EARLY ANGLO-SAXON TERRITORIAL ORGANISATION IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND ITS NEIGHBOURS

KEITH BAILEY

Dr Bailey here reviews the evidence for the areas allotted to the various tribal groupings in the seventh-century document known as the Tribal Hidage and makes a number of suggestions about the arrangements prevailing in the period of the emergence of the historic kingdoms.

I

The document known as the *Tribal Hidage* has already been the subject of much debate, notably by Hart, and Davies and Vierck.[1] Although differing in their interpretation and dating, they generally agree in their location of the various groups south of the Humber. Many of the unintelligible names seem to occur within a fifty-mile radius of London, however, and attempts to identify and locate them have not met with general agreement. In the case of what is now Buckinghamshire, this problem was addressed briefly in an earlier paper,[2] and the purpose of the present paper is to consider the evidence for a wider area, to see if a coherent picture of late seventh-century political arrangements can be obtained. It is assumed that *Tribal Hidage* was compiled under Wulfhere or Æðelred of Mercia (657–704) and represents an assessment for tribute or tax-gathering.[3] The evidence for smaller territorial divisions in this region is also examined.

The inspiration for this study was Alan Everitt's thought-provoking analysis of Kentish territorial and ecclesiastical organisation.[4] It appears that, as he suspected, the patterns found there occur widely in south-east England, in areas with very different physical and historical backgrounds. How far these similarities reflect an earlier, Roman or Celtic system of organisation, or the extent to which they represent a common Anglo-Saxon response to conditions in the fifth and sixth centuries is not explored here. The structures discussed in this paper may point to origins in a more unified system of government in the second half of the seventh century, when many of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms themselves were only recently founded and in a state of turmoil, both internally and in their relationships with one another.[5]

One vexed question is the extent to which early hidage assessments relate to those of later periods, notably Domesday Book.[6] Some seem to have survived unaltered until the eleventh century, while others were lost in the transformation of original large territories into smaller estates. Prof. Everitt, discussing smaller territorial units and minster-lands in Kent, clearly regards them as being arranged hierarchically, with comparable areas.[7] This principle is unlikely to have applied only in Kent.

II

Within the London Region, the kingdoms of Kent and the East Saxons are reasonably well defined, as are the territories of the *Gifle* and *Hicce*, in the basins of the rivers Ivel and Hiz in Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire (see Fig. 1).

While there may be agreement about the location of these four groups, their boundaries (if that is not an anchronistic concept for the time) remain more elusive, except where they are formed by major natural features. One problem is the north-western boundary of the East Saxons. They gained control of the area west of the Lea at an early date. A newly-emerging London was their 'metropolis' c.604, if Bede may be taken at face value.[8] A
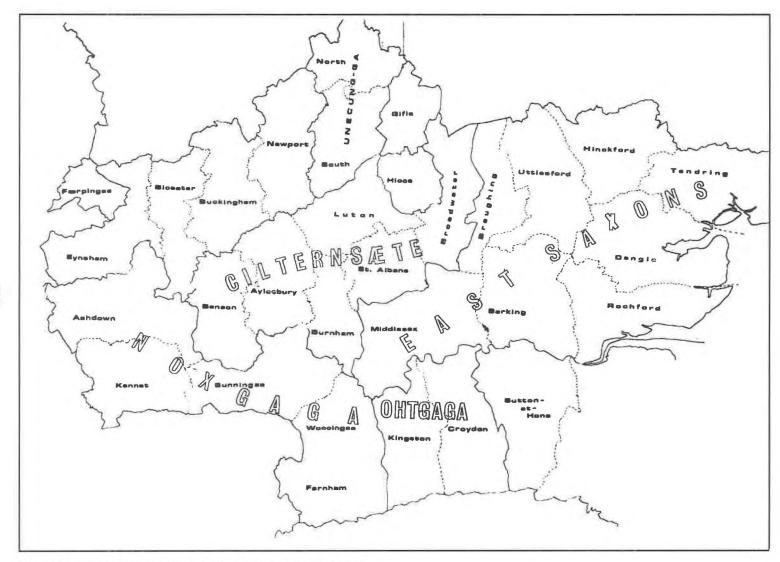
Fig. 1: London Region: notional tribal hidage primary boundary usage

century later, their kings held sway at Twickenham (Middx.) and Hemel Hempstead (Herts.), albeit under Mercian overlordship and in conflict with growing West Saxon ambitions in the Thames Valley.[9] The area around the former Roman town at Braughing (Herts.) was also under East Saxon rule,[10] and it seems that they had absorbed the Middle Saxons by the mid-seventh century.[11] The location of synods at Hatfield and Hertford in the 670s may indicate a boundary zone between areas considered to fall in Mercia proper and Essex. It is assumed here that the East Saxon boundary in north-east Hertfordshire followed that of the diocese of London, running roughly north-south from Royston by way of Braughing and Ware to Cheshunt on the Middlesex border. The Hemel area (OE *Hæmele*, 'broken ground') is best regarded as a salient into the territory of the *Cilternsætan*.

The territories of the *Hicce* and *Gifle* are less easy to define. Other than a few place-names, Hitchin (Herts.) and Northill and Southill (Beds.), there are few indications apart from natural features like the watersheds of the Hiz and Ivel basins.[12] The *Hicce* have been located here in the rural deanery of Hitchin (including those parishes later under the jurisdiction of St. Albans), an area of about 50,000 acres. There is some evidence for continuity from the Roman period at Wymondley near Hitchin, raising the possibility that it represents a pre-Anglo-Saxon administrative unit.[13] The *Gifle* adjoined them to the north in the rural deanery of Shefford (including various peculiars), totalling 65,000 acres. This may represent the area dependent on the minor Roman town at Sandy.[14] The survival of these two groups may give a clue as to the way in which larger polities were built-up or subdivided, and will be discussed further below.

