THE FAMILIA IN ANGLO-SAXON SOCIETY: ‘HOUSEHOLD’, RATHER THAN ‘FAMILY, HOME LIFE’ AS NOW UNDERSTOOD

Abstract: Words used for societal units do not always translate well from one language to another, and present difficulties within one language considered from age to age. The family unit is ideally so overlaid with love and sentiment, so fundamental to the sweet content of father, mother, children, and perhaps others closely tied or loosely connected by blood or affinity that it is hard for us to believe that there appears not to have been in Anglo-Saxon England a native word for ‘the family’ as an ideal grouping. The Anglo-Saxons had words for ‘household’, indeed with a pater familias very much at the head, and the unit including wife and children of course, but equally as a matter of course, servants and slaves in the house and in the fields, and cattle and sheep, often a very large unit. Many of the words used for such a unit are derivatives and compounds of hiw, and that is related to hi(gi)d, the word used for a unit of land, the ‘hide’. That unit is, however, not of some standard land measure, but probably of a variable area one or more of which would be sufficient to sustain a household, large or small, including monastic households, some of them very large with lands of many hides. One might wish to understand their unit, the ‘hide’, as consisting of some definite number of acres. That does not apply. There are several other Old English words for some kind of family unit, sibb, a word for the ‘extended family’ and for ‘peace’, and cynn, a word for ‘tribe, race’, and contained in post-Anglo-Saxon kith and kin. These words are not treated in this paper, which has the complexities of hiw and derivatives and compounds at its centre.

1. ‘KITH AND KIN’ PERHAPS A COLD COMFORT AT ANY TIME IN THE ENGLISH MIDDLE AGES, AND CERTAINLY NOT GOING BACK LINGUISTICALLY TO ANGLO-SAXON

Mrs Thatcher is reported as having said, “there is no such thing as ‘society’.” What exactly she meant is not clear. Perhaps it was a political statement, that socialism has no basis in the realities of the nation. Perhaps it was more profound, that within the nation each one is alone, and that in a self-seeking world there is no cohesiveness between individuals other than of insubstantial sentiment. Our notion of the family is similarly of a grouping, each member of which is alone, and held together, if at all, by insubstantial sentiment. The Anglo-Saxons seem not to have had a word for that grouping. We speak alliteratively of kith and kin, a phrase that looks as if it might go back to the Anglo-Saxons; yet not all that alliterates is ancient, and the

DOI 10.1515/angl.2008.003
collocation is recorded no earlier than Ancrene Wisse in the early thirteenth century:1

Na swuch þing ne schule ȝe ȝeouen wiðuten schriftes leaue, na mare þen neomen þet ȝe ne segen him fore, as of oþre þinges, kun oðer cuðde, hu ofte ȝe un- deruengen hu longe ȝe edheolden.

No such thing (as articles of clothing) shall you give without the confessor’s leave, no more than take what you have not told him of beforehand, nor of other things, from kin or kith, without (telling him) how often you have received things (or) how long you have retained them.

From this quotation it emerges that for a religious the ties of kin and kith are to be put aside as worldly vanities, like articles of clothing made in the solitariness of the anchor-hold to give to those outside, or things received from those near and dear, kinsfolk and acquaintance: no warm relationships in this world for anchoresses.

It might be objected that to generalize about Anglo-Saxon usage from the peculiar case of a coenobitical ideal designed for three young, well-born ladies, who have chosen to cut themselves off from kith and kin, is mistaken in respect of both date and non-secularity. The former is true, but not the latter: the extant literature (in the widest sense of the word) of the Anglo-Saxons was written largely by the religious for the religious, and transmitted by religious scribes in religious houses. Where worldliness is a sin, the comforting warmth of a generous kith and kin is a false comfort.

In the recent Thesaurus of Old English there is hardly a mention of ‘family’.2 In Modern English, when one thinks of ‘family’, one thinks of father, mother and children, and in an ‘extended family’ one thinks of grandparents, and others related by ties of blood or affinity. In twenty-first-century Britain the notion of ‘the extended family’ survives chiefly in immigrant families or those descended from immigrants.

---

1 Ancrene Wisse, ed. Bella Millett, EETS o.s. 325 (Oxford, 2005) 160, lines 170–3. The quotations in this paper do not follow editorial details, including punctuation; all translations are mine, unless the translator’s name is given. For ‘kith and kin’ cf. Middle English Dictionary, ed. Hans Kurath et al. (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1952–2001) s.v. kitthe, n. 3.

2. Wedlock in the Middle Ages, and the Example of the Saintly Abbot Eugenia

It was different before the Great War of 1914–1918, when father went out to work and provided for his wife at home looking after the children, and making sure that grandparents and other dependants were warm and did not go hungry. The aristocracy, the squinarchy too, lived in a different world, a world which by a largely false sense of genealogical descent was affectionately traced back to earlier ages of knights in armour and perhaps even to the heroes of Anglo-Saxon England, in whom their romantic descendants believed. The feelings of kith and kin in Anglo-Saxon England were not a subject in Old English literature. The demands of the immediate family, of father, mother, and children, are not anywhere at the centre of Anglo-Saxon thought as far as we know it. That is perhaps a consequence of the monastic dominance in the transmitted literature of Anglo-Saxon England.

Unlike recent canonizations, the saints venerated in Anglo-Saxon England were not much engaged in social work. Contemporary with Ancræne Wisse, too late therefore even for the Legenda Aurea, St Elizabeth of Hungary is an almost unique medieval model of compassion with the poor. Other than for her royal rank, her family is of little consequence in her saintliness. Ælfric’s homilies on the lives of saints might seem a good place to look for characterizations of saints. Of course in most of his writings he merely follows his source. In these homilies we are not likely to find many accounts of ‘family life’. The good bishop Helenus speaks to St Eugenia’s servants, her familia as that Latin word is to be understood, but there is no sense of that in Ælfric’s account, and there is no mention of familia in the underlying words of the Gospel:³

To hire twam cnihtum . he cwæð þæt hi heoldan ægelborennys on mode . þeah þe hi mannum þeowdon.
and cwæð þæt hi Crist gespræce þysum godspellicum wordum: “Na hate ic eow na þeowan . ac ge synd mine freond.”

He said to her two servants that they should preserve their innate nobility of mind though they served people; and he said that Christ spoke to them in these gospel-words: “I call you not servants, but you are my friends.”

A little later in the homily, Eugenia’s compassion with the poor shows itself when she, dressed as a man and elected abbot, urges the rich widow Melantia to distribute treasure to the poor and to beggars, yet that is not seen in terms of kith and kin. As Melantia tries to seduce the handsome abbot Eugenia, she uses the word *gemæne* (line 157) in connection with her relationship to her deceased husband. Skeat, if I understand his translation correctly, interprets that as the ‘communion’ of wife and husband, a communion that might be regarded as that of an as yet childless family. There is no sign that Ælfric so regarded it; and this interpretation is, I think, mistaken. The sense of the word is clear: if it is a noun, it means ‘a sharing’; if it is an adjective, it means ‘common’. The syntax of *unc næs gemæne. man on pyssum lyfe* is far from clear, less clear than Ælfric’s syntax is usually. Dual *unc* is in form accusative or dative, dative here; pronominal *man* is always nominative, and the first half seems to mean ‘was not held in common by the two of us’, or ‘was not common to (or shared by) the two of us’. In legal terminology Blackstone’s *communion of goods* ‘joint ownership’ may be involved, and that may be meant by Skeat’s translation, ‘we two had no communion’. Skeat’s words have been interpreted as if he had designed to make ‘sexual intercourse’ acceptable to a Victorian readership of the lives of saints, and Ælfric’s words (perhaps as glossed by Skeat) are interpreted by Paul Szarmach as “evidently saying that she and her deceased husband have had no intercourse”, where *evidently* means ‘inferentially’, not ‘evidential-ly’. The four words that follow are vague in sense, and in syntax loosely attached to what precedes: something like ‘as people in this life’.

