

The Matter of *Englaland*

The Story of Offa of Angel,
and the Narrative World of *Widsith*

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The
University of Leeds, Institute for Medieval Studies, August 2025

I confirm that the work submitted is my own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Preface and Acknowledgements

My first and profoundest thanks go to Prof. Alaric Hall and Prof. Jonathan Jarrett, my supervisors at Leeds University, for their immense learning, industry and long-suffering but always patient guidance. I hope to have produced something that they would not blush to acknowledge some responsibility for, but I am sure I leave them disappointed by my abidingly cussed attitudes to the work of Frog and Procopius (respectively).

My interest in Old English and Old Norse was fired long before that as an undergraduate – again at Leeds – by my teachers, Tom Shippey, Rory McTurk and Andrew Wawn. After my degree, in 1986, I moved on to LMH at Oxford, to read for a DPhil, first under the supervision of the late Ursula Dronke, where I was privileged both to benefit from her wisdom and to be a junior colleague of Carolyne Larrington, Guðrún Nordal, Peter Robinson and Clive Tolley. Later I was supervised by Prof. Michael Barnes of UCL, whose academic rigour was a simultaneous impulse to emulation and – since one could only fall short – despair. When I was writing that forerunner of this thesis (on some other topic and long since abandoned for a career in the law), I was lucky to receive some guidance from Bruce Mitchell at St. Edmund Hall. At our meeting at eleven in the morning he offered me a beer (which was as welcome as it was unexpected) and in return for his wisdom asked only one thing, which was to receive an acknowledgement. It is not in the work he (or I) expected, but I am glad to be able to give it now, in genuine gratitude to a great scholar and a convivial and generous man.

My thanks also to Kendra Willson for providing me (via Alaric) with a copy of her thesis on hypocorisms in modern Icelandic – a fascinating stimulus, if ever there was one, to a renewed interest in what I think is an aspect of historical Germanic naming which still lacks systematisation and is frequently misunderstood. I also thank my examiners, Rory and Carolyne, for their many suggestions for improvement (cheerfully incorporated).

It used to be traditional for the (male) writer to thank his wife for doing the typing and compiling the index. Since I can type myself (after a fashion), and a thesis (I am told) requires no index, I only have to thank Joanna for putting up with me in every other way for the last five years (and, of course, long before that and, hopefully, afterwards). Finally, I thank Sadie and Florence, the labradors without whose boundless energy and enthusiasm this thesis would have been finished in half the time.

I. S.

Leeds,

March 2026

Abstract

Contrary to conventional scholarly belief, the Old English poem *Widsith* (composed *c.* 700) is not just a collection of lists of the names of kings and tribes but a poem based on a narrative with two main components. One concerns the personal experiences of the poem's speaker, the poet Wīdsīþ and his mission to take a princess to be married to the Gothic king Eormenrīc (of notoriously savage temper). But this is contained within a wider historical, geographic and political scenario, encompassing Jutland and northern Germany – not entirely as in historical reality, but as it was imagined to be before the Germanic migration to Britain. Although unhistorical and anachronistic, the political and dynastic world understood by the *Widsith* poet (and his audience) was large, populous and complex. Despite the detailed work of scholars such as Chadwick, Chambers and Malone, no study, I argue, has ever considered *Widsith* as expressive of both a coherent narrative *and* as part of a concretely-realised world. No other study, either, has properly identified the importance – to the poet Wīdsīþ and his world – of the heroic saga of Offa of Angel. I examine the very disparate texts containing Offa's story to attempt – for the first time – a holistic reconstruction of the likely shape of his tale, as it may have been known in England up to the thirteenth century. I argue that the story of Wīdsīþ the poet has been made a part of the greater story of Offa, which itself was a part of the story, greater still, of the origins of England following the conquest of Continental Angel by the Danes. This is a story which I identify as a foundational legend of the Anglians in England, and hence of England itself – “the Matter of England”.

In order to undertake this analysis, I have made a close study of the meanings of the names of characters and places. To do this I have developed new methodologies with respect to naming traditions in Old English heroic texts, which are set out in Part I of the thesis.

To the memories of my mother and father, both of whom would have been immensely proud that I had written a book (though they probably would not have read it), and of my grandfather Jack Howey, a self-taught miner whose greatest accolade was that someone was a “scholar”.

For some of these characters [in *Beowulf*], such little information is given about them that meaningful critical discussion is not even a possibility. Oslaf, Guðlaf, Eomer, Garmund, Wiðergyld, and Wonred, among others, confront the modern reader as little more than insignificant names.

Leonard Neidorf¹

Diese gerechtigkeit muß aber der untersuchung im großen wie im kleinen angedeihen. die naturforscher bezeugen uns, daß das kleinste auch das größte mit erweisen kann, und die ursache ist einzusehn, warum in unserm alterthum, während seine hauptzüge getilgt wurden, kleinliche und scheinbar zufällige geborgen blieben. leise analogien, wie die zwischen Bregovine, Freávine und gotes friunt [...], lasse ich mir nicht gern vorbeigehn.

Jacob Grimm²

Anglica quæ hic continentur vix Angli agnoscent

Árni Magnússon³

¹ Neidorf 2020a: 665.

² Preface to the 2nd edition of *Deutsche Mythologie* (1844), reprinted in Grimm 1875-78 (I, vii):

This justice [*sc.* of conceding the sophistication of Germanic heathen culture and literature] must, however, be part of the investigation in large things as in small. Natural scientists provide us with evidence that the smallest may also prove the largest; and we may understand the reason why, in our antiquity, while the main features were erased, petty and seemingly random ones were preserved. Faint analogies, such as those between *Bregowine*, *Frēawine* and *gotes friunt* [...], I do not like to allow to slip by me.

³ “The English things which are contained here the English scarcely know of”. Entry in Árni’s notebook entitled *Skjöldunga Sögu fragmenti ut puto* (“My Thoughts on the Fragments of *Skjöldunga saga*”), in Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, MS AM 1 e β II, fol. 21r.

Table of Contents

<i>Front matter</i>	1
<i>Preface and Acknowledgements</i>	3
<i>Abstract</i>	4
<i>Table of Contents</i>	7
<i>List of Maps</i>	12
<i>List of Figures</i>	12
<i>List of Tables</i>	13
<i>List of Linguistic Abbreviations</i>	13
<i>Glossary of Onomastic and Linguistic Terms</i>	15

INTRODUCTION

1.1	How to Get a Thesis out of <i>Widsith</i>	20
1.2	Aims and Scope	20
1.3	Methodologies: Names and Naming	21
1.4	Terms and Terminology	35
1.5	Quotation, Orthography and Critical Apparatus	38
1.6	Coda	40

I

NAMES AND NAMING IN EARLY MEDIEVAL VERNACULAR LITERATURE

1.1	Lots in a Name: Revised Approaches to Names and Naming	42
1.2	The Ethno-Eponym	43
1.2.1	<i>Ostrogotha</i> and the Ostrogoths; <i>Ēastgota</i> and the <i>Ēastgotan</i>	50
1.2.2	Where's Wala? <i>Widsith</i> and the Missing Roman Emperor	52
1.2.3	Hnæf, Hōc and the Hōcingas	57
1.2.4	Scyld Scēfing.....	59

1.2.5	Healfdene and the Tribe of the Healfdene.....	62
1.2.6	<i>Scylding</i> (and <i>Scylfing</i>)	66
1.2.7	Ethno-eponyms in <i>-ing</i>	68
1.3	One Name Good, Two Names Better: Multiple Naming and the Appositive Style	71
1.3.1	Finn and Folcwald(a); Gefwulf and God(w)ulf	71
1.3.1.1	Finn, the Jutes and Giants	72
1.3.1.2	Finn, Gefwulf and Gārulf	75
1.3.2	Quid Hinieldus cum Withergyldo?	82
1.4	Epithetical Names	90
1.5	Hypocorism in Old English	93
1.5.1	Introduction	93
1.5.2	“Generative” Hypocorism: A Proposal	98
1.5.3	The <i>Offa</i> -Type of Hypocorism	112
1.5.4	Hypocorism in Old English: Conclusions	123
1.6	The Ethno-Eponym and Multiple Naming: Conclusions	124

II

THE NARRATIVES OF *WIDSITH* AND THEIR WORLD

1	The Reception of <i>Widsith</i>	
1.1	<i>Widsith</i> : The Minstrels and the Critics	125
1.2	<i>Wīdsīþ maðolade</i> : What Wīdsīþ Actually Said	133
2	The Man from Ongle: Offa and the Angles	
2.1	Sources and Materials	138
2.2	English Genealogical Traditions	141
2.2.1	Offa I and the Mercian Regnal List.....	143
2.3	Dramatis Personae from Angel to Mercia	145
2.3.1	Frēalāf and Wōden: Of Gods and Men	145
2.3.2	Weoþulgēot: The Wandering Jute	147

2.3.3	Wihtlæg: The Man of Law?	150
2.3.3.1	Wihtlæg, Witta and the Men of Kent	154
2.3.3.2	<i>Wihtlæg</i> and <i>Viglecus</i> : from England to Denmark	156
2.4	Wērmund, Wærmund: The Father of Offa	159
2.5	Offa, King of Angel.....	161
2.5.1	Offa and Uffo: Evidence of the Transmission of Offa's Name and Story	162
2.5.2	Offa's Name: Conclusions	165
2.5.3	<i>Āne sweorde</i> : Offa and his Duel	166
2.5.3.1	Skrep, the <i>ealdsweord Ēot(en)isc</i>	167
2.5.4	Offa and Alewīh: The Context of Fame	170
2.5.5	Offa: Conclusions	180
2.6	Angengēot, Angelgēot, Angelþēow	180
2.6.1	<i>Angen</i> , <i>Angel</i> , <i>Ongen(d)</i>	181
2.6.2	<i>Gēot</i> , <i>Gīot</i> , <i>Gēat</i>	185
2.6.2.1	Jutes in <i>Widsith</i> and <i>Beowulf</i>	188
2.6.2.2	<i>Gīot</i> vs. <i>Gēat</i> ; Jutes and False Gods	193
2.6.3	<i>þēow</i>	197
2.6.4	Angengēot, Angelgēot and Angelþēow: Conclusion	201
2.7	Ēomēr	202
2.7.1	Jutlandic Geopolitics: Ēomēr, the Hæleþas and the Hæþnas	205
2.8	Icīl, Icel	209
2.9	Offa, <i>Widsith</i> and Anglo-Saxon Genealogies: Conclusions	211
3	The Others: Myrgingas, Langobards and Goths and Ethnography in <i>Widsith</i>	
3.1	Introduction	214
3.2	The Myrgingas	214
3.3	Ēadgils	217
3.4	Mearchealf and Meaca	219
3.5	Myrgingas, Ongend-Myrgingas and Hundingas	222
3.5.1	A Problem of Interpretation: The Intrusion of the Bible	222
3.5.2	Myrgingas and Ongend-Myrgingas	225
3.5.3	Myrgingas and Longbeardan: Connections in Narrative and Topography	227
3.5.4	<i>Maurunga</i> and <i>Myrgingas</i>	230
3.5.5	The Story of Eormenrīc and Ealhild: The Myrgingas as a Literary Creation	233

3.5.5.1	The Horse Motif in the Ermanaric Story	236
3.5.6	<i>Ēastan of Ongle</i> : Wīp-Myrgingas and the <i>innweorud</i> of Eormenrīc	238
3.5.7	Bāningas and Burgende: Neighbours of the Goths	245
3.5.8	The Wīp-Myrgingas and the Goths	247
3.5.9	The Home of the Goths in (Later) Literature	252
3.5.10	Myrgingas and Goths: Conclusions	254
4	The Marriage of Offa	
4.1	Introduction	256
4.2	Offa's Marriage and <i>Beowulf</i>	257
4.2.1	The Name of Offa's Wife	258
4.2.2	The <i>Fremu</i> Question	260
4.2.3	The <i>Brȳþu</i> Question	260
4.2.4	Offa's Queen in <i>Beowulf</i> : Conclusion	269
4.3	The Offa-Allusion in <i>Beowulf</i> : Issues of Interpretation	270
4.4	Offa's In-Laws: Hemming, Frēawine and Family	273
4.4.1	Hemming	274
4.4.1.1	<i>Heming</i> , <i>Hemning</i> or <i>Hemming</i>	275
4.4.1.2	<i>Hēming</i> from * <i>Hǣming</i>	276
4.4.1.3	<i>Hemning</i>	277
4.4.1.4	<i>Hemming</i>	278
4.4.1.5	Hemming: The Man of the <i>Hamm</i>	281
4.4.1.6	Hemming and Hemingr: Survival of an Ethnographic Tradition in Old Norse	285
4.4.1.7	Hemming: Conclusion	289
4.4.1.8	<i>Gārmund</i> aka <i>Hemming</i> or <i>Offa</i> ? Possible New Identifications	290
4.4.1.9	<i>Nefa</i> and <i>mæg</i> : Terms of Kinship	295
4.4.1.10	<i>Gārmund</i> and <i>Hemming</i> : Conclusion	299
4.4.2	Frēawine, Wīg and *Cēta	300
4.4.2.1	Frēawine, Wīg and the West Saxon Regnal List	300
4.4.2.2	Frēawine and Wīg, Frowinus and Wigo	302
4.4.2.3	The Name <i>Frēawine</i> , <i>Frowinus</i> , <i>Frewinus</i>	307
4.4.2.4	The Names <i>Wīg</i> , <i>Wīg(g)o</i> and <i>Kēto</i>	309
4.4.2.5	Frēawine and Wīg: Conclusions	313
4.4.3	The Hemmingas and the Swǣfe	314

4.4.3.1	The Swāfe: Conclusions	317
4.4.3.2	<i>Witta wēold Swāfum</i> : Wider Suevic Ethnic Affiliations and More Jutes	318
4.4.3.3	Swāfe and Jutes: Conclusions	322
4.4.4	Offa's In-Laws: Conclusions	323
4.4.5	The Narratives of Offa's Marriage	325
4.4.5.1	Introduction	325
4.4.5.2	The Wives of the Two Offas	325
4.4.5.3	The Story of Alf and Alvilda: An Unidentified Analogue	327
4.4.6	Master of Allusion: The Story of Offa and his Marriage in <i>Beowulf</i>	335
4.4.6.1	<i>Hygd</i> and <i>Hæreþ</i> : The Nomenclature of Geopolitics I	338
4.4.6.2	<i>Hygd</i> and <i>*Hugipō</i> : The Nomenclature of Geopolitics II	344
4.4.6.3	<i>Hygd</i> and <i>Prýþu</i> : The Nomenclature of Geopolitics III	348
4.4.6.4	Offa's Marriage and the <i>Beowulf</i> Allusion: Conclusions	349
5	The Deeds of Offa and his Foes	
5.1	Introduction	352
5.2	The Death of Æadgils	353
5.2.1	The Two-Against-One Duel in Danish Texts	356
5.2.2	Dynastic and Geopolitical Themes in the Two-Against-One Duel Story	364
5.2.3	Æadgils and Athislus: Conclusions	365
5.3	Riganus, Rigus and Rígr	366
5.3.1	<i>Skjöldunga saga</i> and the Appearance (and Disappearance) of Offa	375
5.3.2	The Stories of Rig: Intertextual Relationships	379
5.3.2.1	Conclusions.....	380
5.3.3	The Origins of the Icelandic and Danish Offa-Stories.....	382
5.3.4	England, Iceland and Denmark: Who Influenced Whom?	384
5.3.5	Storytellers from Iceland	386
5.3.6	The Story of Rig and Dan: Conclusions	392
5.3.7	The Origin of the Name <i>Rig</i> : A New Proposal.....	394
5.3.8	The Origins of the Scandinavian Offa Narratives: Conclusions	398
6	The End of Angel; the Beginning of <i>Englaland</i>	
6.1	Introduction	401
6.2	The End of Offa's Story: Dan the Mighty Dane	402

6.3	Origins of the Offa-Story: Conclusions	406
6.4	From <i>Angel</i> to <i>Englaland</i>	408
7	The Story of Offa: Conclusions and Reconstruction	
7.1	Final Conclusions	410
7.2	The Story of Offa of Angel and the Founding of <i>Englaland</i> : A Reconstruction ...	416
	Appendix: Summaries of Danish Texts about Uffo	431
	Bibliography	435

Maps

1	The conjectural geography of <i>Widsith</i> I: Southern Scandinavia c. 400 AD	18
2	The conjectural geography of <i>Widsith</i> II: The wider world	19
3	The conjectural geography of <i>Widsith</i> III: Danish Scylding power	179
4	The peoples of Jutland and Scandia, according to Ptolemy	208
5	Jutland: Locating the Vidå. Olmers-/Olgerdiget and Hærvejen	248
6	<i>Wiþ-Myrgingas</i> on the Vidå?	251
7	Southern Jutland: Schleswig, Holstein and Dithmarschen	281
8	Southern Jutland and the Elbe	287
9	Political map of Scandinavia, as represented in <i>Beowulf</i> and <i>Widsith</i>	342

Figures

1	Naming in the family of Æpelfrīþ	107
2	The beginning of <i>Widsith</i> in the Exeter Book	126
3	Composite family tree of regnal lists in MS V of <i>AngCol</i>	144
4	Reconstructed familial name-patterns in Offa's genealogy in <i>AngCol</i>	204
5	Extract of <i>Beowulf</i> MS, fol. 173r	291
6	<i>Nefa</i> and <i>mæg</i> relationships in Offa's family in <i>Beowulf</i>	298
7a	Genealogy of Rig and Dan in <i>RDF/Skjöldunga saga</i>	371
7b	Genealogy of Rig and Dan in <i>Ynglinga saga</i>	371
7c	Genealogy of Rig and Dan: Bugge/Benediktsson Reconstruction	373
7d	Genealogy of Rig and Dan in <i>Rígsþula</i>	374
8	Skjöldung Succession in <i>RDF/Skjöldunga saga</i> (up to Frodo III)	376

Tables

1	Finn's family in genealogies by English and Welsh authors	78
2	The Mercian list in <i>HB</i> and John of Worcester.....	148
3	The Kentish list in <i>HE</i> and <i>AngCol</i>	154
4	The Bernician list in <i>ASC</i> and <i>AngCol</i>	155
5	Comparative genealogies of Offa (English, Danish and Icelandic)	157
6	Comparative name-forms in Offa's genealogy	158
7	Offa I's genealogy: from Wihtlæg to Icel	292
8	Frēawine and Wīg in various West Saxon regnal lists	301
9a	Frēawine and Wīg: back-calculation from the reign of Cerdic	303
9b	Wērmund and Offa: back-calculation from the reign of Penda	303
10	Versions of the regnal list of the early kings of Kent	318
11	Anglo-Saxon regnal lists: Comparison of descent from Wōden	319
12	Comparative table of Icelandic Skjöldung genealogies	377

Linguistic Abbreviations

acc.	accusative
adj.	adjective
adv.	adverb
C	consonant: e.g. /-CCa/
dat.	dative
fem.	feminine
fn.	footnote
gen.	genitive
Gmc	Germanic
IE	Indo-European
masc.	masculine
ME	Middle English
MHG	Middle High German
n.	noun
neut.	neuter
NGmc	North Germanic
nom.	nominative

ODan	Old Danish
OE	Old English
OEN	Old East Norse
OFr	Old French
OFris	Old Frisian
OHG	Old High German
OIceI	Old Icelandic
ON	Old Norse
OS	Old Saxon
OSwed	Old Swedish
OWN	Old West Norse
PIE	Proto-Indo-European
pl.	plural
PrGmc	Proto-Germanic
PrN	Proto-Norse
PrNGmc	Proto-North Germanic
PrNWGmc	Proto-Northwest Germanic
PrWGmc	Proto-West Germanic
sg.	singular
<i>s.n.</i>	<i>sub nomine</i> (name in glossary, catalogue or list)
<i>s.v.</i>	<i>sub verbo</i> (word in dictionary or glossary)
v.	verb; verse
WGmc	West Germanic
WS	West Saxon
=	(Of names) equivalent in other texts/languages; (of words) cognate with
*	Conjectural or reconstructed linguistic form or word
**	Conjectural or reconstructed linguistic form or word, but non-occurring, or likely non-occurring, because ill-formed
>	(Of sounds and graphs) “develops into, becomes”
/-/	Indicates phonemes: e.g. /a/, /-iþ/
<->	Indicates graphs and orthography as in MS: e.g. <ea>, <geotena>
[-]	Indicates IPA pronunciation: e.g. [tʃet]
~	Indicates alternatives/variants: e.g. /a~o/

Glossary of Onomastic and Linguistic Terms

(Italicised words in definitions are also items in this glossary)

<i>affix</i>	A <i>lexeme</i> joined to a name at the front (<i>prefix</i>) or the end (<i>suffix</i>).
<i>allomorph</i>	A phonetic variant of a <i>morpheme</i> .
<i>allophone</i>	A difference in pronunciation and/or writing of a sound or word which does not make a difference in meaning – i.e. is not phonemic (see <i>phoneme</i>).
<i>appellative</i>	A common noun, not a proper noun or name.
<i>birth-name</i>	The name given to a child by its parents or family shortly after birth.
<i>by-name</i>	An extra name or <i>epithet</i> – usually a <i>lexeme</i> (noun or adjective) given to a person after infancy, supposedly descriptive or commemorative of their deeds, appearance, role, status and/or character. Used in addition to a <i>birth-name</i> . See also <i>given name</i> .
<i>compound</i>	Of names, composed of two or more elements, often regarded in modern scholarship as being joined by a syntactical or grammatical relationship (see <i>syntagmatic</i>).
<i>demonym</i>	The collective name for peoples inhabiting a particular geographical area, irrespective of ethnicity or kinship.
<i>dithematic</i>	Describing a name consisting of two <i>themes</i> , forming a <i>compound</i> .
<i>element</i>	A structural unit in a name, including <i>themes</i> , <i>affixes</i> and grammatical inflections.
<i>epithet</i>	A name given to a person which is descriptive of their deeds, appearance, role or status, and/or character, either as a <i>by-name</i> or as an alternative to a <i>birth-name</i> (overlaps with <i>nickname</i> and <i>given name</i>).
<i>ethno-eponym</i>	The name of a king or chieftain of a people, taking the form of the singulative of the <i>ethnonym</i> of his people.
<i>ethnonym</i>	The name of any group – identified as such on the basis of kinship or ethnicity – which would be called a “clan”, “tribe”, “nation” or “people” in modern English.
<i>ethnophoric</i>	Of a name consisting of an <i>ethnonym</i> or containing one as an <i>element</i> or <i>theme</i> .
<i>folk-name</i>	A <i>phylonym</i> .

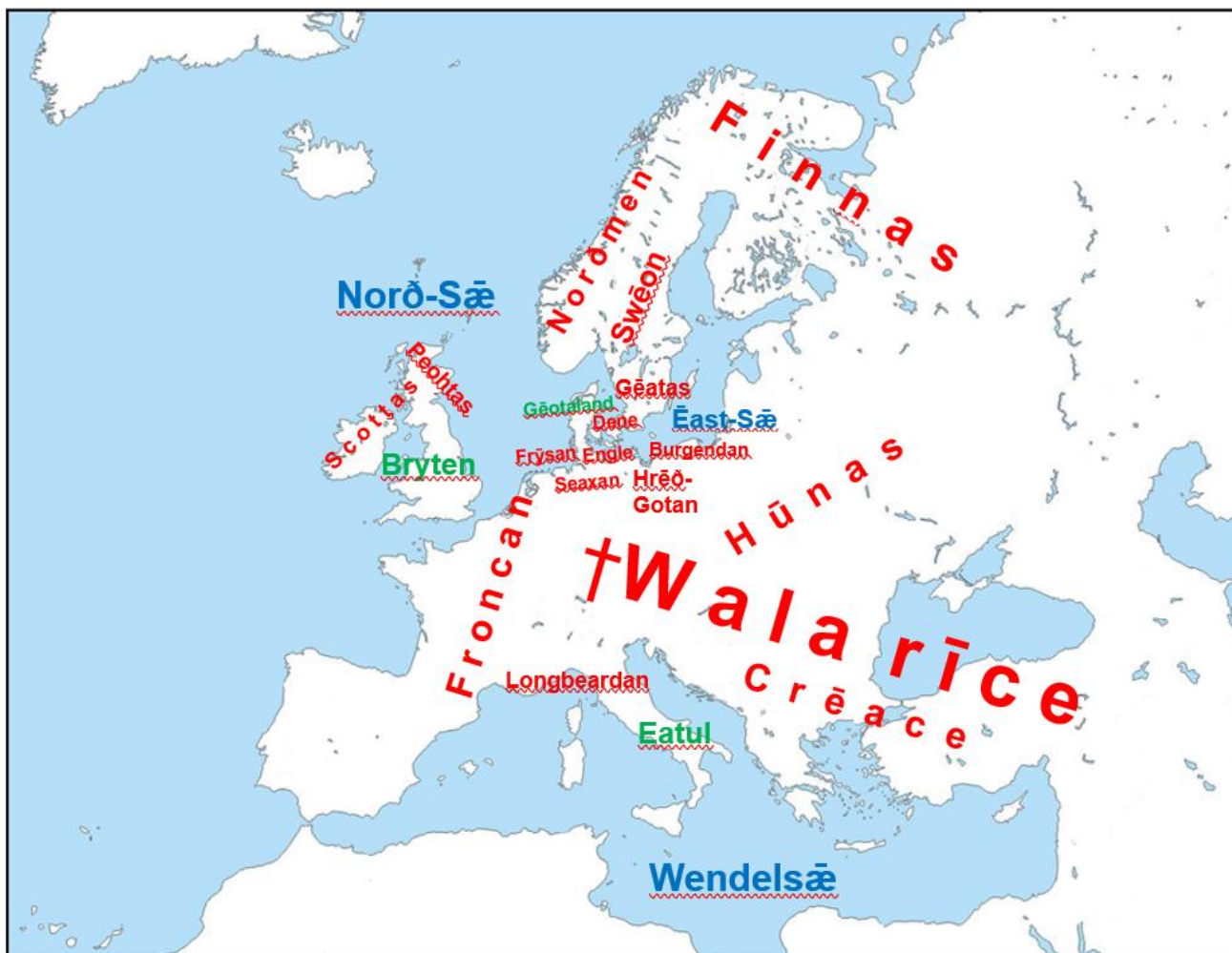
<i>given name</i>	Any name given to a person other than a <i>birth-name</i> – usually by contemporaries, custom, or oral or literary tradition, often referring to their deeds, appearance, role, status, and/or character (includes <i>by-name</i> , <i>epithet</i> and <i>nickname</i>).
<i>hydronym</i>	A name for a stream, river, lake or sea.
<i>hypernym</i>	The name for an ethnic or kinship group which consists of a number of smaller groups (see <i>hyponym</i>).
<i>hypocorism</i>	A “pet” or familiar name (usually <i>monothematic</i>), formed – by processes of linguistic transformation – from one or more <i>themes</i> of the <i>birth-name</i> of that person. (If it forms or resembles a <i>lexeme</i> , this overlaps with <i>nickname</i>). ⁴
<i>hyponym</i>	The name for an ethnic or kinship group which is part of a larger group (see <i>hypernym</i>).
<i>lexeme</i>	A meaningful lexical unit. In names, this includes <i>affixes</i> , <i>appellatives</i> and adjectives in various forms produced by inflection, declension and/or conjugation.
<i>monothematic</i>	Of a name, consisting of one <i>theme</i> (and optionally an <i>affix</i> and/or grammatical inflection).
<i>morpheme</i>	A basic unit of meaning in a <i>lexeme</i> , consisting of a <i>root</i> or <i>stem</i> and/or any <i>affix</i> , including overt indicators of number, gender, case, person and tense.
<i>onomastic</i>	To do with names.
<i>onomasticon</i>	The entire corpus of recorded names in a particular language or language-group.
<i>nickname</i>	A name (especially a familiar one) consisting of a noun, noun-phrase or adjective from the ordinary lexis, whether or not descriptive of the deeds, appearance, role or status, and/or character of a person (see <i>epithet</i> and <i>given name</i>). Typically used in substitution for a <i>birth-name</i> .
<i>phoneme</i>	The basic unit of speech or sound (vowel, diphthong, consonant, consonant-cluster) which distinguishes the sound, and therefore the meaning, of one <i>lexeme</i> from another.

⁴ This at least is the definition contended for in this study. See esp. p. 98 below.

<i>phylonym</i>	The name of a kinship group, family or clan. Sometimes called a <i>folk-name</i> . Hence, a subdivision of <i>ethnonym</i> .
<i>polynymy</i>	The phenomenon of giving the same person or group more than one name.
<i>prefix</i>	An <i>affix</i> consisting of a <i>lexeme</i> joined to the front of a name.
<i>root</i>	Of a name, the basic unit of a <i>theme</i> , to which may be added overt morphological or grammatical indicators (of gender, case or number) or <i>affixes</i> . The same as <i>stem</i> .
<i>stem</i>	The same as <i>root</i> . Hence <i>stemmatic</i> “of a stem”.
<i>suffix</i>	An <i>affix</i> consisting of a <i>lexeme</i> joined to the end of a name (whether <i>monothematic</i> or <i>dithematic</i>).
<i>syntagmatic</i>	Of a name with more than one theme: possessing elements or themes which are in syntactical relationship to one another, thus forming a compound or phrase with its own meaning.
<i>theme</i>	A lexical item (usually a <i>lexeme</i> in the form of a noun or adjective) which forms an <i>element</i> in a name.
<i>theonym</i>	The name of a deity.
<i>theophoric</i>	Of a name, containing the name of a deity (see <i>theonym</i>) as an <i>element</i> or <i>theme</i> .
<i>theriophoric</i>	Of a name, containing a word for an animal as an <i>element</i> or <i>theme</i> .
<i>topo-ethnonym</i>	An <i>ethnonym</i> based on some feature of place or landscape, or formed from a <i>toponym</i> .
<i>toponym</i>	A place-name.
<i>variation-name</i>	An alternative term for a <i>dithematic</i> name.



Map 1
The conjectural geography of *Widsith* I:
Southern Scandinavia c. 400 AD (Literary Time)



Map 2
The conjectural geography of *Widsith* II:
The wider world⁵

⁵ The world of *Widsith* is anachronistic. The Hrēð-Gotan are located on the Baltic (in reality, up to c. 200 AD) ruled by Eormanrīc (actually, d. 370s); Attila's Huns are in Europe (450s), but *Bryten* (Britain) is not yet settled by Germanic emigrants from Jutland (440s ff); the Western Roman empire has fallen (476) and the Franks have established their kingdom and are ruled by Theuderic (511-33/4); the Lombards are in northern Italy (567 ff) as well as in northern Germany. See Map 1 (p. 18 above).

The Germanic hydronym *Wendelsæ* for the Mediterranean and Adriatic is not used in *Widsith* but appears in the Alfredian OE version of Orosius's history of the world (c. 900). It was in use in Germany c. 800 as *Wentilsēo* (*Hildebrandslied* 43a). The name "Vandal Sea" probably commemorates the domination of the Mediterranean during the 570s by the Vandals, who had migrated from Hispania in 429, established a kingdom in north Africa, taken control of the Balearics, Corsica, Sardinia and Sicily, and sacked Rome in 455.

Introduction

“The baby’s name is Kitchener Carrington Methuen Kekewich White
Cronje Plumer Powell Majuba Gatacre Warren Colenso Kruger
Capetown Mafeking French Kimberley Ladysmith Bobs
The Union Jack and Fighting Mac Lyddite Pretoria Bloggs.”

Music hall song (c. 1900)⁶

1.1 How to Get a Thesis out of *Widsith*

“How do you get a thesis out of *Widsith*?” the writer was asked, in genuine wonderment, at a recent academic conference on the Exeter Book – at which *Widsith* received very few mentions (apart from his own), and those to dismiss it as a list of made-up names or a text dependent on Christian analogues. As – I hope – will be seen from the following pages, *Widsith* more than merits a thesis-length examination, part of which is the attempted dismantling of such long-held academic misconceptions about it.

1.2 Aims and Scope

Students of Old English “heroic” poetry⁷ are still interested in the evidence provided by *Beowulf* for ancient myths and legends – that is, its pagan or at least “pre-Christian” ideological and literary heritage. Others focus on its learned, Christian content in terms of doctrine, rhetoric and homily, the twain meeting only occasionally. Comparisons between *Beowulf* and archaeology have been made for a long time, but further finds and more advanced technology now tend to confirm that the poem describes the material world of early medieval Germanic societies accurately. Recent suggestions have been made that *Beowulf* also reflects the political realities of sixth-century southern Scandinavia. Although this was accepted in earlier scholarship, and reaffirmed by Rosemary Cramp’s 1957 article on *Beowulf*’s descriptions of material culture, Tom Shippey (2022) has recently argued for the geopolitical realism of the poem’s narratives of conquest and destruction – though he self-professedly swims against the

⁶ The song was a lampoon on British super-patriotism during the Second Boer War (1899-1902). The performer was singing about his wife’s reply to the vicar’s question at baptism as to what her baby was to be called.

⁷ On “heroic”, see p. 36 below.

critical current. The identification of aspects of historical realism in *Beowulf* has even led to a resurrection of the old argument that the poem was composed in Scandinavia.⁸

But no one, as far as I am aware, has represented the point of view that *Widsith* – just as much as *Beowulf* – is a highly knowledgeable and sophisticated representation of a post-Roman northern European political world, rather than a jumbled collection of references to legends about kings and dynasties (though, inevitably, kings are the main actors). However, such will be the main argument of this thesis. While *Beowulf* is chiefly concerned with the peoples of the Danish Baltic islands and of southern Sweden, *Widsith*'s focus, I shall suggest, is on the complex and interlinked world centred round southern Jutland and the western Baltic coast in the period that we would ascribe to the fourth and fifth centuries AD. This was the homeland of peoples who could be called “Angles”, “Saxons” and “Jutes” (among a number of other peoples). And it was this world – its kings, peoples, glories and disasters – which was remembered in detail for several centuries in an England that remained significantly oriented towards a northern European and North Sea world in its culture, just as much as it was aligned towards Rome in its religion, and after the Norman Conquest towards France in everything.

1.3 Methodologies: Names and Naming

A good deal of the analysis in this thesis is based on names – those of individuals, peoples and places. However, as will be seen from Part I, I take the view that the standard approaches to names and naming – especially in literary texts – suffer from limitations which have hobbled attempts to understand the narratives of which they are a part.

Critics have tended to take either of two courses. One has been to regard a name in a literary text as what we may call a “Cinderella”-type – that is, a name invented to say something relevant about the personality, appearance, role or status of a fictional character. For a very long time now, whether or not a name in a literary text conforms to this type has been the subject of heated academic debate over minutiae of orthography, phonology and palaeography. A good example of this, in one of the texts which features prominently in this study, would be the name *Unferþ*, which belongs to a sharp-tongued, hostile and – to modern readers – dislikable official at Hrōþgār's Danish court in *Beowulf*.⁹ This name has been interpreted as being derived from *un* + *friþ*, “un-peace”, by some scholars who see him as a figure

⁸ See Gräslund 2018 and 2022.

⁹ Named at ll. 499, 1165 and 1488.

representing discord; and from *un* + *ferhp* “no spirit”, by those who see him as a coward.¹⁰ The other course is to argue that names like *Unferþ* were literary occurrences of ordinary names. Thus, they were the same as names recorded as being those of real people, or they were formed from name elements known in the onomasticon, and as such they were not intended to have meaning in themselves. In this case, however, the etymological argument is complicated by the fact that whenever the first of the two *Beowulf*-scribes wrote the name *Unferþ*, he spelled the first element as *Hun-* (in ll. 499, 1165 and 1488). Modern textual scholars think that this cannot be right, since in each instance the metre requires alliteration with a vowel; and so they print *Unferþ*. Thus, onomastic analysis is never far from textual criticism and its uncertainties.

However, I bring up this example to indicate another problem with the scholarship on names in medieval literary sources like *Beowulf*, which is that it is frequently limited by the assumptions embodied in the work on which it builds. For instance, R. D. Fulk (1987) thought it unlikely that the element *Un-* in *Unferþ* was the Germanic negative particle and argued that the origin of the first element of this ordinary and non-meaningful name was Germanic **ūn(i)-* or **ūn(a)-*. He reasoned that in Old High German naming early forms like *Unifrid* contained a “composition-vowel” /-i-/ that would later be lost only when the first syllable was a closed one with a long vowel, thus explaining the later form *Unfrid* (neither of which name-forms, he said, had any link to an original element *Hūn-*). Therefore, in his view, the original form of this name was **Ūnifrid*, a cognate of *Unferþ* (or rather, of *Ūnferþ*).¹¹ However, Philip Shaw considered the same evidence as Fulk but doubted the argument, preferring a derivation of the name *Unferþ* from a written form featuring a Continental Germanic scribal variant of *Hun-*.¹² Both concluded that this was not a meaningful “Cinderella”-type name, but an ordinary dithematic one.

Fulk’s conviction that the vowel in **ūn(i)* was long had led him to reject the earlier view of Ernst Förstemann, who regarded several of the recorded instances of Germanic names in *Un-* as evidence of a name-element which was a reflex of the root *un-*, as in the Germanic verb **unnan* “to grant, give, love”.¹³ But the name *Unferþ* in *Beowulf* is not required by the metre to be *Ūnferþ* (with a long initial vowel), and there is no evidence for the presence of a long vowel in any *Un-* names in non-poetic texts. And Fulk’s philological argument rests on the

¹⁰ See K14: clii and the discussion in Shaw 2020: 7-8, 92-96: “surely one of the most discussed names in *Beowulf*” (*ibid.*: 92).

¹¹ Followed by Jurasinski 2007: 706-07.

¹² Shaw 2020: 92-96.

¹³ Förstemann (1900: 1477), who identified the majority of names in *Un-* as deriving from *unnan*, synonymous with the name-element *gaba* “give” (though there was an admixture of some with *un-* as a negative particle). Kaufmann followed him (1968: 368-69), distinguishing between *un-* from the verbal stem and the negative particle.

assumption that Old High German-speaking parents followed strict phonological laws and never created names in *Un-* and *Uni-* by analogy with names in *Hun-* and *Huni-* (or *Hūn-* and *Hūni-*), or that a “composition vowel” could not be an onomastic element in itself, inserted synthetically into names for the sake of euphony – variables that we might expect in the “real world”. An additional problem for the Fulkian analysis was that there was no etymology for the theme **ūn(i)~*ūn(a)*; so it was meaningless in Germanic, which is rare: name-themes usually have evident meanings.

In the context of *Unferþ* Fulk also cited *Unwona*,¹⁴ the name of an eighth-century Bishop of Leicester, who was probably German according to Fulk and Shaw.¹⁵ But this example, I suggest, exemplifies the weaknesses inherent in purely linguistic arguments about names. Shaw identifies his name as Continental Germanic, and his deutertheme *-wona* as an “Anglicisation” of Förstemann’s name-theme *Wan-*, i.e. *Wān-*, meaning “hope”. As for the prototheme *Un-*, if we are discontent with Fulk’s meaningless *ūn(i)~*ūn(a)*, Shaw’s cockneyfied scribal *Un-* from *Hun-*,¹⁶ or the apparent unlikelihood of the negative particle *un-* (which would suggest a child christened “Hopeless”), Förstemann’s interpretation of *Un-* as “give” offers a solution which is acceptable linguistically and pragmatically, and which, in this instance, is supported by a famous piece of real-world evidence. If the prototheme *Un-* in *Unwōna* is understood as “gives, grants” (semantically and culturally equivalent to the common Germanic prototheme *geb-/gib-* “give”), then his name – if understood syntagmatically – meant “gives hope” or “grants wish”. This interpretation would identify him neatly as the English bishop famously addressed by Alcuin as *Speratus* in a letter of reproof for allowing heathen songs about Ingeld to be sung at his table. The English Alcuin was punning on a Germanic name in Latin (as clerics often did), since *Speratus* meant “hoped for”.¹⁷ (The name *Unwēn*, a Goth in *Widsith* 114, is exactly cognate in wholly Old English phonology). And here, I suggest, we have an instance of a name that was likely to be an example of an ordinary birth-name that was also syntagmatically meaningful and epithetical, perhaps traditionally given to a child who

¹⁴ Fulk 1987: 120-21, fn. 28.

¹⁵ See Shaw 2020: 80-85.

¹⁶ See Shaw 2020: 84 and 94-95 (on *Un-* from *Hun-*).

¹⁷ Alcuin’s letter of 797 (Duemmler 1895: 181-184), contains the famous rhetorical question *Quid Hinieldus cum Christo?* (“What has Ingeld to do with Christ?”). See Shaw 2020: 84, with references. He agrees with Bullough (1993) that the recipient was Unwona. Bullough had explained *un-* as an intensifying prefix, as in *Beowulf* 357a, *unhār* “very hoary” (the only evidence for this sense). However, editors now accept Lapidge’s identification of MS <unhar> as a scribal error for *anhār*, in which *an-* has the sense “very” (Lapidge 2000: 10-11). This does not affect my argument or Shaw’s. The usual candidate, Hygbald of Lindisfarne (*PASE*, *Hygebald* 3), had a name that meant “mind bold”, which does not translate *Speratus* without implausible arguments.

arrived as a response to the wishes or prayers of its parents in circumstances of the previous death of children, infertility or the lack of a male heir. (The version with *Hun-* written by the *Beowulf*-scribes is perhaps best explained as a result of their unfamiliarity with archaic and/or Continental names in *Un-*, or perhaps a belief that a more familiarly native version with *Hun-* would not interfere with the alliteration because although the /H/ might be written, it might not need to be pronounced).¹⁸

As discussed by Fulk, there was a subset of Germanic names in *Un-* where this seems to be the negative particle, such as Old High German *Unleid* “not troublesome” and Old Norse *Óblauðr* “not soft”. But he rejected a derivation of *un-* from **unnan* and observed that *un-*, if a negative particle, was “always followed by an adjective” in German names.¹⁹ However it is also true that in the ordinary Germanic lexis the negative particle *un-* can also be prefixed to a noun, and so, in theory, it may be problematic to exclude *un* + NOUN cases as potential names. For instance, in Old High German *leid* was a noun (“pain, sorrow”) as well as an adjective, so could *Unleid* not mean “No Sorrow”, hence “Delight”? But more importantly, if *un-* is not the negative particle but a verbal category, then one would expect it to be followed by a noun, as in the syntactical relationship VERB + OBJECT. Thus, if in some cases Förstemann was right that *un-* was a reflex of the verb **unnan*, *Unwona* would be just such a case. Alcuin thought so, calling him *Speratus*, “the hoped-for one”, the child who “gives hope” or “grants a wish”. The same analysis removes the long-term puzzlement caused by the Germanic name *Unþank*,²⁰ which would not mean (as in Old English *unþanc*) “annoyance, ill-will”, “no thought” or “ingratitude” – which would be most unlikely meanings for a baby’s name – but the more credible “gives thought” or “gives thanks” (Alcuin might have called him *Gratus*).

This analysis – supplementing the linguistic with the pragmatic – can also be applied to *Unferþ*. It would tend to suggest that his was indeed a name of an ordinary sort, but also that its elements were capable of meaning – according to taste – “un-peace”, “no spirit”, “grants peace”, “gives spirit” or “gives life” (even if *ferþ* is not a theme in the Anglo-Saxon onomasticon, as Fulk (1987) points out). If *ferþ* is a form of *friþ* (which it is) this word connotes the peace or friendly relations that exist within a social or kinship group. Arguably, *Unferþ* represents the antithesis of this because, according to *Bēowulf*, he killed his brothers;²¹ on the

¹⁸ Instances of non-etymological initial /H-/ added by Latin-writing and/or Romance-speaking scribes to Gmc names beginning with a vowel are legion. It is a question whether the added /H-/ was an orthographic hypercorrection never intended to be pronounced – as with Latin *Hinieldus* for OE *Ingeld* in fn. 17 (p. 23 above). On this see also Fulk 1987: 120-21.

¹⁹ Fulk 1987: 123-24.

²⁰ See Fulk 1987: 123; Shaw 2020: 94.

²¹ See *Beowulf*, 587-89.

other hand, he grants *frip* because he regulates the applicants to join Hrōþgār's court. He has spirit because he is reputed brave (or his performances as *pyle* put spirit into others);²² but he also has no spirit because he lets Bēowulf undertake the dispatching of Grendel's mother. Thus, by widening the scope of etymological analysis and employing pragmatic and contextual factors, the door may even be re-opened to unfashionable "Cinderella" interpretations.

The same issues arise in the perennial topic of the meaning of the name *Bēowulf*, featuring an older tradition for whose proponents he was the "bee-wolf" – that is, a kenning-like name for a bear, to suit Bēowulf's "bear's son" folkloric character, in the Panzerian analysis;²³ and a more recent one in which, even if he was a non-regular guy, he had a regular name, like the ninth-century English (?) monk *Biuuulf* (whose name appears in *DLV*) and several others with a cognate form of this name on the Continent and in Scandinavia.²⁴ Dispute has continued – with a kind of *odium onomasticologicum* – as to whether the prototheme was *bēo* "bee", or **Bēow* (the name of a vegetation god cognate with *Byggvir* in the Eddaic poem *Lokasenna*), or it was related to Old High German *bīhal* "axe".²⁵ One hesitates to add to the unprovable theories, but we should note Guus Kroonen's Proto-Germanic lexeme **bi(j)ēn* "to hit", related to Icelandic *bjá* "to fight, struggle".²⁶ In Old English the stem of such a verb ought to have been **bēo* (cf. Proto-Germanic **fri(j)az* "free" > Old English *frēo*). Thus, *Bēo* + *wulf* may – a mere possibility – have been "striking, fighting wolf", in which the element *bēo* would have had the same unremarkable cultural significance as the common protothemes *heapo-*, *beadu-* and *wīg-*, all meaning "battle".

²² The role of the *pyle* (ON *pulr*) is far from clear. See Poole 2010. He seems to have combined a number of roles, including public remembrancer, community archivist, vetter of applicants to the court, satirist, orator and poet.

²³ Friedrich Panzer (1910) identified the character of Bēowulf as a reflex of the *Bärensohn* "bear's son" folktale type.

²⁴ One feature of this onomastic debate is dispute as to whether real people with the same names as literary characters were named after them. The ninth-century Alemannic noblemen's names *Huoching* and his son *Nebi* have long been noted as cognates of *Hōcing* and *Hnæf*, suggesting that their names were influenced by the Finnsburh legend (see Malone 1962: 172-173, *Kl4* 276 and fn. 3, and Shaw 2020: 118-119). Neidorf (2013c) has restated the argument that several recorded Anglo-Saxons who bore the same names as literary characters were named after them. See also Shaw (2020: 179-80) on real names as (uncertain) evidence for the influence and distribution of literary texts or narratives.

²⁵ With respect to the name *Bēowulf*, see the discussion and references in Shaw 2020: 29-35. Shaw rejected Förstemann's **bīh* (as in OHG *pihal* "axe") in favour of Kaufmann's **bī* "bee" (1968: 60), also rejecting the arguments of Fulk and Harris (2002), Fulk (2007), and the affirmation of Neidorf (2013c: 563) that it was the theonym **Bēow*, an OE reflex of the name *Byggvir* in *Lokasenna*. Neidorf and Zhu (2021) reaffirm Fulk (2007) and doubt the existence of theriophoric names including words for "insect" in Gmc, criticising Shaw (2020) harshly because he had mistakenly misunderstood Förstemann's definition of the name-element *lop* as German *Laus* "louse" rather than Latin *laus* "praise" (OHG *lop* = OE *lof*). However, Shaw's error and the undisputed existence of theophoric dithematic names in the Gmc onomasticon do not make the construction of Bēow as a "Golden Bough"-type barley god any less questionable.

²⁶ Kroonen 2013: 64.

However, somewhat overlooked in this battle between Tweedlebeow and Tweedlebee is the pragmatic factor that Germanic names did not contain words for “insect” because, culturally speaking, insects were not much valued, save in the case of the industrious honey-making bee (which might thus have been an exception in both general culture and naming tradition). But irrespective of whether or not Fulk’s or Shaw’s suggestions identified the true origins of the real-life name *Bēowulf* and its cognates, such a name could easily have been interpreted by an Anglo-Saxon (with no immediate access to Pokorny’s *Indo-Germanisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*) as meaning “bee-wolf”; and an imaginative storyteller could simply have selected this name as ideal for the hero of his story adapted from a traditional narrative about a remarkable man who swam and hunted underwater, had enormous strength and hugged people to death – just like a bear or a bear’s son. If so, *Bēowulf* might have been a member of a class of names which originated as meaningful, kenning-like, syntagmatic compounds, possibly entering the onomasticon from folklore or literature.²⁷ Alternatively, the extant and ordinary name *Bēowulf* was repurposed by the *Beowulf*-poet as this type of name.

Shaw reminds us that the imaginative use of names inherited from the onomasticon has not always featured in scholarly debate:²⁸

It is worth remarking that even recent contributions to this debate often fail to consider the alternative position [...];²⁹ the *Beowulf* poet might [...] have depicted characters who were inherited from traditional narrative along with their names in such a way as to accord with his or her understanding of the meanings of their names’ elements. This possibility would allow for the idea that names could be interpreted by the poet without having to suppose that the poet invented names [...] [W]e should not lightly dismiss the possibility that traditional names, formed according to regular onomastic principles and thus not usually meaningful, could be interpreted as meaningful for literary purposes.

²⁷ An example of a kenning-like name might be *Wyrmore*, a Goth in *Widsith* (l. 119). In England the name is found as *Urmheri* in *DLV* only (Rollason and Rollason 2007: II, 164). Does the syntagmatic apparent meaning “serpent warrior” refer to the figure of the dragon-slayer? Förstemann thought so. In the small handful of German names featuring the theme “worm”, the vast majority are reflexes of *Vurmhari*, of which he noted, “wahrscheinlich mit erinnerung an die lindwurmsagen” (“probably reminiscent of the dragon-legend”) (1900: 1665-66). Another might be *Walpēof*, apparently meaning “slain-thief” (*sc.* “booty-taker”?). It is recorded several times in *DLV* (Rollason and Rollason 2007: II, 242, *s.n.* *Valþjófr*) as a Scandinavian name originally from Norway (see Lind *Dopnamn*, 1071-73; not recorded in *PASE* before the late tenth century). Waldef was the English hero of a medieval Anglo-French romance of unknown origin.

²⁸ Shaw 2020: 8. For a brief discussion (sceptical of the identification of “Cinderella”-type meaningful names), see *ibid.*: 6-9. See also the discussion (at pp. 197-201 below) of the name of Hrōþgār’s queen *Wealhþēow*, in which the critical acceptance of the interpretation “foreign slave-woman” has proved extremely durable, despite its inappropriateness to her status and character.

²⁹ He refers to Robinson 1968: 50-57.

He was referring to the view of Robinson, articulated over fifty years ago but evidently often ignored since.³⁰

It should be remembered that Anglo-Saxon writers rarely had control over the selection of names for their literary characters, for the names were usually received, along with the story, from tradition. The only way they could make use of name-meanings would be to tease from the dictated names some latent etymological senses which could be shown to be appropriate to the characters who bear them.

This pragmatic factor, I suggest, has been overlooked by traditional approaches to names and naming, with their emphasis on formal linguistic arguments and their tendency to create a binary distinction between meaningful names and non-meaningful names, such that a name is either an invented “Cinderella”-type” or a real-life “John Smith”-type. But even Robinson’s formulation was an attempt to bridge only these two positions. Other real-life factors in the creation and interpretation of names may be imagined. The parents who gave names to their children and taught them how to pronounce them (and perhaps to write them) were probably guided by what their language and culture taught them about the meanings of their elements, and also by their own “folk-onomastic” perceptions, both intellectual and auditory, based on the names they were familiar with in their families, in wider society and in the literature they heard or read. Names which may seem meaningless to us, with our comparative linguistic expertise, may have been rich in significance to them, whether standing by the font, singing to the lyre or composing in the scriptorium.

But the “John Smith” side of the binary is now in the ascendant. Neidorf and Zhu have recently said:³¹

Though it has continued to find adherents, the assumption that *Beowulf* is filled with artificial names that reflect meaning fully on their bearers in a quasi-allegorical manner has appeared increasingly less credible over the past thirty years on account of the studies of R. D. Fulk and other scholars influenced by him.

No doubt the older tendency could go too far. But one wonders whether this revisionist approach is intended to cover *all* the names in *Beowulf*. One thinks, for instance, of names which seem both pretty artificial and reflective of meaning – like those of the sons of the unknown Wōnŕēding, *Wulf* (“Wolf”) and *Eofor* (“Boar”), and of *Heremōd* (“army-“ or “raiding-temperament”) and *Hygd* (“thought”). And if such wholesale revisionism is intended,

³⁰ Robinson 1968: 14. See the very brief discussion of potentially meaningful names in *Beowulf* by Orchard (2003: 172-73), who seems persuaded of the fictive quality of a number of them.

³¹ Neidorf and Zhu 2021: 109.

one also wonders whether it would not just be another inflexible methodology that may fail to cover all the evidence.

As I have already said, the limitation revealed by such statements is that they treat names or name-elements as individual subjects for abstract etymological and phonological analysis to the exclusion of wider “real-life” factors. But the significations of names are not always located in the “dictionary” meanings of the lexemes within them. For instance, from our knowledge of modern naming-patterns and traditions we can deduce that a modern British person called *Joy Robertson* was not necessarily joyous (though she might have been), because epithetical names are selected as being culturally positive rather than personally descriptive; nor was she a boy (*Joy* is a female name), and therefore not a son; nor was she a son or a child of a man called *Robert* (because the system of surnames is not patronymic). If we also know her to be a child in the household of Joseph Robertson, we can work out that Joy was Joseph’s daughter, possibly named because of the alliteration of *Joy* and *Joseph* or *Joe*. Thus, names do not necessarily exist in isolation, but are potentially elements in wider familial naming-patterns, for which there is a considerable amount of evidence in early medieval Germanic naming.³² Identifying such patterns – rather than etymologising individual names – may have a profound impact on our understanding of texts and the characters in them.

Returning to *Unferþ*, we are told five times in *Beowulf* that he is the son of someone called *Ecglāf*, of whom we know nothing except that he was Unferþ’s father.³³ His name has the appearance of a regular dithematic type (*PASE* has nine people with this name), and the meanings of its elements are transparent, at least in etymological terms: *ecg* “(sword-)edge” and *lāf* “thing left” hence “bequest” or “child, son, heir”. But these banal facts do not assist us much in his case: he was not an Anglo-Saxon Christian but a Scandinavian heathen from the pre-literate period; and he has no role or existence in the poem beyond his relationship to a better-known character, giving us no information with which to judge whether or not his name was intended to be meaningful.³⁴ However, the use of the ordinary-seeming name of an otherwise unknown character raises a significant onomastic question with respect to *Beowulf* and *Widsith*: were the names of such obscure characters invented to lend some air of greater

³² See fn. 237 (p. 80 below).

³³ *Beowulf* 499, 590, 980, 1465, 1808. It appears only in the gen. sg. as *Ecglāfes*, identifying him only by his relationship to his son Unferþ.

³⁴ See Björkman 1920: 18-19 (“ein guter altenglische Name”); and Shaw 2020: 95-96, who regards it as English or Continental Gmc in origin, and absent from Scandinavia. However, again it is moot whether the epigraphic or literary records of NGmc or ON are sufficient to determine whether or not a name from the fifth or sixth century existed or was frequent in “Scandinavia” (i.e. the NGmc language-area).

verisimilitude, on the basis that whatever is or seems to be redundant can be taken to be true;³⁵ or were they references to people better known to the poems' audiences than to us? And if this latter is the case, do such names carry meaningful information – apart from the etymological meaning of their elements – perhaps enabling us to identify their bearers as members of a kinship or ethnic group? These are questions which go beyond etymology and phonology.

Shippey has referred to this issue, taking as an example – though not an isolated one – *Yrmenlāf*, the name of the younger brother of *Æschere*, both of whom are mentioned in *Beowulf* ll. 1323b-24. Grendel's mother had murderously raided Heorot during the night, to avenge the killing of her son Grendel. In the morning Hrōþgār laments to Bēowulf, “*Dēad is Æschere, // Yrmenlāfes / yldra brōþor!*” (“Dead is *Æschere*, // *Yrmenlāf*'s elder brother!”). Neither person has been mentioned before, and they are unknown outside this narrative context. The name *Æschere* meant “ash warrior”, perhaps referring to the ash-wood used in spears and ships. *Yrmenlāf* is composed of a late West Saxon spelling of *eormen*, a word seeming to mean “huge, mighty”,³⁶ and *lāf*, as in *Ecglāf* above. This occurs as a common-noun compound, *eormenlāf*, in *Beowulf* (l. 2234), meaning “huge legacy”, referring to the treasure-hoard in a tomb which the dragon later finds. *Æschere* (*Battle of Maldon* 69b) meant “ashwood ship fleet”. Thus, it is possible to read both names as syntagmatic: *Æschere* as “ash-spear-“ or “ash-ship-warrior”, and *Yrmenlāf* as “mighty son, heir”. But the themes from which they are composed are well recorded in the Germanic onomasticon,³⁷ and neither name is so outstandingly unusual as to suggest that it was intended to carry “Cinderella”-style meaning. Aside from this, neither character does anything known to us which would invest a fictive name with significance. Perhaps understandably, Shippey called *Yrmenlāf* “the poem's most redundant character” and said of *Æschere* that he “functions only as a corpse” and raised the following query:³⁸

But why bring in his *younger brother*? Is this realism again – the outright invention of corroborating detail? Or is it a sudden appeal to a frame of knowledge existing outside the poem

³⁵ Barthes's “reality effect”, i.e. the unnecessary details included by the authors of modern novels to make them seem real. See Shippey 2014: 61-62, with references.

³⁶ See *DOE*, s.v. *eormen*, *yrmen*, occurring only twice in OE as an adj. (in the acc. phrase *yrmenne grund*), but elsewhere as the first element (of unknown grammatical status) in compounds with *~cynn*, *~grund*, *~strýnd*, *~þeod*. For etymology see *ANew*: 295, s.v. *Jormunr*.

³⁷ See Björkman 1920: 1-2; Shaw 2020: 97-100, observing that the name-forms are more consistent with Continental German rather than Anglo-Saxon or Scandinavian onomastics. However all three linguistic groups possessed the themes in these names, and the change of fashions in naming over the period between the events of our stories and the composition of literary works may account for the presence or absence of particular elements in various onomastica. One notes English *Aescuulf* in *DLV* (Rollason and Rollason 2007: II, 85) and Scandinavian (?) *Ascer*, apparently among 12th-c. Scandinavian-derived names (Stevenson 1841: 48; Rollason and Rollason 2007: I, 259) = OE *Æscere* or ON *Askr*?

³⁸ Shippey 1978: 24-25. *Æschere* is also named at ll. 1329 (as an *æpelung* *ærgōd* “good old princeling”), at 1420-21 (as a torso-less head) and at 2122-33 (as a *frōða fyrnwita* “wise longtime counsellor”). For my suggestion as to the identities of *Æschere* and *Yrmenlāf*, see pp. 343, 364 below.

in which Yrmenlaf was a sort of Pellinore or Bedivere of Danish legend – not a prominent person, but one known to exist?

Obviously no one can say, and it hardly matters, since in that context invention and reminder would work just as well.

He wondered whether the world of *Beowulf* was a “never-never land created by the poet” or whether “the original audience [knew] a version of history into which *Beowulf* had to fit”.³⁹ He returned to the same question more recently,⁴⁰ and noted

There are eight other names in the poem which appear only once; only in the genitive; and with a noun of relationship as their head word. Breca is *sunu Beanstanes* (524); Hildeburh is *Hoces dohtor* (1076); Finn is *Folcwaldan sunu* (1089); Eomer is *nefa Garmundes* (1962); Hygelac is *nefa Swertinges* (1203); Ingeld is *Frodan sunu* (2025); Heardred is *nefan Hererices* (2206); Wiglaf is *mæg Ælfheres* (2604). To these eight once-only pairs one might add Hygd, named twice as *Hæreþes dohtor* (1929, 1981), Offa and Eomer, both named as *Hemminges mæg* (1944, 1961), and Wulf, who is *sunu Wonredes* (2971), as also *Wonreding* (2965). Unferth’s father *Ecglaf* is named five times, but always in the genitive and always connected with his son. And at line 1910 the Danes collectively are labelled as *eaforum Ecgwelan*. The roles of Breca, Hildeburh, Finn, etc. are obvious. But what is gained by adding in the names of, for instance, Beanstan, Hereric, Hæreth, Ælfhere or Ecgwela, of whom no more is known than of Yrmenlaf?⁴¹

This was an issue which had also been addressed by Sisam a quarter of a century earlier. Sisam’s researches among the apparently rich onomastic inconsistencies of the Anglo-Saxon regnal lists led him to question an older view that the incidental appearance of names in annals or in *Beowulf* “unlock[ed] a store of well-ordered information in the mind of an intelligent Anglo-Saxon”. Sisam tended more towards the view that this “convey[ed] no more than the vague impression of remote times that add[ed] to the enjoyment of old stories”⁴² (some names were authorial inventions intended to give spurious depth to the foreground narrative).⁴³

Some more recent scholars have been non-committal about the binary posed by Shippey in 1978. Orchard has acknowledged the importance of names to the *Beowulf* poet but spoken of “the impression [...] given of a rich and textured background against which the main action of the story takes place”.⁴⁴ Hill thought that the importance of the names in poems like *Widsith* and *Beowulf* was that they drew audiences into⁴⁵

³⁹ Shippey 1978: 25.

⁴⁰ Shippey 2014:, esp. 61-62.

⁴¹ Shippey 2014: 63.

⁴² Sisam 1953a: 345.

⁴³ See, for instance, Sisam 1953a: 318, fn. 3, who names *Ecgwela*, *Ecgtheow* and *Ecglaf* as “inventions for the purposes of the *Beowulf* stories”.

⁴⁴ Orchard 2003: 172. See also 169-173, admitting the poet’s apparent interest in names of persons and peoples as opposed to places.

⁴⁵ Hill 2009: 2.

a world evocatively rich in legends of heroic deeds [...] that was more a geography of the imagination than the historical relationships of different times and places. For this, the names of tribes and heroes, allusively as well as narratively deployed, had a powerful and cumulative effect, whether or not any particular name had a truly historical origin, and whether or not any given reference was capable of arousing extra-textual associations that would complete the allusion or recall other related stories.

With respect to the names in *Widsith*, she added: “It is in any case unlikely that the individual Anglo-Saxons who enjoyed the poem knew them all, or that the poet could have told of the adventures of each”.⁴⁶ However, one must ask how a name which was no longer attached to a story (or which never was, because it was invented) could have the power to evoke anything except mystification. The trend seems to be: names are ordinary; characters are inventions.

Somewhat similarly to Hill’s view, Bremmer suggested that the mention of otherwise unknown characters in phrases which describe their kinship relationships with other, better-known characters, had the purpose of locating them socially as someone’s son or nephew and thus of giving greater solidity to invented characters.⁴⁷ But Shippey was dubious of this, since several of these obscure figures were also represented in other texts and narrative traditions, and so “it would be rash in the extreme to declare that anyone of whom we have no other record can never have existed even in legend”.⁴⁸ And he and Neidorf have resurrected – at least in some form – the view abandoned by Sisam, arguing that the obscure names and scanty details (if any) which we find in our poems are merely a glimpse of a vast narrative hinterland with which audiences were familiar and engaged.⁴⁹

The approach taken in this study would tend to confirm Shippey and Neidorf’s assertion and endorse the view of Shaw:⁵⁰

The study of personal names in [*Beowulf*] is key to understanding the traditionality or otherwise of some significant figures and, more broadly, therefore, to understanding the traditions from which the poem springs

Shaw’s principal concern in his comprehensive 2020 study of names and naming in *Beowulf* was whether or not names and their forms indicated an English, Scandinavian or Continental Germanic origin for its characters and narratives (and only secondarily whether or not they were “meaningful” or fictive). That is not the main objective of this study (and I have a query

⁴⁶ Hill 2009: 15 – a restatement of her view in Hill 1984.

⁴⁷ In an unpublished paper (2004), quoted by Shippey 2014: 63-64.

⁴⁸ Shippey 2014: 64. The point had also been made by Neidorf (2013c: 568), who had also argued (2013b) that the *Beowulf*-scribes tended to make errors with respect to these names because in their day (c. 1000) the old stories featuring them were no longer known.

⁴⁹ See Neidorf 2013c: esp. 568-70; 2020a: 657; Shippey 2014: esp. 72-78.

⁵⁰ Shaw 2020: 13. As to Ecglāf and his familial connections to Æschere, Yrmenlāf, Heapolāf and Wealhþēow, see fn. 274 (p. 92) and pp. 343, 363 below.

about where – in the Migration Age period – the linguistic or other borders of these regions might have been drawn). But it is nevertheless an important part; and I suggest that the enquiry may be extended to *Widsith* – a text with as many names as *Beowulf* but perhaps more mysteries – and, more importantly, taken further than the issue of where it was composed.

What I hope to offer in this thesis is a further step on from the disputes about the etymologies of names intended to establish whether or not names “meant” something, and if so, what (though these features are not absent from my study). Whereas Shippey and Neidorf thought it was only to be wondered what the lost narratives might be that were alluded to by names, I suggest that much more detail with respect to their personalities and events behind these names can be recovered than hitherto was thought possible. The view consistently taken in this study is that the names in our texts should receive closer scrutiny, to determine whether they are part of wider and deeper patterns of tribal, dynastic and political relationships. And in order to carry out this scrutiny we need, I suggest, a more sophisticated conceptual onomastic toolkit than examining the etymology of a name and saying that it was meaningful, non-meaningful, adapted to be meaningful, or “don’t know”.

Thus, in this study I propose ways of expanding our view of *Widsith* – and to a lesser extent *Beowulf* – and of the narrative traditions they contain by a correspondingly more expansive view than is customary of the principles of names and naming used by the poets. This, I argue, leads to the clearer identification of individuals and the relationships between them and thus to a better understanding of the narratives in which they feature. This occupies the first section of the thesis. In sections 1.2-6 of Part I,⁵¹ I identify different name-types which characters could have. I focus particularly on the “ethno-eponym”, a phenomenon not analysed before. This was the singulative of an ethnonym which the king of that ethnos could bear. Thus, the king of the *Ēast-Gotan* (the eastern Goths or Ostrogoths) could be called *Ēastgota*.

Secondly I consider the issue of “hypocorism” (pet-names) in detail. They are a significant feature of the naming traditions of early Germanic kings – including Offa, the most important character in this study – but I regard the literature on them as limited by too narrow a focus on searching the lexis to identify appellatives which provide a plausible etymology for these almost exclusively monothematic names. I propose instead a different, “generative” approach, identifying most hypocorisms as derivations from dithematic birth-names according to a set of transformational rules which can be described. While this has never been absent from the onomastic study of hypocorism, it has been accorded too little importance. It is

⁵¹ See pp. 43-124 below.

potentially of importance to our narratives to be able to understand that a hypocoristic name may have been derived from another name in the same or a related text, and thus that these are not two different people with two different names, but one person under different forms of the same name.

I also investigate issues with respect to birth-names – usually dithematic – and what the meanings of their elements do and do not tell us; but also what their forms can tell us about family relationships (in terms of shared features, such as alliteration and name-elements). And I also consider apparently epithetical names, such as *Heremōd* (“war mood”) and *Folcwalda* (“people ruler”), which are often taken to be generic-sounding because they are invented names for fictional or archetypal characters – a view which I challenge.

The result of these new or revised approaches, I suggest, is to reveal that the naming of several important literary characters was multiple, in the sense that they could be known by a number of names of different types simultaneously in their historical-poetical traditions. This runs counter to an almost universal assumption that characters are referred to by one name only. In a number of instances I shall claim that this opens up surprising new horizons in our understanding of heroic narratives, especially with regard to *Widsith*, hitherto regarded almost unanimously – though wrongly – as a non-narrative poem.

The second and larger Part II of the thesis, however, is devoted to the identification and description of the narratives which, it is argued, lie at the core of *Widsith*. I shall argue that *Widsith* is no mere list or catalogue from “Dark Age” orality, and no sonorous but meaningless roll-call of the supposed names of kings of a fictitious heathen past which tickled the nostalgic palate of tenth-century, sophisticated Anglo-Saxons.⁵² Rather, it was constructed round a story which its audience would have recognised as one of the heroic achievement of Offa and the tragedy of his Anglian dynasty and nation, set in a recognisable and – at the time of its composition – geopolitically realistic world of fourth- and fifth-century Jutland and its Scandinavian and Baltic environs.⁵³ At its centre is the story of the heroic Offa of Angel; and at the end of Offa’s story is a tale of dynastic collapse which led directly to the migration of his Anglian people to a new home in Britain. Offa’s story was thus the “Matter of England”, standing as a counterpart to the surviving narratives of Hengest, a quite different and morally dubious person.⁵⁴

⁵² See the discussion of the modern critical reception of *Widsith* at pp. 125-33 below.

⁵³ See Maps 1 and 2 on pp. 18 and 19 above.

⁵⁴ See the reconstruction of the Offa story at pp. 417-30 below.

It should be emphasised here, however, that although I argue that names and their forms and meanings help us to trace the development of narrative over several centuries and between languages and cultures, the arguments presented in this thesis with respect to purely narrative features stand (or fall) on their own merits, and are not dependent on the more abstruse linguistic aspects of names and naming.

At the conclusion of the thesis – perhaps somewhat unconventionally – I tell Offa’s partly fairytale story as it may have been known to successive generations of English people from the time of the composition of *Widsith* and *Beowulf* in the early eighth century to the late twelfth century in the English East Midlands. Younger readers (if there are any) may recognise this as a “mash-up”. At any rate, the interested reader may find this tale an easier place to start than the briar-patches of onomastics and the tar-babies of textual analysis.⁵⁵

The Offa-story is preserved in versions which range from the earlier, allusive, incomplete and English evidence in *Widsith*, *Beowulf* and the Anglo-Saxon regnal lists, to the later, descriptive, fuller and Danish witnesses in twelfth-century histories by the Danes Sven Aggesen and Saxo Grammaticus. Also part of this highly variegated picture are the early thirteenth-century romantic story of the two Offas, the *Vitae Offarum Duorum*, from St. Albans, the undated Old Norse Eddaic poem *Rígsþula*, several medieval Icelandic royal genealogies, and two early thirteenth-century Icelandic histories, Snorri Sturluson’s *Ynglinga saga*, and the anonymous *Skjöldunga saga*, now known only from a late sixteenth-century epitome in Latin.

This study undertakes an analysis of the development of the Offa-legend and the several uses to which it has been put by Anglian heroic poets, West Saxon royal genealogists, nationalist Danish royal encomiasts, promotion-hungry Icelandic clerical saga-men and poets, and romantically minded English monks keen to advertise the origins of their Benedictine foundation. It is also argued that the changing ideologies underlying the Offa-story were the drivers of change in its narrative. Rather than – as has often been assumed⁵⁶ – a process of random alteration, or of narrative entropy, according to which a narrative – which may originally have been factual – changes to fiction by random accretion, disorganisation or decay, I suggest each stage of the narrative development of the Offa-story represents a recasting of the tradition in accordance with a certain ideological purpose.

⁵⁵ See pp. 417-30 below.

⁵⁶ This is my analysis of the (usually unstated) methodologies of scholars like Sophus Bugge, Axel Olrik, R. W. Chambers, Kemp Malone and others. It is a subject which deserves further study, but it may be argued that they were influenced by the principles of classical textual criticism.

Such an approach can scarcely be called revolutionary; but it has not been applied to Offa's story – nor probably to any narrative as fugitive or disparate in terms of its evidence – with any expectation that a credible result could be achieved. However, when it is applied, I suggest that the differences between its various guises cease to be as irreconcilable as they have seemed to so many scholars, and a clear narrative tradition emerges. Finally, I argue that the Offa-story was probably known in late twelfth-century England in as much detail as it had been five hundred years earlier to the *Widsith*- and *Beowulf*-poets and their audiences; and it was in England that Icelandic visitors encountered it and realised that here, still surviving in England after the Conquest, was an old story of a Jutlandic homeland before the *Adventus Saxonum*,⁵⁷ and one which could lend new lustre to its current possessors, the kings of Denmark, eager for an ennobling legend of their foundation and history.

1.4 Terms and Terminology

With respect to the terminology to be used in the discussion of traditional poetic stories or narratives (no meaningful distinction is drawn between the two in this study), I note from recent work⁵⁸ that there remains no consensus on the terms for the structural elements from which traditional narratives – such as myth, legend, folktale and fairytale (themselves terms of variable meaning) – are constructed. Tangherlini outlines the difficulties in attempting to identify the structural units of traditional literature (let alone trying to achieve a nomenclature for them).⁵⁹ I have therefore developed the following nomenclature, in the hope that it is usable and not over-theoretical:

- (1) *Detail*: individual instances of people, relationships between people, places, events, objects, dress, possessions, and actions – designated by names and descriptions.
- (2) *Motif*: a *detail* which carries a particular meaning, or a combination of such *details* forming a pattern, appearing in different places within a text or in different texts.
- (3) *Theme*: the meaning associated with *details* and/or *motifs*.

⁵⁷ The term for the arrival in mid-5th-c. Britain of large number of migrants – ethnically and/or linguistically Germanic – from southern Jutland and the North Sea coast. An academic debate continues as to whether this *adventus* was more or less violent and/or discriminatory in its treatment of the Celtic British.

⁵⁸ Frog and Ahola 2021: esp. 21-24; and Frog 2021: esp. 162-69.

⁵⁹ Tangherlini 1994: esp. 9-11.

- (4) *Narrative*: a connected series of events (including *details*, *motifs* and *themes*) about characters, with an overall structure (plot) and meaning. A *story*.⁶⁰
- (5) *Genre*: a characteristic type of narrative or story.

The word “heroic” has been established for so long that it seems futile to challenge it. It was resurrected in 1840 by Thomas Carlyle in his series of lectures entitled “On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History” and applied to the newly-rediscovered literature in Old English and Icelandic. A Carlylean “hero” was a “great man” who was the subject of worship or admiration or who set great events in train. Later, Hector Munro Chadwick, in his *The Heroic Age* (published in 1912), used “heroic” in a more anthropological sense, referring to the culture of Iron Age warrior-society, which he felt Homeric Greece and Anglo-Saxon England shared.⁶¹ “Heroic” is still a serviceable term in its Chadwickian sense, and I do not avoid its use. However, it should not be taken to imply approval of the actions of “heroes” according to our modern (or, one sometimes thinks, any) system of ethics.

I use the term “Anglo-Saxon” throughout this study (alternating with “English”) to designate the Germanic-descended peoples who came to dominate the parts of Britain which became “England” in the period from the fifth century up to the time of the Norman Conquest (when not further distinguished as “Anglians”, “Mercians”, “West Saxons” and so on). “Anglo-Saxon” has become contentious in some quarters – for political reasons – and some writers now choose to replace it with “English” or “early medieval English”.⁶² Among the arguments that have been advanced against “Anglo-Saxon” is that the English did not use it to describe themselves (rather they referred to themselves as “Angles” or “Saxons”). Certainly, the compound term is not recorded before the 780s, when Paulus Diaconus (writing in Latin at the court of Charlemagne) referred to the English as *Anglisaxones*, probably to distinguish the “Saxons” of England from the “Old” Saxons who still lived in Saxony and with whom Charlemagne was at war for about thirty years until the beginning of the ninth century. The title *Angulsaxonum rex* was affected on coins, in charters and in other official documents by

⁶⁰ In narratology a distinction is sometimes drawn between a “story” (an account of a series of events with characters) and a “narrative” (the meaning or ideology which the story contains or expresses). I take the position that as long as structure and meaning are kept distinct in the discussion, there is no need for such a distinction in terminology. Indeed, since “story” and “narrative” are so often identical in meaning in non-specialist discourse, such a distinction risks rather than avoids confusion.

⁶¹ Chadwick 1912: esp. vii-ix.

⁶² See, for instance, Louviot 2020 and, less radically, Naismith 2025. Perhaps ironically, the great historian of the Norman Conquest, Edward Freeman (who had distinctly mid-Victorian views on race and ethnicity) strongly advocated the use of “English” to describe “the Teutonic inhabitants of Britain looked on as a whole” and deplored the use of “Anglo-Saxon” (Freeman 1867-79: I, 597-609).

kings from Alfred to Edward the Confessor, but this was to reflect the claim (which was realised by the 950s) of the House of Wessex and their Danish successor Cnut to be the sole rulers of the English, including all the areas which had been Anglian or Saxon kingdoms before the Viking settlement in the ninth century.⁶³ Therefore, “Anglo-Saxon” may have been the name for a people whom West Saxon kings aspired to rule rather than one that their subjects chose to use of themselves. Nevertheless, whatever “Anglo-Saxon” meant to the rulers or inhabitants of pre-Conquest England, over the past hundred years and more, it has proved a recognisable and reasonably precise term for the English between the *Adventus Saxonum* and the conquest by the Normans. I therefore retain its use, following the views expressed by John Hines and many others.⁶⁴ It is to be distinguished from “Old English”, which is used to describe the language and linguistic forms used by the Anglo-Saxons.

Since this thesis is about a narrative which I identify as a foundational legend about England and its people (or at least its Anglian people), this inevitably engages with modern academic constructions of the “identity” of groups that might be called “ethnicities”. Today this is also a politically charged area. It has not been possible to avoid terms such as “ethnic” and “ethnicity”, but it should be understood that these are designed to indicate distinctions and similarities about which we have very little information – accurate or otherwise – about peoples who may well have looked the same, spoken the same language and shared any number of customs and beliefs. What they made of their differences and similarities we have no idea; and it has seemed best to me to avoid committing to a terminology which includes the concept of “identity” in its current academic construction (preferring terms such as “allegiance” and “affiliation”). I am mindful of the criticism of the construction of “barbarian ethnic identities” by Alexander Callander Murray. He considered that “identity” had been constructed so as to be “political in origin, fluid, and limited to a restricted circle”,⁶⁵ which was thus “readily adaptable to modern sociological notions of ethnicity as an arbitrary situational construct”.⁶⁶ He said: “It is hardly likely that ethnicity, whatever one is to make of its depth in society or the intensity of feelings it aroused, was simply an instrumental category and an attribute of royal

⁶³ See Naismith 2025: 4-9.

⁶⁴ See John Hines *et (mult.) al.* (2020). I do not follow the positions taken in e.g. Louvriot 2020 and Rambaran-Olm and Wade 2022.

⁶⁵ Callander Murray (2002: 58), characterising the theory of *Ethnogenese* (“Ethnogenesis”) by historians of the “Vienna School” (exemplified by Reinhard Wenskus, Herwig Wolfram and Walther Pohl), according to which “barbarian” ethnic identity was multi-ethnic and was created and refashioned by social elites to suit their political and dynastic agendas; and the narratives thus created featured in the early, legendary parts of the histories of Germanic peoples by authors such as Jordanes, Paulus Diaconus and Bede. Walter Goffart has also been a prominent critic of the Vienna School’s methodology.

⁶⁶ Callander Murray 2002: 58.

ideology and political strategy. More often than not it seems to have had very little to do with political allegiance at all”.⁶⁷ The testimony of the sources “tend[ed] to run doggedly to the banal, unambiguous and conventional – ethnic association was something one was born into: a person was a Frank, a Roman or a Burgundian by birth”, and in his view the *Volk* had simply been banished from consideration.⁶⁸ If this criticism has validity, then “ethnic identity” is problematic. For some scholars it is an elite chicken but for others a *Völkisch* egg.

If there is a tendency in this study to take a position on this issue, it is probably that tribal legends grew up among the people and were intended to say something about themselves and their common values; but such stories were also of use to ruling elites and contenders for power, since they also contained genealogical information that was useful for establishing dynastic claims, as if to say, “Here is the story we all know about our forebear Offa. He was my direct ancestor, and I am thus a better candidate for the kingship”. It is possible that Offa (II) of Mercia, who possibly usurped the Mercian throne and ruled from 757 to 796 had the birth-name *Wynfrith* (his father was called *Thingfrith* and his son *Ecgfrith*), but he assumed or was given the name *Offa* to honour his heroic Anglian ancestor (as Offa I is in the Mercian regnal list). However, the Offa legend, as we find it in *Widsith* (and possibly in *Beowulf*) was in existence before the reign of Offa of Mercia, and so while he may have “channelled” it, he did not invent it.

In the Anglocentric style, the word “Continental”, with a capital C, is used throughout to designate languages and ethnic groups “on the Continent” – that is, short for “on the continent of Europe”.

The pre-Christian era is denoted by “BC” and the Christian era by “AD”.

1.5 Quotation, Orthography and Critical Apparatus

Except where stated otherwise, all translations are my own. Although quotations from Old English and Old Norse texts usually follow printed editions, in several instances I have supplied my own readings (or retained a MS reading) and punctuation. Where this is done I have noted the fact.

Long vowels and diphthongs in Old English names, words and textual quotations from poetry have been marked with a macron (/ā/, /ēa/ etc). All vowels not so marked may be taken to be short; however, for the purposes of clarity and/or contrast in linguistic discussion, I have

⁶⁷ Callander Murray 2002: 59.

⁶⁸ Callander Murray 2002: 58.

used the convention of indicating short vowels with a breve (as with /ă/), or with a macron and a breve to indicate a vowel which may have been short or long (as with /ā̆/), and similarly with the first element in diphthongs (/ēa/ etc).

Names and quotations in Old Norse are given in the modern standard reconstructed orthography of Old Icelandic, as used in the Íslenzk fornrit editions. This includes the letters initial /p/ and medial /ð/ (unvoiced and voiced dental spirants, respectively), and the vowels /æ/, /q/ (also = /ö/) and /ø/, with long vowels being marked with an acute accent (/á/, /ý/ etc.). In name-forms from pre-literary or runic Scandinavian, long vowels are marked with a macron.

Diacritics and Old English letters are omitted in the titles of Old English texts – thus *Widsith*, not *Wīdsīþ*, and *Beowulf*, not *Bēowulf*. But diacritics and non-Roman letters are retained in the titles of Old Norse ones, as in *Skjöldunga saga* and *Rígsþula*.

In many Old English texts /p/ and /ð/ were used indifferently for both the voiced dental spirant in *those* and the unvoiced version in *thing*. In reproducing and reconstructing names for the purposes of discussion, and for the sake of consistency I have used /p/ to represent both sounds in the names of people in Old English texts and in Old English words, except where the textual form is being quoted. Hence, *Hrōþgār* and *Wealhþēow*, rather than *Hrothgar* and *Wealhtheow*, or *Hrōðgār* and *Wealhðēow*. Similarly, for example, I use *friþ* (“peace”) if under discussion as a lexical item, but *frið* if quoting from a text with that spelling. Complete consistency, however, is not possible; and when referring to people known from history (rather than textual or linguistic discussion), I use conventional name-forms, such as *Alfred* (the Great) and *Æthelred* (the Unready), rather than *Ælfræd* and *Æpelræd*.

Except where noted otherwise, references to and quotations from *Beowulf* follow the text, diacritics and lineation of *Kl4* (omitting indications of textual emendation where not relevant to the argument). Those from *Widsith* follow the text and lineation in Joyce Hill’s edition (2009), with the addition of my own diacritics. Those from other Old English poetic texts follow *ASPR*, again, with the addition of my own macrons.

Where a Germanic name appears in a text not in a Germanic vernacular (usually Latin), I give the name as written, without any indication of the likely length of vowels or diphthongs, and without attempting to represent likely Germanic sounds with Germanic graphs such as <ð>, <þ>, <p> etc.

Many of the ethnonyms discussed are recorded in Old English texts only as plurals and often in an oblique case which obscures whether the ethnonym was grammatically weak or strong, or whether it was an *a*-stem, an *i*-stem or some other declension. I have therefore usually followed the plural nominative forms assumed by Joyce Hill (2009) and the editors of *Kl4* in

their respective glossaries. Where it has been necessary to assume a singular form, its determination has been my own. Very little turns on the choice of nominative forms.

To assist with the understanding of the discussion of the story of Offa of Angel, the Appendix (pp. 431-34 below) contains summaries of the Danish Uffo texts (originally in Latin).

Where it is necessary to distinguish between Offa of Angel and Offa of Mercia, they are designated as Offa I and Offa II. In referring to the kingdom ruled by Offa I, I use the toponym *Angel*, the Old English form closest to the ethnonym “Angle” which is most common in current historical writing. In modern scholarship in English (including the literary study of *Widsith*) it is common to find the German toponym *Angeln* used for the historical kingdom of the Angles (*Angeln* is German for “Angles”, just as *Polen*, “Poles”, is the German name for Poland). However, in the literary period and up to the present day *Angeln* has never been recorded as the name of a kingdom, duchy, county or other political or administrative entity, either within Denmark or Germany. Rather, it is a historical name for an area without a defined political boundary. Accordingly, there seems to me no strong reason to follow German usage in discussing the area of southern Jutland inhabited and ruled by *Engle* before their mass-migration to Britain in the fifth century (particularly since Offa’s conquest may have considerably expanded the kingdom of the Angles). I therefore use *Angel* throughout.

Alaric and Jonathan (and Rory and Carolyne) have saved me from innumerable errors, obscurities and infelicities. But those that remain are my own.

1.6 Coda

Widsith, I propose to argue, is an elaborate construction of a complex geopolitical world in southern Scandinavia (and particularly in Jutland) which, in our modern understanding of chronology, would have existed between the years *c.* 350 and 450 AD. Some of the narrative which I recover is remarkably congruent with the discoveries of archaeology, palaeogenetics and linguistics, and in particular to the expansion of the Danes during the course of the fifth century. The Anglian story – as analysed here – is one of the collapse of the glorious empire won by Offa from the regional superpowers, and the refuge sought abroad by his successors, the ancestors of Offa of Mercia. As with the Virgilian tradition which made Aeneas and his men – refugees from Troy – the founders of a great nation abroad, and the medieval one which invented another Trojan, Brutus, who would found Britain, the story of Offa is what some German scholars would call *Ethnogenese*, a story of the birth of a people. The argument advanced in this thesis also adds a wholly new aspect to the study of the foundation of England.

Instead of a narrative based on a perception of the incomers as predatory opportunists and ethnic-cleansers, or (in the latest construction) as misrepresented conciliatory pastoralists, it is a story of a people fleeing oppression. It may thus be called “the Matter of Engaland”.

This, at any rate, is how the present writer managed to “get a thesis out of *Widsith*”.

I

Names and Naming in Early Medieval Vernacular Literature

En þá þótti monnum þat miklu heillavænlegra at hafa
tvau nöfn. Var þat þá átrúnaðr manna, at þeir menn
myndi lengr lifa, sem tvau nöfn hefði⁶⁹

Aldwine qui et Wor, episcopus defunctus est.⁷⁰

1.1 Lots in a Name: Revised Approaches to Names and Naming

In this study fairly constant reference is made to names, a multiplicity of which seems to be a characteristic of the heroic and historical literary tradition in medieval England, Scandinavia and Germany. *Widsith* – at least in the view of some critics – seems to consist of little else, and *Beowulf* contains several dozen, a number of which – as we have seen – belong to characters who have little more existence than as a name. Names and the identification (or attempted identification) of their bearers also loom large as themes in the criticism of poems like *The Finnsburh Fragment*,⁷¹ *Waldere*, *Deor* and *Wulf and Eadwacer*. This may be thought to be for the obvious reasons that a name means a character, and a character usually means a plot; and a plot may be the very thing that, to our frustration, we lack when considering the often fragmentary survivals of the Anglo-Saxon heroic tradition and the murky allusions they contain. In the case of the Old English Elegies of the Exeter Book – several of which are entirely lacking in names – many scholars have sought, without general success, to identify the

⁶⁹ “Then [*sc.* in heathen times] people thought it much more propitious to have two names. It was the belief of people then that those people who had two names would live longer”. The saga-author said this to explain the element *brodd* in the name *Brodd-Helgi* in *Þorsteins saga hvíta* (ch. 8; Jón Jóhannesson 1950: 19, and fn. 3). Helgi’s *viðröfn* (by-name) *broddr* (“point, spike”) is explained by a – characteristically implausible – anecdote in which he enabled a bull on his family’s farm to protect itself from the assault of another bull by tying *mannbroddar* (spikes tied to the shoes for crossing ice) to its forehead.

⁷⁰ “Bishop Aldwine, who was also Wor, died”. See Symeon of Durham, *Historia Regum*, ch. 34, *s.a.* 737 (Arnold 1882-85: II, 32). This Aldwine was *Ealdwine2* in *PASE*, a Bishop of Lichfield (?-731×737) This person signed charters S86 (Latin gen. *Wori*) and S87 (OE gen. *Worres*), but appears in *HE* (v.23) and *ASC* MSS DEF (*s.a.* 731) under versions of the name *Ealdwine*. *Wor(r)* was also the name of a West Saxon ealdorman (*PASE*, *Wor* 3).

⁷¹ Henceforth *FFr*.

nameless characters on the basis that that the narrative scenarios in which they feature suggest that they were individuals rather than generic types or symbolic or allegorical figures.

But names have a further function with respect to the examination of literary texts and the history of their development. As I hope this study demonstrates, they are capable of being among the most conservative of details in the transmission of narratives. They can be nuclei which may or may not carry along with them other particles – such as motifs, themes, narratives and genres – as they travel and change through time and tradition. Often, they are the only anchor-points that we have.

As indicated in the Introduction, this study aims to go beyond conventional critical understandings with respect to names and naming in our texts in order to make the narratives behind our texts clearer. In the following sections I investigate the different categories of names that literary characters might possess and the further implications of these names, not only in terms of character, but as members of families and dynasties and actors in lost or partially lost narratives. In several instances, I suggest, it is possible to discover that one individual was – unsuspected until now – known by several names of different types.

I bear in mind, however, that there will be some examples which must remain forever dark. In the second epigram to this section (p. 42 above) we see that the bishop known as *Ealdwine* was also known as *Wor* and *Worr*, a name he used to witness charters. But how he came by this and what it meant are still anyone's guess.⁷²

1.2 The Ethno-Eponym

Scholars long ago drew the conclusion that early medieval Germanic-speaking peoples were named after their kings – the most notable example in northern European literature being the Danish *Scyldingas* of *Beowulf*, who, in a hallowed scholarly tradition, are usually presumed to be named after their progenitor, *Scyld Scēfing*. The supposition that peoples were named after eponymous founders is a venerable one, going back at least as far as the *Etymologiae* of Isidore of Seville in the seventh century, who regarded *Dardanus* as the founder of the *gens Dardana* (the Trojans), *Thessalus* as the founder of the *Thessali* (people of Thessaly), *Graecus* of the *Graeci* (Greeks), and so on.⁷³ Similarly, the name of the city of Rome could be (and in Roman

⁷² See Redin 1919: 39, who (understandably) found none of the attempted etymologies – “weary”, “swampy”, “woodcock” – plausible.

⁷³ See *Etymologiae*, IX.2.67, 69, 84 (Lindsay 1911: I, 352-53, 355). There are many other examples, probably drawing on etymological traditions going back to Classical times. However, the only Germanic people named who are said by Isidore to have got their name from their king are the *Franci* – though if

historical tradition was) explained as deriving from its founder Romulus.⁷⁴ Such traditions – and others like them – may seem logical or even obvious, but I argue that where they persist today they deserve to be questioned. I shall argue that there is evidence from both literature and historical texts in Old English that – perhaps generally in Germanic onomastic custom – the opposite may be the case; and there are identifiable examples of kings who are named after their nation, tribe or dynasty, rather than the other way round.

This name, I argue, took the form of a singulative of the name of the nation, social group, or clan (ethnonym). Thus, the king of the *Ēastgotan* (the Old English name for the Ostrogoths) could be called *Ēastgota*. Likewise, the king of the Danish *Scyldingas* could be called either *Scyld* (using the stem) or *Scylding* (the group-name or phylonym). The same people were known as *Healfdene* (“Half-Danes”), and any of their kings could thus be known by the singulative *Healfdene*.

I term this phenomenon the “ethno-eponym”. To my knowledge, it has never been identified clearly or described. I therefore take the opportunity to do so here, because we will encounter several ethno-eponyms in the discussion of the story of Offa of Angel and his world, including its intersection with the world of *Beowulf*. As I shall argue, the implications of this phenomenon are twofold: firstly, as a name for a king, an ethno-eponym was not a birth-name but was potentially additional to one, and thus characters in our texts may have more than one name (an important point in principle when using names to understand and reconstruct narratives); secondly, as a genuine Germanic idiom, it may have applied to people who were historically real – rather than eponymous fictions of the Isidorean type – thus enabling us to reconsider the narratives in which they appear as representations of historical reality rather than legends spun out of nothing.

Several previous scholars have come near to the realisation that there was something “eponymous” about the names of certain kings. Chambers came close when approving of Sarrazin’s suggestion that the personal name *Hǫðbroddr* in the Eddaic poems about Helgi Hundingsbani (*Hodbroddus* in Saxo Grammaticus’s *Gesta Danorum*) should be identified with the ethnonym *Heapobeardan*, the Old English form of the name of a people who appear in *Beowulf* and *Widsith*, but in no other text. He said this was “exceedingly probable, in view of the way in which kingly and tribal names interchange. Cf. *Ostrogotha*, *Hōcing*, *Hunding*,

his name was *Francus*, Isidore does not say so explicitly: *Franci a quodam proprio duce vocari putantur* “The Franks are thought to be named after some leader of their own” (*ibid.*, IX.2.101; Lindsay 1911: I, 357). However, where the *Franci* actually got their name from has remained a mystery.

⁷⁴ As in Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, I.7; Ogilvie 1974: 10.

Scylding".⁷⁵ This was, I suggest, the beginning of an intuitive insight into the ethno-eponym (according to the argument presented here, the ethno-eponym of the *Heapobeardan* would have been **Heapobeard* or **Heapobearda*). But Chambers did not develop his idea and cleaved to the traditional view that a tribe took its name from an eponymous founder, as with *Scyld* and the *Scyldingas*.⁷⁶

That other great authority on Germanic literary antiquity, Kemp Malone, followed the same tradition,⁷⁷ observing that ideal kings attracted ideal and epithetical names (thus *Scyld* as the "shield" of his people), and their people and descendants were named after them. But these figures were either legendary or poetic fictions.⁷⁸ Malone also took time to refute an idea stated very briefly in an article by Robert Ramsay, that *Scyld* was an "eponym" derived from the ethnonym *Scyldingas*, who were a people named after their shields (and likewise *Helm* "helmet" from the *Helmingas*, and *Brond* "sword" from the *Brondingas*).⁷⁹ In response to Malone's criticism, Ramsay gave the following definition of these "eponyms" as "names for mythical personages from whom tribal names were quite mistakenly supposed to have been derived, whereas the reverse was actually the case".⁸⁰ That, I suggest, comes very close to the concept of the "ethno-eponym", except that Ramsay accepted the enduring *communis opinio* that the bearers of these eponyms were "mythical". He was thus stating a view not much different from that articulated earlier by Axel Olrik, who also argued that *Scyld* was a back-formation from *Scylding*, and also that this was not a myth or a legend, but rather an etymological fiction perpetrated by the *Beowulf*-poet in order to provide the Danish *Scyldingas* with a notable – but entirely factitious – founder-king.⁸¹

On the reverse side of the coin, there are still advocates of the Isidorean view.⁸² We may note Bernard Mees, who regards the Anglo-Saxon ethnonyms *Hæstingas*, *Rēadingas* and *Wæclingas* as "reflect[ing] the name of sub-tribes or clans named after an early leader or eponymous ancestor".⁸³ This is a dominant view in the study of English place-names. While

⁷⁵ Chambers 1912: 82, fn. 1.

⁷⁶ Chambers 1912: 197.

⁷⁷ Malone 1953: esp. 154-55; 1954; 1957: 1-2. See also Malone 1959: 130 in fn. 173 (p. 65) below.

⁷⁸ Malone 1953: 153-55.

⁷⁹ Only a couple of sentences in Ramsay 1953a: 27. Argued against by Malone (1953). Restated at greater length by Ramsay (1953b) (who widened the phenomenon to include the Isidorean examples of Ion of the Ionians etc). This was again argued against by Malone (1954), after Ramsay had died.

⁸⁰ Ramsay 1954: 254.

⁸¹ Olrik 1903: 274; 1919: 440-441. It is a prevalent view today in *Beowulf* studies. See pp. 59-60 below.

⁸² See also Leneghan on *Scyld* (2020: 39-46, 139-51).

⁸³ Mees 2023: 8.

not necessarily always wrong, it is a presumption rather than a conclusion.⁸⁴ It may be conceded that there are cases in which it is either likely (or at least impossible to contradict) that a founder-figure – whether real or perceived – gave his name to an ethnonym and thence to a toponym. For instance, *Nunnington* in North Yorkshire can be derived from an ethnonym **Nunningas*, itself derived from a personal name *Nunna*, which is known to be a hypocorism derived from a name with the theme *nōþ*.⁸⁵ Likewise with *Erpingham* in Norfolk, from **Erpingas*, the people of **Erpa*, or of someone with a name containing the theme *e(o)rp*.⁸⁶ However, since this is a prevalent view, I set out here the reasons why it may be challenged, and I suggest that it is not the case that all ethnyonyms or phylonyms of the form *X-ingas* are to be interpreted as “people descended from founder named X”.

The affix *-ing*, *-ung*, suffixed to nouns and names to indicate relationship, is peculiar to Germanic languages, and its etymological origin is unknown. Victor Watts summarised four meanings of *-ing* in the Old English lexis underlying English place-names – or five if we include the plural *-ingas*:⁸⁷

- (1) A suffix to nouns “denoting male person and diminutives”. He cites two instances, both with the suffixal form *-ling*: *hȳrling* “hireling”, a person in receipt of *hȳr* “wages”; and *dēorling* “darling”, a person who is *dēor* “dear”. However, I note that both of these may be compound suffixes, *-(i)l + ing*, in which *-(i)l-* may have a diminutive function.
- (2) A suffix which forms place- and stream-names: *dēop + ing > Deeping* (Lincolnshire) “deep place”; *Bocca + ing > Bocking* (Essex) “person called *Bocca*’s place”.
- (3) A patronymic: *Ecgbryht Ealhmunding*, “Ecgbryht son of Ealhmund”. (Also very common in Anglo-Saxon regnal lists, with father-to-son succession).
- (4) A “connective particle” linking a first element, appellative or personal name, to a final element. However, “there is some uncertainty about the exact function and meaning of this element”. The uncertainty is caused by names such as *Hannington* (Northants), a *tūn* believed to be associated with a person called **Hana*, but without the expected genitive forms, whether singular **Haninges* or plural **Haninga*.

⁸⁴ See Watts 2004: 285, *s.n. Hastings*, after a person called **Hæst/*Hæsta*; 495, *s.n. Reading*, after a person called **Rēada*; 656, *s.n. Watling Street* (cf. Bede, *Uaeclingacæstir*), after **Wæcel*. I suspect, however, that **wæcling* may have meant “vigil-keeper” in pagan religion, and *Wæclingastræt* was thus a well-known route (along a Roman road) to a cult centre.

⁸⁵ See Watts 2004: 445, *s.n. Nunnington*, and the discussion of *Nōphelm* and *Nunna* at p. 102 below.

⁸⁶ See Watts 2004: 218, *s.n. Erpingham*. *PASE* records *Eorpwald* and *Eorpwine*, and the probably related hypocorisms *Eoppa*, *Epa* and *Eppa*. Cf. Förstemann 1900: 485-56, *s.n. ERPA*, including male *Erpo* and female *Erpa*.

⁸⁷ Watts 2004: xlv-xlvi.

- (5) (In the plural) a suffix forming “folk-names”: in the nominative *-ingas*, *Hastings* (West Sussex) < (nom) **Hæstingas*, the people of **Hæst* or **Hæsta*; and in the genitive plural *-inga*, *Birmingham* (West Midlands) < **Beormingahām*, the *hām* of the **Beormingas*, i.e. Beorma’s people.

English place-names with the elements *-ingas*, *-ingahām* and *-inga-* were once regarded as being among the earliest English place-names. Although this view has largely been abandoned, it has remained the view that *-ingas* names are early, seeming “to be the result of a social development contemporary with a colonizing process later than, but soon after, the immigration-settlement that is recorded in the early pagan burials”.⁸⁸ Therefore, the use of ethnonyms – or phylonyms, that is, dynastic names – in place-name formation is still conventionally regarded as a fairly early phenomenon (mirrored by place-names with the suffixes *-ing*, *-inge* and *-ingen* across northern Europe). Margaret Gelling noted that in regnal lists the suffix *-ing* means “son of”, but in place-names the plural form *-ingas* seems to mean “people of”. While the commonest use of *-inga(s)* was as a suffix to personal names, it could also be attached to river-names: *Avening* (Gloucestershire) and *Blything* (Suffolk); and to topographical terms: *Nazeing* (Essex) “people of the *næss* or spur of land”; and *Clavering* (Essex), from *clāfre* “clover” + *ing*.⁸⁹

Gelling discussed the problem of Anglo-Saxon place-names with singular *-ing-* rather than genitive *-inges* or *-inga*, to solve which scholars had labelled *-ing* a “connective particle”.⁹⁰ She quoted the view of A. H. Smith that *-ing-* in most cases denotes “the association of a place with a particular individual and in the broadest sense [has] something of a genitival function without necessarily implying possession”.⁹¹ Examples were: *Teottingtūn*, “farmstead associated with Teotta”, and *Ælfrēdingtūn* “farmstead associated with Ælfrēd – as opposed to **Teottantūn* and **Ælfrēdestūn*. Gelling cited *Ceolmundinghaga* and *Badenothing land*, referring to individuals who were named in ninth-century charters as *Ceolmund* and *Badanoth*, in respect of which she argued that *-ing-* was “merely genitival” and indicated “temporary overlordship”.⁹² Further (less certain) examples were *Kemberton* (Gloucestershire), possibly from the *Cyneburg* in recorded *Cyneburgincgtun*; *Wolverley* (Worcestershire) from a recorded *Wulfferd* in *Wulfferdinleh*; and *Tredington* (Worcestershire) from *Tyrdda* (a previous holder of

⁸⁸ Gelling 1978: 111, quoting Dodgson 1966: 19.

⁸⁹ Gelling 1978: 106-10.

⁹⁰ Gelling 1978: 177-80. See Watts’s category (4) above.

⁹¹ See Smith 1956: I, 291-98.

⁹² Gelling 1978: 177.

the estate named in a charter of 757). Gelling concluded: “The evidence for the precise meaning of *-ing-* furnished by these names is too slight to build on, but there is little room for doubt that *-ing-* denotes an association of a place with a particular individual”.⁹³

However, the analysis offered in this study suggests a sixth category of *-ing*, which is “suffix denoting the head of a ‘folk’ with the name *-ingas*”. That is, one way of designating the chieftain of a people or clan known, for instance, as **Erpingas* was as **Erping*. Thus, with respect to *Hannington* in (4) above, the head of the people who may originally have been named **Han(n)ingas* – after **Hana* or **Hanna* (perhaps a hypocorism of *Hagena*) – was, from time to time, called **Han(n)ing*, an ethno-eponym; and so **Han(n)ingtūn* (with no evidence of a genitive inflection) was a compound formed similarly to most others in Old English, in which the first element (the ethno-eponym) was not marked for case, or if marked, then with an oblique case other than genitive. This type of formation is most obvious in *Ælfrēdingtūn*, which would mean “the *tūn* of the chieftain of *Ælfrēd*’s people”. **Ælfrēding* was thus either a son or kinsman of *Ælfrēd* or the member of his kinsmen chosen to head the clan.⁹⁴ The rarity of *Ælfrēdingtūn* and *Cyneburgingtūn*-type toponyms would suggest that the suffixation of *-ing* to full dithematic names was also a linguistic rarity (perhaps because also an archaism).

As we shall see later, it is also possible that ethnonyms (and hence ethno-eponyms) could function, unmodified, as toponyms – as, for instance, with *Ongend*, which seems to have functioned as both an ethno-eponym and a toponym, denoting *Angel*.⁹⁵ Hence – hypothetically at least – a name like **Clāf(e)ring* (Clavering in Essex) might represent a toponym meaning “place with clover”, but it may also be a singulative of the ethnonym **Clāf(e)ringas* and hence an ethno-eponym **Clāf(e)ring* “chief of such a people”. Thus, *Finningley* (now in South Yorkshire but historically in Nottinghamshire) could derive from *lēah* “clearing” and one of the following elements: *Finninga* (genitive plural of *Finningas* “people of the *fenn*”); *Finninge* (dative/locative of toponym *Finning* “fenny place”); *Finning*, which could have several meanings: “member of the folk called *Finningas*”, “chieftain of the *Finningas*” (an ethno-eponym), *Finning* as a non-meaningful birth-name, an epithetical name meaning “man of the fen”, or a patronymic form “kinsman/son of Finn”.⁹⁶ This analysis, I argue, suggests a less

⁹³ Gelling 1978: 178.

⁹⁴ Formed from a dithematic name, cf. the folk-name *Wægmundingas* in *Beowulf* (ll. 2607b, 2814a) the Swedish clan (part of the Scylding group) of which *Bēowulf* was a member on his father’s side.

⁹⁵ On *Angel/Angen/Ongen(d)* as an ethnonym and toponym, see pp. 155, 181-85, 225-27 below.

⁹⁶ See Watts 2004: 231, *s.n.* *DB*’s *Feniglei* also suggests a non-*i*-mutated *Fenning*. *Finningham* (Suffolk) may have the same derivation, though derivation from a folk-name (itself derived from the personal name *Finn*) cannot be excluded (*ibid.*: *s.n.*). With respect to *Finningley*, cf. Gover, Mawer and Stenton 1940: 79; Ekwall 1960: 180; Mills 2011: 189; Harvey 2025: 13, fn. 45.

problematical answer to the onomastic conundrum of place-names apparently derived from singulatives in *-ing* rather than genitive singulars in *-inges* or plural ethnonyms in *-inga*.

As I shall argue later,⁹⁷ ethno-eponyms may be derived from singulatives of ethnonyms (as with *Healfdene* from the *Healfdene*), or from the stems of ethnonyms in *-ingas* (as with *Scyld* from *Scyldingas* and *Hōc* from *Hōcingas*), but also from the singulative of an ethnonym in *-ingas* (as with *Scylding*, *Hemming* and *Wælsing*). They are to be found in literary texts, historical texts and potentially in onomastic evidence. If it be accepted that such a phenomenon can exist, then it follows that it should no longer be presumed that an eponymously named character or person is a progenitor of a people similarly named, or that they were necessarily legendary or mythical. Without any Isidorean presumption, I suggest, each case should be assessed on its merits.

The formulation of the ethno-eponym offered here is, I argue, wider than that adumbrated by Ramsay. As a genuine phenomenon in the naming-traditions of Germanic kingdoms, the ethno-eponym could – and I suggest did – apply to real historical figures. As such, the existence of an ethno-eponymous name cannot be regarded as evidence of fictionality. The same remark might be made of *Caesar*. Originally the cognomen of the historical figure Gaius Iulius Caesar, usually known as “Julius Caesar”, *Caesar* was later used by post-Augustan Roman emperors whether they were members of the Julian gens or not; and later still, from the reign of Diocletian in the third century AD, as the title of an imperial ruler subordinate to an *Augustus*. The fact that it could be used by many holders of the same office did not mean that, when referring to one, it meant that they were fictional.

Thus, if there was a real Danish people called the *Scyldingas*, the ethno-eponym of their king would be *Scyld* or *Scylding*, an actual person; and it is a different matter entirely whether any persons so named in poetry were fictional characters. Thus, the king with an ethno-eponym was part of the representation of historical reality rather than a transparent etymological fantasy, conjuring idealised rulers out of the words for shields, helmets and sword. This is an issue of crucial importance to the study of the earliest phase of the Germanic settlement of Britain – most famously in the cases of the equinely-named brothers Hengest and Horsa (sometimes supposed to be divine twins or Germanic horse-gods and thus creatures of myth or legend),⁹⁸ and that of Hengest’s son Oisc, the supposed founder of the Kentish royal lineage of the *Oiscingas*, whose existence is doubted because of an Olrikian suspicion that he was an

⁹⁷ See sections 1.2.5-1.2.7, at pp. 62-70 below.

⁹⁸ As in Sims-Williams 1983, Brooks 1989, Yorke 1990, Kirby 1991 and Davis 1992.

etymological back-formation from an ethnonym.⁹⁹ Considerably different conclusions might be drawn if consideration were given to the analyses of the ethno-eponym, and of hypocorism, offered in this study.

The identification and development of the concept of the ethno-eponym also enables us to tackle several anomalies and cruces with respect to names and identities in texts. For instance, in Old English literature it seems anomalous that the *Helmingas* are mentioned in *Beowulf* (l. 620), but *Helm* – if he was their eponymous founder – is named as a king of the *Wulfingas* in *Widsith* 29; but in *Beowulf* the character named *Wulf* son of *Wōnrēd* is attributed to no tribe other than the *Wōnrēding* clan. *Brond* – a figure in the West Saxon regnal list – is nowhere named as the king of the *Brondingas*, an unknown tribe or dynasty named in *Beowulf* (l. 521b) as the people of *Breca* (ll. 506b, 531b, 583b) the son of *Bēanstān* (l. 524a), and who in *Widsith* 25 are named as the people ruled by *Breoca*.¹⁰⁰ How can this be so? We also need to question whether the ethno-eponym was truly a name, or a kind of title, and if so, whether the bearer of it might also have been referred to by a different sort of name.

Although in this preliminary section there is no space for a full investigation of the phenomenon of the ethno-eponym, I now offer some illustrations of how its identification can assist with textual and interpretational difficulties – thus to create a conceptual basis for the investigation of several names in *Widsith* and the narrative tradition of Offa.

1.2.1 *Ostrogotha* and the Ostrogoths; *Ēastgota* and the *Ēastgotan*

Ēastgota is named among the Ostrogoths of Eormenrīc’s court in *Widsith* 113-14, where he is described as the *frōdne ond gōdne / fæder Unwēnes* (“the wise and good father of Unwēn”), and I shall argue that *Ēastgota* is an ethno-eponym for the king of the *Ēastgotan* or Ostrogoths, a people also known in Old English as *Gotan*, *Hrēþ-Gotan*, *Hrēþas* and *Hrēðas*.¹⁰¹

The same figure appears under the cognate name in Latinised form, *Ostrogotha*, in Jordanes’ *Getica*, where he is the subject of a considerable narrative set in the reign of the

⁹⁹ See fn. 399 (p. 115) and pp. 210-11 below.

¹⁰⁰ See Malone 1962; 133-34.

¹⁰¹ *Hrēðgotan*, *Elene* 20, *Widsith* 57; *Hrēðas*, *Elene* 58; *Hrēðas*, *Widsith* 120; *Gotan*, *Widsith* 18, 899, 109, *Deor* 23. To this might be added *Mæringas*, from *Mæringa burg*, an unidentified Gothic city named as that of Þeodric (Theoderic the Ostrogoth) in *Deor* 19 (probably Verona or Ravenna). See also the Swedish Rök stone runic inscription (c. 800) in which *Þiaurikr* (the same Theoderic) is called *skati mari(n)ka* (= *skati Mæringa*) “king of the *Mæringar”, and his people *Hræipgutnar* (Gordon 1957: 188-91).

Roman emperor Philip (r. 244-49).¹⁰² He was regarded by Chambers and Malone without doubt as a real person¹⁰³ – I suggest with good reason. In Jordanes’ text Ostrogotha was the father of Hunuil, whose name means the same as *Unwēn*,¹⁰⁴ indicating that Ostrogotha and Ēastgota were the same person in Gothic and Anglo-Saxon tradition respectively.

To judge from Ostrogotha’s genealogy, he was a member of the Amal clan (and hence an *Amaling*)¹⁰⁵ who was not the first king of the Goths, nor a figure who led their migrations to the Baltic littoral and then the Black Sea (to Jordanes this was “Scythia”, stretching from the Vistula to the Black Sea), though he was militarily successful in his incursions over the Danube and into Thrace and Moesia, extending Gothic power westward. He was, however, the first of the Amal line (so far as we know) to rule the Goths.¹⁰⁶ As for his eponymous name, Jordanes was unsure whether the Ostrogothae (“East Goths”) took their name from him, or Ostrogotha was so-named because he ruled the Goths settled in the eastern part of their place of settlement on the Black Sea in Scythia – as opposed to the Vesegothae (= Visigoths, “West Goths”) settled in the west.¹⁰⁷ But he was guessing; and his history does not say when the Goths divided themselves between east and west. Ostrogotha, in any event, ruled both.¹⁰⁸ I suggest that the

¹⁰² *Getica*, XIV.79, 82, XVI.89-90, XVII.97-100; Mommsen 1882: 76-77, 78, 80-81, 83. See Malone 1962: 142.

¹⁰³ See Chambers 1912: 13-15, 236-37, and Malone 1962: 142.

¹⁰⁴ See Malone 1962: 206 for references to the scholarly tradition of identifying *Unwēn* with *Hunuil*. However, Malone misunderstood *Un-* as the negative particle, and his etymology is implausible. *Unwēn* can simply be regarded as an OE calque on Gothic **Unwils* (in Latin spelling *Hunuil*). **Unnan* was Common Gmc, meaning “to grant” (see Kroonen 2013: 560), and Gothic *wilja* meant “wish, desire” (*GWB*, s.v.) and was synonymous with OE *wēn*. Thus, **Unwils/Unwēn* would have been an apt name – “grant wish/desire” for a longed-for heir of Ostrogotha/Ēastgota. Semantically they are identical with *Unwona* (see pp. 23-24 above). *Unwēn* was famous enough to survive into later medieval English oral tradition and chivalric romance (see fn. 1499 (p. 415 below), and Falk and Wade 2025: 16 and fns).

¹⁰⁵ His descendant Theoderic was called *Amalung* in the OE *Martyrologium* and *Orosius*. See Shiels 2022: 36, with references.

¹⁰⁶ See Ostrogotha’s Amal genealogy in the *Getica* (XIV.79-81; Mommsen 1882: 77-78): *Gapt*, *Hulmul*, *Augis*, *Amal* (who gave his name to the Amal line, says Jordanes), *Hisarnis*, *Ostrogotha*, *Hunuil* etc. However, in other parts of the history it is clear that the first kings of the Goths were not Amali and perhaps unrelated to Ostrogotha. These were *Berig/Berich* (who began the migration from *Scandza*), three unnamed kings, and a fifth, *Filimer*, son of *Gadarig*, who took them to Scythia, which stretched from the Vistula to the Black Sea (see *Getica*, IV.25-28, V.31, 39, XXIV.121-22; Mommsen 1882: 60, 61-62, 64, 89). It is not said where Ostrogotha comes in the succession after Filimer. After the death of Ostrogotha, his successor is *Cniva*, who is not named as a son or relative (*Getica*, XVIII.101-03; Mommsen 1882: 83-84); then there are others who are also not said to be relatives of Ostrogotha; then *Hilderith* (son of *Ovida*, the son of *Nidada*); then *Geberich* (lineage not mentioned); and finally *Hermanaric*, a direct descendant four generations after Ostrogotha, who was the second Amal king of the Ostrogoths and an ancestor of Theoderic (see *Getica*, XVII.103-XXIII.116; XXIV.129; Mommsen 1882: 84-88, 91). Jordanes does not state when the Goths divided between the Visigoths (the *Balthi*) and the Ostrogoths (Amali), only that this had happened by the reign of Hermanaric (*Getica*, XXIV.130; Mommsen 1882: 91), i.e. by the 370s AD.

¹⁰⁷ *Getica*, XIV.82; Mommsen 1882: 78. In line with changing pronunciation in Late Latin and early Romance, medieval scribes writing Latin often represented original /i/ as /e/. See Elcock and Green 1975: 56, 321.

¹⁰⁸ See *Getica*, XVII.97-100; Mommsen 1882: 83.

lack of information on such an important point as whether Ostrogotha was the first of the Ostrogoth kings is explicable if his name was not that of a famed progenitor of a people but was an ethno-eponym belonging to a remarkable king of that people. Thus, *Ostrogotha* (Gothic **Austraguta*) would be a name given to a Gothic king who was successful in war and came from the east, a figure substantial enough in history and legend to be known by his ethno-eponym, even though he was not the founder of a dynasty (the Amals) or of a people (the Goths), perhaps not even of a tribal sub-group (the Ostrogoths). In this respect, as “Ostrogotha the Amaling”, I suggest that he bears a strong onomastic resemblance to Scyld Scēfing in *Beowulf*.¹⁰⁹

1.2.2 Where’s Wala? *Widsith* and the Missing Roman Emperor

In *Widsith* 10-17 there is a mysterious reference to a person called *Wala*:¹¹⁰

Fela ic monna gefrægn	mægþum wealdan.	10
Sceal þeoda gehwylc	þeawum lifgan,	
eorl æfter ððrum	ēðle rædan,	12
sē þe his þeodenstōl	geþeōn wile.	
þāra wæs Wala	hwīle sēlast	14
ond Alexandreas	ealra rīcost	
monna cynnes;	ond hē mæst geþāh	16
þāra þe ic ofer foldan	gefrægen hæbbe.	

I have heard of many men ruling peoples. Every king¹¹¹ ought to live according to good customs,¹¹² a noble man [ought to] rule his homeland in succession to another, he who wishes his throne to thrive. Of these, Wala was long the best – and Alexander the mightiest of all – of mankind; and he prospered the most of those whom I have heard tell of upon the earth.

Apart from Eormenrīc the Ostrogoth (mentioned in *Widsith* l. 8), *Wala* is the first of many kings to be named by the poet-speaker called Wīdsīþ. But, although apparently fit to be uttered in the same breath as Alexander the Great, he is unknown. The Exeter Book’s reading <wala> is often emended to *Hwala*,¹¹³ in order to alliterate with *hwīle* and to permit identification with Hwala, an ancestor of Alfred’s father Æthelwulf in the West Saxon regnal list in *ASC*.¹¹⁴ But even if Hwala existed as a distant ancestor of the kings of Wessex, he is otherwise unknown

¹⁰⁹ See the discussion in section 1.2.4 (pp. 59-62 below).

¹¹⁰ The text, including punctuation, is my own from the Exeter Book.

¹¹¹ For this interpretation of *þeod* see fn. 493 (p. 135 below).

¹¹² For unmodified *þeaw* meaning “(good) custom”, cf. *Beowulf* 2144, *Swā sē ðeodkyning / þeawum lyfde* “so the people’s king lived according to [good] customs” (Bēowulf’s compliment to Hrōþgār for rewarding him so richly for his services). Similarly today, “manners” usually means “good manners”.

¹¹³ As in *ASPR*, III, 301; Malone 1962: 19 (“and rightly so”, noting Ettmüller as the first to propose it), 178. Muir (2000: II, 544) retains the MS reading but still identifies him with *Hwala* of the regnal list.

¹¹⁴ Included in *ASC* MSS BCD: *s.a.* 856 in BC, and *s.a.* 855 in D.

and seems (to us at least) very obscure to be compared to Alexander.¹¹⁵ But while it might be said that absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, and for all we know *Hwala* was much more famous than we are able to know, this identification of *Wala* as a mythical Proto-West Saxon is open to challenge on several grounds.

One such ground is that the spelling *Hwala* is not necessarily required by alliteration. Although the spelling *Hwala* occurs in MSS BCD of *ASC*, and as *Huala* in the *ASC*-derived text of Asser's *Life of Alfred*,¹¹⁶ the spelling is *Wala* in the histories of John of Worcester¹¹⁷ and Simeon of Durham,¹¹⁸ and *Gwala* in William of Malmesbury.¹¹⁹ Although in Old English verse /hw/ usually alliterates with “/h/ + Consonant”, there are examples of alliteration between /hw/ and /w/. Muir thought that *Wala* was *Hwala*, but he retained the MS reading *Wala* on the basis that the Exeter Book itself contains several examples of /hw/-/w/ alliteration.¹²⁰ Minkova notes several examples of /hw/-/w/ alliteration in what she calls “(mostly) late Old English verse”,¹²¹ citing *Guthlac*, *Maldon*, *Judith* and *Charms*.¹²² But I note other examples, several of which may well not be “late”.¹²³ In particular, *Genesis A* has been argued to date from the late eighth to the early ninth centuries and is one of the earliest of Old English narrative poems. *Guthlac A* may have been as early as, or earlier than, the mid-eighth century – the date of Gūplāc's *Vita* by Felix, which is the basis of *Guthlac B*.¹²⁴ *The Seafarer* and the charms are

¹¹⁵ E.g. Hill 2009: 92. Malone noted that the Icelandic *þulur* contained *hvalr* “whale” as a word or name for a giant (1962: 178; *LP*: 296). The same had been argued by Kemble, as noted by Redin, who agreed and dismissed Brandl's derivation (Brandl 1918: 17) as a hypocorism of the name **Hwætlāc*, which “etymology seem[ed] to betray a desire to explain – a tout prix – all uncompounded names as the result of a mutilation process, i.e. as secondary formation” (Redin 1919: 98). It was also accepted by Davis, who called *Hwala* an “old Germanic giant” (1992: 34 and fn. 64).

Oddly, Brandl used the same method to analyse *Hapra* (*Hwala*'s son in the same list) as deriving from *hapu* + *ræd* (*loc. cit.*), but Redin had no problem with this (1919: 66), possibly because he accepted *Godra* as a possible formation from *Godric* (*ibid.*: 49).

¹¹⁶ *De rebus gesti Ælfredi*, ch. 1; Stevenson and Whitelock 1959: 3. The reading *Wala* in Florence (i.e. John) of Worcester is in the textual notes. Redin noted the variants in Asser and the histories of John of Worcester, Symeon of Durham and William of Malmesbury (1919: 98).

¹¹⁷ *Chronicon*, s.a. 849; Darlington, McGurk and Bray 1995-98: II, 262.

¹¹⁸ *Historia Regum*, s.a. 549; Hodgson Hinde 1868: 43.

¹¹⁹ *Gesta regum Anglorum*, ch. 116; Mynors *et al.* 1998: I, 176. A hybrid of *Hwala* and **Guala* (= *Wala*)?

¹²⁰ Muir 2000: II, 544, 614 (note to Riddle 6).

¹²¹ Minkova 2003: 350

¹²² *Guthlac A* 263, *Maldon* 83, 272, *Judith* 249, *Charms* 248. I note however that *Guthlac* 263 is *hwearfum wræcmæcgas*. / *Wōð up āstāg*, in which the alliteration is potentially conventional, on the /w/ of *wræcmæcgas* and *Wōð*.

¹²³ See *Maldon* 83, *Maldon* 273; *Genesis* 634; *Elene* 22, 582; *Judith* 249; *Seafarer* 19; *Wulf and Eadwacer* 11; *Riddles* 88; *Paris Psalter*, Ps 76.11, Ps 100.3; *Death of Alfred* 21; *Charm for Unfruitful Land* 2: *Nine Herbs Charm* 48; *A Journey Charm* 42 (all *ASPR*).

¹²⁴ For *Genesis A*, see Foys *et al.*, eds, *Genesis A and B*, “Edited Text and Source Detail” <<https://oepoetryfacsimile.org/?document=11712&document=11899>> [retrieved 13.5.25]. *Guthlac A* is in the Exeter Book (2nd half 10th c.). Unlike *Guthlac B* (following it in the Exeter Book), it is not based on Felix's *Vita* (c. 730) but its date is uncertain. See *ASPR*, III, xxxii-xxxiii. Roberts (1979: 70-71) regards *Guthlac A* and *B* as undatable but “earlier” rather than “later” (Gūplāc died in 714/15).

undatable, except for the *terminus ante quem* of the Exeter Book (c. 950-75). Therefore, it may be more accurate to say that /hw/-/w/ is a rare form of alliteration, but one which may well be recorded in early as well as late verse. Thus, the grounds for emending *Wala* to *Hwala* on metrical grounds are somewhat weakened.

A second ground – as often with proposed emendations – arises from the query “how could the scribe have made this mistake?” Although the Exeter Book scribe was a far from infallible copyist, if his exemplar read <hpala>, <huala> or <huuala> and seemed to alliterate perfectly with *hwīle* (the very next word), why would he write <pala>?¹²⁵ While it can be argued that at least some West Saxons must have known of a royal ancestor of their people called *Hwala*, there is no evidence to explain why the West Saxon Exeter Book scribe (or any predecessor in the chain of written transmission) would have rendered a known name *Hwala* as the unheard-of *Wala*, unless that is what his exemplar read.

Here, I suggest, is where the concept of the ethno-eponym assists us. *Wala*, I argue, is an ethno-eponym, and this name was used of the emperor of the Romans, who are called *Rūmwalas* and *Walas* at *Widsith* 69 and 78 respectively. In a text of about the same time as *Widsith*, in the runic text on the early eighth-century Northumbrian Franks Casket, Romulus and Remus are called *Rōmwalus* and *Rēumwalus*, which are neat Latin-Northumbrian versions of their names.¹²⁶ The use of cognates of Old English *Walas* to designate “Romans” is well attested in Germanic languages; and it was later used to designate inhabitants of Gaul and speakers of Romance languages.¹²⁷ *Walah* occurs as an element in personal names in Continental Germania, and as *wealh* and *walh* in Anglo-Saxon names.¹²⁸ *Wala* is also found as an element in Gothic personal names.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ This is the reading on fol. 85r of the Exeter Book.

¹²⁶ See *Bosworth-Toller*, s.v. *wealh*.

¹²⁷ See Malone 1962: 134-135, 209; Elcock and Green 1975: 284 and fn. 2. For OHG, see *AHDWB*, s.v. *Walah*: *Gallia* was glossed as *Walaho lant*; in *Romana* as *in Walahun*; *Quirites* as *Walaha*; and *Romanus* as *Walah*. Köbler defines it as “Welscher, Fremder, Romane, Römer, Rutuler, Nichtdeutscher” and in English as “foreigner, Roman”. The *Frankish Table of Nations* (possibly composed in Gothic Italy, c. 520) distinguishes between *Gothi* and *Walagothi*. The *Walagothi* may well have been the Ostrogoths who ruled Italy (though from Pavia or Ravenna, not from Rome) rather than the Visigoths (though they certainly ruled in Gaul before moving to Spain). See Goffart 1983.

¹²⁸ See Förstemann 1900: 1514-1520, s.v. VALHA. Monothematic *Wealh* is a name in itself in two cases in *PASE*, and a prototheme in seven others (including the spelling *Walh-*). It is also probably present in many names beginning <wal>, <wall>, <wale>, <walc(h)> and <walk> in *PASE*. I have not searched for examples of *wealh* as a deutertheme, but it occurs as such in *Penwealh* the father of Gūplāc, and in three men called *Cēnwealh* (*PASE*). Also see the *wealh-* names in Shaw 2020: 91.

¹²⁹ Green maintains that Gothic lacked **walh*, even in personal names (1998: 162-163). But see *GWB*: s.v. ****walhs*, which is conjectured from a single Gothic personal name *Qualatrūdi*, derived from PrGmc **walhaz* “Celt, Latin-Speaker, Foreigner”. It is difficult to explain otherwise. In the *Getica* there are also the Ostrogoths *Valamir* and *Valaravans*. However, see pp. 200-01 below with respect to the name *Wealhþēow*.

With respect to *Widsith*'s *Rūmwalas* (l. 69b) and *Wala rīce* (l. 78b), Faull observed that *Rūmwalas* showed the general feature in Old English of qualifying *wealh* with a prefix to specify which foreigners – “usually of Romance or Roman stock” – were meant; and that *wealh*, on its own, to mean “Roman”, though very rare, could be found in Ælfric's tenth-century *Vocabulary* in the phrase *Weala sunderriht*, as a gloss for *Jus quiritum* (“full Roman citizenship”), which was elsewhere translated by *reht Rōmwala* or *Rōmwara sunderriht*. She felt that the meaning of *Wala rīce* (with its unprefixd *Wala*) might have been sufficiently established by mention of *Cāsere* (“Caesar”) in *Widsith* 76b so as not to need further qualification.¹³⁰ That *Walas*, in the sense of “Romans”, was rare in later Old English (because it was archaic) is also indicated by the archaic /ū/ in *Widsith*'s other name for the Romans, *Rūmwalas* (l. 69). *Rūm* was an Old English form of “Rome” pre-dating *Rōm-*,¹³¹ and earlier even than the Franks Casket (late seventh or early eighth century),¹³² which has *Rōmwalus* (Romulus) and *in Rōmæ cæstri* (“in the city of Rome”). Thus, I suggest, Old English speakers who inherited the name of Rome as archaic *Rūm* – with a vocalisation characteristic of Continental Germanic languages – also inherited the Continental usage of *Walas* as an unprefixd simplex to refer to the Romans; and both of these became rare, historical and/or obsolete in later Old English.

So, when the *Widsith*-poet says that *Wala* was “long the best” of all the rulers of the world, he probably meant the emperor of the *Walas*, that is, the Romans, who ruled anciently and gloriously at Rome, and after 476 at Constantinople – an entity that was about a thousand years old by the time of *Widsith*. At l. 20 *Cāsere* rules the *Crēacas* “Greeks”, and at ll. 76-78 the same *Cāsere* rules the *Crēacas* and the *Wala rīce*.¹³³ This name is evidently a borrowing of Latin *Caesar* (inherited via Proto-West Germanic **kaisar*) with the ending remodelled as *-ere*, a form of *here*, an Old English name-theme.¹³⁴ Thus, we can understand that *Wala* was a native

¹³⁰ Faull 1975: 24-25, referring to Wright-Wülcker 1884: I, 115, l. 25. The evidence from Ælfric contradicts Neidorf's assertion that *Widsith*'s *Wala* must pre-date the 7th c., because after that *wealh* came to mean “Celt” or “slave” rather than “Roman” in OE (2013a: 170-71 and fn. 6). Neidorf claimed to be relying on Faull 1975, though she does not seem to support such an analysis (see Faull 1975: 36-37).

¹³¹ OEG: 203. Cf. 4th-c. AD Gothic *Rūma* for *Roma* (GWB, s.v.); and Gothic *Rūmōneis* for Latin *Rōmāni*, inheriting the Latin mid-vowel /ō/ as a Gmc high vowel /ū/ (Fulk 2018: 48). Cf. OFris *Rūme* for “Rome” (AFrWB, s.v.). Malone notes *Rūmwalum* as a “prehistoric loan from Gothic” (1962: 115), though it is more likely to be Common Gmc, yet still very archaic in OE.

¹³² Late 7th-c. (Higham and Ryan 2015: 151) or early 8th (Webster 2012: 89, 90, 92).

¹³³ *Cāser* was a name adopted for an early king of the East Anglian line. See Fig. 3 (p. 144 below). This raises the possibility that this *Cāser* in this list actually was the Roman emperor, adopted as an ancestor. The same possibility exists for *Hwala*, if some scribe encountered the unfamiliar name *Wala* in his exemplar and believed it to be an error for a name based on a form of *hwæl* “whale”, by analogy with, e.g. *hwalas*, with stem-vowel /a/ restored, as was regular for /æ/ before a following back vowel (OEG: 60-61, 63, 224).

¹³⁴ Ringe and Taylor 2014: 136.

Old English synonym for *Cāsere*. Its form can be explained as hypocoristic: the stem *Wal-* (from Anglian **walh*) was given a weak masculine ending */-a/*, and by a known sound-change the terminal */-h/* in *Walh* was lost before a voiced sound > *Wala*.¹³⁵ Thus, I argue that to the original audience of *Widsith*, *Wala* would have been a transparent ethno-eponym for the emperor of the *Walas* – that is, the Romans – and that the Exeter Book scribe (whether he recognised it or not) accurately preserved the poet’s original text.

Chetwood discusses Anglo-Saxon names with the element *walh*,¹³⁶ but he doubts that monothematic examples such as *Uualh* provide evidence of the shortening of dithematic names, because “there are no recorded instances where *walh* is combined with a diminutive suffix, such as *-a* or *-uc*”.¹³⁷ However, this argument is flawed because there was an early eighth-century abbess called *UUale* (= *Wale*).¹³⁸ Chetwood regards this as a meaningful by-name based on the “common noun” *wale* “Welshwoman, slave”.¹³⁹ But the likelihood that an abbess would be given such a denigratory name seems small. Chetwood also omits mention of the name *Wala* in *DLV*, where it occurs among female names and is thus probably a female name with a Latin feminine inflection.¹⁴⁰ It is fairly clear, I suggest, that *Wale* would be the Old English weak feminine counterpart of male *Wala*, and the simplest derivation for both is as hypocoristic forms derived from a name with the theme *w(e)alh*. This name-theme was ethnophoric in Old English, meaning both “Celt/Briton” and “Roman/Latin-speaker”, and I argue that *Wala*, as an ethno-eponym, was produced from the ethnonym *Walh* “Roman” according to the same linguistic processes by which the ethnophoric name-theme *w(e)alh* would have produced hypocoristic female *Wale*, the equivalent of male *Wala*.

It would have been strange to have omitted the Roman emperors from a poem celebrating the world’s great kings. Thus, I suggest that this apparent gap was filled by *Wala* –

¹³⁵ In OE, */h/* was regularly lost between voiced sounds. Hence **Walha* > *Wala* (*OEG*: 104 (and fn. 1), 105, 186-87, 225; Ringe and Taylor 2014: 305-08) – including *Wealh* > *Wēalas*, with compensatory lengthening of the root vowel/diphthong. But in *Widsith* compensatory lengthening is not present in the stem-vowels of *Wala* (l. 14), the *-walum* of dat. pl. *Rūmwalum* (l. 69), or the gen. pl. *Wala* (l. 78). The metre indicates that these were short. Even if */a/* in the ethnonym were long, this may have been shortened in the process of hypocorism to *Wala*. Or the rule in names was that there was no lengthening at all. Chetwood 2023: 37-38.

¹³⁶ Chetwood 2023: 37.

¹³⁷ Ep. No. 14 (dated to 719-22 in Tangl 2016: 25), from Abbess Æangyþ and her daughter Hēaburg (aka *Bugge*) to Boniface. Æangyþ describes *Wale* as *abbatissa quondam mea et mater spiritualis* “my former abbess and spiritual mother”. *Wale*’s ethnicity is unknown. See also *PASE*, *Wale* 3 (a Hwiccan male).

¹³⁸ Chetwood was relying partly on Okasha, who regarded *Weale* (< *UUale*) as an example of a monothematic name (which was not a hypocorism) derived from a common noun (Okasha 2016: 51, 67, 84). The derivation of monothematic names from common nouns is a characteristic of the tradition established by Redin, which I mostly contest in this study.

¹⁴⁰ Stevenson 1841: 57. But see Rollason and Rollason 2007: II, 77, where *Wala* and *Wale* are derived from Continental German *Walo*, a hypocoristic form of names in *Walha-* (though they also note OS *Wala*, which would indicate that OE *Wala/Wale* could exist as cognates of the Continental forms).

an Anglo-Saxon name, not for one particular individual, but for all of the rulers of the *Walas* who were otherwise known by the titles *imperator*, *Augustus* or *Caesar*. Their power and glory were fit to be compared with Alexander's, but they ruled much longer than his single lifetime.

1.2.3 Hnæf, Hōc and the Hōcingas

In *Widsith* 29 it is said that Hnæf ruled the Hōcingas, and in *Beowulf* 1076 Hildeburh, the sister of Hnæf in the Finnsburh story, is called *Hōces dohtor*, implying that their father was called Hōc. Hnæf is an important figure in the story of Finnsburh, as it is told in *FFr* and *Beowulf*, but his father Hōc appears only in the description of Hildeburh and is otherwise unknown. So, why is the apparently more notable Hnæf the king of the Hōcingas rather than of the *Hnæfingas? While it is possible to surmise that Hōc was a considerable figure about whom no narratives happen to have survived,¹⁴¹ another explanation is available if we regard *Hōc* as a *Scyld*-type ethno-eponym for the king of the Hōcingas; and I argue that in *FFr* we find the evidence that Hnæf himself was referred to as *Hōc*.

The unintelligible reading <noc> appears in George Hickes's eighteenth-century transcription of an Anglo-Saxon MS leaf (now lost) containing a fragment of a poem we now know as *FFr*. I print my own text below with the unexplained reading <noc> retained:¹⁴²

Ne gefrægn ic nǣfre wurplicor	æt wērahilde	37
sixtig sigebeorna	sēl gebæran,	
nē nēfre swā <noc> hwītne medo	sēl forgyldan,	39
þonne Hnæfe guldan	his hægstealdas.	

I never heard of sixty victory-warriors who bore themselves better, more worthily in fighting by men under a pledge, nor who ever in such a way repaid <noc> better for white mead than when his retainers paid Hnæf.

The simplest explanation of this textual crux,¹⁴³ I suggest, is that <noc> was a misreading – whether by Hickes or the scribe of the exemplar – of <hoc>, i.e. the ethno-eponym *Hōc*. Thus,

¹⁴¹ See the discussion of the narrative of the two kings called *Hako* in *GD* (pp. 330-35 below), whom I argue to be reflexes of Hōc (I) and Hnæf aka Hōc (II).

¹⁴² Chambers condemned Hickes as a “very inaccurate” transcriber (Wyatt and Chambers 1914: 158; also Chambers 1921: 245 and fns), and virtually no one has trusted his text of *FFr* since. It is arguably an unjust view and overdue for reconsideration. E.g. Hickes's <gebæran> (l. 38b) is emended to *gebæran* in *K14*'s text, but is paralleled by <gespræconn> for *gespræcon* in *The Husband's Message* 53b (in the Exeter Book). See *ASPR*, III, 364, and 251 for this and other examples of geminated final consonants in the Exeter Book. Several other renderings by Hickes may be archaisms or the errors of scribes of the lost MS.

¹⁴³ See proposed emendations in *K14*: 285 (fns.) and 290 (discussion). *K14* follows the traditional emendation of <swa noc> to *swānas*, though undermining it with the observation that this meant “herdsmen” in OE and cannot have been influenced by ON *sveinn* “boy, servant” (*K14*: 290; also Hill 2009: 27). However, this interpretation of *sveinn* is wrong. See *LP*: 551, s.v. *sveinn*, “boy, young man (unmarried of about 16

in the appositive style, the poet gives us the same information twice: the *sixtīge sigebeornas* repay Hōc, and the *hægstealdas* repay Hnæf, for his mead.

Line 39 has been perceived as metrically “impossible”.¹⁴⁴ While the emendation proposed here does not make the line conform to a standard Sievers-type or any variant thereof, neither does *KL4*’s adoption of the traditional emendation of <swa noc> to *swānas*. However, the line, though anomalous, may be of a recognisable type of the kind identified by Bliss (1971) and developed by Karasawa (2022). Bliss attempted to account for “single half-lines” in Old English verse, which were frequently supposed by editors to be the remains of a pair, one of which had been lost through scribal error. Karasawa describes the half-lines thus: “each may be a hypermetric or normal verse with or without double alliteration, and with or without continued alliteration, or may even be without any kind of alliteration”.¹⁴⁵ He (unlike Bliss) also identifies a rhetorical function in them, observing that they occur in the gnomic poem *Maxims I* where they are “generally used to conclude a remark, often giving some final or additional comment to the preceding main statement” and occur “at the end of a maxim, statement, or passage, marking a certain break in the text”.¹⁴⁶ I have also identified tripartite “half-line” types in the *Hildebrandslied*, *Wulf and Eadwacer* and the Old English elegies of the Exeter Book, tentatively suggesting a relationship with the also tripartite “hypermetrical” lines in *Beowulf* and *Judith*.¹⁴⁷ Such tripartite lines have been noted to resemble the Old Norse *ljóðaháttr*, a metre used in *ljóð* (“charms”) and in gnomic poetry like *Hávamál*.¹⁴⁸

I therefore suggest that ll. 37 and 39 of *FFr* are both tripartite metrical variants of the Bliss-Karasawa type.

Ne gefrægn ic | nǣfre wurþlicor | æt wērahilde 37

nē nēfre swā | Hōc hwītne medo | sēl forgyldan, 39

Line 37 consists of an initial unit of four syllables, resembling a Sievers type. The second and third units are regular types A and B. Line 39, similarly, consists of a four-syllable unit resembling a type B, followed by regular types D and A. Both lines also have effects of subsidiary alliteration in the first two elements: *ne* and *nǣfre* in l. 37, and *nē* and *nēfre* and *Hōc*

to 25), often of a chieftain’s warriors, generally younger than he”. But the sense of “herdsmen” for Hnæf’s men in *FFr* is wholly implausible, and the poem shows no sign at all of Scandinavian influence which might permit the interpretation “lads” for *swānas*.

¹⁴⁴ *KL4*: 290.

¹⁴⁵ Karasawa 2022: 156.

¹⁴⁶ Karasawa 2022: 156, 161, 162.

¹⁴⁷ Shiels 2022: 403-05.

¹⁴⁸ Karasawa 2022: 156.

and *hwītne* in l. 39. This suggests metrical and rhetorical patterning for effect, to increase the emphasis of an epigrammatic point in the poem of which *FFr* is part, which is a statement that there has never been a more splendid example of retainers making good their vows made over their king's mead. It also marks a break in the narrative, which switches to the Frisian side and presumably begins the part of the story in which the Danes start to lose men and Hnæf is killed.

I argue that the identification of *Hōc* as an ethno-eponym rather than a personal name challenges the presumption that Hnæf's father – known only as *Hōc* – was a back-formation from an ethnonym *Hōcingas* and thus an etymological fiction or an Isidorean mythical tribal progenitor who gave his name to his people. Rather, he was identified as the king of a significant people, the *Hōcingas*, and the father of an even more significant and famous *Hōc* of the *Hōcingas*, Hnæf. Saxo's *Gesta Danorum* contains a narrative about two men called Hako who take over the land of Sygarus, the king of Sjøælland. In Part II I argue that the second of the two Hakos and Sygarus are the same figures who are referred to in contiguous lines in *Widsith* 28-29a as follows:¹⁴⁹

Sigehere lengest Sæ-Denum wēold,
Hnæf Hōcingum

Sigehere ruled the Sea-Danes for the longest time, Hnæf the *Hōcingas*

The *Sæ-Dene* were the Danes of Sjøælland, which was *Sjóland* ("Sea Land") in Old Norse and would have been **Sæland* in Old English, the island where the hall of Heorot and the Scylding capital Lejre were. The ethno-eponymous *Hōc* and his son Hnæf (also called *Hōc*), I suggest, earned their renown by conquering the Danes, ruled for so long by Sigehere, and by taking both their empire and their ethnonyms. They thus became *Dene* and *Scyldingas*.¹⁵⁰ Presumably, since they were not Danes themselves but took over Denmark, they were also known as *Healfdene* "Half-Danes" (perhaps through intermarriage with Danish women).

1.2.4 Scyld Scēfing

I have touched briefly on the name *Scyld* above.¹⁵¹ Some critics regard Scyld Scēfing in *Beowulf* as the founder of the clan of the Scyldingas, who derived their name from him (an analysis after the fashion of Isidore of Seville); but they differ as to whether he was a person inherited from myth or legend, or a poet's invention. Axel Olrik argued that the Scyldingas

¹⁴⁹ See pp. 330-35 below.

¹⁵⁰ For the existence of Scyldingas before Scyld, see pp. 60-62 below.

¹⁵¹ See pp. 43-45 above.

came before Scyld, who was therefore in his view a “supposed progenitor invented to explain the name”.¹⁵² Scyld was thus not a historical or even a mythical figure, but a fiction of the *Beowulf*-poet. Tolkien also regarded Scyld as the *Beowulf* poet’s fiction.¹⁵³ Malone’s antagonist Ramsay, as we have seen, thought that *Scyld* “Shield” was an eponym invented for the mythical leader of the “shield people”. The editors of *K14* regard Scyld as the mythical founder of his line, who were named after him.¹⁵⁴ Anderson has said that Olrik’s view is the prevalent opinion among scholars today.¹⁵⁵ One of these is Leneghan, who regards Scyld as the *Beowulf*-poet’s creation from literary survivals of some Anglo-Saxon fertility cult involving sheaves and barley (the name *Bēow*, Scyld’s son, being the same as the word for “barley”).¹⁵⁶ No one, however, suggests that Scyld was a real person.

Olrik, I suggest, was right to note the important fact that there were *Scyldingas* before *Scyld*. We can deduce this from the descriptions of Hnæf in *Beowulf*, where he is the brother of Hildeburh, a princess married to Finn, king of the Frisians. Hnæf and his men are conventionally regarded as “Danes”, or “Half Danes”.¹⁵⁷ The *K14* editors say that they may be a “a minor branch of the Danish nation” or “Half-Danes” (*Healfdene*), to be identified with the Hōcingas, an otherwise unknown people whom Hnæf is said to rule in *Widsith* 29. “Loosely” they are also called *Scyldingas*.¹⁵⁸ According to Shippey, the events concerning Hnæf and Finn at Finnsburh must precede the events at Heorot in *Beowulf*, perhaps by three or more generations.¹⁵⁹ Certainly, there is no room for Hnæf in the account of the descendants of Scyld in *Beowulf*.

These views are deductions drawn from only a handful of descriptions of Hnæf and his people in *Beowulf*. At *Beowulf* 1069 he is called *hæleð Healfdena*, / *Hnæf Scyldinga* “hero of the Half-Danes, Hnæf of the Scyldings”; and at ll. 1108-09 he is called *Here-Scyldinga* // *betst beadorinca* “the best of the men of battle of the raiding-Scyldings”. His people are called *Scyldingas* (l. 1154), *Healf-Dene* (l. 1069) and *Dene* “Danes” (ll. 1090, 1158). We may guess

¹⁵² Olrik 1903: 274; 1919: 440-441.

¹⁵³ Tolkien 1987: 93-94.

¹⁵⁴ *K14*: lii, 111.

¹⁵⁵ Anderson 2016: 462.

¹⁵⁶ Leneghan 2020: 139-52.

¹⁵⁷ See the broadly similar accounts in *K14*: 273-75 and Shippey 2022: 82-84.

¹⁵⁸ *K14*: 274.

¹⁵⁹ See Shippey 2022: 86-87, who argues *Finnsburh* was set at a time when the Danes were engaged in occupying Jutland, intermarrying with the Hōcings and bumping up against the Jutish Frisians, before the arrival of Bēowulf at Heorot and the time of Hygelāc who died c. 525 (*ibid.*: 8). This was at some time in the 5th rather than 6th c., consistent with Hengest (one of Hnæf’s men) surviving to become the conqueror of Kent, beginning c. 450. Leneghan regards Hnæf and his people as “Half Danes” and also as ancestors of the royal house of Scyld (2020: 68-69 and fn. 133).

that these descriptions of Danish ethnicity do not include Hnæf's foreign warriors – Sigeferþ, a *Secgan* (in *FFr* 24), and Hengest (if he is the same Hengest as in the foundation-story of England), who is traditionally seen as a Jute.¹⁶⁰

It is also conventionally supposed that the king of the Danes called Heremōd came before Scyld and the Scyldingas.¹⁶¹ In *Beowulf* 913a his realm is nonetheless called *ēpel Scyldinga* (“hereditary land of the Scyldingas”). And after Hrōþgār has just predicted that Bēowulf will be a *frōfor* to his people and *hæleðum tō helpe* (“a salvation to heroes”, 1707b-09a), Hrōþgār says:

Ne wearð Heremōd swā	1709
eaforum Ecgwelan, Ār-Scyldingum;	
ne gewēox hē him tō willan ac tō wælfæalle	
ond tō dēaðcwalum Deniga lēodum;	1711

Heremōd did not become so to the sons of Ecgwela, the Loyalty-Scyldings. When he grew up he brought not pleasure to them, the people of the Danes, but violent death and murderous tortures.

No one has convincingly identified who Ecgwela was,¹⁶² but this passage (read with the earlier one) seems in no doubt that Heremōd ruled a people who were called *Scyldingas* (if with notable cruelty). That his people were also “Danes” is evidenced by the use of *Dene* at ll. 1712 and 1720. It has been said that, as with the description of Hnæf's people, the term *Scyldingas* is being used here “in the wider sense ‘Danes’, without regard to the Scyld dynasty”.¹⁶³ But there is another conclusion to be drawn from the ethnographic data given about Hnæf and Heremōd, which is that – even before Scyld and Healfdene happened on the scene – there was a people called variously *Dene*, *Scyldingas* and *Healfdene*. It should be relevant here, I argue, that even if Scyld were to be argued to be the progenitor of the Scyldingas (whether myth or invention), Healfdene cannot plausibly be suggested to be the first of the Healfdene (though Kemp Malone assumed so).¹⁶⁴ After all, the English came before Cnut and William, their kings.

I therefore argue that there were evidently Scyldingas before Scyld, and Healfdene before Healfdene, and therefore that each of these names is not that of a progenitor but both

¹⁶⁰ A vast issue which need not concern us here. But, recently, see Shippey's advocacy of the explanation by Tolkien (1982) that Hengest and most of Hnæf's men were Jutes (2022: 80-87). On the “Jute” question, see also Neidorf 2019. But see my discussion of this issue at pp. 186-97 and 318-23 below.

¹⁶¹ *K14*: lvii; Leneghan 2020: 140, fn. 103.

¹⁶² The *K14* editors suggest that Ecgwela was one of a line of Danish kings earlier than the Scyldingas (possibly a founder of the line), and refer to various conjectures that he was the leader of the Heruli assailed by Scyld, Finn the Frisian, and an Anglian hero (*K14*: lvii and fn. 5). Shaw takes Ecgwela to be Heremōd's father (2020: 130-32). So did Müllenhoff (1889: 50).

¹⁶³ See *K14*: lvii and fn. 5, and 113, 214.

¹⁶⁴ Malone 1959: 126, fn. 7.

are ethno-eponyms: Scyld was called *Scyld* and Healfdene *Healfdene* for the same reason that Ēastgota was called *Ēastgota*. That is, they were figures so notable that they deserved to monopolise the ethnonym of their people. It also follows, I argue, that if these naming conventions were real, then the characters who bore such names were also potentially real. Thus, the king of the Scyldingas was Scyld, whoever he may have been – neither a myth nor a legend nor an etymological phantom. Whether such a king of the Danes actually existed, or did the deeds attributed to him in poetry, is another question – but, I suggest, one no longer dependent on the presumption that he, like his name, was a fiction.

1.2.5 *Healfdene* and the Tribe of the *Healfdene*

Beowulf tells us that *Healfdene* was the name of Bēow’s son and Hrōþgār’s father: he is named as a character, *hēah Healfdene*, at l. 57, and thereafter in the genitive with *maga/mago*, *sunu* and *bearn*, in phrases referring to Hrōþgār thirteen times and to his brother Heregār once.¹⁶⁵ However, *Healfdene* (the plural is identical) was also an ethnonym synonymous with *Dene* and *Scyldingas*, and Hnæf is described as *hæleð Healfdena*, / *Hnæf Scyldinga* “hero of the Half-Danes, Hnæf of the Scyldingas” (l. 1069). As we have seen, there is no warrant from the text of *Beowulf* for regarding Healfdene, the grandson of Scyld, as an eponymous founder or progenitor of his own dynasty of “half-Danes”, and so he is more likely to be the bearer of an ethno-eponym. Thus, other kings of the same line could also theoretically be called *Healfdene*; and I suggest that in two instances in *Beowulf* this is so, and the identification of *Healfdene* as an ethno-eponym helps us to a clearer understanding of the text and its narrative.

In *Beowulf* the name *Healfdene* mostly appears in the formula *maga/mago/sunu/bearn Healfdenes*. There are two exceptions: *brand Healfdenes* “Healfdene’s sword” (l. 1020) and *Healfdenes hildewīsan* (l. 1064, “Healfdene’s battle-wise men (or man)”). I argue that these phrases – though both the subject of scholarly dispute – contain the ethno-eponym *Healfdene*.

Line 1020 reads *Forgeaf þā Bēowulfe / brand Healfdenes*, and is a null-subject construction meaning “Then [someone] gave Bēowulf Healfdene’s sword”. This has been universally interpreted to be a reference to Healfdene, Hrōþgār’s father. This occurs in a scene of ceremonial gift-giving at Heorot in which Hrōþgār rewards Bēowulf richly for having killed

¹⁶⁵ Referring to Hrōþgār at ll. 189, 268, 344, 645, 1009, 1040, 1474, 1652, 1699, 1867, 2011, 2143, 2147; and to Heregār at ll. 469. See fn. 273 (p. 91 below), querying whether *Heregār* was a variant of, or error for, *Heorogār/Hiorogār*, or the birth-name of the epithetically-named brother, *Hālgā* (“the holy one”).

Grendel.¹⁶⁶ In the passage at ll. 1020-29 Bēowulf is given *brand Healfdenes*, a gilded *segen* (“battle-standard”), a *helm* (“helmet”), and a *byrne* (“mailcoat”). These are carried to him in full sight of everyone at Heorot, and at l. 1023 the poet focuses on the *mære māðþumsweord* (“famous gift sword”) as the centre of attention. Bēowulf later takes these gifts (and others) back to the Geatish court and, as custom seems to have required, presents them to his lord, his uncle Hygelāc. In the passage at ll. 2152-62, however, Bēowulf provides the new information that Hrōþgār had told him that these treasures had belonged to his brother Heorogār (who is usually presumed to have been his immediate predecessor), and he does not mention Healfdene.

This might be dismissed as a discrepancy (though the *Beowulf*-poet is usually very consistent with respect to what was given by whom to whom), or it might be argued that even if Healfdene was not mentioned he was nonetheless the original owner of the sword. Even if so, the text focuses on *brand Healfdenes* as the possession of Heorogār, given not to his son Heorowearð but to his brother and (presumably) chosen successor Hrōþgār, and on Hrōþgār’s possession and gift of it – not to his own sons and heirs apparent Hrōþmund or Hrēþrīc, but to a stranger and foreigner. In this context, I suggest, the use of the ethno-eponym *Healfdene* in *brand Healfdenes* marks the sword not – or not only – as the possession of the deceased Healfdene, son of Bēow, but as the ancestral possession and gift of the kings of the Healfdene. (Indeed, its more particular significance may be that it was given by two scions of the Scylding dynasty – Heorogār and Hrōþgār – who, symbolically, did not pass it on to their own sons as a sign of the continuation of sovereignty).

After this festal presentation, the lay of Finnsburh is sung (a tragedy of family members killing each other), and there is then a tableau which many commentators have read as full of omens of anxiety about the Scylding succession, and potential treachery: Bēowulf sports the ancestral heirlooms of the Danish throne and Hrōþgār talks of loving him as a son;¹⁶⁷ Hrōþulf sits closer to Hrōþgār than his own sons do (as does Unferþ the fratricide); Wealhþēow voices her concerns that she has been told that Hrōþgār plans to adopt some warrior or other as his son, predicts hopefully (and vainly) that Hrōþulf will be loyal to her sons and the Danes to each other, and asks Bēowulf to show favour to whichever of her sons is king (destined to be neither

¹⁶⁶ See *K14* 177-78. Some editors had emended *brand* to *bearn*, either to absolve the poet of mentioning the sword twice or because the verb *forgeaf* was not recognised as being without an overt subject.

¹⁶⁷ See ll. 946-50. He uses the phrase *mē for sunu wylle // frēogan on ferhpe* (ll. 947b-48) “I wish to love [you] as a son in my heart”. Wealhþēow later says (ll. 1175-76a) *Mē man sægde / þæt þū ðē for sunu wolde // hererinc habban* “Someone told me that you wanted to have a fighting man for a son” and tells him to leave the kingdom to his own kin. Anxious over gossip that Hrōþgār might be lining up Bēowulf as his heir, she also reveals her anxiety that what Hrōþgār wanted for a successor was a warrior. The reading *hereri[n]c* “army-man” (l. 1176a) is editorial. If the MS reading <hereric> is retained, the meaning would be even more apposite: *hererīc* “fighting king”.

of them, but rather Hrōþulf – himself possibly to be murdered by Heorowearð).¹⁶⁸ Lurking in the background is Ingeld, for now a loving husband-to-be, but shortly to be persuaded to abandon Frēawaru and renew the war which would destroy Heorot by fire.¹⁶⁹ It was also unlikely to have passed notice that between Bēowulf’s receipt of the sword and Wealhþēow’s anxious address was a poetic performance about Hnæf, a king of the Healfdene killed by members of his own family. At the end of this tale, the leader of the remnants of the deceased Hnæf’s warband, Hengest, is impelled to remember his duty to avenge his lord by being presented with a sword as a gift. I shall suggest that this sword, *Hūnlāfing*, was that of Hnæf (aka *Hūnlāf*), king of the Healfdene and thus himself potentially named *Healfdene*.¹⁷⁰ As such, it was also *brand Healfdenes*, and – for all we know – the same one that was given to Bēowulf as a Scylding heirloom. It would have been not only a signal honour, but an apt gift for a foreigner who had rid the Danes of an *eoten* (“monster”), just as another outsider, Hengest, had rid them of an *Ēota* (a Jute, that is, Finn). But it would also have been a concerningly symbolic gift, raising a question over the Danish succession at a time in which it was feared that Hrōþgār might pass his own sons over (as his elder brother Heorogār had).

But this instance is not alone, and I suggest that there is a further example of *Healfdene* used as an ethno-eponym, this time referring to Hrōþgār. The poet introduces the performance of the Finnsburh story by a *scop* at Heorot with the lines:

Þær wæs sang ond sweg	samod ætgædere	1063
fore Healfdenes	hildewīsan,	
gomenwudu grēted,	gid oft wrecen	1065

There was song and melody united together, in the presence of Healfdene’s battle-wise men,
the wooden instrument plucked, many a lay composed

If *Healfdenes hildewīsan* is taken to be singular (as it sometimes has been), it must be referring to Hrōþgār as “Healfdene’s battle-leader”.¹⁷¹ However, while it is not impossible that he was being referred to as his father’s general, nothing else suggests that he (rather than Heorogār) had that role while Healfdene was alive. But it also seems strange to refer to him in this way

¹⁶⁸ The gaps have been filled in using later Scandinavian texts. See Chambers 1921: 35-33, and along similar lines Orchard 2003: 219-22, 246-48. For a brief account including opposing views, see *K14*: lii-liiii, 177, also Osborn 2019. However, if the *Beowulf*-poet meant to imply that everything remained fine at Heorot *pro tem.*, he nevertheless could not help making the air thick with omens of treachery.

¹⁶⁹ Proleptically mentioned in the account of its building, as a result of the violence between *āpumswēoras* (“father and son-in-law”). See *Beowulf* 82-85.

¹⁷⁰ See p. 92 and fn. 275 (with cross refs) below.

¹⁷¹ This is the position taken by the *K14* editors: 180, citing in support Klaeber (1905: 449, fn. 3) and also Cosijn, who stigmatised alternatives as “utter nonsense” (see Bremmer *et al.* 1991: 19). The overstatement is characteristic of Cosijn and academic debate in his time, and neither of these commentators argues his assertions to explain the anachronism.

more than fifty years and two reigns (at least) after Healfdene's death. These objections were taken by Kemp Malone in 1943, who took *hildewīsan* to be a dative plural (as it could easily be in the *Beowulf* MS),¹⁷² and identified *Healfdene* as Hrōþgār's "dynastic name", comparable to *Scylding* (in *Beowulf*, 1792 and 2105) – reminding us, pertinently, that Hnæf was also a member of the Healfdene people.¹⁷³ I suggest that he was right. He had in fact identified an ethno-eponym (though he did not extend the idea further). And I suggest that the reason for the curt dismissal of such a notion by Cosijn, Klaeber and the *Kl4* editors is that the concept of the ethno-eponym was not known to them. Here, I suggest, the identification of an ethno-eponym provides a reading which renders justification of a clumsy anachronism unnecessary. Indeed, it reminds us of the significance of the Finnsburh story to the Danes: Hrōþgār, known as *Healfdene*, was a member of the same dynasty as the glorious but doomed *hæleð Healfdene* called Hnæf, whose own succession was brought into question when he was killed by Finn.

Remarkably (and significantly), I suggest, we also find a cognate of the name *Healfdene* used as an ethno-eponym in two Eddaic poems, *Grottasǫngr* (in MSS of *Snorra Edda*)¹⁷⁴ and *Hyndluljóð* (in *Flateyjarbók*).¹⁷⁵ *Grottasǫngr* tells of a Danish king called Fróði who bought two Swedish giantesses as slave-girls whom he forced to turn a gigantic magical millstone called *Grotti* which ground out not flour from grain but gold. However, they tired of their servitude and destroyed the millstone while predicting Fróði's death at Hleiðrar (Lejre, the site of Heorot) by fire. One says to the other:¹⁷⁶

"Mǫlum enn framarr!	1
Mun Yrsu sonr,	
við Halfdana,	3
hefna Fróða"	

"Let's grind even longer! Yrsa's son, together with Halfdani [or "by Halfdani"], will avenge himself on Fróði" [or "will avenge Fróði", or "will take vengeance for Fróði (*sc.* for what he did)]".

¹⁷² The late dative plural inflexion /-an/ occurs elsewhere in the poem. See *Kl4*: cxl, para 19(1).

¹⁷³ Malone 1943: 259-60 and 1959: 130, though he made it clear that he regarded Scyld's grandson Healfdene as the eponymous progenitor of this lineage (*ibid.*: 126, fn. 7). The *Kl4* editors label Malone's interpretation as "not likely" (*Kl4*: 180) but give no reasons.

