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REVISITING THE ENGLISH STATE, AD c. 700–1100

*Abstract:* This paper reviews some differing views about the character and development of the English state between AD 700 and 1100 and concentrates on those aspects where archaeology has made most impact: the preconditions for state development; the military impetus and crucially the control and nature of the economy.

Preconditions for state development include social differentiation and political centralisation which is based on the intensification of landuse and the ideological underpinnings of Christianity. The spatial expression of this process is often multi-focal rather than based on a single central place: this latter pattern was not achieved until after the Norman Conquest.

Territorial expansion and stabilisation of borders were predicated on effective military organisation and warfare. The series of measures taken to counter the Scandinavian conquests stimulated both an effective defensive system and a collective English identity, itself an important component of a state.

The relationship between state and economic development is a major area of debate and has centred on the level at which the state engaged with the economy, for example, either through the exercise of various forms of taxation or intervention in the practice of local agrarian economies. Similar concerns are expressed over the development of towns, such as the character and control of the emporia; and the speed at which the later towns grew and the extent and effectiveness of state control over trade, towns and the coinage. Further work is needed to understand the scale and social specificity of the production process which underpinned the better-studied trade.

Lastly, how does this archaeological research relate to the current historical views about the state; for example, the reconsideration of the extent and efficacy of the Anglo-Saxon state and its relationship to the exercise of lordship in the localities.

*Keywords:* state, government, lordship, military action, economy, towns, coinage

The English state is commonly portrayed as having an exceptional character, particularly with regard to its precocity and effectiveness in comparison to similar institutions in other parts of Europe. However, there are alternative views and the purpose of this paper is to examine

some aspects of the debate about the development and character of the English state, concentrating on those where archaeology has had most impact. Three themes are reviewed: the preconditions for state development; the military impetus; most consideration is given to the control and character of the economy. Finally, we consider how these themes are related to current historical research on Anglo-Saxon government.

### **Preconditions for state development**

We should perhaps start by offering a definition of the English state: it is often discussed, but rarely defined. And those definitions are frequently in terms of a nation state: “It was an entity with an effective central authority, uniformly organised institutions, a national language, a national church, defined frontiers... and, above all, a strong sense of national identity”<sup>1</sup>. Any definition is conditioned by the evidence that survives and this certainly applies in this case. Discussions and analyses of the narrative histories (for example the “Anglo-Saxon Chronicle”), the laws and the charters have, since at least the nineteenth century, provided the foundation for outlining the political development of England<sup>2</sup>. The relevance of the archaeological material was realized relatively late, in the later twentieth century, and even then the archaeology was empirically- rather than theoretically-informed. The contemporary anthropological discussions about the development of complex societies were ignored. The quality and range of the documentary material may have made any theoretical approaches redundant, whereas some European pre- and protohistoric archaeologists embraced theory in order better to understand the processes behind their data (although there were concerns about a uni-lineal approach to cultural development<sup>3</sup>).

More recently attempts to apply Early State Module theory have been made to help interpret the archaeological data. This approach stresses that political complexity is often predicated on social change

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<sup>1</sup> *Campbell J.* The Anglo-Saxon State. London, 2000. P. 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Stafford P.* Historiography. A Companion to the Early Middle Ages / Ed. P. Stafford. Chichester, 2009. P. 9–21.

<sup>3</sup> The Origins of the State / Ed. R. Cohen, and E. Service. Philadelphia, 1978; *Johnson A. and Earle T.* The Evolution of Human Societies. Stanford, CA, 1987; and see comments in *Brooks N.* The Creation and Early Structure of the Kingdom of Kent // The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms / Ed. S. Bassett. Leicester, 1989. P. 55.

and in particular the maintenance and reproduction of rank and status which fuelled peer competition and exclusion. So, for example, the English state is sometimes seen as the outcome of competition, aggression, war and territorial expansion between kingdoms whereby one (Wessex) eventually achieved major control<sup>4</sup>.

The archaeological evidence from the later sixth century onwards indicates a new and greater degree of social differentiation and political centralisation as reflected in rich “princely” burials (Prittlewell, Sutton Hoo and later at Hamwic and Ipswich), an increasing settlement hierarchy which included places with special purposes such as palaces (Yeavinger), monasteries (Jarrow, Hartlepool) and emporia (or trading stations — Hamwic, Ipswich, Londenwic). These developments also indicate the importance of land as a relatively new major source of wealth, the exploitation of which generated surplus sufficient to produce a more permanently ranked and increasingly competitive and centralised society<sup>5</sup>. It is also important to emphasise that the elite comprised both secular and religious members and that the ideology and symbolism of Christianity was an important strand in the development and legitimisation of centralised institutions<sup>6</sup>.

