



The transformation of kinship and the family in late Anglo-Saxon England

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The development of the family into a small unit in which descent was traced almost exclusively through the male line is regarded as a major turning point in medieval European history. The early stages of the formation of agnatic kinship have usually been connected to strategies designed to preserve and retain control of patrimonies and castles, arising from the breakdown of public order. In this article it is suggested that the emergence of new kinship values was connected to the investment of aristocratic energy and resources in monastic programmes, and to subtle changes in lay involvement with the rituals associated with death and the salvation of souls.

‘Wulfric re-established it [Burton abbey] for his own sake and the sake of his ancestors and filled it with monks in order that men of that order under their abbot might ever serve God in that place, according to St. Benedict’s teaching’.¹

Testament of Wulfric, founder of Burton abbey, c.1002 x 4

Attitudes towards death and kinship

At the turn of the eleventh century the nobleman Wulfric founded Burton abbey in Staffordshire so that Benedictine monks would pray for the salvation of his own and his ancestors’ souls, but who were these ancestors? Prosopographical studies of confraternity books (lists of names of deceased souls for whom the monks offered special prayers) have been used to suggest that nobles such as Wulfric stood at the centre of extended kindreds, which defined their identity through bilateral descent (descent traced through both male and female kin) and kinship connections with royal and ecclesiastical office holders. At each generation these kin-groupings contracted or expanded depending upon the

¹ *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, ed. D. Whitelock (Cambridge, 1930) [henceforth W.], no. 17 (S 1536), p. 50, ls. 27–30; p. 152.

interplay of politics, royal patronage, marriage alliances and 'fictive' kinship strategies such as fosterage, godparenthood and so on.² As it happens, Wulfric's family or for that matter any other tenth-century English dynasty cannot be mapped in this way because England, in contrast to continental Europe, does not have sufficient number of confraternity books.³ The corpus of Anglo-Saxon wills provides the best available evidence to analyze kinship, but it also encourages a slightly different perspective from the prosopographical studies of European confraternity books. Anglo-Saxon wills have been used, for example, to outline the parameters of kinship, to assess the fortunes of a prominent dynasty and to address other important themes, notably the development of military obligations and property law.⁴ The strong emphasis placed in the wills upon testators' preparations for death and the salvation of their own and their kinsfolks' souls (discussed later in this article) suggests that these texts could be used to look at the processes by which the family developed from a horizontal assembly of kinsmen and kinswomen into a much smaller unit governed by agnatic principles (i.e., descent from a common male ancestor). An initial orientation can be achieved by looking in general terms at what was involved in the European family's transformation.

The transformation of the European family into an agnatic, patrilinear structure between the tenth and early thirteenth centuries can be divided into several stages.⁵ The intermediate stage was marked by the investment of wealth in family monasteries, marriages between cousins and neighbours, and the writing of simple genealogies which traced descent through the male line over several generations. This was followed by the advanced stage: the construction of castles, preservations of patrimonies and the commissioning of complex genealogies which

² K. Schmid, 'Über die Struktur des Adels im früheren Mittelalter', *Jahrbuch für fränkische Landesforschung* 19 (1959), pp. 1–23.

³ J.-L. Lemaître, *Répertoire des documents nécrologiques français* (Paris, 1980); O. Oexle, 'Memoria und Memorialüberlieferung im Mittelalter', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 10 (1976), pp. 72–120; S.D. Keynes, *The Liber Vitae of the New Minster and Hyde Abbey Winchester*, Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile 26 (Copenhagen, 1996) pp. 49–65, at p. 52.

⁴ L. Lancaster, 'Kinship in Anglo-Saxon Society', *British Journal of Sociology* 9 (1958), pp. 230–50, 359–77; J. Crick, 'Women, Posthumous Benefaction, and Family Strategy in Pre-Conquest England', *Journal of British Studies* 38 (1999), pp. 399–422; A. Williams, 'Princes Merciorum gentis: the Family, Career and Connections of Ælfhere, Ealdorman of Mercia, 956–83', *ASE* 10 (1982), pp. 143–72; N.P. Brooks, 'Arms, Status and Warfare in Late-Saxon England', in *idem*, *Communities and Warfare 700–1400* (London, 2000), pp. 138–61; P. Wormald, 'On þa weapnedbealfe: Kingship and Royal Property from Æthelwulf to Edward the Elder', in N.J. Higham and D.H. Hill (eds.), *Edward the Elder, 899–924* (London, 2001), pp. 264–79.

⁵ G. Duby, 'Structures familiales dans la Moyen Age occidentale', in *idem*, *Mâle Moyen Age* (Paris, 1988), pp. 129–38; K. Schmid, 'Zur Problematik von Familie, Sippe und Geschlecht, Haus und Dynastie beim mittelalterlichen Adel. Vortragen zum Thema: Adel und Herrschaft in Mittelalter', in *idem*, *Gebetsgedenken und adliges Selbstverständnis im Mittelalter* (Sigmaringen, 1993), pp. 183–239; P.J. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millenium* (Princeton, NJ, 1994), pp. 48–80.

traced descent from a distant founding male ancestor, sometimes of a relatively low social status. In Francia the intermediate and advanced stages were preceded and abetted by the breakdown of public order, but the latter was not necessarily the root cause of the transformation. This opening stage perhaps began with a subtle reorientation of kinship values during the second half of the tenth century, eventually leading to the intermediate and advanced stages of the family's transformation. In assessing whether such subtle shifts can contribute to the formation of new frameworks of kinship, attention can be turned to a parallel example from outside the European framework. In China, between the late tenth and thirteenth centuries, there was also a transformation in the structure of kinship, but much greater attention has been paid to the role of rituals of death in this process than in studies of the European family's transition. A brief review of these developments in Sung-dynasty China (c.960–1270) provides a reference point.

The transformation of Chinese kinship

After the collapse of the Tang dynasty in the early tenth century the aristocratic family developed from a communal system into a patrilineal lineage structure in which membership was defined agnatically, by descent from a founding male ancestor.⁶ In some respects these changes resembled developments in western Europe, most notably the move away from bilateral models of kinship towards agnatic ancestor-focused kinship. The Sung dynasty regulated the rituals of mourning offered by Buddhist monks and Taoist priests, as a means of binding the aristocracy into a close alliance with successive emperors. The emphasis upon the doctrine that the emperor ruled all-under-heaven through filial devotion underwrote the new importance given to agnatic kinship bonds. These bonds were given additional strength after groups of agnates began to gather at a family tomb in order to make common offerings on feast days, such as the Chinese Feast of All Souls, initially sponsored by Buddhist monks. These practices gave rise to texts such as the *Five Grades of Mourning* written by Cheng-Yi (1033–1107), which allotted a more senior role to the male descendants of a great-grandfather's eldest son over other sub-lines, reaching out as far as third cousins. Ou-Yang Hsiu (1007–72) and Su Hsun (1009–66) independently compiled genealogies in 1055 which traced the descent of their kindreds through several lines to a common great-grandfather. The

⁶ For general discussion of these themes, P.B. Ebrey, 'The Early Stages in the Development of Descent Organization', in P.B. Ebrey and J. Watson (eds.), *Kinship Organization in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley, CA, 1986), pp. 16–63; J.L. Watson and E.S. Rawski (eds.), *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China* (Berkeley, CA, 1988); N. Kutcher, *Mourning in Late Imperial China: Filial Piety and the State* (Cambridge, 1999).

creation of an agnatic ideology of kinship arose initially from a series of simple stages, which was followed over the longer term by the investment of lineages' wealth in ancestral halls and charitable estates and by the commissioning of complex genealogies. New family rituals, associated with death and the salvation of souls, did not create individual patrilinear families or agnatic modes of kinship, but it did introduce new ideas which played a central role in the transition of the structure of the aristocratic family.

In western Europe secular rulers did not regulate rites of mourning in order to strengthen ties between courts and localities, and lay kinsmen and kinswomen played no direct role in the rites of salvation. Bearing in mind these two distinctions, we can consider whether in western Europe new, evolving and subtle shifts in the rituals associated with death and salvation of souls also contributed to the establishment of agnatic, descent-orientated kinship systems. In applying the Chinese model to the transition of the European family, castles and patrimonies can be substituted for ancestral halls and charitable estates. Castles/ancestral halls and patrimonies/charitable estates acted as the interdependent symbols of lineages' authority in the advanced stage of the family's transformation, but changes in rituals associated with death perhaps initially altered the organization of kinship in the opening phase.