¹⁷⁴ For text and commentary on *Grottasǫngr*, see *Eddukvæði*: II, 431-36. The MSS of *Snorra Edda* containing it are from about 1400 (*ibid.*: II, 176), but Snorri included it in his treatise on poetic diction, *Skáldskaparmál*, which he wrote in the 1220s.

¹⁷⁵ For text and commentary on *Hyndluljóð*, see *Eddukvæði*: I, 460-69. *Flateyjarbók* was written not long before 1400, but the poem was known to Snorri who cited v. 33 in *Gylfaginning* in *Snorra Edda*, and was therefore extant by the 1220s (*ibid.*: I, 280). For the argument with respect to Halfdan in *Hyndluljóð* (i.e. Hermóðr = Heremōd), see pp. 173-74 below.

¹⁷⁶ Verse 22/1-4; *Eddukvæði*: II, 436.

This is thought to accord with no known text or narrative tradition, and the crux has occasioned numerous suggestions for emendation.¹⁷⁷ Yrsa's son was Hrólfr kraki, the same character as Hrōþ(w)ulf in *Beowulf* and *Widsith*. But neither in *Beowulf* nor in any Scandinavian version of the Skjöldung story does Hrōþ(w)ulf or Hrólfr live at the same time as Healfdene or Hlafdan, who was his grandfather in both traditions. However, in Anglo-Saxon tradition – as we are told in *Widsith* 45-49 – Hrōþwulf and Hrōþgār together destroyed the might of Ingeld's Heapobeards at Heorot. The same outcome seems to be foreseen by Bēowulf in his prediction about the outcome of the betrothal of Frēawaru and Ingeld (ll. 2057-61a). In the climax of this feud, both sides abandoned their attempted reconciliation and tried to take vengeance for their dead kinsmen – Ingeld for his father Frōda, and Hrōþgār and Hrōþ(w)ulf for Healfdene, (whom Frōda may have killed).¹⁷⁸ Thus, the crux in *Grottasongr* becomes soluble if we regard *Halfdani* as an ethno-eponym referring to the figure who was Hrōþgār in Anglo-Saxon literary tradition,¹⁷⁹ or, as I identify him, *Healfdene*.

1.2.6 *Scylding* (and *Scylfing*)

In *Beowulf* 1792 and 2105 Hrōþgār is called *Scylding*, the singulative of the phylonym *Scyldingas*. In the same idiom, the king of the Swedish *Scylfingas* is called *Scylfing*: Ongenþēow is *gomela Scylfing* in *Beowulf* 2487, 2968; and his son, Onela, is called *Heaðo-Scilfing* at *Beowulf* 63.¹⁸⁰ These, I suggest, are examples of ethno-eponyms.

One of the instances involving Hrōþgār, I argue, was correctly rendered by the second *Beowulf*-scribe but has been misunderstood by editors. Consider the passage in which a Geatish messenger predicts the dire consequences when neighbouring enemies learn of Bēowulf's death, and my translation which follows:

syððan hie gefricgeað frēan ūserne	3002
ealdorlēasne, þone ðe ær gehēold	

-
- ¹⁷⁷ See *Eddukvæði*: II, 436 fn.; also II, 180, fn. 3. If this refers to Yrsa's son *by* Halfdani, it would refer to Helgi, who is the equivalent of Hālgā in *Beowulf*, designated as king by the "Half-Dane" ethno-eponym.
- ¹⁷⁸ Cf. *Beowulf* 2059-60, where Bēowulf predicts that a *fāmnan þegn* ("young woman's man", *sc.* Frēawaru's Ingeld) will die by the sword *fore fæder dædum* "for the sake of his father's great deeds", i.e. attempting to honour his father's memory. See pp. 82-90 (esp. 88-89) below on the Ingeld episode in *Beowulf*.
- ¹⁷⁹ There is no room for a study of *Grottasongr* in this thesis. However, as a legendary or mythical poem about early Danish kingship bearing an inexplicable relationship to English narrative traditions, it has a potential connection with the Eddaic poem *Rígsþula*. The contribution to the Icelandic *Rígsþula* of English narrative traditions is discussed at pp. 369-400 below.
- ¹⁸⁰ In *Beowulf*: *Scylfingas* (ll. 2205, 2381, 2603, 2927); *gomela Scylfing* (ll. 2487, 2968); *Heaðo-Scilfing* (l. 63). It is a naming tradition shared with Scandinavian poetic legend about the Swedish kings, who were called *Skilfingar* as well as *Ynglingar* (see fn. 187, p. 68 below). This incorporated sub-tribes or clans: in *Beowulf* 2603b, Wēohstān, Wīglāf's father, is called *lēod Scylfinga* "man (or prince) of the Scylfingas", although he, his son and Bēowulf were also of the Wægmundingas (ll. 2607, 2813-14).

wið hettendum	hord ond rīce	3004
æfter hæleða hryre,	hwate Scildingas	
folcrēd fremede	oððe furður gēn	3006
eorlscipe efnde.		

[...] when they hear about our lifeless lord, him who protected treasure-hoard and kingdom from challengers, [who] after the death of heroes bravely effected Scilding's national salvation, or accomplished even more acts of martial nobility.

The *Kl4* editors follow an august editorial tradition by emending the MS reading <scildingas> in l. 3005b to *Scilfingas* – that is, from the Danes to the Swedes, even though this is a reading which has required justification by elaborate construing of the grammar, the transposition of lines or the supposition of anacoluthon.¹⁸¹ However, I suggest that Samuel Moore was correct in understanding *scildingas* as a genitive singular with the late inflexional form /-as/ instead of /-es/ (as elsewhere in the *Beowulf*MS),¹⁸² so that *Scildingas* meant “Scilding’s”, which referred to Hrōþgār. Moore emended MS <hwate> so that the phrase read *hwates Scildingas* (“brave Scilding’s”),¹⁸³ but this requires no emendation if – as Klaeber suggested – *hwate* is understood as an adverb, “bravely”,¹⁸⁴ in which case it is possible to construe the passage as in my translation above.

Moore’s suggestion is scorned by the *Kl4* editors as an implausible and irrelevant allusion to Bēowulf’s exploits in Denmark, but I think unjustly.¹⁸⁵ The killings of Grendel and his mother were the most famous things that Bēowulf did before his dragon-fight, and half of *Beowulf* is about this boon he performed for the Danes. The mention of Bēowulf’s further achievements of *eorlscipe* can easily be explained as references to a catalogue of heroic feats:

¹⁸¹ A flavour of the puzzlement which this crux has always caused can be found in Wyatt and Chambers 1914: 148, fn., and Klaeber 1950: 224-25. See also *Kl4*’s textual notes and discussion (*Kl4*: 102, 262). Other emendators had justified *Scilfingas* on the basis of co-ordination with nominative plural *Swēona lēoda* four lines before in l. 3001b (which caused some editors to shorten the troubling gap by inserting 3005 following 3001). Neidorf says (2013b: 256):

Numerous errors confirm that the scribes were ignorant of the ethnic groups inhabiting the world of *Beowulf*, who were interchangeable to them. This is illustrated nicely in the final error of this section, the writing of *scildingas* for what should be *Scilfingas* (l. 3005).

However, this ignores the fact that the second *Beowulf*-scribe had written the name *Scylfing(as)* correctly six times before, on its own or compounded (ll. 2205, 2381, 2603, 2927) or as a singulative (ll. 2487, 2968). Shippey and Neidorf print *Scilfingas* (2023: 228-29), although the translation indicates that they regard the acc. pl. *hwate Scilfingas* (“brave Scylfingas”) as a noun-phrase coordinated with *hettendum*, a dat. pl. governed by *wið* in l. 3004a – a syntactical inconsistency which is hard to explain.

¹⁸² See *Kl4*: cxli, para 5(4) and fn. 1, noting *Heaðo-Scilfingas* (l. 63) and *Merewīoingas* (l. 2921). The same interpretation is possible for l. 2205 where *hearde hildefreca* / *Heaðo-Scilfingas* could mean “the tough battle-bold ones, the war-Scylfings” or “the tough battle-bold ones of the War-Scylfing” (i.e. of Onela).

¹⁸³ Moore 1919: 12.

¹⁸⁴ See Klaeber (1950: 224), offering this as “still another conjecture”, referring to Moore 1919 (Klaeber emended MS <scildingas> to *scildwigan* “shield-warriors” in his text).

¹⁸⁵ *Kl4*: 262: “so vague and so irrelevant to the messenger’s overall point that it is difficult to credit”.

swimming to the land of the Finns (battling sea-monsters along the way) in the race against Breca; avenging Hygelāc by hugging his slayer Dæghrefn to death, and then swimming home from the Frisian débacle as the sole survivor with a booty of thirty mailcoats; killing Onela in vengeance for the death of Heardrēd and then restoring Ēadgils to the Swedish throne; and, finally, killing the dragon and saving his country from it. Aside from these objections to the *K14* editors' reasons for rejecting Moore's analysis, I argue that Moore was correct because he had noted – though not described – the phenomenon identified in this section: the singulative *Scilding* was the use of an ethno-eponym for the king of the *Scildingas*, that is, for Hrōþgār. Once this is recognised, the text which includes *hwate Scildingas* ceases to require elaborate explication or emendation.

1.2.7 Ethno-eponyms in *-ing*

As we have seen, in *Beowulf* and *Widsith* ethnonyms or phylonyms can be formed from an appellative with the addition of the group-suffix *-ingas*, and the ethno-eponyms of their kings can be formed from appellative stem, with or without the *-ing* suffix. Thus:

<i>Scyldingas</i> ¹⁸⁶	“people of the shield” (OE <i>scyld</i>)	<i>Scyld</i> , <i>Scylding</i>
<i>Scylfingas</i> ¹⁸⁷	“people of the mountain-shelf” (?) “sword-brandishers” (?)	<i>Scylfing</i>

But there are other examples:

<i>Brondingas</i> ¹⁸⁸	“people of the sword” (OE <i>brond</i> , <i>brand</i>)	<i>Brond</i> / <i>Brand</i>

¹⁸⁶ *Scyld* (*Beowulf* 4, 19, 26), *Scyldingas* (*passim*). Hrōþgār is called *Scylding* in *Beowulf* 1792, 2105. Also, I suggest in line 3005b-06a, where the MS reads <hwate scildingas folcred fremede>. Contrary to *K14* (see text *ad loc.* and 262) and Shippey and Neidorf (2023: 228-29), I argue that this makes little sense emended to *hwate Scilfingas* (“brave Swedes” acc. pl.). It refers, I suggest, to the *folcrēd* (“people’s help”) given to Scilfing (i.e. Hrōþgār – gen. sg. *Scilfingas*) by Bēowulf in slaying the monsters bravely (*hwate*).

¹⁸⁷ *Scylfingas* (*Beowulf* 2603, 2381). The Swedish king Ongenþēow is called *Scylfing* (ll. 2487, 2968), and his son Onela is called *Heaðo-Scilfing* (l. 63). Cf. *Ynglingatal* v. 14/14, where the Swedish king Egill (= Ongenþēow) is called *Skilfinga niðr* “kinsman of the Skilfingar”. The etymology is unclear. See *ANEW*: 492, s.v. *skilfingr*, from *skjalf* “mountain shelf”; and *LP*: 506, s.v. *skilfingr* (2), possibly from *skelfir*, “shaker, fear-causer”. In *Hyndluljóð* vv. 11 and 16, there are two similar lists of dynasties, featuring the *Skilfingar* (in addition to the *Skjöldungar* (= *Scyldingas*), *Qðlingar*, *Ylfingar* (= *Wylfingas*) and *Ynglingar*).

¹⁸⁸ The *Brondingas* are named in *Beowulf* and *Widsith*. In *Beowulf*, *Breca* is named at ll. 506, 531, 583. He is called *sunu Bēanstānes* (l. 524) and his homeland is said to be the *lond Brondinga* (l. 521). In *Widsith* 25 *Breoca* is said to rule the *Brondingas* and is likely to be the same person, or a person known by the same ethno-eponym, since *Breca/Breoca* is potentially a *Becca*-type hypocorism (see pp. 103-04 below) of the ethno-eponym of the *Brondingas*, *Brond/Brand*: **Bro* + *ica* > **Broeca* > *Breca/Breoca*. The name

<i>Frumtingas</i> ¹⁸⁹	“people of *Frumta’s clan” or “bravery people”	<i>Framta</i>
<i>Gūplācingas</i> ¹⁹⁰	“people of Gūplāc’s clan”	<i>Gūplāc</i>
<i>Helmingas</i> ¹⁹¹	“people of the helmet” (OE <i>helm</i>)	<i>Helm</i>
* <i>Hemmingas</i> ¹⁹²	“people of the river area” (OE <i>hamm</i>)	<i>Hemming</i>
<i>Heodeningas</i> ¹⁹³	“people of Heoden’s clan” or “people of the hide jacket” (OE * <i>heoden</i>)	<i>Heoden</i>
<i>Hōcingas</i> ¹⁹⁴	“people of the hook or hank (?)” (OE <i>hōc</i>)	<i>Hōc</i>
<i>Hrēþlingas</i> ¹⁹⁵	“glory/victory-people” (OE <i>hrēþ</i>)	<i>Hrēþel</i>
<i>Hundingas</i> ¹⁹⁶	“people of the dog” (PrGmc * <i>hundaz</i> , or	* <i>Hunding</i>

Brond/Brand occurs in the Bernician and WS regnal lists as a grandson of Wōden. As such, his name may be an ethno-eponym for the leader of the Bronding clan (whether or not this Brand/Brond was the same person as Breca/Breoca in *Beowulf* and *Widsith*).

¹⁸⁹ Malone argued that the *Frumtingas* of *Widsith* 68 were the people of *Framta*, a 5th-c. king of the Germanic Suevi in Spain (1962: 152). Alternatively, *Framta* was the ethno-eponym of the Suevic **Framtingas*, meaning either that this was a variant of *Frumtingas*, or that Exeter Book’s *Frumtingas* was a scribal error for *Framtingas*, with archaic open-topped <a> misread as /u/ (a common error in the *Beowulf* MS, argued by Lapidge (2000) to be evidence that its archetype was written in the period 700-750).

¹⁹⁰ Felix, the author of the 8th-c. *Vita Guthlaci* said that Gūplāc, at his baptism, was given his name *ex appellatione illius tribus quam dicunt Guthlacingas* “from the name of the clan they call Guthlacingas” (ch. X; Colgrave 1956: 76-77). Felix goes on to say that this was most fortuitous, since English *guth* and *lac* could be translated into Latin as *belli munus*, and Guthlac was to win the reward (*munus*) of eternal bliss by warring (*bellando*) against vices (*ibid.*: 76-79). Stenton remarked that Gūplāc “was simply named after the Guthlacingas, whoever they may have been, and without regard to the meaning in itself” (1969: 168). Gūplāc’s father was called *Penwald* or *Penwalh* (see *PASE*, *Penwealh* 1). MSS of the *Vita Guthlaci* of Felix record *Penwald* and (in one) *Penuballus*. Colgrave (1956) reconstructs the name as *Penwalh*. His mother was called *Tette* and his sister *Pega*, which have no apparent relationship to the ethnonym *Gūplācingas*.

¹⁹¹ *Helm* of the *Wulfingas* (*Widsith* 29). *Helmingas*, the people of *Wealhþēow* (*Beowulf* 620). *Wulf*, a prince or king of an unnamed people allied to the Gēats (*Beowulf* 2965, 2993).

¹⁹² *Hemming* (*Beowulf* 1944, 1961). See Part II, sections 4.4.1-4.4.1.10 (pp. 274-300) below.

¹⁹³ *Scyld* and *Scyldingas*, *Scylfingas* (*Beowulf* *passim*). *Helm* of the *Wulfingas* (*Widsith* 29). *Helmingas*, the people of *Wealhþēow* (*Beowulf* 620). *Wulf*, a prince or king of an unnamed people allied to the Gēats (*Beowulf* 2965, 2993). *Hōc*, the father of *Hildeburh* and *Hnæf* (*Beowulf* 1976), king of the *Hōcingas* (*Widsith* 29). *Hundingr* from Eddaic poetry and *Hundingas* (*Widsith* 23, 81).

¹⁹⁴ *Hōc*, the father of *Hildeburh* and *Hnæf* (*Beowulf* 1976), king of the *Hōcingas* (*Widsith* 29). Also a name of *Hnæf*, according to my interpretation of MS <no> in *FFr* 39a. See pp. 57-59 above.

¹⁹⁵ *Beowulf* 2960, *Hrēðlingas* (the Gēats). Their king was *Hrēþel* (ll. 374, 1847, 2191, 2358, 2430, 2474, 2992), but also *Hrēðel* (l. 1485) and *Hrēðla* (l. 454) – apparently hypocorisms. His sons *Hæpcyn* and *Hygelāc* are surnamed *Hrēþling* (ll. 1923, 2925). See also *Beowulf* 445a, where the MS <mægen hreð manna> can be read as containing **Hrēþmenn*, an ethnonym for the Gēats (see p. 192 below). Cf. names for the Ostrogoths and their king in *Widsith*: *Hrēð-cyning* (l. 7), *Hrēðgotan* (l. 57) and *Hrēðdas* (l. 120). Although *Hrēþel* may be a personal name, it may also be an ethno-eponym for the king of the *Hrēþlingas*. The Ostrogothic comparator names suggest that *hrēþ* and *hrēð* were ethnonymic.

¹⁹⁶ *Hundingr* from Eddaic poetry about *Helgi Hundingsbani*, and *Hundingas* (*Widsith* 23, 81).

	“large number” (Gmc <i>*hundq</i> “hundred”)	
<i>*Měrewīingas</i> ¹⁹⁷	“people of Měrewīo’s clan”, = Merovingians, Franks	<i>Měrewīoing</i>
<i>Myrgingas</i> ¹⁹⁸	“people of the horse” (OE <i>mearh</i>)	<i>Mearchealf, Meaca</i>
<i>*Wælsingas</i> ¹⁹⁹	“people of the Walloon” (Gmc <i>*Wals</i> (?))	<i>Wæls, Wælsing</i>
<i>Wulfingas</i> ²⁰⁰	“people of the wolf” (OE <i>wulf</i>)	<i>Wulf</i>

I suggest that the examples in *-ing* show that an ethno-eponym could also be formed from the singulative of an ethnonym with the group-suffix *-ingas*, on the logical basis that, for instance, the occupant of the throne of Denmark could be known as *Scyld*, but that, as either a son of or member of the clan of *Scyld*, he was also *Scylding*. Similarly, in terms of appellatives, any member of the royal *cynn* was a *cyning*; but *cyning* was also the term for the king – that is, the head of it, and himself the scion of a king. (Thus, *cyning*, as a singulative meaning “king”, was a generic ethno-eponym).

It is possible that the same phenomenon is evidenced in the Anglo-Saxon place-names considered at pp. 47-49 above: *Ceolmundinghaga*, *Badenothing land*, *Cyneburgincgtun* and *Wulfferdinleh*. Rather than names in which *-ing-* was “merely genitival” and indicated the “temporary overlordship” of individuals,²⁰¹ we might instead take **Cēolmunding*, **Badenōping*, **Cyneburging* and **Wulfferping* to have been ethno-eponyms, denoting the leaders of the clans of the **Cēolmundingas*, *Badenōpingas*, **Cyneburgingas* and **Wulfferpingas*. Such ethnonyms would have been formed from dithematic names on the same basis as the clan of *Wāegmundingas*, *Bēowulf*’s lineage on his father’s side.²⁰²

¹⁹⁷ *Beowulf* 2921 in the phrase *Měrewīoingas milts* “the largesse/friendship of the Merovingian”. See Shippey 2005 for the argument that *Merewioing* is authentically OE in form and not derived from a learned text. I prefer this to Goffart’s refutation (2007), for the reasons in Shippey 2014: 74-75.

¹⁹⁸ *Myrgingas* (*Widsith* 4, 23, 42, 84, 85, 96). *Mearchealf* and *Meaca* (*Widsith* 23). See pp. 219-22 below.

¹⁹⁹ *Beowulf* 877 (*Wælsing* = Sigemund), and 897 (*Wæls* = Sigemund’s father). In ON *Vǫlsungr* is the name of Sigmundr’s father but is also used of Sigmundr (*Hyndluljóð*, v. 26/2) and his son Sigurðr (*Reginsmál*, v. 18/3). *Vǫlsungr* is therefore likely to be an ethno-eponym for the king of the *Vǫlsungar*. The Gmc stem **wals* explains OE *Wæls* and ON *Vǫlsung* (u-mutation of **Vals-* by the suffix *-ungr*). *Wals* looks like a consonant-stem derivation from Gmc **walah* (“foreigner, Latin-speaker”), cf. modern Dutch *Waal* “Walloon”. This would indicate Netherlandish heritage, consistent with the *Nibelungenlied*’s tradition in which Sigemunt, the father of Sifrit, was *von Niderlant* “from the lowlands”, referring to the region of his capital at Xanten (*in Niderlanden*), on the German side of the Dutch border, where his son Sifrit was brought up (Gillespie 1973: 118, 125 and fn. 1). See also fn. 1153 (p. 288 below).

²⁰⁰ *Helm* of the *Wulfingas* (*Widsith* 29), and *Wulf*, son of Wonrēd, a prince or king of an unnamed people allied to the Gēats (*Beowulf* 2965, 2993).

²⁰¹ Gelling 1978: 177.

²⁰² *Beowulf* 2607, 2814. Wīglāf is the last of them, after the death of Bēowulf.

1.3 One Name Good, Two Names Better: Multiple Naming and the Appositive Style

It follows from the discussion above that if an ethno-eponym can be called a name, rather than a title, single characters can have more than one name. This is an argument which will be made, for example, with respect to Offa's father-in-law Frēawine, who I will suggest was known as *Hemming* (an ethno-eponym) and potentially also as *Gārmund* (a birth-name); whereas *Frēawine* was either a birth-name or (more likely) an epithetical name with the sense "lord and friend".²⁰³ As I have noted above, the consensus presumption is that each literary character has only one name. In defence of this proposition, it may be objected that the hypothesis of polynymy contended for here is merely a convenient fiction created to deal with cruces or confusing texts, according to which any two characters with different names could be said to be the same person, and the absence of evidence of indubitable examples is evidence of their absence. However, two examples might suffice to counter such an argument.

1.3.1 Finn and Folcwald(a); Gefwulf and God(w)ulf

Fin is named as a king of the Frisians in the following passage from *Widsith* (ll. 26-29b):

Ōswine wēold Ēowum	ond ȳtum Gefwulf,	26
Fin Folcwalding	Frēsna cynne.	
Sigehere lengest	Sædenum wēold,	28
Hnæf Hōcingum	[...]	

Oswine ruled the Ölanders, and Gefwulf the Jutes, Fin Folcwalding [ruled] the race of Frisians. Sigehere ruled the Sea-Danes for a very long time, Hnæf the Hōcingas [...]

Finn (as I shall call him) and Hnæf are characters well known from the *Finnsburh* story in *Beowulf* and *FFr* (though Finn is only named indirectly in *FFr*, in the place name *Finnsburuh* in l. 36). Finn is the only king in *Widsith* to be given a surname – in apparently patronymic form – *Folcwalding*. In *Beowulf* 1089, Finn is called *Folcwaldan sunu*, "son of Folcwalda". The patronymic *Folcwalding* is compatible with either strong *Folcwald* or weak *Folcwalda*,²⁰⁴ which would seem to be a syntagmatic and meaningful name, "people ruler" – in other words, an epithet. This passage raises several questions about naming, which I shall address below.

²⁰³ See Part II, sections 4.4.1-2, pp. 274-314 below (though Gārmund may have been Offa – pp. 290-300).

²⁰⁴ As the formation of patronymics in the regnal lists show (*passim*), the termination *-a* in a grammatically weak name can be omitted in the formation of a patronymic with the suffixation of *-ing*. Cf. the Deiran list in *AngCol*: *Uestorfalcna*, *Uilgils Uestorfalcing*; the Bernicia I list: *Ida*, *Eðilric Iding*; the Bernicia II-III list: *Eata*, *Eadberht Eating*; the Mercia I list: *Cnebba* > *Cnebbing*, *Crioda* > *Crioding*, *Pypba* > *Pypbing*, and so on (all from Dumville 1976: 30).

1.3.1.1 Finn, the Jutes and Giants

In the passage above Gefwulf ruled the *ȳte* “Jutes”. But in the *Beowulf* MS it is *Finn*’s people who are called <eotena bearn> (ll. 1088 and 1141). If this meant “children of Jutes”, how could this be so? Unfortunately, there has been a long controversy – about the *Beowulf* MS’s <eotena> and <eotenum> – whether these meant *eotenas* “giants” or *Ēotan* “Jutes”. If Gefwulf ruled the Jutes in *Widsith*, did Finn rule “giants” or “Jutes” in *Beowulf*? See the following:

- 902 <mid eotenum>: referring to the circumstances of the death of the tyrannical Danish king Heremōd. Ambiguous as to whether “among Jutes” (properly *Ēotum*) or “among giants” (*eotenum*) was meant.²⁰⁵
- 1072 <eotena treowe>: referring to the trustworthiness (*trēow*) of Frisians which the bereaved mother Hildeburh (the wife of Finn) had no reason to praise.
- 1088 <eotena bearn> referring to Frisians.
- 1141 <eotena bearn> referring to Frisians.
- 1145 <mid eotenum ecge cuðe>: referring to the sword given to Hengest, leader of the Danish survivors at Finnsburh, with which he kills Finn and avenges Hnæf. Ambiguous (like l. 902) as to whether its edges were “known to Jutes” or “known to giants”.

After a vogue for reading the disputed words as forms of *eoten* “giant” (largely over by the early 1990s),²⁰⁶ most recent scholars are persuaded that the *Beowulf*-poet originally meant “Jutes”, even if the *Beowulf*-scribes misunderstood him as meaning “giants”.²⁰⁷ Although it was a problem for this argument that the MS form *eotenum* was consistent with the dative plural of *eoten* and not that of *Ēota* (which should have been *Ēotum*), a handful of late Old-English weak dative plurals with the anomalous ending *-(e)num* had been found.²⁰⁸ Cronan supplemented these with a small number of anomalous dative plurals of the ethnonym

²⁰⁵ In the case of Heremōd, I tend to the view that even if “Jutes” were alluded to, the primary sense in any wordplay was “giants”. See the discussion at p. 173 below.

²⁰⁶ Vickrey said that the “Jute” theory was now largely dominant (1993: 19) – though his article was an attempt to revive the “giant” theory, as, for instance, advocated by Kaske 1967.

²⁰⁷ On the debate see Niles 2007: 124-130 (a “giant” advocate). See also *K14*: 171 (and fn. 1 – referring to the “giant” vogue), 181, 190. The *K14* editors print *Ēotena* and *Ēotenum*, meaning “Jutes”, in all cases, (though in their note on l. 1145, curiously, they liken the edges of the sword used to kill Finn to the hammer used by Þórr to pulverise giants, as if the reading ought to be *eotenum* rather than the printed *Ēotenum*). Since *K14*’s publication, the pro-“Jute” trend has been followed by Neidorf 2015 and 2023a; Cronan 2018 (with an account of the debate at pp. 1-4); and Shippey and Neidorf 2023, text and translation *ad loc.*, and 275, 281-83. Neidorf (2015) argues for a return to the idea of Chambers (1921: 261) and Tolkien (1982: 62 and fn. 64) that in lines 902 and 1145 the *Beowulf*-scribe failed to recognise *eotum* in the exemplar as the ethnonym of the Jutes and mistakenly “corrected” it to *eotenum* “giants”.

²⁰⁸ See *K14*: 171. Chambers had noticed these (1921: 261).

“Mercian”, appearing in weak dative plural form as *Myrcnum/Myrcenum*, instead of regular *Myrcum*, and possibly formed by analogy with the more numerous (and therefore more frequent in speech?) genitive plural form *Myrcna/Myrcena*.²⁰⁹ However, this evidence is significantly later than the time of the composition of *Beowulf* (which I believe to be roughly 700-750), and *Beowulf* shows no other signs of such aberrant weak morphologies to support Cronan’s contention.

Here, however, I suggest that we reconsider a position on the Jute-giant issue based on the views of North and Hill, who have argued that the *Beowulf*-poet was engaged in wordplay on *Ēota* “Jute” and *eoten* “giant”.²¹⁰ It is self-evident that *eotena* and *Ēotena* would have been homographs in writing, as <*eotena*>, and ought to have had very similar pronunciations. So, we may argue that in an appropriate context the genitive plural of “Jute” would potentially suggest that of “giant”. Thus, even if we read l. 1072 as *Ēotena trēowe*, with the primary meaning “the trustworthiness of Jutes”, it would nonetheless audially suggest *eotena trēowe*, that is, “the good faith of giants”. The same wordplay may be read into *Ēotena/eotena bearn* in ll. 1088 and 1141, though in both of these instances it is very difficult to argue that the *Beowulf*-poet meant, primarily, “giants”,²¹¹ since this phrase obviously designates the people ruled by Finn as “Jutes” (elsewhere called “Frisians”).²¹² But what was the comparison?

What were *eotenas* to the Anglo-Saxons? Our enquiry is limited by the fact that in Old English, except for two glosses of Latin *gigas* or *gigans* in the Psalms, the word *eoten* appears only in *Beowulf*.²¹³ But Grendel is one – called an *eoten* at *Beowulf* 761a – and there is no reason not to see him as a representative of the species. He is a member of the cursed “kin of Cain” (*Caines cyn*, l. 107a) who were begotten as “foul offspring [...], monsters and elves and hellish corpses, also giants” (ll. 111-13a, *untȳdras [...], // eotenas ond ylfe / ond orcnēas, // swylce gīgantas [...]*). In the poem he seems the antithesis of humanity. He is physically huge and monstrous, superhumanly strong, solitary and antisocial, fatherless, lordless and heedless of rank, unreasonably and implacably homicidal, man-eating, miserable and joy-hating. But,

²⁰⁹ Cronan 2018: 5-6.

²¹⁰ See North 1997: 67, and J. M. Hill 2000: 60-61, and *Kl4*: 181 for further refs to this view. Cf. curious ethnophoric ON kennings for “giants”: *berg-Danir*, ~*Mærir* “cliff Danes, ~*Mærir*” (*LP*: 44-45, s.vv).

²¹¹ Though this is the argument of Vickrey 1993 and 2009 (esp. 30-74).

²¹² The *Frēsan/Frȳsan* ruled by Finn are named at lines 1070 (*Frēswæl*), 1093, 1104, 1126 (*Frȳsland*) and 1207. *Beowulf* also refers to *Frēsan/Frȳsan* at lines 1207, 2357 (*Frēslond*), 2503 (*Frēscyning*), 2912 and 2915. But these were different “West” Frisians, living west of the Zuider Zee under the suzerainty of or in alliance with the Merovingian Franks under Theuderic. See *Kl4*: lx, 467 (glossary of names), s.nn. *Frēs-* and references. Although this view of “Frisians” may be poetry rather than history (Hines and IJssenaggar 2017: 36, 37, 56), it demonstrates that “Frisia” was a geographical area and “Frisian” a demonym, applicable to different ethnicities inhabiting the same region.

²¹³ See *DOE*, s.v. *eoten*.

on the (limited) positive side, he had lived alongside humans for a long time before the prideful building of Heorot provoked him; and his mother had harmed no one until she was goaded to a natural vengeance by the killing of her son. This element of slight moral ambiguity was shared with their collateral descendants, the *jotnar* of Scandinavian myth and legend, who, I suggest, were also mostly but not quite entirely bad. Some *jotnar* were wholly malevolent, like the *troll* or *purs* (Grendel is called a *pyrs* at l. 426a), who became demons in Christianised folklore. Others were capable of acts of creation, construction, wisdom, generous hospitality (they were very rich), kindness, parental love, loyalty and friendship. But, as relatives of the European folkloric giant, they were nevertheless essentially hostile to humans (and in Norse myths to the gods),²¹⁴ and their enormous strength, slyness and capricious anger made them unpredictable, untrustworthy and dangerous. Although we lack the part of the *Finnsburh* story which might have explained the reason for Finn’s attack on the Danes (if it was other than to gain Hnæf’s wealth), it is arguable that to Danish eyes the Frisians (*Ēotena bearn*) conformed to the stereotype of folkloric *eotenas*, whose wealth, hospitality and friendliness masked an innate hostility, treachery and greed to which they were liable to revert unexpectedly.

In support of such an argument, we may note that the form *eotenum* provides a difficulty for the pro-“Jute” advocates. As we have seen, it is not a regular dative plural of *Ēota* (“Jute”) – which was *Ēotum* – and if it is to mean “Jutes”, this requires an inference that the *Beowulf*-poet did not know how to decline weak nouns (in two instances only), or that the first *Beowulf*-scribe could not recognise the ethnonym of a people who were supposedly one of the founders of his own nation (the late tenth-century Exeter Book scribe did not have any trouble with West-Saxonising this ethnonym into the contemporary dative plural *Ytum* in *Widsith* 26). But if we are receptive to the idea of paronomasia involving the ethnonym “Jute”, I suggest that in *eotenum ecge cūðe* (l. 1145) the audience would have heard *eotenum* in the sense “giants” but with an echo of *Ēotum* (or *Ēotenum* if Cronan (2018) is correct), meaning “Jutes”. It could thus be both a reference to a sword belonging to Hnæf whose edges were known to the giants who made this remarkable weapon,²¹⁵ but also known to the Jutes (i.e. Frisians) who felt its keen

²¹⁴ See Motz 1982, esp. p. 72; and Simek 2006: 346–48, esp. p. 347.

²¹⁵ It is like three others in *Beowulf*. There is the huge *sigeēadig bil*, // *ealdsweord eotonisc* (“blade blessed with victory, old sword of giants”) which Bēowulf finds in Grendel’s lair (ll. 1557–58) and uses to kill Grendel’s mother and behead the corpse of Grendel. There is the *ealdsweord eotonisc* that Wēohstān loots from the corpse of Ēanmund and is allowed to keep by Onela (l. 2616), and which he gives to his son Wīglāf who uses it to cut through the dragon’s hide, where Bēowulf’s blade Nægling had failed (ll. 2694–2708). There is also the *ealdsweord eotonisc* used by Eofor Wonrēding against Ongenþeow, which cleaves through his *entisc helm* “helmet of giants” (l. 2979). Unferþ’s sword Hrunting is said to have the quality of never failing its wielder in battle (ll. 1460b–63a), which may be regarded as a magical quality,

edges in the battle at Finnsburh.²¹⁶ Likewise, Hildeburh had no cause to praise the *Ēotena trēowe* “the good faith of Jutes”, since it was as unreliable as *eotena trēowe* “the good faith of giants”.

In *eotenum* at *Beowulf* 902, with reference to Heremōd’s demise, the reference (as I shall argue)²¹⁷ was probably to actual giants as his assassins. But the events of his reign are so fragmentary, it is difficult to say whether Heremōd’s demise *mid eotenum* was also intended to pun on the ethnonym “Jutes”.²¹⁸

In summary, I argue that the reason for the Jute-giant debate largely disappears if the *Beowulf*-poet was punning on the similar-sounding Anglian Old English words for “Jutes” and “giants”, and his clever wordplay was intended to imply that – from the point of view of his audience, the Scylding descendants of Hnæf – Finn ruled the Frisians who were “children of Jutes”, though in their monstrous behaviour they had acted like “children of giants”.²¹⁹ And Hengest, with a sword “known to giants” and “known to Jutes” avenges his lord on *eoten*-like Jutes in the same classically heroic monster-quelling vein as Sigemund and Bēowulf.

1.3.1.2 Finn, Gefwulf and Gārulf

I therefore suggest that we can conclude with fair confidence that in the context of Frisian-Danish relations as described in the Finnsburh Episode in *Beowulf*, the *Frēsan/Frȳsan* (“Frisians”) also counted as *Ēotan* (“Jutes”), who were to be regarded as “giants” only as wordplay to be appreciated by a Danish audience. Thus, in the tradition known to the *Beowulf*-poet, the Frisians must have ruled Jutland, or they ruled in part of it, and so were to be distinguished from the early Scylding Danes, ruled by Hnæf, whose centre of power was on the island of Sjøælland. We may also imagine that in the geopolitics of the lost parts of the Finnsburh story, there was some *casus belli* between the Frisians and the Danes, and that the most likely occasion for this would be territorial claims in Jutland.

though the sword is not associated with giants. He lends it to Bēowulf to use on Grendel’s mother, but it does not penetrate her hide. Fortuitously, Bēowulf finds the *ealdsweord eotenisc* mentioned above.

²¹⁶ Or even before, if in a lost part of the narrative Hnæf had married his sister Hildeburh to Finn to end a war between them.

²¹⁷ See pp. 172-73 below.

²¹⁸ See pp. 172-73 below – though in *RDF/Skjöldunga saga* (ch. 9; *ÍF* 35: 18) Alo (= Heremōd) is killed at home in Sweden. The Jutish connection with his death in the *Beowulf* allusion is therefore conjectural.

²¹⁹ Vickrey (1993 and 2009) has argued that the descriptions of Finn as *eorðcyning* (*Beowulf* 1155) and of the Frisians as *eorðbūend* (*FFr* 32) meant that they were chthonic giants “in the earth”. While this is unlikely, it is possible that these compounds were part of the paronomasia, such that a king and people “of the land” might be likened to monstrous beings “in the earth”.

However, in *Widsith* 26 the Jutes are represented by the West Saxon dative plural form *ȳtum*,²²⁰ but their ruler is not called *Finn* but *Gefwulf*, who Joyce Hill says is “not known”.²²¹ This has traditionally been treated as an anomaly. Chambers thought that in *Widsith* the names of tribes and heroes were often grouped together “according as they are related in story” and so concluded that *Gefwulf* was probably a hero of the story of *Finn*, who was named in the next line of *Widsith*. He identified *Gefwulf* with *Gārulf*, a character very obviously on *Finn*’s side in *FFr* (named at ll. 18 and 31), on the grounds that the name *Gārulf* was “very near” to *Gefwulf* – seemingly suggesting (though he is not quite clear) that these were variants, or that one was an error for the other.²²² Tolkien also thought it was possible that *Gārulf* and *Gefwulf* were the same person (and the name had been garbled), but also suggested the possibility that they were relatives of each other.²²³ Neidorf takes this suggestion as the cue for a complex hypothetical reconstruction of the proto-story behind *Finnsburh*. In this, *Gefwulf* was a king of the Jutes who was killed in a Jutish civil war before the action at *Finnsburh* takes place; and this conflict caused the exile of *Gefwulf*’s kinsman *Gārulf* to the Frisian court of *Finn*.²²⁴

It is a further complication in the story that in *Beowulf* (l. 1148) and the *FFr* (l. 16) *Gūðlāf* is named as a person on *Hnæf*’s side, but in *FFr* 33 *Gārulf* is described as *Gūðlāfes sunu*. How could a Frisian be the son of a Dane? Was there more than one *Gūðlāf*? Tolkien (1982) solved this problem by suggesting that *Gūðlāf* was a scribal error for *Gūðulf* – the shared element *-(w)ulf* indicating relationship between *Gārulf*, his father *Gūðulf*, and their kinsman *Gefwulf*. Neidorf (2019) thus argues that *Gūðlāf* and *Gārulf* were both exiled mercenary “Jutes” (not Frisians, a different people), with father and son fighting on opposite sides, for the Danes and Frisians respectively.

To deal first with the argument that *Gārulf* was *Gefwulf*. This would seem to be unlikely. In *Widsith*, *Gefwulf* is the king of the Jutes, but in *FFr* *Gārulf* is only someone serving at *Finn*’s court. He is said to be the son of *Gūðlāf*, which is the name of a Dane in the service of *Hnæf*, not of any Frisian we know. In *FFr* *Gārulf* is the first Frisian to be killed, at which time we know that *Finn*, king of the Frisians and Jutes, is still alive.

²²⁰ *ȳte, an *i*-stem in the plural, developing in West Saxon as *Ēote > *Īete > *ȳte, compared to the Anglian variant, the weak masculine plural *Ēotan*.

²²¹ Hill 2009: 105.

²²² Chambers 1921: 286-287.

²²³ Tolkien 1982: 33-34.

²²⁴ Neidorf 2019: 490 and 491, fn. 9. The Tolkienian solution of “Jutes on both sides” has also been advocated by Shippey (2022: 80-87). However, see pp. 186-97 and 318-23 below for discussion of the complexities of the ethnonym – or demonym – “Jute”. Anyone from Jutland might call himself a “Jute”.

Second, Neidorf's argument is based on the assumption that the Frisians and the Jutes are separate peoples. But, as we have seen, in *Beowulf* Finn's people are called *Frēsan/Frȳsan* "Frisians"; but in *Ēotena bearn* (ll. 1088, 1141) and *Ēotena trēow* (l. 1072), it would be perverse to read the MS's <eotena> as forms of anything but *Ēotan* "Jutes" (whether we understand that to be the only meaning intended by the poet, or accept my argument that these phrases punned on *eotena* "of giants"). There is nothing in the text to suggest that any distinction between "Frisians" and "Jutes" was intended as far as Finn's people were concerned. Also, what little we know of the history of early medieval Frisia supports the contention that the East Frisians' power and influence extended to Jutland, where they had probably originated.²²⁵ And so it is also historically plausible that the East Frisians could also have been called "Jutes", and in this respect *Beowulf*'s ethnography may well agree with history.

Also, just as the use of "Frisians" for Finn's people did not exclude the use of the same term to describe other ethnicities in Frisia,²²⁶ the use of "Jutes" to designate Frisian inhabitants of Jutland does not necessarily imply that there were no other peoples in Jutland who could also call themselves "Jutes" – that is, "people of Jute-land". There is no evidence of a geographical term cognate with modern English *Jutland* earlier than the literary period in Scandinavia (where it is West Norse *Jótland* or East Norse *Jútland*).²²⁷ But if there was an early medieval toponym with the Germanic form **Jeutōlanda/*Jiutōlanda*, then the **Jeutōz/*Jiutōz* who inhabited such a large place were unlikely to be monoethnic. Jutland was a big place. Certainly, according to Ptolemy's *Geography*, the people there were not called "Jutes".²²⁸ Thus, such a term describing them was more probably a demonym, designating place of habitation irrespective of ethnicity. (The fact that "Jutes" were not a tribe may be a reason why the ethnonym "Jute" cannot clearly be identified in Classical geographical texts).

Therefore, I suggest, the Frisians were "Jutes" in the context of the Finnsburh story. But in reality they were not the only people who could call themselves "Jutes". As we shall see, Hengest (at least), though in the service of Hnæf the Dane, was also entitled to be called a "Jute". Thus, I suggest, the Finnsburh story was a personalised historical legend about the

²²⁵ See below at fn. 701 (p. 182) and p. 345 and fn. 1362 (ref. to Knol and IJssenagger 2017: 11-12).

²²⁶ See the reference to the "Western" Frisians in the Merovingian sphere in fn. 1361 (p. 345) below.

²²⁷ See *ONP*, s.v. *Jótland*, with two instances of *Jútland*, the standard East Norse form. See also pp. 186-88 and fns. 720-22 below.

²²⁸ See pp. 205-09 and Map 4 (p. 208) below.

expansion of powers in Jutland, thus involving various “Jutish” peoples.²²⁹ But even if Gārulf was a “Jute” in this sense, he was not Gefwulf, and we must look further for Gefwulf’s identity.

If the reader were to think that the foregoing is complicated enough, there are other anomalies associated with Finn and his relatives. See Table 1 below.²³⁰

<i>Beowulf/Widsith</i>	<i>AngCol</i> (Lindsev)	<i>HB</i> (Kent)	<i>ASC</i> (Wessex s.a. 855/6)	<i>Asser</i> (Wessex)	<i>Æthelweard</i> (Wessex)
	*Geat/*Geot?	Geta	Geatt/Geat(a)	Geata	Geat
Folcwald(a)	Godwulf	Folcwald	God(w)ulf	Godwulf	Goduulfe
Fin(n)	Finn	Finn	Finn	Finn	Fin
	Freopowulf		Friþuwulf ^[A only]	Frithouulf	Fredulf
	Frealaf	Frealof	Frealaf	Frealaf	Frealaf
			Friþuwald ^[A only]	Frithouwald	
	Woden	Uuoden	Woden	Uuoden	Vuothern

Table 1
Finn’s family in genealogies by English and Welsh authors

Here Finn seems to have two different fathers: *God(wulf)* and *Folcwald(a)*. Finn’s father is known by a variant of *Godwulf* in the West Saxon texts, from *ASC* (late ninth century) to *Æthelweard’s Chronicon* (late tenth century). But in the earlier Welsh history, Nennius’s *Historia Brittonum* (c. 820),²³¹ he is *Folcwald*,²³² consistent with *Widsith’s* *Folcwalding* and *Beowulf’s* *Folcwaldan*. Chambers and Tolkien argued that *Folcwalda* was originally an epithet of Godwulf, meaning “people ruler” and describing his kingly role, but it was then erroneously

²²⁹ With the expansionist Danes (assisted by Jutish allies or tributaries like Hengest) threatening the Jutish settlements of the Frisians, perhaps Finn launched a pre-emptive strike at Finnsburh.

²³⁰ Cf. lists in *K14*: 291-292 and Dumville 1976. Texts are arranged earliest to latest, left to right; and ancestor to descendant, top to bottom.

AngCol = Anglian Collection (Lindsey regnal list). The apical figure in *AC*’s Lindsey list is *Godulf Geoting/Geating/Eating* in the MSS: Dumville 1976. The Bernician list of Ida commences with *Godwulf Geating* in *ASC ABC*, s.a. 547. There was much variation in OE between the graphemes <ea> and <eo> (*OEG*: 118-120, 124-126), so it is not clear whether *Geoting/Geating/Eating* is a patronymic, indicating that God(w)ulf was the son of a man named *Geat* or *Geot* (both of which can be ethnonyms); or *Gēat(a)* (the Swedish tribe in *Beowulf*); or, less probably, *Eat*; or, as with *Scyld* and *Scylding*, *Gēot(a)* and *Gēoting* were the ethno-eponyms of the king of the *Gēotan* “Jutes”. See pp. 185-97 below.

HB = *Historia Brittonum* (Kentish list).

ASC = *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Wessex list) There are considerable differences in name-forms in the versions of this list as it appears in the various MSS of *ASC*, s.a. 855. However, these do not affect the argument made above.

Asser = *Asser’s Life of Alfred*.

Æthelweard = *Æthelweard’s Chronicon*.

²³¹ Dumville 1975-76: 82-83.

²³² Dumville notes MS readings in *HB*: <Folepald>, <Folcpald> <Folepald>, <Fodepald>, <Fodebald> and <Fodepald> (1975: 199 (para 30), 321, 331 429, 642, 683). As he observes, <p> is a misreading of <p> (wynn) in an OE text. Equally evidently, <c> has been misread as <e> and <lc> as <d>. The original in the exemplar – an Anglo-Saxon text – must have been *Folcpald*, i.e. *Folcwald*. The scribes in the *HB* tradition responsible for these forms can never have heard the authentic name spoken. See also Shaw 2020: 21.

taken to be his name.²³³ Shaw has suggested that there were originally two people called *Finn*, one with a father called *God(w)ulf*, and another with a father called *Folcwald*; and at some point in the transmission of the text of *Beowulf* someone confused the fathers of the two Finns. *Folcwald*, he argues, was a regular Continental Germanic personal name, but some Anglo-Saxon misunderstood this as an epithet or title “people ruler” and turned it into *Folcwalda*, modelling it on the historical honorific and epithetical title *Bretwalda* (“ruler of Britain”). This, he argues, was the tradition in *Beowulf* and *Widsith*, and the author of *HB* also used it and imported the name *Folcwald* for the father of Finn.²³⁴

The difficulty with Chambers’ and Tolkien’s theory is that they suppose the earliest texts to be the confused ones but it is the later ones that are not; and Shaw’s argument supposes several types of confusion that seem rather more appropriate to literary transmission than oral. However, I suggest that there is an explanation which involves no confusion or error (except on our part), which is that *Folcwald(a)* and *God(w)ulf* were the same person known by two different types of name.

It is not controversial that one of the prominent verse characteristics in *Beowulf* is, as described by Fred C. Robinson, the “appositive style”.²³⁵ Perhaps in imitation of oral extemporisation, the poet slows down and gives us the same (or slightly modified) information in successive phrases or clauses, thus collecting his thoughts before moving on. *Widsith* begins in this way (ll. 5-9), where Ealhild is named and called a *fāle freopuwebbe* “faithful peace-weaver”, and Eormenrīc is named and called both *Hrēðcyning* “king of the Hrēðas or Hrēðgotan”, and a *wrāpe wārloga* “wrathful pledge-breaker”.

If we suppose, as a hypothesis, that individuals and peoples could have more than one name, then it follows that it is also possible that these different names could be imparted sequentially in the appositive style, and I suggest that we may solve the *Folcwald(a)* and *God(w)ulf* issue if we read *Widsith* 26-27 as an example of apposition (and also as an elegant expanded chiasmic parallel):

Ōswine wēold Ēowum ond Ȝtum Gefwulf,
Fin Folcwalding Frēsna cynne.

As we have seen, *Ȝte* and *Frēsna cynn* are different names for the same people, and so their ruler was known both as *Gefwulf* and *Finn*, the son of *Folcwald* or *Folcwalda* (both are consistent with the patronymic *Folcwalding*). It is then not too difficult to see that

²³³ Chambers 1921: 200 and fn. 1; Tolkien 1982: 46.

²³⁴ Shaw 2020: 120-123.

²³⁵ Robinson 1985: esp. 3-5.

Folcwald(a)'s alternative name *God(w)ulf* alliterates with and shares the same deuterotheme as *Gefwulf*, indicating a potential familial relationship. Margaret Gelling noted, "Alliteration is the commonest indicator of family connections".²³⁶ It is a conventional view, but one supported by a mass of evidence from genealogical texts which shows that names of related persons need not alliterate, but they often do. Another feature of naming within kinship groups is that particular name-themes may be shared within and across generations.²³⁷

Thus, I argue, *Widsith* tells us that Finn the son of Folcwald(a) was also called *Gefwulf*; and the tradition in the Anglo-Saxon regnal lists tells us that Folcwald(a) was also called *God(w)ulf*. These I suggest, are alternative names for the same persons and we can see how they form two alliterative trios: *Folcwald(a) – Finn – Frēsan/Frȳsan*; *God(w)ulf – Gefwulf – Gēotan*.

As I shall argue later,²³⁸ the ethnonym "Jutes" could be *Ēotan* in Old English, in which case it would alliterate with vowels and diphthongs. But since it probably derived from Proto-Germanic **Jeutaniz*, etymologically it could also be **Gēotan*, with a palatal initial /g/, a semi-consonant which in Old English verse of the eighth and ninth centuries would alliterate with initial /g/ as a voiced velar stop. I also argue that the familial naming patterns are perpetuated further (see Table 4, p. 155 below), with *Friþulf* the son of Finn, whose name alliterates with *Finn* and shares a deuterotheme with *Gefwulf* and *God(w)ulf*.

I further argue – rather than supposing *Folcwald(a)* to be an epithet turned erroneously into a name – that we regard it as a name in itself, an epithetical type indicative of royal status which could be borne in addition to a birth-name. It would thus resemble *Widsith's Helm* (l. 29), meaning "helmet", "leader", "king"; *Wald* (l. 30) "power, rule", and *Hringweald* (l. 34) "ring power", for a man of power who distributed rings or who had power over rings as treasure.

²³⁶ Gelling 1978: 164.

²³⁷ See *K14*: liii, and references with respect to Germanic naming-traditions. Flom (1917: 9, 12) noted prominent deuterotheme-sharing, together with alliteration: among Germanic royalty of the 1st c. AD, royal Franks of the 5th c., Swedes of the 7th c. (*-lafŕ*), and in the father and son *Hiltibrant* and *Hadubrant* in the *Hildebrandslied* (c. 800); and seemingly generally throughout Germanic speaking cultures. See also Stenton on Anglo-Saxon naming as early as the early 7th c. (1969: 170); and Kitson (2002, 100-01), who noted familial sharing of name-themes with respect to the children of the West Saxon king Æthelwulf, four of whose five children bore the prototheme *Æthel-* (or five if *Ælfred* was in fact a syncopated form of *Æpelfred*). Colman (2014: 105-107) notes the indication of familial relationship by sharing of prototheme and variation of deuterotheme, which preserved the alliteration which she thinks may have been desirable to include the names of kinsmen in verse (though this could not be the case with shared deuterothemes).

²³⁸ See the argument for the historic form of "Jutes", **Gēotan*, at pp. 188-97 (esp. 190-92) below.

Finn – the other name of *Gefwulf* – looks very much like a nickname (cousin to the epithet), though the reason why a Frisian would be named after one of the Finnic or Saami peoples of northern Scandinavia or Karelia is lost in the mists of his narrative tradition.

This analysis, I suggest, also offers a simple solution to the intractable *Gārulf*-problem. The name *Gārulf* can now be seen more clearly as part of the same alliterative and theme-sharing pattern as *Godwulf* and *Gefwulf*, suggesting strongly that *Gārulf* – whether in reality or as an invented character – was related to them. In *FFr* he is the first Frisian to speak and to fight and to die. He also appears to be in command of the Frisian troops, and to be the first to respond to the challenge of the fighter *Sigeferþ*, who is holding one of the doors to the Danes' quarters. This suggests that he was a person of consequence and rank among the Frisians. However, in l. 33 of *FFr*, when we are told that he has fallen, he is said to be the son of someone called *Gūðlāf*. This name has already appeared in *FFr* 16, where *Gūðlāf* and *Ordlāf* are named together; and it also appears in *Beowulf* 1148, where *Gūðlāf* and *Ōslāf* are named together. In both texts this trio are evidently on the Danish side.²³⁹

The most obvious conclusion to draw, I suggest, is that *Gārulf* – like the son or sons of the Frisian-Jutish *Finn* and his Danish wife *Hildeburh*, the sister of *Hnæf* – was the product of a mixed marriage or liaison between a Danish father, *Gūðlāf*, and a Frisian mother of high rank. This would explain his name, his allegiance to *Finn* and his apparently high status. *Garulf* cannot have been *Finn*'s son, but he may have been his nephew by a sister. If so, his relationship and role would resemble those of *Hrōpwulf* in the *Heapobeard* story alluded to in *Widsith* 45-49 and in *Beowulf*, from which we infer that, since *Hrōþgār* was so old, his nephew *Hrōpwulf* must have been the leader of his forces against *Ingeld*'s *Heapobeards* at *Heorot*.²⁴⁰ In *Beowulf*

²³⁹ This is clear even if their ethnicity – Danish or “Jutish” – remains disputed in *Finnsburh* scholarship.
²⁴⁰ *Hrōþgār* was *Hrōpwulf*'s uncle twice, since *Hrōpwulf* was probably the product of an incestuous liaison between *Hrōþgār*'s siblings, his brother *Hālgā* and an unnamed sister. This was the suggestion of Chadwick to Clarke, who argued that the strong theme in Scandinavian sources that *Hrólfr* (= *Hrōþ(w)ulf*) was the product of incest between *Helgi* (= *Hālgā*) and his daughter was derived from the tradition known to the *Beowulf*-poet that *Hālgā* had had an incestuous relationship with his unnamed sister (Clarke 1911: 89). Following the naming of *Hālgā* (*Beowulf* 61) the reading of the MS is continuous but obviously mutilated: <hyrde ic þelan cwen>. Line 62 is partially restored in *K14* as *hýrde ic þæt [... / wæs On]elan cwēn* “I heard that [her name?] was *Onela*'s queen”. Other editors have supplied the name as *Yrse*, based on Scandinavian texts in which *Yrsa* was *Hrólfr*'s mother (see *K14*: 117-18). The mutilated but gapless text suggests the possibility that some scribe in the transmission of the *Beowulf* text omitted a name because of the theme of incest, but subsequent scribes did not notice the excision. However, Chadwick's and Clarke's idea has not received much recent consideration. By a bewildering series of tenuous suppositions, Malone (1959) argued that this woman was named *Yrse* in the text of *Beowulf*, and that this was a Frankish name borne by a woman abducted from Francia by *Hālgā* and married by him (making her *Healfdene*'s daughter-in-law, not his daughter). As a Frankish abductee, she was nicknamed *Wealhþēow*, meaning “Gaulish slave”, but the *Beowulf*-poet mistook this for the name of *Healfdene*'s other (nameless) daughter-in-law, the wife of *Hrōþgār*. In l. 59a the *Beowulf* poet says *Healfdene* had four children, but Malone's argument asks us to accept that he then only named three.

Hildeburh arranges for her son, or sons, to lie beside their uncle, her brother Hnæf, on the same funeral pyre (ll. 1114-17a), symbolising the devastation to her family. It would be thematically fitting if the first casualty in this war – apparently started by Finn – was Gārulf, who would have been especially dear to Finn as his sister’s son.

These arguments, I suggest, indicate the benefits of identifying significant formal relationships between names – *Godwulf*, *Gefwulf*, *Gārulf* and *Gūplāf*; and *Folcwalda*, *Finn* and *Fripulf* – as evidenced by alliteration and theme-sharing, and of placing them in an ethnographic and alliterative context (*Gēotan* and *Frēsan/Frȳsan*), as well as a narrative one (*Beowulf* and *Widsith*) and a genealogical one (the regnal lists). By identifying such patterns, I argue that we can advance from the traditional binary approach – as exemplified by *Gārulf* – which is either mystification (if regarding it as the correctly-transmitted name of a totally unknown person) or speculation (if treating it as the scribally-mangled name of a known person and then attempting to explain the narrative accordingly).

1.3.2 Quid Hinieldus cum Withergyldo?

There is another notable example of multiple-naming in *Beowulf*. Once identified, I argue, this assists us to unravel both a textual crux and the nature of the narrative of which it is a part. This involves a mysterious person called *Wiðergyld*, who is named at l. 2051b: *syððan Wiðergyld læg* “after Wiðergyld lay [dead]”. From the context (see the text quoted at p. 84 below), he seems to have been a *Heapobeard* warrior or captain, but aside from this surmise, nobody knows who was; and he is one of those names in *Beowulf* that Leonard Neidorf thought were so obscure that it was impossible even to discuss them critically.²⁴¹

Wiðergyld is named once only, in the passage at ll. 2020-69a (pp. 83-84 below), in which Bēowulf, now home, reports to Hygelāc that a peace had been brokered by Hrōþgār in his war with a tribe called the *Heapobeardan* (who are named only in *Beowulf* and *Widsith*). In this account Wiðergyld is not the only person to be named once. Hrōþgār’s peace-plan included the betrothal of his daughter Frēawaru (named once at l. 2022a) to the *Heapobeard* prince Ingeld (named once at l. 2064), making him the *glæd sunu Frōdan* “happy son of Frōda” (l. 2025b) – this being the only mention of the name *Frōda*. But these may not have been obscure characters. Ingeld certainly was not; he was the heathen *Hinieldus* about whom Alcuin

²⁴¹ Neidorf 2020a: 665 (quoted in the epigraph at p. 6 above). See Klaeber (1950: 204), describing Wiþergyld as “a great leader”. *K14* calls him “a leader” (*K14*: 232) and “a Heaðo-bard warrior” (*K14*: 473, following Klaeber 1950: 441).

heard monks singing songs at the episcopal court of Unwona of Leicester in the 790s, prompting his scandalised letter containing the rhetorical question *Quid Hinieldus cum Christo?* (“What has Ingeld to do with Christ?”).²⁴² Ingeld is also referred to in *Widsith*, which alludes to his death and the destruction of the Heapobeards by Hrōþgār and his nephew Hrōþwulf (*Hrōþulf* in *Beowulf*) at Heorot (*Widsith* 45-49). Ingeld also features in later Scandinavian versions of the Scylding story in *RDF/Skjöldunga saga* and *GD*. Apart from these barest of bare facts, all that we know about how the tragedy of Ingeld and his men unfolded is what we can gather from Bēowulf’s cryptic account to his uncle. If this was all very clear to Hygelāc and to the audience of *Beowulf*, it is far from so to us. But it is the argument of this section that a new identification for Wiðergyld makes it possible to reconstruct the Heapobeard story in a form which is clearer and more convincing than previous attempts.

Just before the passage quoted below Bēowulf had described to the Geatish court Hrōþgār’s peace-plan involving marriage and Ingeld’s satisfaction with it. This, we understand, must be from his own observation (rather than the talk of others), since, although Ingeld is glad, the other Heapobeard guests at Heorot are visibly not, making Bēowulf less than hopeful about the prospects for amity. He then imagines a scene in which an old man goads a young one to vengeance for his father’s slaying by the Danes, seemingly cast as a prediction about the circumstances which will re-ignite the war between the Heapobeards and the Danes. And it is in this imagined scene that the name *Wiðergyld* is pivotal. Bēowulf says:

Oft – seldan hwær	2029
æfter lēodhryre – lytle hwīle	
bongār būgeð, þēah sēo brȳd duge.	2031
Mæg þæs þonne ofþyncan ðēoden Heaðo-Beardna	
ond þegna gehwām þāra lēoda	2033
þonne hē mid fæmnan on flet gæð,	
dryhtbearn Dena, duguða biwenede.	2035
On him gladiað gomelra lāfe,	
heard ond hringmæl Heaða-Beardna gestrēon,	2037
þenden hīe ðām wæpnum wealdan mōston –	
oð ðæt hīe forlæddan tō ðām lindplegan	2039
swæse gesīðas ond hyra sylfra feorh.	
þonne cwið æt bēore sē ðe bēah gesyhð,	2041
eald æscwiga, sē ðe eall geman,	
gārcwealm gumena – him bið grim sefa –	2043
onginneð geōmormod geongum cempa	
þurh hreðra gehygd higes cunnian,	2045
wīgbealu weccan, ond þæt word ācwyð:	
“Meaht ðū, mīn wine, mēce gecnāwan	2047
þone þīn fæder tō gefeohte bær	
under heregrīman hindeman sīðe,	2049

²⁴² In in his letter to *Speratus* (Unwona) in 797 (Duemmler 1895: 181-184). See also fn. 17 (p. 23 above).

dýre iren, þær hyne Dene slōgon,	
wēoldon wælstōwe, syððan Wiðergyld læg,	2051
æfter hæleþa hryre, hwate Scyldungas?	
Nū hēr þāra banena byre nāhwylces	2053
frætwum hrēmig on flet gæð,	
morðres gylpeð, ond þone mādþum byreð,	2055
þone þe ðū mid rihte rædan sceoldest.”	
Mānað swā ond myndgað mæla gehwylce	2057
sārum wordum, oð ðæt sæl cymeð	
þæt sē fāmnan þegn fore fæder dædum	2059
æfter billes bite blōdfāg swefeð,	
ealdres scyldig; him se oðder þonan	2061
losað lifigende, con him land geare.	
Þonne bioð ābrocene on bā healfē	2063
āðsweord eorla; syððan Ingelde	
weallað wælnīðas, ond him wīflufan	2065
æfter cearwælmum cōlran weorðað.	
þy ic Heaðo-Beardna hyldo ne telge,	2067
dryhtsibbe dæl Denum unfæcne,	
frēondscipe fæstne.	2069

Often – seldom anywhere after a king’s death – the killing-spear is lowered for a little while, even though the bride may be a good one.²⁴³ The king of the Heapobeards might then cause disgust – and to every one of those people – when he walks on the floor with the young woman, fraternising with the child of the warband of the Danes, their veteran warriors. On them [the Danes] gleam things bequeathed by old men, hard and adorned with rings, treasures of the Heapobeards while they were able to wield those weapons – until they took them to destruction at that shield-play, the dear companions – and their own lives.

Then, at the beer-drinking someone who sees the treasure²⁴⁴ speaks. An old ash-spear/ship-warrior, one who remembers everything, all the deaths of men by the spear (there is a cruel spirit in him), begins, dolefully, by the remembrance of spirits [*hreðra*, i.e. “lives”], with respect to a young warrior/champion, to find out what his courage [*hige*] is like, to stir up the evil of war, and says these words: “Might you, my friend,²⁴⁵ recognise that sword, the one your father took to battle under the war-visor on the last occasion, the precious iron weapon, when the Danes, the brave Scyldings, slew him, kept possession of the battlefield after Wiðergyld lay dead, after the fall of heroes? Now, here, the son of I-know-not-who among those killers [*sc.* the Danes], exulting in his treasures, walks on the floor, boasts of murder, and carries that gift/treasure which by rights you should own”. Thus, he goads and reminds him on each occasion with painful words, until the satisfaction/time²⁴⁶ comes when the unmarried

²⁴³ My interpretation of ll. 2029b-31 differs from the approaches discussed and advocated in *K14*: 230. I punctuate the text differently, placing *seldan hwær* in parentheses, since a translation in which the adverbial phrases “often, seldom anywhere” are conjoined makes as little sense in modern English as it does in OE. *Bēowulf* is doubly cynical about such political marriages: as a rule (*oft*), they achieve peace for some little while (i.e. not for long), but seldom even that (*seldan hwær*) when someone as important as a king (*lēod*) has been killed. In the background story, certainly one king (Frōda/Wiðergyld) and possibly more (Healfdene, Hālgar and Heorogār) have been killed. If in *lēodhryre* the word *lēod* means not “king” but “people, nation”, the gnomic sentiment would be the same, but with reference to “the massacre of a people” or “a national calamity”. See further at pp. 349-50 below.

²⁴⁴ *Bēowulf*’s prediction begins here. *Bēah* can mean “ring”, but here, by metonymy, probably means “treasure” (*DOE*, s.v. *bēag*, 1), referring to the trophies being worn by the Danes.

²⁴⁵ *Wine* “friend” was also a word that could be used by someone to refer to his lord or king. See pp. 272-73 and fn. 1085, and pp. 307-08 below.

²⁴⁶ *Sæl* (l. 2058b), without further modification, can mean “the right or an opportune moment” and “happiness”: see *Bosworth-Toller*, s.v. Here, it is possibly a double entendre: the “right, opportune time” being the young *cempa*’s, but the “happiness” being the *æscwiga*’s.

woman's [*fēmnan*, poss. "virgin's"] man, for the sake of his father's great deeds, after the blade's bite, lies dead and bloody, having forfeited his life. The other man gets himself away alive from there; he has a ready knowledge of the land. Now broken on both sides are warriors' oaths: afterwards in Ingeld the lust for slaughter boils, and his love for his wife, after the waves of grief, becomes cooler. Thus, I do not reckon the loyalty of the Heapobards, their great friendship towards the Danish warband, to be without treachery, their friendship fast.

The story of the Heapobards has traditionally been reconstructed from this allusive passage in *Beowulf* and a few lines in *Widsith*, with or without the incorporation of details from analogous (but very different) narratives in later Scandinavian texts, like *RDF/Skjöldunga saga*, *Hrólfs saga kraka* and *GD*.²⁴⁷ In such reconstructions it has been conventionally supposed (although *Beowulf* does not tell us so) that in the war between the Scyldings and the Heapobards Ingeld's father Frōda has killed Hrōþgār's father Healfdene and then himself has been killed by the Danes, possibly by one or other of Hrōþgār's sons. Bēowulf's prediction that the betrothal or marriage will fail in its purpose, and that war will break out again, would seem to be confirmed by the information in *Widsith* that Hrōþwulf (= Hrōþulf) and Hrōþgār will act in partnership to destroy Ingeld and his people at Heorot, and by an allusion in *Beowulf* that suggests Heorot will be destroyed or damaged by fire. *Widsith* says:

Hrōþwulf ond Hrōþgār	heoldon lengest	45
sibbe ætsomne	suhtorfædran,	
sipþan hȳ forwræcon	Wīcinga cynn	47
ond Ingeldes	ord forbigdan,	
forhēowan æt Heorote	Heaðobeardna þrym.	49

Hrōþwulf and Hrōþgār for a very long time maintained peaceful family relations together, this paternal uncle and nephew, after they completely destroyed the race of the Wīc-people [*sc.* the Heapobards] and utterly brought low Ingeld's spearpoint [or "front rank"], cut down at Heorot the might of the Heapobards.

As soon as the *Beowulf*-poet has mentioned the construction of Heorot he alludes to its destruction:

	heaðowylma bād,	82
lāðan liges –	ne wæs hit lenge þā gēn	
þæt sē ecghete	āþumswēoran	84
æfter wælnīðe	wæcnan sceolde.	

²⁴⁷ For older versions see Chambers (1921: 21-22) and the similar account by Klaeber (1950: xxxiv-xxxvi). See also the reconstruction of the background in *K14*: lv, lvi-lvii (though one has to incorporate into this the various comments made in *K14*'s notes *ad loc.* to the passage above).

[The hall] awaited the waves of war, the hostile flame. It was not a longer time from then that, after [or “caused by”] murderous slaughter, the hatred of the sword-edge would awake between father-in-law and son-in-law.²⁴⁸

However, the approach by critics to the interpretation of the egging-scene predictively imagined by *Bēowulf* has been various. It is very closely paralleled by one in the *Gesta Danorum* of Saxo Grammaticus, in which Saxo composes a lengthy, Classically-influenced poem in Latin metres (possibly an expansion of a much pithier vernacular one) in which Starcatherus (= Starkaðr/Størkuðr in Icelandic *fornaldarsögur*), an old retainer of king Frotho (= Frōða) goads prince Ingellus (= Ingeld) to shun the effeminate foreign luxuries of the wedding feast and marital bed, be a man and avenge the killing of his father Frotho by his new wife’s relatives.²⁴⁹ This is the climactic scene in Saxo’s lengthy narrative involving Starcatherus, a remarkable character who is fated to cause the deaths of the lords he wishes to serve loyally (with more than a touch of the psychopathic killer thrown in). Ingellus’s father Frotho (= Frōða) was his most beloved lord, and this drives his goading of Ingellus to exact revenge for Frotho’s death at the hands of Ingellus’s new in-laws (the same scenario as in *Beowulf*). It is also a characteristic of Starcatherus that after each of his crimes he absconds to avoid the consequences. The narrative in Saxo’s account is essentially the same as that epitomised from the lost Icelandic *Skjöldunga saga* by Arngrímur Jónsson.²⁵⁰ Starcatherus also appears as Starkaðr or Størkuðr Stórvirksson in Icelandic *fornaldarsögur*.²⁵¹ He is a figure descended from a grandfather of the same name, surnamed *Áludrengr*, and a father, Stórvirkr/Stórverkr, both of whom were giants. And it is Starkaðr’s fate to be cursed by the gods to commit three great crimes, in each of which he will kill the lord whom he is supposed to serve. The Icelandic and Danish Starkaðr-texts, however, refer to only two crimes. This, I suggest, is because his third was to engineer the death of Ingeld. However, in the Scandinavian narrative traditions in *GD* and *Skjöldunga saga* Ingeld is turned into a Danish Skjöldung king whose vengeance against his bride’s family is successful. He is thus preserved for his role in a

²⁴⁸ One can detect wordplay in *heaðowylmas* (cf. *Heapobeardan*) and in *ecghete* “edge-hate”, since the fighting is occasioned by hatred awoken by the sight of a sword. The inference usually made is that Heorot was destroyed or damaged by fire in the fighting. The syntax and meaning of l. 83b are very difficult (see the discussion in *Kl4*: 120). I take this to mean that the time from Heorot’s completion to its destruction (roughly 12 years: l. 147a) was no longer (i.e. was actually shorter) than the time it took to build it. Since Heorot seems to stand for not much more than 12 years, the common interpretation that its destruction was a long way off in the future is not convincing.

²⁴⁹ *GD* VI.9.1-20; Friis Jensen, Fisher 2015: I, 422-447. It is summarised in *Kl4*: 229.

²⁵⁰ Ch. 10; *ÍF* 35: 21-23.

²⁵¹ See *Skjöldunga saga* (extant only in Arngrímur Jónsson’s 16th-c. Latin epitome), *Ynglinga saga*, *Heiðreks saga ins vitra*, *Gautreks saga*, *Norna-Gests þátr*, and *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserjabana*. His father Stórvirkr/Stórverkr is named among the *jǫtnaheiti* in the Icelandic *pulur*, but Starkaðr is not, indicating that at the time of their compilation he was not regarded as a giant.

part of the story not found in *Beowulf*, in which he kills his half-brother Halfdan (= Healfdene) and in turn is killed by Halfdan's sons, Helgi and Hróarr (= Hālga and Hrōþgār). To accommodate this part of the narrative, the shapers of the Danish Skjöldung story had to absolve the Starkaðr-figure of causing Ingeld's death. This left Starkaðr one enormity short of the required three. However, I suggest that Bēowulf's nameless prediction shows us that Anglo-Saxon tradition had an earlier version of the story in which the figure equivalent to Starkaðr was the inadvertent cause of his lord Ingeld's death. I also argue that the parallelism between *Beowulf* and the Scandinavian Starkaðr texts goes further. As we can see in *Beowulf* ll. 2061-62 above, someone escapes the carnage at Heorot, having a good knowledge of the land. I suggest that this was the *æscwiga*, escaping the disaster he had caused, just as Saxo's Starcatherus would make himself scarce after each of his crimes (it was also his fate to live an abnormally long life, though one full of regret). Thus, if the *æscwiga* was like Starcatherus, he made his way through country he probably got to know in his service with Frōda, campaigning against the Danes as seaborne *wīcingas* (as the Heapobeards are called in *Widsith* 47 and 59).

Despite what seem to be very close parallels, the identifications of the *æscwiga* and the *cempa* as Starkaðr and Ingeld, respectively, have not always found favour with *Beowulf* scholars. Some critics have made them.²⁵² Others have recognised Ingeld though not Starkaðr.²⁵³ Some have seen only a parallel, resemblance or common source.²⁵⁴ There is a marked and recent trend to pass over the relationship, whether ignoring or rejecting it.²⁵⁵ For instance, although the *K14* editors are aware of the parallel with Saxo, they rigorously treat the young *cempa* and the *æscwiga* in ll. 2020-2069a as anonymous.²⁵⁶ They also provide a reconstructed narrative of this episode with which I find it hard to agree, since it suggests a hiatus of twenty years or more between the death of Frōda and the betrothal of Ingeld to Frēawaru, and a Heapobeard expedition to Heorot following the violent result of the imagined

²⁵² Brodeur 1949: 176: "Germanic lays know no nameless heroes"; De Vries 1955: 284 (or the *æscwiga* was Starkaðr's model ("Vorbild")); Turville Petre 1964: 210 (though we cannot know if his name was Starkaðr); Poole 2006: 156.

²⁵³ Davidson and Fisher 1996: 103.

²⁵⁴ Frank 2014: 31, 32; though see Frank 2020: 61-62, where she accepts the identification of Starkaðr; Clunies Ross 2012: 122; Currie 2018: 53-54. See also Currie 2018: 53-54. See also Neidorf (2021b: 22-24) who argues that a common tradition (possibly a Starkaðr story) might have been behind both *Beowulf* and the *Gesta Danorum*, but the *Beowulf*-poet's sense of decorum led him to suppress the less pleasant elements (crudity, violence to women, xenophobia, treachery to those close to him) which Saxo liked in Starcatherus and preserved. See also Neidorf 2022: 9.

²⁵⁵ Chambers (1921: 21-22) regarded these figures as anonymous. Also Klaeber (1950: xxxiv-xxxvi) and more recent authorities: Orchard 2003: 240-242, 244, fn. 21; *K14*: lv, 229-230, 232 (notes to ll. 2041, 2044f); Currie 2018: 43-57; Leneghan 2020: 99, fn. 226.

²⁵⁶ See *K14*: lv, 229-230 (summary of *GD*); 232 (notes to ll. 2041, 2044f).

egging scene (involving unidentified and unidentifiable people) at the Heapobeard court.²⁵⁷ However, I argue both that the identifications of the *cempa* and the *æscwiga* as Ingeld and an Anglo-Saxon reflex of the Starkaðr-character are quite as obvious as they might seem to the untutored reader, and, furthermore, that the key to this interpretation is the identification of the mysterious *Wiðergyld* in l. 2051b.

It has been suggested that *Wiðergyld*'s name is a “nonce-formation” – that is, a made-up name for a non-existent person;²⁵⁸ that he was an otherwise unknown “leader” of the Heapobeards after whose death the Scylding-Heapobeard war ended;²⁵⁹ and that he was just some part of Ingeld's narrative tradition.²⁶⁰ As we have seen, Neidorf thought him too insubstantial even to discuss.²⁶¹ However, Hall, Mead and Schücking long ago argued that in the context of the narrative in *Beowulf* ll. 2021-64 *Wiðergyld* should be understood to be the father of the *geong cempa*.²⁶² This does seem a very natural way to read the passage, since *þīn fæder* (l. 2048a) is the most obvious antecedent of *hyne* in *þær hyne Dene slōgon* “when the Danes slew him” (l. 2050b). The next piece of text (ll. 2051-52a, *wēoldon wælstōwe / syððan Wiðergyld læg, // æfter hæleþa hryre*) appears to be coordinated, because it is the Danes who “controlled the place of slaughter, after *Wiðergyld* lay dead, after the fall of heroes” – that is, they won. This narrative information, I suggest, is given in the *Beowulf*-poet's characteristic “effect-before-cause” or back-to-front style. It tells us first that the *cempa*'s father's sword was taken; then it tells us that the Danes were victorious; finally it tells us that the Heapobeards and *Wiðergyld* were dead. Since no vengeance had been taken for the *cempa*'s father, this also tells us that the war had ended with a Danish victory and no Heapobeard reprisals. In these circumstances, it would be strange indeed if the war had continued after the slaying of king *Frōda* but stopped only after the fall of some more obscure or lesser character, *Wiðergyld*. On the other hand, it would make a great deal more sense if we read the passage under discussion as interpreted by Hall, Mead and Shücking and draw the following conclusions: *Wiðergyld* was the father of the *cempa*, who in *GD* and *RDF/Skjöldunga saga* was the Ingeld-character; thus *Wiðergyld* was another name for Ingeld's father, elsewhere called *Frōda*. He was killed by the

²⁵⁷ *Kl4*: lv-lvi and fns – closely following Klaeber (1950: xxxvi). I see no warrant from the texts to suppose such a gap in time (whether or not the *cempa* is identified as Ingeld). It is also somewhat implausible that in these twenty years Ingeld was growing up among the kingless (?) Heapobeards, and *Hrōþgār* betrothed his daughter to Ingeld only because he had reached an age at which (unless forestalled by a marriage) he might take revenge for his father's death. For all we know, the death of *Frōda* was very recent.

²⁵⁸ Orchard 2003: 243.

²⁵⁹ *Kl4*: 232.

²⁶⁰ Shaw 2020: 86-89.

²⁶¹ Neidorf 2020a: 665.

²⁶² Hall 1910, Mead 1917 and Schücking 1920: 470.

Danes, the son of one of whom would, at some time in the future, flash the sword despoiled from his corpse, to the chagrin of Wiðergyld's son, goaded by the *æscwiga* (= Starkaðr) to vindicate his father's glorious memory (*fore fæder dædum*, l. 2059b).

We have already seen that literary characters can have more than one name. Godwulf was also known by the epithetical name *Folcwald(a)*, and his son Gefwulf by the epithetical name or nickname *Finn*. Both shared the familial deutertheme *-wulf*. Here I argue that the man with the birth-name *Wiðergyld* also had the epithetical name *Frōda* – from Old English *frōd* “wise” – hence “the wise man”; and he shared a familial deutertheme *-gylde* with his son Ingeld (*gylde* and *geld* were side-forms of the same noun, *DOE*'s *gylde*). If confirmation of Wiðergyld's existence were required, it can be found in *Widsith* (l. 124), where he is *Wibergield*, a member of the court of Eormenrīc, and very much alive.²⁶³

Thus, the explanation of *Wiðergyld* and *Frōda* as an example of multiple naming is key to our understanding of the egging-scene envisaged by Bēowulf (that is, that it was wholly accurate), and thus to a holistic comprehension of the story of the Heapobeards underlying it. The poet cast it as a prophecy which, by its nature, could not contain names because the events had not yet happened. But the audience would have understood that Bēowulf – as a sharp-eyed observer and a cynical political realist – got it exactly right. He was talking about Ingeld.

In reconstructing the Ingeld story, I suggest that we may also make a further identification. The person whom the *æscwiga* sees going about, flashing Wiðergyld/*Frōda*'s sword and boasting of slaying (or “of the slaying”) is *þāra banena / byre nāthwylc* “I-know-not-what son of those killers” (l. 2053b). He is not named, but it is his provocation which seems pivotal. Any person who possessed the sword of a slain king must have been someone of rank and consequence. Swords are almost always a matter for remark in *Beowulf* and are seldom just weapons. They carry the symbolic associations of those who have previously owned, used, lost, taken, given and received them. Thus, either this *byre* had fought *Frōda* himself and looted it from his corpse, or he had received it from the Danish king as a gift conferring great honour, or he had inherited it from a kinsman who was the one who had taken it as a trophy or been given it as a royal gift. It seems to have been a custom for a fighter to present to his king the trophies he has taken. Wēohstān gave the arms he took from *Ēanmund*'s corpse to his lord, the Swedish king Onela (*Ēanmund*'s usurping uncle), who granted them back to him; and Wēohstān bequeathed them to his son Wīglāf (ll. 2610-2624). The Wylfing Eofor similarly looted the Swedish king Ongenþēow's body and presented the trophies his lord Hygelāc, who

²⁶³ See p. 241 and fn. 940 below.

then gave Eofor (and his brother Wulf) *ofermāðmas* (“super-gifts”) as a reward (ll. 2985-98).²⁶⁴ So, the most obvious candidate for the owner of this sword – who was both pre-eminent in rank among the Danes and known for his fighting capacity against Heapobeards (as *Widsith* tells us) – is Hrōþulf the son of Hālga and nephew of Hrōþgār. This sword is described at l. 2055b as a *māðpum* – not only a “treasure” but a “gift” (in *Beowulf* this word almost always refers to the gift of a king or an item in his *hord*).²⁶⁵ It may be a further instance of the preservation (in later Scandinavian literature) of information from the narrative tradition of *Beowulf* that in Eddaic poetry Helgi – cognate with Hālga – killed king *Hqðbroddr*, which many scholars accept to be a name related to the ethnonym *Heapobearda*.²⁶⁶ In accordance with the concept of the ethno-eponym, I identify *Hqðbroddr* as a close match to **Heapobeard(a)*, a putative ethno-eponym for the king of the *Heapobeardan*. Although the hero of the Helgi poems in the *Edda* is said to be a son of Sigmundr the Volsung, his status as the slayer of *Hqðbroddr* suggests that his name and this notable exploit have been detached from an earlier tradition of Helgi the Skjöldung, that is, of Hālga the father of Hrōþulf, who may in English tradition have been the killer of **Heapobearda*, that is, of Frōða. We are inevitably in speculative territory, but in the story known to the *Beowulf*-poet and his audience, the killer of Frōða/Wiðergyld may have been Hālga, who bequeathed his victim’s sword as a *māðpum* to his *byre* – a bequest which, as the *æscwiga* noted (rubbing salt in the wound) should have gone to Ingeld. And if Ingeld rose to this bait, then the person who killed Frōða or inherited his sword, we may deduce, was Hrōþulf.

1.4 Epithetical Names

In the discussions above I have identified a distinct type of name of an epithetical kind. There are several of these in *Widsith* and *Beowulf*:

*Bēow*²⁶⁷ “barley”, hence associations of fertility, abundance and wellbeing, or ale and the fellowship of the beer-hall?

²⁶⁴ Similarly, The young Bēow performed his duty of bringing wealth to his aged father Scyld for distribution to Scyld’s fighters in the event of war (ll. 20-24).

²⁶⁵ My own survey of the use of the word *māþmas* in *Beowulf* indicates that all the things called *māþmas* in the poem are either treasures accumulated by a king, to be given as to an inferior as a gift or to another king as an act of diplomacy. The word is not used of gifts from a social inferior to his superior, or for booty, testamentary bequests, land, or for valuables in general (except in the context of a gift).

²⁶⁶ See pp. 44-45 above and p. 230 (and fns. 900, 902) and 286-89 (and fn. 1154) below.

²⁶⁷ *Beowulf* 18, 53. Editorially restored from <beowulf> in both places in the MS. It is generally supposed that the first *Beowulf*-scribe expanded <beop> or perhaps <beap> in the exemplar, mistaking this for an abbreviation of the name *Bēowulf*. The restored name is taken from the West Saxon regnal list, although it is spelled *Beaw* in MSS ABC and Asser’s *Life of Alfred*, and as *Beowi* in MS D. See pp. 25 and 60

<i>Breca/Breoca</i> ²⁶⁸	“breaker”, e.g. of rings, treasure-distributor, hence “king”.
<i>Brond</i> ²⁶⁹	“sword”. Aka <i>Breca/Breoca</i> (?)
<i>Folcwald(a)</i>	“people-ruler, army-commander”. Aka <i>God(w)ulf</i> .
<i>Frōða</i> ²⁷⁰	“the wise one”. Aka <i>Wiðergyld</i> .
<i>gomela</i> ²⁷¹	“the old one”.
<i>Hagena</i> ²⁷²	“the man from the royal fortification” (OE <i>haga</i>).
<i>Hālga</i> ²⁷³	“the <i>hālig</i> one, one blessed with good luck (OE <i>hǣl</i>)”. Aka <i>Heregār</i> (?)

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- above. Shaw has argued for the derivation from OE *bēaw* “gadfly” (2020: 63). The origin of this name is a matter too complex to be resolved here, except to say that, in the context of the opening of *Beowulf*, “Barley” would be a good name for a figure who brought peace and plenty, deity or not.
- 268 *Breca* (*Beowulf* 506, 531, 583), *Breoca* (*Widsith* 25). See DOE, s.v. *brecan*, the senses of which suggest a *nomen agentis* with various apt meanings “breaker”, “taker-by-storm”, “rusher-forward”, “sailor”, perhaps also “breaking wave” (see Chambers 1912: 110-11). See *Kl4* : 465 (with references); Malone 1962: 133-34; and Björkman 1919. The name well exemplifies the multiple semantic possibilities a name might have for myth-makers and storytellers, such as the person who invented the tale about Breca as a king or prince who was famous swimmer (whether this was the *Beowulf*-poet or someone before him).
- 269 The *Brondingas* are named in *Beowulf* 521 and *Widsith* 25. In *Beowulf*, *Breca* is named at ll. 506, 531, and 583; he is the son of *Bēanstān* (l. 524); and his homeland is the *lond Brondinga* (l. 521). In *Widsith* 25 *Breoca* is said to rule the *Brondingas*. For the argument that *Breca/Breoca* is potentially a hypocorism of the ethno-eponym *Brond/Brand*, see fn. 188 (pp. 68-69) above.
- 270 *Beowulf* 2025. The Old Norse cognate name *Frōði* was given to several Danish kings in Old Norse poetry, sagas and genealogical texts.
- 271 See *Beowulf* 2931a. The MS reading *gomela* is compatible with a nominative, identifying Ongenþēow as “the old one” (the *Kl4* editors parse it differently and emend to *gomelan*). Cf. l. 2105, *gomela Scilding*, referring to Hrōþgār; and l. 2487, *gomela Scylfing*, referring to Ongenþēow. Neither of these has the determiner *sē*, suggesting that *gomela* – comparable to *Frōða* – was an epithetical honorific “old man”, meaning “king” – as (in modern English) “the old man” can mean “captain”, “husband” or “father”.
- 272 *Widsith* 21. Probably from *haga*, a hedge or barrier and also the fortified enclosure within one (see DOE, s.v. *haga*¹), the equivalent of a *burh* and hence a seat of royalty: *hag + en + a*, or *hag + ena*. (For *-en* as a suffix meaning “leader”, see p. 277 and fns. 1104, 1105 below).
- 273 See *Beowulf* 61, where he is called *Hālga til* “Hālga the good, the capable”. However, see Hrōþgār’s uniquely modest (for *Beowulf*) remembrance of when he was newly crowned and sheltered Bēowulf’s father Ecgbēow (ll. 467b-69):

“[...] ðā wæs Heregār dēad,
mȳn yldra mæg unlifigende,
bearn Healfdenes; sē wæs betere ðonne ic!”

“[...] then Heregār was dead, my older kinsman no longer living, Healfdene’s child. He was better than I!”

Heregār is always regarded as a variant of or scribal error for the name *Heorogār* (l. 61), *Hiorogār* (l. 2158), who was one of Hrōþgār’s brothers (e.g. Sisam 1953b: 37, fn. 1 (an error); *Kl4*: 469, glossary of proper names, s.n. *Heorogār* (a variant)). However, in *Beowulf* the variant-forms of particular names are orthographical, not phonemic, and *here* is a different word from *heoro*. One suspects that *Heregār* was the birth-name of the epithetical *Hālga*, and thus that the *Gār-Dene* of l. 1 were the fraternal trio with shared deutertheme *-gār*, *Heorogār*, *Heregār* (= *Hālga*) and *Hrōþgār*.

<i>Helm</i> ²⁷⁴	“helmet”, hence the wearer of a helmet and king. Aka <i>Wulf</i> (?)
<i>Hnæf</i> ²⁷⁵	“cutter, slicer”. Aka <i>Hūnlāf</i> (?)
<i>Hōc</i> ²⁷⁶	“hook”, “hang”, “hank”, “swift”? Aka <i>Hnæf</i> (?)
<i>Holen</i> ²⁷⁷	“concealed one”, from the visor of a helmet?
<i>Hringweald</i> ²⁷⁸	“ring, treasure” and “power, rule”, “ring-giver, “treasure-owner”.
<i>Scyld</i> ²⁷⁹	“shield”, hence “protectiveness”.
<i>Wald</i> ²⁸⁰	“power, rule”.

There has been a tendency to regard such epithetical names with transparent etymologies as “role names” and their bearers as imaginary or ideal creations.²⁸¹ However, this is not necessarily the case. For instance, the appellative *scyld* “shield” may be regarded as betokening the role of shield-bearer in war or in a protective sense as king. But although it seems generic, it applies to one famous individual, Scyld Scēfing, whose exploits were noteworthy. Likewise

²⁷⁴ *Helm* ruled the *Wulfingas* (*Widsith* 29). *Helmingas*: the people of *Wealhþēow* (*Beowulf* 620). *Wulf*: a prince or king of an unnamed people allied to the Gēats (*Beowulf* 2965, 2993). It has long been suggested that as an *ides Helminga*, *Wealhþēow* was also of the *Wylfingas* (see *Kl4*: liv and fn. 2, with references; also Shaw 2020: 90). If the *Helmingas* and *Wylfingas/Wulfingas* were the same people, it is thus possible that their king would be known by the ethno-eponyms *Helm* and *Wulf*, and that he was the same person as *Heaþolāf*, a person of the *Wulfingas* killed by *Bēowulf*’s father *Ecgbēow* (*Beowulf* 459-61a), this being his birth-name. As *Wealhþēow* was a *þēodnes dohtor* “king’s daughter” (*Beowulf* 2174), she may have been the daughter of *Heaþolāf* aka *Wulf* and *Helm*.

²⁷⁵ *Beowulf* 1069, 1114; *FFr* 40; *Widsith* 29. This is also arguably a “head-and-tail” hypocoristic shortening derived from *Hūnlāf*. See my “One Bride for Six Brothers? ‘Unresolved Issues’ and Names and Naming in the *Finnsburh* Story” (forthcoming). For further discussion, see also p. 174 and fn. 671, and p. 333 and fn. 1311, below.

²⁷⁶ *Beowulf* 1976 (father of *Hildeburh*). Also a name of *Hnæf*, according to my interpretation of MS <no> in *FFr* 39a (see pp. 57-59 above). The derivation of this name is interesting, since in its OE form it may come from Gmc **hōk-* “hook”, or from **hanx-*, in which case a number of intriguing possibilities arise from etymons such as “hang” and reflexes like “hank”, or near-obsolete Gmc cognates of Lithuanian *šankùs* “quick” (see *ANew*: 226, s.v. *hestr*).

²⁷⁷ *Widsith* 33. See Malone 1962: 173. *Holen* would be the expected OE form of PrGmc **hulanaz*, the past participle of **helanq* “to hide”. This is possibly a reference to kings wearing helmets of the Swedish Vendel or Anglo-Saxon Sutton-Hoo type, with a visor over the eyes, and in some cases a curtain of chainmail hanging beneath. This interpretation is preferable to mystical explanations about invisible god-kings (Hill 2009: 112) or vegetation deities (from *holegn* “holly”). *Holen* was king of the *Wrosnan*, whom Malone argues to have been the inhabitants of the Danish island of Vresen, previously *Wrysn* (1962: 212). *Wrysn* would be phonologically consistent with development from PrN **Wrusin*, which would have been cognate with OE **Wrosen*, suggesting a nominative plural **Wrosnas*. If the ethnonym was real, it is more likely that their king, *Holen*, was too (at least as an individual known in literature).

²⁷⁸ *Widsith* 34.

²⁷⁹ *Beowulf* 4, 19, 26. Also an ethno-eponym.

²⁸⁰ *Widsith* 30. Rejected as a likely name for a real person by Malone 1957: 1.

²⁸¹ See, e.g. Hill 2009: *Widsith* 111 (*Helm*), 112 (*Holen*), 1134 (*Hringweald*), 127 (*Wald*).

with *Frōda*, “the wise one”, a general-seeming name but one applied only to the king of the Heapobeards in English texts.

1.5 Hypocorism in Old English

I called him ‘Wolf’ and he called me ‘Wini’. We were on *du* terms.

Winifred Wagner²⁸²

1.5.1 Introduction

In principle, I suggest, it is an important part of textual analysis to be able to identify instances of multiple-naming of the same individual. And one of the types of name that an individual can have is a “hypocorism”.²⁸³ Almost every modern English speaker will know that a Robert can be called *Rob* or *Bobby* and an Elizabeth *Bess* or *Lizzie* (even though such hypocorisms can also be given as birth-names). In the epigraph above, *Wini* is transparently a hypocorism of the forename of Winifred Wagner; *Wolf* is perhaps less transparent, but it is derivable from the forename of the person Winifred meant – Adolf Hitler.²⁸⁴

Hypocorism has been a phenomenon in Indo-European naming cultures since ancient times.²⁸⁵ The tradition was retained in the naming systems of Germanic-speaking peoples, including the Anglo-Saxons. Many of their early royal ancestors rejoiced in strange names like *Yffi*, *Oesa*, *Bofa*, *Pybba*, *Creoda*, *Cnebba*, *Ocga*, *Bubba*, *Tyttla*, *Bassa*, *Eni*, *Wehha*, and so on.²⁸⁶ These are “monothematic” (that is, they consist of one element as a stem) as opposed to “dithematic” (“two-element”). Many also seem to have a form typical of Anglo-Saxon male hypocoristic names, with their geminated (double) consonants and the weak masculine ending *-a* – like *Pybba* and *Bubba* above. But where did such names come from, and what did they mean (if anything)?

The Swedish scholar Mats Redin’s 1919 thesis on Anglo-Saxon “uncompounded” – i.e. monothematic – names (which includes hypocorisms) is still the largest collection and study of this subject. The frequency of references to this in recent and current work is evidence of his

²⁸² James 1977.

²⁸³ From Greek *ὑποκόρισμα*, “a name produced by treating someone like a boy”. See *OED1*, s.v. *hypocorism*.

²⁸⁴ From *Athulf* or *Adulf*. See Förstemann (1900: 151-58), *ath-* (of uncertain meaning) + *(w)ulf*.

²⁸⁵ E.g. in Greece, *Kleommas* from *Kleomenes*: see *LGPN* <<https://www.lgpn.ox.ac.uk/formation-names>> [retrieved 20.5.24]. Dithematic names are also an Indo-European legacy, being found in Celtic, Slavic, Old Persian, Ancient Greek and Old Indian (van Loon 2021: 28).

²⁸⁶ All from the Anglo-Saxon regnal lists of the Anglian Collection (*AngCol*), in Dumville 1976.

continuing influence, not only as the largest corpus yet assembled but also with regard to its underlying ideology and its methodology, which are still detectable in studies of Anglo-Saxon naming. In summary, this has resulted in an approach according to which a monothematic name: (a) is derived by a simple transformative process from a dithematic name, like *Beonna* and female *Beonnu* and *Beonne* from male *Beorn* or from a name for either sex with the element *beorn*;²⁸⁷ (b) is a meaningless “lall-name”, like *Bubba*, that is, imitative of baby-sounds;²⁸⁸ or (c) is a derivation from an appellative, whether noun or adjective, like *Babba*.²⁸⁹

It would be a mischaracterisation of Redin’s work, and of those who have followed him, to say that he was (or they were) unaware of hypocorism as a process which might involve transformations of a describable kind. In a brief section on “hypocorism”, Redin adopted the characterisation of hypocoristic names (“in the proper sense”) by Adolf Noreen:²⁹⁰

By a hypocoristic name we understand every transformation of an object’s normal name which aims to give it a more affectionate, intimate, heartwarming or playful character. Such names characterise their objects, so to speak, from the point of view of the nursery, family life, and circle of friends.

But although hypocoristic names in this sense were numerous in Old English (according to Redin), it is clear from his study as a whole that his treatment of this aspect of hypocorism was secondary to the business of seeking out etymologies for monothematic names, whether in Germanic or Celtic (with a high rate of failure). The result, I argue, was that his account of Anglo-Saxon hypocoristic transformations was incomplete, unsystematic and inconsistent.²⁹¹ He also thought that the cases of transformation from a “full” to a “shortened” name were very few in Old English,²⁹² a prejudice which, I suggest, has remained potent in onomastics.

²⁸⁷ Redin 1919: 4, 61 (*Beonna*); 41 (*Beonnu*), 115 (*Beonne*). *PASE* records female *Beornthryth*.

²⁸⁸ As used by the Swedish onomastic pioneers Mats Redin, Eilert Ekwall and Olaf von Feilitzen. See Redin 1919: xxi. “Lall” was supposed to represent an adult imitation of baby-talk, as in English “lull”, “lullaby” etc. See also Colman 2014: 126-29. Lall-names might have derivations from a longer name, or they may have no apparent derivation, or may be taken from a so-called “lall-word”. Examples (according to this concept) of lall-names in OE would be meaningless *Ab(b)a* or *An(n)a*, and *Bab(b)a* supposed to be from a lall-word such as *babbe* “tumour” or the like (Colman 2014: 126, 128-29).

²⁸⁹ See Redin 1919: xxxiii, noting West Flemish *babbe* “tumour”, Swedish dialect *babba* “an insect” and *babbe* “little boy, child”, denoting things that were “rounded, lumpy, clumsy, or truncated in some way”. For *Babba*, see *PASE*, which records 7 males of this name from the 8th and 9th centuries.

²⁹⁰ My translation, based on Redin’s. Redin discusses hypocorism (1919: xxviii-xxx), and (at 1919 xxviii-xxix) he quotes from Noreen (1903-23: v, 390), who said:

Med hypokoristiskt namn förstås nämligen hvarje sådan ombildning av ett föremåls normala namn, som afser att åt detsamma ge en förtroligare, intimare, hjärtligare eller lekfullare prägel. Dylika namn känneteckna sina föremål så att säga från barnkammarens, familjelivets och vänskretsens synpunkt.

²⁹¹ See, for example, Redin (1919: xxx-xxxvii), on consonant gemination, a proto-version of the current approach; and also *ibid.*: 88 (and fns) and the discussions of *Ceatta* and *Ceobba*, showing its limitations in practice.

²⁹² Redin 1919: 177. See also Searle (1897: xix-xxi), who identifies only the simplest types of hypocorism as “diminished forms of dithematic names”.

One perceives that Redin's preference for etymological derivations of names is reflected in Frank Stenton's scepticism about any systematic explanation of "short" (i.e. monothematic or hypocoristic forms) as derived from other name-forms, recommending instead an *ad hoc* basis.²⁹³

It is difficult to bring any of these short forms under any express rule of general validity. All that can be attempted here is to indicate the lines on which the shortening of compound names normally proceeded, without prejudging the large number of eccentric short names which will certainly be brought to light in the advance of place-name study.

The influence of Redin's methodology can also be seen in Okasha's study (2016) of Anglo-Saxon female names and Colman's (2014) approach to Anglo-Saxon monothematic names, including hypocorism, which shares several of Redin's assumptions.²⁹⁴ Kitson more or less denied the existence of derivation of monothematic names from dithematic originals except in the most transparent cases.²⁹⁵

From consulting other onomastic studies, such as the derivations in Kaufmann's addenda (1968) to Förstemann's monumental collection (1900), and Shaw's study of the names in *Beowulf* (2020), it becomes plain, I suggest, that hypocorism has not been considered as a single systematic phenomenon and has not been dealt with as such.²⁹⁶

A slightly more extensive treatment of Germanic monothematic names, on a formal basis, can be found in the recent study by Van Loon (2021) of medieval northwest European names.²⁹⁷ Although he is as perplexed as everyone else by some of the names of early kings in the Anglo-Saxon regnal lists,²⁹⁸ he places monothematic (including hypocoristic) names in categories:

- (1) "kale" ("bare"): consisting of a single name-theme of a recorded type (for instance, *Wig* from the Mercian list).

²⁹³ Stenton 1969: 170.

²⁹⁴ Colman 2014: 135-146, 253-257.

²⁹⁵ Kitson 2002: 120-22.

²⁹⁶ See also Mees 2023: 113, for one example in which a 1st- or 2nd-c. AD Batavian (i.e. lower Rhine) poulterer in Roman north Britain was called *Chnisso*, and this is interpreted as "stinky", from PrGmc **hnissa*- "smell". Perhaps more likely is a hypocorism from a name beginning **Hn*- and the well-recorded hypocoristic suffix *-is(s)a* (though "stinky" or "sniffy" may have been the humorous result of the hypocorism, considering the bearer was a poulterer). Cf. the English moneyers called *Clip* (*PASE*)!

²⁹⁷ The section on "niet-tweestammige namen" ("non-dithematic names") occupies nearly half the study (pp. 241-360), though most of this is devoted to suffixes. Kitson called these types "extended monothematic names", consisting of "just one meaningful element with a suffix" (2002: 96).

²⁹⁸ Van Loon (2021: 248): "De meeste namen in deze bronnen zijn hapaxen en etymologisch vaak ondoorzichtig" ("Most of the names in these [narrative, non-contemporary] sources are *hapax legomena* and often etymologically opaque").

- (2) Etymologically opaque (especially early) names, treated as *hapax legomena* and therefore potentially as appellatives (as with the Mercian king *Penda* and many others in the Anglo-Saxon regnal lists).
- (3) By-names, which may be appellatives (*Hengest* and *Horsa*, both meaning “horse”).
- (4) Mythical theonyms (like *Wōden*).
- (5) Mythical/legendary eponymous progenitors (Ostrogothic *Amal*).
- (6) Names with weak endings derived from single name-themes, with mutations of the stem (*Betto* from *Bert-* (= Old English *beorht* “bright”) in *Bertramnus*).
- (7) Names with weak endings derived from contraction involving both themes of a dithematic name (as with *Tammo* from *Tancmarus*).
- (8) Names (as in 6 and 7) but with suffixal endings of various kinds.
- (9) “Head-and-tail” contracted forms.²⁹⁹

However, although Van Loon is more accommodating than most onomastic scholars in deriving hypocoristic types from one or both themes of dithematic originals,³⁰⁰ the early names – particularly those in the Anglo-Saxon regnal lists and legendary texts – he finds mysterious, culturally as well as semantically.³⁰¹

From the sixth century onwards, the monothematic names gave way to dithematic. The transition, which can be traced most clearly in the genealogies of the Old English royal houses, is a strange break in style that raises questions about the relationship between the short and the classic dithematic names. It is strange that deities and deified ancestors are conceived with simple, short names, while historical figures of flesh and blood appear in the family trees with majestic, aloof dithematic names. The change in style in the royal genealogies coincides approximately with the end of the great migrations and with the definitive settlement of Angles and Saxons in the newly conquered territories.

It can be seen from his study that his model is not that far from Redin’s. Monothematic names are divided between the explicable and the inexplicable in terms of etymology. The

²⁹⁹ See pp. 112-23 below.

³⁰⁰ See Van Loon 2021: 250-61. I note that the treatment of monothematic names in *DLV* by Insley and Rollason (in Rollason and Rollason 2007) also gives more latitude than is customary in onomastic studies to “generative” explanations of monothematic names as derivations from dithematic ones (though in cases of difficulty they fall back on the Redin’s methodology).

³⁰¹ Van Loon 2021: 250:

De enkelstammige namen ruimen vanaf de zesde eeuw baan voor tweestammige. De overgang, die het duidelijkst te volgen is in de genealogieën van de Oudengelse koningshuizen [...], is een vreemde stijlbreuk die vragen doet rijzen over de verhouding van de korte tot de klassieke tweestammige namen. Vreemd is dat opperwezens en vergoddelijkte voorouders bedacht worden met simple, korte namen, terwijl historische figuren van vlees en bloed in de stamreeksen verschijnen met majestueuze, afstandelijke tweestammige namen. De stijlbreuk in de koningsgenealogieën valt ongeveer samen met het einde van de grote volksverhuizingen en met de definitieve vestiging van Angelen en Saksen in de pas veroverde gebieden.

inexplicable are further divided between the more obvious cases of hypocoristic derivation from other name-forms and those which are formally and etymologically baffling. The categories listed above mix together formal, semantic and cultural aspects of naming. Van Loon's study is also mainly concerned with the names of northwest-Europe up to the twelfth century, among which Anglo-Saxon names play only a minor part.

Thus, swimming against a long and strong current of scholarly onomastic method, it is perhaps bold to suggest that the *ad hoc* and limited approach to hypocorism in Germanic languages, including Old English, has been in error. Yet, although the material is to hand,³⁰² hypocorism in Old English, I suggest, has not yet received a study which treats it as a *primarily* linguistic and generative phenomenon. Colman considers what she termed the hypocoristic “re-write rules”, proposed by Barley (1974), but is dismissive of them.³⁰³ However, Barley scarcely suggested any, and even if he had intended to, his article cannot be taken as a principled statement of what they might be.³⁰⁴ Such references as one finds to the morphology or phonology of hypocorism remain at an unsystematic level and remain influenced by Scandinavian “lall”-theory and the Redinian etymological method.³⁰⁵ Anyone who compares this tradition with the earlier one represented by Franz Stark's *Kosenamen der Germanen* (“Hypocorisms of the Germans”) published in 1868, will see that, with Redin and his tradition, there was a departure from an approach that was systematic, and primarily linguistic and transformational rather than etymological.

There is insufficient space in this study for a full development of an idea that could fill a book in itself. However, one of the central concerns of this study of *Widsith* and the names which it contains is not to study them purely as individual phenomena which are to be subjected to etymological analysis, but to identify their origins and their relationships with other names, and to consider their typologies within a range of different names, of which hypocorisms were only one type.

³⁰² In *PASE*, supplemented by the copious collection (including examples in place-names) in Briggs 2024.

³⁰³ Colman 2014:138-139. One notes Redin's criticism of Brandl that his “re-write” etymologies evinced a “desire to explain – a tout prix – all uncompound names as the result of a mutilation process, i.e. as secondary formation” (Redin 1919: 98). The pejorative “mutilation” indicates Redin's attitude.

³⁰⁴ He gives a list of only six hypocoristic forms with their dithematic originals (Barley 1974: 12). His “Odda for Aethelwine” immediately strikes one as incorrect (as Colman noted). It is more likely to come from a name in *Ord-*. With respect to a “large number of monosyllabic [monothematic? I. S.] uncompound names”, Barley referred to Redin 1919 (Barley 1974: 12 and fn. 16), which suggests that he did not distance himself from Redin's methodology either.

³⁰⁵ See, e.g. Reaney and Wilson (1997: xxxvi-xxxvii), who make reference to Stenton 1969: 169-173. Stenton's discussion of short-form names is interesting, for the reason that he highlights some of the more obvious “re-write” rules relevant to hypocorism, stressing form rather than meaning. He is also refreshingly sceptical about the “lall-theory” of hypocorism.

I therefore suggest the outline (and it can only be an outline) of an alternative approach to hypocorism which places much greater emphasis on it as a rule-based system of generative and transformational processes applied to dithematic names, which were primarily morphological and phonological and only secondarily semantic. That is to say, most hypocoristic names were not formed to mean anything, any more than *Robbie*, transformed from *Robert*, has any meaning other than “this is a familiar way to address someone called Robert”. As we shall see, a small number of hypocorisms may have been formed so as to resemble appellatives. But I suggest that this was wordplay as a by-product of the linguistic processes of hypocoristic transformation, and thus to be distinguished from the formation of familiar names from appellatives, which were nicknames or epithets rather than hypocorisms.

While etymological analysis is still a necessary component of the study of names here, I intend to go beyond the common dichotomy drawn between “meaningless” everyday Anglo-Saxon names like *Wulfstān*, “Wolf Stone”, and potentially meaningful literary ones (in a “Cinderella”-sense) like “Bee Wolf”.³⁰⁶ Names, I suggest, should also be examined with respect to their functions. I will thus ask whether a name was purely personal, or was it related to an ancestor, dynasty or people, perhaps in the form of an ethno-eponym? Was it part of a pattern which indicates the relationships between people, whether familial or ethnic? Was it a birth-name, or a name acquired in later life, such as a nickname, by-name or epithet? Was the nickname, by-name or epithet personal to that individual, or one borne by others of his rank or ethnicity? And was one individual known by more than one name, or several individuals by the same name?

The foregoing section and the present one, I suggest, offer a wider scope than has existed hitherto for the identification of characters and for understanding their roles and connections within narratives and genealogical traditions (which themselves may be narrative in nature). Notable examples of these investigated below, relating to *Offa* (aka *Gārmund*), *Hnæf* (aka *Hūnlāf* and *Hōc*) and *Meaca* and perhaps *Mearchealf* (aka *Ēadgils*), who appear in *Widsith*, *Beowulf* and *FFr*.

1.5.2 “Generative” Hypocorism: A Proposal

Here, I suggest, a comparison is relevant with the dithematic naming-system which still exists in modern Iceland. The study of Icelandic personal names by Kendra Willson (2007) is not –

³⁰⁶ Referring to the non-syntagmatic name *Wulfstān* and the ongoing debate about the meaning of the name *Bēowulf*. See pp. 25-26 above.

as far as I am aware – much referred to in studies of early Germanic naming. But this is a treasure trove of examples in which people – albeit in modern times – have turned dithematic birth-names into hypocoristic forms, which are included within the Icelandic term *gælunöfn* “nicknames”. Her study also includes extensive discussion of the phonological processes of hypocoristic name-formation. If the linguistic processes applied to early Germanic birth-names were a tenth as inventive as they are in modern Icelandic (and there is no reason in principle why they should not be), then this would itself be a reason to revise the study of Anglo-Saxon hypocorism.

Therefore, I set out below the *basic* typological categories of hypocoristic names, according to formal principles which I shall apply to names elsewhere in this study. Given the restrictions on space, there is no opportunity to cite or discuss all the possible permutations in the Anglo-Saxon onomasticon, and the following account should be taken as stating a series of hypotheses (and yet more types may be identifiable).

- (1) The *Beorn*-type: formed by the isolation of a single name-theme (whether prototheme or deutheme) without further modification.³⁰⁷ See *Wulf Lēofwines sunu* in the entry for 1010 in *ASC* MS D, who is called *Wulfrīc Lēofwines sunu* in the C and E MSS.³⁰⁸ See also *Bercht* (*DLV*)³⁰⁹ and *Uini* (*DLV*),³¹⁰ *Wine* (*PASE* ×37).
- (2) The *Cūpa*-type: the isolation of a prototheme with the addition of a weak grammatical ending or hypocoristic suffix (masculine /-a/ or feminine /-e/) without

³⁰⁷ Willson says that *Guðbjörn* could be known simply as *Björn*, *Guðbergur* as *Bergur* and *Arnljótur* as *Ljótur*, and notes that these monothematic names formed from unmodified themes typically use the deutheme (2007: 203-205). *Leifr* would be a good Viking Age example. It should also be stated, however, that dithematic names were not obligatory, and monothematic names – including hypocorisms – may have been given as birth-names. The use of monothematic names as birth-names seems to have been widespread in medieval Scandinavia, as with *Ulfr*, *Steinn*, *Qrn* etc.

³⁰⁸ The main MSS of *ASC* in OE (five of the nine extant MSS and one fragment) are:

A: Cambridge, Corpus Christi College (CCCC) MS 173 (fols 1-32) “the Parker Chronicle”;
B: London, British Library, Cotton MS Tiberius A VI (quires 1-4), and MS Cotton Tiberius A III (fol. 178);
C: London, British Library, Cotton MS Tiberius B I (quires 15-22);
D: London, British Library, Cotton MS Tiberius B IV;
E: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc 636; and
H: London, British Library, Cotton MS Domitian IX (a single leaf).

³⁰⁹ Also *Berct*. Rollason and Rollason 2007: II, 169, *s.n.* *Beorht*.

³¹⁰ Stevenson 1841: 43. Rollason and Rollason (2007: II, 186) have an entry for *Wine* but cite only the form *Uynna*, which they acknowledge to be a possible hypocorism of a name in *Wynn*- (see *ibid.*: II, 186-87, *s.n.* *Wynna*).

further alteration.³¹¹ Gelling noted Anglo-Saxon names which appeared to be “short forms of compound names”, citing the West Saxon king *Cūþa*, also named *Cūþwine* in *ASC*.³¹²

- (3) The *Cudda*-type: derived from the prototheme (here *cūþ/cūð*) in which the final consonant, the dental fricative /þ~ð/, is geminated and turned into a voiced dental stop.³¹³
- (4) The *Ælle*-type: male names with hypocoristic stems and an apparently morphologically strong ending /-i/ or /-e/. This ending may be suffixal in origin,³¹⁴ deriving from West Germanic *-in or *-īn, as evidenced in some conservative Old English name-forms in *-en*.³¹⁵ The three men called *Ælle* in *PASE* were kings, and the two sixth-century kings are recorded in early texts with the spelling *Ælli*.³¹⁶ Derivation from names in *Ælf-* or *Æl-* have been suggested.³¹⁷ *Cōifi*, the name of

³¹¹ There may have been variants of this and other types with the ending /-i/, as there are many examples of male names with the endings /-i/ and its allomorph /-e/. See Eckhardt 1903: 336, *Bruni*; 337, *Achi*, *Tochi*; 340, *Hiddi*, etc. Many more are recorded by Redin 1919: 118-37. Eckhardt (1903: 332) treats them as *i-* or *ja-* stems. But this is uncertain. They may contain a relic of the Gmc suffixes *-in-, *-īn; or the Gmc attribution-suffix *-ijaz, *-ijō (see Fairfax (2015: 166) citing the hypocoristic variants *S(e)axi* and *Seaxa*).
³¹² Called *Cūþa* (son of Ceawlin) in *ASC* MS B, s.a. 568, 584, 597, and *Cūþwine* in *ASC* MS B s.a. 688, and in the West Saxon regnal list in *AngCol* (Dumville 1976: 34).
³¹³ *PASE* has two 7th-c. examples of *Cudda*. Geminated /þþ/ existed in OE (*OEG*: 21), but this is never found in OE hypocoristic names (Redin 1919: xxxvi, fn. 2). It is paralleled by *Cudd* (*PASE*) and *Cuddi* (*DLV*), which is included s.n. *Cudda* in Rollason and Rollason 2007: II, 172-73, where Insley suggests *Cyd(d)a* as a side-form of *Cyd(d)i*.
³¹⁴ See Eckhardt (1903: 346-47), who suggested that the Gmc suffix *-īn in unstressed positions became *-in*, also *-en* in OE. He instanced only one name, however – *Immin* (*PASE*, a 7th-c. Mercian *dux* in *HE*, III.24), compared to a Deiran warrior *Imma* (*HE*, IV.22). But both are hypocorisms derived from the Northumbrian theme *irmin* (= *eormen*). Since final /n/ was lost after /ī/ in all OE dialects (Ekwall 1930-1931: 3-20), names with the suffix /-in/ or /-īn/ would tend to end in /-i/ and later /-e/. Colman (2014: 142) follows the views of Forssner and von Feilitzen that *-īn* was of Continental origin and a rare, late phenomenon in English naming. Colman addresses Redin’s view that names in /-i/ and /-e/ were Scandinavian (Colman 2014: 142 (referring to Redin 1919: 118), and 253). However she does not address Redin’s fuller analysis of the many names in /-i/ and /-e/, many of which are early and Anglo-Saxon (a number in *DLV*), or his agreement with scholars (like Stark 1868: 52-56, 99) who identified this ending as Common Gmc and suffixal in origin (1919: 118-20). Redin also identified the correspondence between names with these endings and monothematic forms that I have identified as hypocoristic stems (1919: 120 – e.g. *Dudd*, *Dudda* and *Dudde*).
³¹⁵ Stenton identifies the OE suffix *-en* in several place-names (1969: 171-172 and fns. 3-5): *Cymen* (a 5th-c. king of Sussex), **Cūðen* (in a 10th-c. charter, *Cūþenes dun* > *Cuddesdon* (Oxon)) and **Eden* (recorded post-1066 *Edenestou*, re-analysed as *Edwinstow* (Northants)). Also see **Ingen* in *Ingeneshamme*, a historical spelling of *Ingelsham* in Wiltshire (Watts 2004: 331, s.n.).
³¹⁶ See also *Ælli* in *DLV*. See Rollason and Rollason 2007: II, 166-67: *Ælli* is a strong side form of *Ælla* which has been suggested to be a hypocorism of names in *Ælf-*.
³¹⁷ See Colman 2014: 138-39; Ekwall favoured from *Ælf-* (1917: 40); Redin from *Æl-* or *Ælf-* (1919: 59); Müller from *Æl-*, itself derived from *Æpel-* (1901: 45). All are possible, I think; with even more possibilities if /Æ-/ was a hypocoristic “default” vocalisation which could be derived from names in e.g. *Ealh-/Alh-*, *Al(u)- Eald-/Ald-* or *Ēad-*, and if *-lla/-lle* was suffixal. Colman refers to an *Alla episcopus* (S394) who was also identified as *Ælfwine* (aka *Ælle*), a bishop of Lichfield (2014: 139, with references).

the chief priest in Bede's story of the conversion of the Northumbrians, would be a famous example.³¹⁸ See also the pair *Cuddi* and *Cudda* (*DLV*).³¹⁹

- (5) The *Pingu*-type: a strong female hypocoristic form, with an inflection or suffix /-u/ added to a theme, derived from the Old English reflexes of a feminine *ō-*, short syllable *i-*, *ū-* or *īn*-stem.³²⁰
- (6) The *Lāfa*-type: the isolation of a deutertheme with the addition of a weak grammatical ending or hypocoristic suffix (masculine /-a/ or feminine /-e/). See Redin, *Lafe* and *Lafa*,³²¹ which are likely to be derived from deuterthemes, since in Old English *-lāf* was only ever a deutertheme. This type is productive in modern Icelandic naming.³²²
- (7) The *Ossa*-type:³²³ formed from a prototheme (*Ōs-*) with shortening of the stem-vowel (/ō/ > /o/ and gemination of its terminal consonant (/s/ > /ss/) and addition of a weak ending or suffix (/a/ or /e/).
- (8) The *Totta*-type:³²⁴ in names such as *Torhthelm* and *Torhtmund*.³²⁵ Preserving initial consonant and vocalisation (/To-/) from the prototheme, with syncope of *Torht* to

³¹⁸ *HE*, II.13; Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 182-87. *Coefi* in Alcuin's York poem and *Cefi* in the OE version of *HE*. Also possibly in *Ceefti* (*DLV*, Rollason and Rollason 2007: II, 171-72). See Barrow (2011: 698-99) who calls its origin "obscure" and refers to the derivation by Richard North from Latin *cofia*, *cofium* "hood, coif" (North 1997: 333). More likely is from *cōfa* "inner room", which in *cōfgodas* (a gloss for *penates* "household gods": *DOE*, s.v.) may refer to a domestic shrine. OE *cōfa* is from Gmc **kūbōn* "hut, shed, room" (Orel 2003: 222). Hence *cōf* + *in/īn* > *Cēfi* (= *Cōifi*) "shrine man".

³¹⁹ See Rollason and Rollason 2007: II, 172-73. See also (18) the *Cudda*-type at p. 100 above.

³²⁰ See pp. 260-69 below for the discussion of the name of Offa's wife, potentially, as *Prȳpu*.

³²¹ Redin 1919: 51, 123.

³²² See Willson (2007: 8, 51, 52, 97, 107, 109), who gives examples of modern Icelandic hypocorisms produced from deuterthemes:

Þorvarðr, Sigvarður etc	>	Varði
Guðmundur	>	Mummi
Ólafur	>	Lalli
Ingimar	>	Marri
Sigurbjörg	>	Bogga
Halldór	>	Donni
Guðrún	>	Rúna

³²³ E.g. from *Ōswū*, king of Northumbria (r. 642-70). He had two sons, Ecgrif and Aldrif, who were called *mac Ossa* ("sons of Ossa") in an Irish text *The Martyrology of Oengus* (Stokes 1905: 136-37, 182-83). In this text Aldrif was mistakenly called *Oswald*. But he was known in Irish as *Flann Fina mac Ossa*, which meant "Ruddy fair one, the son of Ossa".

³²⁴ *PASE* gives two men called *Totta*: a 7th-c. bishop in a spurious charter (S67), and an 8th-c. bishop in a dubious one (S55). However, *Tota* 1 (Bishop of Selsey, 781×786-786×789) is spelled *Totta episcopus* in charter S143 (of Offa, 761×764) but *Tota* in two other texts cited in *PASE*. He is likely to be *PASE*'s *Totta* 2 in the dubious S55. But *Totta* of S143 may well be *PASE*'s *Torhthelm* 2, Bishop of Leicester (737-64), and if so this is the only non-inferential evidence that *Totta* came from *Torhthelm*. See also Redin 1919: 70-71, whose doubt that *Tota* and *Totta* were the same name seems unfounded.

³²⁵ Both *PASE*.

Tot, or from assimilation of final consonant clusters in the prototheme (/rht/ > /t/); with consonant gemination (/t/ > /tt/); and with the addition of a weak grammatical ending or hypocoristic suffix (/a/~/e/). A typical example of a so-called “lall”-name.

- (9) The *Babba*-type: from a name such as *Badaheard* (*PASE*). Formed by the creation of a hypocoristic stem from the first open syllable (/Ba-/),³²⁶ with reduplication and gemination of the initial consonant (/b/ > /bb/), with the weak ending /a/.³²⁷ If the *Tate/Bebbe*-type (see pp. 106-07 below) is correctly identified, however, it is also possible that a name like *Babba* may derive from any name beginning with /B-/ , with the selection of /a/ as a “default” hypocoristic stem-vowel.
- (10) The *Nunna*-type: from *Nōþhelm*.³²⁸ Formed by the creation of a hypocoristic stem from the first open syllable (*Nō-*) with mutation (lowering and shortening) of the stem vowel (/ō/ > /ū/ > /u/), reduplication and gemination of the initial consonant (/n/ > /nn/), and addition of weak grammatical ending or hypocoristic suffix (/a/).³²⁹
- (11) The *Lull*-type: resembling other (weak) hypocoristic types, but grammatically strong, as with *Lull* (*PASE* ×5), cf. *Lulla* (*PASE* ×18).³³⁰ Possibly a reduplicative form derived from *Lūf-* or (with monophthongisation, shortening and lowering) from *Lēof-* or *Lēod-*. Cf. (16) below: *Dudd* (*PASE* ×3) and *Dudda* (*PASE* ×27). Also see *Nun* (*ASC*, s.a. 710), a West Saxon, probably from *Nōþ-*, hence a strong variant of *Nunna* (see (10) above).
- (12) The *Lūfa*-type: Colman regards *Lufa* (*PASE* ×6, *Lufu* ×2) as a derivation from the noun *lufu* “love” or the adjective *lēof* “dear”, by the addition of suffixal /a/.³³¹ However, the transformation /ēo > /u/ does not receive a principled explanation. I suggest that a preferable derivation is the creation of a hypocoristic stem (without consonantal gemination) *Lūf-* from the theme *lēof* by monophthongisation (with or

³²⁶ *PASE* also records the name *Beaduheard* with the characteristic OE form *beadu* (with back-mutation) from Gmc **baþu-* “battle”. *Babba* may therefore be a *Nunna*-type, with mutation from *Bead-* to *Badd-*.

³²⁷ See Briggs (2024: 46), recording numerous instances of *Babba* and related names (*Babel* and *Babbel*), including ungeminated *Baba* and *Babe*.

³²⁸ See Redin 1919: 68. In *PASE* he is *Nothhelm* 1, a late 7th-, early 8th-c. king of the South Saxons. See e.g. charter S45, which gives his name as both *Nothelmus* and *Nunna* (he grants land to his sister *Nothgid*, i.e. *Nōþgȳþ*).

³²⁹ This type would account for the name *Bubba* (*PASE* ×2, including a king of Lindsey), as derived from a name with the prototheme *Bōt-* or even *Beorht-*.

³³⁰ *PASE* has other names based on the stem *Lull-*: *Lullede*, *Lulling*, *Lullric*, *Lulluc*, *Lullus*.

³³¹ Colman 2014: 248-249, 252-253. Cf. *Luffa*, *Luffe* (Briggs 2024: 198), prob. *Nunna*-types from *lēof*.

without vowel shortening): /ēo/ > /ū/ or /ǔ/.³³² To this is added the weak masculine ending /-a/, giving *Lūfa*; or the strong feminine /-u/, giving *Lūfu* (a *Pingu*-type).³³³

- (13) The *Tubba*-type: from **Tūnbeorht*.³³⁴ Formed by the creation of a hypocoristic stem from the first open syllable (*Tū-*), with shortening of the stem-vowel (/ū/ > /u/), and the first consonant of the deuterotherme, which is geminated (/b/ > /bb/), and addition of weak grammatical ending or hypocoristic suffix (/ -a/).³³⁵

A well-known example would be the seventh-century king of Essex in *HE* called *Saberctus* (= *Sæberht*), who, in a piece of imagined dialogue by his kinsmen, is referred to by them as *Saba*.³³⁶ If the ungeminated of this hypocorism is phonologically authentic (and not a representation of *Sabba*), then consonant-gemination in this type may be optional.

- (14) The *Becca*-type:³³⁷ formed from the initial consonant of the prototheme, followed by a weak-inflection suffixal element (e.g. *-ecca* < **-icca* < Germanic **-ikkō*).³³⁸ The hypocoristic stem-vowel in such cases may be randomly generated as a default vocalisation, such as /-a-/ or /-e-/. Alternatively, it may be the product of

³³² For the same transformation see the discussion of the themes *lēod* and *pēod* below at pp. 108-09, 110-11.
³³³ See Briggs 2024: 192, who treats the hypocoristic variants *Lēofa*, *Lufa* and *Lēofe* together, as the origins of a number of place-names.

³³⁴ *PASE* has *Tunberht* and hypocoristic *Tunbi*, evidently derived from some name in *Tūn* + *b-*. *PASE* also records a Warwickshire *Tubbe* and a Buckinghamshire *Tubbi* (*DB*), who are likely to be English rather than Scandinavian on account of their location. However, **Tubba* has been inferred from the English place-name *Tubney* (Stenton 1969: 173 and fn. 3). Also see Briggs 2024: 273, *s.n.* *Tubba*. In reality, the *Tancmarus* > *Tammo* type (see (7) on p. 96 above) is so well recorded that *Tūnbeorht*/*Tūnbeald* > *Tubba* is extremely likely.

³³⁵ See *DLV Echba* (Stevenson 1841: 10), which is likely to be from *Ecgeberht* (Stark 1868: 122). Stark noted this type (1868: 103-30), including Anglo-Saxon names (*ibid.*: 121-24). It was also noted by Redin: “[W]here the final consonant of the first member has undergone assimilation with the initial consonant of the second member” – though he thought that this type was “but rarely met with in OE, and it is questionable whether that type was productive in historical Old English times” (1919: xxix; also stated at xxxiv). See also Colman 2014: 138, 144 (who quotes Redin’s observations); Woolf 1939: 20 and fns. 6-8; and Van Loon 2021: 259. Whether or not Redin was right (one suspects wrong), most of the names in this study were probably coined before the historical period in England, and not in England. However Rollason and Rollason 2007 read this name as *Eccha* (2007: II, 175) = Northumbrian **Ehha*, possibly from a name with the theme *eoh* or *eh* “horse” (WS and Anglian respectively).

³³⁶ *HE*, II.5; Colgrave and Mynors 1968: 152-153. In this obvious case, *Saba* was noted by Redin as a derivative from a dithematic name (1919: xxix, 69). He also suggested that *Sebbi* (a 7th-c. king of Essex) was another potential derivative (*ibid.*: 128), i.e. from a name in *Sæb-*. Bede names *Sebbi* (*HE*, IV.11; Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 364-69), whose sons were *Sighardus* and *Suefredus* (*ibid.*: 368). However, *Sebbi* may have derived from the prototheme *Swēb-*, as represented by <Suef-> in his son’s name (by assimilation of /sw-/ to /s-/). WGmc /b/ (pronounced [b] or [β]) could be spelled <bb> or <f> in OE (see Hogg and Fulk 2011: I, 29-30).

³³⁷ A name from *Widsith* 19, 115. See discussion at pp. 242-44 below, and esp. fn. 951 (p. 243).

³³⁸ This suffix is possibly compounded from *-ic/-ec* and *-ca*. Or it derives from Gmc **-ikijō*.

assimilation with the vowel of the suffix.³³⁹ It is also possible that *Be-* represents a form derived from an initial open syllable,³⁴⁰ or from an initial consonant cluster.³⁴¹

I further argue that each of these basic types had a number of variants, depending on which of the transformations operated. Most of these would seem to have been optional. And, of course, hypocoristic names were not created step-wise in a series of alterations, but instantly and instinctively according to established patterns which speakers had internalised.

Stem-vowel mutations seem to occur as part of the process of hypocorism without any other apparent phonological trigger,³⁴² but others may be triggered by the mutations caused by low or high vowels in any second syllable, whether a grammatical ending or a suffix (that is, back-mutation or *i*-mutation). The apparently weak grammatical endings, masculine /-a/ and feminine /-e/ are very common, but some monothematic names are morphologically strong.³⁴³

There is also a wide range of suffixes which can be used, and these may occur as simplexes or compounds, and themselves may carry a grammatically weak ending.³⁴⁴

As a general proposition, I suggest, each of the transformational processes identified was optional, and thus may or may not take place in any particular name. Thus there can be several different and valid derivations for each hypocoristic name; and each dithematic name could spawn a variety of hypocorisms. As a comparator we can note the numerous hypocoristic forms which Willson derives from the common modern Icelandic male name *Guðmundur*: *Gvendur*

³³⁹ An alternative explanation for the vocalisation in *Sebbi* (see fn. 336 above). See examples such as *PASE Snocca I* (7th c.), cf. *Snot*, *Snotormann* and *Snotta* (all *PASE*), and *Snoc* (Briggs 2024: 250). *Snocca*, I suggest, is very likely to be derived from a name with the prototheme *snotor* “wise” or the apocopic form *snot-*. Scandinavian *Snorri* may be a head-and-tail derivation from *snotr*. Forms like *Cissa* (*PASE* ×2) may derive from *Cyn* + *ssa* or from *Cēol-/Cīol* + *ssa*. Alternatively, as *Tubba*-types from names like *Cynesige* or *Cēolsige* (both *PASE*). Likewise *Mocca*, *Muca*, *Mucel* (all *PASE*) and *Mucca*, (*DLV*, Rollason and Rollason 2007: II, 180, *Mucca*) and *Mucela* (Briggs 2024: 209) from names in *Mōd-*; or with preservation of initial /M-/ with suffixal /-ucca/~/-occa/ (possibly compounded from /-uc/~/-oc/ and /-ca/). See also *Tucca* and *Tuce* (*PASE*), possibly from names in *Pur-*, which may be Anglo-Saxon versions comparable to ON *Tǫki/Tūki* from names in *Þór-/Þūr-* or *Þórkæ(ti)ll* (Peterson 2007: 221). Also *Ucca* (*DLV*) from a name in *Uht-* or *Eoh-*? (Rollason and Rollason 2007: II, 185: unexplained), and *Plucca* (*DLV*) from *Plēg-*? Rollason and Rollason (2007: II, 182) accept it is not Celtic but suggest an unlikely relation with *pluccian* “to pluck, tear”. But also see *ibid.*: II, 143, identifying the name-element *pleo* (not found outside *DLV*, possibly a variant of *plēg-*). Therefore *Plucca* may show /eo/ > /u/ as in *Dudda* from *þēod* or *lēod* or *Luff(a)* from *lēof* (see pp. 102-03 above and 108-09, 110-11 below).

³⁴⁰ See the argument for *Becca* as an ethno-eponymous derivation from the ethnonym *Bāningas* (his people in *Widsith*), at pp. 242-44 below.

³⁴¹ See the argument for *Breca/Breoca* as an ethno-eponymous derivation from the ethnonym *Brōdingas* (his people in *Beowulf* and *Widsith*), at pp. 68-69 and fn. 188 above.

³⁴² See the discussion of *Hemma* at p. 279 below.

³⁴³ Colman 2014: 248-249, 252-253.

³⁴⁴ Non-exhaustively, I have identified the OE suffixes: *-en*, *-in*; *-(e)lin*; *-el*, *-il*; *-eli*, *-ele*, *-ela*, *-ula*, *-ol(a)*; *-is(s)i*, *-is(s)a*, *-esa*, *-usa*; *-(i)si*, *-(e)si*; *-er*, *-ere*, *-ra*; *-ic(a)*, *-oc(a)* and *-uc(a)*; *-l(i)c(a)*, *-l(o)c(a)*, *-l(u)c(a)*; *-ing*, *-ung*, *-(e)ling*; *-ot*; *-ed(e)*. See also Eckhardt 1903 for OE suffixes.

(older *Gvöndur*), *Gummi*, *Gimsi/Gymmsi*, *Mummi*, *Mundi*, *Gúndi*, *Gundur*, *Gúndur*, *Gúnder*, *Gumbur*, *Gendi*, *Dundi*, *Dendi*, *Bummi*, *Bubbur* and *Muggur*.³⁴⁵

Willson also provides evidence of even more exotic hypocoristic transformations. *Málfríður* (a female name) could be hypocorised to *Malla* and *Friðá*, but also – less expectedly – to *Dadda* (as could *Svanhildur*).³⁴⁶ One suspects that substitution of initial /d-/ for /m-/ is a hypocoristic process (comparable to English *Dand* for *Andrew* or *Dob* for *Robert*), and this results in the more usual formation of replication of the first open syllable, with consonant gemination. Alternatively, stem-terminal /-ð-/ and /-d-/ have been selected for hypocorisation, to produce a stem *Da-*. The reason for the selection of the vowel /a/ for the hypocoristic stem is unknown. But perhaps /a/ was the default, or because it was the same sound as the weak feminine ending /-a/. Other similar examples are:³⁴⁷

Jón	>	Nonni
Þórgunnur	>	Hógga
Þorsteinn	>	Hotti
Guðmundur	>	Bummi (alongside Gummi and Gymmsi/Gimsi);
Steingrímur	>	Denni
Steinunn	>	Denna
Gugga	>	Dudda (Gugga from Guðlaug or Guðríður?)
Sigríður	>	Didda
Sigrún	>	Diddú

See also:³⁴⁸

Ragnheiður	>	Nanna
Svanhildur	>	Nana
Gísli	>	Diddi
Sigfríður Margrét	>	Dísý
Guðrún	>	Gunna/Dunna,
Ragna	>	Agga
Kristján	>	Ninni
Einar	>	Nenni

These latter examples of *gælnöfn* seem to exhibit hypocoristic development from single vowels, closed syllables, and perhaps even single consonants, either in the prototheme or deutherotheme. This does not take into consideration a further set of hypocorisms not derived from the elements of personal names, which seem to be legion. To cite but one obvious case: *barn* “child” > *Baddi* and *Bassi* (< *barn* + *si*?).³⁴⁹

³⁴⁵ Willson 2007: 79, 120, 185, 202-03, 205-06, 226-27.

³⁴⁶ Willson 2007: ix (*Dadda*) and 62, fn. 99 (*Svanhildur*).

³⁴⁷ See Willson 2007: 51, 52, 53, 58, 78, 79, 88, 104, 106, 107.

³⁴⁸ Willson 2007: 54, fns 77, 78; 61, 107, 227.

³⁴⁹ Willson 2007: 70.

There are many others which are entirely specific to individuals and their circumstances, inspired in many cases by the imaginative linguistic ingenuity of the people who gave them their names. If this were replicated in Old English, even the suggestions made in this study might seem hopelessly limited and simplistic. Perhaps they are. One notes in the Icelandic examples a phenomenon of consonant-substitution (or selection) which involves the substitution of initial consonants by /b-/, /n-/, /d-/ and /h-/. This is comparable to a historical phenomenon in English hypocorism in which *Robert* could become *Bob*, *Nob*, *Dob* and *Hob*.

There are two possible examples of this more radical method of hypocorisation in Anglo-Saxon England. In Bede an *Aedilbergae* is mentioned, *quae alio nomine Tatae vocabatur* “who was called *Tate* by another name”.³⁵⁰ Okasha discounts the possibility of the derivation of *Tate* from *Æpelburg*, positing instead a nickname derived from an unrecorded adjective **tāt* (“beloved”), or this element in a dithematic name like *Tātswīþ*.³⁵¹ Although in this study I am open to the concept of literary characters having more than one name, the names are of different types. It might be thought most unusual for the same individual to be known by two different non-syntagmatic dithematic names, identical in this respect to birth-names.³⁵² However, it is also possible that this is an example of a *Málfríður* > *Dadda* type, with the selection of the medial /p/ of *Æpelburg* as the basis of the hypocoristic stem as *Ta-* (with the replacement of the dental fricative /p/ with a stop /t/), which was then reduplicated as *Tāt-* with the addition of weak feminine /-e/. It would thus formally resemble *Tetty* as a hypocorism for *Elizabeth*.

Another possible example of this type is *Bebbe*, one of the names of the wife of *Æpelfrīþ* of Bernicia (later of all Northumbria), who ruled c. 592-616. In *HE* Bede names a *regina quondam uocabulo Bebbā* as the queen after whom *Bebbanburh* (Bamburgh) was named, and in the next paragraph names *Acha* (= *Āhe* or *Āhhe*) as a sister of *Ēduini* of Northumbria. Their father was *Ælla*, king of Deira.³⁵³ In the *Historia Brittonum* it is said that *Æpelfrīþ* gave his wife *Bebba* *Din Guoaroy*, which was then named *Bebbanburh* (Bamburgh)

³⁵⁰ *HE*, II.9; Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 162. The spellings <Aedilbergae> (an ablative) and <Tatae> (a nominative) do not correspond to Latin grammar and are likely to be an archaic Northumbrian spellings with <ae> for later short /e/ (the weak feminine singular).

³⁵¹ Okasha 2016: 87-88. **Tāt* would be cognate with ON *teitr* “merry” and OHG *zeiz* “loving, pleasant”. In OE it is recorded only in names.

³⁵² Thus to be distinguished from, say, *Aldfrīþ* of Northumbria who was also called *Flann Fīna* (“Ruddy fair one”) in Irish, a dithematic but probably descriptive and epithetical name. See fn. 323 (p. 101) above.

³⁵³ Bede, *HE*, III.6; Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 230.

after her.³⁵⁴ Colgrave and Mynors regard Bebbe as Æþelfriþ's first wife and Acha as his second.³⁵⁵ But Bede does not say this and neither does the author of *HB*.

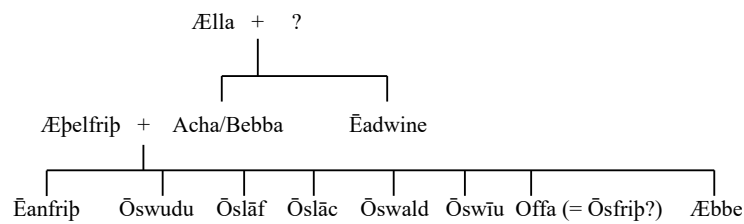


Fig. 1
Naming in the family of Æþelfriþ

As we see in Fig. 1 above, Æþelfriþ had five sons who had the same prototheme *Ōs*-. But his eldest son was called *Ēanfriþ*, and his only daughter was called *Æbbe*, a hypocoristic form. It is therefore possible that behind the hypocorisms *Ælla*, *Acha* and *Æbbe* were names beginning with *Ēad*- (like *Ēadwine* – spelled *Æduini* and *Eduini* in *HE*) or *Ēan*- (like *Ēanfriþ*). A female name such as *Ēadburh* or *Ēanburh* could thus be hypocorised to *Ache* (= *Āhe* or *Āhhe*) as an *Offa*-type or head-and-tail type (see pp. 112 ff below), or to *Æbbe* as a *Tubba*-type, or to *Bebbe* similarly to a *Tate*-type. *Acha* and *Bebba* therefore – despite their lack of a resemblance – may have been names for the same woman.

We can therefore add a further hypocoristic type (though somewhat more tentatively):

- (15) The *Tate/Bebbe*-type: the hypocoristic stem is formed from a consonant within the dithematic name with a following vocalisation derived from the stem of the prototheme, or a default vocalisation in /a/ or /e/. The initial consonant of the hypocoristic stem was reduplicated and optionally geminated (as in a *Nunna*-type), and a weak ending or suffix, /-e/, was added.

So-called “lall”-types, like *Bab(b)a*, may fall under this heading, in which consonant-gemination is optional.³⁵⁶ Types like these were also noted by Noreen in modern Swedish female names, though he thought that they were not governed by any transformational rule.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁴ *HB*, ch. 61 (Harleian recension); Dumville 1975: 245-47.

³⁵⁵ See Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 231, fn. 3, where it is inaccurately stated that Bebbe was “said by Nennius to have been the first wife of King Æthelfrith”. Nennius mentions only *Bebba* and does not say that there was more than one wife.

³⁵⁶ See the examples in Colman 2014: 126-29 (though I do not accept the “lall” theory as a whole).

³⁵⁷ See Noreen (1903-23: v, 400) with respect to Swedish names “completely unbound by formulatable rules” (“Alldeles obundna af några som helst formulerbara regler”): *Dida* from *Fredrika*, *Nana* from *Ottoliana*, *Nanna* from *Johanna* and *Ottoliana*, *Nina* from *Karolina*, *Ninny*, *~i* from *Katarina* and *Karolina*, and *Sissy* from *Elisa*. These exhibit consonant- or open syllable-selection with reduplication.

We can also consider further types. Van Loon notes the name of the thirteenth-century Flemish burgher recorded as *Euerardus Raddo* and *Everardus cognomento Rado*.³⁵⁸ Van Loon did not recognise that *Rad(d)o* – although said to be a cognomen – was likely to be a hypocorism of dithematic *Everard* (Germanic **ebur-* “boar” and **hard-* “hard”), formed – unusually – from the last letter of the prototheme *Ever-* and the initial sequence of the aphetic deutheme *(h)ard* (> *-rard*) which was then assimilated (/rd-/ > /dd-/) with a grammatically weak ending /-o/. We see this process more clearly in the names of the sons of the German emperor Otto I, who Van Loon notes were called *Liudulf* and *Liudgard*, hypocorised to *Dūdo*, *Lūdo* and *Dūdicha*. Also, *Liutoldus* (a bishop of Augsburg) was known as *Dūdo*,³⁵⁹ apparently derived from a voiced version of the final consonant /t/, as in *Liud*, or even from that in the deutheme *-old*.

Here we can see the *Rad(d)o*-type in action, in which names with the prototheme *Liud-* were hypocorised by the selection of terminal /d/ of the prototheme for the initial of the hypocoristic stem, the monophthongisation of the stem diphthong /iu/ to /u/ or /ū/, plus the addition of a suffix or weak ending /-o/. The same hypocoristic process, I argue, can be found in Anglo-Saxon names. The name-element (more probably a prototheme) *lēod* would seem to produce hypocoristic forms such as *Dudd* and *Dudda*.³⁶⁰ In the etymological tradition, a name like *Dud* is interpreted as unintelligible or related to an appellative.³⁶¹ Similar-looking forms are recorded in *PASE* as *Dod(d)(a)*, *Dud(d)(a)*, *Dot*, *Duduc*, *Dud(e)man*, *Dudecil*, and various others. They are so common that it is plausible to hypothesise that they derive from a name element which was also very common, like *lēod*.³⁶² Hypocorised forms like *Dud-* could also become name-themes in their own right, as in *Dudhelm*, *Dudwine* and *Dud(e)man*,³⁶³ and also have been used as birth-names, as evidenced by the names which became the surnames *Dod(d)*, *Dod(d)s* etc. in post-Conquest England.³⁶⁴

I suggest therefore that we can identify a further type (the same as Van Loon’s *Rad(d)o*):

³⁵⁸ Noted by Van Loon 2021: 257, 311.

³⁵⁹ Van Loon 2021: 257; Förstemann 1900: 855. Förstemann gives *Liudold* and *Liutold* (“very common”) as variants (*ibid.*: 1048). The deutheme *-old* was a reduced form of *-wald*.

³⁶⁰ Illustrating the point that monothematic names can be morphologically weak or strong (Colman 2014: 248-249, 252-253).

³⁶¹ Redin has no etymology for *Dud(d)* (1919: 16. Tengvik (1938) makes several suggestions (see Reaney and Wilson 1997: 136-37, *s.n.* *Dod* etc). Kaufmann’s primary analysis of the prototheme *Dōd-/Dūd-* is as a “lall-stamm”, but, as noted below (pp. 109-10 and fn. 369), he concedes it may come from *theuda* (1968: 96), i.e. OE *þēod*.

³⁶² But if the hypocoristic stem *Dud-* is based on the final consonant of the prototheme *Lēod*, it is possible that it could be based on the final /-d/ of other protothemes, like *Ēad-*. The writer’s wife’s Brazilian nephew was christened *Eduardo*, but he is called *Dudu*.

³⁶³ Eckhardt 1903: 332; *Dudwine* also *PASE*.

³⁶⁴ Reaney and Wilson 1997: 136-37.

(16) The *Dudda*-type: from *lēod*. The terminal consonant of the prototheme forms the initial of the hypocoristic stem, with:

- consonantal/open-syllable-reduplication (optional) > *Dud-*, *Dudu-*
- consonant-gemination (optional) > *Dudd-*, *Dodd-*
- monophthongisation: /ēo/ > /ū/, or > /ō/³⁶⁵
- shortening of stem-vowel: /ū/ > /ũ/, /ō/ > /ö/
- further lowering of stem sound (?): /ũ/ > /ǫ/
- addition of weak ending (optional): masculine /-a/ or feminine /-e/
- addition of simplex or compound suffixation (optional): such as *-uc*, and *-ec* + *-il* > *-ecil*.

It is likely that *lēod* (or in some cases *lēof*) could also generate *Nunna*-types: *Lulla*, *Lull*, and (*lēod* only) *Lytel* “little”. *Lytel* might be regarded as a Redin-style nickname *par excellence*, except that it is recorded as another name for a person called *Lull*, which itself was – as just noted – hypocoristic.³⁶⁶ It might thus be considered as a humorous counterpart (for a very small, or perhaps very large person).³⁶⁷ This type would thus straddle the border between hypocorism and nickname or by-name, constituting a type of its own, thus:

(17) The *Lytel*-type: a hypocoristic name in which in which hypocoristic transformations create the simulacrum of an appellative.

A yet further type is identifiable if, as a hypocoristic process, initial fricatives like [θ] could also become stops, voiced [d] or unvoiced [t]. Förstemann suggested that *theuda* was represented by Continental Germanic forms <Did>, <Dit>, <Tid> (also OE), and <Tit>, with several other vocalisations, including <u>.³⁶⁸ Kaufmann’s primary analysis of the prototheme

³⁶⁵ Alternatively, the transformation “diphthong > /ū/ or /u/” may have taken place when the diphthong that became OE /ēo/ was still /ēu/, or even earlier, from PrWGMc */eu/.

³⁶⁶ Redin (1919: 32, fn. 1) notes many people called *Lull*, *Lulla* etc. (indicative of derivation from a common name-element), and, in particular, one also known as *Lytel*. I suggest that *lēod* could become *Lull* as a strong variant of a *Nunna*-type, and *Lytel* by the transformations *lēod* > *lud* > *lut* + *-el* (= *-il*) > *Lytel* (with *i*-mutation or a later process analogous to it). Such hypocorisms as *Lytel* may have led to *Lil* (*PASE*) by assimilation. See also Okasha 2016: 88, who suggested that female *Lulle* “could have been formed as a familiar form from a name containing *lēof* as one element but there is no certainty that this is the correct explanation”. I regard this as over-tentative and would derive *Lull* from *lēof*. Cf. *Mōd-* > *Mul* and *Moll* (both in *PASE*)? I note, by the way, that in charter S1204 (888) *Lulla* and *Dudda* are both witnesses.

³⁶⁷ Like Þórðr inn lági (“the low”) in *Óláfs saga helga* (ch. 135; *ÍF* 27: 236): *Hann var þó manna hæstr, ok var hitt þó meirr, at hann var þrekkligr ok ramr at afli*, “He was however the tallest of men and what was more, he was daring and great in strength”.

³⁶⁸ Förstemann 1900: 1409.

Dōd-/Dūd- is as a “lall-stamm”, but he concedes the possibility that it was derived from Germanic *theuda* (= Old English *þēod*).³⁶⁹ Van Loon notes a ninth-century Saxon *Deddo*, *Deddi* as likely to be from names in Old Saxon *Thiad-* (= *þēod*).³⁷⁰ It is therefore possible that hypocorism of *þēod* could generate not only *Dud-* and *Dod-* forms but also *Tuda*, *Tudda*, *Tuddel*, *Tuduna*, *Tydi*, *Tydlin* and *Tytila* (all in *PASE*).³⁷¹

The transformation [θ-] > [t-] is a feature of Old Norse and modern Icelandic hypocorism. *Þormōðr* or *Þūrmōðr* produced *Tōmi*, *Tūmi* or *Tummi*; *Þörketill* and *Þūrketill* became *Tōki* or *Tūki*.³⁷² Harold Godwinsson’s rebellious brother *Tostig* would originally have been Old Danish *Purstæinn* or in Old English form *Purstān*.³⁷³ In *Vápnfirðinga saga* we have a transparent example in *Þordís todda*, whose by-name *todda* is a hypocorism of her dithematic birth-name *Þordís*.³⁷⁴

This gives us a further hypocoristic category:

- (18) The *Tudda*-type: from *þēod*: the initial consonant of the prototheme forms the initial of the hypocoristic stem by turning a dental fricative into a stop: /ð/ > /d/, /þ/ > /t/. With further (optional) transformations and suffixation as with the *Dudda*-type.³⁷⁵

³⁶⁹ Kaufmann 1968: 96.

³⁷⁰ Van Loon 2021: 257.

³⁷¹ See *Tydlin* 1 in *PASE*, a late 7th-c. secular *praelectus* of Dunbar in Stephen of Ripon’s *Vita sancti Wilfridi* (spelled <tydlin> in both MSS of the *Vita*). Insley suggested that *Tydlin* shows “textual contamination of an original OE **Tyðla* < **Tūd-ila-* by the Latin *-inus*-suffix, this perhaps having been facilitated through the associative influence of the accusative singular OE **Tyðllan*”. (This was on the basis that *Tūda* was borrowed into OE from Brittonic – see Redin 1919: 71). He reserved the possibility that *Tydlin* and *Ceawlin* (an early West Saxon king) might be isolated examples of an OE suffix **-līn* (2019: 271-272). However, such confusion by an English writer of a name in his own language seems less likely than a hypocoristic transformation of *þēod* to *Tūd-*, or *Tyð-* (*i*-mutated to *Tyd-* by the compound suffix *-līn/-līn*); cf. *Tydi* (Rollason and Rollason 2007: II, 184, *s.n.* *Tud(d)a*, identified as from a Brittonic stem */tūd/- “people”, also *Tydi*, *Tidi*). Other reflexes of this stem in *PASE* are *Tuda*, *Tudda*, *Tuddel* and *Tuduna*, which are not Celtic in form. Förstemann includes within his *THEUDA* theme the names *Tudo*, *Tuto* and *Tutto* (1900: 1412) which are highly unlikely to be Celtic. Matasović (2009: 386, *s.v.* **towtā-* “people, tribe”) offers little reason to suppose that OE *Tud-* or *Tūd-* came from a Celtic language.

Ceawlin is potentially derivable from *Cædwalla* as a suffixed *Tubba*-type from (*Ceaw* + *lin*) or as a suffixed head-and-tail type (*Cæawl* + *in*). I am grateful to Alaric Hall for sight of his forthcoming study “What is the Etymology of *Ceawlin*?”, though I come to a different conclusion.

³⁷² See Peterson 2007: 222, 221. Many more examples could be cited.

³⁷³ Harold’s mother was Gýða the daughter of the Danish nobleman Þorkell or Þorgils sprakling. Of her eleven children five had Scandinavian names: her sons Sweyn, Harold, Tostig and Gyrþ, and her daughter Gunnhild.

³⁷⁴ See Finnur Jónsson 1908: 141. He notes this as a static feature of modern Icelandic hypocorisms: *Þorgrímur* > *Toggi*, *Þorbjörn* > *Tobbi*, *Þorbjörg* > *Tobba*.

³⁷⁵ The transformation of fricatives into stops, and also devoicing, are suggested by the coexistence of forms such as *Swafa* and East Saxon *Swæppa* (Redin 1919: 69, 109). The /pp/ of *Swæppa* would seem to be a geminated and devoiced development from /b/ in forms like *Suebdaeg* (Deiran regnal list) and *Suaebhardus* (king of Kent in *HE*, v.8; Colgrave and Mynors 1968: 474). This /b/ was probably a bilabial voiced fricative [β] in early OE, which could be represented by the graphs or <f>. This is confirmed by the variant spellings of seemingly the same name: *Eoba~Eofa* and *Eaba~Eafa* (Redin 1919: 92).

pēod would seem an obvious origin for *Tēoda*, a West Saxon *princeps*.³⁷⁶ This raises the possibility that the devoicing of medial consonants was also a feature of hypocorism. The element *pēod* may also be the origin of *Tutta* (*PASE*), *Tytila* (*PASE*) and the name of king of the East Angles *Tyttla* in *AngCol* (< **Tuttila*).³⁷⁷ Alternatively, it is possible that these were from *torht*, with assimilation, gemination and lowering of /o/ to /u/. The female names *Tetta* and *Tette* may also be reduplicative hypocorisms of names in *pēod* (though also of names in *tāt*).³⁷⁸

However, there are names which are very hard to explain without some concept of devoicing as a feature of hypocorism.³⁷⁹ Briggs records **Cippa* as the derivative from several place-names.³⁸⁰ Linkage to an appellative such as Old English *cipp* “beam, log” or *cīpe* “onion” would – as often – seem highly unconvincing; and I suggest it is more plausible that it is a devoiced variant of **Cibba*, a variant of **Ciob(b)a*,³⁸¹ and I also suggest that both are likely to be derived as *Tubba*-types from a name such as *Cynebeald* or *Cēolbeorht*.

Further, with respect to devoicing, Ēadberht was king of Kent (r. 725-48 – *PASE*, *Eadberht* 7), his father was Wihtrēd, but in charter S1611, he is called *Eadbriht rex*, *cognomento Eating*. *Eating* here was clearly not a patronymic, but a hypocorism derived from recorded *Eata*, which itself was likely to be a hypocorism derived from a name in *Ēad*-.³⁸² *Eata*

³⁷⁶ Fl. 687×91 (*PASE*, *Teoda* 1). See also Redin 1919: 55, with references. I know a Theodore called *Ted*, and Theodore M. Andersson is also known informally as *Ted* (Rory McTurk, pers. comm.).

³⁷⁷ From *AngCol*. See Fig. 3 (p. 144 below).

³⁷⁸ *PASE*, s.nn. *Tetta* has a Latin feminine ending. *Tette* was the mother of St. Guthlac.

³⁷⁹ See Stark 1868: 118-19, e.g. *Wippo*. Continental German examples are not directly comparable, since the High German Consonantal Shift turned previously voiced consonants into unvoiced ones. However, Stark’s examples show an interchange between voiced and unvoiced consonants in hypocoristic variants which suggests that this interchange was a hypocoristic transformation (e.g. hypocoristic *Lubbo* but dithematic *Liupprant* and *Liuppoldus*; and two hypocoristic forms, *Woppo* and *Wolbo* < *Wolf*-?).

³⁸⁰ See Briggs (2024: 84), whose place-name evidence suggests to me **Cipp*, **Cippa*, **Cippel* and **Cippela*. See also Redin (1919: 173) *Cheping* and *Chiping*, suggestive of **Cipping*.

³⁸¹ **Cibba* derived from Chippinghurst in Oxfordshire (Briggs 2024: 83), though it might also have derived from **Cipp(a)*. See also Redin (1919: 88), *Ceoba* and *Ceobba*, from *Cēolbeald* or *Cēolbeorht*, parallel to *Ceolla*.

³⁸² See Redin (1919: 170), who wrongly labels S1611 a forgery and asserts that *Eating* was a confusion with his contemporary Eadberht of Northumbria (*PASE*, *Eadberht* 11), whose father was Eata (*PASE*, *Eata* 3). See ASC (MS A), s.a. 738: *Her Ēadbryht Eating, Eata Lēodwalding, feng tō Norþanhymbra rice 7 heold .xxi. wintra. 7 his brōþor wæs Ecgbryht Eating ærcebiscep [...]* (“Here Ēadbryht, son of Eata the son of Lēodwald, succeeded to the kingdom of the Northumbrians and ruled for 21 years. And his brother was Archbishop Ecgbryht, son of Eata [...]). There is no confusion here if *Eating* and *Eata* were both hypocoristic forms of a name beginning with *Ēad*-, but *Eating* could also be a patronymic form for a son of a man named *Eata*.

is paralleled by *Eatta*³⁸³ (cf. *Eada* and *Eadda*),³⁸⁴ as *Ceadda* is by *Ceatta*³⁸⁵ – showing evidence of voiced and devoiced pairs. Reaney and Wilson observed that English surnames like *Dopson* and *Hopson* were variants of *Dobson* and *Hobson*, and *Nobbs* was linked to the medieval English hypocorism *Noppe*: “a variant with the common interchange of voiced and unvoiced consonants”.³⁸⁶ These surnames all contain hypocorisms of *Robert*: *Hob*, *Hop*, *Dob*, *Dop*, *Nob* and *Noppe* – pairs which evidence hypocoristic devoicing.

1.5.3 The *Offa*-Type of Hypocorism

One of the principal focuses of this study is the character of Offa of Angel, whose narrative, I argue, is at the centre of *Widsith* and of the legend of the foundation of England. The name *Offa*, I suggest, is an interesting onomastic case-study because it is at the same time a hypocorism of a dithematic name but also an epithet which has thematic significance in his story. That it is not to say it was a name invented to suit a literary character; rather, it was one that might be given as an epithetical name to anyone who, like the legendary Offa, was the last son of an old father. It also exemplifies a hypocoristic category we have not yet dealt with:

- (19) The *Offa*- or “head-and-tail”-type: a hypocorism formed from a letter or combination of letters from the beginning of the prototheme and the end of the deutheme; with assimilation of consonant clusters; and with addition of weak ending or suffix /-a/ or /-e/ (optional).

In Anglo-Saxon historical and genealogical traditions, *Offa* was a name borne by the son of Wērmund of Angel; two kings of the East Saxons; one of the sons of Æþelfrīþ king of Northumbria (r. c. 592-616); the famous king of Mercia (r. 757-96); and the father of an East Saxon noble commemorated in the late tenth-century poem *The Battle of Maldon*. *PASE* gives eleven instances of *Offa*, a name which was in use by the English until at least as late as the compilation of *DB* in the 1080s.³⁸⁷

³⁸³ See Redin 1919: 64 “Eat(t)a, Eota etc”. See also charter S124, the Mercian *Eatta dux* (*PASE*, *Eata* 5), also recorded as *Eata* in e.g. charter S55; and *AngCol* (MS V) *Eatta Eanferðing*, king of Lindsey (Dumville 1976: 31) – whose *Eatta* may be a hypocorism of a name in *Ēan-*, after his father.

³⁸⁴ Redin 1919: 47-48.

³⁸⁵ See Redin 1919: 88, and fn. 2, where he attributes the variance *Eadda*~*Eatta* to derivation from dithematic names in *Ēad-* with different deuthemes beginning with voiced/unvoiced consonants respectively. See p. 311 below, where I reject this theory.

