

THE ARRIVAL OF THE HERO IN A SHIP:
A COMMON LEITMOTIF IN OE REGNAL TABLES
AND THE STORY OF SCYLD SCEFING IN *BEOWULF*¹

1. INTRODUCTION

Anglo-Saxon genealogical regnal lists have traditionally been regarded as an extremely valuable report of political and historical events.² They have also aroused considerable interest as they have usually been viewed as a cultural phenomenon of the mythical period of the Invasions. Indeed, Germanic legendary figures contained in them are very much responsible for the great deal of critical debate that they have provoked. However, like Germanic lore in OE literature, genealogical tables are rather controversial and obscure. For example, when similar regnal tables from different sources are compared, they have usually puzzled critics as they seem to lack coherence in many cases.³ Besides, it is generally assumed that the numerous mythical characters mentioned in these lists are presented in a rather eclectic and artificial way. As regards formal order, the last scholarly viewpoint is that genealogical lists were compiled according to concrete organizational criteria.⁴ As for the thematic content of Anglo-Saxon genealogical tables, far from presenting random legendary material, they were skilfully created in the taste of well-known mythical and symbolical motifs which were similar to those employed in earlier or contemporary literary works.⁵

¹ I want to thank Prof. M^a José Mora (University of Seville) for her kind contribution to this paper providing ideas and bibliography.

² One of the most complete works on the subject is by Sisam. See also Dumville.

³ Plummer already noted some of the discrepancies found in genealogical lists stating: "it is lost labour to try and reconcile these inconsistencies" (1899: 2).

⁴ For instance, Hill (1988) has demonstrated that the layout of some regnal lists responds to consistent numerical patterns that derive from Germanic folk-lore.

⁵ See, for example, Davis for a thorough analysis of the cultural background of OE genealogical tables.

It is precisely on this second issue that this paper will concentrate as it aims at demonstrating the existence of a basic leitmotif that is present in OE regnal tables as well as in the opening passage of Scyld Scefing in *Beowulf*: a legendary hero who comes from the sea in a boat, conquers a land and finally becomes a king, consequently founding a dynasty. This thematic pattern is recognizable in the stories of some of the mythical characters that shape up Anglo-Saxon genealogies: Hengest and Horsa, Cerdic and Cynric, and Scyld and Scaef. The study of these legendary figures also reveals that there are several literary devices which are recurrent in their stories such as the use of alliteration for both the heroes' names and the place of landing, as well as the strong metaphorical load that is always present in their names. Finally, this paper will analyze the co-occurrence of this genealogical material in King Æthelwulf's pedigree to illustrate how the mythical and symbolical features present in royal lists were manipulated in order to legitimize a monarch's right to reign.

2. HENGEST AND HORSA: THE JUTISH TRADITION

The genealogical line of Hengest and Horsa is recorded in various sources as the comparative tables offered by Chambers show (199). According to the *Laud Chronicle* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud 636), these two brothers came to Britain invited by King Vortigern to help him fight the Picts. However, the ones that initially were allies turned out to be enemies, so that Hengest and Horsa ended up conquering the land. The *Chronicle* then relates how Hengest--after Horsa's death in battle--became king, and was succeeded by his son Æsc. In the entry for the year 449, the *Laud Chronicle* draws their ancestry back to Woden asserting their continental origin:

Of Angle comon se á syllan stod westig betwix Iutum ond Seaxum,
East Angla, Middel Angla, Mearca, ond ealla Norphymbra. Heora
heretogan wæron twegen gebroþra, Hengest ond Horsa pæt wæron
Wihtgilses suna. Wihtgils wæs Witting, Witta Wecting, Wecta
Wodning. Fram pan Wodne awoc eall ure cynecynn, ond Suþan-
hymbra eac.¹

¹ The edition of the Anglo-Saxon *Chronicle* cited throughout this paper is from Plummer (1892). The translation of the passages quoted is from Swanton. "From Angeln, which has stood waste ever since between the Jutes and the Saxons, came

In his *Historia Ecclesiastica* (i.15), Bede narrates the arrival of Hengest and Horsa.¹ He likewise acknowledges them as the founders of a dynasty of kings and gives them a pedigree carried up to Woden, which is identical to the one provided in the *Laud Chronicle*:

