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Stephen Rippon*

Communities, continuity, and change: territorial identities in early medieval southern Britain

1. Introduction

Human communities will always have had an affinity for the landscapes in which they lived, and until modern times most people will rarely have travelled very far from their home area. Regional styles of material culture, dress, architecture, place-names, and language will have been of great importance in the past as a means by which communities expressed their distinctive identities. Archaeologists have become expert at studying the material evidence left by our ancestors, but within landscape studies this has led to an emphasis on physical components such as settlements, field systems, communication networks, religious sites, and patterns of land-use as opposed to the spatial units within which the landscape was divided. Evidence for these physical elements of the landscape is often preserved within the archaeological record, whereas territorial entities were constructs of the human mind for which little evidence survives on the ground. A farming community will – for example – have known who had the right to graze their animals on a particular piece of land long before such details were written down, and the challenge for archaeologists is therefore to reconstruct territories for which there is little or no direct physical evidence. While some attention has been paid to certain higher-status aspects of territorial organisation – such as the formation of early medieval kingdoms – research into the land units within which farming communities lived their daily lives has been sporadic, and so it is these 'early folk territories' that are the focus of this paper.

2. The need for a diachronic approach when studying past landscapes

Over the course of its development as a discipline, archaeology has divided the past into discrete periods, each with its own learned societies and journals.

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This is a useful way of allowing scholars to specialise in particular periods and datasets, but it has the very great disadvantage of compartmentalising the past into relatively short blocks of time, usually based upon easily visible facets of the archaeological record and/or well-documented historical events. Those of us who study the landscape, however, tend to have a longer-term perspective and this reveals how traditional periodization has inhibited our understanding of the past, and in particular how significant short-term political events must be seen against a background of medium- and long-term continuities in the annual cycle of farming life. For example, the archaeology of 1st-millennium AD Britain (south of Hadrian's Wall) is divided-up on the basis of three political events: the Roman invasion in AD 43, the so-called Rescript of Honorius in AD 410[1], and the Norman Conquest of AD 1066. The first and last of these political events undoubtedly had an immediate impact on the governance of Britain and its native ruling elites, but it is increasingly clear that for the vast majority of the rural population change was far slower. In South-East Britain, for example, settlement form, burial practices, and material culture were increasingly influenced by Roman practices many decades before AD 43 and the invasion simply led to an acceleration of this (e.g. Smith *et al*. 2016). 11th-century AD England was similarly growing closer to mainland North-West Europe before the Norman Conquest (Hadley, Dyer 2017), and in the countryside of southern England it is virtually impossible to detect the Norman Conquest in the archaeological record (Creighton, Rippon 2017). The end of the Roman period, however, presents a more complex picture with a relatively rapid decline in urban life, industry, and material culture use, although this must be seen within the wider context of far greater continuity in agriculture landscapes than has previously been thought (Haarer 2014; Rippon *et al*. 2015; Rippon 2018a). The traditional periodization marked by AD 43, 410, and 1066 therefore runs the risk of inhibiting our understanding of the past, and in particular creating points of assumed discontinuity where in practice there may have been continuity for the vast majority of rural communities who were unaffected by national politics.

3. Explaining the trajectories of landscape change

If we strip away the chronological straight-jackets that archaeologists and historians have imposed upon the past, what we see is that rather than discrete periods of stability separated by short-term events and sudden change, the landscape was constantly evolving albeit with periods of slower and faster change. We also see that these periods of greater change could occur within our

[1] That was traditionally thought to mark the date when British cities were instructed to look after their own defences and so marked the point when Britain ceased to be part of the Empire (although it probably referred to towns in *Bruttium* in southern Italy: Mattingly 2006, p. 530).

major period divisions, rather than at their beginning and their ends, while different components of the landscape could evolve at varying speeds. In early 5th-century AD Britain, for example, urban centres and large-scale manufacturing industry appear to have disappeared within a few decades, yet while there was some decline in arable farming relatively few areas were completely abandoned with land instead going over to more extensive forms of agriculture (i.e. pastoralism). Across large parts of Britain, it was the late 7th and 8th centuries AD – the 'long 8th century', mid-way through the traditionally defined early medieval period (AD 410-1066) – that actually saw a far more significant change (Hanson, Wickham 2000; Wickham 2005; Rippon 2010; Rippon *et al.* 2015).

In addition to studying change over time, we also need to explore spatial variation in landscape character. Early studies of the countryside across lowland Roman Britain, for example, painted a picture of it being relatively uniform both in time and space with just a simplistic binary division between the upland/lowland, military/civilian, and native/villa zones (e.g. Haverfield 1912; 1924; Collingwood, Myres 1937; Collingwood, Richmond 1969; Dark, Dark 1997). In contrast, it is now becoming increasingly clear that there was far greater regional variation in landscape character – created by local communities choosing how to manage their countryside and express their identities – than previously thought (e.g. Rippon 2008; Smith *et al.* 2016; Rippon 2018a).

The challenge we therefore have is to explain why communities and their landscapes in different regions developed in different ways and along different timescales. There was a time when archaeologists saw environmental conditions as dictating human behaviour, although from the 1970s this paradigm of 'environmental determinism' was replaced by one of social agency. This greater emphasis on understanding the contribution that human communities made towards shaping their landscapes was clearly very important, although an unfortunate consequence was that for several decades the role of the natural environment in shaping human behaviour was over-looked (being labelled an 'environmental determinist' needed to be avoided at all costs!). In recent years, however, landscape archaeologists and historians have revisited the role that geology, topography, soils, and climate played in shaping agricultural regimes and landscape character more generally with the result that we now have a more balanced view (e.g. Williamson 2003; Lambourne 2010; Williamson 2013; Rippon *et al.* 2014).

4. Communities and their territorial context: a brief historiography

During the early development of archaeology as a discipline research was dominated by the excavation of discrete sites, and although the adoption of larger-scale survey techniques from the 1960s onwards promoted a more landscape-based approach attention remained focused on the physical infrastruc-

ture of the countryside (settlements, fields, roads, etc). Our understanding of the territorial structures within which communities lived their lives was focused on the regional-scale (this is the first of Peter Gould's [this volume] senses in which communities can be perceived, where they live in physical proximity to one another). The idea that Middle and Late Iron Age Britain was divided up into a series of discrete 'tribal' areas (e.g. Cunliffe 2005) has been questioned (e.g. Moore 2011), although at the very end of the Iron Age there is growing evidence for increasingly sophisticated societies that were acquiring the characteristics of kingdoms (Creighton 2000; 2006). We know that Roman provinces were divided into administrative units known as *civitates*, and although we still have a very limited understanding of the origins, extent, or functions of these in Roman Britain the names of many suggest a link with pre-Roman communities (Smith *et al*. 2016, pp. 402-403; Rippon 2018a, Chapter 4). We know even less about the smaller-scale districts, known as *pagi*, into which *civitates* were divided. A writing tablet found in London mentions an area of woodland located in the *pagus Dibussu* in the *civitas* of the *Cantiaci* [Kent] (Tomlin 1996), while some small towns with the status of a *vicus* may have become the centres for administrative sub-divisions of the *civitates* (Burnham, Wacher 1990, p. 39; Mattingly 2006, 287, p. 355). Mortaria stamps found at Castor (Northamptonshire) and South Shields (County Durham), for example, refer to a potter called Cunoarda working at *vico Durobrivis* (Chesterton near Water Newton, in Cambridgshire: Johnston 1975, pp. 75-77), and it is possible that some of the larger *pagus/vicus* centres such as this were promoted to *civitas* status (Burnham, Wacher 1990, pp. 39-40; Fulford 2006).

The era of processual or 'new archaeology' in the 1970s brought about greater interest in the landscape, and the territorial structures that individual sites might have been associated with. Early work – such as laying hexagonal lattices and simple Thiessen polygons over the distribution of Iron Age hillforts in southern England – was remarkably crude and best forgotten other than as a lesson on how not to study the landscape (see Grant 1986b for a summary). Some relatively simple modelling of the landscape around certain Romano-British sites was somewhat better, serving to highlight the wide range of natural environments that settlements will have been associated with (e.g. the site catchment analysis carried out to contextualise the farmstead at Barton Count Farm, in Oxfordshire: Miles 1986). The reconstruction of a hypothetical territory associated with the settlement at Gatcombe, in Somerset (Branigan 1977), quite rightly rejected the simplicity of Thiessen polygons, but what followed was the only slightly less simplistic approach of positioning the boundaries between sites based on their relative size and status (i.e. 'weighted Thiessen polygons': e.g. Hogg 1971). Christaller's Central Place Theory also got an airing in Romano-British studies with potentially interesting results (e.g. Hodder, Hassall 1971; Hodder 1972;

1974; 1975; Millett 1986). If Romano-British towns were indeed market centres then a degree of regularity in their layout might be expected, although recent revisionist discussion of Roman towns has called into question whether they did indeed have a major role as market centres (Perring, Pitts 2013; Smith, Fulford 2019). An important contribution to the debate about territorial structures in the early medieval period was observing that central place functions need not have all been located in a single place, with sites associated with specific activities having been in different – albeit nearby – places (so-called 'polyfocal central places': e.g. Aston 1986; Reynolds 2013).

Although Ken Dark (1994) has argued – based on very little evidence – that some Romano-British *civitates* survived as administrative and political structures into the early medieval period, most medievalists believe that the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms (which are documented from the late 6th century AD), and the counties, hundreds, and vills recorded in the late 11th-century AD Domesday Book, were all post-Roman creations. The very limited documentary sources that survive from early medieval England led Steven Bassett (1989b), for example, to produce a highly influential model suggesting that Anglo-Saxon kingdoms were created through the gradual agglomeration of smaller territories known as *regiones*. Glanville Jones (1979; 1981; 1985) used documentary sources in Wales to produce another often-cited model for the early medieval landscape having been divided up into districts that he termed 'multiple estates', although there have been problems with how this idea was applied both within and beyond Wales (e.g. Gregson 1985).