³⁸⁶ Reaney and Wilson 1997: 138, 238, 323, *s.nn.*

³⁸⁷ Or ten, since *PASE*’s *Offa* 5, an early 8th-c. king of the East Angles, is reckoned to be spurious, resulting from a confusion with *Offa* 3 of the East Saxons. The confusion appears to stem from “a mangling of *rex*

According to Van Loon, Æbelfrīþ's son Offa (a king of Bernicia *c.* 625) may have derived his name from a hypocorisation of *Ōsfrīþ*, on the basis that he had brothers who shared the familial prototheme *Ōs-* (as we have already seen).³⁸⁸ If so, the name *Offa* in this instance would be a *Tubba*-type. We know that one of his brothers *Ōswīu* was known, by a different type of hypocorism, as *Ossa* (in fact, the *Ossa*-type).³⁸⁹

There are two East Saxon kings named *Offa* in the following version of the Essex regnal list:³⁹⁰

Seaxnēt³⁹¹
 Gēsecg
 Antsecg
 Swæppa
 Sigefugl
 Bēdca
 Offa (A)
 Æscwine
 Sledd
 Sæberht
 Sæweard
 Sigberht
 Sighere
 Offa (B)³⁹²

It has been suggested that Offa (A) is Offa of Angel,³⁹³ and that “names shared by the prehistoric sections of two separate dynasties may reflect marriage or political alliances of the historic period which have been projected back into the ancestral past”.³⁹⁴ Yorke suggests:³⁹⁵

The appearance of an apparently Anglian hero [Offa (A)] in the East Saxon genealogy may possibly be related to Mercian overlordship of the province, which was intermittent from the time of Wulfhere and permanent from the reign of Æthelbald.

orientalium saxonum into *rex orientalium anglorum*. The latter is evidently meant in S80 and S1251 – both forgeries concerning Evesham – where Offa is associated with *Cenred I*, the king with whom the king of the East Saxons went on pilgrimage to Rome in 709” (*PASE*).

³⁸⁸ Van Loon 2021: 260 – though any deutertheme beginning with /f-/ would do.

³⁸⁹ See p. 101 above.

³⁹⁰ See Yorke 1985: 3-4. The only extant pre-Conquest East Saxon genealogies are in London British Library MS Add. 23211. This consists of fragments of an MS of the late 9th c., of unknown provenance.

³⁹¹ The first name in the longest of the three Essex lists is given as *Gesecg Seaxneting*, implying that *Seaxnēt* was the progenitor of the line. This appears to be the same name as *Saxnōt*, the name (in OS form) of a deity whom heathen Saxons promised, in their own language, to renounce on their baptism (along with Wōdan and Thunær and all their devils and companions). See the *Forma Abrenuntiationis diaboli* (probably *c.* 800) in Pertz 1835: 19-20. See also Yorke 1985: 14. See also fn. 752 (p. 195 below).

³⁹² Offa departed for Rome in 709, according to Bede (*HE*, v.19; Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 516) and *ASC* (Yorke 1985: 2 and fns). *PASE* gives his dates (*s.n. Offa 3*) as *c.* 694×709.

³⁹³ Sisam 1953a: 306-07.

³⁹⁴ Dumville 1977: 82-96.

³⁹⁵ Yorke 1985: 15.

She adds that the name-form *Æscwine*, son of Offa (A) – also known as *Erkenwine* in post-Conquest variants of the same genealogy by Henry of Huntingdon, Roger of Wendover and Matthew Paris – has a Kentish (i.e. Anglian) origin, since *Æsc* was the name of Hengest’s son in *ASC* and *Erken-* (= *Eorcen-*) was a name-theme mainly evidenced among the kings of Kent.³⁹⁶

The views of these three eminent scholars are divergent: either the historical character is added synthetically by genealogists into a regnal list (Sisam); or a name with historical associations is inserted in the same way (Dumville); or a name or name element with favourable ethnological or dynastic associations is chosen by a family (Yorke). Each is a different way of considering the “constructed” nature of regnal lists. However, it seems to me that they all ignore three potentially relevant factors. The first is that famous names may have been associated with famous narratives (themselves associated with distinct time periods), which might make it difficult for genealogists to insert them into novel contexts anachronistically. The second is that there may have been underlying naming traditions within ruling families which are not detectable in the names of the persons who are named in the historical record (that is, the names of unrecorded aunts, uncles, wives and grandparents). The third is that names may have had meanings which made them adoptable by more than one person. Such, I suggest, may be the case with *Offa*, which was both a hypocoristic form and an epithetical name.

In the Essex list *Offa* (A) is three generations before Sæberht, who is known to have ruled around the turn of the sixth and seventh centuries.³⁹⁷ This would place Offa (A) near the beginning of the sixth century, probably about two hundred years later than Offa of Angel, and well after the *Adventus*, instead of before it. The name *Æscwine* may have been a variation name of an ordinary kind with no syntagmatic meaning (“ash (ship/spear) friend”) or an acquired epithetical name which meant “friend of *Æsc*”, that is, an ally or tributary of a person called *Æsc*; or a *wine* (“friend” = king)³⁹⁸ who called himself *Æsc*. It is also possible that *Æsc* was a form – misunderstood and re-analysed by a scribe – of *Oisc*, an ethno-eponymous name for the king of Kent from the dynasty of the Oiscingas; and hence *Æscwine* was **Oiscwine*,

³⁹⁶ Yorke 1985: 14-16. If *Æscwine* and *Erkenwine* were the same person, this suggests multiple-naming (or prototheme-swapping) somewhere in the genealogical tradition. The son of Hengest, whom Bede called *Oeric* and *Oisc* is called *Æsc* in *ASC*. It is therefore conceivable that an East Saxon king called *Eorcanwine* earned the name *Æscwine*, meaning “friend of *Æsc*”, i.e. the head of the Kentish royal dynasty, known as *Oisc* or *Æsc*.

³⁹⁷ Sæberht (aka *Saba*) was baptised in 604, according to Bede and *ASC* (Yorke 1985: 2 and fns).

³⁹⁸ For *wine* used to designate a king, see fn. 245 (p. 84 above), and pp. 272-73, 307-08 below.

the friend, tributary or ruling satrap of a Kentish overlord.³⁹⁹ But although Kent was Anglian, it was not associated with descent from Offa of Angel. I also remain unconvinced that Mercian overlordship over Essex would cause its kings to insert into their family trees Anglians, like Offa, who were famous for not being Saxons and whose heroic lineages were presumably already known. The Mercians might also have been displeased to see that their ancestor Offa had been relegated to the *n*th descendant of a Saxon tutelary god, *Seaxnēt*.

It is therefore to be doubted that Offa (A) was or was intended to be Offa of Angel. Certainly, Offa (B) cannot have been, and he must also have pre-dated the rule of Mercia by Offa II. The name *Offa* (B) is an anomaly after five generations of kings whose names begin with /S-/.⁴⁰⁰ Woolf suggested that Offa (B) in the Essex list and Offa of Bernicia (Æþelfriþ's son) were related.⁴⁰¹ But Æþelfriþ (r. c. 592-616) was roughly contemporary with Sæberht of Essex, and so this is unlikely. Offa (B) is therefore a curiosity, leaving us with the hypotheses that he was named after a family member who was unrecorded, his parents liked the name, he was named after the famous Offa of Angel, or – which we shall examine – there was a particular meaning to the name *Offa* which made it appropriate to him.

³⁹⁹ The archaic grapheme <oi> was an early version of <oe>, which was used in OE for the *i*-mutation of /o/ (*OEG*: 71). This <oe> later became <e>. But in medieval Latin the graphemes <æ/ae>, <e> and <œ/oe> were equivalent (*OEG*: 17). In OE <æ> was used for the high front vowel in modern English *bat*, but it was also the graph used for the *i*-mutation of /a/, which became <e> before /m/ and /n/ in most dialects (*OEG*: 71). Therefore, a name which in early Northumbrian orthography was <Oisc> could be represented graphically by <Oesc> or <Esc>; and <Esc> could be taken as a graphical equivalent of *æsc*, “ash”, a lexeme connoting the ash-wood of a spear or a ship which was also a name-element (see *PASE* and Briggs 2024: 28 for the prototheme *Æsc*-). Bede gives *Oeric cognomento Oisc* followed by his son *Octa* (*HE*, II.5; Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 150). In the Kentish lists in *AngCol*, Bede's pair seem to be reversed, as *Ocga* is the father of *Oese/Ese* (Dumville 1976: 31, 33, 37). And Æthelweard names *Ochta qui prænominabatur Ese*, after whom the Kentish *Esingas* were named (*Chronicon*, II.2; Campbell 1962: 18). I suggest that this confusion was caused by the fact that *Oisc* was the ethno-eponym of the *Oiscingas*, borne as a title by Hengest's son called *Oeric Oisc*, the father of *Octa*. Later genealogists were unsure how to deal with this: was this one man or two, or one man known by both names together or by either of two alternative names? The compilers of *AngCol* eliminated *Oeric* and kept *Oisc* (as *Oese/Ese*) but perhaps thought that the following name *Ocga* in their source-list was genitive and thus indicated *Ocga* as his father rather than his son. Æthelweard thought that *Ese* was a praenomen coming before *Ochta* in his source-list rather than (as in Bede) a cognomen coming after *Oeric*. The forms <Oese> and <Ese> in *AngCol* would suggest possible scribal error for *Oesc* and its graphical equivalent *Esc*. However, it is possible that they represent *i*-mutated hypocorisms of a name in *Ōs*- (> *Oese*, *Ese*) and are variants. See Table 4 (p. 155 below), in which there seems to be confusion about the order and form of names in the Bernician list, in which *Beornic/Benoc* is an ethno-eponym of the *Bernice* (Bernicians) that may have attached to a king called *Brand* or *Ingibrand*, causing the mistaken creation of two persons from one.

⁴⁰⁰ As noted by Yorke 1985: 15.

⁴⁰¹ Woolf 1939: 54-55, 58.

I suggest that *Offa* – an evident hypocorism of something – is a type that seems to have been overlooked in English scholarship. It is noted by Van Loon to be a further contraction-type derived from both themes:⁴⁰²

In these, both initial elements are not preserved but rather the head and tail of the dithematic name, and parts of the middle part are syncopated. [...] This syncopating type is younger than those aforementioned. Most examples appear only in the late Middle Ages and in texts in the vernacular.

Van Loon calls these “head-and-tail contractions” and gives Dutch and/or Flemish examples (*loc. cit.*):

Arnoud	>	Arend/Ært
Bernard	>	Bernd
Cunrad	>	Kurt
Diederik	>	Dirk
*Diederikīn	>	Dirkinus
Gerard	>	Geert
Everhard	>	Evert
Wilhelm	>	Willem ⁴⁰³

Van Loon doubts the existence of earlier examples cited by Stark,⁴⁰⁴ on the basis that they tended to be based on scribal error or textual misreading (citing two examples, one from Old English and one from Old High German). However, he ventures on to shakier ground with the Old Norse evidence, which, I argue, suggests the following contracted forms:⁴⁰⁵

(1)	*Hǫpuwolafr	>	Hǫlfr (= Hálfr) ⁴⁰⁶
(2)	*Hrōðwulf	>	Hrólfr
(3)	*Aþa(l)wolfar	>	Álfr

⁴⁰² Van Loon 2021: 260:

Daarbij blijven niet beide anlauten, maar kop en staart van de tweestammige naam bewaard en worden delen van het middenstuk gesyncopeerd. [...] Is] dit syncoperende type jonger dan de vorige. De meeste voorbeelden duiken pas op in de late middeleeuwen en in teksten in de volkstaal.

⁴⁰³ The familiar name *Wim* would be an even clearer example of the head-and-tailing of *Willem*.

⁴⁰⁴ The head-and-tail type had been noted by the thorough and perceptive Stark (1868: 130-32). See *ibid.*: 130:

In den contrahirten Namen dieser Classe ist gleichfalls das erste Glied des vollen Namens, und zwar meistens verkürzt, vorherrschend vertreten, vom zweiten Gliede aber erscheint nur die auslautende einfache oder Doppelconsonanz.

Die Beispiele für diese Contractionsart finden sich, die drei ersten ausgenommen, alle in jüngerer Zeit und nur bei den niederdeutschen, insbesondere bei den friesischen und nordischen Stämmen.

In the contracted names of this class the first element of the full name likewise predominantly appears (most often shortened), but only the single or geminated final consonant of the second element appears. The examples of this type of contraction – apart from the first three examples – all occur in more recent times and only among Low Germans, especially among the Frisian and Nordic peoples.

He noted that his examples were late, except for three from the 9th and 10th centuries.

⁴⁰⁵ Giving the name-forms as cited by Van Loon and his sources. These were Noreen 1923: 380, 387; Tengvik 1938: 196; Keil 1931: 128; Stark 1868: 132; Peterson 2007: 227-36. I have added example (7).

⁴⁰⁶ See also *ANEW*: 204, s.v. *Hálfr*, and 258-59, s.v. *Hróarr*.

(4)	*Bárröðr, *Báruðr	>	Bárðr
(5)	Þórfreðr, Þóroddr	>	Þórðr
(6)	Þórulfr	>	Þólfr
(7)	*Hrōþagaisaz	>	(OE) Hrōþgār, (ON) Hróarr ⁴⁰⁷

The historical first Duke of Normandy, known as *Rollo* in Latin chronicles, was *gongu-Hrólfr* in Old Icelandic sources, which potentially suggests that head-and-tail *Hrólfr* was re-hypocorised to **Hrolli* or **Rolli*, and thence into Franco-Latin form as *Rollo*.⁴⁰⁸ Given the epigram with which I began this section, to these head-and-tail forms we might add *Adolf* from *Athawulf*.⁴⁰⁹

Van Loon suggests that the contracted forms in (1)-(3) above are not evidenced until about 1100 and notes that Stark took (4) and (5) from *Eyrbyggja saga* (which Van Loon wrongly dates to the tenth century).⁴¹⁰ However, the time of the beginning of literacy and saga-writing in Scandinavia is only the earliest time at which certain names are recorded, not a *terminus post quem* for the existence or coining of the names, still less for the processes according to which such names were formed. The name-forms are earlier than the texts.

Van Loon tackles the problem of runic names which seem to provide earlier evidence of head-and-tail forms (as in (5)-(6) above) by noting that they are to be dated to the “Viking period” – that is, *c.* 700 – 1100 – and so they may “possibly” (“mogelijk”) be dated to the later part of this period. But, by the same token, they may be dated to the earlier and are thus potentially runic recordings as early as the beginning of the eighth century, again representing even earlier naming traditions.

Van Loon concedes that “one of the oldest more certain examples” (“een van de oudste zekere voorbeelden”) is *Gormr*, the name of a king of Denmark, recorded on the Danish Jelling 1 runestone (DR 41) as **kurmr kunukr** – a monument raised by Gormr himself (r. 930s – 958×64) in memory of his queen Þyrvé. The Jelling 2 stone (DR 42) was raised by Gormr’s son, Haraldr blátǫnn (r. 958×64 – *c.* 986), in memory of his mother and father, and also bears the name **kurm** (accusative).⁴¹¹ Van Loon refers to the derivation of Peterson who derives Old

⁴⁰⁷ See *ANEW*: 258-59, *s.v.* *Hróarr*. His name in *Skjöldunga saga* is *Roë*, and in *GD* he is called *Roe*. These forms suggest a hypocorism **Hrói* from **Hrōþgeirr*.

⁴⁰⁸ Cf. Peterson 2007: 120, *s.n.* *Hróðlæifr*, *ODan Rolef*, *OSwed Rollef*, *OWN, Hrolleifr*.

⁴⁰⁹ See Förstemann 1900: 158, *s.nn.* *Athulf*, *Adulf*, *Adolf*, *Atolf* and others, recorded from the 8th c. onwards. Derivation from *Athawulf* is also possible.

⁴¹⁰ *Eyrbyggja* contains material from oral tradition which may have been transmitted from before the conversion of Iceland in 1000 (see Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson 1997). But the composition of the saga is conventionally dated to the mid-13th c. See Tulinius 2013.

⁴¹¹ *Samnordiskt runtextdatabas*, DR 41 <<https://app.raa.se/open/runor/inscription?id=77c29407-9f90-4792-9881-7e8f22b30cd2>> [retrieved 7.11.24]; DR 42 <<https://app.raa.se/open/runor/inscription?id=a4071a93->

Danish *Gorm* and Old West Norse *Gormr* from **Goð-ormr*, derived from Proto-Norse **Guða-* “god” + **wurmar* “snake”,⁴¹² or (more likely, in my view) **Goð-þormr*, from **Guða-* + *þorm*, the deuterotherme deriving from the same root as the Old Norse verb *þyrma*, “to reverence, respect (a deity, person)”. This would have given the following forms: Old Danish *Guththorm*, Old Swedish *Gudhthorm*, and Old West Norse *Guðormr*/*Goðormr*, *Guðþormr*/*Goðþormr*. The name of Alfred’s the Great’s adversary, the Danish king *Guthrum*, is another likely example.⁴¹³ *Gormr* has no apparent meaning in Old Norse or derivation from an appellative. It is, therefore, I suggest, a likely head-and-tail name-form of Old Danish *Guththorm*.⁴¹⁴

Van Loon does not discuss the further implications of this analysis, but if one accepts that such “head-and-tail” name-forms were generated by the operation of onomastic processes, then we can draw the conclusions that such a process was in existence in East Norse-speaking areas by the middle of the tenth century, and that while we cannot date the inception of it, the Jelling stones record that *Gormr* was a king known in an official document by the hypocoristic form of a dithematic name – something which he shared with many of the earlier kings in the Anglo-Saxon regnal lists which purport to record Royal naming traditions going back before the *Adventus*.

If one were to accept the premise that such contracted “head-and-tail” forms are “late” (and, for instance, not evidenced in runic Scandinavian as early as *c.* 700), one ought to exclude the possibility of early development by identifying cultural and/or linguistic factors which explain the evidence, that is, which operated on Danish royal names of the tenth century, Old Icelandic regular ones of the eleventh century and later, and Netherlandish names from the later Middle Ages onwards which are found only in vernacular texts. An alternative explanation is that the head-and-tail contraction was an early phenomenon which tended not to be recorded in the name-forms appearing in documents which formed the evidence-base of the Continental Germanic lexicon – that is, of the class of people who became higher ranking clerics, gentry,

512a-47d0-b645-cb2757f08fe0> [retrieved 7.11.24]. Both inscriptions are dated to the period *c.* 950-1050, despite the epigraphic evidence that both inscriptions were made during the reigns of *Gormr* and *Haraldr* respectively.

⁴¹² Peterson 2007: 81, *s.n.* *Gōrmr*.

⁴¹³ ASC MS ACE *Godrum* (*s.aa.* 875/6, 878/9, 890/1); MS B *Gupram* (*s.aa.* 876, 879), *Godrum* (*s.a.* 891); MS D *Goðrum* (*s.a.* 875), *Godrum* (*s.a.* 878), *Guðrum* (*s.a.* 890).

⁴¹⁴ I am unsure that the name *Ormr* derives from the appellative meaning “worm, serpent”. It may derive from a perception that the deuterotherme in *Goðormr* was *ormr*, used as a familiar form. *Guthrum* probably appears as *Ormr enski*, together with *Ubbi inn friski* (the *Ubba dux Fresonum* of the account of the Danish invasions of England in the 860s in the *Annales Lindisfarnenses et Dunelmenses*; Pertz 1866: 506), as legendary paladins of *Haraldr blátǫnn* at the battle of *Brávellir* in *Sögubrot af fornkonungum*. (*ÍF* 35: 62).

nobility and royalty (as opposed to peasant *Kurt* or *Dirk*).⁴¹⁵ Alternatively, if head-and-tail names appeared in such documents, they have not often been identified.

As for Anglo-Saxon England, I suspect that head-and-tail forms have not featured in studies of hypocorism because no one was looking for them – or at least not as a specific type. We might, however, consider cases like the unique *Tilne*, which has been suggested to be a shortened form of *Tilwine*.⁴¹⁶ Insley regards *Eafu* – a ninth-century name in *DLV* – as a female version of *Eafa*, derived from a name like *Ēanflæd* or *Ēadgifu*. If it were from *Ēadgifu*, it would be another head-and-tail type.⁴¹⁷ And similarly with *Uach* from *Walh*,⁴¹⁸ and *Celm* *Cylm* and *Cilm*, if from *Cynehelm*?⁴¹⁹

I accept the existence of the head-and-tail type and argue that *Offa* was one. *Offa* was a name which existed from the early days of Mercian royal legend and was still current in the 1080s, as recorded in *DB*. Its form is typical of an Old English hypocorism: short stem-vowel /o/; medial geminated consonant /-ff-/; and weak masculine ending /-a/.

Redin collected several variants of the name *Offa*: *Ofa*, *Oua*, *Oba*, *Uba*, *Ubba*, *Ufa* and *Uffa*.⁴²⁰ Colman noted *Offa* and *Ofa*, *Oba*, *Oua* and *Obba*.⁴²¹ Those beginning with /O-/ may be regarded as different forms of the same name. West Germanic /b/ (pronounced [b] or [β]) could be spelled <bb> or <f> in Old English.⁴²² The same sound diverged later into [b] and [v] and its allophone [f]. But, as Redin's and Colman's examples show, there was either a hypocoristic form – Germanic **Ōba* > Old English *Ōfa* – without gemination and thus perhaps with a long stem-vowel; or the name *Offa* could simply be written with a single consonant standing for a geminated one; or there were two different but related forms.⁴²³ Redin's examples of *Uba*, *Ubba* and *Ufa* may be unrelated, because the initial (and therefore stressed) /U-/ may derive from a prototheme like *Un-* or *Uht-* (see *PASE*, *Uhtbrand*), in a *Tubba*-type

⁴¹⁵ See Redin's quotation (1919: 189) from John Gower's Latin poem *Vox Clamantis* (I, 783-91) about the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, which lists a set of weak-form hypocoristic names supposedly typical of peasants: *Watte*, *Thomme*, *Symme*, *Bette*, *Gibbe*, *Hykke*, *Colle*, *Geffe*, *Wille*, *Grigge*, *Dawe*, *Hobbe*, *Lorkyn*, *Hudde*, *Judde*, *Tebbe*, *Jakke* and *Hogge* – i.e. *Walter*, *Thomas*, *Simon*, *Bertram* or *Bartholomew*, *Gilbert*, *Richard*, *Nicholas*, *Geoffrey*, *William*, *David*, *Robert*, *Laurence*, *Hugh*, *Jordan*, *Theobald*, *John* and *Roger*. The names themselves were not *infra dig*, but presumably their hypocorisms were.

⁴¹⁶ A 9th-c. example from *DLV*. See Rollason and Rollason 2007: II, 184. The suggestion was that of Müller (1901: 76).

⁴¹⁷ Rollason and Rollason 2007: II, 174-75.

⁴¹⁸ Rollason and Rollason 2007: II, 175. It is treated as a scribal error for *Ualch*, but *Uach* appears twice.

⁴¹⁹ All *PASE*. *Cilm* and *Cylm* were moneyers (though *Celm* was not). One may suspect sometimes in the case of moneyers names may have been shortened so that they would fit on coins. One notes the moneyer *Fierlf* (!) in *PASE*. *Celm* may be an error for *Celin* however. See these names in Table 8 (p. 301 below).

⁴²⁰ Redin 1919: 101-102.

⁴²¹ Colman 2014: 129, 145-146.

⁴²² Hogg and Fulk 2011: I, 29-30.

⁴²³ Redin 1919: 102. See also Colman 2014: 145-46.

hypocorism of a dithematic name.⁴²⁴ However, Förstemann gives the stems *Ub-* and related *Uf-*, with some variants in *Ob-/Of(f)-*,⁴²⁵ which suggests the possibility of variability of /o/ and /u/ in this name.

Redin was perplexed by the form *Offa*, which he thought was unaccompanied by any reliable evidence of the form *Obba* (though it does exist)⁴²⁶ and regarded the etymology of the *Offa*-name as not yet settled. His own suggestion (based on the work of others) was from a Germanic adjectival stem **ub-*, with reflexes in Gothic *ubils* and Old High German *uppi* “evil”, and Old Norse *úfr* “hostile”, and related to the Latin name of a Germanic tribe, the *Ubii*.⁴²⁷ Förstemann suggested a relationship with Gothic *ubjō* “abundance”.⁴²⁸ Stark thought that *Offa* and *Uffo* came from the name theme “wolf”.⁴²⁹ Colman regards *Offa* simply (though with a query) as a “lall” name and does not explain its etymology.⁴³⁰

While the origins suggested by Redin and Förstemann (from the same Germanic etymon **ub-*) are not impossible, and some of the names cited may even be examples of an ethnophoric name-theme related to the *Ubii*, it is strange that nearly all the examples are hypocoristic.⁴³¹ If *uf/of* were a name-theme in its own right, one might expect more evidence of use in dithematic names.⁴³² In the Anglo-Saxon evidence, while the name *Ofa* is spelled once as *Obba*, the name *Offa* – as possessed by our identified *Offas* – is not spelled as *Ofa*. One may suspect that if the same name could be written *Ofa* and *Obba*, then these were two different spellings for the same pronunciation. But even if we were to accept that *Ofa* and *Offa* were two distinct forms with distinct pronunciations, they may still effectively be hypocorisms from the same origin. However, the evidence that the names of kings called *Offa* were always spelled

⁴²⁴ *PASE* *Ubba* 1-3 are 8th c., and are thus pre-Viking Age in England. *PASE* also records the names *Ufede* (×1), *Ufegeat* (×2) and *Ufic* (×5), in addition to *Ufa* (×5), *Uffa* (×2) and *Ufi* (×8). Since none of these is earlier than the late 9th c. (and most from the 10th or 11th), I suspect that these derive from *Uffi/Uffe*, the ON hypocorism of *ulfr*, adopted as a name or name-theme by Anglo-Saxons.

⁴²⁵ Förstemann 1900: 1474. He described *Uf-* as probably the Low German form of *Ub-*. See *ibid.*: 1471.

⁴²⁶ *PASE* records 6 cases of *Oba*, but none of *Obba*. Searle recorded multiple cases of *Oba* and none of *Obba*. *Obba* is also absent from *DLV*. However, *Obba* witnessed charter S103a (716×745) of Æthelbald, king of Mercia, to Ingwald, bishop of London, granting him toll from one ship. This is a unique spelling of *Ofa* 5 in *PASE*, a “Mercian Minister / Dux, fl. c. 716-748”.

⁴²⁷ Redin 1919: 101-02 and fn. The variation of /U-/ and /O-/ he explained as “due to *a*-mutation and levelling out in different directions” (whatever that means), referring to Binz’s view that the variation was dialectal (which is not necessarily the same thing).

⁴²⁸ Förstemann 1900: 1474.

⁴²⁹ Stark 1868: 98-99 – in a class of hypocorisms that Stark thought was based on deuterothermes.

⁴³⁰ Colman 2014: 131, 257.

⁴³¹ Förstemann recorded a single instance of a dithematic (therefore non-hypocoristic?) example, *Uffiliub*, in the place-name *Uffiliubesheim* (1900: 1474).

⁴³² See the discussion of the Gothic ethno-eponym *Ovida*, possibly of the *Ubii* and *Widsith*’s **Ofdingas* (see p. 224 and fn. 873 below).

Offa suggests that their names were associated with a single form. Whether this was the same name as *Ufa*, *Uffa* or *Ofa*, it was not spelled thus.

I shall suggest that the name *Offa* of Angel has a derivation from an originally dithematic name – whether or not the examples of *Ufa* and *Ofa* are related – thus avoiding tendentious origins in prepositional stems or arguable ethnonyms. The evidence (which we shall later examine) from the Latin text *RDF*, based on the lost Icelandic *Skjöldunga saga*, and from other probably roughly contemporary Icelandic genealogical texts, indicates that the character known to the English as *Offa* was known to Scandinavians as *Áleifr* or *Óláfr*, a very common dithematic name.⁴³³ We can therefore investigate the possibility that both names have the same origin.

Onlāf and *Anlāf* are both recorded in Old English – albeit as the names of various Scandinavians.⁴³⁴ These were the Old English phonological equivalents of the Scandinavian name with the forms *Óleifr*, *Óláfr* and *Áleifr*.⁴³⁵ The Proto-Germanic ancestor of this name would have been **Anulaibaz*, becoming **Anulaib* in Proto-West Germanic (the ancestor of Old English) and **Anulaibar* in Proto-North Germanic.⁴³⁶ The prototheme was Germanic **anu-*, which I suggest is cognate with Latin *anus* “old woman”, and also with *ano* “grandfather” in Old High German. Theoretically, it had either or both of two meanings, “ancestor” and/or “old man”.⁴³⁷ (The name of the legendary king of the Swedish Yngling dynasty, *Aun inn gamli*

⁴³³ Colman (2014: 116-117) regards this as a “common anglicizing of *Ó-* to *An-*”. However, it may be that The OE digraph <an> represented an ON initial nasalised vowel in *Áláfr* or *Áleifr*. Alternatively, ON *Óláfr* (with nasalised /Ó/) was perceived in OE phonology as *Onlāf*, to which *Anlāf* would have been an allophone, as with *land~lond*, *man~mon* etc; or *Anlāf* was regarded as cognate with the ON name.

⁴³⁴ See PASE s.nn. *Olaf* (incl. *Anlaf*), *Olof*, *Anolaf* and *Onlafbald*. *Anolaf I* “king of the Norse”, is found in charter S406 (930): *ex Anolafo rege Norannorum* [sic] (though the charter is reckoned spurious). The name *Anlaf* is used of several Scandinavians in English historical recording.

- *Anlaf se swearta* is a Danish noble (in *ASC MSS BC*, s.a. 911).
- *Anlaf* is Óláfr II *cúarán* Sigtryggsson (d. 980), king of York 927(?), king of Dublin 939-40, 945-47/49, 953-80, king of York 941-43/4, 949-52 (in *ASC MSS ABC*, s.a. 937 (= *The Battle of Brunanburh* ll. 26, 31, 46), and s.aa. 942, 944, 949, 952 (as *Onlaf* in *MS C*, s.a. 942)).
- *Anlaf* is Óláfr III Guðrøðarson (d. 941), king of Dublin 934-39, king of York 939-41 (in *ASC MS D*, s.a. 941, and initially in the entry s.a. 943 (erroneously for 940), and *MS E* s.a. 942).
- *Anlaf* the Scandinavian raider is Óláfr I Tryggvason, king of Norway 995-1000 (in *ASC MSS CDE*, s.a. 994).
- *Olaf* is Óláfr II helgi Haraldsson (d. 1030), king of Norway 1015-28 (in *ASC MSS CDE*, s.aa. 1028, 1030, 1055).
- *Olaf* is Óláfr III kyrri Haraldsson, king of Norway 1067-93 (in *ASC MS D*, s.a. 1066).

Cf. the form of this name in Irish annals, *Amlaibh*. In early modern texts of the annals with Anglicised orthography, this name appears as *Awley* (as in the Scottish surnames *Macaulay* and *McAuliffe*).

⁴³⁵ For forms see *ANEW*: 418, s.n. *Ólafr*, *Óleifr*, *Áleifr*. Lind *Dopnamn* (810-16) records a wide variety of spellings of the basic forms *Óláfr* and *Óleifr* (not *Áleifr*); though Peterson records *Ālēifr* (2007: 22).

⁴³⁶ See *ANEW*: 418, s.n. *Ólafr*, *Óleifr*, *Áleifr*.

⁴³⁷ See *ANEW*: 418, s.n. *Ólafr*, *Óleifr*, *Áleifr*; also Orel 2003: 20, s.v. **anōn* “grandmother” (> OHG *ana*).

(“Aun the old”) who unnaturally prolonged his life by sacrificing his sons to Óðinn, is probably related to **anu*).⁴³⁸

**Anulaib* would be expected to develop into an Old English form *Anlāf* or its allophone *Onlāf*, by syncope of the /-u/ in **Anu-*, leaving *An-* or *On-*. The element **laib-* (Old English *lāf*) meant “leaving, bequest”.⁴³⁹ In Scandinavian and English naming this word is almost exclusively male as a deutertheme. And as the simplex *Leifr* it was an exclusively male name in medieval Scandinavia. As a name-theme it therefore probably had the meaning “son, heir”. Hence **Anulaib(az)*, which developed into Old English *Onlāf*, was capable of meaning, in its most ordinary sense, “ancestor’s son” (perhaps a name to give an heir apparent), but also “grandfather’s son” or “old man’s son”, and it was thus an appropriate name for a son born in his father’s old age, either as a last attempt at fathering an heir or as a replacement for a dead son or sons.

As we shall see, this was the role that Offa of Angel had in narrative, and I shall argue that *Offa* was a hypocoristic form of *Onlāf*. Analysed as a head-and-tail type, *Onlāf* could develop a hypocoristic stem in *Of-*, with the customary consonant gemination (/f/ > /ff/), and the addition of a weak masculine ending (/a/). As noted above, the personal name, *Onlāf* might “mean” no more than “heir” and be applicable to any male child (people today are still called *Sonny*). Not every one of the many, many *Óláfrs* in Scandinavia was an “old man’s son”. But, historically and culturally, **Anulaibaz-Onlāf-Offa* may have been a name with a particular familial significance. In this respect it may be compared to the Roman praenomina *Postumus* and *Opiter*. *Postumus* was folk-etymologically interpreted as *Posthumus*, meaning “after burial” – that is, a son born after a father’s death, and *Opiter* “(brought up by a) grandfather” – that is, after a father’s death. Even if scholars regard these origins as folk-etymological, this would not necessarily have affected the way that Latin-speakers interpreted, and Roman parents used, these names.⁴⁴⁰ Similarly, Roman names like *Primus*, *Secundus*, *Tertius*, *Quintus*,

⁴³⁸ See *Ynglinga saga* (ch. 25; *ÍF* 26: 47-50), in which Snorri tells us that Aun was also called *Áni*, and death from old age was thus called *áнасótt*. See *ANEW*: 9, 10 s.vv. *áнасótt* and *Áni*, where *Áni* is suggested to be from adj. **ánn* “old”. I think it more likely that **Ani* was a hypocorism derived from **anu-* or a cognate, meaning “old one” (and *ána-* in *áнасótt* has the same origin), and that the long /á/ is inauthentic. It is also possible that the troublesome name-form printed as *Aun* represents scribal <A/n>, the medieval graphemic equivalent of **Qn*, which would be the *u*-mutation of **anu*. If so, then *Aun* simply meant “old man”.

⁴³⁹ See *OEG*: 23-24. Cf. PrGmc **laibjan-* “to leave”, **laibō-* “remains” (Kroonen 2013: 323, s.vv.).

⁴⁴⁰ *Wikipedia*, “Postumus” <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postumus_\(praenomen\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postumus_(praenomen))> and “Opiter” <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opiter_\(praenomen\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opiter_(praenomen))> [retrieved 18.6.24]. *Postumus*, etymologically, meant “last”, and hence meant the youngest child (not necessarily one born after a father’s death). *Opiter* was falsely derived from *auus* “grandfather” and *pater* “father”, rather than (more likely) from *ops* “help”, hence *Opiter* “helper”.

Septimus and *Decimus* might be chosen for a number of reasons, but also for the reason that the boy in question was celebrated as the first, second or tenth child.

The identification of *Offa* as a head-and-tail hypocorism, if accepted, would tend to refute the view of Stark and Van Loon that such forms were late. If the name of *Gormr* the old in tenth-century Denmark was another example (a transformation of *Goppormr* or the like), this raises the question of how old the phenomenon was which we also see reflected in the apparently head-and-tail Scandinavian names at pp. 116-17 above. It may be that the “head-and-tail” hypocorism was an early phenomenon that became rare in European naming, except perhaps in the labouring classes, as noted in Van Loon’s Netherlandish names.

1.5.4 Hypocorism in Old English: Conclusions

One of the notable features of Willson’s remarkable survey of Icelandic hypocorisms (2007) is that in the material she collected from correspondents there was often a narrative given to explain a particular name. It struck me that many of these were folk-etymological (very often the failure of someone to pronounce a name correctly).⁴⁴¹ But many were not. It is a testament to a fertile naming-culture – with marked formal similarities to that which existed in Anglo-Saxon England – in which people were very interested in the meanings of personal names, even if they did not always understand the processes which gave rise to them. Although I have emphasised the phonological and morphological aspects of Old English hypocorism as generative or transformational processes, there remains the human factor of imaginative engagement with processes of naming. Thus, I endorse Willson’s comment:⁴⁴²

It seems intuitively correct that nicknames are often “blended” forms reflecting paronomasia and a variety of connotations; this is reflected in the narratives about their genesis [...]. Inasmuch as (nick)names are viewed as referring without describing and their transmission is different from the perpetuation of other words in the language, there is a sense in which nicknames can be reinterpreted or created anew each time they are given to a new person. Hence several etymologies can be “correct”.

The two-pronged approach, I shall suggest, may provide the key to solving several textual puzzles and cruces in *Widsith*, the narrative traditions it contains, and the characters in them.

⁴⁴¹ The writer’s labrador Florence (see p. 3 above) is now often called *Nollin*, after the attempt of Louis (aged 2) to pronounce her name.

⁴⁴² Willson 2007: 106.

1.6 The Ethno-Eponym and Multiple Naming: Conclusions

I suggest that in the criticism of texts like *Widsith* and *Beowulf* there has been a general failure to identify the phenomenon of multiple naming and to understand its components. A number of different types of names can be identified, and a single individual may be referred to by any or all of them:

- (1) A birth-name. Often dithematic. Not necessarily meaningful in a syntagmatic way. May exhibit signs of relationship with others by means of alliteration or shared themes.
- (2) A hypocorism. A “pet-name”. Mostly monothematic, occasionally dithematic. Produced by one or more mutations to the birth-name. Sometimes formed to resemble or have the form of an appellative. May take strong or weak form.
- (3) An epithetical name. May be monothematic or dithematic. Referring to some characteristic of the bearer, or his role, status or function.
- (4) An ethno-eponym. The singulative of the bearer’s ethnonym or phylonym, signifying that he is king or clan-chief. May take strong or weak form.

I have also identified two stylistic features which enable us to understand and decode this onomastic information. The first is the “appositive style”, according to which, in verse, the same information is given in different forms in quick succession in one or more coordinated phrases. The second may be called “Covert Name Variation”, in which the same character or tribe is referred to by different names in different parts of the text, without overt signalling that the names refer to the same individual.

To the audience familiar with the characters and peoples in our poems, and with the naming conventions employed, these would have caused no difficulties. It will form an essential part of the argument in this study that, in order to understand the background stories in *Widsith* and *Beowulf*, audiences would have needed a good knowledge of the personnel of various Scandinavian royal kinship groups and of the complex ways in which they intersected. Rather than taking the frequent modern approach – which is to presume that this would have been too difficult, and to conclude that poets “faked” the appearance of genealogical complexity – I explore the coherence of the dynastic background and come to the conclusion that it can only have been feasible if poets and audiences had a keen interest in the ancestry of peoples to whom they were connected or related.

II

The Narratives of *Widsith* and their World

1: The Reception of *Widsith*

1.1 *Widsith*: The Minstrels and the Critics

Widsith is an anonymous and title-less poem found in the Exeter Book,⁴⁴³ an anthology exclusively of Old English verse compiled and written from an unknown number of exemplars in Wessex at some time between about 960 and 975.⁴⁴⁴ As can be seen in Fig. 2 (p. 126 below), it begins with a splendid “drop cap” and display of majuscules, as if it were a work of some consequence. *Widsith* occupies a place in the first half of the anthology, between *Vainglory* and *The Fates of Mortals*. Whatever other thematic or organisational principles underlay the making of the Exeter Book,⁴⁴⁵ these poems – primarily religious but with secular elements – seem to encase the unique *Widsith* in moralising commentary on its theme of the passing of worldly glory (in the case of *The Fates of Mortals*, also in list-like form). If the dates of the composition of the Exeter Book coincide with the beginning of the Benedictine reform in Anglo-Saxon southern England and the rule of its chief sponsor, Edgar (r. 959-75), as we shall see, it is likely that the composition of *Widsith* long pre-dated this. It is a question beyond the scope of the present enquiry as to whether its preservation in the Exeter Book is a testament to its continued appeal to a monastic taste (Benedictine reformed or not) for secular poetry on heroic themes, and it was thought suitable to be included in an anthology judiciously assembled from a wide selection of sources, or to the fact that it happened to be one of the texts lying loose about some

⁴⁴³ Exeter Cathedral Library MS 3501. *Widsith* is on fols 84v to 87r. The MS was given to Exeter Cathedral library by Wulfric, Bishop of Exeter, no later than 1072, and has remained there ever since.

⁴⁴⁴ The range of dates is taken from Conner 1993: 76-77 and Muir 2000: 1, 2 and fn. 1.

⁴⁴⁵ The literature on the compilation of the Exeter Book – arguing all positions between haphazardness and systematic organisation – is copious, and no attempt is made to encapsulate it here. Some scholars (e.g. Conner 1993) regard it as having been compiled from its sources in separate stages, as materials came to hand).

scriptorium which it was thought convenient – for the purposes of general amusement – to copy and bind before disposal of the exemplars (which were now garbage).

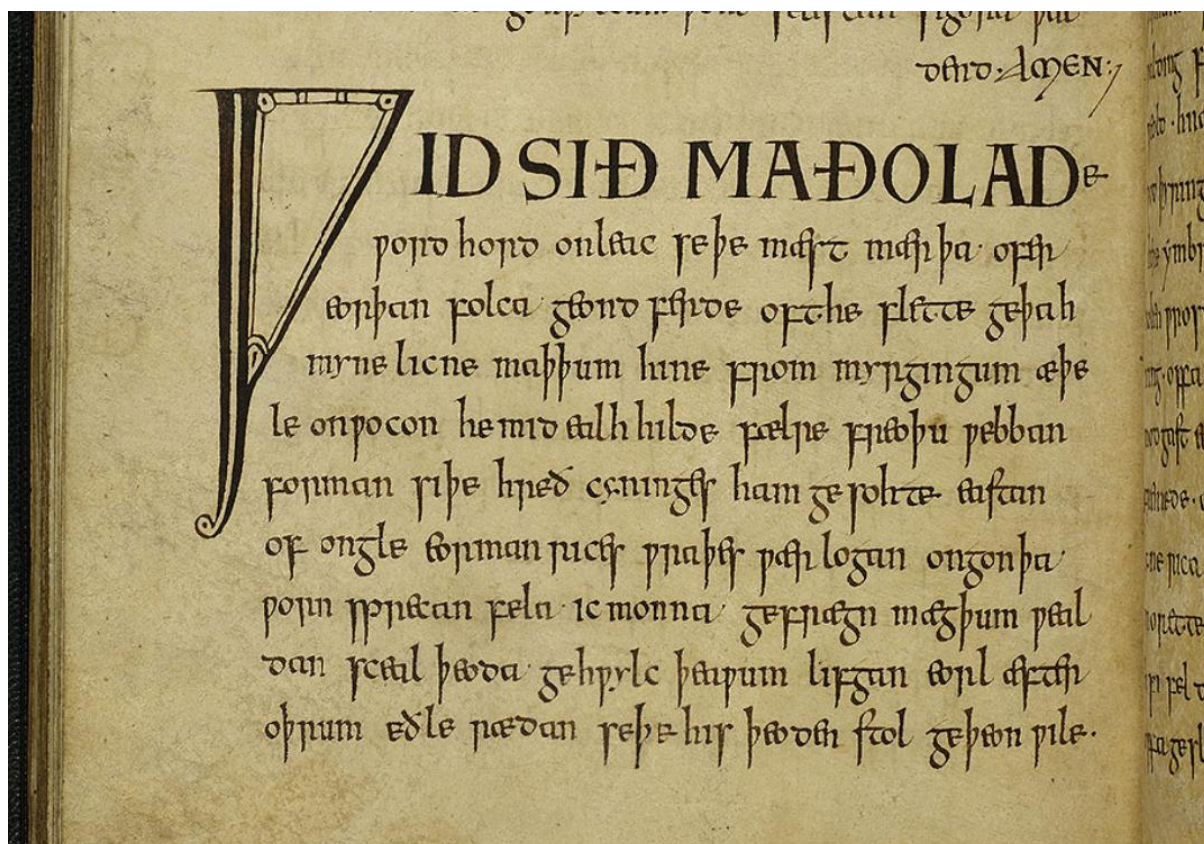


Fig. 2

The beginning of *Widsith* in the Exeter Book (fol. 84v, extract).
Its large capital and uncials shows that it merited a big splash.⁴⁴⁶

While the form and content of *Widsith* have proved an enduring puzzle to scholars, its superficial appearance is easy to describe. It is a short-ish work of 143 alliterative lines without stanzaic form. It is dominated by three lists or catalogues of the names of seventy-odd persons and peoples – mostly kings and the tribes or nations they ruled.⁴⁴⁷ These are of differing lengths and formats, with a notable element of repetition but no obvious principle of organisation or theme – bar the last list, which is mostly about Goths. Among these the poet has scattered a series of allusions to narratives about some of these characters, though the meaning – if any –

⁴⁴⁶ Extract from image of fol. 84v, website *The Exeter Book* (Exeter Cathedral Library and Archives & University of Exeter Digital Humanities Lab, 2021) <<https://theexeterbook.exeter.ac.uk/index.html>> [retrieved 24.4.25].

⁴⁴⁷ The apparent number of individuals is 77 and peoples 76. But these are approximations. The poem contains Biblical names in a few lines that I am inclined to regard as an interpolation on account of their anomalous nature and interference with sense and metre (see pp. 222-25 below). There are some possible repetitions, and some persons and tribes may be referred to by more than one name.

of these allusions is not well understood. The poem also contains, at various points, references to an obscure story about the eponymous Wīdsīþ, a poet who is named by a narrator in the first line (*Wīdsīð maðolade* “Wīdsīþ spoke”), and who is the speaker of the poem from l. 9 until the end. We gather from his account that he travelled with a woman called Ealhild who was to be married to the Ostrogothic king Eormenrīc, after which he returned to his own people, the Myrgingas (who are unknown). The poem concludes with some statements by Wīdsīþ (to his unseen audience) about the breadth of his experience in travelling and praising kings in song, which he seems to advertise as an insurance against being forgotten after one’s death. The untutored reader might be forgiven for thinking that Wīdsīþ is looking for a job and the poem is his CV (and he or she might be right). Wīdsīþ may be the poet’s own invention, placed in a heroic historical setting,⁴⁴⁸ or a character known to tradition about whom many stories – all now lost – were told.

But, for the majority of critics, *Widsith* is a poem of lists. If the contents of the lists can be identified, it has been thought, then the poem’s deeper structure and meaning should be discoverable. Forty years ago now, David Rollman said:⁴⁴⁹

From the beginning *Widsith* has been studied as an artifact rather than as a work of art. One can find little fault with scholars for doing so; the details of *Widsith* are fascinating and intriguing. But unless one is able to stand back from those details a bit to see the general effect they create, one is apt to view *Widsith* as anything but a coherent, unified poem.

He was almost certainly referring to gargantuan studies like Hector Munro Chadwick’s *The Origin of the English Nation* (1907), Mary Clarke’s *Sidelights on Teutonic History* (1911), which use *Widsith* extensively as a historical source, and the hardly less expansive editions of *Widsith* by R. W. Chambers (1912) and Kemp Malone (1962) – together with the voluminous earlier scholarship (mostly in German and Scandinavian languages) on which they were founded and which they recorded copiously in their discussions. As the reader will see, the present study is deeply indebted to their titanic scholarship (if not always in agreement with it). But even though Rollman advised a step backwards to refocus, he too thought that it was the lists in *Widsith* which created its effect. This is a view which Chambers and Malone would probably not have disputed, since they both thought that by means of them *Widsith* achieved a kind of coherence or unity, despite its fissiparous appearance. Chambers said:⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁸ As suggested by Frank 2013: 92 – like the characters Bēowulf and Dēor perhaps.

⁴⁴⁹ Rollman 1982: 431. In Hill’s 1983, 1994 and 2009 editions of *Widsith* she repeated the same view: “Editors and critics have directed most of their attention to elucidating the tribal and personal names” (Hill 2009: 15). This is also true of her own editions (and not something to be criticised).

⁴⁵⁰ Chambers 1912: 165.

We have such a survey of Germanic geography and legend as might have been made by a gleeman who drew his lore from the traditions of the ancient Angel. From this point of view everything drops into its right place: the knowledge shown of the Anglo-Frisian tribes and of their legends, of their immediate neighbours, and the more or less complete ignorance of everything else, with the one exception of Gothic saga, become at once intelligible.

But there remained a problem. He also had to argue that any parts of it which looked like “a jumble such as might have been made by some half-learned and quite stupid person”⁴⁵¹ were owing to interpolation – a critical view which often accompanies catalogue-poems and which has persisted in the case of *Widsith*. Lists, it seems to be presumed, are tempting and easy to interfere with.

Malone set out *Widsith*’s tripartite and allegedly symmetrical form in a schema and echoed Andreas Heusler’s appreciation of its structural subtleties, calling it “a little masterpiece in structure and style”.⁴⁵² But he too labelled its anomalies as interpolations, and his study seems to contain no statement as to what he thought, in sum, the poem ultimately did with its supposedly masterful structure – if anything more than the avoidance of being a formless mess. One is left to draw the conclusion that, like Chambers, he thought it was a vehicle to convey three different “thulas” composed before literacy came to England, the contents of which were intended to be historical and – in some representative way – descriptive of the Germanic pagan past.⁴⁵³ Its coherence was thus derived from the encyclopaedic description which encompassed a world known to Germanic speakers before the age of literacy and which commemorated its heroic glories. It contained lists because, as a feature of their primitive oral culture, they liked primitive, formless things like lists. Thus, Malone and Chambers identified the lists as the most archaic material in the poem (Malone tending to regard the *Widsith* author as more of an editor of these catalogues than a poet), and they dated the earliest of them to the sixth century⁴⁵⁴ – that is, the century before Christianity came to England. It is therefore interesting that lists or catalogues *without* narrative context have been seen by Jack Goody as characteristic of “early literacy” rather than orality.⁴⁵⁵ Goody’s observation was based on non-European cultures in the modern age, but it should at least serve as a check on the unexamined presumption that bare lists are a feature of orality. Ironically, according to Goody’s analysis, bare lists are a sign of

⁴⁵¹ Chambers 1912: 165.

⁴⁵² Malone 1962: 75-76.

⁴⁵³ See, e.g., Malone 1962: 87-88, 105-111. Cf. Clarke (1911: 258), regarding *Widsith* as both “little more than a catalogue of names and facts” but containing events “based on actual occurrences”.

⁴⁵⁴ For his and Chambers’ views on the ancient “thulas”, see Chambers 1912: 165, 177-78, and Malone 1962: 45-46.

⁴⁵⁵ Goody 1987: 98-99, 274-75, 293-95. Cf. the almost entirely contextless *pulur* (lists of ON poetic synonyms) which became attached to MSS of *Snorra Edda*, which are probably learned compilations no, or not much, earlier than the 13th c.

literacy, and the thing which marks *Widsith* out as either oral, or composed in a manner imitative of orality, I suggest, is actually that its lists are contextualised by narrative.

The focus on the catalogues by Chambers and Malone was updated and reformulated (some time ago now) by Nicholas Howe, who argued that *Widsith* – in condensed and allusive form – “represent[s] in catalogue-form the core of those narratives which would together constitute a poetic encyclopaedia of early medieval Germania”, and the catalogue format achieved the “essential structural integrity” of “an articulated principle of order so that the speaker is not buried beneath a torrent of names and stories”, thus allowing poets “the necessary freedom to include various allusions without placing them in an inviolable or inevitable relation”, such that “general resemblance rather than exact parallelism is the criterion of selection and thus of unity”.⁴⁵⁶ The poet-speaker *Wīdsiþ* “must rather preserve the remains of his culture”,⁴⁵⁷ and “there is the need in his poem to contain all that he knows, even if it is only a name”; and by preserving his past “the poet becomes a kind of culture hero”.⁴⁵⁸

Howe asserted that each of the names or episodes in *Widsith* was “an allusion to another poem”, even if the audience (and – one suspects he means – the poet) could not have known them all.⁴⁵⁹ Developing this idea of a partly ignorant poet and audience, Joyce Hill regarded *Widsith* as something between a patchwork and a pastiche. Its original form was unrecoverable from the layers of accretion, but in its final shape it offered its tenth-century audience a largely aural experience by means of its sonorous roll-call of names, even though many of these would have become forgotten in Anglo-Saxon culture; or they were unknowable at any time because the poet had made them up. Thus, in *Beowulf* and *Widsith* the allusions in the texts contain all the information that is necessary to understand the poem, and with respect to *Deor*, “knowledge of the stories behind the allusions [is] not essential for appreciation of the poem”.⁴⁶⁰ Hill’s views are reflected in her successive editions of *Widsith* in *Old English Minor Heroic Poems*,⁴⁶¹ and were in agreement with Norman Blake, who said of *Beowulf*: “Whether all members of [the poet’s] audience knew the stories behind the allusions cannot be proved; it certainly seems unlikely that the audience was as well-informed as we like to think”.⁴⁶² Blake, however, tended to give a late date for the composition of poems like *Widsith* and *Beowulf*,⁴⁶³ and it was under

⁴⁵⁶ Howe 1985: 170.

⁴⁵⁷ Howe 1985: 189.

⁴⁵⁸ Howe 1985: 190.

⁴⁵⁹ Howe 1985: 169.

⁴⁶⁰ See Hill 1984: 312. I am troubled by the idea that one can dismiss as inessential what one does not know.

⁴⁶¹ Hill 1983, 1994 and 2009.

⁴⁶² Blake 1977a: 19.

⁴⁶³ Blake 1977b: 15, 18.

Blake's influence that Muir, the best editor of the Exeter Book, dated *Widsith*'s contents as a whole to no earlier than the Alfredian period.⁴⁶⁴ The views of Blake, Hill and Muir seem to derive added impetus from the belief that *Widsith* is a "late" poem, either adapted to suit the sensibilities and knowledge of a late tenth-century audience (contemporary with the writing of the Exeter Book), or was actually composed at that time by an author who was engaged in nostalgic myth-making about a Germanic past that had never existed; or if that past had existed, the audience for *Widsith* was no longer familiar with it, or needed to be.⁴⁶⁵

These views were part of a turning away from the excesses of earlier scholars – many of them German – who had strained to find evidence of Germanic heathendom in Old English texts – an endeavour heavily criticised by Eric Stanley in his essays published under the title *The Search for Anglo-Saxon Paganism* (1975). John D. Niles applied to *Widsith* and *Beowulf* the theory of "mythistory" – the creation of myths by a fabrication of history – a view adopted by Hill in her third edition of *Widsith*.⁴⁶⁶ The view of heroic poetry as nostalgic fiction is a repeated theme in studies by Frank.⁴⁶⁷

Another critical view, which has also persisted, is that *Widsith* is as disorganised and meaningless as it appears – "a mysterious ragbag of legendary references",⁴⁶⁸ or "an arbitrary assemblage of heroic-legendary lore clumsily placed into the mouth of a wandering poet".⁴⁶⁹ Its perplexing form (or lack of one) has led to a number of critical attempts to undertake the task that Rollman advocated – that is, of arguing for its artistic, or at least thematic, unity. Rollman observed that this had had "mixed results",⁴⁷⁰ and the same may be said today. It has been seen as a begging poem;⁴⁷¹ a celebration of the power of poetry;⁴⁷² an imitation of Carolingian encomia;⁴⁷³ (inevitably) a riddle;⁴⁷⁴ a "mythistory", recasting the myths of a factitious past of openhanded kings, large-gestured heroes and all-knowing singers, to suit the altered ethnic identities and support the political settlement of tenth-century Anglo-

⁴⁶⁴ Muir 2000: I, 40.

⁴⁶⁵ See Niles and the concept of "mythistory" (2007: esp. 92, 108) – a view adopted by Hill in her fourth edition (2009: 1). Nostalgic fiction is also a theme in Frank 1981, 1982, 1993, and 2013. Niles dates *Widsith* to the 10th c., and arguably so does Hill.

⁴⁶⁶ Niles 2007: esp. 92, 108; Hill 2009: 1.

⁴⁶⁷ See Frank 1981, 1982, 1993, and 2013.

⁴⁶⁸ Brooke 1963: 111.

⁴⁶⁹ Neidorf 2022: 14.

⁴⁷⁰ Rollman himself: 1982: 431.

⁴⁷¹ French 1945, Meindl 1964, Eliason 1966.

⁴⁷² Rollman 1982.

⁴⁷³ Conner 1993: 150-59. However, I see no resemblances, and Malone's convincing dating of the archetype to the Merovingian period (see p. 131 below) would make such influence impossible.

⁴⁷⁴ Creed 1975.

Scandinavian England;⁴⁷⁵ a portrayal of a poet deliberately cast as reminiscent of the god Wōden (or Óðinn) in his name, supernatural lifespan and interest in “doomed” monarchs.⁴⁷⁶ But no single view has established itself as dominant. The present study takes issue with these approaches and their underlying assumptions.

As to the dating of *Widsith*, the linguistic and palaeographic arguments set out by Malone in his 1962 edition have seldom been addressed and never – as far as I am aware – refuted.⁴⁷⁷ They establish conclusively, I suggest, that *Widsith* achieved its written form in Anglian England by the end of the seventh century or the beginning of the eighth, and the Exeter Book text preserves traces of the language and orthography of an Anglian archetype of that time. Set against this is the unlikelihood of poets or scribes of later times either having the phonological or palaeographic knowledge, or the impulse, to create archaic and dialectal spellings and to scatter them throughout a text at random.⁴⁷⁸

If it is contended that an audience cannot have known all the characters in *Widsith*, this would seem to be refuted, or at least rendered highly questionable, by the vast array of characters with which medieval German audiences must have been familiar in their heroic poems, as catalogued by Gillespie (1973), and the populous contents of the numerous and varying Icelandic genealogical traditions found in *Landnámabók* and the kings’ and family sagas, which are testament to a hinterland full of people and incidents with which contemporary audiences were not only familiar but engaged. The Danish poet who celebrated Bēowulf’s victory over Grendel is described as *gydda gemyndig // sē ðe ealfela / ealdgesegena // worn gemunde* “good at remembering poems, one who remembered a great number of the very many old stories” (*Beowulf* 868b-70a). While it has been suggested that portraits like this, and that of the poet Wīdsīþ, were nostalgic fictions,⁴⁷⁹ the Irish *ollamh*, as a professional qualification,

⁴⁷⁵ Niles 2007: 92, 108.

⁴⁷⁶ Neidorf 2022 – a development of the idea of Schlauch (1931) that Wīdsīþ lived a superhuman lifespan, encompassing the times of Ermanaric (d. 370s) and Alboin (d. 572). See also Pollington 2024: 206-11. The idea that Wīdsīþ was Wōden goes back to Benjamin Thorpe and Henry Sweet, although several more recent scholars have seen parallels (Neidorf 2022: 4, 17 and references). We know next to nothing about Wōden in Anglo-Saxon England (he is named in only two texts, *Maxims I* and *The Nine Herbs Charm*), but if any poet resembled the Scandinavian mythological Óðinn, the reason might equally be that the literary character Óðinn – god of poetry and chanter of spells – was modelled on human poets.

⁴⁷⁷ Malone 1962: 112-116. See also Neidorf 2013a, especially his discussion of the issues between the “early-” and “late-daters” (2013: 165-67) and his observation that “beyond assertions concerning the lack of evidence for an early date” the early-daters “offer no substantial engagement with the dating arguments of earlier *Widsið* scholars” (*ibid.*: 166). He agrees with Malone on an early date, but advances further arguments which I find less convincing than the purely linguistic evidence. Arguing against Neidorf on metrical grounds is Weiskott 2015; and against Weiskott, Pascual 2016. Levin has it both ways (2020: 28).

⁴⁷⁸ See Ringe and Taylor 2014: 7, generalising about surviving OE poetry “clearly written in an Anglian dialect or dialects [and] transcribed into (late) WS”. I would regard *Widsith* as an example of this.

⁴⁷⁹ E.g. Hill 1984, 2009: 1-2; Frank 1993; Niles 2007: 186.

was required to know 350 tales.⁴⁸⁰ *Widsith*, however, requires familiarity with only seventy or so characters and probably a lesser number of narratives, and *Beowulf* about the same number (some of them the same people). In neither case is it incredible that their audiences knew who they all were, whom they were related to, and what they did. Indeed, the dynastic *dramatis personae* of *Beowulf* are to a great extent interconnected by kin-relations or by interaction within narratives, so that it may be artificial and mistaken in any case to think that each name in *Widsith* betokens a discrete story to be remembered. This scholarly scepticism about the memoriosness of the consumers of popular literature may also be out of date, since modern readers seem quite comfortable with extraordinarily populous “story-universes”.⁴⁸¹

However, perhaps the strongest argument against the approach exemplified by Blake, Hill and others is that Wīdsīþ the poet promises his prospective patrons eternal fame through his poetic skill. If the people he mentioned were utterly obscure, or were his own fictions unknown to any but himself, the poem would be pointless, if not absurd.

I contend that what all of the studies just mentioned have in common – and any since *Widsith*’s first editing by Benjamin Thorpe (1842) – is that they do not treat *Widsith* as a poem telling a story. A recent essay, while focusing on the poem’s narrative thread, in order to highlight the importance of Ealhild as a female royal addressee and rewarder of poet-historians, states that “*Widsith* and its poet-historian are not interested in narrative history”.⁴⁸² A more recent study says:⁴⁸³

To have been able to compose the story independently in as historically and factually plausible a way as we find in the poem [*Beowulf*], such an author must have had access to a whole array of Scandinavian traditional material. And yet the only material of that kind that survives in Old English is the poem *Widsith*, which consists of unsorted lists of peoples and rulers of northern Europe and elsewhere, but contains no information about the various historical contexts that make up the narrative of *Beowulf*.

With respect to both of these comments about *Widsith*, it is the central contention of this study that nothing could be further from the truth, and that many of the names in *Widsith* – particularly

⁴⁸⁰ Jones and Jones 1989: xi.

⁴⁸¹ AI tells me that on a *Wikipedia* page devoted to the novels of George R. R. Martin’s *A Song of Ice and Fire* saga, there are 540 named characters, and that there are over 900 named characters in the “legendarium” of the works of J. R. R. Tolkien. A Google query about Pokémon characters tells me that there are 1025 of them. One might also mention the populous and intersecting spheres of Marvel and DC Comic superheroes, so popular at the time of writing. As to “story-universes” for the literate, the Bible is arguably the greatest of them, with many more characters and stories than our OE poems.

⁴⁸² Lees 2019: 314. Although the poem makes clear that the male Eormanric rewards Wīdsīþ generously too, and before anyone else. Both kings and queens were expected to be generous. Similarly, Johnston: “aber es ist zugleich auch nicht-episch, weil es im eigentlichen Sinne nichts erzählt”, “but [*Widsith*] is also non-narrative because in a strict sense it tells no story” (2024: 187).

⁴⁸³ Gräslund 2022: 227.

those which centre round the Offa-story – are characters in interconnecting narratives against a wide geopolitical background which were known to both poet and audience whenever *Widsith* was composed.⁴⁸⁴

1.2 *Wīdsīð maðolade*: What did Wīdsīþ Actually Say?

As I have said, studies of *Widsith* do not treat it as a narrative poem. However, I regard it as one – and on two levels. The second level is the background world in which the poem is set, which will occupy most of the discussion that follows. But the first is the story of Wīdsīþ the poet and his mission, which takes place against this background. The main events and personnel of this story can be deduced from the text of *Widsith*, and so I set out here what I understand it to be, so that the reader may more easily follow my analysis of the world in which it happens.

The first words of the poem are narratorial: *Wīdsīð maðolade* “Wīdsīþ spoke”. But Wīdsīþ himself does not actually speak until l.10. Before this, it is the anonymous narrator who introduces him and sketches out his story. This narrator does not tell us precisely who Wīdsīþ was (there is no *wē gefrūgnon* – “we have heard of” – formula), or what audience he is addressing. Either we are expected to know already, or these are things we have to work out.⁴⁸⁵

Wīdsīþ – “wide or far journey” – is an apt name,⁴⁸⁶ since he has travelled more extensively than any other poet and has been rewarded with many a gift for his work (ll. 1-4a). The information which constitutes his story and its background I set out as follows:

- (1) Wīdsīþ was born into a noble family among the tribe called Myrgingas (ll. 4b-5).
- (2) The Myrgingas lived somewhere in Jutland which included the estuary of the river Eider, called *Fīfeldōr* (ll. 42-43).
- (3) The king of the Myrgingas was Meaca (l. 23). But Wīdsīþ’s lord (*frēa Myrginga* “lord of the Myrgingas”) was Ēadgils (l. 96).⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸⁴ Which, interestingly, bears no relation to the account of Scandinavia and the Baltic area included in the Preface to the OE version of Orosius’s *Seven Books of History against the Pagans* (composed c. 900) which seems to be based on the anecdotal accounts of two seafarers, the Norwegian Ōthhere (= ON *Öttarr*) and the otherwise unknown Wulfstān. But why rely on the anecdotes of individuals if oral tradition supplied a rich heritage of knowledge about this region and its peoples?

⁴⁸⁵ I use the text and lineation of *Widsith* in Hill 2009, supplying my own diacritics.

⁴⁸⁶ *Widsith* was also a recorded personal name. There was a *Uidsith* in *DLV*, and an abbot called *Widsiðus*. See Rollason and Rollason 2007: II, 157.

⁴⁸⁷ The formula in this part of the poem (ll. 18-35) is *X wēold Y* (“king X ruled people Y”), suggesting that the rule of these kings is past.

- (4) Wīdsīþ (and Scilling (l. 103), if he was a colleague rather than a name for Wīdsīþ's lyre)⁴⁸⁸ are given the job of escorting (ll. 6-8) Ealhild, a female "peace-weaver" (*freoðowebbe*, l. 6) and princess of Langobardic birth (ll. 70-74, 98), to be a queen (ll. 98, 102) to Eormenrīc, the wrathful and treacherous king of the Ostrogoths (ll. 5-9), living somewhere in or to the east of Angel (l. 8).⁴⁸⁹ Ealhild is said to be the daughter of Ēadwine (l. 98), and Ælfwine of Italy (*Eatul*) is said to be the son of Ēadwine (ll. 70, 74). Ealhild and Ælfwine are thus brother and sister.
- (5) Wīdsīþ stays with Eormenrīc for some time (with Scilling), pleasing Eormenrīc with song (ll. 103-08), and being rewarded richly by him (ll. 88-92) and by Ealhild (ll. 97-102), whom he has presumably successfully delivered.
- (6) After this, Wīdsīþ tours the (apparently extensive) Gothic lands, meeting notables (many of whom are known from literary tradition), and he experiences (or hears of) their war with the Huns of Ætla (Attila) in a wood on or near the river Vistula (ll. 109-30).
- (7) Wīdsīþ returns to Ēadgils and presents him with his earnings. Ēadgils returns to him land which Wīdsīþ calls *mīn fæder ēþel* "my father's hereditary estate" – which we guess had either been under Ēadgils's stewardship in Wīdsīþ's absence, or was a reward in the form of a new grant to him of land once held by his father (ll. 93-96).

It is not said what happens to Wīdsīþ, Ealhild or Ēadgils after that. However, since he mentions visiting people as far-flung as the Scots and Picts in the west, the Norwegian Amothingas in the north-west, the Finns in the north-east, the Huns in the east, and the Romans of Rome and Constantinople in the south – far away from his Myrging homeland – we may suppose that by the time of his speaking in the poem he had become an itinerant.⁴⁹⁰

In the final section of the poem (ll. 131-43), Wīdsīþ concludes his address to his audience. However, although he is the subject (*ic*) of the sentence at ll. 131-34, it is not clear whether he continues speaking to the end, or whether the narrator inserts himself silently at some point to observe gnominically that generous rulers are best loved by their subjects, and travelling poets

⁴⁸⁸ *Scilling* was a personal name. See *PASE* (an 8th-c. West Saxon *praefectus*), and also Briggs (2024: 240), the name underlying Shillingbottom in Lancashire. See *Bosworth-Toller*, *scillan* (v), inferred from participial *scyllende*, in a gloss for *concrepans* "resound, clash, strike upon" (*Lewis and Short*, s.v. *concrepo*), hence *scillan* "to make a noise (by striking?)". See also *scyl* (adj.), as in *The Riming Poem* 27b, *scyl wæs hearpe* "loudly resonant was the harp". Hill thought that *Scilling* was probably the harp (2009: 121). I would agree. Since Eormanrīc gave Wīdsīþ a ring worth 600 shillings (ll. 90-92) for his performances, *Scilling* aptly captures the sense of an instrument that both "shilled" in terms of sound and earned "shillings". See also fns. 1507-08 (pp. 419-20) below.

⁴⁸⁹ The phrase *ēastan of Ongle* has been interpreted variously. See discussion at pp. 238-39 below.

⁴⁹⁰ Near-eastern peoples are named in ll. 82-84, which I regard as an interpolation. See pp. 222-25 below.

who deal in encomia are what such open-handed, poetry-appreciating kings need, if they wish to earn praise for their deeds that will last long after they die.⁴⁹¹

“[...]
 Swā ic þæt symle onfond on þære feringe, 131
 þæt sē biþ lēofast londbūendum,
 sē þe him gōd syleð gumena rīce 133
 tō gehealdenne, þenden hē hēr leofað.
 Swā scriþende gesceapum hweorfað 135
 glēomen gumena geond grunda fela,
 þearfe secgað, þoncword sprecað 137
 simle sūð oþþe norð, sumne gemētað
 gydda glēawne, geofum unhnēawne. 139
 Sē þe fore duguþe wile dōm āræran,
 eorlscipe æfnan, oþþæt eal scæceð, 141
 leoht ond lif somod, lof sē gewyrceð,
 hafað under heofonum hēahfæstne dōm”. 143

“[...] So I always found, in that journeying, that he is dearest to the people of his country, he who gives them good things in order to maintain rule over people, while he lives here [*sc.* in this world]. Travelling thus, the bards of the people wander about as fate decrees, they express their needs throughout many lands, speak words of gratitude constantly, south or north, meet some person discerning as to poems, not stingy with gifts. He who may wish, in the presence of the veteran warriors, to raise up a reputation, accomplish noble deeds until all passes away, light and life together – generates praise [or “makes songs of praise”] [and] has under the heavens a very enduring reputation”.⁴⁹²

This revisits the sentiment at the beginning of his address:⁴⁹³

“Fela ic monna gefrægn mægþum wealdan. 10
 Sceal þeoda gehwylc þeawum lifgan,
 eorl æfter oþrum eðle rædan, 12
 sē þe his þeodenstōl geþeōn wile.”

“I have heard of many people ruling nations. Every king ought to live according to good customs, one noble man after another rule his homeland, if he wishes his throne to prosper.”

This leaves hanging the implication of what happens to kings who practise bad customs and/or fail to ensure their succession, and it opens the question – with respect to the instances he cites – of which category each falls into.

⁴⁹¹ My text and punctuation.

⁴⁹² Lines 140–43 are gnomic in tone. They are also artfully constructed so that in each of the phrases – *dōm āræran*, *eorlscipe æfnan*, *lof gewyrceð* and *hafað* [...] *dōm* – the subject *sē* (l. 140a) could apply either to the king who did the deeds of fame or to the poet who praised him for them.

⁴⁹³ Text as in MS, my punctuation. Unlike several editors, I do not emend MS <þeoda> to *þeodna* (gen. pl. of *þeoden* “king”). I suggest that it is the gen. pl. of *þeod* which here meant “king”. It mirrors the forms and meanings of its synonym *lēod*, which were “a people”, “a person of a people” and “a king of a people” (*Bosworth-Toller*, s.v.). Both words, I suggest, function as generic ethno-eponyms in which the singulative of the word for “people” meant “king”.

With respect to the question of religion, in l. 133 I read *gōd* “good”, though all other commentators read *god* “God”.⁴⁹⁴ Muir notes that the sentiment in ll. 132-34 is “Christian in tone” and the reflection on human kings is structurally parallel to ll. 10-13.⁴⁹⁵ Malone notes that the alliterative stress on *hēr* in l. 134b – *penden hē hēr leofað* “while he lives here” – is “a clerical touch with its implied contrast between the kingdoms of earth and the kingdom of heaven”.⁴⁹⁶ However, I disagree: in my view the character *Widsiþ* is inviting kings to do great things, to obtain his services to advertise them, and thus to ensure that they are remembered after they die – thus joining the ranks of former kings whom his praise has caused to be remembered. This is not a Christian sentiment. The transitoriness of earthly life is an obvious fact, and awareness of it can hardly have been the preserve of Christian teaching. But the question of how to ensure a lasting reputation after one’s death by martial feats is a practical question to which heroic poetry and the scop who purveyed it supplied an answer that had little or nothing to do with Christianity – or with paganism for that matter. I therefore do not read *Widsiþ* as a poem expressing any religious sentiment, whether heathen or Christian – nor as saying anything that Anglo-Saxon clerics or Christians living in the eighth century would have found repugnant. We might remember that *Beowulf* ends with entirely positive praise of its hero, the final word of which is *lofgeornost* “the eagerest for praise”.⁴⁹⁷

But in the narrative of *Widsiþ* something must have happened to *Widsiþ* himself, since he seems to be itinerant and seeking employment from his anonymous addressee, speaking to him or her as if everything is past and gone. Once, he seems to say, he was the happy vassal of *Ēadgils*, king of the *Myrgingas*, and the holder of hereditary land (ll. 93-96). The only thing which seems to have remained the same is that the *Angles* and a people called the *Swæfe* still hold their border on the *Eider*, where *Offa* placed it (ll. 43-44).

It can be seen from the non-sequential line-numbers in the above summary that the poem does not tell the story in a linear fashion. In much smaller compass than *Beowulf*, but to

⁴⁹⁴ See e.g. *ASPR*, III, 302.

⁴⁹⁵ Muir 2000: II, 549.

⁴⁹⁶ Malone 1962: 57.

⁴⁹⁷ See *Beowulf* 3178-82, giving *Bēowulf* praise that would have graced a Christian king as much as a pagan one (consistent, I suggest, with the poet’s unstintingly positive portrayal of him throughout):

Swā begnornodon	Gēata lēode	3178
hlāfordes hryre,	heorðgenēatas,	
cwædon þæt hē wære	wyruldcyninga	3180
manna mildust	ond monðwærust,	
lēodum liðost	ond lofgeornost.	3182

So the people of the *Gēats*, his hearth-companions, mourned the death of their lord, saying that, of the kings of the world, he was the most generous of men and the most agreeable, the gentlest to his people and the eagerest for praise.

a much greater degree, *Widsith* lacks the “steady advance”⁴⁹⁸ that modern readers have become habituated to in a literary culture in which many of the narratives are new – in novels, plays and films – and proceed by means of incremental, structured and chronologically linear revelation of new information to their audiences or readerships. However, in a culture in which all the stories were traditional and thus familiar, this would be impossible (as would suspense). With an audience who knew the many stories and their endings, the narrative techniques to be expected would be ones which took into account their knowledge: allusion, foreshadowing (rather than suspense), comparison and contrast, dramatic irony and gnomic reflection. These are also techniques which do not rely for their effects on linearity, and so they permit a “fractured” narrative style which did not risk losing the attention of the audience. These, at any rate, are the narrative techniques which I suggest are dominant in the aesthetic of *Beowulf*, and we find them in *Widsith* too. Thus, even if characters like Wīdsīþ, Bēowulf or Dēor were – as is sometimes argued – inventions inserted into an established and traditional scenario, the audience would still have been able to orient itself to such novelties by their familiarity with the narrative background.

The question of structure can be addressed briefly here. *Pace* Malone, I suggest that the structure of *Widsith* is not based on different types of list; rather, the different types of list represent different phases of Wīdsīþ’s narrative, and it is the underlying narrative which gives the poem its structure:

- (1) The introduction of Wīdsīþ and his glorious embassy with Ealhhild to the dangerous Eormenrīc.
- (2) Glorious kings of the past (in Wīdsīþ’s repertoire), including the reign of Offa (Wīdsīþ’s contemporary): *X wēold Y*.
- (3) The extensive travels of the dispossessed Wīdsīþ: *ic wæs mid Y*.
- (4) The last phase of Wīdsīþ’s success before ultimate failure, returning through the kingdom of the Ostrogoths: the list of Goths.
- (5) Wīdsīþ’s philosophical reflections on exile and adversity; his request for employment.

Within the intricacies of *Widsith*, I shall argue, is a narrative of the experiences of the poet Wīdsīþ deliberately and artfully set against a wider background of the legendary history of Jutland, at the centre of which was the story of the truly heroic Offa of Angel.

⁴⁹⁸ “Lack of Steady Advance” is the title of a whole subsection of the “Introduction” in Klaeber’s third edition of *Beowulf* (1950: lvii-lviii).

2: The Man from Ongle: Offa and the Angles

2.1 Sources and Materials

The suggestions that the story of Offa of Angel is either central to *Widsith* or could be recoverable as part of the proto-story of England might seem unpromising. Offa's story is found in only a small number of sources.⁴⁹⁹ If this scanty collection contains parts of the same basic tale, the numerous discrepancies and lacunae they contain – in addition to their wide distribution in time and place – make them seemingly impossible to reconcile.⁵⁰⁰ According to Shippey: “The only two characters who in [*Beowulf*] might conceivably have a link to historic England are Offa and Hengest. Offa, however, is a dead-end as regards connecting poem and real-life context”.⁵⁰¹ This thesis takes a profoundly different view. But at any rate, in this section I provide a brief description of the sources for the story of Offa, including their chronological order, to provide the reader with an overview which, I hope, will enable the navigation of the texts in the argument that follows.

Unsurprisingly, the scholarly focus has remained on the most substantial surviving product of the Old English heroic tradition, *Beowulf* (and, as we have noted, *Widsith* causes mostly perplexity). As Axel Olrik said, “The Danes appear as the chief branch of the race to which the [*Beowulf*] poet belongs. No other people occupies a like place in the heroic traditions of the Anglo-Saxons”.⁵⁰² However, it is a central contention of this study that this *Beowulf*-centric view of Anglo-Saxon literature is mistaken. Despite the scattered nature of the evidence, I shall argue that the legend of Offa of Angel was also of great importance to the English, and furthermore that we can attempt to reconstruct it. But first I shall give a brief account of the textual sources for the story of Offa, together with their dates and places of composition.

⁴⁹⁹ Swanton (2010) contains edited and translated texts of many of the sources of the Offa story: *VOD*, Sven Aggesen's *BHD*, Saxo Grammaticus's *GD*, the anonymous Danish *AnnR*, and Layamon's *Brut*.

⁵⁰⁰ See the studies of the Offa-story in Olrik (1919) and Rickert (1904-05). Swanton gives an account of the English and Danish sources for Offa I (2010: xlvi-lxxxix), but this is subordinated to his main concern, which is to explain them as source-material for *VOD*, and to relate their motifs and themes to the life and reign of Offa II. The present study goes further, both with respect to the explanation of Offa's story as part of the narrative world of *Widsith*, and in reconstructing his story from its various reflexes and accounting for their origins and interrelationships.

⁵⁰¹ Shippey (2022: 103-04). However, Shippey thinks that this Offa fought one-vs.-two *against* the Swāfe (2022: 104), which I regard as an error. The poem (l. 44) tells us that the Swāfe held the border on the Eider with the Angles and were thus their allies. The distinction is fundamental to the understanding of the Offa-story and hence to the narrative of *Widsith*.

⁵⁰² Olrik 1919: 23.

The date of the composition of *Widsith* is unknown. But, as we have seen, there are good grounds for supposing it to have been put into writing around or perhaps shortly before the year 700 in Anglian England.⁵⁰³ *Beowulf* was probably composed in the first half of the eighth century.⁵⁰⁴ *Widsith* contains a passage which alludes – not very clearly – to a story of how Offa wooed a foreign bride and was subsequently a wise ruler. The same passage names several people associated with him. Offa’s name, and those of his lineage, also appear in versions of the Mercian regnal lists in *AngCol*,⁵⁰⁵ the composition of which is dated to the latter part of the eighth century,⁵⁰⁶ and in *ASC*, a compilation of the Alfredian period⁵⁰⁷ which includes genealogical material of varying and unknown ages. The Mercian list has been argued to be a document created or modified to reflect Offa II’s determination to ensure the succession of his son,⁵⁰⁸ presumably by the construction of an impressive pedigree. Two characters, *Freawine* and *Wig*, who are part of Offa I’s story, appear in Æthelwulf’s extended West Saxon regnal list in *ASC* (s.a. 855/56), a creation of the Alfredian period.⁵⁰⁹

Three medieval Danish sources recount the early, glorious part of his life only: Sven Aggesen’s *Brevis Historia Dacie* (*BHD*), dated to c. 1188;⁵¹⁰ Sven’s younger contemporary, Saxo Grammaticus’s *Gesta Danorum* (*GD*), c. 1188 – after 1208;⁵¹¹ and the anonymous

⁵⁰³ See p. 131 above, referring to the unrefuted palaeographic and phonological arguments of Malone 1962.

⁵⁰⁴ The dating of *Beowulf* has been controversial. Some date it to the 10th c. or not much earlier: see e.g. Chase (1982) and Niles (2007). More recently scholars have dated it to the early 8th c.: Lapidge (2000), Clark (2009), and the studies in Neidorf (2014). I prefer a date in the early 8th c., following Leneghan (2020: 6, and fn. 18 and references), and fortified by Lapidge (2000), Clark (2009) and the essays in Neidorf (2014). Mees, with some justice, observes that late dating of *Beowulf* was a vogue of the 1980s and 90s which has passed with the retirements of its advocates (2023: 179).

⁵⁰⁵ This is found in the following MSS (all except R are edited in Dumville 1976):

MS V: London, British Library Cotton MS Vespasian B VI, fols. 109r-v. Mercian, early 9th c.

MS C: Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 183, fols. 65r-67r. South-western English, first half 10th c.

MS T: London, British Library Cotton MS Tiberius B v, vol. I, fols. 22v-23r. Canterbury, first half 11th c.

MS R: Textus Roffensis, Rochester Cathedral Library MS A.3.5. Rochester, soon after 1122, from T or the same exemplar as T.

⁵⁰⁶ Dumville (1976: 45-50). The “Anglian Collection”, containing the Mercian List, was compiled 765×769 in Northumbria, or not later than 787×796 in Offa II’s Mercia.

⁵⁰⁷ See Sisam 1953a. See also Keynes (2014: 37-39), who dates the initial compilation of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (from various sources) to the late 9th c., in Alfred’s reign, the text of which was made ready for promulgation and use in 892. The earliest surviving MS is the A MS from Winchester, dated to the early 890s.

⁵⁰⁸ See Dumville 1976: 45-50. Ecgrif succeeded his father in 796, but died of illness little more than four months later.

⁵⁰⁹ Sisam 1953a.

⁵¹⁰ See Christiansen (1992: 26), supported by Friis-Jensen and Fisher (2015: I, xxxv).

⁵¹¹ Friis-Jensen and Fisher (2015: I, xxxv).

chronicle history *Annales Ryenses* (*AnnR*) from the late thirteenth century, a text partly dependent on *GD*.⁵¹²

Roughly contemporary with the Danish histories are two English ones, the historical epic chronicle-poem *Brut* by Layamon (c. 1200),⁵¹³ and the *Vitae Offarum Duorum* (*VOD*) from the mid-thirteenth century.⁵¹⁴ This last is by an unknown monk of St. Albans abbey, a curious double account in Latin of the alleged lives of Offa I and his later historical namesake, Offa II, king of Mercia (r. 757-96).

Although the question is a complex one, traces of Offa I and his story are also detectable in Icelandic sources.⁵¹⁵ These consist of a handful of genealogies, undated but probably late twelfth or early thirteenth century, since they are related to narrative traditions found in Arngrímur Jónsson's seventeenth-century epitome of Danish history (*Rerum Danicarum Fragmenta* – *RDF*), which included a summary of the lost vernacular *Skjöldunga saga*, which has been dated about 1180-1200 – contemporary with Sven, Saxo and roughly contemporary with *VOD*.⁵¹⁶ There are also some obscure passages in Snorri Sturluson's *Ynglinga saga* (part of his *Heimskringla*, written c. 1220-35);⁵¹⁷ and in the Eddaic poem *Rígsþula*, which has in my view proved undatable according to any reliable criteria, except the *terminus ante quem* of its inclusion in the Icelandic Codex Wormianus (mid- to later fourteenth century).⁵¹⁸

Broadly, the analysis of Offa I's story in this study is that it served as a glorious prelude to later, disastrous events for the Continental kingdom of Angel as a result of which a large

⁵¹² Swanton 2010: lii. See Leegaard Knudsen [undated], dating it to the late 1280s or later. Saxo is said to be one of its sources. See Mortensen (2016), who dates it to shortly after 1288.

⁵¹³ Swanton 2010: l. However, this is very different from any of the other texts. Layamon was adapting the Anglo-Norman *Roman de Brut* of Wace in which *Gurmund* appears. Even if he was supposed to be Wærmund the father of Offa, there is no mention of Offa. It therefore has no value for comparison. See fn. 1166 (p. 292 below).

⁵¹⁴ Swanton 2010: xxi, xxiii. *VOD* is preserved in the 13th-c. London, British Library Cotton MS Vitellius A XX, and the mid-13th-c. London, British Library Cotton MS Nero D I. Therefore, composed not later than c. 1250. Rickert regards it as from the early 13th c. (1904-05: 30).

⁵¹⁵ There is a small number of Icelandic texts containing the story of Wærmund and Offa, taken from Saxo's account. See Lavender (2018) and Power (1984). As these are derivative from Saxo, whom I deal with extensively, I have not considered them further as independent sources.

⁵¹⁶ *ÍF* 35: li-lij. A very tentative dating, given a *terminus ante quem* of 1220 because Snorri drew on it in his *Edda* and *Ynglinga saga*, reckoned to have been composed about then. Henceforth I shall refer to Arngrímur's text as *RDF/Skjöldunga saga*, except where referring specifically to its lost source, which I call *Skjöldunga saga*.

⁵¹⁷ *ÍF* 26: xxix.

⁵¹⁸ The Codex Wormianus (Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, MS AM 242 fol. – henceforth “W”) is dated to the mid- to later 14th c. (*Eddukvæði*: I, 15, 278-79), or to 1340-70 (Handrit.is <https://handrit.is/en/manuscript/view/AM02-0242#section_5> [retrieved 19.2.22]). See also Dronke 1997: 178-79, 203, 207. She dated *Rígsþula* to the early years of the 11th c. In *Eddukvæði*: I, 279 it is assigned to the 12th c. The criteria used, however, have generally been subjective. Scholars who feel that it is heathen and mythological give an earlier date; those who think it reflects Scandinavian politics a later one. I think it is late 12th c. See pp. 382-400 below.

proportion of its population emigrated to Britain. It is thus a part of the story of the so-called *Adventus Saxonum*, or the arrival in mid-fifth-century Britain of large number of migrants – ethnically and/or linguistically Germanic – from southern Jutland and the North Sea coast. The cause, nature and magnitude of this relocation and settlement is still a cause of academic controversy. However, this study is not concerned with what happened in reality (so far as this can be discerned) but with what the makers and shapers of the legend of Offa of Angel thought had happened. And these include not only Anglo-Saxon poets of the eighth century, but the creators of Anglo-Saxon genealogies, and also the Scandinavian authors who – as will be argued – sought to construct a glorious history for Danish kings of the twelfth century, and for English monks of about the same time who sought to explain how many Offas had or had not been responsible for the foundation of their abbey of St. Albans. In one way or another, all were in the business of using Offa of Angel’s story to their particular ends.

2.2 English Genealogical Traditions

The story of Offa in *Widsith* does not stand alone. He, his forebears and his descendants can also be found in the various versions of the Mercian regnal list – the list of Offa II – in *AngCol* and *ASC*. The Anglo-Saxon regnal list was not a list of kings necessarily, but of the fathers and forefathers of a particular king. It has been accepted since Kenneth Sisam’s groundbreaking study of Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies – reinforced by the later work of David Dumville – that these lists were often political documents, compiled and constructed to suit the image, political agenda and dynastic interests of the figure who was the most recent in them, and of any of his successors who wished to lay claim to the same patrilineal legacy.⁵¹⁹ No doubt, if any contest arose as to which member of the *stirps regia* (the *cynn* “kindred”) should be king (*cynning*, “member of the *cynn*”)⁵²⁰ – and whoever it was who had the power to make the determination⁵²¹ – any candidate from within the eligible royal family would be crucially assisted by a lineage which established either the legitimacy or the superiority of his claim.

No issue is taken with the broad thrust of Sisam’s and Dumville’s views in this study – at least in principle. But I explore one implication of it, which is that the creators and adapters

⁵¹⁹ See Sisam 1953a and Dumville 1976, 1977 and 1986.

⁵²⁰ See Green (1998: 130-31) on the development of the Germanic concept of “king” and its terminology.

⁵²¹ See Chadwick’s admirable account (1905: 356-66). There was no Anglo-Saxon “constitution” according to which a person would be chosen as king in accordance with the law. Rather, like leaders of the British Conservative party up to the 1970s, a king would “emerge” from among the candidates supposed to be eligible. Such a process would no doubt include canvassing support by persuasion, cajolery, bribery, threats and/or violence – that is, where the matter was not decided by a coup or assassination.

of such lists must have had information which dictated the inclusion or exclusion of persons in them, or their rearrangement. One of the possible sources of such information was traditional narrative, which might encompass inherited information about their political, dynastic and ethnic affiliations, but also stories about them in what we would call literature. The regnal list of Æthelwulf, king of the West Saxons (r. 839-58), which is included in the MSS of *ASC*, is longer than any other. Not only did it go back to Noah and thence to Adam, it contained many more names than the others, including some we recognise from surviving narratives in Old English, such as *Finn*, *Scyld*, *Bēow* and *Heremōd*. I suggest the Offa-tradition, as examined in this study, also offers the opportunity to examine the relationship of narrative with genealogical material and to investigate the roles that persons in the regnal lists may have played in dynastic and/or popular legend.

While scholars – quite properly – are open to the idea that regnal lists might be manipulated in pursuance of dynastic or political interests, it often seems to be the case that less interest is shown in the narratives which lay behind the lists and their characters, and the role such narratives might have played in the construction of genealogies. As we have seen with the name *Offa*, which appears twice in the East Saxon list,⁵²² one way of approaching such names – suspected to be inserted – is to explain them as deliberate (and somewhat crude) intrusions intended, by their presence, to signal some contemporary ethnic, political or dynastic allegiance, or state of overlordship or vassalage.⁵²³ As I hope to have demonstrated with respect to the Essex list, the two *Offas* in it are unlikely to have been Offa I of Angel. But this does not mean that the kings of Essex who were given the name *Offa*, or assumed it for themselves, were not “channelling” the narrative traditions of a great hero – even an Anglian one rather than a Saxon.⁵²⁴ It is thus possible to hypothesise that regnal lists potentially provide material derived from narrative traditions and accordingly may assist us in the understanding and reconstruction of those traditions. If – as I will suggest is the case with Offa I – we have Anglo-Saxon narrative material and regnal lists the composition and compilation of which can be dated to the period from the late seventh to the late ninth centuries, these may be reliant on closely related narratives, and thus the study of one may complement the study of the other.

⁵²² See p. 113 above.

⁵²³ Sisam 1953a: 306-07.

⁵²⁴ One notes here that the West Saxons adopted Frēawine and Wīg as ancestors, although they were probably not Saxons (see pp. 300-06 below), as well as Frisians, Danes and Hebrews. Also, in the account in Bede’s *HE* the East Saxons are portrayed as being closely allied to their neighbours in Kent, who were Anglians.

2.2.1 Offa I and the Mercian Regnal List

The Mercians were *Merce*, *Mierce* or *Myrce* (“people of the *mearc*” or borderland – that is, with the Celtic Welsh), but according to Bede, they were one of the peoples who came from *Angulus* or Angel,⁵²⁵ somewhere in Southern Jutland. They are thus habitually described in modern scholarship as “Anglian”, distinct not only by reason of their origins but also because they spoke a dialect of Old English (or a group of dialects) also called “Anglian”.

Even if we have reason to question the assertion by Sisam and Dumville that the Mercian regnal list was compiled primarily to suit Offa and his dynastic ambitions, his lineage was long and noble, and he himself shared a name with one of his most notable ancestors, Offa of Angel. There was an Anglo-Saxon tradition (of unknown age) that Offa II’s birth-name was *Wynfrip* or *Winefrip*,⁵²⁶ and so he may have acquired the name *Offa*, or awarded it to himself, to “channel” the glory of his namesake, who was a heroic empire-builder and border-maintainer against hostile neighbours. In addition to his style of *rex Merciorum*, Offa II occasionally referred to himself as *rex Anglorum*, or even *rex totius Anglorum patriae*. Even if this pretention did not mean all of the English, it can be understood as referring to all of the Angles.⁵²⁷

Thus, we turn to the genealogical traditions of the Anglian kings. These can be found in the MSS of regnal lists comprising what Dumville appropriately entitled the “Anglian Collection” (though they do contain one Saxon list, that of Wessex). I have set these lists out schematically in Fig. 3 (p. 144 below). This is for the purposes of comparison, since it can be seen that the persons in them are related – and in a literal sense.

This schematisation, I suggest, also helps us to understand the connections between royal naming traditions and actual kinship relationships and ethnic affiliations. These will be

⁵²⁵ The pl. of the ethnonym, *Merce*, was used as a toponym (*Bosworth-Toller*, s.v. *Mirce*). See *HE*, I.15; Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 50 – together with the East Angles, Middle Angles, all Northumbrian peoples living north of the Humber and “all the other Anglian tribes” (*ceterique Anglorum populi*). In the OE version of *HE* (I.15; Miller 1890-98: I, 52): *And of Engle coman Eastengle 7 Middelengle 7 Myrce 7 eall Norðhembra cynn; is þæt land ðe Angulus is nemned, betwyh Geatum [sic] 7 Seaxum* “And from Angel came the East Angles and Middle Angles and Mercians and the whole race of Northumbrians. [That] is the land which is named *Angulus*, between the Gēats [*recte* “Jutes”] and Saxons”.

⁵²⁶ Swanton 2010: xxxii, 41 and fns. In *VOD* Offa II’s birth-name is given as *Penefredus* and *Pinefredus*, in which the Anglo-Saxon graph *wynn* /p/ (= /w/) was mistaken for /p/. The use of /p/ might indicate an Anglo-Saxon source, although the use of *wynn* continued in English MSS until its disappearance around 1300 (Wright 1960: xv, 3). These names would have been *Penefredus* and/or *Pinefredus* – i.e. *Wynfrep* (= *Wynfrip*) or *Winefrep* (= *Winefrip*). This is not improbable, since theme-sharing tended to run in families, and Offa II’s father was called *Pingfrip*, and his son *Ecgfrip*. That Offa II was dubbed with or assumed the name of his heroic and empire-building ancestor is a possibility suggested by Brooke 1963: 111.

⁵²⁷ In S108 (of 772), S110 (of 774), S111 (of 774, as *rex totius Anglorum patriae*), S132 (of 790, as both *rex Anglorum* and his more frequent style *rex Merciorum*).

seen in re-occurring name-elements such as *wiht*, *angel*, *angen*, *swāf* and *gēot*, which may be argued to have ethnic and dynastic connotations, particularly with the royal lineages of south Jutlandic peoples. In the following sections, which deal principally with the personages of the Mercian list which contains Offa of Angel, I shall make frequent reference to the composite family tree in Fig. 3, below.

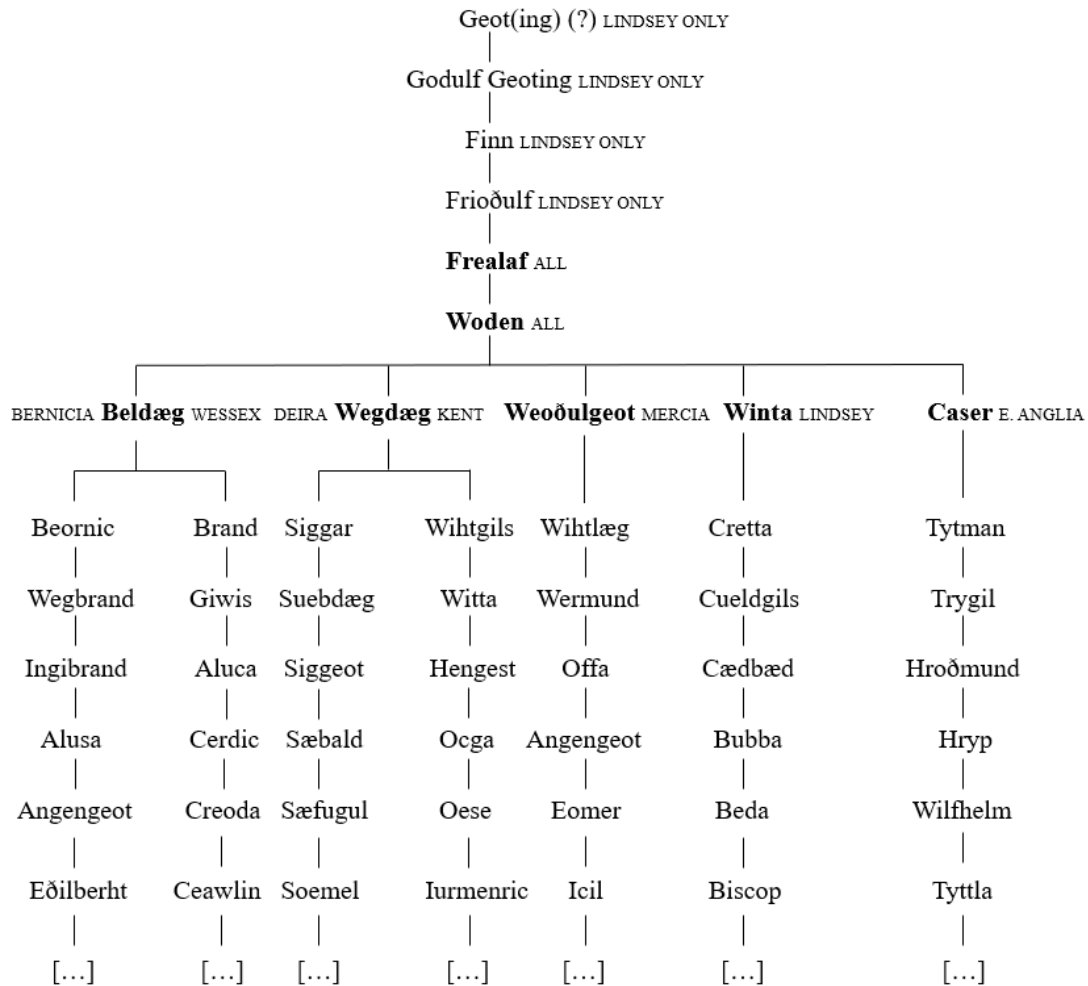


Fig. 3
Composite Family Tree of Regnal Lists in MS V of *AngCol*
(as in Dumville 1976)

In the next section I turn to the names in the tradition of the Mercian regnal list, which also contains Offa of Angel. Here, I suggest, we find not only evidence of ethnic affiliation but other elements which are more suggestive of their roles in a narrative – whether this was a myth, a legend or – as is possible – a version of historical reality.

2.3 Dramatis Personae from Angel to Mercia

2.3.1 Frēalāf and Wōden: Of Gods and Men

In the Mercian list in *AngCol* the first figure named is *Wōden Frēalāfing*. But in the shorter Mercian list in *ASC* (*s.a.* 755 = 757) the first person is *Wihlæg Wōdening*, who was the father of Wāermund and grandfather of Offa. Although the version in *ASC* omits both Wōden’s father (*Frēalāf*) and his son (*Weopulgēot*), it nonetheless preserves, in apparently patronymic form, the name of the heathen god Wōden. We see this formula among “apical” figures in the regnal lists as follows:⁵²⁸

<i>Wōden Frēalāfing</i>	<i>AngCol</i> lists (except Lindsey)
<i>Wōden Friþuwulfing</i>	<i>ASC</i> (A) Deiran
<i>Wægdæg Wōdening</i>	<i>ASC</i> (BC) Deiran
<i>Wihlæg Wōdening</i>	<i>ASC</i> Mercian
<i>God(w)ulf Gēoting/Gēating/Ēating</i> ⁵²⁹	<i>AngCol</i> Lindsey; <i>ASC</i> (ABC) Bernician
<i>Gēsecg Seaxnēting</i>	Essex list
<i>Itermon Hraþraing</i>	<i>ASC</i> (A) West Saxon (<i>s.a.</i> 855) ⁵³⁰
<i>Bedwīg Scēafing</i>	<i>ASC</i> (BC) and Textus Roffensis, West Saxon list (<i>s.a.</i> 856)
<i>Bēowī Scēafing</i>	<i>ASC</i> (D) West Saxon List, <i>ASC</i> MS D (<i>s.a.</i> 855)

In the lists in *AngCol* – except the Lindsey list – the apical figure is *Wōden Frēalāfing*, implying the existence of a father of Wōden called *Frēalāf*, who is unknown outside the Anglo-Saxon regnal lists. As a predecessor of Wōden, an important figure in the history of the Anglian and Mercian kings, it is worth briefly investigating who *Frēalāf* might have been.

Craig Davis argued that *Frēa-* in *Frēalāf* was a cognate of the Old Norse theonym *Freyr*.⁵³¹ However, Old English *frēa* and Old Norse *freyr* both derive from a Proto-Germanic appellative **fraujaz* which meant “lord”. Old English *frēa* is used of secular lords, kings and God or Christ,⁵³² but there is no credible trace of it as a theonym. In Old Norse *freyr* is not

⁵²⁸ I use “apical” in the customary way to refer to the first individual in the list, although it might be argued that the figure identified in the patronymic was the true “apical” figure.

⁵²⁹ The apical figure in the Lindsey list in *AngCol* is *Godwulf* with the surname *Geoting* in MS V, but *Geating* in MS C and *Eating* in MS T. The patronymic form *Eating* (son of Eata) can be found elsewhere among the names of Anglo-Saxon kings, but here may derive from a text in which a coloured capital /G/ had been intended but omitted, or from a mistaken correction of *Geating* to a known hypocorism, *Eating*.

⁵³⁰ In all versions of the Æthelwulf list in *ASC* this is the first ancestor named after Noah and hence the progenitor of a specifically proto-WS lineage. Logically, according to the Bible’s flood legend, we must all be descendants of one or other of Noah’s sons, and the West Saxons invented one of their own.

⁵³¹ Davis 1992: 28-29; Neidorf (2021a: 380-81). But see p. 307 and fn. 1219 below.

⁵³² *DOE*, *s.v.* *frēa*.

recorded as an appellative and was used only in the name *Freyr*, presumably because he embodied lordship.⁵³³ Although Freyr features prominently in Scandinavian heathen mythology, he is not represented as a son or kinsman of Óðinn, and indeed comes from the Vanir, a different family of gods from the Æsir.⁵³⁴ I suggest it is therefore more likely that the Old English name-theme *lāf* could just mean “son and heir” (as we have seen with *Onlāf* > *Offa*). Therefore, *Frēalāfing* can be interpreted as “son of a king’s son”, indicating firmly that, although an apical figure, Wōden was not an original divine being but merely the son of a king who himself was a king’s son. Thus, they were both euhemerised as mortal descendants of unknown people.⁵³⁵

That this was so is strongly indicated, I suggest, by the following advice of Daniel, Bishop of Winchester, to Boniface, an English cleric engaged in converting the heathen Germans in the early to mid-eighth century (not long before the creation of the lists in *AngCol*).⁵³⁶

Neque enim contraria eis de ipsorum quamvis falsorum deorum genealogia astruere debes, [sed] secundum eorum opinionem quoslibet ab aliis generatos per complexum mariti ac femine concede eos asserere, ut saltem modo hominum natos deos ac deas homines potius, non deos fuisse et cepisse, qui ante non erant, probes.

For also you should not provide them with contrary genealogies of their gods, even though they are false; but rather, in accordance with their own belief, allow them to assert that whichever they please were born to others through the intercourse of husband and wife, so that at the very least you may prove that their gods and goddesses were mortals born of mortals, not gods, and that they had a beginning since they did not exist before this.

Thus, I suggest, the purpose of providing apical figures with fathers – expressed in patronymics such as *Geōting/Gēating*, *Wōdening*, *Scēafing* and *Seaxnēting* – was to prove their mortal origins (whether or not in heathen belief they had had parentage or were “first beings”). Arguably, the use of the patronymic also shifted the focus away from the thornier issue of who or what *Geōt/Gēat*, *Wōden*, *Scēaf* and *Seaxnēt* might have been (though, logically, if a son was mortal, then, potentially, so was his father, and thus both were euhemerised).

⁵³³ See Motz 1996: 11-32 on Freyr as king. Comparably, the Gmc appellative that in OE was *bealdor* (“lord, ruler”, “God”) in ON was almost exclusively the name of the god *Baldr*, who actually was Óðinn’s son.

⁵³⁴ *Freyr*, in the sense of “lord”, may have been an honorific attached to the name of the heathen god who was known to the Anglo-Saxons as *Ing*, and perhaps to the Scandinavians as **Yngr* or **Yngvi* – hence such Old Norse forms as *Yngvifreyr* and *Ingunarfreyr*. See *ANew*: 142, 286, 678-79; Simek 2006: 114-17, 120, 499-500. Wellendorf (2025: 174) regards *frēa* in *Frēalāf* as meaning “lord”.

⁵³⁵ See Malone 1953: 159. Sisam (1953a: 308-09, 323-24) thought ancestors of Wōden were an invention of Christians in the age of Offa, but *Frēalāf* may have been “a hero or divinity who was remembered by the Mercians” (*ibid.*: 308). Meaney thought the addition of names before Wōden showed he had been euhemerised to an ancestral king (1966: 110). Shaw agrees (2002: 103). See also Pollington 2011: 182.

⁵³⁶ Ep. No. 23; Tangl 1916: 39, quoted by Davis (1992: 24). This letter is dated to 723-24 by Emerton (1940: 48).

I therefore argue that we can identify *Frēalāf* as a pious invention by Christian genealogists in order to euhemerise Wōden. But euhemerisation was a task which would only have been necessary if, in some tradition known to the Anglian peoples, Wōden had been something unacceptable to Christians, such as a god, or a first being without mortal ancestry. In the Mercian list in *ASC* there is no *Frēalāf*. Perhaps by the end of the ninth century the idea of euhemerised ancestors was more firmly established (and thus the concept of divine royal origins less troubling) than earlier. At any rate, unlike the West Saxons, the Mercians did not need to go further back than Wōden (and perhaps his father) for an illustrious proto-ancestor.

2.3.2 Weoþulgēot: The Wandering Jute

In Offa II's list in *AngCol*, *Weoþulgēot* is the son of Wōden and the father of Wihtlæg. The element *Weoþul-* would seem to be a form of *waðol*, a *hapax legomenon* appearing in *FFr* 8, describing the moon as *waðol under wolcnum*, usually interpreted as “wandering beneath clouds”.⁵³⁷ However, in the context of this poetic image, it could also mean “transitory” or “appearing fitfully”, since Hnæf and his men at Finnsburh are peering out into the spasmodic moonlight, suspecting that they are seeing signs that they are about to be attacked by their hosts (which they are). As I argue in greater detail below, the element *gēot* is likely to be a reflex of the ethnonym “Jute”.⁵³⁸ If so, then *Weoþulgēot* would be an ethnophoric dithematic name meaning “wandering Jute”, or, as *weoþul-Gēot*, an ethno-eponym “Jute” premodified by an epithet. In either case, I suggest, this is potentially significant for our understanding of what the Angles' concept of their ethnic and/or geographical origins was. As an itinerant early ancestor with divine associations, *Weoþulgēot* may be compared to the figure of Ing in the *Old English Rune Poem*, illustrating the rune for /ng/ that traditionally bore his name.⁵³⁹

ǣ [Ing] wæs ærest	mid Ēast-Denum,	67
gesewen Secgun,	oþ hē siððan ēst	
ofer wæg gewāt,	wæn æfter ran;	69
ðus Heardingas	ðone hæle nemdun.	

⁵³⁷ Cf. OHG *wadalōn* “to wander”, MHG *wadel* “wandering, erratic” and OE *wāþ* “wandering, roving, hunting”. See *Bosworth-Toller*, s.vv. *wāþol* (*sic*), *wāþ*; *K14*: 452; Hill 2009: 53. See also *AHDWB*, s.v. *wadalōn* – from **waplōn*-, a frequentative relative of **wadan*- “to go” (cf. English “wade” and “waddle”). *Weoþul* would be an early or south Northumbrian form of **weaþul*, the *u*-mutated form of *waðol* (= **waðul*).

⁵³⁸ See the detailed discussion on this interpretation in section 2.6.2 (pp. 185-88 below). I argue *gēot* is from PrGmc **Jeut*-, which would have become *Gēot*- and later *Ēot*- in OE.

⁵³⁹ My text and translation. Cf. *ASPR*, VI, 29-30. I retain the MS readings and interpret *Secgun* as a dative plural of the ethnonym of the Danish-related people named as *Secgan* in *FFr* 24 and *Sycgan* in *Widsith* 31 and 62.

Ing was first among the East-Danes, seen by the Secgan, until afterwards he departed east over the wave. A wain ran after [him]; that is why the Heardingas called that one “hero” [or “that is why the Heardingas so named that hero”].

It is conventionally thought that the Danes were also known as *Ingwine* “friends of Ing”, since in *Beowulf* Hrōþgār, king of the Danes, is referred to as *eodor Ingwina* “protector of the Ingwine” and *frēa Ingwina* “lord of the Ingwine” (ll. 1044a, 1319a).⁵⁴⁰ Ing would therefore be connected with an ethnonym for the Danes; and he seems in the above verse to be associated with an aetiological myth or legend in which he travels over the sea, to be seen first among the East-Danes, also known as the *Secgun*, and the *Heardingas*.⁵⁴¹ This suggests that there was a legend-type of the divine or semi-divine “wandering” founder.⁵⁴²

A further connection between Ing the traveller or waggoner and Weoþulgēot might be identified. As we see in Table 2 below, the version of the Mercian list in the Harleian recension of *HB* contains the extra generation under the name *Gueagon* (on which Dumville does not comment).⁵⁴³ This is paralleled only in the Mercian list in John of Worcester.⁵⁴⁴

<u><i>HB</i> (Harleian)</u>	<u>John of Worcester</u>
Uuoden	Woden
Guedolgeat	Wothelgeat
Gueagon	Waga
Guithleg	Wihltenge
Guermund	Wermund
Offa	Offa
Ongen[...]	Angengeat
Eamer	Eamer
[...]	Icel

Table 2
The Mercian List in *HB* and John of Worcester

⁵⁴⁰ This, it is said, “bears weighty testimony to the worship of Ing” (*Kl4*: lviii and fn. 5; 470). The name is often associated with the supra-tribal designation *Ingaevones* or *Ingvaeones* among the early Germani in Tacitus’s *Germania* and Pliny’s *Natural History* (1st c. AD). For brief summaries of this complex area see Rives 1999: 113, also Simek 2006: 220. See also fn. 769 (p. 199 below).

⁵⁴¹ *Heardingas* is likely to be a cognate of the Vandalic royal clan name recorded in Latin texts as (*H*)*asdingi* (for which see Sitzmann and Grünzweig 2008: 173-74). It meant “those associated with long hair”, from Gmc **hazdaz* “long hair”. Cf. OE *bunden-heorde* “bound-haired” and *heord-swāpe* “hair-coverer” (*DOE*, s.vv.). The Merovingians were known as *reges criniti* “long-haired kings”.

⁵⁴² The same idea informs the Eddaic poem *Rígsþula*, in which the itinerant Rígr (identified with the god Heimdallr in the prose introduction to the poem in the MS) appears and begets sons who are the founders of different social classes. See pp. 369-72 below.

⁵⁴³ See *BH* (Harleian recension), ch. 56; Dumville 1975: 241. Dumville takes *Ongen* to be defective, missing the second element of the name, which he reconstructs as *Angengeot*; and a scribe accidentally omitted four names after *Eamer* (1975: 240).

⁵⁴⁴ [...] *Wihltenge, qui fuit Wage, qui fuit Wothelgeat* [...] (Darlington, McGurk and Bray 1995-98: II, 86, s.a. 627). The grammar of these phrases in Latin genealogical lists was *qui fuit* GEN (“who was X’s [son]”). Although some of the Anglo-Saxon names in this list are not marked for inflection, it is probable that *Offe* and *Wage* represent the medieval Latin gen. forms of *Offa* and *Waga*.

The extra name or generation *Gueagon* and *Waga* does not appear in the MSS of *AngCol*, nor in any recension of *HB* (except the earliest, the Harleian recension, composed 829/30), nor in any regnal list in *ASC*. The occurrence in *HB* and John's *Chronicle* of what is evidently the same name would tend to support Dumville's contention that John had access to an early genealogical document closely related, in this case, to the Harleian recension of *HB*.⁵⁴⁵

The form in *HB* suggests Welsh-Latin rendering of Old English **Weagon*. Dumville takes this as a weak oblique form and reconstructs the nominative as **Weaga*.⁵⁴⁶ Although the phonological relationship with *Waga* is uncertain, it may be explicable by back-mutation.⁵⁴⁷ However, this is less important than the obvious relationship of the names in *HB* and John, and the opportunity they offer for etymological analysis which may illuminate an aspect of the mythic narrative behind the name *Weopulgēot*. The stem **weag-* or **wag-* is suggestive of a relationship with the proto-Indo-European etymon **ueǵʰ-*, which contained Proto-Germanic **wegan-* "to move, carry",⁵⁴⁸ **wega-* "way, road", and **wagna-* "wagon" and **wagian-* "to shake-move".⁵⁴⁹ This etymon is associated with movement, travel and transportation, and its reflexes in Old English were *wegan*, *weg*, *wægn/wān* and *wagian*, with the same meanings as their Proto-Germanic forebears.

However, since there is no other textual tradition which includes this extra person, it is to be suspected that the original name in Old English, **Weaga* or **Waga* was not *Weopulgēot*'s son but his by-name, which was mistaken for a son in the text on which the *HB* author and John drew. He would thus have been *Weopulgēot weaga* or *waga*, "the wanderer", "waggoner" or "carrier", an epithet congruent with *Weopul-*. As such, his name would represent his role in some founder-legend like that of the itinerant Ing.⁵⁵⁰ It may thus be related to that of his brother

⁵⁴⁵ Dumville 1976: 49.

⁵⁴⁶ Dumville 1975: 240.

⁵⁴⁷ See *OEG* 85-87. In the dialect of the 8th-c. Mercian *Corpus Glossary* there is evidence of the second fronting of /a/ to /æ/ in root-syllables, which then permitted back-mutation by the effect of /a/ or /u/ (= /o/) in a following syllable. Campbell cites *heago* "enclosure", *reagu-* "lichen" and *weagat* "he wags" (*OEG*: 86). Alternatively, in Kentish, back-mutation to /ea/ of fronted /æ/ could occur whenever a following syllable contained a back vowel, and (unlike WS and Anglian) whatever the consonant between them (*OEG*: 85). Thus *Weagon* or **Weaga* may be reflexes of Mercian or Kentish **Wæg-*. John's *Waga* would contain a medieval Latin grapheme <a> used for OE <æ>.

For the ending in *Gueagon*, see *OEG*: 249 for the possibility of a very archaic inflected weak form **weagun*. Alternatively, archaic open /a/ was misread as <u> (see fn. 189, p. 69 above); or the OE inflectional ending *-an* was thought to be stemmatic, or a Welsh suffix, and was rendered as *-on*.
⁵⁴⁸ OE *wegan*, past singular *wæg*, plural *wāgon*.

⁵⁴⁹ See Kroonen 2013: 577-78, 565-566, s.vv. In OE *wegan*, *weg* and *wægn/wān*. For cognates of **wagian-* see OHG *wagōn* "to move, sway" (*AHDWB*, s.v.) and OE *wagian* (also *wecgan*) "to move, shake, totter, be loose" (*Bosworth-Toller*, s.vv.). As an iterative-intensive form of **wegan-* it meant "to move about (a lot)".

⁵⁵⁰ OE *wæg* "wave, sea" (< PrGmc **wēgaz*) in *OERP* l. 69a comes from the same etymon as **wegan-* etc. A voyage over water may also be implicit for *Weaga* or *Waga*, as for Ing.

Wegdæg (according to *AngCol*), the founder of the Deiran and Kentish lines, whose name can be interpreted as “road-Dæg” or “travel-Dæg”.

Thus, *Weoþulgēot* is a son of *Wōden* and closely associated with divine ancestry; he has a name which contains an element suggestive of travel, and an element, *gēot*, which (as I shall argue)⁵⁵¹ is indicative of Jutish allegiance and which re-occurs in the names of kings who were Anglians, including the Angle forebears of the Mercians. As the son of *Wōden* and father of *Wihtlæg*, he may thus represent the stage of the origin of a tribe between its founding godhead and the establishment by his successor of a settled dwelling-place. Thus, *Wihtlæg*’s distinction may have been to be the first true king of Angel.

The theme of an itinerant divinity who procreates noble lineages is one to which we shall return in our consideration of a similar legend in *Rígsþula*.⁵⁵² However, I suggest that here, despite the inevitable uncertainties of etymological analysis, there is a pattern of evidence which suggests that reflected in the names of early figures in the Mercian regnal lists there was a narrative, the echoes of which were still sounding in the twelfth century in England.

2.3.3 *Wihtlæg*: The Man of Law?

In the Mercian lists in *AngCol* and *ASC* Offa I’s grandfather is called *Wihtlæg*.⁵⁵³ I am not aware of any attempt to explain the elements of his unusual name, which may contain information of relevance to the dynastic associations of Offa I and the Mercian lineage.

Wihtlæg appears to be a dithematic name formed from the following elements:

- (1) Old English *wiht* “wight, whit” meant a creature or being, including humans and animals, or a thing.⁵⁵⁴ It was also used of supernatural beings in Old English (and other Germanic languages),⁵⁵⁵ though in the English dictionary citations “wight” is usually accompanied by some prefix or adjective indicating a pejorative

⁵⁵¹ See pp. 185-88 below.

⁵⁵² See pp. 369-72 below.

⁵⁵³ Mercia I List; Dumville 1976: 30 (*Uihtlæg*), 33, 36 (*Wihtlæg*).

⁵⁵⁴ *Bosworth-Toller*, s.v. *wiht* (fem.); *OED1*, s.v. *wight* (n), 1(a) (1924 entry).

⁵⁵⁵ See the citations in *Bosworth-Toller*, s.v. *wiht* (fem.), the etymology in *OED1*, s.v. *wight* (n), and *ANEW*: 672, s.v. *vættir*, and *Orðsifjabók*, s.v. *vættur*. See also Kroonen 2013: 578, s.v. **wehti-* 1. The sense of “spirit, demon” is also found in Old Norse *vættir* (*Cleasby-Vigfusson*: 720, s.v. *vættir* A.2). According to De Vries its ultimate etymology is disputed (*ANEW*: 672, s.v. *vættir*). But he does not include a possible derivation from the stem **wīh-* as in the adjective **wīha-* “holy”, forming the root of several verbs meaning “to bless, consecrate” (Kroonen 2013: 585, s.v. **wīha-* 1). A *wiht* may thus be a thing or being that was *wīh*, i.e. endowed with holiness, or created supernaturally.

sense.⁵⁵⁶ This negativity probably represents the view of the Church that all supernatural beings – whether heathen gods or beings, or the personnel of post-pagan folk-belief – were delusive, evil or demonic.

However, pagan mythology and later folk-belief would have had room for good “wights”, and thus in names *wiht* may have had the same positive cultural connotations as the name-elements Proto-Germanic **albi-* “elf”, **ansu-* “divine, semi-divine being”, and *god-* “god” (almost exclusively protothemes and thus potentially epithetical in their origins, meaning “elven” and “(demi)godlike”).⁵⁵⁷ The element **wīh-* (“holy thing, being, place”) may have been similar, if referring to a supernatural being.

We may reject, I suggest, the argument that *Wihtlæg* was connected with *Wiht* (the Old English name for the Isle of Wight) and was therefore a fictitious name invented to link this person with the conquest of the Isle of Wight. The toponym *Wight* was probably Brittonic, pre-dating the *Adventus*.⁵⁵⁸ *Wihtlæg* of Angel was a Mercian ancestor, and the Mercians were not associated with the establishment of a Germanic kingdom on Wight. Although Hengest’s immediate ancestors were Anglians and had the element *Wiht* in their naming-tradition, Kitson convincingly refutes any connection between the prototheme *wiht* in the names of Hengest’s forebears and the Jutes of the Isle of Wight.⁵⁵⁹ Yorke identifies the name *Wihlgār* as a fictitious eponym for a member of a dynasty that conquered Kent,⁵⁶⁰ based on the account in *ASC* (s.aa. 495-534), according to which the Saxons Cerdic and Cynric landed in southeast Britain and conquered the Isle of Wight (*Wihthe ēalond*) and killed many (or a few) people at a place called *Wihlgāraburh*. They then gave Wight to their *nefan* Stuf and Wihlgār, supposed to have landed in 514.⁵⁶¹

⁵⁵⁶ At least, until the 14th c. See the citations in *Bosworth-Toller*, s.v. *wiht*; *MED*, s.v. *wight*, 1(c); and *OED1*, s.v. *wight* (n). For example, Grendel was a *wiht unhælo* “a being of ill fortune” (*Beowulf* 120b) who lived in an *ælwihta eard* “alien creatures’ land” (l. 1500a).

⁵⁵⁷ *Wiht* was cognate with ON *vættr*, frequently meaning “supernatural being” (see *Cleasby-Vigfusson*: 720, s.v. *vættr*). In medieval Icelandic folk-belief the *landvættir* (“land-wights”) were seen as beings similar to *álfr*, and were nature-spirits whom one could call on for protection. See Simek 2006: 241.

⁵⁵⁸ See Rivet and Smith 1979: 487-89, who regard it as probably from a Brittonic form which they give as **Ueḡta*, possibly meaning “watershed”, recorded since the 1st c. BC in Greek and Latin texts as versions of *Vectis*, *Victis* and *Vecta*. Bede used *Uecta insula* for the island and *Uictuarii* for its inhabitants (*HE*, I.15; Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 50). *Uictuarii* is a Latinisation of OE *Wihware* “people of Wight” (see *ASC* MS A, s.a. 449).

⁵⁵⁹ Kitson 2002: 118.

⁵⁶⁰ Yorke 1990: 3, 27.

⁵⁶¹ See the discussion of *nefa* at pp. 295-97 (and fns.) below. Stuf and Wihlgār may have been brothers whose maternal uncle was Cynric and maternal grandfather Cerdic.

However, I suggest a more convincing origin for the name *Wihtgār* is that it was the ethno-eponym of the leader of the people called *Wihtgāras* “spear-men of Wight”, the conquerors of Wight and inhabitants of *Wihtgāraburh*,⁵⁶² whose name appears as *Wihtgāras* in the Tribal Hidage.⁵⁶³

Wihtgār, I argue, was thus eponymous or ethno-eponymous, and so he was not necessarily a fictional character; and the element *Wiht* in his name is toponymic – derived from the name of the island – and nothing to do with Jutish or Anglian descent (he was in any event a Saxon of some kind).

The element *wiht* may have had supernatural associations when applied to a king who was the subject of tribal legend and who may have been regarded as divine or semi-divine. *Wiht* was also an element in ordinary Anglo-Saxon names,⁵⁶⁴ but it is hard to imagine a culturally valid reason for its inclusion in the onomasticon if it just meant “creature”.⁵⁶⁵

- (2) *læg*: this is not recorded as a simplex in Old English. It is not known whether the vowel was long or short. If long, no etymology is apparent. If short, this may be an Old English reflex of West Germanic **lag*. In West Germanic languages, compound and prefixed nouns with *-lag* carry the sense of “determination, limit”, such as: Old English *ealdorlagu* and Old Saxon *aldarlagu* “lifespan”, Old English *orlæg*, Old Saxon *urlagi*, Old High German *urlag*, “that which is laid out”, hence “fate”,⁵⁶⁶ Old Saxon *gilagu* “determination, fate”. In Old Norse *lög* (a plural form derived from earlier **lagu* “things laid down”) had the senses of “law” and “jurisdiction, area/community subject to a certain law”, which may preserve a sense once common to Germanic languages.⁵⁶⁷ If *læg* was inherited from Proto-Germanic, it may come from **-lagaz* (> Proto-West Germanic **-lag*) with some

⁵⁶² See *ASC*, s.a. 530: MS A, *on Wihtgarabyrg* (altered by another scribe to read *on Wihtgaræsbyrg*); MSS BC *on Wihtgarabyrg*; D, entry omitted; E *on Wihtgarasbirig*. The emendator of MS A and the scribe of MS E seem to have reasoned from the narrative that *Wihtgarabyrg* was “Wihtgār’s fortress” and altered the gen. pl. of the ethnonym *Wihtgāra-* to the gen. sg. of a personal name.

⁵⁶³ See Yorke 1990: 10-11.

⁵⁶⁴ See Briggs 2024: 292.

⁵⁶⁵ But then *man* was also an OE name-theme, and, as *Man*, a name in itself (*PASE*, *Man* 1-51 (!))

⁵⁶⁶ For the etymology see *ANew*: 683 under the ON reflex *ørlag*.

⁵⁶⁷ *Cleasby-Vigfusson*: 369-70, s.v. *lag*, B, *lög* II. As in “Danelaw”, which occurs first in the Laws of Edward the Elder (r. 899-924) and Guthrum as *inne on Deone lage* (cap. 7), implying an OE calque on or borrowing of ODan **Denalagu* “area of Danish jurisdiction” (see Attenborough 1922: 106 and his note at 202). It may be comparable to PrGmc **aiwa-* “law” – see pp. 245-47 and fn. 965 below.

sense of a person associated with legal determinations or legal jurisdiction, or with the fates of people.

It is also possible that *læg* features /æ/ as the *i*-mutation of /a/, hence potentially deriving from Proto-Germanic **-lagiz* or **-laginaz*, with the development > Proto-West Germanic **-lagi* or **-lagin* > Old English **-lægi* > **læge* > **læg*. The name would have the same meanings as above, except that the suffix **-inaz* could mean “leader”,⁵⁶⁸ and hence **-laginaz* would mean “leader of the area of jurisdiction” or “chief magistrate”.⁵⁶⁹

For a son of the itinerant *Weoþolgēot*, *Wihlæg*’s name – as far as we can tell from etymology – would seem to imply that he was the ruler, and thus perhaps the establisher, of an area of a *lag*, a determined area of rule and jurisdiction.⁵⁷⁰ This, I argue, would have been understood to be Angel by those who knew his role and position in the Anglian genealogical tradition.

In the Mercian list in *ASC* he is the son of *Wōden* and thus the founder of the people who eventually became the Mercians. If *wiht* cloaked him with an aura of semi-divinity, he was after all the grandson of a god in some lists and the son of a god in one.

⁵⁶⁸ There were two PrGmc suffixes, **-inaz/* and **-īn/*. Eckhardt suggested that **-īn/* was diminutive and in unstressed positions would become */-in/* (1903: 346-347). In OE, final */-n/* was usually lost after */ī/* in all OE dialects (Ekwall 1930-31: 3-20). Personal names as elements in place-names may sometimes preserve **-in/* as */-en/*, e.g. *Cymen* in the place-name *Cymenesora* (Stenton 1969: 171-72). But otherwise final */-i/* or */-e/* could be retained or lost in OE, as in many originally *i*-stem nouns and (*ex hypothesi*) names. The PrGmc suffix **-inaz/* had the meaning “leader of” (Green 1998: 124-25, also Pollington 2024: 36-37, with refs). In WGmc it would have been reduced to **-in/*, and in OE could have developed similarly to **-īn/*: retained in a noun such as *dryhten* (“leader of a *dryht* or warband” hence “lord, king”); reduced in a name to final */-i/* or */-e/*; or disappearing altogether.

⁵⁶⁹ His name appears in John of Worcester as *Wihllege*. This curious spelling (if not a random “typo”) may derive from misreading of archaic open */a/* (found in insular MSS before *c.* 750) as <u> (see Lapidge (2000) on this frequent error in the *Beowulf* MS). If the apparent minims of such an open */a/* were doubly misperceived as <n>, this would suggest **Wihtleage*. The final */-e/* may be the grapheme for the Latin genitive singular of a noun ending in */-a/*. In Latin versions of regnal lists the names were given in the form “X of Y”, using the Latin genitive instead of the OE patronymic suffix *-ing*. Thus, John’s *Wage* would be the genitive of **Waga*). The form **Wihleaga* would be phonologically consistent with a deutertheme *-laga*, with an inflection or agentive suffix */-a/* causing back-mutation > **-leaga*. For the phonology see *OEG*: 86, and fn. 547 (p. 149 above).

There are three toponyms in *ASC*. See MS A, *Natanleaga* (s.a. 508), *Cerdicesleaga* (s.a. 527) and *Fēpanleag* (s.a. 584), all relating to places of conflict between Britons and early Saxon kings. *ASC* MS A (890s) is too early for the “late” spellings *leag* or *leaga* of *lēah* (see *DOE* s.v.), and it may be suspected that these are reflexes of the word **læg* “law” in the sense of “area of jurisdiction”.

⁵⁷⁰ Cf. perhaps *Gēsecg*, the man surnamed *Seaxnēting* at the head of the East Saxon list (see p. 113 and fn. 391 above) – if interpreted as OE **gē* “region” + *secg* “sword” (hence, metonymically, “man”) – i.e. the settler in or conqueror of a **gē* or area of habitation.

2.3.3.1 Wihtlæg, Witta and the Men of Kent

But there is a further significance in the element *Wiht-*, since it is shared with other kings in the Anglian genealogical tradition. Wihtlæg shares his prototheme with his first cousin, *Wihtgils* of the Kentish list. In Bede's *HE* the Kentish succession is given as follows, as compared with the same list in MS V of *AngCol*:⁵⁷¹

<i>HE</i>	<i>AngCol</i> (MS V)	<i>AngCol</i> (MS T)
Uoden	Uoden Frealafing	Woden Frealafing
Uecta	Uegdaeg Uodning	Wægdæg Woding
Uitta	Uihtgils Uegdaeging	Wihtgils Wægdægging
Uictgislus	Uitta Uitgilsing	Witta Wihtgilsing
Hengist	Hengest Uitting	Hengest Witang ⁿ
Oeric Oisc	Ocga Hengesting	Ocga Hengesting
Octa	Oese Ocing	Ese Ocing
Irminric	Iu[r]menric Oes[ing]	Eormric Oesing
Aedilberct	Ʒðilberht Iurmenricing	Æðelberht Eormricing

Table 3
The Kentish List in *HE* and *AngCol*

The apparently hypocoristic name *Uecta* (= *Wehta*) appears in the same position as *Wegdæg* in the Kentish list in *AngCol*. It is not possible to determine whether it was a *Cūpa*-type based on the theme **weht*, a side-form of *wiht*,⁵⁷² or a *Tubba*-type derived from *Wegdæg*, with devoicing of the medial consonant-cluster in **Wegda-* to *Wehta*. One notes that *Wegdæg*, a son of Wōden, occupies the same place as *Weoðolġeot*, and the element *weg-* suggests the Germanic reflexes of the etymon **ueg^h-*, like **wegan-* “to move, **weg-* “way, road”, and thus, as “way-Dæg”, a similar itinerant role. Also, as in the Mercian list with *Weoðolġeot* and *Wihtlæg*, the traveller-figure is followed by a name with or based on the theme *wiht*, which would seem to suggest a pattern based on mythic or legendary themes.

Witta can be analysed as a *Totta*-type hypocorism of a name with the theme *wiht*. It is possible that *HE* and *AngCol* were both accurate, if Hengest's father and grandfather were both named *Wihtgils* and both known hypocoristically as *Witta*. Another possibility is that in both textual traditions it was not realised that *Wihtgils* and *Witta* were the same person, and the two people who were inferred were placed in different orders.⁵⁷³ At any rate, in two Anglian regnal

⁵⁷¹ *HE*, I.15 and II.5; Colgrave and Mynors 1968: 50, 150.

⁵⁷² OE *wiht* is a reflex of PrGmc **wehti-* “thing, being, spirit” (Kroonen 2013: 578, s.v.). Arguably the OE form is *i*-mutated.

⁵⁷³ Or *AngCol* was garbled, as may be indicated by the reversal and perhaps scribal corruption in MSS V and C of *Ocga* (= *Octa* – poss. scribal error of reading insular /t/ as /g/) and *Oese* (= *Oisc*).

lists, from Mercia and Kent, the first cousins *Wihlæg* and *Witta/Wihtgils* appear to share a dynastic name-theme.

Uniquely, in the Kentish list in the T MS of *AngCol* the patronymic of Hengest is given as *Witang⁵⁷⁴n* instead of the expected *Witting* or *Wittaing*.⁵⁷⁴ Was this a gross scribal error, or does it suggest that Hengest had a surname **Wiht-Angen* which linked his family and its characteristic name-theme *wiht* to a larger Anglian identity, signalled by the ethnophoric element *angen*, to be interpreted as a form of the ethnonym or toponym *Angel*?⁵⁷⁵

As we see in Table 4 below, there is evidence in the Bernician list of Ida in *ASC* of a name composed of the same elements, *Angenwit*, the father of *Ingui Angenwitting*. In *AngCol*'s Bernician list this person is *Angengeot*, with the same ethnophoric prototheme *Angen*, and a different, ethnophoric deutertheme *gēot* (“Jute”).⁵⁷⁶

<u><i>ASC MSS BC (s.a. 547)</i></u>	<u><i>AngCol</i></u>
Godulf Geating	-
Finn	-
Friþulf	-
Freoþelaf	Frealaf
Woden	Woden
Bældæg	Beldæg
Brand	Beornic
Benoc	Ingibrand
Aloc	Alusa
Angenwit	Angengeot
Ingui Angenwitting	Eðilberht
[...]	[...]

Table 4
The Bernician List in *ASC* and *AngCol*

The element *wit* in *Angenwit* and the patronymic *Angenwitting*, I suggest, is likely to be a form of *wiht*; and in the names *Angenwit* and *Angengēot* the element *Angen* is a form of *Angel*, which was both an ethnonym and a toponym, and potentially an ethno-eponym. I further suggest that in the Bernician genealogical traditions the variants *Angenwit* and *Angengēot* express a connection between “Angle” and “Jute” in association with the name-element *wiht*, which was prominent in the Kentish Anglian list. The same individual had more than one name, but I suggest that both expressed related ethnicities in the context of an Anglian naming-tradition which the Bernicians shared with the kings of Mercia and Kent.

⁵⁷⁴ See Dumville 1976: 37.

⁵⁷⁵ The forms of this toponym are discussed in further detail at pp. 181-85 below.

⁵⁷⁶ And a different father, *Eðilberht* (unless *Ingui* (= *Ingwī(h)*?) was an epithetical other name for him).

Furthermore, in *Widsith* 22 we are told *Witta wēold Swāƿfum*, “Witta ruled the Swāƿfe”. As we shall see later, the Swāƿfe were a tribe of southern Jutland, closely associated with the Angles in the Offa-narrative in *Widsith*. This *Witta* would seem to be another reflex of the Anglian naming tradition involving *wiht*.⁵⁷⁷ Indeed, *Widsith*’s *Witta* may be the same person as the father or grandfather of Hengest. If so, it is an important piece of evidence in the vexed question of the ethnic allegiance of Hengest (so often labelled a “Jute” in modern scholarship, even though no medieval text labels him so), and the relationship of his people to Offa I and his Angles as characters in the story of the *Adventus*.

Therefore, from the regnal lists in *AngCol* we can see evidence of the patterning of name-elements *angen* (“Angle”), *gēot* (“Jute”), and *wit/wiht* (“(semi)-divine being”). We shall return to *angen* and *gēot* in our consideration of the name *Angengēot* as one of the immediate descendants of Offa of Angel.⁵⁷⁸ But I suggest here that these name elements (two of them ethnophoric) are apparently associated with Anglian royal lines, and borne by individuals all fairly closely related in their descent from an apical figure (whether Wōden or Frēalāf). This, I argue, is evidence to support a contention that in English genealogical tradition the name *Wihtlæg* did not stand in isolation but was part of an onomastic complex relating to the early history of Angel, Jutland or both, evidenced in more than one Anglo-Saxon (Anglian or Mercian) genealogical tradition of the eighth century. His interconnectedness, I suggest, is of importance in considering his appearance in much later Danish texts, to which we now turn.

2.3.3.2 *Wihtlæg* and *Viglecus*: From England to Denmark

It is all the more surprising, I argue, that identifiable versions of the name *Wihtlæg* appear in three Danish historical texts of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Table 5 (p. 157 below) sets out the genealogical material relating to the figure of Offa and his ancestry in Scandinavian as compared with Anglo-Saxon texts.

The genealogies in the Danish texts *GD* and *AnnR* (which was derived from *GD*) are distinct from those in other Scandinavian texts by containing the names which have a resemblance to *Wihtlæg* in the Anglo-Saxon texts. In Saxo’s *GD* this is *Viglecus*,⁵⁷⁹ in the *Codex Runicus* it is *Uiþlēþ*, and in *AnnR* it is *Wichlecus*. These may be argued to be different from *Wihtlæg*. *Viglecus* and *Wichlecus* appear to be Latinisations of a recorded Old

⁵⁷⁷ See pp. 318–23 below. Also note the ethnophoric element in the Deiran list in *AngCol*, in which *Suebdæg* appears in the same generation as Hengest’s father Witta. *Sueb-* is *Swēf-*, the Anglian reflex of *Swāƿfe*.

⁵⁷⁸ See pp. 180–201 below.

⁵⁷⁹ *GD*, IV.2.4–3.1; Friis-Jensen and Fisher 2015: I, 220–21.

ISH	DANISH				ICELANDIC					
ASC	BHD	GD	AnnR	Cod Run	Resen	Langfeðgatal	Ættartala	ÆHfrA	Skjöldunga s.	Ætt. Sturl
Víhtæg	Frothi hin frókní	Vigleucus	Wichleucus	Uipleþ	Fróðe	Fróðe	Froði	Froði (s.)	Frodo II	Fróði hinn frókní
Vermund (s.)	Vermundus (s.)	Vermundus	Vermundus blinde (s.)	Uermund	Varmundur vitri (s.)	Varmundur vitri (s.)	Vermundur enn vitri (s.)	Vermundur enn vitri (s.)	Vermundus (s.)	Vermundur vitri (s.)
Uffa (s.)	Uffo (s.)	Uffo (s.)	Uffo starke (s.)	Uffi	Olafi litillati (s.)	Olafi litillate (s.)	Olafi enn litillati (s.)	Olof (d.)	Olafa/Olufa (d.)	Olof (d.)
Angelþeow (s.)	Dan (s.)	Dan (s.)	Olaf (s.)	Dan/Huþlek	Daur mikilati*	Daur mikillate (s.)	Daur enn mikilatti (s.)		Dan II* (m. Olafa/Olufa)	
			(aka Dan hin Stelstene)							
Lomær (s.)	Frothi senex (s.)	Frotho vegetus (s.)	Hugholee*		Fróði fríðsami (s.)	Fróðe fríðsami (s.)	Frodi enn fríðsami (s.)	Frodi enn fríðsami (s.)	Frodo III (s. of Dan)	Fróði fríðsami (s.)
					(s. of Daur)		(s. of Olof)			

But while it may be objected that *Viglecus/Wichlecus* and *Wihtlæg* are composed from different themes and are thus not the same name, their similarity in appearance and likely similarity in

157

sound are notable. It is even more notable when we compare *GD*, *AnnR* and the Anglo-Saxon genealogies as in Table 6 below.

<i>GD</i>	<i>Cod Run</i>	<i>AnnR</i>	<i>AngCol</i>	<i>ASC (B, s.a. 626, 755)</i>
Viglecus ⁵⁸⁵	Uipleþ	Wichlecus	Wihtlæg	Wihtlæg
Wermundus	Uermund	Wermundus blinde	Wermund	Wærmund
Uffo	Uffi	Uffo/Uffi starke	Offa	Offa

Table 6
Comparative Name-Forms in Offa's Genealogy

They are, I argue, the same genealogy. The Danish names which so closely resemble *Wihtlæg* belong to the father of Wermund who was the father of Offa. This correspondence occurs only in *GD* and *AnnR* (a text for which *GD* was a source) and in the *Codex Runicus*, in which the name-form *Uipleþ* is anomalous.⁵⁸⁶

These are completely different from the Icelandic genealogies. This, I suggest, is highly unlikely to be coincidence and is more likely to be the result of direct influence by the written or oral transmission of an Anglian naming tradition from somewhere to England and Denmark, or between Denmark and England in one direction or the other.

As has already been argued in this chapter, the name *Wihtlæg* is part of the interrelated naming traditions of Anglian monarchies, as established by the time of the composition of *AngCol* in the course of the eighth century. The element *wiht* had associations with Bernicia, Mercia, and Kent, and with other name-elements associated with the ethnicities of the Angles, Jutes and Swæfe. However, there is no such onomastic patterning associated with these cognates of *Wihtlæg* in the Danish or Scandinavian texts.

Therefore, I would argue that this presents us with evidence from which to form a preliminary hypothesis that an English genealogical tradition was transmitted from England to Denmark. In the process of transmission a name which had dynastic and ethnographic significance in the English Anglian context lost it on the journey and was changed to a name that was more recognisably Scandinavian and with readily comprehensible elements.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸⁵ See Friis-Jensen and Fisher 2015: 1, 218 fns, for variants of this name. The initial <V> may represent <u>, i.e. [w].

⁵⁸⁶ Did /p/ result from a misreading of <ht> in some source-text as <th>. Or was <ch> in a source's <uichlech> misread as <uithleth>?

⁵⁸⁷ The ON cognate of OE *wiht* took the forms *vætrr*, *vétrr* and *vitr* (see *ONP*, s.v. *vætrr* and *ANew*: 672, s.v. *vætrr*), but this does not appear as a Scandinavian name-element – except perhaps in *Vitgeirr*, a sorcerer (!) (Lind *Dopnamn*: 1114). *Lag-* may appear in the monothematic name *Lagi* (with Danish associations). See Lind *Dopnamn*: 379.s.n. See also *PASE*, *Lagman* ("law-man"), a name in *DB*, possibly Scandinavian in origin.

As we shall see, this hypothesis receives further reinforcement when we consider a further strange correspondence between *Frowinus* and *Wigo* in *GD* and *Frewinus* and *Wiggo* in *AnnR* and the names *Freawine* and *Wig* in the West Saxon regnal list.⁵⁸⁸

2.4 Wērmund, Wǣrmund: The Father of Offa

Wērmund was the father of Offa. He appears in English texts either as *Wērmund* or *Wǣrmund* (Anglian and West Saxon spellings respectively), occasionally as *Warmund*,⁵⁸⁹ which is probably a Latinised spelling with Latin /a/ representing Old English /æ/. In the Offa-passage in *Beowulf* the name *Gārmund* appears at l. 1962, in the phrase *nefa Gārmundes*,⁵⁹⁰ describing Æomēr, who was either Offa’s son or grandson. Although this has universally been thought to be a variant of or an error for the name *Wērmund* or *Wǣrmund*, I do not take it to be so.⁵⁹¹

Wērmund or *Wǣrmund* is a regular dithematic variation name composed of the elements Anglian *wēr*, West Saxon *wǣr* “pledge” and *mund* “protection”. While a good name for a king (if he is to be imagined as extending his *mund* over those who owe him a *wēr* of faithful service), this was also an ordinary dithematic name evidenced in England⁵⁹² and in Germanic-speaking Europe.⁵⁹³ Therefore we need not accord it much importance as a thematically meaningful name in the “Cinderella”-sense.

Wērmund is the most constant feature of the story of Offa, appearing under this name in all the versions of and references to the Offa-tradition. In Icelandic tradition he is given the epithet *inn vitri* “the wise”. According to the narratives in *BHD*, *GD* and *VOD*, he had been a formidable warrior-king in his prime, but had passed into blind old age without fathering a son, until eventually his queen bore him Offa. But Offa was a sad disappointment. Although he was mightily strong, in the accounts in *GD*, *BHD*, *GD* and *VOD* he is dumb until manhood, and in *VOD* he is also blind until the age of seven. The enemies of Angel threaten, and Wērmund is forced to rely on Offa to defend the country. The name *Wērmund* was probably never an

⁵⁸⁸ See pp. 300-314 below.

⁵⁸⁹ See Dumville 1976. The spelling *Uermund* (= *Wērmund*) is in the Mercian V MS of *AngCol* (*ibid.*: 24, 30). The West Saxon spelling *Wǣrmund* is in MS C, of southwestern origin (*ibid.*: 26, 33), and MS B, a south English MS (*ibid.*: 27, 36). See also the spelling *Wermund* in John of Worcester’s *Chronicle* (Darlington, McGurk, Bray 1995-98: II, 86). Except where it is necessary to mention the spelling *Wǣrmund*, or to use both spellings, I shall henceforth refer to him as *Wērmund*.

⁵⁹⁰ *Nefa* could mean “nephew” or “grandson”, but presents difficulties which are discussed at pp. 295-97 (and fns.) below.

⁵⁹¹ The argument with respect to *Gārmund* can be found at pp. 290-300 below.

⁵⁹² *PASE*, *Wærmund* (×12 – other than Offa’s father), and Briggs 2024: 283, *s.n.* *Wǣrmund*.

⁵⁹³ Förstemann 1900: 1536; Kaufmann 1968: 388, 394, *s.nn.* **Wāra*- and **Wēra*-.

unusual one.⁵⁹⁴ But although it might not have been a “Cinderella”-type, it probably gained extra, if ironic, force in the story by comparison of its kingly meaning, “pledge of protection”, with Wērmund’s desperate recourse of relying on his apparently useless son.

However, the form of the name of this character is of some importance in considering the origins of the Offa-story. The prototheme of *Wērmund/Wærmund* derives from Proto-West Germanic **wāru* “pledge, agreement”.⁵⁹⁵ The cognate in Old Norse was **vár*.⁵⁹⁶ So, strictly speaking, this name ought to appear in Old Norse as **Vármundr*. However, the forms in Scandinavian texts are mostly consistent with vernacular *Vermundr* and *Vémundr*,⁵⁹⁷ with only two exceptions, the *Varmundr* recorded in the Resen genealogy and *Langfeðgatal*,⁵⁹⁸ each of which may be a copy of the other, or both of them copies from the same exemplar. However, while it might be conceivable that a Norse speaker would analyse a name-theme like Old English *Wēr-/Wæ-* as cognate with Old Norse *Vár*, or might render an Old or Middle English pronunciation [wæ:ɹ] as *War-*, one would not expect a Scandinavian to do the opposite and substitute *Ver-* for inherited *Vár-*. But even if these name-forms had been re-analysed as containing the Norse element *ver-* (from *verja* “to defend”, *verr* “man” or *vér* “holy”), their vocalisation indicates derivation from an original name with the initial sequence *Wer-/Wēr-*. The oldest tradition of this name is Anglian *Wērmund* and West Saxon *Wærmund*, with a prototheme derived from Proto-Northwest Germanic **wāru* “pledge”.⁵⁹⁹ This suggests that the origin of the Old Norse name-form *Vermundr* was a West Germanic language in which the vocalisation of the prototheme was **wēr-*, i.e. Anglian Old English, Old Frisian,⁶⁰⁰ or some related Ingvaëonic dialect or language.⁶⁰¹ While it might be argued that forms like *Wermund* were inherited from such a language,⁶⁰² this presupposes – implausibly, I think – that the Danes had no tradition of a king of Angel with the proto-North Germanic name **Wār(a)mundaz*, nor

⁵⁹⁴ *PASE* has 12 instances of *Wērmund*, other than Offa’s father.

⁵⁹⁵ Ringe and Taylor 2014: 200. The short stems **Wāra-* and **Wēr-* and their origins (see Förstemann 1900: 1531-33, and Kaufmann 1968: 386-87, 393-94) need not concern us.

⁵⁹⁶ The name of *Vár*, a goddess of troths and matters between men and women, but found as an appellative in Old Norse only once, as the plural *várar*, in Snorri’s explanation of the name *Vár* in *Gylfaginning* (ch. 35; Faulkes 2005b: 29). A plural form is logical, since a marriage pledge is mutual.

⁵⁹⁷ Lind (*Dopnamn*: 1083-85) gives many instances of *Vermundr*. The form *Vémundr* has a different prototheme, from the Old Norse *vé-*, derived from PrGmc **wīha-*, an adjective meaning “holy” or a noun meaning “holy or sacrosanct place, thing, being”.

⁵⁹⁸ See Table 5 at p. 157 above.

⁵⁹⁹ Ringe and Taylor 2014: 200.

⁶⁰⁰ Cf. *AFrWB*, s.v. *wēr* “true” (noun and adjective come from the same root). See also Chadwick 1907: 125.

⁶⁰¹ The /ā/ in the PrGmc form of the name **Wāramund* would have become /æ/ in WS and /ē/ in other dialects of OE and OFris. See *OEG*: 50-51 (Campbell calls the original long vowel “Prim Gmc. æ”), and Ringe and Taylor 2014: 148-49 (the PrGmc root-vowel was */ē/ which became */ā/ in PrNWGmc and its successor PrWGMc).

⁶⁰² As argued by Chadwick (1907: 125-27).

of one with Proto-West Germanic name **Wārmund*, but borrowed one from Frisian when its vocalisation had developed to **Wērmund*, without, however, understanding the name, and so did not substitute a cognate **wār* for *wēr*.

At this stage, such a conclusion must be a tentative one given the possibility that the original of this character's prototheme was *wer-* (from Germanic **warjaz* "man, defender"), and this was inherited in Old Norse and Old English but changed to *wēr-/wær-* in Old English. However, as we shall see, it will be supported by other linguistic evidence which points to a West Germanic – indeed English – origin for the Offa-story in Scandinavia.

2.5 Offa, King of Angel

Offa of Angel is named in *Beowulf*, *Widsith*, the Mercian regnal lists, and in the early thirteenth-century *VOD*, as a heroic king in the Continental home of the Angles in southern Jutland. We can back-calculate (from the regnal dates of later kings in *ASC*) to work out that – if he existed at all – he ruled Angel in the latter part of the fourth century.⁶⁰³ The name *Offa* is recorded as part of Mercian royal tradition in the regnal lists of *AngCol*, compiled in the eighth century. It also appears in the regnal lists of the East Saxons and in the royal names of Bernicia. It was also famously borne by Offa (II) of Mercia, and continued in currency until at least the 1080s, when it appears as a personal name in *DB*.⁶⁰⁴

In Danish histories of the twelfth century – Sven Aggesen's *BHD* and Saxo Grammaticus's *GD* – Offa (I) is *Uffo*; and in the thirteenth-century *AnnR*, *Uffo* and *Uffi*. Latinised *Uffo* seems to have standard hypocoristic form, corresponding to Old Norse and Danish *Uffi*, and Old Swedish *Offe*, *Uffe*.⁶⁰⁵

As in English tradition, in *BHD*, *GD* and *AnnR* Uffo is the son of Wermundus (= Offa and Wērmund), and his story is that of a hero – to all appearances the same young duellist as alluded to in *Widsith*.⁶⁰⁶ However, he may not have had heroic stature in all Scandinavian traditions. As we have seen in Table 5 (p. 157 above), in some (Icelandic) genealogies his position is taken by Óláfr litilláti, which means "meek" or "humble", a word with no apparent heroic connotations. In some he is even replaced by a woman, called Ólqf, Óláfa or Ólufa.

⁶⁰³ See the calculations in Tables 9a and 9b on p. 297 below, suggesting that the compilers of *ASC*, using the same *Anno Domini* reckoning as Bede had, placed Offa at this time.

⁶⁰⁴ See *PASE*, s.n. *Offa* 11.

⁶⁰⁵ See Peterson (2007: 240, s.n. *Uffi*) who derives it from *Úlfr*. This is also possible, but not (I suggest) the origin of *Offa*. In *AnnR* (a Latin text) he is sometimes *Uffo* and sometimes *Uffi*.

⁶⁰⁶ See the summaries of the Danish Uffo texts in the Appendix (pp. 431-34 below).

In *BHD* it is said that Wermundus rules his country until old age, when his eyes had grown dim, by which time his son Offa had remained dumb for thirty years. It is not said how old Wermundus was when he fathered Offa.⁶⁰⁷ However in *GD* Uffo comes to Wermundus as a *sero munere* to a *senior* – as a “late gift” to an “older” or perhaps “very old” man.⁶⁰⁸ In *AnnR* Wermundus is surnamed *blinde* “the blind” – presumably through old age. And in *VOD* Warmundus is childless *usque ad annos seniles* “until the years of old age”.⁶⁰⁹ It is clear that Wērmund’s old age and physical disability are prominent themes in the story, as was the late age at which he fathered Offa. As I have already suggested (pp. 121-23 above), it is possible to derive the hypocoristic form *Offa* from *Anlāf/Onlāf* (the cognate of Old Norse *Óláfr/Óleifr* or **Áláfr/Áleifr*), which was derived from Proto-West Germanic **Anulaib*, meaning “old man’s son”; and this hypocorism may have attached to a historical person because it was a traditional epithetical name for sons born in their fathers’ old age; or it was an ordinary hypocorism of a name, *Onlāf*, which meant little more than “descendant” or “ancestor’s heir” but was taken by a storyteller or poet as the etymological cue for a tale about its royal bearer as a hero born to an old father. This may have been an inherited name which suggested a meaning useful to a literary artist.⁶¹⁰

2.5.1 *Offa* and *Uffo*: Evidence of the Transmission of Offa’s Name and Story

As we have seen, the operation of transformational hypocoristic processes potentially explains the development of Old English *Onlāf* into *Offa* as a head-and-tail type of hypocorism. The name *Onlāf* may have remained intelligible to Anglo-Saxons as a name meaning (or potentially meaning) “ancestor’s or old man’s son”, and *Offa* may have been understood as an epithetical hypocorism with this origin. This would accord with the prominent motif of Offa as an old man’s son in his narrative; and we face the traditional problem of whether the name was invented or chosen to fit the fictional character-type, or the character-type was modelled on an interpretation of an actual inherited name – or even that the historical Offa was indeed an old man’s son, and was dubbed as such by his contemporaries. In any case, I suggest that it is likely that his story can be dated to a time when **Anulaibaz* or one of its successor-forms had the transparent etymology “ancestor’s son” or “old man’s son” and was capable of generating a hypocoristic form cognate with Old English *Offa*.

⁶⁰⁷ Swanton 2010: 165-66.

⁶⁰⁸ *GD*, IV.3.1; Friis-Jensen and Fisher 2015: I, 220.

⁶⁰⁹ Swanton 2010: 1.

⁶¹⁰ See the view of Robinson as quoted by Shaw (above at p. 26 and fns. 28, 29).

However, the form of the name *Uffo* (the Latinisation of *Uffi*) in Danish texts is unexpected. The Old Norse name-forms cognate with *Onlāf* were *Óláfr* and *Áleifr*. How long these names were semantically intelligible in Scandinavia is unknown. Cognates of Germanic **anu-* in the Old Norse literary period are hard to find.⁶¹¹ The prevalence of the name *Óláfr* in Scandinavia – and as *Olaf* in the modern day – suggests that it was not restricted to cases of old men’s sons, and if its etymology was understood, it was perhaps in the sense “ancestor’s heir or child”. But in Scandinavian hypocorism we should expect *Óláfr* and *Áleifr* to produce *Óli* and *Áli* respectively.⁶¹² *Uffi*, on the other hand, is the hypocorism conventionally to be expected from a name with the theme *ulf-*, from *ulfr* “wolf”, with characteristic loss of initial /w/ before /u/.⁶¹³ If the Offa-figure had existed in Danish literary tradition since the Migration period, it would be expected that any head-and-tail hypocorism would have developed in East Norse as **Anulaibar* > *Áleifr* > *Affi*, or **Anulaibar* > *Óláfr* > *Offi*. Thus, it is arguable, on purely phonological grounds, that since short /o/ and /u/ could be allophones in East Norse, *Uffi* or *Uffe* might have developed in Old Danish as a cognate of Old English *Offa*.⁶¹⁴ However, there is reason to doubt this, since the other names in his narrative tradition do not seem to have a form consistent with Old Norse or Danish origin.⁶¹⁵

Chadwick tackled the origins of the names *Uffo*, *Wermundus* and *Frowinus* in *GD*. He thought that the name-forms in the versions of the Offa-story (including those in Denmark) pointed to an origin in a North-Sea area – including southern or southwestern Jutland – in which a Frisian language was spoken which was an ancestor of English.⁶¹⁶ He must have included Saxony within this idea, since, as part of this argument, he suggested that that name-form *Uffo* was “not English but Continental, especially Old Saxon”.⁶¹⁷ However, although the

⁶¹¹ See *ANEW*: 3, *ái* “great-great-grandfather” or “progenitor”; 8, s.v. *ánasótt* “illness from old age”. These look as though they might have been taken to be connected with *Á-* in *Áleifr*, but according to De Vries they were from roots different from **anu* in **Anulaibar* (*ibid.*: 418, s.v. *Óláfr* etc).

⁶¹² See Peterson 2007: 20, s.n. *Áli*; 172, s.n. *Óli*. *Áli* was the name of the Swedish king called *Onela* in *Beowulf* and derives from **Anilō* (evidenced in Continental Gmc in the literary period). See Shaw 2020: 104, and (for Scandinavia) Peterson 2004: 37, s.n. **Anula* (*Onela*). The name is a hypocorism with a diminutive suffix, either simplex **-ilō* or a compound **(i)nilō*. The hypocoristic stem was either *An-*, or *A-*, and could be derived from a number of names. However, since in *Beowulf* *Onela*’s father is *Ongenþēo(w)* (< **Angan(a)þewaz*), *Onela*’s name may simply be a hypocorism based on *On-* in the prototheme of his father’s name with the suffix *-ela*.

⁶¹³ As derivations from *(W)ulf-*, Peterson records OSwed *Offe* and *Uffe* and ODan *Uffi* (2007: 240).

⁶¹⁴ See fn. 613 above.

⁶¹⁵ I am fortified by the conclusion of Gregersen with respect to *Uffo*: “Navneformen *Uffe* viser, at sagnet ikke stammer fra en hjemlig tradition, men at det er overtaget udefra” (“The form of the name *Uffe* shows that the narrative does not derive from a native tradition but was adopted from elsewhere”). Gregersen thought that Sven and Saxo had borrowed it from English traditions about Offa of Mercia (1989: 48).

⁶¹⁶ Chadwick 1907: 118-43, esp. 142. See fn. 701 (p. 182), pp. 344-45 (fns 1361-62) for Frisians in Jutland.

⁶¹⁷ Chadwick 1907: 126-27.

Old Saxon masculine weak nominative ending was *-a* or *-o*,⁶¹⁸ in Old Saxon, Proto-Northwest Germanic **An-* should have developed to *Ā-*, whereas in Old English and Old Frisian it would have become *Ō-* or *On-*.⁶¹⁹ Thus **An(u)laib-* should have produced the name **Ālēf* in Old Saxon and the hypocorism **Affa/*Affo*, by contrast with *Offa* in both Old English and its nearest Continental relative, Frisian. Chadwick calls *Wermund* “English or Frisian”.⁶²⁰ And while *Wērmund* would be expected in West Saxon (*Wǣrmund* in Anglian) and in Old Frisian, in Saxon and early Old Norse this would have been *Wārmund* – apparently excluding Saxon as the origin of the name of Offa’s father. Its cognate in Old Norse ought to have been *Vārmundr*. Chadwick also suggested that the name *Frowinus* in *GD*’s Uffo story was Continental, either an Old Saxon, Danish or Frisian form of Old English *Frēawine*.⁶²¹ However, I suggest he was mistaken. The Old Frisian reflex of Proto-Northwest Germanic and West Germanic */au/* (as in **frauja* “lord” = Old English *frēa*) was */ā/*.⁶²² Also, the recorded Old Frisian reflex of **frauja* was *frāna*.⁶²³ In Old Saxon it was *frāho* or *frōho*.⁶²⁴ Therefore, in neither Old Frisian nor Old Saxon would we expect the inherited form *Frowin*. This form is not Old English either, and it appears for the first time in a Danish text (*GD*) composed about three hundred years after *Frēawine* was inserted into West Saxon genealogies in England from some prior and unrecorded genealogical or narrative tradition.

Therefore, strict phonological and lexical analysis would seem to exclude any single language – English, Frisian, Saxon or Danish – as the sole origin for all of these names. However, phonology is not necessarily the final determinant in these cases. The elements in the Germanic onomasticon were not infinite, and when confronted with names in foreign Germanic languages speakers may have been adept at “cognate substitution” – that is, recognising cognate vocalisations or themes in foreign names and substituting a native equivalent. The names of the main characters, *Wērmund* and *Offa*, are consistent only with English or Frisian phonology, not with Old Saxon or Old Norse. *Frowinus* may be (and, as I shall later argue, was) likely to be a Danish “cognate substitution” calque, based on Old English *Frēawine* with substitution of *Frø* “lord”.⁶²⁵ This analysis makes England the focus.

⁶¹⁸ Fulk 2018: 168.

⁶¹⁹ Fulk 2018: 72-73, 76.

⁶²⁰ Chadwick 1907: 125.

⁶²¹ Chadwick 1907: 127. He did not note *AnnR*’s form *Frewinus*. I discuss the phonology of this name at pp. 307-09 below.

⁶²² Fulk 2018: 73-74. Cf. OE */æo/* > */ēa/*.

⁶²³ *AFrWB*, s.v.

