Lords of the North Sea

A Comparative Study of Aristocratic Territory in the North Sea World in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries

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INTRODUCTION

Historians can be described as monarchists in their assessments of the tenth and eleventh centuries. The structures of royal government have been explored and extolled as the precursors to modern notions of democracy and nationalism. This line of enquiry has focused on the period through an administrative lens, thus seeing the study of royal courts, laws and offices. The greatest example of this can be seen in the 'maximum view' developed by James Campbell, who reasoned that the English kingdom in the tenth century was a nation state defined by its central authority, uniform institutions and national language.[1] However, this creates a determinist outlook with kingships and

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[1] J. Campbell, 'Observations on English Government from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 5th Series* 25 (1975), pp. 39-54; 'England, France, Flanders and Germany: Some Comparisons and Connections', in D. Hill (ed.), *Æthelred the Unready: Papers from the Millenary Conference* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 15-46; 'Some Twelfth Century Views of the Anglo-Saxon Past', in J. Campbell (ed.), *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London, 1986), pp. 209-28; 'Some Agents and Agencies of the late Anglo-Saxon State', in J. Holt (ed.), *Domesday Studies: Papers Read at the*

kingdoms appearing as the inevitable form of rule in the Middle Ages. Furthermore, it has cast the aristocracy as rebellious and traitorous because they were the only social group that could muster power within a kingdom to challenge a king's 'central' authority.[2] A crucial problem in the construct of Campbell's paradigm is that the 'uniform' administrative structures such as shires, earldormanries and, later, earldoms can be seen in the previous centuries through the former Anglo-Saxon heptarchy kingdoms.[3] Moreover, the theory negates the possibility of the existence of regional cultures that were based not only on past kingdoms, but also on geographical landscapes. I intend to challenge the 'maximum view' of Campbell in favour of a regional model and, therefore, a framework that promotes the authority of regional aristocratic lordship. This will show that cultural provinces prevailed and were inhabited by pre-existing identities that did not perceive themselves through the rule of a monarch. By contrast, they understood their identity in relationship to personal family ties, culturally symbolic locations and geographical features. However, before providing an overview, it is crucial to highlight the benefit of comparative study in research. A comparative framework will allow an investigation into the levels of regional identity in North Sea Europe. In his paper on comparative history and his assessment of the methodology's place in the field, Chris Wickham successfully outlined the key reasons for its use. He stressed that comparative studies were the closest point a historian could come to testing theories. Wickham stated that 'no historical explanation can be regarded as convincing without some attempt at comparative testing; everything else is provisional.'[4] Comparative studies are not new within research into the Middle Ages; however, they are an underused medium.[5] Therefore, an additional aim for this paper will be to promote comparative research. The paper will first explore the North Sea as a zone for interaction in the Middle Ages. Following this, the key regional terms will be explained; these include territory, cultural provinces, contact zones, and central place theory. This will allow progression to the four regions in question, which include Essex in eastern England; the Vexin and Arques in Eastern Normandy; Guines in western Flanders; and Trøndelag in central Norway. In all four case studies evidence will be derived from written texts in line with Wickham's argument for the use of similar

Novocentenary Conference of the Royal Historical Society and the Institute of British Geographers, Winchester, 1986 (Woodbridge, 1987), pp. 201-18; 'The Sale of Land and the Economics of Power in Early England: Problems and Possibilities', *Haskins Society Journal* 1 (1989), pp. 23-37; 'England, c. 991', in J. Cooper (ed.), *The Battle of Maldon: Fiction and Fact* (London, 1993), pp. 1-17; 'The Late Anglo-Saxon State: A Maximum View', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 87 (1994), pp. 39-65; 'The United Kingdom of England: The Anglo-Saxon Achievement', in K. Stringer and A. Grant (eds.), *Uniting the Kingdom? The Making of British History* (London, 1995), pp. 31-47.

[2] S. Baxter, *The Earls of Mercia: Lordship and Power in Late Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 4–11.

[3] P. Hill, *The Road to Hastings* (Stroud, 2005); E. John, 'War and Society in the Tenth Century: The Maldon Campaign', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Fifth Series* 27 (1977), pp. 173-95; R. Abels, 'English Tactics, Strategy and Military Organisation in the Late Tenth Century', in D. Scragg (ed.), *The Battle of Maldon AD 991* (Manchester, 1981), pp. 143-55; D. Kirby, *The Making of Early England* (London, 1967).

[4] C. Wickham, 'Problems in Doing Comparative History', in D. Skinner (ed.), *Challenging the Boundaries of Medieval History: The Legacy of Timothy Reuter* (Turnhout, 2009), pp. 5-28, at p. 7.

[5] S. Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals: The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted* (Oxford, 1995) and T. Reuter, 'The Making of England and Germany, 850-1050: Points of Comparison and Difference', in A. Smyth (ed.), *Medieval Europeans: Studies in Ethnic Identity and National Perspectives in Medieval Europe* (Basingstoke, 1998), pp. 53-70.

sources when investigating a comparison.[6] Unfortunately, this paper is not able to explore the religious impact on aristocratic territory. However, for the Christian kingdoms, the majority of sources used are from ecclesiastic authors who contribute to our understanding of medieval territory. Monastic communities, collegiate churches and cathedral priors were often maintained through the patronage of local aristocrats. Aristocrats participated in patronage as it was believed that it would provide salvation for the soul.[7] The family would impart gifts for, or found, a monastic community and in return would be the beneficiaries of prayer and have a place of burial. These gifts were seen as an integral part of their status.[8]

The North Sea is the interconnecting cog of the comparative analysis of the four regions (see fig. 1). Only recently has enquiry arisen into North Sea Europe for the earlier medieval period. Robert Liddiard asserted in a recent publication on the North Sea World and its relationship with medieval East Anglia that this sea should not be seen as a barrier; rather, it should be considered as a means of connection for people, goods and ideas.[9] Additionally, Tom Williamson, in the same publication as Liddiard, argued that Essex and Northern France were closer to the Channel than the North Sea world itself; however, Liddiard maintained that the North Sea world could be one that contained numerous worlds.[10] The revival of the North Sea Network during the late-tenth and early-eleventh centuries did not occur because of political authority. Instead, the revival was instigated by trade.[11] Furthermore, it was not simply an outlet used by Scandinavian raiders as often can appear the case in modern historiographies. Lords such as Hereward the Wake can be seen traversing across the North Sea in search of service.[12] Now that the existence of a network of exchange has been established, we will define the key regional terms that aid in the identification of regional distinctiveness.

David Harvey investigated the influence of territory on social identity in medieval Cornwall and its effects on ecclesiastical organisation. He correctly urged that the study of territory can provide the historian an outlet to explore the sources of identity. In order to achieve this he defined territory as a 'geographical expression of social power.' This authority was able to influence people and

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[6] Wickham, 'Problems in Doing Comparative History', p. 8.

[7] D. Power, *The Norman Frontier in the Twelfth and Early Thirteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 301.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 302.

[9] R. Liddiard, 'Introduction: The North Sea', in D. Bates and R. Liddiard (eds.), *East Anglia and its North Sea World in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2013), pp. 1-14, at pp. 1-2.

[10] T. Williamson, 'East Anglia's Character and the "North Sea World"', in D. Bates and R. Liddiard (eds.), *East Anglia and its North Sea World in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2013), pp. 44-62, at p. 57. For Liddiard's analysis see Liddiard, 'Introduction: The North Sea', p. 14.

[11] M. Gardiner, 'Shipping and Trade between England and the Continent during the Eleventh Century', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 22 (2000), pp. 71-93, at p. 72.

[12] '*Gesta Herewardi Saxoni*', eds. T. D. Hardy and C. T. Martin, *Lestoire des Engles solum la translation maistre Geffrei Gaimar* 1 (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 339-404, at p. 370.

relationships within a geographically defined area.[13] Historiography has often perceived territory as nations and their administrative units.[14] However, it is through regionalism that an understanding of territory can be uncovered that is more contemporary to the aristocrats of the North Sea, an area which was not bound to the royal image.

