THE REEVE IN LATE ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to build a picture of the reeve in late Anglo-Saxon England. This little-understood figure has traditionally received limited attention in scholarship, and this study attempts to rectify this, and to shed light upon this official and his impact on English society.

Chapter One explores the nature and implications of the reeve's role as an administrator in Anglo-Saxon government. The law codes emerge as a key source in determining how legislators saw the reeve fitting into and contributing to the mechanisms of the administration. Chapter Two looks at the reeve's status in late Anglo-Saxon society, as well as both the nature of the reeve's relationship with the king, as well as how he acted as a counterbalance to the powerful and influential ealdormen in the localities.

Taking a step away from the reeve as a royal agent, Chapter Three focuses on the reeve as an estate manager for the private aristocratic lord. The nature of the reeve's work on the late Anglo-Saxon estate, as well as how he was rewarded for that work, is explored. The resultant picture not only broadens our knowledge of the private reeve, but also how he fit into tenth- and eleventh-century English society.

Chapter Four explores the manner in which the reeve is presented in late Anglo-Saxon homiletic discourse. Arguably, the increasing number of negative references to the reeve in these moralizing texts is reflective of his growing prominence and influence in late Anglo-Saxon England. The work of Archbishop Wulfstan of York is also examined: it is argued that despite the plethora of moralizing references to the reeve at this time, Wulfstan's thinking represented a departure from this trend. The archbishop crafted a role for the reeve that was integral to the realization of his vision of a "holy society".

Contents

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Declaration

The author asserts that this thesis does not contain any material that has been previously presented, either in publication or in previous research.

Introduction

Anglo-Saxon England is shrouded deep within the murk and mists of distant history. The period spanned nearly five hundred years and was resultant in a kingdom that proved an irresistible prize to the Danes and the Normans alike. The extant source material is quite rich in some areas and very poor in others, and all are complex and require understanding to interpret. One element of this period that is particularly evasive to scholars is that of the workings of the Anglo-Saxon state. It is vitally important for any student of late Anglo-Saxon England's history to develop an insight into the manner in which the administration and its laws functioned. Such knowledge facilitates a firmer grip on the social and political climate in pre-Conquest England. Much of what is known regarding the functioning and efficacy of the Old English state has been drawn from and dependent upon the substantial surviving law codes, along with charters, litigation and dispute evidence, selected extant prose pieces, and of course, *Domesday Book*. This research attempts to attain deeper knowledge of both the late Anglo-Saxon administration and late Anglo-Saxon society through a focus on the reeve. The reeve has traditionally been accepted generally as "an administrator", with relatively little elaboration beyond this label. It will be shown that while the reeve was indeed an administrator, his role in Anglo-Saxon government and administration was a complex one, with reeves operating at numerous levels of the Old English state. The term "reeve" could also be applied to local administrators working for thegns and aristocrats. This research will demonstrate that some reeves, such as urban and shire reeves, were very significant figures, while other royal reeves – as well as those working for aristocrats, such as on estates, were humbler souls.

Traditionally, the research into this area of Anglo-Saxon history has focused upon the activity and machinations of the king and the elite members of Old English society, via the types of evidence catalogued above. Those occupying positions at the upper echelons of society tended to include earls and ealdormen, along with high-ranking members of the English church. It has long been

believed that it was through the work of these great men – on behalf of the king – that the Old English state was molded and operated. Of course, these individuals doubtlessly made innumerable contributions to the development and functioning of the administration – indeed, Stephen Baxter has uncovered a wealth of invaluable insight on the activities of the Mercian earls and ealdormen in late Anglo-Saxon England. However, despite all that has been gained through the study of the activity of ealdormen and high-ranking ecclesiastics alike, it is clear that there is yet much more work to be done. There remain numerous gaps in our knowledge of the workings of the late Anglo-Saxon administration, some of which include: How were judicial proceedings carried out? Which official(s) were in charge of them? Were the Old English law codes exclusively ideological statements, as some scholars have argued, or were they enforced on the ground? How did the king ensure (or, at least, attempt to ensure) that royal power was felt on the ground in the localities? How were the rights and privileges of the church protected and enforced? Did royal power play a role in this, as the law codes suggest? Were royal officials literate, or did they possess at least a modicum of literacy? Who was responsible for operating the royal estates, and what did that role entail? And, finally, how were royal officials perceived by others in late Anglo-Saxon England? Can we know?

Answers to these questions have proven fairly elusive in the past, yet it is clear that scholars' focus has traditionally been on those of higher rank, ealdormen and ecclesiasts in particular – and these are of course the people who are most visible in the historical record. But what if we shifted our attention to officials of a lower rank? Arguably, it is the middling royal officials, many of whom would have been installed in the localities, who may have the most to tell us about the operation of the Old English state – particularly at the local level, and also in terms of royal involvement with the rights and privileges of the church. This study of the reeve – or *gerefa*, in Old English – in late Anglo-Saxon England will aim to shed light on the important questions highlighted above, and to build on the model put forward by the maximal view for the function and operation of the late Anglo-Saxon administration. It will also be shown that the reeve played a

role in the workings of the church, and that he was also a popular subject in late Old English homiletic discourse, particularly in the works of Archbishop Wulfstan of York (d. 1023), where the role of the royal reeve was arguably reinvented to some degree, in order to help achieve the archbishop's vision for England as a holy Christian society. In addition to questions surrounding the operation of the administration, the study of the reeve will also offer insight on other elusive areas of Anglo-Saxon society. While it will be shown that by the tenth and eleventh centuries there were reeves who had achieved positions as very significant figures indeed, many of these men were mid-ranking officials operating in the localities. An examination of their activities will yield a clearer picture of late Anglo-Saxon society and social status. While it has long been known that reeves also worked as administrators on the estates of both aristocrats and the king, the details of this role are shadowy. This research will attempt to build a clearer image of the reeve as a late Anglo-Saxon estate manager, which has important implications for scholars' perception of the late Anglo-Saxon estate, its functioning and how it fit into the economy of the tenth and eleventh centuries.

This study addresses a variety of complex issues and questions pertaining to late Anglo-Saxon England, and accordingly embraces a number of diverse sources. Perhaps the most prominent of these is the corpus of Anglo-Saxon legislation. The law codes are an invaluable resource for any study of the administration, and arguably particularly important in order to create a portrait of the reeve as an administrative official. It will be argued that the reeve as a royal official was envisaged by the law codes as an appointed agent, responsible to the king and wholly subject to his will, in a way the ealdorman was not. The law codes, along with evidence gleaned from the charters and dispute settlements, present the reeve as an agent of the king, whose position – and ability to keep it! – was based entirely on his service to the king, as opposed to any aristocratic or monetary influences. The law codes and charters are indispensible resources for this study. However, this research is not solely confined to the reeve's function and role as a royal administrator. While the law codes constitute a significant proportion of the source material for the reeve as a

royal agent, they are less useful in terms of the reeve and his activities on an estate. Here, it is estate memoranda and the corpus of Anglo-Saxon wills that yield the most fruitful detail on the activities of the estate reeve. Two works in particular emerge as insightful sources on the reeve's work: the tract *Rectitudines Singularum Personarum* and the literary treatise *Gerefa*. Comparison of the picture of the reeve presented by these valuable texts with that of twelfth-century estate memoranda is also quite instructive. Finally, this study of the reeve also seeks to investigate perceptions of the reeve in late Anglo-Saxon England, particularly those that emerge in an ecclesiastical, moralizing context. The Old English homiletic discourse in general, and Archbishop Wulfstan's *Institutes of Polity* in particular, will reveal not only literary trends concerning the reeve, but also that Wulfstan held a particular view on the reeve's role, and accordingly made this official a key player in his vision of England as a good Christian nation.

This study will seek to illuminate an area of Anglo-Saxon history that has long been dark. Very little is known of the activities of the Anglo-Saxon reeve and the nature of his role in the royal administration, as well as the nature of his work on estates. Shedding light on this enigmatic character will not only serve to resurrect him from anonymity, but it will also permit a greater understanding of the functioning of the late Anglo-Saxon administration, especially the judicial process in the localities, details surrounding estate management and finally the relationship between royal officials and the church. Finally, this research will also examine the literary trends involving the reeve in Old English homiletic discourse, as well as, importantly, Archbishop Wulfstan's departure from the traditional ideas expressed about the reeve. This investigation will primarily be concerned with reeves' activity in the tenth and eleventh centuries, where the bulk of the evidence lies. However, references to the reeve in earlier legislation will be considered briefly, in order to contextualize the later legal material. This work will seek to demonstrate, through the use of a wide range of material – law codes, charters, estate memoranda, wills and homiletic discourse – that by the late Anglo-Saxon period the reeve was an appointed administrative official whose

position was contingent upon his service to the king. The nature of this service encompassed a number of functions, with judicial roles being an important element of the reeve's duties. The reeve could be found at numerous levels of society – from an influential position close to the king, to the humble reeve of a local village. The work of the royal reeve – at every level – was important because it enabled royal influence to be felt in the localities. These agents of the king also aided in maintaining the balance of power throughout the kingdom, helping to manage the influence of the powerful ealdormen. An investigation of the late Old English homiletic discourse reveals that there was a literary trend current in this period to depict reeves as evil, rapacious officials, in a heavily moralizing fashion. A closer look at this tradition shows that the homiletic work of Archbishop Wulfstan was doing something very different, and in the process, crafting a new role for the reeve, in which the official played a key part in building and maintaining a good Christian kingdom in England. This research, via an investigation of a little-understood royal official, will offer a number of significant contributions to the legal and cultural landscape of late Anglo-Saxon England.

Scholarly viewpoints on the operation of the late Anglo-Saxon state

Indeed, before it is possible to embark upon a discussion of the late Anglo-Saxon administration, it is necessary to explore just what is meant by the term "state" in connection with Anglo-Saxon England, and to briefly consider its historiography. Despite the fact that many modern historians freely apply the term "state" in relation to polities in the early medieval west, it has been argued that this term is inappropriate and anachronistic for use in connection with such institutions, though Susan Reynolds argues that this could in part be a reflection of modern and nineteenth-century concepts of the state, which may cloud our

perceptions.[1] Accordingly, Reynolds has developed a clear definition to be utilized for an early medieval state, based in part upon Max Weber's interpretation of the modern state:

> I shall myself use the word to refer to an organization of human society within a more or less fixed area in which the ruler or governing body more or less successfully controls the legitimate use of physical force. This definition … is adapted to focus on the difference between societies in which the control of physical force is formally located and those in which it is not.[2]

Furthermore, with this definition of "state" firmly in mind, Reynolds stresses the importance of considering not only the ruler of the state, but also those who are subject to this rule, and the relationship between the two bodies.[3] The legitimacy of those in power is also an important notion here, particularly when considering the concept of the state in early medieval Europe; for example, it was often vital in the medieval west for a ruler to have the approval of the church – and the legitimacy that went hand in hand with this approval.[4]

It is important to recognize the fact that medieval people would themselves have had different ideals and opinions as to what constituted a state, and would have written about it accordingly.[5] This is a significant point to take into account in our consideration of late Anglo-Saxon England; it is necessary to adjust our perceptions and what it is that we are looking for with regard to what constitutes a state. In search of further clarification of the term "state," Reynolds notes that Janet L. Nelson, against a backdrop of anthropological research and the work of

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[1] Susan Reynolds, "The Historiography of the Medieval State," in *Companion to Historiography*, ed. Michael Bentley (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 117 & 118.

[2] Reynolds, "The Historiography of the Medieval State," 118.

[3] Reynolds, "The Historiography of the Medieval State," 119.

[4] Reynolds, "The Historiography of the Medieval State," 119.
A relevant example of such ecclesiastical approval is the case of Wulfstan and Cnut: Wulfstan as the archbishop of York endorsed Cnut's power by legislating for him and by indicating that the English people were bound by God to obey the king's law (Eric Stanley, "Wulfstan and Ælfric: 'the true Difference between the Law and the Gospel'," in *Wulfstan, Archbishop of York: The Proceedings of the Second Alcuin Conference*, ed. Matthew Townend (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2004), 430).

[5] Reynolds, "The Historiography of the Medieval State," 120.