Duces fuisse perhibentur eorum primi duo fratres Hengist et Horsa, e quibus Horsa postea occisus in bello a Brettonibus hactenus in orientalibus Cantiae partibus monumentum habet suo nomine insigne. Erant autem filii Uictgisli, cuius pater Uitta, cuius pater Uecta, cuius pater Uoden, de cuius stirpe multarum prouinciarum regium genus originem duxit.²

The apparently simple legend of Hengest and Horsa reveals significant connotations if it is regarded in its metaphorical dimension. Apart from constituting the typical couple of brothers with similar names--such as Romulus and Remus--the fact that both OE *hengest* and *horsa* mean the same (i.e. horse) is noteworthy.³ Plummer considers the possibility that Hengest and his son's name Æsc could be "abstractions from 'yǫ-hengest' and 'æsc' in the sense of ship" (1899: 11). Similarly, Davis interprets the name Hengest in the

the East Angles, Middle Angles, Mercians, and all the Northumbrians. Their commanders were two brothers, Hengest and Horsa, that were sons of Wihtgils. Wihtgils was Witta's offspring, Witta Wecta's offspring, Wecta Woden's offspring. From that Woden originated all our royal family, and [that] of the Southumbrians also." (Swanton 13)

¹ Further in the same work (ii.5), Bede mentions Hengest as the ultimate ancestor of Æthelberht of Kent. The same pedigree is extended to Woden in Anglian genealogical tables as illustrated, for example, in the list found in Cotton Vespasian B.vi (Dumville 31): "Aepelberht [>] Uihtriding / Uihtrid [>] Ecgberhting / Ecgberht [>] Erconberhting / Erconberht [>] Eadbalding / Eadbald [>] Epilberhting / Epilberht [>] Iurmenricing / Iurmenric [>] Oes[...] / Oese [>] Ocging / Ocgā [>] Hengesting / Hengest [>] Uitting / Uitta [>] Uihgtisling / Uihgtis [>] Uegdaeging / Uegdaeg [>] Uodning / Uoden [>] Frealafing."

² All the references to Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* are from Colgrave and Mynors. "Their first leaders are said to have been two brothers, Hengist and Horsa. Horsa was afterwards killed in battle by the Britons, and in the eastern part of Kent there is still a monument bearing his name. They were the sons of Wihtgisl, son of Witta, son of Wecta, son of Woden, from whose stock the royal families of many kingdoms claimed their descent." (49-51)

³ There are plenty of examples in myth and literature in which the names of heroic founders are echoed by place-names. In this sense, the story of the brothers Hengest and Horsa reminds that of Romulus and Remus, the mythical founders of Rome. Similarly, Brut is considered the founder of Britain in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* and many other works.

sense of "stallion," "denoting the attributes essential to their chosen profession: speed, strength, virility" (27). According to this, he argues that Hengest is associated with Woden since the Scandinavian cult of this god implied "the worship and sacrifice of stallions" (27). However, Plummer's idea seems more accurate if we bring to mind the text of the *Laud Chronicle* concerning the arrival of the two brothers: "Ond on peora dagum gelaðode Wyrtegeorn Angelcin hider ond hi pa coman on prim ceolum hider to Brytene on pam stede Heopwinesfleot."¹ Considering that the term *hengest* is used in compounds such as *mere-hengest* and *ylf-hengest*, which are typical kennings for ship, it can be inferred that the names of Hengest and Horsa were probably intended as metaphorical allusions to the ones who came in a sea-horse.

The mention of the place of landing which either alliterates or bears a certain resemblance with the heroes' names is another relevant aspect to take into account. In the case of Hengest and Horsa, this place of arrival is "Ypwinesfleot," according to the Parker version of the *Chronicle*, which obviously does not alliterate with the heroes' names. However, in the *Laud ms.* the spelling of this place-name is "Heopwinesfleot," which suggests a deliberate attempt to make it alliterate with Hengest and Horsa.²

3. CERDIC AND CYNRIC: THE WEST-SAXON TRADITION

The account of the arrival of Cerdic and Cynric as narrated in the *Chronicle* also contains all the thematic elements that have been discussed so far. To begin with, Cerdic and Cynric constitute the usual alliterative couple of heroes.³ Like Hengest and Horsa, they came from the Continent in ships and were considered the founders of a royal house as recorded in the *Parker Chronicle* (year 495): "Her cuomon twegen aldormen on Bretene, Cerdic ond

¹ "In their days Vortigern invited the Angle race here and they then came here to Britain in three ships at the place Ebba's Creek" (Swanton 13).

