FORMS OF DOMINANCE AND THE EARLY MEDIEVAL LANDSCAPE

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The 1970s must have been an exciting time for those sympathetic to large-scale interpretations of the landscape. The era was marked by the conference whose proceedings were issued as *Early Land Allotments in the British Isles* (Bowen and Fowler 1978), and later on the same scale came the work of Andrew Fleming on the Dartmoor Reaves (Fleming 1988) and Tom Williamson's perceptions of the patterns underlying later field systems (Williamson 1987). Among historians Geoffrey Barrow, who notes Glanville Jones' approach with interest, brought back for serious consideration Jolliffe's account of the 'pre-feudal' polities of Anglo-Saxon England, the so-called 'small shires' with their relationships of 'extensive lordship' (Barrow 1973). Glanville Jones' early work was in tune with this attention to revealing patterns in this way. So why, when many other large-scale interpretations have stood the test of time, did landscape historians and archaeologists become so unsympathetic to his idea of multiple estates?

There must have been many reasons, but a few occur to me as crucial. Two powerful critiques were very influential: an article by Nicky Gregson (1985) and a book on Wales by Wendy Davies (1982). Of these the latter perhaps had the greatest impact because many of Glanville Jones' sources were from Wales and much of his argument related to that country.

The documentary evidence cited by Jones came to seem too late, too fiscal, too royal, two mathematical and above all too *Welsh*: not just because his main source, the Book of Iowerth, was Welsh but because part of his project – clearly emotionally very important to him – was to establish the Celtic and thus the possibly pre-Roman origins of the institution. More recently, Dawn Hadley has shown how in the Danelaw 'estates' or sokes which *looked* old could have been the product of quite recent estate construction during the reorganisation of landholding there (Hadley 2000).

The multiple estate model was used by place-name specialists to explain names – 'milk-tun', 'sheep-tun' and so on – in a way that implied highly specialised production and efficient estate management. It was hard to find this credible in pre-Conquest contexts. Even the twelfth-century abbots of Ramsey with all the bureaucracy at their disposal did not arrange their food farms in such a way. Although there is no inherent reason why Welsh kings should not have been more organised than English kings it is worth pointing out that the English court was itinerant and dependent on food rents, rather than efficiently exploited estates, until well after the Conquest.

Historians were beginning to give more weight to other much more credible entities, the *regiones*, the 'small shires' which had deep roots and long lives. Glanville Jones recognised them too, as had Jolliffe.

Geoffrey Barrow had shown how they might have worked in the kingdom of the Scots (1973). We began to recognise how they could evolve over time: Steve Basset's analysis of Wootton Wawen in Warwickshire showed how part of an area known as the *regio* of the *Stoppingas* – the resource territory of a small people – evolved into a minster *parochia* there (Bassett 1989). The *regiones* have become embedded in perceptions of the landscape. Glanville Jones seems to have elided them into his model of the multiple estate as if they were much the same kind of thing (Jones 1979, 18–19). I do not think they were, but I do think that the landscape of the small shire was the cloth from which the multiple estates were cut. We could consider investigating some form of the multiple estate as the *successor* to the small shire: later in this article I try to do this in the case of a little region in Warwickshire, the *regio* of the *Stoppingas* investigated by Steve Bassett.

If the *regio* did in fact break down, or was broken down into the multiple estate, this is not simply a question of slicing the landscape up into smaller pieces. Human relationships are involved. One way to consider this is to look at the relationships between different elements in the landscape – and by landscape I mean the worked landscape, not just scenery – and the forms of dominance which evolved there.

Glanville Jones himself thought that the *working use* of the landscape was important. At the very beginning of chapter in Sawyer's *Early Medieval Settlement* (1979) he stressed that early Britain was a landscape of transhumance. He perceptively cited Gildas' comment that Britain had 'mountains suitable for seasonal pasture' (Jones 1972, 288). Of the king's two vills in each commote he noted that the king's court was normally in the lowlands with its arable demesne of 'mensal land' to supply his table, and the king's waste and his summer pasture would normally be in the uplands. In other words the estate of the most powerful landowner himself depended on the mixed pasture and arable economy whose different areas were linked by transhumance. He constantly refers to these linkages, whether seasonal or short term, whether up the moor or the mountain, away to the woodlands, or down to the marshes and fens.