Charles Phythian-Adams, a member of the Leicester Local History School, outlined the parameters of regional study and postulated the concept of a cultural province. He defined cultural provinces as general 'focussed areas of influence and regional interaction.'[15] He believed that, in early medieval society, lineage played a crucial role through the mode of inheritance in establishing local social structure. Phythian-Adams stated that the only spatial formations that could fit this criteria were, 'great centrally focussed river-drainage basins on the one hand or, on the other, those de-centralized but localized groups broadly parallel or slightly convergent rivers that are delimited inland in each case by the same watershed line, and which share an identifiable stretch of coastline at the outlet points.'[16] The dominant rivers will be navigable 'far upstream to moorings from which contact may be made with the very heartland of the entire river basin or its de-centralized equivalent.'[17] Therefore, with the concept of a cultural province established, how do we define spheres of influence that inevitably overlap?

John Morrissey appropriately described areas where distinct cultures interacted as 'contact zones.'[18] Morrissey applied this to late medieval Ireland; he identified the various groups and their descriptors, for example Anglo-Irish, Anglo-French and even Cambro-Norman. He argued that interpreting Ireland as bi-ethnic was subscribing to the national view. By contrast, identities multiplied where there was interaction and overlap.[19] A crucial instance was the cultural impact on the settlers from England, 'from the moment of cultural contact, the ethnic identities of both the colonists and the host population are thereafter mutually constitutive of each-other.'[20] Ultimately, he viewed the landscape as networking through marriage and fosterage that initiated alliances and cultural links.[21] Previously, Phythian-Adams called these areas 'intermediary zones' and reasoned that they were colonised from opposing sides and would see gradual interaction as they came closer

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[13] D. Harvey, 'Landscape, Organisation, Identity and Change: Territoriality and Hagiography in Medieval West Cornwall', *Landscape Research* 25 (2000), pp. 201-12, at p. 202.
[14] R. Davies, 'The State: The Tyranny of a Concept', *Journal of Historical Sociology* 15 (2002), pp. 71-74, at pp. 71-72. This has been a notable problem in English historiography.
[15] C. Phythian-Adams, 'Introduction: An Agenda for English Local History', in C. Phythian-Adams (ed.), *Society, Cultures and Kinship, 1580-1850: Cultural Provinces and English Local History* (Leicester, 1993), pp. 1-23, at p. 14.
[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 10. Also see; N. Higham, *The Origins of Cheshire* (Manchester, 1993), p. 213. Higham argued that the River Mersey was a 'major frontier' between Mercia and Northumbria in Northern Cheshire.
[18] J. Morrissey, 'Cultural Geographies of the Contact Zone: Gaels, Galls and Overlapping Territories in Late Medieval Ireland', *Social and Cultural Geography* 6 (2005), pp. 551-66, at p. 552.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 554.
[20] *Idem.*
[21] *Idem.*

to each other.[22] In addition to exploring cultural overlap, it will be crucial to explore 'central place' theory in order to understand the cultural impact of settlements and aristocratic buildings within territory.

Dagfinn Skre investigated the concept of central places as a method for discovering why particular settlements were larger than others. He applied this to medieval Norway and, due to its regional focus, the concept is beneficial to this comparative study. Skre affirmed that a central place was a location of cultural custom and not just dictated by economic factors.[23] It is an area from which power was exhibited. The factor of a location being a central place was 'ascribed' by the people that they served; thus, it would be easier to discover in more regional sources.[24] Skre argued that an aristocratic estate did not necessarily have central functions for the community. Even those on the estate may not have had central dealings outside the rents owed to the landlord. Skre reasons that, in a community, different strata had separate centres.[25] For example, in Norway an aristocrat may have an affinity to a regional *thing*. By contrast, a peasant may have had a connection with a harbour or local market.[26] Skre advocates the difficulty in discovering central places of the lower orders. However, he stresses that frequent mentions in sources such as sagas may identify their former status.[27]

As a consequence, we must identify the aristocrat's central place. In the North Sea, this was embodied by aristocratic residences, which could be fortified. Castles have long been seen as imposing structures on the landscape which provide 'an expression of hierarchies of power.'[28] They were designed to impress contemporaries as well as intimidate them. To highlight the differences in the North Sea, and further identify the importance of buildings in particular, the psychology of aristocratic structures will be evaluated.

It is often overlooked that an aristocratic hall performed similar functions to a fortified building, although its defences were not as impressive. This was the case for England and Norway, where castles were not as prevalent as they were in Flanders and Normandy. Ann Williams identified that the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*'s first reference to a castle was in 1051.[29] The chronicle had previously been using terms such as *burh*, *geweore* and *herebeorg*. *Burh* in particular was a flexible phrase

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[22] Phythian-Adams, 'Introduction', p. 12.
[23] D. Skre, 'Centrality and Places. The Central Place at Skiringssal in Vestfold, Norway', *Studien zur Sachsenforschung* 1 (2010), pp. 220-31, at p. 229.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 223.
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 229.
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 223.
[27] *Ibid.*, p. 222.
[28] L. Hicks, 'Magnificent Entrances and Undignified Exits: Chronicling the Symbolism of Castle Space in Normandy', *Journal of Medieval History* 35 (2009), pp. 52-69, at p. 53.
[29] A. Williams, 'A Bell-House and a Burh-Geat: Lordly Residences in England before the Norman Conquest', in C. Harper-Bill and R. Harvey (eds.), *Medieval Knighthood* 4 (1992), pp. 221-40, at pp. 221-22.

referring to prehistoric earthworks, former Roman camps, Anglo-Saxon fortification, fortified houses, manors, and market towns.[30] This was similar to the Norman chronicler Orderic Vitalis, who used several Latin words when referring to castles in Normandy.[31] Williams argued that sites such as Goltho can logically point to the conclusion that the Norman fortifications seen after the Conquest were, in fact, built over pre-conquest sites.[32]

Similarly, in Norway, fortifications were not common. For example, a site situated in Skiringssal, Vestfold, south-east Norway, has a history that can be dated to the eighth century when a town called Kaupang was founded. Skiringssal of the Viken area was mentioned in Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*.[33] The area held the council known as a *thing*, called *bjóðalyng*, where nobles from the locality converged to resolve conflicts and legal disputes.[34] The site was occupied by a hall between seventy and eighty metres long, which has been hypothesised to be the residence for a petty king and his retinue.[35]

Leonie Hicks has explored the symbolism within these aristocratic residences in Normandy. She believed that a 'visual presence of a leading member of the seigneurial family was necessary for the maintenance of order within the household on a daily basis.'[36] Furthermore, she highlighted the symbolic relationship these structures held in the medieval period.[37] This can be seen in the *Bayeux Tapestry* which portrays castles as centres of defiance in its illustration of Earl Harold Godwinson and Duke William on campaign. The tapestry depicts fortifications at Rennes, Dol, and Dinan in Brittany. The Norman force appears to be besieging the fortress at Dinan after taking the castle of Dol.[38] It clearly demonstrates that, not only were the castles used as defensive structures, positioned on mounds overlooking the landscape, but they were also locations from which rebellions were staged. The sequence on the tapestry ends with Conan, duke of Brittany, handing over Dinan's keys to William.[39] It is intriguing that the tapestry's portrayal of this conflict has no other events after the surrendering of Dinan.[40] Therefore, this suggests that rebellions depended on fortifications as symbols of continued resistance. The evidence also indicates that the central place for an aristocrat was the hall of his residence rather than fortifications. A hall provided a location for lordship to be