While the social aspects of such processual theories are potentially helpful, they nevertheless rely on a spatial analysis with which to identify polities that is invariably based on a central place. However, the early medieval archaeological evidence instead shows that socio-political change was not achieved with a single centre but instead in a more diffuse way, with a collection of places spread across the landscape, each performing one central function<sup>7</sup>. So far it has been suggested that religious, military and secular, and economic centres existed at different locations, and this has been proposed, for example for the early seventh century in Suffolk (Snape/Butley, Rendlesham,

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<sup>4</sup> *Scull C.* Social archaeology and Anglo-Saxon kingdom origins // *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*. 1999. Vol. 10. P. 17–24; *Bassett S.* Introduction. In *Search of the Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* / Ed. S. Bassett. Leicester, 1989. P. 23–27.

<sup>5</sup> *Scull C.* Social archaeology and Anglo-Saxon kingdom origins; *Carver M.* Overview: Signals of Power // *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology* / Ed. H. Hamerow, D. Hinton and S. Crawford. Oxford, 2011. P. 846.

<sup>6</sup> *Campbell J.* The Anglo-Saxon State. P. xxii–xiii; *Yorke B.* Kings and Kingship // *A Companion to the Early Middle Ages* / Ed. P. Stafford. Chichester, 2009. P. 84–87.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Scandinavia: *Andersson H.* Urbanisation // *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia*. Vol. 1 / Ed. K. Helle. Cambridge, 2003. P. 312–316.

Ipswich<sup>8</sup>) and c. 900 in Wessex (Ramsbury, Chisbury, Great Bedwyn in Wiltshire, or in Somerset, Somerton and Langport, or Cheddar and Axbridge<sup>9</sup>) The network of such places was subject to change, perhaps as a result of military, territorial or economic considerations: in the early eleventh century, for example, several mints and moneyers were relocated and strongholds recommissioned<sup>10</sup>. The diffuse nature of the loci of power was gradually reduced between the ninth and eleventh centuries but was not finally achieved until after the Norman Conquest, when centres of religious power, the *sedes*, were transferred to, and castles were imposed on, the economic and administrative centres of county and regional towns<sup>11</sup>.

While evidence of burial customs and settlements can support the development of English political institutions, archaeology has also made an impact on the study of governance at a local level. A study of “execution” cemeteries has shown that they can be dated from the seventh to twelfth centuries. Their location was often on the boundaries of local units of administration, the hundreds (subdivisions of the shire) and it has been argued that this correlation could indicate a relatively early “recognition of territorial limits” and a similar date for this form of local government. It should be noted, however, that the extent of hundredal boundaries is reconstructed from “Domesday Book” (1086) and that hundreds are first documented in the tenth century. It has also been reckoned from the dated burials that cemeteries could have been used for 500 years. However, execution burials may have occurred every 10–20 years, so these sites could not have been a regular or frequent element in local administration<sup>12</sup>.

Judicial cases and disputes were heard at meetings of hundredal courts and these “assembly sites”, where local communities came together, have been located by topographic and documentary fieldwork. It is, however, often difficult to date these features in the

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<sup>8</sup> *Scull C.* Archaeology, early Anglo-Saxon society and the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms // *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*. 1993. Vol. 6. P. 67–70.

<sup>9</sup> *Astill G.* Community, Identity and the Later Anglo-Saxon Town // *People and Space in the Middle Ages* / Ed. W. Davies, G. Halsall and A. Reynolds. Turnhout, 2006. P. 242; *Idem.* General Survey 600–1100 // *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*. Vol. 1 / Ed. D. Palliser. Cambridge, 2000. P. 42.

<sup>10</sup> *Astill G.* General Survey. P. 41–42.

<sup>11</sup> *Campbell J.* The Church in Anglo-Saxon Towns // *The Church in Town and Countryside* / Ed. D. Baker. Oxford. 1979. P. 132–133; *Astill G.* General Survey. P. 42–44.

<sup>12</sup> *Reynolds A.* Anglo-Saxon Deviant Burial Customs. Oxford, 2009; *Idem.* Crime and Punishment // *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology*. P. 901, 910.

landscape<sup>13</sup>. These cemeteries and assembly sites shed archaeological light on government because it has been long recognised that the formalisation of justice was an important element in the development of kingship, concerned as it was with dispute settlement and the limitation of feud<sup>14</sup>.

### **The military impetus**

Territorial expansion and consolidation of boundaries, precursors of state development, were achieved through military organisation and warfare. The obligations of military service, bridge-work and fortress-work were conditions attached to royal grants of land from the eighth century and became common a century later<sup>15</sup>. The defence of the country was founded on these “common burdens” from the later ninth to the eleventh centuries and mark an important stage in state formation. The common burdens were probably used to achieve major expressions of royal power such as Offa’s Dyke, but also important improvements in the communication infrastructure such as the causeways and river crossings from the eighth century, so necessary for the effective movement of forces<sup>16</sup>. The fortress-building obligation was probably enforced to help create the resistance to the Viking attacks and colonisation. While this may be first seen in Mercia, it is most obvious in Alfred’s defence of Wessex<sup>17</sup>.

