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GAMES: *see* Entertainment

GANDERSHEIM CASKET. This elegant house-shaped small casket is one of the finest pieces of Middle Saxon carving to have survived. It dates to the late eighth century, and was at Gandersheim Abbey in *Germany during the Middle Ages, passing in 1815 into the ducal collection at Braunschweig where it remains to this day.

Constructed of carved whalebone panels set in a bronze framework, the casket's walls and lid are exquisitely decorated with an intricate programme of interlacing creatures, vine-scroll and spiral ornament. Behind this elegant surface is a complex cosmological iconography, gridded and grounded in sacred numerology. The casket's very close stylistic relationship to some late eighth- and early ninth-century sculpture from the east midlands, particularly at *Peterborough (*Medehamstede*), suggests an origin in that area. Mercian-style animal ornament also occurs on some of its metal fittings. On the underside of the basal frame is an apparently Old English runic inscription which has not been satisfactorily read; the base itself seems to be a replacement of an earlier frame, and the possibility exists that the runes were copied from a somewhat earlier original.

The casket's house-shaped construction and small scale relate it to the Insular series of small metal-fitted wooden reliquaries, and its vine-scroll

and cosmological decoration suggest that it may have served as a chrismal, a container for the sacrament. How it came to be at Gandersheim is unknown, though the survival of a significant number of Anglo-Saxon artifacts in continental treasuries indicates that it was not uncommon for such precious things to be presented to churches abroad. One possible contender as donor is King *Æthelstan, a noted collector and giver of relics, who had a close relationship with the Saxon court, and was himself commemorated at Gandersheim.

A. Fink, 'Zum Gandersheimer Runenkästchen', in *Karolingische und Ottonische Kunst, Werden, Wesen, Wicklung*, ed. F. Geke, G. von Opel and H. Schnitzler (Wiesbaden, 1957), pp. 277–81; D. M. Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Art* (London, 1984), pp. 64–7; *Making of England*, pp. 177–9; *Das Gandersheimer Runenkästchen. Internationales Kolloquium Braunschweig 24–26 März 1999*, ed. R. Marth (Braunschweig, 2000); L. Webster, *Anglo-Saxon Art* (London, 2012), pp. 140–2.

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GELD: *see* *Heregeld*

GENEALOGIES, ROYAL. Royal genealogies describe kinship relationships between two or more members of a dynasty. Though often grouped together with *regnal lists (both in medieval manuscripts and by modern scholars), they constitute a

separate medium with characteristic features and problems of their own, and should be treated separately. For Anglo-Saxon England, the earliest direct evidence of genealogies comes from the early eighth century, though it has been argued they derive from pagan Germanic practice (see below). *Bede knew a version of the Kentish royal genealogy (*HE* i.15, ii.5) and perhaps also that of *East Anglia (ii.15). The important 'Anglian' collection of genealogies was originally composed in *Northumbria, probably during the reign of Alhred (765×774), though more recent collateral lines occur in the extant copies. It contains pedigrees of the kingdoms of *Deira, *Bernicia (four lines), *Mercia (four lines), *Lindsey, *Kent, East Anglia and *Wessex, all traced to Woden, as well as some regnal, papal and *episcopal lists. Versions of some of these pedigrees also occur in the **Historia Brittonum*, the **Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and the *Chronicle* of *Æthelweard. In addition, there is an account of the royal genealogy of *Essex, c.800, which survives in BL, Add. 23211 (copied after 871). Inevitably, the West Saxon genealogy proved to be the most durable, and over time it was regularly updated and also extended further into the past, eventually to Adam. In addition to the versions in the *Chronicle* (esp. s.a. 855), it occurs in the so-called 'West-Saxon Genealogical Regnal List' and in *Asser's *Vita Ælfredi* (c. 1). Later versions include an elaborate genealogy of *Edgar and his sons, composed 966×970/1; and some Anglo-Norman chronicles also contain Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies.