² Like the legendary heroes, these original places also become mythical. Plummer establishes the equivalent of this landing place with "Ebbsfleet in Thanet" noting that this was "the landing-place of Augustine at a later time" (1899: 10). He also adds: "If the Saxons really landed there, then the origin alike of our nationality and our Christianity is closely bound up with that little spot" (1899: 10). Thus, it is not striking to find it as the legendary place where the founders of one of the Anglo-Saxon dynasties first landed.

³ Wheeler also points out that "the names of the kings and princes whose battles are recorded [in the *Chronicle*] usually occur in pairs. Sometimes the names of the pairs are alliterative" (170). Among these, he cites Cerdic and Cynric.

Cynric his sunu, mid v scipum in pone stede pe is gecueden Cerdicesora, ond py ilcan dæge gefuhtun wip Walum."¹ The *Chronicle* reports how Cerdic and Cynric conquered Wessex and, as in the case of Hengest and Æsc, Cerdic became king and so did his son Cynric.

The list of their ancestry traced back to Woden is also presented in the *Parker Chronicle* under the year 552:

Cerdic wæs Cynrices fæder, Cerdic Elesing, Elesa Esling, Esla Giwising, Giwis Wiging, Wig Freawining, Freawine Freopogáring, Freopogar Branding, Brand Bældæging, Bældæg Wodening.²

Thus, as in the case of Hengest and Horsa, Cerdic's genealogical line in the *Chronicle* links the latter with a continental ancestor of the Woden lineage and, thus, confers him the authority to reign and be the founder of the West-Saxon dynasty of the Gewissae.

The high degree of elaboration of this genealogical list is clearly recognizable if the list is displayed as presented by Chambers (316):

[Cynric Cerdicing],	Cerdic Elesing,
Elesa Esling,	Esla GiWising,
GiWis Wiging,	Wig Freawining,
Freawine Frilugaring,	Frilugar Bronding,
Brond Bældæging,	Bældæg Wodening

As Hill states, "the historical genealogies follow the principle that every son's name should alliterate with that of his father. This was in fact customary

¹ "Here [i.e. in 495] two chieftains, Cerdic and Cynric his son, came to Britain with 5 ships at the place which is called Cerdic's Shore and the same day fought against the Welsh" (Swanton 14).

² "Cerdic was Cynric's father; Cerdic Elesa's offspring, Elesa Esla's offspring, Esla Gewis' offspring, Gewis Wig's offspring, Wig Freawine's offspring, Freawine Frithugar's offspring, Frithugar Brand's offspring, Brand Bældæg's offspring, Bældæg Woden's offspring." (Swanton 16). This Gewis mentioned in Cerdic's pedigree is the one who would give the name "Gewissae" to the West-Saxon dynasty as recorded in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* (iii.7). This name is also included in the prologue of Snorri's *Edda* together with a list of names which is similar to that in the *Chronicle*: "Odin's second son was called Beldegg, whom we called Baldr ... His son was Brand, his son Friodigar, whom we call Frodi, his son was Freovin, his son Wigg, his son Gewis, whom we call Gavir" (Trans. by Faulkes 1986: 4).

among the Anglo-Saxon royal families" (1988: 164). The result of this is that the alliterative pattern of Cerdic's genealogy--as shown in the *Parker Chronicle* under the years 494, 552, and 597--has been established in pairs to the extent that Chambers asserted that it was very similar to poetic structure.¹ This served Chambers to claim the authenticity of this genealogy:

Like the mnemonic lists in *Widsith*, these lines are probably very old. Their object is clearly to connect the founder of the West-Saxon royal house with Woden ... The lines must go back to times when lists of royal ancestors, both real and imaginary, had to be arranged in correct verse; times when such things were recorded by memory rather than by writing. They are preliterate, and were doubtless chanted by retainers of the West-Saxon kings in heathen days. (316-17)

However, this alliterative pattern clearly points to an artificially created pedigree following the poetic rules rather than a list of actual ancestors. In this sense, this table is a clear sign of the literary elaboration with which genealogical lists were produced.