A central element in the revision of the military forces was the burh<sup>18</sup>, designed both to garrison forces and offer shelter to the surrounding population: a “planned scheme of national defence”

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<sup>13</sup> Assembly Places and Practices in Medieval Europe / Ed. A. Pantos and S. Semple. Dublin, 2004; Political Assemblies in the Earlier Middle Ages / Ed. I. Barnwell and M. Mostert. Turnhout, 2003.

<sup>14</sup> Hyams P. Rancor and Reconciliation in Medieval England. Ithaca, NY, 2003.

<sup>15</sup> Brooks N. The Development of Military Obligations in Eighth- and Ninth-Century England // England Before the Conquest / Ed. P. Clemons and K. Hughes. Cambridge, 1971. P. 128–150.

<sup>16</sup> E. g. Blair J. Introduction // Waterways and Canal-building in Medieval England / Ed. J. Blair. Oxford, 2007. P. 1–20.

<sup>17</sup> Biddle M. Towns // The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England / Ed. D. Wilson. London, 1976. P. 120–134; Haslam J. Market and Fortress in England in the Reign of Offa // World Archaeology. 1987. Vol. 19. P. 76–93.

<sup>18</sup> Recorded in the Burghal Hidage, c. 914–918 (The Defence of Wessex: the Burghal Hidage and Anglo-Saxon Fortifications / Ed. D. Hill and A. Rumble. Manchester, 1996).

where nowhere was further than 30 km from a burh<sup>19</sup>. Most of the burhs have been identified, although few have been excavated extensively and dating remains problematic<sup>20</sup>. The sites selected as burhs included walled Roman towns and existing small-scale central places. Some were regularly planned on open ground; others had their streets laid to accommodate the topography, usually on promontories<sup>21</sup>. A high proportion of the burhs were founded on royal land (and communications nodes), which may have initially facilitated the victualling of the garrisons by earmarking food rents<sup>22</sup>.

This strategy was so successful that it was again deployed in Edward the Elder's extension of Wessex territory into the midlands and into the Danelaw. The eleventh-century Viking resurgence was again met with further construction of fortresses<sup>23</sup>. The extent to which these military sites were integrated into the existing socio-economic structure is unclear and so has fuelled the discussion about the urban status of the burhs (below). In some senses the speed of military success fast rendered the burhs redundant, and this may explain why the evidence for forts between the ninth and eleventh centuries is dynamic and not fixed: forts represent a pragmatic response to the military needs of a particular situation and were not part of a fixed network<sup>24</sup>.

It is also argued that a common enemy not only generated an effective military response, it also succeeded in fostering an English (and collective Christian) identity under Alfred which weakened dynastic loyalties and facilitated the expansion and consolidation of a greater Wessex<sup>25</sup>. Another analysis of the development of English

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<sup>19</sup> *Biddle M.* Towns // The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England / Ed. D. Wilson. London, 1976. P. 124; The Defence of Wessex; *Baker J. and Brookes S.* Beyond the Burghal Hidage. Anglo-Saxon Civil Defence in the Viking Age. Leiden, 2013.

<sup>20</sup> *Hinton D.* The Large Towns // The Cambridge Urban History of Britain. Vol. 1 / Ed. D. Palliser. Cambridge, 2000. P. 222–225.

<sup>21</sup> *Biddle M.* Towns // The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England / Ed. D. Wilson. London, 1976. P. 124–137)

<sup>22</sup> *Astill G.* Community, Identity and the Later Anglo-Saxon Town. 242–243)

<sup>23</sup> But see *Baker J. and Brookes S.* Beyond the Burghal Hidage for the argument that these campaigns represent different military strategies.

<sup>24</sup> *Astill G.* Community, Identity and the Later Anglo-Saxon Town. P. 234–237; *Idem.* Medieval Towns and Urbanization // Reflections: 50 Years of Medieval Archaeology, 1957–2007 / Ed. R. Gilchrist and A. Reynolds. Leeds, 2009. P. 263–264.

<sup>25</sup> *Smyth A.* The Emergence of English Identity // Medieval Europeans. Studies in Ethnic Identity and National Perspectives in Medieval Europe / Ed. A. Smyth. Basingstoke, 1998. P. 24–52.

identity confirms the importance of Alfred, but roots it more in his use of a common descent, mythology and language and literary tradition to create a “national identity”<sup>26</sup>. The effect was still to create an important element in the composition of the state.

### **The state and the economy**

The third major theme considers the extent to which the economy was a key feature in the genesis of the state. Most commentaries assume that economic growth was fundamental for political development: “There was an intimate, and two way, relationship between economic development and the exercise of political authority”; “an effective state and a developing economy was mutually supportive”: the essential elements identified for the relationship were the maintenance of peace, the importance of an abundant coinage of a uniform quality that had circulated over a wide area; and the upkeep of the infrastructure of roads and bridges, the latter providing the closest link between the exercise of public power and economic development<sup>27</sup>.