Most of these extant genealogies are what can be termed retrograde linear patriline. They are linear or unilateral in form in that they give one name per generation, though the occurrence of collateral lines for Bernicia, Mercia and Essex adds a degree of segmentation; they are retrograde or 'ascending' in perspective in that they begin with the chronologically most recent name and trace the line of descent back in time (only the material in *Historia Brittonum* reverses this, using the biblical *genuit* formula). Furthermore, female ancestors are not included, though Asser does discuss briefly *Alfred's maternal ancestry (c. 2). The language of the genealogies can be either Old English (the 'Anglian' collection or the *Chronicle*) or Latin (Bede, Asser, or Æthelweard) depending on the narrative context.

Recent comparative study of royal genealogies has demonstrated that, while superficially being descriptions of kinship relationships, they can in fact be very sophisticated means of expressing political claims. As such they are prone to a high degree of ideological manipulation and falsification, which can undermine the historical reliability of the genealogical statements made therein. The 'Anglian' collection is

an example of such manipulation. Each of the heptarchic dynasties is traced back to its respective eponymous founder and thence to the common ancestor Woden. It seems likely that a symmetrical and artificial scheme underlies the surviving texts, whereby fourteen generations separated the subject of each patriline and Woden. Although originally a pagan god, it has been argued that Woden functioned here as a means of defining 'Anglian' origin (or at least a belief in that origin) and thus stands in contrast to Seaxnet, the equivalent figure in the East Saxon genealogy, who defined a 'Saxon' origin. Consequently, it seems that the non-Anglian dynasties of Kent and Wessex have been artificially incorporated into the 'Anglian' origin scheme of the collection, by grafting them onto the lines of Deira and Bernicia respectively (causing chronological difficulties for the Kentish line). It might be argued that the purpose of this manipulation was to express in genealogical terms the predominant position of the 'Anglian' kingdoms in the eighth century, and possibly also to reflect a number of inter-dynastic marriage-alliances in the seventh. The fact that the East Saxon line was not incorporated into the scheme – even though Essex was also under the Anglian overlordship (of Mercia) – may undermine this interpretation. However, the occurrence of certain conspicuously non-alliterative personal names, such as Offa (possibly inserted retrospectively in the East Saxon genealogy due to its Mercian associations) may be a reflex of similar genealogical thinking.

While the surviving Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies were clearly the products of a literate and Christian society, it has been argued that in fact they were derived from earlier, pre-literate and pagan Germanic practices. This line of argument hinges on the occurrence of so many Germanic gods in the genealogies – notably, Woden, *Saxnot* (i.e. Seaxnet), and Geat – who, whatever their function in the eighth-century and later extant genealogies, are undeniably pagan in origin. Comparable Germanic material, quotations from classical authors, and reference to anthropological study of contemporary 'oral' societies, can all be employed to support the theory that pre-Christian Anglo-Saxon kings traced their descent from pagan gods and that this divine genealogical origin served to set these kings apart from the rest of the population. Indeed, the development of the West Saxon patriline through various distinct stages (Woden – Frealaf – Geat – Scaef 'son of Noah' – Adam) could be seen as a progressive search for such divine ancestry, even in a Christian context, following the demotion of Woden. It should be noted here, however, that the practice of grafting royal pedigrees onto Biblical genealogy, best

represented in the Table of Nations (Gen. X), was not uncommon in the Middle Ages, and no doubt in part reflects the understandable desire to find one's place in the overall genealogical scheme of things. In short, it is likely that the Anglo-Saxon genealogies tell us more about political aspirations and inter-dynastic relations at the end of the eighth century, and (possibly) the nature of pagan kingship, than they do about developments in the fifth and sixth centuries, and any attempt to use them for 'historical' purposes must be undertaken with extreme caution.

D. N. Dumville, 'Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists', in *Early Medieval Kingship*, ed. P. H. Sawyer and I. N. Wood (Leeds, 1977), pp. 72–104; K. Sisam, 'Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies', *PBA* 39 (1953), 287–348; D. N. Dumville, 'The Anglian Collection of Royal Genealogies and Regnal Lists', *ASE* 5 (1976), 23–50; B. Yorke, 'The Kingdom of the East Saxons', *ASE* 14 (1985), 1–36; H. Moisl, 'Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies and Germanic Oral Tradition', *JMH* 7 (1981), 215–48; C. R. Davis, 'Cultural Assimilation in the Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies', *ASE* 21 (1992), 23–36.