Kinship and preparations for death in tenth-century western Europe

In tenth-century western Europe the laity and clergy adopted an inclusive approach towards securing their joint salvation. It was acceptable for laymen to be buried in monastic cemeteries, and in England thegns made preparatory visits to view their burial plots in such cemeteries.⁷ When Benedictine monks prayed for the souls of the dead listed in their confraternity books, they sought not only to care for the welfare of their brothers and sisters who had been members of their own houses and other religious communities, but also to care for the souls of the lay donors and patrons with whom they shared bonds of confraternity. The rule of Saint Basil encouraged monks to care for their own and their brethren's kinsmen, and Caesarius of Arles encouraged his sister to support the relatives of the nuns under her charge.⁸ From that it was only a

⁷ D. Postles, 'Monastic Burials of Non-Patronal Lay Benefactors', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 47 (1998), pp. 620–37, at p. 636; *Liber Eliensis*, ed. E.O. Blake (London, 1962), p. 82; *Chronicon Abbatiae Ramesiensis*, ed. W.D. Macray (Oxford, 1886), pp. 93–5; *The Chronicle of John of Worcester*, eds. R.R. Darlington and P. McGurk, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1995–8), II, pp. 420–1, 432–33.

⁸ H. Mayr-Harting, *The Venerable Bede, the Rule of Saint Benedict and Social Class* (Jarrow Lecture, 1976), pp. 7, 24 n. 20.

small step to care for the souls of benefactors' kin. The 'space of death' was public, communal and often drawn out over a number of decades, bringing together extended families and networks of monasteries, rather than being a private moment between the priest and the individual preparing for his or her death.⁹

In the central Middle Ages ideas on purgatory had established that the prayers of the living merely shortened the trials of the dead, but in the ninth and tenth centuries there was a less clear-cut set of ideas.¹⁰ At times sections of the clergy and laity perhaps believed that the status and the number of those who pleaded with the Heavenly Judge for the salvation of the soul was as important as the weighing up of the individual's sins and acts of charity.¹¹ These beliefs shaped the contents of confraternity books, and from the beginning of the tenth century led to the popularity of feasts for the dead, such as the new Cluniac Feast of All Souls.¹² The confraternity books preserve a record of the monks' duties in maintaining the triangular relationship between laity, clergy and the Heavenly Judge, while wills record more of the secular perspective. There is no European equivalent to the 10,000 funerary inscriptions from Sung-dynasty China,¹³ but late tenth-century Anglo-Saxon testaments, multi-gift wills and post-obit donations provide extensive records of kinship strategies in the context of preparations for death and the salvation of souls.

Five of the twenty-four wills surviving for the period between *c.*950 and *c.*1016 will be discussed here as case studies,¹⁴ along with the prologue from Ealdorman Æthelweard's *Chronicle*. All six nobles (three men, three women) belonged to the uppermost rank of the nobility, and each had established close ties with Benedictine abbeys and nunneries. The backgrounds of these nobles are sufficiently similar to make feasible comparisons, while the selection of wills from four archives, ranging from the heartlands of Wessex to north-west Mercia, at roughly ten-year intervals between *c.*950 and *c.*1000, provides a reasonably diverse geographical and chronological sample. These individuals sought to put their family and spiritual affairs in order, addressing personal concerns and issues, but they also operated under general constraints. Given their

⁹ P. Ariès, *Western Attitudes towards Death: from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Baltimore, MD, 1974).

¹⁰ J. Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory* (Chicago, IL, 1984).

¹¹ P. Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death* (London, 1981), p. 101.

¹² M. McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints: Prayer for the Dead in Early Medieval France* (Ithaca, NY, 1994), pp. 75–8.

¹³ B.J. Bossler, *Powerful Relations: Kinship, Status and the State in Sung China (960–1279)* (London, 1998), p. 10.

¹⁴ Of lay wills, in other words excluding those of rulers and clergy, some twenty-four survive from the period 950–1016 (13 men, 8 women, 3 couples); some eight from the period 805–950 (5 men, 2 women, 1 couple); some eighteen from the period 1016–1066 (14 men, 2 women, 2 couples). For related discussion of such statistics, Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, pp. 48–80.

strong bonds of kinship and friendship with the royal family and the episcopate, many of whom had trained as monks, ideological constraints tended to emanate from royal and monastic programmes.¹⁵

A number of issues have to be kept in mind when reading Anglo-Saxon wills. One or two wills may have disposed of all of testators' estates and chattels, but the overwhelming majority only summarized partial distributions of testators' assets and were often drawn up when testators sensed the approach of death.¹⁶ In general, wills were religious documents in which people settled their accounts with God, including bequests to at least one religious community, with varying proportions and types of wealth being set aside for these purposes.¹⁷ Some further observations are worthy of note: royal wills tended to dispose of acquisitions addressing secular more than spiritual concerns, and wills drawn up by members of families of royal service sometimes involved the donation of estates which had recently been granted by kings to testators or their kin.¹⁸ In broad terms the wills directly echo the issues raised in the confraternity books: in three-fifths of testaments, the salvation of testators' kin is also mentioned in addition to that of their own souls; and three-quarters of testators bequeathed gifts to distant as well as near kin.¹⁹ Relationships between monks, nuns and kinsfolk stand at the very centre of these testaments, and these ties were envisaged as complementary and co-operative associations, with gifts to both lay and ecclesiastical legatees fulfilling a common set of spiritual objectives.²⁰

Testators belonging to the royal kin

Between the first and the second half of the tenth century the relationship between the monarchy and the church changed from royal support

¹⁵ P. Stafford, *Unification and Conquest: A Social and Political History of England in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* (London, 1989), p. 87, for statistics on episcopal recruitment from monastic ranks.

¹⁶ Lancaster, 'Kinship in Anglo-Saxon Society', pp. 238–9; K. Lowe, 'The Nature and Evidence of Anglo-Saxon Wills', *Journal of Legal History* 19 (1998), pp. 23–61, at pp. 38–9.

¹⁷ Two examples from continental Europe point to between 90% and 80% of wills including pious bequests: S. Epstein, *Wills and Wealth in Medieval Genoa 1150–1250* (Cambridge, MA, 1985), p. 139; A. von Brandt, 'Mittelalterliche Bürgertestamente: neuerschlossene Quellen zur Geschichte der materiellen und geistigen Kultur', *Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-historische Klasse* (1973), III, p. 18; for similar patterns in early medieval Catalan wills, A.M. Udina, *La successio testatada a la Catalunya* (Madrid, 1984).

¹⁸ Wormald, 'Kingship and Royal Property', pp. 264–79; C. Hart, 'The Ealdordom of Essex', in K. Neale (ed.), *An Essex Tribute: Essays Presented to Frederick G. Emmison as a Tribute to His Life and Work for Essex History and Archives* (London, 1987), pp. 57–81, at pp. 70–1.

¹⁹ The contrast with the later Middle Ages is sharp. R. Dinn, 'Death and Rebirth in Late Medieval Bury St Edmunds', in S.R. Bassett (ed.), *Death in Towns: Urban Responses to the Dying and the Dead, 100–1600* (Leicester, 1992), pp. 151–69, at 158: over half of the wills in which prayer bequests are listed only mention the testators' own souls; 15% refer to friends; and 13% to relatives.

²⁰ W., no. 15 (S 1486), p. 40, l. 16; no. 17, p. 50, l. 12; Lancaster, 'Kinship in Anglo-Saxon Society', p. 266.

of monasticism to one in which kings sought to implement monastic reform in local areas.²¹ These developments had an impact upon the preparations for salvation made by noblemen and noblewomen who shared bonds of kinship with the royal family. In the early tenth century, nobles who shared agnatic or affinal ties (related through marriage) with the royal family did not draw attention to these bonds in their testaments, but in the late tenth century their successors linked the salvation of their own souls to kings' charity or spiritual salvation. This differentiation can be illustrated by comparing the will of Wynflæd, drawn up c.950, with the testaments of Ealdorman Ælfheah and Ælfgifu, drawn up in the late 960s and early 970s. All three testators may have been connected to the royal family through bonds of marriage and were buried in the great royal abbeys and nunneries. Whereas Ealdorman Ælfheah and Ælfgifu left just over half of their estates to the royal family and emphasized the spiritual links between their own souls and King Edgar's soul, Wynflæd did not bequeath any estates to members of the royal family, and nor did she explicitly link the salvation of her own soul to King Edmund's spiritual welfare.

