you. They have bidden me tell you that you must speedily send rings in return for protection and that it will be better for you that you should buy off this armed assault with tribute than that we should participate in such cruel conflict'… angry and single-minded [Byrhtnoth] gave him answer, 'Do you hear, sea-wanderer, what this nation says? They will give you spears as tribute, the poison-tipped javelin and ancient swords, those war-like accoutrements which will profit you nothing in battle'.[139]

This is interesting, as the poem, even though its date is disputed, is likely to have been written after the Danegeld was paid later that year. The poem therefore does not simply record the battle and who died, but also celebrates the heroism and determination of the actions that took place. While the facts of the battle have often been disputed and debated,[140]the poem gives direct insight into the literary construction of the idealized leader and war-hero, even at this late point in Anglo-Saxon England.

---

[138] Chron. C, D, E, F (Whitelock, 1961: 100-103)
[139] *Mald*., ll. 29-34; 44-48:
'Me sendon to þe sæmen snelle,
heton ðe secgan þæt þu most sendan raðe
beagas wið gebeorge ond eow betere is
þæt ge þisne garræs mid gafole forgyldon
þonne we swa hearde hilde dælon. …
yerre ond anræd ageaf him andsware
'Gehyrst þu, sælida, hwæt þis folc segeð?
Hi willað eow to gafole garas syllan
Ættrynne ord on eald swurd
Þa heregeatu þe eow æt hilde ne deah'. (Gordon, 1976: 44-46; trans. Bradley, 1982; 520-521)
[140] Many of those mentioned in the poem as falling in battle with Byrhtnoth survived to sign charters that postdate the battle; see, e.g. Whitelock, 1961; Gordon, 1976.

This leader, the earl, is described as imbued with *ofermode*, which has been variously translated as 'extravagant spirit' or 'overwhelming pride'.[141] This picture of a warrior being so overtaken by emotion to defend his nation, provides an indication of how devoted (idealised) warriors were to battle; it also stresses the importance of loyalty. This is displayed in two ways in the poem: first, Byrhtnoth is loyal to his king (Æthelred, reg. 978-1016); and second, those fighting with him declare their intention to die fighting rather than leave the battle without their leader. His bravery is also stressed: by his decision to fight on foot rather than on horseback, something he commands his men to do as well.

> He commanded each one of the soldiers to set his horse loose, to drive it far away and to proceed on foot, and to turn his mind to his hands and doughty disposition.[142]

His 'pyrrhic victory' is to be celebrated in death although the battle is lost. His heroism is made clear when describing his sword (the only material object to receive attention in the poem), which is only introduced at the moment of his death:

> The golden hilted sword then fell to the earth: he was unable to hold the hard blade, or wield a weapon. Even then, the grey-haired warrior delivered a harangue, emboldened the young men and urged them to press onwards as good comrades. Then he was unable to stand steadily on his feet any longer, He looked to the heavens…Then the heathen warriors hacked him down.[143]

And it is the death of Byrhtnoth that gives a clear indication of the motives inspiring the poem: following the death of his lord, Ælfwine, son of Ælfric, lays a bold challenge to

---

[141] Bradley, 1982: 522; Alexander, 1966: 112; uncertainty lies in the fact that the only other use of this word in the corpus of Anglo-Saxon literature, is found in relation to Lucifer in *Genesis* B, l. See Bosworth-Toller, *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*

[142] *Mald.*, ll. 2-3:
Het þa hyssa hwæne hors folætan.
Feor afysan ond forð gangan. (Gordon, 1976: 41; trans. Bradley, 1982: 519)

[143] *Mald.*, ll. 166-172…181
Feoll þa to foldan fealohilte swurd:
Ne mihte he gehealdan heardne mece,
Wæpnes wealdan. Þa gyt word gecwæð
Har hilderinc, hyssas bylde
Bæd gangan forð gode geferan.
Ne mihte þa on fotum leng fædre gestandan;
He to heofenum wlat …
Ða hine heowon hæðene scealcas (Gordon, 1976: 53-54; trans. Bradley, 1982: 524)

those still standing with him on the battle field, and ostensibly to those who would have

heard the poem following the battle and the payment of Danegeld:

> Let us call to mind those declarations we often uttered over mead when
> from our seat we heroes in the hall would put up pledges about tough
> fighting; now it can be proved who is brave…and now that my leader is
> lying hacked down in battle. To me that is the greatest grief: he was both
> my kinsman and my lord.[144]

In its historical context this challenge, to maintain loyalty to the ideals of a fallen lord,

must have had a particular potency.

In addition to the importance placed on loyalty, to rulers and those who follow

them, the poetry also provides insight into the practices of kings. The poem contained

within the Exeter book,[145] generally referred to as the *Fortunes of Man* (or the *Fates of*

Man), and considered to be an Old English gnomic poem or wisdom poem, details how a

child might die, and what follies might befall him, if he grows to adulthood; it then lists the

possible rewards or skills that a man might gain before attributing all these fortunes or

fates to God. It ends with an account of how a man can tame a falcon, a past-time often

associated with the social elite of Anglo-Saxon England:[146]

> In this wonderful way the Lord of Hosts and Saviour created and allocated
> skills of men throughout the world, sent everyone on earth of human race
> his own nature. So let everyone thank him now for everything that he has
> decreed for men through his mercy.[147]

---

[144] *Mald*. ll. 212-215; 222-254:
Gemunaþ þara mæla þe we oft æt meodo spræcon,
þonne we on bence beot ahofon
hæleð on healle ymbe heard gewinn
nu mæg cunnian hwa cene sy. …
nu min ealdor ligeð
forheawen æt hilde. Me is þæt hearma mæst. (Gordon, 1976: 55-57 trans. Bradley, 1982: 525-526)
[145] Exeter: Cathedral Library, MS 3501
[146] See Oggins, 2004:36-49; Hicks, 1986: 153-165.
[147] *Fortunes*, ll. 93-98:
Swa wrætlice   weoroda nergend
geond midangerd   monna cræftas
sceop ond scyrede,   ond gesceapo freed
æghwylcum on eorþan   eormencynnes.
Forþon him nu ealles þone æghwa secge,
Þæs þe he fore his miltsum   monnum scifeð. (Shippey, 1976: 62-63)

This poem, while having clear Christian frames of reference, also has much to do with the every-day or so-called secular life: it records activities such as climbing trees, playing games and drinking. In this way, when it discusses kings or rulers, it can be understood to provide insight into how people may have conceptualised an actual king or lord. For example, one story of drunkenness and its consequences is recorded as follows:

> Another turns into a man excited by mead and the beer that the servants bring. Then he knows no moderation, cannot set a limit to his mouth by will power, but will have to lose his life most wretchedly, endure the pain of losing his lord, be striped of any happiness. And men say he killed himself, openly put the blame on what the alcoholic drank.[148]

Here the loss of one's lord is the cause of such pain that it does not seem unreasonable to commit suicide; the episode also implies that in the hall drinking must be undertaken in a certain manner, in order to ensure that the drinker is not to be ostracised from the hierarchy of both the lord, and ultimately the king.

While the poem clearly outlines the consequences of poor behaviour, it also identifies some of the good fortune granted to men by God: such as skill in battle or, in one instance, skill as a goldsmith:

> For some marvellous gifts are prepared by the goldsmith. Often the powerful king's servant hardens the metal and puts fine decoration on it, for which the king gives him broad lands as a reward. He accepts it happily. [149]

Here a goldsmith, who is connected to a king, and seemingly in his employ, has made some metalwork with fine decoration that earns him a reward in the form of landed estates.

---

[148] *Fortunes*, ll. 50-56:
Sum sceal on beore   þurh byreles hond
meodugal mæcga.   Þonne he gemet ne con
gemearcian his muþe   mode sine
ac sceal ful earmlice   ealdre linnan
dreogam drhytenbealo dreamum bicyred
ond hine to sylfcwale   secgas nemnað
mænað mid muþe   meodugales gendrinc. (Shippey, 1976: 60-61)
[149] *Fortunes*, ll. 74b-78:
                        Sumum wundorgiefe
þurh goldsmiþe   gearwad weorþeð;
ful of the hehyrdeð   ond gehyrsteð wel,
brytencyninges beorn,   ond he him brad syleð
lond to leane.   He hit on lust þigeð. (Shippey, 1976: 60-61)

This gives valuable insight into two aspects of kingship: firstly, that he controls the land, and its gifting thus lies within his purview; and secondly, that kings commanded the work of goldsmiths. Land and gift-giving are thus presented as intrinsic to the role of the king and although it may not have lain exclusively within their remit, gold as a raw medium was clearly within the realm of royal acquisition.

In this respect the evidence presented by the Old English epic, *Beowulf*, has much to offer. The eponymous hero, *Beowulf*, is a warrior who comes to the aid of a righteous king, Hrothgar, before becoming king himself and dying in the defence of his people in an act of kingly sacrifice. The language used to describe both his character and status is consistent throughout the epic, and while the narrative focuses on Beowulf and his life, kingship is central. Thus Hrothgar plays a major role: he is the wise and good elderly king of the Sheildings, or Danes, who is plagued by the monstrous Grendel. And the descriptions of him include many lexical variations that elucidate some of the ideas surrounding kingship: such as, giver of rings (*beaga bryttan*),[150] helmet of the Sheildings (*Helm Scyldinga*),[151] and their homeland's guardian (*eþelwearde*).[152] These variations all relate to the function of a king.

The poem is particularly interesting when, as has often been noted, it is considered in the context of Sutton Hoo.[153] After his pyrrhic victory over the dragon, Beowulf is cremated upon a pyre along with the helmets, shields and armour that had been hoarded by the dragon, after which his followers built a burial mound in which they inter the remains along with the remainder of the treasure. The description of this scene is often used to 'decode' the Mound 1 burial at Sutton Hoo. Regardless of such scholarly associations, however, *Beowulf* provides a plentiful source of information about kings in the Anglo-

---

[150] *Beo*. l. 353 (Klaeber, 2008: 14)
[151] *Beo*. l. 456 (Ibid: 18)
[152] *Beo*. l. 616 (Ibid: 23)
[153] See e.g. Cramp, 1957; Bruce-Mitford 1974, 35–55; Evans, 1986: 111-113; Franks, 1992: 41-64; Carver, 1998: 173-174

Saxon period in relation to the extant artefacts. It is rich in its descriptions of material objects, particularly those related to Beowulf himself and the other kings and warriors encountered within the epi*c*. These are sometimes described in great depth, while others are just invoked tangentially. One example can be seen in the description of a helmet:

> An embossed ridge,   a band lapped with wire
> Arched over the helmet: head-protection
> To keep the keen-ground   cutting edge
> From damaging it when   danger threatened[154]

Here the helmet is described in considerable detail, recounting its construction and so presenting a clear idea of its physical reality. This said, there are certain 'omissions'. While kings are described as the giver of rings no indication is given of the physical appearance of any particular ring, or even the existence of a specific ring. Such mentions indicate that these objects existed and were commonly associated with kings, but their appearance was perhaps of a lesser concern.[155] Elsewhere, many of the material objects that *are* discussed in *Beowulf* – such as swords which occur with some frequency, presumably because of several warriors and battles encountered in the course of the tale – are presented in terms of their manufacture (in a manner analogous to the helmet), but they are also described with a fully poetic lexicon. Thus, a sword can be called 'hammer-forged' (*hamere geðuren*),[156] as well as a 'glorious weapon' (*wigan weorðmynd*),[157] or it can be named and given a heroic legacy:

> a rare and ancient sword named Hrunting
> The iron blade with its ill-boding patters
> Had been tempered in blood. It had never failed
> The hand of anyone who hefted it in battle,
> Anyone who fought and faced the worst
> In the gap of danger. This was not the first time

---

[154] *Beo.*, ll. 1030-32:
Ymb þæs helmel   hrof heafodbeorge
 wirum bewunden   walu utan heold
þæt him fe[o]la laf   frecne ne meahte (Klaeber, 2008: 36; trans. Heaney, 1999: 33); see further below, Chapter 3.
[155] See further below, Chapter 3.
[156] *Beo.*, l. 1459 (Kaeber, 2008: 50)
[157] *Beo.*, l. 1559 (Klaber, 2008: 53)

it had been called to preform heroic feats.[158]

This gives the impression that certain objects, such as swords, had unique significance and were passed down through generations.

What many of the objects in *Beowulf* – rings, helmets and swords – have in common is the fact that they all signify a high status giving the impression of wealth and reverence. Both sword and helmet have practical functions as well as being ceremonial, as suggested by the hanging of the helmets around the burial pyre of Beowulf,[159] or by being given as gifts.[160] Helmets and swords are thus, arguably, seen as multivalent in Anglo-Saxon culture, both as war gear and as symbolic objects that can be a signifier of high status; further through gift-giving these objects might take on further social significance.[161] Furthermore, the objects invoked in the poem are discussed in the context of the hall; this is presented as the central location of kingship; it is where those closest to the king meet and sleep, where they encounter the king, where oaths are made in the name of loyalty and fidelity – and it is the one place from which weapons are banned. While the king does not sleep in the hall, it is the location of the throne and it is what the monster Grendel attacks as the symbol of the power of the king.

Aside from the physical setting and material of kingship, *Beowulf* also provides two examples of good kings: namely, Beowulf and Hrothgar. Both men represent different aspects of kingship that are regarded in the poem as necessary for a good king. Hrothgar is wise, generous and inspires loyalty: Beowulf, who is not one of the Sheildings but a Geat,

---

[158] *Beo.*, ll. 1458-1464:
Wæs þæm hæftmece Hruntin nama;
Þæt wæs an foran ealdgestreona;
Ecg wæs iren atertannum fah
Ahyrded heaþoswate; næfre hit mid mundum bewand,
Se þe gryresiðas gegan dorste,
Folcstede fara; næs þæt forma sið
Þæt hit ellenweorc æfnan scolde.
(Klaeber, 2008: 50; trans. Heaney, 1999: 48); see further, Chapter 3.
[159] *Beo.*, l. 3140 (Klaber, 2008: 107)
[160] See further, Chapter 3.
[161] See further, Chapter 3.

vows to help Hrothgar defend his hall from the evil that has beset it. Thus Hrothgar is presented as an ideal king who operates within a political setting creating alliances, ensuring loyalty and continued peace for his people by being both generous and wise.

While Hrothgar is presented as the wise king of a peaceful and prosperous time, Beowulf, as the ideal warrior-king, is in many ways his foil. He is brave, battle ready and honourable; he inspires loyalty in a band of men that travel with him into foreign territory, possibly in exile; he forms a fortuitous alliance and demonstrates maturity. Moreover, when he does become king, he demonstrates the 'might is right' type of kingship that is often associated with the early Anglo-Saxons. Furthermore, he is presented as starting a dynasty in his own right, one associated with Christian kingship. This transition to Christian kings is often associated with *Beowulf*; although the poem emerges from the culture of the 'early' or 'migration' period it nevertheless discusses issues of kingship relevant to *c.* 1000, when it was recorded. Indeed, this may explain why the poem was 'set down at the turn of the eleventh century giving as it does a 'mirror of good kingship' from a 'great antiquity', which would be relevant to a reader of this time. Whether this is indeed the case, *Beowulf* can be considered to articulate a 'heroic ideal' of kingship at end of Anglo-Saxon period that uses the language and material culture of the earlier period to make its point.

1.4 Summary

Given the fragmentary evidence left to us, the accepted method of scholarship on the Anglo-Saxon period has traditionally drawn on a range of disciplinary information and frequently employed multi-disciplinary approaches to maximise that which can be gleaned from the extant objects, texts and images to shed light on the period.

This study will continue this tradition, in that it too will consider a variety of source material to understand the ideas of kingship emerging and circulating in England during

the early middle ages. Where it will differ is in the fact that it will prioritise the visual in its investigation, and the visual will be deemed to include objects generally classified as 'material culture'. It will, moreover, include deliberation of portraits of biblical rulers; images of David and Christ are not simple representations of these figures but are invested with motifs relevant to the idea of power in Anglo-Saxon England. They are thus informed by a locally relevant visual language, while the identity of their subjects invests that language with idealised frames of reference.[162]

Ideas, such as kingship, can be signified through material culture, and thus material culture forms part of the visual culture of Anglo-Saxon England through a combination of material culture. This is in turn why and how you get indexical images, which are not naturalistic depictions, but rather an assemblage that refers to kingship. The combination of signifiers forms an assemblage that creates the notion of kingship. The case studies for this thesis form the second and third chapters, while the fourth builds upon the signifiers identified as being kingly, and turns to focus on depictions on identifiable kings and how the material culture of kingship informs the depiction of biblical kings in Anglo-Saxon England. The case studies that have been selected are representative of the methodological approach that will form the basis of the discussion of the idea of kingship. This thesis is not a catalogue of all material culture that can be related to kingship in Anglo-Saxon England. While the archeologically sources may have presented many other case studies for the performance and visual aspects of kingship, the chosen case studies are those that meet the at least three of following criteria: first, the association with kingship in the textual record. Second, they have some evidence of physicality, a material record. Thirdly, they all have a description in the textual record or use of material words to describe the object. Raw argues that the symbols of power encoded within texts, such as *Beowulf,*

---

[162] See Chapter 2 and 3.

present an insight into the society in the 'age of Sutton Hoo'.[163] She notes that the first symbol of power is the hall, followed by the throne and then by gift-giving of certain objects. Her insights are completely led by the text and she does not at any point refer to actual extant material culture. This study, while largely agreeing with many of her conclusions, differs methodologically by taking the leap from the textual to the material. More simply put rather than asserting that the culture identified by a single text, the dating and localisation of which is inherently problematic, this thesis examines a wide variety of texts and compares these to the extant material culture to substantiate the notions of cultural significance that Raw argues is associated with these physical spaces and material objects in the physical and material culture of the early medieval period.

This said, the attributes commonly identified with kingship and its visualisation in Anglo-Saxon England, are best discussed individually to provide a detailed examination of the information they bring to bear on the subject. The first of these will be crowns. While, as Karkov noted, there is no archaeological evidence for the existence of crowns, they appear in many forms on coins, in manuscripts and on sculpture. While many scholars search for an archaeological explanation for these depictions, it is intriguing to explore how this image came into existence. The trope of crowning and the evidence for the kingly crown will thus be considered, and it will be argued that these visual representations precede any form of material crown and had a symbolic significance that transcended the physical need for a crown.[164]

The sword and sceptre are two further symbols of kingship that appear frequently in Anglo-Saxon England. The sword was a symbol of power that had multivalent meanings in the region; they represented warriors and the warrior king who defended his people against the enemies of Christ, and so it is a Christian symbol of devotion. The sceptre, on

---

[163] Raw, 1992: 167-174.
[164] See section 3.2.

the other hand, also had imperial connotation and completes the image of a powerful king.[165]

The temporal limitations on this thesis have been guided by the scholarship surrounding the period, and has taken the view to be as inclusive as possible. The limitations of certain studies, like Roach's, is directly guided by the specific source material he is examining, while Karkov took her dates from the available source material for her study.[166] Both are guided by the limitations of the sources they choose, this study likewise is limited by available source material but seeks to include objects and visual culture beyond the moments of genesis and look broadly at the cultural ideologies that produce and encounter them. Thus the view to look broadly has been taken to mean that there is a cultural long dureé that spans 500 years, without distinctive borders. This study recognises that surviving roman material might have impact on the chosen period and that material culture from the transition from late Saxon to Anglo-Norman culture is not steadfast and may have the retrospective gaze of hindsight that is a commentary on the period. This is why the period chosen is not bounded by historical events, in one region or another. Karkov, by nature of her source material, necessarily focused post 934–939 and geographically focused on Wessex. This study makes no distinction between the Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms as the boundaries so often change and were ultimately permeable boundaries for visual culture. Further, while attempting to examine the predecessors of visualising kingship as limited by Karkov's study this study does not treat the first depiction of a king as a hard boundary that irrevocably alters the means of depiction of kingship, and has thus chosen to leave the boundary soft, extending into the tenth century for source material. The visual culture, in tandem with the shifting political ideas and foci, have informed the soft boundary that is the terminus of this study, the eleventh century

---

[165] See section 3.6.
[166] Karkov, 2005: 1-25; Roach, 2013: 5-28.

forming a significant departure from the ideas that this study argues is informative of the existing visual culture of Anglo-Saxon England.

The geography of this study is largely bound to Anglo-Saxon England, primarily the English (Old English) speaking parts of Britain. This is largely as the linguistic focus is centred on the Old English historic and poetic records and the material is largely found in these same historic areas. At times, when deemed appropriate, there has been some liberties taken with the borders particularly in regards to the northern border, the modern boundaries for England and Scotland bear little significance in the early medieval period, further, there shared materiality is distinctive and important. It might be argued that this thesis could have eliminated this boundary entirely, a case that I have argued elsewhere for the shared iconographies of stone sculpture, however, for the purpose of this thesis, and in an attempt to set realistic scholarly limitations, the focus has been limited to what is studied as Anglo-Saxon England. This is merely a starting point for a methodological study that could go well beyond the limitations of this study. In deciding to take a very broad chronological boundary, the geographic limitations have been necessary to creating a useful dataset. Arguably this geographic region is exceptionally broad, this thesis does not make distinctive boundaries of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms for this very reason, the borders were permeable, changed over time, and the paucity of evidence makes it difficult to create steadfast regional distinctions. Therefore, Anglo-Saxon England is treated as a single entity, sharing a single language, and as argued a largely singular visual culture. This is not to say there are no regional distinctions but rather that these distinctions did not create a barrier, in linguistic terms, the visual language is mutually intelligible across borders and has the ability to ideologically inform the visual culture within the suggested regions.

This investigation is a study of the visual that at times is interconnected with multi-sensory experiences, and there have been a range of studies about this topic. The setting of

kingship is undoubtedly multi-sensory, but in order to fully understand a multi-sensory experience an adequate study of the visual is first needed. To that end, this study does not intend to ignore the potential for overlap of a multi-sensory experience but will focus on the visual aspects that provides more than enough content for study. This study is interdisciplinary in its approach, as much of the study of Anglo-Saxon England historically has been, choosing to look at material and visual culture through the material record, the textual record and images that reflect this. This study does not use the material culture as simple illustrations or validations of textual passages but rather as in dialogue with the textual record. The textual record, particularly in its use of material culture words and descriptions of the visual, works in tandem with the physical remnants of Anglo-Saxon England creating a dialogue that allows access to how the material is conceptualised. This approach differs from previous scholarship in that it does not seek to validate the text or the construction of the material but rather seeks to understand how these concepts are interrelated. While the text has been used to discuss the construction of the material record, such as Davidson on swords or Marzinzik on helmets.[167] While the material record is often signposted as grounding for a particular passage as factual, however this misses how language and visual culture is emblematic and signifies ideas, which is where this study departs. The text and material are read as equal parts of Anglo-Saxon England, going beyond description or evidence of existence, but rather attributing meaning into both the textual and material records.

Before turning to consider these attributes and those closely associated with them, the settings within which they had most currency, the hall of the king or ruler, will be considered. This, as already indicated from the review of the contemporary literature, was a highly emotive place and the various rituals described as occurring within its space, and the focus of those rituals, the throne, were central to visualising kingship in Anglo-Saxon

---

[167] Davidson, 1962; Marzinzik, 2007.

England throughout the period. By these means, the multivalent ways in which kingship was signified and visualised in the region will be elucidated – taking account of the textual, the archaeological, and the visual.

CHAPTER 2

THE SETTING OF KINGSHIP

2.1 Introduction

Having considered the general issues informing the idea of kingship and the authority of

rulership in Anglo-Saxon England, the settings in which we encounter these rulers, and

their appearances will here be examined further. The first of these subjects – the settings in

which kings or rulers are envisaged in the literature – will be considered, before turning, in

the next chapter, to examine the visual appearance of the rulers. In thinking about the

settings in which kings/rulers might be encountered or imagined, the hall and the throne,

provide the most obvious subjects to be interrogated from the point of view of their

literary, archaeological and visual manifestations.

We must first consider the choice of case studies. When examining the 'setting' of

kingship, this study could arguably explore into many different dimensions of the historical

and archaeological records, including emporia, early towns, execution sites, assembly sites,

battlefields, cemeteries not as reflections of life but as monuments of death, ancient earth

works, route ways or maritime networks.[168] All of these types of sites have the potential to

function as visual signifiers of kingship, all of them can potentially add to our

understanding of kingship; and utilising the methodological approach that this study seeks

to take, all could be examined in a similar manner. Semple has argued that the performance

of royal and religious theatre took place at executions sites, assembly sites and ancient

monuments.[169] This is undoubtedly the case: her study in conjunction with Roach's

examination of assembly sites dating between 871–978 make a compelling case for the use

of these types of settings and their relationship to kingship.[170] However, this study, in

---

[168] See Semple, 2013: 193-223, Blair, 2007; Reynolds, 2003.
[169] Semple, 2013: 195-197.
[170] Semple, 2013; Roach, 2013.

contrast, will utilise the literary and textual records along side the archaeological record in order to examine which of the visual components of the hall and enthronement and how they persisted throughout the early medieval period, as a primary setting of kingship. As will be demonstrated, the hall occupies a unique position in the poetic tradition that has a long lasting effect on the descriptions of kingship. The notion of the hall persists beyond the early medieval period, well into the Later Middle Ages, is integral to Tudor kingship and arguably has relevance for the manner in which we conceptualise the monarchy today. Other sites do not seem to occupy the same notional specialness that the hall does, assembly sites for instance, we know are important sites of kingship but are not given the same treatment in the poetic record where they are visually and materially described. This treatment of halls is distinct, and while there is no tangible demonstrability of this notion, the fact the transhistorical literary tradition emphasises their physicality necessitates an examination of them as such.

Battlefields are arguably also associated with kingship, as indicated by Bede in his description of Sigebert, quoted above.[171] They are a setting in which kings were visually on display, however it is not the site nor the location that necessities the kingly associations but rather the site of the king himself. The kings not are described in association with the landscape so much as appearing within it with certain gear that indicates their status.[172] As such the battlefield in this study is addressed in association with the material objects in the following chapter rather than as a setting. Further, route-ways, maritime routes, ancient monuments and earthworks are all evocations? of kingship but do not have the relationship within the text to justify inclusion in this study which seeks to examine material culture as featured in the art and texts of Anglo-Saxon England. But it should be noted that the symbolic relationships developed within this study might be

---

[171] See Section 1.3a.
[172] See chapter 3.

further applied to sites such as these in further studies. This chapter will focus on two settings, the hall and thrones, which are interconnected within the literary and historical traditions and have a sustained association with kingship in order to examine how kingship is conceptually visualised throughout the period.

Roach in his recent book on assemblies suggest that the textual record "presumes that assemblies would involve much symbolic display…"[173] further arguing that 'Byrhtferth saw meetings of the witan as deeply symbolic events…"[174] However it is important to note that these tantalising insights into certain events as symbolic events, there is very little evidence for the material of visual culture that makes up these events. Roach argues that Byhtferth's description of the witan 'accords well with [his] depiction of Edgar's coronation feast? in the *Vita S. Oswaldi*. At which Edgar was seated in the middle on a raised throne, flanked to his right and left…"[175] Here the assembly is described in terms of an event in a hall and on a throne. This further emphasis how integral the notion of hall and throne were in contemporary text as the setting for kingship. The assembly in this instance is seen as an extension of the hall and are thus an extension of the visual language of that setting.

This study acknowledges that the predominate evidence for architectural settings in Anglo-Saxon England is ecclesiastical; further, that ecclesiastic sites undoubtedly have much to do with secular or 'kingly' power. This has been much studied from with exhaustive studies by Sir Alfred Clapham, Professor G. Baldwin Brown and the most recent full catalogue of *Anglo-Saxon Architecture* by Taylor and Taylor. These catalogues of Anglo-Saxon architecture have necessarily focused on churches exclusively, to the extent that in the introduction of the seminal volumes, Taylor and Taylor do not ever even articulate this fact, nor do they state anything about the material focus of stone. It is only in

---

[173] Roach, 2013: 167.
[174] Ibid: 168.
[175] Ibid: 168.

their entry for Greensted Church, do they note that wooden structures are exceptionally rare. With excavations of more hall sites and waterlogged sites that preserve building material such as Coppergate in York or river-side sites in London, it becomes more necessary to make a distinction about what types of buildings are evidenced in extant Anglo-Saxon architecture, and further examine what types of architecture is missing from this record that might be reconstructed through textual descriptions and the archaeological record. Michael Shapland has worked on the tower churches in Anglo-Saxon England and how these are demonstrative of lordly or royal power. His work has contributed much to the understanding of how kingship function in relation to the Anglo-Saxon Church and how spaces might be both secular and religious. The large hall at Northampton was rebuilt in stone, while it was initially interpreted as part of a royal complex it has since been reinterpreted as a monastic hall, which as this study will argue, following Shapland's interpretations of Anglo-Saxon towers, may be a more fluid relationship to?.[176]

While the church has been thoroughly studied and church spaces have previously been associated with kingship, the settings of kingship outside of these ecclesiastic spaces has not been the focus of any architectural study. The hall is often sought in studies of ritual spaces and feature within the conceptualisation of 'pagan' Anglo-Saxon England. However, the hall as a visual space, an architectural space, for kingship before and after conversion has not been undertaken. This study seeks to begin to fill this gap in the scholarly traditions bringing together the buildings archaeology and the sociological and literary studies of 'hall' culture and look at it through the lens of kingship specifically as a setting for kingship and the space that kingship inhabits.

2.2 Halls

---

[176] Blair, 1996: 97-127; Shapland, 2013: 21-45.

2.2.a The Hall in Old English Poetry

Anglo-Saxon poetry and language of Old English has much to offer the study of material culture, but it is not without problems; namely that the date and associated locations of recording are often far removed from the material evidence in question. It is tempting to dismiss this entirely, as the paucity of evidence, at times, creates a desire for connections and synchronicity but to do so would be to inadequately represent the material and poetic records. This is not to say that connections cannot be made but to emphasise the need for some caution and recognise the limitations of the evidence. When comparing the literary traditions in respect to the Anglo-Saxon hall it is necessary to remember that the descriptions are not faithful representations of real architecture, but use language to create a collage of known aspects that might suggest a notion of the hall as it may have existed. The words chosen might be far removed temporally however they reflect the ideas and materials that continued to be associated with building types, commonalties that have the potential to inform the readers both medieval and modern of the setting. In the literary record, the hall (*healle* or *sele*) is generally used in a metonymic manner to refer to the physical structure of the medieval dwelling as well as its socio-political and economic functions. As a distinctive concept, the hall is associated with a set of socially and culturally constructed assumptions that did not need to be defined, as they were deemed intrinsic to the hall as an institutional place and structure. This notion of hall is clearly present in modern translations, even if the particular aspects of the concept are not easily taxonomised.[177] This ambiguity is entirely fitting in the often fantastical and heroic events that form the matter of poetry, but proves more problematic when we consider the realities of halls as actual lived spaces, and which define them within an archaeological context.[178]

---

[177] See Bradley, 1982; Heaney, 1999; Tolkein, 2014.
[178] See further below, section 2.2

Klaeber claims that the word *sele* for hall is used almost exclusively in poetic

contexts: describing it as occurring only incidentally within prose, whereas *healle* is used

both in prose and in poetry.[179] However, as will be discussed, this is not necessarily the

case: *sele* appearing in a variety of other types of text.[180] It does seem that there is little

distinction made and in the poetry *healle* and *sele* are used interchangeably, with

seemingly no significant differences in meaning, some poets using both terms to refer to

the same building: for example in the Beowulf-poet's description of Heorot.[181] The

decision governing the choice of words was most likely dependent on the requirements of

metre, variation and alliteration, rather than any distinctive semantic differences between

the two terms. Both are used to indicate a large residence or structure, most often

associated with a king or lord; they are most often invoked in descriptions of feasting

culture and are the setting for many kingly activities: such as feasting, gift-giving and oath

making.

Healle and *sele* are also both used in compound words, as *Beowulf* amply

demonstrates, with drinking and feasting being the main activity emphasised by the pairing

of 'hall' with drinks, such as beer-hall (*béorsele*, l. 482a), mead-hall (*medoheal*, l. 484a) or

wine-hall (*wínsele*, l. 695a), all of which emphasise the social function of the hall. This

activity is also picked up in one of the two references to the hall in the *Runic Poem*, which

sets out how:

> The dice box(?) is always a source of laughter and amusement among proud men,
> where warriors sit cheerfully together in the beer-hall.[182]

---

[179] Klaeber, 2008: 431.
[180] See sections 2.2b(i) and 2.2b(ii
[181] E.g. Sele is used in l. 482 while heal is used in l. 484a, as a direct variation.
[182] *Rune* ll. 38-40:
      'peorð' byþ symble   plega and hlehter
      wlancum on middum   ðar wigan sittaþ
      on beorsele,   bliþe ætsomne (Shippey, 1976: 82)
      The meaning of 'peorð' is not clear, but is usually translated as dice or game box, e.g.
      trans. by….

In this instance the beer-hall is the setting for warriors enjoying laughter and amusement at the 'peorð' (dice box). The beer-hall is thus represented here as a place of recreation and games, an interpretation that might be corroborated by game pieces recovered in the course of excavations at hall sites.[183] If a dice or game box is not denoted, the passage still indicates, through the use of the compound *beorsele*, that the hall is being portrayed as the expected location for social activity and enjoyment. This is further intimated in the other reference to the hall in the *Rune Poem*, in which it is claimed that:

> In the hall, riding is easy to every warrior, but it is very energetic for the
> man who sits on a powerful horse along miles of road.[184]

Here the hall is signalled as a static place of leisure or rest in contrast to a journey or distance travelled. The focus of the statement is riding, as that is the rune being defined, and while it does not give any clear indication of the nature of the hall itself, it does establish it as a place that exists in contrast to the 'energetic' nature of existence outside. In this respect, another aspect of the hall, indicated by the compound war-hall (*gúðsele*, l. 443a), becomes particularly acute. While the word might simply denote that the hall was a space for warriors, it could equally indicate its role in matters pertaining to war. Here the expected contrast between ease and energetic activity set up by the *Rune Poem* in relation to the hall is perhaps being undercut quite dramatically.

Concomitant on this, the use of compounds with either 'ring' (OE: *hring*) or gift (OE: *gif*) emphasise the hall as a place of gift-giving,[185] with gift-hall (*gifhealle*, l. 838a), bright ring-hall (*béahsele beorhta*, l. 1177a, or ring-hall (*hringsele*, ll. 2010, 3053a) as some of examples. The compound gold-hall of men (*goldsele gumena*, l. 715a) might also refer to gift-giving or, equally, the decoration of the hall itself. Nevertheless, the

---

[183] Such as the gaming pieces found at Lyminge in 2013:
http://blogs.reading.ac.uk/lyminge/2013/10/02/an-end-of-dig-round-up/
[184] *Rune* 11. 13-15
     'Rad' byþ on redyde   rinca gehwylcum
     sefte, and swiþhwæt   ðam ðe sitteþ on ufan
     meare mægenheardum   ofer milpaþas (Shippey, 1976: 80)
[185] See further below, Chapter 3.

importance of the hall as a place within which gift-giving occurred is set out in *Maxims II*: 'in the hall a king must share out rings',[186] an imperative that emphasises the underlying social function and status of the hall.

Bringing together these two functions of the hall – on the one hand, a place of interior calm in contrast to exterior turmoil; and on the other a place of gift-giving and the celebration of loyalty to the ruler/gift-giver – is the view of the hall (*healle*) in the *Battle of Maldon* as a location inhabited by those of elite social status, in direct contrast to the setting of the poem, the battlefield:

> Let us call to mind those declarations we often uttered over mead when
> from our seat we heroes in hall would put up pledges about fighting. [187]

Here it is clear that declarations of fidelity and loyalty among the 'heroes' (warriors) belong to the social fabric of the hall. In both the *Rune Poem* and the *Battle of Maldon* it is clear that the social context and construct of hall behaviour, including drinking and social obligation, is something that may be called upon in order to juxtapose different spaces and activities. By this means, the hall becomes an effective short-hand for certain social statuses and behaviours that reminds individuals of their roles within the culture and society. While none of this gives much insight to what a hall might have actually looked like, it does indicate that the architectural setting, space, and place of 'the hall' is not only commonplace to the structure of Anglo-Saxon society but performs a social function. With this clearly stated, it is not unreasonable to posit that the visual impact of this place was therefore of potential significance.

Indeed, other compounds indicate the hall's status, such as noble-hall (*drihtsele*, l. 485a) or high-hall (*héahsele*, l. 647a). The term 'most-splendid house' (*húsa sélest*, l.

---

[186] *Maxims II* ll. 29b-30a Cyning sceal on healle beagas dælan (Shippey, 1976: 76)
[187] *Battle of Maldon* ll. 212-215
    Gemunan þa mæla   þe we oft æt meodo spræcon
    þonne we on bence   beot ahofon,
    hæleð on healle,   ymbe heard gewinn;
    nu mæg cunnian   hwa cene sy. (Dobbie (ed.), 1942: 13; Bradley (trans), 1982: 518)

935a) is used as a variation, using *husa* (house) rather than *healle* or *sele*, to emphasise that the structure is better than all other houses, giving rise to the notion of the hall as a place of residence or dwelling. It is clear that soldiers and warriors sleep in the hall, as is shown when Grendel happens upon the hall filled with warriors in hall-slumber (*selereste*, l. 690b). But it is also clear that this is not a regular sleeping arrangement; on this occasion it is the guests who sleep in the hall, and Hrothgar himself, along the Queen and with his own band of warriors sleep elsewhere:

> Then Hrothgar went   with his band of heroes,
> the protector of the Scyldings,   out of the hall;
> he wished   to seek Wealhtheow,
> the queen as companion in bed.[188]

Here it is clear that sleeping in the hall is a guest activity, or perhaps something that takes place on special occasions, or involves certain people, but it is not necessarily a regular occurrence.

It is only in *Beowulf*, which, unsurprisingly, has the most frequent and varied mentions of halls, that there is description of the hall in any detail. At the opening section of the poem Hrothgar is described building a new hall, one to rival all others:

> Then was to Hrothgar   success in warcraft given,
> honour in war,   so that his retainers
> eagerly served him   until the young war-band grew
> into a mighty battalion;   it came into his mind
> that a hall-house,   he wished to command,
> a grand mead-hall,   be built by men
> and there within   share out all
> to young and old,   such as God gave him,
> except the common land   and the lives of men;
> Then, I heard, widely   was the work commissioned
> from many peoples   throughout this middle-earth,
> to furnish this hall of the folk.   For him in time it came to pass,
> early, through the men,   that it was fully finished,
> the best of royal halls;   he named it Heorot,
> he whose words weight   had everywhere;

---

[188] *Beo*. ll. 662-665a
> Ðá him Hróþgár gewát   mid his hæleþa gedryht
> eodur Scyldinga   út of healle·
> wolde wígfruma   Wealhþéo sécan
> cwén tó gebeddan· (Klaeber, 2008: 24; Heaney, 1999: 22)

he did not lie when he boasted;   rings he dealt out,
riches at his feasts.   The hall towered,
high and horn-gabled;   it awaited the cruel surges
of hateful flames;   nor was the time yet nigh
that the furious edge-malice   of son-in-law and father-in-law,
arising from deadly enmity   would inevitably awaken.[189]

Here there are several clues about the construction of the hall: first, it is an

expensive endeavour that requires considerable man power; second, it is a large, tall

building that is highly visible in the landscape; and third, it is 'horn-gabled.' It is also clear

that fire is an immediate concern. The account of the construction of Heorot is foiled with

mention of its destruction; the structure is seen as having a natural beginning and end.

Inherent in its fabric (timber) lies the means of its ruin. It is a material that provides a rich

source of poetic expression: when it is noted that 'the wood of the hall resounded'

(*healwudu dynede*, l. 1317b), material and visual information are provided, but multi-

sensory experiences are also intimated.

These are themes repeated in other poetic accounts. The *Finnsburg Fragment*, for

instance, opens with a fragmented first line has been reconstructed to assert that 'the gables

will never burn' (…*nas byrnað*, l. 1); it is a notion repeated two lines later: '…nor are the

---

[189] *Beo*. ll. 65-85
> wíges weorðmynd   þæt him his winemágas
> georne hýrdon   oðð þæt séo geogoð gewéox
> magodriht micel·   him on mód bearn
> þæt healreced   hátan wolde
> medoærn micel   men gewyrcean
> þone yldo bearn   aéfre gefrúnon
> ond þaér on innan   eall gedaélan
> geongum ond ealdum   swylc him god sealde
> búton folcscare   ond feorum gumena·
> ða ic wíde gefrægn   weorc gebannan
> manigre maégþe   geond þisne middangeard·
> folcstede frætwan.   Him on fyrste gelomp
> aédre mid yldum   þæt hit wearð ealgearo
> healærna maést·   scóp him Heort naman
> sé þe his wordes geweald   wíde hæfde·
> hé béot ne áléh·   béagas daélde
> sinc æt symle.   Sele hlífade
> héah ond horngéap·   heaðowylma bád
> láðan líges·   ne wæs hit lenge þá gén
> þæt se ecghete   áþumswéora
> æfter wælníðe   wæcnan scolde. (Klaeber, 2008: 5-6; Heaney, 1999: 5)

gables of this hall burning here'.[190] While this supports the understanding that burning is a

common occurrence, here, in an ill-fated battle, the claim that the hall (the symbol of

society/social structure) will never burn perhaps emphasises the foolhardy nature of the

young warriors' endeavours. Certainly, the last mention of the hall in the *Finnsburg*

Fragment, occurs after the doorway is breached, when 'there was a din of murderous

blows then in the hall',[191] an observation playing to the multi-sensory experience of being

in a hall.[192] Here the noise affects the atmosphere and perception of the building itself,

where the sudden change from quietness to noise directly parallels the intrusion of the

combative soldiers.

The title '*Maxims*' has been assigned to these gnomic poetic articulations of

wisdom in the form of statements of truth. The material of the halls is also referenced in

these poems, in *Maxims I*, but to different effect, in the assertion that:

> A Hall must stand, and itself grow old.
> The fallen tree grows least.
> Trees must grow broader.[193]

Here, the observation that a hall must stand and grow old is directly juxtaposed with the

statement that fallen trees do not grow (and so do not age). It is an odd juxtaposition given

that the material of the hall is a wood, fallen trees.[194] Taken together these aphorisms

provide an intriguing and possibly contradictory view of the ability of halls to age and the

significance of their fabric. This is emphasised by the invocation of growing living trees in

the following statement. Overall this *Maxim* forms a potential riddle about the nature of a

---

[190] Finns. ll. 3-4
      Ne ðis ne dagað eastan,   he her draca ne fleogeð.
      He her ðisse healle   hornas ne bynað. (Klaeber, 2008: 283; Bradley, 1983: 507)
[191] *Finns*. l. 28 Ða wæs on healle   wæslihta gehlyn
(Klaeber, 2008: 283; Bradley, 1983: 507)
[192] See Neuman de Vegvar and Stoner, forthcoming.
[193] *Maxims I* c ll. 20-22
      Sele sceal stondan, sylf ealdian
      Licgende beam   læsest groweð.
      Treo sceolon brædan ond treow weaxan (Shippey, 1976: 72)
[194] See further Shapland, 2013: 28; Hooke, 2010:150-158; Hooke, 1998:106-11.

material that is meant to last, but is limited by its nature. Shapland argues that wood is an obvious material choice, because while stone is symbolic and longer lasting it is not evidenced in the earlier Anglo-Saxon period to any large degree. Further he suggests that if stone were a common building material there would be more evidence for it and thus the symbolic nature of wood was, including its aging properties was prioritised.[195] Whatever the intended meaning in these seemingly contradictory statements, the *Maxims* again reference the link between the hall and the material from which it is made.

Further poetic descriptions of the hall provide insights into the fact that it is richly adorned (*sincfáge sel*):[196] the hall towered / vaulted and gold-adorned,[197] a statement that, while giving evidence to its adornment with gold, emphasises yet again that the height of a hall, in addition to its being vaulted, was of some importance. The form the decoration takes is not described; rather, it is the visual and possibly material qualities of gold that is highlighted as being relevant to the visualisation of the structure. Elsewhere, the building is further specified to be a 'timber-hall, glorious and gold trimmed' (*sæltimbred geatolíc ond goldfáh*, ll. 307b-308a). This again emphasises its materiality, both wood and gold, but here the gold is specifically mentioned as trim, perhaps providing further insight into how halls might have been adorned. Then, at the point when Grendel's hand is displayed for all to see, gold is mentioned as part of the roof decoration:

> Hrothgar spoke he went to the hall,
> stood on the steps, observed the steep roof
> adorned with gold and Grendel's hand.[198]

---

[195] Shapland, 2013: 21-44.
[196] *Beo* l. 167a
[197] *Beo*. ll. 1799b-1800a
>   reced hlíuade
> géap ond goldfáh· (Klaeber, 2008: 61; Heaney, 1999: 58)
[198] *Beo*. ll. 925-927
> Hróðgár maþelode --hé to héalle géong·
> stód on stapole· geseah stéapne hróf
> golde fáhne ond Grendles hond (Klaeber, 2008: 33; Heaney, 1999: 30)

This passage is of particular interest since it not only offers further insight into the nature and richness of hall decoration, but it also provides an indication that this hall might have had steps, making a raised if not multi-levelled structure, which would have added a new dimension to its height and special signification within the social and structural landscape. While the account of Grendel's hand is undoubtedly fantastic, it does perhaps indicate a practice of display that might have been common to Anglo-Saxon halls; they might have been a place to display the spoils of war, banners, wealth, and perhaps the dismembered body parts of slain enemies. It certainly suggests the use of entryways as places of proclamation, display, and communal significance, and this may provide insight into archaeological phenomena such as ritualistic deposition at doorways, as was revealed at Yeavering in Northumberland.[199] Certainly, the account of the approach to the hall in *Beowulf* confirms the importance of the entrance to the building in its suggestion that the band of warriors approaches the hall straight on, implying that the front of the hall and the doorway bore specific cultural significance:

> they sang in their arms,   as they to the hall straight
> in their grim gear   came marching.[200]

The importance of the entrance is echoed in the fragmented account of the fight at Finnsburg, where the emphasis is placed on the need to defend it:

> Meanwhile Guthhere was urging Garulf that he, so excellent a soul, should
> not at the first onset go wearing his armour to the door of the hall, now that
> a man stern in his enmity meant to deprive him of it, But bold-spirited here,
> he asked openly, over it all, who was keeping the door.[201]

---

[199] See Hope-Taylor, 1977: 67, 82, 244-247; further below, section 2.2c.
[200] *Beo*. ll. 323-324
        ong in searwum·   þá híe tó sele furðum
        in hyra gryregeatwum   gangan cwómon· (Klaeber, 2008: 13; Heaney, 1999: 12)
[201] *Finns*. ll. 18-23
        Ða gyt Garulf   Guðere syrde
        Ðæt he swa freolic feorh   forman siþe
        To ðære healle durum   hyrsta ne bære
        Ne hyt niþa heard   hayman wolde
        Ac he frægn ofer eal   undearninga.
        Deormod hæleþ   hwa ða duru heolde (Klaeber, 2008: 284; Bradley, 1982 508)

Here it is clear that breaching the door would represent a considerable loss, reinforcing the triumphal significance of the use of the doorway to display Grendel's arm in *Beowulf*. It is therefore significant that Garulf, 'bold in spirit' (*deormod*), is the one who goes to defend the door of the hall of Finn.

The significance of the entrance is further emphasised in *Maxims II,* which baldly states that: 'a hall must have a door, the building's broad mouth'.[202] While mention of doors and doorways into the hall elsewhere in the poetic corpus might be articulated with greater subtlety, this *Maxim* states the imperative that halls must have (grand/ broad) entrances. From this point on, halls are not invoked in the poem, serving to highlight the doorway. The archaeological placement of doors at Yeavering A2 has been argued by Walker to have "both created and maintained a hierarchical social order."[203] The fact that it is singled out so clearly and definitively in a manner that specifies a broad entryway indicates that the hall's entry held important symbolic, triumphal, and potentially ritualistic functions.[204]

Once entered, the spacious nature of the hall's interior is repeatedly emphasised, in one instance by an account of eight horses being processed into it:

> The defender of earls then ordered eight horses,
> with decorated head-gear, led onto the hall-floor
> in under the ramparts[205]

Here *eoderas* is translated as 'ramparts' somewhat unsatisfactorily; Bosworth and Toller define the word as a 'hedge', 'fence', 'enclosure', 'dwelling', or 'house', choosing 'enclosure' to translate this particular passage. However, the poem explicitly states that this takes place inside the hall; it might be implied that the horses were lead under the

---

[202] *Maxims II* ll. 36b-37a Duru sceal on healle, rum recedes muð (Shippey, 1976: 76)
[203] Walker, 2010: 88.
[204] See further Walker, 2010: 94-98.
[205] *Beo*. ll. 1035-1037a
 Heht ðá eorla hléo eahta méaras
 faétedhléore on flet téön
 in under eoderas· (Klaeber, 2008: 36-37; Heaney, 1999: 33)

(towering) doorway or, under the internal supports or beams that give access to the interior space of the building.

Further insight into the hall is provided by the accounts of the 'anti-hall', the subterranean dwelling within the mere where Grendel's mother resides. The characteristics of this deep-hall (*grundsele*, l. 2139a) are contrasted with its celebratory counterpart. Beowulf is even called a hall-guest (*selegyst*, l. 1545), emphasising the importance of the location, even if it is not a hall of heroes and feasting. In this respect, the dwelling of Grendel's mother is similar to hell in *Christ and Satan*, which is referred to as a wind-hall (*werigan sele*, l. 332), deliberately subverting the role of the hall as a place of warmth, security, feasting and gift-giving. It is, in fact, the hall of hatred (*niðsele*, l. 1513a) emphasising its absolute difference to Heorot. This motif is further emphasised by the use of the compound earth-hall (*eorðsele*, ll. 2232a, 2515a, 2410a) for the dwelling of the dragon, and the location of the hoard. Indeed, it might be suggested that as all three of the battles in *Beowulf* take place in locations called halls (Heorot, the deep-hall, and the earth-hall), this signifier might reflect the nature of the action taking place within: evil is combatted by Beowulf, a kingly figure. Further, as Williams argues, the burial mound built over the funeral pyre of Beowulf provides this contrast "the inhabited landscape is implicit, the threatened landscape that Beowulf saves by slaying the dragon. The inhabitation is, however, explicit earlier in the poem depicted clearly in Hrothgar's hall Heorot, the axis mundi for the inhabited world of kingship and hospitality."[206] By this means, the setting of the hall is not simply a physical or architectural space that denotes rulership and gift-giving, but the setting of the heroic actions of the warrior-king.

These themes – high social status, cohesion, celebration, ritual, impressive and rich visual aspects, but also (conversely) the temporality implicit in the hall – are epitomised in *The Wanderer*, a poem that explores the impact of a warrior no longer having access to his

---

[206] Williams, 2001: 201.

community and the hall. While giving no details about the physical appearance of the hall,

it sets out its importance as a highly emotive social space where the expected norms are

made clear through their absence:

> He remembers hall-warriors   and the gift of the lord
> How in youth   his gold-friend
> Went to feasting.   All joy has fallen![207]

Here, through its absence, the hall is established as the setting for warriors, youth, treasure,

and joy. The extreme impact of their loss is articulated in what is the poem's most famous

passage:

> Where has gone the horse? Where has gone the young man [rider]? Where
> has gone the giver of treasure?
> Where are the seats of feasts? Where are joys of the Hall [seledreamas]?
> Alas for the bright cup! Alas for the mailed warrior!
> Alas for the power of the prince! How that time has gone,
> Darkened under the cover of night, as if it never was?[208]

In lamenting their loss, the narrator establishes how central the hall was to a young

warrior-elite who are armoured, ride horses, inhabit and indeed locate their identity in the

hall, and feast with the prince, from whom they receive treasure in return for their loyalty.