Numerous regional studies have shown how important and widespread this synergy between arable and pasture was, on a large scale or a small one, from kings' estates down to peasant farms. It was a synergy as important for a farmer turning his cows out in a patch of nearby woodland, or his sheep up on the Brecklands during the day and bringing them back at night, as it was for long distance seasonal transhumance to distant mountain or moorland. It was the essential infrastructure of the small shire or *regio*. Unlike Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, which were essentially elite constructions, I would define *regiones* as named areas recognised from the bottom up, that is by the people who lived there.

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Whatever the change in context over time, the identity of a region was always related to, and sometimes described as, its principal pasture resource. Many examples reflect this: the people and the Wood of the Kingdom of Elmet, known to Bede, the 'Chiltern-dwellers' or people of the Chiltern hill woodpastures, the Peak-dwellers, the 'open heathland' mentioned in of the Tribal Hidage, the many Shire Woods and Shire Fens, the southern Devon hundreds which circle Dartmoor, the 'lathes' of Kent, equivalent to hundreds, each with its own swine pasture in the Weald. In the case of *regiones* based on rivers like the *Arrowsaetnas* we must remember Alan Everitt's insistence that we consider River *and* Wold (1977): both the meadow *and* the woodpasture. The *regio* of the *Stoppingas* had not only the river valleys of the Alne and the Arrow as their resources but part of the Forest of Arden as well. In River and Wold, Downs and Vale, of mainland villages and marshland grazing, we see the same synergy, resulting not simply from their geography but from how the landscape was used.

Different kinds of landscape relate to, permit, or perhaps dictate different forms of dominance. Forms of dominance in *primarily pastoral regions* seem far from the kind of control exercised by landlords in other regions, such as the power of the archbishop of Canterbury to get his ploughing done by his tenants and their teams on his Malling demesne (Jones 1979, 20–29). It seems nearer to the kind of dominance exercised by clan chieftains, such as those described by Robert Dogdshon in his book *From Chiefs to Landlords* (Dodgshon 1998). This was basically the power to call men out to fight and to demand regular 'uplifting' of produce to supply an itinerant ruler or a central court. It was the moral economy which corresponds to what Geoffrey Barrow called 'extensive lordship' (1973). We see faint traces of it in the widespread evidence which Glanville Jones and others have collected of obligations owed at *centres* like repairs to the hall, short episodes of harvest or haymaking and so on (Faith 1997, 94–121). That kind of dominance, its origins and its evolution over time, is well represented in the written record, both pre- and post-Conquest. We find it surviving not at estate centres but on their peripheries; what seems very broadly to underpin it is a rural economy oriented more towards pastoral than arable exploitation.

What is harder to untangle is the origins and evolution of the other side of the equation: the forms of dominance that evolve in areas where arable cultivation was more important. I do not mean to suggest that anywhere in England there was either a purely pastoral or a purely arable economy: from the larger landscape of the shire down to the resources of the individual farm most farming must have been mixed and depended on a mixture of resources. It is a matter of emphasis and degree, not a dichotomy. Two phenomena seem to me to need explaining. The first is the relationship between arable farming and servility. The second is the fact that the administrative and consumption centres of estates seem to be in arable areas.

To take two of Glanville Jones' examples: in the Welsh texts the king's court, the *lys* serviced by the *maerdraef* with its servile tenants and the reeve's vill, is in the arable-oriented lowlands. One of his English examples is the archbishop's estate at Malling in late 13th-century Sussex. It was a vast area which stretched from the South Downs (where its townships were described as 'outside the wood') right up into the Weald (where they are 'inside the wood'). The Archbishop's centre and his demesne lay 'outside the wood' in the extreme south where his unfree tenants owed heavy labour rent on his arable demesne at Stoneham. In its northern woodlands his tenants owed much less onerous services related to the woodland economy: repairs to the buildings of the court and in the hunting field (Jones 1979, 20–29).