Until recently, what we were therefore left with was a picture of scholars of Roman Britain not really exploring regional identities, while early medievalists argued that the territorial entities they could see were all created after Britain ceased to be part of the Roman world. The limited availability of source material in both periods also meant that attention focussed on large-scale political and administrative structures as opposed to the smaller-scale community-based territorial entities. In recent years, however, there have been two important developments. The first is a growing awareness of regional variation in Romano-British landscape character and the different identities forged by local communities (e.g. Mattingly 2006; Eckardt 2014; Smith *et al*. 2016). The second is the identification of 'strangely stable boundaries' (Williamson 2013, p. 1) in landscape character that persisted from the Roman period (or even earlier) through to the early medieval period (Roberts, Wrathmell 2000a; 2000b; Williamson 2006a, pp. 90-91; 2006b; 2008, pp. 123-126; Martin 2007; Martin, Satchell 2008; Rippon 2007; 2008; 2012). The cumulative result of this recent research means that we are starting to gain a far better appreciation of the hierarchical nature of territorial structures within the landscape, and potential continuities across time.

Fig. 1. Location of the three study areas in which the extent of early folk territories have been reconstructed across whole regions referred to in this paper.

5. Early medieval communities and kingdoms

While most of the attention within British landscape archaeology has been on territorial structures associated with the needs of the higher echelons of society – such as Roman administrators (*civitates*) and Anglo-Saxon kings – the rest of this paper will explore the districts and regions that reflect the spheres of socio-economic interaction within which rural communities lived their daily lives. It will begin with the reconstruction of regional-scale territories across eastern England that were the size of several later counties (figs. 1-3). Our earliest detailed description of the territorial structure of England is in the late 11th century AD Domesday Book. This describes a hierarchical system of administrative units the largest of which were counties (also known as shires), that were sub-divided into districts known as hundreds, and which in turn were divided into small vills (one or more of which became ecclesiastical parishes) (fig. 2). In Midland and northern England counties appear to have been created in the mid to late 10th or very

early 11th century, although those in southern England (south of the River Thames) may have had their origins in far older territorial units (Taylor 1957, pp. 23-25; Whybra 1990, pp. 4-5; Blair 1994, p. 12; Molyneaux 2015). By the late 7th/early 8th centuries AD the West Saxon kingdom, for example, appears to have been sub-divided into a series of smaller districts knowns as *scir* (shires), and the Laws of King Ine (688-726) refer to 'shiremen' and describe how a man should pay a fine if he 'steals into another shire' (Attenborough 1922, pp. 39, 49; Whitelock 1955, p. 368). The boundaries of these *scir* are not, however, recorded and while it is tempting to see them as the direct predecessors of later counties it is possible that these early *scir* referred to territories that were smaller than their 10th and 11th century namesakes (Eagles 2015). The boundaries between Devon, Dorset, and Somerset, for example, are certainly later than a series of 8th century early folk territories that they pass through the middle of (Rippon 2008).

There has also been a tendency to assume that Domesday counties reflect the boundaries of the far earlier Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and their associated dioceses. Carver (1989, p. 145), for example, assumed that the East Anglian kingdom, and later medieval diocese of East Anglia with which it was coterminous, corresponded to the later counties of Norfolk and Suffolk (the 'north folk' and 'south folk' of East Anglia) whose southern boundary ran along the River Stour (to the south of which lay the county of Essex whose name commemorates the East Saxon kingdom: fig. 2). Scull (1992, p. 5) similarly argues that the 'traditional equation of diocese and counties of the tenth century or later with earlier political units would suggest that the East Anglian province was fossilized in the medieval Diocese of Norwich'. Hart (1977, p. 47) similarly suggests that 'there is ample place-name and charter evidence to show that for the most part (give or take a few border villages) the diocesan boundaries, once established, did not change right down to the time of Henry VIII, except for the occasional formation of new dioceses by splitting the territories of old ones'. In fact, recent research has shown that county boundaries north of the Thames – including in Essex and East Anglia – were drawn up in the 10th or early 11th centuries AD (Molyneaux 2015), which is reflected in how their boundaries slice through a series of early medieval early folk territories (Rippon 2018a, Chapter 7). The boundaries of these counties were, therefore, unrelated to those of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, and the territorial geography of 11th century England was clearly created in the mid-10th to early-11th centuries.

So where did Anglo-Saxon kingdoms that preceded counties come from? The widely established model for their development argues that it can be compared to a football tournament (Bassett 1989b). It is suggested that the early medieval landscape was originally divided up into a series of small territories – sometimes referred to in contemporary documents as *regiones* – that are equivalent to the minor football teams that enter the early stages of a knock-out tournament. Over time, competition between the communities living in these

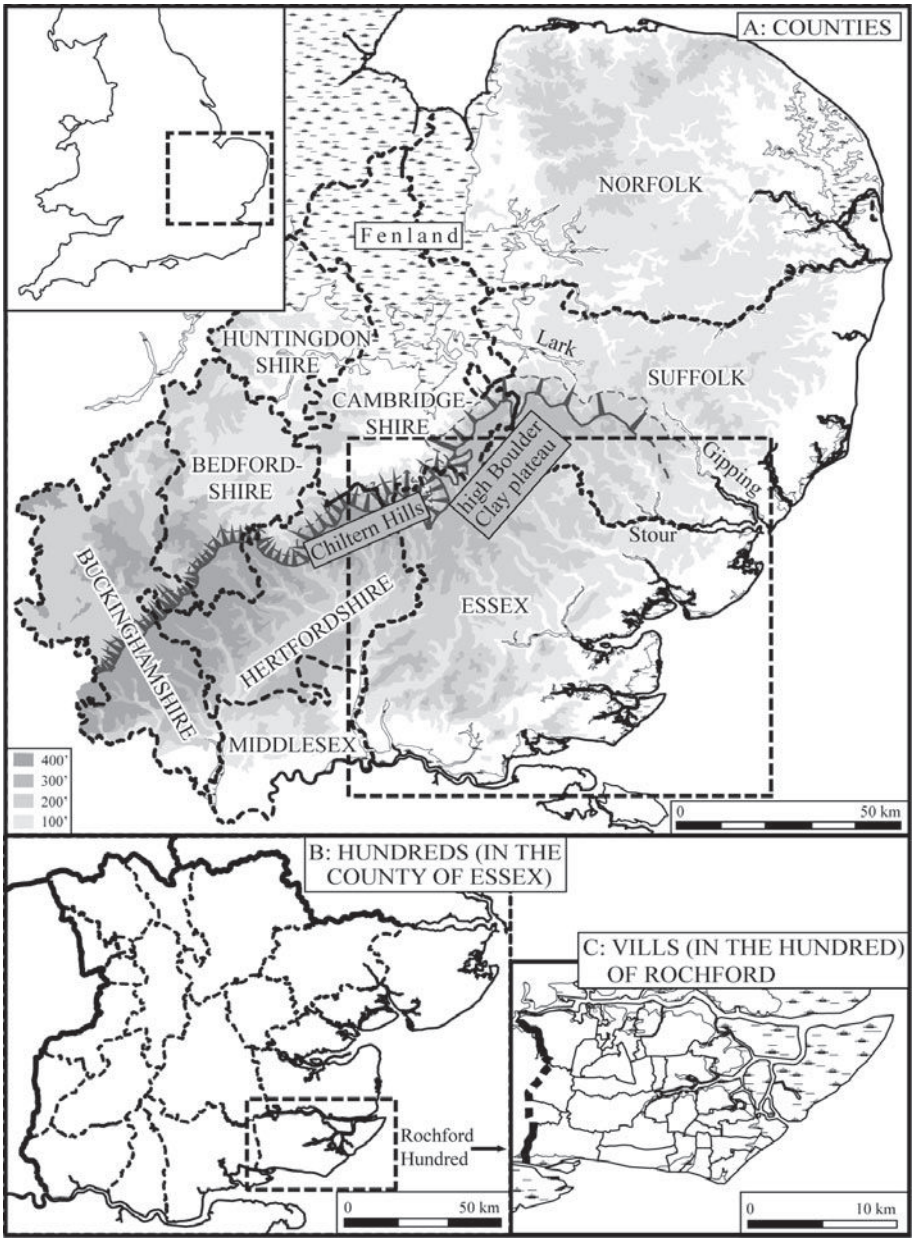

Fig. 2. The hierarchy of territories across eastern England as recorded in Domesday Book and which was probably created in the mid to late 10th or early 11th century AD. (A) the counties, including Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex. (B) the hundreds into which the county of Essex was divided. (C) the vills into which the hundred of Rochford was divided.

regiones led to conflict and conquest (the preliminary rounds of the football competition), leading to the emergence of larger-scale territories and eventually kingdoms (the small number of teams left in the final rounds of the competition, in this case the major Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of Northumbria, Mercia, East Anglia, Essex, Kent, Sussex, and Wessex).