The relationship between economic and political development, however, is a much debated topic, especially if we take a north European perspective. For example, some of the state attributes mentioned above and the extensive evidence for economic growth in terms of agricultural intensification and urban growth were clearly evident in the later tenth and eleventh centuries, yet they occurred in very different circumstances in different areas. In England these are often related to the presence of a strong state, but the same economic indicators existed in northern Francia at a time which was experiencing political fragmentation<sup>28</sup>. In England there is a further difference of view between those who see the role of the king as being fundamental in the management and stimulation of the economy and those who think that, in a time of general economic growth, the state’s role was limited to the provision of legal protection so as to profit from exchange activities through taxation<sup>29</sup>.

To a certain extent these differences could be reconciled if it can be decided at what level the state usually engaged with the economy.

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<sup>26</sup> *Foot S.* The Making of *Angelcynn*: English Identity before the Norman Conquest // Transactions of the Royal Historical Society. 1996. Vol. 6. P. 25–49.

<sup>27</sup> *Campbell J.* The Anglo-Saxon State. P. 17.

<sup>28</sup> *Astill G.* Community, Identity and the Later Anglo-Saxon Town. P. 234–235.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem.* P. 234–235.

This may be reflected in the distinction made between intensive and extensive lordship. Intensive lordship concerned the agrarian process whereby land was managed and made productive — the land that was cultivated either through paid labour, slaves or tenants. Extensive lordship — “the power to command services and goods from the population of an area” — was reinforced by the collection of tribute, often in form of food rents. It also characterised the relationship between kings and important subjects and underpinned the exercise of royal power. By its nature, extensive lordship is an element of a political economy and so does not have to be related directly to the production process whether in the countryside or in towns<sup>30</sup>.

However, it is important to consider the level at which the state interacted with the localities and the economic implications. The lowest administrative unit at which government operated is usually regarded as the hundred, as has been shown with the execution cemeteries and the assembly sites. But it is sometimes argued that the state penetrated to village level, and the evidence used for this is frankpledge, the system by which the whole adult male population was bound to keep the peace and this was achieved by grouping men into accountable units of ten. However, it is not clear how much of this regulatory system actually existed before the Norman Conquest<sup>31</sup>.

If frankpledge were found to be an element of Anglo-Saxon governance, do we need to consider a similar intervention of the centre into the local agrarian economy? Did the state exploit intensive lordship to become directly involved in the farming process? Or indeed would such an intervention have been tolerated by the local landholding aristocracy (below)?

The results of two fieldwork projects have been explained in terms of the intervention of a central authority. In the Bourn valley in Cambridgeshire a large field system has been reconstructed that extended over at least four (later) parishes and is proposed as eighth-century. In a search for the most likely context for this massive change, neither demographic change nor lordship were regarded as convincing explanations. The scale of the replanning implied the exercise of a higher authority and it represented a burgeoning, royal (Mercian), authority. The Bourn fields were part and parcel of a centrally directed attempt to control the rural economy, and

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<sup>30</sup> *Faith R.* *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship.* Leicester, 1997. P. 10, 8–48.

<sup>31</sup> *Campbell J.* *The Anglo-Saxon State.* P. xxvi.

in this case to increase cereal production by achieving a switch from a pastoral to an arable economy<sup>32</sup>.

The second case concerns the extensive excavations and fieldwork which illustrate the nucleation of settlements and their associated field systems in Raunds parish, Northamptonshire. The late ninth-century phase of settlement at Raunds — the Anglo-Scandinavian farm — is seen as an instrument of the Danish takeover of the locality. And then fifty years later, a regularly planned village attached to a high-status farm was created and is similarly interpreted in political terms. The scale and regularity of the arrangement is taken to indicate the exercise of a central authority and it is proposed the most probable context is the consolidation of territory and the shiring of the east midlands which accompanied the reconquest of the Danelaw by Edward the Elder in the first two decades of the tenth century<sup>33</sup>. The nucleated phase of the neighbouring settlement of West Cotton is interpreted in the same, political, way<sup>34</sup>.

While these interpretations might be problematic, in terms of our immediate concerns they involve the intervention of the state at an unprecedentedly low level compared to how such activity has been recently constructed. Political involvement at the level of villages and fields could potentially have overridden and discounted the efficacy of local community action.

In these two cases it is argued that in order to achieve the political goals of sustaining a state, it was necessary to control the agrarian economy. Leaving aside the problems of an essentially formalist interpretation of the economy, it also deprived the locality, including the state's agents — the local leaders — any opportunity for the exercise of self interest and seems to strike at the rationale that has been proposed elsewhere for the effectiveness of early medieval government, namely the importance of cooperation based on mutual interest between the centre and the locality. And, as with all exogenous explanations for change in medieval rural

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<sup>32</sup> *Oosthuisen S.* The Anglo-Saxon Kingdom of Mercia and the Origins and Distribution of Common Fields // *Agricultural History Review*. 2007. Vol. 55. P. 153–180; and see comments in *Bailey M.* Beyond the Midland Field System: the Determinants of Common Rights over the Arable in Medieval England // *Agricultural History Review*. 2010. Vol. 58. P. 153–171.