Melantia’s marital situation is described in the preceding lines. She had been left substantial possessions, *unlytle æhta*, by her husband. While he was alive she had no rights of possession, but was entirely under his authority: they had nothing in common, no communion of goods. About a hundred years after Ælfric composed the homily on Saint Eugenia, a hundred years of momentous change, the *Leges Henrici Primi* give us some idea what property rights a wife and their children had then, and may have had in Anglo-Saxon times (though of course they do not go back to the foreign world of the

---

4 The distinction between noun and adjective does not hold in Old English when there is no distinction of form. Skeat interprets *gemæne* here as a noun rather than an adjective, and that is a possible interpretation, though Ælfric seems not to have used the word recognizable as a noun anywhere. His usual construction is *beon gemæne* ‘to be common to, be held in common by’.


6 Singular *man* is found with plural sense, allowing the rendering (impersonal) ‘people’ for ‘one’. A personal pronoun, here *unc*, being taken up by impersonal *man* is difficult to parallel, and the connection of the two halves of line 157 is vague – I use ‘as’ without confidence.
Romans under the emperor Commodus, AD 180–192, under whom Eugenia and her father lived):\(^7\)

Likewise if a person entrusts anything to, or exchanges it with, or hands it over to, a married woman or infant boy or infant girl without the permission of their lord, it is not necessary for them or their lords, if they are resolved to deny responsibility, to make answer about these things while they are under authority.

It may be that Melantia, through her husband’s death no longer sub virga, that is, no longer under his authority, was looking for a new man to wield the rod over her, to have authority over her, and Ælfric, far from commenting on her marital sex life, says only that she wished to bestow on the lovely abbot her worldly goods as well as her person. As a widow she enjoyed the rights of ownership, in wedlock she had had no such rights; as a widow she was free to give her person and her possessions in matrimony to whomsoever she chose. The handsome abbot, innocent of course, tempted her to do just that. She was in love with the abbot, and she may well have thought that the prospect of enjoying her person and her goods might persuade the abbot strongly. It did not. What may seem to a modern reader a tale suitable for farce or operetta defines, in a more pious reading, a coenobitic ideal unpossessed of worldly riches. I think that is how Ælfric words the account.

The wedded life and vidual lusts of Melantia, leading to her behaviour at St Eugenia’s abbey, are far removed from ‘family life’ as that is now understood. One thinks of the matron’s wholesome words as whispered to her neighbour and overheard in Queen Victoria’s reign during a quiet moment in Act IV of a performance of Anthony and Cleopatra: “How different, how very different from the home life of our own dear Queen!”\(^8\) Melantia’s life in St Eugenia’s vita depicts no home life: family harmony – or rancour – is not for homilies on the lives of women saints.

---


\(^8\) For details of what appears to have been an excessive production, with Sarah Bernhardt as Cleopatra violent in Act IV, see *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, introd. Bernard Darwin, 2nd rev. ed. (London: Oxford UP, 1954) 7, quot. 2, which claims it is from Irvin S. Cobb, *A Laugh a Day*, but it is not in *A Laugh a Day Keeps the Doctor Away* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1923), and later editions of the *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* leave out the reference to Cobb.
3. The Anglo-Saxon Domestic Community; hiw and hired

How far is our idea of family relations to be understood as the Anglo-Saxons’ idea of home life? Felix Liebermann’s *Rechts- und Sachglossar* is a good place in which to search for Anglo-Saxon institutions, legal, political, ecclesiastical, or social; but under the headword *Familie* the Glossar is uncharacteristically evasive. That headword is followed by a definition of what a family is: *häusliche Gemeinschaft*, ‘domestic community’. That coincides with Dr Johnson’s spare definition of his first sense of the word *family*: ‘Those who live in the same house; household’, and that accords with the central sense of Latin *familia*, which Lewis and Short express as, ‘With the idea of house predominating’. Henry Bradley, editing this part of what is now *The Oxford English Dictionary*, begins his entry *Family* with obsolete meanings of the word, before he gets to the two senses which might be thought centrally relevant to 1894, when *F–Fang* was published:

2. The body of persons who live in one house or under one head, including parents, children, servants, etc. . . .

3. The group of persons consisting of the parents and their children, whether actually living together or not; in wider sense, the unity formed by those who are nearly connected by blood or affinity.

By *affinity* Bradley meant a relationship by marriage, regardless of any concomitant liking or disliking of the family members for each other. Liebermann, after his two-word definition of *Familie*, bids the reader to look up the following entries in vol. II/1, *Wörterbuch* (1906): (1) *hiwan*, (2) *hiwen*, (3) *hiwisc*, (4) *hiered*, words the meanings of which are summed up in Clark Hall’s dictionary as (1) ‘members of a family, household or religious house’, (2) ‘household’, (3) ‘household’, (4) s.v. *hiered* ‘household, family, retinue, brotherhood, company’.

---


A legal use of *inhiwan*, in the Laws of Ine 50, clearly refers to the servants, free and unfree, of a person of rank, and these are not seen as his family members as that term is now understood, not even necessarily members of the staff living in the same house as the head of the family: 13

Gif gesiċund mon ðingað wîd cyning oðde wîd kyninges ealdormonnan for his inhiwan oðde wîd his hlaford for ðeowe oðde for frige, nah he þær nane witærædenne, se gesið, forðon he him nolde ær ýfles gestieran æt ham.

If a man of the rank of *gesith* intercedes with the king, or with the king’s ealdorman, or with his lord, on behalf of members of his household, slaves or free, he – the *gesith* – has no right to any fines, because he had not previously sought to restrain them from wrongdoing at home.

In the manuscript *innhiwum* is written in two words, as is its doublet *innhigum* in the will of Badanoth Beotting, two uses that show that such terms may refer to either those dwelling on a secular estate or members of a religious community: 14

& ðonne ofer hiора dei wifes & cilda, ic bebeode on Godes noman ðæt mon agefe ðæt lond innhigum to heora beode him to bruçanne on ece ærfe swæ him liffast sie.

And then after their day, of (my) wife and children, I enjoin in the name of God that that land be given to the members of the monastic house for them to enjoy (its yield) at their common table in perpetual possession as it may best please them.

The Anglo-Saxons’ understanding of compounds and derivatives of *hīw* allowed them to use them without distinction of ‘members of a house’ secular or religious, servants, slaves, or monastics. A sense of ‘family’ as that word is now understood was not part of their understanding. The etymology of *hīw* and related words is no help: the words are polysemous in Old English, and cognates in closely or distantly related Indo-European languages point in too many divergent directions to be of use in determining any

---

13 Liebermann 1898–1916, I, 110–13; III, 77 (annotations on Ine 50). The Textus Roffensis reading is for *his innhiwum* (dative plural), not (accusative plural) for *his inhiwan* (Corpus Christi College MS 173, which I quote). In my translation I have made use of Dorothy Whitelock’s translation, English Historical Documents, I, c. 500–1042, 2nd ed. (London: Eyre Methuen, 1979) 404.

underlying central meaning. It may be a skewed procedure to search for Old English meanings in the laws and legal documents of the Anglo-Saxons: legal terminology may differ from non-legal usage. The writings of Wulfstan, however, manifest no such semantic distinctions; his legal style differs little from his non-legal style. One might therefore begin with Wulfstan, but, disappointingly, he does not make much use of these words. In *Institutes of Polity* Wulfstan lays down that a bishop is to promote and supervise useful manual work in his household (*hired*), so that no one remains idle; and further, it is fitting for bishops to ensure, wherever they may be, that in their households wise teaching prevails, for every folly is to be regarded as unworthy of bishops and their establishments. A bishop’s *hired* is not the kind of family where father is the head, and wife, children, and servants are directed by him to busy themselves usefully, and avoid idleness and silliness: it is a great house over which presides a wise bishop, celibate by rule. The only other occurrence in Wulfstan of any of the words to which Liebermann directs his readers is a single use of *hired* in a homily, in which *Jacobes hired & eal Israhela cyn* renders *domus Iacob et omnes cognationes domus Israhel* of Jeremiah 2:4. This biblical use, with ‘the house of Jacob’ in parallel with ‘all the tribe of Israel’, is again not of a family consisting of parents, their children, and others closely connected by blood or affinity (and in former times including the servants of the house). Wulfstan has no word for ‘family’ in that sense; the concept is not in his language: his two renderings of *domus*, both *hired* and *cyn*, well represent some of the semantic range of *domus*.