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[30] *Idem.*
[31] M. Chibnall, 'Orderic Vitalis on Castles', in C. Harper-Bill, C. Holdsworth and J. Nelson (eds.), *Studies in Medieval History Presented to R. Allen Brown* (Woodbridge, 1989), pp. 43-56, at p. 53.
[32] Williams, 'A Bell-House and a Burh-Geat', p. 231.
[33] Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla: History of the Kings of Norway, Saga of Ynglings*, ed. L. Hollander, (Austin, 1964), Chapter 44, p. 45.
[34] Skre, 'Centrality and Places', p. 225.
[35] *Ibid.*, p. 226.
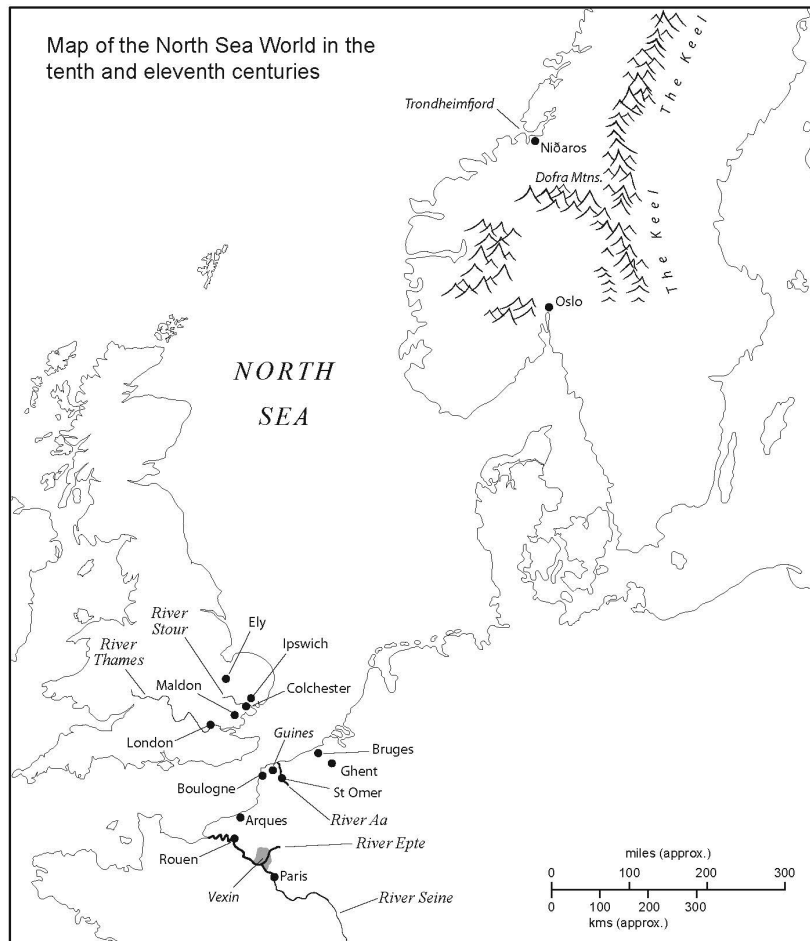[36] Hicks, 'Magnificent Entrances', p. 59.
[37] *Idem.*
[38] *The Bayeux Tapestry*, ed. D. Wilson, *The Bayeux Tapestry* (London, 2004), plates 21-23.
[39] *Ibid.*, plates 23-24.
[40] *Ibid.*, plates 24-27. After the engagements in Brittany William and Harold proceed to Bayeux, where Harold swears an oath to William and returns to England.

performed in and it symbolised the lord's authority within his respective territory. The defences that surrounded the hall were intended to not only protect the important structure but also to extend the hall's authority by dominating the landscape. Now that the key regional frameworks have been explored this paper will progress to the regional case studies, starting with Essex.

Map of the North Sea World in the tenth and eleventh centuries

Essex

Historically, Essex was bordered by the North Sea on its eastern boundary, while the northern reaches of the territory consisted of thick woodland and the River Stour, which separated it from East Anglia. The southern reaches of the region included the Thames (see fig. 1). Finally, the

western border has often been surmised as the modern boundary of Essex.[41] The principal towns within the region included the former Roman settlement of Colchester and the port town of Maldon.[42] The ealdormanry constituted the whole of modern Essex; however, it is uncertain whether the administrative unit consisted of more. Nicholas Banton postulated that since London, Surrey, and parts of Huntingdonshire were included at the kingdom of Essex's zenith, they could have been incorporated into the ealdormanry, too.[43]

Ealdorman Byrhtnoth is arguably the most famous ealdorman of Essex. This is due not only to his longevity in office but, more importantly, to the events that occurred at Maldon that saw his death and his army's famous defeat. He was not the son of the previous incumbent, Ælfgar; however, he was married to the latter's daughter Ælflæd, consequently keeping a sense of continuity of office.[44] Byrhtnoth's patrimony was in Cambridgeshire, which he had received from his father Byrhthelm.[45]

The earldom and earldormanry land holdings can be garnered from the wills of Byrhtnoth, his wife and his father-in-law, in addition to that of his sister-in-law, Æthelflæd. In Essex, the basis of his estates were in the north, close to the River Stour and Colchester.[46] In Suffolk, the two estates of Elmset and Buxhall were in the authority of the ealdorman.[47] Intriguingly, Suffolk was within the remit of the ealdormanry of East Anglia. The family of Ælflæd, Byrhtnoth's wife, were patrons of Stoke-by-Nayland, which was just over the Suffolk border.[48] This is significant as aristocratic families would often endow the same church so that they would receive prayer and a place of burial.[49] The church would usually be located in a region within the family's traditional land holdings.

There is no chronicle of deeds regarding the earls and ealdormen of Essex in existence; however, the *Liber Eliensis* provides crucial insight into the importance of the territory.[50] The *Liber Eliensis* was a Latin composition divided into three books covering the seventh to the twelfth centuries. This

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[41] N. Banton, 'Ealdormen and Earls in England from the reign of King Alfred to the reign of King Æthelred II', Ph.D. thesis, University of Oxford (1981), p. 208.

[42] C. Hart, *The Danelaw* (London, 1992), p. 28. Hart argued the Danes had fortified the *burhs* of Colchester and Maldon, thus highlighting their local significance.

[43] Banton, 'Ealdormen and Earls', p. 208. Banton also believed the ealdormanries represented the heptarchy kingdoms.

[44] C. Hart, 'The Ealdorman of Essex', in K. Neale (ed.), *An Essex Tribute: Essays Presented to Frederick G. Emmison* (London, 1987), pp. 57-84, at p. 68.

[45] M. Locherbie-Cameron, 'Byrhtnoth and his Family', in D. Scragg (ed.), *The Battle of Maldon* (Manchester, 1981), pp. 253-62, at p. 256.

[46] 'The Will of Ælfflæd', *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, ed. D. Whitelock (Cambridge, 1930), pp. 38-43, at p. 39. The estates held in Colchester were Dovercourt, Stanway, Byrton on Stanway, Beaumont, Alresford and Lexidon.

[47] *Idem.*

[48] 'The Will of Ælfgar', *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, ed. D. Whitelock (Cambridge, 1930), pp. 6-9, at p. 8. 'And *ic an þat wudelond at Aisfield into Stoke*'.

[49] Power, *The Norman Frontier*, p. 301.

[50] *Liber Eliensis*, ed. E. O. Blake, Camden Society; 3rd Series 92 (London, 1962) and *The Battle of Maldon*, ed. D. Scragg, *The Battle of Maldon AD 991* (Manchester, 1981), pp. 18-31.

was a cartulary chronicle and, as a result, 'not one piece of historiography.'[51] The author is unknown, but his motive was to synthesise material over five centuries.[52] Janet Fairweather believes this material was predominantly local in origin.[53] Jennifer Paxton described the *Liber Eliensis* as part of a Fenland textual community in eastern England.[54] The Ely text described the renewed Viking threat to eastern England before the events of Maldon in 991. These incursions had seen towns in East Anglia raided. It should also be noted that during this period, the ealdorman of East Anglia was infirm. This left Byrhtnoth as the most prominent nobleman in the area. The reaction against the threat saw the description of all the chief men in the region binding themselves to Byrhtnoth against the Viking incursion.[55] The entry continued by describing Byrhtnoth's journey to Maldon; he originally travelled to Ramsey, asking for provisions and lodging. Byrhtnoth was alleged to have moved on to Ely, as the abbey of Ramsey could only support him and seven other soldiers. In prosaic language, Byrhtnoth stated he would not dine without his men as he would not fight without them.[56]

When he arrived at Ely, Byrhtnoth received hospitality suitable for a king.[57] The ealdorman granted the abbey several estates, thirty mancuses of gold and twenty pounds of silver, in agreement that his body was to be interred at the abbey if he was slain at Maldon.[58] Byrhtnoth's endowment to Ely was in keeping with his contemporaries and similar donations can be evidenced in his father-in-law's will.[59] However, the events described leading to the Battle of Maldon raise some interesting issues.