Weber, has developed a list of important characteristics of a state: "the territorial definition of kingdoms, the assertion of royal control over coinage and fortifications, the sanctions threatened and sometimes imposed on rebellion and disobedience, royal supervision of the criminal jurisdiction exercised by landlords, and the obligation of all the inhabitants of a kingdom to its defence."[6] Based on consideration of the above criteria, the identification "state" can comfortably be assigned to tenth- and eleventh-century England.[7] Arguably, the above definitions of what constitutes a state in the early medieval west are nicely consistent with the maximal view of the late Anglo-Saxon state, although there is one more criterion: the concept of an identity as a nation.[8]

For well over a century, modern historians have been debating the nature and efficacy of, and authority possessed by, the late Anglo-Saxon state. Perhaps the most eminent of the early modern historians to work on the late Anglo-Saxon state is Frederic William Maitland. His research on late Anglo-Saxon England has come to be regarded as seminal and despite the fact that there are aspects of his work that have since been called into question and revisited, many of his conclusions still hold firm more than a century later. Numerous distinguished historians have since referred to Maitland's work as a starting-point and taken up the pen in search of further illumination on the late Anglo-Saxon state. What has emerged is an intellectual debate which has been drawn out over many decades, circling around the details of the functioning and authority of the late Anglo-Saxon administration. One model that has been quite zealously advanced is that of the "maximum view," among whose champions in particular may be found James Campbell, Patrick Wormald and Simon Keynes, who together form a "triumvirate" of sorts in support of the power and efficacy of the late Anglo-Saxon

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[6] Reynolds, "The Historiography of the Medieval State," 122.

[7] Reynolds, "The Historiography of the Medieval State," 130.

[8] As discussed by Sarah Foot: "The Making of *Angelcynn*: English Identity Before the Norman Conquest." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Sixth Series (1996): 25-49. And highlighted by Wormald: Sarah Foot, "Patrick Wormald as Historian," in *Early Medieval Studies in Memory of Patrick Wormald*, ed. Stephen Baxter et al., (Surrey and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2009), 11-27. See also: Patrick Wormald, "Germanic power structures: the early English experience," in *Power and the Nation in European History*, ed. Len Scales and Oliver Zimmer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 105 – 124.

state. This view, in short, is that which assumes a sophisticated, centralized government for late Anglo-Saxon England, which, it has been argued, laid the groundwork for the development of English government as we know it today.[9] These staunch supporters draw their arguments from a variety of evidence: Wormald from the Old English law codes and extant dispute settlements, Campbell primarily from *Domesday Book* and Keynes' work deriving heavily from the Anglo-Saxon charters. This wide range of varied evidence, and indeed, different approaches, certainly lends considerable strength to the maximal model for late Anglo-Saxon England. Despite the evidence and support advanced for this model, there are opponents, such as Paul Hyams, who argue for its over-keenness with regard to the power and authority attributed to the Anglo-Saxon administration. As a student of late Anglo-Saxon England, it is crucial to be aware of the various models for the state put forward by historians, what arguments and evidence underpin them, and what has been said against them by their critics.

There are a number of hypotheses as to the extent of the efficacy and power of the late Anglo-Saxon state, and, as shown, the most prominent of these is regarded as the "maximal" view and has largely been promoted by Campbell, Wormald and Keynes. This centralized administration and control over the kingdom was made possible in part through the existence of a methodically worked out hierarchy, to which all of the king's agents would have belonged and been keenly aware of their status within it. Campbell in part has derived this view in its early stages from *Domesday* evidence as well as documents such as the *Burghal* and *Tribal Hidages*.[10] Other evidence marshaled in support of this view by Wormald and Keynes (among others) includes law codes, dispute records, and charters. Research on the Anglo-Saxon coinage also plays an important role.[11] It has been, in the main, predominantly these threads that have continually been drawn together to underpin the "maximal" theory that the late Anglo-Saxon

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[9] Patrick Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century, Volume One: Legislation and its Limits* (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1999, 2001), 4-6.
[10] James Campbell, *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London: Hambledon Press, 1986), 155 and James Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxon State* (London and New York: Hambledon and London, 2000), 1-3.
[11] Campbell, *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History*, 155 and Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxon State*, 7, 8.

administration was not only organized and centralized, but powerful as well. Like Maitland, Campbell in particular puts great faith in, and relies heavily on, *Domesday*'s evidence for the late Anglo-Saxon state. In fact, Campbell makes the assertion that our primary indicator that pre-Conquest England had an organized, strong, central administration is *Domesday Book*.[12] Baxter too, contends that *Domesday* offers us valuable insight into late Anglo-Saxon England. He argues that *Domesday* demonstrates that "the tenurial and seigneurial structure of England was often highly fragmented…" and that it would have been difficult indeed for local lords to engage in any administrative activities without the awareness of the royal agents.[13] Despite the indisputable value of *Domesday Book* as a source, it is vital to bear in mind the fact that it was a post-Conquest source, and therefore necessarily always offering something of a "hindsight" view of matters in Anglo-Saxon England.

Campbell suggests that comparison between the land assessments of the *Tribal* and *Burghal Hidages* and *Domesday Book* may imply that some of the practices regarding territorial organization of the late Anglo-Saxon state had their roots deep in the past, and perhaps even before the advent of written records.[14] This is flagged as an important detail because it points toward a long legacy of conscious state organization and land management procedures in Anglo-Saxon England. Along these lines, Campbell also suggests a link between the management of estates and the administration of the state – this may reflect a deliberate effort to organize and manage land units and territories and keep track of them.[15] This is significant, Campbell argues, because it intimates that early on, Anglo-Saxon kings were capable of organization on a grand scale.[16] This proposal also offers a suggestion as to the manner in which the reeve may have evolved

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[12] Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxon State*, 2.
[13] Stephen Baxter, "Lordship and justice in late Anglo-Saxon England: the judicial functions of soke and commendation revisited," in *Early Medieval Studies in Memory of Patrick Wormald*, ed. Stephen Baxter et al. (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2009), 388.
[14] Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxon State*, 6.
[15] Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxon State*, 6.
[16] Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxon State*, 6.

from an early administrator of the king's *tuns* into an administrative official of the Old English state.

Further aspects of Campbell's case for an organized and powerful central administration in Anglo-Saxon England center around a number of points. First, he cites the massive scale and vast amount of manpower and organization that building Offa's Dyke must have entailed.[17] Surely such an undertaking would not have been possible in a nation without some modicum of organization and control over its various regions and the people within them. Additionally, various aspects of coin design – as well as the high degree of control the Anglo-Saxon kings apparently had over the mints and the issue of coinage – reveal to the historian the complexity and sophistication of the late Anglo-Saxon coinage.[18] The coinage was kept strictly controlled, and the kings ordered new issues and demonetizations to take place at regular intervals of several years.[19] Keynes too, advocates for the high level of refinement and organization in the production of the Anglo-Saxon coinage.[20] This close regulation and management of a nation's coinage is indeed indicative of an organized and efficient central authority; the king would need to have been possessed of a network of reliable officials in the localities – and perhaps particularly in the regions where mints were located – in order to enable the system's success. Perhaps the most convincing argument in Campbell's arsenal is that of the state exercising its power and authority through the work of its agents in the localities.[21]

One of the major underpinnings of Campbell's case in favor of the existence of a strong, centralized state for Anglo-Saxon England is the concept that there were, he contends, strong links between the officials in the localities and royal power.[22] To this end, Campbell argues for a high number of "agents of government" working in the localities, which would have largely contributed to

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17 Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxon State*, 6.
18 Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxon State*, 7, 8.
19 Campbell, *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History*, 155.
20 Keynes, "Royal government and the written word in late Anglo-Saxon England," 228.
21 Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxon State*, 15.
22 Campbell, "Some Agents and Agencies of the Late Anglo-Saxon State," 205.

the system's success.[23] Keynes maintains that during the tenth century the royal government grew in its power and authority and that this was in part due to the royal agents' work in the localities.[24] The localities were organized in an efficient manner conducive to effective exercise of royal power over a wide area. Although this model was put forth for the whole of late Anglo-Saxon England, rarely do scholars appear to consider Northumbria in their analyses. [25] Northumbria has received comparatively little attention, particularly when juxtaposed against East Anglia, Wessex and Mercia. Northumbria was on the northern fringes of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom, and was also subject to much viking activity; this area did not feature as frequently as other regions in contemporary documents. Perhaps due to this lack of evidence, or possibly unconsciously following in the Anglo-Saxon chroniclers' footsteps, modern historians have not addressed Northumbria in any kind of comprehensive manner. It may prove useful to attempt to uncover more about Northumbria and how it fits into the bigger picture. The royal agents in the localities would represent royal interests and enable the king to maintain close control and supervision over the districts under his authority. The principal players on the stage of local administration would have been the earls and ealdormen, who would have governed various regions of the kingdom within their respective ealdordoms: Baxter contends that royal authority would have relied heavily upon these local agents, in order to make its power felt.[26]

Baxter's discussion regarding the earls and the territories they ruled over has brought some interesting considerations to light. No one specific estate in an earl's possession tended to be utilized as a permanent administrative nucleus: oftentimes, many of an earl's estates would have been spread out across

[23] Campbell, "Some Agents and Agencies of the Late Anglo-Saxon State," 205.
[24] Simon Keynes, "Chapter 18: England, c. 900 – 1016," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History, v. III, c. 900 – c. 1024*, ed. Timothy Reuter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 456.
[25] Stephen Baxter gave attention to Mercian earls in his volume *The Earls of Mercia: Lordship and Power in Late Anglo-Saxon England*, when these have traditionally not been considered in the same light as those of East Anglia and the West Saxons.
[26] Baxter, *The Earls of Mercia. Lordship and Power in Late Anglo-Saxon England*, 10-12.

numerous shires.[27] Thus, it is unsurprising when Baxter concludes that earls rarely worked from a fixed location within their earldoms.[28] This however does raise the interesting question as to where meetings of shire courts would be held and just who would preside over them, when it was entirely possible that shires could move between earldoms, and it was sometimes tough to ascertain exactly what shire(s) lay in which earldoms.[29] Baxter asserts that the "mobility" of these territories serves to indicate the late Anglo-Saxon king's political power and control: it was possible for him to move lands between earldoms, and indeed move earldoms between men.[30] Not only is this an interesting conclusion in itself, but it is also noteworthy for what it might suggest regarding the political situation in the localities. This is intriguing because it indicates that control and sovereignty over lands and territories was moveable and changeable, at least under the king's authority. Perhaps this was the king's tool, deployed in order to keep his tenuous links with his officials intact – an investigation and analysis of the reeve's role in late Anglo-Saxon England will be instructive here.

Pauline Stafford analyzes the balance of power both locally and nationally in late Anglo-Saxon England; she explores what factors might cause kings to rely upon individuals outside the royal family, as opposed to those who were known to him and belonged to his kingroup.[31] Immediately, familial, dynastic tensions come to light, which point toward the necessity of forming alliances and ties outside the royal kin. There are manifold reasons as to why this may have come about, not the least of which were numerous succession disputes during the tempestuous tenth and eleventh centuries. The king's vital need for support in the localities, particularly during periods of unrest or of insecurity, would drive

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[27] Baxter, *The Earls of Mercia. Lordship and Power in Late Anglo-Saxon England*, 62, 63.

[28] Baxter, *The Earls of Mercia. Lordship and Power in Late Anglo-Saxon England*, 62.

[29] Baxter, *The Earls of Mercia. Lordship and Power in Late Anglo-Saxon England*, 64, 65.

[30] Baxter, *The Earls of Mercia. Lordship and Power in Late Anglo-Saxon England*, 70. Furthermore, Baxter stresses the importance of the connection between formal and informal power structures in late Anglo-Saxon England, and that the success of the Old English administration was directly linked with this connection (Baxter, *The Earls of Mercia*, 11 – 12).