By these means the hall is firmly established as a socially constructed space that is

intrinsically linked with the lordly or kingly figure:

> I hid my lord   in the darkness of the earth,
> and I, wretched, from there   travelled most sorrowfully
> over the frozen waves,   sought, sad at the lack of a hall [sele dreorig],
> a giver of treasure,   where I, far or near,
> might find   one in the mead-hall who
> knew my people,   or wished to console
> the friendless one, me,   entertain (me) with delights.[209]

---

[207] *Wanderer*, ll. 92-96:
> Gemon he selesecgas   ond sincþege,
> hu hine on geoguðe   his goldwine
> wenede to wiste.   Wyn eal gedreas. (Krapp and Dobbie, 1936: 136; trans. Author's own)

[208] *Wanderer*, ll. 92-96:
Hwær cwom mearg? Hwær cwom mago? Hwær cwom maþþumgyfa?
Hwær cwom symbla gesetu?   Hwær sindon seledreamas?
Eala beorht bune! Eala byrnwiga!
Eala þeodnes þrym!   Hu seo þrag gewat,
genap under nihthelm swa heo no wære. (Krapp and Dobbie, 1936: 136; trans. Author's own)

With the apparent burial of the lord, his hall is no longer a place in which to be entertained with delights, and the place in which the narrator could find camaraderie is gone. With the phrase *sele* (hall) the adjective *dreorig* (sad, sorrowful, dreary, gloomy, wretched, pensive, or bloody, gory, glorious) agrees with *sele*, a grammatical construction that has led to various translations. Sean Miller has translated this as lack of the hall, but Robert Diamond assigns the sense of wretchedness to the narrator rather than the object, hall.[210] This, however, is not supported grammatically, and others have followed Miller's translation with the 'lack of hall', or more literally, 'hall of sorrows', as it is grammatically similar to the compound found in The Wife's Lament *dreorsele,* which can be translated as 'dreary hall'.[211] This sense might be further explained when considering the circumstances of the hall after the lord or king is dead, as line 23b indicates. It might further be suggested, as hinted by Williams,[212] that this notion of 'lack of hall' might also connote the tomb or burial place, although this association would be implicit from the context rather than an explicit translation. If the hall is associated with a single individual, as is the case in *Beowulf,* where Hrothgar's hall falls from glory after the king dies, then this sense of sorrow might be directly associated with the hall as a specific place, which had a specific role in its given society that was intimately connected to the identity of a king. It further

---

[209] *Wanderer*, ll. 22-29:

      goldwine mine   hrusan heolstre biwrah,
      ond ic hean þonan   wod wintercearig
      ofer waþema gebind,   sohte sele dreorig
      sinces bryttan,   hwær ic feor oþþe neah
      findan meahte   þone þe in meoduhealle
      mine wisse,   oþþe mec freondleasne
      frefran wolde,   wenian mid wynnum.
      (Krapp and Dobbie, 1936: 135; Sean Miller trans: http://www.anglo-saxons.net)

[210] *Wanderer*, ll. 22-29:

      since (the time) years ago(when I) hid in the concealment of the earth (i.e., buried) my gold-friend (i.e., generous lord), and I, abject, winter-grieving (i.e., in a mood as dreary as winter? oppressed by advancing years?) went from there over the surface (lit. bind-ing) of the waves, wretched, I sought the dwelling of a dis-penser of treasure (i.e., generous lord), (sought) where I might be able to find far or near some one who, in a mead-hall, might know of my (people) or might be willing to console me, friendless, comfort (me) with pleasures. (29b) (Diamond, trans. 1970)

[211] *Wife's Lament*, l. 50a; Bradley, 1982: 385

[212] Williams, 2001: 201.

implies that the loss of the king necessitates the loss of the hall. This is emphasised in the

following passage from *The Wanderer*:

> A wise hero must realize   how terrible it will be,
> when all the wealth of this world   lies waste,
> as now in various places   throughout this middle-earth
> walls stand,   blown by the wind,
> covered with frost,   storm-swept the buildings.
> The halls decay,   their lords lie
> deprived of joy,[213]

Here the hall is literally described as decaying or becoming ruinous (*woriað*), the wind,

frost and decay being equated with the absent lord presumed dead, and the loss of joy. As

intimated in *Beowulf*, the *Finnsburg Fragment* and *Maxims II*, halls were understood to

have fairly short life spans – a fact supported by the archaeological record which

demonstrates that they were rebuilt and expanded over generations, and in some instances

abandoned.[214] Here, however, the temporary nature of the hall provides considerable

insight into the predicament of the 'Wanderer': the death of the king has catastrophic

consequences for the individual narrator, but also for the social structure and physical

spaces that would have been associated with him. Furthermore, in considering the nature of

the losses articulated by this particular narrator, it could be hypothesised that the decayed

hall of the poem is a reference to the burial of the king, with some scholars suggesting that

princely burials were intended to imitate the hall, being replete with all the trappings of

hall life. This of course is purely speculative, as the recorded poem post-dates the practice

of furnished burials. Nevertheless, the associations informing earlier practices may well

have been maintained poetically to articulate the notion of loss that these burials might

---

[213] *Wanderer*, ll. 73-79a:
    Ongietan sceal gleaw hæle   hu gæstlic bið,
    þonne ealre þisse worulde wela   weste stondeð,
    swa nu missenlice   geond þisne middangeard
    winde biwaune   weallas stondaþ,
    hrime bihrorene,   hryðge þa ederas.
    Woriað þa winsalo,   waldend licgað
    dreame bidrorene (Krapp and Dobbie, 1936: 138; trans. Author's own)
[214] See further below, section 2.2c.

have represented. Whether or not this is the case, the treatment of the hall in *The Wanderer* as a concept that echoes a physical setting that would have been familiar to the poem's audiences, signifies the hall as a place rich with distinct kingly and lordly associations, and a necessary element of the relationship between warrior and his lord. In this respect, it echoes the themes expressed in other poetic articulations of the hall as the expected setting of the ruler.

2.2.b The Hall in the Historical Record

The use of the words *healle* and *sele* in the historical record is much more diverse, although they are not attested with any great frequency and in many cases they do not seem to correlate with their usage in the poetic record at all. Mention of the hall (*healle*) occurs only once in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, and only four times with certainty in the extant corpus of Anglo-Saxon Charters collectively, the Old English translation of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, and in the Kentish Royal Legend.[215] The words appear in other, less immediately obviously 'historical' texts, such as homilies and metrologies, but in these instances they are not invoked to provide information about the nature of the hall in England (either physically or socially), and so they will not be considered here.[216] Although limited, the various historical usages do, nevertheless, provide some valuable information about the hall and the continued use of the words pertaining to halls in Anglo-Saxon England, particularly in the law codes where they are attested in some of the earliest codes, such as those of Hlothar and Eadric and Ine dating to the second half of the seventh century, as well as the *Geþyncðo* dated to the first quarter of the eleventh century. In keeping with this late invocation, the only listing in the *Chronicle* is included in an entry

---

[215] Rollason, 1982.

[216] The Corpus of Old English records the use of *healle* 54 times and *sele* 231 times in prose texts (although this number is dramatically skewed by the alternative meaning of *sele* as 'willow', with 169 entries with this meaning attested in *Bald's Leechbooks*). For these reasons, and for the purpose of the discussion in this thesis, it has been necessary to limit the types of prose text to be considered in this section.

post-dating the Norman Conquest. Due to the nature of the *Chronicle*, the scarcity of terms used to refer to the hall has been considered problematic, as it does not seem to imply the lasting presence of the hall as a unifying concept. However, evidence does survive, even if it does not provide a systematic understanding of hall life across the period.

Charters, for instance, record halls only infrequently, but equally do not provide evidence for other types of secular buildings. These documents were intended primarily to record the granting of land, and so the overwhelming majority of them relate to churches and church lands, and it is thus not surprising that they do not refer to non-ecclesiastic endowments. Indeed, historical documents generally provide evidence relating to material culture as the text is not descriptive, but it does not follow that the lack of evidence in these texts indicates the absence of a certain type of building in Anglo-Saxon England.

2.2b(i) *Charters*

Although halls do not feature largely in Anglo-Saxon charters, *sele* is used in four separate charters (S414, S811, S998, S1370). In three of these, however (S414, S998, S1370), the word seems to refer to a tree or willow – a use of the word that might be expected in these types of documents which describe natural landscape features that mark the boundaries of lands being granted. In S1370 the reference to a tree is clear, as it refers back to a specific tree that has just been described, in terms suggesting it may have been coppiced for spring.[217] *Healle* is also used infrequently, likewise occurring in only four charters (S648, S708, S811, S817). Of these, S648 refers to a little hall (*litil healle*) although it has been suggested that the term might denote a small rock or a hillock, features commonly referenced in such documents.[218] S708, dated to 963, however, refers to an 'East Hall' (*heast healle / east healle*), a hall that features in the landscape and is being used along

---

[217] Michael Bintley, pers. com. See also, Bintley and Shapland, 2013: 1-25.
[218] ibid.

with place-names to define the boundaries of the land being granted. By contrast, S817 apparently uses *healle* to refer not to an earthly hall, but rather the hall of hell:

> If anyone through any presumption or instigation of the devil, attempts to violate this freedom or dares to alter the what is here established, he shall be accursed with all the curses which are written in all the holy books, and cut off from the fellowship of our lord and of all his saints, and bound as long as he lives in this life with the bonds which God Almighty, by his own power entrusted to his holy apostles, Peter and Paul, after his accursed death he shall lie for ever in the bottomless pit of hell [*healle grundleasan pytte*], and burn in everlasting fire with the devil and his angels for ever without end, unless he make amends for it before his death. Amen.[219]

Robinson translates the phrase *healle grundleason pytte* idiomatically as bottomless pit of hell, but the literal meaning is the hall with the bottomless pit. It would seem that, as in some of the poetic records, the hall is being used as a metaphor for hell. In this charter *healle* does not refer to an extant hall, but rather evokes the concept of the hall in its construction of an anti-hall. What is interesting is that even in texts considered both factual and historical the evidence does not necessarily provide a straight forward reflection of halls in the landscape of Anglo-Saxon England.

The only charter to use the word *sele* as hall explicitly is S811 that uses it in conjunction with *healle,* creating a respective phrase of *sele healle*: both in the Old English Bonds that are appended to the Latin text. It is a charter from the archives at Old Winchester, now in the British Library, dated to 959-963, and records the renewal of a charter by King Edgar to Eadgifu, his grandmother, confirming the ownership of 65 hides (*mansae*) at Meon, Hampshire, the old land-book having disappeared while in Edgar's custody. Unusually this charter refers to several man-made features in the bonds, recording land demarcated:

---

[219] Gif hwo þonne þurh ænige drstigness oððe awendan durre se he awyrged oððe þas gesetedness on oþer aendan durre se he awyrged mid eallan þan anwygednessan þe synd áwritene on eallan halgan bocan ond sy he ascyred fram ures drichtnes gemanan ond ealra his halgana ond sy hé gebunden þa hwile þe he libbe on þisan life mid ®an ylcan bednan þe God ælmihtig þyrh hine sylfne betæchte his halgan apostolan Petre ond Paule ond æfter hís awyrgedan forðsiðe ligge he efre on healle grundlesan pytte ond byrne he on þan ecan fyre mid deofle ond hisenglan a butan ælcan ende butan he hit ær his forðsiðe gebete. AMEN. (Electronic Sawyer: http://www.esawyer.org.uk/charter/817 ; Robertson (trans), 1956:70-71, no. 38.)

From [the] cottage gate throughout the street to that northern gate from that northern gate to that corner hall [*sele heal*] from that corner hall [*sele heale*] to the war boundary.[220]

Here a hall (specifically using both *sele* and *heale*) is clearly being used as a boundary point marking out the lands belonging to Eadgifu. It is unclear why it is used as a marker, or whether the hall on the land being granted belongs to her or Edgar. However, it documents the term in the tenth century implying a continued frame of reference.

2.2b(ii) Chronicle

As noted, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* only once uses the word *healle*, in an entry for the year 1097, and only in Chronicle E the Peterborough Chronicle.[221] In a section pertaining to ills suffered by weather and taxation, the hall is mentioned in a passage that describes 'work on the King's Hall which was constructed at Westminster'.[222] This section also lists the shires as well as the walls and bridges of London, and this mention, dating well past the era of the Anglo-Saxon halls which is the focus of this study, nevertheless provides another reference to a specific structure, that of the king's hall of Westminster. This brief mention does not provide any insight into the construction or use of the hall as a space in Anglo-Saxon England, although it does reinforce the common (and perhaps continuing) association of halls with royal figures, as does the Edgar charter (S811).

One *Chronicle* entry that might provide further information is preserved in the entry for 755, the year of Cynewulf's death. This is an unusually long and narrative entry for the Chronicle, which, since it is a relatively early entry, appears in a similar form in all the manuscripts.

---

[220] of ceola gete andlang strete on ðet nyrðre geat of ðon nyrðan gate on ðac **sele** heale of ðac **sele** heal on wigið mere. (Electronic Sawyer: http://www.esawyer.org.uk/charter/811.html; trans Author's own)
[221] Bosworth-Toller, Anglo-Saxon Dictionary; As searched through the Online Corpus of Old English
[222] þurh þæs cynnges healle gerweard þe mon on westmynstre worhte. **(**Swanton, 1996: 233)

> And then he [Cyneheard] learned that the king, with a small troop, was in the company of a woman at Merton; and he rode after him there and surrounded the chamber, before the men who were with the king became aware of him. And then the king perceived this, and he went to the door, and then defended himself in no disgraceful way until he caught sight of the ætheling, and then rushed out on him and greatly wounded him….[his ealdormen] found the ætheling in the stronghold where the king lay killed, and they had locked the gates against them…[223]

This passage describes a separate chamber for the king, the doorway of the chamber, and the gated stronghold, all of which might reflect aspects familiar to a great hall complex. The king's chamber, like that of Hrothgar, is here a separate and private place, where the king might be alone. The doorway in this episode is the location of the fight, a function that can perhaps be associated with the door into the hall being a significant site for narrative action in Old English poetry. The description of the space as a strong-hold (*byrig*) is of interest, as this term is often associated with later building types, though there is little firm archaeological evidence for secured hall structures with fences, walls, or gates, despite the fact that this may have been common practice. The *Chronicle* account of Cyneheard and Cynewulf, however, does not specifically locate the attack at a hall, nor is a hall mentioned. Furthermore, it is unclear how much of this entry is contemporary to the events described. It is much more likely that, as reflected in the archaeological record, mention of the stronghold reflects practices common in the ninth century when the *Chronicle* was first composed, perhaps explaining in part why this text does not, as a

---

[223] Chron E:

7 þa acsode he þone cining lyt wyrede on wifcyððan on Merantune 7 hine þær berad 7 þone bur uto[n] beeodon ær hine þa men afundan þe mid þam cyninge wæron. 7 þa ongeat se cyning þet, 7 he on ða duru eode 7 þa unheanlice hine werode oð he on þone æþeling locade, 7 þa ut resde on hine 7 hine mycclum gewundode; 7 he ealle on ðone cining feohtende wæron oð þet hig hine ofslægen hæfdon. 7 þa on ðes wifes gebæron onfundon þæs ciningas þegnas þa unstilnessa 7 þa þider urnon swa hwilc swa ðonne gearo wearð hraðost. 7 se æðeling gehwilcan feoh 7 feorh bead, 7 heo nænig þicgan noldan, ac heo symle feohtende wæron oþ hig ealle ofslagene wæron buton anum Brytwyliscum gisle, 7 se swyðe [ge]wundod wæs. Þa on morgen gehyrdon þet þes ciniges þegnas þe him bæfton wæron þet se cining ofslagen wæs, þa ridon þider 7 his ealdorman Osric 7 Wiferð his þegn 7 þa men þe he him beæfton læfde ær, 7 þone æðeling on þære byrig gemetton þær se cining ofslagen læg, 7 heo þa gatu heom to beloce<n> hæfdon; 7 ða ðer toeodon. 7 þa bead he heom heora agene dom feos 7 landes gif heo him þæs rices uðon, 7 heom cydde þet heora maga him mid wæron ða þe him fram noldon. (Swanton, 1996: 47-49).

whole, seem to provide any detailed information about halls.[224] This was not the function

of the *Chronicle*, which aimed rather to provide brief annual records of events relating to

the actions of kings, the social elite, and high-ranking ecclesiasts.

2.2b(iii) *The Law Codes*

As noted, the evidence for halls contained in legal documents from Anglo-Saxon England

is limited, but is nonetheless present from both the earlier and later periods. Early evidence

is preserved in the Laws of Hlothhere and Eadric, those of Ine and the later *Geþyncðo*. The

Laws of Hlothhere and Eadric are thought to date to 679-685, their period of joint rule, but

they may equally represent a conflation of laws from their separate reigns.[225] The text

survives in the *Textus Roffensis*, a manuscript compiled in the twelfth-century, which also

contains the Laws of Æðelberht (*c.* 603), thought to be the oldest of the surviving law

code. Surviving only in this twelfth century document. Hlothhere and Eadric's laws are

written in a manner that indicates they may have been updated at some point after they

were composed, as the language is more modern than the Laws of Æðelberht or the Laws

of Wihtred (*c.* 695) using less arcane word forms, and having more abbreviations. This

said, there is little to suggest that they do not date from the period to which they are

attributed. This is important as one of the laws, on the subject of acquiring property in

London, mentions the king's hall:

> 16. If a man of Kent buys property in London, he is to have then two or
> three honest ceorls, or the King's town's reeve, as witness.
> 16.1 If then it is attached in the possession of the man in Kent, he is to
> vouch to warranty the man who sold it to him, at the King's hall [*cyngæs
> sele*] in that town if he knows him and can produce him at that vouching to
> warranty.[226]

---

[224] See below, section 2.2c and Hamerow , 2012.
[225] Oliver, 2002: 126–46; Douglas, 1953: 360; www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk
[226] 16 Gif Cantwara ænig in Lundenwic feo gebycge. Hæbbe him þonne twegen oððe ðreo infacne
ceorlas to gewitnesse oþþe cyninges wicgerefan.

This law uses the word *sele*, as opposed to *healle*, which linguists consider to be the more normal term in prose texts.[227] However the laws themselves problematise this notion, demonstrating that in legal documents neither *healle* nor *sele* take precedent. While *sele* is used elsewhere in the Laws of Hlothhere and Eadric, Ine's Laws cite *healle*, while the *Geþyncðo* uses both. Beyond this, little can be deduced from the words used to refer to halls in the law codes; there are simply not enough texts that use the terms to provide a clear understanding of whether or not differentiation was intended.[228]

Regardless of such consideration, it is clear that here, a royal hall is indicated the other mentions of the king's hall in the Laws of Hlothhere and Eadric also concerns property and the declaration of warranty in the hall:

> If anyone steals the property of another man, and the owner afterwards attaches it, he the accused is to vouch to warranty at the King's Hall [*cynges sele*], if he can and produce him who sold it to him; if he cannot do that he is to relinquish it, and the owner to succeed to it.[229]

These two laws thus make it clear that the acquisition of property must be witnessed and made public before royal officials, and that a proclamation in the king's hall was considered the right procedure to achieve this aim. This indicates at the very least that in the seventh century the hall was used as a place to make proclamations and statements regarding wealth, providing further insight into how the hall functioned as a public space.

In Ine's laws, thought to date between 688-726, and which survive as an appendix to Alfred's laws (*c.* 893), compensation for violating the activities taking place within the hall is the primary concern. They set out how:

16.1 Gif hit man eft æt þam mæn Cænt ætfo þonne tæme he to wic to cyngæs sele to æam mæn ðe him sealed, gif he þane wite ond æt þam teame gebrengen mæge. (Liebermann, 1903: 11; earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk).

[227] Klaeber, 2008: 431

[228] See Wormold, 1999: 391-393.

[229] Whitelock, English Historical Documents, 1968:360, 7.

Gif man oþrum mæn feoh forstele, 7 se agend hit eft ætfo, geteme to cynges sele gif he mæge, 7 þone æt gebrenge þe him sealde. (Transcribed from earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk)

6. If anyone fights in the King's House [hus] he is to forfeit all his possessions, and it is to be at the king's judgment whether he is to keep his life or not.
6.2 If anyone fights in the house of an ealdorman or other important councillor he is to pay 60 shillings as a fine and six schillings to the gebur.[230]

These clearly demonstrate that fighting in the king's house or hall was seen as entirely prohibited, being subject to the most extreme form of punishment: loss of all possessions and possible death. The king's house is a space in which he gives forth the law, and for this reason the behaviours that might elsewhere be permitted are defined as criminal. Fighting in the house of an ealdorman or councillor was also a crime, but one meriting the less severe punishment of a set fine, it is thus the spaces of the law that are held in higher regard. Although both laws establish the criminality of fighting in the hall or the house of a member of the social elite, legislation against the practice nevertheless indicates that such behaviour was deemed possible or perhaps even likely; this is further implied by the poetry, with *Beowulf* for instance invoking the image of:

all of the benches   smeared with blood
the hall [*heall*] battle-gory[231]

Hall fighting, or the threat of fighting, was perhaps a regular occurrence necessitating the introduction of regulations against the practice.

Another of Ine's codes that is of interest to our understanding of the hall concerns its use during the winter:

61. Church-scot is to be paid from the [hall or home] and the hearth where one resides at midwinter.[232]

---

[230] 6. Gif hwa gefeohte on cyninges **hus**e, sie he scyldig ealles his ierfes, & sie on cyninges dome, hwæðer he lif age þe nage.
…
Gif hwa on ealdormonnes **hus**e gefeohte oððe on oðres geðungenes witan, LX scillinga gebete he & oþer LX geselle to wite. (Liebermann, 1903-16 88-122)
[231] Beo. Ll. 486b-487a
              blóde bestýmed
heall heoru-dréore
[232] Ciricsceat mon sceal agifan to þam **healme** & to þam heorðe, þe se mon on bið to middum wintra (Liebermann, 1903:88-122; *EHD* Whitelock, 1968): Whitlock translates the term healme to

This seems to indicate that the hall might have served as a midwinter shelter for members of the society, suggesting they had a complex dynamic for those who lived there when the king was not in residence. Structurally, this law indicates that halls were places which had a central hearth plan.

Taken together, these early law codes, despite the overall dearth of references to the hall, imply considerable variation in its uses: as a social space, a living space and temporary shelter. This serves to highlight the need to consider these spaces as multi-purpose. And with the early eleventh-century *Geþyncðo*, a compilation of laws on social mobility seemingly recorded by Archbishop Wulfstan of York *c*.1003-1023, further understanding of this multiplicity of function is provided. With the hall providing a central focus, it records how status was negotiated and gives insight into the social structure of the late Anglo-Saxon period:

> 2. And if a ceorl prospered, that he possessed fully five hides of land of his own, a bell and castle gate, a seat and a special office in the King's Hall [*cynges healle*], then was he hence forth entitled to the rights of a thegn.
> 3. An the thegn who prospered, that he served the king and rode in his household band on his missions, if he himself had a thegn who served him, possessing five hides on which he discharged the king's dues, and who attended his lord in the king's hall [*cyninges sele*], and had thrice gone on his errand to the King then he was afterward allowed to represent his lord with his preliminary oath, and legally obtain his [right to pursue a] charge, wherever he needed.[233]

This indicates that the king's hall was far more regulated than suggested by the earlier evidence. It explicitly states that a means to advance from ceorl to thegn is by holding a seat and office in the king's hall, while having the allegiance of men who serve the king serves to increase status. While this has deep implications for the social standing of the

mean hall, but notes that this phrase is the antecedent for the colloquial phrase 'hearth and home' which is an alliterative formula to refer to the whole home-stead.

[233] *EHD* Whitelock, 1968: 432
And gif ceorl geþeah, þæt he hæfde V hida fullice agenes landes, bellan & burhgeat, setl & sundornote on cynges healle, þonne wæs he þanon forð þegenrihtes wyrðe.. And se þegen þe geþeah, þæt he þenode cynge & his radstæfne rad on his hirede, gif se þonne hæfde þegn, þe him filigde, þe to cynges V hida hæfde & on cyninges **sele** his hlaforde þenode & þriwa mid his ærendan gefore to cynge, se moste siððan mid his foraðe his hlaford aspelian & his onspæce geræcan mid rihte, swa hwar swa he þorfte. (earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk)

nobility, what is of interest here is that the king's hall is not only a functioning and regulated space at the end of the Anglo-Saxon period, but it also seems to be deeply entrenched within society. Thus, while there is a paucity of evidence between the seventh and tenth centuries, the later codes indicate a continuity of terminology and use of space.

2.2b(iv) *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*

Against these insights, Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* provides no explicit details about the hall as a space. There are mentions of the royal residences: Yeavering is referred to as *villam regiam*, for example, rendered *cynelican tun* in the Old English version,[234] while Bamburgh is described as *urbem usque regiam*, *cynelican byrig* in the Old English version.[235] These mentions, however, do not provide any details about individual halls or their structure; rather they give indications about settlements or residences in which the kings stayed without detailing their appearance or layout. In fact there is no mention of halls in these locations. While Yeavering, has yielded archaeological evidence of a hall structure and complex from the seventh century, these are not explicitly mentioned by Bede.[236] Bamburgh, a coastal hill fort site, also has extensive Anglo-Saxon archaeology, but due to continued building at the site full excavation of the Anglo-Saxon buildings can be undertaken, although there is evidence of a timber hall with a stone foundation in the west ward of the castle area and it is further presumed that there would have been a hall structure in the inner ward near the Church of St Oswald there is evidence of timber building.[237] Despite the fragmentary nature of sites like Bamburgh present, there are two references that give some insight into the appearance of the hall, particularly if one considers the Old English version of Bede's *History*. The first is the famous passage about Edwin's council and the conversion to Christianity:

---

[234] Bede, *HE* II.14 (Colgrave and Mynors, 186-189)
[235] Bede, *HE* III.16 (Colgrave and Mynors, 190-193)
[236] Bede, *HE* ii.14
[237] Kirton and Young, 2016: 8; 10 & 61.

O king, the present life of man on warmth, in comparison with the time unknown to us, seems to me, as if you sat at a table with your chief men and followers in wintertime, and a fire was kindled and your hall warmed, while it rained, snowed and stormed without; and there came a sparrow and swiftly flew through the house entering at one door and passing out through the other. Now as long as he is inside, he is not pelted with winter's storm, but that is the twinkling of an eye and a moment of time, and at once he passes back from winter into winter.[238]

The Old English explicitly uses the word *heal*, as opposed to the Latin *cenaculo*, meaning simply chamber. This passage, as noted by Hope-Taylor,[239] gives us some notion of the construction of what might be presumed to be a hall. First, it is a single room structure that has a door on opposing sides, a feature coinciding with the archaeological evidence of structures identified as halls.[240] Second, there is a fire that seems to have been centrally placed, another feature supported by the archaeological evidence.[241] Third, and perhaps most significant, is the emphasis on the social function of the hall. Although this is a highly rhetorical narrative that references the psalms,[242] it echoes the laws in its identification of the hall as a place where the king meets with his advisors, which has a fire and provides protection from the elements in the winter. It suggests the lived experience within the (imagined) speech, a familiarity and comfort that was a reality of the halls themselves. While many suggest that this episode may never have actually happened, and that Bede is using it in order to elaborate his narrative,[243] it nevertheless indicates that he would likely have been familiar with the type of space that he invokes. In some ways this

---

[238] Bede, *Old English HE, iii.10*
Þyslic me is gesewen, þu cyning, þis andwearde lif manna on eorðan, to wiðmetennesse þære tibe þe us uncuð is, swylc swa þu æt swæsendum sitte mið þinum ealdormannum ond þegnum on wintertide; and sie fyr onælæd ond þin heal gewyrmed, ond hic rine ond sniwe ond styrme ute. Cume an spearwa ond hrædlice þæt hus þurhfleo; cume þurh oþre duru in, þurgh oþre ut gewite. Hwæt, he, on þa tid þe he inne bið he biþ hrinen mið þy storme þæs wintres' ac þæt biþ an Eagan bryhtm ond þæt læsste þæc ac he sona of wintra on þone wintra eft cymeð. … (Miller, 1890: 134; Colgrave and Mynors, HE ii.13)
[239] Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 182, n.1, 188, n. 2.
[240] See further below, section 2.2c and Hamerow, 2012.
[241] See further below, section 2.2c.
[242] Toswell, 2000: 7-12.
[243] Toswell, 200: 8; Church, 2008: 162-180.

makes the narrative more telling as it does not describe a specific place, but an ideal or

concept of the hall complete with its cultural significances.

Another significant episode within the *Historia Ecclesiatica* is one that is said to

take place outside the hall. This is the moment when Æðelberht meets with the

Augustinian mission on the Isle of Thanet in 597:

> Some days afterward the king came to the island and, sitting in the open air,
> commanded Augustine and his comrades to come thither to talk with him.
> He took care that they should not meet in any building [*domum/hus*], for he
> held the traditional superstition that it they practised any magic art, they
> might deceive him and get the better of him as soon as he entered. [244]

The Latin *domus* is translated by the Old English *hus*, but here the importance of the

episode lies in the insight it gives into a set of supposed superstitions associated with

meeting inside a hall as opposed to out in the open air. It is unclear why magic was deemed

more potent or dangerous indoors, and Bede chooses not to elaborate this point. It might be

suggested that this 'superstition' was so pervasive that Bede mentions in it passing as

potentially commonplace, a century after the events he describes. In this respect, this

episode might be compared with the moment in *Beowulf* where, upon the arrival of the

Geats at Heorot, they are required to wait outside while their presence is announced to the

king; only when Hrothgar recognises Beowulf's name and lineage are they welcomed

inside. In this instance, Wulfgar explicitly announces the king's proclamation from within

the hall, inviting them to enter.[245] While this may not equate to superstition it does

emphasise that not all may have been automatically welcome inside the hall. The need for

Augustine to proclaim his intentions to the king before being allowed inside is echoed in

the *Beowulf* narrative, where he must declare his name prior to gaining entry, and in doing

so illustrates a common social practice. The explicit exclusion of the missionaries from the

---

[244] Post dies ergo uenit ad insulam rex, et residens sub diuo iussit Augustinum cum sociis ad suum ibidem aduenire colloquium. Asuerat enim ne in aliquam domum as se introirent, uetere usus augurio ne superuentu suo siquid maleficae artis habuisent, eum superando deciperent. (Colgrave and Mynors, HE, i.25)
[245] *Beo*. l. 390

hall on their arrival in Kent thus provides a significant insight into social attitudes and practices relating to negotiating the hall.

2.2c The Archaeological Record

Against the understanding gained of the hall as the setting of kingship in Anglo-Saxon England, hall sites (as Great Hall complexes) revealed in the archaeological record share several characteristics: they are rectangular buildings, laid out precisely with earth-fast foundations; all have doors midway along their side-walls and centrally in their end walls; most are formed of two square modules; some have an annex at one end or two internal partitions, while a few have an annex at both ends; all have strong foundations, resulting in thick walls, of either plank construction or wattle and daub; most are enclosed within a palisaded structure, and feature a *grubenhaus*, or sunken feature building; all are part of a larger site, having other buildings and features surrounding them; and all are part of nucleated rural settlements. Several such complexes have been identified by aerial photography, fewer by partial excavation and only three have been extensively excavated: Yeavering in Northumberland, Cowdrey's Down, Hampshire, and the recently excavated, at Lyminge, Kent, while others such as Sutton Courtenay (Oxfordshire) have been partially excavated.[246] All date to the seventh century.

The early view that these buildings reflect the migration and influx of Anglo-Saxons has long been challenged. They differ from their continental counterparts, having 'stout, earth fast timber walls, sometimes with external braces, and a lack of internal roof supports'.[247] While some buildings of this construction are known in England they are generally considered rare and atypical, although Simon James, Anne Marshall and Martin Millett challenge this, pointing to commonalities and further evidence for internal roof

---

[246] Hope-Taylor, 1977; Martin and James, 1983; Brennen and Hamerow, 2015: 325-351; Thomas, 2013: 109-45; Lyminge: http://blogs.reading.ac.uk/lyminge/
[247] James, Marshall and Millett, 1985:199; Dixon, 1982.

supports.[248] As part of this discussion Helena Hamerow has concluded, with evidence

multiplying from recent excavations on both sides of the Channel, that it is clear 'at least

some Anglo-Saxon buildings compare closely with the Continent', while noting that

despite widespread irregularities in the dimensions of the building there is not a single

example of the three-aisled longhouse which, for much of the early medieval period,

constituted the main settlement type of structure found in comparable sites across northern

Europe.[249] Other similarities, however, exist with Romano-British building types,

particularly a 2:1 proportion, and the annexing or partitioning of one end of a hall. This has

led James, Marshal and Millett and Hamerow to conclude that Anglo-Saxon building

traditions are not exclusively Insular and include features of both continental and Romano-

British building practices.[250] Furthermore, where the Anglo-Saxon ground plans seem to

suggest Romano-British traditions were most influential, the methods of construction (the

use of external raking timbers and panelled walls), and the placement of the door on the

long wall, seem to have been inspired by continental practices, although implemented in a

distinctly Insular manner.[251]

Identifying a hall in the archaeological record is thus often a matter of

interpretation and extrapolation. As a direct result of the unclear nature of the textual

record defining a space as a hall is a process based primarily on comparative and

suggestive evidence. Thus Hamerow, following James, Marshall and Millett, has defined a

hall on the basis of measurement. She posits that:

> A group of exceptionally large Anglo-Saxon buildings with a floor area
> measuring more than 100m^2 may reasonably be identified as the halls (OE
> *healles*) referred to in Anglo-Saxon literature, which are distinguished in
> written sources from ordinary houses (OE *hus*) and appear as exceptional,
> one-roomed structures containing the 'high seat' of the lord and benches for
> his followers.[252]

---

[248] James, Marshall and Millett, 1985: 182-215; See also Hamerow, 2002: 52-70.
[249] Hamerow, 2011: 129.
[250] Hamerow, 2012; Hamerow, 2011; James, Marshall and Millett, 1985.
[251] Hamerow, 2012: 190.
[252] Hamerow, 2011: 141.

By this means, she postulates a means of identifying the hall (*healle*), distinguishing it from house (*hus*) as suggested by the literary sources; she does not mention *sele*, which, as noted above, appears to be a variation of hall with no apparent difference. She then cites the housing of business and feasting activities as their function, following Rosemary Cramp and Hildegard Dölling.[253] While this is a reasonable definition, it is flawed: if a hall as a literary concept is defined by its function and role in society, it is problematic to suggest that it should be limited by size. It is, of course, reasonable to suggest that halls would have to be of suitable dimensions in order to perform their function, to hold the number of people that a poem like *Beowulf* indicates regularly occupied the space. Yet, it does beg the question of whether this is a *necessary* requirement for a hall; after all, perhaps this inconstant translation of a varied poetic tradition onto the archaeological record is the very crux of the problem. The large buildings that Hamerow and others suggest are halls (Cowdrey's Down and Yeavering among others) undoubtedly fit the bill, but it remains the case that other smaller buildings might also have served a similar function and been recognised as halls. Hrothgar's Heorot is described as the grandest and largest of buildings, indicating the presence of other halls, which were smaller, a necessity if Hrothgar's newest hall is going to be bigger and better than every other hall. With this in mind, while it might be reasonable to postulate that all buildings more than 100m^2 can be identified as halls, this definition fails to acknowledge or include smaller buildings that may have also been *considered* halls as suggested by the 'little hall' of charter S648.[254] This does not dispute Hamerow's identification of halls, nor does it discount any of the halls she and others have recognised; rather it problematizes how efficacious scale may be in defining the full parameters of what a hall may have been.

---

[253] Cramp, 1957: 57-77 and Dölling, 1958.
[254] See above.

Mark Gardiner, in identifying late Saxon settlement patterns, has identified that after *c.* 900 manorial sites start appearing and developing, alongside the proliferation of the thegnly class and the Alfredian laws regarding land management.[255] These sites, recognisable as the prototype of the high and late medieval manorial sites, differ greatly from the early Anglo-Saxon halls.[256] These later manorial or thegnly sites are characterised by far more formulaic combinations of buildings: namely, the church, kitchen, bell-house and enclosure gate, as indicated by the *Geþyncðo*.[257] Nor do they focus on a single large hall; rather they incorporate numerous buildings with clearly defined functions. These sites are not considered kingly; rather they are associated with an emerging class of high status land-owners. Nevertheless, some of their features may have a bearing on the earlier sites, particularly the enclosure gate, as the earlier structures (including Yeavering, Cowdrey's Down and Lyminge) show a distinct reverence for entries, with the doorways showing signs of ritualistic deposits, repair and replacement, as echoed in the poetry.[258]

Another problematic aspect of this identification, from an archaeological perspective, is the suggestion that any large building necessarily functioned as a hall: more specifically, it is, by default, associated with a lordly or kingly figure by virtue of its size with little other evidence of its use. This point is in some senses moot, as there is often evidence that the 'hall' is paired with other buildings that reveal how they were used and thus provide some indication of the nature of the complexes overall. For example, the Lyminge hall is associated with high-status finds such as horse fittings, combs, and gaming pieces, in addition to large amounts of refuse from the consumption of large quantities of a variety of animals, providing a more holistic and certain identification of the complex.[259]

---

[255] Gardiner, 2011: 198-199.
[256] E.g. North Shoebury Hall (Essex); Whitehouse Road, Ipswich (Suffolk) see Wymer and Brown, 1995.
[257] A law code attributed to Archbishop Wulfstan of York c. 1003-1023; see Liebermann, 1903: 456–58.
[258] For Thirlings see James, Marshall and Millett, 1985.
[259] Lyminge: http://blogs.reading.ac.uk/lyminge/

But this in turn begs the question of whether we can associate halls, as they are found in the archaeological record, with the placement of the 'high-seat' required by Hamerow's definition, and of royal, princely or thegnly status. This is not to dispute the archaeological identification, but rather questions the extent to which can we take a definition as it is understood in a literary or historical context and apply it to the archaeological record.

Furthermore, if halls are to be defined by function, the so-called royal-palaces at Cheddar (ninth-century) or Northampton (tenth-century) might qualify as halls.[260] These sites both have large timber-framed buildings that could be considered royal residences, but these are not often considered as great hall complexes, because although the buildings themselves might or might not have functioned as halls, unlike the seventh-century examples they are not necessarily the primary building on the site; rather they seem to be secondary or periphery. Such scholarly interpretation is however, flawed. If the archaeological definition of a hall based on examples like Yeavering is used to identify all other halls, the hall becomes fixed; it is not a flexible structure and nor can it be defined as anything other than that established as the original model. Yet, as has been demonstrated from the literary, legal and historical evidence, the 'hall' associated with Anglo-Saxon culture is not a fixed entity, nor does it have only one form.

The hall, like kingship, is transient, changing and evolving, and perhaps the large buildings on the later sites that seem to be secondary and periphery. Reynolds has argued that while single building complexes are plausible, multiple building complexes would have also been likely.[261] A number of studies have warned against the uniformity of interpretation of these sites. For example, Unwin suggested that multiple estate sites reflect settlement and migration patterns while Blair argued that they represent a secondary phase of site evolution.[262] Blair argues that "there is of course a point beyond which the

---

[260] Rahtz, 1979; Williams, 1979; Williams, Shaw and Denham, 1985; Gem, 1993; Blair, 1996.
[261] Reynolds, 2003: 101.
[262] Unwin, 1988: 97; Blair, 0000: 105; see also, Brooks, 0000: 66.

distinction between royal palace and royal minster becomes anachronistic."[263] This notion of the spaces that at some ambiguous stage become blended and merged, so that the distinctions are no longer relevant is on the one hand completely correct, but perhaps argues away the social distinctions that textual traditions highlights. Later Blairargued that the establishment of parishes from the seventh century was influenced by earlier patterns of land-holdings, and thus were a reflection of royal settlement and building patters.[264] This reflection of the changing relationship of the 'hall' as a socio-political space with other features of the social landscape namely churches and ecclesiastical centres demonstrates that use of the space supersedes the architecture. It has long been acknowledged that the seventh century saw the introduction of monasticism and high-ranking ecclesiastical complexes. This introduction changed the landscape by introducing fixed sites and building types that had intended permanence. Furthermore, there is a known historical relationship between the king and the Church, with the king donating the land for the establishment of the ecclesiastical centres. This is demonstrated by the charters that record the lands and bounds of the properties, while the histories and chronicles record the donations themselves, such as Æthelberht giving the city of Canterbury to Augustine.[265] As Christianity became part of the identity of the Anglo-Saxon kings, the ecclesiastical sites gained more importance, with kings staying at these sites, visiting the centres that they themselves helped to found with land and patronage. It is perhaps in this way that the itinerant nature of kingship came to be maintained in the period after the seventh century – at ecclesiastical centres rather than specifically 'royal' sites. By this paradigm, structures such as the 'Guest House' at Jarrow, which had coloured glass and painted plaster, or sites located at known urban centres which have not been excavated due to continued use throughout the middle ages, can perhaps be thought of functioning as royal residences in a

---

[263] Blair, 1996: 121.
[264] Blair, 2005: 154. See also Harrington and Welch, 2014; 74-80.
[265] Bede, *HE* i.25

manner similar to the earlier hall structures.[266] Furthermore, Shapland's study of the Anglo-Saxon tower-nave churches give another example of how ecclesiastical sites, not only residences, might have functioned as a setting for kingly power such as that at Earl's Barton.[267] Moreover, in postulating that church architecture might be a physical location for kinship it allows for further examination of the organisation of church spaces such as Repton or Deerhurst with clear royal links to play a further role in examining the settings of kingship.

Perhaps hall-like buildings and houses in ecclesiastical complexes formed part of the varied structures that might be thought of as royal residences. It would follow from this that if, as suggested, a hall is not necessarily a specific type of building, then hall culture exists as separate from it; it is the presence of a king and the social implications of kingship that create the hall rather than a fixed architectural type. This suggestion can be supported by evidence from the Continent, with the Carolingian complexes at Aachen and Frankfurt where the royal complexes where not independent of church buildings and ecclesiastical functions.[268] The interconnected nature of these sites is perhaps key to the interpretation of sites, both ecclesiastical and secular, that developed in Anglo-Saxon England from the eighth century onwards.

The question of royal or princely identification of course needs to be addressed case by case, and what might apply to one site may not be applicable to every hall that can be identified. In the case of a site like Yeavering, widely agreed as identifiable with the place (*Ad Gefrin*) recorded in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*,[269] it is more or less reasonable to identify it as royal. This is in many ways the most clearly defined site, identified both by geographical description as well as place-name evidence, and there is little doubt that it can be associated with an individual king and particular events. Nevertheless, this needs to be

---

[266] Cramp, 1976: 201-252.
[267] Shapland, unpublished PhD thesis, 2012; Shapland, 2010.
[268] Heitz, 1980.
[269] Bede, *HE* ii.14

treated with caution as some of the identifications made of buildings and their functions

have been influenced by the historic narrative: the initial dating and sequencing of

buildings at Yeavering suggested by Hope-Taylor may have relied too heavily on Bede's

account.[270]

In other cases cumulative evidence gives a strong indication of the context of a hall,

while being less prescriptive. Such is the case at Lyminge, where the place-name derives

from the name of the nearby river (Limen) combined with the suffix -ge that has been read

as indicating royal settlement. Furthermore, the excavations have been focused in the areas

around an early church, said to be founded by Ethelburga, the daughter of Æthelbert of

Kent, and wife of Edwin. It has therefore been suggested that Ethelburga founded her

abbey on familial land associated with the Kentish royal family to which she returned after

fleeing Northumbria after Edwin's death in 633, although this has been questioned recently

by Yorke, who suggests that the foundation should not be associated with Ethelburga

herself.[271] This understanding, combined with the presence of a large building, more than

100m^2, which has yielded high status finds and large amounts of feasting refuse, provides a

compelling argument that this hall could reasonably be associated with a kingly or royal

figure. This has generated much interest, not only in identifying the site as royal, but also

in identifying the king associated with the building, an interest articulated most succinctly

in a short article in *British Archaeology*: 'Were Anglo-Saxon halls home to kings?'. This

article focussed on the recent Lyminge excavations and asked if named kings could be

identified; Gabor Thomas responded by pointing out that:

> Radiocarbon dating will be critical […]. Several dates obtained from the
> large quantities of animal bones from all three buildings, combined with the
> stratigraphic sequence and the evidence of diagnostic artefacts, would allow

---

[270] Hope Taylor, 1977: 276-324.
[271] Barabra Yorke, 'Queen Balthild's 'monastic policy' and the origins of female religious houses in Southern England' *Early Medieval Monastacism in the North Sea* 24-26, April 2015. (Publication forthcoming)

an unusually precise chronology. Perhaps […] it will be possible to fit a historical king list to the Lyminge halls.[272]

While any such specific identification remains to be established, the evidence for kingly associations with this particular site does seem to be overwhelming.

Apart from associations between such buildings and particular figures and historic events, it seems that the secular architecture recovered through archaeological activity is primarily timbered, from the seventh century at Lyminge and Yeavering, to the later royal site at Cheddar. However, this provides little understanding of the nature and construction of these buildings, as the wood itself does not survive. Lyminge, as well as Yeavering and others, have yielded evidence for post-in-trench construction, a technique preserved at the only extant wooden Anglo-Saxon building (albeit a church) at Greensted in Essex (Fig. 11), which has been dated to the mid-ninth or mid-eleventh century.[273] This type of plank construction, however, differs from the wattle-and-daub that was used elsewhere at sites like Cowdrey's Down. These two varieties of building type would have had striking implications for how the buildings would have looked, with the wattle-and-daub having a plaster effect on the interior and exterior surfaces, contrasting with the wooden beams. The tower at Earl's Barton (Fig. 12) has been argued to preserve, in stone, this method of decorating wooden buildings, with stone strips resembling timbers, perhaps emphasising that means of construction.[274]

Despite such suggestions, the decoration of these timber buildings is completely lost to us. Nevertheless, some comparisons might usefully be made with the later extant wooden church buildings found in Norway. These are made of staves holding the building together on a floating foundation, without the use of postholes. Although it is not known if this technique was used in England, as there are no extant examples, unlike Norway, and due to the floating foundation they do not leave a significant archaeological trace.

---

[272] British Archeaology, Feb 2014, 7.
[273] Taylor & Taylor, 1965: 262-264; British Archaeology, no 10, 1995.
[274] Rodwell, 1986: 156-75.

Nevertheless, the churches preserve decorative features that provide interesting counterparts to the large wooden buildings known to have existed in Anglo-Saxon England. They have steep pitched roofs, terminal animals on the roof gables, such as at Borgund or Hopperstad (Figs 13-14) which are reminiscent of some of the building features of the eleventh-century Bayeux tapestry (Fig. 15),[275] and decorative entrances that favour complex zoomorphic decoration. At Urnes (Figs. 16-17) the use of a spoiliated carved doorway and carved column/stave feature on the side of the (*c.* 1070) church indicate that these elements of the original building held some significance, and it was this that resulted in the elaborate carving that was employed to decorate them; it also suggests that analogous features might have been used in secular architecture, with similar construction. There is little evidence for this occurring in England, of course, but it is worth noting that entwined serpents were employed to decorate the entrance into the church at Monkwearmouth (Fig.18) in the seventh century, pointing to the potential use of zoomorphs as entry motifs in earlier and/or secular building types.[276] Furthermore, the skeuomorphically lathe-turned stone balusters at Jarrow (Fig. 19) and Earl's Barton (Fig. 20) preserve a type of decoration found in timber construction that are perhaps best demonstrated by the fourteenth-century house (Figs 21-22) preserved at the Norwegian Folk Museum (Oslo)[277] the stones fossilising a construction technique of wooden carving that is unnecessary in stone and thus becomes decorative.

Norwegian wooden buildings display a unique propensity for continuity of building practice, with houses and churches subject to little innovation or change in scale and construction technique across centuries, with little change occurring between the earliest, eleventh-century examples to those of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century date; all share

[275] Stenton, 1965; Havran, 2010: 38-39, 46-51.
[276] See further Zarnecki, 1953.
[277] Norsk Folkenmuseum, 2011:59, no6; 63 n. 21; 102, n. 133.

similar form and decoration indicating a long-standing wooden building tradition.[278] The

decorative choices displayed on the doorways to the stave churches (Figs 23-24.)

(eleventh to fourteenth-century) as well as one twelfth century house (Fig. 25), for

instance, are not far removed from those found on the ships (Figs. 26-27) and carts (Fig.

28) preserved in the ninth- and tenth-century ship burials.[279] Moreover, the decorative

motifs articulated in wood are those produced in the metalwork across Scandinavia and the

Insular world.[280] Given these parallels, it is perhaps not entirely speculative to suggest that

such patterning, if not analogous motifs, may have featured on the Anglo-Saxon halls.

Carved decoration would presumably have added to the visual impact of the hall itself,

although the exact form this might have taken cannot be established in the absence of

contemporary material evidence. It remains the case, however, that later English sources,

such as the Bayeux tapestry, depict details of timber carving comparable to that which has

survived from Scandinavia and which are in keeping with the poetic descriptions of the

hall and other Anglo-Saxon preferences for material adornment and ornament. While this

suggests much about the appearance of late Anglo-Saxon structures, its relevance to the

earlier period can only be hypothetical at best.

Nevertheless, it is perhaps worth postulating that the interior of a hall could have

been coloured with paint, like some of the painted plaster found at Jarrow, or some of the

wooden painted ceilings of the Norwegian churches (although these are part of a wider

corpus of ecclesiastical decoration). It has also long been argued that textiles in the style of

the Bayeux tapestry, or those surviving from the Gokstad ship burial (Fig. 29), would have

had their origin in decorative banners displayed in the hall.[281] If this is the case the interiors

of these buildings would have had rich and varied textures, having brightly coloured

shields lining the wall, with the materials associated with feasting set out on occasion,

---

[278] Havran, 2010; Norsk Folkenmuseum, 2011.
[279] Campbell, 2013: 50-57
[280] Campbell, 2013: 54-55
[281] Ingstad, 1988.

creating a rich visual spectacle of colour, personal adornment and feasting vessels. Centrally lit by the hearth as well as lamps or candles placed around the vast space, the hall would have not just been a visual spectacle, but a place of warmth, smoke, and noise. It was a place for speeches and declarations, games and feasting, oath making and law giving. Beowulf recalls that 'in the hall, bold [are] words spoken',[282] and it is this varied use of the hall that goes beyond the scant archaeological record and varied textual sources to create a visual spectacle of the ephemeral in the Anglo-Saxon world. Furnished with benches and tables, and perhaps even containing an elaborately decorated throne, the hall undoubtedly created a visual display of power that, while perhaps transient, was unquestionably a signifier of the varied nature of kingship in Anglo-Saxon England. While the hall may not have a fixed architectural setting, the poetic recalling of the physical space of the Anglo-Saxon hall solidifies its lasting visual significance, and many of the aspects of the early timber buildings that come to be termed 'halls' are easily translated into differing settings.

2.3 Thrones

Turning now to the furnishing within the hall, it has been argued by Chancey, among others, that the possession of the throne as a physical object was a necessary condition of royal authority and an attribute of the 'Germanic' king in his hall,[283] and Old English texts certainly present the *gifstol* (gift-throne) as one of the royal insignia. Yet, apart from the inclusion of a folding stool in the Prittlewell burial (Fig. 30), which will be considered in more detail below, no example of a secular throne has survived. Raw in describing Hrothgar states that :

---

[282] Beo. Ll. 642b-643a

                inne on healle
        þrýðword sprecen (Klaeber, 2008: 24)
[283] Chancey, 1962: 516-517; 1970.

His status is manifested instead by position, ritual and deference. He sits on a raised seat (*on yppan*, Beo. l. 1815) at the centre of the hall, his *þyle* at his feet and his *gedrhit* or warband around him (Beo ll. 356-7; 500; 1165-6)[284]

Raw specifically notes that it is the raised position of the seat, and perhaps not the seat itself that signifies Hrothgar. This raises two questions: how did the throne become a visual symbol illustrated in a wide variety of media, and entrenched within the language of Anglo-Saxon England? And can this visual and textual evidence provide any insight into how a king might have been imaged in Anglo-Saxon England? Was the *cynestol* of the early medieval peripatetic kings, for instance, simply the stool or seat on which the king sat, or was it an elaborate chair that held significance regardless of whether the king was enthroned on it? Early medieval kings are often presented in the poetic record, in a great hall on a throne, surrounded by their brave and loyal *thegns*. The strength of this image has ensured that kings in heritage reconstructions and fictionalized portrayals of Anglo-Saxon kingship are generally depicted on an elaborate high-backed throne (Fig. 31). But it remains the case that the evidence for these as real objects and signifiers of kingship is extremely tenuous. Indeed, it is the reconstructions, literary suggestions, and images of thrones in various media that beg the question of whether we know what the throne of an early medieval king actually looked like.

2.3a The Vocabulary and Literature of Thrones

In the corpus of Old English literature the throne is complex and it is often uncertain whether the word denotes a physical object or simply the idea of power. Further, as with the language of the hall, the words for throne are varied. *Stol* (literally 'stool') is the word most often used as a suffix in a series of compound nouns where it is understood to denote the seat of a throne. Of these *gifstol* occurs only rarely; there are five occurrences in Old

---

[284] Raw, 1992: 162.

English, all in a poetic context, with two of them being in *Beowulf*.[285] The most common compound using the suffix *stol* is in fact *bisc(e)opstol* (sixty occurrences) referring to the seat of a bishop, with *cynestol* (forty-one occurrences) meaning king-seat being the next most common. Clearly, not all –*stol* compounds bear specifically secular kingly connotations. Indeed, other examples, if referring to the seat of a secular ruler, do so only metaphorically. *Gumstol*, for instance, uses the prefix of *guma* (man, lord or hero) which might be translated as a kingly throne, given the idealised warrior-king often described in the poetry. *Eþelstol,* on the other hand uses *eþel* (country or native land), so may be translated as throne, but could equally denote hereditary seat or royal centre. Many of these distinctions make it difficult to translate the meaning literally in the context of Old English poetry.