The obvious explanation for this is that the Archbishop's court, like all courts, needed basic provisions, chiefly cereal-based (bread and beer), and its demesne supplied them. Arable farming is labour-hungry and needs a reliable and constant labour-supply. This is something Tom Williamson has shown to good effect in explaining the nucleation of settlement in south-eastern England (Williamson 2003). Important people in early England, like kings and archbishops, had the power to command deliveries wherever they wished to stay.

If, as is reasonable, demesne arable production was located in the areas most suitable for it, this begs another question: how were the lords of labour-hungry arable demesnes able to obtain a reliable and constant labour supply? This is simply another way of posing the question of the origin of servile labour tenancies. I don't think sheer violence provides an adequate explanation, although a context of violent political conflict might be relevant. Neither does slavery: we are concerned with the origins of serfdom here, not of dominance in its crudest forms. Ine's laws give an answer from the early eighth century of how the process *began*: it was by lords granting servile tenancies in exchange for labour and money rent. Under these arrangements by accepting the grant of a house the tenant was tied to the land (Charles Edwards 1979). However, if this was the only process involved the demesnes of Anglo-Saxon England would have continued to be run on the labour of smallholders paid with allotments, a 'wage in land' of about seven acres as in the law of Ine which Thomas Charles Edwards analysed. That evidently did not happen. When we have really well-documented examples from the 12th century we can see that the tenants owing labour rent on the lord's demesne were not smallholders or farm workers with crofts: they were peasant farmers with farms of their own. There had evidently been an evolution from the smallholders of Ine's law into the ranks of servile tenants of the post-Conquest custumals.

There could be more than one reason for the apparently innate connection between arable farming and the dominant lordship of the inland. Tom Williamson detects one in the physical resources of a lordship. Where the heavy soils gave tight windows of opportunity for haymaking, ploughing and harvesting a lord needed to assemble labour quickly (as did peasant farmers). What he fails to explain is how, and when, pre-Conquest lords were able to develop this highly focussed, highly organised, highly arable-oriented strong lordship (Williamson 2003)

There is also the question of capital.[2] The advantage to lords of any kind of use of peasant traction power (carting and harrowing as well as ploughing) was that it

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[2] I owe a great deal to discussions about this with Debby Banham.

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meant that they did not need to maintain so many animals themselves, with all the savings in feed, management and housing that that entails. One of the earliest forms of compulsory labour that appears in the Frankish written record (apart from slavery) is ploughing, often in the form of the obligation to plough a proportion of the lord's own land with the tenant's own beasts. It is in this form that labour rent appears in two of the scanty Anglo-Saxon estate documents and it looks as if this was what the Archbishop's tenants had to do on his demesne at Stoneham in the 13th century. But before about 800 in England the opportunities for exploiting this source of free labour, both human and animal, were severely constrained by the available technology. For lords minded to build up an inland the opportunities for appropriating a portion of peasant labour and of peasant capital through ploughing rent would remain very limited while this remained the case.

The changes in the rural economy from about 800 on appear to be reflected in the archaeology of some settlement sites: a shift in location and a more organised look, with some larger buildings, the beginnings in some areas of a shift to what would end up as nucleation, and to changes in the cultivated area which would in some areas end as open fields. Again, in some areas there was the adoption of a heavier plough. Debby Banham argues in our forthcoming book that this was part of a shift to wheat and also part of the larger story of what has been called the 'cerealisation of Europe' (Banham and Faith forthcoming). Peasant farmers could now produce a marketable surplus in grain: the pottery evidence, with the spread of new styles in those parts of England in touch with the market, suggests that many did. But this could only be done by those who invested both in the capital equipment necessary for the new technology: a working team of at least two adult male cattle, fed enough to keep them fit and the back-up herd (or access to a market) to support this. Not all had the resources to do so, or lived in an environment where it was possible or worthwhile. This may well have been a period of greatly increased differentiation among the peasantry, between those who could afford to buy into the new technology and whose land made such an investment worthwhile, and those who could not. It may also have been the start of a much sharper divide then formerly between peasant farmers in areas which became increasingly oriented towards arable farming and those elsewhere. This does not answer the question of the origins of dominance and its connection with arable farming, but I think it gives a context for it: the expansion and transformation of peasant cereal farming, and of seigneurial cereal production on the back of it. That context must be late: we cannot realistically build it into a model of the multiple estate as an early feature of rural society[3] (Banham and Faith forthcoming).

