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*The Origin of the Court of Husting and Danish Influence on London's Development into a Capital City**

THE origin of London's Court of Husting not only affects our understanding of the development of the city's government, but is also important evidence in the debate about Scandinavian influence on the growth of English towns. The name 'husting' is of Scandinavian origin and meant literally an indoor assembly. The Husting of London is first referred to in a tenth-century charter as the authority for a weight-standard, and historians have concluded from this, and from later evidence of the court's commercial jurisdiction, that it was created at an early date, in Stenton's words, 'to meet the needs of English citizens who were in constant association with Scandinavian traders'.¹ From this he and more recent historians have inferred that the contribution of Scandinavian trade to the development of London may have been considerable in the tenth century. However, belief in this early origin of the Husting rests entirely on the evidence of a charter of Ramsey Abbey which exists only in a later Latin translation. By this charter, drawn up perhaps shortly before her death in 985, the Lady Æthelgifu bequeathed to the abbey certain lands, one mark of gold and two silver goblets weighing twelve marks 'according to the measure of the Husting of London'.² Stenton recognized that since the charter exists only in translation the reference to the Husting might be a later interpolation, but he preferred to accept the good authority of the Ramsey *Chronicon* and thought that the reference to the Husting would in any case be a pointless invention for a later translator to add.³

Nevertheless it is recognized that there is no other evidence to support the case for substantial Danish influence in London before the

* In the preparation of this article I am grateful to the Master, Wardens and Clerk of the Grocers' Company for their support and encouragement, and to Miss Susan Reynolds, Miss Barbara Harvey, Mr E. Christiansen and Mr James Campbell for their suggestions and advice.

1. F. M. Stenton, 'Norman London', in *Preparatory to Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. D. M. Stenton (Oxford, 1970), p. 31; C. N. L. Brooke and G. Keir, *London, 800-1216: The Shaping of a City* (London, 1975), pp. 264-5; H. R. Loyn, *The Vikings in Britain* (London, 1977), p. 136; J. Schofield and A. Dyson, *Archaeology of the City of London* (London, 1980), p. 34.

2. *Chronicon Abbatie Ramesiensis*, ed. W. D. Macray (London, 1886), p. 58.

3. Stenton, 'Norman London', p. 30 and n. 2.

conquest of Cnut. Of just over one hundred London moneyers who were striking coins between 973 and 1016 only six had Scandinavian names and only two of these were prolific.¹ All the dedications of churches to Viking saints are recorded only from Cnut's reign or later.² The London trading regulations of Æthelred II's reign list merchants from the Rhineland, Flanders and Normandy, but none from Scandinavia, which argues against any regular trading links of consequence.³ Finally, London was outstanding for the strength and pertinacity of its resistance to the Danes and its support for the house of Wessex in the tenth and early eleventh centuries. The city was the champion of Edmund Ironside, and it was only after his death that it accepted Cnut as king in 1017.⁴ This does not suggest close ties of kinship or the valuable trading connections which have been put forward to explain the Husting's name and apparent early date.

There is, moreover, new evidence which casts a more serious doubt on the value of the Ramsey charter as proof of the Husting's existence by that name in the tenth century. From a study of the weight-standards used in the surviving laws, wills and charters of the period it seems clear that after the reconquest of the Danelaw, when Æthelstan and Eadgar decreed that there should be only one system of weights in the kingdom and one coinage, the mark was not in common use as a weight or as an accounting unit either in the Danelaw or elsewhere in the country. Instead the English pound, as we see in the laws of Æthelred II, was divided into fifteen oras or ounces, probably continuing the Mercian pound of fifteen ounces. The mark of eight oras or ounces was, therefore, as eight-fifteenths, not a useful fraction of the pound, either as a weight or as an accounting unit. The half-mark, which is referred to in the treaty between Alfred and Guthrum survived in the Danelaw as a traditional fine, but in the second half of the tenth century the shilling of twelve pence became the normal accounting unit of the pound; the ora or ounce and the pound were used as weights for silver, and the mancus was the weight for gold.⁵

Since there is no evidence that the mark was used as a weight, it seems that the 'mark of the Husting of London', like the mark of gold of the Ramsey charter, must be a later interpolation – in which case there is no proof that the Husting existed under that name before 1032 when another charter refers in similar terms to a mark of that

1. Veronica J. Smart, 'Moneyers of the Late Anglo-Saxon Coinage, 973–1016', in *Commentationes de Nummis Saeculorum IX–XI in Suecia Repertis*, ii (Stockholm, 1968), 250–5.

2. Brooke & Keir, *op. cit.* pp. 139–41.

3. *The Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, ed. A. J. Robertson (Cambridge, 1925), p. 73.

4. *The A[nglo-] S[axon] C[hronicle]*, D & E, *sub anno* 1016.

5. For detailed evidence on this subject see, Pamela Nightingale, 'The Ora, the Mark and the Mancus: Weight-Standards and the Coinage in Eleventh-Century England', ii, in the *Numismatic Chronicle*, cxliv (1984), 235–7.

weight.¹ In the latter case we can be much more certain that the reference is a contemporary one because of the new weight-standard which Cnut introduced shortly after his conquest. It appears from the weight of the coinage that he reduced the English pound from fifteen to ten oras and struck the penny to a standard of twenty-four pence to the ora. By this means he made the accounting unit of the shilling, or twelve pence, the equivalent of half an ora of coin. A few years later, c. 1026, he altered the weight of the ora in Denmark and in England with the intention, as I have argued elsewhere, of making its weight match the Byzantine ounce. By this means he was able to replace the mancus by the mark as the weight for gold, and after c. 1026 the mark became the normal weight for both silver and gold.² We can therefore be fairly certain that when the Ramsey charter was translated from Anglo-Saxon into Latin the translator would be faced with a document in which a weight of gold was expressed in mancuses, and a weight of silver was expressed in oras or pounds. By the 1030s the mancus was no longer used as a weight, and the ora and pound of a tenth-century charter would not correspond with the contemporary weight-standards which had been introduced by Cnut. The translator therefore did what was done in similar cases³ and brought the weights of the Anglo-Saxon charter up to date. His intention was not to deceive, but merely to clarify the terms of the bequest. He may also have been influenced by the fact that half of the mark of gold was to provide food for the monks. Once the new weight-standard was established and well known, there was no need to specify it as it would be the only one in use throughout the kingdom.