In the more prosaic *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, however, thrones are not mentioned as specific or definite physical objects at all, with one poetic exception. More usually the references are opaque. For example, in the entry for 979, it is recorded that *her feng Æðelred to rice*,[286] which has been loosely translated as: 'In this year Æthelred came to the throne'.[287] However, the Old English word *rice* can be translated as rule, authority and possessed of power, as well as dominion.[288] Clearly this does not indicate that a specific physical throne was being referred to; but even if this was the case, no indication of its physical appearance can be gleaned from this entry. The relevance of the statement is further complicated by the use of the word *feng*, from the verb *fon*, meaning to seize, take, or capture; in effect the entry may be read as a literal seizure of authority and power, rather than a passive gesture of simply coming to the throne. Against such statements the earliest mention of a possible throne occur in the entry for 795, which is usually translated as

---

[285] McGillivray, 2008: 266.
[286] Chron E (Whitelock, 1961: 123)
[287] Garmosway, 1953; Swanton, 1996.
[288] As defined by the Bosworth-Toller Anglo-Saxon Dictionary

'Eardwulf came to the throne of Northumbria'.[289] However the Old English reads *Eardwulf feng to Norþahhymbran cine dome,*[290] where *cine dome* can be translated as royal authority, sovereignty, king's power or office.[291] On its own, *dom,* is often used to translate the Latin *iudicium* (judgment), and when combined with seat (*domsetl*) takes the meaning of judgment-seat or tribunal from which a judge pronounces judgment.[292] As it stands, therefore, while unclear, the *Chronicle* entry in its literal translation does not definitively reference a throne. In fact, the only mention of a physical seat can be found in the poetic entry from the Peterborough Chronicle (Chron. E) for the year 975, which reads: *þa hwile þe se æþela Cyning cynestol gerehte,* usually translated as 'while that noble king occupied the royal throne'.[293] Here, the word *cynestol* is used, meaning explicitly king-seat. While there is still no further description of its physical appearance, in this instance the idea of a throne, or king-seat, is given a direct and unambiguous mention in a poem.

To complicate matters a little more, however, *cynestol* is also used in the *Menologium*, a preface to the Peterborough Chronicle (Chron. E), which records important Church festivals, though the word is not necessarily used in relation to a specific physical object. Referring to Augustine, the papal missionary to England, it is said that:

> Now in Britain he rests
> in Canterbury near the throne [*cynestole*],
> in the famous minster.[294]

While there is no specific evidence of a royal residence at Canterbury, it is referred to in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* as a royal city (*regia ciuitate*),[295] and it is where the baptised king (Æthelbert) was buried. Further, Bede referred to Canterbury as Æthelberht's seat

---

[289] Garmonsway, 1953: 57.
[290] Chron E (Whitelock, 1961: 57)
[291] As defined by the Bosworth-Toller Anglo-Saxon Dictionary
[292] As defined by the Bosworth-Toller Anglo-Saxon Dictionary
[293] Chron E (Whitelock, 1961: 121)
[294] *Menologium* l. 104: Nu on Brytene rest on Cantwarum **cynestol**e neah, mynstre mærum. (Dobbie, 1942: 49-55)
[295] Bede, *HE*, i.33

(*suis locum sedis*),[296] and it seems likely that this is what is being alluded to here. This might suggest that the place where the king sat was being denoted, as well as Canterbury itself. In this context therefore, *cynestol* may well have been understood to refer to a specifically physical seat, but equally it might be understood to denote the seat of power, or the location of a king.

Unlike the more common word *cynestol*, *gifstol*, as noted, is recorded only five times – all in poetic contexts: twice in *Beowulf*, and once in each of *Christ II*, *Maxims*, and *The Wanderer*. In *Christ II*, which deals with the Ascension of Christ, the term is used in an abstract way that does not seem to refer to a physical object:

> Now, after the battle, the saviour of souls, God's own Son, intends to seek
> out the throne of spirits [*gæsta giefstol*][297]

In this context it is unclear if *gifstol* denotes throne. Although it is sometimes translated as the throne of grace or the spirit, it has also been suggested that it refers to heaven as a place, while Cook has translated the phrase as 'gift of divine grace'.[298] Arguably, these are not mutually exclusive ideas; it is possible to imagine Christ in the Heavenly kingdom and on a Heavenly throne. In this respect it is worth noting that the term *cynestol* is used in *Christ I* (detailing the Advent of Christ), as one of the many variations referring to the heavenly Jerusalem:

> O vision of peace, Holy Jerusalem, unparagoned among royal thrones
> (*cynestola cyst*), city and realm of Christ.[299]

It is clear that heaven can be described in many ways, according to its various attributes, which here include the seat of Christ-King. Overall, this suggests that the *gæsta giefstol* of *Christ II* may well be understood to refer to a heavenly throne.

---

[296] Bede, *HE*, i.26. Although, Colgrave and Mynors have give a less literall translation, "his chief city…" the direct translation of the Latin text, uses the word seat.
[297] *Christ II* ii. 571-73a
   Wilenu gese can   sawla nergend
   gæsta giefstol,   godes agen bearn
   æfter guðple gan (Krapp and Dobbie, 1956: 36)
[298] Cook, 1970: 56.
[299] *Christ I*,11.50-51 *cynestola cyst* (Krapp and Bobbie, 1936)

Similar use is made of *gifstol* in both *Maxims* and *The Wanderer*. In *Maxims I A* it is said that:

> The hand must rest on the head, the treasure wait where it is laid, the gift-throne (*gifstol*) stand prepared, until men share out the hoard. The one who receives the gold is avid, the man on the high seat (*heahsetle*) has enough of it.[300]

Here, as alliterative alternatives, both *gifstol* and *heahsetle* are used, giving a clear sense of the physical nature of this particular throne from which a powerful man dispenses treasure. Likewise, *The Wanderer* describes a dream sequence in which the exiled so-called wandering figure is reunited with his lord under more favourable conditions. It is in this sequence that the throne features:

> …it seems to him in his imagination that he is embracing and kissing his lord and laying hands and head on the gift-throne (*gifstol*).[301]

While neither *Maxims* nor *The Wanderer* describe what the *gifstol* may have looked like, they do present a clear indication of a seat that is understood to stand in a place where the acts of both gift-giving and swearing loyalty to one's lord were highly ritualised. *The Wanderer* does not imagine being reunited at the throne and receiving gifts, but rather embracing his lord and kneeling before the throne. This gives a clear sense of what the throne as a signifier of kingship could represent: both the forgiveness and favour of a king.

Gifstol is also used in *Beowulf*, twice. When Beowulf hears of the burning of his hall, it is said that:

> Then Beowulf was given the bad news,
> A hard truth: his own home,
> The best of buildings, had been burnt to a cinder,

---

[300] *Maxims I A* ll. 69-72

    Hond sceal heofod inwyrcan   hord in streonum bidan,
    gifstol gegierwed stondan   hwonnw hine guman gedælen.
    Gifre biþ se þam golde onfehð   gumþæs on heahsetle geneah.
    (Shippey, 1976: 66-67)

[301] *Wanderer* ll. 41-44:

    þinceð him on mode   þæt he his mondryhten
    clyppe ond cysse,   ond on cneo lecge
    honda ond heafod,   swa he hwilum ær
    in geardagum   gifstolas breac. (Krapp and Dobbie, 1936: 136; trans. Author's own)

The throne (*gifstol*) of the Geats. [302]

Here it is unclear whether *gifstol* is a further variation on the idea of a hall, or if Beowulf is specifically mourning the loss of the chair that is presumably contained within that hall. While some, including Murray McGillivray have argued that *gifstol* in this instance must refer to the hall as a poetic variation, it seems not unreasonable to suggest that it is the chair, and its symbolic power, that are being singled out.[303] In fact it could be argued that in order to emphasise the horror of the disaster to Beowulf, king of the Geats, it was felt necessary by the poet to emphasise not only that the hall had been destroyed but that the throne contained within it, the precious symbol of rule, loyalty and gift-giving (that which made the people one with their lord), had also been destroyed. This is made clear in the earlier reference to *gifstol* in the poem when Grendel is kept from approaching the throne in Heorot:

> He [Grendel] took over Heorot
> Haunted the glittering hall after dark
> But the throne (*gifstol*) itself, the treasure seat,
> He was kept from approaching (or attacking); he was the lord's outcast.[304]

This passage has been much studied by those interested in the linguistic complexities of the word. As Chancy put it:

> Scholarly opinion on this passage has ranged from Norman E. Eliason's view that "neither the function nor the meaning of the lines seems particularly obscure" a possibility which would scarcely account for the controversy they have produced to *C*. L. Wrenn's that "this is one of the greater unsolved cruces of the poem".[305]

---

[302] *Beo*. ll 2324-2327a:
    þa wæs Biowulfe   brogan gecyðed
    snude to soðe   þæt hia sylfes ham
    bolda selest   brynewylmum mealt
    gifstol Geata. (Klaeber, 2008)
[303] McGillivray, 2008: 278
[304] *Beo*. ll. 166a-169
          Heorot eardode,
    sincfage sel   sweartum nihtum.
    No he þone gifstol   gretan moste
    Maþðum for metode   ne his myne wisse. (Klaeber, 2008: 8; trans Heany, 1999: 8)
[305] Chancey, 1962: 513.

Once again it has been speculated that the *gifstol* may not be a physical seat but the lands of the king, his power, or the hall itself. However, Grendel has in fact approached or attacked both Hrothgar's lands and his hall, so it is possible that *gifstol* is invoked to refer to something else, most logically the throne, which physically or symbolically lies at the heart of the hall. As Chaney has argued, the reason that Grendel cannot attack the throne, although he has already invaded the hall and killed men, is that there is a legal precedent disallowing those who have defied the natural laws from approaching the throne.

2.3b Archaeological Evidence for Thrones

Regardless of the range of references denoted by these poetic terms, none record a physical throne nor gives insight to the decoration or type of seat or stool that an Anglo-Saxon king might have occupied. The archaeological evidence for seating is rare since many halls may have had raised floors and most sites have been subject to truncation as is evidenced in Yeavering Hall A2.[306] What we know from the archaeological record is also sparse: two bishops' seats survive, one from Hexham (Fig. 32) and one from Beverley (Fig. 33). Constructed from dressed stone masonry, these were partially decorated, and take the form of monolithic stone chairs with a low back, that have some carving.[307] The fragmentary remains of abbots' seats were also excavated at Monkwearmouth (Fig.34) and Lastingham (Fig. 35); these take the form of three-dimensional animal heads and the remains of animal carved arm rests.[308] None of these examples, however, give any solid evidence for the appearance of what a king may have sat upon.[309] Much like the wooden halls that likely housed these objects, it may well be that they too were wooden, and have therefore not survived.

---

[306] Hope-Taylor, 1977: 127.
[307] For Hexham see Cramp, CASSS, v. 1; for Beverley see Lang, CASSS, v. 3.
[308] For see Lastingham Lang, CASSS, v. 3; For Monkwearmouth see Cramp, CASSS v. 1.
[309] See further below.

Given such absences, discussion of royal thrones in the archaeological scholarship has focused instead on their setting, primarily at Yeavering where it has been suggested that the platform of the so-called amphitheatre may have had a throne placed on it from which Edwin may have presided over a council (Fig. 36).[310] Such a meeting was recorded by Bede:

> [King Edwin said] that he would confer about this with his loyal chief men and his councillors so that if they agreed with him they might all be consecrated together in the waters of life […]. A meeting of his council was held and each one was asked in turn what he thought or this doctrine hitherto unknown to them.[311]

However, the suggestion that this episode might be associated with the amphitheatre structure at Yeavering is at odds with the narrative, which (as noted) recounts how one of the king's men makes a speech about a sparrow in a hall with the doors at either end being akin to the soul.[312] This implies (rather than explicitly stating) that the council took place within a hall. It is an assumption that is supported by the archaeological record of the great hall at Yeavering, which had a door at either end.[313] Moreover, the location of this episode in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* is not identified; Bede does not record where the council met, only that it occurred prior to Edwin's baptism in York. It is only after the baptism that Bede mentions Yeavering as the place where Paulinus had met with the King and Queen in order to baptize the king's followers. It has, of course, also been suggested that the platform of the Yeavering amphitheatre was used as a place from which to preach,[314] and although one use does not preclude the other, the suggestion of a throne placed on the platform remains problematic as there is no archaeological or literary evidence to suggest

---

[310] Hope-Taylor, 1977: 278-280.

[311] HE: 182-183 Verum adhuc cum amicis principibus et eonsilariis suis sese de hoc sonlaturum esse dicebat, ut, si, et illi eadem cum eo sentire uellet, mones partier in fonte vitae Christio consecrarentur…habito enim eum sapientibus consilio, scrscitabatur singillatim ab amnibus…

[312] See above, section 2.2c.

[313] Colgrave and Mynors, 1968: 182-185, 182 note 1: posits the similatites between the account of the hall and the archeological record of the great hall at Yeavering (building A2) which had doors on either end, in disscusion with Hope-Taylor. See above section, 2.2c

[314] Hope-Taylor, 1977: 278-280

that this type of platform may have been the setting for a throne, and it is certainly at odds with what is implied by the literature. In this respect the royal site at Yeavering did include a great hall, so far unparalleled in size, and given the literary association of throne and hall this seems the more likely setting for the throne at the royal settlement of Yeavering. Of course, there is no evidence for an amphitheatre other than that excavated at Yeavering, so any function for the structure is potentially possible, yet the (permanent) placement of a throne on the platform at the Yeavering amphitheatre does seem unlikely given what evidence we do have (albeit limited) for the setting of thrones.

Such discussions regarding Yeavering, however, fail to address the potential appearance of royal thrones. Hope-Taylor suggested that there was a raised platfom at Yeavering in building A2, which he interpreted as a 'chair of throne flanked by tall posts.'[315] And Walker further postulates that this high-seat would perhaps have been 'structured by the performance of its users, and the performance, in turn, would be structured by the hall….this entrance can also be envisaged as a ceremonial approach for the supplicants to the high-seat, a seat that may have been positioned directly in front of the door…"[316] This suggests that the location of a throne, and perhaps a setting of a throne, but no indication of the throne itself. Both Hope-Taylor and Walker inform their interpretation of this site with a preconceived notion of a throne/high-seat. It is possible that the sources of inspiration for these interpretations vary from contemporary to modern examples of enthronement from early Christian or Roman exemplars to modern enthronements; while this is not a criticism of those interpretations, it does provide a necessary caution of interpretation. More simply put: while a site like Yeavering likely provides a setting of enthronement it cannot provide any information what sat atop the platforms, if anything.

---

[315] Hope-Taylor, 1977: 127.
[316] Walker, 2010: 88.

The first possible evidence of a 'throne' might be that of the relatively recent discovery of a stool in the seventh-century chamber grave at Prittlewell. As in this instance, it is possible that royal seats (*stols*) were portable. If this were indeed the case, this would support Hope-Taylor's suggestion of royal and ecclesiastical addresses from the 'throne' platform in the amphitheatre at Yeavering. The Prittlewell folding stool (Fig. 30) is an unparalleled find from Anglo-Saxon England, and prior to its discovery it had been asserted that the only surviving *sella curule* stool type was the bronze cast throne of Dagobert (Fig. 37),[317] although comparisons have been suggested with a folding stool in the British Museum collection, which is a *sella castrensis* type and of spurious and unknown provenance.[318] Such associations aside, the Prittlewell stool is the single known stool find from Anglo-Saxon England, and the only *sella curule* type, aside from the throne of Dagobert, to have survived from the post-Roman period. Prittlewell therefore, presents many questions, not least of which is whether this seat can be considered a throne. Its placement in the grave, at the west end at the head of the coffin, occupies the same western placement as the Sutton Hoo sceptre, which as discussed might hold a symbolic significance. The some of the other items found in the Prittlewell grave are a standard, harp, belt buckle, drinking horns, and other high status objects; all of these have analogous occurrences within the Sutton Hoo Mound I finds.[319] The stool, however, is exceptional, having no comparison in any other high-status Anglo-Saxon grave. There are however folding stools that have been found in graves from both Franques de Breny (Aisne) and the Langobardic cemetery at Nocera Umbra (Perugia).[320] None of these examples necessitate a reading of a throne. Prittlewell however, if interpreted as a royal burial with either Sabert

---

[317] Wilson, 1957: 50.
[318] British Archeology, v.76, 2004, makes a preliminary link between the two stools, a thorough discussion of the 1827 find (which suggested it to be from Essex), can be found in Wilson, 1957. British Museum Catalogue Online: BM1957,0405.1
http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=96869&partId=1&people=93646&peoA=93646-3-17&page=1
[319] See Carver, 2005; Carver, 1998; Evans, 1986; Bruce-Mitford, 1978.
[320] Wilson, 1957: 56.

(d. 616) or Sigebert (d. 653) posited as potential individuals associated with the grave, it seems that the stool from the grave would then necessarily function as a throne in the most basic definition as being the chair of the king.

2.3c Figuring Thrones

2.3c(i) Coins

While archaeological finds do not give insight into the widespread occurrences of thrones, other media provide a regular instance of imaging thrones. Against such ambiguities, the coinage of Anglo-Saxon England does seem to offer some insight into thrones as a political symbol. The seated figure is rare in the iconography of early Anglo-Saxon coinage, but the motif does occur, even if the figures depicted are not identified as any individual king. Two examples of this iconography are found on the Carip group of coins, from late in the secondary period of penny minting (*c.* 710-749) and the Series L, Type 13 pennies preserved in the de Whit collection (Fig. 38); both are shown seated and holding a cross upraised.[321] While the Carip group example has the figure also holding a staff and looking towards the cross, the Series L coin depicts the figure turning back to face a bird that he holds in his other hand. Anna Gannon has noted that these two pennies are copies of the *sella curulis* type of coin from classical antiquity, although as she has also pointed out that the thrones portrayed on the Anglo-Saxon examples can be compared to the chair depicted on the Franks Casket (*c.* 725) (Fig. 39) and that illustrated in the St Mathew portrait page of the Echternach Gospels (*c.* 700) (Fig. 40).[322] She concludes from these

---

[321] Gannon, 2003: 98
[322] Gannon, 2003: 98

parallels that the thrones depicted on the coins may have been 'native, independent of classical sources'.[323]

Alongside these (rare) examples of single enthroned figures on early Anglo-Saxon coinage, a more common two-emperor type of coin is found (Fig. 41). Also based on a late antique prototype it shows two forward-facing figures seated on a single throne; there are examples from *c.*660 to the reign of Alfred of Wessex in the ninth-century.[324] The reason for depicting the two emperors has been much debated, with some scholars arguing that the symbol was politically potent, while others have cast doubt on such a suggestion. Most relevant here is the fact that the figures do not seem to have been secular. While it has been suggested that they were intended to advertise the co-operation of kings, or a pseudo-spiritual kinship between kings, they are more usually identified as biblical figures such as the 'compliant figures' of Mary and Elizabeth, or two dedicatory saints of an ecclesiastical centre, such as Peter and Paul of Canterbury.[325] This might suggest that enthronement was increasingly seen through the hierarchical lens of the Church. The notion of the dedicatory saints might suggest that there is a specific setting that comes to be associated with thrones, Canterbury, a metaphorical seat, is imaged as a physical 'seat' or throne for the dedicatory saints. This suggests that there might have a very fluid understanding of thrones as symbolic, and not purely physical. This recalls the use of the word *cynestole* in the *Menologium*, which also refers to Canterbury, or the use of variation in the poetry to refer to thrones, as part of the references to places, such as Heaven or the Hall of *Beowulf.*

2.3c(ii) *The Franks Casket*

Apart from the coins, there are several other visual examples of thrones extant from Anglo-Saxon England. The Franks Casket, as mentioned, has two potential images: the front

---

[323] Ibid.
[324] Ibid
[325] Gannon, 2003, 84-85.

panel, where the Virgin and Child (Fig. 42) are set against an object that may suggest a 'throne,' or may equally represent an architectural feature or baldaccino-altar setting given its surrounding canopy. The enthroned figure on the back panel below the sack of Jerusalem by Emperor Titus also depicts a seated figure (Fig. 39), this time clearly sat in a chair with two curved finials. The figure has been identified as Fronto, the appointed judge of the defeated Jerusalem, an identification supported by the accompanying runic inscription, *dom* (judgment).[326] As noted, *dom* is often combined with –*stol* to give the specific meaning judgment seat of both Christ and earthly kings who dispense judgment and law. However, as with all the panels on the Casket, this is not the only reading postulated for the complex and enigmatic 'Jerusalem' panel. It has, for instance, been explained as a continuation of the Weland scene on the front, with Lang arguing for the leitmotif of drinking as linking the two. While the front panel shows Weland offering a drugged cup to Beaduhild, a small figure offers the enthroned figure a cup (or chalice) in the *dom* panel, which he is also seen holding. Lang has suggested that the enthroned figure can thus be read as King Niðhad, drinking from the skull that Weland fashioned in to a goblet from the head of one of the king's sons whom he had decapitated, and whose body is included on the front panel. If this is the case, the *dom* inscription might be understood to refer to the fate of those in the Weland story; Niðhad would thus link the two panels, with the front panel also including a runic inscription referring to the King of Terror (written in retrograde runes). Webster has argued that this King of Terror refers both to the whale whose bones provided the material for the casket, and also to the fact that whales were seen as unnatural and evil, an interpretation she bases on Bede's account of the whale which consumed Tobias, described it as the 'ancient devourer of the human race'.[327] In this context the juxtaposition of the 'enthroned' Christ on the Virgin with the King of Terror,

---

[326] Wadstein, 1900: 30; Lang, 1999: 250; Ables, 2009: 549-581.
[327] Connolly, 1997: 46 12.6.1-2, as quoted in Webster, 1999: 233; Webster, 2012: 92-97.

136

and a judged earthly king might provide insight into how these images may be read together.

The Franks Casket also presents a third image that might be taken into account when considering thrones, and how they might be depicted. This scene on the right-hand side of the fragmented lid of the Casket, is identified by the inscription 'Ægili' (Fig. 43). It is shows a lone archer, presumably identified by the inscription as Egil, Weland's brother, inside a fortification, defending a lone figure thought to be female, who is surrounded by an arch similar to that surrounding the Virgin and Child on the right hand side of the front panel. Although it is unclear whether or not the figure is female or male, it does seem to wear a head-dress unlike those worn by the helmeted soldiers and distinct from the bare-headed figures also depicted on the Casket. It holds what has been identified as an arrow, though this object lacks the distinct arrowhead shape and fletching associated with arrows elsewhere in the scene, and so might be interpreted as a staff or spear. Also contained within the arch are two different double-headed beasts: one beaked and similar to the entwined beast set over the Holy of Holies on the back panel of the Casket; the other having long bills opening outwards below the figure. Given their shared 'double-headed' nature and beaked characteristics, it is worth considering whether they can be understood to function together as bestial terminals to a throne. In this respect, the creature above the figure on the lid could be deemed analogous to the fragments from Lastingham, while the lower creature might be considered in light of the Monkwearmouth arm-rest panels. As the figure on the Casket lid can likely be understood as seated, as (like the Virgin) it has no lower half depicted, unlike the other figures on the Casket, the upper and lower 'double-headed' creature might be considered to function as a throne with only the bestial terminals being depicted. The difficulty with this explanation, and indeed any discussion of this scene, is that it can only be presumed to represent a lost episode of the Weland and Egil story; there is no way to identify the figure sat within the architectural setting on the lid,

137

and so any reading of the iconographic details associated with the figure must be conjectural at best. It is impossible to know who the figure is, where the scene takes place and how the stylized beasts surrounding the figure might be interpreted. However if it is postulated that double-headed beast above and below the figure may *reference* a throne, it might be significant that the figure in this type of throne is being defended while on the back panel, a figure that might be considered as being judged is depicted in a different type of throne, one with more simple, curved finials.

2.3c(iii) *Stone Carving*

In the medium of stone carving there are further images of enthroned figures that might provide added insight into the visual symbol of the throne. One such is the seated figure on a fragmentary cross shaft from St Alkmund's in Derby (Fig. 44) dated to the tenth or eleventh century. This figure, though previously identified as a Virgin and Child, has since been re-identified by Hawkes (with the help of favourable lighting) as a male figure seated on a stool, with a sword and a rectangular element that might be a harp. From above, hangs a foliate motif, previously identified as the 'head' of the child. Understood as a seated male figure this image might be most easily identified as the Old Testament King David, if it is accepted that he indeed does hold a harp; yet, the presence of the sword makes this debatable as there are no examples of King David being depicted with a sword.[328] The seat on which the figure sits, while lacking any detail or decoration due to its damaged condition, does retain its distinctive shape. The seat depicted in profile has no back; rather it appears as a stool, not a folding stool formed of cross bars, but one supported by a central component, which has no visual or physical comparison.

---

[328] See section 3.3 and Chapter 4.

The Easby Cross (Fig. 51) – dated to the beginning of the ninth century – also presents a fragmented depiction of enthronement.[329] Here, it is the nimbed Christ who is enthroned in Majesty, flanked by two figures that can most likely be identified as saints.[330] While the decoration of the seat is much eroded, it is clear that Christ is sat in an elaborate throne, which may have included armrests at waist height. The flanking figures, however, obscure whether the throne was high-backed.

The tenth-century Middleton 2 (East Yorkshire) (Fig. 45)[331] has a figure carved on one of its broad faces of a warrior with war gear, this figure has been argued to be a seated figure due to the positioning of its legs and it has been further suggested that some of the ambiguous carving in the negative space is representative of a chair or throne, similar to that at Halton or the figures of the Enthroned Christ (discussed further below)[332] which lack a definitive chair such as that at Dewsbury (Fig. 46).[333] However, others have suggested that this is not a seated figure, but rather a walking figure, or a figure in a grave.[334] The 'throne' is only clearly demarcated with two distinctive round terminals above the shoulders reminiscent of the Franks Casket figure or the coins mentioned above, however the stone does not present the seat of side to offer a definitive representation of a seated figure. If the figure is seated, with the regiments of war, this might offer a commentary about the role of the elite warrior depicted, and could potentially provide a further example of image pairing as discussed below; however it does not lead to any further understanding of the throne as a material object.

Nunbornholme 1 (Fig. 47) (East Yorkshire) –dated to the ninth or tenth century – is a fragmented cross shaft that depicts a seated figure with a sword similar to that at St

---

[329] Lang, CASSS, v.6.
[330] Lang, CASSS, v.6.
[331] Lang, CASSS, v.3.
[332] Bailey, CASSS, v.9.
[333] Coatsworth, CASSS, v.8.
[334] Thompson, 2004 144-147.

Alkmunds.[335] Here again the sword is emphasised due to its size and presence in the foreground of the image, however the figure is not depicted with a harp, therefore this figure is not generally associated with the David type. However the similarities between these stones in the way the seat is figured is distinctive. The seat is depicted as a stool, without a back, and the figure is in profile. This figure is paired with two other images of seated figures, firstly it is opposite to a Virgin and Child (where the child holds a book) here the virgin is forward facing and functions as the throne for the Christ child, while her seat is not evidence. The other seated figure is on the lower half of the shaft, which has been cemented to the upper potion haphazardly with much of the middle material lost,[336] so it is unclear how it was originally positioned in relation to the figures on the upper fragment, however it is suggested by the Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture that this figure would have originally been on the on the same side as the figure with the sword. This figure on the lower fragment, has a high backed chair, sits in profile and has a book, the head of the figure has been lost. The presence the book might suggest the identification of an evangelist figure, however the figure is above and appears to be sharing a space with a centaur figure, which has thus far eluded secure identification. Nevertheless, the two figures might demonstrate two separate notions of enthronement, as the figure that might be seen as a lord or king, who aside from his presence on a cross shaft has no clear biblical significance, and he is presented on a stool and the other figure is presented on a high-backed chair. However, if Middleton 2 is thought to represent an enthroned warrior, that would represent a high backed chair on a secular figure. This possibility further suggests that the manner of throne is not necessarily distinctive of a particular status.

---

[335] For Nunburnholme see Lang, CASSS, v.3; and for St Alkmunds see Hawkes, CASSS, Forthcomming 2017.

[336] Lang, CASSS, v.3: 189. The two pieces of the cross shaft were found at separate times with one piece recorded in 1873 during church restoration and the second recorded in 1901 as part of the fifteenth century fabric of the porch, then they were erected together (in the current arrangement) in the churchyard sometime before a record and drawing of the current arrangement is made in 1924 by Brøndsted, after which it was moved inside the church (still cemented together incorrectly, according to Lang) into its present location.

The tenth-century cross from St Wilfrid's churchyard at Halton, Lancashire (Fig. 48),[337] preserves another carved panel that might be included in the corpus of images depicting a throne. At the base of the fragmented cross shaft of Halton 1A is an unidentified figure, facing forwards, on a seat with a high back that encloses the shoulders of the figure; at his feet, are two smaller crouching figures turned to face him. These crouching figures appear to hold the legs of the central figure, though it might be that their hands are held in a position of prayer. Although this figure could be interpreted as Christ, he has no halo or other identifying attribute, and adoring or venerating figures do not necessarily serve to denote the presence of Christ. In fact, the gesture of the two crouching figures is reminiscent of that depicted on the so-called Blessing Stone from York Minster (Fig. 49)[338] where there the central figure, rather than being sat, is stood with bare feet pointing beyond the scene. Both these carvings offer ambiguous interpretations, and many suggestions have been made. For the purpose of this discussion, it is important to note that the Halton carving depicts yet another type of chair or throne that may be considered among the many images from Anglo-Saxon England that seem to illustrate such objects. Although it does not preserve any detail or decoration, it nevertheless indicates the illustration of a high-backed throne that encloses the figure within it.

Another scene on the same shaft Halton 1C, depicts a figure in the lower register seated in profile in a high-backed chair in front of a two-legged table he is interpreted as leaning forward and raising a hammer.[339] This figure is part of a complex scene with many different elements that has been interpreted as the smith Reginn from the legend of Sigurd.[340] This is one of the only profile views of a high-backed seat in England although examples from Scotland exist; the composition of this scene and the possible subject matter further confuses the presentation. Due to the poor preservation on this stone and the

[337] See Bailey, CASSS, v. 9.
[338] Lang, CASSS, v.3.
[339] Bailey, CASSS, v. 9.
[340] Bailey, CASSS, v. 9:180-181.

crowded composition it is impossible to discern any detail of the seat however this example provides a further variation of depicting a seated figure, and interestingly depicts the figure not as a static 'portrait' but as part of the action, with hammer raised.

Scotland has several depictions of enthronement that might be useful comparative material to the sculpture of Anglo-Saxon England. There are several examples of seated ecclesiastics or clerics such as those at Kingoldrum,[341] St Vigeans 7,[342] or Dunfallandy.[343] Fowlis Wester (Perthshire) depicts a seated figure beside an interlaced cross, that is most often interpreted as an ecclesiastical figure depicts a seat that has an exaggerated curved seat but the distinctive curved terminals similar to that which can be seen on the coinage and franks casket. This throne was used to reconstruct a 'Pictish' throne for the National Museum of Scotland. Carved in wood, the museum found difficulties in translating the depiction of the seat in to a reality, which might suggests that thrones carved or depicted do not necessarily faithful represent the physical objects from which their inspiration is drawn.[344] This might further suggest that these depictions are exaggerated representations thrones and do not therefore directly reflect the material culture of the period problematizing the notion that depictions give direct insight into the material culture of the period. The throne depicted on the Dupplin Cross, shows an enthroned figure playing a Harp thought to be the figure of David (Fig 50).[345] This throne as a distinctive animal terminal, thought to be a bird with open mouth, echoing the terminals on the harp, possibly referencing the music emitting from the harp.[346] Animal terminals are also depicted on a stone found at Kirriemuir (Angus)[347] where the profile figure is sat in a throne with two animal terminals facing outwards possibly similar to the manner in which the Lastingham

---

[341] ECMS, v. 3: 238; 226.
[342] ECMS, v. 3: 268.
[343] ECMS, v. 3: 288.
[344] Clarke, Blackwell and Goldberg, 2012: 106-112.
[345] ECMS, v. 3: 319.
[346] See unpublish church information boards on site drawing on ECMS, v. 3: 319.
[347] ECMS, v. 3: 226.

fragments would have looked. These crosses demonstrate that Scotland also has significant variation in the depiction of thrones, implying that ideas of Kingship are fluid in the various parts of the Insular world and that these ideas could have been borrowed and recast across the region.

When considering the nature of the high-backed thrones, such as that at Easby or Halton, that are clearly depicted in Anglo-Saxon art, it is useful to turn to fragments from both Lastingham and Monkwearmouth (Figs 34-35) which seem to have been three-dimensional animal-head terminals seem to come from high-backed chairs where the animals faced inwards, similar to the chair depicted in the Barberini Gospels (Fig. 52), while the other stone chair fragments from Monkwearmouth (Fig. 34) have leonine animals carved along the side into the arm rests. The Lastingham and Monkwearmouth fragments are similar to animal carvings at Deerhurst (Fig. 53) however the Deerhurst examples are *in situ* architectural examples, where as both the Lastingham and Monkwearmouth terminals were clearly freestanding as they are smaller and carved on all sides, the Lastingham terminal having carving further down demonstrating that it was likely part of a chair, as argued by Cramp.[348] However the Deerhurst examples demonstrate that the use of animal terminals was not limited to enthronement, and might symbolically reference the recognition of Christ as discussed below.[349] While there is a vernacular peculiarity of these types of terminals on ecclesiastic chairs, they also seem to have borrowed and manipulated the iconographies of the late antique thrones, and used the animal motifs in a distinctly Insular way.

A further stone that might have belonged to a chair is a fragment from Bamburgh Castle (Figs 54-55), found in the nineteenth century and thought to date from the ninth century; it is unclear whether it comes from the church on the site or, as some have

---

[348] Cramp, CASSS, v.1; Hawkes, CASSS, v.15 (forthcoming); Bailey, 2005.
[349] See Chapter 4.

suggested, belongs to the royal history of the site.[350] While long thought to be a fragment of a cross, its shape does not indicate that it would have come from a cross base; rather, it is smoothly dressed on one side and has been suggested to form part of a chair, not unlike those of Hexham and Beverley (Figs 32-33), a reconstruction of which has been made on site, (Fig. 55).[351] Unlike these pieces, however, but is decorated with entwined beast that the current reconstruction places on the side of the throne, just under the point where the arms might rest. This placement might be compared to the arm-rest fragments from Monkwearmouth that bear three dimensional animal carvings and has recently been reconstructed on site.

The directions of the beast heads on these disparate examples might suggest a symbolic significance relating animal heads to power. There is a long tradition within the scholarship on Anglo-Saxon visual culture that the beast could hold Christological liturgical significance in the Insular world. This is best rehearsed when addressing the Christ panels on both the Ruthwell and Bewcastle crosses (Fig. 56).[352] Éamonn Ó Carragáin has convincingly argued that the depictions can be read in the light of both Psalm 90 and the Old Latin Canticle of Habakkuk.[353] On the basis that Christ is not only "*super aspidem et basiliscum calcabis conculcabis leonem et draconem*" (literally "The asp and the basilisk you will trample under foot/you will tread on the lion and the dragon") but also "*In Medio duorum animalium innotesceris / Dum adpropiaverint ann cognoceris*" ('In the midst of two animals you will be recognised / When the years come to pass you will be known'). The potential for this type of bestial recognition can be found, not only stone carvings of Christ, but on early medieval reliquaries, such as the Engers Reliquary (Fig. 57) which has two animals clutching the gables of the house-shaped body of the

---

[350] See Cramp, CASSS, v. 1.
[351] For Hexham see Cramp, CASSS, v. 1; for Beverley see Lang, CASSS, v. 3.
[352] For Bewcastle see Cramp, CASSS, v. 1; for Ruthwell see Ó Carragáin, 2005.
[353] Ó Carragáin, 2005: 204-207.

reliquary.[354] While the relevance of this to the enthroned figure of the ecclesiastic is not impossible it is interesting to posit that such symbolic associations may also have had a bearing on images of enthroned (apparently) secular figures in Anglo-Saxon art.[355]

2.3c(iv) Manuscripts

In manuscript painting it is the enthronement of biblical figures that form the major theme, and insight into our understanding of thrones. Bailey arguing that the standing Christ with a spear in the eighth-century *Durham Cassiodorus* (Fig. 58) could have direct Christological references in a manner analogous to that suggested by the stone furniture fragments, as he stands upon a double headed beast, a scheme that might refer to Psalm 90.[356] Further, it might be argued that this presents an implicit meaning of the recognition of power, in the form of Christ, through David as a precursor to Christ, although recognition here does not seem to be present. Bailey has suggested that the placement of the curls of his hair and the suggestion of a cruciform halo both being direct references to Christ.[357] This conscious reference to Christ reflects the text of Cassiodorus' commentary on the psalm illustrated by the miniature which presents David as a precursor to Christ.

While this motif might simply have been retained, as Bailey suggests, because the exemplar from which the image was copied was an image of Christ not David, in turning to the throne image in which the bestial terminals are turned in to face David further issues are raised (Fig. 59).[358] The image, which shows David seated with a harp on hiss knee, illustrates the throne in such a way that both the seat and back are presented in the same planar surface with the outline composed of an interlaced border on a dark background,

---

[354] Bailey, 2011: 243-53.
[355] See further below, Chapter 4.
[356] Durham, Cathedral Library, MS B. II. 30; see chapter 4.
[357] Bailey, 1978: 10.
[358] Durham Cathedral Libriary MS B.ii 30 f.81v

while the seat is decorated with a dotted circular pattern. The figure is labelled *David Rex* (David the King), whereas the other standing figure is simply labelled David. If taken as another depiction of Christ – this time enthroned as king – it might be suggested that the terminals function here as a clear display of recognition. If both images signify Christological references, David as king is recognised in the throne as having power and a role akin to those of Christ. The idea of Christ as a kingly figure, the King of Heaven, is a common trope referenced in many sources: from biblical commentaries, to Bede's *Historia*, as well as vernacular poetry.[359] In this image it is perhaps the case that David as King is again likened to Christ, amidst two beasts. In this context the zoomorphic recognition indicates a further set of significances: David is recognised between two beasts, as Christ is at Ruthwell and Bewcastle.[360]

These terminals also feature in insular Evangelist portrait pages, such as the Luke portrait in the early-eighth century Lichfield Gospels, which shows Luke seated facing forwards in a chair with bestial terminals facing outwards, just below shoulder height (Fig. 60).[361] The early ninth-century Barberini Gospel miniature of Matthew also depicts terminal figures just above the shoulders that spiral in on themselves (Fig. 48),[362] while the back of the seat is also shown and features a circle-and-dot pattern, like that illustrated in the Durham Cassiodorus image. The motif of the bestial-headed terminal is further evidenced in a wider Insular context on the Virgin and Child page in the Book of Kells (*c* .800) (Fig. 61).[363] Here the throne is shown in profile, the figures presented in three-quarter profile, and the bestial-terminal facing away from them, its mouth open and protruding from its jaws.[364]

---

[359] See Chapter 1.
[360] Ó Carragáin, 2005: 204-207.
[361] Litchfeild Cathedral Library, MS I p. 218
[362] Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS lat. 570 f.iiv
[363] Dublin, Trinity College Library, MS A. I. (58)
[364] Dublin, Trinity College Library, MS 58, f. 7v.

Other less ornate thrones that do not feature the bestial-terminal are depicted in other Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, such as the image of David in the Vespasian Psalter (*c.* 720-30) (Fig. 62);[365] or the evangelist portrait pages in the Stockholm *Codex Aureus* of the mid-eighth century (Fig. 63);[366] or the late-seventh or early-eighth century *Lindisfarne Gospels* (Fig. 64).[367] Many of these images may derive from late antique or continental sources, Merovingian or later Carolingian Gospel books but in these context the bestial terminals do not seem to have been the common feature they are in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, although examples do exist such as the enthroned miniature of Lothair (*c.* 900) (Fig. 65), or the enthronement of Otto iii (Fig. 66); which both have bestial figures at seat level as apposed to on a high back.

One later Anglo-Saxon manuscript, the Caedmon Manuscript, MS Junius 11 (*c.*930-1000), contains within it an image illustrating the story of Cain. One later Anglo-Saxon manuscript, the Caedmon Manuscript, MS Junius 11 (*c.*930-1000), contains within it an image illustrating the story of Cain (Fig. 67) in which shows two figures enthroned, on the left is a small women and child in an architectural type throne, whereas on the right there is a king enthroned in an elaborate throne that appears to have the crossed bars of the Sealla Curealls type, similar to that of the Prittlewell example. Here it should be noted that the imaged kings from the later Anglo-Saxon period do not show a king enthroned, with the exception of the miniature of King Edgar, which places him in an architectural setting sat alongside Æthelwold and Dunstan holding the *Regularis Concordia* (Fig. 5). While the king here is central, he is arguably not enthroned in the royal sense, but might be considered to share a bench with Æthelwold and Dunstan. The depiction is that of three important men with an important document; if that enthronement is symbolic, not every depiction of a seated king must be an enthronement.

[365] BL, Cotton MS Vespasian, A.i f.30v
[366] Stockholm, Royal Library, MS A.135, f9v
[367] London, British Library Cotton MS Nero D.IV

2.3c(v) *Counterparts – Continental*

Despite the differences between Anglo-Saxon and continental images of enthronement, the continental counterparts do provide some contemporary evidence for enthronement, albeit, in many cases of a later date generating problematic questions of influence. There are, nevertheless, images of kings or emperors enthroned that might suggest an ultimate source of iconographic influence. Merovingian and Carolingian examples of enthronement seem to present the kings in high-backed, broad and architectural thrones. For instance, the ninth-century Utrecht Psalter illustration of Psalm 151 depicts an enthroned king (probably Saul) facing forwards with a sword held out from the body (Fig. 68).[368] The figure sits in a high-backed arched throne which has round terminals on both the back and arm rests, and is set on a raised platform. The king himself sits on a round cushion, like those shown in the Evangelist portrait pages of the *Lindisfarne Gospels*. The setting is articulated as a structure composed of Corinthian columns with a plain triangular pediment. Another Carolingian depiction of enthronement, persevered in the royal portrait frontispiece to the *Psalter of Charles the Bald* (ninth-century) depicts the emperor holding a staff (Fig. 69).[369] Again the throne is high backed, has a round cushion on the seat, and stands upon a dais. The throne itself also appears to be encrusted with jewels, like those thrones depicted in early medieval mosaics in Rome and Ravenna (Fig.70-71). Like the *Utrecht Psalter* miniature, the scene is framed by Corinthian columns supporting a triangular pediment, but in this instance elaborate curtains act as a further framing device. The thrones depicted in both these examples are markedly different from the types of thrones depicted in an Anglo-Saxon context. Furthermore, and more importantly, they do not have the decorative motif of beast-headed terminals featured in earlier Anglo-Saxon art.

---

[368] Utrecht, University Library, MS 32, fol. 91v
[369] Bibliothèque nationale de France, Manuscrits, Latin 1152 f.12

There is of course, one exception to this general trend that is the Throne of Dagobert (*c.* 630). As mentioned, this bronze cast throne is constructed in the tradition of the *curule* seat, a type used in imperial Rome to signify certain status: only senior magistrates holding *imperium* were entitled to sit on such a seat. As the chair could be folded it was inherently portable, and thus came to be associated with military commanders in the Western Empire. The legs of Dagobert's 'throne' are fashioned from four forward-facing leonine creatures arranged so that their heads turn outwards at the level of the seat from the figure seated between them. Charles the Bald later added a back to this throne, as well as arm rests designed in keeping with the iconography of the original curule. This changed the portable function of the throne, bringing it more in line with that featured in the manuscript miniature Charles had commissioned for his Psalter.

The original throne of Dagobert, however, with its leonine headed elements, and distinctly Roman form, may well have drawn inspiration from images of the curule depicted on late antique Consular diptychs. The Diptych of the Consul Rus Gennadius Orestes (*c.* 530), for instance (Fig. 72), features just such ornate leonine thrones with two outward facing beasts forming the legs of the chair.[370] Wood has suggested that images such as these, circulating on the consular diptychs, might well have provided sources of inspiration in Anglo-Saxon contexts, such as the Ruthwell and Bewcastle crosses, while Hawkes has argued the same for the Rothbury cross.[371]

2.3c(v) Counterparts – Late Anglo-Saxon

Further setting the earlier Anglo-Saxon examples in context, and highlighting their bestial attributes, are the thrones featured twelfth-century Lewis Chessmen (Fig. 73), whose figures sit on elaborately decorated chairs, with entwined beasts carved on the back of the

---

[370] Williamson, 2010: 46-49, cat.no. 6.
[371] Wood, 1997: 124-5; Hawkes, 1996: 73-90; Hawkes, 1989: 208-210.

king, queen, and bishop pieces, suggesting associations between regnal and ecclesiastic authority and thrones decorated with bestial ornament might have been interchangeable by this date, whereas previously, there have been no examples of 'secular' figures depicted. Other late evidence for such thrones that might also be considered here are found on the mid eleventh-century Bayeux Tapestry, where several key figures, including Edward, are pictured on beast-headed seats (Fig. 74). Interestingly however, the only coronation scene on the tapestry is that of Harold (Fig. 75), who is not enthroned on a seat with beast-headed terminals, making it unclear whether or not any potential or inherent meaning is maintained across the Tapestry. As already mentioned, the only late Anglo-Saxon manuscript depiction of a seated king is that of Edgar in the *Regularis Concordia* (Fig. 5); this does not include any bestial references, but equally, it does not necessarily illustrate the enthronement of the king. This may indicate that the bestial decoration was widely associated with furniture, and was not regarded as an exclusively kingly attribute. Nevertheless, it is seen in many 'royal' contexts, the chessmen and the tapestry are both intrinsically related to royalty and kings, those who are and who aspired to be kings. It is perhaps in this sense that something which may have once held a specific significance is seen to have been preserved and diversified.

2.3d Summary

In the literature of Anglo-Saxon England the throne is a setting or a place in which the king sits: defined functionally, it is where the king dispenses gifts and forgiveness. The literature strongly avers the cultural and societal importance of the throne, but provides astonishingly few insights into the physical appearance of such objects. The literature emphasises the importance of the idea of throne, perhaps indicating that the form it took might not have been the primary concern in Anglo-Saxon England. The archaeological evidence for thrones is likewise scant, but it seems likely that thrones would have been

made of wood, like much of the secular furniture and architecture, and would thus leave little trace in the material record. Conversely, Anglo-Saxon art offers a wealth of visualisations, but fails to provide any consensus as to what a throne needed to look like, indicating, like the contemporary literature, that it was the idea of a throne rather than its form that invested meaning.

However, from the visual evidence that does survive it seems that there were several types of thrones, all with potential significance. Bestial decoration and recognition of royal authority seems to have been widely understood, and this was manifested in different ways in manuscripts and stone sculpture. Further the portable stool – perhaps the curule seat type, with its late antique imperial implications – might have been selected for its associations of power within a system of peripatetic kingship. It is perhaps this combination of imperial thrones and the Christological recognition of rulership that was combined in Anglo-Saxon art to produce images such as the enthroned David in the *Durham Cassiodorus*. Once established, such motifs might have circulated more widely if associated with earthly kings who emulated both imperial and biblical kingship. In addition, there is evidence for plain high backed thrones in manuscripts and sculpture. While all of these types might have appealed to image-makers and their audiences, the evidence is ambiguous, and a nuanced position on the matter of thrones in Anglo-Saxon art and literature is advisable.

CHAPTER 3:

THE MATERIAL OF KINGSHIP

3.1 Introduction:

Having established a clear indication of the wider visual setting of a king in Anglo-Saxon England (his hall and 'throne') *c*. 500–1000, this chapter will look at the material attributes that may have been associated with kingship in the period from the literary, archaeological and visual record. As has been noted,[372] there are few definitive images of kings, and without such depictions it is necessary to set the extant material (archaeological) record associated with apparently royal burial contexts alongside textual sources in order to reconstruct the material culture that would have comprised the visual effect of kingship in Anglo-Saxon England.

The objects that will be considered here by no means represent a comprehensive corpus of archaeological finds from the period, but rather those that might be considered specifically kingly and/or have strong associations with kingship. Other objects that are undoubtedly high-status, but do not have specifically kingly connotations are thus not included. Drinking horns, for example (Fig. 76), have been found in many burials, and some of the finest examples come from what are here termed 'princely burials' (such as Sutton Hoo, Prittlewell and Taplow), and are presented in the literature as common Anglo-Saxon artefacts; however they are not directly associated with kings. Rather drinking horns are most often associated with women, such as Hrothgar's wife Wealhtheow.[373] Thus, while kings are known to have been intimately involved in the mead-hall culture and high status objects (such as drinking horns) were undoubtedly a symbol of political power,[374] such activities were by no means exclusive to royal settings. Horse fittings and ships also

---

[372] See above, Introduction
[373] Beo. ll. 612-14.
[374] See above, Chapter 2

have the potential for kingly associations and would certainly have added to the visual spectacle of kingship, but they do not feature in the textual record as directly associated with kings. It is for this reason that only certain objects have been selected for discussion here, each being considered in the scholarship to have had a specific role in the visual expression of kingship, with some having potentially stronger associations than others. These objects, as will be discussed are not necessarily exclusively kingly but have distinctive relationships that associate them with kingship found in both the material and textual records.

3.2 Helmets

The material evidence for kingship in Anglo-Saxon England can be difficult to define, but the relationship between certain objects and kingship has a long tradition. The question that immediately presents itself is: what are the specific objects that signify kingship; and further: what types of object does a king have? Symbolic headgear is one of the first object types that might signify a king or monarch. It is an object type that by the Late Anglo-Saxon period and more prolifically in the High Middle Ages is visually synonymous with kingship.[375] and they are often included in reconstructions of an Anglo-Saxon ruler – where such images mainly take the form of the crown (Fig. 77). This object is today imbued with ancient precedent, yet it is unclear where and how the tradition started in England, or if it was always the only way in which to symbolically identify a king in this particular region; particularly as there is no material record of crowns in this period.[376] Of crowns in *Beowulf*, Raw states that:

> Hrothgar himself does not seem to be distinguished by any special dress or ornaments, though his queen and daughter are decked with gold and his queen *appears* [italics added] to wear a crown (Beo. ll. 612-14; 1162-3; 2025) [*goldhroden; under gyldnum béage; goldhroden*] His status is manifested instead

---

[375] See Karkov, 2005; Zarnecki et al, 1984.
[376] Bruce-Mitford, 1974; Carver, 2011; Enright, 2006.

by position, ritual and deference. He sits on a raised seat (on yppan, 1815) at the center of the hall, his *þyle* at his feet and his *gedrhit* or warband around him (Beo. ll. 356-7; 500; 1165-6). [377]

She posits that it is *not* the king who wears a crown but rather the queen. However, of the three passages she invokes, two use the word *goldhroden* (gold-laden or gold-adorned), *hroden* on its own being used in other instances to indicate the wearing of many rings, a hall being filled with the slain, or an ale-cup being full.[378] While the other passage uses the phrase *under gyldnum béage* (literally 'under golden ring'), this could translate, as Heaney among others have suggested, as 'neck-ring', with Heaney going so far as to associate it with a torque. The only instance in which *béah* is used in the corpus of Old English as anything definitively other than ring, is in a passage in the Old English version of Gregory's *Pastoral Care*, in which the crown of thorns is called *ðyrnenne beág on ðæt heáfod* (literally 'a thorny ring on that head'); here *beág* is used to refer to a crown but it is not necessarily the meaning of the word that conveys the message of head gear, because the translation specifies that it is worn on the head, indicating that the word *beág* does not necessitate this information.[379] So, while Wealhtheow may have been envisioned wearing a golden crown, that is not how she was described; rather she is gold adorned and has a ring of gold, which could be a neck ring or torque, finger rings or a circlet of gold around her head. But given this ambiguity it may be necessary to expand the field of investigation, to consider other types of object as being able to signify the same sort of societal significance, as would a crown, and not to expect crowns where they seem to be absent. Rather than ask why crowns are not present in the archaeological record, it might be more useful to consider what may have been the prevalent signifiers of kingship in the period that remain in the record and thus form part of our data-set, suggesting (implicitly) that other types of symbolic headgear, such as the helmet, might provide more insight into the

---

[377] Raw, 1992: 168.
[378] As defined by the Bosworth Toller Anglo-Saxon dictionary.
[379] As defined by the Bosworth Toller Anglo-Saxon dictionary.

visual culture of the period than assumptions predicated on the imagined existence of crowns.

3.2a The Evidence for Crowns

That having been said, the lack of archaeological evidence for crowns from the Anglo-Saxon period poses a problem for both the archaeologist and art historian. The vocabulary of kingship and the hierarchical social structure of a lord and his thanes are prevalent in the period, and are well evidenced in the surviving literature. Moreover extant images of crowns within the corpus of Anglo-Saxon art, such as those found in later manuscripts (For e.g. see Figs 2, 4, 5, 7 and 8), or the late Saxon/Norman Bayeux Tapestry (See Figs 74-75) indicate that the notion of crowns and crowning were common-place in later Anglo-Saxon England.