⁶²⁴ *ASWB*, s.vv.

⁶²⁵ For a further discussion of *Frowinus*, see pp. 307-09 below.

I argue that the name *Óláfr* or *Áleifr* in the Icelandic Offa-tradition is likely to preserve a cognate of Old English *Onlāf*, and yet his heroic story does not seem to have survived even in that conservative literary culture. It is therefore extra paradoxical that in a linguistically closely-related culture, that of Denmark, that the same figure bears a name, *Uffo*, which is not typically derivable from *Óláfr*, and not at all from *Áleifr*, if these names had survived as the hero's name in his story in Denmark. Instead, *Uffo* looks like English *Offa*. Added to this, the name *Wermund*, the father of *Óláfr/Uffo* in both the Icelandic and Danish traditions, carries the vocalisation of a non-Scandinavian, West Germanic original. This leads me to suggest that Danish *Uffo* was more likely to be a Danicisation of *Offa*, substituting a close-sounding equivalent, based on a familiar Scandinavian hypocorism *Uffi*, derived from equally familiar *Ulf*.

2.5.2 Offa's Name: Conclusion

The present study does not take issue with Chadwick's argument that the Offa-story and its names originated in a West Germanic, probably Jutlandic, linguistic sphere which predated the literary period. The use of names in the investigation of the transmission of the Offa-story requires a greater degree of subtlety than the proposition that they are all anciently "Frisian" and that their tradition was preserved separately, and in parallel, in England and Denmark.

As we shall see, I develop the argument that the transmission of the Offa-story was from England to Denmark, and it may well have happened as late as the twelfth century, before which no significant tradition of Offa of Angel had been preserved in Scandinavia.⁶²⁶

However, another feature of the investigation of the name *Offa* which has not been considered in the Chadwickian tradition is that *Offa* was a meaningful name in the form of an epithetical hypocorism. The strong theme of the story of Offa and Uffo is that he was an old man's son. Either his contemporaries dubbed him with this name because, in reality, that was what he was; or a storyteller who understood the meanings of *Anulaib-*, *Onlāf* or *Óláfr* (and/or the meanings of their semantically opaque hypocoristic forms) invented both the character and an appropriate name, or invested the real Offa with an appropriate role.

One must doubt, I suggest, that by the late twelfth century it was likely that in Denmark *Uffo* would be understood as a hypocorism of *Óláfr*, or that the etymology of the Old

⁶²⁶ See pp. 386-92 below.

Scandinavian name *Óláfr/Áleifr* would be sufficiently transparent⁶²⁷ to explain the contents of the Danish Offa-narratives of this time. The morphological relationship between *Onlāf* and *Offa* was possibly more evident in Old English, although the type of hypocorism it exhibits would seem to be archaic (if one may judge, given the absence of a full survey of the onomasticon).

The etymology of Proto-West Germanic **Anulaib* ought to have been clear to speakers of that language. It may have remained apparent to Old English speakers who used the name *Onlāf*; and it may also have been known to them that *Offa* was the head-and-tail hypocorism of *Onlāf*, which was potentially an epithetical and affectionate name for a boy born in his father's old age. I argue that the theme of the aged Wērmund in Offa's story suggests that either this was a true feature of the historical Offa's story (perhaps going back to the fourth century), and his contemporaries or immediate posterity gave him this apt name; or some etymologically-aware and inventive author gave it to the character he had substantially invented. If the latter was the case, then the apt name *Offa* may well have been coined at a stage in Anglo-Saxon culture early enough for the relationship of *Onlāf* and *Offa* to be understood.

2.5.3 *Āne sweorde*: Offa and his Duel

Widsith and the histories *BHD* and *GD* would seem to agree that the most famous exploit of Offa/Uffo was to win a mighty empire and considerable renown by a feat of swordsmanship. As we shall see, not only the duel, but Offa's sword, and its name in Saxo's narrative, *Skrep*, are of considerable interest. Again, I suggest that phonology indicates English origin.

The combat of single warriors in the face of their respective armies is well enough recorded from earliest times. A notable instance provides the occasion for the meeting in the only surviving Old High German heroic poem, the *Hildebrandslied*, in which, by an irony, the two combatants are Hiltibrant, the champion of Theoderic, and Hadubrant, the champion of Odoacer, who are father and son (unknown to Hadubrant). But there are very few instances in legend or history of a duel which takes the place of a battle to decide an issue between two opposing peoples.⁶²⁸ However, in Saxo's account of the rise to power of the hero Scyoldus (=

⁶²⁷ According to De Vries, OWN had *ái* "ancestor, progenitor" (< Gmc **awē* [properly, PrGmc **awō*? I. S.]) and *aſi* "grandfather". The same root (with the suffix **-haimaz*) gave *ēam* "(maternal) uncle" in OE (*ANew*: 2, 3, s.vv. *aſi* 2 and *ái*). The Gmc word is cognate with Latin *auus* "grandfather, ancestor, old man".

⁶²⁸ See Livy (*Ab urbe condita*, I.22-25; Ogilvie 1974: 27-34), on the fight between the two sets of triplets, the Horatii of Rome and the Curiatii of Alba Longa. Tacitus (*Germania*, ch. 10; Wolff 1907: 28-29)

Scyld Scēfing) in Book I of *GD*, he describes Scyoldus as winning a single combat in a scene strongly reminiscent of the Uffo-story.⁶²⁹ Like Uffo, Scyoldus fights a champion from a southern enemy (as in *BHD*, it is the *Alemanni*). The opponent is called Scatus; and, like Offa, Scyoldus wins territory by his victory. However, they also fight over their rivalry for a woman called Alvilda, and in Saxo's story of Sygarus, Alvilda was the princess won by Alf, who was – I shall argue – an analogue of Offa.⁶³⁰

2.5.3.1 Skrep, the *ealdsweord Ēot(en)isc*

According to *GD* and *BHD*, Uffo prepares for the duel with some instruction in swordsmanship, but he is so strong that every sword he is given shatters at the first blow. Wermund therefore digs up a sword that for some reason he had buried (Sven says this was in a *tumulus* or burial mound). In *GD* this is a weapon called *Skrep* that was so sharp it could cut through anything at a stroke, though it is now unpromisingly rusty and fragile-looking. In *BHD* Wermund says that the sword had never failed him in battle (though the condition of the sword is not mentioned).

The motif of the sword is also present in *VOD*'s story of Offa I. As a reward for his son's new-found eloquence and maturity, Warmundus invests him with the *cingulum militare* ("sword-belt of knighthood") and the *celiber gladius* ("novice's sword") to go with it.⁶³¹ After the duel with Riganus's two sons, the author says: *Post hec desuiens in ceteros contrarii excercitus duces, gladius Offe quicquid obviam habuit prosternendo deuorauit* ("After this, savaging the rest of the generals of the enemy army, Offa's sword devoured everything in its way by knocking it down"). It is as if the sword, rather than Offa, were doing the killing.

This would seem to be a reflex of the motif of the magical, never-failing weapon, comparable to the *ealdsweord eotonisc* ("old sword of giants") borne by Eofor against Ongenþēow, which cleaves through his *entisc helm* ("helmet of giants") in *Beowulf* 2979; and

describes a practice whereby a Germanic tribe would stage a single combat between an enemy captive and one of their own people (though this was to take the auguries, not to decide a battle). Gregory of Tours (*History of the Franks*, II.2) describes the duel between the champions of the Suevi and the Vandals in early 5th-c. Hispania (the Suevian champion won and the Vandals migrated to Africa). See also Paulus Diaconus (*HGL*, v.40-41; Bethmann and Waitz 1878:159-61) on the single combat between 7th-c. Lombard king Cunincpert and his usurper Alahis. The fight between Wulf and Eofor and Ongenþēow in *Beowulf* is simplest to understand as a set-piece determinative duel rather than a fight in a general mêlée. See further at pp. 355-63 below for this story as an analogue of a very similar duel in *GD*.

⁶²⁹ *GD*, I.3.2-4.1; Friis-Jensen, I, pp. 24-25.

⁶³⁰ *GD*, VII.6.1-7; Friis-Jensen and Fisher, I, pp. 470-77. See discussion at pp. 327-35 below.

⁶³¹ See Swanton 2010: 5-6 and fn. 7. Such an investiture in the later Middle Ages could also mark a prince's coming of age.

the *sigeēadig bil*, // *ealdsweord eotenisc* (“blade blessed with victory, old sword of giants”) which Bēowulf finds in Grendel’s lair (ll. 1557-58), which (though not said to be magical)⁶³² is the only weapon which can penetrate the hide of the monsters. It was also bigger than any person other than Bēowulf could have used, a *gīganta geweorc*, “work of giants” (ll. 1561-62). Wīglāf has the sword which his father Wēohstān looted from the corpse of Ēanmund and which Onela returned to him as a reward (ll. 2610-2619). This was an *ealdsweord etonisc* (l. 2616a), and Wīglāf is able to cut through the dragon’s hide with it, where Bēowulf’s blade Nægling failed (ll. 2694-708). Similar supernatural echoes hang about Hrunting, the sword (*hæftmēce*) lent to *Beowulf* by the Danish *þyle* Unferþ, which was an *ealdgestrēon* (“ancient treasure”) and *nāfre hit æt hilde ne swāc* // *manna ængum / þāra þe hit mid mundum bewand*, “it never failed any man in battle among those who grasped it in their hands” (*Beowulf* 1457-61). A similarly magical weapon was the sword Mimming, described in *Waldere* (l. 2-5) as *Wēland[es] geworc*, which also never failed any man in battle, if he could wield it. In *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, the warrior-maiden Hervör visits her dead Viking father Angantýr in his grave to obtain his magical, dwarf-made sword Tyrfingr, which (once it was drawn) had to taste blood, could cut through anything, always granted victory to its owner and caused wounds, all of which were fatal.⁶³³

Like Hrunting and Tyrfingr, Offa’s sword has a name, *Skrep*, which appears only in *GD* and is of disputed meaning.⁶³⁴ However, I suggest that this tells us something of the origins of Saxo’s narrative. Its consonants suggests strongly that it is related to English “scrape”, or “scrap”.⁶³⁵ The vocalisation of *Skrep* might seem not to be Scandinavian, except that Fritzner, cites two by-names and relates them (possibly) to Nynorsk *skrap*, *skrep* (s.v. *skrepr*). Aasen gives *skrap* as “scrap goods” and “poor condition”, and *skrapa* as “scraper” (he has no **skrep*).⁶³⁶ While the Old Norse sense of “scrap” might well fit a corroded old weapon that was effectively “scrap-iron”, the vocalisation of *Skrep* is more consistent with Old English *scref*, an Anglian variant of West Saxon *scræf*,⁶³⁷ meaning “cave, cavern, hollow place in the earth”, or, as in *eorþ-scræf*, “grave, tomb”.⁶³⁸ The sense of “hole in the ground” is apt for the motif of the sword buried in the earth in the Danish narratives, and I suggest is clearly derived from the

⁶³² See Shippey 1969.

⁶³³ See *Hervarar saga*, ch. 1; Turville-Petre 1976: 1.

⁶³⁴ See Ellis Davidson and Fisher 1979-80: II, 69.

⁶³⁵ For “scrape”, see *scrapian* (*Bosworth-Toller*, s.v.). *Scrap* in English is from Scandinavian. See *OED*3, s.v. *scrap* n.¹, and *Cleasby-Vigfusson*: 556, s.v. *skrap*.

⁶³⁶ Aasen 1850: 434, s.vv.

⁶³⁷ For *scref* forms, see the citations in *Bosworth-Toller*, s.v. *scræf*. See also *OEG*: 62-64 for “second fronting” of /æ/ to /e/ in Mercia or Midland areas.

⁶³⁸ *Bosworth-Toller*, s.vv. *scræf*, *eorþ-scræf*.

sense of “to scrape”, represented in Old English by *scrapian*.⁶³⁹ Kroonen gives the forms **skrappōn-*, **skrabōn-* and **skarbōn-* for the Proto-Germanic forms of an iterative verb meaning “to scrape, scratch” > Old English *scearfian* “to cut into small pieces”. This was derived from Proto-Germanic **skerban-*, **skerpan-*, **skrepan-* “to scrape, scratch”, from the posited strong verb **skreban-*, but influenced by the iterative forms. One reflex of these was Old English *sceorfan* *sceorpan*, *screpan* “to scratch, bite, vex” (cognate with Latin *scrobis* “hole in the ground”, i.e. a thing scraped).⁶⁴⁰ The vocalisation with /e/ in the stem is also found in Old English *screpan* (a strong verb) “to scrape” and *screpu* “strigil”, that is, “scraper”.⁶⁴¹ With respect to *scrapian* and *screpan*, Holthausen notes the vocalisation /e/ only in the West Germanic languages: Middle High German *schrepfen* and *schrefften* and Middle Dutch *schrepen*.⁶⁴² The sole example of /e/ in cognates of *scræf* is Norwegian *skjerv* “cliff”.⁶⁴³

Another, I suggest relevant, reflex of this etymon occurs in Old English *sceorp*, as in *heresceorp* (FFr 45a), meaning “(war) apparel”.⁶⁴⁴ This is derived from **scerp-*, with the same root as *gesceorpan* “to scrape, cut in pieces”.⁶⁴⁵ The etymology must derive from some connection with cutting or burial or retrieval from burial – that is, the *sceorp* was something cut from the body of the slain, or was cut up as offerings to war-gods, or was an object fit to be buried with a warrior (or taken from grave robbery). In a similar sense, “robe” is related to “rob” and other Germanic words for taking booty.⁶⁴⁶

This would suggest that Old English, rather than Old Norse, preserves the phonology and semantics consistent with *Skrep* having the multiple meanings, “something which cuts into pieces”, “item of war-gear” and/or “something buried in a *scref*/*screp*, i.e. a grave” – accurately representing the two motifs which are preserved in Saxo and Sven, respectively. This provides us with further evidence of a connection of the story in the Danish histories with an older, West

⁶³⁹ See the etymology in *OED*, s.v. *scrape* (v).

⁶⁴⁰ Kroonen 2013: 444, 447, s.vv).

⁶⁴¹ Both *Bosworth-Toller*, s.vv.

⁶⁴² Holthausen 1934: 282, s.vv. *scrapian*, *screpan*.

⁶⁴³ Holthausen 1934: 282, s.v. *scræf* 2.

⁶⁴⁴ Hickes’s transcription reads <Here sceorþum hrōr> (“strong (?) in war-gear”). See the notes in *K14*: 290 (in which the editors emend to *heresceorp unhrōr* “war-gear in bad condition”), and Hill 2009: 55-56, retaining the MS reading. Both assume that this word is synonymous with *byrne* “mailcoat” (l. 44a). For *sceorp* with the meaning “apparel”, see *Bosworth-Toller*, s.v. *sceorp*, also citing various compounds, all of which are in a military context (*fyrð-*, *guð-*, *hilde-* etc).

⁶⁴⁵ See *Bosworth-Toller*, s.v. *gesceorpan*. As with *sceorpan* (“to irritate”?) and related *sceorfan* (“gnaw, bite, scarify”), the definitions in *Bosworth-Toller* rely exclusively or heavily on passages in Cockayne’s edition of the *Leechdoms*. However, the (single) example of *gesceorpan* does suggest the meaning “to cut up”; whereas *sceorpan* and *sceorfan* are used in the OE *Leechdoms* of internal pain of the sort that modern speakers would probably call “sharp, stabbing”. Cf. Holthausen 1934: 276, s.v. *sceorpan* “scratch, gnaw”, which he relates to OHG *scurfen* “to cut up”. I suggest the most likely original sense of *sceorp* is therefore “something cut up”.

⁶⁴⁶ See *OED*3, s.v. *robe* n¹.

Germanic original.⁶⁴⁷ We may note also that the conservatism of this motival complex is associated with the preservation of a name – so often the most conservative of narrative elements – which, in Saxo’s Old Danish, if it meant anything at all, cannot have meant very much more than “scrape”.⁶⁴⁸

Given the importance of the sword-motif in Uffo’s duel, we should perhaps understand *Widsith* 41b-42a – *āne sweorde // merce gemærde* – to mean not “with one sword he made the border known”, but “with *a certain sword*”. The Anglo-Saxon audience was also expected to remember Offa’s wonderful sword. (Or, if one is tempted to see deeper wordplay, *Merce gemærde* might be taken to mean “made Mercia known”!)

2.5.4 Offa and Alewīh: The Context of Fame

At ll. 35-44, after the first list of kings’ names, the *Widsith*-poet says this about Offa:

Offa wēold Ongle, Alewīh Denum;	35
sē wæs þāra manna mōdgast ealra,	
nō hwæpre hē ofer Offan eorlscype fremede,	37
ac Offa geslōg ærest monna,	
cnihtwesende, cynerīca mæst.	39
Nænig efeneald him eorlscipe mārān	
onōrette. Āne sweorde	41
merce gemærde wið Myrgingum	
bī Fīfeldōre; heoldon forð siþpan	43
Engle ond Swāfe, swā hit Offa geslōg.	

Offa ruled Ongel, Alewīh the Danes. He [Alewīh] was the bravest of all those men, yet he never did deeds more glorious than Offa’s. Rather, Offa – the youngest of men, being a boy – gained with swordplay the greatest of kingdoms. Nobody of his age fought a duel⁶⁴⁹ with more honour to himself. With a single [or “a certain”] sword he made known the border with the Myrgingas on the Eider.⁶⁵⁰ Thenceforth the Angles and the Swāfe maintained it, just as Offa won it with his swordplay.

⁶⁴⁷ See Herrmann 1922: II, 299, who thought *Skrep* was not Danish but “Anglisch” (“Anglian”) and suggested it was cognate with Dutch *schrap*, meaning “‘fest, widerstandsfähig’ [...] denn Skrep ist das einzige Schwert, das fest und widerstandsfähig genug ist, um die Kraftprobe Offas auszuhalten [...]” (“‘firm, resistant’ [...] because Skrep is the only sword that is firm and resistant enough to withstand the trial of Offa’s strength”). However, his etymology is not correct. Dutch *schrap* (Frisian dial. *skrep*) is a noun meaning “line, scratch”, as in the line drawn in the ground in a game of tug-of-war, on which the foot of the foremost competitor is placed (De Vries and De Tollenaere 2004: 330: s.v. *schrap* 1). This exactly corresponds to English “scratch”, as in *OED*, s.v. *scratch* (n), I.5.a (1911 entry): (in sport): “a line or mark drawn as an indication of a boundary or starting point” – hence in boxing, “to come up to scratch”, i.e. to turn up and be fit enough to fight at the scratch. At any rate, the vocalisation in the form *skrep* is an indicator of the WGmc origin of the word used by Saxo.

⁶⁴⁸ See Ellis Davidson and Fisher 1979-80: II, 69, n. 33, referring to Falk’s suggestion that it may be related to Norwegian *skreppa* “to make a scraping noise”.

⁶⁴⁹ *onōrette*: cf. *Beowulf* 1532, 2538, *ōretta* “challenger, champion” (see Green 1998: 73-74). The verb *onōrettan* meant, literally “to bring about by a calling-out”; cf. OS *urhētian* “to call out, challenge”. In the *Hildebrandslied*-style of single combat, in the view of opposing armies, you literally “called out” your opponent from the enemies’ ranks to answer your challenge. In the *Hildebrandslied* two such fighters are called *urhettun* (l. 2a), the cognate of OE *ōrettan*, lit. “callers-out”.

⁶⁵⁰ For “on the Eider”, see p. 215 and fn. 829 below.

This alludes to the greatest feat of Offa's heroic life, when he fought a duel by the river Eider, as described in extended narratives in *BHD* and *GD*.⁶⁵¹ The outcome of his victory was the defeat of his enemy and the expansion of Anglian territory to an unprecedented extent. He thus outdid even Alewīh. But the compliment has been somewhat lost, since no one now knows who Alewīh of the Danes was.⁶⁵² Let us see whether we can identify him.

Chambers referred to the suggestion made by Müllenhoff that Alewīh was to be identified with "Olo", a king "frequently mentioned by Saxo" in the *Gesta Danorum*⁶⁵³ (though Müllenhoff later abandoned this).⁶⁵⁴ Chambers observed that "the names do not correspond phonetically".⁶⁵⁵ However, Saxo's Latinisation of a name from a vernacular text or tradition is not necessarily reliable, phonetically or phonologically, with respect to its origins. His character of Olo appears in other texts, where he is chiefly noted for having been a famous warrior killed in his bath by the treacherous retainer Starkaðr. In *Ynglinga saga* he is Áli inn frækni "the bold";⁶⁵⁶ in *RDF/Skjöldunga saga* he is partly Latinised as Alo hinn fræckne, and is also assassinated in his bath.⁶⁵⁷ He is also Ármóðr in *Norna-Gests þáttur*⁶⁵⁸ and *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana*.⁶⁵⁹ Sophus Bugge was the first to suggest that the figure of Áli/Ármóðr was a version of *Beowulf*'s Heremōd, as were the figures of Olo and Lotharus

⁶⁵¹ See the Appendix (pp. 431-34 below).

⁶⁵² Chambers 1912: 203; Malone 1962: 128; Hill 2009: 96.

⁶⁵³ In Saxo's story, Starcatherus joins a conspiracy to kill the tyrannical king Olo, hatched by Olo's own twelve chieftains. He kills Olo in his bath and feels great guilt (*GD*, VII.6.2-4; Friis-Jensen and Fisher 2015: I, 552-53). Olo is the subject of an extended narrative in books VII and VIII of *GD*, although his place in the Scylding chronology is radically different from that of Heremōd in *Beowulf*. In *GD* he is a maternal nephew of Haraldr hilditōnn of Denmark, who joins Haraldr's retinue and then that of king Ring of Sweden. He is appointed governor of ex-Danish Scania, after Ring's defeat of Harald at Bravicus (= Brávellir). Saxo often alters the chronology of his sources, displacing narratives with abandon.

⁶⁵⁴ Referring to Müllenhoff 1889: 53, who suggested that Alewīh was one or other of the sons of king Sygarus, called *Alf* and *Algerus* in Saxo's *GD*, by a *namenswechsel oder eine namensumbildung* ("a change or reforming of the name"). He identified *Sygarus* as the *Sigehera* who is said to have ruled the *Sæ-Dene* in *Widsith* 28, who were probably the Danes of Sjælland, ON *Sjóland* "Sea land" (see pp. 59 above and 331-32 below).

⁶⁵⁵ Chambers 1912: 203.

⁶⁵⁶ In *Ynglinga saga* (ch. 25; *ÍF* 26: 48-49) Áli inn frækni, son of Friðleifr, conquered Sweden from king Aun and ruled at Uppsala for twenty years before Starkaðr inn gamli killed him.

⁶⁵⁷ *RDF/Skjöldunga saga*, ch. 9-10; *ÍF* 35: 16-19. In this narrative Alo is the half-brother of Frodo IV (a reflex of *Beowulf*'s Frōða the Heapobeard).

⁶⁵⁸ In *Norna-Gests þáttur* it says: *Litlu síðar heyrðu vér getit niðingsvígs Starkaðar, er hann hafði drepit Ármóð konung í laugu* "A little later we heard mention of the treacherous killing by Starkaðr, when he had slain king Ármóðr in the bath" (*Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, ch. 288; Unger and Vigfusson 1860-68: I, 354 – where, however, the editors suggest MS <Armod> should be *Ala*).

⁶⁵⁹ See ch. 18, where Ármóðr is the son of Ásmundr berserkjabani. He marries the daughter of king Hákon Hámundarson from Denmark, [...] ok er þaðan mikil ætt komin. Þenna Ármóð drap Starkaðr inn gamli í laugu, ok var þat it síðasta óskapaverk hans, "[...] and a great family came from them. Starkaðr the old killed this Ármóðr in the bath, and that was his last ill-fated deed" (*Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda*: III, 364).

in *GD*.⁶⁶⁰ The *K14* editors seem to entertain this contention,⁶⁶¹ though they do not pursue it further. However, Neidorf has recently reaffirmed Bugge’s argument.⁶⁶²

It would accord with the view of Áli as a great hero that a person of this name appears as a son of Óðinn in an Icelandic *pula* of the names of Æsir.⁶⁶³ He appears in the same stanza as another hero-apotheosis son of Óðinn, Hermóðr (also alongside Skjöldr = Scyld).⁶⁶⁴ And Hermóðr also appears as an important denizen of Valhøll favoured by Óðinn in the tenth-century skaldic poem *Hákonarmál*.⁶⁶⁵

Although it may not have been apparent to the scholarly compiler of the *pula* – who was probably making deductions from a body of poetic allusions (in kennings), some of which had become detached from their original narratives by the thirteenth century – I suggest that the reason for the joint honour of being at Valhøll of both Áli and Hermóðr was that they were the same person under two different names, and this person was once the greatest of heroes.

The brief references to the end of Áli/Alo/Olo in the Norse texts, I argue, are strikingly reminiscent of *Beowulf* (ll. 901-06) in which an unnamed Danish scop improvises a song of praise to Bēowulf for killing Grendel and compares him to Sigemund the dragon-slayer, the greatest hero since the glory-days of Heremōd, a figure not mentioned in the poem hitherto, and who seems to have gone into a decline in later life and ended miserably (my text):

siððan Heremōdes	hild sweðrode,	901
eafōð ond ellen.	Hē mid eotenum wearð	
on fēonda gewæld	forð forlācen,	903
snūde forsended.	Hine sorhwylmas	
lemedon tō lange;	hē his lēodum wearð,	905

⁶⁶⁰ See Bugge 1887: 42-45. See also the references in Neidorf 2023a. I do not deal with Lotharus here, as the matter is complicated. However, I suggest that it is strongly arguable that Saxo combined the elements of the story of Hloðr from *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* with others inherited from narratives of the Heremōd tradition, and combined their name-elements in his composite of the villainous usurper as *Loth + her*.

Bugge also identified Saxo’s Olauus as another reflex of Heremōd (1887: 42-43). See *GD*, VI.4.10-12; Friis-Jensen and Fisher 2015: I, 374-377. Like Olo, Olauus has a father called *Fridleuus*, and like Heremōd in *Beowulf*, Olauus becomes corrupted by *tristior fortuna* (“very sad fortune”) and he gains a name for *permixta liberalitati parcitas* “meanness mixed with generosity” (*GD*, VI.4.12; Friis-Jensen and Fisher 2015: I, 376-377). However, as Bugge noted, we do not find out how this happened, because Olauus simply disappears from the story (to re-occur later as Olo, for his death-scene). I consider both of Bugge’s identifications to be likely. Saxo probably back-formed the name *Olo* to create *Olauus*, one of his many duplications of a useful character. Neidorf (2023b) omits to mention Olauus, which I suggest negates his argument that niggardliness was not a vice of the Heremōd-figure. It is a testament to Heremōd’s fame that Saxo recycled his name and narrative so often.

⁶⁶¹ *K14*: lvii and 170, fn. 2.

⁶⁶² Neidorf 2023b: 1-2.

⁶⁶³ Áli the son of Óðinn is not noted by Gurevich (2017: 754), though she notes *Áli* as the name of a *sækonungr* in the *Pulur*, frequently mentioned in kennings, who can potentially be identified with Áli inn frækni Friðleifsson (i.e. the Heremōd-character) as well as with others (Gurevich 2017: 678).

⁶⁶⁴ See Gurevich 2017: 754.

⁶⁶⁵ *Hákonarmál*, v. 14 (Fulk 2012: 188). Hákon, king of Norway (d. c. 961), was a younger half-brother of, and successor to, Eiríkr bloodaxe.

eallum æþelingum tō aldorceare;

[...] since Heremōd's martial ability dwindled, might and courage. He ended up among giants, tricked to his doom in the power of enemies,⁶⁶⁶ rapidly sent to his destruction. The waves of sorrow had battered him too long; he had become a threat to the lives of his people, all his important men.

In the Scandinavian tradition the Heremōd-figure's killer, Starkaðr, was descended from giants (for real, according to *fornaldarsögur*, but only reputedly, according to *GD*), and in *RDF/Skjöldunga saga*, the person who sent him to kill Alo was Frodo IV (= Frōda in *Beowulf*), who was his half-brother. Of Frodo it is said: *Aulam suam patrio more instituit, in qva pugiles aliquot, giganteis viribus pollentes, alebat, qvibys Starcadum præfecit. Barones etiam 12 sibi subditos habuit* "He kept his hall after the manner of his father and in it supported a number of fighters who had the strength of giants, of whom Starcadus [= Starkaðr] was the leader. He also had twelve earls under him".⁶⁶⁷ Thus, Áli died at the hands of a giant-descended man who was one of a band of men of gigantic strength. I suggest that the brief details in *RDF/Skjöldunga saga* are reconcilable with the allusive reference in the *Beowulf* passage above, thus encouraging us to read its *eotenum* as "giants".⁶⁶⁸ As we shall see later, there is other evidence to suggest that there may have been a close relationship between *RDF/Skjöldunga saga* and English heroic narrative traditions still alive in the twelfth-century, which may explain close correspondences like this.⁶⁶⁹

Heremōd was also known in Scandinavia under a cognate version of his name, *Hermóðr*. He seems to have been a very great hero, though we lack a clear account of his career. In the Eddaic poem *Hyndluljóð* (v. 2) Hermóðr is said to have been a member of Óðinn's *verðung* (war-band) and to have received from him a helmet and corselet, while Sigmundr received a sword. But in v. 14 of the same poem Áli appears too, explicitly linked with the Skjöldung Danes and receiving very high praise.⁶⁷⁰

Áli var áðr	1
qflgastr manna,	
Halfdan fyrri	3
hæstr Skjöldunga;	
fræg váru folkvíg,	5
þau er framir gerðu,	
hvarfla þóttu hans verk	7

⁶⁶⁶ Or "the realm of fiends", i.e. "monsters", or "giants", as with *eotenum* in l. 902b. See fn. 668 below.

⁶⁶⁷ *RDF/Skjöldunga saga*, ch. 9; *ÍF* 35: 17.

⁶⁶⁸ Or, if there was wordplay on *Ēotenum* "Jutes" and *eotenum* "giants", I suggest the primary sense here was "giants". See the discussion at pp. 72-78 above.

⁶⁶⁹ See sections 5.3.3-5.3.8 at pp. 382-400 below.

⁶⁷⁰ *Eddukvæði*: I, 460, 462.

með himins skautum.

Áli was previously the mightiest of men, Halfdan formerly the highest of the Skjöldungar. Famous were the wars between peoples, those which brave men [or “kings”] made. His deeds seemed to echo from the corners of the heavens.

The use of the singular *hans* in l. 7 shows that only one person is referred to in this stanza. Thus, if we read this “appositively”, the mighty Áli was also known as *Halfdan*, highest of the Skjöldungar.⁶⁷¹ The use of *Hermóðr* and *Áli* and is an example of “Covert Name Variation”.

However, even if it is correct to read *Hyndluljóð* v. 14 appositively, there is no text which makes any overt link between a person called *Áli* (or the like) and the figure who is called *Halfdan* in Norse texts or *Healfdene* in *Beowulf*. In *RDF/Skjöldunga saga* Halfdanus (= Healfdene) appears in one guise as an illegitimate son of Frodo IV (= Frōða/Wiðergyld) and half-brother to his legitimate son Ingjalldus (= Ingeld). Saxo’s Haldanus is even more remote from *Beowulf*’s narrative and is a father of Harald wartooth.⁶⁷² Thus, I suggest that in *Hyndluljóð* (v. 14) *Áli* and *Halfdan* are the same person, but *Halfdan* is not being used as a personal name (as if for the father of Hrōþgār in *Beowulf*), but is another example of an ethno-eponym, referring to the king of the tribe of the Halfdanir, *Beowulf*’s *Healfdene*. Thus, Áli (aka *Hermóðr*) was also *Halfdan*, the king of the Halfdanir and therefore a Skjöldungr.⁶⁷³

From this evidence, taken as a whole, I suggest it is possible to form a coherent picture of the naming tradition which surrounded the Heremōd-figure, even though the events of his life are so obscure. The motival resemblances between the text of *Beowulf* concerning Heremōd and the Scandinavian texts concerning Áli/Alo/Olo suggest that these were the same character under different names. We know from several references in Old Norse texts that there was a very famous warrior – worthy to be a denizen of Valhøll and to be thought of as an áss and a son of Óðinn – who was called *Hermóðr*, an exact cognate of Old English *Heremōd*. Again, it is more likely that these are the same person rather than two entirely different super-heroes with the same name. In one Scandinavian text, the putative Heremōd-analogue who is murdered in his bath is called *Ármóðr*. This has a different prototheme from *Hermóðr*, but it is not so different (given the more important resemblances of his manner of death) that we should

⁶⁷¹ As we saw in Part I, reading *Widsith* 26-27 “appositively” enabled us to identify *Gefwulf* and *Fin* as different names for the same person who was also to be identified as the son of Godwulf (sharing the deutertheme -wulf) who also had another name, the epithetical *Folcwalda* (pp. 78-80 above). The same method of reading showed that *Hnæf* was *Hōc* (pp. 57-59), aka *Hūnlāf* (p. 92 and fn. 275 above). And in a case of “Covert Name Variation” *Frōða* was the same person as *Wiþergyld* (pp. 88-89 above).

⁶⁷² See p. 330 below.

⁶⁷³ Cf. *Grottasǫngr*, v. 22, where *Halfdani* is an ethno-eponym for Hróarr (= Hrōþgār). See pp. 65-66 above. Note also that in *Beowulf* 913a Heremōd’s kingdom is called *ēpel Scyldinga*, so he was a Scylding.

conclude he is a different person. It may have been an author's attempt to justify or explain *Áli* as a hypocorism of *Hermóðr* by hypercorrectly changing the name to *Ármóðr*.

Thus if *Áli/Alo/Olo* was also *Hermóðr* and *Ármóðr*, where does the shorter, apparently hypocoristic name come from? Here I suggest that *Widsith* provides the answer. While it is arguable that *Áli/Alo/Olo* may have been a hypocorisation of *Ármóðr*, or that it could be derived as a *Tubba*-type from the common name *Óláfr* or *Áleifr*,⁶⁷⁴ it is also possible to derive it from a name beginning with *Al-*. Such a name in Old English could have been **Aluwīh*, which had a cognate form in Old Norse – that is, Proto-Norse **Aluwēr* (> *Qlvér*, *Qlvir*).⁶⁷⁵ What makes this observation significant, I suggest, is that *Widsith* tells us that *Alewīh* was a king of the *Dene*, and a great one, but Offa's feats were so outstanding that they were greater even than those of *Alewīh*. But “Who was *Alewīh*?” the critics have always asked. The first part of the answer, I argue, is that he was a great man – the most famous king of the Danes ever (as far as the poet-speaker *Wīdsīþ* knew). If we do not recognise his name, this means either that he and his story have been lost to us, or that we do in fact know him, but under a different name. Here, I suggest we follow a chain of reasoning which goes thus: according to *Beowulf*, a very famous king of the Scylding Danes was called *Heremōd*; he was known as *Hermóðr* and *Áli* (and other similar forms) in Scandinavian texts, in which he was also a Dane and a *Skjoldung* of great fame; in the English and Scandinavian texts he came to a bad end, killed in some way associated with giants; the origin of the hypocorism *Áli* – and thus the link between – is most easily explained by *Widsith*'s reference to *Alewīh*. This, I suggest, was the birth-name of *Heremōd*, as known to the *Widsith*-poet's tradition. Thus, if we again accept that a character can have more than one name, *Alewīh* can be identified potentially as another name for *Heremōd*. It is consistent in form with a dithematic birth-name of a non-syntagmatic kind: *alu* “ale” or “good fortune” + *wīh* “holy”.⁶⁷⁶ *Heremōd*, by contrast – though capable of being an ordinary name –

⁶⁷⁴ Cf. Willson 2007: 199-200, who cites eight modern Icelandic male names which can be hypocorised to *Alli*: *Aðalbjörn*, *Aðalsteinn*, *Alfred*, *Albert*, *Alberg*, *Axel*, *Árelíus*, *Aðalgeir*. But she regards any “attempt to define truncation rules” to account for this as “theoretically cumbersome and practically impossible”. However, I doubt this. The names all begin with /a-/; /-li/ is a historically-evidenced Gmc hypocoristic suffix (= /-ila/); and consonant-gemination in hypocorism would cause *Ali* to become *Alli* optionally. These rules could produce *Ali* or *Alli* from any name beginning with /A-/.

⁶⁷⁵ See Peterson 2007: 20, 21, 172-73, *s.nn.* *Āli*, *Alvēr*, *Ōli*.

⁶⁷⁶ It is possible that there is an epithetical element to *Alewīh* if it were understood syntagmatically as “holy being associated with *alu*”. Mees reviews the complex issue of the meaning of Gmc *alu* (2023: 187-89). He concludes that it had a “generic, magico-religious meaning, and its use may have reflected an ancient connection with the maintaining or protecting of life rather than dedicating or drinking ale” (2023: 189). However, rather than *alu* “good luck” coming to mean *alu* “ale”, I suggest that “ale” (i.e. beer) was symbolic of the good fortune attending an ordered and harmonious state of society. Robinson (1985: 74-80) argued persuasively that the adjective *druncen* (e.g. *Beowulf* 480, 1230, 2179-80) did not necessarily mean “intoxicated” but denoted the status of people who had ritually drunk a loyal toast to the king

is evidently potentially meaningful and epithetical: *here* “army” > “war” + *mōd* “temperament, courage” – hence “raiding-temperament” or martial spirit”. It was apt for a king who achieved his huge fame through his *hild* [...] // *eafoð ond ellen* “martial ability [...] might and courage” (*Beowulf* 901b-02a).⁶⁷⁷ I therefore conclude that – like Gefwulf who was known as *Finn*, Godwulf who was known as *Folcwald(a)*, and Wiðergyld who was known as *Frōda* – the king with the birth-name *Alewīh* was also known as *Heremōd*, and each of these bore both a birth-name and an epithetical name of a meaningful kind.

Alewīh, I suggest, we can take to be a variant of *Aluwīh*, with its second, unstressed syllable reduced from /u/ to /e/.⁶⁷⁸ *Alewīh* is not recorded in *PASE*, but it occurs as *Alewi* in *DLV*.⁶⁷⁹ *Alewīh* would be capable of generating hypocoristic forms of the *Ælle*-type in Old English: **Ali*, **Ale*, **Alli*, **Alle*, *Ælli* and *Ælle*. It may be admitted that Old Norse *Áli*, with its long /ā/ would not be exactly cognate with Old English /ā/ or /æ/, but, again, the pattern of cross-linguistic resemblances, I suggest, is stronger than that of differences (and the marking of vowel-length in medieval Icelandic MSS was not consistent or always correct).⁶⁸⁰

Thus, the *Áli*, who was *oðlgastr* and *hæstr Skjöldunga* was also comparable in stature and fame with *Alewīh* in *Widsith* (l. 36), who was also described superlatively as *þāra manna*

accompanied by a boast of future service, thus signalling their entry into a binding relationship of vassal and lord, that is, of loyalty in return for protection and sustenance, of which ale and the drinking of it were symbolic. I regard *alu* and **alub* (see Kroonen 2013: 23-24) as nouns derived from the same Gmc stem as in the verb **alan-* “to nourish, support” (see Kroonen 2013: 19 – though he takes a different view). “Ale” was thus “sustenance”, the substance with which a king nourished and supported his men and with which they indicated their loyalty to him.

⁶⁷⁷ See Müllenhoff (1889: 50): “[...] eine personification der kriegerischen gesinnung, die sich als kriegerischer mut, aber auch in schlimmer weise als kriegerische Wildheit und grausamkeit offenbaren kann.” (“a personification of the warrior-temperament, which can manifest itself as warrior-like bravery, but also in a nastier way as warlike savagery and cruelty”). “War-mind”, matching his temperament, says Orchard (2003: 112). However, Björkman emphasised it as an ordinary name recorded as being borne by actual people, featuring ordinary elements (1920: 63-64). See *PASE*, *Heremod* 1-14, and Shaw (2020: 131-32), emphasising how widespread it was in the Germanic speaking world. However, this would not prevent it from being used as an epithetical name for a particular individual.

⁶⁷⁸ See *OEG*: 158-59 (on the reduction of medial unaccented vowels); and *ibid.*: 259 and fn. 2, forms of *ealu* (= *alu*) **æleþ* and *ealeþa*, with reduction of /u/ to /e/.

⁶⁷⁹ See *Alewi* presbyter in *DLV* (Stevenson 1841: 80), and *PASE*, *Ælewi* 1. The names in the regnal lists, *Alusa* (*PASE*) and *Aluca* (Wessex, son of Giwis, not in *PASE*) are probably hypocorisms (with suffixes) of names in *Al(u)-*.

⁶⁸⁰ In OWN *u*-mutation was more regular than in OEN, hence the appellative *alu* “ale” became *ol* in OWN. But it is not certain that this would have occurred in hypocorisms of a name with the theme *Alu-* > *Ali*. The vocalisation /a/ may have been retained and assumed to have been long /ā/ by analogy with *Áli*, the phonologically cognate hypocorism of the name which was *Onela* in OE. Alternatively, *Ali* (with a short /a/) has been presumed editorially to have a long /ā/. I do not think it is coincidental that *Starkaðr*, the giant who was the grandfather of *Starkaðr Stórverksson*, is called *Áludrengr* in *Heiðreks saga ins vitra* and *Gautreks saga*. The by-name is unexplained in the saga, but is consistent with *Starkaðr* being the *drengr* (“lad”, i.e. “follower”) of a person associated with a word <álu> or <alu>, or featuring this element in his name. An obvious candidate would be an ON **Aluvér*, cognate with OE *Alewīh* – consistent with the hypocoristic name of Starcadus/Starcatherus’s beloved lord Alo/Olo in *RDF/Skjöldunga saga* and *GD*. **Aluvér* became *Qlvér/Qlvir* in ON (see *ANew*: 687, s.v. *Qlvér*).

/mōdgast “the bravest of those men”. Heremōd’s story is hardly recorded at all in Anglo-Saxon tradition. We have perhaps been conditioned by the authority of *Beowulf* to view him principally or merely as a niggardly and murderous tyrant whose own people contrived his death. But, as the Danish scop sang in the passage at ll. 898-913a, until his savage old age, Heremōd was the greatest hero there was, surpassed since only by Sigemund (and maybe by Bēowulf). In the Scandinavian tradition, it took a giant to kill such a king; and it is possible to read the text in *Beowulf* as an allusion to a narrative which contained a similar motif.

However, there is a further relevant aspect to the story of Heremōd, I suggest, which impinges on our understanding of *Widsith*. This appears in Arngrímur Jónsson’s *RDF/Skjöldunga saga*, in which the Heremōd-character, Alo inn fræckne (“the bold”), is assassinated by the gigantic Starcadus. As we have seen in our examination of Wiðergyld and the Heapobear story, he is the same figure as Starkaðr Stórverksson, the retainer of giant stock in Old Norse texts; and I have argued that he is also likely to be the *eald æscwiga* in Bēowulf’s prediction about the Frēawaru-Ingeld marriage, who goads Ingeld to avenge the death of his father Wiðergyld/Frōda. Starcadus performs this outrage on the instructions of his lord, king Frodo IV, who is the same figure as Frōda the Heapobear in *Beowulf*. Starcadus infiltrates Alo’s entourage and, once trusted by him, kills Alo in his bath.

In *RDF/Skjöldunga saga*, however, Alo and Frodo (IV) are both Danes. They are the sons of the Danish king Fridleifus (II) by different mothers, and both are nephews of Fridleifus’s brother Halfdanus.⁶⁸¹ Frodo (IV) himself has two sons by two different women: Ingjalldus (= Ingeld in *Beowulf*) and Halfdanus father of Helgo and Roë (= Healfdene, father of Hālgā and Hrōþgār in *Beowulf*). Continuing the theme of internecine conflict, Ingjalldus kills Halfdanus, and in turn is killed by Helgo and Roë. In each of these scenarios one of the half-brothers is fathered on an abducted woman.

While all these characters are present in *Beowulf*, we do not know why, in the background to the poem’s narrative, the Heapobears and Scyldings were at war, nor whether or not they were related to one another. In *RDF/Skjöldunga saga* they are all members of the Danish royal family, the Skjöldungar, and their contention is thus intra-familial. But this raises a question about the nature of the narrative tradition from which this conflict-scenario is drawn in the Scandinavian texts. The first question is whether the ideology underlying *Skjöldunga saga* was aimed at erasing originally non-Danish ethnicities in order to produce a single narrative of Skjöldung descent, thus making the line of Danish kings as ancient and venerable

⁶⁸¹ See *RDF/Skjöldunga saga*, ch. 8-10; *ÍF* 35: 15-23.

as possible.⁶⁸² In such a case, we might expect the main contenders to be turned into Danes and the causes of their contention to be changed from intertribal arguments into struggles for the Skjöldung succession or for supremacy over rivals. But another possibility is that *Skjöldunga saga* preserved aspects of a narrative tradition which was also known to the *Beowulf*-poet but omitted from his poem. One such aspect may have been the kinship of the antagonists – of Alo and Halfdanus (= Heremōd and Healfdene), and of the Scyldings and the Heapobeards (Healfdene and Frōda and Ingeld). Perhaps their struggles were omitted because the themes which we find in *RDF/Skjöldunga saga* – bigamy, kidnapping, concubinage, illegitimacy, treachery and fratricide – were morally repugnant, or they conflicted with the image of a glorious and still united Danish court that the *Beowulf*-poet wished to project as a worthy arena for Bēowulf’s heroism. Many critics speak of the skulduggery to come, as hinted at in the text of *Beowulf*; but none speaks about the skulduggery that may already have been.

In the chronology informing *Widsith*, we may therefore understand Alewīh as a Danish forebear of Hrōþgār and Hrōþulf. However in *Widsith* ll. 35-39 (quoted above), the poet does not commit himself to whether Alewīh came before or after Offa. He says only that Alewīh was *pāra manna / mōdgast* (l. 3, “the bravest of those men”), referring either to the *Dene* of the previous line or the list of heroic kings which has just been given. In any case, the poet says that Offa outdid him in achievement, not that Offa did so after Alewīh’s time. The fact that both Offa and Alewīh are both named in l. 35 may even suggest that they were contemporary, and that Offa’s glory was won at a time when the Danes had been made a great (and threatening) power under Alewīh. If – as I shall later suggest – the defeat of Ingeld’s Heapobeards by Hrōþgār and Hrōþulf (*Widsith* 45-49) represented the peak of Scylding power and thus an existential threat to Angel, it is also possible that in the tradition known to the *Widsith*-poet Alewīh (= Heremōd) and the Scylding line from Scyld to Hrōþgār and Hrōþulf occupied the same (and not too lengthy) period of time as Wērmund and Offa to Ēomēr and Icel.

This line of reasoning is inevitably speculative. But rather than suppose that the *Widsith*-poet was focusing on the Danish Scyldings for no reason, I suggest that his allusions to Alewīh (= Heremōd), Hrōþgār, Hrōþwulf, and Ingeld may have been to a narrative of ruthless dynasts who were prepared to kill their own kinsmen to achieve power. Thus, while the pro-Danish *Beowulf*-poet may have wished to ignore such a history, the pro-Angle *Widsith*-poet would not. Indeed, the suggestion of a mighty, imperial Scylding entity gained by the

⁶⁸² The view of Jakob Benediktsson (1957-1961: 48-49).

unprincipled would have worrying implications for the safety and independence of a Jutlandic nation like the Angles. The “wide kingdom” inherited by Hrōþgār⁶⁸³ may have been even more extensive than that of Scyld and Bēow (which included Scania). It may have encompassed Vendel in the north of Jutland,⁶⁸⁴ and the lands of the Heapobeards (after their defeat), somewhere in or to the south of Jutland, on or around the Elbe,⁶⁸⁵ as well as whatever Healfdene and his sons had conquered in the interim.

Guided by the mentorship and spurred by the suggestions of Chadwick, Mary Clarke long ago floated the idea that if in *RDF/Skjoldunga saga* Dan was the conqueror of a king of Sjælland called *Aleifus* (= *Áleifr*, *Óláfr*), then Alewīh the Dane in *Widsith* may have been the conqueror of Offa, whose name she (like myself) related to *Aleifus*.⁶⁸⁶ As I shall argue later, Clarke’s identification of a theme in *RDF/Skjoldunga saga* of the Danish conquest of Offa’s Angel was justified.⁶⁸⁷ But I suggest here that the above analysis of the significance of Alewīh and his fame, compared to that of Offa, sets the scene for the clash of these two regional powers.



Map 3

The Conjectural Geography of *Widsith*: indicating (highlighted) the possible extent of Danish Scylding power as understood by the *Beowulf* and *Widsith* poets

⁶⁸³ Hrōþgār tells Bēowulf that in his youth he ruled a *ginne rīce* (l. 466).

⁶⁸⁴ Wulfgār, a senior official (*ār ond ombiht*) apparently in charge of protocol at Heorot (*Beowulf* 331b-70), is said to be *Wendla lēod* (l. 348), a man or prince of the *Wendlas*. These are likely to have been the inhabitants of Wendel in northern Jutland, indicating Danish overlordship there. See p. 228 and fn. 894 below.

⁶⁸⁵ See Malone 1962: 162.

⁶⁸⁶ Clarke 1911: 119

⁶⁸⁷ See section 6.2 (pp. 402-06 below).

2.5.5 Offa: Conclusions

I suggest that the linguistic evidence with respect to the name *Offa* and its Danish form *Uffo* indicates an English origin for the character, rather than two branches of the same ancient narrative, developing in England and Denmark respectively. I further suggest that the phonological and semantic evidence with respect to the name of Offa's remarkable sword *Skrep* in *GD* is also consistent with an English origin, and that the description of it in *Widsith* as *ān sweord* ("one", "a certain" "a unique") is consistent with its remarkable character in *GD* as a magical, never-failing weapon, and the only one that Offa could be relied on not to break.

The allusion to Alewīh king of the Danes, I argue, can only have functioned if he was the greatest hero or monarch known until his achievements were exceeded by Offa. It would be unusual if the identity of such a person had not survived in some form. I use the principles of multiple naming and hypocorism to identify him as Heremōd, a figure whose enormous glory (in his heyday) can be inferred from English and Scandinavian sources, even though his deeds are barely recoverable. The form of his name, *Alewīh*, is related to Scandinavian hypocorisms like *Áli*, *Alo* and *Olo* in Scandinavian texts, but it is found nowhere but in *Widsith*.

2.6 Angengēot, Angelgēot, Angelpēow

The only thing we know about the man, who – in the regnal lists in *AngCol* and *ASC* – was the son of Offa, is his name. This apparently dithematic name appears variously as *Angengēot*, *Angengiōt*, *Angengēat*, *Angelgēot* and *Angelpēow*. In this section I shall analyse these elements in order to demonstrate that they denote Anglian and Jutish ethnicity respectively, and in combination form an ethno-eponymous name which designated Offa's successor as a king of dual heritage, arising from the marriage of his Angle father to a "Jutish" princess (as we shall examine in section 4 below on Offa's marriage),⁶⁸⁸ and thus a man with a significant role as the inheritor of the empire Offa achieved.

In the *Beowulf*-poet's allusion to the story of Offa, he does not mention Angengēot (the default form I shall use). Instead, he names *Ēomēr* (*Beowulf* 1960), apparently as a person of heroic stature. While it is usually thought that *Ēomēr* is named because he was Offa's son, as we shall see, the text of *Beowulf* does not actually say so.⁶⁸⁹ In the regnal lists in *AngCol* and *ASC* Offa's son is named as *Angengēot* (and variants), and *Ēomēr* is Angengēot's son.

⁶⁸⁸ See pp. 256-351 below.

⁶⁸⁹ See pp. 202 and 292 below. Shaw (2020: 145-46) argues that the relevant text (l. 1960b, *ponon Ēomēr wōc*) does not necessarily mean that *Ēomēr* was Offa's son, just that he was born later than Offa.

We may hypothesise that if the *Beowulf*-poet had a reason for mentioning Offa and his grandson while omitting his son, this was because Offa and Æomēr played more notable roles in the narrative that the poet knew – or at least roles more germane to the theme of his Offa-story and its narrative function in *Beowulf* (to which we shall also turn in sections 2.7-2.7.1).⁶⁹⁰ All we know about Angengēot is the various forms of his name and his kin-relationships. But these, I shall suggest, may tell us a significant amount about this mysterious person.

2.6.1 *Angen, Angel, Ongen(d)*

The name which has the forms *Angengēot*, *Angengīot*, *Angengēat*, *Angelgēot*, and *Angelþēow* would appear to be dithematic and to consist of elements that have potential associations with ethnicity: *Angel/Angen* perhaps with “Angle”; *Gēot/Gīot* perhaps with “Jute”; and *Gēat*, apparently with the *Gēatas*, *Bēowulf*’s people. Given the concurrence and similarity of the forms *Angel* and *Angen* in the same name, it seems reasonable to hypothesise that they may be synonymous variants. *Angel* is recorded as a toponym, the home of the Angles.⁶⁹¹

A name with similar variants also appears in the Bernician regnal list in *AngCol*, the MSS of which name *Angengēot*, *Angengīot* or *Angelgēot Alusing*.⁶⁹² This person appears in a different version of the Bernician list in *ASC* (MS B, *s.a.* 547) under a further variant as *Angenwit Alocing*.⁶⁹³ He seems to have been contemporary with Æomēr.⁶⁹⁴

The unique form *Ongen*, for the son of Offa I in the Mercian list, appears in the Harleian recension of *HB*.⁶⁹⁵ Dumville suggested that the second element of the original name **Ongengēot* or **Ongengēat* was omitted.⁶⁹⁶ This may be correct, since, according to Dumville, John of Worcester “appears to have had access to a genealogical collection more closely related to that used three centuries before by the author of the *Historia* than is any other surviving

⁶⁹⁰ See pp. 202-09 below.

⁶⁹¹ Recorded in *Widsith* (ll. 8, 35) as dative *Ongle*, from nominative *Ongel* (also recorded in *DOEC* are *Angul* and *Ongol*). *Angel* as a singular ethnonym is also to be inferred from the *i*-mutated plural *Engle*. *HB* (ch. 24, Harleian recension) has *Ochgul uel Ongle* (var. *Angle*), which Dumville notes gives the “‘Old Welsh’ form some sort of Old English gloss” (1975: 348, 412). However, as <ch> was a Latin grapheme for Gmc voiceless [x] (also written <h>), it is more likely that an Anglo-Saxon original <ongul> was misread as <ohgul> and its perceived <h> was rendered by a scribe with the graph <ch>. (It should also be noted that *Widsith* 35a, *Offa wēold Ongle*, uses the toponym *Ongel* rather than the ethnonym *Englum* (“Angles”), suggesting that *Ongel* was perhaps a demonym for several peoples rather than an ethnonym).
⁶⁹² See the lists in Dumville 1976: MS V *Angengeot*, MS C *Angengiōt*, MS T *Angelgeot*. In each MS the orthography and form of the name of the Bernician king mirrors that of the son of Offa.

⁶⁹³ *Alusa* and *Aloc* may be regarded as variant hypocorisms (for the same person) based on some name beginning *Al-*, *Æl-* or *Ēal-* with the respective suffixes *-(u)sa*, *-oc*.

⁶⁹⁴ See Fig. 3 (p. 144 above).

⁶⁹⁵ *HB*, ch. 56; Dumville 1975: 241. The scribe carelessly omits four names after *Eamer* and gives *Pubba* as the next name (Dumville 1975: 698).

⁶⁹⁶ Dumville 1975: 241, 698.

document”,⁶⁹⁷ and John gives the son of Offa I as *Angengeat*.⁶⁹⁸ However, this suggests that *Ongen* was a variant of *Angen*,⁶⁹⁹ and if both are synonymous with *Angel*, then *Ongen* is also a possible ethno-eponym for a king of Angel. In the *Vita Willibrordi* Alcuin describes the Northumbrian missionary’s encounter in the land of the *Dani* with a heathen king called *Ongendus*,⁷⁰⁰ but he does not say where Ongendus ruled. Alcuin seems to suggest that the Frisians (under the pagan king Radbod, who ruled at Utrecht) and the Danes under Ongendus were neighbours of each other. On his way back to Francia from the court of Ongendus, Willibrord clearly travelled by sea, since he stopped at an island on the border between the Frisians and the Danes (*in confinio Fresonum et Daenorum*) called *Fositesland*, after a pagan god *Fositae*.⁷⁰¹ Adam of Bremen suggested this was Heligoland, off the western coast of southern Jutland, but this has been generally doubted.⁷⁰² Since a mammoth journey from Frisia to the Baltic islands of Denmark would seem unlikely, it is more probable that Ongendus ruled somewhere in southern Jutland, and it was his kingdom that bordered the Frisians. I therefore suggest that *Ongendus* was a Latinisation of an Old English name-form *Ongend*. This word is found as an element in the name *Ongendþēow*, the king of the Swedes in *Widsith* 31. In *Beowulf* the same element in the same name is spelled as *Ongen-*, in *Ongenþēow*, either omitting the /-d/ or assimilating it with /þ/.⁷⁰³ *Ongend* also occurs in the ethnonym *Ongend-Myrgingas* in *Widsith* 85, who (it will be argued) were a branch of the Myrgingas on Anglian territory.⁷⁰⁴

⁶⁹⁷ Dumville 1976: 49.

⁶⁹⁸ John of Worcester, *Chronicle*, s.a. 628; Darlington, McGurk and Bray 1995-98: II, 86.

⁶⁹⁹ In OE short /o/ was an alternative spelling for the short back-vowel /a/ when followed by a nasal consonant, as in *monn~mann*, *lomb~lamb* and *gongan~gangan* (OEG: 14, 51-52). Hence *Ongel~Ongen* = *Angel~Angen*.

⁷⁰⁰ *Vita Willibrordi*, ch. 9-11; Levison 1920: 123-26.

⁷⁰¹ Since the suggestion of Jacob Grimm, Fosite has been persistently identified with Forseti, a god named in the Eddaic poem *Grímnismál* (see Simek 2006: 111). However, *Fosite* may be explained as ethnophoric, (**Fosipi*) derived from the Gmc ethnonym recorded as *Fosi* by Tacitus in *Germania* (ch. 36). The name *Fozo* appears in a linguistically WGmc runic inscription on a late 5th-c. bracteate found at Hitzum in Frisia. *Fozo* has been interpreted by Mees as ethnophoric, related to the Fosi. Historians have suggested that in the 3rd c. AD migrants came from WGmc language areas to Frisia (which had become depopulated). See Mees 2023: 164-66. It is therefore possible that Fofo was a man (possibly an ethno-eponymous king) of the *Fosi*, and *Fosite* was their tutelary god.

⁷⁰² *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae Pontificum*, IV.3; Schmeidler 1917: 232. Doubting are Levison (1920: 124, fn. 3) and Simek (2006: 111). However, in Tacitus’s *Germania* (ch. 35-36) the Fosi were neighbours of the Cherusci and apparently situated somewhere near the western foot of the Jutland peninsula. If so, this would make it rather likely that Fosite was their tribal god, and that he did indeed have a cult centre on Heligoland, which could have been a port of call for Willibrord on his sea journey from the Danes back to the Franks.

⁷⁰³ Spelled *Ongenþēow*, *Ongendōiow* and *Ongendōio* in *Beowulf* 1968, 2387, 2475, 2923, 2951, 2961, 2986. He is known by the name *Egill* in *Ynglingatal* (v. 15) and *Ynglinga saga* (ch. 26; *IF* 26: 50-53). The name *Egill* was originally PrN **Agilaz*, from a PrGmc stem **agjō* (“sword-”)edge” + suffix */-ilaz/. It is etymologically unrelated to *Ongen(d)þēow*, although the two alliterate. We may hypothesise that the OE name was epithetical, with the apparent meaning “Anglian lad” or “slave of Angel”. See further at p. 227 below.

⁷⁰⁴ See section 3.5.2 at pp. 225-27 below.

Ongendus may therefore be understood as the ethno-eponym for the ruler of the former kingdom of Angel, possibly as a *subregulus* under the king of Denmark.

I therefore argue that *Angen/Ongen* and *Ongend* were variants of the same toponym, which was synonymous with *Angel* (*Ongel* in *Widsith* 8, 35) – each with the same stem but different suffixes. In Old English *Ang-* and *Ong-* were allophones (as in *man/mon*, *land/lond*, and other words in which short /a/ was followed by a nasal consonant). The Old English elements *-en* and *-el* were not the same, but were suffixal in both common and proper nouns in Old English. That they were interchangeable in the name of Offa’s grandson is suggested by the occurrence of variants with *Angel-* and *Angen-*.

The element *-end* would also appear to be suffixal. It has the same form as the Old English present participial ending *-end-*, but it also occurs in nouns formed from verbs, such as *būend* “dweller” (from *būan* “to dwell”), *frēond* “friend” (from *frēogan* “to love”), and *fēond* “fiend, enemy” (from *fēogan* “to hate”). And it is also found in ethnonyms: *Prōwend* (*Widsith* 64), Old Norse *Prændir*, the people of Þrándheimr (modern Trondheim), from **Prōwinda* “those who grow, increase”;⁷⁰⁵ and also **Burgende* (*Widsith* 65), the Burgundians, whose name meant “people associated with fortified dwellings called **burg* (= Old English *burh*)”.⁷⁰⁶ These two examples suggest that *Ongend* was an ethnonym structured in the same way. As a singulative, *Ongend* could thus be an ethno-eponym, designating the king of the *Dani*, whom Willibrord met, as “Angle”, the king of the Danes in the region known historically as *Angel*. By the time of Willibrord’s mission at the beginning of the eighth century, *Vetus Anglia* must have been under Danish control for two centuries or more – hence the description of *Ongendus*’s people as *Dani*.

Also, *Angel/Ongel* could exist as both an ethnonym (the plural of which was *Engle* in Old English) and as a toponym. This makes it theoretically possible that *Angen* and *Ongen(d)* could too, in which case *Angen* and *Ongen(d)* may also have functioned as toponyms. If the early medieval inhabitants of southern Jutland and northern Germany had had such things as maps, the area of south-eastern Jutland associated with Angles might simply have borne the

⁷⁰⁵ *ANEW*: 625, sv. *Prændir*. The same suffix is probably found in the name of the Κοβανδοί, a tribe of Saxony noted by Ptolemy in his *Geography*. In Sitzmann and Grünzweig the etymology is unascertained (2008: 101), but it may be derived without much difficulty from PrGmc **kubōn* “shed, hut” (> OE *cōfa* “(inner/bed-) room, bakery, cave, den” (*DOE*, s.v.)). This would seem to be confirmed by the element *koven* in place-names in Holstein. See Dohm (1909: 124), suggesting a primitive kind of dwelling. Semantically, the **Kubandiz* “hut-dwellers” would be akin to the **Burgundiz* “burh-dwellers”.

⁷⁰⁶ However, see Sitzmann and Grünzweig (2008: 69) who suggest derivation from a Gmc adjective **burgund-* “high”. While one doubts this (see fn. 705 above), nevertheless *burg-* would be a nominal stem and *-und* a suffix. Sitzmann and Grünzweig compare *Burgund-* in formal terms to the Celtic ethnonym *Brigantes* (a different people and ethnicity but with a cognate name).

name *Angel*, *Angen* or *Ongend* – at the same time meaning “the Angle”, “the king of the Angles” and “Anglia”.⁷⁰⁷

Thus *Angel/Ongel*, *Angen/Ongen* and *Ongend*, I argue, were not only related but synonymous, meaning both the kingdom of the Angles, its individual inhabitants, and (by an ethno-eponym) its king or sub-king. Thus, we can understand the name-forms *Angengēot/Angengīot*, *Angelgēot*, *Angengēat*, *Angelþēow* and *Angenwit* as dithematic and ethnophoric, their first elements referring to the Angles, their ethnicity and/or their territory.⁷⁰⁸

Interestingly, while *Angil*- and *Angin*- were fairly common protothemes in Continental Europe,⁷⁰⁹ the only names (other than those in the regnal lists) recorded in England with cognate protothemes are a ninth-century abbot of St. Riquier (in northern France), called *Angilberct*, and in *DB* one person called *Engelbert* and four called *Engelric*.⁷¹⁰ One imagines that the paucity may be explained by the hypothesis that people in a country called “Angleland” (that is, England) had no use for a name-element which would overwhelmingly be taken to identify them – pointlessly – as English. However, it would conceivably have been different on the Continent, and among the early members of English royal houses, among whom the prototheme “Angle” may have had cultural associations which caused it to be retained in the onomasticon, or functioned to distinguish the bearer as in some way “Anglian”.

As a fascinating sidelight on this subject, we may note that, according to the *Annales Regni Francorum*, in 811 one of the witnesses to the Treaty of Heiligen between the Danes and the Franks (which established their mutual border on the Eider) was Angandeo, the brother of the Danish king Hemming.⁷¹¹ *Angandeo* is a Frankish spelling, but it is cognate with Old English *Ongen(d)þēow*. It is intriguing to see it in proximity to the name *Hemming*, since both

⁷⁰⁷ The use of an ethno-eponym toponymically can be found in two Eddaic poems: *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar, vík Varins* (v. 23/3); and *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I, Varinsfjörðr* (v. 26/10) and *Varinsey* (v. 37/2). The name *Varinn* is the ON form of the singulative of the ethnonym of the Baltic coast tribe called *Varini* (in Tacitus, *Germania* 40), and *Werne/Wærne* (in *Widsith* 25, 29). They were neighbours of the Angles (Hill 2009: 128), and these toponyms survived in the ON Helgi tradition, presumably indicating coastal locations ruled by Varinn, the ethno-eponym for the king of this people.

⁷⁰⁸ The name *Angantýr* appears in ON legendary sagas and poetry, though it is not borne by any king of Sweden (see *LP*: 12, s.v. *Angantýr*). It was also borne by other Scandinavians (Lind *Dopnamn*: 29). It has been linked to the name *Ongenþēow*, developed from **Anganþér* with the substitution of *týr* (“god”? the god Týr?). See *ANEW*: 10, s.v. *Angantýr*. The element *angan* appears in Norse poetry with the apparent meaning “joy, delight” (*LP*: 10, s.v. *angan*). Thus, if *Angan*- was once ethnophoric, it may have lost this significance. There is no other evidence of an ethnophoric name-element “Angle” in ON (unless it lurks among the examples of *Qngull* (see Lind, *Dopnamn*: 1251) – though these may simply come from the word for “hook”).

⁷⁰⁹ See Förstemann’s collection of names under the protothemes *Ang*-, *Angil*- and *Angin*- (1900: 117-09), some of which at least must represent the ethnonym “Angle”.

⁷¹⁰ *PASE*, s.nn. *Angilberctus I* (also spelled *Engelberhtus*, in two letters to him from Alcuin), *Engelbert I* and *Engelric I*. *DLV* contains no names in *Angil*-.

⁷¹¹ *ARF*, s.a. 811; Kurze 1895: 131-35.

names occur in the Offa-tradition, and both are associated with the homeland of the Angles. One notes from *ARF* that the other Danish witnesses were: a second brother of Hemming called *Hancwin*, *Osfrid de Sconaowe* and *Aowin*. Their names give us reason to believe that they were politically symbolic, spelling out to Charlemagne's hard men that the Danes were not to be messed with, since their rule encompassed Scania, the islands of the Baltic, the possessions of the Hōcingas (the descendants of Hnæf), and all the territory as far as the south of Jutland, where kings called *Hemming* and *Angandeo* ("the Anglian lad") now ruled.⁷¹² We shall see later the significance of the ethno-eponym *Hemming*.⁷¹³

2.6.2 *Gēot*, *Gīot*, *Gēat*

The element *gēot*, *gīot* or *gēat* appears in several names in *AngCol*: *Angengīot*/*Angengēot*/*Angelgēot* in the Bernician and Mercian lists (*Angengēat* in John of Worcester); *Siggēot* in the Deiran list (spelled *Sigegeat* in *ASC ABC*, s.a. 560); and *Weoðulgēot* in the Mercian list (*Guedolgeat* in *HB*).⁷¹⁴ The apical figure in *AngCol*'s Lindsey list is *Godulf Gēoting*/*Gēating*/*Ēating*. The Bernician list of Ida commences with *Godwulf Geating* in *ASC ABC*, s.a. 547. The apparent patronymic form seems to have led to the inference that the father of Godwulf was called *Gēat*, or a similar form.⁷¹⁵

In his editions of *HB* and the regnal lists in *AngCol*, respectively, Dumville suggested that the name-element *gēot* was from West Germanic **gaut* (> Old English *gēat*), on the basis that /ēa/ from Germanic /**au*/ could be written as <eo> in an archaic MS in any Old English dialect, or in a later South Northumbrian one.⁷¹⁶ While this is true in phonological and palaeographic terms, it does not explain the form *gīot*.

AngCol MS V attests only -*gēot*-; it is a Mercian MS. MS C attests *gīot*, except for *Godwulf Geating*; the MS is of southwestern origin. MS T attests *gēot* except for *Godwulf*

⁷¹² *Sconaowe* is likely to be a representation of the toponym *Scania* (a Frankish version of ON *Skáney*). See *ANEW*: 482-83, s.v. *Skáney*. *Aowin* is likely to be related to the name of the Baltic island of Öland, which was *Ēowland* in the OE *Orosius*, and the home of *Widsith*'s *Ēowan* (Malone 1962: 149). *Hancwin* is potentially related to *Hōc*, the ethno-eponym of Hnæf, if derived from **Hanh-* (see *ANEW*: 203, s.v. *Hákon*). *Aowin*, *Hancwin* and *Angandeo* were epithetical and *Hemming* ethno-eponymous, I suggest.

⁷¹³ See my conclusions about *Hemming* at pp. 289-90 below.

⁷¹⁴ *HB*, ch. 56; Dumville 1975: 241.

⁷¹⁵ In *HB* he is *Geuta* father of *Folcpald* (ch. 14; Dumville 1975, 331); *Geta* father of *Foleguald* (ch. 20; Dumville 1975, 408); and *Geata* father of *Folepald* (ch. 28; Dumville 1975: 642). In Asser's *Life of Alfred*, he is *Geata* or *Geta*, father of *Godulf* (ch. 1; Stevenson and Whitelock 1959: 3). In the WS list in its most extended form in *ASC* (MSS ABCD, s.a. 855/56) he is *Geat* (AD) *Geata* (B) and *Geatt* (C). *Folcpald*, *Foleguald* and *Folepald* are transparent errors for original OE *Folcpald* (= *Folcwald*).

⁷¹⁶ Dumville 1975: 872, fn. 2; restated in 1976: 48. He also regarded *Geuta* as a corruption (resulting from insular features) of *Geata* (1975: 309). However, it could represent *Geuta*, an archaic form of *Geota*.

Eating; the MS is southern English.⁷¹⁷ Therefore, the Mercian MS closest to the Anglian origins of the collection (Dumville was undecided between Northumbrian and Mercian) attests *gēot*. But even the southern or south-western witnesses mostly attest *gīot* or *gēot*, except for one instance, the patronymic of Godwulf, given as *Geating* or *Eating*, implying that his father was *Gēat* or *Ēat*, or *Gēata* or *Ēata*.⁷¹⁸ While *gīot* may have been a trivial scribal variation of *gēot* (based on /eo/~io/ variation or confusion), *gīot* ought not to be a variant of *gēat*, and the predominance of *gēot*/*gīot* as spellings in names in *AngCol* looks to be inconsistent with names which were originally with *geat* (= *gēat* < **gaut*).⁷¹⁹

Be that as it may, Dumville did not consider the phonology of the ethnonym “Jute”. It existed in Old Norse as *Jótar* or *Jútar*. Munch pointed out that Germanic initial */ju/ lost its initial */j-/ in Old Norse, resulting in initial /u-/ and not /jú-/ (e.g. Proto-Germanic **jungaz* “young” > Old Norse *ungr*, cf. Old English *geong*). Thus, he argued that Old Norse *Jótar* and *Jútar* did not come from a Germanic stem **jut-* but from **jiut-*⁷²⁰ (though perhaps **jeut-* might be better).⁷²¹ Hence, the ethnonym “Jute” – if it had existed in Proto-Germanic – ought to have been **Jeut-* or **Jiut-* (though this does not necessarily mean that “Jutland” or “Jute” were

⁷¹⁷ Dumville 1976: 24, 26, 27.

⁷¹⁸ *Ēating* may have been a scribal error (possibly based on a text in which a coloured capital initial letter /G/ was omitted or faded; or it represents a pronunciation of /ēa/ little different from palatalised /gēa/, and/or its spelling was influenced by hypocorisms of names in *Ēad* > *Eata*, *Eatta* (as discussed at pp. 111-12 above). However, I regard it as an anomaly not meriting separate consideration.

⁷¹⁹ In the MSS of *AngCol* – MS V, the oldest, (Mercian, early 9th c.) has <eo>; MS C (south-western English, 1st half 10th c.) has <io~eo> variation; MS T (Canterbury 1st half 11th c.) has <eo> only. Dumville referred to a “veneer” of Mercian forms in V, and a “covering of later and West Saxon forms” in C and T but otherwise cautioned that name-forms were unreliable indicators of age or dialectal origin, as they were equally liable to preserve their original forms or to be altered, and indeed may have been derived from sources that came from different places and times (1976: 47). See *OEG*: 124-26. Mercian tended to preserve the distinction between /io/ and /eo/ longer than WS (though even in Mercian there was confusion in both long and short versions of the diphthongs), and /io/ was relatively little used in late West Saxon, where /eo/ predominated. All that can be said, however, is that in a Wessex MS of c. 900-50, like C. one would not expect a scribe to vary MS <eo> to <io>. However, this occurs in both the Bernician and Mercian lists, where the scribe has written *Angengiot* and then *Angengeoting*, suggesting that he was substituting a familiar /eo/ for a less familiar /io/. This may be evidence – albeit slight – that the form in his exemplar was <giot>.

⁷²⁰ See Munch 1848, I, 433-434, as noted by Stevenson and Whitelock 1959: 167-168, fn. 3. Munch supposed that ON *Jótar* and *Jútar* both came from ON */jiut/ > */iut/, and that *Jótar*/*Jútar* indicated either a weak masc. or a strong *a*-stem masc., *Jíti* or *Jútr*, respectively. But he also noted that modern Norwegian/Swedish was *Jíte* and Danish *Jyde* (though he did not say that this was in fact consistent with an *i*-stem). Possibly, *i*-mutation can be seen in modern Danish forms *Jyder* “Jutlanders” and *Jylland* “Jutland”, as in the West Saxon form <yum> (= *ȳtum* < nom. *ȳte*) in *Widsith* 26. See also *ODS(HO)*, s.v. *Jyde*, for historical forms, including *lúti*, *iutæ*, *iuti*. *ONP* (s.v. *Jótland*) records only two instances of *Jútland* as opposed to *Jótland* (presumably the latter was the OWN form). See also fn. 721 below.

⁷²¹ See Fulk 2018: 54, where he attributes two PrGmc diphthongs */eu/ and */iu/ derived from PIE */eū/. But see also *ibid.*: 49, 71, 78: PrGmc appears to have only one, */eu/. In OWN this became */eo/ > /jó/ before dental consonants, [x] and /m/, but /jú/ otherwise. This would suggest that *Jót-* forms were OWN and *Jút-* forms OEN.

Germanic words).⁷²² Munch deduced the forms *Geóta*, *Gióta* (= *Gēota*, *Gīota*) as “correct” for the ethnonym “Jute” in Old English.

Except in the personal names in *AngCol*, the forms *Gēot-/Gīot-* are difficult to find in Old English texts. In Bede’s extremely brief account of the *Adventus* in *HE*, Hengest and his brother Horsa are associated with the Kentish kingdom of the *Iutae*.⁷²³ The termination *-ae/* is a Latin feminine plural. But the spelling *Iut-* would be consistent with an early Northumbrian form of the plural of the “Jute” ethnonym which could be reconstructed as **Īutan* (if it were grammatically weak in the plural).⁷²⁴ The forms found in Bede are Latinised as *Iutis*, *Iutarum* and *Iutorum*.⁷²⁵ In *ASC* they appear in Old English inflected forms as *Iutna*, *Iutum* and *Iotum* (*ASC* notes that in Wessex there are people who are still called *Iutna cyn*).⁷²⁶ These forms seem to replicate the grapheme <iu> used by Bede (which could stand for both the archaic diphthong /iu/ but also /giu/), probably because the *ASC* compilers used his text (/iu/ later became /io/). However, it is theoretically possible that early Northumbrian had a homophonous but etymologically more conservative form, **Gīutan*, by analogy with words for “Yule”, derived from Proto-Germanic **jehwlq*. Bede spelled this word *giuli* in his *De Temporum Ratione*, but in other texts under the influence of this the form recorded is *iuli*. “Yule” could also have the variant forms *gēola* and *iūla*.⁷²⁷

In the Old English version of Bede’s *HE* the ethnonym “Jute” is rendered in one passage as *Geatum* (which seems to be a mistake, substituting the *Gēatas* named in *Beowulf*),⁷²⁸ and in another as the genitive plural *Eota*, representing Anglian *Ēota*, the later Anglian reflex of Bede’s *Iut*.⁷²⁹ In Asser’s *Life of Alfred* the Jutes appear in *Gothis et Iutis*, referring to the ethnicity of Alfred’s father-in-law Ōslāc, a Hampshire and therefore “Jutish” nobleman whom Asser also called *Gothus* – believing that “Goth” and “Jute” were related.⁷³⁰ So did the author

⁷²² **Jeut-/*Jiut-* would not be related to the ethnonyms *Goth* or *Gēat*, which would have been **Gut-* and **Gaut-* in PrGmc (reflexes of the Gmc ablaut-series **geut-*, **gaut-*, **gut-*), and it is to be doubted that the Jutish ethnonym was originally Gmc. Toponyms in Gmc-speaking Europe can reflect pre-Gmc languages, including Celtic, PIE and non-IE languages. If “Jute” and “Jutland” reflect a pre-Gmc but IE language, it is possible that they were related to the PIE etymon *jē-* : *jā-* “to throw”, as in Latin *iaciō* “throw” (*IGEWB*: 502). Purely by coincidence, English *jut* (from OFr *jeter* < Latin *iaciō*) continues the sense of “to project, stick out”, which would be appropriate for a peninsula like Jutland.

⁷²³ *HE*, I.15; Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 50.

⁷²⁴ The classes and inflections of ethnonyms in OE were variable. They could be strong *a*-stems, *i*-stems or weak *an*-stems, or a mixture. See *OEG*: 245.

⁷²⁵ *HE*, I.15, IV.16; Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 50, 382, 384.

⁷²⁶ *ASC MSS AE*, s.a. 449.

⁷²⁷ See *DOE*, s.vv. *giuli*, and *gēola*, *iūla*.

⁷²⁸ OE trans. of *HE*, I.15; Miller 1890-98: I, 52. Or *Gēatum* was an unrounded form of *Gēotum*, whether north Northumbrian or Kentish (*OEG*: 118, 119).

⁷²⁹ OE trans. of *HE*, IV.16; Miller 1890-98: II, 308.

⁷³⁰ *Life of Alfred*, ch. 2; Stevenson and Whitelock 1959: 4, 166-70.

of the preface to the Old English *Orosius* (a little later than the time of Alfred), who called Jutland *Gotland*.⁷³¹ However, in the 980s the West Saxon chronicler Æthelweard related some information about *Vetus Anglia*, Schleswig, Hedeby, Saxons and the people he called *Gioti*, who represented Jutes, not Goths.⁷³² William of Malmesbury wrote a passage about Scaef, the supposed ancestor of the West Saxons, in which he relied on Æthelweard's information about *Vetus Anglia*, a region which he placed *inter Saxones et Gothis* "between Saxons and Goths", restoring the confusion.⁷³³

In this brief conspectus we see, I suggest, the influence on *ASC* of Bede's orthography; the error perpetrated by his Old English translator; and the folk-etymological confusion of Goths and Jutes by two Alfredian authorities – Asser and the author of the Old English *Orosius*. The text, based on *ASC*, which is not affected by these influences is that of Æthelweard, and he uses a form, *Gīot-*, which is not consistent with the likely phonology or orthography of late West Saxon, but which accords with the earliest attestations of an apparently ethnonymic element *gīot* in the names of the *AngCol* regnal lists. *Gīot*, I therefore suggest, was the original Old English form and meant "Jute".

2.6.2.1 Jutes in *Widsith* and *Beowulf*

With respect to "Jutes", I propose here to re-investigate a word in the *Beowulf* MS which has universally been taken to refer to Bēowulf's people, the *Gēatas*, but which may be argued to be an instance of the ethnonym "Jutes", which – I suggest – gives us a crucial insight into the development of this word, and also into the geopolitical background to the poem.

The evidence with respect to the ethnonym "Jute" in England appears in Latin texts or vernacular texts under their influence. But we also find it in Anglo-Saxon vernacular texts. In *Widsith* the Jutes are found in *ȳtum* (l. 26), the dative plural of nominative *ȳte*, which was the standard late West Saxon form of the Jutish ethnonym, consistent with the date of the Exeter Book, written at some time between about 950 and 975 and mostly rendered in standard West

⁷³¹ OE *Orosius*, l.1.22; Godden 2016: 42-43.

⁷³² Æthelweard's *Chronicon* gives the ethnonym "Jute" in the forms *Giota*, *Giotis* and *Giotos*, where Bede had *Iut-* and the *ASC* *Iut-/Iot-* (Campbell 1962: 8, 9). Campbell suggests that this was a late WS "pronunciation spelling" (1962: lvii – referring to *OEG*: 65-66). But this is dubious, since by the late 10th c. (when Æthelweard was writing), /gea, geo/ and /ea, eo/, respectively, should have become homophonous: see *OEG*: 128-29. Also, by this time earlier graphemes in initial position <gio-> and <io-> had become <geo-> and <eo->. Æthelweard was using a text of *ASC* older than any now extant (Barker 1967), and the forms with *Gīot-* suggest an archaic (and phonologically more authentic) spelling of "Jute". Cf. the element in the name *Angengīot*.

⁷³³ *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, II.116; Mynors *et al.* 1998: 176 (my translation).

Saxon orthography. This form is also reflected in *Ytene*, a name for the New Forest in John of Worcester, and a small number of other south-eastern Anglo-Saxon place-names beginning with *Yt*.⁷³⁴ In *Widsith* 26, the alliterating words are *Ōswine*, *Ēowum* and *ȳtum*. Because, in the prosody of the early eighth century, palatal /g/ could alliterate with /g/ as a velar stop but not with a word beginning with a vowel or diphthong, we may take l. 26 as evidence that, for the *Widsith*-poet, the ethnonym “Jute” began with a vowel or diphthong, not with /gi-/ or /ge-/. This was perhaps consistent with the Latinised spelling we find in Bede, and was known to the *Widsith*-poet in the plural as **Īutan*, **Īotan* or *Ēotan*. On the other hand, as we saw earlier (p. 80 above), the evidence of ll. 26-27 suggests that the names for Finn, his father and their people formed two parallel alliterative trios: *Folcwalda*, *Finn* and *Frēsan*, and *Godwulf*, *Gefwulf* and **Gēotan*.

As we have seen, in *Beowulf* the evidence for the ethnonym “Jutes” consists of a handful of lines in which the word-forms *eotena* and *eotenum* appear. Some scholars take them to be inflected forms of *eoten* “giant”, but others of *Ēota* “Jute”, in its Anglian manifestation.⁷³⁵ As we have also seen, *Beowulf* shared the same tradition with *Widsith*, according to which Finn’s people were both “Frisians” and “Jutes”, and it is likely that *Frēsan*/*Frȳsan* (“Frisians”) was a demonym rather than an ethnonym, and thus applicable to any peoples inhabiting the geographical region known as “Frisia”, irrespective of ethnicity.⁷³⁶

The supposition of a form of the “Jute” ethnonym as **Gēotan* – a phonologically conservative form – would be speculative except that there is a possible occurrence of it – though disregarded by all critics – in *Beowulf* 443, in the following words of Bēowulf at Heorot, predicting that Grendel will be looking forward to feasting on Danes as usual (my text in ll. 443b and 445a):

Wēn’ ic þæt hē wille,	gif hē wealdan mōt,	442
in þæm gūðsele	Gēotena lēode	
etan unforhte,	swā hē oft dyde	444
mægen Hrēðmanna.		

I expect that he [Grendel] may wish, if he can manage it, in that hall of slaughter, to eat the people of the Gēotan without fear, as he often did the might of the Hrēðmenn.

The first *Beowulf*-scribe originally wrote <geo | tena> (including a line-break in the MS) but then altered this to <gea | tena>, which the *K14* editors print as *Gēatena*.⁷³⁷ The scribe clearly

⁷³⁴ *Life of Alfred*; Stevenson and Whitelock 1959: 168.

⁷³⁵ See pp. 72-75 above.

⁷³⁶ See fn. 1361 (p. 345 below). Frisia was a big place and “Frisian” perh. a demonym (cf. pp. 77, 226).

⁷³⁷ *K14*: 17 and textual notes.

meant – by his correction – to refer to Bēowulf’s men, who are *Gēatas*. But in every other instance of this ethnonym in the poem, the stem is *Gēat-* (including six times before l. 443), not *Gēot-*; and the ethnonym *Gēat* is a strong *a*-class noun, with a genitive plural form *Gēata*, not *Gēatena*. The other problem with the scribe’s correction is that Grendel could not yet know that the Gēats had arrived (which was that very day), and so could not be expecting to eat them. The people he was used to eating were Danes.

So, why did the *Beowulf*-scribe first write <geotena> as if it were the genitive plural of some word like *gēota*? It has been argued⁷³⁸ that he thought this was a reference to Jutes, and so he wrote a form of the ethnonym “Jutes” (*Ēotan*) with an initial /G-/ that was either Kentish or “hyper-correct”; and that he thought that the terminal /-n/ in *Ēotan* was organic rather than inflectional and so he wrote the genitive plural ending as *-ena*. Similarly, the same argument goes, he wrote *eotenum* in *Beowulf* 902 and 1145 as an anomalous form of the “Jute” ethnonym – that is, *Ēotenum* instead of regular *Ēotum*. But this is questionable. Firstly, one charge against the first *Beowulf*-scribe is that he wrote forms like *eotenum* in l. 902 (the dative plural of *eoten* “giant”) because he did not even recognise the ethnonym “Jute”. Secondly, if he saw <geatena> in his exemplar, why would he change the root-diphthong if he had already come across the ethnonym *Gēatas* (and *a fortiori* if he did not know the ethnonym for Jutes)? We can ignore the argument with respect to the weak genitive plural ending *-ena*, since it is arguable that the Old English ethnonym “Jute” could be weak in its plural forms.⁷³⁹ If the scribe thought he was writing “of Jutes”, the weak ending *-ena* would probably have been correct. However, if he thought he was writing “of Gēats”, on the basis of the strong forms he had already written, the form *-ena* would not.

I therefore suggest the simpler explanation that the scribe wrote <geotena> because that is what his exemplar said. Looking at it, probably in puzzlement, he thought this must mean “Gēats”, which he had written half a dozen times already. So, he altered the stem diphthong from /eo/ to /ea/. But although the weak genitive plural *-ena* did not agree with the form of the name “Gēat” he had already written (which was strong), this could be shrugged off as some kind of weak morphological variant, perhaps of a kind known in ethnonyms.⁷⁴⁰ At any rate, he could not spend all day on such posers, and it was time to move on.

⁷³⁸ See *Kl4*: cxxxviii–cxxxix, para 16(2)(a); cxlv, para 21.6 and fn. 6.

⁷³⁹ *OEG*: 245 and fn. 1. “Jutes” could have the weak gen. pls *Ēōtena* or strong *Ēōta*. See fn. 740 below.

⁷⁴⁰ See *OEG*: 245 and fn. 1. Cf. also the strong *i*-stem pl. *Mierce* “Mercians”, but the paradigm has the weak gen. pl. form *Mierc(e)na*; *Seaxe* and *Seaxan* were strong (*i*-stem) and weak pls respectively; and (see p. 187 and fn. 724 above) “Jutes” could have the weak gen. pl. *Ēotena* or strong *Ēota*. Cronan’s (2018) evidence of irregular dat. pls in *Myrc(e)num* also suggests the significant variability of inflected forms in

I also suggest that <geotena> was the genitive plural form to be expected from weak **Gēota*, which was a singular form of the ethnonym “Jute” (as predicted by Munch). As we have already seen, the ethnonym “Jute” would have been either **Jiut-* or **Jeut-* in Proto-Germanic, which would have become *Gīot-* or *Gēot-* in Old English (or, strictly speaking, **Gīōt-* or **Geōt-*). But this word developed a variant which had either entirely lost initial /G-/, or the pronunciation of this sound was so close to the diphthong /iu/ ~ /ěo/ ~ /īo/ as to suggest that “Jute” be spelled <iu> or <eo>. This would account for the readings in early eighth-century texts – *ȳtum* in *Widsith* 26 (which alliterates with a vowel); Bede’s spelling *Iutae*; and the instances of *eotena/eotenum* in *Beowulf* – at least some of which undoubtedly represent a form of **Ēotan*. However, the persistence of the element *giot/geot* in the names of early kings of the Anglian and therefore Jutlandic branch of the English peoples suggests that an etymological original form of the name “Jute” survived in the environment of names transmitted in a written text, which were likely to be phonologically conservative (unless interfered with by copyists). I draw from this evidence the conclusion that even by the time of *Widsith*, *Beowulf* and *Bede*, the form of the ethnonym “Jute” which preserved its etymological initial /G-/ in speech and writing was in the process of becoming obsolete.

Thus, in *Beowulf* 443 the palatal /g/ of archaic *Gēotena* could alliterate with the velar /g/ of *gūðsele* (such alliteration was regular in the prosody of *Beowulf*),⁷⁴¹ and the sound of the stem *Gēot-* was sufficiently similar to that of *Gēat-* to enable wordplay by saying “Jute” but also implying “Gēat”. There were many situations in which the graphemes <ea> and <eo> could be interchangeable in Old English at various times and in various dialects.⁷⁴² This general phenomenon demonstrates, I argue, a relatedness in pronunciation between /ēa/ and /ěo/ which would have facilitated punning on words containing their respective sounds in Old English at various times, and in particular in dialects of Anglian Old English, of which the text of *Beowulf* shows much influence.⁷⁴³

the pls of ethnonyms (apparently arising from uncertainty about the stems from which these pls were formed).

⁷⁴¹ In *Beowulf*, palatalised /g/ in initial /ge-/ and /gi-/ can alliterate with /g/ as a velar stop, but it does not alliterate with vowels.

⁷⁴² See *OEG*: 116-20. But also see Sisam (1953a: 308, fn. 3) who notes *Geot-/geot* spellings as reflexes of **gaut*, which were “regular” in *AngCol* MS V (and consistent with southern Northumbria and central Mercia). *AngCol* MS C (a south-western MS) had *Geating* once, -*geot* five times, and the “bad spelling” [! I. S.] -*giot* three times. *HB*’s *Geata* may have derived from a text with /ea/-spellings, possibly south Mercian. But this view is dependent on the assumption that the relevant names came from **gaut*.

⁷⁴³ *Kl4*: clxxix: “[...] the linguistic evidence, which is much stronger for localization than for dating, favors the assumption that the poem was first recorded in an Anglian dialect, more likely Mercian than Northumbrian [...]”.

I also argue that we see wordplay in the phrase which is coordinated with *Gēotena lēode*, which appears in the MS as <mægen hreð manna> (l. 445a). While this can be interpreted as *mægenhreð manna* (“great glory (or flower) of men”),⁷⁴⁴ it is also consistent with *mægen Hrēðmanna*. It was the view of Kemp Malone in a series of articles that this meant “strength of the Gēats”, partly on the basis that *Reiðgotaland* in Scandinavian texts was the land of the Gēats in southern Sweden.⁷⁴⁵ The connection between the *Gēatas* and the *Gotan* has long been a matter of interest to scholars (not least because these ethnonyms seem to be related words),⁷⁴⁶ but I suggest it is irrelevant here. I argue instead that *Hrēðmenn* is likely to be a pun with the same intention as with *Gēotan*. The *Hrēðmenn* could be taken to be the men of Hrēpel, that is, of Bēowulf’s grandfather, the king of the Gēats, whose sons Hæpcyn and Hygelāc were surnamed *Hrēpling*. The possibly hypocoristic name *Hrēpel* would have derived from West Germanic **Hrōpil(a)* (> early Old English **Hræpil*). Its first element **hrōp-* may have been apocopic as a prototheme, reflecting *i*-mutated and non-*i*-mutated forms in Old English as *hrōp* and *hrēp-* (< **hræpi*).⁷⁴⁷ At any rate, Hrēpel of the Gēats, Hrōþgār of the Danes, and Hrōþgār’s sons Hrōpmund and Hrēþrīc (< **Hræp(i)rīc*) all shared the same name-element, and so the coinage *Hrēðmenn* could – to a person who was aware of this feature in common – refer to the kinsmen of both Hrēpel and of Hrōþgār.

Thus, I suggest that Bēowulf was displaying his wit by means of a pun on the names of peoples and tribes, joking that Grendel would be expecting, as usual, to consume *Gēotan* and *Hrēðmenn* (Jutes and Hrōþgār’s people), whereas he would find *Gēatas* and *Hrēðmenn* (Hrēpel’s people). Unfortunately, the first *Beowulf*-scribe did not get the joke; and nor has anyone since.

But from this, I also suggest that Bēowulf called the Danes *Gēotan* “Jutes” because the poet understood that the Scylding Danes had lands or lordship in Jutland. Otherwise, the text of *Beowulf* is almost silent on this topic, except in the mention of Hrōþgār’s official Wulfgār who is said to be *Wendla lēod* (l. 348), a man or prince of the *Wendlas*, who are likely to have

⁷⁴⁴ Thus *K14*: 143.

⁷⁴⁵ See the analysis of Malone’s complex arguments in *K14*: 143, which adequately indicates their difficulties, the most notable of which was that, everywhere apart from *Beowulf*, the element *hrēp* refers to Goths not Gēats. Malone’s final thoughts on the various reflexes of the element *hrēp* are set out in his edition of *Widsith* (1962: 174-75). They do not need to be addressed here. See pp. 252-53, 373-74 below.

⁷⁴⁶ In PrGmc **Gaut-* (= *Gēat*) and *Gut-* (Goth) can be regarded as two members of the same ablaut series, which also included **geut-*, a root meaning “pour, gush”. See Kroonen 2013: 177, *s.v.* **geutan-*. On one view, this etymology is evidence of an ethnic relationship; on another, two similarly-named but distinct peoples have been confounded with one another since the earliest records of them.

⁷⁴⁷ See Kroonen 2013: 249, *s.vv.* **hrōpi-* “glory” (an *i*-stem), and related **hrōþra-* “praise”, cf. OE *hrōþor* “solace, joy, benefit”. These cognates may be the sources of the protothemes *hrōp-* and *hrēp-*.

been the inhabitants of Wendel in northern Jutland. As an honoured man in a responsible position at Heorot, he may have been a Jutlandic tributary. However, if (as is argued in this study) Offa preceded Bēowulf in literary as well as real historical time, and if Offa's posterity was known to be threatened and eventually overwhelmed by the encroachment of the expansionist Danes (which was a historically real phenomenon in fifth-century Jutland), then it may be argued that the purpose of the Offa episode in *Beowulf* was to allude to the collapse of nations and dynasties, despite the heroic efforts of heroic kings, like Offa's grandson Æomēr – and by implication Bēowulf – to save their homelands. Therefore, I suggest that the *Beowulf*-scribe's initial, and correct, transcription of <geotena> from his exemplar reveals an important geopolitical fact known to the *Beowulf*-poet, which was that the Danes were *Gēotan*, that is, a power already established in Jutland, and – as history tells us – on their way south towards Angel.

2.6.2.2 *Gīot* vs. *Gēat*; Jutes and False Gods

In the names of some of the early kings we have been examining, we find elements with the forms *-geat* and *Geat* occurring alongside *-giot* and *Giot*, and *-geot* and *Geot*. Since the ninth century scholars have supposed *geat* to be original (presumably regarding the other forms, if they were aware of them, as derivative). Attempting to encapsulate a vast academic tradition within a nutshell, I suggest that the spelling *geat* has led to the supposition of a divine figure called *Gēat* or *Gēata*, a name which has been regarded by modern scholars as cognate with *Gapt* (= *Gaut*), a divine or semi-divine progenitor figure in Ostrogothic legendary genealogies, and with *Gautr*, one of the names of Óðinn in Old Norse poetry. The result has been the construction of a theogony encompassing *Gēat*, *Gapt*, *Gautr* and Óðinn as reflexes of a myth of the divine origins of Germanic kingship. The argument of this section is that – whatever the origins of *Gapt* and *Gautr* – neither of them has anything to do with Anglo-Saxon *geat* in the regnal lists and the texts connected with them, whether as a name-element *geat*, or as a name, *Geat* or *Geata*, in itself. If this spelling represented *gēat*, it was a graphemic variant of the more original *gīot* or *gēot*, which were variants of the ethnonym “Jute”; and as a name element, this was more likely to be related to ethnicity or geographic location than divinity.

Modern scholars might have come to the conclusion that *Gēat* was related to *Gautr* (= Óðinn) on purely linguistic criteria. But I suggest that this now conventional linkage⁷⁴⁸ has been fuelled by the evidence of two ninth-century Welsh clerics. In the *HB*, attributed to Nennius (the Harleian recension of which dates from 829/30), the earliest person in the Kentish regnal list (the father of Fodepald)⁷⁴⁹ is named as *Geta*, and it is said:

qui fuit, ut aiunt, filius dei. Non ipse est Deus deorum (amen), Deus exercituum, sed unus est ab idolis eorum quod ipsi colebant

[...] who was, as they say, a son of a god. He was not the God of gods (Amen), the God of hosts, but is one of their idols which they used to worship.⁷⁵⁰

Writing in the early 890s, Asser says of the same figure (though in the West Saxon list), called *Geata* and/or *Geta*:

[...] Godwulf; qui fuit Geata, quem Getam iamdudum pagani pro deo venerabantur. [...] Qui Geata fuit Tætua; qui fuit Beauu; qui fuit Sceldwea [...]

[...] Godwulf, who was [the son of] Geata, which Geta the heathens long ago used to worship as a god. [...] That Geata was the son of Tætwa, who was the son of Bēaw, who was the son of Sceldwea [...]⁷⁵¹

Statements about the Anglo-Saxons' worship of *Gēata/Geta* appear only in these Welsh authors. But they do not say the same thing: they are in the regnal lists of different nations; *Gēata/Geta*'s son is called *Folcwald* in *HB* and *Godwulf* in Asser (though, as we have seen,

⁷⁴⁸ Established by the time of Sisam's study of the regnal lists (see 1953a: 307-308, 308 fn. 3, 313-14). For perhaps its most complex elaboration see North 1997: 133-71. But see also Wolfram 2005: 26-27, Pollington 2011: 238-40, 2024: 175, 384-87, and Simek 2006: 128-29, as representative of the syncretism of *Gēat/Gēot-Gapt-Gautr* prevalent among students of Germanic myth and its role in the construction of early Germanic ethnic "identities". Neidorf uses this scholarship to posit the "divine name" *Geat* as the basis of the names *Siggeot*, *Angengeot* and *Weoðulgeot* (*sic*) in regnal lists (2021a: 381 and fn. 20).

⁷⁴⁹ *Sic*. A mangling of *Folcpald* in an Anglo-Saxon MS.

⁷⁵⁰ Harleian recension (Dumville 1975: 199). The Chartres and Sawley recensions are almost identical. But the Vatican recension (ch. 20; Dumville 1975: 408-09) moralises thus:

qui, ut aiunt, filius fuit dei, non ueri nec omnipotentis Dei et Domini Nostri Iesu Christi (qui ante tempora seculorum permanens Patri et Spiritui Sancto coaeternus et consubstantialis in fine seculorum et mortalitatis nostrae formam non dedignatus est induere seruilem) sed alicuius ex idolis eorum quem, ab ipso daemone caecati, more gentili pro deo colebant.

[...] who, they say, was a son of a god – not of the true and omnipotent God and our Lord Jesus Christ (who, existing before time, co-eternal and consubstantial with the Father and the Holy Spirit, within the confines of time and our mortality has not disdained to assume our servile form) but of some idol or other of theirs, which, blinded by that demon, they used to worship as a god in the manner of heathens.

⁷⁵¹ *Life of Alfred*, ch. 1; Stevenson and Whitelock 1959: 3. The spelling *Geta* seems to have been influenced by the name *Geta* which appears in the *Carmen Paschale* of the 5th c. AD Irish poet Sedulius which Asser quotes in this genealogy, under the mistaken impression that this Geta was the West Saxons' ancestor-god, when in fact he was a slave in the Roman comedy *Phormio* by Terence. Stevenson noted the MS variants: *Geta* for *Geata*, and *Geatam* for *Getam* (in John of Worcester). It may be that Asser preserved the distinct spellings of his different sources, but subsequent copyists conflated them as if they were original vernacular OE variants.

these were names for the same person); in *HB Geta* is the son of a god, while in Asser *Gēata/Geta* is himself a god; in *HB Geta* is the apical progenitor of the Kentish kings, but in Asser he has supposedly West Saxon ancestors.

From these rather significant disparities, it begins to look unlikely that Asser was relying on *HB*, or that they had a common text as a source. I suggest, however, that it is likely that they had a common tradition, which was that of the regnal lists; and a common assumption, which was that the earliest figure in these lists was either a divinity in his own right or the son of a divinity. Apical characters in the regnal lists, such as *Wōden Frēalāfing*, *Godwulf Gēoting/Gīoting/Gēating* and *Gēsecg Seaxnēting*, were potentially ambiguous. Wōden – the deity commemorated in “Wednesday” (the Roman *dies Mercurii*) would clearly once have been regarded as a god. If he was the apical figure in a list, he was a god. If his surname *Frēalāfing* was taken to be a patronymic, then his father Frēalāf might be taken to be the apical god and Wōden a god’s son. The same logic, if applied to the other apical figures, would lead to the conclusions that the East Saxon Gēsecg was either a god or a son of the supposed god Seaxnēt;⁷⁵² and Godwulf Gēoting/Gīoting/Gēating would be a god or the son of an imagined deity called *Gēot*, *Gīot* or *Gēat*, or *Gēota*, *Gīota* or *Gēata* (since patronymics formed from weak names often omitted the weak ending /-a/). An alternative conclusion (apparently drawn by the *HB* author) was that the apical figure in a regnal list (with or without patronymic) could be a god’s son. So, if *Gēat* or *Gēata* headed the list in the source text, he was the son of a god. I would also suggest that the variation between strong *Gēat* and weak *Gēata* in some texts is a result of this name being inferred from an apparent patronymic *Gēating*, which could be produced from either strong *Gēat* or (in line with many names of early kings) weak *Gēata*.

In addition, it is of some importance, I argue, that the kings of the regnal lists who had the element *gēot/gīot/gēat* in their names were part of the Anglian branch of the English people or peoples who historically have been associated with southern Jutland and environs. There is no evidence to suggest why they would have been incorporating the element *Gēat* in their names, as a reference to the *Gēatas* (Germanic **Gautōz*) of southern Sweden. On the other hand, there is arguably more reason, as people from Jutland, to have incorporated in their royal naming tradition the ethnonym *Gēot/Gīot*, meaning “Jute” – though, as we have seen such a

⁷⁵² Saxnōt was known as a god of the heathen Continental Saxons, as evidenced by his anathematisation (together with Wōden and Thunær) as an *unholdo* (demon) in the OS baptismal formula, the *Forma Abrenuntiationis diaboli* (see Pertz 1835: 19-20). This would probably have been known to English clerics who were prominent in the evangelisation of Germany and Frisia in the 8th c., operating out of foundations like Fulda in Hesse. See also fn. 391 (p. 113) above.

form was probably obsolescent by the first half of the eighth century, and by the time of Asser had become confounded with the ethnonym “Goth”.

I therefore offer the conclusion that Nennius and Asser used different regnal lists but the same assumptions about heathen gods as originators of the Anglo-Saxon peoples and thus came to different but similar conclusions. But their supposition of a god of the heathen English called *Gēat* or *Gēata* was an illusion based on an interpretation of the name of the figure Godwulf the father of Finn as either the son or the grandson of an apical regnal-list deity.

For some reason unknown to us, *Godwulf* (aka *Folcwald(a)*) appears as the apical figure in the Lindsey regnal list in *AngCol* (longer and older than the others) and in the Bernician list in *ASC* (MSS ABC). In poetic and genealogical tradition, as we have seen, he was the father of Finn (aka *Gefwulf*), and they were thus both Frisians and Jutes. The only indicators of who Godwulf’s father was are to be found in the regnal lists. In Æthelwulf’s West Saxon list, Godwulf’s father is Tætwa, a son of Bēaw and grandson of Sceldwea. Since these latter two would appear to be Scyld and Bēow in *Beowulf*, the list and the poem cannot represent the same tradition, or Finn would be of the generation younger than Hrōþgār. The other evidence is in those lists which give Godwulf’s surname as *Gēoting*/*Gīoting*/*Gēating*, from which – if interpreted as a patronymic – it is possible to infer that his father was called *Gēot(a)*, *Gīot(a)* or *Gēat(a)*. However, as I argued in Part I, section 1.2 above,⁷⁵³ kings could bear ethno-eponyms which were the singulative of their people’s ethnonym, and ethno-eponyms could also have the group suffix *-ing*. If so, then the surname *Gēoting*/*Gīoting* could designate Godwulf either as the son of *Gēot* or *Gīot*, king of the *Gēotan* or *Gīotan* (that is, the Jutes), or as *Gēoting* or *Gīoting*, a member or the head of the dynasty who ruled them. In the same way, the king of the *Scyldingas* was *Scyld* and *Scylding*, and the king of the *Wælsingas* *Wæls* or *Wælsing*, and the king of the *Hōcingas* was called *Hōc*, and his son, in all likelihood, **Hōcing*.

Thus, I argue that the example of *Godwulf* *Gēoting*/*Gīoting* in the regnal lists – in which he seems to have been a prominent figure – permits us to revisit and to dismantle the construct of the divine figure *Gēat(a)* and to identify him as a dialectal spelling derived from the surname *Gēoting*/*Gīoting* which contained an orthographically and phonologically conservative form of the ethnonym “Jute” which was probably becoming obsolete in the eighth century and was not recognised as an ethnonym in later periods. Furthermore, the designations *Gēoting*/*Gīoting* or *Gēot*/*Gīot* permit us to comprehend something about the stature of the otherwise unknown Godwulf/Folcwald(a) as a man of great power, since any king who had earned the right to style

⁷⁵³ See pp. 43-70 above.

himself simply “Jute” or “Juting” – similarly to *Scyld* and *Scylding* – was likely to have been regarded as a powerful, or even dominant, ruler in a place – Jutland – in which there were many tribes and peoples. It should be no surprise then, that he was adopted into the Kentish regnal tradition by genealogists who saw the men of Kent as the inheritors of the “Jutish” affiliation in Britain. Accordingly, I argue that this ethnic aspect of kingship was also reflected in the element *gēot/gīot* in the names of Anglian kings.

2.6.3 *pēow*

The element *pēow* in the name *Angelpēow* (as Offa’s son is called in *ASC*) has peculiar problems of its own, largely because of a continuing belief that it meant “slave”. On the face of it, this might seem unlikely. The servile status supposedly implied by this name element has featured prominently in the ongoing debate about the “meaning” of *Wealhþēow*, the name of Hrōþgār’s queen in *Beowulf*. Some scholars have taken *wealh* to mean “foreigner” and *pēow* to mean “slave” and have treated the name as epithetical, and of course uncomplimentary.⁷⁵⁴ This must be reckoned improbable. The Germanic word from which Old English *wealh/walh* was derived was **walahaz*, a term used by Continental Germanic speakers for Romans and speakers of Latin and its Romance successor-languages. **Walahaz* probably came from the name of a Celtic people or peoples called *Volcae* by the Romans, with whom the ancient Germani were in contact in eastern Europe before the third century BC.⁷⁵⁵ In Britain the Germanic incomers used *wealh/walh* to refer to Romans, but also to Celtic-speaking Britons (hence modern “Welsh”), and later used it to mean “slave” (a meaning unique to Old English, and probably connected with the context of British war-captives used as slaves – though, interestingly, not very early in their often hostile contact).⁷⁵⁶

However, there is no evidence in *Beowulf* that *Wealhþēow* could have been a *wealh* in any of these senses. Nor does it seem probable that an Anglo-Saxon poet would coin her name as an epithetical name used by Danes for a woman whom he seems to identify as coming from the noble or royal stock of a Germanic tribe, the Helmingas (also known as *Wulfingas* or

⁷⁵⁴ To follow this debate, see Gordon 1935, Jurasinski 2007, Neidorf 2018a, and Shaw 2020: 8, 90-91. See also fn. 773 (p. 200 below).

⁷⁵⁵ See Green 1998: 162-63. There are no literary records of what Gmc ethnonyms there were for the Celtic Gaulish-speaking peoples subsumed within the Roman Empire after the Roman colonisation in the 1st c. BC and before the extinction of their distinct language and culture in the 6th c. AD. See also Shaw 2013: 61-63.

⁷⁵⁶ *Wealh* in OE is extensively discussed by Faull (1975).

Wylfingas).⁷⁵⁷ Nor is there anything servile in the portrayal of *Wealhþēow* in *Beowulf* – if anything, rather the opposite.⁷⁵⁸

The etymological origins of *þēow* are ambiguous with respect to the meanings “servant” and “slave”. Kroonen defines Proto-Germanic **þewa-* as “servant” but notes that in Wulfilan Gothic *þius* (the earliest recorded Germanic cognate) had the meanings “thrall, bondsman, servant”.⁷⁵⁹ Cognates of *þēow* are well recorded in Continental German names of both sexes,⁷⁶⁰ in which we might think them unlikely to connote “slave”. Kaufmann treats its meaning in names as principally “servant, retainer”.⁷⁶¹ Mees interprets a very early Old English reflex of later feminine *þēowe* as probably having the meaning “servant, retainer, thegn”,⁷⁶² rather than “slave”. One wonders in what circumstances any parent would call their child “slave”. To take a comparable example, Old English *esne* – this had a range of meanings from “man of low, servile class”, to “servant”, to “young man, youth”; and its etymology suggests that it connoted a person who worked for wages.⁷⁶³ But *Esne* was also a name and name-element. There are fifteen examples of the name *Esne* in *PASE*, nearly all of whom are of exalted rank, including *comites*, *duces* and *principes*. So, it is unlikely that *esne* entered the Anglo-Saxon onomasticon as a word meaning “wage-earner”, “menial” or “slave”, and the same argument may be made for *þēow*. *Pace* the Romans, a *nomen* was not always an *omen*.

While the entanglement between the meanings “servant” and “slave” of *þēow* might be regarded as inevitable, I suggest that this would only be the case in a domestic social milieu below the level of nobility or royalty. In an ordinary household a servant would often be a slave, and so cognates of *þēow* could apply to both (although the distinction between bond and free would have been a significant one for the individual concerned). But in a higher social context a servant of a person of exalted rank might himself have honoured status. Thus, a *cniht*, who was a “young man” in an Anglo-Saxon royal entourage became a *knight*,⁷⁶⁴ a *mariscalcus*

⁷⁵⁷ See discussions at: fns. 191 (p. 69), 200 (p. 70), 274 (p. 92), 773 (p. 200) and pp. 343, 364.

⁷⁵⁸ Orchard notes the conflict between the “foreign slave” etymology of her name (which he accepts) and her queenly portrayal (2003: 219-22).

⁷⁵⁹ Kroonen 2013: 541.

⁷⁶⁰ Förstemann 1900: 1457-61, s.v. THIVA.

⁷⁶¹ Kaufmann 1968: 356-57.

⁷⁶² Mees 2023: 195-96. PrGmc masc. **þewaz* (> OE *þēo(w)*) had a fem. reflex **þewī* (> OE *þēowe*) (Kroonen 2013: 541).

⁷⁶³ See *DOE*, s.v. *esne*, also Holthausen 1934: 94, s.v. *esne*, “worker, servant, man”, from the same root as *earnian* “to earn”. One wonders about the name *Frēawaru* (Hrōþgār’s daughter): *frēa* is “lord”, but is *waru* fem. nom. sg of adj. *wær* “attentive to”, or n. *waru* “watchful care” (K14: 466), or (one fears) the n. *waru* “ware, chattel, merchandise” – i.e. in a marriage-contract?

⁷⁶⁴ Even in the OE period – see *DOE*, s.v. *cniht*. Interestingly, *Knecht* in German never rose above the status of “servant”.

(“horse-man, groom”) became a “marshal”;⁷⁶⁵ a man who looked after the king’s pantry became a *hlāfweard* “loaf-ward”, hence “lord”, and his female counterpart a *hlāfdige* “loaf-kneader”, hence “lady”.⁷⁶⁶ The phenomenon has other reflexes. A servant who looked after bottles of drink eventually became the head-servant known as a “butler”;⁷⁶⁷ a person who writes letters for someone else in a business is a “secretary”, but one who did this for a king became a “Secretary of State”; and the “Groom of the Stool” began by assisting the English king at toilet but eventually managed his privy (no pun intended) purse.⁷⁶⁸

Bēowulf’s father was called *Ecgbēow*, but he was a king or prince of the Wāegmunding tribe, and of high enough rank to marry a Geatish princess. In *Beowulf* and *Widsith* there is a king of the Swedes called *Ongen(d)bēow*, and in *Widsith* a Gothic nobleman or prince is called *Incgenbēow* (l. 116). If one were to form a hypothesis based on these examples, it might be that, so far from meaning “slave”, *bēow* was a name-element appropriate to scions of noble or royal families.

As I have argued above, *Ongen(d)* is a version of the ethnonym “Angle”. *Incgen* is unclear but may well indicate a relationship with the hero, demigod or god *Ing* who was a progenitor or tutelary deity of the Danes.⁷⁶⁹ But, as we have seen, the element *Angel* in *Angelbēow* is also ethnophoric. The reasons for the giving of these names may lie in lost narratives,⁷⁷⁰ but the etymology of their elements suggest that they were epithetical and connected to some narrative which associated their bearers with Angel and Denmark.

I would therefore suggest that in this ethnic and royal context, the element *bēow* is likely to refer to a young man – perhaps “boy” or “lad” – who was of subordinate status in a royal household on account of his youth but who was much more exalted in social terms. He was thus not only a “boy” but also a “prince”. We may note here that in these three royal names

⁷⁶⁵ See the etymology in *OED3*, s.v. *marshal*. See also Kroonen 2013: 439, s.v. **skalka-* “servant” and *OED1*, s.v. *shalk*. This Gmc isogloss had the worst associations of villainy and roguery. And yet, as the term borrowed into English as *seneschal*, it referred to an official of high rank.

⁷⁶⁶ See the etymologies in *OED3*, s.vv. *lord* and *lady*.

⁷⁶⁷ See the etymology in *OED3*, s.v. *butler*.

⁷⁶⁸ Grummitt 1999: 240-41 (with references).

⁷⁶⁹ Hrōþgār king of the Danes is referred to as *eodor Ingwina* “protector of the Ingwine” and *frēa Ingwina* “lord of the Ingwine” (*Beowulf* 1044a, 1319a). This, it is said, “bears weighty testimony to the worship of Ing” (*K14*: lviii and fn. 5; 470). Etymologically, *Incgen-* is consistent with derivation from PrGmc **Ingijān* “little one associated with Ing” or **Ingijinaz* “leader of Ing’s people” – either of which may have applied to the king of the Danes. See further Ball 1960: 408-10.

⁷⁷⁰ *Beowulf*’s *Ongenbēow* has been identified with the Swedish king Egill who appears in *Ynglingatal* v. 14 and *Ynglinga saga* ch. 26 (*ÍF* 26: 50-53). Egill is presented as an unwarlike character who flees to Denmark when bandits ravage his country and defeat him continually. There he enlists the help of the Danish king Fróði inn frækni (“the bold” – the same figure as Frōða the Heapobeard in *Beowulf*) to put the bandits down and restore him, accepting the humiliating condition that he become a Danish tributary.

þēow is preceded by an ethnophoric element, just as seems to be the case with *wealh* in *Wealhþēow*. In another culture *þēow* might have been “kid”, as in “the Ringo” or “Billy the”.

Returning to *Wealhþēow*, her name may or may not have been epithetical but it is strongly to be doubted that in *Beowulf* it was a meaningful one of the “Cinderella”-type. The elements *wealh* “(historical) Celt, Roman” and *þēow* “girl” were ones which could have formed a dithematic name of the ordinary, non-syntagmatic kind.⁷⁷¹ But even if *þēow* connoted girlishness, in the context of *Beowulf* (and Migration Age north-western Europe generally), *wealh* was hardly likely to connote Celticness or Romanness. If we were to take the name to be both epithetical and syntagmatic, it could have meant “Celtic/Gaulish/Roman slave-girl, servant” or “girl”. But if so, it was highly likely to be historical, from an epoch when the queen of a Germanic king might well have been a **Walahpewī* (= *Wealhþēow*), either by marriage between Continental Germanic and Celtic royal families before the Christian era – or, less benignly, from the ages-old practice of taking foreign women captive in land warfare or sea-raiding (including those of royal rank) and forcing them into concubinage. If such women became the property of kings, presumably they would be capable of achieving rank, status and influence, and their sons would be capable of competing in the succession for the throne.

Thus, in the value-system represented in early Germanic names, *Wealhþēow* may have meant “Celtic concubine” in a (paradoxically) exalted sense.⁷⁷² In any case, *Wealhþēow* is more plausible as a regular personal name – possibly with royal associations – the meaning of which, if syntagmatic, was historical and no longer applied to the bearer.⁷⁷³

This conclusion is of some importance in the ongoing debate about the name *Wealhþēow*, since its supposedly denigratory associations as “foreign slave” have led Neidorf to recast the argument of Gordon that *wealh* was originally **wæl* “chosen”, contending that scribes in the transmission of the text of *Beowulf* did not recognise the rare or non-existent name element **wæl* and substituted the commoner one *wealh*.⁷⁷⁴ However, the name-element

⁷⁷¹ The name-theme *walah* (OE *walh/wealh*) may have been ethnophoric, one of several such elements in the Gmc onomasticon, commemorating an admired “Roman” ethnicity without attributing it to the bearer of the name.

⁷⁷² Cf. *Laxdæla saga* in which Melkorka, the daughter of the Irish king Mýrkjartan, is taken as a war-captive aged 15 and is sold as a slave in Norway to the Icelander Hǫskuldr Dala-Kollsson. He makes her his concubine (he was already married), and she bears him a son in the form of the notable Óláfr Peacock.

⁷⁷³ The meaning “Celtic or Roman slave-woman, girl or war-captive” was suggested by Björkman (1919: 179-80). He argued that *Wealhþēow* was so-named because she was taken in a Danish raid on Gallo-Roman or British territory (similarly argued by Malone 1959: 139-40 – see fn. 240 at p. 81 above). But this is contradicted by the text, which calls her *ides Helminga* (l. 620), “lady of the *Helmingas*”, a people usually taken to be the same as the *Wulfingas/Wylfingas*, who are also usually supposed to be a Germanic tribe located somewhere in southern Scandinavia. See refs at fn. 757 (p. 198 above), and see their conjectural location in Map 1 on p. 18 above.

⁷⁷⁴ Gordon 1935 and Neidorf 2018a.

walha is very well attested in Continental Germany without any apparent connotation of Celticness or Romanness in its bearers, and so is **pewa* (= *pēow*) without any suggestion of slavishness.⁷⁷⁵ Mees’s identification of a very early Old English cognate of feminine **pewī* opens up the possibility of this as an element in female names, in England and elsewhere. For these reasons, I suggest that the counterargument for **wæl* is superfluous,⁷⁷⁶ and that *Wealhþēow* may be regarded as a name inherited from the Germanic onomasticon which was accurately rendered in Old English form by the *Beowulf*-poet and by the scribes who transmitted the text.⁷⁷⁷ The idea that Hrōþgār’s queen was in any real sense a “foreign slave” – or that her name should be changed to avoid such an imputation – should be put firmly to rest.

2.6.4 *Angengēot*, *Angelgēot* and *Angelþēow*: Conclusion

I therefore draw the conclusion that *Angengēot*, or *Angelgēot*, was “Angle-Jute”, a doubly ethnophoric name; and *Angelþēow* was “Angle lad”, referring to the same person. His father was Offa, whose ethno-eponym would have been **Angen(d)* (= *Ongen(d)*) and *Angel*, and – as we shall see in the discussion of the marriage of Offa I – his mother was from another tribe, who I shall suggest were the Swæfe of *Widsith* (ll. 22, 44, 61), a people of Jutland from a branch of whom the “Jutish” kings of Kent came. The double ethno-eponym thus identified Offa’s son as the heir to his father’s Anglian and Jutish empire. And *Angelþēow* also designated him as the heir to the power and territory of Angel. However, as we shall see, this glorious entity was not destined to last for long, and thus *Angengēot*/*Angelþēow* may have played the part of Henry VI to Offa’s Henry V, as the unlucky heir to a fleetingly glorious empire – won by victory and cemented by marriage – which dissolved under the rule of a less than impressive king, or under the pressure of an overwhelming enemy force, or both.

⁷⁷⁵ See Förstemann 1900: 1513-20 (s.n. *VALHA*) and 1457-61 (s.n. *THIVA*) – as noted by Shaw 2020: 91.

⁷⁷⁶ And is somewhat questionable. Neidorf (2018a) cites Schönfeld (1911: 251), who derived the prototheme *Vala-* and *Valia-* (in some Gothic names) from Gothic *walis* “chosen, beloved”. But Neidorf omitted Schönfeld’s other examples where he derived names in *Vala-* from *walah* (Schönfeld 1911: 250-51). Schönfeld had to argue for an unattested *a*-stem version, **wala*, to obtain *Vala-*. If he had not, this would have caused the problem that in WGmc languages an *i*-stem **wali-* would mutate to **weli-* (as in reflexes of the related PrGmc verb **waljan-* “to choose” – see Kroonen 2013: 570). In OE, a WGmc *i*-stem **wali-* would have been inherited in OE as *i*-mutated **weli-/wele-*, or possibly inherited as **wæli-* and then *i*-mutated to **weli-/wele*. Either way, we would not expect **Wælþēow* but **Wel(e)þēow*.

⁷⁷⁷ As Shaw seems to accept (2020: 91).

2.7 Ēomēr

In the Mercian regnal lists, Ēomēr is the grandson of Offa and the son of Angengēot/Angelgēot. As we have seen, the second *Beowulf*-scribe (or some predecessor) does not seem to have recognised Ēomēr's name in his exemplar. This is always printed as *Ēomēr* (l. 1960b, *ponon Ēomēr woc*), but it is written in the MS as <geomor>, which has the same form as *geōmor*, the Old English word for “sad”.

Sam Newton has suggested that l. 1960b ought to read *pon ongeomor wōc* “then the very sad one was born” – referring not to Ēomēr but to Offa, who would then be the person referred to as *nefa Gārmundes* (l. 1962a), the nephew of Gārmund (if Gārmund were Wērmund's brother).⁷⁷⁸ But **ongeōmor* is an implausible coinage intended to justify what is evidently a scribal garbling of a name which is well attested in the Offa-tradition. The editors of *K14* suggest that the scribe added a Kentish initial <g> or “hypercorrected” the name.⁷⁷⁹ Neidorf argues that the scribe – writing long after *Beowulf* was composed – was no longer familiar with this character and mistook the name *Ēomēr* for *geōmor*.⁷⁸⁰

The name borne by Offa's descendant (usually in his case spelled *Ēomēr*) appears in *PASE* as *Eumer*, *Eamær*, *Eammer*, *Ēomēr* and *Eomær*.⁷⁸¹ It is a standard dithematic or variation-name and need have no fictive meaning. The deuterotheme is probably *mēr-/mār-*, a Common Germanic name-element, meaning “famous” or “fame”. The prototheme might be from *geō* “old, former” (< Germanic **ju*, cf. Gothic *ju* “already”), as in *geōmann*, *geōmagister*, *geōmēowle*.⁷⁸² *Geō* can also be spelled as <iu> and <io>; hence West Germanic **Jumēri* > Old English **Giūmār* > *Īumār*. The unusual name *Giuhæp* is recorded in *DLV*, and its prototheme is presumably *giū*.⁷⁸³ However, the other candidate, *eoh* “horse” is more frequent, and is thus the likelier.⁷⁸⁴

⁷⁷⁸ Newton 1993: 67-68. The idea was originally from Malone 1939b: 236. Kiernan suggested *ponon [on]geōmor* (1996: 184-85). Aside from other problems (Offa was not sad, for instance), these proposals have been dismissed as “metrically improbable” (*K14*: 227).

⁷⁷⁹ *K14*: clxii, para 20; see also *K14*: 227. Although I am unclear why the scribe was supposed to think that <geo> was “hypercorrect”. By analogy with what? This may be a reference to Sisam (1953b: 37) who said that the scribe was “misled by a possible spelling or pronunciation of the initial diphthong”.

⁷⁸⁰ Neidorf: 2013b: 255. Had it been forgotten in Wessex since it appeared in versions of *ASC*?

⁷⁸¹ *PASE*. Offa's descendant is *s.n. Eomær*, and includes spellings *Eamaer*, *Eamer*, *Eomer*, and *Eomær*. Others with this name are *s.nn. Eammer*, *Eamær*, *Eomer* (spelled *Eumer* in Bede's *HE*, and *Eomer* in *ASC*).

⁷⁸² *DOE*, s.vv.

⁷⁸³ *DLV*; See Rollason and Rollason 2007: II, 120-21 (no plausible explanation). But *Haep* may be from *hēap* “warrior band”.

⁷⁸⁴ Williams 1908-09. Förstemann (1900: 451) observes: “Es wäre zu verwundern, wenn das indogermanische wort für pferd, alts. *Ehu*, ags. *eh*, *eoh* nicht in den namen erhalten wäre” (“It would be

There is an outside possibility, however, that the *Beowulf*-scribe's exemplar read <geomer>, representing *Geōmēr*. Although only the form *Ēomer* would alliterate with *ēðel* in l. 1960, <geomer> in the exemplar may have represented an alternative form of *Ēomer*'s name (influenced by the /g/ in *Gārmund* and *Angengēot*?), inserted at some point in the transmission of the text, even though it was inconsistent with the metre.⁷⁸⁵ On the question of alliteration, Kiernan raised the possibility that the alliteration of *geōmor* with *ēðel* was potentially a case of "phonetic alliteration". This was occasionally noted in Old English (not least in *Beowulf*). For instance, words written etymologically correctly with initial /hr-/ could also be written <r->. Both spellings could alliterate with words beginning with etymological /r-/; words spelled with initial /h-/ could occasionally alliterate with words beginning with a vowel. Thus, Kiernan argued, the semivowel [j] followed by the diphthong /eo/ could alliterate with a vowel.⁷⁸⁶ As we have seen, the ethnonym *Ēota* ("Jute") was historically from Germanic */jeut-/.⁷⁸⁷ But in each of the lines in which it appears in *Beowulf* (ll. 902, 1072, 1088, 1141, 1145 – indubitably the ethnonym in all but ll. 902 and 1145) it alliterates with a vowel. From this we deduce that its inherited semivocalic initial [j] had been lost entirely, or that the *Beowulf*-poet was able phonetically to ignore it for the sake of making a pun on *eoten* "giant". Conversely, for the sake of a pun on the ethnonyms in *Gēot* and *Gēat* (in *Beowulf* 443b), the ethnonym *Gēotan* ("Jutes") was permitted to retain its inherited initial palatalised /G-/ to enable the poet to make it alliterate with the velar /G-/ of *Gēatas*, and so to create a pun on the two ethnonyms. Thus, I would argue, rather than the poet's or a copyist's carelessness in pronouncing or copying, the name usually rendered, with an apparent initial consonant, as *Ēomer*, may have been inherited from West Germanic as **Jumēr*, which would be expected to appear in Old English as **Geōmēr* or *Ēomēr*.

surprising if the Indo-Germanic word for horse, OS *ehu*, OE *eh*, *eoh*, was not preserved in names"). However, he lists only eight (four in ON) and does not exclude contamination with other elements. *Kl4* observes (274, fn.3) that *Eaha* (FFr 15a) is a likely late spelling for *Eahha* or, "perhaps likelier", *Eohha*. Campbell (*OEG*: 96) thought that a similar name, *Echha*, was derived from *eoh* "horse". There are of course the famous Hengest and his brother Horsa in the *Adventus* story, both of which names mean "horse". It is also present in the names *Mearchealf* and *Meaca* from *Widsith* 23 (discussed at pp. 219-22 below). Doubtless, horse ownership had status associations (I leave aside its – in my view – questionable religious associations).

See Malone (1923: 3, 23), Woolf (1939: 149-50) and Van Loon (2021: 248) for the suggestion that *Eaha* and *Horsa* might be the same person.

In *Kl4* the name is given as *Ēomēr*, derived from *eoh* (*Kl4*: 466, referring to line 1960). However, since the diphthong in *eoh* was short, the name ought perhaps to be *Eomēr*.

⁷⁸⁵ In Fig. 4 (p. 204 below), **Jumēriz* would alliterate with the second element of **Angana-Jeutaz*.

⁷⁸⁶ Kiernan 1996: 188-89 and fn. 21. He cited Rickert 1904-05: 54 and Sisam 1953b: 37. However, he only discussed confusion with the common noun *gēomor*, not the potential name-form **Gēomēr*.

⁷⁸⁷ See pp. 186-88 above.

Both the name forms **Geōmēr* and *Ēomēr* fit in with alliterative and thematic patterns in his family, if we suppose them in fourth-century form (see Fig. 4 below).⁷⁸⁸ Critics have been unanimous that the *Beowulf*-poet regarded *Ēomēr* as Offa's son, though the text does not say so, and the various versions of the Mercian regnal list name him as Offa's grandson.⁷⁸⁹ However, as was noted in the case of Oeric, surnamed *Oisc*, the son of Hengest, and possibly Brand or Ingibrand aka *Beornic*, king of the Bernicians,⁷⁹⁰ it is possible that the juxtaposition of an ethno-eponym next to a birth-name in the original genealogical source led to the mistaken supposition that there were two people rather than one.

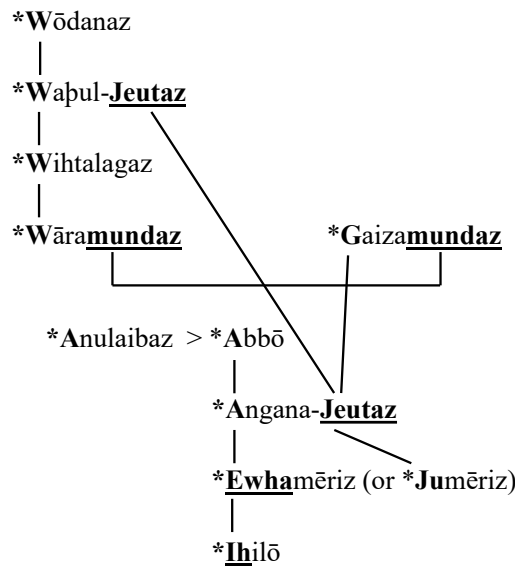


Fig. 4

Reconstructed familial name-patterns in Offa's genealogy in *AngCol*

Thus, it is conceivable that *Ēomēr* also had the ethno-eponym *Angengēot*, or the apparently patronymic version of the Anglian-Jutish ethno-eponym *Angengēoting*, and thus was indeed Offa's son. Given the paucity of information about Offa's successors, it might be argued that it is of little relevance whether his son was *Angengēot*, *Ēomēr* or a single individual called *Angengēot Ēomēr*. However, this question does have an influence on the identification of the character named as *Gārmund*, whom we shall examine later.⁷⁹¹

⁷⁸⁸ **Gaizamundaz* represents *Gārmund* (*Beowulf* 1962) who, I shall argue, was either Offa himself or Offa's father-in-law (and also a relative of *Wērmund*) – see pp. 290-300 below. *Icil* or *Icel* is likely to be a hypocorism of a name beginning with *Eh-* or *Eoh-*, shared with his father *Ēomēr*.

⁷⁸⁹ See the reference to Shaw's argument at p. 295 below.

⁷⁹⁰ See fn. 399 (p. 115 above).

⁷⁹¹ See pp. 290-300 below.

2.7.1 Jutlandic Geopolitics: Ēomēr, the Hæleþas and the Hæþnas

The description of Ēomēr as *hæleþum tō helpe* (*Beowulf* 1961) may also contain an unrecognised ethnonym, *Hæleþas*, which, I argue, provides us with information about his heroic role in Angel or Jutland in the decades following Offa’s rule and leading up to the Anglian migration to Britain. As we shall see from a comparison between *Beowulf* and *Widsith*, it may be argued that the *Hæleþas* can be paired with the *Hæþnas*, both of which, I argue, were ethnonyms.

In *Widsith* 81 the poet-speaker says that he was with *mid hǣðnum ond mid hæleþum*. If these are read as appellatives, this means “with heathens and heroes”. However, in the rest of the poem the names of specific peoples are given, not generalities, and the negative Christian value-judgement implicit in “heathens” is quite alien to the celebratory spirit of the poem’s speaker, a poet whose stock-in-trade is encomium. It is therefore necessary to investigate whether this line actually refers to identifiable ethnicities.

To begin, I argue that the *Hæþnas* appear in the following passage from *Beowulf*:⁷⁹²

	Meoduscencum hwearf	1980
geond þæt sidereced	Hæreðes dohtor,	
lufode ðā lēode,	līðwæge bær	1982
Hæðnum tō handa.		

With cups of mead Hæreþ’s daughter turned through that mannerly hall, showed love to the people, carried cups of ale to the hands of the Hæðnas.

In the *Beowulf* MS, l. 1983a reads <hæ nū>. The second *Beowulf*-scribe first wrote this with <ð> in the gap but then deleted it, leaving a text that was and is meaningless. The simplest explanation is that he copied what his exemplar read, <hæðnū> or (archaically) <hædnū>, but then had second thoughts, since *hæðnum* appeared to mean “heathens” – a completely inappropriate term to use when introducing this merry and well-mannered company at the court of Bēowulf’s uncle, being served by the impressive and capable young Hygd, and welcoming the glory-laden hero home. The second scribe had only taken over from the first in l. 1939. But even if he had read none of what his predecessor had written, it would seem very strange to

⁷⁹² My text. In the MS (fol. 173v), the verb-phrase in ll. 1980b-1981a reads <hwearf geond | þæt ^{side} rēced>, with <side> (from *sidu* “(good) manners”) added above the line in the same hand but in different ink. The *Kl4* editors emend to *healreced*, to restore (or introduce) alliteration, but such a strange superscript addition can only have come from the exemplar – as argued by Kiernan (1996: 187-88) who noted that the line made sense and was metrical as it appeared in the MS. He treated the lack of alliteration as a deliberate variation by the poet.

him for the poet suddenly to stigmatise these people as heathens.⁷⁹³ The conclusion to be drawn from this, I suggest, is that the word in the exemplar was not a form of *hǣþnas* “heathens” but an ethnonym *Hǣþnas* “heath people”.

This identification of the nation of the *Hǣþnas* has also been suggested for *hǣðnum* in *Widsith* 81 – but referring to the Heiðnir, a people of Heiðmörk (modern Hedemark) in southern Norway.⁷⁹⁴ However, Ptolemy in his *Geography* describes four islands to the east of Jutland called Σκανδίαι, three small and one very large, the very large one being itself referred to as Σκανδία (*Scandia*). This was a reference to Scania – that is, the southern part of what is now Sweden, which was thought to be part of a large island from Antiquity to the later Middle Ages.⁷⁹⁵ He says that there was a people living in the west of it called the Χαιδεῖνοι, to the south of whom were the Γοῦτοι. Greek Χαιδεῖνοι indicates Germanic **Haiþīn-*, which I suggest is wholly consistent with a Germanic ethnonym appearing in Old English as **Hǣþnas*.⁷⁹⁶ And the Γοῦτοι located in the south of Scania would be consistent with the habitation of the *Gēatas* (though transliterating the Greek as Germanic **Gut-* suggests a stem with a different ablaut grade from Germanic **Gaut-*).⁷⁹⁷ I suggest that the joint witnesses of Ptolemy and the *Beowulf* MS indicate that the men to whom Hygd was serving drinks in Hygelāc’s hall were the *Hǣþnas*, allies and neighbours of the *Gēats*.⁷⁹⁸ Given the support of Ptolemy and the contextual inappropriateness of the sense “heathens” in both texts, I would argue that *Beowulf* and *Widsith* were both referring to a people of Scania called the *Hǣþnas*.

Malone interpreted *hǣðnum* in *Widsith* 81 as the dative plural of the tribal name *Hǣþnas*, but he noted that some preferred to read this as “heathens”.⁷⁹⁹ I take this argument a

⁷⁹³ The *Beowulf*-poet rigorously presents his characters as virtuous monotheists, except for one passage (ll. 175-78), where he admonishes the Danes for going to their *hærgtrafas* (“altar huts”) to implore their demonic idols for help.

⁷⁹⁴ See the discussion in Malone 1962: 159

⁷⁹⁵ *Geog.*, II.11.16 in Müller 1883-1901: I, 276; II.11.33-35 in Stückelberger and Graßhoff 2017: I, 234-37 and 235, fn. 258.

⁷⁹⁶ *Geog.*, II.11.16; Müller 1883-1901: I, 276; II.11.35 in Stückelberger and Graßhoff 2017: I, 236 (who read “Γοῦται (Οῦται)”). Ptolemy’s /ei/ would be the early Gmc diphthong /ei/ represented by the rune ᚱ *īh* “yew” (transliteration *ī*) and originally distinct from the long vowel /ī/ represented by the rune ᚦ *īs* “ice” (transliteration *i*). See Mees 2025 for this feature of early WGmc phonology.

⁷⁹⁷ The history of the confusion (ignorant or deliberate) of Goths and Jutes/Götar is dealt with at pp. 185-88 above and pp. 252-53 below. There were however the linguistically distinct “Gutnish” people who called themselves *Gutar* (in a later dialect of ON) who may have inhabited this area (including the Baltic island of Gotland, which bears their name).

⁷⁹⁸ See Maps 1 (p. 18 above) and 9 (p. 342 below).

⁷⁹⁹ Malone 1962: 159. Also, most recently, Hill 2009: 110. In his notes *ad loc.* Müller (*Geog.*, II, 11.16; 1883-1901: I, 256) gives the alternative Latinisations *Gutae* and *Gautae*, and relates this people to the *Gēatas* of the Anglo-Saxons and the people named Γαυτοί by Procopius, who described them as a most numerous people among the 13 tribes of Thule (i.e. “Scandinavia” *sc.* Scania) next to whom the migrating Ἑρούλοι (Herulians) settled (*Wars*, VI.15.26; Dewing 1914-40: III, 420).

step further and contend that if this is an ethnonym, then *hæleþum* in *Widsith* 81 is also likely to be one. Malone noted that the emendation of *hæleþum* to *Hæreþum* (in *Widsith* 81) had found favour with a number of editors.⁸⁰⁰ He himself argued that this was a reference to a Danish tribe called, in Old English, **Hæleþan* (he used several medieval toponyms to support this argument).⁸⁰¹ Hill concedes that this might once have been an ethnonym, though later scribes and audiences may not have recognised it and “may have been content to accept the familiar common nouns at face value as general terms that could be passed off for the moment as tribal names”.⁸⁰²

However, Ptolemy again provides some valuable evidence. He referred to the Jutlandic people of the Χάλοι,⁸⁰³ which would correspond to a Germanic stem **Hal-*, cognate with Old English *Hæl-*. There is also evidence of a people called *Chalitani* from an inscription on an altar found at Mainz, which is consistent with a Germanic stem **halip-* + Latin suffix *-ani*,⁸⁰⁴ or Germanic **-an-*. In Old English, the poetic word “man, hero” had the dual form *hæleþ* and *hæle*, as did Old Norse *hǫlðr* “free peasant” and poetic *halr* “man” (pl. *halir*)— one form with a dental consonant in the stem and the other without.⁸⁰⁵ This is mirrored by the forms Χάλοι and *Chalitani*, which can be derived from a Germanic strong *a*-stem **Halōz* and weak *þ*-stem **Halipaniz*, both of which are consistent with the morphology and phonology of Old English *Hæle/Hæleþ*. Thus, the combined testimony of Ptolemy and *Widsith* would suggest that there was a people of late Antique and early medieval Jutland called **Halōz*, a variant of whose name may have had the stem **Halip-*. Given the variability of the declensions of ethnonyms in Old English, the forms **Halōz*, **Halipōz*, and **Halaniz* and **Halipaniz* would be possible, and two of these would be consistent with Old English **Hæleþas* and **Hæleþan*.

⁸⁰⁰ Malone 1962: 157-58. These included Chambers 1912: 214.

⁸⁰¹ Malone 1962: 157-58.

⁸⁰² Hill 2009: 16. This is a restatement of her views in Hill 1984: 314-15. In that article she joined Norman Blake in doubting that audiences for poems like *Widsith* and *Beowulf*— of any period — were ever well-informed enough to understand all of the poet’s allusions, leading them to the conclusion that poets could and did make them up and pass them off as actual (*ibid.*: 311-13). However, there is a difference between not recognising a name and deliberately passing it off as an appellative on an ignorant audience.

⁸⁰³ *Geog.*, II.11.7; Müller 1883-1901: I, 257. See also pp. 208-09 below with respect to the Χαλούσιος ποταμός, Ptolemy’s name for the river Schlei, after the town on which the region of Schleswig is named.

⁸⁰⁴ See Sitzmann and Grünzweig 2008: 85-86.

⁸⁰⁵ The original inflection of this word is unclear (see Kroonen 2013: 204, s.v. **haleþ-*, **halup-*). Its declension in OE is highly unusual, with one type resembling the *þ*-stem *ealu* “ale” (*hæle*, *hæle*, *hæleþes*, *hæleþe* / *hæleþ*, *hæleþ*, *hæleþa*, *hæleþum*), and another a standard *a*-stem (*hæle*, *hæle*, *hæleþes*, *hæleþe* / *hæleþas*, *hæleþas*, *hæleþa*, *hæleþum*). ON had *halr* in the singular and *i*-stem *halir* in the plural, as well as *hǫlðr* (< **halupR*) and *hǫlðar*, evidencing *þ*-stems.

Ptolemy's editor Müller identified the Χαλούσος ποταμός – “the river of the Haloi” – as the Schlei,⁸⁰⁶ giving the alternative readings Χαλάσου, Χαλαΐσου, Χαλύσου.⁸⁰⁷ indicating that, for him, only the stem Χαλ- was certain.⁸⁰⁸ The element -ούσ- is not explained. However, it may also occur in the unexplained name of the unknown Jutlandic people, the Φουνδοῦσοι,⁸⁰⁹ and may also occur in the eighth-century Frisian toponym *Hunusga*, as *-us*.⁸¹⁰ The part of the Χαλούσος ποταμός referred to by Ptolemy was its mouth, ἐκβολαί (plural of ἐκβολή), and it may be that the unexplained element -ούσ- was a reduced grade of Proto-Germanic **ōsaz* “river-mouth”. In such a case, the Χαλούσου ποταμοῦ ἐκβολαί would be the pleonastic “river-mouth of the mouth of the (river) Hal” – the boundary of the Hælepas.



Map 4

The peoples of Jutland (the Cimbric peninsula) and Scandia,
according to Ptolemy's *Geography* (c. 150 AD)

- ⁸⁰⁶ *Geog.* II, 11.7-8; Müller 1883-1901: I, 256-59. See Malone 1962: 158 for several other suggestions.
- ⁸⁰⁷ Müller 1883-1901: I, 250 fns, 258 fns. However, see the discussion in Malone 1962: 158-59, who is tempted to identify the form in Ptolemy with the ethnonym *Hælsingas* (appearing in *Widsith* 22 as *Hælsingum*, ruled by Wada), thus meaning “dwellers in the valley of the Chalus(os) river” (though there are phonological difficulties with this). Whether Wada is to be identified with the character of Vaði, the giant who is the father of Velent (= Weland) in *Piðreks saga af Bern*, or the English folktale figure of Wade, is entirely undetermined: see Malone 1962: 206-07. However, in *Widsith* Wada of the Hælsingas comes between Witta of the Swæfe and Meaca of the Myrgingas (ll. 22-23). Their collocation in the text may indicate their geographical proximity somewhere in southern Jutland (although in *Piðreks saga*, the home of Vaði and Velent is on Sjóland (Sjælland), and today the narrow Øresund strait lies between Helsingør on Sjælland and Helsingborg in Sweden, the names of which seem derived from an ON ethnonym, *Helsingar* (cognate with OE *Hælsingas*) based on *hals* “neck”, i.e. “strait, narrows”).
- ⁸⁰⁸ This river is at *Geog.*, II.11.4 in Stückelberger and Graßhoff (2017: I, 222), who also give a metathetical form *Λαχούσος* (without identifying the river meant).
- ⁸⁰⁹ *Geog.*, II.11.12 in Stückelberger and Graßhoff (2017: I, 226); II.11.7 in Müller (1883-1901: I, 257-58 and fns), giving *Φουνδοῦσοι*, the origin of whom was unknown. Their name is also unexplained in Sitzmann and Grünzweig 2008: 136, *s.n. Fundusi*.
- ⁸¹⁰ *Vita Liudgeri* (ch. 19; Pertz 1829: 410). However, see Gysseling 1960, *s.n. Hunzego*, which is attested in the 2nd half of the 8th c. as *in pago Hunesgeuue* (corr. from MS *Hunergeuue*). However, Pertz (1829: 410) glosses this toponym as *Hunsingo*. If *Hunes-* were suggested to be a gen. sg. form of a name *Hun*, one would not expect a group-name ***Hunsing* but rather **Huning*.

If a waterway as important as the Schlei was named after the *Χάλοι*, it is an indicator that they and the area they occupied were likewise of importance, whether they were settled on both banks, or only to the north or the south. The extensive fortifications known as the Danevirke were situated at the head of the Schlei to its southwest, and the earliest parts of them are now dated to about 500 AD, also a time at which it has been reckoned that the Danes had conquered Jutland as far as the Eider.⁸¹¹ If this is so, one is bound to ask, if the Danes built the Danevirke inside an area they had already conquered, who were they protecting themselves from? Or were these fortifications not built or begun by the people of Schleswig to keep the Danes out, and should we not entertain the idea that both Engle and Hæleþas were involved in this phase of the history of Jutland? (Note from Map 4 above that there are no “Angles” named in Jutland. As with “Jute”, perhaps this was because *Ongel* was geographic and thus “Angle” a demonym).

I argue, therefore, that the reference to *Ēomēr* in *Beowulf* 1961 as *hæleþum tō helpe* may in fact be *Hæleþum tō helpe*. He was not of help to, or the salvation of, “heroes”, but of the people of the Hæleþas/Hæleþan, one of the Jutlandic, Sleswician or even Anglian peoples to his north, whose independence and identity was expunged in the Danish domination of the peninsula.⁸¹² Such a people, I suggest, would have been on the “front line” of Danish expansion from the north, inhabiting the major strategic waterway of the Schlei.

Ēomēr was also the last member of Offa’s line before Icel, the figure credited with the establishment of the Iceling dynasty in Mercia. *Ēomēr* may therefore have had the role of the valiant but doomed assembler of alliances to defend his Anglian homeland.

2.8 Icil, Icel

I add the coda that the name *Icil* or *Icel* ([i'kɪl] or [i'kɛl], or [i'tʃɪl] or [i'tʃɛl]) is likely to be either a hypocorisation of *Ēomēr*, or of a name with the prototheme *eoh/eh* “horse”. The hypocoristic processes would be:⁸¹³

- West Saxon diphthong /eo/ monophthongised to /e/: *Eoh* > *Eh*; or Anglian smoothed vowel in *Eh* retained.
- Fricative [x] turns into stop [k]: *Eh* > *Ec*; or fricative [x] is velarised: *Eh* > *Eç*.
- Suffixation with /-il/: > *Ecil*.
- Suffix /-il/ causes *i*-mutation /e/ > /i/: > *Icil* ~ *Icel*.

⁸¹¹ See the discussion at pp. 343-44 below.

⁸¹² See pp. 338-44 for discussion of another Jutlandic people, the *Hæreþas*, whose king, I argue, was the father of Hygd, Hygelāc’s wife.

⁸¹³ See the processes set out with respect to the hypocoristic types in section 1.5.2 (pp. 98-112 above).

Alternatively,

- West Saxon diphthong /eo/ monophthongised to /e/: *Eoh* > *Eh*; or Anglian smoothed vowel in *Eh* was retained.
- Suffixation with compound /-cil/: > **Ehcil*.
- Assimilation of consonant cluster /ehc/ > /ec/: > **Ecil*.
- Suffix /-cil/ causes *i*-mutation /e/ > /i/: > *Icil* ~ *Icel*.

Icil was thus linked to his father Ēomēr by bearing a hypocorism based on his name or part of it, meaning “Little *eoh*”. But his name was also an ethno-eponym of the new line called the Iclingas which established itself in what became Mercia, as a ruling clan.⁸¹⁴ His name is thus comparable to that of *Oeric* or *Oisc* in the Kentish genealogy, which I shall briefly examine. In Bede’s account of the foundation of the Kentish kingdom, Oeric was⁸¹⁵

cognomento Oisc, a quo reges Cantuariorum solent Oiscingas cognominare, cuius pater Hengist, qui cum filio suo Oisc inuitatus a Uurtigerno Britanniam primus intrauit [...]

surnamed *Oisc* (from whom the kings of the people of Kent are accustomed to call themselves *Oiscingas* as a surname), whose father was Hengist who, with his son Oisc, was invited by Wurtigern and was the first to enter Britain [...]

Thus, while Hengest was the man who arrived in Britain, it was his son, Oeric, who founded the Kentish dynasty of the Oiscingas. In scholarship on the *Adventus* there is still a tendency to follow ideas like that of Sims-Williams and to argue that Oisc was a different person from Oeric, and that he was a made-up, legendary or even mythical character, conjured as an eponym out of the phylonym *Oiscingas* and mythically fathered by a divine being, Hengist (rather like the current conception of Scyld Scēfing in *Beowulf*).⁸¹⁶ The reality may have been much more prosaic; and while Hengist was the conqueror of Kent, the kings of Kent traced their lineage back to his son Oisc (not the other son, Ebissa, he was credited with in the Harleian version of *HB*) who simply bore the ethno-eponym of their line (whatever was its derivation).

Rather than from myth or legend, *Ōisc* may be derived, etymologically, from **Ōsic*, a derivation from Proto-West Germanic **Ansik(o)*, identifiable as a suffixed hypocorism based on a name with the common theme **ansu-* (= Old English *ōs-*). According to the seventh-

⁸¹⁴ *Iclingas* is attested in OE as the name of the extremely noble Mercian dynasty to which Penwald the father of St. Guthlac belonged, according to the OE prose *Life of St. Guthlac* (ch. 1; Gonser 1909: 104).

⁸¹⁵ *HE*, II.5; Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 150.

⁸¹⁶ See the still influential Sims-Williams 1983: esp. 21-23. Dumézilian ideas of origins in Indo-European myths of horse-gods and divine twins (i.e. Hengest and Horsa) were imported from work like that of Joan Turville-Petre (1953-57) and applied to the narratives of the *Adventus*.

century Cosmographer of Ravenna, the leader of the Germanic people who went to Britain was called *Ansehis*.⁸¹⁷ Some scholars accept an editorially emended form, *Anschis*,⁸¹⁸ but of the three MSS of the Cosmographer's treatise, two read <ansehis> and one <ansehys>. Förstemann records *Anschis* as a variant of *Ansigis* and explains *-chis* as a Langobardic (that is, High German) form of the name-element *gis*, a shortened version of *gisil*.⁸¹⁹ This name would give **Ōsgīs(e)l* in Old English, derived from Proto-West Germanic **Ansugīs(i)l*. *Ansehis* is not evidenced other than in the Cosmographer, but it may be a scribal version of **Ansihis*, itself a variant of *Anschis*. Thus, the hypocorism **Ansiko* "little *Ansu*-" is consistent with the form *Ōisc*, and it may also be explained as a derivation from the name a man bearing the prototheme of his father's birth name **Ansgīsl*. Therefore, using non-mythological material and the onomastic theories advocated in this study, Bede's *Oisc* of the *Oiscingas* may be explained as the ethno-eponymous lineage of "little Ōs", the son of **Ōsgīsl*, who also bore the epithetical name *Hengist* – both of whom were entirely flesh-and-blood rather than gods.

2.9 Offa, *Widsith* and Anglo-Saxon Genealogies: Conclusions

The conclusions to be drawn from onomastic analysis of the names in the genealogical tradition of Offa are limited by the limited material available. However, the epithetical hypocorism *Offa*, meaning "old man's son", establishes it as appropriate to the figure represented in our narratives. The existence of an appropriate epithet does not mean that Offa was a fictional character (though, of course, he may have been). The name-patterns illustrated in Fig. 4 (p. 204 above) indicate that the Anglian genealogy followed the patterns of alliteration and inter-generational theme-sharing widely evidenced in other families in Germanic-speaking cultures. While this is unsurprising, the appearance of forms like *Viglecus*, *Frowinus* and *Uffo* in twelfth-century Danish texts are not part of similar patterns, nor are they likely to be representative of Danish names or onomastic phonology, but are more likely to be derived from English tradition (a theme investigated further below).⁸²⁰

The discussion also illustrates the explanatory power of the concepts of the ethno-eponym, hypocorism and multiple naming in Anglo-Saxon narrative and genealogical tradition. Names could be either literary fictions or inherited traditions. The case of Heremōd and Alewīh, aka Áli, is a case in point. He had an apparent dithematic birth-name, *Alewīh* ("ale"

⁸¹⁷ Cosmographer, v.31; Pinder and Parthey 1860: 423.

⁸¹⁸ E.g. Joan Turville-Petre (1953-57: 285) and Sims-Williams (1983).

⁸¹⁹ Förstemann 1900: 126-27, s.v. ANSI; 642-43, s.v. GIS; 647-48, s.v. GISIL.

⁸²⁰ The evidence is summarised at p. 406 below.

or “good luck holy being”) in *Widsith*, an epithetical name *Heremōd* (“army temperament”, celebrating his success in war) in *Beowulf*, and in Old Norse texts the name *Hermóðr* and a hypocorism *Áli/Ali* derived from a name cognate with Old English *Alewīh* (perhaps Old Norse *Qlvér*). He shares the feature of “multiple naming” with other characters in the heroic tradition – like Gefwulf aka *Finn*, Godwulf aka *Folcwalda* and Wībergylf aka *Frōda*, and the feature of being known by a hypocorism with many early figures in the Anglo-Saxon regnal lists. While it is possible that Heremōd was an invented figure, I argue that we should abandon the simplistic equation “invented name = fictional character”. As a person from an area and period beyond the recording of Latin and Greek historians, Heremōd aka *Alewīh* may have been a real person (whatever fictions grew up around him).

I also argue that the explicit comparison between Alewīh’s glorious military career and Offa’s in *Widsith* suggests not only huge renown, but also alludes to a wider narrative background in which Offa’s kingdom may be eclipsed by the growing power of the Scyldings Hrōþgār and Hrōþulf, mentioned in *Widsith* directly after the Offa allusion. It is a narrative conundrum yet to be solved, but, as we have seen, in the tradition known to the author of *Skjoldunga saga*, Frodo IV inn frekne (= Frōda the Heapobear in *Beowulf*) procured the assassination of his half-brother Alo (= Heremōd); and in the next generation Frodo’s son Ingjalldus (= Ingeld) killed his half-brother Halfdanus (= Healfdene), and Ingjalldus was then killed by Halfdanus’s sons Helgo and Roë (= Hālgā and Hrōþgār).⁸²¹ If this narrative of internecine conflict was anything like the untold story in the background of *Beowulf*, then *Widsith* may even be read as an augury of the downfall of Offa, like that of Alewīh/Heremōd, at the hands of Scylding Danes, perhaps represented as treacherous kinsmen or allies.

If accepted, the arguments advanced in this study should, I suggest, increase our awareness of the presence of ethnographic traditions in our texts, and therefore enable us better to investigate the multiple “ethnicities” (if that is the right word for people who would have looked and talked the same) of Jutland, and to examine the likelihood that these peoples – like the dynasties of their rulers – were still known in Anglo-Saxon England at the time *Beowulf* and *Widsith* were being composed, in the late seventh or early eighth century. For instance, using the concept of the ethno-eponym, it is possible to see Angengēot/Angelþēow as the actual inheritor of an Anglian-Jutish kingdom – won by his father in narrative and perhaps in reality too – rather than a “suspicious” genealogical fiction. This identification of the dual heritage of Angengēot/Angelþēow also assists us as part of the analysis of Offa’s intertribal marriage, the

⁸²¹ See pp. 177-78 above, and *RDF/Skjoldunga saga*, ch. 8-10; *ÍF* 35: 15-23.

alliance with the Swāfe people created by this, and the status of Angengēot/Angelþēow as the inheritor of a great realm that was destined to be short-lived. These are aspects of the Offa narrative that we shall investigate in section 6 (pp. 401-09) below.

3: The Others: Myrgingas, Langobards, Goths and Ethnography in *Widsith*

3.1 Introduction

In considering the reluctance of modern scholars to believe in a large-scale emigration from Jutland to Britain in the fifth century, Bernard Mees observes that “*Widsith* even retells a story reputedly of a war between the Angles and a people called the Myrgingas (‘marsh-dwellers’) before their immigration to Britain”.⁸²² He goes on to note the narrative content of *Widsith* with respect to Offa, and to compare it to some recent accounts of the archaeology of fifth-century Jutland which seems to confirm the picture painted in *Widsith* and *Beowulf* of a time of constant conflict and dynastic downfall.⁸²³ We shall reconsider this question in due course. But it is rare, in *Widsith* scholarship, to see a plain statement of what the poem is about – or rather that it is about anything. It is indeed about a war between the Angles and the Myrgingas, which causes us to ask, who were the Myrgingas, what was the war about, who won it, and what happened after it? To these questions we now turn.

3.2 The Myrgingas

It is the argument of this study that Ēadgils, the *frēa Myrginga* “lord (= king) of the Myrgingas” of *Widsith* 36b was a character in the Offa story from the earliest recording of it, which is in *Widsith*; and I propose to examine who he was and where he fitted into the complex ethnographic and geopolitical world of *Widsith*.

The tribal name *Myrgingas* is not found anywhere but in *Widsith*. The origin of their name has been debated without unanimity.⁸²⁴ Chadwick and Chambers thought that the Myrgingas were Swabians.⁸²⁵ Malone thought they were a branch of the Saxons (as does Mees 2023), living where the second-century AD Graeco-Roman geographer Ptolemy had placed his

⁸²² Mees 2023: 178.

⁸²³ Mees 2023: 178-81. Also a theme in Shippey 2022.

⁸²⁴ See the discussions on their origins and the etymology of their name in Chadwick 1907: 128, 135, 138; Chambers 1912: 159-61, 236; Much 1925: 122-24; Malone 1962: 183-86; and Hill 2009: 118.

⁸²⁵ Chadwick 1907: 138; Chambers 1912: 159.

Chadwick, Chambers and Malone all agree that the Myrgingas lived to the south of the Eider, which was the traditional boundary between the historical regions of Holstein to the south and Schleswig to the north⁸²⁸ (see Map 7, p. 281 below). Malone located the Myrgingas more precisely in West Holstein, in the region of the mouth of the Eider.⁸²⁹ This is the implication of ll. 41b-44 of *Widsith*:

215

Engle ond Swāfe, swā hit Offa geslōg.

With a single [or “a certain”] sword he made known the border with the Myrgingas by the Eider estuary. Thenceforth the Angles and the Swāfe maintained it, just as Offa won it with his swordplay.

The Eider was also where Offa fought his duel in the story of Uffo in *BHD* and *GD*. This passage also tells us that Wīdsīþ, the speaker of the poem, is singing at a time when he knew that the allies, the Angles and Swāfe, were still holding this frontier against the Myrgingas – that is, before the event took place that caused the Angles to migrate to Britain.⁸³⁰ (Some connection between the Angles and Swāfe is also implied by the fact that they appear next to each other in l. 61a, – *Mid Englum ic wæs ond mid Swāfem* “With the Angles I was, and with the Swāfe”).

However, Offa’s achievement was to have used his sword to achieve the greatest of kingdoms (*geslōg [...] cynerīca mæst*, ll. 38a, 39b). That is, he did not just defend home territory, he extended it. This suggests that he must have expelled the Myrgingas from lands north of the Eider, and perhaps to the east – that is, in Angel. As we have already seen, *Ongend* may be interpreted as a synonym of *Angel*, and so the *Ongend-Myrgingas* whom Wīdsīþ tells us he was with (l. 85b) would be the Myrgingas settled in Ongend or Angel whose territory Offa won⁸³¹ (indicating that *Ongend/Angel* was a name for a geographic region containing different peoples, and thus the ethnonym *Angel* was a demonym). But these do not seem to have been the only Myrgingas, since the *Wip-Myrgingas* are mentioned at l. 118b, and the *Wip* of their name may also be geographical.⁸³² The Myrgingas may thus have been – or were imagined to be – an extensive and powerful people inhabiting more than one area of southern Jutland and environs, and the *Widsith*-poet expected his audience to have knowledge of this and its nomenclature. Offa faced a considerable enemy.