The Bassett model assumes that – as kingdoms emerged through the aggregation of smaller *regiones* – they were unrelated to earlier regional-scale territorial arrangements such as Romano-British *civitates*. This is an easy assumption to make due to the widespread belief that the end of Roman Britain saw a major discontinuity within the rural landscape coupled with the disruption caused by Anglo-Saxon colonisation. The scale of this immigration has been much debated with views ranging from mass folk migration through to nothing more than a political take-over by a small warrior elite (e.g. Arnold 1988; Lucy 2000; Hills 2003; 2011). The most extreme views are particularly dismissive of the extent of Anglo-Saxon immigration (e.g. Pryor 2004; Oosthuizen 2019), although such studies should be read with great care as their interpretation of primary evidence is deeply flawed (e.g. see Hines 2020). At the other end of the scale place-name scholars still assume a widespread population replacement (Higham 2007a; 2007b) that superficially seems to get some support from archaeology. The traditional approach towards mapping 'Anglo-Saxon' cemeteries (defined by their associated grave goods) at a national scale does give the impression that immigrants settled most of the lowlands in southern and eastern England, and while there remains a question over exactly who was buried within 'Anglo-Saxon cemeteries' studies of ancient DNA is starting to confirm that they included a significant number of immigrants (e.g. Oakington in Cambridgeshire: Pitts 2016). The introduction of an entirely new form of architecture (*Grubenhäuser*) similarly suggests that settlements characterised by them were occupied by newcomers and their descendants.

A closer examination of the distributions of Anglo-Saxon settlements and cemeteries, however, suggests that they were far from evenly spread across the landscape, and that while some districts have a relatively high density of sites others have very few. In eastern England, for example, three regions can be discerned with the chalk escarpment (Chiltern Hills) dividing the Northern Thames Basin from the South-East Midlands, and the High Boulder Clay Plateau marking the northern edge of the Northern Thames Basin beyond which lay East Anglia (fig. 3). In East Anglia Anglo-Saxon settlements and cemeteries have been found across all areas, and – allowing for the fact that in part figure 3 reflects where the greatest amount of archaeology has taken place – it appears that the newcomers were widely spread across the landscape. In the South-East Midlands there are also large numbers of Anglo-Saxon settlements and cemeteries, but they are concentrated in a restricted range of areas – the major river valleys and Fenland-edge – and are

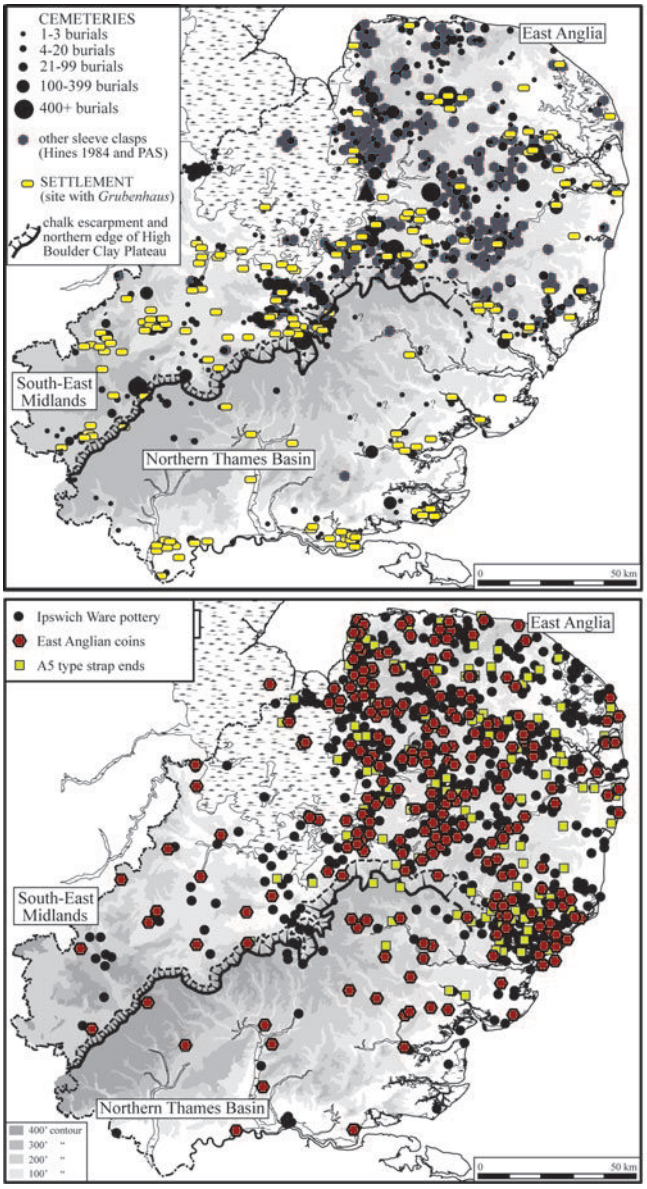

Fig. 3. Top: migration-period (5th to 6th century AD) Anglo-Saxon settlement (reflected in the presence of *Grubenhäuser*) and cemeteries (with the size of the symbol in proportion to the number of graves), and the distribution of a distinctive 'Anglian' type of dress accessory (sleeve clasps). Bottom: 7th- to 9th-century AD material culture produced within the East Anglian kingdom (for sources see Rippon 2018a). Although some objects produced within East Anglia travelled outside that region – presumably through trade, exchange, and as the personal possessions of travellers – far less appears to have travelled south into the East Saxon kingdom than west into the South-East Midlands suggested that the dispersion of goods was socially embedded.

absent from other districts such as the interfluvial claylands. In the Northern Thames Basin (Essex, southern Suffolk, Hertfordshire, and Middlesex) there is a different distribution again, with the very small number of Anglo-Saxon settlements and cemeteries almost wholly restricted to coastal and estuarine districts. The absence of Anglo-Saxon settlements and cemeteries from inland parts of the Northern Thames Basin does not, however, mean that this area was not occupied during the 5th to 8th centuries AD, but instead reflects how it continued to be settled by descendants of the Romano-British population – a community that is archaeologically almost invisible (Rippon 2018a; 2018b; in press).

A wide range of other evidence clearly shows that two of these regions correspond to Anglo-Saxon kingdoms documented in the Tribal Hidage and a series of charters: East Anglia and the East Saxons. These kingdoms had emerged by the early 7th century AD, and they remain evident archaeologically during the later 7th and 8th centuries AD through the restricted distributions of East Anglian material culture such as Ipswich Ware pottery and Series BII, BIIIa, BZ, Q and R *sceattas* [coins] and later inscribed coins (fig. 3; Rippon 2018a, pp. 300-301, figs. 11.5, 11.6). Whilst we must not equate objects with kingdoms in a simplistic way, as some artefacts clearly travelled long distances through trade, gift exchange, or as personal possessions, in the case of Ipswich Ware and coins minted within East Anglia, the majority clearly remained within the territory that documentary sources tell us was the East Anglian kingdom. The territorial development of the South-East Midlands is more complex, with the Tribal Hidage recording a series of smaller-scale communities in a region that Bede referred to as 'Middle Anglia' (Rippon 2018a).

The boundaries between these regions were invariably either low-lying wetlands (e.g. Fenland), or high interfluvial areas such as the northern edge of the High Boulder Clay Plateau (that formed the watershed between the Stour and Gipping/Lark Valleys which divided the Northern Thames Basin from East Anglia) and the chalk escarpment of the Chiltern Hills (between the Northern Thames Basin and the South-East Midlands). These are classic examples of 'river and wold' landscapes (Everitt 1977; 1986) whose sparsely settled boundary zones – that were largely ignored when county boundaries were created in the 10th and 11th centuries AD – had relatively low densities of population and plough-teams, and large areas of woodland, in Domesday. Place-names similarly suggest that these boundary zones contained extensive areas of woodland, wood pasture, and heathland, and when first mapped in the post-medieval period some watersheds were still covered in extensive areas of woodland and common land. The place-names on post-medieval maps allow us to identify further – recently enclosed – commons, while a characterisation of field-boundary patterns suggest further areas of recently enclosed land that can be identified. The combination of all this evidence suggests that these watersheds were once largely held in common (e.g. figs. 4, 5).

Another significant feature of these liminal zones within the landscape is that there is some evidence for sites associated with communal gatherings and ritual activity. Some of the so-called 'productive sites' – rural locations producing large numbers of 7th to 8th century AD coins – occur in these boundary zones (Hodges 1982; Blackburn 2003; Palmer 2003; Naylor 2004; 2012), and it is possible that these were places where different communities could meet on neutral ground for seasonal activities such as trade and exchange. There is, however, very little evidence for monumental boundary markers, the exception being a series of banks and ditches in south-eastern Cambridgeshire that ran across a narrow strip of lowland between the well-wooded Boulder Clay Plateau and low-lying wetlands of Fenland and which marked East Anglia's south-western boundary (Malim 1996; Rippon 2018a Chapter 12).

6. Rooted in the land: long-term continuities in regional-scale socio-economic spheres of interaction

The problems of researching only one discrete period of the past are numerous. If, for example, you study early medieval archaeology alone it is all too easy to assume that the start and the end of that period were marked by great changes, and that society and the landscape before and after that period were somehow 'different'. If one takes a longer-term perspective, however, then it becomes possible to explore the relationship between these early medieval regional-scale territories and those of the preceding Roman period.

While it is clear that urban centres suffered a catastrophic decline at the end of the Roman period, the idea that there may have been greater continuity within the countryside at the end of the Roman period than had often been thought is not new. Comments such as 'there is little evidence that the fifth century saw a significant decline in the global amount of land under cultivation in Britain' (Esmonde Cleary 1989, p. 158) were perceptive, but they did little to establish just how uniform this continuity was. *The Fields of Britannia* project (Rippon *et al*. 2015) was the first attempt to systematically analyse the palaeoenvironmental and archaeological evidence for continuity and discontinuity in broad patterns of land-use (such as whether field systems remained in some form of agricultural use, albeit with a shift from arable to pasture). This revealed some marked regional variations across what had been Roman Britain, but overall there appears to have been very little total abandonment of agricultural land in the 5th and 6th centuries AD. So what of the territorial structures within which the landscape was managed?