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GENESIS, the first and longest of the poems in the *Junius Manuscript, deals with the events of the first biblical book from the creation to the offering of Isaac. It is in fact two poems, known for convenience as *Genesis A* and *Genesis B*. *Genesis A* is based on Gen. I–XXII. On the whole it stays close to the biblical version, keeping the same narrative content event by event. But in place of the paraphrase of Gen. III. 1–7, the deception of Eve by the serpent, there is an interpolation, known as *Genesis B*, comprising lines 235–851 of the whole poem.

That *Genesis B* is a translation adapted from an Old Saxon poem was first established by Eduard Sievers in 1875 and subsequently confirmed by the discovery of fragments from an Old Saxon *Genesis* in the Vatican Library. Apart from the repetition of the fall of the angels and the obvious differences in subject-matter, Sievers's argument focused on differences in vocabulary, especially the words used for God. There are also some metrical features that reflect the OS original, such as longer initial dips than usual, the predominance in the *b*-verse of verses with a rising rhythm, and unusually frequent use of anacrusis (initial extra-metrical syllables) and unstressed infinitives.

In the treatment of episodes *Genesis A* often tends to emphasise Germanic elements. For instance, like a Germanic warlord, God exacts vengeance on men's malicious deeds (1380). In the Cain and Abel episode the *kinship of the brothers is emphasised, so that, in killing his brother, Cain is offending against one of the strongest bonds of Germanic society. When Cain is banished he is sent into exile, another

common motif in Old English poetry. In the episode of Lot and Sodom and Gomorrah, the Sodomites are guilty of overbearing behaviour (2581), like Hygelac when he took on the Frisians (**Beowulf* 1206). But the poem's principal message is inevitably religious. A theme that emerges from practically every episode is that of Salvation by the Help of God. The differences between those who are saved and those who are destroyed emerges particularly clearly in the episode of Lot and Sodom and Gomorrah. Like God, Lot is firm in his adherence to the covenant between them, as were also Abel, Noah and Abraham, whereas the Sodomites, like the fallen angels and the race of Cain before them, are covenant-breakers. The terms of the covenant are that God will protect the people if they obey Him and keep His commands. God propels his followers (2813–14), but only if they fear and respect him as Abraham does in offering Isaac (2861–7). Those who fail to follow God's directives are punished: the rebel angels are sent to hell, the Sodomites are engulfed in flames, and Lot's wife is turned into a pillar of salt. God controls everything: his moral righteousness is backed by physical power.

Genesis B treats the fall of the angels and the fall of man in a dramatic and ironic way. While this subject-matter is biblical, most of what is in *Genesis B* is not in the Bible. The events are interpreted in terms of the Germanic **comitatus*. In heaven God is lord and the angels are His **thegns* owing God loyalty in return for His favour. Satan is the senior angel. But, dissatisfied with this position, he objects to serving God, and rebels. For his pains he is thrown into hell, and there, ironically, sets up his own *comitatus* with himself as lord. Chained in hell he then makes a long appeal to the fallen angels, his *thegns*, for one of them to volunteer to go to earth to deceive Adam and Eve. On earth, where Adam and Eve are the Lord's *thegns* in paradise, this devilish emissary approaches Adam, but is rebuffed on the grounds that he cannot show Adam any sign of the benefits of eating the forbidden fruit. The devilish emissary promptly invents a heavenly vision for Eve, who falls, followed by Adam. Adam and Eve are expelled from paradise, and the devilish emissary returns exultant to hell. This version of events differs from that in Christian tradition in some notable ways. First, there is an infernal council at which the devils plot the fall of Man and one of them is chosen to go and bring it about. Secondly, the devilish emissary approaches Adam first (rather than Eve) and is rebuffed. Thirdly, Eve is the victim of a deception, acting throughout in good faith. It is possible that Milton was familiar with the contents of this poem through its first editor, Francis *Junius.