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THE DEVELOPMENT OF KENTISH SOCIETY FROM  
THE ANGLO-SAXON INVASIONS TO THE NORMAN CONQUEST

A Thesis  
Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Letters

by

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University of St. Andrews

1 May 1971



Tm 5849

CERTIFICATE

I certify that CAROLINE E. VAIDEN has spent no less than two academic years in full-time higher study toward the degree of Master of Letters in Arts and that she has fulfilled the requirements under Ordinance C, Resolution No. 9 of the University Court of St. Andrews. She is qualified to submit this dissertation for the degree of Master of Letters (Medieval History).

Supervisor

DECLARATION

This dissertation embodies the results of the higher study undertaken by the candidate on the topic approved by the Senatus Academicus of the University of St. Andrews in accordance with the regulations governing the degree of Master of Letters in Arts.

I was admitted under the Resolution of the University Court, 1967, No. 9, to read for the degree of M.Litt. from October, 1969, in terms of Ordinance C in Higher Study and Research 1970-71, p. 1, 2(b)-7.

Candidate

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

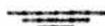
I wish to thank my supervisor, Dr. N.P. Brooks, for his considerable assistance, which was given far more generously than I had any right to ask.

Also Miss Sarah J. Mason for advice on Old English.

Also Mrs. J. Wallace for aid in British usage and for proof-reading.

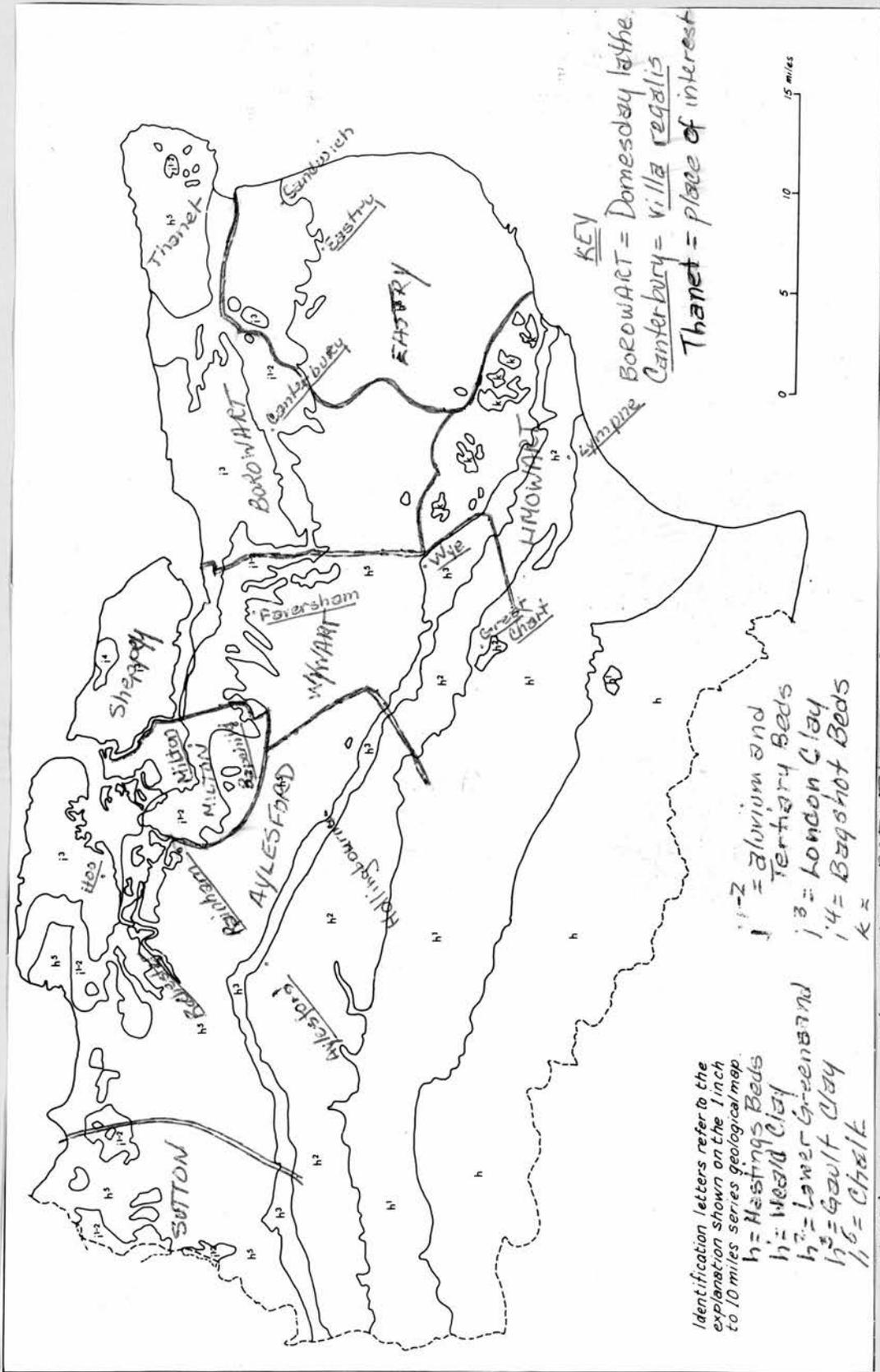
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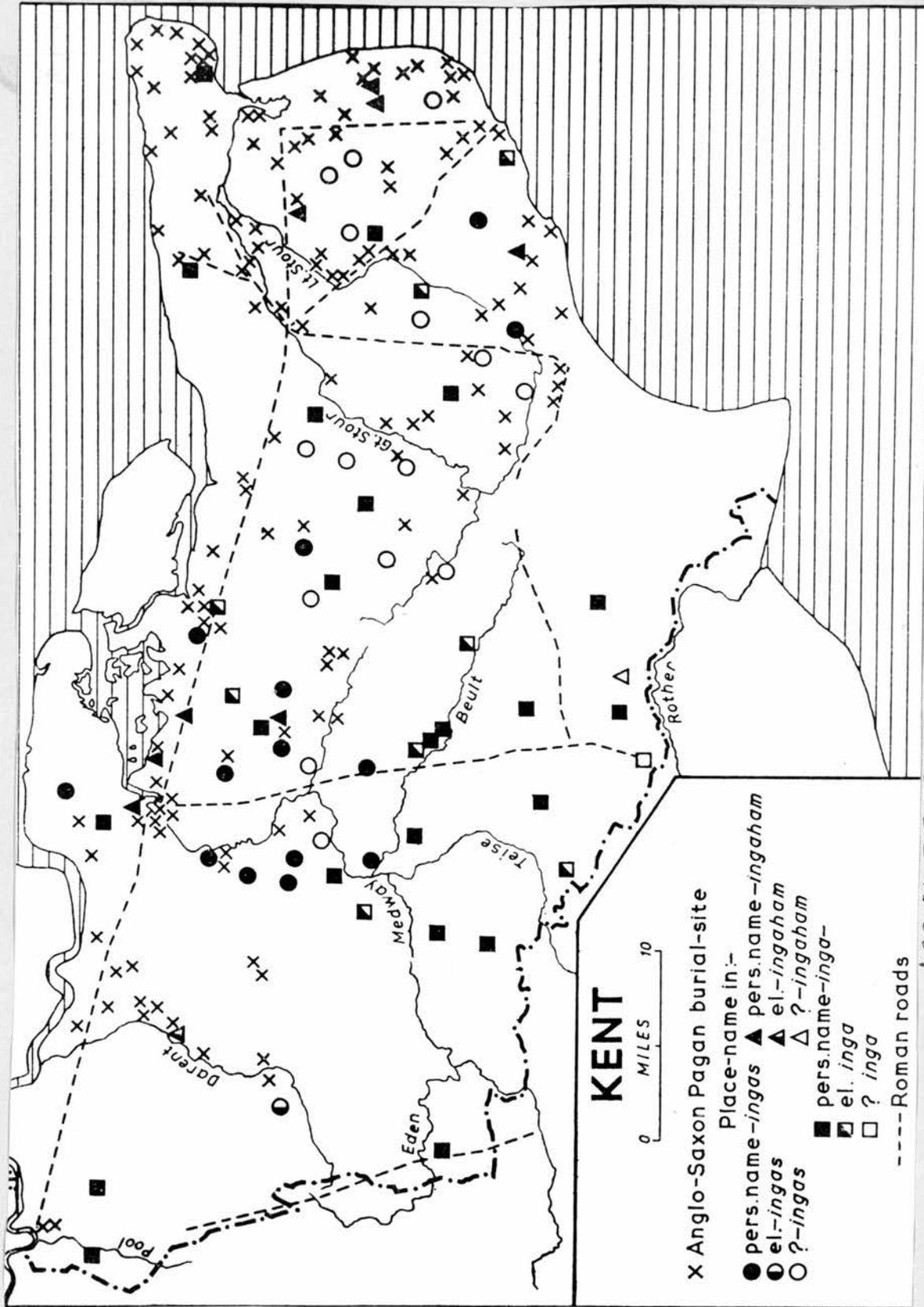
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## ABBREVIATIONS

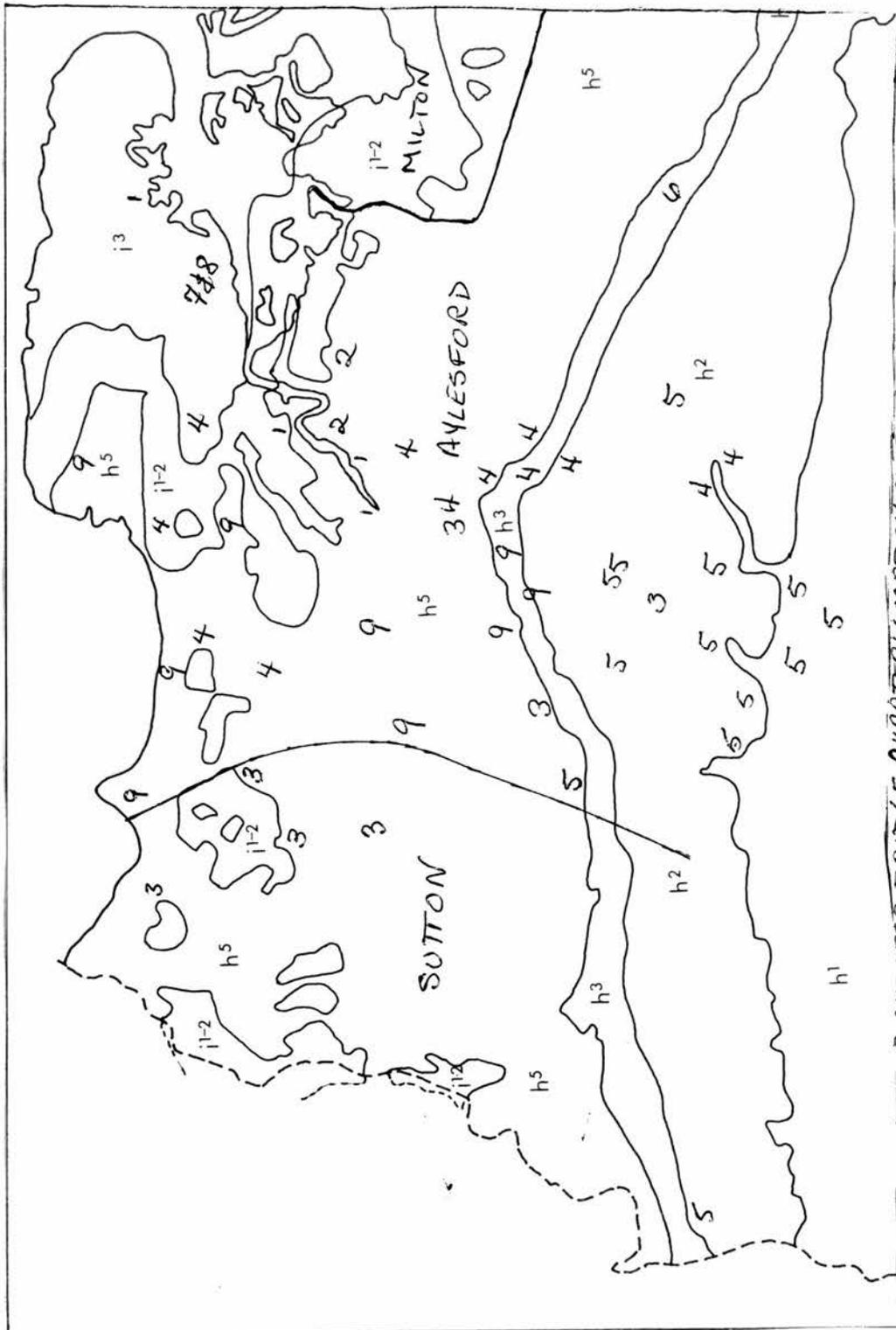
<u>Arch.Cent.</u>	<u>Archeologica Cantiana</u>
<u>ASC</u>	<u>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</u>
<u>BCS</u>	Birch, <u>Cartularium Saxonicum</u>
<u>DB</u>	<u>Domesday Book</u> , tr. F.W. Ragg ( <u>VCH III:203-252</u> )
<u>DBB</u>	Maitland, <u>Domesday Book and Beyond</u>
<u>DMon</u>	<u>Domesday Monachorum</u> ( <u>VCH III: 253ff.</u> )
<u>ECHR</u>	<u>Economic History Review</u>
<u>EHD</u>	<u>English Historical Documents</u>
<u>EHR</u>	<u>English Historical Review</u>
<u>HE</u>	<u>Bede, The Ecclesiastical History of the English People</u>
<u>KCD</u>	<u>Kentish Codex Diplomaticus</u>
<u>KPN</u>	<u>Kentish Place Names</u>
Lat.	Latin
MS, MSS	Manuscript(s)
OE	Old English
s.a.	sub annum
Sawyer	<u>Peter Sawyer, Anglo-Saxon Charters : An Annotated List and Bibliography; all comments on MS dates and authenticity are from Sawyer unless otherwise stated</u>
<u>SEHD</u>	<u>Select English Historical Documents of the Ninth and Tenth Centuries</u>
<u>VCH</u>	<u>Victoria County History : Kent</u>



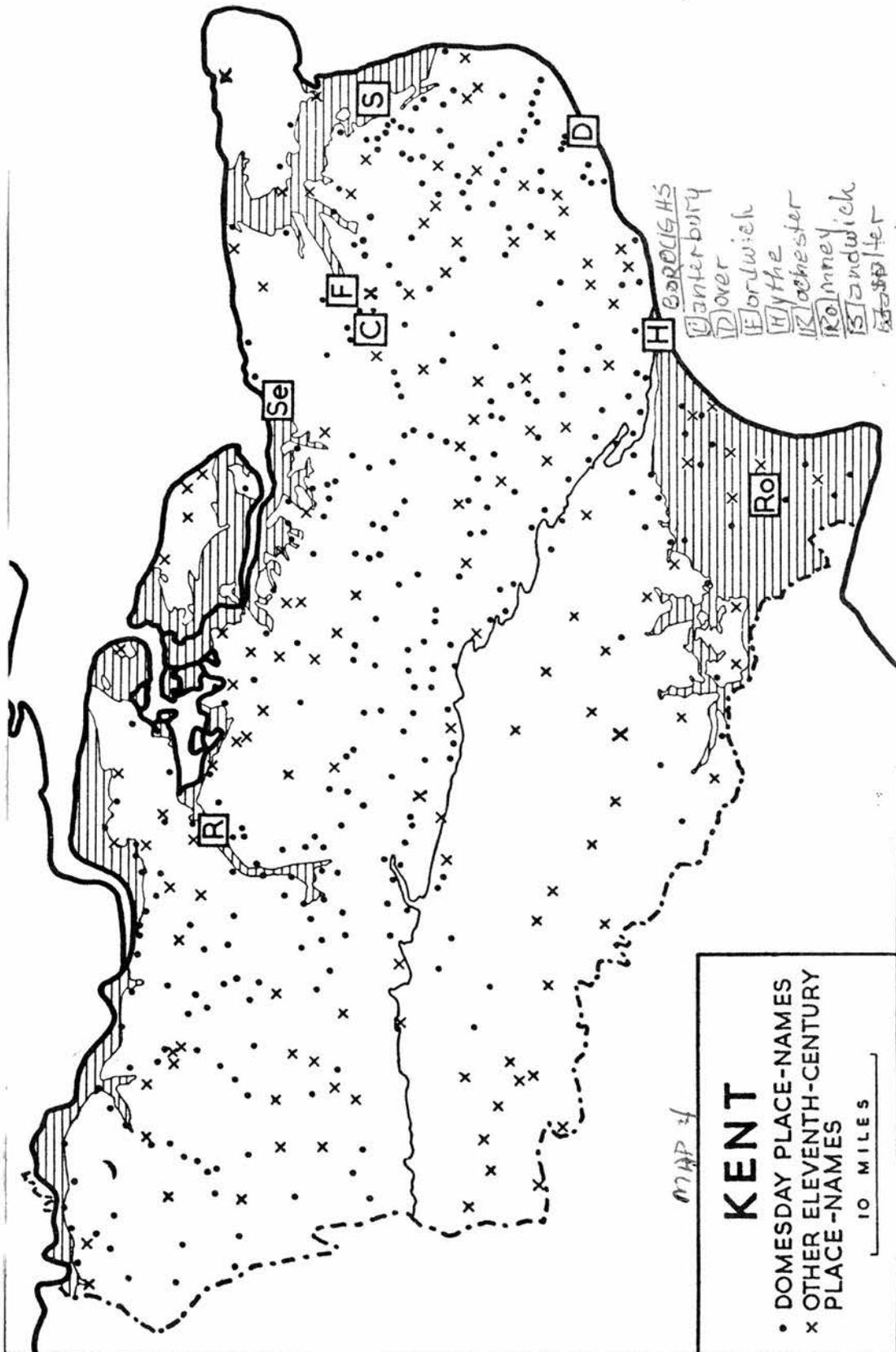


MAP 2: THE ORIGINAL SETTLEMENT AND FIRST EXPANSION

From: S. H. Dodgson: "The Significance of the Distribution of the English Place Names in -ingas, -ingaham - in Southeast England," *Federal Archaeology* 1974, p. 10.