There is a long history of scholarly attempts to identify the Myrgingas and describe their relationship to other peoples. Since the nineteenth century there has been a view (though not a consensus) that the Myrgingas were to be related to the *Beardan* – that is, the tribal

⁸³⁰ Malone considered but rejected the idea that the Swāfe were the same as the Myrgingas and were being described as opponents of the Angles (1962: 138). However, uncertainty or confusion still exists: Shippey thinks that Offa fought one-against-two against the Swāfe (2022: 104).

⁸³¹ See the discussion at pp. 225-27 below.

⁸³² See discussion at pp. 249-51 below.

grouping including the *Longbeardan* and *Heapobeardan*,⁸³³ who are usually accepted as relatives of each other on account of their sharing the name-element *-beard* (“beard”).⁸³⁴

However, I shall suggest that in the world conceived of by the *Widsith*-poet, or his tradition, the Goths were still inhabiting the Baltic coast near the Vistula (as history suggests they did, though no later than the second or third centuries),⁸³⁵ and the Myrgingas were imagined as a large tribe in alliance with them, whose possessions included Angel, or part of it, and lands to the east, on the western Baltic coast, bordering on Eormenrīc’s empire, which – as hyperbolically described by Jordanes – stretched from the Baltic to the Black Sea.⁸³⁶

That deals with where the Myrgingas were (at least for the moment), but who they were is a different question. If there were subdivisions among the Myrgingas, were the Myrgingas themselves a sub-division of some larger ethnic grouping, whether related by ancestry, alliance or subjection? I shall argue that in *Widsith*’s version of the sub-Scandinavian geopolitical world, the Myrgingas were related to, or were a part of, the *Longbeardan*, and thus part of a considerable polity based on “Bardic” ethnicity, forming a power-bloc to the south of Jutland. The Myrgingas allied themselves by marriage to the Ostrogoths of Eormenrīc, creating an even more powerful grouping and setting the scene for Offa to disrupt it with his desperate heroism.

3.3 Ēadgils

As I have argued – though largely at variance with previous studies – the character Wīdsīþ is part of a wider story involving Ēadgils, his lord, and Ealhild, a princess whom Wīdsīþ escorts to the court of Eormenrīc to be married.⁸³⁷ Wīdsīþ returns home with the rewards he has gained from Eormenrīc and Ealhild, where – according to custom – he gives them to Ēadgils, accepting in return *mīnes fæder ēþel* (l. 96), that is, hereditary land owned and bequeathed to

⁸³³ See *Kl4*: lvi, and fn. 7 (and references). Chambers thought they were the same people as the Swāfe (1912: 160-61). Malone thought they were Saxons (1962: 184). Other scholars tried to associate them with the Heruli (see *Kl4*: lvi and fn. 8). But the people in *Beowulf* who have been identified as Herulians are the *eorl[as]* of l. 6a (see *Kl4*: 112 with references). In my “My Name is *Eorl*” (forthcoming) I argue that the MS reading <eorl> is *Eorl*, the ethno-eponym of the Herulians, or **Eorlas* in OE.

⁸³⁴ As accepted by the editors of *Kl4*: lvi and fn. 3. Malone said the names were “obviously related” (1962: 162). My argument, as it develops, concurs with these views, though “beard” could simply be a metonymic designation of “man”, as with *-skeggjar* “beards” as a second element in some ON ethnonyms (see *Cleasby-Vigfusson*: 542, s.v. *skeggi*).

⁸³⁵ See Chambers 1912: 13-14, 189. Also Wolfram 2005: 39-40. Numismatists have discussed the influence of later Goths in the Baltic (see Fagerlie 1967: 164-71). Also Kyhlberg 1986: 19, and Ciolek 2007. The Vistula area was a centre of wealth in Roman gold, transmitted by the Goths.

⁸³⁶ The Gothic Empire (comparable to Alexander’s) attributed to Ermanaric by Jordanes in the *Getica* was of vast extent, from the Black Sea to the *Oceanus Germanus*, where the Sclaveni and Aesti lived – i.e. the Baltic (*Getica*, XXIII.116-20; Mommsen 1882: 88-89).

⁸³⁷ See pp. 133-34 above.

him by his father, which we guess Æadgils has been looking after in his absence. The poet tells us no more about Æadgils.

But while Eormenric is clearly identifiable as the Ostrogothic king Ermanaric – copiously recorded in history and northern European vernacular literature – Æadgils and Ealhild have consistently been regarded as unknowns.⁸³⁸ We shall consider Ealhild later, but I shall argue that Æadgils is identifiable as a key figure in the story of Offa, and as a powerful enemy of the Angles and their allies.

The name *Æadgils* appears as *Athislus* in Saxo Grammaticus’s narrative of Uffo in *GD* and in the same narrative in the *AnnR* (though misspelled or misprinted as *Achislus*).⁸³⁹ *Athislus* is a Latinisation of the Old Norse personal name *Aðisl* or *Aðils*, which may or may not be cognate with Old English *Æadgils*, but is at any rate very similar.⁸⁴⁰ One matter which has complicated the issue of the identity of Æadgils/Athislus is that the same names are used for a king of Sweden who appears in *Beowulf* as *Æadgils*, the son of the Swedish king Öthhere, and in Old Norse as *Aðils*, son of king Óttarr of Uppsala.⁸⁴¹ It has therefore been argued that the story of the figure named as Athislus in *GD* and *AnnR* originally had no connection – either in history or narrative – with the story of Offa.⁸⁴² Shaw has recently suggested that, in applying the name *Athislus* to two distinct Swedish kings, “it seems likely that Saxo here created two kings out of a single legendary figure”⁸⁴³ – also Malone’s suggestion.⁸⁴⁴ But these arguments had previously been refuted by Chambers who pointed out the chronological difficulties, the differences in motif and theme, and the coherence of the Athislus episode from the death of Frowinus (Uffo’s father-in-law) to the duel of Uffo. He believed that Saxo and his tradition had confused two men of the same name, wrongly making the Æadgils-figure of the Offa story a king of Sweden.⁸⁴⁵ With modification, that is my position. One might add that whoever Saxo thought Athislus was, Æadgils in *Widsith* cannot have been the same person as Æadgils of

⁸³⁸ See e.g. Malone 1962: 137-39 (*Æadgils*), 140-42 (*Ealhild*); and Hill 2009: 100 (*Æadgils*), 100-01 (*Ealhild*).

⁸³⁹ This looks like the common scribal error of mistaking <þ> for <c>.

⁸⁴⁰ See Lind *Dopnamn*: 4-5, s.n. *Aðils* (also recording *Athisl*), derived from *Aðgisl*. See also Peterson 2007: 16, s.n. *Aðisl*, derived from **Aþagīslar* (*apa-* from **apal-* “noble”). OE *Æadgils* and ON *Aðils* are not believed to be cognates, though there may be an explanation for this variation. See the discussion in Shaw 2020: 106-108. The ON cognate of *Æadgils*, *Auðgisl*, is recorded (Lind *Dopnamn*: 97-98; Peterson 2007: 35). However, there is no doubt that the Swedish prince called *Æadgils* in *Beowulf* is the same figure as the Swedish king *Aðils* in ON texts, whatever may be the origin of the difference in their names. I suggest that *Aðils* is a head-and-tail hypocorism of *Auðgisl* and thus equivalent to *Æadgils*.

⁸⁴¹ In *Ynglingatal* and the texts based on it, Snorri’s *Ynglinga saga* and the *Historia Norwegie* (Ekrem, Boje Mortensen and Fisher 2006).

⁸⁴² Olrik 1894: 185; Malone 1962: 138. Hill calls Æadgils of *Widsith* “unknown” (2009: 100).

⁸⁴³ Shaw 2020: 106.

⁸⁴⁴ Shaw refers to *GD*, Friis-Jensen and Fisher 2015: I, 108-18, 142, 156, 222-42. See Malone 1962: 139.

⁸⁴⁵ Chambers 1912: 92-94. Though he mistakenly thought that the Myrtingas were Swæfe.

Sweden: they were of quite different peoples and were probably not even contemporaries in the legendary chronology (Ēadgils of Sweden is part of the Geatish story after the death of Hygelāc in the first half of the sixth century). Saxo may have confused his Athislus with the Swedish figure (who had considerable fame), but then he took an elastic view of ethnicity, and it may simply have suited him to portray Athislus as a Swede. Since Uffo was a Dane, and Danish ethnicity had no subdivisions, Athislus had to be a foreigner of some kind, and the villain's role was already allotted to the Saxons or Germans in the story he developed or reported. At any rate, Ēadgils in *Widsith* was not Ēadgils in *Beowulf* or Aðils the Swedish king.

3.4 Mearchealf and Meaca

In *Widsith* 23 we are told that *Meaca* [wēold] *Myrgingum*, / *Mearchealf Hundingum*. These figures are not named in any other text and have not been identified. They are currently regarded as “unknown”.⁸⁴⁶ The longest-lived theory with respect to either of them is Karl Müllenhoff's suggestion that *Meaca* is related to Old English *gemaca* “comrade” and *maca* “match, mate”,⁸⁴⁷ which would make it a “royal epithet [...] to be compared with *wine* ‘friend, lord’” and thus “eminently appropriate as a royal appellation”⁸⁴⁸ or “a role-name suitable for a typical king”.⁸⁴⁹ And yet *Meaca* was not just any king, but the ruler of the Myrgingas, a people prominent in *Widsith*; and if he was their king, why does the poem say in l. 96 that Ēadgils was *frēa Myrginga*, which ought to mean “king of the Myrgingas”? Also what connection, if any, might *Meaca* have had with *Mearchealf*, since they both occupy the same line and, as Chambers noted, “in *Widsith* names of heroes and tribes are grouped together (often, but not invariably) according as they are related in story”.⁸⁵⁰

The etymological approach, taking each name singly, has clearly proved limited. But here, I suggest, is an instance where we may apply a wider variety of methodological tools of the kind set out in Part I.

Thus, *Ēadgils* would appear to be an ordinary dithematic name of a non-meaningful kind.⁸⁵¹ *Meaca* looks like a monothematic hypocoristic form (though obviously not derived from *Ēadgils*). If it was intended to suggest “comrade”, then it may have been an epithetical

⁸⁴⁶ Chambers (1912: 195) does not identify them, and they are “unknown” to Malone (1962: 182-83) and Hill (2009: 117).

⁸⁴⁷ Müllenhoff 1859: 277. Referred to by Chambers, Malone and Hill. But see fn. 858 (p. 220 below).

⁸⁴⁸ Malone 1962: 182.

⁸⁴⁹ Or it was “conceivable” that this was the case (Hill 2009: 117).

⁸⁵⁰ Chambers 1921: 286.

⁸⁵¹ The name-themes *ēad* “blessing, wealth, good fortune” and *gils* (= *gisl*) “(high-ranking?) hostage” may have had cultural significance, but the name is clearly not syntagmatic.

name for Ēadgils, as *Frōda* was for Wīpergyld the father of Ingeld, and *Folcwalda* was for Godwulf the father of Finn. Meaca may therefore have been Ēadgils under another type of name.

I also suggest that it is possible to identify the origin of *Meaca* as a hypocorism. *Mearchealf* is a dithematic name with the transparent meaning “horse + elf”.⁸⁵² However, it is unusual in its form. It would seem to be unique among names in Old English by having the theme *ealf* (= *ælf*) as a deutertheme rather than a prototheme.⁸⁵³ The spelling *ealf* appears to be late West Saxon,⁸⁵⁴ but *mearch* (= *mearh*) may be archaic.⁸⁵⁵

However, according to the analysis of the ethnonym *Myrgingas* in this study, the first element is derived from *mearh*, and so *mearch* potentially has an ethnonymic significance. While it was Meaca who ruled the Myrgingas, *Meaca* is a possible hypocoristic form – of the *Totta*-type – of a name in *Mearch*-, with assimilation of consonant-cluster /rch/ > /ch/, and with the fricative <ch> (= [χ]) becoming a stop [k]. As with several of the types identified in Part I,⁸⁵⁶ consonant-gemination was optional and in *Meaca* did not take place.⁸⁵⁷ Another potential explanation is that it was a *Becca*-type, with initial open syllable *Mea*- with a suffix *-ca*. There is also potential for an appellative-resembling *Lytel*-type, if *Meaca* was intended to recall *(ge)maca* “mate comrade”,⁸⁵⁸ expressing the idea of a king as a friend.

If we read *Widsith* as exhibiting the same characteristic as *Beowulf* – as for instance with *Frōda* and *Wiðergyld* – that is, by referring to the same character by different types of name in different parts of the text without overt signalling (which I have called “Covert Name

⁸⁵² The generally agreed etymology. See Malone 1962: 182. The form *ealf* is not recorded by *DOE* (s.v. *ælf*) but it occurs in several late recordings of personal names in *DOEC*: e.g. *Ealfword* (ASC MS F, s.a. 1011), and in one place-name, *of ealfruige* (S877) (unless this was *healf* “half”, as in some other examples of *ealf*). As a name-element, *healf* is recorded by *PASE* and in Briggs (2024) only in the names of men called *Healfdene* (in *DB*) and in one ambiguous instance of *Healfred* (*healf*- or *heal*-?) There is no evidence of *healf* as a deutertheme. Semantically, it would be most odd.

⁸⁵³ See Hall 2007: 56-62. *Mearchealf* would be an exception to his statement that *ælf* is never a second element in a name in OE (though Alaric might not agree with this – personal communication).

⁸⁵⁴ Possibly the confusion of the graphs <æ> and <ea>.

⁸⁵⁵ See *OEG*: 24. The use of <ch> for the final consonant [χ] of protothemes is, e.g., a characteristic of 9th-c. forms in *DLV*, e.g. *Alchfrith*, *Walchstod*. Malone said that <ch> was a “relic of pre-classical orthography” (1962: 182). However, it is not as archaic as <c> for [χ], as in *Cædmon’s Hymn* and the English names in Bede’s *HE*. While the digraph <ch> was used in late Anglo-Saxon texts for the sounds [k] (mostly in Classical and Biblical names and words) and [tʃ] (in OE), evidence from *DOEC* suggests that <ch> for [χ] resurfaced in England in the 2nd half of the 10th c. and the 11th c. (in West Saxon charters) and even as late as the OE poem about Durham (beginning of 12th c.). One suspects the influence of Latin or Franco-Latin orthography in which <ch> had long represented Gmc [χ].

⁸⁵⁶ See section 1.5.2 (pp. 98-112 above).

⁸⁵⁷ See (13) *Tubba*-type, at p. 103 above. Cf. *FFr* 15a, *Eaha* for *Eahha* (= *Eohha*) (*K14*: cxliii, 274 fn. 3, and 280).

⁸⁵⁸ See Malone: 1962: 182 (the suggestion of Müllenhoff 1859), *(ge)maca* “mate, equal”, cf. OS *gimako*, OHG *gimahho*. See *Bosworth-Toller*, s.v. *gemaca*. Highly dubious: *maca* or *gemæcca* meant “mate, match” in a marital sense. See *Bosworth-Toller* (s.v. *maca*) and *OED3*, s.v. *match* n¹, 1.1.

Variation”), then we can understand *Meaca* and *Ēadgils* to be names for the same person, the king of the Myrgingas. If *Meaca* is (as is phonologically possible) a hypocoristic form of a name in *Mearh*-, then this suggests that *Meaca* is a hypocorism based on the ethnonym *Myrgingas*, also derived from *mearh*) and is thus ethno-eponymous. And if we read *Widsith* 23 “appositively” (as with *Gefwulf* and *Fin* in ll. 26-27), then *Meaca* king of the Myrgingas would be the same person as *Mearchealf* of the Hundingas. Alternatively, *Meaca* and *Mearch*- indicate a shared prototheme indicative of some kinship relationship, perhaps that of brothers. Malone advanced the argument that the Myrgingas and the Hundingas were related peoples.

Mearchealf, I suggest, contains an ethnonymous element, the appellative *mearh* (similarly to *Scyld* from *Scyldingas*), and an epithetical one, *ealf*. Although the literary evidence is lacking in Old English with respect to “elf”, in the language of Old Norse poetry the word *álfr* had the general meaning “supernatural being” but was also used of mortal men and warriors – and very often kings – both as a simplex and in kennings and compounds.⁸⁵⁹ It was thus used similarly to *áss* and *goð*, both meaning “god”⁸⁶⁰ or “supernatural being”. Their cognates *ælf*, *ōs* and *god* (one would add *wiht* “wight”) occur in Anglo-Saxon names, which is probably evidence of a shared cultural significance – that is, the creation of propitious omens for the bearer of a name as a person exercising or channelling semi-divine power or benefiting from divine good fortune.

In Jordanes’ *Getica* we find reference to heroic military leaders as “*æsir*”:⁸⁶¹

Tum Gothi haut segnes reperti arma capessunt primoque conflictu mox Romanos devincunt, Fuscoque duce extincto divitias de castris militum spoliant magnaue potiti per loca victoria iam procures suos, quorum quasi fortuna vincebant, non puros homines, sed semideos id est *Ansis* vocaverunt.

Then the Goths – who were not slow on the uptake – seized their weapons and in the first battle they soon defeated the Romans. And when Fuscus the general was killed, they looted the riches of the soldiers’ camp and, now victorious everywhere, called their leaders (as if they had won through their luck) not just men but *Ansis*, that is ‘half-gods’.

This account is supposed to be of Goths who were victorious against the Romans in Dacia in the reign of Domitian (r. 81-96 AD). However, although the Romans fought in Dacia in the 80s AD (with indifferent success), their opponents were Dacians not Goths. This passage is thus a fiction, seemingly an attempt – probably originally by Cassiodorus⁸⁶² – to find a starting-point

⁸⁵⁹ *LP*: 7, s.v. *alfr* 2.

⁸⁶⁰ See Hall 2007: 28-30.

⁸⁶¹ *Getica*, XIII.78-XIV.79; Mommsen 1882: 76.

⁸⁶² Jordanes’ *Getica* was largely – though not wholly – an epitome of a multi-volume history of the Ostrogothic Amal dynasty by the Roman Cassiodorus, a senior administrator under the Amal kings of Italy, Theoderic (d. 526) and Athalaric (d. 534).

in Roman history for the sixteen successive generations of Gothic *heroes* that formed the Amal line up to Theoderic's grandson and successor Athalaric in the early sixth century (all of whom Jordanes names in the passage following that above). However, even if the history is bogus, the etymology of *ansis* is not necessarily so. It is a plausible plural form of Gothic **ansus*, the cognate of Old English *ōs* and Old Norse *áss*. In a context which, I would argue, is one uncontaminated by the complexities and accretions of late heathen Scandinavian theology concerning the Æsir, we find *ansus* used by sixth-century Goths as a term to impute semi-divine powers or luck to successful leaders.⁸⁶³ This, I suggest, is comparable with the use of *álfr* to refer to kings and warriors in Old Norse poetry. Thus, “Mearch-elf” would be *Mearch* (= *Mearh* “horse” – cf. *Hengest* and *Horsa*), king of the Myrgingas, and their “elf” in the sense of a royal person endowed with good fortune.

Thus, I suggest, we have an example of multiple naming in which we can distinguish between a birth-name *Ēadgils*, a hypocoristic ethno-eponym *Meaca*, and an ethno-eponymous-epithetical hybrid *Mearchealf*, all potentially for the same person. The identification of *Ēadgils* with *Meaca* and (possibly) *Mearchealf* also provides a further argument that he was not the *Ēadgils* who was the son of *Öthhere* king of the Swedes in *Beowulf*.

3.5 Myrgingas, Ongend-Myrgingas and Hundingas

3.5.1 A Problem of Interpolation: The Intrusion of the Bible

If we posit that *Meaca* and *Mearchealf* were the same person, or relatives, then we should examine the possible identity or relationship of the ethnonyms *Myrgingas* and *Hundingas*, the people they ruled. They are paired in l. 23, but we find them again, in reasonably proximity to each other, in ll. 80-87a. However, the degree of proximity depends on whether or not one accepts that this passage contains an interpolation. Here is the text as in Chambers (1912) and Hill (2009):⁸⁶⁴

Mid Lidwīcingum ic wæs ond mid Lēonum ond mid Longbeardum,	80
mid Hæðnum ond mid Hæleþum ond mid Hundingum.	
Mid Israhelum ic wæs ond mid Exsyringum,	82
mid Ebreum ond mid Indeum ond mid Egyptum.	
Mid Mōidum ic wæs ond mid Persum ond mid Myrgingum	84
ond Mofdingum ond Ongend-Myrgingum	
ond mid Amothingum. Mid Ēast-Þyringum ic wæs	86
ond mid Ēolum [...]	

⁸⁶³ See Wellendorf 2025: 121-51, esp. 151, on the *ansis* and the interface of the human and divine.

⁸⁶⁴ The text in Malone 1962 has several silent emendations. I have added macrons to indicate long vowels.

With the Ship-Wīcingas I was, and with the Lēonas, and with the Lombards, with the Hæþnas and the Hæleþas⁸⁶⁵ and with the Hundingas, with the Israelites I was and with the Assyrians, with the Hebrews and with the Indians [or *Iudeum* “Jews”, “Judaean”?], with the Medes I was and with the Persians, and with the Myrgingas and Mofdingas, and Ongend-Myrgingas, and with the Amothingas. With the East-Thyringas I was, and with the Ēolas⁸⁶⁶ [...].

In ll. 82 to 84 there are seven names of “exotic, semi-biblical folk”,⁸⁶⁷ seemingly in contrast with the other European, mostly Germanic, tribal names in the rest of this passage, and in the poem as a whole. Some critics have supposed that this section (among several others) is interpolated or corrupted.⁸⁶⁸ But as the critical approaches of Chambers and Malone (and the textual-critical traditions they refer to) show, *Widsith* has been thought to contain quite a few interpolations. One suspects that this is because the text subverts some rather rigid notions about what a “Germanic” and originally pagan and oral poem should contain,⁸⁶⁹ but also because its narrative and geopolitical content has not been fully understood. At any rate, the argument for non-authorial interpolation in ll. 80-84 deserves closer scrutiny, because while there is no reason, *prima facie*, to suspect the authenticity of Biblical references in a poem which may well have been composed by a cleric and in which the wandering poet says that he has been everywhere from Constantinople to Pictland and Finland, these lines stick out like a sore thumb, displaying a disjointedness not found in the rest of the poem: they are the poem’s only inclusion of non-European peoples, or people from scripture; the sudden switch from the Persians to the Myrgingas of Jutland is abrupt; and the repetition of the name *Myrgingas* seems uncharacteristically clumsy.

We can identify the questionable passage as the text which contains the ethnonyms *Isrāhēlas*, *Exsyringus*, *Ebrēas*, *Indēas* (or *Iūdēas*?) *Egypte*, *Mōidas* and *Perse*. They are sandwiched between two undoubtedly Germanic ethnonyms, *Hundingas* (l. 81) and *Myrgingas* (l. 84) which – significantly – also appear next to each other in l. 23. While it has been suggested

⁸⁶⁵ Some editors emend MS <hæleþum> to *Hærepum*, meaning the *Hærepas*, the OE name for the Hǫrðar of medieval Norway (modern Hordaland), and/or the people of Jutland who gave their name to a medieval region *Hardæsysæl* who were called *Harudes* or *Kharoudes* in classical texts. See Chambers 1912: 214. But this emendation is unnecessary – see pp. 206-09 above.

⁸⁶⁶ See p. 224 below.

⁸⁶⁷ Chambers 1912: 215.

⁸⁶⁸ See Chambers 1912: 7-9, 215. Malone argues against those who suggest that ll. 76-78 were interpolated (1962: 24, 94-95). But he does not include ll. 82-83 in his discussion of the poem and prints these lines in small type – his indication that he considered them an interpolation. The person responsible is called an “interpolator” (*ibid.*: 179, *s.n. Israhelas*).

⁸⁶⁹ See Chambers (1912: 7): “alien to the spirit of the poem as a whole”.

that the Mofdingas and Amothingas are also Biblical,⁸⁷⁰ there are good reasons for concluding that these are Germanic ethnonyms too.

Malone makes a good case for supposing the MS reading <7mofdingum> to contain a garbling of the formula *ond mid* – which is frequent in the poem – and thus to correct it to *ond m[id] Ōfdingum*.⁸⁷¹ If the early eighth-century Anglo-Saxon grapheme <d> was used for /ð/ or /p/, this gives us **Ōfpingum*. It strengthens this argument, I suggest, that *Mofdingas* does not accord with any known ethnonym, inside or outside the Bible, and has no identifiable etymology, whereas *Ōfdingas*/*Ōfpingas* is consistent with an early Old English form of a people whose name can be plausibly reconstructed from textual sources as **Ub(i)pingōz*/**Uḅ(i)pingōz* in Proto-Germanic. The stem of this name has been linked to the Germanic people recorded in Latin histories as *Ubii*. But the Ostrogothic name *Ovida*, found in the *Getica*,⁸⁷² is also consistent with a Late Latin version of Gothic **Ōbiṣa*/**Ōbiṣa* or **Ūbiṣa*/**Ūbiṣa*, which in Old English would have given **Ōf(e)pa*.⁸⁷³ This would be consistent with a weak-form ethno-eponym for the leader of the Gothic clan of the *Ōfpingas*.

The name *Amothingas* is phonologically consistent with their being inhabitants of the Norwegian island of Qmð, derived from earlier **Amuḅ-*, as argued by Malone.⁸⁷⁴ The *Ēast-Pyringas* (l. 86) are identifiable as an eastern branch of the Thuringians;⁸⁷⁵ and the name of the *Eolas* (l. 87) is phonologically consistent with Ἐλουαῖωνες, the name of a Germanic people recorded by Ptolemy as living south of the Burgundians on the Baltic. With the exception of the Amothingas, these ethnonyms designate peoples of southern Jutland and northern Germany, from the Elbe eastwards towards the Vistula. But none is Biblical.

Thus, if we remove the exotic names and regard the pleonastic reference to *Myrgingum* in l. 84b as an insertion intended to alliterate with interpolated *Mōidum* (and thus to provide a clumsy re-introduction to the northern European world), I argue that we recover a passage of

⁸⁷⁰ See Chambers 1912: 215. Hill (2009: 45-46, 96, 118) suggests *Moabites* for *Mofdingas*, and *Ammonites* or *Amorites* for *Amothingas*. These Gmc names may have suggested Biblical peoples to the interpolator.

⁸⁷¹ See Malone 1962: 21-22, following Grein (his 1857 edition). It is possible that in the exemplar *mid* had been abbreviated to <m>, with or without some truncation-notation, and the exemplar read <7m>. This may even have been attached to the front of <ofdingas>, as was common in Anglo-Saxon MSS.

⁸⁷² See *Getica*, XXII.113; Mommsen 1882: 87. The Ostrogoth Ovida, was a son of Nidada and the father of Hilderith and grandfather of the notable king Geberich, who was the conqueror of Dacia in the mid-4th-c. AD and the immediate predecessor of Ermanaric.

⁸⁷³ See Malone 1962: 86-87. Chambers noted Grein's *Ofdingas* and queried whether this was the tribe recorded in Latin texts (the earliest by Julius Caesar) as *Ubii* (1912: 215). It would be consistent with a stem **ubja-* or **uḅja-* "luxuriant" or "hostile" (see Sitzmann and Grünzweig 2008: 290-91). Added to this is the suffix *-ip-*. See Förstemann 1900: 383-86, identifying the name-suffix *-id/-it*.

⁸⁷⁴ Malone 1962: 128-29. Now named Hinnøya in the Lofoten group.

⁸⁷⁵ Some branch of the Thuringians east of the Elbe area. See Malone 1962: 143. The stem *Pyr(i)-* is also evidenced in the name *Hermunduri*, a Latin version of Gmc **Ermuna-purōz*. See Sitzmann and Grünzweig 2008: 114-15, 276-79.

verse which is internally consistent, in keeping with the rest of the poem, and metrically unexceptionable:

Mid Lidwīcingum ic wæs ond mid Lēonum ond mid Longbeardum,
mid Hæðnum ond mid Hæleþum ond mid Hundingum,
ond mid Ōfdingum ond Ongend-Myrgingum
ond mid Amothingum. Mid Ēast-þyringum ic wæs
ond mid Eolum [...]

It strengthens the argument for interpolation here, I suggest, that the restored text places the *Hundingas* and the *Myrgingas* (in their *Ongend*-manifestation) close to each other, as in l. 23; and the *Ongend-Myrgingas* are next to the Ostrogothic *Ōfdingas*, just as the *Wip-Myrgingas* are placed among the members of the Ostrogothic court at ll. 117-18.

I therefore suggest that there is good evidence that ll. 82-84 of *Widsith* are non-authorial and were inserted by someone who was keen to represent the near-eastern peoples of the Old Testament in what is otherwise a very secular-looking poem.⁸⁷⁶ I see no convincing case, however, for interpolation elsewhere in *Widsith*.

3.5.2 Myrgingas and Ongend-Myrgingas

The meaning of *Ongend*, however, has been found debatable and so should be dealt with here. Chambers and Hill read *ongend* as the preposition “against” and thus *ongend Myrgingum* as “against the Myrgingas”.⁸⁷⁷ However, this means that ll. 84b-85b in the original text would read *ond mid Myrgingum, // [...] ond ongend Myrgingum* “and [I was] with the Myrgingas and against the Myrgingas”. This flat contradiction finds no explanation in the rest of the text. Indeed, the idea that the poet Wīdsīþ was both for and against the people of his own birth and of his lord Ēadgils makes the poem incomprehensible. Since neither Chambers nor Hill offers any explanation in support of this,⁸⁷⁸ there is little reason to accept their interpretation of a poet advertising his own disloyalty, and so their reading must be rejected as unlikely.

Thus, Chambers and Hill rejected the suggestion of a compound ethnonym *Ongend-Myrgingas*, which was the explanation adopted by Malone, who understood *ongend* as the same element as in the name *Ongendþēow* (l. 31) – apparently the same person as the Swedish king

⁸⁷⁶ Interestingly, the interpolation may provide a clue to the dating of *Widsith*, since <moidum> (l. 84) contains an archaic grapheme <oi> (for /œ/, the *i*-mutation of /ō/) which is characteristic of the time of Bede, and later became /æ/ then /ē/ (Malone 1962: 114-15). If this is correct, the poem must have been in existence at some time before this insertion, when the grapheme <oi> was still in use.

⁸⁷⁷ Chambers 1912: 215, and Hill 2009: 118.

⁸⁷⁸ See Hill (2009: 118): “[...] it is uncharacteristic of the poet that he should claim to have been against (*ongend*) a tribe [...], especially when that tribe is his own”. Indeed.

Ongenþēow in *Beowulf*. He identified this people (albeit cautiously) with the branch of the Myrgingas called *Wip-Myrgingas* at *Widsith* 118,⁸⁷⁹ and he did not connect the element *Ongend* with Angel.⁸⁸⁰

But there is a positive, and thus stronger, ground of objection to the contention of Chambers and Hill, which is that *Ongend* may be argued to be an ethnonym and/or a toponym synonymous with *Angel/Ongel*.⁸⁸¹ Malone identified the Ongend-Myrgingas as a branch of the Myrgingas possibly to be identified with the Wip-Myrgingas in *Widsith* 118, who were inhabitants of the area round the river Vidå in western Schleswig.⁸⁸² However, Malone was led by Björkman's etymology (relating this to Frankish *ango* "barbed spear")⁸⁸³ into a strange excursus which ended with him describing the Ongend-Myrgingas as "phallus worshippers" (an *ongend* being a "prick", one assumes). Accordingly, the Swedish king *Ongenþēow* – mentioned several times in *Beowulf*, and as *Ongendþēow* in *Widsith* 31 – was a "phallus-servant", a name appropriate for a king who was the high-priest of a fertility cult.⁸⁸⁴ Such arguments, I suggest, demonstrate the ease with which the subtleties of the etymological method of name-analysis can pass from implausibility to absurdity.

It is more credible, I suggest that *Ongend* is both ethnonymic and toponymic in meaning,⁸⁸⁵ being synonymous with *Angel/Ongel*, which was also both an ethnonym (or demonym) and toponym. Hence, the Ongend-Myrgingas were the branch of the Myrgingas who lived in Angel. Either they occupied land that was traditionally that of the Angles, another people; or *Angel* was a demonym, referring to a geographical area and its peoples, irrespective of ethnic differences or subdivisions. Thus, a Myrging of the Angel area could be an "Angel-Myrging", whereas the ethnonym *Angel – tout court* – could be used of another ethnicity of the same area. Similarly, perhaps, Finn's *Frēsan* ("Frisians") were also *Ēotena bearn* "children of the Jutes" in *Beowulf*. As inhabitants of Jutland as well as Frisia, in the context of the *Finnsburh* story they could be designated by the demonym "Jutes" without the implication that they represented all Jutes, or that other "Jutes" were also Frisians. As we shall see, this nomenclature of ethnonyms, hypernyms and demonyms was a complex matter.⁸⁸⁶

⁸⁷⁹ Malone 1962: 188.

⁸⁸⁰ Malone 1962: 188.

⁸⁸¹ See pp. 181-84 above, with respect to the *Vita Willibrordi's Ongendus*.

⁸⁸² The element *Wip-* being related to the river Vidå in western Schleswig. See Malone 1962: 211 and Hill 2009: 129. Also see the discussion at pp. 247-51 below.

⁸⁸³ Björkman 1920: 91-93.

⁸⁸⁴ Malone 1962: 188-90.

⁸⁸⁵ As argued at pp. 181-84 above.

⁸⁸⁶ See pp. 77, 183-84 (and fn. 707), 189 above, and 242, 306, 317-18, 322-23, 408 below.

The reason why the Swedish king Ongen(d)þēow was called “Anglian lad” or “slave of Angel” remains unexplained.⁸⁸⁷ In the Old Norse skaldic poem *Ynglingatal* he is called *Egill* (Proto-Norse **Agilar*) which has no etymological relation to *Ongen(d)þeow*.⁸⁸⁸ While the narrative concerning Egill in Snorri Sturluson’s *Ynglinga saga* may consist of inferences made by him or his predecessors from their interpretations of the kenning-rich language of *Ynglingatal*, it nevertheless tells of Egill’s exile to Denmark following a rebellion in Sweden. In order to regain his throne, he accepts the help of the Danish king Fróði inn frækni (a reflex of *Beowulf*’s Frōða the Heapobeard), agreeing to pay Fróði tribute once he is restored. Egill is successful but later refuses to pay the tribute. In some texts he was surnamed *Vendilkráka*, meaning apparently “the crow of Vendel”. While the origin and meaning of this are entirely unclear, it is nonetheless interesting that it seems to be an unflattering epithet applied to a Swedish king which refers to a place in Jutland.⁸⁸⁹ Arguably, *Ongen(d)þēow*, referring to the same person, was similar, with its implication of servitude to *Ongend*, or Angel. One must suspect the existence of a lost narrative about *Ongen(d)þēow* which explained this name.

3.5.3 Myrgingas and Longbeardan: Connections in Narrative and Topography

Once the interpolated text is removed, the *Hundingas* of *Widsith* 81 are in close proximity to the *Ongend-Myrgingas* of l. 85, as the *Myrgingas* and *Hundingas* are in l. 23. This is likely to have been intentional, since the two peoples were either related or intended to be taken as such. Malone argues that *Hundingas* was a nickname for the Lombards.⁸⁹⁰ He refers to a story

⁸⁸⁷ See fn. 889 below and fn. 1506 (p. 419), and the discussion of *þēow* at pp. 197-201 above.

⁸⁸⁸ See the text in Marold 2012, v. 14.

⁸⁸⁹ In the genealogy of the Ynglingar and Breiðfirðingar in Ari Þorgilsson’s *Íslendingabók*, Egill is by-named *Vendilkráka* “crow of Vendill” (*ÍF* 1: 27 and fn. 6) and *Vendilcraco* in *HN* (IX.22; Ekrem, Boje Mortensen and Fisher 2006: 76). The story of Egill is referred to allusively in *Ynglingatal* v. 14, and a detailed narrative is given in *Ynglinga saga* (ch. 26; *ÍF* 26: 50-53). Snorri presents Egill as an unwarlike character who flees to Denmark when rebellious bandits ravage his country and defeat him continually. There he enlists the help of Danish king Fróði inn frækni (“the bold”), in order to put the bandits down and restore him, accepting the humiliating condition that he become a Danish tributary. However, in *Ynglinga saga* it is Egill’s son Óttarr (the same person as Öthhere, son of Ongenþēow, in *Beowulf*) who is named *Vendilkráka*. This is accompanied by an explanatory narrative in which Óttarr dies fighting in Denmark, and the Danes send an insulting *trékráka* (a carved wooden crow) to the Swedes to inform them of this (*ÍF* 26: 54-55 and fn.). The toponym *Vendill* was potentially ambiguous, since it was both the name for the northernmost region of Jutland and for the region around Uppsala where the kings of Sweden ruled. The narratives in *Ynglingatal*, *Ynglinga saga* and *HN* may all be inventions to explain *Vendilkráka*, the true origin of which was unknown.

⁸⁹⁰ See Malone 1962: 176-178. However, in *HGL* (I.15; Bethmann and Waitz 1878: 54-55) there is a story about the Lombard king Agelmund (named in *Widsith* 117 as *Ægelmund*) who, when riding past a pool, saw seven babies in the water (a prostitute had given birth to them and tried to drown them). He turned them over with his spear. One of them grabbed it, and Agelmund, impressed (the author of the story knew that it was princely to “shake a spear”), rescued him and brought him up, naming him *Lamissio* (variants,

recounted by Paulus Diaconus in his *Historia gentis Langobardorum* which features a canine motif.⁸⁹¹ And indeed, this story seems still to bear the traces of its origins in some vernacular narrative about the early history of the Langobards in which the themes of the numerousness of the Lombards and a name associated with dogs is evident. These are both meanings which the homophonous but unrelated Germanic stems *hund-* (“hound”) and *hund-* (“hundred”) can bear. We can also see the relationship of the Lombards to the Myrgingas in the toponyms which feature in Paulus’s story, and which must have survived from orality.

According to Paulus, at an early stage in their history the Winnili (as the Langobardi were then called) had migrated from Scandinavia (believed to be a huge island)⁸⁹² to the territory of the Vandals. This would have been the area north of Limfjord in Jutland now known as Vendsyssel, likely to have been known as **Vandilar* in Proto-Norse (> Old Norse *Vandill*, *Vendill*) and *Wendel* in Old English (that is, “Vandal”).⁸⁹³ Its inhabitants were possibly the stay-at-home branch of the well-known East Germanic Vandals.⁸⁹⁴ This Jutlandic people were called *Wendlas* or *Wenlas* in Old English (see *Beowulf* 348, *Wendla lēod*, and *Widsith* 59, *Wenlum*). The name *Winnili* is probably related.⁸⁹⁵

Lamio, *Lamicho* or *Laiamicho* in the earlier *Edictus Rotharii* and *Origo Gentis Langobardorum* (ch. 2) – though these texts do not contain Paulus’s story. See Bethmann and Waitz 1878: 3 and fns. *Lamissio* became his successor and a great king of the Lombards and a member of Agelmund’s *genus* who were called *Gungingi* (*HGL*) or *Gugingus* (*OGL*, 2; Waitz 1878: 2). The method of the disposal of so many babies was probably intended to liken them to a litter of puppies or wolf-cubs (in Latin *lupa* meant “she-wolf” and “prostitute”). One suspects that *Lamicho* (the most authentic-looking spelling of this name) is a pronunciation-spelling of Gmc **Glammikō*, from the same stem as ON *glammi* “wolf”, from *glam(m)* “loud noise, noise of battle” (*ANEW*: 172, s.v. *glam*, *glamm*). Hence, *Lamicho* could mean “little wolf”, “little howler” and “little battle-noise man”. The canine theme of this dynastic myth may have been intended to explain the ethnonym *Hundingas*, associated with the Langobards (“Apparently an old nickname of the Langobards”: Malone 1962: 176). *Gungingi*/*Gugingus* is possibly from the same origin as the name of Óðinn’s spear *Gungnir* “the waverer” or “thing shaken” (see *ANEW*: 195, s.v.). This intriguing narrative would seem to be an etymological aetiological myth explaining the origin of names associated with the Langobardic kings.

⁸⁹¹ *HGL*, 1.11; Bethmann and Waitz 1878: 53. A version is also told in *OGL*, 1: Waitz 1878: 2-3.

⁸⁹² See Parroni 1984: 355. Scandinavia was believed to be an island by writers until the time of Adam of Bremen (11th c.) who called it *fere insula* “almost an island” (= *paene insula*, “peninsula”?), linked to the Continent in the east. Adam still knew almost nothing about it and relied on fabulous accounts.

⁸⁹³ Like *Ongend* and *Angel*, a toponym derived from an ethnonym or ethno-eponym. See cross-refs at fn. 886 above.

⁸⁹⁴ See Malone 1962: 209. For Danish and ON forms, see *ODSHO*, s.vv. *Vendel-bo* (“inhabitant of Vendel”) and *Vandal*. See also *Knytlinga saga*: *Vendill* and *Vendilskagi*; also *Vandilskagi*, *Vandilsbúar* (*ÍF* 35: 369, index). In Arngrímur Jónsson’s *Sviakonungatal*, Alf is the rex *de Vindle* (*ÍF* 35: 73), implying a dat. form *Vindli* from *Vendill*, or a nom. form **Vindill*.

⁸⁹⁵ The name *Winnili* probably has some connection with “Vandal”. In Late Latin MSS <e> and <i> are often interchangeable, hence *Winnili* may represent Continental Gmc **Wennil-* or **Wendil-*. *Winnili* may represent an ethnonym formed comparably to a hypocorism, with assimilation of a medial consonant-cluster followed by gemination and suffixation (with secondary *i*-mutation): *Wend-* > **Wen-* > **Wenn-* + *-il-* > *Winnil-*. Thus, these proto-Lombards, while still under Vandal domination, were named “little Vandals”.

The Vandals demand tribute under threat of war and seek the help of Guodan (= Wōden). Gambara, queen of the not-very-numerous Winnili, consults Guodan's wife Frea, who suggests a ruse which manipulates Guodan into giving victory to the Winnili, whom he now renames *Langobardi* "long-beards" (this is because he had been fooled by the Winnili women who had wrapped their hair round their faces to resemble beards, to make them look like the winning side, or the more numerous Vandals). Next, the Langobardi suffer from famine and wish to leave Vandal territory. A tribe called the Assipitti bars their way. The Assipitti are not recorded elsewhere,⁸⁹⁶ but earlier Paulus had named the two *duces* of the hostile Vandals as *Assi* and *Ambri*, who are referred to elsewhere only in the *Origo Gentis Langobardorum*.⁸⁹⁷ The name *Assi* suggests an ethno-eponym for the king of the Assipitti, or a back-formation from the tribe's (unexplained) ethnonym. *Ambri* suggests an ethno-eponym based on the name of the Germanic people called *Ambrones* by classical authors, who were believed to have lived in Jutland.⁸⁹⁸ The Langobardi tell the Assipitti that they have a band of men in their camp called *cynocephali* ("dog-heads") who make war fiercely and drink human blood from their fleeing enemies (or their own if they cannot catch them). They also increase the number of tents and fires to make themselves appear more numerous. The Assipitti, discouraged by this, then suggest a duel between two nominated champions. Although the Langobardi's sole volunteer is a slave, he wins, and the Langobardi continue on their travels.

⁸⁹⁶ The name may be garbled: MSS record *Assipiti*, *Assipicti*, *Assipicii*, *Asipiat*, *Assipite* and *Hassipicti* (see Waitz 1878: 53, fns). Any connection with the tribe of the *Usipi* or *Usipetes* (though the two are usually identified) seems dubious on grounds of location. See the note in Foulke 1907: 19 fn. 2. The *Usipi*/*Usipetes* are recorded by various Classical authorities from Caesar to Cassius Dio (mid-1st c. BC to mid-3rd c. AD) as inhabiting the region of the lower Rhine. Their name has often been supposed to be Celtic. Their last appearance is as the *Usippi* in the *Cosmographer of Ravenna* (c. 700 AD). See Sitzmann and Grünzweig 2008: 292-94 (though they do not discuss the Assipitti).

⁸⁹⁷ *OGL*, ch. 1; Waitz 1878: 2.

⁸⁹⁸ See Plutarch's 'Lives', *Life of Caius Marius*, XI-XXVII; Perrin 1914-26: IX, 488-539. According to this, in about 120-101 BC Italy was threatened by a grouping of tribes who moved south into Gaul and Spain but whose origin was not known. The best guess by the Romans was that they were Germanic, whose peoples stretched as far as the northern ocean (11.3). These were the Cimbri, the Teutones, and (19.2) said to be the most warlike of them, the Ambrones (*Ἀμβρόνες*). Eventually they were checked by Roman armies led by Marius and effectively destroyed at Aquae Sextae in 102. The name and reputation of the Ambrones lived on. In *HB* (ch. 57) the term *Saxones Ambronum* is used of the Bernician Angles. In *HB* ch. 63 *omne genus Ambronum* refers to Edwin's Northumbrians (Dumville 1975: 283-86). Chambers (1912: 200) notes that in a 13th-c. MS of *HB* mention of this people is glossed with *id est Ald-Saxonum* "that is, Old Saxons", which indicates that the glossator thought that *Ambrones* referred to Germani on the continent (this was MS CCCC 139 – see Dumville 1975: 454). However, Nennius's use of *Ambrones* in *HB* to refer to the Northumbrian Bernicians suggests that he thought *Ambrones* related to "Humber". Plutarch reported a view that the Germans called the Cimbri "robbers" or "pirates" (11.3, Greek *ληστές*) – as to which see Kuhn and Wenskus 1973: 252. And Gildas seems to use *Ambrones* as if of seaborne predators. In his *De excidio et conquestu Britanniae* (ch. 16; Mommsen 1898: 33-34) Gildas uses *Ambrones* of the Picts and Scots in their seaborne incursions into southern Britannia, suggesting that this ethnonym meant "piratical barbarians" to him.

The use of the idea of dogs and greater numbers to fool their opponents is explicable as a twofold wordplay based on two possible interpretations of the ethnonym *Hunding*, related to *hund* “dog” and to *hund*, the cognate of Latin *centum*, as in *hundred*, thus meaning “many”.⁸⁹⁹ Hence, in this legend, the Langobards pretend to be many *and* to be dogs. Alternatively, Paulus conflated two different folk-etymological legends about the name of the Hundings.

The link between the Hundingas and the “Bardic” ethnicity was also preserved in the ethno-eponymous names *Hundingr* and *Hqðbroddr* found in the Eddaic poems *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I* and *II*, where these are the names of two allied kings killed by the hero Helgi, a son of Sigmundr and half-brother of Sigurðr.⁹⁰⁰ As has long been recognised in *Beowulf* scholarship, *Hundingr* has some connection with *Widsith*’s *Hundingas*,⁹⁰¹ and *Hqðbroddr* is closely related to (albeit not exactly cognate with) the Old English ethnonym *Heaðobearda*.⁹⁰² It may be that in *Widsith* 23 the unheard-of Myrgingas were claiming acquaintance with the better-known Bardic Hundingas, or were simply their kinsmen.

3.5.4 *Maurunga* and *Myrgingas*

More significantly for our understanding of *Widsith*, its peoples and locations, the place to which Paulus said the Langobards were now able to pass, after duping the Assipitti, was called *Mauringa*, a toponym that several scholars have tried to link with the ethnonym *Myrgingas*.⁹⁰³ *Mauringa*, as a genuine toponym, is supported by the place-name *Maurungani* in the treatise of the seventh-century Cosmographer of Ravenna.⁹⁰⁴ The mangling of names by the

⁸⁹⁹ See Kroonen 2013: 256, s.vv. **hunda*- 1 and 2.

⁹⁰⁰ In the development of the Icelandic tradition of Helgi (a son of Sigmundr the Völsungr), these exploits were probably transferred from those of Hǫlga (= Helgi), the brother of Hrǫþgār. If the Scyldingas were at war with Frōða of the Heaðobeards (= Hqðbroddr), we would have expected Hǫlga to be involved; and the Eddaic tradition may contain evidence that Hǫlga was Frōða’s slayer. If in Anglo-Saxon legend Hǫlga was also the slayer of Hunding, king of the Langobards (= Hundingas), this narrative has been lost. For *Hundingr* and *Hqðbroddr*, see *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I* and *II*. Helgi is at feud with king *Hundingr* and his sons and kills *Hundingr* in circumstances not described. Helgi also enters into a feud with, and kills *Hqðbroddr* Granmarsson and his brothers, in order to rescue Sigrún, the Valkyrie daughter of Hqgni who had been betrothed to *Hqðbroddr* against her will.

⁹⁰¹ See Chambers 1912: 195; Malone 1962: 176-77.

⁹⁰² See Chambers 1912: 81-82, 82 fn. 1, 206; and *K14*: lvi and fn. 1. It was first suggested by Sarrazin. Chambers regarded it as “exceedingly probable, in view of the way in which kingly and tribal names interchange. Cf. *Ostrogotha*, *Hōcing*, *Hunding*, *Scylding*” (1912: 82, fn. 1). This is an early recognition of the concept of the ethno-eponym (see pp. 44-45 above).

⁹⁰³ See Malone 1940 and Malone 1962: 183-186.

⁹⁰⁴ Cosmographer, I.11; Pinder and Parthey 1860: 28-29:

Quarta ut hora noctis Northomanorum est patria, quae et Dania ab antiquis dicitur. cuius ad frontem Alpes vel patria Albis: Maurungani certissime antiquitus dicebatur. In qua Albis patria per multos annos Francorum linea remorata est. et ad frontem eiusdem Albis Datia minor dicitur, et dehinc super ex latere magna et spatiosa Datia

Cosmographer and/or his copyists is a constant onomastic problem (see Rivet and Smith 1979: *passim*), and while *Maurungani* looks like a plural, the Cosmographer treats it as singular. It may therefore be a scribal error for **Maurungai*, that is, Langobardic for “the region (*gawi*) of the *Maurung* or *Maurunga*”. However, both forms are consistent with a place-name with the stem *maur* and the suffix *-ing(a)/-ung(a)*, which was a Common Germanic place-name element.⁹⁰⁵

If this was a region of Jutland, the element *maur* has a plausible etymological relationship with the Germanic words “mire” (borrowed from Old Norse *mýrr* into English) and “moss” in its sense of “bog”.⁹⁰⁶ Such words would well suit the medieval landscape of Jutland before it was comprehensively drained in the later Middle Ages and modern era, and this feature is commemorated in a number of Danish place-names, associated with peat-bog, with the second element *-mose*.⁹⁰⁷ It is thus phonologically and semantically possible that the stem *maur* was derived from the full-grade Proto-Germanic stem **meuz-* (“moss, bog”) with the addition of the suffix *-ing(a)/-ung(a)*, giving **Maurung(a)/*Mauring(a)*, effectively meaning “The Bog”.⁹⁰⁸

If the Cosmographer of Ravenna (*malgré lui*) was right that this area was in the region of the Elbe, the area called Dithmarschen lies in south-western Jutland, south of the Eider and north of the Elbe. It is in the right region, and, and as we shall see, its etymology is “giant

dicitur: quae modo Gipidia ascribuntur: in qua nunc Unorum gens habitare dinoscitur. Posthinc Illyricus usque ad provinciam Dalmatiae pertinet.

The fourth hour of the night is the homeland of the Northmen, which is also called *Dania* by old writers, facing whom are the Alps or the land of the Elbe. In antiquity this was most certainly called *Maurungani*. In this country of the Elbe there remained the border of the Franks for many years, and the land facing the same Elbe is called *Datia* minor; and thence, in addition, from its wide and spacious breadth, the land is called *Datia*, which places are now ascribed to the Gepids. Here the people of the Uni [recte *Uui* = *Ubii*? I. S.] are now known to live. Thence, Illyria stretches as far as the province of Dalmatia.

In Late Latin <alpes> and <albis> could be graphical equivalents, and therefore both could refer to the Elbe (*Albis*), which is clearly what is being discussed here. Medieval authors often conflated *Dania* (Denmark) with *Dacia* (properly, the former Roman province approximating to Hungary or Romania). The Cosmographer seems to do so too, but whether this led him also to suppose that the “Alps” were in question (which are nowhere near *Dania*, *Dacia* or the Elbe) is a mystery. At any rate, *Maurungani* seems to refer to the land of the Danes, conceived of as stretching as far south as the Elbe (*Albis*).

⁹⁰⁵ For German place-names, see Niemeyer 2012: 287-88. Cf. also *Scoringa*, the toponym in *HGL* for the place where the Langobards first came to Vandal territory. In English place-names the singular suffix *-ing* (= *-ung*) could form a place-name “with no connotation of filial relationship”, as in *Clavering* (Essex), from *clæfre* “clover” + *ing* (Gelling 1978: 106-10). See also Watts 2004: xlvī, s.v. *-ing*², and the discussion at pp. 46-49 above. Niemeyer suggests a similar function of *-ing/-ung* in German place-names (*loc. cit.*).

⁹⁰⁶ See Kroonen 2013: 368, 379, s.vv. **meusa-*, **musa(n)-* “moss”, giving e.g. OE *mēos* “moss” and ON *mýrr* “swamp” (< **meuzi-*). The nil-grade *mos* also meant “bog”; cf. ON *mosi* (> Danish *mose* “bog, esp. of peat or moss”, *ODSHO*, s.v. *mose* 1), and *mos* in several pre-Viking Age English place-names (Gelling 1984: 56-57).

⁹⁰⁷ See the discussions in Chadwick 1907: 128; Chambers 1912: 159-61, 236; Malone 1940; Malone 1962: 183-86; and Hill 2009: 118. Mees accepts the meaning “marsh dwellers” for *Myrgingas* (2023: 178).

⁹⁰⁸ See Malone 1940.

marsh”.⁹⁰⁹ If Maurung(a) and Dithmarschen were not the same place, their names seem to describe the same kind of boggy terrain, and one that was likely to be known to the peoples who migrated to Britain. If so, then the inhabitants of this region would have been known as **Maurungōz* or **Mauringōz*, or (with the attribution-suffix *-ijōz) **Maurungijōz* or **Mauringijōz*. If such a name had passed into Old English, it would have developed into **Mēarung*, or **Mēaring* without *i*-mutation, or **Mēring* (Anglian) or **Mīring* > **Mȳring* (West Saxon) with *i*-mutation.

However, despite the attempts of illustrious scholars such name-forms cannot be turned into *Myrgingas* by regular phonological processes because the medial /g/ is a stumbling-block, being impossible either to introduce or eliminate convincingly. For example, Rudolf Much suggested that *Myrgingas* derived from the Germanic word for “mare”: Proto-Germanic **marhijō* > Proto-West Germanic **marhi* > Old English **meare* > *miere* > (late West Saxon) *myr*-. But this does not explain the /g/ in *Myrging*. Malone suggested an unrecorded West Saxon **mīere* “mire” – although modern English “mire” is from *mýrr*: and is absent from pre-Conquest English place-names.⁹¹⁰ He found the missing /g/ in **gē* “region” – hence **Mīergēingas* “people of the boggy region”.⁹¹¹ Chambers thought *maur*- was cognate with Old Norse *maurr* “ant”, with the sense of “anthep” (that is, a place teeming with people), which would have developed as Proto-Germanic **maur*- > Old English **mēare* > West Saxon **mīere*/**mȳre* or **mīera*/**mȳra* > Middle English *mīre*.⁹¹² Again, this does not explain the /g/.

However, although poets and myth-makers may be inspired by etymology, they are not necessarily bound by it. Any name inherited in Old English as **Mēaring* – in the absence of an Old English phoneme cognate with early Germanic words for “mire” – would look something like a derivation from *mearh* “horse”. As was noted with *walh* and *Wala*, in Old English /h/ was regularly lost between voiced sounds, with compensatory lengthening of the root vowel/diphthong.⁹¹³ Thus, to a speaker of Old English, **Mēaringas* would look like a derivation from *mēarh* + *ingas*, with the potential meaning “horse people”. Since *mearg* was a variant of *mearh* (as in *Wanderer* 92), any person who perceived the etymology from “horse” could form the ethnonym **Mēarhingas* or **Meargingas*. If – as with some ethnonyms – the

⁹⁰⁹ See p. 285 below.

⁹¹⁰ Gelling 1984: 57.

⁹¹¹ See Malone’s discussion: 1962: 184. There are other problems. *Widsith* was probably not originally WS but Anglian. Gmc *Maur*- would be **Mēar*- in Anglian OE, but compounding with **gē* and -*ingas* would probably not cause *i*-mutation. If it did, in Anglian it would be **Mēar* > **Mēr*-.

⁹¹² See *MED*, s.v. *mīre* (n. 2), and modern English dialectal *pismire*, both meaning “ant”. Semantically, this is not very likely.

⁹¹³ See fn. 135 (p. 56 above). See *OEG*: 104 and fn. 1, 105, 186-87, 225; Ringe and Taylor 2014: 305-08.

suffix *-ingas* caused *i*-mutation or its non-historical simulacrum, this would produce **Mergingas* in Anglian or **Miergingas* > **Myrgingas* in a West Saxon one.

I therefore argue that the evidence of Paulus Diaconus and the Cosmographer of Ravenna is strongly supportive of a southern-Jutlandic toponym *Maurung(a)/Mauring(a)* in the area between the Elbe and the Eider, which concurs with the likely scene of the intertribal conflict at the heart of the Offa story. I further suggest that it is too much for coincidence that the phonologically very similar name *Myrgingas* occurs in *Widsith* for a people who may well have inhabited such an area. Although phonology has not accounted for the medial /g/, it can be explained as imaginative folk-etymology on the part of some literary artist who thereby managed to forge a link between the Offa legend and the story of Eormenrīc the Ostrogoth. As I shall now discuss, it is possible to see in his ancient story a strong horse-motif.

It should be added here that if – as I argue – the eponym *Myrgingas* was modelled on the historical toponym **Maurunga*, the original **Maurungōz* would have consisted of all the ethnicities within the **Maurunga*. Thus, **Maurungōz* would not have been an ethnonym in the strict sense, but another demonym, and one which potentially encompassed a large number of people or peoples.

3.5.5 The Story of Eormenrīc and Ealhild: The Myrgingas as a Literary Creation

In *Widsith* the person who tasks Wīdsīþ with taking Ealhild to be married to Eormenrīc is his lord, the king of the Myrgingas, Ēadgils. However, Ealhild's brother is Ælfwine, the son of Ēadwine, ruling in Italy (ll. 70, 74, 117). Ēadwine seems to be named as a member of the *wlonc gedryht Wip-Myrginga* (l. 118, “proud warband of the Wip-Myrgingas”) who are at Eormenrīc's court. However, Ēadwine and Ælfwine are versions of the undoubtedly historical sixth-century Lombard kings Audoin and his son Alboin.⁹¹⁴ Ælfwine is said to rule in Italy (l. 70), which accords with history, since Alboin conquered a Lombardic kingdom in northern Italy between 569 and 572 AD (which remained as a significant geopolitical entity until Charlemagne's conquest of it in 774). But history does not record any sister of Alboin under any name. Had one existed, she could not have married Eormenrīc, who died slightly less than two hundred years before she would have been born.

Therefore, what is Ēadgils of Jutland doing marrying off the daughter of Ēadwine (who is with the Goths) and sister of Ælfwine (who rules in Italy)? The first response is that this

⁹¹⁴ See *HGL*, I.22-24, 27; Bethmann and Waitz 1878: 60-62, 68-70.

whole scenario is highly anachronistic and must be a fiction. Secondly, the patterning of names suggests that Ēadgils may have been, or been created as, a brother to Ēadwine, or as some other relative of his (as suggested by the sharing of their prototheme). Ēadwine was a Lombard, and as we have seen, the Myrgingas were also potentially Hundingas (a name associated with Bardic peoples in other traditions), or their relatives, and Ēadgils was their king.

We can therefore only speculate why Ealhild was being sent to Eormenrīc to be married (perhaps it was for an alliance against the threatening Huns of Attila). But what we know about Eormenrīc's relations with women does not bode well for her wellbeing. In the story told about Ermanaric by Jordanes, the wrathful emperor has the foreign woman Sunilda punished for the absconding of her husband by having her pulled apart by wild horses:⁹¹⁵

Quod genus expeditissimum multarumque nationum grassatorem Getae ut viderunt, paviscunt, suoque cum rege deliberant, qualiter tali se hoste subducant. Nam Hermanaricus, rex Gothorum, licet, ut superius retulimus, multarum gentium extiterat triumphator, de Hunnorum tamen adventu dum cogitat, Rosomonorum gens infida, quae tunc inter alias illi famulatum exhibebat, tali eum nanciscitur occasione decipere. Dum enim quendam mulierem Sunilda nomine ex gente memorata pro mariti fraudulento discessu rex furore commotus equis ferocibus inligatam incitatisque cursibus per diversa divelli praecipisset, fratres eius Sarus et Ammius, germanae obitum vindicantes, Hermanarici latus ferro petierunt; quo vulnere saucius egram vitam corporis inbecillitate contraxit.

When the Getae [Goths]⁹¹⁶ saw this people [the Huns], the robber of many nations, running amok, they are afraid, and they discuss with their king how they might escape from the path of such an enemy. But while Hermanaric the king of the Goths – although, as I said above, he had become the conqueror of many nations – is thinking about the approach of the Huns, the treacherous tribe of the Rosomoni – which at that time, like others, was professing its servitude to him – takes such an opportunity to deceive him. For the king had ordered that a certain woman of the aforementioned tribe, called Sunilda, was to be tied to wild horses who were then goaded to gallop in different directions and pulled her apart, because he [Hermanaric] had been moved to fury by the dishonest absconding of her husband. Her brothers Sarus and Ammius came to avenge their sister's death and attacked Hermanaricus's side with their swords. Disabled by that wound, he dragged out a miserable existence as a result of his physical feebleness.

In the very similar story behind the Eddaic poems *Guðrúnarhvöt* and *Hamðismál*, Jǫrmunrekr (= Ermanaric, Eormenrīc) is persuaded by a malicious counsellor, Bikki, that his betrothed,

⁹¹⁵ *Getica*, XXIV.129; Mommsen 1882: 91.

⁹¹⁶ Properly, the Getae (etymologically unrelated to *Gothi*) were a non-Germanic people of Thrace (modern Bulgaria and southern Romania). Jordanes was among the Late Antique authors who confused the Getae and the Gothi, because of the similarity of the names, and because in the late 3rd c. AD the Goths held territory in Danubian Thrace.

Svanhildr (= Sunilda) has been unfaithful with his son Randvér.⁹¹⁷ He hangs Randvér and has Svanhildr trampled to death by horses.

It is not certain that Randvér is the same person as Rondhere in *Widsith* 123.⁹¹⁸ However, *Rondhere* would have been a side-form of **Randhere* in Old English orthography, and Förstemann records the Continental German cognate *Rantheri*.⁹¹⁹ Since there is only one letter difference between Codex Regius's <randver> and the possible Continental German form **Randher*, the identity of *Randvér* with *Rondhere* is not improbable. But it is a separate question as to whether or not, in the tradition known to the *Widsith*-poet, Rondhere was a son of Eormenrīc who was killed by his father. In German tradition – recorded from the tenth century – this role was played by Friderīch,⁹²⁰ and in *Widsith* 124 there is a person at the Gothic court called *Freoþerīc*. While we cannot tell from the mere presence of names in the text of *Widsith* what the identities and roles of these characters were, I suggest that it is probably significant that present in *Widsith* are both of the names (with one small modification) given to the son murdered by the Ermanaric figure in the related Scandinavian and German narrative traditions. It is also relevant here, I argue, that the figures of Ermanaric's nephews, the Harlungs,⁹²¹ are named (in the appositive style) as *Herelingas*, called *Emerca* and *Fridla* (*Widsith* 112b-13a). It was a prominent feature of several German narratives that their kinsman Ermenrīch hanged them for their treasure.⁹²² In *Þiðreks saga* Erminríkr is tricked into murdering Egarðr and Áki of Aurlungaland, the sons of Áki Aurlungatrausti of Fritilaborg. *Aurlungar* is a form of *Herelingas*, and Áki is the same character as Hāche in German tradition, who is named in *Widsith* as *Hēhca* (l. 112a). He apparently heads the group which also contains the Herelingas, Emerca and Fridla. In German tradition Hāche was a Harlung closely associated with the motif of Ermanaric's murder of his kinsmen within this group.⁹²³

⁹¹⁷ It seems to have been a feature of the Ermanaric character that he was not necessarily innately evil but that he was easily persuaded to vicious courses – even against his own kin – by malicious and hypocritical advisors who preyed on his suspiciousness and greed.

⁹¹⁸ See e.g. Hill 2009: 120.

⁹¹⁹ Förstemann 1900: 1247. He cites *Rondhere* under the name *Ranthar*.

⁹²⁰ See Gillespie 1973: 46-47 – though this name is borne by four characters in the same tradition, Ermenrīch's son, his man, Dietrich's man and Constantin's man.

⁹²¹ See the discussion in *Kl4*: 193-94.

⁹²² See Gillespie 1973: 37, and 62-63, *s.n. Harlunge*. In their earliest recording in Germany (c. 1000) they were named *Embrica* and *Fritla*.

⁹²³ See Gillespie 1973: 33-34, 56, 62-63. In *Þiðreks saga* Áki Aurlungatrausti (= Hēhca, Hāche) is half-brother to Erminríkr (Gillespie accepts the emendation of *Heðca* to *Hēhca* by Malone 1962: 161); and Fritila (= Fridla) is the foster-father of his sons Egarðr and Áki. The name *Egarðr* represents German *Ekkehart*, who in German tradition was the son of Hāche and the guardian of the Harlungs. His name does not feature in *Widsith*, and in German tradition is not recorded before the 13th c.

Thus, the most prominent victims of Ermanaric in the Middle High German and Eddaic narrative traditions are named among the members of the court of Eormenrīc in *Widsith*. And although Wīdsīþ praises the Gothic king for his generosity, he also acknowledges at the outset that he is taking Ealhild to a man who has the reputation of being a *wrāþe wārloga* (l. 9, “angry pledge-breaker”). I suggest it would not be lost on the poem’s audience that this reputation seems to exist even while Eormenrīc’s son Rondhere and his nephews the Herelingas are still alive – thus hinting that they are marked down to be his victims. One name missing from *Widsith* is the exact cognate of *Sunilda*. However, Ealhild’s status as a tyrant’s queen, and the deutertheme she shares with *Sunilda* and *Svanhildr* give one grave concerns that she is yet another prospective victim. (One also wonders what political imperative it was that led Ēadgils and or Ēadwine to risk her life in pursuit of a *freoðowebbe* marriage).

3.5.5.1 The Horse Motif in the Ermanaric Story

The prominence of the horse-motif in this story, I suggest, has remained unexamined. But it is an example of how, over several centuries, elements of a narrative can cohere and travel together through time while remaining recognisable – in this case not only personal names but a motif to do with horses. The people of Sunilda’s husband in the *Getica* were called *Rosomoni*. Their name has been the subject of several fruitless efforts to explain it.⁹²⁴ However, I suggest that these have missed the most obvious solution, which is that this name contains the Germanic words “horse” and “man”.⁹²⁵ This would have been an appropriate name if it was for a Scythian people of the Eurasian steppes bordering on the historical Ermanaric’s capital on the north shore of the Black Sea.⁹²⁶ And I suggest that this is how the name may have originated in the story told by Jordanes. Sunilda was killed as a reprisal for the absconding of her husband, whom we may suppose was some tributary king or chieftain at the court of Ermanaric, who, according to Jordanes, ruled an empire from the Arctic North to the steppes of Central Asia, making him comparable to Alexander. If Sunilda’s husband was one of the *Rosomoni* – **Hrosomanniz* “Horsemen” – his method of execution was cruelly appropriate.

⁹²⁴ See Sitzmann and Grünzweig 2008: 229-32.

⁹²⁵ See Orel 2003: 189-90, s.v. **xrussan* “horse”, and ON *hross*, OS *hros*, OHG *hros*, *ros*. Mommsen (1882: 91, fns) records the MS variants with <man>: *rosomanorum* and *rosimanorum* (one MS each). This is perhaps an illustration of the dangers of the purely phonological and etymological approach to onomastics, especially when a historical text bears the hallmarks of literature.

⁹²⁶ Cf. Chambers (1912: 23): “The Rosomoni, to whom Sunhild [*sic*] originally belonged, had long been forgotten”.

The same motif of execution by horses survived for over six hundred years, to reappear in the *Edda* – though the only vestige of the motif of the “horse people” to survive is in the name of Svanhildr’s stepfather, *Jónakr*, who is the father of her avenging half-brothers Hamðir and Sqrli. The first element of his name is from *jór* “horse”, but he is otherwise utterly unknown and thus highly likely to be a literary invention.⁹²⁷

The only positive portrayal of the Eormenrīc figure anywhere in literature is in *Widsith* (and even there he is acknowledged to be a *wrāþe wārloga* (l. 9, “angry pledge-breaker”). In *Deor* (ll. 21-26) he was described as a *grim cyning* (“cruel king”) with a *wylfen geþōht* (“wolvish temperament”), and his people were thoroughly miserable and longed for his kingdom to be overthrown. Either Wīdsīþ’s skills were so great that he alone was able to soothe the savage breast of the Gothic tyrant, or he would have us believe that this was so. But it is much to be suspected that Ealhild (sharing the motival deutertheme *-hild* with her unlucky reflexes Sunilda and Svanhildr) was also destined for death at Eormenrīc’s hands – as the audience knew but the speaker Wīdsīþ did not – rendering him able to praise even the monstrous Eormenrīc.

The fact that Ealhild’s father Ēadwine was at Eormenrīc’s court, among the Wīþ-Myrgingas is also ambiguous: was he there to honour the Gothic king, or as an unwilling tributary or a hostage? Ealhild herself is a *fāle freoðowebbe* “faithful peace-weaver” (l. 6). Although it has been suggested that the term *freoðowebbe* is an “honorific or epithet for a (high-ranking) woman”,⁹²⁸ this word is used of only two women in Old English literature – Ealhild and the unnamed wife of Offa (*Beowulf* 1942). Sklute takes the word somewhat more literally and defines it as a “poetic metaphor referring to the person whose function it seems to be to perform openly the action of making peace by weaving to the best of her art a tapestry of friendship and amnesty”.⁹²⁹ The most natural conclusion is that if *freoðowebbe* was an honorific, it was given to high-ranking women because their significant marriages were typically used to make peace or cement alliances.

Thus, while Ealhild’s role is to be faithful and to weave peace, Eormenrīc’s description as a *wrāþe wārloga* (l. 9) indicates that his is to be angry and to break pledges. These

⁹²⁷ The name-element *-nakr* is unexplained. All we can gather from a prose passage in the *Poetic Edda* is that after Guðrún murdered her second husband Atli she tried to drown herself, but for some reason could not sink. She drifted until she came to Jónakr’s unknown kingdom. The geography of the *Edda* is obscure and not much studied. It is not certain where Guðrún and her supposedly Burgundian family were imagined to live, or where Atli and his Huns had their home, or where Jónakr ruled.

⁹²⁸ DOE, s.v. *friþu-webbe*.

⁹²⁹ Sklute 1970: 540. See also p. 339 below.

descriptions – almost exactly antithetical – suggest the potential not only for conflict between them, but for the elimination of Ealhild as the traditional literary victim of her husband.

The *Widsith*-poet seems, therefore, to be describing a scenario in which the Myrgingas are in alliance with Eormenrīc’s Goths, and Ealhild is the means by which the alliance is to be sealed. Ēadgils chooses his most skilful poet-diplomatist to make the nuptials work (given Eormenrīc’s terrible reputation), and he justifies his lord’s confidence, leaving the Gothic court with all in harmony. However, behind this arrangement, Ēadwine is in a vulnerable position (in the version of the Eormenrīc story in the eleventh-century Saxon *Annales Quedlinburgenses* it is the avenging brothers’ father who is murdered),⁹³⁰ and Ælfwine is in faraway Italy. Ēadgils, as we already know – if indeed he is Ealhild’s uncle – does not have long to live.

However, this analysis demonstrates, I argue, that the formation of the name of the Myrgingas – as “horse people” – is likely to have been undertaken in order to conform to the equine motif in the narrative of the murdered bride of Ermanaric – a role to be fulfilled by Ealhild in the audience’s imagination. Although the name of the *Myrgingas* is strongly redolent of the toponym **Maurung*, it may be that they and their connection with the Bardic peoples, and in particular the Langobards, were a fiction of the Anglo-Saxon literary imagination. It may also be the case that if Ēadgils was a known legendary character, his other name, *Meaca* and his alter ego or kinsman *Mearchealf* (with the same etymological derivation as the name *Myrging*), were also onomastic fictions, created to lend verisimilitude to him as an early Germanic king with a panoply of birth-name, epithetical name and hypocorism. The story of Ealhild, with its strong resemblances to the narratives in the *Getica* and *Edda*, I suggest, was also pure invention – albeit ingeniously grafted on to a narrative about geopolitical rivalries in southern Jutland by the adaptation of an actual topographical ethnonym **Maurung* into an Old English form, *Myrging*, which related it to the horse-motif which was a prominent feature of the traditional Ermanaric uxoricide story.

3.5.6 *Ēastan of Ongle*: Wīp-Myrgingas and the Multi-national *innweorud* of Eormenrīc

The narrator of *Widsith* tells us that Wīdsīþ took Ealhild to be married to Eormenrīc (ll. 5b-9a):

Hē mid Ealhilde,	5
fæltre freoðowebban, forman sīþe	
Hrēð-cyninges hām gesōhte	7
ēastan of Ongle, Eormenrīces,	

⁹³⁰ See Giese 2004: 410-11.

He, with Ealhilde the faithful peace-weaver on her first journey, made for the home of the king of the Hrēþgotan, east of Angel, of Eormenrīc the wrathful pledge-breaker.

The phrase *ēastan of Ongle* has been the cause of debate, as scholars have tried to reconcile the sense of *ēastan* “from the east” with the location of the Myrgingas, Wīdsīþ’s tribe, who seem to have lived somewhere in southern Jutland.⁹³¹ The problem is that all literary and historical traditions place the Ostrogoths east of Jutland, and no further west than the Vistula. In this study, I take the view that the Myrgingas of *Widsith* are represented as a powerful people probably inhabiting a swathe of territory from the Eider mouth in the west to the Baltic coast in the east, and since part of them were also known as *Ongend-Myrgingas* (l. 85b), they also inhabited part of *Ongend*, another name for *Ongel* or *Angel*. It therefore makes no sense to interpret *ēastan of Ongle* as anything other than a locative phrase meaning “east of Ongel”.⁹³²

In l. 111 the *Widsith*-poet announces the roll-call of the people in Eormenrīc the Ostrogoth’s *innweorud*, his “inner group” of closest companions. In ll. 112-16 there are fifteen names, mostly of people identifiable as Goths (or people associated with the Goths) in other texts. The poet then says:

Ēadwine sōhte ic ond Elsan, Ægelmund ond Hūngār 117
ond þā wloncan gedryht Wīþ-Myrginga

I visited Ēadwine and Elsa, Ægelmund and Hungar, and that proud warband of the Wīþ-Myrgingas

This has raised the question of interpolation. Chambers thought that this was an outbreak of Lombards among the Goths, which was the work of the same “unintelligent” interpolator responsible for the insertion of the near-eastern peoples’ names discussed above.⁹³³ Malone too thought it was an insertion.⁹³⁴ Chambers felt that *Myrgingas* was a name that the interpolator liked to repeat, even to the point of mistaking the prepositional phrase *wið Myrgingum* (l. 42b) as an ethnonym *Wīþ-Myrgingas*.⁹³⁵

⁹³¹ See Chambers 1912: 165, 179 and fn. 2, 189 (reviewing earlier interpretations). He interpreted it as being from a point of view in England, hence “from Angel, in the east”. Malone suggested the meaning “from the east side of the peninsula including Angeln” (1962: 28-29). *DOE* includes *Widsith* l. 8 under the sense “from the east” (s.v. *ēastan*, 1.a), Hill concurs (2009: 73).

⁹³² See *DOE*, s.v. *ēastan*, 1.c, with the sense “in the east”.

⁹³³ Chambers 1912: 122-23, 220.

⁹³⁴ Malone regarded ll. 114 and 118 as metrically inconsistent with the rest of the list of Goths and thus as insertions by the *Widsith*-poet in the work of an earlier “thulaman” who created the list, which Malone conjecturally, but not very probably, reconstructed (1962: 53-55, 99, 211).

⁹³⁵ Chambers 1912: 123, 221).

However, I suggest that there need be no interpolation here. In the *Getica* Jordanes attributed to Ermanaric a vast empire, comparable to Alexander's, which stretched from the Black Sea to the *Oceanus Germanus* where the *Sclaveni* and *Aesti* (Slavs and Estonians) lived – that is, the Baltic.⁹³⁶ If Jordanes was reprising what Cassiodorus had earlier written, then this multinational polity, under the sway of one man, was acceptable as fact to a Roman historian, possibly for the reasons that (a) it related to peoples of Scythia and Sarmatia largely unknown to Rome, and (b) it was highly flattering to Cassiodorus's lord, Athalaric, the grandson of Theoderic and a direct descendant of Ermanaric in the Amal dynasty. It therefore ought not to be a surprise if, in the Anglo-Saxon tradition of 150 years later, Eormenrīc was the suzerain of a multinational empire whose court was attended by the kings of allied or subject peoples.

In *Widsith*, we find among the Goths the following non-Gothic figures who, I suggest, can be identified as kings of allied or tributary peoples, indicative of the power of the Ostrogoths:

Beadeca (l. 112): possibly a Saxon.⁹³⁷ His name is a hypocorism, composed of the name-theme *beadu* “battle” with the suffix *-eca*.

Gislhere (l. 123): he is a version of the *Gislaharius* named in the sixth-century *Lex Burgundionum* as the son of former king Gebica of the Burgundians, and the brother of Godomarus and Gundaharius.⁹³⁸ Gebica is the *Gifca* named in *Widsith* 19 as the ruler of the *Burgende*; and Gundaharius is named in *Widsith* 65-67 as *Gūðhere*, a person who rewarded Wīdsīþ generously when he visited the *Burgende*.⁹³⁹ This is the family at the centre of the long-lived legend of the Burgundians who came to be known as Nibelungs – Gjúki and Gunnarr in the *Poetic Edda*, and Gibeche and Gunther in Middle High German poetry.

⁹³⁶ *Getica*, XXIII.116-20; Mommsen 1882: 88-89. Jordanes also mentions the *Venethi* (also named in *Germania* 46). They appear in *Widsith* (l. 60) as *Winedum*. See Malone 1962: 210 and Hill 2009: 128-29. They are also mentioned in the preface to the OE *Orosius* (a late 9th- or early 10th-c. text) where they are located between the Elbe and the Vistula.

⁹³⁷ See Chambers 1912: 218-19. *Beoduca* and *Baduca* occur in *DLV* (Rollason and Rollason 2007: II, 168).

⁹³⁸ See Chambers 1912: 65.

⁹³⁹ See *Widsith* 64-67:

Mid Pyringum ic wæs	ond mid Brōwendum,	64
ond mid Burgendum,	þær ic bēag gēpāh;	
mē þær Gūðhere forgēaf	glædlicne mǣppum	
songes tō lēane.	Næs þæt sǣne cyning!	67

With the Thuringians I was, and with the Trondheimers, and with the Burgundians, where I received a ring [or “treasure”]. There, Gūðhere gave me a heartening gift as a reward for singing. That king was no sluggard!

Wiþergield (l. 124): he is also named as *Wiðergyld* in *Beowulf* (l. 2051b), the king of the Heapobeards, also named Frōda, the father of Ingeld (who is named at *Widsith* 48).⁹⁴⁰ In *Widsith*, Wiþergield's name occurs among several who are counted among the fighters of the *Hræda here* "army of Goths" (l. 120a) who fought for Eormenrīc against Ætla (Attila) in a battle in or near the *Wistlawudu* "wood of the Vistula people" (l. 121a), defending their "old ancestral seat from Attila's countrymen" (*ealdne ēpelstōl / Ætlan lēodum*, l. 122). This would seem to suggest that the Anglo-Saxon tradition of the *Hrēðgotan* and their battle with the Huns was similar to that in *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, in which the *Reiðgotar* under Angantýr (= Incgenþēow in *Widsith* 116) beat the Huns led by his illegitimate half-brother Hlōðr (= Hliþe in *Widsith* 116). The chronology of events in Ostrogothic legendary history is not clear in *Widsith*. But whichever of Eormenrīc, Heapōrīc (= Heiðrekr) or Incgenþēow led them against the Huns, he counted Wiþergield and the Heapobeards as his allies.

Seafola (l. 115): He has been identified with three characters, all called *Sabene*, in Middle High German epic poetry.⁹⁴¹ But, phonologically, *Seafola* is consistent with earlier Old English **Sæbula* or **Sabula*, and I suggest that it is more than coincidence that this name can be found in the ethnonym *Σαβαλίγγοι*, a people located in southern Jutland by Ptolemy.⁹⁴² The connection between name and people was argued by Müllenhoff, citing the names *Sauulo* and *Sabulo*, and Gothic *Saba*, as *comparanda*.⁹⁴³ These name-forms are phonologically consistent with *Seafola* (*Saba* being a hypocorism). But if, as Ptolemy witnesses, there was a tribe of the second century called **Sabalingōz*, then *Seafola* is also consistent with an ethno-eponym for the king of this people, with a weak form, **Sabalo* or **Sabulo* (with reduction of the unstressed second vowel). Thus, *Widsith* provides the first written evidence – after Ptolemy – for the existence of this actual people. If they inhabited southern Jutland, then the presence of their king, *Seafola*, at the court of Eormenrīc also suggests a tradition – whether true or

⁹⁴⁰ See pp. 82-90 above. In line with earlier scholars, Chambers and Malone accept *Wiþergield* as the same person as *Beowulf*'s *Wiðergyld*, and thus a "leading figure" in the conflict between the Heapobeards and the Danes (Chambers 1921: 222) or a "Heathobardish champion" (Malone 1962: 211). Hill doubts the identification (2009: 103).

⁹⁴¹ See Hill 2009: 98 (*s.n. Becca* 2), and 121-22 (*s.nn. Seafola, Secca*). The identification is likely, despite the different endings in *Seafola* and *Sabene*. *Hetel* in the MHG *Kudrun* is evidently the same character as *Heðinn* in ON and *Heoden* in *Widsith* and in the ethnonym *Heodeninga* in *Deor* – differing only in the suffix. Scandinavian *Sigurðr* may have a different deuterotherme from German *Sifrit*.

⁹⁴² See Map 4 (p. 208 above) and *Geog.* II.11.7 in Müller (1883-1901: I, 257); II.11.11 in Stükelberger and Graßhoff (2017: I, 226-27). For discussion of the ethnonym, see Sitzmann and Grünzweig 2008: 235-36.

⁹⁴³ Müllenhoff 1848: 458-59.

not – of a Gothic empire which included parts of Jutland, as well as Germanic-speaking areas to the south and south-east, towards the Vistula.

Ēadwine, Elsa, Ægelmund, Hūngār (l. 117): in *Widsith* (ll. 74, 98, 117) *Ēadwine* is identified as the father of *Ælfwine* (ruling in Italy) and *Ealhild*, *Eormenrīc*’s bride-to-be.⁹⁴⁴ In ll. 117-18 he is also named as one of the “proud band of *Wiþ-Myrgingas*”. In Paulus Diaconus’s *HGL* he is the Lombard king *Audoin*, the father of *Alboin* who after his father’s death conquered Lombardy. *Ægelmund* is an earlier Lombardic king who appears in *HGL* together with a legend about his succession.⁹⁴⁵ *Elsa* is said to be unknown,⁹⁴⁶ but he is likely to be the equivalent of *Else*, a Middle High German literary figure who was a chieftain on the Danube who fought the Burgundians and Ostrogoths.⁹⁴⁷ *Hūngār* would appear to have been a figure with a Germanic name at the court of *Attila* (as perhaps was *Elsa*).⁹⁴⁸ Whatever ethnicities these persons had in history (and even the Byzantines did not know or did not care), to the *Widsith*-poet they were “*Wiþ-Myrgingas*”. The overall interpretation I suggest is that *Ēadgils* ruled the *Ongend-Myrgingas* (the branch including *Angel*, north of the *Eider*), his kinsman (possibly his brother) *Ēadwine* ruled the *Wiþ-Myrgingas* further east, and *Ēadwine*’s son *Ælfwine* ruled the split-off branch (known to history as *Lombards*) in Italy.

Becca (ll. 19, 115): he is named in *Widsith* (l. 115) among the *innweorud* of *Eormenrīc*; but earlier, at l. 19a (directly after *Eormenrīc* is named in l. 18b), a person with the same name is said to be the king of the *Bāningas*. Despite the complex arguments of

⁹⁴⁴ Malone (1962: 139-40) distinguishes two *Ēadwines*: the Lombard king and father of *Ælfwine* (ll. 74, 117) and the father of *Ealhild* (l. 98). I regard them as the same person for the reasons at p. 233-34 above.

⁹⁴⁵ See fn. 890, p. 227-28 above.

⁹⁴⁶ See Malone 1962: 143-44, Hill 2009: 102.

⁹⁴⁷ See Gillespie (1973: 35-36 and 36 fn. 1, *s.n. Else* (1)) who notes the similarity of the names *Else* and *Elsa*. However, in MHG tradition *Else*’s location was on the eastern bank of the Danube and he was in conflict with the Burgundians and Dietrich’s Ostrogoths. These features are consistent with the imagined ethnography and geography of *Widsith*, reflecting some picture of tribes between the Baltic and the Danube in northern and eastern Germania. As a long-lived character in literature, and in this milieu, this makes it rather likely that *Elsa* was *Else*, known to the *Widsith*-poet as a *Wiþ-Myrging*, an ally or vanquished tributary at the Ostrogothic court. It seems to have passed commentators by that the historians Priscus and Theodosius name one *Ῥσλας* as the Hunnish king *Rua*’s emissary to the Romans. He was a contemporary of *Attila* and *Ὀνηγῆσιος* (see Müller 1841-70: IV, 71, 81, 83, 95, 96). Potentially, Greek *Eslas* is simply a metathetical form of *Elsa*. See also fn. 948 below.

⁹⁴⁸ Malone argued that *Hūngār* was originally called **Hundgār*, aka *Lamissio* (1962: 177-78). Hill rightly notes his argument to be “very complex” and the identification “remote” (2009: 114). Chambers (1912: 220-21) noted the correspondence between *Hūngār* and *Ὀνηγῆσιος* and *Hunigasius*, recorded by late Antique historians as a viceroy or interpreter at *Attila*’s court. As Chambers noted, the Gothic name **Hūnigais* would be cognate with OE *Hūngār*. Historically, *Attila*’s court seems to have been replete with figures with Germanic names who may have been Germanic kings and chiefs who acknowledged his overlordship. Whatever their original ethnicities were, to the *Widsith*-poet they were *Wiþ-Myrgingas*.

Malone,⁹⁴⁹ there is no *a priori* reason not to regard these as references to the same man. I regard as preferable the view of Chambers, who argued that the *Bāningas* were neighbours of the Goths and probable tributaries, and Becca was both their king and advisor to Eormenrīc at his court.⁹⁵⁰ *Widsith* is the earliest text to refer to Becca, and the only one to provide him the rank of king and an ethnicity. In later traditions he is just a Gothic courtier, his origins having been forgotten. In Eddaic tradition he is Bikki, an evil adviser of Jǫrmunrekr (= Eormenrīc); in Middle High German poetry he is Sibeche and has the same role as treacherous vizier with respect to Ermerich; in *Piðreks saga* he is Sifka, a counsellor who bears secret malice towards Erminríkr for having raped his wife.

The name *Becca* looks like a hypocorism of the kind which I have named the “*Becca*-type” after him, consisting of the initial consonant or open syllable of the prototheme with a suffixal ending.⁹⁵¹ Malone suggested that *Becca* was a hypocorism derived from the Anglian name-theme *berht* and a suffix *-cca*. He explicitly rejected the frequently suggested etymology “bitch” (Old English *bicce*, Old Norse *bikkja*) on account of the different stem vocalisation.⁹⁵² I agree with this criticism, and add that while connotations of “bitch-ness” might have been available for the Old Norse reflex of this name, *Bikki* (cf. *bikkja*), they were not for *Becca*, which in Old English was homophonous with *becca* “pick-axe, mattock”, not *bicce*.⁹⁵³ However, I differ from Malone’s derivation from *Berht*- and suggest that *Becca* is best explained as an ethno-

⁹⁴⁹ Malone (1962: 131-32. Hill (2009: 97-98) is equivocal about whether there were two men called *Becca*. But she notes that Malone’s argument for two identically-named men was based on his implausible conviction that *Widsith* 115 named Theuderic the Frank as *Pēodric* (rather than Theoderic the Ostrogoth) and other figures from his story.

⁹⁵⁰ Chambers 1912: 19, 20, 33, 191. See the discussion at pp. 245-47 below.

⁹⁵¹ See pp. 103-04 above. See also Willson 2007 for examples of modern Icelandic hypocorisms in which the geminated consonants from a hypocoristic stem followed by a weak ending seem to have become either stereotyped or suffixal. Thus, male names beginning with /A-/ > *Alli*; *Björk* > *Böppa*; *Sigurður* > *Siggi* and *Siddi* (Willson 2007: 199, 226, 227). This adds an extra layer of complexity to identifying the origins of hypocorisms, if they are based on an initial consonant or open syllable, followed by /-CCa/, which becomes analysed as a hypocoristic suffix.

⁹⁵² Malone 1962: 131-132. He thought *Becca* was an Anglian form equivalent to *Beocca* (PASE ×5). Redin had included Malone’s analysis as an alternative (1919: 84). According to *OED3* (s.v. *bitch* n¹, II.4.a), “bitch” is not recorded in English as an insulting term for a man before the 2nd half of the 15th c. For a woman, it is first recorded c. 1175 (sense II.3.a).

⁹⁵³ See *DOE*, s.v. *becca*. For its etymology, see Holthausen 1934: 18, s.v. *becca*. Orel (2003: 41) suggests Gmc **bekwjanan* behind related MHG *bicken* “to punch, to kick”. See also *AHDWB*, s.vv. *anabikken* “poke, attack, hit” and *bikkil* “pickaxe”; *MHDWB*, s.v. *bicken* “poke, attack, sting”; *MNDWB*, s.v. *bicken* “peck, chop, dent, hit with point, pick at”. It is just about conceivable that *Becca* was coined as a hypocorism intended to recall OE words from the same etymon as **bekwjanan*, (apparently meaning “to attack, hit (esp. with a pick)”), such as *becca*, or (if it existed in OE) the verb **beccian*. However, this strays into Redinian etymologising territory.

eponymous hypocorism derived from the stem of the ethnonym *Bāningas*: *B-* + *-ecca*; or *Bā* + *-icca/-ecca* > (by *i*-mutation) **Bǣcca* > (written form) *Becca*.

This character was also called *Sibeche* in Middle High German poetry. As we shall see below, the element *beche* is cognate with *Becca*. But much confusion has been caused by the false identification of this person with the supposedly male person *Sifeca* who is thought to be referred to in *Widsith* 116, *Heaporīc ond Sifecan / Hlīþe ond Incgenþēow*. Three of the quartet mentioned in this line have plausibly been identified with characters also found in the Icelandic *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*:⁹⁵⁴ *Heaporīc* is Heiðrekr, king of the Goths; *Hlīþe* is Hlōðr, his illegitimate son; and *Incgenþēow* is Angantýr, Heiðrekr's legitimate son and successor, the vanquisher of Hlōðr.⁹⁵⁵ But Scholars have regarded *Sifecan* as a reference to male *Sifeca*, Eormenrīc's adviser, known by the apparently cognate names *Sibeche* in Middle High German poetry and *Sifka* in *Piðreks saga*,⁹⁵⁶ who is also the hypocoristic *Becca* of l. 115. Critics have tied themselves in knots trying to explain how this *Sifeca* became *Sifka* in *Hervarar saga*, a Hunnish princess, seized as a concubine by Heiðrekr, who is the mother of Hlōðr. The attempted solutions are so convoluted, I suggest, because *Sifecan* in *Widsith* 116 is in fact the accusative of **Sifece*, a weak female name exactly cognate with *Sifka*. Both are derived from Germanic **sib* "relation by marriage, wife" + suffix *-(i)kō* – hence "little wife" or perhaps "concubine".⁹⁵⁷ In *Widsith*, therefore, *Sifece* would be Hlīþe's mother, as *Sifka* was of Hlōðr in *Hervarar saga*.

I also argue that *Sibeche* is entirely unrelated to **Sifece*. Rather, *Sibeche* consists of *Beche* (< Old High German **Behho*) a Middle High German cognate of Old English *Becca*, prefixed with *sī-*. This prefix, I suggest, is likely to be a reflex of the Common Germanic prefix *sin-*, meaning "constant", which underwent assimilation or nasalisation to *sī-*. Hence **Sī-Beche* would mean "constant Beche", an apt but ironic name for an advisor whose loyalty was so beyond question that it masked his enmity. A comparable pair can be seen in Old English *Fitela*, the name of the son and nephew of Sigemund in *Beowulf*, whose name in Old Norse texts was *Sinffjotli*. Scholars have

⁹⁵⁴ See Chambers 1912: 46-48, 221-22; Malone 1962: 165-68, 170-71, 179, 199-200.

⁹⁵⁵ In *Heaporīc* and *Heiðrekr*, the protothemes *Heapo-* and *Heið-* are not phonologically cognate (or even the same lexeme); *Hlīþe* differs from *Hlōðr* in stem-vowel and ending; OE *Incgenþēow* should be **Ingunþēr* in ON. However, here phonological difference is outweighed by the pattern of sonic similarities and the grouping together of these names in *Widsith*.

⁹⁵⁶ See for instance Malone 1962: 199-200.

⁹⁵⁷ Cf. OE *sib(b)* "relationship", including relationship by marriage, i.e. "wife" (*Bosworth-Toller*, s.v. *sib* (n)); OS *sibbia*, the same (*ASWB*, s.v.); also ON *sif*, in the singular only as *Sif*, the name of Þórr's wife; in the plural *sifjar* "connection by marriage" (*Cleasby-Vigfusson*: 526, s.v. *sif*).

struggled to explain the element *sin-* in *Sinffjotli* and to reconcile the name with *Fitela*.⁹⁵⁸ But I suggest we may understand him to be “constant *Fjotli” – fittingly, since he was his uncle (and father) Sigmundr’s ever-present companion and faithful follower.

3.5.7 Bāningas and Burgende: Neighbours of the Goths

In ll. 18-19 of *Widsith*, *Ætla* is named next to *Eormenrīc* of the *Gotan*, then *Becca* of the *Bāningas* and *Gifca* of the *Burgende*. A complex of evidence (including the witness of Ptolemy in the second century AD) suggests that peoples with these ethnonyms did indeed inhabit central and eastern Germania in the second century, which would have made them likely neighbours of the Goths, who lived around the Vistula at that time and until some time in the second or third century before moving east to the Crimea.⁹⁵⁹ In *Germania* 43 the *Gotones* are on the Baltic coast to the west of the island of Rügen.⁹⁶⁰ The same tradition seems to be reported by Jordanes, who describes the migration of the Goths from *Scandza* to *Gothiscandza*,⁹⁶¹ which seems to have been the mainland of the Baltic coast, somewhere in the region of the Vistula, where the Goths displaced the Ulmerugi (*Widsith*’s *Holm-Rygās* and *Rugās*), and the Gothic-related Gepids settled on an island inhabited by the multi-ethnic *Vidivarii*,⁹⁶² then wiped out the Burgundians and provoked the Goths under Ostrogotha.⁹⁶³ Ostrogotha was supposed to rule during the reign of the Roman emperor Philip (244-49 AD).⁹⁶⁴

As noted above, it is conventionally thought that this historical reality ceased to exist from the beginning of the third century, when the Goths moved east. But Paulus Diaconus’s

⁹⁵⁸ See Shaw 2020: 136-38, and *ANew*: 476, s.v. *Sinffjotli*. I think it probable that *Fitela* is from **fetilo* and *fjotli* from **fetulo*, both with a root *fet-* related to “foot” plus a diminutive suffix, perh. indicating his lowly status as a “fetchling” in the household of his mother’s husband. Cf. OE *fetian* “fetch”, ON *feta* “to step, go on foot”. See Holthausen 1934: 103, s.v. *fetian*, *feccan*; Kroonen 2013: 138, s.v. **fetan*. The medieval German personal name, *Sintarfizzilo* – so often referred to in this context as a real-life parallel form (see Shaw *loc cit.*) – would literally be a “Cinderella”-name, meaning “Cinder-fetchling”. At any rate, *sintar* and *sin* cannot be related, and it is questionable whether *Sintarfizzilo* was named after some German version of *Fitela*/*Sinffjotli*.

⁹⁵⁹ See Chambers (1912: 189, 192, 220-21), citing Hodgkin 1892: I, 40 (who relied on Ptolemy); Malone 1962: 129-30, 131-32, 134. Also the view in Heather 2010: 104-05, 117-21.

⁹⁶⁰ Wolff 1907: 98-99.

⁹⁶¹ *Scandza* is a Late Latin pronunciation-spelling of *Scandia*. Cf. Latin *Florentia* > Italian *Firenze*.

⁹⁶² *Vidivarii* in *Getica*, v.36: Mommsen 1882: 63. This appears as *Vividarii* later, in *Getica*, xvii; Mommsen 1882: 83.

⁹⁶³ *Getica*, iv.25-27, xvii.94-96; Mommsen 1882: 60, 83. The Gepids are named in *Widsith* 60 as *Geffum*, followed by the *Winedum*, i.e. the Slavonic *Venethi*, associated with the Baltic. Hill summarises thus (2009: 105): the Gepids were related to the Goths. They migrated from the mouth of the Vistula to the area corresponding to south-eastern Hungary today. There, in 567, they were defeated by the Langobards under Alboin, son of Audoin (in *Widsith* he is Ælfwine the son of Æadwine and brother of Ealhild).

⁹⁶⁴ See Malone 1962: 142. Ostrogotha’s narrative appears in *Getica*, xiv.79, 82; xvi.89-90; xvii.97-100; Mommsen 1882: 76-77, 78, 80-81, 83.

Lombardic tradition remembered that the areas called *Bainaib* and *Burgundaib* went together⁹⁶⁵ as places to which the Lombards travelled in their early migration from Mauringa. These names, I suggest, are references to the peoples known in *Widsith* as *Bāningas* and *Burgende*. In *HGL* Waitz prints *Banthaib* and *Vurgundaib*.⁹⁶⁶ There are many scribal variants of these names in which *Banthaib* always has medial <t~th>. But Ptolemy (mid-second century AD) gives a form without it: πρὸς ἀνατολὰς περὶ τὸν Ἀλβιν ποταμὸν Βαίνοχαῖμαι “to the east, about the river Elbe, the *Bainohaimai*”.⁹⁶⁷ Also, according to Ptolemy, the *Βουργουνται* (“Burgundians”) lived between the Oder and the Vistula,⁹⁶⁸ which places them in reasonable proximity to each other.

Ptolemy’s form *Βαίνοχαῖμαι* contains a first element which is phonologically consistent with Proto-Germanic **Bain-* and Old English *Bān-*. The first element is consistent with a cognate of Old Norse *beinn* “prompt, right, propitious” and *beini* “hospitality”. It is also potentially found as an ethnophoric prototheme in *Bainobaudes*, a fourth-century Frank in the Roman army named by Ammianus Marcellinus.⁹⁶⁹ The second element is consistent with derivation from Proto-Germanic **haimaz* “home”.⁹⁷⁰ The medial <t> or <th> in *HGL*’s *Banthaib* (and variants) may be explained as the trace of Germanic suffixal *-ip*, as found in other Germanic ethnonyms and personal names – hence **Bānþaib* or **Bānþaib*, “the jurisdiction of **Bānip* or the **Bānþōz*.”⁹⁷¹ In conclusion, I suggest that *Widsith*’s *Bāningas* are

⁹⁶⁵ The element *aib* is a representation of PrWGmc **aiw* “law” (Kroonen 2013: 16, s.v. *aiwa/ō-* 2), which in place-names meant the area of jurisdiction over which a tribe’s laws extended (cognate with OE *ǣ*). Cf. ON *lǫg* “law” in medieval Norwegian toponyms *Þrændalǫg* (mod. *Trøndelag*) and *Njarðarlǫg*.

⁹⁶⁶ *HGL*, I.13; Waitz 1878: 54.

⁹⁶⁷ *Geog.*, II.11.10 in Müller (1883-1901: I, 262).

⁹⁶⁸ *Geog.*, II.11.3, 8 in Müller (1883-1901: I, 250, 259). See also II.11.4, 15 in Stückelberger and Graßhoff (2017: I, 213 and fn. 216; 226-27).

⁹⁶⁹ XIV.11; Rolfe 1935-39: I, 96. Late 4th c. See *ANEW*: 30, s.vv. *beini*, *beinn* (2); and Malone 1962: 129.

⁹⁷⁰ Sitzmann and Grünzweig accept the emendation to Ptolemy proposed by Much, hence *Baiochaim*, the ethnonym of the Bohemians, which is then connected to *Baiovari*, the ethnonym of the Bavarians (2008: 48-49, 49-52). This is followed by Stückelberger and Graßhoff (2017: I, 229, fn. 238), who see it as a toponym not an ethnonym. However, given the vernacular witness of *Widsith* and the phonological and likely geographical correspondences between its text and Ptolemy’s, I see no reason to emend Ptolemy’s text. All the variants of this name in MSS of *Geog.* contain the medial /n/ which was eliminated by Much. See Müller 1883-1901: I, 262, fns. – though even he regarded the MSS forms as garblings of the names “Bohemians” or “Bavarians”. The true “Bohemians” appear in Ptolemy as the Danubian *Βαῖμοι* (*Geog.*, II.11.11; Müller 1883-1901: I, 265). Stückelberger and Graßhoff (*Geog.*, II.11.26; 2017: I, 228-229) give the variants *Βαῖμοι* and *Βαίανοι* and observe that these are abbreviations of *Boihaemum* (*ibid.*: I, 229, fn. 240). Whether or not this is so, these “Bohemian” and “Bavarian” forms have a first element which is distinct from *Baivoχαῖμαι* and which is more likely to derive from the Celtic *Boii* who inhabited this area from at least the 2nd c. BC, according to Classical historians.

⁹⁷¹ Sg. and pl. respectively. See also fn. 873 (p. 224 above). For suffixal *-ip*, cf. the Latinised ethnonym *Gepidae*, *Widsith*’s *Gefþum* (l. 60) and *Beowulf*’s *Gifðum* (l. 2494), from **Gef(i)þas*/**Gif(i)þas*; and the suffixal dentals in *Winedum* (*Widsith* 60, cf. Latin *Venethi*) and *Frumtingum* (*Widsith* 68). Also see discussion of **Hugipō* (= Hygd), *Hæreþas* and *Hæleþas* (pp. 205-09 above and 338-44 below).

the same people with a different suffix, and the reference to them constitutes another of *Widsith*'s accurate reflections of ethnographical facts dating back to the late Antique period.

It is in the context of the Burgundians' ancient contiguity with the Goths that I suggest we understand *Widsiþ*'s reference to *Gūþhere* in *Widsith* 64-68:

Mid þyringum ic wæs	ond mid þrōwendum	64
ond mid Burgendum:	þær ic bēag geþēah;	
mē þær Gūðhere forgeaf	glædlicne mǣppum,	66
songes tō lēane;	næs þæt sǣne cyning!	

I was with the Thuringians and with the Trondheimers, and with the Burgundians. I received a ring [or "treasure"] there. There, Gūðhere gave me a splendid gift/treasure to reward me for my song. That was not a niggardly king!

Gūðhere (Gunnarr of the *Poetic Edda*) was the king of the Burgundians, and the audience was probably meant to imagine *Widsiþ* stopping off at the brilliant court of these neighbours of the Goths on his way home to Angel.⁹⁷²

3.5.8 The *Wīþ*-Myrgingas and the Goths

In this context of people who would seem to be neighbours of the Ostrogoths, let us consider the possible origins of the name *Wīþ-Myrgingas*, named in *Widsith* 118. Since the Myrgingas – in one manifestation or another – feature so prominently in *Widsith*, the forms of their name, including *Ongend-Myrgingas* and *Wīþ-Myrgingas*, may have importance for our understanding of the extent of their settlement and power if the first element in these compounds is topographical (as I have argued *Ongend* was).

Malone thought that this people was associated with the Danish river *Vidå* (German *Wiedau*) in Schleswig – a possibility also suggested by Hill.⁹⁷³ See Map 5 below, in which the river is marked with its conjectural Old English name **Wīþ* or **Wīþ*. There are medieval attestations of spellings of *Vidå* in <th> consistent with a medial dental fricative derived from Germanic /þ/,⁹⁷⁴ and the modern German form *Wiedau* suggests a long stem-vowel.⁹⁷⁵ These indicate a possible derivation from Germanic **Wīþ*-. Malone suggested derivation from a Germanic word for "willow" – cognate with "withy" – a tree which typically grows in watery

⁹⁷² Gunnarr in the *Poetic Edda* was the richest man in the world, having taken the fabulous hoard of gold from his brother-in-law Sigurðr (whom he murdered), which Sigurðr had taken from the dragon Fáfnir. However, we do not know how much of this part of the Niflung story existed in Anglo-Saxon England.

⁹⁷³ See Malone 1944 and 1962: 211 and Hill 2009: 129.

⁹⁷⁴ See Malone 1944 and *Wikipedia*, "Vidå" <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vidå>> [retrieved 15.8.25], citing reliable sources for historical spellings, including *Withae a* (13th c.) and *Withaa* (14th c.).

⁹⁷⁵ Cf. the historical toponyms Danish *Viding Herred* and German *Wiedingharde* (Malone 1944: 55), for the area south of the Vidå – meaning *herað* (ON "district") of the Vidå region (< OEN **Wīþing*-?).

areas and on river-banks.⁹⁷⁶



Map 5

Jutland: Locating the Vidå. Olmers-/Olgerdiget and Hærvejen⁹⁷⁷

But the etymon of which it is a part meant “turn”, “bend”, perhaps “braid”, and so * *Wīþ-* (with short /i/) may have meant “winding” or “intersecting”.⁹⁷⁸ If the *Wīþ-Myrgingas* were named after their habitation in this river valley, it would tell us that their power extended fairly far north in the west of Jutland, confronting the Angles in the east.

Gregersen (1989) has argued that in the 400s the Angles came to England from an Angle kingdom in Southern Jutland between the Eider in the south and the Olger Dyke (Danish *Olgerdiget* or *Olmersdiget*), a man-made fortification near Tinglev in southern Jutland, controlling the *Hærvejen* (military road) which ran from north to south through Jutland. Gregersen dated the Olger Dyke to about 200 AD, and argued that the Angles maintained it as a barrier against their northern enemies until, in the 400s, the Danes pushed them westward. However, at an earlier stage some of the Angle peoples had migrated south to the Elbe-Saale area in Thuringia. But more recent archaeological research, using dendrochronological dating, has established that the Olger Dyke – a more than 12 km construction consisting of a wooden

⁹⁷⁶ Conjecturally from PrGmc **wīþijaz*, giving OE *wīþig* “willow”. But cf. OHG *wīda* “willow” (modern *Weidenbaum*), from **wīþwō* (*AHDWB*, s.v. *wīda*).

⁹⁷⁷ The Olmers-/Olgerdiget is shown as a solid red line, and the north-south Hærvejen by a dotted red line. See website *Arkæologi Haderslev*, “Olgerdiget Udstillingen” <<https://oldtidsglimt.dk/location/vold-og-vaern-i-aeldre-jernalder/?lang=da>> [retrieved 27.9.24].

⁹⁷⁸ As in the English word for a flexible twig “withy” (OE *wīþpe*, ON *við*, OHG *wid*). See Orel 2003: s.v. **wīþiz*, and *AHDWB*, s.v. *wid*.

palisade (90,000 (!) oak trunks) on an earth rampart before a ditch – was not, as previously thought, constructed after 219 AD, but in three phases in a period after 21-89/90AD, with a few repairs thereafter, including some after 127 AD. However, it was largely unmaintained after 110 AD, following the beginning of a new fortified line 15 km to the north, *c.* 105 AD, the so-called “Æ Rampart” a similarly constructed fortification begun *c.* 105 AD.⁹⁷⁹

Christensen (2020) accepts – as did Gregersen – the current interpretational model that the Olger Dyke was the northern fortification of the Angle kingdom against its northern neighbours, built in a period of unrest when the first major sacrifices took place in Thorsbjerg Mose and where the ring fortresses Trælbanken at Højer and Archsumburg on Sylt were built in the west. These formed a system of fortifications designed to control access to the Vidå river-system and cut off access to southern Jutland. The construction of a more northerly Æ-rampart, and the evidence of similar building types across this area, thus constitute evidence of the expansion of the area dominated by the Angles.⁹⁸⁰ If this analysis is well-founded, then the Angles may have built a large fortified line to protect themselves from whichever people dominated the Vidå river system to the west. However, as we have seen,⁹⁸¹ Ptolemy (writing in the mid-second century AD) mentions no Angles in Jutland. He names them as Συήβωι τῶν Ἀγγειλῶν and locates them in a wide band stretching from west to east, but not as far north as Jutland, in which he is in agreement with Tacitus and possibly Pliny.⁹⁸² We may therefore query whether the builders of this great dyke were Offa’s people. However, it may be, nonetheless, that its position was testament to a static feature of strategic reality for any Jutlandic peoples – which was that Jutland was divided between east and west by a military road (which permitted offensive expeditions north and south), and strategic control of this road was important for defensive purposes.

But there is another possible derivation of *Wīþ-Myrgingas*, potentially consistent with the presence of Myrgingas at Eormenrīc’s court at some place, east of Angel, on the Baltic littoral or in its hinterland, including the Vistula. In the *Getica* Jordanes mentions the *Vidivarii*, an ethnically mixed people or peoples located around the mouths of the Vistula.⁹⁸³

Ad litus autem Oceani, ubi tribus faucis fluenta Vistulae fluminis ebibuntur, Vidivarii resident, ex diversis nationibus adgregati; post quos ripam Oceani item Aesti tenent, pacatum hominum genus omnino.

⁹⁷⁹ Christensen 2020.

⁹⁸⁰ Christensen 2020: 21-23.

⁹⁸¹ See p. 208 and Map 4. The *Anglii* (*Germania* 38-39) are not clearly located, but although associated with other Suevic tribes, they are not associated with Jutland either.

⁹⁸² *Geog.* II.11.8, in Müller 1883-1901: I, 258-59.

⁹⁸³ *Getica*, v.36; Mommsen 1882: 63. See also p. 245 and fn. 962 above.

To the shore of Ocean [*sc.* the Baltic], where the streams of the river Vistula drain in three mouths, is where the Vidivarii live, gathered from various nations. After these, the Aesti [Estonians] also inhabit the shore of Ocean, a wholly peaceful race of people.

If the name-element *vid-* was used by different language groups,⁹⁸⁴ this would be congruent with the account by Jordanes of an ethnically mixed or various population in the region of the Vistula.⁹⁸⁵ The second element in the name *Vidivarii* is consistent with the usual Latin rendering of Germanic **warijōz* (“defenders, fighters” > “people”). Thus, the first element may or may not be of Germanic origin. But its Latinate form is consistent with Germanic **widu* “wood” and hence provides a potential fit with *Widsith*’s *Wistlawudu* (l. 121), the “the wood of the **Wistle* (= people of the Vistula)”, where the Goths were supposed to have fought the Huns.⁹⁸⁶ Although “wood” people could live anywhere where there was forest, an alternative explanation of *Vid-* is that it represents the *widu* “wood” which was also known as *Holt*.⁹⁸⁷ The modern name *Holstein* is a development from a Germanic toponym first recorded by Adam of Bremen as *Holcetae*, which in Latin orthography was a phonetic rendering of a Germanic toponym **Holtset-*.⁹⁸⁸ On the other hand, Latin *vid-* could also have represented the same element as in *Vidå*, referring to the winding, intersecting nature of the mouths of the Vistula.

As with many purely etymological analyses, the results are inconclusive and point in several different directions. Potentially superimposed on the etymological origins of a name are the interpretations of speakers and writers based on words they have heard or read, in addition to whatever other traditions about such names that they knew. Notwithstanding this, the prototheme *Wīþ-* in *Wīþ-Myrgingas* may be regarded as a parallel to *Ongend-* in *Ongend-Myrgingas*, and thus may have had a topographical function. However, another interpretational difficulty lies in whether to read *Wīþ-Myrgingas* and *Ongend-Myrgingas* as distinct from each

⁹⁸⁴ As suggested by Sitzmann and Grünzweig (2008: 305).

⁹⁸⁵ In the 12th-c. *Chronicon Lethrense*, the toponym *Withesleth* is used of the region containing the four Danish islands of Sjælland, Møn, Falster and Lolland (ch. 1; Gertz 1917: 43-44). It has not, as far as I know, been explained. The second element is probably ODan *leth*, from ON *leið* “way, course”, cognate with OE *lād* “journey (by sea), course, voyage, water crossing” (*DOE*, s.v. *lād*¹), from the same root as *līpan* “to sail”. See also *ODSHO*, s.v. *led* (n). The first element may be from ON *víðr* “wide, extensive”, but this does not explain the apparently genitive nominal inflection in medial <es>. One wonders – without conviction – whether this is related to the *Wīþ-* in *Wīþ-Myrgingas* and/or the *Vid-* in Jordanes’ *Vidivarii*, and it was a toponym or hydronym associated with the Baltic.

⁹⁸⁶ Sitzmann and Grünzweig 2008: 305.

⁹⁸⁷ Malone suggests that the Myrgingas were inhabitants of west Holstein (he calls them Saxons). He also suggests that the Ongend- and Wīþ-Myrgingas may be the same people, inhabiting western Schleswig (1962: 188, 211).

⁹⁸⁸ Adam named one part of the Saxons north of the Elbe as *Holcetae*, *dicti a silvis, quas accolunt* “named from the woods which they inhabit”. Variants in MSS are *Holscette*, *Olcetae*, *Holsati* and *Holtzati*: *History of the Bishops of Hamburg*, II.17; Schmeidler 1917: 72. Cf. *Cleasby-Vigfusson*: 278, s.n. *holt*, *Hol(t)setar*, *Holtsetaland* “Holstein”. The Holsteiners of the 5th c. AD would have been **Holtsātijōz* or **Holtsātaniz*, and in OE **Holtsāete*/**Holtsēte* or **Holtsētan*.

other and subdivisions of the *Myrkingas*, or to understand all three names as variants referring to the same people.

It may be that Malone was right, and the *Wīþ-Myrkingas* historically occupied western Schleswig, perhaps as far north as Vidå and as far south as the Eider, and they were natural enemies of the Angles to their east. However, the text of *Widsith* suggests that after the Myrkingas' defeat, the Eider was controlled by the Swāfe to the west and the Angles to the east, which causes one to query whether the Myrkingas must have been rather to the south than the north of the Eider. Their association with the Bardic people of the Hundingas also links them to the other Bardic nations: the Heapobeards and Langobards (the “proud warband of the *Wīþ-Myrkingas*”) at the court of Eormenrīc contained Ægelmund and Ēadwine, who are associated in legend and history with the Langobards. This association of the *Wīþ-Myrkingas* with peoples who, in the scholarship, are usually placed in what is now northern Germany seems to suggest a more southerly habitation than the Eider. I therefore argue that it indicates a large grouping of related “Bardic” nations – including the *Wīþ* branch of the Myrkingas – on a latitude between the Elbe and the Eider, extending to the east (as in Map 1 on p. 18 above), and as far as the Burgundians and Ostrogoths, to whom the Bardic peoples may have been neighbours and (if they were wise) allies. Thus, I suggest, the *Wīþ-Myrkingas* were one of Jordanes' *Vidivarii* by the Vistula. However, although I have preferred this latter solution, it cannot be said that there is a great deal in it; and Map 6 below may be regarded as also feasible.



Map 6
Wīþ-Myrkingas on the Vidå?

3.5.9 The Home of the Goths in (Later) Literature

The apparent placing of the Ostrogoths in the environs of Jutland is also found in the traditions of king Heiðrekr of the *Hreiðgotar* (= *Hrēðgotan*)⁹⁸⁹ in two Icelandic texts, *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* (the R version),⁹⁹⁰ and its variant in Hauksbók (the H version) printed under the title *Saga Heiðreks konungs ins vitra*.⁹⁹¹ In the H version, of the homeland of the Gotar, *Reiðgotaland* it is said, *þat heitir nú Jútland* “That is now called Jutland”.⁹⁹² However, slightly later in the same text, and apparently in contradiction, it is said that Vindland (which was undoubtedly on the eastern Baltic coast) *næst liggr Reiðgotalandi* “lies next to Reiðgotaland”.⁹⁹³ In Turville Petre’s edition of *Hervarar saga* (based on the R-version),⁹⁹⁴ the text in ch. 14 describes the conquests of the legendary king Ívarr inn víðfaðmi (“the wide-embracer”), a wholly legendary figure who expanded from Reiðgotaland to rule an empire which included Sweden, Denmark, Courland, Saxony, Estonia, and lands from Novgorod in the east to England in the west. He appointed Valdarr as his viceroy of Denmark.⁹⁹⁵ This tradition (wherever it came from) is not consistent with Reiðgotaland being Jutland, but rather somewhere on the Baltic coast – a tradition also found in the fourteenth-century *Heimslýsing* (“Description of the World” – included in the Icelandic MS Hauksbók)⁹⁹⁶ which places *Reiðgotaland* to the east of Poland, between it and Húnaland, the land of the Huns.⁹⁹⁷

Although this tradition shows evidence of a confusion of the lands of the Goths with Jutland (a folk-etymological misconception found elsewhere),⁹⁹⁸ it is fundamentally the same tradition as in *Widsith* (ll. 7, 57), where the Gothic lands ruled by Eormenrīc, the *Hrēðcýning* of the *Hrēðgotan* (= Old Norse (*H*)*reiðgotar*) include an area in which he defended his ancestral realm against the Huns of Ætla (Attila) *ymb Wistlawudu* (l. 121a) “by the Vistula-people’s

⁹⁸⁹ The often-debated phonological and semantic issues raised by the forms OE *Hrēð-*, *Hræð-* and ON *Hreið-* are irrelevant here. However, see Malone 1962: 174-75.

⁹⁹⁰ The R-version is in Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, MS GkS 2845 4^{to} (written in Iceland 1440-60).

⁹⁹¹ Rafn 1829-30: I. Christopher Tolkien’s edition, under the title *Saga Heiðreks Konungs ins Vitra* is mostly from R, supplemented by U (1960: xxxi).

⁹⁹² *Saga Heiðreks konungs ens vitra*: ch. 7; Rafn 1829-30: I, 526. See also pp. 186-88 above, 373-74 below.

⁹⁹³ *Heiðreks konungs ens vitra*: ch. 9; Rafn 1829-30: I, 531; and Turville Petre 1976: 77 (note). Vindland was the home of the Slavic people called *Winedas* in *Widsith* 60 (see Malone 1962: 210) and *Venet(h)i* in Latin texts.

⁹⁹⁴ Turville-Petre 1976: xviii.

⁹⁹⁵ See *Hervarar saga*, ch. 15; Turville Petre 1976: 67-68.

⁹⁹⁶ Hauksbók is an Icelandic MS containing many texts written in Iceland and Norway between 1290 and 1360. Originally whole, it is now split into 3: Copenhagen, Arnemagnæanske Samling MSS AM 371 4^{to}, AM 544 4^{to} and AM 675 4^{to}.

⁹⁹⁷ Turville Petre 1976: 77.

⁹⁹⁸ See pp. 186-88 above. The early 10th-c. author of the OE *Orosius* called Jutland *Gotland* (I.1.21, 23; Godden 2016: 42, 44).

forest”.⁹⁹⁹ This may well be the forest named Myrkviðr in Old Norse texts, which in one MS of *Hervarar saga* “divides Hunland and Gothland” (*skóg þann, er Myrkviðr heitir, er skilr Húnaland ok Gotaland*).¹⁰⁰⁰

Therefore, as we have seen, a location for the Goths on or around the Vistula (and its supposed wood) is consistent with the presence of the Wīþ-Myrgingas, among whom were Ēadwine and Ægelmund (a great Langobard king named by Paulus Diaconus). The Wīþ- in their name would correspond to the *Vid-* of Jordanes’ *Vidivarii*, a name containing an undoubted Germanic element (*-vari-*), for a mixed people living by the Vistula. These would thus be allies or tributaries of their neighbours the Goths, assisting them in their resistance to the invading Huns. The *Widsith*-poet says, just after introducing them:

	Ful oft þær wīg ne ālæg	119
þonne Hrāda here	heardum sweordum	
ymb Wistlawudu	wergan sceoldon	121
ealdne ēpelstōl	Ætlan lēodum.	

Very often [*sc.* constantly] there, war did not die down, when the army of the Hrādas [Goths], with hard swords, around the Vistula-peoples’ wood, had to defend the ancestral throne against Ætla’s [Attila’s] people.

If the Huns had reached as far as the Vistula, and this was an area also inhabited by Myrgingas, there cannot have been much of the Gothic kingdom left, and the unhistorical battle on the Vistula was one for the Goths’ very survival. Thus the Myrgingas were necessary allies, and a marriage to Ealhild, the daughter of the Wīþ-Myrging Ēadwine, highly advisable.

⁹⁹⁹ See *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, ch. 11 (Turville-Petre 1976: 51-53); King Heiðrekr of the Goths is murdered by slaves he brought from the British Isles. His son Angantýr tracks the killers to the river Grafá (unidentified), identifies his father’s sword Tyrfingr when one of them decapitates a fish with it while reciting a verse saying how the pike he has caught is paying for Heiðrekr’s slaying *und Harvaða fjöllum* (“by the Carpathian mountains”). Angantýr avenges Heiðrekr by killing the culprits, which he immediately celebrates with a feast at a town called *Árheimar* (unidentified), located *á Danparstöðum* (“in the settlements on the Dnieper”, cf. the form *Danaper* in Jordanes’ *Getica*). Clearly, the saga author can have had little understanding of chronology or geography; but the tradition he was reporting seems – remarkably – to have preserved cogent onomastic evidence (esp. *Harvaða*, a Gmc cognate of **Karpata-* as in *Carpathian*) of the historical presence of the Goths on the Baltic (up to c. 200 AD), in the Carpathians of Roman Dacia north of the Danube (270s AD), and on the Dnieper on the northern coast of the Black Sea (370s AD) when they were forced east into the Roman empire by the Huns. See the accounts in Tolkien, C. 1960: xxii-xxviii and Turville-Petre 1976: xi-xiv, 82-83. For commentary on the verse, see Burrows 2017: 453.

¹⁰⁰⁰ *Hervarar saga*, ch. 12; Turville-Petre 1976: 60, 87 (note). While it might be natural – in the absence of accurate geographical information – to suppose that peoples were divided by barriers such as forests and mountain ranges which were in fact imaginary (as with the fictional Riphean mountains supposed by Classical geographers to divide the known western world from the unknown east), Myrkviðr may represent the same forest as denoted by the toponym *Holt* (= Holstein). As Turville-Petre notes (*loc. cit.*), however, an 11th-c. chronicler, Thietmar of Merseburg (in south Saxony), used *Miriquidui* of the Erzgebirge, a mountainous forest area between south-eastern Germany (south Saxony) and the north-western Czech Republic (Bohemia). However, it is possible that Saxons named this forest from the “Murk Wood” known to them from poetry and legend.

3.5.10 Myrgingas and Goths: Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that although the Ealhhild story and the connection of the Myrgingas with the Hundingas/Langobards are likely to be unhistorical fictions, these elements are interwoven into a tradition of Eormenrīc's extensive empire and many tributary kings, located on the littoral, to the east of Jutland. (At this point, the reader may like to refer to Maps 1 and 2 (pp. 18-19 above) and Maps 5, 6 and 8 (pp. 248, 251 above and 287 below) which encapsulate the arguments hitherto in pictorial form). I also argue that the ethnographic knowledge displayed in *Widsith* is an extraordinary conservation of the places in which the historical Goths, Bāningas and Burgundians were settled until the second century, when the Goths migrated east to the Crimea or the Sea of Azov. It is, of course, an anachronism that in *Widsith* the king of the Goths is Eormenrīc, who first came to notice in the 370s, when his people migrated west, into the Eastern Roman Empire, apparently in the face of pressure from the Huns to their east. But in the vernacular literary traditions preserved in *Widsith*, the Goths and their subject peoples were still in the hinterland of the Baltic. In *Widsith* several of the ethnonyms and names of kings associated with the Goths preserve linguistic evidence consistent with the Goths' sojourn near the Baltic, probably five hundred years before *Widsith* was composed. Yet this was mingled with traditions about the Lombards under Alboin, which were no more than a century-and-a-half old by the same time. It may be argued (to some extent at least) that in Anglo-Saxon literary traditions of the early eighth century the chronology of the period still often called the "Migration Age" (that is, of the third to the sixth centuries AD) was malleable, fluid or elastic – or some other metaphorical word which encapsulates the ability of English poets to manipulate time and to absorb and assimilate traditional narratives.

This section has mostly dealt with the story of Ealhhild and Eormenrīc rather than Offa, but I argue that their combined Langobard-Gothic story has been incorporated as part of the story of the Angles which is at the centre of *Widsith*. We have seen how a patent fiction of the Myrgingas (the Angles' enemy) as Langobards has been grafted into other legends about the Goths on the Baltic and their conflicts with the Huns which, if equally unhistorical, at least preserve memories which may go back as far as the second or third centuries AD (though also preserved in *Heiðreks saga* and the verse it contains).

Whatever was historically true or untrue, I suggest that the audience for *Widsith* was expected to have a command of the personnel and their nomenclature – kings (and the various forms of their names) and peoples, and also an awareness of the relevant topography, without this having to be spelled out to them. I also suggest that they were expected to have a grasp of

dynastic geopolitics, and to be able to understand the strategic importance of an alliance between the Myrgingas and the Ostrogoths, each of them a power destined to face an existential threat from their neighbours – and both, in tandem, unable to prevent Offa’s defeat of Æadgils and the seizure of his territory. Part of the history of the Myrgingas that the audience was supposed to understand was that, after Offa, they were never heard of again. The requirement to have a grasp of such complex details suggests that if *Widsith* included fictions, they had existed long enough for audiences to become familiar with and internalise them.

But it should also be noted, I argue, that the introduction of Ealhild as a significant character in *Widsith* means that a woman takes a central role, albeit one in which she – like several other female characters in heroic poetry – is destined to suffer. Indeed, I would further suggest that she is structurally central, since it is she who forms – via a series of notable anachronisms – the link between the Myrgingas who are part of the story of Angel and the Hrēþgotan who were from another narrative tradition. Thematically, however, as a *freoðowebbe*, she has a connection with the Offa story, since she is one of only two women in Old English literature to be described by this word (the other is the wife of Offa in *Beowulf*). The point of the *Widsith*-poet, in such a description, may have been that such marriages, though intended to increase security, sometimes brought dangerous consequences – that is, sometimes the *webbe* did not bring *frip*, or her fate even became a *casus belli*. If Ealhild was the *Widsith*-poet’s version of Sunilda in the *Getica* or Svanhildr in the *Poetic Edda*, this might further suggest an Anglo-Saxon narrative in which there were also brothers in the background who would avenge her murder on Eormenrīc (though we see no sign of *Hāmpēow or *Searula to act the parts of Ammius and Sarus in Jordanes or Hamðir and Sqrli in the *Edda*). In all his literary incarnations Eormenrīc met his downfall through the vengeance of those he had wronged; and in the account of him by Jordanes, it was his cruelty to a woman of a horse-people which led to his being crippled in a revenge attack by her brothers, at a time when he faced a threat from the Huns to the east – elements which I argue are still present in *Widsith*’s background narrative. And, as we shall now see, the “peace-weaver” marriage of Offa was one that also had significant consequences for Angel, not all of them good.

4: The Marriage of Offa

4.1 Introduction

It is the main argument of this thesis that at the centre of the narrative which forms the background to *Widsith* is the story of the heroic Offa of Angel. As we have seen, according to the *Widsith*-poet his achievements were even greater than those of Alewīh of the Danes (whom I have identified as Heremōd in *Beowulf*). When Bēowulf has killed Grendel, an unnamed Danish poet extemporises a song of praise about him comparing his feat to that of Sigemund the dragon-slayer, the greatest hero known since the glory-days of Heremōd (*Beowulf* 867-913). Such comparisons would suggest that Offa was among the greatest of the great, fighting his way to a sizeable kingdom and everlasting glory while still only a boy.

Offa was an Angle and thus an ancestor of the Anglian peoples who came to England from the mid-fifth century onwards. As we have seen, Offa's great-grandson Icel founded a dynasty that established itself in Mercia, which suggests that within three generations of Offa's death something happened to cause the Angles to migrate to Britain. This is an aspect of his story that is not explicitly mentioned in *Widsith* (Wīdsīþ the character did not know about it because it had not happened yet); and the closest *Beowulf* gets to providing information about the aftermath of Offa's reign is in opaque allusions to Ēomēr, who is identified in the Anglo-Saxon regnal lists as Offa's grandson, but who is identified in *Beowulf* only as some kinsman of persons called *Hemming* and *Gārmund* who are mentioned nowhere else.

The main focus of the Offa allusion in *Beowulf*, however, is not on his epic duel, but on his marriage, which, again, is alluded to in cloudy terms. As we shall see, many scholars have thought that the Offa-allusion may be of significant importance to some theme in *Beowulf* or to its structure, but no one has successfully argued what this was, and the episode is widely regarded as mystifying, perhaps even pointless and inept.

Therefore, we now come to the wider story of Offa of Angel and its *dramatis personae*, examining and attempting to reconcile the very disparate sources about his marriage, his dynastic connections and the geopolitical consequences of these for his country. In doing so, I shall argue that a coherent picture of the Offa story emerges, and that in order to understand the narrative presented in *Widsith*, its Anglo-Saxon audience must have known this tale, which

was one of romance and martial daring but ultimately collapse and failure – though leading to the foundation of England. We begin first with Offa’s mysterious queen.

4.2 Offa’s Marriage and *Beowulf*

The Offa allusion in *Beowulf* (ll. 1931b-1962) focuses on the marriage of Offa of Angel rather than any other of his exploits. We are told the following about his unusual bride (my text and punctuation):

	*Mōd þrȳðo wæg	1931
fremu folces cwēn	fīren-ondrysne.*	
Nāenig þæt dorste	dēor genēþan	1933
swæsra gesīða,	nefne sinfrēa,	
þæt hire an dæg	ēagum starede,	1935
ac him wælbende	weotode tealde	
handgewriþene;	hraþe seopðan wæs	1937
æfter mundgripe	mēce geþinged,	
þæt hit sceādenmæl	scȳran mōste,	1939
cwealmbealu cȳðan.	Ne bið swylc cwēnlic þēaw	
idese tō efnanne,	þēah ðe hīo ænlicu sȳ,	1941
þætte freoðuwebbe	fēores onsæce	
æfter ligetorne	lēofne mannan.	1943
Hūru þæt onhōhsnode	Hemminges mæg;	
ealodrincende	ōðer sēdan,	1945
þæt hīo lēodbealewa	læs gefremede,	
inwitnīða,	syððan ærest wearð	1947
gyfen goldhroden	geongum cēpan,	
æðelum dīore,	syððan hīo Offan flet	1949
ofer fealone flōd	be fæder lāre	
sīðe gesōhte;	ðær hīo syððan well	1951
in gumstōle,	gōde, mære,	
līfgesceafta	līfigende brēc,	1953
hīold hēahlufan	wið hæleþa brego,	
ealles moncynnes	mīne gefræge	1955
þone sēlestan	bī sām twēonum,	
eormencynnes.		195

[*...* – for discussion and interpretation, see pp. 258-70 below] No brave man among her own dear companions dared to approach – apart from her ever-present lord – such that he might look on her with the eyes of day, but that the death-bonds could be expected to be administered to him, twisted by hand [or “binding his hands”]. Quickly afterwards, following the arrest, the matter was settled with a sword, such that the variously-patterned one [*sc.* sword] was bound to cut, to advertise the foul harm. Such was not a queenly custom for a noble lady to accomplish (even though she may be singular) – that a peace-weaver should take the life, for a pretended insult, of a dear man. However, Hemming’s kinsman hamstrung that. Ale-drinkers¹⁰⁰¹ said something else: that she committed fewer acts of malicious spite

¹⁰⁰¹ See fn. 676 (pp. 175-76 above). It was suggested by Robinson (1985: 74-80) that a man who was *druncen* was not one who *was* drunk but one who *had* drunk – that is, he had accepted vassalage to a lord by drinking his ale and boasting of his future service. Thus, *ealodrincende* may mean, not mere quaffers of beer, but

as soon as she was given, laden with gold, to the young champion, after she later went to Offa's home, in accordance with her father's wisdom, over the dusky water. There, afterwards, on a throne, good and famous, she made fine use, while she lived, of the life allotted to her, retained the high regard of all mankind – as far as I heard – together with the prince of heroes, the best one of all the huge population between the two seas.

The *Beowulf*-poet's praise of Offa is as high as the *Widsith*-poet's. Offa was the greatest king in the southern Scandinavian world, between the North Sea and the Baltic Ocean. A man worth commemorating as an ancestor of the English.

4.2.1 The Name of Offa's Wife

The Offa-digression has been called “the most obscure in the whole poem”¹⁰⁰² and “one of the most difficult passages in the poem”.¹⁰⁰³ It begins, with great abruptness, at l. 1931b, and it has been a particular source of critical perplexity that the *Beowulf*-poet seems to switch – in the course of a single line of verse – from talking about Hygelāc's very good wife Hygd to Offa's very bad wife. Did he mean a parallel or a contrast? Why was this so sudden? To add to the mystery, we cannot even be sure from the text what the name of Offa's wife was, or whether she was named at all.¹⁰⁰⁴

The text which may or may not contain her name reads as follows in the *Beowulf* MS: <mod þryðo wæg fremu folces cwen firen ondrysne> (= ll. 1931b-32). Early scholars thought that her name was *Þryðo*, which was first advanced by Grundtvig, re-argued by Klaeber and Holthausen,¹⁰⁰⁵ and has most recently been followed by Swanton.¹⁰⁰⁶ Chambers (following Schücking) thought it was *Þryð*.¹⁰⁰⁷ Klaeber changed his mind by the time of his third edition of *Beowulf*, in which (with some qualms) he read her name as *Mōdþryðo*.¹⁰⁰⁸ The suggestion

thegns in the royal hall of Offa whose loyalty was symbolised by their ale-drinking – a situation where all was as it should be, in contrast to the murderous place his queen had come from.

¹⁰⁰² Chambers 1921: 36.

¹⁰⁰³ Swanton 2010: xlix.

¹⁰⁰⁴ For a summary, see *Kl4*: 224-26. In this section I do not propose to provide anywhere near exhaustive coverage of the arguments for or against particular views.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Klaeber 1905 and (following him) Holthausen 1931: 341.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Swanton calls her *Thryth*, preserving the MS reading of 1931b as *Mod Þryðo wæg* and translating 1931b-32 as “Thryth, imperious queen of the nation, showed haughtiness, a terrible sin” (2010: 141-42).

¹⁰⁰⁷ Chambers printed “Mōd Þryðe [ne] wæg”, following the emendations proposed by Schücking and Holthausen, and translated it as “She [Hygd], brave queen of the folk, had not the mood, the pride of Thryth” (Wyatt and Chambers 1914: 94 and fn.). *Þryðe* was the regular gen. sg. of the appellative *þryð*, here taken by Chambers as a monothematic name. Chambers called her *Thryth* in his 1921 “Introduction to *Beowulf*”. Orchard (2003: 222-23) calls her *Thryth*; and he parses *Hygd* as the subject of the verb-phrase *mōd Þryðo wæg*, giving the meaning that Hygd weighed up or pondered the mood or pride of Thryth.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Klaeber 1950: 198-99.

of Axel Kock that it was *Fremu* – which Klaeber regarded as “startling”¹⁰⁰⁹ – has been adopted by Fulk and the editors of *K14* (of whom Fulk was one),¹⁰¹⁰ and most recently by Shippey in his 2023 translation (although the commentator Neidorf says she is nameless in the text because the first *Beowulf*-scribe omitted her name inadvertently through eye-skip).¹⁰¹¹

Other scholars have argued that, deliberately, the poet did not name her.¹⁰¹² Namelessness has been described by Shippey as “the simplest if at the same time least attractive solution to the crux”,¹⁰¹³ reflecting a view that such an important character ought to have a name. Neidorf (sharing a longstanding critical view) doubts that the poet would “abruptly transition from praising Hygd to condemning an ostensibly anonymous character”.¹⁰¹⁴ Although the simplest explanation is usually to be preferred, the idea of her namelessness as a solution to the textual crux has resulted in the far-fetched argument that Offa’s queen was not named because she was the same person as Hygd, who was first married to Offa and then to Hygelāc.¹⁰¹⁵ This, however, is not compatible with the conventional understanding of historical chronology, according to which Offa was from the late fourth or early fifth century – before any Angles arrived in Britain – and Hygelāc from the beginning of the sixth, after the *Adventus*.¹⁰¹⁶ Even if the *Beowulf* poet believed in another chronology, this does not agree with his text, which tells us that Offa’s wife reformed and enjoyed his high regard for the rest of her life as they reigned together (ll. 1951-57a), whereas Hygd is described as *swīðe geong* “very young” (l. 1926b) at Hygelāc’s court. Therefore, this argument can be safely rejected.¹⁰¹⁷

However, we need not resign ourselves to her anonymity if there are plausible grounds for identifying her name, which I shall suggest there are, and that it is likely to be *Prȳðo* – the oldest of the suggestions – for the same reasons as argued by Klaeber in 1905,¹⁰¹⁸ but with reference to more recent scholarship based on a larger corpus of similar names.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Klaeber 1950: 198 (with references).

¹⁰¹⁰ Fulk 2004; *K14*: 224-26.

¹⁰¹¹ Shippey and Neidorf 2023: 167 (Shippey’s translation), 310-11 (Neidorf’s commentary). Leneghan thinks it likely that a scribe omitted text containing the name (2020: 78-79, fn. 166).

¹⁰¹² E.g. Weiskott 2011: 5-6 and (following him) Shaw 2020: 141. Weiskott rejected *Fremu* chiefly because “Nowhere else in *Beowulf* is a proper name varied within a half-line” (*ibid.*: 5).

¹⁰¹³ Shippey 2010: [unpaginated].

¹⁰¹⁴ Shippey and Neidorf 2023: 310. See also Fulk 2004. The transition would not be so “abrupt”, or its abruptness would be unimportant, to an audience who knew these characters well.

¹⁰¹⁵ See *K14*: 224-25, with references.

¹⁰¹⁶ Hygelāc is usually regarded as the only character in *Beowulf* to be recorded by reliable history and thus to be datable. Gregory of Tours briefly describes the raid on Frankish Frisia by a king of the “Danes” called *Chlochilaichus* (only one of several spellings in various MSS) who was killed by Theudebert, the son of the then king Theuderic (r. 511-34). See *Historia Francorum*, III.3 (Krusch and Levison 1901: 99 and textual notes). This is usually thought to be the same disastrous expedition to Frisia as that by Hygelāc, referred to several times in *Beowulf*.

¹⁰¹⁷ See also Klaeber (1905: 451), for whom its impossibility “leaps to the eye”.

¹⁰¹⁸ Klaeber 1905: 452.

4.2.2 The *Fremu* Question

However, first I address the argument for *Fremu* as the name of Offa's wife, since this has been advocated by some notable recent authorities.¹⁰¹⁹ Firstly, it leaves the difficulties with regard to the text <mod pryðo> unresolved. Secondly, while the name-element *fram/from* is found in many names in England and on the Continent (< *fram* (adj.) “brave, notable”), the *i*-mutated stem *frem* is not found in any names. The Old English noun *fremu* derives its *i*-mutated stem by derivation from the Proto-Germanic feminine abstract noun **framīn*, which gave rise to the dual forms *fremu* and *freme* in Old English,¹⁰²⁰ and *fremo* and *freme* in Old Frisian.¹⁰²¹ However, I do not consider it likely that an abstract noun *fremu* (“use, advantage”) would be a personal name in Old English (and the belief that it could is result of the Redinesque “etymological” analysis of monothematic names as lexemes).¹⁰²² Thirdly, we shall shortly examine a type of monothematic female name constructed with the addition of final /-u/ (for example *Pingu*). But *Fremu* cannot be such a name, since final /-u/ would not explain the /-e-/ in its stem, and (as just noted) ***frem* was not recorded as a name-theme. Fourthly, the form *fremu* is probably an adjective. It is consistent with the feminine nominative singular form of a short-stem *i*-stem adjective *freme* (from Proto-Germanic **framiz* “notable”?).¹⁰²³ This adjective is recorded by *DOE* in two Old English instances (one of them from *Beowulf* 1931); but it is also attested by a reflex *frim* in Middle English and English dialects.¹⁰²⁴ However, Anglo-Saxon names were declined as nouns not as adjectives. Finally, there are also the arguments of Weiskott (2011) and Shaw (2020) (see fn. 1012 above). Consequently, I share Klaeber's view that the suggestion of *Fremu* as the name of Offa's queen is not only mistaken but “startling”, and that we should look elsewhere for her name.

4.2.3 The *Prȳþu* Question

Klaeber acknowledged that it had been argued that *prȳðu* was morphologically impossible as a nominative form, which ought to have been *prȳð*,¹⁰²⁵ the form to be expected of a regular Old English feminine *i*-stem with a long root vowel. And in *DOEC*, whether as an appellative

¹⁰¹⁹ E.g. Fulk 2004, the editors of *Kl4* (2008) and Shippey in Shippey and Neidorf 2023.

¹⁰²⁰ See the nominative examples in *DOE* s.v. *fremu*.

¹⁰²¹ Köbler, *AFrisWB*, s.v. *fremo*.

¹⁰²² I argue against this below, at p. 264 (and fn. 1045), and in the case of *Hygd* at p. 345 (and fn. 1364).

¹⁰²³ However, see Orel 2003: 111, s.v. **framaz* (an *a*-stem) > OE *fram* “valiant, stout, firm”.

¹⁰²⁴ See *DOE*, s.v. *fremu*.

¹⁰²⁵ Klaeber 1905: 450, referring to the argument of Hart 1903. Chambers also regarded *Prȳðo* as an impossible nominative form – whether common or proper noun – because of the presence of the terminal /-o/ (= /-u/) following a long stem-vowel (Wyatt and Chambers 1914: 94, fn).

meaning “strength” or as a common deutertheme in female names, *prȳð* behaves like a regular feminine *i*-stem: it is endingless in the nominative singular, takes the ending /-e/ in singular oblique cases, and does not take the ending /-u/ or its allophone /-o/ anywhere in its declension – except perhaps in *Beowulf* 1931. This evidence would seem to rule out *Mōðprȳðo* or *mōðprȳðo* as a possible, morphologically regular form. Omission of the terminal /-o/ as a putative scribal error does not solve the problem, since the resulting half-line – whether *Mōðprȳð wæg* or *mōð prȳð wæg* – would be metrically too short. Thus, *prȳð* must have had some ending which made it a disyllable. While it is possible that a scribe mistook <prȳðe> for *prȳðo*, or read and intended to write *prȳðe* but wrote *prȳðo* instead, the morphological enormity produced is unique in the corpus of Old English and may be as likely as a modern author writing *eggses* instead of *eggs*.¹⁰²⁶

In his 1905 note on the *prȳðo* episode, Klaeber suggested (albeit somewhat tentatively) that *Prȳðo* (= *Prȳðu*) might be a *Kurzform* (“short form”) of a dithematic name such as **Prȳðgifu* or **Prȳðswīð*, comparable, for example, to a male short-form name *Cūþa*, derived from a dithematic name such as *Cūþwine*.¹⁰²⁷ In support, he cited two examples from *DLV*, *Þingu* and *Ēadu*, the latter of which he suggested might be from *Ēadburg* or *Ēadgifu*.¹⁰²⁸ He noted that Holthausen had also supported *Prȳðo* as a name, albeit referring to the evidence of Old High German names. But, as we have seen, in his third edition of *Beowulf* Klaeber abandoned this suggestion in favour of *Mōðprȳðo*.¹⁰²⁹ This argument has not been restated recently,¹⁰³⁰ but there is now further evidence from the Anglo-Saxon onomasticon, and scholarly analysis of it, which gives us reason to query sceptical views like the following:¹⁰³¹

The impulse to see a woman’s name in MS *mod prȳðo* stems in large part from comparison with the tale told of (Quen-)Drida in the St. Albans narrative [...] Yet the wife of Offa II actually was named Cyneþrȳþ, a name of which *Quendrida* is obviously either a corruption or a calque, whence *Drida* was derived by transparent etymological back-formation.

¹⁰²⁶ Cf. the formulaic half-line *higeprȳðe wæg* “exercised strength of mind” (*Genesis* A, 1, 2240b), in which *higeprȳð* would be practically synonymous with *mōðprȳð*, if it were an appellative. Similar formulaic half-lines are: *modsorge wæg* (*Elene* 61b, *Guthlac* 1051b); *gnornsorge wæg* (*Elene* 655b, *Guthlac* 1335b); *hygesorge wæg* (*Guthlac* 1009b); *ne hē sorge wæg* (*Guthlac* 1137b); *ond on hreþre wæg // micle mōðceare* (*Guthlac* 1341b-42a); *hetenīðas wæg* (*Beowulf* 152b); *līgegesan wæg* (*Beowulf* 2780b); *þām þe on brēostum wæg / byrnende lufan* (*Death of Edgar* 20). The verb *wegan* meant “to carry”, and its use in these b-lines (except the *Death of Edgar*) seems to suggest the carrying of burdensome emotions.

¹⁰²⁷ Chambers did not follow Klaeber in his own text of *Beowulf*, but he conceded that *Prȳðo* was “perhaps conceivable as a diminutive of some form like *Prȳðgifu*, as *Ēadu* for *Ēadgifu*” (Wyatt and Chambers 1914: 94, fn).

¹⁰²⁸ Klaeber 1905: 452.

¹⁰²⁹ See *Kl4*: 224, with references.

¹⁰³⁰ Holthausen (1931) argued for it. Swanton (2010) accepts it without argument.

¹⁰³¹ *Kl4*: 224-25. As we see below, this gets it the wrong way round: the coinage *Quendrida* in *VOD* was a calque on *Cyneþrȳþ* but based on the inherited name *Drida* (= *Prȳðo*).

The *K14* editors also reject Klaeber's suggestion on the grounds that "a hypocorism like *Ēadu* for *Ēadburg* or *Ēadgifu* [as in *DLV*] seems out of place in the present context".¹⁰³² However, it is difficult to see how this statement can be justified, either in the Offa-digression or in *Beowulf* generally. It is one of the principal arguments of this thesis that *Widsith*, like *Beowulf*, features a range of different types of names, including hypocorisms. *Offa* itself – as we have seen – is a hypocorism. In *Beowulf*, the name *Hrēpel*, the king of the Gēats who was Bēowulf's grandfather is probably a hypocorism, derived from Germanic **Hrōþila*, i.e. the prototheme **Hrōþ* + the diminutive suffix *-ila*. He is also referred to by other apparently hypocoristic forms: *Hrædla* (l. 454) and *Hrædel* (l. 1485). Even *Grendel* may be a hypocoristic diminutive, from **grand* "harm" + *-ila* ("the harmer").¹⁰³³ And hypocoristic name-forms were frequent in heroic tradition, to judge from the number of them in *Widsith* and *Beowulf*, borne by kings, queens and nobles.¹⁰³⁴ This picture is consistent with the frequency of hypocoristic forms in Anglo-Saxon documents, usually of the most official stamp – charters, official records of synods, regnal lists and *libri vitae* – by *milites*, *duces*, *magistri*, priests, abbots, bishops, archbishops, princes, kings (particularly early ones) and queens. Even if we were to accept the argument that the heroic nature of the Offa story did not permit a hypocoristic form, we cannot be sure that *Prȳþu* was actually hypocoristic: it may in fact have had the form of a type of female monothematic name given at birth. In such a case, the only difference between *Fremu* and *Prȳþu* would be the grammatical fact that *fremu* was an unmodified feminine appellative while *Prȳþu* was the endingless feminine appellative *prȳð* with */-u/* added. In these circumstances, the only objection to *Prȳþu* would be that it offended against a rule which determined that a monothematic female name which was based on a feminine appellative ought to retain the form of the appellative – ruling in *Fremu* from *fremu* but ruling out *Prȳþu* from *prȳþ*. However, there is no good evidence for such a rule.

The monothematic female names cited by Klaeber and Holthausen have been considered by Okasha in her study of Anglo-Saxon women's names, under the heading "Names whose Origins are or may be Old English Words".¹⁰³⁵ She notes a number with the standard

¹⁰³² *K14*: 225.

¹⁰³³ There is a copious literature on the etymology of the name *Grendel*, which I do not examine here, but note that ON *grand* "injury, damage, hurt" (*ONP*, s.v.) and OE *grondorlēas* (*Juliana* 271) "innocent, guileless" (*DOE*, s.v. *grandorlēas*) – i.e. "not harming" – suggest a Gmc stem **grand*, meaning "harm", and thus an apt meaning for *Grendel* (< **Grandila*), the "little harmer" or "harmful one". One might add *Hæðcyn*, if it is from Gmc prototheme **hap(u)* + compound suffix **-kin* (but see Shaw 2020: 21-23).

¹⁰³⁴ In *Beowulf* there are also the following weak hypocorisms: *Breca*, *Fitela*, *Frōda*, *Hālgā*, *Hāma* and *Onela*. In *Widsith* there are: *Ætla*, *Beadeca*, *Becca*, *Breoca*, *Eaha*, *Elsa*, *Emerca*, *Fridla*, *Gifca*, *Hēhca*, *Meaca*, *Sceafa*, *Seafola*, *Secca*, *Sifeca*, *Wada*, *Wala*, *Widia*, *Witta* and *Wudga*.

¹⁰³⁵ Okasha 2016: 84-87.

weak feminine nominative ending /-e/ (the equivalent of the weak masculine ending /-a/).¹⁰³⁶ She cites three examples where the name has the same form as a strong feminine appellation: *Cwēn* “queen”, *Hild* “battle” and *Sweostor* “sister”. *Sweostor* is not a recorded name-theme, but it has a masculine counterpart in *Brother* (*PASE* ×5), suggesting that the name of a family-relationship was a name in itself. But *cwēn* and *hild* are name-themes in the onomasticon and thus like the class of endingless male names with the morphology of strong *a*- or *i*-stems, such as *Beorn*, *Beorht*, *Cild* and *Mon(n)/Man(n)* (all *PASE*), which are monothematic *Beorn*-types derived from themes in the onomasticon (rather than appellatives selected at random from the lexis).¹⁰³⁷

Okasha identified a third class of female name, with the ending /-u/-/-o/: *B(e)adu*, *Giefu*, *Æpelu*, *Lufu*, *Be(a)gu*, *Pingu*, *Eadu*, *Eadlu*, *Eafu*, *Bettu*, *Heiu* and *Æbbino*.¹⁰³⁸ Many of these come from the ninth-century entries in *DLV* (to which we can add *Beonnu*).¹⁰³⁹ Okasha thinks that the origins of these monothematic names lie in Old English nouns, adjectives, hypocorisms or nicknames, but is uncertain as to which in each case, or generally.¹⁰⁴⁰ In the analysis of Insley and Rollason, the *DLV* examples are mostly said to be hypocorisms (for instance, *Ēafu* a female version of *Ēafa*, derived from a name like *Ēanflæd* or *Ēadgifu*, for example) or derived from known name-themes, like *Pingu* from *Ping*.¹⁰⁴¹

Among these we find the following examples derived from grammatically strong appellatives:

- Bēgu*, *Bēagu* from *bēag* (masc.) “ring”
- Pingu* from *ping* (neut.) “assembly”
- Ēadu* from *ēad* (neut.) “luck, wealth”
- Beadu*, *Badu* from *beadu* (fem.) “battle”
- Giefu* from *gyfu/gifu* (fem.) “gift”

¹⁰³⁶ *Bote*, *Nunne*, *Wæle*, *Cille*, *Cyre*, *Beorhte*, *Æse*, *Sige*, *Golde*, *Gode*, *Ealde*, *Leofē*, *Eahhe*, *Æffe*, *Hille*, *Tove*, *Tole*, *Hwite*, *Milde*, *Swete*, *Swipe*, *Ricule*, *Tate*, *Dunne*, *Beonne*. I note that, for instance, *Nunne* is not related to the word for “nun”, but is more likely to be a female equivalent of *Nunna*, from a name with *nōþ* as a theme (see p. 102 above). Several of the others (*Tole*, *Tove*, *Eahhe*, *Hille*, *Æse* and *Ricule*) require further argument, but may be suspected to derive from hypocoristic stems with or without suffixation.

¹⁰³⁷ One has to doubt that the name *Man(n)* was given because it meant “man”.

¹⁰³⁸ *Beadu*, *Giefu* and *Lufu* are exceptions, since they have the form of the appellation *beadu* “battle” (a *wa*-stem found only in compounds and dithematic names), and *gifu* “gift” and *lufu* “love”, feminine *ō*-stems.

¹⁰³⁹ See Rollason and Rollason 2007: *Þingu* (= *Pingu*, II, 183-84, 9th c.), *Bettu* (II, 169, 9th c.), *Æbbino* (II, 166, 9th c.), *Eadu* (II, 174, 9th c.), *Eafu* (II, 174-75, 9th c.), *Badu* (= *Beadu*, II, 168, 9th c.), *Eðilu* (= *Æpelu*, II, 167, 9th c.), and *Beonnu* (II, 169, 9th c.).

¹⁰⁴⁰ Okasha 2016: esp. 89.

¹⁰⁴¹ Rollason and Rollason 2007: see refs in fn. 1039 above. I note here that *Ēafu* from *Ēadgifu* would be an example of a “head-and-tail” type hypocorism.

But, again, these are not random appellatives: they are relatively common name-themes in the Anglo-Saxon onomasticon, which suggests a connection between name-themes and suffixation with /-u/.¹⁰⁴²

Others may be derived differently. *Lufu* may be derived from *lufu* (fem.) “love”. However, Briggs relates it to the male names *Lufa* and *Lēofa*.¹⁰⁴³ It is therefore possible that *Lufu* is not from an appellative, but from *luf*, the reduced form of the name-theme *lēof* occurring in hypocorisms. This tends to be confirmed by Colman’s identification of the female names *Ælfleof* and *Eadleofu*. She considers the possibility that the form *-leofu* is evidence of the adoption of a grammatically feminine adjectival inflection, analogous to the noun-derived examples with the ending /-u/.¹⁰⁴⁴ However, *lēof* was a common adjective with a grammatically “heavy” first syllable, the feminine nominative singular form of which ought to have been *lēof* not ***lēofu* (which might have appeared very ill-formed to an Old English speaker). Also, Anglo-Saxon male names with deuterothermes derived from adjectives, such as *-beald*, *-heard* and *-hēah*, were declined like *a*-stem nouns, not like adjectives. Thus, I suggest, *Ēadlēofu* has final /-u/ as an affix to a name-theme rather than as a regular inflection of an noun or adjective; and the morphosyntactic function of final /-u/ was to indicate feminine gender and status as a proper noun, that is, a name.

Æpelu is theoretically from one of four origins. It was from: (1) *æpel-*, a noun meaning “noble” occurring as a prefix in OE + /-u/; or (2), like *Ēðilu*, from a noun **ǣðil* (> *ǣpel/ēpel*) “home, homeland” + /-u/; or (3) it was the feminine nominative singular form *æpelu* of the *i*-stem adjective *æpele* “noble”; or (4) it was the abstract noun *æpelu* “nobility”. While we are hampered by the lack of non-nominative forms in order to see whether such female names were declined like adjectives rather than nouns, as just noted above, male names with adjectivally-derived deuterothermes were always declined as nouns, not adjectives; and abstract nouns do not seem to be evidenced as names in the onomasticon.¹⁰⁴⁵ On the other hand, *Æpel-* was a very common Old English prototheme and first element in compounds, and the best

¹⁰⁴² Cf. the following weak female names which are derived from name-themes (mostly protothemes): *Bote*, *Wæle*, *Beorhte*, *Sige*, *Golde*, *Gode*, *Ealde*, *Leofe*, *Hwite*, *Milde*, *Swete*, *Swiþe* and *Dunne*, from *bōt*, *walh/wæl*, *beorht*, *sige*, *gold*, *gōd*, *eald*, *hwīt*, *milde*, *swiþe* and *dūn*. The correlation between hypocoristic form and pre-existing name-themes is evident here.

¹⁰⁴³ See Briggs 2024: 198-99. It would also be related to the *Ossa*-types with geminated consonants, *Luffa* and *Luffe*. For the hypocoristic transformation of stem-diphthong /ēo/ > /u/ see pp. 102-03, 108-09 above.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Colman 2014: 117. See *PASE*, *Eadleofu* (10th c.) and *Eadlufu* (11th c.).

¹⁰⁴⁵ See p. 260 above, with respect to *Fremu*; and p. 345 below, with respect to *Hygd*. Things might be different today, with girls or women called *Faith*, *Charity*, *Honor* and so forth.

explanation is that in names and compounds it was derived from a noun,¹⁰⁴⁶ and thus *Æpelu* was a *Beorn*-type monothematic name in which *Æpel* was grammatically nominal, and the final /-u/ was the same morphosyntactic marker as in the ending of *Ēadlēofu*.

The examples of *Eafu*, *Bettu* and *Beonnu* correspond to weak female and weak male versions, and I suggest they are based on hypocoristic stems. *Ēafu* (which puzzled Okasha) I regard as analogous to a *Tubba*-type hypocoristic stem, *Ēaf*-, as perhaps from *Ēanflāed* (*PASE* × 2), and thus *Ēafu* corresponds to the female names *Ēafe* and *Ēafa*.¹⁰⁴⁷ *Bettu* corresponds to the male name *Betti*, which I suggest is from a hypocoristic stem *Bett*-, which is derived either from *berht*- or *bēt*-.¹⁰⁴⁸ *Beonnu* corresponds to weak female *Beonne* and male *Beonna* (both *PASE*), from the hypocoristic stem *Beonn*-, transparently derived from *beorn*. *Ēadlu*, I suggest, derives from the theme *ēad* + the suffix *-ill/-el* + the suffix *-u*;¹⁰⁴⁹ and *Æbbino* from the hypocoristic stem *Æbb*- + the suffix *-in/-īn* + the suffix *-u* (or + a compounded suffix **-inu/*-īnu*). Its stem is the same as in the weak female name *Æbbe* (*PASE* × 6),¹⁰⁵⁰ which may be derived hypocoristically from: (a) the theme *ælf*, as a *Totta*-type, with syncope or assimilation: *Ælf* > *Æff*- (or > *Æbb*-, with /b/ as an allophone of /f/); or (b) as a *Tubba*-type from dithematic names such as *Æpelburh* or *Ælfburh*, or *Æpelflāed* or *Ælfflāed* (all are in *PASE*). Bede's *Heiu* (*Hegiu* in the Old English version of *HE*) is a difficult form.¹⁰⁵¹ But the sequence /iu/ cannot be an inflexional ending, and the adverb *giū* ("ago", "of old") is highly unlikely as a deutertheme.¹⁰⁵² The best guess is that it derives from the common name-theme *hēh* (the Northumbrian form of *hēah* "high") with the insertion of medial /-i-/ for euphony, causing the terminal /-h/ to become voiced and palatalised > *Hēgi* + *u*.¹⁰⁵³

¹⁰⁴⁶ See Kroonen 2013: 40, *s.n.* **apala*- "nature", occurring as a simplex in ON *aðal* "nature, disposition", OS *athal* "noble clan", and OHG *adal* "nobility, race".

¹⁰⁴⁷ Okasha 2016: 84 (related speculatively to OE *eafop* "power"). See p. 119 above for the more likely derivation from e.g. *Ēanflāed* (as suggested in Rollason and Rollason 2007: II, 174-75).

¹⁰⁴⁸ See Müller 1901: 28, 64, 122. The fem. sg. nom. of the adj. *berht* would be *berht*, not ***berhtu*.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Though it is possible that the consonant cluster /dl/ or the terminal /u/ caused breaking or back-mutation, **Adl-/ *Adlu* > *Eadlu*, and the original theme was *æpel*. It may also be a *Tubba*-type from e.g. *Ēadlēofu* or *Ēadlufu* (both *PASE*).

¹⁰⁵⁰ See the various forms recorded by Okasha 2016: 16-17 (including *Æbbino*).