The names of Cerdic and Cynric also contain symbolical connotations that provide information about how genealogies were skilfully fabricated. Plummer comments that the name Cerdic has a Celtic origin:

It is curious to find the traditional founder of the West-Saxon kingdom, the source to which all West-Saxon pedigrees are traced, bearing the name Cerdic, Certic, so like the Welsh Ceredig, Ceretic. (1899: 12)

It would not be very surprising if this name had been taken from a Welsh legendary chieftain; probably genealogists were aware of the fact that this name had been adopted from the Celtic tradition so that they contrived a way to assimilate it. Thus, Cynric, Cerdic's son, constitutes a suspiciously genuine West-Saxon name which was surely intended to provide credibility to the presence of Cerdic's name in West-Saxon regnal lists. It must be borne in mind that the transformation of a continental chieftain into an Insular king

¹ As indicated by Chambers, "Every line attains double alliteration in the first half, with one alliterating word only in the second half" (316).

had to be supported genealogically; otherwise the origin of his kingship would be dubious.

Plummer similarly argues that the name Cynric may have originated in the necessary transition from alderman to king: "it is possible that the name Cynric is an abstraction from this establishment of the 'cynerice'" (1899: 13). It can also be inferred that the etymology of this name could well point to the one who belongs to a *cyn*, in other words, the one of noble stock.¹ Thus, the insertion of an originally Welsh name would be supported with the succession of a West-Saxon name alliterating with Cerdic, and a very suggestive meaning--binding the origins of kingship to that dynasty--which would conceal the Celtic provenance of Cerdic. As with Hengest and Horsa, the genealogist justified the right to kingship elaborating a pedigree which claimed that the new monarch came from the glorious ascendancy of the Continent. The credibility thus depended on the genealogist's skilful use of the mythical material.

As regards the place-name, the manipulation is again quite evident since the *Chronicle* tells us that Cerdic and Cynric landed at a place called *Cerdicesora*, a name that not only alliterates but also contains the name of the so-called mythical founder.² In sum, as in the case of Hengest and Horsa, the account of the arrival of Cerdic and Cynric combines all the elements that denote the existence of the leitmotif that was defined above.

¹ The etymology of Cynric conjures up the story of King Cynewulf who was murdered by his relative Cyneheard as narrated in the *Chronicle* (year 755). The conflict to legitimize political power is well-represented in the suspicious emphasis of the two characters' names with *cyn*. Furthermore, this episode ends with the chronicler's insistence that both characters were of noble lineage: "ond hiera ryhtfæderencyn gæp to Cerdice" (as found in ms. A) ["and their direct paternal ancestry goes back to Cerdic" (Swanton 48)].

² They are also said to have fought the Britons at *Cerdicesford* (year 508 and 519) and *Cerdicesleag* (year 527, *Cerdicesford* in ms.E). A similar pattern can be found in the account of Ælle's arrival (year 477): "Her cuom Ælle on Breten lond, ond his iii suna Cymen, ond Wlencing, ond Cissa mid iii scipum, on pa stowe pe is nemned Cymenesora..." ["Here Ælle and his 3 sons, Cymen and Wlencing and Cissa, came to the land of Britain with 3 ships at the place which is named Cymen's Shore... (Swanton 14)]. Also, in the entry for the year 501, there is a further interesting passage in which the name of one of the chieftains is contained in a place-name: "Her cuom Port on Bretene ond his ii suna Bieda ond Mægla mid ii scipum on pære stowe pe is gecueden Portesmupa..." ["Here Port and his 2 sons, Bieda and Mægla, came with 2 ships to Britain at the place which is called Portsmouth ..." (Swanton 14)].