Byrhtnoth's lands in Essex were in the far north of the region, in close proximity to Colchester. However, Maldon was situated further to the south, where, although the ealdormen of Essex are known to have held land, it was certainly less than in the north.[60] The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* informs us that, before the defeat of Byrhtnoth, the Vikings had raided Folkestone and Sandwich in Kent as

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[51] J. Fairweather, 'Introduction', ed. J. Fairweather, *Liber Eliensis: A History of the Isle of Ely from the Seventh to the Twelfth* (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. xiii-xxiii, at p. xiv.

[52] *Idem.*

[53] *Idem.*

[54] J. Paxton, 'Textual Communities in the English Fenlands: A lay Audience for Monastic Chronicles?', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 26 (2004), pp. 123-37, at p. 123.

[55] *Liber Eliensis*, Book II, Chapter 62, pp. 133-6, at p. 134. '*Brithnodo autem duci omnes provinciarum principes, quasi invincibili patrono pro magna ipsius probitate et fide sese fideliter alligabant, ut eius presidio contra inimicam gentem securius se defenderent.*'

[56] *Ibid.*, p. 135. Byrhtnoth's quote was '*Sciat dominus abbas, quod solus sine istis nolo prandere, quia solus sine illis nequeo pugnare*'.

[57] *Idem.* '*Receptus ergo cum omnibus suis regali hospitalitate procurator*'.

[58] *Idem.* '*Exponens negotium ad quod ibat aliaque maneria sub hac conditione concessit, scilicet Fuulburne, Theveresham, Impetune, Pampewrðe, Crochestune, et Fineberge, Tripelaue, Herduuic, et Summeresham cum appendiciiis eius, et super hec triginta mancas auri, xx libras argenti, ut, si forte in bello occumberet, corpus illius huc allatum humarent.*'

[59] 'The Will of Ælfgar', pp. 6-9. Ælfgar's will included gifts to the church of Stoke-by-Nayland and also made provisions for Saint Mary's foundation at Barking.

[60] See the wills from Byrhtnoth's ealdormanic family; 'The Will of Ælfgar', pp. 6-9; 'The Will of Ælfflæd', pp. 38-43; and 'The Will of Æthelflæd', *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, ed. D. Whitelock (Cambridge, 1930), pp. 34-7.

well as Ipswich in Suffolk.[61] In all three cases, there was no evidence of an ealdorman performing his ealdormanic duties of mustering the defence. Furthermore, towns in the late-tenth and eleventh century were far more related to the power of kings than aristocrats.[62] Yet, using Skre's hypothesis, Maldon may have developed to become a central place in Essex, especially as it was in an ideal location for trade.[63] As a consequence, if Byrhtnoth had not defended the town, he may have been seen as ineffective in the Essex region. Nevertheless, for evidence of an East Saxon cultural province, and others in England, *The Battle of Maldon* poem is a more appropriate source than the *Liber Eliensis.*

The Battle of Maldon, composed in Old English by an anonymous author shortly after the events in question, is an incomplete account of the battle and there are still issues concerning the intended purpose, audience, and date of its composition.[64] Despite these shortcomings Donald Scragg urged that the source should be viewed as a reliable account on the events of Maldon.[65] The poem raises the subject of regional distinctiveness in England. Although it described Byrhtnoth as Æthelred's earl, it also highlighted various other local identities.[66] For example, the leaders of the army at the battle are described as the foremost men of the East Saxons rather than as English commanders.[67] In addition, after Byrhtnoth falls, we are told of speeches by members of his household. Among these men were Ælfwine, who was from a great kin among the Mercians and he would not allow thegns to reproach him in that land for leaving the army now that his leader, lord and kinsman was dead.[68] This continued with Leofsunu, Byrhtwold and Dunnere, all of whom fail to mention the king or the realm, but just mention their lord.[69] Finally, there was a hostage of the Vikings, Æscferth, who was described as a man from a bold Northumbrian kin.[70] Throughout the poem the author revealed the different cultures within the realm in the late-tenth century. He acknowledged three former regional kingdoms of the Northumbrians, Mercians, and East Saxons in addition to an English identity. Otherwise, the author could have described these men as English lords from powerful English families. These men were at the battle through ties of lordship to Byrhtnoth rather than national defence through connection to Æthelred. The case for the regional identity in

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[61] *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Revised Translation*, ed. D. Whitelock with D. C. Douglas and S. I. Tucker (London, 1961), 991 A, p. 82.

[62] Skre, 'Centrality and Places', p. 228.

[63] *Ibid.*, p. 229.

[64] D. Scragg, 'The Battle of Maldon', in D. Scragg (ed.), *The Battle of Maldon AD 991* (Manchester, 1981), pp. 16-36, at p. 16.

[65] *Ibid.*, pp. 17 and 34.

[66] *The Battle of Maldon*, p. 26. '*Æþelredes eorl*'.

[67] *Ibid.*, p. 20. '*Eastseaxena ord*'.

[68] *Ibid.*, p. 26. '*þæt ic wæs on Myrcon miccles cynnes*' and '*Ne sceolon me on þære þeode þegenas ætwitan, þæt ic of ðisse fyrde feran wille,eard gesecan, nu min ealdor ligeð, forheawen æt hilde...he wæs æg[ð]er min mæg and min hlaford*'.

[69] *Idem.*

[70] *Ibid.*, p. 28. '*he wæs on Norðhymbron heardes cynnes*'.

Essex becomes clearer when we make comparisons to its North Sea equivalents. Therefore an examination of eastern Normandy will now be presented.

THE VEXIN AND ARQUES

Eastern Normandy represents the Normans' territorial heartland and is often referred to as Upper Normandy. This region represented the former Neustrian march under the influence of Charles the Simple in the early-tenth century and acted as a buffer against Breton incursion.[71] The far reach of the eastern border of Upper Normandy was Eu, where Rollo had been defeated while raiding in the early-tenth century.[72] The northern border is the coast which is connected to the Channel and the North Sea. The patrimonial lands of the tenth-century dukes of Normandy centred on the River Seine. The southern border was adjacent to the hotly-contested region of the Vexin between the Normans and the French king (see fig. 1).

The Vexin represented a contact zone in Upper Normandy. In a frontier region, families held a greater amount of independence. In 911, the River Epte was a boundary between the Norman dukes and the French king.[73] It bisected an old *pays* called the Vexin, and the diocesan boundaries of bishoprics and archbishoprics did not match the areas of influence.[74] An excellent instance of these overlapping interests can be seen in the account of the Crispin family by Milo Crispin.

Milo Crispin, a monk from Le Bec, wrote during the twelfth century about the Crispin family and the Holy Virgin's appearance to William Crispin.[75] William was the son of Gilbert Crispin, castellan of Tillières in the Eure region, and he would later become a famous warrior in Normandy and France. William Crispin's brother Gilbert would inherit Tillières castle from their father; however, William would be granted the office of vicomte in the Vexin and the castle of Neaufles from Duke William the Bastard.[76] Milo described that William Crispin made his home in the region and placed his family and garrison there also to prevent French incursions.[77] William Crispin married Eve who was from a noble family which was French in origin.[78] Ultimately, William Crispin was ambushed when returning to his castle from Le Bec by French forces; the account continues that he survived

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[71] S. Deck, 'Le Comté d'Eu sous Des Ducs', *Annales de Normandie* 4 (1954), pp. 99-116, at p. 99.

