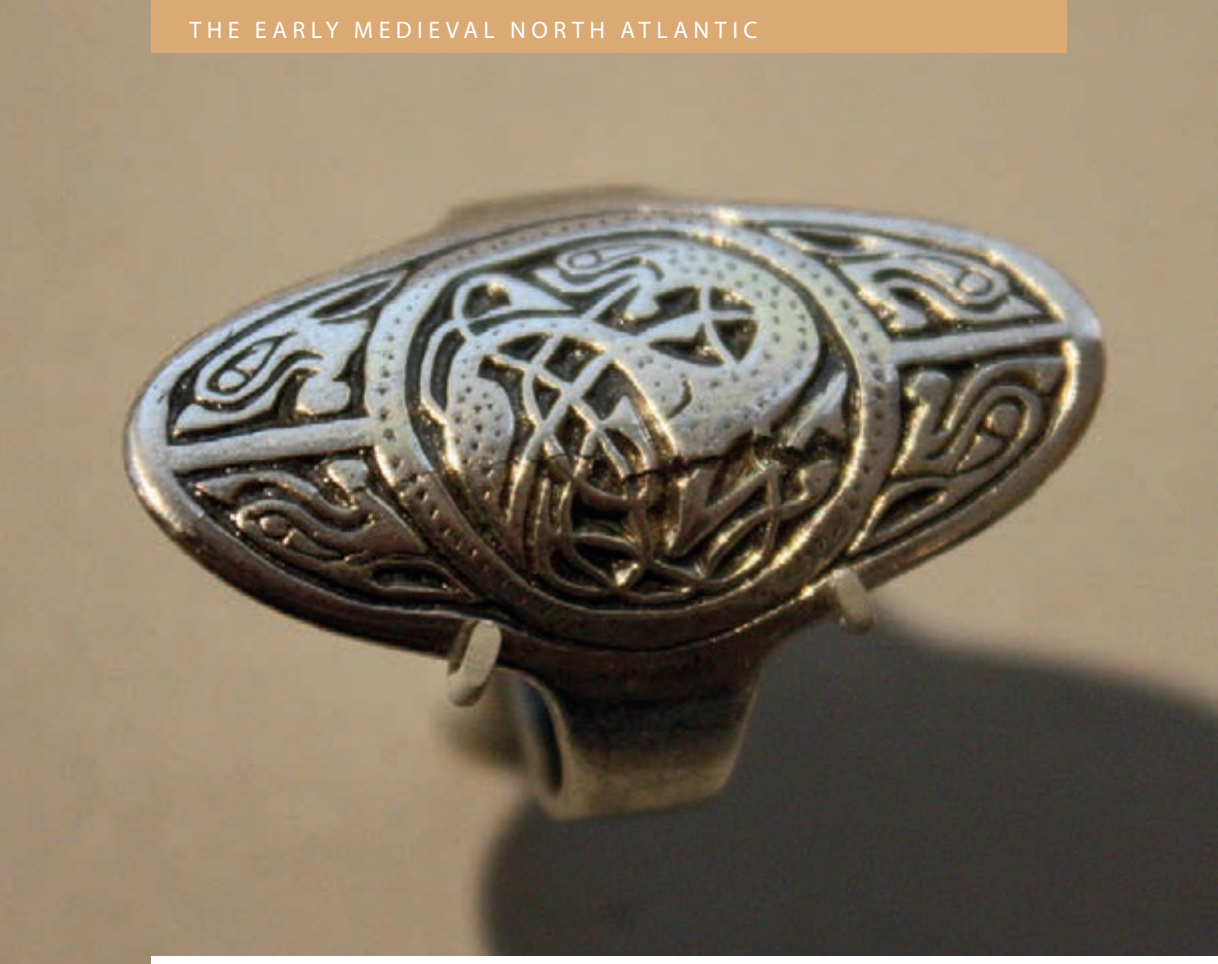

Alexander D. Mirrington

Transformations of Identity and Society in Anglo-Saxon Essex

A Case Study of an Early Medieval North Atlantic Community

Amsterdam
University
Press

Transformations of Identity and Society in Anglo-Saxon Essex

The Early Medieval North Atlantic

This series provides a publishing platform for research on the history, cultures, and societies that laced the North Sea from the Migration Period at the twilight of the Roman Empire to the eleventh century.
The point of departure for this series is the commitment to regarding the North Atlantic as a centre, rather than a periphery, thus connecting the histories of peoples and communities traditionally treated in isolation: Anglo-Saxons, Scandinavians/Vikings, Celtic communities, Baltic communities, the Franks, etc. From this perspective new insights can be made into processes of transformation, economic and cultural exchange, the formation of identities, etc. It also allows for the inclusion of more distant cultures – such as Greenland, North America, and Russia – which are of increasing interest to scholars in this research context.

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Cover illustration: Silver ring, from the Anglo-Saxon Period, found in the River Thames
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Abbreviations

EMC	Fitzwilliam Museum Corpus of Early Medieval Coin Finds
EMS	Early Medieval Sandy Ware
GLSMR	Greater London Sites and Monuments Record
HER	Historic Environment Records
MOLA	Museum of London Archaeology
MoLAS	Museum of London Archaeology Service
PAS	Portable Antiquities Scheme
SMR	Sites and Monuments Records
UAD	Urban Archaeology Database

1 Introduction

The Anglo-Saxon period is a peculiarly formative period in English history. It is in this period that the origins of the English language and sense of nationhood can be found. The naming of the country and its constituent regions, towns, and villages, together with much of the current settlement distribution, is also largely a product of the Anglo-Saxon period. Indeed in many diverse areas of culture, from the use of coinage to Christian religious practice, the Anglo-Saxon period established an unbroken chain that continues to this day and thus shaped something of the character of English national life.

Indeed across Europe, during the early medieval period, many of the modern states of the Continent began to take shape, establishing enduring cultural and political distinctions. It is little wonder that many groups in the modern era have passionately promoted particular visions of the early medieval past. For better or worse, it is so often seen as a cultural and national starting point in the contemporary construction of group identity. It is thus a fascinating, if loaded area in which to conduct archaeological research.

In the case of Essex, we still have a politically distinct region that has endured since at least the seventh century. In the area of the traditional county of Essex we find an eastward-looking region on the front-line of many of the social, political, and economic upheavals of the early medieval period. As a result, Essex (taken together with its early polyfocal centres in the London region) presents us with an opportunity to explore the mechanisms and expressions of these formative changes, adding to a growing body of research on other contemporary regions around the eastern North Atlantic. The focus of this monograph is then to delve into the origins of this 1400-year-old region; to examine those first links in the unbroken chain.

The study presented in this monograph examines social identity, economy, and socio-political development in Anglo-Saxon Essex, between AD *c.*400 and 1066. The earlier date is set knowingly during the Roman period, so as to allow the inclusion of early artefacts of relevance to the creation of 'Anglo-Saxon' communities in Essex. This is the first time that there has been a comprehensive synthesis of the archaeological evidence for the entire duration of the Anglo-Saxon period in Essex. Furthermore, this study is the first to integrate London into an analysis of Essex.

The Essex and London region provides an exceptional case study for examining many of the key themes of the Anglo-Saxon period. Located in the south-east of England, Essex is one of the first places in England where a

diagnostic 'Anglo-Saxon' material culture is archaeologically visible. Further, Essex became one of the first attested major Anglo-Saxon kingdoms; and was only the second such polity to receive a missionary from the Augustinian mission in the seventh century. The recently excavated 'princely' burial at Prittlewell is one of the finest archaeological manifestations of developing social complexity concurrent with the establishment of Christianity in Anglo-Saxon England.

The inclusion of London in this region means that, for the first time, the re-emergence and development of this major centre can be examined in its Essex context. As a coastal society, Essex itself is an excellent case study for the examination of long-distance trade networks in early medieval Europe. Furthermore, the socio-economic and ideological impact of foreign overlordship or influence can be explored in the latter half of the period as the kingdom of Essex was ruled successively by Mercian, West Saxon, and Danish kings before being subsumed into the late Saxon English state.

As an area of primary settlement or contact, Essex provides an opportunity to look in detail at the formation of an Anglo-Saxon identity and society in eastern England. Beyond this the changing expressions and character of group identity, social complexity, and the evolution of trade networks can be explored in relation to all of the major socio-political transformations.

Themes pursued in this monograph include the nature of settlement and lifestyles, social affiliation, social networks in the rural world, and the origins and development of central places. This comprehensive thematic analysis is only possible thanks to the large amount of archaeological data from Anglo-Saxon Essex and London which have been accumulated by heritage bodies, such as the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS), the Fitzwilliam Museum (EMC), the Museum of London (MOLA, formerly MoLAS, Museum of London Archaeology Service), Greater London Sites and Monuments Record (GLSMR), Essex Historic Environment Record (HER), Sonthend Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), and Colchester Urban Archaeology Database (UAD). Until now there has been no attempt to synthesize these data for the Essex region.

This monograph will thus present the results of analyses of a huge corpus of material. The conclusions drawn from these results help to inform our understanding of large-scale transformations. In the fifth and sixth centuries the pattern of evidence from material culture shows that radical transformations occurred across the spectrum of artefact use, from everyday tools to more expressive outlets of culture in art and fashion. Notably this was a culturally mixed milieu, rather than a single clear expression. However, there is an overwhelming influence from north-western continental Europe. The

social display also heralds the beginnings of political 'unity' and collective projects, such as the resumption of coinage production.

It is indeed a strengthening and deepening of trade networks under a more stable hierarchy that characterizes the seventh and eighth centuries. Sites were established across the Essex coast and on key routes further inland to exploit and facilitate the exchange of goods. The pattern of consumption of imported material also suggests that these links had varying social importance depending on location. Links across the sea also continued to exert cultural influence in aspects of dress and art, as well as economic influence in coinage. This influence was often clearly mutual, emerging from long-standing links between regions across the sea which united them.

Between the ninth and mid-eleventh centuries political upheaval is again a marked characteristic of the archaeological record. The region was taken from successive Mercian and West Saxon hegemonies by the Scandinavians in the mid-ninth century and from then until the second decade of the following century Essex was seemingly divided informally into different zones of interaction. Northern Essex shows evidence of Scandinavian cultural influence. The coastal east shows participation in Scandinavian trade. While the south seems to have been a frontier zone, archaeologically marked by weapon deposits and fortifications. The resumption of West Saxon control began a process of greater regional urbanization and elite management of exchange. This management was largely continued during the period of Scandinavian rule in the eleventh century. Indeed, the popular cultural display in this period lacks much of the heterogeneity of the earliest centuries, indicating perhaps some cultural coalescence in the nascent English state prior to the Norman Conquest.

Topographical background of the Essex region

The region studied here consists of the present-day 'Ceremonial County' of Essex as well as a further seven London boroughs and the City of London. Essex is generally defined as the area between the River Thames in the south and the River Stour in the north; bordered to the west by the River Lea, and to the east by the North Sea. Besides these major boundaries, Essex also has a land border to the north-west with southern Cambridgeshire and small extensions to this bordering Suffolk and Hertfordshire. The Ceremonial County thus corresponds with the traditional (pre-1965) county boundaries, which include the modern county of Essex, plus the London boroughs of Havering, Barking and Dagenham, Redbridge, Waltham Forest, and Newham.

The other areas of London examined within this study consist of the City of London and the boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Hackney, Islington, Camden, the City of Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea, and Hammersmith and Fulham.

