

*The Aristocracy of Northumbria in the Long  
Eighth-Century: Production, Circulation,  
Consumption*



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*In loving memory of Lucia, 'vó', 'dona' and 'bisa'.*

*A História é um carro alegre  
Cheio de um povo contente  
Que atropela indiferente  
Todo aquele que a negue*

*É um trem riscando trilhos  
Abrindo novos espaços  
Acenando muitos braços  
Balançando nossos filhos*

[...]

*Quem vai impedir que a chama  
Saia iluminando o cenário  
Saia incendiando o plenário  
Saia inventando outra trama?*

*Trans:*

*History is a joyful car  
Filled with happy people  
Which indifferently runs over  
All those who deny it*

*It's a train cutting rails  
Opening new spaces  
Waving many arms  
Shaking our sons*

[...]

*Who is going to prevent the flame  
From lighting up the scenario  
From setting fire to the plenary  
From inventing another plot?*

(Pablo Milanés, Canción Por La Unidad de Latino America)

*Pra quem sabe olhar pra trás nenhuma rua é sem saída.*

*For those who know how to look back, no street is a dead end.  
(Gabriel o Pensador, Tem Alguem Aí?)*

## **Abstract**

### **The Aristocracy of Northumbria in the Long Eighth-Century: Production, Circulation, Consumption**

**By Renato Rodrigues Da Silva**

The current thesis is a study of the Northumbrian aristocracy during the Anglo-Saxon period. The main goal of the thesis is to analyse the aristocracy as the ruling social class, trying to understand it with a holistic approach. Therefore, the decision for focusing on production, circulation and consumption is an attempt to cover as many aspects of the aristocratic life as possible. Also, the option for having the three dimensions mentioned on the title of the thesis is to highlight the Marxist perspective from which the thesis is derived. In order to understand the aristocracy as a class, the thesis focused both on the inter-class (mainly with the peasantry) and on the intra-class relations of the ruling class. As the current thesis is a question orientated thesis, the body of evidence used is diverse and heterogeneous. The main written sources used are the *Durham Liber Vitae*; Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, *Epistola Bede ad Egbertvm episcopvm*, *Historia Abbatvm*; Stephen's *Vita sancti Wilfrithi*; Æthelwulf's *De abbatibus*; Symeon of Durham *Historia Regum*. The main archaeological sources are the sites of Flixborough, West Heslerton and Sherburn; the Coppergate Helmet; Northumbrian coinage; the Bed burial at Loftus, Street House; the stone grave markers of Street House and the namestones of Hartlepool. The main conclusion of the thesis is that the crisis that ended Northumbria as a kingdom was the product of the historical contradictions of the devices of reproduction of the ruling class. The thesis was sponsored by CAPES (Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior).

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## Abbreviations

*ANS* – *Anglo-Norman Studies*.

*ASC* – *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, trans. Whitelock, EHD.

*ASSAH* – *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*.

*BAR* – *British Archaeological Reports*.

*BAR Brit. Sr.* – *British Archaeological Reports, British Series*.

*BEASE* – M. Lapidge, John Blair, Simon Keynes, Donald Scragg (eds), *The Wiley Blackwell encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2014).

*DLV* - *Durham Liber Vitae: London, British Library, MS Cotton Domitian A. VII: edition and digital facsimile with introduction, codicological, prosopographical and linguistic commentary, and indexes*, eds D. Rollason and L. Rollason, 3 Vol. (London, 2007); also the digital version at ‘Durham Liber Vitae’, The British Library Digitised Manuscripts, [http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=cotton\\_ms\\_domitian\\_a\\_vii\\_fs001r](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=cotton_ms_domitian_a_vii_fs001r) [accessed 02/07/2016]

*EEE* – *Epistola Bede ad Ecgbertvm Episcopvm*, 'Bede's letter to Ecgberth', in C. Grocock and I. Wood, *The abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 123-61.

*EHD* – *English Historical Documents, c. 500-1042*, ed. Dorothy Whitelock (London, 1955).

*EngHR* – *English Historical Review*.

*HA* - *Historia Abbatvm*, in Christopher Grocock and Ian N. Wood (trans and eds), *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 21-75.

*HE* – *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, trans. and ed. Colgrave, B. and Mynors, R.A.B. (Oxford, 1969).

*HR* – *Historia regum*, in *Symeonis Monachis Opera Omnia*, ed. T. Arnold, RS75, vol. 2 (London, 1885).

*ODNB* – *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/>.

*S(number)* – *The Electronic Sawyer – Online Catalogue of Anglo-Saxon Charters*, <http://www.esawyer.org.uk/about/index.html> [accessed 10/08/2016].

*VCA* – *Vita santi Cuthberti auctore anonymo*, ed. Colgrave, *Two Lives*, pp. 59-139.

*VCB* – *Vita santi Cuthberti auctore Beda*, ed. Colgrave, *Two Lives*, pp. 141-307.

*VW* – Stephanus, *Vita Wilfridi*, ed. and trans. B. Colgrave, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus* (Cambridge, 1927).

## Introduction

*I have made a heap of all that I could find.*<sup>1</sup>

Nennius

In 2013, a survey on British social class divisions was published. It was called ‘The Great British Class Survey’. The research was done in a partnership with BBC, and was ‘one of the largest ever studies of class in Great Britain’ based on 160,000 responses. It concluded that British people can be divided into seven different social classes, ranging from the elite (top) to the precariat (lowest).<sup>2</sup> The survey was acclaimed because of its scale and also because it took into consideration not only the so-called economic capital (income and assets), but also cultural capital and social capital. The survey followed the method developed by Pierre Bourdieu in his 1960s survey on the French culture, organized and published in his book *La Distinction*.<sup>3</sup>

The 2013 survey on the British Class system is very interesting and bold. The study points out the complexities of British social differentiation, but it only alludes to a connection between the increasing number of social classes and the distance between the elite layers and the ones below. And it misses something very important: the strong focus on the empirical data led the sociologists to omit analysis of the historicity of social classes. But they alluded to something even more crucial: despite what is found in neo-liberal thought, social classes still matter.<sup>4</sup>

This thesis sets out to examine evidence for the crystallization of the aristocracy during the long eighth century. The thesis aims to define the aristocracy, explore its

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<sup>1</sup> *Ego autem coacervavi omne quod inveni*; Nennius, *Historia Britonum*, in J. A. Giles (ed.), *Historic Documents concerning the Ancient Britons* (London, 1847), p. 303; also \_\_\_\_\_, *History of the Britons*, ed. and trans. J. Morris, *British history, and, the Welsh Annals* (London, 1980), p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> BBC Science, *The Great British Class Survey*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/science/0/21970879>, 03/04/2013, accessed on 27/08/2016]. The idea of the ‘precariat’ as a class (or a class fraction) is one of the great questions of the contemporary Left; see G. Standing, *The precariat – The new Dangerous Class* (London, 2011); Idem, *A Precariat Charter – from denizens to Citizens* (London, 2014); R. Braga, *A Política do Precariado* (Campinas, 2013); also B. Palmer, ‘Reconsiderations of Class: Precariousness as proletarianization’, *Socialist Register*, 50 (2014).

<sup>3</sup> P. Bourdieu, *La Distinction: critique sociale du jugement* (Paris, 1979).

<sup>4</sup> BBC Science, *The Great British Survey*.

characters and internal stratification and examine its relation with other sectors of society. It focuses on the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Northumbria, and approaches the evidence from this period from a theoretical perspective that is self-consciously and unashamedly Marxist. This approach to the Northumbrian evidence is unusual, and the originality of the thesis derives from it. In terms of a theoretically driven approach, the current thesis is inspired by the works of Timothy Reuter.<sup>5</sup> The great question addressed by him was Early Medieval aristocracy. Reuter was also not afraid to draw models, concepts and insights from other disciplines such as Anthropology.<sup>6</sup> His models of understanding the aristocracy focused primarily on the relations in which the aristocratic families were inserted, rather than institutions. Reuter understood that social practice creates institutions, and that the practice of the aristocracy, rather than the speech about itself that should be examined. However, Reuter also paid close attention to the dynamics of rule and its associated rituals.<sup>7</sup> His influence on the present thesis lies on the themes related to the aristocracy (dynamics and rituals of rule, warfare, social prominence, etc), the aristocratic nature of the Church (with its internal levels and hierarchies), and the emphasis on social practice.

Most of the analysis of Anglo-Saxon England, at one point, needs to refer to Northumbria, generally the seventh and eighth century. The necessity to address Northumbria arises from one great hub of primary sources: Bede.<sup>8</sup> The works of Bede are so valuable for Early Medieval studies that their gravity always pulls the attention of historians. Bede's writings illuminate Northumbrian history but also cast the remainder of the eighth century into darker shadow in comparison. Also, there is a significant shortage

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<sup>5</sup> T. Reuter (ed.), *The Medieval Nobility*; Idem, *The Greatest Englishman essays on St. Boniface and the Church at Crediton* (Exeter, 1980); Idem, 'The "Imperial Church System" of the Ottonian and Salian Rulers: A Reconsideration', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 33 (1982), pp. 347-374; Idem, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages* (London, 1991); Idem, 'Debate: The Feudal Revolution', *Past and Present*, 155 (1997), pp. 177-95; Idem (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. III: c. 900-1024 (Cambridge, 2000); Idem, "'You can't Take it With You": Testaments, Hoards and Movable Wealth in Europe, 600-1100', In E. M. Tyler, *Treasure in the Medieval West* (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 11-24; Idem, *Medieval Politics and Modern Mentalities*, ed. by J. Nelson (Cambridge, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> P. Skinner, 'Introduction', In P. Skinner (ed.), *Challenging the Boundaries of Medieval History – The Legacy of Timothy Reuter* (Turnhout, 2009), p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> H. Mayr-Harting, 'Foreword', In P. Skinner (ed.), *Challenging the Boundaries of Medieval History – The Legacy of Timothy Reuter* (Turnhout, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> The bibliography on Bede is vast. The most recent compilation are G. H. Brown, *A Companion to Bede* (Woodbridge, 2009); S. DeGregorio, *The Cambridge Companion to Bede* (Cambridge, 2010).

of written sources in the early ninth century, which helped to crystallize the interpretation of disintegration and decline of Northumbrian society.

As the proposed interpretation of the long eighth century is focused on the aristocracy as a class, and social domination is the main element of it, the thesis proposes a new approach and narrative to the history of Northumbria itself. Traditionally, historiography discusses Northumbrian history following the path of Anglo-Saxon infiltration (sixth century), the unification of Deira and Bernicia and Christianization (both early seventh century), the Golden Age (late seventh and early eighth century), political instability and crisis during the eighth century climaxing with raids which mark the start of the Viking period.<sup>9</sup> The perspective assumed in this thesis, however, points to a different interpretation: the history of Northumbria as a history of class dominance, and the crisis and ‘destruction’ of the kingdom as a development of its own historical contradictions. A second important point that rises from the theoretical perspective assumed is that the focus on class relations leads to the interpretation of both secular and clerical aristocracy as part of the same group, although with specificities. So, instead of following a traditional path that is very keen on the distinction between these spheres, the thesis will highlight their ties and connections, as well as their similarities.<sup>10</sup> The class focus also proposes a non-traditional understanding of kingship, since the king is understood as part of the ruling class (to whom the king belongs and by whom sometimes he perishes). Finally, the Marxist approach can also produce different questions and interpretations of the primary sources, bringing them under new light. In this sense, a confraternity book like the Durham *Liber Vitae* is read as a book of privileges; the *Historia Regum* is perceived as a record of the autonomy and rise of the *duces*; coins as evidence for surplus from class exploitation; feasts, food and its absence as manifestation of power and networks of sociability; death rites as a moment of class apotheosis.

The structure of the thesis requires methodological explanation. The decision to include ‘production’, ‘circulation’ and ‘consumption’ in the thesis title is not fortuitous. In his introduction of the *Grundrisse*, Marx pointed out the possibility of division of society spheres in these three elements in order to achieve a holistic understanding of a certain society.<sup>11</sup> ‘Production’, ‘circulation’ and ‘consumption’ are also key elements of analysis

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<sup>9</sup> D. Rollason, *Northumbria, 500-1100, Creation and Destruction of a kingdom* (Cambridge, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> *Idem*, pp. 171, 198-208.

<sup>11</sup> K. Marx, *Grundrisse*, trans. and ed. M. Nicolaus (London, 1973), pp. 88, 98.

on the book that perceived the eighth century as a long one.<sup>12</sup> The option for this triad of terms is also a way of stating right from the beginning the theoretical background on which the thesis was built.

The study of aristocracy is not new for Anglo-Saxon studies. However, what is generally produced as the study of the aristocracy is actually the study of the male elite. In order to understand the role played by the other half of the population, the thesis could either include a chapter about women and gender relations or weave the role of women into each chapter and discussion. A whole chapter dedicated to the discussion about women could be argued to be an artificial focus, since women are part of all the dimensions of social life and of all themes discussed in the thesis. Having a specific chapter only for them would feel like an unnatural and anti-historic way of addressing the question, since they played important roles in each question addressed by the thesis. Another important point is how the historical sources actually tend to minimize the role of women. In other words, the underrepresentation of women in historiography in general is a reflection of the same phenomena in the historical sources. This gap at the same time limits historical analysis and enlightens us on gender relations in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria. Women tended to be subsumed, taken for granted by those who composed the written sources. However, this does not mean that they were not important. Even in the most basic, biologic sense, women are a vital part of aristocratic production and reproduction. In this sense, whenever possible, each chapter contains a discussion about the role of women within the topic the chapter addresses. However, primary sources do not always make it possible. It is significant too that women are much more visible through the archaeological data, especially those related to funerary rites.<sup>13</sup> Although ‘silenced’ by written sources, their role can be revealed by other means. The approach selected to the question of women seemed much more fluid and natural than simply addressing ‘women’ within a token chapter.

This thesis does not start by looking directly at the mechanisms or core relations that are essential to the reproduction of the aristocracy. In other words, it does not start by deconstructing the aristocracy. The first chapter concerns the ‘appearance’ of the aristocracy, focusing on both the extant evidence for the aristocracy and on how the aristocracy represented itself within those primary sources. This approach has a dual

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<sup>12</sup> I. Hansen and C. Wickham (eds), *The Long Eighth Century – Production, Distribution and Demand* (Leiden, 2000).

<sup>13</sup> See Chapter 7.

objective. The first is to present to the reader the primary sources available for addressing the aristocracy, as well as addressing this author's understanding of the sources, since historical evidence can be addressed via different perspectives. The second objective relates to the theoretical approach of the thesis. The Marxist perspective does not ignore the way social phenomena are perceived, since this perception is a very important part of the society itself. This perspective requires addressing the appearance of the social phenomena, since the appearance any phenomenon is also a form of manifestation of the relations that underpin them. This is the reason why *Das Kapital* begins:

The wealth of societies in which a capitalistic mode of production prevails, appears as a 'gigantic collection of commodities' and the singular commodity appears as the elementary form of wealth. Our investigation begins accordingly with the analysis of the commodity.<sup>14</sup>

In other words, Marx's proposed study of the phenomenon he called 'capital' must start with how wealth 'appears', of how it is perceived. Before analysing it in depth, and reaching its essence, the appearance (in the sense of what is visible) must be taken into consideration. The same perspective is valid and important for other realities and temporalities (like 'the Middle Ages') since it represents a question of methodology rather than a reference to a specific moment in time. This is the path taken by the current thesis. The first step will be the analysis of the aristocracy's appearance (in the sense of visibility, not meaning 'emergence'), before analysing its essence, deconstructing it.

Another important point needs to be made about the methodology adopted. A decision was made to selecting those pieces of evidence that could best address the questions asked. As Marc Bloch suggested, primary sources are like witnesses on a trial: they only speak when asked, and some as better suited to answer some questions, while not as valuable to others.<sup>15</sup> In that sense, the sample of evidence selected represent the selected witnesses. Therefore, the methodology adopted for each chapter is to start each one by discussing a general question (such as 'land granting' or 'circulation'), then move on to the discussion of that question in the Early Middle Ages or Anglo-Saxon England more generally, then to address how this phenomenon is observed in Northumbria, through a primary source case study. Each chapter concludes with an attempt to dialectically connect

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<sup>14</sup> K. Marx, *The Capital, Volume 1*, trans. David Fernbach (Harmondsworth, 1976). Chapter 1, p. 83.

<sup>15</sup> M. Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, trans. Alfred A. Knopf (Manchester, 1992), p. 53.

all these dimensions and layers of the phenomenon. At the same time, the chapters are interconnected, in order to create a holistic and dialectical approach.

The first chapter addresses the appearance of the aristocracy. It explores the nouns in order to understand how the usage of Latin nouns can refer to specific groups within the aristocracy, and the crystallization of its elite (mainly those named *dux*); the role and visibility of women, almost reserved to those at the apex of the ruling class (abbesses and queens); the tales of social mobility which are actually presenting this is an impossibility; and how the aristocracy and its relations are crystallized on the a confraternity book by the end of the long eighth century. The hypothesis of the first chapter is that the forms in which the aristocracy make itself visible are expressions of their power, rank and internal hierarchy, and that these expressions change throughout the long eighth century.

The second chapter addresses the question of production in terms of class relations. The main hypotheses of this chapter are that the main classes of the period are the aristocracy and the peasantry, and that both intra-class and inter-class relations follow a logic of encompassing spheres. This image means that class relations do not erase each other, but they fit a bigger puzzle.

The third chapter addresses the reproduction of the aristocracy through land donation, and its main hypothesis is that land donation expressed the process of empowerment and relative autonomy of the aristocracy. Also, the impossibility of infinite donation revealed the contradictions of a class rule based on the constant acquisition of land and workforce.

The fourth chapter is about circulation, using coins as evidence. The main hypotheses of this chapter are two: 1) coins can be understood as an expression of class power since they are also part of the extraction of surplus by the aristocracy; 2) the early coinage of Northumbria is clerical, and it emerges connected to the access to surplus of peasantry as well as the workers specialized in precious metal.

Chapter five addresses the manufacture of history in eighth-century Northumbria. Its main hypothesis is that the control of the devices which allow ideological reproduction is the mortar of the ruling class ideology. In this sense, the chapter tries to establish the different forms of time reckoning and how they are connected and converge to a particular sense of historicity.

Chapter six addresses consumption through the practice of eating. Its main hypothesis is that the patterns of consumption must follow class rank and express prestige. Feasts and meat consumption were a practice of the elite, both lay and ecclesiastical, while peasantry protein was drawn from chicken and fowl.

Chapter seven is the last chapter and addresses the rites of death. Its main hypothesis is that funerary rites were an essential part of celebrating the life of the deceased, and as such it expressed their social class of origin. In that sense, death appeared in Anglo-Saxon life as an element that converged all topics discussed throughout the thesis – surplus acquisition, time-reckoning, circulation and reproduction etc – in a ceremony of class apotheosis.

Marxist concepts are commonly a matter of controversy among Marxist thinkers. In this sense, it is vital to define three main concepts and their inter-relationship. Forces of production (in German, *produktivkräfte*) can be defined as the combination of the means of labour (land, infrastructure, accumulated knowledge, tools etc) with human labour power; at least since the 1960s, it is also acknowledged that ideal elements are also a vital part of the forces of production.<sup>16</sup> Relations of production (in German, *produktionsverhältnisse*) are formed by ‘the economic ownership of productive forces’.<sup>17</sup> Relations of production has a broad sense, since the German word *verhältnis* can mean ‘relation’, ‘proportion’, or ‘ratio’. In this sense, relations of production can be used in a quantitative or qualitative sense, or a dialectical combination of both. However, although they have a wide sense, they refer to social-economic relationships that are derived from the organization of production. Relations of production and forces of production are connected concepts in Marxist thought. In Marx’s own words,

In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material powers of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society - the real foundation on which rise legal and political superstructures and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> L. Harris, ‘Forces and relations of production’, in T. Bottomore, *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought* (Oxford, 1991), p. 204; M. Godelier, *The Mental and the Material – Thought, Economy and Society*, trans. M. Thom (trans. Norfolk, 1986, original Fayard, 1984).

<sup>17</sup> Harris, ‘Forces and relations of production’, p. 204.

<sup>18</sup> K. Marx, ‘Preface’, in K. Marx, *A contribution to the critique of political economy* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1859, trans. S. W. Ryazanskaya, online version 1999), [https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx\\_Contribution\\_to\\_the\\_Critique\\_of\\_Political\\_Economy.pdf](https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx_Contribution_to_the_Critique_of_Political_Economy.pdf) [accessed 15/01/2017], p. 3.

The mode of production (in German, *Produktionsweise*) is the articulation and combination of the productive forces and the relations of the production. Although there is a long discussion in Marxist theory about how this articulation works, it is acknowledged that both of them are necessarily interconnected in a dialectical way, which means that each dimension modifies the other at the same time it changes itself.<sup>19</sup> In this sense, the mode of production is a dynamic and historical system, not a static model of a society.

The definition of ‘aristocracy’ is also vital for the thesis. The current piece of work understand that ‘aristocracy’ is the ruling social class, whose members were detached from the process of production and lived from the products of other class(es) labour. Although forming a social group, the aristocracy has its own internal hierarchies. The aristocracy also have forms of expressing its own social distinctions, built on patterns of consumption and the way it is perceived by other members of society. The elements of distinction converge to form a social identity that reproduces the aristocracy in ideological terms. Also, the ways in which prestige, status and wealth are displayed are gendered, and this distinction is vital to the reproduction of the aristocracy.

The goal of the thesis is to establish the historicity of a particular social class in a specific social context. However, even in a remote past, the object of study of a historian is never exclusively about the past. There is always a dialectical connection and expression about the two realities – the one the research was produced and the other to which it refers. One possibility of connection was explored by Marx on the famous phrase that ‘Human anatomy contains a key to the anatomy of the ape’, referring to capitalist and pre-capitalist realities.<sup>20</sup> In this sense, a study that highlights the historicity of a social class in the past is also one that can indirectly shine a light on current social classes and relations.

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<sup>19</sup> H. Susan, ‘Mode of Production’, in Bottomore, *A Dictionary*, pp. 379-81.

<sup>20</sup> Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 105.

## Chapter 1)

### The Aristocracy's Appearance

#### Introduction

This chapter aims to understand the image that the Northumbrian aristocracy built of itself. The chapter will try to seek how the aristocracy is portrayed by itself in the historical sources, using the nouns used to refer to them, the image of warriors and/or clerics, the war gear, the role played by women, the idealizes impossibility of social mobility and how the aristocracy understands itself at the end of the long eighth century, in the Durham *Liber Vitae*. The main hypothesis of the chapter is that the way the aristocracy wants to be perceived plays a major role in its ideological (re)production. Also, the self perception is fundamental in order to organize the aristocracy internally, and to establish its own internal hierarchies.

The image of the Middle Ages as the 'Age of the Three Orders', is still a powerful one. In King Alfred's translation of Boethius's *De consolazione Philosophia*, the king reflected on the division of people:

You know of course that no-one can make known any skill, nor direct and guide any enterprise, without tools and resources; a man cannot work on any enterprise without resources. In the case of the king, the resources and tools with which to rule are that he have his land fully manned; he must have praying men, fighting men and working men. You know also that without these tools no king may make his ability known. Another aspect of his resources is that he must have the means of support for his tools, the three classes of men.<sup>1</sup>

According to this division, society was divided into groups of those who pray (*oratores*), those who wage war (*bellatores*) and those who work (*laboratores*). Alfred's understanding of the Middle Ages, however, was painted with the colours of his social

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<sup>1</sup> *Hwaet, bu wast bxt nan mon ne mseg mnne craft cydan ne nasnne anweald reccan ne stioran butan tolum and andweorce. Eaet bid aelces craftes andweorc ban mon {sone craft buton wyrcan ne masg. Pxt bid bonne cyninges andweorc and his tol mid to ricianne, baet he haebbe his lond fullmonnad; he sceal habban gebedmen and fyrdmen and weorcmen. Hwaet, bu wast bstte butan bissan tolan nan cyning his craft ne maeg cydan. taet is eac his ondweorc, bxt he habban sceal to dxm tolum bam brim geferscipum biwiste. King Alfred's Old English Version of Boethius' De consolazione philosophiae, ed. W. J. Sedgefield (Oxford, 1899), p. 40. Translation at S. Keynes and M. Lapidge, Alfred the Great (Harmondsworth, 1983), p. 132.*

position, and to a certain extent reflected what medieval society looked like for a king close to the end of the ninth century. Modern scholarship on social phenomena must go beyond the appearance of a thing, but at the same time cannot ignore the importance of contemporary perception. The way a phenomenon is perceived, or how it wants to be perceived, is an essential element of that phenomenon and the social practices associated with it. This is the first chapter of a thesis dedicated to the understanding of Northumbrian aristocracy in the eighth century; therefore, it is important to understand the image projected by the aristocracy itself, so that we can deconstruct the aristocracy as a social class.

The main hypothesis explored in this chapter is that the appearance projected by the aristocracy is that of warriors and clerics whose social position is perpetual and immovable. This image, however, does not portray social reality. Another important hypothesis to be tested is that the role of women is subsumed in the sources, and that this has informed the perception of the Northumbrian reality. Luckily for the objective of the present thesis, most of the written sources of our period concern the aristocracy, either in its lay or clerical sphere. The eighth century produced a considerable production of written documents, both in quantity and genre. For the study of Northumbria in this period, it is possible to use: the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle; the *Historia Regum*; Bede's writings (especially the *Historia Ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, hagiographies, the *Epistola ad Egbertvm* and the *Historia Abbatum*); correspondence, mainly Alcuin's letters to Northumbrians; the Durham *Liber Vitae* (DLV); material culture and archaeological discoveries. This chapter will interrogate contemporary Latin labels used to describe the Northumbrian aristocracy, to investigate whether there was a relative hierarchy within this group. Since this evidence is very closely linked to military activity a discussion about 'warrior status' is the next step. In order to illustrate this, and to explore the self-image of the aristocracy, the Coppergate Helmet has been selected as a case study. However, the focus on warriors is gender biased, requiring discussion of women's role in the aristocracy. Class difference and the possibility of social mobility will be addressed by the case studies of Imma and Caedmon, both found in Bede's narratives. As these case studies are actually a demonstration of impossibility of mobility, the last topic of the chapter is about the crystallization of social classes, their 'labels' and positions through the Durham *Liber Vitae*.

## 1) Nouns for aristocrats: labels

The nouns which are found in the written sources about the aristocracy can shine a light on their social role. However, it is vital to highlight the historicity of words. As Marc Bloch once said, ‘to the desperation of historians, men [sic] don’t have the habit of changing the vocabulary as costumes change’.<sup>2</sup> In this sense, it is also important to note that aristocracy and its labels (*dux*, *comes*, etc) are more visible over time, and by the end of the long eighth century they are definitely more visible (in names and nouns) than in earlier documents.

There is no precise data about all the aristocratic lineages; however, succession practices and the systems of kinship that existed are acknowledged by historians, although not in a clear picture.<sup>3</sup> Lineages and groups are more easily perceived in the later eighth century because of struggles for the throne of the kingdom.<sup>4</sup> As the lineages and factional groups increase in visibility, the titles or Latin adjectives that describe them also increase in variety and frequency. *Princeps*, *patricius* (‘patrician’), *comes* and *gesith* (‘count’ in Latin and Old English, respectively), *minister* (‘minister’), *miles* or *thegn* (‘knight’), *dux* (‘duke’), *praefactus* (‘reeve’) are some of the labels used to identify the aristocracy.<sup>5</sup> A question arises from the different labels: what were their roles in the internal aristocratic hierarchy? How steep or fluid was this internal hierarchy? In the first place must come the problems and difficulties. It is not unusual for the same nobleman to be given different labels in different sources. This might mean either an accumulation of positions and status by one person, or that these terms are synonyms and do not reflect different status in fact, or still they could reflect the preferred usage of a particular author. Another important aspect of these terms is how the records available for the study of the aristocracy are gendered. While there were many different nouns for describing noblemen, the label most used for aristocratic woman is certainly *regina* (‘queen’). Is absence of labels for aristocratic female roles a fiction of the sources that favour descriptions of men, or is this

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<sup>2</sup> Bloch, *The historian’s craft*, p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> Rollason, *Northumbria*, p. 180.

<sup>4</sup> Rollason, *Northumbria*, p. 181.

<sup>5</sup> H. M. Chadwick, *Studies in Anglo-Saxon institutions* (Cambridge, 1905); H. R. Loyn, ‘The term Ealdorman in the translations prepared at the time of King Alfred’, *EngHR* 68 (1953), pp. 513-25; idem, ‘Gesiths and thegns in Anglo-Saxon England from the seventh to the tenth century’, *EngHR* 70 (1955), pp. 529-49; A. Thacker, ‘Some terms for noblemen in Anglo-Saxon England, c. 650-900’, *ASSAH* 2, BAR Brit. Sr. (1982), pp. 201-5. Rollason, *Northumbria*, p. 185.

absence a real reflection of the limits to variety of women's roles in early medieval Northumbria? In this sense, it is significant that the folios of the mid-ninth century manuscript known as the Durham *Liber Vitae* (DLV) lists male secular aristocrats together as 'kings or dukes' (*Nomina regum vel ducum*), and abbots in a separate list.<sup>6</sup> High ranking women, however, are grouped together within a single list as 'queens and abbesses' (*Nomina reginarum et abbatissarum*), mixing women of high secular and high clerical status.<sup>7</sup> In other words, the paucity of nouns attributed to the female aristocrat is part of the reason why they are less visible in the sources, and, as a consequence, in historiography. However, each of these labels requires analysis of what they mean, and in which context they appear and/or disappear.

*Principes* for Thacker were people of royal blood, either member of royal families or for magnates (i.e. very powerful and rich noblemen) whose families once rules over an area but were encompassed by a more powerful lord.<sup>8</sup> However, his area of reference for this label is mainly Wessex and Mercia.<sup>9</sup> *Dux* is a term that is used frequently in Anglo-Saxon England the eighth century.<sup>10</sup> In later eighth-century Northumbria it seems to describe a 'senior noblemen' (although there is no indication if that seniority means age or power).<sup>11</sup> Most of the noblemen referred to in the Northern Annals preserved by Simeon of Durham are *duces*. These *duces* are frequently members of the royal family and some of them became kings as well.<sup>12</sup> The increase in the mobility between the status of *rex* and *dux* may also explain why the Durham *Liber Vitae* intermingles men of these two ranks together.

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<sup>6</sup> This document will be addressed in the section 5 of this chapter. *Durham Liber Vitae: London, British Library, MS Cotton Domitian A. VII: edition and digital facsimile with introduction, codicological, prosopographical and linguistic commentary, and indexes*, eds D. Rollason and L. Rollason, 3 Vol. (London, 2007), f. 20r-22r.

<sup>7</sup> DLV, f. 15r, 17r.

<sup>8</sup> Thacker, 'Some Terms', p. 205.

<sup>9</sup> Idem.

<sup>10</sup> Idem, p. 206.

<sup>11</sup> Idem, p. 207.

<sup>12</sup> *Symeonis Monachis Opera Omnia*, ed. T. Arnold, RS75, vol. 2 (London, 1885), pp. 44-7, 51-2, 24, 56-7, 59, 62, 65.

The *comes* mentioned by Bede was defined by Chadwick as a senior member of the *comitatus*, settled in his own *vicus* or *villula*.<sup>13</sup> *Comites* were probably royal councillors or companions, forming men of the highest rank in the seventh and early eighth century.<sup>14</sup> They are opposed by the *miles*, who had no estates. This interpretation is also defended by Thacker.<sup>15</sup> Rollason, by his turn, argues that the *comes* were also different from the *ministri* (and the *milites*), both being part of the king's retinue, but had yet to be awarded land.<sup>16</sup> So, a 'career progression' might be expected, as the king established his 'ministers' (*ministri*) as 'counts' (*comites*), granting them land as part of the reward for their military efforts.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, the king also inserted the *comes* into a class relation, since the king granted both land and the workforce to make it productive. The *comes* was therefore someone who did not have indirect access to surplus, but actually seized it himself. The term *comes* seems to be in frequent use in the early eighth century (as in Bede's works); however, it is not used after that. No mention of a *comes* is made by Simeon of Durham, for example. Loyn suggested that *comes* became archaic noun like *gesith*, probably because the major powers wanted to distinguish themselves from the royal councillors of subordinate kingdoms.<sup>18</sup> But this does not mean that this class relation ended or disappeared; it continued to exist under other labels (like the aforementioned *dux*).

*Praefectus* is generally translated as 'reeve', but it could also be applied to men of the highest status and importance.<sup>19</sup> In Northumbria *praefecti* are sometimes presented associated with *urbes*. Osfrith and Tydlin, for example, are named as King's Ecgrith's *praefecti* in the *urbs Broninis* and the royal *urbs* of Dunbar.<sup>20</sup> Blaecca is described by Bede as *praefectus* of the *civitas* of Lincoln in the time of King Edwin.<sup>21</sup> They seem to be akin to

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<sup>13</sup> Chadwick, *Studies*, p. 55.

<sup>14</sup> Thacker, 'Some Terms', p. 209.

<sup>15</sup> *Idem*, p. 208.

<sup>16</sup> Rollason, *Northumbria*, p. 185.

<sup>17</sup> *Idem*, p. 186.

<sup>18</sup> Loyn, 'Getish and Thegns', p. 535.

<sup>19</sup> Chadwick, *Studies*, pp. 259-60; J. Campbell, 'Bede's words for places', in P. H. Sawyer, *Names, words and graves* (Leeds, 1979), pp. 34-54, p. 42; P. H. Sawyer, *From Roman Britain to Norman England* (London, 1978), p. 34; Thacker, 'Some Terms', p. 210.

<sup>20</sup> *VW*, 36, 38.

<sup>21</sup> *HE*, II.16.

provincial governors.<sup>22</sup> Some *praefecti*, however, were more than that. Berhtfrith is named *praefectus* by Bede and *secundus a rege... princeps* by the *Vita Wilfridi*.<sup>23</sup> Apparently, he was a regent for the *puer regius* Osred (705–716), and led an expedition against the Picts in 711.<sup>24</sup> Interestingly, Wilfrid also had a *praefectus*, named Hocca. Hocca recovered a boy from the possession of the *Britonnes* who Wilfrid had cured, which suggested he had military resources at his disposal.<sup>25</sup> As Thacker shows, Wilfrid by this time was the ruler of a *regum ecclesiasticum*, and his officials were in charge of armed warriors of considerable number.<sup>26</sup> The term implies office-holding rather than hereditary status, and is focused more on administrative than military tasks. The same men who were called *praefectus* could also hold the title of *duces* or *comites*. However, the term, just like *comes* is not found in later eighth-century sources.

*Patricius* is a Latin word with a background in the Roman period.<sup>27</sup> Bede was acquainted with the word, but used it to refer to foreign people, like the Frankish mayor *Ercunwaldus patricius*.<sup>28</sup> The first time the term is used to refer to the Northumbrian nobility is from an outside perspective as well, in a letter dated from 757. Pope Paul I alluded to his correspondents' removal of three monasteries from Abbot Forthred and the granting of them to Forthred's brother, *quidam patricius Moll nomine*.<sup>29</sup> This Moll was presumably Æthelwold Moll, who won the throne in August 759.<sup>30</sup> The *patricii* of Northumbria also played very important roles in the later eighth-century Northumbria. In 779-80 Beorn, *patricius regis Aelfwoldi* was burnt by the *duces* Osbald and Aethelheard; in 788, King Ælfwold was slain by his *patricius*, Sicga, and Æthelred reclaimed the throne; in 793 Sicga himself perished (by his own hand); in 796 King Aethelred was killed to be succeeded briefly by the *patricius* Osbald.<sup>31</sup> As Thacker notices, the *patricii* are both the

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<sup>22</sup> Thacker, p. 210.

<sup>23</sup> *HE*, V, 24; *VW*, 60.

<sup>24</sup> *HE*, V, 24; *VW*, 60.

<sup>25</sup> *VW*, 18, Thacker, 'Some Terms', p. 211.

<sup>26</sup> Thacker, 'Some Terms', p. 211.

<sup>27</sup> Rollason, *Northumbria*, p. 181.

<sup>28</sup> *HE*, III.19.

<sup>29</sup> Thacker, 'Some Terms', p. 216.

<sup>30</sup> Simeon of Durham, *Opera*, p. 41.

<sup>31</sup> *Idem*, pp. 47, 52, 54, 57, 62. This 'chronology of *patricius*' is proposed by Thacker, 'Some Terms', p. 216.

slayer and successors of the king.<sup>32</sup> Thacker argues that very rarely there were more than one *patricius* at a time, and that it was a title probably reserved for the office was second only to the king.<sup>33</sup> The *patricius* was rather a title than an office (in contrast to the *praefectus*).

The *milites* can be enlightening how labels can refer to different status, or how the difference between social groups are not clear-cut. According to Bede, in 679, a battle took place in the river Trent, and Ælfwine, king of Deira, was killed. One of his retainers (*militia eius*), called Imma was wounded in the battle.<sup>34</sup> He was captured and taken to the enemies' *comes*.<sup>35</sup> When asked who he was, Imma was afraid to confess he was a *miles*, so he said he was a poor peasant and married.<sup>36</sup> In this passage, the *milites* appear as someone subordinated to a king, and having a prestigious position. However, there are other registers of *milites* that differ. In a letter addressing his pupils Calvinus and Cuculus, Alcuin questions the actions of the Archbishop Eanbald II of York, which Alcuin thinks are unfit for a Archbishop. Alcuin asks: *Et quid ei in comitatu suo tantus numerus militum?*<sup>37</sup> The *militum* (thegns) were also accused of having a lot of foot soldiers (*gregarii*) under their command: *Item et illi gregarios, id est, ignobiles milites, pluriores habent, quam deceat, sub se.*<sup>38</sup> In Alcuin's letter there is the possibility of *ignobiles milites*, which suggests that those soldiers are not from the noble stock. In other words, *milites* might represent a grey area between the aristocrats and non-aristocrats.

In other words, the hierarchy of the aristocracy of Anglo-Saxon Northumbria seems to follow a pattern. In the first part of the eighth century, from bottom to top: *milites*, with all the ambiguity the term can hold; followed by *ministri*; then came the *comites*; then the *duces* (as the office of a military leader) and *praefectus* (as an administrative office) at the same level; then *principes*; then *reges*. Later in the eighth century, the hierarchy seems to have been *miles* and *ministri* at the same level; *dux* (now meaning 'senior nobleman', not

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<sup>32</sup> Thacker, 'Some Terms', p. 216.

<sup>33</sup> Idem, pp. 216-7.

<sup>34</sup> *HE*, IV, 22.

<sup>35</sup> Idem.

<sup>36</sup> [...] *usticum se potius et pauperem atque uxoreo uinculo conligatum fuisse respondit*, *HE*, IV, 22.

<sup>37</sup> 'What does he (Eanbald II) wants with such number of thegns in his retinue?', D. Whitelock, *EHD* I, 208, p. 797.

<sup>38</sup> 'Moreover, they too have more of the common sort, that is, low-born soldiers, than is fitting, under them.', Whitelock, idem.

only an office); *patricius*; *reges*. The history of the labels of the aristocracy seems to be a good thermometer to perceive the rise of the aristocracy and how offices and roles get blurred at the same time that new titles (like *patricius*) appear. The *princeps* were very close to royalty early in the period, their records do not reveal a history of regicide and a form of *coup d'État*. However, the title that referred to the people closest to royalty at the end of century (*patricius*) is a title that often coincides with regicide and the aspiration for kingship. The struggle between the class fractions crystalized a title with royal blood.

The main points on the aristocratic labels seem to refer to war, service and hierarchy. The idea about hierarchy will be explored throughout the thesis; the idea of service will be discussed better on the chapter related to the donation of lands. However, it is imperative to discuss the idea referring to violence, since the 'warrior aesthetic' is very commonly associated to those of medieval nobles, and has a vital role on the way they present themselves, on their social appearance.

## 2) Aristocrats as warriors

The *bellatores* are defined by making war their attribution. However, there is no evidence that supports the idea that only aristocrats would go to war. Bede tells us about Imma, an aristocrat who lost a battle and tried to fool his captors into thinking that he was just a poor peasant, who would have come *propter uictum militibus adferendum in expeditionem se cum sui similibus uenisse estatus est*.<sup>39</sup> Rollason reads this passage as evidence that warfare in the seventh century was an aristocratic matter, and peasants only provided porters and provisioners.<sup>40</sup> However, there is no direct evidence that peasants avoided the fight itself. Also, if they were close enough to be captured with the defeated aristocrats, it is possible that they could have other functions than just watch and support with logistics.

Another interesting topic relates to Anglo-Saxon cavalry. Higham has argued that in early Bernicia horses were used only for transportation, not for mounted fight.<sup>41</sup> This proposition was challenged not long after its publication. Cessford has argued that Anglo-Saxon warriors might have fought on horseback while using helmet, sword, shield and

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<sup>39</sup> '[...] to the army in company with other peasants to bring food to the soldiers.' *HE*, IV.22.

<sup>40</sup> Rollason, *Northumbria*, p. 185.

<sup>41</sup> N. J. Higham, 'Cavalry in early Bernicia?', *Northern History* 27 (1991), pp. 236-41.

(throwing) spears, based on a Pictish symbol stone, named the ‘Aberlemno Stone’.<sup>42</sup> Hooper has also agreed that it is possible that Northumbrians fought on horseback, using both the Aberlemno stone and a deeper critic of the sources studied by Highman.<sup>43</sup> Snaffle bits were discovered in Sutton Hoo.<sup>44</sup> North of the Humber snaffle bits were relatively common in furnished burials.<sup>45</sup> Snaffle bits implied a bridle, which implies a rider. And snaffle bits were found in Yeavinger and Withorn, as well as associated with burials at Howick, Great Tosson and possibly Crosby Garrett.<sup>46</sup> Independent of the outcome of the discussion about actual fight on horseback, most depictions of Anglo-Saxon warrior status are of those battling on foot, a reason that takes Hooper to defend the ‘misconception’ about horseback fighting.<sup>47</sup>

However, the horse is still identified as a part of the aristocratic possessions. Coifi was once the chief of the pagan priests (*primus pontificum*) of Northumbria; in order to prove he was no longer pagan, Coifi mounted a stallion and threw a spear into the pagan shrine, before setting fire to it.<sup>48</sup> Bede also tells us that a high priest of Coifi’s former religion was not allowed to carry arms or to ride except on a mare.<sup>49</sup> Bede also points out that Coifi was a counsellor for the king. Once Coifi is no longer a pagan priest, he is granted a male horse, sword and spear, the gear set of a lay aristocrat. In other words, Coifi takes a secular role – mounted, armed and aggressive – but he did not lose his status as a member of the elite. King Oswald also gave Aidan, bishop of Lindisfarne, a horse as a gift

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<sup>42</sup> C. Cessford, ‘Cavalry in early Bernicia: a reply’, *Northern History* 29.1 (1991), p. 185.

<sup>43</sup> Nicholas Hooper, ‘The Aberlemno stone and cavalry in Anglo-Saxon England’, *Northern History* 29:1 (1993), pp. 190-1.

<sup>44</sup> R. Bruce-Mitford, *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial*, vol 1.

<sup>45</sup> L. Alcock, ‘Quantity or quality: the Anglian graves of Bernicia’, in *Angles, Saxon and Jutes. studies presented to J. N. L. Myres*, ed. V. I. Evison (Oxford, 1981), pp. 168-86; R. Miket, ‘A restatement of evidence from Bernician Anglo-Saxon Burials’, in *Anglo-Saxon cemeteries 1979*, ed. P. A. Rahtz, T. Dickinson and L. Watts (Oxford, 1980), pp. 289-305; Cessford, ‘Cavalry’, p. 186.

<sup>46</sup> B. Hope-Taylor, *Yeavinger, An Anglo-British centre of early Northumbria* (London, 1977), p. 189; P. Hill, *Whithorn 2, Excavations 1984-1987* (Whithorn, 1987), p. 8; G. S. Keeney, ‘A pagan Anglian cemetery at Howick, Northumberland’, *Archaeologia Aeliana* xvi (1939), pp. 120-8; Miket, ‘A restatement’, pp. 294, 300; Cessford, ‘Cavalry’, p. 187.

<sup>47</sup> Hooper, ‘The Aberlemno Stone’, p. 196.

<sup>48</sup> *HE*, II.13.

<sup>49</sup> *Non enim licuerat pontificem sacrorum uel arma ferre uel praeter in equa equitare*, *HE*, II.13.

fit for someone of his status. Later on, Aidan gave the animal to a peasant and was reproved for doing that.<sup>50</sup>

The horse, therefore, was a part of the distinction within the *bellatores* group. As they seem to be uncommon, they highlight the internal hierarchy of the aristocracy. Using them in combat or just for transportation does not erase the fact there was an élite group of the aristocracy which was recognized by their horses. In this sense, mounted warriors represented the peak of the aristocracy. Possessing a horse meant a lot in terms of visibility and of intra-class distinction, since the person was easily perceived as a member of a selected group. It has a direct connection on how they were seen and understood, on their appearance.

As important as horses were the weapons of the warrior. The most common weapon found in pagan burials is the spear.<sup>51</sup> The spear continued to be represented in other pictorial representations (as the aforementioned Aberlemno Stone), and continued to be used in hunting and fighting, both for throwing and to keep enemies at distance.<sup>52</sup> Bows can be associated as the weapon of the unfree; the lower status of an archer can also be inferred by the few representations bows have: one single reference in the Battle of Maldon refers to ‘busy’ bows, and only one archer is depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry.<sup>53</sup> Axes could be used both as a woodman’s tool and for warfare, and its light throwing version can be found in pagan burials; the double-headed version of axes were in use right at the end of the Anglo-Saxon era in the Bayeux Tapestry as well, both as ceremonial object and in battle.<sup>54</sup> The knives known as *seaxes* were also commonly used and found in pagan burials, and some might have had ceremonial uses as well.<sup>55</sup> Swords were highly regarded weapons, immediately associated with aristocratic status and leadership.<sup>56</sup> In pagan times they were found mostly in richly burials, and were outnumbered by spears in a 20:1 ratio.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> *HE*, III, 3.

<sup>51</sup> N. Brooks, ‘Arms and armour’, *WBEOASE* (Oxford, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2014), pp. 47-9, p. 49.

<sup>52</sup> M. J. Swanton, *The spearheads of Anglo-Saxon settlements* (London, 1973); Idem, *A corpus of pagan Anglo-Saxon spear-types*, *BAR Brit. Sr. 7* (1974); N. Brooks, ‘Weapons and Armour’, in *The battle of Maldon AD 991*, ed. D. Scragg (Oxford, 1991); Brooks, ‘Arms’, p. 49.

<sup>53</sup> Brooks, ‘Weapons’; Idem, ‘Arms’, p. 49.

<sup>54</sup> Brooks, ‘Arms’, p. 49.

<sup>55</sup> Idem.

<sup>56</sup> H. R. Ellis Davidson, *The sword in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1962).

<sup>57</sup> Brooks, ‘Arms’, p. 49.

Swords were both elite weapons and ceremonial objects, and they depicted status by their ornamentation on hilts, scabbards and even on pattern-welded blades.<sup>58</sup> According to Brooks, by the time of the Battle of Hastings (1066) the sword was part of the standard equipment of the well-armed soldier, losing its association with leadership.<sup>59</sup> Swords are also a very important symbol for masculinity in Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>60</sup>

In terms of defensive gear, the most commonly used item was probably the shield. Both at Maldon and at Hastings the representation of the ‘shield-wall’ calls attention to the importance of the device and tactics for using it.<sup>61</sup> Mail body armour the rarest object in pagan cemeteries, only found at Sutton Hoo and possibly at Benty Grange.<sup>62</sup> Almost as rare as chain mails are the helmets. Until now only five Anglo-Saxon helmets have been found: the Sutton Hoo ship-burial (Suffolk); the ‘Pioneer Helmet’ (Northamptonshire), the Benty Grange helmet (Derbyshire), the Coppergate helmet (York) and, more recently, the Staffordshire Hoard helmet cheek pieces.<sup>63</sup> The Coppergate helmet is from Northumbria and is dated c. 750-75.<sup>64</sup> It is the perfect example for a brief case study on the physical appearance of Anglo-Saxon warriors in the context analysed by the thesis.

## 2.a) The Coppergate Helmet

The Coppergate Helmet was found inside a well at York.<sup>65</sup> The helmet consists of four major elements: an iron cap with brass decoration and edge bindings; two cheek-pieces with brass edge bindings, hanging from the edge of the cap from iron hinges; a mail curtain, predominantly of iron, suspended from the edged of the cap.<sup>66</sup> The decorations of

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<sup>58</sup> Davidson, *The Sword*.

<sup>59</sup> Brooks, ‘Arms’, p. 49.

<sup>60</sup> D. M. Hadley, ‘Masculinity’, in Jaqueline Stodnick and Renée R. Trilling (eds), *A handbook of Anglo-Saxon studies* (Oxford, 2012), p. 116.

<sup>61</sup> T. Dickinson and H. Härke, ‘Early Anglo-Saxon Shields’, *Archaeologia* 101 (1992), pp. 1-94; Brooks, ‘Arms’, p. 49.

<sup>62</sup> Brooks, ‘Arms and Armour’, p. 48.

<sup>63</sup> ‘Helmet Cheek Piece’, *Staffordshire Hoard*, <http://www.staffordshirehoard.org.uk/staritems/helmet-cheek-piece> [accessed 19/06/2016]; Brooks, ‘Arms and armour’, p. 48.

<sup>64</sup> D. Tweddle, *The Anglian helmet from Coppergate*, *The Archaeology of York, The Small Finds* 17/8 (York, 1992), p. 1082.

<sup>65</sup> Tweddle, *The Anglian Helmet*, p. 893.

<sup>66</sup> Idem, pp. 940-941.

the helmet consists of: A) a decorative plate covering the nasal piece, probably also done in one piece with the decorative eyebrows over each eyehole; B) each eyebrow ends in an animal head; C) an inscription forming a crest which runs along the mid-line, going from nose-to-nape band, and ends at the animal head at the nasal; D) separate inscriptions run down from the crown of the helmet towards each ear.

The decoration of the nasal strip presents ‘confronted interlocking bipeds whose hindquarters develop into interlace’.<sup>67</sup> The nasal strip varies in width, but it ranges from 18mm to 49mm.<sup>68</sup> The head of the animal above the two confronting animals is 53.8mm long and 21.5 wide.<sup>69</sup> The eyebrow decoration also ends with animal heads, and the left eyebrow tapers from 16.2mm wide and 6.4mm thick near the junction of the eyebrows to 8.5mm wide and 5 mm thick on the animal head terminal; the right eyebrow ranges from 15.6mm wide and 5.3 thick at the eyebrow to 8.6mm wide and 4.7mm thick at the animal terminal.<sup>70</sup> The animals at the end of the eyebrows seem to have canine dentition.<sup>71</sup> The usage of animals and their fierceness is common to impersonate characteristics that were expected from a warrior. Anglo-Saxon animal art has been much studied, highlighting its connection to the ‘Germanic background’, and a war oriented culture.<sup>72</sup> As Hill points out, animal ferocity is present in warrior’s names in Anglo-Saxon England and symbolizes a vital part of the ‘warrior ethic’.<sup>73</sup> The usage of animals on other defensive war gear (shields) may have had apotropaic qualities, giving protection to the wearer.<sup>74</sup> Dickinson’s argument concerning the apotropaic animals on sixth-century shields can be extrapolated to the Coppergate helmet with its canine animals which must also have that function or, at least, resonated it.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Idem, pp. 965-9.

<sup>68</sup> Idem, p. 965.

<sup>69</sup> Idem, p. 978.

<sup>70</sup> Idem, p. 973.

<sup>71</sup> Idem, p. 1016.

<sup>72</sup> G. Speake, *Anglo-Saxon animal art and its Germanic background* (Oxford, 1980), page?.

<sup>73</sup> J. M. Hill, *The Anglo-Saxon warrior ethic: reconstructing lordship in early English literature* (Gainesville, FL, 2000), p. 14.

<sup>74</sup> T. M. Dickinson, ‘Symbols of protection: the significance of animal-ornamented shields in early Anglo-Saxon England’, *Medieval Archaeology*, 49:1 (2005), pp. 109-163, p. 162.

<sup>75</sup> Tweddle, *The Anglian Helmet*, p. 1015.

The inscription on the helm is also very important. Once reconstructed, it reads

IN NOMINE : DNI : NOSTRI : IHV : SCS : SPS : DI  
ET : OMNIBVS : DECEMVVS : AMEN : OSHERE : XPI<sup>76</sup>

The inscription, however, is written retrograde (Figure 1).<sup>77</sup> Many inscriptions in Anglo-Saxon England are retrograde, but they generally are done like that to imprint the ‘correct’ form on other surfaces, like seal-dies and signet-rings.<sup>78</sup> Osaka’s explanation is that it was probably a mistake, and the panel was fixed wrong-side up.<sup>79</sup> However, it may also imply that writing had an important apotropaic value, making the act of writing sometimes more important than the act of reading. A parallel can be found also on the Staffordshire Hoard inscribed strip, which also has what modern audiences would consider problems with spellings.<sup>80</sup>

Two translations for the inscription have been suggested: ‘In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit [and] God; and to [or with] all we say Amen. Oshere’.<sup>81</sup> The second one is ‘In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and of the Spirit of God, let us offer up Oshere to All Saints. Amen.’<sup>82</sup> In both translations, the idea of protection and prayer is overt. At the same time, the text is fastened into place on the helmet in the form of a cross, which certainly is not incidental and must reinforce the idea of divine protection.

The dithematic Old English name presented on the helmet is also important. Oshere is a not uncommon Anglo-Saxon name, present in the Durham *Liber Vitae* and also as the moneyer of Æthelberht, King of Wessex (858–66). The prefix ‘os’ means ‘divinity, god’

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<sup>76</sup> Idem, p. 983.

<sup>77</sup> E. Osaka, ‘The inscriptions: transliteration, translation and epigraphy’, in Tweddle, *The Anglian Helmet*, p. 1013.

<sup>78</sup> Osaka, ‘The inscriptions’, p. 1013.

<sup>79</sup> Idem.

<sup>80</sup> E. Osaka, ‘The Staffordshire Hoard inscription’, <https://finds.org.uk/staffshoardsymposium/papers/elisabethokasha>, [accessed 28/06/2016].

<sup>81</sup> Osaka, ‘The inscriptions’, p. 1013.

<sup>82</sup> J. W. Binns, E. C. Norton, and D. M. Palliser, ‘The Latin inscription on the Coppergate helmet’, *Antiquity*, Vol. 64, Issue 242, (March 1990), pp 134-139, p. 136.

and the suffix, *'here'*, means 'army'.<sup>83</sup> *'Oshere'* means something like 'holy army' or 'divine army'. The owner's name encapsulates a connection between aristocratic power and the sphere of sacredness. In this particular case, the connection is even stronger, since the inscription recalls strong Christian beliefs and has the aspect of a prayer. The Coppergate helmet, in this sense, is another piece of evidence between the secular and ecclesiastical class connections.

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<sup>83</sup> *Bosworth-Toller Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 'os', <http://www.bosworthtoller.com/025014> [accessed 17/06/2016]; Idem, 'here', <http://www.bosworthtoller.com/finder/3/here> [accessed 17/06/2016].

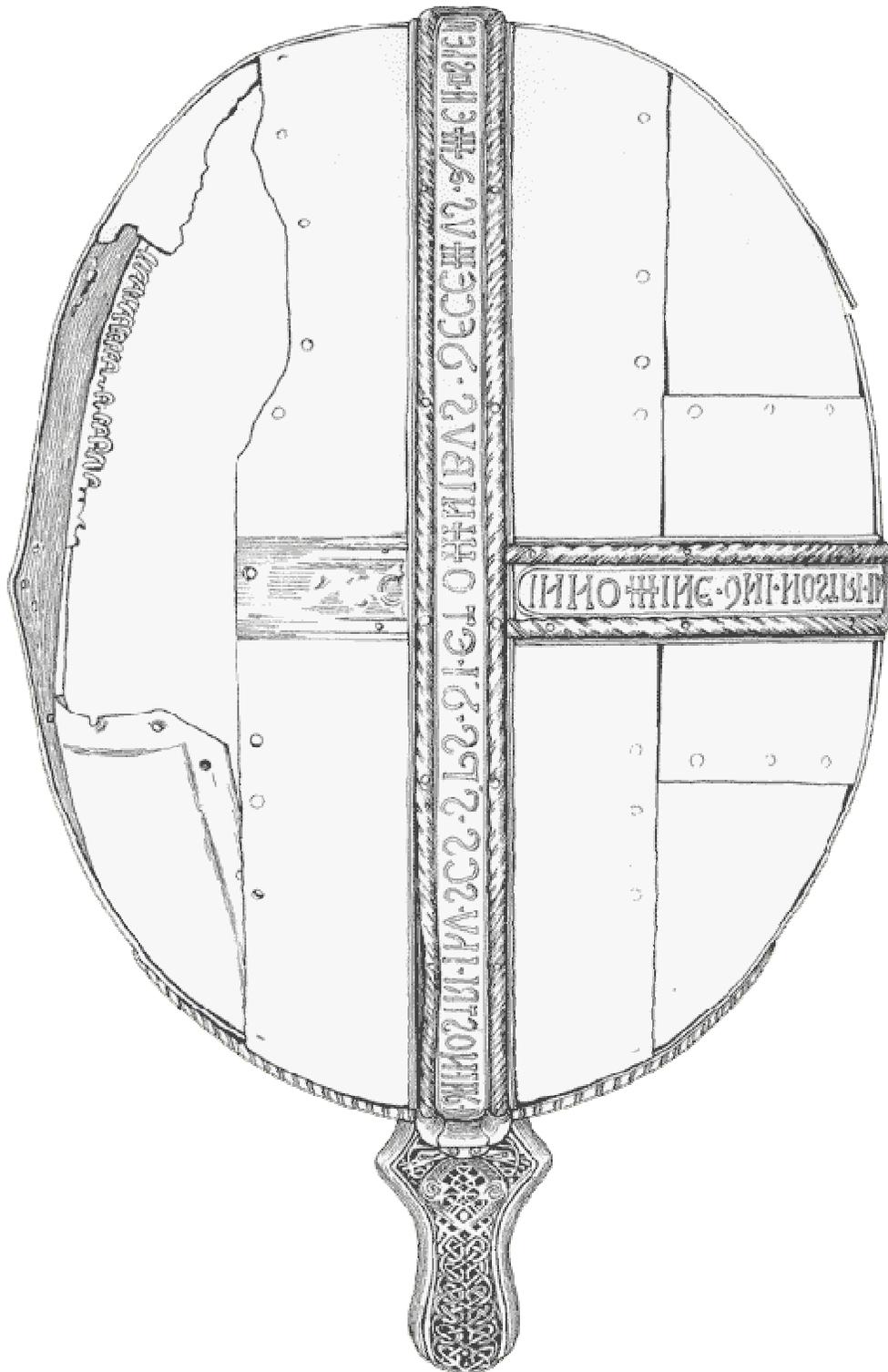


Figure 1 - The Coppergate Helmet Inscription. <http://www.yorkarchaeology.co.uk/artefacts/copphelm3b.htm>.  
©York Archaeological Trust

The Coppergate Helmet embodies many different aspects of how an aristocrat wanted to be perceived in the eighth century. It symbolizes the virtues and ethics of a warrior, was filled with apotropaic meanings, probably had a practical (although not necessarily used) function of protection at war times, and also expressed religious belonging. The ownership of the helmet might also express the place of its owner in the aristocracy, differing him from those below him in the hierarchy.

After discussing the warrior dimension of the aristocracy, there is an aspect of it that is crucial for a class-based analysis. The capacity of waging war is also the capacity of gathering potential violence. It is important to highlight this dimension because of the theoretical perspective assumed in this thesis. The capacity for damage that levying an army represents, together with the possibility of peasants as witness to this damage, represents the dissemination of the potential of violence of the aristocracy. In other terms, the form that the aristocracy appears in society is also a form of dissuasion, as it evokes the terrible consequences for those who would go against or would disobey the ruling class. Besides external enemies and factionalism, the warrior dimension is also a matter of class violence, potential or not.

The role of warrior, however, only represents half of the aristocratic class. Warfare and war gear were highly gendered elements, associated with men and masculinity.<sup>84</sup> In order to better understand the aristocracy, an evaluation of the role of women (and its under-representation) is also required.

### 3) Aristocratic Women

The most well recorded women of the Anglo-Saxon period are those of great privilege, both in lay or ecclesiastical spheres.<sup>85</sup> The most recent studies on the topic tend to avoid the idealization of an Anglo-Saxon “Golden Age” for women (when compared to women’s situation in the Norman period) as well as refuting the understanding of women’s life as one of an utter subjection and domination.<sup>86</sup> Current studies tend to focus on the

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<sup>84</sup> N. Stoodley, *The Spindle and the Spear: A Critical Enquiry into the Construction and Meaning of Gender in the Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Rite* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 29-30, 35, 74-5; Hadley, ‘Masculinity’, p. 115-7.

<sup>85</sup> H. Scheck and V. Blanton, ‘Women’, in Stodnick and Trilling, ed. *A Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Studies*, p. 265.

<sup>86</sup> H. T. Bennett, ‘From Peacemaker to Text Weaver: Feminist approaches to Old English Literature’, in *Twenty Years of the Year’s Work in Old English Studies*, Old English Newsletter Subsidia 15. (Kalamazoo,

different experiences of women across space and time, highlighting and exploring their historicity.<sup>87</sup>

The main evidence for noblewomen in seventh and eighth century concerns their role in religion, either as leaders or as part of these communities.<sup>88</sup> These women were also highly connected to literacy, book production, and education.<sup>89</sup> Hild (614-680) became the abbess of Whitby about 657 and there presided over the Synod of Whitby in 664.<sup>90</sup> Hild was also responsible for establishing a rigorous program of education, and trained five bishops at Whitby; she was called *matrem illarum omnium* and was loved *pro insita ei sapientia*.<sup>91</sup> Hild probably played a vital role on the ‘birth’ of Christian vernacular poetry, but this role was ‘erased’ by Bede, following what Lees and Overing called ‘The Paradigm of Absence in Anglo-Saxon Culture’.<sup>92</sup> Æbbe (c. 615-683) was the sister of King Oswiu and was the abbess of Coldingham. Coldingham was a community known to charge monks and nuns for not reading at their cells, and was valued both by Cuthberht and the Northumbrian royal family.<sup>93</sup> Scheck and Blanton remember that scholars like Aldhelm, Bede, Boniface (c. 675-754) and Alcuin (c. 735-804) were educated by Anglo-Saxon women; the epistolary and hagiographical evidence also present female educators.<sup>94</sup> Royal

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1989), pp. 23-42; C. A. Lees, ‘At a Crossroads: Old English and Feminist Criticism’, in K. O’Brien O’Keeffe (ed.), *Reading Old English Texts* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 146-169; K. O’Brien O’Keeffe, ‘Keep the Conversation Going: Critical Strategies in Old English Texts’, in *Thirty Years More of Year’s Work in Old English Studies*, Old English Newsletter Subsidia 27 (Kalamazoo, 1999), pp. 15-27; M. Dockray-Miller, ‘Old English Literature and Feminist Theory: A State of the Field’, *Literature Compass* 5/6 (2008), pp. 1049-59.

<sup>87</sup> Scheck and Blanton, ‘Women’, p. 266.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>89</sup> P. Wormald, ‘Hilda, Saint and Scholar (614-680)’, in S. Baxter (ed.), *The Times of Bede: Studies in Early English Christian Society and Its Historian* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 267-76, at 268-9.

<sup>90</sup> *VW*, 20.

<sup>91</sup> “Mother of them all” and “for her innate wisdom”. *HE*, IV. 23.

<sup>92</sup> Lees and Overing, *Double Agents*, pp. 40-45, esp. p. 40.

<sup>93</sup> *HE*, IV, 25; *VW*, 40.

<sup>94</sup> C. E. Fell, ‘Some Implications of the Boniface Correspondance’, in H. Damico and A. Hennessey Olsen (eds), *New Readings on Women in Old English Literature* (Indiana, IN, 1990), pp. 29-43, p. 41; Scheck and Blanton, ‘Women’, p. 267.

women were teachers and learners, but also patrons of education.<sup>95</sup> Eanflæd (c. 626-704) was patron of Wilfrid; she also gave her daughter, Ælfflæd (654-713) to the monastery of Hartlepool under Hild, and Ælfflæd was the second abbess of Whitby between 680-c. 714.<sup>96</sup> The letter correspondence also shows that there was a network of women in powerful positions inside the Church across the Channel.<sup>97</sup> According to Scheck and Blanton, it is also possible that the anonymous *Life of Gregory the Great* was written at Whitby, under Ælfflæd's command.<sup>98</sup>

The role of women as advisors must also be taken into consideration. Bede tells us something interesting about Hild, before the foundation of the monastery of Whitby. According to Bede: *Tantae autem erat ipsa prudentiae, ut non solum mediocres quique in necessitatibus suis sed etiam reges ac principes nonnumquam ab ea consilium quarerent et inuenirent.*<sup>99</sup> Scheck and Blanton suggest that is very probable that Hild was among the lay women whose training granted special status in royal courts (as Hundraða in Offa's court or Gundrada at Charlemagne's).<sup>100</sup> This would explain why Hild was appointed to rule a monastery within 12 months of learning the ecclesiastical office.<sup>101</sup> Ælfflæd, her successor was also known for her wise councils. She was a witness at the Council of Nydd; she was described by Stephen of Ripon as *semper totius provinciae consolatrix optimaque consiliatrix.*<sup>102</sup> Bede also registered his appreciation for her respect and zeal for the rule, since *regis filia primo discipula uitae regularis, deinde etiam magistra exstitit.*<sup>103</sup>

As Scheck and Blanton point out, women had a very active agency in terms of administration and counselling politics, as well as promoting intellectual life.<sup>104</sup> The missing point in their analysis, however, is that women occupied these places of power

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<sup>95</sup> Scheck and Blanton, 'Women', p. 267.

<sup>96</sup> *HE*, II, 9, III, 24, IV, 26; *VW*, 6-8.

<sup>97</sup> Scheck and Blanton, 'Women', p. 267.

<sup>98</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>99</sup> 'So great was her prudence that not only ordinary people but also kings and princes sometimes sought and received her counsel when in difficulties', *HE*, IV, 23.

<sup>100</sup> Scheck and Blanton, 'Women', p. 271.

<sup>101</sup> *Idem*, p. 272.

<sup>102</sup> 'Always the comforter and best counsellor of the whole province', *VW*, 40.

<sup>103</sup> 'The king's daughter was first a pupil then she became a teacher, of life under the Rule', *HE*, III, 24.

<sup>104</sup> Scheck and Blanton, 'Women', p. 275.

within a class structure. In other words, it is definitely important to highlight the agency and importance of women in the aristocracy institutional power play, but this understanding must be connected in other dimensions. In other words, the power of abbesses must not be understood as disconnected from those of the queens; the connection and proximity between these statuses will be better addressed in the discussion of the Durham *Liber Vitae*, below.

Another important and vital part of gender relations is the role they play in biological reproduction of the aristocracy. In other words, marriages and birth are a vital part of aristocratic life. It is important to highlight that the connection between women (and/or gender) and marriage is set by tradition in historiography, and the path taken in this chapter does not imply the impossibility of addressing marriage outside the study of womanhood. Marriage has to do with gender relations, and therefore must be thought both from the perspective of womanhood and manhood.<sup>105</sup> It has already been pointed out, however, that although the phenomenon of marriage is important throughout the Anglo-Saxon period and regions, the regional and temporal specificities of the institution must be taken into consideration.<sup>106</sup> The most commonly used evidence for marriage studies are laws and charters.<sup>107</sup> Unfortunately, there are no surviving law codes or charters for Northumbria. An alternative approach must be taken, then.

Æthelthryth (d. 679) was the daughter of Anna, king of East Anglia, and she was given in marriage to Tondberht, noble of the South Gyrwas.<sup>108</sup> When Tondberth died (c. 655), she retired to Ely, but remarried Ecgfrith, future king of Northumbria, when he was only fifteen years old.<sup>109</sup> According to the narrative sources, she preserved her virginity throughout both marriages, and when Ecgfrith insisted on consummating the marriage, she used Wilfrid's help to leave her husband, and become a nun at Coldingham, under her aunt Abbess Æbbe.<sup>110</sup> Æthelthryth's story alerts us to one common practice among the Northumbrian male aristocrats and kings: the custom of marrying a noble lady from a kingdom different from his own.