[72] D. Bates, *Normandy before 1066* (Harlow, 1982), p. 10.

[73] J. Green, 'Lords of the Norman Vexin', in J. Gillingham and J. Holt (eds.), *War and Government in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of J. Prestwich* (Woodbridge, 1984), pp. 47-61, at p. 47.

[74] *Ibid.*, p. 48.

[75] Milo Crispin, *Miraculum Quo B. Maria subvenit Guillelmo Crispino seniori; ubi de nobili Crispinorum genere agitur*, ed. J. Migne, *Patrologica Latina* 150, cols. 735-44.

[76] *Ibid.*, col. 737. '*donans illi castrum ipsum et Vilcasini vicecomitatum jure haereditario custodiendum*'.

[77] *Idem.* '*At ille ibi mansionem sibi constituit, familiam et milites in loco posuit contra irruptiones Francorum*'.

[78] *Ibid.*, col. 741. '*Haec Eva de gente Francorum, claris natalibus progenita*'.

after calling on the protection of the Holy Virgin.[79] From Milo's account it can be argued that lords were aware of culturally symbolic locations within a cultural province. However, it is important to state that those who occupied areas of overlapping influences preferred to create affiliations on both sides. This is likely to be the reason why William Crispin married a French noblewoman. This marriage would have allowed him to participate in two cultural identities that would have been recognised in his territory. This was why Judith Green theorised that the Norman dukes were unable to rely on the Vexin lords in the eleventh century.[80]

The significance of castles being used by the aristocracy as a method for asserting their dominance can be seen in the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*. When discussing Duke William's minority, William of Jumièges complains of the Norman lords' sudden construction of castles.[81] It is plausible that the lamenting of such constructions was based on the fear that regional lordships were strengthening as new fortifications exerted greater authority over the landscape. In this next example, a castle features heavily as the central location of rebellion against the duke.

Count William of Arques was hostile to William the Bastard's rise to power and William of Poitiers recorded the count's rebellion.[82] William of Poitiers, from 1050, spent his life in Normandy and was a chaplain of William the Bastard.[83] Originally, William of Poitiers trained as a knight and, as a consequence, fought in wars. This makes his work a valuable resource for studying military actions in Normandy as he had first-hand experience in conflict.[84] Marjorie Chibnall reasoned that William of Poitiers relied on the accounts of participants of the duke's campaigns before the Battle of Hastings.[85] In addition to this, he was an admirer of the duke for his 'speed, his prudence and, above all, his careful planning.'[86] Therefore, his record of the rebellion by Count William of Arques provides a ducal interpretation of the conflict, but reveals much in regards to the power of regional lordship in eastern Normandy. The count would succumb to defeat in his endeavour, but it is the application of his cultural influence that made this rebellion possible and a genuine threat. The county of Arques was positioned on the far eastern border of Normandy and, from this region, the

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[79] *Ibid.*, col. 742. '*Beatam Domini Matrem inclamitans, voce magna: o Sancta Maria Becci, adjuva me, sancta Maria Becci, adjuva me.*'
[80] Green, 'Lords of the Norman Vexin', p. 61.
[81] William of Jumièges, *The Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, ed. E. van Houts (Oxford, 1992), Book 7, Chapter 1 (1-4), p. 92. '*Sub cuius ineunte etate Normannorum plurimi ab eius fidelitate aberantes plura per loca erectis aggeribus, tutissimas sibi construxere munitiones.*'
[82] William of Poitiers, *Gesta Guillelmi: The Deeds of William*, eds. R. Davies and M. Chibnall (Oxford, 1998), p. 34. '*Is ab ineunte pueri principatu infidus ei et aduersus, quanquam fidelitatem iuratus et obsequium, hostilia agitabat, modo temeritate non latente resistens, clandestinis interdum dolis.*'
[83] M. Chibnall, 'Introduction', ed. M. Chibnall, *Gesta Guillelmi: The Deeds of William* (Oxford, 1998), pp. xv-xlvi, at pp. xvi and xix.
[84] *Ibid.*, p. xv.
[85] *Ibid.*, p. xxxi.
[86] *Ibid.*, p. xxiii.

count was able to gather support for his rebellion.[87] William of Arques attempted to not only deny access to his castle in Arques, but also he tried to prevent entry to the land east of the Seine to those west of the river.[88] William of Poitiers's description continued with the Duke of Normandy seizing the castle of Arques; nevertheless, the duke's men surrendered it quickly back into the count's authority.[89] Despite an attempt by the French king to provide aid, Count William relinquished the castle to Duke William following the second siege.[90]

The case of Arques raises many additional points. Firstly, and most importantly, it demonstrated the authority of regional lordship. The count of Arques was capable of exploiting his stature across the Seine by inspiring rebellion in the area, as was explored above with Dinan in Brittany on *The Bayeux Tapestry*.[91] This was because the count, like Byrhtnoth, was the central authority for the territories' inhabitants. Secondly, the castle of Arques was the central hub of the rebellion. It was the key objective for both Williams to hold and its surrender concluded the count's unsuccessful uprising. Therefore, the incident emphasises that the aristocratic residences were culturally symbolic of regional lordship. Thirdly, we see evidence of contact zones allowing interaction and cooperation. Being on the periphery of Normandy, the count of Arques received aid from powerful contacts – in this case, the king of France.[92] Finally, and perhaps the most intriguingly, was the fact that, with the conclusion of the turmoil, Duke William allowed the count to keep his patrimony, but removed his title.[93] This suggests that it was problematic for the duke to remove William of Arques entirely from the region, signifying that the central authority in Normandy had to engage with the local politics. Therefore, this contributes to the case that administrative titles were based on regional cultures and it was difficult to remove established lords in favour of more cooperative men from outside the cultural province. This had been experienced in England, where Tostig was ousted

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[87] William of Poitiers, *Gesta Guillelmi: The Deeds of William*, Book I, Chapter 23, p. 34. '*Motus dissensionum aliorumque superius commemoratione aliquanta digestorum malorum, nonnullos ipse, caput principale, concitauit, plerosque exemplo, consilio, fauore et auxilio incitauit, auxit, confirmauit*'

[88] Idem. '*Multa et inquieta, longique temporis, eius molimina fuere, pro sua et contra domini sui magnitudinem, cuius accessum non modo ab Arcensi castro, uerum etiam ab ei propinqua Normanniae parte, quae citra flumen Sequanam sita est, arcere saepenumero surrexit.*'

[89] Ibid., I, 24, p. 34. '*Ob haec et alia tot eius et tanta ausa, dux, uti res monuit, suspiciens plura et maiora ausurum, receptaculi, quo plurimum confidebat, editius firmamentum occupauit, custodiam immittens, in nullo amplius tamen ius eius imminuens. Nempe eas latebras, id munimentum initae elationis atque dementiae, ipse primus fundauit et quam operosissime extruxit in praealti montis Arcarum cacumine. Ceterum malefidi custodes non multo post castri potestatem conditori reddunt, munerum pollicitatione et impensius imminente uaria sollicitatione fatigati subactique.*'

[90] William of Poitiers, *Gesta Guillelmi*, I, 26, p. 38. '*Audiens uero rex Henricus inclusum esse cuius uesaniae fautor erat atque consulator, auxilium ferre festinat*'. For William's eventual surrender see; p. 40. '*Cernit tandem angustiarum oculo Papiae partus rapiendi contra dominum suum principatus cupidinem malesuadam esse*'.

[91] *The Bayeux Tapestry*, plates 23-24.

[92] William of Poitiers, *Gesta Guillelmi*, I, 26, p. 38.