MAP 3: THE ROCHESTER BRIDGE CHARTER: LOCATION OF ESTATES FOR EACH PIER  
 SUTTON = Tamesday lathie  
 h<sup>1</sup> = Weald Clay  
 h<sup>2</sup> = Lower Greensand  
 h<sup>3</sup> = Gault Clay  
 h<sup>5</sup> = Chalk  
 j<sup>1-2</sup> = Alluvium and Tertiary Beds  
 j<sup>3</sup> = London Clay



# KENT

- DOMESDAY PLACE-NAMES
- x OTHER ELEVENTH-CENTURY PLACE-NAMES

10 MILES

MAP 4

- H HOROGLHS
- Canterbury
- Dover
- Florwich
- Hythe
- Rocheester
- Rolmney
- Sandwich
- Wester

from: H.C. Darby and E.M.C. Campbell, (eds): *The Domesday Geography of Southeast England*, (Cambridge UP, 1962), fig. 143.

## INTRODUCTION

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Those who came over were of the **three most powerful nations of Germany** - Saxons, Angles and Jutes. **From the Jutes are descended the people of Kent . . . . .**

Bede in 731 recorded the awareness that Kent was different from the rest of England, a difference that remained apparent for many centuries. Medieval Kent was a land of hamlet settlements measured in *sulungs*, not of villages measured in hides. There was little or no common farming; each landholder acted independently. Land of a man dying intestate was disposed of by division among all his sons, and land was fully alienable. By the thirteenth century villeinage was rare and by the seventeenth century most farmers owned part of the land they occupied and rented the rest in freehold tenure for nominal sums.<sup>1</sup>

Yet Kent is not completely different from the rest of England; its settlement by hamlets and the inheritance system have especially close ties to Wales and Northumbria. It is difficult, furthermore, to trace the customs to their origin to know if they came from settlement by a German people different from those settling elsewhere, or from the survival of more Britons, or as a response to a set of

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1. C.W. Chalklin, Seventeenth-Century Kent : A Social and Economic History (Longmans Green, London 1965), pp. 1, 46-47.

conditions different from those encountered elsewhere, namely geography and the smallness of the kingdom to be ruled. This essay has a two-fold purpose: first, to analyse the relations between Kent and her conquerors, to see what effects conquest had on social development; and second, to examine the elements of society and in particular the social classes and forms of landholding, to determine whether they can be traced back to racial or other origins. For the purpose of analysis, the history of Kent between the Anglo-Saxon invasions and the Norman Conquest will be divided into three sections: c.450-597, the pagan period; 597-825, the decline of Kent from the most powerful kingdom south of the Humber to a Mercian province; and 825-1066, the unification of England under Wessex, and the Danish raids.

CHAPTER I  
THE ORIGINS OF KENT

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No written records from Kent have survived from the period c.450 to 597. Pre-Conquest secondary sources are also scanty. Bede tells of the settlement and revolt of Hengist and Horsa, and of the conversions; the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle adds a few regnal dates. The bulk of the information available comes from archeology and placename studies, and inferences from later institutions and customs. Four questions are of interest:

- (i) Where did the Anglo-Saxons settle in Kent?
- (ii) When did they arrive?
- (iii) Who were they?
- (iv) What became of the previous inhabitants?

The answers to these questions will indicate whether or not Kentish society owes its uniqueness to its original settlement.

1. The Geography of Settlement

(a) Distribution of original settlement

The settlement sites are all straightforward, as the first Anglo-Saxons farmed the best land in Kent, the alluvial soils along

the major rivers, and along the eastern and northern coasts. Geologically Kent is divided into bands of clay, chalk, and sandy loams (see Map 1) which run virtually parallel across from east to west. Furthest south is a wide band of clay, heavily forested until the Stuart period,<sup>1</sup> which was used by the Anglo-Saxons chiefly for forest swine pastures. To the north of the Weald lies the Greensand ridge with its sandy soils. The western Greensand is not particularly fertile, and was part of the Weald before the Norman Conquest. The eastern slopes are lower and more fertile and formed an important area of early settlement. North of the Greensand belt is the Chalk ridge which was also forested, but came under the plough some time during the Anglo-Saxon period, as the first area of expansion from the regions of original settlement, though the top of the ridge remained forested.<sup>2</sup> The north-east corner of Kent from Dover to Canterbury to Sturry to the coast and then along the coast to the Medway contains the richest and most easily worked soils of Kent. It is the main area of Kentish medieval settlement, and almost all the pagan burial sites have been found there or along the rivers that cut through the Chalk ridge, the Stour, the Medway and the Darent, or around Lympe river at the edge of Romney Marsh. Along the coasts of Kent there is much marshy land: the best grazing land in Kent.

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1. Ibid., p. 9.

2. H.C. Darby and H.C. Campbell (eds.), The Domesday Geography of South-east England (Cambridge U.P. 1962), pp. 558-9.

Geography, then, was a major factor in determining the settlement patterns of Kent. For most estates in the historical period had the bulk of their arable lands in the rich soils of the north east, swine pastures in the Weald or Chalk forest, sheep pastures on the coastal marshes, salt-pans in a coastal settlement, and fisheries, hunting and fowling places where the land was most suitable. Most charters granting land listed the facilities included in some detail, and after about 760 A.D. generally specified the names of the forest swine pastures, called "denes" (OE dænas). Rarely, however, were other appurtenances listed by name or location.

The evidence that the settlers of the fifth century chose the best land comes primarily from excavated pagan burial sites and from the pattern of the placename elements. The earliest burial sites found have been on light, loamy, well-watered soils, often on top of Romano-British remains. Indeed, the three main areas of settlement — in the north-east, around the Lympne (now the Royal Military Canal), and along the Medway — have held the densest population since at least the Bronze Age,<sup>1</sup> a continuity of settlement which undoubtedly has been due to the excellence of the soil in these areas and its inferiority elsewhere in Kent.

Most place names indicate little about the sites of original

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1. For map, see S.W. Woolridge and Frederick Goldring, The Weald (1953), p. 180.

settlement, as the elements used to form them were used throughout the Anglo-Saxon period. The suffix -ingas and the connective -inga-, however, were commonly used by the earliest settlers as the genitive plural ending, and added to a proper name meant 'of the people of'. The singular -ing remained usual in Kent throughout the development of Old English, but the plural -ingas soon ceased to be used. E.K. Ekwall and others have argued that an -ingas ending indicates an original settlement, but J.M. Dodgson has challenged their view.<sup>1</sup> He argues that the endings represent the earliest expansion from the original settlement, since they are found near the pagan burial sites but do not coincide with them. Often "-ingas" settlements are uphill and inland from the burials, on less desirable ground.

Expansion is one of the major themes of the history of Kentish settlement, yet it is virtually unrecorded before the Norman Conquest. Burial sites indicate the original settlement, and probably -ingas names show the first expansions. Woolridge and Goldring analyse the next phases, finding three:<sup>2</sup> first, new sites were found at the foot of the Chalk Downs with arable in the Lower Greensand belt and woodland on the edge of the Weald. The first settlements used -ingas and -ham names. The second phase came after the dropping of these suffixes, as about half the names use later nomenclature. The phase included

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1. J.M. Dodgson, "The Significance of the Distribution of the English Place Names in -ingas, -inga in South-east England," Medieval Archaeology 10 (1966), 1-29. including the literature on the subject.
  2. Woolridge and Goldring, Weald, pp. 201-205.

not just the filling in of the spaces between the first sites, but also a second row of settlements between the Downs and the Weald where the Greensand widens. The final phase of the Anglo-Saxon period was the movement into the Weald, which is to some extent recorded in Domesday Book. There are fifty-two denes and two half denes recorded in DB, only a fraction of those found in the land charters. Most of them have no teams or population recorded and must have been swine pastures, since <sup>some</sup> denes do have teams and inhabitants and occasionally an assessment. In addition, there are four settlements which have become discrete vills, Tiffenden, Benenden, Newenden and Dean Court. They all have teams and inhabitants and are listed like any other estate. Two hundreds that lie in the Weald are recorded in DB, Rolvenden and Selebrist (mod. Selbrittenen). Rolvenden contains two DB vills, one anonymous, the other Benenden; Newenden and Sandhurst<sup>1</sup> lie in Selbrittenen.<sup>2</sup> DB records the early stages of expansion into the Weald, an expansion which occurred chiefly in the thirteenth century but continued through the sixteenth.<sup>3</sup>

The first question about the settlement of Kent was: Where? The answer is that the settlers chose the most fertile land which lay in the north east, around the Lympne and down the Medway valley, according to the archaeological evidence. Institutional patterns

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1. Only recorded in Mon.
  2. Darby and Campbell, DB Geography of SE England, pp. 528-532.
  3. Chalklin, 17th-Century Kent, p. 18.

confirm the archaeological results. In DB Kent is divided into several lests: Eastry, Borowart, Limowart, Wiwart, Sutton, Aylesford and Milton. They are centred in the areas of original settlement — Eastry and Borowart on the north-east plain, Wiwart in the Stour valley, Limowart around the Lympne, Aylesford down the Medway, Milton along the north coast, and Sutton along the Darent.

Sutton represents expansion of a different sort; original settlements in the Darent valley are related to Thames valley sites archaeologically, rather than to Kentish ones. The area must have been an early conquest in the political expansion which culminated in Æthelberht, Britwalda of All England below the Humber when St. Augustine arrived in Kent in 597.

(b) Division into regiones

The Domesday lests have been traced by J.E.A. Jolliffe to the regiones of the eighth-century charters.<sup>1</sup> Regio in classical Latin means 'region', 'country', 'territory' or 'administrative district', and seems to have had the same meanings when used in the early charters. Eleven charters dating from AD 697-815 specify the regione in which an estate lies, and no <sup>later</sup> examples of the word. Two late charters use OE lathe, a list of estates contributing to the maintenance of Rochester Bridge,<sup>2</sup> and to the restoration of monks at Christchurch by Æthelred

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1. J.E.A. Jolliffe, "The Hidation of Kent," EHR XLIV (1929), 617-618.

2. There is some doubt about whether this charter is pre-Conquest; if it is it dates from before 987 when King Æthelred granted Rochester Wouldham / ....

with confirmations of all their lands.<sup>1</sup> The use of limen were wealdo, weowerawealthe, burh wara waldo and caestruarowealth may also indicate lathes, as they mean 'the wood of the people of Lympne, Wye, Canterbury ("the burh of Kent") and Rochester (from Celtic duro- 'fortress' and OE cæster 'fort', esp. 'Roman fort')' respectively, and other evidence shows that all four are ancient regiones. They are also the names of specific settlements, however, and there is no indication that the wara came from the regio or the individual settlement. Thus the -werawealda cannot be used as evidence for the existence of the regiones or of their functions.

The regiones found in the eighth-century charters are: Lympne,<sup>2</sup> Eastry,<sup>3</sup> merscuare,<sup>4</sup> Chart,<sup>5</sup> Faversham,<sup>6</sup> Hoo,<sup>7</sup> caestruare (Rochester),<sup>8</sup> Rainham,<sup>9</sup> westan widde<sup>10</sup> and perhaps Sturry.<sup>11</sup> The regiones coincide with the cemeteries of the pagan period, other than those around Canterbury and on the Isle of Thanet which are not found as regiones though they contain very important early settlements. Thanet was given to the first arrivals, while Canterbury became the chief royal villa by the time of Æthelberht.<sup>12</sup> There is also an area around Maidstone with early remains and no regio recorded. It may be a part of Caestruare regio, or it may be a coincidence that no records of a regio around the upper Medway survive. The latter case seems more

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/ Wouldham and after 942 when King Edmund gave it Malling. The MS is Textus Roffensis from the 12th century.

1. A.D.1006 in ten post-Conquest MSS, undoubtedly spurious.

2-12. [See page 10 for these notes.]

[notes to page 9, continued]:

2. BCS no. 341 of A.D.812, grant by Coenwulf of Mercia to Archbishop Wulfred of land in regione on liminum (MS contemporary).
3. F.M. Stenton, Latin Charters of the Anglo-Saxon Period (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1955), pp. 38-39: Offa's grant in A.D.788 of land "in the province of Kent and the regio called Eastry" to Osberht his minister (MS contemporary).
4. BCS no. 214 of A.D.774, grant by Offa to Iaenberto Archbishop, of land "on the east part of the region called merscuare" (MS 10th century); and BCS no. 335 of A.D.811, grant by Coenwulf to Wulfred of land in regione merscuare (MS contemporary); and ASC 798, 813.
5. BCS no. 191 of A.D.762, King Æthelberht of Kent to SS. Peter and Paul, Canterbury, half a mill "in the regione which is called Cert" given to the royal villam at Wye for pasture in salu Andreo (earliest MS 13th century).
6. BCS no. 335 (see n. 4 above) includes land et in regione suburbana ad oppidum regis Febresham (MS contemporary); and BCS 340 of A.D. 813, grant by Coenwulf to Wulfred of land "in the province of Kent and the regione of Fefreshames (MS 13th century); and BCS 353 of A.D.815, Coenwulf to Wulfred of land "in the region called Febres ham (MS contemporary).
7. Gordon W. Ward, "The Life and Records of Eadberht, Son of King Wihtried," Arch.Cant. 51 (1939), 17-18: grant of A.D.738 by Eadberht to the bishop of Rochester "in regione called Hogh" (MS 12th century, considered genuine); and BCS no. 89 of c.A.D.687, grant by Cædwalla of Wessex to Abbot Egbalthe of ".XL. terræ illius manentes ubi HOGH nuncupatos ad Hebureahg pertinentes" (MS 12th century, considered doubtful or spurious).
8. BCS no. 199 of c.A.D.767, Eardulfus king of Kent grants Recælver land in regione caestruara (MS contemporary).
9. BCS no. 335 (see n. 6 above) includes land in regione suburbanaque ad oppidum regis Roeginga ham.
10. BCS no. 348 of A.D.814, Coenwulf to Wulfred, grant of land in regione westan widde (MS contemporary).
11. Sturry has been derived from Stur + ge 'the region of the Stour'. Ge is a Kentish word meaning 'region' and parallels the German gau used by the Franks to describe their administrative districts. The form Sturigeo, Sturige only appears in charters with late MSS, and the name is written Sturria in BCS no. 45, in an original MS, which weakens the argument, especially since Sturry is only about two and a half miles from the centre of Canterbury.
12. Bede, HE, 1:25 for Canterbury; Nerimus, Historia Brittorum, in Monumenta Historia Germaniae, 61, for the settlement in Thanet.

likely, as the regiones on the whole seem small.

Jolliffe has argued that the regiones were the administrative unit of the early Kentish kings. Each was centred on a villa regalis where justice was administered and the feorm was paid. The evidence is scanty, consisting only of the phrase in regione et suburbana ad in one charter,<sup>1</sup> and a statement in the law code of Hlothhere and Eadric that stolen property was to be brought to the cyninges sele when claimed by the owner with proof of sale.<sup>2</sup> Yet there are some royal villae which Jolliffe did not connect to his elaborate system, in particular Bapchild, where Wihtried held a synod between 696 and 716,<sup>3</sup> and Berkamystede, where he issued a grant of privileges to Abbess Mildred of Minster in Thanet,<sup>4</sup> which is probably the same place as Berghamstyde where he issued his law code.<sup>5</sup> Aylesford<sup>6</sup> and Wye<sup>7</sup> are both royal villas in the charters, and were included by Jolliffe because they gave their names to Domesday Book lests.

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1. BCS no. 335 (cf. notes 6 and 9, p. 10 above).
  2. Clauses 7, 16: from F.L. Attenborough (ed.), The Laws of the Anglo-Saxons Earliest English Kings (Russell & Russell, New York 1963).
  3. BCS nos. 91-95, considered reliable (Whitelock, EHD) or with interpolations (Eric John, Land Tenure in Early England, Leicester U.P. 1960), cited by Sawyer, no. 22.
  4. BCS no. 88, probably authentic (Sawyer, no. 17). Wallenberg (KPN) identifies it as Bearsted (near Maidstone).
  5. Attenborough, (Laws, p. 180 n. 4) identifies it with either Bearsted or Barham (near Canterbury).
  6. SEHD no. 23, of A.D.959.
  7. BCS no. 191 (cf. n. 5, p. 10 above).