If this interpretation of the charter is correct, there is no evidence that the Husting existed in London before the reign of Cnut – a date of origin which most easily explains its Scandinavian name. If the name was not adopted for an assembly before Cnut's conquest, there is nothing to show that Danish trade or settlement had any significant part to play in the growth of London before the eleventh century. A more difficult question to decide is why London should have an assembly which was the only one in England to be called a husting in the eleventh century. Can this be explained by developments in London's internal government, or by the new standing given to the city by the Danish conquest? The fact that the two charters which first mention the Husting refer to it as an authority for weight-standards has led other historians to follow Stenton's suggestion that it came into being as a specialized commercial court to meet the needs of the city's overseas trade and to hear the commercial disputes which could

1. *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, ed. A. J. Robertson (Cambridge, 1956), pp. 170–1; *The Crawford Charters*, ed. A. S. Napier and W. S. Stevenson (Oxford, 1895), p. 78.

2. Pamela Nightingale, 'The Ora, the Mark and the Mancus', ii. 238, 241–3.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 237.

not be resolved in an unwieldy outdoor assembly like the folkmoor.¹ The collection of London customs made in John's reign, which appears to incorporate some earlier material, refers to the Lotharingians' privilege of pleading in the Husting.² However another of these documents suggests that the privilege existed, not because the Husting was primarily a commercial court, but because it was 'la curt le rei', the king's court, as opposed to the private courts of the London sokes.³ There is no evidence that the Husting of London in the eleventh century was anything but a general-purpose, governing assembly which dealt collectively with all manner of administrative and judicial work like the shire and hundred courts, and indeed, as Miss Reynolds has shown, like all the assemblies, great and small, which governed urban and rural areas alike in early medieval Europe.⁴ Only in the late twelfth century are there signs in England of the growth of specialized commercial courts in fairs and markets, and of the use of the law merchant.⁵

If there was nothing specialized about the composition and functions of the Husting, the question still remains why only London's governing assembly should have adopted a Scandinavian name in the eleventh century. In Winchester, and elsewhere in the kingdom, it does not appear that there was a local assembly called a husting before the thirteenth century, when the name was clearly copied from London's chief court.⁶ To explain why the name was adopted in London we must go back to the original use of the word in English sources. It appears first in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle as the name for the assembly of the Danish host which condemned Archbishop Ælfheah to death at Greenwich in 1012.⁷ The fact that it is not found in earlier English texts suggests that the chronicler was using a Danish name for what he saw as an assembly of the invaders, much as in 1940 Londoners adopted the German word, 'blitz'. In Old-Norse sources a husting meant an indoor assembly held by the king, earl or other leaders, for their immediate followers, as opposed to the more populous assemblies or 'things' held in the open air.⁸ One explanation therefore of the adoption of the name is that when Cnut came to the throne, or even in 1016 when the Danes occupied London, the city was placed under the authority of the Danish commander, so that its use for London's governing assembly may indicate the extent to which the Danes

1. H. R. Loyn, *The Governance of Anglo-Saxon England, 500-1087* (London, 1984), p. 151.

2. Mary Bateson, 'A London Municipal Collection of the Reign of John', *ante*, xvii (1902), 501.

3. *Ibid.*

4. Susan Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe, 900-1300* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 32-4 and *passim*.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 57; T. H. Lloyd, *Alien Merchants in England in the High Middle Ages* (Brighton, 1982), p. 15.

6. *Fleta*, ii, ed. H. G. Richardson and G. O. Sayles (Selden Society, lxxii, 1955), 184; *Winchester in the Middle Ages*, ed. M. Biddle (Oxford, 1976), p. 423.

7. *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, ed. C. Plummer (Oxford, 1892), i. 142: 'heora hustinga'.

8. *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, ed. Joseph Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller (Oxford, 1898).

intervened in the city's administration. To discuss this question we must look at the kind of government which had operated in London before the Danish conquest. When it ceased to be a Mercian city and was taken by Edward the Elder into his own hands to become a royal city of the newly united realm of England, it was apparently governed for the king by royal reeves through assemblies of the citizens.¹ The folkmoot, the ancient open-air assembly to which all the citizens were summoned by St Paul's bell, appears to be one of the *burhgemots* described in Edgar's laws, since it met three times a year – as it continued to do in the twelfth century.² The day-to-day work of justice and administration in what was already the largest town and busiest port in the kingdom must therefore have been conducted in a smaller, indoor assembly like the pre-Conquest borough court of Chester.³ It was normal for all such assemblies throughout Europe to have panels of *judices* or judges composed of the most prominent local men. Under the presidency of the king's representative or local lord they would arrive by discussion at collective judgments and administrative decisions.⁴ It is from such a body of *judices*, stretching back probably to the early tenth century, that the aldermen of London undoubtedly derived the judicial and administrative functions which they can be seen exercising in the twelfth-century Husting.⁵ The Husting therefore would seem to be little more than a new Danish name for a much older institution.

It is also likely that the aldermen's specific responsibilities for the wards of London developed before the Danish conquest, although they may reflect the central part which London played in the defence of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom. Professor Brooke and Mrs Keir have argued from topographical and other evidence that the wards of London were created early in the eleventh century.⁶ It is likely that their purpose was originally to organize London's defences against Danish attacks and to raise the heavy taxes needed for the payment of Danegeld. But they were also an effective means, welcome to the Danes, of controlling the population through the policing powers of the aldermen's wardmotes. Clearly the Danes could not hope to govern a population of about 10,000–12,000 without the active co-operation of its leading citizens. It would be sensible therefore to continue London's existing system of government and merely substitute one of their military commanders for the sheriff or portreeve as president of the city's governing assembly. It is tempting to speculate that Cnut used for this purpose

1. *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, ed. F. L. Attenborough (Cambridge, 1922), pp. 156–7.

2. J. Tait, *The Medieval English Borough* (Manchester, 1936), pp. 41–2.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 60–1; Susan Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities*, p. 167.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 25–8, 33.

5. Susan Reynolds, 'The Rulers of London in the Twelfth Century', *History*, lvii, No. 191 (Oct. 1972), 339, 345, 349.

6. Brooke & Keir, *London: 800–1216*, pp. 169–70.

one of his stallers. This office appears in Scandinavia from the early eleventh century. Twelfth-century sources show that the staller was then the most important officer in the royal household. His wide powers included speaking on the king's behalf at assemblies and the duty of leading the host into battle. There seems to be no exact counterpart of this office in the Anglo-Saxon royal household, and although the title is not recorded in England before the 1040s it has been assumed that the office was introduced by the Scandinavian kings.¹ The Normans equated it with that of their constable and dapifer.² The sources emphasize the stallers' military authority and their standing as members of the king's household. The fact that theirs was a central rather than a local authority distinguished them from the Anglo-Saxon ealdormen.