[93] Ibid., I, 28, p. 42. '*Patriam ei concessit*'. Also see; p. 42, no. 1. It is important to note that in Orderic's interpolations he states the count was exiled and flees to Boulogne. Chibnall believes that William of Poitiers, although hesitant to record the duke's crueller side, was telling the truth in that William of Arques would have lived off his lands. For Orderic's interpolation see; William of Jumièges, *The Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, Book 7, Chapter 4 (7), pp. 102-05.

as earl by the regional aristocracy of Northumbria in favour of the local lord Morcar.[94] Similar experiences can be exhibited in western Flanders, which was east of Normandy and, like the duchy, shared a border with the county of Ponthieu. It is the county of Guines where this paper's next case study lies.

GUINES

The county of Guines was sandwiched between two regions under the authority of the count of Boulogne in western Flanders. Guines shared its northern border with Boulonaisse land, also known as the viscounty of Merk, and its western boundary was shared with the traditional county of Boulogne land holdings. To the south, Guines had a border with the castellany of Saint-Omer and, in the north west of the county, was Guines' coastline (see fig. 1). Guines was under the remit of the counts of Flanders.[95] Leah Shopkow highlighted that the county of Guines was not created by the Flemish and, therefore, was often independent as it operated within a 'peripheral' zone.[96] The evidence of this sense of otherness from the Flemish is exemplified in the origin story at the start of a chronicle. However, the discussion will analyse the origin story of the Guines chronicle first.

Lambert of Ardres wrote about aristocratic residences and intimated their symbolism to their respective regions. He wrote *The History of the Counts of Guines and Lords of Ardres* in the late-twelfth and early-thirteenth centuries.[97] The narrative of the work ends in 1203 and Shopkow has hypothesised that Lambert was possibly writing up to 1206.[98] By authoring the chronicle, Lambert intended to gain the good graces of the counts of Guines as his patron was its count, Arnold II.[99] The book, in fact, is divided into three parts; the first is Lambert's lineage of the counts of Guines; the second was by a different author named Walter of Le Clud, who wrote on the lords of Ardres; and the third and final part was a compilation of the two histories by Lambert. Despite there being another author, the compilation of the works is Lambert's doing.[100] Lambert defended the county's independence from rival claims of sovereignty. The rival claim emanated from the monks of Saint-Bertin, who he believed would assert that the counts of Guines held the land in fief from the monks. Lambert used a character called Siegfried and linked him to the principal fortress of Guines. According to the chronicle, Siegfried wanted to expand his fortress with another earthwork.

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[94] F. Barlow, *The Godwins: The Rise and Fall of a Noble Dynasty* (London, 2002), p. 122.
[95] L. Shopkow, 'Introduction', ed. L. Shopkow, *The History of the Counts of Guines and Lords of Ardres* (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 1-39, at p. 27.
[96] *Idem.*
[97] *Ibid.*, p. 2.
[98] *Ibid.*, p. 3.
[99] *Ibid.*, p. 4.
[100] *Idem.*

However, due to a lack of space, he exchanged property with the steward of the area near his keep for five shillings a year.[101] François-Louis Ganshof explored the dispute and noted the donation to Saint-Bertin, which later monks had presumed to be the whole county, but consisted only of the town of Arques.[102] However, it is clear that Lambert, when stressing the ties between the counts of Guines and the principal fortress of the region, was maintaining a commonly held belief of where power resided within the locality. He knew that the people within Guines would understand the regional ruler as residing in this residence. Therefore, by establishing the counts were there lawfully and free from services to an external authority, Lambert makes the lords of Guines the unquestioned leaders within the cultural boundaries. Lambert informed the reader that the county of Guines occupied the land between the River Aa in the east, the springs of Nielles to the west and the River Hem to the south, and in the north was dominated by a large marsh.[103] In addition to this, the land was hilly, covered with little woods and thickets. The area also held marshlands and pasturelands fertile for sheep flocks and was called Bredenarde.[104] These geographical features fit into Phythian-Adams's assertions on how a cultural province can be recognised.[105] The descriptions by Lambert give the reader an impression of an inland island surrounded by rivers and marsh. Lambert claimed that Siegfried was from Denmark and was renowned because he was second in status after the king. He was a nephew to the king's advisor too.[106] Lambert maintained that, before Siegfried arrived in Guines, there was a Count Walbert and the land had been usurped by Arnold of Flanders.[107] Thus, Siegfried gathered his retinue and made for Guines, which was wooded, uncultivated and inhabited by few residents at the time.[108] From there, Siegfried proceeded to fortify

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[101] 'Lamberti Ardensis historia comitum Ghisnensium', ed. J. Heller, in Monumenta Germaniae Historica Scriptores XXIV (Hanover, 1879), pp. 550-602, Chapter 4, p. 565. 'Sed cum postea Ghisnensis nobilitatis et generis auctor Sifridus Ghisnensis oppidi munitionem sive dunionem fossato duplici circumcingere voluisset, nec ei ad perficiendum in propria terra locus sufficeret, de tota terra censuali iuxta dunionem tunc existenti villico concambium dedit, et sic demum fossatum perfecit. Et sic de terra illa censuali que fere octoginta iugera sive geometricalium perticarum mensuras continet, singulis annis unum fiertonem vel quinque solidos iam dictis reddidit cenobitis.'

[102] F.L. Ganshof, 'Saint-Bertin et les Origines du Comté de Guines', Revue belge de philolgie et d'historie 10 (1931), pp. 541-56. Ganshof highlighted that between the ninth and twelfth centuries the abbey of Saint Bertin held claims over the town of Arques. Later in 1383 Jean d'Ypres would escalate this claim to the whole county! Ganshof concludes that there was a misunderstanding of the term comitatus, which between the ninth and twelfth centuries could be the geographical unit and the authority of a count. This Arques was a different settlement from the previously discussed county of Arques.

[103] 'Lamberti Ardensis historia comitum Ghisnensium', Chapter 13, p. 568. 'Fuit enim diebus illis locus quidam pascuus, amplus admodum et latus, inter flumen quod dicitur Vonna ab orientali plaga et Neleios vel Nileios fontes ab occidentali, et inter flumen quod a re veris, id est amenitatis effectu, vel a rei vero Reveria nuncupatur a meridie usque in oppositam marisci partem spaciosi ad aquilonem longe lateque diffusus et extensus'.

[104] Idem. 'Hec siquidem terra a latitudine pasture vulgo Bredenarda dicta est'.

[105] Phythian-Adams, 'Introduction', p. 14.

[106] 'Lamberti Ardensis historia comitum Ghisnensium', Chapter 7, p. 566. 'ducens originem, nomine Sifridus, qui eo quod regi Dachorum plurimis servivit annis agnominatus est Dachus, vir quidem in bellicis apparatibus admodum strenuus et per totam Dachiam, utpote nepos et cognatus germanus regis et colateralis et a rege secundus, famosissimus extitit et nominatissimus.'

[107] Idem. 'Cum diutino diucius sustinuisset et hinc illinc in auribus, fame rutilante penna et verissima scripti genealogici assertione, de predecessore suo, comite videlicet Walberto, et filio eius Bertino necnon et de fratre eiusdem Walberti Pharone et Phara sorore similiter eorum rei percepisset eventum, et Flandrie comitem Arnoldum Magnum, sicuti et predecessores suos, Ghisnensis terre comitatum…usurpasse'.

[108] Ibid., p. 567. 'licet adhuc silvestrem et incultam et paucis habitatoribus habitatam'.

the keep with a motte and double earthwork which, apparently, was achieved without consulting Count Arnold of Flanders.[109] Lambert reports, however, that Siegfried does homage to the count later and the pair became good friends.[110]

The authenticity of the origin story has been examined. It has been recognised that, if Siegfried had existed, it was likely that he was a Viking war leader.[111] Also, it has been postulated that Guines, similarly to Normandy, was granted to the Viking leader as a way of protection against future raids.[112] The origin story has another function, too; it represents the connection of the land and principal fortress of Guines to the count of the territory. Lambert, as stated earlier, described the land as not well-developed, with very few people established in the area.[113] The description of a sparsely populated area maybe figurative; nevertheless, he links the creation of this territory directly to the lords of Guines. Furthermore, he establishes an identity outside the remit of the Flemish counts by underlining the county's creation not being achieved by the Flemish.