Ælfric provides a richer store of words that might be rendered ‘family’ in Modern English, even when the underlying concept was not in Anglo-Saxon England what *family* is today; that is, even if there were a word in Old

---


English conveniently rendered by ‘family’ in Modern English it would not be equipollent with Modern English family. In Ælfric there are many occurrences of the words to which we are directed by Liebermann. I restrict my selection to contexts involving parents and children (and perhaps servants), or a house in which there are parents and children (and perhaps servants), not ‘household’, not ‘court’, not ‘dynasty’. Family membership is outside the hired in the homily on St Apollinaris, lines 119–27:18

Then the Christians rejoiced in praising Christ, and the maiden was baptized, and her mother too, and all their household too, some three hundred people, and many of the pagans accepted the Faith. Her father Rufus, however, because of the emperor’s severity, did not dare to disclose that he believed in the Lord, but in secret he loved the faithful bishop (Apollinaris), and served him with food, and his daughter was consecrated to the service of God, and remained a virgin.

4. The ‘hide’, a Variable Land Measure, Sufficient to Sustain a hired, a familia, of Variable Size.

In the minds of many of those who write about Anglo-Saxon land measures the notion of ‘family’ seems to me to be too close to their understanding of hi(gi)d, ‘hide’ (cf. the meaning of German Hufe). No doubt, they are influenced by Anglo-Latin usage, especially Bede’s use of the word familia; two examples suffice (iv. 16):19 Est autem mensura eiusdem insulae iuxta

---

18 Skeat 1881–1900, I, 478–80. The use of byred, at line 59, is similar in that the word explicitly describes members of the household other than family (476, lines 58–9): the Ravenna nobleman is being baptized mid his wife and cildum | and eall his byred.

aestimationem Anglorum mille ducentarum familiarum; unde data est episcopo possessio terrae trecentarum familiarum; and (iv. 23) acceptit locum unius familiae ad septentrionalem plagam Uiri fluminis, ubi aequo anno uno monachicam cum perpaucis sociis utiam agebat. Stapleton attractively translates familia as ‘tenementes’ (i.e. ‘holdings’) in the plural, and as ‘Lordship’ (iv. 16): “The sayd Iland conteyned, as the English doo rate it, m.cc. tenementes. Whereof was given to the byshop the possession of the land of ccc. tenementes”; and (iv. 23) “she had delivered her the landes of one Lordship at the north coast of the river Were, in which she lived also the space of one yeare, and lead a monastickall lyf with a fewe other of her companie.” The Old English translation is fairly literal for these two uses (iv. 16): Is þæt ilcan ealondes gemet æfter Ongol cynnes eahte twelf hund hida. & he þa þam biscope gesealde in æht þreo hund hida & þær eahta to; and (iv. 23): Pa onfeng heo anes heowscipes stowe to norðæle Wiére þære ea, & þær efenlice an ger munuclif dyde mid feawum hire geferum (‘That same island measures twelve hundred hides according to the reckoning of the English people. And he gave into the bishop’s possession three hundred hides and possessions in addition’; and ‘then she received accommodation to the north of the river Wear for one household, and there she pursued in like manner monastic life for one year with a few of her companions’).

What size is a household – a hired? In Christ and Satan, the fallen Lucifer and his crew think of establishing their court, hired, in heaven, yet God maintained his court in heaven by right:20

Godes andsacan

hweorfan geond helle,  hate onæled
ufan and utan  him was aghwær wa.

Witum werige,  wuldres bescryede,
dreamum bedæle  heofon deop gehygd,
þa heo on heofonum  ham staðelodon,
þæt hie woldon beneman  nergendne Crist
roderes rices,  ah he on riht geheold
hired heofona  and þæt halige seld.

God’s adversaries wandered throughout hell, hotly scorched from above and below they experienced misery from all sides. Worn down by torments, deprived of glory, bereft of joys they wailed the grievous thought that, when they had their established home in heaven, they would take away from Christ the Saviour the

---

kingdom of heaven: but he maintained by right the court of heaven and that sacred palace.

5. The Holy Family; Royal Courts; Christ and the Apostles Seen as a Unit

For hiréd no grander context than hiréd beofona and pat halige seld was imaginable in Anglo-Saxon England. In the visual arts, the Holy Family, la Sacra Famiglia, with St Anne and St John, does not appear much in the early Middle Ages, and in time the number of those participating in the scene grows into representations of Virgin and Child and all their kindred, with St Anne prominent—die heilige Sippe. All this is, however, long after the Anglo-Saxons, and this paper is not concerned with the Old English words sibb and cynn.

A royal prince’s court was designated by the word hiréd in late Anglo-Saxon England; thus in the Chronicle annal for 1041:21

& þæs geres sona com Eadward his broðor on medren fram begeondan sæ, Æþelrædes sunu cinges, ðe wæs ær for fela gearon of his earde adrifen, & ðeh wæs to cinge gesworen, & he wunode þa swa on his broðor hirede þa hwile ðe he leofode.

And soon in that year Edward, his brother on the mother’s side, came from beyond the sea, King Æthelred’s son, who had been driven from his homeland many years previously, and nonetheless was sworn in as king, and in that way he dwelt at his brother’s court as long as he lived.

A royal household with the king’s retinue is a hiréd; thus in MS Corpus Christi College Cambridge 188 of the First Series of Ælfric’s Catholic Homilies:22 Ne mæg nan eorðlic cyning cyelic lybban, buton he hæbbe ðegenas & swa gelogodne hiréd swa his cynescipe gerisan mæge (‘No earthly king can live (as) royal, unless he has retainers and a household so filled with occupants as may be fitting for his royal rank’).

In the account of St Petronilla Ælfric refers to the holy company of the apostles as Cristes hiréd (line 203), and a few lines later as his halgan hiréd:23

On anginne middaneardes . cwæð se ælmihtiga God .
‘Beoð gemenigfyldre . and gefyllað þas eordán’. 
and Crist wolde on his tocyme clænnysse aræran .
and his halgan hiréd . heold on clænnysse.

22 Ælfric’s Catholic Homilies. The First Series, ed. Peter Clemoes, EETS s.s. 17 (London, 1997) 533, addition to Homily VIII, after line 165.
In the beginning of the world Almighty God said, “Multiply, and fill this earth”; and Christ wished at his Advent chastity to be established, and his holy household kept itself in chastity.

The court as a royal institution is not designated a hired till after the Conquest, thus at the end of the annal for 1075 (recte 1074):24 & se kynge Wyllelm mid miclcan weorðscyple þa bine underfencg, & he wes þær þa on his hirede & toc swilce gerihta suwa he him gelagade (‘and King William received him with great honour then, and he was there then at his court and took such dues as he established for him by law’).

In the Old English writings that have come down to us, in the charters especially of the later Anglo-Saxon period (early charters, exemplified below, more often have dative plural bigum, biwum, beowum), hired very frequently refers to an ecclesiastical community, not to a secular household; thus a grant of land to Christ Church, Canterbury, in a charter attributed to 1036:25 Ic or ed geann æt land æt Horslege am hir ede æt Cristes cyrcean for mine sawle swa full & suwa fornð suwa ic sylf bit abe (‘I, Thored, grant the estate at Horsley to the community at Christ Church for the sake of my soul as fully and completely as I owned it myself’).

