

Power and place-names: did early English rulers use Roman-style province names?

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*Power and place in Later Roman and early medieval Europe:
interdisciplinary perspectives on governance and civil organization*

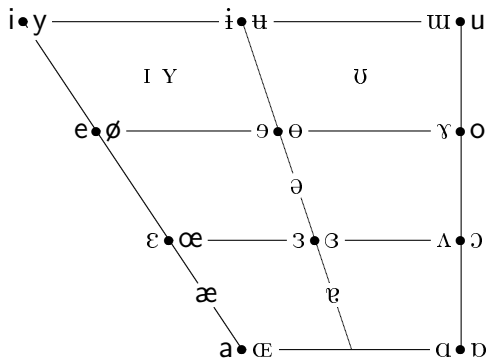
UCL Institute of Archaeology

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A little motivation

- ▶ *Assyria* = *Assyrige*
- ▶ *Babylonia* = *Babilonige*
- ▶ *salmuria* = *sælmerige* 'brine'
- ▶ *Elia* = *Elige* 'Ely'
- ▶ *Sturia* = *Sturige* 'Sturry'

Vowels



The standard Jones vowel diagram, showing schwa ($/ə/$) in relation to $/e/$ and $/a/$. Front vowels are to the left; a point in the diagram corresponds to the position of the highest point of the tongue. Unstressed $/a/$ is liable to be modified to $/ə/$, though OE had no way to represent this in writing except $\langle e \rangle$. Right-hand members of pairs have lip-rounding.

Pre-English Latin *-ia* place-names

Pliny: *Scadinavia*

Vulgate : *Aegyptia, Aethiopia, Alexandria, Antiochia, Apollonia, Appia, Arabia, Arimathia, Armenia, Asia, Babylonia, Bethania, Calvaria, Cappadocia, Frygia, Galatia, Gallia, Graecia, Hadria, Hispania, India, Italia, Iudaia, Lybia, Lycia, Lydia, Macedonia, Media, Mesopotamia, Pamphilia, Philadelphia, Samaria, Syria*

Roman coins mid-310s : *Alamannia, Francia*

Merovingian : *Austria, Austrasia, Neustria*

Gothic : Visigoths (c.590) *gens vel patria Gothorum . . . Spania, Gallia et Gallaecia*; Ostrogoths: *Italia*

English Latin *-ia* place-names

ASC : *Alemanie, Aluearnie, Bataille, Clunig, Elig, Hloðeringa, Hungrie, Ispanie, Lombardige, Manige, Normandig, Sicilie*

10th century coins : *Brydia, Bridiga, Brydige*

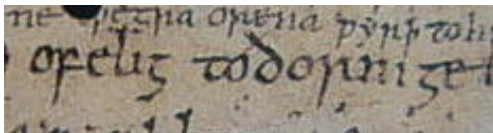
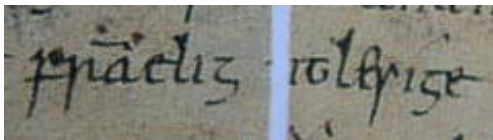
Old English *ġē 'district'

- ▶ Supposed cognate of German *Gau*
- ▶ Found (if at all) only in place-names
- ▶ But does *Gau* really exist?
- ▶ It is south German and normally a suffix (-*gawi*) only
- ▶ OE cognate should be **ġēġ!

The place-name Ely

- ▶ Normal OE form *Elig*
- ▶ Indeclinable! Not parallel to surrounding *-ēg* names
- ▶ Usual theory: OE *-gē*
- ▶ But then why *-ig*?
- ▶ Base form might be Latin *Elia*
- ▶ *Elia* < *Ælia*??

The Thorney Fragment



frā eliz [to w]itlesige and of *eliz* to dornize. From Michelle Brown, *Manuscripts from the Anglo-Saxon age*, British Library 2007, Plate 133; reproduced with permission. © British Library Board BL Add. MS 61735.

The place-name Surrey

- ▶ *Sudrige* Bede
- ▶ *Sudrig*, *Sudrige* ASC
- ▶ *Suðerie*, *Suprigum* etc. charters
- ▶ If from **ġē*, the *-i-* is unexplained
- ▶ I propose the etymology *sūðr-ia* with base 'south'
- ▶ Perhaps named by an early bishop of London

The place-name Eastry

- ▶ *to Eastorege* 805×832 (9th)
- ▶ *on Eosterge* 811 (9th)
- ▶ I propose the etymology *ēast(o)r-ia* with base 'east'
- ▶ The name is actually exactly what we would expect as a regular development of Latin *Austria*!

The place-name Sturry

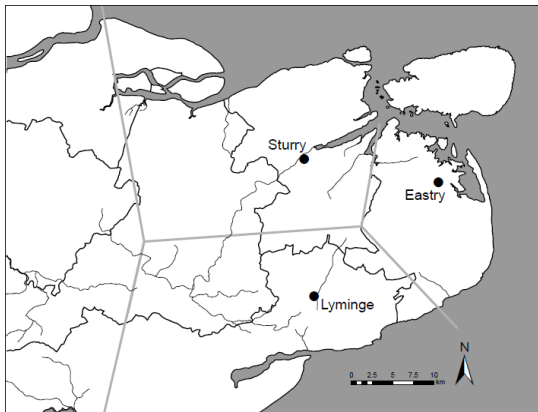
- ▶ *TERRAM IN STURIA* 679 S:8
- ▶ cf. *super ripam Sturiae* 9th for the Stör
- ▶ *terram que sita est in Sturige* c. 690 (13th)
- ▶ Etymology is river-name *Stūr+ia*

The place-name Lyminge

- ▶ *ad cortem que appellatur Liminge* 689 (13th)
- ▶ Etymology is either Celtic *lem-* 'elm' or perhaps Latin *līmen* 'threshold (of Kent)' + *ia*

Brookes map of Kent

Stuart Brookes *The lathes of Kent: a review of the evidence*, Studies in early Anglo-Saxon art and archaeology: papers in honour of Martin G. Welch, ed. by Stuart Brookes, Sue Harrington, and Andrew Reynolds, BAR British series 527, 2011, pp. 156–170



*Fig. 70 Thiessen polygons defined around the *gē* settlements and lathe boundaries in eastern Kent*

Conclusion

- ▶ The phonology of these names is consistent with an origin in Latin *-ia*
- ▶ In fact the data fits better than to OE **-ġē*, which is of doubtful existence anyway
- ▶ Such an origin would fit into a general picture of seventh and eighth century Romanization in religion, architecture, town planning, law, personal naming . . .
- ▶ Moreover it would be plausible as an influence from Merovingian and Frankish naming fashions
- ▶ See my paper *Early English region-names with the suffix -ia, with a special emphasis on the name Ely* for full data and argument