Jolliffe, by manipulating his data,<sup>1</sup> found that the Domesday lests were combinations of 80 sulung units which he identified with the early regiones. But his units are not the same as the regiones of the charters. He ignores Chart, Rainham, merscuare and westan wide, combines Rochester with Hoo, and divides Eastry in half. And if one hypothesises that each royal villa marks a regio, he has ignored Bapchild and Berkanystede as well. The Rochester Bridge charter provided him with an additional lathe, Hollingbourne, which is not otherwise recorded.

While Jolliffe's argument that the regio was an early administrative system in which settlements paid dues to and obtained justice from the nearest royal villa seems sound, his conclusion that the regiones were neat geographical units can be challenged, even if one tries sizes other than 80 sulungs. For the recorded regiones are not of the same size. In the north-east triangle bordered by the North Downs that run from Dover to Canterbury, there is one recorded regio, Eastry, and Canterbury which must have been one. Thanet probably was also a regio, although there is no evidence for it; Sturry and Berhamstede may have been regiones here. In contrast, along Watling Street there are five royal villae — Faversham, Bapchild, Milton Regis, Rainham and Rochester — in a distance of eighteen miles. Even if Bapchild and Milton are the same regio (they lie half a mile apart),

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1. He included Preston in Borowart lest rather than in Eastry.

the regiones lie very close together and must have been smaller than in the east.

The Rochester Bridge maintenance list, if genuine, complicates matters further. It lists the estates that must contribute to each pier's repair, presumably on a geographical basis. Yet the estates for each pier do not lie all in the same area around Rochester. Pier 1 is maintained by four estates, three around Rochester and one in the north-east corner of Hoo. Pier 2 is maintained by two neighbouring towns, across the Medway from Rochester. Pier 3's lands are completely scattered from the Medway westward, and are among estates contributing to other piers. Pier 4 is in three areas, due south of Rochester, below pier 1, directly west<sup>of it</sup>, and due north. Pier 5 included the area around Maidstone, some estates almost on the Weald separated from the Maidstone area by two pier 4 estates, and Westerham on the western edge of Kent. Pier 6 is Hollingbourne and eala that lathe, while piers 7 and 8 belong to the "Hoo people's land". Pier 9 is also widely scattered with estates all over the area (see Map 3). There are further problems with the document, such as the fact that some of the estates credited to the Archbishop of Canterbury have no record of anything but lay ownership, including a listing under Odo of Bayeux in 1036. And the lands contributing to pier 3 include four estates in Sutton lest in Domesday Book. Altogether the document is a very complete one, and suggests strongly that the administrative system was not a neat one at all.

In Domesday Book there are two levels of administration above the individual settlement, the hundred and the lathe. The hundred is probably a West Saxon institution and the lathe seems to be the Kentish equivalent. Wessex gained control of Kent in A.D.825, and the hundred system was introduced some time after that date. Possibly the Rochester Bridge charter shows why they were introduced -- to clear up the tangle of estates within the regio created when some land was given to the Church, some passed to laymen, and the remainder stayed with the king. For the profits of justice went to the landlord, except for specific fines reserved to the king. Perhaps it was found that the regio was too large and the hamlet too small, and the hundred was introduced to bridge the gap. For hundreds are small and irregular in size, ranging from the 84 sulungs of Milton Regis to the two yokes of Wachelestan (mod. Washlingstone). Jolliffe states that "in the Middle Ages they change their boundaries, divide and combine in a way which proves them to have no deep hold as institutions." He goes on to say that only infangetheof (the trial of thieves caught in the act) and frankpledge came within the competence of hundred courts, and concludes that the hundred must have been introduced about the time of Edward's decree that detailed the organisation of hundreds in general.<sup>1</sup>

A comparison of the sizes of the lathe, the hundred and the

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1. J.E.A. Jolliffe, Pre-feudal England : The Jutes (Oxford U.P. 1933) pp. 121-122.

settlement indicates why the three levels were needed. In Domesday the lathes were about 160 sulungs each, which is probably about three times the size of the Wessex hundred.<sup>1</sup> The size of the hundred varied, averaging  $14\frac{1}{2}$  sulungs in Borowart lest, ranging from 3 yokes (Fordwich) to 68 sulungs (Isle of Thanet). Limowart hundreds averaged about  $5\frac{1}{2}$  sulungs ranging from  $2\frac{1}{2}$  sulungs (Rolvenden) to 24 sulungs  $2\frac{1}{2}$  virgates (Bircholt). The Wiwart average was about 8 sulungs, ranging from 2 yokes (Theterham) to 44 (Faversham). Milton Regis was a royal estate of 84 sulungs which is listed as a lathe and a hundred in Domesday. In Aylesford the average was about  $13\frac{1}{2}$  sulungs, the range from 2 sulungs (Washlingstone) to  $61\frac{3}{4}$  (Hoo). In Sutton hundreds averaged  $15\frac{1}{2}$  sulungs and ranged from 7 sulungs (Westerham) to  $49\frac{3}{4}$  (Axton). Eastry had the highest average, 25 sulungs, in a range from  $1\frac{1}{2}$  sulungs (Summerden) to 40 sulungs (Wingham).<sup>2</sup> The overall average was about 24 sulungs per hundred if Milton is included, or about  $13\frac{1}{2}$  if it is not. In other words, the Kentish hundreds were either one half or one quarter the size of the West Saxon ones.

The size of the Kentish settlement in relation to the Midlands is a problem, for Kent has "hamlets" while the Midlands have "villages". There were about 350 settlements recorded in Domesday Kent which when divided into the 1151 sulungs recorded gives an average settlement size

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1. Probably sulung = 2 hides, though the evidence is ambiguous; the theoretical 100 hides to a hundred was one-third the 320 hides of a Kentish lathe.
  2. Figures taken from Jolliffe, "The Hidation of Kent," EHR XLIV (1929), 613-616.

of 3 sulungs. But this is not accurate, for it includes the large manors like Milton Regis or Hoo which could easily have contained more than one settlement. And related documents such as the Domesday Monachorum recording dues owed to Christchurch, Canterbury, or the Textus Roffensis entries of the late eleventh century add about 150 settlements,<sup>1</sup> which brings down the average size to a little over 2 sulungs, or 4 hides, at most. The Midland villages were "very commonly rated at five or some low multiple of five hides, ten, fifteen or twenty".<sup>2</sup> Maitland lists the hidage of 100 charters granted A.D.840-956 and counts 18 grants of 5 hides, 16 of 10, six of 15, 13 of 20, 3 of 25 and 4 over 30. He assumes that each is a grant of a village, as this was the normal royal practice.<sup>3</sup> If he is correct, the average number of hides per village was 10, or  $2\frac{1}{2}$  times the size of the Kentish hamlet. A look at the relative populations produces a similar conclusion. There were about 25 households in an average Kentish settlement, and Maitland finds about the same number in the Midland villages.<sup>4</sup> Thus the population is much denser in Kent (c.6 per hide) than in the Midlands (c.2.5 per hide), though Maitland finds them about the same.<sup>5</sup> But Maitland's density figures are based on modern acreage while the above ones consider only the arable, a far more

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1. Darby and Campbell, Domesday Geography, p. 495. see map 4
  2. F.M. Maitland, Domesday Book and Beyond [DBB] (Cambridge U.P. 1897), p. 494.
  3. Ibid.
  4. Ibid., p. 18.
  5. Ibid., p. 20.

accurate basis.

It is very interesting that Maitland thinks that the inhabitants of Devonshire probably used the hundred for many of the disputes handled by the villages of Central England.<sup>1</sup> For Devon, like Kent, was a countryside of hamlets. But it was far less densely populated, so probably would not need a layer above the hundred; all administration could be handled by the one.<sup>unit</sup> Kent, as a densely-populated region of small settlements, seems to have needed two administrative levels between the hamlet and the shire, whereas other areas only needed one. Hence, Kent had both the lathes of the native kings and the West Saxon hundreds.

Kent, then, was settled in four major areas which remained the centres of population and became the basis for the administrative system within the county. This is only the first of four questions asked about the original settlement, and it is the most straightforward.

## 2. The Date of Settlement

The second question is the date of the settlement, traditionally given as 449 A.D., because Bede records that it was during the reign of Mauricius and Valentinian (449-55), and that the first settlers were given land by Vortigern tyrannus of Britain.<sup>2</sup> Excavated remains,

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1. DBB, p. 21.

2. HE, 1:15.

however, indicate that Saxon settlements in England began as early as the fourth century, when the Romans imported barbarian laeti as half-free settlers, given land in return for garrison duties. Richborough was probably the centre of a laeti camp as it was possibly the headquarters of the comes of the Saxon shore.<sup>1</sup> No pottery remains dated to before the fifth century have been found in Kent,<sup>2</sup> but buckles from Bifrons, Snodland and Richborough are typical of those worn by the barbarians settled by the Romans elsewhere during the fourth century. The buckles and similar metal pieces were made in Gaul and have been found along the northern and eastern borders of the Roman Empire.<sup>3</sup> In another article Hawkes dates these finds to the early fifth century, soon after the Roman withdrawal from Britain in 407 A.D.<sup>4</sup> Myres dates the earliest pottery found in Kent to about the same time, stating that it was found at Sarre in Thanet, Canterbury and Faversham.<sup>5</sup>

The mid-fifth century date for the arrival comes from Bede's chronological list in Book V, Chapter 24, who gained his information from Albinus of St. Augustine's and Gildas, De Excidio Britanniae. Albinus, a contemporary of Bede, sent the traditions of the settlement

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1. R.G. Collingwood and J.N.L. Myres, Roman Britain and the English Settlements (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1936), pp. 299-300.
  2. J.N.L. Myres, Anglo-Saxon Pottery and the English Settlements (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1969), p. 87.
  3. S.C. Hawkes, "Soldiers and Settlers in Britain, Fourth to Fifth Centuries," Medieval Archeology 5 (1961), 11-21.
  4. S.C. Hawkes, "Early Anglo-Saxon Kent," Archeological Journal CXXVI (1969), 184.
  5. Myres, Pottery, pp. 95-97.

remembered in Kent. Gildas wrote about A.D. 540, but included no dates or personal or place names. Thus the literary evidence cannot provide accurate dating, though the chronology of Gildas makes a later date than c.450 highly unlikely.

Archeological dating is also imprecise, as it is relative.

In Kent, fourth-century buckles have been found, but only fifth-century pottery. The first remembered settlers were given land by treaty from a British prince, not a Roman magistrate. Thus, the first settlements probably occurred after the withdrawal of Roman troops in A.D. 407. Possibly the earlier buckles had been used by the settlers before they came to Britain, or possibly they survived from laeti of whom there is otherwise no trace. In either case, it is clear that the first significant settlement of Anglo-Saxons occurred in Kent some time between A.D. 407 and A.D. 450. Gildas' and Bede's account of a group of settlers given land by treaty in return for military aid and revolting when inadequately paid parallels conditions on the Continent. And the three battles fought by Hengist and Horsa recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle <sup>1</sup> are also recorded by Nennius.<sup>2</sup> It is especially interesting that the victories recorded in the Chronicle have no result given by Nennius and the same is true of Welsh victories in Nennius. For the two accounts are independent of each other, but based on a common

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1. Agælesbrep (? Aylesford) in 455; Crecgauford (? Crayford) in 456; Wippedesfleet (?) in 465. See Wallenberg, KPN, pp. 83, 286 n.

2. Historia Brittonum, cited by J. Morris, "Dark Age Dates," Britain and Rome, ed. M.G. Jarrett and B.D. Dobson, (Kendal 1965), p. 117. The three battles are Derguentid (Darent) 2 miles from Crayford, Episford / .....

origin, as the names show.<sup>1</sup> The third battle was a Welsh victory that halted the English advance for about ten years, until the English victory recorded in the Chronicle under the year 473. The border presumably was fixed at Crayford where the English won in 455. It is interesting that Crayford was almost on the border of Kent until 1889, when London absorbed Kent's north-west corner.

### 3. The Racial Origin of the Settlers

The third question asked about the original settlement was the origin of the settlers, since Jolliffe traces the hamlet settlement and the lathe back to settlers who came from a different part of Europe. Bede states that the settlers of Britain in the mid-fifth century were Angles, Saxons and Jutes, and that the Jutes settled Kent. Bede did not call Hengist, the leader of the settlers, a Jute. When he had listed the three peoples he stated that their leaders "were two brothers, Hengist and Horsa; they were sons of Wihthgils".<sup>2</sup> Beowulf includes a lay about a Hengist who was chief thegn of Hnæf, a Danish leader. Hnæf's brother-in-law and murderer was Finn, king of the Eoti or Frisians. G.W. Ward has reasoned convincingly that the two Hengists were the same man, because the Hengist of Beowulf took service

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/Epsiford (or Rithergabail, "Horseford") and juxta lapidum tituli qui est super ripam Gallici maris and a portus (? Richborough).

1. Ibid.

2. HE, 1:15.

with Finn after Hnæf's death, and so violated a basic law of honour. Ward argued that Hengist came to Britain after Finn was killed because he was unable to obtain new service under a Germanic leader.<sup>1</sup>

There are many fifth- and sixth-century Frisian remains in England, but they are not listed by Bede among the peoples settling England. In Beowulf the Eoti are a tribe or a band that live in Frisia, which may well indicate that Bede was referring to the Frisians when he used the word Jutae. In Beowulf, however, Hengist is not a Jute but a Hocingas Dane, who in the "Finnsburg Fragment" became leader of a band of Frisians under their king, Finn.<sup>2</sup>

The settlers of Kent spoke the same language as the settlers elsewhere in Britain, and it is impossible to trace the differences in dialect to different continental origins. For the oldest Kentish documents in original manuscripts<sup>3</sup> differ chiefly in spelling from contemporary non-Kentish ones.

Jolliffe<sup>4</sup> argues that the administrative and agricultural structure of Kent parallels that of the Rhineland and differs from both the ~~system~~ of the Midlands and that of the northern German forests. For the settlements of Kent and the Rhineland were small with compact

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1. G.W. Ward, "Hengist," Arch.Cant. 61 (1949), 77ff.

2. Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg, ed. F. Klaeber (Boston: D.C. Heath, 1950); trans. J.R. Clark Hall (London: Swan Sonnenschein 1911).

3. SEHD no. 1, of A.D. 805 X 810; Oswulf ealdorman and his wife Beornthryth, to Christchurch (MS contemporary).

4. Pre-feudal England, pp. 102-116.

holdings farmed individually, while the other group lived in centralised villages with common fields held in scattered strips. In law most fines varied by rank, especially the value of a man's life (his wergeld). Kentish and Frankish law valued a nobleman three times more highly than the commoner, while late Saxon law valued him six times more highly. And the legal language of Kent (e.g. leodgeld, sele, mæthl) parallels Frankish usage but not West Saxon (e.g. wergeld, tun, gemot). The customs recorded in Kent and Frankia are also very close, especially in the terms of gavelkind in the fourteenth century and de alodibus in the sixth-century Lex Salica.

Each of Jolliffe's arguments can be challenged by the examination of more detail. The settlement pattern is not only parallel in Kent and the Rhineland, but also in the Celtic parts of Britain, and in Northumbria. Not all the Midlands was farmed in strips; East Anglia had compact holdings in its villages. The evidence of Domesday Book suggests that the areas with strip farming were those where each village had its own lord, while in areas like Kent and East Anglia the manors and villages were not coterminous. The pattern of holdings within a settlement seems to have been more the result of the amount of economic independence the tenants had, than of <sup>one</sup> particular racial origin or another.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Denmark in 1800 abolished the great manors and parcelled out the village holdings among the tenants. Very shortly thereafter the holdings were rearranged from strips to consolidated plots, and eventually hamlets and isolated farms replaced villages to some extent.

The different wergeld ratios between Wessex and Kent may also be due to something other than tradition. There is a class in the laws of Ine and Alfred who have a 500-shilling wergeld, a class not found in the later laws when the thegn's wergeld of 1200 shillings was six times the ceorl's. Several explanations of the class have been offered, including Chadwick's that they were gesids without land,<sup>1</sup> and Stenton's that they were Welsh nobles.<sup>2</sup> Another explanation is possible, that 600 shillings was the original noble wergeld, so that Kentish and West Saxon ratios were identical. Kings and ealdormen had double wergelds, half from their rank and half from their office.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the cyninges thegns did as well, and when "thegn" came to refer to the nobleman in general and not just to a king's servant, the wergeld of the thegn was retained and that of the gesid was not. In Ine's laws occurs a parallel, in that the burgbryce of a cyninges bearn was 60 shillings while that of a gesid was 35 shillings.<sup>4</sup>

The terms of tenure common to the Consuetudinés Kancie and the Lex Salica can be found elsewhere as well. Partible inheritance is

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1. H.M. Chadwick, Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions (Cambridge U.P. 1905), pp. 94-98.
  2. F.M. Stenton, Anglo-Saxon England (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1947), p. 481, because Ine (24.2): "The wergeld of a Welshman who holds five hides of land shall be 600 shillings." Perhaps they were entitled to a full noble wergeld if they held the required amount of land.
  3. Chadwick, Institutions, pp. 161-163.
  4. The king's burgbryce was 120s., the ealdorman's was 80s. Alfred (40) states that the ealdorman's burgbryce was 60s., the 1200 man's was 30s., and the 600 man's 15s.

also found in Wales;<sup>1</sup> gafol, or rent in money and kind, parallels cornage and dregnage found in Northumbria.<sup>2</sup> And 11 Cnut 19:

And no one shall make distraint of property either within the shire or outside it, until he has appealed for justice [three times in the hundred court].