Though this ecclesiastical usage is very common, the Anglo-Saxons certainly used hired for secular households too. Job’s household, in his prosperity, is described thus by Ælfric:26 Him wær on acennede seofon suna and réo dohra. He hæfde seofon ðusend sceapa and réo ðusend olfenda, fif hund getymu oxena and fif hund assan and ormæte micelne hir ed (‘Seven sons and three daughters were born to him. He owned seven thousand sheep and three thousand camels, five hundred teams of oxen and five hundred donkeys and an immensely great household’). This is a literal translation of the Bible, and ormæte micelne hir ed renders ac familia multa nimis.27 What is clear is that familia is Ælfric’s hired, but not family in the restricted Modern English sense.28 Ælfric’s treatment of the Bible is less literal in the


27 Biblia Sacra, IX (1951) 95, Liber Iob, 1:3.

28 The wording and a familie exceeding great in the Doway version (The Holie Bible, I [1609], 1061) is unidiomatic, for that version tends to use, even if unidiomatic, English words closely related to the Latin of the Vulgate. The Authorized Version, based on the Hebrew text, has “and a very great household,” and for household it has the marginal gloss, Or, husbandrie.
following sentence from his *Sermo Excerptus de Libro Rerum*, in which *hired* is used with a prophetic reference to the dynasty or progeny of the unrighteous king Ahab (nothing in the Vulgate corresponds to the first half of the following sentence): 29 *ic adilegie fiinne hired and fordo fiinne ofspring* (‘I shall destroy thy progeny and extirpate thy ofspring’).

The glossed biblical books of the Anglo-Saxons sometimes provide evidence not otherwise so clearly available, though that evidence may not reveal Old English idiom so much as an Anglo-Saxon’s wish for literalness in giving an Old English equivalent of a Latin word. The Northumbrian Gospels several times use *hiorod* to gloss *familia* in *pater familias*; thus at Luke 13:25 it is glossed by Aldred in the Lindisfarne Gospels as *se faeder hiw*isc l hiorodes *faeder* l higna *faeder*, and the Rushworth Gospels have *faeder hiorodes l higna*, perhaps dependent on Aldred’s triple gloss; the West Saxon Gospels (MS Corpus Christi College Cambridge 140) have *se hirdes ealdor* ‘the lord of the household’. 30 Probably Aldred’s *faeder hiw*isc stands for *hiw*isc-*faeder*, a compound, but the elements are in the order of the Latin as he glosses *pater familias* element by element. The triple gloss may be considered with Ælfric’s glossary entry, *familia*: *hiwredden oðde hired*. 31 Aldred and Ælfric, trebly and doubly, show the modern reader how an Anglo-Saxon might have understood Latin *familia*, possibly revealing some insecurity, and at the same time guiding us, correctly on this occasion, into etymological relationships perhaps attended by subtle semantic distinctions which we no longer understand fully. 32 The idiom *pater familias* is differently rendered in the Old English Bede: 33 *Pa he da cwom to þæm men þe he secan wolde þa gemette he þær fæmnan, wæs nift þæs higna aldræ þe he


32 The <o> in the stem of *hiorod* is explained as a Northumbrian retention of final /u/ contracted with /i/ to form <io>; in the second syllable /el/ < /øl/ < /æl/ is a different development of the suffix with /o/ < /øl/ < /æl/; see Alistair Campbell, *Old English Grammar* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1959, and corrected reprints) §§ 120.3.c, note 2, 372, 382.

sohte, wæs mid longe ædle legeres swīðe gehesigad (‘When he came to the person whom he wished to visit he found there a (young) woman, the niece of the head of the members of the household whom he was visiting, who had been burdened grievously with a chronic paralytic disease’). The Old English renders Bede’s Latin, Quo dum aduenir et, inuenit puellam ibi neptem patris familias longo paralysis morbo gravatam. Stapleton translates that, “Here he found a damsell niece to the good man of the house of a long time diseased with a grevous palsey.”

6. OE hired (< *hiwræd), hiwræd(d)en

The Old English suffixes -ræd and -ræden form abstracts.34 Again, whether there are shades of meaning is beyond our understanding. Both hiwræd(d)en(ne) and hired (< *hiwræd) are not uncommon; at Luke 19:9 hiwrædde(n) (in the dative) renders domus (domui) in the West Saxon Gospels in the sense of ‘family, tribe’, not ‘house’, i.e. the building (for which the Northumbrian Gospels have huse).35 Da cwæd se Hælend to him todaeg þisse hiwrædde(n) ys hæl geworden forþam he wæs Habrahames bærn; rendering the Vulgate, ait Iesus ad eum quia hodie salus domui huic facta est eo quod et ipse filius sit Abrahamae. That ‘house’ means ‘those who dwell in a house’ may be clear, but, coming immediately after ‘house’ used in the sense of the building, the change from huse to hiwrædde(n) in the West Saxon Gospels (Luke 10:5) is significant in Christ’s sending forth his disciples into the world: On swa hwylc huse swa ge inga æryst, “Sib si þisse hiwræddenne!” rendering the Vulgate, In quacumcumque domum intraueritis | primum dite, “Pax huic domui”.36 Biblical uses of house, as, for example, in the house of Israel, may suggest that the greeting, Sib si þisse hiwræddenne!, shall bless not only the present members of the household, it blesses generations yet to come, the tribe, the progeny. Glossary entries are often difficult to assess. Whether familia is really synonymous with familiaritas in

34 Cf. Charles T. Carr, Nominal Compounds in Germanic, St Andrews University Publications 41 (London: Oxford UP, 1939) 106, no. 14; Friedrich Kluge, Nominaalpha Stammbildungslehre der altgermanischen Dialekte, 3rd ed. revised by Ludwig Sütterlin & Ernst Ochs (Halle: Niemeyer, 1926) §§ 149b, 162. The form ræd is of course frequent as the second element of personal names, where it is presumably to be understood as the noun, not as a suffix.

35 Skeat 1874, 182–3, with several spelling variants. For the Vulgate cf. Wordsworth & White. 1889–1954, I, 438. The Rhemes New Testament, 193, has “Iesus said to him, That this day saluation is made to this house: because that he also is the sonne of Abraham”.


Brought to you by | Swets
Authenticated | 192.87.50.3
Download Date | 11/4/13 11:12 AM
Medieval Latin is unlikely, but *cneoris* ‘generation, tribe, posterity’ is close to some denotations or connotations of *hiwræden*: to that extent the entry in the Harley Glossary makes sense:37 *Familia* . *hiwræden* . *familiaritas* . *cneoris*.