III

The disrupting effect of the Danish wars and settlement after 850 and subsequent administrative changes seem to have erased the memory of other groups, especially where later shire boundaries cut across the north-east to south-west grain of the landscape north of the Thames. Six groups remain to be fitted into present-day Surrey, Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, and the rest of Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire. Some of their names are badly garbled. They are the: *Cilternsætan* 4,000

hides; *Færpingas* 300 hides; *Hendrica* 3,500 hides; *Unecung-ga* 1,200 hides; *Noxgaga* 5,000 hides; *Ohtgaga* 2,000 hides. The last two together form a typical 7,000-hide unit, the same as some of the lesser kingdoms, although it is not clear whether this represents the break-up, or a stage in the creation, of a unitary territory, or whether it is coincidental.[15] The *Hendrica* and *Cilternsætan* may represent another potential kingdom. It is not clear how such putative states relate to the vigorous expansion of Mercia from its Midland heartland in the generation after 650, the very time when the *Tribal Hidage* was compiled. The *Færpingas* occupied an area in north-west Oxfordshire, apparently centred on the resting-place of St. Diuma at Charlbury.[16]

The *Cilternsætan* share with other groups a name formed from that of a prominent hill or range (e.g. *Wreocensætan*, *Pecsætan* named after the Wrekin and the Peak), and were clearly in the vicinity of the Chiltern Hills, which include parts of four later shires. They have previously been located both in the Chilterns and in the vales to the north, the latter assuming, incorrectly it seems from an increasing body of archaeological evidence, that the high chalklands were thickly-wooded, sparsely-settled and generally unattractive to Romans and Anglo-Saxons alike.[17]

The northern boundary of the *Cilternsætan* is assumed to follow the line of the Icknield Way, along the foot of the escarpment. In the north-east they marched with the *Hicce* and the East Saxons, occupying the later Odsey and Broadwater Hundreds. In the south-west the picture is less clear. There is evidence around the small Roman town at Dorchester of continuity into the first half of the fifth century, and possibly even later.[18] The Thames marked the southern boundary as far as the Colne, which formed the western boundary of the East Saxons, now that between Buckinghamshire and Middlesex. Roman Staines occupied a similar position to Dorchester where the London-Silchester road crosses the Thames. There is some evidence of early Anglo-Saxon occupation here.[19] The broad, marshy Colne valley, with many braided streams, was not necessarily a barrier to the passage of settlers and trade.

The only known connexion between south

Buckinghamshire and west Middlesex is a Domesday reference to a render paid by some men in Burnham to an otherwise unrecorded minster church at Staines, although there is a suggestion that the place-names Harlington, Hitcham and Hughenden may commemorate an early dynasty of local rulers.[20] The East Saxon salient into the Chilterns around Hemel Hempstead need not have arisen before 650–700, the original boundary following that of the later counties to Cheshunt, then turning north. Braughing is yet another minor Roman town on one of the radial routes from London which seems to have been on a seventh-century political frontier. There is little evidence of early Saxon occupation here, although the Roman site is located near Wickham Hill, a place-name often indicative of early contact between Britons and Saxons.[21] The area of south Bedfordshire centred on Limbury and Luton, which lies on the chalk, was also part of the *Cilternsætan* area.

Thus defined, the *Cilternsætan* occupied 640,000 acres. It has been suggested that this represents the territory of *Verulamium*, where there is evidence of sub-Roman activity well into the fifth century, and possibly beyond.[22] The extent of Celtic survival in and around the Chilterns is a vexed issue although it seems likely to have been extensive at least until the West Saxon victory at *Biedcanford* in '571', which initially at least probably represented only a change of overlordship. Some of the territory annexed then might have been ruled by Anglian settlers, rather than Britons.[23] The *tunas* and their territories taken in '571', do not include St. Albans. Limbury, Aylesbury and Bensington are all very close to the suggested northern boundary of the *Cilternsætan*, in areas where early Anglo-Saxon occupation is known, and it seems as likely that Cuða was taking over English territory as extinguishing the kingdom of *Calchvynydd*, if that were indeed this area.[24]

There is nothing to suggest that the *Cilternsætan* had evolved into a kingdom, or part of one which included the *Hendrica*, although they may have done. The rich barrow burial at Taplow, datable to 600–625,[25] shows a life-style comparable with those of contemporary Kentish and East Anglian rulers. Tæppa may have been a member of an independent dynasty which has left no literary trace, or the scion of an occupying power. By 675,

the Chilterns were under Mercian overlordship, and by analogy with Surrey ruled by a *subregulus*, either representing a native ruling house, or a Mercian prince imposed by Wulfhere. There was a Mercian *villa regalis* at Thame (or on the river Thame, possibly Quarrendon) at this time, on the boundary with the *Hendrica*.[26]