[31] Pauline Stafford, "King and Kin, Lord and Community: England in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries," in *Gender, Family and the Legitimation of Power: England from the Ninth to Early Twelfth Century*, ed. Pauline Stafford (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 3.

him to appoint men into positions of administrative authority, both as a reward with which he hoped to bind the man to him, but also in order that he had men firmly under his authority (and backing it) in local districts.[32] Although the king wielded power and influence as the head of the royal government, this essentially would never be realized if it was not expressed in the localities through the actions of his agents.[33] Thus in holding an administrative position, officials of the Anglo-Saxon state would have been carrying out the king's will and making it felt in local areas, such as through law enforcement and presiding over the meetings of the hundred and shire courts. This research seeks to illuminate some of the finer details of the exercise of royal power and authority in the localities. Alan Kennedy, in his research on the *Libellus Æthelwoldi episcopi* explores the workings of the local courts and administrative function in the local districts of late Anglo-Saxon England.[34] Kennedy argues for a high level of administrative work undertaken by royal agents in the localities.[35] Kennedy states that the *Libellus Æthelwoldi* provides a much more three-dimensional image of the local workings of the late Anglo-Saxon administration than do the Old English law codes.[36] It is clear from the *Libellus Æthelwoldi* that the late Anglo-Saxon kings (particularly Edgar in this instance) were involved in the administration of the kingdom, and that the king was at the nucleus of an organized network of agents who ensured that law and justice were carried out in the localities.[37] Like Kennedy, Wormald too extols the usefulness of dispute settlements in uncovering detail regarding administration in the localities.[38]

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[32] Stafford, "King and Kin, Lord and Community: England in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries," 6.
[33] Stafford, "King and Kin, Lord and Community: England in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries," 6.
[34] Alan Kennedy, "Law and Litigation in the *Libellus Æthelwoldi episcopi*." *Anglo-Saxon England* 24 (1995).
The full name of the text is: *Libellus quorundam insignium operum beati Æthelwoldi episcopi*, and it dates to the late tenth century at Ely abbey.
[35] Kennedy, "Law and Litigation in the *Libellus Æthelwoldi episcopi*," 136, 137.
[36] Kennedy, "Law and Litigation in the *Libellus Æthelwoldi episcopi*," 135.
[37] Kennedy, "Law and Litigation in the *Libellus Æthelwoldi episcopi*," 135.
[38] Patrick Wormald, "Charters, law and the settlement of disputes in Anglo-Saxon England," in *The Settlement of Disputes in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 157.

A further benefit of holding an administrative office might have been that men in local administrative positions may have encountered opportunities for advancement in the courts and through their exercise of the king's power.[39] Similarly, Keynes reiterates that the support of the local officials, men such as ealdormen and thegns, was vital to the king, but that one method of securing men's loyalties – if not their hearts as well – was to award them grants of land.[40] Indeed, some scholars have argued that men's loyalty could be bought with grants of land, and even then this loyalty only stretched as far as the limits of the king's generosity. Hyams, too, offers a particularly negative view on loyalty in Anglo-Saxon England. He argues, based on his reading of the story of Cynewulf and Cyneheard, that no loyalty could be viewed as absolute, not even the ties of lordship. Despite some convincing elements of Keynes' and Hyams' views, one cannot help but to feel that it is a bit of a severe judgment – can we really presume that *none* of the men in Anglo-Saxon England felt deep loyalty to their lords? Some of the myriad extant vernacular poems and homilies would have us believe otherwise.[41] Thus it is important to consider ideologies of loyalty which were circulating in tenth- and eleventh-century England. Wulfstan, archbishop of York and bishop of Worcester (d. 1023), drafted laws for both Æthelred II and Cnut; his legislation and homilies abounded in exhortations and moral reforms for the English people.[42] Based on a phrase Wulfstan used in his *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* of 1014, Eric Stanley argues that the Anglo-Saxons and especially Wulfstan,

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[39] Stafford, "King and Kin, Lord and Community: England in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries," 30, 31.

[40] Keynes, "Chapter 18: England, c. 900 – 1016," 456, 458.

[41] Such as can be found in an excerpt from the poem *The Husband's Message*: "Very often in a boat … I sought/where my lord … /over the high seas. I have now come here/on the deck of a ship, and now you shall know/how you might think in your heart about/the heartfelt love of my lord. I dare promise/that you will find there a gloriously assured commitment" [Ful oft Ic on bates … … gesohte/þær mec mondryhten min…/ofer heah hafu. Eom nu her cumen/on ceolþele, ond nu cunnan scealt/ hu þu ymb modlufun mines frean/on hyge hycge. Ic gehatan dear/þæt þu þær tirfæste treowe findest]. Elaine Treharne, ed. *Old and Middle English: An Anthology* (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, Ltd, 2000), 80 – 81.

[42] Patrick Wormald, "Wulfstan [Lupus] (d.1023), archbishop of York and homilist", Oxford Dictionary of National Bibliography, accessed 6 December 2009.

viewed law and justice linked with God.[43] Further to this point, Wormald states that "it seems that Wulfstan saw law and homily as barely different ways of achieving the same objective: an ordered and Christian society."[44] Thus, Wulfstan would have seen loyalty to the king and to the state as important elements of obeying God's law and being a good Christian. Loyalty was therefore a vital force in many aspects of life in millennial England. Royal officials would have been acutely aware of its pull – they were bound to the king not only through service and lordship, but by land and God as well.

Rosamund Faith considers the development of the late Anglo-Saxon state from the perspective of royal agents below the rank of ealdorman.[45] Faith explores the growth of the late Anglo-Saxon state through the evolution of the landholding class: she contends that thegns, gaining land as reward for a variety of services they could render, developed into a new class of smaller landowners.[46] Not only does Anglo-Saxon England have its roots in a feuding culture (in which ties of kin and lord feature prominently), but as the administration developed, lordship began to play a key role in some judicial proceedings; concerns surrounding lordship feature heavily in the laws. [47] Service was elemental to the thegns' office, particularly to their existence as members of the landholding class; this in effect created a lesser nobility whose rank, prestige and power were contingent upon the quality and dependability of their service to the king.[48] Not only would this create numerous landholders in the localities who were keen to be the king's representative, but it would also be in itself an attraction to royal service. Drawing towards the end of the Anglo-Saxon period, it is evident that a position as a royal official was becoming a

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[43] Eric Stanley, "Wulfstan and Ælfric: 'the true Difference between the Law and the Gospel'," in *Wulfstan, Archbishop of York: The Proceedings of the Second Alcuin Conference*, ed. Matthew Townend (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2004), 430.

[44] Wormald, "Æthelred the Lawmaker," 57, 58.

[45] Rosamund Faith, *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship* (London: Leicester University Press, 1997).

[46] Faith, *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship*, 156.

[47] Baxter, "Lordship and justice in late Anglo-Saxon England: the judicial functions of soke and commendation revisited," 399, 400.

[48] Faith, *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship*, 156.

desirable commodity and would have been rewarding and perhaps associated with some measure of status. The concept of royal office as an opportunity for advancement walks hand in hand with the king's desire to use appointments and rewards to keep his agents in check and loyal to him. Additionally, Keynes states that the tenth century was a period in which the administration of Anglo-Saxon England gained in power and influence and "kings and their agents sought various ways to establish social order."[49] Keynes contends that this goal was supported in part by an increase in royal servants who were granted lands and estates around the country in return for services and support rendered to the king.[50]

In his discussion of the tenth- and eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon administration, Baxter states that there were some significant alterations in the manner in which the royal government operated, particularly at the local level: shires and towns were becoming ever more important administrative areas, with sheriffs, reeves, and other royal officials below the rank of earl becoming increasingly visible on the political stage.[51] Reynolds regards one of the important purposes of an Anglo-Saxon town as its function as a center of government.[52] She highlights that one eleventh-century text differentiates specifically between town law and country law.[53] This suggests that a town operated as its own entity, directly responsible to the royal administration, instead of perhaps to the shire in which it was located. It seems clear from subsequent, recent scholarship that towns played an integral role in the administration of the late Anglo-Saxon state, and that there was indeed something of a strong administrative structure in place, into which towns played a not insignificant role.

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[49] Simon Keynes, "Chapter 18: England, c. 900 – 1016," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History, v. III, c. 900 – c. 1024*, ed. Timothy Reuter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 456.
[50] Keynes, "Chapter 18: England, c. 900 – 1016," 456, 458.
[51] Baxter, *The Earls of Mercia. Lordship and Power in Late Anglo-Saxon England*, 73.
[52] Susan Reynolds, *An Introduction to the History of English Medieval Towns* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 92.
[53] Reynolds, *An Introduction to the History of English Medieval Towns*, 92.
Reynolds cites the terms used in the text as "burhriht and landriht."

In further discussion of courts, Campbell states that it is likely that the courts of the more important and large late Anglo-Saxon towns would have probably been akin to those of the rural hundreds in influence and power.[54] Campbell highlights a case in which the widow of Edward the Confessor, who was a powerful woman in her own right, sought justice through Wedmore hundred's public court.[55] This case points toward the concept of "public justice" as an important element of Old English government. Moreover, following the same consideration on a more formal and prescriptive level, the laws of Edgar state specifically that first justice is to be sought at the local court, before recourse may be made to the king.[56] Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this case may be firm evidence attesting to the fact that real people *did* in fact turn to the local courts; certainly the fact that a woman who was likely very influential turned herself to the court (as opposed to using her authority to settle the issue) must be indicative that the courts were indeed an option that was used and relied upon.

After having reviewed the nature of the arguments in favor of the maximal view, it is important to consider an alternate viewpoint. Hyams disagrees with the extent of authority and centrality ascribed to the late Anglo-Saxon administration. He concedes that royal ambitions continued to grow throughout the period, but he doubts the actual effectiveness of the legislation in reality – he refers to the laws and the pronouncements of the king as having been "normative" texts.[57] He maintains that the Old English laws were documents designed and intended to showcase royal power, but not necessarily enforce it.[58] For Hyams, the Old English laws were primarily intended as "display" texts, which is a tough

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[54] James Campbell, "Power and authority 600 – 1300," in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain Volume I: 600 – 1540,* ed. DM Palliser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 56.

[55] Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxon State*, 25.

[56] Felix Liebermann, ed., trans., *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen* (Halle a.S: Max Niemeyer, 1903), 200. III Edgar 2: "7 ne gesece nan man þone cyngc for nanre spræce, buton he æt ham rihtes beon ne mote oððe riht abiddan ne mæg."
III Edgar 2.1: "Gif þæt riht to hefig sy, secan siððan þa lihtinge to ðam cynge."
AJ Robertson, ed., trans., *The Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925), 25. III Edgar 2 and III Edgar 2.1: "And no-ne shall apply to the king about any case, unless he cannot obtain the benefit of the law or fails to command justice at home." And 2§1: "If the law is too oppressive, he shall apply to the king for mitigation."

[57] Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation in Medieval England*, 72 and 102.

[58] Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation in Medieval England*, 98.

view to reconcile, when one considers the amount of time and effort these texts would have taken to compile, as well as the instances in which recorded practice in dispute settlement records aligns with what was prescribed in the law codes. Hyams also believes that the king would have had great difficulty enforcing his will – especially when attempting this from a distance – with Hyams doubting the power and usefulness of the royal officials in the localities.[59]

The view of the late Anglo-Saxon administration held by Hyams differs markedly from that of Campbell, Keynes and Wormald: he argues that late Anglo-Saxon England was a feud culture, which also boasted public courts and monarchical power.[60] Despite his acknowledgement of the function of public courts, Hyams does not credit them with the same organization and efficacy as those who hold the maximal view.[61] Indeed, Hyams argues that the maximal view is far too "modern" and anachronistic a model to be realistic for an administration of the tenth and eleventh centuries.[62] Despite the informed argument Hyams employs and the attractiveness of his cautious view, he cannot quite overtake the appeal of the evidence, in particular that in favor of the efficacy of a network of royal agents. Campbell's multi-faceted argument certainly has its appeal, yet the most convincing aspect of this is his discourse on the network of royal agents, implementing the king's authority around his territories. On one hand, Hyams is right; this official activity, and its supposed effectiveness, is difficult to prove, to say the least. Yet if more work were done on the subject, we might be able to ascertain definitively whether or not the network of royal officials in the localities was indeed as effective and organized as its supporters claim. This research will not only shed light on shadowy royal officials who were key figures in the localities, as well as their spheres of activity and influence, but it will also bring scholars a significant step closer to understanding the power and functioning of the royal administration in millennial England.

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[59] Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation in Medieval England*, 101.
[60] Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation in Medieval England*, 72.
[61] Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation in Medieval England*, 73.
[62] Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation in Medieval England*, 73.