§1. If on the third occasion he does not obtain justice, he shall go on the fourth occasion to the shire court, and the shire court shall appoint a day when he shall issue his summons for the fourth time.

§2. And if this summons fails, he shall get leave, either from one court or the other, to take his own measures for the recovery of the property.<sup>3</sup>

which is very similar to gavelate, the procedure by which the lord claimed land when the tenant failed to pay gafol. The failure to pay was proclaimed three times at the lord's own court, then once at the sheriff's. The land sat waste for a year and a day, after which the lord could farm it, unless the tenant paid his wergeld or nine years' rent.<sup>4</sup>

Jolliffe's arguments for a Frankish origin of Kentish society, then, are weak, as parallels elsewhere can be found. Only the similarities of technical language remain as possible evidence. And they could easily be explained by the fact that St. Augustine had Frankish assistants, and the laws were drawn up soon after the conversion of

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1. VCH Kent, 3:324-8.

2. See G.W.S. Barrow, "Northern English Society in the Early Middle Ages," Northern History 4 (1969), 1-28.

3. Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I, trans. Robertson (Cambridge U.P. 1925), p. 193.

4. Jolliffe, Pre-feudal England, p. 37.

Æthelberht when St. Augustine's familia must have been the only ones who knew how to write.

Archeological evidence about the settlers makes it clear that they were a thoroughly mixed lot, for they have left remains paralleling those left by most of the peoples of north-western Europe. But in different periods the parallels are closer to one part of Europe than to the others. In the late fifth century the pottery used in Kent was most similar to that used in Frisia and the north-west coast of Germany,<sup>1</sup> while brooch styles also show strong Jutish influence. The gold bracteates are especially significant, as they have been found only in Kent and in Denmark.<sup>2</sup> In the sixth century the people left no pottery other than imported wheel-made "bottle" vases,<sup>3</sup> and their jewellery shows strong Frankish influence.<sup>4</sup> Kent became much wealthier and more sophisticated in the sixth century and some time around mid-century began to produce unique jewellery that combined Jutish and Frankish elements. About the same time Æthelberht began his conquest of southern England, after a defeat by the Wessex kings Ceawlin and Cutha.<sup>5</sup> Æthelberht married a Frankish princess, Bertha the daughter of King Charibert of Paris. Her retinue is a possible source of Frankish

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1. Myres, Pottery, Map 7.

2. C.F.C. Hawkes, "The Jutes of Kent," Dark Age Britain : Studies Presented to E.T. Leeds, ed. D.B. Harden (London: Methuen, 1956), pp. 97-99; and E.T. Leeds, "Notes on Jutish Art in Kent," Medieval Archeology 1 (1957), 9-13.

3. Myres, Pottery, p. 110.

4. C.F.C. Hawkes, "The Jutes of Kent," p. 104.

influence as is the trade which undoubtedly prompted the marriage.<sup>1</sup> Kent was the closest part of England to Frankia, and one of the richest kingdoms, a natural market for Frankish goods. Almost all the Frankish remains found are luxury items,<sup>2</sup> further evidence that trade and similar cultural contacts brought Frankish goods to Kent, not an influx of settlers.

The evidence about the origin of the inhabitants of Kent, then, indicates it to have been mixed with closest ties to Frisia and north-west Germany. Probably the tradition that Kent was settled by "Jutes" is correct, but the "Jutes" did not come from Jutland. The "Jutes" of Bede are most likely to have been the Eoti of Beowulf, a North Frisian tribe. But the Frisian "Jutes" were not the only settlers of Kent, merely the most numerous and best remembered ones. And it is very difficult to trace the origins of Kentish institutions in such a mixed beginning.

#### 4. The Survival of Previous Inhabitants

The final question about the origins of medieval Kent is the number of Britons that survived, and their influence on social origins. For there are very close institutional parallels between Kentish and

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1. <sup>See</sup> ASC, sub annum.

2. Myres, Pottery, pp. 109-111.

Celtic society, especially in the size of the settlements and in the inheritance laws. G.W.S. Barrow and William Rees have analysed the parallels between Northumbria and Wales and concluded that the two are so close that there must have been considerable British survival in Northern England.<sup>1</sup> Northumbrian and Kentish rents are very similar in their components during the Middle Ages, though one is called cornage and the other gafol. They are both rents in kind and money, as opposed to the service given in the Midlands. The inheritance laws of the Midlands passed on land through primogeniture, which made for much greater stability than was found in either Kent or Wales, where the land was fully alienable during the holder's lifetime but was divided between all his sons if he died intestate. In Wales land was divided by all second cousins, a peculiarity not found in Kent.<sup>2</sup>

Considerable British survival is not expected in Kent, however, because there is so little trace of Britons except through institutional parallels. Kentish place-names, for example, are almost entirely Old English. Wallenberg finds thirteen places with Celtic or Roman names: Canterbury from the Celtic tribe the Cantii and its Roman name Dorobernia used in charters throughout the Anglo-Saxon period; Reculver (OE Ra- or Reculf, Lat. Regulbi); the Stour (OE Stur from Celtic 'strong'); Rochester (Celtic duro + briva > OE Hrofi); the Lympe River and

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1. Barrow, "Northern English Society," 1-28; Rees, "Survivals of Ancient Celtic Custom in Medieval England," Angles and Britons: The O'Donnell Lectures (University of Wales Press, Cardiff 1963).

2. VCH 3:324-328.

Lyminge (Lat. Lemanis > OE linen); Sarre on Thanet (from Lat. serare); Blean Wood; the Cray; Faversham (OE Febres ham, from Lat. faber 'maker, manufacturer'); the Darent; Chatham, cæt hærst and Chattenden Wood; Eccles (from Lat. ecclesia); Maidstone if the Medway is Celtic, though <sup>its origin is</sup> ~~not~~ usually considered Old English med or medu + weg; and Dover (Brit. Dubrae, OE Dofras, both nominative plural). Wallenberg lists five possibly Celtic names: Chislet, Cilling, Lind cyl(e)ne ("line /kila"), Cessingedene and Keston. Some scholars, he states, consider Cooling, Thanet, Impkins and Teston are Celtic, but he disagrees. Thanet he claims is Old English because the Celtic name for the island was Ruim.<sup>1</sup>

The places Wallenberg lists include the major rivers of Kent, and four (possibly five with Maidstone) of the early regiones. All of the major Roman town and fort names survived: Durobriva, Durobernia, Lemanis, Regulbum, and Rutupia (not in Wallenberg's Kentish Place Names, but the Oxford Dictionary of Placenames shows Rutupia > Repta-cæstis in Bede > Raette in DMon > Ratteborg in 1197 > Retesborough in the fourteenth century > Richborough). The river and major town names could easily have been known to the settlers, especially since they came as foederati. About ten minor place-names were possibly Celtic, of the more than 500 old English ones known. None of the definitely Celtic names are minor, except Sarre which has fourth-century

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1. KPN, see index.

buckles that often indicate laeti settlements. And laeti would probably use existing names, since they came as individuals. Thus the Celtic names that survived in Kent were probably those known by the settlers before they arrived, and cannot be used as evidence for British survival.

Three place-names may include the word wealh "Welshman":  
(via the pers. n.  
Dunwaling land, Dunwalla "Dark Briton", according to Wallenberg),<sup>1</sup> ~~via~~  
~~the names of~~ Walmer and Walton. Such names usually indicate a specific group in a mixed community and so would suggest some British survival. The names could, however, also describe the terrain <sup>since</sup> walu 'ridge, bank' combines in a name in the same form wal-.

The law codes may indicate that some Britons survived since three classes called laets appear with wergelds of 80, 60 and 40 shillings, compared with the ceorl's wergeld of 100s. On the Continent the letus was half-free and had half the wergeld of a free man. Usually his fines were also half the free man's, but sometimes they were equal.<sup>2</sup> In clause 42.4 Romans and leti who were killed both received half the free man's wergeld. But under the Romans the laeti were Germans and the leti of Salic law are considered their descendants. The distinction made in law 42.2 supports the view.

Ine's laws specify three classes of Welshman. Those holding <sup>one</sup> ~~hide~~

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1. KPN, p. 112.

2. Ethelberht 7, 21; and Lex Salica 13.7, 26.1, 35.5, 35.8, 42.4, 50.1, 77.2, 83.2.

have a 120s. wergeld, those with  $\frac{1}{2}$  hide have 80s., those with no land 60s.<sup>1</sup> The laets of Kent, in comparison, have 80, 60 and 40 shilling wergelds which seems a parallel. Wealh later also meant "slave", but it seems not to in Ine, for in 74 occurs the word feowwealh 'Welsh slave'.

There is a possibility, then, that the Britons survived as laeti in Kent. Since the class vanished long before any sort of population statistics are available, it is impossible to say how large a class there was or what proportion of the total population were laets. Probably both were small, as the class vanishes so completely.

It seems unlikely that a people who left very little linguistic remains would leave many institutional ones, especially if those who survived were half-free or in slavery. Many factors can influence the establishment of institutions in a new settlement. Tradition is one; the class relationships and ratios are another. H.R. Loyn finds a third: he states that the hamlet settlements of Kent may have been the result of greater security. The frontier was in the Chilterns and Kentish kings were strong into the seventh century.<sup>2</sup>

Partible inheritance in Kent and the payment of gafol in kind and money seem in particular the result of factors other than tribal custom. For one thing the peoples of Europe by the fifth century did

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1. Clause 32.

2. H.R. Loyn, Anglo-Saxon England and the Norman Conquest (Longmans Green, London 1962), p. 41.

not live in distinct tribes. For another, partible inheritance was the usual practice throughout Europe. Even kingdoms were divided equally among all the sons of the king. And from the twelfth century dues are paid in money, kind or service, depending on what the lord preferred and the tenant was willing to pay. Kentish peasants, being wealthier, were able to avoid payment through service more easily than most.

Four aspects of the original settlement have been examined to see what could be learned about the background of Kentish society. The geography of Kent was a major factor in social development, because the arable, marshy and forest lands were in separate areas of the kingdom and so holdings were widely scattered. The population was concentrated in specific areas which made a more sophisticated government necessary when the gaps within the regions were filled. Kent's location in the south-east corner of England was also important because it lay closest to the Frankish kingdoms. Watling Street led from Dover to Canterbury to London and was a major trading route. There is no direct evidence of trade, but it seems the most reasonable explanation for the Frankish luxury goods found in sixth-century Kentish contexts. It also explains Æthelberht's marriage to Bertha of Paris and probably his conquest of England below the Humber. St. Augustine came to Kent first, in part because it was closest and in part because of Æthelberht's power.

Racial factors seem the least useful in explaining origins, because the settlers were so mixed and came from a complex environment.

There were many "Germanic", "Celtic" and "Roman" elements in western European society, so completely mixed that it seems impossible to know which are which. And one people can influence another in so many ways other than through settling together. Furthermore, the differences between Kent and the Midlands *were* differences of detail, such as the size of the settlements. The averages in Domesday Book are not very far apart — 4 hides in Kent versus 10 hides in the Midlands, and 25 households versus 30. The size of population in the Kentish hamlets seems much closer to that of the Midlands than to that of Devon, where there were about five or six households per hamlet. Thus density was an important factor in the development of Kentish society, and explains much of the administration, especially the regiones.

## CHAPTER II

### THE DEVELOPMENT UNDER FOREIGN KINGS

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One other factor is especially important in explaining the development of Kentish society. This is the conquest of Kent by the larger kingdoms of Wessex and Mercia. For it freed land from the necessity of supporting the king; his lands were elsewhere. The dues formerly paid to the kings could be devoted to other uses, such as bequests to the Church and rewards to laymen. At the same time more sophisticated and complex government was needed, since the king could not be in every part of a large kingdom at once. Hence the creation of shires, each with its ealdorman,<sup>1</sup> within Wessex and the provinciae with subreguli or duces in Mercia.<sup>2</sup> The royal officials were granted bocland which had been royal estates. Thus the dues were still paid but they went to the Church or a royal official instead of to the king himself.

The interaction of Kentish and Mercian or West Saxon practice

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1. The word ealdorman first occurs in Ine, Preamble 6.2, 36.1, 45, 50, while scire is found in 8, 31.1; the institutions, therefore, dated at least from the late seventh century.
2. Mercian charters call Kent a provincia, especially Coenwulf's (796-821); the rulers of the Hwicce and of East Anglia were called subreguli, while duces appear throughout the charters.

can be studied in two periods: 597-825 when Kent fell from an independent kingdom to a Mercian provincia, and 825-1066 when Kent was West Saxon. For Kent's reactions were different in each period. In the first the struggle for political independence is a major theme of Kentish history; in the second the people seem to have accepted their part in a larger state, though they retained a strong local pride. A comparison of the two periods will show to what extent the difference was due to different practices <sup>and Wessex</sup> by Mercia, and how much to outside factors, such as the Danish raids which began about 800 A.D.

## 1. Mercian Rule Provoked Revolt

### (a) Political developments

By 597 Athelberht of Kent was Bretwalda or overlord of all southern Britain. His power was slipping, however, by the time of his death in 616. Rædwald of East Anglia was the next Bretwalda, and probably conquered Kent. The next three Bretwaldas were Northumbrian, and Bede states that they controlled all England but Kent.<sup>1</sup> As Edwin of Northumbria "conquered all Britain except Kent alone" in 617,<sup>2</sup> Kent's subjugation was short-lived.

For most of the seventh century Bede and the Chronicle record

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1. HE, II:5.

2. ASC, MS E, s.a. 617.

little more than the kings' names and their attitude toward Christianity. The first additional record is a hint that King Egberht (664-73) was overlord of Surrey since a charter of King Frithewald of Surrey says he founded Chertsey Abbey there.<sup>1</sup> But Frithewald is provincia Surrianorum subregulus Regis Wlfarii Merciorum.

The Chronicle records that in 676 King Æthelred of Mercia ravaged Kent. Two of his charters of that year claim to be grants of Erith and Swanscombe to Chertsey. But neither estate belonged to Chertsey later, and the manuscripts are very late (sixteenth and seventeenth century). Sawyer records divided opinions, but most scholars he cites consider the charter a fabrication that embodies authentic material.<sup>2</sup> Hart hypothesises that Æthelred did grant Erith and Swanscombe to Chertsey but Kentish kings ignored the grants when they returned to power.<sup>3</sup> The charter is the only evidence that Æthelred did anything more than overrun Kent, causing much destruction.

Hlothhere followed Egberht, and his son Eadric ruled with Hlothhere at some point in his reign. For Hlothhere and Eadric issued a law code together, though no joint charters survive. Presumably Eadric joined his father shortly before Hlothhere's death in 684 or 685.<sup>4</sup> Eadric died in 686, and was succeeded by "reges dubii

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1. BCS no. 34, "... Monasterium quod primo sub Rege Egberto constructum est ..."

2. No. 1246.

3. The Early Charters of Eastern England, ed. and trans. by C.R. Hart (Leicester U.P. 1966), 144.

4. Bede, HE, 4.26, gives both dates.

vel externii".<sup>1</sup> Their names are found in later charters which are *mostly* accepted as genuine.

The first was Cædwalla of Wessex whose brother Mul ravaged Kent in 686 and was burned there with twelve of his men in 687. Cædwalla ravaged Kent again, undoubtedly in revenge.<sup>2</sup> Charter BCS 89 is attributed to Cædwalla, and to Swæbheard who regranted the land with confirmations by Wihtried and Æthelred of Mercia. It is a grant of Hoo to Abbot Ægbald (of Medeshamstede) and is generally considered a post-Conquest forgery.

Two other kings have left charters, Oswin and Swæbheard. Originally they were assigned to 673-6, but that date produces a discrepancy in the dates of Hlothhere's reign. His charters claim that he ruled from 673, and Bede states that he ruled for eleven years and four months before his death. Bede further states that Wihtried (690-725) and Swæbheard ruled together in 692; Swæbheard is undoubtedly the same man as the Suabhardus of the charters.<sup>3</sup>

Oswin's third charter is dated "anno secundo regni mei, indicatione autem tertia, sub die .vi. kalend. Februarii [17 January 690]",<sup>4</sup> which means his rule began some time between 18 Jan. 688 and 16 Jan. 689. F.W. Ward decided he was the son of Ethelberht, one of Eormen-

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1. Ibid.

2. ASC, s.a.

3. BCS 41, 42; Bede, HE.

4. BCS no. 40. Oswin's other charters are BCS 73 of 689, and BCS 35, n.d.

berht's two murdered sons,<sup>1</sup> because Oswin's charters claim he was a close relative of Abbess Ebba, the sister of the murdered men, and that he ruled by hereditary right.<sup>2</sup>

Swæbheard's charters claimed he was the son of King Sebbi of Essex. A Swæbheard signed Oswin's charters, and Ward hypothesized that both Swæbheards were the same man.

The charters of both kings were confirmed by Æthelred of Mercia.<sup>3</sup> The next king, Wihtred, had no recorded overlord once he paid Mul's wergeld of "30,000" to Ine, if indeed that indicates anything more than buying off a feud. But Bede states Wihtred's rule began in 690,<sup>4</sup> while the Chronicle gives the year as 694. Since Swæbheard had Æthelred as his overlord and since Bede records that he was Wihtred's co-king, the year 694 must be when Wihtred became an independent king, ending an eight-year period of Mercian rule and West Saxon ravaging.