The west of Flanders also had another powerful regional lord in the counts of Boulogne, who acted very independently, particularly if one looks at Boulogne's foreign diplomacy compared to the Flemish policy. On many occasions, the counts of Boulogne were backing a rival party of the allies of Flanders.[114] Lambert was keen to address the possible issue of Boulogne claiming an authority over the Guines county. Lambert outlined that there were no chronicles of Flanders or Boulogne, nor were there any stories from elders stating that Erniculus of Boulogne divided his patrimony between his three sons, one of whom received Guines.[115] This creates a cultural province comparable to the East Saxons. None of the titles represented a jurisdiction created by either the West Saxon kings or the Flemish counts. The jurisdiction represented a previously understood area of authority for the East Saxons and the people of Guines. Furthermore, all cultures have an identity that is linked to royal power outside of the contemporary monarchs. In the case of Guines, the stress has been placed on leaders connected, through Siegfried, to the Danish royal house, whereas the Anglo-Saxon ealdormanries represented a previously understood political entity for the region. The final

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[109] *Ibid.*, Chapter 8, p. 567. '*inconsulto Flandrie comite*'.

[110] *Ibid.*, Chapter 10, p. 567. '*Facti sunt itaque sub illa die amici, et Sifridus Flandrensium principi super Ghisnnensis terre dominio debita cum reverentia primus prestitit hominum*'.

[111] Shopkow, 'Introduction', p. 26.

[112] *Idem.*

[113] '*Lamberti Ardensis historia comitum Ghisnensium*', Chapter 7, p. 567.

[114] H. Tanner, *Family Friends and Allies: Boulogne and Politics in Northern France and England, c. 879-1160* (Leiden, 2004), p. 117. Eustace of Boulogne between 1050 and 1056 supported King Edward of England and maintained alliances with his southern border and King Henry I. In contrast, Baldwin V maintained alliances with the dukes of Normandy and harboured the exiled family of Earl Godwine. Baldwin would also campaign against Henry I.

[115] '*Lamberti Ardensis historia comitum Ghisnensium*', Chapter 15, p. 569. '*Ghisnensium enim terra, circumspectis, lectis et relectis omnibus tam Flandrie quam Bolonie chronicis, si qua sunt, autenticis, auditis etiam et intellectis plurimorum narrationibus antiquorum et fabulis, nunquam et nusquam Boloniensis terre portio vel appendicium invenitur aut auditur, sed Flandrensis dignitatis ditioni post comitem Walbertum totaliter inclinata et subiecta.*'

case study moves north into the region of Trøndelag in central Norway, a predominantly pagan realm.

TRØNDELAG

Norway, and Scandinavia as a whole, has often been viewed as outside of Europe in medieval historiography. However, the Norwegian historian Dagfinn Skre has asserted that it is time to bring it into the discussion as he believed that, across the North Sea, many cultural traits were shared, including ties within the aristocracy, fragility of kingdoms and rivalry of honour.[116] Western Norway has been considered to be the origin of supra-regional power in Norway in the ninth and tenth centuries. As a political unit, Norway was unstable due to 'alternating domination and rival elites.'[117] Norway had one of the earliest known provincial laws in the law of Gulathing and would see Trøndelag and eastern Norway submit to the western kings in the tenth and eleventh centuries respectively.[118]

The earls of Lade ruled the Trøndelag in central Norway and the district had Trondheim (also known as Niðaros) as its principal settlement. The region's eastern border was marked by the Keel mountain range, which separated it from the Swedish kingdom. Trøndelag's southern boundary incorporated several dales, including the Gaular Dale, and was closed off by the Totharfjord and a mountain formation extending from the main body of the Keel. The district had a North Sea coastline to the west and this could be accessed through the Trondheimfjord, which was above the settlement of Trondheim. Finally, the northern border narrowed with the Keel and included the Naumu Dale (see fig. 1).[119]

By contrast to the other regions assessed, the evidence for central Norway is not derived from monastic chronicles, and instead the material is gathered from sagas. The most prominent saga used is *Heimskringla* believed to be authored by Snorri Sturluson, therefore making it a thirteenth-century composition.[120] The work follows an oral tradition and Snorri cites that his sources were known to be 'well-informed men'.[121] Snorri's history is a conscious document meaning that he, like

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[116] D. Skre, 'The Social Context of Settlement in Norway in the First Millennium AD', *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 34 (2001), pp. 1-12, at p. 2.
[117] F. Iversen, 'The Beauty of *Bona Regalia* and the Growth of Supra-Regional Powers in Scandinavia', in S. Sigmundsson (ed.), *Viking Settlements and Viking Society: Papers from the Proceedings of the Sixteenth Viking Congress, Reykjavík and Reykholt, 16-23 August 2009* (Iceland, 2011), pp. 225-44, at p. 238.
[118] *Idem.*
[119] L. Hollander, 'Introduction', ed. L. Hollander, *Heimskringla: History of the Kings of Norway* (Austin, 1964), pp. ix-xxvii, at p. xxvii.
[120] *Ibid.*, p. xxiv.
[121] Snorri, *Heimskringla*, *Preface*, p. 3.

other medieval historians, created an account of his own understanding of the past for a contemporary audience. [122] Therefore Snorri was not writing at the time and as a saga writer it is difficult to extract the author's assessment of the events. [123] Furthermore, it is believed that Snorri had used other compositions, for example *Ágrip Af Nóregskonungsögum* for the *Saga of Harald Fairhair*.[124] In his publication assessing Snorri's work and its insights on society, Sverre Bagge identified that Snorri was a medieval historian who applied source criticism to his work. Furthermore, Bagge believed that there is no certainty that Snorri had anticipated 'modern principles of source criticism.' [125] However Snorri's work has value as a historical source and it is important to note that Snorri himself had been a powerful chieftain in Iceland and had travelled to Norway where his uncle, Earl Skúli, was regent and, while in Norway, he visited the regions of Trøndelag.[126] Therefore, Snorri, like Orderic Vitalis in Normandy, had an insight into the mechanics of earldoms and knowledge of the land in central Norway.[127] The earls had their own origin myths that not only made them distinctive from Christian Europe, but also similar in the sense that these myths tied them to the land they ruled. There were two types of myth. The first was simply rulership through conquest by a dynasty. The second, and more insightful when understanding the concept of territory in Norway, described the gestation of peoples through relationships between gods and land. This can be called 'sacral kinship.'[128]

Adam of Bremen's perception of Norway placed it as the last country within the circle of the world and far away from the centre of Jerusalem.[129] The earls of Lade were described by Adam as having descended from a race of giants.[130] Gro Steinsland assessed the origin myths of pagan Norwegian rulers and examined their longevity. She aptly postulated that the importance of land was crucial in these myths. Steinsland stated that the ruling elite within Viking society all had exceptional origins and, as a result, had exceptional deaths too.[131] These myths can be seen for an earl and his territory.

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[122] D. Whaley, 'A Useful Past: Historical Writing in Medieval Iceland', in M. Ross (ed.), *Old Icelandic Literature and Society* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 161-202, at p. 165.

[123] S. Bagge, *Society and Politics in Snorri Sturluson's Heimskringla* (Berkeley, 1991), p. 61.

[124] Hollander, 'Introduction', p. xviii.

[125] Bagge, *Society and Politics in Snorri Sturluson's Heimskringla*, p. 26.

[126] Hollander, 'Introduction', pp. xi-xiv.

[127] Bagge, *Society and Politics in Snorri Sturluson's Heimskringla*, p. 13.

[128] G. Steinsland, 'Origin Myths and Rulership. From the Viking Age Ruler to the Ruler of Medieval Historiography: Continuity, Transformations and Innovations', in G. Steinsland, J. Sigurðsson, J. Rekdal and I. Beuermann (eds.), *Ideology and Power in the Viking Age and Middle Ages: Scandinavia, Iceland, Ireland, Orkney and the Faroes* (Turnhout, 2011), pp. 15-67, at p. 16.