After a consideration of the historiography and the various ways of thinking about the medieval state, it is clear that there are numerous conflicting views regarding the power and level of efficacy we may attribute to the late Anglo-Saxon administration. As a result of this brief review of the late Anglo-Saxon administration and the models advanced for its functioning and effectiveness, it is clear that the "maximal" view has its appeal. Nonetheless, for this view to really be accepted as the definitive model for the Old English state necessitates further research. Arguably, looking at the role and activities of one royal official will not only yield valuable details regarding the administration and legal processes in the localities, but it will also aid historians in resolving some of the debate over the efficacy and degree of centralization of the late Anglo-Saxon state. One such royal official who has traditionally been given very little attention in scholarship is the reeve. Most commonly referenced in Old English as *gerefa* and in Latin as *praepositus*, the reeve is an enigmatic figure, generally referenced broadly as "an administrator". Despite the lack of research on this official, what we do know about the reeve strongly indicates that in this figure, we have an important resource for furthering our understanding not only of the workings of the royal administration, but also of local justice and legal activity, as well as details concerning estate management and the status of men who were of middling importance, sometimes attaining the rank of thegn.

Scholars have long seemed to recognize the existence of the reeve, and that he was to some degree an important element within the administration. Indeed, Campbell has unequivocally stated: "The ultimate link in the chain which led from the king to a village was the village reeve."[63] However, despite this bold assertion of the reeve's vital importance, particularly, it seems, in local areas, scholars have a relatively vague understanding of just what the reeve actually *did* on the ground. Clearly, we are dealing with a rather enigmatic figure whose specific function has been little recognized, but who appears to have been invested with a great deal of importance in the workings of the administration –

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[63] Campbell, "Some Agents and Agencies of the Late Anglo-Saxon State," 205.

indeed, the reeve appears repeatedly in the Old English laws, as well as in the diplomatic, dispute settlement evidence, and the homiletic material. It is possible that illumination of the reeve's role in the Anglo-Saxon government will prove immensely useful in determining how effective and organized the administrative system might have been, and whether the exercise of royal power was, as we hypothesize it to be, effective when mediated through agents in a distant territory.

Building on a model for the operation of the late Old English state

It is instructive now, having explored the preeminent viewpoints on the functioning of the late Anglo-Saxon state, to build on an existing a model for its workings and administration. It will be shown that the reeve operated at many levels within the late Anglo-Saxon government, and these officials were indeed an integral element in its functioning. Of course, it is well known that the state operated at numerous levels, though the details of how it actually worked on the ground and how royal power permeated the localities have been elusive. The reeve is arguably a major piece in that puzzle. Therefore an addition to the maximal model for the workings of the Anglo-Saxon administration is proposed. This contribution builds on the existing maximal view that the late Anglo-Saxon state was not only powerful, centralized and sophisticated, but that this power was largely effected through the work of royal officials operating in the localities on the king's behalf. This addition to the model underlines the importance of middle managers in the localities, showcasing the value and importance of their role through the activities of the reeve as a royal agent. Much of the maximal model hinges on the belief that royal officials were making royal power felt in local areas; arguably this research on the reeve both tests the efficacy of this model and ultimately contributes to it. The king and his royal court were at the center of royal power. The great men of the realm – that is, the ealdormen and the bishops – would participate at the royal court as well as at the itinerant

meetings of the witan. The ealdormen or earls were responsible for governing the shire(s) which fell within the territory of their earldoms. The ealdorman, along with the local bishop, ran the local shire court. However, it will be shown that shire reeves (also in some cases known as king's reeves) too could be present at the meetings and proceedings of the shire court. These officials were arguably the king's men, installed in the localities in order to both temper the influence of the powerful ealdormen as well as to protect and ensure the rights of the bishops and the church. Archbishop Wulfstan of York in particular highlighted and refined this aspect of the reeve's role.

On the next rung down on the administrative ladder, the local or village reeve operates the hundred courts, with the village priest working alongside. It was these reeves who were responsible for dispensing justice and making judgments in their localities, though petitioners of the hundred court had the recourse to turn to the shire court if unsatisfied. These local reeves were also the officials on the ground who were responsible for aiding the village priest in ensuring that taxes and tithes were rendered and that any mandated fasting was properly observed. This local, administrative role for the reeve – indeed, this figure represents the king's arm in the localities – arguably stems from the reeve's place as the manager of the king's *tuns* or estates in early Anglo-Saxon England. These *tuns* were once the centers of the communities in which they lay, much as villages became the foci of local life towards the end of the period.[64] Therefore, over the course of the Anglo-Saxon period, the local reeve underwent an evolution from the manager and local official at the king's *tun*, to the village reeve in charge of the hundred court. The reeve remained an important force within the community, as well as its link back to the king, though the nature of his responsibilities shifted somewhat by the tenth and eleventh centuries, due to the developments of the Anglo-Saxon administration across the period. Of course, this change does not signal the end of the reeve as an estate manager. This role

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[64] For more on the royal *tun*, please see: P. Sawyer, "The Royal *Tun* in Pre-Conquest England," in *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society: Studies Presented to JM Wallace-Hadrill*, ed. Patrick Wormald (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1983), 273 – 299.

too, had shifted. By the tenth and eleventh centuries, we begin to see the demise of the great estates, and the subsequent rise of many smaller ones. This increase in the number of smaller estates owned by the aristocracy and the minor nobility occasioned a rise in the need for estate reeves to manage and run them (particularly in the cases of individuals who owned numerous estates across a wide geographical zone), and therefore we see a resurgence in late Anglo-Saxon England of the estate reeve, albeit on a smaller scale than previously.

This research will build on and contribute to the maximal model for the Old English state, demonstrating the workings and efficacy of royal power in the localities, through the activities of the reeve as a royal agent. It is evident that by the end of the Anglo-Saxon period, the reeve had risen to become not only a very visible and recognizable figure in the English landscape, but also an integral cog in the functioning of the machinery of the Old English state. It is hoped that the following work will illustrate just how important and indispensible this shadowy figure had become by the eve of the Conquest. Furthermore, in addition to the contribution to scholarly understanding of the functioning of the Anglo-Saxon administration, this research will also illuminate the reeve's role as an estate manager, yielding detail regarding the workings of late Anglo-Saxon estates. Finally, the Old English homiletic discourse will shed light upon contemporary views of the reeve, as well as serve to underline the utterly new and unique role Archbishop Wulfstan envisaged for the reeve as a key player in his vision for England as a holy society.

Sources: a review

One of the great difficulties in building a picture of the late Anglo-Saxon state (and indeed, of the officials who were the key elements in its function) is the nature of the extant sources. Our key source for the administration of Anglo-Saxon England in this period has long been the Old English law codes, with the importance of the dispute settlement evidence also being recognized by

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Wormald.[65] These sources provide a very rich compendium of legal evidence, spanning much of the Anglo-Saxon period. The Old English legislation is a crucial source in this study of the reeve; this material is so important because it illustrates the manner in which the Anglo-Saxon kings envisaged the reeve operating as an element of the royal administration. Whether this was actually the case on the ground can be determined to some extent from looking at other evidence such as dispute settlement and charters, but nonetheless it is essential to have an understanding of what was royally expected. An awareness of the nature and limitations of the law codes as a source is vital in order to contextualize the picture they present of the reeve and the part he played in the royal administration.

It is thought that the law codes represented the king's and therefore the royal government's "official" intentions, and consequently the ideal administrative model, which the Anglo-Saxon kings envisaged as being within the tradition of a good Christian king.[66] It has been argued that the principal focus of the first law codes was for kings to project an ideological statement, articulating that they were not simply warriors, but also lawmakers part of a long tradition of written legislation.[67] Furthermore, Keynes argues that the promise the Anglo-Saxon kings made at their coronation bound them to preserve the rule of the law, primarily manifest in three elements:

Promissio Regis:

1. On þære halgan þrinnesse naman! Ic þreo þing beháte
    Cristenum folce 7 me underðeoddum:
    § 1. án ærest, þæt Godes cyrice 7 eall Cristen folc minra
         gewealda soðe sibbe healde;
    § 2. oðer is, þæt ic reaflac 7 ealle unrihte þing eallum
         hádum forbeode;

[65] Patrick Wormald, "A handlist of Anglo-Saxon lawsuits," in *Anglo-Saxon England* 17 (1988).
[66] Sarah Foot, "The Making of *Angelcynn*: English Identity Before the Norman Conquest." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Sixth Series (1996), 32.
Foot elaborates, on the laws of Alfred: "Alfred was legislating here overtly in the tradition of a Christian king, against an historican background of Old Testament law-giving (and in the light of a contemporary Frankish commitment to written laws and to the collection of law-codes)" (32).
[67] Ann Williams, *Kingship and Government in Pre-Conquest England, c. 500 – 1066* (London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1999), 58.

§ 3. þridde, þ*æt* ic beháte 7 bebeode on eallum dómum
    riht   7 mildheortnisse, þ*æt* us eallum arfæst 7
    mildheort God þurh þ*æt* his ecean miltse forgife, se
    lifaðe 7 rixað.[68]

The oath arguably dates to the ninth century at the latest, though none of the extant copies can be dated as early as that.[69] It is important to bear in mind that those who drafted the law codes were generally not those who promulgated the codes.[70] This is a major consideration because it is possible that those drafting the law might have allowed their own agenda to influence their work.[71] Wormald cites Archbishop Wulfstan as a prime example: here was a powerful and influential ecclesiastic who drafted legislation for two Anglo-Saxon kings and whose work often saw a connection between God and the law.[72]

HR Loyn has postulated that the arrival of Christianity onto England's shores with the coming of Augustine's mission in AD 597 provided the necessary impetus for the promulgation of the written legislation by the Anglo-Saxon kings.[73] The church's ultimate goal would have been that of a good Christian kingdom, and with the conversion of England being as it was a "top-down"

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[68] Liebermann, ed., trans., *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 214, 216.
"1. In the name of the Holy Trinity! I promise three things to the Christian people who are under my authority:
§ 1. Firstly, that true peace shall be assured to the church of God and to all the Christian people in my dominions.
§ 2. Secondly, I forbid robbery and all unrighteous deeds by all classes of society.
§ 3. Thirdly, I promise and enjoin justice and mercy in the decision of all cases, in order that God, who liveth and reigneth, may in his grace and mercy be brought thereby to grant us all his eternal compassion" (Robertson, ed., trans., *The Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 43).
See also: Simon Keynes, "Crime and Punishment in the Reign of King Æthelred the Unready" in *People and Places in Northern Europe, 500-1600*, ed. Ian Wood and Niels Lund (Suffolk, England: The Boydell Press, 1991), 67, 68.
[69] Robertson, ed., trans., *The Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 40-41.
[70] Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century, Volume One: Legislation and its Limits*, 264.
[71] Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century, Volume One: Legislation and its Limits*, 264.
[72] Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century, Volume One: Legislation and its Limits*, 264; Simon Keynes, "An abbot, an archbishop, and the viking raids of 1006-7 and 1009-12." *Anglo-Saxon England* 36 (2007): 171-2; Patrick Wormald, "Æthelred the Lawmaker," in *Æthelred the Unready: Papers from the Millenary Conference*, edited by David Hill (Oxford: BAR British Series, 1978), 57, 58.
[73] HR Loyn, *The Governance of Anglo-Saxon England: 500-1087* (London: Edward Arnold, 1984), 44. Also, Williams, *Kingship and Government in Pre-Conquest England, c. 500 – 1066*, 58.

process, it was in the church's best interest to convince the king of the myriad benefits of ruling in the manner of a good Christian king.[74] One crucial aspect in this equation was of course the promulgation of law codes: this would endow the Anglo-Saxon king with a firm position within the tradition of not only the laws and administrative prowess of the ancient Roman empire, but also a direct link with the tradition of Old Testament law-making.[75] Thus the promulgation of formal written law would identify the Anglo-Saxon king as someone akin to Moses or Solomon, and his people like the Israelites.[76] Wormald also contends that these "ideological ambitions" were likely shared and appreciated most by the clergy and the kings.[77] Incidentally, the ecclesiastics were those best equipped to facilitate production of legislation. The Biblical links went deeper than simply producing legislation: Wormald highlights that Alfred's law book contained one hundred twenty chapters, and that this was the age at which Moses was said to have died.[78] This is just another example of Alfred's desire to link his legislative efforts with Old Testament exemplars. We are also reminded that Christianity was "a religion of the Book," therefore producing codified written legislation further identified the lawgiving king and his people with Biblical models.[79] Further to that end, Wormald argues that it is difficult to overstate "the impact of the Old Testament as a prescriptive mirror for early medieval societies."[80] He goes on to establish that Asser, in his *Life of Alfred*, cast his subject in the light of an "Anglo-Saxon Solomon" of sorts, wherein Alfred attempted to dispense justice

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[74] John Blair, *Anglo-Saxon Oxfordshire* (Gloucestershire: Alan Sutton Publishing Limited, 1994), 34, and Foot, "The Making of *Angelcynn*: English Identity Before the Norman Conquest," 32.