Yet from an archaeological standpoint, neither the high status/princely burials at Sutton Hoo, Taplow and Prittlewell nor any other archaeological finds to date provide any indication that such artefacts actually existed. Given that other objects apparently denoting power and status, such as the so-called sceptre (Fig. 9) and the shoulder-clasps (Fig. 4) from Sutton Hoo are present as part of these collections of grave goods, it is curious that artefacts which might reflect the crowns common in the visual record are nowhere to be found.[380]

When faced with this lack of material evidence the most immediate problem to address, is: how do we discuss the idea of crowns and coronation in Anglo-Saxon England? Do crowns as we recognise them today, and as they exist in late medieval

---

[380] Evans, 1986: 86-87; Carver, 1998: 126.

imagery, need to have existed physically at all, or is the *concept* of a crown sufficient to explain the way it pervaded the visual culture of Anglo-Saxon England?

The extant images of headdresses certainly indicate an Anglo-Saxon understanding of them as object despite the lack of physical evidence for their existence. One of the most recognised of these images is the Repton Rider (Fig. 79), part of a fragmentary cross shaft found in St Wystan's parish church in Repton, Derbyshire.[381] This building is well known in the scholarly literature as it preserves a considerable amount of Anglo-Saxon architectural fabric dated to the seventh through tenth centuries, which includes the crypt, originally set up as a free-standing mausoleum, which is the recorded burial site for some of the Mercian royal dynasty; the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, for instance, records that King Æthelbald was buried there in 757.[382] The Rider carving itself has been variously dated between the seventh and early-ninth centuries,[383] and depicts a warrior (replete with seax), on horseback, in a pose completely at odds with any that might have been adopted in combat – even if Anglo-Saxon warriors rode into battle, which the *Battle of Maldon* suggests they did not.[384] In other words, the image presents an action unlikely to be historical. It also depicts a physical impossibility: the rider, astride his mount, does not face forwards; rather he is turned toward the viewer.

In this, however, the image presents a well-established iconographic type: that of the triumphal rider, which is preserved on late antique medals and cameos, such as the fourth-century Belgrade Cameo (Fig. 80),[385] or the third -century Constantine Londinium Adventus medal (Fig. 81);[386] imperial diptychs such as the fifth- or sixth -century

---

[381] Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle, 1985; see further below.

[382] Taylor and Taylor, 1965: 510-516; This is recorded for the year 757 [755] in Chronicles D, E, and F, while A merely states that he was killed at Repton, making no mention of his burial location, while D and E adds that Æthelbald reigned for 41 years. Swanton, 1996: 48-49; Whitelock 1961: 30-31.

[383] Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle, 1985.

[384] Gordon, 1976: 41, ll. 1-2.

[385] Wiseman, 1979: 86, no. 73.

[386] Sutherland,1967: 118.

Barberini diptych (Fig. 82);[387] triumphal carvings, such as the Hadrianic spolia found on the fourth-century Arch of Constantine (Fig. 83);[388] and northern European Roman grave markers such as the first-century 'Corbridge Stone' at Hexham Abbey (Fig. 84).[389] As the Biddles and Hawkes have argued, the Repton Rider can thus be regarded as a self-conscious vernacular response to a well-established (late antique imperial) iconographic tradition.[390] The use of this iconography does not require the image to represent physical or historical reality. Indeed, in this it is in keeping with the wider traditions of Anglo-Saxon art, which does not prioritise naturalism or rely on direct representation; rather it uses stylised concepts, generic image types and abbreviated iconographies to perpetuate and disseminate the ideas understood to be associated with a motif or a type.

The Repton Rider, however, although based on a Roman or late antique iconographic type, has clearly been transformed and adapted to depict a Anglo-Saxon warrior. Riding his horse in profile and turning to face the viewer, he holds the reins and what is considered to be a shield upraised, with a sword across his lap, and the seax tucked into his belt. On closer inspection, it is apparent that he has a moustache, while the pattern on his chest indicates that he wears either chainmail or plated armour. Around the crown of his head is a line that suggests the presence of head-gear. While this line may have been inspired by the ribbon or diadem sported by a number of victorious figures in late antique art, what is significant here is that the decision was made to retain it, while so much else has been changed from the late antique model lying behind the figure. This 'line' has been variously suggested to represent a crown, a helmet, hat or diadem. [391]

In order to examine this particular detail more closely, it is necessary to address the other aspects of the image and so develop an understanding of its iconographic function as

---

[387] Kitzinger, 1977: 96, fig. 176.
[388] Badrill, 2011: 94-95, no. 74-75.
[389] Blair, 2006: 190-191.
[390] Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle, 1985; Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle, 2001; Hawkes, 2006: 104-109.
[391] Hawkes, 2006: 107-8; Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle, 1985: 243 & 274-5; Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle, 2000.

a whole. The shield, for instance, is small in scale; indeed, it is smaller than one might expect given the size of some shields that have emerged from the archaeological record (such as that at Sutton Hoo, see Fig. 86).[392] In this respect it is perhaps more in keeping in with a targe, a small shield, covered in leather and featuring a central boss, to accommodate for the hand grasping the strap on the reverse. This type of shield was used in close hand-to-hand combat in order to block blows at a close targeted range, while allowing for agility.[393] But if the carving does depict a targe, it lacks the central boss, a necessary element of such objects.

An analogous example of this image type from an Anglo-Scandinavian context is the tenth-century cross shaft, Middleton 2 (Fig. 45), where a warrior is presented with his spear, sword, axe and diminutive shield.[394] They are not presented naturalistically, as if the warrior is holding them, nor are they placed next to the body of the figure reflecting how they might be in 'life': rather, they are set in the surrounding space and fit around the figure. The axe appears to stand upright, unsupported, next to the figure's left leg, while the sword, which is pointing down, occupies the space next to the left shoulder, and the shield, not to scale with the other objects, floats in the space above and to the left of the figure's head. Even the spear, which occupies the space to the right of the figure, which might be considered a realistic placement as it stands on the 'ground' of the image, is not held upright; it is merely placed next to the figure. Bailey has convincingly argued that the weapons surrounding this figure are treated in a symbolic manner, representing them as objects that were recognisable in life, which can be understood as themselves, although not depicted in a realistic manner.[395] Here, the shield is much smaller than the other objects depicted, and is awkwardly placed above the figure in order to fit it into the limited space available on the stone. Overall, the objects included in this panel are not presented in a

---

[392] Bruce-Mittford, 1978: 94-97. Dickinson and Harke, 1992.
[393] Halsall, 2003: 167; Dickinson and Härke, 1992: 43.
[394] Lang, 1991: 182-183.
[395] Bailey, 1980: 183.

manner conducive to consideration of how they relate spatially to each other and/or the figure; they are 'merely' objects depicted in an abbreviated manner which by their presence add meaning and importance to the image.

This is also the case with the shield in the Repton Rider panel, where the shield is placed above the figure who holds it upraised in a rather awkward position; a detail (Fig. 86) that Hawkes (seeing a cross lightly incised on the 'shield ') has argued was inserted to denote Christian affiliations and to signify the victory afforded those who go into battle as Christian leaders.[396]

Such evident differences between realistic representation and iconographic types, raises the question of what this typified image of a warrior or ruler, and the manner of its construction, might indicate about the perceptions of rulership and its associated accoutrements in Anglo-Saxon England at this time. The manner in which the Repton Rider is depicted is encyclopaedic and typographic, not naturalistic; meaning that the image is not a representation of a specific person or incident, but rather a representation of the type, containing attributes that identify the figure as a warrior. The image presents a collection of items that such a portrait is apparently expected to include: a victorious rider, a shield, a sword, a horse – all of which are represented with little concern given to 'naturalistic depiction'. If it is accepted that the shield here is an abstraction of known shields, it follows that it is difficult to take anything from the image and consider it to be a *factual* depiction of a warrior, let alone one presenting kingly attire as a historical reality. The carving certainly reflects elements present in the model on which it was based, explaining, at least to some extent, some of the 'inconsistencies'; but this preservation of archetypes also suggests that certain elements were deliberately retained: namely, the delineated line at the top of the head. Thus, like the horse, sword, seax, shield and corselet,

---

[396] Hawkes, 2006: 107.

it seems likely that it too was deemed part of what was necessary to denote a (victorious) warrior figure in Anglo-Saxon England.

A second visual example lies with the images of crowns preserved on Anglo-Saxon coinage. Like the Repton carving, it can be argued that most of these do not present Anglo-Saxon iconographies; rather, as Anna Gannon has demonstrated, they display late antique types, and so depict examples of headdress that are not 'crowns' that reflect a physical reality, *per se*, like the Anglo-Saxon gold shilling of *c.* 650-660 (Fig. 87) copied from the Roman *Concordia Militum* type, such as that of Antoninianus of Aurelian (270-275 CE) (Fig. 88), which showed the profile bust of the emperor wearing a radiate crown.[397] Moreover, among the Anglo-Saxon coins that do include crowns, Gannon has noted a tendency to exaggerate the coronal features, abstracting the form into 'a pattern of triangles in fields of dots'.[398] Indeed, one silver penny (Fig. 89) shows the crown as a further abstracted motif placing it in the space behind the head rather than on the head itself (Fig. 90).[399]

Generally speaking, therefore, many of the coins that depict crowns are adapted copies of Roman prototypes, meaning their images do not present the material culture of Anglo-Saxon England; in this, they display the same tendency to reduce naturalism in favour of abbreviated iconographies, as is the case with the Repton Rider (and the Middleton stone). Together, therefore, these visual representations of crowns in Anglo-Saxon England present us with nothing definitive that would point to the reality of 'a crown'. While this does not disprove the existence of crowns, it makes it very difficult to say anything concrete about their existence, or what form they might have taken in this period. At the same time, because these examples demonstrate a strong dependence on

---

[397] Gannon, 2003: 42-51. (AG 43) is a gold shilling c. 650-60, copied from the Roman *Concordia Militum* type; see – Antoninianus of Aurelian, 270-275 http://www.harvardartmuseums.org/art/183993
[398] Gannon, 2003; 45.
[399] Gannon, 2003: 45. Series R, Deriv. R3, Secondary (3031, De Wit Collection),

images that were not part of the vernacular Anglo-Saxon repertoire, and do not clearly include objects that might be understood as crowns independent of late antique headgear, the overall impression is that those designing the images were not illustrating actual crowns known in Anglo-Saxon England, but rather an imperial ideal. At the same time, because they were retained, it is clear the Anglo-Saxons had a very firm understanding of regal or elaborate headgear as real objects, which a specific type of person *could* wear, and so could be used to denote the identity or standing of that figure in visual representations.

3.2b The Textual Evidence for Crowns and Helmets

Overall, it seems that while there are extant images of crowns, albeit presented in a highly symbolic and suggestive manner, rather than a naturalistic portrait of an actual crown, there is no evidence of their physical existence in the archaeology of the period. This begs the question: does this dearth of evidence necessarily indicate non-existence or the incomplete record of that which once existed? The lack of clear evidence for crowns undoubtedly leaves those studying power in the Anglo-Saxon period with a problem. It is a problem that is not confined to the question of kingship, however. A common methodological conundrum for this period is the fact that the usual sources of archaeology, or the evidence commonly cited in the History of Art, cannot provide definitive answers regarding the visual culture of Anglo-Saxons; many of the extant sources are either too singular or unique to provide a working 'type', or they do not present a 'real' likeness due to stylistic choices, non-naturalistic representation being the norm in this milieu. Against these evidential limitations, the textual record provides a rich and varied set of sources.

One such text that is often invoked in the context of archaeological and art historical sources is, as already noted the Old English epic *Beowulf*, most frequently compared with the Sutton Hoo finds, as the first and last lines of the poem provide one of the rare written sources that give evidence for early medieval burial practices in England,

such as those discovered in the Sutton Hoo ship burial, or the barrow burial at Taplow.[400] Furthermore, the poem pays particular attention to material objects, giving descriptions of helmets and swords, which are presented as trappings of authority not irrelevant to our consideration of the Repton Rider.[401] Of particular note in this respect is the fact that not a single crown is mentioned within *Beowulf*, either as a specific object or as having a function or place within society; the king is never mentioned as wearing or possessing a crown. In fact there was no Old English word for crown prior to the introduction of the Latin loan word *corona* (Old English), or *corenbeg* (Old English) derived from *corona* (Latin).

Although crowns are not mentioned in *Beowulf*, helmets do feature with some frequency; helmets, unlike crowns, do form part of the material evidence remaining from this period. Furthermore, while they (like swords) have an unequivocally practical function, they are also cited as highly ceremonial objects, being hung around the burial pyre of Beowulf, for instance.[402] Indeed, the description of this scene is often used to make sense of the early seventh-century burial Mound I at Sutton Hoo.[403]

Furthermore, the kings in *Beowulf* are often described, as are their attributes, using verbal variations, or kennings. For instance, Hrothgar is described as 'giver of rings' (*beaga bryttan*),[404] or 'their homeland's guardian' (*eþelwearde*).[405] One such epithet, of particular interest to this discussion, is his title 'helmet of the Sheildings' (*Helm Scyldinga*).[406] This kenning uses a material object that is rare in the material record, often associated with high-status or 'princely' burials, in order to identify the king. 'Helmet of the Shieldings', acts as a title, and there are two ways in which this can be read: first, that

[400] Cramp, 1957; Frank 1992; Raw, 1992; Webster, 1992; Carver, 2011.
[401] Bosworth and Toller, 1898.
[402] Klaeber, 2008:106-107, ll. 3138-50.
[403] See Bruce-Mittford, 1976; Cramp, 1957; Carver, 1998.
[404] Ibid: 14, l.353.
[405] Ibid: 23, l. 616.
[406] Ibid: 18, l. 456.

the function of a helmet as protection is akin to the function of a king, protecting his people; second, that this object is related to the notion of kingship. These are not mutually exclusive: a king could function as the helmet, the protector, of the people while also wearing or having a helmet. In any case the helmet here becomes a signifier of the notion of kingship, which is preserved in the poetic language of the Anglo-Saxons. Overall such epithets give clear insight into the status of these objects in association with figures of high social status, and goes some way to explaining the apparent need to present such objects visually in the images on the cross shafts at both Repton and Middleton.

3.2c Symbolic Decoration of Helmets

Helmets, however, are not simply invoked as appropriate kingly epithets or attributes in *Beowulf* and other Old English poems; they are, perhaps more importantly, also marked as being one of the few objects deemed necessary to be described in some detail. Thus, early on in *Beowulf*, we are told that:

> An embossed ridge, a band lapped with wire
> Arched over the helmet: head-protection
> To keep the keen-ground cutting edge
> From damaging it when danger threatened.[407]

Here the helmet is presented by means of its construction and function; the result is an object with a strong physicality and presence in the text. Likewise, the helmet that Beowulf wears into the battle underwater, from which he returns victorious with the head of Grendel. Gives particular insight into the decoration and visual impact such a helmet might have had:

> To guard his head he had a white (glittering) helmet
> That was due to be muddied on the mere-bottom
> And blurred in an up swirl. It was adorned with beaten gold,

---

[407] *Beo*. ll.1030-32:
> Ymb þæs helmel   hrof heafodbeorge
> wirum bewunden   walu utan heold
> þæt him fe[o]la   laf frecne ne meahte (Klaeber, 2008: 36; trans. author, after Heaney, 1999: 33)

Princely headgear hooped and hasped
As in past days the weapon smith had wrought it,
Fashioned it wondrously and adorned it with boar (swine)-shapes
That after that nor fire nor battle knife could ever bite it.[408]

The description of the white or glittering helmet recalls the sheen exhibited by the

reconstructed Sutton Hoo helmet (Figs 91-92) that indicates the powerful visual effect of

the original.[409] The helmet is also described as being adorned with beaten gold, which not

only recalls the metal appliques over the crest and face mask of the sixth-century Sutton

Hoo helmet, but also brings to mind the decoration found on the early eighth-century

Coppergate Helmet (Fig. 93) from York, which has gold coloured copper alloy decoration

around the brow, on the nose piece and forming an inscribed cross on the top of the

head.[410]

In addition, the poetic account visually recalls the zoomorphic decoration found on

the helmets that have survived. Indeed, swine or boar motifs are found on all of the four

extant Anglo-Saxon helmets, two having freestanding three-dimensional boar figures

surmounting them (the seventh-century Benty Grange (Figs 94-96) and Pioneer helmets

(Figs 97-98), from Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire); and two having swine terminals at

the brow (the Coppergate and Sutton Hoo helmets) (Figs 99-100).

Boars also occur in the decoration of other objects surviving from Anglo-Saxon

England, such as inlaid boar shapes on the Sutton Hoo shoulder clasps,[411] (see Fig. 4). The

three-dimensional boar figures on both the Pioneer and Benty Grange helmets can be

---

[408] *Beo*. ll. 1448-1454:

ac se hwita helm	hafeland werede,
se þe meregrundas	mengan scolde,
secan sundgebland	since geweorðad,
befongen freaweasnum,	swa hine fyrndagum
worhte wæpna smið,	wundrum teode,
besette swinlicum,	þæt hine syðþan no
brond ne beadomecas	bitan ne meahton

(Klaeber, 2008: 50; trans. author, after Heaney, 1999: 48)
[409] See further below for full discussion of the reconstruction: Bruce-Mittford, 1975.
[410] Webster and Backhouse, 1991: 64, no. 47; Tweddle, 1992.
[411] Bruce-Mitford, 1978: pl. 15.

compared to the decoration on one of the Torslunda plates (Fig. 101), from the Vendel era (*c*. 550-793) in Southern Sweden, which depicts two helmeted figures with a boar surmounting the helmet - although the scale of the boar is exaggerated in the plates.[412] This detail also recalls that depicted in the image of David slaying the giant, Goliath, who wears a helmet surmounted with a boar figure, in the eighth-century St Petersburg Bede (Fig 102.).[413] Indeed, boars have been argued to have some significance in Anglo-Saxon England, as they are often depicted as specific types of early Anglo-Saxon metal work objects.[414] Thus, they are rarely depicted on offensive equipment, like swords, but rather are limited to protective or defensive material, such as helmets; in such contexts this might indicate an apotropaic function for the boar motif. Carola Hicks has suggested that they may have a protective function, citing both decorative inclusions of boars, alongside the teeth and tusks that have been included in early medieval graves, particularly those of women.[415] However, as they also appear on the Sutton Hoo shoulder clasps, which do not have a function directly related to combat, this suggests it is also possible that boar images may have a meaning that is related to status, as they are primarily found on richly adorned objects. Chaney, in this respect, has argued for a reading of the motif related to sacral kingship, citing a prophecy found in the tenth-century Cotton Tiberius Manuscript, which states that: "to see any four-footed beast betokens a king's friendship".[416] This prophecy does not specifically identify boars, but Chaney follows this observation by invoking the physical evidence of the zoomorphs found in the Sutton Hoo Mound I. While this potential reading of the prophecy might refer to boars and sacral kingship, it does not necessitate that this is the inspiration for the inclusion of boars on the Sutton Hoo shoulder clasps as this would be to back project a single quotation as fact through four centuries.

---

[412]Ibid: 209, pl. 156; Bruce-Mitford, 1976.

[413] St Petersburgh: Russian National Library, Cod. Lat. Q.v.XIV.1, fol.1r (Alexander, 1978: 65-66, no. 42, pl. 179)

[414] See e.g. Speake, 1980: 78-81; see also Hawkes, 1997.

[415] Hicks, 1993: 24, 68-74; also see Hawkes, 1997: 313-15.

[416] Chaney, 1970: 121, n.1; London: British Library, Cotton MS Tiberius, A iii, fol. 29a

Speake also signposted a distinctly royal connection, citing ten boar motifs decorating objects from the Sutton Hoo burial, and many others, such as those from the so-called King's Field at Faversham, Kent, although he surmises this place-name may be no more than mere coincidence. He also points to Saxo Grammaticus' ascription of the boar's head emblem to Woden, a god of death and battle, often included in Anglo-Saxon genealogies.[417] Further he notes the use of the boar-banner in *Elene* (l. 259) and *Beowulf* (l. 2512), as evidence for kingly associations. Speake further postulates the boar's potential ability to be related to deities of fertility, citing third-century Germanic cultic practices. North also traces the literary traditions for the use of boar imagery among the Vandals from their appearance in Old Norse saga traditions, citing the helmets as an intermediate step, although the transmission pattern through Anglo-Saxon material culture is not attested elsewhere.[418] Speake concludes, however, that the boar motif could refer to fertility when found in the grave of a woman, but overall thought that it symbolized protective power.[419] Hawkes has problematized this type of monolithic identification, particularly in the evidence for boar imagery, arguing that, perhaps even to a contemporary audience, the symbolism was deliberately ambiguous and that every instance of boar imagery may not have the same meaning, as animal symbolism in this early period is not directly iconic – the signifier and the signified may have an arbitrary relationship.[420] Further, she argues that the use of both precursors and antecedents of a meaning to construct a continuous and dogmatic use of a symbol might not fully reflect the complexities of the multiple usage of any given symbol.[421] Nevertheless, the boar was a creature viewed as bearing some significance in this social context, that is often used in the

---

[417] Speake, 1980: 78.
[418] North, 2015: 151-175.
[419] Speake, 1980: 78-81.
[420] Hawkes, 1997.
[421] Hawkes, 1997: 313-15.

poetic record as a kenning for helmet (boar-crest), so it seems likely that boar imagery, and its meaning in such contexts, was intrinsically linked to that of the helmet.

3.2d The Individual Helmets

Having said this, each of the extant helmets is, of course, a unique find; there are only four in the material record, and they all differ in decorative detail and overall visual impact.[422] Yet, each is of a type that indicates high status and value, and each involves elaborate metalworking and some form of decoration. This makes them notably different to what the average Anglo-Saxon warrior or fighter may have worn. It has been argued that most of the warrior class would have had helmets of blocked leather, which would not have survived in the archaeological record, rather than the highly decorated metal type that has been preserved in a limited context.[423] It is not certain what form this leather head-gear might have taken, but it is possible that it, too, had some form of decoration, perhaps incorporating the familiar zoomorphic boar motif.[424] It is possible that a metal frame covered with leather could have been a lower status and less costly alternative to elaborate metal headgear. Furthermore, such leather helmets could have been dyed, painted, stitched with adornment, or decorated with metal appliqués, perhaps akin to the cross added to the Benty Grange helmet.[425] When Hrothgar recounts the attack of Grendel's mother for instance he exclaims that 'our boar crests [helmets] had to take a battering'.[426] It remains the case, however, that there is no extant archaeological or visual evidence for these

---

[422] See further below, the helmet pieces found in the Staffordshire Hoard(s) (*www.staffordshirehoard.org.uk/)*
[423] Webster and Backhouse, 1991: 59.
[424] See Breay, 2015, on the St Cuthbert Gospel binding for an indication of embossed leather decoration.
[425] Lyne, 1994: 97-105; Halsall, 2003: 171; Bradbury, 2004, 266; DeVries and Smith, 2012: 59. Although leather helmets are dismissed categorically by Stephenson, 2007: 67.
[426] *Beo.*, ll. 1326b-27:
       Ðonne we onorlege
     hafelan weredon   þonne hniton feþan
(Klaeber, 2008: 46; trans. author, after Heaney, 1999: 44)

helmets, or their potential decoration; we can only assume that they likely existed. This of course is not an unreasonable assumption given the numbers of men involved in armed combat in Anglo-Saxon society, and the fundamental need to use protective headgear in engagements that involved arm-to-arm combat with swords and battle axes.[427] It thus seems likely that the extant metal helmets were unique when placed in the ground, and, rather than representing a common type of protective headgear, can perhaps be considered a royal or kingly type of head-dress that set apart the individual who wore them.

With this in mind it is worth examining them in more detail. Of the four helmets to have survived from the period, that found within the ship burial in Mound I at Sutton Hoo (Figs 91-92) is the most decorated and elaborate. In its construction it differs from the other three as it is made of iron and covered by stamped bronze panels that had been tinned, giving it its silvered appearance. The nasal and brow piece takes the form of several animal features that are conflated, combining to create a hybrid facemask of bestial and human forms and features. The brow shapes terminate in boars (Fig. 99), similar to those on the Coppergate helmet (Fig. 100), and like those on the Coppergate helmet, they morph into the wings of a central creature that, unlike those on the Coppergate helmet, faces upwards with its body forming the nasal-piece, which terminates in a tail-moustache. Confronting this figure is a double-headed beast, often called a dragon due to its teeth, although it lacks wings, whose body forms the central ridge over the helmet.[428] The eyes of both creatures are inlaid with garnet and silver wire while the bodies are cast bronze creating the appearance of gold and silver highlighted with garnet.

The tinned bronze plates that cover the helmet, facemask and neck plate are variously decorated. Those that fill the facemask are non-figural, being decorated with interlace. Around the cap of the helmet, however, are two repeated figural scenes: one is

---

[427] Webster and Backhouse, 1991: 61.
[428] Bruce-Mitford, 1974: 203-205, 208, fig. 30; Hicks, 1993: 59-63.

composed of two figures thought to be dancing, carrying spears and swords, and wearing head-gear, sometimes referred to as helmets, which have two upturned 'horns' with confronting beaked terminals (Fig. 103(L)); the other is decorated with a rider with a spear mounted on a horse, accompanied by two other figures: one a trampled fallen figure, who in turn stabs the horse, and the other a diminutive figure who appears to run up the back of the horse and grab at the rider's spear (Fig. 103 (R)). These plates have been often compared to a set of four plates from Torslunda in southern Sweden (Fig. 101).[429] One of these has a figure bearing the same beaked head-gear as the Sutton Hoo 'dancing' figures, but on the Torslunda plates this spear-and-sword bearing figure is paired with a bear rather than another dancer.[430] These demonstrate how a plate could be stamped and repeated, and has given rise to the argument that the Sutton Hoo helmet may be of Scandinavian construction, as it is comparable to the many helmets found in Uppsala, southern Sweden, at Vendel and Välsgarde.[431] Additionally these Swedish helmets share a similar construction, as they are of the 'Nordic-ridge' type, held together by a clasp that takes the form of the ridge, which is often then highly decorated.[432] The helmets at Vendel and Välsgarde (Figs 105-108) from an impressive collection from graves ranging from the sixth to seventh centuries, a phenomenon unparalleled in Anglo-Saxon England in terms of the sheer number of separate, richly adorned graves that are closely associated with one another geographically. It is debated whether these are princely or royal burials, in part because of the numbers involved. However, Vendel is often thought to be an ancient royal site, near Uppsala, which has burial mounds associated with royalty and which later developed into the financial and tax centre for medieval Swedish kings. Välsgarde, although similarly situated near Uppsala, is dismissed in the scholarship as being princely

---

[429] Bruce-Mitford, 1974: 198-201, 214-22.
[430] Bruce-Mitford, 1976: 44.
[431] Bruce-Mitford, 1974; Tweedle, 1992; Marzinzik, 2007: 33-41.
[432] Halsall, 2003: 170; Marzinik, 2007: 35.

due to the large number of graves found. [433] This indicates that in Sweden richly adorned helmets were much more common place than in Anglo-Saxon England, and the deposition of the helmets in graves was a common practice, not a unique symbol of status. It is, however, likely that, as all of the graves with such rich material are found within lands associated with royalty and wealth, the men in these burials may have also been associated with a king or chieftain, perhaps as retainers or earls, like the band of men that travel with Beowulf. Undoubtedly, the graves at Vendel and Välsgarde are unparalleled throughout the early medieval world, and they bear the mark of some form of high-status identity; while the material is comparable to that of Anglo-Saxon England, it is clear that it is distinct in practice. [434]

The helmet found at Sutton Hoo, in the early seventh-century burial mound, is the only helmet from an Anglo-Saxon context to incorporate a full-face mask. It had corroded into a brittle iron shell when the chamber of burial collapsed and the helmet shattered, reducing it to fragments, not all of which have survived or been convincingly incorporated into the reconstruction (Fig. 92). This makes it difficult to discern if the helmet bore any signs of significant wear or use at the time of its inclusion in the assemblage. However, holes are included in the nasal piece for airflow and the hinged mask and neck guard make it practical for wear. It has been reconstructed twice, first in 1945, and then again in 1972. The first reconstruction was worked up from a plaster cast of a head but was not deemed entirely accurate as it did not factor in the leather lining indicated by the corrosion pattern on the inside; nor did it follow the given lines of joints and hinges. [435] Nevertheless, it did include more of the remaining material than the 1972 reconstruction which only included pieces that could be placed with certainty and allowed the pieces to dictate the size and shape of the whole, rather than trying to make it fit a pre-subscribed head. Despite such

---

[433] Tweddle, 1992: 1104-32; Arwidsson, 1934: 39-70; Thordeman, 1944: 217-24 .
[434] Tweedle, 1992: 1104-1132; Halsall, 2003: 170-171.
[435] Bruce-Mitford, 1974: 201-209.

considerations, the replicas indicate that the helmet would have originally been highly visible due to the amount of silver, garnet and burnished bronze that would have given it a bright sheen and made the wearer stand out as a unique and commanding figure.

Consideration of the (primary) function or ceremonial use of this helmet does raise the question of the extent to which the facemask may have infringed visibility, and the neck guard would certainly have limited the mobility of the wearer. Given the fragmentary state of the helmet it is impossible to answer such questions, definitively but the lining does imply that it could have been worn. Further, while it may not have been the most practical item of headgear, it would nevertheless have served as a form of protection, if only due to the material it is made from. Its decoration implies that it could also have served a ceremonial function.

Like many of the other objects found in the Sutton Hoo Mound I burial, the quality of the helmet is exceptional and the cost that w ould have been involved in obtaining it; it has been argued that this sets it apart from the other extant helmets. However, Woolf has argued that the construction of the Sutton Hoo helmet represents the norm of construction, particularly in respect to what he calls the 'aspirational helmets of the Upplanders' from Vendel and Valsgärde, leading him to suggest that helmets may have been more common, than previously thought.[436] This being the case, it is still notable that the Sutton Hoo Helmet is the only helmet forged in a single sheet of iron with a solid iron face plate, it is the only helmet to feature precious stones and has more decorative features than any of the other examples from Sweden or Britain.[437] Each of the Anglo-Saxon helmets is unique, possibly due to the rarity of survival and each is of exceptional construction. All have complex visual programs that would have rendered them, like the Sutton Hoo, visually distinct, and so would have set apart the individuals who owned and wore them.

---

[436] Woolf, 2015: 14-15.
[437] Evans, 1986: 48.

The later eighth-century helmet found in 1982 in the Coppergate area of York (Fig. 93) is remarkably well preserved, with all the decoration still intact.[438] It is made of iron and decorated with copper alloy. Unlike the Sutton Hoo helmet, it is constructed from a composite cap of bands and plates; a late example of the Nordic-crested type it is a 'clasp-helmet' composed of a circular iron band that is clasped over conjoining bands that cross the skull, creating the structural framework, which is then plated or covered.[439] This implies that the Coppergate helmet was functional rather than primarily ceremonial and decorative.

Its decoration consists of zoomorphic interlace taking the form of two ribbon beasts or entwined serpents whose bodies form a pattern of crosses and lozenges (Fig. 109); this takes up the entire field of decoration on the nasal piece. The brows terminate at either temple in two beasts bearing their teeth, whose bodies follow the brow line, morphing into the wings of the animal centrally placed on the crest so that it is seen from above, not in profile. The body of this central crest creature, cast separately, forms one of two long inscribed strips of bronze alloy that form a cross bisecting the crown of the helmet (Fig. 110). These are both inscribed in repoussé: IN. NOMINE. DNI. NOSTRI. IHV. SCS. D. ET. OMNIBUS. DECEMUS. AMEN. OSHERE. XPI; this has been translated as: 'In the name of our Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit, God and with all we pray. Amen. Oshere. Christ.'[440] The inscription thus retains a personal name, one, moreover, that is not preserved in any other Anglo-Saxon sources.[441] The inscription runs from nose to nape continuously, and then in two segments from the left ear to the right.[442] Surrounding the inscription are two strips of roll moulding decorated with an incised diagonal pattern that terminates in a U-shape with confronted animal heads. The neck is shielded by mail, which

---

[438] Webster and Backhouse, 1991: no 47, Tweedle, 1997.
[439] Halsall, 2003: 170; Marzinzik, 2007: 40.
[440] Tweddle, 1992: 983.
[441] Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England, database. http://www.pase.ac.uk
[442] Tweddle, 1992: 1165; Webster and Backhouse:1991: 62 (Note addition by Michelle P Brown)

shows evidence of repair, indicating that this helmet was used and mended prior to deposition. It is the only helmet not found in an burial site, instead being found in a purpose-built pit, carefully deposited with an iron sword beater or spearhead. The inscription, repeated to form both of the cross arms, provides an obvious Christian reference, like the Benty Grange helmet which also has a cross inscribed on the nose piece. In both instances these can be related to Constantinian frames of reference with the sign of the cross as a symbol of victory.

Indeed the inscription and decoration could have been considered to have enhanced the protective function of the helmet in combat having an apotropaic function: the inscription and cross being a prayer to God, and the two entwined snakes being comparable to those arranged in a Tau-cross at the entrance to the church at Monkwearmouth, which has been interpreted as having a symbolically protective function (Fig. 111). [443]

Found in 1848, the mid seventh-century Benty Grange helmet (Figs 94-96), unlike the other three extant helmets it is covered not with metal plate, but with horn.[444] While most of the horn has disintegrated due to the wet conditions of the ground in which it was buried, sufficient material survives near the rivets and joints not only to confirm that it was horn, rather than any other material, but also that it was not composed of whale bone or short-horn breed cattle; rather it is thought to have been composed of a now extinct long-horned cattle (*bos longifrons*), the ancestor of modern domestic cattle, that was common to Britain and Ireland throughout the early medieval period.[445] The only other comparable horn-covered helmet to be found is that interred with an adolescent under Cologne cathedral and dated to the sixth century.[446]

---

[443] Bailey, 1992; Kitzinger, 1993: 1-14; Hawkes, 1997: 311-38.
[444] Marzinzik, 2007: 38.
[445] Jackson, 1939: 189-193.
[446] Bruce-Mitford, 1974: 231; Rogers, 2010: 371.

Being covered with horn, the helmet would have had a brilliant white appearance with the other decoration, including a silver cross on the nasal piece, standing out prominently against the horn background; this can be seen most clearly in the reconstruction (Fig. 94). While this cross is so corroded that no details of its decoration are immediately evident, radiography reveals (Fig. 112) that it was a composite motif composed of an equal-armed cross that expands into a circle at the intersection of the arms, with a separate strip of silver that extends the lower vertical arm of the cross down the length of the nasal piece. This may indicate that the equal-armed cross was part of the decoration for something else, such as a cup or garment, before being included on the helmet.[447] This may indicate that the owner of this helmet had an object of significance that he wanted to then be included on his helmet, and had it modified to fit the space. Alternatively, during the life of this helmet the cross was added, indicating that the additional sign of protection or personal identification with Christianity was intended to be placed in an extremely visible location of this helmet. While the cross on the Coppergate helmet could have been seen from above, that of the Benty Grange would have been visible to anyone looking directly at the person wearing it. This has implications both for the wearer and those viewing it, as the public affiliation with Christianity and potential reference to Constantinian Christianised victory, would have been very clear to contemporary viewers.

The other significant decorative feature of this helmet is the boar crest that surmounts the iron frame. This three-dimensional figure, smaller than those depicted in Vendal and manuscript art, is hollow and was cast in two pieces of bronze, with silver rivets creating a 'bristle' pattern of light silver dots on the dark bronze field, with pointed oval garnets inlaid for eyes. It has been suggested that actual fur bristles may have been

---

[447] Bruce-Mitford, 1974: 234-236.

included along the spine, reminiscent of a Roman centurion's helmet.[448] The overall visual impact of the helmet is that of stark white horn, possibly laid out in a chevron pattern, with a silver cross on the nasal and a boar figure standing prominently on the crown. While it is impossible to ascertain whether it bore signs of wear or use, due to the deterioration and rust of the frame, its construction suggests it was completely functional, while its striking appearance and associated iconography suggest it could also have had a ceremonial function.[449]

The seventh-century so-called 'Pioneer' helmet (Fig. 97) is the most recently recovered of the helmets, being found in an inhumation at Wollaston, Northamptonshire, in 1997, near a Roman road, along with an iron sword, several buckles, a small clothing hooks and the remains of a hanging bowl embellished with an inlaid *millefiori* escutcheon.[450] The burial was of an adult male, who is thought to be less than twenty-five and had been carefully laid out on some sort of textile bedding, perhaps with a mattress and pillow.[451] The helmet is of much simpler decoration than the other three extant helmets having hinged cheek-plates, small groups of incised lines, and a boar crest; it was found with the remains of a leather lining. The boar figure is made from the same material as the cap and is simply fashioned, with no elaborate decorative elements beyond its form. Its features are only suggested, as opposed to being fully articulated as they are on the Benty Grange helmet. Thus, the Pioneer helmet does not create a visual spectacle comparable to that presented by the other helmets. However it still would have been a costly and impressive artefact, particularly with the figure of the boar standing proud of the crest, and when set against the leather headgear assumed to have been worn by most warriors, it, too, would have had a distinctive visual impact.

[448]This notion is suggested by the Museum of Sheffield, based on the reconstruction made by the British museum, following Bruce-Mitford, 1974.
http://www.idigsheffield.org.uk/object.asp?ref=1995_260
[449] Bruce-Mitford, 1974: 230-233.
[450] Meadows, 1997.
[451] Marzinzik, 2007: 41-42.

The find context of three of these helmets confirms some of the observations concerning their status and visual impact: the Benty Grange, Pioneer and Sutton Hoo helmets were, all found in high status inhumation burials. The exception is the Coppergate Helmet, the context of which, being a purpose-built deposit pit, nevertheless suggests that it, too, held some significance to those who buried it. Fragments of other helmets have also been found in hoards, indicating perceptions of value. The most recent of these is the cheek plate found in the first Staffordshire Hoard (Fig. 113), which is made of an alloy with a relatively low gold content and elaborately decorated with zoomorphic interlace. Other pieces of this helmet might also survive amongst the fragments found in this and the subsequent hoard, including some stamped plates (Fig. 114) similar to those on the Sutton Hoo helmet, and fragments of C-sectioned edging and receded strips which may prove to be from a single helmet, and which may yet lead to a more complete reconstruction.[452] The Staffordshire Hoard presents an intriguing insight into material culture and poses as many questions as it answers. The question of kingly context for the hoard is in many ways an unanswerable one. To date, we do not know the burial context of this hoard although many suggestions have been made, including that the hoard is the spoils of a battle and possibly was made as payment to a king.[453] If this was the case it gives rise to the question of commonality of objects: this hoard includes 92 individual sword pommels, 152 hilt plates, four gold crosses but only the fragments of one, potentially two helmets.[454] The rarity of helmets, at least high-status precious metal helmets, in comparison to other war band materials is notable and supports the notion that a helmet might have been an exclusive object only worn by an exceptionally high-status individual. This gives credence to the argument that helmets are more special than swords, and that this is arguably what signifies a king on the battlefield. The fact that the helmet is the most broken of object and

---

[452] Staffordshire Hoard website: ; Leahy and Bland, 2014: 45.
[453] Ibid.
[454] Leahy and Bland, 2014: 17.

was not preserved in any way to be re-used, either means the rest of the construction was not as high-value metal or that there is particular zeal in the breaking of this particular piece, which might be analogous to the folding of the eagle mount which is argued to potentially be part of a battle mount or symbolic of the opposing side. This is perhaps akin to the 'ritual killing' of objects, which disarms them in someway.[455] This disarming may have also been done to the crosses perhaps in a religious and political statement; however, it is equally possible that these objects all were not ritually dismantled but rather needed to fit into the container of the hoard and were thus folded for spatial efficiency and the bullion value was prioritised.[456] The archaeological evidence, along with the associated decoration of these finds, therefore, strongly suggests that elaborate helmets were closely associated with figures of authority and rulership in Anglo-Saxon England.

3.2e The Poetic Context:

These associations are not, as intimated above, limited to the archaeological record; nor are the literary references to such objects limited to *Beowulf*. The poem *Elene*, for instance, signed by Cynewulf and written at some point in the late-eighth or early-ninth century, recounts a battle between Constantine and the Huns and Hrethgoths where:

> Gold helmets (mask) and spears gleamed in the battlefield […] as the
> King of the Romans ordered the holy tree to be raised aloft.[457]

---

[455] Härke, 2000: 386; Lund, 2010: 55-8; Härke, 2012: 137-140.

[456] See Adby and Williams, 2006: 11-74 for other hoards in the Anglo-Saxon period and Graham-Campbell and Williams, 2007: 73-75 for a discussion of how the bullion economy works in England during the Viking Age. These text pre-date the discovery of the Staffordshire hoard, and thus do not take it into account in their discussion of the pre-Viking economy but with this new evidence the discussions of hoarding practice and worth might be applicable here, which would support Gareth Williams' (Curator of Coins and Medals at the British Museum) as yet unpublished research on Anglo-Saxon Gold (pers. comm.). For further information about the lost container of the Staffordshire Hoard, see Leahy and Bland, 2014.

[457] *Elene* ll. 125-126a…128-129:
> gylden grima,   garas lixtan
> on her[e]felda;   ….
> Hunan leode   swa þæt halige treo
> Aræran heht   Romaþara cyning
(Gradon, 1977: 31; trans. Bradley, 1982: 168).

Here Constantine, as king of the Romans, fighting under the sign of the cross, is directly linked to golden helmets, although it remains unclear who specifically wears them on the battlefield. Nevertheless, the visual effect of helmets and the sign of the cross are both impressive and explicit and recall two of the extant Anglo-Saxon helmets, Benty Grange and Coppergate, with their obvious cross imagery. The poem *Judith* also recounts a battle that presents helmet-wearing soldiers:

> Now I want to urge each man among these citizens, each shield–
> wielding soldier, that you immediately get yourself ready for battle […]
> go forth bearing shields, bucklers in front of your breasts and mail coats
> and shining helmets into the ravagers' midst.[458]

Here Judith, the heroine, urges the men to go to war in shining helmets giving the clear indication that metal, while not only more expensive than a leather helmet, was preferred for the highly charged effect required by the poet. The shimmering image of helmets going to war is here invoked to indicate the righteousness of these soldiers about to defeat the Assyrian ravagers.

This type of battle imagery is also picked up in the *Finnsburg Fragment*, a fragmentary poem of around fifty lines, that preserves two direct references to helmets in its account of a battle also recounted in *Beowulf*.[459] In *Beowulf* the combat is recounted as a saga performed by the king's *scop*, and is told from the perspective of Hildeburh after the battle. She is married to Finn, the victor, but loses her brother Hnaef, a Danish prince, and

---

[458] *Judith*, ll. 185b- 195a:

              Nu ic gumena gehwæne
þyssa burgleoda   biddan wylle,
randwiggendra   þæt ge recene eow
fysan to gefeohte,   syððan fryða god,
arfæst cyning,   eastan sende
leohtne leoman.   Berað linde forð
bord for breostum   ond byrnhomas.
Scire helmas   in sceaðena gemong.
Fyllan folctogan   fagum sweordum
Fæge frumgaras.   (Griffith, 1997: 102; trans. Bradley, 1982: 500-501).
[459] *Beo*., ll. 1063-1159 (Klaeber, 2008: 37-39).

her unnamed son. It is here that the *Beowulf* poet invokes helmets as part of the funeral

pyre of Hildeburgh's slain kinsmen:

> The pyre was heaped with the boar-shaped, forged in gold, with the
> gashed corpses of well-born Danes.[460]

Here the helmets are alluded to by their associated decoration (boars) common to all four

of the extant Anglo-Saxon helmets. The *Finnsburg Fragment,* on the other hand, records

the battle from the perspective of Hnaef, identified as 'the king, a youngster in war-

making'.[461] Being told from the perspective of the losing side, much is made of their valour

and inevitable demise: 'the skull-guarding helmets, were to be shattered, the floor of the

strong hold resonated'.[462] Here the breaking of a helmet is inseparable from the demise of

the young soldiers and king who fight in the hall of Finn. Furthermore, this motif is singled

out, both practically and symbolically as integral to their death.

The second reference to a helmet presented in *Finnsburg* is found in a passage

concerning an unnamed hero:

> The hero came walking away wounded; a man of action in his military
> trappings, he said that his mail coat was hacked to pieces and his
> helmet was holed too.[463]

The *Fragment* ends just one line later, so the fate of this warrior remains unknown, but his

heroic attributes suggest that he had fought on the side of Hnaef, while the damage to his

helmet, in context, suggests his ultimate defeat – although he has not yet died in the fight.

---

[460] *Beo.*, ll. 1111-1114a:
  Æt þæm ade wæs eþgessyne
  watfah syce, swyn eal gylden
  eofer irenheard æþeling minig
  wundum awyrded (Klaeber, 2008: 39; trans. author, after Heaney, 1999: 36-37).
[461] *Finns.*, l. 2: Hleoþrode ða heaþogeong Cyning (Klaeber, 2008: 283; trans. author after Bradley, 1982: 508).
[462] *Finns.*, l. 30: Banhelm berstan buruhþelu dynede (Klaeber, 2008: 284; trans. author after Bradley,1982: 000).
[463] *Finns.*, ll. 43-45:
  Ða gewat him wund hæleð on wæg fanfan
  sæde þæt his byrne aborocen wære
  heresceorp unhror and eac wæs his helm ðyr[e]l
  (Klaeber, 2008: 285; trans. author after Bradley, 1982: 509).

In both instances helmets have been invoked as attributes of heroes (in one case a ruler),

while their damage speaks to the defeat of the warriors.

Both *Maxims I* and *II* also contain references to helmets that confirm these

associations. *Maxims I* is made up of three potentially separate poems (A, B, C) presented

in the Exeter Book;[464] while *Maxims II* forms an addition to British Library Cotton

Tiberius B I, fols 115r-115v. Relevant to this discussion are the last lines of *Maxims I C*

which provide a set of gnomic statements about war and warriors:

> The war shield must be ready, the shaft must have a spear, the sword an
> edge and the spear a point, the unyielding man must have spirit. The
> brave man must have a helmet, the man of poor spirit will always have
> least treasure.[465]

This presents a helmet as a requirement for a proper soldier, a necessary attribute of

masculinity. It does not provide any indication of the physical or visual aspects of a

helmet; it simply establishes that a man must have a helmet to be a warrior. This underlines

the understanding that both ornate helmets and the simple leather head coverings thought

to be worn by the average soldier were a pervasive part of the kit of an Anglo-Saxon

warrior and must therefore have been a strong visual indicator of a certain type of man.

Maxims II further associates battle with the nobility:

> A young prince ought to be encouraged in war and generosity by good
> companions. A warrior must have courage; a sword has to experience
> its battle against the helmet.[466]

Here it is stated that an *æþeling* (nobleman, a prince, or person of royal blood) ought to be

encouraged in war, and that in war, sword must be raised against helmet. Taken together,

---

[464] Exeter: Cathedral Library, MS 3501.

[465] *Maxims I*, ll. 66-70:
  Georo sceal guðbord   gar seafte
  ecg on sweorde   ond ord spere
  hyge heardum men   Helm sceal ceunum
  ond a þæs heanan hyge   hord unginnost (Shippey, 1976: 74-75).

[466] *Maxims II*, ll. 14-16a:
  Geongne æþling sceolan   gode gesiðas
  byldan to beaduwe   and to beahgife
  Ellen Sceal on eorle   ecg sceal wið hellme
  Hilde gebidan (Shippey, 1976: 76-77).

therefore, *Maxims I* and *II* give a picture of a warring society in which the young, brave, male warrior is expected to wear a helmet and fight against others who also wear helmets. Together they present the expectation that of noblemen and kings are inseparable from helmets. This has distinct visual ramifications if considered in the light of the archaeological evidence for helmets.

In this context, a further significant literary reference to helmets lies in the figure of Christ in the Exeter Book poem known as the *Descent into Hell*. While Christ is often discussed as a kingly figure, and depicted as a king, he is not overtly depicted as an armed warrior. The poem, in recounting the Harrowing of Hell maintains and elaborates this distinction:

> For that battle he [Christ] gave no thought to helmet-wearing warriors,
> nor was his will to lead armoured fighting men to the stronghold
> gates.[467]

Here Christ is seen descending into hell, giving no thought to the type of warfare in which men, who wear helmets, participate, and so a clear distinction is established between him and earthly warrior-kings. The second reference to helmets comes from John the Baptist:

> Then John saw the victorious son of God coming into hell with royalty
> and power…[saying] I have endured a great deal since the time before
> when you travelled to me, when you gave me my sword and armour,
> helmet and battle dress – I have kept them always till now …[468]

Here it is asserted that Christ does not himself need the equipment necessary for battle. In fact, this exception is made only for Christ; John is given the weapons of war, indicating

---

[467] *Descent*, ll. 37-40a:
　　Ne rohte he to þære hilde　helm berendra,
　　ne he brynwigend　to þam burggeatum
　　lædan ne wolde　ac þa locu feollan,
　　clustor of þam ceastrum.　(Shippey, 1976: 112-113).
[468] Descent, ll. 49-50, 70a-74:
　　Geseah þa Iohannis　sidebearn godes
　　mid þy cyneþrymme　cuman to helle […]
　　　　　　　Ic adreag fela
　　Siþþan þu end to me　in siþadest
　　Þa þu me gesealdest　sweord ond byrnan
　　Helm ond heorosceorp　a ic tæt heold hu geit (Shippey, 1976: 114-15).

that it is not holy status that excludes Christ from helmet-wearing and sword-bearing, but rather his divinity. John, although a saint, is a man, and because men wear helmets to fight, so too does he.

While there are many such allusions to helmets in the literature, they are, as mentioned, most numerous in *Beowulf*. Here helmets are not only mentioned in terms of their physical description, but are directly linked to kings – the Swedish king, Ongentheow, for instance, who died at the hands of Eofor: 'When Eofor cleft the old Swede's helmet, halved it open, he fell, death-pale'.[469] Here as in the *Finnsburg Fragment*, a king is defeated only as his helmet is both broken and removed from his head. However, helmets are not an exclusively royal attribute: Beowulf has a helmet *before* he becomes king, and fighting men are twice described as 'brave helmet-bearers' (*Hate helm-berend*).[470] Furthermore, as Hrothgar laments the deaths in his hall following the attack of Grendel's mother, he recalls the event: 'When the sword hefted [… she] razes the sturdy boar ridge off a helmet';[471] 'When the ranks clashed and our boar crests [helmets] had to take a battering'.[472] What is important here is that although these helmets are clearly similar to that of Beowulf, they warrant less ornate description. Evidently, the association of a helmet with a ruler was what earned it special attention in the heroic epic, the genre of poetry devoted to preserving the memory of the people and their ruling dynasties.[473]

---

[469] *Beo.*, ll. 2486-88:
     þær Ongenþeow   Eofrores niosað
     guhelm toglad   gomela Scylfing
     hreas [hilde]blac (Klaeber, 2008: 85, trans. author after Heaney, 1999: 78).
[470] *Beo.*, ll. 2518, 2643 (Klaeber, 2008: 86, 90).
[471] *Beo.*, ll. 1286-1287:
     Sweord swate fah   swin ofer helme
     ecgum dyhtitig   andweard scireð (Klaeber, 2008: 45; trans. author after Heaney, 1999: 43)
[472] *Beo.*, ll. 1326b-27:
               Ðonne we onorlege
     hafelan weredon   þonne hniton feþan (Klaeber, 2008: 46; trans. author after Heaney, 1999: 44)
[473] Shippey, 1976: 1.

Indeed, high-status armour is also tied to the idea of the victorious warrior. When Beowulf wears this helmet, for instance, in the fight against Grendel's mother, and takes with him a sword imbued with mythical powers, the sword fails him in the fight, as does his armour; we are told that his mail is torn. He then finds another sword, made by giants, which is successful as a weapon but subsequently melts from the blood of Grendel. As he returns victorious from the fray, he no longer has a sword and his armour is damaged, but in the face of such destruction his helmet remains intact: 'quickly the hero's helmet and mail shirt were loosed and unlaced.'[474] This is in stark contrast to the hero of the *Finnsburg Fragment*, who emerges from the fray unsuccessful with his helmet damaged. The helmet is the only piece of armour or weaponry that goes into the lake with Beowulf that comes out unscathed. This gives it a significance deeply intertwined with being victorious both over the unnatural evil presented by Grendel and his mother and with being a good leader. While, as noted, helmets are not objects exclusively limited to a ruling warrior elite, the literature suggests that they held deep significance as signifying triumphant leadership in Anglo-Saxon England.

3.2f The Visual Context:

Supporting such poetic intimations, it is worth noting that helmets not only exist in the archaeological record, but were also depicted in the visual record: on the early eighth-century Franks casket (Fig. 115), and on Viking age monuments at Chester-Le-Street and Sockburn (Figs 116-117), as well as Scottish sculptural examples such as Aberlemno (Fig. 118). It has also been suggested that they feature on Mercian coinage (*c.* 730-740) (Fig.119);[475] and, less obtusely, a helmet is clearly depicted in the St Petersburg Bede (Fig. 102). In the upper register of folio 1r David is depicted being anointed by Samuel, while

---

[474] *Beo.*, ll. 1629-30a:
     Ða wæs of þæm hroran   helm ond byrne
     lungre alysed (Klaeber, 2008: 55; trans. author after Heaney, 1999: 53)
[475] Gannon, 2003: 51.

below he slays Goliath, who wears the helmet that, as noted, closely resembles the extant helmets from seventh- and eighth-century Anglo-Saxon England, primarily due to the animal that crowns the piece, which recalls the boars on the Benty Grange and Pioneer helmets.