When we think of pastoral-centred rural economies we seem often to 'turn our eyes unto the hills', to the mountain pastures of Gildas, to moorland and upland. We may bring in the Weald and the seasonal movement of pigs to mast there, marshland grazing on the Somerset Levels, and possibly the major named forests as pasture resources. I want now to make a case for seeing the pastoral sector as much more important and more widespread than that (and of cattle and sheep as more interesting than pigs). I think we should be paying much more attention to woodpasture as a major and widespread pasture resource, one that supported very large numbers of people in southern England before the Conquest. The people 'within the wood' on the archbishop's Malling estate were representative of a whole kind of rural economy we need to take into account, and if we do that we may get an idea of the kind of dominance that went with it.

One way into this is through place-names. Two kinds of countryside are reflected in the distribution of the place-names *leah* and *tun* giving us places today ending in '–ley', '–ton' and similar. These are the two most common English place-name endings, as Margaret Gelling pointed out a long time ago when working on Warwickshire; seeing their importance, she made sure that the subsequent Place-Name Society volumes have mapped them. This is not a matter of broad regional distributions: *leahs* are found in a very broad swathe across England.[4] As she also pointed out they are virtually mutually exclusive. In areas where '–leys' are found, '–tons' are not and vice versa. It is important to remember that the Place-Name Society volumes map the names of *places*, not landscape features, so a map of *leahs* is a map of areas in which people lived. Many of these names are pre-Conquest and had been settlement sites for some time before 1086; some appear a good while earlier in charters (Gelling 1974).

Here an important shift in interpretation demands our attention. Gelling's interpretation of *leah* was as 'clearing' and so she saw it as an indicator of woodland. As a result it is often mapped together with other woody names such as hurst, wood, etc (see e.g. Roberts and Wrathmell 2000). It has therefore tended to be counted as evidence for post-Conquest assarting (as to a certain extent in Roberts and Wrathmell's *Region and Place* (2002)). Della Hooke has put forward a different interpretation of *leah*: that it indicates woodpasture – grazing and foraging land which could include large open glade-like spaces (Hooke 1998 139–69). Her work is very much in tune with the study of northern European woodpasture by the Dutch ecologist Vera (2000). This gives *leah* a meaning which relates landscape to land-use and rural economy. The *leah/tun* divide is not one that simply reflects, or is reflected by, any hard and fast pastoralism/arable farming divide. It reflects a divide between two kinds of economy or farming system. It represents the same distinction as there was on the Malling estate between the arable township in the south, with their place-names in *ham* and *ton*, and the townships 'within the wood' in the Weald, with their place-names in *hurst* and *leah*. We need to think of *leah* as the setting for a kind of rural economy. It could support thriving yeomen farms which contained a wide range of often quite large and privately owned resources of their own

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[3] We might wonder whether Glanville Jones spliced some later elements, derived from the period of 'High Farming' in the thirteenth century, into his picture of what was essentially, as he said, a much earlier entity.

[4] Unfortunately the maps in Roberts and Wrathmell's *Region and Place* (2002) and in the Place-Name Society volumes do not make it possible to distinguish *leah* from other woodland names.

around the farmstead, like Chiltern farms with their own valleys and ponds and discrete woodlands, or Essex farms held by free men in Domesday, which became gentrified as 'halls', each with its little moat. But it was also an economy of the very poor who could make a precarious living there because they could supplement their very small arable patches with the virtually unlimited common resources where they could keep a pig and a couple of sheep. On a tiny scale these woodland smallholders were essentially pastoralist/husbandmen rather than husbandmen/pastoralists.