The *Carmen de Hastingæ Prælio* tells us that in 1066 a certain Ansgar, who seems to be identified with Esgar the Staller, ruled London through an assembly of its chief citizens, and that he was also influential in national affairs: 'Omnibus tamen primatibus imperat urbis/Ejus et auxilio publica res agitur'.³ This assembly of chief citizens would appear to be the Husting. On this point it should be noted that although the *Carmen* has been dismissed as a fanciful embroidery of William of Poitier's *Gesta Guillelmi*, its author could not have acquired his knowledge of Ansgar's name and standing from that work or from any other known written source, and it seems that on this subject at least he was writing with personal knowledge.⁴ The Waltham Chronicle states that Ansgar's father and his grandfather, Tofig the Proud, were stallers before him, and that Tofig was Cnut's standard-bearer and 'first after him in governing the country'.⁵ However, the Chronicle was written in the twelfth century, and there are no contemporary charters which can verify these statements. Since there are few surviving charters of Cnut's reign, the lack of evidence on this point is not decisive, and we do know of at least one occasion when Tofig the Proud attended the shire court of Hereford in Cnut's reign expressly on the

1. L. M. Larson, *The King's Household in England before the Norman Conquest* (Madison, 1904), pp. 147-52.

2. *Anglo-Saxon Writs*, ed. F. E. Harmer (Manchester, 1952), pp. 558-9.

3. *Carmen de Hastingæ Prælio*, ed. C. Morton and H. Muntz (Oxford, 1972), p. 45.

4. R. H. C. Davis, 'The *Carmen de Hastingæ Prælio*', *ante*, xciii (1978), 241-61. Professor Davis himself points out (pp. 251-2) that Ansgard is not named in the other eleventh-century literary sources which the poet might have used. The *Carmen*'s information about him accords with our knowledge of him from other sources, e.g. his position of authority in London, his military responsibilities, his standing in the kingdom; and even with the likelihood that he might be bribed, since the Ely *Libellus* describes him as an avaricious man who stole some of the Abbey's lands - an accusation which is supported by *Domesday Book*, ii. f. 60. The emphasis of the *Carmen* on the part played by London can be linked with the similar prominence it gives to Eustace of Boulogne, the Confessor's brother-in-law, who visited England in 1051 and also acquired property in London and in Southwark before 1086 (*ibid.*, i. f. 34). It is therefore possible that the poet acquired his knowledge of London and of Ansgard perhaps first-hand through a connection with Eustace of Boulogne.

5. *The Foundation of Waltham Abbey*, ed. W. Stubbs (1861), pp. xxvii-viii, 6, 13-14.

king's business.¹ But whether he had any specific link with London is not known.

A much clearer example of one of Cnut's followers who seems to have had authority over London and was later described as a staller is Osgot Clapa. He can be identified with the Osgod who was addressed as 'minister' and who attested the charters of Cnut and the Confessor from 1026 until he was exiled in 1046.² He had a house at Lambeth, and it was there that Hardacnut collapsed and died in 1042 at the wedding feast which Osgot gave for the marriage of his daughter to Tofig the Proud.³ The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle describes Osgot as 'staller' in 1046,⁴ and before then he was addressed by the Confessor after the Bishop of London but before Ulf the Sheriff and all the thegns of Middlesex as one with authority over that area.⁵ Earlier, in Cnut's reign, he also attested immediately after the bishops and the earls a writ which concerned the rights of St Paul's Cathedral.⁶ It seems likely from this evidence that Osgot Clapa's authority in London dates from Cnut's reign. It also appears that despite the Confessor's hostility to the Danes he had to maintain Osgot in power until he found the opportunity to exile him in 1046.⁷ Even then, in the person of Ansgar or Esgar, he was succeeded as staller by the grandson of another eminent follower of Cnut who was linked by marriage to Osgot's family. Therefore although there is convincing evidence that after 1051 English stallers were used by King Edward in a new way to buttress royal power⁸ after his expulsion of the Scandinavian naval force which had been the main support of the Danish kings, one sees in Osgot Clapa and Esgar that the office was before then closely linked in London with the Danish occupying force. Moreover all the later authorities agree in stressing that Osgot Clapa and Esgar, like Tofig the Proud, derived their standing in the kingdom at large from their close relationship with the king. Florence of Worcester described Osgot as 'a man of great power and influence in the kingdom'.⁹ To the monk Hermann of Bury St Edmunds at the end of the eleventh century he was the king's 'major domus',¹⁰ and to Abbot Samson in the twelfth he was not less to be feared than the king himself.¹¹ In the *Liber Eliensis*

1. *E[nglish] H[istorical] D[ocuments]*, i: 500-1042, ed. Dorothy Whitelock (2nd edn, London, 1979), 602: no. 135.

2. *Anglo-Saxon Writs*, p. 569.

3. *EHD*, i. 319.

4. *ASC*, C, s.a. 1046.

5. *Anglo-Saxon Writs*, p. 344: no. 77.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 241: no. 53.

7. *ASC*, C, s.a. 1046.

8. Katharin Mack, 'The Stallers: Administrative Innovation in the Reign of Edward the Confessor', *Journal of Medieval History*, xii (1986), 123-34.

9. *EHD*, i. 319.

10. *Memorials of St Edmund's Abbey*, ed. Thomas Arnold (London, 1890-6), i. 54.

11. *Ibid.*, 135.

Esgar appears as 'potens in regno ubi regis constabularius',¹ and the Waltham Chronicle refers to him as 'regni vesillifer'.²

Does this evidence of the national standing of the stallers of London and the prominence of the city's Husting mean that under Cnut London advanced in status to something akin to a capital city? Economically of course London had long been the richest and most populous city in the kingdom, and the pre-eminence of its mint, which struck about a quarter of the national coinage, had been established since Edgar's reign.³ But in the tenth century Winchester had been coupled with London as the authority for the kingdom's weight-standards.⁴ Moreover Winchester's prestige as the home of the West-Saxon monarchy had been enhanced at the end of the century by the construction of an enlarged complex of royal and ecclesiastical buildings which formed a ceremonial setting unsurpassed elsewhere in the kingdom.⁵ It was undoubtedly the new wave of Danish attacks at the end of the tenth century which caused Æthelred II to make London rather than Winchester his main headquarters, because the wealth of southern England, and of London in particular, led the Danes to focus their campaigns on this part of the country, and on the approaches especially to the Thames Valley.⁶ In response to this strategy Æthelred made the city his chief naval and military base. In 992 ships were assembled at London from all parts of the country in the vain attempt to defeat the Danes at sea.⁷ The importance of the London militia in the campaigns, the city's refusal to accept Cnut and its election of Edmund Ironside as king to carry on the struggle in 1016 meant that as a consequence of the Danish campaigns the city won for itself a new political and military leadership in the kingdom which developed into its claim to elect the king.⁸

One reason therefore why Cnut had to pay special attention to London after its eventual submission was that it was a threat to the security of his conquest. With a population which has been conservatively estimated at 10,000–12,000,⁹ many of them battle-hardened fighting men who seem to have been looked on as elite troops, London could not be trusted to go on supporting Cnut, particularly while Æthelred II's

1. *Liber Eliensis*, ed. E. O. Blake (*Camden Society*, 3rd Ser., xcii, 1962), 165–6.