The approach used to identify regional-scale socio-economic territories during the medieval period – the systematic mapping of large data-sets of artefacts, architectural forms, and burial practices – can also be carried out for the Roman period. In Britain this is a relatively recent approach as the traditional view of 'Ro-

manization' is one that saw a homogenization of society, landscape, and material culture, although it is increasingly recognised that regional identities are in fact reflected in artefact production and circulation (e.g. Swift 2000; Eckardt, Crummy 2008; Eckardt 2014; Revell 2016). While many forms of artefact were indeed used very widely across Roman Britain, such as certain types of brooches (Bayley, Butcher 2004, figs. 166-79; Mackreth 2011) and toilet instruments (e.g. Eckardt, Crummy 2008), there were also some regionally specific variants. 'Polden Hill' brooches, for example, were largely used in the West Midlands and the West Country (Bayley, Butcher 2004, fig. 171), rear-hook brooches in East Anglia (Plouviez 2008), and the 'Head Stud' type in Yorkshire and the East Midlands (Pearce, Worrell 2014, fig. 6). Walton (2012, pp. 37-41) has even identified some marked regional differences in coin loss. Regionality is sometimes clearer in the early Roman period after which it was replaced by greater uniformity (e.g. hairpins: Cool 2000), although some local variations in material culture becomes clearer in the later Roman period (e.g. belt fittings: Laycock 2008). Regionality in rural settlement form, agricultural practices, and architecture are also being identified across Roman Britain (e.g. Rippon 2012; Rippon *et al*. 2015; Smith *et al*. 2016; Allen *et al*. 2017; Rippon 2018a; Rippon, Gould 2021).

When this systematic mapping of Romano-British data-sets is carried out across eastern England, the results are remarkable in showing the same regional patterning as for the early medieval period with the Northern Thames Basin being distinct from East Anglia and the South East Midlands (Rippon 2018a, Chapter 4-6). These Romano-British regional differences are not as clear as in the early medieval period, but they are present in material culture (e.g. the production and distribution of local coarseware pottery), architecture (e.g. the plan-form and development over time of villas), and the evolution of urban hierarchies (which was less well-developed in East Anglia). The boundary zones between these regions are also remarkably similar to those of the early medieval period – a classic example of Williamson's 'strangely stable boundaries' – and there is a marked tendency for religious sites to occur in 'persistent places' that saw ritual use starting in the Iron Age and continuing into the Roman period (e.g. Harlow in Essex: Rippon 2018c). Indeed, these same regions – and their boundary zones – are also evident in the Middle and Late Iron Age both in material culture and settlement forms (Rippon 2018a, Chapters 2-3).

So what do these regions represent? They are very large: East Anglia covered c. 9,600 km^2, and the Northern Thames Basin c. 8,000 km^2 (the South East Midlands has not yet been completely reconstructed). The large size of these regions means that it will have been impossible for the people living within them to have met very regularly. Instead, the social and economic links that led to the development of discrete styles of material culture, architecture, and settlement forms must have developed over a long period of time through inter-community trade, exchange, and other periodic social gatherings such as seasonal feasting.

In the Late Iron Age communities within some of these regions saw the development of a united political leadership, including hereditary kingship, and in eastern England at least it appears to have been these existing territorial entities that were then adopted by Roman administrators when creating *civitates*. The apparent survival of these regions into the post-Roman period would seem to be more surprising, as this has traditionally been viewed as a period of great political, economic, and social upheaval. But this may not have been the case in all aspects of the landscape. There certainly was political upheaval – Britain ceased to be part of the Roman Empire – but the British ruling elites could have maintained some form of leadership, especially in areas that did not see mass Anglo-Saxon immigration (such as the Northern Thames Basin). Economically there were profound changes with the collapse of large-scale manufacturing and the use of coinage, although the abandonment of towns may not have been as significant as was once thought as current thinking is that they were not the primary means by which trade was conducted (e.g. Perring, Pitts 2013; Smith, Fulford 2019). If this was indeed the case then there must have been more socially embedded ways in which manufactured goods and surplus food were traded or exchanged, such as rural markets and seasonal fairs (as were common in the medieval period). The survival of those more socially embedded networks may in part explain why these regional identities appeared to have survived into the early medieval period: although their function as administrative units had disappeared, these regions continued to reflect long-standing associations between communities and landscapes that predated and transcended Roman governance. In part, these regions will also have survived as their boundaries ran through sparsely settled and uncontested zones within the landscape, that created a psychological divide between the homely countryside with which a community was familiar, and the landscapes 'over the over side' that were different and alien. The folklorist Rudkin (1955, p. 389), for example, tells a story of how she asked members of a community on the Lincolnshire Wolds whether they were aware of a Fenland custom and got the reply 'We wouldn't know that: they are strangers'.

7. The local level: district-scale early folk territories

The Tribal Hidage – probably written between the mid-7th and the 9th centuries AD (Hart 1970; 1977; Davies, Vierck 1974, pp. 224-227; Yorke 1990, p. 10; Blair 1999; Harrington, Welch 2014, p. 1) – assessed Anglo-Saxon communities in terms of 'hides'[2]. East Anglia (assessed as 30,000 hides) and the East Saxons

[2] A 'hide' was a very common unit of assessment in early medieval England, but one with a complex history. According to Bede, it was the 'land of one *familia*': the amount of land required to support the extended family of a free man with their slaves and retainers (Faith 1997, pp. 12, 132; Hooke 1998,

(7,000 hides) dwarfed the smaller communities of 'Middle Anglia' such as the Gifla, Hicca, and East Wixna (each assessed as 300 hides) and the East and West Willa, North and South Gyrwa, and West Wixna (each assessed as 600 hides). The latter may have been comparable in scale to territories referred to in some charters as *regiones* or *pagi*. In 704x709, for example, King Offa of the East Saxons granted Wealdhere, Bishop of London, land in the *pagus* of *Hæmele* (Hemel Hempstead: Sawyer 1968, No. 1784; Gelling 1979, No. 160; Kelly 2004, No. 4). In 706x709 King Swæfred of the East Saxons granted 70 hides in the *regione* called *Deningei* (Dengie) to Ingwald, Bishop of London (Sawyer 1968, No. 1787; Hart 1971, No. 7; Kelly 2004, No. 6). And in 716x757 King Æthelbald of Mercia granted Wihtred, his *comes* [companion], 7 *manentes* in the *regio* called *Geddinges* [Yeading] in the province of the Middle Saxons (Sawyer 1968, No. 100; Gelling 1979, No. 198). In none of these is the extent of the *pagus*/*regio* given, although Dengie was clearly larger than the 70 hide estate that was granted to the Bishop of London.

There have been various attempts at reconstructing the extent of individual *pagi* or *regiones*, and a bewildering array of terms used for them. These include 'river estates' (Hoskins 1952, pp. 303-304), 'multiple estates' (Jones 1979; 1985), 'great estates' (Williamson 1993, pp. 92-104; 2010; Dyer 2003, p. 27), 'federal estates'/'land units' (Lewis *et al*. 1997, pp. 9, 20, 90), 'federative estates' (Blair 1991, p. 24), 'archaic hundreds' (Klingelhöfer 1992), 'large terrains' (Fleming 1998, p. 51), and 'folk-groups' (Blair 2005, p. 49). The most widely used of these terms is Jones' 'multiple estate' which expressed the basic socio-economic principle that early territories embraced a wide range of environments such as meadow and woodland alongside arable and pasture, with some settlements specialising in the exploitation of particular environments (e.g. seasonal shielings in the uplands). The 'multiple estate' model also embraced a hierarchical structure within both society and the landscape, with dues paid in kind (e.g. food renders) to the social elite through a central place. There are, however, problems with the 'multiple estate' model (Gregson 1985; Faith 2008; Winchester 2008). Firstly it was derived from legalistic and highly theoretical concepts described in Welsh Law Codes that were written down as late as the 13th century AD, and even if they contained some early medieval material, they were distant in space from the rest of early medieval Britain. The second problem is that the term has been applied to territories of very different character and size that cannot have functioned in the same way: Aberffraw on Anglesey, for example, covered

p. 50). By the late 7th century, the Laws of the West Saxon King Ine record that the hide was used as the measure of apportioning liability to *feorm* (food render), *gafol* (tax), and various services owed to the king (Attenborough 1922, p. 59; Whitelock 1955, pp. 364-372; Faith 1997, pp. 38, 105, 107, 128; Dyer 2003, p. 31). A hide at this time was not a fixed unit of area, and the oft-stated figure of 120 acres per hide is a post-Conquest notion; instead, a hide was 'the essential unit in assessing, administering and financing service to the king' (Faith 1997, pp. 90, 28).

around 180 km^2 whereas Burghshire in Yorkshire was in the order of 900 km^2 (Jones 1979). The third problem is that the term 'estate' implies private ownership whereas early medieval territories will have been folk-based with the authority of the social elite resting upon the right to demand goods and services from communities rather than owning land.

The term that this author prefers is therefore 'early folk territory' (Rippon 2018a; 2018b; in press) as it reflects the association between communities and the landscapes within which they lived (and that these kinship and folk-based territories pre-dated the ownership of land that the introduction of charters brought about from the late 7th to 8th centuries AD). The collective way in which life in these districts was administered is reflected in how judicial hearings were held at the communal gathering places (Reynolds 2009; 2013; Baker 2015, p. 253). The law code of King Æthelbert of Kent written c.600, for example, describes how breaching the 'peace of an assembly' required compensation, while the later 7th-century Kentish laws of Hlothere and Eadric state that 'if one man accuses another at an assembly, the accused is to provide him with surety and agree to abide by the decision of the judges of Kent' (Whitelock 1955, p. 357; Reynolds 2013, p. 705; Lambert 2017, p. 44). In some regions early folk territories appear to have evolved into the 10th-century AD administrative districts known as 'hundreds' but this was often not the case, which is why Klingelhöfer's (1992) term 'archaic hundreds' is not appropriate everywhere. Ironically, it is the earliest of the terms cited above – Hoskins' (1952) 'river estates' – that hit upon a crucial feature of the early folk territories: that they were focussed on the well-settled, fertile lowlands of river valleys.