¹⁰⁵¹ See Okasha (2016: 39, 84) who says that this name is recorded as a Latin ablative *Heiu* (*HE*, IV.23; Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 406) and an OE dative *Hegiu* (*HE*, IV.23; Miller 1890-98: II, 332), related possibly to *hēah* "high". But *Heiu* is not a possible Latin ablative form. Charter S328 (858) names a Kentish *Hega*. Redin (1919: 97, 98) relates this to *Haecga* (S50 (765) and *Heca* (S1474 (1045×46)). But the basis of his analysis (*gehagian* "to please" and "*haga*" hedge) and comparisons is very sketchy.

¹⁰⁵² Though see the odd name *Giuhæp* (*DLV*; Rollason and Rollason 2007: II, 120-21).

¹⁰⁵³ As perhaps in Kentish *Hega* (see fn. 1051 above). See also *DLV Hegaer* (Rollason and Rollason 2007: II, 124, *s.n.* *Heahgær*, for which no interpretation is offered, but I suggest it is from *hēh* (= *hēah*) + *gær* (= *gār*). Another possibility is that /-iu/ was a female hypocoristic suffix in its own right. Cf. (rare) male names with /-ia/, /-ea/: *Æscea* (*PASE*), *Albia* (*DLV*) and *Sceldwea* (*ASC MSS AB*, *s.a.* 856).

But, I suggest, we can go further. Two other, potentially relevant, anomalous phenomena appear in female names. The first is identifiable in *Raegumaeld*, *Inguburg* and *Alduburg* (all *DLV*). In these cases (if these readings in Stevenson (1841) are correct),¹⁰⁵⁴ the protothemes seem related to the recorded protothemes *rægen*, *ing/inge/ingi* and *eald/ald*,¹⁰⁵⁵ but with the addition of the non-etymological ending */-u/*, or its insertion into the dithematic name. The second is the addition of the ending *-u* to dithematic female names in a very small number of cases. Colman develops the analyses in Okasha (2016)¹⁰⁵⁶ and cites female <Oslafe> as a genitive singular of an unrecorded nominative **Ōslāf*,¹⁰⁵⁷ a grammatically feminine name with a deutertheme almost always found in male names.¹⁰⁵⁸ However, genitive *Ōslāfe* is also consistent with an nominative form **Ōslāfu* (comparable to *Ēadlēofu* in adding */-u/* to a long-vowel stem that would have lost its terminal vowel in the pre-literary period).

Another woman's name with a grammatically feminine deutertheme usually found in male names is <Leofdæge>, another genitive form, based on the masculine *a*-stem appellative *dæg* "day".¹⁰⁵⁹ This is consistent with a nominative in **Lēofdagu*. The existence of such putative nominatives might be supported by <Eadulfu>, from a Latin charter S448 (of 939) which Colman analyses as nominative *Ēadulfu*, with a deutertheme derived from masculine *wulf*, a very common name-theme, especially in male names.¹⁰⁶⁰ She also notes *Cwemelīcu* as an example of a feminine deutertheme derived from a neuter *a*-stem, *līc* "body", rather than as a feminine nominative singular form of a putative adjective **cwēmelīc* ("pleasant"?).¹⁰⁶¹ And we have dealt with *Ēadlēofu*.

This evidence, I suggest, is sufficient to establish that the typically feminine strong ending */-u/* could be added to the ending of women's names, thus marking them as feminine. In all cases the */-u/* was suffixed to an element from the onomasticon, whether this consisted of a name-theme, a hypocoristic stem, a hypocoristic name with a suffix, and to the prototheme or the deutertheme of a dithematic name. As a strong counterpart to weak female names with

¹⁰⁵⁴ Stevenson 1841: 3. However, see Rollason and Rollason 2007: *Rægumeld* is read as *Rægnmeld* (II, 144); *Inguburg* (II, 133); *Alduburg* is read as *Aldburg* (II, 108).

¹⁰⁵⁵ *Rægen* from Gmc **ragina-* "decision" (neut.); *Ing* from the theonym, historically a masculine *wa*-stem **Ingwaz* (see Ball 1960), though unlikely to have retained a vestigial */-u/* by the literary period; *ald/eald* the OE adjective "old".

¹⁰⁵⁶ Colman 2014: 114-15. Okasha (2016) was originally published in 2011.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Cf. Okasha 2016: 111-12

¹⁰⁵⁸ In the Anglo-Saxon onomasticon almost every person with the deutertheme *-lāf* is male, and this element is declined like a masculine *a*-stem, though *lāf* was a feminine *ō*-stem when used as an appellative. For rare female examples see Okasha 2016: 59, 70, 93, 100.

¹⁰⁵⁹ See Colman 2014: 110, 113.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Colman 2014: 115.

¹⁰⁶¹ Colman 2014: 115-16. *DOE* has *cwēme* "fit", *gecwēme* "pleasant" and *cȳmlic* "comely". While *-lic* may have been adjectival, the addition of */-u/* made it grammatically nominal (and it was not *līc* "body").

the ending /-e/, it may be that they were a strong female counterpart to strong male monothematic names ending in /-i/, like *Betti*, *Bisi* or *Coifi* (all *PASE*), declined like masculine *i*-stems. It is much less likely, I suggest, that female names – any more than male names – were selected randomly from the lexis, whether as appellatives or adjectives, and declined accordingly.

Therefore, both *Prȳðo* and *Mōðþrȳðo* were morphologically possible in the grammar of the Anglo-Saxon onomasticon. The only substantial lexical or morphological argument against it is that *þrȳð* was grammatically feminine as an appellative and a deuterotheme and so did not need any further marking as feminine – like *Cwēn* and *Hild*. But, contrary to this, the point should be made that many of the generative features of hypocorism identified in this study (and *Prȳþu* has a good claim to be a *Kurzform* hypocorism) are optional. Thus, while it might be argued that *þrȳþ* could exist as a female name (as a *Beorn*-type), there is no corresponding rule that states that it *should* exist as such, rather than appearing as *Prȳþu*, with optional /-u/.

But there is a further argument in support of *Prȳþu* as the most likely form of the name of Offa's wife. *þrȳþ* was a very common deuterotheme in Anglo-Saxon female names, appearing in insular Latin texts as *driuda*, *drida* and *dryda*, among other forms.¹⁰⁶² *PASE* records it as a prototheme in only two male names.¹⁰⁶³ It was also a common name-theme in Continental Germanic names: Förstemann records *Drudi* (from Germanic **þrūþiz*) as a very common name element, as both a prototheme and deuterotheme, in both male and female names. He also records many monothematic forms, such as male *Trudi*, *Trut* and *Drudo*, and female *Druda*.¹⁰⁶⁴ These are not recorded in Anglo-Saxon England (though they are the origin of the modern female name *Trudy*, a later importation from German). But the story of Offa, and the names of its characters, may have originated in Continental Europe and conformed to naming traditions which were more frequent in the Continental Germanic than in the Anglo-Saxon onomasticon. Thus, a monothematic female name may well have been inherited by the Anglo-Saxons from the West Germanic literary tradition of Offa as **Prūþā* or strong **Prūþu* (derived from the theme *þrūþ* + weak *-ā* or strong *-u*), or as **Prȳþā* or **Prȳþu* if the theme had

¹⁰⁶² E.g. *Etheldriuda*, queen of Mercia in S209 (862); *Etheldrida*, *Ætheldryda*, *Ædedrida*, saint, abbess of Ely and queen of Northumbria (*PASE* *Æthelthryth* 2, *Fragmentary Annals of Ireland*, *Vita Oswaldi*, *ASC MS F*). The other forms give the stem-vocalisation as <i> or <y> and the initial and terminal consonants as <d>, <ð>, <th> or <þ>. Terminations are variable: as Latin singular nominative /-a/ or oblique /-e/ (= Latin /-ae/), or OE singular oblique /-e/. All the Continental Gmc forms have the stem vocalisation /u/ (Förstemann 1900: 421-27).

¹⁰⁶³ *PASE*, s.nn. *Thrythred* and *Thrythwulf*. See also variants in *Thrudgar* and *Thruthgar*.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Förstemann (1900: 421-27).

been *i*-mutated (as with Proto-West Germanic **prūþi* “power” > Old English *prȳþ*). Thus *Prȳþu* might be an archaic survival from the pre-*Adventus* form of the Offa-story. However, the evidence presented above, I suggest, also supports the contention that the form *Prȳðo* (= *Prȳþu*) exhibits a feature of Old English onomastics by which monothematic names with the form of appellatives (possibly derived from dithematic names as *Beorn*-types) could be given the ending /-u/ to distinguish them not only as female but also as names.¹⁰⁶⁵ I suggest, therefore, that the interpretation of the name of Offa’s wife as *Prȳðo* agrees with Continental naming traditions and Anglo-Saxon morphology, and that it was no different from, say, *Frederick* – a name with a foreign origin adapted to English orthography. This argument has the side benefits of crediting the *Beowulf*-poet with some onomastic and prosodical sophistication, and of requiring no emendation of the MS.

Klaeber (1905) also argued that there was evidence for *Prȳðo* in *Drida*, the name of the evil wife of Offa II in *VOD*. *Drida* was from *Prȳðo*, and *Quendrida* (her *aka*) was an attempt to reconcile *Drida* with the name of the real queen of Offa II, *Cyneprȳþ*. This is contrary to the argument of the *K14* editors, who assert that *Drida* was “a transparent etymological back-formation” from *Quendrida*, which was “either a corruption or a calque” of *Cyneprȳþ*.¹⁰⁶⁶

However, the element *prȳð* was so common in Anglo-Saxon female names (and the range of female deuterothermes so constricted) that a coincidence of *Prȳþu* as the legendary wife of Offa I and *Cyneprȳþ* as the real-life wife of Offa II is hardly unlikely.¹⁰⁶⁷ Also, if *Beowulf* was composed in the first half of the eighth century (as is accepted in this study), the naming of Offa I’s wife was a matter of literary tradition and nothing to do with *Cyneprȳþ* (Offa II became king of Mercia in 757). I also argue that if the wife of Offa II in *VOD* was supposed to be *Cyneprȳþ*, this name was unlikely to have been misunderstood by an author or scribe of about the year 1300, or corrupted or calqued as *Quendrida*. English – and English-speaking – historians roughly contemporary with *VOD*, like John of Worcester, William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon, recorded the Old English prototheme *Cyne-* as *Kine-*, *Cine-* or *Cyne-* and never as *Quen-*. Even if they did not know what *cyne* meant (itself unlikely, given the survival of the word “kin” in Middle English), they recognised it as a name-element and did not try to “translate” it. *Quen*, I suggest, is a Middle English form of the word “queen” (cf. *MED*’s headword *quēn(e)*), and hence a deliberate reformulation of her name as “Queen-

¹⁰⁶⁵ See Shaw (2020) for a detailed analysis of the names in *Beowulf* in aid of the argument that their form indicates the origin of its narratives in the “Continental Germanic” speech area, rather than England.

¹⁰⁶⁶ *K14*: 224-25.

¹⁰⁶⁷ The deuterothermes *-burg*, *-gifu*, *-gȳð*, *-prȳð*, *-flāed* and *-waru* seem to account for a huge number of them.

Drida”.¹⁰⁶⁸ It would be unusual for a literary character to have their rank incorporated into their name as a prototheme. And I suggest that the reason for doing so in the case of Quendrida was to turn the name of Offa I’s villainous wife, inherited as *Prȳþu/Drida*, into the real name of Offa II’s historical wife Cyneþrȳþ, who thus became a version of the same villainess.

Conversely, if an author of the narrative we find in *VOD* misunderstood an Old English name like Cyneþrȳþ as *Quendrida*, this suggests that a name which had once been of transparent meaning to English speakers was no longer so, and here we must be speaking of a time – such as the beginning of the thirteenth century, when *VOD* was written – when the dithematic Anglo-Saxon naming system was defunct. It would therefore be rather unlikely if an author, having inherited a name he thought was *Quendrida*, would have hypocorised it to *Drida* in Anglo-Saxon style, unless such a name-form were also part of his narrative tradition. It is pertinent to note here that despite the commonness of *þrȳþ* as an element (and particularly a deuterotherme) in Anglo-Saxon female names, there are no recorded hypocoristic names in the Anglo-Saxon period, such as **Prȳþ*, **Prȳþe*, or **Dryde* or **Dryda/Drida* – apart from the one in *Beowulf*.

It is therefore significantly more likely, I suggest, that the *VOD* author inherited an Old English name (which became Latinised as *Drida*) as the name of Offa I’s bad foreign queen, transferred her to Offa II, and then imaginatively recast her name as “Queen-Drida”, to reconcile it with *Cyneþrȳþ* (which we would otherwise expect to find as *Cynedrida* or *Cinedrida* in a post-Conquest English text in Latin). We shall therefore take the wife of Offa of Angel to have been called *Prȳþu*, whose name, I suggest, survived in that or a very similar form until the composition of *VOD* in the early thirteenth century.

4.2.4 Offa’s Queen in *Beowulf*: Conclusion

Here, I suggest, we have a good example of the conservatism of names in widely differing versions of the same literary tradition. But along with the name we can also see the transmission of patterns of motifs, adapted to suit a different narrative ideology. In *Beowulf*, a single king, Offa, had a queen who was bad and then – once under his control – good. This was altered to a story about two Offas, one of whom had a wholly good queen (modelled on the Constance-type), the other a wholly bad one. The name of the bad queen was retained when she was

¹⁰⁶⁸ *Quendrida* was, however, possible as a Latinisation of a recorded Anglo-Saxon name *Cwēnþrȳþ*. See *PASE Cwenthryth 1* and *2*, the names, respectively, of an early 9th-c. abbess who was the daughter of king Cēnwulf of Mercia, and a woman from Lincolnshire in *DB*. It is thus possible that *Quendrida* (modelled on *Cwēnþrȳþ*) was not invented by the *VOD* author but inherited from an Anglo-Saxon source-story.

transferred to Offa II. In *Beowulf* and *Widsith* Offa I's destiny was to stop his wife's murderous practices and found a great kingdom in a duel. This motif or theme is retained with Offa II in *VOD*, in which it is only when he has put his evil queen out of the way that he fulfils his destiny of founding the monastery of St. Albans.¹⁰⁶⁹ Given the concurrence of motifs and themes between the two bad queens, I suggest that it is rather more than coincidence that Offa's bad queen *Prȳþu* in *Beowulf* should re-appear as Offa's bad queen *Drida* in *VOD*. I argue that it is likely that they are the same character with the same name.

We might now edit and translate *Beowulf* 1931b-32 as follows:

Mōd *Prȳðo* wæg
fremu folces cwēn firen-ondrysne.

Prȳðo displayed spirit, the bold people's queen, [and levied] obeisance by means of atrocity.

By using the name in this form, I suggest, the *Beowulf*-poet skilfully adapted the conventional half-line phrase of which we have noted *higeprȳðe wæg* is an example. If this is correct, I suggest that it demonstrates another parallelism between the queens Hygd and *Prȳðo*: both have *Lytel*-type monothematic names which have been cast to resemble abstract nouns, descriptive of their respective and contrastive strengths of "thought" and "spirit".

4.3 The Offa-Allusion in *Beowulf*: Issues of Interpretation

The Offa-Allusion in *Beowulf* – as we have noted – has proved difficult to understand, and its thematic relation to the rest of the poem has remained a puzzle. However, there is a handful of issues of textual interpretation which require to be dealt with here, as part of this study's overhaul of the interpretation of this passage and its attempt to place it within a wider Offa-narrative.

The text <firen ondrysne> (l. 1932b) has been interpreted as a noun-phrase consisting of a noun (*firen*) and an adjective (*ondrysne*). Swanton interprets this as singular, "a terrible sin".¹⁰⁷⁰ Shippey follows the text and interpretation of the *K14* editors and parses it as *firen* (an elided or apocopic form of the accusative plural *firena*) and *ondrysne* (an accusative plural adjective), translating as "awful crimes".¹⁰⁷¹ The citations in *Bosworth-Toller* (s.v. *andrysne*)

¹⁰⁶⁹ See Swanton 2010: 101-23. In the concluding part of the story of Offa II, having removed the obstacle of his evil queen (esp. *ibid.*: 101), Offa is free to fulfil his ancestral promise and found St. Albans, and he uses his extensive lands to endow it richly.

¹⁰⁷⁰ See Swanton 2010: 141-42, reading *firen ondrysne*.

¹⁰⁷¹ See Shippey's translation in Shippey and Neidorf 2023: 166-67. See also the glossary and commentary in *K14*: 226, 381, 421.

show that there was an adjective *andrysne* with the meanings “fearful” and “worthy of respect”, and also a derivative adjective *andrys(e)nlic* meaning “terrible” (see *Bosworth-Toller s.v.*). These adjectives must be related to the noun *andrysno* or *ondrysnu*. *Bosworth-Toller* has an entry for each of these forms, treating them as different words. But I suggest that they are the same word, meaning “fear, awe, reverence”. The dative plural form of this noun appears in the phrase *for andrysnum* in *Beowulf* 1796a, which the *Kl4* editors parse as the dative plural form of a feminine *īn*-stem abstract noun **andrysno*. It is used of a Heorot hall-thegn’s guiding of Bēowulf to his bed after the retirement of Hrōþgār. It has traditionally been translated as “courtesies”,¹⁰⁷² and the *Kl4* editors suggest the meaning of the singular as “reverence”, and secondarily as “propriety, courtesy”.

With regard to etymology (which I suggest is relevant to meaning here), the first element in both the adjective *ondrysne* and the noun *andrysno/ondrysnu* is *and-* “against, before”, and the second element is an ablaut grade of *drēosan* “to fall”.¹⁰⁷³ Etymologically, they mean “falling in front of”, which I argue suggests an act of obeisance which is dutiful or reverential at the positive end of the scale and fearful at the negative end. In formal terms, it would not be possible to distinguish between the accusative singular of an *īn*-stem noun *andrysnu/ondrysnu*, and the accusative feminine plural of a *ja*-stem adjective *andrysne/ondrysne*. Both would appear as *andrysne/ondrysne*. Therefore, it is possible that *firendrysne* in *Beowulf* 1932b was a compound noun, the accusative singular of the *īn*-stem **firendrysnu*, with the meaning “obeisance, reverence or fear through atrocity”. This, I suggest, is more accurately descriptive of the actions of Offa’s queen-to-be, who obtains the reverence of her suitors and then abases them and subjects them to fear by her foul acts. As the passage goes on to say, they are bound and dispatched with the sword, having literally “fallen down” before her.

Sinfrēa in l. 1934b is a *hapax legomenon*, and it has been suggested that it refers to Brȳðo’s unnamed father or to her husband Offa.¹⁰⁷⁴ Its meaning has also been debated. The *Kl4* editors translate it as “great lord”, Swanton as “overlord”, and Shippey as “husband”¹⁰⁷⁵ (all meaning Offa). The Germanic prefix *sin-* meant “eternal, constant”.¹⁰⁷⁶ This prefix in Old English usually had the same meaning, though in some words there was a semantic shift

¹⁰⁷² See the discussion and glossary entry in *Kl4*: 217, 349.

¹⁰⁷³ *Drēosan* had /u/ in its ablaut series, as in *druron* “they fell”.

¹⁰⁷⁴ *Kl4*: 226.

¹⁰⁷⁵ *Kl4*: 434; Swanton 2010: 142; Shippey and Neidorf 2023: 167.

¹⁰⁷⁶ See *ANew*: 472, s.v. *sí-* 2. See also *Wiktionary*, s.v. **sin-*.
<<https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Reconstruction:Proto-Germanic/sin->> [retrieved 19.2.24].

towards the sense of “large, great”, or a generally intensive sense.¹⁰⁷⁷ In *sinhīwan* “married couple, their household”, *sin-* could refer to the enduring state of marriage.¹⁰⁷⁸ Thus *sinfrēa* might mean “lord in marriage”, that is, a husband. However, in this part of the brief narrative, Offa is not yet the princess’s husband.

In the narrative of Alf and Alvilda in *GD* (which we shall examine more closely as an analogue),¹⁰⁷⁹ the princess’s father keeps her in *purdah*, under constant guard, and it is only the bold and ingenious hero Alf, who succeeds in winning his way into her chamber. The father’s name is *Sywardus*, and although this can represent the Scandinavian name *Sivarðr*, a variant of *Sigurðr*,¹⁰⁸⁰ it may also represent Old Norse **Sīvarðr*, which would mean “constant guardian”, an apt description of his role.¹⁰⁸¹ The Germanic reflexes of Old English *frēa* – meaning “lord” or “king” in a secular sense – referred to the *paterfamilias*, i.e. the male head of a household.¹⁰⁸² Therefore, *sinfrēa* could refer to Offa’s prospective father-in-law, with the meaning “constant (i.e. ever-present) lord”.

In the phrase *swāse gesīðas*, *swæs* could mean “one’s own”, “dear, beloved” and “pleasant”.¹⁰⁸³ These are all facets of the same concept, as *swæs* was related to words which meant “separate”, “one’s own”, “related” and hence “familiar, pleasant”.¹⁰⁸⁴ Her typical victim of this kind is described as a *lēof mann* “dear, beloved man” (l. 1943b). The adjective *lēof* is used frequently in *Beowulf*, both of kings and their loyal followers. It resembles another *comitatus* word, *wini* “friend”, also used of lord and vassal alike, which like other such words

¹⁰⁷⁷ *Bosworth-Toller*, s.vv. *sin-* (prefix): “The form does not occur as an independent word; as a prefix it has usually the force of ever, everlasting; but in some cases it seems to denote magnitude, e.g. *sin-here*”. *Ibid.* s.v. *sinhere*, translated as “immense army”. Other exceptions are *sinīðe* “very gentle” and *sinsnæd* “big bite” (*Beowulf* 743a *synsnædum*) and *sindolh* (*Beowulf* 817, *syndolh*) are the other exceptions to the usual meaning “continual”. However, even in these examples the sense “constant” is not absent: the *sinhere* was a besieging and hence a “constantly present” army; Grendel’s *synsnædas* were repeated bites in a remorseless attack; a *syndolh* was a great, but also a lasting wound. In *Beowulf* there is also *singal(a/es)* “constant(ly)” and *sinnihte* “perpetual night”. As a name-element, SIN, Förstemann regarded it as emphatic (1900: 1337-38), and thus perhaps meaning “great”.

¹⁰⁷⁸ See *Bosworth-Toller*, s.v. OS, OFris and OHG had cognates with the same meaning. OE also had *gesinhīwan* (pl.) “married couple”, *gesinhīwan* “married”, and **gesinhīw* “marriage” – though this appears only once as *gesinige*, in an interlinear gloss for *connubii* (*Bosworth-Toller*, s.v. *gesinīg*). *GD*, VII.6.1-7; Friis-Jensen and Fisher, I, pp. 470-77. See pp. 327-35 below.

¹⁰⁷⁹ See Lind, *Dopnamn*: I, 892, s.n. *Sigurðr*.

¹⁰⁸⁰ *Sí-* was not a name-element in ON. The only example Lind notes is *Sívqr* (var. *Svívqr*) the name of a *trollkona* (Lind, *Dopnamn*: I, 906). Untranslated from a WGmc language, it probably occurs as *sin-* in the name of Sigmundr’s son/nephew *Sinffjotli*, who is the same person as the prefix-less *Fitela* in *Beowulf* 879b and 889b. *Sin-* “constant” would indicate *Fitela*’s faithful companionship with his uncle Sigmund (also likely to be his father). See pp. 244-45 and fn. 958 above.

¹⁰⁸¹ See Green 1998: 102.

¹⁰⁸² See the note in *Bosworth-Toller*, s.v. *swæs*, II: “used mostly in reference to the connection that belongs to relationship by blood or by marriage, or to dear companionship, and so often has the force of (*one*’s) *own dear*, (*one*’s) *dear*”.

¹⁰⁸³ See Holthausen 1934: 331-32, s.v. *swæs*. See also *ASWB*, s.v. *swās*, with etymological information. The core sense of the PIE etymon seems to have been “separate”.

for the same concept (in Old English, *trūwa*, *hyldu*, *milts* and *āre*) implied a vertical but reciprocal relationship between superior and inferior in early Germanic society, characterised by protection and generosity by the superior and loyal service by the inferior.¹⁰⁸⁵ Words like *wine* and *lēof* connoted an emotional as well as social component which was probably integral to such relationships. Thus, we can understand *swāes* and *lēof* as adjectives that referred to subordinate members of the kinship or tribal group who were supposed to be beneficiaries of royal favour and protection rather than victimisation and destruction. Therefore, *Brȳþu*'s offence was not killing people who were *lēof* or *swāes* in the sense of valued or popular, but loyal thegns of her own kind or kin to whom she and her father owed protection. The only two exceptions to this must have been her father and her successful suitor. Since *sinfrēa* may apply to either of these men in a different sense, it may be that, by skilful wordplay – that largely ignored feature of *Beowulf* – the poet coined a word to mean both.

4.4 Offa's In-Laws: Hemming, Frēawine and Family

To judge from *Beowulf*, Offa's in-laws were an unusual ménage. But, apparently, none of them is named, and we struggle to understand important elements in the story. However, there exists, I suggest, an analogic narrative with names and a clear storyline which may enable us to understand the murky allusions in *Beowulf*. This is the story of Uffo (= Offa), as told by Saxo in *GD*. Uffo marries the daughter of a *praefectus* of Schleswig called Frowinus, who has two sons called Keto and Wigo. Although nothing apart from the bare fact of Uffo's marriage is given, there is a lengthy prelude to the scene of Uffo's famous duel on the Eider which involves Keto, Wigo and Athislus (= Ēadgils). In the slightly earlier *BHD* these characters also feature but are not named, and no marriage is mentioned (which means that Sven Aggesen's text cannot have been Saxo's source, or his only source). In the later and very brief *AnnR* (a text indebted to *GD*) there is also no mention of a marriage, but Uffo's male in-laws appear as Frewinus, Keto and Wiggo.¹⁰⁸⁶ The relationships between these Danish accounts – replete with circumstantial detail – and the Offa story in *Widsith* and *Beowulf* (nearly six hundred years earlier) remain – as far as I know – largely uninvestigated. However, certain aspects of names and naming – especially with regard to Offa's wife's family – provide some evidence, giving

¹⁰⁸⁵ On *wini*, see Green 1965: 106-14. On *comitatus* words generally see *ibid.*: 93-114. The ON cognate *sváss* (only in poetry) was applied to kinsmen, gods and even beer (presumably in its role of convivial group-affirmation). See *LP*: 550, s.v.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Saxo's story of Uffo is summarised in the Appendix (pp. 431-32 below).

an increased understanding of these relationships, and hence an increased appreciation of the value of Saxo's text (in particular) as a close analogue of the English Offa-story.

4.4.1 Hemming

The person in *Beowulf* who is conventionally called *Hemming* is referred to in two lines, and only as a relative of another person. In l. 1944b *Hemminges mæg* ("Hemming's kinsman") refers to Offa; and in ll. 1961b-62a *Ēomēr* – widely regarded as Offa's son, according to *Beowulf* – is referred to as *nefa Gārmundes // Hemminges mæg*. There are no other references to this name in the poem.

There has been a general lack of interest in who Hemming was. Editors and commentators tend not to identify him except as the *mæg* of Offa and *Ēomēr*, an undefined relationship.¹⁰⁸⁷ Klaeber (echoed by the editors of *KL4*) wondered inconclusively whether he was a brother of Gārmund (whom they took to be the same person as Offa's father Wērmund in the regnal lists), or the father-in-law of Gārmund (i.e. Wērmund) or Offa.¹⁰⁸⁸ But among more recent considerations of the Offa-episode in *Beowulf*, Swanton (2010) makes no comment on Hemming, and nor do Shippey and Neidorf in their recent edition and translation of *Beowulf*.¹⁰⁸⁹ They may well speak for the instincts behind a long scholarly tradition with respect to the Offa episode – and perhaps its fugitive names – when they say that it was "merely intended, along with other digressions, to provide the narrative in the foreground with a rich and variegated heroic-legendary background".¹⁰⁹⁰

The general impression, I suggest, is that Hemming's identity has been felt to be irrecoverable; but even if it were not, knowing it would not be of much consequence. One suspects it is likely to be a factor in this absence of curiosity that scholars have struggled to see any clear purpose in the Offa-allusion, and so *Hemming* has been regarded as an insignificant name in an arguably superfluous or meaningless digression. He has thus joined the ranks of the unknowables of *Beowulf*, like *Æschere*, *Ecglāf*, *Gārmund*, *Wōnrēd* and others, known principally or only as a relative of some other character.

I shall suggest, however, that it is possible to identify who Hemming was, which people and where he ruled, and what his likely role was in the Offa-story – a pivotal one in the fortunes of the kingdom of Angel.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Wyatt and Chambers 1914: 172. Klaeber 1950: 436. *KL4*: 469. Shaw 2020: 141, 147-48.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Klaeber 1950: 199-200; *KL4*: 226-27, repeating Klaeber's text.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Shippey and Neidorf 2023: 166-69.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Shippey and Neidorf 2023: 311.

4.4.1.1 *Heming, Hemning or Hemming?*

I have called this character *Hemming*. But the form of his name in *Beowulf* is not certain. The *Beowulf* MS reads <hem ninges> (l. 1944) and <hem inges> (l. 1961). These variants are the work of the second *Beowulf*-scribe who took over in the middle of l. 1939. They may suggest that he was unfamiliar with the name of this person,¹⁰⁹¹ or that the form of the name in his exemplar threw him. It was common for Anglo-Saxon scribes to divide up what we consider to be single words, and they also did this with names. Thus the scribe's exemplar may have read <hem ing>, or, with a scribal nasal suspension mark, <heŋ ing> (indicating an original *Hemming* or *Hemning*). The exemplar may, inconsistently, have given both forms, leaving the scribe uncertain whether the name was (as we would write it) *Heming*, *Hemning* or *Hemming*. Perhaps the exemplar had a plethora of minims, looking something like <heuuuinges>, <heuuuinges>, or <heui inges>, which might create doubt in the most diligent copyist, whether he knew of this character or not.

Editorial convention has resolved the issue in favour of *Hemming*. However, the history of this name began in inconsistency. Kemble printed *Hemminges* (for l. 1944) and *Heminges* (for l. 1961) in both his 1833 and 1835 editions.¹⁰⁹² Thorpe used the form *Heming* in his text of *Beowulf*, but *Heming* and *Hemming* in his notes.¹⁰⁹³ Grein followed him, but with the long-vowel form *Hēming*.¹⁰⁹⁴ Sievers identified *Hēming* as metrically wrong but (on consulting the literary forms and toponyms featuring versions of this name) thought that *Hemming* was probably the correct reading.¹⁰⁹⁵ Sievers was followed by Wyatt and Chambers, and by Klaeber and his successor-editors of *Kl4*.¹⁰⁹⁶ In this context, Klaeber and *Kl4* have noted the existence of a placename, *Hemmingstedt*, in Holstein, which seems supportive of the form *Hemming*.¹⁰⁹⁷

If we make the reasonable presumption that the names in ll. 1944 and 1961 refer to the same person, then – aside from the line of authority just quoted – the potentially correct name form is either *Hēming*, *Hēmning* or, with emendation, *Hēmning*.

However, here it is necessary to confront the reality that the evidence of both place-names and personal names is subject to the vagaries of scribal idiosyncrasy, error, dialectal

¹⁰⁹¹ See Neidorf 2013b: 253-55, who also suggests that *Garmundes* was an error for *Wærmundes*.

¹⁰⁹² As noted by Wyatt and Chambers 1914: 96. Kemble's 1833 edition is unobtainable. But see Kemble 1835: 138-39, and 258, referring to "Heming, a hero unknown to me".

¹⁰⁹³ Thorpe 1855: 130-31.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Grein 1857: 307 – though querying it as a form of *Hæming*, from *Hāma*.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Sievers 1885: 264, 501-02. He also queried *Hēming* as a form of *Hæming*.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Wyatt and Chambers text and notes (1914: 96); Klaeber 1950: 72, 73 and fns, and 199-200; *Kl4*: 66 and fns, and 226-27. *DOE*, s.v. *hemming* is a common noun meaning some kind of boot and is irrelevant.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Klaeber 1950: 199-200; *Kl4*: 226-27.

variation, pronunciation-spelling, and etymological re-interpretation. These could have the result that long vowels were perceived as short, and vice versa; single medial consonants could become geminated, and vice versa; suffixes such as *-ing* could be rendered as <in>; and elements like *hem* (“hem, edge”) *hamm* (“riverland”), *hām* (“home, settlement”) and *helm* (“helmet”) could be confounded.¹⁰⁹⁸

4.4.1.2 *Hēming* from **Hǣming*

In Kentish (from the ninth century) /ǣ/ from whatever source could be written as <e>, representing /ǣ/; and in Anglian texts /ǣ/, the *i*-mutation of /ā/, could become /ē/ when before a dental consonant, but also sporadically in other environments, for example, before a nasal consonant, as in *clēne*.¹⁰⁹⁹ Comparably, perhaps, Bede says that the name of the West Saxon king *Ceaulin* (= *Ceawlin*) was *Cælin* in his dialect,¹¹⁰⁰ but in the south-western and south-eastern MSS of *AngCol* (MSS CT), this name appears as *Celin*.¹¹⁰¹ It is therefore possible that <heming> in the *Beowulf* MS represented *Hēming*, which was a dialectal form based on original **Hǣming*.

This is not an impossible form. In Anglo-Saxon charters there are frequent phrases, usually indicating a boundary, in the form *æt —hæma gemære/mearce* and the like. See, for instance, S724, *to Stifingc hæma gemæra*, and S956 *be Middel hæma mærcce*. In these phrases the first element is toponymic: *Stifingc*, a group name, and *Middel* “middle”. The second element *-hæma* must be a noun in the genitive plural. Although no singular **hæm*, **hæma* or **hæme* is recorded in any form in *Bosworth-Toller* or *DOE*, I suggest that the element in genitive plural form *hǣma* was from a nominative plural form **hǣme*, meaning “inhabitants of a *ham(m)*” or “*hām*”. **Hǣme* would derive from Proto-Germanic **haimijōz*, “people of the *haimaz* (= *hām*)”, and **hæme* from **hæmijōz* “people of the *hamm*”. The suffix */-ijaz/ (> Old English /-i/ > /-e/) would cause *i*-mutation /ǣ/ > /ǣ̃/, and they would be expected to develop in Old English as **hǣmig/hæmig* > **hǣmi/hæmi* > **hǣme/hæme*.

As names in *-ing* feature in folk-names, and can also be ethno-eponyms,¹¹⁰² **Hǣming* is theoretically possible as a predecessor of later scribal or dialectal *Hēming*. This name would

¹⁰⁹⁸ For *Hem-* and *Helm-* see Sievers 1885: 502.

¹⁰⁹⁹ See *OEG*: 122-24.

¹¹⁰⁰ *HE*, II.5; Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 248. Bede also gives *Cælin* as the name of a brother of Cedd, the evangelist and brother of St. Chad (*HE*, III.23; Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 286).

¹¹⁰¹ Dumville 1976: 34, 37. MS C is south-western English (1st half 10th c.) and MS T is from Canterbury (1st half 11th c.).

¹¹⁰² As argued in Part I, pp. 47-49, 70 above.

“mean person inhabiting a *hām*”, “member of the people of the *Hāmingas*” or “leader or king of the people of the *Hāmingas*”. However, it would not be expected to have any variant form which might cause a scribe to write it in the form *Hemning* indicated by the *Beowulf* MS.

4.4.1.3 *Hemning*

There is some evidence from Continental Germanic toponyms that might be used to support an argument for the form *Hemning*. There is no known Germanic lexeme ***hemn*; however, *Hemning* might represent a syncopated version, such as **Hemining*, **Hemening* or the like.¹¹⁰³ In such a case */-ing/* would be suffixed to **Hemin*, which itself was conceivably the stem *Hem-* or *Ham* (= *hamm*) suffixed with */-in/* – a reflex of the suffix */-en/~/-in/* found in Old English *dryhten* “lord, king” (cf. Old High German *truhtin*), which betokened leadership or kingship;¹¹⁰⁴ or the diminutive suffix **/-īn/*.¹¹⁰⁵ If this is the case, it would have the stem *hem* or *hamm*, both of which forms are considered below.

There is a small piece of evidence which might suggest that *Hemn-* was an Old English stem which was a variant of *Hemm-*. In the anonymous *Vita Cuthberti*, *Hemma* appears as the name of a *comes* of king Aldfrith of Northumbria. However, in two MSS the variant *Hemini* is given. And in a marginal annotation to Bede’s prose *Vita Cuthberti* the name of the same person is supplied as *Hemni* – apparently by an annotator supplying information from the anonymous *Vita* which read *Hemini*.¹¹⁰⁶ Although the noun-phrase of which *Hemma* and *Hemini* was the head is in the genitive in the Latin text, *Hemma* has not been declined as a Latin noun in those texts which have this form. It may therefore be that *Hemini* was not so declined either, and that both retained their Old Northumbrian forms. In the annotation to Bede’s text it is not clear what Latin case *Hemni* has, or whether it too is not declined.¹¹⁰⁷ However, I suggest that if this information is reliable, it may tell us that the same person could be known as *Hemma* and also as *Hemini*, *Hemni* or some other Old English variant that could be Latinised as *Hem(i)nus*. This

¹¹⁰³ See the side-forms of place-names recorded by Förstemann (1913-16: 1220, 1222): *Hamingesheim* and *Heminisheim*; *Heminingishoven* and *Hemmingshoven*; *Heminis hoba* and *Hemmigkofen*. In Niemeyer (2012: 243), *s.n. Hamm (Sieg)*, there is the historic form *ecclesiam Hamne* (1131).

¹¹⁰⁴ See Green 1998: 124-25. From PrGmc **/-inaz/*.

¹¹⁰⁵ Eckhardt suggested that there was a Gmc diminutive suffix **/-īn/*, which in unstressed positions became */-in/*, also */-en/* in OE (1903: 346-347). See fns. 314-15 (p. 100 above).

¹¹⁰⁶ *Hemini* in MSS T and P of the anonymous *Vita* (IV, 3; Colgrave 1940: 114 and fn. 7); and *Hemni* in an annotation to Bede’s *Vita* (ch. 29; Colgrave 1940: 252 and fn. 9). Noted in Rollason and Rollason (2007: II, 177, *s.n. Hemma, Hemmi*) where *Hemni* in the annotation to Bede’s text is said to be gen.

¹¹⁰⁷ See Rollason and Rollason (2007: II, 177, *s.n. Hemma, Hemmi*). Although (as noted in fn. 1106 above) the editors say that *Hemni* in the annotation to Bede’s text is gen., the marginal note reads *nomen loci Hintis, nomen comitis Hemni*, from which it is not clear that *Hemni* is gen. rather than a nom., or is not declined.

suggests **Hemīn* or **Hemīni*, or syncopated versions **Hemn* or *Hemni*, which themselves could be suffixed with */-ing/* to produce *Hemning*.¹¹⁰⁸ On the other hand, the MSS of the anonymous *Vita* (T and P in Colgrave's edition) were written at Trier and Paris in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries respectively;¹¹⁰⁹ and it may be that their scribes "corrected" genuinely Old English and undeclined *Hemma* to a supposedly similar, Continental Germanic form of the name, **Hemin*, which they Latinised and placed in the genitive as *Hemini* or *Hemni*. This evidence must therefore be regarded as ambiguous.

4.4.1.4 *Hemming*

Hemming has proved the most durable interpretation of this name among modern editors of *Beowulf*. With respect to this, Shaw has recorded his doubt that *Hemming* was an English name, being attested by only one or maybe two instances in the eleventh century. He thought it possible that *Hemming* was created "in a Scandinavian or a continental context", rather than an English one.¹¹¹⁰ As I shall argue, it is preferable to regard *Hemming* in *Beowulf* as an ethnonym rather than a birth-name. This identified its bearer as king of the *Hemmingas*, a people who lived in a riparian region called a *ham*. The name *Hemming* is found in most regions of Germanic-speaking Europe (including England); but *Beowulf* preserves a Continental tradition of a king known as *Hemming*, a most important person in the story of Offa.

Shaw's judgement (above) is based on the evidence that recordings of this personal name are numerous in Scandinavia and in Continental Germanic-speaking areas and few in England. It is just, but deserves closer scrutiny. Lind recorded a large number of Scandinavians with the name *Hemingr* or *Hemmingr*. He noted that it occurred infrequently in older periods (its legendary bearers), but when it achieved greater frequency, this was in Denmark and Sweden.¹¹¹¹ Förstemann listed many personal names with the stems *Ham(m)-* and *Hem(m)-*, but although he noted Old Norse and Old English instances of *Hemming*, he gave only one Continental Germanic occurrence of this as a personal name, and three in place-names.¹¹¹²

¹¹⁰⁸ See Rollason and Rollason (2007: II, 177), where *Hemma*, *Hemmi* are suggested to be a shortened versions of a name like *Haemgils* (*DLV*). See *ibid.*: II, 123, though the etymology of this name and other examples is not explained.

¹¹⁰⁹ Colgrave 1940: 19-20. Colgrave also notes that T and P were carelessly written (1940: 43-44), so it is possible that original <Hemm> was read erroneously as *Hemin*. The marginal annotation to Bede's *Vita* containing *Hemni* appears however in Colgrave's MSS C₃ (Durham, 12th c.) and O₃ (Durham, 14th c.) which are English (*ibid.*: 21-24).

¹¹¹⁰ Shaw 2020: 147-48.

¹¹¹¹ Lind, *Dopnamn*, 510-13; Supplement, 437. See Rollason and Rollason 2007: II, 225 (with refs).

¹¹¹² Förstemann 1900: 743-45, *s.n. HAM* (Förstemann adopted Jacob Grimm's erroneous etymology of *ham* "armour").

In England *Hemma* is recorded once in *PASE* (a seventh- to eighth-century ealdorman of king Aldfrith of Northumbria) and twice in *DLV*.¹¹¹³ The name *Hemmi* also appears in *DLV*.¹¹¹⁴ The stem-vowel /e/ is the expected product of *i*-mutation from the terminal /-i/ in *Hemmi*, but not the terminal /-a/ in *Hemma*. However, there may be a comparator in Anglo-Saxon hypocoristic names derived from the prototheme *cūþ-*: *Cudda*, *Cuda*, *Cyddi*, *Cyda* and *Cyddā*.¹¹¹⁵ Here, the *i*-mutation in the hypocoristic stem *cyd(d)-* produced by terminal /-i/ in *Cyddi* would appear to have been retained, although the grammatical ending /-a/ has been substituted. Similarly, *Hemmi* (from **Hammi-*) may have produced the variant *Hemma*. Thus, apparent *i*-mutation in hypocoristic stems may occur as an analogic rather than as a phonological process; or mutated stems became established in the hypocoristic onomasticon, and various endings or suffixes could be added, irrespective of whether the stem was mutated or not.¹¹¹⁶

Both *Hemma* and *Hemmi* are identified by Briggs as personal names underlying English place-names – albeit ones with the first element *Heming-* in their recorded forms.¹¹¹⁷ Such forms are ambiguous, indicating either **Hemmingas* as the people of *Hemmi* or *Hemma*, or a person with the ethno-eponym *Hemming*. *Hemmi* suggests a hypocorism with *i*-mutation of a stem *Ham-*. *Hemma* suggests a hypocorism either based on the stem *Hemm-* (of unknown origin); or (perhaps more likely) it was formed by analogy with the *i*-mutated name-stem *Ham-* > *Hemm-*, with the addition of weak masculine /-a/ in substitution for /-i/ or /-ing/.¹¹¹⁸

Hemming is not recorded in early Old English texts (other than *Beowulf*). In *PASE* there are three eleventh-century entries for *Hemming*, including a monk and a householder (both of Worcestershire and possibly the same person), and six instances in *DB* (all spelled *ham-* or *haim-* and thus dubious as examples of *Hemming*).¹¹¹⁹ These late examples may show the influence of Scandinavian *Hemingr*. There is one earlier *Hemming*, a ninth-century East Anglian moneyer, whose recorded forms are *Hamin*, *Hamni* and *Hemnc*. But – as often with

¹¹¹³ Rollason and Rollason 2007: II, 177.

¹¹¹⁴ Rollason and Rollason 2007: II, 177.

¹¹¹⁵ See Rollason and Rollason 2007: II, 172-73, *s.n.* *Cudda*.

¹¹¹⁶ See discussion at p. 104 above.

¹¹¹⁷ Briggs 2024: 161.

¹¹¹⁸ *I*-mutation of *ham-* > *hemm-* would not be expected to be caused by an OE inflectional ending /-a/ (from Gmc */-o/). But cf. perhaps the otherwise inexplicable forms *Ipa* and/or *Ippa* (Briggs 2024, *s.nn.*), which might be explained as derivations with the ending /-a/ added to a hypocoristic form of the prototheme which had already been *i*-mutated, *Eorþ* + *i* > Anglian **Ioppi*, WS > **Ieppi* > **Ippi*. *Ip(p)-* would thus constitute a stem fixed in the hypocoristic onomasticon, to which any inflection or suffix could be added, without altering the stem-vocalisation. Cf. the unmutated forms *Epa* and *Eppa* (*PASE*).

¹¹¹⁹ Although see Van Loon (2021: 257) who notes that a 9th-c. Saxon bishop of Merseburg was named *Haimo* and *Hemmo*.

moneyers – it is not clear that he was English, but rather Continental, as the forms of his name may indicate.

As Shaw notes, there is thus a distinct shortage of reliable examples of *Hem(m)ing* from the English onomasticon before the eleventh century. But that is only in the literary record. Shaw does not refer to the evidence of English place-names. As we saw in Part I, section 1.2, the view that place-names with the elements *-ingas*, *-ingahām* and *-inga-* were among the earliest in England has been replaced with one which regards them, nonetheless, as a fairly early phenomenon, not long after the initial settlement phase.¹¹²⁰ There is a number of English place-names in *Hemming* or *Heming* which variously suggest a folk-name *Hem(m)ingas*, an individual called *Hem(m)ing*, or some shortened, probably hypocoristic name, *Hem(m)a* or **Hem(m)e*. Although the records of these names are from the literary period, they may be much older. This reminds us, I suggest, that, *pace* Shaw, the name *Hemming* (in whatever form it existed) did not necessarily come from Scandinavian, Continental German, or even Anglo-Saxon influence on the text of *Beowulf*, but was a name inherited from the naming traditions of Migration Age Angel, as transmitted with the traditions of the Offa narrative.

I further argue that the onomastic evidence, as a whole, suggests that the name *Hemming* was not frequent in early Scandinavia, and that its later frequency was a phenomenon in the East Norse area, which may indicate the influence of Danish custom. In Continental Germany and Anglo-Saxon England (before the eleventh century) it was not frequent as a personal name either. But in Germany there is slightly more evidence of places in *Hemming-*; and in England there is a reasonable selection – potentially rather old – associated (as we shall soon see) with the topographical feature of the *hamm*. This creates a somewhat different picture from that of Shaw. *Hemming* was potentially an old name, rather more associated with toponyms than personal names. It was relatively rare by the literary period in Germany and England, but became more frequent in areas possibly under Danish influence. In so far as we can draw any conclusions from such a patchy and incomplete record, this is consistent with a topographical folk-name that developed more strongly as a personal name in an area that came under Danish influence, potentially before the literary period. Such a place, I further argue, is consistent with the area of southern Jutland of which Angel was a part.

¹¹²⁰ Gelling 1978: 111, citing Dodgson 1966: 19. See p. 47 above.

4.4.1.5 Hemming: The Man of the *Hamm*

We have already noted several folk-names in /-ing/ which are also royal ethno-eponyms – *Scylding*, *Scylfing*, *Merewīoing* and others. Whether the *Beowulf*-poet knew the character whom editors call *Hemming* as *Hēming*, **Hǣming*, *Hemning* or **Hemming*, the form of his name is potentially ethno-eponymous. As a *mæg* of both Offa and Ēomēr, he was either a blood-relation or a relation by marriage, and therefore either a royal Angle or a king of some other people (if, for instance, he was the father of Offa’s bride). However, I suggest that the etymology of his name provides us with a vital clue as to his identity, location and role.

As a name, *Hemming* could represent: (a) an epithetical name without any implication of a relationship to any person or place; (b) a son of **Hemma*/**Hemmi* or **Hamma*; (c) the inhabitant of a *hem(m)* or *hamm*; (d) a member of a people called **Hemmingas* (meaning “Hemmi/Hemma/Hamma’s people”, or “people inhabiting a *hamm*”); or (e) the ethno-eponym of the leader of the **Hemmingas*.

As noted by Klaeber and the editors of *Kl4*, there is a place in Holstein, south of the Eider, called *Hemmingstedt*,¹¹²¹ which is either the place of Hemming or of the Hemmingas.



Map 7
Southern Jutland:
Schleswig, Holstein and Dithmarschen

This name form – complementary to the English and other German place-name evidence of *Hemming* – suggests a potential topographical origin relevant to the story of Offa, which

¹¹²¹ See Klaeber 1950: 199-200; *Kl4*: 226-27. Also see Map 1 on p. 18 above.

involves the conquest of territory about the Eider estuary (*Widsith's Fīfeldōr*), which the Angles and the Swāfe held between them.¹¹²² It is therefore of considerable significance, I argue, that if a person called *Hemming*, who was a blood-relative or in-law of Offa, had a name which suggested rule and habitation near a river. Such, I shall suggest, is the case with Hemming, whom I contend to be Offa's father-in-law.

The form *Hemming* suggests a stem *hem-* or *hemm-* consistent with an *i*-mutated form of the West Germanic noun *hamm*, or with the noun *hem*.¹¹²³ *Hamm* is a word frequently found in place-names within the West Germanic language-area. In English toponymy, a *hamm* was a piece of land which was bounded, bordered or enclosed in some sense, including land bounded or bordered by water, such as dry land in a marsh, and land by rivers (water-meadows or land at river-bends) or bounded by rivers; spurs of higher or lower ground; and land set against an outer boundary (whether artificial or natural, physical or political).¹¹²⁴

Old English *hamm* in this sense was a masculine relative of feminine *ham/hom* “ham, crook, back of knee” (< Proto-Germanic **ham(m)ō-*).¹¹²⁵ Both words are related to Old and modern English *hem* “edge, border”,¹¹²⁶ and are thus part of an etymon with the sense “constricted, enclosed object, space” (and thus, potentially, a source of conflation in names). Cognates of *hamm* are found as topographical words in other West Germanic languages. In Old Frisian *hamm* meant “fenced-in, enclosed land, or space” and (interestingly in the context of the Offa-story) “battlefield”.¹¹²⁷

The noun *hamm* when suffixed by *-ing* could undergo *i*-mutation, producing *Hemming*, though this process was not uniform at all times and throughout the West Germanic speech-area. *I*-mutation raised Proto-West Germanic **/a/* to **/e/* when the following syllable contained syllabic [i] or consonantal [j]. This change affected the Ingvaeonic West Germanic languages (including proto-Old English) earliest, in the first half of the sixth century.¹¹²⁸ As a (very) general rule, *i*-mutation in Old English names may be expected where the element after the

¹¹²² *Widsith* 43-44.

¹¹²³ OE *hem* “hem, border” was etymologically related to *hamm* and could mean “edge” of anything, but this was a late usage in OE (*DOE*, s.v. *hem*). If, contrary to this, it was an early place-name element, it would refer to “hemmed in” land and border areas. It would therefore be phonologically and semantically very similar to *hamm* and does not require separate consideration.

¹¹²⁴ For the use and meaning of *hamm* in English place-names, see Gelling 1984: 41-50; and more succinctly in Watts 2004: xlv. See also *DOE*, s.v. *hamm*² (“piece of enclosed land, ? (water-)meadow, land in the bend of a river”, mainly in charter bounds”). See also *OED*, s.v. *ham* n. 2.

¹¹²⁵ Kroonen 2013: 207, s.v.

¹¹²⁶ Cf. OHG *gihemmen* “to hinder, humiliate”, MHG *hamen* and modern German *hemmen* “to hem in, hinder, constrict”: *AHDWB*, *MHDWB*, s.vv. ON *hemja* had the same meaning (*LP*: 243, s.v).

¹¹²⁷ *AFrWB*, s.v. *hamm*; varr. *ham*, *hem(m)*, *him(m)*, *hom(m)*.

¹¹²⁸ Fulk 2018: 62. It travelled south, reaching the High German speech-area later.

stressed syllable is an inflection or a derivational morphological structure and not the second element of a compound.¹¹²⁹ Thus, the suffix /-ing/ would be a derivational morphological structure and should cause *i*-mutation. However the course of true *i*-mutation never did run smooth.¹¹³⁰ We can see this in the difference between unmutated *Wulfingas* (*Widsith* 29), and ethnonym which appears in *i*-mutated form as *Wylfingas* (*Beowulf* 471) and *Wilfingas* (*Beowulf* 461). It is a moot point whether *Beowulf*'s *Scyldingas* is a late spelling of *Scildingas* (an *i*-mutation of **Sceldingas*) or a late variant of **Sceldingas* according to a different rule (and similarly with *Scylfingas*). And any pattern of *i*-mutation with respect to /-ing/ endings may be disrupted by the operation of its inherited Germanic side-form /-ung/ (which would not cause *i*-mutation), as well as by coinage in the post *i*-mutation period, when it can only have been an analogous – and therefore potentially optional or sporadic – phenomenon. As noted by Colman, patronymic name-forms found particularly in regnal lists, such as *Eafing*, *Eopping* and *Branding*, do not exhibit *i*-mutation.¹¹³¹ But these may be explained as the creation of genealogists in the literary period (when *i*-mutation had ceased to operate except perhaps as an analogical process), treating their sources as a list of pure father-to-son descent. However, we can conclude that the form *Hemming* – if derived from *hamm* – is consistent with inheritance from the stage of English extant prior to the period 500-550 AD.

Hemming is therefore a name that might be expected to indicate *hamm*-dwelling by rivers or in bounded areas. And there is English evidence to bear this out. Hemmingborough (North Yorkshire), or *Hem(m)ingaburh*, was on the old course of the river Ouse, and so it would seem to be an instance of people inhabiting a *ham(m)*. Hemmingford Abbots (Cambridgeshire) was abbey land at the “ford of the Hemmingas, the people of Hemma or Hemmi”, thus another riparian *hamm*.¹¹³² Hemington (Northamptonshire) is the “*tūn* of Hemma or Hemmi’s people” (Ekwall) and “*Hemma* + *ing* (connective particle) + *tūn*” (Watts).¹¹³³ This is close to the border with Cambridgeshire and was thus possibly a border *hamm*. The evidence for Old English *hamm* is frequently found in charter bounds,¹¹³⁴ and this frequency may be connected to river *hamms* as boundary markers.

¹¹²⁹ Colman 2014: 205.

¹¹³⁰ See *OEG*: 245-46. Ethnonyms might or might not exhibit the expected mutations. In *Widsith*, the same people are referred to as *Holm-Rygas* (l. 21) with *i*-mutation and *Rugas* (l. 69), without.

¹¹³¹ Colman 2014: 206. These are from regnal lists and the suffixation of /-ing/ may be the work of scribes after the period of phonological *i*-mutation.

¹¹³² See Ekwall 1960: 233, *s.n.*, and Watts 2004: 296, *s.n.*

¹¹³³ See Ekwall 1960: 233, *s.n.*, and Watts 2004: 296, *s.n.*

¹¹³⁴ *DOE*, *s.v.* *hamm*².

The same topographical term is found on the Continent. Old Saxon had the same word as *ham* or *hamm*, meaning “corner, river-bend, meadow”.¹¹³⁵ On the Continent the most notable of the *hamm*-names is *Hamburg* (medieval *Hammaburg*) in Saxony, the fortification at the confluence of the rivers Elbe, Alster and Bille. Niemeyer defines the element *ham* in this name as Old Saxon, meaning “river-bend or bank, marshland”.¹¹³⁶ The same element is found in the town of Hamm (North Rhine Westphalia), referring to its position as a spur of land at the confluence of the river Ahse with the river Lippe.¹¹³⁷ Its earliest attested form (in 1188, *iuxta Hammonem*) suggests to Niemeyer an original **Hamm(a)na*.¹¹³⁸ Again, there are other examples.¹¹³⁹

Förstemann records many examples of names grouped under the elements *Ham*¹ “corner, corner-shaped land by rivers, riverbend”.¹¹⁴⁰ He records *Ham*, but also *Hamma*, *Hamme*, *Hammo* and *Hemme*, which would appear to be derivations from *hamm*. But it is unclear whether they are place-names proper or eponymous personal names used as toponyms. These also appear in compounded forms (as with *Hammanburh* for *Hamburg* etc). He groups all the forms in *Hem(m)ing* under *Ham*² “personal name from the stem *Ham*”.¹¹⁴¹ These are numerous, suggesting derivation from the names *Heming*, *Hemming*, *Haming*, *Hamming*, *Hem*, *Hemme*, *Hemmin*, *Hemma*, *Hammo*, *Hemmo*, *Hemmice*, *Hamele*, *Hamala*, *Hemini*, and *Hemed(e)*. As with the English names in /-ing-/, there are examples of /-inga-/ forms which indicate genitive plurals, but many more in /-ing-/ or /-inges-/, indicating the singulative. These place-names evidence a mixture of forms with and without *i*-mutation, probably more consistent with the later development of *i*-mutation in the Old High German speech area than in North Sea Germanic languages.

¹¹³⁵ *ASWB*, s.v. *ham* – though the number of question-marks used by Köbler indicates that he is tentative about form and meaning.

¹¹³⁶ Niemeyer 2012: 242, s.n. *Hamburg*. He defines *ham* as “Bucht, Ufer, Sumpfgelände”, and *Hamburg* as “hochgelegenes Ort am Rande der von Wasserläufen durchzogenen Marsch” (“elevated place on the edge of a marsh intersected by water-courses”).

¹¹³⁷ See the official website of the city of Hamm (North Rhine Westphalia), <<https://www.hamm.de/ahse-projekt/die-ahse>> [retrieved 4.3.24].

¹¹³⁸ Niemeyer 2012: 243. Its earliest attested form (in 1188, *iuxta Hammonem*) suggests to Niemeyer an original **Hamm(a)na*. But he does not consider that, if this is correct, it may derive from OHG **Hammōno*, the weak gen. pl. of sg. **Hammo* “an inhabitant of a *hamm*”.

¹¹³⁹ E.g. *Hamm*, a municipality in the administrative area (*Verbandsgemeinde*) of Hamm (Sieg), north of the town of Altenkirchen (Rhineland-Palatinate), situated by a bend in the river Sieg. It is included by Niemeyer among names of places which were sited in river-bends, or which were meadowland by rivers, or spurs of land bounded by two rivers, such that the term meant “habitation at a river-bend” (Niemeyer 2012: 243, s.n. *Hamm (Sieg)*). Local names nearby indicate a watery landscape: to the east, Wissen “water-meadows, marshland” (see Niemeyer 2012: 698, s.n. *Wissen*); and to the south Nassen, probably from Gmc **nassa-* (a river-name) or **nata-* “wet” (see the discussion, s.n. *Nassau*, in Niemeyer 2012: 429).

¹¹⁴⁰ Förstemann 1913-16: 1215-18.

¹¹⁴¹ Förstemann 1913-16: 1218-22.

The area shown in Map 7 (p. 281 above), between the Eider and the Elbe, includes Dithmarschen, the meaning of which further indicates the watery nature of the area in which Hemmingstedt is situated. The element *marschen* is German for “marshes”,¹¹⁴² and this can be seen in the earliest recorded form of the name, *Thiatmaresgaho*,¹¹⁴³ which is consistent with Old Frisian *thiād* “huge” + **marisk* (> *mersk*) “marsh” + *gā* “region” (or with the phonology of some dialect of Old Frisian, Old Saxon or some other northern West Germanic language of the area).¹¹⁴⁴ MSS of Adam of Bremen’s *History of the Church of Hamburg* (1070s – a Low German speech area) record ethnonyms which are consistent with the element “marsh” – *Thedmarskones* and *Ditmarscones* “Dithmarscher”.¹¹⁴⁵ Dithmarschen was thus “the huge marshy area”, a name in agreement with its character as a giant wetland, similar to the landscape of the English fens before they were drained in the seventeenth century. Classical and medieval texts refer to the marshy nature of this area.¹¹⁴⁶

Thus, the area in which Hemmingstedt is situated was likely to be in an extensive area of bog-land in which habitation would be concentrated on river meadows and on whatever dry land there was amid the marshland. Transport to other places in the interior would probably have to begin by travel across extensive areas of water. This kind of habitable land amid wetness would be described by the Germanic word *ham(m)*, and the people living in such an area might aptly be called *Hemmingas* and their king *Hemming*.

4.4.1.6 *Hemming* and *Hemingr*: The Survival of an Ethnographic Tradition in Old Norse

As Lind observed, in the earliest recordings in Scandinavia the name *Hemingr* was sporadic, becoming more frequent later. This may be because there is more documentary evidence from later periods. But one of the kings called *Hemingr* or *Hemming* whom he records has, I suggest, a relevance to Hemming in *Beowulf*.

¹¹⁴² See the forms recorded in Förstemann 1872: 1445-46.

¹¹⁴³ *Vita Sancti Willehadi* (c. 782-85), ch. 6; Pertz 1829: 382.

¹¹⁴⁴ See *AFrWB*, s.vv. *thiād*, *mersk*, *gā*. Cf. also *ASWB*, s.vv. *thiod*, *thioda* (prefix), *mersk*, *gō*.

¹¹⁴⁵ See *History of the Church of Hamburg*, II.17 (Schmeidler 1917: 72), giving the pl. ethnonym of the inhabitants of this area as *Tedmarsgoi*, with MS varr. *Thedmarskones*, *Ditmarscones*, *Thiedmarsi*, *Thiatmarsgoi*. The assimilation of final /k/ of *mersk/marsk* and initial /g/ in *gā/gō* (as in *Thiatmarsgoi*) probably led to the false derivation “Dietmar’s Gau” which can be found in several websites on Dithmarschen. It would be unusual for such an extensive area to be attributed to an individual, and no historical *Dietmar* has been identified as its ruler.

¹¹⁴⁶ *Terra [...] aut silvis horrida aut paludibus foeda*, “Land [...] either bristling with forests or stinking with swamps” (Tacitus, *Germania*, ch. 5; Wolff 1907: 11). *Saxones, gentem in oceani litoribus et paludibus inuiis sitam*, “the Saxons, a people inhabiting the shores of Ocean and impenetrable marshes” (the Spaniard Orosius on the Saxons in 370, *Historiae adversum paganos*, VII.32.10; Zangemeister 1889: 278). Orosius was quoted by Isidore of Seville (*Etymologiae*, IX.2.100; Lindsay 1911: I, 360).

Hemingr is named as one of the many sons of Hundingr king of Hundland in the Eddaic poem *Helgakviða Hundingsbani II*.¹¹⁴⁷ Helgi, the son of Sigmundr the Völsungr, joins in his family's feud with Hundingr and kills him in battle, earning his by-name *Hundingsbani*. But nothing else is recorded about Hundingr in Old Norse texts. His sole function is to be killed by Helgi. His name, however, is an Old Norse version of the ethno-eponym of the tribe named in *Widsith* as *Hundingas*. In l. 23 *Mearchealf* is named as the king of the *Hundingas*, and as we have seen with other ethno-eponyms like *Scylding* and *Scylfing*, he could also have been known to Anglo-Saxons as *Hunding*.

At *Widsith* 81-82 the *Hundingas* are named in the same couplet as the *Longbeardan*, and there is a scholarly tradition according to which the *Hundingas*, *Longbeardan* and *Heapobeardan* were related “Bardic” ethnicities somewhere in Holstein (see Map 8 on p. 287 below). Malone concluded that *Hundingas* was “an old nickname of the Langobards, later confined to the part of the tribe settled in east Holstein”.¹¹⁴⁸ He linked the “Bardic” tribes of the *Longbeardan* and *Heapobeardan*.¹¹⁴⁹ The editors of *Kl4* also indicate a readiness to accept the link between them as tribes of the southern Baltic coast.¹¹⁵⁰

In the narrative which opens *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* all we are told is that Helgi Sigmundarson has been on a spying mission to the court of king Hundingr, where Hundingr's son Hemingr was at home. The background to this episode is likely to be the slaying of Helgi's father Sigmundr by Lyngvi, another of Hundingr's sons, for which Helgi is plotting vengeance.¹¹⁵¹ On his clandestine departure, Helgi tells a herdsman to tell Hemingr that he had been there in disguise:

“Segðu Hemingi
at Helgi man
hvern í brynju
bragnar felldu;
ér úlf grán
inni hofðuð,
þar er Hamal hugði
Hundingr konungr.”

“Tell Hemingr that Helgi remembers whom the princes killed in his mailcoat [*sc.* Sigmundr]; you had a grey wolf in your home when king Hundingr thought it was Hamall”.

¹¹⁴⁷ Prose introduction and v. 1; *Eddukvæði*: II, 270.

¹¹⁴⁸ Malone 1962: 176-77. For the connection of the name *Hundingas* with the *cynocephali* of Paulus Diaconus's *HGL*, see pp. 227-30 above.

¹¹⁴⁹ Malone 1962: 162-65, 181-82.

¹¹⁵⁰ *Kl4*: lvi.

¹¹⁵¹ As in *Völsunga saga* ch. 11-12.



Map 8
Southern Jutland and the Elbe

Immediately after another escapade in disguise, a prose passage tells us that Helgi fought Hundingr at sea and killed him, earning his by-name *Hundingsbani*. That is all we know about Hundingr. However, in both Helgi-poems Helgi takes on another adversary, called *Hǫðbroddr*, (the son of Granmarr). In a narrative sequence containing much more detail than that concerning Hundingr, Helgi rescues the princess Sigrún from forced betrothal to Hǫðbroddr and kills him along with all his brothers.

Gregor Sarrazin was the first to suggest that the personal name *Hǫðbroddr* in the Helgi poems and *Hodbroddus* in Saxo Grammaticus's *Gesta Danorum* should be identified with the Old English ethnonym *Heapobeardan*. This has met with general approbation ever since – at least as some memory of the feud involving the Heapobeards.¹¹⁵² But while the *Hundingas*, *Longbeardan* and *Heapobeardan* seem to be part of the *Widsith*-world of Jutland, southern Scandinavia and the Baltic, the paternal family of Helgi, the son of Sigmundr in the Eddaic

¹¹⁵² Chambers thought it “exceedingly probable”, and thus nearly identified the ethno-eponym by likening it to eponymous names like *Ēastgota* (1912: 82, fn. 1). See also *K14*: lvi and fn. 1.

tradition is not.¹¹⁵³ Where Helgi's maternal family came from is unknown.¹¹⁵⁴ But it is strongly to be suspected that the Eddaic Helgi was created from the heroic-romantic exploits of the Scandinavian reflex of Hǫlga, the brother of Hrǫþgār, who, as a Scylding, was more likely to have been in conflict with the Heapobeards, and who – in some lost narrative – may have been the Dane who actually killed their king Frōda. As we have seen, *Frōda* is an epithetical name, and this person had the birth name *Wiðergyld*. If his ethno-eponym had been recorded, it would have been **Heapobearda*. Though there is no Old Norse **Hǫðbarði*, *Hǫðbroddr* is close enough to it to make the identification of the names likely.

According to the concept of the ethno-eponym advanced in this study, Mearchealf in *Widsith* 23 (*Meaca [wēold] Myrgingum, Mearchealf Hundingum*), because he was king of the Hundingas, would also have been known as *Hunding*. According to the scholarly tradition followed by Malone and the editors of *K14*, there was an onomastic and ethnic connection between the *Hundingas*, the *Longbeardan* and the *Heapobeardan*. This connection, I suggest, was preserved in the Helgi-poems in which the hero kills the ethno-eponymous Hundingr and Hǫðbroddr, and in which a person, Hemingr, whose name is a reflex of *Hemming*, is connected with Hundingr as his son. I would therefore suggest that the narrative submerged beneath the synthetic “Viking” romance of Helgi the Vǫlsungr was an older story in which Helgi was a Skjöldungr, and his killing of Hundingr and Hǫðbroddr was an echo of a narrative in which Hǫlga the Scylding fought against the southern Jutlandic and Baltic ethnicities who are referred to in *Widsith* and *Beowulf* as *Hundingas* and *Heapobeardan*, and also perhaps *Hemmingas*.

I have argued that the names *Meaca* (of the Myrgingas) and *Mearchealf* (of the Hundingas) in *Widsith* are both epithetical, ethno-eponymous and derived from the same first

¹¹⁵³ On the Netherlandish origins of Sigemunt and Sifrit in MHG tradition, see fn. 199 (p. 70 above). In *Vǫlsunga saga*, Sigi (a son of Óðinn) wins a kingdom called *Húaland* for himself. His grandson is Vǫlsungr, who becomes king of *Húaland* (“Hun-land”), and he is succeeded by Sigmundr. In the prose introduction to *Grípisspá* (*Frá dauða Sinfjötla*) in the *Poetic Edda* Sigmundr is also said to be a *konungr í Frakklandi* “a king in France”. The description *inn Húnski* (“the Hunnish one”) is used of Sigmundr’s son Sigurðr in *Atlamál* (v. 99) and 5 times in *Sigurðarkviða in skamma* (where he is also called *seggr inn suðræni* “the southern man”, a term also used of Atli’s Huns). Sigurðr is also referred to in the phrase *rekka Húna* “of the champions of the Huns” (*Guðrúnarkviða II*, v. 15). However, in *Piðreks saga af Bern*, *Húaland* is said to be Saxony (Gillespie 1973: 142), which was part of Francia (= *Frakkland*) from the time of Charlemagne, and would have been “southern” from the point of view of Scandinavia. In this confused-looking tradition, it remains unexplained how the Vǫlsungar came to be associated with an apparently Hunnish ethnicity while ruling in Frakkland (possibly also conceived of as Saxony!) However, it does not seem to refer to Jutland.

¹¹⁵⁴ In *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I* and *II*, Helgi’s mother comes from the unknown place of Brálundr. The toponyms in these poems have not been identified and some or all may be pure invention. But personal names – such as *Hǫðbroddr*, *Hundingr*, *Hemingr* and *Varinn* (see fn. 707 at p. 184 above) – indicate the Jutland-Baltic region. Possibly so does the identification of Helgi’s paternal family of the Vǫlsungar as *Ylfingar* (if this was a memory of the *Wylfingas* of *Beowulf* and the *Wulfingas* of *Widsith*), though this may simply derive from the wolf-motif in the story of Helgi’s father Sigmundr.

element *meaṛh* “horse”;¹¹⁵⁵ and that this lexical closeness indicates that this pair were identical, or related, as were their peoples. The further witness of what we may deduce from the Helgi poems suggests that there was a connection between *Hundingr* and his son/subordinate *Hemingr* which survived in the Scandinavian tradition. If so, then conflict between the peoples of the Hemmingas, Hundingas and Myrgingas may have been be intrafamilial.¹¹⁵⁶

Thus, I argue, in the same area, and sharing a Bardic and/or Suevic ethnicity, were the Hemmingas, another of the peoples to be swallowed up by the growing Danish imperium. We know of this people only through the dark allusions to *Hemming* in *Beowulf* and to *Hemingr* in the *Edda*. But it is the argument of this study that both narrative traditions shared the story of the destruction of national independence – including that of the Angles – by the expansion of the Danes.

4.4.1.7 Hemming: Conclusion

This evidence, as a whole, suggests that a *hamm* was a common topographical feature in the West Germanic language-area, and this is represented by its commonness as a place-name or place-name element. The areas of southern Jutland, Frisia, the North Sea littoral and lowland Britain would have been regions where bog and waterland were extensive, and in which habitation by means of communication such as rivers would have been a notable feature of settlement.

I also suggest that there is a nexus between the frequency of the toponym or toponymic element *hamm* and personal and folk-names apparently based on this word, including *Hemming*. In Germany, as in England, place-names in *Hem(m)ing* are more common than instances of the personal name. And it may be that in both England and Germany the prevalence of habitation by rivers and in wetland led to a plethora of early place-names commemorating individuals or groups known by the ethnonym *Hemming*, which would designate a person who lived at a *hamm*, a person who was one of the people known as *Hemmingas*, or *Hemming*, the clan head, known by his ethno-eponym.

Hemming of the *Hemmingas* thus fits in with a topographical meaning of “people of the *hamm*”, i.e. of the land bounded by the river, and/or forming a border”. It would therefore be

¹¹⁵⁵ I note here that the father of Hǫðbroddr was Granmarr, whose name meant “horse horse”. See *ANEW*: 184, s.v. *grani*, and 380, s.v. *marr* 2 (ON *marr* is cognate with OE *meaṛh*).

¹¹⁵⁶ A more daring “appositive” reading of *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*, v. 1 would be that Hemingr and Hundingr were the same. If this were the tradition underlying *Widsith*, then Mearchealf of the Hundingas (aka Hunding, poss. also aka Meaca of the Myrgingas) would also have been Hemming of the Hemmingas, reflecting not the names of individuals but titles to land assumed by the same person.

suitable as a name for a people on or near the Eider, holding it as a border area or buffer-zone, as the Swæfe are said to do in *Widsith* 43-44.

When Offa takes his bride home, it is *ofer fealone flōd* “over the dusky water” (*Beowulf* 1950a). While, theoretically, this could have been any body of water, any sea-journey undertaken by Offa from Angel would have taken him over some stretch of the Baltic to Denmark, Sweden, or the coast of the Baltic or one of its islands. However, I suggest that we can unite the information given in *Beowulf* and *Widsith*. Thus, we can identify Hemming as Offa’s father-in-law, the ruler of the Hemmingas with their capital (or at least an important centre) at Hemmingstedt. He was also the ruler of a branch of the Swæfe people associated with Schwabstedt. This indicates an extensive realm in south-western Jutland, in the marshy estuarine region of the Eider known to the *Widsith* poet as *bī Fīfeldōre* (coterminous with or bordering on Dithmarschen). We can therefore understand the bridal journey of Offa and his queen being “over the dusky” water of this great fen, including the waters of the Eider. By his daring, Offa managed to achieve a marriage which allied the Angles with a considerable power in the lower Eider area, greatly increasing the strength and security of Angel.

4.4.1.8 *Gārmund* aka *Hemming* or *Offa*? Possible New Identifications

The name *Gārmund* appears at *Beowulf* 1962a in the Offa-episode. Although this has been almost universally regarded as a variant or erroneous form of the name of Offa’s father, who is named in the Mercian regnal lists as *Wērmund* or *Wārmund*, there are, I suggest, reasons to believe that *Gārmund* was another person, and also that the form of this name contains important evidence as to the relationships that were involved in Offa’s bridal quest.

In *Beowulf* the text containing this name is printed as follows in *K14*:

ponon Ēomēr wōc	1960
hæleðum tō helpe, Hem[m]inges mæg,	
nefa Gārmundes, nīða cræftig.	1962

After that [or “from them”] Ēomēr was born, a salvation to men/heroes, Hemming’s *mæg*, Gārmund’s *nefa*, mighty in warfare.

The *Beowulf* MS which contains this text is shown in Fig. 5 (p. 291 below):

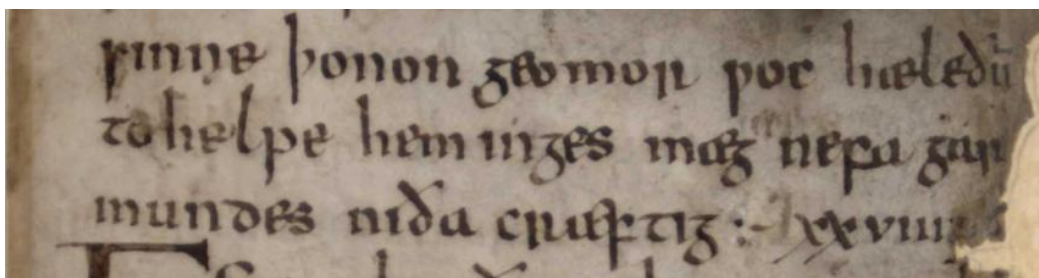


Fig. 5
Beowulf MS, extract of fol. 173r

The relevant part reads:

þonon geomor wor hælēdū
 to helpe hem inges mæg nefa gar
 mundes niða cræftig:-

The passage contains three personal names, and each one has been the subject of debate as to whether it has been correctly rendered by the second *Beowulf*-scribe. It has been argued that the reading <geomor> in l. 1960b is not correct, since it ought to alliterate with *ēðel* in the a-line (*ēðel þinne* “your homeland”), and in *Beowulf* words beginning with palatalised /ge-/ do not do this. Nor is the adjective *geōmor* contextually appropriate, where one would expect a subject noun. Most recent editors have therefore regarded this as a mistake and emended it to *Ēomēr*, a name which appears as that of Offa’s grandson in the various versions of the Mercian regnal list (though the same editors consider this person to be Offa’s son in *Beowulf*).¹¹⁵⁷ Next, in l. 1961b, as we have seen, most editors have regarded the MS reading *Hemninges* as an error for *Hemminges*. Thus, the MS reading of another name, <gar mundes>, in the same environment has been taken by nearly all commentators to be either a further scribal error for the name of Offa’s father, *Wērmund* or *Wærmund*, or a variant of that name.¹¹⁵⁸

Neidorf notes that both *Beowulf*-scribes had a tendency to mangle names – including *Ēomēr* and *Wērmund* – and argues that this was because these belonged to characters from old literary traditions the late tenth-century copyists no longer knew.¹¹⁵⁹ We have addressed the issue of scribal error with regard to both *Hemming* and *Ēomēr*,¹¹⁶⁰ but is *Gārmund* an error for *Wērmund*, and if not, then whose name is it that the *Beowulf*-poet thought worth mentioning in this puzzling excursus on Offa’s marriage?

¹¹⁵⁷ See *K14*: 227, and the discussion with respect to *Ēomēr* at pp. 202-04 above.

¹¹⁵⁸ See *K14*: liii-liv, fn. 7; 222-23 and 222, fn. 4; 226-27.

¹¹⁵⁹ Neidorf 2013b: 255, 257.

¹¹⁶⁰ See, respectively, pp. 202-04 and 275-85 above.

If *Gārmund* is a garbling, it ought to be noted that it was also a recorded male personal name, both in Anglo-Saxon England and on the Continent.¹¹⁶¹ In the texts which contain parts of the Offa-tradition it does not occur as a variant of *Wērmund*/*Wǣrmund*, as can be seen from the following Table 7 below (in which the spellings with <Gu> are characteristic of Welsh or Old French pronunciation and/or orthography).¹¹⁶²

<i>Beowulf</i>		Garmund	Offa	Eomer		
<i>AngCol</i> ¹¹⁶³	Wihtlæg	Wermund	Offa	Angengēot	Eomær	Icel
<i>HB</i> ¹¹⁶⁴	Guithleg	Guer(d)mund	Offa	Ongen	Eamer	—
<i>ASC</i>	Wihtlæg	Wærmund	Offa	Angelþeow	Eomær	Icel
John of Worcester ¹¹⁶⁵	Wihtleng	Wermund	Offa	Angengeat	Ēomēr	Icel
<i>VOD</i>		Warmundus	Offa			
Layamon ¹¹⁶⁶		Gurmund				
<i>BHD</i>	Frodo	Wermundus	Uffo	Dan		
<i>GD</i> ¹¹⁶⁷	Viglecus	Wermundus	Uffo	Dan		
<i>AnnR</i>	Wichlecus	Wermundus	Uffo	Olaf (aka Dan)		
<i>Cod Run</i> ¹¹⁶⁸	Uiþlēþ	Uermund	Uffi	Dan/Huhlek		

Table 7
Offa I's genealogy: from *Wihtlæg* to *Icel*

Shaw has taken issue with the theory of scribal error, arguing that it is not – as in other cases – a substitution of a common word for a name that a scribe did not recognise (like <geomor> for

- ¹¹⁶¹ See names in *Gar-/Gār-*, including *Gārmund* in Briggs 2024: 136-37. *PASE* has two entries under *Garmund*, a name on a gold ring possibly of the 9th c., and a witness to a late 11th-c. charter. Its cognate forms are also recorded in Continental Germany (Förstemann 1900: 583).
- ¹¹⁶² The texts are presented chronologically, from earliest (top) to latest (bottom). See also Table 12 (p. 277).
- ¹¹⁶³ *AngCol* also records the form *Wærmund*; and the Mercian *Angengeot* (MS V) is also given as *Angengiot* (MS C), and *Angelgeot* (MS T) – as is his namesake (a different person) in the three versions of the Bernician list in the MSS of *AngCol*.
- ¹¹⁶⁴ *HB*, ch. 56, Harleian recension; Dumville 1975: 240-41. Four names have been erroneously omitted between *Eamer* and the next name in the Mercian list, *Pubba*, who was not Eamer's son. In *HB* there are variant spellings *Guytlec* and *Guerdmund* (*ibid.* 698).
- ¹¹⁶⁵ Darlington, McGurk and Bray 1995-98: II, 86. John's source is unknown, though Dumville has suggested that he “appears to have had access to a genealogical collection more closely related to that used three centuries before by the author of the *Historia* [*Brittonum*] than is any other surviving document” (Dumville 1976: 49).
- ¹¹⁶⁶ Layamon's *Brut* (see Swanton 2010: 145-60) is an early 13th-c. English adaptation of Wace's Anglo-Norman verse chronicle *Roman de Brut* in which *Gurmund* (also *Guermons*, *Guermont*, *Gormons* and *Gormont*) appears as a heathen from Africa who conquers Britain with the Saxons and after many cruelties hands it over to the Angles (with no mention of Offa). It is not certain he is the same person as Offa's father. The name *Gurmund* appears in William of Malmesbury's *Gesta regum Anglorum*, but only as the Scandinavian enemy of Alfred (aka *Guthrum* in *ASC*). *Gurmund* also appears in Alfred of Beverley's *History of Britain* (c. 1151) as *Gurmundus Afffricanorum rex*, the fancied conqueror of Ireland who allied himself with the Angles against the Britons. One MS adds *sed ut verius dicatur Norwiagiorum regis*, “but, as may be more accurately said, ‘king of the Norwegians’” (ch. 6; Slevin and Lockyer 2023: 71, 75). Whoever this *Gurmund* was, the initial <Gu> of his name is the grapheme <gu> used to represent the pronunciation, in some parts of medieval France, of Gmc words borrowed into late Latin and early Romance with their original Gmc initial /w-/. The *Brut* is so far divorced from the rest of the Offa tradition that I do not consider it further.
- ¹¹⁶⁷ The succession after *Uffo* in the Scandinavian texts bears no relation to English tradition, and, apart from *Olaf/Dan*, is omitted here.
- ¹¹⁶⁸ *Codex Runicus* (Copenhagen, Arnemagnæanske Samling MS AM 28 8^{vo}, c. 1300), printed in *K14*: 303.

<eomer>); and to suppose a mistake of <g> for an exemplar's <p> (*wynn*) or <u, uu> would be “highly unlikely” in any insular script.¹¹⁶⁹ Instead, he examines the possibility that a Continental form <Garmund> or <Guarmund> – though representing Germanic *Warmund* – could have been mistaken by an Anglo-Saxon scribe for *Garmund* or *Gaarmund*.¹¹⁷⁰ However, he prefers the analysis that the initial /G-/ of *Gārmund* betokens the influence on the *Beowulf*-poet of an eighth-century Welsh text containing the name of Offa's father.¹¹⁷¹

As to the unlikelihood of scribal error, some errors in *Beowulf* are just careless garblings resulting in nonsense, not substitutions of common words; and there is at least one instance in the *Beowulf* MS of apparent confusion between <p>, <u> or <uu> and <g>.¹¹⁷² But a stronger reason for scepticism, I suggest, is that if the name of Offa's father had appeared in the *Beowulf*-scribe's exemplar, it is highly likely it would have done so in the forms <uermundes>, <uuermundes>, <permundes>, <uærmundes>, <uuærmundes> or <pærmundes>, or (as often) with the name-themes divided as <uer mundes> etc. One would expect a spelling such as *Warmund* only in Latinised name-forms,¹¹⁷³ of which the *Beowulf* text shows no other evidence. Thus, the scribe was unlikely to have encountered, say, <uuar mundes> and altered the apparent non-word ***war/wār* to <gar>. In addition, a noun-phrase in the form —*es nefa* should have alerted him to the presence of a personal name; and even if he did not recognise the character referred to, *Wērmund* (Anglian) or *Wærmund* (West Saxon) was an ordinary, and

¹¹⁶⁹ Shaw 2020: 142.

¹¹⁷⁰ Shaw 2020: 142–44. Though he identifies the use of <g> and <gu> for Gmc /w/ to Francia in the 9th c. (too late) and Lombardy in the 8th (too far away).

¹¹⁷¹ Shaw 2020: 144–45. Celtic influence was also briefly suggested by Sarrazin (1910: 17), noting the forms *Guermund* and *Guerdmund* in *HB*.

¹¹⁷² Cf. *Beowulf* 461b, where the MS has <gara cynn>, an evident error since <gara> omits the required alliteration on /w/. Appropriately for the context, the literal meaning of *wāra cynn* would be “family of (marriage) pledges” – i.e. in-laws. (Bēowulf's father Ecgbēow was required by his Geatish in-laws to leave the country after killing Heaðolāf, whose people, the Wylfings, threatened war).

¹¹⁷³ There are two exceptions recorded in *PASE*: (1) *Wærmund* 4, <warmund> in S50, a charter purportedly c. 785 but in MSS of the 13th and 16th centuries and suspected to be spurious; and (2) *Wærmund* 6, a late 8th/early 9th-c. Bishop of Rochester attested in 15 documents, all but one of which are in <Wer-> or <Wær->. He is spelled <Uuaremundus> only in a recording of a synod in Offan Mercia in 786, authored by the foreign Georgius Bishop of Ostia (Duemmler 1895: 29), in a list of signatories containing significant evidence of Continental or Latin orthography in the names. As a comparison, note *Warmundus* (in fn. 1174 below); also *Wærbald* (*PASE*), the name of four men spelled in charters respectively as <Verbaldis>, <Warbaldo>, <Wærbald>, <Werbald>. *Warmund* (as recorded in *DOEC*) is also found in a Peterborough charter as a personal name and in S648 in a toponym *warmundes stan*. Since *War-* does not accord with OE orthography or phonology, I suggest that in forms like Latinised *Warbaldus* the Latin graph /a/ was used as an equivalent to OE /æ/.

PASE's other names in *War-* (*Warin*, *Waringod*, *Warmer*, *Warner*) are no earlier than c. 900 and are all either moneyers, clerics or *DB* property owners, suggestive of non-English people and/or non-English spellings or both. *Warmundus* in *VOD* is late, Latinised and spelled thus as part of a folk-etymological fantasy linking Warmundus and his capital of Warwick.

not particularly rare, Germanic dithematic variation name with etymologically transparent themes.¹¹⁷⁴ Taking these factors together, scribal error seems an unlikely explanation.

I suggest that we may also reject Shaw's arguments for the influence of Continental Late Latin or Romance, or Welsh orthography. In the first place, these contentions require us to believe that there was some stage in the development of the text of *Beowulf* (and/or its Offa-digression) which included a written stage somewhere in Europe or Wales; and that this influenced the spelling of only one name in the whole poem. As Shaw sets out, in Welsh texts the grapheme <gu> represented initial /gw-/, the Welsh development of proto-Celtic and Brittonic /w-/, and this graph was also used in Welsh texts for Old English /w-/, as we find in the forms of the name *Wērmund* in *HB*'s <Guerdmund> and <Guermund>.¹¹⁷⁵ But while it is conceivable that *Wær-* in an English text (or heard from an Old English speaker) might have been represented by a Welsh scribe as *Guar-*, it is not likely it would have been rendered as *Gar-*. Indeed, the Mercian list in *HB* is an early ninth-century Welsh borrowing of an English text closely related to *AngCol*; and the forms of this name appear as *Guermund* and *Guerdmund*, following the standard Anglian phonology or spelling that we find in the vocalisation of *Uermund* in MS V of *AngCol*, a Mercian MS of the first two decades of the ninth century and thus the earliest of the *AngCol* MSS.¹¹⁷⁶ These are difficulties; but an even greater one lies in accepting that an English poet who was familiar enough with the story of Offa of Angel to be able to allude to it meaningfully, and who was aware of the names of its more obscure (to us) characters, would have needed to seek the name of Offa's father in a foreign document, or would have chosen (or retained) an alien spelling in conflict with that of his oral tradition – especially when the line in which *Garmund* appears does not even require it to alliterate with another word beginning with /g/ instead of /w/ (or any word at all).

I therefore suggest that scribal error and Welsh influence are equally unlikely, and we ought to consider the hitherto largely ignored alternative possibility, which is that the *Beowulf*-poet is displaying a characteristic familiarity with names from a wide narrative background of

¹¹⁷⁴ In *PASE* there are 13 instances of *Wærmund*, with spellings equivalent to *Wermund*, *Weremund*, *Warmund*, *Waremund* and *Wærmund*, but none with initial <G-> or <Gu->. In Briggs (2024) all the names in *Gar-/Gār-* appear to be English (including *Gārmund*), and the names in *Ger-/Gēr-* Continental, Welsh, French or late (Briggs 2024: 136-37, 138-39), as are the names in *Gua-*, *Gue-* and *Gui-* (*ibid.*: 147-48). Briggs has three examples (2024: 285). One is *Wārmund*, based on recorded <Wermund>; the second is *Warmund*, based on recorded <Uuærmund>; and the third is *Warmundus* from *DLV*. However, this occurs among post-Conquest names in Franco-Latin form. See Rollason and Rollason 2007: II, 156, *s.n.* *Wærmund*. The form *Uermund* is dated to the 9th c., but *Warmundus* is dated to the 12th. I do not know why Briggs represents the first two Anglo-Saxon names with phonologically erroneous /a/ and /ā/.

¹¹⁷⁵ Dumville 1975: 241, 698.

¹¹⁷⁶ Dumville 1976: 24.

which we are unaware, and that *Gārmund* was a person in the Offa-story whom we have so far failed to identify.

4.4.1.9 *Nefa* and *mæg*: Terms of Kinship

The clues to *Gārmund*'s identity, I suggest, lie in two phrases which use terms for kinship relations: *nefa Garmundes* (l. 1962a) referring to *Ēomēr*, and *Hemminges mæg*, which is used to describe both *Ēomēr* (l. 1961b) and Offa (l. 1944b). However, the examination of this problem is rendered difficult by the *communis opinio* that in *Beowulf* Offa and *Ēomēr* are father and son.¹¹⁷⁷ This is based on three factors which, I argue, are open to challenge.

The first – that *Gārmund* was an error or variant for *Wērmund* – we have already dealt with. The second is that the clause *ponon Ēomēr wōc* (l. 1960b) refers back to Offa (in l. 1957b) so that *Ēomēr* was Offa's son and *Gārmund*'s grandson (*nefa*). But Shaw convincingly argues against this, pointing out that *ponon Ēomēr wōc* can simply mean that *Ēomēr* was subsequently born in Offa's family, as a descendant (including a grandson) of Offa, as in the regnal lists. As we have seen, he equates *Gārmund* with *Wērmund*, with the consequence that *nefa* must mean “paternal great-grandson” of *Wērmund*.¹¹⁷⁸ However, that may be a stretch for the kinship term *nefa*, and also a somewhat distant relationship to mention, if *Ēomēr*'s most glorious kinsman was his grandfather Offa (unless *Wērmund* was super-famous too).

The third is that *Angengēot* – Offa's son in the regnal lists, also known as *Angengīot*, *Angelgēot*, *Angengēat*, *Angelþēow* and *Ongen* – ought to be suspected as a fiction. The variant of his name, *Angelþēow*, has been described as “somewhat suspicious” by the editors of *Kl4*,¹¹⁷⁹ referring to Newton's doubt about its authenticity,¹¹⁸⁰ which was based on the arguments that *Angengēot/Angelgēot* was perhaps a genealogical invention signifying an Anglo-Geatish political connection,¹¹⁸¹ and that because the name *Angengēot* also appears in a Bernician regnal list, it was an expression of political relations between Mercia and Bernicia at the time of the compilation of the lists.¹¹⁸² A further claimed cause for suspicion is that *Angengēot* has

¹¹⁷⁷ See *Kl4*: 223 and fn. 4, 227, and 466, *s.n.* *Ēo-mēr*. The *Kl4* editors however say that Jack (1994) regards *Ēomēr* as Offa's grandson. This is an error: Jack defines *Ēomēr* as *Gārmund*'s grandson and Offa's son (Jack 1994: 141, 142). See also Newton 1993: 64-68 (with references) – though none of the conclusions drawn or cited by him are followed here. Leneghan treats *Ēomēr* as Offa's son, who was included because he was his father's successor as king (2020: 232, fn. 142).

¹¹⁷⁸ Shaw 2020: 145-46.

¹¹⁷⁹ *Kl4*: 222, fn. 4.

¹¹⁸⁰ Newton 1993: 68.

¹¹⁸¹ As in Eliason 1965: 130-31, and Malone 1939a: 203.

¹¹⁸² As in Dumville 1977: 79-80.

also been identified with the Swedish king Ongenþēow, whose death in battle is described in *Beowulf*, making *Angelþēow* a duplicate or conflation.¹¹⁸³ Leneghan treats *Angelþēow* (“servant of the Angles”) as originally a title for Offa, and *Angelgēot/Angengēot* as corruptions of *Weopulgēot*, earlier in the Mercian list.¹¹⁸⁴ However, as I have argued (see pp. 180-201 above), *Angengēot* (“Angle Jute”) and its variants are consistent with ethno-eponyms with a thematic relevance to the story of Offa and the dual heritage of his descendants. As with other ethno-eponyms it is not necessarily a fiction, and I suggest that the only argument which affects the identification of Offa’s immediate kindred turns on whether the name *Angengēot* belonged to Offa’s son and Ēomēr’s father (who was unknown by any other name), as in the Mercian regnal list, or that Offa’s son was indeed Ēomēr, but an early copyist of the Mercian regnal list had seen in his source the descriptions of Ēomēr as *Angengēot Ēomēr* or *Ēomēr Angengēoting*, and had thought that *Angengēot* and *Angengēoting*, rather than ethno-eponymous epithets attaching to Ēomēr the son of Offa, indicated that Ēomēr had a father called *Angengēot*. (The identification of *Angelþēow* with *Ongenþēow*, the father of Ōhthere and Onela, is impossible, whether dynastically, chronologically or in terms of ethnicity, and I do not consider it further).

I suggest, rather, that once we remove the presumptions that Ēomēr was Offa’s son (replacing this with “he *may* have been Offa’s son”) and that Gārmund and Wērmund must be the same person, new avenues of analysis are opened up. The *Beowulf*-poet seems to have thought it worthwhile to tell us that Ēomēr was the *nefa* of Gārmund, and that he and Offa were each the *mæg* of Hemming, and in doing so to tell us that at least three of the four names in this passage were related to each other by kinship spanning at least two and possibly four generations in the story of Offa, thus placing it in a wider context.

This presents us with two potential solutions to the *Gārmund*-problem. The first is that Gārmund was the son of Wērmund – that is, Offa himself. If so, then *Gārmund* would have been his birth-name (sharing a deuterotheme with his father), and *Offa* was a hypocoristic and epithetical name given to him as an “old man’s son” or (more simply) “heir”. Offa would have been *Hemminges mæg* by virtue of his marriage to Hemming’s daughter.¹¹⁸⁵ Thus, Ēomēr would have been *Hemminges mæg* in the general sense of “male kinsman” of Hemming, and he would have been *nefa Gārmundes* as a grandson of Offa (though not if he was a son, as *nefa*

¹¹⁸³ *K14*: lxi, fn. 6, referring to Kier 1915: 129-38.

¹¹⁸⁴ Leneghan 2009: 551.

¹¹⁸⁵ *Mæg* meant “male kinsman” in the broadest sense. In *Beowulf* it used nephews and uncles, brothers, and parents and sons. Unlike *nefa*, it did not only refer to younger relatives, and it could also refer to male relations by marriage. In the OE Heptateuch, Moses’s father-in-law Jethro is called his *mæg* (Exodus 3: 1, cited in *Bosworth-Toller*, s.v. *mæg*).

did not mean “son” in Old English).¹¹⁸⁶ If this is correct, then the significance of *Ēomēr* which was being alluded to was that he was a descendant of two significant males in the Offa story – his paternal grandfather Offa (aka *Gārmund*) and his maternal great-grandfather Hemming. And Offa’s thematically significant relationship was that he was the son-in-law of Hemming. In a narrative which focuses on the terrible risks taken by Offa to achieve a marriage, this places considerable, and appropriate, focus on Hemming.

The second possibility is that *Gārmund* was some kinsman of *Wērmund*. The most significant male in the Offa-story – apart from Offa and *Wērmund* – was the father of Offa’s bride, who, I have suggested, went under the names of *Hemming* and *Frēawine*, with *Hemming* as an ethno-eponym for the king of the Hemmingas, and *Frēawine* as an epithetical name indicating relationship to a *frēa* (“king, lord”). Thus, *Gārmund* would conceivably be the birth-name of this person, sharing a familial deutertheme *-mund* with *Wērmund*, who would potentially be his brother or a cousin of some kind. If so, then Offa would have been *Hemminges mæg* in two ways (as a son-in-law and a nephew or other kinsman); and *Ēomēr* would have been *nefa Gārmundes* in the sense of “the male descendant of a *nefa*” (a sense recorded in Old English), that is, as a grandson of Offa who was himself a *nefa* of *Gārmund*.

But which of these two alternatives is preferable? As we saw in Part I, reading *Widsith* 26-27 “appositively” enabled us to identify *Gefwulf* and *Fin* as different names for the same person, and to realise that he was the son of Godwulf, who also had two names, also being known as *Folcwald(a)*. We noted the pattern that father and son shared the deutertheme *-wulf*, and each of them had an epithetical name.¹¹⁸⁷ The same method of appositive reading also showed that *Hnæf* could be *Hōc* in *FFr*.¹¹⁸⁸ An example of contiguous phrases referring “appositively” to the same person can be found in *Waldere* (II, 7b-9):

	iūlēan genam	7
þæs ðe hine of nearwum	Nīðhādes mæg,	
Wēlandes bearn,	Widia ūt forlēt;	9

He [þēodrīc] got that long loan [*sc.* of the sword Mimming] because Nīðhād’s kinsman,
Wēland’s child, Widia freed him from perils;

¹¹⁸⁶ Bosworth-Toller defines *nefa* as “grandson”, “nephew” and “stepson” (s.v. *nefa*). The *Supplement* adds, “in a general sense, a descendant, pl. children’s children”, citing glosses to Aldhelm’s *De Laudibus Virginitatis* from Napier (1900) in which *pronepotum* is glossed as *nefena bearnum* “children of *nefan*” and *nefena nefen* “*nefan* of *nefan*” (Napier 1900: 24, 128). Lowe considered the literary and (very limited) charter evidence of the use of *nefa* and offered the definition “(younger or contemporary) male relative”, whether by direct or collateral descent (1993: 33) – following Spolsky 1977.

¹¹⁸⁷ See pp. 75-82 above.

¹¹⁸⁸ See pp. 57-59 above.

Thus, it is possible that the phrases *Hem[m]inges mæg // nefa Gārmundes* (*Beowulf* 1960b-61a) which describe *Ēomēr*, should be understood in the same way, in which case Hemming and Gārmund were the same person. If so, this would give the following scenario, if Wērmund and Gārmund were brothers and Offa's marriage was one between first cousins (red arrow = *nefa*; blue arrow = *mæg*):

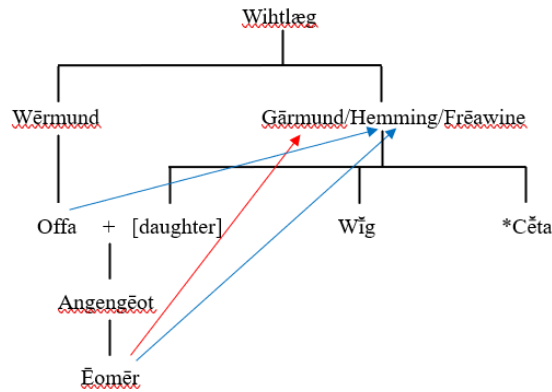


Fig. 6
Nefa and mæg relationships in Offa's family in Beowulf

Again, this places great emphasis on the importance of Offa's father-in-law Hemming aka *Gārmund*. But it would also signal that this was a marriage within the same family and potentially between cousins.

Because of the scantiness of the evidence, the choice between *Gārmund* as the birth-name of Offa and as the name of a kinsman of Wērmund who was also Offa's father-in-law is too narrow to determine with probability, let alone certainty. The form of *Gārmund* is clearly dithematic, consistent with a birth-name; and the two potential candidates, Offa and Hemming/Frēawine, each bear types of names that I have identified as different – that is, as a hypocorism, an ethno-eponym and an epithetical name, respectively. While there is no attestation of Offa of Angel being known under any other name, this cannot be regarded as conclusive in itself (since *Offa* is a hypocorism). While the contiguity of the descriptions of *Ēomēr* as *Hemminges mæg*, // *nefa Gārmundes* (in ll. 1961b-62a) are suggestive of the appositive style (that is, naming the same person twice, like *Widia* in *Waldere*), such apposition is not certain here, since both Offa and Hemming are, I suggest, central to *Ēomēr*'s dual heritage, a prominent theme in the legend of Angel. (One may even wonder, in this passage with several scribal errors, whether <niða cræftig> in l. 1962b was – as the editors have it – *nīðā cræftig* “mighty in warfare”, or originally *niðða cræftig* “mighty in kinsmen”).

However, it is especially interesting in this context that, after considering several Anglo-Saxon cases of historical “wicked queens” who were involved in cousin-marriages,

Shippey (2001) speculated that Offa's wife "Modthryth" had two marriages. The first was a "cousin-strategy" within the family to reconcile rival intra-familial factions (in which she played the role of wicked queen). Then, after the death of this husband, she was sent abroad in a "stranger" marriage to Offa. We do not need to suppose two marriages for Offa. But it would add a further, intriguing dimension to the Offa-story if his quest was to seek a marriage to his cousin as part of a strategy to unite different parts of the same family in order to meet a common threat. In this scenario it can also be seen that Hemming/Gārmund – as the abetter or author of his daughter's crimes – would have played the role of the wicked uncle – perhaps appropriately in typological or genre terms, since the marriage scenario otherwise seems strongly indebted to folk- or fairytales featuring dangerous bridal quests.

When we come to consider the Offa-story in the Danish versions in *GD*, *BHD* and *AnnR*, cousin-marriage would also help to explain the motif of the obligation assumed by Uffo of expunging the shame caused by the disgraceful behaviour of his brothers-in-law in ganging up as a pair against king Athislus. If, in this narrative tradition, they had been the sons of his paternal uncle, Offa may have felt an obligation to uphold the honour of his own family.

4.4.1.10 Gārmund and Hemming: Conclusions

I suggest, in conclusion, that we may combine the information from the Offa-episode in *Beowulf* (which describes Offa's bridal quest), from ll. 43-44 in *Widsith* (which tell us that the *Engle* and the *Swæfe* held the border against the Myrgingas where Offa had won it, by the mouth of the Eider), and that we can place this in the context of the Uffo-narratives preserved in Danish histories. This combination leads us to conclude that Gārmund was not Wērmund. He was either Offa himself under his birth-name (sharing a deuterotheme with his father Wērmund), in which case Æomēr was *nefa Gārmundes* (*Beowulf* 1962) because he was Offa's grandson, as he is in the Mercian regnal list. Alternatively, *Gārmund* was the birth-name of the father of Offa's bride, referred to in *Beowulf* as *Hemming*, the ethno-eponym of the people of the riverside (*hamm*) called *Hemmingas*. These are the *Swæfe* who assist Offa in holding his border against the Myrgingas on the Eider. If so, then the deuterotheme shared between Wērmund and Gārmund may be indicative of a familial relationship (potentially as close as brothers), in which case Offa's marriage was a "cousin-strategy" intended to strengthen a kinship alliance. As we shall see in the next section, Hemming was also known by an epithetical name, as *Frēawine*, suggesting that he was the "lord-friend" of Wērmund, and either a fellow king or a subregulus, and thus potentially a kinsman of his too.

As a postscript, we can note that in l. 22 of *Widsith* that Witta ruled the Swæfe (*Witta wēold Swæfum*), and *Witta* was a hypocoristic name borne by the father and grandfather of Hengest the conqueror of Kent, whose grandfather was a first cousin of Wihtlæg (see Fig. 3, p. 144 above). If the Swæfe consisted of a number of related though not united peoples in southern Jutland, then Wērmund's stratagem of a "cousin marriage", creating a defensive alliance across the width of the peninsula was indeed a canny one.

The traditional – but I think unnecessary – alternative is that, with Neidorf, we conclude that "such little information is given about [him] that meaningful critical discussion is not even a possibility" and Gārmund "confront[s] the modern reader as little more than [an] insignificant name".¹¹⁸⁹

4.4.2 Frēawine, Wīg and *Cēta

4.4.2.1 Frēawine, Wīg and the West Saxon Regnal List

In the Danish histories the figure we have associated with *Beowulf*'s Hemming is Frowinus (*GD*) or Frewinus (*AnnR*), a *Slesuiciensium prefectus* who has two sons, Keto and Wigo or Wiggo (*AnnR*). It is most curious that two of these names seem to be mirrored in those of the father and son *Freawine* and *Wig*, who appear in some of the versions of the West Saxon regnal lists in *ASC* (*s.aa.* 552 and 855/56 – though not in MS E, where West Saxon genealogies are omitted generally) – as can be seen in table 8 below (at p. 301 – earliest ancestor at top).¹¹⁹⁰

But Frēawine and Wīg are absent from the West Saxon list in *AngCol* – the earliest of these genealogical sources, dating from the eighth century. They are also absent from Asser's *Life of Alfred*,¹¹⁹¹ which was based on a version of *ASC* older than any currently surviving.¹¹⁹² The late tenth-century chronicler Æthelweard is also supposed to have used a late ninth-century version of *ASC* older than the surviving versions.¹¹⁹³ But his genealogy of Æthelwulf contains

¹¹⁸⁹ Neidorf 2020a: 665. In my reconstruction of the Offa story (see p. 421 below) I have preferred to regard *Gārmund* as a name for Hemming aka *Frēawine* – if purely for the reason that this is the more sophisticated and interesting interpretation of the two.

¹¹⁹⁰ Line "_____" indicates start/end of list; "[...]" indicates names omitted in table.

¹¹⁹¹ Ch. 1; Stevenson and Whitelock 1959: 2 and fns. Stevenson inserted the sequence *Freothe gar Freawine Wig* into the text from John of Worcester: *Chronicle s.a.* 849. See Darlington, McGurk and Bray 1995-98: II, 262 and fns, where it is said that these were additions to the "defective" genealogy in Asser, either from *ASC* or John's copy of Asser. See Stevenson and Whitelock (1959: cxxxiii), where Whitelock notes Sisam's view that Asser's omissions here were not due to scribal error (Sisam 1953a: 297, 299, 301, 313).

¹¹⁹² Stevenson and Whitelock 1959: lxxxv-lxxxviii. Stevenson dates the earliest extant version, A, from the "very end of the ninth century, the earlier part being apparently written in 891" (*ibid.*: lxxxv).

¹¹⁹³ Stenton 1970: 114, and Barker 1967: 77-79. See also Leneghan 2020: 145.

Frithogar, *Freawine* and *Vuig*.¹¹⁹⁴ Sisam suggests that Freawine and Wig were “Saxon heroes” inserted into the “shorter Cerdic list” (i.e. into the list in *AngCol* and Asser’s original text).¹¹⁹⁵

<i>AngCol</i> (MS CT)	<i>ASC</i> (Intro MS A)	<i>ASC</i> (s.a. 552/97)	<i>ASC</i> (s.a. (855/56)	Asser
			Adam	Adam
			[...]	[...]
			Noe	Noe
			[...]	[...]
			Fin	Finn
			Fribuwulf ^[A only]	Frithuwulf
Frealaf			Frealaf	Frealaf
			Fribuwald ^[A only]	Frithowald
Woden	Woden	Woden	Woden	Uoden
Bældæg	Beldæg	Bældæg	Beldæg	Beldeag
Brand	Brond	Brand	Brond	Brond
	Fribugar	Freoðogar	Fribogar	
	Freawine	Freawine	Freawine	
	Wig	Wig	Wig	
Giwis	Giwis	Giwis	Giwis	Geuuis
	Esla	Esla	Esla	
Aluca	Elesa	Elesa	Elesa	Elesa
Cerdic	Cerdic	Cerdic	Cerdic	Cerdic
Creoda				Creoda
Cynric	Cynric	Cynric	Cynric	Cynric
Celin	Celm		Ceawlin	Ceaulin
Cubwine	Cubwine		Cubwine	Cuthwine
[...]	[...]		[...]	[...]
Ine	Ine		Ine	Ine
—	[...]		[...]	[...]
	Ebelwulf		Ebelwulf	Æthelwulf
	—		—	Ælfred

Table 8
Frēawine and Wīg in various West Saxon Regnal Lists

The Textus Roffensis (R) was written soon after *c.* 1122. It is either a copy of the T MS (which contains *AngCol*) which was written in the first half, and probably second quarter of the eleventh century, incorporating material from *AngCol* as revised in the period 990-94; or R and T are both from a common exemplar.¹¹⁹⁶ R contains a section of regnal lists, including three versions of the West Saxon list:

¹¹⁹⁴ Æthelweard, *Chronicon*, III.4; Campbell 1962: 33.

¹¹⁹⁵ Sisam 1953: 304-07. See Leneghan (2020: 80, fn. 168), who refers to studies which suggest that the insertion of names into regnal lists may have involved characters known to the insertors from heroic-type poetry. However, there is no reason to suppose that narrative traditions were restricted to verse. The creators and editors of such lists may have drawn on their knowledge of traditional narrative generally – the same knowledge that would have enable the composition of heroic poetry.

¹¹⁹⁶ Dumville 1976: 26, 28.

- (1) fol. 101r-v: the same list as in *ASC* BCD *s.a.* 855/56; beginning with Adam (via Scyf, born on Noah's ark), but adding the West Saxon kings after Æthelwulf, down to Edgar's sons Eadweard and Æthelred. This contains *Friðegar*, *Freawine* and *Wig*.
- (2) fol. 103v: the same list as in MS T's text of *AngCol*;¹¹⁹⁷ beginning with *Woden Frealafing* and ending with *Yne*; which omits *Friðegar*, *Freawine* and *Wig* (Brand is the father of Giwis).
- (3) fols 103v-104r: apparently based on a list like that in *ASC* BCD *s.a.* 855/56, the same list as in MS T (other than *AngCol*); beginning with Adam, containing the same early figures as the list in *ASC* BC, and ending with Edgar's sons Eadweard and Æthelred; this contains *Freodēgar*, *Freawine* and *Wig*.¹¹⁹⁸

Therefore, it would seem that between the compilation of the early version of *ASC* used by Asser, and the early version of *ASC* used by Æthelweard, someone inserted the names *Friðugar*, *Freawine* and *Wig* into the Æthelwulf list (MS A intro; MS ABCD, *s.a.* 855/56), and also in the Cynric list (*s.a.* 552) and the Ceolwulf list (*s.a.* 597). Alternatively, Æthelweard, writing his chronicle in the 980s, included material – including these names – that had been added to the Wessex list in the course of the tenth century, whether from a written text, or from the genealogical *on dit* that members of the House of Wessex shared with each other. Is the correspondence between the regnal lists and the Danish texts merely fortuitous? If not, what does it tell us?

4.4.2.2 Frēawine and Wīg, Frowinus and Wigo

Chadwick was the first to note the correspondence between *GD* and the West Saxon list. He did not think it was a coincidence, since Frēawine and Wīg were

in positions corresponding approximately to those held by Wermund and Offa in the Mercian genealogy and lying, like them, in the fourth and fifth generations from Wōden. As both these names are decidedly uncommon the coincidence can hardly be accidental.¹¹⁹⁹

¹¹⁹⁷ Also appearing in *AngCol* MS C, but not MS V.

¹¹⁹⁸ Rochester, Cathedral Library MS A, 3. 5. See images online at John Rylands Library, Manchester <<https://luna.manchester.ac.uk/luna/servlet/detail/Man4MedievalVC~4~4~990378~142729>> [retrieved 3.6.24].

¹¹⁹⁹ Chadwick 1907: 133.

If we allow twenty or thirty years per generation,¹²⁰⁰ Chadwick's point can be reinforced by back-calculating from later kings. If we count back from the West Saxon founder Cerdic who was born *c.* 455 (working from dates in *ASC*), we get the following putative birth dates:

	(30yrs)	(20yrs)
Frēawine	315	355
Wīg	335	375
Giwis	365	395
Esla	395	415
Elesa	425	435
Cerdic	455	455

Table 9a

Frēawine and Wīg: back-calculation from Reign of Cerdic¹²⁰¹

If, in the Mercian list, we count back from Penda in the Mercian list in *AngCol* (born *c.* 576), we get:¹²⁰²

	(30yrs)	(20yrs)
Wærmund	306	396
Offa	336	416
Angelþeow	366	436
Eomær	396	456
Icel	426	476
Cnebba	456	496
Cynewald	486	516
Creoda	516	536
Pybba	546	556
Penda	576	576

Table 9b

Wærmund and Offa: back-calculation from Reign of Penda

The back-calculations based on thirty years per generation make Wærmund and Frēawine, and Offa and Wīg, respectively, almost exact contemporaries, as they are in the Danish narratives. The calculation in the Mercian list also places Icel – the founder of the Mercian Iceling dynasty

¹²⁰⁰ The estimate of thirty years per generation has been frequently used by modern scholars. See Swanton 2010: xxxviii, and Eliason 1965: 129, 136-37. It was also used by Chadwick (1907: 133). Shippey uses twenty years per generation, on the basis that these medieval lives were short – though his calculation allowed him to note a correspondence between the chronology of *Beowulf* and that of Hrōpmund in the East Anglian regnal list and Hrōpmund the son of Hrōþgār in *Beowulf* (Shippey 2022: 109-10).

¹²⁰¹ In the preamble to the A MS of the *ASC*, Cerdic's arrival in Britain (with his son Cynric) is dated to 494. Cerdic reigned from 519 until his death in 534. If his son Cynric was of fighting age (late teens or slightly older) in 494, he may have been born *c.* 475 and thus his father Cerdic born *c.* 455 (making him an impressive octogenarian when he died).

¹²⁰² According to *ASC* MS B, *s.a.* 626, Penda was 50 when he acceded to the throne in 626 (and 79 when killed in battle in 655!)

in Britain,¹²⁰³ and the Saxon founder Cerdic— at appropriate times with respect to the Bedean date for the *Adventus Saxonum* in 449.¹²⁰⁴ This shows us that whoever had the idea of inserting Frēawine and Wīg into the West Saxon list – at some time in the hundred years after about 890 – he knew where they ought to go chronologically.

Like Chadwick, Chambers also thought that the correspondences in the names *Frēawine*, *Wīg* and *Ēadgils* in Anglo-Saxon texts and *Frowinus/Frewinus*, *Wigo/Wiggo* and *Athislus* in Danish texts were not fortuitous but showed that the duel of Wigo and Keto with Athislus was known in England, and that it was “probable” that this and the tale of Offa’s duel were “connected in Old English story”. Both men seem to have assumed that these narratives were early legends which survived in both England and Denmark. Ellis Davidson thought it was possible that the duel with Athislus was known to Anglo-Saxons in England, but she was uncertain whether it was “originally linked” to the story of Offa’s duel.¹²⁰⁵ Otherwise she did not dissent from the idea that the English and Danish narratives came from the same early southern Jutlandic legend.¹²⁰⁶

However, if the story of Frēawine and Wīg had not been connected with that of Offa, the chronological and generational correspondences between the regnal lists and the Uffo-story would be highly unlikely. And I suggest that the reason for the insertion of Frēawine and Wīg into the Wessex list, contemporaneous with Offa, is that the compilers of the list knew of a narrative which made them not only worthy to be ancestors of Æthelwulf and Alfred, but also plausible relatives to the West Saxons in the sense of ethnicity.

In the West Saxon lists which contain Frēawine he is separated from Wōden by only four generations, and his son Wīg immediately precedes *Giwis*. This name immediately recalls the supposedly archaic name for the West Saxons, the *Gewissæ* or *Gewisse*.¹²⁰⁷ *Giwis* may therefore be a genuine instance of a genealogist’s factitious eponym, invented to be a progenitor for the tribe, or it is another of our traditional ethno-eponyms, styling the first member of a significant branch of the dynasty (the distinction is perhaps not important).¹²⁰⁸

¹²⁰³ See Newton 1993: 62, specifically referring to the account of the ancestry of the Mercian Guthlac, traced back to the founder-figure Icel in the early 8th-c. text the *Vita Sancti Guthlaci*. See also Brooks 2000: 67, who concluded that Icel was the first king of his line in Britain. He calculated his dates as 450-525.

¹²⁰⁴ According to whichever source is relied on, the *Adventus* occurred between c. 409 and c. 455. See Wood 1984, and Vermaat 2002.

¹²⁰⁵ Olrik, Malone and Weyhe believed not. See pp. 356-57 below.

¹²⁰⁶ See Chambers 1921: 34; Ellis Davidson and Fisher 1979-80: I, 93. Also II, 68, note 20.

¹²⁰⁷ See Coates 1989-90.

¹²⁰⁸ The same may be so of Beornic, the grandson of Wōden in the Bernician list in *AngCol*. This is an eponym or ethno-eponym of the *Beornice*, i.e. Bernicians (by general consent, an originally Celtic ethnonym – Breeze 2009: 73). Coincidentally, *Beornic* imitates OE lexemes *beorn* + *ic*.

The name is of unknown antiquity and origin. It has been suggested that it is Celtic in origin, or related to Old English *gewis(s)*, an adjective meaning “reliable, sure”.¹²⁰⁹ However, I know of no other instance of an English or Germanic ethnonym which contains the prefix *ge-* or *gi-* (< **ga-*), which in the ordinary lexis is usually a semantic indicator (cognate with Latin *cum* “with”) of a meaning related to but different from that of the root: hence *wīs* “wise, knowing”, *gewiss* “sure”. But “the certain ones” sounds highly unconvincing as a tribal name. *Gewisse* and *Gewissæ* are, however, entirely consistent phonologically with **gawisijaz*, or, according to Sievers’ Law, **gawisjaz*, “person of the *wisō*”,¹²¹⁰ that is, associated with a water-meadow.¹²¹¹ This would develop into Proto-West Germanic **Gawis* or **Gawisi* in the nominative and accusative singular (> Old English *Giwis*, *Gewis*). However, by a separate development, Proto-West Germanic /-sj-/ in inflections other than nominative and accusative singular (and when not followed by /-a-/) became assimilated as /-ss-/ in Old English.¹²¹² Thus, if this ethnonym were declined in Old English as an *i*-stem in the plural (as some ethnonyms were), or was formed by analogy with a genitive plural **Gewissa* (< **wisijōnō*), its form would be expected to be *Gewisse*. Ekwall notes, in his discussion of the Norfolk river name *Wissey*, that phonologically the variant *Wisse* could derive from **Wisjōn-* and could be related to a “rare” Old English **wisse* “‘meadow’, or the like”.¹²¹³

This revised etymology is not just of academic interest. It enables the argument that the meaning of *Giwis* was “the man of the water meadow or river”, and that this was not necessarily a back-formation from the ethnonym *Gewisse* in the usual sense, but rather an ethno-eponym. That is, the *Gewisse* were a real people, and their kings could be known ethno-eponymously in Old English as *Gewis* or *Giwis*, the singulative of “the people of the water-meadow or riverbank area”. This is of particular relevance in the Offa-story, since the West Saxon regnal list is claiming kinship with Frēawine, a person whom I have identified with *Beowulf*’s Hemming, “the man from the *hamm* or riverbank”, which is very close semantically. Thus, I argue that

¹²⁰⁹ Coates 1989-90: 3. He reviews the literary evidence and previous suggestions. He is followed by Yorke 1995: 34. See Kroonen 2013: 588, s.v. **wissa-* “certain”, citing several Gmc cognates of *gewiss*. The word still exists with that meaning in German *gewiss*.

¹²¹⁰ See *AHDWB*, s.v. *wisa* (mod. Germ. *Wiese*), and Niemeyer 2012: 698, s.n. *Wissen*, from Gmc **wis-*, ablaut variant of **waisōn*, from a PIE etymon “to flow” (Orel 2003: 441, s.v.). *Wis-* may be a hydronym, cf. *Weser*, *Vistula*. For prefix *ge-*, cf. Kroonen 2013, 171, s.v. **gauja-* “district, region”, poss. from *ga* + *aujō* “wetland”, “in view of the frequent combination of the word with river names in toponyms”.

¹²¹¹ With respect to the suffix */-ija-/, see Peterson 2007, where she identifies <-ia> in Old Scandinavian runic inscriptions as a “tīlhōrighetssuffix” (“attribution suffix”), to the theonym *Ing-*, resulting in the ON name-theme *Ing(i)-*, *Ingv-* (2007: 135-36). See also the discussion in Fairfax 2015, although his attempt to restrict it to use as a patronymic on the Nydam axe runic inscription, I suggest, is mistaken.

¹²¹² Ringe and Taylor 2014: 44-47, 387.

¹²¹³ Ekwall 1928: 466-67; 1960: 225-26, s.n. *Hautbois* (Norfolk), a folk-etymological Frenchification of OE **Hob(b)wisse* “tussock meadow”, and still pronounced [ˈhou̯bɪs] in Ekwall’s time.

Gewisse is not a case of random naming based on some attribute supposed to be important in early Germanic intellectual culture (that of wisdom), but an ethnonym drawn from the dominant marshy topography of southern Jutland, with a riverine theme also found in the Offa-story and its motif of war over territory by the Eider. The semantic similarity between *Hemming* and *Giwis* indicates, I suggest, that West Saxon genealogists were either aware of this geopolitical narrative or of one like it, or they reported what their narrative traditions told them about Giwis as a close descendant of Frēawine (aka Hemming), a king guarding the border on a river in Angel, as an ally of an Anglian king.

Here, I suggest, we see a further illustration of the complexities of early Germanic ethnic nomenclature. Just as Finn's Frisians in *Beowulf* could also be "Jutes" (presumably by virtue of possessions in Jutland), the *Gewisse*, or early West Saxons, could have *Gewisse* as their ethnonym and "Saxons" as their ethnic hypernym. In addition to this, *Widsith* identifies these allies of Offa on the Eider as Swāfe; and if they were inhabitants of the geographical area of Angel, they might also bear the demonym *Engle*. (Of course, it may also have been a matter for dispute, or one susceptible of manipulation, as to who, among these very closely related peoples or their intermarrying rulers, was a Saxon or an Angle or both).

It is of particular interest in this context that Dohm, in his study of the place-names of Holstein identifies *-vi* as a topographical element, meaning "marshland" ("Sumpfland"), appearing in Middle Low German (the successor-language of Old Saxon) as "vi, vihe (vigge)", and noting that at the time of his writing it was used "mostly of strips of meadowland" ("Die *vi-* sind jetzt meistens Wiesenstriche").¹²¹⁴ Thus, it is possible that the name *Wīg* may have also been topographical originally, referring to "one from the **wig-/wīg-*", i.e. dry land in a marsh. It may thus have designated Wīg's status as a landholding satrap of his father.¹²¹⁵ It would therefore also potentially complement *Cēta*, if this was also toponymical, associated with **cēto*, the Brittonic word for "wood".¹²¹⁶ If this is so, then there would be a phonological and semantic correspondence with *Giwis* "man of the river meadow", the name of Wīg's son and successor in the Wessex regnal list.

¹²¹⁴ Dohm 1908: 84.

¹²¹⁵ See *Beowulf* 2195-99 in which Bēowulf's low standing as a slacker with the Gēats is ended when he returns from Denmark in glory, presents Hygelāc and Hygd with the gifts of Hrōþgār and Wealhþēow, and Hygelāc presents him with Hrēpel's sword and 7,000 hides of land *bold ond bregostol* ("building (= hall) and princely seat") as his *ēðelriht* – i.e. the lordship of a large freehold estate (equivalent in the 7th-8th-c. Anglo-Saxon Tribal Hidage to the lands inhabited by each of the East Saxons and the South Saxons).

¹²¹⁶ See discussion at pp. 309-13 below.

4.4.2.3 The Name *Frēawine*, *Frowinus*, *Frewinus*

Philip Shaw noted that the name-element *Frēa-* is not well attested in Old English. He cited the instance of *Frēalāf*, the father of Wōden in the royal genealogies but “it does not appear to occur in the names of historical individuals from early medieval England” – except perhaps an eighth-century English abbot called *Frehelm*.¹²¹⁷ However, he did not consider *Frēawine* the father of Wīg. If this was a name, it was also a meaningful appellative in Old English poetry, applied to royal persons. In *Beowulf* 2438 Hæpcyn is *frēawine* to his elder brother Herebeald; Hygelāc is described as *frēawine folca* (l. 2357), as is Hrēpel (l. 2429). It has been translated as “(friend and) lord”¹²¹⁸ and “lord and friend, beloved lord”.¹²¹⁹ The graphemes <ea> and <eo> for the diphthongs /ēa/ and /ēo/ were somewhat interchangeable in some, particularly early, texts, and there was also an appellative *frēowine*, as in *Beowulf* 430, *frēowine folca* (of Hrōþgār). It is glossed in *DOE* as “noble friend of the people” (s.v. *frēo-wine*). In *Beowulf* both compounds are used exclusively of kings and princes. But according to Green,¹²²⁰ Germanic *wini* “friend” was one of the words in the vocabulary of the Germanic *comitatus* which could apply to both a king and his subordinate, expressing a relationship which was vertical and reciprocal: the exchange of loyal service in return for protection, in which each was a “friend” to the other.¹²²¹ He argued, convincingly and authoritatively I suggest, that this proto-feudal sense of *wini* (Old English *wine*) developed in southerly areas of the Germanic-speaking area under the influence of Latin *amicus*, a technical legal term for the inferior of a *dominus*. Thus, in *Beowulf*, *wine* could mean “subordinate” in the Latin sense of *amicus* (ll. 1418, 2567) but *wine Scyldinga* meant “king of the Danes” (ll. 30, 148, 170, 1183). Green said:

Furthermore, *wine* itself can be understood as the leader [citing *Beowulf* 376, referring to Hrōþgār, l. S.], or the idea of social authority can be underlined by the other element of a compound, as in *Frēawine* or *winedrihten*.¹²²²

Green went on to argue that this usage of *wini* was exported from southern Germania to Scandinavia, where it appears sporadically in poetry and poetic language. In *Atlakviða* (v. 18/3) Gunnarr king of the Burgundians is called *vinr Borgunda* – the same idiom as *wine*

¹²¹⁷ Shaw 2020: 79-80.

¹²¹⁸ *K14*: 379.

¹²¹⁹ *DOE*, s.v. *frēa-wine*. I do not follow Neidorf (2021a: 380) in analysing *Frēawine* as theophoric, with *frēa* being cognate with ON *Freyr*. See pp. 145-46 (and fn. 531) above. See also Wellendorf 2025: 174.

¹²²⁰ Green 1965: 106-14.

¹²²¹ For *wine* as a term for a subordinate, see the description of the Danes as *winum Scyldinga* (*Beowulf* 1418a) and of Bēowulf as *winia bealdor* “lord of friends” (l. 2567a).

¹²²² Green 1965: 108, citing *Beowulf* 2357, 2429 (*frēawine*) and 862, 1604 (*winedrihten*).

Scyldinga;¹²²³ and it appears in poetic words like *gjaḡvinr* “giving friend” and *auḡvinr* “wealth friend”, which can be compared to Old English *goldwine* “gold friend” i.e. “king”.¹²²⁴ One may draw the conclusion that in early Germanic society the king could be imagined as a “friend” to his men in a way that the Gallo-Roman *dominus* or *patronus* could not.

If Green is correct, then the name *Frēawine* may simply mean “king” in the sense of “lord (and) friend”, or it may mean “lord (and subordinate) friend (of a king)” – perhaps a term for a *subregulus*. It is semantically identical to the appellative *winedryhten* (as in *Beowulf* 360, 862 and three other instances). It is inherent in the role of Frowinus/Frewinus in *GD* and *AnnR* that, as a *prefectus*, he was a ruler, but a local one subordinate to Wermundus – a dual function which it is possible to see encoded in his generic-seeming name “lord-friend”. Another conclusion to be drawn from Green’s argument is that the semantics of the name *Frēawine* – known (from the regnal list in *ASC*) to be in existence for this person in the ninth and tenth centuries in England – reflect the role his equivalent character has in the Danish narratives, but this is consistent with the semantics of a West Germanic language, rather than North Germanic Old Norse. Thus, he is unlikely to have been an invention of Saxo’s time.

In Saxo’s *GD* the name is *Frowinus* and in the later *AnnR* *Frewinus*. It is possible that *Fro-* represents *Frø*, which Saxo uses for the West Norse theonym *Freyr* (cognate with Old English *frēa*);¹²²⁵ or it represents *frō*, the cognate form in Old High German and Old Saxon. This element (with the variant vocalisation /ø/~e/) can be found in one instance in Lind.¹²²⁶ But the name **Frowin/*Frewin* (though not impossible as Scandinavian) is unrecorded in any form in the Scandinavian onomasticon.

Shaw notes the names *Freowin(us)* (Suffolk) and *Freuwin(us)* (Essex) in *DB*, and observed that late Old English *Fre-* and *Freo-* may have been derived from *Frea-*, though there were other possibilities, such as scribal error.¹²²⁷ *PASE* records *Freowine* (*Freowin* in *DB*), *Frewin* (*Freuwinus* in *DB*) and *Frewine*,¹²²⁸ but also the names *Frawin* (spelled *Frauin*, *Frauwinus*) and *Frawine*.¹²²⁹

¹²²³ He could have added the reference to Gunnarr’s alter ego, Gūḡphere in *Waldere* (II, 14b), who is called *wine Burgenda*. The characterisation of the relationship between an early Germanic king and his man as one of friendship may account for the prevalence of hypocoristic names among the early names in the regnal lists.

¹²²⁴ Green 1965: 1089-11.

¹²²⁵ Peterson records *Frø* as the ODan and OSwed form of *Frey-* (2007: 69). I am reliant on Friis-Jensen’s text for *Frø* as Saxo’s actual spelling of this name (though I am dubious about the letter /ø/, which I suspect is modern and editorial).

¹²²⁶ *Dopnamn*: 282, s.n. *Frelikr/Frølikr*. Lind speculated a side-form of *Frīrekr*, *Frīðrekr* or *Freyleikr*.

¹²²⁷ Shaw 2020: 80.

¹²²⁸ Charter S1000 (1043).

¹²²⁹ Though no citations in *PASE*.

The spelling *Frowinus* in *GD* is theoretically a graphical form of Old Danish **Frøwin*, but *AnnR*'s *Frewinus* is very unlikely to be. If it is possible that <o>/<e> scribal error has taken place, then it may have occurred in either text, and either form is original. However, the late Anglo-Saxon English evidence shows it to be more likely (I suggest) that a name *Frēawine* or *Frēowine* had become *Frēowin(e)* or *Frēwin(e)*, and possibly a variant *Frāwin(e)*. This evidence, while not decisively probative, nevertheless suggests that *Frowinus* and/or *Frewinus* are more consistent with Late Old English or early Middle English phonology than with Old Danish. We shall consider this later as part of a complex of pieces of linguistic evidence which indicate an origin for the Danish story of Uffo and its characters in England.

4.4.2.4 The Names *Wīg*, *Wīg(g)o* and *Kēto*

The name *Wīg* can be related to Old English *wīg* “war, battle, killing”. This was a common Anglo-Saxon name-element, but this spelling could also represent *wīh* “holy (thing, being)”.¹²³⁰ *PASE* records only one other monothematic *Wīg* (two occurrences in *DB* which seem to be the same person). In Old Norse *víg* (cognate with *wīg*) is a common prototheme, but is not recorded as a monothematic name. The Danish forms *Wigo*/*Wiggo* are suggestive of a hypocorism *Vigi*, which is recorded by Lind in Old Norse,¹²³¹ or **Viggi*, which is not. Cognate Old English hypocorisms are also recorded in *PASE* as *Wiga* and *Wigo*.¹²³² However, we should be wary of certainty here: we have already seen that *vi-* or *vig-* may have derived from a topographical term associated with wetland, semantically connected, potentially, with *Hemming* and *Giwis*. Another possible derivation is Old English *wicg* “horse” (Old Norse *vígg*),¹²³³ or from a strong-form hypocorism of a dithematic name with the initial sequences *Wīg-*, *Wīhg-*, or *Wineg-*. On the other hand, the name *Wīg* would be consistent with a *Beorn*-type hypocorism and it had the meaning “battle” or “duel” which was appropriate to this character in the Uffo story.

The name of this person's brother appears as *Keto*, and only in *GD* and *AnnR*. Its derivation is obscure. If it represents Old Norse **Kēti*, no name with that form is recorded,

¹²³⁰ In *Beowulf*, *Wīglāf* (also *Wīlāf*) probably had the same prototheme as his father *Wēohstān* (also *Wēoxstān* and *Wīhstān*), which was *wīh-*, pronounced [wi:x]. Before the voiced liquid /l/ in *-lāf*, [x] probably became voiced to [ɣ] (> *Wīglāf*) or was assimilated (> *Wīlāf*).

¹²³¹ Lind, *Dopnamn*: 1100.

¹²³² Cf. well-known historical horse-names, such as *Hengest* and *Horsa*, and *Eaha* in *FFr* 15 (a form of *Eohha*, from OE *eoh* “horse” – see *Kl4*: 2008: 274, fn. 3). One might add *Ēomēr*.

¹²³³ See Lind *Dopnamn*: 1099-1100. He records *Vīg-glōð* (“killing glad”) as a valkyrie-name (var. *Vigg-lōð* “horse hospitality”), and *Viggr*, a dwarf-name. See also *ANew*: 661, s.v. *vigg* “horse”. *Viggi* was a term for an ox (< *vega* “to lift, carry, transport”). OFris had *widze*, and OS had *wigg*.

either as a derived or a hypocoristic form of likely candidates such as *Ketill* or *Kjǫtvi*.¹²³⁴ *Ketti* might be theoretically possible as an *i*-mutated hypocorism from the stem *katt-* of *kǫttr* “cat”.¹²³⁵ But the retention of *i*-mutated forms was a feature of West not East Norse.¹²³⁶

The name *Káti* is recorded, derived from *kátr* “happy, cheerful”.¹²³⁷ This adjective is an isogloss in Old Norse, the origins of which are obscure, though suggestions of Indo-European origin have been made.¹²³⁸ If such an adjective had existed in Old Frisian or Old Saxon the vocalism cognate with Old Norse *kát-* would have been **kēt-*, and the weak masculine hypocoristic form would have been **Kēto*/**Kēta* in Old Saxon and **Kēta* in Old Frisian. “The cheerful one” would have been an appropriately kingly name.¹²³⁹ But no trace of such a name exists in Scandinavian or Ingvaemonic West Germanic. Nor is it apparent why a name in the Danish narrative tradition would preserve Old Saxon or Old Frisian morphology. It is different, I suggest, with English phonology, however, and in the following analysis I investigate whether *Keto* may have an English – or rather, Welsh – origin.

Redin records *Ceatta*.¹²⁴⁰ This name appears in a tenth-century toponym *ceattan broc*.¹²⁴¹ It is also recorded as the name of an obscure saint, perhaps of the seventh century, buried at Lichfield, according to a list of the resting-places of saints in England.¹²⁴² The same list records a St. Cett, buried at Oundle in Northamptonshire.¹²⁴³ *PASE* identifies him as *Cett* (1), an otherwise unknown seventh-century saint.

¹²³⁴ See Lind, *Dopnamn* and Peterson 2007, s.vv. Müllenhoff thought that the origin of *Keto* was *Kjǫtvi* (1889: 81). However, see *ODSHO*, s.v. *kǫd*, where the historical and comparative Scandinavian forms show only the vocalisations /ø/, /io/, /iø/, /jǫ/ and /ǝ/. OIcel gives evidence of stemmatic /v/ in the dative form *kjǫtvi*, also evidenced as a by-name in that form (as a weak adjective?). The etymology of *kjǫt* is unknown. The by-name presumably meant “fatty”.

¹²³⁵ Recorded as a name by Lind, *Dopnamn*: 724.

¹²³⁶ Gordon 1957: 320. See also the historic forms in *ODSHO*, s.v. *kat* (“cat”). There are no historic or dialectal forms which combine a vowel likely to be represented by <e> and a single <t> rather than <tt>.

¹²³⁷ Lind, *Dopnamn*: 681; Peterson 2007: 148.

¹²³⁸ E.g. comparison with Latin *gaudēo* “to rejoice” (*ANEW*: 303, s.v. *kátr*).

¹²³⁹ *Glæd* “glad, cheerful” is a word used several times of kings and princes in *Beowulf*, whose role was to preside over the *drēam* (“joy”) in the mead-hall: see ll. 366 (*glædman*), 863, 1173, 1181, 2025.

¹²⁴⁰ Redin 1919: 88 and fn. 3.

¹²⁴¹ Redin 1919: 88, citing Searle (1897: 126, s.n. *Ceatta*). This toponym appears in charter S848 (Æthelred II, 983) as <ceattan>. Derivation from an appellative (like *catte* “cat”) is difficult. The assumption of a personal name *Ceatta* is easier.

¹²⁴² *Ceatta* is named in a list of the resting-places of saints in England in the *Liber Vitae* of Hyde: *Donne resteð sancte Ceadda and sancte Cedde and sancte Ceatta on þam mynstre, þe is genemnod Licetfeld* “Then there rest St. Ceadda and St. Cedde and St. Ceatta in the minster that is called Lichfield” (Liebermann 1889: 11; Birch 1892: 88). *PASE* identifies *Ceatta* as *Headda* 13, Bishop of Hereford (758×770/77), who appears in three sources respectively as *Hedde*, *Ceadda* and (*LVH*) *Ceatta*. Given his resting-place, one might also consider *PASE*’s *Headda* 7, a Bishop of Lichfield (691-716×27), recorded as *Headda*, *Eadda* and *Cedda*. Another possible candidate is Cedd’s and Ceadda’s brother *Cælin*, a Northumbrian form of the West Saxon name *Ceawlin*, both of which are possible hypocoristic derivations from *Cædwalla*, as *Cæ* + *lin* and *Ceaw* + *lin* (thus all three brothers had names derived from the theme *Cæd-/Cead-*). *Ceatta* may have been another hypocoristic form of *Cædwalla* or a name in *Cæd-/Cead-*.

¹²⁴³ Liebermann 1889: 11; Birch 1892: 89.

These names are similar to those of the more famous brothers Chad and Cedd, the seventh-century evangelists and bishops. In the recorded forms for *PASE Chad I*, the spellings are overwhelmingly *Ceadda*, with an eighth-century *Caedda*, a ninth-century *Ceadde*, and a tenth-century *Tedda* (!).¹²⁴⁴ In the spellings in *PASE* for *Cedd I*, he is *Cedd* in the *Hyde Liber Vitae* (though Liebermann and Birch print *Cedde*), and also in charter S66.¹²⁴⁵ Bede always calls him *Cedd* in the nominative (and *Ceddi* in the genitive and *Cedde* in the ablative) in *HE*. He is called *Ceadwalla* in the ninth-century Old English *Martyrologium*, but *PASE* notes that this is erroneous, and the MS reading *Ceddes* (the genitive of *Cedd*) is correct.¹²⁴⁶

Redin, as a counsel of despair, preferred to understand *Ceatta* as a purely Celtic name, “perhaps a parallel form to Celtic *Ceadda*, formed by analogy with *Eatta*, *Eadda* etc”. He rejected Zachrisson’s idea that hypocorism included a process of devoicing medial voiced consonants, as with *Odda* and *Otta* and *Botta* and *Bodda*.¹²⁴⁷ He preferred the explanation that monothematic *Eatta* derived from dithematic names with *Ēad-* followed by a deuterotheme with an unvoiced consonant.¹²⁴⁸ However, this is not convincing, since in the recorded names in *Ēad-* the only unvoiced consonants which begin deuterothermes are /f-/ , /h-/ and /s-/ , and it is difficult to see how the clusters /df/ , /dh/ or /ds/ would assimilate to /t(t)/ . An analogue might be the trio of names recorded in *PASE* as *Creda*, *Creoda* (also *Cryda* and *Crioda*) and *Cretta*.¹²⁴⁹ There are no available appellative etymologies for these names, and I suggest that they are likely to be variants of the same hypocoristic name (whatever its origin).¹²⁵⁰ Similarly with *Ceadda*, *Cedd*, *Ceatta* and *Cett*, I suggest, it is difficult to identify any derivation other than hypocorisms from a Celtic-derived English name with the prototheme *Cæd-* or *Cead-*.

Aside from these literary sources, there is evidence from English place-names. There is a body of these which indicate the existence of Anglo-Saxon personal names with the forms

¹²⁴⁴ Very possibly a confusion of <c> and <t>; or palatalisation of /t/ before a high vowel as [tʃ].

¹²⁴⁵ Though labelled “spurious” in Electronic Sawyer.

¹²⁴⁶ *PASE Ceadda I* was a witness to a 675 Surrey charter (Birch No. 34; 1885-99: I, 55-56); text not full in S1165). But in the text he is gen., *Ceaddi testis*, in a list of names with Latin inflections. So the nom. form is not clear. *PASE*’s *Cedde I* was a 7th-c. Surrey landowner (a dat. form, see charter Birch No. 72; 1885-99: I, 106).

¹²⁴⁷ Redin 1919: 88, fn. 3. These names are not probative, since *Botta* could come from the theme *bōt* and *Otta* from *ōht* or *uht*.

¹²⁴⁸ Redin 1919: 64.

¹²⁴⁹ *Creoda* and *Cretta* are from the early parts of regnal lists. *Creda* was an 8th-c. Mercian abbot.

¹²⁵⁰ It is possible that *Creoda* is a metathesised hypocorism of *Cerdic* rather than the name of Cerdic’s son.

Catt,¹²⁵¹ *Catta/Catte*,¹²⁵² *Cator*,¹²⁵³ *Ceatta*,¹²⁵⁴ *Ceatt*,¹²⁵⁵ *Cet*,¹²⁵⁶ *Ceta*,¹²⁵⁷ *Cete*¹²⁵⁸ and *Ceten*.¹²⁵⁹ It is apparent from the etymologies for these and similar place-names given by Watts (2004), for example, that it is not always possible to distinguish toponyms containing personal names from those containing the loanword *cet* “wood”,¹²⁶⁰ borrowed from Brittonic/Proto-Welsh **cēto* or later **cēd* “wood”. However, it would seem unlikely that all derivations from a personal name are mistaken; and the existence of names such as *Ceatta* and *Cett* are supported in the literary record.

This makes it possible, I suggest, that a name such as **Ceta* could have been inherited from the Anglo-Saxon onomasticon, or developed from *Ceatta*. It is also difficult to see what the origin of these names could be except from a name with the Celtic-derived prototheme *Cæd-* or *Cead-*. *PASE*’s *Cædwalla I*, the king of the West Saxons (r. 685-88), has twenty-five different spellings of his name recorded, and his prototheme appears as *Caed-*, *Cæd-*, *Cead-*, *Ced-*, *Ched-* (and one anomalous *Cen-*). The variations in vocalisation of the stem match those in the shortened and probably hypocoristic forms identified in the literary record and the place-name evidence.

While Old Norse had the graph <c>, it was only an alternative grapheme for <k> and both of them represented the velar stop [k]. In medieval Latin orthography initial /c/ followed by a high vowel would indicate a palatal pronunciation. In Old and Middle English <c> could represent both velar [k] and palatalised [tʃ], typically before low and high vowels respectively. But in Middle English, the Old French digraph <ch> began to replace palatalised Anglo-Saxon <c>, while <k> came to be used for the preservation of the velar stop before a high vowel. For an early Middle English speaker, a name transmitted textually with the orthography **Cet-* could be pronounced either [tʃet] or [ket] (and the more frequent the graph <ch> became, the less likely it would be that <ce> in writing would be pronounced [tʃe]). But in Old Norse pronunciation and orthography the distinction between velar and palatal /c/ could not be represented in

¹²⁵¹ Watts 2004, *s.nn.* Catsfield, Catshill, Cattistock.

¹²⁵² Watts 2004, *s.nn.* Caterham, Catton (or from Kāti), Catwick, Catworth.

¹²⁵³ Watts 2004, *s.nn.* Catherington (prop. *Cater?*), Catterall (? Watts 2004: “uncertain”).

¹²⁵⁴ Watts 2004, *s.nn.* Chat Moss, Chatburn, Chatcull, Chattenden (? Watts 2004: first element uncertain), Chatteris, Chatton, Great Chatwell, Chedgrave (and river Chet), Chetney Marshes, Chetnole, Chetton.

¹²⁵⁵ Watts 2004, *s.nn.* Chatsworth House, Chettisham.

¹²⁵⁶ Watts 2004, *s.n.* Chettisham (?).

¹²⁵⁷ Watts 2004, *s.n.* Cheddington.

¹²⁵⁸ Watts 2004, *s.n.* Chettisham (?).

¹²⁵⁹ Watts 2004, *s.n.* Chattenden (?).

¹²⁶⁰ Watts 2004, *s.nn.* Cheadle (×2), Cheetham Hill, Cheetwood, Chettisham, Chetwode, and Chatham (hist. *Cethāme*; in charters, usually indicating a boundary, *æt —hæma mearce*, and the like. *Hæme* is likely to derive from Gmc **hamijōz*, “people of the *ham(m)*” > OE **hæmiga* > **hæmi* > *hæme*. If the vowel is long, *hāme* derives from *hām* by the same processes). See p. 276 above.

orthography, and it is likely that the graphs <k> and <c> would have to do for both sounds. It is therefore possible – on orthographical and phonological grounds – that a name transmitted from an Old English text as **Cete* or **Ceta* (possibly pronounced with palatal /c/) would be rendered in Old Norse as **Keti*, or with a Latin weak ending as *Keto*.

I therefore suggest that the simplest explanation for the naming of two brothers *Keto* and *Wig(g)o* – in a Danish two-against-one duel motif very closely related to an Old English analogue – is that both names mean “battle”. *Wīg* is straightforwardly Old English, as a monothematic *Beorn*-type hypocorism; and **Ceta* is a *Cūþa*-type hypocorism of a name in *Cæd-/Cead-*, a prototheme in Anglo-Saxon names borrowed from Brittonic **katu-* “battle”. Like *Wulf* and *Eofor* (“wolf” and “boar”) in *Beowulf*’s story of their two-against-one duel with Ongenþēow, the names of the brothers are thematically related to each other. Frowinus, a man at the border with the enemy, had one son with a Welsh name, another with an English one.

We shall see later that there is a potential Welsh connection with another name in the Offa tradition, *Riganus* in *VOD*, which is potentially from Old Welsh (or Brittonic) **Rīgān* “petty chieftain, *subregulus*”. If this linguistic connection is correctly identified, it may be evidence of the development of the Offa narrative in a milieu linked to Wales – such as Mercia – before its transmission to Denmark.

4.4.2.5 Frēawine and Wīg: Conclusions

The reasons for the insertion of *Friþugār*, *Frēawine* and *Wīg* into a Saxon regnal list are problematical. In the story related by Sven and Saxo (and alluded to in *AnnR*), Frowinus, Keto and Wigo are not Saxons (the Saxons are the enemy) but men of Schleswig, the region north of the Eider. There is no historical source which places Saxons north of the Eider or counts them among Suevic peoples. The associations of Frēawine and Wīg are therefore primarily Anglian. Perhaps we should be more open to the idea that who was or was not a “Saxon” was a more fluid concept in the early Middle Ages than we suppose – or that we simply do not understand the identities involved and attribute to these people modern-derived mentalities (under the term “identity”) that they did not have.

But at any rate, some time between about 890 and the 980s Frēawine and Wīg became part of the dynastic history of the house of Wessex. With evidence of their rule over areas of both Schleswig and Holstein, it was presumably arguable that, if not Saxons, they may have been proto-Saxons. Alternatively, as Swāfe (see the next section), they were part of an identity that was both Anglian and Jutish, which later merged with that of the people of Kent, Wight

and Hampshire, all sub-kingdoms of the West Saxons, and part of their own legendary history identity. Near neighbours of the Continental Saxons – it may have been imagined – became part of the Wessex story. If so, it would be because they were not just names but people famous as part of a narrative, and the evidence we have suggests that it was part of the Offa-narrative, which must have been alive in England in the late ninth century and the tenth. Frēawine and Wīg (his second son) sired an ultimately Saxon line that was also related to that of Offa of Angel, and Wīg was the father of the eponymous or ethno-eponymous Giwis, who gave his name to the West Saxons (or vice versa). At about the same time as they were added, the West Saxon kings, as part of their plan for the *Reconquista* of England from the Danes, began to style themselves *Angulsaxonum reges* – that is, as the rulers of a prospective joint or unified realm of Angles and Saxons.¹²⁶¹ The Æthelwulfian list in *ASC* also includes the Danes Scyld, Bēaw and Heremōd – certainly associated with heroic narrative (not forgetting the Frisians Finn and Godwulf). Together with the Anglo-Saxo-Jutish Frēawine, these names may have been used to establish a hereditary right of the House of Wessex to be regarded as kings of Saxon, Angle, Jutish and Danish ancestry, and to rule peoples with these ethnic affiliations.

4.4.3 The Hemmingas and the Swāfe

As we have seen, the allies of Offa who, with the Angles, hold the border with the Myrgingas on or near the Eider are the Swāfe (*Widsith* 41b-44):

	Āne sweorde	41
merce gemærde	wið Myrgingum	
bī Fīfeldōre;	hēoldon forð sippan	43
Engle ond Swāfe,	swā hit Offa geslōg.	

With a single [or “a certain”] sword he made known the border with the Myrgingas by the Eider estuary. Thenceforth the Angles and the Swāfe maintained it, just as Offa won it with his swordplay.

The name *Swāfe* is cognate with the ethnonym recorded in Latin histories as *Suebi*, *Suevi*, *Suabi* and *Suavi* (to Late Latin scribes and <v~u> and even <p> were interchangeable, dependent on their pronunciation).¹²⁶² In Greek texts they are Σόνβοι or Σουήβοι. In Proto-Germanic the stem of their ethnonym must have been **Swēb-* (> proto-Northwest Germanic

¹²⁶¹ In the charters (beginning with S355, 892×899 AD) of the West Saxon kings from Alfred to Eadwig, they styled themselves *Anglo Saxonum rex*, *Angulsaxonum rex* and similar. The Graeco-Roman imperial title *basileus* (usually *basileus totius Britanniae* or *Anglorum*) was also used, beginning with Æthelstan, and then particularly favoured by Edgar and his successors, including Cnut.

¹²⁶² Using the MGH search engine (<<https://www.dmgh.de/search?q=Pauia>>) for the name of the Lombard city of Pavia, there are 651 returns for *Pavia*, 8 for *Pauia*, 13 for *Pabia* and 1110 for *Papia*.

**Swāb-*). It is conventionally derived from the stem or prefix **swe-* “self” (cf. Gothic *swēs* “one’s own”),¹²⁶³ and so the name possibly means “we ourselves”, “the free ones” or “the related ones”.¹²⁶⁴ In Old English their name became *Swāġfe*. However, the presence of a people with this name in the region of the Eider is somewhat problematic,¹²⁶⁵ and, as Hill says, “The relationship between the *Swāġfe* (who ‘hold’ Offa’s boundary as well as the Angles) and the Myrgingas [...] the enemy against whom it was established [...] is unclear”.¹²⁶⁶

There is some corroboration for the *Swāġfe* in the region of the Eider, since in modern Schleswig-Holstein (now in Germany), just north of the Eider, there is a town called Schwabstedt (Svavsted in Danish) which means “place of the Swabians” (see Map 7 on p. 281 below). However, although the Suevi (as I shall refer to them neutrally) are frequently mentioned in Latin histories throughout the Middle Ages, they are never located in the place where the *Widsith*-poet places them, whether in insular or Continental sources. This was the conclusion of Chadwick,¹²⁶⁷ and it is confirmed by an examination of the references to Suevi in late Antique and early medieval histories. It has become a commonplace of modern historians that the Suevi were one of the peoples who crossed the upper Rhine on New Year’s Eve 406, and in the next few years devastated Gaul and then moved into Hispania, where the Vandals and Suevi established their own kingdoms.¹²⁶⁸ However, the only author who names the Suevi in this event is Gregory of Tours, writing nearly two centuries later; and even he clarifies the Suevi as meaning the Alemanni (i.e. from southern Germany).¹²⁶⁹ While there is no doubt that a people called the Suevi established a kingdom in Hispania in the fifth century, they were not the people identified by the *Widsith*-poet as living around the estuary of the Eider.

However, there may be one medieval witness to the *Swāġfe* of *Widsith*. In a recent collection of essays on early medieval Frisia,¹²⁷⁰ Dijkstra and de Koning state that the name *Suevi* appears in a seventh-century text referring to “barbarians coming from the seacoast or

¹²⁶³ Kroonen 2013: 496, s.v. **swe-*.

¹²⁶⁴ See Sitzmann and Grünzweig 2008: 253-255; and also 243-46, under the stems SEMNO (as in *Semnonēs*) and SIBIN, which may be related to PIE **s(u)e-bʰ(o)-* “of its own kind” or PrGmc **sebjō* “sib, relative”.

¹²⁶⁵ See Malone’s discussion (1962: 201-02).

¹²⁶⁶ Hill 2009: 124.

¹²⁶⁷ Chadwick 1907: 100-01, 113-17, 136-41, 216-18.

¹²⁶⁸ See e.g. Wolfram 2005: 161; Heather 2006: 14-15; and Goffart 2006: 82-83.

¹²⁶⁹ *Historia Francorum*, II.2: *Post haec Wandali a loco suo degressi, cum Gunderico rege in Gallias ruunt. Quibus valde vastatis, Spanias adpetunt. Hos secuti Suebi, id est Alamanni, Gallitiam adpraeherunt* (“After this, the Vandals, having left their own place, charge into Gaul under their king Gunderic. Having caused great devastation, they make for Spain. The Suebi – i.e. the Alamanni – having followed them, seize Galicia”).

¹²⁷⁰ Itself a Latin version of a Gmc ethnonym applied by learned writers to an area of uncertain extent, inhabited by an unknown people, largely beyond the experience of the Romans and their Frankish and Gallo-Roman successors.

distant lands”, and that this was a “reuse of the classical ethnographic tradition [...] and the Suevi must have been the learned name for the local name for the ‘sea-people’”.¹²⁷¹ They suggest that *Suevi* was used because it resembled the Germanic word for sea, **saiwi* (as found in the toponym *Zeeland* and the ethnonym for its inhabitants *Zeeuwen*). They add: “The learned interpretation of Suevi causes confusion, however, about whether or not we are dealing with Suebi or Suevii mentioned by classical authors or Gregory of Tours (Hist. II.2 and V.15 and 41)”. They also point out that the name *Suevi* was still being used in the *Annales Vedastini*, describing a Viking attack in the region in 880.

The “seventh-century text” they refer to is the *Vita Eligii*, the Life of St. Eligius of Noyon (588-660), by his friend Bishop Dado of Rouen (d. 683).¹²⁷² Dado wrote:¹²⁷³

Sed Flanderenses et Andoverpenses, Fresiones quoque et Suevi et barbari quique circa maris litora degentes, quos velut in extremis remotos nullus adhuc praedicationis vomer inpressat, primo eum hostili animo et aversa mente susceperunt, postmodum vero, cum paulatim per gratiam Christi his verbum Dei insinuare coepisset, pars maxima trucis et barbari populi, relictis idolis, conversa est ad verum Deum Christoque subiecta; sicque demum factum est, ut quasi caelitus lumen ostensum aut radius quidam solis erumpens totam partem illius barbariem inlustraret.

But the people of Flanders and Antwerp, the Frisians and the Suevi, and whatever barbarians there were living along the sea-coasts – among whom, as with those in extremely remote places, no one had yet driven the ploughshare of prayer – at first received him with hostile spirit and reluctant mind. But later, when, by the grace of Christ, he had begun to sow among them the word of God, the greatest part of this savage and barbaric people, having abandoned their idols, was converted to the true God and submitted to Christ. And so, eventually it happened – like a light shining in heaven or some ray of the sun bursting forth – that every part of their barbarian land was illuminated.

The translation of this passage used by Dijkstra and de Koning¹²⁷⁴ is by McNamara, and it reads: “But in Flanders and Antwerp, Frisians and Suevi and other barbarians coming from the seacoasts or distant lands not yet broken by the plow, received him with hostile spirits and averse minds.”¹²⁷⁵ As can be seen, this is inaccurate. According to Dado, the people of Flanders and Antwerp were one with the Frisians and Suevi in their initially hostile reception of Eligius. The Frisians and Suevi are likely to be the ones living along the sea-coasts, but they did not come from distant lands; they were only *like* people from distant lands, in that they did not know Christ. This is not a trivial error, because it has encouraged the belief that these Suevi

¹²⁷¹ Dijkstra and de Koning 2017: 57-58.

¹²⁷² *Vita Eligii episcopi Noviomagensis* in Krusch 1902.

¹²⁷³ *Vita Eligii*, II.3; Krusch 1902: 696-697.

¹²⁷⁴ See Dijkstra and de Koning 2017: 57.

¹²⁷⁵ In Book II, ch. 3; McNamara 1997. This part of the translation is omitted in McNamara’s print translation (2001).

were a people from a distant land (like Suevic Spain), whereas the author meant them to be understood as a relatively nearby people living by the North Sea. In the texts concerning the migratory Suevi, this people is never associated with habitation by the sea.

Dado was describing the areas – until lately heathen – of Flanders, south and west of the Scheldt, with Frisia ceterior to the north and east. Frisia remained unconverted (both ceterior and ulterior), as we see in Alcuin's *Vita Willibrordi* (dealing with a period two or three generations after Eligius), which records the Northumbrian Willibrord's unsuccessful attempts to convert the Frisian king Radbod whose capital was at Utrecht. The *Vita Eligii* contains a substantial exaggeration of the extent of Eligius's conversion of the Franks and Frisians, and in these circumstances it is not surprising that Dado is extremely vague as to the northward and eastward extent of this. Be that as it may, Dado's text is good evidence that there was a people known to him at the beginning of the eighth century as *Suevi*, associated with North Sea coastal areas, to the east of Frisia. These cannot have been the Suevi named by Classical authors or Gregory of Tours, who founded a kingdom in northern Spain at the beginning of the fifth century. It is more likely that it refers to the south-western Jutlandic Swāfe named in *Widsith*.

4.4.3.1 The Swāfe: Conclusions

The name *Suevi* – if it meant “we ourselves” or “the free ones” – might have been coined independently by several peoples. However, Tacitus in his *Germania* uses it as a designation for a number of tribes across a sizeable swathe of non-Roman Germania Magna. He includes both the Longobardi and Anglii within it (ch. 39-40), and the analysis of *Widsith* offered here suggests that the Swāfe by the Eider occupy a buffer zone between the Bardic Myrgingas and the Angles – both of these groups being historically included among the Suevi. It would therefore follow that the ethnonym *Swāfe*, used in this context, referred to a people who either existed as a remnant of the Suevic people, most of whom migrated elsewhere, or it was used to designate a people with reference to an ethnicity which they shared with two antagonistic neighbours, but which could be used nonetheless to distinguish them from these neighbours. That is, in the context of the narrative scenario in the poem, Myrgingas, Angles and Swāfe were all Suevi, but only the Swāfe used this ethnonym to distinguish themselves.

It seems to have been an important part of Offa's story that he risked his life to ally himself to another people by his marriage to a *freoðowebbe*, and I have identified this people as the Hemmingas, ruled by Hemming, aka *Frēawine* and *Gārmund* (a man of sufficient stature to warrant inclusion in the West Saxon regnal list). Since in *Widsith* the Angles maintain Offa's

empire on the Eider with the help of the Swāfe, I suggest that the Hemmingas and the Swāfe were the same people, occupying some significant part of south-western Jutland, to the west of Angel. (It may be that, as with “Jute”, and perhaps “Angle”, *Swāfe* could be used of a number of peoples and was thus a hypernym, but in certain contexts it could be used to distinguish one particular Swāfe people from peoples with other ethnic affiliations).

4.4.3.2 *Witta wēold Swāfum*: Wider Suevic Ethnic Affiliations and More Jutes

The ethnic affiliation denoted by Swāfe is important to the Offa-story as presented in *Widsith*, since a people of this name assists the Angles in holding Offa’s border with the Myrgingas on the Eider (ll. 42-44). But this small piece of information does not stand alone, since we find other material in the Anglo-Saxon regnal lists which seems to tell us that this Suevic identity (whatever its scope) was one shared by the first Germanic migrants to Britain in the traditional *Adventus* story. Hengest – always said to be a “Jute” – seems also to have been a Swāfe. We shall now examine this connection between the ethnographical information in *Widsith* and the legend of the beginnings of England.