Not surprisingly, the image within the St Petersburg Bede has attracted some scholarly attention, with one reading posited by Joanna Story suggesting that the image shows a Christian king (David) overcoming a (helmeted) pagan villain, in keeping with Christianised and continental kingship, particularly as the image is paired with the anointing of a future king. [476] However in light of the evidence presented here, it is possible to consider this image in an alternative manner. Bearing in mind the story of Ongentheow in *Beowulf*, who only dies with the loss of his helmet, this might suggest that two types of kingship are being presented within the miniature: one anointed by God, the other won in battle against a foe who is overcome *only* as his helmet fails him. These two separate notions of kingship are given a biblical exemplar: a king could have been considered to be chosen by God, but was also able to defend the people and the faith. This particular aspect of kingship, of being a warrior, seems to fit seamlessly with Anglo-Saxon poetic conceptions of warrior culture, where the king is the helmet of the people. In the poem it is Beowulf's ability to fight off evil, keep his helmet, and save the hall that contribute to his being a good candidate for kingship. The images of David provide a biblical exemplar of a leader, who before he becomes king defeats the giant, and so earns his kingship. It is particularly notable that David grasps the animal atop Goliath's helmet strongly suggesting that he claims his kingship by claiming the helmet, the symbol of a warrior-king. This is directly paralleled with the manner in which Beowulf becomes king, but in the St Petersburg Bede it is visually articulated with the use and presentation of the helmet.

---

[476] Story, 2003: 261-72.

Underlining this, it is worth remembering that it was deemed necessary for a king in Anglo-Saxon England to be visibly present on the battlefield. In Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, which itself is dedicated to a king, the tale of the old King Sigeberht is related:

> As the East Anglians realized that they were no match for their enemies, they asked King Sigeberht to go into the fight with them in order to inspire the army with confidence. He was unwilling and refused, so they dragged him to the fight from the monastery, in the hope that the soldiers would be less afraid and less ready to flee if they had one with them who was once their most vigorous and distinguished leader... But remembering his profession and surrounded though he was by a splendid army, he refused to carry anything but a staff in his hand. He was killed together with King Ecgric, and the whole army was either slain or scattered by the heathen attacks. [477]

This anecdote of an old king, killed on the battlefield, makes it clear that it is the visual presence of a king in battle that makes him a symbol of the people. While Bede does not describe how a king might look in battle, from the descriptions in *Beowulf* and the extant material evidence it is not hard to imagine that Sigebert would have worn a helmet that made him visible to the people: the *helm Anglinga*.[478]

3.2g Summary

When faced with the material evidence, or rather the lack thereof, for crowns in this period, alongside the material and textual evidence that relates to helmets as high status objects worn on the head, which denote rulership or leadership in this culture of warriors, it

---

[477] Bede, *HE*, iii.18: His temporibus regno Orientalium Anglorum, post Erpualdum Redualdi successorem, Sigberct frater eius praefuit, homo bonus ac religiosus; qui dudum in Gallia, dum inimicitias Redualdi fugiens exularet, lauacrum baptismi percepit, et patriam reuersus, ubi regno potitus est, mox ea, quae in Galliis bene disposita uidit, imitari cupiens, instituit scolam, in qua pueri litteris erudirentur; iuuante se episcopo Felice, quem de Cantia acceperat, eisque pedagogos ac magistros iuxta morem Cantuariorum praebente. Tantumque rex ille caelestis regni amator factus est, ut ad ultimum, relictis regni negotiis, et cognato suo Ecgrice commendatis, qui et antea partem eiusdem regni tenebat, intraret monasterium, quod sibi fecerat, atque accepta tonsura pro aeterno magis regno militare curaret. Successor autem regni eorum factus est Anna filius Eni de regio genere, uir optimus, atque optimae genitor sobolis, de quibus in sequentibus suo tempore dicendum est; qui et ipse postea ab eodem pagano Merciorum duce, a quo et prodecessores eius, occisus est. (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 266-69).
[478] cf. Beo. l.456 *Helm Scyldinga*

is possible to suggest that helmets, rather than crowns, could have been considered a more apt form of symbolic head-gear for a king. There is no evidence that as vernacular kingship developed in Anglo-Saxon England there would have been any need to wear crowns, *per se*; rather, it seems a king could have been signified in many different ways. There is no clear evidence that the Anglo-Saxons viewed helmets in place of a crown; but equally there is nothing to suggest this could not have been the case. In fact, in Anglo-Saxon England, there is arguably evidence for symbolic head-gear, namely the elaborate warrior helmets, which could very well have served as a symbolic focal point, which, like the kings they so likely adorned, could have been considered the helm of the people.

3.3 Swords

Swords feature in many of the narratives of kingship and it has often been suggested that the sword was symbolic of the investiture of social status and land-holding.[479] This association with kingship makes the swords, as invoked in the fictional poetic accounts, an item that might be considered to have symbolic significance and be a signifier of kingship. In *Beowulf* there are many descriptions of swords, several *named* swords, and it would not be extreme to say that they form part of the material fabric of the poem. They are referenced both in off-hand comments and at times are given particular significance as part of the narrative. It would be too exhaustive to enumerate the number of words and kennings that reference swords; much work has been undertaken into the subject, and how such words might reflect the materiality of swords from the archaeological record.[480] For the purposes of this thesis, however, it might beneficial to examine the relationship between the kings and swords in *Beowulf* and other poetic sources to ascertain the relationships between them.

---

[479] See Nelson, 1989: 75-87; Banton, 2011: 16; Barthélemy, 2009: 209-22.
[480] See Davidson, 1962; Hawkes, 1989: 63-70; 71-84; Halsall, 2003; Härke, 1990; and Bruce Mitforrd: 1974.

3.3a The Archaeological Evidence

Archaeologically, swords with elaborately decorated hilts have been associated with kings from an early date in a continental context, such as the sword excavated from the tomb of the Merovingian King Childeric I (d. 481), in 1653. The hilt of this sword (Fig. 120), contained in a jewelled scabbard, was decorated in gold; it has been suggested that it and the gold-hilted scramasax which also accompanied the burial may have been associated with a coronation or ceremony of coming to power, due to their extreme value.[481]

This identification of decorated sword hilts with kingship might be evidence in an Anglo-Saxon context by the large number of highly decorated sword hilts found in graves – although not perhaps with some specific coronation as with Childric's sword. However, the sheer numbers of these items in the Staffordshire Hoard (at current count: 92 pommel caps and 152 hilt plates),[482] and those that lack clear archaeological contexts are more difficult to attribute to kingly associations than the helmets, which are limited in number. Thus, while the sword hilts from the burials at Sutton Hoo, Taplow and Prittlewell form part of assemblages that give an overall impression of kingly-ness, a sword as a single grave-find does not and cannot be explained as a signifier of kingship. The Staffordshire Hoard emphasises this; so many highly ornate and valuable sword hilts and fastenings forming part of a single collection mean it is unlikely that they all belonged to a king – or kings – let alone one man. Rather, the evidence of the Hoard suggests that perhaps many people had ornate swords. Nevertheless, the *association* between sword and king is still strong; the poetry makes it clear that it is not just a king who might have a sword he also gave them as rewards and gifts while further implying that many could own such objects.[483] Kings are recorded as giving swords to poets, or *scops*, who performed well, and

---

[481] Rupp, 1937: 57; as cited in Davidson, 1962: 64.
[482] Leahy and Bland, 2014: 17.
[483] See further Härke, 2000: 377-380; Bazelmans, 2000: 311-375.

to warriors who have been especially loyal and brave. And here, perhaps, we have a clear indication of how the sword as a visual signifier might relate to kingship. A sword of immense value and decoration was a necessary part of the assemblage of a great king, but by disseminating swords as gifts, widely and generously, his power is further demonstrated in the context of a warrior society. In this way, the means by which the power of a king is visually signified is dispersed, and, rather than swords having a direct association with kingship, they indirectly reference an entire political structure of power, rather than a particular individual.

In other words, the plethora of archaeological evidence from differing contexts, makes it very difficult to suggest a direct link between kingship and swords, the exclusivity that may be surmised for helmets is simply not present with these artefacts. Instead, they represent numerous examples of varying degrees of wealth. Nonetheless, the objects themselves are considered to be of high status, as the blades would have required much skill to make and the decoration can be of the highest quality and thus may be linked to the nexus of kingly power and authority in a gift-driven, feudal society.[484]

3.3b Historical Evidence

The documentary record, late though it is, seems to substantiate this impression, with Davidson noting how the different words used in wills of tenth- and eleventh-century date might refer to different types of swords, scabbards and fastenings, as well as some of the decoration. Through these wills it is also possible to glean some insight into the practice of giving swords that were regarded as heirlooms. The will of Ælfgar (*c.* 1062), for instance, records that: 'I gave my lord the sword which King Edmund gave to me'.[485] Here, the social context of object and gift is manifest: a sword is given by a king and is then given to

---

[484] ibid.
[485] Whitelock, 1930: 6.

one who is owed loyalty; it demonstrates clearly how a sword might reflect kingship and kingly behaviour. In his will (dated 25 June 1014), Æthelstan also bequeaths a sword to his brother, Edmund, one reported to have been that of the eighth-century king, Offa.[486] While it is impossible to know if such a sword could have survived, or whether it was more a case of oral history and legendary association, the sword was clearly highly prized and such associations articulated its value.

At a slightly earlier date the *Chronicle* records how King Æthelwulf of Wessex (d. 858) sent Alfred, his young son, to Rome, where he received a sword from Pope Leo IV; the chronicler regards this as an ordination of Alfred's eventual kingship. In the entry for the year 853, it sets out how:

> And the same year King Æthelwulf sent his son Alfred to Rome. Dom. Leo was pope in Rome then, and he consecrated him as king and took him as son at confirmation.[487]

While the sword is not mentioned in the *Chronicle* or in Asser's *Life of Alfred*,[488] it is thought to be referenced in a fragment of a letter from Pope Leo IV to Æðelwulf,[489] and its acquisition as a gift from the Pope might explain, in part, why the chronicler saw the donation as a significant moment.

One key piece of evidence for sword comes from Charter S1447 (*c*. 950-968). This charter preserves a reference to Ecgfrith, a thegn of King Edgar, whose property is forfeited and seized 'by the sword that hung on his hip when he was drowned'.[490] Kemble and Liebermann initially suggested that Ecgfrith committed suicide and that the sword was an allusion to this betrayal of the king, who had presumably given him this sword.[491] However, Robertson has rejected this manner of death and Brooks has suggested the

---

[486] Whitelock, 1930: 56–63
[487] Swanton, 1996:64-67.
[488] Keynes and Lapidge, 1983: 68.
[489] For a full discussion of these comparative sources and the differences and significances see Nelson, 1967: 145-149.
[490] urh æt swyrd he him on hype hangode a he adranc (Electronic Sawyer: http://www.esawyer.org.uk/charter/1447.html; trans Author's own)
[491] Liebermann, 1903: 479.

drowning occurred during some sort of crime that amounted to betrayal, and further suggesting that the sword may be an additional reference to that betrayal.[492] The focus of the scholarship on this particular passage has focused on why Ecgfrith was buried outside consecrated grounds and not of the sword itself.[493] However it might be suggested that this deliberate reference to the sword that he has with him when he dies is indicative of the betrayal of his king that by having the sword when he died was the cause for losing his land, not necessarily the manner of death.

3.3c Literary Evidence:

Against these few (later Anglo-Saxon) documentary references, the literary and poetic evidence for swords is extensive; swords are ever present in such sources and they are described and named in many ways. They are described as adorned, ornamented, gleaming with patterns, gleaming and plated – all of which reflects the extent material, be it the pattern wielded-blades or the ornate hilts (See figs 120-126) We are told in *Maxims I* that 'it is right for gold to be on a man's sword',[494] an observation that might be most easily illustrated by the Staffordshire Hoard, which included many gold sword fittings. Further, we are told in *Maxims II* that the 'goodly-iron should lie on the king's lap',[495] a statement that might refer to the potentially symbolic or ritualistic placement of a sword on a man's lap when he is sat in a throne, or in the ceremony of him becoming king, which is attested in the instances when swords are given to kings, both historically (as with Alfred), and fictionally, as in *Beowulf.*

In fact, this poem provides the most detailed and discursive accounts of swords and their relationships with the men who owned them. In Beowulf's first fight with Grendel he boasts that he will not use a sword:

---

[492] Robertson, 2009: 338; Brooks, 1984: 249.
[493] Foxhall-Forbes, 300-308.
[494] *Maxims I B* l. 56 Gold geriseþ   on guman sweorde (Shippey, 1976: 70-71)
[495] Lines 25b-26a Sweord sceal on bearme drihtlic isern (Shippey, 1976: 76-77)

so it won't be a cutting edge I'll wield
to mow him down, easily as I might.[496]

Yet, after he is victorious, the king gives to him a standard of victory, a helmet, chainmail and 'a sword carried high, that was both precious object and token of honour'.[497] All of these could be considered materials of kingship, foreshadowing Beowulf's eventual role as King of the Geats, but in this instance it is the sword that is singled out as both precious and a token of honour, the very item he himself said that he would fight without. The passage then goes on to detail the decoration of the helmet already discussed.[498]

Hrunting, the named sword that Beowulf then takes with him to the fight with Grendel's mother in the mere, is lent to him by one of Hrothgar's men, Unferth. It is identified as an iron blade (*ecg wæg iren*),[499] a hilted-sword (*ha hilte*),[500] gleaming with twigs of venom (*atertananum fah*)[501] and hardened by the blood of battle (*ahurded heaad swate*)[502] having never failed a man; it is said to have curving patterns (*hringmg*),[503] twisting patterns (*wundenmng*),[504] bound ornaments (*wround gebunden*)[505] and a hard and steely edge (*stylecg*).[506] These attributes combine to present a clear description of the sword itself. Davidson has translated '*wæs þæm hæftmece Hrunting nama*' (l. 1458) as having the name borne on the hilt, further postulating that the words *ateranum fah, hringmhr*, and *wundenmri* (cited above) all reference a pattern-welded blade. Her argument that gleaming and flickering patterning on blades referenced the technique of pattern-welding is convincing, as the suffix *-mæl* can also mean 'marked', and so seems to indicate a visible pattern on the blade. However, whether the name was inscribed onto the hilt

---

[496] 679-680
[497] 1022a-1023
[498] See above, section 3.2c.
[499] l.1459a
[500] l. 1457a
[501] l. 1459b
[502] 1.1460a
[503] l.1521b
[504] l.1531 a
[505] l.1531b
[506] l.1533a

remains unclear as the language of the verse does not necessarily support this, despite the

extant examples of runic-inscribed hilts, such as the pommel from Gilton, Kent (Fig. 121),

or the Hiberno-Norse inscribed guard from Ballinderry, Ireland (Fig.122).[507]

While no metal is mentioned in this case, the ornamentation (*wrættum gebunden*)

calls to mind the gold and garnet found on many sword hilts, like that of the sword found

in the Sutton Hoo burial (Fig. 123) or the Cumberland hilt (Fig. 124).[508] The old sword

made by giants (*eald-swoerd eotenisc*),[509] that Beowulf finds in the mere, with which he is

able to defeat Grendel's mother, is similarly described:

> The inlaid sword hilt
> Embossed with jewels; its blade had melted
> The scroll work on it was burnt so scalding was the blood.[510]

Inlaid with jewels this again recalls the types of hilts extant within the material record.

This sword, however, said to be supernaturally the work of giants (*enta geweorc*),[511] is 'so

huge and heavy that only Beowulf could wield it'; it thus functions as the leitmotif of a

predestined man stronger, bigger and better than all other warriors being of a size that it is

unwieldy for the everyday hero.

It is further described when Beowulf presents it to Hrothgar:

> Then the golden hilt was handed over
> To the old lord, a relic from long ago
> For the venerable ruler. The rare smithwork
> …
> that relic of old times. It was engraved all over
> *(on ðæ ww or writen fyrnge-winnes)*
> and showed how war first came to the world
> and flood destroyed a tribe of giants.
> ….
> in pure gold inlay on the swords guards

---

507 See Davidson, 1962: plate II.
508 British Museum 1876,0717.1
509 *Beo*. l. 1558a
510 *Beo*. ll. 1614a-1616
        ond þa hilt somod
since fage;   sweordær gemealt
forbarn brodenmæl;   wæs þæt blod to þæs hat.
(Klaeber, 2008: 54; trans. author after Heaney, 1999: 52-53)
511 *Beo*. l. 2717b

> there were rune-markings correctly incised
> stating and recording for whom the sword
> had first been made and ornamented
> with its scroll-worked hilt.[512]

Here we are told that the sword is gold, recalling the many golden hilts of the Staffordshire
hoard; in this instance there is explicit reference to a runic inscription on the sword guard,
as well as scroll work that might parallel the gold wire-work found on many sword hilts,
such as the Windsor pommel (Fig. 125), or filigree on the Staffordshire examples (Fig.
126). The assertion that it presented an origin story of war is, however, more difficult to
explain. The use of the verb *writen* is normally applied to its modern day cognate of
writing, and as Davidson has suggested it is perhaps in the runes that the story is related.
Nevertheless, the inscriptions that have survived are not as complex as this explanation
would necessitate, nor do they convey such detailed meaning; rather, runic inscriptions on
metal work tend towards naming and claims of ownership. Davidson thus leaves open the
suggestion of the runic inscription.[513] It might be posited that despite the use of the word
writen, the 'origin story of war' might have been alluded to through decoration; this,
however, remains speculation.

Upon Beowulf's return to his homeland, he presents the gifts that Hrothgar had
given him to his own king, Hygelac, including a boar standard, a helmet and a sword,

---

[512] *Beo*. ll. 1677-1698a

Ða wæs gylden hilt   gamelum rince
harum hildfruman   on hand gyfen
enta ærgeworc;   hit on æht gewearf
…
          hylt sceawode
ealde lafe.   On ðæm wæs or writen
fryngewinnes' syðan flod ofsloh
gifen geotende   giganta cyn
…
Swa wæs on ðæm scennum   sciran goldes
þruh runstafas   rihte gemearcod,
geseted ond gesæd,   hwam þætsweord geworht
irena cyst   ærest wære,
wreoæenhilt on wyrmfah.
(Klaeber, 2008: 57; Heaney, 1999: 54-55)
[513] Davidson, 1962: 139.

along with four horses. In return, Hygelac presents Beowulf with a sword from the Geat treasury:

> The battle-famed king, bulwark of his earls
> Ordered a gold-chased heirloom of Hrethel's
> To be brought in; it was the best example
> of a gem-studded sword in the Geat treasury.
> This he laid on Beowulf's lap
> And then rewarded him with land as well,
> Seven thousand hides; and a hall and a throne.[514]

Here Beowulf receives from his own king what might be considered all of the trappings of kingship: a sword that is both gold and encrusted with jewels is laid on his lap and he is given his own hall and throne. Indeed, this passage has been interpreted as an initiation ceremony by which Beowulf is identified as the successor of Hygelac, and it is a mere four lines later that Hygelac falls and Beowulf begins his own fifty-year rule.[515] In this passage only the sword receives any detailed visual description, and both its materiality and historic nature are highlighted. In this instance, it seems that gold, jewels, and heirloom status are the three qualities essential to an impressive and good sword, and the larger the better.

Elsewhere in the poem, the sword that Eofor raises to kill the Swedish king Ongentheow,[516] is said to be Hygelac's sword, and the story is recounted as Beowulf reminiscences about the treasures that Hygelac gives to him.[517] While it is not explicitly stated that the sword that felled Ongentheow is the sword that Hygelac bestows on

---

[514] *Beo.*, ll. 2190-96a:
   Het ða eorla hleo   in gefetian
   heaðorof Cyning   Hreðles lafe
   golde gegyrede;   næs mid Geatum ða
   sincmaðþum selra   on sweordes had
   þæt he on Biowulfes   bearm alegde
   ond him gesealde   seofan þusendo
   bold on bregostol.   …
   (Klaeber, 2008: 74; trans. author after Heaney, 1999: 70)
[515] Huppé, 1984: 83; Lyon, 1984: 22.
[516] See above, n. 362.
[517] *Beo*. ll. 2985-2990

Beowulf when he returns from Heorot, it is tempting to make the connection. It is certainly

the sword that he takes into battle against the dragon:

> Beowulf was foiled
> Of glorious victory. The glittering sword,
> Infallible before that day,
> Failed when he unsheathed it, as it never should have.[518]

As Beowulf is defeated in his fight with the dragon, his sword fails, and in this act Beowulf

is ultimately defeated. If it is accepted that this was the sword that was given to him by

Hygelac when he is (at least symbolically) identified as his successor, it is the sword which

in turn ends his reign, and thus acts as the 'bookends' of his kingship. It is unclear whether

this glittering sword, which fails in the first attack on the dragon, is the same as Naegling,

the sword that snaps when Beowulf strikes the second time, aided by Wiglaf. While this

sword, described as ancient and iron grey (*gomol ond grægmæl*),[519] might be considered to

contradict the earlier description of it as glittering; as Davidson points out, these two

adjectives could simply be descriptions of different parts of the sword, the iron blade and

glittering hilt.[520] When Wiglaf comes to Beowulf's aid, he is also described as taking an

ancestral blade with him into the fray, and it is this decorated sword that sinks the fatal

blow into the dragon's abdomen.[521]

Contributing further to the overall understanding of the role of swords in the poem,

it is notable that they are the only article of war-gear that is not listed as being part of

Bewoulf's funeral pyre, perhaps explaining the processes by which they could become

heirlooms.[522] While this does not seem to be confirmed by the burial evidence, as swords

are frequently found within high-status inhumations, the archaeological record may not

provide insight into the full range of the symbolic significances a sword could acquire, and

may not reflect the number of swords an individual might have owned. Beowulf seems to

---

[518] *Beo*. ll. 2583b-2586
[519] *Beo*. l.2682a
[520] Davidson, 1962: 144.
[521] *Beo*. l.2700
[522] See Owen-Crocker, 2004: 89-90.

have used at least four swords during his lifetime, and many of them passed in and out of his possession. He has a sword which he takes to Heorot, but this is not the one he uses to fight Grendel's mother; for this encounter he takes the sword, Hrunting, from Unferth, one of Hrothgar's thanes. When Hrunting fails, he takes the giant-made sword from the bottom of the lake and presents its hilt to Hrothgar. Hrothgar then gives him another sword, which he presents to Hygelac, who in return presents him with an ancient Geatish sword, which may or may not be Naegling, the sword which snaps during the fight with the dragon.

3.3d Visual Evidence:

The numismatic evidence for swords is intriguing when considering kingship, as they do not appear on early Anglo-Saxon coins, appearing only in later (tenth-century) Anglo-Scandinavian minting (Fig. 127), where they are predominantly associated with St Peter and the episcopal-controlled mint of York (*c.* 905-927).[523] It was this iconography that was co-opted by the Anglo-Scandinavian king, Eric Bloodaxe (reg. 947-954), who used an image of the sword on his later coinage (Fig. 128).[524] This evidence, interesting as it is, does not provide clear indication of how or if swords were an established iconography of kingship, but rather simply that they were co-opted by this particular individual as he established control over York.

The image of David and Goliath in the St Petersburg Bede (Fig. 102), discussed above in terms of the helmet illustrated on the miniature, also warrants examination. As noted, the association between sword and helmet is made clear in the poetic sources,[525] and it is perhaps this association that is being presented in the manuscript miniature; it certainly does not depict the biblical youth who (like Beowulf) divested himself of the sword given to him by the king:

[523] Grierson and Blackburn, 1986: 322.
[524] Dolley, 1965.
[525] See discussion of Maxims and Beowulf, sections 3.2 and 3.3.

> So Saul clothed David with his armour, and he put a bronze helmet on his head; he also clothed him with a coat of mail […] fastened his sword to his armour […]. And David said to Saul, "I cannot walk with these" […]. So David took them off.[526]

Armed only with his sling-shot:

> David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. But there was no sword in the hand of David. Therefore David ran and stood over the Philistine, took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him, and cut off his head with it.[527]

Furthermore, the manuscript image does not illustrate the moment Goliath is slain, but rather the moment when David takes the sword from Goliath at the same time as he takes the helmet. As noted, it is in the taking of these two signifiers of kingship that this image gains its potency. This depiction from eighth-century Northumbria thus depicts attributes inherent to Anglo-Saxon kingship while simultaneously highlighting aspects of biblical kingship that reinforce the vernacular understanding of it.

Another image that must be considered in the light of swords and kingship is the stone cross fragment from St Alkmund's in Derby (Fig. 44).[528] As noted, this features a male figure in profile, seated on a stool, with a rectangular element that might be a harp and a very large sword, prominently placed, that extends the entire length of his thigh, its pommel clearly visible under his arm, which appears to be wrapped in a scabbard. So prominent is this sword that it extends over the frame of the panel, a trope that is later used in the New Minster *Liber Vitae* manuscript depiction of Cnut who, while placing a cross on the altar, holds a sword that extends beyond the frame enclosing the miniature (Fig. 57). In both of these instances the sword is given a prominent foreground placement, suggestively indicating the visual importance of the sword itself to the composition and iconography as a whole.

---

[526] Samuel I:38-40
[527] Samuel I.50-51
[528] See above, Chapter 2, and further below, Chapter 4.

3.3d Summary

There is no literary evidence that a sword is an exclusive requirement of kingship, and the archaeological record's numerous examples indicate that they are not rare, certainly not as rare as helmets. This may indicate that while a king needed to have a sword, as a good warrior, there was nothing exclusively kingly about swords in themselves. Rather, it is the ability of the king to give and receive swords that is highlighted in the poetry, and the collection of sword-parts in the Staffordshire Hoard indicates that many people of high status or in the service of a wealthy king might have owned extremely ornate swords; thus, while it is likely that the king may have had the finest/most ornate swords he might also have been be expected to supply these to the most loyal of his warriors.

3.4 Rings

As with the swords, the Old English literary evidence for rings is extensive, the word *beaga* (ring) occurring innumerable times throughout the corpus, often in conjunction with kings. The kenning, 'giver of rings', for instance, is used many times in royal contexts: in *Beowulf* it is used three times as a title for the king (*béaga bryttan*, ll. 35, 352; *béaggyfan*, l. 1102a), and at another point in the poem the ruler is referred to as the 'ward of the ring hoard' (*béahhorda weard*, l. 922b). However, rings are more often referred to in *Beowulf* in the context of the ceremony of giving rings, explaining why kings receive the title of ring-giver. When Hrothgar advises Beowulf on the subject of 'wise rulership', and invokes Heromod as a negative exemplar, for example, the failure to give rings is specifically mentioned: 'He grew bloodthirsty, he gave no more rings' *(bréosthord blódréow· nallas béagas geaf*, l. 1719). He repeats this when he explains that one of the dangers of power is he who 'dishonours costume and bestows no gold rings' (*nallas on gyp seleð fætte beagas*, l. 1749b-1750a). When Hrothgar himself is first introduced in the poem, he is described as a king who does give out rings (*béagas daélde*, l. 80), and when Beowulf departs, amongst

the gifts given to him by Hrothgar are two arm-rings (*earm-reade twa*, l. 1194b), as well as rings (*hringas*, l. 1195a), presumably finger rings, one of which Beowulf then gives to his own king, Hygelac, who dies wearing it:

> Hygelac the Geat, grandson of Sweating
> Wore this ring on his last raid [529]

The fact that Beowulf is given both arm-rings (*earmreade* – literally 'arm gold') and what are most likely finger rings (*hringas*), highlights one potential problem with the interpretation of some of this material: namely, that the words for different ring types seem to be interchangeable; when the king is called the 'giver of rings' it does not specify what type of ring. An 'arm-band' of gold may have been considered as much a 'ring' as a finger ring.[530] Further neck-rings, arm-rings, sword-rings and finger rings could all be the potential interpretation for these poetic records. Both the literature and archaeology of the Viking period seem to indicate that the giving of arm-rings was more common within this context, with silver arm-rings being used in the bullion economy as hack-silver, however, this type of exchange is not noted in Anglo-Saxon hoards and no arm-rings or neck-rings have been securely dated to the Anglo-Saxon period.[531] Sword rings however are evidenced, such as on hilts from Gaverham, Crundale as well as on the Sutton-Hoo sword these have been interpreted as gifts, that are then affixed to the sword although the construction suggest that the rings are part of the original conception of the design.[532] If Anglo-Scandinavian material is considered, the number of artifacts to consider increases exponentially, including the silver neck-ring found in the Bedale hoard (North

---

[529] *Beo*. ll. 1202-1203:
      Þone hring hæfde   Higelac Geata
      Nefa Sweartinges,   nyhstan siðe (Klaeber, 2008: 42; trans. author after Heaney, 1999: 40)
[530] In a Scandinavian context, the area most associated with the setting of the original oral poem, *Beowulf*, there is more evidence for the use, wear and significance of arm rings (Pedersen, 2014: 128).
[531] Williams, 2007: 200-205.
[532] Davidson, 1962: 58-61; Bazelmans, 2000: 375-80.

Yorkshire)[533] and two examples of gold arm rings one from the Vale of York Hoard (Fig. 129)[534] and one single find from York (Fig. 130).[535] Given this, as well as the frequency of Anglo-Saxon finger-ring finds, it seems reasonable to assume that ring-giving in an Anglo-Saxon context could refer to either arm-rings or finger-rings, with no distinction made.

Another aspect of ring-wearing and -giving is that rings do not seem to have been gendered objects, as demonstrated by the description of Hrothgar's wife as 'ring-adorned queen' (*béaghroden cwén*, l. 623). Further, in one instance it is unclear what type of ring she may have been wearing, as she is said to be 'under' (OE, *under*) a ring:

> Then Wealhtheow came forth,
> walking in (OE *under*) a golden ring.[536]

This has been interpreted as a potential reference to a crown, but is more often translated as neck ring. Wealtheow also takes part in the giving of rings:

> Wealhtheow spoke; she spoke before the retinue:
> 'Make use of this ring, beloved Beowulf,
> young man, with good fortune, and take benefit from this corselet'.[537]

Here she is recorded as giving a ring (*beaga*) to Beowulf, which a few lines further on is denoted *hrægla,* which is defined by Bosworth and Toller as dress or vestment, which has led some to interpret this as either ring or mail (ringed clothing).[538] This word is cognate with the modern English word bangle which, in turn, allows some to translate it as bracelet

---

[533] http://www.yorkshiremuseum.org.uk/collections/collections-highlights/the-bedale-hoard/
[534] yorkmuseumstrust.org.uk/collections/search search:YORYM : 2006.2900
[535] yorkmuseumstrust.org.uk/collections/search search: YORYM : 2009.55.2
[536] *Beo*. ll. 1162b-1163a:
    Þá cwóm Wealhþéo forð
    gán **under** gyldnum béage (Klaeber, 2008: 41; trans. author after Heaney, 1999: 39)
[537] *Beo*. ll. 1215-1217:
    Wealhðéo maþelode· héo fore þaém werede spræc:
    'Brúc ðisses béages, Béowulf léofa
    hyse, mid haéle ond þisses hrægles néot (Klaeber, 2008: 42; trans. author after Heaney, 1999: 40)
[538] Beo. l. 1217 quoted above, Heaney (1997) translates this as mail, while Slade (2012) translates as corsetlet, Bradley translates as cloak (1982). I am grateful to M. Bintley for discussion of this term.

or arm-ring (although unlike l. 1194, *earm* is not specified), while others associate it with her previously mentioned neck ring.[539]

Despite such questions, it is clear that 'rings' occupy a specific place in *Beowulf*, being associated with the rich appearance of those associated with kings, and functioning as a clear expression of their wealth and generosity in the treatment of those loyal to them. These are themes that recur elsewhere in the poetic record.

The *Maxims*, for instance, specifically link rings with kings twice, demonstrating the socio-political nature of that relationship. Furthermore, in the context of these verses, the associations are mentioned as aphoristic truisms, and present an idealised relationship between ruler and material object, providing insight to how the relationship with material culture is specifically viewed in this context. In *Maxims II* it is said that: 'A king in the hall should share out rings',[540] and that rings are to be exchanged as part of the marriage arrangements for a queen; *Maxims I B* also mentions rings as bride price to be paid by a king: 'A king shall pay bride price for a queen with rings and goblets'.[541] The only other mention within *Maxims* is not about how the rings are given, but rather about how they might ideally be constructed and worn: 'On a ring a jewel should stand large and prominent';[542] here it is the prominence of the jewel and the visual significance that is highlighted. Overall, like *Beowulf*, the *Maxims* highlight the role that rings had within society, specifically linking them to the role of the king. However, it is not the king who wears the rings, but rather those around him and those who are ultimately loyal to him.

---

[539] Heaney, 1999.
[540] *Maxims II* ll. 28b-29a:
    Cyning sceal on healle
    Beagas dælan. (Shippey, 1976: 76-77)
[541] *Maxims I B* ll. 11-12a:
    Cyning Sceal mid ceape   cwene gebicgan
    Bunum ond Beagum. (Shippey, 1976; 68-69)
[542] *Maxims II* ll. 22b-23a: Gim sceal on hringe
Standan steap and geap (Shippey, 1976: 76-77)

In the material record, Anglo-Saxon finger-rings survive with some frequency,

often turning up as single finds. Many form part of museum collections with very little

information available; the British Museum, having the largest collection, currently has 131

finger-rings that are listed as Anglo-Saxon.[543] With the establishment of the Portable

Antiques Scheme (PAS), increasing numbers of single finds are being recorded, with

approximately 20 finger rings with an ascribed Anglo-Saxon identification currently

searchable on the PAS database, which expands the corpus of finger rings held in museum

collections.[544] The difficulty with a single find is that it often comes without any

archaeological context, leading to problematic dating and lack of any meaningful

associations. There is also great variation of style and quality of the finger rings found,

such as a simple copper alloy example from Lincolnshire, known as the Skidbrooke Ring

(*c.* 1000-1100; Fig. 131),[545] while others are highly decorated, such as the gold finger ring,

decorated with granulation, filigree and enamel inlay (similar to the decoration of the

tenth-century Minster Lovell Jewel), found in Norfolk (*c.* 850-950; Fig. 132).[546] While

some examples have precious stones, such as a ring from the West Yorkshire Hoard which

has a cabochon (Fig. 133), others are seemingly decorated more simply – like a ring held

in the Victoria and Albert Museum which displays animal interlace in silver niello (Fig.

134).[547] One example of a gold ring from York is not inset stones or enamel but rather has

a decorative bezel which features a human head with animals cut in on either side. [548]

Other rings had inscriptions, such as the Kingmore and Bramham Moor rings (Figs 135-

---

[543]British Musem Online Collection:
http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/search.aspx?object=22713&matcult=8832
[544] PAS: http://finds.org.uk/database/search/results/objecttype/FINGER+RING/culture/1
[545] PAS PUBLIC-22B414: http://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/629535
[546] PAS FAKL-6C1815 http://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/593383
[547] http://friendsofleedsmuseums.org/2012/04/493/ ;Webster and Backhouse, 1991: 222 cat no. 175
V&A inv. No 678-1871
[548] yorkmuseumstrust.org.uk/collections/search search: YORYM : 1951.58

136), both of which are simple gold bands bearing cryptic runic inscriptions in the 'younger futhark' – a feature that has been used to link them.[549]

Of interest to the discussion of kingship are two rings that, although found nine years apart and in different parts of the country, are also often paired on the basis of their inscriptions. The first found (in a cart rut in Wiltshire in 1780), and potentially the earlier of the two, is a gold and niello finger ring with two birds facing inward towards a foliate motif with a triangular bezel (Fig. 137 right); its inscription reads 'Ethelwulf Rex' which firmly associates it with Æthelwulf of Wessex (reg. 839-858). In keeping with the associations made in the poetry, it has been suggested by Webster that this was not the personal ring of the king, but rather a gift or mark of office.[550] The other ring (Fig. 137 left), ploughed up in 1870 (Aberford, West Yorkshire), is similarly decorated in gold and neillo, but rather than bearing a triangular ring face, it has a round bezel with a nimbed four-legged creature in the roundel at the centre of a cruciform foliate motif. The letters 'A' and 'D' on either side of the quadruped identify it as the A*gnus Dei*. On the back of the bezel is an incised inscription that reads '*Æthelswith Regna'* (reg. *c.* 853-870). Webster claims that this ring, too, is more likely to have been a royal gift rather than a royal possession.[551]

Given that none of these rings comes with an explicitly associated context, even those with inscriptions that relate them to royal individuals cannot necessarily be assigned to royal possession. Thus, without any Anglo-Saxon visual evidence (images depicting figures wearing rings of any kind), clearly contextualised archaeological material, or fully descriptive textual accounts, it is difficult to associate any of these rings with a clear

---

[549] http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=88694&partId=1

[550] Webster and Backhouse, 1991: 268-269 cat. No. 243; http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/pe_mla/p/pair_of_royal_finger_rings.aspx

[551] Webster and Backhouse, 1991: 268-269 cat. No. 244; http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/pe_mla/p/pair_of_royal_finger_rings.aspx

iconography of kingship. While the literature associates rings with kings, it is the giving

and receiving of them that is highlighted. Rings, as high status indicators, are a more

convincing signifier of social position, wealth and personal loyalties than objects of solely

kingly significance.

3.5 Harps

Another object commonly associated in the scholarship with Anglo-Saxon kingship is the

harp. Indeed, while the word *hearpan* in the corpus of Old English literature is often used

in reference to heavenly chorus and singing in glorification of God,[552] when mentioned in

an earthly context it is intrinsically linked with hall life and the loss of it. Thus, the so-

called 'Last Survivor' of *Beowulf* lists the harp as one of the lost items of his previous life:

'no trembling harp, no tuned timber',[553] and in the *Seafarer*, 'not for him is the sound of

the harp'.[554] The presence of the king in the hall is implicit in these relationships, yet it is

never suggested that the king himself plays the harp. Rather, it is usually another figure

playing, while the king listens and rewards the harpist, as is noted in the *Fortunes of Men*:

> Some shall with harp   at his Lord's
> Feet sit,   Wealth given
> and quickly   tunes twisting
> sending forth loud sound   the strings cry
> nails sounds sweet. He was a great pleasure.[555]

---

[552] Eg. *Christ II* l. 668; *Phoenix* 134; The Paris Psalter 42.
[553] *Beo*. ll. 2262b-2263a
      Næs hearpan wyn, gomen gleobeamas
(Klaeber, 2008: 78; trans. author after Heaney, 1999: 72)
[554] *Seafarer* l. 42a Ne biþ him to hearpan hyge
[555] *Fortunes* ll. 80- 84.
      Sum sceal mid hearpan   æt his hlafordes
      fotum sittan   feoh ðicgan
      ond a snellice   snere wrætan
      lætan scrælletan   sceacol, seðe hleapeð
      nægl neomegende,   bið him neod micel (Shippey, 1976: 60-61; trans. Author's own)

In the *Gifts of Men*, however, harp-playing is mentioned as an attribute that any man might possess alongside athleticism, seafaring and skill in battle, suggesting a king might well have the ability to play, but not that such a talent was seen exclusively as a kingly attribute:

> One with his hands   may play the harp
> He has on the glee-wood   a quick-playing skill [556]

While it might be argued that any of the attributes mentioned in the *Gifts of Men* might also be those desirable of a king, it is more clearly understood, as the title given to the poem suggests, to be concerned with the attributes associated with masculinity, while Cross has argued, followed by Bradley, that this poem has biblical and homiletic sources drawing on both the Gospel of Matthew and the works of Gregory in its rhetorical form, extolling the human attributes as a means of glorifying God.[557] While the overall themes of divinely-inspired masculinity do not exclude kingly behaviour, the evidence for the possible frames of reference being exclusively kingly is, at best inconclusive. Furthermore, other poems, such as *Beowulf*, identify the figure associated with the harp as the *scop*, or poet. Indeed, the very introduction to the hall of Hrothgar invokes 'The harp being struck and the clear song of the poet'.[558] The association between the *scop* and the harp is very clear and reinforces the notion of the harpist sitting at the lord's feet, as mentioned in the *Fortunes of Men*, and this position might arguably be that which is lamented in poems such as the *Seafarer*.[559]

The only instance in which a king might potentially be seen as playing a harp is with Hrothgar himself. When Beowulf recalls the feasts in Heorot in his account of events to Hygelac upon his return to the land of the Geats, he sets out that:

> There was singing and excitement: an old reciter (Old Scylding)
> A carrier of stories recalled the early days.

---

[556] *Gifts* ll. 80- 84.
   Sum mid hondum mæg hearpan gretan
   Ah he gleobeames gearobrygda list (Krapp and Dobbie, 1936; trans. Author's own)
[557] Cross, 1962; Bradley, 1983: 325.
[558] *Beo*. ll. 89b-90a þær wæs hearpan sweg, swutol sang scopes
[559] See Bradley, 1982: 329.

> At times some hero made the timbered harp
> Tremble with sweetness, or related true
> And tragic happenings; at times the king
> Gave proper turn to some fantastic tale…[560]

In this passage it is unclear if the king is reciting a tale along with a harp, which either he himself plays, or by which he is being accompanied. Klaeber, in his commentary on these lines, suggests that there is an indeterminate relationship between harp-playing and the elegies that are apparently being declaimed.[561] While he notes that Brodeur identified these lines with Hrothgar's earlier lecture on the sword-hilt from Grendel's mere (ll. 1700-84) rather than any musical performance,[562] he goes on to suggest, in the light of Scandinavian parallels, that the phrase *fela ficgende* (literally: asking many questions) can be based on vernacular references to rhetoric in poetry and, as it agrees in case (nominative) with Hrothgar, indicates that the whole passage can be associated with the figure of the king.[563] This suggests that these lines might, however obliquely, refer to a shared Germanic and Scandinavian practice of minstrelsy by kings. This, however, must remain speculative, and relies entirely on how the passage is translated.

Of further interest in this respect is whether g*omela Schilding* (literally the old Scylding) is taken as a reference to Hrothgar.[564] *Gomela* is paired with an ethnic signifier on two other occasions within the poem; both denote a dying king: *Gomela Scilfing* (l. 2968) refers to a dying Swedish king, and *Gomela Scylfing* (l. 2487) refers to Ongentheow

---

[560] *Beo*. 11. 2105-2111:
>   Þær wæs gidd ond gleo;   gomela Scilding
>   felafricgende   feorran rehte;
>   hwilum hilde-deor   Hearpan wynn
>   hoen-wudu grette   hwilum gyd awræce
>   soð ond sarlic   hwilum syllic spell
>   rehte æfter rhite   rum-heort cyning
>   hwilum eft ongan   eldo gebunden
(Klaeber, 2008: 71; trans. author after Heaney, 1999: 67)
[561] Klaeber, 2008: 233-234.
[562] Brodeur, 1959: 237-8
[563] Klaber, commentary, 2008: 233-4
[564] Ellen Pillsworth, in her 2014 Leeds paper and forthcoming publication argues that Hrothgar is the only Anglo-Saxon King known to have played a harp. Ellen Pilsworth (pers. Com – July. 2014) takes *Gomela Schilding* as a kenning for Hrothgar, and suggests that this is proof that Hrothgar was indeed a harpist.

in the battle in which he is killed. In fact, the word itself almost exclusively refers to kings throughout the poem. *Gomela* is used to refer to Beowulf, as he utters his last words (l. 2817), and when he is laid out before his men (l. 2851). Earlier, it is used clearly referring to Hrothgar (l. 1397) while at line 2421 it refers to Beowulf when he is described as nearing his fate (*wyrd ungemete neah*). The only instance in the poem when *gomela* does not refer to a king is used to denote the unnamed wife of Ongentheow as she is widowed (l. 2931), and even in this instance it is exclusively used for a royal person. On this basis, it would seem that *gomela* is used as a specifically kingly or royal adjective, suggesting that the *gomela Schilding* of line 2105 might well be Hrothgar, and that Beowulf is recalling his harp playing and recitation. This would support Pilsworth's assertion about the relationship between Hrothgar and harp-playing, but it remains the case that he is merely reciting alongside a harpist.

Regardless of whether Hrothgar was indeed playing the harp in Beowulf's account of Heorot, a clear association between harps and the feasting culture of kings is developed within the corpus of Anglo-Saxon literature, and the archaeological evidence seems to reflect this. The remains of harps or lyres have been uncovered in seven Anglo-Saxon burials, and they may have been more common, but without metal fittings or detailed soil analysis this is difficult to determine. With modern archaeological processes it is likely that the presence of harps may be more frequently identified. Those that have been found are almost exclusively associated with male burials, with only Grave 97 at Morning Thorpe, Norfolk, perhaps presenting an exception, with a male burial being disturbed by a female burial, confusing the objects initially interred with each.[565] Apart from this, four of the burials are high (male) status, and potentially of princely status interments: those at Sutton Hoo and Snape (Suffolk), Prittlewell and Taplow. Those at Bergh Apton, Morning Thorpe, and Abingdon (Oxfordshire, formerly Berkshire) are, however, all thought to be of lower

---

[565] Penn and Brugmann, 2007:36.

status, with few grave goods accompanying the inhumations. This distinction is potentially explained by the inclusion of the harp in the high status burials as expressions of lordly feasting – rather than as objects owned in life, and played, by the person buried with the harp. Thus, at Sutton Hoo, Prittlewell and Taplow (Figs 138-142) the harp is included with drinking vessels and bowls, and has been suggested to form part of a set of accoutrements representing the transference of the hall in its entirety into the afterlife.[566] While the burial with its harp at Snape is less grand than those at Sutton Hoo, Prittlewell and Taplow, it is nevertheless a ship burial, although the smaller number and lesser quality of the few surviving grave goods mean it is less well known – a fact exacerbated by the incomplete records of the excavation by Davidson in 1862. Considering the burial overall, however, Lawson, followed by Penn and Bergmand, suggested that this was the burial of a warrior musician rather than a king or princely figure.[567] The burials at Abingdon, Bergh Apton and Morning Thorpe also contained few grave furnishings other than the harp/lyre and, as at Snape, it has been argued that the musical instruments were the personal possessions of those interred in the graves, and further, that these individuals were *scops*.[568] The interpretation of these graves seemingly contradicts the poetic associations made above, however it is necessary to note that the harp as an object may have had royal assiociations while simultaneously, not being exclusively, being found in royal graves. The grave at Snape, if interpreted as a warrior musician rather than princely, is still a high status figure and in any case can be interpreted as having royal affiliations, perhaps playing the harp for a king, as described in the poetic traditions.

The Sutton Hoo lyre (Figs 138-140) is both the most ornate harp to have survived and has done so in a condition that allows the most insight into its construction. Although the musical instruments in the poetry are called harps, the objects found in the graves are

---

[566] Penn and Brugmann, 2007:36; Lawson, 2009: 223; Pilsworth, Leeds 2014.
[567] Penn and Brugmann, 2007:36; Lawson, 2009: 223.
[568] Lawson, 2009; Pilsworth, Leeds 2014.

not what would be called harps today, being small, hand-held stringed instruments with the sound box below, rather than at the side of the frame.[569] Further there seems to be no distinction between that of a square or triangular instrument being identified as harp; this is most easily demonstrated by Davidic images that portray him with square instruments.[570] Evidence of beaver hair on both sides of the instrument has led to the suggestion that it was kept in a beaver skin bag that has since disintegrated. The frame of the harp was made of maple-wood, the same material identified for the Taplow harp (Fig. 142). There are six pegs for the strings, five of willow and one of alder, perhaps suggesting a later repair or replacement; the strings themselves were made of either gut or horsehair.[571] The bottom of the vertical arms were attached to a sound box, and the joints were disguised by gilt bird-headed escutcheons inlaid with garnet cloisonné work featuring serpentine interlace around the central garnet that were riveted over bronze washers.[572] It has been suggested that the presence of birds on the harp might recall the singing of birds, and reference knowledge from the language of birds recounted in later Scandinavian myths.[573] Overall, this instrument, its context and those of the other harp remains demonstrate that they were deemed precious objects that were elaborately adorned, made of a prized and difficult to carve material. Furthermore, their seeming rarity and inclusion in high-status graves indicates they were considered high-status objects in themselves.

As suggested, the visual sources for harps or lyres are most often associated with the iconography of David the Psalmist, as in the eighth-century Vespasian Psalter (Fig. 57) or the Durham Cassiodorus (Fig. 54), or on the ninth-century column at Masham in Yorkshire (Figs 143-144).[574] The only image of a figure who is possibly secular and holds

---

[569] Evans, 1986: 69.
[570] See further below.
[571] Evans, 1986: 69.
[572] See Wickham-Crowley, 1992.
[573] Pilsworth, Leeds 2014
[574] BL, Cotton MS Vespasian A.i f 30v; Durham Cathedral Library MS B.ii f.81v; For Masham see Lang, CASSS, v. 6.

a harp is that carved on the tenth-century shaft fragment from St Alkmund's (Fig. 44) who, as noted, also bears a large sword, suggesting he may have been a secular figure depicted in a manner (with the harp) so as to invoke Davidic references;[575] the regal implications of such Davidic iconography will be considered further in the next chapter. The harp features on sculpture from Scotland, but most often not as a square lyre type harp but as triangular harp, as on the Dupplin Cross (Fig 50) where a seated figure plays a stringed instrument with a distinctive bird terminal, possibly referencing the role of David as the Psalmist.[576] It must be noted that while the harp is present in the literary sources of Anglo-Saxon England, and lyres survive in kingly contexts in the archaeological record, they do not appear to have been something that was depicted outside the specific context of Christological/Davidic frames of iconographic reference, which for most of the period concerned might possibly have been intrinsically tied to kingship. If given the evidence discussed in the previous chapter that kings took residence or 'held court' at ecclesiastic sites, the harp playing Christian king could have drawn parallels to the figure of the Old Testament.[577] The harp might therefore be considered amongst the visual signifiers of kingship in its material form and in its association with the hall, or other settings of kingship and its royal feasting and gift-giving activities.

3.6 Standard

As has already been set out,[578] Anglo-Saxon accounts of kings (particularly those by Bede), never describe the men themselves visually, nor are they given any individualized physical attributes related to their appearance, regardless of their religious convictions. There *are*, nevertheless, several passages that indicate how a king might be signified in

---

[575] J. Hawkes and P. Sidebottom, Derbyshire and Chester, CASSS 11 (forthcoming 2016), See further below Chapter 4.
[576] ECMS, v. 3: 319.
[577] See below, Chapter 4.
[578] See above, Chapter 1.

order to present the *idea* of 'King'. One obvious example is the account of how Edwin had

banners carried before him as he moved around his kingdom:

> So great was his majesty in his realm that not only were banners
> carried before him in battle, but even in time of peace, as he rode
> about among his cities, estates, and kingdoms with his *thegns*, he
> always used to be preceded by a standard-bearer. Further, when he
> walked anywhere along the roads there used to be carried before him
> the type of standard which the Romans called *tufa* and the English
> called *thuf*. [579]

This demonstrates that there was a precedent for the ruler being visually distinguishable on

the battlefield and, in this case, also during peacetime, suggesting that power, and more

importantly, power used in the proper kingly manner, was connected to a strong visual

presence. In this respect it is worth considering the so-called standard found within Sutton

Hoo Burial Mound I (Fig. 145) and the analogous example found within the Prittlewell

burial.[580] These comprise iron staffs with a grid-like structure at one end, to which banners

could be attached, and which could be carried, or stood in the ground. As such, they seem

to give physical expression to the ways in which a king might be visually identified and

articulated in the Anglo-Saxon world of the seventh century – given Bede's account of

Edwin. Further, in describing the iconography of Edwin's processions, Bede specifically

links an Anglo-Saxon king to an object that had an established Roman military

connotation: the *tufa* perhaps referring to the banners borne in procession before Roman

generals (Fig. 146). At the very least, Bede's account suggests a perceived continuity of

the visual markers associated with Roman military parade gear, and the established

iconographies of power, authority and triumph.[581] Indeed, Gannon has further proposed

---

[579] Bede, *HE*, II.16: Tantum uero in regno excellentiae habuit, ut non solum in pugna ante illum uexilla gestarentur, eds et tempore pacis equitantem inter ciutates siue uillas aut prouincias suas cum ministris semper antecedere signifer consuesset, necon et incedente illio ubilibet per plateas illud genus uexilli, quod Romani tufam, Angli appellant thuuf, ante eum feri solebat. (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969, 192-3).
[580] Bruce-Mitford, 1978: 403-31; Hirst, et al, 2004: 29-30.
[581] Bruce-Mitford, 1978: 403-31; Halsall 2003: 199-200.

that just such an object is portrayed on a gold shilling from *c.* 640 (Fig. 147).[582] Filmer-Sankey suggests that the standard along with the sceptre, discussed below, and the shoulder clasps from the Sutton Hoo finds represent a "fanciful interpretation of Roman customs and protocol" suggesting that these objects are poor interpretations of their Roman counterparts.[583] This suggestion correctly identifies the influence of imperial iconography and material culture but is quick to see the Anglo-Saxon objects as derivative and without any local significance. However, it might be argued that the material presented in Anglo-Saxon England, while influenced by imperial traditions, might also be part of a wider tradition of signifying kingship. One object that might be considered as a standard is that of a gold mount from the Staffordshire Hoard. The object has two eagles facing inwards carrying a fish in between them (Fig. 148) while initially proposed to be a shield mount, has also been postulated to perhaps have formed part of a banner or standard, perhaps being held aloft during battle.[584]

Raw notes:

> Anglo-Saxon poets frequently refer to royal standards. In the old English exodus, Pharoah is described as *segncuning*, a king who owns a standard (*Exodus*, l. 172), the emperor Constantine has a *þuf* or *segn* raised in battle and sleeps beneath his *eofurcumbul*, his boar standard (*Elene* ll.76; 123-4). The most interesting example is the standard devised by Satan as a first stage in setting himself up as a rival to god; the procession of a *segn* and *side byrnan* clearly symbolises his move from retainer to *drihten* (*Soloman and Satan*, l. 454). Three standards are mentioned in *Beowulf* apart from that given to Beowulf by Hrothgar. Scyld's standard is placed in his funeral ship and must therefore be a personal item (*Beo*, l. 47), Hygelac's standard was probably captured together with his neck-ring after his death in Frisia (*Beo*, ll. 1202-14); it is impossible to know whether it was a national symbol or a personal one, since it could not be passed to his successor. The standard in the dragon's cave on the other hand, is clearly tribal possession rather than a personal one, for it forms part of the treasure of a whole race, buried by a man who is its sole survivor (*Beo*. ll. 2232-70, 2767-71) [585]

---

[582] Gannon, 2003: 72.
[583] Filmer-Sankey, 1996: 8.
[584] Leahy and Bland, 2014: 15-16; The suggestion of its use is at present only discussed on the webiste of the Staffordshire Hoard: http://www.staffordshirehoard.org.uk
[585] Raw, 1992: 172-3.