2. *Foundation of Waltham Abbey*, p. 19.

3. D. M. Metcalf, 'Continuity and Change in English Monetary History, c. 973–1086', pt. ii, *British Numismatic Journal*, li (1981), 74–5.

4. *Laws of the Kings of England*, p. 29.

5. M. Biddle, 'Felix Urbs Winthonia: Winchester in the Age of Monastic Reform', in *Tenth-Century Studies*, ed. D. Parsons (Chichester, 1975), pp. 123–40.

6. *Vide infra*, p. 572, n. 6.

7. *ASC.*, E, s.a. 992.

8. *Ibid.*, E, s.a. 1009, 1012 & 1016; May McKisack, 'London and the Succession to the Crown during the Middle Ages', in *Studies in Medieval History Presented to F. M. Powicke*, ed. R. W. Hunt, W. A. Pantin and R. W. Southern (Oxford, 1948), pp. 76–8.

9. H. R. Loyn, *Anglo-Saxon England and the Norman Conquest* (London, 1962), p. 144.

younger sons were still alive in Normandy. Cnut's fear that London might prove to be a focus of rebellion probably explains the blow he dealt to the city's prestige in 1023 by translating the relics of St Ælfheah, the archbishop murdered by the Danes in 1012, from St Paul's to Canterbury.¹ Miracles had been associated with the relics in London,² and the growing cult of an Englishman martyred by the Danes could be a powerful encouragement to rebel against Danish rule; in Canterbury they could do less harm. It is significant that it is in the 1020s that we see the sudden increase in popularity of the cult of an earlier victim of the Danes, St Edmund, who became a national saint because he refused to submit to them in 870.³ One cannot help thinking that Cnut's later generosity to English monasteries, like the magnificent procession he organized for the translation of St Ælfheah's relics, was as much an exercise in propaganda, designed to stifle opposition, as the policy ascribed to him by some historians of reconciliation and zeal for the church.

London therefore had to be closely watched and controlled, and there is evidence that from 1016 it was a city under military occupation. The churches dedicated to Scandinavian saints, which are usually said to be an indication of peaceful commercial integration,⁴ in fact can be better explained as centres for the garrison. Of the six dedicated to St Olave – a dedication which must be dated after his death in 1030 – two, perhaps originally three, commanded the wall, a fourth the waterfront and a fifth the defensive works round the Southwark bridgehead.⁵ The position of St Clement Danes' and St Bride's on the road to Westminster may also indicate an encampment of troops along the river-bank close to their ships. It is possible that it was Cnut who first moved the royal residence from within the city to Thorney

1. ASC, D, s.a. 1023.

2. *Ibid.*, E, s.a. 1012.

3. Antonia Gransden, 'The Legends and Traditions concerning the Origins of the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds', *ante*, c (1985), 11; R. H. C. Davis, 'The Monks of St Edmund, 1021–1148', *History*, xl (1955), 228–32.

4. Loyn, *Vikings in Britain*, pp. 92–3.

5. St Olave's, Monkwell Street, and St Olave's by the Tower commanded the north-west and south-east sections of the wall, and it is likely that St Olave's, Broad Street, commanded the northern section before that parish disappeared when the Augustinian Friars settled close by. It is significant that all three are linked with gates in medieval descriptions: H. A. Harben, *A Dictionary of London* (London, 1918), p. 444. St Nicholas Olave's was much nearer the eleventh-century waterfront than it is today. For the defensive works at the Southwark bridgehead, see A. Dyson, 'London and Southwark in the Seventh Century and Later', *Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society*, xxxi (1980), 92–3. There are also churches dedicated to St Olave in York, Chester and Exeter, which seem to be linked with a Scandinavian garrison. The Danish Earl Seward built a church dedicated to St Olave outside the walls of York where the earl was buried in 1055: *Victoria History of the Counties of England, City of York* (London, 1961), p. 15. Before the Conquest Exeter paid a sum in marks 'ad opus militum', and Chester similarly paid a sum in marks: *Domesday Book*, i. ff. 100, 262v. Another strategically situated church dedicated to St Olave was at Chichester. It is significant that there was no such dedication at Winchester.

where it could be protected by his fleet.¹ Osgot Clapa, it should be noted, lived across the river from Westminster at Lambeth.² The fact that Harold Harefoot, Cnut's son and successor, was buried at Westminster and not at St Paul's may indicate that he had lived there as king.³ When his body was dug up and thrown into the Thames by his half-brother, Hardacnut, it was retrieved and buried by his Danish troops in their own burial-ground.⁴ This again adds to the impression that there were churches built specially for the garrison.

However, it seems clear that the force which Cnut stationed in London was intended to do more than subjugate the city. London was chosen by Cnut and his successors as the chief naval base for their hired fleet of Scandinavian mercenaries, the *lithsmen*, whom, it seems, we should now more clearly distinguish from the housecarls who formed the king's personal guard.⁵ Supported by English revenues, they gave Cnut the kind of mobile, professional force he needed to secure his conquest not only of England but also of the Scandinavian empire which he soon acquired. They were drawn originally from the forty ships' crews which stayed behind with Cnut in 1017. Their organization as a naval force meant that they could not follow the king round the country, and the choice of London as their headquarters is indicated by the reference in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle in 1035 to Cnut's *lithsmen* based in London.⁶ Not only was the city the hub of the Roman road system which gave it command of the land routes, but by the Thames the *lithsmen* could reach Oxford, and a fleet based at London could protect the southern coast from invasion and also maintain communications with Scandinavia. At the beginning of Cnut's reign the Danish naval force could have numbered about 3,200 men.⁷ If London's population was then 10,000–12,000, the Danes obviously formed a sizeable proportion of it and the city must have become an armed camp, unless, as seems likely, the naval force was based outside the walls at Westminster, Lambeth and Southwark, where they could beach their ships. Nonetheless their presence in such numbers in and close to the city was an additional reason why the city's governing assembly should acquire the name of a Danish military tribunal, and why its president might indeed be the 'regni vexillifer' or 'regis constabularius'.

1. *Carmen*, pp. 42–3. Consider the parallel in York where the ancient name of 'Earlsburgh' is attached to St Olave's Church, which 'strongly suggest[s] that the earls had their fortified residence here outside the walls': *Victoria County History, York*, p. 15.