The word *hiwræden* occurs only once in Byrhtferth, translated ‘household’ by Crawford, ‘family’ by Baker and Lapidge, in a difficult context in which the word refers to the inhabitants of a house, a household in that sense, and a family only if that is understood to include all who are of the household including servants, not only father, mother, children, and other relations, that is, not ‘family’ as now usually understood:38 *On þem teoðan dæge þissan mondes nime æghwylc hiwræden of ælcum buse an lamb, and gif þær beon læs manna þonne þæt lamb læge fretan, þonne nyme he his neahgebur, þe him gebendost sy, þæt he læge þæt lamb cænlice fretan* (‘On the tenth day of this month let each one, the householder from each house, take a lamb, and if there are fewer people than can eat up the lamb, then let him take his neighbour, who is nearest to him, so that he can eat up the lamb entirely’). The word *hiwræden*, however, nowhere else in Old English means ‘head of the household, householder’. The Commentary to the 1995 edition (315) compares Byrhtferth’s wording with that of the Hexateuch Exodus 12:3–5 in connection with the authorship of anonymous parts of the Hexateuch.39 The crucially different wording for establishing the meaning of *hiwræden* is in the Hexateuch, *nime ælc man an lamb to his bywraeden* ‘let each one take a lamb to his household’. The use of the third person singular pronouns in Byrhtferth’s wording, *he* ‘the householder’ and *his neahgebur* ‘his neighbour’ have no noun to which they refer back. My translation, ‘each one, the householder’, tries to make sense of the sentence; but the syntax is unlikely and *hiwræden* means ‘household’ (not ‘householder’, as in my translation). Byrhtferth, we are told (1995 edition, p. lxxviii), “here ... shows no interference from Old Latin readings”, but he used the Vulgate, which reads *vocavit autem Moses omnes seniores filiorum Israhel et dixit ad eos | ite tollentes animal per familias vestras immolate Phase*, undiagnostically translated in the Doway Version as “And Moyses called al the Ancients of the children of Is[r]ael, and said to them: Goe take a lambe by your families, and sacrifice the Phase.”40

---

40 *Biblia Sacra*, II (1929), Libri Exodi et Levitici, 138, Exodus 12:21. *Holie Bible* (1609), 185–6; *Israel* misprinted *Isael*. As has been pointed out, and the 1995 Commentary makes clear, the underlying version of the *Heptateuch* is not the
Words derived from *hiw-* include words based on the notion of relationship, thus *hiwan* and *higan* (often in the dative plural), *hiwisc*, and *hiwscipe*, as well as *hiwung* when it relates to marriage. Examples of *hiwan* ‘community’ occur in the early charters, thus in two charters referring to the same community: 41.1. Ealhferð Bisceop & da higan on Wintaceastr habbað gelæned hiora leofan friond viii hida landes on eastyne ðriora manna deg, ðet is CURED dux & Wulfride his wife & anan man þerto sulþ him lieofost sio him to hæbbenne & to brucenne (‘Bishop Ealhtherth and the community at Winchester have leased eight hides of land at Easton to their beloved friend for the lifetime of three people, namely, to Earl Cuthred and to his wife Wulfrith and in addition to one person such as is most agreeable to (Cuthred), (for them) to hold and enjoy’). 2. Denewulf bisceop & þa hiwan in Wintanceastr leton to Beornulfa hiora landes xv hida æt Eblesburnnan wið þam gefole ðe he wið bisceop & wið hiwan ared (‘Bishop Denewulf and the community at Winchester leased to Beornulf fifteen hides of their land at Ebbesbourne at the rent which he agreed with the bishop and with the community’). There are a few verse occurrences, for example, in Genesis A: 42

Gewat him þa mid bride þroðor Arones
under Abimelech æhte lædan,
mid his hiwum.

Then the brother of Haran (i.e., Abraham) went with his wife to bring under Abimelech’s control his possessions, with members of his household.

Vulgate but the Old Latin; see Bibliorum Sacrorum Latinæ Versiones Antique, seu Vetus Italicà, ed. Pierre Sabatier, 3 vols. (Reims, 1743) I, 156, Exodus 12:3–4, Loquere ad omnem synagogam filiorum Israël, dicens: Decimâ mensis biius sumat unusquisque ovem per domos familiarum, ovem per singulas domos. Quod si pauci erunt in domo, ita ut non sufficient ad ovem, assumet secum vicinum proximum suum, secundum numerum animarum, unusquisque, quod sufficiat sibi, computabit in agno.

41 1. Anglo-Saxon Charters, 26, beginning of Robertson’s charter XIV. The transaction took place in AD 871 × 877, but the charter is preserved in the Codex Wintoniensis of the twelfth century. 2. Select English Historical Documents of the Ninth and Tenth Centuries, ed. Florence E. Harmer (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1914) 29, beginning of her charter XVII. The transaction took place in 902, but the charter is also preserved in the Codex Wintoniensis.

Forms of the genitive plural occur with <g>, higna, and without <g>, hina, for example, in Genesis A, lines 2370–2377a:43

Abraham fremede swa him se Eca bebead,
sette friðotacen be Frean hæse
on his selfes sunu, heþ þæt segn we[g]an
heah gehwilcne þe his hina wæs
wæpnedcynnes, wære gemynndig,
glaw on mode, ða him God sealde
soðe treowa, and þa seolf onfeng
torhtum tacne.

Abraham did as the Eternal One commanded him, set the covenanted symbol (i.e. circumcision) at the Lord’s command on his own son, commanded each one to bear that high symbol, who of the members of his household was of the male sex, having the covenant in mind, wise in his thoughts, when God gave him true assurances, and when he himself received that illustrious symbol.

The West Germanic ending, in Old English -isc, forms abstracts designating, in Kluge’s words, eine menschliche Gesamtheit, ‘a human totality’, in the case of hiwisc the human totality within a household.44 How big a hiwisc was in early Anglo-Saxon times may be deducible from the Laws of Ine. It is defined as a hide of land by Liebermann, who suggests that in explanation of Ine 44.1: the rent payment of a mantle or blanket to the value of sixpence from the hiwisc cannot be rendered from the cottage of a labourer on the estate; it is to be rendered from the whole tenanted estate.45

The Text of Ine 44.1 is: Gafolhwitel sceal bion æt hiwisce VI pæninga weorð; translated by Dorothy Whitelock, “The blanket paid as rent from each household shall be worth sixpence.” That the word hiwisc equals ‘hide’ is thought to be most clearly in evidence in the Law of the North People, 7, probably of about 1020 × 1023, where the genitive phrase hiwisc landes, together with Ine 7.1, leads to that explanation.46 These are difficult legal technicalities. They are complicated by the descriptive or defining use of the

44 Kluge 1926, §69.
45 For the text, see Liebermann 1898–1916, I, 108–9, Liebermann’s translation explained III, 76; cf. II, 513, s.v. Hufe, 1 (a), where he adds a question mark to the equivalence at Ine 44.1 of hiwisc and ‘hide’. D. Whitelock 1979, I, 404 expresses her doubts concerning the word household in the footnote to her translation of Ine 44.1: “Or perhaps hiwisc means here, as sometimes elsewhere, a hide of land. I am uncertain whether the meaning is that a ‘blanket’ was paid from each household with at least one hide of land, or else one had to be rendered for every hide.”
46 Liebermann 1898–1916, I, 460–1, III, 261, Norðleod 7, notes 3 and 4; Whitelock 1979, I, 469.
Old English genitive, a relationship that has no exact parallel in Modern English syntax, so that in translating such Old English genitive constructions a more exact relationship of the two nouns is required in Modern English.47 ‘A household of land’ makes little sense in Modern English, ‘a hide of land’ is readily understood; but that does not mean, by some false syllogism, that a household is a hide, even though hiwisc landes occurs in a context closely related to the legal context of hid landes. The understanding of the idiom is bedevilled by the not unlikely etymology and recorded use of bi(gi)d as an area of land sufficient to feed one familia.48 A use in the Old English Bede illustrates both the Old English phrase and the underlying terra familia-rum:49

\[& foron & he hine Wilfrid rihtgefremedne & wisne onfunde & gemette geaf he him sona & sealde tun hiwisca landes on ðære stowe ðe cweden is Stanford, & æfter medmicilcum fæce sealde him mynster þritiges hiwisca on stowe seo is gecyed in-Hriþum.\]

And because he perceived and found Wilfrid to be sound and wise he gave and bestowed on him at once ten household-units of land in the place that is called Stamford, and after a not very long period he bestowed on him a monastery of thirty household-units in the place that is called Ripon.