Our sources are silent about the fate of St. Albans after the fifth century, although Bede attests its continuing role as a cult centre.[27] Rutherford Davis comments on the absence of early English finds in the area, but this does not mean that the Britons had not come under Anglo-Saxon rule before '571'. The fact that it is not named as being taken then suggests three possibilities: (1) that it was not an important strategic objective; (2) that it was under the control of one of the places named (Limbury or Aylesbury); or (3) that it did not fall to the West Saxons at that time, but remained independent even longer, until taken over subsequently in a campaign which did not involve West Saxons, thereby escaping the attention of the chronicler. The separateness of St. Albans and its hinterland, from Middlesex to Bedfordshire, is still apparent in the early eighth century, when it was bounded both east and west by the East Saxon kingdom.[28] This was probably the territory of the *Wæclingas*, who gave St. Albans its English name *Wæclingacæstir*.[29] They were presumably part of the *Cilternsætan*. The Chiltern region may have had a mixed Anglian-Saxon-British population, like the *Hwicce* in Gloucestershire and Worcestershire, where the West Saxons equally failed to achieve a lasting presence after their military successes under Ceawlin in the 570s and 580s.[30]

IV

The *Noxgaga*, *Ohtgaga*, *Hendrica*, and *Unecung-ga* have given rise to a great deal of speculation, but not yet consensus. This section considers the views of Cyril Hart and Wendy Davies, and offers an interpretation which seems to fit both the geographical and historical contexts. There is no evidence for any of them outside the *Tribal Hidage*.

Dr. Hart placed the *Noxgaga* and *Ohtgaga* in Berkshire/West Surrey and East Surrey, respectively, regarding them as divisions of the same

people, because their assessments total 7,000 hides.[31] This may be true, but may only be a coincidence. Hart emended the 'N' of *Noxgaga* to 'W', on the basis of scribal error in copying OE 'Þ', linking them to Woking, Wokingham and Wokefield, all of which derive from a group called the *Woccingas*[32] The Berkshire examples, however, seem to be offshoots from the main group in Surrey, located in the *provincia* of the *Sunningas*.[33] His explanation fails to account for the second element of the name, which also appears in *Ohtgaga*, and apparently in an even more garbled form in *Unecung-ga*. I suggest that that awkward letter 'Þ' is again to blame, and that the ending should be *wara*, a common enough termination denoting a group. Hart suggests that the first element of *Ohtgaga*, which occurs in certain Kentish royal names,[34] points to a location in east Surrey, and part of west Kent, which has institutional parallels with the rest of Kent although archaeologically it belongs with the Saxon areas.[35] In his revision, Hart gives all of Surrey to the *Ohtgaga*, leaving Berkshire to the *Noxgaga*, confirmation, if any were needed, of the difficulties inherent in trying to locate these groups.[36]

Dr. Davies offers no linguistic interpretation of these names, locating them by process of elimination in Hampshire and west Sussex.[37] These areas, however, are usually assigned to the West and South Saxons, and there seems no reason to intrude other groups there.

Basing his views on their position in the text, Hart places the *Hendrica* between the *Hwicce*, *Cilternsætan* and Outer Mercia, certainly a large enough area to accommodate their 3,500 hides.[38] Following Ekwall's derivation of Hindringham in Norfolk from a group-name *Hindringas*, 'the people dwelling behind' (the hills),[39] Hart suggests that *Hendrica* denotes those dwelling on the lands behind, that is to the north of, the Chiltern escarpment. It seems unlikely, however, that an *ingas* group would occupy such a large area. The two *Gadre* hundreds mentioned in Domesday Book east of the Cherwell (later part of Kirtlington Hundred) may contain an echo of the *Hendrica*, although the origin of this name is equally obscure.[40] Davies places the *Hendrica* in Berkshire, identifying the name with *Ondred*, which is linked with *Ciltinne* in Eddius' account of the exile of Cædwalla, later

king of Wessex.[41] She assumes that *Ciltinne* is Chiltern and that *Ondred* is in the same region. Margaret Gelling, however, has convincingly argued that *Ciltinne* lies in Sussex, forming the basis of the name Chiltington, lying close to the Weald, whose Old English name was *Andredesweald*.[42]

Hart would emend the first 'n' of *Unecung-ga* to 'u', and the second 'u' to 'li', which he defends on palaeographical grounds.[43] This would give *Uuecling-ga*, which he identifies with the *Wæclingas* (see above). He locates them north of the Chilterns, over much of Bedfordshire. This seems unlikely for two reasons. First, 1,200 hides is an exceptional area for an -*ingas* group, and secondly, the *Wæclingas* would not then occupy the area around the place named after them. It is probable, however, that the *Unecung-ga* **did** occupy most of modern Bedfordshire. Davies offers no explanation of the name, locating it by elimination in the Upper Thames Valley, apparently western and central Berkshire.[44]

Of the two, Dr. Hart's solutions to the topography of *Tribal Hidage* seem distinctly more plausible, but it remains to be seen if the groups of most concern to students of Buckinghamshire can be more precisely located, by consideration of geology, relief, major rivers and later administrative boundaries. The meaning of their names is likely to elude final solution.

V

We may follow Dr. Hart in locating the *Hendrica* north and west of the *Cilternsætan* in west and central Oxfordshire and north Buckinghamshire. The southern boundary follows the Thames from Dorchester to Oxford, where there is a choice: (1) up the Thames to Lechlade, one of the four-shire junctions found along the river (cf. Staines and the mouth of the Lea); or (2) up the Cherwell as far as the boundary with "Outer Mercia" near Adderbury. There is some debate as to whether or not Wychwood lay inside the territory of the *Hwicce*.[45] Here the territory of the royal vill at Shipton-under-Wychwood has been assigned to the *Hwicce*. Eynsham, the fourth of the *tunas* taken by Cuða in 571 lies south of this area, which also has evidence of fifth and sixth-century English settlement.[46] Option 1 fits the scanty evidence better,

with the territories centred on Eynsham and Bampton west of the Cherwell belonging to the *Hendrica*.