[129] L. Sondergaard, 'At the Edge of the World: Early Medieval Ideas of Nordic Countries', in L. Bisgaard, C. Jensen, K. Jensen and J. Lind (eds.), *Medieval Spirituality in Scandinavia: A Collection of Essays in Honour of Tore Nyberg* (Odense, 2001), pp. 51-71, at p. 58.

[130] *Adami Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum ex recensione Lappenbergii. In usum scholarum ex monumentis Germaniae historicis recusa*, ed. altera, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, Scriptores XVII (Hannover, 1876), Book 2, Chapter 22, p. 57. '*Haccon iste crudelissimus, ex genere Inguar et giganteo sanguine descendens, primus inter Nordmannos regnum arripuit, cum antea ducibus regerentur.*'

[131] Steinsland, 'Origin Myths and Rulership', p. 17.

According to the earl of Lade origin myth, Odin and Skadi had engendered him in the earl's land of Trøndelag. Steinsland argued that the 'metaphor of the land as the ruler's bride shows that power was understood to refer to territory rather than to people.'[132] So, the earls of Lade were the rulers of land rather than the people. The land is described metaphorically as a wild woman from Utgard who needs to be 'conquered and tamed through sexuality.'[133] The aristocrats of the Christian territories discussed did not have origin myths as vivid or elaborate as the Lade earls. This was predominantly due to Christianity, in which the king was anointed ruler by God.[134] However, the concept of ruling the land first was shared. Previously, it has been discussed that the counts of Guines, when they first arrived on their land, ruled over an area that was sparsely populated.[135] It can be asked, what is the use of ruling where no one was settled? However, if we understand, in light of the Trøndelag ethos, the ideology was associated with rulership of the physical landscape; therefore, the cultural identity of the Medieval aristocrat was intrinsically linked to the topography. This connection to the land can also be viewed in the aristocratic residences. These buildings held similar characteristics to the other North Sea lords previously discussed.

In addition to origin myths, the sagas provide tangible evidence of existing cultural provinces within Norway. The *Saga of Harald Greycloak* provides insight into the territory of the earls of Lade. The saga outlined the earls' struggles with the kings of Norway, who were situated in western Norway. Earl Haakon Sigurdsson of Lade ascended to the earldom after his father, Sigurd Haakonsson, was killed by King Harald of Norway east of the Trondheimfjord in *ca. 963*.[136] Haakon was selected by the people of the 'Trondheim shires' as they rushed to arms in response to the murder of Sigurd.[137] Haakon was able to keep the region within his remit and deny revenues to the king who, during this period, dwelled within Horthaland and Rogaland in west Norway and south west Norway respectively. A peace between the two sides was established, although we are informed that each faction remained wary of the other.[138] Following the easement of conflict, Haakon allied himself with the Uppland kings, Tryggvi Óláfsson of the Viken, Guthröth Bjarnarson of the Vestfold and Guthbrand of the Dales in Heithmork. These three men ruled to the south of the earl and to the east of the king of Norway.[139] The earls of Lade assist in reinforcing the concept of cultural provinces in the Christian territories. Norway at this point as a kingdom is considered less developed administratively and, as seen in the sagas, did not as yet portray an encompassing power.[140] Therefore, we see cultural provinces binding themselves to their principal lords rather

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[132] *Ibid.*, p. 32.
[133] *Idem.*
[134] *Idem.* For the origin myth of the earls of Lade see; Snorri, *Heimskringla, Saga of Ynglings*, pp. 12-13.
[135] '*Lamberti Ardensis historia comitum Ghisnensium*', Chapter 7, p. 566.
[136] Snorri, *Heimskringla, Saga of Harald of Greycloak*, Chapter 6, p. 134.
[137] *Idem.*
[138] *Ibid.*, p. 136.
[139] *Ibid.*, Chapter 9, p. 137.
[140] Iversen, 'The Beauty of *Bona Regalia*', p. 238.

than the monarch for protection. The cultural province in the earldom of Trøndelag is comparable when we look back at the evidence for the ealdormanry of Essex. In both cases, the identity of the province is tied to a specific family ruling the region, thus suggesting the source of lordship was more through personal connection than ownership of an office.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to establish that the aristocracy of the North Sea world ruled through lordship of regional territory rather than through a royal office or title. Such lordships were centred within cultural provinces that had an inherent connection with the land through distinctive geographical features such as rivers. The lords of the North Sea sought to create relationships with the land, so that they were part of the regional identity. Aristocrats, as shown with Guines and Trøndelag, would attempt to promote an origin story that saw their families bound to the land itself.[141] In addition, a lord would emphasise his lordship by inhabiting a principal residence that was a central place within the region. The proposition that this period saw strong central authorities rule across an administratively defined realm would appear too simplistic.[142] It would suggest that the aristocrats did not interact with the social identities within their territory, but rather conformed to a national ethnicity. Administrative offices such as ealdorman and count did not solely represent a central organisation; but also, they reflected cultural provinces. These were defined from dominant geographical features such as the River Stour between the East Saxons and the East Anglians.[143] These boundaries allowed the region to distinguish who was part of the social identity. The lords of the North Sea were acutely aware of this and, as has been shown, utilised it in their lordship. However, we should caution against simple boundary drawing based on geography, particularly as this is a twentieth-century phenomena and not a reality of the tenth and eleventh centuries. In fact, these features in the landscape represented a zone of interaction where two identities would meet, network and form a new culture, as exhibited in the Vexin region with the account of William Crispin.[144] These peripheral cultures saw very little influence from a central authority and were contested between rivals such as the duke of Normandy and king of France.[145]

The North Sea's cultural provinces have shown that a central place within a locality would be situated where locations had connotations with power, as Colchester had with the Romans.[146] Aristocrats would seek to build their residences in these locations to take full advantage of this

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[141] *Ibid.*, p. 56 and Steinsland, 'Origin Myths and Rulership', p. 32.
[142] Campbell, 'The United Kingdom of England', p. 31.
[143] Hart, *The Danelaw*, p. 25.
[144] Milo Crispin, 'Milo Crispin, on the Origin of the Crispin Family', p. 88.
[145] Green, 'Lords of the Norman Vexin', p. 47.
[146] B. Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1990), p. 5.

symbolism. The examples of Count William of Arques, Earl Haakon of Lade and William Crispin demonstrate that these dwellings did not only function as a location to exert authority over a landscape, but also acted as staging grounds for war and as emblems of resistance. As a result, the fall of these aristocratic homes represented the failing or failure of regional rulership. However, whether a central place could be changed due to economic factors in the tenth and eleventh centuries remains open to question. Walter Le Clud described Arnold of Ardres moving the aristocratic residence from Selnesse to Ardres; it is possible, in this instance, to say that economic motives conspired to transfer the central place of a region to a location where the lord followed the locality's inhabitants.[147] However, at this point it is difficult to say whether this was the case for the rest of the North Sea.

Ultimately, a further comparative study on the North Sea world in particular will allow for new insights into medieval society (this does not discount the value of other comparative works in other seas such as the Mediterranean or the Baltic). Moreover, the application of this line of research will allow the continued testing that Wickham argued for, though in a context away from the traditional outlook of central Europe. This is particularly crucial because the North Sea, as a network in northern Europe in the tenth and eleventh centuries, is a new line of inquiry. If not for comparative elements, national historiographies would see aristocratic landholding within individual kingdoms and fail to contextualise it amongst foreign contemporaries.

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[147] 'Lamberti Ardensis historia comitum Ghisnensium', Chapter 109, p. 613. '*Ab illo ergo die, magno Selnescensium mansionis loco commolito et contrito, edificiisque apud Ardeam contractis atque delatis, deleta est cum castello memoria etiam Selnescensium, adeo ut ab Ardea etiam ubique predicaretur et nominaretur Ardensium protector et dominus.*'

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