Records again provide merely the kings' names and dates until 748, when the Chronicle records Eadberht's death and Æthelberht's succession. Bede records that they ruled jointly with their brother Alric from Wihtred's death in 725.<sup>5</sup> Alric must have died soon after

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1. ASC, MS E, s.a. 640.

2. "I Oswin king of the men of Kent humbly return thanks to Almighty God who has confirmed me in the kingdom of my fathers, and vouchsafed me the inheritance of my family" (G.W. Ward, "King Oswin - A Forgotten Ruler of Kent," Arch.Cant. 50 (1938), p. 61).

3. BCS 42, 73.

4. HE, 5:24.

5. HE, 5:23

Bede, for there is no other record of him, and he signs no charters after Wihtrred's.<sup>1</sup> The editor of the Rolls Series edition of Symeon of Durham considers that the Alric who was killed with Æsc on 23 August 732 is the same man as Alric, the son of Wihtrred.<sup>2</sup> The deaths of Alric and Æsc, however, are only mentioned in that chronicle. Æthelberht's charters continue until 762,<sup>3</sup> while Eadberht's latest is dated 761.<sup>4</sup> Both seem clearly to have ruled from A.D. 725 to 761, when Eadberht died. Four kings seem to have held the throne in 761, Æthelberht, Eadberht, Sigereð and Eardwulf. Eardwulf may have come to the throne in 747 as his first charter has witnesses who died before 760. But the charter is a late copy and is not signed by his father Eadberht, which argues for a date after his death. Eardwulf's next charter appears in 767, and it seems odd that there would be no reference to him if he was king for twenty years.<sup>5</sup>

Under Wihtrred's sons Mercian control seems at most sporadic, and there is no trace of West Saxon interference. Four of the five Mercian grants to Kentish churches are of tolls on ships in London,

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1. He signs BCS nos. 91, 92: see p. 11, n. 3 above.
  2. W.G. Searle, Onomasticon Anglo-Saxonicum (Cambridge U.P. 1897), under "Alric".
  3. BCS no. 191, earliest MS 13th century, considered authentic.
  4. BCS no. 193, earliest MS 13th century, considered authentic. He also signs a charter of King Sigereð (761-765), BCS no. 189, earliest MS 13th century.
  5. His two charters are BCS nos. 175 and 176; 176 is contemporary.

while the fifth is a spurious grant of general privileges, probably forged in the late ninth century.<sup>1</sup> Offa, king of Mercia (759-796) grants charters in 764-5, 774 and 785-96. His puppets include Heahberht (c.765) and possibly originally Ecgberht (765-785).<sup>2</sup> Ecgberht revolted in 775 and was able to issue charters without Offa's signature until 785.<sup>3</sup> After 785 no Kentish kings are recorded except Eadberht Præn who led a revolt in 796 and was dragged by Coenwulf to Mercia in 798. <sup>later</sup> No Kentish king issued charters, other than Cuthred, Coenwulf's brother. Cuthred signed some Mercian charters as dux, but he is rex cantuariorum in almost all the charters related to Kent. He issued coins only as king of Kent and the Chronicle records his death in 807.<sup>4</sup> After Cuthred died, there was no subking in Kent, except for a Baldred who is recorded only in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle when King Ecgberht of Wessex drove him "north over Thames" in 825.<sup>5</sup>

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1. BCS nos. 149, 150, 152, 177; none is original, but all are considered authentic. The grant of privileges is BCS no. 162.
  2. See BCS no. 195 (grant by Offa, signed by Heahberht, MS 12th century) and no. 196 (grant by Ecgberht, signed by Heahberht and confirmed by Offa, MS 12th century). Both are considered authentic.
  3. See ASC, s.a. 773, where the Mercians and Kentish men fought at Otford; no result is given. Ecgberht's charters are BCS nos. 196, 227 (contemporary), 228, 260, all authentic.
  4. As dux Cuthred signs BCS no. 295 of 799, grant of Kempsey, and no. 293 of 799 to Christchurch; as rex from 801 to 807. See ASC, s.a. 805.
  5. ASC, s.a. 823; Searle (Onomasticon) states that there are coins in his name. See BCS no. 421 in which Ecgberht and Æthelwulf restore to Christchurch land at Malling, Sussex, donated by Baldred while in flight and confiscated by Ecgberht (MS contemporary).

(b) Administrative modifications

Political unrest was one of the major factors influencing Kentish society in the period 616 to 825, and control by an outside power became another factor by 760. Almost nothing can be known about these factors, as the only evidence comes from a comparison of Kentish and Mercian charters.

(i) The consolidation of the archbishops

Two groups of charters reflect the political situation directly. One is the quarrels of Archbishop Æthelheard with Offa's widow who became Abbess of Cookham and of Wulfred with Coenwulf's heiress, Abbess Cwenthryth of Winchcombe and Southminster in Thanet. A charter of 798<sup>1</sup> states that Cookham in Berkshire was given to Christchurch, Canterbury, by Æthelbald of Mercia, but in 758 Daegheah and Osbert stole the title-deeds and gave them to King Cynewulf of Wessex. Despite many complaints by the archbishops of Canterbury, the deeds were not returned. Nor was the estate, which had been overrun by Offa. Cynewulf eventually did return the deeds, but Offa gave Cookham to his wife Cynethryth. Finally in 798 a council at Cloveshoh decided she should give the archbishop 100 manenses in Kent in order to keep Cookham. They were 60 cassati in Fleet, 30 in Tenham and 20 at cræves æuuelma (? Newell at Orpington).

The quarrels with Cwentryth were the "test case" in the Church's

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1. BHD, I, no. 79; earliest MS 13th century, considered authentic.

struggle against lay abbacy. In the first charter<sup>1</sup> Wulfred claimed that Cwenthryth had taken Oesevalūn (Easole) which Aldberht and his sister Abbess Selethryth had granted him, though the boc went to Folkstone. Aldberht's relative Oswulf comes stole the boc and gave it to Cwenthryth. Wulfred, however, had no trouble recovering the land at the Council of Cloveshoh of 824. Their second quarrel was far more serious and was not resolved until 825.<sup>2</sup> Coenwulf had deprived Wulfred of Southminster and Reculver, two Kentish monasteries. During their quarrel Wulfred was in exile for six years, and was only able to return when he paid £120 and gave Eynsham to Coenwulf. In return Coenwulf promised to restore Wulfred to his full authority or give back the money. When Southminster failed to pay its dues of money, clothing and obedience to Wulfred for three years, the quarrel flared anew, not to be settled until the reign of Beornwulf at Cloveshoh. Cwenthryth was to give Wulfred 100 hides at Harrow, Herefreding lond, Wembley and Yedding, Middlesex, in return for the end of Wulfred's claims on Southminster. Twelve months later she had failed to hand over the 47 hides of boc land, Wembley and Herefreding lond, and Wulfred reopened the quarrel. Cwenthryth finally handed over the rest of the bocs, plus those for 30 hides at Coombe, Kent, as a pledge for good behaviour. The quarrel was finally settled, only to be reopened after the West Saxon takeover a few months later.

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1. BCS no. 378 of A.D. 824, MS contemporary.

2. BCS no. 384, MS contemporary.

The first quarrel shows the archbishops' troubles that arose from owning land along the Mercian-West Saxon border. Their reaction was to withdraw from the area and concentrate their holdings in Kent. Wulfred used the opportunity to consolidate Christchurch estates, buying land near estates he already held and combining several smaller estates for more efficient management.<sup>1</sup> The second set of quarrels was a part of the general European movement to keep the Church free of lay control, a movement that recurred throughout the Middle Ages. Wulfred had been archdeacon of Christchurch and was installed as archbishop because his Mercian predecessors had been unpopular. He seems, from the volume of the charters granted him<sup>2</sup> and the quarrels he undertook, to have aimed at keeping Mercian influence in Kent as low as possible by substituting an archbishopric with extensive and well-managed estates and with considerable authority over the inhabitants. For the people of Kent are recorded as never having lost their pride in the kingdom, and Wulfred's actions were undoubtedly an attempt to focus that pride anew, once independence seemed a thing of the past. He seems to have succeeded, because Coenwulf's successor Beornwulf was able to assume control in Kent immediately, and Mercian charters continue to 825 without a break.

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1. N.P. Brooks, The Pre-Conquest Charters of Christ Church, Canterbury (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1969), pp. 254-271.

2. BCS nos. 322 (contemporary), 328 (suspicious), 335 (contemporary), 340 (?), 341 (contemporary), 344 (genuine), 346 (?), 348 (contemporary), 353 (contemporary), 370 (contemporary), 373 (contemporary), 400 (contemporary).

(ii) The amount of integration within the Mercian empire

The second group of charters that reflect the political situation are the grants to laymen; for the earliest surviving grant to a laymen of land in Kent comes from 785<sup>1</sup> and all such grants found are from the Mercian kings. Two motives seem possible: first, the need to reward and feed royal officials, and second, the desire to have loyal men, i.e. Mercians, in Kent to lessen the chance of revolt. Seven men received grants in charters that survive: Aldberht minister (with his sister Selethryth Abbess) in 785, 786 and 805; Osberht minister in 788; Oswulf dux in 798; Swithhun minister in 801; Æthelnoth prefectus between 805 and 807; Eadwulf minister in 808; and Swithnoth in 814.<sup>2</sup> Only Eadwulf witnesses charters outside Kent; he signs four from Worcestershire, two from Sussex and four from Kent.<sup>3</sup> Oswulf, Swithhun and Æthelnoth are presumably Kentishmen, because they sign charters of Egberht, Eardwulf and Sigered of Kent,<sup>4</sup> including some while Kent was independent.

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1. BCS no. 247, MS contemporary.
  2. Aldberht: BCS nos. 247, 248 (suspicious), 1336 (antiquary's copy); Osberht: BCS no. 254 (contemporary); Oswulf: BCS no. 259 (contemporary); Swithhun: BCS no. 303 (probably authentic); Æthelnoth: BCS no. 341 (contemporary); Eadwulf: BCS no. 326 (contemporary); Swithnoth: BCS no. 343, tr. Cowper, Arch.Cant., 1915 (contemporary).
  3. Worcestershire: BCS nos. 351, 364, 379, 386; Sussex: BCS no. 1334, 387; Kent: BCS nos. 291, 319, 343, 348. Since he signs royal and ecclesiastical charters in all three places and a grant of Dux Oslac of Sussex (no. 1334), he is probably from Sussex.
  4. Oswulf: (no title) BCS no. 225 of Egberht 779; Swithhun: BCS no. 193 of Sigered 761x765; Æthelnoth: BCS no. 193.

It seems that the Mercians did not follow an extensive policy of infiltrating the Kentish aristocracy, since so few of the men receiving bocland were Mercian. And they did make at least two Kentishmen duces (OE ealdormen), i.e. officials in charge of a provincia, directly under themselves.

A second indication that the aristocracy of the various parts of England under Mercian rule did not become particularly mixed comes from a comparison of the charters of various areas. Offa's early charters in Kent seem to have been witnessed by both his officials and those of the Kentish kings, as a comparison of three charters of 775-780 shows. BCS no. 227, a 779 grant of Egberht of Kent in an original manuscript, is witnessed by Egcbertus rex Cant', Iaenberhtus archiepiscopus, Escuuald presbyter, Uban, Boban, Uualhard, Ubban, Aldhun, Sigered, Esni, Eaniardi. BCS no. 230, a 778 grant of Offa to his minister Duddanus of land in Gloucestershire in an original MS, is witnessed by Offa, Eadberhtus episcopi, Ceolulfo sacerdos, Tilbertus anti[stes], ... geberhtus electus praesul, Aldberhtus episcopus, Botuuine<sup>r</sup> abbas, Brordan principis, Berhtuualdi principis, Esne principis, Eadbaldi p<sup>r</sup>, Eanberhti principis, Eanbaldi principis, Esne principis, Brordan ducis and Bynni ducis. BCS no. 213, a 774 grant of Offa to Jaenberht archbishop of Canterbury of land in Kent in a tenth-century copy, begins with their signatures and continues: Cynethrythe reginae, Eadberhti episcopi, Aldberhti abbati, Brordan principis, Berhtuuoldi principis, Byrthuni episcopi, Ceoluulfi episcopi, Botuuini abbatis, Aethelwoldi abbatis, Eadberhti abbatis, Esne, Eadberhti,

Eadbaldi ducis, Boban, Badohardi, Brordani prefecti, Uuigheardi, Ciani, Folchberhti abbatis, Hearedi and Swithuni. Offa's grants in other subject areas such as Sussex and the Hwiccan kingdom show the same pattern when compared with those of the native rulers. Thus the grants do not show that Mercian kings mixed their aristocracy; Offa, at least, kept the aristocracy he found in the territories he conquered,<sup>1</sup> although undoubtedly he favoured those who supported him over those who did not.

Under Coenwulf the situation was slightly more complex. Many of his charters are signed by all or almost all of his duces, while those that are signed by one or two do not follow a pattern.<sup>2</sup> It seems that duces from all over Mercian territory witnessed the charters, and who signed was a result of who was present, not of the region involved in the grant itself. It is impossible, however, to draw a conclusion about witnesses below the rank of dux because only Kentish grants include them, and because original charters remain only from Kent. Perhaps the cartularies failed to copy the witnesses below the duces,

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1. East Anglia, Lindsey, Essex, Kent and Sussex. Middle Anglia, the Hwicce and the Magosetan had long been Mercian. See P. Hunter Blair, Anglo-Saxon England (Cambridge U.P. 1962), p. 53.
  2. E.g. 814-815: - BCS no. 344 (Kent): Eadberhti ducis, Ealhheardi ducis, Ceolwulfi ducis; BCS no. 346 (Kent): Eadberhti ducis, Ealhhardi ducis, Ceolulfi ducis, Headberhti ducis; BCS no. 348 (Kent): Heardberhti ducis, Ceolwulfi regis propinqui; BCS no. 350 (Worcestershire): Heardberhti dux, Beornod dux, Dynna dux, Ceolberht dux, Mucel dux, Ceolulf; BCS no. 351 (Worcestershire): Heardberht dux, Beornod dux; BCS no. 353 (Kent): Ceolwulf, Mucel dux, Ulfred dux.

considering them irrelevant. Or perhaps only the Kentish scriptoria included the consent of local men in the first place, a reflection of local pride and the distance from the centre of Mercian power.

Two charters specify that the witnesses are all from Kent, but both are in post-Conquest cartularies. The first is the grant of Coenwulf to Swithun,<sup>1</sup> signed by Coenwulf, Cuthred, Ceolberhti duci, Berthuni et Byrnwaldi comitum, and confirmed by Cuthred at Canterbury. His witnesses were Adilheard archbishop, Daegholm priest abbot, Heaberht, Oswulf, Egnulf, Almund, Beornheard, Esne, Ealdberht, Haelhfrid, Ealdberht, Osmod, Wiothert and Bealdheth. The second charter<sup>2</sup> is a grant of Coenwulf to Wulfred which after the main list of signatories<sup>3</sup> states:

Hanc predictam donacionem scripserunt satrapes cantuariorum Anno dominici incarnationes .DCCC<sup>o</sup>.X<sup>o</sup>. Indictione .III. in civitate famosa ~~quae~~ antiquo vocabulo Dorovernia Canterbury dicitur. Eciam eorum nomina subter notatus ascribuntur.

The witnesses listed are Wulfred, Esne comes, Aldberht, Wethere, Sigheard, Esne, Eadberht, Hereferd, Aldred, Withred, Escberth, Oseberht and Bernod.

It seems, therefore, that the Mercians had a discrete aristocracy in each provincia headed by a dux. The duces signed charters relevant to any part of Mercia while other witnesses came only from the specific

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1. In Textus Roffensis (12th century), BCS no. 303, (considered authentic).
  2. In Lambert MS 1212, p. 390, BCS no. 328, considered suspicious.
  3. Coenwulf, Wulfred, Denebertus bishop (Worcester), Hearberht dux, Beornod dux, Ceolward dux, Cynehelm dux, Wisheard dux, Eatford dux, Ulfred dux, Ploesa dux, Eadberht dux, Ecguulf dux, Wigheard dux.

area. The practice is undoubtedly due to the fact that neighbours testified to land ownership in legal disputes,<sup>1</sup> and one could make sure they knew of a change in ownership by having them witness the grant which recorded the change.

Two aspects of the social structure under Mercian rule are not found in the charters. First, only the duces and comites are listed by rank, and there is no way to know whether the rest of the witnesses are noblemen or commoners. They seem to be noble, since their numbers are so small<sup>2</sup> and since no rank is included. Had there been commoners, they would have been kept distinct, as oaths in disputes varied in value according to the rank of the oath-giver.<sup>3</sup> The duces are clearly provincial leaders, and comites appear too seldom to account for the rest of the nobility.

Second, there is no certainty that the "Kentish" duces were not Mercians living in Kent, although the evidence hints that "native" Kentishmen benefitted from Mercian grants and promotions. Probably Mercian practice included both the promotion of a man within one province<sup>4</sup> and the moving of men from one area to another.<sup>5</sup>

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1. See 11 Æthelstan 9 for the procedure used.