<sup>33</sup> *Audouy M. and Chapman A.* Raunds: the Origin and Growth of a Midland Village, AD 450–1500. Oxford, 2009. P. 30–36; 51–52.

<sup>34</sup> *Chapman A.* West Cotton, Raunds: a Study of medieval Settlement Dynamics, AD 450–1500. Oxford, 2010. P. 30.

society, one has to ask why this particular tactic for state control was exercised in such a chronologically and geographically limited way.

A similar debate concerns the character and development of towns and their role in the growth of Anglo-Saxon government. The post-Roman revival of towns mainly took the form of a Christian colonisation of former Roman cities as they became bishops' seats and centres of dioceses; and although many existed in the countryside, some secular palaces were also based in these former towns. These much-shrunken settlements should be seen as foci for high-status consumption, perhaps drawing in surplus and tribute from outlying secular and religious estates<sup>35</sup>.

The "long eighth century" (c. 680–830) has now become a formative time in European economic development, with widespread evidence for agricultural intensification that included the exploitation of new environmental zones. It was also a time of increased exchange articulated by an extensive network<sup>36</sup>. This is the context for the rise of the international trading stations, the emporia or wics, which fringed the coast and major waterways of the English Channel, the North and Baltic Seas.

These sites were previously seen as the major way by which kings secured prestige goods with which to reinforce their status through gift-giving. To a certain extent this interpretation was conditioned by an emphasis on the exotic or imported element in the material culture. With the analyses of the more local material and the faunal assemblages, we now tend to see emporia more as the means by which agricultural surplus of the elite groups was redistributed, overseen by kings and their officials. In order for these sites to function as foci of redistribution and exchange, it is postulated that they depended on a network of tribute-gathering places, often centres of estates and these are documented as monasteries and sometimes as secular palaces, and archaeologically attested as "productive centres" or concentrations of coins and metalwork, and potential beach markets<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup> *Astill G.* Medieval Towns and Urbanization. P. 258–259.

<sup>36</sup> *The Long Eighth Century* / Ed. I. Hansen and C. Wickham. Leiden, 2000; *McCormick M.* Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce AD 300–900. Cambridge, 2001.

<sup>37</sup> *Scull C.* Urban Centres in Pre-Viking England? // *The Anglo-Saxons from the Migration Period to the Eighth Century* / Ed. J. Hines. Woodbridge, 1997. P. 269–310; *Markets in Early Medieval Europe: Trading and Productive Sites 650–850* / Ed. T. Pestell, and K. Ulmschneider. Macclesfield, 2003.

However, it is important to note that this economic network, essentially based on emporia and productive sites and estate centres, did not coincide chronologically with the development of the kingdoms to which it was connected because the system seems to have failed by the earlier ninth century (830–840s). This collapse of exchange may be related to the direct and indirect effects of the Viking attacks but may also reflect changed circumstances within the kingdoms. Again, it is instructive to compare the experiences of Francia and Anglo-Saxon England. The more politically fragmented Francia, and yet one of the most commercially developed parts of Europe, had a three-level exchange network: estate centres; *portus* — regional centres such as St Denis and Verdun which were mints, fairs and toll stations set in the major north French river valleys; and the emporia. Located at the estuaries of the rivers, the emporia were the least numerous element of the network, but the most engaged with long-distance trade and yet the shortest-lived. The demise of the emporia had no apparent effect on the Frankish structure which continued to influence the urban pattern for most of the middle ages. The English exchange infrastructure had no equivalent to the *portus* and had to develop a new urban and trading network after the ninth century<sup>38</sup>.

That the foundations of a more durable urban framework were laid through royal initiative and most clearly seen in the defensive burhs is one version of England's urban sequence. In this reading, the burhs were part of an economic as well as a military strategy. The burhs were intended as planned towns as well as garrisoned forts — and they in turn facilitated the creation of the state. The major places such as Canterbury and Winchester where both documentary, and to a lesser extent archaeological, evidence show they were urban centres and mints in the ninth century, are integral to this argument<sup>39</sup>. An alternative interpretation takes into account the evidence from the more unexceptional burhs, and as a result seeks to separate the military and urban functions of these sites. The archaeological evidence for when most of the burhs acquired an urban character is considerably

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<sup>38</sup> *Verhulst A.* The Rise of Cities in Northwest Europe. Cambridge, 1999; *Astill G.* Medieval Towns and Urbanization. P. 262.

<sup>39</sup> *Biddle M.* Towns // The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England / Ed. D. Wilson. London, 1976. P. 120–134; *Russo D.* Town Origins and Development in Early England, 400–950 AD. Westport, CN, 1998. P. 193–231; *Hodges R.* The Anglo-Saxon Achievement. Archaeology and the Beginnings of English Society. London, 1989. P. 155–166; but see *Hinton D.* The Large Towns. P. 226.

later than their foundation and delayed their economic development until the late tenth or eleventh century, when they became centres of local exchange and industry<sup>40</sup>.