Will of Wynflæd, Shaftesbury nunnery archive, c.950

Wynflæd has been tentatively identified as the mother-in-law of King Edmund and niece of Bishop Alfred of Sherborne.²² In her testament matrilineal and patrilineal ideologies of kinship were kept in equilibrium. Wynflæd had inherited an estate from her mother Brihtwyn, and two of Wynflæd's other estates lay about ten to fifteen kilometres from one of Brihtwyn's properties.²³ In her testament Wynflæd disposed of the following: two Dorset estates; one estate in Wiltshire, possibly acquired from the crown; and a residence, perhaps in Dorset, which she had inherited from her mother.²⁴ One estate was granted to the Shaftesbury nunnery, but the other properties passed to her daughter, Æthelflæd, along with numerous household chattels.²⁵ In return Æthelflæd had 'to be mindful' of her mother's soul, and was asked to oversee gifts of men and stock from these three estates to two royal nunneries and two royal minsters in the south-west. Through these transactions vertical bonds of female kinship linking the grandmother,

²¹ D.N. Dumville, 'Learning and the Church in the England of King Edmund I, 939–46', in *idem*, *Wessex and England from Alfred to Edgar: Six Essays on Political, Cultural and Ecclesiastical Revival* (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 173–84.

²² *W.*, p. 109; *Charters of Shaftesbury Abbey*, ed. S.E. Kelly, Anglo-Saxon Charters 5 (London, 1996), pp. xiii–xiv.

²³ *W.*, no. 4 (S 1539), p. 14, ls. 29–30; *Charters of Shaftesbury Abbey*, ed. Kelly, nos. 13, 26.

²⁴ *W.*, no. 4, p. 10, ls. 7–15. She had the title deed to Ebbesborne (Wilts.), possibly a royal grant. For other Ebbesborne grants by the crown, S 522; S 635; S 640; S 696; S 861.

²⁵ *W.*, no. 4, p. 10, ls. 7–15.

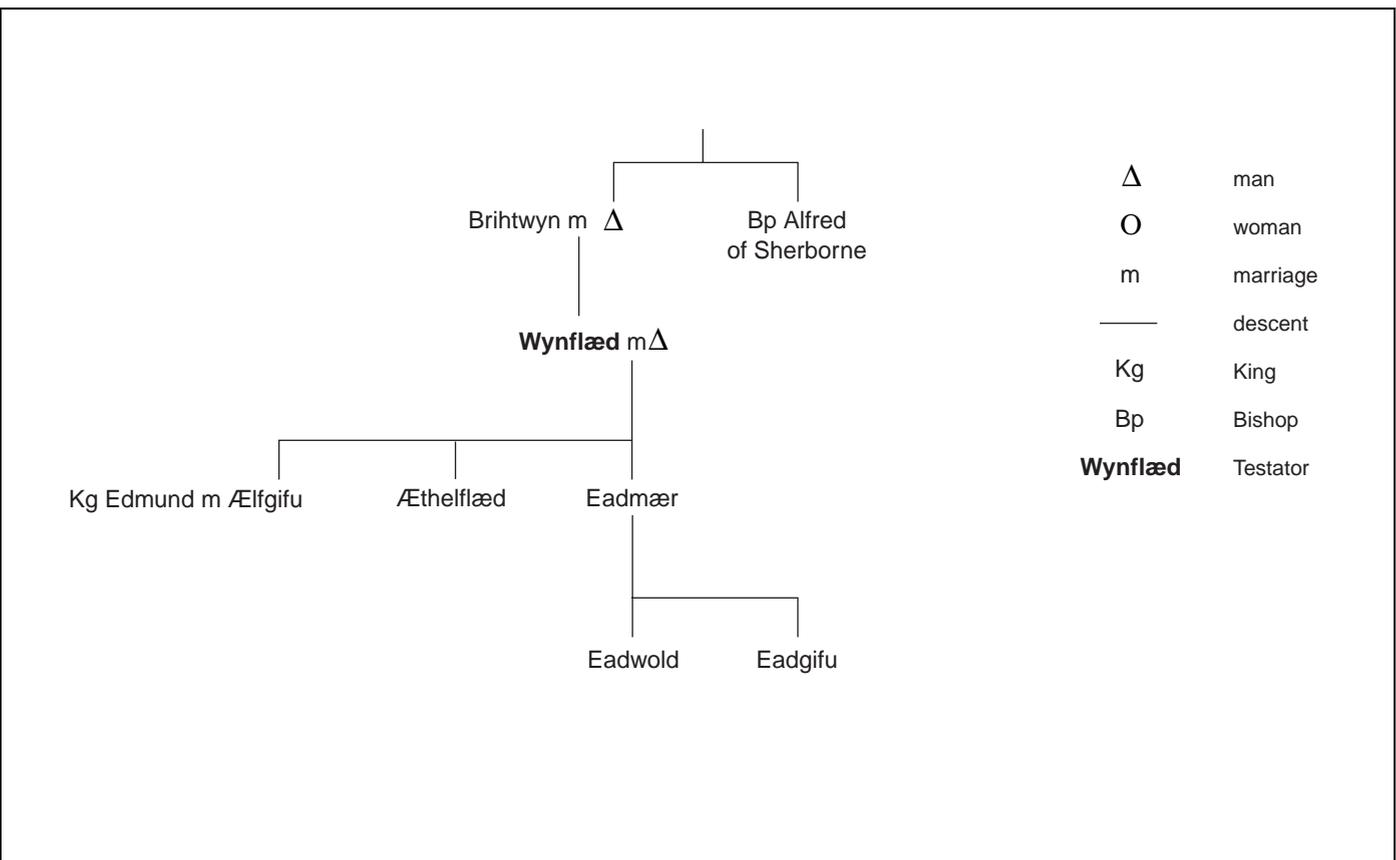


Fig. 1 Family tree of Wynflæd
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Brihtwyn, to her granddaughter, Æthelflæd, were emphasized. The spiritual relationship between Æthelflæd and the Shaftesbury nunnery gave value to horizontal female kinship ties, forging an alliance between Æthelflæd, her sister who was buried at Shaftesbury, and her royal mother-in-law.

The strength of patrilineal ideologies was demonstrated by the bequest of four estates in Hampshire and Berkshire.²⁶ As one of these estates had been Wynflæd's marriage gift from her husband, it seems likely that the remaining three estates had also passed from her husband's resources. Wynflæd bequeathed these estates to Eadmær, identified as her son, and when his son (Eadwold) reached his majority, he was to receive two of these properties.²⁷ Eadmær was required to make gifts in coin and stock to five minsters in Berkshire, which had no known connections with the monarchy or with Wynflæd's own family. Estates which had descended from Wynflæd's family of birth and the royal fisc were used to emphasize ties between kinswomen in association with royal nunneries and minsters in the south-west, whereas estates acquired from her husband were used to focus attention upon the male line of descent linking grandfather to grandson in association with a group of non-royal minsters in Berkshire.

Will of Ealdorman Ælfheah, Winchester Old Minster archive, c.968 x 71

Ealdorman Ælfheah married Ælfswith, King Edmund's kinswoman, and that bond of kinship was further reinforced when Ælfheah stood as co-godparent with Queen Ælfthryth, wife of King Edgar.²⁸ In his will Ælfheah donated estates to her and her children, the æthelings Edmund and Æthelred, as well as to King Edgar.²⁹ Ælfheah's friendship with successive bishops of Winchester served to increase his knowledge of the reform movement's programme.³⁰ In his will he restricted his religious donations to the great Benedictine abbeys founded by the monarchy, with the intention of primarily establishing ties between these houses and his kinsmen. His brother, Ealdorman Ælfhere, his two nephews and his kinsman Æthelweard each received one or two estates

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 10, ls. 15–27; p. 12, ls. 23–4.

²⁷ On kinship, *ibid.*, p. 110. On property, the exception to this pattern was Wynflæd's marriage gift, Faccombe, which after the death of Eadmær was to pass to her daughter (Æthelflæd) and then to her grandson Eadwold. Wynflæd may have included her daughter Æthelflæd because she had greater control over her marriage gift than over the other estates (Adderbury, Coleshill, Inglesham) received from her husband.

²⁸ *W.*, no. 9 (S 1485), p. 22, l. 22.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 22, ls. 14–17; 22–5.

³⁰ On wider connections, Williams, *Principes Merciorum*, pp. 150–3; N.P. Brooks, 'The Career of Saint Dunstan', in N. Ramsay, M. Sparks and T. Tatton-Brown (eds.), *St Dunstan: His Life, Times and Cult* (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 1–23, at pp. 6, 11; S.D. Keynes, 'The Dunstan B Charters', *ASE* 23 (1994), pp. 165–93, at p. 193.