North Oxfordshire (Banbury and Bloxham Hundreds) is in "Outer Mercia", separated from the *Hendrica* by the Swere valley. Stoke Lyne east of the Cherwell contains the site of the battle of *Feðanleag*, where in '584' Ceawlin and Cuða fought against the British (?and Anglians). Although many villages (*tunas*) and their lands were captured, Cuða was killed and Ceawlin retreated 'in anger' (OE *ierre*).[47] Coming after the capture of four important *tunas* (571) and the driving of a wedge between the Britons of Wales and those of south-west England (577), this campaign looks like an attempt to counter the initial expansion of Mercia into the upper reaches of the Thames Valley as well as a mopping-up operation against pockets of Britons remaining along the Cherwell/Avon watershed. It marked the effective end to West Saxon expansion north of the Thames. There are, however, signs of British survival in north-west Buckinghamshire, where the part-Celtic place-names Brill, Bernwood and Chetwode, the last two indicative of wooded terrain, are found in an area where early Anglo-Saxon settlement is sparse.[48]

East of the Cherwell, the northern boundary follows that between Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire to the Ouse, where there are two alternatives: (1) down the Ouse to the Bedfordshire border at Cold Brayfield; (2) following the later shire boundary, including the hundreds of Stotfold and Bunsty north of the Ouse. Major rivers often formed boundaries between Anglo-Saxon groups. Their broad flood-plains impeded, but did not prohibit, communications, the Thames being an obvious example. The Great Ouse is such a river, with braided streams and a low rate of fall. At Buckingham, (where two *burhs* were built in 917), Stony Stratford and Newport Pagnell, important routeways cross the river.

Option 1 requires an explanation for the later extension of Buckinghamshire north of the Ouse. One context might be the assignment of territory to the new *burhs*. Buckingham had a pre-Conquest minster church associated with the cult of St. Rumwald,[49] but the extent of its *parochia* is unclear, and it need not necessarily date back to the conversion. Much later, in the fifteenth century, there was an ecclesiastical link with King's Sutton, an important royal estate in south-west Northamptonshire which may imply that Buckingham was once in "Outer Mercia".[50] There were certainly later territorial and ecclesiastical links between north Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire.[51] Whatever the early history of Buckingham, its name suggests settlement by 650 in common with other sites along the Ouse.[52] Its position on a major early boundary resembles Hertford, Oxford and Wallingford, all important crossing points and religious or secular central places. There seems to be no trace of administrative or tenurial links between Buckinghamshire north of the Ouse and Northamptonshire in Domesday Book,[53] although such links may once have existed but failed to survive the upheavals of the ninth-tenth centuries. One possible example is suggested by the toponymic link between Brafield in Northants. and Cold Brayfield in Bucks.[54]

The eastern boundary of the *Hendrica* is assumed to coincide with that of Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire from Lavendon to Linslade, where it turned west along the northern march of the *Cilternsætan* to Long Crendon and back to the Thames near Dorchester. This gives the later Buckinghamshire hundreds of Ashendon, Cottesloe, Lamua, Moulsoe, Mursley, Rowley, Seckloe and Waddesdon to the *Hendrica*. Although Yardley Hundred became one of the three hundreds of Cottesloe, it forms a salient between Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire, suggesting that it belongs with the *Cilternsætan*, especially as it had detached parishes on the west side of the salient.

In Oxfordshire the *Hendrica/Cilternsætan* boundary probably followed the Thame to the Thames just south of Dorchester. The latter had very early Anglo-Saxon occupation and was a West Saxon and Mercian see after 635. It occupies the sort of position often found close to a major boundary. During the Roman period this would have been the Thames.[55] The contest between Wessex and Mercia for control of south Oxfordshire was not finally resolved until 779, when Offa secured it for Mercia at the battle of Benson, in what seems to have been a repetition of the events of '571', with the whole dependent territory transferred from one overlord to another. Four and a half hundreds were appurtenant to Benson in 1086.[56]

To summarise, there are four options for the territory of the *Hendrica*:

Option	Area Covered	Acres (000)
A	North Bucks. (S. of Ouse); Cent./West Oxon. (inc. Wychwood)	456
B	As A, but incl. Bucks. N. of Ouse	507
C	As A, but excl. Wychwood	431
D	As C, but incl. Bucks. N. of Ouse	482

Of these, D seems the most likely.

The *Hendrica* have a less obvious physical basis than the *Cilternsætan*. The area north of the chalk covers a variety of geology, soil types and relief,[57] ranging from gravel terraces along the major rivers to clay vales and outliers of high ground in north Buckinghamshire up to 600ft OD. Lying in both the Thames and Ouse basins, this area was equally open to influences from Germanic settlers using river and land routes to the interior, from both the Wash and the Thames Estuary. It cannot predate the Anglo-Saxon period as an administrative unit, as it includes parts of two *civitates* (*Dobunni* and *Catuvellauni*).[58] There is as yet little evidence for early Anglo-Saxon settlement in most of this region, with the exception of Dorchester, Eynsham and Cassington.[59] We should probably look to the turbulent century after 550 to provide a context for the creation of the *Hendrica* as a separate group.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, with its West Saxon bias, provides some clues. Cuðwine and his sons Cuðwulf and Ceawlin seem to have been the dominant leaders, whose objective, like that of Wulfhere of Mercia a century later, was the annexation of territory on the northern and western flanks of the London Region from the assorted petty rulers who had hitherto assumed the mantle of their Romano-British predecessors. The first steps towards the creation of a kingdom were also being taken in the late-sixth century by the East Saxons.[60] The '571' campaign was aimed at gaining control of the *Cilternsætan* and *Hendrica*. The location of Biedcanford has given rise to much debate, philological opinion being strongly against Bedford,[61] although there was early and long-lived settlement at nearby Kempston.[62] One of the four *tunas* taken in '571' was Benson, only a few miles from Dorchester, the assumed centre of West Saxon

power, suggesting that the latter was severely circumscribed, since Eynsham and the Cherwell valley also remained to be taken.