An important attempt at reconstructing an individual early folk territory was Bassett's (1997) work on the Rodings in Essex (fig. 4), a group of eight parishes and sixteen Domesday manors and other land-holdings called Roding, derived from the Old English folk-name **Hrōthingas*, 'the people called after Hrotha' (Watts 2004, p. 505). Bassett skilfully used a wide range of documentary evidence to show how these parishes were once part of a single early medieval territory, but he made an important mistake: as he tried to reconstruct the folk territory of the Rodings he assumed that its boundary corresponded to the group of parishes whose name included that place-name element. In contrast, a study of the wider landscape that looked beyond the cluster of Roding place-names revealed a web of territorial connections that extended well to the south and embraced the rest of the river valley (fig. 4; Rippon 2018b; in press). Bassett's (1997) work on the Rodings is also a good example of how most previous work has focussed on reconstructing individual territories, rather than trying to map them across entire regions. Reconstructing only a single territory leaves many important questions unanswered most notably whether all of the early medieval landscape was divided up into early folk territories or if there were areas of the

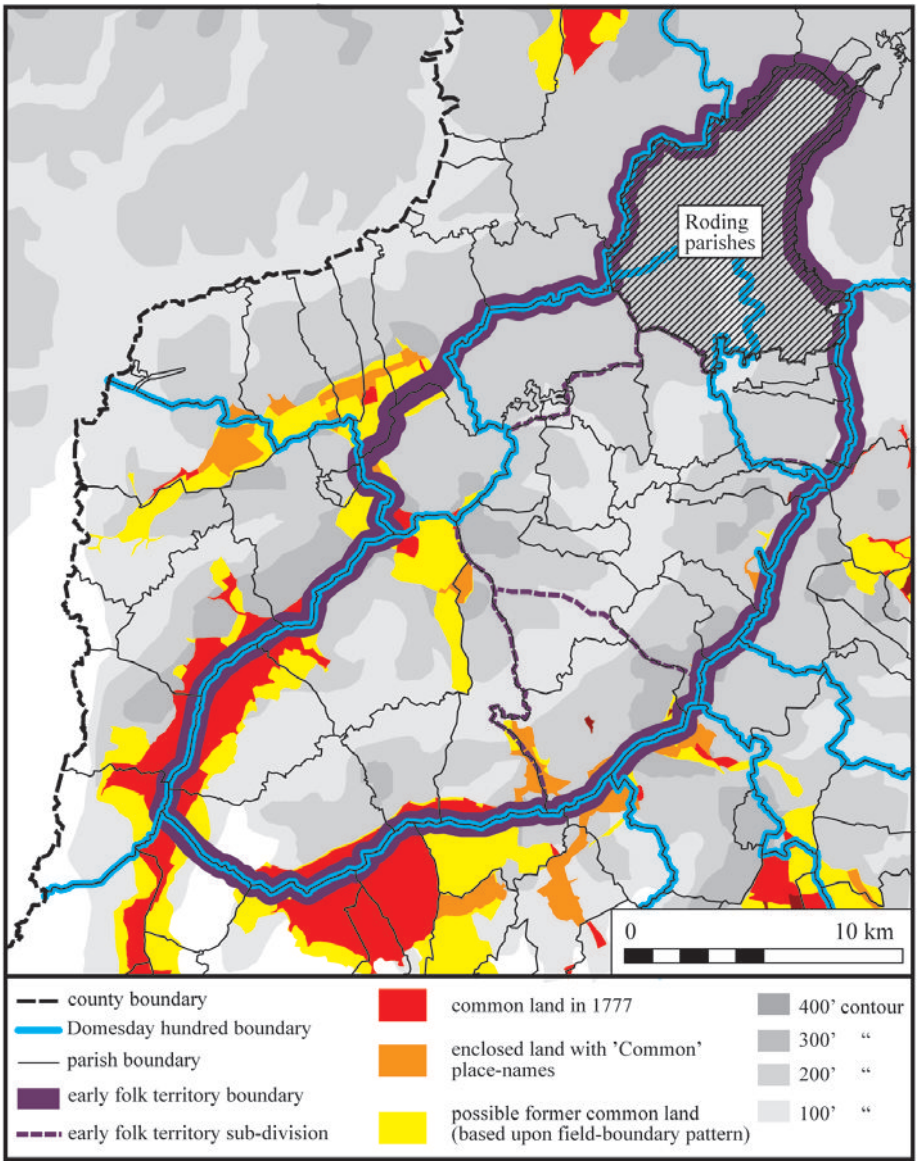

Fig. 4. A reconstruction of the Roding Valley early folk territory that was far larger than the group of parishes including 'Roding' in their name (see Rippon 2018b and in press for a detailed discussion of the sources and methods used).

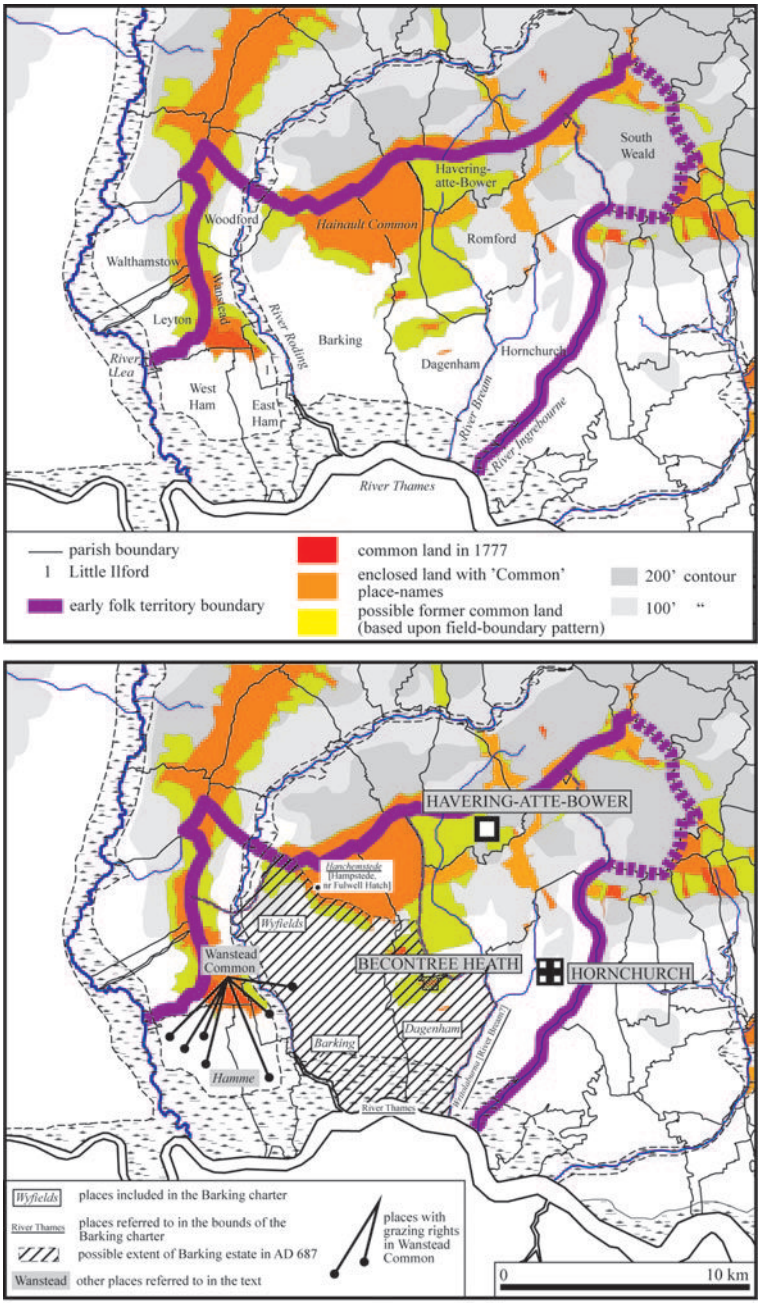

Fig. 5. A reconstruction of the Havering early folk territory (see Rippon in press for a detailed discussion of the sources and methods used), evidence contained in the Barking charter, and places with rights to graze animals on Wanstead Common.

landscape that did not fall within such territorial structures. In two regions that this author has studied – a large part of western Wessex (Somerset, Dorset, and eastern Devon) and the East Saxon kingdom in eastern England (fig. 1; Rippon 2012; in press) – however, it does appear that all areas were part of discrete early folk territories.

8. A case study in reconstructing an early medieval folk territory: Havering, the land of the *Haeferingas*

The early folk territory of Havering, on the northern banks of the Thames estuary in what is now eastern London, is a good example both of how a wide range of sources need to be woven together in order to reconstruct the full extent of an early folk territory, and of the form that those territories took[3]. In Domesday Book, this area of Essex lay within the Hundred of Becontree that was bounded to the south by the Thames, to the west by the River Lea, to the east by the Ingrebourne River, and to the north by the high ground of Hainault and Wanstead Commons, and Waltham Forest. Becontree Hundred appears to have been the successor to a relatively small early folk territory covering c. 170 km^2 (to which the parishes of Walthamstow and Leyton were added sometime before Domesday). Most of this district had light soils derived from sands and gravels, with high ground and poor soils of the London Clay to the north, and marshland fringing the Thames estuary to the south. The early folk territory appears to have been divided into three following the foundation and endowment of Barking Abbey which left blocks of land to the east (including the royal vill at Havering-atte-Bower) and west (including the parishes of East and West Ham).