[75] Foot, "The Making of *Angelcynn*: English Identity Before the Norman Conquest," 32.

[76] Wormald, "*Lex Scripta* and *Verbum Regis*: Legislation and Germanic Kingship, from Euric to Cnut," 131.

[77] Wormald, "Æthelred the Lawmaker," 49.

[78] Wormald, "*Lex Scripta* and *Verbum Regis*: Legislation and Germanic Kingship, from Euric to Cnut," 132. Additionally, many of the fines stipulated throughout Anglo-Saxon legislation were fixed at 120 shillings.

[79] Wormald, "*Lex Scripta* and *Verbum Regis*: Legislation and Germanic Kingship, from Euric to Cnut," 132.

[80] Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century, Volume One: Legislation and its Limits*, 122.

through wisdom from God.[81] Thus the creation of written legislation was proffered as an attractive prospect, and taken up by the Kentish king, Æthelberht, following his conversion under Augustine's mission.[82] Æthelberht's laws were not only heavily influenced by Christian and Biblical examples, but also by the legacy of Roman legislation. The Roman model gave "barbarian kings" a method of civilizing themselves, through composing written law in imitation of what the Romans had done for centuries.[83] Æthelberht's legislation represents the earliest extant written law and it also marks the beginning of a long legislative archive, which was to foster a plausibly successful system of government, elements of which remained in use during the Norman period and beyond.[84] The majority of the extant legal records and law codes survive as a result of their preservation in ecclesiastical institutions; thus records that were not in some manner important to the church tended to have a very slim chance of survival.[85] As this means that amongst the surviving records, there are a preponderance of those of an ecclesiastical nature and very few of secular persuasion, the evidence tends to be skewed and it is often difficult to understand how effective the secular laws might have been and how they operated. Finally, despite this, Wormald argues that "...it was oral pronouncement, the *verbum regis*, which actually gave them [the laws]

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[81] Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century, Volume One: Legislation and its Limits*, 121-2.

[82] FL Attenborough, ed., trans., *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), 2.

*This was ca. 598 - ca. 617; regrettably, there is no concrete dating for the promulgation of Æthelberht's legislation, save the fact that it must date to between the arrival of Augustine (and thus the king's eventual conversion) and his death in ca. 617 (Attenborough, ed., trans., *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, 2).

[83] Patrick Wormald, "*Lex Scripta* and *Verbum Regis*: Legislation and Germanic Kingship, from Euric to Cnut," in *Early Medieval Kingship*, ed. PH Sawyer and IN Wood (Leeds: The School of History, The University of Leeds, 1977), 130. Foot, "The Making of *Angelcynn*: English Identity Before the Norman Conquest," 31, and Keynes, "Royal government and the written word in late Anglo-Saxon England," 230 – 232. See also: Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century, Volume One: Legislation and its Limits*, 94.

[84] Dorothy Whitelock, "The Anglo-Saxon Achievement," in *History, Law and Literature in 10th – 11th century England* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1981), 25, 27 and Pauline Stafford, "The laws of Cnut and the history of Anglo-Saxon royal promises," in *Anglo-Saxon England 10*, ed. Peter Clemoes et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 178.

[85] Whitelock, *English Historical Documents, Volume I: c. 500-1042*, 3.

legal force," suggesting that the specific wording of the written texts, or *lex scripta*, mattered less than the king's oral legislation.[86]

One of the elements that makes the study of Anglo-Saxon legislation sometimes challenging is its manner of survival. The legal material comes down to us in a variety of different manuscript types (Wormald categorizes these as "Class I – VIII"), with the earliest manuscript dating to sometime in the tenth century.[87] Almost all of these manuscripts are compendiums, which combine the legal material with various other types of text, particularly ecclesiastical texts. In fact, the legal texts in six of Wormald's eight categories are transmitted along with ecclesiastical material. Often the quires containing the legal material have been rearranged from their original ordering and context, further muddying the waters.[88] Because the earliest extant manuscripts date to the tenth century (and of course the majority of surviving legal texts dating much later than that), it is often quite difficult to determine the circumstances of the laws' original composition. Those circumstances of course have implications for how the legislation was utilized and viewed on the ground. Wormald also points out that the laws were sometimes copied and preserved in order to fulfill individual or dynastic ambitions, as opposed to any notion of preserving the legislation for its own sake. For example, Wormald contends that the purposes of the Parker manuscript (CCCC 173) were more as a "historical" volume, as opposed to a text with a more practical aim intended for use by royal officials.[89] While it is of course possible that this text was put together in connection with the royal court, it does not bear the appearance of a law book that would be useful to royal

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[86] Wormald, "*Lex Scripta* and *Verbum Regis*: Legislation and Germanic Kingship, from Euric to Cnut," 118. See also: Wormald, "The Uses of Literacy in Anglo-Saxon England and Its Neighbours," 100.

[87] Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century, Volume One: Legislation and its Limits*, 164 – 165. This legal manuscript, known as the Parker Manuscript or CCCC 173, is the earliest extant manuscript containing Old English legislation, dating to ca. mid-tenth century.

[88] Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century, Volume One: Legislation and its Limits*, 166 – 167.

[89] Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century, Volume One: Legislation and its Limits*, 172; 179 – 180.

officials in action on the ground.[90] It is likely, based on their content, that many of these manuscripts may have been owned and utilized by ecclesiastics, particularly bishops.[91]

Many Anglo-Saxon laws come down to us within ecclesiastical manuscripts. Wormald argues that just as individuals wished to protect their property rights by enshrining their charters in religious or holy books, kings may have believed that laying down their laws alongside the word of God would lend them the same power over their Christian kingdom.[92] Furthermore – and perhaps more significantly – the laws of the Anglo-Saxon kings were viewed (and intended to be viewed) as continuing the tradition of divine and biblical law-making; perhaps the ultimate expression of that singular aim between divine and secular law would be to place royal law physically beside that of God.[93]

Amongst those manuscripts containing both legislative and ecclesiastic material can also be found numerous "Wulfstan" manuscripts, or texts influenced by or connected with the archbishop in some manner. It is important to bear in mind that bishops played a not insignificant role in the development of England's early legislation, though Archbishop Wulfstan was particularly prominent on the political stage.[94] As will be shown in Chapter Four, Wulfstan viewed God's law and royal law as having much the same objectives, and thus in his view, placing royal law beside homiletic texts would be visually and spiritually quite powerful. These manuscripts could have various applications, such as a handbook of sorts on a good Christian administration, or perhaps as educative guides for those with the ambition to become bishops.[95] It is significant that much of the corpus of

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[90] Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century, Volume One: Legislation and its Limits*, 172.

[91] Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century, Volume One: Legislation and its Limits*, 181.

[92] Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century, Volume One: Legislation and its Limits*, 197.

[93] Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century, Volume One: Legislation and its Limits*, 197.

[94] Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century, Volume One: Legislation and its Limits*, 263.

[95] Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century, Volume One: Legislation and its Limits*, 210.

extant Old English legislation survives as a result of its being included in ecclesiastical manuscripts. Not only are the specific laws likely to have been included on the basis of their impact on and connection with the church, but also for their symbolic element. It follows that presentation, ordering and number of clauses for each code included could be altered in some fashion, in order to suit the ecclesiastic compiler and the specific purpose envisaged for the text itself as a whole.

Of course, not all of our extant laws derive from manuscripts with religious ties. There is a class of manuscripts regarded by Wormald as "legal encyclopedias". These texts are a testament to Norman interest in Anglo-Saxon legislation.[96] What was new and important about these manuscripts is that they contained *only* legislation, and no other material.[97] Despite their post-Conquest dating, these manuscripts yield a wealth of valuable detail regarding Anglo-Saxon law, including some legal texts which are extant nowhere else. Unfortunately, all of the extant manuscripts for *Quadripartitus* have been tampered with or damaged in some manner. The three major post-Conquest manuscripts of Anglo-Saxon law – *Quadripartitus*, *Textus Roffensis* and the St Paul's manuscript – all date to the first or second quarter of the twelfth century.[98] Laws for which post-Conquest manuscripts constitute their only survival can sometimes be difficult to interpret, since it is unknown how well the twelfth-century compilers understood not only Old English but also the laws' content and context.[99] One such example is "Q", the scribe of *Quadripartitus* – he was most certainly not a native English speaker.[100] There are also instances of the post-Conquest authors' having revised the text, as well as sometimes adding rubrics where there previously were none.[101] Furthermore, it seems clear that *Quadripartitus* was likely recognized by

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[96] Whitelock, ed. *English Historical Documents Volume I, c. 500 – 1042*, 328-329.

[97] Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century, Volume One: Legislation and its Limits*, 224.

[98] Whitelock, ed. *English Historical Documents Volume I, c. 500 – 1042*, 329.

[99] Whitelock, ed. *English Historical Documents Volume I, c. 500 – 1042*, 329-330.

[100] Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century, Volume One: Legislation and its Limits*, 237.

[101] Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century, Volume One: Legislation and its Limits*, 242.

contemporaries as an important collection because the text was copied – unlike any other compilations of Old English law at the time.[102] These post-Conquest manuscripts not only provide us with a rich resource in Anglo-Saxon law, but they are also a testament to the enduring interest in and appreciation of this legislation (and perhaps also an awareness of its importance for the governance of England – especially by an incoming conqueror), though it is equally important to recall the problems these texts bear, not the least of which is the tenuous grasp of Old English by the scribes.

Some of the myriad challenges associated with approaching Anglo-Saxon law come to light following a brief survey of the legal sources. First and perhaps foremost, it is difficult to determine how and to what extent Anglo-Saxon law was exercised on the ground. Second, it has been tough to build up a picture of the functioning of the Old English administration and the efficacy of those laws. The legal texts themselves, while undoubtedly invaluable in any study involving the Old English state, often become roadblocks in attempts to elucidate the questions outlined above. This is where the study of the reeve will fill some gaps. The reeve was an administrative official who operated at numerous levels within the Old English state, perhaps most particularly in the localities. Illuminating the reeve's activities will not only yield valuable details regarding the functioning of Anglo-Saxon law at the local level, but it will also deepen our understanding of the particular workings and organization of the Old English administration. This research will reveal the reeve as a middle manager in the localities, whose role contributes to the maximal model for the Old English state and demonstrates its efficacy. It will be shown that the legislation from the Anglo-Saxon period presents the reeve as an official active in several spheres, such as bearing some responsibility for prisoners, judicial activities, aiding the church and helping to regulate the power of the ealdormen in the localities. This will facilitate our understanding of at least an ideological perspective for how the administration and selected royal officials were envisaged to have operated.

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[102] Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century, Volume One: Legislation and its Limits*, 244.

However, first it is necessary to introduce and discuss charters and their uses. Charters can reveal much about the workings of the law in Anglo-Saxon England, as well as provide insight into lay mores and the politics of the period. These documents can be expected to offer insight on the role of the reeve in the administration of late Anglo-Saxon England. Furthermore, wills, as private charters, reveal much about the wealth, piety and connections of individuals, as well as details regarding estate management. Susan Kelly regards charters as an invaluable resource in determining the uses of the written word in Anglo-Saxon England.[103] Similarly, Stafford argues that the late tenth-century charters especially offer an important window into the mindset of the elite in Anglo-Saxon England.[104] Indeed, Charles Insley contends that not only did charters likely reflect the debates and issues which occurred during assemblies in which these documents were generated, but that these texts were also highly symbolic and had ceremonial uses.[105] It is instructive to consider the format and function of the charters themselves. Two categories can be applied to Anglo-Saxon charters: those of royal and private documents, with the royal charters being further divided into the groups "diplomas" and "writs".[106] Diplomas were generally issued in Latin and by the authority of the king; these documents often involved matters such as dispute settlements and transfers of land.[107] Land in which ownership was secured by charter was known as "bookland" (*bocland*), and the owner was free to sell it to whomever he or she desired.[108] Alternatively, *folcland* was required to be kept amongst the kindred of the initial grantee and carried

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[103] Susan Kelly, "Anglo-Saxon lay society and the written word," in *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. Rosamund McKitterick (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 39.