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<sup>105</sup> For a recent approach on masculinity and marriage in early medieval Europe see, R. Stone, *Morality and Masculinity in the Carolingian Empire* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 247-278.

<sup>106</sup> C. Fell, *Women in Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1984), p. 56.

<sup>107</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>108</sup> R. C. Love, 'Æthelthryth', *BEASE*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>109</sup> *Idem*, p. 20.

<sup>110</sup> *HE*, IV, 17-18.

Historiography has already shown that marriage in Anglo-Saxon society formed a contract between the bridegroom and the bride's kindred.<sup>111</sup> Although the two families became intertwined, the arrangements were perceived as the woman becoming part of the groom's family and under his care and subordinated to him. In order to repay for the 'loss' of one of their members, the bridegroom was required to pledge a substantial sum for the acceptance of his suit.<sup>112</sup> As Pasternack has already pointed out, the negotiation of marriage is also a negotiation between families.<sup>113</sup> One of the questions that the Church tried to control was the level of kinship to which marriage was acceptable, and it is probable that Æthelberht's laws and Theodore's penitentials tried to reinforce the hard lines of kinship and marriage.<sup>114</sup> The bride received a *morgengifu* ('morning-gift'), probably on the morning after the consummation of the marriage.<sup>115</sup> The gift was expected to be a substantial amount of money and/or land, and the wife had total control over it.<sup>116</sup> One of the earliest *morgengifu* recorded is a Northumbrian one: the early seventh-century king Æthelfrith (593-616) gave a property to his wife Bebbe, after whom Bamburgh was named, according to Nennius.<sup>117</sup>

Using the status quoted in the laws, Pasternack has demonstrated that while a man's status could be that of a king, nobleman, freeman, commoner, servant or slave, a woman could be classified as a *friwif* (free woman) and a *mægþ* (maiden), but are otherwise generally classified according to a male relative (husband or, for widows, her father), but never the other way around.<sup>118</sup> However, the main concern of marriage is about the generation of offspring. Theodore's penitential allowed a woman to repudiate her husband on the accusation of impotence, and she could remarry if a spouse had been taken into captivity or enslaved as a condemnation for a crime.<sup>119</sup> Also, the legal compensation

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<sup>111</sup> C. Hough, 'Marriage and Divorce', *BEASE*, p. 308.

<sup>112</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>113</sup> C. B. Pasternack, 'Negotiating Gender in Anglo-Saxon England', in S. Farmer and C. B. Pasternack, *Gender and Difference in the Middle Ages* (Minnesota, MN, 2003), p. 113.

<sup>114</sup> Pasternack, 'Negotiating Gender', p. 113.

<sup>115</sup> Fell, *Women*, p. 56; Hough, 'Marriage and Divorce', p. 308.

<sup>116</sup> Fell, *Women*, p. 57.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>118</sup> Pasternack, 'Negotiating Gender', p. 117.

<sup>119</sup> Hough, 'Marriage and Divorce', p. 308.

for the destruction of man's penis is equivalent for that of homicide.<sup>120</sup> Also, the change in the sense of belonging after marriage affects directly the couple's sons and daughters, since they are seen as belonging to their marital families rather than the woman's natal families (in case of death of the husband).<sup>121</sup> At the same time, according to the Penitential of Theodore, women were still held responsible for acts of abortion and infanticide.<sup>122</sup>

Aristocratic women were seen and perceived as an important part of their class, but generally under the command and/or authority of a man. Although their agency is crucial to historical development, they were basically perceived in the sources (and thus perhaps also in practice) as playing the roles of maternity and reproduction. The 'Paradigm of Absence' also reflects the gender relations of the period.

This section has proved that women certainly played very active and important roles in the Anglo-Saxon aristocracy. However, the women who are visible in the written sources are either queens and/or abbesses. As the focus of the thesis is rather on the aristocracy as a whole, and not solely on kingship and queenship, the our ability to study non-royal women is slim. However the archaeological record can bring new light to this question. The data for this will be explored in Chapter Seven, about death.

Gender differences have been explored through the ways that the aristocracy is perceived; it is important now to understand perceptions of class difference, and the (im)possibility / difficulty of social mobility in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria. For that purpose, the case studies of Imma and Caedmon will be used.

#### **4) Social Mobility? The cases of Imma and Caedmon**

Change of social class in something not widely recorded in the Middle Ages. For the long eighth century in Northumbria, two cases illuminate this discussion, as well as the awareness of the aristocracy about their own social positions. These case studies are: a) Cædmon, a herdsman who became a saint through a miracle; b) Imma, an aristocrat who pretended to be a person of low-rank to avoid being killed, but who could not remain bound and shackled as other slaves.

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<sup>120</sup> Pasternack, 'Negotiating Gender', p. 118.

<sup>121</sup> Idem, p. 121.

<sup>122</sup> Idem, p. 127.

#### 4.a) Caedmon

Caedmon was a person lifted from a very low social status – ultimately – to that of a saint. His life, as it is told by Bede, represented social mobility of low status people. The chapter of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* that addresses his life and miracles is focused and constructed as a hagiography in itself, or a mini-hagiography.<sup>123</sup> The story is well known: Caedmon was an old man (*prouectioris aetatis*) who had never learned any *carmina* (religious songs).<sup>124</sup> The lack of skill in singing was so dreadful to Caedmon that when there was a feast and people would agree that they would take turns singing with a harp, Caedmon would rise up and leave the feast when the harp (*cithara*) was approaching him.<sup>125</sup> Bede presents Caedmon as a herdsman because after fleeing one of these feasts, he says that Caedmon *esse ad stabula iumentorum, quorum ei custodia nocte ille erat delegatus*.<sup>126</sup> So, although singing was customary in the community Caedmon belonged to (Whitby), he could not do it.

The ability to sing and to compose religious poetry in the English vernacular came to him after a dream. After Caedmon approached the aforementioned byre (or stable), he went to sleep. He dreamt of a masculine figure (*eumque* is the construction used by Bede, and although Colgrave and Mynors translate as ‘someone’, the gender is marked in Latin) asking him to sing for him. After Caedmon stated he could not sing, the masculine figure insisted, and Caedmon sang a song never heard before, by himself or any others. When Caedmon awoke, he could remember all he sung during his dream and added some more verses. The added verses were done *in eundem modum uerba Deo digni caminis adiunxit*.<sup>127</sup> When dawn broke, Caedmon went to his *uilicum, qui sibi praeerat*.<sup>128</sup> The *uilicum* took Caedmon to the abbe. In order to decide the origin of his gift, Caedmon had to describe his dream and to recite his song in the presence of many learned men: *multis doctoribus uiris praesentibus*. Although Caedmon was a member of the community ruled an abbe, Bede says that his gift and dream were first analysed by men.<sup>129</sup> As Thornbury

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<sup>123</sup> *HE*, IV, 24.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>125</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>126</sup> ‘[...] Went to the cattle byre, as it was his turn to take charge of them that night.’, *HE*, IV, 24.

<sup>127</sup> ‘in the same manner, praising God in fitting style’, *Idem*.

<sup>128</sup> ‘The reeve who was his master’. *Idem*.

<sup>129</sup> *Idem*.

argues, in order to become a poet, a person needed a community that was capable of telling good poetry from bad.<sup>130</sup>

After Cædmon's dream and gift was considered of divine nature, the council of men read to him a passage of sacred history or doctrine (*sacrae historiae siue doctinae sermonem*), and asked him to make him a song of it, if possible in metrical form. Cædmon succeeded and the abbess instructed him to enter monastic life, ordering that he should be instructed in all course of sacred history.<sup>131</sup> As part of his gift, Cædmon could transform all history taught to him into *carmen dulcissimum*.<sup>132</sup> The sound was so pleasant (*suauius*) that his teacher (*doctores*) became his audience (*auditores*).<sup>133</sup> By the end of his life, Cædmon had his own 'attendant' (*ministrum suum*), who prepared his deathbed as Cædmon foresaw his own death.<sup>134</sup> Cædmon's death resembles that of many other holy men of Anglo-Saxon England (not least, Bede himself): surrounded by his peers, who were now monks.

Cædmon's life represents a rare case of upward social mobility in Anglo-Saxon England. From the position of herdsman to become the teacher of the teachers (*doctores*) of a monastic community. However, this is extremely remarkable for Anglo-Saxon England, and this transformation was only possible through God's intervention. The miracle, however, was not accepted immediately or taken for granted. Through the steps by which Cædmon was accepted it is possible to observe power structures that were overcome in the process. First Cædmon had to tell his *uilicus* (reeve) of his gift. A herdsman could not go straight to the abbess, but needed to address his immediate superior. Access to the abbess was available through the *uilicus*, and he had to go through a series of tests in order for his peers to acknowledge that his ability was granted by God and not any other (evil) force. In other words, the case of upward social mobility presented by Cædmon's story is a case of going step by step upwards in the hierarchy, and how people in these different levels should behave. As Cædmon goes upward, he did not jump straight to the top, but go patiently progressed through all of them, waiting for the approval of people in each of the steps. Cædmon does not face any opposition; actually he just climbed up the hierarchy because he was permitted (as an acknowledged recipient of a

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<sup>130</sup> E. Thornbury, *Becoming a poet in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 91.

<sup>131</sup> *HE*, IV, 23-24.

<sup>132</sup> 'The most melodious verse', *HE*, IV, 24.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibidem*.

miracle). *Uilicum*, abbes, *doctores*, all of them, had to act and to agree before Cædmon could reach his ultimate position in that society.

An important point to make is that the people in community agreed to accept Cædmon in their ranks because of his poetic skills. As O'Donnell points out, the centre of the story is not the miracle itself, but how well Cædmon could sing and compose in 'proper manner'.<sup>135</sup> Although O'Donnell downplays the importance of the miracle (maybe too much), he stresses how for contemporary poets in Streaton the most noteworthy characteristic of Cædmon was the quality of his verse.<sup>136</sup> The quality of the verse is something that was vital to Bede too, since he was also a poet, and teacher of metrics and composition.<sup>137</sup> Also, knowledge of metrics was an important part of the work of exegesis of the Bible.<sup>138</sup> Also, when discussing the usage of rhetoric in *De schematibus et tropis sacrae scripturae*, Bede defends the usage of Christian texts in order to produce the educational results he was pursuing (understanding Christian literature).<sup>139</sup> In other words, poetry was a matter of social distinction, since it required a life-long training, and this distinction was connected to both status and exercise of Christianity. The miracle enabled Cædmon to bypass the life-long training, but the social mobility that went with the skill was not automatically granted and was withheld until the *doctores* were satisfied. In other words, following Thornbury's idea, the community is essential to make a person who wrote poetry an actual and acknowledged poet.<sup>140</sup>

Unfortunately, it is not possible to know much about the social position of *uilicum*. This character could be either a person from the local community who shared a position with Cædmon (but oversaw him) or someone who was in a different, higher level of power. The first case would be a case for intra-class relations, a case of subordination. The

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<sup>135</sup> D. O'Donnell, *Cædmon's Hymn - A Multimedia Study, Edition and Archive* (Cambridge, 2nd ed., 2007), p. 5.

<sup>136</sup> *Idem*, p. 8.

<sup>137</sup> Bede, *De arte metrica*, in C. B. Kendall (ed.), *Bedae Venerabilis Opera, Pars I* (Turnhout, 1975).

<sup>138</sup> N. Wright, 'The Metrical Art(s) of Bede', in Katherine O'Brien O'Keefe and Andy Orchard (eds), *Latin Learning and English Lore. Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature for Michael Lapidge*, vol. I (Toronto, 2005), pp. 150-1.

<sup>139</sup> Bede, *De schematibus et tropis*, in C. B. Kendall, *Bedae Venerabilis Opera*, pp. 00-000; also J. Campbell, 'Bede (673/4-735)', ODNB (2008), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1922?docPos=1> [accessed 29/06/2016].

<sup>140</sup> Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet*, p. 94.

second one would be a case for inter-class relations, a case of social domination. If it was possible to know which the case is, the picture of class relations would be clearer. Cædmon's life story (or 'mini-hagiography') expresses awareness of his own position in society and how this position relates to other position of power. Although an exception to a social rule, the miracle behind Cædmon does not break the hierarchy, but reinforces it.

#### 4.b) Imma

In 679, a battle took place in the river Trent, and Ælfwine, king of Deira, was killed. According to Bede, one of his retainers (*militia eius*), called Imma was wounded in the battle.<sup>141</sup> He was captured by soldiers from the enemy army who took him to their lord (*comes*).<sup>142</sup> When asked who he was, Imma was afraid to confess he was a thegn (*miles*), so he said he was a poor peasant (*rusticum pauperem*) and married.<sup>143</sup> According to Bede, Imma also said that Imma told his captor that he came to the army in company with other peasants to bring food to the soldiers.<sup>144</sup> His captor then attended to his wounds and, when Imma felt better, ordered him to be bound at night so he would not escape. However, as soon as Imma was chained, his fetters were loosed.<sup>145</sup> His captor thought he had loosing spells (*litteras salutorias*) cast on him, which Imma denied.<sup>146</sup> He explained, though that Imma's brother, Tunna, who was a priest and abbot, thought Imma was dead. Therefore, Tunna was praying for Imma's soul to be absolved, so it could go free to Heaven.

Imma's position allowed him not only to know the ways in which an aristocrat should look, behave and act, but he also tried to emulate the features of the lower class, the *rusticus pauper*. As he was served in the battlefield by those people, he was acquainted with their role(s) in it, including bringing food, together with his equals (*similibus*). *In extremis*, Imma thought it was possible for him to be seen as someone who from another class, and was successful for some time. However, his appearance, bearing, and speech (*uultu, et habitu et sermonibus*) was not that of the poor people (*pauper uulgo*), but from noble origin (*sed de nobilibus*). Those who watched him close (*diligentius considerabant*)

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<sup>141</sup> *HE*, IV, 22.

<sup>142</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>143</sup> [...] *usticum se potius et pauperem atque uxoreo uinculo conligatum fuisse respondit*, *HE*, IV, 22.

<sup>144</sup> [...] *propter uictum militibus adferendum in expeditionem se cum sui similibus uenisse estatus est*. *Idem*.

<sup>145</sup> *Nec tamen uinciri potuit; nam mox, ut abiere qui uincierant, eadem eius sunt uincula soluta*. *Idem*.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibidem*.

could notice that he was lying about his social origin by observing these markers of identity. Imma's class position had moulded him in a way that he could not pass as a man of low status. After interrogating Imma about the loosing spells, his captor (the *comes*) realized his lie and promise do no harm to him, as long as he would tell the truth. As Imma revealed he was one of King Ecgfrith's thegns, his captor said that he should kill him (because all his brother and kinsmen – *frater et cognati* – had been killed during the battle), but would not do so in order to not break his promise.<sup>147</sup>

One important point to highlight in this part of Imma's narrative is how the class awareness was a live phenomenon, which came directly from experience. In this sense it is telling that it took some time (*aliquanto tempore*) for the captor to be sure of Imma's lie. The narrative is precious in revealing how people can identify a peer, and therefore themselves, by demeanour. A second point from the narrative up to this point is about the expectations of someone from this class. While Imma is a liar and a negative example of an aristocrat, who is discovered and exposed, his captor is presented as someone true to his words, even when dealing with an enemy. Imma's narrative is important to highlight that the body, speech, and bearing of someone from a high class can be perceived even from some from a different kingdom. The appearance associated to the ruling class is not only local. The continuation of his story is important in this sense as well.

As the captor had promised he would do no harm to Imma, he sold Imma to a Frisian in London. As he was not able to be bound either on his way there or by his new master, Imma was allowed to ransom himself (*sese redimendi*) if he could.<sup>148</sup> Imma swore to his master that he would either get the ransom or come back.<sup>149</sup> This time Imma kept his word (as befitting his rank, is the implication), and he went to King Hlothhere of Kent, who gave him the money, which was sent to Imma's master (*dominus*). The decision to go to the king of Kent was both pragmatic and guided by social convention, but because Imma was once a thegn of Æthelthryth, who was the aunt of Hlothhere.<sup>150</sup> Imma received the price asked for his ransom (*pretium suae redemptiois*) because he was connected through kin ties to the family in the locality where he was sold. The distance between Kent and Northumbria was not an obstacle for intra-class marriage and reproduction. The same

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<sup>147</sup> [...] *ne fidem mei promissi praeuaricer*, HE, IV, 22.

<sup>148</sup> HE, IV, 22.

<sup>149</sup> *At ille iureiurando ut redirect, uel pecuniam illi pro se mitteret* [...]. HE, IV, 22.

<sup>150</sup> [...] *uenit Cantiam ad regem Hlotheri, qui erat filius sororis Aedilthrydae reginae, de qua supra dictum est, quia et ipse quondam eiusdem reginae minister fuerat* [...]. HE, IV, 22.

way, the narrative does not encompass any further questions of Hlothhere about Imma; it was his duty to set free one of his peers. As Imma and Hlothhere were connected through a network of services, kinship and counter-gifts, the ransom can be understood as part of the class obligations.

Also very important in this part of the narrative is the network of information that is part of being an aristocrat. Imma knew the king of Kent was connected to him and that he would pay his ransom. Also, even in captivity, Imma tells his captor that he knew that his brother thought him dead and that he offered masses on his behalf.<sup>151</sup> The narrative is uncertain about if this means that Imma was somehow receiving news or if he was just guessing. However, access to this data was vital to the course of the narrative, and this data were vital in order to restore Imma's social position.

Imma's story ends with him back to his country (*patria*), giving a full account of what happened to him to his brother. The brothers confirmed the synchronicity between the masses and the bonds being loosened, and how his comforts and blessing during his captivity were blessings from heaven through the intercession of his brother.<sup>152</sup> The narrative about Imma can also be understood as a story which main core and meaning is the miracle and the capacity of a priest's prayers to be the medium through which human agency and divine action are connected. At first sight, the emphasis on the miraculous action could obscure the class-related question. This perspective, however, reinforces the argument about Imma's class condition. The priest who was praying for him was Tunna, both a priest (*presbyter*) and abbot (*abbatus*) of a monastery in a city called *Tunnacaestir* by Bede.<sup>153</sup> Highlighting the status and power of the abbot, Bede tells us that the city was named after Tunna.<sup>154</sup> In other words, the miracle was possible because of the prayer of a powerful person. Imma could only have access to that kind of person (and miracle) because of his position in society, which is embedded in relations amongst the wealthy and powerful. Even more meaningful is that the Abbot Tunna was Imma's brother (*frater*). The case of Imma is important because it highlights how power positions were concentrated within aristocratic families.

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<sup>151</sup> [...] *et scio quia ille me interfectum putans pro me per intercessions eius solueretur a poenis*. Idem.

<sup>152</sup> [...] *quase periclitanti ei / comode contigissent et prospera, per intercessionem fraternam et oblationem hostiae salutaris caelitus sibi fuisse donate intellexit*. Idem.

<sup>153</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>154</sup> [...] *eius nomine Tunnacaestir cognominatur*. Idem.

In Bede's tale of Imma we can observe a microcosm of what meant to be an aristocrat. In the narrative his close connections to a king are notable: his military status and function; the connection with other aristocrats, even from other kingdoms; the high status position connected to his family background (both for him and his brother, who has a town named after him); the trustworthy nature of his oaths (while he lied to be a peasant, he swore an oath to ask for his ransom and fulfilled it); the recognition by his peers of his social origin, by all his manners, speech and even appearance. It is also a microcosm of a social position that is self-aware of itself, very conscious of its privileges (oaths as truth) and access to resources (the ransom).

The case studies presented here are full of meaning about class positions and their appearances. Upward social mobility is only possible through divine intervention; even then, Cædmon was required to follow steps of the hierarchy. It was also required from him to be accepted and acknowledged by the people in each of the levels, to be acknowledged as a peer. The collegiate approval of Cædmon required an exercise of (self)identification by the *doctores*. Even divine authorization of social mobility requires class approval to take place.

Downward social mobility, however, seems unnatural and much more difficult, almost impossible to be produced or faked. The class determinations of human experience is the mould in which demeanour is cast. The recognition of a peer who was trying to disguise himself as someone from a different group is a great example of how a social class is very aware of their members and their appearance is unavoidable.

Power positions are clearly crystalized in the mind of the aristocracy. The steps are more easily acknowledged by those who are doing a bottom-to-top movement; the top-to-bottom direction is not seen as possible, not even imitable. Both cases had the intervention of the divine will. Not only was the aristocracy aware of itself as a group, but their position was (ideologically) crystalized to the point of immobility. That is the point of thinking about class consciousness and social mobility in an articulated relationship: the way the class consciousness in Anglo-Saxon England is shaped makes class transition seems ideologically impossible.

The crystallization of these phenomena can be observed in the Durham *Liber Vitae*, which converges all the discussion held in this chapter.

## 5) The crystallization of the aristocracy: the Durham *Liber Vitae*

The Durham *Liber Vitae* (DLV) is a manuscript made in mid-ninth-century Northumbria, now London, British Library, Cotton Domitian A.vii.<sup>155</sup> It dates to c. 840 on the basis of the latest names copied by the scribe of the ‘Original Core’, although the script might indicate a date between c.800 and c.840.<sup>156</sup> Additions continued to be made to the book throughout the middle ages. It contains several lists of names of people associated with a Northumbrian church, and is one of a number of early medieval manuscripts that are classified as *libri vitae*.<sup>157</sup> The book is divided into sections that classify people according to their status. On the top of each folio are found headings which indicate the rank of the people whose names follow: kings or dukes;<sup>158</sup> queens and abbesses;<sup>159</sup> anchorites;<sup>160</sup> abbots;<sup>161</sup> abbots of the grade of priest;<sup>162</sup> abbots of the grade of deacon;<sup>163</sup> priests;<sup>164</sup> names of deacons;<sup>165</sup> names of clerics;<sup>166</sup> names of monks.<sup>167</sup> The order in which the lists are arranged is a system of social classification itself; they convey names of people who wanted to be remembered alongside people of similar rank. It is remarkable for preserving the names of lots of individual Northumbrians, many of them of noble rank;

<sup>155</sup> ‘Durham Liber Vitae’, The British Library Digitised Manuscripts, [http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=cotton\\_ms\\_domitian\\_a\\_vii\\_fs001r](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=cotton_ms_domitian_a_vii_fs001r) [accessed 02/07/2016]; Rollason and Rollason, *DLV*, 3 vols.

<sup>156</sup> Gameson, ‘The script of the Original Core’, in Rollason and Rollason, *DLV*, vol. 1, p. 61.

<sup>157</sup> As examples of other *libri vitae*, S. Keynes, ‘The Liber Vitae of the New Minster Winchester’, in Rollason, David, *The Durham Liber Vitae and Its Context* (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 149-64; L. Rollason, *The Thorney Liber Vitae (London, British Library, Additional MS 40,000, fols 1-12r), edition, facsimile and study* (Suffolk, 2015).

<sup>158</sup> *Nomina regum vel ducum*, fol. 15r-v.

<sup>159</sup> *Nomina reginarum et abbatissarum*, fol. 16r-17v.

<sup>160</sup> *Nomina anchoritarum*, fol. 18r.

<sup>161</sup> *Nomina abbatum*, fol. 20r-21r.

<sup>162</sup> *Nomina abbatum gradus p[raesb[yte]ratus*, fol. 18v-19r.

<sup>163</sup> *Nomina abbatum gradus diaconatus*, Fol. 19v.

<sup>164</sup> *Nomina praesbyteror[um]*, Fol. 21v-25v.

<sup>165</sup> *Nomina diaconorum*, Fol.26r-v.

<sup>166</sup> *Nomina clericorum*, Fol. 27r-36v.

<sup>167</sup> *Nomina monachorum*, Fol. 37r-45r. The ‘original core’ of the DLV ends at this folio.

it is also striking that there are non-Northumbrians within the lists, which could reveal Northumbrian elite coalitions. Some of these coalitions might not have taken place in real terms, face-to-face. Whether real or imaginary, these cases are significant for the study of Northumbrian nobility. It carries a sense of belonging to a community, and a quite stratified one. The DLV is thus the clearest display of the Northumbrian nobility that a historical source can be.

The DLV is composed of many sections. The ‘Original Core’ (fols. 15-45, 47) will be the focus of this study. As the name suggests, the ‘Original Core’ is the oldest part of the book. The names are entered on purple-tinted vellum in a half uncial<sup>168</sup> (or a high-grade Insular hybrid minuscule) script, and they are written alternately in gold or silver leaf.<sup>169</sup> The sections of the book were divided according to rank, as already mentioned. All these sections were thought of as extendable, since plenty of space was left by the original scribe for more names to be added in the future. The absence of a binding in this period is more evidence for this, since new parchment could be added later on, to expand the lists. However, one obvious rank seems to be missing from the lists. The striking absence is a list of bishops. This missing bit could have been kept as a completely detached diptych; or it could have been situated between the list of queens/abbesses and the anchorites. Gerchow also highlights that there seems to be a missing leaf between king or dukes and queens and abbesses, which could have held the list of the bishops.<sup>170</sup>

### 5.a) The origin of the DLV

The patron of the Durham *Liber Vitae* did not stint on resources. It is striking that such a monumental book lacks an overt nomination for its owner or place of origin. There are two main possibilities of origin of the DLV. One, led by Elizabeth Briggs, argues that it was produced and therefore used by the Community of St Cuthbert on Lindisfarne.<sup>171</sup> The second is led by David N. Dumville and Jan Gerchow, who believe the book was

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<sup>168</sup> L. Webster and J. Blackhouse (eds), *The Making of England. Anglo-Saxon Art and Culture AD 600-900* (London, 1991), p. 132.

<sup>169</sup> Gameson, ‘The script’, p. 58.

<sup>170</sup> J. Gerchow, ‘The origins of the *Liber Vitae*’, in Rollason and Rollason (eds), *DLV*, vol. 1, p. 57, n.36.

<sup>171</sup> E. Briggs, ‘Nothing but Names: The Original Core of the Durham *Liber Vitae*’, in Rollason and Rollason (eds), *DLV*, vol. 1, p. 74.

produced in Wearmouth and Jarrow.<sup>172</sup> The argument in favour of Lindisfarne lies in the prominence of the Bernician royal families within the book and in the ascetic tradition of Lindisfarne and the prestige place in which the name of Æthelstan (895-939) was placed by a tenth-century scribe, at the top of the folio 15r, next to the title *Nomina regum uel ducum* (Figure 2).<sup>173</sup> The ascetic tradition which would explain the presence of the *Nomina Anchoritarum* – this is the only record of anchorites in all surviving *libri vitae*. The majority of identifiable men presented in this list had links with Lindisfarne.<sup>174</sup> King Aethelstan paid a visit to the shrine of St Cuthbert in 934, when the community was based at Chester-le-Street (the place where the community moved in 883 following Viking assaults; it would move again to Durham in 995); Æthelstan offered many gifts at the shrine of St Cuthbert, and the counter-gift could have been that his name was written down in their ‘book of life’.<sup>175</sup>

The arguments for placing the production of the DLV in Wearmouth and Jarrow lies in the discontinuity of names inserted, and the fact that the Wearmouth and Jarrow abbots are better recorded than Lindisfarne’s. According to this line of thought, the ‘book of life’ was transferred to Lindisfarne when Æthelstan decided to make donations to the Community of St Cuthbert at Chester-le-Street in 934. As the king gave the vill of Wearmouth this time, the library (and/or its content) was given then too.<sup>176</sup> Rollason, however, points out that the movement and the new settlement of Cuthbert’s community at Norham during the pontificate of Ecgréd (830-845), translating the see, the community’s main saints and reallocating St. Aidan’s church would be a fitting context to the production of the DLV.<sup>177</sup> It would have been an object among many relics from the past, which could bear witness to the identity, continuity and recognition of past support for the community.<sup>178</sup> Rollason’s explanation is more reasonable, offering us a very good

<sup>172</sup> D. N. Dumville, *A Palaeographer’s Review: The Insular System of Scripts in the Early Middle Ages*, vol. 1 (Suva, 1999), pp. 64-80; Gerchow, ‘The origins’, pp. 45-61.

<sup>173</sup> Briggs, ‘Nothing but Names’, p. 67.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>175</sup> H. Mayr-Harting, *The coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. xv-xvi, 86-91, 102-5, 144-9; Rollason, ‘History and Codicology’, p. 33; DLV, fol. 15r2 (1), Briggs, ‘Nothing but Names’, p. 63.

<sup>176</sup> H. H. E. Craster, ‘The patrimony of St Cuthbert’, *EngHR* 69 (1954), pp. 189-91; Gerchow, ‘The origins’, pp. 51-2.

<sup>177</sup> DLV, fol. 15r, *HReg*, s.a. 934; Also E. Briggs, ‘Nothing but Names’, p. 63.

<sup>178</sup> Rollason, ‘History and Codicology’, p. 33.

interpretation not only when and/or where, but also why the book was produced and why it was kept afterward. On balance, it seems more likely that the book was made by the Lindisfarne community rather than that at Wearmouth and Jarrow.

It is highly probable that the DLV is a compilation from more than one earlier commemoration lists that Lindisfarne is known to have had in early eighth century, in the form of a register (*album*). This was a locus of such great importance that even Bede asked to be part of this *album* (in c.721); if he had been accepted, Bede's name would be found in the list(s).<sup>179</sup> Besides the indication presented in Bede's words, there are two linguistic pieces of evidence supporting the hypothesis of earlier lists: early name-forms are conserved in the writing (and they would be written in a later form had they been first written down in the 830s) and the same hand use both archaic and more recent forms for the same name when it occurred more than once. For example: Æthelbald is spelled Aeðilbald, Ethilbald, and Eðilbald; Alberht is spelt Ælberct, Albercht and Alberct; Eostorwine is spelt Æostoruini, Æsturuini and Eosturuini; and Heathured is spelt Hadured, Haðured, Headured and Heaðured.<sup>180</sup>

Studying the *Liber Vitae* of New Minster at Winchester, Simon Keynes pointed out that *Libri vitae* had a liturgical function, used by the priest during mass to recall past benefactors of the community.<sup>181</sup> The *Libellus de exordio* by Simeon of Durham attests that during his episcopacy Bishop Ecgred (830-45) built the church at Norham and dedicated it to Sts Peter and Cuthbert.<sup>182</sup> Lynda Rollason points out that the ceremonies associated with the dedication of the altar in the new church by Ecgred would have be a fitting context for the production and first use of the *LVD*.<sup>183</sup>

### 5.b) The gilded and the silvered: the DLV script

Easily spotted in excavations or in a book, gold remains the same: it is timeless. The choice to gild names with a substance that can endure over time was not accidental. The names in the LVD were added with gold 'ink' rather than burnished leaf. The gold

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<sup>179</sup> *VCB*, Preface.

<sup>180</sup> Briggs, 'Nothing but Names', p. 66.

<sup>181</sup> S. Keynes, '*Liber Vitae* of New Minster', p. 151; S. Keynes, 'Liturgical Commemoration', *BEASE*, pp. 291-2.

<sup>182</sup> Unfortunately, Simeon gives no exact date for this foundation. Simeon, *Libellus de Exordio*, trans. and ed. D. Rollason (Oxford, 2000), pp. 92-3.

<sup>183</sup> Rollason, 'History and Codicology', p. 34.

brushing technique was also not invented by the DLV makers, since there was a living tradition of chrysography in Francia. The connection between Northumbria and Carolingian Francia makes it easier to understand the Northumbrian know-how presented in the ‘book of life’.<sup>184</sup>

The potency of *litterae aureae* recalls certain lines from the inscriptions in deluxe Carolingian books.<sup>185</sup> The inspiration could also come from another source. According to Stephanus, Wilfrid had ordered that four gospels from purest gold to be written in purple colour parchment. He also ordered the jewellers to make a case for the books from pure gold and don it with precious gems.<sup>186</sup> Wilfrid’s tomb mentioned the four golden gospels, lodged in a shrine of gold.<sup>187</sup>

The apparently simple appearance of the script must not disguise its elegance and must not be taken as an evidence of lack of skill; its use was rather a self-conscious choice to enhance legibility.<sup>188</sup> The wide space between the names must also be read as evidence for avoiding confusing names and blurring lines between them. The page is filled by lists of names laid out in three columns, alternating names in gold and silver. But there are a few instances where the standard pattern is broken. The most obvious one is the first column of the first ‘original core’ folio.<sup>189</sup> All names presented in this column are gilded.

Display scripts are also a display of the hierarchy among the different lists, and the order of appearance is central in this sense. The first name of the first list (reges et duces: EDVINI) is written in hybrid Square Capitals; the first name of the following list (*Nomina reginarum et abbatissarum*: RAEGNMAELD) is presented in Rustic Capitals; the first names of the subsequent lists present a weightier version of the normal text script, highlighting their higher prestige among its equals.<sup>190</sup> The first two lists also present a more abundant use of gold: as aforementioned, the first column of the names of kings and dukes is all golden, and the first 6 names of the list of *Nomina reginarum et abbatissarum* are

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<sup>184</sup> Idem. p. 65.

<sup>185</sup> Idem. pp. 64-5.

<sup>186</sup> *VW*, 17.

<sup>187</sup> HE, V, 19.

<sup>188</sup> Gameson, ‘The script’, p. 58.

<sup>189</sup> Fol. 15r1, col. a.

<sup>190</sup> Fol. 15r1 (1); Fol. 16r1 (1); Gameson, ‘The script’, p. 59.



religious communities throughout the island in tenth and eleventh century could not even produce their own books, highlighting the extravagance of the *Liber Vitae*.<sup>195</sup>

The use of precious metals in books was a rare thing in Anglo-Saxon England. The amounts used in the Durham *Liber Vitae* have no parallel. The first reference to a book that would be furnished that way is the gospel book St. Wilfrid gave to Ripon in the 670s.<sup>196</sup> A small amount of gold was used both in the Lindisfarne Gospels and in the Codex Amiatinus.<sup>197</sup> The only extant manuscript that can match its luxury is the Codex Aureus of Canterbury: passages of the Bible written in both gold and silver ink written in purple parchment – the apex of affluence, dating from the mid eighth century.<sup>198</sup>

An artefact that embodies such wealth certainly bears very special inspiration and aspirations. As we have already mentioned, Wilfrid ordered Gospels to be written out of pure gold, and they were lodged in a shrine that of gold as it was their due.<sup>199</sup> These gifts and relics certainly played a role in preserving Wilfrid's memory, and in a gilded form. The Dagulf Psalter of 794 x 795 say that 'The Words resound here are golden; they promise the realms of gold and they sing of lasting benefit without end'.<sup>200</sup> Northumbrian network of influence with Francia (especially in intellectual terms) has already been pointed out as a strong one. In this sense, probably the sacredness embodied by gold and its ideological impact, would immediately evoke a sacred text in both realities. As Gameson underlines, the chrysography aspire to apotheosise its content by its 'intrinsic worth, extrinsic beauty and symbolism of precious metals'.<sup>201</sup>

The choice of gold represents also the struggle with time, and the desire for timelessness that is referred in the beginning of this section. The shining and flashy properties of gold endure and survive aristocracy rivalries, dynasties changes, and even burials. Inhumation was certainly a very important part of making a living in the Middle Ages, and full of meaning for the Anglo-Saxon ideology (as it will be explored in Chapter 7). However, if funerary practices could establish the landmark where the body of people

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<sup>195</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>196</sup> *VW*, 17.

<sup>197</sup> London, British Library Cotton MS Nero D.IV. Also kindly digitalized by the British Library at [http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=cotton\\_ms\\_nero\\_d\\_iv](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=cotton_ms_nero_d_iv) [accessed 25/07/2016].

<sup>198</sup> Stockholm, Kungliga Biblioteket, MS A. 135.

<sup>199</sup> *HE*, V, 19.

<sup>200</sup> E. Dümmler (ed.), *Poetae latini aevi Karolini*, MGH Poeta Latini 1 (Berlin 1881), pp. 91-2.

<sup>201</sup> Gameson, 'The script', p. 65.

would receive its last sacraments, finishing a circle, the *Liber Vitae* people could start a new one; a circle of prayers and memory, of *amicitia* and patronage.

### 5.c) Patronage, Fraternity and Memorialization in the DLV

The ‘Book of Life’ of Durham shines an important light upon gift-giving, exchange and patronage among clerics and also between lay people and church members.

The very first folio reveals an episode of recording a name and connecting the person to the community of the book. Prayers were directed for *Æthelstan rex* since his name was written on folio 15r2 (1), probably as a counter-gift for his donation. The power of prayer cannot be underestimated during the Middle Ages. The (relatively) few names presented in the ‘Original Core’ also highlights that the amount of resource or the kind of donation required to be considered a patron of the community.

Having a name written in the book also established connections and belonging to an artificial family. These arrangements were later called fraternities. They are ‘brotherhoods’, societies formed among people in order to associate their members in a friendly way (as the name indicates).<sup>202</sup> It is generally focused on mutual support, favours and eventual aid. The names chosen to be written down in a *Liber Vitae* compose an imaginary/ideological fraternity. The phenomenon of fraternities is better known and understood in later periods, mostly because it is transformed into an institution.<sup>203</sup> However, the names presented in the ‘Original Core’ of the *Liber Vitae* can give us some clues about how this phenomenon worked in earlier times albeit in a less developed shape. The main motives for recording one’s name in this kind of book was to be remembered in the prayers of a particular religious community, or to enter into a reciprocal agreement of a similar kind with another community, or to commemorate other churchmen or churchwomen as and when they had died.<sup>204</sup>

The ‘brotherhood’ and ‘sisterhood’ (in the case of queen and abbesses) contained in the book is expandable in all dimensions. First of all, it can grow by folio, adding more parchment leaves when previous pages were full – just as the Durham community did from eleventh-century onwards. It can also be expanded by simply adding new names, as attested by the addition of names on the same folio. And, of course, it connects people

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<sup>202</sup> G. Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity in the Middle Ages. Guilds in England, 1250-1550* (Oxford, 2015).

<sup>203</sup> For example, D. J. F. Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power: Religious Guilds in Late Medieval Yorkshire 1389-1547* (York, 2000).

<sup>204</sup> S. Keynes, ‘Liturgical Commemoration’, p. 291.

centuries apart. Edwin, from the early seventh century, is part of the same ideological community as Thomas de Hexam, who only entered the monastery in 1417.<sup>205</sup>

The lists presented by the *Liber Vitae* are not only socially restricted but also restricted by gender. While the names of king or dukes were registered in a folio on its own, with various grades of abbots in separate sections, the queens and abbesses were put together, with no distinction between lay and ecclesiastical. The access to sacredness that the book permits seems to have very different channels according to the gender of the person.

When it comes to its liturgical use and the aspect of memorization, Simon Keynes' tells us that this kind of book was used in everyday liturgical office. The names were exposed to an impressive level of sacrality, especially if we consider that the book was used for a long period of time. Keynes highlights that the book was placed on the altar; therefore the book was also exposed to a relic set within the altar. The holiness stored on its pages would be amplified. This observation can help us understand why people would want their names written down in it. People named by the book were celebrated in daily services by their inclusion in the book, and Simon Keynes imply that by extension their names (and souls) were written in the 'Book of Life' mentioned in the Book of Revelations (XX, 12); the *Liber Vitae* that would be also opened at the Last Judgement.<sup>206</sup>

The *Liber Vitae* conveys names of people who are not part of its immediate community and who never visited it. The 'imaginary' visitors would be people so remarkable that their presence alone would be capable of lending authority and prominence to the community. Charlemagne and his treasurer Magenfrith are good examples, appearing under the heading of *reges vel duces* (figure 3).<sup>207</sup> These labels were certainly part of an *interpretatio*. However, the connection was not accidental. These noble people accumulate badges of distinction: bloodlines, personal relations with the monarch, landholding, the possession of weapon and armour, patronage of priests (and therefore a privileged mediation between the worldly space and the sacred dimension), not to mention the relations of friendship and the exchange of gifts. These are social devices that grease and anoint aristocratic relations. And this recognition (and sometimes emulation) of people that are spatially distant expresses not only elements of local identity, but also portray the self-consciousness of the group's own rights and privileges.

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<sup>205</sup> Fol. 74v4.

<sup>206</sup> S. Keynes, 'Liturgical Commemoration', p. 292.

<sup>207</sup> Fol. 15v1 (19); Fol 15v1 (17).

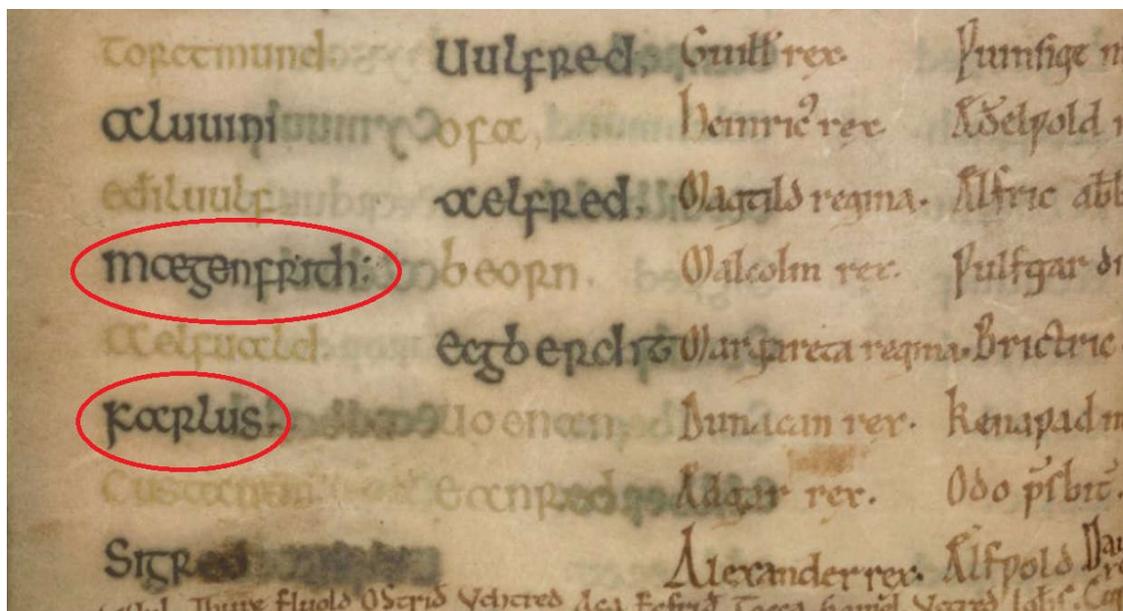


Figure 3 – The names of Magenfrith (Fol 15v1 (17)) and Charlemagne (Fol. 15v1 (19)) – names highlighted. The *Durham Liber Vitae*. ©The British Library Board, Cotton Domitian A. VII [http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=cotton\\_ms\\_domitian\\_a\\_vii\\_f015v](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=cotton_ms_domitian_a_vii_f015v).

#### 5.d) Networks of power throughout the folios

There are ties binding people within the folios too, and case studies can reveal these connections. The case study selected for this purpose is Oslaf.<sup>208</sup> His name is under the heading ‘kings or dukes’. The first important observation is that there are certain groupings that follow the rank pattern. Oslaf is put outside the grouping of kings – EDVINI, Osuald and Osuio would be the first royal grouping; Alfrith, Alduini, Eaduulf, Coenred, Osred and Osric the second (on fol. 15r1).<sup>209</sup> Oslaf is placed in the grouping of people who, according to Gerchow had taken part in the battle of River Trent in the year 679, where the men of Egfrith of Northumbria fought the army of King Æthelred of Mercia; Oslaf supported the Mercian side.<sup>210</sup>

On the folio, Æthelred’s name is placed between his followers – Oslaf above and Æthelbeorht below him (figure 4).<sup>211</sup> The closeness to the king leads us to think of Oslaf as someone of a privileged status. He is mentioned again in a charter, being called *Oslauuo*,

<sup>208</sup> Fol. 15r1 (8).

<sup>209</sup> Fol. 15r1 (1-3); Fol. 15r1 (14-18).

<sup>210</sup> Gerchow, ‘The origins’, p. 59.

<sup>211</sup> Fol 15r1 (10).

minister of Æthelred, *rex Merciorum* (king of the Mercians).<sup>212</sup> This authenticity of this charter is a matter of debate, and recent research has proved it as a forgery of the eleventh-century.<sup>213</sup> Scharer argue, however, that it was a skilful forgery, most probably using eighth-century models and witness lists.<sup>214</sup>

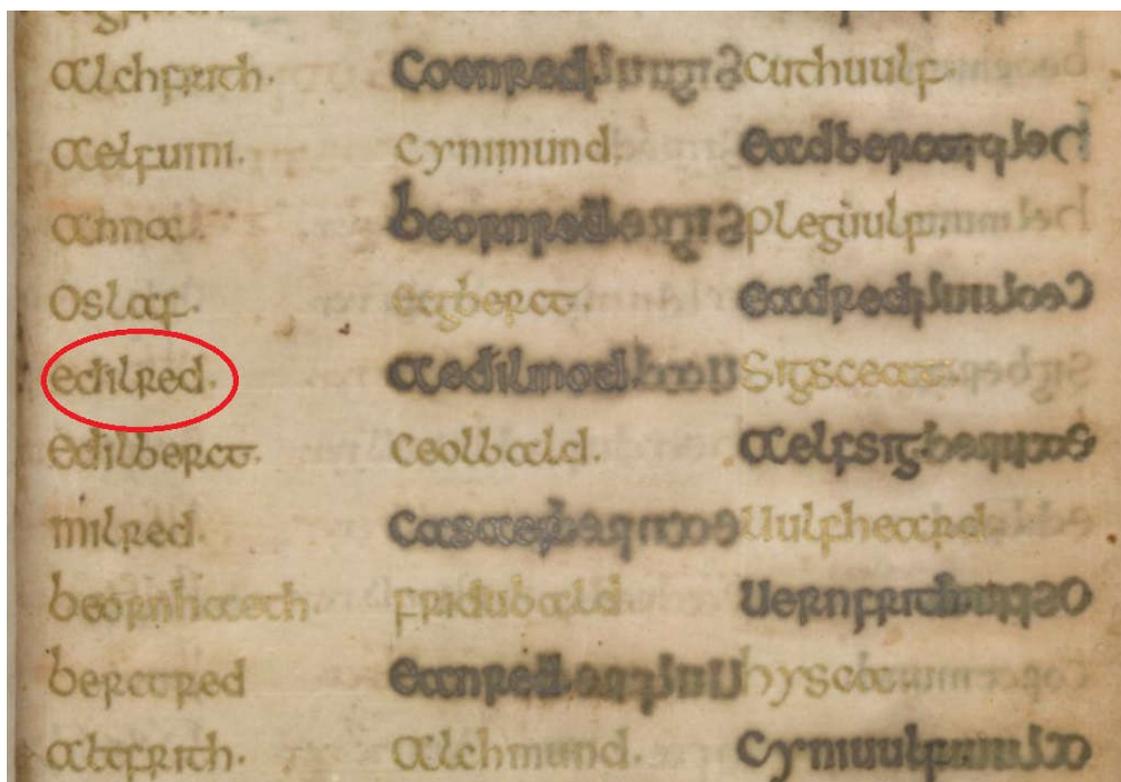


Figure 4 - Æthelred's name, below Oslaf and above Æthelbeorht. The *Durham Liber Vitae*. ©The British Library Board, Cotton Domitian A. VII, Fol. 15r, [http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=cotton\\_ms\\_domitian\\_a\\_vii\\_f015r](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=cotton_ms_domitian_a_vii_f015r).

Gerchow argues that the way people who were on opposing sides in the Battle of River Trent are displayed on fol. 15r1 corresponds to a pact of peace (*feodora pacis*) between Northumbrians and Mercians pushed through by Archbishop Theodore.<sup>215</sup> The

<sup>212</sup> S75, *Æthelred, king of Mercia, to Oslaf, his former minister and now a servant of God at Worcester; grant of 10 hides (manentes) at Wychbold*, Electronic Sawyer, <http://www.esawyer.org.uk/charter/75.html#> [accessed 20/06/2016].

<sup>213</sup> A. Williams, 'The Spoliation of Worcester', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 19 (1997), pp. 383–408.

<sup>214</sup> A. Scharer. *Die angelsächsische Königsurkunde im 7. und 8. Jahrhundert* (Vienna, Cologne, and Graz, 1982). *Apud* Electronic Sawyer, <http://www.esawyer.org.uk/charter/75.html#> [accessed 20/06/2016].

<sup>215</sup> *HE*, IV.19.

treaty was agreed during the mourning for Ælfwine, who was brother of the king of Northumbria (Ecgfrith) and brother-in-law of the king of Mercia (Æthelred), who had been killed in the battle. According to Gerchow, the list in the DLV links former opponents binding them by peace.<sup>216</sup> Gerchow isn't explicit about it, but it is quite easy to imagine, according to his ideas, that proximity on the parchment may indicate proximity in real life, and the projection of ties of lordship, obligation, treaty and – perhaps – friendship onto the pages of a book.

Oslaf is a dithematic name comprising two distinct OE words: 'Os' (indicating divinity or godlike presence) and 'Laf' (remnant, what is left, relic, reminder).<sup>217</sup> Although the second part of the name and its meaning can be hard to pin down, the 'os' is a common reference in Anglo-Saxon noble people, especially in Northumbria, as shown by 'Oshere' commemorated on the Coppergate Helmet. Oslaf was probably no Northumbrian, but his social class allowed him to be part of the very selective community of the book, in which highborn Northumbrians saw a man of equivalent status. It was important for the community around the DLV to borrow prestige from his name and social associations, and the offer of prayers could be a counter-gift. In other words, the *Liber Vitae* creates a prestige network as well, borrowing and lending high status at the same time. In this sense, the book was used not only to celebrate bonds of *amicitia*, but also to remember pacts – in full sight of the community and God Himself.

It is important to notice is that while the list on fol. 15r-v names king **or** dukes, the list encompassed by folios 16r1-17v1 is about queens **and** abbesses (*reginarum et abbatissarum*). The presentation of king and dukes side by side is important. In the first place, it points out the prestige held by military leaders – comparable to kings. As it has been pointed out before, this is a piece of evidence of how kingship was within reach of the high nobility.

There is no clue within the DLV itself which are names of queens, which were abbesses and which were both. Barbara Yorke, Dagmar Schneider and Andrew Warham agree that the heading of this section is intrinsically connected to the gender path and pattern reserved to the feminine in Anglo-Saxon England: marriage, childbirth and

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<sup>216</sup> Gerchow, 'Origins', p. 59.

<sup>217</sup> J. Bosworth and T. Toller, *An Dictionary of Old English* (Oxford, 1898), pp. 768, 614

retirement to monastic communities, all these always following the political chess of the kingdom.<sup>218</sup>

Their idea can be based on the evidence by the DLV. The first six names, all gilded are names of queens or daughters of Northumbrian kings who were named in the first column of the king's list (and are also in golden letters).<sup>219</sup> The seventh name, 'Nunnae', is written in silver, and we have no information about her connections.<sup>220</sup> The only place the name 'Nunnae' is mentioned is in the DLV; however, the name has a male form by the name Nunna, who was once king of the South Saxons (690, 710-17, 724).<sup>221</sup> In other words, the initial golden pattern of the queens and abbesses has its own glow reflecting marriage and kin. The next golden name, Pendgith, is another name (among many other) that are known only through the DLV.<sup>222</sup> From then on the pattern is kept, which underlines the special character of these first six names (Figure 5).

Most of the women mentioned, however, are directly connected to royalty, and have their recorded status (as queens) acquired through marriage. Eanflæd<sup>223</sup> (626-c.685) was daughter of Edwin<sup>224</sup> and Ælfflæd, king and queen of Northumbria,<sup>225</sup> and the second wife of Oswiu and abbess of Whitby; Iurminburg<sup>226</sup> (d. 699) was granddaughter of King Eadbald of Kent (616-640) and second wife of king Ecgrith (670-85); Ælfflæd (654-714) was daughter of king Oswiu (651-675) and queen Eanflæd (fol16r1 (2)); Æthelburg (d. 647) was daughter of Æthelberth, king of Kent and wife of Edwin, king of Northumbria; Cuthburg, sister of king Ine of the West Saxons (688-726) and wife of Aldfrith (686-705). Raegenmaeld, the first name – capitalized, was a British princess and the first wife of Oswiu.

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<sup>218</sup> B. Yorke, *Nunneries and Anglo-Saxon Royal Houses* (London, 2003), p. 147; A. Werham, 'The *ordines* of the original core', *DLV*, Vol. III, p.9; D. Schneider, 'Anglo-Saxon Women in the Religious Life. A Study of the Status and Position of Women in Early Medieval Society.' (unpubl. D. Phil. Thesis, Oxford, 1985).

<sup>219</sup> DLV: Queens: Fol. 16r1 (1-3,5-6); Daughters: Fol. 16r1 (4).

<sup>220</sup> Fol. 16r1 (7).

<sup>221</sup> *DLV*, Vol II, p. 181.

<sup>222</sup> Fol. 1651 (8); *DLV*, Vol. II, p. 142,

<sup>223</sup> Fol 16r1 (2).

<sup>224</sup> *HE*, II.9, 20; III.15; V. 24.

<sup>225</sup> *HE*, III.24; IV, 26.

<sup>226</sup> Fol 16r1 (3).

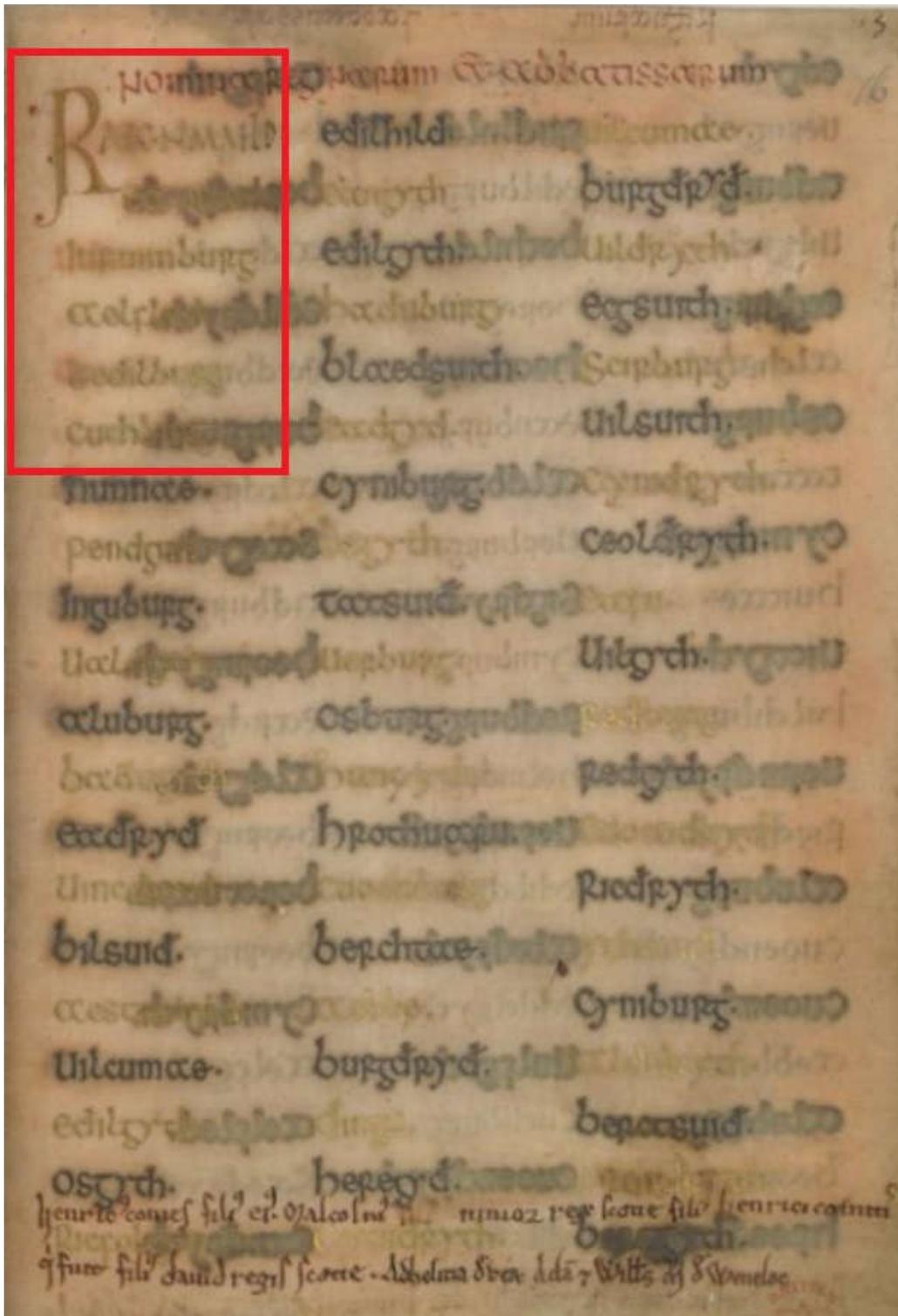


Figure 5 – The First six names of queens and abbesses in gold. The *Durham Liber Vitae*. ©The British Library Board, Cotton Domitian A. VII, Fol 16r, [http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=cotton\\_ms\\_domitian\\_a\\_vii\\_f016r](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=cotton_ms_domitian_a_vii_f016r).

The first gilded names were discussed this way with for several reasons. In the first place, it can portray the extension of connections and diplomatic arrangements through

marriage alliances. Northumbrian kings were in contact with diverse (and sometimes distant) areas, and it was a common practice for these kings to marry noblewomen from other kingdoms. Kent and Wessex (at least) are included in what Andrew Wareham sadly called the Northumbrian ‘catchment area’.<sup>227</sup> In the second place we can observe how all of these women were connected somehow to royalty. We can observe therefore how the first golden columns of these folios are connected to each other in a tacit way. It is also remarkable that the endogamy of the peak of the elite are expressed even in this point: as gilded and clear as sunrise.

The Durham *Liber Vitae* is, of course, a list of names of noble people. But it is more than that. In the first place, the DLV reveals literally the Northumbrian noble people. Also, it preserved the ranks of the aristocracy in a crystallized form. It also present many links and networks, both of subordination and marriage, of *amicitia* and of peace treaties. It is also a wish for transcendence, forging links throughout time and space, connecting people who never met. It is a vault of sacredness, since the prayers dedicated to people named would stack over time. Its presence on the altar, exposing the people that are part of the ‘book community’ to the power of relics reinforces this sense.

The Durham *Liber Vitae* is also a levelling mechanism, equating noble people of different contexts. This equivalence expresses the recognition of different people having the same position in society - controlling power, status and wealth. The ruling classes of different regions and realms are located side-by-side, and this cannot be taken for granted. The DLV is also an expression of the class-consciousness of the aristocracy, and in this sense the DLV must be inscribed on any work dedicated to social history in a Northumbrian context. The *Liber Vitae* is essentially a history book, disguised as a list.<sup>228</sup> As such, the story in it is the story of the aristocracy, told by the aristocracy. It is vital to understand how the aristocracy wanted to be perceived.

## Conclusion

Understanding the Northumbrian aristocracy’s outward appearance is vital to understand how the aristocracy wished to be perceived, and therefore to understanding the complexities of its roles and how they were transmitted through time and historical

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<sup>227</sup> Wareham, ‘The *ordines*’, p. 10.

<sup>228</sup> See R. McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 174, for discussion of *Libri Memoriales*, especially the Salzburg *Liber Vitae*.

sources. This chapter has aimed to set the framework for understanding both aristocratic class ideology and its internal limits, so the next step can be go beyond the simple outward appearances and deconstruct it.

The nouns related to the aristocracy have a history of their own. The introduction of *patricius* as well as the ascendancy of the *duces* (which by the end of the long eighth century is almost synonym for 'king worthy'), are both pieces of evidence for the historicity of the aristocratic power relations, and how they change over the course of time. The *milites* are a piece of evidence that shows how blurred the transition between the aristocrat and the non-aristocratic group can be. Military leadership is also an aristocratic trait, and the war gear expresses the internal divisions of the aristocracy, in a very visible way. Also, the possession of horses is vital to identify hierarchy and leadership among the élite. Helmets have the same role, and the Coppergate Helmet is a good example of union between the religious and the lay branches of aristocracy. Also, the Coppergate Helmet is a perfect example of how the symbolic, religious, and material worlds cannot be separated in the aristocratic appearance, as the animal representations, inscription and the role of a helmet are a convergence of the apotropaic themes. Women's roles are related not only to marriage and biological reproduction as most sources tend to downplay, but also as patrons and promoters of knowledge and monastic rules, being a vital part of (ideological) aristocratic reproduction. Imma and Caedmon narratives are also stories about the impossibility of class mobility (as retold in an elite literary context), which is another very important aspect of aristocracy's own image. By the end of the period, classes are crystalized and represented in a list (the DLV), which also encompasses the class's connections, neighbours and pacts.

Since the aristocracy have been presented in its own terms, it is now important to start going beyond appearances. The first step in order to deconstruct it will be the analysis of production in Northumbria.

## Chapter 2)

### Production: Classes and Class Relations

#### Introduction

This chapter sets out structure and the dynamics of production in eighth century Northumbria. This part of the thesis starts by defining the concept of “social class” that will be used throughout the thesis. The chapter also aims to establish which are the main social classes in this context and their relation, as well as presenting the importance of the forces of production for such objective.

Some aspects of society can be transformed in a few decades, while some changes require centuries.<sup>1</sup> The temporal context of the current thesis is the ‘long eighth-century’, which overflows one hundred years. The current chapter will address aspects of the eighth-century economy, a dimension that is better observed in the long term. Archaeological evidence requires a broader span of time. The long-term approach does not erase the contingency and short-term changes or cycles. Actually, the social history approach requires a dialectical approach to all kinds of durations (short, medium and long), in which each of them contains, affects and shapes the others.

The first chapter of the current thesis presented the evidence for the Northumbrian aristocracy, and what kind of evidence is available to perceive it. From this chapter onwards, the thesis will start to ‘deconstruct’ it, starting a deeper and denser understanding of this sector of society. The decision to start with ‘production’ is based on the theoretical approach the thesis is drawn from. According to Marx, production is a fundamental condition, essential to History. Human life requires, ‘before anything else eating and drinking, a habitation, clothing and many other things’.<sup>2</sup> The first historical act is actually the production of the means to satisfy these needs, which are essential to sustain human life.<sup>3</sup>

Production can also be a powerful analytical tool. In his recent works, Wickham uses production as a starting point through which it is possible to unfold a holistic

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<sup>1</sup> F. Braudel, *Écrits sur l'histoire* (Paris, 1969).

<sup>2</sup> K. Marx, *The German Ideology*, Part I: Feuerbach, A. Idealism and Materialism, History: Fundamental Conditions. [<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01a.htm>].

<sup>3</sup> Idem.

interpretation of the transition of the Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages.<sup>4</sup> This transformation follows different temporalities and processes according to different regions; however, by *c.* 700 the world of late antiquity had changed irrevocably to one that has seen the networks of distribution and connectivity shrink. In other words, the 'world becomes smaller', and local power tend to flourish in comparison to central powers.<sup>5</sup> One key elements of the transformation in this period is the change in the control of production by the ruling classes. The control over production was no longer done through long-distance connections and networks. The elite of society was still formed of great landowners, but its capacity to manage resources and labour is much more local than it was during the Late Roman Empire. The change in production implies a deep transformation of social relations, as well as the ways in which the social classes (re)produce themselves. Although this trend is more easily spotted in the Mediterranean context, it does have a 'ripple effect' on Northern Europe as well.

The hypothesis for the current chapter is that production is one key factor for understanding the creation and reproduction of aristocratic power. The eighth century seems to have been a period in which both the forces of production and the relations of production changed significantly. The capacity of acquisition of surplus and labour increased dramatically during this period for other regions of Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>6</sup> The chapter will therefore try to understand this phenomenon in Northumbria. The main way to explore this idea is through archaeological sources. In order to test these hypotheses, the chapter will address different case studies. Excavations at Sherburn and West Heslerton (Vale of Pickering, N. Yorks) will be explored mainly for the discussions about the forces of production, the control of the means of production and the connection between enclosures and open field systems. It will also be used to discuss how forces of production are a key element to understand a society. Sherburn and West Heslerton will also be used to explore the connections between different localities and settlements, in terms of the organization of production.

In order to start the analysis, it is imperative to discuss the concept of class and class fractions. After this discussion, the next step will be to present and discuss the main

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<sup>4</sup> C. Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400-800* (Oxford, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> Wickham, *Framing*.

<sup>6</sup> D. Wright, *'Middle Saxon' Settlement and Society: The Changing Rural Communities of Central and Eastern England* (Oxford, 2015).

classes and forms of labour in Anglo-Saxon England, which embody the theoretical discussion that precedes them.

## 1) Concepts and Definitions

### 1.a) Class

Class has been a central concept for Marxism since its earliest times. Modern historiography has used the term broadly, although not always with the care and theoretical depth that the concept requires. Inside the Marxist perspective, structuralism has also led to an idea of class that is mechanically derived from the productive process; this concept, however, have been thoroughly discussed and questioned.<sup>7</sup>

The historical understanding of social classes requires addressing them historically. In other words, it is necessary think about ‘classes’ not as atemporal entities, but as historical phenomena, that are (re)produced throughout time. The making of a class conjugates both ‘objective’ factors (like a common relationship to the means of production) and the ‘subjective’ factors (like ‘class conscience’). However, these elements must not be thought separately, and the option to address them in different chapters is only heuristic; in social reality they are simultaneous. In this sense, this chapter will focus on the ‘objective’ factors.

A ‘class’ is not simply born. Highlighting its historicity, the Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci has already pointed out the necessity to produce an ‘evaluation of the degree of homogeneity, self-awareness, and organisation attained by the various social classes’.<sup>8</sup> The first moment of class consciousness for Gramsci is limited to the economic-corporative dimension: a trader has class solidarity limited to his equals (another trader). The second moment is when the consciousness has produced class solidarity among all of their members (a trader would have solidarity with a manufacturer, for example), but only on an economic level. The third moment is when the class is aware of its interests also at a political level, and starts disputing the ideology of the society so its own ideology can become the ruling ideology. The third level is also the moment when the self-aware class

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<sup>7</sup> For example, the critic of Althusser by Thompson in E. P. Thompson, *Poverty of Theory: An Orrery of Errors* (London, 1978).

<sup>8</sup> A. Gramsci, *An Antonio Gramsci Reader – Selected Writings (1916-1935)*, Part Two: Prison Writings 1929-1935, Notebook VI Hegemony, Relations of Force, Historical Bloc, 10 Analysis of Situations: Relations of Force, ed. David Forgacs (London, 1988).

can project its own interests to the subordinate groups, so the subordinate groups can also defend other class(es) interest and ideology.<sup>9</sup>

Gramsci's interpretation of the development of class self-awareness is historical. Although his interpretation is divided into moments, not all classes not need to follow all the steps. Some classes can be historically limited to the first(s) step(s). A development of Gramsci's ideas was proposed by Edward Thompson, highlighting the empirical experience of the class and its consciousness. In his seminal work about the (own) making of the working class, Thompson declared that the working class was present at its own making.<sup>10</sup> A social class was not thought of as a 'thing', or taken for granted, but as a product of the social process of class struggle.<sup>11</sup> As this sentence shows, temporality and historicity of class in Thompson's thought is not simple.

'Class' for Thompson is a bifold concept. Class can be used as a heuristic (research) tool, talking about hierarchies and ranks in society in abstract form, thanks to the tradition of widely employing the concept. However, 'class' can also refer to the self-produced social entity.<sup>12</sup> The raw material for the manufacture of a class is the common and shared experience, which is collectively organized.<sup>13</sup> This organization (which is also an experience in itself) produces internal cohesion, identity and self-awareness. In other words, the class as a historical reality must be a group that embodies the second and third moments of Gramsci's definition of class. However, identity and self-awareness of/for a class do not necessarily mean that the class call themselves a 'class'. In other words, the specific set of social relations is more important than the existence of the self-applied label. So at the same time, class is historical, processual. It changes over time, and classes are at the end of a process and at the same time the 'beginning' of it (since it is constantly reproducing itself). But in order to produce and reproduce itself, it must be thought in relation with the other groups or classes. Ellen Wood summarized these appointments

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<sup>9</sup> Idem.