4. SCYLD AND SCEAF: THE SCANDINAVIAN ANCESTRY IN REGNAL LISTS AND *BEOWULF*

As a result from the invasions of Danes and their subsequent establishment in the British Isles, antiquarians surely perceived the necessity to incorporate Scandinavian legendary material to OE genealogical lists. Thus, Scyld and Sceaf compose the third pair of heroes with alliterating names that is usually included in many regnal tables, and is obviously the most explicit representative of the myth of the hero coming in a boat.¹ As Murray indicates, "by the late ninth and tenth centuries Sceaf and Scyld were regarded as the ancestors of the West-Saxon dynasty" (103).

Like Cerdic and Cynric, Scyld and Sceaf are usually associated in a father-son relationship.² The symbolical content of this myth is extremely rich to the extent that it has also found a place in epic literature. Thus, the opening lines of *Beowulf* present the story of Scyld Scefing who arrived in a boat when still a child and would later become king of the Danes:

Him ía Scyld gewat to gescæphwile
felahror feran on frean wære.
Hi hyne pa ætbæron to brimes faroíe,
swæse gesipas, swa he selfa bæd,
penden wordum weold wine Scyldinga;
leaf landfruma lange ahte.

.....

¹ Chambers offers a broad discussion of all the sources and varying motifs in which this myth is present (68-86). Murray analyzes the connection between *Beowulf* and the figures of Scyld and Sceaf as Danish ancestors of the West-Saxon kings in order to question the early date and Anglian origin that are sometimes ascribed to the poem.

² Chadwick affirms that the connection between Scyld and Sceaf is a product of genealogical lists as "originally Scyld had nothing to do with Sceaf" (277). Likewise, he considers that Scefing is not a surname neither a patronymic given the lack of evidence of Sceaf as a personal name in OE. However, the presence of a certain Sceafa as king of the Longobards in *Widsith* (32) made Chambers consider the possibility that this could be the reference to the historic king upon whom the legend later developed (311). Furthermore, the existence of the Scandinavian counterpart of Scyld, Skjoldr (the eponymous ancestor of the skjoldungar) also supports the idea that all these names stem from older legends that were later incorporated to works such as the *Skjoldunga saga* and the prologue to Snorri's *Edda* (see Faulkes 1978-79 on this issue). For these reasons, it is not surprising to find Scyld and Sceaf as independent characters in genealogical lists.

Nalæs hi hine læssan lacum teodan,
peodgestreonium, pon pa dydon
pe hine æt frumsceafte forf onsendon
æne ofer yfe umborwesende.(26-46)¹

This passage from *Beowulf* describes Scyld's funeral in a boat, surrounded by weapons and treasures. As Chambers states "Scyld Scefing then, like Tennyson's Arthur, comes from the unknown and departs back to it" (70).² Chambers's words are the most accurate to explain the importance of the Scyld episode: Scyld's mysterious origin is intended to express his quasi-divine nature. The *Beowulf*-poet—as well as genealogists in general—was aware of the fact that a mythical founder of a dynasty could not be born and die as a normal human being. After the description of Scyld's funeral, the poem goes on with the account of his descendant Beaw whose son Halfdan would in turn continue the royal line founded by Scyld.³ In this sense, the *Beowulf*-poet was surely following the pattern set by early historical sources and genealogical lists. As Campbell had already noted:

The beginning of *Beowulf* indeed shows affinity with the genealogical literature which was so popular in the early Old English period. The *Beowulf* poet made his epic spring from a genealogy ... (1971: 290)

According to this, the Scyld passage in *Beowulf* can be considered as a genealogical prelude which is meant to supply authority and credibility to the events that are about to be narrated. This does not necessarily mean that Scyld was a real person but the *Beowulf*-poet knew that he could make the story more interesting if he related the main characters to important royal houses and historical or legendary figures that were surely known to the au-

¹ The text of this passage is from Dobbie's edition. As translated by Chickering (49-51): "Scyld then departed at the appointed time, / still very strong, into the keeping of the Lord. / His own dear comrades carried his body / to the sea's current, as he himself had ordered, / great Scylding lord, when he still gave commands; / the nation's dear leader had ruled a long time. / / No lesser gifts did they provide him / --the wealth of a nation-- than those at his start / who set him adrift when only a child, / friendless and cold, alone on the waves.

² This story also recalls the arrival and departure of Lohengrin in a boat drawn by a swan.