[104] Pauline Stafford, "Political ideas in late tenth-century England: charters as evidence," in *Law, Laity and* Solidarities, ed. P. Stafford, J. Nelson and J. Martindale (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2001), 73.

[105] Charles Insley, "Rhetoric and Ritual in Late Anglo-Saxon Charters", in *Medieval Legal Process: Physical, Spoken and Written Performance in the Middle Ages*, ed. Marco Mostert and PS Barnwell (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers n.v., 2011), 112 – 115 and 117.

[106] Dorothy Whitelock, ed., *English Historical Documents: Volume I c. 500-1042* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1968), 343.

[107] Whitelock, ed., *English Historical Documents: Volume I c. 500-1042*, 343 and Patrick Wormald, "A handlist of Anglo-Saxon lawsuits," in *Anglo-Saxon England* 17 (1988), 248, 259.

[108] Kelly, "Anglo-Saxon lay society and the written word," 45.

with it numerous obligations and dues.[109] Although the estates held through *bocland* were free from the constraints applied to *folcland*, the holder was still responsible for the three duties of "bridge-work, fortress-work and military service."[110] Furthermore, in his "handlist of Anglo-Saxon lawsuits," Wormald notes ninety-five documents in his category "Charters and notitiae" which consist of dispute settlements; even if these did not enjoy wide currency within the corpus of extant Anglo-Saxon charters, lawsuits still represent an important source for our knowledge of Anglo-Saxon law in action.[111]

Writs tended to be short, informal documents in letter format, issued in Old English (until the 1070s). [112] The writ's purpose was to convey communication from the king to the shire court in writing.[113] Writs required the king's seal and generally addressed and included instructions to the sheriff of the shire court and other officials.[114] Writs tended to indicate confirmation of privileges, though these were only temporary, requiring confirmation again, with a new writ, when either the king or the recipient of the original right died.[115] It is likely also that the king would have required payment to generate these writs.[116] Richard Sharpe cites the earliest surviving writ as one dating to the reign of Æthelred the Unready, though he suggests that writs might have come into use during the reign of Edgar.[117] Furthermore, it seems as though writs grew in their popularity in the end of the Anglo-Saxon period – Sharpe notes that the number of extant writs increases from the reign of Cnut through that of William II.[118]

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[109] Kelly, "Anglo-Saxon lay society and the written word," 45.
[110] Simon Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred 'The Unready' 978 – 1016: A study in their use as historical evidence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 31.
[111] Wormald, "A handlist of Anglo-Saxon lawsuits," 265.
[112] Richard Sharpe, "The use of writs in the eleventh century," *Anglo-Saxon England* vol. 32 (2003), 249.
[113] Sharpe, "The use of writs in the eleventh century," 248.
[114] Sharpe, "The use of writs in the eleventh century," 249, 250.
[115] Sharpe, "The use of writs in the eleventh century," 248.
[116] Sharpe, "The use of writs in the eleventh century," 259.
[117] Sharpe, "The use of writs in the eleventh century," 247.
[118] Sharpe, "The use of writs in the eleventh century," 247.

Writs were generally issued in Latin after 1070, though in all cases, a shire court official would read the writ out to the assembly at a shire court meeting.[119]

Only about 250 out of 1500 surviving Anglo-Saxon charters are extant as contemporary copies from the pre-Conquest period; the remainder survive as later post-Conquest copies.[120] The earliest extant and purportedly authentic charters date from the late seventh century.[121] The later texts need not necessarily be dismissed as spurious; in many cases these were faithfully copied from the now-lost pre-Conquest originals.[122] In the ninth century, charters were generated in association with religious foundations, both in instances when grants were made to the foundation and also to laypeople.[123] Pierre Chaplais argues that by the tenth century, charters were primarily drafted in ecclesiastical scriptoria, most likely under the auspices of bishops and some abbots.[124] Chaplais bolsters his argument with the contention that the Anglo-Saxon kings would have conducted most of their administrative business in Old English, only requiring Latin for the more infrequent generation of diplomas; there may not have been enough work drafting diplomas to occupy one royal scribe trained in Latin and Old English on a full-time basis.[125] Conversely, Keynes argues for the existence of a royal chancery from the reign of Æthelstan in the 930s through to at least the reign of Edgar.[126] He contends that this chancery traveled with the king and his *witan* and generated the royal diplomas as the necessity arose.[127] This argument is based on the general uniformity of the charters generated in

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[119] Sharpe, "The use of writs in the eleventh century," 253. NB: after the Conquest and until 1070, the English would be translated into French; following 1070 the Latin would be translated into both English and French (Sharpe, 253).

[120] Whitelock, ed., *English Historical Documents: Volume I c. 500-1042*, 337.

[121] Kelly, "Anglo-Saxon lay society and the written word," 40.

[122] Whitelock, ed., *English Historical Documents: Volume I c. 500-1042*, 338-339.

[123] Simon Keynes, "The West Saxon Charters of King Æthelwulf and his Sons," in *English Historical Review* CIX, no. 434 (1994), 1109.

[124] Pierre Chaplais, "The Royal Anglo-Saxon 'Chancery' of the Tenth Century Revisited," in *Studies in Medieval History Presented to RHC Davis*, ed. Henry Mayr-Harting and RI Moore (London and Ronceverte: The Hambledon Press, 1985), 44-45, 51.

[125] Chaplais, "The Royal Anglo-Saxon 'Chancery' of the Tenth Century Revisited," 43-44.

[126] Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred 'The Unready' 978 – 1016: A study in their use as historical evidence*, 39-46 and 79.

[127] Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred 'The Unready' 978 – 1016: A study in their use as historical evidence*, 39-46 and 79.

this period, as well as the fact that because the king and his council were mobile and moved around the country, it would have been difficult for an ecclesiastical scriptorium to cope with this movement.[128] Keynes does allow that it is unlikely that this royal chancery could have been responsible for the production of all charters, perhaps particularly in light of his argument that it seems that the Anglo-Saxons were apparently not particularly concerned with consistency when it came to charters.[129] The diplomas include numerous references to the reeve, both in his role as a royal agent and also in a more personal capacity, granting and receiving lands. These documents are a valuable resource for not only gaining a clearer understanding of the reeve as an administrative official, but also in terms of determining factors such as status and personal piety.

Wills, or private charters, are another important source of information for late Anglo-Saxon England; these texts tend to be in Old English, and can reveal much valuable information about personal wealth, relationships, and what trappings of life individuals would have particularly valued.[130] The earliest extant example dates to 832 x 840. Wills are a useful resource in the investigation of the work of the estate reeve, not only for details on the functioning of an estate, but particularly because wills in some cases mentioned reeves to be rewarded for their service on an estate. The overriding concern of the testators of these documents centered upon providing for their kindred and the disposal of their property; there also appear to have been concerns that the donor was acting with appropriate piety.[131] Wills may be useful in the study of the reeve in illuminating details regarding estates and the private reeves that appear in some cases to have worked on them.

Anglo-Saxon wills have been identified as vernacular documents providing for *post obitum* disposition, though these documents differed

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[128] Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred 'The Unready' 978 – 1016: A study in their use as historical evidence*, 79-80.
[129] Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred 'The Unready' 978 – 1016: A study in their use as historical evidence*, 81.
[130] The earliest of the extant Anglo-Saxon wills dates to 832 x 840, and incidentally, was the will of a reeve in Kent, named Abba (Kelly, "Anglo-Saxon lay society and the written word," 47).
[131] Kelly, "Anglo-Saxon lay society and the written word," 48.

considerably from those from the later medieval and modern periods.[132] It has been argued that the most legally important element of will-making was the "oral declaration before witnesses," and that the approaching death of the donor was not necessarily the impetus for the act of will-making.[133] Linda Tollerton argues that the written documentation was merely regarded as the representation of intent, but that the legally significant elements of will-making were the attestations of witnesses or the possession of the charter connected with the property in question.[134] Sometimes, multiple copies of wills were made, to be held by different interested parties, such as the donor and the beneficiary.[135] The importance of the will's oral nature is evidenced by the use of the vernacular in its composition, which would have allowed for increased accessibility and lay engagement with the content.[136] The scribe, date and location of the activities the wills record are not documented. Tollerton ascribes this to the paramount importance of the oral proceedings; furthermore, it is likely that details such as local place-names and property boundaries would have been known to the witnesses.[137]

In form, the Anglo-Saxon will bears resemblance to the Latin diploma, although it is important to recall that the diploma was a royal document, whereas the will was drafted in Old English and intended for a lay audience.[138] The will follows a similar format to that of the diploma, encompassing a *notificatio*, a dispositive section and an anathema; numerous wills also bear close resemblance to the style of the writ.[139] However, wills tended to incorporate very little detail, either regarding donors and beneficiaries or the estates and property being dealt with.[140] It is likely that this was the case because will-making was a fairly

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[132] Linda Tollerton, *Wills and Will-Making in Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2011), 56 – 57.
[133] Tollerton, *Wills and Will-Making in Anglo-Saxon England*, 22 – 29 and 62.
[134] Tollerton, *Wills and Will-Making in Anglo-Saxon England*, 18 and 72 – 73.
[135] Tollerton, *Wills and Will-Making in Anglo-Saxon England*, 31 – 33.
[136] Tollerton, *Wills and Will-Making in Anglo-Saxon England*, 56 – 67.
[137] Tollerton, *Wills and Will-Making in Anglo-Saxon England*, 30 – 31 and 61.
[138] Tollerton, *Wills and Will-Making in Anglo-Saxon England*, 22.
[139] Tollerton, *Wills and Will-Making in Anglo-Saxon England*, 22 – 33.
[140] Tollerton, *Wills and Will-Making in Anglo-Saxon England*, 24.

localized activity, and there would have been shared regional knowledge amongst the participants and witnesses.[141] Tollerton highlights the king's power and potential influence over the will, and the apparent hope of the donor that if necessary, this will be enforced upon his or her behalf.[142]

Donors did not solely make outright bequests in their wills; sometimes they specified a life-interest in an estate, often for a family member, after which the property would revert to another beneficiary.[143] This type of bequest will later be seen to be applied to reeves who had worked in the service of the donor. Furthermore, there are some instances in which the donor's intentions were not carried out; these could include actions by the king, disputes over the bequest and negotiations between a beneficiary and a third party.[144] As in the case of the law codes, many wills are extant as a result of their preservation in a monastic archive, though the survival and distribution of these documents tends to be inconsistent.[145] There appears to have been an increase in the number of wills produced from around 924; this may have been a result of increased interest in this type of activity on the part of the laity, an increase in royal land grants, or perhaps the improvement of monastic archiving from the eighth century onwards.[146] Finally, Tollerton contends that the increase in written wills in the ninth through the eleventh centuries bears a close connection with the contemporary religious reform taking place in late Anglo-Saxon England.[147]

There are a number of significant late Anglo-Saxon sources concerning estate management. The two foremost of these are *Rectitudines Singularum Personarum* (*RSP*) and *Bege sceadwisan gerefan* or *Gerefa*.[148] *RSP* is a tract on

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[141] Tollerton, *Wills and Will-Making in Anglo-Saxon England*, 30 – 31.
[142] Tollerton, *Wills and Will-Making in Anglo-Saxon England*, 68 – 72.
[143] Tollerton, *Wills and Will-Making in Anglo-Saxon England*, 36.
[144] Tollerton, *Wills and Will-Making in Anglo-Saxon England*, 70 – 73.
[145] Tollerton, *Wills and Will-Making in Anglo-Saxon England*, 11 – 19.
[146] Tollerton, *Wills and Will-Making in Anglo-Saxon England*, 15. See also pp130 – 147 and 199 – 200 below, on reeves, wealth, and status.
[147] Tollerton, *Wills and Will-Making in Anglo-Saxon England*, 15 – 18.
[148] For Old English and German texts, see: Liebermann, ed., trans. *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 453 – 455 and for Modern English translation, see: Michael Swanton, ed., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Prose* (London: Everyman, JM Dent, 1993), 30 – 33. For the most recent translation and

estate management, dealing specifically with the rights and obligations of the workers on an estate. Since the reeve has long been identified as working in the capacity of an estate manager, this text will be indispensible in helping to ascertain just what that role entailed and how the reeve might have interacted with others on the estate. *Gerefa* deals exclusively with the reeve as an estate manager. Scholars have argued as to what category of text *Gerefa* falls into; it is clearly not a practical guide, and likely would not have been found at the fingertips of an estate manager. More likely, *Gerefa* represents a literary treatise or an exercise in prose composition. Nonetheless it still has great value in a study of the reeve as an estate manager – indeed, it is the only extant contemporary text containing detail regarding the work of an estate reeve.