<sup>10</sup> E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1963).

<sup>11</sup> E. P. Thompson, 'Eighteenth-Century English Society: Class Struggle without Class?', *Social History* 3.2 (1978), pp. 133-165.

<sup>12</sup> E.P. Thompson, 'Alcune osservazioni su classe e "falsa coscienza"', *Quaderni Storici*, 36 (1977), pp. 900-908.

<sup>13</sup> E. P. Thompson, *Customs in Common: Studies in Traditional Popular Culture* (London, 1991).

presenting the class at the same time as a process and a relation.<sup>14</sup> Class is therefore a historical phenomenon; it is ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’; it is process and relation; it is therefore dialectic.

The historicity of a social class also implies that the class is not a monolithic event and actor. A class encompassed many differences within it. Gramsci has already pointed out how class fractions of the ruling class can struggle among themselves in order to modify the state for their interests.<sup>15</sup> Although Gramsci’s text talks about different aspects of the bourgeoisie in the capitalist context, the idea of class fractions can be used in the medieval context. The current thesis will address the set of different aristocratic families as fractions of the ruling class. Their internal differences are more visible in the historical sources during the second half of the long eighth century. Once the definition of class is established, the next step is to think about what they are in the context of the current thesis.

## **1.b) Productive Classes and Forms of Labour:**

### **1.b.1) Slaves**

Slavery is a social relationship that could be found in Ancient, Medieval, Modern and (unfortunately) contemporary times. However, there is a difference between ‘society with slaves’ and where a kind of ‘slave system’ is present.<sup>16</sup> As a system, slavery is found in two contexts. The first is Antiquity, in two distinct societies: Classical Greece (especially Athens) and, for a broader span of time, Rome (especially the Italian Peninsula). The second period where we can find slave system(s) is the Early Modern times (generally from the seventeenth century until the nineteenth century), and the regions are the South of the United States, Brazil and the Caribbean.<sup>17</sup> It does not mean, however, that both regimes (Antique and Modern) were the same thing. The ancient world was a time when people with few or no rights were an essential part of the economy, although

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<sup>14</sup> E. M. Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism – Renewing Historical Materialism*, especially chapter 3, ‘Class as process and relationship’ (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 76-107.

<sup>15</sup> A. Gramsci, ‘11 - Some Theoretical and Practical Aspects of “Economism”’, in D. Forgacs (ed.), *An Antonio Gramsci Reader, Selected Writings, 1916-1935* (New York, NY, 1988).

<sup>16</sup> E. Dal Lago and C. Katsari, ‘The Study of Ancient and Modern Slave systems’, in E. Dal Lago and C. Katsari, *Slave Systems. Ancient and Modern* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 3-31, at 3.

<sup>17</sup> Moses Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (New York: NY, 1980).

they did not compose the majority of the workforce.<sup>18</sup> Finley, for example, defends that more important than the number or percentage of the slaves in a certain society is who are the slave owners and which is the role of these proprietors in the economy.<sup>19</sup> Following this trend, Sainte Croix argues that the major part of the income of the ruling class came from unfree labour, mainly employed on the *latifundia* and in urban sectors.<sup>20</sup> Finley concludes that the greatest part of their income comes from the right of property (of slaves).<sup>21</sup> In these perspectives, there is a phenomenon that helps us identify these slave systems based on the sphere of production: the plantation.<sup>22</sup> This idea, however, has been challenged lately, with a call for rethinking the relation between the free and unfree labour in the plantation system.<sup>23</sup> However, the role played by slavery on the reproduction of the ruling class, highlighting the importance between the *villa* and the state (or city-state) is still held.<sup>24</sup>

Early Modern slavery was not the same as during Antiquity. In Marxist tradition, the main discussion is about the character of the use of this kind of labour: would it be pre-capitalist or capitalist? In other words, would they be used to produce (capitalist-like) commodities or would they be used with a closer sense to those members of the ruling class of Antiquity (more closely connected to the dimension of politics and culture)? Marx himself thought that in the British colonies the colonists were driven ‘by the motives of bourgeois production, wanted to produce commodities ...’.<sup>25</sup> The plantations are, ‘The business in which slaves are used is conducted by capitalists’.<sup>26</sup> The slave owners’

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<sup>18</sup> Moses Finley, *The Ancient Economy* (London, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1985), p. 71

<sup>19</sup> M. Finley, *Ancient Slavery*, p. 83.

<sup>20</sup> Ste. Croix, G. E. M. de, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World: From the Archaic Age to the Arab Conquest* (New York: NY, 1981), p. 160.

<sup>21</sup> M. Finley, *Ancient Slavery*, p. 83.

<sup>22</sup> C. Garcia Mac Gaw, ‘A Economia Escravista Romana. Reflexões sobre conceitos e questões de números na historiografia do escravismo’, in M. J. da Motta Bastos et alii (eds), *O Pré-Capitalismo em Perspectiva* (Rio de Janeiro, 2015), p. 143.

<sup>23</sup> C. Garcia Mac Gaw, ‘The Slave Roman Economy and the Plantation System’, in L. da Graca and A. Zingarelli, *Studies on Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production* (Leiden, 2015), pp. 77-111.

<sup>24</sup> Mac Gaw, ‘The Slave Roman Economy’, p. 111.

<sup>25</sup> K. Marx, *Theories of Surplus-Value, Part II* (Moscow, 1968), p. 239.

<sup>26</sup> Idem, pp. 302-3.

intention was to produce ‘surplus value’.<sup>27</sup> In the twentieth century, those who saw the slave regime in the Early Modern period tend to use the same passages of Marx, and framing the slave system under the label of capitalist enterprises.<sup>28</sup> Others, however, defended that those *latifundia* were based on relations that were ‘survivals of pre-capitalist relationships’.<sup>29</sup> In the same trend of thought some people highlighted how plantation-profits financed peerages, marriage-alliances, places in parliament and sometimes feudal properties (and, therefore, an expanded control over the means of production).<sup>30</sup> In the Early Modern Period, slave-labour seems to congregate heterogeneous elements that do not converge to a simple label or concept. The articulation of these aspects of pre-capitalist elements (the ‘patriarchal’ and ‘feudal’ elements) with the production of absolute surplus-value in a nascent world-market was just very recently acknowledged and attempted.<sup>31</sup>

However, what did slavery mean to the Middle Ages? According to Bede’s anecdote, Anglo-Saxon England was ‘sighted’ by Christianity because of its slaves. Gregory the Great said that he met slave boys brought from England to Rome by merchants and ‘misheard’ Angles for angels.<sup>32</sup> This is one of the reasons given for his decision to send the missionaries to evangelize the island.<sup>33</sup> Another ‘exported’ slave was Bathild, who ascended to the Frankish throne as Queen of Neustria. She was also a Saxon slave who was brought to Gaul: ‘Divine Providence called her from across the seas’.<sup>34</sup> Her hagiography portrays her as a ‘pearl’ who was ‘sold at a cheap price’.<sup>35</sup> The story of Imma, discussed above, makes it clear that slaves existed in Anglo-Saxon England. According

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<sup>27</sup> K. Marx, *Capital, Volume One*, trans. by D. Fernbach (Harmondsworth, 1976), p. 345.

<sup>28</sup> M. Dobb, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism* (London, 1963); E. Genovese, *The World Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation* (London, 1970), p. 69; J. Mandle, ‘The Plantation Economy: An Essay in Definition’, *Science & Society* 36.1 (1972), pp. 49-62.

<sup>29</sup> V. I. Lenin, ‘New Data on the Laws Governing the Development of Capitalism in Agriculture. Part One’, in *Collected Works*, Vol. 22 (Moscow, 1964), p. 50.

<sup>30</sup> R. Pares, *Merchants and Planters* (Cambridge, 1960); R. B. Sheridan, ‘The Wealth of Jamaica in the Eighteenth Century’, *Economic History Review*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ser., 18.2 (1966), pp. 292-311.

<sup>31</sup> J. Banaji, *Theory as History. Essays on Modes of Production and Exploitation* (Leiden, 2011), p. 71.

<sup>32</sup> *HE*, II, 1.

<sup>33</sup> Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity*, pp. 57-59.

<sup>34</sup> ‘Life of Bathild’, ch. 2 in J. A. McNamara et alli (ed. and transl.), *Sainted Woman of the Dark Ages* (London, 1992), p. 268.

<sup>35</sup> ‘Life of Bathild’, ch. 2.

this passage, while the nobles were killed, the low status people would be transformed into slaves and sold to other localities.<sup>36</sup> There is also linguistic and legal evidence to prove the existence of slaves. The main word for slave is *þeow*, but *esne* is also used in riddles.<sup>37</sup> However, as Pelteret study presents, the great bulk of evidence for slavery is located on a context later than the current thesis.<sup>38</sup>

The few pieces of evidence available for slavery in the long eighth century are mostly about their role on the sphere of circulation. Archaeologically, slaves are also nearly invisible in Anglo-Saxon England. None of the usual evidence is available for their presence and management on the production dimension. This does not mean that slaves did not take part on the production. Actually, they were probably owned and used by aristocrats and by peasants that were wealthy enough to have them.<sup>39</sup> Some of them were ‘housed’, in the sense that they were granted a habitation and a grant of land.<sup>40</sup> However, from these landed slaves comes a vital (theoretical) question for the definition of which class people belonged to. This question is vital to the understanding of what a slave is and how a slave is different from a peasant. As Wickham acknowledges, both the Ancient and Medieval worlds knew referred to land tenants as *servi*, *ancillae* and *mancipia*, the Latin words that mean ‘slave’. They were unfree in legal terms; however, ‘their *economic* relationship to their landlords was effectively identical to that of their free tenant neighbors’.<sup>41</sup> Wickham points out that the *de facto* economic autonomy these people held is more important to label them in terms of class than their legal unfreedom; therefore, they cannot thought to be under the same class of those who are unfree.<sup>42</sup> This difference

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<sup>36</sup> *HE*, IV, 22.

<sup>37</sup> D. Pelteret, *Slavery in Early Mediaeval England* (Woodbridge, 1995), pp. 41, 51.

<sup>38</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>39</sup> R. Faith, *The English peasantry and the growth of lordship* (Leicester, 1997), p. 60.

<sup>40</sup> *Idem*, p. 70.

<sup>41</sup> Wickham, *Framing*, p. 261.

<sup>42</sup> *Idem*, pp. 261-2; also see A. Rio, 'Freedom and unfreedom in early medieval Francia: The evidence of the legal formulae', *Past and Present* 193 (2006), pp. 7-40; *idem*, 'Les formulaires et la pratique de l'écrit dans les actes de la vie quotidienne (vie-xe siècle)', *Médiévales* 56 (2009), pp. 11-22; A. Rio, 'Self-sale and Voluntary Entry into Unfreedom, 300 – 1100', *Journal of Social History* vol. 45 no. 3 (2012), pp. 661–685.; A. Rio, 'Penal enslavement in the early middle ages', in C. De Vito and A. Lichtenstein (eds), *Global Convict Labour* (Leiden, 2015), pp. 79-107.

might seem a detail, but it actually derives from the perspective in which the relations in which people are in hold the priority of analysis.

The study of slavery in the Early Modern period benefited from the comparative approach to the same phenomenon in the Antiquity. In the same way, the understanding and characterization of slavery in the Early Middle Ages, and especially in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria required the presentation of their main traits. The comparative approach is required to argue with some degree of certainty that slavery was not the essential or main form of labour in the long eighth century in Northumbria. Although there are developments in terms of areas of farming and in the productivity, there is no evidence for anything like the *latifundia* of any period; nor there is any piece of evidence that proves that slave labour was the cornerstone of acquiring political status or playing political roles. In this sense, the current chapter will not address Anglo-Saxon slavery as a fundamental class, like they probably were in Antiquity and in the Early Modern Period.

### **1.b.2) Wage Labour**

Wage labour used in production was a reality during the Middle Ages. However, the existence and size of this kind of workforce during the Anglo-Saxon period is called by Faith as ‘a matter of guesswork’.<sup>43</sup> A translation for the Latin *peculium* (a slave’s property) to Old English was once proposed: *ceorles æhte* (*ceorl’s* property).<sup>44</sup> *Hyringmanna* could also mean a hired labourer, but the reference for it is only appears in the tenth century.<sup>45</sup> An important point is that the volume of small currency grows throughout the eighth century (as addressed in chapter 4). Faith points out that the presence of small spenders might be a piece of evidence for small earners.<sup>46</sup> However, it is important to highlight that there is no evidence for such thing as a labour market in long eighth-century Northumbria, as there is in Capitalism. Wage workers are not part of the fundamental classes of the thesis context.

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<sup>43</sup> Faith, *The English Peasantry*, p. 75.

<sup>44</sup> T. Wright and R. P. Wulkeker, *Anglo-Saxon and Old English Vocabularies*, 2 vols (PLACE, 1884), IV.115.19, *apud* Faith, *The English Peasantry*, p. 75, n. 79.

<sup>45</sup> Faith, *The English Peasantry*, p. 75.

<sup>46</sup> *Idem*, p. 76.

### 1.b.3) Peasantry

The study of the peasantry is not a simple task. In the first place, there is the issue about primary sources. Most of the surviving documents from the Middle Ages are about aristocratic life, and they do not tell much comparatively about peasant life. The written sources that are generally used in the study of the peasantry are hagiographies, law codes and charters.<sup>47</sup> For the current thesis context, there is no surviving charter or law codes, and the hagiographies do not give us great detail about the dependent population.

Whenever glimpses of peasant lives are available, they are portrayed by an outsider, generally through the scope of moral exemplification.<sup>48</sup> It was only very recently that peasants had access to formal education and literacy, in the nineteenth century on the best speculations.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, to perform a study of the peasantry according to their own experiences and perspectives is near impossible.<sup>50</sup> However, these difficulties do not prevent the historical understanding of the phenomenon of peasantry. In this sense, archaeological studies have been of great value and made advances in the field possible.

The first step is to define what a peasant is. The attempt to come up with a simple and single concept for the peasantry in the Middle Ages is a daring one. The current knowledge about these populations acknowledges different kind of social relations they are embedded into, different lifestyles and unequal levels of wealth and power.<sup>51</sup> At the same time, as much as women had a vital role in rural economy, both the historical and historiographical terms are in the masculine.<sup>52</sup> However, historians must work with generalizations. Without any level of generalization, no communication is possible. It does not mean, however, that specificities will be neglected; there is a need for a dialectical relation between what is general and what is specific in order to better understand both.

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<sup>47</sup> For a critique on the naïve usage of law codes by historiography to understand the peasantry until 1960s, Cf. C. Wickham, *Land and Power: Studies in Italian and European social history, 400-1200* (London, 1994), pp. 205-7.

<sup>48</sup> Wickham, *Framing*, p. 383.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>50</sup> For a recent attempt see, S. Kilby, *Encountering the Environment: Rural Communities in England, 1086-1348* (PhD Thesis, Leicester, 2014).

<sup>51</sup> For example, R. Hilton, *The English Peasantry in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 4-18; C. Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The people of Britain 850-1520* (Yale, NJ 2002); Wickham, *Framing*, p. 386.

<sup>52</sup> D. Banham and R. Faith, *Anglo-Saxon Farms and Farming* (Oxford, 2014), p. 3.

According to Wickham, the aristocracy requires lots of criteria to be defined. The peasantry definition is easy in comparison, since it can be defined as a ‘strictly economic’ concept.<sup>53</sup> A peasant might be defined as:

a settled cultivator (or, more rarely, pastoralist), cultivating largely for subsistence, who does at least some agricultural work personally, and who controls his or her labour on the land.<sup>54</sup>

The main differences between the peasant and the slave in this conception are that the peasant has more control over his or her labour and the peasant has perennial access to land. The peasant does not necessarily have ownership of the land; they can be either smallholders or tenants.<sup>55</sup> At the same time, the peasant work is different from the wage labour. Workers who would work under payment are relatively unimportant and generally used as extra workforce on farming.<sup>56</sup> Also, the payment is not necessarily in money (or at least exclusively money).<sup>57</sup>

The historiography dedicated to Anglo-Saxon England has tried its own definitions and understanding of the peasantry as well. Although much less visible in the written sources, people involved in production (and in farm production) formed the bulk of the economy.<sup>58</sup> A historiographical tradition attributes the early Anglo-Saxon communities (during the period of migration) to look rather ‘flat’ societies, without a strong and defined hierarchy.<sup>59</sup> According to this trend of thought there is a trend of increase in social wealth in the sixth and seventh centuries, and from the ‘flat’ society emerged the kingships that

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<sup>53</sup> Wickham, *Framing*, p. 386.

<sup>54</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>55</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>56</sup> Wickham, *Framing*, p. 264; check the earlier section on ‘wage labour’ for more details.

<sup>57</sup> R. Naismith, *Money and Power in Anglo-Saxon England, The Southern English Kingdoms, 757–865* (Cambridge, 2012), p. 252.

<sup>58</sup> Banham and Faith, *Anglo-Saxon Farms*, p. 2.

<sup>59</sup> C. J. Arnold, *An Archaeology of the Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* (1988); P. J. Fowler, ‘Agriculture and rural settlement’ and P. Rahtz, ‘Buildings and rural settlement’, both in D. M. Wilson, *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England* (1976); R. Hodges, *The Anglo-Saxon achievement: archaeology and the beginnings of English society* (1989), esp. pp. 34-42; C. Scull, ‘Archaeology, early Anglo-Saxon society and the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms’, *ASSAH* 6 (1993), pp. 8-11; H. Uhlig, ‘Old Hamlets with infield and outfield systems in western and central Europe’, *Geografiska Annaler* 43 (1961), pp. 285-307.

will dominate Anglo-Saxon history.<sup>60</sup> By the long eighth-century, however, it is clear the big class division, which separates the ruling class (the aristocracy) from those below it. As Banham and Faith defend, the average Anglo-Saxon was a peasant, a person who would grow what they ate and ate most of what they grew.<sup>61</sup> The same authors highlight the auto-sufficiency of the peasants (and therefore, of Anglo-Saxon society). People were enlivened by the animal food they produced themselves, produced their clothes the same way, and produced their building and furniture from their fields.<sup>62</sup>

A big reference point for peasants in Anglo-Saxon society is Faith's work on the topic.<sup>63</sup> Since Faith's substantial work, not much attention has been granted to production, especially to daily life of the peasantry.<sup>64</sup> Banham and Faith highlight that the big 'blockbusters' of early medieval economy either barely look at the production sphere (McCormick) or don't 'drill down' to the very specific aspects of production (Wickham).<sup>65</sup> Banham and Faith recent work, however are less concerned with class structures and relations and focus more on the technical issues of farming and the geographical aspects of it.<sup>66</sup>

The main class division proposed by Banham and Faith is that between noble people and the peasantry. This division is called by them the 'two-tier hierarchy', the difference between *eorl* (noble) and *ceorl* (free peasant), although both acknowledge that both of these 'tiers' bear gradations among them.<sup>67</sup> The *ceorl* was then referred as 'those who work'; they also held free status. The free status granted the *ceorl* the obligations of paying tax and doing military service, but also the right to participate in public courts.<sup>68</sup> The evidence in which the study of the *ceorl* is based is generally from tenth and eleventh century and applied retrospectively, when there is evidence for the category of *gebus*,

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<sup>60</sup> Faith, *The English Peasantry*, p. 5.

<sup>61</sup> Banham and Faith, *Anglo-Saxon Farms*, p. 2.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>63</sup> Faith, *The English Peasantry*.

<sup>64</sup> Banham and Faith, *Anglo-Saxon Farms*, p. 1.

<sup>65</sup> *Idem*, p. 1, n. 1.

<sup>66</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>67</sup> Banham and Faith, *Anglo-Saxon Farms*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>68</sup> *Idem*, p. 3.

who were burdened with obligations to lords.<sup>69</sup> However, Faith points out that a good part of the farming might have been done by slaves or other forms of dependent labourers.<sup>70</sup> These labourers, according to her, would be part of the ‘inland’, the area near the central dweller of a landowner.<sup>71</sup> It was once thought as core areas that represented the transition between an economy based purely on tribute and the manorial system.<sup>72</sup> This point is not as easily held nowadays. However, it is vital to highlight the different conditions in which the peasantry could live in, and its internal divisions.

It has long been established by the historiography that the basic unit of the peasant family is the ‘hide’, the unit of land required in order for the peasant family to (re)produce itself.<sup>73</sup> However, this idea has been challenged as it could also mean a unit of measurement, encompassing few small communities (villages), contrasting with the *regio* (region), a bigger measurement.<sup>74</sup> Either way, ‘hides’ was the measure of obligation to social superiors, as payment, rents, renders, taxes and labour dues were levied on the hide. It then represents the surplus extracted by the aristocracy. This is the reason why it is the unit used in charters and the reference for the donation of lands for monasteries in the Northumbrian hagiographies.

The main difference in terms of management of production in the long eighth century lies on the enclosed and/or unenclosed field layouts.<sup>75</sup> The enclosed field layouts are enclosed arable fields laid out in an irregular circle, oval or rounded rectangle, enclosed by a fence, bank and/or ditch.<sup>76</sup> They are not exactly an innovation: they existed in prehistoric and Roman periods, and throughout England (naturally including

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<sup>69</sup> Faith, *The English Peasantry*, p. 5.

<sup>70</sup> Idem, chapter 2 and 3, pp. 59-70.

<sup>71</sup> Banham and Faith, *Anglo-Saxon Farm*, p. 3.

<sup>72</sup> C. Wickham, ‘The other transition: from the ancient world to feudalism’, *Past and Present* 103 (1984), pp. 3-36, at 31-2 and n. 34; Faith, *The English Peasantry*, p. 16.

<sup>73</sup> F. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 284-6.

<sup>74</sup> Faith, *The English Peasantry*, p. 29.

<sup>75</sup> S. Oosthuizen, ‘Anglo-Saxon Fields’, Hamerow, Hinton & Crawford, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology*, pp. 377-401.

<sup>76</sup> Oosthuizen, ‘Anglo-Saxon fields’, p. 387.

Northumbria, at High Knowes).<sup>77</sup> The enclosed fields were a roughly geometric layout on the ground, heavily influenced by local topography.<sup>78</sup> Their ‘open’ feature means that they require communal efforts, and therefore must be thought as a possession of a community rather than a single family. In this sense, no fence or ditch or visible definition of property could be held. The evidence for England as a whole suggests that open, arable fields divided into strips were present in the mid Saxon period, probably as a continuity of prehistoric and Roman systems of field layout.<sup>79</sup> However, how the management of cropping worked and how the distribution of tenure was done is almost unknown.<sup>80</sup> The combination of both system quoted here form the so called infield-outfield agriculture.<sup>81</sup> However, as Banham and Faith have recently argued, agriculture must be thought together with animal husbandry, in the common act of farming.<sup>82</sup> However, the setup of field cultivation can bring important discussions, as the section on forces and means of production will address with the case study of Sherburn, in West Heslerton.

The control of the aristocracy over the peasantry and peasant labour, however, is hard to grasp. The consequence is that it is very hard to pin down unified or standardized patterns of surplus extraction. The excavations of Flixborough have produced interesting evidence, though. The Flixborough settlement lasted from seventh to tenth century.<sup>83</sup> The settlement was known for its evidence of ostentatious aristocratic display and intensive production, with the exception of a period in the mid / late ninth century to the early tenth.<sup>84</sup> The

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<sup>77</sup> P. Toppings and T. Pearson, *The South-East Cheviots Project. A descriptive account of the prehistoric landscape* (York, 2008), pp. 23-26; also P. Topping, ‘Landscape narratives: the South East Cheviots Project’, *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, 74 (2008), pp. 323-64.

<sup>78</sup> Oosthuizen, ‘Anglo-Saxon fields’, p. 389.

<sup>79</sup> *Idem*, p. 392.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>81</sup> *Idem*, p. 394.

<sup>82</sup> Banham and Faith, *Anglo-Saxon Farms*, p. 2.

<sup>83</sup> C. Loveluck and D. Atkinson (eds), *The Early Medieval Settlement Remains from Flixborough and Lincolnshire, The Occupation Sequence, c. AD 600-1000* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 39-112; C. Loveluck, ‘The excavated Anglo-Saxon settlement remains and their potential for wider interpretation’, in C. Loveluck, *Rural Settlement, Lifestyles and Social Change in the Later First Millennium AD, Anglo-Saxon Flixborough in its Wider Context*, Excavations at Flixborough, vol. 4 (Oxford, 2007), pp. 8-30, pp. 22-30.

<sup>84</sup> C. Loveluck, ‘Changing Lifestyles, Interpretation of Settlement Character’, in C. Loveluck, *Rural Settlements*, p. 154.

osteoaerchaeological evidence of the site indicates the consumption of cattle, sheep and pig, slaughtered and consumed throughout the centuries.<sup>85</sup> The eighth century is the context in which the evidence for feasting is more abundant: the highest animal killing rate of animals and imported drinking vessels (suggesting public display of power).<sup>86</sup> Early to middle ninth-century life in Flixborough saw a great change in the patterns of material culture evidence. Cattle consumption was replaced by sheep consumption, especially that of old sheep.<sup>87</sup> Fish is also relatively abundant for this period, and comparing Flixborough assemblage with other religious communities the result is similar.<sup>88</sup> The change on the patterns of consumption might indicate a change from of nature from secular to ecclesiastic (this transition will be discussed better in chapter 6). However, both of them are based on the exploration of dependent labour. Both of them require people manning the settlement and offering labour time. The extent to which the aristocracy was able to control the process of labour or to which point the aristocracy controlled labour time, however, it's not clear.

Another point to remember is that peasants also took part in war, as the Imma story highlights, explored in the previous chapter. Once captured after losing a battle, Imma was afraid to admit he was a soldier (*miles*), and said he was a poor peasant (*rusticum [...] et pauperem*), and married.<sup>89</sup> Bede records that Imma said he was in company with other peasants to bring food to the soldiers.<sup>90</sup> This passage brings important details: 1) the peasants provided subsistence for the army of aristocrats; 2) the relation with the aristocrats also encompassed labour and time of work, since they had to follow the army and provide them with their needs (unfortunately, Bede makes no mention to food

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<sup>85</sup> K. Dobney, D. Jaques, J. Barrett and C. Johnstone, J. Carrot and A. Hall, 'Patterns of Disposal and Processing', in Keith Dobney *et al.*, *Farmer, Monks and Aristocrats*, p. 90

<sup>86</sup> K. Dobney, D. Jones, C. Johnstone, A. Hal, J. Barrett, J. Herman, J. Carrot and D. Slater, 'The Agricultural Economy and Resource Procurement', in Loveluck, ed. *Rural Settlement*, pp. 87-98, pp.87-9; Vera I. Evison, '2.1 Glass Vessels', in D.H. Evans and C. Loveluck, *Life and Economy at Early Medieval Flixborough, c. AD 600-1000, The Artefact Evidence*, Excavations at Flixborough, vol. 2 (Oxford, 2009), pp. 103-113 p. 109.

<sup>87</sup> Dobney *et al.* 'The Agricultural Economy and Resource Procurement', in Loveluck, *Rural Settlement*, pp. 99-111, pp. 87-98, p. 89.

<sup>88</sup> Dobney *et al.*, 'Zooarchaeological Evidence', p. 233.

<sup>89</sup> [...] *rusticum se potius et pauperem atque uxoreo uinculo conligatum fuisse respondit*; HE IV, 22.

<sup>90</sup> [...] *propter uictum militibus adferendum in expeditionem se cum sui similibus uenisse estatus est*; Idem.

preparation and the labour required for that); 3) probably the peasants could take part in the battle, or at least be quite close to the battlefield.

Anglo-Saxon peasantry plays a key role on social configuration. However, the current thesis focuses on the aristocracy. It is impossible to understand the aristocracy without those who worked for them and made their lives and lifestyle possible. In this sense, although the main working figure of Anglo-Saxon England might seem less visible throughout the other chapters, the peasantry is always present. Their absence (both in the historical sources and in the historiography) corresponds to a real historical phenomenon: subsumption. The ruling class subsumed the ruled classes, eliminating them from historical visibility. It is important also to highlight how the gendered the peasant also is; as mentioned earlier, all terms are used in the masculine. If the aristocracy subsumes the peasantry, the masculine subsumes the feminine inside the peasantry.

There is still another feature of the peasantry as a class that is extremely important to highlight. In this thesis theoretical perspective, the peasantry is the productive class. In that sense, it is the class that does not ‘need’ the others to (re)produce itself. As the ruling class, the aristocracy needs the surplus produced by others, and needs to draw labour and the fruits of the work of its dependent to produce itself. In this sense, while there can be peasantry without aristocracy (as Wickham proposes), there can be no such thing as an aristocrat that does not live from the labour of others.

### **1.c) Aristocracy**

One of the main goals of the current chapter (and thesis) is to improve and polish a definition of aristocracy in terms of a social class. In order to name the criteria for the definition of aristocracy for the Early Middle Ages, Wickham mentions six main elements: A) Distinction of ancestry; B) Landed wealth; C) Position in an official hierarchy; D) Imperial or royal favour (what the Germans call *Königsnähe*); E) Recognition by other political leaders; F) Lifestyle.<sup>91</sup> Wickham acknowledges the need to think about these criteria in historical terms, respecting the different weights, relations and function they have in each part of the world and how they change throughout time. The main hypotheses that guide his study are based on production, and the peasantry plays a very important role in his framing of the period. However, when the need for a definition for the aristocracy arises, the peasantry is subsumed in the ‘landed wealth’ criterion. By not being explicit that ‘landed wealth’ needs to include class relations and the extraction of surplus and/or

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<sup>91</sup> Wickham, *Framing*, p. 154.

labour, the definition loses the sense that a class can only exist in relation with another class. However, if these relations are not presented on the definition of Wickham, they definitely are presented throughout the book.

The absence of class relation can be explained by Wickham's wish to polish and build a new 'Mode of Production', called the 'peasant mode of production'. The main difference from other forms of Production (especially the feudal Mode of Production) is that neither the landlords nor the state take surplus in a systematic way.<sup>92</sup>

When it comes to Anglo-Saxon Northumbria, the definition of aristocracy still needs polishing. We do not have precise data about all the aristocratic lineages; however, its succession practices and the systems of kinship that existed are acknowledged, although not in a clear picture.<sup>93</sup> The lineages and groups are easier to be perceived in the later eighth century.<sup>94</sup> The visibility is increased because of the struggle for the throne they are part of. As they are more visible, the titles or Latin adjectives they are attributed also increase in variety and appearance. *Princeps*, *patricius* (patrician), *comes* and *gesith* ('count' in Latin and Old English, respectively), *minister* (minister), *miles* or *thegn* ('knight' or 'soldier'), *dux* (duke), *Praefactus* ('reeve') are some of the labels to identify the aristocracy. Their meaning has already been explained in the first chapter.

It is a common trend in historiography to understand the source of the aristocracy's power in its relation to the king.<sup>95</sup> This topic is a long one, which is obviously explored throughout the whole thesis. However, as the present chapter addresses the question of production, a critique of this point is required. The idea of royal power as the source is not wrong. However, it is incomplete. As the aristocracy is thought in this thesis as a class (and the ruling class), it must be always thought in relation to the other class(es). In this sense, although the relation with royalty must be highlighted, its relation with the dependent class (the peasantry) must never be forgotten. Therefore, the class position of the aristocracy puts it into a dual relation: a close connection to central power (the king), with leverage between its factions; a vertical relation with the dependent class (the peasantry). These connections were also responsible for a differentiation in the relations the aristocracy held. With its peers, the relation is a relation of subordination; with the lower class, the relation is based on social domination. The differentiation between

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<sup>92</sup> Idem, pp. 261, 535-47.

<sup>93</sup> Rollason, *Northumbria*, p. 180.

<sup>94</sup> Idem, p. 181.

<sup>95</sup> Idem, p. 185.

subordination and domination was already pointed out by the Portuguese historian João Bernardo.<sup>96</sup> The big work of synthesis proposed by Bernardo shares approach of this thesis to the Middle Ages, based on Marxism and class relations. Therefore, the stress on the different kind of relation a class can hold. Also, the terms about subordination and social domination are drawn from Marx's writings.

Another important point to be highlighted when it comes to the definition of the aristocracy is to include the king as a part of the ruling class. The predominance of scholarship about Anglo-Saxon ruling has focused on kingship; as a consequence, the historiography about the topic is huge.<sup>97</sup> However, the thesis focuses on the class kingship belongs to, which is the aristocracy. The main point about kingship being part of the ruling class is that as a development of the historical dynamic of aristocratic reproduction, many families struggled for making their own kings. In other words, kingship became achievable through the internal conflicts of the ruling class.

## 2) Why is the eighth century a 'long' one?

The idea to classify centuries as 'long' or 'short' ones is not exclusive to medieval studies. The twentieth century, for example, has also been under debate, in order to classify it according to its length.<sup>98</sup> The long-eighth century is defined by Wickham as spanning the years 680-830 CE, 'a period which seemed [...] to have both a general homogeneity and a long enough span to allow for the pinning down of differences'.<sup>99</sup> As a general trend for Europe, it can be seen as the 'post-transformation' period, a context in which the Roman world-system has already collapsed.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> J. Bernardo, *Poder e Dinheiro. Do Poder Pessoal ao Estado Impessoal no Regime Senhorial, Séculos V-XV*, Vol. 1. *Sincronia. Estrutura Económica e Social do Século VI ao Século IX* (Porto, 1995); for a review in English of Bernardo's synthesis work, see L. Goldner, 'Review: Poder e Dinheiro', *Historical Materialism*, vol. 12.3 (2004), pp. 333-343.

<sup>97</sup> As examples of it, B. Yorke, *Kings and kingdoms of early Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1990); D. P. Kirby, *The earliest English kings* (London, 1991).

<sup>98</sup> G. Arrighi, *The long twentieth century: money, power and the origins of our time* (London, 1994); E. Hobsbawm, *The age of extremes: the short twentieth century, 1914-1991* (London, 1994).

<sup>99</sup> C. Wickham, 'Introduction', in L. Hanse, L. and C. Wickham (eds), *The long eighth century - Production, distribution and demand* (Leiden, 2000), p. ix.

<sup>100</sup> C. Wickham, 'Introduction', p. ix.

The nature of the archaeological evidence requires a concept and approach to time that challenges very specific and accurate time scales. The ‘long-eighth century’ roughly matches what is called in the archaeology as the ‘Mid-Saxon Period’. As the name suggests, it means the context after the installation and settlement of the early phase and before the late Saxon period. The very notion of ‘Saxon’ might be a matter of question, since it has come to be a chronological label as well as an ethnic one too.

The archaeological historiography about the period agrees that the great trends that happen in the eighth century do not neither start nor finish in the eighth century. The ‘length’ of the century could be explained based on these elements, since ‘a hundred years’ is as way of marking time, but ‘centuries’ can mean events or processes. Therefore, a brief exposition of this trends and types of evidence is required in order to give examples of why these phenomena share some homogeneity and are somehow complementary to each other.

One of the traits that distinguish the eighth century is the emergence and the dissemination of the *emporia*.<sup>101</sup> *Emporia* are large sites, which specialized in trade, especially long-distance trade. *Emporia* are also different to the type of site that came before them and from those that followed them.<sup>102</sup> The dissemination of this type of sites was interpreted in the 1990s as a great change in medieval economy.<sup>103</sup> Moreland calls this context as ‘the age of *emporia*’, in a way to criticize it.<sup>104</sup> According to Moreland, the big problem in the analysis of *emporia* is how they were then regarded as a separate community from their environs.<sup>105</sup> As a consequence, exchange (and circulation) was thought separate from the sphere of production. It is by no means a surprise that for those arguing in favour of an ‘age of *emporia*’, that the *emporia* seemed to emerge suddenly from a subsistence production society.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Hodges, *The Anglo-Saxon Achievement*.

<sup>102</sup> J. Moreland, ‘The significance of production in eighth-century England’, in Moreland and Wickham, *The long eighth century*, p. 71.

<sup>103</sup> T. Saunders, ‘Trade, towns and states: a reconsideration of early medieval economics’, *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 28 (1995), pp. 31-53; J. Richards, ‘Anglo-Saxon settlements of the Golden Age’, in J. Hawkes and S. Mills (eds), *Northumbria’s Golden Age* (Stroud, 1999), pp. 44-54.

<sup>104</sup> Moreland, ‘Significance’, p. 71.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibidem*.

The interpretation of levels of production being limited to the level of subsistence has a close connection to the archaeological evidence, its interpretation, and excavation methods. Early excavators missed evidence for timber buildings in sites such as Sutton Courtenay.<sup>107</sup> This led scholars like Lethbridge and Tebbutt to frame the living conditions of the Anglo-Saxons ‘as primitive a condition as can be imagined’.<sup>108</sup> The piece of evidence that they were based on to form this image were the ‘sunken-featured buildings’, also known as *Grubenhauser*. The inhabitants of this ‘huts’ were interpreted as ‘wretchedly poor serfs’.<sup>109</sup> The interpretation of the levels of life in Anglo-Saxon settlements as primitive lasted for decades.<sup>110</sup> It started to change after the discovery of the first ground-level timber halls (which generally survives only as postholes), in the 1950s. During the 1970s the number of discoveries of this kind made it clear that Anglo-Saxon architecture did not lack sophistication.<sup>111</sup> The main settlements responsible for challenging this notion were Yeavinger (Northumberland), Linford (Essex) and Cowdery’s Down (Hampshire).<sup>112</sup> Also, the idea of buildings that were ‘sunken’ has been recently challenged by Tipper. Although both concepts refer to the same kind of building, Tipper has challenged and showed the technical flaws of understanding this kind of structure as having actual sunken floors.<sup>113</sup> Therefore, the term *Grubenhäuser* is more accurate to current scholarship. *Grubenhäuser* could have many uses: grain storage, textile production, general

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<sup>107</sup> E. T. Leeds, ‘A Saxon village at Sutton Courtenay, Berks.: a third report’, *Archaeologia* 112 (1947), pp. 73-94; K. Ulmschneider, ‘Settlement Hierarchy’, in Hamerow, Clinton and Crawford (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology* (Oxford, 2012), p. 156.

<sup>108</sup> T. Lethbridge and C. Tebbutt, ‘Huts of the Anglo-Saxon Period’, *Cambridge Antiquarian Society’s Communication* 33 (1933), p. 149.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>110</sup> H. Hamerow, *Early Medieval Settlements* (Oxford, 2002), p. 7.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>112</sup> K. Barton, ‘Settlements of the Iron Age and Pagan Saxon Periods at Linford, Essex’, *Trans. Essex Archaeol Soc*, 3rs ser., 1 (1962), pp. 57-102; B. Hope-Taylor, *Yeavinger: An Anglo-British Centre of Early Northumbria* (London, 1977); M. Millett and S. James, ‘Excavations at Cowdery’s Down, Basingstoke, Hampshire’, *Archaeological Journal* 140 (1983), pp. 151-279.

<sup>113</sup> J. Tipper, *The Grubenhäuser in Anglo-Saxon England* (Yedingham, 2004), pp. 74-93.

storage and maybe clay production and/or storage.<sup>114</sup> At the same time, their interpretation as ‘squalid huts’ is no more tenable.

The eighth century is also a period of expansion in different settlement and site types.<sup>115</sup> It is the period of the emergence of ‘urban’ centres: the aforementioned *emporia/wics*; ecclesiastical sites (although this definition can be a matter of debate, as in the case of Flixborough); so-called ‘productive’ sites.<sup>116</sup> The expansion of settlements also brings questions about settlements hierarchies. Were there hierarchies within or between them? If so, is it possible to confirm a clear stratigraphy of power? Which are the types of settlements that are placed in each level of power? And, more importantly (for a Marxist perspective), what are the social relations that produce and reproduce this hierarchy?

Blinkhorn once proposed a ranking of power. From the most important to the least: A) *emporia*; B) royal villas/palaces; C) nucleated rural settlements that were read as ecclesiastical; D) rural (farming) sites.<sup>117</sup> Moreland follows a more economic-based perspective. According to him, the hierarchy would be, in a top-bottom order: A) major sites (both ecclesiastical and secular) like Flixborough and Brandon, which were characterized by coinage, imports, craft production, evidence that they were regional central places and literacy; B) settlements that are just like ‘A’, but ‘materially less well endowed’, like Wharram Percy and Barham; C) sites which participate in the exchange networks, but are also embedded in the structures of rural production (like Pennyland and Riby Cross Roads); D) the numerous sites which must have served the centres above, but that are archaeologically invisible because they did not receive the fruits of the economic developments and transformations they drove.<sup>118</sup> Palmer proposed an approach that highlights the economic roles played on the hierarchy. The hierarchy would be, top-bottom: A) *emporia*; B) sites that acted as central places and markets (productive and ecclesiastical sites); C) rural sites with specialized production, some of them connected to

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<sup>114</sup> H. Hamerow, ‘Timber Building and their social context’, in H. Hamerow, D. A. Hinton and S. Crawford (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 150-1.

<sup>115</sup> Ulmschneider, ‘Settlement Hierarchy’, p. 160.

<sup>116</sup> *Idem*, pp. 160-1.

<sup>117</sup> P. Blinkhorn, ‘Of cabbages and kings: production, trade and consumption in Middle Saxon England’, in Anderton (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Trading Centres* (PLACE, 1999), p. 8.

<sup>118</sup> Moreland, ‘Significance of Production’, p. 96.

ecclesiastical sites of the type ‘B’; D) ordinary and common rural sites that traded occasionally, exchanging mainly surpluses.<sup>119</sup>

A different and more holistic approach was proposed by Loveluck. This proposition criticizes an approach that equals the numbers of imported artefacts (which are read as ‘prestige goods’) with the social rank of the settlement.<sup>120</sup> Loveluck is also aware of the difficulties of distinguishing both the internal differences and external differences of the social classes; in other words, ‘high status’ label could refer to local notables, free allodial landowners and the peaks of aristocracy.<sup>121</sup> Also, social mobility can be an issue while trying to use this kind of label, since it is very hard to determine, using only the archaeological data, when a free peasant became a member of the elite or how to distinguish a member of the elite of the peasantry from the local aristocracy.<sup>122</sup> For Loveluck, it is very important to understand the profiles of consumption, the control over land-based resources, and the consumption of luxury goods, understood within the context of rituals of display of power.<sup>123</sup> Also, it is vital to highlight the changes of these relations over time, especially when analyzing a specific settlement or site.<sup>124</sup> Loveluck’s perspective is crucial to our work, since it combines the holistic approach (an important feature of Historical Materialism) and also the internal dynamics and changes at a specific place. Both aspects are crucial to the eighth-century phenomena this chapter addresses.

As presented above, most of the discussions about the nature of the sites or the how to read them has to do with their materiality. It is then necessary to discuss the Forces of Production, since this subject is closely linked to a better understanding of the data available and the society which produces it.

Some methodological questions need to be pointed out, however. When dealing with high-status sites it is easy to equate sophisticated structures to increasing social hierarchy or social complexity. Although this is not necessarily wrong, this idea could

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<sup>119</sup> J. B. O. Palmer, *The Emporia of Mid-Saxon England: Hinterlands, Trade and Rural Exchange* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 53-5; idem, ‘The hinterlands of three southern English *emporia*: some common themes’, in Pestell and Ulmchneider (eds), *Markets in Early Medieval Europe*, pp. 48-60.

<sup>120</sup> C. Loveluck, *Northwest Europe in the Early Middle Ages, c. AD 600-1150* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 98.

<sup>121</sup> Idem, p. 99.

<sup>122</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>123</sup> C. Loveluck, ‘Rural Settlement in the Age of Charlemagne’, in J. Story, ed. *Charlemagne – Empire and Society* (Manchester, 2005), pp. 253-5.

<sup>124</sup> Loveluck, ‘Rural Settlement’. p. 257.

bring its polar opposite, which is not necessarily true: the absence of sophisticated structures does not imply the absence of hierarchy. In the same sense, although stone work does imply a specific kind of knowledge and skill and a different and more expensive raw material, it does not mean that wooden structures do not require considerable engineering and architectural knowledge. As the Yeavinger excavations proved, it actually required a lot of effort and resources for the maintenance (and expansion) of its Great Hall. Although the material and knowledge are important and key elements to better understand Anglo-Saxon society in archaeological terms, the main goal is to understand the social relations behind them. They are an important step, but not the ultimate goal for the current thesis. In this sense, it is important to highlight how the archaeological visibility might lead the scholarly knowledge and perception of the Anglo-Saxon reality. A good example can be given using Blair's interpretation of the Church in Anglo-Saxon England. For Blair, minsters were spreading throughout the whole country, which was evidence for the growth of the ecclesiastical power.<sup>125</sup> This conclusion was easily taken, since minster are more visible archaeologically. However, in the theoretical approach of the current thesis, the structures that Blair analyses are interpreted in a different light: they are evidence for the crystallization of the aristocracy in which the Church (as an institution) is embedded. For Blair, primacy lies on the Church; in this thesis, primacy lies on class.

### **3) Forces of Production and Means of Production, at Sherburn (N. Yorks)**

Forces of production are a key element within the Marxist tradition. It is one of the core elements of the mode of production. Until the 1960s (or even the 1970s), forces of production were interpreted as one key element of change in History. According to this structuralist perspective, historical change would happen because of the contradictions between the forces of production and the relations of production.<sup>126</sup> This position has been severely criticized since then, and a greater focus has been given to the relations of production. Until very recently, the forces of production themselves were not considered in detail. The absence or misapplication of the concept for analysis about social

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<sup>125</sup> J. Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 2005).

<sup>126</sup> Thompson, *Poverty of Theory*.

transformation was highlighted by Ciro Cardoso.<sup>127</sup> He criticizes the works of Samir Amin, Eric Wolf, G. A. Melekechvili and Chris Wickham for the absence or the very small attention granted to the concept.<sup>128</sup> To better understand the concept and its implications, we must take into consideration the natural, human and technical dimensions. Marx and Engels did not define the concept of forces of production as clearly as other concepts. However, the concept cannot be taken for granted and must be considered together with the relations of production. The historiography of Anglo-Saxon England has approached the theme, although not always using this terminology.

The received wisdom of much twentieth-century scholarship proposed that the Anglo-Saxons were responsible for felling the wildwood, introduced the habits of living in villages and introduced the ploughing of intermingled strips within shared fields.<sup>129</sup> The image of Anglo-Saxon turning the virgin woods into heavily exploited fields that would endure until the enclosures of the Early Modern period, however, cannot be believed anymore. In the lowlands the soil was heavily exploited during the Roman period.<sup>130</sup> In other regions, some areas were used extensively but later abandoned (like the vicinities of Sherwood Forest).<sup>131</sup> And some Anglo-Saxon villages were not founded until the Middle or Later Saxon-period, like Wharram Percy.<sup>132</sup> However, when Anglo-Saxon settlement took place, it did not occur in a pioneer impulse, but in an environment where the landscape were farmed (or at least once farmed), in which ‘settlements, fields, tracks, roads, pastures, and managed woodlands were all pre-existing elements’.<sup>133</sup> The usage of timber, however, must not be taken for granted. Timber was widely used for building, but also as fuel and for a host of different crafts. Cristopher Grocock, for example, argues that

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<sup>127</sup> C. Cardoso, ‘As forças produtivas e as transições economicossociais no Egito antigo (do pré-dinástico ao final do Iio milênio a.C.)’, in M. J. M. Bastos et alii (eds), *O Pré-Capitalismo em Perspectiva – Estudos em Homenagem ao Professor Ciro F. S. Cardoso* (Rio de Janeiro, 2015), p. 15.

<sup>128</sup> Idem, pp. 16-21.

<sup>129</sup> N. Higham, ‘An Introduction’, in N. Higham and M. J. Ryan, *Landscape Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2010), p. 2.

<sup>130</sup> J. Taylor, *An Atlas of Roman Rural Settlement in England* (York, 2007), pp. 23-54; also S. Rippon, C. Smart and B. Pears, *The Fields of Britannia* (Oxford, 2015).

<sup>131</sup> D. Riley, *Early Landscape from the Air* (Sheffield, 1980).

<sup>132</sup> G. Milne and J. D. Richards, *Wharram, A Study of Settlement on the Yorkshire Wolds, Vol. VII, Two Anglo-Saxon Buildings and Associated Finds* (York, 1992), p. 1.

<sup>133</sup> N. Higham, ‘An Introduction’, p. 4.

trees were at the same time intensively managed and heavily exploited across all the Anglo-Saxon period.<sup>134</sup> The exploration of trees and woods do not make them simple materials, though. As Bintley and Shapland remind us, woodland, trees and timbers are intertwined into ‘practical application and religious belief, architectural utility and literary conceit, or functionality and symbolism’.<sup>135</sup>

Bintley and Shapland's point is very important, since a discussion about the forces of production cannot leave the intellectual and ideological dimensions of that society aside. The so-called ‘ideal forces of production’ are as vital to any society as the material dimension.<sup>136</sup> A ploughshare found in Flixborough finds close affinity with this topic. It was recovered from a pit, with a cauldron chain, near a mortuary chapel.<sup>137</sup> The ritual deposition and preparation of ground prior to constructing a church was common practice in the Early Middle Ages, and the deposition of ploughshares in pits and post-holes is generally read as having a strong religious belief (that according to Loveluck could be linked to pre-Christian beliefs of fertility).<sup>138</sup>

The material related to the acquisition of fresh water and sea fish can also be revealing. Using a sample of Anglo-Saxon traps found along the River Thames, Nathalie Cohen has pointed out how the acquisition of fish (and eel) was possible and frequent in this region.<sup>139</sup> At Holme-next-the-Sea, Norfolk, several places along the East Coast produced fish traps as well (Barber's Point, Alde Estuary, Holbrook Bay, Stour Estuary, the Blackwater Estuary and Sales Point Essex); from the thirty-six specimens analyzed,

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<sup>134</sup> C. Grocock, ‘Barriers to knowledge: Coppicing and Landscape Usage in the Anglo-Saxon Economy’, in N. Higham and M. J. Ryan, ed. *Landscape Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2010), pp. 23-37.

<sup>135</sup> M. D. J. Bintley and M. G. Shapland, ‘An Introduction to Trees and Timber in the Anglo-Saxon World’, *idem*, *Trees and Timber in the Anglo-Saxon world* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 1-18, p. 2.

<sup>136</sup> M. Godelier, *The Mental and the Material – Thought, Economy and Society*, trans. Martin Thom (trans. Norfolk, 1986, original Fayard, 1984).

<sup>137</sup> C. Loveluck, *Rural Settlements, Lifestyles and Social Change in the Later First Millenium AD: Anglo-Saxon Flixborough in its Wider Context* (Oxford, 2007), p. 245.

<sup>138</sup> Loveluck, *Northwest Europe*, p. 45.

<sup>139</sup> N. Cohen, ‘Early Anglo-Saxon fish traps on the River Thames’, S. Brookes, S. Harrington and A. Reynolds (eds), *Studies in Early Anglo-Saxon Art and Archaeology: Papers in Honour of Martin G. Welch*, BAR British Series 527 (2011), p. 137.

twenty-eight are dated 600-900.<sup>140</sup> The hypotheses raised by Murphy for the ending of these traps during the ninth century are 1) depletion of the estuary given the high level of effectiveness of the traps; 2) if the traps were under monastic control, the social disruption caused by Anglo-Scandinavian conflicts reduced the control of production levels in the East; 3) the cod, herring and other fisheries from the North Sea made the local, in-shore fishing less profitable.<sup>141</sup> Although it is very hard to pick one of these hypotheses (which are not mutually exclusive, as Murphy acknowledges) the second one has a link to the Northumbrian context. Just like the fish traps, some Northumbrian settlements are also abandoned in the ninth-century (e.g. Heselton, Whithorn, Eorforwic/York, etc).<sup>142</sup> Unfortunately, no study these are available yet for Northumbria, neither for fishing in the sea nor in rivers.

In order to discuss the forces of production in an empirical sense with deeper analysis, preliminary excavations in Sherburn (N. Yorks) will be discussed. This site was selected because the scale of the buildings and the powder-like material found within them are perfect for the discussion about production capacity and its forms in Northumbria. Exploration of archaeological features in Sherburn (Vale of Pickering, North Yorkshire) has taken place intermittently over three decades.<sup>143</sup> Initial analysis was made after the discovery of crop marks in 1981 (the date of the modern day cultivation), through geophysical analysis. The crop-mark formed a D-Shaped enclosure, revealing the archaeological potential of the field.<sup>144</sup> The geophysical survey revealed that during the Anglo-Saxon period the settlement was composed extended over 25ha (a broader area than West Heselton, nearby), with a large and denser proportion of *Grubenhäuser* than at Heselton.<sup>145</sup> The *Grubenhäuser* are thought to be a building distinctive from the Early and Middle Saxon phase.<sup>146</sup> However, the structures revealed by the excavations require closer attention.

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<sup>140</sup> P. Murphy, 'The Landscape and Economy of the Anglo-Saxon Coast', in editors ? *Landscape Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2010), pp. 218-9, table 12.1.

<sup>141</sup> Murphy, 'The Landscape and the Economy', pp. 218-19.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>143</sup> D. Powlesland, *Archeological Excavations in Sherburn, Vale of Pickering, North Yorkshire*, The Landscape Research Centre (September, 2011), p. 1.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>146</sup> Tipper, *Grubenhäuser*, p. 4.

An elaborate stone structure was composed of a combination of local materials and re-used Roman rough building stone.<sup>147</sup> Inside the area of the structure large deposits of burnt grain were found; the grain was mostly rye, the kind of crop best suited for the sandy well-drained landscape of the area.<sup>148</sup> The width of the structure measured almost 2m, too large for a domestic corn dryer.<sup>149</sup> Below the drying structure, a depression of 5-6m was found. It could be interpreted as the base of a very large *Grubenhaus*. Although the size could lead to interpretations that it was too big to be this type of building, the Sherburn site contains evidence for *Grubenhäuser* as large as 10x8m, with pits up to 1m deep.<sup>150</sup> However, these measurements are far larger than buildings from average Anglo-Saxon settlements.<sup>151</sup> Tipper suggests that the average *grubenhäus* is *c.* 3x4 m in area x *c.* 0.3-0.5 m in depth.<sup>152</sup> Also, although stone buildings were not unknown to this context, ‘Anglo-Saxon England was a “wooden world” in which timber buildings predominated in settlements of all kinds’.<sup>153</sup> Therefore the building material found in this trench had a better, long-lived quality than if made out of wood. Also, the usage of stone in buildings also implies knowledge of a specific architectural skill: masonry. A wattle fragment from the grain drying structure was dated using C14; it was dated between AD605 and AD674 (with 95.4% probability).<sup>154</sup>

A *grubenhäus*, measuring 6.5 cross and *c.*6m deep was also found, with massive quantity of ash.<sup>155</sup> The analysis of the ash defined it as part of the grain processing; it contained a large assemblage of phytoliths (a microscopic silica body that forms in a living

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<sup>147</sup> Idem, p. 6.

<sup>148</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>149</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>150</sup> Idem, p. 7.

<sup>151</sup> D. Powlesland, 'Early Anglo-Saxon settlements, structures, form and layout', in J. Hines, *Anglo-Saxons from the migration period to the eighth century: an ethnographic perspective* (Studies in historical archaeoethnology, 2) (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 101-24; Powlesland, *Archeological Excavations in Sherburn*, p. 7.

<sup>152</sup> Tipper, *Grubenhäus*, p.1.

<sup>153</sup> Hamerow, 'Anglo-Saxon Timber Buildings', p. 128.

<sup>154</sup> Powlesland, *Archeological Excavations in Sherburn*, p. 15.

<sup>155</sup> Idem, p. 9.

plant).<sup>156</sup> The conclusion was that the deposit indicated grain drying at industrial level, which took place over a long period of time.<sup>157</sup>

Only one *grubenhaus*, measuring c.10x6m, was found with that are typical of a *grubenhauser*: a bone comb, bone pins, an amber head, a few sherds of pottery, a large volume of animal bone (especially articulated vertebrae of sheep) and fragments of unfired clay loom-weights were incorporated in the fill of the pit which was a meter deep.<sup>158</sup> None of the samples could be precisely dated, however.<sup>159</sup>

The last *grubenhaus* was too close to the first example to have been used at the same time.<sup>160</sup> This structure had no traces of ash, but a large number of clay loom-weight fragments tipped in around the edges, concentrated on the south-west corner of the building.<sup>161</sup> This building is important to the site, since a fragment of charcoal in it produced a date between AD772 and AD952 (with 95.4% probability).<sup>162</sup>

The dating of the whole settlement ranges from the seventh to the tenth century. The 'industrial-scale' grain production, however, seem to have a shorter duration concentrated in the earlier part of the period, as the later date was attributed to a building that was not used at the same time structure which had contained one of the grain dryers).

Initially, the settlement was believed to have been an Anglo-Saxon monastic site, which was wiped out during the Viking period.<sup>163</sup> However, nothing in the excavations confirms or refutes the idea that the enclosure was related to a monastery.<sup>164</sup> Powlesland points out that if the site was not monastic in nature, it must be related to another form of high-status site, 'perhaps processing the tithes or taxes from surrounding settlements'.<sup>165</sup> West Heselton, a settlement close to Sherburn, has evidence that taxes may have been

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<sup>156</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>157</sup> Idem, p. 10.

<sup>158</sup> Idem, p. 12.

<sup>159</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>160</sup> Idem, p. 14.

<sup>161</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>162</sup> Idem, p. 15.

<sup>163</sup> Idem, p. 3.

<sup>164</sup> Idem, p. 15.

<sup>165</sup> Ibidem.

paid in livestock; therefore Powlesland admits that is very tempting to see Sherburn as an early manor.<sup>166</sup>

The impressive dimensions and products found in Sherburn (especially through its ashes) must be thought as a fruit of a huge collective enterprise. The scale of the buildings implies both the acquisition of surplus in material and in labour. At the same time, the settlement must not only be thought in terms surplus extraction for its construction, but also as a site where maintenance cannot be taken for granted. In classic historiography, it is very easy to find the equation ‘stone buildings equals wealth’ (or control of resources and specialized labour). However, Sherburn is an expression of how timber buildings can also require both architectural and engineering sophistication (a trend that will also be explored, below, in the section dedicated to Yeavinger).

The region where Sherburn is located is densely occupied. Along the valley, one small Anglo-Saxon settlement has been found every 800 meters, with a large one every 2.5 kilometers; the total number of *grubenhäuser* found is greater than 1,300.<sup>167</sup> Almost all of these settlements are contemporary, implying an intensive usage of land. It is important to highlight that the large Anglo-Saxon settlement of West Heselton also had its own crop processing area, as well as areas specialized in other activities: animal pens, craft and ‘industrial’ zones, a cemetery that was apart, and even its own woods.<sup>168</sup> Most of these activities were within enclosed spaces. However, the dimensions of the cropping processing area at West Heselton are dwarfed by the proportion of the buildings at Sherburn. This piece of evidence reinforces the hypothesis of Sherburn as a place to collect tithes or taxes. It also implies the progressive specialization of labour expressed both in landscape and in space. In space, since West Heselton had areas that seem to be specific devoted to certain forms of labour, which were in ‘micro-enclosures’; in landscape since Sherburn and West Heselton were apart but connected, and Sherburn was located inside an enclosure. The discussion about what is cause and what is consequence between specialized space and specialized labour might seem like an egg-and-chicken conundrum. However, labour plays a core function in Historical Materialism, so it would be hard to

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<sup>166</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>167</sup> N. J. Higham and M. J. Ryan, *The Anglo-Saxon World* (London, 2013), p. 95. The original data is available at the Landscape Digital Centre Digital Atlas, available at [http://www.landscape-researchcentre.org/Atlas/lrc\\_a.html](http://www.landscape-researchcentre.org/Atlas/lrc_a.html) [accessed 05/08/2016].

<sup>168</sup> D. Powlesland, ‘West Heselton settlement mobility: A Case of Static Development’, in H. Geake and J. Kenny, *Early Deira* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 19-26.

assume otherwise; at the same time, the enclosures must be produced (by labour) in the first place.

A methodological issue must be highlighted. Sherburn was not nearly as extensively excavated as was Heslerton. In other words, while Heslerton has a unique sample of buildings and settlements (unique for Anglo-Saxon England as a whole, not only Northumbria or Deira), Sherburn excavations represent just a peek through a key-hole. It is important to keep this uniqueness in mind so not to extrapolate the scale (including the population scale) of the Vale of Pickering for all of Anglo-Saxon England.

The enclosure of Sherburn, however, brings a very important question to the development of lordship. No dwellings have yet been found, either by excavation or any other research methods. In other words, the enclosure represents a step in the control of the means of production by the person who controlled that locality. It is probable that the amount of collective labour required in that place (without any evidence for communal property of it) required a degree of separation between the producers and their means of production. This separation is also responsible for possibility of transferring surplus from one place to another, both in kind and labour. Also, it represents a control over the time of the workers, since the scale of Sherburn indicates the constant work in it. Both capacities combined can also help explain the developments of larger buildings and estates by aristocrats. However, this hypothesis does not eliminate the fact that Northumbria aristocracy and royalty was still itinerant.

The region where the enclosure was found seems to have played an important part in production. Its importance is attached to the scale of the burned rye; however, it is also a good example of the development of the infield-outfield agriculture mentioned on the peasant section, and how they are combined.

The tons of rye found in Sherburn are also a key element to understand the site, the Vale of Pickering, and maybe even Deira (or Northumbria). The development of forces of production is clear in this context, and materialized in the tons of rye grain that it could produce. The development in the forces of production also brings the question about the relations of production. A site like Sherburn requires a huge amount of labour to continue to work, and it can be read in two opposite ways: it was either A) a product of a collective organized, communal work, managed and organized by peasants with no external interference; B) the existence of hierarchies which were capable of extracting surplus in large scale. Although Anglo-Saxon peasantry was once interpreted in terms of option 'A',

it is now generally acknowledged that it is almost impossible to think in these terms.<sup>169</sup> Sherburn seems to have played the role of a central place at the cluster of settlements in the Vale of Pickering. This central place of and/or for power seems to be the place in which local communities would pay their taxes in kind (to an aristocrat), and probably to be transformed into flour. However, this phenomenon is not unique to Sherburn. A horizontal watermill was also found at Corbridge, Co. Durham, also with evidence for milling on an 'industrial scale'.<sup>170</sup> The geographical localization of this mill (at the fording point of the Tyne on the Roman road of Dere Street) led some scholars to conclude that people took their grains to it so they could grind it into flour.<sup>171</sup> The mill was dated using two separate timbers, and the results were AD 720-960 and AD 900-1030. In other words, the mill only used its full capacity in a period later than the context of the current thesis; nonetheless, it might have been built during the long eighth century.

There is not total disconnection between producers and their means of production; Sherburn has produced a building into which other kind of activities (besides crop processing) seem to have taken place.<sup>172</sup> The discussion about forces of production could not be split from the general discussions about relations of production. In this sense, Sherburn is also a very important example, since its relationship with its vicinities is crucial to understand the site fully. Also, the uncertainty about the lay or ecclesiastical nature of the site is not significant for the chapter argument, since it is rather focused on inter-class relations.

One point over this region is crucial: just like the fish trap data for other regions, the settlements near and around Sherburn were abandoned in the ninth century.<sup>173</sup> (Re)production of these settlements ceases in a time that is recorded by the written sources as a time of political instability and upheaval. If the sources are correct, this instability might imply the absence of a social force powerful enough to maintain and reproduce such place. The reason might be that no aristocratic family or group (royal or non-royal) was

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<sup>169</sup> See the section above on the definition of peasantry.

<sup>170</sup> M. E., Snape, 'A horizontal-wheeled watermill of the Anglo-Saxon period at Corbridge, Northumberland, and its river environment', *Archaeologia Aeliana* 5<sup>th</sup> series, 32 (2003), pp. 37-72; D. G. Passmore and C. Waddington, *Archaeology and environment in Northumberland*, Till-Tweed Studies, 2 Volumes (2007 and 2012), p. 292.

<sup>171</sup> Snape, 'A horizontal-wheeled watermill', p. 45; Passmore and Waddington, p. 292.

<sup>172</sup> Powlesland, *Excavations in Sherburn*, p. 10.

<sup>173</sup> Higham and Ryan, *Anglo-Saxon World*, p. 95.

powerful enough to keep that region working as it was before. This hypothesis must be better examined under the light of land donation in the next chapter.

## Conclusion

The analysis of production is of vital importance to the understanding of the structure and dynamics of the class structure of any society. The eighth century seems to have been a place for important transformations in production. The social division of labour seems to have achieved new levels, and specialization is a trend. The specialization seems to be expressed in space, in many levels. At a community level, some *grubenhäuser* seem to concentrate certain activities, while other buildings are responsible for dwellings (like the West Heslerton example). At local level, different sites are specialized in other activities, and can only exist with the interference of an external force, which seems to drive and organize the labour and products surplus (Sherburn). The aristocratic control over the means of production seems to be an important part in the grain processing level. In other words, both the developments of the forces of production and the new forms of relations of production converge to increasing levels of productivity and of surplus acquired.

The long eighth century, often called the ‘Golden Age’ in Northumbria, seems to be actually the Golden Age of the aristocracy: the forces of production had developed accordingly to their class needs; the means of production were probably assured in their possession through land-granting ceremonies; the amount of surplus acquired seems to be higher than before. The ‘fall’ of Northumbria, however, seems to coincide with the political instability era, in which the rise of the aristocracy might have played a vital part. So far, there is no evidence in terms of production that could explain the abandonment of sites or the changes in patterns of living.

A ‘scale play’ seems to take place in this context, which seems to obey the logic of encompassing sets. There are ‘concentric’ forms of enclosures (developing, but never fully developed), seen in the Vale of Pickering; and also encompassing sets of lordship emanating from the ruling class and encompassing the peasantry. The different *foci* of power do not eliminate one another; actually, they encompass each other. This is visible through enclosures in the Vale of Pickering (where enclosures inside enclosures are a literal expression).

This disposition of power might seem to contradict Wickham’s proposition of a peasant based society, in which settlements and focus of power are designed as a leopard

skin. However, the current proposition is actually complementary to that. As Wickham proposed and composes a bottom-top understanding of power, the proposition in this chapter is to compose a holistic comprehension, but with the 'top' as the starting point. In other words, we are looking closer at the (bigger) dots, and seeing how they are also layered.

The 'encompassing spheres' logic and dynamic seems to be present throughout classes, time and space. It seems to be the blueprint of power in Northumbria, made visible through the study of production. It is the backbone of social relations, printed on landscape and its modifications.

## **Chapter 3)**

### **Land Donation**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter analyzes the logic and dynamics of land donation in Northumbria. Its main hypothesis is that land donation is an element that organizes the ruling class as well as it redistributes the access to the labour of the peasantry among them. Many monasteries might have been founded as a strategy to grant autonomy to fractions of the aristocracy. In that sense, the foundation of monasteries was also a strategy of independence and reproduction of the aristocracy in the face of royal power. The chapter still discusses the ambiguity and the absence of clarity between lay and clerical aristocracy.

A study of production aiming to elucidate the reproduction of aristocracy would be incomplete if it did not take land granting and transfer into consideration. Land ownership is not only a question of giving autonomy for the different aristocratic families and/or branches. The main hypothesis of this chapter is that land donation is essential for the reproduction as well as for the internal cohesion of the aristocracy. However the phenomenon of land donation also held contradictions. The autonomy granted by land donations in order to found monasteries represented the break of a tie of subordination to central power (the king), and implied different kinds of relations.

Discussing land donation in Northumbria has a particular problem: namely, the absence of the most used type of historical source to address it: charters. For this reason, a discussion about how to approach this subject will be required. In order to understand how the system of land granting worked, Bede's *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* will be explored to understand the process of land granting. To better understand the consequences and possibilities of the process, a few generations leap will be taken, and the early ninth-century poem known as *De Abbatibus* will be explored to discuss family ties to monastic foundations.

#### **1) Charters, Bede's letter and the donation system**

A study involving the circulation of land in Anglo-Saxon England starts with the study of charters. Charters can illuminate land donation, since they present both the

grantee and the receiver of the gift.<sup>1</sup> They can also offer a window to the means of production that are being transferred, since most of them mention what is contained within the parcel of land being donated (marshes, woods, salt production, buildings, etc).<sup>2</sup> The donation was made using boundary descriptions; the earliest charters are short in boundary descriptions, while by the end of the ninth century they are more detailed and written in Old English.<sup>3</sup> Forces of production are also presented and mentioned in charters, and charter collections can offer a form of catalogues for what forces of production were available and were important to be written down. The relations of production are implicit within them, since although the peasantry is never mentioned directly, the presence of peasants is always presupposed. In a nutshell, charters can be a highly valuable source for the study of production.

