

What Role Does Trojan Ancestry Play in the development of Norman Genealogical Histories, from Dudo of Saint-Quentin to Geoffrey of Monmouth?

Introduction

The purpose of this dissertation is to assess the role that the inclusion of Trojan ancestry plays in Norman genealogical histories, from literary, socio-economic and historiographical perspectives. Although Trojan ancestries are a very common addition in medieval genealogies,¹ the Normans have a particularly comprehensive array of examples, with different purposes and historical contexts, making it a particularly useful case study. In studying this particular topic, we can get a better understanding of how medieval dynasties used the prestige of ancestry from antiquity to provide the social capital necessary to justify their own power, also giving us an impression of the reception of classical works such as *The Aeneid* in the Middle Ages. The dissertation aims to achieve this by analysing four Norman histories containing the Trojan origin myth: Dudo of St-Quentin's *Historia Normannorum*, William of Jumieges' *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, Orderic Vitalis' *Historia Ecclesiastica* and Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*. The first question that will be attempted to answer through these texts is what the inclusion of Trojan ancestries tell us about the identity and perception of Norman rulers. The dissertation will then move on to trying to determine how the social, economic and political developments at the times in which these works were produced affected the purpose and message of these inclusions. Finally, it will address the differing historiographical developments through the time period in question, particularly the differing methodologies and sources of monastic and clerical historians.

¹ For a discussion of these inclusions, see A. J. Goldwyn, 'Trojan Pasts, Medieval Presents: Epic Genealogy in Eleventh to Thirteenth Century Genealogical Histories', in *Brill's Companion to Prequels, Sequels, and Retellings of Classical Epic*, ed. R. Simms (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2018), pp. 154-174.

Literature Review

It is generally agreed that the purpose of Trojan ancestry in Norman genealogies is to create continuity between the Roman Empire and the Norman states through establishing a common ancestry between the founders of their dynasties.² One such example is Ingledew, who argues that such an inclusion represents a return to the classical epic history of *The Aeneid* as a template for clerical histories, such as Dudo of St-Quentin and Geoffrey of Monmouth, particularly emphasising the role of prophecy in said works creating a narrative in which history is “realised, rather than made”.³ Ingledew also notes that, in opposition to this, monastic historians like William of Jumieges and Orderic Vitalis used the Trojan ancestry as a stepping stone to a biblical origin of the Normans, with Orderic Vitalis emphasising the cruel nature of the Trojans, rather than nobility, instead following the tradition of Augustine’s *City of God* as a template for their histories.⁴ He also includes an overview of the historical context for the purpose of the Trojan myth’s inclusion, with the development of the feudal system creating a need for appealing to ancestry to justify land ownership, in addition to the increasing importance of cities leading to an increase in the importance of clerical figures and their incorporation into aristocratic authority creating a pre-eminence for clerical histories over monastic equivalents.⁵

Others have also Assessed the historical context for the purpose of the works. For example, Lifschitz attributes Dudo’s history to the need to justify the prestige of the Norman dynasty,

² Various examples include R. Hanning, *The Vision of History in Early Britain* (New York, London: Columbia University Press, 1966), pp. 104-5, 140; R. Cavendish, *King Arthur and the Grail: The Arthurian Legends and their Meaning* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1978), pp. 26-7; R. Barber, *King Arthur: Hero and Legend*, 2nd ed. (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1986), p. 35; P. Bouet, ‘Dudon de Sain-Quentin et Virgile: (L’Enéide) au service de la cause Normande’ *Cahier des Annales de Normandie*, 23 (1990), pp. 215-36; N. Higham, *King Arthur: Myth-Making and History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002), pp. 124; Goldwyn, *Trojan Pasts, Medieval Presents*, pp. 154-164.

³ F. Ingledew, ‘The Book of Troy and the Genealogical Construction of History: The Case of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia regum Britanniae*’, *Speculum* 69(3) (1994), pp. 665-704. Quotation from p. 671.

⁴ Ingledew, *Book of Troy*, pp. 684, 692

⁵ Ingledew, *Book of Troy*, pp. 668-9, 690; also see G. Duby, *The Three Orders: Fuedal Society Imagined* (London, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980), pp. 211-216, 233.

in order to ensure a peaceful succession of hereditary power from Richard I to Richard II in 996.⁶ Dalton argues that Geoffrey of Monmouth was also influenced by his surroundings, specifically the civil war between Stephen and Matilda, which was raging at the time of his writing.⁷ More precisely, he interprets Geoffrey's work as a plea for peace and reconciliation, necessary for the continuation of Norman dominion, also stating that Orderic Vitalis brought up the possibility of Norman rule being under threat.⁸