Together, Essex and London make up a low-lying coastal region. Hemmed in between the North Sea and the Chiltern Hills, the land rises from sea level in the east, to around 147 metres (482 feet) near the Cambridgeshire border in the extreme north-west.

The most outstanding feature of Essex, when compared with neighbouring regions to the north and south, is its heavily indented coastline, consisting mostly of marshland. There are three large estuaries: the Stour, the Blackwater in central-east Essex, and the Thames. And two smaller estuaries: the Colne in the north, and the Crouch/Roach Estuary in the south. The underlying geology of inland Essex is extensively cut by the alluvial terraces of the many tributaries which lead to these estuaries. However, it is possible that only the Thames, Stour, and upper Colne and Lea rivers would have been easily navigable (Sherratt 1996) (Map 1).

The geology of Essex can be separated into three zones: London, southern and coastal Essex, central Essex, and north-west Essex. In the south and along the east coast is a broad ribbon of Lower Eocenian London Clay, which in the south is peppered with the sand and clay Bagshot beds of the Upper Eocene. The vast majority of the interior of Essex is made up of Glacial Period boulder clay, making the generally acidic soil often heavy and poorly drained. The best agricultural land is found in the small area of chalk land in the north-west of the county, and in the river valleys that cut through north and central Essex.

The research context

This book is primarily concerned with issues related to two overarching themes. One is to examine the archaeological reflections of the way identity was expressed and society functioned through the Anglo-Saxon period. The other is to establish the nature of the networks in which identities and communities were created and maintained. In particular, this research is concerned with how and why identity and society changed over the course of the early medieval period in Essex.

Within these areas, themes pursued in this book include the nature of settlement and lifestyles, group identity, social networks in the rural world, and the origins and development of central places. The main themes to be

explored are primarily the dynamics of the expression of group identity, and the impact of trade, exchange, and networks between *c.*400 and 1066. Expressions of social complexity in Essex will also be explored as far as these relate to the two primary themes. These are important themes which touch upon many of the biggest issues in Anglo-Saxon archaeology. The purpose of the following sections is to place this study in its research context. A brief theoretical background is also included to give generalist readers a better understanding of the rationale behind the ongoing academic discourse in these areas.

Group identity

This book will examine the complexities of expressions of ethnic affiliation through material culture, especially from dress, coinage, and pottery. The purpose of the following is to provide a theoretical background to give readers a greater insight into specific archaeological debates referenced and the conclusions of this monograph. There is insufficient space here for an in-depth theoretical review. Indeed, that is not desirable. Rather, my intention is to provide a background that is of use to readers who are less familiar with the field of archaeology. This section reviews the theoretical discourse regarding the problems with 'reading' cultural patterns. A central point of contention has been the underlying question of what relationship we perceive there to have been between material culture and ethnic identities.

For most of the twentieth century, archaeological interpretation adhered to the so-called 'culture-history' school of thought. The German prehistorian Gustav Kossinna can largely be credited with originating this approach in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Kossinna (e.g. 1896, 1902, 1911) stated that there was a direct link between material culture and 'race'; and indeed 'race'/common ancestry and ethnic identity. For Kossinna, the tribal identities named in classical sources were based upon biological realities. He argued that it was these genetic differences between groups that were responsible for the differences in material culture, which we observe in archaeology. This notion of a direct link between material culture and groups with common ancestry has been hugely influential. The benefit of this approach to archaeology was in the simple link it proposed between 'peoples' and material culture, which enabled the spread of a particular material culture to be simply explained as the spread of a particular 'people'. Thus, material change in a region resulted from an influx of new people, to whom that culture belonged. In Anglo-Saxon archaeology, two of the foremost 'culture-historians' were E.T. Leeds and J.N.L. Myres. E.T. Leeds

(e.g. 1945) in particular observed regional differences in 'Anglo-Saxon' material culture in England and attributed these to the ethnic regional differences described by Bede. Assuming a direct link between material culture and ancestry, both Myres and Leeds saw Germanic material culture as a sure sign of the presence of immigrants, and used this material culture to plot the advance of their settlements in England (e.g. Leeds 1912, 1933, 1945; Myres 1969). Although this technique has been rightly criticized, and alternative paradigms of cultural change proposed (see below), even today the link between cultures and historically attested 'peoples' remains intact. This is particularly the case in the nomenclature of artefact classification.

The 1960s and 70s saw the development of Processual archaeology, or 'New Archaeology', most notably with the work of David Clarke (e.g. 1968) and Lewis Binford (e.g. 1972, 1981, 1983). This approach to material culture saw it as a passive response of societies to their environment. This theory sees material culture as the product of a complex system of interacting anthropogenic subsystems (e.g. social, ideological, and economic), set within and interacting with the external environment. Put simply, processualism saw culture as the product of humans adapting to their situation. It was an optimistic approach that thought that by understanding this relationship, archaeologists could begin to move beyond simply describing the technology and economies of past societies, and better explain cultural change. In Anglo-Saxon archaeology, the processual approach was at its most influential in the 1980s. For instance, Richard Hodges explained fifth-century cultural change in eastern England as a response 'to different social and economic resources as the legacy of the Empire diminished' (1989: 28). On the whole, however, it has failed to make much of an impact in early medieval archaeology, at least relative to prehistoric archaeology. It may be that Anglo-Saxon archaeology's use of a historical framework for its research has made it less accepting of processualism. On a more fundamental level, Julian Richards (1995: 54-55) has also noted that while many 'New Archaeologists' agreed on the basic tenets of this approach few could agree on how the grand system actually worked, what it was composed of, or explain how change could occur without an external stimulus.

The biggest criticism of New Archaeology was from Post-processualists, who objected to the notion that material culture was simply a passive response to stimuli. Instead, post-processualism argues that material culture is 'actively created'. This is to say post-processualists see material culture as a form of conscious, non-verbal communication, giving physical expression to abstract ideas. Further, this approach states that material culture is also used to gain control and make of sense of the world by codifying ideas in the

physical world, which can then be manipulated. Richards (1995: 55) provides a good example in contemporary society where white and black are used as symbolic, physical expressions of the abstract ideas of good and evil. What this example also demonstrates is that symbols have no intrinsic meaning. It could well be the case that another culture symbolizes 'good' with the colour black, or green, or purple, or something else entirely. To derive the meaning from symbols they must be understood to be products of their cultural context and thus any interpretation must be sensitive to this fact. Post-processualism thus sees material culture as culturally dependent and actively created symbolism. Richards (e.g. 1992, 1995) has advocated the use of the post-processual approach in Anglo-Saxon archaeology – particularly early cemeteries – as burials are actively constructed to symbolize particular ideologies and communicate these. This post-processual view of material culture as symbolism, and people as 'language-users', had a great influence on theorists in the 1990s, and it is a conception which remains influential in archaeological interpretation today.

Modern approaches to the archaeology of ethnicity are rooted in an understanding of the symbolic nature of material culture. They respect the truism that distinct material-culture regions do not equate to distinct biological groups inhabiting these regions – that ethnicity and ancestry are different things. Ancestry is natural and objective, while ethnicity is socially constructed and subjective. Banks states that 'ethnicity operates in a mythologised area of feelings and beliefs' (1996: 3), while Siân Jones has stressed that ethnic identity is a 'self-conscious identification with a particular group of people' (1996: 71, 1997: 123).

Today most archaeologists would accept that material-culture change, which may be a reflection of changing ethnicity, can occur without any great movement of people. Rather, ethnicity is seen as a cultural phenomenon that arises from interaction between groups. Material culture is simply a method by which communities can codify their sense of togetherness and give physical expression to their perceived separateness from other groups. This objectification of cultural difference can be based on all manner of things, such as shared ideologies and practices, not just common ancestry (S. Jones 1997: 123; Jenkins 1997: 165). While for Kossinna culture was a product of ethnicity (which could be equated with ancestry), today archaeologists recognize that ethnicity may be born out of culture (Shennan 1989: 16). Modern theorists also stress that ethnicity may be symbolized in different ways and in different media from region to region; or ethnic symbols may change over time in one region (e.g. Shennan 1989: 21; S. Jones 1996: 72). Indeed, importantly, the creation of an ethnic identity among a group

of people is not a certainty. Thus, we cannot posit a consistent relationship between material culture and ethnic identity. The anthropological 'instrumentalist' paradigm proposes that the notion of ethnic unity provides a means by which a group of individuals may be united and mobilized to meet particular political, economic, and social aims (e.g. Richards 1992: 136; Banks 1996: 3; Lucy 2000: 181). Acculturation models of cultural change can make use of this concept of ethnic identity as a fluid, self-conscious, and socially dependent phenomenon. They posit that the material trappings of an existing ethnic identity may be adopted by others outside the 'original' ethnic group in response to unequal power relationships. Shennan (1989: 21) states that this is a rather Darwinian model of culture change. In the 1990s and early 2000s acculturation became a popular alternative model of cultural change in Anglo-Saxon England to theories based on folk movement (e.g. Higham 1992; Lucy 2000; Moreland 2000; Ward-Perkins 2000). The active adoption of new modes must be accepted as a potential model of cultural change if we are to avoid continual interpretative recourse to waves of immigration or deterministic external factors.

The theoretical stance taken by the current study holds that when we observe discreet cultural regions, we are viewing expressions of negotiated ideology. In this book – in common with a great deal of the prior research noted above – the issues surrounding group identity will make significant reference to dress-accessory data. The selection of dress accessories to examine expressions of group affiliation is primarily a response to the theory of culture comprising acts of social display constructed from contemporary discourses. Indeed, group identity is commonly displayed across cultures in dress customs (though not exclusively). From a practical standpoint, expressive fashion accessories in the early medieval period also tend to have a better survival rate than other aspects of culture as a consequence of the relatively frequent use of metal. Dress accessories thus present a useful resource for examining active cultural affiliation at personal, communal, and regional levels.

The active nature of cultural practice influences the approach of this study to different archaeological contexts. Burial assemblages, for example, are consciously selected as a form of communication. Most dress accessories from the fifth and sixth centuries have been found in burial contexts. As a result, the approach of this study from the start has been mindful of the nature of burials as constructed events, and not necessarily reflective of everyday realities. Specifically, there are theoretical obstacles to the use of dress as revealed purely by burials. We cannot say for certain that burial costume reflects what was worn by the living. The careful incorporation of

stray finds begins to correct this picture. While some stray finds – especially when found close to other contemporary items characteristic of burial assemblages – may reflect dispersed burial assemblages or hoards, many isolated finds are likely to have been accidental losses. The proportion of accidental losses to intentionally deposited items provides a better measure of the representativeness of burial assemblages. Of course, this study is limited, as the available archaeological data are mostly not the result of scientific survey, but rather the different biases which direct excavation and metal-detector activity. Nevertheless, stray finds do provide a corrective to cultural patterns derived purely from the funerary record.

In relation to ethnic affiliation, cultural patterns revealed by this research are interpreted as conscious expressions of association with a particular group. By studying dress accessories alone it is not possible to answer whether cultural change in Essex occurred through migration or assimilatory processes. Rather it is only appropriate to explore what ethnicity, if any, was being expressed. The combination of multiple strands of archaeological evidence throughout this book enable us to suggest how collective identities may have been formed, but archaeological evidence from artefacts cannot directly answer questions related to ancestry.