She argues that the standards that are frequently mentioned in the poetry are emphatically symbols of kingship although she distinguishes between symbols of the king as a person and standards of groups of people or 'national symbols'. She notes that the standard that Constantine sleeps under is an *eofurcumbul,* or a boar standard or symbol which is interesting due to the boars' supposed associations with Anglo-Saxon royalty discussed above.[586] If the Staffordshire Hoard mount, the gold schilling and two standards from Prittlewell and Sutton Hoo are considered together with the textual references that Raw notes, in addition to the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, it may well suggest that the standard was a common visual signifier of kingship in the seventh century. Bede's account could well provide an insight into the visual culture of Anglo-Saxon kingship at the time, without a full description of the king himself. The fact that these standards may have held colourful banners, which could have displayed motifs signifying additional kingly associations that are now lost, would further support this hypothesis.

3.7 Sceptre

The last object type commonly associated with kingship in Anglo-Saxon England is the sceptre, largely on the basis of the artefact generally known as the Sutton Hoo sceptre (Fig. 9) which was placed at the west end of the burial chamber, along with other potential signifiers of kinship, such as the standard and shield.[587] This large whetstone, measuring 23 inches without its metal fittings (32 inches inclusive of the fittings) with its cast bronze ring terminal and carved heads is a unique object in Anglo-Saxon England, but is nevertheless one that is potentially particularly fitting as a symbol of kingly authority. As Bruce-Mitford has noted, 'a giant whetstone would be a natural enough symbol for the power of a king, the giver and master of the swords of his war-band, the head of a fighting

---

[586] See above, section 3.2c.
[587] Bruce-Mitford, 1978: 246; Enright, 2006; Mortimer and Pollingtion, 2013; see above, section 1.2b.

213

elite in an heroic period'.[588] As has often been noted, this stone is materially similar to

those found in the boat graves at Vendel or the so-called royal mounds at Uppsala, but

these are all much smaller and worn showing evidence of use as sword and knife

sharpeners (Fig. 149).[589] There is also a large whetstone from a grave at the seventh

century cemetery in Uncleby (East Yorkshire) which Owen-Crocker suggested was in a

position next to the male skeleton so that it may have been suspended or held in a belt.

There is no indication of a method of suspension indicated and given its size of 18.5 inches

this seems impractical.[590] The excavations at Uncleby where 22 graves are cut into

prehistoric round barrow have not received much scholarly attention since they were

recorded by Mortimer in 1905, meaning that little of the grave context for this object is

known.[591] However, this object while comparable in size to that of the Sutton-Hoo sceptre

it bears no decoration or trace of paint.

The Sutton-Hoo sceptre remains unique, and while nothing like the Sutton Hoo

Sceptre is referred to in the literature of Anglo-Saxon England, with evidence of how it

might have been used, Bruce-Mitford argued that the Sutton Hoo sceptre may have been a

signifier of *bretwalda*-ship in Anglo-Saxon England, holding imperium over the disparate

kingdoms, in keeping with the popular although problematic suggestion that the burial at

Sutton Hoo is that of Rædwald.[592]

Whether this is indeed the case, the sceptre clearly recalls the form of imperial

sceptres depicted in late antique images of majesty and power, where they form part of the

established iconography of magisterial power: on the late antique consular diptychs, for

instance, that depict the consul enthroned and holding a short staff with an eagle terminal

---

[588] Bruce-Mitford, 1974: 6.
[589] Bruce-Mitford, 1974: 6-8.
[590] Owen-Crocker, 1976: 331; Geake, 1995: 51; www.yorkmuseumstrust.org.uk/collections/
ser:YORYM : 1947.344.
[591] https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1009387
[592] Bruce-Mitford, 1978: 347

resting on his knee (Fig.150).[593] Filmer-Sankey argued that the means of transmission of this image may not have been the diptychs, but rather may have ciculated on coins.[594] What ever the means of transmission the question as to whether the Sutton Hoo sceptre was used in an analogous manner remains unclear, but it is nevertheless an object that, being composed of a short staff topped by a brass terminal in the form of a creature, in this case the stag (Fig. 151), and possibly made to be supported on the knee, as indicated by the cup-shaped pedestal (Fig. 152), clearly recalls the form of the imperial sceptre depicted in late antiquity. It might suggest that the royal figure buried in Mound 1 at Sutton Hoo was consciously appropriating the attributes of imperial rule to articulate kinship, in the light of objects associated with high-status males (such as the whetstone), which, in this case was elaborated with carved terminals and the addition of a metal fitting.

3.8 Conclusion

Iconographies and signifiers of kingship are continually used and transformed throughout the Anglo-Saxon period, responding to the changing dynamics of the political landscape and the changing nature of kingship. New and synthesized iconographies formed into coherent means of visual recognition emphasized the notion of the militant king. The use of the helmet, standard and sceptre all have the possibility of representing the use of Roman military iconography in tandem with Anglo-Saxon ornamentation and decoration created a distinctively multi-valent visual culture. Forms that might be considered 'Roman' where deliberately transformed by using decorative styles from beyond the canonically Roman traditions, creating objects that display what might be argued as a deliberate juxtaposition of ideas, associations, or meanings.[595] The shoulder clasps at Sutton Hoo

---

[593] Such as two different ivory diptychs from the Consulate of Aerobindus c. 506, as illustrated in Aillagon and Umberto: 2008) 211, 411 Cat nos. II.16 IV.51; and also the dyptch of the consul Rufus Gennadius Orestes, 530 CE discussed by Filmer-Sankey, 1996: 5-10; Wood 1997: 111–127.
[594] Filmer-Sankey, 1996: 6.
[595] Contra Filmer-Sankey, 1996: 5-8.

exemplify this juxtaposition: they are objects that look like Roman military parade gear, but are decorated in an archetypically Anglo-Saxon manner. The clasps are decorated with *mille fiori cloisonné*, gold and garnet work and zoomorphic imagery.[596] Their form, however, visually evokes a Roman shoulder clasp, although they do not function as a clasp at all: rather, they are held in place by a series of pins on the reverse. These skeuomorphic representations of clasp thus maintain the appearance of their original function, but are instead an artefact of personal adornment, fashioned for their appearance and perhaps symbolic significance. While the clasps, arguably, retain their visual significance as 'Roman', the decoration is unmistakably not classical. It is this synthesis of iconographic traditions that creates an object that signifies the diversity of Anglo-Saxon art, and further creates a distinctive early medieval visual culture.

Overall, consideration of the types of objects commonly associated with kingship in the scholarship from the point of view of the literary, visual and archaeological evidence, suggests that some were indeed associated with kingship, albeit to varying degrees. There are other objects that might be considered as having kingly significance that have not been discussed here at length including many of those found at Sutton Hoo. These objects are ones that do not feature widely beyond there instance of finding, nor have they been singled out in the scholarship as being emblematic of kingship and this thesis is not a catalogue of what is contained in any individual burial. Rather the objects selected for inclusion in this study are those that the heroic narratives of early medieval kingship give special significance as well as having some material trace in the archaeological record. While some objects, such as rings, harps and swords, were not exclusively kingly, they nevertheless form part of the collection of possible objects that could comprise signifiers of kingship in their use and role within the rituals associated with royal culture. Other objects, such as standards and helmets, however, have more clearly defined links with kingly status

---

[596] Bruce-Mitford 1978: 523–535; 584–589.

and suggest a perceived need to make visible the figure of kings. These objects not only signify kingship, but also demonstrate the role and function of a king within a society, whether that is as leader of a war-band or head of feasting in the hall. All of these functions are related to the extant material culture and surviving literature.

The relationship between material culture and political power in Anglo-Saxon England emphasises the structure of society and the nature of itinerant kingship, displays of power and wealth being both portable and personal. They relate to how a king used the spaces he was associated with, and how he interacted with other members of society. The use of these objects within a burial context further accentuates their role in the life of a king, providing insight into how they related to both other grave goods and to the individual commemorated. Further, each object has a function, which created and actualised their significance and ability to signify meaning and position, the role of the object innately referring to role of the person or persons who owned and used them.

The role of such kingly objects within Anglo-Saxon England is not only evidenced by their survival within the archaeological record, but also by the way in which they are recorded within Old English texts, and to a lesser extent in the visual record. While there are few images – if any – depicting helmets, swords, rings, harps, standards and sceptres in secular contexts in the carvings, coinage and manuscript miniatures, the documentary and poetic accounts attest to the significance and relationships that these objects had in Anglo-Saxon England and, moreover, their ability to convey socio-political standing. No object individually signifies kingship, rather it is the collection of signifiers and the method of decoration that provides insight into how kingship was visualised/made visible in Anglo-Saxon England.

CHAPTER 4

BIBLICAL KINGS

4.1 Introduction

Having examined the material and vernacular literary evidence relating to the appearance
and presentation of kings and rulers in Anglo-Saxon England, a process that has revealed
an absence of specifically visible 'kingly' or 'regal' attributes, but which has suggested
various ways in which the presence of such figures might be identified or signalled, it is
now worth turning to consider the ways in which kings were presented in Christian
contexts: namely, in the Christian art produced in the region during the early medieval
period, and the exegetical associations underpinning these representations. This will
involve examining both the visual appearance of such figures—primarily the Old
Testament king, David, the Magi and Christ himself—and the various ways in which they
were conceptualised, theologically in their role as king. This may, in turn shed further light
on the way those wielding the power and authority of kingship in Anglo-Saxon England
might have been perceived.

This chapter will rely heavily on ecclesiastical sculpture that is a medium that
survives in a deeply fragmented state throughout England and the wider Insular world.[597]
Due to this fragmentation and wear some images are difficult to interpret and some suffer
such extreme weathering that images of these objects inadequately illustrates the scenes
(C.f. Masham). Sculpture is a uniquely important medium for the study of the church in
Anglo-Saxon England, and the wider Insular world, however the sculpture is not always
afforded consideration out side of the strict boundaries of its Christian imagery and
ecclesiastical settings. However, as will be demonstrated when considered in light of the

---

[597] See CASSS, v.1-15; See also Collingwood, 1927; Kendrick, 1949; Hawkes, 1989; Bailey, 1996.

preceding chapters, the material culture present on these monumental sculptures may shed light on how kingship is signified and visualised in Anglo-Saxon England.

4.2 Visualisations of the Magi

The Magi are clearly presented in biblical narrative in Matthew's account of the birth and infancy of Christ (Matt. 2:1-12), which recounts the appearance of the star in Bethlehem, the arrival of the 'wise men from the East' (*magi ab oriente*), their encounter with Herod and adoration of the Christ Child, the 'answer received in their sleep' (*responso accepto in somnis*) that they should avoid revisiting Herod, and the return 'to their country' (*in regionem suam*).[598] Nowhere does this account refer to the Magi as kings, however; rather they are wise men. Nevertheless, by the time Tertullian (*c.* 155-*c.* 240) was writing in the second century they had come to be linked with the kings cited in Psalm 71/2:10 who offer gifts to Solomon ('The kings of Tharsis and the islands, shall offer presents; the kings of the Arabians and of Saba shall bring him gifts: and all the kings of the earth shall adore him')[599]—Solomon himself being the wisest of earthly kings—as a foreshadowing of the adoration due the Christ Child.[600]

Despite the biblical account therefore, the Magi were understood by the early medieval period to be kingly figures whose defining characteristic was their wisdom; it

---

[598] Cum ergo natus esset Iesus in Bethleem Iudaeae in diebus Herodis regis ecce magi ab oriente venerunt Hierosolymam dicentes ubi est qui natus est rex Iudaeorum vidimus enim stellam eius in oriente et venimus adorare eum audiens autem Herodes rex turbatus est et omnis Hierosolyma cum illo et congregans omnes principes sacerdotum et scribas populi sciscitabatur ab eis ubi Christus nasceretur at illi dixerunt ei in Bethleem Iudaeae sic enim scriptum est per prophetam et tu Bethleem terra Iuda nequaquam minima es in principibus Iuda ex te enim exiet dux qui reget populum meum Israhel, tunc Herodes clam vocatis magis diligenter didicit ab eis tempus stellae quae apparuit eis et mittens illos in Bethleem dixit ite et interrogate diligenter de puero et cum inveneritis renuntiate mihi ut et ego veniens adorem eum qui cum audissent regem abierunt et ecce stella quam viderant in oriente antecedebat eos usque dum veniens staret supra ubi erat puer videntes autem stellam gavisi sunt gaudio magno valde et intrantes domum invenerunt puerum cum Maria matre eius et procidentes adoraverunt eum et apertis thesauris suis obtulerunt ei munera aurum tus et murram et responso accepto in somnis ne redirent ad Herodem per aliam viam reversi sunt in regionem suam.

[599] Reges Tharsis et insulae munera offerent reges Arabum et Saba dona adducent.

[600] For Tertullian, see *Adv. Marcion* III, xiii (Roberts and Donaldson, 1868); For full account see, Schiller, 1971, vol. 1: 94-113.

was this that enabled them both to recognise the divine nature of the Christ Child, and to perform the appropriate act of adoration (and gift-giving) when encountering him. In an Anglo-Saxon context it may also have been relevant that they were understood to be exemplars of the Gentiles (while the Shepherds who also adored the Child in Bethlehem were understood to represent the Jews who recognised the divine nature of Christ).[601]

In the corpus of early Christian art the Magi were early established, initially in funerary contexts: in the catacombs in both frescos and on the marble slabs sealing the *loculi*, such as the frescoes in Catacomb of Priscilla (Fig. 154), in Rome (third-century), or that of Marcus and Marcellianus (Fig.155) (fourth-century) and the marble slab from the Catacomb of Priscilla (Fig. 156),[602] and on sarcophagi of third- and fourth-century date, many of which are preserved in the Vatican Museum.[603] In these instances they are depicted as three figures in Phrygian dress composed of a cloth cap, short tunic, leggings and a short cloak fastened by a single brooch, an outfit well-established in the art of late antiquity to denote those from beyond the frontiers of the Empire, often those taken in battle as on the third-century Arch of Septimius Severus in Rome, dedicated in 203 (Fig. 156).[604] As such the Magi tend to be undifferentiated,[605] although by the fifth century in the mosaics at Sta Maria Maggiore in Rome, 432-40 (Fig. 157) their Phyrigian dress is differentiated by colour and motif—a feature also found in the slightly later mosaics of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna, 504 (Fig. 158), where they are further differentiated

---

[601] See Schiller, 1971, vol 1: 95; and Hawkes, 2002: 31-34; Hawkes, unpublished PhD Thesis, 1989.

[602] Mancinelli, 1981.

[603] E.g. Panel from a fourth-century sarcophagus from the cemetery of St. Agnes, Rome. Location: Vatican Museums: Museo pio christiano (Inv. 31459).

[604] See, e.g. Grabar, 1968; Matthews, 1993; as the motif was so well established in the art of late antiquity to denote those from 'outside' the Roman world, it was easily appropriated to denote those 'from the east' in early Christian art and is unlikely to have indicated that the Magi were subservient as Matthews has suggested.

[605] See also the sixth-century ivory now in the British Museum, or the eighth-century panel from the Werden Casket in the V&A, where the Magi are undifferentiated (Williamson, 2010: 156-158 , cat. no. 38); it is likely that in this medium, as in stone, colour would need to be added to differentiate the Magi as was done in the mosaics of Rome and Ravenna

by their beards and the names Balthassar, Melchior and Caspar, who are given the appellation of saints. All these early depictions of the Magi, however, whether differentiated or not, do not employ kingly signifiers to represent them; rather their exoticism is emphasised by their dress, and in particular the Phrygian cap. It was only in the twelfth century that crowns were introduced to the iconography of the scheme, ensuring visual identification of the Magi as kings.[606] Before this date, however, the Magi were illustrated in Anglo-Saxon England, albeit rarely: on the early eighth-century Franks Casket and the early ninth-century northern Sandbach cross.

4.2a Franks Casket

On the Franks casket (Fig. 164), a whale bone bow of indeterminate use decorated with intricate carving on five sides, the Magi are clearly identified as such by an incised runic inscription, and are shown approaching the Virgin and Child in profile (in keeping with the dominant iconographic tradition circulating in the Christian art of Western Europe),[607] and presenting their gifts. The Magi themselves have not received much scholarly attention beyond their outfits (comprising short cloaks fastened by a single brooch, short tunics and leggings), which have been identified as representing typical Saxon dress and is largely indistinguishable from other figures on the Casket,[608] but which are all items of clothing that happen to coincide with the long-established features of Phrygian costume as depicted in early Christian art more generally.

The first scholarly assessment of the scene, by Souers in 1937 considered the formal arrangement of the scene and the nature of the influence and models used in its composition. He considered it a conventional picture, but at the same time claimed that:

> It does not belong to the [early Christian] tradition, and no suggestion to explain its presence has been satisfactory. Aside from the bird, the

---

[606] Schiller, 1971, vol 1: 95.
[607] Schiller, 1971, vol 1: 15-22.
[608] Owen Crocker, 2004: 187-8; Webster 2012: 33-35.

Adoration on the casket looks forward to Carolingian art rather than backward to the early art either of Syria or the Greek cities. It shows, if the dating of the casket is correct, the modified Hellenistic formula in existence two hundred years before it became common![609]

Souers thus presented the image on the casket as an anomaly that needs further explanation of the reasons lying behind its apparent inconsistencies when considered within the context of early Christian art. The most apparent of these include the unique nature of the gifts presented by the Magi, and the way the Child is presented as a bust in a medallion set over the breast of the Virgin who is also depicted as bust-length, the two of them being placed over a series of pellets and framed by an arch. However, the object itself has no immediate contemporary comparanda, the clearest parallel, in the construction and layout of the decoration of the casket, being identified as the fourth-century Brescia casket (Fig. 160);[610] it is therefore not surprising that formal analysis of an individual panel does not provide a clear explanation of its art historical sources.

The closest parallel for the unique presentation of the Child as a bust within a medallion can likely be identified with the seventh- and eighth-century iconography of the Virgin and Child which was being produced in Rome – at Sta Maria Antiqua and Sta Sabina (Figs 161-162), and which may also have been produced in Anglo-Saxon England at Deerhurst, Gloucestershire in the eighth century (Fig. 163).[611] If this is the case it clearly indicates that such a model-type was abbreviated to present both Mother and Child as bust-length. It might follow from this that the adaptation of an icon-type image of the Virgin and Child that the figures of the Magi (appropriately labelled), were added to this element to create a version of the Adoration of the Magi specifically for the Casket. If this were indeed the case it would explain why the Magi might hold gifts unique in the corpus of such objects in the early Christian iconography of the Adoration. These comprise two cups (given by the first two Magi) and a twisted stick presented by the third. The first cup seems

---

[609] Souers, 1937: 254.
[610] Webster, 1982: 20-31Webster, 1999: 227-230; Webster, 2012: 30-33.
[611] Bailey, 2005: 9.

to be filled with individual coins and has been suggested by Webster to have been intended to depict gold, while the second emits a series of curved lines which Webster has explained as steam, representing the odour of frankincense; the twisted stick has been identified as the thorny myrrh tree.[612] The idea that the scheme was deliberately adapted to depict the Adoration of the Magi would also explain the apparent 'Anglo-Saxon' nature of their dress, despite the fact that they share the brooch-fasted short cloak or cape, the short tunic and leggings with the Phrygian outfit. Here it is notable that the Franks Casket version of these three figures does not depict them wearing the cloth cap so characteristic of Phrygian dress.

Turning to consider their garments in more detail, Owen-Crocker has postulated that these might have been regarded as comprising high status dress.[613] They are certainly identifiable with the garments worn by Æthelstan in the (ostensibly) earliest portrait of an Anglo-Saxon king, *c.* 930 (Fig. 2),[614] suggesting that if these garments were worn by high status individuals, it is a style of dress that was worn for a number of centuries. Owen-Crocker does not mention the circular element that holds the cloaks of the Magi on the Casket Magi, which can be interpreted as a brooch, but this is included among the accoutrements worn by Æthelstan, albeit as a smaller and less prominent detail. Other figures on the casket, such as the fugitives fleeing Jerusalem on the back panel, also wear brooches fastening their cloaks (Fig. 164), but none are as large and nor are they displayed as a regular feature of the costumes worn as they are for those of the Magi. In this respect, it may be that the brooches worn by the Magi on the eighth-century Casket were intended to be viewed as elaborate brooches analogous to those found in seventh to eighth century high status burials in the wider archaeological record (figs 165-166)[615] – distinguishing

---

[612] Webster, 2012: 33.
[613] Owen-Crocker, 2004: 169.
[614] See Chapter 1
[615] E.g Wingham Cemetery: BM1879,0524.34; King's Field Cemetery: BM.1037.'70; BM 1041.'70: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online

them from smaller brooches in other burials which could also be made from less valuable metals.[616] In the tenth century circular brooches were still in fashion, as evidenced by the smaller version illustrated in the Æthelstan portrait and the Fuller Brooch (*c.*850) (Figs 2, 167).[617] If this is the case, the brooches featured on the Franks Casket may have been a method of displaying wealth and status, and the high, if not kingly status of the Magi.[618]

In the light of this, it is worth noting that the Casket has long been recognised as articulating the theme of kingship among the many such themes and readings informing its iconography.[619] Thus, the Romulus and Remus panel (Figs. 168), and the potential Hengst and Horsa scene (Fig.169) as argued by Bouman and d'Ardenne to inform the unidentified panel on the right side of the Casket,[620] perhaps indicate political foundation myths; examples of good and bad kingship are presented by the figures of King Niðhad (implied by the Weland scene, Fig. 170), and Christ with the Magi on the front panel, the enthroned figure on the back proclaiming judgment, while the top panel with the unknown Egil scene (Fig. 43) might suggest the role of the warrior-king defending the enclosure. Such readings may well explain the way in which the scene of the Magi was intended to be understood, and how they were to be recognised. Furthermore, their identity is given in an inscription, the only incised one on the casket (the others being rendered in high relief), which was probably intended to highlight the Magi as particularly emblemati*c.* Overall, the Franks Casket seems to provide a rare and early depiction of kingly figures in Anglo-Saxon England, and within this overall iconographic programme the Magi are presented in the

---

[616] E.g Suchas as these two single finds from the PAS: NARC-E11208 (https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/460435) NCL-771FB5 (https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/197439)

[617] Fuller Brooch BM.1952,0404.1 http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online

[618] Two of the Magi figures have obvious facial hair, which has been argued to be an indication of status. There has long since been an association of facial hair with the Merovingian court, and it is postulated that this was also a social signifier in the Early Middle ages.

[619] See Webster 1999; Webster, 2012.

[620] Bouman, 1965; d'Ardenne, 1966; Although Webster argues that the scene is an unidentifed aspect of a horse cult myth, but also suggest that it could be a deliberate juxtaposition to the Roman foundation myth. Webster, 2012: 91.

traditional kingly act of gift giving while their personal adornment emphasises their high social status, and their recognition of the enthroned Christ – of the divine made human – speaks to the expectation of wisdom among those in positions of power and authority. In the absence of an established iconography that depicted the Magi as kings, and in the likely absence of an image of the Adoration of the Magi, the biblical figures have been presented very much in keeping with the traditions associated with Anglo-Saxon kings.

4.2b The Northern Sandbach Cross

The other extant depiction of the Magi in Anglo-Saxon England is found on the early ninth-century North Cross in the Market Place at Sandbach (Fig. 171).[621] On the east face in the uppermost extant panel is a figure enthroned in an architectural niche holding another smaller figure on her knees; on the right are three bust-length figures enclosed in individual niches, each presenting an object towards the two figures on the left, with the uppermost figure being upside down. Together, these have been interpreted by Hawkes as having been compiled to depict the Virgin and Child being presented by the gifts of the three Magi in a unique representation of the Adoration of the Magi.[622] Hawkes suggests that the arrangement of the figures, including the upside down Magi, and the unusual bust depiction is due to the vertical nature of the stone cross, as well as the need to truncate the iconography to fit within the panelled arrangement of the cross. The upside down magi would be presenting his gift above the head and canopy of the Virgin and Child scene if he were placed upright; the inversion results in the gift still being presented to the recipient. The gifts, unlike those on the Casket, however, are not individualised and do not appear to replicate any other depiction of the Magi's gifts extant in the corpus of Christian art; rather they take the form of scrolls. Hawkes argues that this is due to their being based on the

---

[621] Hawkes, 2002; Bailey, 2010: 101-104
[622] Hawkes, 2002:30-8.

figural model used across the Cross, brought together with an image of the Virgin and Child, to create a scheme depicting the Adoration.

Due to the weathered and fragmented nature of monument the details of the scheme are not clear, but a thin double line that follows the profile of the back of the skull on each of the Magi is clearly present. While there are various possible explanations for this feature, such as a profile halo or a remnant of the Phrygian cap,[623] Hawkes has postulated (on the basis of numismatic iconographies), that the detail may represent a form of kingly headdress.[624] She further suggests that this may have represented a helmet—the so-called '*cynehelm*' of Mercian sceattas which portray kingly figures with a similar profile (Fig. 114).[625] As has been discussed,[626] the helmet is arguably a distinctive signifier of kingship in Anglo-Saxon England. While Hawkes argues for an ultimately late antique influence, and situates this depiction within early Christian traditions with allusions to Lombardic and early Carolingian arts, this element might demonstrate a local secular influence in the depictions of the biblical kings. If this is indeed the case, Hawkes' suggestion that this form of head dress is being invoked in this particular depiction of the Magi demonstrates that the visual language of kingship in Anglo-Saxon England might well have informed this adaptation of Christian imagery in keeping with the material culture of the secular elite. As on the Franks Casket, the Magi depicted on the Sandbach Cross not only depict the biblical kings in keeping with early Christian visual traditions, but they also speak to Anglo-Saxon kingship, enabling the figures to apparently appear more kingly to local viewers.

---

[623] Hawkes, 2002: 33-34.
[624] Hawkes, 2002: 33
[625] Metcalf, 1977:89-90; see also Nelson, 1980:45-6
[626] See Chapter 2.

4.3 Visualisations of David

There has been much discussion of the iconography of the Old Testament king, David, whose exploits are set out in the biblical books of I Samuel, II Samuel, I Kings and I Chronicles. By means of this extensive narrative Bailey has summarised the rich set of associations which established David not simply as Christ's ancestor:

> His kingdom on earth foreshadowed that of Christ in heaven; his anointment by Samuel foreshadowed Christ's baptism by John; his struggle with the lion was a type of Christ's struggle with the Devil. His psalms were directly inspired by God, and whilst his words may have been applicable to a historical Old Testament situation, they were also, as every thoughtful Christian realised, the words of Christ and his Church living under the New Covenant.[627]

Given this, it is not surprising that images of David are well represented in the extant art of Anglo-Saxon England, with many articulated in such a way that it is clear ideas of kingship relevant to the period and region were being deliberately presented.

4.3a David Anointed King

One of the first episodes of David's life that might be considered as depicting a type of kingship is that of David being anointed by Samuel. This scene is potentially depicted twice within the corpus of Anglo-Saxon art. The first depiction is in the St Petersburg Bede (Fig. 104), a late eighth- or early ninth-century fly-leaf from the Anglo-Saxon manuscript containing *Carmina* by Paulinus of Nola, now preserved in the St Petersburg Bede (formally Leningrad Bede),[628] which portrays the scene with little ambiguity, labelling each of the figures as 'David' and 'Samuel *profeta.*' David stands on the left-hand side, with knees bent and his right hand stretched out towards Samuel who has his right hand raised and clutching a horn. David is bearded with curled hair, which given early Christian and continental parallels, is at odds with the traditions of depicting David as a young man

---

[627] Bailey, 1978: 5.
[628] St Petersburg: Russian National Library, Cod. Lat. Q.v.XIV.1, fol. 1r; Alexander, 1978: 65-66.

at the anointing.[629] Nevertheless, the curled hair is very similar to the hairstyle adopted by David in the two depictions in the Durham Cassiodorus (Figs 53-54), which will be discussed further below. Between the two figures is a bust length figure, which Alexander has argued was added later, being drawn by a different hand in a different style.[630]

The only other scene of Samuel Anointing David that seems to have survived in Anglo-Saxon England has been identified by Elizabeth Alexander on a cross-shaft fragment at Breedon-on-the-Hill in Leicestershire (Fig.172).[631] It has been previously proposed by Bailey as depicting the Sacrifice of Isaac.[632] Elizabeth Alexander, however, citing early Christian examples, explains the scene as an Anointing on the basis of the presence of a horn held out by one figure while the other gestures towards it.[633] Whether this identification can be upheld, the Anointing of David depicts the moment at which David, divinely selected, is established as the future king of God's Chosen People.[634]

This type of kingship is different to that presented in the more war-like scenes of David and Goliath. It is, in fact, a distinct type of kingship that, while not foreign to Anglo-Saxon England, is not necessarily typical to the region.

4.3b David and Goliath

The depiction of David and Goliath is equally rare but has some particular relevance to how kingship may have been understood to be signified in Anglo-Saxon England. The St Petersburg Bede Anointing scene is directly paired with a depiction below of the boy David slaying Goliath (Fig. 102) who, as noted, wears a helmet bears a remarkable similarity to the extant helmets from seventh- and eighth-century Anglo-Saxon England,

---

[629] See e.g., St Gall: Stiftsbibliothek, cod. sang. 22, fol. 59; New York: Metropolitan Museum 17.190.398; Monasterboice, Co. Louth (Tall Cross): Harbison, 1992: 85.
[630] Alexander, 1978: 65-66; Story, 2003: 263.
[631] Elizabeth Alexander, unpublished thesis, forthcoming.
[632] Bailey 1980, 172–4.
[633] Alexander, forthcoming; I am grateful to Elizabeth Alexander for sharing her research with me and discussing this subject.
[634] I Samuel 16: 1-13.

primarily due to the animal that is placed on top; it is this that recalls the boars on the Benty Grange and Pioneer helmet (Figs 94-96).[635] The figure of David again is on the right hand side, portrayed with a beard and the characteristic curls; his beard, however, differs distinctly from that of the crumpled figure of Goliath, David having close-shaven stubble while Goliath sports a long manicured moustache and pointed beard. The figures of David and Goliath occupy about the same amount of space on the page, but the larger size of Goliath is indicated by his folded stature, his legs bent and spine bowed towards David.

Given the rarity of such depictions it has, not surprisingly, attracted considerable scholarly attention, often in regards to the evidence of anointing in Anglo-Saxon England.[636] Story's reading of the image as presenting a Christian king (David) overcoming a helmeted pagan villain (Goliath), in keeping with Christianised and continental kingship.[637] The pairing of the anointing and the defeat of Goliath was likely intended to present two types of kingship (one anointed by God and the other won in battle) through the inclusion of the specific type of helmet depicted. This depiction from eighth-century Northumbria clearly reflects attributes inherent to Anglo-Saxon kingship while simultaneously highlighting aspects of biblical kingship that coincide with contemporary and more local and traditional understandings of authority and ruler-ship.

Elizabeth Alexander also discusses the only other surviving David and Goliath scene from Anglo-Saxon England: that on a cross shaft fragment at Newent in Gloucestershire (Fig.173). This shares with the manuscript image the crumpled pose of the giant and David using Goliath's sword, in this case to decapitate him; it does not, however, preserve the other details so redolent of Anglo-Saxon material culture included in the St Petersburg drawing; on the cross-shaft Goliath is depicted with a spear but lacks the helmet. The survival of these two scenes in two different media suggests, on the one hand,

---

[635] See above, Chapter 2.
[636] Nelson, 1986: 309-328; Story, 2003: 261-272; Alexander, forthcoming.
[637] Story, 2003: 263-65; See above Chapter 2.

that the iconography of the event may have been circulating quite widely in Anglo-Saxon England. It also implies that the scene in the St Petersburg Bede was perhaps deliberately adapted to emphasise ideas central to kingship in Anglo-Saxon England.

The St Petersburg Bede certainly presents on a single folio a pairing of kingly images that reflect two different aspects of kingship. The upper image of an anointing articulates the divine nature of kingly authority, while the lower image details a warrior kingship current in Anglo-Saxon society. The helmet and sword handled by David have distinctive meanings and associations and it seems that these are deliberately alluded to in the way the image has been composed. In this respect it is worth considering how the pairing of these two images might reflect the text of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* with which they are associated.

As has been set out, Bede discusses warring kings as well as kings inspired by a divine plan in his *History*;[638] these two notions represent the idealisation of the fight for Christianity, and how this biblical association prefigures the conversion of the English, which Bede sets out as part of his discussion of the Ages of Man, a teleological process that would lead to the Second Coming.[639] This extended prefiguration and refiguring of biblical narratives, emphasises the concept of embattled Christian kingship and those that they combat as participants in a pre-ordained narrative. It is this conceptualisation of kingship that is articulated by the images of David, and the way in which they are presented makes it clear that the kings of the present day were understood within this context. The battle against Goliath can be imagined both as Christ warring against the devil *and* any contemporary (Christian) king's fight against (by definition, wrongful) opposition. Thus the figures identified as David and Goliath might just as easily be viewed as Oswiu at Winwead, fighting against Penda and the struggle to convert the Anglo-Saxons. These

---

[638] See above Chapter 1.
[639] Darby, 2013; Wallis and Darby, 2014; I am greatful to Peter Darby for discussions on this topic.

images function not only to recall the subject matter presented but also contemporary concerns. The use of distinctively Anglo-Saxon material culture, that bears with it a host of distinctive iconographic and social implications for those viewing the object, only serves to further signify a particular type of kingly associations; these must reflect contemporary ideas of kingship, both in terms of how it is signified and how it functions. The imaging of David, as representative of all types of kingship serves as a visual foil against which to define kingship and measure notions of good and bad kingship in an idealised format.

4.3c David Dictating the Psalms

In addition to depicting the divine anointing of David and his prowess in battle, as exemplified by the Anointing and Goliath scenes, the single most common depiction of David in Anglo-Saxon England, and elsewhere, is that of David as the Psalmist.[640] The Psalms were well known in the early medieval period, being, next to the gospels, the single most frequently copied text, with the Psalter as a manuscript book thought to have been developed in the Insular world.[641] It is thus unsurprising that the image of David as the Psalmist was so popular. However, if this image is also considered as depicting a type of kingship, it is interesting to note that this early Christian iconographic type struck a resonance with the material culture of Anglo-Saxon England. David, depicted with his harp, finds an easy parallel within hall culture.

The eighth-century Vespasian Psalter[642] includes a large portrait miniature of David accompanied by his musicians (Fig. 57), which is iconographically similar to that found on the early ninth-century Masham Column in Yorkshire (Figs 143). The depiction presents David, centrally placed under a canopied arch. As the largest figure of the group he

---

[640] For examples of these scenes in Scotland see e.g. Dupplin Cross, Perthshire, St. Martin's Cross, Iona (RCAHMS); in Ireland, see e.g. South Cross, Castledermot, Co. Clare and Muridach's Cross, Monasterboice, Co. Louth; Harbison, 1992.
[641] Brown, 2007: 52-54.
[642] London: British Library Cotton MS Vespasian A.i., f. 30v-31r

dominates those surrounding him: musicians playing different instruments and dancers clapping. David himself is seated on a plain backed throne holding a square shaped harp, like those found at Sutton Hoo, Taplow and Prittlewell (Figs 138-142),[643] which clearly indicates that viewers of the image would likely have associated the figure with contemporary activities in the hall. The arch under which David is enthroned is decorated, not only with geometric motifs, such as key pattern and spirals, but also with four bestial roundels, the two at the base featuring confronting animal motifs, and the two above containing birds. Within the context of Christian art, and given the associations of David with Christ,[644] this pairing of creatures flanking the figure of David enthroned within a hall-like setting may well have been understood to express themes of recognition (in keeping with the Canticle of Habbakuk, recited at Lauds along with the Psalms, that refers to the divine and kingly nature of Christ being recognised in the midst of two beasts).[645] The scene overall clearly presents David, nimbed, as the ideal (kingly) psalmist.

The column at Masham (Fig.143) has been thoroughly discussed in the scholarship, in terms of both its Old Testament imagery, and the ways in which it expresses *Romanitas*.[646] What is of interest here is the figures of both David and Christ. Considering the image of David it is worth noting that the iconographic scheme of David Accompanied by Musicians is distinct from that of David the Psalmist, which features the Old Testament figure alone, seated in profile, or accompanied by only one or two musicians who face him, also in profile. This latter iconographic type is common elsewhere in the Insular world, on St Martin's Cross on Iona for instance (Fig. 174),[647] and focuses primarily on David in his role as Psalmist. Accompanied by musicians and dancers, and arranged in the

---

[643] See above, section 3.5.
[644] See further below (section 4.3 and 4.4)
[645] "In Medio duorum animalium innotesceris / Dum adpropiaverint ann cognoceris", which translates as, 'In the midst of two animals you will be recognised / When the years come to pass you will be known. For full discussion, see Ó Carragáin, 2005: 201-210
[646] Lang, 2002:168-171; Hawkes, 2002: 337-348; Hawkes, 2003: 69-100.
[647] RCAHMS, Argyll, 1984: 42; Roe, 1949: 39-59; Henderson, 1986: 87-123; Hawkes, 2005: 259-275.

so-called *aulic* setting with the figure of David dominating the scene,[648] the scheme featured in the Vespasian Psalter and at Masham however, was intended to focus on the process informing the composition of the Psalms. It thus presents David as divinely inspired (the aspect underlined by the dancers), and passing on the words and music given by God to the scribes and musicians—aspects retained in every celebration of the liturgy. It is the scheme that was widely illustrated in later Carolingian manuscript art.[649] Thus, at Masham David, although in profile, is enlarged and accompanied, as in the Psalter, by the smaller figures of a second harpist, a scribe and a dancer. Again, David holds a square harp similar to those from the Anglo-Saxon archaeological record.

Of further interest here is the fact that both David and Christ on the Masham column are seated on thrones (Fig. 143-144; 175). They differ from one another in that David's throne is seen in profile and Christ's is seen from the front, but both seem to have been high-backed: David's clearly preserves the outline of the back with curved terminals and while damage to the upper register of the column means it is not possible to discern the upper portion of Christ or his throne, from what does remain it seems that it had a back that extends up each side of his torso. The figure of Christ articulated in this manner is flanked by the twelve apostles, standing in pairs on either side of him and encircling the column in a scheme established early in Christian art to articulate Christ enthroned in majesty, accompanied by his apostles.[650] By this means David, in the context of the column, is clearly presented, not simply as psalmist, but as king, and this role is highlighted not just by means of iconographic elements associated with schemes of David Accompanied by Musicians, but by the way these same elements would have been understood in Anglo-Saxon England as signifying kingship.

---

[648] Wright, 1967: 1-36.
[649] Hawkes, 2011: 35
[650] Hawkes, 2002: 337-348.

Indeed, it is these very elements (and only these elements) that are included in the seventh-century Durham Cassiodorus depiction of David as psalmist, which depicts him frontally enthroned with a harp, facing Psalm 51 (Fig. 54); it is the only extant image of David enthroned, without accompanying figures—not only in Anglo-Saxon England, but within the corpus of extant early Christian art. [651] It has been argued by Elizabeth Alexander that by showing David face on the artist of the Durham Cassiodorus deliberately intended to present parallel representations of David and Christ in Majesty, associations clear at Masham. In the manuscript, however, they are presented by means of a single image of David with his harp and emphasised by the dots and circles filling the background that have been explained as representing the cosmos, and so can be understood to refer specifically to Christ as heavenly ruler. This Christological set of associations is familiar in the exegetical literature, with Augustine, for instance, discussing the manner in which David foreshadowed the king of kings:

> In David God was foreshadowing a reign of eternal salvation, and he had chosen David to abide forever in his posterity. Our King, the King of the ages, with whom we shall reign eternally, was descended from David according to the flesh.[652]

As noted, the enthroned figure in the Durham Cassiodorus includes two key objects pertaining to kingship in Anglo-Saxon England: the throne and the harp – objects that also play a distinctive role in the context of the early Christian iconographic traditions relating to David. As with the other images surviving from Anglo-Saxon England, however, the biblical king, David, accompanied by these items represents kingship not only as a biblical ideal but also as culturally relevant. The throne featured in the manuscript, with its animal-head terminals is particularly redolent of thrones associated with ecclesiastical power in

---

[651] See Alexander, forthcoming; see further, North and South crosses at Castledermot, Co. Kildare; Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly in Harbison, 1992; and St Oran's Cross at Iona, Inner Hebrides; Dupplin, Perthshire. (RCHAMS)

[652] Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*: in quo Deus praefigurabat regnum salutis aeternae, et qeum Deus elegerat permansurum in semine suo; quandoquidem futurus erat rex noster, rex saeculorum cum quo regnaturi sumus in aeternum, ex semine ipsius dauid secundum carne. (Dekkers and Fraipont, 1963: 475; Boulding and Rotelle (trans), v. 3, 2001: 13)

the region, recalling the bishops' -*stols* (such as those from both Monkwearmouth and Lastingham, Figs 34-35), as well as the literary (and potentially *aulic*) settings current in Anglo-Saxon England. The Cassiodorus David is thus both the biblical king and a king of the Anglo-Saxons; it conflates early Christian iconographies with elements characteristic of Anglo-Saxon signifiers of kingship. Again, it is the squared harp that he holds, the very type of harp that would have been used in Anglo-Saxon England.

This manuscript, however, was not likely associated with royal contexts; this might beg the question of why consideration of secular kingship could be deemed relevant in relationship with the image of David enthroned – over and above the close relationship that existed between royal secular and ecclesiastical centres throughout the period.[653] Nevertheless, although the manuscript will have emerged from an unidentified Northumbrian ecclesiastical setting (as did most manuscripts in this period),[654] and will have served a scholarly theological purpose, containing as it does Cassiodorus' commentary on the Psalms, the manner in which David has been presented (apparently uniquely) as 'king' has been achieved in such a way that makes such references clear within a contemporary Anglo-Saxon setting, suggesting that it was intended to denote kingship in an abstract and potentially universal manner, as opposed to representing any individual king: be that Christ, David or a ruler of Anglo-Saxon Northumbria. It has been composed so that all can be recognised within the one image.

The potential multivalency of such portrayals raises interesting questions in relation to the tenth-century image preserved on one of the cross-shaft fragments from St Alkmund's in Derby (Fig. 44). Identified as a seated male figure with a harp this image might most easily be identified as the Old Testament king, David. In this context, however, the presence of the sword is problematic. No other image of David with a harp *and* sword

---

[653] See Rollason, 1982; Wormald, 1983; Thacker, 1985; Mayr-Harting, 1987; Yorke, 1990; Higham, 1997.
[654] Brown, 2007: 52, 59.

has been preserved in the extensive corpus of Davidic images in early Christian and medieval art, implying that such an explanation might be debateable at best.[655] At Masham – as elsewhere – the profile figure enthroned with a harp has been universally accepted as depicting David. There is no other (conflicting) attribute and so this is the only reading possible. In a sense the presence of the harp equates with, or becomes *the* signifier of, David. And at Masham, and in other sculptural and manuscript contexts, this (essentially unproblematic) identification is underlined by association with other Old Testament scenes. When turning to the St Alkmund's figure, however, no such context has survived, if indeed it was ever present. Yet if the harp is so inseparable, iconographically, from David its presence on the Derby stone should enable identification of the figure as David; after all, the figure is seated in profile with a harp. Admittedly, the seat is not the high-backed throne featured at Masham, but it is clearly depicted as a stool, and as such is identifiable perhaps with the *-stol* featured in literary accounts of the king in his hall.

It is, in fact, the presence of the sword that problematizes the identification. While the harp may be inextricably associated with David, the presence of a harp *and* sword makes it difficult, if not impossible, to identify the figure simply as the Old Testament king. Nevertheless, as has been demonstrated, there are images of David with a sword: at Newent and in the St Petersburg Bede where David, fighting Goliath seizes the sword to make his final stroke, taking Goliath's own sword and decapitating him. This, as has been argued, was probably done in a conscious effort to reflect Anglo-Saxon ideals of kingship. Considered in this light the St Alkmund's figure might also be seen as conflating two aspects of kingship—here, in the one image. It perhaps amalgamates concepts that, in the manuscript, were expressed by means of paired images. This might suggest that the image was intended to be understood as presenting a Davidic scene depicting the two

---

[655] Hourihane, 2002.

predominate aspects of Davidic kingship: the victorious warrior and the generous, wise ruler in the hall enthroned with his harp.

Supporting this hypothesis is the fact that images of kings or emperors have survived from the ninth century onwards that show them enthroned with a sword, which might suggest a source of iconographic influence: the ninth-century miniature of Lothair, for instance (Fig. 65);[656] or the ninth-century Utrecht Psalter illustration of Psalm 151 which depicts a king (probably Saul) with a sword (Fig. 68).[657] On the one hand, the Derby stone presents an image of a kingly figure that includes signifiers of kingship such as the stool (*cynestol*), the harp, associated with David, and a sword the symbol of a warrior king that was articulated visually in high-status manuscript art of the ninth century. All three of these attributes might therefore have been combined to suggest broad kingly frames of reference, a consideration that gains credence when the panel is viewed in the light of the other images on the cross-shaft, which include a Rider figure (Fig. 79).

If this explanation of the St Alkmund's figure can be accepted, as in some way related to Carolingian royal portraits, it would mean that this is perhaps one of the early depictions of a secular regal figure emerging from Anglo-Saxon England. In this respect it could be considered in the light of an earlier stone in Scotland, the ninth-century Dupplin cross which features a rider and an enthroned figure with a harp (Fig. 50; 197).[658] Here the scholarship has focused on the identifying the enthroned figure with the Pictish king-saint Constantine, son of Fergus (*Constantín mac Cináeda*, reg. *c.* 775–820, sometimes styled Constantine I of Scotland), who is apparently mentioned in the accompanying inscription, CUSTENTIN, FILUS FIRCUS [after which it is illegible].[659] St Alkmund's, it is worth noting, was the cult centre of the eponymous saintly royal figure – the elaborate

---

[656] London: BL, Add MS 37768, fol. 4r, *c.* 840-855
[657] Utrecht: University Library, MS 32, fol. 91v; van der Horst et al., 1996: 74
[658] Henderson, 1999: 161-177; Harden, 2010:23-35.
[659] Henderson, 1999: 163; Harden, 2010: 32.

sarcophagus from the site being associated with his remains;[660] it thus has much in common with the Dupplin monument in that both are associated with a king-saint, and both present images of a figure with a harp, in conjunction with a figure on horseback. In the light of such contexts the harp, iconographically associated with David, might also here be intended to deliberately invoke secular kingly associations, recalling the wise king in the hall. As noted, this was one of the aspects of Hrothgar who, as the Old Shielding (*gomela scilding*) in *Beowulf*, takes the harp.[661] Thus, while the harping images in any context will recall the psalmist, and necessarily the ideal of kingship represented by David, in signifying a specific type of kingship, these images maintain the dual associations of kingship that the Durham Cassiodorus and the St Petersburg Bede signify. In the sculptural context of the Derby stone cross-shaft (and the Dupplin Cross), the figure with the harp is further associated with a rider, which as will be discussed further below, has a potentially secular and Christological set of references.

The fact that these figures are presented on Christian monuments does of course mean that they carry Christian significances. And in this respect it is likely that the St Alkmund's figure at least represents kingship, if not an individual king, in such a way that it expresses how this ideal can exist within the setting of a Christian worldview. The figure with a sword and a harp is thus both David and the ideal king, one who functions both in times of peace and in times of war, one who serves both as a wise and generous gift giver in the hall and as the leader of warriors in battle. In this context the sword lying across the lap of the St Alkmund's figure might be considered to articulate the readiness of this particular leader for war, even in times of peace, and so indicates the wisdom of his rule – something Bede stresses in his account of Edwin of Northumbria.[662] In this respect, it is

---

[660] Radford: 1976: 26-61; I am grateful to Jane Hawkes for discussion on this topic which will be explored further in the forthcoming British Academy Corpus volume on Derbyshire (Hawkes and Sidebottom, forthcoming 2016)

[661] *Beo*. l. 2105b (Klaeber, 2008: 71)

[662] Bede, *HE*, ii.16 (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 192-193); see Chapter 1

likely that the visual language of war, being ever present, has come to reflect the role of a king, in the eternal struggle – like his biblical and divine counterparts, David and Christ. The image is undoubtedly a multivalent reference to kingship and kingly identity, but perhaps also to the identity of the saint-king, and a demonstration of that to which all kings should aspire.

4.3d David as Christ-King

The potential multivalent set of references inherent in images of David, not only include the possibility of denoting secular associations, they also, as has been noted by Bailey, have the distinct ability to represent the pre-figuring of Christ.[663] The Anglo-Saxon images thus display the possibility of portraying exegetical thinking in a dynamic way, leading the viewer to contemplate and actively engage with the viewing process involved in such encounters. The second image in the Durham Cassiodorus, exemplifies this by showing David, in a Christological pose, standing in triumph over a double-headed beast (Fig. 53).[664] This image has inspired considerable scholarship on its typological frames of reference, its iconographic exemplars and its function within the manuscript.[665] Here, it is its iconography and manuscript associations that are of interest.