The *leahs* and *tuns* can be mapped over a very wide swathe of southern England, and over a county they will have a mutually exclusive distribution. On a smaller scale, however, the picture often looks different. They are often found as neighbours and they exhibit the same relationships as I emphasized above. Over time they perhaps came to be less sharply differentiated. *Tuns* needed and kept their neighbouring woodpasture, even when it only remained in the faint traces of distant woodland or moorland rights attaching to a lowland manor. Some *leahs* which were unquestionably woodland in the broad sense by the 12th century, perhaps earlier, developed their own internal nucleations: their own *tun* with its manorial demesne, church and so on and their own tiny versions of the same synergy between arable and pasture with which I began.

On the small scale of the estate we can see how this involved different forms of dominance, as shown by the example of the *regio* of the *Stoppingas*. By the time of Domesday, it had transmogrified into the estate of Vagn, an important Scandinavian landowner on the eve of the Conquest.[5] It was what we might call a multiple estate: Vagn had a large demesne on the Alne at Wootton Wawen, where he built his church and where he had his mills and slave teams. The woodland which went with the estate was a world of peasant yeomen and very small poor people hanging on by their bootstraps who could just about make a living because they had access to vast common woodpasture. Vagn's major capital investment lay at the centre and it would be there, at what is now Wootton Wawen, that Vagn or his successors would need a controlled labour force. The surrounding woodland was probably much more use to him as hunting or timber land or swine-pasture. Here his control was much less, and his need for labour and access to peasant resources was less as well. In any case the peasants of the woodland did not have the ploughteams which would be of any use to him.[6] These two worlds of *tun* and *leah*, so different in their economy and social structure, were elements in the same 'multiple' estate, itself once part of the *regio* of the *Stoppingas* and bearing the same dichotomy that the ancient *regio* had done.

There is nothing new about asserting that comparative peasant independence was associated with being on the periphery of an estate, with being self-sufficient, with an economy based on woodpasture, moorland and mountain, with owing hunting services rather than labour rent. In the first part of this paper I associated this bundle of characteristics with the form of dominance, of 'extensive lordship' associated with the small shire or *regio*. Glanville Jones' multiple estate model seems to me to be right and helpful about the basic synergies in the landscape on this scale. What he said about the relationships of the people of the periphery with the centre and about their possible great age rings true. This approach is helpful in looking at the landscape in close-up, as I have tried to do with the estate of Wootton Wawen. In this paper I have been also looking for the other component of the estate structure, the unfreedom and labour rent demanded by the needs of the medieval manorial demesne arable from people like the tenants in Glanville Jones' 'bond vills' or on the Archbishop's demesne at Stoneham. I suggested that part of the answer must lie in the landscape: 'where did this form of dominance develop?' and proposed that the arable sector was the context. But *where* was only part of the answer. The other part lies in the *when*? In my view, although some of the greater minster estates may have begun to be run on a serious appropriation of peasant labour and livestock before the Conquest in England, this was not yet a widespread form of exploitation by the landed class. There were labour tenants closely tied to a manorial inland, and their houses and holdings were the embryo from which the nucleated 'manorial' settlement would evolve. But the widespread dependence implied by the idealized arrangements of the Book of Iowerth, or in Rees Davies' statement that 'a dependent servile peasantry formed a major sector of the Welsh population' was not early medieval, still less pre-Roman. Rather it was the product of a long period of development in particular historical circumstances (including conquest). In Rees Davies' words it was the product of a move from 'an economy of plunder to one of exploitation' in the 12th and 13th centuries (Davies 1982, 138). Quite simply, the early medieval landscape was against it.

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[5] DB fo.242v

[6] The economy of the woodland at Wootton Wawen is analysed in detail in the 'Woodland' chapter in Banham and Faith (forthcoming).

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