³ For a thorough analysis of the mythical figures contained in Æthelwulf's genealogy, see Chadwick.

dience. In Murray's words, "a poem beginning in the manner of *Beowulf* would be bound, and surely would be intended, to catch the attention of an audience or patron with West-Saxon connections" (107). This idea is supported by the fact that the names of some of the characters mentioned in the starting lines of *Beowulf* are found in several royal lists. The Scyld Scefing episode seems to arise from a conscious or unconscious equation present in the mind of the author and the audience of *Beowulf*, as well as in the minds of genealogists: the nobler the pedigree of a character or a king proved to be, the nobler his acts would be.

As with the preceding cases, the Scyld Scefing story is related to an alliterative place-name which is regarded as the original continental realm of this legendary king. The reference to the land of *Scedenig* appears in *Beowulf* (1686) although it is not directly associated with the Scyld Scefing passage.¹ However, *Scedenig* suspiciously alliterates with Scyld Scefing providing a connection which is explicit in other accounts of this legend. For example, in the 10th-century *Chronicle of Æthelweard* a place called *Scani* has been identified with *Scedenig*:

Ipse Scef cum uno dromone aduectus est in insula oceani que dicitur Scani, armis circumdatus, eratque ualde recens puer, et ab incolis illius terrae ignotus. Attamen ab eis suscipitur, et ut familiarem diligenti animo eum custodierunt, et post in regem eligunt.²

Similarly, William of Malmesbury's *De Gestis Regum Anglorum* (12th century) provides a version of this legend in which a place known as *Scandza* is directly associated with a mythical king Scef:³

Sceldius [fuit filius] Scef. Iste, ut ferunt, in quandam insulam Germaniae Scandzam, de qua Jordanes, historiographus Gothorum, lo-

¹ According to Klaeber, it is the "name of the southernmost part of the Scandinavian peninsula (*Skane*), applied to the Danish realm" (439).

² The edition and translation of this passage is from Campbell (1962): "And this Scef arrived with one light ship in the island of the ocean which is called Skaney, with arms all round him. He was a very young boy, and unknown to the people of that land, but he was received by them, and they guarded him with diligent attention as one who belonged to them, and elected him king" (33).

³ Despite the lack of alliteration as regards *Scani* and *Scandza*, the closeness with the heroes' names is obvious.

quitur, appulsus navi sine remige, puerulus, posito ad caput frumenti manipulo, dormiens, ideoque Sceaf nuncupatus ... (ii.116)¹

Although no early version of the Scyld-Sceaf myth has been preserved, and *Scedenig* in *Beowulf* is not linked to the opening episode, Æthelweard and Malmesbury present a story with certain fixed elements that also appeared in the preceding myths and cannot be held fortuitous.

The names of the two characters involved in this myth also present clear emblematic features. For example, the expression "posito ad caput frumenti manipulo" (with a handful of corn at his head) from Malmesbury's version adds significant connotations to the name Sceaf. Chambers argues that this name could have originally referred to an ancient pagan corn-god.² With regard to this, Hill argues that *scyld* (MnE shield) and *sceaf* (MnE sheaf) compose the emblematic representation of the Anglo-Saxon coronation formula "pax et habundantia salutis" according to which Scyld Sceafing is the one "who brought the protection of the shield (*pax*) and the prosperity of the sheaf (*abundantia*)" (41).

5. THE CONFLATION OF THE THREE GENEALOGICAL TRADITIONS: KING ÆTHELWULF'S PEDIGREE

The genealogical tradition evolved so that the scope of the lists was enlarged when it was convenient. This is the case of King Æthelwulf's pedigree in which the genealogist's aim to establish the authority of the monarch over a multicultural society is evident. Thus, the *Parker Chronicle* (year 855) illustrates how the main genealogical traditions--together with the list of Biblical

¹ The Latin edition is from Stubbs and the translation quoted is by Stevenson: "Sceld [was the son] of Sceaf, who, as some affirm, was driven on a certain island in Germany called Scandza (of which Jornandes, the historian of the Goths, speaks), a little boy in a skiff without an attendant, asleep with a handful of corn at his head, whence he was called Sceaf ..." (97)