Iconographically, the image emerges from a tradition that depicted Christ, as warrior, standing in triumph over the defeated enemy – normally illustrated as the lion, asp, basilisk and leviathan of Psalm 90/91:13: "The asp and the basilisk you will trample under foot; you will tread on the lion and the dragon".[666] The image was well established in Christian art by the sixth century, being preserved in the mosaic programme of the archiepiscopal chapel in Ravenna where Christ stands over the lion and asp (Fig. 177); its inclusion on the eighth-century Northumbrian Genoels-Elderen Diptych (Fig. 178)

---

[663] Bailey, 1983: 189-193; Bailey, 1978: 5-7.
[664] See above Chapter 2.
[665] See Bailey, 1977; Stevick, 1994; Brown, 2007.
[666] Psalm 90:13 super aspidem et basiliscum calcabis conculcabis leonem et draconem

demonstrates that is was also circulating in Anglo-Saxon England, its iconographic frames

of reference being fully understood with its citation of the Psalm. This was recited every

day during Compline and also as part of the liturgy of Good Friday, [667] by which it was

associated with the Crucifixion of Christ, the act of sacrifice by which death (and the

devil), signified by the beasts trampled by Christ, was overcome. This is the significance of

the Psalm that was well established in Christian exegesis, being described by Augustine

and Cassiodorus in their commentaries on the Psalms, both of which were echoed by Bede

in his commentary.[668] Cassiodorus explains in his commentary on Psalm 90 that:

> The praise of the canticle can be interpreted only a divine praise. We must
> regard David as the prophet himself; he will speak the first section of this
> psalm in sweet tones. It is a most pleasant psalm, as sweet as can be in the
> variety of its promises. Verses 11 and 12 are directed at the lord saviour
> himself by the devil after he has tempted Him…[669]

David is here seen by Cassiodorus, not merely as an Old Testament prophet, but as a

Figure of Christ. Furthermore, his comments on the trampling of the asp and the basilisk

indicate that these animals should be understood to signify the devil, while the animals that

recognise Christ recognise his divinity as total truth:

> *Thou shalt walk upon the asp and the basilisk: and thou shalt trample
> underfoot the lion and the dragon.* At this point God's power which
> governed such savage elements is being emphasised. All these labels
> fittingly applied to the devil. He is the asp when he strikes covertly; the
> basilisk when he openly spreads poison; the lion when he attacks the
> innocent; the dragon when he devours with wicked greed those who are off
> their guard. But the Lord's glorious comes is all these lay prostrate at his
> feet. Subjugation of such fierce creatures was possible only for Him which
> is known to be in His divinity coeternal and consubstantial with the Father.
> If we handle these matters carefully according to the proclamation of the

---

[667] Ó Carragáin, 2005: 201
[668] Augustine, CCSL, Vol 38, *Enarrationes in Psalmos I-L* (Dekkers and Fraipont, 1956);
Augustine, CCSL, Vol 39, *Enarrationes in Psalmos LI-C* (Dekkers and Fraipont, 1956);
Cassiodorus, CCSL, Vol 97, *Espositio Psalmorum I-LXX* (Adriaen, 1958); Cassiodorus, CCSL,
Vol 98, *Espositio Psalmorum LXXI-CL* (Adriaen, 1958)
[669] Cassiodorus, Psalms, 90: laus intellegi potest et humana praedicatio,; sed laus cantici
animaduerti non potest nisi diuina laudatio. Dauid autem hic ipsum prophetam debemus aduertere,
qui promam partem huid psalmi suaui relatione dicturus est. Amoenus admodum et ipsarum
promissionum uarietate dulcissimus: suius undecimum et duodecimum uersum diabolus ipsi
Domino Saluatori, cum eum tentasset, obiecit. Hunc hymnum daemonibus pia confidentia semper
opponimus… (CCSL, v 98. M. Adriaen, 1962: 828; trans. Walsh, 1991: 379-380)

holy Fathers, and we are not discomfited by any heretical perversion of madmen, we shall find that everything squares with the account given in total truth.[670]

This commentary, containing the image of David over the beasts in its Anglo-Saxon

manuscript version, clearly indicates the manner in which the image should be understood:

by recognising Christ in David, the total truth is revealed. However the image itself is

placed facing Psalm 101,[671] which Cassiodorus explains:

> *And the gentiles shall fear the name, O Lord, and all the kings of the earth thy glory* …Moreover the kings of the lands believed in his glory, in other words subjected their bodies to the divine commands and through the Lord's gifts were able to become rulers of themselves. … *For the lord hath built up Sion, and he shall be seen in his majesty*. This verse is appended to the previous words: al the gentiles shall fear the Lord, and the kings shall be in awe of His glory, because Sion which Is the mother Church has been built up and fashioned from living stone, and in her the Lord's worship will prevail without interruption till the end of the world. The Lord who built up Sion *shall be seen in his majesty* in the truth of the body which He assumed, when He separates the goats from the lambs, dispatching the wicked to hell and bestowing eternal blessedness on the just.[672]

Here again, the focus is recognition: this time, of the power of the heavenly king and how

the Church plays a part in bearing witness to that majesty. Following the image of

---

[670] Cassiodorus, Psalms, 90: Super aspidem et basilicum ambulabis, et conculcabis leonem et draconem. Hid iam diuina uritus exprimitur, quae tantis rebus saeuientibus imperauit. Nam omnia ista nomina diablolo cingruenter aptantur: apsis est dum occulte percutit; basilicus, cim palam uenena disseminat; leo, dum persequitur innocentes; draco, cum neglegentes impia uoracitate deglutit. Verum haec omnia glorioso aduentu Domini pedibus ipsius prostrata iacuerunt. Solus enim tam ferocia ualuit subdere, qui Patri coaeternus et consubstantialis secundum diuinitatem probatur existere. Haec si diligenter sanctorum partum praedicatione tractemus, nec aliqua dementium haeretica prauitate turbemur, omnia nobis, sicut dicta sunt, absoluta ueritate constabunt. (CCSL, v 98. M. Adriaen, 1962: 834; trans. Walsh, 1991: 385)

[671] Bailey, 1978: 7-10

[672] Cassiodorus, Psalms, 101: *Et timebunt gentes nomen tuum, domine et omnes reges terrae gloriam tuam*. … Reges quoque terrarum item eius gloriae crediderunt, id est qui corpora sua diuinis regulis inferenantes, sui imperatores esse 9Domino praesante) ualuerunt. Et hi sunt de quibus seprius dixit, quoniam beneplacitos habuerunt serui tui lapides eis. Ipsi enim iam glorium Domini ueirissime cognoscunt, qui in assumpta fidei firmitate sonsisunt. 17 *Quia aedificauit Dominus Sion et uidebitur in maiestate sua*. Versus iste de superioribus pendet; quoniam omnes gentes ideo timebuunt Dominum et reges eid gloriam formidabunt, quia aedificata est Dion, hoc est mater Ecclesia de uiuis lapidibus fabricata, in qua Domini cultura usque ad finem mundi sine intermisione proficiet. Iste autem Dominus qui aedificauit Sion, idem assumpti corporisveritate uidebitur in maiestate sua, quando haedos sequestrat ab agnis, in hehenam impios mittens, iustis donand beatitudinem sempiternam. (CCSL, v 98. M. Adriaen, 1962: 907-908; trans. Walsh, 1991: 11-12)

David/Christ standing triumphant, the passage reads as a commentary on the image. It also provides clear insight into how the images were intended to function.

The manner in which the figure, clutching a roundel inscribed with the word 'David' in his upraised right hand, stands on a double-headed serpent, whose heads might be described as leonine (and so might be deemed to recall the lion and the asp of Christ triumphant), with the end of his spear terminating just above one of the beast-heads, clearly recalls the established iconography of Christ triumphant, and yet also depicts the Old Testament precursor of Christ: David.

In this respect David is portrayed here as a (victorious) warrior king and within the manuscript is paired with the more peaceful aspect of a king (David) enthroned with his harp. Containing the text of Cassiodorus' commentary on the Book of Psalms, many of which were deemed to have been composed by David, the manuscript overall can be understood to contain a text explicating the songs (the psalms) sung in praise for the king of kings, which were recited initially, in an act involving divine inspiration, by a biblical king who was the ancestor and pre-figuration of Christ. Through the two miniatures elaborating this text visually, aspects of historical, earthly, secular and divine, heavenly kingship are presented, in ways that would have been entirely comprehensible within an Anglo-Saxon context.

Although the manuscript was likely to have existed with an ecclesiastical purview, inhabitants of such a centre did not live outside the context of Anglo-Saxon (secular) society; they are aware of the political significances of that world and how it related to their own, and indeed, in many cases were part of it.[673] Furthermore, David, while a biblical figure with Christological aspects, was also a secular king, and functioned as an exemplar to illustrate that such figures were not deemed to stand apart in a world where good Christian kings brought about the conversion of their people, and enabled their realm

---

[673] See Higham, 2007: 68-79; Higham, 1997.

to function under the heavenly kingdom. To this extent it is entirely relevant to consider the images of ideal kingship in the Durham Cassiodorus as reflecting contemporary conceptualisations of kingship. Indeed, it can be understood to portray both aspects of a Christian secular Anglo-Saxon king: one victorious in battle and enthroned in a manner spatially related to that of a king in the hall, bearing a harp which contemporary burials indicate where kingly attributes, and part of the accoutrements of an idealised king. The manuscript thus presents a view of kingship in the early-eighth century, complementing that articulated in contemporary Anglo-Saxon texts and preserved in the material record.

4.4 Christ in Majesty

The iconography of Christ as King has a long tradition in early Christian art, taking the form of either the *Maiestas Christi,* a full length portrait of Christ enthroned, or Christ Pantocrator, a bust length portrait of Christ as the king referencing the title used for Christ as king of kings twice in the book of Revelations.[674] All depictions of Christ as kings are thus rooted in the apocalyptic vision of John the Evangelist, "in the spirit" (*in spiritu*), who saw:

> A throne set in heaven, and upon the throne one sitting. And he that sat, was to the sight like the jasper and the sardine stone; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. And round about the throne were four and twenty seats; and upon the seats, four and twenty ancients sitting, clothed in white garments, and on their heads were crowns of gold. And from the throne proceeded lightnings, and voices, and thunders; and there were seven lamps burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God. And in the sight of the throne was, as it were, a sea of glass like to crystal; and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four living creatures, full of eyes before and behind.[675]

---

[674] Revelation 17:14; 19:16

[675] Et statim fui in spiritu: et ecce sedes posita erat in caelo, et supra sedem sedens. Et qui sedebat similis erat aspectui lapidis jaspidis, et sardinis: et iris erat in circuitu sedis similis visioni smaragdinae. Et in circuitu sedis sedilia viginti quatuor: et super thronos viginti quatuor seniores sedentes, circumamicti vestimentis albis, et in capitibus eorum coronae aureae. Et de throno procedebant fulgura, et voces, et tonitrua: et septem lampades ardentes ante thronum, qui sunt septem spiritus Dei. Et in conspectu sedis tamquam mare vitreum simile crystallo: et in medio sedis, et in circuitu sedis quatuor animalia plena oculis ante et retro. Revelations 4:2-6.

This description provides the basis of the iconography of Christ in Majesty throughout the early Christian world, becoming a standard feature of apse mosaics in churches in Rome and Ravenna,[676] as well as those preserved in manuscripts, ivories and sculptural reliefs. Many of these images depict elaborate jewelled thrones, such as that portraying the enthroned Christ in the apse mosaic at Sta Pudenziana in Rome, *c.* 410 (Fig. 71). The iconographic tradition informing such schemes is thought to lie in imperial depictions of the Emperor and his Consuls, flanked by their courtiers and ministers (Figs. 72, 150).[677] One of the earliest extant examples in Christian art is the central group of the Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus of 359 in the Vatican, where Christ, centrally enthroned, is flanked by the apostles Peter and Paul to whom he donates the Law (Fig. 179).[678] Here, the act of donation draws on that made by emperors handing an imperial decree or letter of appointment to an official, as on the late fourth-century Missorium of Theodosius I (Fig 180). The influence of these schemes on early Christian art is clear in the later fourth-century apse mosaic of Christ enthroned as law-giver in the Basilica of San Lorenzo, Milan, which includes a box of scrolls at Christ's feet (Fig. 181).[679]

Texts in Anglo-Saxon England also draw upon this trope when describing Christ, particularly at the Last Judgment. In the poem *Judgement Day II*,[680] which is a *c.* 950 Old English translation of the Latin poem *De Die Judicii* (traditionally attributed to Bede, although there is some doubt about this authorship), Christ is described as:

> The lord of heaven, bright as the sun, will sit on the high throne [high seat], enhanced by a crown [helmet/head adorned].[681]

---

[676] See, e.g. Sant'Apollinare in Classe and San Vitale (Ravenna, sixth century), or Sta Pudenziana (fifth century), SS Cosmas and Damian (sixth century) and Sta Maria in Domnica, Sta Prassede and Sta Cecelia in Trastevere (ninth century) in Rome; Krautheimer and Trachtenberg, 1980.

[677] Cameron, 1998; Bowes, 2001; Olovsdotter, 2005

[678] Malbon, 1990: 91-103

[679] Lewis, 1973: 197.

[680] Found in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 201, pp.162-5

[681] *JuD II*, ll. 117-118:
> Sitt þonne sigel-beorht   swegles brytta
> on heah setle,   helme beweorðod. (Lumby, 1876: 87; trans. Bradley, 1982: 531)

This is almost a direct quotation from the biblical account, emphasising Christ in judgement as bright and shining, but 'translates' this into Anglo-Saxon idiom with the invocation of *helme beweorðod*, literally meaning 'adorned at the helm or head'. In another poem *Christ III*, the last in the series of three poems on the life of Christ contained in the Exeter Book, Christ is also described as enthroned on 'the high seat' and later, as seated on 'the royal throne'.[682] Here both the words *cynestole* and *heahsetle* are used, providing the variation that is so common in poetry, but also referring to two separate notions of thrones and enthroning. The throne itself is not described, but would call to mind many the different types of thrones present in Anglo-Saxon England.[683]

As king Christ is also described as a "wondrous figure" in the form of a "noble king [who] will come from the east from out of the skies".[684] And elsewhere in *Christ III*, he is further presented as:

> Holy, glorious, he will shine out above the hosts, the reigning god, and
> round about him that supreme and noble multitude, the holy warrior-band
> will shimmer clear, the blessed company of the angels. [685]

This shining quality is again reminiscent of the biblical account, as is the description of Christ surrounded by attendants (in Revelation, the twenty-four elders), but here they are a 'warrior band'. This is further emphasised at line 943, where it is said that, "there too will be the throng of thanes, blessed with victory".[686] Here the word *þenga* is used, a word normally associated with noble supporters of a king. The descriptions of Christ are also

---

[682] *Chr.III*, ll. 1216-1217a: Þonne Crist siteð   on his cynestole / Ho heahsetle (Krapp and Dobbie, 1936: 37; trans. Bradley 1982: 237)

[683] See section 2.3.

[684] *Chr.III*, ll. 905-908:
  Cymeð wundorlic Cristes onsyn
  Æþelcyninges wlite, eastan fram roderum
  On sefan swete sunum folce (Krapp and Dobbie, 1936: 28; trans. Bradley, 1982: 230)

[685] *Chr.III*, ll. 1009b-1013a:
     Halig, schineð
  Wuldorlic ofer weredum, waldende god,
  Ond hine ymbutan æþelduguð betast
  Halge herefeðan hlutre blicað,
  Eadig engla gedryht. (Krapp and Dobbie, 1936: 31; trans. Bradley, 1982: 233)

[686] *Chr.III*, ll. 943b-944a: Bið þær his þegna eac / Hreþeadig heap. (Krapp and Dobbie, 1936: 29; trans. Bradley, 1982: 231)

steeped in war like imagery: when it is established that "to the evil he will be terrible to see",[687] the word *grimlic* is used, from which the modern word 'grim' is derived. While it can mean 'terrible' or 'fearsome', it also carries connotations of 'bloody' or 'bloodthirsty'.[688] These associations are further attached to the cross in *Christ III*, where it is invoked as a symbol of power: "The high cross reared upright as a symbol of power".[689]

Thus throughout, Christ is described as war-like, fierce and accompanied by warriors; these are poetic descriptions that echo the visualisations of ruler-ship in Anglo-Saxon England. Together, these poetic accounts provide some insight into how Christ was figured in the region in the early middle ages – into the ideas informing the visual images, and what they would have been understood to have signified. Such images portray Christ as king, in terms concomitant with expressions of power current in Anglo-Saxon England – they therefore also offer a commentary on the power of Christianity. In this respect, the use of carved stone crosses as the medium for much of the imagery relating to Christ in Majesty imparts multivalent readings: the material of stone has been argued to convey expressions of power and authority invested in ideas of *Romanitas*, while the cross itself is a symbol of power and of eternal kingship, as is the image of Christ himself.

4.4a Visualising Christ in Majesty

In Anglo-Saxon England Christ was typically depicted in poses common to early Christian art. He is portrayed enthroned, facing forwards, often holding a book or scroll, with his right hand raised in blessing, and sometimes accompanied by attendants. In this respect, the images are in keeping with the iconographic tradition based on the biblical accounts of Christ as the Kings of Kings, and within a Christian context would have been understood

---

[687] *Chr.III*, l. 918: He bið þam yflum   egeslic on grimlic (Krapp and Dobbie, 1936: 28; trans. Bradley, 1982: 231)
[688] As defined by Bosworth Toller, *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*
[689] *Chr.III*, ll. 1064b-1065: Ond seo hea rod / Ryht aræred   rices beacane (Krapp and Dobbie, 1936: 32; trans. Bradley, 1982: 234)

as such. The full-page miniature in the early eighth-century Codex Amiatinus (Fig. 182),[690] for example, draws upon an early Christian prototype, the style of which it self-consciously reproduces,[691] to the extent that it does not explicitly feature any identifying characteristics that make it 'Anglo-Saxon' nor do they promote a reading as definitively Anglo-Saxon. Indeed, there are no other surviving images of the *Majestas* in early Anglo-Saxon manuscript art,[692] and it is perhaps, only in the elaborately decorated *Chi-Rho*, the initials of Christ's name in Greek (*Christos*), that an essentially vernacular cast is invested in visualising him in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, as in the early eighth-century Lindisfarne Gospels (Fig. 183).[693]

In fact, it is only in stone and ivory carvings that images of Christ in Majesty are found with any frequency,[694] and although they vary in detail, the carved *Majestas* schemes all depict Christ enthroned and facing forwards, sometimes accompanied by attendant figures, and are closely based on early Christian prototypes. Fragments from the upper register of an early ninth-century stone column at Dewsbury in Yorkshire (Figs 46),[695] for instance, preserve the high-relief figure of Christ enthroned, identified by an inscription, HIS XPVS, an abbreviated *nomina sacra*; he has a dished halo, long hair and a

---

[690] Florence: Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, MS Amiatinus 1, fol. 796v
[691] See Bruce-Mitford, 1969; Nordhagen, 1990; Meyvaert, 1996.
[692] Aside from the Codex Amiatinus, the earliest surviving *majestas* image is the *c*. 939 Æðelstan Psalter, BL Cotton, MS Galba A.xviii, f. 2v, in the Winchester style, influenced heavily by Carolingian traditions, see Brown, 2007:103.
[693] London: BL, Cotton MS Nero D.iv, f. 29r.
[694] There are nine images of Christ in Majesty in the corpus of Anglo-Saxon Ivories, only two of which date to the period of which this study is concerned and will thus not be considered here, they are: *Majestas Domini* Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich [MA158] *ca*. 870-880; *Life of Christ Diptych*, Late ninth century, Musée de Cluny, Paris [Cl. 391A], (the reverse panel is known as [Cl. 391B]); *Heribert Tau Cross, ca*. 999 – 1021, Neu St Heribert Church, Cologne; *Majestas Domini with Four Angels*, Late tenth century, The Hermitage, St Petersburg [Ø3637], *Last Judgement with Mary & St Peter*, Late tenth century, Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology, Cambridge [1883.736], *Traditio Legis cum Clavis*, late tenth century, Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris [Codex Lat. 323]; *Pectoral with Christ and the Lamb of God and the Symbols of the Four Evangelists (or the Pectoral)*, Early eleventh century, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York [17.190.217]; *Seated Figure in Majesty, ca*. 1000-1020, Victoria & Albert Museum, London [A.32-1928]; *Majestas Domini and Four Evangelists*, early eleventh century, The Morgan Library and Museum, NYC [M.319a]; See Smith, Forthcoming. I am grateful Lyndsey Smith for discussion of this material.
[695] Coatsworth, 2008: 129-130.

beard, raises his enlarged right hand in blessing and holds a scroll and his left. His eyes are deeply drilled and are thought to have been originally inset with a material, such as paste-glass. To his right are the remains of a second nimbed figure that is severely damaged but which has been identified as an apostle.[696] Like the contemporary fragments preserved at Reculver, Kent, and Masham, the scheme of Christ flanked by his apostles gained early currency in Rome, and enjoyed renewed popularity in Roman art the early ninth century.[697] At the top of the shaft of the late eighth-century Rothbury cross, is a further (half-length) image of Christ in Majesty (Fig. 184), in this case pointing to the book held in his right hand. Another bust-length image was originally set at the centre of the cross-head (Fig. 185), where the portrait was surrounded by figures presenting him with attributes signifying his power and authority, all of which Hawkes has argued were derived from late antique images of imperial figures associated with sceptre, crown of victory and the mappa.[698] The panel preserved at the base of the shaft, depicting the Ascension (Fig. 186), has been further argued by Hawkes to have been based on a model illustrating Christ enthroned in Judgement; the absence of the apostles from this scheme necessitated their provision to create the Ascension specifically for the monument.[699] Recently, she has postulated that the model may well have been that imported from Rome for display in the churches at Jarrow and Monkwearmouth.[700] Whether this is indeed the case, the many examples of Christ in Majesty featured in the art of stone sculpture, while conveying the power and authority of Christ as King of Kings, reflect their early Christian prototypes,

---

[696] Ibid: 129-130.
[697] For Reculver, see Tweddle et al. 1995: 46-61, 151-163; for Masham, see Lang, 2002:168-171; for discussion, see Hawkes, 2002.
[698] Hawkes, 1996: 77-94; Hawkes, 1997: 311-44.
[699] Hawkes, 1996: 80-83.
[700] Hawkes, 2007: 19-36.

rather than having been adapted to articulate themes of local relevance in relation to kingship.[701]

4.4b Christ Recognised as Heavenly Ruler

One exception to this general trend is the image depicting Christ recognised between two beasts, a scheme unique to Anglo-Saxon sculpture of the eighth century: at Ruthwell, Dumfriesshire, and Bewcastle in Cumbria (Figs 190-192). It is worth considering these in the context of enthronement due to the prevalence in Anglo-Saxon England of thrones with bestial terminals flanking the figure of authority. Viewed in this light, the figure of Christ recognised between two beasts might demonstrate a regional frame of reference involving understanding of kingship as triumphant and militant. Éamonn Ó Carragáin has convincingly argued that these panels can be read in light of both Psalm 90 and the Old Latin Canticle of Habakkuk, arguing that Christ is not only "*super aspidem et basiliscum calcabis conculcabis leonem et draconem*" ("The asp and the basilisk you will trample under foot/you will tread on the lion and the dragon"), but also "*In Medio duorum animalium innotesceris / Dum adpropiaverint ann cognoceris*", which he translates as, "In the midst of two animals you will be recognised / When the years come to pass you will be known".[702] Visual references to both these statement have been made iconographically in the two images. The Psalm, sung each night at Compline, is indicated by means of the feet of Christ standing prominently upon the noses of the beasts – although the animals cannot be identified as asp, basilisk, lion or dragon. In fact they are non-specific in terms of 'species', more comfortably fitting the category of generic 'beast'. The second visual allusion, to the Canticle of Habakkuk, sung each Friday at Lauds is seen in the paws of the

---

[701] For further examples of the *Majestas* in pre-Viking sculpture, see carvings at: Peterborough, Cambridgeshire; Hoddam, Dumfriesshire; Halton, Lancashire; Easby, Yorkshire; Ilkley, Yorkshire; for examples in Viking age and southern English sculpture of the tenth and eleventh centuries, see e.g.: Barnack, Peterbourgh; Daglingworth, Gloucestershire.
[702] Ó Carragáin, 2005: 204-211; See above, chapter 2.

beasts at Bewcastle; as Ó Carragáin has noted, these are crossed centrally at Bewcastle, to form a *Chi*, while the outer paws are extended, perhaps in the orans pose.[703]

Richard Bailey has further noted that the vernacular glosses to the Habakkuk *animalium* in Anglo-Saxon Psalters, which survive in four manuscripts, are all glossed with the Old English word *nieten*, which while used in the Old English poem *Deor* to signify domesticated animals, is also used as the gloss for the beasts Adam names in *Genesis*, and the evangelist symbols of Jerome's commentary on Habakkuk.[704] Jerome himself said of the Canticle that it could be explained by the image of the Crucifixion or the recognising of Christ between the two testaments. Bede, breaking from this tradition in his commentary on Habakkuk, argues that it can be seen in light of the Transfiguration of Christ (when he was transformed between Elijah and Moses), which draws inspiration from Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*.[705]

None of these explanations is mutually exclusive, and at the very least they indicate that the audience imagined as viewing these two panels would have included those familiar with the canonical hours and sophisticated biblical commentaries. As both Psalm 90 and Habakkuk are sung together on Good Friday a complex and thematic reading of both the Ruthwell and Bewcastle crosses is clearly possible. In other words, in the light of the findings of these studies, the anticipated audience of the theologically intended meanings of these panels is likely to have constituted a relatively select few.

However, if we accept these interpretations, the question arises, as to whether this is the *only* way to read these two scenes. Bearing in mind their multivalent potential in terms of biblical and exegetical references, is it possible that they have the potential to also reference more than one kind of power and authority? Is it possible that the scenes at both Ruthwell and Bewcastle, and other schemes of Christ in Majesty presented in the public

---

[703] Ó Carragáin, 2005: 205.
[704] Bailey, 2011: 243-252.
[705] Bede, *On the canticle of Habakkuk* (Connolly, 1997); Augustine, *De Civitate Dei,* CCSL, (Dombart and Kalb (eds), 1960).

medium of relief sculpture (as at Rothbury or Dewsbury) can be read in ways that suggest a power that is more earthly: namely the power of a king or local ruler?

As already mentioned, the overall form of the monuments would have been quite clear, so are we to assume that for those outside the church the form of the cross was all they had access to in terms of Christian frames of reference, or can more be read into these images? To answer this question, it is worth noting that Bailey, among others, such as Benedicta Ward and George Henderson, have suggested that the Habakkuk canticle might also have been invoked in the popular life of St Cuthbert – in the episode that recounts his retirement to the Northumbria beach to pray throughout the evening, ignoring the incoming tide, when two animals (often interpreted as otters) come out of the sea to dry off the saint before he returned to celebrate Lauds, which as noted is when Habakkuk was sung.[706] If this allusion to two animals recognising the holiness of the man by ministering unto him, can be regarded as a common trope in a popular saint's life, it could potentially be considered as a means by which a lay-person, familiar perhaps with the stories and miracles of a local saint, could view this image of Christ.

They would, of course, have had to have access to such hagiographic literature, perhaps circulating orally as well as textually,[707] but the idea of Christ as a majestic figure, the King of Kings and Lord of Heaven, is a common trope, referenced in many sources: from biblical commentaries, to Bede's *Historia*, written for a king, to vernacular poetry. In the Old English poem, *Descent into Hell*, for example, Christ is called both 'the fiercest of kings' (*reþust earl cyninga*),[708] and 'the bravest king of all' (*gust earla cyninga*),[709] and in *Judgment Day II*, he is "King of all Kings" (*ealra cyninga cyning*),[710] who:

---

[706] Ward, 1993: 189-93.
[707] Cubitt, 2006.
[708] *Descent*, l. 36b (Shippey, 1976:112-113)
[709] *Descent*, l. 94b (Shippey, 1976: 116-117)
[710] *JuD I*, l. 95a: (Shippey, 1976:124-125)

> … has fixed the time when he will come here, on that greatest day, as
> highest king of power; then the ruler of mankind will burn the land with
> fire. [711]

Such phrases are, of course, innumerable within the corpus of Old English poetry and they recur across the Christian world. In the context of the Ruthwell cross, however, they carry an added resonance, as the vine-scroll panel is flanked on either side by lines of vernacular poetry written in runes at the height of the Christ panel, that states explicitly: "I [lifted up] the powerful King, the Lord of heaven" (Figs 190-191).[712] Repeated in the later *Dream of the Rood* preserved in the Vercelli book,[713] this statement gives a clear indication of how the panel might have been viewed by an audience that, while Christian, may not have been exclusively ecclesiasti*c.* At Bewcastle the associations were perhaps made more explicit with the inclusion of a member of the secular elite standing at the base of the cross, below that of Christ recognised in Majesty.

If these images can be viewed as presenting the King of kings, it is not unreasonable to hypothesise that they might have been associated by such secular viewers with a king to whom daily allegiance was owed. Indeed, the idea of 'King of kings' is one that underpinned –indeed defined – the early medieval view of the world; more than a sentiment articulating religious theology, it encapsulated the relationships between men and their God, Christ being the highest of rulers. In this context, an image of Christ in Majesty has the potential to represent both Christ and King (and by extension bring to mind all kings). In fact, the way the image has been composed (with a tall centrally hierarchical figure set over and between two creatures), allows each individual viewer to bring to the encounter their own perceptions, and understand it accordingly. In this way the

---

[711] *JuD I*, ll. 5-8a:
> Hafað him geþinged hider   þeoden user
> On þam mæstan dæge   mægencyninga hyhst
> Wile þonne forbrnan   brego moncynnes
> Lond mid lige. (Shippey, 1976:120-121)

[712] [ahof] ic riicnæ kyninc (Ó Carragáin, 2005: Fig 1, xxii-xxiii)

[713] Vercelli, Biblioteca Capitolare CXVII fol 104r-106v; *DoR*, l. 44b Ahof ic ricne cyninge (Krapp, 1932: 62)

Christ panel is not an indexical image but one that contains many different signifiers, creating a visual puzzle that fits well with the riddling culture of the Anglo-Saxons.[714] To some extent depictions of Christ in Anglo-Saxon England stem from a wider early Christian tradition of depicting Christ as king, and as triumphant, which speaks to and compliments the visual traditions in Anglo-Saxon England, but does not ultimately add very much to our understanding of how Anglo-Saxon kingship was uniquely signified.

4.5 Christological Riders

Such suggestions of secular references in Christological scenes remain, of course, entirely hypothetical, if not entirely implausible. But there are carvings of figures that, like the Bewcastle falconer (Fig. 192), might be regarded as more secular in their portrayal. Yet, just as the *Majestas* images might have carried secular references, could other secular depictions have carried Christological references? One scheme that has the potential to be interrogated in this way is that of the Rider depicted on Anglo-Saxon stone crosses. This type of scheme gives a clear insight into the warrior culture of Anglo-Saxon England, but they do not present straightforward portrayals of such societal norms.

Chapter 19 of Revelations contains a description of Christ, riding into battle during the Apocalypse:

> And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called faithful and true, and with justice doth he judge and fight. And his eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many diadems, and he had a name written, which no man knoweth but himself. And he was clothed with a garment sprinkled with blood; and his name is called, THE WORD OF GOD. And the armies that are in heaven followed him on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth proceedeth a sharp two edged sword; that with it he may strike the nations. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God the Almighty. And he hath on his garment, and on his thigh written: KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. [715]

---

[714] See above, Chapter 1.
[715] Revelation 19:11-16: Et vidi caelum apertum, et ecce equus albus, et qui sedebat super eum, vocabatur Fidelis, et Verax, et cum justitia judicat et pugnat. Oculi autem ejus sicut flamma ignis,

This description, while not picked up in Anglo-Saxon texts, may nevertheless have informed understanding of the imagery of the Rider.

As previously discussed the Repton rider (Fig. 79), features on the Anglo-Saxon cross-shaft from the royal burial site of Mercian kings, and is placed on the face adjacent to a Hell-mouth, and is opposite a Crucifixion scene, setting it firmly within a Christological programme. Overall, this Riding figure seems to have no biblical, exegetical or liturgical reason to be placed on a cross shaft, and due to its fragmented state it cannot be viewed in the context of the full range of other scenes originally present on the monument. However, as we have seen with the two Christ panels at Ruthwell and Bewcastle, other frames of reference can be deduced from the image itself. The Repton Rider may well be a 'secular' figure, but like many of the heroic warriors familiar in vernacular poetry, it could be viewed as Christ-like. For instance *Beowulf* may well have been preserved due to its promotion of a code of ethics regarding kingship; the protagonist is a heroic leader who displays all the attributes of a good king and protects his people from pure evil, as does Christ – from the Devil. In this context it is worth noting that the *Maxims,* set forth in order to give 'wise words' (*frodum wordum*),[716] open with the notion that:

> The Ruler, Almighty God, established these broad lands for the human race, with just as many customs as there are people. [717]

Maxims I C also closes with a set of statements about war and warriors:

---

et in capite ejus diademata multa, habens nomen scriptum, quod nemo novit nisi ipse. Et vestitus erat veste aspersa sanguine: et vocatur nomen ejus: Verbum Dei. Et exercitus qui sunt in caelo, sequebantur eum in equis albis, vestiti byssino albo et mundo. Et de ore ejus procedit gladius ex utraque parte acutus, ut in ipso percutiat gentes. Et ipse reget eas in virga ferrea: et ipse calcat torcular vini furoris irae Dei omnipotentis. Et habet in vestimento et in femore suo scriptum: Rex regum et Dominus dominantium.

[716] *Maxims I A*, l. 1a (Shippey, 1976: 64-65)

[717] *Maxims I A*, ll. 15b-18a:

> Eardas rume
> meotud arærde   for moncynne,
> ælmihtig god,   efenfela bega
> þoda on þeawa (Shippey, 1976:64-65)

> The war shield must be ready, the shaft must have a spear, the sword an edge and the spear a point, the unyielding man must have spirit. The brave man must have a helmet, the man of poor spirit will always have least treasure.[718]

The juxtaposition of these extracts makes it clear that a secular figure of authority, or king, could be seen in a religious context, God establishing them and their customs, including the need of the warrior to be brave in spirit; consideration of the right action of an earthly ruler, inevitably involves consideration of the heavenly powers invested in him. If the Repton Rider is viewed in this light, especially given its setting on a cross, the Christian (perhaps even Christological) connotations are clear – and might be further emphasized by the association of the image with that interpreted as the Mouth of Hell and that of the Crucifixion on the opposing face of the cross shaft (Figs 193-194).

In associating kingship with the warrior ideal of Christ, perhaps the warrior figure at Repton might be seen as 'all kings' and by extension, as Christ. The setting of the monument at Repton, which was at the site of a royal mausoleum, further emphasises that link. The St Alkmund's stone also depicts a Rider (Fig. 176). This figure is heavily damaged and not much more than a figure astride a quadruped can be discerned, along with a shield and a raised staff or sword that projects outside the moulding framing the image. If the figure does hold a staff rather than a sword, this could be seen as the attribute of a royal saint such as Bede notes in his account of Sigeberht of East Anglia.[719] In this instance it is the staff that is seen as the more appropriate weapon for a holy king to carry. This would suggest that the St Alkmund's figure could be read in a manner very similar to that of the Repton Rider, and this paring of powerful men (potentially saintly rider, and

---

[718] *Maxims I C*, ll. 67-70

    Georo sceal guðbord   gar seafte
    ecg on sweorde   ond ord spere
    hyge heardum men   Helm sceal ceunum
    ond a þæs heanan hyge   hord unginnost (Shippey, 1976. 74-75)

[719] Bede, *HE*, iii.18: See quotation in section 3.2f; see also Loyn, 1964:21, above Chapter 1

enthroned ruler associated through his harp with David and Christ), can be given a Christian context that is in keeping with the practice of kingship in Anglo-Saxon England.

A third riding figure can be found at Breedon-on-the Hill, on the face adjacent to the scene depicting the anointing of David (Fig.195). This figure does not have any clear weapons displayed, rather his hands are holding the reigns of the horse. This more peaceful looking rider, may have also reflect the role of warrior or riding Christ, as like the Repton Rider, it is placed opposite a Hell scene: here there is a winged Devil with a knotted serpentine body and open jaws (Fig. 196). The pairing of the rider scenes with these Hell depictions may indicate how the riders were meant to be interpreted.

Those that viewed (and view) these monuments bring to them a set of personal references, and cultural signifiers that add to their carved decoration. While any image may be read in many ways, and just as we are able to read multivalent meanings into the image, there is no reason not to assume that the contemporary audiences did likewise as well. Be they ecclesiastics who came from royal families, or kingly visitors, clerics or a member of the landed estate, secular or monastic, the ability to have both a religious and secular meaning in a singular image may not have been internally contradictory, as no matter who the viewer was they would necessarily have existed in a culture where earthly and supreme kings were both considered to have held significant power over their own lives.

All these depictions of Riders might bring to mind the many mentions of horses in association with kingship in the poetic record, such as the famous 'ubi-sunt' sequence from the *Wanderer*, where the narrative voice asks a series of questions all seemingly related to the lost lord:

> Where has gone the horse? Where has gone the young man [rider]? Where has
> gone the giver of treasure?
> Where are the seats of feasts? Where are joys of the Hall?
> Alas for the bright cup! Alas for the mailed warrior!
> Alas for the power of the prince! How that time has gone,

Darkened under the cover of night, as if it never was?[720]

It might be suggested that the horse, rider and giver of treasure are all one in the same, forming a link between the idea of the king and the horse rider. It has long been acknowledged that horses have a long symbolic history in Anglo-Saxon England and so perhaps the frequency of rider imagery in Anglo-Saxon England is directly related to the notions of kingship and the role of the warrior king.

Certainly, in the Old English version of the *Decent into Hell*, Christ in his role as king of all kings is a militant Christ and his warring nature is highlighted. Of the twenty-three times Christ is given a title he is identified as 'victorious' six times, as 'king' five times, and is invested with other kingly epithets four times: prince, leader of all people, ruler of people/tribes/nations, and lord of power.[721] The association of Christ with a warrior king is explicit; indeed, he is referred to once as warrior.[722] Furthermore, and of particular interest here, Christ is said to explicitly 'ride' (OE *oþrad*) into hell; perhaps it is this which is reflected in the Rider figures carved on the stone monuments.

Whether this was indeed the case, a useful comparison might also be found in the Dupplin Cross, which features a rider and where the inscription indicates that the cross was

---

[720] *Wanderer*, ll. 92-96:

> Hwær cwom mearg? Hwær cwom mago? Hwær cwom maþþumgyfa?   Hwær cwom symbla gesetu?   Hwær sindon seledreamas?
> Eala beorht bune! Eala byrnwiga!
> Eala þeodnes þrym!   Hu seo þrag gewat,
> genap under nihthelm swa heo no wære. (Krapp and Dobbie, 1936: 136; trans. Author's own)

[721] Of the 23 titles denoting Christ in the Harrowing, 6 refer to him as victorious, 5 as king with 4 others giving him other kingly titles, and he is once described as warrior; see e.g.: *halend* (saviour), ll. 107b, 118b; *monna scyppend* (creator of men), l. 109b *sigebearn godes* (victorious son of God), ll. 11b, 32b, 50b; *syggebearn* (victorious son), l. 43a; *sigedryhten god* (Lord God of victory), l. 92b; *sigedyran god* (God of victory), l. 111b; *æþelinge* (prince or noble), l. 19b; *cyning* (king), l. 40b; *dryhten* (lord), l. 108b; *rice dyhten* (lord of power), l. 116b; *reþust earl cyniga* (fiercest of all kings), l. 36b; *modigust earla cyniga* (bravest of all kings), l. 93b; *selast ealre cyniga* (best of all kings), l. 117b; *cyniga selast* (best of kings), l. 119b; *ealles folces fruma* (leader of all people), l. 41a; *þeoda waldend* (ruler of nations), l. 112b; *weoruda drythen* (lord of hosts), ll. 120b, 126b, 134b; *hagosteald* (young warrior), l. 21b. (Shippey, 1976)

[722] l. 21b (Shippey, 1976)

raised in honour of a sainted king (Figs 197-198);[723] In other words, perhaps the Anglo-Saxon rider images in England, can also be explained as portraits of royal martyr saint, a trope familiar in Anglo Saxon England hagiography.[724] If it can be postulated that these figures portray saintly types, then they are neither purely secular nor biblically informed. The rider images might therefore represent a type of image that is elsewhere fully realised within a liturgical or exegetical context. Lacking inscriptions, it is difficult to ascribe an individual identity to the sculptural riders. Unlike other identifiable figures, such as Christ or David, these figures do not carry any identifying attribute beyond their role as rider. They cannot be identified as individuals,[725] so suggestions beyond that of a type are hard to substantiate. Nevertheless, within a militant Christian society, it is entirely possible to regard them as manifestations of an idealised type of saintly warrior, living and dying in imitation of Christ. The idea of the militant and warrior Christ, as the king of kings is highlighted by the apocryphal Anglo-Saxon Text of the *Decent into Hell*, which tells of Christ riding into hell, and utilises a lexicon that emphasises the role of Christ as a militant king. If these riders are considered within this context, perhaps they can be read as having Christological, as well as kingly frames of reference.

4.6 Conclusions

The images of biblical kings in Anglo-Saxon England indicate a vernacular understanding of kingship. The images emphasise both the role of warrior as well as that of the wise king. The Magi, particularly on the Franks casket, emphasis gift giving which is a deeply social construct to Anglo-Saxon society The images of David often show different aspects of his kingship, all of which resonate with a local idea of kingship. David enthroned as the Psalmist, playing his harp can be read as the wise king in the hall, while his triumphs over

---

[723] See Chapter 1.
[724] Rollason, 1982; Ridyard, 1988.
[725] *Contra* Biddle and Kjolbye-Biddle

Goliath emphasise the need for strength in kingship. The images of Christ can be taken as a representation of kingship in its ideal form, as the King of kings, and as such he is scene in Judgment, and bestowing the law; much as Anglo-Saxon kings bestowed individual law codes. The rider figures emphasize the role militant kings play in the biblical narrative; moreover, they contextualise the role of kingship in Anglo-Saxon England. Ideal kingship is typified by the depictions of biblical kings through the use of both iconographic early Christian images as well as vernacular perceptions of kingship.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine and consider what could be considered the visual signifiers of kingship, asking what material visual culture makes up the notion of kingship and how kingship can be articulated beyond the socio-political definitions on which the scholarship has primarily focused. This study, therefore, has sought to identify motifs that exist beyond any individual king, and study the idea of kingship rather than the ideal king. This study of signification sought to be an iconographic approach that was not limited to figural depiction, nor to rely on solely on traditional art historical media when thinking about how kingship manifests within a cultural consciousness across a broad spectrum of time and disparate identities, and how in within the location know as Anglo-Saxon England, these varied ideas might come together and be identified as signifying kings.

The themes identified in this work of settings materials and biblical depictions have many links that connect them. The process of gift giving from the throne is one that might highlight the continuity of kingship. The hall and throne as a setting utilise the material culture that comes to be associated with kingship and thus takes on further significance in the depictions of the magi, as three gift-giving kings. Further the notion of the gifts of Christ, while non-material might be further identified with this cultural practice. The very words chosen and method of depiction of gift giving demonstrates the links between material culture and the depiction of kings. The material signifiers of kingship found within the textual record, becoming the iconographic tropes that identify kingship. This process of gift giving is found in the later manuscript portraits that Karkov initially identifies as the only Anglo-Saxon portraits of kinship, Cnut is giving a cross where as Æthelstan is giving a book.[726] It is through understanding to cultural significance of the

---

[726] Karkov, 2004: 60.

signifiers of kingship that later iconographies can be understood and it is hoped that this methodological approach to the non-figurative art and imagery of Anglo-Saxon England further informs how kingship is imagined and imaged in an Art Historical discourse.

David is presented, in Anglo-Saxon England, as a typical King. Like Hrothgar, he plays his harp and gives wisdom. The presentation of David and Goliath is reminiscent of battles against the monstrous, such as Beowulf and Grendel. These images therefore feature the material aspects that one might associate with kingship. The St Petersburg Bede contains within it aspects of Anglo-Saxon kingship that are directly linked to the material record. The depiction of the harpist within the Durham Cassiodorus has direct ties to the material record that has been preserved. While there may be centuries and distance between the creation of objects, the recording of texts, and the imaging of kings there are aspects that persist, which suggests a notion or ideology of kingship that was persistent. Further themes that can be addressed is the notion of equestrian riders, while the material culture of horse riding was not focused on in the detailing of the setting of kingship and the materials associated with kingship, the understanding of images horse riders in the ninth and tenth centuries. This understanding of the visuality of kingship links directly to how the mind conceptualised kingship in Anglo-Saxon England. This thesis has looked at high-status objects and their ability, through their visual language, to communicate to its contemporary audience. This thesis sought to interpret and translate some aspects of the process of visualising kingship in order to gain access to the visual language as it may have signified the idea of kingship in the early medieval period.

As far as the places of kingship are concerned, it has been suggested that the hall as an idea had a significant impact on the concept of kingship in Anglo-Saxon England. While the Great Hall complexes may not have left any archaeological record beyond that of the seventh century, the societal notion of the hall, and the notion of hall culture, has left

a substantial trace on within the literary tradition. The king was in the hall arguably a mnemonic of a visual tradition that has been lost to the archaeological record. The repeated references to entrances, entry ways, and doorways, taken in conjunction with the archaeological evidence for grand doorways, as well as comparative material of wooden entry ways from Scandinavian traditions, yields compelling evidence for visualising the way in which these halls may have been decorated, and how carving may have been applied to these buildings. Moreover, they suggest the types of visual associations that might have been made with the king by means of the hall.

When examining the thrones of Anglo-Saxon England, it is clear that through considerable variation both in the physical objects as well as the words used to signify them. And yet, it is this very variation in reference to a single idea that makes it clear there were accepted social implications relating to the throne or high seat. Enthronement was not limited to the kingly, but rather to those with power and position; thus we find that the most commonly enthroned figures depicted were the Evangelists. That being said, the status of being enthroned had clear implications for enthroned kings which placed them in a social hierarchy that was visual construed. While the thrones of kings may not survive, with the possible exception of the Prittlewell stool, how they may have looked can be reconstructed through the variations found within extant visual material, from coins, manuscripts and sculpture all paired with the descriptions found within the literary record. While some, like the Prittlewell stool, may have called on a Roman tradition, others may well have had animal terminals that, while having parallels in late antiquity, seem to recall a more local and regional tradition of confronting bestial terminals, which may have come to be identified with the traditions of the recognition of Christ between two beasts. This motif of animal imagery, found on many other extant artworks may have invoked to visually emphasise the significance of the king his rule.

In considering the materials of kings, and the objects associated with kingship, it is necessary to consider what can be considered and what might be considered, rather than looking to simply identify expected tropes. Thus, the question of crowns is not whether they existed, but rather whether they had the pre-eminence that set them apart as a signifier of kingship. Given both the archaeological and textual records it is clear that this may not have been the case, and in addressing this lack of evidence rather than focus on what cannot be known, it has proven beneficial to address what is known. In looking to other types of headdress, namely the helmet, it seems that, again, variation and difference, had impact. The helmet had an important place in textual accounts, and its relative scarcity in the archaeological record reinforces the idea of distinct significance. The fact that so few examples survive, and that all those that do are ornate and of high status, indicates that these objects held an extremely prestigious place within their societal context. That context is, arguably, markedly kingly. The presentation of these objects as signifiers of kingship place them within a visual tradition of militaristic imagery, which has its roots both in Roman and localised traditions, synthesising the languages of power into an immediate language of vernacular kingship.

While the material record for swords is far more numerous than that of helmets, it is clear that these high-status objects fell within the requirements of the war-band led by a warrior king. The role gift-giving played within Anglo-Saxon society cannot be understated, and as such both swords and rings, as gifts, become visual reminders of allegiances and the role an individual might play in their society particularly in relation to their king. While these objects may not have belonged to the rulers themselves, or did so only in passing, they may well have served as a visual reminder of kingship, and the reciprocal expectations both demanded and signified by these gifts. A king might have been expected to have the biggest and most elaborate of swords, and the most grand personal adornments in the form of rings, belt buckles and perhaps even shoulder clasps,

but it was his ability to share out this wealth that the literature identifies as being the characteristic which identify him, and by association the objects, as kingly. The display of personal wealth was matched by the ability to display generosity to those loyal to any individual king.

Such visual displays of power may also have taken the form of banners or standards. Bede seems to indicate that this was in an attempt to display '*Romanitas*' and the imperial aspirations of the early Anglo-Saxon kings, although the material evidence for these objects might indicate a far more localised tradition. The multiplicity of the references may well have been deliberate and intentional, but perhaps served to consolidate power, and ideas of kingship. The banners, standards and sceptres may add to our understanding of objects that were uniquely kingly, but they also present us with further questions of inquiry: where there more of these types of objects? What type of imagery did they bear? Further, there is a temptation to link their potential to display zoomorphic imagery to the bestial throne terminals, the boar-crested helmets and the potential for zoomorphic carved doorways of halls creating a further layer of meaning inherent in these images. The suggestion that a folded metal appliqué from the Staffordshire Hoard may have been used to identify a local king either held aloft on a standard or attached to a banner, presents many further possibilities in questioning how a king was visually signified both on and off the battlefield.

A further aspect of kingship that had visual significance is that of the king as the leader of hall life and hall culture. A king's role in the hall was not simply to be present, enthroned, and giving gifts, but was to lead these activities and society. This is manifest not only in the holding of feasts, with richly adorned cups and horns, the provision of mead and wine to drink, but also in the proclamation of poetry and the playing of musi*c*. While this was probably accomplished by a *scop* in the employ of a king, it may have also been the remit of the king himself. The inclusion of the harp in burials, and the references in

poetry to the king's ability to play, may imply that the harp was also associated with kingship. This tradition may have been distinct from the Christian traditions that linked the biblical king David with the harp, but such biblical associations may well have further emphasised the harp as a visual signifier of kingship.

Within Anglo-Saxon England, the biblical notions of kingship firmly established in the art, but the ideas were adapted and co-opted to both reference and enhance local and secular notions of kingship. Christian imagery developed from Roman and late antique tradition were used but, they were selected and coloured by a complex set of associations which can be seen to have been chosen deliberately to reflect Anglo-Saxon kingship in unique and complex ways. Both the literature and visual culture adapted Christianity to express regional identities. Thus as the *Decent into Hell* uses language similar to heroic epics; so too does the imagery depict Christ as an iconic and triumphant character that finds many parallels with notions of power. Further, the unique depictions of Davidic imagery both in combat with Goliath as well as the Psalmist, emphasis the construct of both the warrior and wise king that is emphasised in the material and visual culture that signifies kingship. Davidic imagery also provides a useful key to a new understanding of images that might be considered kingly, such as the enthroned figure on the St Alkmunds cross shaft. The biblical associations mean the figure can be understood not just as a king, albeit unidentifiable, but also as an image that represents the ideal of kingship in a Christian Anglo-Saxon society.

Further, the role of the king as a warrior is emphasised in images such as the Riders on Anglo-Saxon sculpture. If these images are taken as representations of kingship in its ideal form, it might be suggested that they recall Christ at the apocalypse, while also representing the fight for Christianity, the role militant kings play in the biblical narrative and in Anglo-Saxon England. The idea of kingly triumph is therefore represented on Anglo-Saxon sculpture in the images of Christ recognised between two beasts, in the

defeat of Goliath, in the presence of a peaceful king, in the enthronement of the King of kings, as well as in the battle for Christianity typified by a Christological Rider. While it is arguable that these images do not depict kingship, to reduce the potential iconographic frames of reference to being purely eidetic does not afford them the complexity of intention of which they are clearly capable. The use of multivalent meanings has long been noted with this material, with the layering of Christian meaning and symbolism being a well studied aspect of Anglo-Saxon art, and this study argues that there is room for further interpretations when considering a complex world view, that includes the local, the regional and the so-called secular aspects of Anglo-Saxon society.

It remains clear that such ideas were not only circulating in Anglo-Saxon England, but also that they continued to flourish beyond the temporal and geographic bounds of this study. Complex notions of kingship are related and interconnected not only in the Insular world, and across the North Sea region, but also can be found through the medieval world. The way in which kingship is visually articulated in Anglo-Saxon England, may well reflect the variation and difference that may be found in other regions. These methodological approaches to visual culture will no doubt find wider application with further study.

This study has taken an iconographic approach to materials and non-figurative images in a manner that has afforded them the same ability to convey complex and nuanced ideas. The notion of kingship is in this study treated not simply as 'high-status' wealth that may be uncovered but as a cultural construct that conceptualised and interpreted in multifaceted ways with complex and multivalent meanings. By treating images and material culture as both having the ability to communicate these ideas this study has built upon previous scholarship and challenged traditional methods of distinguishing between what has hither too been identified as decorative arts and arts capable of conveying meaning. The perception of kingship is altered when the spaces,

though they no longer exist, are treated in a similar manner that is afforded to other types of spaces. Not simply as a drinking hall but a transformative space that affects how kingship functions.

Going beyond this study it will be necessary to begin to look more holistically at the art and imagery of the early medieval world. In looking at images of things it is important to consider the words used to describe them, the extant material culture it may be referencing and the context of that image. Moreover, it will be necessary to look at images not as the first depiction of a king, but looking at how it has come to depict a king. When looking at ninth and tenth century sculpture it is necessary to see it not as a break with notions of kingship but rather a synthesis or a distillation of the idea of kingship. When depictions of kings come to be made, there are aspects of visual culture that need to already have been established in order for the depiction to function within its context.

For future research, it is important to look not just at Anglo-Saxon England, but to look beyond the traditionally excepted border of Anglo-Saxon England in order to examine comparative sources, however, as this study has discovered visual culture has a much more flexible boundary, and it would be useful to examine the Insular world as a much more interconnected place. It is also hoped that further aspects of daily life that are distilled within the art and imagery of Anglo-Saxon England can be further elucidated by examining the processes by which signification comes to represent aspects of culture. Much more work could be done on the comparison of monumental imagery with portable imagery, particularly coins.

This study, while limited, is one attempt at suggesting that the way in which scholarship, particularly art history, is focused on certain types of images limits the understanding. The art and imagery of objects, places and monuments all contribute to how visual culture crystallises the notions and ideas of kingship.

Anglo-Saxon signifiers of kingship took many forms, and drew upon many disparate influences from imperial imagery, native ideas of power and distinctive visual languages, as well as the early Christian traditions. These visual traditions are appropriated, adapted and amalgamated in various ways to establish a means of signifying kingship and representing power and authority that came to be distinctly recognisable as Anglo-Saxon. This was accomplished, not only through the conscious selection of images, but also by the use of material culture as more than functional objects, as articles that might be imbued with meaning and significance within a complex cultural setting where value is placed on the material. Moreover, images are used together, and objects are found together which serves to create a seen context. In considering how these might have been used to represent kingship visually, expands the corpus of what might be considered kingly imagery and what it means to understand kingship from a visual and iconographic perspective. This methodological approach to the idea of kingship in Anglo-Saxon England provides a rich and valuable means of accessing the ideas and notions involved in signifying kingship before the depiction of kings.

