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

Keith Briggs  keith.briggs@bt.com

Visiting Research Fellow, Linguistics, UWE
http://keithbriggs.info

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

- Assyria = Assyrie
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- Assyria = Assyriège
- Babylonia = Babilonige
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- Elia = Eligè ‘Ely’
A little motivation

- Assyria = Assyrige
- Babylonia = Babilonige
- salmuria = sælmerige ‘brine’
- Elia = Elige ‘Ely’
- Sturia = Sturiège ‘Sturry’
The standard Jones vowel diagram, showing schwa (/ə/) in relation to /e/ and /a/. Front vowels are to the left; a point in the diagram corresponds to the position of the highest point of the tongue. Unstressed /a/ is liable to be modified to /ə/, though OE had no way to represent this in writing except ⟨e⟩. Right-hand members of pairs have lip-rounding.
Pre-English Latin -ia place-names

Pliny: *Scadinavia*
Pre-English Latin -ia place-names

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Pre-English Latin -ia place-names

**Pliny:** Scadinavia

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

**Roman coins mid-310s:** Alamannia, Francia
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Merovingian: Austria, Austrasia, Neustria
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Vulgate: Aegyptia, Aethiopia, Alexandria, Antiochia, Apollonia, 
        Appia, Arabia, Arimathia, Armenia, Asia, Babylonia, Bethania, 
        Calvaria, Cappadocia, Frygia, Galatia, Gallia, Graecia, Hadria, 
        Hispania, India, Italia, Iudaia, Lybia, Lycia, Lydia, Macedonia, 
        Media, Mesopotamia, Pamphilia, Philadelphia, Samaria, Syria

Roman coins mid-310s: Alamannia, Francia

Merovingian: Austria, Austrasia, Neustria

Gothic: Visigoths (c.590) gens vel patria Gothorum ... Spania, 
        Gallia et Gallaecia; Ostrogoths: Italia
English Latin -ia place-names

ASC : Alemanie, Aluearnie, Bataille, Clunig, Elig, Hloderinga, Hungrie, Ispanie, Lumbardige, Manige, Normandig, Sicilie
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10th century coins : Brydia, Bridiga, Brydige
Old English *gemäß ‘district’

▶ Supposed cognate of German Gau
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- Found (if at all) only in place-names
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- It is south German and normally a suffix (-gawi) only
Old English *ġē 'district'

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

- Normal OE form *Elig*
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- Usual theory: OE *-gē*
- But then why *-ig*?
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- *Elia* < *Ælia*??
The place-name Surrey

➤ *Sudrige* Bede
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- *Sudrige* Bede
- *Sudrig, Sudrige* ASC

If from *g¯e*, the -i- is unexplained.

I propose the etymology *suð-ria* with base 'south'.

Perhaps named by an early bishop of London.
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The place-name Eastry

- to Eastorege 805×832 (9th)
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- I propose the etymology ēast(o)r-ia with base ‘east’
- The name is actually exactly what we would expect as a regular development of Latin Austria!
The place-name Sturry

* TERRAM IN STURIA 679 S:8

Etymology is river-name St¯ uria
The place-name Sturry

- *TERRAM IN STURIA* 679 S:8
- cf. *super ripam Sturiae* 9th for the Stör
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The place-name Lyminge

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- Etymology is either Celtic *lem-* ‘elm’ or perhaps Latin *līmen* ‘threshold (of Kent)’ + *ia*
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Brookes map of Kent


Fig. 70 Thiessen polygons defined around the gē settlements and lathe boundaries in eastern Kent
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Moreover it would be plausible as an influence from Merovingian and Frankish naming fashions.
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Conclusion

- The phonology of these names is consistent with an origin in Latin -ia.
- In fact, the data fits better than OE *-ê, which is of doubtful existence anyway.
- Such an origin would fit into a general picture of seventh and eighth-century Romanization in religion, architecture, town planning, law, personal naming...
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- Such an origin would fit into a general picture of seventh and eighth century Romanization in religion, architecture, town planning, law, personal naming . . .
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- See my paper \textit{Early English region-names with the suffix -ia, with a special emphasis on the name Ely} for full data and argument