There are two schools of thoughts about the introduction of charters to Anglo-Saxon England. One proposes that these documents were introduced by Augustine, with the introduction of Christianity itself *c.* 600. According to this argument, the missionaries would have managed to obtain for Anglo-Saxon Church the same privileges that the Church enjoyed in the Empire. This was first proposed (according to modern scholarly methods) by Stevenson, and this idea was later developed by Chaplais.<sup>4</sup> However, the first genuine charter dates from 675, which brings the question of what happened to the charters produced between 597 and 675. It has been suggested that charters were written on imported papyrus, and therefore would not have survived in a place with England's environment and weather.<sup>5</sup> Another suggestion is that that charters had simply not survived at all.<sup>6</sup> The second school of thought attributes the introduction of charters to Theodore of

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<sup>1</sup> Whitelock, *EHD*, p. 369. For more on the gift on the early middle ages, see W. Davies and P. Fouracre (eds), *The languages of the gift in the early middle ages* (Cambridge, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> For example, S. 102.

<sup>3</sup> M. Reed, 'Anglo-Saxon Charter Boundaries', in M. Reed (ed), *Discovering Past Landscapes* (London, 1984), p. 277.

<sup>4</sup> W. H. Stevenson, 'Trinodas Necessitas', *EngHR* 29 (1914), p. 701; P. Chaplais, 'Who Introduced Charters into England? The Case for Augustine', *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 3, 10 (1969), p. 536.

<sup>5</sup> S. Kelly, 'Anglo-Saxon Lay Society and the Written Word', in R. McKitterick (ed.) *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 41.

<sup>6</sup> S. Thompson, *Anglo-Saxon Royal Diplomas: A Palaeography* (Woodbridge, 2006), p. 4.

Tarsus, by the end of the seventh century.<sup>7</sup> A different approach is proposed by Patrick Wormald, who thought that the contents of the English documents that were ‘too early for Theodore’ are actually ‘too late for Augustine’ as well.<sup>8</sup> Wormald’s suggestion is that Anglo-Saxon charter were a *sui generis* expression, neither Augustinian nor from Theodore’s inspiration.<sup>9</sup>

In its earlier phase, the Anglo-Saxon charter is ‘essentially an ecclesiastical document’.<sup>10</sup> This nature changes with time. Around the eighth and ninth centuries, it is highly probable that the beneficiaries (either churchpeople or laypeople) were responsible for the production (or at least drawing up) the charter.<sup>11</sup> At this point the scribes may not have been attached to a religious house; the charter could have been produced either by a priest attached to a king’s household or even a literate layman could have done it.<sup>12</sup> The true identity of the scribes or draftsmen cannot be discovered, since they do not reveal themselves.<sup>13</sup> However, for the purposes of the present chapter, the focus must be on the powerful people, both lay and clerical that were mentioned on the charters: more specifically, their social status and the social meaning behind the charters.

Sarah Foot proposed that early Anglo-Saxon society a society that can be classified as a ‘transitionally-literate’ society.<sup>14</sup> Foot also evokes the obvious utility of writing in forming social memory, in the sense that charters could embody a social practice which could potentially allow itself self-reproduction throughout time.<sup>15</sup> In other words, the

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<sup>7</sup> F. Stenton, *The Latin Charters of the Anglo-Saxon Period* (Oxford, 1955), p. 31; and *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 141; S. Keynes, ‘Church Councils, Royal Assemblies, and Anglo-Saxon Royal Diplomas’, in G. Owen-Crocker, *Kingship, Legislation and Power in Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester, 2013), pp. 17-182; B. Snook, *The Anglo-Saxon Chancery. The History, Language and Production of Anglo-Saxon Charters from Alfred to Edgar* (Woodbridge, 2015), p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> P. Wormald, *Bede and the Conversion of England: the charter evidence* (Jarrow, 1984), p. 14.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>10</sup> Kelly, ‘Anglo-Saxon Lay Society’, p. 43.

<sup>11</sup> Thompson, *Anglo-Saxon Royal Diplomas*, p. 17.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>13</sup> P. Chaplais, ‘The origin and Authenticity of the royal Anglo-Saxon diploma’, *Journal of the society of archivists*, vol.3 Issue 2 (1965), pp. 48-61, p. 56.

<sup>14</sup> S. Foot, ‘Reading Anglo-Saxon Charters: Memory, Record or Story?’, in *Narrative and History in the Early Medieval West*, ed. E. M. Tyler and R. Balzaretta (Turnhout, 2006), p. 41.

<sup>15</sup> Foot, ‘Reading Anglo-Saxon Charters’, p. 55.

written word is just a product of a performance of power, which could exist with or without its written record. In that sense, this part of the ritual was a form of framing the ritual with a portrait of words, capturing time. However, charters are not only about guaranteeing the future: they also have very important functions on the very moment of their production, especially for gift-giving and the setting of boundaries of landowning. This is a very important point, since while organizing the knowledge of the past by making the present visible through written words, charters are also establishing the footprints for the future, trying to guarantee the possession of aristocrats.<sup>16</sup> It is a form of taming space and time altogether, trying to produce and reproduce the aristocracy involved in it *in perpetuum*.

The ritual of power behind it is also a key element. The land grant a charter represents might have occurred only orally, requiring nothing more than the presence of certain witnesses.<sup>17</sup> The grant a charter represents is mainly a grant of surplus labour, donated from one aristocrat to another. Although the peasantry is not mentioned explicitly within a defined territory, people were required to make the marshes, ponds, fields and all other things mentioned functional. So, the first point about the ritual is that it allows an aristocrat to reproduce himself (and his family) without the need to work and/or the support of another aristocrat. It is a key point for the material (re)production of the ruling class. Another important point is that charters encompass a list of witnesses. These witnesses are powerful people whose name and status lends the document authority and trustworthiness. In other words, the ritual is a key moment for the elite to present its (new) member to its peers, with the consent and acknowledgements of his equals. The second point is that the land granting ritual is also a key moment for the ideological reproduction of the class. The third point about it is how points 1 (material reproduction) and 2 (ideological reproduction) cannot be considered separately; they are different expressions of the same phenomenon. This is why charters are so important when studying production: they represent a window to the ritual with the intersection of the (re)production of social classes. Unfortunately, these windows are not numerous.

The survival of such documents depended largely on luck. As Stenton suggested, 'It is only through a succession of fortunate chances that the text of any Old English charter has survived'.<sup>18</sup> Some of the original charters made their way through our times

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<sup>16</sup> Idem, p.59.

<sup>17</sup> D. A. Woodman (ed.), *Charters of Northern Houses - Anglo-Saxon Charters* 16 (Oxford, 2012), p. 2, n. 5.

<sup>18</sup> Stenton, *Latin Charters*, p. 51.

because they were curated, according to political circumstances in which their possession (or forgery) had political impact. Northumbria, however, does not have one single surviving charter. This absence must be considered also in the context of the political chaos and upheaval that the eighth and ninth-century sources reveal to us.<sup>19</sup> Charters could be lost or deliberately destroyed.<sup>20</sup> In other words, the historical context was not in favour of documents that required skilled maintenance efforts.

If there are no surviving charters for Northumbria, why this chapter talks about it in such a lengthy way? Because there is evidence that there were charters in Northumbria, especially in the early eighth-century narrative sources. Just like in every other discussion about primary sources we are not going to survey all mentions of land granting, but will pick those who can better understand our question about Northumbria's (absent) diplomatic practices (i.e., the issuing of charters).

Stephanus' *Vita Wilfridi* narrates the foundation of a church in Ripon by Wilfrid. Stephanus tells how Wilfrid stood in front of the altar and read out the names of places and regions to be given to Ripon.<sup>21</sup> The calling of names follows the formula of the witness-list of a charter, naming those of the highest rank first ('the two most Christian kings and brothers, Ecfriht and Ælfiwini'), descending to other peoples and ranks ('abbots, the reeves and the sub-kings; dignitaries of every kind gathered together'). Stephanus also tells us about how Wilfrid 'read out clearly a list of the lands which the kings, for the good of their souls, had [...] presented to him'. Chaplais and Kelly think that the deposition of the charter in the altar would imbue it with authority and binding.<sup>22</sup> In other words, the sacredness of the altar would sanctify the grant of the charter itself, which would receive an aura of holiness as well. Stephanus then tells us that the chief men and all the bishops gave their signatures to the document, *cum consensus et subscriptione*. As Woodman points out, the words were chosen carefully by Stephanus to recall the formula of the charters, *consensi et subscripsi*.

Bede's *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* also contains a valuable window onto this matter. In this letter, Bede complains how places which were supposed to be monasteries appeared to be more like secular estates.<sup>23</sup> As part of this complaint he mentions the existence of

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<sup>19</sup> Woodman (ed.), *Charters of Northern Houses*, p. 6.

<sup>20</sup> *Idem*, p. 5.

<sup>21</sup> *VW*, 18.

<sup>22</sup> Chaplais, 'The origin and Authenticity', p. 33; Kelly, 'Anglo-Saxon Lay Society', p. 44.

<sup>23</sup> *EEE*, 10-11.

*scripta* which he says underpinned the status of these estates. Woodman argues that these written documents were charters.<sup>24</sup> Bede also tells us how laymen had been granted estates in order to found religious establishments but used them to satisfy their own ‘lust’ (*libidini*).<sup>25</sup> These estates had been given to these laymen ‘... *in ius sibi haereditarium regalibus edictis faciunt asscribi, ipsas quoque litteras priuilegiorum suorum quasi ueraciter Deo dignas, pontificum, abbatum, et potestatum seculi obtinent subscriptione confirmari*’.<sup>26</sup> Woodman interprets the ‘royal edicts’ (*regalibus edictis*) as diplomata (royal charters).<sup>27</sup> It is quite clear in Bede’s narrative that royal charters were an important tool in early eighth-century Northumbria, to a point where the social function of these documents was appropriated by laymen.

Going further into the eighth century, there is also evidence for the preservation of traces of Northumbrian diplomatic. George, bishop of Ostia and Amiens (753-98) wrote a letter to Pope Hadrian I following his visit with another papal legate to Northumbria and Mercia in 786.<sup>28</sup> The letter narrates how George arrived in Kent, was then received at the Mercian court of King Offa, and then went to Northumbria to visit King Ælfwald (d. 788) and Archbishop Eanbald I of York (d. 796). At the meeting, some religious reforms were announced at the presence of both ecclesiastical and secular Northumbrian figures. The letter concludes narrating how the canons were read out publicly at a meeting of the king and his councilors, and how the people who were present ‘... *stilo diligenti in charta huius paginate exarauerunt signum sanctae crucis ...*’.<sup>29</sup> In George’s letter the document is identified as a ‘charter’ (*charta*) and is followed by a list of witnesses, who attested the document following the formula common to Anglo-Saxon Charters.<sup>30</sup> The copy of the letter was made *c.* 1000, and it is possible that the twenty canons and the witness’ lists

<sup>24</sup> Woodman, *Charters of Northern Houses*, p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> *EEE*, 12, Grock and Wood, *The Abbots*, p. 146.

<sup>26</sup> ‘The hereditary rights over these lands ascribed to them by royal warrants, and manage to get these charters of their privileges confirmed by the signature of bishops, abbots, secular authorities as though they were truly worthy in God’s sight!’, *EEE*, 12.

<sup>27</sup> Woodman, *Charters of Northern Houses*, p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> W. Levison, *England and the Continent* (Oxford, 1947), pp. 127-9 and 154-5; C. Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils c. 650-c. 850* (Leicester, 1995), pp. 153-90; J. Story, *Carolingian Connections - Anglo-Saxon England and Carolingian Francia, c. 750-870* (Routledge, 2003), pp. 55-78, esp. 64-78.

<sup>29</sup> George, *Epistola ad Hadrianum*, in Alcuin, *Ep.*, no. 3 (p. 27), apud Story, *Carolingian Connections*, p. 68.

<sup>30</sup> Woodman, *Charters of Northern Houses*, pp. 4-5.

(there is another list for the Mercian meeting) existed before as separate documents, and George interpolated them into the letter.<sup>31</sup> As Story points out, in some places it seems to be mimicking the lay-out of an Anglo-Saxon charter, and it might be possible that the original document was produced in Northumbria itself.<sup>32</sup> As Woodman argues, the letter represents an undeniable evidence for Northumbrian diplomatic in the (later) eighth-century.<sup>33</sup>

There are, therefore, good reasons for considering charters in a region and context where none survive. Despite this lacuna, and even if the format of Northumbrian charters was not identical to those being produced in another regions, some kind of document was probably produced which had the same social meaning as explained in the beginning of this section. At the same time, from the theoretical perspective of this thesis, the historical sources are a window to our main goal: the social relations behind them, which produced the sources and were reproduced by them. In this sense, discussing and analyzing evidence for Northumbrian charters is a way to pin down, present and explain the existence of social relations that are vital to understand both the sphere of production and the whole Northumbrian class society. Land granting continues to be the moment of synthesis between the inter- and intra-class phenomena. That is the reason why it is so important to highlight that the absence of evidence is not an evidence of absence.

Bede's famous *Epistola ad Ecgbertvm* discussed other important topic, besides the evidence for the existence of charters. The letter is fundamentally a complaint about the land exchange and donation in Northumbria, and how the social dynamics were either broken or not operating as he expected them to do. Many monasteries of the early eighth century were not what they should be, according to Bede: although they had the title of monastery, they had no trace of a monastic life.<sup>34</sup> The clergy also grew greedy, in his opinion; bishops wanted larger dioceses, clergy wanted payment.<sup>35</sup> As there were more

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<sup>31</sup> Story, *Carolingian Connections*, p. 75-7.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>33</sup> Woodman, *Charters of Northern Houses*, p. 5.

<sup>34</sup> [...] *in monasteriorum ascripta uocabulum, sed nichil prosus monasticae conuersationis habentia, EEE*, 10.

<sup>35</sup> *EEE*, 6, *Si ergo illos gratis euangelium praedicare iussit, neque aurum vel argentum, uel aliquid pecuniae temporalis ab eis, quibus praedicabant, accipere permisit; quid rogo, illis qui his contraria gerunt, periculi immineat?*, pp. 164-; 7, *Sicque fit ut episcoporum quidam non solum gratis non euangelizent uel manus fidelibus imponant; uerum etiam, quod grauius est, accepta ab auditoribus suis pecunia quam Dominus prohibuit, opus uerbi quod Dominus iussit exercere contemnant*, pp. 136-7; 8, *Cum enim antistes, dictante*

people under the bishops' authority than they could care for, Bede suggested founding new bishoprics, using the wealth of these 'false' monasteries.<sup>36</sup> Not only were they richer than they should be, but their way of life was also a problem. Blair points out that both in the *EEE* and in his *Commentary on Ezra*, 6:18, there is a request for the destruction of the charters of perverted monasteries.<sup>37</sup>

The perverted monasteries are not only a problem of religious falsehood. Bede was also a political commentator. According to him, the king's own ministers (*ministri*) and servants (*famuli*) were calling themselves at the same time (*partier*) abbots (*abbates*) and local rulers (*praefectos*) or thegns (*ministros*) or servants of the king (*famulos regis*).<sup>38</sup> This is probably an indication that the people who founded these 'bogus' monasteries must have been of really high status, probably with royal support.<sup>39</sup> The donation became hereditary with the support of a charter and, hence, it did not go back to the king. As a consequence, *ut omnino desit locus ubi filii nobelium aut emeritorum militum possessionem accipere possint*.<sup>40</sup> In this sequence, Bede tells us that, as they cannot marry and be idle, the young men leave their fatherland (*patriam suam*) and live a life out of the chaste way, giving themselves to luxury and sex (*luxuriate ac fornicationi*).<sup>41</sup> The passage is full of moral values. However, it has already been pointed out both by Yorke and Higham that Bede was very aware of the importance of the military and the defense activities in Northumbria.<sup>42</sup> It has even been argued that Bede preferred the warrior

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*amore pecuniae, maiorem populi partem qual ulla ratione per totum anni spatium peragrarare praedicando aut circuire ualuerit in nomen sui praesulatus assumpserit, satis exitiabile et sibimet ipsi et illis quibus falso praesulis nomine praelatus est comprobatur concinnare periculum*, pp. 138-9; 16, *in saeculari uita habuerat retentare, uel sub praetextu uitae sanctioris illas quas non habuerat congregare diuitias*, pp. 156-7.

<sup>36</sup> [...] *synodica auctoritate transferantur atque in adiutorium sedis episcopalis*, *EEE*, 10.

<sup>37</sup> Blair, *The Church*, p. 111; also Grocock and Wood, *Abbots*, p. 143, n. 50.

<sup>38</sup> [...] *ac praeualente pessima consuetudine ministri quoque regis ac famuli idem facere sategerint, atque ita ordine peruerso innumeri sint inuenti qui se abbates pariter et praefectos siue ministros aut famulos regis appelent*, *EEE*, 13.

<sup>39</sup> Grovock and Wood, *Abbots*, p. lii.

<sup>40</sup> 'there is absolutely no place left where the sons of nobles and veteran thegns may receive an assignment of land', *EEE*, 11,.

<sup>41</sup> [...] *qui propositum castitatis non habent, luxuriae ac fornicationi deseruiant*, *EEE*, 11.

<sup>42</sup> B. Yorke, *Rex Doctissimus - Bede and King Aldfrith of Northumbria* (Jarrow, 2009), p. 12, 17; N. Higham, , (Re-) *Reading Bede - The Ecclesiastical History in context* (London, 2006), pp. 158-67.

Ecgrith to the pacific Aldfrith.<sup>43</sup> The consequence for Bede is clear: *neque illa milites siue comites secularium potestatum qui gentem nostrum a barbaris defendant possident.*<sup>44</sup> The economic crisis was also a military crisis.

Bede paints a portrait of a system he thought was broken. However, the letter was written on 5 November 734, and Bede died in 26 May 735.<sup>45</sup> Bede was overtly exaggerating, as he perceived a trend and tried to stop it in order to prevent what he foresaw as a kingdom in ruins. It is therefore possible to do a process of ‘reverse engineering’ to recover the ‘normative’ process before the crisis. Also, it is important to forward a bit in time to understand the developments and outcomes of the structure that Bede had observed and was criticizing. A good window to the question we are addressing can be found in the *Historia Abbatum*.

According to Bede’s *Historia Abbatum*, Benedict Biscop was *nobili quidem stirpe gentis Anglorum progenitus*.<sup>46</sup> As it was expected, after serving his king (Oswiu) for some time and reaching the age of 25, he received land as it befitted his rank.<sup>47</sup> Bede’s narrative also tells us that Biscop kept himself away from mundane military service and its temporary rewards in order to fight for the true king and to have an eternal kingdom in the city above.<sup>48</sup> He decided to follow the gospel so he would receive a hundredfold and possess eternal life.<sup>49</sup>

The first chapter of the *Historia Abbatum*, therefore, is vital to the understanding of the dynamics of land transfer and monastery foundation in Northumbria. The logic of gift-exchange is very clear in the relation of those who belong to noble stock (*nobile stirpe*). Noblemen offered military service to his king (the gift). If the nobleman survived until he was twenty-five years old, he would be granted a portion of land that befits his rank (the

<sup>43</sup> Yorke, *Rex Doctissimus*, pp. 12, 17; Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede*, pp. 158-67, Grocock and Wood, *Abbots*, p. lii.

<sup>44</sup> ‘[...] and neither do thegns or gesiths with secular power own them who might defend our people against the barbarians’. *EEE*, 11.

<sup>45</sup> *Scripta nonas Nouembris indictione tertia*, *EEE*, 17; also Grocock and Wood, *Abbots*, p. 1.

<sup>46</sup> ‘He was in fact born of a noble family of the race of the Angles’, *HA*, 1.

<sup>47</sup> [...] *denique cum esset minister Osuii regis, et possessionem terrae suo gradui competentem illo donante perciperet, annos natus circiter uinginti et quinque fastidiuit possessionem caducam*[...], *HA*, 1.

<sup>48</sup> [...] *despexit militiam cum corruptibili donatiuo terrestrem, ut uero Regi militare, regnum in superna ciuitate mereretur habere perpetuum* [...], *HA*, 1.

<sup>49</sup> [...] *et propter euuangelium ut centuplum acciperet et uitam aeternam possideret*, *HA*, 1.

counter-gift). However, Biscop decided to follow another path and did not use his royal counter-gift to marry and to have children. He decided to break the circle of gift-giving with his king, and by doing so, Biscop entered into new power relationships. However, and the *Historia Abbatum* tells us, Biscop was giving a gift to God through the Church (the monastery of St. Peter) and was expecting to receive other counter-gifts, which were a hundredfold (*centuplum*) and also eternal life. Also, we know that by founding a monastery, he ‘shunned earthly military service’ (echoing Bede’s later complaints). In other words, it granted him exemption from repaying the donation of land with military service (to his king); instead the return gift is one of perpetual prayer.

The example of Biscop is clear about two different moments when it comes to land granting. The first was to laymen, who received the land and continued to reproduce their ties through gift-giving ceremonies and rituals with their kings. On the second moment, the mechanism of gift-giving is refracted; the land is donated to the Church (in the form of the foundation of a monastery), and that moment of gift-giving excluded the king. Of course that kings were part of the circuit or network of gift-giving that included the Church. However, when it comes to land holding, once land was granted to the Church, it was (technically) granted in perpetuity, and could not come back to the king and his stock of patronage.

These two moments in terms of land property have been at the center of a historiographical debate for a long time. It is known as the debate between the folkland (or *folcland*) and the bookland (or *bokland* or *bocland*). The *folcland* is generally referred to as the land that belonged to the kingdom (although it actually belonged to the king).<sup>50</sup> This was the land given to men who performed military service or had already done it, and would now raise their families.<sup>51</sup> This kind of possession was not hereditary; the land returned to the king upon the death of the recipient.<sup>52</sup> This is the kind of donation that Ecgrith granted Biscop, his thegn. However, endowments for churches were different, including perpetual grants of land, since the institution does not share the life span of a person.<sup>53</sup> The usage of written documents (*boc*) to attest the donation is the reason why

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<sup>50</sup> E. John, *Land Tenure in Early England* (Leicester, 1960), pp. 32-8; S. Baxter and J. Blair, ‘Land tenure and royal patronage in the early english kingdom: a model and a case study’, *ANS* 28 (2006).

<sup>51</sup> T. Charles-Edwards, ‘The distinction between land and moveable wealth in Anglo-Saxon England’, in P. H. Sawyer, *Medieval settlement, continuity and change* (London, 1976), pp. 180-90.

<sup>52</sup> Grocock and Woods, *Abbots*, p. lv.

<sup>53</sup> P. Wormald, *Bede and the Conversion*, pp. 22-3.

this donation is called bookland.<sup>54</sup> Susan Wood argues that the early bookland was not landlord property but territory whose holder had royal rights over the inhabitants, chiefly food-renders.<sup>55</sup> Wood also highlights how (in the places where the documents containing the formulae survive) the documents emphasize perpetuity: *ius perpetuum, in sempiterno possidenda*. Also, it is not unusual to find references to ‘free power’ (*libera potestas, facultas* or *licencia*) to ‘exploit, alienate or bequeath’.<sup>56</sup> There is a discussion about how much this land could be actually alienated or not.<sup>57</sup> However, Biscop's donation also echoes a hypothesis defended by Wood: that the imposition of bookland meant a perpetual donation (and gift) to the Church (and God); at the same time that the donation kept the property intact (undivided) and reserved the property for a specific branch of the family.<sup>58</sup> Biscop's donation also concurs with the hypothesis that some of the lands and estates already owned by the beneficiary could be transformed into bookland.<sup>59</sup> However, the concern about ownership of sacred places must not be stripped of ideology. As Wood highlights, ‘the wish to secure a holy place for one's heirs might arise precisely because it was a holy place’.<sup>60</sup> The prestige, status and the display of power that it implies must not be taken for granted. The issue of family ties and networks of kinship and the control of these sacred places deserves attention.

The monastery of Gilling is an interesting case to understand the dynamics of kin ties and social hierarchy in Northumbria, expressed through control of a single monastic house. In origin, it was said to have been founded by King Oswiu as atonement for the murder of his rival Oswine.<sup>61</sup> We know that Ceolfrith decided to join the monastery when Tunbert was its abbot. Tunbert was a relative (*cognato*) of Ceolfrid; before him, the

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<sup>54</sup> S. Wood, *The proprietary church in the medieval west* (Oxford, 2006), p. 152.

<sup>55</sup> Wood, *The proprietary Church*, p. 153, especially n.8.

<sup>56</sup> *Idem*, p. 153.

<sup>57</sup> For doubts on the freedom of disposition, S. Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals: The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted* (Oxford, 1994), p. 329.

<sup>58</sup> Wood, *The proprietary Church*, p. 155.

<sup>59</sup> *Idem*, p. 155.

<sup>60</sup> *Idem*, p. 156.

<sup>61</sup> *HE*, III, 14.

monastery was ruled by Cynefrith, Ceolfrith's brother.<sup>62</sup> We also know that Benedict Biscop (the founder of Wearmouth) had kin ties with the family which ruled Gilling.<sup>63</sup>

It is notable, despite Bede's objections expressed in his letter, that the rule of Wearmouth in its early days was not that different. Benedict Biscop founded the monastery and was its first abbot. Eosterwine was Biscop's first co-abbot, and was also his cousin.<sup>64</sup> Esoterwine was Wearmouth's abbot while Ceolfrid was the abbot of Jarrow. Ceolfrith was also a relative.<sup>65</sup> Ceolfrith was succeeded by Sigfrith, the first who was not part of that family. However, Sigfrith he was elected while Biscop was abroad; Sigfrith's election happened under the command of electing someone who was not one of Biscop's relatives.<sup>66</sup> It has been pointed out that this command was given because Ceolfrith feared that his brother (who he seen as unsuitable for the position) might be elected.<sup>67</sup> If this is correct, Ceolfrith acted in a very conscious way in order to avoid what could be the 'natural unfolding' of events. Bede acknowledges the kinship between the three, but only to state it was not important and it did not grant any of them favours or places in the hierarchy.<sup>68</sup> However, it is hard to avoid Grocock and Wood's conclusion that Wearmouth was taken over by a single family.<sup>69</sup>

Bede seems to be quite aware about the contradictions of the society he lived in. He urged the election of abbots based on their religious office and personal wisdom, but knew this was not exactly the rule. His own *Historia Abbatum* is witness of how difficult it was for religious communities to escape aristocratic families' grasp and power. Also, the proliferation of monasteries was not free of problems and contradictions. As Grocock and Wood point out, the value in the *Epistola ad Ecgbertvm* is that it suggests that

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<sup>62</sup> [...] *frater eius Cynifridus rexerat, sed non multum ante Tunchercto cognate ipsorum regendum commiserate, VCB, 2.*

<sup>63</sup> Eosterwine as cousin of Benedict in *HA 8, Patruelis quippe erat abbas sui Beneciti*, pp. 40-1 ; Benedict and Ceolfrith as kinsmen in *HA 13, uirum uidelicet sibi non tam carnis necessitudine*, pp. 53-3 ; on the kinship between Ceolfrid and Bishop, also *VCB 16, qui magis sibi spiritali quam carnali erat cognatione conexus*, pp. 94-5.

<sup>64</sup> *HA 8, VCB 10, 12.*

<sup>65</sup> *HA 13, VCB 16.*

<sup>66</sup> *HA 11, VCB 16.*

<sup>67</sup> Grocock and Wood, *Abbots*, p. xlix, based on *HA 11, VC 16.*

<sup>68</sup> *HA 8, 13.*

<sup>69</sup> Grocock and Wood, Introduction, p. xlix.

Northumbria was living a crisis; however, it was not a temporary crisis, but a structural one.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, Grocock and Wood also state that Bede's analysis of this crisis identifies a landholding crisis, and that he held a most precise insight into the social structure of eighth-century England.<sup>71</sup> However, the problem of excessive alienation of land is not exclusive to Anglo-Saxon Northumbria. Sims-Williams points out remarkable parallels to be found in Gregory of Tours in Francia, in the *Vita Sancti Fructuosi* in Braga (current Portugal), and in the Spanish and anonymous *Regula monastic communis*.<sup>72</sup> It is possible to see the developments of the aforementioned contradictions (in Northumbria) if we take a comparative approach of the same questions going slightly forward in time.

In his letter of 734, Bede advises Ecgbert to surround himself with virtuous companions.<sup>73</sup> According to Bede, in the 'false' monasteries, it was common for some men who bought their estates to persuade their retinue (*satellitibus*) to follow them into monastic life.<sup>74</sup> In other words, Bede suggests that laymen continued to have their subordinate men with them, under their *obedientia* (obedience). An interesting parallel can be found in a letter of Alcuin, dated by Dümmler and Bullough to 801.<sup>75</sup> Addressing his pupils Calvinus and Cuculus, Alcuin questions the actions of the Archbishop Eanbald II of York (called Simeon in the letter). Alcuin states that he knows what is probably making the archbishop suffer: *Timeo, ne propter possessiones terrarum vel suceptiones inimicorum regis aliqua patiatur*.<sup>76</sup> He is also accused of chasing lands that do not belong to him: *Sufficiat sua sibi; non appetat aliena, quae in periculum saepe habentibus*

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<sup>70</sup> Idem, p. liii.

<sup>71</sup> Idem, p. liv.

<sup>72</sup> P. Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature in Western England, 600-800* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 126-30; Hillgartg, J. N., 'Popular religion in Visigothic Spain', in Edward James (ed.), *Visigothic Spain: new approaches* (Oxford, 1980), p. 47; P. H. Blair, *The World of Bede* (Cambridge, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1990), p. 136, Grovock and Wood, 'Introduction', p. liii.

<sup>72</sup> [...] *Christo fideli deuotione famulentur plurimum inuuat, EEE, 4.*

<sup>73</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>74</sup> [...] *uel certe quos ipsi de suis satellitibus ad suscipiendam tonsuram promissa sibi oboedientia monachica inuitare quieunt, EEE, 12.*

<sup>75</sup> Alcuin, Ep. 233, E. Dümmler, *Poetae latini aevi Karolini, MGH Poeta Latini I* (Berlin 1881), pp. 378-9; trans. Whitelock, *EHD I*, 208, p. 797; D. Bullough, *Alcuin: Achievement and Reputation* (Leiden, 2003).

<sup>76</sup> Alcuin, Ep. 233, Dümmler, pp. 278; 'I am afraid that he is suffering to some extent for his landed possession or for harbouring the king's enemies', Whitelock, idem.

*eveniunt*.<sup>77</sup> Not only land is being acquired (or desired) by the archbishop, but also by nobles. Alcuin asks: *Et quid ei in comitatu suo tantus numerus militum?*<sup>78</sup> The *militum* (thegns) were also accused of having a lot of foot soldiers (*gregarii*) under their command: *Item et illi gregarios, id est, ignobiles milites, pluriore habent, quam deceat, sub se.*<sup>79</sup> The exemplar for proper behaviour on this point was Archbishop Ælberht, who had died in 780 and who was, according to Alcuin in this letter, *magister noster*.<sup>80</sup> Alcuin points out that the *magister* allowed only *unus* (one) *gregarius* to each man under him; the head of the household was allowed ‘only’ two.<sup>81</sup> Although Alcuin and Bede might appear to be talking about different spheres (one was talking about episcopal clergy and the other about monks), they used the same word to talk about this surrounding people: *satellitibus*. The parallel is striking.

The letter of Alcuin provides an interesting window on the same question a couple of generations later. The question of the concentration of immovable wealth in the hands of the bishop (in this case, the archbishop) might bring problems. Also, the Church’s right to protect people from harm (known as the right of sanctuary) might have brought political problems.<sup>82</sup> It is interesting how in the letter, both are seen as possible roots of a political problem. It is an example how the issue of land was not only a matter of wealth, but of political ramifications, as Bede had attested in the mid 730s. Also, the hierarchies that are observable in the letter are important. The degrees of subordination in ecclesiastical organizations are not that different from the lay world. Alcuin’s letter makes it clear that the archbishop had a retinue of military men (a *comitatus*), and these military men had their own subordinates (the *gregarii*), a term translated by Whitelock as ‘low-born’. However, the label *milites gregarios* is actually a very specific term, used to describe the foot soldiers of the Roman army. In other words, the pattern of hierarchy around Eanbald

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<sup>77</sup> Idem; ‘Let his own possession suffice him; let him not strive after those of others, which often result in peril for their possessors’, Whitelock, idem.

<sup>78</sup> Idem; ‘What does he (Eanbald II) wants with such number of thegns in his retinue?’, Whitelock, idem.

<sup>79</sup> Idem; ‘Moreover, they too have more of the common sort, that is, low-born soldiers, than is fitting, under them.’, Whitelock, idem.

<sup>80</sup> Idem; Whitelock, idem, n. 5.

<sup>81</sup> *Magister noster neminem dimisit ex suis satellitibus plus habere nisi unum; praeter rectoribus familiae suae, id est duobus tantum*, Alcuin, Ep. 233, Dümmler, p. 278, Whitelock, idem.

<sup>82</sup> About the right of sanctuary, cf. T. B. Lambert, ‘The Evolution of Sanctuary in Medieval England’, in P. Dresch and H. Skoda (eds), *Legalism: Anthropology and History* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 115-44.

II was formed with him at the top, followed by a circle of nobles under him, each of whom had their own circles of foot soldiers of lower rank (or at least performing this activity) under them. In a 3D model, it could be understood as cones inside cones, with a person at each peak, and a circle of people in similar position under them.

Alcuin's letter is very important to point out how problems and contradictions that had been posed by Bede had not been resolved decades later. It shows how social dynamics could not change simply by a decree or a synod, but required deeper structural reorganization and social change. However, the question about the perpetuity of donations and of independence of aristocratic family remains at this other 'end' of the long eighth century. As the letter of Alcuin is not capable of enlightening this question, we must address another source that is very useful in this sense. The poem *De Abbatibus* is better suited for this analysis.

## 2) De Abbatibus: a family inheritance

The poem *De Abbatibus* was written in the very early ninth century, by Æthelwulf the priest (*presbyter*), and gives an account in verse of a Northumbrian monastery through six generations of abbots. The poem contains two datable references. The poet salutes an eminent *sacerdos*, the Lindisfarne bishop, Ecgbert.<sup>83</sup> If the attribution is correct, the poem dates to Ecgbert's pontificate 803-821.<sup>84</sup> The origin of the monastery described in the poem, however, dated from the reign of Osred I (704/5-716), who is named by the poet. According to the poem, Osred persecuted many (*multos persequitur*).<sup>85</sup> The consequence of this persecution was either pitiable death (*miseranda morte*) or exile to monastic enclosures after tonsuring.<sup>86</sup> A *dux* named Eanmund was one of these tonsured nobles. According to the *De Abbatibus* he was *nobilis hic nimium, proceri de sanguinis ortu, / exstitit, in populis summon celebrates honore*.<sup>87</sup> However, he was 'nobler (*nobilior*) before

<sup>83</sup> Æthelwulf, *De abbatibus*, trans. and ed. Alistair Campbell (Oxford, 1967); *amicorum prestantissimo atque dilectissimo sacerdoti magno Ecgberto presbiter meritis exiguus Aediluulf intime caritatis salutem*, p.3.

<sup>84</sup> Campbell, 'Introduction', in *De abbatibus*, p. xxiii.

<sup>85</sup> *De eo quod Osred regnum indeptus multos persequitur*, Æthelwulf, *De abbatibus*, II, *De eo quod Osred regnum indeptus multos persequitur*, p. 5.

<sup>86</sup> [...] *hic igitur multos miseranda morte peremit, / ast alios cogit summo seruire parenti, / inque monasterii attonsos consistere septis*. Idem, II, p. 7, v. 49-51.

<sup>87</sup> 'He was very noble, springing from the blood of chieftains, and was extolled with high honour among the people', idem, III, pp. 6-7, v. 56-7.

the Lord', because of 'his lofty mind (*culmine mentis*) and his pure heart (*candida corda*)'.<sup>88</sup> Therefore, Eanmund quit his fruitless military career (*militiam sterilem* [...] *deseruit*) and entered the service of Christ when the tyrant (i.e. Osred) was persecuting the nobles of the *Anglorum*.<sup>89</sup> Eanmund and his retinue (*comitantur*) placed themselves in a monastery.<sup>90</sup> Eanmund asked Ecgberht, bishop of Lindisfarne (803-821) for advice on education for his monks, for an altar and advice on where to build a church.<sup>91</sup> Eanmund built a church on the top of a hill and started a community there, with his companions. Among them was Ultan, an Irish scribe and illuminator;<sup>92</sup> Frithugilds, a priest (*presbiter*) who is known to give 'wondrous gifts' (*munera mira parat*);<sup>93</sup> Cwicwine, the smith (*ferrario*);<sup>94</sup> and brother Merhtheof, who had married twice, but as he was pardoned by his (first) wife he escaped damnation.<sup>95</sup>

In other words, Eanmund had in his retinue a number of skilled people, who were necessary and useful in order to build a monastery, furnish and endow it, and to keep it operational. At the same time, skilled craftsmen (especially smiths, but also priests) were required in lay premises, and people who mastered those abilities were sought by nobles. Nonetheless, more importantly to the current thesis (and the present chapter), this kind of entourage reflects control over specialized labour, whose use was a very important form of distinction for the aristocracy. The presence of Ultan, an Irish illuminator and scribe is evidence of patronage; Irish scribes and illuminators were held in high esteem, especially in the orbit of Lindisfarne.<sup>96</sup> The capacity to attract such skilled people was very important to the aristocratic culture of Anglo-Saxon England.

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<sup>88</sup> [...] *nobilior domino summe pro culmine mentis / dux uenerandus erat, fecit cui candida corda*, idem, III, pp. 6-7, v. 58-9.

<sup>89</sup> [...] *militiam sterilem magno deuotus amore / deseruit*, pp. 6-7, v. 62-3; IV, *Algrorum proceres nimium trucidante tyranno seruitium domini miles prefatus inibat*, idem, III, pp. 6-7, v. 65-6.

<sup>90</sup> Idem, IV, pp. 8-9, v. 72-3.

<sup>91</sup> Idem, VI, pp. 10-17.

<sup>92</sup> Idem, VIII, pp. 18-9.

<sup>93</sup> Idem, IX, pp. 22-3.

<sup>94</sup> Idem, X, pp. 24-5.

<sup>95</sup> Idem, XI, pp. 30-1.

<sup>96</sup> Rollason, *Northumbria*, p. 124.

As the poem states, Eanmund was a nobleman. Under his command was a group of people with specialist skills who served him both as a layman and then as an abbot. However, these texts suggest that passage from secular to clerical life was a complex process and not an instantaneous event; they require adaptation and ideological transformation. The capacity of conversion of status (from lay to ecclesiastical) was responsible for the survival of Eanmund when faced with the ‘tyrant’ Osred. To start a monastic life meant a type of exile from lay affairs, expressed on the body of the ‘exile’ in the form of the tonsure. The strategy of founding a monastery in order to escape the power of the king must not be taken for granted. It implies the control of the resources necessary – land, workforce, specialized labour, manpower, networks with other religious houses and places (evidenced by the request from a teacher from Lindisfarne). The foundation of monasteries was a political movement which meant to enable the aristocracy (or at least aristocratic families) to be independent from royal power. It is possible that even charters were used in this step.<sup>97</sup>

The evidence for the control of the site by a family is also attested in this source. Eanmund founded the cell in 704-5 and was abbot for a long time (*diu*), until 716. He was followed by Eorpwine, a priest. Eorpwine was followed by Aldwine, his brother, about whom no evidence of any kind of priesthood is given. Sigbald was the next abbot *longo tempore*, and was a priest; he probably died 771.<sup>98</sup> All these names are recorded in the Durham *Liber Vitae*. In the list of abbots of the degree of priest, it is possible to find the names Eorpuini, Siguini, Vulfsig.<sup>99</sup> In the list of abbots who had not the degree of priest, we can find Eanmund and Alduini.<sup>100</sup> The only lacuna is the absence of Sigbald. So, not only the kinship was maintained in terms of the ruling the cell, but also the artificial families that the networks of communities provided were also maintained.

*De Abbatibus* represents, therefore, the strategy that sought autonomy of the aristocracy in relation to the king. However, the aristocracy never came to be fully independent. The best example to discuss the impossibility of snapping the tie to the king is granted by the life of Wilfrid.

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<sup>97</sup> Æthelwulf, *De abbatibus*, IV, p. 8, n. 2.

<sup>98</sup> The *HR* entry of 771 is *Sibald abbas obiit*.

<sup>99</sup> *DLV*, fol. 20v.

<sup>100</sup> *DLV*, fol 24r.

### 3) Wilfrid and the aristocratic ties to kingship

Wilfrid was born in a aristocratic family. According to his hagiography, even when young he taught both people of noble rank and those bellow them.<sup>101</sup> He also learned how to clothe, arm and mount both him and those subordinated to him so that they would not be ashamed in royal presence.<sup>102</sup> Wilfrid travelled to Rome, and on his way back is tonsured by Archbishop Dalfinus, in Gaul.<sup>103</sup> Reaching Northumbria, Wilfrid is granted a total of forty hides of land and the monastery at Ripon by Alhfrith, son of king Oswiu.<sup>104</sup> Wilfrid is ordained priest in 663 and on the next year he is granted an episcopacy, since he advocated in favour of the winning side on the Synod of Whitby over the questions of tonsure and the Easter date.<sup>105</sup> Wilfrid lost his see in 666, after Alhfrith's attempt to take the throne fails.<sup>106</sup> Wilfrid regains his see in 669, by the decision of Archbishop Theodore, and retaining it until 678.<sup>107</sup> In 678 his see was divided into three, following a procedure adopted by Tehodore of reducing the size of the sees.<sup>108</sup> According to the hagiography, the queen advised Iurminburgh, married to Ecgrith, pointed out to the king the amount of wealth he held, the number of his possessions, the number of his monasteries, the size of the buildings and the numerous followers he had, armed like a king's retinue.<sup>109</sup> After losing his see, Wilfrid looked for Rome and asked for a papal decree that return him his see, and he is granted one.<sup>110</sup> The king does not concede to the papal decree and has Wilfrid imprisioned, taking him all the marks of honours to his rank.<sup>111</sup> After imprisonment, Wilfrid is again exiled, and he goes South, where he is sheltered by Berthwald, a noblemen of Mercian (nephew to Aethilred, king of Mercia); but then Wilfrid has to flee because Aethelrid and his queen (Ecgrith's sister) forbade Berthwald to harbor him.<sup>112</sup> From Mercia Wilfrid flees to Centwini, king of Wessex; Wilfrid was received, but had to run away again, since Centwini's queen was Iurminburgh's sister and therefore detested him.<sup>113</sup> Wilfrid then goes to Sussex, seeks king Aethilwalh, conversts the area of

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<sup>101</sup> *VW*, ch. 2.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>103</sup> *VW*, ch. 5-6.

<sup>104</sup> *VW*, ch. 8.

<sup>105</sup> *VW*, ch. 9-11.

<sup>106</sup> *VW*, ch. 14.

<sup>107</sup> *VW*, ch. 15, 24.

<sup>108</sup> *VW*, ch. 24.

<sup>109</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>110</sup> *VW*, ch. 29-32.

<sup>111</sup> *VW*, ch. 34.

<sup>112</sup> *VW*, ch. 40.

<sup>113</sup> *Idem*.

Selsey to Christianity, receives an episcopal seat there and ninety hides of land.<sup>114</sup> Wilfrid also helps Ceadwalla, a nobleman, advising him and being his spiritual mentor on his way to the throne. Wilfrid is granted extensive lands and other gifts from him as Ceadwalla becomes king.<sup>115</sup> Wilfrid is received again by king Aldfrith, but enmity rises again over property rights and Wilfrid flees back to Aethilred, who ensures Wilfrid that his properties will remain untouched.<sup>116</sup> Wilfrid is restored to Ripon and Hexham by the King Osred in 706.<sup>117</sup> Wilfrid remains as bishop of Hexham until his death.

During his trips, either with religious purposes or because he was exiled, Wilfrid was always surrounded by a large retinue. Wilfrid was also very keen on retrieving both his status as bishop and his right over the hides of land associated to monasteries. Wilfrid opposes kings, is a counsellor and adviser to political movements of kings and noblemen. His connections are ‘international’, as his several trips present. Even exiled, he retains his status so that he is still received by kings and noblemen, who honour his stay and respect his friendship as the relation between equals. Wilfrid still reproduces the language of power that he learned when he was a child in his father estates later at his life, although he was a member of the clergy. His capacity to call for help and support to his side, and also to be able to defend his side and point of view on a Synod attests the power to challenge kingship. However, all of Wilfrid’s efforts aim to have his rights acknowledged by the king. In other words, Wilfrid’s objective is to reproduce his condition as an aristocrat, and that could only be possible by subordinating himself to the king. The number of times he is exiled and comes back is also an evidence that even a very powerful aristocrat is not totally independent from the king. Also, this high number is also an evidence for the depth in which the clergy is a fundamental part of the politics in the realm. In this sense, the lines between clergy and lay world are not sharp, and the class perspective can bring new light to the question.

The career of Wilfrid as presented by his hagiography shows us that the border between lay and ecclesiastic grounds is blurred and ambiguous. Wilfrid held an immense amount of land; when beyond the boundaries of Northumbria or even England he still held status and prestige. However, the exile and expropriation imposed by kings reveal that the aristocracy connection to the king could never be broken. Kingship was an institution strong enough to survive weak kings and decades of kingslaying, and it still held prerogatives about property rights – one of the reasons why the aristocracy fought over

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<sup>114</sup> *VW*, ch. 41.

<sup>115</sup> *VW*, ch. 42.

<sup>116</sup> *VW*, ch. 44-48.

<sup>117</sup> *VW*, ch. 60.

the throne on the last part of the eighth century. Paradoxically, the maintenance of the institution is an evidence for its vigor, as a society without it seems to be impossible for those people.

## Conclusion

The trend perceived by Bede was a partial understanding of the contradictions of his own society. The redistribution of land which was the king's duty could not be fulfilled anymore as different branches of the aristocracy (and the aristocratic families) were set autonomously. The perpetuity of donation severed the connection between the king and the receiver of the gift. The history of the rise of the aristocracy is also a history of the attempt to emancipate the fractions of the ruling class in relation to the central power (kingship). The level of independence is better expressed on *De Abbatibus*: a family that is capable of founding a monastery as a strategy to keep independence of the king, and the monastery is ruled by the same family (which kept their ties with other communities) throughout the long eighth century. The relative autonomy of the aristocracy is also an important part of its reproduction, since they were literally occupying places where wealth, status and power converged.

The logic behind the 'corruption' of Northumbrian donation system is an aspect linked to that explored at the analysis of farming fields and enclosures, as argued in the previous chapter. The foundation of the 'bogus' monasteries also meant the ability to establish an enclosure in which the aristocracy tried to firm up its own jurisdiction. These *foci* were ideally beyond regal control, and charters were mechanisms to guarantee that. However, as Wilfrid hagiography presents his career, this mechanism not always worked and the strategy could fail. However, it was a necessary mechanism, since the king needed continuous donation in order to reproduce the ties of fidelity that connected him to the other aristocratic families. Bede's letter is an exaggeration of the trend he perceived, in order to call for immediate action. *De Abbatibus* is a witness that the foundation of monasteries could try to guarantee the possibility of safe-conduct or political refuge for the members of aristocracy in case the king decided to do what Bede advised, and it shows that these family monasteries persisted despite Bede's objections. In other words, the foundation of monasteries attempted to grant an aristocrat the right to sanctuary to himself. In this sense, the building of minsters represented the attempt to build the class privilege of safety and reproduction. Moreover, it represented the process building of privilege of

independence of class fractions in the face of the hegemonic class fraction. This privilege, however, is never fully conceded or fulfilled.

## Chapter 4)

### Circulation through Coins and Coinage

*“Gold? Yellow, glittering, precious gold?  
This much of this will make black white, foul fair,  
Wrong right, base noble, old young, coward valiant.  
[...]  
Thou visible God!”*

#### Introduction

This chapter analyses coins and coinage in the eighth century Northumbria, attempting to understand the role it played in the circulation of wealth as well as a power display. The main hypothesis of this chapter is that coinage emerges as a form of surplus extraction and appropriation, and in ecclesiastical grounds. The royal coinage only starts with Aldfrith, and it might be related to his monastic training.

The understanding of the social role played by money in modern society was once identified by Marx through these verses by Shakespeare.<sup>2</sup> In the very brief session dedicated to ‘The Power of Money’, Marx identifies money in modern society as the universal equivalent and mediator, one of the expressions of value in circulation.<sup>3</sup> The idea of money as ‘the existing and active concept of value’ is embryonic at this stage of the Marxist thought, but it was later developed in the second book of ‘Capital’. Marxist thoughts and concepts however, demand to be contextualized and historically specific. It is not possible to state that money, wealth or coins (as its material embodiment) have the same role on Anglo-Saxon England, Revolutionary France or twenty-first century Sudan. It is therefore imperative to establish the hypotheses and objectives of this section of the thesis in order to clarify the methodology used in a Marxist approach to the question of circulation.

This chapter will address the dimension of circulation through coins in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria. The first step will be a brief theoretical discussion about pre-capitalist economy, mainly the primitivist and modernist approaches and how they impact the themes of trade, circulation and economy in Anglo-Saxon England. The next step will be

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<sup>1</sup> W. Shakespeare, *Timon of Athens*, Act 4, Scene 3.

<sup>2</sup> K. Marx, ‘The Power of Money’, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*.  
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/power.htm> [accessed 28/06/2016].

<sup>3</sup> Idem.

the analysis of the nature of coins and coinage in Anglo-Saxon England. Although the approach to Anglo-Saxon England as a whole might seem problematic at first, it is a step that is required to better understand how and why Northumbrian coins and coinage are different (or not) from the area south of the Humber. While the initial (i.e. the seventh-century) coinage is basically the same both North and South of the Humber, in the next centuries Northumbrian coinage took a divergent path. Within regions South of the Humber coins became larger in size and their iconography tended to improve in terms of finesse (especially with the famous Offa's coinage). In Northumbria by contrast the stycas tended to become physically smaller, and fewer pennies were produced (compared to other regions) and this is probably a reason why they have been underused as a historical resource.

The last part of this first chapter on circulation will analyse the data available from maps of distribution of single-finds of coins in order to better understand the role of coins and coinage, and how this role connects to the aristocracy, but mainly archiepiscopal and royal power. In this sense, coinage will address the general questions of our thesis regarding the making of class and social complexity by testing the hypothesis that coinage can be used, 'as a barometer of the rise and fall of states and statehood in the early medieval West'.<sup>4</sup> Another very important hypothesis is that the coinage did not start under royal power, but at ecclesiastical grounds. In order to test this hypothesis, we will address the coinage of King Aldfrith (684-704/5).

The data here presented in this chapter was collected from the Fitzwilliam Museum's Corpus of Early Medieval Coin Finds (EMC) and also at the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) database.<sup>5</sup> The data observed in the tables at the end of the chapter, as well as the distribution maps were all collected via the EMC website.

## 1) Pre-capitalist Economy and Circulation

The secular debate over the nature of pre-capitalist economy (which the circulation is but one sphere) can be divided into two great perspectives: primitivism and modernism. This debate was summarized by Friedrich Oertel in 1925:

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<sup>4</sup> Naismith, *Money and Power*, p. 15.

<sup>5</sup> PAS, at <https://finds.org.uk/> [accessed 20/06/2016]; EMC, at <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/emc/> [accessed 20/06/2016].

‘Are we to conceive of the economy of antiquity as having reached a high level of development, or, on the contrary, as essentially primitive? Should the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries B. C. be regarded as an age of international trade and international business, [...] large scale manufacturing managed on capitalistic lines [...] with factories working for export and competing with one another for sales in the world market?

Or should we assume [...] that the stage of the closed “household economy” had not yet passed [...] that no large-scale industry producing for foreign markets existed? In brief, was the character of economic life still agrarian rather than industrial?’<sup>6</sup>

A big reference for primitivism was Karl Bücher, who thought that up to the year 1000 A.D. the economy never passed beyond the level of a domestic and closed economy.<sup>7</sup> This position was questioned by Eduard Meyer, who identified the ancient world as a context in which economic life was articulated with a highly developed system of transportation and an intense exchange of commodities.<sup>8</sup> Meyer concluded that late antiquity was in essence entirely modern.<sup>9</sup>

These positions take the circulation of goods and the developments of markets as the critical aspect of the nature of an economy. One of the first and more important critics of the equation ‘circulation equals market’ was Karl Polanyi. Polanyi’s critique of the hegemonic economic thought was summarized in, ‘The Great Transformation’, which analyses the rise and fall of liberal capitalism.<sup>10</sup> In this work, Polanyi highlights the uniqueness and historicity of a society based on market economy (the contemporary capitalistic world). More important to this chapter, however, is his idea that societies that existed before (or in parallel to) capitalism must function under different logics and

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<sup>6</sup> F. Oertel, ‘Supplement and comments appended to Robert Pöhlmann’, *Geschichte der sozialen Frage und des Sozialismus in der antiken Welt*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. III (Munich, 1925), pp. 516-17, apud Harry W. Pearson, ‘The secular Debate on Economic Primitivism’, in K. Polanyi, Conrad M. Arensberg and Harry W. Person (eds), *Trade and Market in the Early Empires: economies in theory and history* (Closcoe, IL, 1957), pp. 3-4.

<sup>7</sup> K. Bücher, *Industrial revolution* (New York, NY, English translation, 1912), pp. 96-7.

<sup>8</sup> Eduard Meyer, *Kleine Schriften* (Halle, 1924), pp. 88, apud Harry W. Pearson, ‘The Secular Debate on Economic Primitivism’, in K. Polanyi et alii (eds), *Trade and Market*, p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> E. Meyer, *Kleine Schriften*, p. 89.

<sup>10</sup> K. Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (New York, NY, 1944).

structures. In a market-dominant society, the economy would be (re)presented as a radically separate dimension of life; in other societies, the economy would be ‘embedded’ in other institutions, such as kinship, religion etc.<sup>11</sup> Prior to ‘The Great Transformation’, he argued, people would be economically orientated by reciprocity and distribution rather than being economically rational and pragmatic.<sup>12</sup> Polanyi recognizes three great systems that would represent the shades of diversity that circulation of good could take in a specific society. They are:

- a) *Redistributive* – when the production of good is directed to an entity (generally a leader) and this leader redistributes the production among its members;
- b) *Reciprocity* – the circulation of goods is based on reciprocal exchange between entities. The moral obligation involving circulation is very important, and donation that was not repaid could be a focus of conflict;
- c) *Householding* – production is focused on individual households.

The three forms are not mutually exclusive and can compose a variety of forms, respecting the specificity of each society they are referring to.

Later on, Polanyi and his *entourage* published a substantial book about pre-capitalist societies.<sup>13</sup> In this work, Polanyi rightly points out that the three functions of money (means of payment, standard and measure of value, instrument of exchange) have not always operated jointly and unified. They can be present alone, or two combined, but only in the modern market they became the ‘all-purpose money’, whose possession allowed its holder to acquire all factors of production: labour, instruments of labour, land.<sup>14</sup>

The need to point out the different nature of market (and, therefore, money) in his work tuned the focus to the qualitative difference of money in the pre-capitalist society. Polanyi was criticized by the Marxist anthropologist Maurice Godelier for the fact that his analysis interprets economic calculation, ‘both possible in a formal sense and necessary in a practical sense’, as a phenomenon that is restricted to the modern world.<sup>15</sup> In other words, although Polanyi (rightly) acknowledges the qualitative difference of money in Pre-

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<sup>11</sup> Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, p. 47.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>13</sup> Polanyi et alii, *Trade and Market*.

<sup>14</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>15</sup> Godelier, *The Mental and the Material*, p. 198.

capitalism, he negates the possibility of any quantitative perception of wealth in the pre-capitalist societies. This chapter defies this notion, because one of the roles of coins in Anglo-Saxon England is exactly to be a ‘unit of account’.<sup>16</sup>

The eclipse of circulation through market by ‘other forms of integration’ in pre-industrial societies led Polanyi to what Maurice Godelier called ‘confusion’. Godelier criticizes Polanyi because the latter confused, ‘two distinct realities, namely, the social relations of production and the social forms of circulation of the product of the production process’.<sup>17</sup> According to Godelier, ‘The production relations determine the respective number, form and importance of the forms of circulation of the social product existing within each socio-economic system.’<sup>18</sup> For Godelier, production is not only rational economic activity, but is always entangled in other non-economic dimensions (such as religion).<sup>19</sup> In other words, the circulation sphere must be taken into account with other social dimensions, both economic and extra-economic (production, politics, religion etc).

This critique is really important to the main questions of this chapter. The aim to establish and explore a connection between coins and power requires an understanding that there are elements that precede circulation. This is also one of the reasons why the ‘circulation’ part of the thesis is also preceded by the ‘production’ part.

## 2) Coins and Coinage in Anglo-Saxon England

The changing pattern of coinage in Early Medieval Europe has been a matter of great debate. The change from gold to silver coins was once seen as the real economic transition from the Antiquity to the Middle Ages.<sup>20</sup> Coins were seen as undisputed evidence of trade, and the maintenance of the ‘gold-standard’ was evidence of trade or, more specifically, traders.<sup>21</sup> The most famous critic of this understanding of coin use was Philip Grierson. Drawing inspiration from Marcel Mauss, Grierson points out that gold coinage in the

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<sup>16</sup> R. Naismith, *Money and Power*, p. 253.

<sup>17</sup> M. Godelier, *The Mental and the Material*, p. 202.

<sup>18</sup> *Idem*, p. 203.

<sup>19</sup> *Idem*, pp. 131-43.

<sup>20</sup> H. Pirenne, *Mohammed and Charlemagne*, trans. B. Miall (London, 1939).

<sup>21</sup> *Idem*, pp. 116, 244.

seventh century could be used in other ways than trade: fines, tribute, gifts (also for the dead).<sup>22</sup> All non-commercial usage of gold would outweigh its importance in trade.

Modern scholarship has discussed the theme with its acknowledged complexity.<sup>23</sup> However, it is not unusual to find interpretations of for the usage of coins in the medieval context that remount classical thinker and philosophers. Rory Naismith, for example, understands that money can be used in three forms:

- a) Means of exchange, sometimes with a subdivision for fines and taxes;
- b) Store of value;
- c) Unit of account.<sup>24</sup>

To differentiate the approach of this thesis from Naismith's, it is highly important to underline that the 'value' concept will not be considered. In Marxist tradition 'value' is a vital part of Capitalist society, and defined as 'socially necessary labour time'.<sup>25</sup> In Pre-capitalism labour is not unified under the commodity form, and therefore there is no 'abstract labour'. Discuss the nature of value in Pre-capitalism would require a thesis on its own, and instead of approaching this matter we will therefore identify money (expressed, in the current analysis, as coins) as a measure of wealth rather than value.

In this chapter coins will be understood as the embodiment of surplus and money as a quantified form of wealth, used as means of exchange and payment. Wealth took forms other than coin in the early Middle Ages: livestock and slaves were used with exactly the same intent in early Ireland; silver and golden objects were commonly traded among the elite; barter pure and simply must have been a reality for the lower classes (both in urban or rural communities).<sup>26</sup> However, coins were certainly more durable and they were made

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<sup>22</sup> M. Mauss, 'Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques', *l'Année Sociologique*, seconde série (1923-1924); P. Grierson, 'Commerce in the Dark Ages: A Critique of the Evidence', *TRHS* 9 (1959), pp. 123-40.

<sup>23</sup> P. Grierson and Mark Blackburn, *Medieval Europe Coinage, with a catalogue of the coins in the Fitzwilliam museum, Cambridge – Volume I, The Early Middle Ages (5<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries)* (Cambridge, 1986); M. McCormick, *Origins of European Economy, Communications and Commerce, AD 300-900* (Cambridge, 2002).

<sup>24</sup> R. Naismith, *Money and Power*, pp. 252-3.

<sup>25</sup> Marx, *Kapital*, Book 1, Chapter 1.

<sup>26</sup> C. Dyer, 'Peasants and coins: the uses of money in the middle ages', *British Numismatic Journal* 67 (1997), pp. 30-47; Naismith, *Money and Power*, p. 289-90.

of precious metal, a material widely desired.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, the precious metal could be (re)melted and reused or simply debased.

During the early Anglo-Saxon occupation it is possible that coins were used in ‘heterodox’ ways. At this point, it was not unusual for coins to play the role of bullion or to be used as jewellery.<sup>28</sup> Grave finds from the fifth to seventh centuries sometimes contained Roman bronze coins that were pierced and used as decorative spangles or as pendants.<sup>29</sup> These adornments were believed to have protection properties, warding evil off.<sup>30</sup> We know that in these early times gold coins were also prestige goods, as the evidence from the Sutton Hoo purse suggests. In this purse, thirty-seven Merovingian gold coins (minted between *c.* 575 and *c.* 620) plus three blanks and two billets were found.<sup>31</sup> The coins were among other exotic treasures found in the burial.<sup>32</sup> Anna Gannon observes that before the introduction of native coinage, coins must have enjoyed a special prestige in Anglo-Saxon society, and this prestige must have endured.<sup>33</sup>

The representation of rulers on coins suggests that coins were also used as a display of power for those commemorated on them. Although the idea of ‘propaganda’ must be considered carefully, it is possible that higher numbers of findings the numbers are connected to political stability (and long reigns). It is probable, for example, that Osbald, king for twenty seven days in 796 had not enough time to issue any coin in his name and/or image; however, the thirty one years of Eanred (dates) as king is linked to numerous finds (Table 2). Coins were a durable means to portray names and images; therefore they may also be thought as a device that encapsulated social memory.

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<sup>27</sup> M. Godelier, *Enigma of the Gift*, trans. N. Scott (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 163-6; Naismith, *Money and Power*, p. 289.

<sup>28</sup> A. Gannon, *The Iconography of Early Anglo-Saxon Coinage* (Oxford, 2003), p. 8.

<sup>29</sup> M. D. King, ‘Roman Coins from Early Anglo-Saxon Contexts’, in J. Casey and R. Reece, *Coins and the Archaeologist*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London, 1988), pp. 224-9, at p. 224.

<sup>30</sup> A. Meaney, *Anglo-Saxon Amulets and Curing Stones*, BAR British Series 96 (Oxford, 1981), pp. 213 and 220; Gannon, *The Iconography*, p. 8.

<sup>31</sup> J. P. C. Kent, ‘Catalogue of Sutton Hoo Coins, Blanks and Billets’, in R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford, *The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial*, vol. 1: *Excavations, Background, the Ship, the Coins, Dating and Inventory* (London, 1975), pp. 588-647.

<sup>32</sup> A. Care Evans, *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial* (London, 1994), p. 89.

<sup>33</sup> Gannon, *The Iconography*, p. 9.

As the last (but not least) point of importance for coins in Anglo-Saxon England is the importance it has to chronology of archaeological finds, sites etc. One of the pieces of evidence used to date the site of Yeavinger was a coin that was found close to a wall.<sup>34</sup> Coins are so important on dating finds that Blackburn says archaeologists are ‘keen’ to find them, so the job is made easier.<sup>35</sup> The new chronology that is being proposed for Anglo-Saxon graves and grave goods has a substantial discussion on the impact that new (and more accurate) forms of dating coins through radiocarbon techniques can have on the available evidence.<sup>36</sup> The analysis will now focus on the general observable trends of coinage, paying close attention to its nomenclature, classification and chronology.

## 2.a) Gold issues

The numismatic bibliography uses several words to describe gold coins. There are finds of some few early *solidi* (the coins that refer and emulate golden Roman coins). The coins that followed this standard are called *thrymsas*, *tremisses* or shillings.<sup>37</sup> The first native Anglo-Saxon coins were originally from the south, more specifically in Kent (although not only in this realm). Some emulated large Roman *solidi*, others the smaller Merovingian *tremisses*.<sup>38</sup> It is very important, however, to observe the role played by Christianity in this matter.<sup>39</sup> The first coin-like object produced in the late sixth century was a *tremissis* bearing the name of Bishop Liudhard, who was the companion of the Frankish princess Bertha who came to England to marry Ælthelberht of Kent.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Hoper-Taylor, *Yeavinger*, p. 186.

<sup>35</sup> M. Blackburn, ‘Coinage in its archaeological context’, in Hamerow, Hinton and Crawford, *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology* (Oxford, 2011), p. 580.

<sup>36</sup> M. Archibald, ‘Numismatics and Chronological Models’, in John Hines and Alex Bayliss (eds), *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Centuries AD: A Chronological Framework* (London, 2013), pp. 493-515.

<sup>37</sup> A. Gannon, *Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles 63 – British Museum, Anglo-Saxon Coins I. Early Anglo-Saxon Gold and Anglo-Saxon and Continental Silver Coinage of the North Sea Area, c. 600-760* (London, 2013), 2013.

<sup>38</sup> Gannon, *The Iconography*, p. 10.

<sup>39</sup> Grierson and Blackburn, *MEC*, p. 156.

<sup>40</sup> P. Grierson, *Dark Age Numismatics* (London, 1979), M. Werner, ‘The Liudhard Medalet’, *Anglo-Saxon England* 20 (1991), pp. 27-41; Gannon, *The Iconography*, p. 10.

The second quarter of the seventh century produced more local coinage compared to the earlier century. The Crondall Hoard, for example, produced 70% of Anglo-Saxon coins in the seventh century, and the rest are from the continent.<sup>41</sup> The third quarter of the seventh century observes increase in the production of gold coins, but their gold content plummets from *c.* 40% in the latest Crondall coins to *c.* 15% or even less.<sup>42</sup> The same debasement is observed in Merovingian Francia, where, by *c.* 675, silver coinage was favoured over gold coinage.<sup>43</sup> The golden jewellery was also debased around this time. Although some of the jewellery was made of previously crafted and used items, the later attached parts (as loops) are the elements which are debased.<sup>44</sup> The late seventh century saw a transition from pale gold shillings to silver pennies (now also known as *sceattas*), a pattern also followed in the Merovingian reform of 670s.<sup>45</sup>

It is important to highlight that both Blackburn and Gannon talk about the debasement, observable across the Channel, but don't explain (or speculate) about the reason of this trend. The question of gold supply is not addressed by the authors, and in this sense their work become more descriptive than explanatory.

Northumbria also produced gold coins at this time.<sup>46</sup> The more recent find is a gold shilling, found in 2012 by a metal-detector user.<sup>47</sup> With this addition, the total number of gold shillings (or *thrymsas*) reached fourteen.<sup>48</sup> Gold coins were highly valued in Northumbria. Bede tells us about princess Eorcengota who was dreaming of angels

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<sup>41</sup> Grierson and Blackburn, *MEC* 1, p. 163; MEC no. 127, dated '650 or a little earlier'; apud Gannon, *The Iconography*, p. 11.

<sup>42</sup> Grierson and Blackburn, *MEC*, p.163.

<sup>43</sup> *Idem*, pp. 94-6, Gannon, *The Iconography*, p. 11.

<sup>44</sup> S. Chadwick-Hawkes, J. M. Merrick and D. M. Metcalf, 'X-Ray Fluorescent Analysis of some Dark Age Coins and Jewellery', *Archaeometry* 9 (1966), pp. 98-138, p. 120; Gannon, *The Iconography*, p. 11, n. 46.

<sup>45</sup> Grierson and Blackburn, *MEC* 1, pp. 90-97, 138; MEC 15, p. 157, Gannon, *The Iconography*, p. 12.

<sup>46</sup> R. Naismith, 'The Social Signification of Monetization in the Early Middle Ages', *Past and Present* 223.1 (2014), pp. 3-39.

<sup>47</sup> EMC 2012.0025.

<sup>48</sup> Variety A: Ai – EMC 1994.5004, EMC 2010.0154; Aii - EMC 2009.0268. Variety B – EMC 1994.5003. Variety C - EMC 1948.00751, EMC 1948.00753, EMC 1993.9076, EMC 1996.1001, EMC 2007.0088, EMC 2008.0432, EMC 2011.0105, PAS YORYM-78A342, Dix Noonan Webb catalogue 63, lot 196. The new finding was classified as type 'D' and will be analysed on the Northumbrian coins session.

scouring her monastery searching for an *aureum nomisma* (a gold coin).<sup>49</sup> In order to better understand the role of these issues, the next step is the case study of the ‘Harrogate coin’ (figure 6).