ABBREVIATIONS

AEMS	American Early Medieval Society
ASE	Anglo Saxon England
BAR	British Archaeological Reports
Beo.	*Beowulf* (Klaeber, 2008: 1-109)
CASSS	Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture
CCSL	*Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*
Descent	*The Descent into Hell* (Shippey, 1976: 112-119)
ECMS	Early Christian and Pictish Monuments of Scotland, v.1-3 (Romilly-Allen: Edinburgh, 1903)
EETS	Early English Text Society
EHD	English Historical Documents
HE	*Historia Ecclesiastica*, Bede, (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969)
JBAA	*Journal of the British Archaeological Association*
JBAS	*Journal of the British Archaeological Society*
Klaeber, 2008:	Fulk *et al.* 2008
Finns.	*Finnsburgh Fragment* (Klaeber, 2008: 283-285)
Med. Arch.	*Medieval Archaeology*
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary* (online edition)
PASE	The Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England (online edition)
PMLA	Publications of the Modern Language Association (of America)
RCAHMS	Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland
TTH	Translated Texts for Historians

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES:

Adriaen, M. (ed.). *Cassiodorus, Espositio Psalmorum I-LXX*, CCSL 97 (Turnhout, 1958).

Adriaen, M. (ed.). *Cassiodorus, Espositio Psalmorum LXXI-CL*, CCSL 98 (Turnhout, 1958).

Alexander, J. *The Earliest English Poems*. 1966

Bradley, S.A.J. (ed. and trans.). *Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (London, 1982).

Campbell, A. (ed.). *The Battle of Brunanburh* (London, 1938).

Campbell, A. (ed. and trans.). *Æthelwulf: De Abbatibus* (Oxford, 1967).

Cook, A. S. (ed.) *The Christ of Cynewulf; A poem in three parts: The advent, the Ascension, and the Last Judgment* (New York, 1970).

Cox, B. *The Book as Relic: The Lindisfarne Gospels and the Politics of Sainthood* (unpublished PhD thesis, Stanford University, CA, 1995)

Bosworth, J. and Toller, T.N. *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (Oxford, 1898); and its Supplement (first edition 1921) (online edition, 2009)

Colgrave, B. (ed. and trans.). *Felix: Life of St. Guthlac* (Cambridge, 1985; 1st edn 1956).

Colgrave, B. (ed. and trans.). *Eddius Stephanus: The Life of Bishop Wilfrid* (Cambridge, 1985; 1st edn 1927).

Colgrave, B. (ed. and trans.). *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great* (Cambridge, 2007; 1st edn 1968).

Colgrave, B. (ed. and trans.). *The Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert* (Cambridge, 2007; 1st edn 1940).

Colgrave, B. and Mynors, R. A. B. (eds). *Bede: The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford, 1969; repr. 2007).

Connolly, S. (trans.). *Bede: On the Temple*, TTH 21 (Liverpool, 1995).

Connolly, S. (trans.). *Bede: on Tobit and on the Canticle of Habakkuk* (Liverpool, 1997).

Dekkers, E. and Fraipont, J. (eds). *Augustine, Enarrationes in Psalmos I-L,* CCSL 38 (Turnhout, 1956).

Dekkers, E. and Fraipont, J. (eds). *Augustine, Enarrationes in Psalmos LI-C*, CCSL 39 (Turnhout, 1956).

Dobbie, E.van K. (ed.). *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems* (New York, 1942).

Dombart, B. and Kalb, A. (eds). *Augustine, De Civitate Dei*, CCSL 47 (Turnhout, 1960)

Douglas D.C and Greenaway G. W. *English Historical Documents, 2: 1042–1189* (London,1953).

DeGregorio, S. (trans.). *Bede: On Ezra and Nehemiah* (Liverpool, 2006).

Fulk, R. D. Bjork, R.E. and Niles, J.D. (eds). *Klaeber's Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg, trans. Klaeber* (Boston MA, 2008; 1st edn 1950).

Gordon, E.V. (ed.). *The Battle of Maldon* (Manchester, 1976).

Garmonsway, G.N. (trans) *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (London, 1953).

Goodwin, C.W. (ed. and trans.). *The Anglo-Saxon Version of the Life of St. Guthlac, Hermit of Crowland. Originally written in Latin* (London, 1848).

Gradon, P.O.E. (ed.). *Cynewulf's 'Elene'* (Exeter, 1977).

Heaney, S. *Beowulf* (London, 1999)

Holder, A.G. (trans.). *Bede: On the Tabernacle*, TTH 18 (Liverpool, 1994).

Irvine, S.*The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition. Vol. 7: MS. E* (Cambridge, 2004)

Kendall, C.B. (trans.). *Bede: On Genesis*, TTH 48 (Liverpool, 2008).

Keynes, S. and Lapidge, M. (trans). *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and other Contemporary Sources* (London, 1983).

Krapp, G.P. (ed.) The Vercelli Book (New york, 1932)

Krapp, G.P. and Dobbie, E. van K. (eds). *The Exeter Book* (New York, 1936)

Liebermann, F. (ed.). *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, vol. 1 (Halle, 1903).

Lumby, J.R. (ed.). *Be domes daege: an old English version of the Latin poem ascribed to Bede*, EETS (London, 1876).

Robertson, A.J. *Anglo-Saxon Charters*. vol. 1 (Cambridge, 2009).

Shippey, T.A. (ed. and trans.). *Poems of Wisdom and Learning in Old English* (Cambridge, 1976).

Swanton, M. (ed. and trans.) *Anglo-Saxon Prose* (London, 1975 *passim*).

Swanton, M. (ed. and trans.) *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (London, 1996).

Trent Foley, W. and Holder, A.G. (trans.). *Bede: A Biblical Miscellany* (Liverpool, 1999).

Wallis, F. (trans.). *Bede: The Reckoning of Time* (Liverpool, 1999).

Wallis, F. (trans.). *Bede: Commentary on Revelation* (Liverpool, 2013).

Walsh, P.G. (trans.). *Cassiodorus: Explanations of the Psalms*, vol. 2: Ancient Christian Writers: The works of the Fathers in Translation, no. 52, ed. W.J. Burghardt and T.C. Lawler (New York, 1991).

Whitelock, D. (ed. and trans.). *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (London, 1930).

Whitelock, D (ed.) *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (London, 1961).

Whitelock, D. (ed.). *English Historical Documents* (London, 1968).

SECONDARY SOURCES:

Ables, R. *Alfred the Great: War, Kingship and Culture in Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1998).

Abels, R. "What Has Weland to Do with Christ? The Franks Casket and the Acculturation of Christianity in Early Anglo-Saxon England." *Speculum* 84, no. 03 (2009): 549-581.

Aillagon, J-J. and Roberto, U. *Rome and the Barbarians: The Birth of a New World* (Milan, 2008).

Al-Azmeh, A. and Bak, J.M. (eds). *Monotheistic Kingship: The Medieval Variants (Ceu Medievalia)* (Budapest, 2005).

Alcock, L. *Kings and Warriors, Craftsmen & Priests: in northern Britain AD 550-850* (Edinburgh, 2003).

Alexander, J.J.G. *A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles: Insular Manuscripts 6th to the 9th century* (London, 1978).

Alexander, L. *Old Testament Imagery in Anglo-Saxon England* (forthcoming PhD Thesis).

Arnold, C.J. *An Archaeology of the Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* (London, 1997; new edn).

Arwidsson, G. 'A New Scandinavian form of helmet from the Vendel time' *Acta Archaeologia* no. 5 (1934): 243-57.

Backhouse, J., Turner, D. H. and Webster, L. *The Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art, 966-1066 (*London, 1984).

Badrill, J. Constantine, *Divine Emperor of the Christian Golden Age* (Cambridge, 2011).

Bailey, R.N. "The Chronology of Viking Age Sculpture in Northumbria". In J. Lang (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon and Viking Age Sculpture and its Context: Papers from the Collingwood Symposium* (Oxford, 1977), pp 77-102.

― *The Durham Cassiodorus*, Jarrow Lecture (Jarrow, 1978).

― *Viking Age Sculpture in Northern England* (London, 1980).

— *England's Earliest Sculptors* (Toronto, 1996).

—Anglo-Saxon Sculptures at Deerhurst (Deerhurst, 2011).

— "Bede's Text of Cassiodorus' Commentary on the Psalms", *The Journal of Theological Studies* (1983): 189-193.

— Bailey, R.N. "Sutton Hoo and seventh-century art", In R.T. Farrell and C. Neuman de Vegvar (eds), *Sutton Hoo: Fifty Years After*, AEMS 1 (Oxford, 1992), pp 31-34.

— *England's Earliest Sculptors* (Toronto, 1996).

—*Anglo Saxon Sculpture at Deerhurst*, Deerhurst Lecture Series 2002 (Oxford, 2005).

— *Cheshire and Lancashire*, CASSS 9 (Oxford, 2010).

— "*In Medio Duorum Animalium*: Habakkuk, the Ruthwell Cross and Bede's Life of St Cuthbert". In Mullins and Scully, 2011: pp 243-252.

Bailey, R.N. and Cramp, R. *Cumberland, Westmorland and Lancashire North-of-the-Sands*, CASSS 2 (Oxford, 1988).

Baker, N. *The Evangelists in insular culture: c.600 - c.800 AD* (unpublished PhD Thesis, 2012).

Barthélemy, D. *The Serf, The Knight and the Historian* (Ithaca, 2009).

Barthes, R. *Elements of Semiology* (London, 1968)

Bassett, S. *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* (Leicester, 1990).

Bazelmans, J.. "Beyond Power. Ceremonial Exchanges in *Beowulf*", in F. Theuws & J.L. Nelson (eds.) *Rituals of Power from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2000): 311-375.

Belting, H. *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, (trans.) E. Jephcott (Chicago, 1994).

Benjamin, W. *Illuminations*, (ed.) Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn. (London, 1992).

Biddle, M. and Kjølbye-Biddle, B. "The Repton Stone", *Anglo-Saxon England* 14.1 (1985): 233-292.

Biddle, M. and Kjølbye-Biddle, B. "Repton and the 'Great Heathen Army', 873-4." In: J. Graham-Campbell, R. Hall, J. Jesch and D. N. Parsons (eds) *Vikings and the Danelaw (*Oxford, 2001): 45-96.

Bintley, M. and Boulton, M. *New Voices in Anglo-Saxon Art: Conversations in Honour of Jane Hawkes* (Oxford, forthcoming).

Blackburn, M and Dumville, D. *Kings, Currency, and Alliances: History and Coinage of Southern England in the Ninth Century* (Oxford, 1998).

Blackburn, M. *Anglo-Saxon monetary history: essays in memory of Michael Dolley* (Leicester, 1986).

Blair, I. Barham, E. and Blackmore, L. "My Lord Essex", *British Archaeology* 76 (2004): 10-17.

Blair, J. "Palaces or Minsters? Northampton and Cheddar reconsidered." *ASE* 25 (1996): 97-121.

—*The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 2006).

—"Frithuwold's kingdom and the origins of the Anglo-Satking Kingdom" in Bassett*, S. The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* (Leicester, 1990):97-107.

—*The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 2005).

— *Waterways and Canal Building in Medieval England* (Oxford, 2007).

Bloch, M. *Feudal Society*, trans. L.A. Manyon, 2 vols (Chicago, 1961).

Bonner, G. (ed.). *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the Thirteenth Centenary of the Birth of the Venerable Bede* (London, 1976).

Bonner, G. *Saint Bede in the Tradition of Apocalyptic Commentary* (Jarrow Lecture, 1966).

Boulton, M. and Hawkes, J. *The Art, Literature and Material Culture of the medieval World* (Dublin, 2015)

Boulton, M. and Stoner, H. *Place and Space in the Medieval World* (New York, forthcoming)

Bouman, A.C. "The Franks Casket", *Neophilologus* 3 (1965): 241-249.

Bowes, Kim. "Ivory Lists: Consular diptychs, Christian appropriation and polemics of time in Late Antiquity." Art History 24, no. 3 (2001): 338-357.

Bradbury, J. (ed.). *The Routledge Companion to Medieval Warfare* (London, 2004).

Breay, C. and Meehan, B. (eds) *The St Cuthbert Gospel: Studies on the Insular Manuscript of the Gospel of John* (London, 2015).

Brennan, N. and Hamerow, H. "An Anglo-Saxon great hall complex at Sutton Courtenay/Drayton, Oxfordshire: a royal centre of early Wessex?" *Archaeological Journal* 172 (2015): 325-51.

Brooks, N.P. *Anglo-Saxon Myths, State and Church, 400-1066* (London, 2000).

Brooks, S. "Population Ecology and Multiple Estate Formation" in Higgins, N. J. and Ryan, M. J. (eds) *The Landscape Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2010): 66-82.

Brown, G.H. *Bede the Venerable* (Woodbridge CT, 1987).

Brown, M.P. *Manuscripts from the Anglo-Saxon Age* (London, 2007).

— *The Lindisfarne Gospels: Society, Spirituality and the Scribe* (London, 2003).

Brown, P. *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (London, 1967).

Brodeur, A.G. *The Art of Beowulf.* (Berkeley, 1959).

Bruce-Mitford, R.L.S. The Art of the Codex Amiatinus. (Jarrow, 1969).

―*The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial: a Handbook* (London, 1979).

― *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology: Sutton Hoo and other Discoveries* (London, 1974).

― *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial, vol.* 1: *Excavations, Background, the Ship, Dating and Inventory* (London, 1975).

― *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial*, vol. 2: *Arms, Armour and Regalia* (London, 1978).

Bruce-Mitford, R.L.S. and Evans, A.C. *The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial*, vol. 3 (London: 1983).

Bryant, R. and Hare, M. The Western Midlands: Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Shropshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire CASSS 10 (Oxford, 2012)

Cambridge, E. and Rollason, D. "Debate: The pastoral organization of the Anglo-Saxon Church: a review of the 'Minster Hypothesis'." *Early Medieval Europe* vol 4, no. 1 (1995): 87-104.

Cameron, A. "Consular diptychs in their social context: new eastern evidence*." Journal of Roman Archaeology* 11 (1998): 384-403.

Cameron, J.M. *Images of Authority: A Consideration of the Concepts of "Regnum" and "Sacerdotium"* (New Haven CN, 1966).

Camille, M. "Seeing and Reading: Some Visual Implications of Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy", *Art History* 8 (1985): 26-49.

Camille, M. *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (London, 1992).

Campbell, J. G. "Bede".In T.A. Dorey (ed.), *Latin Historians* (London, 1966), pp 159-190.

― "Some New and Neglected Finds of 9th-century Anglo-Saxon Ornamental Metalwork", *Med. Arch.* 26 (1982): 144-50.

―*Viking Art* (London, 2013)

Carruthers, M. *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric and the Making of Images* (Cambridge, 2000).

― *The Medieval Craft of Memory: An Anthology of Text and Pictures* (Philadelphia PN, 2003).

Carver, M.O.H. (ed.). *The Cross Goes North: A Process of Conversion in Northern Europe A.D. 300-1300* (Woodbridge, 2003).

― *Sutton Hoo: Burial Ground of Kings* (London, 1998).

— *Sutton Hoo: A Seventh-Century Princely Burial Ground and its Context*, (London: 2005).

— "Agency, Intellect and the Archeaological Agenda" in Carver, Sanmark and Semple (eds) *Signals of Belief in Early England* (Oxford, 2010): 1-20.

— "Signals of Power". In Hamerow, Hinton and Crawford, 2011: pp 845-848.

Chadwick, H. *The Early Church* (London, 1973).

Chaney, W.A. *The Cult of Kingship in Anglo-Saxon England* (Berkley CA, 1970).

— "Grendel and the Gifstol: a Legal View of Monsters", *PMLA* 77, no. 5 (Dec 1962): 513-520.

Charles-Edwards, T. "Anglo Saxon Kinship Revisited". In Hines, 2003: pp 171-210.

— (ed.). *After Rome* (Oxford, 2004).

Church, S.D. "Paganism in Conversion-Age Anglo-Saxon England: The Evidence of Bede's Ecclesiastical History Reconsidered." *History* 93, no. 310 (2008): 162-180.

Clarke, D., Blackwell, A. and Goldberg, M., *Early Medieval Scotland: Individuals, Communities and Ideas* (Edinburgh, 2012).

Coatsworth, E. *West Yorkshire*, CASSS 8 (Oxford, 2008)

Coldstream, N. *Medieval Architecture* (Oxford, 2002).

Collingwood, W.G. Northumbrian Crosses of the Pre-Norman Age (Somerset, 1927).

Collins, R. *Early Medieval Europe 300-1000* (London, 1991).

Content, S. and Williams, H. 'Creating the Pagan English' in Carver, M., Sanmark, A., and Semple, S. (eds) *Signals of Belief in Early England* (Oxford, 2010):181-196.

Cox, B. *The Book as Relic: The Lindisfarne gospels and the politics of sainthood* (unpublished PhD thesis, 1995).

Cramp, R.J. "Beowulf and Archaeology", *Med. Arch*. 1 (1957): 57-77.

— *Early Northumbrian Sculpture* (Jarrow Lecture, 1965).

— 'Monastic Sites', in Wilson, D. M. (ed.) *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England*, (London, 1976), 201–52.

— *County Durham and Northumberland*, CASSS 1 (Oxford, 1984).

— *Southwest England*, CASSS 7 (Oxford, 2006)

Cramp, R.J. and Bailey, R.N. *Cumberland, Westmorland and Lancashire North-of-the-Sands,* CASSS 2 (Oxford, 1988).

Croke, B. and Emme, H. (eds). *History and Historians in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 1983).

Cross, J.E. "The Old English poetic theme of the Gifts of Men", *Neophilogus* vol. 46, no. 1 (1962): 66-70.

d'Ardenne, S.R.T.O. "Does the right side of the Franks Casket represent the burial of Sigurd?", *Études Germaniques* 21 (1966): 235–242.

Darby, P. *Bede and the End of Time*. (Farnham, 2013).

Davidson, H.R.E. *The Sword in Anglo-Saxon England* (Gloucestershire, 1962).

Davies, W. Halsall, G. and Reynolds, A. (eds.) *People and Space in the Middle Ages, 300-1300* (Turnhout, 2006).

Deanesly, M. *The Pre-Conquest Church in England* (London, 1961).

DeVries, K. and Smith, R.D. *Medieval Military Technology* (Toronto, 2012).

Dickinson, T.M. and Härke, H. *Early Anglo-Saxon Shields*, Archaeologia Series 110 (London, 1992).

Dobat, A. "The king and his cult: the axe-hammer from Sutton Hoo and its implications for the concept of sacral leadership in early medieval Europe", *Antiquity* 80 (2006): 880-93.

Dodwell, C. R. *Anglo-Saxon Art: A New Perspective* (Manchester, 1982).

Dolley M. *Viking Coins of the Danelaw and of Dublin* (London, 1965).

Dölling, H. Haus und Hof in West Germanischen Volksrechten (Münster, 1958).

Duggan, A.J. *Kings and Kingship in Medieval Europe* (London, 1993).

Enright, M.J. *The Sutton Hoo Sceptre and the Roots of Celtic Kingship* (Dublin, 2006).

Evans, A.C. *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial* (London, 1986).

Everson, P. and Stocker, D. *Lincolnshire*, CASSS 5 (Oxford, 1999)

Fanning, S. "Bede, *Imperium*, and the Bretwaldas", *Speculum* 66 (1991): 1-26.

Farrell, R.T. (ed.). *Bede and Anglo-Saxon England: Papers in Honour of the 1300th Anniversary of the Birth of Bede, given at Cornell University in 1973 and 1974*, BAR 46 (Oxford, 1978).

Farrell, R.T. and Neuman de Vegvar, C. (eds) *Sutton Hoo: Fifty Years After*, AEMS 1 (Oxford, 1992)

Fern, C.J.R. 'Before Sutton Hoo: the Prehistoric Remains and Early Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Tranmer House, Bromeswell, Suffolk', East Anglian Archaeology (2015) 155.

Filmer-Sankey, W. 'The "Roman Emperor" in the Sutton Hoo Ship Burial', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 149 (1996): 1-9.

Filmer-Sankey, W. and Pestell, T. "Snape Anglo-Saxon Cemetery: Excavations and Surveys 1824–1992", *East Anglian Archaeology* 95 (2001).

Foot, S. *Æthelstan: The First King of England* (New Haven CT, 2011).

Foxhall-Forbes, H. *Heaven and earth in Anglo-Saxon England: theology and society in an age of faith* (Farnham, 2013).

Frank, R. "Beowulf and Sutton Hoo: The Odd Couple". In C. B. Kendall and P. S. Wells (eds), *Voyage to the Other World: The Legacy of Sutton Hoo* (Minneapolis IL, 1992), pp 47-64.

Gameson, R. (ed.). *St Augustine and the Conversion of England* (Stroud, 1999).

Gannon, A. *The Iconography of Early Anglo-Saxon Coinage: Sixth to Eighth Centuries* (Oxford, 2003).

— *British Museum Anglo-Saxon Coins*, 1: *Early Anglo-Saxon Gold and Anglo-Saxon and Continental Silver Coinage of the North Sea Area, c. 600-760* (London, 2013).

Gardner, A. "Early Mediæval History, circa. AD 300–1000", *Annual Bulletin of Historical Literature* 5, no. 1 (1917): 8-11.

Geake, H. *The Use of Grave-goods in Conversion-period England c. 600 - c. 850 A.D* (unpublished PhD thesis, 1995).

Geake, H. *The Use of Grave Goods in Conversion-Period England, c.600-c.850* (Oxford, 1997).

Gem, R. 'Architecture of the Anglo-Saxon Church, 735 to 870', *JBAA* 146 (1993): 29–66.

Grabar, A. *Christian Iconography: A Study of its Origins* (New York, 1968).

Green, B. and Rogerson, A. "The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Bergh Apton, Norfolk: Catalogue", *East Anglian Archaeology* 7 (1978).

Grierson, P. and Blackburn, M. "Medieval European Coinage: With a Catalogue of the Coins in the Fitzwilliam Museum", *Cambridge* 1 (special edition: *The Early Middle Ages (Fifth-Tenth Centuries)* (1986).

Hagberg, G., "Wittgenstein's Aesthetics", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* Fall Edition (2014).

Halsall, G. *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West, 376-568* (Cambridge, 2007).

— *Warfare and Society in the Barbarian West, 450-900* (London, 2003).

Hamerow, H. *Early Medieval Settlements: The Archaeology of Rural Communities in North West Europe, 400-900 (Oxford, 2002).*

— *Rural Settlements and Society in Anglo-Saxon England*, (Oxford, 2012).

— "*Anglo-Saxon Timber Buildings and their Social Context*". In Hamerow, Hinton and Crawford, 2011: pp 128-155.

Hamerow, H., Hayden, C. and Hey, G. "Anglo-Saxon and earlier settlement near Drayton Road, Sutton Courtenay, Berkshire", *Archaeological Journal* 164 (2007): 109-146.

Hamerow, H. Hinton, D.A. and Crawford, S. (eds). *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology* (Oxford, 2011).

Hamerow, H. and MacGregor, A. (eds). *Image and Power in the Archaeology of Early Medieval Britain: Essays in Honour of Rosemary Cramp* (Oxford, 2001).

Hamilton Thompson, A. (ed.). *Bede: His Life, Times and Writings* (Oxford, 1969).

Harbison, P. *The High Crosses of Ireland: an Iconographical and Photographic Survey* (Bonn, 1992).

Harden, J. *The Picts: Including Guides to St Vigeans Museum and Meigle Museum* (Edinburgh, 2010).

Härke, H. The Circulation of Weapons in Anglo-Saxon Society in J. Nelson (ed.) *Rituals of Power: From Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2000): 377-400.

Härke, H. 'Weapons in Anglo-Saxon burials: The symbolic representation of war and violence in early medieval grave' in Florya, B.N., Akimova, O.A., Turilov, A.A. and Ivanov, S.A. (eds.) *Obraz Vojny v Obshchestvennoj Mysli Slavyanskikh Narodov Epokhi Srednevekovya i Rannego Novogo Vremeni*, (Moscow, 2012): 137-140.

Härke, H. " 'Warrior Graves?' The Background of the Anglo-Saxon Weapon Burial Rite." *Past and Present* (1990): 22-43.

Harrington, S. and Welch, M. *The Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms of Southern Britain AD 450-650: Beneath the Tribal Hidage* (Oxford, 2014).

Hartley, E. Hawkes, J. and Henig, M. (eds). *Constantine the Great: York's Roman Emperor* (York, 2006).

Havran, J. *Norwegian Stave Churches: A guide to the 29 remaining stave churches* (Oslo, 2010)

Hawkes, J. *The Non-Crucifixion Iconography of the pre-Viking Sculpture of the North of England: Hovingham, Masham, Rothbury, Sandbach and Wirksworth*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 2 vols (1989).

— "The miracle scene on the Rothbury Cross", *Archaeologia Aeliana* 17 (1989): 208-210.

— "The Rothbury Cross: An Iconographic Bricolage", *Gesta* 35.1(1996): 73-90.

— *The Golden Age of Northumbria* (Newcastle Upon Tyne, 1996).

— "Symbolic Lives: the Visual Evidence", in Hines, 1997: pp 311-44.

— "Columban Virgins: iconic images of the Virgin and Child in Insular sculpture". In C. Bourke (ed.), *Studies in the Cult of Saint Columba* (Dublin, 1997), pp 107-135.

— *The Sandbach Crosses: Sign and Significance in Anglo-Saxon Sculpture* (Dublin, 2002).

— "The Art of the Church in ninth-Century Anglo-Saxon England: the Case of Masham Column." *Hortus Artium Medievalium* 8, no. 1 (2002): 337-348.

— "Iuxta Morem Romanorum: Stone and Sculpture in Anglo-Saxon England". In Karkov and Brown, 2003: pp 69-100.

— "Sacraments in stone: the mysteries of Christ in Anglo-Saxon sculpture". In Carver, 2003: pp 351-371.

— "Figuring salvation: an excursus into the iconography of the Iona crosses" In. F. Foster and M. Cross (eds), *Able Minds and Practised Hands* (Leeds, 2005), pp 259-275.

— "The Legacy of Constantine in Anglo-Saxon England", in Hartley et al, 2006: pp 104-114.

— "Viewed through a glass darkly: the questionable movements of art in Anglo-Saxon England". In P. Horden (ed.), *Freedom of Movement in the Middle Ages* (Donington, 2007), pp 19-36.

— "The road to hell: the art of damnation in Anglo-Saxon sculpture". In Mullins and Scully, 2011: 230-242.

Hawkes, J. and Mills, S. (eds). *Northumbria's Golden Age* (Stroud, 1999).

Hawkes, J. and Sidebottom, P. *Derbyshire and Staffordshire*, CASSS 13 (forthcoming 2016).

Hawkes, S. C. (ed.) *Weapons and Warfare in Anglo-Saxon England*. Vol. 21. Oxford University School of Archaeology, (Oxford, 1989).

Hedeman, A.D. *The Royal Image: Illustrations of the Grandes Chroniques de France*, 1274-1422 (Berkeley CA, 1991).

Heitz, C. *L'Architecture religieuse carolingienne. Les formes et leurs fonctions* (Picard, 1980).

Hen, Y. *Roman Barbarians: the Royal Court and Culture in the Early Medieval West* (Basingstoke, 2007).

Henderson, G. *Bede and the Visual Arts*, Jarrow Lecture (Jarrow, 1980).

— *From Durrow to Kells: the Insular Gospel-books* (London, 1987).

Henderson, I. "The'David Cycle'in Pictish art". In J. Higgitt (ed.), *Early Medieval Sculpture in Britain and Ireland*, BAR British Series 152 (Oxford, 1986), pp 87-123.

— "The Dupplin Cross: A preliminary consideration of its Art-Historical Context". In Hawkes and Mills, 1999: pp 161-177.

Henri, F. *Early Christian Irish Art* (Dublin, 1955).

Hicks, C. "The Birds on the Sutton Hoo Purse", *ASE* 15 (1986): 153-165.

— *Animals in Anglo-Saxon Art* (Edinburgh, 1993).

Higham, N. J. *The Convert Kings: Power and Religious Affiliation in Early Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester, 1997).

— "Historical Narrative as Cultural Polotics: Rome 'British-ness' and English-ness'" in N.J. Higham (ed.) *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2007).

Hines, J. (ed.). *The Anglo-Saxons from the Migration Period to the Eighth Century: an ethnographic perspective*, 2 (Woodbridge, 2003).

— (ed.) *The Anglo-Saxons from the Migration Period to the Eighth Century: an Ethnographic Perspective. Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Studies in Historical Archaeoethnology*, (Woodbridge, 1997).

Hinton, D. A. *Catalogue of the Anglo-Saxon Ornamental Metalwork, 700-1100 in the Department of Antiquities*, Ashmolean Museum (Oxford, 1974).

Hirst, S. with T. Nixon, P. Rowsome and S. Wright, *The Prittlewell Prince: The Discovery of a Rich Anglo-Saxon Burial in Essex* (London, 2004).

Hobsbawn, E. 'Introduction' to Karl Marx, *Pre-capitalist Economic Formations*, trans. J. Cohen (London, 1964, 4th edn 1974): 9-66.

Holder, A.G. "Bede and the Tradition of Patristic Exegesis", *Anglican Theological Review,* 72 (1990): 399-411.

Hooke, D. *The Landscape of Anglo-Saxon England* (Leicester, 1998).

Hooke, D. *Trees in Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2010).

Hope-Taylor, B. *Yeavering: an Anglo-British centre of Early Northumbria* (London, 1977).

van der Horst, K. Noel, W. and Wüstefeld, W.C.M. (eds). *The Utrecht Psalter in Medieval Art: Picturing the Psalms of David* (Utrecht, 1996).

Hourihane, C. (ed.). *King David in the Index of Christian Art (*Princeton NJ, 2002).

Howorth, H.H. "The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Its Origin and History", *The Archaeological Journal* 65 (1908): 141–204

Hume, K. 'The Concept of the Hall in Old English Poetry', *ASE* 3 (1974), 63–74

Hunter Blair, P. *An Introduction to Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, UK 1956).

─ *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation and its Importance Today*, Jarrow
        Lecture (Jarrow, 1959).

Hunter Blair, P. and Lapidge, M. (eds). *Anglo-Saxon Northumbria* (London, 1984).

Huppé, B.F. *The Hero in the Earthly City: a reading of Beowulf* (Bingham, 1984).

Ingstad, A.S. "Textiles from Oseberg, Gokstad and Kaupang." In *Archaeological textiles:*
        report from the 2nd NESAT symposium 1.-4. V. 1984, (Copenhagen, 1988): 133-
        148

Irvine, S. *The Anglo-Saxon chronicle: a collaborative edition*, vol. 7 (Cambridge, 2004).

Jackson, J.W. "Discovery of Remains of the Celtic Short-Horned Ox, Bos longifrons
        Owen, at Whitepark Bay, Co. Antrim", *The Irish Naturalists' Journal* (1939): 189-
        193.

James, S. Marshall, A. and Millett, M. "An early medieval building tradition",
        Archaeological Journal 141 (1985): 182-215.

Jolly, K.L. Karkov, C.E. and Keefer, S.L. (eds). *Cross and Culture in Anglo-Saxon*
        England: Studies in Honor of George Hardin Brown (Morgantown WV, 2007).

Karkov, C.E. (ed.). *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England: Basic Readings* (New
        York, 1999).

─ *The Ruler Portraits of Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2004).

─ *The Art of Anglo-Saxon England*, (Woodbridge, 2011)

Karkov, C.E. and Brown, G.H. (eds). *Anglo-Saxon Styles* (Albany NY, 2003).

Karkov, C.E. and Orton, F. (eds). *Theorizing Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture* (Morgantown
        WV, 2003).

Kendall, C.B. and Wells, P.S. (eds). *Voyage to the Other World: The Legacy of Sutton Hoo*
        (Minneapolis MN, 1992).

Kendrick, T. D. *Anglo-Saxon art to 900 AD*, (London, 1938).

Kendrick, T. D. *Late Saxon and Viking Art* (London, 1949).

Kirton, J. and Young, G. "Excavations at Bamburgh: New Revelations in Light of Recent
        Investigations at the Core of the Castle Complex" Archeology Journal 174(2016):
        146-210.

Kitzinger, E. *Byzantine Art in the Making: Main Lines of Stylistic Development in*
        Mediterranean Art, 3rd-7th Century (Cambridge, 1977).

― "Interlace and icons: form and function in early Insular art". In M. Spearman and J. Higgitt (eds), *The Age of Migrating Ideas: Early Medieval Art in Northern Britain and Ireland: Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Insular Art Held in the National Museums of Scotland in Edinburgh, 3-6 January 1991* (Edinburgh and Stroud, 1993): 3-14.

Krautheimer, R. and Trachtenberg M. *Rome: Profile of a City, 312-1308.* (Princeton NJ, 1980).

Lang, J. *York and Eastern Yorkshire*, CASSS 3 (Oxford, 1991).

― "The Imagery of the Franks Casket: Another Approach". In Hawkes and Mills , 1999: pp 247-255.

― "The Apostles in Anglo-Saxon Sculpture in the Age of Alcuin", *Early Medieval Europe* 8, no. 2 (1999): 271-282.

― *Northern Yorkshire*, CASSS 6 (Oxford, 2001).

Lawson, G. "An Anglo-Saxon harp and lyre of the ninth century". In D.R .Widdes and R.F. Wolpert (eds), *Music and Tradition: essays on Asian and other musics presented to Laurence Picken* (Cambridge, 2009), pp 229-244.

Leahy, K. and Bland, R. *The Staffordshire Hoard* (London, 2009)

― *The Staffordshire Hoard: New Edition* (London, 2014)

Lees, C.A. and Overing, G.R. "Anglo-Saxon Horizons: Places of the Mind in the Northumbrian Landscape". In C.A. Lees and G.R. Overing (eds), *A Place to Believe In: Locating Medieval Landscapes* (University Park, PA, 2006), pp 1-26.

Lewis, S. "San Lorenzo Revisited: a Theodosian Palace Church at Milan". *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 32 (1973): 197-222.

Loyn, H.R. *The Governance of Anglo-Saxon England 500-1087* (London, 1984).

Lund, J. 'At the Water's Edge' in Caver, M., Sanmark, A. and Semple, S. Signals of belief in Early England (Oxford, 2010): 49-66.

Lyne, M. "Late Roman leather helmet fragments from Richborough", *Journal of Roman Military Equipment Studies* 5 (1994) 97-105.

Malbon, E.S. *The Iconography of the Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus: Neofitus Iit Ad Deum* (Princeton NJ, 1990).

Mancinelli, F. *Catacombs and Basilicas: the Early Christians in Rome.* (London, 1981).

Marsden, R. *The Text of the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 1995).

Martin-Clarke, E. *Culture in Early Anglo-Saxon England* (Baltimore MD, 1947).

Marzinzik, S. *The Sutton Hoo Helmet: object in focus* (London, 2007).

Matthews, T.F. *The Clash of Gods: A Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art* (Princeton NJ, 1993).

Mayr-Harting, H. *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1987).

McGillivray, M. "What kind of seat is Hrothgar's 'gifstol'", *Studies in Philology* 105, no. 3 (Summer, 2008): 265-283.

Meadows, I. "The Pioneer Helmet", *Current Archaeology* 154 (1997): 391-395.

Metcalf, D.M. "Monetary Affairs in Mercia in the time of Æthelbald". In A. Donier (ed.), *Mercian Studies* (Leicester, 1977), pp 87-106.

Meyvaert, P. "Bede, Cassiodorus, and the Codex Amiatinus." *Speculum* 71, no. 04 (1996): 827-883.

Millett, M. Martin, A. and James, S. "Excavations at Cowdery's Down Basingstoke, Hampshire, 1978–81." *Archaeological Journal* 140, no. 1 (1983): 151-279.

Mitchell, W. T. J., *Iconology, Image Text and Ideology* (Chicago, 1986)

Mitchell, W.T.J., *Image Theory: Living Pictures* (New York, 2016)

Mortimer, P. and Pollington, S. *Remaking the Sutton Hoo Stone: The Ansell-Roper Replica and its Context, (*Ely, 2013).

Moss, R. (ed.). *Making and Meaning in Insular Art* (Dublin, 2007).

Mullins, E. and Scully, D. (eds). *Listen, O isles, unto me: studies in medieval word and image in honour of Jennifer O'Reilly* (Cork, 2011)

Naismith, R. *Money and Power in Anglo-Saxon England The Southern English Kingdoms, 757–865* (Cambridge, 2012).

Nees, L. *Early Medieval Art* (Oxford, 2002).

Nelson, J. "The Problem of King Alfred's Royal Anointing." *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 18, no. 2 (1967): 145-163.

Nelson, J. "The Earliest royal Ordo: some liturgical and historical aspects", in B. Tierney and P. Linehan (eds), *Authority and Power: Studies on Medieval Law and Government* (Cambridge, 1980): 29-48.

Neuman de Vegvar, C. and Stoner, H. "Senses in the Hall" in Owen-Crocker, G. and Clegg, M. *Daily Living in Anglo-Saxon England Volume 4* (Liverpool, forthcoming).

Newton, S. *The origins of Beowulf and the pre-Viking kingdom of East Anglia* (Cambridge, 1993).

Newton, S. *The Reckoning of King Rædwald: the Story of the King Linked to the Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial* (Colchester, 2003).

Nordhagen, P.J. *Studies in Byzantine and Early Medieval Painting* (Oxford, 1990).

Norsk Folkemuseum, *Norsk Folkemuseum- The Open-Air Museum* (Oslo, 2011)

North, R. *The Origins of Beowulf: from Vergil to Wiglaf* (Oxford, 2006).

— "You Sexy Beast: The Pig in a Villa in Vandalic North Africa and Boar-Cults in Old Germanic Heathendom". In M.D.J. Bintley and T.J.T. Williams (eds), *Representing Beasts in Early medieval England and Scandinavia* (Woodbridge, 2015), pp 151-175.

Ó Carragáin, É. *Ritual and the Rood: Liturgical Images and the Old English Poems of the Dream of the Rood tradition* (Toronto and London, 2005).

Oggins, R.S. *The Kings and their Hawks* (New Haven CT, 2004).

Oliver, L. *The Beginnings of English Law* (Toronto, 2002).

Olovsdotter, Cecilia. *The Consular Image: an Iconological Study of the Consular Diptychs. Vol. 1376.* (Oxford, 2005).

Owen-Crocker, G.R. *Anglo-Saxon costume: a study of secular civilian clothing and jewelry fashions* (unpublished PhD thesis, 1976).

Owen-Crocker, G.R. *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2004).

Patterson, L. *Negotiating the Past: The Historical Understanding of Medieval Literature* (Madison WI, 1987).

Peddie, J. *Alfred: Warrior King* (Sutton, 1999).

Pederson, A, 'Power and Aristocracy' in Williams, G, Pentz, P. and Wemhoff, M. (eds). *Vikings: life and legend*. (London, 2014): 122-160.

Penn, K. Brugmann, B. and Høilund Nielsen, K. *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon Inhumation Burial: Morning Thorpe, Spong Hill, Bergh Apton and Westgarth Gardens*. Historic Environment, Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service (Norwich, 2007).

Petts, D. and Turner, S. (eds). *Early Medieval Northumbria: kingdoms and communities, AD 450-1100*. (Turnhout, 2011).

Pillsworth, E. *Anglo-Saxon and Norse Harps and Folksongs* (unpublished M.Phil., 2014)

Price, N. and Mortimer, P. "An eye for Odin? Divine role-playing in the Age of Sutton Hoo", *European Journal of Archaeology* 17(3) (2014): 517-38.

Radford, C.A.R. "The Church of Saint Alkmund, Derby", *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal* 96 (1976): 26-61.

Rahtz, P. "The Saxon and Medieval Palaces at Cheddar. Excavations 1960-62." *BAR British serie*s 65 (1979).

Rahtz, P. "Cheddar Vicarage, 1965." *Somersetshire Archaeological and Natural History Society* vol. 110, (1966): 52-84.

Raw, B. "England in the Age of Sutton Hoo: in Carver, M. (ed.) *The Age of Sutton Hoo* (Woodbridge, 1992).

RCAHMS. *An Inventory of the Ancient Monuments of Argyll*, 4: *Iona (prehistoric and Early Historic*) (Edinburgh, 1984).

Reynolds, A. 'Boundaries and settlements in late sixth to eleventh-century England', *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 12 (2003), 98-136.

Reynolds, A. and Semple, S. Anglo-Saxon non-funerary weapon depositions, in S. Brookes, S. Harrington and A. Reynolds (eds) *Studies in Early Anglo-Saxon Art and Archaeology: Papers in Honour of Martin G. Welsh.* British Archaeological Reports Brit. Ser. 527 (2011), 40-48.

Ridyard, S. J. *The royal saints of Anglo-Saxon England: a study of West Saxon and East Anglian cults.* (Cambridge, 1988).

Roach, L. *Kingship and Consent in Anglo-Saxon England, 871-978: Assemblies and the State in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2013).

Roberts, A. and Donaldson, J. *Ante Nicene Christian Library, Tranlations of the Writing of the Fathers, Vol. 8* (Edinburgh,1868).

Rodwell, W. "Anglo-Saxon church building: aspects of design and construction." In C.A.S. Butler and R.K. Morris (eds) *The Anglo-Saxon Church. Papers on history, architecture and archaeology in honour of Dr. H. Taylor* (Amhurst, NY, 1986): 156-75.

Roe, H.M. "The 'David Cycle' in Early Irish Art", *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* (1949): 39-59.

Rollason, D. W. *The Mildrith Legend: A Study in Early Medieval Hagiography in England* (Leicester, 1982).

—"The cults of murdered royal saints in Anglo-Saxon England", *ASE* 11 (1982): 1-22.

—*Northumbria 500-1100: creation and d estruction of a kingdom* (Cambridge, 2003).

Rupp, H. *Die Herkunft der Zelleneinlage und die Almandin-Scheibenfilbeln im Rheinland* (Röhrscheid, 1937).

Salin, B. *Die altgermanische Thierornamentik* (Stockholm, 1904).

Sanmark, A. "Living On: Ancestors and the Soul" in Carver, M. ,Sanmar, A. and Semple, S. (eds) *Signals of Belief in Early England* (Oxford, 2010): 158-176.

Saussure, F. Cours de linguistique générale (Paris, 1916)

Saussure, F. *Écrits de linguistique générale* (Paris, 2002).

Savage, A. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* (London, 1997).

Sawyer, P. and Wood, I. (eds). *Early Medieval Kingship* (Leeds, 1977).

Schiller, G. *The Iconography of Christian Art, vol. 1* (translated by J. Seligman), (London, 1971)

Schiller, G. *The Iconography of Christian Art, vol. 2* (translated by J. Seligman), (London, 1971)

Semple, S. *Perceptions of the Prehistoric in Anglo-Saxon England, (*Oxford: 2013).

Shapland, M., 'In Unenvied Greatness Stands: The Lordly Tower-Nave Church of St Mary Bishophill Junior, York', *Church Archaeology* 14 (2010)

— *Anglo-Saxon Lordly Towers* (unpublished Phd thesis, 2012)

— 'Meanings of Timber and Stone in Anglo-Saxon Building Practice', in Shapland and Bintley (eds), *Trees and Timber in the Anglo-Saxon World* (Oxford , 2013) 25-44.

Shapland, M. and Bintley, M. *Trees and Timber in the Anglo-Saxon World* (Oxford, 2013).

Shaw, P. *Pagan Goddesses in the Early Germanic World: Eostre, Hreda and the Cult of Matrons* (London, 2011).

Smith, L. *Waterways and White Gold: Anglo-Saxon Ivory and its context* (unpublished PhD thesis, 2016)

Smyth, A.P. *Warlords and Holy Men* (London, 1984).

Souers, P.W. "The Magi on the Franks Casket", *Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature* 19 (1937): 249-254.

Souers, P.W. "The Wayland Scene on the Franks Casket", *Speculum* 18, no. 1 (1943): 104-111.

Speake, G. *Anglo-Saxon Animal Art and its Germanic Background* (Oxford, 1980).

Stenton, D.M. (ed.). *Preparatory to Anglo-Saxon England: Being the Collected Papers of Frank Merry Stenton* (Oxford, 1970).

Stenton, F.M. *Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1971).

Stephenson, I.P. *The Late Anglo-Saxon Army* (Stroud, 2007).

Stevens, J. "On the remains found in an Anglo-Saxon tumulus at Taplow, Buckinghamshire", *JBAS* 40 (1884): 61-71.

Stevick, R. D. *The earliest Irish and English bookarts: visual and poetic forms before AD 1000.* (University Park, 1994).

Story, J. *Carolingian Connections: Anglo-Saxon England and Carolingian Francia, c. 750-870* (Aldershot, 2003)

Sutherland, C.H.V. *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, 6 (Charlottesville VA, 1967).

Taylor, H.M. and Taylor, J.S. *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, 3 vols (Cambridge, 1965).

Temple, E. *A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles: Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts 900-1066* (London, 1976).

Thacker, A. "Kings, saints and monasteries in pre-Viking Age Mercia", *Midland History* 10 (1985): 1-25.

Thomas, G. "Life before the Minster: the Social Dynamics of Monastic Foundation at Anglo-Saxon Lyminge, Kent", *Antiquaries Journal* 93 (2013): 109-45.

Thompson, V. *Death and Dying in Later Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2004).

Thordeman, B. 'Der nordische Helm in frühgeschichtlicher Zeit' *Zeitschrift für Historischen Waffen und Kostumkunde,* 17 (1944): 217-24.

Tierney, B. and Linehan, P. (eds). *Authority and Power: Studies on Medieval Law and Government presented to Walter Ullmann on his Seventieth Birthday* (Cambridge, 1980).

Tolkien, J.R.R. with S. Spell *Beowulf: a translation and commentary* (New York, 2014)

Toswell, M. J. "Bede's Sparrow and the Psalter in Anglo-Saxon England." *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews* 13, no. 1 (2000): 7-12.

Tweddle, D. *The Anglian Helmet from Coppergate: The Archeology of York, 17: The Small Finds* (York, 1992).

Tweddle, D. *Biddle M. and Kjølbye-Biddle, B. South-East England*, CASSS 4 (Oxford, 1995)

Tyler, E.M. *Treasure in the Medieval West* (London, 2000).

Unwin, T. 'Towards a Model of Anglo-Scandinavian rural Settlement in England" in Hooke, D. (ed.) *Anglo-Saxon Settlements* (Oxford, 1988): 77-98.

Walker, J 'In the Hall', in Carver, M., Sanmark, A. and Semple S. (eds) *Signals of Belief in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford. 2010) 83-102.

Wadstein, E. *The Clermont Runic Casket* (Uppsala, 1900).

Wallace-Hadrill, J.M. *Early Germanic kingship in England and on the Continent* (Oxford, 1971).

— *Long Haired Kings and Other Studies in Frankish History* (Toronto, 1982).

Wallis, F, and Darby, P. (eds) *Bede and the Future*. (Farnham, 2014).

Ward, B. "'In medium duorum animalium': Bede and Jerome on the Canticle of Habakkuk." *Studia Patristica* 25 (1993): 189-93.

Webster, L. "Stylistic aspects of the Franks Casket." The Vikings 20 (1982): 31.

— "Death's Diplomacy: Sutton Hoo in the Light of Other Male Princely Burials", in R. Farrell and C. Neuman de Vegvar (eds) *Sutton Hoo: Fifty Years After* (Oxford, 1992): 75–82.

—"The iconographic programme of the Franks Casket". In Hawkes and Mills, 1999: pp 227-246.

—*The Franks Casket*. (London, 2010).

— *Anglo-Saxon Art* (London, 2012).

Webster, L. and Backhouse, J. (eds). *The Making of England: Anglo-Saxon Art and Culture AD 600-900* (London, 1991).

Webster, L. and Brown, M. (eds). *The Transformation of the Roman world AD 400-900* (Berkley CA, 1997).

Weiler, B.K.U. *Kingship, Rebellion and Political Culture: England and Germany, c.1215-c.1250* (Basingstoke, 2007).

Wickham-Crowley, K. "The Birds on the Sutton Hoo instrument," in R. Farrell and C. Neuman de Vegvar (eds) *Sutton Hoo: Fifty Years After* (Oxford, 1992): 43–62.

Williams, G. *Coinage and History in the North Sea World*, *c. 500-1250, edited with B. Cook* (Leiden, 2006).

— "Kingship, christianity and coinage: monetary and political perspectives on silver economy in the Viking Age", *Silver Economy in the Viking Age* 00 (2007): 177-214.

— *Early Anglo-Saxon Coins*, (Oxford, 2008).

Williams, H. Death, Memory and Time: A Consideration of the Mortuary Practices at Sutton Hoo, in C. Humphrey & W.M. Ormrod (eds.) *Time in the Medieval World*, (Woodbridge: 2001): 35-71.

—. "Mortuary Practices in Early Anglo-Saxon England". In Hamerow, Hinton and Crawford, 2011: pp 238-265.

— "The sense of being seen: ocular effects at Sutton Hoo", *Journal of Social Archaeology* 11(1) (2011): 99-121.

Williams, J. H. Shaw, M. and Denham. V.. *Middle Saxon Palaces at Northampton*. (Northampton, 1985).

Williams, J. H. *St Peter's Street, Northampton: Excavations 1973–1976* (Northampton, 1979)

Williamson, P. *Medieval Ivory Carvings. Early Christian to Romanesque.* (London, 2010).

Wilson, D.M. "An inlaid iron folding stool in the British Museum", *Med. Arch.* 1 (1957): 39-56.

Wilson, D. M. Anglo-Saxon Art: From the Seventh Century to the Norman Conquest (London, 1984).

Wiseman, K. *Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century* (New York, 1979).

Wittgenstein, L., *Philosophical Investigations* (trans and notes) G.E.M. Anscombe, (New York, 2009)

Wood, I. "The Transmission of Ideas". In Webster and Brown, 1997: pp 111–127.

Woolf, A. 'Sutton Hoo and Sweden revisited', in A. Gnasso, E.E. Intagliata, T. J. MacMaster and B. N. Morris (eds) *The Long Seventh Century: Continuity and Discontinuity in the Age of Transition,* (Oxford, 2015): 5-18.

Wormald, P. "Bede, the Bretwaldas and the Origins of the Gens Anglorum". In P. Wormald with D. Bullough and R. Collins (eds), *Ideal and reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon society* (Hoboken, NJ, 1983), pp 99-129.

Wormold, P., *Legal culture in the early medieval west: law as text, image and experience* (London, 1999): 391-393.

Worssam, B.C. and Tatton-Brown, T.K.T. "The stone of the Reculver columns and the Reculver Cross". In D. Parsons (ed.), *Stone: Quarrying and Building in England. AD 43-1525* (London, 1990), pp 51-69.

Wright, D. H. (ed.) *The Vespasian Psalter*. (Copenhagen, 1967).

Wymer, J.J. and Brown, N.R. *Excavations at North Shoebury: Settlement and Economy in South-east Essex 1500 BC-AD 1500* (Colchester, 1995)

Yorke, B. *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1990).

Zarnecki, G. *Later English Romanesque Sculpture, 1140-1210*, (London, 1953).

– *English Romanesque Art 1066-1200* (London, 1984)

Websites:

(—). "Early Church Date?", *British Archaeology*, Dec. 1995, n.10 (http://www.archaeologyuk.org/ba/ba10/BA10NEWS.HTML) (Accessed: April, 2015).

(—). "My Lord Essex" *British Archeology*, May 2004, no.76 (http://www.archaeologyuk.org/ba/ba76/feat1.shtml) (Accessed: May, 2104).

(―). "Were Anglo-Saxon Halls Home to Kings?" *British Archaeology*, Feb 2014, no. 7 (http://www.lymingearchaeology.org/files/2013/12/British-Archaeology-134-Lyminge.pdf) (Accessed: April, 2015).

British Museum- Collection online, http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/search.aspx (Accesed, Jan 2012)

Dictionary of Old English: Web Corpus, http://tapor.library.utoronto.ca.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/doecorpus/ (Accessed, November 2012)

Early English Laws, http://www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk/ (Accessed: November, 2014)

Electronic Sawyer, http://www.esawyer.org.uk/about/index.html (Accessed, May 2015)

Lyminge Archeological Project, http://blogs.reading.ac.uk/lyminge/ (Accessed: April 2015)

Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS), https://finds.org.uk/ (Accessed: December 2012)

Staffordshire Hoard Website: http://www.staffordshirehoard.org.uk/ (Accessed: 15 April 2013)

The Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England, http://www.pase.ac.uk/index.html (Accessed: 13 May 2013)

Webster, L. *The Rise, Fall and Resuscitation of the Taplow Burial* (http://www.suttonhoo.org/, 2001) (Accessed: 12 April 2013).

York Museums Trust- Collection online, yorkmuseumstrust.org.uk/collections/search (accessed April 2016)