2. *Vide supra*, p. 565, n. 3.

3. ASC, E, s.a. 1040. The meeting of the great council in 1052 'outside London' may have been at the Westminster palace: *ibid.*, E, s.a. 1052.

4. *EHD*, i, p. 317.

5. Nicholas Hooper, 'The Housecarls in England in the Eleventh Century', in *Anglo-Norman Studies*, vii (Woodbridge, 1985), 170.

6. ASC, E, s.a. 1035.

7. M. K. Lawson, 'The Collection of Danegeld and Heregeld in the reigns of Æthelred II and Cnut', *ante*, xcix (1984), 722.

It was the hergeld raised by Cnut to pay for this standing force – amounting probably to a minimum of £5,000 a year¹ – which brought about the introduction of a new monetary system and weight-standard into England. Whereas the Anglo-Saxon kings had profited from the coinage by using varying weight-standards controlled by the local mints, the Danes were accustomed to exchange coins only by weight, and not by face value. Cnut therefore wanted to collect taxes from his new subjects in coins of full and stable weight which his troops would accept and which would also have the same value in Scandinavia. They were struck to the new weight-standard which Cnut imposed on his English and Scandinavian subjects alike, ‘the mark of the Husting of London’, and in the same period London became the chief centre for the engraving and distribution of the moneyers’ dies.² The Husting therefore came to symbolize the imposition of a new military and fiscal system directed from London. As a consequence of this the city became the focus of political power where great events were decided. It was in London in 1017 that Cnut executed the treacherous ealdorman Eadric and three other prominent Englishmen whom he considered to be threats to his power.³ It was Cnut’s *liþsmen* in London who played a key part in the choice of his illegitimate son Harold to succeed him instead of the legitimate Hardacnut who was then ruling Denmark.⁴ When the Scandinavian dynasty died out without direct heirs and Edward the Confessor was recalled from his exile, ‘the whole nation chose Edward to be king in London’.⁵

The Danish force there continued to play a part in the troubled politics of a reign in which English and Danish interests competed for supremacy. We do not know why Osgot Clapa was exiled by Edward in 1046, but it is likely that he was plotting against the king, since he returned with a force of ships bent on invasion. Fortunately for Edward they were destroyed in a gale.⁶ A little earlier Esgar’s father also lost his lands, which may mean that he too forfeited Edward’s confidence.⁷ Edward’s ruthless treatment of his mother, Queen Emma, who had identified herself completely with Cnut and the powerful Danish party in the kingdom, and his expulsion of Cnut’s relations, suggest his fear of a Danish coup.⁸ It was probably the danger posed

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 721–2.

2. Pamela Nightingale, ‘The Ora, the Mark and the Mancus’, ii. 235–7; C. S. S. Lyon, *Numismatic Circular* (April, 1959), p. 77.

3. *EHD*, i. p. 312.

4. *ASC*, E, s.a. 1035.

5. *Ibid.*, E, s.a. 1042.

6. *Ibid.*, C, s.a. 1046; D, s.a. 1049.

7. Stubbs, *Waltham Abbey*, p. 13.

8. *ASC*, C, D & E, s.a. 1043; D, s.a. 1044. Edward had to rule in his early years through men appointed by Cnut, but by 1049 not one of the thegns witnessing his charters bears a Scandinavian name: F. Barlow, *Edward the Confessor* (London, 1970), pp. 75, 88–9.

by the Scandinavian naval force in London which explains why Edward in 1050–51 took the great risk of dismissing the remaining standing force of fourteen ships.¹ At the same time he abolished the hergeld, although it was probably re-imposed not much later.² Although they were thereby deprived of their independent naval strength, it seems clear that London was by then seen as the chief base of the housecarls because the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle tells us that the housecarls who were lying in wait for Godwin at Sandwich afterwards went ‘home-wards’ to London, and it was London which Edward chose to hold against Godwin.³ Esgar certainly continued as staller with authority over London. The Danes also continued to provide important contingents of fighting men in the retinues of the earls⁴ and may still have formed the majority of the king’s housecarls – of the five or six who held land in Middlesex in 1066 all but one had Scandinavian names.⁵ Perhaps it was more particularly the naval crews of about a thousand men whom Edward feared, since their ships gave them the mobility and the organization to act as an independent force. We are told that when they were paid off ‘they went away with the ships and everything’.⁶ Their departure certainly seems to have weakened the Danish hold over London, although it did not lessen the city’s importance as the centre of military and political power. In the contest between the king and Godwin’s family in 1052 the city seems to have re-asserted its English identity, because many of the citizens allied themselves with Godwin in a struggle in which we are told few but Englishmen were engaged.⁷ Godwin’s position in London was undoubtedly strengthened by his possession of half of the manor of Southwark, at least from 1051,⁸ which gave him control of the bridge-head. If his son Harold inherited from him the manors of Bermondsey and Merton, these carried with them the ownership of houses in Southwark and in the city.⁹

The family of Godwin was unknown until Cnut made him an earl and married him to his sister-in-law, Gytha. It appears, however, that he was a South Saxon, and it has been suggested that his promotion by Cnut reflects the new strategic importance of the south-east in the

1. ASC, C & E, s.a. 1050.

2. Pamela Nightingale, ‘The Ora, the Mark and the Mancus’, ii. 245.

3. ASC, C & E, s.a. 1052; Barlow, *Edward the Confessor*, p. 123.

4. ASC, C, s.a. 1054; E, s.a. 1065.

5. *Victoria County History, Middlesex* i (London, 1969), 102; Hooper, ‘The Housecarls in England’, 175, says that 87 per cent of the named men described as housecarls have names which are of Old-Norse origin.

6. ASC, C, s.a. 1050.

7. *Ibid.*, C, s.a. 1052.

8. *Victoria County History, Surrey*, i (1902), 286; Marjorie B. Honeybourne, ‘The Pre-Norman Bridge of London’, in *Studies in London History Presented to Philip Edmund Jones*, ed. A. E. J. Hollaender and W. Kellaway (London, 1969), pp. 27–9.

9. *Victoria County History, Surrey*, i. 296, 305.

Danish campaigns.¹ It seems from Godwin's appointment to the earldom of Wessex and his acquisition of manors on the Isle of Wight and in Hampshire and Sussex that Cnut committed to him the defence of a vulnerable part of the coast² – one which commanded not only Wessex but also the southern approaches to London. Whereas the insignificant amount of land held by the king in Essex, Middlesex and Hertfordshire indicates that London became strategically important to the West-Saxon monarchy only as a consequence of the Danish attacks, one sees by contrast that after the Danish conquest Esgar the Staller was given large and unusually compact estates in Essex and Middlesex.³ They have the appearance of a military fief created to defend the northern approaches to London. What seems to be the Confessor's foolishness or helplessness in permitting Godwin's family to acquire in his reign more land and revenues than the king himself⁴ is more explicable if one considers that before 1051 he may have feared most of all the Danish forces in and near London and accordingly increased Godwin's power in order to counterbalance the Danes. The significance of the re-arrangement of the earldoms after Godwin's restoration in 1052 is that they seem to reflect a deliberate policy of ringing London by the military power of Harold and his brothers.