Bede’s Latin reads: \(\text{Vnde et illi, quia catholicum eum esse conperit, mox donauit terram x familiarum in loco qui dicitur Stanford, et non multo post monasterium xxx familiarum in loco qui vocatur in-Hrypum.}\) Stapleton translates that using Catholique in line with what appears to accord with his


recusancy, “And for that he perceaved this Wilfride to be Catholique, he gave him streyewayes a Lordshippe, of x. tenements in Stanford: & within a while after a monastery with xxx. tenements in Rhippon.” It may well be thought that my translation ‘household-unit’ for hiwisc is clumsy, which ‘hide’ is certainly not; I have chosen that clumsy term because I believe it to render familia well, and to correspond to Stapleton’s tenement, that is, ‘holding’.

The derivative hiwiscipe occurs less frequently than hiwisc. The ending -scipe forms abstracts, sometimes collectives, as -ship still does. It is likely that in Old English there was a difference in meaning between these two words; if so, it is irrecoverable. Perhaps the abstract hiwisc is more connected with having and holding an establishment where the family, servants, slaves, sheep, and cattle share life together, though togetherness implies no equality. Perhaps hiwiscipe is even more abstract. One thinks of Modern English abstracts that might be possible translations; they all fail because overlaid or undermined by distractions based on life in England in the last two centuries. Thus domesticity is a well-regulated bourgeois residentiality, and the word residentiality seems not to exist in the English language. If it did, it might do when translating hiwiscipe in some contexts for the secular hiwiscipe of the Anglo-Saxons. Anglo-Saxon society, if that, pace Mrs Thatcher, is allowed to have had an existence, was an aristocracy and, less grandly noble, a squirarchy, both with landownership; the head of each household had authority, with his wife, children, other relations, servants, slaves, cattle, sheep, etc., coresident with him, but of no significance on the estate during the life of the head of the establishment. Then there were the monasteries and nunneries with their collective residential establishment, a head, abbot or abbess, and free and pious men, the monks, and women, the nuns, and a great number of servants, especially to work in the fields and to tend the animals: all these together form the coenobitic hiwiscipe.

Like hiwraeden, and unlike bid and hiwisc, hiwiscipe never governs landes, though one occurrence appears to be, like bid and hiwisc, a land measure. A good example of hiwiscipe used as a collective noun, ‘a group of people’, comes in an inedited Paschal homily in Corpus Christi College Cambridge MS 162, which I quote from the Toronto Microfiche Concordance, s.v. hiwscipum: Men da leofestan! On ðam dæge Drihten demð þrym hiwscipum, þæt is, heofonuware and eordware and heluware (‘Most beloved! On that day the Lord will judge three groups, namely, those who dwell in heaven, and those who dwell on earth, and those who dwell in hell’).

The Lambeth Psalter has hiwscype þ husraeden Israheles glossing domus Israel. The word as a measure of land occurs in the will (dated 1008 x

---

50 Der Lambeth-Psalter, ed. Uno Lindelöf, 2 vols., Acta Societatis Scientiarum Fennicae XXXV/1 and XLIII/3 (Helsinki, 1909, 1914) I, 185, Psalm 113 verse 9 [= 17].
of Ælfwold, bishop of Crediton, where the editors translate it as ‘hide’, as does Dorothy Whitelock, whose translation I quote here:51

Dis is Alfwoldes bisceopes cwyde, þæt is ðæt he geann þæs landes æt Sandforda in to þam mynstre in to Crydian Tune him to saulsceatte, mid mete & mid mannum swa hit stent butan witeþeowum mannum; & anes hiwscypes he geann Godrice þæræf, & an sylhðe oxna.

In Whitelock’s translation: “This is Bishop Ælfwold’s will: that is that he grants the land at Sandford to the minster in Crediton as payment for his soul, with produce and men just as it stands except for the penally enslaved men; and he grants one hide of it to Godric, and a plough-team of oxen.” The editors’ note on hiwscype distinguishes the ordinary sense of the word from the sense here:

hiwscype, ‘hide of land.’ Like familia in Medieval Latin, the OE. hiwscipe, which ordinarily meant ‘family, household,’ could be used to denote a measure of land, a hide. Cf. OE. Beda, ed. Miller, p. 332: þa onfeng heo anes heowscipes (v. l. hiwscipes) stowæ = ‘acceptit locum unius familiae.’ Cf. Also Schmid, p. 610, s.v. hid.52 Similarly hiwisc could mean either ‘family’ or ‘hide of land’.

And they give examples. No attempt is made, nor could it be substantiated, what exact measurement a hid represents. It has been suggested that the quality of the land might be involved; my belief is that what may be involved also is the importance, and therefore the size, of the familia, dependent on the importance of its head.

Some of the compounds with hiw- as first element show further that in Old English the membership of a household was more comprehensive than our sense of membership of a ‘family’. The following compounds or deriv-


52 Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen, 2nd ed. Reinhold Schmid (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1858) 610–11, a long entry, of which, no doubt, Napier and Stevenson, have in mind the reference to the Old English Bede quoted by them, as well as the reference quoted above, p. 54, and note 49: “An einigen Stellen steht hiwisc oder hiwscip für hîd”, ‘in a few places hiwisc or hiwscip stands for hid’; and further, “Der Sinn des Wortes hîd oder hiwisc scheint demnach zu sein, daß damit ein Landcomplex bezeichnet werden soll, groß genug, eine Familie (hîw) zu ernährzen”, “The meaning of the word hid or hiwisc appears therefore to be that it denotes an area of land large enough to feed one family (hîw).” Liebermann 1898–1916, II/1, 114, defines hid as “Hufe (ein [durch Maass oder Ertrag oder Besitz durch Eine Familie bestimmtes] Quantum) Landes” (‘hide (a quantity of land [determined by measure or yield or possession of one family]’). Liebermann (II/2, 513–15, near the beginning) has “Ursprünglich heisst das Wort [bigd] ‘Wohnland’”, ‘originally the word bigd means ‘inhabited land’. By ursprünglich he meant ‘etymologically’; he did not mean ‘in early Old English’. 
atives are involved: hiwcynd, hiwcyph, and hiwgedal. Dative plural hiw-
cyndum is the only occurrence of the nomen, glossing domesticis in the
Brussels Aldhelm, De Laudibus Virginitatis. Aldhelm is always difficult,
and the shade of meaning of domesticis glossed by hiwcyndum requires
some violence of explication; the translators, learned in Aldhelm’s ways of
thought and peculiarities of expression, have chosen ‘domestic comforts’,
which has the advantage of presenting a plural as in the gloss and its lemma.
The sentence comes in the passage figuring the parabolic monachism of the
bee. A monk’s ‘domestic comforts’ are spiritual, not bodily, and perhaps that
is what the translation is meant to convey; but that is far from clear. A little
earlier (fol. 3vo line 11) Aldhelm gives the details of a monk’s voluntarie
servitutis (genitive singular), glossed sel(f)willes peowdomes, and I believe it
is the spiritual strengthening, an earlier sense of comfort, that comes from
this ‘voluntary servitute’ binding the monk to the harsh conventions of the
house of God that is meant by these domesticis, these hiwcyndum: they are
not ‘domestic comforts’ – “home comforts” – in the current sense of these
words.