2. About 20 signatures in the longest witness lists. In Domesday Book 107 landholders are listed by name. Since sokemen, villeins and freemen are listed as such, the named men are undoubtedly all noblemen.

3. See Wihtrud 16-24; Ine 14-19, 46, 52, 53, etc.

4. Oswulf and Æthelnoth. See n. 4, p. 43 above.

5. Eadwulf: see n. 3, p. 43 above.

(iii) The increasing complexity of the nobility

A third result of Mercian expansion into Kent was a more complex nobility. For there are no titles given in the native Kentish charters before about 750. After that a few charters call some signers comes.<sup>1</sup> Only five clauses in the early Kentish law codes<sup>2</sup> refer to the nobleman establishing that his wergeld is 300 shillings and that his mund is worth 12 shillings. Three clauses, however, suggest that there were two subdivisions. Æthelberht (75) states, "Mund þare betstan widuwan eorlcundre 12 scillinga gebete," while 75.1 adds, "Dare opre XX scill', ðare þriddan XII scill', þare feorðan VI scill'." Fifty shillings is the king's mundbryce; twelve is a nobleman's, while six is the ceorl's. As it is doubtful that a woman's mund is greater than a man's of the same rank, the "best noble widow" must be the king's widow, the "third" must be a noble's and the "fourth" a ceorl's, which leaves the "other" with a 20-shilling wergeld unparalleled. Hlothhere and Eadric 1 states, "Gif mannes esne eorlcundre mannan ofslæhd þane ðe sio þreom hundum scill' gylde ...". Attenborough notes that the wergeld merely explains the word eorlcundre,<sup>3</sup> but perhaps it specifies which group of the nobility the clause refers

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1. BCS no. 190 of A.D. 761 (probably authentic): Esne comitis, 3 other laymen; BCS no. 189 of c.A.D. 761 (earliest MS 13th century): Baltheardi comitis, Eathelhun principis (for presbytri?), 6 other laymen; BCS no. 194 of A.D. 761x765 (authentic): Eogbaldi comitis et praefecti, 4 other laymen.

2. Æthelberht 13, 14, 75; Hlothhere and Eadric 1; Wihtrud 5.

3. Laws, p. 179, n. 1.1.

to. Finally Wihtrud 20 states that the cyninges degn may clear himself alone at the altar; it is the only reference to cyninges degn in the Kentish Laws. In Ine's laws the cyninges degn has a gridbryce higher than the gesid's<sup>1</sup> awarded because he was a royal servant. It seems that the same was true in Kent. The ordinary noble's mund of 12 shillings probably was raised to 20 shillings when he served the king. Perhaps his wergeld also increased, though the evidence is very unclear.

One of the king's servants was the præfectus (OE gerefa) or reeve. "Aldberhti prefecti" appears in 741 and 762;<sup>2</sup> "Ecgbaldi comitis et præfecti" between 761 and 765.<sup>3</sup> Æthelnoth signs without title from 761 to 805, as præfectus in 805 and as dux from 812 to 819.<sup>4</sup> His will states he was reeve of Eastry. Reeves also appear in the Kentish laws as supervisors of sales and of judicial disputes.<sup>5</sup> They seem from Hlothhere and Eadric 16.1 ("Gif hit man eft æt þam mæn in cænt ætfo, þonne teame he to wic to cyngæs sele to þam mæn ðe him sealde, gif he þane wite 7 æt þam teame gebrengen mæge.") to be the managers of royal estates as they certainly were later. Æthelnoth's wealth indicates that he was a major official, probably the head

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1. See above, p. 21.

2. BCS no. 160, grant of Æthelberht of Kent (MS original?), and BCS no. 191 (see n. 3, p. 38 above).

3. BCS no. 194, grant of Sigereð of Kent (MS 12th century, authentic).

4. BCS nos. 174, 194, 196, 1336, no title; no. 318 as præfectus, no. 340, 364 as dux (no. 364 is a Worcester charter).

5. Hlothhere and Eadric 16; Wihtrud 22.

of a lathe if they included more than one villa regalis.<sup>1</sup>

The comes who signs after 760 seems to be another royal official as he appears so seldom. But what official he was seems far from clear. The word means 'companion', as does the Old English gesid. Gesid, however, is the title of the "ordinary" nobleman in the law codes, not a member of a specific group. In the tenth-century charters the noble witnesses were called ministri and the untitled witnesses seem more likely to be their predecessors than the comites, who only appear three times in Kentish charters.

The Mercians seem to have introduced the duces (OE ealdormenn) into the kingdoms they took over, either by lowering the status of the kings or by raising members of the nobility. There were no duces in Kent before Oswulf who became dux by 798.<sup>2</sup> In Mercia there seem to have been fifteen to twenty duces at any one time, which is approximately the number of modern counties (24) covered by Mercian territory in 800. Under Wessex, Kent seems to have had two duces, but there is no way to know if this was a continuation of Mercian practice or a West Saxon innovation.

Possibly the comites of the last charters of the Kentish kings were forerunners of the duces, but this seems unlikely. Kent had anywhere from two to four kings from 760 to 785 and should not have

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1. See pp. 9-11 above.

2. BCS no. 289.

needed a level of administration between them and the lathes. Perhaps comes was the title given to the head of a lathe, and only the one in whose territory the land granted lay witnessed the grant, with the men living around it. For the witnesses do vary from charter to charter in the 760s, almost as much as under the Mercians.

Mercian rule, after its establishment in 785, changed Kentish society in two major ways. First it gave the archbishops an opportunity and a motive to consolidate their estates in Kent. Wulfred (805-832) in particular bought land and consolidated Christchurch's holdings for more efficient management. His motives seem to have been only in part the advancement of the Church. For he was Kentish and Mercian control seemed complete by 805. The focussing of local pride on the Church and the replacement of the local king by the archbishop must have satisfied both loyalty to the Church and pride in Kent. Kent was no longer independent, but it retained unique features well into the Middle Ages. Wulfred's efforts must have been an important factor as it changed the emphasis from independence to identity.

Secondly, Kent became more open to outside influence. The Mercians introduced duces into Kent and promoted some of the local nobility to that rank. The nobility remained local, however, although there is no way to know if the individual nobles mostly remained where they were or moved. It seems from a comparison of witness lists that they remained on the whole, but the opportunities

for movement and advancement were certainly greater in the larger kingdom if for no other reason than the increasingly complex government needed to rule a larger area.

Government did increase in complexity during the eighth century though only the smallest hints remain, particularly the mysterious group the comites, who may have been royal officials in charge of the lathes. If so, the regio, found almost exclusively in the eighth-century charters,<sup>1</sup> was an institution that became formalised about 760. But this conclusion is no more than speculation, based on two or three statements not otherwise explained. It may quite possibly be correct, but the basis is far too flimsy to yield definite conclusions. All that is definite is that there were regiones which had administrative functions and comites about which nothing is known.

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## 2. West Saxon Rule was Accepted

In 825 King Egberht of Wessex "sent his son Æthelwulf from his levies (OE fyrd) and Ealhstan his bishop and Wulfheard, his ealdorman, to Kent with a great force, and they drove King Baldred<sup>2</sup> north over Thames, and the Kentishmen submitted to him ... because formerly they had been wrongly forced away from his kinsmen."<sup>3</sup>

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1. See pp. 9-10 above.
  2. See p. 39 and note 5.
  3. ASC, s.a.823.

This was the start of West Saxon rule in Kent, a rule which continued almost without revolt, except in the late tenth century when the Chronicle records King Eadger's harrying of Thanet in 969, and of the diocese of Rochester in 986.<sup>1</sup> Roger of Wendover records another harrying of Thanet by the king in 974, because the residents had robbed and murdered some traders from York.<sup>2</sup> York was inhabited largely by Danes and presumably the men of Thanet wanted revenge for the Viking raids of the previous hundred years. In the mid-eleventh century Kent sided with its earl, Godwin of Wessex, in his quarrels with King Edward. In 1051 Godwin and his sons were exiled for defying the king over the punishment of the people of Dover who had fought with Eustace of Boulogne. During their exile, Godwin and his sons raided along the south coast; "everywhere hostages and provisions were given to them wherever they desired them," and they "won to their side all the men of Kent" and of the rest of south-east England.<sup>3</sup>

(a) The fostering of local pride

Neither the tenth-century nor the eleventh-century hostility to the king was a revolt of the ~~sort~~ sort the men of Kent had raised against the Mercians in the eighth century. Despite having a strong

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1. ASC, MSS D,E,F, s.a.969, and MSS C,D,E, s.a.986.

2. Flores Historiarum in EHD I, 257.

3. ASC, MS C, s.a.1051-2; MS D, s.a.1052; MS E, s.a.1048-52; MS F, s.a.1051.

sense of local pride the Kentishmen seem to have accepted outside rule reasonably well.

Several factors account for the more peaceful relations with Wessex. First is the inadequacy of the records. There could have been any number of revolts which were not written down. This is a possibility, however, in any statements made about the Anglo-Saxon period and so must be ignored.

A second factor is Wulfred's refocussing of local pride away from the kingship. It cannot be said that the archbishop remained the focus, but the Kentish people found outlets for their pride in other areas, such as the Kentish unit in the fyrd.<sup>1</sup> The West Saxon kings respected local usage; in Kent they left the lathes and the measurement of land in sulungs. They also called themselves rex occidentaliū saxonū necnon cantuariorū in their charters relevant to Kent.<sup>2</sup> Since the charters were written by the recipients (or by a church scriptorium for an illiterate recipient), the royal title may have been more the preference of the church scriptorium than of the king. Nonetheless, it is the normal Kentish usage in contrast to other areas where the king was rex occidentaliū saxonū.

The eldest son of the king of Wessex was king of Kent, Essex, Surrey and Sussex under his father, and signed charters as rex.<sup>3</sup> In

1. ASC, s.a. 853; C902; A905; E999. See C.W. Hollister, Anglo-Saxon Military Institutions on the Eve of the Norman Conquest (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1962), pp. 91-92.

2. BCS nos. 242, 396 (contemporary), 442 (contemporary), 449 (contemporary), 467 (contemporary), 502, 506 (contemporary), 507, 518, 568 (contemporary), 853, and EHD I, no. 89.

3. ~~Charter of King Alfred the Great~~ ACS, s.a. 836.

three Kentish charters the son appears as rex cantuariorum, a further example of local pride and awareness.

(b) The centralisation of power

Kent as a political unit actually was moved down a level under the West Saxons. The Mercians kept it a sub-kingdom, <sup>first</sup> under its own royal house, then under the Mercians Cuthred and Baldred. The West Saxons made it a provincia governed by duces. Chadwick states there were usually two in Kent,<sup>1</sup> seemingly using the charters as evidence. But the charters do not state which dux has which province and one cannot be certain that when only two ealdormen signed a Kentish charter they were both Kentish officials. Under Æthelwulf, though, Æthelwulf and Alhere appear regularly as the only duces listed, which suggests that they were both in Kent.<sup>2</sup>

Below the duces were the cyninges degnas and gesids. Gesid seems still to have been the word denoting 'noble', while the degn was the king's servant. West Saxon practice seems similar to Mercian and Kentish in that king's servants were awarded higher fines. By the tenth century the word gesid dropped out of use and degn became the usual noble title. Leyn considers the change a reflection of an

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1. Institutions, p. 271.

2. BCS nos. 426 (Hereberht and Athelwulf), 437 (Ædelwulf and Balchere), 439 (Adelwulf and Alhere), 442 (Aedeluulf and Alahere), 449 (Alcahere).

increase in royal power in the tenth century,<sup>1</sup> and an increase also seen in the conquest of Danish territory, the reforming of the Church under royal sponsorship and the increasing definition of government. The establishment of the hundred courts and the more sophisticated law codes are two particular examples of the last symptom.

The change from gesid to degn is also reflected in the Kentish charters. Throughout the ninth century the word minister is only sometimes found,<sup>2</sup> while in the tenth all witnesses are either duces or ministri. Perhaps, however, the change in usage is not a significant one, for gesid 'companion' and degn 'servant' both emphasise the noble's relationship to the king and dependence on him.

Under Cnut England was divided into four great earldoms, and Kent became a shire within the earldom of Wessex. It retained its unique customs, including the lathe and the sulung which are both in Domesday Book.

The West Saxon kings, then, fitted Kent into a larger administrative framework, but respected local pride and usage as well. On the whole, however, their practices seem to have been very similar to

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1. H.R. Layn, "Gesiths and Thegns in Anglo-Saxon England from the Seventh Century to the Tenth Century," EHR 70 (1955), 529-549.
  2. BCS no. 439: 2 ministri, 7 untitled witnesses (MS 14th century); 442: 5 ministri (MS contemporary); 467: 8 ministri (MS contemporary), 548: 3 ministri regis, 6 untitled witnesses (MS 12th century). After 858 all but one charter (BCS no. 536, contemporary) use minister for all the laymen below dux.

Mercian ones, including the use of duces and probably the retention of local aristocracy. For the witness lists of Kent differ from those elsewhere, especially in contemporary charters. Unfortunately, however, all but one original comes from Kent and most of the non-Kentish charters from the ninth century with witness lists are considered spurious. But the two original charters of about 874 have very different witness lists.<sup>1</sup> A quick look at the tenth-century charters indicated different witnesses for each area, too, despite the long lists. There it seemed that all the duces signed but only local ministri, though there again one finds too few originals to be definitive.

In Domesday Book there are 107 named landholders and 8 unnamed thegns holding land<sup>2</sup> who were probably the nobility of Kent. Of these, 90 held directly of King Edward, which probably indicates that either the number of noblemen greatly increased, or the charters were witnessed by the nobility only of the area in which the estate granted lay.

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1. BCS no. 449, grant from King Æthelwulf to Badanoð, apparitor of land near Canterbury in 845: Alchhere dux, Ædelmod, Eadwulf, Osberht, Edelred, Duduc, Goda, Sigeberht, Edelric; BCS no. 451, grant from Æthelwulf to himself of land æt Hamme in Devon in 847: Osric princeps, Osmundi minister, Ecgeard minister, Lulluc minister, Ceorli princeps, . . . . ., Uulfræd minister, Alhstan minister.
  2. I have assumed that all listings of the same name are the same man, unless the sobriquets differ. See n. 2, p. 47 above.

(c) Danish raids

The fact that under the West Saxons the importance of Kent as an administrative unit declined without seeming to spark a revolt suggests that other factors were more important than local pride in the ninth and tenth centuries. For the West Saxon retention of the lathes and respect for local custom does not seem enough to explain the change from the Kentishmen's attitude to Mercia to their acceptance of Wessex. Indeed there is another factor far more important than administrative practice, and that is the Danish raids.

The first recorded raid on Kent came in 835,<sup>1</sup> on Sheppey. Kent became a regular target, with raids noted in the Chronicle in 841, 842, 850, 853, 855, 865, 884, 892-3.<sup>2</sup> Thanet and Sheppey were often used for winter quarters, and usually the raiders landed first on the Kentish coast, then moved north into the Midlands or west into Wessex. Kent was important because of its location across the Channel from Frankia. The Danes seem to have alternated between the West Frankish kingdom and England, spending a year or two in one, then returning to the other. The Chronicle states this specifically in 865, 884 and 892. All three times Kent was the first area raided. But the West Saxon kings never lost political control over Kent, except in 876 when Alfred's territory was reduced to the woods and marshes of Somerset.

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1. ASC, s.a.832.

2. ASC, s.a. 838, 839, 851, 853, 855, 865, 885, 893-4.

Kent, however, was one of the first areas Alfred regained, and it remained English in the treaty of 878.

By 910 the English had gained the offensive, and the West Saxons began to push back the Danish borders in the Midlands. Kent being already English, was not the scene of any tenth-century battles, and no Danish raids on Kent are recorded between 905 and 994. Yet the men of Kent were not free of fighting, as they formed a unit in the fyrð. In 903, for example, King Edward's cousin Æthelwold tried to seize the throne and Edward marched against him. When the king wished to withdraw, the Kentishmen refused and lost a battle, but managed to inflict severe losses on the Danes, including Prince Æthelwold.<sup>1</sup>

In the late tenth century new Viking raids began, and after the year 1000 Swein of Denmark tried to conquer England. He succeeded shortly before his death in 1014, after which Æthelred the "Unready" returned. Swein's son Cnut conquered England in 1016; Danes ruled England until 1042. Kent was again one of the first targets and suffered heavily from the raids.<sup>2</sup> But its strategic importance increased, because Sandwich became the chief naval base where the fleet gathered ready to go out against the Danes.<sup>3</sup> In 1013, 1014 and 1015

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1. ASC, MS A, s.a.904, BCD, s.a.905; the "Mercian Register" calls it the battle of "the Holm".

2. See ASC, MS E, s.a.994, E, s.a. 999, E, s.a. 1006, E, s.a. 1009, s.a. 1011-12, s.a. 1013, s.a. 1015, s.a. 1046.

3. See ASC, MS E, s.a. 1009, where the fleet gathered at Sandwich but dissolved among quarrels of the nobility.

Sandwich itself was the target of Swein or Cnut, undoubtedly in order to damage or capture the English fleet.