The areas taken over in '571' may have had four rulers, thereafter being controlled by one or more West Saxon *subreguli* until the Mercian takeover in the 660s. A ninth-century dispute between Coenwulf of Mercia and the Archbishop of Canterbury reveals that Eynsham was the centre of a 300 hide estate.[63] The area taken by Ceawlin probably comprised the Three Hundreds of Wootton (67,000 acres), between the Cherwell and the *Færpingas/Hwicce*. Another territory centred on Bampton contained about 55,000 acres, counted as two hundreds in 1086, but may originally have been a 300-hide unit.[64]

The recent stimulating reappraisal of the life of St. Frideswide (Friðuswið) by John Blair provides support for at least one Mercian *subregulus* in this area in the late-seventh/early-eighth century.[65] The name of her father, Didanus, may derive from one of several Old English personal names,[66] one of which, Dæda, is contained in the place-name Deddington in north Oxfordshire.[67] This faces Adderbury across the Swere valley, identified here with the northern boundary of the *Hendrica*. Adderbury is named after Eadburh, a sister of Wulfhere of Mercia, who was associated with Bicester and with St. Osyth of Aylesbury.[68] This may be no more than a coincidence, but like many others in the surviving sources, it may contain a grain of truth. Frideswide's mother was Sæðryð, a name which fits the East Saxon alliterative tradition, and this may represent a dynastic union under the auspices of the Mercian king to consolidate his position as overlord of southern England.[69] (Offa, an East Saxon king *c*.700 had close links with the Evesham area.)[70]

The choice of a name in Friðu- for Dida's daughter strongly implies some link with the *subreguli* Friðuwold and Friðuric, who ruled in Surrey (and possibly Buckinghamshire), and the northern part of Middle Anglia respectively.[71] Dida is said to have been succeeded as "king of Oxford" by Ælfgar, "king of Leicester" (?*c*.700).[72] That Leicester, formerly a Roman *civitas* capital, retained some administrative importance is indicated by its choice as a bishopric for Middle Anglia *c*.680. The

West Saxon see at Dorchester had been transferred to Winchester in the 660s, to be replaced by a Mercian one.[73] Friðuswið is said to have died in 727. (Friðugyð, the queen of Æðelheard of Wessex in the 730s may have been a relative.)[74] By then Æðelbald of Mercia seems to have reduced the status of former *subreguli* to that of senior noblemen, a trend continued by Offa.[75]

Members of this family were evidently closely associated with the Mercian dynasty. Finberg suggested that the rulers of the *Hwicce* originated in Northumbria, and the Friðu- element may also indicate an origin there (cf. king Friðuwald of Bernicia).[76] Friþuwold ruled the territories of the *Noxgaga* and *Ohtgaga* after 670, and perhaps also the *Cilternsætan*. Friðuric ruled the various small groups who were located in the north and east of Middle Anglia, as successor to Peada.[77] This leaves the *Hendrica* and *Unecung-ga*, and possibly the *Cilternsætan* if they lay outside Friðuwald's regnum, to be ruled by a third subregulus. It is he who may have been the father of Friðuswið.

The West Saxons practised multiple-kingship, and probably governed the areas taken in '571' in much the same way.[78] One, possibly two, *subreguli* could have ruled in what became Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, with others in Surrey and Berkshire. The relevant *Tribal Hidage* units are at least equal in size to later shires, and would therefore be appropriate for a subregulus. The confused nature of West Saxon genealogies, and their desire to rationalise and give only one ruler prominence at any one time, make it impossible to identify any of these rulers with certainty. *Prima facie*, they would belong to the usual 'C'-alliteration, as Cuðwine and his sons did. The names Cuðwulf, Cœlwold, Cynebald and Æðelbald, descendants of Ceawlin, may belong to the period between 625 and the onset of Mercian rule after 660.[79]

VI

The 1,200 hides of the *Unecung-ga* may be placed with reasonable certainty in north and west Bedfordshire. Excluding the areas given to the *Gifle*, *Hicce* and *Cilternsætan*, about 183,000 acres remain to accommodate them. The name must remain a puzzle, although it may derive from *Usewara* ('dwellers by the Ouse'), combining its major feature, the Ouse (OE *Use*), with a common group-name element. As in the case of Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and Oxfordshire, there was a fundamental change in the administrative geography of this area between 670 and 1066. The creation of territories to support Edward the Elder's new *burhs* in an area where the previous administrative pattern followed the grain of relief and geology produced a radically different pattern.[80] The fact that all four shires are named from *burhs* is suggestive. Of the old names, only the *Gifle* and *Hicce* survive in placenames, the latter also a hundred. The others, even if they had remained current after centuries of Mercian rule, had become hopelessly garbled by the time surviving versions of *Tribal Hidage* were set down. Bedfordshire is the most extreme example of dislocation. This is not surprising in view of the fact that the boundary agreed between Alfred and Guthrum in 878 ran through the later county in an arbitrary way.[81] The straight line from Luton to Beford did not survive, and the Ouse does not always act as a hundred and rural deanery boundary in the north. The current shire boundary cannot predate the campaign of 915, when Edward took the northern *burh* at Bedford and built the southern one.[82] The *County Hidage* gives 1,200 hides to Bedford; in 1086 the shire had twelve hundreds and 1,214 hides.[83] This may represent the area controlled by the Danish army of Bedford prior to 906. In that year, a treaty was made between Edward and the armies of East Anglia and Northumbria at Tiddingford, where the Þeodweg crossed the Ousel at the Beds./Bucks. boundary.[84]