Old English hiwcyph, hiwcyphlic, hiwcyphlice, gehiwcyphlician, hiwcyphnes,
and hiwcyphraednys, several of them rare, appear all to enshrine senses of
domesticus or familiaris, often in glosses. The only occurrence of hiwcyndo in

---

53 The Old English Glosses of MS. Brussels, Royal Library, 1650, Aldhelm’s De
Laudibus Virginitatis, ed. Louis Goossens, Verhandelingen van de Koninklijke
Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België, Klasse
der Letteren XXXVI, No. 74 (Brussels: Palais der Academiën, 1974) 172, gloss
384. The sentence in Aldhelm reads: ita prorsus, ut multo libentius ob reuer-
entiam principis ad incolatum peregre proficiscantur quam domisticis adsuetæ
deliciis et vernacula contente quiete in cellulis commorentur, thus Aldhelm’s De
Laudibus Virginitatis with ... glosses Manuscript 1650 of the Royal Library in
Brussels, ed. George van Langenhove, Rijksuniversiteit te Gent, Werken uit-
gegeven door de Faculteit van de Wijsbegeerte en Letteren, Extra Series: Fac-
similes II (Bruges: Saint Catherine P, 1941) fols. 3vo–4vo. Cf. Aldhelm Post
Opera, ed. Rudolf Ehwald, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi
XV (Berlin: Weidmann, 1919) 233, lines 18–20. Aldhelm, The Prose Works,
translated by Michael Lapidge & Michael Herren (Ipswich/Cambridge: Brewer,
1979) 63: “so much is this the case, in fact, that out of reverence for
their leader they set out for foreign parts (in search) of a residence more willingly
than they would remain at home in their cells (where they are) used to domestic
comforts and content with subservient tranquillity”. On hiwcynd, with -cund
taken to be an adjectival suffix, cf. Walter Hofstetter, “The Old English Ad-
njectival Suffix -cund”, Words, Texts and Manuscripts: Studies in Anglo-Saxon
Culture Presented to Helmut Gneuss on Occasion of his Sixty-fifth Birthday, ed.
Michael Korhammer et al. (Cambridge: Brewer, 1992) 325–47, at 336, 338
and n. 60, 346 and n. 82.

54 Ehwald 1919, 233, line 8.
verse is in Alfred’s *The Meters of Boethius* 10, 61 (there is no corresponding use in his prose rendering of this metre):\(^5\)

\[\text{ac hit is wyrse nu}
\text{þæt geond þas eordan æghwar sindon}
\text{hiora gelican hwon ymbspræce,}
\text{sume openlice ealle forgitenene,}
\text{þæt hi se hlisa hiwcuðe ne mæg,}
\text{foremære weras, ford gebrengan.} \]

but it is worse now that throughout this earth everywhere the like of them are little talked about, some clearly altogether forgotten, so that Fame cannot bring them forth, the familiar ones, men foremost in glory.

As if belonging to one’s own household, as if oneself were at home in the knowledge of it, that is what *familiarity* means, and how its sense developed from *familia* in Classical Latin. Boethius, like the Old English rendering with well-known differences, had specified the household names, now forgotten, he says – but, in effect, truly memorable and remembered.\(^6\) If there are subtle differences in meaning distinguishing *hiwcuð* from *hiwcuþ* we cannot recover them. Outside glosses these words are rare. However, *hiwcuþ, hiwcuþlice, hiwcuþnes* occur relatively frequently in Wærferth’s translation of Gregory’s *Dialogues*, three times in the Life of Machutus, but in the voluminous works of Ælfric twice only, both occurrences in his homily on the *Life of St Martin*.\(^7\) An occurrence in a leechdom is worth quoting, perhaps to show that ‘familiarity’ is perceived by an Anglo-Saxon author as an experience of doves, not of humankind; but an earlier explication may make better sense:\(^8\) *Berbena: Deos wyrt, he man peristereon & oðrum*

---

\(^5\) The verse and prose are conveniently printed on the same page by Bill Griffiths in Alfred’s *Meters of Boethius*, ed. Bill Griffiths (Pinner: Anglo-Saxon Books, 1991) 77, lines 57b–62. I do not follow this edition (and other editions) in italicizing (or indicating in other ways) where the damaged Cotton MS Otho A.vi has been supplemented by Bodleian Library MS Junius 12.


\(^7\) Bischof Wærferths von Worcester Übersetzung der Dialoge Gregors des Grossen, ed. Hans Hecht, Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Prosa V (1900, 1907; repr., Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1965); *The Old English Life of Machutus*, ed. David Yerkes, Toronto Old English Series, 9 (Toronto, etc.: Toronto UP, 1984); Skeat 1881–1900, II, 218–313, homily XXXI.

\(^8\) The related Latin gives the name [*herba*] *columbina* as from *columbinus*, ‘dove-coloured’; thus MS Harley 6258B, dated authoritatively by Neil Ker,
næman berbenam nemned, hæo ys culfron swiðe hiwćūþ, þanum hy eac sum þeodscepe columbinam hateð (‘VERVAIN: This plant, which is named peristerone and by another name vervain, is very familiar to doves for which reason some people call it also columbine’). The translation follows the glossary entry, “hiwćūþ ... familiar”, in de Vriend’s edition, and Bosworth–Toller supports such a reading, “doves are very fond of this plant.”

Perhaps those who know about birds in Old English texts will tell me that pigeons habitually sit on vervain or other plants of the order Verbenaceae, and, if so, I shall be content to believe that doves love such plants. The Latin text underlying the standard interpretation is quoted by de Vriend (from Montecassino MS V. 97?), Haec herba admodum columbis est familiaris, unde hoc nomen habet, ‘this plant is absolutely familiar to doves, whence it has that name’. But the late MS Harley 6258 B, quoted by de Vriend, has a different Latin text, without familiaris (which seems to correspond to hiwćūþ): hoc est berbenan uel ueruenam, hanc quidam columbinam uocant propter colorem columbinam, which explains that the columbine is so called because dove-coloured. The word deæcēþ comes to mind: “known clearly as if by day, clear as day” are the renderings given in the Toronto Dictionary of Old English, for the only occurrence of the compound, namely, in Judgement Day II, line 40. The earlier editor of the Herbarium, no doubt guided by the knowledge that the plant is dove-coloured, translates

59 De Vriend’s translation follows An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Based on the Manuscript Collections of the Late Joseph Bosworth Supplement, ed. T. Northcote Toller (Oxford: Clarendon, 1908–1921) 728, s.v. þeodscepe a people; and cf. OED, s.v. thede. The editors of Anglia, to whom I am greatly indebted for a considerable number of corrections and improvements, plausibly suggest that þeodscepe here may be accusative and mean something like ‘species’ and refer to the plant columbine.

60 Toller 1908–1921, 546, s.v. hiw-cūþ II.


62 De Vriend 1984, 111.

63 Dictionary of Old English, ed. Angus Cameron et al. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, for the Dictionary of Old English Project, 1986–), s.v.; The Old English Poem Judgment Day II, ed. Graham D. Caie (Cambridge: Brewer, 2000) 86. The note (112) adds “literally, ‘as well known as in daytime’. This is another original compound and creates a contrast to dihle.” The contrast with dihle ‘hidden, dark’ is certain in this line, but the suggested, literal rendering is too precise for an Old English compound: the first element of Old English poetic compounds is suggestive and associative rather than precisely literal.
ys culfr on swiðe hiwcuð as “is very near akin in colour to culvers or doves.”

The simplex hiw commonly means ‘colour’, though this meaning is not considered by me in the present study, which is about senses connected with familia ‘household’. Cockayne’s translation is not to be as lightly dismissed as lexicographers and editors have done.

The past participle gehiwcudlicud occurs, as A.S. Napier noted, in the Vercelli Book, the only occurrence of this weak verb of the second class. One may wonder why is gehiwcudlicud (+ dative) was thought preferable to hiwcup(lic), and the editors give the variant (ge- erased) hiwculicost from Corpus Christi College Cambridge MS 162. The answer may lie (as Donald Scragg’s glossary suggests) in a wish to render closely familiar...

One compound remains to be considered: hiwgedal, which occurs in the glossaries, most fully explained in the Harley Glossary.

64 Leechdoms, Wortcunning, and Starcraft of Early England, ed. Oswald Cockayne, 3 vols., Rolls Series 35 (1864–1866) I, 171–2; Cockayne knew MS Harley 6258 B, with the Latin explanation of the plant name, but he did not collate the manuscript thoroughly (see lxxxiv–lxxxv).

65 Angus F. Cameron, “The Old English Nouns of Colour: A Semantic Study” (unpublished B.Litt. Dissertation, U of Oxford, 1968), discusses hiw (and derivatives and compounds), systematically (see especially 146–50) when the sense is ‘colour, form, shape, kind’, but regards hiwan ‘family’ as belonging to a semantic field different from the colour words he is considering.