The administrative centre of the territory was Havering-atte-Bower, a royal manor in Domesday whose place-name means 'the residence [-atte-Bower] in the settlement of the people of **Hæfer* (*Hæferingas*)' (Reaney 1935, p. 111; Watts 2004, p. 288). As Havering is the only estate recorded by Domesday in this eastern part of Becontree Hundred it presumably included the adjacent but undocumented (in Domesday) later parishes of Hornchurch and Romford. That Hornchurch was a former minster church – that served an area far wider than its later medieval parish – is suggested by the way that it had chapelries at Havering-atte-Bower and Romford (both of which only achieved independent parochial the late 18th and early 19th centuries AD: Victoria County History of Essex VII, 1, 23; Youngs 1980, p. 149). Hornchurch was also a very large parish (14,499a), and its early name *ecclesia de Haweringis* points to it serving the Havering

[3] This author's approach towards reconstructing early folk territories, and the sources and techniques used, have been presented in *Beyond the Medieval Village* (Rippon 2008), *Making Sense of an Historic Landscape* (Rippon 2012), and *Territoriality in the Early Medieval Landscape* (Rippon 2018b; in press).

district (the name Hornchurch only appeared in the 13th century AD: Reaney 1935, p. 112). The hundred meeting place (Becontree Heath: Christy 1928, p. 193) lay in neighbouring Dagenham which along with the royal manor at Havering-atte-Bower, and the minster church at Hornchurch, provides an example of a polyfocal central place. The boundaries between Dagenham, Hornchurch, Havering-atte-Bower, and Romford all zigzag through the historic landscape confirming that they were once part of the same early territory.

The kingdom of the East Saxons has not left us many charters, although several survive for Barking Abbey to the west of Hornchurch. The church at Barking was founded by Eorcenwald, Bishop of the East Saxons, in c. AD 666 (*HE* IV.7; Victoria County History of Essex V, 185). An initial confirmation charter of AD 687/8 records how in c. AD 687 Edilred, a kinsman of King Sæbbii of the East Saxons, gave the newly founded church at *Berecingas et Beddanhaam* (Barking) land comprising 35 *manentes* [hides] in *Ricingaham* (unlocated), *Budinham* (Barking), *Daeccanhaam* (Dagenham), *Angenlabeshaam* (unlocated), and the field in the wood called *Widmundesfelt* (Wyfields in Great Ilford) (fig. 5; Hart 1971, Nos. 4-5). The bounds of the estate were the *flumen Thamisa* [the river Thames to the south], *Writolaburna* [presumably the river Bream to the east], *Centinces triow* [Centing's tree, unlocated], and *Hanchemstede* [possibly Hampstede, near Fulwell Hatch at the south-west corner of Hainault Forest to the north] (Victoria County History of Essex V, 190; Hart 1971, No. 4). The western boundary is not given but may have been the river Roding, as East and West Ham to the west were the subject of a separate charter of 958 (see below). Barking was an extremely large parish (12,307a) that included Ilford to the north and which only became a separate parish in 1830 (Victoria County History of Essex V, 184; Youngs 1980, p. 129). The parish boundary between Barking and Dagenham zigzags through, and so clearly post-dates, the historic landscape, and as the earliest reference to ecclesiastical provision in Dagenham is in 1205 when Baldwin 'the chaplain' was involved in a dispute, it appears that Dagenham was a chapelry of Barking (Victoria County History of Essex V, 294). Neither Dagenham nor Ilford appear in Domesday and were presumably part of Barking (the Domesday entry for 'Ilford' refers to Little Ilford on the opposite side of the river Roding: Victoria County History of Essex VI, 164). Overall, the estate in AD 687 appears to have lain between the river Thames to the south, the Bream to the east, the Roding to the west, and the wooded commons of Hainault to the north.

Between the Roding and the Lea lie five parishes – East Ham, West Ham, Little Ilford, Wanstead, and Woodford – that appear once to have been a single territory. East and West Ham were clearly once a single estate, being documented as such (*Hamme)* in AD 958 (Hart 1971, No. 15). The parish boundary between *Hamme* and Wanstead to the north clearly post-dates the historic landscape (Wanstead also had a detached parcel in West Ham), and the con-

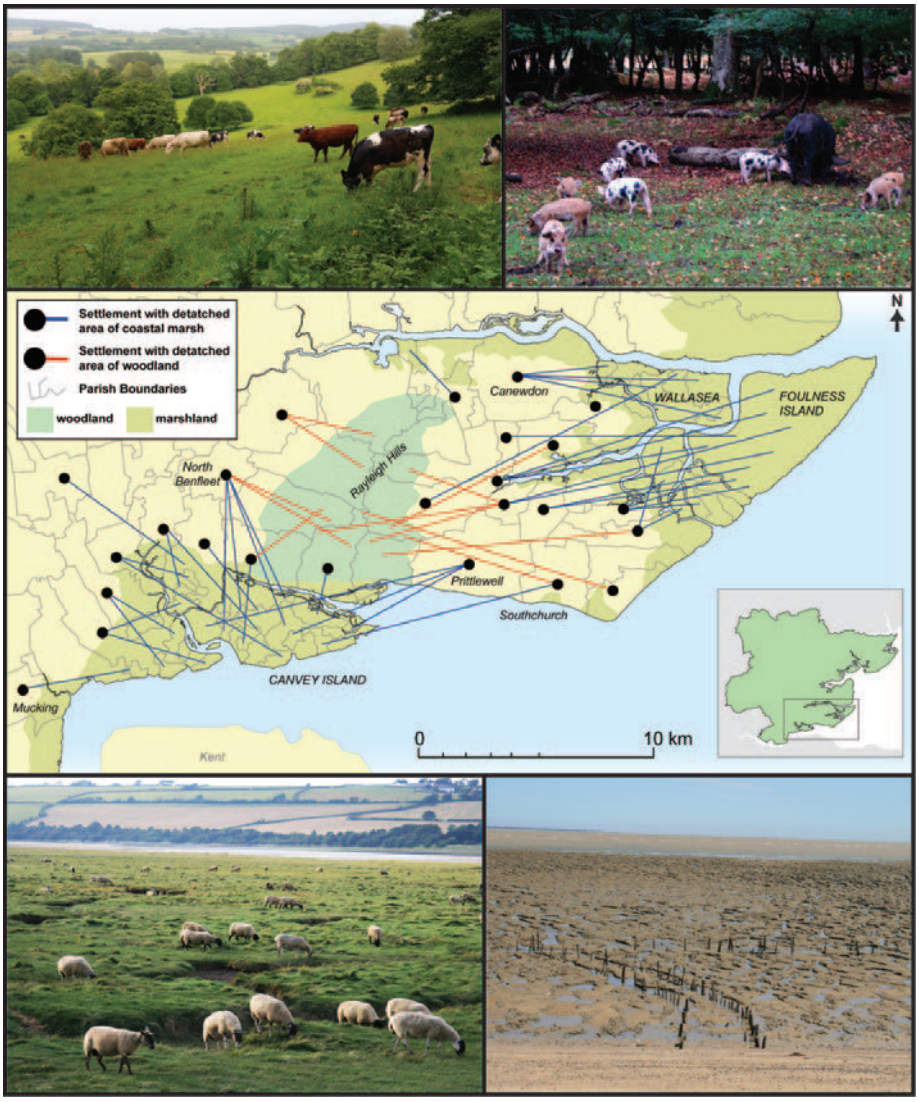

Fig. 6. The network of detached land-holdings that link inland communities in South-East Essex to important shared resources including woodland and wood-pasture on the high ground of the Rayleigh Hills, with the opportunity for grazing and fish traps on the coastal saltmarshes and mudflats.

figuration of its boundaries suggests that Little Ilford was carved out of East Ham and Wanstead (by 1066: Rumble 1983, 64,1). Woodford had also clearly been carved out of the far north of Wanstead, as its parish boundaries cut across the historic landscape, although this had happened by Domesday (Rumble 1983, 8,1). In contrast, the western and northern boundaries of

Wanstead and Woodford follow a remarkably long, sinuous, watershed boundary that is clearly an early landscape feature running through the southern part of Waltham Forest (that in 1777 still included large areas of common land). In the 16th century the tenants of Little Ilford, East Ham, West Ham, Upton, Plaistow, and Stratford (the last three being hamlets in West Ham parish) all had grazing rights in Wanstead Common, as did those of Ilford to the east of the Roding (fig. 5; Fisher 1887, p. 287).

9. Resource distribution across early folk territories

The Rodings and Havering illustrate many of the typical features of early folk territories. Where landscapes contained varied topography that included both high and low ground, and good and poor soils, their boundaries typically ran through areas with the lowest agricultural potential such as high ground (that was woodland or heathland), and low-lying wetlands. The central places usually lay within the agricultural heartlands, although some – including Havering-atte-Bower – were on the margins adjacent to woodland, heathland, and marshland. Such locations suggest that these physically marginal environments were highly valued for the resources they provided, notably grazing for livestock. This is seen most clearly in the coastal districts of Essex where two strands of evidence suggest that saltmarshes were once managed communally. Firstly, before the 19th century, these marshes were held as detached parcels of inland parishes, and secondly Domesday records that numerous inland manors held 'pasture for sheep' that was presumably located within these detached parcels shown on later maps (fig. 6; Round 1903, pp. 369-374; Darby 1952, pp. 241-245). It seems logical, therefore, that the coastal marshes were once all held in common with their resources shared by communities living on the adjacent dryland areas. As territorial boundaries – both secular and ecclesiastical – started to be defined more closely these commons were divided up, with each community that had once held shared rights receiving a parcel. It is unclear whether Domesday Book's 'pasture for sheep' refers to the pre- or post-enclosure landscape on these coastal marshes.