The Viking raids of the ninth and early eleventh centuries must have had a great effect on society because they were so expensive. Not only did the raiders rob, burn and otherwise destroy an impressive but unspecified amount of property, but also the kings bought them off with great sums. Maitland<sup>1</sup> analyses the Danegeld, comparing it to those of Henry I and Henry II recorded in the Pipe Rolls. The pipe roll tax of 2s. per hide raised £5198, less the amount due from privileged land that was assessed but not taxed. The Chronicle records a Danegeld of £10,000 in 991 which is 4s. per hide, if the assessment was the same as in the twelfth century. The £16,000 of 994 was 6s.6d. per hide, while in 1002 £24,000 (10s. per hide) was given. The highest bribe was £30,000 (12s. per hide) given in 1007. As in theory each hide was worth £1, the Danegelds varied from a quarter to over half the value of the land.

The tenth and eleventh centuries were in addition a time ~~when~~ several natural disasters, <sup>were</sup> recorded in the Chronicle as being especially severe. From 894 to 897 plague and murrain struck; in 962 a great pestilence came; in 976 "a great famine and very many disturbances" caused hardship. A great pestilence among cattle "came first to England" in 986, while "famine the most severe in living memory" hit in

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1. DBB, pp. 3-4.

1005. So many hard years in a century was probably not an exceptional occurrence, but they added to the difficulties caused by the Danish raids. The writer of the Parker Chronicle summed up conditions succinctly in 897:

The host, by the mercy of God, had not altogether utterly crushed the English people; but they were much more severely crushed during these three years [894-7] by murrain and plague, most of all by the fact that many of the best of the king's servants in the land passed away during these three years: one of these was Swithulf, bishop of Rochester, and Ceolmund ealdorman in Kent ...<sup>1</sup>

His description is true not only of 894-7 but also of much of the ninth through eleventh centuries.

That both the troubles of the age, especially the Danish raids, and the policies of the West Saxon kings were important in keeping Kent loyal to a larger state is seen in the reign of the weak kings Æthelred the Unready and Edward the Confessor. Æthelred's military ineptness is well recorded in the Chronicle,<sup>2</sup> while several charters record his administrative failings. Two Kentish charters provide particular examples. EHD I no. 120 records a dispute that arose when Wulfbald stole all his stepmother's belongings after his father's death. Æthelred called Wulfbald before his council four times and when he ignored

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1. ASC, MS A, tr. Galmonsway (1953), 89, 91.

2. See especially s.a. 999 when Æthelred gathered troops to relieve the Kentish fyrð at Rochester, but the battle was lost and Kent ravaged while the royal ships sat idle and the fyrð retreated. "So in the end these naval and land preparations were a complete failure, and succeeded only in adding to the distress of the people, wasting money and encouraging the enemy" (ASC, MS E, s.a. 999, tr. Galmonsway).

the summons, ordered him to forfeit his wergeld. Wulfbald ignored the fines as well, and in between the second and third royal summons seized the land belonging to his kinsman Brihtmær of (Bra)bourne. After the fourth time Wulfbald ignored his fine, a great council at London assigned his life and all his property to the king. This, too, failed and Wulfbald died with both thefts uncompensated for. The king finally got the property from Wulfbald's widow who in the meantime murdered his cousin Eadmær and fifteen of his companions at Bourne. Part II of the will of Æthelric of Bocking is its endorsement by King Æthelred. Æthelric had been in a plot to receive Swein when he landed in Essex and was ordered to forfeit all his lands when it was discovered. Bocking was to pass to Christchurch, however, which caused the archbishops to become his advocates. But he was not cleared of the charge until his wife paid his heriot at Cookham. Even when she did the king tried to reopen the case, but her payment of her morgen-gifu to Christchurch for the benefit of the king and all the people gained the king's consent to the will.<sup>1</sup> Despite Æthelred's failings, however, the Kentishmen on the whole remained loyal to him.

Under Edward the Confessor Kent proved more loyal to its earl than to the king in their quarrel over Eustace of Boulogne's fight in Dover.<sup>2</sup> Conditions were somewhat different under Edward in that the Danes had proved to be effective kings of England, especially Cnut, who

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1. ~~Probert's~~ Anglo-Saxon Wills, ed. and tr. D. Whitelock (Cambridge U.P. 1930), no. 16(2).

2. See above, p. 53 and n. 3.

had issued laws and improved England's trade with Rome in his trip there in 1027.<sup>1</sup> Probably the men of Kent were loyal to Æthelred because the Danes were a threat. But Cnut brought better government and the Danes no longer made it necessary to accept a weak English king for fear of something worse.

In addition, there were no great earls in 1000. The quarrels of Godwin and Edward split England in half, as about half of the country had Godwin or one of his sons as their earl. English government was much more fragmented before Cnut created the four earldoms that each combined several shires. By 1050 the great earls had enough power to be serious threats to royal supremacy. The men of Kent, therefore, had an alternative to a weak king in 1050, an alternative not present in 1000 after the tenth century and earlier kings had centralised their power as far as they could, and had reduced autonomy to regional variations such as the Kentish lathes and sulungs.

The development of Kentish society from 825 to 1066, then, must be seen against the background of a monarchy that respected traditional forms in their subject territory but ~~was~~ reduced the power of the units as far as possible. Kent was a sub-kingdom under Mercia, but merely one of the shires of south-east England under Wessex. The inhabitants accepted the fall in status after 825 because the kings

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1. Cnut, Proclamation of 1027, in The Laws of the Kings of England (ed. and trans. Robertson), pp. 146-153.

offered the best protection against the Danes who were dangerous and expensive. The three factors discussed in this section — respect for local pride, centralisation, and protection — were all important, but Edward's reign shows that protection was the deciding factor.

CHAPTER III  
THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF KENT

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Kings offered protection not only against the Danes and other enemies, but also against thieves and crimes of violence. Their success seems limited but they did set up the machinery to handle violations of their protection. The machinery had to be paid for, namely, through the feeding and rewarding of royal officials. The chief reward was bockland, land freed from "all royal service and fiscal tribute, within and without, great and small, known and unknown eternally" except for certain specified duties, usually "expeditione et arcis et pontis constructione", the three military obligations laid on virtually all land.

1. Land Tenure

(a) Assessment

Military service and other dues were assessed on the land of Kent in sulungs (Lat. aratra) rather than the hides (Lat. mansae, cassati, manentes) of Wessex and Mercia. That the sulung equalled two Mercian hides is made clear in two charters of Coenwulf issued to Archbishop Wulfred in 805 and 812. The first is:

Aliquam in Cantia partiunculam terræ hoc est duorum manentium ubi SUEORDHLINCAS [Swarling] vocitantur Iuxta distributionem suarum utique terrarum ritu saxonica an sulung seu in alia loco mediam partem unius mansiunculae id est an geocled ubi ab incolis ECGHEANNG LOND appellatur.<sup>1</sup>

The second:

Hoc est terræ particula duarum manentium id est an sulung ubi ab incolis GRAFON EAH [Graveney] vocitatur ... KASING BURNAN [Casebourne (lost) in Cheriton] appellatur demidiam partem unius mansiunculae id est an ioclet ....<sup>2</sup>

They provide clear evidence thatt the sulung was twice as large as the mansa or hide about 800 A.D.

The tenth-century charters seem to indicate that one mansa equalled one sulung. Three examples that equate them survive: "... id est .VI. mansas quod Cantigene dicunt .VI. sulunga ..."; "... .VI. mansas quod Cantigene dicunt .syx. sulunga ..."; and "... .VI. mansas quod Cantuarii .VI. sulunga vocant ..." <sup>3</sup> Seven other charters use mansas or cassatos rather than sulung but do not specify the relationship between them.<sup>4</sup>

The change in usage appears about 940 under King Athelstan (925-40), at the same time as the development of a single "royal" scriptorium, probably at Winchester. Scribes there knew West Saxon formulae rather than Kentish, and their use of a mansa that equalled

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1. BCS no. 321, MS contemporary?
  2. BCS no. 341, MS contemporary.
  3. BCS no. 760, MS contemporary; BCS no. 869, MS contemporary; KCD no. 688, MS 12th century.
  4. BCS nos. 741 (contemporary), 753 (9th century?), 1031 (14th century), 1295 (contemporary), 1345 (13th century); KCD nos. 647 (14th century), 1285 (13th century).

the sulung seems more the result of ignorance than of a change in the ratio of sulungs to hides.

Domesday Book uses sulungs in Kent, assessing the shire at about 1150.<sup>1</sup> This is much too low if 1 sulung equals 1 hide, but possible if 1 sulung equals 2 hides. There is no way to know how many ploughlands Kent contained, as the phrase terra est  $\pi$  carucis is left blank for 84 settlements of the 374 recorded. But there are  $3152\frac{3}{8}$  plough teams listed,<sup>2</sup> or about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per sulung. In contrast, there is about 1 team per hide in the Midlands.<sup>3</sup> A sulung twice as large as the hide gives the two areas roughly the same number of teams per hide.

A look at modern acreage makes the two-hide sulung even more probable. Maitland establishes the 120-acre hide, and states that Kent's modern acreage is 975,820 acres. If 1 sulung = 1 hide, only one eighth of Kent would be assessed as arable in 1086; if 1 sulung = 2 hides, one quarter was. Even with large-scale beneficial hidation throughout the Anglo-Saxon period, and an allowance for woodland and marsh pastures, an assessment covering one eighth of Kent seems impossibly small. One quarter arable seems a low percentage, especially compared to the Midlands where arable seems to have covered over half the modern acreage.<sup>4</sup> But a large part of Kent was forested

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1. Darby and Campbell, DB Geography of SE England, p. 507.

2. Ibid., p. 512.

3. See Maitland, DEB, p. 447.

4. Ibid., p. 435.

in the eleventh century, and one tenth was marshland.<sup>1</sup> If over half was forest and marsh, the assessment of arable in Domesday Book looks more reasonable. Probably Kent was somewhat underassessed, but extreme underassessment does not seem likely in an era when military and financial resources were strained from counteracting Danish raids.

(b) Bocland

(i) Amount in Kent

By 1066 almost all non-royal land was bocland and only subject to military obligations. A comparison of Domesday and the land grants produces approximate statistics about the percentage of "bookland" and "folkland" by 1066. In Domesday Book, King William had  $93\frac{1}{2}$  sulungs of land; King Edward had about 100, because William gave seven to Battle Abbey. Charters record that the kings gave 519 sulungs to the Church, including 397 before 825, 65 in the remainder of the ninth century, and 58 in the tenth century. The kings gave laymen 163 sulungs and 111 hides ( $218\frac{1}{2}$  sulungs), of which 39 are recorded as passing to the Church. A further 176 sulungs were given to the Church by laymen in charters not including assessment.<sup>2</sup> Presumably they are all bookland, as folkland does not seem to have been alienable. Laymen also granted 25 sulungs to other laymen, according to the estates' Domesday assessment. A total of about 939 sulungs were recorded as

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1. Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, pp. 9-10.

2. The assessments were taken from Domesday Book, trans. F.W. Ragg (VCH III: 203-252). The addition is by the author.

bookland, which means that at most 112 sulungs were neither traceable as bookland nor royal estates. These could easily be accounted for by lost "books", as many charters were lost, especially ones to laymen.

About one third of the Domesday land was bookland by 825<sup>1</sup> and almost all was by Cnut's reign.<sup>2</sup> About half of Kent was ecclesiastical by 1066; the Church held 562 sulungs,  $\frac{1}{2}$  yoke,  $3\frac{1}{2}$  virgates and 46 acres, by their Domesday 1065 (called T.R.E.) assessment. Comparing the Domesday assessment and the charters shows some "beneficial hidation" since 519 and 176 add up to about 100 sulungs more than those the Church had in 1066. Some of these 100 sulungs may be accounted for in later losses from Church lands, through trading estates in Kent for those outside, the failure to regain laenland, theft, or alienation. Domesday statistics are only approximate, and this may account for some of the differences.

Laymen held about 478 sulungs in Domesday Book. Under King William there were five lay tenants in capite, Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, Earl of Kent, sometime regent of England and William's brother, Hugh de Montfort, Haimo the Sheriff, Richard of Tonbridge and Eustace of Bu. Odo was the largest landholder, with 315 sulungs approximately. The situation was very different under King Edward. Ninety men held directly of the king of whom ten also held of other men, including Earl

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1. 461 sulungs; compare DB 1151.

2. Cnut and Edward granted at most 24 sulungs by their surviving charters.

Godwine and his sons Earls Harold and Leofwine [DB Lewin] and Athelred [DB Alvred] Biga and this son Esbeorn [Sbern Biga], Ælfnoth [Alnod] Cilt and Bryhtsige [DB Brixi] Cilt. A total of 107 names are given as landholders in the time of King Edward, plus 8 thegns, 9 freemen, 85 sokemen, 5 brothers, 3 villeins, 5 men, 1 woman, the burgesses of Canterbury and a gildam of Dover. An additional 37½ sulungs are listed under laymen in 1086 with no 1066 holder given.

Thus 223 men held 431 sulungs in 1066, an average of just under two sulungs per holder. Earl Godwine was the largest holder with 107 sulungs, plus 9 held by subtenants. Ælfnoth Cilt, with 22½ sulungs, and Earl Leofwine with 22 are the next largest; 9 men hold from 10 to 15 sulungs each. Thus most named holders had only small estates of about one sulung.

Domesday Book does not specifically distinguish between the various types of land tenure — bookland, folkland and laenland. But it does use five phrases: "N. held it of King E[ðward]," "N. held it," "N<sub>1</sub> held it of N<sub>2</sub>," "N. held it and could go to what lord he wished," and "N. held it in alod." Probably, however, all this land was bookland, except for the thirteen estates "N<sub>1</sub> held it of N<sub>2</sub>", which may have been laenland. "N. held it and could go to what lord he wished" (12 estates) indicates bookland, held by a man under a personal lord.

(ii) Laenland from it

The essential difference between ~~z~~ bookland and laenland was that bookland originated in an eternal royal grant while laenland was a

temporary grant or commendation by someone else. There are three charters from Kent granting laenland. In the first<sup>1</sup> Plegmund archbishop granted Byrhtræde wæringnerse next to the River Romney for 305 pence. He could possess it for his lifetime and his heirs for two lives after him; then it was to return to Christchurch's demesne. The second<sup>2</sup> was an agreement of Æthelric [Bigga] with Archbishop Eadsige about Chart, which thegn ~~Æ~~Hæleth sold to Archbishop Ceolnoth and King Æthelwulf granted by charter. Æthelric was to have the estate in his lifetime and return it after his death "with such endowment as shall please them both". The title-deeds remained at Christchurch, and the estates of Stowting and Milton which Æthelric and his son Esbearn held were included. The third charter<sup>3</sup> was the record of a judicial dispute between Leofwine and St. Augustine's over St. Mildred's, Thanet. Earl Godwine imposed a compromise in which Leofwine was to have two ploughlands at Langdon and Ileden and £500 of pennies at ---mas and half at mid-Lent. After his death the estates passed to St. Augustine's.

Domesday Book gives one example of laenland created by a gift from a lay owner to the Church. Godessa gave St. Augustine's half a sulung and half a yoke of Ælvetone [Elmton] which had been his alod. He kept the use of the land, however, and paid St. Augustine's 25 pence

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1. BCS no. 638, MS contemporary.
  2. Anglo-Saxon Charters (1956), no. 101.
  3. Ibid., no. 102.

a year in almoign.<sup>1</sup>

(iii) Place in the judicial system

Booking land freed it from royal dues but not from military obligations. It seems, in addition, to have given the landholder a privileged position in the judicial system. Justice in Anglo-Saxon England meant the paying of compensation (bot) to those harmed by a crime. If one man murdered another he paid wergeld to the victim's kindred, manbot to his lord and a wite (fine) to the king. If he stole something he paid n times its value to the victim and a wite to the king. In later law the thief's landlord (landrica or landhlaford) received a share of the fine, if he did not participate in the crime or help the thief escape.<sup>2</sup>

Justice was administered publicly through the swearing of oaths by witnesses and the testimony of neighbours about the accused man's character. In the early part of the Anglo-Saxon period the cases were heard at the king's residence (Kent, sele), supervised by a reeve. Edward the Elder declared that the courts were to be held every four weeks and a specific date was to be set for each suit.<sup>3</sup> A mid-tenth-century code called I Eadgar defined the workings of the hundred, a territorial unit that in judicial cases replaced the royal residences. II Cnut 20 states that:

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1. VCH III:245b and note.

2. I Eadgar 2.1, III Eadgar 1.7, II Cnut 25.1, I Æthelred 1, II Cnut 30.

3. II:8.

we wyllad þæt ælc freoman beo on hundrede 7 on teodunge gebrohte,  
de lade wyrde beon wylle odde weres wyrde, gyf hine hwa afylle,  
ofer twelfwintre; oppe he ne beo æniges freorhtes wyrde, sy he  
heordfæst, sy he folgere - þæt ælc sy on hundre[d] 7 on borh  
gebroht 7 gehealde se borh hine 7 gelæde to ælcon gerihte.<sup>1</sup>

Several law codes order that lords will stand surety to their men<sup>2</sup>  
and that all men are to have a lord and place of residence.<sup>3</sup> II Cnut  
31a specifies that the lord should answer an accusation against one of  
his men "innan ðam hundrede ðær he on beclypod beo, swa hit lagu séo".<sup>4</sup>

Not all justice, however, was handled at the king's residence, or  
by hundred court. Five ninth-century/<sup>Kentish</sup> charters include justice in the  
exemption clause. A grant of 858 in a contemporary manuscript<sup>5</sup> has  
an exemption clause that makes the land "free from all royal tribute  
and services exacted by force and penal matters, from the dominion of  
the ealdorman and the capturing of thieves and every secular burden"  
except the three military ones. A grant of 862 frees the estate from

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1. "It is our desire that every freeman over twelve years of age, who desires to have the right of exculpation and of being atoned for by the payment of his wergeld, if he is slain, shall be brought within a hundred and a tithing; otherwise he shall not be entitled to any of the rights of a freeman, whether he has an establishment of his own or is in the service of another — everyone shall be brought within a hundred and under surety, and his surety shall hold and bring him to the performance of every legal duty" (Robertson, Laws, p. 185).
  2. III Æthelstan 7.2, III Edmund 7, I Æthelred 1,10, II Cnut 31.
  3. III Eadgar 6, IV Eadgar 3, I Æthelred 1, II Cnut 20. See II Æthelstan 2.
  4. "within the hundred where he was accused, as the law be".
  5. BCS no. 496.