This approach has also been influenced by the instrumentalist paradigm (e.g. Richards 1992: 136; Banks 1996: 3; Lucy 2000: 181), which holds that ethnic groups are created by communities to meet particular aims as a response to their socio-political circumstances. This approach necessarily places importance on social context in interpretations of the use particular material culture. Historical background is therefore provided, where appropriate. Additionally, the wider archaeological context of coinage, dress accessories, and pottery informs our understanding of the socio-economic conditions in which ethnic affiliations were expressed.

The discussion of artefacts must also be alive to intraregional zonal identities, such as urban/rural, coastal/inland, northern/southern, and so forth. This book identifies and makes reference to several material-culture zones, which are a function of their geographical and social setting. The interpretation of material-culture assemblages takes account of research (e.g. Loveluck and Tys 2006; Loveluck 2009, 2011) which holds that archaeological interpretations of discard patterns should take account of the social setting of the actors who created those deposits. As a result, I treat social setting as a variable, not as a constant.

The wealth of prior research on early medieval ethnic affiliation and expression has greatly inspired my approach to one of the major themes of this study. These issues are of particular interest as they inform our

understanding of the formation of new polities after the end of Roman Britain, as well as the popular impact of changing hegemonies and the creation of an English state. This involves a consideration too of the relationship between elite ideologies and the creation of communal identities.

Essex provides an ideal specific case study to look closely at some of these ideas. This monograph explores for the first time the dress customs of Essex preserved in the archaeological record. These analyses are conducted quantitatively and qualitatively to elucidate how these patterns might relate to group identity, particularly 'ethnic'/communal identification and cultural affiliation.

Trade, exchange, and networks

This book pursues the development of socio-economic networks in the Essex and London region throughout the Anglo-Saxon period. This involves an examination of the archaeological evidence of regional trading places, the extent of Essex's engagement with long-distance trade, the structuring of the exchange networks, and the relationship between rural Essex and the central place of London.

The key theoretical debate within this theme relates to the development of the North Sea-centred exchange network, especially from the seventh century, and its manifestation in coastal landing places, large emporia, and later towns.

During the period of East Saxon hegemony, the major emporium of Lundenwic developed. Since the 1980s, the development of the emporia and their associated trade networks has been one of the major areas of theoretical debate in early medieval studies. The discussion has particularly centred on the question of why emporia developed at all, and, more recently, how they relate to the increasing number of diverse smaller landing places.

Today's theories are often set against Richard Hodges' thesis published first in *Dark Age Economics* (1982). Hodges' model of early medieval trade was made possible by the greater archaeological investigation of early medieval urban sites in the later twentieth century. However, his research focused on urban sites, with little regional dimension. As we shall see, this is a critical aspect that more recent research – including the current monograph – seeks to correct.

For Hodges, the growth of a trade network centred on the North Sea was causally related to the emergence of a stable elite class. He has argued that 'the motive for the long-distance trade systems was the acquisition of prestige-goods, scarcities and on occasions, slave labour [...] Kings and

chiefs [...] were instrumental in the trading-systems, which appear to have developed to a formal level from the direction of trade between courts' (1989: 53-54). Hodges noted that the emporia had regular street plans, which he took to suggest their development was centrally controlled. His argument is also partially based on historical texts, particularly from Wessex, which show that kings were taking an interest in trade from the late seventh century. Taken together with the incidence and distribution of coinage and mint marks (which, he argued, demonstrate centralization), Hodges argued that '[i]t was [...] [royal] authority that was unquestionably the motor for the long-distance trade' (1989: 55). Thus the argument is that, desiring to make themselves richer and secure their status, kings had a purposeful and direct hand in fostering trade.

Hodges (1982: 50-52) also distinguishes between Type A and Type B emporia. Hodges defines Type A emporia as seasonal markets and fairs which, as a result of elite opportunism, in many places developed into structured and tightly controlled trading areas (Type B emporia) through the elites' aspiration to control trade and access to/distribution of, in particular, prestige goods. Hodges had one further classification – Type C emporia – for sites which developed particularly from the late ninth/tenth century onwards, which had even greater administrative and economic functions (1982: 50-52). In sum, for Hodges, the emporia were 'an expression of imperial needs' (1989: 65).

Hodges' theory can be situated within the substantivist tradition, following Polanyi's work (e.g. 1957, 1963, 1968) in particular. The substantivist position posits that modern economic theories cannot be used to examine 'primitive economies'. From a substantivist view, exchange in 'primitive' societies is seen as socially embedded. Thus exchange in early medieval north-west Europe is largely seen as consisting of non-commercial transactions, such as gift-exchange or tribute. For example, Hodges (e.g. 1982: 148-149) argued that the movement of goods in the early medieval period was driven by kin-based networks mediated by regional institutions.

Beyond the fundamental system behind early medieval economies, substantivists such Grierson (e.g. 1959, 1961, 1963, 1967, 1970, 1975) – supported later by Hodges (1982) – have also theorized on the emergence of coinage in north-western Europe in the sixth and seventh centuries. Grierson (e.g. 1961, 1970) argued that early gold and silver coins were only used by certain groups for specific socially embedded practices, such as gift-exchange, fines, or taxes. Meanwhile trade was probably conducted largely without the use of coinage. The *social* role of early gold and silver coins was thus emphasized, rejecting any commonplace economic function.

In contrast to this substantivist view is the formalist position, which maintains that it is possible to use modern economic forces, such as supply and demand, to examine past economies. Formalists further argue that coinage was minted in sufficient quantities from the later seventh century as to merit the conclusion that it was being used in commercial exchanges. This position has become increasingly credible as more and more 'sceattas' (late seventh-/eighth-century silver coins) have been recorded across eastern Britain and elsewhere, partially as a result of more frequent field surveys, but more particularly resulting from amateur metal-detecting and improved find recording.

The formalist position has been put forward most notably by Metcalf (e.g. 1965, 1974, 1977, 1988, 1989; Hill and Metcalf 1984). Metcalf (1988; Hill and Metcalf 1984) argued that much of England was fully engaged in monetary exchange by the mid-eighth century, and that, prior to this, later seventh- and early eighth-century sceattas reflected commercial exchange and the expansion of coin usage throughout much of north-western Europe. It is Metcalf's formalist view that has been most influential in modern interpretations of later sixth-/seventh-century coinage distributions and concentrations, which are now largely taken as reflective of an at least partially monetized exchange network (e.g. Blackburn 2011).

Much recent scholarship emphasizes the heterogeneity in coin usage, rather than solely social or monetary functions. Williams (G. Williams 2010), for example, has argued that fifth- and sixth-century gold coinage – both imported and Anglo-Saxon – probably functioned as currency in many cases, rather than solely as social symbols or jewellery. Again this view emerges from the greater number of gold coins found unmodified (e.g. no suspension loops fitted) and outside of funerary contexts (see Naylor 2012: 246-248). This mixed usage is also found in Essex and such a middle-way position to interpretation seems appropriate here.

Verhulst (2002: 87-88) has argued for mixed modes of coin usage within single territories. Likewise, Davies (2010: 97-98) posits that early medieval coinage use may have changed over time – broadly speaking, from primarily performing a social role, to functioning within a full or mixed monetary economy – but that it may always have been linked with the socially embedded exchange of taxation.

The classic substantivist position of Grierson (e.g. 1961, 1970) and Hodges (1982) was expounded within the context of limited coin finds. The lack of evidence for widespread coin usage was taken as evidence of a lack of widespread coin usage. However, the substantivist argument has been remodelled recently, most notably by Skre (2008, 2011), who terms his new

approach 'post-substantivism' (e.g. 2011: 327). Skre's propositions attempt to respond to many of the formalist criticisms of substantivism; especially of the notion that pre-industrial economies were socially embedded. Skre (2008: 327-328, 333) argues that the economies of both pre-industrial *and* industrial societies are socially embedded, but that the market mechanism is not. Thus, we can posit market forces/economic agency in pre-industrial societies. However, as other scholars have noted (e.g. Bourdieu 1990: 114-115; Lie 1991: 230; Swedberg and Granovetter 1992: 9), these forces are constricted by the differing social limitations on the economic agency of individuals in different societies.

Hodges' theory largely ignored the economic agency of the hinterlands. For Hodges (e.g. 1982: 148-149; Hodges and Whitehouse 1983: 105-106), the same level of control posited for towns applied to the countryside, with rural secular and ecclesiastical elites playing a central role in the consumption and distribution of rural produce. Hodges' later modified theory (1989) particularly underlined the church's influence in the development of urban markets, by promoting wealth based on domination of the landscape, and by engineering a self-serving settlement structure, as well as controlling the flow of exotic objects (ibid.: 56-58).

This theory drew some measured support from scholars such as Hinton (1990: 37; 1996: 100), who argued that landed power supplanted access to prestige goods as the basis for authority from the seventh century, though noting that this probably had as much to do with capitalizing on trade as facilitating it.

Ecclesiastical centres were central places for numerous networks operating at a number of levels. They thus provided an ideal site for trade. Their role in England and on the Continent as facilitators of exchange has been emphasized by numerous scholars (e.g. Blair 1988; Kelly 1992; Astill 1994; Lebecq 2000; Ulmschneider 2000a). However, while ecclesiastical centres were heavily involved in trade networks, it is clear from sites in England and on the Continent that ecclesiastical communities were not necessary for trade to happen and for centres of trade to be established (e.g. Loveluck 1998: 158-159; Tulp 2003).

Since the publication of *Dark Age Economics*, various excavations have caused many scholars to cast doubt upon its primary inference that emporia were created and controlled by elites, and exercised an intentioned monopoly over trade. The most notable early critique of Hodges' argument was formulated by Carver (e.g. 1987, 1993a, 1993b), whose alternative model emphasized a North Sea trade network characterized by widespread, dispersed access to, and engagement with, long-distance trade. Carver distinguished emporia

from other centres of trade on the basis of their greater intensity of exchange, denying they had a monopoly over it. Indeed, the current study has been able to support this notion by providing evidence of numerous small sites of exchange in rural Essex, taking advantage of coastal and inland routes.

Excavations have shown intensive craftwork in early medieval emporia, suggesting that they were productive centres too, rather than solely sites of importation and exchange. In light of this, Hodges (2000: 83) extended his previously trade-focused argument to posit that concentrations of exchange in emporia reflect an elite desire to control and ensure the continuance of craftwork.

However, contemporary scholarship mostly envisages royal involvement in trade and exchange as largely restricted to a desire to tax it, rather than limit or control it (e.g. Tatton-Brown 1988; Lebecq 1990; Kelly 1992; Carver 1993b: 57; Scull 1997: 285; Verhaeghe 2005: 284; Skre 2008: 339). Commenting on excavations at Dorestad in the Netherlands (Es 1990: 172), Ribe in Denmark (Bencard and Bender Jørgensen 1990; Feveile 2006, 2012), Kaupang in Norway (Skre 2007, 2012), and Hamwic/Southampton (Hunter and Heyworth 1998), Anderton perceived trade to be localized to these emporia, which he noted would have facilitated taxation, but suggested that they did not function as redistributive centres for prestige goods (1999: 2).

Recent academic opinion has mostly supported Carver's model, moving away from Hodges' elites-focused theory towards dispersed and bottom-up models of trade. Lebecq (1997: 75) has argued that most emporia originated from 'the initiative of maritime communities' and that Quentovic (France) and Haithabu/Hedeby (Germany) were probably even founded by Anglo-Saxon traders. Most importantly, it is argued that, for all the dynamism of the contemporary trading community, the emporia, and their successful legacy, only became possible as a result of seventh-century societal stability, peace, agricultural productivity, and crucially, the introduction of practical silver coinage (ibid.: 75-78).