67 Oliphant 1966, 142, D 737.
does not occur with that meaning), among them (ge)hiwian, hiwung, and huelic, glossing the variant matrimonialis (not matronalis), as correctly interpreted by H.D. Meritt. The group is well discussed by Andreas Fischer, who shows that the semantic branches of hiw are (1) ‘appearance, colour’, (2) ‘home, family’ – where I prefer ‘household’ – and (3) ‘marriage’, at the centre of his discussion. He connects groups 2 and 3. In discussing these words and their derivatives and compounds, he is perhaps too absolute when he keeps group (1) strictly apart from the rest (79): “It will be noted that although the stems are practically identical there is no homonymy whatsoever: simplex hiw only occurs with the meaning ‘appearance, colour’, and the respective derivatives and compounds do not overlap.” I prefer the handling by Grein (of verse usage only): “μόρφωσις, forma, species, Aussehen, was auch zum Teil in den Begriff der Farbe übergeht, zum Teil auch in den der Schönheit”, ‘form, shape, appearance; outward appearance, figure, colour, an appearance that to some extent passes into the concept of colour, to some extent into the concept of beauty’. Among his quotations is this from The Phoenix, lines 75b–81a:

ac þær wraetlice
on þam treowum symle telgan gehladene,
ofett edniwe in alle tid
on þam graswonge grene stondaþ,
gehroden hyhtlice Haliges meahtum,
beorhtast bearwa: no gebrocen weorþed
holt on hiwe.

But there wondrously displayed (fruit-)laden branches stand always green in those trees, fruit ever new eternally on that grassy plain, as the most glorious of

69 Fischer 1986, 79–84.
70 Sprachschatz der angelsächsischen Dichter, 2 vols., Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Poesie, III, IV, ed. C.W.M. Grein (Kassel/Göttingen: Wigand, 1861, 1864) II, 78, s.v. hiw; the edition revised by J.J. Köhler (Heidelberg: Winter, 1912–1914) has not changed the wording quoted.
71 For the text cf. The Phoenix, ed. N.F. Blake (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1964) 47. His notes (68) have a reference to Else von Schaubert, “Zur Erklärung Schwierigkeiten bietender altenglischer Textstellen”, Philologica: The Malone Anniversary Studies, ed. Thomas A. Kirby & Henry Bosley Woolf (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins P, 1949) 31–42. At 31–3 she discussed The Phoenix, lines 71–80a; I have used her translation for lines 75b–80a: “sondern wundersamerweise prangen dort beständig, in alle Ewigkeit im Grün an den Bäumen auf der Grasflur (frucht-)beladene Zweige, neues Obst, da der schönste aller Haine durch des Heiligen Macht freudevoll geschmückt ist”. Her translation is difficult because of the difficulty of the text, and I am not sure if it is convincing in every detail. My concern, however, is on hiwe (two half-lines after the passage she discusses), and its context.
groves is joyfully adorned by the Holy One’s powers: never shall be destroyed the grove on hiwe.

The phrase on hiwe is variously translated; and the following are among significant examples of that variety:72 “in aspect”, Thorpe; “im Haine” (‘in the grove’), Grein 1854; “in dem Haine”, 1857; “an Schönheit (geschwächt)” (‘weakened in beauty’), 1864; “die Erscheinung, Gestalt, Farbe, habitus” (‘appearance, stature, colour; condition, character, disposition’), Leo; “in all its beauty”, Gollancz; “in [sein] Schönheit” (‘in [its] beauty’), Schlotterose; “beauty”, Cook (glossary); “beautiful appearance, beauty”, Toller; “colour, appearance, beauty”, Blake (glossary); “in appearance”, Ashley Crandell Amos et al.

Scholarly opinion is overwhelmingly in favour of translating on hiwe as ‘appearance, beauty’ and the like, that is, placing this use in The Phoenix unequivocally within the orbit of those uses of biwe which I have disregarded in this study. The simplex never means ‘household, home’. But then (ge)hiwian, hiwung, hiwlic only exceptionally refer to marriage, hiwgedal to ‘divorce’ in documents of repudiation. Grein’s rendering, in the 1850s, of the phrase as ‘in the grove’ is not to be forgotten, though in the 1860s he gave up that rendering and fell into line with what was to become the only understanding. It may be argued that in his alliterative translations he was driven to using a German word beginning with <h>, das Holz im Haine, wo der heilige Duft, his 1854 translation of bold on hiwe, þær se balga stenc. In the locus amoenus depicted in this part of the poem the trees, delightful in their beauty, no doubt, have their place, their ‘home’, using that word metaphorically. That grove shall never be broken from its ‘home’, never suffer divorce – hiwgedal. The polysemous noun hiw means at one and the same time ‘beauty of form and colour’ and ‘perfection of union, rightness of conformation’, whether, as here, of the place where in that locus amoenus the trees grow inseparably with it for ever, or of husband and wife, where the man uses a hiwgedales boc to cast her off. In another way of looking at both

the place where the grove has its home, and the household, the *familia*, uniting husband and wife (before he repudiates her), *hiw* is not to be strictly confined to a single semantic branch of the word.

8. The Anglo-Saxon Conception of ‘family’

Perhaps the only safe conclusion to be drawn from my selective survey of so polysemous an element as *hiw*, its derivatives and compounds, is that these Old English words are for members of a household or residents on an estate: if secular, the servants and slaves rather than the head of the household and his immediate family; if religious, the community on its estates. Often such Old English words render Latin *familia*, the sense of which is not that of Modern English *family*. Shades of meaning in Old English are beyond our reach, and instead of asking ourselves, does it belong to this semantic branch or that, we should incline to consider if a particular use may not belong to more than one branch.

We may be sure that in some uses of *hi(gi)d* the sense ‘a unit of land ownership’ is uppermost, but the unit is too variable to be converted into so many acres or hectares. Though standardization of weights and measures came to the United Kingdom and the United States only in the nineteenth century, we now expect any unit of land to be expressed in standard land measures. Reasons for variability have been sought by some as depending on the quality of the land for arable use, rocks or loam, and therefore the size of the holding required to sustain a household, a smallholder, a cotter, sustained by a single unit, and a great estate, with its inhabitants of many buildings, needing much land for adequate sustenance. Similarly a monastic establishment of many monks or nuns and their servants in the monastery or convent and on the lands belonging to the establishment, bequeathed to them in pious hopes for eternal rewards.

The unit of land is variable. An estate, a household, a house, in Modern English as in Old English, differ in sense, but overlap often blurs meaning in usage; in usage demarcation does not always define meaning neatly. The same words were used by the Anglo-Saxons for such *realia* in both religious and secular contexts. What defines ‘family’ is definite only in not being anchored in the *paterfamilias* and those closely related to him by blood or affinity. The Anglo-Saxons seem not to have understood any of their words in terms of close relationship tied by blood or affinity, and seem not to have succumbed to the sentimental belief – contrary to evidence from Anglo-Saxon times to the present day – that this group of close relatives is always held together by love: blood is thicker than water. That some notion of unified form or shape, and of some such unit underlies *hiw* and its derivatives and compounds is shown by the use of some of these words for marriage and divorce. The Anglo-Saxons understood and expressed marriage and how to break it. Houses, households and the servants and slaves on the
estate formed a societal aspect the Anglo-Saxons understood. They had a sense of the size of land holdings and of what such lands might yield, and they considered and expressed their ideas about secular and monastic estates in identical terms. If we could interview a leading Anglo-Saxon, and tell him (her would not be appropriate for an Anglo-Saxon leader) about our family, I suspect that he might shrug his shoulders (if the Anglo-Saxons had that gesture), and say, there is no such thing as ‘family’.

Oxford

ERIC G. STANLEY