In *Widsith* 22a we are told *Witta wēold Swāfum*, “Witta ruled the Swāfe”. He would seem to be one of the people called *Witta* that we find in different versions of the Kentish regnal list, as shown in Table 10 below:¹²⁷⁶

<i>AngCol</i> (V)	<i>AngCol</i> (C)	<i>AngCol</i> (T)	<i>Bede HE</i>	<i>HB</i>	<i>ASC</i> (E)
Uoden	Woden	Woden	Uoden	Uuoden	Woden
Uegdaeg	Wægdæg	Wægdæg	Uecta	Guechta	Wecta
Uihtgils	Wihtgisl	Wihtgils	Uitta	Guicta	Witta
Uitta	Witta	Witta	Uictgislus	Guictglis	Wihtgils
Hengest	Hengest	Hengest	Hengist + Horsa	Hengest + Hors	Hengest + Horsa
Ocga	Ocga	Ocga	Oeric Oisc	Octha + Ebissa	Æsc
Oese	Oese		Ese		

Table 10
Versions of the Regnal List of the early kings of Kent

As we have seen, *Witta* is consistent with a *Totta*-type hypocorism of a name with the theme *wiht*-. Even though it is not clear from the lists whether it was Hengest’s father or his

¹²⁷⁶ *AngCol* in Dumville 1976: 31, 33, 37. *HE*, 1.15; Colgrave and Mynors 1968: 50. *HB*, Ch. 20 (Vatican recension; Dumville 1975: 408) – except for *Ogha* and *Ebissa* (ch. 34, Harleian recension; Dumville 1976: 207). In the Sawley recension, *Otta* is the son of *Hengist* and *Ebissa* the son of *Hors* (Dumville 1975: 622).

grandfather (or, indeed, both of them) who was called *Wihtgils*, both of them could have been known by the hypocorism *Witta*.

However, I suggest – whether as *Witta* or as *Wihtgils* – this need not have been a purely personal or birth-name. We know that ethnonyms in /-ing/ could be formed from dithematic names, as for instance in *Beowulf* with *Wægmunding*, the Swedish tribe of which Bēowulf was a member through his father, and *Merewīoing*, which was the ethno-eponym of the king of the Merovingian Franks.¹²⁷⁷ There is also evidence of this in Anglo-Saxon place-names.¹²⁷⁸ This makes it onomastically possible, I suggest, that ethnonyms such as **Wittingas* and **Wihtgilsingas* could exist, and, thus, the leader of such a people could bear the ethno-eponym **Wiht*, **Witt*, **Witta* or even **Wihtgils*.

At any rate, the grandson or son of Witta was the famous Hengest, the Germanic king who, with his son (or sons) and his brother Horsa, conquered a kingdom in Kent, according to the traditional narrative in Bede’s *HE*, *ASC* and the Welsh *HB* attributed to Nennius. Hengest, however, is currently regarded by historians as a fictional or even mythical character.¹²⁷⁹

An examination of the regnal lists shows us genealogical traditions which indicate a close connection between the Swæfe and the Angles, and that both are also associated with the ethnonym “Jute”, as shown in Table 11 below.¹²⁸⁰

<u>1 Kentish/Lindsey</u>	<u>2 Deiran</u>	<u>3 Mercian I</u>	<u>4 W Saxon (ASC)</u>	<u>5 W Saxon (AngCol)</u>
Uoden	Uoden	Woden	Woden	Woden
Uegdaeg	Uegdaeg	Weoðulgeot	Bældæg	Bældæg
Uihtgils	Siggar	Wihtlæg	Brond	Brand
Witta	Suebdaeg	Wermund	Friþugar	
Hengist	Siggeot	Offa	Freawine	
Oega	Saebald	Angengiot ¹²⁸¹	Wig	
Oese	Saefugul	Eomær	Giwis	Giwis

Table 11
Anglo-Saxon Regnal Lists: Comparison of Descent from Wōden

¹²⁷⁷ *Beowulf* 2607, 2814, 2921.

¹²⁷⁸ See Ekwall 1962: Angmering < **Ange(n)māringas* (pp. 30-31); Woolbeding < **Wulfbealdingas* (p. 41); Metherringham < **Mæðlringahām* (p. 142), etc. But the vast majority of -ing place-names appear to be from monothematic/hypocoristic forms. See also the dithematic-based place-names in -ing in the discussion at pp. 47-48 above.

¹²⁷⁹ See Sims-Williams 1983, Yorke 1990: 3, 26, and Higham 2015: 71-75, who represents most clearly the modern consensus view which largely rejects the earlier model of mass migration followed by violent conquest, displacement and/or subjugation of the British population.

¹²⁸⁰ Col. 1, *AngCol* Kentish and Lindsey lists (Dumville 1976: 31, 33, 37). Col. 2, *AngCol* Deiran list (Dumville 1976: 30, 32, 35). Col. 3, *AngCol* Mercian I list (Dumville 1976: 30, 33, 36). Col. 4, West Saxon list, *ASC* ABCD, s.a. 855/56. Col. 5, *AngCol* West Saxon list (Dumville 1976: 34, 37).

¹²⁸¹ His name is recorded variously as *Angengīot*, *Angengēot*, *Angelgēot*, and as *Angelþēow* (*ASC*) and *Ongen* (*HB*).

This displays the following relationships among Anglian dynasties:

- *Uihtgils* (Kent/Lindsey) and *Siggar* (Deira) have the same father (*Uegdaeg*) and are thus brothers.
- *Uihtgils* (Kent/Lindsey) shares his prototheme with *Wihtlæg* (Mercia). They have the same grandfather (*Uoden*) and are thus first cousins.
- *Witta* and *Suebdaeg* share the same grandfather (*Uegdaeg*) and are thus first cousins. According to *Widsith*, Witta was the king of the Swāfe, the tribe commemorated in Suebdaeg's name. They share a great-grandfather (*Uoden*) with *Wermund* and are thus his second cousins and contemporaries.
- *Hengest* shares a great-great-grandfather (*Uoden*) with *Offa* and is thus his third cousin and contemporary.¹²⁸²

Here we can see the close familial relationships between the lineages of the Bernician, Mercian and Kentish Anglians, and the occurrence and repetition of the elements *suēb*, *gēot/gīot* and *angen*, which I argue are ethnophoric; and also of *wiht*, an element associated with Kentish and Mercian kingship.¹²⁸³ These naming-elements seem to be associated with dynastic – and therefore perhaps ethnic – allegiances which encompassed the Angles, Jutes and Swāfe.

This suggests a new departure-point for the discussion of the ethnicity of Hengest as part of this wider Anglian family. Although he is almost always labelled a “Jute”, the medieval texts do not call him a “Jute”. The inference is drawn from Bede, a version of whose text also appears in *ASC*. Bede says:¹²⁸⁴

De Iutarum origine sunt Cantuari et Uictuarii, hoc est ea gens quae Uectam tenet insulam, et ea quae usque hodie in prouincia Occidentalium Saxonum Iutarum natio nominatur, posita contra ipsam insulam Uectam.

Of an origin from the Jutes are the Kent-dwellers and Wight-dwellers – that is, the tribe who inhabit the island of Wight, and the one in the province of the West Saxons, which until the present day is called the tribe of Jutes, sited opposite the Isle of Wight.

And in *ASC*:

Of Iotum comon Cantware 7 Wihtware, þæt ys seo mæið ðe nu eardað on Wiht, 7 ðæt cynn on Westsexum þe man gyt hæť Iutna cyn.

¹²⁸² Though this conflicts significantly with the traditional chronology of Hengest's participation in the migration to Britain in the mid-5th c. (if he is the same man).

¹²⁸³ See the discussion of the name *Wihtlæg* at pp. 150-53 above.

¹²⁸⁴ *HE*, I.15; Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 50. *ASC* MS A, s.a. 449. The text is only found elsewhere in *ASC* in MS E, s.a. 449, identical except for spelling.

From the Jutes came the Kent-Dwellers and Wight-Dwellers, that is, the tribe who now inhabit Wight, and that race in Wessex who are still called the race of Jutes.

In his *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae* Gildas names the invading Germanic peoples as *Saxones* once and once only,¹²⁸⁵ but he names none of them individually. Procopius (only dubiously informed about Britain) names Angles and Frisians as the inhabitants of Britain.¹²⁸⁶ Bede refers only to “Angles or Saxons” in the part of his narrative in which he seems to be mostly dependent on Gildas. But in a passage which follows shortly afterwards, in which he is probably relying on English vernacular tradition, he famously identifies the three peoples of the migration as Angles, Saxons and Jutes.¹²⁸⁷ He does not describe Hengest’s ethnic affiliation, and, as we see above, the *ASC* closely follows Bede.

In *HB* – a Welsh text partly based on Anglo-Saxon narrative and genealogical traditions – Hengest is a prominent character, with a cynical personality remarkably similar to that of Hengest in *Beowulf*’s Finnsburh Episode; and the author describes his people throughout (in the Romano-British-Celtic fashion) as *Saxones*, except for two occasions where he calls them *gens Anglorum* (once in his narrative about the Arthur-like Ambrosius and once in a genealogical section).¹²⁸⁸ But he also says that Hengest was from *Ochgul uel Ongle* – that is, Angel (oddly called an island in one MS)¹²⁸⁹ – and that he sent back to his homeland for reinforcements.¹²⁹⁰ This is in the Vatican recension of *HB*, dated by Dumville to 944.¹²⁹¹ Since *ASC* MS A (from the early 890s) contains the same tradition, siting the Germanic invaders in Angel,¹²⁹² either the Vatican recension of *HB* used a version of *ASC* with the same tradition,

¹²⁸⁵ *De excidio*, ch. 23; Mommsen 1889: 38.

¹²⁸⁶ An account given to the court at Constantinople by an embassy of Franks (claiming also to contain Angles) in the mid-6th c. See Procopius, *History of the Wars* (VIII.20.7; Dewing 1914-40, v, 254):

καὶ ὀνόματα κεῖται τοῖς ἔθνεσι τούτοις Ἀγγίλοι τε καὶ Φρίσσονες καὶ οἱ τῇ νήσῳ ὁμώνυμοι Βρίττωνες
And the names occurring for these peoples are: Angiloi, Frisones, and – with the same name as the island [*sc.* Brittia] – Brittones.

Although what “Frisian” meant to a Frank of this time is hard to say. It may have encompassed the peoples of the North Sea coast as far as western Jutland.

¹²⁸⁷ See *HE*, I.15; Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 50, comparing the text at the top of the page (*Tunc Anglorum sive Saxonum gens*), with that further down (*id est Saxonibus, Anglis, Iutis*).

¹²⁸⁸ Ch. 38, 59; Dumville 1975: 215, 245. I exclude its separate use in the name of the *East(er)angli*, i.e. the people of East Anglia.

¹²⁸⁹ See Mommsen 1889: 178 and textual notes. On the form *Ochgul*, see fn. 691 (p. 181 above).

¹²⁹⁰ *HB*, ch. 24 (Vatican recension); Dumville 1975: 412-13. He summoned ships *suae regionis*.

¹²⁹¹ *HB*, ch. 24 (Vatican recension); Dumville 1975: 412. See *ibid.*: 391 for dating.

¹²⁹² The detail about coming from Angel is not in Bede’s *HE*. But see *ASC* MS A, *s.a.* 449:

7 On hiera dagum Hengest 7 Horsa from Wyrtegeorne geleapade Bretta kyninge gesohton Bretene on þam staþe þe is genemned Ypwinesfleot, ærest Brettum to fultume, ac hie eft on hie fuhton. Se cing het hi feohtan agien Pihtas, 7 hi swa dydan 7 sige hæfdan swa hwar swa hi comon. Hi ða sende to Angle 7 heton heom sendan mare fultum 7 heom seggan Brytwalana nahtnesse 7 ðæs landes cysta. Hy ða sendan heom mare fultum. Ða comon þa menn of þrim mægþum Germanie, of Ealdseaxum, of Anglum, of Iotum.

or they both derive from a joint English narrative tradition pre-dating both; and in this tradition Hengest was either an Angle, or his connection with Angel also encompassed other ethnic affiliations he may have had (or was perceived to have had), such as being a Swæfe or a “Jute”.

The theme that Swæfe and Anglians were related by blood can be seen in a narrative in *HB* where it is said that Hengest’s sons ruled land in the north of Britain, as far as the kingdom of the Picts.¹²⁹³ Thus – it may be interpreted – as Swæfe they established their rule in Anglian areas of what was to become England, the land of Angles.

Taken as a whole, I argue, these genealogical and narrative traditions suggest that the people of Kent were Swæfe, and therefore also – because they came from Jutland – Jutes, and that they were related to the Angle-descended peoples of northern England, and in this sense “Angles”. It thus becomes arguable that the person (or one of the persons) named *Witta* in the Kentish regnal list is the ruler of the Swæfe named in *Widsith* 22 (and if *Witta* was a dynastic ethno-eponym, each of them).

4.4.3.3 Swæfe and Jutes: Conclusions

From this analysis I suggest that we ought perhaps to treat these designations (sometimes regarded as ethnic) with greater subtlety than has been customary. Just because someone was called a *Jute*, a *Swæfe* or an *Angle* did not necessarily mean that they could not have other affiliations, or that other peoples could not also call themselves *Jutes*, *Swæfe* or *Angles*. Jutland was a large peninsula, and it may be that any people who lived there could use “Jute” as a demonym. In Tacitus and Ptolemy, *Suebi* and *Σουήβοι* were hypernyms, that is, ethnic designations encompassing a number of tribes across a sizeable area. This suggests a hierarchy of ethnonyms, including those based on geography, culture and other factors, such as kinship. Thus, the ethnicity one might proclaim in any given situation would be context-specific.

And in their days [of the Roman emperors Valentinian III and Mauricius] Hengest and Horsa – invited by Wyrtegeorn king of the Britons – came to Britain to the landing-place that is called Ebbsfleet, at first to support the Britons, but later they fought them. The king ordered them to fight against the Picts, and so they did and were victorious wherever they went. Then they sent to Angel and told them to send more help and told them of the worthlessness of the Britons and the excellence of the land. Then they sent them more help. Then there came those men from three tribes of Germany, from the Old Saxons, the Angles [and] the Jutes.

The tradition followed here is that all three tribes lived in Angel. In the entry for 473 (MS A) it is said *Her Hengest 7 Æsc gefuhton wiþ Walas 7 genamon unarimedlico herereaf, 7 þa Walas flugon þa Englan swa þær fyr* “Here Hengest and Æsc fought against the Britons and seized uncountable war-booty, and the Britons then fled from the English/Angles as if they were fire”. Either this represents the tradition in the passage *s.a.* 449 above (which seems to regard Hengest as an Angle) or it is an anachronistic back-projection of the “English” ethnonym by Alfredian writers.

¹²⁹³ *HB*, ch. 34 (Harleian recension); Dumville 1975: 205-08. See Wallace-Hadrill 1988: 21-22 and Stevens 1941: 368.

Hengest, for instance, would be an interesting case, being a Swāfe by kinship-affiliation, a Dane by socio-political affiliation (as Hnæf's man), an Angle by regional affiliation, and a Jute by virtue of living in Jutland. The application of a single modern term such as "identity" to this complex phenomenon ought therefore to be regarded as questionable at best.

The question of related but distinct or overlapping ethnicities, allegiances or affiliations, I suggest, is a theme of Offa's marriage. It created a link between Angles and Swāfe (who could also be designated as "Jutes") and produced a son whose name, *Angengēot* or *Angelgēot*, meant "Angle-Jute" – a double ethno-eponym, proclaiming him as a king of the Angles and, presumably, as many of the Jutes (including the Swāfe) as Offa's marriage, his conquests and his imperial pretensions encompassed

It may not appear particularly likely that the figure we have identified as *Frēawine*, *Hemming* and *Gārmund* (and who was a Swāfe – apparently a designation of ethnic affiliation), was also known as *Witta*, who ruled the Swāfe in *Widsith* 22. But this cannot be excluded. We have seen several examples of characters and persons who were known by more than one name and more than one type of name. *Witta* is consistent with a hypocorism of names with the element *Wiht*-, which is prevalent in the genealogies of the Anglo-Jutes who might justly claim to have been Swāfe. *Wiht*- – meaning "wight" – had supernatural associations that may have accompanied a mystical or religious conception of the role of king. *Wiht* may thus have been epithetical – as we have seen with *Frōda* "wise one", *Folcwalda* "people ruler" and *Helm* "helmet" and others – but it may also have been connected with the expression of a Swāfe ethnic affiliation.

At any rate, if, as I suggest, the *Witta* who ruled the Swāfe in *Widsith* 22 was Hengest's immediate forebear, then this tells us that this was an allusion to a time not long before the migration to Britain, and the Swāfe presence in England was pioneered by Hengest who was also an Angle and a Jute.

4.4.4 Offa's In-Laws: Conclusions

I suggest that the most natural conclusion to draw from the Offa digression in *Beowulf* is that Offa's father-in-law was Hemming (referred to by his ethno-eponym) and perhaps Gārmund (referred to by his birth-name); and that he was also known by the epithetical name *Frēawine* in Anglo-Saxon tradition, the same figure as *Frowinus*/*Frewinus* in *GD* and *AnnR*. It is also likely that the people of Schleswig, of whom Hemming/Gārmund/Frēawine was the king, were the Swāfe, or at least a people who were of the Swāfe group (among whom Tacitus and

Ptolemy had included the Angles), even if they did not comprise the whole of it – that is, the Hemmingas. I suggest that we can also conclude also that this people were unlikely to have been Saxons (except by the special pleading of West Saxon Alfredian genealogists).

The insertion into the West Saxon regnal lists of the names *Friþugār*, *Frēawine* and *Wīg* appears to have taken place during the compilation and revision of the text of the *ASC* in the period up to the early 890s. The insertion, I suggest, was made in order to provide an immediate ancestry for the eponymous or ethno-eponymous Giwis of the Gewisse or West Saxons, in which *Wīg* was used to replace Brand (who was Giwis's father in the version of the list in *AngCol*). The reason behind the insertion, I argue, is likely to have been the survival of a narrative in which *Friþugār*, *Frēawine* and *Wīg* were illustrious and therefore well-known figures from historical narrative, who had ethnic affiliations which incorporated – or could be argued by genealogists to incorporate – elements that were Anglian, Swāfe and Jutish. *Frēawine*, the father of *Wīg*, would also have been the grandfather of Offa's children and an illustrious member of their lineage.

According to *Widsith* 22, the king of the Swāfe was Witta, a hypocoristic name which features in versions of the Kentish regnal list as the father or grandfather of Hengest (potentially both). Therefore, it is conceivable that the expansion of the Wessex regnal list occurred in a period in the late ninth or early tenth centuries when the kings of Wessex (*ex officio* kings of Mercia) were planning a *Reconquista* of England, uniting its former kingdoms and the Danelaw under one *Angulsaxonum rex*, and asserting their overlordship over the Welsh. Heroes from Danish legend, like Heremōd, Scyld and Bēow, were imported; but so also were figures from the history of the Angles and the Jutes, who were commemorative of their resistance to the Danish forces which drove them overseas. It can thus be argued that the lineage of Æthelwulf was re-designed in the reign of Alfred to incorporate almost every Germanic ethnicity extant in England by the end of the ninth century – Angle, Jute and Dane, in addition to Saxon – as part of an assertion to a claim to legitimate rule over them all. The fact of Offa's marriage – and the alliance it created, and the progeny it spawned – were therefore of use in founding the *Angul*- part of the claim of the kings of Wessex to be the kings of the *Angulsaxones*.

4.4.5 The Narratives of Offa's Marriage

4.4.5.1 Introduction

Having examined the names and identities of the people associated with Offa's marriage, we come now to the narratives associated with it. Offa's wife was only vestigially alluded to by Saxo, but although the wedding ushers in a major part of his Uffo narrative, there is nothing about Offa's bridal quest in his story. Some details of it are alluded to in *Beowulf* (which we have dealt with). But although they are the focus of the Offa-allusion, they are difficult to understand fully. Some of the motifs of the wedding-story can be gleaned from *VOD* in the stories of the wives of both Offas respectively. However, I shall suggest that very striking parallels with the *Beowulf* story can be found in Saxo's narrative of Alf's wooing of Alvilda in *GD*. This has no connection with Saxo's Uffo-narrative, but I argue that it is so similar in terms of detail, motif and theme, it is likely to have been taken from the Uffo-story and put to use elsewhere by Saxo (and for reasons which can be explained).

4.4.5.2 The Wives of the Two Offas

In *VOD* there are two Offas and two wives. However, as we shall see, even though the persons are duplicated, their characteristics derive from single originals, assisting us in our understanding of the story of Offa and his wife in *Beowulf* and in the reconstruction of the early form of the Offa-story.

The account of the wives of Offas I and II in *VOD* can be summarised as follows:

In *VOD* Offa I's unnamed wife-to-be is the daughter of the king of York (a city long associated with Danes in England) whose incestuous designs she repulses and is exiled by him. Offa comes across her while hunting, befriends her, and, following the directions of a nearby hermit, takes her home. Offa is celibate at this time, but after some years he succumbs to persuasion that it is high time he married (the theme of delayed paternity, as with his father), and so he chooses the woman he rescued for his wife. She bears him fine boys and girls. When Offa is campaigning against the Scots (who were threatening his ally the king of Northumbria), he sends a messenger back home with letters for his officers. By chance, the messenger stops and rests overnight at the home of the queen's father in York. He is made drunk by the evil king, who takes the letters, alters their contents and forges Offa's seal, making them read as a command to punish Offa's wife for the evil she has done, which has brought misfortune on the kingdom. She was to be taken with her children to some wild spot, and they were to have their

hands and feet cut off. On receipt of the message, Offa's men are astounded, but they carry out the orders nonetheless, fearful of Offa's displeasure. The men entrusted with the task cannot bear to kill the queen because she is so beautiful, but the children are murdered and dismembered. However, a holy hermit of the woods (the same hermit as before) hears the laments of the mother and children, finds the queen and the corpses and puts them back together again. His prayers move God to restore them to life. The queen and the children remain with the hermit in the wilderness. Meanwhile Offa returns. He is fobbed off with false excuses for the absence of his wife and children until he demands the truth and is told it. He is overwhelmed with grief. In order to lessen this, he agrees to go hunting. Inevitably, he comes across the home of the hermit and while resting there opens his heart to the old man. He is at once reunited with his wife and children. After asking Offa to found a monastery in thanks, the hermit goes to his eternal reward. In his later years Offa gives himself up to sinful luxury and his kingdom begins to disintegrate. He and his sons forget the vow they had made to found an abbey at St. Albans.

In this story, as in *Beowulf*, Offa I's wife is unnamed. She is from another ethnicity, since her father is imagined to rule at a time when York had its own king, which means that he can only have been a Dane. Although innocent, she is associated with evil acts which cause harm to the country. After a period of turmoil, she and Offa live happily together until the end of his life. These parallels survive, I suggest, despite the recasting of Offa I's queen as an exiled, falsely-accused and passive heroine of the Constance folktale-type who bears little resemblance to the princess in the Offa story in *Beowulf*.¹²⁹⁴

By contrast, Offa II's queen, Drida (from *Prȳþu*) or Quendrida (a modified and Latinised version of the name of Offa of Mercia's actual queen, Cyneþrȳþ) is as enterprising as she is bad. In summary:

She is a member of the Frankish royal house of Carloman and/or Charlemagne (the author is sometimes confused). Before her marriage she commits crimes which cause the Franks to exile her overseas by setting her adrift in an oarless boat. Offa is struck by her beauty and marries her against the wishes of his parents. But Drida turns out to be evil through and through. She plots against her husband's chief men (including the bishops) for thwarting her marriage plans for her daughters, and she contrives the atrocious murder and beheading of her unwanted but saintly son-in-law Æthelberht of East Anglia. Offa eventually becomes aware of her misdeeds, and after one unsuccessful attempt to stop her, he finally places her in exile where she can do no more harm, and there she dies.¹²⁹⁵

¹²⁹⁴ See Swanton 2010 and fns. 292 and 293, with references.

¹²⁹⁵ See Swanton 2010: 47-49, 89-100.

In *VOD* the two sides of Offa's queen in *Beowulf* are divided between the queens of Offa I and II. The queen of Offa I is entirely excellent in terms of personal virtue, reigning with him (after some vicissitudes) until his death. But the queen of Offa II is inherently evil wherever she is placed, malignantly active, contrary to her husband's wishes. Her evil is stopped by exile and death. But – as in *Beowulf* – the reason for her badness is not disclosed.

The parallels between the Offa digression in *Beowulf* and the stories of the two queens of the two Offas in *VOD* (taken together) are sufficiently obvious, I argue, to indicate that there is a relationship between them (a thematic relationship is also noted by Currie 2024):

- (1) The wife-to-be is a princess.
- (2) The princess's family neighbours the Anglian realm of Offa (Mercia in *VOD*). In the case of the Franks, it is over water.
- (3) The princess's father is a significant actor in the narrative (Carloman is not said to be Drida's father, but he is the head of the royal family). In *Beowulf* and *VOD* the bride's father is instrumental in sending her over water.
- (4) The princess is associated with atrocious acts.
- (5) Offa's marriage-suit is not straightforward, or there is an unusual reason attending his choice. Offa I has to be persuaded to abandon celibacy and choose a wife. Offa II marries the troublesome Drida against her family's wishes.
- (6) Offa's in-laws are also a source of trouble. Offa I's father-in-law obtains the banishment of his daughter and murder of his grandchildren. Offa II faces successive alliances made by Carloman, and then by his successor Charlemagne, with Offa II's English and Welsh enemies. Offa II is later reconciled with Charlemagne.
- (7) Offa stops the evil acts of his queen summarily (though only after a period of ignorance).

Thus, I suggest, a theme integral to the Offa story was a famous marriage to a foreign queen whose father was a formidable but ambiguous character from a neighbouring people. The marriage was associated with evil acts which might have brought disaster or rupture, but these were addressed by Offa's decisive actions.

4.4.5.3 The Story of Alf and Alvilda: An Unidentified Analogue

In Saxo's story of Uffo, his marriage to the daughter of Frowinus is an integral part of the narrative: without it he would have no connection to a family whose actions threaten to bring

doom on his father's kingdom. But in *GD* Uffo's wife is not named, and she plays no active part in the story, except (by necessary implication) to provide him with in-laws and to bear him his son Dan. However, I suggest that the following narrative is so close to that alluded to in *Beowulf* that it is likely that Saxo recycled the story of Uffo's marriage and deployed it in a different context in his Book VII.¹²⁹⁶ The transplanted narrative occurs as an episode in a larger narrative, which I summarise here.

There was a king of Denmark called Sygarus who had three sons, Sywardus, Alf and Algerus, and a daughter, Signe. Alf was the bravest of the three brothers and very handsome. He lived as a viking (*pirata*). King Sywardus of the Goths had two sons, Ostenus and Wemundus, and a daughter called Alvilda. She was so modest that from a very young age she had kept herself veiled. Her father kept her under close guard in her room and gave her two poisonous snakes to bring up as pets to protect herself. He ordered that anyone who tried to get into his daughter's room should be beheaded. This had the expected deterrent effect on young men. Out of youthful bravado, Alf put himself forward as a suitor and it was agreed he could embrace the princess if he could vanquish the snakes. To stir them to attack him, he wrapped his body in a fur pelt soaked in blood. Equipping himself with a red-hot iron bar held in tongs and a spear, he went into Alvilda's room. He killed the first snake that attacked him by thrusting the iron bar down its throat, then the other with a spear hurled into its gaping mouth. However, after this, and contrary to the agreement, Alvilda's father let his daughter choose whether or not to accept Alf. She was keen, but her mother – who resented Alf and his suit (for a reason not explained) poisoned her mind against him, suggesting that she was naively bedazzled by his looks. Alvilda followed her mother's suasions, and then took to the life of a piratess, attracting other like-minded girls to the freebooting life and eventually being elected as the chief of a (male) pirate band that had lost its own leader. Meanwhile, Alf continued to pursue her across the seas. After an adventure or two, he approached a creek in the land of the Finns and on reconnoitring it he came across a number of boats already moored in a harbour. Unknown to Alf, this was Alvilda and her band. Alvilda attacked Alf, and during the fighting her helmet was knocked off and Alf recognised her. (Saxo's prose becomes somewhat oblique at this point, and it is unclear how forceful Alf's sexual advances towards her were). But Alf forced her to put women's clothes back on and she went a-roving no more and bore him a daughter called Guritha.

The Alf and Alvilda story is colourful and memorable, but it has no function in this part of Saxo's history. There is no apparent reason why Alvilda's parents would have gone to such

¹²⁹⁶ *GD*, VII.6.1-8; Friis-Jensen and Fisher 2015: I, 470-77.

extremes to keep her suitors away – whether their daughter was innately modest or not. Alvilda is provided with two brothers, Wemundus and Ostenus, who are named but have no role whatever in the story.

The *Kl4* editors note in passing the resemblance of Offa’s wife in *Beowulf* to other unapproachable, fierce literary shrews, including Alvilda.¹²⁹⁷ But otherwise no attention has been paid to the wider parallels between the story of Alf and Alvilda and the Offa-allusion in *Beowulf*.¹²⁹⁸ These are so striking, and Saxo’s story so redundant in its context, that I suggest that they are reflexes of the same story. The parallels are as follows:

- (1) A beautiful princess is kept veiled and away from suitors at the home of her father (and in *GD*, her mother).
- (2) The princess has two brothers who are named (in *GD*).
- (3) Anyone who sees her illicitly is killed with a bladed weapon.
- (4) The princess’s father is a king and a significant figure in the story. In *Beowulf* her father (if this is not Offa) is a *sinfrēa* (l. 1934b) “constant or ever-present lord”; in Saxo he is *Sywardus*, which can represent *Sívrðr* “constant guardian”.
- (5) The hero survives his encounter with the princess and is entitled to marry her.
- (6) Marriage does not follow automatically on from the hero’s performance of the quest. In *Beowulf*, the princess is said to have reformed after being married to Offa (ll. 1947-49). But it is not clear whether, in the lines following, we are told again, appositively, that this was after her marriage, or whether we are provided with new information suggesting that something happened between the wooing and the wedding. See ll. 1949-51: “[...] after she sought out Offa’s home, following her father’s counsel, over the dusky water, by a journey” (*syððan hīo Offan flet // ofer fealone flōd / be fæder lāre // sīðe gesōhte*). *Sywardus* is described as a *rex Gothorum*, which, according to Saxo’s usage of the name *Gothia*, is likely to mean the people of Götaland in southern Sweden – though “Goths” were sometimes associated (albeit wrongly) with Jutland.¹²⁹⁹ The aftermath of the wooing involves journeying over water in both *Beowulf* and Saxo, though in *Beowulf* the

¹²⁹⁷ See *Kl4*: 222, note to ll. 1931^b-62 (only a reference to the passage in *GD* is given).

¹²⁹⁸ Rickert (1904-05) and Chambers (1921) do not mention it. Nor is it mentioned by Ellis Davidson (Ellis Davidson and Fisher 1980: II, 112) or Swanton (2010).

¹²⁹⁹ See e.g. *GD*, Preface 2.5; Friis-Jensen and Fisher 2015: I, 12-13; and Index (*s.n.* *Götaland*); Friis-Jensen and Fisher 2015: II, 1719. Scandinavian authors regarded Jutland (ON *Jútland/Jótland*) as a land of *Gotar* (Goths), on the basis of folk-etymology. See pp. 186-88 and pp. 252-53 and fn. 998 (p. 252) above.

circumstances of the journey – if anything other than the usual accompanying of the groom to his home – are unknown. However, the phrase *be fæder lāre* is unexpected if Offa had won her as of right by some stratagem or act of bravery. In Saxo, the father leaves the decision up to Alvilda, who is initially keen, but her mother counsels against. *Beowulf* suggests that the wedding goes ahead only after his father-in-law gives his daughter an instruction or the benefit of his wisdom.

- (7) The hero crosses water as part of the obtaining of the princess.
- (8) The princess stops her unwomanly acts (murder, cross-dressing and piracy) and bears children.
- (9) The princess's posterity is not long before dynastic disaster comes.

A dim echo can also be detected in names from the Alf and Offa/Uffo stories respectively:

Wemundus (Alvilda's brother)	Wermund, Wermundus (Uffo's father)
Alf	Offa, Uffo (< <i>Áleifr</i>) ¹³⁰⁰
Alvilda (= ON <i>Álfhildr</i> ?)	Ealhild

This narrative is followed by the story of Hagbarthus (Old Norse *Hagbarðr*), the ill-fated sea-rover who was the secret lover of king Sygarus's daughter Signe. This story contains the theme of a hero risking death to woo a king's daughter, but I suggest that it is also relevant to the Offa-story because Saxo also places both within a larger narrative about the end of a royal dynasty – indeed, of a nation. Sygarus catches Hagbarthus attempting a liaison with Signe and hangs him. This causes Signe to commit suicide. Hagbarthus's brother Hako then makes war on Sygarus to avenge his brother. In the fighting, both Hako's and the Danish royal family's lines become extinct – except for Guritha, a daughter fathered by Alf on Alvilda. The new, lordless Denmark has to look for kings among its non-royal population; and in the ensuing anarchy Guritha ends up by marrying Haldanus (the father of Haraldus wartooth) – i.e. *GD*'s reflex of *Beowulf*'s Healfdene, whose narrative Saxo has delayed until this point. He thus makes Haldanus's son Haraldus the figure who unites the whole realm of Denmark after his father's death, rather than Hrōþgār. In this recasting of the Scylding narrative, Haraldus takes the glorious place of Hrōþgār, and is given Hrōþgār's father Healfdene.

Here, I suggest, Saxo has paid attention to the motifs and themes of the narratives in his sources. He has translated the Offa/Uffo bridal quest episode – now about Alf and Alvilda – from the Uffo story to a place next to the Hagbarthus story (which it largely duplicates, and

¹³⁰⁰ See pp. 121-23 above.

in which it has no independent narrative function) which has similar motifs. But he has also placed it in a thematically similar position, as a romantic liaison which occurs just before the finale of a story of national disaster which the marriage and its progeny are unable to avert.

I further suggest that it is possible to identify the origins of the narrative of dynastic downfall into which Saxo has inserted Alf and Alvilda: it is the same story that we find in the tragedy of Finnsburh. Saxo's *Hako*, I argue, represents a Latinisation of Old Norse *Haki*, the name of a *sækonungr*, a "sea-king", that is, a sea-rover figure like those who feature in Viking *fornaldarsaga* romances, or as mere names in the Icelandic *pulur* (poetic lists) of sea-kings' names which were recommended for use in skaldic kennings but whose narratives have been lost. *Haki* can be identified with *Hōc*, the father of Hnæf and Hildeburh.¹³⁰¹ But there are two men called *Hako* in Saxo's narrative, and I suggest that the second of them corresponds to Hnæf, and further that Saxo's story of the two Hakos is a reflex of the Finnsburh story.

As I have argued earlier,¹³⁰² Hnæf was a king of the Hōcingas, and he was both a Healfdene and a Scylding. His father was known by his ethno-eponym as *Hōc*, and when the text of *FFr* is emended from <noc> to *hoc*, we discover that Hnæf was also known as *Hōc*.¹³⁰³ Therefore, there were two men called *Hōc* in Old English literature, the latter of whom was Hnæf, a traveller by sea, according to the *Finnsburh* story.

Saxo's narrative of Hagbarthus and the two Hakos has several curious features which suggest that it has been adapted to a new purpose, and not entirely smoothly (a characteristic feature of Saxo's methodology). The figure of Hako (I) first appears in *GD* Book VI as a Danish *tyrannus* (petty king) – and employer of Starcatherus – whose ancestry is not given.¹³⁰⁴ In Book VII, presumably the same Hako appears (unannounced) as a person whom princess Signe was attracted to.¹³⁰⁵ Then this Hako is said to be someone whose name Signe – strangely – uses in her praise of Hagbarthus (as if *Hako* were another of Hagbarthus's names).¹³⁰⁶ Then, suddenly, Hako is named as the avenging brother of the hanged Hagbarthus; and this Hako (I) is given an (unrelated) ally, also named *Hako* (II), of Sjøælland.¹³⁰⁷ An extra curiosity about Hako (I) is that

¹³⁰¹ *Haki* is potentially identified with *Hoc* by Gurevich 2017: 988. The point is not argued by her however (and is of some complexity), but I accept the identification as correct. See *Beowulf* 1076b, where Hildeburh is described as *Hōces dohtor*.

¹³⁰² On *Hōc*, see pp. 57-59 above

¹³⁰³ See pp. 57-58 above, where I argue that *FFr* 39 (as emended) should read *nē nēfre swā [H]ōc / hwītne medo sēl forgyldan*, identifying Hnæf, by his ethno-eponym *Hōc*, as king of the Hōcingas.

¹³⁰⁴ *GD*, VI.5.10-12; Friis-Jensen and Fisher (2015): I, 384-386.

¹³⁰⁵ *GD*, VII.7.2; Friis-Jensen and Fisher 2015: I, 478.

¹³⁰⁶ *GD*, VII.7.5; Friis-Jensen and Fisher 2015: I, 480.

¹³⁰⁷ *GD*, VII.8.1; Friis-Jensen and Fisher 2015: I, 492.

he was not named earlier as one of Hagbarthus's two brothers, who were called *Helwin* and *Hamundus*.¹³⁰⁸

The odd onomastics of this episode can be explained, however, if *Hako* was an ethno-eponym which, like *Hōc*, could be borne by more than one individual in the same royal line, and was supplementary to a birth-name. Thus, Hagbarthus (sometimes aka *Hako*) and Hako (I) were successive kings of the same sea-roving people, who I suggest were identical with the people named as *Hōcingas* in *Widsith*. *Hako* is close enough to *Hōc* in phonology and semantics (both can mean “hook”) to indicate a relationship between them. The ethno-eponymous Hako (I) would therefore theoretically have had a birth-name, and I suggest that we can deduce this from the fact that in Saxo's text Hagbarthus at first has two brothers named *Helwin* or *Hamundus*, but later he has a brother called Hako (I). I suggest that Hako (I) was not a third brother of Hagbarthus, but the ethno-eponym borne by either *Helwin* or *Hamundus*. Hako (I)'s successor, Hako (II), is not his son in *GD*, but I argue that their possession of the same ethno-eponymous name indicates that they were likely to be related by kinship as well. Hako (II)'s role is that of the eventual conqueror of Sygarus of Sjøælland.

So, if we consider the text of *Widsith* at ll. 28-29a:

Sigehere lengest	Sæ-Denum wēold,	28
Hnæf Hōcingum		

I suggest that we may understand this collocation of names as the onomastic skeleton of a narrative in which Hnæf (who *Beowulf* tells us was a Healfdene and a Scylding) was the second of two kings called *Hōc* (thus “*Hōc* (II)"); and he came after Sigehere who had long been the ruler of the “Sea Danes”. I argue that it is beyond coincidence that in Saxo's narrative Hako II conquers Sygarus (= *Sigehere*) of Sjøælland, the island of the Scylding Danes, which in Old Norse was *Sjóland*, or “Sea-Land”, and thus the home of *Widsith*'s *Sæ-Dene*, that is, “Sea-Danes”.¹³⁰⁹ They are, I suggest, the same story with the same characters and names.

Understood thus, Saxo was recounting a story which is likely to have been a prelude to the well-known tragedy at Finnsburh – that is, before the time when Hnæf was established as king of the Danes and his sister was married to the mighty Finn of Frisia. It is likely to be a further indication that the stories of Sigehere and Hnæf were related that in the text of *Widsith* Sigehere comes between the two main protagonists of Finnsburh, Gefwulf aka Finn (ll. 26-27) and Hnæf (l. 29).

¹³⁰⁸ *GD*, VII.7.1; Friis-Jensen and Fisher 2015: I, 476.

¹³⁰⁹ As argued at p. 59 above.

I also contend that there are thematic correspondences between the *Finnsburh* story and the story of Sygarus and the two Hakos, in that both feature the theme of complete dynastic dissolution. It is an argument which deserves to be made that in the *Finnsburh* story known to the Anglo-Saxons Hnæf had a number of brothers, and this band of princelings were named in an analogue to the *Finnsburh* story which can be found in Arngrímur Jónsson's *RDF*, in the part containing his epitome of the lost Icelandic *Skjoldunga saga*. In one section of Arngrímur's narrative of the early *Skjoldung* kings – which is barely more than a genealogy with brief glosses – we are told that king Havardus (a name-form not far from *Hagbarthus*) was succeeded by his brother Leifus (= Old Norse *Leifr*), and Leifus was succeeded by each of his six sons in turn, all of whom were kings of Denmark ruling on Sjælland, and all of whom (by implication) died without issue, since their successor was their cousin, Frodo, a son of Havardus.¹³¹⁰ In *RDF* the sons of Leifus are called *Hunleifus*, *Oddleifus*, *Gunnleifus*, *Aleifus*, *Geirleifus* and *Herleifus*. These are the Old Norse names *Hunleifr*, *Oddleifr*, *Gunnleifr*, *Áleifr*, *Geirleifr* and *Herleifr*. Strangely and remarkably, the first three are exactly cognate with Old English names occurring in *Finnsburh* texts. *Hunleifr* is cognate with *Hūnlāf*, which occurs in the name *Hūnlāfing* (*Beowulf* 1143), and I have argued that *Hnæf* was a head-and-tail hypocorism of *Hūnlāf*.¹³¹¹ *Oddleifr* and *Gunnleifr* are cognate with *Ordlāf* and *Gūplāf* (in *Beowulf* 1148 and *FFr* 16, 33). The fourth, *Áleifr* is close to *Ōslāf* (*Beowulf* 1148), differing only in one letter in their respective Proto-West Germanic forms, **Anulaibaz* and **Ansulaibaz*.

This correspondence has been noticed by scholars but never satisfactorily accounted for.¹³¹² Although the matter deserves a closer examination than there is space for here,¹³¹³ the correspondence in names can be explained if *Skjoldunga saga* contained an analogue to the English *Finnsburh* legend, but alluded to features of it not present in its remains in *FFr* and *Beowulf* – that is, the fact that Hnæf (aka *Hōc*) was also called *Hūnlāf*, and that he and his five brothers (all with names ending in *-lāf*) were massacred by Finn's Frisians at *Finnsburh*, leaving

¹³¹⁰ See *RDF/Skjoldunga saga*, ch. 4-5; *ÍF* 35: 7-9.

¹³¹¹ See fn. 275 (p. 92 above). *Hūnlāfing* would then be understood as the sword owned by *Hūnlāf* (i.e. Hnæf) given as a gift to Hengest, which shames him into vengeance.

¹³¹² Since Chadwick first noted the correspondence between these names (1907: 52, fn. 1), it has often been mentioned by scholars, but only in passing, and it has thus languished in footnotes as an interesting but unexplained (or inexplicable) fact. See Chambers 1921: 252, fn. 2; *ASPR*, v, 181-182; Brady 1979: 96-97 and fns; Tolkien 1982: 78-79 (his views from the 1920s and 30s); Bjarni Guðnason 1982 (*ÍF* 35): 8, fn. 11; *K14*: 274, and fn. 8; Shaw 2020: 128; Neidorf 2019: 491; Leneghan 2020: 4, fn. 14. Jakob Benediktsson gave it closer consideration (1950-57: XII, 39-61, 107-117, 228 and references; 1957-1961: 58-59), but was dismissive of any identifiable connection between *RDF/Skjoldunga saga* and the OE texts, on the traditional assumption that names could be transmitted by literary tradition but without any narrative accompanying them – an assumption repeatedly challenged in this study. See fn. 275 (p. 92 above).

¹³¹³ I propose to deal with it in my "One Bride for Six Brothers? 'Unresolved Issues' and Names and Naming in the *Finnsburh* Story" (forthcoming).

their foreign mercenaries (including Hengest of *Adventus* fame) to fight on – or, as we learn, to make a dishonourable peace with Finn.¹³¹⁴ This comes to an end when someone presents Hengest with Hūnlāfing, the sword of his dead lord Hūnlāf (aka *Hnæf*), as a reminder of vengeance left undone. The result of this for Denmark was the destruction of its royal dynasty, probably followed by a lordless interregnum.¹³¹⁵

If this is so, then Saxo's Guritha – the daughter of Alf and Alvilda – plays the same role as Hildeburh in the *Finnsburh* story, as the last surviving (and non-regnant) member of her Danish royal family. I suggest that Saxo has detached the Hagbarthus-Hako narrative from its original context in the beginnings of the history of the Danish monarchy and deployed it later, at a point at which another dynastic dissolution was required by the narrative.

I suggest also that the story of Alf and Alvilda was detached from the Uffo-story and incorporated as a prelude within the Sygarus-Hagbarthus-Hako narrative. It is significant, I argue, that the story of Alf – one of a traditional trio of brothers – could be removed from its context in *GD* without affecting the main narrative at all – an indication that it was an insertion rather than an organic part of a single story. The motives for inserting it (whether by Saxo or his sources) were to avoid wasting excellent narrative material, and to find a convenient place where its theme corresponded with that of another narrative. Alf's life-endangering bridal quest for Alvilda resembles that of Hagbarthus for Signe. But I suggest there was a further correspondence. In Saxo's story of Uffo, his marriage to the unnamed daughter of Frowinus is also the trigger for war; and this motif is also found in the story of Hagbarthus and Signe, whose liaison triggers a revenge-tragedy involving the two Hakos and the end of the Danish line.

I therefore contend in conclusion that the juxtaposition by Saxo (or his sources) of these two stories – both detached from their original places in Danish history – provides evidence of the thematic content of both of them; and that this makes it reasonably likely that central to the

¹³¹⁴ In *RDF/Skjöldunga saga* (ch. 4-5; *ÍF* 35: 7-9) Havardus handrammi is king of the Danes, then is succeeded by his brother Leifus, who is succeeded by each of his six sons, including Hunleifus. If *Hako* was an ethno-eponym (= OE *Hōc*), this would have been borne by Havardus, Leifus and Hunleifus and his brothers, as kings of the Danes. This may explain the anomaly in *GD* that Signe seem to call Hagbarthus *Hako*. If his name were a version of *Havardus*, then he too would have been a king entitled to be called *Hako*.

¹³¹⁵ The deaths of all the princes who were brothers would explain why the non-Dane Hengest is in charge of the survivors on the Danish side in the *Finnsburh* episode in *Beowulf*. It is often asserted that Hengest in the *Finnsburh* texts was a Dane (see, for instance, in the account of *Finnsburh* ethnicities in *K14*: 274, 286). But if he were, he could not be the Swāfe/Jutish/Anglian Hengest of the *Adventus* story, as I argue that we find it in *HE*, *HB* and *ASC*. I consider it highly unlikely that our sources feature two identically-named but different Hengests; and the view that the *Finnsburh* Hengest was a Dane, I suggest, is based on a failure to consider him as the literary type of the *wræcca* – the exiled prince in the service of a foreign lord. This is the status that his colleague, Sigferþ, a *wreccea* of the Secgan, proclaims for himself at *FFr* 24-25.

English Offa story that included Frēawine and Wīg was a theme connecting Offa’s marriage with war – either the attempt to avoid it (since Prȳpu was a *freoðowebbe*), or the cause of it. As we see in point (6) of the correspondences between *Beowulf* and *VOD* (at p. 327 above), the marital alliance is associated with the risk of war against neighbours. I therefore suggest that the appearance of very similar stories in *Beowulf*, Saxo (Books IV and VII) and in *VOD*’s account of Quendrida suggests strongly that Offa of Angel’s marriage was integral to his story and constituted an important theme in the history of Angel as it developed in vernacular literature.

4.4.6 Master of Allusion: The Story of Offa and his Marriage in *Beowulf*

The foregoing analysis, I argue, offers us several new perspectives on the Offa-allusion in *Beowulf*, which is probably the least understood, certainly the least admired, of the poem’s “digressions”.

The skill with which the *Beowulf*-poet incorporated the Offa story into his poem has not impressed many. Chambers says, “the passage is the most obscure in the whole poem”.¹³¹⁶ Bonjour says, “Of all the historical digressions this is apparently the least apposite in the poem”.¹³¹⁷ Michael Swanton thinks its awkwardness is due to the poet’s wish to insert something into his poem in praise of Offa II.¹³¹⁸ Others have been as harsh, if not more so.¹³¹⁹ (Perhaps the first *Beowulf*-scribe felt the same way: eight lines into the allusion, by the word *scyran* in in line 1939, he had had enough and gave up, or died, fell sick or was sacked).

The reasons for critical dissatisfaction are fairly obvious: the transition from the story of Hygd and Hygelāc to Offa I and his queen (named or unnamed) is unannounced and very abrupt, taking place during the course of l. 1931. Naturally, the juxtaposition suggests comparison.¹³²⁰ But of what? The poet insinuates no suspect or evil demeanour or behaviour

¹³¹⁶ Chambers 1921: 36.

¹³¹⁷ Bonjour 1970: 53.

¹³¹⁸ Swanton 2010: xlix. Offa II’s queen was called *Cynethryth* and would presumably not have been flattered by any allusion to a queen with a murderous past. Earle’s idea that this was a “poetic and veiled admonition addressed to Cynethryth” (1892: cvii) is even less credible. A poet intending to flatter Offa and his wife had plenty of material to refer to, omitting the disgraceful early career of the wife of Offa I.

¹³¹⁹ See Leneghan 2009: 543–44, with references: “crude excrescence” (Sisam), “far-fetched and out of place” (Klaeber), characterised by “gratuitousness and unsuitability” (A. C. Murray). Leneghan (2009) argues for its appropriateness: its purpose was to foreground royal marriage and to point out the dangers of kings – like Bēowulf – being wifeless and childless.

¹³²⁰ Eliason (1965) has argued that Offa’s wife and Hygd were one and the same, married first to Offa, and then to Hygelāc. But this ignores the strong implication of the Offa allusion that he and his wife lived “happily ever after”. In *Beowulf* Hygd is described as “very young” (*swīðe geong*, l. 1926b) and she had already been at Hygelāc’s court for a small number of years (*wintra lýt*, l. 1927b). So, what happened to

on the part of Hygd. On the contrary, she seems to be a model young queen. In l. 1981a the MS reading is <geond þæt side rēced>. Whatever problems this may create for alliteration in the line,¹³²¹ Hygelāc's *sidereced*, in which Hygd serves his thegns with mead, was a hall distinguished by *sidu* "seemliness", and thus in utter contrast to the one in which Offa's bride executed her own men at will. *Ne bið swylc cwēnlic þēaw // idese tō efnanne* "Such is not a queenly custom for a noble lady to practise", says the poet of Offa's wife-to-be (l. 1940b), whereas Hygd seems to have been entirely *cwēnlicu*. Unsurprisingly, it has proved impossible to imagine that the *Beowulf*-poet intended to praise Hygd merely by suggesting that she was not a terrifying murderess who needed to be restrained by her husband, which would be both feeble and absurd.

Any comparison between the husbands Hygelāc and Offa seems troubled too. Offa was obliged to curb his killer-wife, but Hygelāc was not. Offa's career seems – from what we are told in *Widsith* and *Beowulf* – to have been one of triumphant success and subsequent good rule. But, apart from his rescue of the remnant of the Geatish army at Ravenswood from Ongenþēow, the repeated theme of Hygelāc's reign is the disaster of his Frisian raid, of which Bēowulf may have been the sole survivor (and which, historically, may have spelled the beginning of the end of the Gēats as a nation). While Offa's posterity (in the form of Ēomēr) was a "salvation to heroes" or "to Hæleðas" (l. 1961a, *hæleðum/Hæleðum tō helpe*), Hygelāc's son Heardrēd is not fit to rule – at least, in the opinion of his own mother Hygd, who offers the crown to Bēowulf, who declines it (ll. 2369-79). Heardrēd harbours the fugitive Swedish princes Ēadgils and Ēanmund and in the ensuing conflict dies fighting their uncle Onela (ll. 2379-88). He achieves nothing but the antagonism of the Swedes – the enemy who ultimately overwhelms the Gēats. The conclusion is inescapable that Offa and Hygelāc seem to have very little in common except their fame and the fact that they got married.

Other critics have considered the possibility of contrast rather than comparison between the queens. Bonjour was not persuaded, doubting – if this were so – that the inclusion of the story was aesthetically justified (presumably because it would be pointless).¹³²² Instead, he argued that Offa's queen was being compared and contrasted with Heremōd, a murderous

Offa so quickly to make Hygd move on to Hygelāc? Eliason's suggestion (1965: 131 that Hemming was the father of Hæreþ, Hygd's father) is undermined by his contention that the *Beowulf*-poet himself did not understand these relationships (which offers no prospect that we can either).

¹³²¹ See fn. 792 (p. 205 above).

¹³²² Bonjour 1970: 54. See also Newton (1993: 65), who considered whether it was an example of the "compare and contrast" style of the poet, but thought it so artistically awkward that it was legitimate to consider interpolation or "perhaps more likely, scribal error". I note that it would have to be scribal error of a major kind.

Danish king who is referred to in a couple of allusions (at ll. 901-06 and 1709-24). The first is made by a Danish poet in a poem of praise of Bēowulf for killing Grendel (ll. 901-06). The second is by Hrōþgār in a speech of thanks to him for having got rid of both monsters (ll. 1709-24), in which he explicitly moralises that Bēowulf should not imitate Heremōd (ll. 1722b-23a). But although Heremōd's companion-killing badness may be comparable to that of Offa's bride-to-be, these passages do not seem close enough to the Offa-allusion to make the parallels obvious, even to an attentive contemporary audience skilled in understanding the non-sequential narrative techniques of Anglo-Saxon poets. Also, Heremōd began well and ended badly as a murderer, whereas Offa's queen did the opposite.

Francis Leneghan has interpreted the comparison as one between Offa who makes a sound dynastic marriage (in the end) and produces good posterity in the form of a son, Ēomēr, to be contrasted with the unwedded, sonless Bēowulf after whose reign the Gēats are destroyed.¹³²³ Currie (2024) sees a different aspect to dynastic marriage, contrasting the success of the well-advised, temperate Offa with the disaster of the ill-advised and besottedly uxorious Ingeld. And yet, if the *Beowulf*-poet intended Offa to be compared to some other man, in another part of the text, it is difficult to see why he chose to achieve this by directly juxtaposing two queens within the space of a few words.

Andy Orchard has observed of such comparisons: "It cannot fairly be said that the results are always flattering".¹³²⁴ But this is perhaps a confession of defeat. Even if no one in heroic literature could be referred to without some inclusion of their less attractive qualities, or if audiences were skilled at filtering out from any allusion the parts of it relevant to the context, the Offa-allusion pushes this observation to the limit: Hygd's goodness is juxtaposed to Offa's queen's badness; the rightness of one to the wrongness of the other; marital harmony with the need for spousal domination; communal hall-joy with a reign of terror.

And yet the Offa allusion seems so strongly emphasised as to be unignorable. It is one of only two narrative "digressions" in the poem which are in the poet's own voice, rather than being spoken by a character,¹³²⁵ and thus has an authorial imprimatur. It is also pivotal, coming at a crucial juncture in a poem of two distinct halves,¹³²⁶ when we have left Heorot and are first being introduced to Hygelāc and the court of the Gēats. The poet names two queens almost in

¹³²³ Leneghan 2009: 560 and 2020: 80.

¹³²⁴ Orchard 2003: 113.

¹³²⁵ The other is the account of how the dragon's treasure came to be buried, including "The Lay of the Last Survivor", the lament of the person with whom it was interred (ll. 2231-70). However, this mysterious story contains no names or identifiable characters.

¹³²⁶ At l. 2200 the action moves swiftly from Bēowulf's return to Hygelāc after his exploits at Heorot to the kingdom of the Gēats fifty years later, when its king, Bēowulf, is about to be vexed by a dragon.

the same breath and gives especial focus to their personalities and qualities as royal wives (though with rather more on Offa's bride). Unless this was the *Beowulf*-poet ineptly telling a story for the sake of it, we might suppose that the general purport of the allusion was the aesthetically daring one of saying, "You know these two queens were utterly different? Yet in one respect they, or their situations, were remarkably alike".

One avenue which remains uninvestigated, I suggest, is that the thing which made these queens alike was not their personalities but their marriages. Hygelāc married the daughter of Hæreð and Offa the daughter of Hemming or Frēawine. Both – as would have been normal – were likely to have been dictated by geopolitical considerations, with the purpose of creating or consolidating useful alliances. But were they successful in doing so? What posterity did they achieve; and was the ultimate result not success but dynastic catastrophe?

The audience of *Beowulf* knew both the national stories of the Gēats and the Angles, and I shall investigate whether the theme shared between Hygelāc and Offa and their respective wives was that their marriages sounded the knell of doom for nations who had reached a peak of power and influence under a great hero (Hygelāc/Offa) and then, despite the efforts of another hero (*Eomēr/Bēowulf*), were overwhelmed by foreign enemies (Danes/Swedes) and finally evacuated in a diaspora. Thus, in either case disaster supervened within a couple of generations, whether the hero-king was wise or foolhardy, and whether his wife was a paragon or a pest. Let us now turn to the question of marital geopolitics.

4.4.6.1 *Hygd* and *Hæreþ*: The Nomenclature of Geopolitics I

We have already discussed the geopolitical scenario that led to Offa's suit of this most dangerous *freoðowebbe* (as she is called at *Beowulf* 1942). As a daughter of king Hemming and the Swæfe, the local power on the Eider, a match with her would have been politically most desirable to the Angles, especially since their king, Wērmund, was now incapacitated by blindness and old age, and his only son was apparently useless. Wērmund's only recourse was to make an advantageous union with a people – possibly a branch of his own family – who would act as a buffer between him and the Ostrogoth-backed Myrgingas. It was so important that he was not dissuaded even by the princess's habit of murdering anyone who looked at her "with the day's eyes". We can guess that Offa was sent on something of a suicide mission by his father but triumphed against all the odds by finding some stratagem to breach her purdah (as in Saxo's narrative of Alf and Alvilda). It follows that she was young, unmarried and from some other people *ofer fealone flōd* "over the dusky flood" (*Beowulf* 1950a), that is, *Fīfeldōr*

(*Widsith* 43a), the “door to the giant one”, which was either the Eider, its marshy estuarine region next the sea, or the expanse of “the great marsh” of Dithmarschen.

As we have seen,¹³²⁷ the word *freoðowebbe* may have meant “noble lady”, but in the only other instance where such a word is used – of Ealhild – it is in the context of an intertribal marriage. The word *freoðo* or *frip* could mean “peace”, “friendly relations”, “treaty (of peace)”, “quarter” (that is, sparing from violence or punishment), “immunity” and “sanctuary”. Thus, the primary meaning of *frip* in Old English seems to have been “peace” in some form or other.¹³²⁸ *DOE* notes the phrases *frip ond sibb* and *frip ond frēondscipe*, translating these as “peace and concord”.¹³²⁹ *Sibb* seems to have had more or less the same range of meanings as *frip*, and was only different from *frip* in that its primary meaning is recorded as “relationship”.¹³³⁰ *Wealhþēow* is called a *friðusibb folca* (*Beowulf* 2017a), but this description is likely to be synonymous with *freoðowebbe*.¹³³¹ Taking its stem *fri-* from an etymon meaning “to love”, *fripu* was “the most widespread word in Germania for ‘peace’, formed from **fri-* and denoting the state or condition prevailing among those who regard each other as their own kindred”, creating a state of peace that was the antithesis of feuding and violence, based on kindred relationships.¹³³² Thus the female *webbe* or *sibb* created the relationship of *fripu* by marriage. I therefore suggest that *freoðowebbe* and *fripusibb* were capable of functioning in accordance with their semantic content – that is of weavers or relationship-creators who made or cemented relationships of *frip* between different peoples.¹³³³ And since Offa’s wife was one of Old English poetry’s two *freoðowebban*, it is perhaps in this context that we may look closer at Hygelāc’s marriage to Hygd.

We know little about Hygd, but we are twice told that she was *Hæreþes/Hæreðes dohtor* (ll. 1929, 1981). The name *Hæreþ* appears in the glossary of names in *K14* only as “father of Hygd”,¹³³⁴ but nothing else is known about him.¹³³⁵ Was he another of the “redundant”

¹³²⁷ See pp. 237, 255 above.

¹³²⁸ To summarise the senses in *DOE*, s.v. *frip*, all of which are in some way related to the sense “lack of violence”

¹³²⁹ *DOE*, s.v. *frip*, 1.

¹³³⁰ See *Bosworth-Toller*, s.v. *sib* and compare with *DOE*, s.v. *frip*.

¹³³¹ *DOE*, s.v. *fripu-sibb*: “pledge of peace; honorific for a (high-ranking) woman, probably especially a woman whose marriage was intended or expected to forge a peace between peoples”. Cf. *DOE*, s.v. *fripu-webbe* “(female) weaver of peace; honorific or epithet for a (high-ranking) woman; *fæle fripuwebbe* ‘faithful peace-weaver’”.

¹³³² Green 1998: 42-43. The verb from this root, e.g. Gothic *frijōn*, meant “to make *frī*” or “to treat as a friend, to love”, and it was closely associated with legally contracted marriage (*ibid.*: 42).

¹³³³ See the discussion at pp. 237, 255, above.

¹³³⁴ *K14*: 468.

¹³³⁵ See Binz 1895: 162-163. He regarded it only as dithematic and thus could not explain its form or meaning. See also Köpke 1909: 26-27; Björkman 1920: 49-51; and Kaufmann 1968: 176.

characters given a name to make the poem's fictional world seem more substantial?¹³³⁶ I suggest, rather, that his name was an ethno-eponym which identified him as the king of a people who – whether in reality or historically-based poetry – were likely to have been significant in the early medieval world of Jutland – the *Hæreþas* (to use the Old English form).

As Björkman noted,¹³³⁷ *Hæreþ* was not only a personal name recorded in several Germanic languages from as early as the sixth century, it was also an ethnonym, being the singular of *Hæreþas*, a supposedly Norwegian people mentioned in *ASC*,¹³³⁸ and known in Old Norse as *Hǫrðar* (sg. *Hǫrðr* – also a personal name),¹³³⁹ living in *Hǫrðaland* (modern Hordaland).¹³⁴⁰ While *Hæreð* derives from West Germanic **Harip*, the Old Norse form *Hǫrðr* derives from **Harup*,¹³⁴¹ a form consistent with the name of a tribe named as *Harudes* (Julius Caesar), *Charydes* (Augustus), *Χαροῦδες* (Ptolemy) and *Arudes* (Orosius), and located on the Cimbrian peninsula, i.e. Jutland.¹³⁴² In medieval Danish geography, there was an area in western Jutland called *Hardesysse* or *Harsysse*.¹³⁴³ This was probably the area behind the name of Hardicanute, who succeeded his father Cnut (Old Norse *Knútr*) in 1035 as king of Denmark and Norway, and in 1040 his half-brother Harold harefoot as king of England (r. 1040-1042). In the vernacular history of the Danish kings, *Knýtlinga saga*, he is called *Hǫrða-*

¹³³⁶ See pp. 28-30 above.

¹³³⁷ Björkman 1920: 50-51.

¹³³⁸ The *Hereðas* or *Hæreðas* were the people of *Hereðaland* or *Hæreðaland* mentioned in *ASC* MSS DEF, s.a. 787 (= 789). MS E has:

Her nam Breohtric cining Offan dohter Eadburge. 7 on his dagum comon ærest .iii. scipu Norðmanna of Hereðalande, 7 þa se gerefa þærto rad, 7 he wolde drifan to ðes cininges tune þy he nyste hwæt hi wæron, 7 hine man ofsloh þa; ðæt wæron þa crestan scipu Deniscra manna þe Angelcynnes land gesohton.

Here [the West Saxon] king Beorhtric married Offa's daughter Eadburh, and in his days there came for the first time three ships of the Northmen of Hereðaland; and the reeve rode there, and he wanted to force them to go to the king's town because he did not know what sort of men they were; and then he was killed. These were the first ships of Danish men which attacked the land of the English nation.

But there were two places from which *Hæreðas* could have come – one in southern Norway (the usual supposition of historians), the other in Jutland. The nomenclature of the chronicler, pointing to both origins, I regard as unclear.

¹³³⁹ See Lind, *Dopnamn*: I, 607-608. See also *Hversu Noregr Byggðisk* in *Flateyjarbók* (Vigfusson and Unger 1860-1868: I, 22), where *Hǫrðr* is the ethno-eponymous ruler of *Hǫrðaland* (though this may just be a back-formation).

¹³⁴⁰ The OWN forms preserved /q/ (the *u*-mutation of /ǣ/) in the pl. (as reflected in modern Norwegian place-name *Hordaland*). This was originally caused in all inflected forms by the stem **/up/*, and the mutation remained in OWN after /u/ was dropped from the stem. It can be compared with the ON personal name *Hǫrðr*, with its gen. sg. form *Harðar*, declined by analogy with a masc. *u*-stem noun; cf. nom. sg. *fjorðr*, gen. sg. *fjarðar*. The gen. sg. ending of the PrGmc *u*-stem declension was **/-auz/*, which did not cause *u*-mutation in ON.

¹³⁴¹ Björkman 1920: 51.

¹³⁴² See the references in Sitzmann and Grünzweig 2008, who also discuss the origin of *harud* extensively (2008: 170-173).

¹³⁴³ See Olrik 1919: 31. There were two shires to the south of Limfjord in the north of Jutland: *Himbræ sysæl* (Himmerland), and *Harthæ sysæl*. Respectively, these corresponded to the Classical name-forms of the names of the tribes of the *Cimbri* and *Harudes*. See also Sitzmann and Grünzweig 2008: 97-98.

Knútr, the same name as a semi-legendary Danish king who was a grandson of Ragnarr loðbrók. In *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar in Flateyjarbók*, it is said of this earlier Knútr: *Hann var fæddr á Hǫrð á Jótlandi ok þaðan af kallaðr Hǫrðaknútr* (“he was born in Hǫrð in Jutland and from this called Knútr of the Harðar”).¹³⁴⁴

Shaw treats the name *Hæreð* in *Beowulf* purely as a personal one and identifies its origin as Continental Germanic, though possibly Scandinavian.¹³⁴⁵ However, since *Hæreð* is an ethnonym which is traceable back to the time of Caesar, and thus before the separation of Germanic into distinct language groups, Shaw’s formulation is open to question. It is not even clear that the distinction in suffixes, *-<ip>/*-<up>, has any geographical basis.¹³⁴⁶

Hygelāc, as a king, was likely to marry someone of appropriate rank, that is, the daughter of a king; and the name *Hæreþ* is consistent with the phenomenon of the ethno-eponym identified in this study. Thus *Hæreþ* would have been an ethno-eponymous name for the king of the Hæreþas. If so, by his marriage Hygelāc made an important strategic alliance with a major Jutlandic (and possibly also southern Norwegian) power, and presumably one that was not under the control of the expansionist Scyldings.

Apart from the pun on *Gēats* and *Jutes* which we examined earlier (suggesting that Hrōþgār’s Danes could be called *Gēotan* “Jutes”),¹³⁴⁷ there is another piece of evidence in *Beowulf* which indicates that Scylding power had extended to Jutland. This is the reference to Wulfgār, who was a senior official (*ār ond ombiht*) apparently in charge of protocol at Heorot (ll. 331b-70), who is said to be *Wendla lēod* (l. 348), a man or prince of the Wendlas. These are likely to have been the inhabitants of Wendel in northern Jutland, and whatever territory the Wendlas claimed as their own.¹³⁴⁸ See Map 9 at p. 342 below.

At *Beowulf* 1855-1859 Hrōþgār makes a clear allusion to previous conflict between the Danes and the Gēats, to which Bēowulf’s heroic services have now brought détente.¹³⁴⁹ We do

¹³⁴⁴ *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, ch. 71; Unger and Vigfusson 1860-68: I, 98. For historic forms, see Björkman 1910: 64. He identifies the name as Scandinavian and originally a by-name, though frustratingly he does not say what he thought it meant. He referred to Steenstrup (1876-1882: II, 96, fn. 2), who noted this name as that of a son of the semi-legendary Danish king Gorm from the 9th c. Steenstrup does not explain the name either. It may have betokened some junior sovereignty over parts of Denmark associated with the *Harðar*.

¹³⁴⁵ Shaw 2020: 43-44.

¹³⁴⁶ See Björkman 1920: 51. Langobardic (of the High German language group) had *Harodus*; OHG had both *Haruth* and *Harit*. OSwed *Hardh* and ODan *Harth* – without *u*-mutation typical of OWN – are equivocal. In England the name may have survived as *Haret* or *Hared* up to the time of *DB* (von Feilitzen 1937: 287). The evidence of personal names may indicate that this ethnicity was of considerable renown.

¹³⁴⁷ See pp. 189-93 above.

¹³⁴⁸ The other Wendel in Sweden would have been within the kingdom of the Swedes. It is modern Vendel in Uppland, central east Sweden, the centre of which was Uppsala.

¹³⁴⁹ Not commented on in *Kl4*. See *Kl4*: lxi and notes *ad loc*.

not know what this was, or what was its cause. There is very little comment on it in the *Beowulf* scholarship I am aware of, and yet it seems important, forming part of the geopolitical background into which the fictional Bēowulf is inserted, achieving a reconciliation between two powerful enemies and near-neighbours who had been at war, or at least at daggers drawn.



Map 9
Political Map of Scandinavia, as Represented
in *Beowulf* and *Widsith*¹³⁵⁰

But this was a world in which tribes and dynasties were in almost constant conflict. It is accepted as historically true that during the early medieval period “Denmark” (whether a unified kingdom or not) ruled overseas, encompassing southwestern Sweden and the area west of and round Oslo Fjord.¹³⁵¹ As can be argued,¹³⁵² the opening lines of *Beowulf* describe Scyld’s conquests in Scania and celebrate Bēow’s glory there. Such conquests would have brought the Danes into conflict with the Gēats. Another factor likely to have raised tensions between the

¹³⁵⁰ The borders in black correspond to historical regions in southern Sweden. That marked “Hæpnas” was a Norwegian possession from at least the 11th c. The southernmost area of Scania was Danish from some time until the 17th c. The area marked “Gēatas” corresponds to the regions now known as Västergötland and Östergötland.

¹³⁵¹ See Hall 2012: 32; Roesdahl 2012: 652-53; and Williams, Pentz and Wemhoff 2014: 33.

¹³⁵² In my “My Name is *Eorl*” (forthcoming). See also fn. 833 (p. 217 above).

Danes and the Gēats was the marriage of Hrōþgār's unnamed sister to the Swedish king Onela (as probably stated in the mangled line *Beowulf* 62). He was the son of the Swedish king Ongenþēow (killed by the Gēats under Hæpcyn and Hygelāc), and usurper of his brother Ōththere's sons, Ēadgils and Ēanmund, whose cause the Gēats supported, provoking a war that was not over until Bēowulf restored Ēadgils by invading Sweden and killing Onela (*Beowulf* 2391-96). Until this time, Onela was Hrōþgār's brother-in-law and his ally (and the step-father of Hrōþgār's nephew Hrōþulf).

We might also bear in mind here the Wylfingas, the people of Heapolāf. He is one of *Beowulf*'s "unknowns", whose sole appearance in the poem is as the person slain by Bēowulf's father Ecgbēow, a killing which seems to result in a threat of war in response to which the Gēats exile Ecgbēow, or he leaves them of his own accord, thereafter seeking protection with Hrōþgār, who, for some reason, pays Heapolāf's wergild.¹³⁵³ This curious narrative suggests a background which is not fully revealed in the poem but which may have been known to the audience. One of the things not related in the text is whether the quarrel between the Wylfingas and the Gēats was ever patched up, or whether Ecgbēow was ever welcomed back to the court of the Gēats, or whether the Wylfingas made a new alliance with the Danes.

Maps 3 (p. 179) and 9 (p. 342) above show the Swedes to the north and east, the Danish possessions in the south of Scania, perhaps indicating sufficiently that the Gēats were surrounded by nations who, at one time or another, were their enemies.

There is also good reason, I suggest, to understand *Beowulf* (as we shall later see with *Widsith*) as being consistent with a historical tradition of Danish expansionism, a policy pursued successfully by the Scylding kings. Shippey has argued for the historicity of some of the contents of *Beowulf*. He gives a date of *c.* 400 for the time when "The Scyldings under king Healfdene extend their control from Lejre towards Jutland".¹³⁵⁴ Shippey's comparison of *Beowulf* with the history, archaeology and climatology of the period *c.* 450 to 550 is intended – counter to the scholarly consensus – to demonstrate how realistic the world of *Beowulf* is in its portrayal of instability, the precariousness of life, and violent dynastic extinction and/or change, with archaeological evidence consistent with the destruction and burning of royal halls. It is to this period that we assign hundreds of Danish deposits of gold, buried for safety in times of trouble, in the forms of bracteates and other objects.¹³⁵⁵ According to historians, the Danish

¹³⁵³ See *Beowulf* 459-72. But also see my suggestion regarding the politics of this at p. 364 below.

¹³⁵⁴ Shippey 2022: 118.

¹³⁵⁵ See Imer and Vasshus 2023: 60-63. Roman solidi finds in Denmark are of single coins, except for two hoards on Fyn, and wealth was in gold objects not coins: Fagerlie 1967: 101-03, 171-72; Fischer and

conquest of Jutland was complete no later than the early sixth century.¹³⁵⁶ Näsman has said that “the silent archaeological record” indicates that by about 500 AD “the Danes had won almost total hegemony in the eastern North Sea basin and the southwestern Baltic”.¹³⁵⁷ It may be that that influxes of Roman gold into Germania – intended to shore up the *limes* of the Western Empire, and after its fall to encourage successor kingdoms to fulfil the border-guarding role – became the cause of strife, as tribal leaders fought for a share of it.

Other substantive archaeological evidence for a unified Danish kingdom is the construction of impressive fortifications by the Danes, including the extensive Danevirke, in the region of Hedeby in Schleswig, at the head of the Schlei to its south. Until recently, the Danevirke was conventionally dated to the beginning of the eighth century.¹³⁵⁸ However, new excavations have suggested that earthworks from around 500 can be identified in this area.¹³⁵⁹ If the Danes constructed these fortifications, this would indicate that as early as the beginning of the sixth century either Danes were constructing defensive positions in the territory traditionally identified as Angel, which they controlled – or someone else in Angel was building fortifications against an enemy, perhaps the Angles against the Danes. In either case there was a frontier where Anglian land used to be, and this would agree with the estimation of Eggers quoted above.¹³⁶⁰

In these circumstances, the identification of Hygd as the daughter of Hæreþ, the king of the Hæreþas would indicate a marriage that made very sound strategic sense. Indeed, where else was there a people friendly to the Gēats whose king would have let Hygelāc marry his daughter? In the world of Danish expansionism, the Jutlandic Hæreþas would also have needed a powerful ally, such as the Gēats, thus creating a power-bloc hostile to the Danes to both their west and east.

4.4.6.2 *Hygd* and **Hugipō*: The Nomenclature of Geopolitics II

This strategic wisdom would be even greater if the kingdom of the Hæreþas was a region of Jutland under the influence or suzerainty of the Franks, whose rule or sway certainly extended

López Sánchez 2016: 249-50, 260, 261 (map). Roman solidi flowed into Swedish Öland, Gotland and Bornholm (early/mid-5th c. until shortly after 476): Alfsdotter *et al.* 2018.

¹³⁵⁶ Eggers 2000: XVI, 94.

¹³⁵⁷ Näsman 1999: 5 (quoted in Shippey 2022: 30).

¹³⁵⁸ Roesdahl 2012: 655; Williams, Pentz and Wemhoff 2014: 33.

¹³⁵⁹ Tummuscheit and Witte 2018.

¹³⁶⁰ See fn. 1356 above.

to Frisia in history.¹³⁶¹ According to what we surmise about the history of Frisia, at some time during or after the migrations from southern Jutland from the middle of the fifth century, there was also an influx of migrants from the same peoples to Frisia, and back again.¹³⁶²

It is possible – as is conventionally argued – to derive the name *Hygd* from an Old English abstract noun meaning “thought”. However, this word was *gehygd*, with prefixal *ge-*, (as its cognates in other Germanic languages also had). *Hygd*, as an appellative, is not recorded,¹³⁶³ although it may be argued that *Hygd* was sufficiently close to *gehygd* to suggest “cleverness”, a quality which the wise *Hygd* clearly had, being *wīs*, *wēlpungen* (l. 1927a, “wise, very accomplished”). However, the contention that she effectively had an abstract noun for a name I find as unconvincing as the case for *Fremu* as the name of Offa’s wife.¹³⁶⁴ At best, it might be considered a *Lytel*-type name, that is, a hypocorism formed to resemble an appellative. But this raises the question of what such a hypocorism would have been formed from.

Here I suggest the possibility that *Hygd* was derived from a Germanic female name **Hugipō* or **Hugip*, which would have been a hypocorism derived from a dithematic name with the prototheme *Hug-* or *Hugi-*, an ethnophoric element congruent with *Hugas*, an Old English form of an ethnonym associated with Merovingian Franks and Frisians.¹³⁶⁵

¹³⁶¹ See Wood 1983. From the beginning of the 6th c. to the middle of the 7th c. the Merovingian kings of Francia claimed suzerainty over peoples from the Danube to the North Sea coast, including the peoples of northern Germany, the Frisians and the Jutes of Jutland. Rather than an empty boast, this may have been an accurate statement of the influence they exerted by means of maritime power and military success. In *Beowulf* the Frisians ruled by Finn are referred to as *Ēotena bearn* “children of the Jutes” (ll. 1088, 1141). But they were “East” Frisians. *Beowulf* also refers to “West” Frisians (see Glossary, *K14*: 467, *s.nn.* *Frēs-* and references), but these were tribes west of the Zuider Zee under Frankish rule, and their king (the *Frēscyning*, l. 2503b) was the king of the Merovingian Franks (Theuderic at the time). After the death of Finn, it is not clear who – according to English historical legend – filled the power vacuum. It may have been the Franks. See p. 346 below for reference to *Beowulf* 2921, *Merewīoingas milts* (“favour of/alliance with the Merovingian (king)”) – the Frankish influence that extended as far as the Gēats.

¹³⁶² See Knol and IJssenagger 2017: 11-12.

¹³⁶³ See *K14*: lxi, fn. 1 “the peculiar, abstract name *Hygd* is entirely unknown outside of *Beowulf*”. See also the Glossary (*ibid.*: 470-71), where it is related to *ge-hygd* “thought, deliberation”. Cf. PrGmc **gahugdiz* (Ringe and Taylor 2014: 30, 222). Interpreted thus, *hygd* was a derivative of *hyge* (“mind”) occurring only in compounds: cf. also Gothic *gahugds*, OS *gihugd*, and OE *oferhygd* “pride” etc: see *Bosworth-Toller*, *s.v.* *-hygd* (suffix), with references. The dental affix *-d/-t* may have the meaning “mind” to “thought”, i.e. thing in the mind, but **hygd* itself was not a lexeme.

¹³⁶⁴ See pp. 260 (and fn. 1022), 264 (and fn. 1045) above.

¹³⁶⁵ See Shaw 2020: 45-46. He identifies the first element as related to OE **hygd* “thought”, also appearing as the prototheme *Hyge-* in Anglo-Saxon names, but sees a possible (if rare) original **Hugida* or **Hugitha*, on the basis that there is evidence of a potentially hypocoristic form spelled *Hugizo* which may have been a side-form of **Hugitho* (based on 10th- and 11th-c. single instances). See Van Loon 2021: 309-11 (who supports this). But see Förstemann, who identifies the name-suffixes male *-id/-it*, and female *-ida/-ita*, *-ido/-ito* (1900: 383-86). See also Stark on *-t/-t-* as a diminutive suffixal element (1868: 63-64). **Hugipō* is also conceivable as a *Tubba*-type hypocorism of an ethnophoric name, e.g. **Hugipewō*, formed like *Wealhþēow*.

In *Beowulf* 2502-03 Dæghrefn is a *Huga cempa* (“champion of the Hugas”) rendered unable to present his spoils to the *Frēscyning* (“king of Frisia”)¹³⁶⁶ because Bēowulf killed him in a bear-hug. In *Beowulf* 2914, *Hugas* is synonymous with *Froncum ond Frȳsum* in l. 2912 and *Hetware* in l. 2916,¹³⁶⁷ and also with the **Merewōingas* (Merovingian Franks) implied by the ethno-eponym *Merewōing* in *Beowulf* 2921, *Merewōingas milts* (“favour of/alliance with the Merovingian (king)”). In Widukind of Corvey’s tenth-century *Gesta Saxonum* Clovis is called *Huga rex Francorum*;¹³⁶⁸ and in the early eleventh-century *Annals of Quedlinburg* (from Saxony), Clovis’s son and successor Theuderic is called *Hugo Theodoricus*.¹³⁶⁹ *Huga* and *Hugo* were not their birth-names, and these are, I suggest, ethno-eponyms for the king of the “Hugs”, that is, the Merovingian Franks – rare survivals in Latin histories probably still influenced by the Germanic vernacular and/or vernacular literary sources.¹³⁷⁰

The commemoration of the ethnonym *Hug* in the name of a daughter of the king of the Jutlandic Hæreþas, may, on the one hand, be as of little significance as the ethnophoric element *wealh* (“Roman”) in the name *Wealhþēow*. But, on the other, I suggest, it may be another onomastic clue to the nature of geopolitical relationships, as conceived by the tradition which informed *Beowulf*. Hygd was not only wise, she was the “*Hug* girl”, indicative of her father’s connection – by marriage – with the Merovingian Franks. If the “Merovingian” could extend his *milts* to the Gēats (or withdraw it from them, as we are told he did in *Beowulf* 2920-21), then he could do the same to peoples closer to home, including the Hæreþas. At any rate, if Hygd’s name is ethnophoric, it is a reminder, in a geopolitical marriage-scenario, of the presence and importance of Francia.

¹³⁶⁶ See also *Beowulf* 2357b *Frēslondum*. This is evidence that the OE name for Frisia was **Frēs*, a strong version of the more frequent weak ethnonym *Frēsa/Frȳsa*. Among the Latin forms of the Frisian ethnonym are *Frisius* and *Frisii*, *Fresii*, *Frisiones* and *Fresiones* (according to the MGH search engine). Tacitus uses *Frisii* (*Germania* 34). The earliest attestation of the toponym is Latinised *Fresia* (755-68, in the *Vita Bonifatii* by Willibald, chs. 4, 5; Levison 1905: 16, 23). The thematic /-i-/ may indicate that these forms of the ethnonym developed from a toponym **Frēs* with the suffix *-ijōz. Hence, **Frēsijōz* or (i-mutated) **Frīsjōz*. See Sitzmann and Grünzweig 2008: 130-33.

¹³⁶⁷ Goffart (1981) argued that the name *Hugas* dated from the earlier 9th c. and *Hetware* from the later 8th. However, see the sceptical note in *Kl4*: lx, fn. 1. The *Hetware* are also found in *Widsith* (l. 33) as *Hætwerum* (text dated to c. 700). These cannot be other than the *Cha(t)tuarii* of Tacitus and other authors, known since classical antiquity. The OE forms are phonologically authentic derivations from a PrGmc *ja*-stem **Hat(t)uwarjōz* “helmet-warriors” (which explains the Latin form *Chat(t)uarii* perfectly). *Hetware* is an Anglian form and *Hætwerum* WS. Goffart’s dating of *Hugas* seems to be based on Cynewulf’s *Elene* 21 where the *Francan* and *Hugas* are named together, and Cynewulf’s uncertain *floruit* of the 9th c. However, see the *Vita Sancti Liudgeri* which mentions *Hugmerchi* – “march or border of the Hugs” – among the Frisian regions granted by Charlemagne to Liudger in 785 (Pertz 1829: 410). Goffart’s argument may thus be rejected.

¹³⁶⁸ *Gesta Saxonum*, 1.9; Hirsch and Lohmann 1935: 10.

¹³⁶⁹ *Annales Quedlinburgenses*; Giese 2004: 412.

¹³⁷⁰ The etymological origin of the ethnonym *Hug* is unknown. It may have something to do with PrGmc **hugiz* “mind, spirit”, thus associated with courage.

Thus, the political canniness of Hygelāc's marriage may have encompassed an alliance with a Jutlandic power which was also close to the Franks whose influence over Frisian lands (potentially including eastern Jutland) would have been enormous.

As we are reminded five times in *Beowulf*, Hygelāc led the Gēats to disaster in Frisia, a ruinous miscalculation which turned the Merovingian's *milts* into enmity, thus ensuring that when Bēowulf died the Gēats would be without allies when their Swedish enemies fell on them and destroyed them, as predicted by an unnamed Geatish messenger (ll. 2999-3027). The poet comments, *hē ne lēag fela* "he did not lie much" (l. 3029b) – that is, he did not lie at all. And it seems that in the mid-sixth century the Gēatish kingdom collapsed, either allowing the Swedes to move in, or as a result of conquest by them.¹³⁷¹

It is perhaps pertinent to observe here that Hygelāc is almost always identified with *Chlochilaichus*, a piratical king of the "Danes" said by Gregory of Tours to have been killed when on a raid in Frisia in the reign of the Frankish king Theuderic (r. 511-34). But neither *Chlochilaicus* nor any of the variants of this name in MSS of Gregory's history is a linguistic match for Old English *Hygelāc* or its allophone *Higelāc*, or for its reflex in Old Norse texts, *Hugleikr* (*Huglecus* in the *Gesta Danorum*).¹³⁷² While Old English *Hyge-* ought, on phonological grounds, to be derived from earlier **Hugi-*, the Frankish scribal forms of this name of Gregory's pirate do not suggest this, but rather a range of possible Germanic originals, of which only *Hōh-* ("high"), *Hōk-* ("hook"), *Hrōþ-* ("glory") and *Hlōþ-* ("band of raiders, booty") are recorded in the Germanic onomasticon. A Frankish scribe of Gregory's time ought to have rendered the Frankish ethnonym *Hug-* as *Hug* or *Chug*. Of these three possibilities, *Hlōþ-* is the commonest in Frankish male names – as in the famous *Chlodovech* or *Clovis* (Frankish **Hlōþowēh*), the ancestor of *Louis*, *Ludovic* and *Ludwig*.

The name *Hygelāc* (more often *Higelāc* in *Beowulf*) has been seen as a meaningful coinage with the sense of "instability of mind",¹³⁷³ or as an ordinary variation-name with no literary significance.¹³⁷⁴ However, unless the Franks misunderstood the name of the ill-starred Scandinavian raider, Old English *Hygelāc/Higelāc* looks like a re-etymologisation, substituting an original prototheme with ethnophoric *Hugi-*. Thus, it is possible to argue that an original

¹³⁷¹ See Shippey 2020: 74-77 (with references), 119.

¹³⁷² *Historia Francorum*, III.3; Krusch and Levison 1901: 99 and textual notes. The variants are: *Chlodilaicum*, *Chlochilaico*, *Chlochilaicho*, *Chochilaico*, *Chochiliaco*, *Chrochilaicho*, and *Hrodolaicum*.

¹³⁷³ Robinson 1968: 57. From *hyge* "mind" and *lāc* "play, dance". Since *lāc* was also a suffix used in OE to create abstract nouns (see *DOE*, s.v. *lāc*), it might equally be argued that his name, if meaningful as a compound, meant "thoughtfulness".

¹³⁷⁴ Shaw 2020: 8-9, 17-18. *PASE* has two men called *Hyglac*. There are four men of that name in *DLV* (Rollason and Rollason 2007: II, 132, s.n. *Hygelac*).

proto-North Germanic variation-name of no literary meaning, e.g. **HlōpilaikaR*, became West Germanic **Hugilaik*, which could be interpreted as a compound of *Hugi* (associated with “Hugs”, that is, Franks) and *laik*. (“sacrifice, battle”, from Proto-West Germanic **laiku* > Old English *lāc*), thus forming a meaningful compound “man in battle with/a victim of Franks”. (Conversely, the Franks may have re-dubbed **HugilaikaR* as **Hlōpilaik* “robber-*laik*”!)

This would also potentially complement the name of his wife **Hugiþō*, a lady associated with the same people; and this collocation of ethnophoric names may indicate that it was Hygelāc’s particular folly to contract a political marriage with a woman associated with the Franks, and then to precipitate the downfall of his own people by angering them.

4.4.6.3 *Hygd* and *Brǣþu*: The Nomenclature of Geopolitics III

As I shall argue in section 6 below,¹³⁷⁵ a fate like that of the Gēats befell the Angles. Both in history and historical legend, their once mighty empire was destroyed by an enemy to the north. For the Angles this was the Danes, for the Gēats the Swedes. Thus, I suggest, the point of comparison between *Hygd* and *Brǣþu* was only tangentially related to their personalities (both were excellent queens). Rather, it was focused on their geopolitical and dynastic significance as brides. Both were the daughters of ethno-eponymous kings whose kingdoms occupied a significant position vis-à-vis a major regional power. *Hæreþ* was a king of central and north-west Jutland bordering on Frankish power; *Hemming* was a king of the buffer-zone between the Angles and the Myrgingas (part of the powerful Bardic group of nations). In neither case was the marriage to a *freoðowebbe*-style queen successful (perhaps it was even provocative): the Swedes conquered the Gēats (despite heroic *Bēowulf*); and the Danes conquered the Angles (despite heroic *Ēomēr*). As if to drive the point home, *Bēowulf* is entirely scathing of the prospects that the political marriage between *Freawaru* and *Ingeld* would succeed for long in bringing peace between the Danes and the Heapobeards. The audience would have known that he, too, “did not lie much”. The ineffectiveness of intertribal marriages seems to be a strong theme – *pēah sēo brȳd duge* “though the bride may be a good one” (*Beowulf*, 2031b).¹³⁷⁶

Thus, I suggest, the purpose of the *Offa*-episode in *Beowulf* was to prepare the audience of *Beowulf* for the second, tragic, half of the poem in which the great hero of enormous strength (so strong that he breaks his swords) dies without leaving a posterity sufficient to protect his country from its neighbouring enemies. The audience thus begins the second half of *Beowulf*

¹³⁷⁵ See pp. 401-09 below.

¹³⁷⁶ See p. 84 and fn. 243 above, and pp. 349-50 below.

with the echoes of the heroic but doomed Angel and the lost glory of its scattered peoples ringing in their ears.

4.4.6.4 Offa's Marriage and the *Beowulf* Allusion: Conclusions

Offa's marriage was an integral part of his story as it had developed by the time of the composition of *Beowulf*. It is the first part of his journey from zero to hero, involving the successful negotiation of an impossible hurdle, which was the intention of a shrewish princess or her father – in folk- or fairytale style – to murder any who dared to woo her. The only clue to how he did it is in Saxo's displaced narrative of Alf and Alvilda. However, the correspondences in detail and motif between the Offa allusion in *Beowulf* and the story of Alf are striking; and the places where the anomalous story of Alf is joined into Saxo's Skjöldung narrative are evident. I therefore draw the conclusion that, despite the difference in names, this is one of those instances in which Saxo recycled his original material. In this case it was a part of the Offa-story which was surplus to his requirements, since in *GD* Offa's in-laws were cast as his Danish subordinates, not as foreign kings with whom the Angles needed to make a strategic marital alliance.

The existence of an extended narrative in both *BHD* and *GD* of Offa's marriage, the difficulty of his in-laws with Athislus, and the enmity between the Angles and Swæfe and Myrgingas (under Ēadgils) alluded to in *Widsith*, all very strongly suggest a unified story. This impression is reinforced by the repeated element of the two-against-one duel (that Sven and Saxo failed to understand).¹³⁷⁷ The very similar narrative in the killing of Ongenþēow by Wulf and Eofor suggests that this kind of fight was a conventional narrative with a number of persistent details and motifs; and that it had existed in English literary tradition since the composition of *Beowulf*.

But behind the folktale apparatus of bridal quests, magic swords and young oafs turning into heroes, I suggest that there was a core of dynastic and geopolitical realism. Directly after the Offa allusion, *Bēowulf* predicts (apparently with complete accuracy) how the marriage between Hrōþgār's daughter Frēawaru and the Scyldings' former enemy Ingeld the Heapobeard will not prevent a recurrence of the war between them. As we have seen, he observes gnominically and cynically (ll. 2029b-31):¹³⁷⁸

¹³⁷⁷ See discussion at pp. 356-63 below.

¹³⁷⁸ My punctuation and translation. See also pp. 83-84 and fn. 243 above.

	Oft – seldan hwær	2029
æfter lēodhryre –	lytle hwīle	
bongār būgeð,	þēah sēo brȳd duge.	2031

Often – seldom anywhere after a king’s death – the killing-spear bows down for a little while, though the bride may be a good one.

This means that even when brides are good, peace lasts for a little while (or perhaps “some little while”, that is, a moderate amount of time), but not when there has been a *lēodhryre*, either a “national calamity” or the killing of a king.¹³⁷⁹ In the background narrative of the Heaðobeard-Scylding war in *Beowulf*, the Heaðobeards had lost (perhaps been massacred), and no fewer than four kings may have been killed – Healfdene, Heorogār, Hālgā and, most recently, Frōda (aka Wiðergyld). According to this gnomic view, dynastic marriage usually provided only a short interlude between bouts of violence, and none at all when kings were killed. In the Offa-story, I suggest, we see an illustration of Bēowulf’s pessimistic adage: after the death of Ēadgils at the hands of the sons of Hemming, the marriage alliance with Offa of the Angles brings no lasting peace (which I shall examine in section 5 below).

Thus, within a short compass in the *Beowulf* narrative, we have a sequence of three *freoðowebbe*-type women – Hygd, Offa’s wife Þrȳþu and Frēawaru – each illustrative of the consequences of intertribal marriages made for political reasons. I suggest that in each case the poet intended to illustrate the point that political marriage – even where the policy was sound and the bride good – were ultimately failures. However, the most direct comparison is between Hygd and Offa’s queen; and the point of the comparison, I argue, was not their moral qualities, but the reasons for and consequences of their marriages. Both women were the daughters of kings of considerable power in Jutland – the Hæreþas and the Swæfe respectively. Both were good queens (even if Offa’s wife had a career as a murderer when a spinster). Both were married to capable and heroic husbands. But neither could stem the wider forces at work which led, within two generations, to the conquest of their husbands’ kingdoms and the flight of their populations elsewhere. It was a fate which overcame the Gēats, and – I shall suggest – also the Angles.

Apart from Þrȳðu, the other bride called a *freoðowebbe* in Old English literature was Ealhild. If she was the same figure as the ill-fated Sunilda of Jordanes and Svanhildr of the *Poetic Edda*, her liaison with Eormenrīc would be cut short, and his killing or maltreatment of her would bring down on him the vengeance of her kinsmen. Thus, the *Widsith*-poet’s allusion to the story of Eormenrīc may well have reminded the audience of the ineffectiveness of

¹³⁷⁹ See the text and translation at pp. 83-84 and my construction of this text in fn. 243 (p. 84) above.

dynastic marriage in regulating violent impulses, or in preventing national danger. Also, both *Beowulf* and *Widsith* allude to the story of Hnæf and Finn, a tale in which intertribal marriage utterly fails to avert the destruction of two dynasties.

Leneghan argues for the relevance of Offa's marriage to the dynastic theme he identifies in *Beowulf*, "foregrounding the benefits of royal marriage to the individual, the court and society as a whole".¹³⁸⁰ He describes the birth of Æomēr (whom he regards as Offa's son) as "pivotal", recalling the line of Scylding successors at the beginning of the poem. He compares Æomēr to Bēow, and remarks that the "dynastic life-cycle moves towards its final phase". Yet Bēow was closer to the beginning of the (short) Scylding life-cycle than its end, and the allusion to Offa and Æomēr, I argue, contains a direct comparison with a different dynasty – that of Hygd, Hygelāc and the Gēats. I suggest, therefore, that while Leneghan is right to sense a dynastic theme, the *Beowulf* and *Widsith*-poets were aware of a geopolitical and historical reality much wider and deeper than that of Scylding Denmark, in which not only dynasties but whole nations were to be unseated by violence, which their best-laid plans of peace-weaving marriages and the production of heroic heirs were unable to avert. If one is looking for a broad dynastic pattern, it is of an endgame rather than an opening gambit. Æomēr was the last king of Angel before foreign conquest forced his son Icel to re-establish his line in Britain; and Bēowulf was the last king of the Gēats before they were overwhelmed and killed, enslaved or dispersed by the Swedes.

¹³⁸⁰ Leneghan 2020: 80.

5: The Deeds of Offa and his Foes

5.1 Introduction

The achievement of Offa came through struggle. The bridal-quest story in *Beowulf* implies it, and the allusion in *Widsith* tells us that he fought for a great empire *āne sweorde* “with a single sword” or perhaps “with a certain sword”. However, if we only had *Beowulf* and *Widsith*, we would know very little about Offa and would have only the faintest hint about what made him great, indeed, possibly even the greatest. We would certainly know nothing about what came after him, except what we might infer from the mass migration of Angles to Britain in the mid-fifth century (regarded by modern historians more as a cause for mystification than a fact).

However, there are other substantial narratives about Offa of Angel which we find in Danish histories and chronicles (*BHD*, *GD* and *AnnR*) written in Latin in the latter half of the twelfth century, and in a curious double biography, the *Vitae Offarum Duorum*, written in Latin at St. Albans in the early thirteenth century. Almost wholly submerged and altered almost beyond recognition, we may also see something of his story in the Icelandic legendary-historical *Skjoldunga saga*, about the ancient line of the kings of Denmark, written about 1200 but since lost and surviving only in a Latin epitome of it written in 1596 by the Icelandic Arngrímur Jónsson. It should be acknowledged that this material – from different countries, times and languages, featuring many differences and inconsistencies – is the sort that would make most scholars despair of reconciling it. However, it is the argument of this part of the thesis that with the *dramatis personae* assembled so far, we may begin to put together a more detailed version of the story of Offa.

In this attempted reconstruction I shall describe how his marriage seems at first to have led to conflict, rather than peace, between his in-laws and his first antagonist, Æadgils (the king of the Myrgingas and lord of Wīdsīþ in *Widsith*), who is Athislus in the Danish accounts. The slaying of this character sets in train a chain of events which leads to Offa’s famous duel with two of the slain king’s successors. In the course of literary transmission, the Æadgils/Athislus character mutates into Riganus, the usurping villain of *VOD*, who supplies the inspiration for the character of Rigus or Rígr in Icelandic texts (*RDF/Skjoldunga saga*, *Rígsþula* and Snorri Sturluson’s *Ynglinga saga*), whose successor, in one form or another, is Dan, the ethno-

eponymous representative of Danish power which, when united, eventually overwhelmed the Angle kingdom in both heroic literature and historical reality.

I also argue that the strong resemblances between the English Offa-tradition (in *Widsith*, *Beowulf*, the regnal lists and *VOD*) and the much later Scandinavian narratives are neither accidental nor the product of derivation from a very old common source. Rather the Offa tradition was carried to Denmark from England, probably in the late twelfth century, by Icelandic visitors to England who encountered a “Danish” story that was perfect for filling out the grand history of the Skjöldung kings that was being assembled to celebrate Denmark’s increasing power and influence. Key to this analysis is the correspondence of the names *Riganus* (in *VOD*), *Rigus* (in *RDF/Skjöldunga saga*), and *Rígr* (in *Rígsþula* and *Ynglinga saga*), which has received no attention hitherto. This also permits us, I argue, to see royal myths in the making.

5.2 The Death of Ēadgils

I argue that the story of Keto and Wigo forms an integral part of the Offa legend. Swanton does not include it at all, calling it a “digression”.¹³⁸¹ But I suggest that this is not so. As we see in Saxo’s telling of the Uffo-story in *GD*, Uffo’s marriage (in which Saxo has no interest *per se*) embroils him in a conflict which threatens his own country and leads to his remarkable victory. Rather than being a folktale of a lummoX-made-good, Offa’s story has epic proportions involving a wider political world; and for all we know it was once the subject of epic poetry.

We have already noted the remarkable temporal correspondences between Frēawine and Wīg and Wērmund and Offa in the regnal lists (indicating that the two families were linked). But also these two young men are Offa’s relatives by his marriage, which, according to *Beowulf*, was another important part of his story, in which he seems to have risked his life in order to win a bride. This may suggest to us that this was an alliance well worth having. However, the most remarkable feature of the story of the two brothers is that in *GD*, *BHD* and *AnnR* they kill Athislus, whose name is a version of the Old Scandinavian name *Aðisl* or *Aðils*; and though not precisely cognate with Old English *Ēadgils*, in Old Norse literature the Swedish king *Aðils* was evidently the same character as *Ēadgils* the son of *Ōththere* in *Beowulf*, and the

¹³⁸¹ Swanton 2010: 173, 174. The story of Wermund and Uffo is in *GD* (IV.3.1-6.1; Friis-Jensen and Fisher 2015: I, 220-45).

two names may thus be taken as equivalents¹³⁸² (and, as we have seen, the Danish Uffo-texts seem to have mistaken *Widsith*'s *Ēadgils* for the better-known *Aðils* of Sweden).¹³⁸³

In *Widsith* *Ēadgils* is king of the Myrgingas, the people who must be the losers as a result of Offa's duel on the Eider. Here, I suggest, the correspondence of the names *Ēadgils* and *Athislus*, and the presence of both of them in the same story, of Offa and Uffo, go beyond coincidence and may be taken as evidence of the close correspondence of the Offa narratives in *Widsith* and the Danish histories, and also of the connection between Offa/Uffo and members of his family by marriage.

The narrative in the Danish texts can be summarised as follows:

According to Saxo, Uffo grew up into a physically imposing young man, but a lummo and a dullard who never laughed or spoke. In *BHD* he gluttonised on food and drink from infancy but retained his youthful strength intact; from the age of seven to thirty he refused to speak out of shame (two unnamed Danes had killed a Swedish king who was alone, to avenge their father). In *GD* his father Wermundus married him to the daughter of Frowinus an *illustrissimus vir* who was the *Sleswicensium prefectus* ("most illustrious man [...] governor of the people of Schleswig" – as he is in *AnnR*). He was the father of the fine Keto and Wigo, and Wermundus thought that they would all provide an excellent example to the lubberly Uffo. However, a powerful king in Sweden called Athislus then invaded Schleswig. There was a battle in which Athislus and Frowinus fought hand-to-hand. Athislus killed Frowinus, the army of Schleswig was destroyed, and Athislus returned home, boasting of his exploits. Then Wermundus appointed Keto and Wigo in their father's place. This enraged Athislus, who brought an army from Sweden and vowed to conquer all Denmark. Keto sent one of his chief warriors called Folco¹³⁸⁴ to bring the news of invasion to Wermundus (who was at Jelling in Jutland). Folco asked Wermundus's permission to fight Athislus, and he agreed. Folco and his army took on the Swedes, and Folco engaged Athislus in personal combat, wounding but not killing him. Athislus escaped (to Keto's disgust – Wigo not being mentioned at this point) and he and his Swedes went back to Sweden. However, Athislus continued to boast about his killing of Frowinus. This enraged Keto and Wigo, who vowed an oath to avenge their father. Having heard that Athislus liked to walk alone, they both went to Sweden (without their army, though

¹³⁸² See p. 218 and fn. 840 above. The ON cognate of *Ēadgils* was *Auðgisl*, *Auðgils*, recorded by Lind, *Dopnamn*: 97-98.

¹³⁸³ See pp. 218-19 (and fn. 840) above.

¹³⁸⁴ He is not otherwise known. PrGmc **fulka-* could mean "crowd" or "army", hence "people" (Orel 2003: 117, *s.n.* **fulkan*), and *folc/fulc* was a common Continental Gmc prototheme, with hypocoristic *Fulco/Folco* being "very common" (Förstemann 1900: 547-59, *s.n.* FULCA). Also recorded as *Fólk-* (and *Fólki*) in Scandinavia (Peterson 2007: 65-66). *PASE* and Briggs (2024: 130-31) record several Anglo-Saxon names in *Folc-*, and Briggs also notes *Folca*, *Folce* and *Folco*. The name *Folco* is appropriately martial and could have originated anywhere in the early medieval Gmc speech-area.

Saxo does not adequately explain why this was suddenly unavailable). They concealed their weapons and engaged Athislus in conversation, pretending to be deserters from Schleswig, on the run because of a murder. On another occasion, the youths recovered their weapons and followed Athislus, whom they confronted, telling him they intended to avenge their father. Athislus told them not to be foolhardy and offered them compensation. This was refused and Keto (the more dominant of the two brothers in Saxo's account) challenged Athislus to single combat. Athislus refused and told the brothers to fight him together, to make it a fairer fight. Keto rejected this and fought alone. Athislus struck only light blows, but Keto got nowhere. Athislus told him it was not shameful to ask for his brother's help. Wigo refused, and Athislus said that he would now not spare Keto and attacked him vigorously. However Keto landed a blow that split Athislus's helmet and wounded his scalp. Athislus renewed his onslaught and beat Keto to his knees. Wigo now intervened to help his brother and Athislus was killed (Saxo does not say whether by one or both of them). They cut off Athislus's head and published their killing at a nearby village. Wermundus received them with acclaim. Saxo's narrative then passes on to Wermundus's blindness in his old age, and the demand of the Saxon king that he step down under threat of war. There then follows the story of Uffo and his empire-winning duel.

The story of Keto and Wigo's combat with Athislus has marked similarities to the story of the brothers Wulf and Eofor and their fight with the Swedish king Ongenþēow in *Beowulf*. This pivotal event in Swedo-Geatish history is alluded to at ll. 2484-90 of *Beowulf*, but it is recounted more fully by an anonymous Geatish messenger (at ll. 2961-2998) who brings the news of Bēowulf's death to his court. He says that a Geatish army under king Hrēpel's son and successor Hæpcyn had invaded the territory of king Ongenþēow of the Swedes. Ongenþēow had fought the Gēats, killed Hæpcyn and surrounded the remnant of his army in the ominously-named Ravenswood, issuing threats to hang them. However, the Gēats were operating in different mobile groups.¹³⁸⁵ Hæpcyn's brother Hygelāc then appeared with a relief force, and Ongenþēow was compelled to withdraw behind the earthen rampart of some fortification (perhaps his own *burh* or *haga* at Vendel), which was then overrun by the Gēats. In circumstances which are not entirely clear from the text but seem to suggest a duel, Ongenþēow first fought Wulf Wōnrēding. He is a character who is introduced for the first time, is not mentioned in any other text (as far as we know), and is the son of the even lesser-known Wōnrēd. Wulf landed a blow on Ongenþēow's head which wounded him under his hair, but he

¹³⁸⁵ A tactic used by the Viking Danes in England in the 9th c., for the maximisation of loot and to enable one group to come to the aid of another (as happens in *Beowulf*).

was unable to kill him. Ongenþēow struck Wulf back, cleaving through his helmet and knocking him down, wounded and apparently insensible or helpless. Wulf's brother Eofor then intervened and struck Ongenþēow with a blow from his sword, described as an *eald sweord eotonisc* "old giant-sword" (l. 2979a). This cut through Ongenþēow's *entisc helm* (l. 2979b "giant-helmet") and knocked him over. (One guesses that it is a fairytale motif that only a giant-made weapon can get through a giant-made helmet). Eofor then finished him off and despoiled the corpse of its weapons and armour while his brother was being bandaged. After the battle Eofor presented the spoils to Hygelāc, and when they got home Hygelāc honoured the brothers with lands and gold, and married his daughter to Eofor. The messenger ends his account with a prediction that the Gēats are doomed now that Bēowulf is dead (ll. 3014-29).

The narrative gives no details of who Wōnrēd or his two theriophorically-named sons "Wolf" (*Wulf*) and "Boar" (*Eofor*) are, or why they are the ones chosen (or who volunteer) to fight Ongenþēow on behalf of Hygelāc and the Gēats, or even why they are on the side of the Gēats at all. As often, it seems that the audience was expected to know these things. However, there is a possible thematic link between the two-on-one duel narrative in *Beowulf* and a very similar motif in the story of Offa (albeit only in the later Danish versions), which we shall investigate¹³⁸⁶ after a closer look at the typology of this episode and in particular how the Danish authors processed the material they inherited.

5.2.1 The Two-Against-One Duel in Danish Texts

We have already seen the doubts of several scholars as to whether the Athislus story was originally connected to the Offa story.¹³⁸⁷ Olrik believed not.¹³⁸⁸ Malone agreed, citing the analysis of Weyhe who argued that Saxo's story was a "late version" of the fight between Ongenþēow and Wulf and Eofor, in which Ongenþēow had been replaced by his grandson Ēadgils, and two Geatish brothers had been replaced by two Danish ones.¹³⁸⁹ Malone added that Saxo's disapproval of the ethics of fighting two-on-one (his Uffo fought against two opponents in his own duel just to expunge the shame caused by Wigo and Keto) did not seem to be shared by the *Beowulf*-poet and was more characteristic of the Age of Chivalry than the Heroic Age.¹³⁹⁰ (In *BHD* Uffo became deliberately mute at the infamy of the two-on-one duel).

¹³⁸⁶ See pp. 358-63 below.

¹³⁸⁷ See pp. 218-19 above.

¹³⁸⁸ Olrik 1894: 185.

¹³⁸⁹ Weyhe 1908: 14-39 – esp. p. 37.

¹³⁹⁰ Malone 1962: 138.

As we have seen, it has been suggested that *Ēadgils* of *Widsith* and *Athislus* of *GD* and *AnnR* were duplicates of *Ēadgils/Aðils* the Swedish king, which I have rejected for the reasons suggested by Chambers.¹³⁹¹ But it is a further argument in support of Chambers' position that in *GD* and *BHD* the sons of Frowinus/Frewinus kill a Swedish king, but, inconsistently with this, Offa expunges his family's shame by fighting, one-against-two, against an enemy of a different ethnicity, that is, a Saxon or German. One of these ethnic identifications looks anomalous; and I suggest that it is crucial here that *Widsith* provides evidence that *Ēadgils* – a person with a name cognate with *Aðils* and *Athislus* – appears in a narrative intimately associated with the Offa legend, and is clearly not a Swede but a person from southern Jutland. So, rather than supposing the two stories of *Athislus* and Uffo's duel to have been unconnected, I suggest it is simpler to agree with Chambers that Sven, Saxo and the author of *AnnR* erroneously supposed the *Ēadgils* of the Offa story to be the famous Swedish king *Aðils* of *Ynglingatal*, *Ynglinga saga* and other Scandinavian texts, who was better known to them from their own historical legends or from the traditions passed to them by Icelanders.¹³⁹² They also re-imagined the enemy of the Angles to the south as the main geopolitical opponents of the Danes in their time, under Valdemar I, Knut VI and Valdemar II – the Germans of Saxony.

Thus, the story of the “dual-duel” was given the clothing of geopolitical concerns contemporary with late twelfth-century Denmark, but it was a lot older. I argue that the following list of motifs shared between the Danish Uffo narrative and *Beowulf*'s story of Wulf and Eofor demonstrates that the similarities are highly unlikely to be the result of coincidence, and that it is more probable that there is some – as yet unexplained – genetic link between them.

- (1) The challengers are two young brothers.
- (2) We are given the name of their father, about whom little is said (Frowinus and Wōnrēd).
- (3) Keto and Wigo, are sons of a *prefectus*, i.e. their father, though a local ruler, was beholden to a greater authority in the region, Wērmund. Wulf and Eofor were sons of the Wylfing king, and were allies of (and maybe subordinate to) Hygelāc, the king of the regional power, the Gēats.
- (4) They have unusual, monothematic, perhaps somewhat emblematic names.
- (5) They have a motive of vengeance (in *Beowulf* Hæþcyn, king of the Gēats, had been killed by the Swedes).

¹³⁹¹ See p. 218 above.

¹³⁹² For the role of Icelanders in informing Saxo, see pp. 386-89 below.

- (6) The brothers take on a formidable Swedish king who fights them alone.
- (7) The combat takes place in Swedish territory.
- (8) The brothers do not attack the Swedish king simultaneously. The first brother cannot prevail against the Swedish king, suffers a head-wound and is then felled and is *hors de combat*. The second brother enters the fray and kills the Swedish king.
- (9) The brothers report the killing to their own king who is very pleased and gives one of them a significant reward.
- (10) The brothers take no further active part in the story.
- (11) The slaying of the Swedish king begins a chain of events – motivated by vengeance – which involve the main hero (Bēowulf and Offa) in feats of heroism.

To call Saxo's narrative a "late version" assumes a relationship without accounting for it. Saxo did not know *Beowulf* (as far as we know) and his narrative shows little similarity with it. In Scandinavian tradition Aðils was not the same character as *Beowulf*'s Ongenþēow. Rather, Aðils was the son of Óttarr (= Ōthhere in *Beowulf*) and the grandson of Egill (= Ongenþēow in *Beowulf*), and he was thus the same person as *Beowulf*'s Ēadgils. There is no narrative in which Aðils the son of Óttarr meets his end as Athislus does in the Uffo story. And the duelling brothers in Saxo are Schleswig Danes, not some people of Scania allied to the Gēats.

But there is another issue. The suggestion of Weyhe (p. 356 above) is typical of a style of criticism which seems founded on the presumption that authors like Saxo assembled their texts almost at random, forming a collage of disparate names, persons, events and other details at will, regardless of the overall meaning of the text. This is an approach which remains rooted in the ideas of source-criticism of the nineteenth and earlier twentieth century. The objective – as in textual criticism – was to trace the origins and development of a text by comparing instances of similarity, disparity and error in different versions of it – but as if perpetrated mechanically by a copyist, rather than selected by an author who had the purpose in mind of constructing a narrative. According to such old-school criticism the importance of inherited texts could easily be outweighed if – by emendation, rearrangement or excision – a smoother, more rational-seeming product could be achieved. Thus, the imaginativeness of the medieval author and his inherited narrative tradition could be smothered by the rigorous rationality of the modern scholar. The result in this instance, I suggest, highlights the limitations of the method (if it can be called a method). It asks us to believe that Saxo appended to the Uffo story

a practically irrelevant narrative taken from a poem he cannot have known and introduced the name and personality of a well-known king – Aðils – with no connection to either narrative.

On the contrary, I suggest that there was a strong thematic link between the two-on-one duel involving Athislus and a similar unequal combat involving Uffo, which the Danish authors inherited and strove to understand and explain according to the partly chivalric ethics of their own time. I further suggest that the modern critics who have noted this chivalric aspect as an anachronism mistakenly supposed that it was an erroneous attempt by our Latin authors to justify bolting two separate stories together and to provide them with a linking theme. Rather – I suggest – it was an anachronistic gloss by the Latin authors on an inherited, single, coherent narrative. This was bipartite and contained thematic parallels and symmetry, but the Danish authors struggled to understand these, except according to the *mores* of their own time. As I shall now argue, the attempts by Sven and Saxo to interpret the Offa story in chivalric terms are consequently troubled by incoherence and inconsistency.

Saxo thought that the two-on-one duel of Wigo and Keto against Athislus caused the Danes so much criticism (*opprobrium*) that Uffo felt he had to offer to fight one-against-two to expiate it. In *GD* we are eventually told that Uffo remained dumb since babyhood by choice: he says he had no need to speak in his father's defence until he heard the Danes' native good sense being assailed by "foreign garrulity".¹³⁹³ However, Saxo does not say why Uffo had chosen not to speak before this. In *BHD*, similarly, it is the ultimatum of the Germans which causes Uffo to speak; but his previous muteness since early youth is said to be voluntary, caused by his shame at the manner in which the Swedish king was killed. In *AnnR* Uffo was voluntarily mute from the age of seven to thirty until the duel on the Eider, though no reason is given in the brief account. The voluntariness of Uffo's voicelessness suggests an inherited motif in which Uffo, dumb for so long, suddenly decided to speak, or became able to. But the fact that each of our three authors either gives a different reason or a different occasion for doing so suggests that the motif was originally unexplained, and so each writer had to come up with his own interpretation for the hero's dumbness.

In the only other surviving version of this story, in *Beowulf*, the poet makes no overt moral comment on the apparently uneven odds in this fight, and there is no motif of shame. (Indeed, he makes no moral commentary at all on an episode in which the Gēats' objective was

¹³⁹³ *GD*, IV, 4.5; Friis-Jensen and Fisher 2015: I, 238, *Qui respondit se paterna hactenus defensione contentum non prius uocis officio opus habuisse, quam domesticam prudentiam externa loquacitate pressam animaduerneret*, "He responded that up till now he had been content, in the defence of his father, not to have been troubled in the employment of his voice until he noticed that native prudence was being assailed by foreign garrulity" (my translation).

nothing more edifying than killing and the seizure of women, children and loot).¹³⁹⁴ He records only the approval of Hygelāc, who rewarded the brothers richly and married his daughter to Eofor. In the Danish stories, Wermundus did not feel any shame, and like Hygelāc he was delighted with the result of the duel.

With respect to the moral stances of Sven and Saxo, it is difficult not to agree with Malone who argued that this was an anachronistic injection into heroic tradition of the values of the Age of Chivalry. Certainly, the respective treatments of the motif in *GD* and *BHD* are inconsistent with each other, which suggests that each author sought to impose his own rationalisation. And both are unconvincing, which suggests rationalisations inconsistent with the ethics underlying the inherited tradition. Saxo says that Offa never spoke or laughed until the Saxon ambassadors presented their ultimatum to Wermundus. But then he gives him a speech in which he claims that he did not speak in his father's defence before this because he did not need to (though this does not explain his muteness before that or his rediscovery of the faculty of speech). He says that his offer to take on two opponents is motivated by the shame of Keto and Wigo who fought-two-against one. But that was against a Swede, whereas Uffo's prospective duel is against a Saxon – a different people – causing one to question how shame with regard to one people can be expunged by a duel against another. In *BHD* Uffo refused to speak at all, out of shame, until he was thirty, which suggests – absurdly – that he made this decision when a baby. In *BHD*, although (as in Saxo) Uffo speaks for the first time in response to the foreign (this time German) ambassadors, he makes no mention of shame, or of taking on two opponents; and in his duel the encounter with two opponents who gang up on him at once is unexpected, and Uffo has to improvise a reason to persuade them to come on separately. Sven does not mention that the original shame of the two brothers was expunged until after he has recounted the duel. In *AnnR* the narrative is significantly truncated. The names *Frewinus*, *Wiggo* and *Keto* are preserved, but nothing is said about shame; rather, we are told that from the age of seven Uffo did not wish (*noluit*) to speak. The reason is not given, but it must be a remnant of the motif in Saxo and Sven that Uffo's dumbness was partly voluntary.

A series of similar motifs exists in *VOD*'s story of Offa I. He was blind from birth until the age of seven and dumb from birth until the age of thirty, though with no explanation for

¹³⁹⁴ Shippey (2010) noted the lack of a moral standpoint (or a modern moral standpoint at any rate) in this episode. Hygelāc is *sē gōda* ("the good man") at l. 2944b, and so is Ongenþēow at l. 2949a. The Gēats kidnapped Ongenþēow's wife and robbed her of her gold (ll. 2930-32), and came for treasure, women and children as sea-raiders (ll. 2953-56). See Alfsdotter *et al.* 2018 for an account of the excavations at Sandby Borg on the Swedish island of Öland, a village never repopulated after its cruel sacking in the late 5th c. There were hardly any women among the bodies which were left where they had been struck down; and no weapons and only a single gold coin were found. It could have been a scene from *Beowulf*.

either. He speaks for the first time at a meeting which includes magnates who wish to usurp his father's throne. This is moralised as a miraculous gift from God, who rewards Offa for his true penitence in acknowledging his own uselessness in assisting his father (strangely implying a level of voluntarism not otherwise present in the story). Offa fights the army of his father's enemies, but his fight with two warriors who insult him (the sons of Riganus) is quite by chance. Offa is tired and wounded and kills them both with the sword his father had given him.¹³⁹⁵ But he is unmarried at this time.

A final reason to doubt the originality of the motif of shame is that in Saxo's story – as in *Beowulf* – the two brothers do not fight their opponent simultaneously. In fact, they studiously avoid doing so, even when encouraged by the overconfident Athislus. This aspect of the two-on-one duel narrative is also present in *Beowulf*, in which Eofor steps in once Wulf has fallen. Indeed, it is hard to imagine any pre-modern ethical system that would applaud someone for standing by and watching while his own helpless brother was dispatched by an opponent in a duel.

I suggest that these three differing approaches were rationalisations by each of our authors based on an inherited narrative in which there were the following motifs:

- (1) Uffo was mute from some early age.
- (2) Uffo was married while still suffering disabilities including muteness.
- (3) Uffo's brothers-in-law killed an opponent two-on-one.
- (4) (Possibly) the king killed by the brothers was so physically formidable that it required two men to defeat him (whether together or sequentially).
- (5) The killing caused (or was followed by) a second episode in which Uffo had to be the combatant to protect his father's realm.
- (6) Uffo underwent a speedy and unexpected development, notably in speech and fighting ability.
- (7) Uffo's duel was against two opponents.
- (8) Uffo used one particular sword to vanquish them.

Whether the theme of shame was integral to this narrative is questionable. The evidence of the differing and inconsistent approaches of Saxo, Sven and the author of *AnnR* suggests that it was not, but the idea of a two-on-one duel offended against their common notion of chivalry. Sven and Saxo saw the double motif of the two-on-one duel as evidence of a shame being

¹³⁹⁵ Swanton 2010: 9-10.

expunged, and thus they interpreted the folktale motif of the late-developing “coal-biter” hero’s dumbness as a moral response to family dishonour.

Saxo is the only author to make any mention of Uffo’s marriage, which, of course, provides the link between the two halves of his story – his marriage and his duel (represented, respectively in *Beowulf* and *Widsith*). This motif of familial relationship is ignored in *BHD* and *AnnR*. But even in *GD* it is given a moralising slant: Uffo’s in-laws were intended to set him a good example.¹³⁹⁶ This, I suggest is a further attempt by Saxo to give an ethical character to features of the original story in which there were political and dynastic reasons, rather than moral ones, for Offa to seek a marriage (and in particular one that was so forbidding that there were likely to be few rivals).

To take an alternative approach to the thematics of the Offa-story, I would suggest that there seems to have been a theme of singularity as opposed to duality; and this theme occurred – long before the Age of Chivalry – in the original Offa-story, or in the early forms of it, providing a satisfactory narrative symmetry (preserved but somewhat botched by the different moralisations of later authors). We can see this, I suggest, in the motif of Offa’s sword.

In what may be the earliest recorded Offa text, *Widsith*, it is said that Offa slew for himself the greatest of empires with *āne sweorde* (l. 41b). *Āne* is the neuter singular instrumental of the adjective *ān*, which had a range of meanings. It could: mean “one” or “a single” (numerically, contrastive to more than one); act almost as an indefinite determiner, “a certain or particular”; and/or have the intensifying sense of “a unique”; or “the same” (implying multiple and continuous use).¹³⁹⁷ Since the use of one sword in a single duel by one combatant ought not to require any emphasis, it is reasonable to suppose that *āne* alludes to a salient feature of Offa’s duel. The Danish versions of the story and *VOD* contain motifs related to Offa’s sword which describe it as remarkable (in cutting-power and victoriousness), the only sword that the mighty Offa did not break (and had thus become irreplaceable), the only sword that he had in the duel (against two opponents), and the same sword used on both opponents. Taking these senses into account, we might translate *āne sweorde* as “with that one and only (unique) sword”. While a single word like *ān* cannot prove the *Widsith*-poet’s knowledge of motifs like those found in Saxo, Sven and *VOD*, in Old English syntax it did not just mean “a”, and I suggest it is likely to be compatible with a thematic contrast between “one of something” and “more than one of something else”. We may note in this context that the sword with which

¹³⁹⁶ *GD*, IV, 3.1; Friis-Jensen and Fisher 2015: I, 222. We have seen what Saxo did with the wooing story. See pp. 327-35 above.

¹³⁹⁷ See *DOE*, s.v. *ān*, senses A.1 “one”, A.2.c “the same”, A.5 intensifying, and A.6 “a certain”.

Eofor clove Ongenþēow's *entisc helm* and killed him was no ordinary one, but an *ealdsweord eotonisc*, an ancient sword fashioned by or associated with giants.

If, as I suggest is likely, there was an original motif of twos in the Offa-story – obscurely alluded to in *Widsith*, but explicit in *GD*, *BHD* and *VOD* – I suggest it was not to do with expunging a stain on the family reputation, but with the bravado of the archetypal young hero who did not just perform heroic feats, but did so the hard way. Bēowulf, like Offa, was a youth who showed no early promise and was not thought well of.¹³⁹⁸ But his emergence as a hero came not through an ordinary deed but a doubly extraordinary one. It would have been remarkable enough to take on a monster like Grendel, but Bēowulf boasts he will do so with his bare hands. He justifies this by saying that since Grendel goes unarmed, this would give him something more pleasing to tell Hygelāc (ll. 433-40).¹³⁹⁹ He also suggests that using a sword (though he could) would be unfair (ll. 677-87). When he comes to grips with Grendel, the Gēats ply their swords, but they do not know that Grendel cannot be harmed by swords, having cast a spell on them (ll. 798-05). Thus, no one at Heorot has told Bēowulf that swords were useless against Grendel; and no one mentions this until the creature's torn-off arm is on display at Heorot, when everyone agrees that a sword could not have touched him (ll. 987-90). This does not stop the Danes from grabbing their own swords when Grendel's mother comes the next night (ll. 1288-91), which looks like sheer inconsistency (though at least it avoids making the Danes seem cowardly by having them run away).

Here, I suggest, the *Beowulf*-poet has also attempted to provide his own ethical rationalisations – of no impressive consistency – for the folktale-motif of the young hero's ultra-bravado. If, on the other hand, the Danes had told Bēowulf that his sword was useless against the ogre, his use of main force – though in keeping with his “bear's son” persona – would have looked like resignation instead of admirable youthful recklessness. The true hero of this type, I suggest, discovers the extent of his own powers by adding difficulties to his exploits, just for extra glory. Whereas to kill one opponent would be somewhat ordinary, to dispatch two is remarkable. Similarly, I suggest, the Offa-story had at its core the sense of an extremely unpromising youth, with a remarkable yet vulnerable weapon, taking on a task that seemed impossible. Either he doubled its difficulty by challenging two opponents (quadrupling the feat of his brothers-in-law), or when faced by two opponents (such was the custom of duels), he managed to dispose of both against all odds, using *ān sweord*.

¹³⁹⁸ See *Beowulf* 2183-2200. Bēowulf was thought to be a slacker of no promise until he received significant honours from his beloved uncle Hygelāc (his mother's brother) after returning from Heorot.

¹³⁹⁹ In his report to Hygelāc Bēowulf emphasises the hand-to-hand nature of the fight (ll. 2069-96).

5.2.2 Dynastic and Geopolitical Themes in the Two-Against-One Duel Story

Here I address the difficult question of where the two-on-one duel story in Saxo came from which so closely resembles that of Wulf and Eofor in *Beowulf*. There is no evidence that Saxo could have read *Beowulf*, which in his time existed – as far as we know – in a single copy in some English monastic library. But I shall suggest – albeit with inevitable speculation – that this story may have contained important themes and motifs which derived from very old heroic narrative traditions that were preserved in *Beowulf*, but also in the Offa story, and were retained until it made its way to Denmark.

I have previously suggested¹⁴⁰⁰ the possibility that Wulf was the ethno-eponym of the tribe of the Wulfingas, also known as Helmingas, and that since Wealhþēow was a lady of the Helmingas and a king's daughter, her father would have been known by the ethno-eponyms *Wulf* and *Helm*. And since the killing of Heaðolāf – the otherwise unknown man of the Wilfingas (= Wulfingas) – by Bēowulf's father Ecgbēow nearly caused a war between the Wilfingas and the Gēats, Heaðolāf may have been the Wilfingas' king, aka *Wulf* and *Helm*, and thus Wealhþēow's father. If so, this might explain why Hrōþgār (who owed nothing to the Gēats) was motivated to pay a wergild to the Wilfingas, if he was also able to marry Wealhþēow and thus form an alliance with her people and supplant the Gēats as their allies. It would also explain the presence at his court of mysterious people who shared Heaðolāf's deutertheme, like Yrmenlāf, the younger brother of Æschere, and Ecglāf, the father of Unferþ (these may have been Heaðolāf's brothers, and Ecglāf may have been Eofor (an epithetical name, perhaps meaning "prince"), the husband of Hygelac's daughter).

Although I can advance this idea only as an intriguing speculation, if there is any merit in it, it suggests that in the context of *Beowulf* the Wulf and Eofor narrative played an important thematic part. Their duel with Ongenþēow was linked to an intertribal marriage (between Wylfingas and Gēats), making or cementing their alliance; but it was also the spark for an international war (between the Swedes and the Gēats) which involved the story's main hero (Bēowulf), following whose glorious reign disaster came to his nation. As I shall argue, the motival similarities between the Wulf and Eofor story in *Beowulf* and those in the Danish Uffo narratives are so striking that they are unlikely to be coincidental. I shall therefore suggest that there is a genetic link between the *Beowulf* and the Offa narrative traditions: both shared a story – potentially very old – of individual (or rather dual) glory leading to marriage, alliance and

¹⁴⁰⁰ See discussions at: pp. 29-30, fns. 191 (p. 69), 200 (p. 70), 274 (p. 92), 773 (p. 200) and p. 343.

eventual catastrophe; and this part of the narrative tradition of Offa survived in England until it was transmitted to Denmark at some time up to the twelfth century.¹⁴⁰¹

5.2.3 Ēadgils and Athislus: Conclusions

I suggest that the analytical approach to the construction of narrative that we see in Weyhe, as it applied to the duel with Athislus, is mechanistic, paying little attention to the overall meaning of the narrative. Like other similar approaches, it thus struggles to explain why changes were made to the story and ends up by simply describing them. I suggest that Saxo's telling of the Uffo story is simpler to explain if we identify the purposes underlying its adaptation to the underlying ideology of his *Gesta Danorum*. As Jakob Benediktsson said, Skjöldung genealogists (and here we can include Saxo) had the aim of constructing a "coherent narrative [which] combine[d] various traditions of single kings and separate episodes".¹⁴⁰² In this process other ethnic affiliations were erased. Thus, Wermund and Uffo, who were Angles in English texts, and Frōda and Ingeld, who were Heapobeards, are turned into Danes. This has two knock-on effects on the antagonisms and rivalries which are a constant theme of the Skjöldung story: (a) where both the antagonists' original ethnicities have become Danish, they need to be provided with another reason for their antagonism (for instance, a conflictual kin-relationship, such as half-brothers); (b) where original antagonist X has become a Dane, and original antagonist Y remains a non-Dane, Y has to be invested with a hostile ethnicity comprehensible to Saxo's contemporaries (typically Saxon, German or Swedish).

Applying these principles to the Uffo story, I suggest that the reason why Athislus is an important character is not because he was an insertion, but because he was part of the early Offa narrative and is the same person as Ēadgils in *Widsith*. Saxo does not include any detailed narrative about the marriage of Offa (such as we find in *Beowulf*), because the purpose of that story was to show Offa making an alliance with another people to beat a joint enemy. In Saxo's narrative, Uffo and Frowinus are both Danes, and their relationship is that between a king and his subordinate *prefectus* – a relationship which does not need to be cemented by marriage. According to Saxo, the purpose of the wedding is a moralistic one – to provide Uffo with

¹⁴⁰¹ I also note here the parallelism between Bēowulf's duple fight with Grendel and his mother and Uffo's double-duel, that both feature remarkable swords, supposedly never-failing and retrieved from under the earth. To tackle Grendel's mother, Bēowulf accepts a loan of the sword Hrunting from Unferþ (ll. 1456-63). It had never failed its owner in battle, though it proves useless against Grendel's mother. Bēowulf is only able to kill her with a huge sword he finds in her underground lair, a *sigeēadig bil*, // *ealdsweord eotenisc* / [...] *giganta geweorc* "a victory-blessed blade, an ancient giant-sword [...] the work of giants", the blade of which melts in the monsters' blood.

¹⁴⁰² Jakob Benediktsson 1957-1961: 48-49.

positive male role-models in the form of his in-laws, not to form an alliance. The narrative which develops thereafter is entirely Dano-centric. The aggressive and rapacious Athislus is represented as a Swede, a nation threatening to Denmark. When he is dispatched, the role of enemy is taken over by the similarly aggressive Saxons of the German empire to the south.

In the Offa narrative, before it was adapted for use by Danes, I suggest that his marriage and his duel were linked by a chain of causation, in which an alliance between two peoples led to war with a third, to resolve which Offa was obliged to emerge as a hero. While my analysis of the dynastic background of the Wulf and Eofor story in *Beowulf* must remain a suggestion for further development, there is no doubt that in *Beowulf*, as conventionally understood, the killing of Ongenþēow by Wulf and Eofor precipitates an enduring hostility between the Swedes and the Gēats that only seems to be resolved (in the aftermath predicted at the end of the poem) by the destruction of the Gēats by the Swedes. In the narrative which underlay this story in *Beowulf* and the Offa story the two-on-one duel may have played a similarly ambiguous role, as both a noble feat of arms and the trigger for eventual calamity.

5.3 Riganus, Rigus and Rígr

Possibly the most remarkable correspondence between the English and Scandinavian traditions of Offa is one that has never been remarked on. In *VOD* – uniquely – a character called *Riganus* is one of the nobles subject to Warmundus who rebels against him. In the Scandinavian traditions, which, I contend, are connected with the figure of Offa, there is a character called *Rigus* and *Rígr*, and I intend to argue that it is almost inconceivable that this correspondence in names is coincidental. Rather, this is strong evidence of a genetic link between the English Offa-story and the Scandinavian tradition of Uffo as a Danish king; and that Icelanders and Danes took the character represented by Riganus in *VOD* and repurposed him in their own ways, as Rigus or Rígr, to suit their own versions of Skjöldung kingship.

In *VOD* the story of Riganus can be summarised as follows:

Riganus (also known as *Aliel*) was one of the chief men of Warmundus's kingdom (a *primarius regni*) and a most arrogant man. He had a companion, much like himself, called Mitunnus. Riganus saw the physical decline of Warmundus in old age, and the old king's perplexity as to whom to appoint as his successor, since his son Offa was out of the question, having been blind until he was seven and mute since birth. Riganus alternately used persuasion and threats on Warmundus to make him his heir, until, at a council of his leading men, Warmundus spurned Riganus who left in anger. Riganus was then joined by like-minded nobles and gathered a huge

army to harass Warmundus with challenges to battle. Warmundus ignored this as long as he could but then summoned a council of his foremost men to discuss what should be done. Offa, now aged thirty, was present at this council and heard their private talk, understanding that he was despised as utterly useless. (Although the author does not say so, it becomes apparent that Riganus, Mitunnus and their rebellious supporters are also present). Stung with shame, Offa prayed to God who gave him the gift of speech. He reproved the assembled nobles for their plans to disinherit him and to give his father's hereditary crown to a usurper (i.e. Riganus), thus putting the kingdom at the mercy of its foreign enemies. He threatened the rebellious with correction. This frightened and cowed some present, but Riganus left angrily with Mitunnus and his other henchmen. The men loyal to Warmundus were heartened and joyous, and at their suggestion Warmundus knighted Offa and made him the commander of his army, declaring war on the rebels, chiefly Riganus and his two sons, Otta and Milio. Both armies encamped on either side of a fast-flowing river and nothing happened for a time except taunts and thrown spears. Then Offa sallied over the river and assaulted Riganus's men. More men followed and there was a battle, as a result of which Offa's men were driven back to their own side of the river and pursued there. But Offa stood his ground and then attacked, encouraging the fleeing others to join him. Riganus's men then retreated, exhausted, and attempted to cross back over the river. Offa advanced and came across the two sons of Riganus (without explanation, the older is now named as *Brutus* and the younger as *Sueno* – with *Hildebrandus* added, apparently as an alternative, in the margin).¹⁴⁰³ They insulted Offa and he killed them. Riganus and the others tried to climb out of the river on the far bank, but they were fatigued and in heavy armour. They all drowned, and the river was named *Riganburne* in commemoration of Offa's victory. By night Offa's men pursued the remainder of the enemy forces, now under Mitunnus, and slaughtered them. Offa gained great glory from the complete victory. The enemy soldiers were pardoned, but the ringleaders of the rebellion were punished. The bodies of Riganus and Mitunnus and their dead men were thrown in the river. Warmundus granted Offa the kingship, and Offa then called back the landholders who had been unjustly exiled by Riganus and exacted fealty from them (no doubt expropriating the lands of the rebels). There then follows the narrative of Offa's marriage and the story of his much-victimised but innocent queen.

If we investigate the forms of the names used in *VOD*, there is, I argue, sufficient evidence from which to conclude that some of them at least derive from a late Old English text. In the Latin of *VOD*, the name-form *Riganus* is mirrored by the form *Offanus*, which is used as an alternative to *Offa*. These were forms consistent with the Latinisation of Anglo-Saxon

¹⁴⁰³ See Rickert 1904-05: 41.

monothematic names with the weak oblique case ending *-an*.¹⁴⁰⁴ A reflex of the name *Riganus* also appears in *VOD* in the fictitious river-name *Riganburne* – a late Old English form of **Riganburna* – suggesting that in the source text his name was **Riga* or **Rīga*, which is purely Old English in form. *Offanus* and *Riganus* are therefore potentially Latinisations of the names *Offa* and *Riga*, and are probably based on their Old English oblique forms *Offan* and *Rigan*, and are thus evidence that *VOD* derives, in part at least, from an Old English forerunner.¹⁴⁰⁵

The origin of Riganus’s alternative name *Aliel* is unknown. The scribe added it in the margin.¹⁴⁰⁶ He also added *Hildebrand* to the names of Riganus’s two sons, *Otta* and *Milio*; *Auene* (Avon?) as another name for *Riganburne* (where Offa’s battle was fought); and *Qualmweld* as an alternative to *Qualmhul*, for the burial mound containing Riganus’s fallen – Middle English forms based on Old English *cwalm* “death”, *hyll* “hill” and *weald* “wooded height”.¹⁴⁰⁷ These additional names, added marginally, suggest that the scribe was aware of another version or versions of this story with different names. The name *Aliel* may suggest some relationship with Latin *alius* or *alienus*, meaning “other” or “foreign”.

I suggest that it is probably of significance here that some scribe added the name *Auene* as an alternative to *Riganburne*. There were several rivers in England known to the Anglo-Saxons by versions of the Brittonic word **abonā* “river”, which became *Afon* and later *Afen/Aven* and *Avon*.¹⁴⁰⁸ The river called Avon in south-west England, which flows into the Severn Estuary, was historically the site of major conflict between Germanic incomers and autochthonous Britons in the fourth and fifth centuries, and later formed the boundary between the Germanic Hwicce and the British kingdoms to the south-west, and (when the Hwicce were absorbed into Mercia during the reign of Offa II) between the Mercians and the West Saxons.¹⁴⁰⁹ This suggests that in an Offa-tradition known to the annotator who added *Auene*

¹⁴⁰⁴ The form *Offanus* is used occasionally by Alcuin of Offa II in his letters. See *PASE*, s.n. *Offa* 7, and Alcuin’s letters in Duemmler 1895: p. 106 (No. 63), p. 107 (No. 64 – fn.), p. 128 (No. 85). Otherwise, it is *Offa*, *Offam* etc. Cf. *PASE*, s.nn. *Eddanus* 1, an 8th-c. bishop of Strasbourg, and perhaps *Untan* 1 (*DB*); *Addan* (from attested *Addanus*) a bishop in Essex (*fl.* 693×706); and *Æadan*, the maker of a casket (8th – 9th c.); perhaps *Beranh* 1 (moneyer, mid- to late 9th c.). In Anglo-Saxon England there may have been a male name-suffix */-an/*, Latinised as */-anus/*. In *VOD* the forms *Offanus* and *Riganus* create a parallelism.
¹⁴⁰⁵ This is in addition to the scribal errors of *Penefredus* and *Pinefredus* for <penefredus> and <pinefredus>, i.e. spellings, potentially from an Anglo-Saxon MS, of Offa II’s birth name *Wynfreð/Wynfrið* or *Winfreð/Winfrið*. See Swanton 2010: xxxii, 41 and fns. (but also see fn. 526 (p. 143 above), where it is noted that the use of *wynn* continued in English MSS until c. 1300).

¹⁴⁰⁶ See Swanton 2010: 11 and 12, fn. 92.

¹⁴⁰⁷ *Qualm* has the vocalisation of Anglian *cwalm* (cf. West Saxon *cwealm*). *Hul* is a frequent late OE/early ME spelling of “hill” (see *DOE*, s.v. *hyll*, and *MED*, s.v. *hil(le)*). *Weld* is likely to be *wēld*, a ME form from WS *weald* rather than Anglian *wald* (see *MED*, s.v. *wēld* (n)).

¹⁴⁰⁸ See Ekwall 1928: 20-23.

¹⁴⁰⁹ See Whittock and Whittock 2014: ch. 3 and 4.

the main battle of the story took place on a boundary between two nations – one Anglian, the other Celtic or Saxon – on which was Warwick, supposed the capital of Warmundus in *VOD*.

A character with a name similar to *Riganus* appears in *RDF/Skjöldunga saga* (composed c. 1180-1200) as *Rigus*, the ancestor of two figures called Dan (I and II), the latter of whom becomes king of all Denmark by his conquests. In Snorri Sturluson's *Ynglinga saga* (1220s) he is *Rígr*, father of *Danpr* and grandfather of *Dan*, a man who becomes a king of Denmark. *Rígr* is also the father of *Dan's* sister *Drótt* ("warband"), who marries a Swedish king and gives birth to his heir and successor, *Dyggvi* ("doughty one"). *Dyggvi* is called *konungmaðr* ("king-man") in *Ynglingatal*, a ninth-century Norwegian poem (attributed to Þjóðólfr of Hvin) which lists the ancient kings of Sweden descended from *Fjölfnir*, a son of the god *Freyr*, aka *Yngvifreyr*.¹⁴¹⁰ Snorri explains that *Rígr fyrstr var konungr kallaðr á danska tungu* "was the first to be called 'king' in the Danish language".¹⁴¹¹ *Rígr* is also the name of the titular character in the Old Norse Eddaic poem *Rígsþula*, preserved in a single MS, the Codex Wormianus ("W"), written not later than c. 1350.¹⁴¹² W contains texts on grammar and poetics, including *Snorra Edda*. In W the text of *Rígsþula* ends with v. 46, and so abruptly as to suggest that only its beginning is preserved. *Rígr* is identified as the god *Heimdallr* by the author of a prose passage which introduces the poem. He says, *Svá segja menn í fornum sögum* ("so people say in ancient stories"), though no source for the identification has been discovered. In the poem itself, the first *Rígr* to be named has that name and no other. He is described at v. 1/4 as *áss kunnigr* "a wise god", or *áskunnigr* "god-related". He is a mysterious itinerant who arrives, successively, at the homes of couples called *Ái* and *Edda* ("Great-Grandfather" and "Great-Grandfather"), *Afi* and *Amma* ("Grandfather" and "Grandmother"), and *Faðir* and *Móðir* ("Father" and "Mother") and impregnates each woman and then leaves. The women bear *Þræll* ("Slave"), *Karl* ("churl, peasant") and *Jarl* ("earl"), respectively. Each of these sons marries, and each fathers an extensive brood of children (all of whom are named). *Rígr* reappears to his son *Jarl* and gives him his own name – as if it were an inherited title – and *Jarl* passes this to his own youngest son *Konr ungr*, whose name – meaning "young kinsman" – is transparently an etymologisation of *konungr* "king". *Jarl* and *Konr ungr* thus become *Rígr* II and III respectively. Befitting their names, these are noblemen, and *Jarl* lords it over others,

¹⁴¹⁰ As explained by Snorri in ch. 10-11 of *Ynglinga saga*. The poem does not name *Yngvi* as *Fjölfnir's* father. The name-form *Ynglinga-* suggests that the *Ynglingar* were descended from **Yngr*. Although the poem lists many kings of Sweden, it celebrates the lineage of *Rögnvaldr heiðumhöeri*, a 9th-c. Norwegian nobleman who was a cousin of king *Haraldr hárfagri*.

¹⁴¹¹ *Ynglinga saga* (ch. 27; *ÍF* 26: 34).

¹⁴¹² For W, see fn. 508 (p. 140 above).

conquering lands for himself. He teaches rune-lore to Konr ungr, who surpasses his father's skill and knowledge and comes into his own inheritance. One day Konr ungr rides out to hunt birds. His runic skill allows him to understand the language of birds, and a crow tells him not to kill them but to ride horses and slay an army, informing him that the warlike Danr and Danpr (who are mentioned here for the first time) own halls richer than his. There, the text of *Rígsþula* in W ends. Understood most simply, *Rígsþula* would seem to be an aetiological myth, of unknown origin, about the creation of a stratified society, with slaves, a peasantry and a nobility, the ultimate development of which features a *konungr* ("king") in the person of Konr ungr, who also bears the title *Rígr* (a word also associated with kingship, as we shall see). He is a youngest son who, it appears to be hinted, should seek a better fortune in a more propitious place, that is, wherever Danr and Danpr lived.

It has not been possible to date *Rígsþula* on any reliable objective grounds.¹⁴¹³ And although the same figure, Rigus/Rígr, appears in each of these Scandinavian texts (two of which are almost contemporary), it has proved outstandingly difficult – using standard methods of textual and literary criticism – to reconstruct an “original” version of the Rig story which must be common to all these versions.¹⁴¹⁴ For clarity's sake, the relationships – which are vexed – of the relevant figures in the Icelandic texts are set out in diagrammatic form below.¹⁴¹⁵

¹⁴¹³ See the summary in Dronke 1997: 178. There has been a preference for a dating to the 12th or 13th centuries as a “learned speculation on class origins, or contemporary comment on the conflict for the Norwegian throne”. Dronke thought it was a development of old mythic traditions, achieving its form in the Danelaw in the early 11th c. (1997: 202-03). The *Eddukvæði* editors regard it as a scholarly poem of the 12th c., largely on account of the Celtic influence (I, 279). Simek thinks that *Rígsþula*, like *Skirnismál*, was a text of the second half of the twelfth and first decades of the 13th c., and its composer “no longer [made] an attempt at systematically or even correctly portraying heathen mythology but [used] it for their own ends: in the case of *Rígsþula* for a political statement in favour of a god-sent royal power” (Simek 2004: 377-380). However, the only objective factor relevant to its earliest dating is its inclusion in W, to which it may have been attached because its lists of poetic *heiti* (the names of the grandchildren of Rígr) were similar to those in the *þulur* which were often attached to texts of *Snorra Edda*. However, these accounts do not really explain why an Icelandic Christian of the 11th to the 13th centuries felt the need to invent a paganised myth in poetic form about social stratification in Scandinavia. (Iceland had slaves and a free peasantry, but no nobility or king).

¹⁴¹⁴ See Jakob Benediktsson (including references to Olrik and Bugge): 1950-57: XII, 230-31. Bjarni Guðnason makes little attempt to solve the problem (*ÍF* 35: lxiii-iv), referring to Holtsmark 1969, who thought the *Skjöldunga saga* author and Snorri knew *Rígsþula*. See also *Eddukvæði*: I, 276-77, which is inconclusive.

¹⁴¹⁵ Solid lines indicate direct descent and relationship, dotted lines descent through several generations not all of which are given.

A: *RDF/Skjöldunga saga*

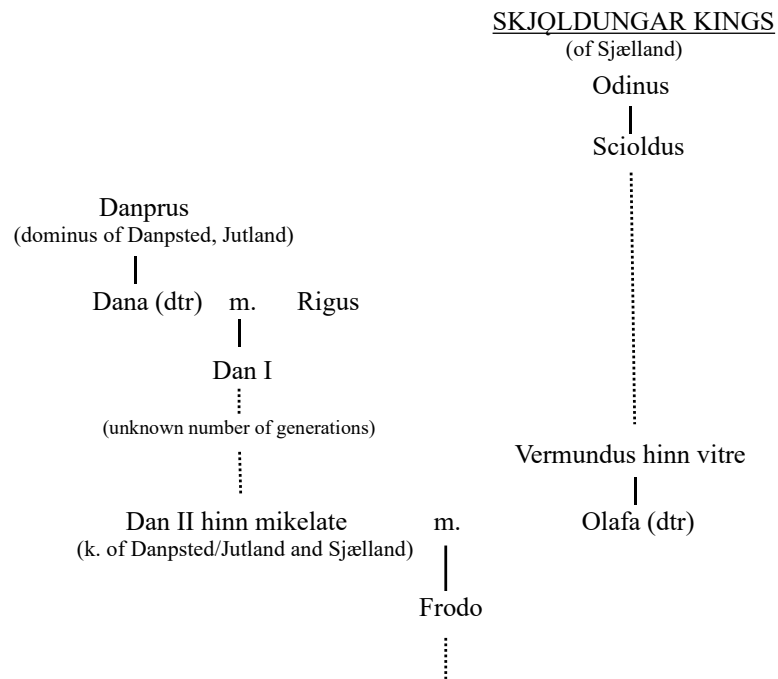


Fig. 7a
Genealogy of Rig and Dan in *RDF/Skjöldunga saga*

B: *Ynglinga saga*

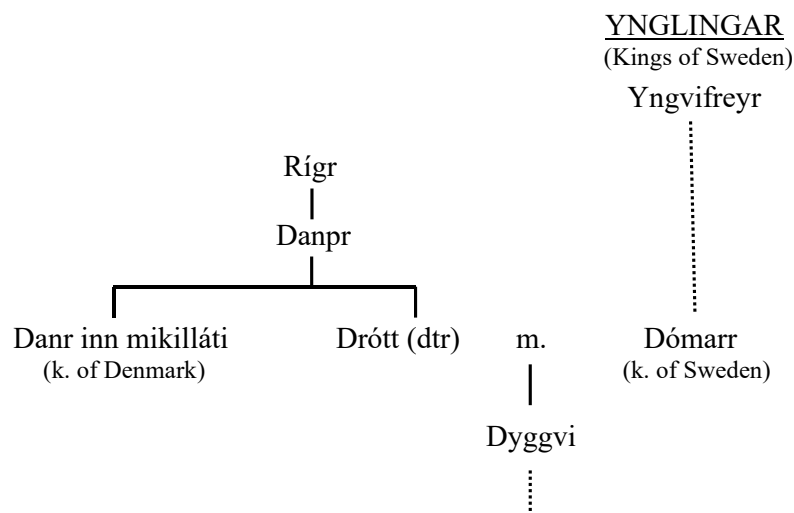


Fig. 7b
Genealogy of Rig and Dan in *Ynglinga saga*

C: *Rígsþula*

As set out above, *Rígsþula* tells us that **Rígr** was the father of Jarl (**Rígr II**), who was the father of **Konr ungr** (**Rígr III**), and also links together **Danr** and **Danpr**, but without describing what

relationship – if any – they have to each other. In v. 46, when Konr ungr (Rígr III) is out idly amusing himself riding and bird-catching, a crow speaks to him and asks if he would not rather ride a horse and slay an army. The crow continues:

Á Danr ok Danpr	1
dýrar hallir,	
œðra óðal	3
en ér hafið;	
þeir kunnu vel	5
kjól at ríða,	
egg at kenna,	7
undir rjúfa.	

Danr and Danpr own precious halls, a nobler estate than you have; they know well how to sail ships, make a sword's edge felt, and rip open wounds.

The surviving text of *Rígsþula* in W ends there, and debate has continued as to how the poem's narrative developed from this suggestion that Konr ungr seek his fortune where Danr and Danpr lived.¹⁴¹⁶ Jakob Benediktsson follows a long list of scholars in representing the pair Danr and Danpr in *Rígsþula* as Danr the father and Danpr the son (as does Bjarni Guðnason).¹⁴¹⁷ Although he admits that the text of the poem does not say this (or that Rígr married a daughter of Danpr), he avers that “it can still scarcely be doubted that the reconstructed form [...] is correct. It also agrees with AJ [= *RDF/Skj.*], as far as it goes, apart from the fact that AJ omits the first Danr”.¹⁴¹⁸ The “correct” reconstruction is given by Jakob Benediktsson as in Fig. 7c (p. 373 below).¹⁴¹⁹ However, I suggest that it is far from certain that this is correct. Without explanation, it requires the increase of *Dans* from two to three, and of *Danprs* from one to two. The identification of Dan I with Danpr is suspiciously convenient, since it provides the join between the two halves of the reconstruction, which is effectively a spatchcock. The somewhat strained implication is that *RDF/Skjöldunga saga* and *Ynglinga saga* both followed the same

¹⁴¹⁶ See Dronke 1997: 176-78, 236-38. The editors of *Eddukvæði* describe this imaginative but involved account as “skáldlegt og skemmtilegt” (“poetic and entertaining”), but do not think that much of the poem has been lost (I, 268-69, fn. 1). See Handrit.is <<https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/da/AM02-0242/0#mode/2up>> [retrieved 18.4.24]. Sigurður Nordal (see reference on Handrit.is website) thought that the leaves containing *Rígsþula* and *Orms Edda* were originally from a quire of eight folios, three of which were lost. However, the beginning of the fragmentary text of *Orms Edda* corresponds to ch. 65 in Anthony Faulkes' edition of *Skáldskaparmál* (Faulkes 2007: I, 105). This suggests that in W, potentially missing are: the remainder of *Rígsþula*, the Prologue to *Snorra Edda*, *Gylfaginning*, and a portion of *Skáldskaparmál* equivalent to 105 pages in a text like Faulkes's. Given the size of this lacuna, it would be bold to speculate how much of *Rígsþula* has been lost (even supposing it was originally included in W in its entirety).

¹⁴¹⁷ Jakob Benediktsson 1950-57: XII, 229-30 (with references), referring to Bugge 1867: 150-51; and see Bjarni Guðnason 1982 (*ÍF* 35): 10, fn.13.

¹⁴¹⁸ Jakob Benediktsson 1950-57: XII, 230.

¹⁴¹⁹ Jakob Benediktsson 1950-57: XII, 231, based on Bugge 1867: 150-151.

tradition, but the author of each forgot to include a different half of it; but where they did coincide, they gave the character they shared two different names (*Dana* and *Drótt*). In the reconstruction, Danr is presumed to be the original progenitor (and father of Danpr) even though *Rígsþula* does not say so, and the other two texts contradict it.

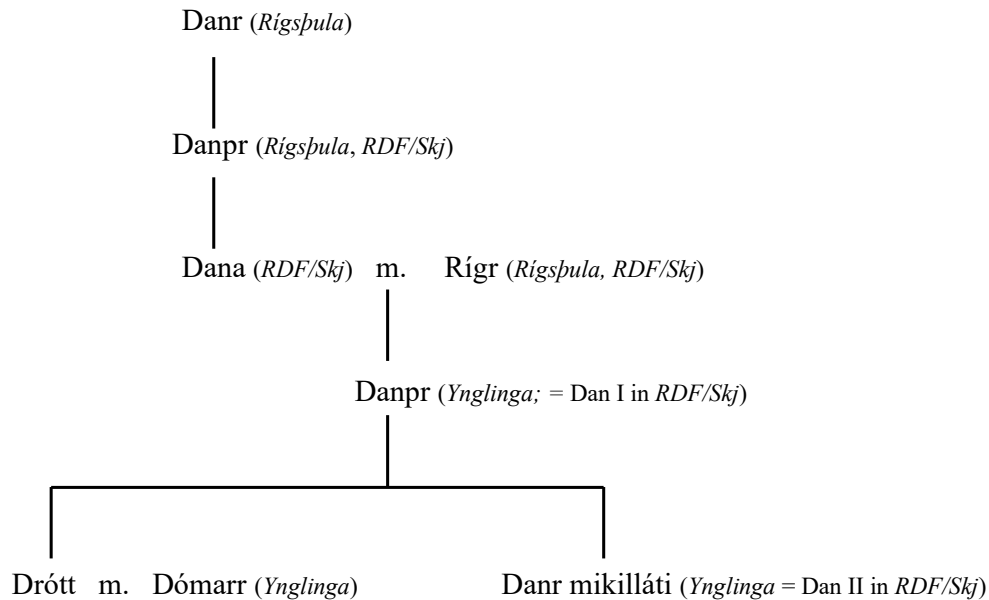


Fig. 7c
Genealogy of Rig and Dan: Bugge/Benediktsson Reconstruction

Presumably the point of the myth or legend underlying these variant versions was that the figure called *Rígr* united himself by marriage with a dynasty including Danr, or he vanquished them and took their hereditary ethno-eponym. *Rígr* then went on to be the king of Denmark (if this was the realm of Danpr/Danr), or sired a line of kings who bore the titles or names *Rígr* and *Danr*, and one of these eventually became king of Denmark. As *Danr* is the source of “Dane”, this ethnonym ought to derive from *Danr* not from *Danpr* (whether an ancestor or a descendant). This is confirmed by the evidence of Danpr’s non-Danish origins. In *RDF/Skjöldunga saga* Danpr is Danprus of Danpsted, and *Danpsted* seems to be the same as *Danparstaðir* named in *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* and *Atlakviða*, where it refers to the abode of the Goths or the Huns in what is now Ukraine.¹⁴²⁰ However, Arngrímur says that Danpsted

¹⁴²⁰ See *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, ch. 11; Turville Petre 1976: 52, 56: *á Danparstöðum* and *á stöðum Danpar*, referring to the home of the Goths in Ukraine, and probably meaning “on the banks of the Dnjepr” (*ibid.*: 83). See also *Atlakviða* v. 5/6, *ok staði Danpar*, which was part of Atli the Hun’s treacherous offering of great lands in the east to the Niflungar as an inducement to come to his home. The tradition in *Hervarar saga* was that Angantýr was the king of the Goths and his capital of Árheimar was in Danparstaðir in Reiðgotaland (ch. 11, 13, 15; Turville-Petre 1976: 52, 54, 61, 65, 67; notes at 83).

is in Dania (Denmark) and in particular in Jutia (Jutland), which the Norwegians call *Reiðgotaland*. But the testimony of *Hervarar saga* suggests that Danpsted or Danpsstaðir was long established as a place in the history of the Goths (wherever it was imagined to be), and is modelled on a real name, that of the river Dnieper (*Danaper* in Latin sources). We have already discussed the tradition that Reiðgotaland was Jutland or somewhere on the Baltic coast.¹⁴²¹

The king who ruled at Danpsstaðir was believed to be Danpr – either as a folk-etymological back-formation from the hydronym *Dnieper*, or as an ethno-eponym based on the ethnonym of the people who lived there, the **Danp(r)ar* or “Dnieper people”. I would therefore suggest it would be more probable that the name *Danr* was derived by folk-etymology from *Danpr*, a name with a clear, non-Danish onomastic origin. This is supported by two out of our three texts, which suggest that Danpr was the father of Danr (the third, *Rígsþula*, being equivocal). This suggests that the interpretation to be favoured is that *Danr* – with his ethno-eponym proclaiming his proto-Danishness – was a name distilled from *Danpr*, rather than the other way round; that is, according to the construction of this myth, the Danes were an offshoot of the Dniepr people, both historically and etymologically.

Thus, I suggest we can conjecturally represent *Rígsþula* and its continuation as follows:

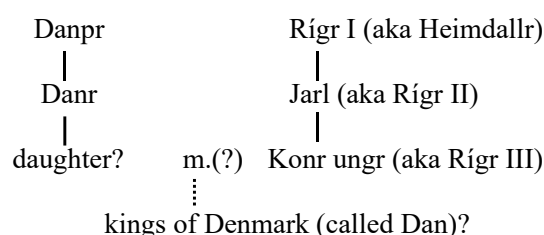


Fig. 7d
Genealogy of Rig and Dan in *Rígsþula*

The *Eddukvæði* editors note the perplexing relationship between *Rígsþula* and the royal traditions of kingship in *Skjöldunga saga* and *Ynglinga saga* and suggest that there was a narrative or poetic tradition in which earls developed into kings, the theme of which was reflected in *Rígsþula*; and later this notion was adapted to learned histories of the kings of the Danes and Swedes. They consider that *Skjöldunga saga* influenced Snorri and refer to the conclusion of Bjarni Guðnason that Arngrímur relied on *Skjöldunga saga* which had used *Rígsþula* as a source.¹⁴²²

¹⁴²¹ For Jute-Goth confusion and the complexities of what and where Reiðgotaland was (whether Jutland or on the Baltic coast) see pp. 187-88, 192, 252-53 (and fn. 998) below.

¹⁴²² See *Eddukvæði*: I, 276-79 and *ÍF* 35: li-lii.

However, I suggest that if *Rígsþula* was a source for *Skjöldunga saga*, and *Skjöldunga saga* a source for *Ynglinga saga*, they should show a greater measure of agreement than they do with regard to the relationships between two or three characters only.¹⁴²³ The facts that they do not, and cannot be convincingly reconciled with one another, suggest, I argue, that they derive from an earlier source or narrative common to all of them, and that their respective authors either adapted the contents of that source independently to suit their needs, or the source did not provide them with the information they needed and so each author worked it out differently for himself. However, I also argue that the question of *Rígs* or *Rígr* is also connected intimately with the figure of Offa, as can be seen from closer inspection of *RDF/Skjöldunga saga*, which turns out to contain an unlikely reflex of Offa I.

5.3.1 *Skjöldunga saga* and the Appearance (and Disappearance) of Offa

We can see from Fig. 8 and Table 12 (pp. 376-77 below) how the Skjöldung succession is represented in *RDF/Skjöldunga saga*, as it affects Dan and Uffo (who appears in forms of the name *Óláfr*).¹⁴²⁴ Table 12 indicates the way in which the different narratives have been spliced together, as can be seen from various Icelandic genealogical texts with respect to the Skjöldungar. The following colour-coded key to Fig. 8 and Table 12 provides a guide to how these narratives fit within the overall genealogy.