The Old English homiletic discourse offers a wealth of rich detail on the reeve as a royal administrator, and the manner in which he may have traditionally been viewed. These heavily moralizing texts primarily date to the tenth and eleventh centuries and generally reflect a rather negative view of the reeve as a greedy, rapacious official. However, it is important to bear in mind that much of the material – homilies and saints' lives alike – consisted of Old English translations of late antique texts and was thus reflective of an antique perspective, though it is of course telling that the Old English translators chose to render these officials "*gerefa*". The two principal collections of preaching material of the tenth and eleventh centuries were the Blickling Homilies and the Vercelli Homilies. [149] Both of these collections offer valuable insight on ecclesiastical attitudes towards the reeve in late Anglo-Saxon England – particularly for the period before the writings of Wulfstan and Ælfric. Wulfstan's *Institutes of Polity* will also be considered here. This text remained unfinished at his death in 1023, but it is still uniquely important for the insight it provides on Wulfstan's political thought. This text is crucial to the study of the reeve because

commentary, see: Thomas Gobbitt. "*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum* and *Gerefa*," in *Early English Laws*, ed. Bruce O'Brien and Jane Winters (2012): www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk.

[149] R. Morris, ed., *The Blickling Homilies, with a translation and Index of words, together with the Blickling Glosses* (London and New York: Published for the Early English Text Society by the Oxford University Press, reprint 1967) and DG Scragg, ed., *The Vercelli Homilies and Related Texts*, Early English Text Society 300 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

it introduces a new role which the archbishop envisaged for the reeve, wherein this official was a key player in the creation and maintenance of a good, holy Christian kingdom and society.

The methodology deployed to approach the charters was to utilize the *Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England* [PASE] as an entry point.[150] This database was employed in order to obtain a listing of persons denoted as "reeve" in tenth- and eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon charters. This methodology revealed forty-one charters in which the office of reeve is mentioned, in which three strands of evidence become apparent. Of these forty-one sources, there are four wills, four writs and thirty-three diplomas. The diplomatic material sheds light on the connection between the reeve and the public meeting, and perhaps particularly on the function and authority of the king's reeve at these meetings. Attestations and charters regarding land grants to and by reeves demonstrate the existence of personal piety and also that some reeves achieved a measure of elevated status. These strands of evidence, used alongside the Anglo-Saxon law codes, will offer some important insights on the reeve. The diplomas and the writs will shed light on the reeve's contribution to and place in the Anglo-Saxon administration, as well as more personal details, such as issues of status and individual piety.

A review of current scholarship on the reeve

From the existing scholarship, it is clear that the reeve was a figure who is thought to have been vital to the workings of the Anglo-Saxon government and its administration. Though unfortunately it is also just as clear that relatively little information is known about the specific roles of the reeve in each capacity in which he is thought to have operated. Despite the paucity of scholarship on the reeve, it is useful to review the existing work on the subject in order to

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[150] *Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England*: http://www.pase.ac.uk/index.html

contextualize the new material introduced in the forgoing chapters. Perhaps a logical place to begin this review would be a brief study of the terms used most commonly in Anglo-Saxon England to denote "reeve".

One important issue for further consideration and research is that of the terminology used to denote "reeve," and what that may bring to light regarding the role and position of the reeve during various periods of the Anglo-Saxon era. Or are we placing more importance upon the terminology than it deserves? Did the men who shared these titles all share similar functions? Does the etymology matter so much, as opposed to the actual work these officials were doing? One very clear indication of the nebulous cloud surrounding this figure presents itself immediately when one considers the terms used to denote the reeve in the sources. Here there is not one, but several different terms, both in Old English and Latin, that are used to denote an official who in some manner falls under the umbrella category of "the reeve." Thus this makes the job of the historian interminably more difficult, for now we must contend with the possibility that there may not have been a contemporary "black and white" definition of the function of the reeve in the Anglo-Saxon period. Of course it is also possible that he was indeed in general regarded as the same figure, but was defined in different terms depending upon the region and period in which he lived. There is also the possibility, which must not be neglected, that the terms we see as meaning "reeve" may simply have been freely utilized in Anglo-Saxon texts to denote an "administrator". The terms *praepositus* and *praefectus*, both of which appear in Anglo-Saxon legal texts, tend to be rendered "reeve" by historians; these are the most popular Latin terms used in this period. The *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* renders *praepositura* as "the office of reeve or provost," and highlights its first appearance in British sources in 971.[151] The *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon minus: a medieval Latin-French/English Dictionary* supplies a lengthy entry for *praepositus*, suggesting fifteen different definitions

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[151] *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources.* Prepared by RE Latham, British Academy (London: Published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 1975 – 2010), 2419.

for the term.[152] The first seven of these are ecclesiastical in nature, suggesting a high-ranking or administrative role in an individual church.[153] The latter eight are concerned with secular variations of the term. In this latter half, the *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon minus* describes the *praepositus* as a secular official who was affiliated with the state, referencing as an example Ebroin (d. 680/1), the Frankish mayor of the palace at Neustria, mentioned by Bede in Book IV of his *Historia Ecclesiastica*.[154] The *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon minus* additionally suggests that *praepositus* could indicate steward, a count's subordinate, a manorial agent, a bailiff or a sheriff, and finally it is rendered "municipal magistrate."[155] It is evident that the term *praepositus* has been linked with the concept of an administrative official of some persuasion at least since the time of Alfred, since Asser was clearly referring to a royal official with some judicial capabilities.

The *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* interprets *praefectus* as a "high-ranking official under a king or emperor; reeve, count, magistrate."[156] The *Dictionary* cites the term's earliest appearance in Books II and IV of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Willibald's *Vita Bonifatii* and also highlights its presence in *Domesday Book*.[157] The *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon minus* also has an entry for *praefectus*, which encompasses thirteen variants.[158] In the first instance, the dictionary renders *praefectus* as *gerefa* or *ealdorman* in Old English, citing occurrences in Eddius Stephanus' *Life of Wilfrid*, Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* and

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[152] Jan Frederik Niermeyer and C. van de Kieft, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon minus: a medieval Latin-French/English Dictionary*, vol. 1. (Leiden: Brill Archive, 1954), 835 – 837.

[153] Niermeyer and van de Kieft, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon minus: a medieval Latin-French/English Dictionary*, 835, 836.

[154] Niermeyer and van de Kieft, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon minus: a medieval Latin-French/English Dictionary*, 837.

[155] Niermeyer and van de Kieft, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon minus: a medieval Latin-French/English Dictionary*, 837. The *Dictionary*'s text cites here the appearance of the term for "sheriff" in Asser's *Life of King Alfred*, page 92.

[156] *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*. Prepared by RE Latham, British Academy (London: Published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 1975 – 2010), 2401.

[157] *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, 2401.

[158] Niermeyer and van de Kieft, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon minus: a medieval Latin-French/English Dictionary*, 831, 832.

letters between Boniface and Lull.[159]   The entry then goes on to refer to *praefectus* as a "state official in a general sense," following this with the various suggestions of duke, count and viscount, citing primarily Carolingian sources.[160] It subsequently goes on to suggest that *praefectus* denoted a judicial official based in a city, employing Quentovic on the Continent as an example.[161]   Finally, the *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon minus* proposes that *praefectus* could also be rendered "royal bailiff," or "manorial bailiff."[162]

In his 1981 article, Alan Thacker offers a thoughtful discussion considering the various Latin terms utilized in the sources to denote a figure ostensibly in the role of reeve.[163]   Thacker argues that the Latin term so often used to indicate the reeve, *praefectus*, is a difficult term, particularly because when translated into Old English, it is generally presented as *gerefa*, which is always interpreted as "reeve."[164]   This is a particular difficulty for the historian because when *praefectus* appeared in sources, it was not necessarily always intended to be taken as "reeve."[165]   *Praefectus* is a difficult term to identify clearly in Anglo-Saxon England, particularly because it often tends to be of an ambiguous nature in early sources.[166]   In the eighth century, it is clear that the Carolingians sometimes employed this term to indicate a count.[167]   In terms of its English connotations, Thacker contends that *praefectus* has been apparent in the sources since the beginning of the Anglo-Saxon period, particularly in Northumbria,

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[159] Niermeyer and van de Kieft, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon minus: a medieval Latin-French/English Dictionary*, 831.
[160] Niermeyer and van de Kieft, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon minus: a medieval Latin-French/English Dictionary*, 831.
[161] Niermeyer and van de Kieft, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon minus: a medieval Latin-French/English Dictionary*, 831. Additionally, it is noteworthy that Quentovic, along with Dorestad, were the major Continental *emporia* doing trade with the Anglo-Saxon *emporia* of Hamwic, Gipeswic, Lundenwic and Eoforwic. See Middleton, "Early medieval port customs, tolls and controls on foreign trade," for more detail.
[162] Niermeyer and van de Kieft, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon minus: a medieval Latin-French/English Dictionary*, 832.
[163] Alan Thacker, "Some Terms for Noblemen in Anglo-Saxon England c. 650 – 900." *British Archaeological Reports: British Series*, Volume 92 (1981), 201 – 236.
[164] Thacker, "Some Terms for Noblemen in Anglo-Saxon England c. 650 – 900," 210.
[165] Thacker, "Some Terms for Noblemen in Anglo-Saxon England c. 650 – 900," 210.
[166] Thacker, "Some Terms for Noblemen in Anglo-Saxon England c. 650 – 900," 210.
[167] Thacker, "Some Terms for Noblemen in Anglo-Saxon England c. 650 – 900," 210.

where it appears to have denoted a figure of high rank.[168]   The title appears to have been applied in some cases to those who worked as royal ministers.[169] Despite this, Thacker argues that although the term appears initially to have been indicative of high status early in the Anglo-Saxon period, this particular distinction faded over time.[170] The *praefectus* also appeared in Kent as early as the seventh century, in the capacity of a royal official based at and in charge of a royal tun.[171] Significantly, it also seems clear that at least by the eighth century, the *praefectus* was recognized as ranking below the ealdorman amongst the Mercians.[172]   In conclusion, Thacker suggests that *praefectus* was "the pre-eminent administrative term," therefore indicating that it was perhaps in general viewed as a Latin synonym for the Old English *gerefa*.[173] It is clear, from a preliminary review of the terms most commonly seen to denote "reeve" in Anglo-Saxon England that at best we are dealing with a somewhat vague and imprecise vocabulary. This, along with scant direct evidence and generally only passing remarks in modern scholarship, demonstrates that a full-scale study on the reeve and his role in late Anglo-Saxon England is more than overdue.