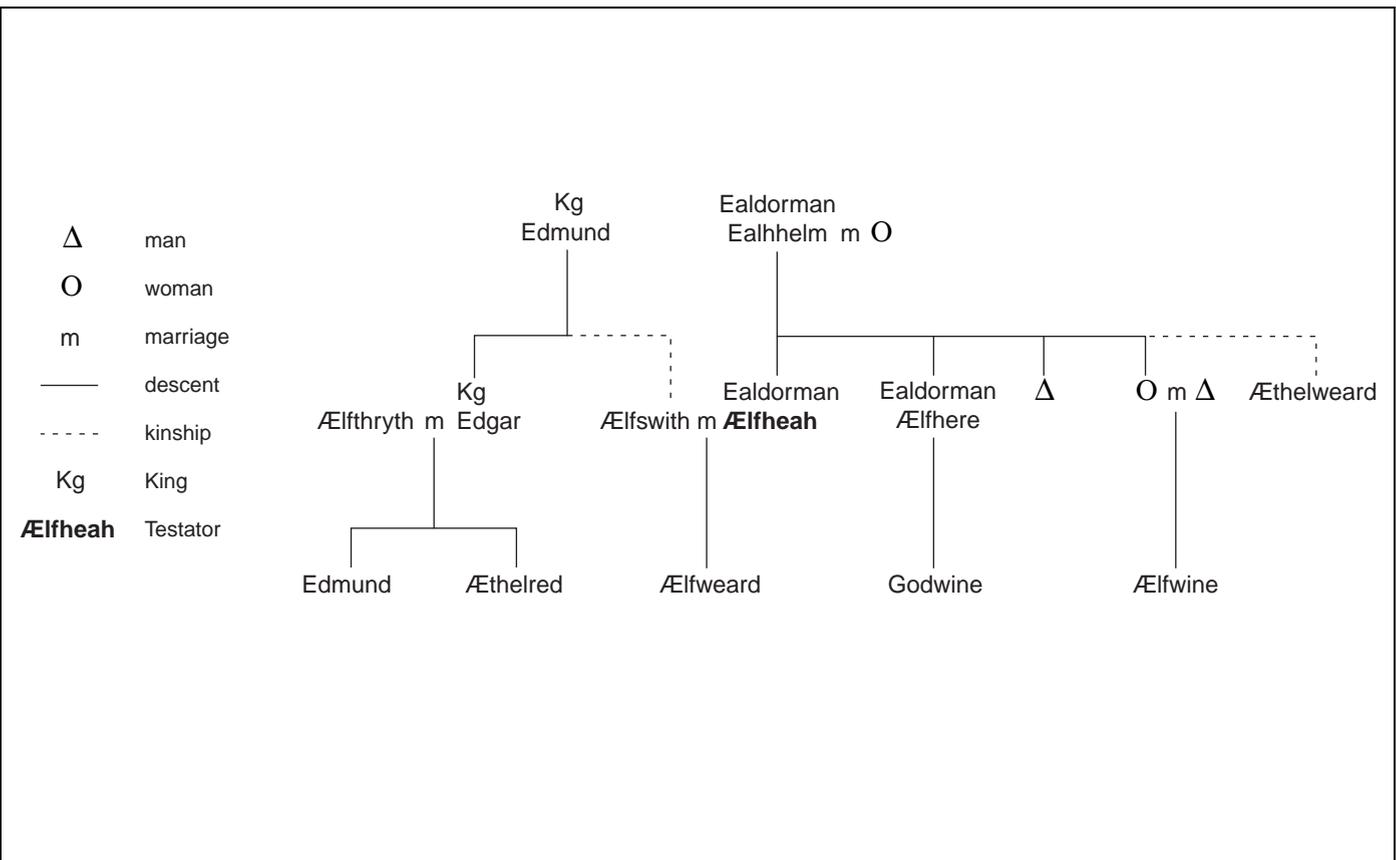


Fig. 2 Family tree of Ealdorman Ælfheah

in his testament, but the only kinswoman mentioned was his widow. She was 'to remember God zealously, and to be zealous for the welfare of our souls'.³¹ Through these bequests, ties between a series of agnates over two generations were emphasized and given value, but the honour of taking care of Ælfheah's and his ancestors' souls was reserved in a lay context to his son, Ælfweard. On Ælfheah's death Batcombe, which he and his wife Ælfswith had received from King Edmund, passed firstly to her, then to Ælfweard and finally to Glastonbury abbey, for the sake of 'our father and mother and of us all'.³² It was to his own parents' souls that Ælfheah drew special attention. His son, Ælfweard, was entrusted with passing Batcombe on to Glastonbury for the salvation of a wide kin-group, but the emphasis was upon the male line of descent linking paternal grandparents to grandson.

In both Wynflæd's and Ælfheah's testaments attention was drawn to patrilineal descent (from father to son) across three generations, but in other respects there was a shift in attitudes towards kinship. This suggests that in the years around c.950, when Wynflæd's will was written, matrilineal descent complemented patrilineal descent, but in the late 960s (the time of the composition of the will of Ælfheah), the latter was complemented by ties with the royal family and extended agnatic kinship ties. These two examples will need to be tested in detail against a wider survey of wills from each of these decades,³³ but for the present they form part of a recognizable continuum.

Ælfgifu, Winchester Old Minster archive, c.966 x 75

Ælfgifu, a fourth-generation descendant of King Æthelred I, married her kinsman, King Eadwig (d. 959), a fourth-generation descendant of King Æthelred I's youngest brother, King Alfred.³⁴ After Eadwig's and Ælfgifu's marriage had been dissolved in 958, she continued to be a benefactress of communities associated with the royal family and with Bishop Æthelwold.³⁵ Eadwig had been buried in the New Minster Winchester, and in her testament Ælfgifu asked to be buried in the Old Minster, which was to receive her shrine with its relics, a 30-hide estate at Princes Risborough (Bucks.) and other gifts, including

³¹ W., no. 9, p. 22, ls. 25–31.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 24, ls. 1–6. In the event of Ælfweard predeceasing his uncles, they were to have responsibility for granting Batcombe to Glastonbury.

³³ W., nos. 2 (S 1483), 14 (S 1494), and 15 are particularly instructive in this context.

³⁴ S 367 for confirmation in 903 at Ealdorman Æthelfrith's request of Athulf's grant of Princes Risborough to his daughter Æthelgyth, presumed to be Æthelfrith's wife, and the mother or grandmother of Ælfgifu, the testator; for further discussion, S.D. Keynes, 'A Charter of King Edward for Islington', *Historical Research* 66 (1993), pp. 303–16, at pp. 308–9.

³⁵ B. Yorke, 'Æthelwold and the Politics of the Tenth Century', in *eadem* (ed.), *Bishop Æthelwold: His Career and Influence* (Woodbridge, 1988), pp. 89–118, at pp. 79–80.

200 mancuses.³⁶ Each year Ælfgifu's siblings, Ealdorman Æthelweard the Chronicler, Ælfweard and Ælfwaru were to grant the Old and the New Minsters two days of food renders from two estates, which were to pass on their deaths to the monks of the Old and New Minsters.³⁷ One estate was only a few kilometres from an estate which Ælfgifu had received from King Edgar in 966, and which was left in her testament to one of Edgar's sons.³⁸ Ælfgifu may have hoped that her royal nephew would join his uncles and aunt in making gifts to Winchester for her soul's benefit from these two neighbouring estates.

Ælfgifu associated her soul's salvation exclusively with her former husband's family. Seven estates that passed to religious houses were given for her soul and King Edgar's soul, and one estate was given to Bishop Æthelwold to pray for the souls of Ælfgifu and her mother.³⁹ Ælfgifu may have mentioned her mother's soul because she had probably inherited Princes Risborough from her maternal line, but contemporary kinship strategies may also have played a role.⁴⁰ Through her father, Ælfgifu was descended from a different branch of the royal family than Kings Alfred and Edgar, but through her mother she was closer in kinship to King Alfred. By asking Bishop Æthelwold to pray for her mother's soul, Ælfgifu highlighted kinship unity with her deceased former husband (King Eadwig) and his brother (King Edgar). Ælfgifu's efforts met with rewards, as King Edgar demonstrated a personal interest in her salvation. After her death he donated one of the estates which he had received from her to Ely abbey, refounded by Bishop Æthelwold in 970.⁴¹

Ealdorman Æthelweard the Chronicler, brother of Ælfgifu

These patterns of reciprocal gift-giving, linking Ælfgifu and King Edgar, long after the dissolution of her marriage to King Eadwig, may have acted as an instrumental act in strengthening kinship unity between the two branches of an extended kindred descended from King Æthelwulf. This perspective upon kinship informed the prologue of Ealdorman Æthelweard's version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (written c.978 x 88), addressed to his cousin Abbess Matilda of Essen. Æthelweard stated: 'As our parents taught us Alfred was the son of Æthelwulf, from whom we

³⁶ W., no. 8 (S 1484), p. 20, ls. 6–10.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 20, ls. 26–31; p. 145; S 902 for identification of Æthelweard in Ælfgifu's will with Ealdorman Æthelweard the Chronicler; cf. S.D. Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred 'the Unready'* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 192 n. 139, 264 n. 64.