	The Scylding narrative of <i>Beowulf</i>
	The pre-Scyld Finnsburh Narrative, shared by <i>FEp</i> , <i>FFr</i> and <i>RDF/Skjöldunga saga</i> (alluded to in <i>Beowulf</i> and <i>Widsith</i>)
	The narrative of Wermund and Offa of Angel
	The narrative of Dan and Rig
	The narrative of Froda and Ingeld the Heathobeards
	Danish genealogical narratives from a later period attached to the Skjöldung narrative

¹⁴²³ Arngrímur Jónsson got W (containing *Rígsþula*) from his relative, bishop Guðbrandur Þorláksson, and used it for his treatise on Iceland, *Crymogæa*, published in 1609. Arngrímur lent it to Magnús Ólafsson (who used it for his edition of the *Poetic Edda*). In 1628 Arngrímur sent W to the Danish antiquarian Ole Worm, who kept it. See Handrit.is <<https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/da/AM02-0242/0#mode/2up>> [retrieved 18.4.24]. However, there is no evidence from *RDF* that Arngrímur had W or knew *Rígsþula* in 1596, when he wrote *RDF*.

¹⁴²⁴ In Fig. 8 the Skjöldung succession in *RDF/Skjöldunga saga* is given, with superscript numbers indicating the order of succession and blocs of colour indicating the separate narratives that have been fitted together – as in the key above.

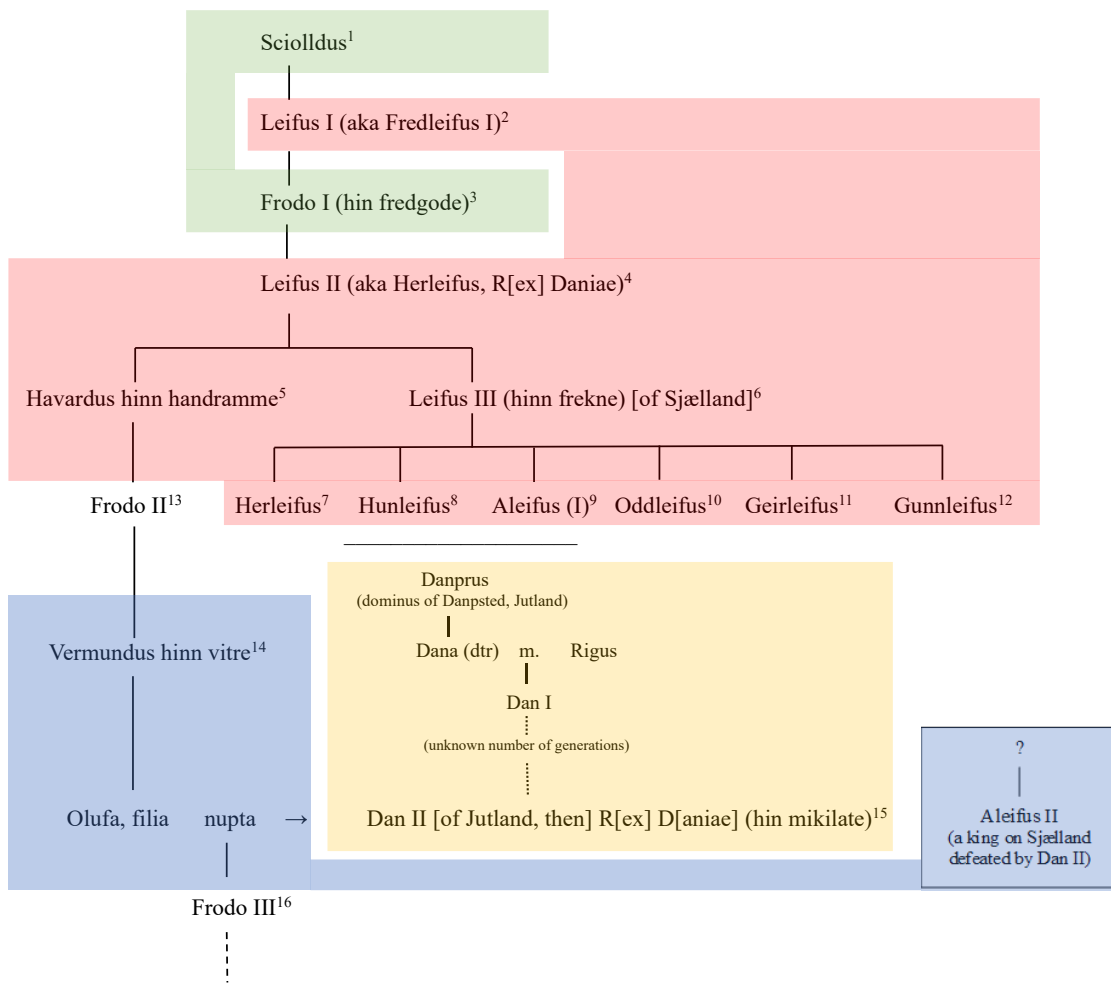


Fig. 8
Skjöldung Succession in *Rǫgvis/Skjöldunga saga* (up to Frodo III)

<i>Resen</i>	<i>Langfeðgatal</i>	<i>Ættartala</i>	<i>ÆHfrA</i>	<i>RDF/Skjöldunga saga</i>	<i>Beowulf/Widsith</i>
[Odinn]	Oden	Odinn	Odinn	Odinus	Scef (?), Sceaƿa
Sciavldr (s.)	Skioldr (s.)	Skioldr (s.)	Skioldr (s.)	Scioldus (s.)	Scyld
Fridleif (s.)	Fríðleifr (s.)	Fridleifr (s.)	Fridleifr (s.)	Leifus I (Fridleifus) (s.)	
Fríðfroði (s.)	Fríðfroðe (s.)	Fridfrodi (s.)	Fridfrodi (s.)	Frodo I fredgode (s.)	Beow
Fríðleifr (s.)	Fríðleifr (s.)	Fridleifr	Herleifr (s.)	Leifus II (Herleifus) (s.)	
Havarr handrame (s.)	Havar handrami (s.)	Hauardr enn handrammi (s.)	Hauar enn handrammi (s.)	Havardus hinn handramme (s.)	
				Leifus III hinn frækne (br. of Havardus)	
				6 brothers (ss. of Leifus III)	
Froðe (s.)	Froðe (s.)	Frodi (s.)	Frodi (s.)	Frodo II (s. of Havardus)	
Varmundr vitri (s.)	Varmundr vitri (s.)	Vermundr enn vitri (s.)	Vemundr enn vitri (s.)	Vermundus (s.)	Garmund (?)
Olafr litillati (s.)	Olafr litillate (s.)	Olafr enn litilláti (s.)	Olof (d. of Vermundr)	Olafa (d. of Vermundus)	Offa
Danr mikilate (not s. of Olafr)	Danr mikillate (s.)	Danr enn mikillati (s.)		[Dan II hinn mikilate (m. to Olafa)]	
Froði fríðsami (s. of Danr)	Froðe fríðsami (s.)	Frodi enn fríðsami (s.)	Frodi enn fríðsami (s. of Olof)	Frodo III (s. of Dan II)	
Fríðleifr (s.)	Fríðleifr (s.)	Fridleifr (s.)	Fridleifr (s.)	Fridleifus II + Halfdanus I (ss. and bros.)	Healfdene
Froði enn frækni (s.)	Froðe frækni (s.)	Frodi enn frækni (s.)	Frodi enn frækni (s.)	Alo + Frodo IV (½ bros, ss. of Fridleifus)	Alewið = Heremod, Froda
Ingjaldr starcaðar fostri (s.)	Ingjaldr Starkaðarfostri (s.)	Ingjaldr Starkaðarfostri (s.)		Ingjaldus + Halfdanus II (½ bros, ss. of Frodo)	Ingeld, Healfdene
Halfdan (bro. of Ingjaldr)	Halfdan (bro. of Ingjaldr)		Halfdan (s.)		
Helgi, Hroarr (bros, ss. of Halfdan)	Helgi, Hroar (bros, ss. of Halfdan)		Hroar (s.)	Helgo + Roð (bros, ss. of Halfdanus)	Halga, Hrothgar, Hrethric
Hrolfr kraci (s. of Helgi)	Rolfr kraci (s. of Helgi)			Rolfo krag (s. of Helgo)	Hrothulf (s. of Halga)
Hrækr hræggvanbægi (s. of Ingjaldr)	Hrækr hræggvan bægi (s. of Ingjaldr)	Hrækr hræggvanbægi		Hiorwardus (rel. of Helgo's cous. Rærecus)	Hecroweard, Hrethric
Haraldr hillitann (s.)	Haraldr hillitann (s.)	Halfdanr (s.)	Valdar enn milldi (s.)	Waldarus (rel. of unknown Waldemarus)	

Table 12¹⁴²⁵
Comparative Table of Icelandic Skjöldung Genealogies (with *Beowulf* and *Widsith*)

From Fig 8 and Table 12 it can be seen how the child of Wērmund is represented as *Offa* in the English texts (the earliest), and in the Icelandic texts either as the male *Óláfr litilláti*, or as the female *Olof/Olafa/Olufa* (Arngrímur spells her name as both *Olufa* and *Olafa*). These names correspond to *Wermundus* and *Uffo* in the Danish texts *BHD*, *GD*, *AnnR* and the *Codex Runicus*.¹⁴²⁶ It does not require complex argument to demonstrate that in these traditions Offa the son of Wērmund is the same person as Uffo and also Óláfr litilláti. Saxo himself observed that most people believed the character of Uffo to be the *Olauus* who was named *mansuetus* (“the mild”), from his spirit of moderation – that is, Óláfr litilláti.¹⁴²⁷ His comment suggests that while this was likely enough as a deduction, it was not obvious and needed to be said. It is also evident that in *ÆHfrA* and *Skjöldunga saga* the daughter of Vermundr, named *Olafa*, *Olufa* or *Olof*, is a female replacement of Vermundr’s son Óláfr, with a feminised form of his name.

¹⁴²⁵ Table 12, sources:

- (1) *Resen*: lost MS containing genealogies in the library of Danish scholar Peder Resen, copied by Árni Magnússon (in Faulkes 2005a: 118).
- (2) *Langfeðgatal*: an Icelandic genealogy from MS AM 415 4^{to} (in Kålund 1917-18: 58-59).
- (3) Cols. 3 and 4 are genealogies from the texts entitled *Ættartala* (“family list”) and *Ætt Haralds frá Adam* (“Haraldr [finehair’s] family from Adam”) in *Flateyjarbok* (Unger and Vigfusson 1860-68: I, 26-27).

I have argued that *Garmund* in col. 5 (as in *Beowulf*, l. 1962) is not – as universally supposed – Wermund the father of Offa, but either Offa, or Offa’s father-in-law, Hemming (see pp. 290-300 above). However, for the sake of argument here I follow the conventional view. Scef is queried as the father of Scyld, whose surname is *Scēfing* in *Beowulf*. The identity of Scef is a vexed matter (see, most recently, Leneghan 2020: 39-46, 139-51).

¹⁴²⁶ See Table 5 (p. 157) and Table 7 (p. 292) above.

¹⁴²⁷ *GD*, IV.5.1; Friis-Jensen and Fisher 2015: I, 242-44.

However, the genealogical traditions diverge with respect to the son of the Offa-character. In *Langfeðgatal* and *Ættartala* Dan is the successor and son of Óláfr (as he is in *BHD* and *GD*). In the genealogy in the Resen MS Dan succeeds Óláfr but is not his son (as in *RDF/Skjöldunga saga*). In *ÆHfrA* there is no Dan at all (possibly he was the husband of Olof and father of Fróði, but was omitted because he was not a Skjöldung king). In *AnnR* the son and successor of Uffo is called both *Olaf* and *Dan*. These would all seem to be different solutions to the problem of how to continue the Skjöldung succession after either Vermundr or Óláfr/Uffo, who (we must remember) were originally not Danes but Angles, and as such must be insertions into the Skjöldung narrative.

As we see in Fig. 8 above, in *Skjöldunga saga*, there is a king called Aleifus (II) who rules on Sjælland. This is a Latinisation of *Áleifr*, a side-form of *Óláfr*, of which *Offa* was an English hypocorism.¹⁴²⁸ Aleifus II rules on Sjælland, which was the traditional centre of power of the Scyldings/*Skjöldungar*, who ruled at Hleiðrar (Lejre), the site of *Beowulf*'s Heorot, or close to it. It is an unexplained oddity of *RDF/Skjöldunga saga* that Dan II, a Jutlander who is married to a daughter of Vermundr, supposedly a Skjöldung king of Lejre on Sjælland, should defeat some other king of Sjælland, who appears in isolation, is given no provenance, but has the same place of rule as a Skjöldung king, and has the same name as Óláfr, the son of king Vermundr in other Scandinavian genealogical traditions. It is likely that this represents a version of the narrative behind the Resen MS genealogy in which Dan follows Óláfr lítilláti but is not his son, and therefore, by implication, is a usurper or successor by conquest.

Aleifus II is the second person of that name in *RDF/Skjöldunga saga*. Aleifus I can be seen in Fig. 8, where he is of a different generation and parentage. Olrik said (but only in a footnote) that Arngrímur had become confused by his source and had erroneously duplicated the characters called *Dan* and *Aleifus*.¹⁴²⁹ Jakob Benediktsson agreed, stating that Arngrímur or his source had perpetrated a “misunderstanding of family relationships”.¹⁴³⁰ But Arngrímur himself considered and rejected the argument that Aleifus I and II were the same man.¹⁴³¹ He pointed out (as can be seen in Fig. 8, p. 376 above) that they were not of the same generation (even if they were related). Of course, he was not aware that Aleifus II came from the extraneous narrative tradition of the Angles. If Arngrímur did not explain the unknown generations between Dan I and Dan II, he is not to be accused of confusion: no one else has

¹⁴²⁸ See pp. 112-23 above.

¹⁴²⁹ Olrik 1894: 158, fn. 1.

¹⁴³⁰ Jakob Benediktsson 1950-57: XII, 228; 1957-1961: 58.

¹⁴³¹ *RDF*, ch. 7; *ÍF* 35: 10-11 – quoted at p. 405 below.

been able to either, and this was probably a mysterious feature of *Skjoldunga saga* too. As I shall argue below, the existence of Dans I and II may be explained as the use of an ethno-eponym to create two persons in the same royal line both of whom bore a “Danish” ethnicity, which line was destined to vanquish its enemies and create an empire which was the foundation of Denmark.

5.3.2 The Stories of Rig: Intertextual Relationships

The correspondence of *Riganus* and *Rígr/Rigus* might be dismissed as a coincidence of names. However, the name is only one element in a complex of motival resemblances which indicate a relationship in theme and narrative. I suggest that examination of this relationship shows us how different, but related, myths of the origins of Danish kingship were constructed using the Offa story, and that a crucial part of this construct was the name which find in English, Icelandic and Danish texts as *Rig* and its reflexes. I further suggest that the only likely reason for the occurrence of this name in these texts is a common origin in English narrative material connected to the Offa story.

The Icelandic *Skjoldung* tradition and *VOD* share the following motifs associated with *Rigus/Rígr* and *Riganus*:

Motifs I

- (1) They both have a character called Rig.
- (2) Rig is warlike and ambitious.
- (3) Rig is a nobleman with aspirations to be a king.
- (4) Rig has a connection with the royal family of Wērmund and Offa to which he is an outsider. He also has a subordinate position. (In *VOD* *Riganus* is represented as an nobleman subject to Warmundus; in *Skjoldunga saga* he is an ancestor of Dan II, the son-in-law of Vermundus).
- (5) Rig (or his descendant Dan II) supplants or attempts to supplant Wērmund’s posterity with his own.
- (6) There is a conflict between Rig and/or his family and Offa. (In *VOD* this is *Riganus* and his sons; in *Skjoldunga saga* it is Dan II, a descendant of Rig, who defeats Aleifus II).
- (7) The conflict between Offa and Rig involves full battle.

VOD coincides with the Danish Uffo-tradition with the following motifs:

Motifs II

- (1) Offa has a disability (dumbness or dumbness and blindness), and his dumbness continues to the border of maturity.
- (2) Offa suddenly overcomes his disability as a result of shame, anger and the threat to his country, just in time to save his country.
- (3) The Riganus figure presents the same threat to Offa's kingdom that Athislus does. But although Riganus is killed, he is not killed by Offa (as Athislus is not killed by Uffo).
- (4) Offa fights and kills two men. This pair includes at least one person who is the son of his chief opponent.
- (4) The fight takes place by a river. (Also *Widsith*).
- (5) Offa's victory results in his rule over a kingdom which requires and receives fealty from those within and neighbouring it, and probably in the acquisition of land from the defeated. (Also *Widsith*).
- (6) Offa does nothing heroic after his initial successes (though he may be a good ruler).
- (7) Offa's posterity involves an element of change. (In *VOD* there is a collapse of his kingdom, with rebellions and desertions of his vassals; after him is a series of undistinguished kings; in Saxo and Sven his successor is Dan II mikilláti).

Motifs I involve the absorption and/or defeat of the Anglian characters. This is associated with the character of Rig and his posterity (in the shape of Dan II) in the Icelandic texts; and in *VOD* these motifs are associated with the danger to the Anglian kingdom from the army of Riganus (in which there is no duel but a battle). By contrast, Motifs II are concerned with Offa's duel, his victory and salvation of the kingdom of the Angles, and perhaps with a posterity that was undistinguished or involved failure. Motifs I focus on the latter part of the Offa story, with no heroic prelude; whereas Motifs II focus on the early glorious prelude, avoiding a clear narrative of his later reign and its aftermath, though with the implication that all did not go well later.

5.3.2.1 Conclusions

VOD is to some extent the odd-man-out in the Offa narratives. It has no formal duel, whereas this is perhaps the most striking feature of the Offa story in *Widsith*, *GD* and *BHD*; and even

in *Beowulf* he is called a *geong cempa* – a word which specifically means “champion” in the “single combat” sense.¹⁴³² However, Offa does take on two men in combat, which suggests that two elements are being combined in one scene: the two-against-one duel with the son of the enemy leader; and a more general engagement with a figure, Riganus, whose name imports “king”. Although the two have become inextricably intermixed in *VOD*, it may be that this mélange contains the vestige of a tradition of a final conflict between the forces of Angel and of Rig. Although *VOD* and *Skjöldunga saga* – on a superficial view – appear to have almost nothing in common, they both share this theme, as we shall see below.

The differences in the various versions of the Offa story are considerable (to say the least), and they still differ irreconcilably even where we can identify an important correspondence in names – as with *Rígr* and *Riganus*. However, in the following section I shall argue that there is a quite simple solution to the discrepancies, based on the different authorial ideologies to which the Offa-story was adapted. In essence it is this:

- (1) In the Icelandic and Danish Offa-traditions (respectively) there were two different Offas. In Iceland he was the meek loser Ólafr lítilláti conquered by the non-Skjöldung Dan. In Denmark he was the heroic Uffo, who defeated his enemies and fathered a son and successor called Dan.
- (2) These versions of Offa were prototypes adapted from an Offa-tradition that was extant in England in the second half of the twelfth century.
- (3) The Rig-character featured in the Icelandic versions of the Offa-story, in which the Offa-figure was not a Skjöldung and was a nugatory character who was vanquished by the non-Skjöldung family of Rígr, which was also that of his descendant Dan.
- (4) The Rig-character was expunged from the version of the Offa-story in Danish histories, because in these Uffo was to be a great Skjöldung hero whose throne passed peacefully to his son, Dan.

It therefore follows, I suggest, that when the theme of the usurpation of Offa’s kingdom disappears, so does the *Rig* character. He is not mentioned in *Widsith* or *Beowulf*, and so we have no evidence one way or other as to when he became part of the Offa-narrative. Perhaps he – or someone like him – was a feature from the earliest versions of the Offa-story, since, as I shall argue, the evidence as a whole suggests that after Offa’s glorious reign the kingdom of

¹⁴³² *Beowulf* 1948b. See Neidorf 2020b on this word in *FFr* 14. Via Frankish and French, the originally Gmc word **kampijō* gave English “champion”, i.e. the king’s nominee to fight in a single or judicial combat.

the Continental Angles succumbed to assault; and its assailants – in both history and literature – were likely to be the Danes. Alternatively, Ríg (or his name) may have been a later insertion.

5.3.3 The Origins of the Icelandic and Danish Offa-Stories

In the sections above I have attempted to account for the treatment of the figure of Ríg in Icelandic texts, and in particular the evidence which suggests that this was an inheritance of a narrative tradition from elsewhere – namely the English Offa-story. Now I propose to broaden the enquiry to consider the origins of the Offa-story which appeared at some time towards the end of the twelfth century in England, Iceland and Denmark. The conclusion which I shall suggest is that the story of Uffo, as alluded to in Icelandic stories, and as told by Sven, Saxo and in *AnnR*, originated in the story of Offa as it existed in England in the late twelfth century and was carried to Scandinavia by Icelanders.

Scholars have differed about the relationships (or lack of them) between *VOD* and the Danish narratives. Müllenhoff thought that the correspondences between the different Offa-traditions (especially with regard to the periods of blindness and dumbness of Offa/Uffo) were coincidental.¹⁴³³ Olrik thought that *VOD* influenced the Danish tradition¹⁴³⁴ (although it is likely that Sven and Saxo wrote before it was composed). Boberg argued that the English story influenced the Danish versions.¹⁴³⁵ But Herrmann had earlier found *VOD*'s and Sven's narratives very different, and thought it unlikely that Sven – if influenced by *VOD* – would have set his story in Jutland when in *VOD* it takes place in England. Following Heusler,¹⁴³⁶ he said: “the English account of the heroic life long pre-dates the Danish”.¹⁴³⁷ Indeed, it is impossible to imagine how Sven or Saxo could have recovered their story of Uffo from a text like *VOD*. It is also plain from a comparison of Saxo's text with Sven's that although they are very closely related, Saxo included more material in the Uffo story than is found in Sven, and thus was not dependent on him, but more probably on a fuller source or tradition that was common to them both.

This would be an academic question of a not especially interesting kind, except that the correspondence between the names *Riganus*, *Rigus* and *Rígr* complicates things even more.

¹⁴³³ Müllenhoff 1889: 79-80.

¹⁴³⁴ Olrik 1892: 184, fn.

¹⁴³⁵ Boberg 1942-43. See also Schütte 1942-43.

¹⁴³⁶ As reported by Johannes Hoops, presumably in his *Reallexikon* (Herrmann 1901-22: II, 298-99). I have not been able to locate the original comment by Hoops.

¹⁴³⁷ “Vor allem steht der englische Bericht an heroischem Leben tief unter dem dänischen” (Herrmann 1901-22: II, 298-99).

VOD and the Icelandic *Skjöldunga* texts (themselves irreconcilable with each other) must be somehow related, but *VOD* is too different from the Uffo story in *BHD*, *GD* and *AnnR* to be plausible as a source. How can this possibly be explained?

Approaching the issue from the point of view of meaning – or perhaps authorial ideology – rather than abstract intertextual mechanics, I suggest that we can see that each of the texts in the Icelandic tradition – *Skjöldunga saga*, *Ynglinga saga* and *Rígsþula* – needed in its own way to encompass a narrative in which Ríg was connected to Dan. In addition, *Skjöldunga saga* needed to reconcile Dan with the Anglian narrative of Wērmund and his successors. In all three texts, and the Danish chronicle histories, the king who needed to come out on top following the reign of Wērmund was Dan, whose job it was to unite Denmark and give the country and its people his name. In the Danish texts Dan is simply the son and successor of the Skjöldung Uffo. But in *Skjöldunga saga* (and implicitly in *Ynglinga saga* and *Rígsþula*) Dan, the descendant of Ríg, is an outsider. In *Skjöldunga saga* his legitimacy is created by his marriage to a Skjöldung princess. But as we have seen, he defeats the non-Skjöldung Aleifus II, who is actually a reflex of Offa I; and so the creator of this narrative disguised the usurpation of Offa as an act which completed Skjöldung hegemony by means of the conquests of a Skjöldung princess's husband whose son would be a Skjöldung – thus creating (if by sleight of hand) the ideologically necessary appearance of Skjöldung continuity.

If the preserved text of *Rígsþula* is truncated, it suggests – I argue – that the lost continuation contained a narrative in which *Rígr* was a title borne by imperial conquerors who, by marriage, became part of the family of Danpr and Danr and later insinuated themselves – in the person of Dan II – into the line of the Skjöldungar, making them truly “Dan-ish”. If I am wrong, and *Rígsþula* is complete or almost complete as a largely mythological poem, I would argue that it nonetheless still refers to just such a narrative, but in the form of an allusion as to its future. In this tradition, Dan II, the conqueror, is from a lineage which unites the name *Dan* with the name or title *Rigus*, *Rígr* or (as in *VOD*) *Riganus*. His destiny in *Skjöldunga saga* (and implicitly in *Rígsþula* and *Ynglinga saga*) is to create a maximal Danish empire and rule it, expunging the power of other rulers, one of whom is the reflex of Offa of Angel (*RDF*'s Aleifus II). The remarkable concurrence of this tradition with the Offa narrative existing in England is that in *VOD* the cognate name *Riganus* belongs to a satrap or *subregulus* who is a challenger to the throne of Anglia of which Offa is a prince. Despite the fact that Riganus does not succeed, the correspondence of his name with *Rigus* and *Rígr* is, I argue, beyond coincidence and constitutes strong evidence of a direct relationship between the English and the Icelandic narratives.

A less important, but still telling, sign of interrelationship of the texts is the motif of Offa's blindness and dumbness, with its remarkable correspondences in numbers (see below). As I have suggested above, the Icelandic texts chose a solution in which the Offa-figure was downgraded and almost effaced by Dan II. However, the Danish authors of *BHD*, *GD* and *AnnR* preferred the narrative of Offa the hero, and downgraded the role of Dan (of the family of Rig) from that of his conqueror to that of his son and successor. These were, as I shall further suggest, prototype solutions to the question of the proto-story of the Danish monarchy, but all based on a common, English original.

5.3.4 England, Iceland and Denmark: Who Influenced Whom?

VOD – in its present form – was composed in the first half of the thirteenth century. The band of dates for the composition of *Skjöldunga saga* stretches from c. 1180 to the 1220s;¹⁴³⁸ Sven Aggesen wrote not long after 1185, and Saxo completed his *Gesta Danorum* in the years 1208-19,¹⁴³⁹ though perhaps he had been composing since the 1180s;¹⁴⁴⁰ and Snorri wrote *Ynglinga saga* (part of his *Heimskringla*) in the 1220s. *Rígsþula* cannot be dated with confidence.¹⁴⁴¹

As can be seen from these datings, *VOD* would have to have been hot off the press to have influenced Saxo or Snorri, but was likely too late to have influenced Sven. However, as we have seen, several orthographical forms of names in *VOD* potentially point to a pre-Conquest Anglo-Saxon original: *Pinefredus* in error for *Pinefred*, the Old English weak masculine name-forms **Riga* (implied by *Riganburne* and *Riganus*) and Offa (implied by *Offanus*), and the place-names *Qualmweld* and *Qualmhul*. This makes it highly unlikely, I suggest, that *VOD*'s source could have been influenced by Scandinavian texts; though it does not exclude the possibility that the source for *VOD* – or the narrative tradition about Offa on which *VOD* was based – influenced the Scandinavian texts. And it is on this last possibility that I focus.

There is some evidence to support the contention that the Offa story was a late export from England to Scandinavia in the considerable points of similarity between the Danish and the English traditions in the details of Uffo/Offa's disabilities – *pace* Müllenhoff. In *BHD* Uffo is dumb until he is thirty, in *AnnR* he is wilfully dumb from age seven to thirty, and in *VOD* he is blind until he is seven and dumb until he is thirty. In each of these narratives his famous duel

¹⁴³⁸ *ÍF* 35, li-llii.

¹⁴³⁹ Friis-Jensen and Fisher 2015: I, xxxiv.

¹⁴⁴⁰ *ÍF* 35: ix.

¹⁴⁴¹ See p. 140 and fn. 518, and p. 370 and fn. 1413 above.

takes place when he is thirty – or possibly twenty-nine in *VOD*, since peace reigns for five years after his victory, and he is said to be nearly thirty-four.¹⁴⁴² Rather than coincidence, these correspondences suggest that numbers can be remarkably durable in the transmission of narratives. Either they endured from an early stage of the narrative, or they have been shared between England and Denmark at a later stage. The latter possibility may be preferable, since in *Widsith* 38-39 Offa was said to have achieved his empire-building victory, David-like, in a duel, *ærest monna // cniht wesende* “the earliest (that is, youngest) among men, being a boy”, indicating that he was younger – or at least younger than one would expect – rather than a reasonably mature lummoX of about thirty.¹⁴⁴³

The choice of the age of thirty for his feat by the Eider suggests that the earlier motif of him as a boy has been replaced by one of his achieving just the right level of maturity to rule, at which convenient point the last of his disabilities miraculously vanishes. The illegitimate Æthelstan was acclaimed as king on his father Edward’s death, commended not by lawful birth but by his age of thirty and his maturity.¹⁴⁴⁴ Edgar became king aged sixteen, but (perhaps as an act of piety) was not consecrated until a ceremony held in 973, when he was thirty,¹⁴⁴⁵ the age “below which no one could canonically be ordained to the priesthood”.¹⁴⁴⁶

But these Anglo-Saxon traditions of thirty as the age for royal maturity are not the only evidence we have considered with respect to potential English origin. As I have argued, the phonology and forms of the names *Vermundr/Wermundus*, *Uffo*, *Frowinus/Frewinus* and *Skrep* all point to non-Scandinavian, West Germanic origin. The story of Wigo and Keto’s duel with Athislus has very strong motival resemblances to that of Wulf and Eofor with Ongenþēow in *Beowulf*. There are also striking similarities in the motifs in the Offa-episode in *Beowulf* and the story of Alf and Alvilda in *GD*. It is also remarkable that figures known in England only from regnal lists appear in much later Danish texts. A reflex of the name *Wihlæg* (known only

¹⁴⁴² Swanton 2010: 21. On these correspondences, see Herrmann 1901-22: II, 298-99.

¹⁴⁴³ While seven might simply be a conventional number in folk-narrative (seven dwarfs, the seventh son of a seventh son etc), in *Beowulf* 2428 it was the age at which Hrēpel took over the care of Bēowulf, his grandson, but a boy who was thought to be a slacker until his uncle Hygelāc showed him honour (ll. 2183b-99). Bēowulf, Offa and the Icelandic saga-hero Grettir Ásmundarson (*Grettis saga* is usually recognised as an analogic text to *Beowulf*) share the motif of the young hero who is despised as unpromising. And in this context, the age of seven may have been seen as the end of infancy, when a child could be fostered. But this developmental and cultural milestone is meaningless for Offa who is still dumb from that age (even supposing there were a relative available to take him on).

¹⁴⁴⁴ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum* (ch. 133; Mynors *et al.* 1998: I, 210): *Tunc, jussu patris et testamento, Ethelstanus in regem acclamatus est, quem iam tricennalis ætas et sapientiæ maturitas commendabant*, “Then, according to the order and will of his father, Æthelstan was acclaimed as king, commended by his age of thirty years and the maturity of his wisdom”.

¹⁴⁴⁵ *Gesta regum Anglorum*, ch. 160; Mynors *et al.* 1998: I, 260.

¹⁴⁴⁶ Stenton 1971: 368

from Mercian regnal lists) appears as *Viglecus*, *Wichlecus* and *Uipleþ* in *GD*, *AnnR* and the *Codex Runicus* respectively. Frēawine and Wīg from the Wessex list appear as Frowinus/Frewinus and Wig/Wiggo in *GD* and *AnnR*, closely associated with an Offa-narrative which appears in *GD*, *AnnR* and *BHD*. Most striking of all, I argue, is the correspondence of the name *Riganus* as *Rigus* and *Rígr*, all appearing in texts connected with Danish hegemony over Jutland and the downfall of the kingdom of Angel.

Consideration of these factors leads me to argue that it is unlikely in the extreme that Danes, Icelanders and the various authors of a considerable range of English texts over several centuries were all relying on ancient traditions common to them all. I shall suggest rather that the Offa story came to be part of *Skjöldung* history as it was constructed in Denmark under Valdemar I (r. 1154-82), by a conscious adoption of narrative traditions about ancient Denmark that were still current in England by the end of the twelfth century but which had been lost or changed out of all recognition in Iceland and Denmark. For twelfth-century Danish patriots, like Sven and Saxo, who were eager to reconstruct a glorious history of Danish kingship, Offa provided the perfect pattern of a man who could be claimed to be a proto-Dane and whose story, as known to the English, included the congenial theme of giving his bad neighbours to the south – presumably the Saxons – a bloody nose.

5.3.5 Storytellers from Iceland

Bjarni Guðnason considered *Skjöldunga saga* to be a product of the vogue for the writing of national histories in northern Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.¹⁴⁴⁷ Of medieval histories written in Britain, Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae* had travelled to Iceland, where it was put into the vernacular (c. 1200) as *Breta sögur*.¹⁴⁴⁸ Bjarni also suggested that the Icelandic cleric Páll Jónsson may have had a part in composing *Skjöldunga saga* or even wrote it himself. Páll was a member of the influential clan of the Oddaverjar, from Rangárvellir in southern Iceland, which included the historian Sæmundr fróði Sigfússon, who was Páll's great-grandfather. Sæmundr's son Loftr had married Þóra, a natural daughter of the Norwegian king Magnús III berfœttr. Loftr's son Jón (Páll's father) was a great chieftain who enjoyed considerable popularity (according to *Sturlunga saga*). From about 1175 to 1180, Páll was a student in England, possibly at the cathedral school at Lincoln, where his maternal uncle Þorlákr helgi Þorhallsson (also his predecessor as bishop of Skálholt, 1178-93) had been not

¹⁴⁴⁷ *ÍF* 35: vii-viii.
¹⁴⁴⁸ *ÍF* 35: viii.

too long before.¹⁴⁴⁹ Páll returned to Iceland with the reputation of a poet and very well-read man. In 1195 he went to Lund (a Danish archbishopric in what is now southern Sweden, whose archdiocese covered Denmark, Norway and Iceland), to be consecrated as bishop of Skálholt by Eiríkr Archbishop of Nidaros and Absalon Archbishop of Lund. Absalon (c. 1128-1201) was not only Archbishop of Lund (from 1178), he was also a fighting soldier and advisor and administrator to king Valdemar I (r. 1154-82) and his son and successor Knut VI (r. 1182-1202).¹⁴⁵⁰ Absalon was a supporter of strong monarchical government and an advocate of Danish independence from the German Holy Roman Empire. He commissioned Saxo to write his history of the Danes, the *Gesta Danorum*, a work strongly influenced by, or expressive of, both of these policies.

This was a time of the assertion of Danish independence, and of the establishment of its power under its monarchy. Absalon's request to Saxo – not easy to refuse, we guess – was intended to underpin this with a narrative history conferring longevity and authority on Denmark and its king. This required historical materials which, if they did not exist in Denmark, had to come from somewhere else, or be invented. Saxo found them among Icelanders, as he admitted:¹⁴⁵¹

Nec Tylensium industria silentio oblitteranda: qui cum ob nativam soli sterilitatem luxuriae nutrimentis carentes officia continuae sobrietatis exerceant omniaque uitae momenta ad excolendam alienorum operum notitiam conferre soleant, inopiam ingenio pensant. Cunctarum quippe nationum res gestas cognosse memoriaeque mandare uoluptatis loco reputant, non minoris gloriae iudicantes alienas uirtutes disserere quam proprias exhibere. Quorum thesauros historicarum rerum pignoribus refertos curiosius consulens, haud paruam praesentis operis partem ex eorum relationis imitatione contexui, nec arbitros habere contempsimus, quos tanta uetustatis peritia callere cognoui.

The diligence of the people of Thule [Iceland] should not be blotted out in silence. Lacking the means to nourish luxury on account of the sterility of their native soil, they undertake their offices with constant sobriety and are accustomed to devoting every minute of their lives to perfecting knowledge about the deeds of foreigners, compensating for their poverty by their genius. Indeed, in place of pleasure-seeking, they consider it worthwhile to have ascertained the histories of all nations and committed them to memory, judging it no less glorious to

¹⁴⁴⁹ See *saga Þorláks biskups hin elzta*; ch. 3-4; Sigurðsson and Vigfússon *et al.* 1858-78: I, 91-92 and 91, fn. 3. Þorlákr (1133-93) was a deacon at 15 (in 1148-49) and was ordained as a priest by Björn Gíllsson of Hólar in the period 1148-52, when the see of Skálholt was vacant (and Þorlákr was 15-19 – though Guðbrandur Vigfússon suggests 17-18 (*ibid.*: I, 91, fn. 3)). After at least a *misseri* and then *nokkra stund*, he travelled abroad for six years, first to Paris and then to Lincoln. He was therefore at Lincoln for some time in the period c. 1149-59. Fahn and Jensson (2010: 29) suggest he was at Paris from c. 1153-59.

¹⁴⁵⁰ Absalon's father, from the rich and influential Hvide family, is called *Asser Rig* "the mighty" in modern histories. See *ODSHO*, s.v. *rig* (adj.). The vowel of *rig* was long in ODan (i.e. Danish of c. 1100-1515), hence the spellings *ri(i)gh*. E. V. Gordon dated the change from ON intervocalic [k] to [g] in ODan to the period 1200-1350 (1957: 324). The possible existence of ODan *rīg* "king" at about the time of the creation of the Danish Skjöldung histories is a factor to be borne in mind with respect to the origins of the names *Rígr* and *Rigus*, so often asserted to be Celtic. See pp. 395-97 below.

¹⁴⁵¹ Text from *GD*, Preface, 1.4; Friis-Jensen and Fisher 2015: I, 6. My translation.

discourse on the brave deeds of foreigners than to display their own. I have consulted most carefully their treasuries crammed with stores of historical events, and I have constructed no small part of the present work in imitation of their accounts. Nor have I scorned to use those as witnesses whom I know to have such great knowledge of ancient times.

In the previous section to this in *GD* Saxo refers to the heroic poetry of the Danes (though this might refer to Scandinavians in general), and to runic inscriptions on rocks and stones which he believed recorded these poems. He says that he has rendered these verses with some of his own, followed by a lament that much more would have been recorded had the Danes known Latin.¹⁴⁵²

Quorum uestigiis ceu quibusdam antiquitatis uoluminibus inhaerens tenoremque ueris translationis passibus aemulatus metra metris reddenda curauī, quibus scribendorum series subnixa non tam recenter conflata quam antiquitus edita cognoscatur, quia praesens opus non nugacem sermonis luculentiam, sed fidelem uetustatis notitiam pollicetur. Quantum porro ingenii illius homines historiarum edituros putemus, si scribendi sitim Latinitatis peritia pauissent, quibus tametsi Romanae uocis notitia abesset, tanta tradendae rerum suarum memoriae cupido inessit, ut uoluminum loco uastas moles amplecterentur, codicum usum a cautibus mutantes?

I have taken pains to render [these poems] verse for verse, dogging their tracks as if they were ancient books, having striven to achieve the tenor of a true translation in their footsteps, so that the series of items I have been obliged to write, based upon them, should be regarded as the product of antiquity rather than something recently invented; because the value of the present work is not the trifling beauty of its language but its faithful representation of antiquity. Indeed, how many men of this genius might we imagine would have produced histories if they had been seized with a thirst for writing by experience of Latin (in whom even the knowledge of the Roman language was absent), when the desire of recording the memory of their history was so great that huge boulders were employed in place of books and jagged rocks used as one does manuscripts?

While he may have believed that runic inscriptions on stones recorded heroic poems, they do not (with very rare exceptions), and even if Saxo could have read them, they cannot have been a source. Reading these sections together, they seem to mean, “as far as antiquity goes, I am largely reliant on poems in the oral repertoire (which I have followed closely) and the reports of Icelanders about other countries (including Denmark), which I have turned into a narrative”. The fulsomeness of the tribute to the memorious Icelanders is such as to make one believe that their contribution to the *Gesta Danorum* – or at least its first nine books – was very extensive. However, it should be noted from Saxo’s words in the paragraph above that his compliments to the Icelanders relate not to their appetite for the history of the Danes alone but for *cunctarum [...] nationum res gestae* “the histories of all nations”, which they committed to memory. As

¹⁴⁵² *GD*, Preface, 1.3; Friis-Jensen and Fisher: 2015: I, 6 (my translation).

we shall see, at the time Saxo was researching and writing this, Icelandic interest encompassed England.

Bjarni notes that Icelanders were present at Absalon's court at Lund, and they were regarded as learned men and great storytellers.¹⁴⁵³ Particularly notable was Arnhallr or Arnaldr Þorvaldsson.¹⁴⁵⁴ Saxo mentions him as *Arnoldus Tylensis* ("Arnold the Iclander"): *Nec minus antiquitatis quam diuinationis peritus sollerti historiarum narratione callebat* "No less versed in history than divination, he was skilled in the artful telling of stories".¹⁴⁵⁵ But there must have been others.

One particular Anglo-Saxon regnal list provides good evidence of Icelandic contact with England and its narrative or genealogical traditions in the twelfth century. Bjarni considered it possible that Páll brought back to Iceland a copy of the West Saxon regnal list, a text of which found its way to the library of the seventeenth-century Danish antiquarian Peder Resen. It began with *Sescef*, *Beldeg* and *Brand*, and continued with the sequence *Freoðegar*, *Freovine* and *Vigg* and *Gevis*, ending with *Epelreð* and *Eadverð*, the sons of king Edgar (r. 959-75). It was also known to Snorri, who used it in the Prologue to *Snorra Edda*, noting (accurately and inaccurately) several correspondences between the figures of English and Icelandic myth and legend.¹⁴⁵⁶ Anthony Faulkes concluded that the Resen text was closest to Cotton Tiberius B.v vol. I ("T"), dated by Dumville to the first half of the eleventh century.¹⁴⁵⁷ The Resen list is also closely related to the text of the same list in the Textus Roffensis, written soon after 1122, which is either a copy of T, or they are both from a common exemplar.¹⁴⁵⁸ As we have seen, it is likely that *Frēawine* and *Wīg* were added to the West Saxon list in the later ninth or the tenth century, testament to a living tradition of the Offa narrative that was exploited for the purposes of West Saxon genealogical propaganda. But this information was also part of the background which was transmitted from England to Iceland, probably in the twelfth century, when the genealogy of English kings became of interest not only to English

¹⁴⁵³ Cf. the story about Snorri's father Sturla in *Sturlunga saga* (ch. 331; Vigfússon 1878: II, 270). In 1263 he told a version of *Huldar saga (frá trollkonu mikilli)* – "the saga of Huld (of the great trollwife)" – to king Magnús *berfættr*'s ship's company, better and more learnedly than anyone had heard it told before. And when he repeated this to the queen and delighted her, this (together with some praise poetry) began a reconciliation between Sturla and Magnús. As in *Widsith*, literary performance was potentially a tool of diplomacy.

¹⁴⁵⁴ *ÍF* 35: x-xi.

¹⁴⁵⁵ *GD*, XIV, 36.2; Friis-Jensen and Fisher 2015: II, 1258-60, and fn. 256. Arnoldus was probably the same as the Arnhallr (or Arnaldr) Þorvaldsson named as one of Valdemar I Knutsson's court poets in Snorri's *Skáldatal*.

¹⁴⁵⁶ See Faulkes 2005a: 117, and Snorri's Prologue (Faulkes 2005a: 5).

¹⁴⁵⁷ Faulkes 1977. Dumville 1976: 26.

¹⁴⁵⁸ Dumville 1976: 28, 44. See also pp. 301-02 above.

ecclesiastical scholars, but also to Icelanders and to Danes, since the earliest “English” kings were not from England, but from places which had become part of Denmark, the sovereignty over which continued to be disputed between the Danes and the Germans until just after the end of the First World War.

As I say, Bjarni also thought that Páll might have been involved in the writing of *Skjöldunga saga*, or he wrote it himself. Certainly, the period from 1180 onwards would have been a very propitious time for such a composition by an Icelandic cleric hoping for preferment from Valdemar, Knut and – above all – Absalon. If we are to understand Saxo, the material for it was not likely to have come from Denmark, and the place where I suggest it was most likely that narrative traditions about Offa had survived was England, where Þorlákr and Páll – and why not other Icelanders? – had spent a considerable time.

The interrelationships of written texts and the ideas they contained, and of the manuscripts which transmitted them, are of course at the centre of the study of medieval literature and thought, and always have been. But, I suggest, this is often in the context of “earnest”, that is, serious or learned texts (including regnal lists); and it is often forgotten what these monks and prelates would have used for “game”, or entertainment. Like ordinary people they would have had amusements in the form of songs and stories from the culture of the laypeople from whom most of the monks and novices would have come. For an Icelandic, like Páll, who came from a conservative oral culture which was rich in stories, the encounter with English monks and their narrative traditions was likely to have been a fascinating one.

Unfortunately, there is very little evidence of the survival of English pre-Conquest secular and heroic narrative traditions (which may have returned largely to orality with the Norman *adventus*), but I suggest that the influence of the English Offa story on twelfth-century Danish histories is one piece of it; and the vector of its communication may well have been the Icelanders who encountered in England a rich tradition of ancestral narrative, not unlike their own. It could hardly have been lost on any such Icelandic visitor to England that the story of Offa was also part of the early story of Denmark. The same may have been so of other narrative traditions of the Scyldings which had survived in England until the beginning of the thirteenth century. This is a subject which merits reinvestigation. There are vestiges of evidence which suggest that the poetic subjects and forms preferred by the Anglo-Norman and French-influenced elite in the couple of centuries following the Conquest (and recorded for them in writing) ran in parallel with a continuing English and probably alliterative tradition that had

relapsed into orality but perpetuated much older, originally Continental narrative traditions of the kind found in *Beowulf*, *Widsith* and the Offa-tradition.¹⁴⁵⁹

It is notable that in the earliest known Danish chronicle, the *Chronicon Lethrense*, the proto-story of the Danish monarchy contains an eponymous figure called Dan, the son of king Ypper of Uppsala in Sweden, who conquers a kingdom in Denmark.¹⁴⁶⁰ But his son is Ro, so named because he is the founder of Roskilde (*Ro* is usually the name of Hrōþgār in Danish chronicles, but it may be a back-formation from the toponym *Roskilde*, interpreted as “Ro’s spring”). Ro’s sons are Helgi and Halfdan. But there is no Skjōldr, or any of the other figures from the earliest parts of the Icelandic Skjōldung genealogies, and no Vermundr or Óláfr lítilláti.¹⁴⁶¹ However, these persons suddenly appear in Sven’s *BHD*, which begins with Skiold, after whom *in modis Islandensibus* (“in the Icelandic manner”) came the *Skioldunger*. Skiold’s sons were Frothi and Halfdan. Halfdan killed Frothi and left the kingdom to his son Helghi, who was followed by his son Rolf kraki, then, father-to-son, to Rókil slaghenback, Frothi hin frókni, Vermundus, Uffo, then Dan (etc).¹⁴⁶² The difference between the *Chronicon Lethrense* and *BHD* is remarkable. The story of the Skjōldungar in *BHD* has become much closer to the pattern in *Beowulf*; but the extended narrative of Uffo is its most noticeable difference of all. Saxo’s narrative closely resembles Sven Aggesen’s, though with many alterations and additions which cannot have come from Sven’s text.

Therefore, in the period between the *Chronicon Lethrense* (composed perhaps c. 1170),¹⁴⁶³ Sven Aggesen’s *BHD* (c. 1188)¹⁴⁶⁴ and Saxo’s *GD* (c. 1188 – after 1208),¹⁴⁶⁵ narratives appeared in the Skjōldung story in Denmark which expanded and revolutionised it. Sven’s *in modis Islandensibus* hints at the same origin as Saxo’s comment in his preface – this was Iceland. However, the difference between the treatment of the Offa-figure in the Icelandic

¹⁴⁵⁹ The evidence of the continuation of this tradition post-Conquest is tiny but nonetheless potentially significant. There is a passage about Migration Age Germanic heroes, including *Hunlapus* (= Hūnlāf), in a mid-12th-c. history of England by Alfred of Beverley (I quote it at fn. 1499 (p. 415) below). Rudolf Imelmann discovered it in the 15th-c. British Library MS Cotton Vespasian D IV (fol. 139v) and quoted it in his review of Moritz and Schücking’s edition of *Beowulf*. Chambers referred to it in a footnote (1921: 252, fn. 2). But the passage remains unedited, since Vespasian D IV was not used in the recent edition of Alfred’s history by Slevin and Lockyer (2023). There is also an early 13th-c. Latin sermon from England (I date it no later than 1210), the author of which cites a scrap of early ME verse apparently spoken by Wade (“The Wade Fragment”) which refers to Theoderic’s loyal thegn Hildebrand (see the edition of the sermon and verse in Falk and Wade 2025).

¹⁴⁶⁰ *Ypper* (= *Yppir*), patently a back-formation from the element *Upp-* in *Uppsala* (ON *Uppsalar*) the ancient seat of the Swedish kings.

¹⁴⁶¹ See *Chronicon Lethrense*, ch. I-III; Gertz 1917: 43-47.

¹⁴⁶² *BHD*, ch. 1-4; Gertz 1917: 96-107.

¹⁴⁶³ Conventionally dated to the second half of the 12th c., or c. 1170 – though on the subjective grounds of its anti-German sentiments (Andersen 2012).

¹⁴⁶⁴ See Christiansen 1992: 26, supported by Friis-Jensen and Fisher 2015: I, xxxv.

¹⁴⁶⁵ Friis-Jensen and Fisher 2015: I, xxxv.

Skjoldunga saga (who is Aleifus II) and in the Danish texts *BHD*, *GD* and *AnnR* is stark: in the Icelandic text he is a zero, in the Danish ones a hero.

However, the contents of the *Chronicon Lethrense* at least give us a clue as to how Offa and Dan intersected. The *Chronicon* had an eponymous figure called *Dan* whose role was to come from a royal family in the east (the Swedes) to unite the different parts of the Danish kingdom. The core of this legend is that the founder of Denmark was not an autochthonous Dane, but a foreigner from the east. But when the Icelanders behind Sven's and Saxo's narratives came across the story of Wermund and Offa, I suggest that this conflicted with their own genealogical (and perhaps narrative) tradition of Óláfr lítilláti, a person named after his unheroic meekness. If the Offa-figure seemed to come from some early part of Danish history (and was therefore a Dane), how was his story to be reconciled with the other early Danish tradition of Dan the conqueror (as in the *Chronicon Lethrense*)? The tradition followed in *Skjoldunga saga* was to make Dan a member of the Skjoldung line by marriage, and to eliminate Offa (= Aleifus II) by turning him into a vanquished victim of Dan. The option followed in *BHD*, *GD* and *AnnR* was to retain Offa and his wonderful story as the tale of the hero Uffo and to make Dan the conqueror his son. *Skjoldunga saga* (as Arngrímur himself noted) was, in its earliest parts, little more than a genealogical list, showing little interest in whatever narratives may have attached to the names it used. Saxo, as we have seen, operated in a different milieu in which one never let a good story go to waste.

5.3.6 The Story of Rig and Dan: Conclusions

It follows from this analysis that in Icelandic and Danish tradition respectively, at about the same time in the last decades of the twelfth century, there were two contradictory narratives about the Offa-character. His story seemed to come at the crucial juncture in legendary history where the Skjoldungar ceased to be dynastic kings in Denmark and became national kings of Denmark, properly meriting the ethnonym "Dane"; and at this point the eponymous and imperial figure of Dan was inserted to represent this new historical reality, which constituted the real beginning of the political entity still ruled over by Dan's descendant Valdemar I. Further, I suggest that these two versions of Offa were essentially narrative prototypes. In *Skjoldunga saga* the model chosen was to reduce Offa (as the meek Aleifus II) to a mere victim of Dan (echoing the motif in the English Offa story that his reign, or his posterity ended badly). But in the Danish histories it was to retain Offa as the heroic Uffo. Here, the ultimate failure of Uffo and his line had been excised, leaving the latter half of his biography missing (which

Saxo noted).¹⁴⁶⁶ But this lacuna was turned to good account by giving Uffo a son in the person of the masterful Dan, who was not a conqueror of Uffo but of everyone else.

Saxo's perception that there was something missing from the Uffo story, I suggest, is evidence of how the English Offa story was processed in twelfth-century Scandinavia. In *Beowulf* and in *VOD* the story of Offa of Angel seems to be one of lasting success and peace following his duel, though this was followed by the troubles of Offa's old age and/or those of his immediate successors. These bad events are alluded to only tangentially in *Beowulf*, and require to be inferred (with the assistance of the Mercian regnal list and other information) as a likely reason for the mass migration of Angles to Britain. But in *VOD* they form a clear theme of decline towards oblivion, though this was re-interpreted, monkishly, as the consequence of an impious failure to fulfil a vow to found St. Albans. Skjöldung history, however, had no need for tales of national disaster; what it required was continuity. In *Skjöldunga saga*, this was achieved by grafting Dan into the Skjöldung line and achieving mastery by the conquest of Offa in the person of the non-Skjöldung Aleifus II (thus retaining the motif of the ultimate failure of Offa and his replacement by a Dane). In the Danish histories, Uffo is a Skjöldung who fathers a Dane in the form of Dan. The motif of his failure and/or that of his posterity is eliminated, but with it the salient event of the Anglian story, which was the unwanted idea of decline. In brief, in the English Offa story, the Angles were overwhelmed by the Danes, which was a calamity; in the Icelandic adaptation, Offa (Aleifus II/Óláf lítilláti) was conquered by the Danes (Dan), which was a good thing; and in the Danish adaptation, Uffo was a hero who was conquered by no one, but was succeeded by a representative of Danish empery, his son Dan, who, curiously, is presented quite negatively, which may represent an echo of English tradition, in which the Danes were the enemy (as the evil king of York is in *VOD*).

In an important sense Saxo's instinct was right. Uffo was just the sort of character whom one would expect to be the subject of many tales throughout an eventful and heroic life. The odd fact that he was not, I suggest, is evidence that his story was homegrown in neither Iceland nor Denmark. It was an English story of heroic glory and later decline and defeat that had led the Angles to Britain. To re-adapt this story to the history of the Skjöldung Danes required major surgical procedures which left very evident scars and stumps.

¹⁴⁶⁶ See p. 403 below.

5.3.7 The Origin of the Name *Rig*: A New Proposal

Further telltale evidence of this process of adaptation, I suggest, is to be found in the person of Rig. Indeed it is the example *par excellence* in this study of a name from which a great deal can be deduced. This person almost inexplicably appears in *VOD* and the Icelandic texts *Skjoldunga saga*, *Ynglinga saga* and *Rígsþula*, but not in the Danish chronicles. I suggest that the Offa-story, as it is found in the Danish histories – and even in *Skjoldunga saga* – existed in England in the twelfth century, where it was most probably encountered by Icelandic clerics studying there. As Bjarni Guðnason suggested, Páll Jónsson may easily have been the person responsible for its transmission to Iceland and possibly Denmark, and he may even have been the author of *Skjoldunga saga*. He was ambitious for Danish preferment in an atmosphere of burgeoning Danish nationalism, and the dates of his English sojourn fit very well with the rapid development and expansion of the Danish proto-story between the *Chronicon Lethrense* and *BHD* and *GD*. In *Skjoldunga saga* all rival non-Danish ethnicities (Angle and Heapobeard) are removed, and the beginning of the saga is primarily genealogical, with little narrative, acting as a prelude to the main interest, which was the reign of Hrólfr kraki, the greatest of the Skjoldung heroes in Scandinavia – probably because he was the main actor in an early phase of the expansion of Skjoldung hegemony.

The figure of Rig in *Skjoldunga saga*, *Ynglinga saga* and *Rígsþula* supplies a background for the ancestry of Dan, who is an entrant into the Skjoldung family. No Rig is needed in the Danish histories because Dan is made a Skjoldung by birth, not marriage. This divergence has the corollary that in the Icelandic version Dan must conquer Aleifus (= Offa), which is consistent with Icelandic tradition of Óláfr as a meek person surnamed *litilláti*. The Danes, who had no such tradition, preferred the heroic version of Offa; but to retain this, Dan could not conquer him, and so Dan had to be Uffo's son and successor. As we have seen, Dan the conqueror and unifier of Denmark was a figure in the *Chronicon Lethrense*. So, in the new version of Skjoldung history in *BHD* and *GD* he was retained and melded into the Skjoldung line by being joined to the Anglian sub-narrative of Vermundr/Wermundus and his offspring. The use of the Offa narrative from England brought the character of Riganus into play as Rig.

An attraction of the name *Rig* for Danes of the late twelfth century, I suggest, was probably that, as *Rígr*, it was close to the East Norse pronunciation of Old Norse *ríkr* by the end of the twelfth century and meant “mighty”. To the learned in Latin, it may have suggested both the stem of Latin *rex* (as in *regem*, *regis* etc) and words like *rigēre* “to be stiff”, *rigor*

“stiffness” and *rigidus* “stiff”.¹⁴⁶⁷ Since Old Norse had *reigjask* “to walk with arched back (i.e. stiffly)”, and *reig-* was an ablaut-variant of *rīg-/rig-*, there may have been an unrecorded Old Norse verb **rīga* “to be stiff, stand upright”. There was a noun *rigr* “stiffness”, though the evidence for this is late and may suggest a borrowing from Latin or French, though a native word with a relationship to *reigjask* is also possible.¹⁴⁶⁸ It is thus not impossible that the name *Rígr* – whatever its origin – was capable of connoting to a speaker of Old Icelandic or Old Danish the idea of “stiffness” and “strutting” as well as imperious power. And in *Rígspula*, the original *Rígr* is indeed an itinerant strider of significant sexual potency who is also a proto-king.¹⁴⁶⁹

But the usual assumption is that the name *Rígr* in *Rígspula* comes from Old Irish *rí*, and is evidence of Goidelic Celtic influence on the poem.¹⁴⁷⁰ This has led to the conclusion that the myth in *Rígspula* has roots in the culture of the Irish-speaking Celts of the British Isles with whom the Scandinavians were in close contact from the end of the eighth century. However, if the figure of *Rígr* was supposed to symbolise a new, dominant kind of imperial kingship, there is no such figure in the history of Ireland during the Viking Age. There were three layers of kingship in Ireland.¹⁴⁷¹ The lowest rank was *rí túaithe* (“king of a people”), who might be ruled over by a *ruirí* (“king of several kings”), who might be ruled over by a *rí coiced* (“provincial over-king”). The Uí Néill clan who were the provincial over-kings of a sizeable area from north-west to mid-east Ireland (divided into southern and northern branches) had their centre at Tara in Co. Meath, and various of their over-kings styled themselves “Kings of Tara”. The Uí Néills fostered a myth of an Ireland once united under a single kingship to which they were the heirs. They were regarded as the most powerful kings in Ireland, and “[a]t times,

¹⁴⁶⁷ In *VOD* the names *Riganus* and *Mitunnius* are punned on in Latin:

Ipsam quoque Riganum in superbia rigentem, et imitem Mitunnum commilitonem ipsius, cum exercitu eorum proiecit in flumen rapacissimum.

Also [God] threw that same Riganus, stiff [*rigens*] with pride, and his confederate the un-mild [*immitis*] Mitunnius, with their army, into the most swiftly-flowing river.

¹⁴⁶⁸ See *ONP*, s.v.; and *Cleasby-Vigfusson*: 490, s.v. – also citing *reigsa* as an “iterative” meaning “to walk stiffly and haughtily” (no citations given). See *reigja* (v) “tilt the head back”, in the phrase *reigja sig* “sveigja aftur höfuðið (gjarnan af yfirlæti)” (“to tilt the head back (usually arrogantly)” (Íslensk nútímamálsorðabók Árnastofnun online <<https://islenskordabok.arnastofnun.is/ord/32990>> [retrieved 19.4.24]) – i.e. to look down your nose at someone.

¹⁴⁶⁹ Sturtevant (1952: 1159-60) was sceptical of Irish origins and suggested a native origin as a noun **rigr* meaning “stiffness”, supposedly an attribute of the alert and thus “stiff-backed” watcher of the gods Heimdallr (though this depends on reading *Lokasenna* v. 48/4, dubiously, as *orðgu baki* (“with upright back”) instead of as *orgru* “cowardly, effeminate” or *aurgu* “muddy” (the Codex Regius reads <*ar*go>), see *Eddukvæði*: I, 231-32, 417 and notes *ad loc.*). De Vries misattributes this argument to Kemp Malone and observes that no noun **rigr* is recorded (*ANEW*: 446, s.v. *Rigr*). Dronke accepts the existence of *rigr* (1997: 215). The evidence is uncertain.

¹⁴⁷⁰ See e.g. Dronke 1997: 177-78, 215; and *Eddukvæði*: I, 274.

¹⁴⁷¹ This account is taken from Downham 2018: 57-58, 71-72, 81-85.

they could wield authority over other provincial kings, but they never achieved direct rule across all Ireland”.¹⁴⁷² The concept of an *ardrí* “High King of All Ireland” was recognised in literature as early as the late seventh century, but it was not embodied in law. Like the Anglo-Saxon title *Bretwalda* (“Britain ruler”), it was more like an accolade for a king who enjoyed some kind of ascendancy by intimidating his rivals but who did not in fact exert political control over the whole of Ireland. Downham says:¹⁴⁷³

Ireland did not possess a centralised monarchy in the early Middle Ages [...] During the eleventh century, a handful of provincial royal lineages competed to unite Ireland under their rule, but no single dynasty held power long enough to make this a reality.

In Old Irish *rí* was used of “the various grades of chiefs from the high-king (*rí Érenn*, *rí Temra*, also called *ardrí* in distinction to other kings) through the kings of the provinces down to the chiefs of peoples or districts”.¹⁴⁷⁴ But it follows that *rí*, without further qualification, had no function of indicating any superior or dominant form of kingship in Ireland.

So, it would seem that the figure of Ríg, as an over-king controlling the whole of a united Skjöldung Denmark, was the very thing that medieval Ireland lacked. It would therefore seem somewhat odd to derive the title of this unifying pantocrator from Irish *rí*, a title that could signify a number of types of kingship but not a king that ruled a nationwide kingdom, like those of England (from the tenth century), Francia (intermittently), or Denmark.

However, none of the scholars who have accepted an Irish provenance for the name *Rígr* have considered *Riganus* in *VOD*. I suggest that it is his name which is the source of the figure of Rigus and Rígr in the Icelandic texts, as well as his role as a usurper of alien origin. It was this figure which – in the minds of the Icelandic Skjöldung genealogists – had somehow to be turned into Dan, that is, from an almighty king into a *Danish* almighty king.

I argue that there is no reason to suppose the influence of Old Irish on the Offa-story in England. In Anglian England the closest contacts with Celtic language and culture would have been the borders between Mercia and the Celtic kingdoms in Wales and Cumbria. I therefore propose to examine the possibility that the name *Riganus*, if it came from the Celtic speech area, may have come Wales or the Strathclyde Welsh kingdom rather than Ireland, reflecting an aspect of the Offa story adapted to Mercia rather than Continental Angel.

As we have noted, the name form *Riganus* suggests a Latinisation of *Rigan/Rīgan*. The earliest attestation of the Old Welsh reflex of the word for “king” is in *HB* (ninth century)

¹⁴⁷² Downham 2018: 82.

¹⁴⁷³ Downham 2018: 72.

¹⁴⁷⁴ *eDIL*, s.v. *rí*.

where it appears as *rig* (from Proto-Celtic **rīg-*).¹⁴⁷⁵ Welsh also had a diminutive suffix *-an*, cognate with Irish *-án*.¹⁴⁷⁶ Hence, in Welsh of the time of Nennius or before, **rigan* or **rīgan* would have been the Welsh term for “petty king”, cognate with recorded Old Irish *rígán*, a sub-king or chief, *regulus* or *subregulus*.¹⁴⁷⁷ This may also be found in the name *Riganburne* (though also consistent with Old English **Riga*~**Rīga*).

In *VOD* both Offas rule the same realm, which was Mercia (Warmundus ruled at Warwick, folk-etymologically supposed to be named after him). It has been suggested that by the time of *VOD* English tradition had somehow “forgotten” that Offa I was from Angel and set his story in Mercia.¹⁴⁷⁸ However, in this study I have found cause to challenge the idea that narratives originate in truth which then decays over time into inaccuracy or falsehood: the evidence of *Skjoldunga saga* and *VOD* suggests that narratives change most when the ideologies of their narrators change. The purpose of the *VOD* narrator was to construct a single narrative in which Offa I and his immediate heirs were punished for their failure to perform their vow to found an abbey at St. Albans – a vow which was made good by his descendant Offa II, whose marital tragedy was blended with a hagiographic miracle tale about St. Æthelberht of East Anglia.

VOD thus probably did not stand at the end of a long process of desuetude of the Offa-story. Rather, I suggest, the *VOD* author, in pursuit of his narrative purpose, transformed the narrative material he inherited – most notably by entirely omitting the Continental location of Offa I and providing him with a long-suffering, innocent wife. He probably showed no more fidelity to the Offa tradition than was displayed by the clerics who forged charters and deeds to advance the interests of their foundations. However, he retained enough of the original material (in the form of motifs and names, especially the name *Drida*) to indicate that there must have been an earlier English story about Offa I, and one containing many of the elements of the narrative we find in *Widsith*, *Beowulf* and *GD* – but also one we do not find in these texts, which was the downfall of Offa’s empire. The correspondence of *Riganus* in *VOD* with the Scandinavian texts of about the same time mentioning *Rig* provide evidence, I suggest, of a very direct link between the English and Scandinavian Offa-traditions.

¹⁴⁷⁵ GPC online: s.v. *rhi*^l.

¹⁴⁷⁶ See GPC online: e.g. s.v. *bychan* “small”, from *bych* + *-an*; and s.v. *-an*^l, a diminutive suffix from Proto-Celtic **-agno-*.

¹⁴⁷⁷ *eDIL*, s.v. *rígán*. This is the origin of the Anglicised Irish surname *Regan*. See Reaney and Wilson 1997: 330, s.n. *O’Regan*, *Regan*.

¹⁴⁷⁸ See Ellis Davidson and Fisher 1979-80: I, 93.

I argue that the Old English form of the name *Riga*, and the Welsh form of *Rigan* for a petty king who rebels against his Anglian overlord, suggest a development, during the Anglo-Saxon period, of the Offa-story which reflected the realities (and language) of Anglian or Mercian relations with the Welsh. This comprised not only the assertion of Mercian overlordship over neighbouring Welsh petty kings, but the formation of alliances with them – such as Penda of Mercia’s alliance with Cadwallon of Gwynedd in the defeat of Edwin of Northumbria at Hatfield Chase in 632/33; his alliance with the Welsh of Pengwern in his defeat of Oswald of Northumbria at Maserfelth (in 642); and his alliance with Cadafael of Gwynedd at Winwæd in 655, when Oswy of Northumbria killed him. In such political circumstances, the relationship between Mercia and the Welsh – only a tiny part of which is recorded – may have been such that the name *Rīgan* was emblematic of subordinates whose power to support if loyal, or to harm if not, was considerable. At any rate, *VOD* provides evidence that at some point (if not by the *VOD* author, then possibly in the late Anglo-Saxon period), the stories of Offa I and II were melded, and the story of Offa I relocated from Angel to Mercia. Given this, the choice of the name *Riganus* for his enemy – so similar in form to Welsh *rīgan* “petty king” – seems more than fortuitous.

Although the origins of the name *Keto* must remain problematical, I would argue that it ceases to be improbable that it has a Celtic origin (meaning “wood” or “battle”), acting as a complement to the Germanic name of his brother *Wīg* (meaning “battle” or possibly “riverland”), if we can accept the Welsh origin of *Riganus*. The sons of Frēawine aka *Hemming* were sons of a man of the river or borderland, and men likely to come into conflict with aliens over the frontier – guardians on the Eider in Jutland, and akin to English Marcher lords after their translation from Angel to Mercia.

5.3.8 The Origins of the Scandinavian Offa Narratives: Conclusions

The argument that the Danish story of Uffo came from High Medieval England also explains how reflexes of *Wihtlæg*, *Frēawine* and *Wīg* come to be in the Danish story of Uffo. They were features of the story of Offa which had survived unrecorded into the twelfth century in England. This narrative was absorbed by Scandinavians who were probably studying in England (of whom Icelanders seem the most likely candidates). This provided them with new information and perspectives on what they would have understood to be not an Anglian story but a Danish one, and it was transmitted to the Denmark of Absalon, Valdemar and Knut, probably via the conduit of Icelanders.

However, there is a difference between the Icelandic and Danish texts associated with Offa. Rig appears in the Icelandic texts but not in the Danish ones, but both of them feature Dan. This, I suggest, represents the adaptation of the English Offa-tradition into two prototype versions of Skjöldung history. In English tradition, I suggest, Offa was a heroic winner, but either towards the end of his life, or after it, he and the Angles were losers. In *VOD* his paramount enemy is the rebellious satrap Riganus. He and his two sons (whom Offa slays by the river) take the roles of Athislus and Uffo's two opponents on the Eider. But in *VOD* Offa's reign ends in the rebellion of his tributaries and the apparent dissolution of his kingdom – that is, a perpetuation of the unrest personified in Riganus.

For the Scandinavian adaptors of this ambivalent winner-loser tradition, I suggest, two potential solutions suggested themselves. One (the Icelandic solution) was to make Rig an ancestor of Jutish Dan, who conquers the Offa-figure (reduced almost to nullity and robbed of any recognisable ethnicity). However, this required the abandonment of a good and heroic story. The other (the Danish solution) was to retain Offa in full heroic mode in an extended narrative featuring three enemies (Athislus = Æadgils, and two others on the Eider), to turn Dan into Offa's *echt* "Danish" conquering son and successor, and to drop the ancestry with Rig (who was taken in the Icelandic solution to be the symbolic origin of Danish kingship). This, I argue, shows the experimental stages of a national myth borrowed from elsewhere, rather than representing the recording of ancient myths about the Danish people.

If this derivation of the Offa-story is correct, it is a remarkable testament to the fecundity of Icelandic scholarly imagination in the late twelfth century that the concept of an ambitious and acquisitive nobleman called Rig from the story of Anglian Denmark could have spawned a fascinating mythic pastiche like the one that begins *Rígsþula*. But even here there is, I suggest, evidence of English influence. Ursula Dronke claimed to detect Old English influence in a number of instances in the poem, which she believed to have been composed in Danelaw England.¹⁴⁷⁹ These are not many, and such influence has been doubted. However, their mere presence raises the issue of how – if correctly identified – they come to be there at all.¹⁴⁸⁰ I suggest that they are consistent with the argument presented here and are explicable as the influence on an Icelandic poet of the English language – mundane and everyday, rather than poetic – a person such as a visitor who stayed long enough to be influenced by early

¹⁴⁷⁹ See Dronke 1997: 203 and fn. 79. She notes *Rígsþula* 16/6 *smokkr* from OE *smocc* (Dronke 1997: 223); 22/7, 8, *kart* from OE *cræt*, and reference to a type of wheeled plough likely to have been English in origin (*ibid.*: 225); 36/8, *frǫkkur*, "Frankish spears" from OE *francas* (*ibid.*: 229-30); 42/3, *Aðal*, as a name-element, imitating OE *Æpel*- "noble" (*ibid.*: 233).

¹⁴⁸⁰ See *Eddukvæði*: I, 274 and Dronke 1997: 190-95.

Middle English. It is tempting to suggest the possibility that someone like Páll Jónsson was the poet of *Rígsþula*, and, like Asser and Nennius, he was taken with a learned, antiquarian – and partly English – idea of the origin of kings among the heathen gods (*dei falsi e bugiardi* though he may have known them to be), and he – or others like him – created a myth of Danish royal sovereignty derived from not one god but two – Óðinn the ancestor of Skjöldr and Heimdallr the ancestor of Dan. Immersion in Iceland’s still-flourishing native Eddaic traditions and sheer imagination did the rest.

6: The End of Angel; the Beginning of *Englaland*

6.1 Introduction

Having attempted, in the foregoing chapter, to identify the relationships between the characters and motifs in the Offa-story as it had developed in England by the beginning of the twelfth century, and as it had been adapted to the uses of Danish royal propaganda, we now come to the end of the story of Offa – or rather the end of the story of what he created. As we shall see, Saxo was puzzled that, after a brilliant start to a heroic career, there were no stories about Uffo in later life. *Widsith*'s timeframe is the lifetime of its narrator, Wīdsīþ, who tells us that, as far as he knows, the Angles and the Swæfe are still holding the border of Offa's realm on the Eider, right where he won it with his sword. In *Beowulf* there is an allusion to the heroic stature of Offa's descendant Ēomēr (either his son or, more probably, his grandson) as a "help (or "salvation") to heroes" (or, as I prefer, "to Hæleþas").¹⁴⁸¹ This raises the question of why, after the successes of Offa, Ēomēr was required to "help" or "save" anyone. The Mercian regnal lists tell us, however, that Ēomēr's son Icel founded a dynasty in Britain, suggesting that something unwelcome had happened to Angel. Since *Beowulf* is explicit that after Offa had tamed the excesses of Þrȳþu, they ruled as ideal monarchs thereafter, this suggests that in the Offa-tradition known to the *Widsith*- and *Beowulf*-poets, the decline of the Anglian kingdom came after Offa.

VOD is in several respects a difficult text in the Offa tradition. Its creator has adapted many of its traditional motifs and themes to create a narrative which explains how the foundation of St. Albans, though vainly promised by Offa I, and neglected by his posterity, was gloriously fulfilled by Offa II (once he had rid himself of his evil wife Drida). But even through the ideological distortions of this version I suggest that we find the clearest evidence of the end of the story of Offa, which was of the eclipse of one kingdom in the face of its enemies, but also the creation of another. I shall also argue that it is the Danish sources which reveal the true cause (according to legend) of the end of Angel, which was Danish dominion – probably the very thing which attracted Icelandic storytellers to the Offa story as a crucial episode in the history of the Danish kings.

¹⁴⁸¹ See *Beowulf* 1961a: either *hæleðum tō helpe* or *Hæleðum tō helpe*. See the discussion at pp. 207-09 above.

6.2 The End of Offa's Story: Dan the Mighty Dane

The motif of the final decline of the king which causes his former vassals to discard their allegiance and jockey for power is replicated in the account of the end of Offa I's life in *VOD*:¹⁴⁸²

Rex autem, cito monita ipsius salubria dans obliuioni et incurie, ex tunc ocio ac paci uacauit, prolemque copiosam utriusque sexus expectabilis pulchritudinis procreauit. Vnde semen regium a latere et descensu felix suscepit incrementum. Qui completo uite sue tempore, post etatem bonam quieuit in pace. Et regaliter sepultus, appositus est ad patres suos. In eo multum redarguendus, quod scenobium uotiuo affectu repromissum, thesauris parcendo non construxit. Post uictorias enim a Domino sibi collatas, amplexibus et ignaue necnon auaricie plus equo indulsit. Prosperitas enim secularis, animos, licet uiriles, solet frequenter effeminare. Verumtamen hoc onus humeris filii sui moriturus apposuit, qui cum deuota assercione, illud sibi suscepit. Set nec ipse Deo auerso pollicita, prout patri suo promiserat, compleuit. Set filio suo huius uoti obligacionem in fine uite sue dereliquit. Et sic memorati uoti uinculum, sine efficacia complementi de patre in filium descendens, usque ad tempora Pineredi filii Tuinfreth suspendebatur. Quibus pro pena negligentie, tale euenit infortunium, ut omnes principes quos Offa magnificus edomuerat, a subiectione ipsius Offe, et posteritatis sue procaciter recesserunt, et ipsum morientem despexerunt. Quia ut predictum est, ad mortem uergens, deliciis et senii ualitudine marcuit eneruatus.

But the king soon consigned these forewarnings as to his own wellbeing to oblivion and neglect, and from then on wasted his time in idleness and peace; and he fathered a numerous progeny of both sexes and notable beauty, whence the happy royal seed increased, both in lateral and direct descent. When the term of his life was done, at a good age, he reposed in peace, buried as befitted a king and laid to rest with his forefathers. He was much to be reprovved because he spared his treasury the expense and did not build the monastery which he had promised when of a mind to make vows. Indeed, after the victories conferred on him by the Lord, he yielded to the embraces of sloth and avarice immoderately; for, frequently, worldly prosperity is wont to render the spirit effeminate, even a manly one. At any rate, on the point of death, he placed this burden on the shoulders of his son. With devout protestations he accepted it. But, turning his back on God, nor did he carry out the things he had vowed, as he had promised his father he would. But at the end of his life he left the obligation of the vow to his own son. And so the shackle of this vow – remembered but never effectually fulfilled – was passed on from father to son and remained in abeyance until the time of Winefrith [Offa II of Mercia] the son of Thingfrith. These people, as punishment for their neglect, suffered such misfortune that all the great men whom the magnificent Offa [I] had subjugated flagrantly threw off their subjection to this same Offa and his posterity and despised him as he was dying. For, as I have said, in his declining years he was exhausted, having become enfeebled by luxury and the ill-health of old age.

The kingdom established and expanded by Offa simply trails away, as if his narrative ended with “...” – implying the dissolution of his realm but failing to tell us what happened to it before Offa II came along. According to the *VOD* author, the histories of both Offas take place in a Christian England, but the author establishes no temporal or familial connection between the two. The theme which actually connects them is that Offa I and his successors vowed but

¹⁴⁸² Text from Swanton 2010: 39. My translation.

failed to found the abbey of St. Albans, but this vow was fulfilled by Offa II. While there are several details and themes shared between the stories of Offa I and II (probably resulting from an osmotic process caused by their juxtaposition), the St. Albans theme is the only element which provides *VOD* with overall unity, in the sense of a continuous narrative of connected events. This can only have been a part of the story of Offa I after the foundation of St. Albans in the 790s. But the suggestion that Offa I and his posterity were ultimately failures, despite their other glories, and that their kingdom was visited with disaster because, through the sins of sloth and luxury, they failed to build an abbey, has an element of the absurd about it, making it probable – I suggest – that this is an ingenious but unconvincing moralising gloss on an earlier theme of the story of Offa I, which was that his latter years of peace were swiftly followed by the destruction of Angel, which his son and grandson were unable to prevent.

At about the same time as *VOD*, we find Saxo regretting the lack of a story about his hero Uffo's later career and blaming it on the vagaries of oral transmission:¹⁴⁸³

Ita Saxonie regnum ad Danos translatum post patrem Vffo regendum suscepit, utriusque imperii procurator effectus, qui ne unum quidem rite moderaturus credebatur. Hic a compluribus Olauus est dictus atque ob animi moderationem Mansueti cognomine donatus. Cuius sequentes actus uetustatis uitio solennem fefellere notitiam. Sed credi potest gloriosus eorum processus extitisse, quorum tam plena laudis principia fuerint. Tam breui factorum eius prosecutione animaduerto, quot illustrium gentis nostre uirorum splendorem scriptorum poenuria laudi memorisque subtraxerit. Quod si patriam hanc fortuna Latino quondam sermone donasset, innumera Danicorum operum uolumina tererentur.

Vffoni Dan filius succedit. Qui cum, transfusus in exteros preliis, tropheorum frequentia rerum dominium propagasset, partum glorie fulgorem tetro superbie squalore fuscauit, ita a clarissimi parentis honestate degenerans, ut, cum ille ceteris moderatione praestiterit, hic ceteros fastuosa tumidus elatione contempserit. Sed et paterna bona, uel que ipse exterarum gentium manubiis pepererat, flagitiis disiciebat, opes, que regio splendori seruire debuerant, uoracibus sumptuum impensis tribuens. Sic interdum a maioribus suis similia portentis pignora desciscunt.

So, the kingdom of Saxony was passed to the Danes, and, after his father, Uffo ruled it – a custodian of two realms who was thought incapable of properly governing one. He is said by many to have been called *Olaf*, and to have had the surname “the Mild” on account of his moderate temperament. Because of the vice of ancient times [or “the ravages of age”], his subsequent deeds have escaped the customary notice. But it may be believed that their continuation was glorious since their beginnings were so praiseworthy. With respect to such a short account of his deeds as this, I hold the opinion that it is the lack of writings commemorating their praise that has erased the splendour of so many of the famous men of our nation; for if, long ago, Fortune had favoured this land with the Latin language, countless volumes of the deeds of Danes would be being thumbed through.

Uffo's son Dan succeeded him. Although by spreading war to foreign lands and frequently emerging triumphant he extended his dominion, he darkened the lustre of the glory thus achieved with the loathsome foulness of pride, declining so far from the nobility of his most famous parent that, whereas he had exceeded all in his moderation, this man, puffed up

¹⁴⁸³ *GD*, IV.5.1-6.1, Friis-Jensen and Fisher 2015: I, 242-44. My translation.

with haughty arrogance, held all in contempt. But in his wickedness he threw away both the wealth of his father and that which he himself had won as booty from foreign peoples, squandering in ruinous expenditure on luxuries the riches which ought to have been the glory of a king. Thus it is sometimes that, as with monstrous births, children degenerate from their forebears.

According to Saxo, the disjuncture between Uffo and Dan is total (Uffo's son in *BHD* is also called Dan).¹⁴⁸⁴ The admirable and *litilláti* Uffo/Olaf gives way to the reprehensible and *mikilláti* Dan; and a glorious phase of history is replaced with one marked by sin (here, pride and luxury). I suggest that this melds an Anglian tradition that Offa's posterity declined from the glory of his conquests, with a joint Anglian and Danish tradition (reflective of historical reality) that in history the Danes overwhelmed the land of the Angles. Saxo curiously represents the Anglian point of view (that Dan's conquests were a tragedy) by applying Christian moralising to them: he ruined his imperial glory with *superbia* and *luxuria*, in contrast to his father's *mansuetudo* (though Saxo's Uffo is not *mansuetus* in the Christian sense of clemency or humility, but rather *mildr* "generous, kind, protective", as a king should be).¹⁴⁸⁵ The Danish conquest of Angel is represented as a delinquent son's falling into sin. It is curious that in *GD* it is not said that Dan's son rules after him; the next king mentioned after Dan is Hugleucus. For some reason we can only speculate on, he appears to have the same name as *Hygelāc* in *Beowulf*.¹⁴⁸⁶ We may wonder whether this "sinful son" is partly a version of Angenþēow.

¹⁴⁸⁴ Little is said of him, but he is the same character: see *BHD* (IV; Gertz 1917: 106, 107): *Hic filium procreauit, cui Dan nomen indidit; qui Elatus uel Superbus est cognominatus. Huic successit in regno filius Frothi, qui et Senex dictus est* "He [Uffo] fathered a son to whom he gave the name Dan. He was surnamed 'the Exalted' [or 'Conceited'?] or 'the Proud'. His son Frothi succeeded him in the kingdom; he was also surnamed 'the Old'".

¹⁴⁸⁵ See p. 377 above. Green (1965: 163-73) argued that *milti* was a characteristic of pre-Christian Germanic kings (kindness, generosity, loyalty) that was adopted by Christianity as part of the concept of Christ as king, and thereafter developed the Christian sense of "meek and mild". This word was sometimes glossed in Latin as *mansuetus*. It is likely, I suggest, that the characteristic of Offa as an admirably "mild" king in the pre-Christian sense, was altered to ON *litilláti* – which meant nothing other than "meek" – when the Offa character was downgraded to a loser in Icelandic tradition.

¹⁴⁸⁶ Hugleucus's only exploit is to defeat two otherwise unknown Swedish vikings called Hømothus and Høgrimus (see *GD*, IV.7.1, Friis-Jensen and Fisher 2015: I, 244; Ellis Davidson and Fisher 1979-80: II, 70; and *K14*: Ixi). Why the name cognate with *Hygelāc* should intrude here is one of the mysteries of the traditions Saxo was working with. The Vikings' names are likely to represent ON **Eymuðr* and **Eygrímr* (typical "sea-rover"-like names), but Hømothus has nothing to do with the Swedish prince Eanmund in *Beowulf* (pace *K14*: Ixi). These narratives may contain a vestigial memory of war between the Danes and the Gēats, at a time including that of Hygelāc. There is a hint of this in *Beowulf*, in which Hrōþgār alludes to violent conflict between Danes and Gēats during his reign (ll. 1855-59). I have argued (see pp. 338-44 above) that Hygelāc married Hygd, the daughter of Hæreþ of the Hæreþas of Jutland, and that the Danes also had a Jutlandic presence (see pp. 190-93 above). This may have placed Hygelāc's Gēats in conflict with the expansionist Scyldings, and the intrusion of Hugleucus here may be a distant echo of this.

In *GD* Frothi comes after Hugleucus, but no familial connection between them is mentioned. In *RDF/Skjöldunga saga* (ch. 7; *ÍF* 35: 13) Dan II's son is Frodo III (= Fróði), the grandfather of Frodo IV, who is the same person as Frōða the Heapobeard in *Beowulf*, turned into a Danish king and inserted into *Skjöldunga* history. In *Ynglinga saga* (ch. 22; *ÍF* 26: 42-43), Hugleikr is an unwarlike king of Sweden,

In *RDF/Skjöldunga saga*, the end of Offa is as simple as this:¹⁴⁸⁷

Dano etiam hoc rerum summam in Jutia adepto, in Selandia regnavit quidam Aleifus, Aleifo Herleifi nepoti supra in tabula consangvinitatis posito cognominis; quem tamen eundem non fuisse inde verisimile est, quod Frodo Aleifi illius patruelis eum in regno secutus tradatur, Dan autem II Frodonis istius neptim Olafam in matrimonium acceperit. Qvisqvis autem ille Aleifus Rex Selandiae fuit, eum Dan II^{us} magna cum laude devicit atque eo usque crevit, quod universo regno, ab ipsius nomine notato appellatione Daniae, potiretur.

Hic Danus II cognomen adeptus est hinn Mikelate, quod si durius interpretere, superbum denotata: sin mollius, magnificum. Bellator fui eximius et rem magnificè gerens, pedissequum habuit Regis titulum gerentem; barones etiam duos individuos sibi comites, qui iter facturo equum sternerent et stapedem ascendentis et descendentis tenerent.

And when Dan had achieved rule over Jutia [Jutland], a certain Aleifus [II] was ruling in Selandia [Sjælland]. Aleifus [I] is placed in the table of family relations above as the grandson of Herleifus (he of the surname). However, it is not likely that he [Aleifus I] was the same man, because Frodo, the cousin of that Aleifus [I] is said to have succeeded to the kingdom after him; whereas Dan II married Olafa, the granddaughter of that Frodo. But whoever this Aleifus king of Selandia was, to his great fame Dan II defeated him, and so it came to be that he took over the whole kingdom, which from his name was known as Dania [Denmark].

This Dan II received the surname *hinn Mikilláti*, which, if interpreted more severely meant “haughty”, but if more favourably “magnificent”. He was a great warrior and achieved brilliant victories, and he had a follower bearing the title of “King”. He also had two jarls as his constant companions who would hold his horse steady when he was about to make a journey and hold the stirrup when he mounted and dismounted.

Aleifus II is Offa I, and Dan, the descendant of Rigus (= Riganus) defeats him and sires his own progeny to replace that of Wermundus. Dan II achieves mastery over the whole of the extent of Denmark, from Jutland to Sjælland, and his imperium is such that it is his subordinate who has the title *Rex*, and jarls act as his grooms. He clearly fulfils the role of the super-king with which the name Rig is invested in Scandinavian tradition.

It is therefore also possible to read the conclusion of Offa I’s story in *VOD* not as an invention but a gloss on the traditional, tragic continuation of his story, which was that after a pinnacle of imperial glory there came a general destruction for Angel, followed by migration to Britain. It is in this aspect of the Offa story that we can dimly perceive the role of the Rig figure in these narratives, which was to be Offa’s nemesis, or at least that of the kingdom he created.

VOD is the only English source which refers to the Rig-figure (as *Riganus*). His role is to threaten to supplant the posterity of Warmundus with his army. This motif subsumes the motif of the duel, which is changed into a chance encounter between Offa and Riganus’s two

niggardly and given to luxury, who is defeated by the *sækonungr* Haki (brother of Hagbarðr) and his *kappar* at the battle of Fýrisvellir, and is pursued to his burh and killed by Haki, who takes his throne.

This episode is not alluded to in *Ynglingatal*.

¹⁴⁸⁷ *RDF/Skjöldunga saga*, ch. 7; *ÍF* 35: 10-11.

sons. In *RDF/Skjöldunga* it is explicit that the line of Rig, in the person of Dan II, supplants Offa's line – firstly by succeeding Wermundus as king (albeit only a son-in-law) and secondly by killing Offa (in the person of Aleifus II). The tradition of the Anglo-Saxon regnal lists between Offa and Icel, and the facts of the history of Jutland in the fifth century, tell us that Offa's immediate successors could not maintain Anglian independence in the face of Danish encroachment. This was a historically real phenomenon: Angel fell to the Danes.¹⁴⁸⁸ And the figure of Rig is at the centre of that motif of final downfall – associated with a powerful imperial Denmark under a single mighty king in each of the Scandinavian texts in which he appears.

6.3 Origins of the Offa-Story: Conclusions

As I have argued, there is linguistic evidence that names and words in the narrative tradition of Offa of Angel were originally West Germanic rather than North Germanic, and potentially English rather than Scandinavian. This includes:

- (1) The vocalisation of *Wērmund*
- (2) *Offa* as a hypocorism from Old English *Onlāf*; and *Uffo* as a Danicisation of *Offa*.
- (3) The lack of evidence for an Old Norse reflex of the name *Frēawine*. The vocalisation of *Frewinus* as non-Danish.
- (4) The vocalisation of the sword-name *Skrep*, and its likely (non-Norse) meanings as a motif in the Offa story.
- (5) The irreconcilability of the vocalisation in the name *Keto* with Old Norse phonology.

In addition to this, the names *Viglecus*, *Frowinus/Frewinus* and *Wig(g)o* are derived from an English tradition found elsewhere only in Anglo-Saxon regnal lists. These figures are part of an extended narrative that is fully realised only in Danish texts of the twelfth century, but not in any Icelandic tradition that historians such as Saxo might have relied on. I therefore suggest that the origin of the Offa-story, as we find it in *GD* and *BHD*, was England, and it reached Denmark, potentially, via Icelandic clerics. The people to whom a story about the foundation of England would have mattered most would, of course, have been the English – who, I suggest, retained it as one of their national narratives. I further suggest that although Rig found a place only in Icelandic narratives connected to the Offa story and not in the Danish ones, the evidence as a whole points to an English origin (via Welsh) for him too.

¹⁴⁸⁸ See p. 343-44 above. The Danish conquest of Jutland was complete by about 500 AD.

In conclusion, the story of Offa was part of the foundational myth of the Angles of England. But he was a hero like Arthur and Bēowulf in that his heroic exploits in youth were ultimately in vain; his people were defeated and their land taken by someone else. Offa's story thus fits in with the general theme of those kings in *Widsith* whom we know as more than a mere name, which is the ruin of their glory. The kingdoms of Offa, Hrōþulf, Ingeld, Hnæf, Eormenrīc, Gūþhere and Ætla all were famous for meeting their doom in one way or another.

If *Widsith* is a catalogue poem, it is also a catalogue of disasters. One of them – the fall of Ēadgils – Wīdsīþ must have lived through; but others, such as that of Ealhild and Eormenrīc, of Ætla, Gūþhere and of Offa and Angel, still lay in the future. So it is ironic that when Wīdsīþ claims to be able to ensure an everlasting poetic reputation for his kingly patrons whose brave deeds he will extol, he does not know that beneath the veneer of their glory is failure and death. Thus, I suggest, as a poet whose view of the big picture is limited, Wīdsīþ is very like Dēor, the eponymous *scop* (court poet) in the short lyric *Deor*, also in the Exeter Book. Dēor complains that he has been rendered landless and jobless by being replaced as the *scop* of the Heodeningas, the people of the ethno-eponymous king Heoden. He consoles himself by recalling the examples of several famous people from legend or history whose misfortunes came to an end, and he repeats the refrain, *þæs oferēode / þisses swā mæg* (“that passed away, so can this”). However, if – as I suggest is likely – the poem's audience knew the whole of the legend of the Heodeningas as it appears in the analogous *Hjaðningavíg* story retold by Snorri Sturluson,¹⁴⁸⁹ they would have known that Heoden and his Heodeningas were cursed to fight for all time in a battle with Hagena's people over the possession of Hild, Hagena's daughter, who had either eloped with Heoden or been abducted by him. Thus Dēor himself, as he sat lamenting, could not foresee that he had escaped the eternal battle of the accursed, and his apparent misfortune was – as he would come to realise – a piece of great good luck, and his sorrow would pass. The audience for such poems had to be familiar not only with the people and events within their timeframes, but those outside them too.

Our understanding of the history of Jutland in the fifth century is that it was a period of mass migration from its southern part and of Danish expansion from its northern part. Whatever independent peoples and kings or other leaders had existed before this time, these were now brought under a single Danish suzerainty, and the disparate elements of the Offa story, as we

¹⁴⁸⁹ See *Skáldskaparmál*, ch. 50; Faulkes 2007: I, 72. Kings Heoden of the Glomman and Hagena of the Holmrygas (the names correspond to Old Norse *Heðinn* and *Hogni*) are mentioned together in *Widsith* l. 21 – their proximity in the text here is consistent with their being characters in the same legend.

find it in the English, Icelandic and Danish texts, all contribute, in different ways, to this narrative.

The survival for several centuries of a detailed narrative about Offa between the allusions in *Widsith* and *Beowulf* (and the West Saxon regnal list) to the almost full accounts in Sven, Saxo and the *Annales Ryenses* is remarkable enough. But I suggest that the endurance of the name *Rig*, and the preservation of his central purpose in the story of Angel's destruction, are more remarkable still, presenting convincing evidence to support the contentions continually advanced in this study that some of the most conservative elements are names, and they travel through the oral and written milieu carrying their meanings and other narrative impedimenta with them, to establish new, but related narratives, refashioned in pursuit of different ideologies. Rig and Dan are effectively the same person, providing one more example of a character with more than one name, and more than one type of name, *Dan* being the most persistent of the ethno-eponyms we have examined.

6.4 From *Angel* to *Englaland*

Although Scandinavia before about 450 AD is effectively prehistoric (apart from a small number of runic inscriptions), the legends examined in this study relate to an area of southern Jutland which provided the peoples, or parts of peoples who migrated to Britain. Whatever were the differences between the peoples described by Bede's tradition as Angles Saxons and Jutes, by the middle of the fifth century AD they spoke the same language, a branch of West Germanic often subcategorised as "Ingvaeonic" or "North Sea" Germanic, a label which has also embraced Frisian and Old Low Franconian, the language of the Salian Franks. This language is referred to in Old English texts as *englisc*, and never as anything else. In Old English texts, if a single word is used of the Germanic incomers as a whole and their descendants, it is always *Engle* or *Engla þēod* or *cynn* and never *Seaxe* or *Ēote*, or either of those ethnonyms joined with *þēod*.¹⁴⁹⁰ In the laws of the West Saxon king Ine (r. 688-726), the word *englisc* is used as an ethnic term, drawing a distinction between those of "English" ethnicity (whether Angle, Saxon or other) and the *Wilisc* ("Welsh" or Celtic British).¹⁴⁹¹

The only disruption to this royal tradition of using "English" during the Anglo-Saxon period was the adoption in their charters by English kings, from Alfred to Edward the

¹⁴⁹⁰ See Naismith (2025: 6-7, with references) mentioning the use of *Saxones* and *Saxonice* by Anglo-Saxon authors of their own people. But these were Latin texts, presumably influenced by Latin usage in which the Germanic inhabitants of Britain were *Saxones*.

¹⁴⁹¹ Laws of Ine, cap. 46; Attenborough 1922: 50.

Confessor, of the style *Angulsaxonum rex* (or *basileus* or *imperator*).¹⁴⁹² This was probably coined by learned writers in Carolingian Francia in the late eighth century to draw a distinction between the “Saxons” of England and the “Old Saxons” of Continental Saxony. In the tenth and eleventh centuries it was a handy portmanteau word to denote the Anglian and Saxon peoples of England over both of whom the West Saxon kings asserted their sovereignty during and following their *Reconquista* of areas of England under Scandinavian rule.¹⁴⁹³ And it is in the laws of Æthelred II that we first find recorded the toponym *Englaland* – which became *England* – for the land of the English.¹⁴⁹⁴

The longevity of the onomastic tradition according to which an area of southern Jutland, north of the Eider, was named after “Angles” suggests that the name “Angle” was not, or not solely, an ethnonym, but a demonym – that is, a label based on the name of a region, irrespective of the ethnicities of the people within it. Thus, Angles, Saxons and Jutes could all be *Engle* if they came from *Angel*.

Thus, whatever the historical reality, Offa was of Angel, and his ethnic affiliations were inextricably bound up with the further implications of this demonym, which was that, in their various guises, these “Angles” were the peoples who came to Britain and founded England in the sense of the “land of the Angles”, an entity the power and glory of which, at its short-lived peak, was attributed to Offa, its unlikely overlord. As with the stories of Aeneas and Brutus, the fugitives from Troy, the wreck of one great nation can scatter the seed which grows into another.

¹⁴⁹² The earliest occurrence is in a charter of Alfred (S356, 871×899) where he is styled *Angolsaxonum rex*.

¹⁴⁹³ The term “Anglo-Saxon” fell into disuse from about the time of the Conquest until the late 18th c. in Britain, but achieved dominance during the 19th and 20th cs. in Anglophone scholarship – possibly under the influence of German philologists and historians who regularly used *Angelsächsisch*. Very recently it has become controversial, especially in the USA. See the account in Naismith 2025. See also the Introduction at pp. 36-37 above.

¹⁴⁹⁴ In the treaty of 991 between the English and the “Danish” sea-raiders, after the defeat at Maldon. See Liebermann 1903-16: I, 22, para 1, 1: *7 gif ænig sciphere on Englaland hergie [...]* “And if any hostile fleet makes raids on England [...]”. (It is curious that the text of the contemporary heroic poem *The Battle of Maldon* does not contain the words “English” or “England”).

7: The Story of Offa: Conclusions and Reconstruction

7.1 Final Conclusions

Based on the application in Part II of the methodologies set out Part I of this study – largely to do with names as an aid to identification of characters and peoples – I suggest that we can make a number of inferences about the ethnographical, political and narrative background to the poem *Widsith*, at the centre of which, I argue, was the story of Offa of Angel, a tale of heroic triumph followed by decline and fall.

The Myrgingas (“horse people”, from Old English *mearh*) were regarded by the *Widsith*-poet as a branch of the Longbeardan (the Lombards), who were either also known by the name Hundingas or were closely related to them. They were also related to another “Bardic” people, the Heapobeards, who feature in *Beowulf*, under their king Frōda, aka Wiðergyld (who was the member of Eormenrīc’s court called *Wipergield* in *Widsith* 124). The king of the Myrgingas (and lord of Wīdsīþ) was Ēadgils. He was also known by the hypocorism *Meaca* (*Widsith* 23). This hypocorism can be derived from *mearh* (“horse”), which was the stem of the ethnonym *Myrgingas* (a late West Saxon spelling). It would therefore suggest an ethno-eponym **Mearh* (semantically comparable to names like *Hengest* and *Horsa*); or it could be derived from a dithematic name similar to *Mearchealf*, king of the Hundingas, whose name had the same prototheme and meant “horse elf”. *Meaca* and *Mearchealf* may have been relatives, but it is also possible that, by reading *Widsith* 23 appositively, *Meaca* of the Myrgingas and *Mearchealf* of the Hundingas were the same person ruling the same people under a different name (though it is not necessary for my arguments to conclude so).

Wīdsīþ was born to a noble Myrging family, and his father had received the grant of hereditary lands from Ēadgils, to whom Wīdsīþ had entrusted them during his embassy to the court of Eormenrīc to the east of Angel, having delivered the Lombardic princess Ealhild as a bride to him (full of evil omens on account of Eormenrīc’s wrathful and treacherous nature, and the sorry fates of his womenfolk in analogic narratives). Wīdsīþ received his estate back again from Ēadgils when he returned and (as was required by law or custom) surrendered the golden treasures that Eormenrīc and Ealhild had given to him as a reward for his services.

The Myrgingas were also known as, or were subdivided into, the Ongend-Myrgingas and Wīþ-Myrgingas. The Ongend-Myrgingas occupied land in Ongend, also known as *Angen*

and *Angel*, the country of the Angles north of the Eider in south-eastern Schleswig in Jutland. The Wīp-Myrgingas may have been associated with the River Vid in western Schleswig, though it is probably more likely that their name was associated with the Vistula, where they were neighbours and subordinates of the Ostrogoths of Eormenrīc. Following the duel with Offa, the border of Angel was established on or near the Eider, and the Anglian allies called *Swāfe* helped them to hold it against the Myrgingas (as we are told in *Widsith* 41-44). The Myrgingas, we suppose, lost their lands north of the Eider, and whatever remained of them (if anything) faced a powerful alliance of Angles and *Swāfe*. The people called *Swāfe* were also known as *Hemmingas*, whose king is referred to in *Beowulf* as *Hemming* (an ethno-eponym), though he is also referred to in the Anglo-Saxon regnal lists as *Frēawine* (an epithetical name indicative of his role as a friend and subordinate to Wērmund). He may also have been called *Gārmund* (his birth-name), and he may have been a brother or relative of Offa's father Wērmund (as indicated by their shared deutertheme). The names *Hemming* and *Gārmund* appear contiguously in *Beowulf* 1961b-62a, potentially as an example of the appositive style, giving two names for the same person. (The alternative explanation for *Gārmund* is that it was the birth-name of Wērmund's son Offa, whose name was both epithetical and hypocoristic, being derived from *Onlāf*, meaning "old man's son").

Widsith tells us explicitly that Ealhild was the daughter of Ēadwine, who is named as a member of the court of Eormenrīc (*Widsith* 117), and also that she was the sister of Ælfwine who ruled in Italy. Ealhild was sent, apparently on the order of Ēadgils, to be married to Eormenrīc – an illustrious match, but one possibly needing all the skills of a master poet-diplomat to keep the bride alive, which is why Wīdsīp accompanied her, to charm the irascible tyrant with his songs of flattery.

Ēadwine and Ælfwine are identifiable as Audoin and Alboin, known to history as kings of the Langobards or Lombards in the mid-sixth century (Alboin was the conqueror of a kingdom in northern Italy, and his Lombards are still commemorated in the name *Lombardia*). In the poem, however, Ēadwine is named in a group called *Wīp-Myrgingas* (*Widsith* 117-18). This also included Ægelmund, another king of the Langobards (though in the early, legendary part of their history).¹⁴⁹⁵ We may therefore conclude, I suggest, that in the tradition known to the *Widsith*-poet, Ēadwine the Wīp-Myrging was related to Ēadgils the Myrging, possibly as brothers; and they headed different branches of the extensive "Bardic" people of the Myrgingas

¹⁴⁹⁵ As Agelmund, Audoin and Alboin, they are all Langobard kings appearing in narratives in Paulus Diaconus's *HGL*.

– Ēadgils in Angel; Ēadwine nearer the Goths on the Vistula; and (a nod to real history) Ælfwine in northern Italy. (Perhaps these different identities, if actual, became subsumed under the term “Langobard” in Lombardic tradition). In the absence of Ēadwine at Eormenrīc’s court (whether guest or effectively captive), Ēadgils was given the task of arranging for a peace-weaver (*freoðowebbe*) marriage between his kinswoman, the Bardic-Myrging Ealhild (Ēadwine’s daughter) and the Gothic Eormenrīc. If we are to understand that the Myrgingas ruled some area between Angel and the lands to the west of the Vistula, they must have been a significant power. In alliance with the Goths, they would have been even more formidable. This, I argue, gives us some sense of the magnitude of Offa’s achievement in vanquishing his Myrging opponent (probably Ēadgils’s successor, if he had been killed by the sons of Frēawine) and gaining his lands. *Widsith* does not mention this narrative at all, but it is recoverable from the histories of Sven Aggesen and Saxo Grammaticus, who, I have argued, preserved a story, complete with personnel, which is so closely related to English traditions that it is likely to have been imported from England, where the Offa-story was still being told at the end of the twelfth century. This part of the background to *Widsith* illustrates the anachronistic nature of the Anglo-Saxon literary imagination, with its mixture of fourth-century Goths fighting fifth-century Huns and marrying into the dynasty of sixth-century Lombards. But it also illustrates the remarkable conservatism of some of its elements, in its depiction of a northern European world more like that of the second or third centuries AD, where the Goths are still on or around the Baltic hinterland, neighbouring the Langobards, Burgundians and Bāningas, and with tributary kings at their court like Seafola, whose ethno-eponymous name derives from a Jutlandic tribal name recorded in Greek by Ptolemy in the mid-second century AD.

Against this geopolitical background – perhaps accurate in many details but fictional overall – the triumph of Offa of Angel shines out as especially glorious: “single-sworded” (*āne sweorde*) he humbled the might of the Myrgingas, the Bardic peoples and their allies the Ostrogoths, the Jutlandic superpowers of *Widsith*’s imaginary fourth-century world. It was such a heroic deed that Offa even outshone the martial glory of Alewīh of the Danes, whom I have identified as likely to be *Beowulf*’s Heremōd.

And one of the incidental casualties of these momentous events was the poet Wīdsīþ himself. Made lordless and landless with the slaying of his king Ēadgils, he roamed the world seeking employment where he could. As he is addressing his unidentified prospective employer (*Wīdsīð maðolade*), Ealhild is still safe, and Offa’s empire is still maintained on the Eider estuary by the Angles and the Swāfe. But we know from the joint witness of the Mercian regnal list and the Life of St. Gūþlāc that within three generations of Offa, Icel becomes the first Angle

to establish his dynasty in what was to become England. In the tradition known to Bede, Angel became *desertus*, emptied of its population who emigrated *en masse* to Britain.¹⁴⁹⁶ As historians now tell us, by the end of the fifth century the Danes had taken their place.

Thus, it was an irony – and probably one that was evident to the audience of *Widsith* who shared its composer’s knowledge and culture – that Wīdsīþ’s sales pitch was to offer poetic praise as a means to transcend death and oblivion by means of everlasting poetic renown.

Sē þe fore duguþe wile dōm āræran, 140
 eorlscipe æfnan, oppæt eal scæceð,
 leoht ond lif somod, lof sē gewyrceð, 142
 hafað under heofonum hēahfæstne dōm”.

He who may wish, in the presence of the veteran warriors, to raise up a reputation, accomplish noble deeds until all passes away, light and life together – generates praise [and] has under the heavens a very enduring reputation.

But even if Wīdsīþ was not in the right time or place to appreciate it, this sentiment – that *lif is læne*¹⁴⁹⁷ – was about to be exemplified by Offa, or his immediate successors, whose Anglian dominion was destined to fall, probably before the expansionist Danes. Although we lack sufficient information from the text of *Widsith*, the audience may also have known that Eormenrīc’s empire was about to be eclipsed too – that is, if the story of his marriage to Ealhild followed the same trajectory as its apparent analogues in Jordanes’ *Getica*, the *Poetic Edda* and other texts, in which the menfolk of his female victim wreak a terrible vengeance on him (or if, alternatively, he went the same way as the historical Ermanaric and was undone by the invading Huns).

But the truly remarkable feature of *Widsith*, which I have tried to bring out in this study, is the breadth and depth of information – historical, cultural, topological, ethnographical and linguistic – that its poet expected his audience to have. They had to be masters of a complex

¹⁴⁹⁶ See *HE*, I.15; Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 50:

Porro de Anglis, hoc est de illa patria quae Angulus dicitur, et ab eo tempore usque hodie manere desertus inter prouincias Iutarum et Saxonum perhibetur, Orientales Angli, Mediterranei Angli, Merci, tota Nordanhymbrorum progenies, id est illarum gentium quae ad boream Humbri fluminis inhabitant, ceterique Anglorum populi sunt orti.

Moreover, from the Angles – that is, from that country which is called *Angulus*, between the lands of the Jutes and the Saxons, and is said to have remained deserted from that day to this – are sprung the East Angles, Middle Angles, the Mercians and the whole race of Northumbrians, that is, of those people who live north of the river Humber, and the rest of the peoples of the English.

Bede's account of a deserted area in southern Jutland can be reconciled with Bernard Mees's study of the archaeology and epigraphy of this time, indicating takeover by North-Germanic speakers (Mees 2023: 180-81).

¹⁴⁹⁷ This sentence is not recorded in OE, but was coined by J. R. R. Tolkien to describe the theme of *Beowulf*, together with *eal scæceð leoht ond līf somod* [...] (1936: 18). However, *Beowulf* does have the phrase *lænan līfes* (l. 2845a), the weak form of the adjective *læne* suggesting the meaning “of this transitory life”.

system of nomenclature in which individuals and peoples could have several names. They were also required to understand the complex political and dynastic relationships between these “ethnicities” (if that is the word we want for people who would have been practically identical in appearance and language) – between the Myrgingas (and other “Bardic” peoples) and the Goths, and between the Angles and Swāfe, and between the Swāfe and their neighbours the Angles and the Myrgingas.

As with all the representations of history in “heroic” literature, bones of contention are personalised into themes of offence and revenge, the ultimate expression of which is the single combat of Offa on the Eider, gaining a great, if short-lived empire. The literary culture of which the Offa-story is an example was peculiarly focused on the theme of dynastic and national collapse. This was probably for good reason. When a single defeat could wipe out the head of government, his cabinet and general staff, his treasury and a sizeable component of the economically productive part of the male population, the ability of a king to protect *hord ond rīce / bēagas ond bregostōl* was a mark of distinction,¹⁴⁹⁸ as was his ability to secure wealth and land by conquest, expansion and raiding.

Finally, the audience would know that the Anglian kingdom fell. The authors of its demise – as history tells us – were the Danes. They lurk ominously in the poem in the forms of Alewīh (= Heremōd), and Hrōþgār and Hrōþulf (which perpetuates the theme in *GD* that the generation after Haldanus (= Healfdene) unites the whole realm of Denmark, including Jutland). Scholars have frequently found it odd that the character of Hrōþulf, who seems so shadowy in *Beowulf* compared to the glorious Hrōþgār, should be the paramount hero of the Scandinavian tradition as Hrólfr kraki. The explanation I offer here is that the role allotted to Hrólfr by Danish Skjöldung tradition was as the heroic king who completed an important stage in the accumulation of a Danish kingdom at its maximum extent – the same extent as that achieved, or pretended to, by Danish kings of the time of Sven and Saxo.

In *Widsith* too Hrōþulf may lurk, possibly as the Dane credited by legend with the extinction of Angel. In the paragraph from the twelfth-century history of Britain by Alfred of Beverley, which we noticed earlier as containing the names of Germanic heroes like *Hunlapus*

¹⁴⁹⁸ “Treasury and kingdom, rings and a prince’s throne”. See *Beowulf* 2369b-70a – the things which the dead Hygelāc’s queen Hygd offers to Bēowulf in preference to her own young son and Hygelāc’s heir, Heardrēd. At ll. 3003b-05a a Geatish messenger remembers the now-dead Bēowulf as *þone ðe ær gehēold // wið hettendum / hord ond rīce // æfter hæleða hryre* “him who previously protected treasury and kingdom from challengers after the death of heroes” – i.e. after Hygelāc’s disastrous Frisian expedition.

(Hūnlāf, aka Hnæf, from the Finnsburh story), the name *Rodulphus* appears, showing that Hrōþulf's memory had endured in Migration Age stories known to the English.¹⁴⁹⁹

In this part of the “post-Offa” story, the role of Rig is central. As Riganus he appears in *VOD* as almost the nemesis of Offa's kingdom and the father of two sons whom Offa slays in single combat by a river. As such, he resembles the figure of Athislus in *BHD* and *GD*, and probably Ēadgils in the narrative behind *Widsith*. However, in the Icelandic tradition which includes *RDF/Skjöldunga saga*, *Ynglinga saga* and *Rígsþula*, a character with a very similar name has become the progenitor of a race – the Danes of Dan – who are destined to succeed or destroy the figure identifiable as Offa. While we can only speculate as to the origins of Riganus or Rig (possibly he owes his name to rebellious Welsh satraps of the Mercians in the Anglian narrative traditions of Offa I), it is I suggest, the most remarkable of all the pieces of fugitive onomastic evidence in this study that the name *Rig* is identifiable as that of a significant character in the Offa-story in texts from England and (via Iceland?) Denmark around the year 1200. I have argued that the experience by Icelanders in England of still-extant heroic narrative traditions about ancient Denmark inspired them to construct a myth of Danish kingship, the making of which we can observe taking place. And I draw from this analysis the conclusion that while Wīdsīþ was singing his paeans, and the Angles and Swāfe were still on the Eider, he could not see the post-Scylding nemesis represented by Dan the Mighty, the descendant of the *Überkönig* Rig, who was to trouble the reigns of Angengēot, Ēomēr and Icel.

The issue of the role of traditional narrative in the “construction” of early medieval “ethnic identity” has filled many books and will fill many more. There is no space here to deal with this vexed issue. However, I suggest that the close study of *Widsith* shows that the literary world it described was so complex, and the references to it so allusive, that this was not a story invented *ad hoc* to inform the Angles of England – at the will of some elite – who they were supposed to be; it was to tell them what they knew already. It can hardly have been lost on the Germanic inhabitants of Britain that – at least up to the late ninth century¹⁵⁰⁰ – the only name by which they were collectively known in their own language was *Engle* or *Engla þēod*, the

¹⁴⁹⁹ See fn. 1459 (p. 391) above. Imelmann (1909: 999) printed this paragraph:

In diebus illis imperante Valentiniano imperatore vel principe regnum barbarorum et germanorum exortum est. Surgentesque populi et nationes per totam europam consederunt. Hoc testantur gesta rodulphi et hunlapi, Unwini et Widie, horsi et hengisti, Waltef et hame, quorum quidam in Italia, quidam in Gallia, alii in britannia, ceteri vero in Germania armis et rebus bellicis claruerunt.

In those days, in the reign of the emperor or prince Valentinian [prob. III, r. 425-55], the rule of the barbarians came into being, and peoples and nations rose up and settled through the whole of Europe. This is evidenced by the deeds [or ‘histories’] of Rodulph and Hunlap, Unwin and Widia, Hors and Hengist, Waltef and Hama, of whom some achieved renown in war and military matters in Italy, some in Gaul, others in Britain, but the rest in Germany.

¹⁵⁰⁰ With respect to the term “Anglo-Saxon”, see pp. 36-37 above.

only name by which the whole area of their settlement was known was *Englaland*, and the only word applying to all the variants of the languages they spoke was *englisc*. Nor, evidently, was it lost on them that these words derived from an area in Continental Europe whose greatest hero – so far as we know – was Offa of Angel, and his story was the “Matter of *Englaland*”.¹⁵⁰¹

7.2 The Story of Offa of Angel and the Founding of *Englaland*: A Reconstruction

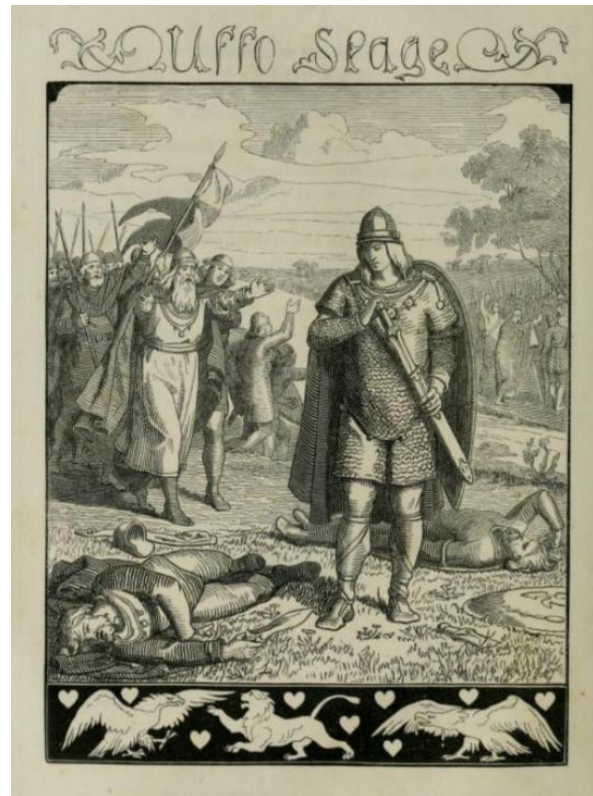
In this study we have reached the point of considering what to do with the *disiecta membra* of the literary tradition of Offa of Angel. In the time between the composition of *Widsith* and that of *GD* and *VOD* (which may have been five-hundred years or more) there may have been many versions, whether truncated, expanded or otherwise altered. However, the traditions with respect to the names of its characters, I suggest, were steady enough to imagine a composite Offa-story in which they continued to feature in familiar roles with enduring motifs, and which may have existed in England at some point between 700 and 1250. And so, in the spirit of Tolkien’s mini-drama *The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth Beorhthelm’s Son* – an imaginative discussion of the moral problems in *The Battle of Maldon* which has been described as “a work of (informed) literary fiction rather than a philological or scholarly study”¹⁵⁰² – I offer something similar. Since this thesis is about stories, I tell it as one.

¹⁵⁰¹ I therefore do not share Neidorf’s neo-Chambersian view that the ethnic identification of the *Widsith* with “continental Germania” and was thus “pre-national” (2018b: 863). Konshuh (2020) examines the construction of English identity in *ASC*, but his is a Wessex-centric view. *Widsith* appears to have been composed for an audience that cared less about our notions of “Anglo-Saxons” or the *gens Anglorum* than it cared about the various Continental Germanic heroes and peoples that flourished during the migration period who were their forebears. There must have been a considerable period, after the *Adventus*, during which Germanic settlers and their descendants in Britain were aware or believed that they came from parts of Europe in which their name, culture and language originated.

¹⁵⁰² Tolkien 1953. The comment is by Honegger (2007: 189) – though in my opinion Tolkien’s playlet is both.



long time ago in Jutland, before the Angles and the Saxons and others came to England, there was a king called Wērmund.¹⁵⁰³ He was the son of Wihtlæg, who some say was a son of Wōden, a man whom the heathens in their blindness used to worship as a god (others say Wihtlæg's father was the traveller Weopulgēot the Waggoner whose father was Wōden). In his day Wērmund was a great warrior and very wise. He ruled the kingdom of the Angles in eastern Jutland, south of the river Sles at Sleswīc. He was known to his subjects and neighbours as "Angle". However, Wērmund did not seem to be able to father a child. He and his people were greatly concerned about his succession, for these were violent and unstable times, and the Angles were surrounded by watchful neighbours who shot greedy glances on the fertile lands and riches of Angel, a realm soon to be kingless, they thought. To the north were the Danes ruled by Healfdene and the great Alewīh or Ala (also, because of his belligerent nature, known as Heremōd).¹⁵⁰⁴ To the east



and south were the Heapobeards ruled by the half-Dane Frōda (also known as Wipergyld, a tributary king of the Goths),¹⁵⁰⁵ To the west and south were the Myrgingas, ruled by Ēadgils (an important figure in this story). He was also known as *Meaca* for short, because the name *Myrgingas* comes from our word for a horse, *meorh*, an animal of which these people were fond. They were related to the Hundingas – so-called because they were either very numerous or very few, or (in the opinion of the unwise) because they were partly dogs. Some say that the Myrgingas and the Hundingas were the same people, and Meaca was the same person as Mearchealf, the Hundingas' king. I am not so sure; I think they were possibly brothers.

¹⁵⁰³ Illustration: Wermund rejoices at the victory of Uffo, by Lorenz Frølich (1820-1908), in Fabricius 1854-55: I, 52.

¹⁵⁰⁴ Their contemporaneous rule is a speculation based on *RDF/Skjoldunga saga*. See p. 178 above.

¹⁵⁰⁵ One of the unsolved conundrums in *Beowulf* is what his surname *Scēfing* meant. Was he a son of or related to a person called *Scēf*? And if so, was this the Scēafa who ruled the Longbeardan, according to *Widsith* 32 (see Malone 1962: 193-94)? And if he was, was Scyld originally a Longbeard and a relative of the Heapobeard Frōda?

However, they were part of the great people called Longbeardan – so named because they are so tall, or because they have long beards, or because Wōden was fooled by his wife Frigu into giving them this name. (It depends on whose old wives’ tale you believe). They were also related to the Heapobeards ruled by Frōda, and after him by his son Ingeld, whose tragic end we have all heard of. The Longbeardan and their kind were cunning and warlike peoples who had migrated from the island of Scandinavia into northern Jutland and established themselves in western Jutland (north and south of the Eider), as far south as the Elbe, as far east as the Vistula, and even in northern Italy, where Ælfwine, the son of Ēadwine (the brother of Ealhild and nephew of Ēadgils), ruled instead of the emperor of the Romans, whom we call *Wala*. To the south of the Myrgingas, and south of the Elbe, were the Saxons, another powerful nation. They were one of the very many peoples of this region, but we are not concerned with them.

In the East, towards the river Vistula, were the Hrēþ-Gotan or “Glory Goths”, or “East Goths” (one of their famous kings was called *Ēastgota*, in the usual fashion by which the king of a people has the same name as a person of that people). They had a great empire in the east, encompassing many different peoples. They were ruled by Eormenrīc, who was a great conqueror and rich beyond imagination but also reputed to suffer from fits of mad fury, and to be so sickly suspicious that he could be persuaded to any evil course by tattle-tales. No trust or promise was so sacred that Eormenrīc would not break it. And so he was known as “the wrathful warlock”. (“Warlock” means “pledge-breaker”, but some use it of sorcerers, demons and the devil, which goes to show you what kind of man he was). It is said that if Eormenrīc had been put out of the way, none of his people would have been sorry. Beyond the empire of the Goths there lay lands of unknown and fearsome peoples. These included the Huns, ruled by Ætla, of whom we have all heard.

The Myrgingas, Hundingas, Longbeardan and Heapobeardan existed in an uneasy alliance with the Goths. King Ēadwine (the brother of Ēadgils and father of Ælfwine) was at the court of Eormenrīc as leader of a noble band of Wīþ-Myrgingas (from the province of the Myrgingas west of the Vistula), but it was a nice question whether he was an honoured guest there or a captive hostage. There were other kings at Eormenrīc’s court in the same position, for instance Wīþergyld (the Danish Heapobeard), whom we have mentioned, and Ongenþēow, the king of the Swedes, who had once made himself a vassal of Wīþergyld in return for his help and had earned the nickname “slave of Angel” (he is not to be confused with Incgenþēow

the son of Heapōrīc of the Goths, the successor of Eormenrīc).¹⁵⁰⁶ With innumerable barbarian tribes to his east, Eormenrīc needed these allies, especially since it was reported that Ætla was massing his Huns, which, as we know, happened later, when there was a famous battle between the Goths and the Huns in the forest on the Vistula.

I should add that Ēadwine had a most noble and beautiful daughter called Ealhild, who lived with her uncle Ēadgils in the part of Angel controlled by the Myrgingas. Eormenrīc asked Ēadwine for her hand in marriage. Despite Eormenrīc's known character (he had murdered his own nephews, the Herelingas, for their treasure-hoard, and, as I say, had a monstrous temper), the proposed alliance was nonetheless a very honourable one for Ēadwine. But even if he had been reluctant to join his daughter to such a man, Ēadwine was in no position to refuse the offer, and so the arrangement was made, and Ēadgils was instructed to send Ealhild to the Gothic court. And so she went – not without a certain trepidation.

As was customary, she was accompanied by an entourage, and this included a most remarkable fellow, a Myrging nobleman by the name of Wīdsīþ, who was also an accomplished singer and poet (for on foreign embassies it was good policy to take with you someone who could both entertain and, more importantly, flatter). Night after night during the feasting that celebrated their nuptials, Wīdsīþ sang beautifully eloquent songs, praising the deeds and munificence of Eormenrīc, the nobles of his court and their ancestors, and celebrating the beauty and illustrious lineage of Ealhild. He compared them to more glorious kings and queens than you and I might have known existed. To listen to Wīdsīþ, you would never have thought that there was a bad word to be said about Eormenrīc and his Goths; though, as we know, he was a tyrant, and his court – as such places usually are – was a hotbed of slander and treachery. Eormenrīc was charmed by Wīdsīþ's paeans. His normally savage mood lifted, and he became genial and rewarded him with a very costly golden arm-ring (worth over 500 shillings in the old gold money),¹⁵⁰⁷ and Ealhild gave him another of her own. Wīdsīþ left the

¹⁵⁰⁶ This is an interpretation permissible from Snorri's narrative which accompanies the verse of *Ynglingatal* about Egill the father of Óttarr (= Ongenþēow and Ōththere) in which Egill is driven out of Sweden by a rebellion but restored by Fróði inn frækni of Denmark (= Frōða in *Beowulf*) in return for becoming his tributary (*Ynglinga saga*, ch. 26; *ÍF* 26: 50-53).

¹⁵⁰⁷ See *Widsith* 91-92. Eormenrīc gives Wīdsīþ a ring (*bēag*) which *on þām siex hund wæs / smātes goldes, // gescýred sceatta scillingrīme* "was on the six-hundred, of refined gold, in a monetary calculation in shillings". Portable scales and weights were in use in early Anglo-Saxon England (Biggs 1990: 65-66), which may explain the curious phrase *on þām siex hund* – perhaps meaning "on the six-hundred shilling mark" on the scale of Wīdsīþ's balance. On the value of this, see Chambers 1912: 217 and Malone 1962: 48. Two Anglo-Saxon gold *scillingas* examined by Abramson (2017) weighed about 1.26g and 3g respectively. Such coins would suggest that a 600-shilling ring would weigh between 756g and 1200g (1lb 10 oz to 2lb 10 oz). This weight of 24-carat gold would be worth about £60,000 to £95,000 at the time of writing.

Goths for his homeland, feeling justifiably proud of himself. He travelled home to Angel, stopping at the court of Gūphere (the Burgundians were then living near the Goths) and was again richly rewarded for his song (and by a king known for his greed too!) Finally he returned to his father's ancestral estate, which his lord Ēadgils had been looking after during his absence; and, as was the custom, he presented his gifts to Ēadgils. However, Wīdsīþ soon earned them back. With his lyre – the aptly named *Scilling*¹⁵⁰⁸ – he sang panegyrics to Ēadgils before his warband, and a grateful and flattered Ēadgils showered him with wealth.

By this time Wērmund had grown old and yet had still not fathered a son. His physical powers and his sight began to fail. In those days, when a great warrior-king grew old, this was the most dangerous time for his people. Unless the king had a vigorous young son or other kinsman to lead his armies and defend his kingdom, his enemies licked their lips and prepared for the time when they could fall on a leaderless country, pillaging it at will or even conquering it. The Angles had almost given up hope, when Wērmund's wife bore him a son. However, their joy – and the father's – gradually turned to despair when they saw how the boy turned out. He was born blind, like a kitten or puppy, but remained so. He was also dumb and spoke not a word. As he became a boy and then a youth, he ate and ate and grew to a massive size and developed remarkable strength. But he remained a sad lummo, and no one – his father included – thought that he would ever amount to anything, let alone lead the kingdom. At his birth he had been given some name no one remembers. But his nickname was *Onlāf*, a name meaning “grandad's boy” which was given to sons born in their father's old age – often a great boon and the salvation of the family line, but not in Offa's case. The familiar form of *Onlāf* was *Offa*, which is how he has always been known.

By some stroke of fortune, Wērmund's reputation for victory had kept the enemies of the Angles at bay. But he knew that this would not last forever. He decided that the best way to ensure the succession would be if Offa were to marry and have a son of his own. But the question was: who on earth would marry his daughter to such a man – not only monstrous and

¹⁵⁰⁸ *Scilling* is named in *Widsith* 103-04:

Ðonne wit Scilling scīran reorde
for uncrum sigedryhtne song ahōfan,
hlūde bē hearpan hleoþor swinsade

Then Scilling and I, in a clear voice, began our song before our victorious lord. Loudly, accompanied by the harp, the voice sang out.

On *Scilling* as a name for Wīdsīþ's colleague, see Chambers 1921: 218; Malone 1962: 50-51, 194 (evidence for poets working in pairs); and Hill 2009: 121. *Scilling* is recorded as a personal name (an 8th-c. presbyter: *PASE*, *s.n.*). However, I prefer to understand it as the name of Wīdsīþ's lyre. See fn. 488 (p. 134 above).

clumsy (he was so strong that he would break any sword he was given and so was useless in a fight) but blind and dumb to boot?

To the south and west of the Angles, near the estuary of the Eider, there ruled a king called Frēawine. His kingdom was in such relatively dry and fertile land as there was to be had in that vast area of wetland (the Saxons who still live there call it *Piudimarisko* or “The Giant Marsh”), and on the rich meadowland of the Eider estuary. In England we still give the name *hamm* to dry land in a marsh or the meadows by rivers, and to borderlands. And so Frēawine was also known as *Hamm* or *Hemming*, his people as the *Hemmingas*, and the hall where he ruled was at *Hemmingstede*. However, his birth-name was (in the opinion of the best-informed) *Gārmund*, which shows you that he was related to Wērmund (if not a brother then a cousin of some kind). The Hemmingas were also called *Swæfe*, as they had once been one of the large number of tribes who lived under that name in this region before most of them moved elsewhere long ago. If you went back far enough, the *Swæfe* or Hemmingas, the Hundingas or Myrgingas, the Longbeardan and the Heapobeardan (and, for that matter, the Angles) were all related to each other – or so they say. Some maintain that these people originally came to Jutland from the great island of Scandinavia, but there are different opinions about that. As we know, anyone who comes from Jutland may be called a “Jute” (even if he is a Frisian), and anyone from Angel an “Angle” (even if he is a Myrging), and Angles can be Jutes, and vice versa, and *Swæfe* can be both. But in telling this story I shall try to avoid such confusion. Everybody knows what he is when he needs to know it!

The Eider, though not so great as the Elbe, was an important barrier between the traditional land of the Angles to the north and the land of the Myrgingas to the south (although the Myrgingas also occupied some of the Anglian land north of the Eider, and called themselves Ongend-Myrgingas, that is, the Myrgingas of Ongend, or Angel). So, it can be seen that these *Swæfe* or Hemmingas were placed most strategically. Anyone who was their friend could participate in the trade that flowed along the Eider; and in defending his own land, Frēawine would also prevent anyone else from crossing the Eider to make war on their neighbours.

Then – as today – alliances between peoples were often made by marriage between members of royal families. We have seen this with Ealhild, who was called “the faithful peace-weaver”, as it was the habit of noble ladies both to weave fine cloth and hangings and also to weave webs of peace or friendship between nations by their marriages, whether to end a war or to avoid one, or to make a friendship firmer. Frēawine had a beautiful daughter whose name is so well known I do not even need to tell you it. But I shall: it was *Þrȳþu* (some called her *Mōd-Þrȳþu* because of her reputation for ferocity). For the political reasons I have just

described, Ēadgils of the Myrgingas wished to marry her. Allied to the Hemmingas, and with his people's lands to the south of the Eider and, to the north of it, in Angel, Ēadgils would thus make his kingdom an invincible power in the region, and everyone would have to bend to his sway. But when Wērmund heard of Ēadgils's suit, his fears for his kingdom grew. His only recourse was himself to seek the hand of Frēawine's daughter for his son Offa (who was a cousin of hers – though in those days this was no guarantee of a people's friendship). If he brought it off, not only would he have made a powerful ally against Ēadgils, but – so he hoped – he might get a grandson. At the very least Offa might profit from the example of Frēawine and his two fine sons, his sub-kings, Ceta and Wīg (or Wīga), known for their fighting prowess.

However, there was one very curious thing which is to be told about Frēawine and his daughter. Frēawine's name may have been given to him because he was a "friend", that is to say a follower, of a lord or king (in those times people often went by nicknames that many supposed to be their real names, but in fact they had more than one name). By this we understand that he was a king of a minor kind who must always be beholden to a more powerful monarch (even though he was a kinsman of Wērmund). As I have said, his kingdom was of strategic importance between two hostile kingdoms, those of the Myrgingas and the Angles. He therefore knew that if he married his daughter to one of these peoples it would mean war with the other. And so he set an impossible condition: she could only marry a suitor if he never looked on her "with the eyes of day". Of course, this was inconceivable: how could, or would, any prince woo her if he could not look on her in daylight, and would lose his life if he did? The other condition to which her suitors had to agree was that if they failed this test they must accept that the penalty was death.

And so Þrýþu was kept to her bedchamber; and if any man – native or foreign, suitor or no – should happen to catch sight of her, she would tell her father and the unfortunate would be bound and instantly beheaded with a sword. While Frēawine may have thought this an ingenious way of preserving his neutrality, the universal view was one of disgust: this was no way for a princess who was a "peace-weaver" to behave, however special or beautiful she might be! Poor Þrýþu attracted the blame that, by rights, should have attached to her parents.

Ēadgils saw no reason why he should be refused a marriage to Þrýþu (who was a distant relation of his), but in any case had no intention of submitting himself to such a test, and his anger and threats against Frēawine grew. Meanwhile, Frēawine gained no new friends by his cruel and unusual stratagem, but rather several new enemies. Yet he persisted, possibly because there was little else he could do.

But who was there who was so silly, or desperate, that he would risk death to gain Þrýþu's hand? Several brave but foolhardy young men had tried and failed in what – it had become plain – was a hopeless task. Nevertheless, Wērmund in his desperation decided that Offa was just such a person. He had probably reasoned that his own case was so parlous that any risk was worth taking, and that if Offa perished, this would not, all things considered, be much of a loss. And so he sent Offa to make his suit to Þrýþu, instructing him to conceal, if possible, his blindness and dumbness. It is not recorded whether he told him of the terrible conditions that Frēawine had imposed.

Offa arrived at Hemmingstede with his retinue. Frēawine was immediately impressed by the young man's enormous size. Although it was common for a royal suitor's ambassadors to press a suit for marriage rather than the prince himself, it did not pass notice that Offa did not say a single word to anyone and seemed oblivious to the ceremonial laid on for him. But Frēawine was persuaded of the young Anglian prince's bona fides and then explained to him the conditions under which the suit had to be made. If Offa could make his way past the constant guard set upon his daughter, he must not catch sight of her "with the day's eyes" (whatever those slippery words meant) before she agreed to marry him. She was also fully veiled, so that without lifting this no man could tell if she was fair or foul. Should he breach any of these conditions he would forfeit his head. Apart from a slight raising of the eyebrows Offa gave no sign that he was surprised or dismayed and nodded his assent. Frēawine must have wondered if he was right in the head. Anyway, Offa was welcomed as a guest and given an honoured seat in the hall, where he sat, cheerful but still silent and apparently abstracted, gazing into space.

The time came when the evening's feasting and drinking was done and Frēawine and his court went to their beds and his guests were shown to theirs. As soon as they were all asleep, Offa emerged from his own quarters and made his way to where the princess had her chambers (as he had taken care to find out beforehand). With the keen senses that blind people develop to compensate them for their lack of vision, Offa was able to feel his way along the passageways towards Þrýþu's rooms. As he sensed each dozing and unwary guard along the way, he swiftly put them out of action with his bare hands. He had also learned of what awaited him there and was prepared. When he opened her door, there were two poisonous snakes who hissed malevolently. Offa had wrapped a blood-soaked animal pelt about his arm, and when he opened the door he threw the pelt on the floor, whereupon the snakes flew at it hissing. While they worried at it, he killed them both with his spear, judging by his hearing alone. Then he broke through the stout locked door that led to Þrýþu's inner bedchamber and found her sitting

up in her bed, startled by the great noise. She cried out, but Offa sat on the bed and took her by the hand, as if pleading his suit. She lit a candle. During the evening she had asked for reports of the appearance of the young Angle prince. And now she could see that the favourable news of his person was not wrong. He was most comely. She told him that as soon as he saw her she must tell her parents and cause him to lose his life. He smiled and by signs showed that he was not afraid. He lifted the veil. When Ealfhild looked into his eyes she realised why he had not been afraid. “You are blind”, she said. Offa nodded.

It is often the way with plans – even very careful and elaborate ones – that fate will find a way round them. Frēawine – who loved his daughter dearly – was initially reluctant to keep his side of the bargain. But Offa, by signs, had it explained to him that he had satisfied every condition, even the impossible one of not setting eyes on the bride-to-be – with the day’s or any other kind of eyes. Frēawine had to concede, but found a last refuge in the stipulation that his daughter must choose him of her own free will. Offa, who was fair-minded, agreed. Frēawine’s queen, who was more observant and wiser than her husband, told him he was a fool to give her the choice because it was obvious that the little minx was besotted with the giant Angle. Prȳþu, torn between desire and filial piety, hesitated, but when persuaded by her father she agreed to go with Offa as his wife.

And so the two young people were married at Hemmingstede, with much celebration and joy (mostly on the part of the Angles, it has to be said). Offa then returned home with Prȳþu, over the dark waters of the Great Marsh and the Eider estuary, to Angel. Despite her former bad reputation as a participant in her father’s murderous schemes, Prȳþu (who was a gentle creature at heart) turned out to be an excellent queen and was beloved of all. This union should have secured the future of Angel for generations. But, as we know, this was not to be.

However, first let me tell you of Offa’s most remarkable feat of heroism. Not long after their marriage (which was exceedingly happy), Offa unexpectedly gained his sight. But, although he was a loving and attentive husband, he remained as dumb as a stone. He and Prȳþu had a son called *Angengēot*, so-named because his father was an Angle and his mother a Swæfe, who, as I have said, were one of the many peoples of Jutland, and it was thought that one day he would rule in the lands of both peoples. He was also known as Angelpēow “the Angle lad”. He was the hope of his nation, though the second part of his name could also mean “slave”, and that was an ill omen for the future.

But before this, when Ēadgils of the Myrgingas heard about the wedding he was furious beyond measure. He declared war against Frēawine and marched on Hemmingstede. As he made his way through the land of the Hemmingas he killed, burned and looted until he was met

by an army led by Frēawine. He challenged the aged Frēawine to single combat. It was a custom in heathen times – much less so since, but not unheard of – that battles might be decided not by a general engagement but by a duel between champions which took place on the ground between the two opposing armies. This had the benefit that it could thus be divined whom the gods were supposed to favour for victory, without causing a mass slaughter or the ruination of a whole country. Frēawine had to accept for his honour's and country's sake. They fought, and Ēadgils slew him. The army of the Hemmingas broke and fled, and Ēadgils and his men could now roam their land at will, destroying, killing and pillaging.

The Hemmingas then sent one of their earls, Folca by name, against Ēadgils. There was another duel with Ēadgils who badly wounded Folca and routed his forces. However, Frēawine's sons Ceta and Wīg were capable young men. They soon regrouped their men and intercepted Ēadgils's marauding army. This time it was Ceta who challenged Ēadgils to a duel. Ēadgils was a formidable opponent, experienced in hand-to-hand combat, aggressive and physically very large and powerful. The Hemmingas feared (and the Myrgingas expected) that the young Ceta would be no match for him. And yet Ceta fought very well and even managed to land a blow on Ēadgils's helmet which made his scalp bleed. This only enraged Ēadgils, and he fought all the harder, eventually striking Ceta a blow which sent him to the ground. He was just about to finish him off when Wīg ran out and carried on the fight. Wīg was the younger of the two brothers, but, to the surprise of all, he turned out to be the better duellist, and he managed to strike Ēadgils on the head with such a mighty blow (as if he had a giant's sword) that it split his helmet and the blade went into his brain, killing him outright. Wīg recovered his brother and took him back to the Hemmingas. Some people tell a very similar story about Wulf of the Wulfingas and his brother Eofor who killed Ongenþēow the king of Sweden (this is not the same person as Offa's son Angengēot or Angelþēow, or Heaþorīc's son Incgenþēow).

Opinion was divided as to whether Wīg's intervention was proper. Some thought that a duel was between two champions only, and two-against-one was dishonourable. Others said that it was dishonourable not to avenge a fallen brother, and in any case the brothers had not fought Ēadgils together but singly (and at his own encouragement), and that was allowed. Whatever the legal or moral position was, Ēadgils lay dead. And whether or not the heathen Myrgingas thought this was an augury of defeat, they had no king and no general to lead them. Disheartened, they went back to their own land, full of vengeful thoughts.

Ceta recovered from his wounds and he in turn became Hemming, king of the Hemmingas. He gave his brother Wīg rich lands of his own to rule (some say he married a Saxon lady and sired his own illustrious line). Anyway, the brothers are now out of this story.

Although the Myrgingas had suffered a setback against the Hemmingas, Ēadgils's son and successor was determined to gain a victory over the Angles. We know him as Meaca of the Myrgingas (though *Meaca* was the name borne by his father, a pet-name for the king of the Myrgingas, that is to say, for king "Mearh" of the "Mearh"-people). The prospects looked much better here. Wērmund was old and blind, and his son (who they said could now see) was still a mute and a lubber and generally reckoned to be an idiot. The country was ripe for the taking. The Myrgingas sent their ambassadors to Wērmund and his council of wise men and told them that they must pay tribute to the Myrgingas or prepare for war and conquest. The Angle elders did not reply, but muttered among themselves, and it was plain that there were some – and more than a few – who were minded to yield, whatever Wērmund said, because their king was a blind old man and his son dumb and useless. As they conspired, Offa spoke for the first time in his life (he later said that it was the Myrgingas' impudence, the elders' cowardice and the threat to his own country which had enabled him to give tongue, but we may be sure that it was the work of God). Fluently, and in a stentorian voice, he told the ambassadors that the Angles were not frightened of their bluster, and that if they would consent to a duel to decide the quarrel between them (though the Myrgingas had no just cause that he could see), then he would fight as his father's champion. Moreover, if the Myrgingas thought that it was unfair for his two brothers-in-law to have fought and killed Ēadgils and wished for redress (though he personally saw nothing wrong with it and was not responsible anyway), he would agree nonetheless to fight any two of Meaca's nominees at once. The Angles were so astounded that they uttered not a word. The ambassadors, equally dumbfounded, returned to Meaca with the news. He realised that this was a veiled challenge to himself, and so he must be one of the fighters, for his honour's sake. Though we should not doubt that he was a brave man, he no doubt reckoned his chances good, since Offa, despite finding the power of speech, had no reputation as a swordsman. At any rate, Meaca chose his best warrior as the other champion. His name has not been remembered (though there are some who say he was Mearchealf of the Hundings, a kinsman of Meaca).

And so a meeting was arranged between the Myrgingas and the Angles on one of the islands in the estuary of the Eider, with each army encamped on either side of the river, between their two countries. It was traditional to fight such duels on an island so that neither combatant could escape, and neither army could attack the other if they disputed the result.

This was the moment that Wērmund had feared. After Offa had issued his impossible challenge, Wērmund had made a belated attempt to train him in swordsmanship, though without success (as I said, Offa shattered every sword he was given). Now, Wērmund had long

ago buried his father Wihtlæg in a grave mound, and (as the heathens did) placed his arms and other treasures next to his body in readiness for the next life that, in their folly, they believed would come. Wērmund remembered that among these grave goods there had been a sword with the fabulous reputation (which some swords had) that it could cut through anything and would thus grant victory to whoever wielded it. It had been called *Screp* (*scræf* or *sceorp* in our language), which means – appropriately enough – “military kit”, “dismemberer” and “hole in the ground”. Wērmund had it dug up. It was ancient, rusty and seemed fragile and quite useless as a weapon, but since Offa had broken all his other swords and had to have something to fight with, Wērmund gave it to him. What Offa thought of this gift, or his chances, is not recorded.

On the day of the duel, Offa armed himself and was ferried over to the island where Meaca and his champion were waiting for him. They were surprised at Offa’s gargantuan size, but bore in mind that he had spent almost his whole life as a slow-witted mute, and presented a ridiculous spectacle in a mail corselet that had plainly burst at the seams and with a rusty old sword that looked like a toothpick in his giant paw. They anticipated no trouble.

Wērmund, it seemed, had expectations no different. He had asked to be placed on the end of a jetty that went out into the river, and to be pushed off it if Offa lost. He did not want to live to see the end of his kingdom.

Meaca reminded the Angles of his demands if they lost the duel. Offa then spoke again, and added a term of his own, which was that if the Myrgingas lost, they would have to cede the land that they occupied in Angel north of the Eider to his father Wērmund. Laughing heartily, Meaca saw no reason not to agree and instructed his champion to finish this dolt off.

Offa and the Myrging champion met in full view of the two armies. Offa proved to be as nimble and skilful as he was strong, evading the strokes and thrusts of his opponent. But because he struck no blow of his own, nor used his sword to parry any by the champion, the Myrgingas began to make catcalls while the Angles groaned. Wērmund heard this and feared the worst, shuffling to the very edge of the jetty. And so this went on for some time, as the hoots of Myrging derision and cries of Anglian disappointment grew louder. We may guess that Offa – who was no fool – had calculated that there was but one good blow in this feeble sword (if that), and he wished to pick his moment.

Nobody afterwards could agree whether it was the magical nature of *Screp* or Offa’s enormous strength (or a mixture of both), but with his first swing he cut right through the middle of the body of the champion, which lay twitching in two halves on the ground. Meaca was astounded for a moment, but then with a roar immediately rushed at Offa, and the pair

came to blows. Again, Offa spared the use of his untrustworthy sword, but it was not long before he managed to land a blow on Meaca, and as before it sliced right through him.

There remains little to be said except that this is the story of how, with that single, remarkable sword, Offa marked the border with the Myrgingas on the river Eider. He was still little more than a boy, and by conquering the land of the Ongend-Myrgingas, he had made the Angles masters of Sleswic “between the two seas”, that is, from the shores of the North Sea to those of the Baltic – a feat that had never been achieved by anyone at that time, not even Alewīh (that is, Heremōd) of the Danes who conquered Sweden. With their allies the Hemmingas on the lower Eider, the Angles seemed safe from any enemy to their south – whether Myrging, Longbeard or Goth. Further south there were the Saxons, but as I say we are not concerned with them.

I should just add a word about Wīdsīþ, the Myrging poet. He is said to have been at the duels where Ēadgils and his son Meaca fell, and of course when the Angles took over the Anglian possessions of the Myrgingas he lost his ancestral land. They say that he then wandered abroad from court to court, seeking employment by talking up his lengthy experience and recalling the days of his glory when he was Ēadgils’s man and escorted a princess to be married to Eormenrīc, a monster whom he was able to charm with his valuable skills.

This brings us to what eventually happened to Ealhild. Eormenrīc was persuaded by one of his counsellors (known as Becca or Sībecca – “faithful” Becca – a king of the Goths’ allies the Bāningas) that his son Rondhere was having an affair with his wife Ealhild. He hanged Rondhere and – in a cruel touch, because she was related to the Myrgingas or “horse people” – he had Ealhild pulled apart or trampled by horses (some say that he also killed her father Ēadwine). This turned out to be an error, since two of Ealhild’s kinsmen, called Hāmpēow and Searula, came and, before they were killed by the Goths, injured Eormenrīc so grievously that he was left a cripple. When he died, his son Heaþorīc succeeded, but it was Heaþorīc’s son Incgenþēow who was left to defend what was left of the Gothic kingdom against the Huns in a great battle on the Vistula. By this time Ætla was dead (murdered by his Burgundian wife, they say), and the Huns were led by Hliþe, a bastard son of Heaþorīc’s by a Hunnish woman named Sifece. You all know the rest of the story.

As for the Angles, Wērmund died not long after Offa’s victory, content that his kingdom was in safe hands. Offa and his queen ruled long and wisely. But in these times peace and stability did not long endure. In the north a new power grew. After a period of anarchy and lordlessness, the outsider Scyld Scēfing came to power and founded his own dynasty. Scyld made conquests in Scandinavia, but his son Bēow and grandson Healfdene were great warriors.

I will not go into the intricacies of the family relationships among the Danes (which also involved Alewīh, also known as Heremōd), but there was a war in which Frōda the Heapobeard killed Healfdene. But Healfdene's sons – Hālga, Heorogār and Hrōþgār – killed Frōda and then his son Ingeld (after a failed political marriage with Hrōþgār's daughter). Hrōþgār's nephew Hrōþulf led the Danes to victory over Ingeld and his men at Heorot, at the very wedding celebrations, if you would believe it. Heorot was burned down in the fighting. But this was the end of the Heapobeards and their power, and Hrōþgār and Hrōþulf (who became very famous indeed) took over their lands to create the greatest empire seen since the Romans.

Now there stood very little between the Danes and Offa's Angel. Even as Offa's life drew to a close, his allies and tributaries deserted him, one after the other, hoping to make their accommodations with the approaching Danes, who swallowed them up like gnats.

Hrōþulf was assassinated by Heorowearð, the overlooked and resentful son of Heorogār, Hrōþgār's elder brother. But it was not long before Heorowearð himself was killed by a man of Hrōþulf's, and the great but short-lived dynasty of Scyld came to an end. But this did not stop the onward march of the Danes. Under a new king – a kind of king who carried all before him – they continued to forge southwards. This king was called Dan, "the Dane" (after the fashion we have already noted). Dan – a man of uncertain ancestry, the Northmen say from the plains and great rivers of Russia, others from nearer home – achieved mastery over the lands which had formerly sworn fealty to Offa, and so, in the view of the Angles, Dan was simply a foreign vassal of Offa, of the kind we know in Mercia as *Rigan* (to use the Welsh word). But this did not take into account the reality of the situation. Offa – now very old – technically still ruled Angel, and his son Angengēot (as his name implied) had pretensions to sovereignty over Angel and Jutland, but Dan was now a greater power than they. The Welsh call their kings *Rig*, because this means powerful. And whether Offa's enemy was also known as Riga the king or Riganus the sub-king, he was also Dan, the author of the mischief that was to befall Angel.

Dan or Riga defeated Offa and began to take his lands from him. However hard Angengēot tried, he could not prevail against Dan. Offa eventually died, with the empire he had won so gloriously in desperate straits. Angengēot had a son called Ēomēr. Ēomēr grew into a fine young man, and it was thought that he would be another Offa, like his grandfather, and would save the kingdom of the Angles from the Danes. He forged an alliance with the remaining independent peoples of Jutland, including the Hæleþas, and by his example, bravery and stratagems saved their kingdom from the Danes. But this won only a short reprieve for

Angel. The Danes were too numerous and too powerful, and eventually even Ēomēr could not hold them back.

Ēomēr had a son who was known as Icel (“little horse”). It was at this time that it became known that when the Roman legions had left Britain the country was ruled by a number of rascally, worthless British kings. After their long domination by the Romans, the Britons had no military skills or experience of their own, and their kings were reliant on foreign troops for protection. In truth, these were only the same Germanic-speaking mercenaries that were the mainstay of the Roman army (those that did not prefer to raid the coasts of Britain and Gaul). Such men had served the Romans, and then the British kings after them, and had been rewarded with lands in the south-east of Britain. But the Britons were not the Romans. News arrived back in Jutland that these lands were lush, fertile and sparsely populated by people unused to war and led by men of no value. For the peoples of Angel and Jutland who were battling the threat of the Danes from the north this was an unlooked-for opportunity.

The first of Jutlanders to sail was Hengest, son of Witta, a king of another branch of the Jutlandic Swāfe called the *Oiscingas* (he was also known as Ōsgīsl and Ōsica). He became a mercenary and served the great Hnæf of the Half-Dane Hōcingas, until Finn the Frisian killed Hnæf and his five brothers, whereupon Hengest followed Finn until moved to murder him (such was the character of Hengest). In Britain the lordless Hengest became the man of the British king Wyrhtgeorn, who married Hengest’s beautiful daughter. But Hengest either tired of service to this unworthy lord, or his native disloyalty and opportunism came to the fore. At any rate, he treacherously killed Wyrhtgeorn and his *witan* at a feast (as he had done with Finn), seized his land for himself and sent word to Angel that others should follow him. And they did, in their hundreds of thousands, so that what had once been the mighty kingdom of the Angles was left deserted. When the Angles and other Jutish peoples (let us here at last also mention the Saxons) left for Britain, the Danes occupied the places that they had left behind, as far south as the Eider, to the south of which enough Saxons remained to check their progress.

As for the Angles, Icel, the great-grandson of Offa, founded his own dynasty in central Britain, where they were called the *Mearce* or “people of the border”. Saint Gūplāc was of the Iclingas. Icel was only one of the kings of a new Angel which they made in Britain, from the Jutish peoples of the south-east and the Saxons of the south-west, to the Scots and Picts in the North. This was the land of the Angles, or *Englaland*. And that is why we remember Wērmund and Offa, and the others who were part of this history, which is our own. The Danes, I am told, have a different story about Offa, whom they even deny to be a hero, or, good heavens, say he was a woman! But we need not concern ourselves with such nonsense.

Appendix

Summaries of Danish Texts about Uffo

1. Saxo's Story of Uffo (*Gesta Danorum*, IV.3.1-6.1; Friis-Jensen and Fisher 2015: I, 220-45)

Viglecus king of Denmark was succeeded by his son Wermundus. The reign of Wermundus was long and peaceful, but he did not father a son until he was very old. His son was Uffo. Uffo was physically huge but seemed unfit for anything. He was solitary and never laughed or spoke. He was thought stupid. Wermundus arranged for his marriage to the daughter of Frowinus, a governor of his province of Schleswig, hoping that Frowinus and his two fine sons, Keto and Wigo, would set him an example. The king of Sweden was called Athislus. He invaded Schleswig, killed Frowinus in a duel and defeated his army; then he returned to Sweden and boasted about his victory. Wermundus appointed Keto and Wigo in their father's place, which provoked Athislus to invade again with all his army. Keto sent a warrior called Folco to inform Wermundus, who gave him orders to repel Athislus. Folco fought a duel with Athislus. Both men were wounded, and Athislus's army fled to their ships, followed by Athislus, and was allowed to escape back to Sweden. Keto, disgusted, asked Wermundus how this could have happened, but was assuaged by Wermundus's explanation. Athislus again boasted about killing Frowinus. Keto and Wigo vowed to avenge their father's slaying. They knew that Athislus liked to walk alone. They went to Sweden, stashed their weapons and armour, and met him on one of his walks. They engaged him in talk and pretended to be two people who had come from Schleswig on account of a killing (which was true). The dramatic irony continued as Athislus asked if it was known in Denmark who had killed Frowinus (it was) and if Frowinus had sons who were still living (yes), and about their appearance, and their reactions to the death of their father (etc). Athislus feared their vengeance if they were anything like their father. On a subsequent occasion the brothers followed Athislus on one of his walks and confronted him. Athislus offered compensation (out of pity, not fear). Keto refused and attacked him. Athislus withheld his strength in the fight until Keto wounded him on the head, and then he beat Keto to his knees. Wigo had refused to join his brother against Athislus (although Athislus had encouraged this). Wigo now attacked Athislus and killed him. Saxo

complains that this was unfair and dishonourable. But when the brothers reported to Wermundus, the king was very pleased. Wigo and Keto are now out of the story.

Wermundus now went blind, and the King of Saxony – arguing that Wermundus was not fit to rule – demanded that he hand over his kingdom. Wermundus refused. The ultimatum delivered by the Saxon king’s ambassadors was to accept a duel for the kingdom (to be fought by their respective kinsmen) or be invaded. Uffo – who was present – emerged suddenly from dumbness to scorn their threats and accept their challenge, offering to fight two at the same time. The blind Wermundus did not at first realise that it was his son who had said this. He asked why it was only now that he had spoken, and Uffo said that it was the threat to his country that had moved him to speak, and that he had agreed to take on two men to expunge the shame of the killing of Athislus by Keto and Wigo. Wermundus encouraged Uffo to get some training. But Uffo was so large that he split his armour and broke every sword given to him. Wermundus procured a sword called *Skrep* which could cleave through anything. (Wermundus had previously buried it, believing that Uffo would never be fit to use it). *Skrep* was very old and looked fragile.

The duel took place in a bend of the river Eider. Uffo’s opponents were the son of the king of Saxony and his champion. Uffo was alone. There was a large crowd. Wermundus sat on a jetty, ready to throw himself in the river if things went badly. The duel began. Uffo was reluctant to use *Skrep* and parried with his shield. He goaded the king’s son and champion to come at him. The champion did so and Uffo cut him in half with a single blow. Uffo goaded the king’s son to approach him, and when he did, ran him through the body. Uffo then took over the realm of the Saxons. Saxo complains that nothing else is written about Uffo’s later life, and notes that he was also believed to be the figure called *Olavus mansuetus* [= Óláfr lítilláti in Icelandic texts]. Uffo’s son was Dan, a warlike king who made many foreign conquests.

2. Sven Aggesen’s story of Uffo (*Brevis Historia Dacie*, ch. 1-4; Gertz 1917: 96-107)

King Frothi the bold of Denmark had a son called Vermundus, a brave and sagacious king who earned the surname “the wise”. Vermundus had one son, called Uffo, who refused to speak until he was thirty. This was on account of the shame which had been heaped on the Danes when two Danes went to Sweden and murdered the slayer of their father when he was alone [Sven does not name these people or describe any relationship with Uffo]. The heathens placed great value on individual bravery, and so it was disgraceful for two to slay one.

Vermundus ruled Denmark until his old age, when he became blind. When the Germans south of the Elbe [called *Teutones* and *Alamanni*] – arrogant and ever-greedy for the lands of others – heard this, they planned to seize Denmark. They sent ambassadors to give the Danes the ultimatum that they should either let themselves be absorbed into the Roman Empire and pay tribute, or nominate someone to fight their champion in single combat.

When Vermundus heard this he called his chief men together and expressed his perplexity. The duty of fighting fell on him, but he was old and blind, and his only son was not only dumb but a sluggard from whom no one expected much. From infancy the boy had given himself up to eating and drinking, although he had managed to preserve his youthful bodily strength unimpaired. What was to be done? No one could think of any plan, and there was silence. But Uffo, who was present, stood up and spoke for the first time, and delivered an oration in which he declared that the threats of the Germans were bluff intended to overawe fools and cowards. He told them to send a message to the German emperor saying that he, Uffo, would face the German emperor's son and heir, and his foremost champion in combat.

The blind Vermundus asked the assembly who was this who had spoken. They told him it was Uffo. He asked for Uffo to be brought to him and felt all over his body. "This is how I was in the flower of my youth", said Vermundus. The date for the duel was set and the ambassadors – who had witnessed this scene – returned home.

Worthy weapons were sought for Uffo to use, but every sword he was given he shattered, complaining that he could not defend Danish honour with such things. Vermundus then ordered his men to take him to a certain grave-mound. Guiding himself by known signs among the rocks, Vermundus found a sword he had buried there, the trustiest of weapons. He gave it to Uffo, saying that it had never failed him in his numerous victories.

The day of the duel loomed. It was to take place on an island in the river Eider, so that the supporters of neither side could assist their champion. Great numbers had come to see it, the Germans on the Holstein bank, and the Danes on the Schleswig side. Vermundus sat in the middle of a bridge over the river, prepared to throw himself in if Uffo lost, preferring death to the loss of his son and his kingdom.

On the island, the German emperor's son and the German champion both charged at Uffo. Seeing two coming against him, Uffo roared like a lion and goaded each of them to come on ahead of the other – the emperor's son for his country's honour, and the champion out of duty to his lord. Uffo was brandishing a sword in his right hand, but this was not the one Vermundus had dug up, which was at his belt. Uffo fought the champion first. He struck him on the helmet, but the sword broke with a loud report that caused the Germans to shout with

joy and the Danes to groan in despair. Vermundus heard this and asked to be placed on the parapet of the bridge. Uffo drew his father's sword and struck the champion on the hip, wounding him. Then he cut his head off. Vermundus asked to be put back where he had been. Uffo then chased the emperor's son to the shore of the island, where he cut his throat. Thus, Uffo effaced the disgrace of the two Danes who had slain one man. The Germans went home in shame, and Uffo later ruled a peaceful kingdom.

Uffo had a son called Dan who was called "the glorious" or "the proud". [Sven says nothing about Dan's deeds].

3. *Annales Ryenses* (ch. 26-29; Lappenberg 1859: 394)

Ambletus was the king of England, Denmark and Sweden. He was killed by Wigleclus the king of Norway who took over Ambletus's kingdom and his wife, putting aside his own. Wigleclus was succeeded by his son Wermundus the blind. Wermundus was a warlike man. In his time, Keto and Wiggo, the sons of Frewinus the governor of Schleswig, killed Athislus the king of Sweden to avenge their father. Uffo the strong succeeded Wermundus.

Uffo the strong, from the age of seven to thirty, did not wish [*noluit*] to speak. In the place called Kings' Battle [*Kunengikamp*], on the Eider he fought single-handed against the son of the king of the Germans and the best champion in all Germany. He killed them both. The result was that a quarter of Germany became a tributary to Denmark. Uffo was succeeded by his son Olaf.

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NB All entries below are alphabetic – by author, editor, translator and/or title as appropriate – and not subdivided between primary and secondary sources or types of text. Icelandic authors are referred to by forename and patronymic and alphabetised under their forename: e.g. *Bjarni Guðnason* is under “B” not “G”. Also included are abbreviations (e.g. *BHD*, *DOE*) and short titles (e.g. *Eddukvæði*, *Cosmographer*).

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