Harold himself held the earldom of Wessex after his father's death in 1053. In 1057 his brother Gyrrh acquired the earldom of East Anglia, and, curiously, Oxfordshire was added to it, no doubt because it commanded the Thames Valley. But more significantly a new earldom was created for Harold's youngest brother, Leofwine, from the shires of Essex, Hertford, Middlesex, Buckingham, Kent and Surrey. Every shire bordering on London and commanding the eastern and southern coasts was therefore under the control of Harold and his brothers.⁵ This concentration of Harold's forces round London repeats the pattern of his father's pincer-attack on Edward's forces in the city in 1052, in which he won to his side the men of Essex, Kent and Surrey before moving from Sandwich on to Southwark.⁶ London therefore became the centre of Harold's power in the struggle for the succession, and it is noticeable that whereas before the re-arrangement of the earldoms the king had addressed his stallers, Esgar and Osgod Clapa, as the chief authorities over London and Middlesex, afterwards Earl Harold and Earl Leofwine were given precedence over the stallers.⁷ The

1. Ann Williams, 'Land and Power in the Eleventh Century: The Estates of Harold Godwinson', *Proceedings of the Battle Conference*, iii (London, 1980), 171–87.

2. Robin Fleming, 'Domesday Estates of the King and the Godwines: A Study in Late Saxon Politics', *Speculum*, lviii (1983), 995–1006.

3. J. H. Round in *Victoria County History, Essex*, i (1903), 343, wrote of Ansgar's lands, 'It is exceptional in Domesday to find the manors of a tenant-in-chief so compactly grouped as this'.

4. Fleming, 'Domesday Estates', 991–3, 1007.

5. F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (3rd edition, Oxford, 1971), p. 574.

6. ASC, D, s.a. 1052.

7. *Anglo-Saxon Writs*, Nos 75, 77, 91, 98.

remaining Danish forces in London were therefore placed firmly under Harold's control, and consequently the city continued to be at the centre of the kingdom's affairs. Nine meetings of the witan have been recorded there between 1044 and 1066.¹ At one of them Harold's rival, Earl Ælfgar, was exiled for no obvious reason.² It was also in London that the most serious contender for the English throne, Prince Edward, the son of Edmund Ironside, was prevented in 1057 from seeing the king, and he died there in mysterious circumstances.³ Harold also chose to be crowned at Westminster, which henceforth was accepted as the proper place for the coronation of English kings. Winchester in fact slipped in importance and became the residence of widowed queens – first of Emma, and then of the Confessor's wife, Edith, both of whom received it in dower.⁴ It was surely the proximity of Winchester to Southampton, and therefore its convenient position for collecting and exporting English taxes to Normandy, which determined the Norman conqueror to build there a new cathedral and palace.⁵ In this way the Normans temporarily slowed down the effect which the Danish conquest had had on the development of London as the chief centre of royal power.

However, besides the military and political considerations which governed the attitudes of both the Danish and the Norman conquerors to London, the evolution of the city into a capital was also decided by its commercial pre-eminence. It was London's wealth as much as its strategic importance which led the Danes to focus their attacks on the south-east and to invest so much effort into their assaults on the city.⁶ Sandwich, which is conspicuous in the naval campaigns, was also an outpost for London, since it was linked by the Wantsum Channel with the Thames and by Watling Street with Canterbury and Southwark.⁷ When Sandwich was attacked in 1048, the raiders found there 'indescribable booty, both in captives and in gold and silver',⁸ which is an indication of its economic links with London. One must therefore turn to consider the effects of the Danish conquest on London's trade to see whether it stimulated or retarded the city's economic growth.

In Bede's day London's easy communications by sea with the Rhine-

1. Loyn, *Governance*, p. 92.

2. ASC, C, s.a. 1055.

3. *Ibid.*, D & E, s.a. 1057.

4. *Winchester in the Middle Ages*, p. 289, n. 4.

5. C. W. Hollister, 'The Origins of the English Treasury', *ante*, xciii (1978), 265; Metcalf, 'Continuity and Change', pt. 1, 32, shows a rise in the output of the mints of the Hampshire basin from c. 8 per cent between 1017 and 1051 to c. 20 per cent at about 1086.

6. The Danes attacked London in 994, several times in 1009, in 1013, and in 1016 when they dug a great channel on the south bank so that they could drag their ships to the west side of the bridge.

7. D. Hill, *An Atlas of Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1981), p. 14.

8. ASC, E, s.a. 1048 (entered under the year 1046). Sandwich is prominent in naval campaigns in 991, 1006, 1009, 1014 and 1015.

land, the main artery of trade to central and southern Europe, made it 'the mart of all nations'.¹ From the eighth century both numismatic and written evidence point to the importance of Anglo-Saxon trade with Italy by way of the Rhineland, and also to the significant stocks of gold in the country, which could only have come to England from the Mediterranean. There is no evidence that the Vikings were active in this trade between England and the Rhineland, and Anglo-Saxon charters show that payments in gold occur only in that part of the country which is south of a line drawn from the Wash to the Severn – outside the area of greatest Scandinavian settlement.² The finds of gold objects confirm this pattern,³ and it is clear that up to the eleventh century English monetary circulation focused on the Thames Valley and from there thinned out to the West Country and the West Midlands.⁴ Paradoxically, the 'mark of the Husting', which has been quoted as evidence for the importance of Scandinavian trade with London, shows that Cnut adopted weight-standards related to the gold of the Mediterranean which he then imposed on his Scandinavian possessions.⁵

What evidence there is suggests that rather than contributing to the expansion of London's overseas trade the Danish conquest instead retarded its growth. There can be little doubt that the exactions of the Danegeld and the hergeld must have drained London of much of its mercantile capital. Cnut's punitive tribute of 1018 was in monetary value the largest tax ever raised in medieval England, but it was also equalled in weight of silver by the previous levy of £48,000 in 1012.⁶ In 1018 London paid £10,500, compared with £72,500 from the rest of the kingdom, and it is likely that it bore a similar share of the previous levies as well as paying a separate tribute in 1013. How severe this taxation was can be judged from the fact that the farm of London in the twelfth century was less than £700 and additional *dona* were not more than £1,000.⁷ The fourteenth-century taxes on moveables, which were meant to tap mercantile wealth, raised less than £1,000 from a London population approximately four times larger than the

1. Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and trans. B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (*Oxford Medieval Texts*, 1969), p. 142.