Figure 6 - The 'Harrogate Coin', recorded in the Fitzwilliam's Museum Database as 2012.0025. J. Naylor and M. Allen, 'A new variety of the gold shilling of the "York" group', *Studies in Early Medieval Coinage: Volume III*, p. 144. Add a scale?

This gold shilling has resemblance with varieties A and B discussed by Blackburn and Williams.<sup>50</sup> The iconography can be interpreted as a full figure of a person flanked by two crosses, bearing what may be a belt and even legs sprouting under the belt.<sup>51</sup> The image of someone standing with a cross is also known in later sceattas, as in the examples below (figure 7). According to Gannon, the iconography promoted the power of the cross in warding off evil.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>49</sup> *HE*, III, 8.

<sup>50</sup> M. Blackburn, ‘A variant of the seventh-century ‘York’ group of shillings found in Lincolnshire’, *NC* 154 (1994), pp. 204-208; G. William, ‘The gold coinage of seventh-century Northumbria revisited’, *N. Circ.* 115(1), pp. 6-8.

<sup>51</sup> J. Naylor and M. Allen, 'A new variety of the gold shilling of the "York" group', *Studies in Early Medieval Coinage: Volume III*, pp. 143-148.

<sup>52</sup> A. Gannon, *The Iconography*, pp. 87-93.



Figure 7 - On the left, series U, type 23c. PAS IOW-12C6B7. On the right, Series Y, Eadberht, with Archbishop Egberht. PAS YORYM-989833. J. Naylor and M. Allen, 'A new variety of the gold shilling of the "York" group', *Studies in Early Medieval Coinage: Volume III*, p. 145.

The reverse of the 'Harrogate coin' is different from all other known York shillings, and Naylor and Allen have identified them as a variant design of Blackburn's variety A. Its centre is interpreted as a Greek cross with four forked limbs, with lozenge centre with an inner circle. It is surrounded by fourfold design of a runic 'd' at the end of each cross arm; they are alternated with a cross pommée.<sup>53</sup> There are parallels for this style in the coins known as 'Witmen-type' south of Humber, which pushes its dating back as one of the earliest York shillings known.<sup>54</sup>

The SG analysis also revealed that the coins contains *c.* 55% of gold content, lower than the 60-65% of varieties A and B, but on the borderline for variety C.<sup>55</sup> Its weight is 1.28g, which is acceptable for variety A and B and on the upper end of variety C.<sup>56</sup> In this sense, both the stylistic and the metrology of the coin lead us to think that this is the earliest variety yet known.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, it is called 'series' D by Naylor and Allen.<sup>58</sup>

Recent finds (at least since 2007) have increased the number of the coins known to series A, B and (now) D. Many of them were discovered in the south of Northumbria,

<sup>53</sup> Naylor and Allen, 'A new variety', p. 144.

<sup>54</sup> *Idem*, p. 145.

<sup>55</sup> Williams, 'The gold coinage', p. 7.

<sup>56</sup> Naylor and Allen, 'A new variety', p. 145.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*.

which helps confirming the long-held suspicion of a York mint at a very early stage.<sup>59</sup> The numbers of findings are also evidence that the earliest series (A, B and D) were probably small-scale compared to the variety C, which correspond to 70% of current exemplars.<sup>60</sup> It is important to highlight, however, that Naylor and Allen do not formulate any hypotheses that could explain the increase of coin production as times goes by. The factor could be many: increase in productivity, access to a new or better supply of precious metal, increase in the surplus acquired by settlements etc. The hypothesis this chapter lines out is how the higher number in coin production (or at least coin findings) can be related to the success of minsters. This hypothesis will be better addressed below, in the section dedicated to mints and moneyers. For now, it is essential to highlight how the earliest coins portray clerical iconography, and how the production of coins must not be thought separate from the ideological, political and economic power of the Church and its aristocratic rulers.

## 2.b) Silver issues

The silver issues of coins cover a large area, reaching England, Frisia, Francia etc.<sup>61</sup> Historiography calls this kind of coin a ‘penny’ or *sceat* (or, more commonly, the plural *sceattas*). *Sceat* comes from a misunderstanding of the laws of Ethelberth of Kent, in which it was used to refer to an equivalent weigh of gold.<sup>62</sup> Some scholars, therefore, opted for the expression ‘silver pennies’.<sup>63</sup> In a recent revisit of this question, John Hines has defended the term *sceattas* for silver coins.<sup>64</sup> Even if the term was originally a mistake, traditional use turned this word as a synonym for this kind of coin, making it widely known and accepted.<sup>65</sup>

The production of silver coins presents an interesting fact for the study of Anglo-Saxon England taken as a whole. South of Humber, from the late seventh to the middle eighth century they generally circulate in the south-east, mainly

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<sup>59</sup> Idem, p. 146.

<sup>60</sup> Idem, p. 147.

<sup>61</sup> W. Op den Velde and D. M. Metcalf, *The Monetary Economy of the Netherlands, c. 690-c715 and the Trade with England: a Study of the Sceattas of Series D* (Amsterdam, 2003), p. 1.

<sup>62</sup> Grierson and Blackburn, *MEC I*, p. 157.

<sup>63</sup> P. Grierson, ‘La fonction sociale de la monnaie en Angleterre aux VIIe-VIIIe siècles’, in *Moneta e scambi nell’alto medioevo* (Spoleto, 1961), pp. 341-62; Grierson and Blackburn, *MEC I*, p. 157-8.

<sup>64</sup> John Hines, ‘Units of account in gold and silver in seventh-century England: *scillingas*, *sceattas* and *pæningas*’, *The Antiquaries Journal* 90 (2010), pp. 159-61.

<sup>65</sup> Gannon, *Sylloge*, p. 51.

between Kent and East Anglia, and follow the pattern of Merovingian coinage: stating the name of the moneyer and/or the place where it was minted.<sup>66</sup> In Northumbria, King Aldfrith (685-704) minted coins bearing his name, a model that would only happen consistently in the south on the second half of the eighth century.<sup>67</sup> Some coins attributed to Egfrith of Northumbria (670-685) were found, but later proved to be modern forgeries.<sup>68</sup> On the south, the first phase was followed by an intermediate phase, whose main characteristics were the name of the moneyer imprint on the coin and the dies that were of a cruder quality of craftsmanship than its predecessors.<sup>69</sup> They kept the same weight of their predecessors, around 20 grams.<sup>70</sup> In contrast to what happened in the continent for the series D (contemporary to it), this phase kept a high content of silver (c. 90-95%).<sup>71</sup> The Secondary phase, however, saw a debasement down to 20 per cent or less of silver content in the coins.<sup>72</sup> They also reduced their weight standards (to 0.8-1.0 g.).<sup>73</sup> In order to fit the south of Humber into a broader chronological understanding of coinage, it is useful to refer to Rigold's chronology. According to this chronology, there are three phases:

- a) Preliminary phase, c. 675-680, with a small % of gold;
- b) Primary phase, c. 680-710, using silver;
- c) Secondary phase, c. 710-760, using lesser % of silver.<sup>74</sup>

In Northumbria, on the other hand, Eadbert's (738-58) coins (series Y) were produced with a slightly heavier weight than in South (0.9 to 1.1 g) and kept a relatively high percent

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<sup>66</sup> D. M. Metcalf, 'Monetary Circulation in Southern England in the first Half of the Eighth Century', in D. H. Hill and D. M. Metcalf (eds) *Sceattas in England and the Continent*, BAR British Series 128 (Oxford, 1984), pp. 193-205.

<sup>67</sup> Naismith, *Money and Power*, p. 97.

<sup>68</sup> Elizabeth Pirie, *Catalogue of the early Northumbrian coins in the Museum of Antiquities, Newcastle upon Tyne* (1982), pp. 3-4.

<sup>69</sup> Grierson and Blackburn, *MEC I*, p. 167.

<sup>70</sup> *Idem*, p. 168.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>72</sup> Gannon, *Iconography*, p. 13.

<sup>73</sup> Grierson and Blackburn, *MEC I*, p.172.

<sup>74</sup> S. E. Rigold, 'The two primary series of *sceattas*', *British Numismatic Journal* 30 (1960/61); Op den Velde and Metcalf, *Monetary Economy*, p. 2.

of silver (50-90%).<sup>75</sup> It seems that the ‘change of phases’ in Northumbria took different directions than it took in other regions. One of the reasons suggested by this would be its relative isolation.<sup>76</sup> In terms of representations, Eadbert’s coins (of his first phase) presented his name around a small cross and a walking beast on the other side, similar to the pattern presented by Aldfrith’s (685-704) (figures 8 and 9).<sup>77</sup> As the spelling, form of the obverse cross, direction of the beast and the extra symbols present are varied, it was once proposed that these details would be evidence for coins done in different mints, moneyers or belonged to different periods.<sup>78</sup> The second series of coins from Eadbert combines his name with the representation of his brother Ecgbert, the Archbishop of York (735-66). From the 53 coins that were minted with reference to Ecgbert, 42 had reference to Eadbert on the other side.<sup>79</sup> Ecgbert is shown as a standing figure holding a cross and a crozier, or two crosses. This model established the pattern of archiepiscopal coinage that followed up to the Viking conquest in 867 at York (and Canterbury up to 923).<sup>80</sup> The only archbishop of York who had no coins produced (or not found up to now) following this standard is Æthelbert (767-780).



Figure 8 - Aldfrith's coin, with the cross and name in one side, and the beast in the other. (EMC: 2006.0223)

<sup>75</sup> Grierson and Blackburn, *MEC I*, p.173.

<sup>76</sup> Gannon, *Iconography*, p. 13.

<sup>77</sup> Grierson and Blackburn, *MEC I*, p.173.

<sup>78</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>79</sup> 'York: Archbishop Ecgbert (732-766)', *Early Medieval Corpus of Coin Finds - Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles*.

<sup>80</sup> Grierson and Blackburn, *MEC I*, p.173.



Figure 9 - Eadberht's coin, following the pattern set by Aldfrith, with the circular name and the beast on the other side. (EMC: 2014.0053)

Hiatuses are observable in king's coinages. As Table 2 shows, not all kings were capable of producing coins. Although there is a relationship between period that a king ruled and his capacity for minting coin, there is no simple mathematical correlation between the amount of time of rule, the number of coins found, and political stability. The reality of coinage is not that simple and nor is the survival and discovery of this kind of source.

Northumbrian *sceattas* are believed to have only one mint: York.<sup>81</sup> From the current total of coins found from AD 600 to AD 900 in Northumbria (1293), few were from uncertain mints (45, or approximately 3.48%), and even fewer uncertain, but are probably from the York mint as well (5, or approximately 0.38%). This means that, despite having different moneyers, the mint would still be the same (table 8).

In the end of the 'long eighth century' (around 840s) the coinage of Northumbria was basically brass; however, silver remained available for contemporary metalwork of other kinds.<sup>82</sup> Naismith points out that the debasement of the coinage must be understood as a result from the shortage of supply (of silver) or economic depression, but also from the political instability of the kingdom and the pressure of the Vikings.<sup>83</sup>

Silver issues represent a point in which Northumbria reformed its coinage before the South of Humber as well as the Continent. While Eadberht (737-58) has probably produced loads of coins with a regular standard (table 2), the same policy was adopted by

<sup>81</sup> Naismith, *Money and Power*, p. 54.

<sup>82</sup> For the availability of silver for metalworking of other nature, see J. Naylor, 'The Circulation of Early-Medieval European Coinage: a Case Study from Yorkshire, c. 650–c. 867', *Medieval Archaeology*, 51 (2007) pp. 41-61; Grierson and Blackburn, *MEC* I, pp. 295–303; G. Thomas, "'Brightness in a Time of Dark": the Production of Secular Ornamental Metalwork in Ninth-Century Northumbria', in R. Bork (ed.), *De re metallica: the Uses of Metal in the Middle Ages* (Aldershot, 2005), p. 43.

<sup>83</sup> Naismith, 'The Social Significance', p. 14.

Pippin III (751-68) in Francia and by Offa of Mercia (757-96) at a later stage.<sup>84</sup> However, as the eighth century approach its end, the Carolingian denier assume its classic broad and thin form, the same with what is called (by Naismith) the mid to late Anglo-Saxon penny.<sup>85</sup> Northumbria had already changed the coinage to the brass pattern. The next step is to analyse it.

### **2.c) Northumbrian ‘stycas’ and the coins of the South**

The ‘stycas’ from Anglo-Saxon England were called by Blackburn and Grierson the ‘most common and least respected Anglo-Saxon coins’.<sup>86</sup> Although the numbers of surviving material is high, careful in terms of conceiving the scale of trade is required, since many of there is a ‘high degree of die-linking’.<sup>87</sup> The introduction of stycas represents another difference between Northumbria and the region south of the Humber: while the South kept the broad silver pennies, Northumbria retained coins of small and thick module.<sup>88</sup>

The stycas can be divided into two phases. The earlier one contained more silver (15-40%) than the second (5-15%).<sup>89</sup> Coins of Archbishop Eanbald II (796-837) are part of the first phase, but Archbishop Wigmund’s (837-854) are part of the second, for example. From Eanred (810-841) onwards, the numbers of moneyers rose. Some of the moneyers probably struck coins in both phases, as Monne and Gadutels (for example).<sup>90</sup> This means that moneyers might retain their social status and function after a change of ruler. During Eanred’s reign, it is observable different spellings of his name, and this is evidence for less sharing of obverse dies between moneyers. Also, it is possible that the form of the king’s name varied as a decision of the moneyers, so people would know the die from which the coin was originated.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Idem, pp. 13-14.

<sup>85</sup> R. Naismith, ‘Kings, Crisis and Coinage Reform in the Mid-Eighth Century’, *Early Medieval Europe*, 20 (2012), pp. 291–332.

<sup>86</sup> Grierson and Blackburn, *MEC I*, p. 298.

<sup>87</sup> H. E. Pagan, ‘Northumbrian Numismatic Chronology in the Ninth Century’, *British Numismatic Journal* 38 (1969), p. 3.

<sup>88</sup> Naismith, ‘The Social Significance’, p. 14.

<sup>89</sup> Grierson and Blackburn, *MEC I*, p. 298.

<sup>90</sup> Idem, p. 299.

<sup>91</sup> H. E. Pagan, ‘The Bolton Percy Hoard of 1967’, *British Numismatic Journal* 43 (1973), pp. 6-7.

Despite the relatively low amount of precious metal in the coin, Northumbrian stycas were imitated. The contemporary imitations and derivatives generally occur in hoards and probably circulated among the official, regular coins.<sup>92</sup> It is probable that they were not a simple fraud, but could be tolerated as a product of a less skilled workshop or were struck in times of political uncertainty.<sup>93</sup>

An important feature of the stycas of Northumbria is the fact that the people responsible for writing down the patterns for the die-cutters know how to write. Although this sentence seems to state the obvious, it is crucial to highlight that there are very close parallels from this usage of names and those seen in manuscript sources.<sup>94</sup> We have analysed in the first chapter of the thesis how names can be meaningful and important to historical research, both on the DLV and on the Coppergate Helmet. The names on the coins have orthographical and even phonological evidence comparable to those in the DLV.<sup>95</sup> They are also comparable in date too to the later parts of the ‘original core’ of the DLV.<sup>96</sup> The names also share strong similarities to an earlier record of Old English names in the MSS of Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica* which preserve Northumbrian features.<sup>97</sup> As we have already mentioned, for their own durability, coins were also a mean to convey and embody social memory (just like the DLV), and to be remembered. The durability of the written word added to the durability of the metal was probably very attractive as means for celebrating the powerful.

Stycas are the most commonly found and probably most widely produced coins in the ‘long-eighth-century’. However, they must be thought and analysed carefully. A good example of this need is brought to us by the excavations at West Heslerton. This settlement has produced a total of 24 coins (Tables 5 and 6).<sup>98</sup> From these, only 5 are sceattas. Although the number may not seem high at first, for a single settlement it is remarkable. As Dyer has pointed out, it is not unusual archaeologist to find only one or no coin for later

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<sup>92</sup> Grierson and Blackburn, *MEC* I, p. 300.

<sup>93</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>94</sup> V. Smart, ‘The personal names on the pre-Viking Northumbrian coinages’, in D. M. Metcalf (ed), *Coinage in Ninth-Century Northumbria – The Tenth Oxford Symposium on Coinage and Monetary History*, BAR British Series 180 (Oxford, 1987).

<sup>95</sup> *Idem*, pp. 245-7.

<sup>96</sup> For dating, see chapter one.

<sup>97</sup> Smart, ‘The personal names’, p. 245.

<sup>98</sup> D. Powlesland, *Pers. Comm.*

medieval sites.<sup>99</sup> For the eighth-century Northumbria, a great number of stycas were found in hoards, and although Metcalf and Grierson think that even the coins that were treasured were in circulation before, the scale of coin usage in daily trade transactions cannot be immediately transposed.<sup>100</sup> In other words, the usage of stycas seems to imply a more monetized economy, but not in the scale a modernist approach would argue in favour of.

An important critique about coinage and power is how sometimes the flourishing of trade inside a kingdom must be preceded by peace and absence of internal conflicts. Peace was already mentioned as the reason why Aldfrith could produce his coins in the seventh and eighth century.<sup>101</sup> The ninth century was not a time for neither internal nor external peace in Northumbria; yet, it was one of the most productive in terms of coins. The key to understand the connection between coins and power in Northumbria lie in the relations of production of the coins. The next step is to analyse them.

## **2.d) York and circulation**

York is a major market centre in Northumbria. If the hypothesis that coinage started under ecclesiastical command, the importance of York as a trade centre must also be considered early. In the early 7<sup>th</sup> century York was an important royal centre for the kings of Northumbria, probably harbouring both political and economic activities.<sup>102</sup> York also has a symbolic importance to the Church, since it was in the city that Edwin of Northumbria was baptized by Paulinus.<sup>103</sup>

York retained its status over time. Besides an important royal centre and a spot for bishopric, York was elevated to the condition of archbishopric in 735. At the same time, the place acted as a bridgehead of trade between other places of England, northern France, the Rhinelands and the Low Countries.<sup>104</sup> The Fishergate excavations found buildings dating from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> centuries; these buildings could form a trading settlement that was connect to York centre of power (ether from the king, bishop and/or archbishop).<sup>105</sup> Although that settlement was located outside the walls of the city, it is probable that it belonged to a continuous usage of the bank of the river, connecting the settlement to the

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<sup>99</sup> Dyer, 'Peasants and Coins', p. 33.

<sup>100</sup> Grierson and Blackburn, *MEC I*, p. 298.

<sup>101</sup> J. R. Madicott, 'Prosperity and Power in the Age of Bede and Beowulf', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 117 (2002), pp., 25-45; B. Yorke, *Rex Doctissimus*, p. 14.

<sup>102</sup> Rollason, *Northumbria*, p. 72.

<sup>103</sup> *HE*, II, 9-14.

<sup>104</sup> Rollason, *Northumbria*, p. 78.

<sup>105</sup> AY 7/1, p. 3; AY 7/2, p. 298.

city itself.<sup>106</sup> Both the excavations of Fishergate and Dixon Lane/George Street have provided pieces of evidence of manufacture and trade: imported pottery and glasses, iron-working, bone-working and antler-working tools (like slag, antler tine tips and cone offcuts).<sup>107</sup> The items found on both of them suggest both daily trade and trade focused on ostentatious consumption.

The evidence for trade intensification in York might be complemented with the evidence of stycas. The presence of more abundant and debased coins is an evidence of a more monetised economy, in which coins (and trade) are more present in daily life. The intensification of trade goods that are visible archaeologically and the abundance of stycas show internal development in terms of commerce. There is no sign of such development in Mercia or any other Anglo-Saxon regions at the time. However, the relations between York, aristocratic power and circulation is not yet historiographically clear, and future excavations and historical works must develop the theme.

## **2.e) Coin production: die-cutters, mints and moneyers**

The production of medieval coins could be done in two different ways. The first method consisted in casting metals in prepared moulds; the second transferred the design to pieces of metal through the constant blows of a hammer.<sup>108</sup> The hammered coinage method was more commonly used in the West, and it is more difficult to counterfeit.<sup>109</sup> The hammer hit the upper part of the metal piece that is going to be a coin, and this part is called 'trussel'. The hammer hit and imprinted the reverse of the coin. The lower part ('pile' or anvil die) carried the image that was imprinted in the obverse of the coin.<sup>110</sup> As the hammer hit the trussel, the upper part (or the reverse) of the coin had to be substituted more frequently.<sup>111</sup> For the same reason, the more intricate design was reserved for the lower die, or the obverse of the coin.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> J. M. McComish, *Roman, Anglian and Anglo-Saxondavian activity and a Medieval cemetery on land at the junction of Dixon Lane and George Street, York, AYW9* (York, 2015), p. 46.

<sup>107</sup> McComish, *Roman*, p. 48.

<sup>108</sup> A. Gannon, *The Iconography*, p. 14.

<sup>109</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>112</sup> *Idem*, p. 15.

The people who prepared the dies are those that numismatists call die-cutters. No information has survived about them in the early Anglo-Saxon times; however, it is possible that they could have been jewellers and/or ironsmiths of very complex iron work.<sup>113</sup> The possibility of the coincidence between jewellery production and people involved in the production of coins are generally drawn from Merovingian Francia, where Abbo and Eligius were at the same time jewellers and moneyers.<sup>114</sup> This possibility has been under discussion at least since 1950.<sup>115</sup> It is clear, however, that it was a very special skill practised by a small number of people.<sup>116</sup>

The appearance of coins is one of the most important factors of their production. The preconceived notions of how legitimacy and authority should be portrayed on them should be match by what was visible on the surface of coins.<sup>117</sup> It was the appearance and the quality of the iconography and inscriptions what separated coins and currency from small pieces of bullion.<sup>118</sup> Since quality was a requisite the people and/or place that held the skill to produce it were certainly important and must be thought and analysed in some detail.

Outside Northumbria, it is possible to observe five ‘mint-towns’: London, Canterbury, Rochester, Ipswich and Southampton or Winchester. In Northumbria, the only known mint site was at York (Table 8).<sup>119</sup> However, thinking about ‘mint-towns’ can be misleading. In the first place, there is no single mint building in any Anglo-Saxon town known to us.<sup>120</sup> In the second place, the base of coin production was not a place, but a person, who is called by historiography the moneyer. The responsibility of the moneyer was to oversee the processes of minting and exchange, and who took responsibility for the product and its quality by imprinting his name on the surface of the coin (although not all coins bear the

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<sup>113</sup> Idem, p. 15.

<sup>114</sup> *MEC*, 99.

<sup>115</sup> R. Jessup, *Anglo-Saxon Jewellery* (London, 1950), p. 38.

<sup>116</sup> Gannon, *Iconography*, p. 15; Naismith, *Money and Power*, pp. 142-3.

<sup>117</sup> I. Garizpanov, ‘The Image of Authority in Carolingian Coinage: The Image of a Ruler and Roman Imperial Tradition’, *Early Medieval Europe* 8 (1999), pp. 197-218; Naismith, *Money and Power*, p. 47.

<sup>118</sup> Naismith, *Money and Power*, p. 47.

<sup>119</sup> Idem, p. 128.

<sup>120</sup> Idem, p. 132.

name of the moneyer).<sup>121</sup> Naismith defines the mint of a town as the ‘agglomeration of all moneyers active therein, each of whom probably operated his own separate workshop’.<sup>122</sup> The primary sources in which Naismith bases his argument is a twelfth-century document (the Winton Domesday), projecting it back to the Anglo-Saxon reality.<sup>123</sup> Although Naismith’s definition is good because it perceives and expresses the precedence of people over places (or buildings), it raises other questions.

The generalization of the label ‘moneyer’ is fruitful in the sense that it highlights that although only one name was imprinted on the coins, it was a collective work rather than a personal, solitary job that a single name might suggest. However, since historiography generally addresses moneyer as the person who is recorded on the coin, it might imply that people who were working at the workshops shared the same social status, blurring the internal hierarchy (or hierarchies) of the profession. ‘Mint-workers’ could a better concept to refer to people who worked under the supervision and authority of the moneyers. As the theoretical perspective assumed in the thesis highlights hierarchies and the appropriation of labour, it is important to underline that not everyone working in these workshops was powerful enough to have their name marking a coin. The privilege to have names sharing the same storage of social memory (coins) was reserved to few.

The role of the moneyer was to guarantee the issue and its quality.<sup>124</sup> Unfortunately the documentary evidence for moneyers is very scarce. Where there is evidence, it suggests that they were men of at least moderately high standing and wealth.<sup>125</sup> Blackburn has suggested that in the late eighth and early ninth centuries they were prominent men drawn from the mercantile circles and communities, rather than the royal house and family.<sup>126</sup> Blackburn argues in favour of this position because the same individuals continued in office even when the political control of the region changed. This perspective also raises problems. In the first place, it attributes a disconnect between aristocracy and the mercantile function, which can be problematic. In the second place, it does implicitly state

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<sup>121</sup> J. D. Brand, *Periodic Change of Type in Anglo-Saxon and Norman Periods* (Rochester, 1984); Naismith, *Money and Power*, p. 132.

<sup>122</sup> Naismith, *Money and Power*, p. 132.

<sup>123</sup> *Idem*, p. 132-4.

<sup>124</sup> A. Gannon, *Iconography*, p. 15.

<sup>125</sup> *Medieval Europe Coinage*, 98. again

<sup>126</sup> M. Blackburn, ‘Money and Coinage’, in R. McKitterick, *The New Cambridge Medieval History II: c. 700- c. 900* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 555.

that the aristocracy as a group cannot prevail in a context of political turmoil. If moneyers belonged to high aristocratic ranks, and they continued in their office despite the change of the people in the throne, this is evidence for the crystallization of the aristocracy. In other words, the crystallization of high-ranked positions of the aristocracy and the fragility of the position of the king are phenomena that go hand-in-hand with each other. In order to better explain this thought, a step back is required in order to think of this question in the *longue durée*.

Seventh- and eighth-century Anglo-Saxon England was a context in which the organization of minting was initially in the hands of moneyers but came slowly under the control of the king.<sup>127</sup> Very few of the coins in this period bear the name of the king under whose rule it was issued (Aldfrith is the exception).<sup>128</sup> The iconography bears the meaning of the coins, and it is the key to unlock its social role. The series of coins for this period (Second Series) suggests a limited literate patronage, with access to artefacts and skilful craftsmen who could understand and reproduce a sophisticated, religious and over-regional iconography. Not by coincidence, the craftsmen capable of manipulating precious metal into these patterns can be found in church premises.<sup>129</sup> The complexity of the work could also help explain why the moneyers continued to issue coins despite the changes on the throne. Those who would command the coinage should also be capable of organizing wealth into coinage and managing the necessary bureaucracy.<sup>130</sup> These are the elements that are enrolled by Gannon in order to discover the possible the origin of this series. What she does not mention – and which is essential in our approach – is the possibility of extracting labour and surplus from the community. Without surplus production (and, in this case, acquisition), no trade can take place. Her conclusion is that there is only one institution capable of fulfilling all her ‘requirements’ at that time: the Church.<sup>131</sup> The additional element mentioned (surplus acquisition) does not challenge her conclusion, but confirms it.

Influenced by the ideas of John Blair about the Church in Anglo-Saxon England, Gannon understand the minsters (*monasteria*) as ecclesiastical complexes housing

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<sup>127</sup> Blackburn and Gierson, *MEC* I, p. 139.

<sup>128</sup> See table 2.

<sup>129</sup> Blair, *Church*.

<sup>130</sup> Gannon, *Iconography*, p. 189.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibidem*.

religious communities endowed with lands and workforce.<sup>132</sup> The minster was at the same time a holy city (*civitas sancta*), whose scale, size, population, buildings wealth and economic importance were very close to towns (even closer than *wics*).<sup>133</sup> At the same time, late seventh-century minsters were endowed by kings (and some were headed by queens and royal ladies); some of these served as ‘alternative courts’, as ways for aristocratic groups to gain privileges from the king.<sup>134</sup> To be a part of a minster community was also observed as a lifestyle of prestige, culture and increasing wealth.<sup>135</sup> The location of many of these minsters was near road crossings and waterfronts, nodal points in the transport system.<sup>136</sup> This would not only ease the acquisition of prestige goods, but also the trade and exchange that would come from the surplus produced.<sup>137</sup>

The iconography of the Second Series coins suggest a dual motive: to preach the gospel and to display pastoral commitment. Gannon points out that these coins were public and were an ideal way to teach the illiterate, as Gregory the Great had counselled.<sup>138</sup> The iconography could also be interpreted as a way to justify the increasing wealth of the Church.<sup>139</sup> The main source for this embarrassment (widely used by the historiography) is Bede’s *Epistola ad Ecgbertvm* (chapter 2).<sup>140</sup> Another evidence that must be taken into consideration for this topic in the coins themselves, and what they can tell about the moneyers.

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<sup>132</sup> Idem, pp. 189-90.

<sup>133</sup> For the *civitas sancta*, R. Gem, ‘Church Buildings: Cultural Location and Meaning’, in J. Blair and C. Pyrah (eds), *Church Archaeology: Research Directions for the Future*, CBA Research Report 104 (York, 1996), pp. 1-6, p. 1. Also J. Blair, ‘Churches in the Early English Landscape: Social and Cultural Contexts’, in J. Blair and C. Pyrah (eds), *Church Archaeology: Research Directions for the Future*, CBA Research Report 104 (York, 1996), pp. 6-18, at p. 9.

<sup>134</sup> D. Parsons, ‘The Mercian Church: Archaeology and Topography’, in M. P. Brown and C. A. Farr (eds), *Mercia an Anglo-Saxon Kingdom in Europe* (Leicester, 2001), pp. 50-68, at pp. 62-3.

<sup>135</sup> J. Blair, ‘The Minsters on the Thames’, in J. Blair and B. Gloding (eds), *The Cloister and the World: Essays in Medieval History in Honour of Barbara Harvey* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 5-28, at p. 6.

<sup>136</sup> Blair, ‘The Minsters on the Thames’, pp. 8 and 17.

<sup>137</sup> Gannon, *Iconography*, p. 190.

<sup>138</sup> Gregory’s epistle 13 in *Patrologia Latina*, lxxcii, col. 1128, *pro lectione picture est*. Apud Gannon, *The Iconography*, p. 190, n. 75.

<sup>139</sup> Gannon, *Iconography*, p. 190.

<sup>140</sup> *EEE*.

In Northumbria, the earliest king to have coins issued with the moneyer's name imprint as is Æthelred I (774-79). From the 28 exemplars recovered so far, ten had no moneyer name on them; ten were issued by Ceolbald; four by Tidwulf; two by Cuthheard; 1 by Hnifula; one by Eanbald. In his second reign (790-96), the same moneyers are present in some exemplars, and we can add one coin with the name of Hwætræd and four with the name of Cuthgils (all this data is expressed in Table 1). The kings that ruled in between his two turns were Ælfwald I (779-88) and Osred II (788-90); while Ælfwald I produced some coins (there are 17 exemplars found so far), none of Osred II (date) has been found.

Therefore, we can observe a trend in minting. In the first place, coinage took place in minsters and religious places. Then, it also became a royal 'prerogative' by the time of Eadberht (737-58) and his brother, the archbishop Ecgberht (732-66). It is important to highlight that Ecgberht was also the first archbishop of York. In this sense, the first archbishop of York is also the first cleric to have his name imprinted on a coin in Northumbria. By the early ninth century, Northumbrian coinage had changed to the pattern of stycas. Coins containing the name of King Eanred (810-841) comprise a total of 233, from which only 12 specimens reveal unknown moneyers. The total of moneyers that produced coins for him is 15 (Table 2). For four years he shared his rule with Archbishop Wigmund (837-854). We can find 89 coins with Wigmund's name, and they are all stycas; from these, only 5 have uncertain moneyers, and the identifiable moneyers are 5 different people (Table 2). Eanred's and Wigmund's coin production do not share moneyers, i.e., the king and the archbishop had different moneyers who would work only for each of them. From the context analysed in this chapter, there is a universe of 37 known moneyers and only four of them have produced coins both to a king and an archbishop (Tables 4 and 5). It is reasonable to think that the very powerful would desire to have these skilled people under their networks of subordination. One way of exercising power and authority would be to take the moneyers away from the sphere of influence from the other powerful person (archbishop or the king). Only very few of them could serve both.

The connection between ecclesiastical and secular powers is important when trying to understand the role of coins and coinage in Anglo-Saxon England. In order to have a deeper understanding of this matter, the next step will be the analysis of a case study: the coinage of Aldfrith.

### 3) Aldfrith's coinage

Aldfrith is a king that is oddly well recorded for early medieval times. He was mentioned by Bede, Stephen (the hagiographer of Wilfrid), Alcuin, and the Irish annals. Aldfrith also collects adjectives that are clear about his love for learning. He is called *doctissimus* by Bede, *rex sapientissimus* by Stephen, and *sapiens* by the Irish annals.<sup>141</sup> In Irish tradition, a *sapiens* (just like the *doctissimus* to Bede) was a person who had great knowledge, and was skilled in interpreting the scriptures.<sup>142</sup> The Irish *sapiens* was also capable of judging Church matters, as well as canon law and probably secular law as well.<sup>143</sup>

The love for books and learning was an essential part of Aldfrith's recorded life and acts. Some of the gifts that were given to him were books: *De Loci Sanctis* from Adomnán, abbot of Iona; also the *Epistola ad Arcircium*, from Aldhelm, abbot of Malmesbury.<sup>144</sup> The most impressive, however, was his exchange with Abbot Ceolfrith of Wearmouth and Jarrow: 8 hides of land for a book of 'The Cosmographers'.<sup>145</sup> Bede also states that Aldfrith was pursuing his studies and learning among the Irish prior to his ascension to the Northumbrian throne.<sup>146</sup> It is quite clear that Aldfrith knew how to read, and was trained at it. Barbara Yorke points out that this training took place at religious communities.<sup>147</sup> His family background is also not clear, but it is possible that he had family links to the Irish.<sup>148</sup>

The reign of Aldfrith was considerably peaceful, without conquest pretensions south of Humber or to the region of the Picts. Barbara Yorke argues that the king 'was pro-active in

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<sup>141</sup> *HE* IV, 26; *VW*, 44; C. Ireland, 'Aldfrith of Northumbria and the learning of a *sapiens*', in K. A. Klar et alii (eds), *A Celtic Florilegium. Studies in Memory of Brendon O Hehir* (Lawrence, 1996), pp. 63-77; T. M. Charles-Edwards, 'The context and uses of literacy in early Christian Ireland', in H. Pryce (ed.), *Literacy in Medieval Celtic Societies* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 264-71.

<sup>142</sup> Yorke, *Rex Doctissimus*, p. 5.

<sup>143</sup> T. M. Charles-Edwards, 'Early Irish law', in D. Ó Cróinín (ed.) *A New History of Ireland. I Prehistoric and Early Ireland* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 331-70.

<sup>144</sup> Adomnán, *De Locis Sanctis*, ed. and trans. D. Meehan and L. Bieler, *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae 3* (Dublin, 1958); M. Lapidge and M. Herren (eds), Aldhelm, 'Acircium', *Aldhelm, The Prose Works* (Ipswich, 1979), pp. 31-47.

<sup>145</sup> *HA*, 15.

<sup>146</sup> *VCB*, 24.

<sup>147</sup> Yorke, *Rex Doctissimus*, p. 6.

<sup>148</sup> *Idem*, pp. 7-11.

developing the internal economy of Northumbria' (i.e., his coinage).<sup>149</sup> The distribution of his coins is concentrated in the Deiran area and eastern Yorkshire (figure 10). One area of concentration of his coins finds is in the Yorkshire Wolds; this area was very important economically, especially for the production of iron.<sup>150</sup> It is possible that some of the silver that was employed in the first batches of the coins that were minted with his names used the silver present in the royal treasury.<sup>151</sup>

The background of Aldfrith is therefore clear about his training under Church patterns and standards. In order to understand if this leaning and learning to ecclesiastical affairs are also part of his coinage, it is important to compare the iconography of one of his coins to one of the seventh-century anonymous coins.

Aldfrith's coins are easily spotted and recognized by the quality and distinctness of the letters that form his name. Also, the high quantity of precious metal along the pattern of name on one side and the beast at the other make it easy to accredit. The anonymous shillings from the seventh century, however, have different iconography (figures a-d, table 1). Series A lack any inscription, while series B and C bear inscriptions, although the ruler is unknown. However it is possible to observe the representation of a symbol of power on one side – man with cross or crosses on anonymous series A-C, a beast on the other. On the other side, series B-C also present the writing in the same circular fashion. The iconography, however, is not the only way to pin down the similarities. Maps of distribution can also be very helpful.

The maps of distribution of the single finds of Aldfrith's can be compared to the anonymous versions in the seventh century (figures 10 and 11). All the finds seem to be somehow connected to both commercial places and religious houses. Gannon had identified minsters as places of production of the earliest Northumbrian coins. If this thought is right, Aldfrith's coinage is a coinage of a churchman or someone who was very close to the Church and was made king, not the contrary. At the same time, coins were produced by minsters and religious settlements. In this sense, Aldfrith's coins are more 'ecclesiastical' than actually royal. They are considered the very first named royal coinage

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<sup>149</sup> Idem, p. 14.

<sup>150</sup> C. P. Loveluck, 'The development of the Anglo-Saxon landscape, economy and society "On Driffeld", East Yorkshire, 400-750 AD', *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 9 (1996), pp. 25-48; J. Naylor, 'York and its region in the eighth and ninth centuries AD: an archaeological study', *Journal of Archaeology* 20 (2001), pp. 79-105.

<sup>151</sup> Yorke, *Rex Doctissimus*, p. 15.

in Northumbria, but actually they belong to another tradition, the one he was raised with and taught for a long time, whose link was not lost when he became king. At the same time, it is not possible to detach Aldfrith's person and coins to his royal status. In other words, by being part of a different tradition, he inaugurates another, that was later recovered by Eadberht. The change produced by Aldfrith was very dialectical: 'Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past'.<sup>152</sup> By bringing a skill and method that originated in ecclesiastical spaces to kingship, he inaugurated in Northumbria something new. The creation of royal coinage in Northumbria might have been seen by Aldfrith as a way to emulate those people who he admired so much and from whom he devoted his early life to learn with. However, it was also a very important dimension in which the aristocracy rivalries and struggles can be observed.

The trajectory of coinage suggested in this chapter directs a different path for power in Anglo-Saxon England. It is common for the historiography to understand power as deriving directly from the king, and that the aristocracy appropriated the different spheres of power of the kin, 'privatising' them. In Northumbria, however, the pattern seems to be that aristocracy of the Church could extract surplus and transform it into coins before the king. This new possibility is then appropriated by the monarch. Not all the social power has its source in the king.

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<sup>152</sup> K. Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), part I.

Table 1 - Northumbrian Gold coins



a) Aldfrith sceatta  
weight: 1.27g; findspot: Rendlesham,  
Suffolk. EMC 2014.0201



b) Anonymous gold shilling of York  
weight: 1.28g, gold content c. 65%;  
findspot: Burton-by-Lincoln, Lincolnshire.  
EMC 1994.5003



c) Anonymous gold shilling of York  
weight: 1.26g, gold content c. 64%;  
findspot: near Dunnington, East Yorkshire.  
EMC 2010.0154



d) Anonymous gold shilling of York  
weight and gold content, unknown;  
findspot: Middleham, North Yorkshire.  
EMC 2011.0105



Figure 10 - Map of the distribution of Aldfrith's coins (685-704). Map produced by the EMC website [accessed 25/09/2016].



Figure 11- Map of distribution of Anonymous Nothumbrian coins (600-675). Map produced by the EMC website [accessed 25/09/2016].

## Conclusion

When approaching economics, circulation and money, historiography can be divided into three trends: a) the ‘primitivist’ approach that stresses the importance of gift exchange, and coins as one valuable item among others in the networks of political and social reciprocity; b) coins as expression of money, and a society in which money played a substantial component to the economy, but generally less than 50% of transactions; c) the ‘cultural’ approach, with close attention to the symbolic dimensions of coins.

The approach that was suggested and followed in this chapter was to understand coins in their social dimension, with a holistic point of view. In this sense, the symbolic dimensions cannot be thought separately from the political tensions or the economic cycles. The propagandistic and ideological aspects of coins cannot be separated from the fact that they are being imprint on an item that is a quantified abstraction of wealth.

Coins also represent the abstraction of surplus and labour extracted from the dependant people. In other words, they are also a measure of labour being sucked from workers, and go up in the social hierarchies, reach its peak with the king or the archbishop, and then they might come back to the peasantry to mediate their daily trade, but marked with the name of their ruler and a built-in ideology.

It is very important to highlight the historicity and change in the roles played by coins and people involved in their circulation, as well as people named in them. The trend observed is that coinage started as a clerical prerogative, and then transformed to a royal one; in the ninth century it seems to have been a display of power of the moneyer rather than only the king. Therefore, coins can be very important evidence to understand power and distinction in the aristocracy, both for the king and the moneyer. The continuous presence of moneyers throughout different rulers is also evidence for the prominent position of these people. Coin production in this context is based on extraction of labour and surplus rather than peace. Dissemination of coins, crystallization of the aristocracy and political instability (for kings) are converging phenomena. The rise of names in coinage is nothing more than one of the many chapters in the history of the ascending aristocracy of Northumbria, and resembles the importance of names present on the DLV.

Table 2 - Kings and Coins (from single finds)

King	Dates	Number of Coins Found	Mint	Moneyer	Observations
Anon	600-867	13	Unknown	Unknown	-
Aldfrith	685-704	26	2 Uncertain, 1 probably York, 23 York	Unknown	East of England, majority of find near rivers or coast (Fig. 10)
Eadwulf	704-705	No Coins Found	-	-	-
Osred I	705-716	No Coins Found	-	-	-
Coenred	716-718	No Coins Found	-	-	-
Osric	718-29 May 729	No Coins Found	-	-	-
Ceowulf	729-731; 731-737-8	No Coins Found	-	-	-
Eadberht	737-758	146	1 Mint Unknown [EMC 2006.0363]; 145 York	Unknown	Concentration in Northeast of Humber area
Oswulf	758-759	No Coins Found	-	-	-
Æthelwald Moll	759 to 765	1	York	Uncertain	Coin under number 2012.0036; on the obv. side is written '+EDILRhLD'; on the reverse 'ECGBERhT AR'
Alhred	765-774	21	All Yor	Unknown	
Æthelred I	774-779	28	27 from York, 1 Unknown (number 2011.0038)	10 Unknown 10 Ceolbeald 4 Tidwulf 2 Cuthheard 1 Hnifula 1 Eanbeald	-
Ælfwald I	779-23 September 788	17	All Yor	Unknown	-
Osred II	788-790	No Coins Found	-	-	-
Æthelred I	790-18 April 796	47	All York	1 Hwætraed 2 Hnifula 4 Cuthgils 4 Eanbeald 6 Cuthheard 6 Unknown 11 Tidwulf 13 Ceolbald	1: in Canterbury; higher concentration westwards from Canterbury.
Osbold	796 (27 days reign)	No Coins Found	-	-	-

Eardwulf	14 May 796 - 808/10	7	All York	All by Cuthheard	-
Ælfwald II	806/8- 808/10	11	All York	1 Cuthbeorht 10 Cuthheard	-
Eanred	810-841	233	All York	15 Hwætræd 8 Cynewulf 9 Dægbeorht 48 Monne 8 Wihtræd 15 Aldates 7 Eardwulf 38 Eadwine 31 Forthræd 6 Hereræd 3 Gadutels 1 Æthelheah 14 Brother 16 Wilheah 2 Heardwulf 12 Unknown	All 'stycas'
Æthelred II	840/841- 844; 844-c. 848/9	179 (129 referred as 'stycas')	All York	10 Brother 1 Cynemund 24 Eanræd 12 Forthræd 7 Leofdæg 45 Monne 4 Wulfræd 2 Wulfsige 3 Wihtræd 53 Eardwulf 3 Odilo 15 unknown	-
Rædwulf	844	19	All York	5 Monne 6 Coenræd 2 Brother 2 Forthræd 1 Hunlaf 1 Eanræd 2 uncertain	All stycas
Osberht	c. 848/9- 862/3	36	All York	14 Monne 13 Eanwulf 5 Winebeorht 1 Æthelheah 1 Æthelhelm 2 uncertain	All 'stycas'
Ælle II	862/3/7-23 March 867	No Coins Found	-	-	-

Osberht	867-21 March 867	No Coins Found	-	-	-
Illegible	737-867	96	73 York 23 Unknown	2 Monne 1 Leofthegn 93 uncertain	All 'styca'
ANON.	850-867	229	207 York 4 probably York 18 Uncertain	210 uncertain 1 Forthræd 1 Eanna 3 Eardwulf 3 Hereræd 7 Monne 2 Wilheah 1 Merewine 1 Tidwulf	All 'styca'

Table 3 - Archbishops and Coins – from single finds

Archbishop	Dates	Number of Coins Found	Mint	Moneyer	Observation
Ecgeberht	732-766	<b>53 (total)</b> 42 with Eadberht on the other side 1 with Æthelwald Moll on the other side 10 with Alchred on the other side	All York	All Unknown	-
Æthelbert	767-780	No Coins Found			-
Eanbald I	780-796	<b>11 (total)</b> All mint with Æthelred (790-796) on the other side of the coin	All York	All Unknown	-
Eanbald II	796-837	16	All York	All Unknown	-
Wigmund	837-854	89	All York	36 by Coenræd 19 by Hunlaf 19 by Æthelweard 10 by Æthelhelm (3 are also named after Wulfræd. Their number are 2001.0174, 2001.0176 and 2001.0221). 1 (broken piece) containing only 'Æthel' (E[d]i[ ]), number 1006.0050 5 with moneyer uncertain	All 'Stycas'

Wulphere	854-900	16	All York	All Wulfræd	-
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Table 4 - Moneyers

Moneyer	No. of Coins	Person named on obverse
Æthelweard	19	All with Wigmund
Æthelheah	2	1 with Eanred, 1 with Osberth
Æthelhelm	11	1 with king Osberth, 10 with Wigmund
Aldates	15	15 with king Eanred
Brother	26	14 with king Eanred; 10 with king Aethelred II; 2 with Raedwulf
Ceolbald	13	13 with Aethelred I
Coenræd	42	6 from king Rædwulf; 36 from ab Wigmund
Cuthbeorht	1	1 from king Ælfwald II
Cuthgils	4	4 from king Aethelred I
Cuthheard	25	2 from Aethelred I; 6 from the second reing of Aethelred I; 7 from Eardwulf; 10 from king Aelfwald II
Cynemund	1	1 from Æthelred II
Cynewulf	8	8 from Eanred
Dægbeorht	9	9 from Eanred
Eadwine	38	38 from Eanred
Eanbeald	5	1 from Aethelred I (1st reign); 4 from Aethelred I (2nd reign)
Eanna	1	Anonymous
Eanræd	25	24 with Aethelred II; 1 with Raedwulf
Eanwulf	13	13 with Osberht
Eardwulf	63	7 with Eanred; 53 with Aethelred II; 3 annonymous.

Forthræd	46	31 with Eanred; 12 with Aethelred II; 2 with Raedwulf; 1 with Annonymous
Gadutels	3	3 with Eanred
Heardwulf	2	2 with Eanred
Hereræd	9	6 with Eanred; 3 Annonymous
Hnifula	3	1 with Æthelred I (1st reign); 2 with Æthelred I (2nd reign)
Hunlaf	20	1 with king Raedwulf; 19 with Wigmund
Hwætræd	16	1 with king Aethelred I; 15 with king Eanred
Leofdæg	7	7 with Æthelred II
Leofthegn	1	Illegible
Merewine	1	Annonymous
Monne	121	48 with Eanred; 45 with Aethelred II; 5 with Readwulf; 14 with Osberht; 7 anonymous; 2 with someone illegible
Odilo	3	3 with king Æthelred II
Tidwulf	16	4 with Æthelred I (1st reign); 11 with Æthelred I (2nd reign); 1 anonymous
Wihtræd	11	8 with Eanred (2 of them use runic characters); 3 with Aethelred II
Wilheah	18	16 with Eanred; 2 anonymous
Winebeorht	5	5 with Osberht
Wulfræd	20	4 with Æthelred II; 16 with Wulfhere
Wulfsige	2	2 with Æthelred II

Table 5 - Moneyer that produced coins for king and archbishops

Moneyer in common	King and Archbishop
Coenræd	Rædwulf (844) and AbpWigmund (837-854)
Hunlaf	Rædwulf (844) and Abp Wigmund (837-854)
Æthelhelm	Osberht (848/9-862/3) and Abp Wigmund (837-854)
Wulfræd	Æthelred II (840/1-844) and Abp Wulfhere (854-900)

Table 6 - Coins of West Heselton produced from spits

Coin ID	Material	King / Archbishop / Anon type	Sub-type	Period
011AB003022	Bronze	Eadbert	Styca	737-758

011AB002912	Silver	Porcupine	Sceatta	670-690
011AB010603	Bronze	Abp Wigmund	Styca	837-854
011AB019929	Bronze	Æthelred II	Styca	841-849
002DB002643	Bronze	-	Styca	737-755
002DB023543	Bronze	Abp Egbert of York	Styca	732-766
002DB028787	Bronze	Porcupine	Sceatta	670-690
002DB041628	Bronze	-	Styca	737-755
011AE003018	Silver	Porcupine	Sceatta	670-690
011BB015992	Bronze	-	Styca	737-755
011BE002900	Bronze	-	Styca	737-755
011BE009496	Bronze	AETHEL (Æthelred II) + Abp WIGMUND	Styca	840-848
011BF006950	Bronze	AETHEL I+EANBA (Æthelred + Eanbald)	Styca	706-786
011BF002292	Bronze	Eanred	Styca	810-841
011CE203039	Bronze	Eanred	Sceatta	810-841
012AA003048	Bronze	-	Styca	737-755
012AA009525	Silver alloy	-	Styca	737-755
012AB098828	Bronze	-	Styca	737-755

Table 7 - Coins of West Heselton produced from stratified deposits

Coin ID	Material	King, Archbishop or Anon. Type	Sub-type	Period	Exc. type
011AB00369AA	Bronze	Eanred	Styca	Middle Saxon	Pit fill
011BA00155AE	Bronze	Aethelred	Styca	-	Ditch fill
011BA01038AB	Bronze	-	Styca	-	Layer
012AD05261AA	Silver alloy	Porcupine (670-690)	Sceatta	Middle Saxon	Grub fill
012AD08054AT	Bronze	-	Styca	-	Slot fill
012AE00020AA	Bronze	-	Styca	-	Layer

Table 8 - Totals

Total of Kings' Coins	1108
Total of Archbishops' Coins	185
Total of Coins	1293
Total of Coins containing the moneyer's name	625
Coins with unknown Mints	45
Coins whose origin is probably the York mint	5
Total of Kings in the Context Analyzed	23
Total of Archbishops	6
Total of Moneyers	37

## Chapter 5)

### Time, History and Class through narratives

*Man does not live by bread alone*

(Deuteronomy 8: 2-3)

#### Introduction

This chapter sets out the importance of History-making for the aristocracy. Its main hypothesis is that the shaping of time and the making of History are vital elements for the ideological reproduction of the aristocracy. The argument is that the different genres of narratives converge to form a sense of historicity, one that organizes and crystalizes the aristocratic experience.

It has been a few decades since a French Medievalist pointed out that History cannot be understood only through analysis of cold tables and numbers; therefore History should always retain faces and people. Drawing from the biblical paraphrase that starts this chapter, Jacques Le Goff highlights the importance of connecting the material realities to the mentalities.<sup>1</sup> Previous chapters of the current thesis addressed the economic relations that were certainly a key factor in the (re)production of the aristocracy, its hard materiality, or, to put it simply and metaphorically, its daily bread. Nonetheless, the ideological elements that produced the aristocracy's cohesion (or lack of it) are also vital to a full understanding of this social class. The current chapter will address the sense of belonging through narratives, and the social identity that is formed from it.

The question of narratives and the sense of belonging in Anglo-Saxon England have been addressed in many ways by the historiography. The investigation of identity in early medieval times has led down many paths, all of them connected to new perspectives in History. In this sense, Anglo-Saxon England has been studied under the light of many

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<sup>1</sup> J. Le Goff, 'Mentalities: a History of Ambiguities', trans. D. Denby, in J. Le Goff and P. Nora (eds), *Construction the Past – Essays in Historical Methodology* (Cambridge, 1985, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Paris, 1974), pp. 166-180, pp. 168-169.

different identities: religious (mainly paganism and Christianity);<sup>2</sup> ethnic (British and Anglo-Saxons, Anglo-Saxons and Vikings);<sup>3</sup> local and regional identities;<sup>4</sup> gender roles and identities, often through the lens of the history of women.<sup>5</sup>

The main purpose of this chapter is to discuss the existence of a class identity in Northumbria in the long eighth century. The main hypothesis of this chapter is that different types of narratives converge to build History in that society. The History that is built (encompassing storytelling, narratives, and many other genres of communication and texts) is connected to the ruling power in that society, not least through the control of literacy. The History that is built cannot be other than the History of the aristocracy. In this sense, the chapter will try to demonstrate how History-making is also connected to the ‘Space of Experience’ and ‘Horizon of Expectation’, being a part of the ideological reproduction of the Northumbrian aristocracy.<sup>6</sup>

In order to explore this hypothesis it is necessary to start by explaining our concepts of History and how they it can be related to the ideological reproduction of the aristocracy.

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<sup>2</sup> W. A. Chaney, *Paganism to Christianity in Anglo-Saxon England* (1960); H. Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity*; J. Blair, *The Church*; N. J. Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede*; B. Yorke, *The Conversion of Britain* (Harlow, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> B. Ward-Perkins, ‘Why did the Anglo-Saxons not become more British?’, *The English Historical Review*, 115.462 (2000), pp. 513-33; W. O. Frazer and A. Tyrell (eds), *Social Identity in Early Medieval Britain* (Leicester, 2000); J. Hines (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxons from the Migration Period to the Eighth Century: An Ethnographic Perspective* (London, 2003); C.A. Snyder, *The Britons* (Oxford, 2003); N. J. Higham (ed.), *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2007); J. F. Kershaw, *Viking Identities: Scandinavian Jewellery in England* (Oxford, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> Rollason, *Norhumbria*; R. Weetch, ‘Cultural Contact and Identity Expression: Brooches in Late Anglo-Saxon England’ (2011); R. Weetch, ‘Wearing Money: coin brooches in England, AD 700-1100’ (2014); T. F. Martin, *The Cruciform Brooch and Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2015).

<sup>5</sup> Fell, *Women*; M. P. Richards and B. J. Stanfield, ‘Concepts of Anglo-Saxon Women in the Laws’, in H. Damico and A. Hennessey Olsen (eds), *New Readings on Women in Old English Literature* (Indiana, IN, 1990), pp. 89-99; for studies on masculinity, see D. Hadley, ‘Engendering the grave in later Anglo-Saxon England’, in *Proceedings of the Chacmool Conference*, 2004, eds G. McCafferty, S. Terendy, and M. Smekal (Calgary, 2004), pp. 121-32; idem, ‘Warriors, Heroes and Companions: negotiating masculinity in Viking-Age England’, *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 15 (2008), pp. 270-84; Pasternack, ‘Negotiating’; D. Hadley, ‘Negotiating gender, family and status in Anglo-Saxon burial practices, c. 600-950’, in L. Brubaker and J. M. H. Smith (eds), *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300-900* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 301-323; G. R. Owen-Crocker, *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England*, 2nd ed. (Woodbridge, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> R. Kosseleck, *Futures Past – On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. K. Tribe (New York, NY, 2004).

From this discussion, the chapter will then address what a narrative is, what genres of narrative are available for our period, and what the connections are between their form and content. The next step addresses the nature and the sense of past in Anglo-Saxon England, through analysis of particular Latin and Old English words. The chapter will then briefly address Bede and his works, using him as an example of how different kinds of narratives can have their own internal rules and forms. Bede's use of numerous genres converges to build a sense of historicity. However, historicity also implies an understanding of the future, and this topic will also be addressed when discussing Bede's works. The broader topic of History, however, requires a case study in order to demonstrate the previous discussions. The case study of this chapter is the *Historia Regum* edited in the earlier twelfth century by Simeon of Durham.

## 1) History and Ideological reproduction

When it comes to the discussion of historical sensibilities and the production of what could be called 'historiography' in Anglo-Saxon England, Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (*HE*) is an obvious choice for analysis. The *HE* can be classified as part of an example early medieval historiography.<sup>7</sup> Isidore of Seville and Gregory of Tours are other exemplars of this genre. This kind of historiography is heavily informed by *Latinitate* and by Christianity's cosmogony and demiurgic discussions, combining these traditions with local and specific materials.<sup>8</sup>

The writing of History was by no means neutral for Bede. As Alan Thacker points out, 'Bede had an agenda'.<sup>9</sup> Writing history for him was taking part in a greater process: God's plan for mankind as the world moved towards the end of time and the final judgment.<sup>10</sup> It was also an important way to practice the exegesis of the work of Church on Earth.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> C. Taranu, 'Senses of the Past: The Old English Vocabulary of History', *Florilegium*, vol. 29 (2012), pp. 65-88, p. 65.

<sup>8</sup> P. Wormald, 'Bede, the Bretwaldas and the Origins of the Gens Anglorum.' In *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society: Studies Presented to J. M. Wallace-Hadrill*, P. Wormald, Donald Bullough, and Roger Collins (eds) (Oxford, 1983), pp. 99-129.; H. Mayr-Harting, 'Bede's Patristic Thinking as an Historian.' In *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. Anton Scharer and Georg Scheibelreiter (Vienna, 1994), pp. 367-74.; Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede*.

<sup>9</sup> A. Thacker, 'Bede and history', in DeGregorio, *The Cambridge Companion*, pp. 170-189, p. 170.

<sup>10</sup> Thacker, 'Bede and History', p. 170.

<sup>11</sup> Idem, p. 188.

Bede's style was sober. Many of his works were composed of short sentences, simple syntax and prosaic vocabulary. This is a perfect combination to be read aloud.<sup>12</sup> Silent reading was not common in Anglo-Saxon times, and Bede's style is evidence of his self-awareness of how wide his ideas would (or could) circulate.<sup>13</sup> It was also a didactical strategy, since the genre and writing style was well suited for broadcasting his message.

A sense of historicity was not present only within the Church. As will be explored below, secular society was not deprived of its narrative within history-building and time-shaping. The different narrative genres in Anglo-Saxon England converge to create a sense of Historicity that is certainly different from the modern understanding. However, it does not mean that 'time' can be taken for granted.

Reinhart Koselleck once explored two concepts that are very important for understanding how societies produce their sense of historicity. They are two articulated concepts, called 'space of experience' and 'horizon of expectation'. For him, 'experience' is 'present past', in the way that events are incorporated and remembered.<sup>14</sup> However, that experience is not only the experience of the present, but also that of institutions and generations that are distant, and therefore, alien (at first sight, at least).<sup>15</sup> 'Expectation' also happens today, but refers to the future. It is 'future made present'.<sup>16</sup> However, they are not future and past, but are evidence used to understand the 'present' they refer to. The 'space' and 'horizon' must also be explained as well as 'experience' and 'expectation'.

Experience based in the past is spatial, since it is assembled into a totality with 'many layers of earlier times simultaneously present'.<sup>17</sup> However, experience itself does not give a sense of 'before' and 'after', and multiple experiences can be accessed by memory simultaneously.<sup>18</sup> Horizon is the 'line behind a new space of experience will open', but can never be directly accessed.<sup>19</sup> The legibility of the future confronts a limit that cannot be

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<sup>12</sup> Brown, *A Companion to Bede*, p. 78.

<sup>13</sup> G. H. Brown, 'The Dynamics of Literacy in Anglo-Saxon England', in D. Scragg (ed.), *Textual and Material Culture in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 183-212.

<sup>14</sup> Koselleck, *Futures Past*, p. 259.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>17</sup> *Idem*, p. 260.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>19</sup> *Idem*, pp. 260-1.

overcome, since each step in direction of the horizon means the horizon steps back as well. The horizon is responsible for movement.

Time, experience and expectations present themselves in different kinds of narratives throughout the long eighth century. Narratives, experience, expectations and time have a complex relation between form and content. Narratives are different expressions of the knowledge of the past as well and encode a perspective of expectations to the future. By organizing experience, knowledge, time, and expectations a sense of historicity is produced. Historicity also encompasses identity and belonging. The sample of narratives used in this chapter converge to show the existence of a thorough craft: History-making.

History produced in Anglo-Saxon times, however, is not equivalent to the modern, scientific and scholarly field of knowledge. It refers to its own sense of historicity, in which the criteria are connected to different devices of legitimacy and truth. Modern History veracity and authenticity are connected to critical apparatus, acknowledgment and recognition of academic peers. History-building legitimacy in Northumbria in the eighth century can be connected to social actors that were directly connected to power structures (minsters, *scops*, etc). In this sense, they are connected to the social class structures. But how they can be connected to the ideological reproduction of the ruling class? In order to answer this, it is necessary to address the meaning of class consciousness, and to evaluate whether that concept makes sense in the context we are analysing.

This chapter is dedicated to the understanding of the organization of the ruling class, especially how the aristocracy organized its experience and transformed it into historicity. Just like class, historicity and time is not a ‘thing’. Therefore it requires longer explanation. One part of the effects of Capitalism is what was called by Marx ‘reification’ (*Verdinglichung*, literally: ‘making into a thing’). The process of reification can also be interpreted as a particular problem of the commodity-shaped world.<sup>20</sup> Gajo Petrović understands reification as a something that transforms human characteristics, relations and actions into things. The same goes the other way around; things seem to have human feats, and human relations appear to be things.<sup>21</sup> This process transforms everything into things, and so it does to the past. A reified past is an object (in the sense that it is objectified), something that does not have any relation with the present, and that is seen as external to the current

<sup>20</sup> G. Luckács, *History and Class Consciousness*, Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat, I: The Phenomenon of Reification (1923), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lukacs/works/history/hcc05.htm> [accessed 01/09/2016].

<sup>21</sup> G. Petrović, ‘Reification’, in *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, eds. T. Bottomore, L. Harris, V.G. Kiernan, R. Miliband (Cambridge, MA, 1983), pp. 411–413.

human relations. In this sense, Petrović is right when he arguing that reification is a form of alienation or estrangement (*Entfremdung* in German). A new form of comprehension of the past is therefore required.

The necessity for a material understanding of time was also pointed out by Norbert Elias. Elias has pointed out how time is also socially determined, not eternal, and therefore it is also historical.<sup>22</sup> As it is one element among many in society, there can be dominant forms of time in a specific society, which is connected to its internal hierarchies. For Elias, time must also be thought as a norm, as something that can be related to (work) discipline by one side of society and to leisure by the other side. The concept of time for Elias must be thought within an immanent framework, which means it is a product of social relations. This point of view is built against a transcendent understanding of time, which reads it as something that is beyond human elaboration and confection. Or, as presented above, ‘reified’ time.

As repeated throughout the current chapter, there is no neutral form of organizing time and the knowledge of the past. This is a process connected to the sense of belonging and to a project of (and for) a society.<sup>23</sup> It requires and reproduces experience and expectations, present and past, in a specific form of historicity, connected to a class. Nonetheless, Northumbria in the long eighth century does not encompass a reified form of time. Actually, time and the past, experience and expectations are not (external) things, but are forces that are acknowledged as meaningful and powerful. They are also connected to the powerful. In this case, these elements reflect and ideologically reproduce the ruling class, the aristocracy.

## 2) Narratives, Form and Content

The concept of narrative used in this chapter is a very simple and broad definition: the report of connected events. This report, or ‘story’, can be presented in a sequence of written or spoken words, or still or moving images.<sup>24</sup> This sequence does need not to be chronological. Narratives can address either real or fictional events or anything in between them. In either case, they are very important historical sources, and reveal much about the society that produced them.

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<sup>22</sup> N. Elias, *Time: An Essay* (Oxford, 1992).

<sup>23</sup> J. Fontana, *Historia: Análisis del Pasado y Proyecto Social* (Barcelona, 1982); J. Fontana, *La Historia de los Hombres* (Barcelona, 2000).

<sup>24</sup> ‘Narrative’, *Oxford English Dictionary*, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/narrative> [accessed at 16/09/2016].

Several kinds of narratives are available for the study of the long eighth century in Northumbria. This time span and locality can be accessed via hagiographies, homilies, letters, Easter tables, coins, chronicles, Old English poems, and *Historiae*.<sup>25</sup> The different genres of narrative follow their own internal rules and formats. Therefore, each of the genres is shaped differently, and the relation between form and content cannot be taken for granted. The materiality of the support in which the narrative is conveyed can shape its content. A comparative example can be enlightening.

Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* survives in several early manuscripts, including two which were copied within a couple of decades (at most) of Bede's death.<sup>26</sup> The images below show the difference between the 'Leningrad' manuscript and the Moore manuscript (which is believed to be the earlier of the two). The Moore manuscript conveys only one column of text, with no image and the space between words is comparatively small (figure 12). The 'Leningrad' manuscript presents the text in two columns, the gap between the words is wider (figure 13), and we find there what is thought to be the first initial with a historical figure (Pope Gregory the Great) of European illumination (figure 14).<sup>27</sup> The Moore Bede uses the parchment as much as possible, without large margins (though the book has been trimmed by later binders) or much word division. This is a high grade book, but the emphasis is rather more on the dissemination of its content, by using less parchment and increasing its portability and reproducibility, than on ornamentation and display.<sup>28</sup> The 'Leningrad' MS, however, represents an increase in legibility and display (greater margins, two columns and word division) as well as more flourished initials, chapter separations etc. This version of the text is not only about its content, but also represents a memorialization and ostentatious display of the content it bears. If the Moore Manuscript cared about survival of the text and

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<sup>25</sup> EHD; HE; Bede, *The Reckoning of time*, trans. and ed. F Wallis (Liverpool, 1999); Bede, *Homilia in Natale S. Benedicti*, HA, VCB, EEE, B. Colgrave trans. and ed., *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert: A Life by an Anonymous Monk of Lindisfarne and Bede's Prose Life* (Cambridge, 1985, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1940); B. Colgrave trans. and ed., *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus* (Cambridge, 1927); *Beowulf*. Klaeber's *Beowulf and The Fight at Finnsburg*, eds R. D. Fulk, R. E. Bjork, and J. D. Niles (Toronto, ONT, 2008).

<sup>26</sup> P. H. Blair (ed.), *The Moore Bede: Cambridge University Library Kk. 5. 16*, Early English manuscripts in facsimile, 9 (Copenhagen, 1959); Olof S. Anderson, *The Leningrad Bede: an eighth century manuscript of the Venerable Bede's Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum in the Public Library, Leningrad*, Early English manuscripts in facsimile, 2 (Copenhagen, 1952).

<sup>27</sup> Anderson, *The Leningrad Bede*; M. Schapiro, 'The Decoration of the Leningrad Manuscript of Bede', in *Selected Papers - Late Antique, Early Christian and Mediaeval Art*, vol. 3 (London, 1980), p. 198.

<sup>28</sup> R. A. B. Mynors, 'Introduction', in Blair, *The Moore Bede*.

its reach, the 'Leningrad' MS was text turned into a treasure-like item. These closely contemporary copies of the same text do not play exactly the same roles.

Although the manuscripts presented in images 12 and 13 are different, they also share similarities. First of all, in Anglo-Saxon England books are expensive items, and access to them was also not simple. We know that the exchange of books sometimes follow the logic of gift giving, and they are sometimes classified as prestige goods. Probably the most famous example is Aldfrith's exchange of land for a copy of the work of a cosmographer.<sup>29</sup> In the second place, both manuscripts contain (only) a copy of the same text, which is a very long narrative. Although the level of monumentality between the books differs, there is no lack of space for the message that is passed. The guarantee of space in the books (and on the parchment) allows the narrative to range from 'biblical' times to the time of the author. Bede can take the reader by the hand and present the story from immemorial times until his recent period; the events that were omitted from the narrative were more a product of authorial choice than material restraints.

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<sup>29</sup> *HA*, 15.