³⁸ Mongewell (Oxon.) in W., no. 8, p. 20, ls. 26–7; S 738 for grant of Newnham Murren (Oxon.).

³⁹ W., no. 8, p. 20, ls. 4–15, 25.

⁴⁰ As note 34 for descent of Princes Risborough.

⁴¹ W., no. 8, p. 20, ls. 16–17; *Liber Eliensis*, ed. Blake, p. 116. See notes 35, 39, for relationships between Ælfgifu and Bishop Æthelwold.

are descended.⁴² Although he added the qualification of Matilda's descent from King Alfred and his own from King Æthelred I, the reader is given the impression that the cousins were equally connected to Kings Alfred and Æthelwulf. This formed the underlying theme for the rest of the prologue.

Æthelweard discussed the marriages that connected his cousin Abbess Matilda to Alfred's branch of the royal family. He did not, however, begin with the marriage of Edward the Elder's daughter, Ealdgyth, to Matilda's grandfather, Emperor Otto I, but with the marriage of King Alfred's daughter, Ælfthryth, to Count Baldwin of Flanders. The names of all of Baldwin's and Ælfthryth's children are listed, and he ends this section with: 'From Ælfthryth, Count Arnulf, your *vicinus*, is descended.'⁴³ *Vicinus* is better translated as 'kinsman', rather than literally meaning that Count Arnulf and Abbess Matilda were neighbours.⁴⁴ Ealdorman Æthelweard was perhaps seeking to draw attention to the equality of kinship between Matilda and Arnulf when measured in terms of distance from Kings Alfred and Æthelwulf. Ealdorman Æthelweard preferred to present both himself and his two cousins as co-descendants of Kings Alfred and Æthelwulf, focusing upon the most prestigious kinship tie. Ealdorman Æthelweard concentrated upon Count Arnulf's branch perhaps because it was in a genealogically senior position than other branches of this extended kin-network when measured in terms of distance from King Alfred: Arnulf was the direct male descendant of Alfred's daughter, whereas Matilda was descended from Alfred's granddaughter. By focusing upon Count Arnulf's descent, Æthelweard perhaps sought to narrow the kinship divide of all three cousins with King Alfred and his direct descendants, reaching forward to Kings Edgar and Eadwig. Kinship was envisaged in terms of shared descent from a common ancestor, King Æthelwulf, with the royal family as the dominant male line, and the families of Count Arnulf, Abbess Matilda and Ealdorman Æthelweard as equal sub-lines.

Abbess Matilda may well have shared Ealdorman Æthelweard's views,⁴⁵ but the key issue is Edgar's response. A change can be detected in Edgar's attitudes towards kinship and descent c.966, but first we need to sketch in the circumstances surrounding his succession and coronation. Anglo-Norman historians with access to good sources of information argued that because Edgar's coronation was delayed for seven years, his first son, Edward the ætheling, born before c.964, was less

⁴² *The Chronicle of Æthelweard*, ed. A. Campbell (London, 1962), pp. 1–2.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁴⁴ C.T. Lewis and C. Short, *Latin Dictionary* (Oxford, 1879). The use of Anglo-Saxon personal names by Count Baldwin's descendants is interesting in this context.

⁴⁵ E. Van Houts, 'Women and the Writing of History in the Early Middle Ages: the Case of Abbess Matilda of Essen and Æthelweard', *EME* 1 (1992), pp. 53–68.

throne-worthy than his half-brother, Æthelred the ætheling, born after c.964.⁴⁶ Some of the details surrounding the circumstances of Edgar's three marriages lack plausibility, but the chronology and the doubts that arose over Edward the ætheling's throne-worthiness were well known. With the exception of Edmund's succession in 924 and possibly Eadred's succession in 946, Edgar was the only other tenth-century king to succeed as a ruler of Wessex and Mercia with no other surviving claimants to challenge his authority. Though he became king of Mercia in 955 and of Wessex in 959, Edgar was not crowned for the first time until 962 or 966.⁴⁷ The year 965 was marked by a new monastic programme, involving plans for forty new monasteries, which was perhaps followed in 966 by the coronation and a new interest in royal descent.⁴⁸

In 966 King Edgar issued a new charter for the New Minster at Winchester, which had been founded by his grandfather, King Edward the Elder (d. 924).⁴⁹ Although Edward and his father King Alfred had been buried at the New Minster, it was not used again as a royal mausoleum until King Eadwig's burial there.⁵⁰ King Edgar also refounded Edward's nunnery at Romsey (Hants).⁵¹ Edgar was perhaps expressing a particular interest in descent, but not necessarily in terms of exclusive patrilineal descent from father to son, to the exclusion of extended agnatic kinship bonds. In the same year he recognized kinship with his former sister-in-law Ælfgifu, when he granted her two estates.⁵² Reflections of this new attitude towards kinship and descent can also perhaps be detected in a shift in naming patterns given to æthelings. Before c.964 Edgar had named his first son after his grandfather (Edward) and his second son after his father (Edmund), but instead of then moving to the next layer of kinship by naming his third son, born after c.964, after his uncles (Athelstan and Eadred), or after his great-grandfather (Alfred), he selected the name of his

⁴⁶ Eadmer, *Vita Dunstani in Memorials of Saint Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. W. Stubbs (London, 1874), p. 214; William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum, the History of the English Kings*, eds. R.A.B. Mynors, R.M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1998–9), I, 258; J.L. Nelson, 'Inauguration Rituals', in *eadem, Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe* (London, 1986), pp. 284–307, at pp. 298–300.

⁴⁷ It depends upon whether 955 or 959 was taken as the starting date. 966 would fit neatly with two seven-year cycles: accession to a united kingdom in 959, first coronation in 966 and second coronation in 973.

⁴⁸ J.S. Barrow, 'The Community of Worcester, 991–c.1100', in N.P. Brooks and C.R.E. Cubitt (eds.), *St Oswald of Worcester: Life and Influence* (Leicester, 1996), pp. 84–99, at pp. 94–5 on dating of Easter 'synod' where the monastic reform programme was announced.

⁴⁹ S 745.

⁵⁰ R. Deshman, *The Benedictional of Æthelwold*, Studies in Manuscript Illumination 9 (Princeton, NJ, 1995), pp. 195–204; A.T. Thacker, 'Dynastic Monasteries and Family Cults: King Edward the Elder's Sainted Kindred', in Higham and Hill (eds.), *Edward the Elder*, pp. 248–63.

⁵¹ *Chronicle of John of Worcester*, eds. Darlington and McGurk, II, 416–18.

⁵² S 738; S 739; discussed in note 38.

great-great-uncle, Æthelred I, the direct male ancestor of Ealdorman Æthelweard.⁵³ By choosing the name 'Æthelred' as a suitable one for a throne-worthy son, King Edgar was perhaps seeking, among other things, to narrow the kinship divide with Ælfgifu and her brother, Ealdorman Æthelweard. These developments may have strengthened the sense of kinship unity between the two families, and perhaps contributed to Ealdorman Æthelweard's construction of an extended royal genealogy in the prologue to his *Chronicle*, drawing attention to descent from Æthelwulf.

After c.960 nobles who shared bonds of kinship with the royal family drew attention to the importance of the patriline and extended bonds of kinship with agnates and royal kinsmen at the expense of matrilineal (descent traced through mother's line) and cognatic (linked by a common male or female ancestor) associations. These strategies and royal kinship ideologies perhaps lay behind Ealdorman Æthelweard's construction of a genealogy, which traced the descent of his own immediate family and his cousins from King Æthelwulf. Descent was constructed in terms of a forward progression from a single ancestor, a fixed point within a kinship matrix, rather than working backwards from each individual to a different combination of ancestors (ego-centred kinship). These developments perhaps provided a key step towards the creation of the agnatic kinship and descent system within this aristocratic circle during the second half of the tenth century, replacing ego-centred kinship and bilateral descent.

Non-royal testators

The combination of various kinship strategies and shared royal and aristocratic involvement in gift-giving to royal abbeys and nunneries provided the context for the formation of new kinship values within this aristocratic circle, but what of those nobles, who although they belonged to the premier rank of the aristocracy, did not share recognized bonds of kinship with the royal family?

Will of Æthelgifu, St Albans Abbey archive, c.990

Æthelgifu, who disposed of around forty hides of land, upheld her will with a gift to the king and queen which was equivalent to the heriot of the very highest noble rank in early eleventh-century England.⁵⁴ Ælfgifu asked that her favoured heir, Leofsige, perhaps her son or nephew,

⁵³ Keynes, *Diplomas*, p. 164.

⁵⁴ S 1497; *The Will of Æthelgifu: a Tenth-Century Anglo-Saxon Manuscript*, ed. D. Whitelock with appendices by N. Ker and Lord Rennell (London, 1968), p. 7, ls. 3–4; Brooks, 'Arms, Status and Warfare', in *Communities and Warfare*, p. 145.