Royal interest or concern for managing the burhs is best assessed from the laws. From the early tenth century the laws reflect a royal intention to supervise trade, to judge from the emphasis on witnessing transactions and preventing theft. Edward the Elder tried to concentrate all trade into “ports”, but Athelstan’s, Edgar’s and Cnut’s laws seem to acknowledge that there were places where small-scale trading took place and which were beyond direct royal control<sup>41</sup>. Although it could be argued that most laws are essentially responses to existing situations, these trading references might indicate the essentially regulatory role of kings in the urban economy.

One of the most telling indications of royal control is the coinage. The siting of mints in burhs would have obliged people to visit these places to obtain coin, presumably in exchange for commodities they had produced, in order to pay taxes. From the 920s, there is a steady increase in the number of mints founded in burhs, and this presumably reflects the royal determination to control the coinage, and to supervise and protect the moneyers and their bullion<sup>42</sup>. Viewed in the light of the legislation concerning trade, this is further evidence of the attempt to extend royal control over the local economy. Yet, while the mechanisms for this level of control appear to have been in place by the mid-tenth century, whether they worked is dependent on how effective the Anglo-Saxon state had become, a point to which we will return.

But we also need to consider whether there was a sufficiently high level of trade to warrant such royal measures. The number of coins in circulation during the later ninth and tenth century was limited which suggests that economic growth, or the extent of trading, was circumscribed<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> *Astill G.* Medieval Towns and Urbanization. P. 264–265; *Hinton D.* The Large Towns. P. 230–235; *Carver M.* Birth of a Borough: Stafford, An Anglo-Saxon ‘New Town’. Woodbridge, 2010. P. 127–145.

<sup>41</sup> *Loyn H.* Towns in Late Anglo-Saxon England: the Evidence and Some Possible Lines of Enquiry // *England Before the Conquest* / Ed. P. Clemoes and K. Hughes. Cambridge, 1971. P.115–128; *Wormald P.* The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century. Oxford, 1999. P. 289–290, 319–320.

<sup>42</sup> *Astill G.* Community, Identity and the Later Anglo-Saxon Town. P. 244–245.

<sup>43</sup> *Blackburn M.* Coin Circulation in Germany During the Early Middle Ages: the Evidence of Single Finds // *Fernhandel und Geldwirtschaft: Beiträge Zum Deutschen Münzwesen: Beiträge zum deutschen Münzwesen in sächsischer und salischer Zeit:*

The importance of coinage in lubricating the economy could be regarded as variable until at least the later tenth century, and this may be because trade was conducted using other exchange media. But this was not necessarily the main function of coinage because coin was still used as a symbol of royal authority and as a means of taxation, both important attributes of a medieval state<sup>44</sup>. This returns us to the political economy and whether coin might have been confined to the exercise of extensive lordship and so did not deeply penetrate the agrarian economy until the late tenth or eleventh centuries. And this also reflects the continuing discussions about the character of the early medieval economy, if it was highly monetised and market-based — the formalist approach — or if it was a more socially embedded system where transactions had little independent economic significance — the substantivist view<sup>45</sup>. The latter view, for example, might delay the effect or even challenge the notion of the association quoted above, that an effective state and a developing economy were mutually supportive.

The revision of the coinage in c. 973 by Edgar which provided for the frequent recall and reissue of the coinage has always been taken as one of the most important indicators of the effectiveness of the English state because such a regular change of the coinage would have required an administrative infrastructure (and one which also facilitated the collection of the tax to pay to the Danes — Danegeld)<sup>46</sup>. It is also important to remember that the regular change of coinage was a reliable bullion tax and thus an important source of royal income. It is usually agreed that the coinage was successfully recalled and reissued every six years until about 1135. However, whether this actually occurred with such regularity, and if a mechanism existed to make it possible, has been questioned<sup>47</sup>. And the economic implications of such a regular monetary change need further investigation and cannot necessarily be assumed.

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Ergebnisse des Dannenberg-Kolloquiums 1990 / Ed. B. Kluge. Mainz, 1993. P. 31–32;  
*Vince A. Saxon* London. London, 1990. P. 106–108.

<sup>44</sup> *Naismith R.* Money and Power in Anglo-Saxon England. Cambridge, 2012. P. 199–251.

<sup>45</sup> *Blackburn M.* Money and Coinage // *The New Cambridge Medieval History*. Vol. 2: c. 700 – c. 900 / Ed. R. McKitterick. Cambridge, 1991. P. 539.

<sup>46</sup> *Campbell J.* *The Anglo-Saxon State*.

<sup>47</sup> Stewart 1990.

This review of the economy has reflected current work which has tended to concentrate on trade and its articulation. While this is critical, it nevertheless does not exploit all the available archaeological evidence. A key area in need of investigation is the character and scale of the production that fuelled the exchange systems. This would bring the enquiry to the level of landscapes and settlements and should include all the environmental data, especially the faunal assemblages. We would then, for example, be in a position to reconsider the relative roles of the aristocracy and the peasantry in the production process; and at the very least it would make a contribution to understanding more fully the role of the different levels of the aristocracy in the development of towns<sup>48</sup>.