It has also been shown that the earliest phases of emporia, such as Lundenwic (e.g. Malcolm and Bowsher 2003), do not have planned layouts. Verhaeghe (2005: 270) has also questioned whether the emporia's regular street plans were so complex that they required elite central planning. He also states (ibid.) that some 'Type B' emporia may have developed directly from 'Type A' emporia, before elites even took an active interest, and that the phenomenon may have more complex origins in the general changes in settlement at this time. In his paper on the Scandinavian emporia, Søren Sindbæk (2007) agrees that political initiative was not the originator of the urban revival.

Bruno Latour's 'Actor-Network Theory' (2005) has also influenced theories concerning the development of early medieval urban worlds and their networks. Latour's theory in part stresses the multilayered nature of networks. In this conception, no network relationship (e.g. between sites) can be reduced to a single structural component (e.g. power or economics). Sindbæk (2007: 121) refers to sites regularly engaged in long-distance trade as 'nodal points'. He notes that certain 'luxury items' do not appear to have been much distributed beyond the Scandinavian emporia/nodal points. In England, a similar apparent lack of redistribution has been noted by other scholars (e.g. Anderton 1999: 2; Blinkhorn 1999: 10; D. Brown 2003: 23) – though this may be a result of an excavation bias towards high-status sites (Newman 1999: 34). However, although luxury goods *are* common in emporia, their apparently limited distribution inland perhaps indicates that the acquisition and redistribution of 'prestige goods' were not primary functions (Anderton 1999: 2; Blinkhorn 1999: 10). Additionally, the looting of major emporia, such as London, in the ninth century shows that, even at this stage, kings did not exercise enough power to protect these sites. Fundamentally, it does not follow that large-scale long-distance trade implies a political authority pulling the strings (Sindbæk 2007: 128). Sindbæk's argument characterized the emporia as multifaceted nodes of numerous different networks, rather than primarily political or economic structures. This multifunctionality was argued (ibid.: 126) to have emerged naturally as emporia increasingly provided traders, artisans, and other groups a central place which connected them to a grand socio-economic network, which had access to raw materials and other goods from a wide area. The multifaceted productive role of emporia has also been stressed (e.g. Verhaeghe 2005: 270) in opposition to Hodges' focus on the management of the flow of prestige goods. Nevertheless, excavated faunal assemblages in towns are a reminder of the vital, semidependent (see Scull 1997: 284) relationship between 'urban' or 'proto-urban' communities as consumers (as well as merchants) and their productive rural neighbours.

For some (e.g. West 1989: 167, onLundenwic), the implications of the widespread urban discard of rural produce, such as meat and fish, indicates consumption levels indicative of many wealthy individuals. Others (e.g. Astill 1991; Blinkhorn 1999) stress the role of emporia as the terminal market for rural surplus. Nevertheless, the rural specialization apparent from the seventh century onwards may suggest a desire by rural producers to profit from urban demand (e.g. Naylor 2004: 11, 120). However, many still see urban discard patterns as indicative of provisioning rather than market forces (e.g. Saunders 2001).

The study of emporia and their regional hinterlands has been subject to greater study over the last 20 years. Blinkhorn (1999: 10-11) argues that, aside from ecclesiastical sites, luxury goods played little part in the relationship between the emporia and settlements in their hinterlands. Instead, rural settlements provisioned emporia with raw materials and basic necessities which they could not provide for themselves (ibid.: 11-17). In return, low-status rural settlements may have received archaeologically invisible items (e.g. salt, honey, dyes, etc.), some foreign goods (e.g. Mayen lava querns and pottery), and, of course, money. Much of this internal trade probably took place at ecclesiastical sites directly linked to emporia (ibid.: 18). Newman (1999: 45) notes that identifying the hinterland of a particular emporium is complicated by various factors that affect the distribution of traded artefacts: the operation of concurrent 'Type A' emporia; invisible economic, social, and political forces; and present day excavation bias. Naylor (2004: 121; 2012: 249-250) has argued that the most profound zone of influence of particular markets extended *c.*15 kilometres out (though dependent on terrain) – the reasonable limit for a day's journey by foot to the centre. The evidence from Essex indicates a great variety in the settlements engaged in exchange. These were situated within a landscape that was increasingly exploited to produce bulk commodities, such as fish and salt.

Some of the most interesting recent scholarship is now moving beyond simple emporia-hinterland relationships to discuss the increasing number of smaller sites that were active participants in long-distance exchange. In Lincolnshire, the settlement excavations at Flixborough (e.g. Loveluck 2007, 2009) and the widespread use of coinage (Blackburn 1993; Naylor 2004, 2012) have demonstrated significant engagement with long-distance trade in the absence of a regional emporium.

Furthermore, amateur metal-detecting continues to highlight metalwork- and coin-rich sites in rural areas, termed 'productive sites', which indicate areas of concentrated monetized trade, often far from emporia (e.g. Metcalf 1984: 27, 41; 1988; Newman 1999; Davies 2010). These sites are incompatible with the strict evolutionary framework devised by Hodges. They demonstrate a more widespread engagement with long-distance monetized exchange networks across a variety of sites; from coastal landing places to rural central places (e.g. Ulmschneider 2000b: 62-63). Naylor (2012) has used stray coinage distributions to argue that the large emporia of the eighth century may have emerged from a collection of interconnected seventh-century exchange sites of similar size. These emporia then dominated their immediate surroundings, while coexisting with numerous smaller sites of exchange (evidenced primarily by metalwork clusters) along the coast, rivers, and major routeways.

Many scholars (e.g. Richards 1999a: 71-80; Naylor 2004: 14) have argued that the term 'productive site' is both too broad, being applied to a variety of coin assemblages, and misleadingly exclusive, discounting sites – usually excavated – with rich assemblages, but few coins. There is also a growing recognition that the term 'productive site' may mask a variety of different local socio-economic contexts in which exchange took place (e.g. Skre 2008: 337; Davies 2010: 90-92, 117). Certainly, those identified in this book arose from varied circumstances.

Skre (2008: 337-338) has attempted to fit these new sites within an evolutionary framework by supplementing Hodges' Type A, B, and C emporia with two additional classifications. The first additional class consists of seasonal 'central-place markets' (*c.*500-*c.*1000), engaged in inter- and intraregional trade initially linked to elite centres. The second new type consists of possibly independent, seasonal 'local markets' (from *c.*700), engaged in intraregional trade. Skre's post-substantivist position emphasizes that royalty *was* important in the creation of trading centres. However, Skre (ibid.: 339) differs from Hodges in arguing that kings were heavily involved in the foundation and operation of many (but not all) exchange centres, but were not the sole originators and purpose behind them. Rather than assuming any general elite control, Skre instead emphasizes the capacity of kings to create the conditions in which trade could flourish (e.g. by providing a legal basis for exchanges), alongside their desire to benefit from this trade (e.g. through taxation and tolls).

However, Loveluck has argued that, in many cases, coastal communities seem to have been territorially marginal enough to independently engage in the long-distance exchange of alienable goods, with some sites even free from taxation (Loveluck and Tys 2006: 142, 149-152; Loveluck 2012).

Loveluck and Tys's work highlighted the rich material culture of Frisian terp settlements set against their unostentatious architecture, perhaps suggestive of communities comprising 'wealthy "free peasant traders" or "marchands-paysans", rather than an aristocracy' whose access to high-status goods had not been aristocratically restricted (2006: 147). A similar model has also been suggested for sixth- and seventh-century Kent, based on widely distributed imported material (Fleming 2009).

Loveluck (2012) has also situated coastal central places of parts of eastern England and Scandinavia within their broader maritime network context. His study stresses the importance of smaller ports and landing places in seventh- to late ninth-century trade. Significantly, these smaller sites existed concurrently with large emporia, and were also directly acquiring imports (ibid.: 131-146, 148-159). With imports readily available, it appears that status

in coastal/marginal areas may have been articulated through activities such as hunting and feasting; both of which express domination/control of the landscape and its resources (ibid.: 140, 163).

However, from the later ninth century, imported material, elites, and much specialist craftwork appear to have been concentrated in emergent central-place towns. The smaller coastal exchange sites of the earlier centuries declined in status to regional nodes, with far less direct participation in long-distance exchange (ibid.: 146-148, 159-160). These findings should certainly be used to question the contemporary value we ascribe to imports between different communities, and at different times.

Following Loveluck, Wickham (2012) has stressed the great variety of coastal sites of exchange that existed in early medieval Europe. Significantly, these ports developed in different socio-economic contexts. Wickham's particular focus is on the development of the emporia-like centres in the western Mediterranean, such as Comacchio, *alongside* existing centres. Once again, these sites point to the direct participation of relatively free coastal communities in long-distance exchange. It is possible that north-western coastal Italy was home to many of the smaller coastal communities evident in northern Europe (ibid.: 506-507). Furthermore, the development of sites in the western Mediterranean which were similar to those in northern Europe shows that these sites developed even where there were existing ports of long-distance trade (ibid.: 503-504). Thus, the emergence of emporia need not fit into a narrative of an elite move to control new networks.

Further corroborative evidence for this model of exchange comes from the contrasting pattern of imported material in much of western Britain, which perhaps provides an archaeological model of elite-directed exchange. Although this region was active in very long-distance trade (particularly with the Mediterranean and western France), it seemingly acquired goods quite differently from contemporary regions around the North Sea (Lebecq 1997: 67; Anderton 1999: 3; E. Campbell 2007; Fleming 2009). Notably, in western Britain it appears that only a restricted range of goods were imported, and that these were only consumed on high-status sites (Fleming 2009: 394-397). These imports must have been exchanged for local resources, such as tin, which probably would have required a coordinating authority to make sure that sufficient quantities were ready for the arrival of traders from Byzantium or western France (ibid.). On this basis, it is reasonable to argue that the fifth- to eighth-century archaeology of western Britain is much more suggestive of elite direction and control than that of eastern England and continental north-western Europe.

In light of these recent studies, new research must be focused on the relationship between the emporia and their coastal hinterlands, which themselves were directly engaged in long distance trade. This dynamic is critical to our understanding of the coastal region of Essex during the Anglo-Saxon period. This book represents a response to this imperative. The archaeological data has been reviewed to produce a picture of dynamic exchange activity over the course of the period, with several sites put forward as possible sites of exchange and landing places between the emporia at Ipswich and London.

The primary materials used in this study to analyse exchange networks in Essex are pottery and coinage. The theoretical background reviewed above illustrated that those two materials have been used extensively in the study of emporia and their hinterlands (e.g. Blinkhorn 1999; Newman 1999; Naylor 2004, 2012), as well as in the identification of nodes of trade (e.g. Ulmschneider 2003).

While dress accessories also provide information on social and economic networks, fewer of them are useful in elucidating exchange relationships as they were often made by itinerant craftsmen, rather than made in one place and exported (Hinton 2000; Coatsworth and Pinder 2002: 214-215, 234). In addition, their use, find locations, and depositional contexts make them hazardous to use as indices of sites of trade.

The greatest influence on the interpretation of the patterns emergent from the distributional analyses are previous studies concerning the relationship between emporia and their hinterlands (e.g. Palmer 2003; Naylor 2004), and those concerning the functioning of the North Sea exchange network (e.g. Hodges 1982, 1989; Lebecq 1997; Loveluck and Tys 2006; Loveluck 2012).