2. Pamela Nightingale, 'The Ora, the Mark and the Mancus', ii. 237–8, 243.

3. D. A. Hinton, 'Late Saxon Treasure and Bullion', in *Ethelred the Unready: Papers from the Millenary Conference*, ed. D. Hill (*British Archaeological Reports, British Series*, lix (Oxford, 1978), 138.

4. D. M. Metcalf, 'Monetary Circulation in England in the First Half of the Eighth Century', in *Sceattas in England and on the Continent*, ed. D. Hill and D. M. Metcalf (*British Archaeological Reports, British Series*, cxxviii (Oxford, 1984), 27.

5. Pamela Nightingale, 'The Ora, the Mark and the Mancus', ii. 242–3.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 242; see also, Lawson, 'The Collection of Danegeld', p. 736, n. 2, about the contemporary record of the 1018 levy.

7. Susan Reynolds, 'The Farm and Taxation of London, 1154–1216', *Guildhall Studies in London History*, i (London, 1975), 211–27.

10,000–12,000 which inhabited the city in Cnut's reign.¹ Moreover the tribute of 1018 was not the last of the Scandinavian levies. Hardacnut began his reign with another huge tax of £32,000,² and one may presume that London's share was also considerable. Whereas before 1018 it appears that the kingdom could go on paying the Danegeld from its accumulated treasure and probably also from replenishment of the supply of silver by overseas trade, the estimates of mint production indicate that after Cnut's accession the supply of new silver progressively diminished, and with it the size of the currency. Not until the 1050s is there evidence of any reversal of this trend.³ The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle tells us that Hardacnut's tax of 1040, which was less than half that of 1018, was nonetheless borne with difficulty and alienated even those who had been the new king's most zealous supporters. It was collected by the housecarls, and when the citizens of Worcester rioted in protest two of the housecarls were killed – a desperate act which indicates the lengths to which people were driven.⁴ The fact that there is no record of such a protest in London is probably but another indication of the effectiveness of Danish military control.

One cannot therefore escape the conclusion that the period of Danish rule was one of increasing shortage of money, and that one of the reasons for this may have been a deepening trade depression caused by the crippling depletion of English mercantile capital through the tribute and taxation levied by the Danes. Before 1017 much of the silver was exported to Scandinavia, while the great gelds of 1018 and 1041 were used to pay off many of the ships' crews which manned Cnut's and Hardacnut's invading fleets.⁵ Some of the hergeld in Cnut's reign must also have been spent on his military expeditions to Scandinavia and in maintaining his authority there, although in more peaceful times some of it would undoubtedly have been spent in London. There is no evidence that much, if any, of the silver exported to Scandinavia came back to England through an increased trade with Cnut's northern empire. It is true that despite the general reduction in output the English coinage of this period shows a marked increase in the production of the east-coast mints at the expense of the south.⁶ But if this could be explained by an increase in trade with Scandinavia, one would expect

1. E. Ekwall, *Two Early London Subsidy Rolls* (London, 1951), pp. 119, 126; M. Curtis, 'The London Lay Subsidy of 1332', in *Finance and Trade under Edward III*, ed. G. Unwin (Manchester, 1918), pp. 40, 42. In 1346 only about 400 men were assessed in the City as possessors of goods and chattels worth £10 or more: *Calendar of Letter-Books of the City of London, Letter-Book F*, ed. R. R. Sharpe (London, 1904), pp. 144–9.

2. ASC, E, s.a. 1040.

3. Metcalf, 'Continuity and Change', pt. ii. 56, 63.

4. ASC, C, s.a. 1040.

5. D. M. Wilson, 'Danish Kings and England in the Late Tenth and Early Eleventh Centuries – Economic Implications', *Proceedings of the Battle Conference*, iii (London, 1980), 195. For the view that England's trade with Scandinavia increased in this period see, A. R. Lewis, *The Northern Seas* (Princeton, 1958), pp. 427–9.

6. Metcalf, 'Continuity and Change', pt. i. 32.

to find in England a good many 'pecked' coins, that is, those which had been nicked in accordance with the Scandinavian practice of testing the silver content of a coin. The fact that scarcely any have been found implies that the increased output of the east-coast mints was not the result of Scandinavian trade.¹

Instead there is the possibility that it reflects purchases of wool from this region by Flemish merchants. It may be significant that it was in Cnut's reign that Flanders adopted the Anglo-Scandinavian mark as the weight-standard for its coinage.² Whereas there is little evidence of Flemish trade with Scandinavia in this period, it is clear from the London tolls of Æthelred II's reign that Flemings were trading with London, and that Londoners were dealing in wool.³ After Cnut's death Bruges, which was described in 1037 as frequented by numerous merchants, gave shelter to many important exiles of the Danish party from England, who, like Hardacnut, Osgot Clapa and Godwin, found there plenty of ships which they used to invade the kingdom.⁴ It is likely, therefore, that the Flemings already had a considerable mercantile fleet, and that their adoption of the mark indicates the extent of their involvement in English trade. It is true that the Flemings had flocks of their own, but their wool could not compare in fineness with that of eastern England, and such Domesday statistics as we have show that in Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Essex alone there were more than 151,000 sheep.⁵

The appearance in the Danelaw of the first recorded English fairs later in the eleventh century, and of the new ports of Boston and Lynn,⁶ seems to reflect a shift away from London as the centre of overseas trade. It may also be significant that at Norwich, Nottingham and Northampton, and at Pontefract and Richmond in Yorkshire new 'French burgs' appear.⁷ However, research into the origins of Lynn suggests that these are more likely to reflect Norman exploitation of existing commercial growth than pioneering attempts to develop it.⁸ One has to wait for the Pipe Rolls of the 1170s for documentary confir-

1. *Ibid.*, pt. ii. 58.

2. Pamela Nightingale, 'The Evolution of Weight Standards and the Creation of New Monetary and Commercial Links in Northern Europe from the Tenth Century to the Twelfth Century', *Economic History Review*, 2nd Ser. xxxviii (1985), 199.

3. *Laws of the Kings of England*, p. 73.

4. R. Doehaerd, *L'Expansion Economique Belge au Moyen Age* (Brussels, 1946), pp. 29-30: in 1066 Count Baudouin provided sixty vessels for Tostig, and twenty years later 600 ships were provided by Robert Le Frison for the Danish king.

5. H. C. Darby, *Domesday England* (Cambridge, 1977), p. 164. If the Flemings had been exporting wheat from eastern England, this would argue for the growth of their industrial labour force as a consequence of their developing cloth industry.