Some scholars, particularly Albu, have argued that the Trojan ancestry of the Normans, rather than being intended to glorify, was in fact a subversive inclusion from the beginning, due to Dudo tracing their ancestry back to Antenor, a figure generally associated with treachery and cowardice.⁹ She also attributes the Norman embrace of Geoffrey of Monmouth's account of the Trojan origins of the British, through Brutus of Troy and King Arthur as part of the steps toward Norman assimilation into English identity and escape the "burden of Normanness".¹⁰ In a similar vein, Liu associates the inclusion of Trojan ancestry into medieval English history with the trauma of constant invasion and upheaval.¹¹ This appears to show that there was a difference in how the Trojan origins were received by the Norman rulers themselves, and their subjects. Shopkow, on the other hand, argues that Dudo's account of Rollo's foundation of Normandy also echoes Christian narratives, particularly the story of Constantine, presenting the Normans as divinely sanctioned to rule.¹² Birns asserts that multiple ways of constructing the past could co-exist,¹³ so perhaps this is an example of an

⁶ F. Lifschitz, 'Dudo's Historical Narrative and the Norman Succession of 996', *Journal of Medieval History*, 20 (1994), pp. 101-120.

⁷ P. Dalton, 'The Topical Concerns of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britannie*: History, Prophecy, Peacemaking, and English Identity in the Twelfth Century', *Journal of British Studies*, 44(4) (2005), pp. 688-712.

⁸ Dalton, *Topical Concerns*, pp. 690-694.

⁹ E. Albu, *The Normans in their Histories* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2001), pp. 15, 237-8.

¹⁰ Albu, *The Normans in their Histories*, pp. 220-1, 237-8.

¹¹ S. Liu, *A Regnal Genealogy in Trouble: The Trojan Myth as a Traumatic National Historiography in Medieval England* (Indiana University, 2001).

¹² L. Shopkow, *History and Community: Norman Historical Writing in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1997), pp. 38, 68, 151.

¹³ N. Birns, 'The Trojan Myth: Postmodern Reverberations', *Exemplaria*, 5(1) (1993), pp. 47-8.

internal clash between historical approaches which later become more separate and polarised. The previously mentioned Lifschitz, however, asserts that the Normans were already well established and respected by the 990's, and including subversive material would be counter-productive to the goal of ensuring a smooth royal succession.¹⁴

Methodology

Primary Sources

The first primary source used in the dissertation will be Dudo of Saint-Quentin's *Historia Normannorum*, specifically the first two books, written between 996 and 1015. The first two books of Dudo cover the story of the ancestors and founders of Normandy. The first book establishes the Trojan ancestry of the Danes, then focusses on the figure of Hasting, a Danish Viking who persecutes the church and Frankish people, ending with him sacking the city of Luna, thinking it to be Rome. The second book follows Rollo, the founder of the Duchy of Normandy, also a Danish Viking, driven from his homeland by a tyrant. Unlike Hasting however, he converts to Christianity and is given control of Normandy after swearing loyalty to the Frankish king Charles 'The Simple'.¹⁵ This work is the earliest example of a history of Normandy, and therefore offers an example of the use of the Trojan myth in early Norman historiography.

Two other examples are William Jumieges *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* and Orderic Vitalis' *Historia Ecclesiastica*, written in c.1070 and between 1123-41, respectively. Both deal with the Norman invasion of England. The first two books of William of Jumieges' work, like Dudo, discusses the ancestry of the Danes, also attributing it to Trojans, albeit tracing back even further to Noah, then focussing on the lives of Hasting and Rollo, albeit with elements

¹⁴ Lifschitz, *Dudo's Historical Narrative*.

¹⁵ Dudo of St Quentin, *History of the Normans*, translated by E. Christiansen (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1998).

of prophecy redacted.¹⁶ Orderic Vitalis, on the other hand, refers to the Normans' Trojan ancestry in passing, as the origin for a tendency for cruelty.¹⁷

The final main source is Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, written in c. 1136. Geoffrey's history covers the history of Britain, from Brutus, grandson of Aeneas founding Britain, to the seventh century dominance of the Anglo-Saxons, also including the myth of King Arthur in between.¹⁸ This source represents the presentation of Trojan ancestry towards the end of Norman rule in England, being written during the civil war, following which the Plantagenet dynasty was established. Therefore, the four main sources used represent the concepts of ancestry at the beginning, middle and end of Norman dominion.

These sources will be complimented by other examples of Trojan ancestry from the Middle Ages, such as Snorri Sturluson's *Prose Edda*,¹⁹ for the purpose of comparing Norman Trojan myths to others. Classical sources, such as *The Aeneid*,²⁰ *Ilias Latina*,²¹ *Dares Phrygius and Dictys of Crete*²², that were available to scholars during the time period in question, as well as Augustine's *City of God*.²³ These will be used as references for the sources and methodologies of the previously mentioned sources.

Structure

¹⁶ William of Jumieges, *The Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, translated by E. Van Houts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

¹⁷ Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, translated by M. Chibnall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).

¹⁸ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, translated by L. Thorpe (London: Penguin, 1966).

¹⁹ Snorri Sturluson, *The Prose Edda*, translated by Jean I. Young (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966).

²⁰ Virgil, *The Aeneid*, translated by W. F. Jackson Knight (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1956).