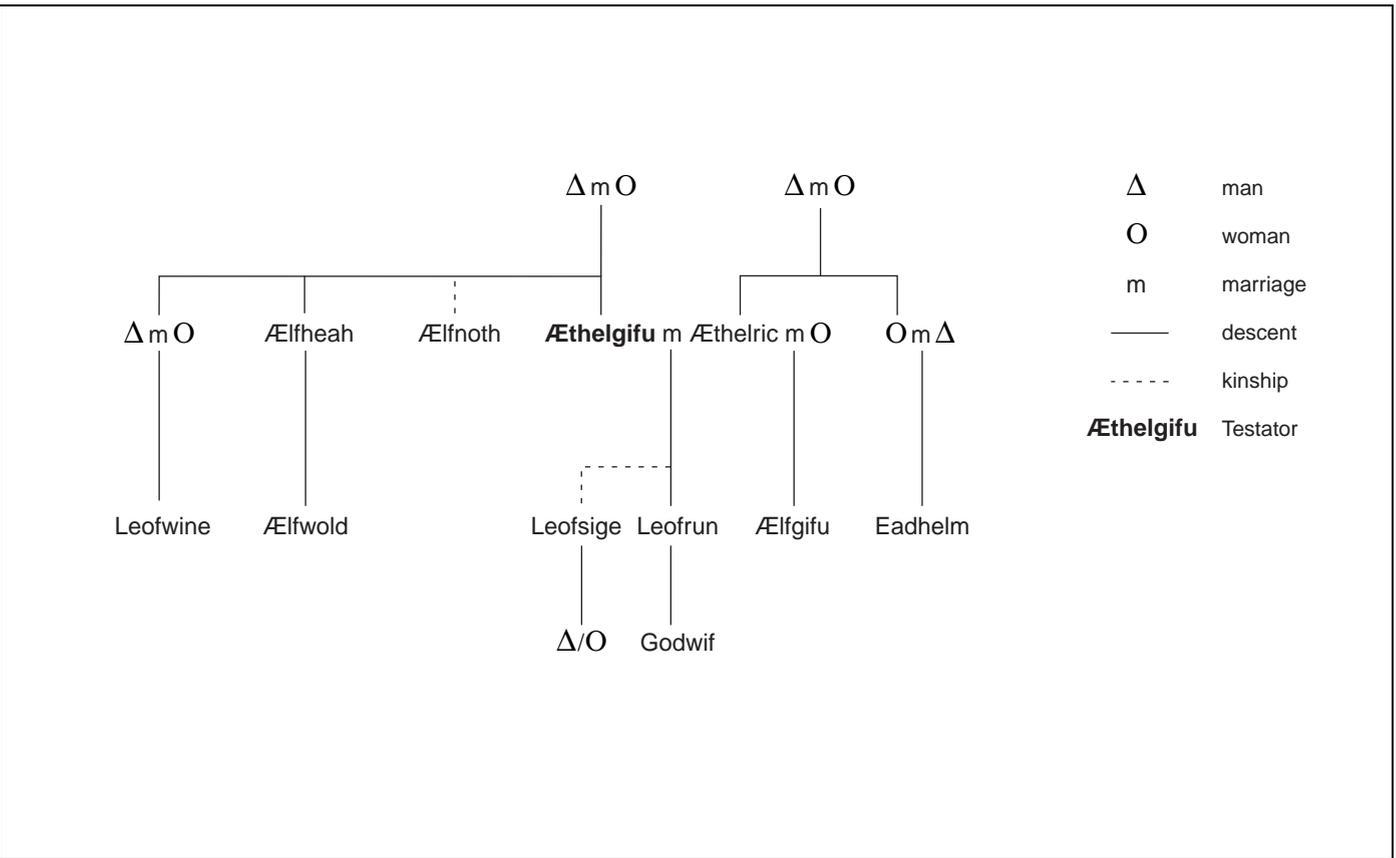


Fig. 4 Family tree of Æthelgifu

should be allowed to enter royal service.⁵⁵ He perhaps became ealdorman of Essex and East Anglia c.994–1002.⁵⁶ For all these connections, though, Æthelgifu was not a royal kinswoman. She did not seek to establish spiritual ties with the royal family or to donate estates in her testament to abbeys and nunneries founded by the royal family. She arranged to be buried at St Albans abbey, whose monks were charged with the salvation of her own and her husband's souls.⁵⁷ In return St Albans received fifteen hides on her death. The other main block of Æthelgifu's bequests, comprising eighteen hides of land, was bequeathed to Leofsig. He was asked to arrange for food grants from the estates to be given to St Albans abbey on Æthelgifu's commemoration day.⁵⁸ It included a barrel of ale not only for the souls of Æthelgifu and her husband, but also for the souls of her brother and her parents.⁵⁹ On the death of Leofsig half of these lands were to pass to his child if he had one, with the remainder descending to St Albans. There may have been the expectation that Leofsig's child would continue to donate food gifts from these lands, thereby drawing attention to a unilineal line of descent over three generations.⁶⁰

Æthelgifu also emphasized the importance of a wider network of ties between kinsmen in association with a group of minsters. From the ten hides, over which Ælfnoth received life tenure, he was asked to give Hitchin minster a smaller proportion of food renders than those which Leofsig was to donate to St Albans.⁶¹ Another agnate, Ælfwold, possibly Æthelgifu's nephew, received life tenure over five hides, from which he was to make food donations to Welwyn and Braughing minsters every Lent. His food gifts to these minsters were relatively smaller than the grants made by Leofsig and Ælfnoth to other houses.⁶² The communities at Braughing and Welwyn were to recite only around a quarter of the number of masses and psalms which were to be performed by the monks of St Albans for the salvation of Æthelgifu and her husband. There was a fourfold hierarchy: Ælfwold and Ælfnoth made smaller donations (than Leofsig) to religious houses which were to play a less

⁵⁵ *Æthelgifu*, p. 11, l. 39. The problem arises from the absence of kinship terminology, but the common Leof stem in the names of Æthelgifu's sister's son (Leofwine) and her kinswoman (Leofrun) suggests that Leofsig was a close male relative, from the next generation.

⁵⁶ Hart, 'Ealdordom of Essex', pp. 136–8.

⁵⁷ *Æthelgifu*, p. 7, l. 5; p. 11, l. 38.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 9, ls. 23, 27; p. 11, ls. 29–31; pp. 65–6, 68–70.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11, ls. 34–5.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 11, l. 36.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7, ls. 10–12. If Leofsig was Æthelgifu's nephew, then this line of descent operated through her sibling.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 9, l. 20. Ælfwold was also given a toft to share with his father Ælfheah, putatively identified with Æthelgifu's brother, *ibid.*, p. 10 n. 13; p. 11, l. 34. Æthelric and Ælfheah, who witness alongside each other in S 517 and S 536, may be the husband and the brother of Æthelgifu, respectively.

prominent role (than St Albans) in the salvation of the souls of Æthelgifu and her husband, while Ælfwold and Ælfnoth were not permitted to pass on these estates to heirs. There may also have been an implicit kinship coding. Leofsige donated food which needed no preparation after it had reached St Albans, such as honey, cheese and wine, but Ælfwold and Ælfnoth provided the monks of Hitchin, Welwyn and Braughing with food which had to be prepared and cooked, such as malt and meal. These differences may have reflected a differentiation in the intended relationship between Leofsige and the monks of St Albans, and that between other kinsmen and religious houses.

Although a series of gradations separated Leofsige, Ælfnoth and Ælfwold, they belonged to an inner circle of kinsfolk. Other kinsmen, such as Æthelgifu's sister's son (Leofwine) and all of Æthelgifu's kinswomen belonged to an outer circle. They received less substantial gifts, comprising one or two hides or chattels, and they were not required to donate annual food renders to religious houses.⁶³ There may have been an expectation that they might attend the celebration of the mass which was to be offered for the souls of Æthelgifu and her husband on her commemoration day, which may have been followed by a commemoration feast. Through such rituals, bonds of kinship and friendship between monks and kinsfolk may have been strengthened and given value, but they also had an exclusive dimension, with other kin being completely left out. Eadhelm, son of Æthelgifu's sister-in-law, received neither lands nor chattels, and was not allotted a role in the rituals of food donations to the religious houses entrusted with the salvation of the souls of Æthelgifu and her husband.⁶⁴ Other kinsfolk belonging to her husband's natal family may have been similarly excluded.