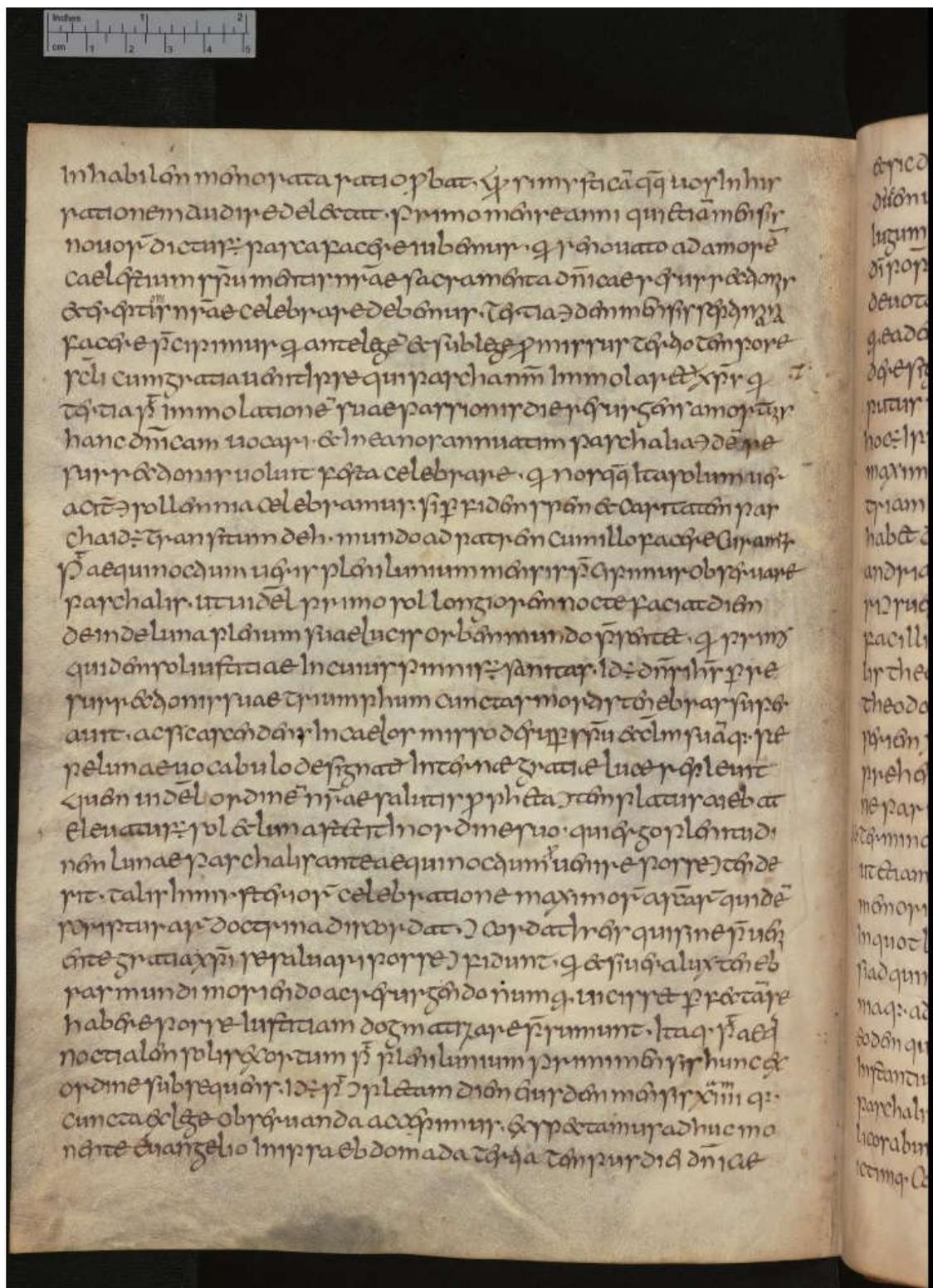


Figure 12 - The 'Moore Bede' which is probably the earliest copy of the HE. Available at <http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-KK-00005-00016/250> [accessed 10/09/2016]. As Joanna Story points out, the scribe was quite concerned to fill the writing space as much as possible. J. Story, 'After Bede', p. 170, Figure 1.





Figure 14 - The first initial with a historical figure (Pope Gregory the Great) of European illumination. Schapiro, 'The Decoration', p. 198.

As the opposite extreme, we can observe how information is presented by annals. Add a sentence here which prefigures your conclusion about the difference between the presentation of annals and the presentation of the longer historical narratives. The Frankish annals of Lindisfarne and Kent have been identified as the 'roots' of history-making in Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>30</sup> The earliest, fragmentary copy of these annals (named 'M' by its editor) predates the earliest copy of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* by about 150 years, and therefore is the earliest surviving manuscript of the annalistic genre from Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>31</sup> The information contained in the annals was written into the margins of Easter tables, and therefore consisted of very short 'historical notes', which may have been part of the 'raw material' available to Bede (figure 15).<sup>32</sup> However, it would be wrong to assume that the shortness of the information represents a primitive form or expression of narrative. As they were often preserved in the margins of Easter tables, these short historical notes were

<sup>30</sup> J. Story, 'The Frankish Annals of Lindisfarne and Kent', *Anglo-Saxon England* 34 (2006), pp. 59-109, p. 59.

<sup>31</sup> The 'M' MS is Westfalen, Staatsarchiv MSC. I. 243, fols. 1-2 and 11-12 (Northumbria, s. viii<sup>2/4</sup>, provenance Fulda, Werden and Corvey). See also *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle MS A*, ed. J. Batley, *The AS Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*, ed. D. N. Dumville and S. Keynes 3 (Cambridge, 1986), Story, 'The Frankish Annals', p. 72.

<sup>32</sup> Story, 'The Frankish Annals', p. 59.

intimately connected to that genre. As Story points out, the tables provided a rigid structure in which the connection between past, present and future was assured.<sup>33</sup>

The events in these annals that refer to Northumbrian history generally date to the later seventh century, with focus on the ascension of king and deaths of the bishops of Lindisfarne.<sup>34</sup> All of the Northumbrian annals contain very short compositions, two or three words long.<sup>35</sup> The only exception is the eclipse of 664 in some MSS. Versions **M** and **F** have it registered as *eclipse quasi x hora diei v nonas maias*; MSS **W**, **B** and **P1** has only the word *eclipsis*.<sup>36</sup> There is a great chance that the annal was a note of contemporary observation.<sup>37</sup> The precision of the record of the eclipse, however, has other implications.

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<sup>33</sup> Idem, p. 74.

<sup>34</sup> Idem, p. 80.

<sup>35</sup> Idem, p. 97.

<sup>36</sup> Idem, p. 108.

<sup>37</sup> F. Wallis, *Reckoning of Time*, p. 332, esp. n. 163.

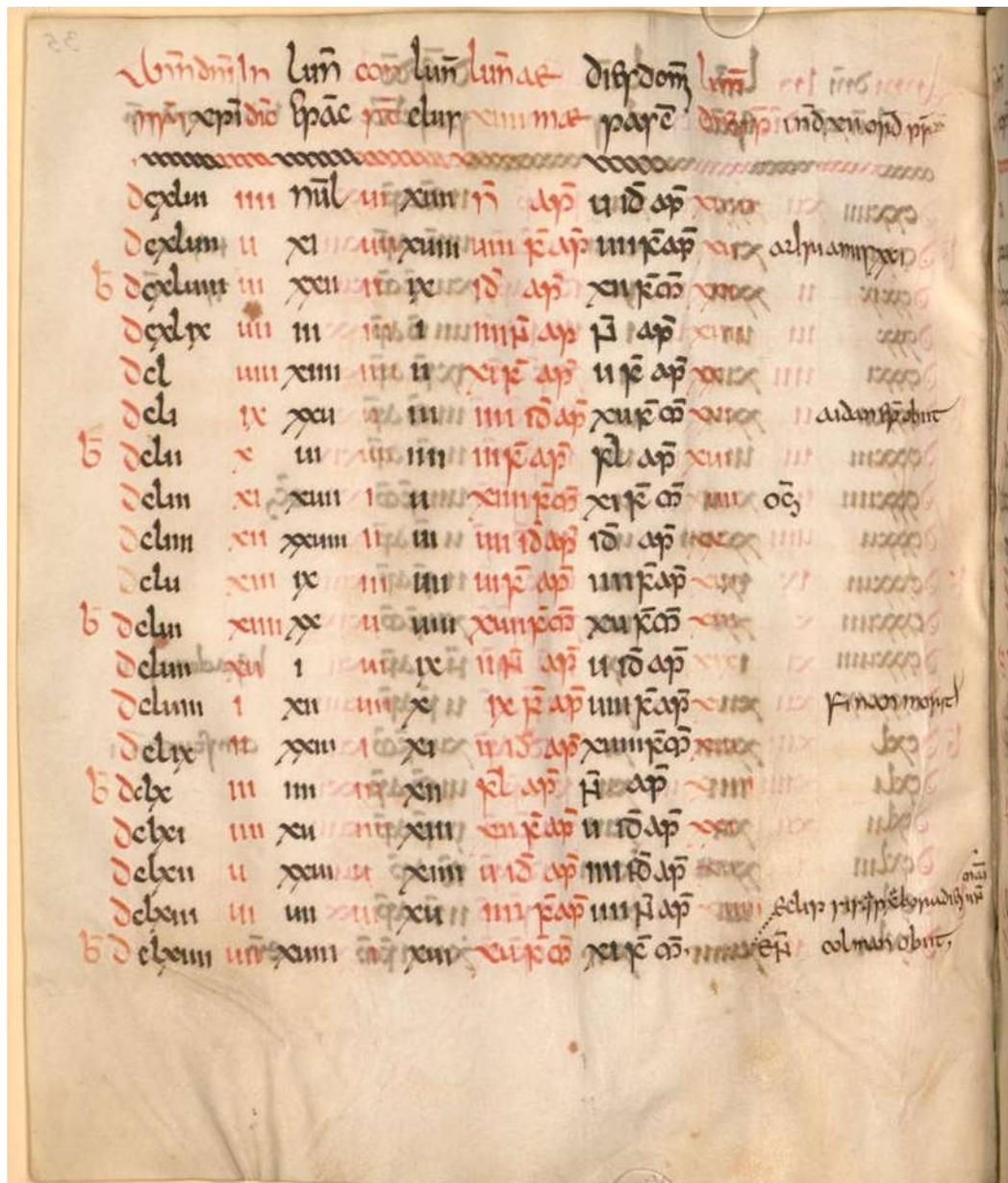


Figure 15 - Easter table annals (MS F of the Annals of LfG and K). The annalistic data in the last column on the right is a palimpsest, recording events from the 'first Great Cycle' (eg: the 21-year rule of the Emperor Hadrian, 647-532=115) and the events at Lindisfarne in the 'second Great Cycle' (eg: the death of Finan, 658). Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14641, 35v, table 7 (646-64). [http://daten.digital-sammlungen.de/bsb00065770/image\\_72](http://daten.digital-sammlungen.de/bsb00065770/image_72) [accessed 20/06/2016]. Copyright: CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

The records are that it happened at *quasi x hora diei v nonas maias*, which means it happened almost at the tenth hour on the fifth *nonas* of May (3 May, 4.00 p.m.).<sup>38</sup> However, the true date of the eclipse was 1 May (the kalends), as the Annals of Ulster records, and can

<sup>38</sup> Story, 'The Frankish Annals', p. 99.

be checked by modern astronomy.<sup>39</sup> The political background can better explain the error of the Anglo-Saxon record, despite its apparent precision. The year of 664 was also the year of the Synod of Whitby, when the correct way of calculating Easter and to tonsure monks was debated.<sup>40</sup> In one side, the Irish way of calculating Easter used the Alexandrian paschal tables; on the other, the Roman party used the Dionysiac reckoning.<sup>41</sup> The Roman side won the discussion, and as a consequences Colman, bishop of Lindisfarne, left his post. However, this information about Colman has mutated in these annals, since some MSS inform us that he ‘left’ (**M**, **P1** and **P2** say *Colman abiit*), while others say that he died (**F** and **K** say *Colman obiit*).<sup>42</sup> The meaning probably shifted because much of the content of these annals are the recordings of death (*obiit*, as figure 15 shows), and therefore the scribe was probably expecting to read *obiit* instead of *abiit*.

Bede knew, drawing knowledge from Pliny, that a solar eclipse could only happen at a new moon; and Easter tables made possible the calculation for the next new moon after Easter; in 664 Easter occurred on 21 April which was the 18<sup>th</sup> day of the 28-day lunar cycle. The new moon would have occurred 10 days later, on 1 May.<sup>43</sup> The proximity of the phenomenon of the new moon / solar eclipse to the actual date of Easter in 664 would have made it impossible to miss the fact that there was – thus – a discrepancy between the observed and the computed date of the new moon. The Dionysiac table stated that the new moon would occur on 3 May, but the eclipse (and thus the new moon) had actually happened two days earlier. This created a problem: either the tables or calculations needed to be acknowledged as wrong, or they could simply be recorded in a false date. One crucial element for understanding the possible political implications of a wrong calculation is the date of the Synod of Whitby. If the Synod took place before the eclipse, the winning side of the debate was proven wrong. The changes that came with the Romanist triumph (the translation of the Northumbrian see to York, for instance) would need to be somehow addressed. However, if the synod happened after the eclipse, this question was probably addressed in the synod itself. Bede did not register the exact date of the synod. For someone as skilled in narratives and so worried about time, time reckoning and worried about

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<sup>39</sup> *The Annals of Ulster*, ed. S. Mac Airt and G. Mac Nicaill (Dublin, 1983), p. 34, apud Story, ‘The Frankish Annals’, p. 99.

<sup>40</sup> Bede, HE, III, Ch. 25. Colgrave, pp. 294-309.

<sup>41</sup> Story, ‘The Frankish Annals’, p. 84, 99.

<sup>42</sup> *Idem*, p. 99, n. 146.

<sup>43</sup> *DTR*, 27.

establishing a chronology, it is hard to think that this missing piece of information was by chance.

The eclipse question put Bede in a difficult position: neither nature nor the Dionysiac table could be wrong. The solution for this puzzle is in another work of Bede: *De temporum ratione*. One chapter of this book is entirely dedicated to answer why the moon sometimes appears older than its computed age.<sup>44</sup> For Bede there was no way that either nature or the *computus* could be wrong; instead, the calculations need their own form of commentary or ‘exegesis’. Bede was used to write this kind of commentaries for sacred texts, so the aforementioned DTR chapter should be thought also as part of this genre of writings.<sup>45</sup>

The explanation does not erase the fact that the error in the calculations could bring uncertainty and chaos to those who knew these data. Besides that, 664 was also the year Bede records that the *pestilentia* arrived in Britain, and reached as far as Northumbria.<sup>46</sup> The way this narrative is organized by Bede is also quite telling: the chapter starts by mention the eclipse and the next information is about the ‘sudden’ (*subita*) pestilence, that was *Nordanhymbrorum quoque prouinciam corripens atque acerua clade diutius longe lateque desaeuiens, magnam hominum multitudinem strauit*.<sup>47</sup> The pestilence was certainly *subita*, but so also was the eclipse. Although there was a period of time and therefore no explicit relation between the eclipse and the pestilence, there proximity of the record creates an implicit relationship. If not one of cause and consequence, a relationship of temporal proximity is certain, creating the impression of a difficult year.

The record of the eclipse is also evidence of how information can be stored either taking a political stand (as MSS **M** and **F** do, by stating false data to protect a form of time reckoning) or avoiding them (MSS **W**, **B** and **P1**, by only saying ‘eclipse’). The synthetic nature of the annals allows the data to be distilled to a single word (*eclipsis*), but one that would resonate loudly on people’s minds at the time. Bede tells us that it was an event ‘still remembered in our days’, and by our days he meant 725 (the date in which *De Temporum*

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<sup>44</sup> DTR, 43.

<sup>45</sup> For example see Bede’s commentaries in: *On the tabernacle*, trans. and ed. A. G. Holder (Liverpool, 1994); idem, *On the temple*, trans. S. Connolly (Liverpool, 1995); idem, *On Tobit and On The canticle of Habakkuk*, trans. and ed. Seán Connolly (Dublin, 1997); idem, *A biblical miscellany*, trans. and ed. W. Trent Foley and Arthur G. Holder (Liverpool, 1999) ; idem, *On Genesis*, trans. and ed. C. B. Kendall (Liverpool, 2008); idem, *On Ezra and Nehemiah*, trans. and ed. S. DeGregorio (Liverpool, 2006).

<sup>46</sup> HE, III, 27.

<sup>47</sup> ‘Raging far and wide with cruel devastation and laying low a vast number of people’, HE, III, 27.

*Ratione* was completed).<sup>48</sup> The vivid memory of the eclipse could also be a reason to explain in detail the phenomenon whereby the phase of the moon could be out by 2 days in order to explain precisely the discrepancy between the observed and computed dates of this eclipse.<sup>49</sup> The capacity of flooding the mind with memories and sensations by the usage of a very short trigger or motif should be entirely familiar for modern readers for whom the simple expression ‘9/11’ brings instant recall (even if the year of the event is uncertain).

The comparison between the form of the narrative presented in the annals and Bede’s *HE* leads to some conclusions. The first of them is that the narrative presented in the selected annal is sometimes distilled to a single word. This word (*eclipse*) could trigger a broader story in the minds of those that had access to it, unfolding the ‘experience’ in their ‘memory’. However, they required background knowledge for the wider meaning to unfold in this way. That narrative was clear for people who lived in that context, but required thorough analysis to be brought back by scholars. The *HE*, however, had more space and time to develop its meaning; it is already in its full form and do not require ‘unfolding’. In this sense, *HE* is a form of narrative that is more likely to be time-proof in its meaning than the encapsulated narratives, of which ‘*eclipse*’ is one example. However, it does not mean that form itself is absolutely time-proof. Bede’s *recapitulatio* (*HE* V, 23) in the Moore MS is copied out exactly like the rest of the text; the same chapter has a different form in a twelfth-century version of Bede’s *HE*, making it look closer to an annalistic composition (figure 16). In other words, annalistic composition developed as a genre, creating its own format. This change can be observed on the difference in formats of the MSS.

The form is also very important in other expressions of transmission of information. The presence of a witness is a constant element in several kinds of narratives. If the writer or storyteller was not an eyewitness, they revealed from whom they heard the information that they are broadcasting. If not, some expressions are used as a way to show that they can distinguish this information from ‘tradition’. This is true for Bede’s writings, which used *vel monumentis litterarum vel seniorum traditione*.<sup>50</sup> Bede also reveals that there was selection of what should be remembered (*quae memoria digna uidebantur*), either by writing or by oral means (*siue litteris mandata siue ipsuius Nothelmi uiua uoce referenda, transmisit*).<sup>51</sup> The usage of *relatio*, *auctor* and *uiua uoce* by Bede many times in the Preface of the *Historia*

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<sup>48</sup> *DTR*, 66.

<sup>49</sup> *DTR*, 66, year 4622 (or 664 in AD reckoning).

<sup>50</sup> ‘From written records or from the old traditions’, *HE*, *Praefatio*.

<sup>51</sup> *HE*, *Praefatio*.

*Ecclesiastica* is seen by Higham as an indication of his stress of oral sources.<sup>52</sup> However, Bede was able to use sources of this nature with great accuracy in the construction of a chronology (and a teleology). The precision of building a time scale was a vital point in his of rhetoric of persuasion.<sup>53</sup> However, reproducing oral tradition through speech and performance required different sets of liability and rhetoric knowledge.

The *scop* (generally translated as ‘bard’) was a person whose social role was closely related to storytelling.<sup>54</sup> However, they generally told stories that they did not witness, but learned from other *scop*. But in order to have their story accepted as reliable and truthful, they needed to follow some rules. The validation came from a relationship between memory and poetic skills. In order to have the story validated, the *scop* had to follow a recognizable pattern of alliteration, themes, knowledge of *kenningar*, etc.<sup>55</sup> The dominance over form of narrative is what made a *scop* acknowledged in his role.

Bede used *uiua uoce*; the *scop* in Beowulf resorted to what *we gefrunon*, ‘we have heard tell, we have learned by asking’, a phrase that is repeated.<sup>56</sup> The voice that Bede refers to is *uiua*, it is ‘alive’; the message that the *scop* passes on ‘have been told, have been heard’. Both messages carry the idea of something alive, that records must not only be spoken, but heard. The life of the ‘hidden voices’ means not only that orality is a key factor to be taken into account, but also that the voices of those who could still be heard (or read) must be reproduced, as they deserved to be passed on to the next generations.<sup>57</sup> There is a sense of careful selection, as well as a sense of urgency so that ‘these voices’ were not forgotten.

Temporality is not neutral. In this sense, it is vital to explore the way in which the knowledge about time is organized and structured. This will be topic of the next section.

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<sup>52</sup> N. J. Higham, *Bede as an Oral Historian* (Jarrow, 2011), p. 5.

<sup>53</sup> V. Gunn, *Bede's 'Historiae' – Genre, Rhetoric and the Construction of Anglo-Saxon Church History* (Woodbridge, 2009), pp.182-3.

<sup>54</sup> R. D. Fulk and C. M. Cain, *A History of Old English Literature* (Oxford, 2003); A. Crépin, *Old English Poetics: A Technical Handbook* (Paris, 2005).

<sup>55</sup> T. A. Bredehoft, *Authors, Audiences, and Old English Verse* (Toronto, 2009), pp. 7-14.

<sup>56</sup> Taranu, ‘Senses of the Past’, p. 81.

<sup>57</sup> Brown, ‘The Dynamics’.

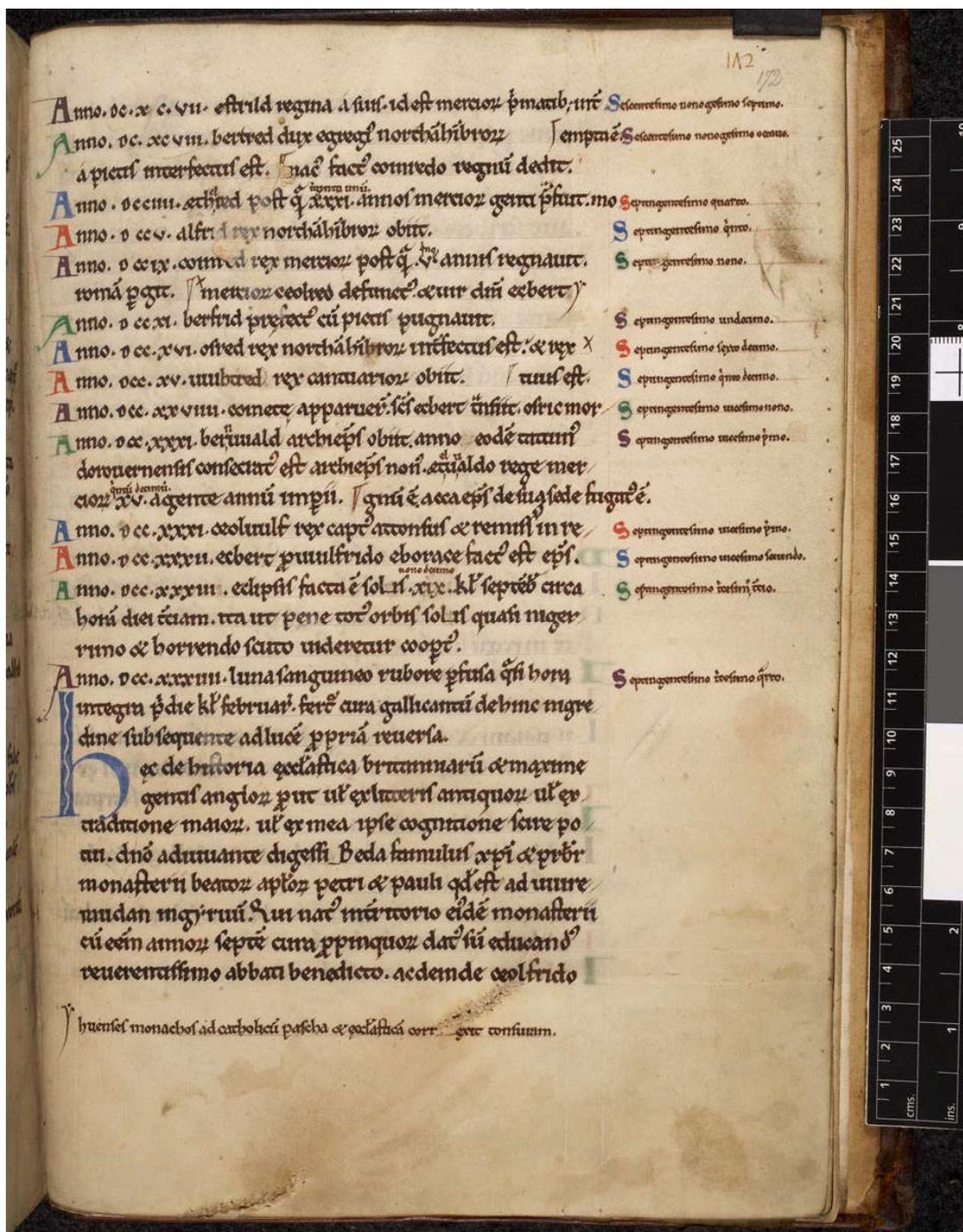


Figure 16 - London, BL Harley 681, f.172r, written c.1120x1140 at Rochester. Bede's recapitulation is laid out here in the form of annals, each entry starting with 'Anno' with a different colour.

### 3) The past and its senses in Anglo-Saxon Society: the vernacular and Latin

Dealing with the past was a common affair in Anglo-Saxon times. The primary sources used in this chapter are mainly written in Latin. Such sources were part of the clerical world. Some of them had liturgical purposes (like hagiographies) or the information conveyed supported rituals (like the Easter tables). However, it is important to stress that people who lived outside the Church did not lack knowledge of the past.

The narratives presented in *Beowulf*, *The Fight at Finnsburg* and *Waldere*, for example, are filled with references to the past and how it related to the present day of the narrator. For some scholars, the anonymous poets behind these stories had a complex relationship with the past. That relationship involved weaving different aspects of historicity together: they re-created the ancient world of heroic age and mourned its passing, but they did so by weaving present issues, concerns and realities inbetween them.<sup>58</sup>

The lexicons of these texts are also useful windows to access the Anglo-Saxon understanding of the past. For example, *Beowulf* refers to ancestry, descent or origin (*framcynn*, *cynnreccenes* etc) of both people and objects, both of them having a ‘personal history’.<sup>59</sup> At the same time the collective and oral traditions, wisdom and history are assembled as ‘old memories’ or ‘old lore’ (under the composites of the word *gemynd*).<sup>60</sup> The memorial narratives are also always believed to be true, emphasized in the texts by the word *sopcwed*, translated as ‘truth of speech or thought, veracity’.<sup>61</sup>

These words and concepts cannot be taken for granted. They must be understood as part of the fabric of language and they imply conceptualization of a certain culture.<sup>62</sup> As Sharifian points out, these concepts act as labels or ‘banks of memory’, triggering values that were socially built and shared.<sup>63</sup> Sharifian points out that not all members of a certain culture share this system in a homogeneous way and the concepts can be re-signified throughout time

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<sup>58</sup> Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, pp. 10-18; Taranu, ‘Senses of the Past’, p. 66.

<sup>59</sup> Taranu, ‘Senses of the Past’, p. 68.

<sup>60</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>61</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>62</sup> F. Sharifian, *Cultural Conceptualizations and Language* (Amsterdam, 2011).

<sup>63</sup> Sharifian, *Cultural Conceptualizations*, p. 39.

and generations.<sup>64</sup> Culture, however, is not classless; the way in which people experience, build and reproduce their culture are mediated by other structures of society – like class.<sup>65</sup>

Most of known words in Old English for ‘history’ come from translations of Latin texts to the vernacular.<sup>66</sup> They were written down by clerics who had been educated in Latin (and therefore were probably bi-lingual).<sup>67</sup> In that sense, what we know about the vernaculars words is that they must be thought inside a tradition that started with late-antique and early medieval historiography.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, the translators of Bede, Orosius and the Glossator of Aldhelm changed *historia* for *stær*, referring not to historical events, but to their narration.<sup>69</sup> Two key-words are derived from *stær*: *stærleornere*, a ‘historical scholar’ (in the sense of someone who learns history) and *stærwritere*, a ‘writer of history’.<sup>70</sup> The word in Old English for chronicle is *cranic*, and those who write them are *cranicwritera* – a plural word which translates *chronographorum*.<sup>71</sup> The known Old English lexicon for narratives is extensive: *præc* (speech), *spell* (story, narrative, history), *sægen* (statement, tradition, report), *wyrd* (fate), *reccing* (story, narrative, recited), *talū* (tale, talk). Two other words are meaningful: *enderbyrdnes* (‘row, series or rank’, but also ‘succession in time or place’) and *getæl* (‘number, series reckoning or computation’). These two words refer to a ‘stair’ structure that is similar to that of chronicles and annals. However, it was not the only sense of time that was possible or available.

An account of the formation of words that can mean ‘narratives’ and their attached adjective can be enlightening. The first element of binary construction generally is *eald* (old), *cyn* (related to kin/ancestry) and *sop* (true/truthfulness). The second are *spell* (story), *sagu*

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<sup>64</sup> Idem, p. 4.

<sup>65</sup> E. Wood, ‘The Politics of Theory and the Concept of Class: E.P. Thompson and his Critics’, *Studies in Political Economy*, Vol. 9 (1982), pp. 45-75.

<sup>66</sup> Taranu, ‘Senses of the Past’, p. 70.

<sup>67</sup> Opland, Jeff, *Anglo-Saxon Oral Poetry: A Study of the Traditions* (London, 1980), p. 231.

<sup>68</sup> Taranu, ‘Senses of the Past’, p. 71.

<sup>69</sup> T. Miller (ed. and trans.) *The Old English Version of Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, 4 vols. EETS o.s. 95, 96, 110, 111. (London: 1890-1898); Bosworth, Joseph. ‘Stær’, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*, <http://www.bosworthtoller.com/028672>; Taranu, ‘Senses of the Past’, p. 72.

<sup>70</sup> *Stær-leornere*, Bosworth, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, *Stær-leornere* <http://www.bosworthtoller.com/028675>; *Stær-writere*, <http://www.bosworthtoller.com/028678>. [accessed 25/07/2016].

<sup>71</sup> *Cranic*, Bosworth, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, <http://www.bosworthtoller.com/042119>; *Cranic-writere* idem, <http://www.bosworthtoller.com/042120>. [accessed 25/07/2016].

(saying/oral tradition), *talū* (tale) and *recedness* (reckoning/series of events).<sup>72</sup> As Taranu points out, Anglo-Saxon authors, glossators and translators used these combinations as they please in order to attain a precise meaning.<sup>73</sup> It is crucial to highlight the absence of a sense of hierarchy between these narratives of different natures; they refer to specific dimensions and contexts in which the bearers of the knowledge of the past require specific answers. The *scop* is an interesting piece of evidence in this sense. In *Beowulf* the *scop* does not simply reproduce old stories, but has the role of composing new verse (*word oper fand*) that must be bound in truth (*soðe gebunden*).<sup>74</sup> As Taranu points out, the Old English version of Orosius labelled both Homer and Pompeius a *scop*, revealing the Anglo-Saxon vision of history that ‘embraced poetic manipulation and fictional/narrative distortion’.<sup>75</sup>

Sense of belonging is also a social role of the *scop*. Recounting your own genealogy is crucial to determining someone’s identity. In order to identify himself when arriving on the shores of the Danes, *Beowulf* is asked about his lineage (*frumcyn*), and replies telling his lineage and ethnic ties.<sup>76</sup> His own *persona* only makes sense through the network of relation he has; his identity is given by his genealogical place. In other words, a personal history is a small piece of a greater history.

As a social actor whose role involves genealogy performance, the *scop* is also responsible for the legitimacy of royal power.<sup>77</sup> Opland reminds us that the *scop* acted as chroniclers and historians, mediating the relation of rulers and the ruled, and the ‘link between the king and his divine source of power’.<sup>78</sup> Taranu points out that this happened ‘before the ecclesiastical monopoly on learning’, when the *scop* at the same time preserved and re-enacted history.<sup>79</sup> ‘Monopoly of learning’ is a questionable idea, since other forms of teaching and learning took place at this time. However, Taranu assessment of the *scop* as someone who organizes information available within a structure of narrative is helpful.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Taranu, ‘Senses of the Past’, p. 78.

<sup>73</sup> Idem.

<sup>74</sup> Klaeber’s *Beowulf*, 867-76 – full ref; Taranu, ‘Senses of the Past’, p. 79.

<sup>75</sup> Taranu, ‘Senses of the Past’, p. 80; also Opland, *Anglo-Saxon Oral Poetry*, 239.

<sup>76</sup> Klaeber’s *Beowulf*, v. 251-2. ref

<sup>77</sup> Taranu, ‘Senses of the Past’, p. 81.

<sup>78</sup> Opland, *Anglo-Saxon Oral Poetry*, p. 265.

<sup>79</sup> Taranu, ‘Senses of the Past’, p. 81-2.

<sup>80</sup> Idem, p. 82.

Therefore sense and legitimacy are attributed to royal power through genealogy and belonging (both of the king and the subordinated aristocracy), through time and identity.

The presence of Old English words about time cannot be taken for granted, since they involved complex relations. The *scop*, a historical actor that is generally thought to be responsible for declaiming them, must always be kept in mind. Both *scop* and the narratives in Old English are organizers of information of the past, and are connected with spheres of power in that society. The organization of time and experiences is not neutral, neither in ecclesiastical grounds nor in secular society.

#### 4) Bede and his works

Bede's achievements as a scholar require scant comment. Bede is a very important historical witness to the main social actors and events in late seventh and early eighth centuries. And he's not only a by-standing witness but also a 'perceptive, astute and politically alert writer'.<sup>81</sup> Bede's background and direct experience was limited to ecclesiastical grounds: he grew up in Wearmouth-Jarrow and paid some visits to Lindisfarne, Hexham and perhaps York.<sup>82</sup> Bede himself tells us that he started to live a monastic life when he was seven; ordained deacon when he was nineteen, and a priest when he was thirty.<sup>83</sup> Therefore, Bede's background allowed him to be aware of the politics of the realm but at the same time be outside the direct royal circles and the struggles for power in Northumbria. However, it was not unusual for royal circles to be in contact with Bede and Jarrow, which was a royal foundation. Ian Wood argues that Jarrow was part of a royal landscape, with a royal nunnery on the site of the Roman fort at South Shields (*Arbeia*); the *portus Ecgfridi* is believed to be the area just north of Jarrow known as 'the Slake'.<sup>84</sup>

Bede's 'outsider' perspective (and his intellect) granted him different perspectives for these questions. The 'astute' nature of Bede can also be observed in his silences in these matters and points that are simply cut of his writings.<sup>85</sup> One good example of Bede's awareness is the closure of *HE*, which ends in a year of political turmoil, which culminated

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<sup>81</sup> Grocock and Wood, *HA*, p. xvii.

<sup>82</sup> *Idem*, p. xvii.

<sup>83</sup> *HE* V, 24; Grocock and Wood, *HA*, p. xiv.

<sup>84</sup> Ian Wood, 'The foundation of Bede's Wearmouth-Jarrow'.

<sup>85</sup> Grocock and Wood, *HA*, p. xvii.

with a *coup* in Northumbria. The absence of any subsequent narratives demonstrates political and diplomatic awareness.

The sagacity of Bede's writings and political implications can also be observed in the closure of the *HE*. Although the last words on the last book say that this is its end (*Explicit Domino iuuante liber quintus Historia Ecclesiasticae gentis Anglorum*), it is not exactly the end.<sup>86</sup> As Story points out, there are variations of this closure, and some of them contain Bede's request for intercession of his readers.<sup>87</sup> Some of his readers definitely interceded for him: his work was later continued, and more information was inserted as annals – at the end of the work (in the Moore Bede) and as additions to the Recapitulation in other copies.<sup>88</sup>

The political implications of Bede's works can be observed through his version of the *Life of Cuthbert*. As modern scholarship has shown, the cults of saints can be crucial to the development of the identity of communities.<sup>89</sup> An anonymous *Life of Cuthbert* was written as a form of presenting Cuthbert as a rebuilders of the Church, embodying the best of the Roman and Celtic traditions of Christianity.<sup>90</sup> Bede later produced another version of this saint's *Life*, which had important political factors behind it. The publication of Bishop Wilfrid's hagiography, probably in 712 or 713, presented a rival cult to Cuthbert's.<sup>91</sup> In the *Vita Wilfridi*, Wilfrid is presented as the champion of Roman ways, sharing the same episcopal qualities as Cuthbert. However, Wilfrid had no connection with Irish heterodoxy. Bede's *Vita Cuthberti* reshaped Cuthbert's image as a true Roman, embodying the values defended by

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<sup>86</sup> 'Here, with God's help, ends the fifth book of the History of the English Church', *HE* V, 24.

<sup>87</sup> J. Story, 'After Bede: continuing the *Ecclesiastical History*', in , pp. 165-184, at p. 165; see also *Codice latini antiquiores: A Palaeographical Guide to Latin Manuscripts prior to the Ninth Century*, ed. E.A. Lowe (11 vols., Oxford, 1935–66), VIII, 1140 and II, 191; H. Gneuss, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: A List of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100*, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 241 (Tempe, AZ, 2001), nos. 835 and 377.

<sup>88</sup> *HE*, Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 572-577; Story, 'After Bede', p. 172.

<sup>89</sup> For example, J. Cartwright, 'Regionalism and Identity: Locating the Cult of Mary in Medieval Wales', in A. Mariković and T. Vedriš, *Identity and Alterity in Hagiography and the Cult of Saints* (Zagreb, 2010), pp. 119-36.

<sup>90</sup> J. Eby, 'Bring the *Vita* to Life: Bede's symbolic structure of the *Life of Saint Cuthbert*', *American Benedictine Review* 48 (1997), pp. 316-48.

<sup>91</sup> W. Goffart, *The Narrator of Barbarian History, A.D. 550-800* (Notre Dame, 2005, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Princeton, 1988), A. Thacker, 'Lindisfarne and the Origins of the Cult of St Cuthbert', in Bonner *et al.* (eds), *St. Cuthberth, his Cult and His Community*, pp. 103-22; Thacker, 'Bede and history', p. 186.

Gregory the Great.<sup>92</sup> However, the ‘redesign’ of Cuthbert’s *Life* by Bede also has other meanings.

The author of the anonymous *Life* used place-names within the narrative to reinforce the ecclesiastical geography of early Northumbria, building a ‘propaganda’ of networks of churches, monasteries and possessions under the rule of the saint’s church.<sup>93</sup> Bede, however, removed some of these place-names and some personal names too.<sup>94</sup> The intention seems to be that of elevating Cuthbert to a higher status by transforming him from a local saint to a (inter)national saint.<sup>95</sup> As has already been noted, Bede knew that the ‘geographical memory’ was a powerful tool to make the landscape incarnate in places and names in people’s minds.<sup>96</sup> At the same time, the end of seventh and early eighth century was a context of great conflict in Northumbria’s ecclesiastical establishment.<sup>97</sup> The way the landscape is shaped by Bede’s version of Cuthbert’s *Life* was an expression of what McMullen called his ‘desire for smaller dioceses, more bishops, and less encroachment into the diocese of another bishop.’<sup>98</sup>

Rollason has already pointed out that many hagiographies were composed as a reflection of ecclesiastical environment.<sup>99</sup> In this sense, the *Vita Wilfridi* could be a response to the Anonymous *Life of Cuthbert*, and Bede’s prose *Life* would be a response to the *Vita Wilfridi*. Bede had his own agenda, which can be traced through his works. The elevation of Cuthbert from local to national saint was not an isolated phenomenon. Most of his works point in the direction of a national narrative, about the Northumbrians. In this sense, there are layers in this narrative.

The knowledge about time is crucial to Bede. In the preface of the *HE*, Bede presented a plead to the reader:

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<sup>92</sup> Thacker, ‘Bede and history’, p. 186.

<sup>93</sup> A. Joseph McMullen, ‘Rewriting the ecclesiastical landscape of early medieval Northumbria in the Lives of Cuthbert’, *Anglo-Saxon England* 34 vol. 43 (2014), p. 57.

<sup>94</sup> F. Tinti, ‘Personal Names in the Composition and Transmission of Bede’s Prose *Vita S. Cuthberti*’, *Anglo-Saxon England* 40 (2011), pp. 15–42.

<sup>95</sup> McMullen, ‘Rewriting’, p. 64.

<sup>96</sup> S. Coates, ‘Ceolfrid: History, Hagiography and Memory in Seventh- and Eighth-Century Wearmouth–Jarrow’, *JMH* 25 (1999), pp. 69–86, at p. 78.

<sup>97</sup> Thacker, ‘Lindisfarne’, p. 122.

<sup>98</sup> McMullen, ‘Rewriting’, p. 64.

<sup>99</sup> D. Rollason, ‘Hagiography and Politics in Early Northumbria’, in P. E. Szarmach (ed.), *Holy Men and Holy Women: Old English Prose Saints’ Lives and their Contexts* (Albany, 1996), pp. 95–114.

*Lectoremque suppliciter obsecro ut, siqua in his quae scripsimus aliter quam se ueritas habet posita reppererit, non hoc nobis inputet, qui, quod uera lex historiae est, simpliciter ea quae fama uulgante collegimus ad instructionem posteritatis litteris mandare studuimus.*<sup>100</sup>

In this passage, Bede refers to the *uera lex historiae*, translated by Colgrave and Mynors as ‘the principles of true history’. Colgrave and Mynors noted that *quae uera historiae lex est* had been used before by Bede in his Commentary on St. Luke’s Gospel.<sup>101</sup> The expression was actually borrowed from Jerome.<sup>102</sup> Goffart, however, pointed out that the question is not about an opposition between truth and falsehood, but between theological truth and common perception.<sup>103</sup> Both of these expressions have their own place, and common perception (*opinion uulgi*) was the place of history.<sup>104</sup> In other words, according to Goffart, Bede was posing a methodological question: should history be as superficial as he could make it?<sup>105</sup> In this sense, Colgrave and Mynors were imprecise by translating it as ‘principles of true history’; Goffart suggests that the phrase could be replaced by ‘inherent limitation of historical discourse’.<sup>106</sup>

The end of the passage is also very important. Bede tells us that he registered the information encompassed by his work *ad instructionem posteritatis*, ‘for the instruction of posterity’. This means that writing history, for him, is directly connected to the future. To better understand Bede’s manufacture of time, we need to address his approach to the future. Directly and indirectly, Bede wrote about the future. As observed above, the establishment of a linear chronology relates to the shaping of time. Annals shape time as stairs, making it possible to go in either direction.<sup>107</sup> The shaping of time possibility to go in more than one

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<sup>100</sup> ‘So I humbly beg the reader, if he finds anything other than the truth set down in what I have written, not to impute it to me. For, in accordance with the principles of true history, I have simply sought to commit to writing what I have collected from common report, for the instruction of posterity.’ *HE, Prefatio*.

<sup>101</sup> *HE*, Colgrave and Mynors, p. 7, n. 4.

<sup>102</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>103</sup> W. Goffart, ‘Bede’s *uera lex historiae* explained’, *Anglo-Saxon England* 34 (2005), pp. 111-116, at p. 113.

<sup>104</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>105</sup> *Idem*, p. 116.

<sup>106</sup> *Idem*, p. 115.

<sup>107</sup> *HE* V, 24.

way was already a part of Bede's writings since his first work, *De temporibus*.<sup>108</sup> The first writings of Bede were about time, nature and the interpretation of eschatological prophecy; towards the end of his career (around 725), Bede was back to the same themes. However, his style had changed. The short phrases were substituted for longer and more complex ideas; also the intellectual approach was more sophisticated, and Bede realized how the themes overlapped.<sup>109</sup> The audience of the texts was also different, and they certainly helped shape the narratives: the first set of works was directed to help students and teachers, and therefore required a didactic approach.<sup>110</sup>

The mathematical approach to time was crucial to Bede. The methods, diagrams, formulae etc presented both in 'On Times' and on 'The Reckoning of Time' represent the complexity of time. These sources present a knowledge based on observation, but also on math. They correspond to the measurable and cyclical dimension of time.

There were actually many futures for which Bede looked upon. They could be about the near future (like the question of many monasteries founded), the indeterminate future (hence the worry on heresies and the increasing interest in Islam) or the limit of time itself (Apocalypse).<sup>111</sup> The way Bede wrote about future was also very closely related to genre: *computus* was related to apocalyptic future; the future of Wearmouth and Jarrow was connected to institutional history; and the Old Testament exegesis was connected to a perception of a potential crisis in Northumbrian Church.<sup>112</sup>

Bede's early texts cannot be thought as primary, though; the understanding of the three major themes (nature, time and the end of times) was written as way of correcting what he considered to be misconceptions current in Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>113</sup> These early works were so important that Darby named them 'Bede's time shift'.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> F. Wallis and P. Darby, 'Introduction: The Many Futures of Bede', in P. Darby and F. Wallis, *Bede and the Future* (Farnham, 2015), pp. 1-21, p. 8.

<sup>109</sup> Idem.

<sup>110</sup> Idem.

<sup>111</sup> Wallis and Darby, 'Introduction', p. 3.

<sup>112</sup> Idem, p. 21.

<sup>113</sup> P. Darby, 'Bede's time shift of 703 in context', in *Abendländische Apokalyptik. Kompendium zur Genealogie der Endzeit*, eds V. Wieser, C. Zolles, C. Feik, M. Zolles and L. Schlöndorff (Berlin, 2013), pp. 619-40; F. Wallis, *Bede: Commentary on Revelation* (Liverpool, 2013), pp. 39-57.

<sup>114</sup> Darby, 'Bede's time shift'.

In order to address the question about future on Bede's thought, the best source is the *Expositio Apocalypseos*.<sup>115</sup> The reasons behind the selection of this book was a 'countdown fever': as by the *Annus Mundi* of Jerome and Isidore the year 6000 (A. D. 800) was arriving, within less than a hundred years the world would end.<sup>116</sup> For Bede, the repetitive structure of the book meant the trials the Church endured, endures and would endure for the indefinite future.<sup>117</sup> Bede thought the book had no clue of when history would end. For Bede, there was a layer or dimension of time that was not arithmetical, not able to be calculated. The 'sacred future' was at the same time mapped out in terms of its events; however, it was also unpredictable in temporal terms.<sup>118</sup> The end of times could be perceived, but not calculated. Human agency was also a crucial factor to Bede: his writings can encompass a message of hope for Northumbria.<sup>119</sup> His wishes and requests for what was later called 'Reform' are also part of a comprehension of human roles in the development of history. The *HE* is also evidence for how agency is a key factor in the unfolding of time. In this sense, Bede was also aware of the immanent dimension of time. Time for Bede is multi-dimensional and encompassed several layers and dimensions. It was composed of immanence (human agency), transcendent (godly time), and the intersecting cycles.

## 5) The *Historia Regum*

The *Historia Regum* (henceforth *HR*) is a northern English compilation attributed to Simeon of Durham, who was writing in the 1120s; it survives in a single manuscript dating to the 1160s.<sup>120</sup> The *HR* can be divided into different sections, with different origins and different 'natures'. These differences highlight the fact that the *Historia* is a melting pot of several genres and channels of communication. The constituent elements of Simeon's text are: 1) contained in folios 51v-54v, containing primarily the Kentish Royal Legend (seventh- and eighth-century Kentish legends); 2) fols 54v-55r, a list of Northumbrian rulers, from Ida

<sup>115</sup> F. Wallis, *Bede: Commentary on Revelation* (Liverpool, 2013).

<sup>116</sup> F. Wallis, 'Why did Bede Write a Commentary on Revelation?', in Darby and Wallis, ed. *Bede and the Future*, pp. 23-46; P. Darby, 'Bede's History of the Future', *idem*, pp. 115-138 at p. 136.

<sup>117</sup> Wallis, 'Why did Bede Write', p. 136; P. Darby, *Bede and the end of time* (Farnham, 2012); Wallis, *Commentary on Revelation*, pp. 73-81.

<sup>118</sup> Wallis and Darby, 'Introduction', p. 3.

<sup>119</sup> P. C. Hiliard, 'Quae res Quem sit Habitura Finem, Posterior Aetas Videbit: Prosperity, Adversity and Bede's Hope for the Future of Northumbria', in Darby and Wallis, ed. *Bede and the Future*, pp. 181-205).

<sup>120</sup> Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 139, folios 51v-129v; *Symeonis Monachis*, p. xlvi.

of Bernicia to Ceolwulf of Northumbria (d. 737); 3) 55r-58v, Bede-based material (*HE* but mainly the *Historia Abbatum*); 4) 58v-68v – Northumbrian annals, 732-802; 5) 68v-75r Annals covering 849-887, mainly from Asser's *Vita Aelfredi regis Angul Saxonum*; 6) 75r-76r a series of annals written after 1042 covering 888-957; 7) 76r-76v Parts of *Gesta Regum* by William of Malmesbury; 8) 76v-123v where part of the D-text of the ASC seems to be parallel to it; 9) 123v-129v A chronicle covering the period from 1119 to 1129.

From the beginning of the manuscript up to Section 5 it seems to be the work of synthesis of one editor, Byrhtferth of Ramsey. The comparison with the *Libellus de exordio* makes it clear that the last part (Section 9) was probably the only element that was really authored by Simeon.<sup>121</sup> The features identified by Peter Hunter Blair that would call for Byrhtferth's authorship are his quite florid style, the usage of three verbs in a row, the quotations of Boethius, the persistent use of formulae (especially concerning death), and very characteristic periphrases.<sup>122</sup> Michael Lapidge, agrees, based on the Latinity of this text and comparing it throughout other works by Byrhtferth.<sup>123</sup> The current analysis will focus on what we called here Section 4, i.e. the annals between 732-802 (hereafter *HR4*). This section was edited by Byrhtferth, but his interventions are easily identifiable and do not extend to the lexical vocabulary for the nobility, discussed below.

The strongest reason for the production of the *HR* was, according to Gransden, 'the desire to preserve the records of St. Cuthbert's church'. This developed into the idea of an historical perspective, in which the desire to extend the religious tradition (the Norman Conquest would be perceived as a hiatus). In this sense, the work and its patchy nature (clearly a collage of several different sources) is understood as a gradual growth from local history, to a broader area, and finally a history of the kingdom. It was therefore also probably thought as continuation to Bede's work.<sup>124</sup>

The annals selected require a brief explanation. Although certainly northern, they also present facts and events from other regions. If so, can this selection be used to inform us about Northumbria? Although the stories presented in them are not from Northumbria, they were chosen to be preserved in a Northumbrian context. The reproduction of these stories

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<sup>121</sup> A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England – c.500-to c.1037* (London, 1974), p. 150.

<sup>122</sup> P. H. Blair, 'Some observations on the "Historia Regum" Attributed to Simeon of Durham', in *Celt and Saxon: Studies in the Early British Border*, in N. K. Chadwick, ed. (Cambridge, 1964), pp. 63-118.

<sup>123</sup> M. Lapidge, 'Byrhtferth of Ramsey and the Historia Regum', *Anglo-Saxon England* 10 (1982), pp. 97-122., pp.118-119.

<sup>124</sup> Gransden, *Historical Writing*, p. 150.

was made following a Northumbrian *interpretatio* of them. In this sense, even when addressing a non-Northumbrian context, the information contained in annals can also be revealing about Northumbria itself.

The annals of *HR4* is a source that was composed by churchmen. It comprehensively addresses many ecclesiastical matters, such as the death of bishops and archbishops, and the elevation of their successors. However, it also opens interesting windows for the observation of the life and deeds of kings and those around them.

The hybrid nature of the *HR4* also brings some interesting consequences to its format. It does not contain any narrative as distilled as the aforementioned case of the eclipse of 664. However, the annals can be very short as well. The entry for the year 738 is very close to those brief annals that just annotated the year of death of a king or a bishop. It only says ‘*Swebriht Orientalium Saxonum rex obiit.*’<sup>125</sup> However, annals can also be lengthy, like the entry for the year 796 which contains information about regicide, the banishing of a king, the coronation of another one, the death of a bishop, and the election of his successor.<sup>126</sup>

The *HR4* is also one of the sources with more diversity in terms of vocabulary that refer to the aristocracy of the eighth century. Table 1 shows the terms used in this text, and their frequency: *comes*; *dux*; *familiae* (in the sense of ‘household’); *miles*; *nobilis*; *patricius*; *praefectus*; *primatibus*; *principes*; *tutor*. The most used term is *dux*, however.

The high number of *duces* mentioned in *HR4* is also an evidence for how the term is crystallized by the later part of the long eighth century, representing the military aristocratic factions, as explained in chapter 1. Its number is the double of the registered for *principibus*, a noun used for those directly connected to central power (kingship).

The *HR* was also patched up in a period later than the context that it refers to. It is, however, possible to point out, by style, at least one later voice. Byrhtferth of Ramsey, the main ‘editor’ of the *HR* may have edited different sources (and early versions of the *HR*) into a structure with a sense, even dividing it into chapters and using rubrics.<sup>127</sup> However, his work seems to impact much more on the form (especially the florid style) than the content of the *HR4*. As an example entry 801 tells us that ‘*Edwine, qui et Eda dictus est, quondam dux Northanhymbrorum, tunc vero per gratiam Salvatoris mundi abbas in Dei servitio*

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<sup>125</sup> *HR*, p. 32, translated as ‘Swaeferht, king of the East Saxons, died’, *EHD*, p. 240.

<sup>126</sup> *HR*, pp. 57-8; *EHD*, pp. 248-9.

<sup>127</sup> Story, *Carolingian Connections*, p. 120, Lapidge, ‘Byrhtferth’, Blair, ‘Some observations’; *Symeonis Monachis*, pp. ix-xiv.

*roboratus*'.<sup>128</sup> The same entry tells that he '*velut miles emeritus, diem clausit ultimum in conspectus fratrum xviii. Kal. Febr.*'<sup>129</sup> This is a 'typical' editing of style of Byrhtferth, who always uses metaphors, especially referring to death.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> *HR*, p. 65. 'Edwin, who was also called Eda, formerly Ealdorman of the Northumbrians, then indeed by the grace of the Saviour of the world an abbot strong in the service of God [...]' *EHD*, p. 250.

<sup>129</sup> *HR*, p. 65, 'ended his last day like a veteran soldier in the sight of the brothers on 15 January', *EHD*, p. 250.

<sup>130</sup> Lapidge, 'Byrferth'.

Table 9 - Vocabulary for the Aristocracy found in the *Historia Regum*.

<i>Historia Regum</i>	
Noun	Entry (years AD) (Total number of entries for the noun)
<i>Comes</i>	774 (1)
<i>Dux</i>	772, 774, 775, 778, 780, 786, 790, 793, 796, 798, 799, 801 (12)
<i>Familiae</i> (in the sense of ‘household’)	758, 774, 796 (3)
<i>Miles</i>	801 (1)
<i>Nobilis</i>	772 (1)
<i>Patricius</i>	780, 788, 796, 799 (4)
<i>Praefectus</i>	711 (1)
<i>Primatibus</i>	786 (1)
<i>Principes</i>	772, 774, 778, 786, 792, 796 (6)
<i>Tutor</i>	757 (1)
<b>Total numbers of annals:</b>	<b>59</b>
Number of annals containing aristocratic lexicon:	<b>16</b> (757, 758, 772, 774, 775, 778, 780, 786, 788, 790, 792, 793, 796, 798, 799, 801)

The intention of the composer of the *Historia Regum* selecting the information is not always immediately perceivable. Some of the annals are too brief or too straightforward and/or talk about very important places or people, and therefore are very easy to understand why they were written down. For example, the 741 annal, which states that ‘*monasterium in Eboraca civitate succensum est ix. Kal. Maii, feria i*’.<sup>131</sup> Judgements of character of (dead) people are not the most common trend observable, but are also part of the *HR*. We know that in the year 769 ‘*Ceteracte succensa est ab Earnredo tyranno, et ipse infelix eodem anno incendio periit Dei iudicio*’.<sup>132</sup> The use of words that qualify people involved in events are not

<sup>131</sup> *HR*, p. 38. ‘The minster in the city of York was burnt on Sunday, 23 April’, *EHD*, p. 240.

<sup>132</sup> ‘Catterick was burnt by the tyrant Earnred, and by the judgment of God he himself perished miserably by fire in the same year’, *EHD*, p. 243.

very common in quantitative terms. Exactly for this reason, the application of these words (like ‘tyrant’) involves gravity and should not be taken for granted.

Annals are also highly selective, and they chose these stories to be remembered not by chance, but for reasons. These reasons might be connected to stories that could be somehow useful or have a potential political advising in it. One of the most striking facts about these annals is how much stories concerning treachery it contains. We can observe stories about treachery and internal struggle within the aristocracy in entries 750; 757;<sup>133</sup> 758;<sup>134</sup>; 775;<sup>135</sup> 778;<sup>136</sup> 786;<sup>137</sup> 790;<sup>138</sup> 791;<sup>139</sup>; 792;<sup>140</sup>; 796;<sup>141</sup>, 798.<sup>142</sup> As the sequence is clear, the further we go into the eighth century, more instability can be perceived in this source. The contrast between this context, and the stable portrait constructed by Bede for the seventh century is

<sup>133</sup> *Ethelbald rex Merciorum a suis tutoribus fraudulentè interfectus est*, HR p. 41 ‘treacherously killed by his bodyguard’ *EHD*, p. 241

<sup>134</sup> *quia occisus est nequiter a sua familia*, HR p. 41, ‘for he was wickedly killed by his household’, *EHD*, p. 241

<sup>135</sup> *Eadwlf dux, per insidias fraudulentè captus, post spatium exigui temporis occiditur, sepepitur, obliviscitur*, HR., p. 46, ‘Ealdorman Eadwulf, seized guilefully by treachery, was after a short space of time killed, buried and forgotten’, *EHD*, p. 244

<sup>136</sup> *tres duces, Aldwulf videlicet, Cynwulf, et Ecga eodem rege precipiente fraude necati sunt*, HR, p. 46, *EHD*, p. 244

<sup>137</sup> *Kinwulf Occidentalium Saxonum rex a perfido tyranno Kynheardilugubri interfectus est morte, et ille crudelis interemptor ab Osredo duce in ultione domini sui in misericorditer interemptus est*, HR, p. 51, ‘Cynwulf, king of the West Saxons, was killed with a miserable death by a treacherous tyrant Cyneheardm abd te curell slayer was himself killed without pity by Ealordman Osred’, *EHD*, p. 245

<sup>138</sup> *Ofredus autem rex dolo suorum principum circumventus et captus ac regno privatus, attonsus est in Eboraca civitate*, ‘King Osred, redved by the guile of his nobles, taken prisoner and deprived of his kingdom, was tonsured in the city of York’, *EHD*, p. 246

<sup>139</sup> *Filii Elfwaldi regis ab Eboraca civitate vi abstracti, et de ecclesia principali per promissa fallaciae adbucti, miserabilitier sunt perempti*, HR, p. 53, ‘The sons of King Aelfwold were taken by force from the city of York, being brought from the principal church by false promises, and were miserably killed’, *EHD*, p. 246.

<sup>140</sup> *Oseredus de exilio sacramentis et fide quorundam principum clam de Eufania venit, ibique, deficientibus ab eo suis militibus, captus est a rege praefato [...], occisus*, HR, p. 54, ‘Osred came secretly from the exile in the Isle of Man, relying on the oaths nad good faith of certain nboles, and his soldiers deserterd him, he was captured [...] and killed.’, *EHD*, p. 247

<sup>141</sup> *Osbald [...], ominae regiae familiae ac principum est societate destitutus, fugatusque et de regno expulsus*, HR, p. 57, ‘Osbald [...] was deserted by the hwole company of the royal household and the nobles, put to flight and banished from the kingdom’, *EHD*, p. 248

<sup>142</sup> *conjurazione facta*, HR, p. 59, ‘A conspiracy have been formed’, *EHD*, p. 249

striking. Rollason thinks that, although Bede's picture is 'rosy', the contrast is too stark not to be anchored in reality; instability was connected also to the growth of power of the aristocracy.<sup>143</sup>

'Chaos' also encompasses order. The annal of 774 mentions that King Alhred (dates) was deposed *consilio et consensus ruorum omnium, regie familie ac principum destitutus societate*.<sup>144</sup> Osbald was evicted from the throne in 796 using the narrative formula: *omni regie familie ac principum est societate destitutus*.<sup>145</sup> The Continuation of Bede's *HE* tells that, after the killing of Oswulf in 759, Æthelwold was elected (*electus*) by his people (*plebs*).<sup>146</sup> Rollason interprets these pieces of evidence as a strong suggestion of a council or assembly.<sup>147</sup> In other words, when dissent between aristocratic families ended up with a *coup*, a new consent needed to be built. The longevity of the new reign was strongly connected to the capacity of forging the aristocratic consent.

Treachery was obviously something important to power dynamics, which could favour one family and take power from another. In a context in which power struggles for the crown were so intense, it is understandable that it was such an important topic. The normative sense of the recording of treachery is easily spotted on entry 775, which mentions that the noble named Eadwulf was '*occiditur, selepitur, obliviscitur*'.<sup>148</sup> It is very interesting how a device of memory uses the oblivion of social memory as a consequence of treachery. It is a reminder of forgetfulness, making the threat of historical erasure by making the invisible known.

The connection between the church and the aristocracy is also quite vivid in the *HR*. As Rollason points out, the sources present an institution dominated by aristocrats.<sup>149</sup> For all the sources of the long eighth century, the only non-aristocratic churchman named is the Whitby cowherd Cædmon (as explored in Chapter 1).<sup>150</sup> The Church was involved into

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<sup>143</sup> Rollason, *Northumbria*, p. 195.

<sup>144</sup> 'by the counsel and consent of all his people', *Continuatio*, pp. 574-5.

<sup>145</sup> 'deprived of the society of the royal household and princes', *Continuatio*, pp. 574-5.

<sup>146</sup> *Ediuald anno eodem a sua plebe electus intrauit in regnum*; *Continuatio*, pp. 574-5.

<sup>147</sup> Rollason, *Northumbria*, p. 197.

<sup>148</sup> *HR*, p. 46, 'Ealdorman Eadwulf, seized guilefully by treachery, was after a short space of time killed, buried and forgotten', *EHD*, p. 244.

<sup>149</sup> Rollason, *Northumbria*, p. 182.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibidem*.

dynastic disputes in this period (especially on later moments of the eighth century).<sup>151</sup> The entry of 750 tells us how King Eadberht took bishop Cynewulf as a prisoner and had the church of St. Peter besieged: *Eadberht rex Kyniwlfulm episcopum [...] adduxerat, basilicamque beati Petri obsidere fecit in Lindisfarnea*.<sup>152</sup> The same entry tells us that Offa, son of king Aldfrith, was dragged from the sanctuary at the tomb of St. Cuthbert, also in Lindisfarne, unarmed and almost dead with hunger: *Offa filius Aldfridi quoque [qui ad] reliquias sancti Cuthberti pontifices innocens coactive accurrebat, pone defunctus fame de ecclesia sine armis abstractus est*.<sup>153</sup> The connection between the two events is clear: the then king Eadberht incarcerated the bishop of Lindisfarne (Cynewulf) because he was protecting Offa, son of Aldfrith, and therefore member of a rival aristocratic family.<sup>154</sup>

The *Historia Regum* is a source that can enlighten us on the dynamics of power of the aristocracy. It was also a vessel of social memory, and a highly selective one. The information available on it can be perceived also as *exempla*, a way to learn from history. Bede's selective writing (like in the case of the unspoken date of the Synod of Whitby) still conducts historiography. At the same time, the rising power of the aristocracy, its consensus and struggles shaped the available knowledge of the history presented in the Northern annals. The ruling class created history 'in its image, according to its likeness'.

## Conclusion

Medieval scholars, *scops*, annalistic authors and scribes were all producing different genres of narrative texts that converged to a sense of historicity. They were producing history. However, the sense of belonging (in time and class) presented in the long eighth century is different from ours. Modern history is written following scientific methods and the required critical apparatus.<sup>155</sup> Knowledge of the past in Anglo-Saxon society followed other rules. In this sense, it is very important to highlight that neither in the Old English nor in the Latin evidence for the senses of the past is there a definitive and clear division between what

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<sup>151</sup> Idem, p. 195.

<sup>152</sup> *HR*, p. 39, 'King Eadberht took bishop Cynewulf as a prisoner to Bamburgh, and had the church of St. Peter in Lindisfarne besieged', *EHD*, p. 241.

<sup>153</sup> *HR*, pp. 39-40, 'Offa, son of Aldfrith, who had been forced to flee to the relics of the holy bishop, Cuthbert, though innocent, was dragged unarmed from the church, almost dead with hunger.' *EHD*, p. 241.

<sup>154</sup> Rollason, *Northumbria*, p. 195.

<sup>155</sup> C. F. S. Cardoso and H. P. Brignoli, *Los Metodos de la Historia* (Barcelona, 1999).

is true and falsehood. All surviving narratives express and organize stories as experience, and therefore help shape the ideology of the aristocracy.

Unfortunately for the long eighth century we only have partial access to the way Northumbria thought about and organized its past. Oral tradition was probably the main medium through which the peasants would organize their knowledge of the past and could confer identity to some communities. As for now there is little evidence for it beyond the reports of written text, this topic remains a matter of speculation.

The analysis of the evidence proves that History-making in Anglo-Saxon society is a part of the ideological mortar of the ruling class. It granted sense of belonging, organized a very important branch of knowledge and put a sense in time and organized time itself in several layers (current time, recent past, future, biblical time, heroic time, eschatological and teleological time etc). Unlike the modern sense of time, which treats time as a thing or object (in the sense that it is also objectified), the past in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria is understood as a force. However, the social actor that is responsible and capable of action and, therefore, of making History is the aristocracy. If 'the dominant ideology of a determined society is the ideology of the ruling class' it should not be a surprise that 'the dominant history of a specific society is the History of the ruling class'.

## Chapter 6)

### Consumption: Aristocratic Eating

#### Introduction

Consumption is a social dimension that can shine a light on the daily life of people of the past. Consumption can take many forms, and in order to address this dimension, this chapter will analyse the act of eating. As Hull and O’Connell have already stated, eating is like breathing: humans must do it regularly; however, unlike breathing, an element of choice usually exists in the food consumed.<sup>1</sup> In this sense, discussing diet makes possible the discussion of how Anglo-Saxons “ate” their culture on a daily basis.<sup>2</sup> As Lee points out, food and status are very close in hierarchical societies.<sup>3</sup> The analysis of eating can shine a light on daily life. Addressing daily experience is not new to Marxism. Thompson’s great work presents the importance of daily rituals and activities on the processual making of a class.<sup>4</sup> The objective of the current chapter is to recover this process of daily consumption in order to better understand class reproduction. The main hypothesis is that eating procedures and rituals are an essential part of the reproduction of the aristocracy, both material and symbolic.

Eating habits also represent a link between inter-class exploitation and intra-class phenomena. The inter-class relations are presented both in terms of the surplus acquired by the aristocracy and the labour this surplus requires in order to be processed to be consumed. The intra-class phenomenon is linked to the habits and rituals of aristocracy and its internal hierarchies and transformations.

The path to be taken by this chapter will address the botanical and faunal evidence of archaeological assemblages and what they can reveal about Anglo-Saxon England as a whole in order to put Northumbrian data in perspective. These data are important since they can reveal details about what daily life consumption seems to have been and how class divisions were expressed through it. After this step, the social meaning of food will be explored by

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<sup>1</sup> B. D. Hull and T. C. O’Connell, ‘Diet: Recent Evidence from Analytical Chemical Techniques’, in H. Hamerow, D. A. Hinton and S. Crawford, *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 667-687, p. 667.

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>3</sup> C. Lee, *Feasting the Dead – Food And Drink in Anglo-Saxon Burial Rituals* (Woodbridge, 2007), p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Thompson, *The Making*.

looking at the meaning of fasting and feasting, and how these extreme behaviours might shine a light on patterns of consumption. The last part of the chapter addresses a case study: Flixborough. Located close to the south margin of the Humber, Flixborough is a key site for understanding Northumbrian settlements. The quality of the published data available for consumption is one key factor for selecting it. However, to that we must add the fact that it extends beyond the eighth century and that the changes in patterns of consumption could be evidence for the change of the nature of the settlement (secular or ecclesiastical), but with no great change for class division. In other words, the consumption patterns can reveal how things can change in order to reproduce aristocratic power.