² Chambers mentions the example of the god of Vegetation, Sämpsä Pellervoinen, in the Finnish *Kalevala* as a possible parallel (84-85). He also points out that OE *beow*--Scyld Sceafing's son in *Beowulf*--means "grain": "it is highly probable that Beow (grain) the descendant of Sceaf (sheaf) was originally a corn divinity or corn fetish..." (87).

patriarchs¹--are conflated in the royal pedigree of Æthelwulf, Alfred the Great's father:

Onð se Æthelwulf wæs Ecgbrehting, Ecgbryht Ealhmunding, Ealhmund Eafing, Eafa Eopping, Eoppa Ingilding; Ingild wæs Ines bropur West Seaxna cyninges ... Onð hie wæron Cenredes suna, Cenred wæs Ceolwalding, Ceolwald Cupaing, Cupa Cupwining, Cupwine Ceaulining, Ceawlin Cynricing, Cynric Cerdicing, Cerdic Elesing, Elesa Esling, Esla Giwising, Giwis Wiging, Wig Freawining, Freawine Fripogaring, Fripogar Bronding, Brond Bældæging, Bældæg Wodening, Woden Fripowalding, Fripuwald Freawining, Frealaf Fripuwulfing, Fripuwulf Finning, Fin Godwulfing, Godwulf Geating, Geat Tætwaing, Tætwa Beawing, Beaw Sceldwaing, Sceldwea Heremoding, Heremod Itermoning, Itermon Hrapraing, se wæs geboren in pære earce; Noe, Lamach, Matusalem, Enoh, Iared, Maleel, Camon, Enos, Sed, Adam. primus homo et pater noster est Christus, Amen.²

One of the most relevant features in this list is the fact that Sceldwa--a variant form of Scyld--is connected genealogically to Noah, although they are separated by three other ancestors. Since the story of Scyld Scefig in *Beowulf* tells us of a hero who comes in a boat over the sea and becomes the king of a nation, the parallel with Noah's story is quite evident. Being one of the Biblical patriarchs, Noah is the visible head of a genealogical line, and the founder of a new race of men after the Flood. With regard to this, Hill argues

¹ The Biblical names that appear in this list are drawn from Adam's descent in Luke iii.36-38, not from Genesis v, as was generally assumed before Magoun pointed it out.

² "And that Æthelwulf was Egbert's offspring, Egbert Ealhmund's offspring, Ealhmund Eafa's offspring, Eafa Eoppa's offspring, Eoppa Ingeld's offspring; Ingeld was the brother of Ine, king of Wessex ... and they were the sons of Cenred; Cenred was Ceolwald's offspring, Ceolwald Cutha's offspring, Cutha Cuthwine's offspring, Cuthwine Ceawlin's offspring, Ceawlin Cynric's offspring, Cynric Cerdic's offspring, Cerdic Elesa's offspring, Elesa Esla's offspring, Esla Gewis' offspring, Gewis Wig's offspring, Wig Freawine's offspring, Freawine Frithugar's offspring, Frithugar Brand's offspring, Brand Bældæg's offspring, Bældæg Woden's offspring, Woden Frithuwald's offspring, Frithuwald Freawine's offspring, Freawine Frealaf's offspring, Frealaf Frithuwulf's offspring, Frithuwulf Finn's offspring, Finn Godwulf's offspring, Godwulf Geat's offspring, Geat Tætwa's offspring, Tætwa Beaw's offspring, Beaw Sceldwa's offspring, Sceldwa Heremod's offspring, Heremond [sic] Itermon's offspring, Itermon Hrathra's offspring--he was born in the ark: Noah, Lamech, Methuselah, Enoch, Jared, Mahalaleel, Cainan, Enos, Seth, Adam the first man, and our father who is Christ. Amen." (Swanton 66)

that the direct connection between Noah and Scyld stems from the widespread apocryphal belief that Noah had a fourth son who was born in the ark:

an Anglo-Saxon antiquarian would not have had to invent the concept that Noe had a fourth son; the conception was current. And such an antiquarian, perhaps influenced by the story that Sceaf or Scyld was brought to his people as an infant on a boat, hypothesized that the first ancestor of their kings was indeed born(e) on a boat--the ark of Noe. (1986: 383)