The *Þeodweg* ('People's Way') runs to the north of Icknield Way on or just south of the *Hendrica/ Unecung-ga-Cilternsætan* boundary, and features in two tenth-century charters. In 926, Æðelstan granted five hides at Chalgrave and Tebworth (Beds.) to his minister Ealdred.[85] This charter records the earlier purchase of the estate from the pagans (i.e. Danes) for £10 of gold and silver by order of Edward the Elder and Ealdorman Æðelred of Mercia. This policy, which the crown was pursuing in the early days of the reconquest of the Danelaw, seems to have proved unpopular with the nobles who had to implement it.[86] The Þeodweg ran past Wingfield and across Watling Street, and Grundy traced it to the crossing of the Ousel at Tiddingford (*Yttingaford*).[87] It also appears in the bounds of Linslade, granted by Edgar to his

kinswoman Ælfgifu in 966.[88] These commence at *Yttingaford* and proceed along a stræt as far as the Wing-Leighton Buzzard road at Ascott.[89] The use of the word *stræt* often denotes a Roman, or at least a paved road, indicating more than a local track leading to a minor ford.[90] Wing was a central place with a minster church.[91] It was also in Ælfgifu's hands in the mid-tenth century, but there is no evidence for its early ecclesiastical history.[92] Beyond Wing, the course of the Þeodweg is unclear. The west bank of the Ousel formed the territory of the Wiðungas, perhaps the later Hundred of Cottesloe, and the east bank that of the *Yttingas*, a component of the *Unecung-ga*.

VII

We turn now to the next level in the seventh-century administrative hierarchy, the so-called "primary units". One of the most significant problems in understanding the relationship between these and the larger entities is one of chronology, which is incapable of final resolution without further documents. On the one hand, primary units may be seen as emerging from the increasing governmental and socio-economic sophistication which characterises the period 550–650 in many parts of England.[93] This may have begun with the grouping of settlements into polities which often bear *-ingas* names, and which commonly occupied territories containing 15–30,000 acres, assessed at up to 150 hides. The consensus among place-name scholars that many *-ingas* names do not date from the earliest phase of Anglo-Saxon settlement also suggests that these smaller units could have arisen after 550.[94] In their turn, primary units, usually equivalent to one or more later hundreds, may have been created by the early rulers in the genealogies which commonly seem to have their true, rather than mythological, roots in this period.[95]

Alternatively, the primary units may represent an older structure, either Anglo-Saxon or Romano-British. This has been suggested for many smaller entities, or multiple-estates, where a significant element of continuity is seen, even predating the Roman era in certain cases.[96] Apart from the relationship between some Dark Age and earlier sites such as villas and hillforts, there is no positive proof of such continuity, however, and it may be that the pendulum has swung too far away from the traditional "clean break" approach which saw the imposition of Anglo-Saxon rule and customs *de novo*.[97]

A third possibility is that primary units postdate the appearance of the kingdoms, created by subdivision. They often seem to have been assessed at 300-hides or multiples thereof, the system which appears to underlie the *Tribal Hidage*. Such a system was not necessarily of great antiquity, for the seventh century was especially fluid politically. The small groups of Middle Anglia were being absorbed into the Mercian realm in the 670s, a fate which overtook the minor kingdoms in the eighth century, until Mercia itself was eclipsed by Wessex. Many early boundaries would have been transition zones of varying widths, "marches", fluctuating frequently in response to short-term political changes, and although the remarks made throughout this paper imply that they are fixed and clearly identifiable on the ground, this is merely for convenience.

The expansionism of the West Saxons between 560 and 600 and the bretwaldaship of Æðelberht of Kent after 600 were no doubt catalysts for change in areas where older systems prevailed, be they British or Anglo-Saxon. The need to organise tribute around a network of royal centres could have brought together hitherto disparate groups, and it is not necessary to assume that viable pre-existing structures were always taken over by the newcomers. For example, the territories taken in '571' need not represent Romano-British units, but may have been created by the earliest English settlers out of the remains of collapsed British successor states. It is not clear how long the sub-Roman government of Verulamium survived, and, more important, how much of its former territory actually remained under its control by '571'.

Equally important, although obscure, is the role of the Church in all this. As a new dimension in government after 600, and moreover one which acquired substantial landed endowments, the church clearly represented a force for change at a time when this was occurring anyway. The appearance of a literate class, often closely related to the new kings, soon led to written records of laws and land transactions, and may also have been crucial in producing a seemingly neat administrative hierarchy across much of southern England by 700. The

relationship between "old minster" territories and the third-tier units has been observed in several areas already,[98] and seems unlikely to be fortuitous. The activities of Eorcenweald, bishop of London 675–693, provide a good example of the working of the new order.[99] He was involved in the complex relations between the four kingdoms contending for control of the London area, founding minsters at Barking (for his sister Æðelburh) and Chertsey in the 660s, and ensuring that they received very substantial endowments from a variety of kings.[100] Mercian expansion under Wulfhere and Æðelred, and the institution of regular synods for the English church (Hertford 672; Hatfield 679) by Archbishop Theodore (668–690),[101] show that Eorcenweald was part of a wider process in which both church and state were becoming more sophisticated administratively.