6. Susan Reynolds, *English Medieval Towns*, p. 42; Dorothy Owen, 'Bishop's Lynn - The First Century of a New Town?', *Proceedings of the Battle Conference*, ii (London, 1979), ed. R. Allen Brown, 141-53.

7. T. Rowley, *The Norman Heritage, 1055-1200* (London, 1983), p. 97; Susan Reynolds, *English Medieval Towns*, p. 43.

8. Dorothy Owen, 'Bishop's Lynn', p. 153.

mation of Flemish trade with this area, but it is then clear from its extent that it could not have been of recent origin. In Yorkshire the Flemings were such valued customers that several Englishmen were fined heavily there for protecting them and their goods from arrest and confiscation during one of the Anglo-Flemish disputes.¹

One can only speculate about the possible connection between this evidence and the pattern of minting under the Danish kings, but one hypothesis to explain the early hold which foreign merchants established over the wool trade is that the opportunity to export wool in any quantity was first given to them by the dislocation of the native cloth industry as a result of the Danish invasions. Cloth-making was largely an occupation of the towns, and those of eastern England in particular were hard hit by the Danish invasions. Norwich, Thetford, Cambridge and Northampton were sacked and burnt, and the whole area from the Humber to Wiltshire was many times harried and looted by the Danes. The making and export of cloth on any large scale required capital investment by the native mercantile class, and the successive levies of tribute inevitably deprived them of the means to invest.² With less demand for cloth and reduced competition from English merchants the price of wool must have fallen, and would therefore have been even more attractive to foreign merchants who, like the Flemings, could buy it with German silver and had the shipping to carry it. Since the east-coast ports were closest to Flanders, they, rather than London, would be used by Flemish merchants to the detriment of London's mercantile community.

It is therefore likely that the Danish invasions and the subsequent tribute and taxation played a part in the failure of English merchants and manufacturers up to the fourteenth century to prevent their country from becoming primarily an exporter of raw materials in foreign ships. The Danish conquest set the pattern for that of the Normans in its destructiveness and economic exploitation. Far from Scandinavian rule bringing prosperity to English merchants, such evidence as there is suggests the reverse. And this seems to have been the view of contemporary Englishmen. In a passage on the death of Edward the Confessor the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle contrasts his rule with the twenty-eight years in which England was controlled by the Danes. What the chronicler says about that period, translated literally as it is in Dorothy Whitelock's version, is that the Danes distributed riches, but there can be little doubt from the context that he meant that they distributed

1. *Pipe Rolls, 19-22 Henry II* (Pipe-Roll Society, xix, xxi, xxii, xxv), *passim*.

2. The English exported woollen cloaks in the reign of Offa, and the Pavian customs regulations show that they were privileged traders there at the beginning of the eleventh century. Since the same document refers to the imports of woollen and linen cloth from northern Europe, it is likely that some of these were of English manufacture: A. Solmi, *L'Amministrazione finanziaria del Regno italico nel' alto medio evo* (Pavia, 1932), pp. 20-7. See also, H. R. Loyn, *Anglo-Saxon England and the Norman Conquest* (London, 1962), p. 86.

the spoils among themselves and that Garmonsway's version comes near the Chronicle's meaning when he says that they squandered the wealth of the country.¹ There is also little evidence that the invaders had become fully integrated with the English before the Norman Conquest. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle distinguishes between the English and Danish supporters of Hardacnut in 1040,² and as late as 1054 and 1065 it refers to the followers of Earl Siward and Earl Tostig as both English and Danes.³ Worcester leases of the 1040s and 1050s similarly distinguish between English and Danish thegns.⁴ In London the Confessor's charter to the Cnihtengild stresses that it was a guild of English knights, and his promise to extend their privileges may reflect his distrust of Osgot Clapa and the Danish housecarls.⁵ It seems that it was a kingdom still divided and still suspicious of the surviving Danish elements within it, as well as fearful of new invasions from Scandinavia, which fell victim to the Normans.

In summary, it seems that since there is no evidence that the Danish name, 'husting', was adopted for London's governing assembly before Cnut's occupation of the city, Danish influence on its development appears in a more sombre light. There is nothing to suggest that the Danes contributed significantly to the economic growth of London or that the kingdom's incorporation into Cnut's northern empire gave a new and more prosperous direction to its trade. On the contrary, the evidence implies that, as in the period of the Danegeld, England's wealth was directed from commercial growth to the maintenance of a foreign military force, with deleterious long-term effects on the English merchant class and its overseas trade. For by the tenth century England already had economic and cultural ties with the Rhineland and with Italy, and did not need either its Danish or its Norman conquerors to draw it into close relations with the Continent or into the new currents of economic growth.⁶ Rather, it was because England was the pivot of monetary and commercial development in northern Europe at the beginning of the eleventh century that it invited invasion and exploitation. Given the wealth and strategic importance of London, it was inevitable that it should play a major part in the Danish campaigns. Before 1016 the city's heroic defiance of the Danes had won for it both the military and the moral leadership of the kingdom, from

1. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, trans. G. N. Garmonsway (London, 1953), pp. 194-5; ASC, D, s.a. 1065: 'Deona weoldon deore rice/Engla landes 'xxviii/wintra gerimes' weolan brytnodon' (*Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, i, 195).

2. *Ibid.*, E, s.a. 1040.

3. *Ibid.*, C, s.a. 1054, and E, s.a. 1065.

4. Robertson, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, nos. 94, 111, 112.

5. Anglo-Saxon Writs, pp. 234-5.

6. Even where there is the strongest case for Viking influence on the development of towns such as York and Lincoln, objects recovered in excavations show that these towns relied on trade with the rest of England and with the Rhineland as much as with Scandinavia: Richard Hall, 'The Vikings as Town-Dwellers', *History Today*, xxxvi (November 1986), 32-3.

which developed its claim to elect the king. The particular contribution which the Danish kings made to London's status in the kingdom arose from the fact that their rule was founded on conquest and was upheld by armed force. Free from the historic and cultural ties which bound the Anglo-Saxon kings to Winchester, Cnut was in no doubt that London's wealth and strategic position made it the best headquarters for his permanent naval and military forces. The need to pay these mercenaries made the city the centre of a monetary and tax system which introduced new elements of centralization into the government of the kingdom. By the time that they were dismissed in 1051 and the *hergeld* abolished, London had become England's political centre as well as its richest and largest city.

Despite the yoking of England to Normandy, which temporarily revived the importance of Winchester, the Normans showed by their insistence on being crowned in London and in the care they took to control the city with castles and armed garrisons, that the effects of the Danish conquest on its standing could not be reversed, and that henceforth anyone who would be the effective ruler of England had first to hold and control London.

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