The same appears to have been true of certain upland areas such as Wanstead Common (see above, fig. 5) and the Rayleigh Hills where parcels of woodland and heathland were parts of parishes down in the lowlands to the east (fig. 6; e.g. Temple Sutton's detached woodland called 'Temple Wood' in Hadleigh: Rackham 1986b, pp. 16, 21; Lord 2002, pp. 71-72). Rayleigh and Hadleigh are examples of the large number of place-names containing the Old English '-*leah*' on this high ground that is now thought to be indicative of wood-pasture (Hooke 2008). It is also noteworthy that Domesday Book records less woodland than expected on these upland manors, yet there is more than expected

woodland recorded for some lowland manors to the east. The most likely explanation for this is that just as inland communities had areas of coastal marshland for their sheep, so these lowland communities had areas of woodland on the uplands to graze their pigs. These fertile lowland areas contained almost no woodland when first mapped in 1777, yet Domesday records that manors there held large amounts of woodland that was described by the number of pigs that it could support. Shoebury, for example, held 'woodland for 20 pigs', yet by 1777 there was no woodland in the parishes of North and South Shoebury, and so it was probably at 'Shoebury Grove' in the north-west corner of Leigh parish (up on the Rayleigh Hills) that is documented in 1536 and appears on 19th-century maps (Rackham 1986b, pp. 18, 21, 100). By the 11th century AD the well-wooded Rayleigh Hills had also assumed another role as a place for lordly sport and recreation when they became the location of the early Norman castle and deer park at Rayleigh (Rumble 1983, pp. 24,17). The same is seen on the margins of the Roding early folk territory where a pre-Norman (mid 11th-century) park is documented at Ongar (Hart 1971, No. 59; Rackham 1986a, fig. 6.2). The creation of these parks is an example of the privatisation of what had been shared landscapes.

The complexities of managing common resources are discussed elsewhere in this volume and as such need not detain us further (see Gould, and Stagno *et al.* in this volume, with their discussions of Ostrom's (1990) *Governing the Commons* and the diversity of resources that could be managed in this way). We should, however, reflect on the antiquity of the arrangements seen in early medieval England. This has seen some recent discussion, with Oosthuizen (2013) suggesting that such practices date back to prehistory. She begins by making a simple observation that there are similarities in the physical characteristics of areas of permanent pasture in the late prehistoric/Romano-British periods and areas that in the later medieval period are known to have been commons. It is then noted that 'this is a long way, however, from establishing the proposition that prehistoric and Romano-British cultivators utilised and managed their grazing lands in the same ways as their medieval successors' (Oosthuizen 2013, p. 29). Unfortunately this caution is soon abandoned. It is argued that 'the collective management of pastoral landscapes under common rights may represent a continuous tradition from prehistoric into early medieval England and after' (Oosthuizen 2013, p. 42) and that 'it follows, then, that if at least some prehistoric and Roman arable was laid out in open fields subdivided between a number of cultivators, then they were probably managed within a CPrR' (common property regime, i.e. a collective institution that governed common pasture and open fields) (Oosthuizen 2013, p. 78). These claims, that both pasture and arable were managed collectively in the late prehistoric and Roman periods, and that collective arrangements documented in the medieval period show continuity back to the late prehistoric and Roman periods, are certainly bold, but – in the opinion of this author – lack credible evidence. There certainly were extensive areas of per-

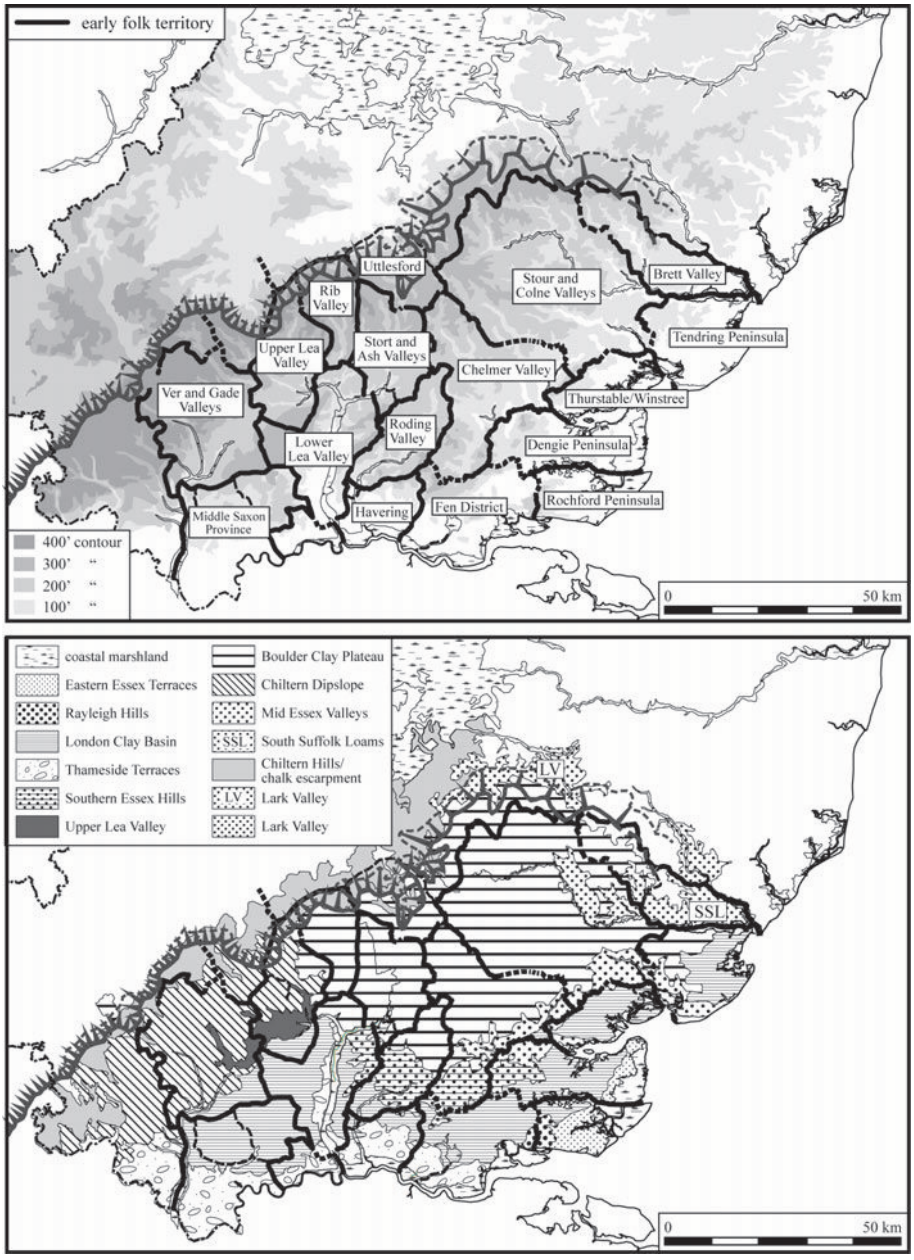

Fig. 7. The early folk territories across the East Saxon kingdom at the period of its maximum extent in the 7th century.

manent pasture during the late prehistoric and Roman periods, but that these pastures were managed in the same way from the prehistoric through to the medieval period is clearly unproven because the prehistoric and Roman periods lack the documentary sources that we have for later periods (Rippon 2013).

What is clear, however, is that there will have been some seasonal movement of livestock around these landscapes, not least because it would have been impossible to graze animals on coastal saltmarshes during the stormy winter months. The Laws of King Ine (688-694), for example, refer to 'mast-pasture' and 'pannage' (the grazing of pigs on Autumn falls of acorns and beech nuts: Whitelock 1955, p. 368). This movement of livestock around these early folk territories will have been one way in which their communities were drawn together, another being any communal gatherings, and early folk territories were of a scale whereby members of the community could have regularly met face-to-face. Across the East Saxon kingdom sixteen early folk territories have been reconstructed with an average area of 377 km^2 (the range being 170-692 km^2: fig. 7)[4]. Where assembly places can be identified they are always close to the physical centre of the early folk territory (Rippon in press) suggesting that in the average sized early folk territory no place was more than c. 19 km from its centre. It is difficult to generalise how far someone in the past could have walked in a day as it will depend on the topography, how well made the road or trackway was, what they were carrying, whether they were on foot or horseback, or accompanied by a packhorse, ox- or horse-drawn cart. The Antonine Itinerary, for example, suggests that many Romano-British *mansiones* – official buildings whose roles included providing over-night accommodation for Imperial officials – were around 12 to 15 Roman miles apart (18-22 km: Jones, Mattingly 1990, map 2.8) although they will have been linked by well-made roads. In 19th-century Devon it was said that people would travel up to six or seven miles to get to a market town in a day (i.e. a round trip of 12 miles [19 km]) (Kowaleski 1995, pp. 49, 54-55). This suggests that in an average-sized early folk territory of 377 km^2 most people could have walked to a communal gathering at the centre of the territory in one day, although not all of them could have attended a communal gathering and got home the same day.

10. Belonging and identity: place and person

We know the names of very few early folk territories, although the examples referred to in East Saxon charters described above mention the *regione* called *Deningei* (Dengie) and the *regio* called *Geddinges* [Yeading]. To these can be added the assumption that the territory of which Havering-atte-Bower was the

[4] In the Colne and Stort valleys an area of 1149 km^2 was either a single early folk territory or an area in which it has not been possible to reconstruct any smaller ones.