A possible hierarchy of seventh-century administrative units is set out below. A large kingdom like Mercia had many more primary units than those of the East and South Saxons. Furthermore, some smaller units remained at least nominally independent as late as 700. There was a wide range in the size of primary units, although many of those which have been identified fall in the 100–200,000 acre range, with a possible threshold of 600 hides. The third tier units cluster within the range 40–60,000 acres, and may represent the *parochiæ* of the first minster churches. Of course, most estates granted by charter were very much smaller than this, and it is probable that a fourth level existed.

Level 1	(Kingdoms; Major *Tribal Hidage* Groups)	3000+ hides
Level 2	(Minor *Tribal Hidage* Groups; Primary Units)	600–1200 hides
Level 3	(Secondary Units)	150–300 hides
Level 4	(Multiple Estates; Hundreds)	50–150 hides

VIII

Proceeding from this model to the realities of the seventh century in and around Buckinghamshire, we may begin with the smallest *Tribal Hidage* groups, with 300-hide assessments (*Hicce, Gilfe, Færpingas*). Their areas range from 45–65,000 acres. The *Gilfe* and *Hicce* between them occupy

115,000 acres in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire. The *Færpingas* were based around Charlbury (Oxon.). There were other 300-hide units which were not independent *c*.675: the territory of Eynsham; the estates of Chertsey minster, and possibly the territories of Limbury/Luton, Aylesbury and Benson. There is too much detailed topographical and administrative research still to be undertaken for this to be more than a preliminary review of primary units in and around later Buckinghamshire.

The *Hendrica* may have included four primary units: [1] South-west Oxfordshire, centred on Bampton and Eynsham (112,000 ac.); [2] North-east Oxfordshire, from Dorchester to Bicester (109,000 ac.); [3] North-west Buckinghamshire (128,000 ac.), with central places at Buckingham and Brill and [4] North-east Buckinghamshire (133,000 acres), centred on Quarrendon, which was associated with early Mercian involvement in the region, and lay near the boundary with the *Cilternsætan*. It contains two possible minster sites: Wing and North Crawley.[102] Each of these units had assessments of 600 hides or more.

These primary units included smaller ones, with 300-hide assessments, for example Eynsham. Although the grouping of Buckinghamshire Hundreds into threes seems to postdate the Norman Conquest, this does not mean to say that the territories thus defined had not had an earlier unity, albeit one disrupted and distorted by the Danish wars and their aftermath. We may reasonably assume that Brill and Buckingham were important early centres, probably *villæ regales* and possible early minsters.[103] There is some indication of continuity from the Romano-Britsh period at Brill. Its sphere of influence extended with the band of woodland represented by Chetwode into what became Oxfordshire, possibly including the two and a half Hundreds assigned by Domesday to Kirtlington.[104]

While the triple Hundreds of Buckingham and Ashendon form reasonably clear units covering 56,000 and 61,000 acres respectively (278 and 356 hides in 1086), the same is less true of the Cottesloe and Newport groups to the east. Given its position, Yardley Hundred should probably be assigned to the *Cilternsætan*, although it may have originated as an allocation of hill-pasture and wood' id to

estates on the clay which lacked such resources. Adjusting the boundary of Mursley/Cottesloe to exclude Shenley Brook End and Tattenhoe and to include Granborough, the resulting territory covers 52,000 acres (268 hides in 1086).

Moulsoe and Seckloe Hundreds occupy 56,000 acres (247 hides), while the addition of Bunsty north of the Ouse increases this to 82,500 acres and 346 hides. As mentioned above, there is no clear-cut case one way or the other for extending the lands of the *Hendrica* north of the river. The recent study of Brafield/Brayfield shifts the balance of probability towards Bunsty having once been part of a single territory later divided between Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire.[105]

The *Cilternsætan* included six, possibly seven, primary units: [1] North-east Hertfordshire (116,000 ac.) with possible central places at Hertford, Hatfield and Welwyn, two of which were the meeting-places of early synods; [2] the area around St. Albans (92,000 acres); [3] the area around Luton/Limbury (107,000 acres), including parts of three later shires; [4] South-east Oxfordshire (116,000 acres), centred on Benson and Dorchester; [5] the Aylesbury area, from the Thame to the Thames (122,000 acres – 553 hides in 1086); [6] the later Hundreds of Burnham and Stoke (84,000 acres – 218 hides).

The two Buckinghamshire territores may alternatively have been divided into the three Chiltern Hundreds (Stone, Risborough and Aylesbury), containing 71,000 acres (403 hides), and the area to the south (134,000 acres – 368 hides). Desborough Hundred may have had links with the adjacent parts of Oxfordshire, forming a separate 300-hide unit. The generally very light assessments south of the Chiltern escarpment may be a function of the amount of wooded or infertile heathland, or may reflect the granting of beneficial hidation to some estates. It is just conceivable that the apparent influence of Kent in south Bucks. at the time of the Taplow burial (c.625) led to its assessment in sulungs, the Kentish equivalent of the hide, but covering twice as much in the way of resources.[106]

Turning to the *Ohtgaga/Noxgaga*, John Blair has identified four primary units in Surrey: Chertsey/Woking (101,000 ac.), Farnham/

Godalming (107,000 ac.), Kingston (126,000 ac.) and Croydon (151,000 ac.).[107] In 1086, they included 246; 248; 556 and 921 hides, respectively, and the underlying principle seems once again to be based on multiples of 300 hides. The Chertsey and Farnham units each represent only 300 hides, despite their size. Both contain areas of sterile country which would have reduced population density and agricultural exploitation.[108] There was a fundamental rearrangement of the hundreds of Berkshire after 1086, which obscures possible earlier arrangements.[109] The names used here are those given in the Domesday rubrics. The only named territory is the *provincia* of the *Sunningas*.[110] This probably included the hundreds of Bray, Beynhurst, Charlton and Ripplesmere, covering 115,000 acres (289 hides in 1066).