²¹ *The Ilias Latina: A Study of the Latin Iliad, Including Translation, Commentary, and Concordance*, translated by W. A. Tiltroe (University of Southern California, 1939).

²² Dares Phrygius; Dictys of Crete, *The Trojan war: the chronicles of Dictys of Crete and Dares the Phrygian*, translated by R. M. Frazer (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press).

²³ Augustine, *City of God*, translated by H. Bettenson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972).

The general structure of the dissertation will be as follows; an introduction, followed by a main body and a conclusion. The introduction will begin with a general overview of the prevalence of Trojan ancestry in the Middle Ages, followed by a summary of the Norman primary sources which will be used to justify their use as a case study. It will then lay out the questions that these sources raise. This will be followed by a literature review of the already existing scholarship on the topic and their contributions to the questions raised previously, noting the main arguments, disagreements and any gaps in our understanding.

The main body of the dissertation will be split into three chapters. The first chapter will be a detailed analysis of the use of Trojan ancestry in the genealogies within the main sources. Specifically, this chapter will focus on how the Trojan ancestry of the Normans affects the narratives of each of the sources, comparing and contrasting the similarities and differences between them. It will also assess the thematic and structural influences of previous works, such as *The Aeneid* and *City of God*, and seeing how the Norman genealogies compare with those in antiquity. More specifically, it will examine the how Rollo and Brutus of Troy operate as mythical heroes, embodying the character of the peoples they represent, as Aeneas does for Rome in the *Aeneid*.²⁴ From looking at the values that these characters represent, we can determine how their ancestries contribute to the perception of Norman identity. We can then compare this with other examples of Trojan genealogies from the Middle Ages to see how the perceived identity of the Normans differed from others.

Once the internal purpose of Trojan ancestry has been established, the next two chapters will examine the external reasons for these inclusions. The subject of the first of these chapters is the socio-economic and political reasons for these inclusions. Of particular importance will be the development of the feudal system and the need to establish stable hereditary

²⁴ Ingledew, *Book of Troy*, p. 677; Albu, *Normans in their Histories*, p. 16; Goldwyn, *Trojan Pasts, Medieval Presents*, pp. 157, 160-5; Higham, *King Arthur: Myth Making and History*, p. 124.

succession of aristocratic titles, through historical ties to the land.²⁵ It will examine how links to Trojans create a shared ancestry with Roman mythical heroes such as Aeneas and Romulus, allowing the Normans to present themselves as successors to the Roman Empire.²⁶ Following this, the specific historical context of the sources will be considered to show how this association with antiquity suited the circumstances of their times. With Dudo of St-Quentin for example, the need for a stable succession following the consolidation of Norman authority in Normandy will be inspected.²⁷ For William of Jumieges, the context of the immediate aftermath of the Norman invasion of England will be examined, with the longer-term impacts being discussed for Orderic Vitalis. Regarding Geoffrey of Monmouth, the context of the civil war between Stephen and Empress Matilda, and the imminent establishment of the Plantagenet dynasty and assimilation of Norman rulers into the English identity.²⁸

The final main chapter will focus on the historiographical developments from the time period in question. Specifically, it will address the differing methodologies and sources of the monastic and clerical historians.²⁹ Particularly, the use of themes from *The Aeneid* in Dudo of St-Quentin possibly being a result of influence from the Carolingian School,³⁰ whereas monastic historians such as William of Jumieges and Orderic Vitalis likely had a more biblically minded approach, influenced by Augustine.³¹ Using the information from the previous chapter, the dissertation will explain why the clerical approach was commissioned

²⁵ Ingledew, *Book of Troy*, pp. 668-9, 674-6, 681.

²⁶ Hanning, *Vision of History*, pp. 104-5, 140; Cavendish, *King Arthur and the Grail*, pp. 26-7; Barber, *King Arthur: Hero and Legend*, p. 35; Bouet, *Dudon de Sain-Quentin et Virgile*, pp. 215-36; Higham, *King Arthur: Myth-Making and History*, pp. 124; Goldwyn, *Trojan Pasts, Medieval Presents*, pp. 154-164.

²⁷ Lifschitz, *Dudo's Historical Narrative*.

²⁸ Albu, *Normans in their Histories*, pp. 220-1, 237-8; Dalton, *Topical Concerns*, pp. 689-691, 694-697, 708-710.

²⁹ Ingledew, *Book of Troy*, pp. 669-672, 684-687, 689-694; Duby, *Three Orders*, pp. 211-2, 214, 216, 233.

³⁰ L. Shopkow, 'The Carolingian World of Dudo of Saint-Quentin', *Journal of Medieval History*, 15 (1989), pp. 19-37.

³¹ Ingledew, *Book of Troy*, pp. 671-2, 684, 692-3.

by Richard I, in his choice of Dudo of Saint-Quentin, as well as why Geoffrey of Monmouth's similar approach gained popularity over the monastic approaches.

Finally, the conclusion will recap the main research questions, then outline how each chapter contributed to the wider debate. It will then highlight the main discoveries found in the research, ending with a general statement that answers the main question.

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