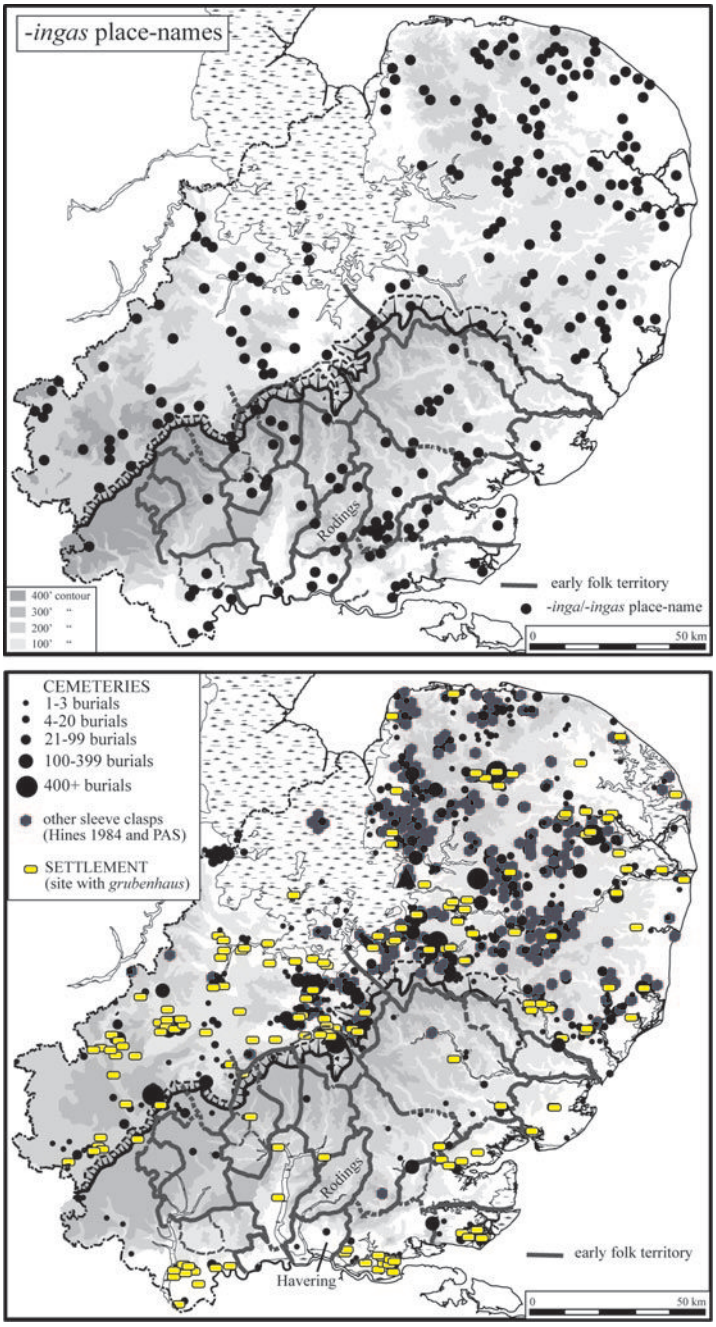

Fig. 8. The distribution of -ingas place-names across eastern England, showing how they are spread right across the landscape including in areas without archaeological evidence for Anglo-Saxon settlement (including the Rodings early folk territory).

royal manor, and Hornchurch (*ecclesia de Haweringis*) the minster, was named after the *Hæferingas*, and the Rodings was named after the *Hrōthingas*. In total, of the sixteen early folk territories identified in the East Saxon kingdom twelve have evidence for folk-names in *-ingas*, while two others may have been named after an individual (Rippon in press). Folk names such as those in *-ingas* are common in eastern England although they were far more widespread than the archaeological evidence for 5th to 6th century AD Anglo-Saxon colonization, occurring for example in large numbers on the claylands of the Northern Thames Basin where there is a marked absence of *Grubenhäuser* and burials with Anglo-Saxon grave goods (fig. 8). This lack of 5th to 6th century AD Anglo-Saxon settlement is clearly genuine as extensive surveys and excavations in these areas have revealed abundant evidence for prehistoric, Roman-British, and later medieval settlement. This lack of correspondence between *-ingas* place-names and evidence for early Anglo-Saxon colonisation led Dodgson (1966) to propose that instead of representing the initial phase of Anglo-Saxon settlement, *-ingas* and *-inga-* names are evidence of a later phase of immigration. Another possibility, however, is that they reflect the naming of folk territories by a social elite who had adopted Old English as their language irrespective of their own genetic heritage, or those of the communities living in these territories.

If this hypothesis about the use of *-ingas* type place-names is correct then it reflects an association between communities, their possibly mythical leader, and a specific area of land, rather than their ethnic identity. Elsewhere in southern Britain there are different naming traditions reflecting a strong association between early folk territories and the natural landscape. In Devon and Somerset, for example, there is almost no evidence for the names of the early folk territories themselves, but a large number of their central places, and in particular their royal vills, have a place-name combining a river name and -ton. This naming tradition reflects the strong connection between communities and the major topographical feature that ran through their territories – the river – with their boundaries invariably running through sparsely settled areas such as along watersheds. Of the fourteen early folk territories reconstructed in this part of South-West England so far, the average area is 324 km^2, the lowest being 205 km^2 and the largest 449 km^2 (the latter including a large area of what would have been unoccupied wetland in the Somerset Levels: Rippon 2018a, fig 9.1 and tab. 10.1). In a third study area that is currently being researched – South Devon (fig. 1) – the two early folk territories reconstructed so far were 318 km^2 and 306 km^2. This is also similar to the average of 377 km^2 seen in eastern England and it presents the intriguing possibility that as communities divided-up the landscape, similar sized early folk territories were established based upon the areas across which there could be regular contact between community members. This hypothesis, of there being an optimum size for early folk territories, is strengthened by geographical spread of these case studies that straddle the important divide

in British landscape character that is marked by the 'Central Province' (the broad swathe of central England that saw the development of villages and open fields around the 8th to 10th centuries; fig. 1).

11. Conclusions

In order to understand past societies, we have to see them in the context of the territories within which they lived their lives. These territories were constructs of the human mind and as such leave few physical traces within the landscape, but through an interdisciplinary approach – that brings together archaeological, documentary, cartographic, and place-name evidence – it has been possible to reconstruct them across an entire Anglo-Saxon kingdom. These territories were made by human communities but partly shaped by the natural environment. At their core they all had fertile lowlands and river valleys, while their boundaries ran through sparsely settled landscapes notably on high ground. Until the development of land-ownership (i.e. true estates) and more complex state-based societies with their associated bureaucracies, there was little need to define boundaries precisely, and those of early folk territories were instead marked by zones within the landscape where few people lived, and the woodland, wood pasture, and other rough grazing was managed in common. In eastern England some of those watersheds still had extensive areas of common land as late as the post-medieval period, and a characterisation of field-boundary patterns and field- and place-names suggests that these commons were once far more extensive. Occasionally we even have documentary evidence for the places that formerly held grazing rights in these commons, such as the Domesday Book's references to 'pasture for sheep' in the south Essex marshes, and the 16th-century list of places whose tenants had grazing rights in Wanstead Common in Havering. Whether these early folk territories had their origins in Roman or pre-Roman times is impossible to say: we simply do not have the documentary and place-name evidence that exists for the medieval period, while variations in material culture, architecture and settlement form – that allow us to reconstruct regional scale territoriality – are not evident at this smaller, district, scale. It is, however, very striking how similar in size and character the early medieval early folk territories appear to have been right across southern England, suggesting that there was an optimum size within which social ties could create a sense of community. While it is plausible that these early medieval folk territories did indeed have their origins as the *pagi* or and *vici* of which we get fleeting glimpses from the Roman period, this will be very difficult to prove. That there does at least appear to be continuity of some form in the larger regional-scale territories, however, hopefully shows the need for archaeologists to start looking outside their traditional period-based silos and take a more diachronic approach to studying the past.

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Abstract

This paper explores two different scales of community identity in early medieval Britain and their possible antecedents in the Roman and pre-Roman periods. The traditional focus of archaeologists and historians has been on territorial structures of a political and administrative nature, but it is argued here that these were underlain by district- and regional-scale territories that reflected spheres of socio-economic interaction within which rural communities conducted their daily lives. These various territories were focussed on fertile lowland areas, with their initially diffuse boundary zones lying within sparsely settled and physically more marginal environments such as along watersheds. This pattern of territorial identities – deeply rooted in the landscape and its farming communities – had probably existed for around a millennium before being swept away by administrative reform in the 10th or early 11th centuries AD as the growing power of the English state asserted its authority.
Keywords: Romano-British, early medieval, Britain, early folk territory.

Questo articolo indaga le identità di comunità a due diverse scale nella Gran Bretagna altomedievale e i possibili precursori nel periodo romano e pre-romano. Tradizionalmente, archeologi e storici si sono focalizzati su strutture territoriali di natura politica e amministrativa, ma qui si discute se queste fossero basate su territori a scala distrettuale o regionale specchio di sfere di interazione socio-economica entro le quali le comunità rurali vivevano quotidianamente. Questi territori erano concentrati in bassure fertili, con le loro diffuse zone di confine entro zone di insediamento sparso e ambienti fisicamente più marginali come lungo bacini idrici. Questo pattern *di identità territoriali – profondamente radicato nel paesaggio e nelle sue comunità agricole – probabilmente esistette per circa un millennio prima di essere spazzato via dalla riforma amministrativa di X o inizio XI secolo, quando il crescente potere dello stato inglese affermò la sua autorità.*
Parole chiave: *Romano-Britannico, alto medioevo, Britannia, territorio* 'early folk'.

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