Alongside a study of the various terms utilized to identify the reeve in Anglo-Saxon England, it is necessary to review the work of historians on the Anglo-Saxon administration, as well as their thoughts regarding how the reeve might have fit into the overall picture. Additionally, it is important also to consider how the reeve has been discussed in his own right, in the cases where historians do in fact examine him. A worthwhile starting point in the literature on the reeve in Anglo-Saxon England is Stafford's entry regarding the reeve in the *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*. This provides us with an indication as to how important reeves are believed to have been over the course of the period, as well as making us aware of the fact that they were likely present

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[168] Thacker, "Some Terms for Noblemen in Anglo-Saxon England c. 650 – 900," 210.
[169] Thacker, "Some Terms for Noblemen in Anglo-Saxon England c. 650 – 900," 211.
[170] Thacker, "Some Terms for Noblemen in Anglo-Saxon England c. 650 – 900," 211.
[171] Thacker, "Some Terms for Noblemen in Anglo-Saxon England c. 650 – 900," 212.
[172] Thacker, "Some Terms for Noblemen in Anglo-Saxon England c. 650 – 900," 213.
[173] Thacker, "Some Terms for Noblemen in Anglo-Saxon England c. 650 – 900," 222.

at most levels of society. It seems that by the seventh and eighth centuries, the title of reeve had some measure of status attached to it, and royal reeves were affiliated with royal *tuns* or estates, perhaps sometimes even gaining grants of land from the king.[174] Indeed Frank Stenton argued that the reeves of the king's *tuns* became important figures locally by nature of their occupation.[175] There is no real opportunity to fit the reeve into the organizational apparatus of the Anglo-Saxon state. Of course, these entries are solely aimed at providing an overview on each subject, and as such, cannot offer an exhaustive account. Looking back at Asser, Stafford refers to the ninth-century reeve as one of the "lynch-pins in the control of the kingdom" alongside other officials.[176] This naturally alludes to a vital and exceptionally important figure in the operation and functionality of the administration, yet despite this favorable assessment we are still for the most part left wondering just how exactly the reeve fit into the workings of the Anglo-Saxon state.

This brief encyclopedia entry highlights the usefulness of the Old English law codes in determining the "official," royal view on what was expected of the reeves, but do they reveal much regarding the duties and functionality of the reeves at the lower levels? It appears that much of the focus thus far has been delegated to the activities of the king's reeve, while details regarding other types of reeve have in general, been left in the dark. At present, scholars are in agreement that these men were involved in dues and tithes collection, estate management and with justice and court matters.[177] But what exactly were they responsible for? What about the roles of the humbler souls operating as village reeves, or of those who worked as estate managers? It appears as though despite the fact that scholars have been able to link the reeve with many occupations, there has been little progress towards resolving the ambiguity that surrounds the specifics of his existence and function.

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[174] Stafford, "Reeve," 386.
[175] Frank Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 482.
[176] Stafford, "Reeve," 387.
[177] Stafford, "Reeve," 387.

Stafford states right at the outset of her entry that there were a variety of reeves and that generalizing about them is difficult – aside from mentioning general duties, which is helpful on the surface level, but really only perhaps suggests a point from which to embark upon deeper research. The impression Stafford gives of the reeve appears to be rather parallel to our picture of the Anglo-Saxon administration, rather than an integrated part of it.

It appears that the reeve has heretofore often only been considered in a general fashion, viz. to aid in the description of various aspects of the Anglo-Saxon estate or governmental administration, but rarely addressed in his own right. This makes it difficult to understand how he fit into the workings of the Anglo-Saxon administration, as well as where his place was in the chain connecting local villages and districts to the royal government. Uncovering these details could not only revive the identity of the reeve, but may also illuminate previously dark corners of the Anglo-Saxon administration. Perhaps the only historian to have addressed the reeve specifically to date was William Morris in his 1927 volume. Although Morris devotes the introduction of his work to the Anglo-Saxon "king's reeve" and another chapter to the office of sheriff in the Anglo-Saxon period, it is still evident that there is more work to be done. The figure of the reeve in Anglo-Saxon England was not discussed in its own right, nor reviewed in order to gain a clearer understanding of his role and position in society and administration. Rather, the reeve was mentioned briefly in order to prepare the ground for Morris's examination of the office of sheriff in the high medieval period.

Much of Morris's work on the reeve encompasses what might be learned about the position through a close review of the Anglo-Saxon law codes.[178] Although it has been established that the legislation is an invaluable source of information, it is also clear that what we gain from this might be supplemented with the perhaps more dynamic accounts of individuals, mentioned in Old English narrative sources. In this vein, it will be instructive to examine a variety

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[178] William Morris, *The Medieval English Sheriff to 1300* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1927), 6 – 15.

of sources, particularly the *Gerefa* text and the *Rectitundines Personarum Singularum*. These two tracts on estate management are quite different in focus and purpose, but nonetheless yield valuable insights into the management of an Anglo-Saxon estate and the reeve working on it. Homilies and religious discourse too, will play an important role in revealing some aspects of late Anglo-Saxon views regarding the reeve.

Furthermore, Morris differentiates between the status accorded to a "king's reeve" and that of a "village reeve," though he does not provide much elaboration regarding these differences. Another compelling possibility that deserves further attention is whether military action was something in which reeves engaged in. Morris cites an account in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which mentions the death of a reeve in a naval battle in AD 896.[179] Ann Williams too, reviews evidence of reeves, named Kola and Eadsige, leading others into battle; in this case, the *Chronicle's* record of their defeat against the Danes, which took place in AD 1001.[180] Could it be possible that leading men into battle was an aspect of some reeves' official duties?

It is important to be aware of Morris's goals in examining the reeve, lest his conclusions regarding this figure be colored by what he hoped to reveal about the high medieval official on whom he focused. Morris remains the only historian

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[179] Morris, *The Medieval English Sheriff to 1300*, 5.

896 A (897 C, D): "And there [the Isle of Wight] were killed the king's reeve Lucuman, Wulfheard the Frisian, Æbba the Frisian, Æthelhere the Frisian, Æthelfrith the king's *geneat*, and in all 62 Frisians and English and 120 of the Danes" (Whitelock, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 58).

[180] Ann Williams, *Kingship and Government in Pre-Conquest England, c. 500 – 1066* (London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1999), 119. See also the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*'s account for 1001 in which a number of reeves are killed:

1001 A: "In this year there was much fighting in England because of a naval force; and they ravaged and burnt almost everywhere, so that they betook themselves inland in one journey till they reached Dean; and the people of Hampshire came against them there and fought against them, and there Æthelweard the king's high-reeve was killed, and Leofric of Whitchurch and Leofwine the king's high-reeve, and Wulfhere the bishop's thegn, and Godwine of Worthy, Bishop Ælfsige's son, and 81 men in all; and there were far more of the Danes killed, although they had control of the field" (Whitelock, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 85).

See also: 1001 A: "Then they went from there to the mouth of the Exe, so that they transported themselves in one journey until they reached Pinhoe; and opposing them there were Kola, the king's high-reeve, and Eadsige, the king's reeve, with what army they could gather, but they were put to flight there, and many were killed, and the Danes had control of the field" (Whitelock, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 85).

to date to have considered the reeve and the sheriff in the Anglo-Saxon period, yet he has done this by working back from a high medieval perspective and primary interest. A brief review of Morris's work has perhaps further highlighted the necessity for the reeve to be analyzed in his own right, and to consider his function and position in administration and society. Not only will the forgoing work offer a clearer picture of this shadowy figure, but it will also be a valuable contribution to a better understanding of the government during the Anglo-Saxon period. While existing scholarship on the reeve certainly has many gaps, it is instructive as to where the research on the reeve must go next. A number of points become clear: First, the office of the Anglo-Saxon reeve is a position of some antiquity – the reeve appears early on in the tradition of Old English law (his first appearance was in the code of Hlothhere and Eadric, ca. 673 - ca. 685, under the term *cyninges wicgerefan*). Second, the reeve in some cases functioned as an estate manager – for noblemen and of course, for the king – in addition to those reeves who bore solely administrative duties. Third, it seems that the reeve worked in conjunction with other officials and ecclesiastical figures, such as ealdormen and local priests and bishops, respectively. Fourth and finally, it appears that the reeve as an administrator was deeply involved with judicial, fiscal and law-enforcement duties in the localities. While these points are indeed significant, they merely scratch the surface of the reeve's existence in and impact upon late Anglo-Saxon England. These points serve to illuminate many more important questions which need to be addressed, in order to develop a picture of who the reeve was, what role he played in the operation of the administration – particularly in the localities and in estate management – how he interacted with other officials and with the church, what status he held, if any, how he was perceived by others, and finally, whether his role in the late Anglo-Saxon administration had an impact on the workings of royal government and indeed the English people themselves.

After a preliminary review of the available secondary literature on the reeve and the Anglo-Saxon administration it is clear that more work is in order. This brief review has illuminated the necessity to further understand more about

the administrative functioning on the local level via the reeve and his duties; which, it is expected, will in turn offer some insight into the workings and efficacy of the Anglo-Saxon government as a whole. It also may prove worthwhile as well to understand *how* various types of reeves might have been viewed differently by their contemporaries: there are a number of instances discussed in the secondary literature in which people commented on, or complained about reeves. Could this possibly further illuminate their role and position in society? Were reeves members of the land-owning class? We have seen that earls and thegns often received grants of land during their tenure in their position; were reeves rewarded in the same manner?[181] Could the term "king's reeve" denote multiple individuals?

From the existing scholarship, it is clear that the reeve was a figure who was vital to the workings of the Anglo-Saxon government and its administration. Though it is also just as clear that relatively little information is known about the specific roles of the reeve in each capacity in which he is thought to have operated. The subject of the "reeve" in Anglo-Saxon England has not been addressed with the attention that the topic and its wider implications deserve. It is clear that here we have an official that was present at many levels of society, and who is thought to have often acted as an important link between local villages and lords' estates and the king. It appears that due to the rather scant and sometimes difficult nature of the evidence, there have not been many attempts to shed light on who the reeve was, and what his presence would have meant, not only to the Anglo-Saxon royal government, but to the villages and estates that he administered. An approach which considers not only the evidence provided in the extant law codes, but also contemporary narrative source material as well, may offer a more "three dimensional" image of who the reeve was and why he was an important figure. Further research on this topic will enable historians to have a clearer understanding of the functioning of the Anglo-Saxon state at numerous levels. Some of those key questions are as follows: How

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[181] Faith, *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship*, 159.

were judicial proceedings carried out? Which official(s) were in charge of them? Were the Old English law codes exclusively ideological statements, as some scholars have argued, or were they enforced on the ground? How did the king ensure (or, at least, attempt to ensure) that royal power was felt on the ground in the localities? How were the rights and privileges of the church protected and enforced? Did royal power play a role in this, as the law codes suggest? Were royal officials literate, or did they possess at least a modicum of literacy? Who was responsible for operating the royal estates, and what did that role entail? And, finally, how were royal officials perceived by others in late Anglo-Saxon England? Can we know?

This study will seek to demonstrate that the reeve was a figure with a multifaceted role in late Anglo-Saxon England. The reeve as a royal official could be found at numerous levels of the administration, from the king's circle all the way down to the local village. This royal agent was one who was appointed, and the position was contingent upon the reeve's service and ability to perform the post's associated duties. Chapter One will reveal the nature of the reeve's specific roles and responsibilities as a royal administrator. This will be followed in Chapter Two by an exploration of the reeve's status in late Anglo-Saxon society, as well as the role the reeve played in the local balance of power between royal authority and the influence of the prominent and wealthy ealdormen. Chapter Two will also demonstrate the nature of the reeve's office as an appointed position, and the particular power the king was able to wield over this figure as a result. The role of the reeve as an estate manager will be addressed in Chapter Three, and this is important not only because it has bearings on the reeve's role as an administrator, but also because our understanding of estate management and operation has an impact on what we know of the late Anglo-Saxon economy and society. Finally, Chapter Four will examine the picture of the reeve built up by the late Old English homiletic discourse. This will shed light on contemporary views of the reeve, as well as on literary trends and tropes. Following on in a similar vein from this moralizing discourse, Chapter Four will address Wulfstan's *Institutes of Polity*, and it will reveal that Wulfstan carved out a new role for the

reeve that had not been seen before: as a secular "shepherd of the people", of sorts. Wulfstan arguably saw the reeve as an important player in his vision and quest to mold the English into a holy society, building a good Christian kingdom in an England reeling from much turmoil in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. Thus, not only does this research reveal the reeve as an important official within the late Anglo-Saxon administration – at many levels – and as an agent whose work contributed to the already substantial evidence for the maximal model for the operation of the late Old English state, but this research also yields important new detail on the status of the reeve as well as the nature of his work on estates. Finally, this work culminates in Wulfstan's vision of a holy society, and the unique and pivotal role he crafted for the reeve. Arguably, the distinctive nature of the reeve's role made him Wulfstan's obvious choice for an agent who could work among the people and with the church at all levels of society.