Recent studies have demonstrated that there was widespread access to long-distance trade, and that emporia should not necessarily be seen as redistributive centres (e.g. Naylor 2004; Loveluck and Tys 2006). Regional studies have demonstrated that this direct engagement with long-distance trade was influenced by the proximity of settlements to major routes (e.g. Newman 1999; Naylor 2004). Naylor's study of the emporia-hinterland relationship provides a good basis for interpreting the pattern of finds in Essex – what sites functioned as sites of long-distance trade, and what patterns better represent redistributive or internal exchange mechanisms.

Naylor's (2004) study also stressed that the majority of traded goods resulted from specific exchange relationships that are difficult to detect, such as the trade in organic consumables and salt. This must be a limitation on any conclusions drawn from the material examined in this study. While coinage and imported pottery are good indicators of trade, they were not the

only items exchanged in the long-distance exchange network. For example, sites around the Blackwater Estuary evidence salt panning and also specialist ironworking (Barford 1988; Wallis and Waughman 1998). However, it is not clear where these products ended up.

Historical sources for Essex give us some background on the natures of some of the archaeological sites that are prominent in the archaeological record. However, the theoretical discourse on early medieval trade has recommended that interpretations here be alive to the complex nature of settlement development. This includes viewing settlements in a multidimensional way, as nodes of different networks that were capable of functional transformations (e.g. Sindbæk 2007; Loveluck 2012).

The research environment regarding trade, exchange, and networks has certainly been enriched as a result of the curation of records of stray finds. Coinage, for example, is very often not found on excavated sites. As a result our understanding of certain aspects of economic activity in the early medieval period is changing a great deal.

Essex provides an excellent case study to examine these themes. It is situated on the coast, in the area of early coinage use and production, as well as between major known sites of exchange. In this book, I will illustrate the chronology of trade networks in the Essex region. This will reveal patterns of supply and consumption, how these were related to the social elite. Major and minor hubs of exchange will be explored and, in some cases identified for the first time. The relationship between 'town' and country is also important here. Notably the London-Essex relationship has not been widely researched archaeologically. Finally, the issue of rural access to trade and local productive activity in Essex will also be addressed. This intersects with the issue of the emergence of high-status settlements and their impact on landscape development.

Social complexity

Intersecting with the two major themes is the issue of social complexity. Archaeological reflection of this in Essex will also be explored as far as these relate to the two primary themes. This is particularly the case in interpreting the circumstances behind changing cultural expression and the creation and maintenance of exchange networks.

It has long been recognized that the dynamics between different levels of society play an important role in shaping and transforming those communities. The socio-economic changes visible in the archaeological record have often been explained with reference to social complexity.

Debates over social stratification have been principally concerned with aspects of settlement and burial archaeology. Particularly since the 1990s, the extent to which archaeologists can 'read off' an individual's social status from their burial (e.g. from grave assemblages or construction) has been debated. Additionally, what constitutes a settlement of high status has also been brought into question after the flurry of 'high-status' sites excavated in the 1990s. Nevertheless, with care, social stratification is visible at different times in both burial and settlement in the Anglo-Saxon period.

In terms of the funerary record, the normative past approach to social status has been to attribute high rank to individuals buried with wealthy grave-goods. This interpretation was continued by 'New Archaeologists' who conceived of the archaeological record as a passively constructed reflection of ancient realities. Different levels of grave wealth were taken to indicate different classes. The seventh-century decline in grave-goods would be taken to imply increased social stratification linked with a decline in resources (e.g. Shephard 1979; C. Arnold 1980). However, this theoretical approach has also proven too simplistic in Anglo-Saxon archaeology. While processual interpretations of grave assemblages have some merit, they can appear simplistic when married to the evidence of textual sources. Geake (1997: 127) has noted that processualist thinking cannot adequately explain why the differences in grave wealth disappeared at a time when Anglo-Saxon society was more socially stratified and unequal than ever.

In the last few decades, post-processualists have rejected the processualist notion that there is a direct correlation between social complexity/access to wealth and burial practice. In line with this thinking, Geake (ibid.) has proposed that, at least in the Middle Saxon period, the grave assemblage wealth was not a reflection of that individual or their family's wealth but rather burial practice was far more symbolic. For Geake, the decline in grave-goods was a reflection of a change in ideology. A post-processual approach to burial practice allows for the symbolism behind particular assemblages to change through time. Though he finds the processualist approach a good starting point to the analysis of social complexity, Heinrich Härke has tracked the changing symbolism of Anglo-Saxon weapon burial as an actively constituted archaeological event (1990, 1992, 1997: 144-145). He argues that in the seventh-century weapon burials symbolize only wealth and status, having previously had far more complex associations (1992: 164). When furnished burial ended in the eighth century a post-processualist approach argues that wealth and status were symbolized in other ways (e.g. Härke 1992: 165; Geake 1997: 128). In particular, expression

of authority through ownership of the landscape, rather than objects, has been emphasized by numerous scholars (e.g. Hinton 1990: 37; Scull 1993).

However, post-processualism has itself been criticized – even from those who agree with its tenets – for not having engaged with the issue of archaeological representations of social status to the extent to which the processualist movement did, which created a more usable theoretical paradigm for research (e.g. Härke 1997: 144-145; Babić 2005).

Settlement hierarchies in the Anglo-Saxon period have traditionally been examined by comparing excavated artefact assemblages between sites. Only very few sites, such as Yeavering in Northumberland (Hope-Taylor 1977), have impressive architectural evidence suggestive of elite status (Hamerow 2002: 93-99), so there has been much recent discussion regarding the relationship between conspicuous consumption and elite lifestyles (e.g. see Loveluck and Tys 2006; Loveluck 2007, 2009, 2011, 2012). The validity of this approach is bound up in the theory related to the functioning of early medieval socio-economic exchange networks around the North Sea.

There is also a link here between the creation of group identities based on social or functional roles. The association of a group of individuals by an aspect of their lifestyle – such as ecclesiastics, secular aristocrats, merchants, artisans, etc. – has the potential to create role-specific patterns of consumption and use (Loveluck and Tys 2006). The ways in which groups engaged with the North Sea exchange route, both socially and economically, have a bearing on how we interpret patterns in the deposition of contemporary artefacts.

Theoretical debates concerning social complexity are important in this study, as social stratification and power relations are strongly connected to debates regarding the creation of group identities, and the emergence and operation of trade networks.

The seventh century was perhaps the most transformative century of the Anglo-Saxon period. The changes most relevant to this study are the dramatic changes in dress, with the cessation of regional fashions; and also the expansion of the North Sea exchange network. These transformations cannot be explored without reference to the emergence of a stable social elite, as well as the establishment of the Church.

The previous section reviewed the theoretical debates regarding the emergence and operation of emporia and the expansion of the North Sea exchange network. It illustrated how the role of 'high-status' settlements and perceived elite strategies have been central in theories of how networks functioned and why they existed. In examining Essex's engagement with trade networks it is important to be able to identify sites of high social

status and how they were involved in long-distance trade. This goes hand in hand with an understanding of the majority view that access to trade was widespread, and that geographical location, rather than social status may have been the prime factor in determining a settlement's engagement with long-distance exchange routes (e.g. Naylor 2004).

The theoretical debates concerning exchange networks have thus led to the formulation of the Essex-specific research question, which is, to what extent were imported goods restricted to elite centres in Essex? And to what extent was engagement with long-distance exchange widespread? This has implications for interpreting how long-distance networks functioned in the Essex region.

It is also important to note that networks are influenced by and reflect groups united by social role, such as artisans or ecclesiastics. This may also apply to settlements united by function. This is relevant to this study, as one of the research aims is to examine how socio-economic networks were structured in Essex. The diversity of settlements and lifestyles in the Anglo-Saxon period makes it likely that this relationship was complex, with interlocking role-based networks.

Previous literature on Anglo-Saxon Essex/previous work in the region

Previous syntheses of the archaeology of Anglo-Saxon Essex have focused almost exclusively on settlement and burial sites. By far the most comprehensive analysis of the archaeology of Essex in the Anglo-Saxon period is Keith Challis's unpublished MPhil thesis 'Early and Middle Saxon Essex' (1992), which reviewed the archaeology, primarily from settlement and cemetery sites, between the fifth and ninth centuries.

Challis's work was the first modern attempt to bring together both published excavated material and HER data for the period between *c.*400 and 850. The result was a major contribution to the archaeological scholarship on Anglo-Saxon Essex. In particular, Challis's thesis included new presentations of the important burial at Broomfield, and the cemetery/monastery at Bradwell, which were both excavated in the nineteenth century.

The broader result of the thesis was a tracking of the development of early Anglo-Saxon-style settlement, from its earliest emergence in coastal Essex. Challis (1992: 186, 188-189) posits a mixed socio-political context for these settlements, with some established by immigrant folk groups, and others fitting into sub-Roman territorial arrangements. It is further argued that

these small groups coalesced to form larger polities within Essex, attested by place-name groupings and great social differentiation in burials. These polities were then ultimately united under a single 'East Saxon' dynasty (ibid.: 189-193).

However, the research questions and discussion of the thesis were significantly focused on the earlier period. Challis examined in particular the nature of the *adventus Saxonum* (i.e. to what extent this involved native acculturation), the formation of the kingdom of Essex, and the nature of Anglo-Saxon settlement in Essex more generally. As a result, Challis's work was limited in its scope (though nonetheless impressive for an MPhil thesis). The present study engages far more with the post-*c.*700 material than Challis's thesis. In particular, this project examines the nature, functioning, and development of exchange networks over the period, which is not a major concern for Challis.

Indeed, while Challis (ibid.: 196) notes the presence of imported Frankish items at early Saxon sites (attributing this to social ties, rather than trade), and the presence of Ipswich ware at Barking and Wicken Bonhunt, he concludes that '[t]here are no real candidates for emporia or trading stations of any permanence within Essex, though London was under fluctuating East Saxon control'. It should be noted that 'early Saxon' is here used as a common chronological and geographical marker – no assumption is being made regarding the inhabitants' ethnic origins in the fifth and sixth century.

The research for the present monograph has revealed how Challis's work has unavoidably dated. A huge number of artefacts and sites have been unearthed in the intervening 27 years. There is now a lot more we can say about Anglo-Saxon society in Essex. In this light, this new appraisal of the Anglo-Saxon archaeology is long overdue.

Furthermore, the current project is the only study to review the archaeology of Anglo-Saxon Essex over its full length, including the later Saxon period. This has been made feasible by the accessibility of digital databases, such as those of PAS, EMC, MOLA, and county SMRs.

This project is also the only work to consider the relationship between Essex and London. Though Challis sought to investigate the formation of the kingdom of Essex, he failed to include its diocesan centre at London.

Beyond Challis, the only relatively recent regional syntheses of the archaeology of Anglo-Saxon Essex have been the short papers of Tyler (1996) and Rippon (1996) for the 1993 Writtle Conference, and a brief review written as an adjunct to place-name analysis (Baker 2006). The most recent short review is by Welch (2012), whose conference paper included some of the most important new material to have emerged in recent years.

The Writtle Conference papers built significantly on those from the *Archaeology in Essex to AD 1500* (ed. Buckley 1980). Though clearly long out of date, this seminal work included reviews of the known cemeteries (W. Jones 1980), early settlements (M. Jones 1980), and early medieval archaeology of Colchester (Crummy 1980); as well as presenting in short form the findings from Wicken Bonhunt (Wade 1980).