## 1) Types of evidence available

### 1.a) Botanical evidence

The study of food plants has been of great value to understanding Anglo-Saxon practices of cultivation and consumption. Most of this data would be unknown without the recent advances in archaeobotany. However, there is a bias in the volume of data available for each species. As Moffett highlights, plant remains generally survive by charring or waterlogging in anoxic conditions.<sup>5</sup> Compared to the early and mid-Saxon period, later Saxon evidence can only be observed within a wide window of time, making it hard to pin down if the botanical evidence refers to the pre- or post-Conquest period. The early Anglo-Saxon period (fifth and sixth centuries) has produced little by way of plant remains because few wells or rubbish-pits have been excavated.<sup>6</sup> In other words, the ‘Mid-Saxon period’ is more ‘visible’ archaeologically.

Emmer (*triticum dicoccum*, Schübl) and spelt (*Triticum spealta* L.) were cultivated before the Anglo-Saxon period, but seem to have been a tangential product in eighth-century Northumbria.<sup>7</sup> Bread wheat (*Triticum aestivum* L.) seems to have been used more widely, generally for bread making.<sup>8</sup> In the later Anglo-Saxon period, rivet wheat (*Triticum turgidum* L.) was introduced, and it continued to be used post-Conquest.<sup>9</sup> Rye (*Secale cereal* L.) is also

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<sup>5</sup> L. Moffett, ‘Food Plants on Archaeological Sites’, in Hamerow, Hinton and Crawford, *Handbook*, pp. 346-360, at 347.

<sup>6</sup> Moffett, ‘Food Plants’, p. 348.

<sup>7</sup> Idem, pp. 348-9.

<sup>8</sup> Idem, p. 349.

<sup>9</sup> J. Leets, *Smoke-Blackened Thatch, a Unique Source of Plant Remains from Southern England* (London, 1994).

commonly found.<sup>10</sup> Rye's tolerance for dry, sandy soils could mean it was used in areas where wheats could not be sown.<sup>11</sup> Although Moffett thinks this relation has not been firmly established, the connection seems clear in the study of Sherburn (N. Yorks). The tons of rye found the grain processing buildings were probably cultivated in the local sandy soil.<sup>12</sup> Rye can be used to make dense but moist bread, but can also be mixed with bread wheat in order to make a lighter, softer loaf.<sup>13</sup> Barley (*Hordeum vulgare* L.) cultivation was also widespread, probably the variation known as six-row hulled barley.<sup>14</sup> There is evidence that barley was malted during the Anglo-Saxon period, so it was probably used for making ale.<sup>15</sup> Oats are also widely found, in both species: the common oat (*Avena sativa* L.) and the bristle oat (*Avena strigose* Schreb.).<sup>16</sup>

Legumes are not so commonly found. However, their seeds were less likely exposed to fire, which could bias the data.<sup>17</sup> At Hamwic remains of peas (*Pisum sativum* L.) and beans (*Vicia fada* L.) were found in mineralized state, dated from the 'Mid Saxon' period.<sup>18</sup> There is also evidence for cultivation of vetch (*Vicia sativa* subsp. *Sativa*) and lentils (*Lens culinaris* Medik) in certain regions of England, but probably used for rotation crops with cereals, and not for direct consumption.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Moffett, 'Food Plants', p. 351.

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>12</sup> Check the discussion of Sherburn in Chapter 2.

<sup>13</sup> Moffett, 'Food Plants', p. 351.

<sup>14</sup> Idem, p. 351.

<sup>15</sup> L. Moffett, 'Crop economy and other plant remains', in A. Hardy, B. M. Charles and R. J. Williams, *Death and Taxes: The Archaeology of a Middle Saxon Estate Centre at Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 158-78.

<sup>16</sup> Moffett, 'Food Plants', pp. 351-2.

<sup>17</sup> Idem, p. 352.

<sup>18</sup> W. J. Carruthers, 'Mineralised plant remains', in Birbeck, ed. *The Origin of Mid-Saxon Southampton* (Salisbury, 2005), pp. 157-63.

<sup>19</sup> For vetch cultivation, G. G. Astill and S. J. Lobb, 'Excavation of prehistoric, Roman, and Saxon deposits at Wraysbury, Berkshire', *Archaeological Journal* 146 (1989), pp. 68-134; G. Campbell, 'The preliminary archaeobotanical results from Anglo-Saxon West Cotton and Raunds', in Rackham (ed.), *Environment and Economy in Anglo-Saxon England* (York, 1994), pp. 65-82; Moffett, 'Crop economy'. For cultivation of lentils, see G. Jones, V. Straker and A. Davis, 'Early medieval plant use and ecology', in A. Vince, *Anglo-Saxon and Norman London 2: Finds and Environmental Evidence*, London and Middlesex Archaeological Society Special Paper 12 (1991), pp. 347-88; C. Stevens, 'Charred plant remains', in G. Hey, *Yarnton: Saxon and Medieval*

A wide sample of fruits seems to have been available for Anglo-Saxon England. The whole range includes apple, elderberry, bramble, grape, gooseberry, plum, quince, pear, walnut, hazel, strawberry, raspberry, elderberry, bilberry, blackberry, sloe, hazel nuts, dewberry, rose, rowan, hawthorn, cherry and fig.<sup>20</sup> Not all of these have been found at the same site; however, there is no connection between the size or complexity of the site and the range of fruits.<sup>21</sup> In other words, even those sites that are not ‘high-status sites’ counted with the presence of several types of fruits. Walnuts seem to have been imported, since they are more present at urban (and trader) sites.<sup>22</sup>

Herbs, seeds and legumes may also have been prepared for use as flavourings.<sup>23</sup> However, as Banham points out, the Anglo-Saxons made no differentiation between herbs for flavouring and as vegetables.<sup>24</sup> Also, these items also appear in medical texts, so at certain occasions they must have had an extra layer of function.<sup>25</sup>

The available data seems to produce a distinction between the waterlogged urban deposits and its fruits, nuts, vegetables and herbs and the charred evidence of rural settlements with its cereals. However, much of this result is connected to the recovery bias of archaeological evidence. It is not possible yet to determine with certainty if this distribution means that there was a different access to food plants. However, the great majority of the food plants were native.<sup>26</sup> The fact that most of them were easily cultivated in England might argue in favour of an argument that people in the countryside, although not wealthy, may have had access to these food plants.<sup>27</sup> However, it can also be argued the existence of a class distinction in terms of quality, quantity and the possibility of combining and mixing them in

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*Settlement and Landscape*, Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph 20 (Oxford, 2004), pp. 351-64; A. J. Clapham, ‘Waterlogged plant remains’, in Birbeck, ed. *The Origins of Mid-Saxon Southampton* (Salisbury, 2005), pp. 173-81.

<sup>20</sup> Moffett, ‘Food Plants’, pp. 353-4.

<sup>21</sup> *Idem*, p. 353.

<sup>22</sup> C. Dickinson, ‘Macroscopic fossils of garden plants from British Roman and medieval deposits’, in D. Moe, J. H. Dickinson and P. M. Jorgensen (eds), *Garden History: Garden Plants, Species, Forms and Varieties from Pompeii to 1800*, PACT 42, (1991), pp. 47-71.

<sup>23</sup> Moffett, ‘Food Plants’, pp. 354-6.

<sup>24</sup> D. Banham, *Food and Drink in Anglo-Saxon England* (Stroud, 2004).

<sup>25</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>26</sup> Moffett, ‘Food plants’, p. 357.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*.

recipes. Mere access to the same items is not enough to level the ground between aristocratic and peasant consumption.

### 1.b) Faunal Evidence

Products of animal origin were also very important in Anglo-Saxon daily life. As Hagen has already pointed out, meat and dairy were often salted and consumed in many meals during the later Anglo-Saxon period.<sup>28</sup> Specialist animal husbandry was also vital for the production of manuscripts. As Bruce-Mitford highlights, 1,545 calves were required to produce the three Biblical pandects at Wearmouth Jarrow in the early eighth century.<sup>29</sup> Secondary products of animal origin (milk, cheese and eggs, for example) probably played a major role in Anglo-Saxon society, but are almost invisible in archaeological evidence.<sup>30</sup>

The main archaeological assemblages of livestock bones contain cattle, sheep and pigs.<sup>31</sup> These three seems to have been the most used animals in terms of daily life. Few horses have been found, and goats are frequent throughout sites, but always in a very low percentage.<sup>32</sup>

The main usage for cattle was traction power, meat, milk, horn, bone and hide; in other words, they produced varied and valuable materials for Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>33</sup> In Northumbrian mid-Saxon sites, the evidence seems to point to relatively long-lived cattle. In Wharram Percy the average age of death for cattle was 7-8 years.<sup>34</sup> At Flixborough, the assemblages are also formed of fully adult to elderly cattle bones, in all phases.<sup>35</sup> Using both

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<sup>28</sup> A. Hagen, *A Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Food: Processing and Consumption* (Norfolk, 1992), p. 41.

<sup>29</sup> R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford, *The Art of the Codex Amiantinus*, Jarrow Lecture (Jarrow, 1967), p.2.

<sup>30</sup> Hull and O'Connell, 'Diet', p. 668.

<sup>31</sup> T. O'Connor, 'Animal Husbandry', in Hamerow, Hinton and Crawford, *Handbook*, pp. 361-76, at p. 364.

<sup>32</sup> O'Connor, 'Animal Husbandry', p. 364.

<sup>33</sup> J. Driver, 'Zooarchaeological analysis of raw-material selection by a Saxon artisan', *Journal of Field Archaeology* 11 (1984), pp. 397-403; A. Grant, 'The animal bones', in B. Cunliffe, *Excavations at Portchester Castle*, Reports of the Research Committee 32 (London, 1976), pp. 262-87; D. A. Hinton, 'Raw Materials: Source and Demand', in Hamerow, Hinton and Crawford, *Handbook*, pp. 423-39; K. Leahy, 'Anglo-Saxon Crafts', in Hamerow, Hinton and Crawford, *Handbook*, pp. 440-459.

<sup>34</sup> S. Pinter-Bellows, 'The animal remains', in Stamper and Croft (eds), *Wharram : a study of settlement on the Yorkshire Wolds* (York, 2000), pp. 167-84.

<sup>35</sup> K. M. Dobney, D. Jaques, J. Barrett, C. Johnstone, *Farmers, Monks and Aristocrats: The Environmental Evidence of Anglo-Saxon Flixborough*, Volume 3 of *Excavations at Flixborough* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 152-48.

Wharram and Flixborough as samples of Northumbrian activity which exploited cattle, it seems that the relation between productivity and demand was balanced enough to slaughter cows after a couple years' yield of secondary products.<sup>36</sup> At four to five years old, cattle could have produced two cycles of calving and lactation, and also some work pulling the plough.<sup>37</sup> In other words, cattle were probably more often used for traction power than simply sheer beef production; they could also have been used for dairy farming, but that might not have been the main objective.

Sheep could be used for wool production, meat, dairy, and also as a 'muck-spreader' (for fertilization of the soil).<sup>38</sup> The sheep were generally killed in Anglo-Saxon England when they were adult, ranging from 3 to 6 years.<sup>39</sup> In its mid Saxon phase, Wharram Percy produced sheep from a few months up to 4 years, but few older (elderly) animals.<sup>40</sup> The avoidance of killing very young animals was part of a strategy of sustaining breeding stock whilst taking at least two clips of wool from each.<sup>41</sup>

Pigs were generally culled for meat only. However, their capacity to eat things that most species wouldn't was probably used as a form of converting refuse into meat, and maybe even foraging woodlands.<sup>42</sup> The pig assemblages of mid Saxon phases have produced very few pigs reaching an elderly age.<sup>43</sup> This is related to the fact that pigs can breed at almost any time of year, and therefore their reproduction is assured more easily than other animals.<sup>44</sup> The bones found at Flixborough phase 3b (mid eighth to early ninth century) indicate a first-year cull.<sup>45</sup> At Wharram, there is more variation of ages, with a concentration on third and fourth-year pigs (already adults).<sup>46</sup> At York, an assemblage produced limbs of young pigs, but not their mandibles; they also had an age gap between the bones without mandibles and those

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<sup>36</sup> O'Connor, 'Animal Husbandry', p. 370.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>38</sup> *Idem*, p. 372.

<sup>39</sup> *Idem*, p. 369.

<sup>40</sup> Pinter-Bellows, 'Animal Remains'.

<sup>41</sup> O'Connor, 'Animal Husbandry', p. 369.

<sup>42</sup> *Idem*, p. 372.

<sup>43</sup> *Idem*, p. 369.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>45</sup> Dobney *et al.*, pp. 125-48.

<sup>46</sup> Pinter-Bellows, 'Animal Remains'.

with (maybe reflecting the transport of butchered meat).<sup>47</sup> The mid Saxon material of West Heslerton, however, complements this distribution, since they have produced bones of pigs with a chronology that fits the gap in York.<sup>48</sup> In other words, it seems that pigs that were raised and culled in West Heslerton might be consumed at York. However, there is a discussion if pork was a high-status food in Anglo-Saxon or not. Albarella has defended the idea that pork and beef were common table items of wealth families, while the poor classes had a basically vegetarian diet, with limited access to pork only.<sup>49</sup>

One archaeological method might shine a light on the consumption of animal protein and diet habits. Previously, only the absence of nourishment could be noticed and measured.<sup>50</sup> The isotopic analysis of bones of people reveals the presence of different levels of Nitrogen, which is read as an indication of the level of consumption of protein.<sup>51</sup> This method applied to Anglo-Saxon England has revealed that people who were identified as poor had higher levels of Nitrogen isotopes than their wealthy counterparts.<sup>52</sup> This interesting piece of evidence, however, is not evidence for cattle, pig or fish consumption.<sup>53</sup> Hull and O'Connell offered two explanations: A) manuring cereal crops impacts on the soil and plant nitrogen isotopic values, which would also affect the bodies of those working it and feeding from it (especially if they were eating a vegetable-based diet); B) the consumption of domestic birds (chickens, geese, fowl) and their eggs, whose impact on the nitrogen values are also higher than cattle and pigs.<sup>54</sup> In other words, the daily intake of proteins of poor

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<sup>47</sup> T. O'Connor, *Bones from 46-54 Fishergate* (London, 1991), p. 15.

<sup>48</sup> O'Connor, 'Animal Husbandry', p. 370.

<sup>49</sup> U. Albarella, 'Pig husbandry and pork consumption I Medieval England', in C. M. Woolgar, D. Serjeantson, and T. Waldron (eds), *Food in Medieval England: Diet and Nutrition* (Oxford, 2006), p. 73.

<sup>50</sup> T. Waldron, 'The effects of urbanisation on human health: the evidence from skeletal remains', in D. Serjeantson and Tw. Waldron (eds), *Diet and Craft in Towns: the evidence of animal remains from the Roman to the post-medieval periods*, BAR British Series 1999 (Oxford, 1989), pp. 55-73; C. Lee, *Feasting the Dead*, p. 34.

<sup>51</sup> K. Privat, T. O'Connell and M. Richards, 'Stable isotope analysis of human and faunal remains from the Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Berinsfield, Oxfordshire: dietary and social implications', *Journal of Archaeological Science* 29 (2002), pp. 779-90, at 780.

<sup>52</sup> 'Hull and O'Connell, 'Diet: Recent Evidence', pp. 676-7.

<sup>53</sup> 'Hull and O'Connell, 'Diet: Recent Evidence', pp. 677; J. H. Barret, A. M. Locker and C. M. Roberts, '“Dark Age economics” revisited: the English fish bone evidence AD 600-1600', *Antiquity* 78, 301 (2004), pp. 618-36.

<sup>54</sup> 'Hull and O'Connell, 'Diet: Recent Evidence', pp. 677; A. Bogaard, T. H. E. Heaton, P. Poulton and I. Merbach, 'The impact of manuring on nitrogen isotope ratios in cereals: archaeological implications for

people might have been higher than those of the ruling classes; however, the social distinction implied in the act of feeding from cattle and/or sheep was a crucial element.

The isotope analysis has also studied to see if there was a gender difference in terms of protein consumption throughout Anglo-Saxon England. Sites like Caistor-by-Yarmouth, Swaffham and Morningthorpe (Norfolk), as well as Winnall II in Hampshire have produced data that points in the direction of a higher protein consumption by males than females.<sup>55</sup> Nonetheless, sites like Shavard's Farm, Hampshire and Westgarth Gardens, Suffolk produced data in which women had higher levels of nitrogen isotopes than men.<sup>56</sup> Although this points to no consistent social differentiation of consumption based on gender, there are distinctions in the levels of nitrogen within each gender, which must reflect social hierarchies that would not be visible otherwise.<sup>57</sup>

Animal husbandry and consumption must not be considered separately from farming. The mixed farming referred in the Chapter 1 must be kept in mind. At the same time, the animals used and consumed must be considered as a set, not as individuals separated by species one from another. The mixed farming process included complementary management of these resources, which probably shared the same space and were part of a plan of resource control. The aged animals are evidence that the Anglo-Saxons could make their animals survive through several winters, which certainly involved skill and selection in handling animals and controlling consumption.

The archaeological evidence leads to a question about how class difference might affect the consumption of the Anglo-Saxon populations. The main debate on this question concerns the access to food, either from animal or vegetable origin. Härke argues in favour of a class gap between access to this kind of resources, widening the distance between the peasantry and the privileged classes, especially in times of drought and economic

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reconstruction of diet and crop management practices', *Journal of Archaeological Science* 34 (2007), pp. 335-43.

<sup>55</sup> B. Hull, *Diet and Social Differentiation in Early Anglo-Saxon England: Stable Isotope Analysis of Archaeological Human and Animal Remains*, Unpublished Thesis (Oxford, 2008); Hull and O'Connell, 'Diet: Recent Evidence', p. 675.

<sup>56</sup> Hull and O'Connell, 'Diet: Recent Evidence', p. 675.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*.

uncertainties.<sup>58</sup> Hagen, however, suggests that the difference in diet referred primarily to a matter of quality of goods, instead of an unbreachable gap between access and deprivation.<sup>59</sup> Although certainly more studies are required to better qualify the class gap, its existence is undeniable and an essential part of social hierarchy. As it has been presented in this section, it seems that there is no great difference in terms of plant consumption (maybe only in quality). However, there is a distinction in terms of animal eating, with beef and sheep probably reserved for the wealthy and powerful, while the peasants were probably eating domestic birds and protein from vegetal sources.

Since the evidence for daily life consumption have been examined, it is necessary to explore the moments of both frugality and luxurious consumption of food, and their social meaning.

## 2) Fasting and Feasting

The notion of frugality and fasting has been attached to the image of ideal monasticism since the fifth-century ‘Rule of Augustine’ and the sixth-century ‘Rule of Columbanus’.<sup>60</sup> In a work which addressed rules for monks in Western Europe, Dembinska argues that up to the ninth century the daily diet of men and women was so severe and strict that a very strong will was required to adhere and to obey them.<sup>61</sup> A difference in diet was made according to the monks’ activity: contemplative monks would have only one meal a day (mostly bread and water), while working monks had more substantial meals.<sup>62</sup> When fasting was foreseen in the monastic calendar, working monks would avoid labour.<sup>63</sup> During the Carolingian period, the Rule of Saint Benedict was adopted throughout monasteries of Western Europe.<sup>64</sup> The Benedictine Rule said that monks could only consume the meat of

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<sup>58</sup> H. Härke, ‘“Warrior Graves”? The background of the Anglo-Saxon burial rite’, *Past and Present* 126 (1990), pp. 22-43.

<sup>59</sup> Hagen, *A Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Food*.

<sup>60</sup> Lee, *Feasting the Dead*, p. 36.

<sup>61</sup> M. Dembinska, ‘Fasting and working monks: regulations of the fifth to eleventh centuries’, in A. Fenton and E. Kisban (eds), *Food in Change: eating habits from the Middle Ages to the present day* (Edinburgh, 1986), pp. 152-60, p. 153.

<sup>62</sup> Dembinska, ‘Fasting and working monks’, pp. 153-4.

<sup>63</sup> Lee, *Feasting the Dead*, p. 37.

<sup>64</sup> L. Milis, *Angelic Monks and earthly Men: Monasticism and its Meaning to Medieval Society* (Woodbridge, 1992).

four-legged terrestrial mammals if they were ill or weak.<sup>65</sup> This prohibition would explain the near absence of mammal bones at monastic sites excavated in Belgium, implying a transfer to fish in terms of the origin of the protein consumed.<sup>66</sup> However, these are the rules, which do not translate necessarily into social practice. The Belgian evidence, for example, represents an area that was easier to control since it was near the central power of the Carolingian world. It is hard to think that the same level of control would apply to all Western Europe.

Throughout Europe, fasting is not a clearly defined term, since it could vary from abstention from meat and dairy and eating only low-quality food, or not eating at all.<sup>67</sup> For the majority of Anglo-Saxons, fasting would mean abstention from certain foods, like meat or alcohol, during Lent, Rogationtide and Advent, or just not eating outside prescribed mealtimes.<sup>68</sup> In the 'Penitential of Theodore', there is a clear distinction between abstention from certain foods and true fasting: the first meant not consuming meat and wine, and the second meant actually not eating.<sup>69</sup> In terms of rules, fasting had a rigid meaning in Anglo-Saxon England, as it was an important part of the calendar. The absence of eating had a spiritual sense in a monastic community, and therefore reinforced the control of patterns of consumption. These rules were not, however, equally obeyed and observed everywhere. Rules were literally rulebooks to be followed, and were not necessarily daily life practice.

Rules did not try to regulate only absence of consumption. Communal eating was an essential part of the integration and the sense of belonging to monastic life.<sup>70</sup> The Rule of Saint Benedict uses the exclusion of the commensality as a punishment; as part of the punishment, the monk could not intone psalms or antiphons in the oratory, nor read a lesson, and should have his meals alone.<sup>71</sup> In this sense, the regulation over consumption is also the

<sup>65</sup> P. Schmitz, *Sancti Benedicti Regula Monachorum* (Maredsous, 1945).

<sup>66</sup> A. Eryvnyck, 'Orant, pugnans, laborant. The diet of the three orders within the feudal society of Medieval Europe', in S. J. Jones I'Day, W. van Neer and A. Eryvnyck (eds), *Behaviour behind bones* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 215-223.

<sup>67</sup> Lee, *Feasting the Dead*, p. 37.

<sup>68</sup> Idem, p. 128.

<sup>69</sup> H. Wassersleben, *Die Bussordnungen der abendländischen Kirche* (Graz, 1958), p. 198; Lee, *Feasting the Dead*, p. 128.

<sup>70</sup> Lee, *Feasting the Dead*, p. 39.

<sup>71</sup> *Si qui stamen frater in levioribus cuplis invenitur, a mensae participatione privetur. Privati autem a mensae consortio ista erit ratio: ut in oratorio psalmum aut antiphonam non imponat neque lectionem recitet usque ad satisfactionem. Refectionem autem cibi post fratrum refectionem solus accipiat; ut si verbi gratia fratres reficiunt sexta hora, ille frater nona, si frater nona, ille vespera: usque dum satisfactione congrua veniam*

regulation over the practice of spirituality, and the over the access to sacred rituals beyond eating and consumption.

At the other extreme of levels of consumption and eating are feasts. Most of the historiography that deals with the question of feasts is ‘royal-centric’, i.e. they focus on the phenomenon of feasting in the king’s presence and how it relates to royal power.<sup>72</sup> The focus of this thesis, however, is on the king’s entourage. The king’s presence is obviously important; however, the king is just one person, and he does not feast alone. At the same time, as the king’s retinue is part of these acts of luxurious consumption (and their audience), the feasts are useful for observing the top of the ruling class or, as proposed here, the leading fraction of the ruling class.

Early Anglo-Saxon legal texts present the obligation of the king’s subordinates to ‘feasting’ at the royal household.<sup>73</sup> Etiquette for behavior in the presence of the royal household is also part of these laws: the lawcode of Ine of Wessex (688-726) prohibits fighting in the king’s house, for example.<sup>74</sup> In early Anglo-Saxon England, most kings were peripatetic, i.e., they travelled between royal residences, accompanied by their subordinates.<sup>75</sup> Charles-Edwards has already pointed out that the surplus required to supply these people meant that they could not stay in one place for more than a few weeks without long-distance supplies.<sup>76</sup> According to him, it was easier to move people than the food, which was also perishable and could not last for a long time.<sup>77</sup> John Blair agrees with that perspective, emphasizing the reduction of the labour and resources required in transportation and storage.<sup>78</sup> Rahtz states that one hundred and fifty-five Anglo-Saxon palaces (royal houses)

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*consequatur*, Rule of Benedict, 25, Justin McCann (ed. and trans.), *The Rule of Saint Benedict* (London, 1952), p. 74.

<sup>72</sup> Lee, *Feasting the Dead*, pp. 39-50.

<sup>73</sup> *Idem*, p. 39.

<sup>74</sup> F. Liebermann (ed. and trans.), *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 3 vols, vol. 1 (Halle, 1903-16), pp. 90-1; M. P. Richards, ‘The manuscript context of the Old English laws: tradition and innovation’, in P. E. Szarmach (ed.), *Studies in Earlier Old English Prose: sixteen original contributions* (Albany, 1986), pp. 171-92, p. 174.

<sup>75</sup> Lee, *Feasting the Dead*, p.40.

<sup>76</sup> T. Charles-Edwards, ‘Early medieval kingships in the British Isles’, in S. Bassett (ed.), *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* (London and New York: NY, 1989), pp. 28-39, p. 28.

<sup>77</sup> Charles-Edwards, ‘Early medieval kingships’, p. 28.

<sup>78</sup> Blair, *The Church*, p. 252.

location are known and a further thirty-eight are known by name but are unlocated, making a total of 193 sites known from written sources.<sup>79</sup> The relatively high number of these sites led John Blair to defend the idea that the landscape was organized to support kings in transit and the consumption needs of their retinue.<sup>80</sup>

Supporting the presence of the king and his subordinates was not only a duty of lay premises. Bede tells about the Northumbrian king going to Lindisfarne and sharing the daily fare with Aidan, Finan, and Colman at Lindisfarne. When the king was visiting the community he had only a small retinue of five or six men, and all of them would eat the same things as the monks.<sup>81</sup> Bede's narrative emphasizes both the frugality of the monks and the humility of the king, subordinating himself to the monks' habits. However, a closer look at Lindisfarne can reveal a bit more about its consumption habits.

Bede tells us that the community of Lindisfarne, *nil pecuniarum absque pecoribus habebant*.<sup>82</sup> The phrase is a clear attempt to highlight the humility of the community on Lindisfarne. However, although Bede mentions the absence of money (*pecunia*), this does not mean that the presence of cattle (*pecus*) was not a measure and display of wealth. The play on words is deliberate. Raising and culling young animals is perfectly sensible when it comes to a site where the production of manuscripts was a core activity, and animal skins for parchment was a primary, not secondary product. However, it is important to highlight that it also implied the consumption of meat, milk and other dairy products. Excavations in Lindisfarne have produced a good number of animal bones, both of wild and domesticated species.<sup>83</sup> From these, there is a considerable amount of butchered cattle, and the sex and age analysis indicate a cattle economy based focused on dairy.<sup>84</sup> If the level of wealth of Lindisfarne is easily spotted via objects like the Lindisfarne Gospels, the subtle evidence of the patterns of consumption must not be forgotten. The connection between manuscript production and meat consumption is also valid for the Codex Amiatinus and the community

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<sup>79</sup> P. Rahtz, 'Royal sites', in M. Lapidge, J. Blair and Donald Scragg, *BEASE* pp. 411-3, at p. 412.

<sup>80</sup> Blair, *Church*, p. 253.

<sup>81</sup> *Rex ipse, cum oportunitas exegisset, cum quinque tantum aut sex ministris ueniebat, ex expleta in ecclesia oratione discedebat. Quodsi forte eos ibi refici contingeret, simplici tantum et cotidiano fratrum cibo contenti nil ultra quaerebant.* *HE*, III, 26.

<sup>82</sup> 'They had no money, but only cattle', *HE*, III, 26.

<sup>83</sup> P. Beavitt, D. O'Sullivan and R. Young, *Archaeology on Lindisfarne, Fieldwork and Research, 1983-88* (Leicester, 1988), p. 21.

<sup>84</sup> D. O' Sullivan and R. Young, *Lindisfarne, Holy Island* (London, 1995), p. 86.

of Jarrow. In other words, the consumption of meat and dairy must always be considered alongside the production of manuscripts, bringing the consumption patterns of these monastic sites closer to those of the lay aristocracy. In other words, it is always important to link the dimension of production to that of consumption.

The food and drink consumed at feasts were probably collected through taxation.<sup>85</sup> The taxation of food rent is known as *feorm* in Old English, and was probably paid not only to the king but to all figures of authority.<sup>86</sup> The most famous case of *feorm* is the amount of food rent that ten hides of land should pay, according to Ine's law:

Ten vats of honey, three hundred loaves, twelve measures of "Welsh ale", thirty measures of pale ale, two adult cows or ten withers, ten geese, twenty hens, ten cheeses, a measure of butter, five salmon, twenty pound weight of fodder and a hundred eels.<sup>87</sup>

Wickham points out that the tributes included in the *feorm* were not a heavy levy.<sup>88</sup> Lee adds the fact that the *feorm* is based on itineration of the king's household, even if there is no way for the king to visit all the estates.<sup>89</sup> However, what is missing in Lee's argument is the fact that these estates were inhabited most of the time, but they did not all exist necessarily at the same time. Exemptions from the *feorm* could be granted by the king, and some monastic communities in particular were granted this gift.<sup>90</sup> The counter-gift of these donations was spiritual assistance and prayers.

In order to ensure the loyalty of his retinue, a king must be able to feed his men. This is true not only for the food provided by the lower classes, but also by enemies that were subjugated.<sup>91</sup> As Bede recalls, when the Anglo-Saxons defeated the Picts they demanded a

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<sup>85</sup> Lee, *Feasting the Dead*, p.42.

<sup>86</sup> R. Faith, 'Feorm', in *BEASE*, pp. 186-7, p. 187.

<sup>87</sup> 'x fata hunies, ccc hlafa, xii ambra Wilisc ealað, xxx hluttres, tu eald hriðeru oððe x weðeras, x gees, xx henna, x cesas, amber fulne buteran, v leaxas, xx pundwæga foðres hundteontig æla'. Liebermann, *Gesetze*, vol. 1, pp. 118-21; also Lee, *Feasting the Dead*, pp. 43-4, n. 170.

<sup>88</sup> Wickham, *Framing*, p. 321.

<sup>89</sup> Lee, *Feasting the Dead*, p. 44.

<sup>90</sup> *ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>91</sup> Lee, *Feasting the Dead*, p.46.

greater supply of food, threatening them to lay waste their lands if disobeyed.<sup>92</sup> Also, the food acquired by the king must be enough to feed his servants and slaves as well.<sup>93</sup>

Feasting was also an important part of social cohesion. Feasting and hunting could represent ‘arenas’ for the cementing bonds between social equals, both within and between kinship groups, and between a lord and his subordinates.<sup>94</sup> In this sense, the feast hall is the place to host feasts and gift-giving ceremonies and performances, in order to promote loyalty and reproduce the aristocracy’s bounds.<sup>95</sup> The construction of cohesion is also made out of devices for punishing those who transgress the rules. In this sense, it is also a demonstration and reaffirmation of power. There are punishments for a man taking another’s stoup without reason (who should pay compensation for the house-owned and 12 shillings to the king, according to Ine’s laws); for quarrelling over cups (in Ine’s laws); for drawing weapons without reason (in Hlothhere and Eadric’s laws).<sup>96</sup> The presence of the king generally doubled the fine, and fighting in the house of the king could lose combatants’ their property and the king could decide whether or not to execute the offender.<sup>97</sup> In other words, the legal evidence makes it clear the role of the king in providing not only the food, but also the (peaceful) conditions for it to be consumed. Also, the fines that are also paid to the king attest that royal power was not based on the king’s separation from aristocratic families; it actually includes him as part of all the families under his subordination. In other words, the king was organically attached to his class origin.

Unfortunately, there are no surviving codes for Anglo-Saxon Northumbria. However, there is no lack of evidence for feasting as an important social practice. Places like Yeavering have produced good evidence in that sense, although earlier than the context of the current thesis. However, there are no reasons to believe that the Northumbrian regulations were that

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<sup>92</sup> *Et primum quidem annonas sibi eos affluentius ministrare cogunt, quaerentesque occasionem diuortii protestantur, nisi profusior sibi alimentorum copia daretur, se cuncta insulae loca rupto foedere uastaturos.* *HE*, I, 15, p. 53.

<sup>93</sup> Lee, *Feasting the Dead*, p.46.

<sup>94</sup> R. Fletcher, *Bloodfeud – Murder and Revenge in Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 2002), pp. 27-8, 189-92; B. Hayden, ‘Fabulous Feasts – A Prolegomenon to the Importance of Feasting’, in M. Dietler and B. Hayden (eds), *Feasts – Archaeological and Ethnographic Perspectives on Food, Politics and Power* (Washington, DC, 2001), pp. 23-64, pp. 58-9.

<sup>95</sup> For the granting of land, see Chapter 3.

<sup>96</sup> Liebermann, *Gesetze*, vol. 1, p. 11; idem, p. 93; idem, p. 11.

<sup>97</sup> Idem, vol. 1, p. 3; idem, pp. 90-1.

different from other Anglo-Saxon regions. The same class interactions (surplus acquisition and its redistribution among the aristocracy) were observed in previous chapters, and if they differed from the Southumbrian region, it was probably a matter of degree than of quality.

### 3) Flixborough

The Anglo-Saxon site at Flixborough lies just outside the ancient kingdom of Northumbria *stricto sensu*, sited as it is on the southern side of the River Humber, 5km south of its confluence with the Trent. However, borders and frontiers in the early Middle Ages were not as controlled and rigid as in the modern world. As Rollason has pointed out, even the very visible borders that are apparently linear and strict (like Hadrian's Wall or Offa's Dyke), must be considered as flexible entities rather than definite.<sup>98</sup> Also, the early middle ages are a period when kingdoms were in process of formation, and jurisdiction areas were not always clear, a phenomenon which is true for Northumbria as well.<sup>99</sup> It is possible also that the denomination 'Northumbria' was also relatively new.<sup>100</sup>

The Flixborough settlement lasted from the seventh century to the tenth.<sup>101</sup> In this period, the settlement was known for its evidence of ostentatious aristocratic display and intensive production, with the exception of a period in the mid / late ninth century to the early tenth.<sup>102</sup> The long-term occupation of the same area raises a question that is common in the analysis of high-status settlements: was it ever a monastery?<sup>103</sup> The presence of items that indicate literacy (usually styli) is generally taken as an indication of possible monastic status.

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<sup>98</sup> Rollason, *Northumbria*, pp. 20-1.

<sup>99</sup> *Idem*, p. 22.

<sup>100</sup> *Idem*, p. 35.

<sup>101</sup> C. Loveluck and D. Atkinson (eds), *The Early Medieval Settlement Remains from Flixborough and Lincolnshire, The Occupation Sequence, c. AD 600-1000* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 39-112; C. Loveluck, 'The excavated Anglo-Saxon settlement remains and their potential for wider interpretation', in C. Loveluck, *Rural Settlement, Lifestyles and Social Change in the Later First Millennium AD, Anglo-Saxon Flixborough in its Wider Context*, Excavations at Flixborough, vol. 4 (Oxford, 2007), pp. 8-30, pp. 22-30.

<sup>102</sup> C. Loveluck, 'Changing Lifestyles, Interpretation of Settlement Character', in C. Loveluck, *Rural Settlements*, p. 154.

<sup>103</sup> K. Dobney, D. Jaques, J. Barrett and C. Johnstone, 'Zooarchaeological evidence for the nature and character of the settlement', in K. Dobney, D. Jaques, J. Barrett and C. Johnstone, *Farmer, Monks and Aristocrats, The Environmental Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon Flixborough*, Excavations at Flixborough, vol. 3 (Oxford, 2007), pp. 217-247, p. 220.

However, literacy could also be held at lay centres.<sup>104</sup> A discussion that takes into consideration the dietary evidence can help to answer this question, as well as shining a light on the habits of monastic life.<sup>105</sup>

The evidence of terrestrial animal consumption is quite close to those of the rest of Anglo-Saxon England. The skeletal remains indicate that the main domestic mammal species were cattle, sheep and pig, slaughtered and consumed throughout the whole occupation period.<sup>106</sup> At first, this evidence might lead to conclude that Flixborough was never a monastery, since it would go against the monastic rules presented on the section about fasting. However, the reality of social practices is not always congruent with rules.

The evidence for the eighth-century occupation reveals traits of aristocratic presence, although it is not clear if the presence was permanent or periodic.<sup>107</sup> The aristocratic practices can be observed in evidence for two activities: feasting and hunting. Feasting evidence is found on drinking vessels imported from the Rhineland, Belgium, or northern France, with fragments that point to a total of approximately fifty such vessels throughout the occupation sequence.<sup>108</sup> The same kind of glass (with the same patterns of form, decoration and green-blue colour) is found at many other sites in England and the Continent, from France to Scandinavia.<sup>109</sup> However, what marks it as different is the fact that in the deposits from the end of the seventh century, the vessels were found smashed on the settlement and worked into floor and domestic refuse deposits; in the eighth-century deposits, however, they were recovered within buildings, even those that were probably used for private living and/or

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<sup>104</sup> For example, P. Wormald, 'The lay intellectual in Anglo-Saxon England: Ealdorman Æthelweard and the politics of history', in P. Wormald and J. Nelson, *Lay Intellectuals in the Carolingian world* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 218-245.

<sup>105</sup> K. Dobney et al., 'Zooarchaeological Evidence', p. 220.

<sup>106</sup> K. Dobney, D. Jaques, J. Barrett and C. Johnstone, J. Carrot and A. Hall, 'Patterns of Disposal and Processing', in Keith Dobney et al., *Farmer, Monks and Aristocrats*, p. 90

<sup>107</sup> Loveluck, 'Changing Lifestyles', p. 148.

<sup>108</sup> Vera I. Evison, '2.1 Glass Vessels', in D.H. Evans and C. Loveluck, *Life and Economy at Early Medieval Flixborough, c. AD 600-1000, The Artefact Evidence*, Excavations at Flixborough, vol. 2 (Oxford, 2009), pp. 103-113 p. 109.

<sup>109</sup> Evison, 'Glass Vessels', p. 109.

accommodation.<sup>110</sup> The vessels were probably used both by public ceremonies and in private contexts, which point to frequent conspicuous consumption.<sup>111</sup>

Cattle consumption also reached its peak in this period, representing *c.* 50% of the animals killed.<sup>112</sup> During Periods 2-3a (i.e. late seventh to mid-eighth century) there is also evidence for unusually tall cattle, which by isotope detection method have been suggested could have been imported from Flanders or the Rhine mouth (just like the drinking vessels).<sup>113</sup> However, the cattle consumed were either adult or older than that, showing how they were probably used for traction and/or dairy production first, and then killed for meat and leather.<sup>114</sup> This data contrasts with those found in *wics*, where high-status consumption are linked to the consumption of very young animals.<sup>115</sup> The evidence from York, for example, shows that both the Mid-Saxon material from 46-54 Fishergate (a *wic* or emporium) and the ninth-century material from 16-22 Coppergate (the Saxon-Scandinavian period) were similar in the consumption of 'subadults' (although young adults were the most common find).<sup>116</sup> The consumption of sheep at Flixborough also point out that most of the animals were killed during their adult phase.<sup>117</sup> Pigs were also probably killed and consumed older than the average in other sites of Northumberland (like York) and other regions of Anglo-Saxon England, past what is generally considered the 'optimal age for meat production.'<sup>118</sup> In other words, the data of meat consumption of Flixborough points out that the animals were used in other activities throughout their lives (i.e. cattle used for traction and dairy, sheep to produce wool and pigs at farming, probably for fertilizing the soil) and then taken to

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<sup>110</sup> Loveluck, 'Changing Lifestyles', p. 148.

<sup>111</sup> Loveluck, 'Changing Lifestyles', p. 148.

<sup>112</sup> K. Dobney, D. Jones, C. Johnstone, A. Hal, J. Barrett, J. Herman, J. Carrot and D. Slater, 'The Agricultural Economy and Resource Procurement', in Loveluck, ed. *Rural Settlement*, pp. 87-98, pp.87-9.

<sup>113</sup> K. Dobney and J. Barrett, 'Evidence of regional and long-distance contacts from the faunal remains', in Loveluck, *Rural Settlement*, pp. 121-4, pp. 122-3.

<sup>114</sup> Dobney *et al.* 'The agricultural Economy', in Dobney *et al.*, *Farmers, Monks and Aristocrats*, pp. 116-189, p. 141.

<sup>115</sup> Dobney *et al.* 'The agricultural Economy', p. 141.

<sup>116</sup> O'Connor, *Bones from Anglo-Scandinavian levels at 16-22 Coppergate*; idem, *Bones from 46-54 Fishergate*; idem, 'On the Interpretation of Animal Bone Assemblages from Wics', in D. Hill and R. Cowie (eds), *Wics: The Early Medieval Trading Centres of Northern Europe* (Sheffield, 2001), pp. 54-60.

<sup>117</sup> Dobney *et al.*, 'The Agricultural Economy', p. 144.

<sup>118</sup> Dobney *et al.*, 'The Agricultural Economy', p. 146.

Flixborough as food rents.<sup>119</sup> In other words, the evidence for red meat consumption is a very clear evidence of aristocratic consumption of surplus and labour of the peasant communities, which included both the animal(s) as part of the rent and its transportation for *in loco* consumption. The crop evidence from the site has a similar interpretation, although its evidence is considerably thinner than that of meat.<sup>120</sup>

Hunting was part of the leisure of the Northumbrian aristocracy. In one of Alcuin's letters counselling clerics, he advised them not to hunt foxes by 'galloping' over the fields in pursuit.<sup>121</sup> The word *discurrentes* suggests 'galloping' which may be more evidence for the usage of horses in aristocratic life (leisure time). The evidence for hunting in Flixborough is based on the range of wild species bones found at the settlement. The majority of the population at Flixborough apparently had limited access to meat – if not in quantity at least in variety.<sup>122</sup> The aristocracy, however, used hunting also for having access to different forms of animal protein, while also displaying wealth, bravado and achieving prestige.<sup>123</sup> In other words, the social meaning of wild animal consumption goes beyond calorific and/or protein content and even taste.<sup>124</sup> The possession and control over the access to wild animals was a form of reinforcing the power of the élite, making it an exclusive activity dyed with the colour of social prestige. These animals could be used to reproduce ascendancy over those of the same class (providing a feast, for example), to (re)produce subordination within the same class (granting those animals as a gift for a peer), or even as a way of rewarding those who are seen as inferiors.<sup>125</sup>

<sup>119</sup> Dobney *et al.*, 'Zooarchaeological Evidence', p. 235; Loveluck, 'Changing Lifestyles', p. 148.

<sup>120</sup> Debora Jaques, Keith Dobney, James Barrett, Cluny Johnstone, John Carrott and Allan Hall, 'The Nature of the Bioarchaeological Assemblages', in Dobney *et al.*, *Farmers, Monks and Aristocrats*, pp. 36-58., pp.40-1; Dobney *et al.*, 'Agricultural Economy', p. 116.

<sup>121</sup> *Non per campos discurrentes vulpes agitando declament; sed tecum equitando psalmos dulci modulamine decantent.* Alcuin, Ep. 144, E. Dümmler (ed.), *Epistolae Karolini aevi II, Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Epistolae* Reprint, 1994 ed. (Berlin, 1895), 168, l. 31-2.

<sup>122</sup> U. Albarella and R. Thomas, 'They dined on crane: bird consumption, wild fowling and status in medieval England', Proceedings of the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of the ICAZ Bird Working Group, *Acta Zzoologica Cracoviensia* 45 (2002), pp. 23-38.

<sup>123</sup> Dobney *et al.*, 'Zooarchaeological Evidence', p. 240.

<sup>124</sup> K. Dobney and D. Jaques, 'Avian signatures for identity and status in Anglo-Saxon England', Proceedings of the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of the ICAZ Bird Working Group, *Acta Zzoologica Cracoviensia* 45 (2002), pp. 7-21.

<sup>125</sup> M. Gardiner, 'The exploitation of sea-mammals in medieval England: bones and their social context', *Archaeological Journal* 154 (1997), pp. 173-195.

The hunting of boar is linked to warfare, masculinity and the warrior profession.<sup>126</sup> The boar is depicted in helmets and tusk-armlets in the ‘warrior graves’, although these generally predate the eighth century.<sup>127</sup> Flixborough excavations have produced boar remains, mainly in the eighth and tenth centuries, but these were absent from the ninth-century phase.<sup>128</sup> As the presence of boar bones is small compared to other animals (like cattle, sheep or pig), it is probable that they were consumed not as frequently as the other, which would fit a pattern of hunting. The wild birds found and identified were cranes, wild geese, ducks and black grouse, with some other waders in lower numbers.<sup>129</sup> The wild mammal species found in Flixborough are roe deer, pine marten and hare, reflecting the wetlands and underwood regions close to the settlement.<sup>130</sup> The presence of bottlenose dolphin remains might indicate the hunting of these animals, although it might refer to other forms of acquisition, like rent from estuary communities.<sup>131</sup>

Evidence for falconry is indirect and ‘untraditional’, since no traces of falcons or hawks were found.<sup>132</sup> However, the presence of other raptor species like the buzzard and the red kite can be taken as evidence for this particular task. As Dobney points out, the presence of raptor birds in settlements is not common, and generally occurs in high-status sites.<sup>133</sup> Also, the presence of cranes might be related to the usage of these birds for falconry, since they share a relation of hunter and prey.<sup>134</sup> Also, crane was used throughout the Middle Ages a favoured prey for falconry, and also a favoured ‘feast food’.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Dobney *et al.*, ‘Zooarchaeological Evidence’, p. 240.

<sup>127</sup> S. Lucy, *The Anglo-Saxon Way of Death: Burial Rites in Early England* (Stroud, 2000).

<sup>128</sup> Dobney *et al.*, ‘Zooarchaeological Evidence’, p. 240.

<sup>129</sup> Loveluck, ‘Changing Lifestyles’, p. 148.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>131</sup> *Idem.*, p. 149.

<sup>132</sup> Dobney *et al.*, ‘Zooarchaeological evidence’, p. 241.

<sup>133</sup> *Idem.*, p. 242-3.

<sup>134</sup> C. Loveluck, ‘Wealth, Waste and Conspicuous Consumption: Flixborough and its importance for Middle and Late Saxon rural settlement studies’, in H. Hamerow and A. MacGregor (eds), *Image and Power in the Archaeology of Early Medieval Britain – Essays in honour of Rosemary Cramp* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 78-130, p. 115.

<sup>135</sup> O. Rackham, *The History of the Countryside* (London, 1986), p. 37.

The evidence of artisan activity at Flixborough in the eighth century is limited when compared to that of the ninth. The main activities identified were wood-working, blacksmithing, textile manufacture and limited non-ferrous metalworking, but mainly focused on the supporting daily life inside the community.<sup>136</sup> However, the fact that iron tools were used and discarded (and not recycled) reflects a control of raw material and skilled professionals to produce and work them, contributing to the understanding of site as a spot for conspicuous consumption.<sup>137</sup> The presence of such tools implies, however, that Flixborough was not just a ‘consumer’ site.

Early to middle ninth-century life in Flixborough saw a great change in the patterns of material culture evidence. The main changes are the presence of tools and debris of specialist craft-working; in animal husbandry and exploitation patterns, and the presence of styli and inscribed artefacts.<sup>138</sup> Flixborough seem to have developed a good range of crafts specialist production during the ninth century. In the eighth the focus was on supporting daily life inside the community; in the ninth century it is possible that the production was specialized and diverse to the point it might have been used for exportation.<sup>139</sup> A good example of that is in the evidence for textile-manufacturing. During Phase 3 (eighth to very early ninth century), there are 9kg of loom-weights, 160 loom-weight fragments and 3 spindle whorls; Period 4 (early ninth to mid 9<sup>th</sup> century) produced 16 kg of loom-weight fragments, 244 individually recorded loom-weight fragments and 12 spindle whorls.<sup>140</sup> The trade evidence also points out to a more regional focused trade, mainly with areas of the East Midlands, Humber and east coast waterways.<sup>141</sup>

The livestock evidence also changed. In the eighth century, cattle held the predominance of the domesticated livestock; during the ninth, mature sheep replaced them.<sup>142</sup> Also, the number of very young sheep killed raised.<sup>143</sup> The elevated age of the sheep together

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<sup>136</sup> C. Loveluck and P. W. Rogers, ‘Craft and Tecnology – Non-Agrarian Activities Underpinning Everyday Life’, in Loveluck, *Rural Settlement*, pp. 99-111, pp. 99-102.

<sup>137</sup> Loveluck, ‘Chainging Lifestyles’, p. 150.

<sup>138</sup> Idem, p. 151.

<sup>139</sup> Loveluck and Rogers, ‘Craft and Tecnology’, pp. 102-3.

<sup>140</sup> Idem, p. 102.

<sup>141</sup> Loveluck, ‘Chainging Lifestyles’, p. 151.

<sup>142</sup> Dobney et al. ‘ The Agricultural Economy and Resource Procurement’, in Loveluck, *Rural Settlement*, pp. 99-111, pp. 87-98, p. 89.

<sup>143</sup> Idem.

with the evidence for quality textile production might indicate the correlation of the two, pointing into the direction of wool production.<sup>144</sup> The occurrence of wild species (especially bird species) have also decrease a lot during this period, indicating also a change of the pattern of consumption and also probably of hunting.<sup>145</sup>

Evidence of fish consumption might also shine a light on the change of the nature of the settlement. The consumption of fish is not common in English sites of the Middle Saxon period.<sup>146</sup> Not surprisingly, the few large rural collections of fish bones are those very close to sea coasts or rivers.<sup>147</sup> Fish assemblages for Anglo-Saxon England are more common in urban contexts, like York.<sup>148</sup> Fish is relatively abundant in Flixborough, making it different from both urban and rural settlements.<sup>149</sup> A comparative approach to other ecclesiastical assemblages revealed that the species of fish found in Flixborough are not different from other religious communities (mainly flatfish and smelt); however, the assemblage is closer to those of ecclesiastical assemblages from the mid eighth century onwards mainly.<sup>150</sup>

The main pieces of evidence to support the presence of literacy are the styli and the inscribed artefacts found.<sup>151</sup> However, as Loveluck suggests, there is a trend in historiography to attribute styli to monastic sites because many of the archaeological studies and excavations were done at documented monasteries, confirming what was very probable.<sup>152</sup> McKitterick has also criticized this equation, since styli could be related to tuition or estate management

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<sup>144</sup> Loveluck, 'Chainging Lifestyles', p. 152.

<sup>145</sup> Dobney *et al.*, 'The Agricultural Economy', p. 91.

<sup>146</sup> Dobney *et al.*, 'Zooarchaeological Evidence', p. 228.

<sup>147</sup> *Idem*, p. 229.

<sup>148</sup> A. K. G. Jones, 'Provisional remarks on fish remains from archaeological deposits at York, in P. Murphy and C. French (eds), *The exploitation of wetlands*, BAR, British Series 186 (Oxford, 1988), pp. 113-127.; O'Connor, *Bones from Anglo-Scandinavian*, pp. 137-207; O'Connor, *Bones from 46-54 Fishergate*, pp. 209-298.

<sup>149</sup> Dobney *et al.*, 'Zooarchaeological Evidence', p. 231.

<sup>150</sup> *Idem*, p. 233.

<sup>151</sup> Tim Pestell, Michelle P. Brown, Elisabeth Okasha, Patrick Ottaway and Nicola Rogers, 'Artefacts Relating to Specialist Activities', in D. H. Evans and C. Loveluck, *Life and Economy at Early Medieval Flixborough, c. AD 600-1000, The Artefact Evidence*, Excavations at Flixborough, vol. 2 (Oxford, 2009), pp. 122-142, pp. 123-130.

<sup>152</sup> Loveluck, 'Chainging Lifestyles', p. 152.

rather than book production (which would be an activity much more frequent at major monasteries than smaller houses).<sup>153</sup>

The inscribed artefacts are an inscribed silver finger ring and an inscribed lead plaque (Figure 17).<sup>154</sup> The ring contains the letters ABCDEFGHIKL. The plaque contains seven names (starting with a cross) and also ruling lines (that were not fully followed by the person who inscribed them). The names are: alduini, aldheri, haedhaed, eoduni, edelgyd, eonberech[t] and edelui[i]n.<sup>155</sup> ‘Edelgyd’ was a female name, and edelui[i]n might be either a latinized version of the Old English male name Aedelwine or a form of the female name Aedelwyn. Loveluck thinks the plaque might have indicated the presence of a reliquary either from an ecclesiastical building or a secular estate.<sup>156</sup> The plaque has a striking parallel to the name listing present on the DLV, as explored in Chapter 1 above.<sup>157</sup> It comprises a list of names, exposing the names to sacrality – if Loveluck is right – in attributing the plaque to a reliquary box.

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<sup>153</sup> R. McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 139-141.

<sup>154</sup> Pestell, ‘Artefacts’, p. 139.

<sup>155</sup> Pestell, ‘Artefacts’, p. 140.

<sup>156</sup> Loveluck, ‘Changing Lifestyles’, p. 152.

<sup>157</sup> Pestell, ‘Artefacts’, p. 140.

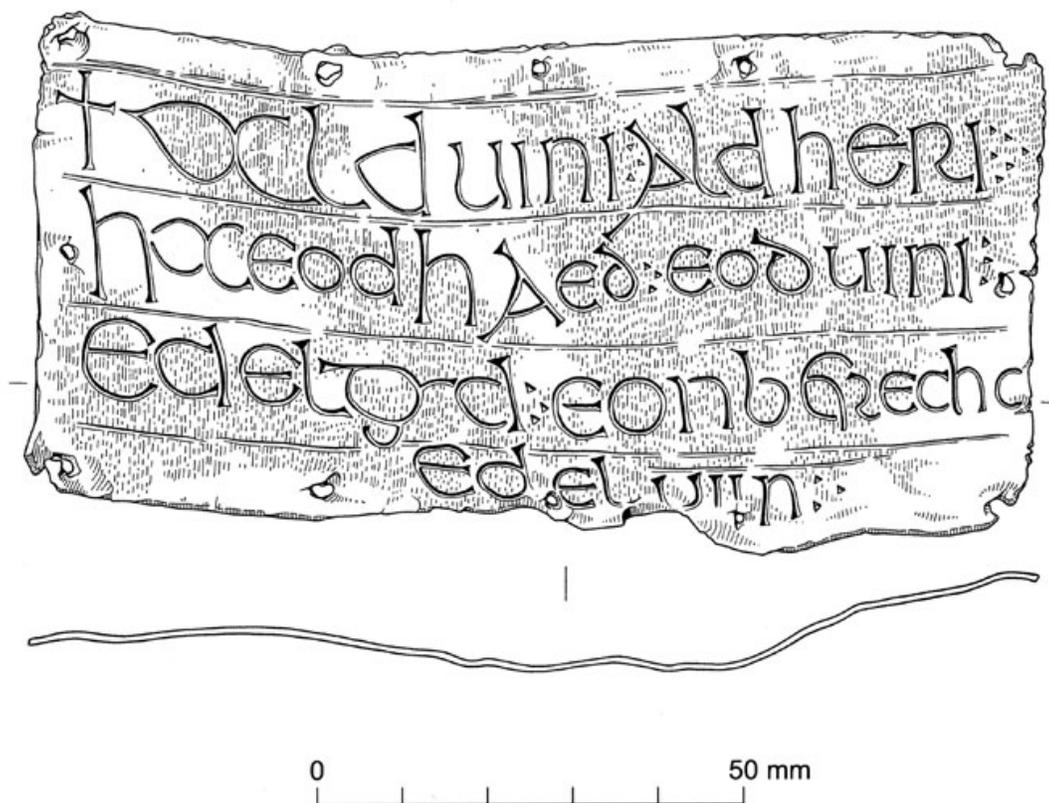


Figure 17 - Flixborough lead plaque. Brown, M. P. and Okasha, E., 'The Inscribed Objects', in D. H. Evans and C. Loveluck (eds), *Life and Economy at Early Medieval Flixborough, c. AD 600-1000: The Artefact Evidence* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 138-141.

In conclusion, Flixborough has evidence to illustrate great changes in terms of patterns of consumption. The 'secular' phase is marked by 'feast kits' (like the drinking vessels), exploration of wild resources and nearby areas, long-distance trade for prestige goods, large consumption of cattle and hunting. It synthesizes the ostentatious display of the usage and consumption of resources and of 'leisure' time.<sup>158</sup> In the early ninth century, the community seems to be more integrated with the local systems, and the production of crafts seems to have developed and expanded, and literacy seems to be an important life of community life. The food evidence also points out in the direction of more frugal consumption. However, the settlement is still a high status site. It preserves its place in the hierarchy by acquiring surplus. Also, the fact that the site is included in a network of trade and connected to other settlements does not eliminate the possibility of hierarchies between settlements.<sup>159</sup> Also, as the thesis has been demonstrating (especially in chapter 3) it s

<sup>158</sup> Loveluck, 'Chainging Lifestyles', p. 152.

<sup>159</sup> Idem, p. 154.

common practice of the aristocracy to found monasteries on their lands. This could have been the case of Flixborough.

In other words, the understanding of Flixborough must be dialectical and holistic. It must include the changes over time within the settlement as well as observing its permanencies. There seems to be a change in patterns of living, transitioning from lavish to frugal standards; however, this does not imply an erasure of the class relations behind it. If the change represents the existence of a 'monastic phase', it is important to highlight that founding and ruling a monastic community was a display of power, wealth and status. Consumption cannot be separated from class.

## **Conclusion**

Eating practices are an essential part of the aristocratic experience and of the reproduction of the ruling class of Northumbria. The archaeological data available suggest that throughout Anglo-Saxon England there was no distinction between peasant and aristocratic access to food plants, although it is probable that the quality of them varied according to the social status, as well as the possibility of combining them with different plants (also from different places). The usage of meat however, has a probable class cleavage: beef and mutton were commonly consumed by aristocrats and seen as high-status food; pork was consumed by aristocrats or, much more rarely, by peasants; domestic birds (chicken, fowl) were commonly consumed by peasants and were probably seen as low status food.

Fasting was a practice that was probably restricted to clerical people, and the Church control over consumption was connected to spirituality. However, feasting practices were not uncommon for both the lay and clerical worlds. Church feasts were probably more connected to the calendar, and would obey more strict conditions. The lay feasts were probably more common, and they are connected to places of power. However, the feasts are not only restricted to the king and his retinue, but are a part of the class reproduction. Both secular and clerical feasts are an essential part of the establishment and renew of networks of sociability and play an important role on the affirmation of hierarchies.

The Flixborough analysis has revealed that in Northumbria, patterns of consumption are vital to understanding class reproduction and social differentiation. Hunting, falconry and feasting were part of the lay élite sociability rituals, and part of class reproduction. Meat consumption, mainly cattle was also a high status element of the lay élite diet. When transformed in what could be an ecclesiastical site, the patterns of consumption are more frugal, and the evidence for meat consumption plummets. Although time might have changed

a site that celebrated feasting and hunting to one that encouraged fasting, it continued to be a settlement of social hierarchies and differentiation, both in material and symbolic forms. Also, the pattern of class exploitation continued throughout the whole life of the settlement.

## Chapter 7)

### The End: Death

#### Introduction

This chapter sets out the importance of death in Anglo-Saxon society. Its main hypothesis is that rituals of death change over time in the long eighth century, but they continue to be a class apotheosis, since they converge all the aspects of aristocratic life mentioned in the earlier chapters.

Just like any society, death was a matter of worry and wonder for the Anglo-Saxons. At the same time, the end of life in Anglo-Saxon England has also raised questions and answers for scholars who choose this society as the object of their studies. One of the main reasons lies in the nature of the extant evidence, and how this type of evidence reveals possibilities that are not necessarily present in written sources. In other words, skeletons, burials and cemeteries are one of the best types of archaeological evidences to understand the historicity of the body, burials practices and rites, diet habits, gender relations and – even – precautions taken against the dead not turning into undead.<sup>1</sup>

Death is connected to power and class relations; Härke called cemeteries ‘places of power’.<sup>2</sup> Modern historiography about Anglo-Saxon England has developed a better understanding of everyday life facts and events as well as the aspects of ritual and performance that goes along with the expression of power.<sup>3</sup> The progress made is impressive,

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<sup>1</sup> Owen-Crocker, *Dress*; H. Härke, ‘Early Anglo-Saxon Social Structure’, in John Hines (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxons from the Migration Period to the Eighth Century – An Ethnographic perspective* (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 125-170, p. 135; Lucy, *The Anglo-Saxon way of death*; Victoria M. Whitworth, *Dying and death in later Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2004); Lee, *Feasting the Dead*; A. Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon deviant burial customs* (Oxford, 2009); Jo Buckberry and Annia Cherryson, *Burial in Later Anglo-Saxon England, C. 650-1100 AD* (Oxford and Oakville, 2010); S. Mays, ‘An investigation of diet in early Anglo-Saxon England using carbon and nitrogen stable isotope analysis of human bone collagen’, *Journal of Archaeological Science*, Vol. 39, 4 (2012), pp. 867–74; J. Blair, ‘The dangerous dead in early medieval England’, in Stephen Baxter et alii (eds), *Early Medieval Studies in Memory of Patrick Wormald* (Farnham, 2009), pp. 539-60.

<sup>2</sup> H. Härke, ‘Cemeteries as places of power’, in M. de Jong and F. Theuvs (eds), *Topographies of Power in the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2001), pp. 110-16.

<sup>3</sup> For the more daily and down-to-earth issues and questions, see S. Oosthuizen, *Tradition and Transformation in Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 2013); Banham and Faith, *Anglo-Saxon Farms*. For power and performance, see Kelly, ‘Anglo-Saxon lay society’ and the written word’ in R. McKitterick, *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 36-62; Simon Keynes, ‘Royal government and the written word’, in

considering the scarcity of information that we can collect from written sources. However, death is such an important event that the passing of the powerful is relatively well recorded, as explained below. The social process of remembering and forgetting is vital to the construction of identities, whether they are ethnic, gendered, of class nature, etc.<sup>4</sup> Since the approach of this thesis is based on analysis of class distinctions, it is this element that will be the focus of this chapter. It is also important to highlight that communities throughout the social spectrum also held ceremonies and rituals; however, the written sources of the early middle ages have little to say directly about it.<sup>5</sup>

The underpinning hypothesis of this chapter is that the forms of death and burial are expressions of wealth, status and power in life.<sup>6</sup> These expressions are not purely ‘material’, but are accompanied by a ceremony and a performance.<sup>7</sup> As Williams points out, death was a memory-making transition in Anglo-Saxon England; however, the dead were neither treated nor remembered equally.<sup>8</sup> In other words, death in Anglo-Saxon society expresses class positions and privileges of those deceased.

The following hypothesis of this chapter is that aristocratic women are more visible archaeologically than in the written sources. In other words, through the study of mortuary practices it is possible to better understand the expression of women’s power as part of the ruling class in Anglo-Saxon England. This is the reason why the case studies here tend to privilege (whenever possible) the data involving female aristocrats and rulers. For the same reason, some of the case studies selected are from the earliest part of the long eighth-century.

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McKitterick, *The Uses of Literacy*, pp. 226-257; G.Owen-Crocker and B. Schneider (eds), *Kingship, Legislation and Power in Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2013), specially S. Keynes, ‘Church Councils, Royal Assemblies and Royal Diplomas’, pp. 17- 184, p. 51 and B. Yorke, ‘The Burial of Kings in Anglo-Saxon England’, pp. 237-258.

<sup>4</sup> Howard Williams, *Death and Memory in Early Medieval Britain* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 15.

<sup>5</sup> J. Fentress and C. Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford, 1992).

<sup>6</sup> C. Loveluck, ‘The dynamics of elite lifestyles in the rural world, AD 600-1150: archaeological perspectives from northwest Europe’, in: F. Bougard, R. Le Jan, R. McKitterick (eds), *La culture du haut moyen âge, une question d’élites* (Brepols, 2009), pp. 139-170; C. Loveluck, ‘Problems of the definition and conceptualisation of early medieval elites, AD 450-900: the dynamics of the archaeological evidence’, in: R. Le Jan, F. Bougard and H.-W. Goetz (eds), *Theories et Pratiques des Elites au Haut Moyen Âge. Conception, Perception et Realisation Sociale* (Brepols, 2011), pp. 21-67; C. Loveluck, *Northwest Europe*, especially ‘Expression of leadership and models for emulation, AD 500-900’, pp. 98-123.

<sup>7</sup> For example, the burial of Wilfrid. *VW*, 66.

<sup>8</sup> H. William, ‘Mortuary Practices in Early Anglo-Saxon England’, in *TOHASE*, pp. 238-265, p. 239.

The last hypothesis of this chapter is that death is a moment of convergence and of apotheosis of aristocratic power. In this sense, it synthesizes what means to belong to the ruling class. In order to analyse this, the chapter is going to explore the usage of death as: a) form of marking and reckoning time; b) display of wealth (through jewellery and grave goods, both of lay women and of male clergy); c) ‘Wills’ as a form of interfering in circulation seeking continuity; d) the rites involving death and ways to (per)form social distinctions in it, including the shaping of the landscape.

## 1) Death as a form of time reckoning

Chronicles were one of the most important and decisive forms of gathering information from the past in order for them to be accessed in the future, as Chapter 5 has discussed. In these texts, it is striking how many entries relate to the death of élite members of society. The chronicles produced in Anglo-Saxon England have many entries about death of notables, despite being a highly selective kind of primary source. For the seventh and eighth centuries, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, for instance, presents 65 entries that register deaths (including the death of kings, bishops, and nobles), while only 30 about someone becoming king, and 27 about people being ordained as a priest, abbot, bishop or archbishop.<sup>9</sup> During the same period, the *Historia Regum* counts a total of forty (40) entries that registered deaths, 16 for church ordinations and only ten (10) about king-making.<sup>10</sup> In other words, death was an important pace-maker and milestone to mark time in Anglo-Saxon society.

It is interesting and thought-provoking that death is better recorded than the elevation to kingship or some degree in the ecclesiastical orders. The quality of the information presented

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<sup>9</sup> Entries registering death: 603, 604 (in MS D; in MS E is 605, and in MSS B and A is 606), 616, 617, 619 (F), 624, 626, 627, 633, 640, 641, 644, 651, 654, 655, 657, 661, 664, 667, 670, 672, 673, 675, 676, 679, 685, 690, 697, 698, 705, 709, 710, 714, 716, 718, 721, 725, 727, 729, 730, 731, 734, 740, 744, 745, 746, 748, 757(755), 758, 760, 762, 761, 763, 774, 776, 778, 779, 780, 782, 786, 788, 789, 792, 793, 794. Entries including people ascending to kingship: 616, 617, 634, 640, 641, 655, 657, 674, 675, 676, 688, 694, 702, 704, 705, 716, 729, 731, 737, 738, 740, 758, 759, 765, 774, 778, 786, 789, 792, 796. Entries about people achieving clerical status or being elected to a certain position in the ecclesiastical hierarchy: 604, 625, 626, 627, 633, 664, 668, 676, 690, 692, 693, 709, 710, 727, 731, 734, 735, 736, 738, 740, 744, 761, 763, 765, 766, 780, 792.