Having reviewed these themes, it seems that the development of the English state owes much to increasing social and political stratification and competition, underpinned by territorial growth enabled by the creation of an effective military force, particularly in the face of foreign invasion; and in combination with a governmental structure. While such a trajectory must be reinforced by significant economic power, this may have been achieved as much by the levy of tribute, tax and regulation as by a more intrusive intervention into the agrarian structure of the country. If the latter occurred at all, it may have been relatively late in the process and it could be argued that it was not complete by the mid-eleventh century and that it was the consequences of the Norman Conquest which further extended the political and economic power of the state<sup>49</sup>.

While these themes were chosen to highlight the archaeological impact on, and the areas of debate about, the study of the state, they are nevertheless documentarily informed, whether it be concerned with specific classes of document, such as the laws, or the more general interpretations of the political or socio-economic character of Anglo-Saxon society. This interaction is fundamental, but in order to maximise the benefit, we should acknowledge those areas of historical debate, be aware of their significance and reconsider our data and interpretations accordingly. But it is important to accept the differing range of the information — the archaeological evidence, for example, tends to emphasise the long period of gestation, from the

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<sup>48</sup> *Fleming R.* Rural Elites and Urban Communities in Late Saxon England // Past and Present. 1993. Vol. 141. P. 3–37.

<sup>49</sup> *Faith R.* The English Peasantry. P. 178–200.

later sixth century, whereas the documentary material points to the late ninth century and beyond as the period when much of the state structure was put in place<sup>50</sup>.

For example, archaeological discussions about the development of polities tend not to distinguish between the means by which kingdoms and states came into being. In one sense it is a question of scale and sequence: that the state is seen as emerging from a growing kingdom. The state was the outcome of a competitive and aggressive process whereby one kingdom achieved dominance. This outcome was facilitated because the competing kingdoms shared a similar developmental sequence (territorial consolidation; administrative procedures; exploitation of natural resources; developing hierarchies<sup>51</sup>). This historical interpretation has been modified because it was regarded as too unilinear a sequence: the character of the regional kingdoms was much more divergent and these polities did not share a similar developmental sequence<sup>52</sup>. This emphasis on regional differentiation could usefully be considered by archaeologists: this could become a common theme.

Most archaeological interpretations of the state are usually set in the context of the “maximum” view of the Anglo-Saxon state which has been the dominant paradigm; the state had an exceptional character, was precocious and highly effective compared to the rest of Europe. This maximum view reflects the English historiographic tradition since the nineteenth century: it stresses the power of Anglo-Saxon government, and the capability of its institutional framework as reflected in the networks of burhs, the shires and hundreds and the large number appointed as royal officials. The results were the defensive measures, a closely controlled coinage, an effective taxation system and the development of the law to manage disputes and control crime<sup>53</sup>.

An alternative approach has been growing which questions the real extent and power of these centralised institutions and how they might have actually worked. It has been argued, for example, that the evidential basis — the laws and charters — might be interpreted as ideological statements

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<sup>50</sup> *Campbell J.* The Anglo-Saxon State. P. xxi–xxii.

<sup>51</sup> *Bassett S.* Introduction; *Keynes S.* England, 700–900 // The New Cambridge Medieval History. Vol. 2: c. 700 – c. 900 / Ed. R. McKitterick. Cambridge, 1991. P. 19–23

<sup>52</sup> *Keynes S.* England, 700–900. P. 18–21.

<sup>53</sup> E. g. *Campbell J.* The Anglo-Saxon State; *Wormald P.* Frederick William Maitland and the Earliest English Law // Law and History Review. 1998. Vol. 16. P. 1–25.

(and so more related with European traditions) rather than bureaucratic actualities, with a consequence for how we judge the effectiveness of a state mechanism<sup>54</sup>. And the efficacy of central government was dependent on local power structures: the capability of the state may have been determined by the extent to which its interests coincided with the political networks in the localities. A further consideration is that, if central administration was delegated to those who were powerful in the regions, the impact of the state could vary from region to region<sup>55</sup>. And if regional variation influenced the state, it need neither have developed progressively nor evenly over time. Indeed, as the state was so dependent on the locally powerful, it has been suggested that the term has become too confusing and should be substituted by “lordship”<sup>56</sup>.

Others have drawn attention to the potential for political instability, such as the succession problems in 978 and during Cnut’s reign<sup>57</sup>. The state may not have become so deeply rooted, and some argue that the absence of laws and charters in the eleventh century represented a hiatus in government and could indicate periods when the institutions did not function. And there were cases when the state’s dependence on regional magnates failed and resulted in expressions of local disaffection that the king dealt with by forceful harassment, that is the lawless option. The possibility existed that the kingdom could be dominated by some aristocratic families, which might have resulted in partition, or even a take-over, as happened twice in the eleventh century<sup>58</sup>. However, some historians have argued that we should adopt ways of exploring in less extreme, opposite, terms the relationship between royal power vested in central institutions and the local power

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<sup>54</sup> *Insley C.* Assemblies and Charters in Late Anglo-Saxon England // *Political Assemblies in the Earlier Middle Ages*. P. 47–59.