Tyler (1996) reviewed the known archaeological sites dating to the period between *c.*400 and 700. Tyler's discussion of the archaeology almost entirely excluded unstratified finds, with just a few listed. Early settlements and cemeteries were discussed particularly in the context of their relationship with previous Roman settlement and prehistoric features.

Particular reference was made to the cemetery at Springfield Lyons, later published jointly by Tyler and Major (2005). Like Challis, Tyler (Tyler and Major 2005; Tyler 1996: 113) also noted the lack of seventh- to eighth-century material. Tyler's recommendations (ibid.: 115) were for further work on the nature of the creation of Anglo-Saxon society in Essex, as well as increased survey and excavation.

Welch's (2012) review is in a similar mould; updating the general picture as part of a short conference paper. Though helpful, it of course does not provide the in-depth study that the region of Essex has lacked.

Baker (2006) also reviewed the archaeology of early Saxon Essex. His research, however, focused on the transition from the Roman into the Anglo-Saxon period between AD 350 and 650, in the Chilterns and Essex region. Baker's project aimed to bring together the archaeological data with specialist place-name analysis to assess the level of continuity of occupation and culture from the Roman into the Anglo-Saxon period.

Baker briefly reviews the archaeology in subregional sections. His conclusion (2006: 131-137) is that the earliest and strongest manifestation of 'Germanic' culture is in eastern Essex; and further, that this culture spreads west. As first observed by Wheeler (1935), Baker also notes the late appearance of early Anglo-Saxon material culture at St. Albans/Verulamium in particular, and posits (2006: 131-134) this as evidence for the survival of Romano-British ethnic communities here. As far as the extent to which the native inhabitants were replaced by migrants, Baker (ibid.: 134-135, 245) concedes the difficulty assigning a change of culture to a change of population. Baker (ibid.: 245-259) infers that, though archaeologically invisible, the continuance of 'Romano-British' communities should be assumed, especially on the basis of certain place names of British origin or Old English place names relating to British speakers. The current study is able to add a detailed archaeological perspective to the discourse on the formation of

Anglo-Saxon societies. It indeed reveals a mix of cultural influences in the creation of 'Anglo-Saxon' Essex, resulting in a great variety of artistic and functional material.

Though it is one of the most recent overall surveys, Baker's review of the archaeological material is certainly not deep enough to stand alone. It provides us with few new ideas pertaining to the nature of early Saxon societies in Essex prior to *c.*650. Concerning the early Saxon period, the present examination, though touching on the long-standing issues picked up by Baker, moves beyond these to discuss in more depth the active creation of Anglo-Saxon cultures in Essex after *c.*400. The overwhelming cultural influences seem to be from north-western continental European areas bordering the North Sea/North Atlantic. Fashions, household items, and even architecture suggest a culture emerging as a process of eclectic social construction.

Thus, while the questions Baker asks are relevant to this monograph, the current project moved well beyond Baker's short review. The focus here is also squarely on the archaeological material, and covers the entirety of the Anglo-Saxon period, asking many more questions of the data.

Stephen Rippon (e.g. 1996, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2008) has perhaps provided the greatest individual contribution to our understanding of later Saxon Essex. However, Rippon's published work in Essex deals primarily with the exploitation of the landscape (e.g. 1997, 1999, 2000, 2008), rather than material culture, burial, and settlement morphology. These publications have mostly been in the form of papers and chapters (1996, 1997, 1999, 2000), though his 2008 monograph included Essex within a much larger landscape study.

Rippon's work on coastal Essex has proposed (1997: 130-133) the existence of sites of exchange at Tilbury, Goldhanger Creek, and Canvey Island, and noted (e.g. 1999, 2000) the great value placed on the Essex marshes, which were maintained throughout the Anglo-Saxon period for grazing and salt production. Inland, Rippon (2008: 181) has also noted the maintenance of a predominantly Roman, dispersed pattern of settlement in Anglo-Saxon Essex. The current monograph adds a great deal of support to Rippon's 1997 thesis, arguing for places of exchange along the Essex coast. There is now much more archaeological evidence in support of the notion that coastal communities in Essex were significantly engaged in maritime trade, exploiting their advantageous position through the centuries. However, looking at the period as a whole, it has also been possible to see how this popular interaction with the seaways changed over time. In short, the period Rippon refers to was one of greater formalization and strengthening of trade routes in the seventh and eighth centuries following post-Roman arrangements. In the tenth and eleventh centuries, however, the growth of

urban and quasi-urban settlements leads to the demise of smaller coastal trading sites, such as those referenced by Rippon.

Though Rippon specializes in landscape analysis, he is also responsible for the only significant synthesis of Anglo-Saxon material culture and settlement remains from the period between *c.*700 and 1066 (1996). Though a significant proportion of this paper was dedicated to historical landscape analysis – charting estate groupings, land use, and settlement patterns – Rippon also reviewed some of the historical and material evidence relating to Essex between *c.*700 and 1066. In particular, Rippon focused on the archaeological and historical evidence from the areas of known or suspected royal vills in Essex, and other sites he argued to be early 'central places'. He argued these formed nuclei for later communal central places. This analysis relied a great deal on historical evidence and inference, with a few excavated sites, such as Wicken Bonhunt, which Rippon linked with the mint at Newport (1996: 121).

Rippon's paper also reviewed archaeological material and contemporary textual accounts relating to the Vikings in Essex (1996: 122-123). The only archaeological sites mentioned were the hall and burial in Waltham Abbey, the burial at Saffron Walden, the nineteenth-century grave finds at Leigh-on-Sea, and the coin hoard at Ashdon. Rippon suggested (1996: 123) that the Ashdon hoard might imply that north-west Essex was economically engaged with Danish East Anglia, rather than 'English' regions to the south.

The present monograph is able to add a wealth of evidence to support this tentative conclusion. Indeed, Chapter 4 details extensively how Essex related to Danish East Anglia. The archaeological evidence now includes coinage, dress accessories and other diagnostic small finds, human burial, defensive landscape features and settlements, and deposits of weaponry. Taken together with wider circumstantial evidence – including Scandinavian place names, traded items, and indeed the historical record – a much greater picture has emerged. We can now see that Essex was very much a frontier region between West Saxon and Danish hegemonies. There is a distinct difference in the archaeological record between northern and southern Essex. Southern Essex has largely revealed material remains linked with warfare, such as defensive sites and weaponry deposits. Northern Essex, on the other hand, has provided us with evidence of more wide-ranging Scandinavian influences, including trade and cultural affiliation alongside remains related to battle. It is also only in the north that Scandinavian place names are found. A third region one should now also add is the eastern seaboard, which displays evidence of wider trade networks than before driven by Scandinavian traders.

In concluding, Rippon (1996: 125) recommended that future research should be conducted into the development of rural settlement, church-hall complexes, and towns in Essex during the later Saxon period, and on how London impacted upon Essex's urban and rural worlds. The present study goes some way to furthering these aims, as well as examining in far greater detail the operation of exchange networks in the Essex region.

One of the major limitations of Rippon's synthesis was that it made little attempt to include stray finds, despite aiming to present a 'first synthesis of the available material' (1996: 117). For example, just twelve locations were noted as having produced imported sceat coinage (ibid.: 118). This is another area in which the present study moves beyond this previous work to produce a more comprehensive and – hopefully – more accurate picture of Essex between *c.*650 and 1066.

For London, there have been recent syntheses of the burial and particularly settlement archaeology from both the walled town of Lundenburh (e.g. Dyson and Schofield 1981; Schofield 1981; Horsman *et al.* 1988; Schofield *et al.* 1990; Vince 1991), and the earlier emporium of Lundenwic (e.g. Cowie 1988; Cowie and Whytehead 1988; Malcolm and Bowsher 2003; Leary 2004; Cowie and Blackmore 2012), and the London region (Cowie and Blackmore 2008).

These publications have focused on London itself. What no recent work has attempted is to place London within the context of the Kingdom of Essex, albeit under later Mercian and West Saxon hegemony. The digital records of bodies such as PAS, the Greater London SMR, EMC, and the MOLA have resulted in a growing corpus of accessible archaeological information pertaining to London and rural settlement in its immediate hinterland. This project has combined this material within a wider regional study, while also revealing new information about the development of London. In particular, the stray-find evidence from the River Thames points towards much greater activity in the City of London between the seventh and mid-ninth centuries than has previously been found, given scholarly reliance on excavated material.

This lack of investigation into Anglo-Saxon Essex (including London) means that we still have large gaps in our knowledge. Even issues that have been pursued in the past are now in need of revisiting in the light of new evidence and with a fresh methodology. Indeed, there has been no large-scale study of the archaeology of Anglo-Saxon Essex in the last 20 years. Further, only two studies have looked seriously at the archaeology of Essex as a whole beyond 700 (Challis 1992; Rippon 1996), and only Rippon's short summary ventures beyond 800. This monograph is the first to look in depth at the

archaeology of later Saxon Essex as part of a thematic approach which will also revisit major themes of the period in the light of new evidence.

Crucially, no previous study has analysed in depth the relationship between Essex and the major European trading centre of Lundenwic/Lundenburh which lies on the doorstep of Essex, and which lay within the East Saxon kingdom for part of the Anglo-Saxon period; and was the East Saxon diocesan centre throughout. This study examines this issue as the major part of an overall analysis of the dynamics of trading centres and exchange networks in the region.

The present monograph is an important first attempt at a comprehensive archaeological study of Anglo-Saxon Essex. No previous work has endeavoured to look at the archaeology in its totality. Rather, previous analytical syntheses have focused almost entirely on excavated cemetery and settlement evidence, or on landscape development, overlooking what can be gained from an appropriate incorporation of stray finds. As this study will demonstrate, these finds can prove to be valuable correctives to conclusions that draw only on data from excavations and landscape morphology.

In summary, this book is a response to the need for an up-to-date archaeological synthesis of Anglo-Saxon Essex. This study, for the first time, is one that goes beyond the traditional tripartite division of the Anglo-Saxon period to examine the long-term continuity and transitions that are often masked and decontextualized by isolated intraperiod divisions defined over the past 200 years. The combination of both the contemporary corpus of settlement and cemetery sites with stray finds is central to the methodology, as it allows conclusions to be drawn from a more representative data set. Indeed, this study is being published at a time when archaeologists are attempting to make greater use of the huge amount of archaeological evidence that is held in various databases (e.g. see Cooper and Green 2017).

In drawing on the dedicated research of past studies and the great deal of new archaeological material available today, this book will tell a comprehensive story of Essex during the Anglo-Saxon period. What is revealed is a small region that was linked profoundly to communities around the North Sea. Between the end of Roman rule in Britain and the seventh century a brand new polity with a radically different culture was forged. Its culture, including language and basic and expressive material aspects, overwhelmingly looked east across the North Sea, rather than west or south. These changes almost certainly involved both ancestral and commercial links across the Sea. These nascent exchange networks were expanded significantly through the following centuries. Essex played a full part here,

minting its own coinage and developing trading places. The region's material culture, including dress, continued to be infused with influences from the cultures of neighbouring regions, but the evidence suggests that trade was dominated by bulk commodities. A significant episode in this narrative was the Scandinavian hegemony of in the late ninth and early tenth centuries in which the Essex coast was materially linked to a transcontinental network reaching into Asia. The development of more urban central places in the wake of West Saxon hegemony led to a decline in smaller trading places, but otherwise not significantly in coastal land use. The economy of Essex in the eleventh century became more strongly organized as part a relatively efficient English state, using exclusively its own coinage and trading in elite-promoted centres. By the time of the Norman Conquest Essex had settled permanently into its position as a coastal shire in eastern England.