Æthelgifu's estates had passed to her as dower, and their final descent to St Albans and other minsters may have been strongly influenced by her deceased husband's wishes.⁶⁵ She was entrusted with important responsibilities. Nevertheless, she was sufficiently sure of her ground to delay the descent of these estates by one or two generations, and included clauses which specified who the monks were to offer prayers for, in addition to her own and her husband's souls.⁶⁶ This was far from being a passive process: the attention of monks and selected kinsfolk was focused upon the souls of her own parents rather than upon her husband's parents. This was in contrast to some examples from the early tenth century, when non-royal widows, who disposed of smaller bequests, were much more dutiful in attending to the spiritual needs

⁶³ *Æthelgifu*, p. 11, ls. 42–5; p. 65.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15, ls. 61–3; 17, l. 64.

⁶⁵ Crick, 'Women and Benefaction', pp. 399–422.

⁶⁶ A similar and contemporary process of women making subtle alterations to a kinsman's bequests is to be found in *W.*, nos. 2, 14, 15, in this case involving a father and his daughters.

of their husbands' ancestors.⁶⁷ It is uncertain whether the exclusion of Æthelgifu's husband's agnates led to the focus upon the souls of Æthelgifu's parents at the expense of the souls of her parents-in-law, or whether the latter provided an excuse for the former. The end result was to strengthen the bonds between a particular set of cousins, while turning other relatives into strangers. Differentiations in the extent and type of food gifts were used to introduce genealogical inequalities within this kin-group. Through these means not only was an inner circle of kin distinguished from an outer circle, but attention was focused upon a line of descent from Æthelgifu's parents to Leofsige's child. In Æthelgifu's will a series of arrangements set the boundaries of kinship within an extended family, pinpointed its centre of gravity and served to maintain and to develop genealogical inequalities.

Will of Wulfric, Burton abbey archive, c.1002 x 1004

Wulfric, son of Wulfrun, founder of Burton abbey, was identified through a metronymic by-name,⁶⁸ perhaps because of memories of his mother's involvement in the Viking wars and the inheritance of estates from his maternal grandfather, Wulfsige. In 942 Wulfsige had been granted between fifteen and nineteen estates in Staffordshire, some of which passed to his grandson.⁶⁹ In 943, following the 'great slaughter' at Tamworth, Olaf Sihtricson seized Wulfrun.⁷⁰ Her capture and safe return from captivity were events of national importance, and perhaps formed part of her descendants' stock of family memories. Wulfric cared for the welfare of his mother's soul, but did not mention his father. He asked the monks of Burton, in return for receiving two estates, to pray for his mother's soul, his own soul and the soul of the kinsman who received life tenure.⁷¹

When Wulfric founded Burton abbey c.1002 x 4, he asked Archbishop Sigeric and his brother, Ælfhelm, to protect it after his death 'against any man, not as their own possession, but as belonging to Saint

⁶⁷ *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, ed. A.J. Robertson (Cambridge, 1956), nos. 17, 26 (S 1513, S 1533).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 63 (S 877); W., no. 16(2) (S 939), p. 44, l. 29; for by-name Spot in cartulary sources, *Annales Monastici*, ed. H.R. Luard, 5 vols. (London, 1864–9), I, 183; *Chronicon Monasterii de Abingdon*, ed. J. Stevenson, 2 vols. (London, 1858), I, 411.

⁶⁹ *Charters of Burton Abbey*, ed. P. H. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters* 2 (London, 1979), nos. 5–7. The royal style *rector Angulsexna* perhaps enhances the authenticity of no. 5, which has no obvious signs of forgery. As two estates appear in both nos. 6–7 (dealing with six estates each), one was probably forged. For Wulfsige's attendances at the royal court: S 461; S 463; S 464; S 470; S 467; S 511; S 414; S 415.

⁷⁰ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*, 6, MS D, ed. G.P. Cubbin (Woodbridge, 1996), p. 43; W. Page (ed.), *Victoria County History of Warwickshire*, 8 vols. (London, 1908–69), II, 62.

⁷¹ W., no. 17, p. 48, ls. 14–16.

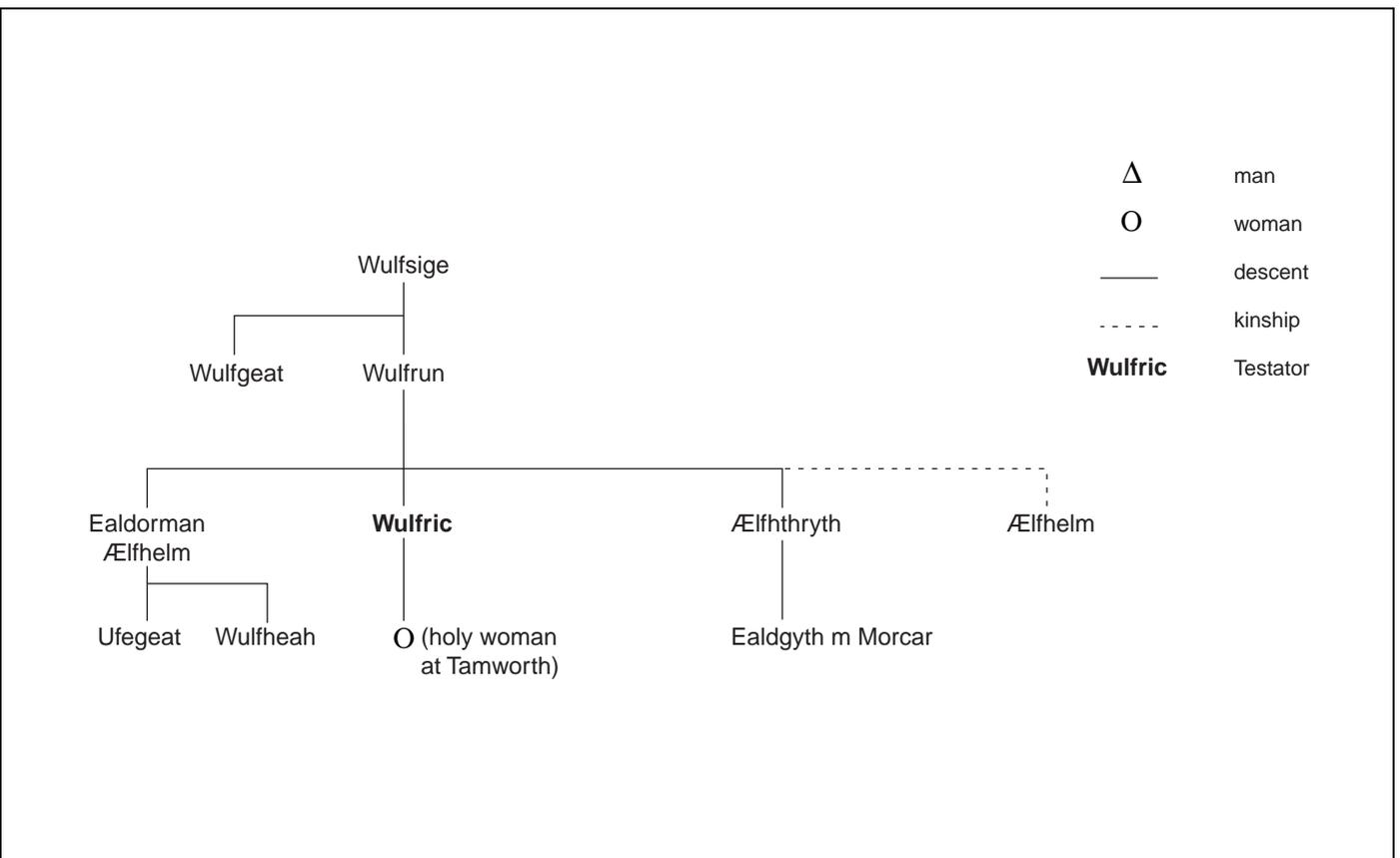


Fig. 5 Family tree of Wulfric, son of Wulfrun

Benedict's order'.⁷² This protection established a close bond between the monks and Wulfric's relatives, which was augmented by making the monks dependent upon his kinsfolk. Although the community and his kin received equal shares of his landed wealth, three quarters of the estates which passed to his immediate kin lay within 15 kilometres of the abbey,⁷³ whereas three-quarters of the estates which the monks received were 30 to 120 kilometres from Burton.⁷⁴ Wulfric's brother Ælfhelm and his son Wulfheah (Wulfric's nephew) received five estates close to Burton, as well as all of Wulfric's lands between the Ribble and the Mersey.⁷⁵ From these littoral estates Ealdorman Ælfhelm and Wulfheah were to give the monks of Burton 6,000 herrings each year. Wulfric and his nephew, Wulfheah, were also bound to each other through ties of spiritual kinship and attendance at the royal court,⁷⁶ but the relationship between Wulfric and his other nephew, Ufegeat, was less friendly, and he received only one estate.⁷⁷ These developments emphasised the seniority of Wulfheah over his brother Ufegeat. Both brothers and their father, along with Wulfric's daughter, niece and great-niece, belonged to the inner circle of spiritual salvation, while other kin belonged to an outer circle.⁷⁸ Wulfric's nephew-in-law, Morcar, and the kinsmen, Æthelric and Ælfhelm, did not receive estates which lay within the immediate vicinity of the abbey; nor were they required to make food donations to the monks. Through rituals of gift-giving, an inner circle of spiritual salvation was created with attention being focused upon one male heir, Wulfric's nephew, Wulfheah. There was perhaps an awareness of a uni-linear line of descent stretching back over several generations through Wulfrun to Wulfsige.