"all royal tribute and exaction of works and of penal causes eternally known and unknown major and minor" except tribus necessariis causis.<sup>1</sup> The third grant is from 863<sup>2</sup> and frees the land "from all servitude of work within and without, in great things and small, known and unknown eternally, except expeditions, fortification and bridge-building, and returning thieves from outside and pursuing those inside". Two more charters grant Lenham first to Alher, Aethelwulf's principe, then to St. Augustine's, stating that the land was "secura et immunis ab omnium regalium et principalium et tributorum" and from the power of the exaction of works and from capturing thieves and from all popular gravedine" except the three military obligations.<sup>3</sup>

The first folio of Domesday Book includes a description of the laws of Kent,<sup>4</sup> "agreed on by the men of the four lathes" (Eastry, Limowart, Borowart, Wiwart). The king received 100 shillings for any fences or ditches that block the public way (calle) and £8 for gridbrige (breaking the peace). "Otherwise he shall be discharged as regards the king, but not as regards the lord whose man he is." For all other forfeitures the king's fine was 100 shillings.

These forfeitures the king has over all alodiaries Œ begnas.<sup>5</sup> in the whole county of Kent and over all their men. And when an

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1. BCS no. 506, MS contemporary.
  2. BCS no. 507, MSS contemporary.
  3. BCS nos. 459 and 854, MSS 13th century, considered doubtful or spurious.
  4. In VCH III:203-4.
  5. See the writs of Cnut and Edward in Anglo-Saxon Writs (ed. F.E. Harmer / ....

alodiary dies the king has therethrough (inde) a relief from his land except in case of the land of Holy Trinity [Christchurch], St. Augustines, and St. Martin and except in the case of these; Godric of Burnes [Bourne], Godric son of Carl, Alnod [Ælfnoth] Cilt, Esber [Esbearn] Biga, Siret of Cilleham [Sigered of Chilham] Turgis, Norman, and Azor [Æsere]. In the case of these (super istos) the king has the personal ameracements (forisfacturam de capitibus eorum) only; and the possessors of their sac and soc have the "relief" from their lands.

Over Goslaches, three estates named Buckland, Hurst (?), one yoke of Oare, one yoke of Hartly Isle, Schildreham, Macknade, Arnolton, Oslachintone, the two Perrys (Wood and Court), Throwley (?), Ospringe, and Horton, the king has the fines for handsocan (housebreaking), gribrige, and foristel (assault in the public way).

Domesday then records that in the two lests of Sutton and Aylesford Brixi Cilt [Bryhtsige Cild], Adelold de Elteham [Æthelwold of Elteham], Anschil de Becheham [Beckenham], Azor de Lesneis [Ætsere of Lessness], Alwin Hor, Wlward Wit, Ordine de Hortone [Horton], Esbern de Cillesfelle [Chelsfield], Levenot de Sudtone [Leofnoth of Sutton], Edward de Estan [Stone], Ulestan et Leveric de Otrinberge [Wulfstan (?) and Leofric of Wateringbury], Osward of Nortone [Norton], Eddid de Aisiholte [Edith of ?], Alret de Ellinges [Yalding] had sac and soc.

It seems that the ninth-century kings sometimes granted exemption from the judicial system as a special privilege, but the tenth-century kings did not. They defined judicial practices more closely,

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/Harmer, Manchester U.P. 1952), which grant the archbishops of Canterbury judicial rights over their own men including their pegnas (OE MSS) or alodiarii (Lat. MSS).

including the establishment of hundreds to deal with theft. Theft and violence were the kings' main concern, and by the eleventh century they had reserved serious cases and their profits, such as gridbryce (breach of the peace), hamsoen (forcible entry), foresteall (resisting the law) and flymenafymd (harbouring fugitives). Normally, landowners had to participate in the judicial system, since they stood surety for their men. They received a share of the fines when one of their men violated their surety, but if a lord defended his man unjustly, he shared in the payment of the fine. Landownership increased both the holder's privileges and his responsibilities in law. Exemption from certain classes of justice seems to have been a special privilege, granted only to men like the archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>1</sup>

(c) Sokemen

Landholders came from every class of freemen, including the villeins, three of whom are recorded as landholders in Kent in 1066.<sup>2</sup> There were 85 sokemen holding land in 1066, of whom 32 "held and hold now". Almost all had land in Romney Marsh; five held in Stowting near Lyminge, and four held in Longbridge, Bewsborough, Chart and Sumerden hundreds on forest land. Between them the 85 sokemen held

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1. See Cnut's grant of judicial rights to Archbishop Æthelnoth (Harmer, Writs, no. 28).
  2. "A certain villein held Bodesham" (1 sulung) and "2 villeins with 2 sokemen held  $\frac{1}{2}$  yoke in Romney Marsh" (VCH III: 245a, 247a).

just over six sulungs or about one third of a yoke apiece. The largest holding was one sulung less half a virgate, shared by 14 sokemen; the largest share was 1 yoke; the smallest 6 acres.

Nothing is known of these sokemen, but clearly they were the lowest class of landholders. Perhaps they were assarters, given part of their land to "hold" as an incentive. Or, perhaps they had something to do with pasture supervision, since Romney Marsh and the forest belts were sheep and swine pastures respectively. A smallholding would be given there to give them more reason for interest in their duties, again as an incentive. Maitland states<sup>1</sup> that one of the consuetudines most frequently demanded in East Anglia was "fold-soke", the obligation to put one's sheep in the lord's fold. Perhaps the sokemen of Kent also owed fold-soke in addition to "sac and soc" which many other men owed. All that can be stated definitely is that the sokemen were landholders, with tiny pieces of property.

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## 2. Peasants

A clear distinction is made between landholders and peasant tenants who almost never "held" land. In Domesday Book they "were there", listed with the ploughs. There were three peasant classes in

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1. DBB, p. 76.

Domesday Kent: villani, bordarii and cottari. These classes are not found in pre-Conquest documents.

The problem in studying the peasants is lack of information. Only legal status can be known before the late tenth century; Domesday distinguishes sub-classes by economic status, but does not define its terms.

In the early Kentish laws the ceorl is legally free, with a wergeld of 100 shillings, a mundbyrd of 6 shillings and other fines. He has a household with dependents (hlafætæn),<sup>1</sup> servants (esne) and slaves (þeowas). Examples of tenantry are found in Ine's laws,<sup>2</sup> and there seems no reason to doubt that they existed in early Kent as well.

Lordship is also common in the laws; it is found in Ine 50, and by the tenth century every man was expected to have a lord.<sup>3</sup> Being a tenant or legally subject to a lord's borg (surety) did not, however, make the peasant unfree. They kept their full wergeld and edorbryce and mundbryce, and there is no indication that all the lords who acted as surety were nobles. Indeed, III Edmund 7 states:

Et omnis homo credibilis faciat homines suos et omnes qui in pace et terra sua sunt.

§ 1 ....

§ 2 Et praepositus vel tainus, comes vel villanus, qui hoc

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1. See Aethelberht 25.

2. Especially clause 67, "Gif mon geþingad gyrde landes oþþe mare to rædegafole 7 geered, gif hlaford him wile þæt land aræran to weorce 7 to gafole, ne þearf he him onfon, gif he him nan botl ne seld, 7 þolie, þara æcre."

3. See p. 73 and n. 2.

facere nolet aut disperdet, emendet CXX sol. et sit dignus eorum quae supra dicta sunt.

Thus, there are hints in the laws that the peasantry was complex from at least the seventh century if not earlier. Their only unifying aspect seems to have been the size of the bot to which they were entitled.

The first information about the ceorl in an economic context comes from the Rectudines Singularum Personarum, a treatise on the workers of a great estate which specifies three peasant classes. The highest were geneatas or "companions", whose duties were riding and guarding services and who paid rent in money and kind. In Domesday Book they were called radknights; there were none in Kent. Second came the geburas, who held about a virgate (quarter of a hide or 30 acres) and paid rent by service on the lord's land for so many days a week and in money and kind, because the lord gave them their possessions. These are the tenants given a house in Ine 67, and the coliberti of Domesday Book.<sup>1</sup> Again, there are none recorded in Kent. The third class is the kotsetla, who held about 5 acres and paid for them entirely by service. They are the cottari of Domesday; 309 are recorded of a total peasant population of about 11,753.

Domesday Book records three groups of peasants: villani, bordarii and cottari. Maitland states that the villani were the "men

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1. Maitland, DBB, 36-8.

of the vill" who had 30 or more acres of arable, the bordarii had 5 to 30 acres and the cottari had merely their "cot" and its yard. The villeins spent most of their time farming their own plots or performing duties owed to the landlord, while the bordars and cottars were the hired labourers of the settlement. Detailed records from Middlesex indicate that there was much overlap between the groups and as great a variety of tenures and status as among the recorded landholders. Kent's returns do not provide such evidence, since they merely list that there were 6829 villeins (58%), 3372 bordars (39%), 309 cottars (2%) and 1160 slaves (10%).<sup>1</sup>

Peasant tenure is not recorded in Kent until the fourteenth century, when the Consuetudines Kancie calls it "gavelkind" tenure.<sup>2</sup> It was a free tenure, though it had some servile features. In particular, the land was fully alienable in the holder's lifetime, and he could sue the landlord in any court. It seems from II Cnut 19 that the process called "gavelate" in the fourteenth century was the recognised procedure for distraint in the eleventh century. In Domesday Book the Kentish peasants seem no freer than those elsewhere in England. Their greater freedom in the fourteenth century comes from their greater wealth, acquired through trade in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.<sup>3</sup> Jolliffe argued that gavelkind was the original tenure

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1. Darby and Campbell, DB Geography of SE England, p. 513.

2. See p. 24 above.

3. R.H. Hilton, The Decline of Serfdom in Medieval England (Macmillan, London 1969), p. 22; Pollock and Maitland, The History of English Law, cited by VCH III, pp. 335-6.

of Kent, from the time when gafol was the payment of royal dues. Probably he is correct, but Cnut's law indicates that the tenure later called gavelkind was probably common to most of England. It survived in Kent because of the country's geographical position on the main trading route to London which made it one of the richest counties in England. Gavelkind tenure is evidence that Kent's prosperity was shared by the peasants.

Domesday Book gives the earliest count of peasants that survives. Its terms, however, were not defined, since they were obvious to the eleventh-century user. They are not obvious to us, which creates great problems. One aspect not mentioned is distribution of settlement. Kentish estates were widely scattered with marshy sheep pastures on the coast, arable in the north and swine pastures in one of the great forests (Blean Wood, the Weald, the North Down uplands). Men must have lived not only on the arable but also in the marshes or forest pastures of the estate, yet Domesday does not say so. It does not say, in fact, that the men in the detached holdings were counted. It can be assumed they were, since they would presumably have a house and possibly some land.<sup>1</sup>

But the proportions of the population engaged in the various aspects of farming cannot be determined or even the method of distributing labour. Possibly there was a rota of all peasants in which they

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1. J.C. Russell, British Medieval Population (Albuquerque, New Mexico, U.P. 1948), p. 37.

took turns watching the pastures. Possibly specific individuals had that duty. Certainly in Alfric's colloquy certain individuals were herdsmen:

D(iscipuli). Sume sint yrþlingas, sume scéphyrdas, sume oxanhyrdas, sume éac swylc huntan, sume fisceras, sume fugeleras, sume cýpmenn, sume scéowyrhtan, sealteras, bæceras.<sup>1</sup>

but his description of a great West Saxon ecclesiastical estate may not cover all agricultural practices.

A second problem arises from the fact that Domesday Book lists not total population, but the number of households. Usually modern demographers assume that there were on the average five members per household which gives a Kentish population of about 58,765. J.C. Russell<sup>2</sup> argues that five is too high a multiplier, because Domesday households included only the immediate family. He uses 3.5, which gives a population of 41,135. J. Krause<sup>3</sup> replies that Russell used inadequate data; in particular he challenges the argument that the household consisted only of the immediate family. Krause concludes that Russell has not successfully challenged the traditional multiplier of five. The whole question of the size of the medieval household remains open and any conclusions about the size of the Domesday population must remain tentative.

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1. A.J. Wyatt, An Anglo-Saxon Reader (1919), p. 39.

2. Medieval Population, pp. 22-35.

3. J. Krause, "The Medieval Household : Large or Small?" Ec.H.R. 9 (1956-7), 420-432.

Population continued to grow after 1086. In the tax rolls of 1377, 56,557 inhabitants are recorded. Since only communicants paid the tax, Russell concludes that the total rural population of Kent was 84,835.<sup>1</sup> This again is only a very approximate figure. By 1600 Kent had about 130,000 inhabitants, the result of a sizeable population growth in the sixteenth century. Since 1600 the rural population of Kent has increased only slightly.<sup>2</sup>

The chief method of expansion was through forest clearance, especially in the Weald. It seems very probable that north-eastern Kent had reached optimum density by Domesday, though there is no way to prove it. If the sokemen were assartars, their settlement on the edge of the Weald and in Romney Marsh would be some indication that expansion into those areas had begun.

Peasants, then, are largely an unknown part of Anglo-Saxon society in Kent. Their wergeld was 100 shillings in the seventh century; their mund was 6 shillings; this compares with the noble's wergeld of 300 shillings and mund of 12 shillings. Later laws hint that society at that level was complex, with landlords and tenants, lords and slaves, hired labourers. Very little is known about social mobility before the tenth century when the laws specify that a ceorl with five hides may become a thegn, as may a merchant who crosses the

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1. Population, p. 142.

2. Chalkin, Seventeenth Century Kent, p. 27.

sea three times.<sup>1</sup> And even these laws do not say how many ceorls rose to own five hides. Perhaps the mobility was more theoretical than real. Or perhaps it was the result of the dislocations caused by the Viking raids. That social mobility was a general characteristic of society before the tenth century is thus only another possibility.

From Domesday Book one learns that there were three sub-classes, but not what those classes were. And one learns that there were about 11,753 households but not how large the household was. One learns nothing of the legal status of the villani. A comparison of the pre-Conquest laws and the Consuetudines Kancie suggests that they must have been free men legally because peasants in Kent were before the Conquest and in the fourteenth century.

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1. F.M. Stenton, "The Thriving of the Anglo-Saxon Ceorl," in Doris M. Stenton (Ed.), Preparation to Anglo-Saxon England : being the collected papers of Frank Merry Stenton (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1970), pp. 391-2.

## CONCLUSION

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The social development of medieval Kent began in the first half of the fifth century, when a mixed group of Germanic people settled on the rich soils of the north coast, in a large triangle in the north east and along the Medway, Stour and Lympne valleys. Geography, traditions brought by the settlers and customs borrowed from the previous inhabitants were important factors influencing society, but only the first is traceable. Far more important was the conquest by outside kingdoms — first Mercia, then Wessex. For they introduced new social groups such as the duces and new administrative practices such as the hundred, which was combined with the existing Kentish administrative unit, the lathe.

Kent had a predominantly agricultural community with a clear legal division between the three social classes: nobles, peasants and slaves. Very little is known of the classes other than their legal position, but it is apparent that the classes were complex. There seem to have been two groups of nobles below the duces: the gesids and the cyninges ðegnas, all called þegnas from the tenth century. The cyninges ðegnas had a higher borgbryce and perhaps a higher wergeld as a reward for office-holding. They may have been called comes in the Kentish charters, though the word is translated

gesid elsewhere. In Domesday Book the nobles held anywhere from one yoke to 20 sulungs. About 1000 sulungs of the 1150 recorded were bookland with charters that have survived. Nobles also held laenland, distinguished from bookland by being a temporary tenure.

Peasants also held land, but most by the time of Domesday were tenants. About 60 per cent of the peasants were villani or full tenants. Peasants were distinguished in law by their lower wergeld and mundbryce. They were expected to have a lord to act as their surety and to stand surety to the members of their household. Being under a lord seems not to have made a man "unfree" in Anglo-Saxon law.

The king's chief duty was to offer protection against enemies and justice. All men were obliged to participate in defence and almost all seem to have been within the judicial system. In Kent only the archbishop was freed of most judicial obligations, by Cnut in the early eleventh century.

Kentish society was complex and fully developed by the eleventh century. Many of its characteristics — such as the lathes and a great variation in individual wealth and status — were present from the earliest records. But most of the knowledge about society comes from deductions based on scanty information in law codes and charters; all conclusions must therefore be tentative.

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