Sources of evidence

This study examines three forms of data in detail. These are pottery, coinage, and dress accessories. In each chapter, these material-specific studies are followed by a thematic synthesis of archaeological data from which securer conclusions can be drawn. The study of these data takes the form of chronological distribution analyses of all of the relevant artefact types. In most cases, these distributional studies were quantified, though this was not possible for all sites.

Prior to these focused studies on coinage, dress accessories, and pottery, a comprehensive literature review of the full range of Anglo-Saxon archaeological evidence from Essex and the London boroughs was undertaken. Thus data collection was carried out against a comprehensive knowledge of all the excavated sites and their associated finds in the study region, including assessment of stray finds/PAS data. This was the first synthesis of its kind attempted for the region. Only once this had been achieved was it possible to examine the archaeological evidence as a whole in detail to establish the most significant patterns. This process resulted in the decision to concentrate on certain forms of evidence. It was decided that the most relevant new findings from outside these material classes would be brought out in subsequent discussion as part of a wider synthesis of the archaeological evidence geared towards the two broad themes of this monograph: group identity and socio-economic networks. The following sections explain the value of using the material chosen for the purpose of this study, as well as the caveats that come with each class of evidence.

Dress accessories

Dress accessories have been selected for a number of reasons. Firstly, they fulfil practical necessities for this kind of study: they are relatively frequent finds and they can be distinguished both typologically and chronologically. These are the simplest requirements for any diachronic distributional analysis. More importantly dress accessories often display characteristic artistic styles and forms reflective and constituent of regional cultural traditions. Some articles, such as girdle-hangers, have no apparent physical function; others are simple clothes fasteners which have been significantly embellished. This is indicative of their symbolic value for contemporary communities. For these reasons, dress accessories have been used extensively in studies of early medieval ethnicity and broader cultural affiliation (e.g. Hines 1984; Thomas 2000; Owen Crocker 2004, 2011). The use of dress accessories is also uniquely both personal and communal. As items of dress they related to the identity of an individual. They were communal in the sense that the styles and forms are not anarchic, but rather reference communal fashions. Indeed, in the case of burial dress, the items are very likely to have been chosen by the family of the deceased. In this sense, they provide an interesting and potentially insightful resource in studies of group identity.

There are, however, limitations with the use of dress accessories. The first concerns who wore them. The key point is that, in the Anglo-Saxon period, we are not looking at an inclusive sample of the population. Almost all of the dress accessories under consideration are made of metal. Metal dress items appear to have been worn by a minority of the population. It is likely that many or even most early medieval dress accessories were not made of metal. In addition, the flamboyant dress accessories of the fifth and sixth centuries almost all belong to female costume. Later, from the seventh century, strap ends from male dress are most conspicuous, with far fewer elaborate female accessories made from durable materials. It is thus very often the case that we are examining gendered items, not styles worn by the population as a whole.

A further problem is the lack of evidence from the early to mid-seventh century onwards. Before this time dress accessories were commonly deposited in burials, and so we have a relatively large corpus with which to work. Conversely, shroud burial took over in the seventh century, meaning that dress accessories were rarely intentionally deposited. We are thus far more reliant on stray finds in this period. The body of evidence is nevertheless diminished as a whole by the near-cessation of deliberate deposition of this artefact type. If dress accessories were not deposited in this way or

lost, they would have been melted down to make the next generation of metal artefacts.

Dress accessories are also of limited value in elucidating exchange networks. Certainly many would have been traded. However, the modes of transit, exchange, and deposition of dress items are complex. Some would have arrived by migration and were then either lost, buried, or handed on. Others would have been brought by traders. Many items may have been made by itinerant metalworkers, rather than exported from a central workshop (e.g. Hinton 2000; Coatsworth and Pinder 2002: 214-215, 234). The adoption/exchange of particular dress accessories was a loaded social exchange; perhaps more so than most other articles of exchange. For example, salt (or likewise other consumables) would have been heavily traded, but the extent to which this was a socially embedded phenomenon resides in the relationships between producers, merchants, and consumers. Salt, whether from Droitwich, the Blackwater Estuary, or anywhere else, is salt. Dress accessories were not acquired in this way and it was the acceptance of their use, not contact with their region of manufacture, which dictated the level to which they were traded. They are thus an imperfect class of evidence for charting trade networks, though they can nevertheless inform the discussion, and indeed have much to say about exchange in the socio-political sphere.

Pottery

Pottery distributions have already been used extensively to examine regional patterns of exchange in areas of early medieval eastern England (e.g. Blinkhorn 1999; Naylor 2004). The pottery record presents a useful resource for a number of reasons. The use of pottery as storage vessels means that they can be used to indicate the transports of goods across a region (e.g. Whyman and Perring 2002). Critically, pot sherds are one of the most common archaeological finds, resulting in a greater degree of significance for distribution-based studies. Pottery is also useful as there are multiple types which can be distinguished chronologically and by region of origin.

Local Essex pottery from this period is difficult to use alone to examine movement in networks. The handmade pottery current in Essex during the Anglo-Saxon period fits very much within the wider Anglo-Saxon traditions. The predominance of grass-tempered pottery between the fifth and ninth centuries is a classic example of this. This pottery varies very little either temporally or spatially. Though it has been assumed to have been produced by households for their own use (Naylor 2004: 19), the fact that this pottery was more or less the same everywhere means we cannot

rule out internal trade (ibid.: 19). There is also the problem of periods of time in which communities in Essex may have been aceramic. It is not clear whether or not this was the case, but a period of aceramicism has been incorporated into some archaeological narratives for the county (e.g. Rodwell and Rodwell 1986: 121). What it means for distribution patterns is that, if we accept some level of aceramicism at some point, we have a bias towards those sites which used pottery, which may have been wealthier to some degree (e.g. Hodges 1981: 53-54; Naylor 2004: 19).

The most useful pottery types for this study are those, which we know to have been acquired through exchange. In the case of Essex, where no specialist pottery industry is known to have existed until the medieval period, this pottery is synonymous with imported wares. Imported pottery is found in a range of distinctive types and with relative frequency in the archaeological record. This presents us with a potentially useful body of evidence for a material-based case study of exchange networks and patterns of consumption (e.g. Whyman and Perring 2002: 103; Naylor 2004: 19).

This distinction between exchange networks and consumption is important when considering imported pottery. D. Arnold (1988) has noted that pottery finds can represent the site of consumption rather than the site of trade/importation. In the present study, the impact of this limitation is reduced by the additional use of coinage data. This synthesis is in line with the recommendations made by Whyman and Perring (2002: 47) in their review of the methodological potential and constraints of distribution studies of urban-rural relationships.

Coinage

Coinage distribution studies have been used extensively in studies of trade networks (e.g. Naylor 2007, 2012). Richards and Naylor (2009) have also recently explored the great potential for using the substantial corpus of metal-detectorist data for regional studies concerning social and economic development in eastern England. However, sites identified through metal-detecting do place major limitations on interpretation. The most obvious problem is the non-archaeological method of recovery that provides limited contextual information, if any. Thus, interpretations of these sites are based on finds only, with no stratigraphic or structural data. Additionally this artefactual evidence is incomplete, as to a greater or lesser extent, detectorists choose not to recover or even look for certain material classes, such as ironwork or pottery. The latter of course would demand different surveying techniques, but the point is that the assemblages of sites identified through

stray finds are biased towards particular forms of evidence, which in turn influences archaeological interpretation.

Nevertheless, coins are one of few artefact classes which we can safely say were intimately linked with the operation of trade – at least from the late seventh century, with the introduction of silver coinage (e.g. Metcalf 1984; Whyman and Perring 2002; cf. e.g. G. Williams 2005, 2010, on earlier gold coinage). Thus, sites which produce such finds are helpful in illustrating trade routes and their mechanics. The introduction of silver coinage (sceattas) in the later seventh and early eighth century was probably an effort to create a more practical standardized unit of alienable wealth (e.g. Lebecq 1997: 75-78). Exchange, in this sense, was the reason for their existence. As a result, we can use chronologically sensitive, quantified coinage distributions as indices of the level and pattern of trade (e.g. Naylor 2004: 16). It is also important to note, as Naylor (ibid.: 18-19) does, that coinage data are contextually limited. That is to say the extent to which distributions map patterns of trade is limited to the use of particular contexts, namely accidental losses, to the exclusion of others, such as hoards, burial finds, and other deliberate depositions. We should be careful not to assume that all stray finds are stray losses. When multiple coins come from a single area it is important to examine the chronological and spatial distribution of the assemblage to distinguish whether the corpus results from a single deposit (perhaps a hoard) or the consistent deposition of coinage at a site over a longer period of time. Single, isolated finds are likely to have been lost. However, most are found by metal detectorists, using non-archaeological extractive methods, so we may be missing critical contextual information.

The lack of precise find-spots is one general limitation of individual elements of the data used in this study. This is a problem which affects each of the three primary classes of evidence to some extent. These finds constitute a very small minority of the data set. Where they are included within distributional studies, it is made clear from a dot off the map that a certain number were from undisclosed or unknown locations. Some finds have been given general zonal locations, such as 'west Essex'. In these cases, these articles are represented on distribution maps by a dot beside a question mark placed in an approximate central location within this zone.

There are more general problems with coinage in that the assemblages from metal-detected finds are strongly affected by metal-detector bias. That is to say, metal detectorists will often go where they anticipate the greatest return on their hours of searching, rather than simply searching in their immediate local area. An example of this is Tilbury (e.g. Bonser 1997: 44-45), a well-known 'productive' site where well over a 100 coins

have been found datable to the Anglo-Saxon period. It is thus considered a significant coastal exchange site (e.g. Blackburn 2003). However, one can see simply from looking through the annual gazetteers contained within the *British Numismatic Journal* that Tilbury has produced a steady drip of coins from other periods, with finds dating to many hundreds of years before the first Anglo-Saxon silver coinage. When one adds this problem to the unsystematic way in which coins are lost, the varying post-depositional processes over hundreds of years between sites, and the differing retrieval efforts, we end up with unavoidably unscientific data. As a result, it is not wise to compare too religiously the frequencies of coins found at different sites. Instead, concentrations of coinage should be seen as a general indicator of above-average monetized activity.

Another general limitation, though largely confined to the pottery data, is the presence of sites in which the amount of the particular artefact type has not been quantified. It must also be noted, however, that even if all of the site reports were quantified, comparing between assemblages would be hazardous with this type of regional study. The reason for this is the biases emanating from the different modes of excavation. London has been extensively and professionally excavated. The great extent of these excavations, admittedly of the largest settlement in the region, contrasts markedly from most settlement excavations, such as Barking (Webster 1972; Stone 1986; MacGowan 1987; Redknap 1991, 1992; Vince 1998; Hull 2002), for example, where only a small fragment of the original site has been excavated. The bias towards greater, more representative assemblages is even starker when compared with simple surface/topsoil-surveyed field sites (often field-walked by amateurs), which constitute the majority of the sites on which pottery and coinage have been found. This problem is particularly acute for pottery, which is far harder to find stray than coinage, no less to identify as Anglo-Saxon, especially with undiagnostic and friable handmade wares. When comparing such sites with such divergent levels of excavation, the quantification of finds is unavoidably of secondary importance to simple presence/absence information. Nevertheless, where significant contemporary assemblages have been found and quantified, they are of course compared in this study.