Discussion

In so many ways Anglo-Saxon wills can be unfavourably compared with the confraternity books of the great European abbeys as sources for outlining the contours of kinship, but in one respect the former offer an advantage. Confraternity books were maintained by a number of scribes, often over several centuries, and set out the obligations of the community, but these sources cannot be easily used to assess an individual's or a

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 50, ls. 11–15; p. 152.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 46, ls. 24–30; 48, l. 11; p. 50, l. 16.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 48, ls. 17–34; p. 50, ls. 1–2.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 46, ls. 15–19, 22–24.

⁷⁶ *Liber Vitae: Register and Martyrology of New Minster and Hyde Abbey*, ed. W. Birch (London, 1892), p. 54; S 876–7, 881, 883, 886–7, 891, 893, 900–1, 904.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 46, ls. 25–26: 'ic geaann Ufegeate þæs landes æt Nordtune. on Ð gerád Ð he freond. 7 fultum Ð betere sy into Pære stowe' (I grant Ufegeat the estate of Norton in the hope that he may be a better friend and supporter of the monastery: trans. *ibid.*, p. 47).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 48, l. 11; p. 50, l. 16.

family's attitudes towards relatives and ancestors in the lay rituals associated with death and salvation. Such questions can be analyzed by turning to the corpus of late Anglo-Saxon wills: did changes in rituals, associated with death and salvation among the aristocracy in the second half of the tenth century, act as catalysts in re-ordering kinship values into a narrower and more male-dominated framework?⁷⁹

At first glance Wulfric's identity as Wulfrun's son and the emphasis given to mothers' souls in both his and Ælfgifu's wills, the general importance of female testators and the quite large numbers of kin mentioned in these testaments would seem to make the case that lay kinship rituals were extensive and inclusive of women. These kinship strategies should perhaps not be connected with the emergence of narrower, male-dominated kinship ideologies. When, however, these issues are looked at a little more closely, a slightly more complex and exclusive picture begins to emerge. In Anglo-Saxon England during the second half of the tenth century, new agnatic kinship strategies and values replaced ego-centred and bilateral ones in the rituals associated with death and salvation. This shift was partly in response to royal and monastic ideologies, as part of a wider series of developments across western Europe.

One obvious example of these developments, relating to the Benedictine reform movement, presents itself. In the *Regularis Concordia*, promulgated c.973, each of the monks' meals was to be immediately preceded or followed by mass or vespers, while towards the end of the tenth century monastic scholars tightened the correlation between lay women and concepts of impurity.⁸⁰ Society may have become increasingly uncomfortable with the idea that the monks' food and drink, consumed just before or after intercession, should be provided by their conceptual opponents. As a result it became much more difficult for lay women to take part in the rituals of gift-giving associated with the salvation of souls. In the 950s Wynflæd's daughter was allowed to donate stock to minsters, but in the 960s and 970s in Ælfheah's and Ælfgifu's testaments, women played a less prominent role in gift-giving, and by c.990–1006 this role was being monopolised by kinsmen in the wills of Æthelgifu and Wulfric. The male-orientated ideologies of the Benedictine reform movement encouraged testators to rely increasingly upon kinsmen at the expense of kinswomen in creating extended circles of spiritual salvation. Cognatic kinship values were downgraded, and ties between male agnates were upgraded.

⁷⁹ To consider whether this filtered down to the median and lower ranks, the eleventh-century East Anglian wills, from the Bury St Edmunds archive, could be consulted.

⁸⁰ *The Regularis Concordia*, ed. T. Symons (London, 1953); C. Cubitt, 'Virginity and Misogyny in Tenth- and Eleventh-Century England', *Gender and History* 12 (2000), pp. 1–32.

In addition to these processes, a new interest in descent among members of the royal family in the 960s may have been one of the factors which contributed to the emergence of patrilineal descent as the preferred method of reckoning kinship over bilateral and ego-centred models. When Wulfric and Ælfgifu drew attention to their mothers' souls, they were perhaps seeking to emphasise their descent from a single male ancestor, while Ælfgifu's brother, Ealdorman Æthelweard, constructed a simple genealogy in order to orientate his branch of an extended family in relation to other lines. Similar developments may have worked towards corresponding outcomes in the families of Ealdorman Ælfheah and Æthelgifu. Ideologies of descent were invested with social value through hierarchies of gift-giving, which regulated the inter-relationships between inner and outer circles of kinsfolk. In each case there were variations in the composition of extended circles of spiritual salvation, but the overall consequence was to give seniority to the principal line of descent over sub-lines, which each traced their shared kinship from a common ancestor.

During the third and fourth quarters of the tenth century the popularity of the monastic reform movement with the laity encouraged the investment of aristocratic wealth in ways which simultaneously strengthened the authority of extended kin-networks and laid the foundations for their demise, by the emphasis upon male-orientated strategies. Noblemen and women became more aware of and sensitive to agnatic and patrilineal ideologies of kinship, while matrilineal, cognatic and some 'fictive' ones gradually disappeared from the social and spiritual horizons. In short, although the structure of kinship was still organized within the framework of extended kinship, the points of orientation had altered to such an extent that it led naturally towards the intermediate stages in the transformation of kinship, as outlined at the beginning of this article. In this context Ealdorman Æthelweard's family turned to other, complementary areas to supplement genealogies and family rituals, in order to express continued investment in male-orientated kinship values. In the next two generations, his family arranged a marriage within its local area and founded family monasteries at Cerne Abbas (Dorset), Eynsham (Oxfordshire) and Buckfast (Devon).⁸¹ In directing so much material wealth, as well as intellectual, spiritual and social energies, into a series of male-orientated kinship strategies, this family was wholly exceptional, but this is not to say that it was unique in seeking to articulate a new series of kinship values.

⁸¹ On relationships between agnatic kinship and endogamous and local marriages, L. Holy, *Kinship, Honour and Solidarity* (London, 1979); on monastic foundations by this family, S.D. Keynes, 'Cnut's Ears', in A.R. Rumble (ed.), *The Reign of Cnut: King of England, Denmark and Norway* (Leicester, 1994), pp. 68–9.

Meanwhile, Ælfric (monk at Cerne Abbas and abbot of Eynsham) was amongst the monastic scholars who sought to re-order the laity's sexual relations, putting forward views which differed in key aspects from seventh-century ideals. He suggested that married women who bore sons, practised continence and then carried out acts of charity with their husbands, chose a better path towards salvation than wives who unilaterally asserted rights to continence.⁸² This model for the lay family's behaviour arose from monastic concerns, ranging from the need to secure monastic recruits to fears of assertive statements of female sexuality, but it was also part of a more general debate on sexuality, kinship and the family.⁸³ As regards the structure of kinship and the family, a series of developments correlated with the beginning and intermediate stages in the transformation of the family from an extended bilateral system into an agnatic and patrilineal kinship: new family rituals in gift-giving, family monasteries, and simple genealogies. The parallel transformations in the structure of the aristocratic family in north-west Europe and Sung-dynasty China between the late tenth and early twelfth centuries developed from nobilities' commitment to the initiatives of Benedictine and Buddhist monks under the sponsorship and protection of kings and emperors respectively, rather than emerging from fissures between rulers, secular elites and religious orders.⁸⁴

⁸² P. Jackson, 'Ælfric and the Purpose of Christian Marriage: a Reconsideration of the *Life of Æthelthryth*, Lines 120–30', *ASE* 29 (2001), pp. 235–60, particularly pp. 255–60.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 258; Cubitt, 'Virginity and Misogyny', pp. 10–11, 21–2.

⁸⁴ For a study of this comparative theme in the central Middle Ages, see I.F. Silber, *Virtuosity, Charisma and Social Order: a Comparative Sociological Study of Monasticism in Theravada Buddhism and Medieval Catholicism* (Cambridge, 1995). The author is grateful to Janet Nelson, Nancy Hynes, seminar audiences at the Institute of Historical Research and the University of York, and to the editors of *Early Medieval Europe*, especially Julia Crick.