<sup>55</sup> *Green J.* Kingship, Lordship and Community in Eleventh-Century England // *Anglo-Norman Studies*. 2009. Vol. 31. P. 1–16.

<sup>56</sup> *Davies R.* The Medieval State: the Tyranny of a Concept // *Journal of Historical Sociology*. 2003. Vol. 16. P. 296.

<sup>57</sup> *Reuter T.* The Making of England and Germany, 850–1050: Points of Comparison and Difference // *Medieval Europeans: Studies in Ethnic Identity and National Perspectives in Medieval Europe* / Ed. A. Smyth. Basingstoke and N.Y., 1998. P. 55–59.

<sup>58</sup> *Reuter T.* Debate: the Feudal Revolution, III // *Past and Present*. 1997. Vol. 155. P. 191–192; *Green J.* Kingship, Lordship and Community. P. 9–10; *Insley C.* Southumbria // *A Companion to the Early Middle Ages* / Ed. P. Stafford. Chichester, 2009. P. 324–327.

structures<sup>59</sup>. For example, the king's power in the eleventh century is indicated by the importance of royal patronage of the earls, whereby kings lent lands for periods of the earl's office. Kings also regranted and reallocated earldoms which could make these units relatively short lived: this produced a "highly stressed polity"<sup>60</sup>.

In contrast, recent work on the king's council (witan) and assemblies has emphasised the importance of royal interaction with magnates and how assemblies were a way of achieving consensus. This approach represents a shift away from the legalistic and administrative character of the state to accommodate the ritual and charismatic aspects of government. Itineraries and assemblies, for example, were ways of emphasising the importance of social interaction among elites in terms of rites of passage and feasting<sup>61</sup>. The last two aspects are common concerns for early Anglo-Saxon archaeologists who study the period c. AD 450–700, but they should also be considered for later times, at least until AD1100.

This recent work shows the increasing sophistication of the historical enquiry and this should stimulate further archaeological work of a similar character. One of the most important lessons is to move from the large-scale, "national" approach and try to refine the enquiry by considering the character and importance of regions and to explain inter-regional variability. Such work is already in progress. The detailed research on aspects of Anglo-Saxon governance and the studies of civil defence rely on a combination of archaeological, documentary, topographic and place name studies, which, with theoretically-informed interpretations, will produce a much more nuanced appreciation of the Anglo-Saxon state.

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<sup>59</sup> *Baxter S.* The Earls of Mercia: Lordship and Power in Late Anglo-Saxon England. Oxford, 2007. P. 11–13.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibidem.* P. 61–124.

<sup>61</sup> *Roach L.* Kingship and Consent in Anglo-Saxon England, 871–978. Cambridge, 2013. P. 161–194; 212–238.

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СНОВА ОБ АНГЛИЙСКОМ ГОСУДАРСТВЕ, ок. 700–1100 гг.

*Аннотация:* В статье рассматриваются различные концепции характера и становления английского государства между 700 и 1100 гг. Особое внимание уделяется тем аспектам, для изучения которых большое значение имеет археология: предпосылки становления государства, военный стимул и (что немаловажно) характер экономики и управление ею.

К предпосылкам становления государства относятся социальное неравенство и политическая централизация, основанные на интенсификации землепользования и идеологических устоях христианства. В пространственном отношении это, скорее, процесс, происходящий во многих местах, а не фокусирующийся в единственном центре: эта последняя модель возникла лишь после нормандского завоевания.

Основой территориальной экспансии и стабилизации границ служила развитая военная организация и войны. Ряд мер, предпринятых для противодействия набегам скандинавов, стимулировал создание как эффективной обороны, так и коллективной английской идентичности, которая сама по себе являлась важным компонентом государства.

В статье широко освещается связь между государством и экономическим развитием — на том уровне, где государство имеет дело с экономикой, например, посредством различных форм налогообложения или интервенции в практику местных сельскохозяйственных экономик. То же самое наблюдается и в развитии городов, особенно если речь идет о характере центров торговли и управления ими, а также о скорости роста позднейших городов и о степени эффективности государственного управления торговлей, городами и чеканкой монет. В дальнейшем будет необходимо исследовать масштаб и социальные особенности процесса производства, лежавшего в основе торговли, изученной значительно лучше.

Наконец, показано, как это археологическое исследование соотносится с современными историческими концепциями государства, например, с пересмотром масштаба и эффективности англо-саксонского государства и его связи с осуществлением власти на местах.

*Ключевые слова:* государство, правительство, власть, военные действия, экономика, города, чеканка монет