There were several major reasons why certain classes of evidence were ruled out of being the primary focus of the study. The first was a matter of frequency. Some artefact classes, such as glass vessels, were simply too rare to be central in such a study.

For other artefacts, rarity or poor quality of evidence discounted them from deeper study, as the results would simply not have been significant.

Glass vessels are found on several sites, though they concentrate in London, the large excavation at Mucking, and several early cemeteries. The corpus of glass vessels has not benefited significantly from stray-finds recording, and thus almost all of the evidence has already been published. The context of glass-vessel finds is interesting, however, and is included within the present study's synthetic discussion.

The collection of full environmental evidence was outside the scope of the research, which set out to explore the various questions from the perspective of man-made artefacts.

Weapon burials are of interest to this study as they have been argued to symbolize elevated social status between the fifth and early seventh centuries (e.g. Härke 1990, 1992, 1997). Though social status and the creation of a stable social hierarchy are relevant to patterns of exchange and consumption, due to acid leaching, the demographic data does not exist in Essex to analyse the implications of weapon burial there.

Other aspects of the archaeological record in Essex, such as the overall distribution and development of settlement and burial, have been covered already in publications, and thus there was no need to retrace this ground.

The quality of the evidence and limits of inference from excavated and unstratified data

As noted above, previous regional or subregional archaeological studies of Anglo-Saxon Essex have focused on excavated material. Partially as a result of this, these studies have concentrated on the early Saxon period in particular, where excavated material is more readily available. The great advantage of the present analysis is that, in drawing upon both stratified and unstratified data, it has been possible to address major research questions with a fuller archaeological corpus, and further, to venture answers to otherwise unanswerable questions.

For example, the analysis of fifth- to sixth-century dress in Essex is conducted in this monograph with a more comprehensive data set than ever before. Indeed, this is true to say for any of the themes pursued in this book. The advantage of this is that the resulting quantitative distributions should be more complete reflections of actual patterns of loss/deposition.

However, there are numerous complications that come with using unstratified data, which act as limitations on inference. The major drawback to unstratified material is that there is very little contextual information regarding its loss/use. In this respect, for instance, we cannot assume stray finds of dress accessories to have been contemporary accidental losses. Some

or many grave items may have been pulled into the plough and topsoil by post-depositional disturbance.

Indeed, our ability to interpret the usage of many artefacts that are now found commonly as stray finds is dependent to some extent on contextual information provided by excavations. Excavations allow us to observe contemporary social contexts in which artefacts were and were not used, helping to clarify their function(s) (e.g. buried dress accessories as tokens of identity as well as clothing fasteners). Excavations also aid archaeological constructions of chronological patterns of use.

However, though excavations have the potential to provide us with a detailed picture of a specific site, for the purposes of a regional study, they usually only represent islands of information in an otherwise empty landscape; especially when they are not accompanied by any landscape analysis. Indeed, there is a great deal of methodological variety between excavations. For example, some are large-scale open area operations, while others consist of only a small number of trenches. A minority are conducted as part of planned research programmes, while most are excavated in advance of potentially destructive development. As a result, excavation strategy biases the overall artefact corpus to areas which have been subject to larger, more comprehensive excavations.

Furthermore, excavations tend to recover particular items, such as discarded pottery, while other classes – notably coinage – are usually not found in great numbers in excavated assemblages, though there are exceptions (e.g. Flixborough (Loveluck 2007); Cottam (Richards 1999b)). This arises from the small areas examined by excavations, and, in some cases the ploughing out of surface refuse deposits (as at Cottam).

While unstratified finds can go some way to counteracting this imbalance, amateur survey – the main source of stray finds – is likewise biased in its recovery. This bias is overwhelmingly towards the recovery of metallic artefacts, due to the exclusive use of metal detectors by most enthusiasts. As a result of this type of recovery, archaeologists and numismatists have been able to identify numerous concentrations of metalwork – notably coinage and dress accessories – and have classified these as 'productive sites'. However, as noted above, this term refers only to the success metal detectorists have had in a particular area. This label may in fact cover a variety of site types (e.g. Richards 1999a: 71-80). However, with only limited classes of evidence provided by these sites, identifying functional/typological differences is extremely difficult.

This lack of information on the functional type(s) of site at which this metalwork is clustered means that we must rely heavily on our theoretical

understanding of how coins were used in contemporary society. There is now a consensus of opinion that Anglo-Saxon coinage – from the sceat issues at least – can be taken as having been linked with commercial exchange (Naylor 2004: 16). Therefore, we may reasonably argue that areas with relatively large coin deposits were areas of monetized trade. However, this does not mean that some of these sites were not primarily engaged in socially embedded exchange, such as tax collection, as estate centres or other centres of social units (e.g. Hutcheson 2006: 79-84).

In addition to these limitations, there is also the problem of recording. It is unfortunate, though nevertheless true, that not all artefacts which are found by metal detectorists are reported to bodies such as the PAS. Though this is probably the case for a range of different items, it is more likely that information on valuable finds is withheld, resulting in deficient distributions.

Ultimately, amateur metal detectorists are driven by a different set of motivations to those of professional archaeologists. Metal detectorists are essentially treasure hunters, interested in particular artefacts they consider to be of value; financial or otherwise. Not only does this result in the discard of 'less valuable' finds, such as fragments of iron artefacts, but this also biases amateur survey to areas in which they might have the best chance of finding something. As noted above, the well-known site at Tilbury has now produced a huge corpus of finds dating back to the Bronze Age because of its fame over the last few decades.

The resultant desire by metal detectorists to prevent 'their patch' from being searched by others has a couple of negative consequences for the archaeological community. At worst, it exacerbates the problem of finds going unrecorded. The compromise has been to allow finders to provide inexact locations – such as providing only four-figure grid references or parish area locations. However, in many cases inexact locations are intentionally published by bodies such as the PAS with the legitimate aim of protecting suspected ancient monuments from looting. Nevertheless, this practice does set limitations to any archaeological study using these data; and in particular hampers smaller-scale analysis, which requires fine spatial resolution. Even with these limitations, it must be stressed that stray finds provide us with hugely valuable archaeological information from otherwise unexamined areas.

In the present study, the incorporation of unstratified finds has been able to substantiate the archaeological record of many aspects of the Anglo-Saxon period in Essex. For example, because of the ending of deliberate deposition in burial, a study of dress in Essex beyond *c.*600 would be almost impossible without the contribution of stray finds.

The same may also be said of the archaeological study of the development of exchange networks, which is severely hampered without the regional distributions of material created by unstratified evidence. Many sites of the exchange identified by this project, as well as by other studies, are only made visible with stray finds – most notably coinage.

To give another example, without stray finds, one could say very little indeed about the Danelaw period in Essex from an archaeological perspective. We would be left simply with burials with Scandinavian affinities, at Saffron Walden (Bassett 1982), Waltham Abbey (Huggins 1988), Benfleet (unconfirmed nineteenth-century report; e.g. see Challis 1992: 211; Essex HER 7167), and Leigh-on-Sea (nineteenth-century finds; e.g. see Biddle 1987; Blackburn 1989; Rippon 1996: 123). Indeed, the latter two can hardly be classed as stratified evidence, as they were chanced upon during nineteenth-century building. However, by bringing together stray and excavated finds from different artefact classes, it has been possible to provide much more information about the impact of the Danelaw period; such as the level of inclusion within internal East Anglian networks; changes to the nature of exchange at North Sea coastal sites; the extent of Scandinavian cultural affiliation; and political arrangements are all accessible once stray finds are appropriately included.

In summary, the imperfections of archaeological data, whether stratified of found stray, place limits on inference. Of course, generic problems arise from the pre- and post-depositional processes that destroy ancient material, leaving only a fraction for recovery and analysis. However, in this section I have concentrated on some of the more specific considerations regarding archaeological material retrieved from stratified and unstratified contexts. Although in some cases the strength of one goes some way towards mitigating the weakness of the other, we are nevertheless always unavoidably left with a deficient data set. However, it is important that the standard methodology for regional studies should draw on both stray and excavated evidence to achieve the greatest data set possible. As outlined above, this enables new research questions to be asked, thus opening the door to new information about past societies.

How this book is structured

This monograph is structured around three main chapters which present and analyse the archaeological evidence from three sub-eras of the Anglo-Saxon period. These chapters examine the periods *c.*400-*c.*650, *c.*650-*c.*800, and

*c.*800-1066. While many themes addressed in this book run through each of the chapters, the use of these chronological divisions is intended to facilitate a coherent narrative and discussion of the particular circumstances of a smaller period of history. However, reference is made throughout and in the closing chapter to the way in which archaeology and interpretations from these different periods flow into and relate to one another.

In Chapters 2, 3, and 4, dress accessories, ceramic, and numismatic evidence will be reviewed separately and in detail. These individual studies bring out the major distributional trends, which are of significance regarding the natures and transformations of identities, social structure, and networks, as well as issues of social complexity. Following these material specific analyses, the totality of the archaeology from Essex is synthesized in discussion sections addressing major themes. The discussion in each chapter set these trends within the broader archaeological context, including explorations of the archaeological reflections of group identity and the nature of socio-economic networks. It is from here that conclusions are draw regarding various aspects of the social, economic, and political life of this region.

The major themes and findings

Essex represents a primary zone of interaction in the dynamic and formative environment of the early Middle Ages. This book illustrates a grand narrative in this region's history, situating the region within the major debates regarding contemporary life in the North Atlantic environment. The result is a new, detailed case study which is able to highlight changes and continuities over a long period.

In Chapter 2, the relevant evidence from the fifth and sixth centuries is reviewed and analysed. This was the period in which a diagnostic Anglo-Saxon material culture developed. As a result the overarching theme of this chapter concerns the mechanisms by which society in this region was so transformed. When the available evidence is seen in its totality, it is clear that changes that occurred following the withdrawal of the Romans were both profound and broad. It will be argued that dress accessories and other material point towards a number of influences on the developing communities, though not to a single identity. Furthermore, intraregional zones are identified with subtly different spheres of interaction, which hold in many ways through the Anglo-Saxon period. The change here was also rapid and the archaeology as a whole shows a new engagement with

communities around the North Sea littoral and the beginnings of a stable exchange network and minting.

In Chapter 3, the 'middle' centuries of the Anglo-Saxon period are studied. The key developments in the seventh and eighth centuries particularly relate to the strengthening of trade around the North Sea and the development of major trading centres, such as London/Lundenwic. The introduction of silver coinage has left a valuable archaeological resource, showing the flow of exchange and indicating the range of the contacts. Display items also continue to show the importance of overseas cultural exchange. This monograph proposes several sites in Essex as regular sites of exchange away from the large 'emporia' at London and Ipswich. These sites are characterized archaeologically by their accessibility and evidence of consistent engagement with long-distance networks.

Chapter 4 examines the ninth, tenth, and earlier eleventh centuries, up to the time of the Norman Conquest. This study examines in detail the impact of Scandinavian rule on Essex. It is argued in particular that the Danish influence and agency was stronger and more stable in northern and coastal Essex. While there is evidence that the Scandinavians used earlier landing places, it will be shown how earlier smaller exchange sites diminished in importance through this period and almost wholly vanish archaeologically during the tenth and eleventh century. This appears to have been in favour of the emergent regional towns and major centres with the backing of elite members of society.