In this respect, it is interesting to quote the last part of Æthelwulf's genealogical list in mss. B and C of the *Chronicle* (London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius A.vi and Cotton Tiberius B.i), in which a son of Sceaf is directly made Noah's offspring without the intermediary characters recorded in the Parker version: "Itermon Haþraing, Hapra Hwalaing, Hwala Bedwiging, Bedwig Sceafing, id est filius Noe, se wæs geboren on pære earce Noes."¹ But this association is even more evident in the genealogical lists from Cotton Tiberius B.v (late 10th century) and the so-called Textus Roffensis II (12th century). In both texts Sceaf occurs as Noah's son: "Se Sceaf wæs Nóes sunu and he wæs inna Íære earce geboren."²

The similarity of the name Shem (Noah's son in Genesis) to Sceaf surely provoked the parallelism. Genealogists deliberately established this direct connection between Noah and Sceaf because they noticed the emblematic possibilities of associating the two stories. It is clear that the intention was to equate Sceaf to the Biblical patriarch and thus raise him to the category of a sort of Germanic patriarch.

The fact that the genealogical tables discussed above are drawn for Æthelwulf, Alfred the Great's father, is very significant. These pedigrees are included in a similar way as an introduction to Asser's biography of King Alfred. Since Asser's genealogical introduction was intended to exhibit the credentials of a pan-Germanic leader of "the Angles and the Saxons" as well

¹ "Itermon Hathra's offspring, Hrathra Hwala's offspring, Hwala Bedwig's offspring, Bedwig Sceaf's offspring, that is the son of Noah: he was born in Noah's ark" (Swanton 67).

² This Sceaf was Noah's son and he was born in the ark (my trans.). The text is from Cotton Tiberius B.v, as edited by Chambers (203). An almost identical version is found in Textus Roffensis II.

as of "all the Christians" (Keynes and Lapidge 67), this is a very good example of how genealogies were manipulated in order to legitimize a king's right to rule. Asser's intention was to present Alfred as a great authority among authorities since his pedigree sums up all the traditions mentioned above. His West-Saxon ancestry is well represented by Cerdic, Cynric and Gewis. Furthermore, Sceldwa appears as a representative of the Danish share of Alfred's pedigree, and the Biblical characters provide a Christian background to the genealogical list.

Even though the connection with Hengest is wanting here, Alfred's Jutish blood is declared in the mention of his maternal descent from Osburh, who is said to be "descended from Goths and Jutes" (Keynes and Lapidge 67). The genealogical material contained in Alfred's pedigree thus makes him the perfect monarch and asserts his authority as king of all the Angles and the Saxons. Compared to the other pedigrees in the *Chronicle*, Alfred's ancestry is the one that presents a higher degree of elaboration and manipulation since genealogists were aware of the fact that Alfred had to be distinguished from the kings who had preceded him.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The study of these three myths in Anglo-Saxon regnal lists and the opening passage of *Beowulf* has proved that there is a recurrent thematic pattern which presents the story of the heroes (or the hero) who arrive from northern lands in a boat and become the ancestors of Anglo-Saxon dynasties. The *Beowulf* passage, the *Chronicle* accounts, and the genealogical lists analyzed share several common traits such as the alliterative names of the mythical figures and place-names, and the strong symbolical connotations of the onomastic material. In this sense, this paper has demonstrated the so far neglected literary scope of genealogical tables which are very close to the uses of Germanic lore in OE poetry. We could even affirm that genealogical regnal tables actually constitute schematic representations of the same myths that are found in *Beowulf* and other Anglo-Saxon poems.¹ Finally, the analy-

¹ Similarly, the Anglo-Saxon *Chronicle*--despite its being a collection of annals, i.e. written to describe historical facts--has also proved to be endowed with literary features.

sis of Æthelwulf's genealogical list shows the conflation of the three traditions and the implicit presence of the thematic leitmotif of the hero's arrival in a boat in the connection with Noah.

To what extent genealogists were dealing with historic characters is something that is extremely difficult to prove. Yet the important point is that these mythical heroes were alive in the minds of the authors of regnal lists as well as in the minds of the audience of *Beowulf* who associated them with Germanic legends that could help consolidate a king's ancestral authority.

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