<sup>10</sup> Entries registering death: 732, 734, 735, 737, 738, 739, 740, 745, 749, 750, 754, 755, 757, 758, 759, 764, 766, 767, 768, 769, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 777, 778, 780, 781, 783, 786, 787, 788, 790, 791, 792, 793, 796, 797, 799. Entries about people achieving clerical status or being elected to a certain position in the ecclesiastical hierarchy: 732, 734, 735, 736, 739, 750, 764, 765, 767, 773, 777, 778, 780, 781, 787, 791. Entries naming people kings: 737, 740, 749, 758, 759, 779, 786, 788, 790, 796.

is also very meaningful: although there is no general rule about the accounts of king's deaths (some are brief, others not), there is only one reference to a king-making ceremony for Northumbria. It is registered under the year 796, in which Eardwulf was (according to the *Historia Regum*) brought back from exile and made king (according to the ASC) in 14 May, but only consecrated and enthroned in 26 May in York, by Archbishop Eanbald, Ethelbert (bishop of Hexham), Higbald (bishop of Lindisfarne) and Badwulf (bishop of Whithorn).<sup>11</sup> As Story points out, The reference to enthronement and coronation is entirely Carolingian and extremely unusual in Anglo-Saxon England. The precise dates are an important feature too, reflecting an especially careful record.<sup>12</sup>

Williams has argued that the 'social memory' organization in mortuary practices is a way to commemorate the past, and also to evoke aspirations of the future.<sup>13</sup> In this sense, the register of death in chronicles might be understood as a form of shaping time as a way of honouring the past élite members, while conceiving the birth of a new cycle. However, there is also linearity in the chronicles just as in a person's life. A chronicle is a type of source which endeavours to establish a chronology, and the individual annals are the milestones that highlight the important (usually political) facts that took place in a certain context (chapter 5). In this sense, the death of the powerful seems to be like a number on a watch: a predictable and expected tool in time reckoning, yet highly important.

## 2) Periods, Chronology and their meaning in Archaeology

Williams points out, that the understanding of mortuary practices as technologies of remembrance allows us to perceive continuities and change in funerary traditions over time.<sup>14</sup> In this sense, they are historical, at the same time containing change and continuity. In order to clarify change and continuity, it is crucial to understand what are the periods referred to in chronology and what they correspond to.

The period known as the 'early Anglo-Saxon' encompasses the period from the fifth to the early seventh centuries. The elements of this phase are the possibility of either cremation or inhumation; the presence of comparatively numerous grave goods, in what are called

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<sup>11</sup> ASC D 796, E 795; H. Reg. 796. The verb 'enthroned' is only used in the ASC, as well as the names of the bishops and the Archbishop.

<sup>12</sup> Story, *Carolingian Connections*.

<sup>13</sup> Williams, *Death and Memory*, p. 14.

<sup>14</sup> H. Williams, 'Mortuary Practices', p. 240.

‘furnished burials’; and the possibility of burial in mounds.<sup>15</sup> However, there is great variability in burial practice in this phase.<sup>16</sup>

The period of this thesis (the long eighth century) coincides with that described by archaeologists as the ‘Mid Saxon’ period. The ‘Mid Saxon’ was marked by changes in the practice of furnished burials, as well as its symbolism and meaning. It refers roughly to c.650–c.850, and has been labelled differently.<sup>17</sup> It was once known as ‘Final Phase’, a term coined by E. T. Leeds who thought he had identified the manifestations of the last pagans.<sup>18</sup> Helen Geake, in turn, chose the term ‘Conversion Period’, referring to a broader span of time and processes because it ‘described the period quite so succinctly’.<sup>19</sup> It is only by the eighth century that inhumations in cemeteries were wrapped in shrouds rather than in normal clothing (following a trend that started in monasteries).<sup>20</sup> In other words, there is a time lapse between the end of the ‘princely burials’ of the elite and the near absence of grave goods. The long eighth century starts with this transition. Changes in social practices do not change overnight and everywhere, but they are transformed differently across time and space.<sup>21</sup> In this case, the furnished burial became a minority rite until it disappeared, but this did not mean they were abandoned as soon as people converted to Christianity.

It is necessary to present the chosen approach to this corpus of evidence. The set of archaeological evidence from burials have already being analysed in the light of questions regarding ethnic groups, identities, gender relations, etc. The issue of identifying of social status and stratification has also been addressed by scholars; initially archaeologists assigned a score to excavated objects in order to identify the social status of the buried person.<sup>22</sup> From

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<sup>15</sup> Ibidem

<sup>16</sup> Idem, p. 258; also H. Geake, *The Use of Grave-Goods in Conversion-Period England, c.600-c.850*, British Archaeological Report 261 (Oxford, 1997), p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Bayliss et al., *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods*.

<sup>18</sup> E. T. Leeds, *Anglo-Saxon Art and Archaeology* (Oxford, 1936).

<sup>19</sup> Geake, *The Use of Grave-Goods*, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> J. Blair, *The Church*, p. 240.

<sup>21</sup> Geake, *The Use of Grave-Goods*, pp. 123-6.

<sup>22</sup> J. Shephard, ‘The social identity of the individual in isolated barrows and barrow cemeteries in Anglo-Saxon England’, in B. C. Burnham and J. Kingsbury (eds), *Space, Hierarchy and Society: interdisciplinary studies in social area analysis*, British Archaeological Reports International Series 59 (Oxford, 1979), pp. 47-79; C. J. Arnold, ‘Wealth and social structure: a matter of life and death’, in P. A. Rahtz, T. M. Dickinson and L. Watts

this point of view, the approach was a simple quantitative one. This simplistic view of the matter has been questioned since then, since a single item of extraordinary craft and social value could reflect the social class to which that person had belonged.<sup>23</sup> Also, the classification of ‘high status’ sites has been equated with ‘materially wealthy’ and ‘low status’ with ‘materially poor’ has been recently questioned by Loveluck.<sup>24</sup> In Loveluck’s point of view, the level of wealth is generally characterized with imported luxury items (even when they are single finds), losing therefore the gradations that could exist between the two poles of the social spectrum.<sup>25</sup> Local notables, free (and enriched) allodial landowners, regional elites and higher aristocracy could all fit into the category of ‘high status’.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, automatic association of foreign and/or exotic goods and social class cannot be sustained. A more critically developed model is required in which the findings must be thought in relation to others. In other words, numbers and types of findings are not absolute.

The first question that arises from the analysis of the material culture found in burials is why people were dressed and attired for burial. Ellen-Jane Pader says that grave goods are texts that convey information on the dead.<sup>27</sup> Helen Geake answers this question in a very basic way: the furnishing of a burial is not an activity necessary for daily life, and therefore fulfils the need for countering the instability caused by the death of a member of a family and community.<sup>28</sup> This is the reason why she believes that furnished burials is a very important source of data to ‘reconstruct the idealised self-expression of a society’.<sup>29</sup> Although the ‘reconstruction’ is a step required in any historical analysis, it is certainly not the goal. Geake’s analysis has formulated a model to help understand the Conversion-period burials and the grave goods in them. The current analysis will be different from Geake’s because it intends to establish a model in order to analyse a historical concept (social class).

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(eds), *Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries 1979*, BAR British Series 82 (Oxford, 1980), pp. 81-142; J. Brenan, ‘Assessing social status in the Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Sleaford’, *Institute of Archaeology Bulletin* 22 (1985), pp. 125-31.

<sup>23</sup> R. Samson, ‘Social Structures from Reihengräber: mirror or mirage?’, *Scottish Archaeological Review* 4.2 (1987), pp. 116-26; Geake, *The Use of Grave-Goods*, p. 4.

<sup>24</sup> Loveluck, *Northwest Europe*, p. 98.

<sup>25</sup> *Idem*, p. 99.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>27</sup> E.-J. Pader, *Symbolism, Social Relations and the Interpretation of Mortuary Remains*, BAR International Series 130 (Oxford, 1982).

<sup>28</sup> Geake, *The Use of Grave-Goods*, p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*.

It is important to highlight a change of the grave good patterns in terms of periodization. Still following Geake's formulation, the model is: Period 1 ranges from c. 600 to c. 650; period 2 from c.650 to 720/30; period 3 refers to the context after 720/30.<sup>30</sup> Geake identifies important changes in each period. The richest assemblages of graves are found in Period 1, in the 'princely burials' like Sutton Hoo. They are all male ('princely') burials, isolated and very rich in terms of diversity of items and the individual finds as well. Period 2 is a period of transition, with fewer finds, and generally the richest burials tend to be of women. In Period 3 the demonstration of wealth in graves stopped, with very rare exceptions.<sup>31</sup> Hypotheses about the way why furnished burials progressively stop have been presented. Guy Halsall, for example, argues that furnished burials fit a period when status was contested, and therefore power relations among aristocratic families were unstable.<sup>32</sup> This hypothesis has been discussed and echoed among other scholars.<sup>33</sup> However, the latest effort to understand and explain this change has concluded that there was a close link between the transformation in inhumation practices and the relatively swift successes of interventions and reforms initiated by Archbishop Theodore.<sup>34</sup> In order to test these hypothesis, the next step is the analysis of clerical grave goods, and compare their possession and handling with those on lay hands.

### 3) Clerics, jewelry and status

The use of jewelry was part of the display of wealth and status of the powerful. The analysis of examples of morality involved in renouncing them, as well as the difficulties of really renouncing them (both for women and clerics) can shine a light on how jewelry and status are articulated. The case studies selected are Cuthbert, Balthild and Æthelthryth. Cuthbert because he was held up as a great example of humility, and yet his burial is a demonstration of wealth; Balthild and Æthelthryth are good examples because they can understand how status in the élite is gendered, as well as how women tended to seek a religious life that allowed to still be in contact with the court. Also, there was a close

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<sup>30</sup> Idem, p. 123.

<sup>31</sup> Idem, p. 126-7.

<sup>32</sup> G. Halsall, "Burial Writes: Graves, Texts and Time in Early Merovingian Northern Gaul", in J. Jarnut and M. Wemhoff, M (eds.), *Erinnerungskultur Im Bestattungsritual*. (Munich, 2003), pp. 61-74, p. 66.

<sup>33</sup> H. Williams, *Death and memory in Early Medieval Britain* (Cambridge, 2006).

<sup>34</sup> Bayliss *et alii*, *Anglo-Saxon Graves*, pp. 553-4.

connection between Kent and Chelles, revealing how Balthild was not apart from the Anglo-Saxon world and practices by being in the Continent.

St. Cuthbert (c. 634–687) was one of the Anglo-Saxon saints who was renowned (in the early sources) for frugality and humility.<sup>35</sup> In his instructions for his own burial, he recalled and summoned some of the gifts that had been bestowed on him: one stone coffin (given by Abbot Cudda) and a *sindo*, probably a silk garment (given by Abbess Verca).<sup>36</sup> The usage of the stone coffin can only be in the very specific context of death; the *sindo*, however, could have been used in other situations. The option to use it only at the time of his death is very meaningful. Its use here juxtaposes Cuthbert's refusal to dress lavishly in his lifetime and the selection of the same noble garment for use in the funerary rite. The stone coffin mentioned in the text is also a very important gift and form to express status through death caskets: both the piece of cloth in which he was wrapped and the vessel in which he would be buried would be visibly different from others.<sup>37</sup> The silk of the shroud has an Eastern origin and stone coffins are also a common Roman practice.

Cuthbert was not the only saint who had his status expressed through the items buried with the body. According to her *Vita*, St. Balthild (c. 626–680) was once an Anglo-Saxon slave (probably formerly a high-status woman) who came into the service of the palace of Erchinoald, in Neustria, Frankia.<sup>38</sup> She married Clovis II, king of Burgundy and Neustria (639-658). Her qualities in the hagiography are also coloured by the same pencils as Cuthbert: humbleness and modesty.<sup>39</sup> She was buried with a chasuble (or chemise), a piece of linen measuring 117 x 84 cm, embroidered with brightly coloured silken thread to suggest three necklaces (figure 18).<sup>40</sup> From the second necklace an embroidered pectoral cross hangs.

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<sup>35</sup> David Rollason, R. B. Dobson, 'Cuthbert [St Cuthbert] (c.635–687)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6976> [accessed 16/05/2016].

<sup>36</sup> BVC, chapter 37.

<sup>37</sup> J. M. Cronyn, *St. Cuthbert's coffin: the history, technology and conservation* (Durham, 1985).

<sup>38</sup> P. Fouracre and R. A. Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France: History and Hagiography, 640-720* (New York, NY, 1996).

<sup>39</sup> McNamara et al., *Sainted Woman* (Duke, 1996).

<sup>40</sup> J.-P. Laporte, *Le trésor des saints de Chelles* (Chelles, 1988); J.-P. Laporte and J. Boyer (eds), *Trésor de Chelles: sépultures et reliques de la reine Bathilde et de l'abbesse Bertille, Catalogue de l'exposition organisée au Musée Alfred Bonno* (Chelles, 1991); For photos of the chemise, Krone and Schelier, *Kunst aus mittelalterlichen Frauenklöstern* (Esses, 2005), pp. 245-6, 288-90; Genevra Kornbluth, 'Historical Archive:

The chemise is currently at Chelles, remarkably well-preserved and dating from the saint's lifetime.<sup>41</sup> The silken-line necklaces in the chemise reproduce the heavy necklaces of jewels and other precious metals and stones worn by Byzantine Empresses, early medieval queens and high-status ladies who lived in the early medieval courts.<sup>42</sup> The representation of this jewellery in a blouse has already been interpreted as a summary of the life of a queen and noblewoman, turned into a holy woman.<sup>43</sup>

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Tunic of Balthild, Chemise de Sainte-Balthilde, Chasuble de Chelles', in *Kornbluth Photography – Documenting Luxury Arts*, <http://www.kornbluthphoto.com/TunicBalthild.html> [accessed 19/12/2016].

<sup>41</sup> Jane Sculenburg, 'Female Religious as collector of relics – Finding Sacrality and Power in the Ordinary', in Michael Frassetto, Matthew Gabriele and John D. Hosler, *Where Heaven Meets Earth – Essays of Medieval Europe in Honor of Daniel F. Callahan* (Leiden, 2014), pp. 152-177, at p.172.

<sup>42</sup> J. L. Nelson, 'Gendering courts in the early medieval west', in Leslie Brubaker and Julia M. H. Smith, *Gender in the Early Medieval World, East and West – 300-900* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 185-197, p. 189; B. Yorke, 'The weight of Necklaces': Some insights into the wearing of women's jewellery from Middle Saxon written Sources', in Stuart Brookes, Sue Harrington, Andrew Reynolds, *Studies in Early Anglo-Saxon Art and Archaeology: Papers in Honour of Martin G. Welch*, BAR British Series 527 (Oxford, 2011) pp. 106-111, p. 107.

<sup>43</sup> Laporte and Boyer (eds), *Trésor*, pp. 45-6; B. Effros, 'Symbolic Expressions of Sanctity: Gertrude of Nivelles in the Context of Merovingian Mortuary Custom', *Viator* 27 (1996), pp. 1-2; idem, *Caring for Body and Soul – Burial and the Afterlife in the Merovingian World* (Pennsylvania, PA, 2002), p. 160.

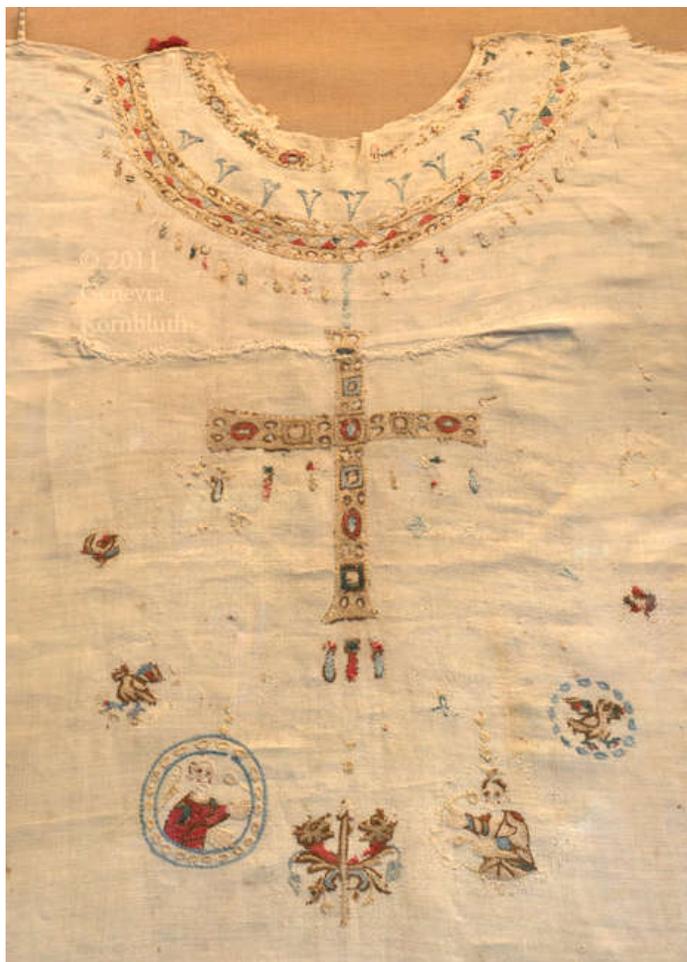


Figure 18 - Balthild's chemise. Kornbluth Photography, <http://www.kornbluthphoto.com/images/Balthild7.jpg> [accessed 28/08/2016], ""Commercial usage is not authorized without written permission.".

Bede's narrative about another female Anglo-Saxon saint Æthelthryth is an interesting parallel to attest the morality involved in renouncing the use of jewellery from a Northumbrian point of view. Quoting the Æthelthryth's own words (according to Bede's narrative):

*Scio certissime quia merito in collo pondus laguoris porto, in quo iuenculam me memini superuacua moniliorum pondera portare; et credo quod ideo me superna pietas dolore colli uoluit grauari, ut sic absoluar reatu superuacuae leuitatis, dum mihi nunc pro auro et margaretis de collo rubor tumoris adorque proemineat.*<sup>44</sup>

<sup>44</sup> 'I know well enough that I deserve to bear the weight of this affliction in my neck, for I remember that when I was a young girl I used to wear an unnecessary weight of necklaces [*monilia*]; I believe that God in His goodness would have me endure this pain in my neck in order that I may thus be absolved from the guilt of my

Bede attests that vanity (in the form of rich garments) was not to be expected from someone who was trying to live a fully saintly life. The chemise of Bathild is a very important medium because it records the ‘two kind of lives’ that the saint lived. The chemise folds and compresses two moments and dimensions of her life: at the same time that it expresses her previous status, it is also highlights her humbleness since they were just mimicking real jewellery. However, the decision to embroider this skeuomorphic jewellery with very vivid and resilient silk also makes it clear that the linen was not chosen by accident. The colour and the quality of the materials can still be observed; also silk is not a common material, but a high status one. As pointed out by Effros, the emulation of jewellery might have been a way of preserving the display of status through a solution that was more acceptable for the Christian faith.<sup>45</sup> The choice of choosing shrouds over garments seemed a better option; the material for the confection of these shrouds, however, could be costly.<sup>46</sup> Balthild’s chemise would be then the halfway solution between a fully clothed and a shrouded burial.<sup>47</sup>

The comparison between Æthelthryth and Balthild is important in a thesis focused on the Northumbrian context because, like Balthild, Æthelthryth had once also been a queen (married to Ecgfrith of Deira, c. 654–685) who later abandoned the secular life to enter the Church, and ended her career as an abbess for seven years.<sup>48</sup> The close connection between Chelles and Anglo-Saxon England (Kent) is also attested by Bede: [...] *et filias suas eisdem erudiendas ac sponso caelesti copulandas mittebant, maxime in Brige et in Cale et in Andilegum monasterio*.<sup>49</sup> In this sense, these queens-turned-abbesses can enlighten us on the understanding of the use of items for displaying status, power and wealth. They can help us understand what Janet Nelson called the ‘gendered display culture’ of early medieval Frankish and Anglo-Saxon courts.<sup>50</sup> According to Nelson, the Balthild’s chasuble was a

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needless vanity. So instead of gold and pearls [*margaretæ*], a fiery red tumour now stands out upon my neck’. *HE* IV, 19.

<sup>45</sup> Effros, *Caring for Body and Soul*, pp. 13-39.

<sup>46</sup> *Idem*, pp. 177-9.

<sup>47</sup> Yorke, ‘The weight of Necklaces’, p. 107.

<sup>48</sup> [...] *annos septem ex quo abbatissae gradum susceperat* [...]. *HE*, IV, 19.

<sup>49</sup> [...] they [the Kentish] also sent their daughters to be taught in them [Frankish monasteries] and to be wedded to the heavenly bridegroom. They mostly went to the monasteries at Brie, Chelles and Andelys-sur-Seine’. *HE*, III, 8.

<sup>50</sup> Nelson, ‘Gender in courts in the early medieval west’, p. 189.

shadowy image of the conspicuous consumption of these women, showing off the high-status attributed to her and her kin.<sup>51</sup> Another important point raised by Nelson is that high-status people could envisage and pursue a religious life that retained close contact with the court.<sup>52</sup>

Not all objects of power could be worn without serious consequences. The holding and usage of (sacred) objects of distinction by people who were not supposed to have them is attested by the *Vita Wilfridi*. Iurminburg, Ecgfrith's second wife took over Wilfrid's *chrismarium* (which contained holy relics), and wore it (and therefore displayed it) as she moved around the kingdom.<sup>53</sup> The display of the relics could have been part of her own costume.<sup>54</sup> However, Iurminburg was struck by an illness that was only cured when she gave the relics back to Wilfrid. Iurminburg case is enlightening because it shows that sacredness, power and display of status can walk hand in hand. Because of its normative nature, the hagiographical text tends to shape the circuit that is considered acceptable for the circulation of these objects that concentrate sacredness. The story of the *chrismarium* is actually a narrative that tries to limit the holding and display of sacred items at the hands of the ecclesiastical personnel. However, it also shows that this monopoly was never complete. Once Bathild and Æthelthryth entered the service of the Church, they were expected to dispose of their jewellery; in the same way, the Northumbrian queen Iurminburg was not supposed to handle relics, especially those that belonged to a churchman (Wilfrid), forfeited when the Wilfrid lost a part of his properties.<sup>55</sup> These examples can enlighten us to how the Church could interfere in the circulation of items that displayed wealth, power and status.

When Æthelthryth and Balthild disposed of their jewellery, they seemed to seek the repayment for it in Heaven, expecting what is called in the hagiography of Balthild as *thesaurum optimum*, the 'best treasure of all'.<sup>56</sup> It represents what Kreiner called as a 'double-scope action' of the *vitae*, linking the eternity to treasure, and spending the regular, mundane treasure to achieve the best one.<sup>57</sup> Geake points out that the burial with items does not

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<sup>51</sup> Idem, p. 189.

<sup>52</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>53</sup> *VW*, 39.

<sup>54</sup> Yorke, 'The weight of Necklaces', p. 109.

<sup>55</sup> *VW*, 34-8.

<sup>56</sup> *V. Balthildis*, 13.

<sup>57</sup> Jaime Kreiner, *The Social Life of Hagiography in the Merovingian Kingdom* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 158.

necessarily imply in a use in afterlife; however, the absence in a Christian context can mean the search for another kind of goods.<sup>58</sup>

Despite the discourse about humility and the moral pressure to give their mundane wealth, the clergy could not simply ignore their own historicity. Cuthbert's burial has parallels with the burial of Northumbrian noblewomen, some of them also members of the clergy. Anglo-Saxon Christianity could be troubled by the burial of objects in its preaching and theological discourses, but the social practice (by members of the own Church) leads us to think in a more complex and gradual process. The hypothesis that burial practices changed because of Theodore and immediately after him seems an exaggeration. As Hines point out, the transition was gradual.<sup>59</sup> The circulation of goods (and also their deposition in inhumation context) was still an important part on the reproduction of status and power. For a better understanding of the relation of circulation and death, the next topic will address the redistribution of goods at the moment of death in the form of wills.

#### 4) Wills: reproduction through death

The internal stratification of the Church means that different ranks were able to access different ways of expressing status and power. A good example on this difference can be observed through the 'wills' of Bede and Wilfrid. Although Northumbria lacks the formal document known as 'will' for the period of the thesis, the *Vita Wilfridi* and the *Epistola de Obitu Bedae* contain orders given in the moment that preceded the deaths of Wilfrid and Bede. These orders are the partition of their worldly goods, but also recall how the donation is always connected to an expected repayment. According to the author of the *epistola*, Bede said that:

*Quaedam preciosa in mea capsella habeo, id est piperum, oraria et incense. Sed curre velociter, et adduc presbiteros nostril monasterii ad me, ut ego munuscula, qualia mihi Deus donauit, illis distribuam. [...] Et prasantibus illis locutus est ad eos et unumquemque, monens et obsecrans pro eo missas et orations diligenter facere. Et illi libenter spoponderunt.*<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Geake, *The Use of Grave Goods*, p. 13.

<sup>59</sup> Bayliss et alii, *Anglo-Saxon Graves*, p. 553.

<sup>60</sup> 'I have a few treasures in my box, some pepper, and napkins, and some incense. Run quickly and fetch the priests of our monastery, and I will share among them such little presents as God has given me [...] and when they came, he spoke to them and to each one singly, urging and begging them to offer masses and prayers

The treasure mentioned by Bede is certainly different from the treasure of Wilfrid's see or the kind of portable wealth available to the secular lords. However, the supply of pepper and incense is connected to a long-distance trade: the pepper was possibly from India or Indonesia, and the incense probably from Oman.<sup>61</sup> Although it is highly possible that Bede had not travelled far in his lifetime (maybe not travelled at all), Jarrow was connected to a network of trade that allowed a monk such as Bede to have access to exotic goods of this sort.

The gifts were distributed by Bede and repaid with a promise that the holy community would pray for his soul, and that his name would be kept in the masses on his behalf. The small treasures that Bede possessed were divided and apparently handed in person by person, each on his turn. In other words, Bede's (last) division of goods was very selective and expressed how he could reach the right people in order to achieve his goals. The posthumous rituals that he asked to be performed on his behalf related to the saving of his soul, but also had an impact on the preservation of Bede's person on the social memory. The social role of name-remembering in prayers has already been discussed in chapter one, analysing the DLV. The offering of masses in someone's name implies an expansion of this phenomenon. In this chapter, however, it is important to understand and highlight how the last act of a person in the circulation process can impact in different spheres of social practice. Also, Bede's last action that had to do with the circulation of goods implied that his name and memory kept circulating in the rites of community, entangling his roots deeper in the community spiritual and ideological reproduction.

Another clerical will in the early eighth century in Northumbria can be observed in the *Vita Wilfridi*.<sup>62</sup> The comparison between Wilfrid's will and Bede's is interesting because it represents another scale and quality of material wealth. When the signs of death were approaching Wilfrid, he summoned two of his abbots and six other friends. Wilfrid commanded the treasurer of the diocesan coffers and took all the gold, silver and precious stones and divided them into four different piles. The destinations of these piles were: 1) Rome; 2) the poor of his diocese; 3) to the abbot of Hexham and Ripon so that they could secure the favour of bishops and kings; 4) his companions in exile that were not yet rewarded regularly on his behalf, and they promised with a will'. Cuthbert, *Epistola de Obitu Bedae*, Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 584-5.

<sup>61</sup> E. Campbell, 'The archaeological Evidence for External Contacts: Imports, Trade and Economy in Celtic Britain, AD 400-800', in K. Dark (ed.), *External Contacts* (1996), pp. 83-96, p. 92; McCormick, p. 709; C. Loveluck, *Northwest Europe*, p. 123.

<sup>62</sup> For a recent compilation of recent research on Wilfrid, see N. J. Higham, *Wilfrid: Abbot, Bishop, Saint. Papers from the 1300th Anniversary Conferences* (Donington, 2013).

with lands or estates.<sup>63</sup> It is remarkable from Wilfrid's donation(s) that they are explicitly political. In the first place, it implies that Wilfrid could dispose as he liked of the treasure of his diocese. The usage of Church property as his personal belongings (as well as choosing his kinsman Tatberht as his successor in Ripon) is very far from the expected in the Benedictine rule.<sup>64</sup> Alan Thacker reads his behaviour as close to a Germanic lord with his *comitatus*, and Thacker thinks that Wilfrid's actions would resemble a secular aristocrat.<sup>65</sup> It is also notable that this division of movable wealth was not mentioned by Bede in his account of Wilfrid's death.

An interesting exercise is to imagine Wilfrid's piles of treasure over a map. The piles would represent the most important points or axes of his network of relations. Rome supported Wilfrid whenever his claims of authority and rights over his properties were questioned. The gifts to the poor of his diocese remember how important the dominance over this (broad) region was a key aspect of his life – important to the point that he faced Theodore.<sup>66</sup> The supply of portable wealth to the abbots of Hexham and Ripon implies how important it was to keep this places out of the direct control of bishops and kings, and how this independence could be acquired through gift-exchange. The last point is not so easily put on map; however it reveals the importance of personal relations through his period of exile. It also represents how a good part of Wilfrid's life was in transit (not only in exile), and represents a good contrast with Bede as well. It also displays how people that travelled together in a relation of subordination should be somehow repaid for their loyalty – if not in states and lands, at least by portable wealth. Their social status must be equated with the display of wealth.

Wilfrid's hagiography presents the usage of the whole treasure in order to reproduce the relations he had in life. In other words, Wilfrid divides diocesan treasure in order to secure power and prominence for the diocese. In a comparison, Bede's will is also a call for reproduction, on a smaller scale: fewer people, different level of wealth, less (explicit) political connections and the absence of precious metals or stones. Nonetheless, both wills are very good examples of how the circulation of portable wealth in the context of death was

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<sup>63</sup> *VW*, 63.

<sup>64</sup> C. Cubitt, 'Wilfrid's "usurping bishops": episcopal elections in Anglo-Saxon England', *Northern History*, 25 (1989), pp. 18–38; A. Thacker, 'Wilfrid', *ONDB* (2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy4.lib.le.ac.uk/view/article/29409?docPos=3> [accessed 04/01/2016].

<sup>65</sup> Thacker, 'Wilfrid'.

<sup>66</sup> D. Rollason, *Northumbria*, p. 44.

a very important element of social reproduction, extending the social practices of one (or more) individual(s) after his lifetime. Although not ‘wills’ strictu sensu, the last wishes of Bede and Wilfrid can express the last intervention in life as a way to seek continuation, to reproduce ties and places in hierarchies.

## 5) Rites of Death

The rites of death and burial in Anglo-Saxon England can reveal aspects of Anglo-Saxon hierarchies through the study of their performance and of the material objects left behind. This phenomenon has already been addressed through evidence for feasting, connecting it to the construction of memory.<sup>67</sup> This section will address other expression of the same phenomenon, through case studies of the bed burial at Street House, Cleveland, and a comparison between the stone grave markers at that site and the namestones from the nunnery at Hartlepool. The bed burial represents a period of time at the beginning of the ‘long-eighth century’ and is well suited for addressing questions related to the performance of power following the event of death. At the same time, the bed burial is also an expression of the power of a woman in this period, shining a light on a part of the aristocracy less visible in the sources discussed so far. The stone grave markers of Street House and the namestones of Hartlepool offer a way into two hypotheses: the first is specific to this chapter, and relates to the expression of social differentiation in death through grave (goods or) markers, even in a Christian context. The second hypothesis is a wider one, which flows through the whole thesis: that the expressions of social hierarchy are very similar in both secular and ecclesiastical worlds, and correspond to the class division in Anglo-Saxon society. There are few other case studies that would enable this hypothesis to be tested, especially involving female members of the elite, and this is why, although early in the chronology of this thesis, these case studies have been selected.

### 5.a) The Bed Burial at Street House

The bed burial is a phenomenon that was recognised in the archaeological record in the nineteenth century. The most recent discovery of this kind of practice took place in 2011, at Trumpington, in Cambridgeshire.<sup>68</sup> This type of burial represents and expresses a rite known

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<sup>67</sup> Lee, *Feasting*, pp. 104-125.

<sup>68</sup> A. Dickens and S. Lucy, “Mystery of Anglo-Saxon teen buried in bed with gold cross” (16 March 2012), <http://www.cam.ac.uk/research/news/mystery-of-anglo-saxon-teen-buried-in-bed-with-gold-cross> [accessed 01/12/2016].

and recognized in the South and in the East Anglian regions, but before the excavations at Street House, was unknown in Northumbria.<sup>69</sup> In these burials the deceased person's body, the grave, and the goods that were buried formed a complex mosaic of social practices and performances. Williams suggests that it took days to dig the grave (maybe covered by a temporary shelter for protection against the weather), during which the body was prepared.<sup>70</sup> The bed was lowered into the grave, together with the body and some of the items that would be buried with it.<sup>71</sup> Some of the burials had so many artefacts with them that Williams thinks that a part of the performance could have involved people approaching the grave and passing the objects to the persons that were near the body. After the funeral was complete, the grave was backfilled and a mound was raised.<sup>72</sup> The most important aspect of Williams' reconstruction is the idea of a ritualised burial, which followed predetermined practices.

The bed in itself might represent a metaphor, comparing death to sleep.<sup>73</sup> Richard Dance points out that the etymology of the word *leger* in Old English means 'where one lies', but in literature of the time (i.e. seventh century) it is a synonym for 'grave' and 'bed' too.<sup>74</sup> The probable symbolism of this ceremony was the convergence of these actions.

The bed burial found at Street House, as aforementioned, is the only one yet excavated in the North. Excavations on the site took place between 2005 and 2007. The woman found at grave 42 (the bed burial) may have had a southern origin (as implied by the prevalence of this rite in the South).<sup>75</sup> This possibility has been questioned. The main argument to support her local origin is the fact that the developments of the cemetery at Street House were contemporary with the developments at Whitby under Abbess Hild, only around 13 miles away.<sup>76</sup> Therefore, both sites are likely to have been under the same kind of patronage, and local links should be stronger (like the Hild's transfer from Hartlepool to Whitby), making the Street House dead connected to the powerful people of Deira, rather than the Bernicia.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> S. Sherlock, *A Royal Anglo-Saxon Cemetery* (Hartlepool, 2012), p. 130.

<sup>70</sup> Williams, *Death and Memory*, p. 31.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>74</sup> Dickens and Lucy, 'Mystery'.

<sup>75</sup> S. Sherlock, *A Royal Anglo-Saxon Cemetery*, p. 130.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

Sherlock positions the cemetery within the ‘Conversion period’. Although the dating of the site corresponds to the period that Northumbria was officially Christian, the only evidence for the cemetery having been Christian is the east-west alignment of the graves, which is not enough to be sure of its Christian nature.<sup>78</sup>

The graves were aligned east-west, within a squared enclosure that pre-dates the Anglo-Saxon period but was probably still visible during the seventh-century context. The bed burial was located near the centre of the enclosure, in grave 42.<sup>79</sup> The size of grave 42 (it is the largest one at 2.02m long), and the exquisite quality (and number) of object within it has encouraged close attention.<sup>80</sup> In a survey of the cemeteries of East Yorkshire, Sam Lucy observed that burials containing weapons or jewellery were generally broader, longer and wider than those without.<sup>81</sup> Therefore, a relationship between the size of a grave and the social prominence of the person buried in it seems clear. In this case, there is a strong connection between the size and elaboration of a grave and the labour and wealth invested in it.<sup>82</sup>

The evidence for the bed itself was scanty, but sufficient survived for some conclusions to be drawn. It was probably made of ash wood, and composed of several pieces of ironwork (bifurcated cleats, rectangular cleats, headboard stays, flat brackets, nails and rivets), most using decorative patterns; it measured 1.8 x 0.8m and may have been roofed with an awning or canvas.<sup>83</sup> The presence of an awning or canvas would have increased the visibility of the deceased person, and therefore would help express the status of the person. The variety of symbols presented in the bed (especially through the sophisticated ironwork) served to communicate the high status of the person within, and this is the reason why it was important to be visually impressive.<sup>84</sup> Also, the variety of symbols represented very skilled craftsmanship, which highlights the status of the people doing the burial. It was also possible that an additional box was superimposed on the original bed, elevating the position (and

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<sup>78</sup> Ibidem; Williams, *Death and Memory*, p. 106.

<sup>79</sup> Sherlock, *A Royal Anglo-Saxon Cemetery*, p. 131.

<sup>80</sup> Idem, p. 102.

<sup>81</sup> S. Lucy, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries of East Yorkshire*, BAR British Series 272 (Oxford, 1998), p. 52.

<sup>82</sup> Stoodley, *The Spindle and the Spear*.

<sup>83</sup> Sherlock, *A Royal Anglo-Saxon Cemetery*, pp. 91-99.

<sup>84</sup> Idem, p. 99.

increasing the visibility) of person who was laying on it.<sup>85</sup> The burial rite was also a performance of power, and expressed belonging to an upper class.

Pendants found in graves 42 and 43 might also help the understanding of the burial rite and the hierarchies within it. Grave 42 (the grave with the bed) produced a round cabochon pendant (figure 19), an oval cabochon pendant (figure 20), and a gold and garnet cloisonné shield-shaped pendant (figure 21).<sup>86</sup> All the three have a considerable amount of gold in their confection.<sup>87</sup> The scallop might have gendered symbolism, since it was used as a symbol of love, fertility and birth; it had connection with pagan deities and in Late Antique and early Medieval Christianity it might mean rebirth in the through baptism.<sup>88</sup> The garnets overlaid a thin layer of cross-hatched gold leaf in order to improve their reflectivity and luminosity.<sup>89</sup> Grave 43 produced only one pendant, triangular in shape (Figure 22).<sup>90</sup> The interpretation that the woman buried in grave 43 may have been a subordinated person to the woman in grave 42 relies mainly on the bed burial ceremony that would have taken place around grave 42. Both graves seem to have been connected with a semi-circular ditch (memorial).<sup>91</sup> As stated above, it is not a matter of simple quantitative analysis to determine social status, i.e., more objects equals higher status. The element of differentiation in this case is the bed itself, as well as the ceremony and ritual inferred from the furnishing of the burial, not just the quantity of grave goods.

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<sup>85</sup> Ibidem, p. 99.

<sup>86</sup> Idem, pp. 45-6, 48-50.

<sup>87</sup> Idem, p. 53, table 3.1.

<sup>88</sup> Idem, 54.

<sup>89</sup> S. Sherlock and M. Simmons, 'The Royal Cult of Street House, Yorkshire', *British Archaeology* 100 (May-June 2008).

<sup>90</sup> Sherlock, *A Royal Anglo-Saxon Cemetery*, p. 33.

<sup>91</sup> Idem, pp. 45-6.



Figure 19 - Round cabochon pendant, grave 42 (item 42.4). The cabochon is 10mm in diameter, and the full pendant has a 12mm diameter. The loop has a 4.5mm diameter. Sherlock, *A Royal Anglo-Saxon Cemetery*, p. 45.



Figure 20 - Oval cabochon pendant, grave 42 (item 42.5). The stone measures 10mm x 15mm, and the whole pendant 13.5mm x 21 mm (incorporating the loop). Sherlock, *A Royal Anglo-Saxon Cemetery*, pp. 45-6.



Figure 21 - Garnet cloisonné shield-shaped pendant from Grave 42 (item 42.6). There are a total of 57 red garnets plus the scallop-shaped gem. The pendant is 27mm wide and 37mm long, including the loop. Sherlock, 'Street House Saxons', <https://loftussaxonprincess.wordpress.com/2012/02/05/3/> [accessed 03/06/2016].



Figure 22 - Finds from Grave 43, including the triangular pendant with the cabochon. Sherlock, 'Grave 43', <https://loftussaxonprincess.wordpress.com/2012/04/08/grave-43-2/> [ accessed 03/06/2016].

Also, a *grubenhous* was discovered near the grave, dating from the same time, and could have been a place where mourners paid respect to the deceased person before the grave was covered.<sup>92</sup> It would not be the only site in which these ‘mourning structures’ can be found.<sup>93</sup> If this hypothesis is correct, we could also imply that the display of the body before the burial was a very important part of the bed burial rite. Displaying the body could be a form of socially acknowledging the death of a high-status person, with the recognition of this fact by several eye witnesses. Although this can seem very naïve, in a society in which the succession through family lines, widespread acknowledgement that the time of that person is already past is crucial to the reproduction of power. In this sense, in the bed burial of Street House, death also plays the role of time marking and included time reckoning ceremonies.

The bed burial was part of a very complex system that expressed the power of the woman buried in it. Nelson once proposed that women in courts of the early medieval west played a very important role in the representation and transmission of what she called ‘courtly values’.<sup>94</sup> For Nelson, the court also offered high-born women agency, a public and a cultural space.<sup>95</sup> It is possible to adapt this notion for the performance of power presented in the bed burial. It was a public display of the women’s influence and of her agency in life, with the commemoration and memorialisation of her deeds in life as well as her ascendancy over the buried woman of grave 43. It does not erase Nelson’s idea about what she calls a court, but complements it in what could be called class sociability and ideological reproduction.

### **5.b) The stone grave markers of Street House and the namestones of Hartlepool**

Stone grave markers are generally seen as a Christian practice that would symbolize a memorial to the deceased person. However, their meaning is attached at the same time to religious symbolism and elements of social-political display.<sup>96</sup> The stone markers may sometimes contain the name of the dead person or not.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Steve Sherlock and Mark Simmons, ‘A seventh-century royal cemetery at Street House, north-east Yorkshire, England’, *Antiquity* 82 (2008).

<sup>93</sup> Williams, *Death and Memory*, p. 106.

<sup>94</sup> Nelson, ‘Gendering courts’, p. 195.

<sup>95</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>96</sup> Williams, *Death and Memory*, p. 103.

<sup>97</sup> R. Daniels, *Anglo-Saxon Hartlepool and the foundations of English Christianity* (Hartlepool, 2007), p. 133.

The cemetery of Street House produced three triangular-shaped pieces of roughly worked stone, interpreted as grave markers. They were made of sandstone, and found on graves 65, 102 and 103. The sex of these inhumations is uncertain, because soil conditions did not allow any human bone to survive. The marker stones are of a similar shape and measure 380 mm (102.1), 440 mm (103.1) and 500mm (65.1) in height (figure 23).<sup>98</sup> One stone was at the foot of its grave (65), and it might have marked the grave and fell (or was pushed) into the grave at some later date.<sup>99</sup> The other two (102 and 103) were at the head of the grave, and they were clearly placed within the grave.<sup>100</sup> The stone from grave 103 was the only one that does not seem to have been worked anyhow, with no cut marks; the stone on grave 65 shows no sign of tooling, but seems to have been roughly shaped to have four facets or faces; the stone on grave 102 also shows no sign of tooling, but had a smooth face and it tapers to a rounded top.<sup>101</sup> Stones found in 102 and 103 were not pillow stones or namestones, but it is believed that these are markers that were deliberately placed behind the deceased person's head. This would not make them visible from the ground (as the marker from grave 65), but could serve as a memorial to the dead person.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> S. Sherlock, *A Royal Anglo-Saxon Cemetery*, p. 79.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>101</sup> *Idem*, pp. 37, 42-3.

<sup>102</sup> *Idem*, p. 79.

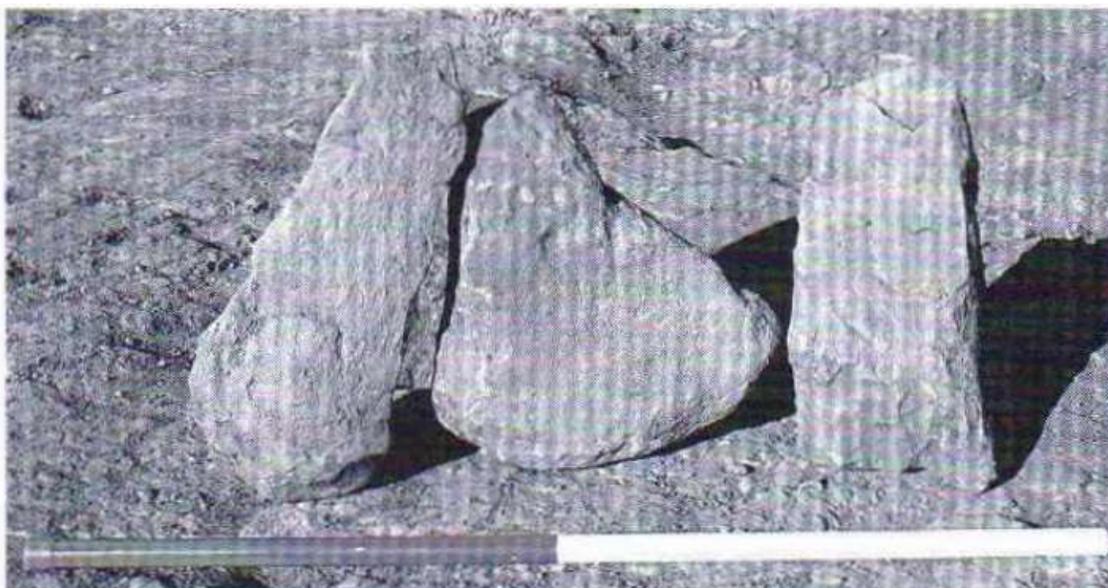


Figure 23 - Street House Gravemarkers: (left to right) 65.1, 102.1 and 103.1. (0.05m scale unit). Sherlock, *A Royal Anglo-Saxon Cemetery*, p. 79.

Sherlock's interpretation is useful; however the issue deserves more development. As Sherlock attests, it was highly probable that the posthole was cut in order to the marker to be placed at the head of the grave.<sup>103</sup> This kind of procedure is resource consuming – not only the stone, but in time and labour. The graves where these people were buried were made different by these devices (the stones), with different possibilities. The stone that was outside grave (65) marked the landscape of the cemetery and increased the visibility of the person who was inside it. The differentiation through visibility is also a way to improve the presence of that person in space and time, since the marker comes to represent the person. In other words, it is a device that preserved and reproduced social memory and the hierarchy within that community. Its audience are the people who would wander around the cemetery.<sup>104</sup> The same could not be said about the two other grave markers (102.1 and 103.1). These markers were placed within the grave.<sup>105</sup> In other words, they were part of the burial ceremony, but would not be visible after it. Their presence in the ceremony could attest for a differentiation in the ritual itself. Their deposit after the ceremony could mean that they were not meant for a

<sup>103</sup> Idem, p. 79.

<sup>104</sup> Williams, *Death and Memory*, p. 179.

<sup>105</sup> S. Sherlock, *A Royal Anglo-Saxon Cemetery*, p. 79.

worldly audience, but for a divine audience. This idea makes more sense when compared to namestones, which will be presented below and then discussed.

The grave stone markers were part of the mortuary practices, and preserved and reproduced social differentiation that had been produced through religious practices. The rarity of these kinds of stones (only 3 in a total of 109 graves), also accounts for the socially reserved aspect of the practice. It is important to highlight that at the graves where the stones were found, no other object accompanied the bodies.<sup>106</sup> In other words, if the ‘Early Saxon Phase’ hierarchies were more visible and easily spotted for the amount and complexity of items buried, in the ‘Conversion Period’ and in the ‘Mid Saxon Phase’ the buried items are less common, and hierarchies are less visible.<sup>107</sup>

An interesting comparison can be done between these grave markers and the namestones found in Hartlepool, about 13 miles away along the coast. The Hartlepool namestones were found in the nineteenth century, associated with a cemetery; however, their exact position in relation to individual graves is unknown.<sup>108</sup> Contemporary accounts of their discovery say only that ‘under each skull there was a flat stone’, indicating the presence of such stone devices.<sup>109</sup> They are made of local limestone and their length varies from 190mm to 295mm, in width from 140mm to 292mm and in depth from 25mm to 140mm (example in figure 24).<sup>110</sup> All of them (nine in total) have inscriptions: in five there are female names, in one a male and female name, and in one a possible male name.<sup>111</sup> The names are: Hildithryth,

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<sup>106</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>107</sup> M. Welch, ‘The Mid Saxon “Final Phase”’, in Helena Hamerow, David A. Hinton and Sally Crawford (eds), *The Oxford handbook of Anglo-Saxon archaeology* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 266-287, p. 267.

<sup>108</sup> *The Gent's Mag*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 10 (1838), p. 536; apud J. Story and Richard N. Bailey, ‘The Skull of Bede’, *The Antiquaries Journal* 95 (2015), pp. 1-26, p. 3, n. 12.

<sup>109</sup> Idem.

<sup>110</sup> Daniels, *AS Hartlepool*, pp. 133-6.

<sup>111</sup> All their references can be found at CASSS, Vol. 1 – County Durham and Northumberland. The individual references are Hartlepool 00, Durham, Pl. 84.429, pp. 97-98; Hartlepool 01, Durham, Pl. 84.433, p. 98; Hartlepool 02, Durham, Pl. 84.430-432, pp. 98-99; Hartlepool 03, Durham, Pl. 84.437-439, p. 99; Hartlepool 04, Durham, Pl. 84.434-436, pp. 99-100; Hartlepool 05, Durham, Pl. 85.440-442, p. 100; Hartlepool 06, Durham, Pl. 85.444, pp. 100-101; Hartlepool 07, Durham, Pl. 85.443, 85.445-446, p. 101; Hartlepool 08, Durham, Pl. 85.447-449, p. 101. [http://www.ascorpus.ac.uk/catvol1.php?pageNum\\_urls=225&totalRows\\_urls=532](http://www.ascorpus.ac.uk/catvol1.php?pageNum_urls=225&totalRows_urls=532); [http://www.ascorpus.ac.uk/corpus\\_images.php?set=203](http://www.ascorpus.ac.uk/corpus_images.php?set=203) [accessed 02/06/2016]

Hildigyth, Vermund and Torhtsuid, Berchtgyth and –gyth.<sup>112</sup> The scarcity of namestones in Hartlepool compared to the number of graves that had no inscriptions of this kind is evidence that this was not a resource and device that was used indiscriminately.<sup>113</sup> The strong female associations of Hartlepool are supported by the prestigious status that these namestones express.<sup>114</sup> However, as Daniels highlights, the use of stones was meant primarily for the professed of the monastery, like respected nuns, but also potentially other persons of note who may be of the same lineage as these nuns.<sup>115</sup> As Williams point out, cemeteries are only an ‘end-point’ of the mortuary sequence, that involved many locations like churches, temples and other places of congregation.<sup>116</sup> In this sense, the cemetery would be a continuation of the ties beyond it. This would explain why, although the cemetery was primarily used for the nuns, it also included children and males.<sup>117</sup> Their presence could be explained (as well as the male inscriptions in the namestones) by the impossibility of breaking all the kin ties when these women entered the monastic community.<sup>118</sup> Women who entered the monastic life could be married or widowed; at the same time, the male buried with them could have other kind of affiliation, like brothers.<sup>119</sup> The children could be either sons or daughters of nuns, but maybe other kind of *protégé* as well. If this hypothesis is correct, it is important to highlight that the beneficial connections with a sacred space could extend to the aristocracy in general. A brother could benefit from a sister who became a nun, by being buried in a place that acknowledged its sacredness – and he might even have his name inserted on or in a device that could preserve his existence in social memory.<sup>120</sup> And, of course, by doing so the person would be displaying his own status and differentiation from other people that were not registered as extraordinary. Another possibility might be that both the burial and the namestone in sacred grounds were part of a counter-gift granted by the Hartlepool

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<sup>112</sup> Idem, p. 80; also R. Cramp, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon England stone sculpture: volume 1, part 1, county Durham and Northumberland* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 97-101, chapter 7, Fig. 7.7, Table 7.1.

<sup>113</sup> Daniels, *AS Hartlepool*, p. 141.

<sup>114</sup> Idem, p. 141.

<sup>115</sup> Idem, pp. 141-2.

<sup>116</sup> Williams, *Death and Memory*, p. 196.

<sup>117</sup> Daniels, *AS Hartlepool*, p. 80.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid. See also the Imma story discussed on the first chapter.

<sup>120</sup> Daniels, *AS Hartlepool*, p. 141.

community after a generous donation. The writing of names, the exposition to elements that pulsate sacredness, the preservation of benefactors (through their names) in social memory and the expression of power of all these elements combined are elements of striking parallel on these namestones and the DLV, explored in Chapter One. The namestones are therefore a good device to better understand the power of female ecclesiastical aristocrats, who could be expressed in material culture their wealth, power and status.<sup>121</sup>

The findings of the graves of Hartlepool and their analysis can lead to two different expressions of hierarchies within the cemetery. The first one is based on the religious goods found on them: at the lowest level, the graves have no goods; in the next level, there are 'pillow stones' within the graves; at the highest level, the graves that contained both 'namestones' and 'pillow stones'.<sup>122</sup> The second expression of hierarchy is reflected on spatial distribution of graves containing these goods: the namestones were predominantly in the northern part of the cemetery, and absent in the south.<sup>123</sup> These expressions of power are likely to support and reproduce hierarchy within the monastic settlement.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Christine Maddern, *Raising the dead : early medieval name stones in Northumbria* (Leiden, 2013).

<sup>122</sup> Daniels, *AS Hartlepool*, p. 81.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibidem*.

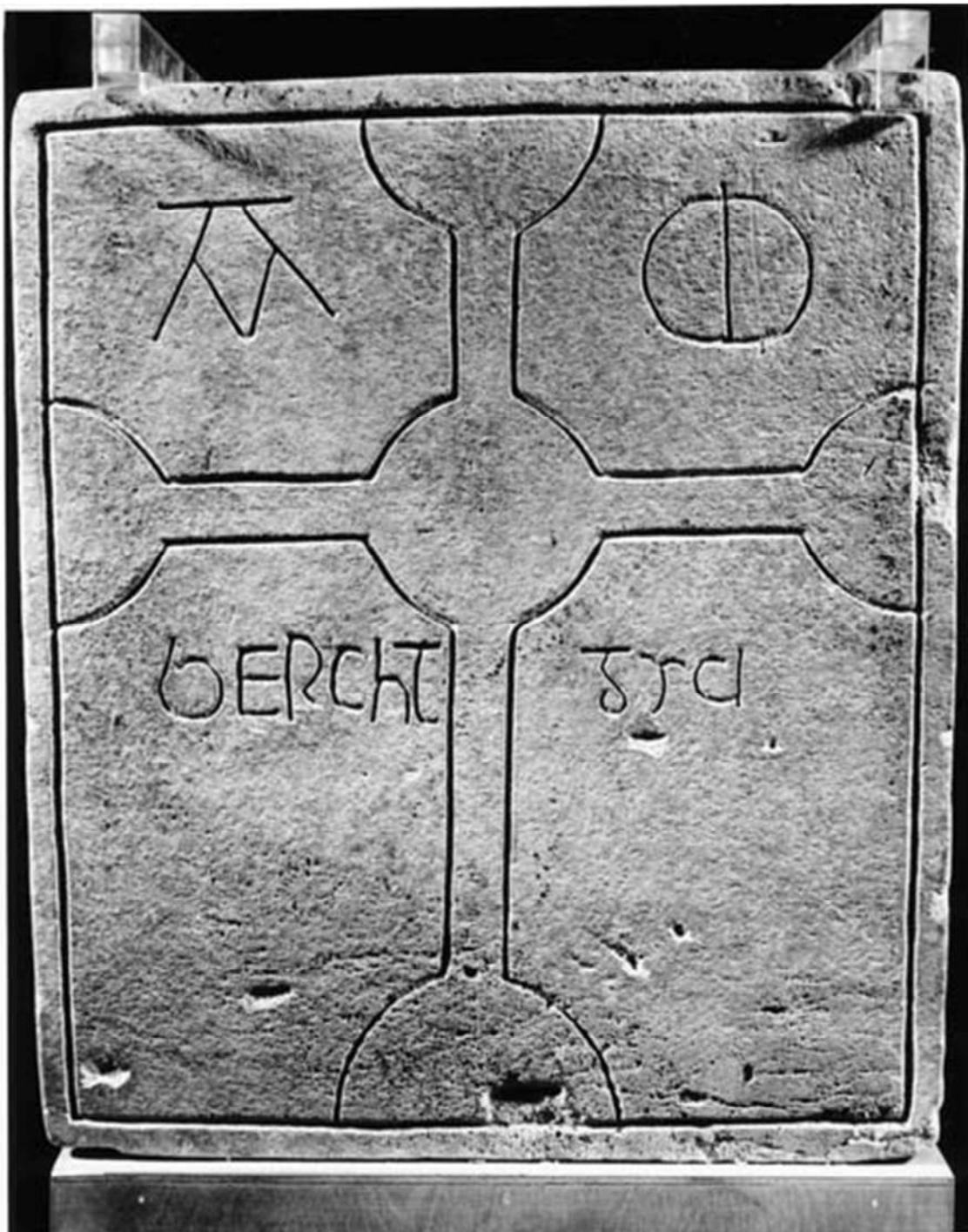


Figure 24 - Hartlepool 06, Durham. Measurements: L. 29.5 cm (11.5 in); W. 25.4 cm (10 in); D. 7.6 cm (3 in); CASSS, Vol. 1 – County Durham and Northumberland, pp. 100-1, Pl. 85.444. [http://www.ascorpus.ac.uk/corpus\\_images.php?set=203](http://www.ascorpus.ac.uk/corpus_images.php?set=203) [accessed 02/06/2016]. Copyright: Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture, University of Durham, Photographer: Tom Middlemass.

The monastic community of Hartlepool has been identified as the monastery called ‘Heruteu’ by Bede.<sup>125</sup> This longstanding identification is reinforced by archaeological finds.<sup>126</sup> We know from Bede that Hild was an abbess at the monastery called ‘Hereteu’ (Hartlepool): *Post haec facta est abbatissa in monasterio, quod uocatur Heruteu.*<sup>127</sup> Before going there, she intended to go to Chelles in Gaul where her sister, Hereswith, was a nun.<sup>128</sup> Bede argues that the Hereteu existed in a state quite close to the primitive church, with no difference in wealth or properties: [...] *ut in exemplum primitivae ecclesiae nullus ibi dives, nullus esset egens, omnibus essent omnia communia, cum nihil cuiusquam esse uideretur proprium.*<sup>129</sup> The archaeological evidence attests that Bede’s record was not precise, and that social hierarchies were maintained and reproduced at the moment of death, both through spatial separation and grave items.

The use of the written word in Anglo-Saxon England must not be taken for granted, either on parchment or stonework. The presence of literacy is a matter of status, and it is possible that some noblemen were trained in the vernacular.<sup>130</sup> The written word can also be part of the identity and sense of belonging to a community (both the wider Christian and the local community).<sup>131</sup> In this sense, the namestones of Hartlepool are also important because they also express both the sense of belonging (to Christian and Bernician practices) and also the status of those named on them.<sup>132</sup>

In Chapter Six the phenomenon of monasteries and monastic status were explored, especially through the case study of Flixborough. Flixborough’s ‘blurred’ evidence tends to reflect the academic uncertainty about the nature of the settlement (either ecclesiastic or lay). The academic uncertainty might reflect the contemporary uncertainty about the monastic communities, reflected by Bede’s ‘Letter to Ecgberht’. The comparison between the

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<sup>125</sup> *HE*, III, 24.

<sup>126</sup> Daniels, *AS Hartlepool*, p. 29.

<sup>127</sup> ‘After this she was made abbess in the monastery called *Heruteu* (Hartepool) [...]’. *EH*, III, 23.

<sup>128</sup> Daniels, *AS Hartlepool*, p. 29.

<sup>129</sup> ‘After the example of the primitive church, no one was rich, no one was in need, for they had all things in common and none had any private property’, *HE*, IV, 23.

<sup>130</sup> S. Kelly, ‘Anglo-Saxon lay society’, p. 59.

<sup>131</sup> R. McKitterick, ‘Introduction’, in R. McKitterick, *The uses of literacy*, p. 8; Kelly, ‘Anglo-Saxon lay society’, pp. 38-9.

<sup>132</sup> Maddern, *Raising the dead*.

Hartlepool namestones and the Street House grave markers can enlighten parallels between the clerical and the lay aristocracy, since they seem to embody the same phenomenon. In other words, in the very part of our period, the data available for lay and ecclesiastical practices of differentiation through mortuary practices can express the blurred line between lay and ecclesiastical, thereby highlighting the class structures.

## **Conclusion**

Death was an important part of the Anglo-Saxon life and it was directly connected to social reproduction. Death was a crucial milestone in terms of time reckoning, since the death of kings and archbishops was used as a very common way of determining time, representing the start of a new cycle.

The rituals surrounding death changed after the Christianization. Although grave goods became less common and less numerous, they were still present in the early part of the period, even among ecclesiastical burials. This is attested by the items buried with Cuthbert, as well as the namestones of Hartlepool and the grave markers of Street House.

The rituals of death were also rituals of (class) power. The bed burial of Street House depicts a ceremony that was probably very strict in its rituals, including a level of crowd control. If the bed found ‘personifies’ the ritual of death, there were also findings that expressed the display of wealth. The pendants found in the same grave had a good amount of gold, as well as contained a good amount of labour time and expertise to produce them. In other words, the burial was probably also a form of immobilizing wealth by the deposit of such expensive items, displaying the family wealth through conspicuous consumption (with a parallel to that explored in Chapter Six). In this sense, the possibility and hypothesis that grave goods disappear because power positions are no longer in dispute seems inaccurate. Death continues to be a display of power, wealth and status even after grave goods are no longer in fashion. In the same sense, when the clash of aristocratic families intensify on the last part of the long eighth century, there is no intensification of such mechanisms.

Death is not only about immobilization, though. The ‘wills’ of Bede and Wilfrid are testimony of a wish for the reproduction and strengthening of the position they represent beyond their own lives. Both Bede and Wilfrid asked for a redistribution of their possessions as one of their last acts, seeking assurance that they could intervene in the circulation of goods. Therefore, death cannot be separated to the sphere of circulation in that society either.

Death in Anglo-Saxon England was not only a specific point in time or in the chronology; it was connected to the end of a cycle and the start of a new one. Its rituals

showed off the deceased's person wealth, power and/or status and sometimes could do it by preserving them in devices of social memory, be it a stone coffin, a large grave, a grave marker or 'only' a name in a namestone. In other words, the mortuary rituals are a way of presenting the deceased person as the member of the ruling class; it was also a way of composing and marking time; and finally, it also contained a very important sense of belonging. In other words, the topic chosen to finish the thesis synthesizes all the topics discussed throughout the thesis. It is an end that connects the dots spread throughout the chapters and summarizes the aristocracy and its desire for eternity.

## Conclusion

The writing of a thesis is a journey, composed of many paths, companions and dead ends. The text that the reader has in hands now is distilled version of this journey. The original idea for the thesis was the analysis of all Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms, reading state-building as the organism responsible for production and reproduction of the ruling class (the aristocracy). However, the contact with recent historiography and with the available evidence has proven that idea overwhelming, considering the constraints of time imposed on a thesis manufacture. Narrowing the scope was necessary.

The questions that were asked to Anglo-Saxon reality also needed to be reframed and re-worked, considering the evidence available for the period and region selected. The main question was no longer state-building (a question that would require a longer period of time), but the mechanisms that produced social differentiation and dominance. Northumbria was selected because of the heterogeneous evidence available for the period, which contributed to the holistic approach desired. The reframed question and hypotheses of the thesis still requested a span of time longer than a few decades, so the long eighth century was chosen. The reason for this length is that changes in social hierarchy are better spotted and analysed in this *durée*. Also, the narrative proposed throughout the thesis is that the long eighth century is the stage in which the aristocracy rises and falls. In this sense, the eighth century might not start the process of social difference, but it can be seen as having a reasonable development and ‘conclusion’.

The theoretical approach of the thesis was also responsible for the originality of the thesis. Although the word ‘class’ is not unusual for labelling either the aristocracy or the peasantry, it is rarely thought as a concept. For this reason, ‘class’ is generally not discussed theoretically and does not have a significant impact on the research. On the current thesis, however, it set the lenses through which the data and evidence are scrutinised. In this sense, the thesis insisted on the similarities over the differences between the lay and ecclesiastical aristocracy, although acknowledging the nuances between them (for example, the differences in terms of consumption, as explored on chapter 6). The class focus was also responsible for understanding kingship differently, reading the king as a member of the ruling class and the access to the throne as a crucial part of the struggles between the ruling class fractions.

The self-image of the aristocracy is vital to understand it. Their position as warriors, the possession of weapons and armour and the vocabulary that refers to them, all these are elements that identify them at the same time that reproduce a sense of belonging. These identity elements seem natural to the aristocrats (to the point that social mobility is only

achievable through divine action), as well as the invisibility of aristocratic women. However, they are historical and subject to change, and they are transformed throughout the eighth century, as explained in the first chapter.

No class is an island, especially the ruling class. In this sense, the definition of class relations is a vital step in order to understand the social relations that underpin class structures and activities. Therefore, the study of production was really important to highlight the predatory nature of aristocracy surplus acquisition, as well as the base for the following chapters, from circulation to leisure time activities. The second chapter presented the fundamental classes of eighth century Northumbria - peasantry and aristocracy, as well as highlighted the exploitation nature of the relation. Class relations, however, seem to be drawn as encompassing groups, keeping a degree of autonomy rather than total interference and control.

Land granting can be perceived as one of the key moments in order to understand both intra and inter class relations in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria. The phenomenon has a dual nature: on one hand, it grants autonomy to an aristocrat and allow him to live from peasant-generated surplus; on the other hand, it organizes and reproduces hierarchies through gift-giving ties inside the aristocracy. The proliferation of grants in perpetuity (and, therefore, without the possibility of return to the king's treasure) can be understood as one of the main events on the crystallisation of the aristocracy.

The success of aristocracy on acquiring and manipulating surplus led to innovations. The early coinage Northumbria probably has its origin in minsters, the same sites that were granted land holding in perpetuity. Coinage can be understood as a form of processing and exchanging the surplus acquired from the peasantry. Royal coinage might actually have been introduced by Aldfrith, whose monastic training could be the explanation for introducing the practice on the sphere of kingship. Coins can also express power as devices of social memory, since they had people named in them. In that sense, the fact that on the ninth century moneyers could share the same device the king used probably mean a growth in prestige of these workers.

Ideology is also a vital part of the reproduction of any social class. One important expression of aristocratic historical self-awareness is the curatorship of social memory. The aristocracy had a complex understanding of time, composed of several layers (biblical time, eschatological time, recent past, future, heroic time etc). The manufacture of time organize the aristocracy's experience and expectations, as well as producing a sense of belonging and of activities.

Habits of consumption might also be revealing of class relations, structures and differentiation. Meat consumption, especially young meat, seemed to be a matter of distinction of the lay aristocracy. It is also probable that fish consumption was more common among the ecclesiastic elite than the lay people. The consumption of chicken and fowl was more common among the peasants. The botanical evidence shows a match between the types of food plants were consumed by both classes. However, the act of luxurious consumption (feasts) was a regular practice of the aristocracy, both in secular and ecclesiastical grounds. Voluntary fasting, however, was encouraged for churchpeople.

Death was also a crucial part of aristocratic life. Funeral rites could involve the consumption of resources (as jewellery). Last wishes could represent an effort and wish for reproduction through intervention on the circulation of good on someone's the last moments (as recorded in the wills). Also grave markers and namestones were used as capsules of social memory, preserving the visibility and name of the deceased person. The ritual practices involved in the inhumation also reinforced the ties between the people who were part of the network of relations of the deceased. In other words, the mortuary rituals were also a way to reinforce the sense of belonging. The last rites expressed the status, power and wealth of the deceased person, converging many different aspects of the aristocrat's life. As a celebration for the living, funerary practices could represent a moment of class and privilege apotheosis.

Production, circulation and consumption are spheres that are intertwined and that must be thought together. In that sense, the acquisition of surplus mentioned in chapter two is vital to obtain the parchment used in the MSS mentioned in chapter five; the access and craftsmanship of gold used to write on the DLV, explained in chapter one, are also a vital part to understand coinage, as presented in chapter four; the phenomena of land donation and the possibilities of changes in patterns of consumption are also interlinked, meaning chapter three and six are also connected. Death rites as the apotheosis of class celebration mean that they must not be thought as a culmination of the previous discussions.

The research, however, does not end on the next pages. The possibilities of interpretation of the past raised here opened new paths. The immediate possibilities of continuation are twofold. The first option is to collect more data for the same region, using more pieces of evidence in order to obtain a more intensive and detailed knowledge of the same area. The second option is to use a more extensive approach, testing the same questions to other realities synchronically. Ideally, the first step would address other Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and then head to other European regions during the long eighth century. This approach could flow into a larger project, trying to study the eighth century as the moment of crystallization of early medieval aristocracy.

One of the main contributions of the thesis is the possibility of understanding the crisis of the eighth century not simply as an unexpected event. The crisis is connected to the development and crystallization of the ruling class, and the consequent instability is part of the historical contradictions of this development. Therefore, the crisis can be understood as beyond a simple question about the centrality of power (kingship). To summarize the essence of the thesis, it is possible to argue that the ruling class is the crisis. Any comparison to the current crisis of capitalism in the early 21st century will be on the reader, and the dialectical use of the ‘anatomy of the ape’ as a key to the ‘anatomy of the man [sic]’ (as explained in the introduction) is recommended.

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