West Berkshire falls physically into three units, the Downs, the Kennet valley and the Vale of White Horse/Thames Valley. Together, they cover 350,000 acres, and may represent the 3,000 hides "at Ashdown" which were granted to the West Saxon Cuðred in 648. Hundreds in west Berkshire were rather small, often with high hidages, which suggests that they may have been subject to reassessment after the final annexation of this region by Wessex in the early ninth century, using the smaller West Saxon hide as the basis.[111]

The *Unecung-ga* probably contained two 600-hide primary units. The obvious dividing line is the Ouse, with Bedford as a pivotal point on the boundary, suggesting that its tenth-century strategic significance had established precedents. As in Berkshire, the pattern of hundreds in Bedfordshire changed after 1086, leading to a simplification, especially in the north. It is possible that rural deaneries reflect the earlier administrative arrangements, although there is a dearth of evidence for minster churches in the county. The primary unit in south and west Bedfordshire, including the rural deaneries of Dunstable, Flitt and Bedford south of the Ouse, but excluding those areas already allocated to the *Gifle* and *Cilternsætan* contained 93,000 acres. North Bedfordshire, comprising the rural deaneries of Eaton, Clapham and Bedford north of the Ouse, covers 90,000 acres.

Buckinghamshire contains relatively few *-ingas* names, only three of which – Halling (in Stoke Mandeville), Oving and Wing – are not compounded with other elements. The latter often use *-ing-* as a connecting particle, rather than as an indicator of the territory of a folk group, although several of the local examples do seem on balance to offer such evidence.

Averingdown (in West Wycombe)[112] – possibly the *dūn* ('rounded hill') of Hæfer's people. Desborough Hundred is named after an earthwork in the same parish, and might represent the territory of the **Hæferingas* and one other group since it covers 50,000 acres and was assessed at 150 hides in 1086.

Buckingham[113] – the *hamm* (in this case land inside a river bend, meadow) of Bucc's people. Although not mentioned until 918, the position of Buckingham and its association with the seventh-century legend of St. Rumwald suggest early Anglo-Saxon settlement by the Ouse.

(Stoke) Halling[114] – a lost place in Stoke Mandeville parish, not recorded until *c.*1200 in the form *Hallinges*. The editors of the county place-name survey considered it possible that this was an *ingas* name, from the personal name Heall. If so, their territory may coincide with Aylesbury Hundred. Early Anglo-Saxon settlement is known at nearby Walton, and Aylesbury itself was an important central place in the sixth and seventh centuries.

Ivinghoe[115] – the hill-spur of Ifa's people. The Chiltern escarpment here has many prominent spurs overlooking the vale. Ivinghoe lies on the important prehistoric and later routeway Icknield Way. Ifa's territory may be the later Yardley Hundred, whose meeting-place was in neighbouring Pitstone.

Lenborough (in Buckingham parish)[116] – many early forms of the name have *-inge-* forms which suggest that the name derives from **Hliþingabeorg* ('the hill associated with those dwelling on a slope'). It lies very close to Buckingham, and the names may represent two different periods of naming. The chronol-

ogy and extent of the respective territories is unclear.

Lillingstone[117] – 'the stone of Lytel/Lytla's peope'. In the extreme north-west of the county, Lillingstone was partly in Oxfordshire for many centuries. Lytel's people may have occupied land now in Northants., as well as parts of Stodfold hundred.

Oving[118] – 'Ufa's people' (identical with Oving, Sussex). Oving lies in an area where several hundreds meet, and it is possible that the territory associated with Ufa was subdivided between the seventh century and 1086.

Tingewick[119] – possibly the *wīc* ('dairy farm, outlying farm') of Tīda's people. Again, this is very close to Buckingham, although there is room for several group territories in the area, perhaps assessed at 50–75 hides apiece.

Tyringham[120] – 'the village (or land by a river) of Tīr's people'. On the Ouse between the crossings at Newport and Olney. They may have occupied the northern part of Mousloe Hundred, which had a minster church at North Crawley.

Wing[121] recorded as *æt Weowungum* in 1012 and *Witehunge* in *Domesday Book*. Mawer and Stenton assume the original form to have been **Wiþungas*, of unknown meaning. Ekwall suggests a personal name **Weohthūn* (Wihthun), which is on record as the name of one or more clerics around the year 800.[122] Although Wing possesses an important Anglo-Saxon church, nothing is known of its history. If it was an early minster, its *parochia* may have included the later hundreds of Mursley and Cottesloe - the meeting-place of the latter is in Wing parish. The dithematic name of the "founder" may indicate a slightly later stratum of names than Oving and Ivinghoe, although these could contain short forms of other names.

X

This survey has sought to define the geographical extent of the late seventh-century peoples around London, especially those whose names and

locations have been the subject of some controversy. We may now bring together the main threads of the argument concerning the number, nature and distribution of seventh-century administrative units in the London Region. The principal elements are: [1] the kingdoms and other major groups listed in *Tribal Hidage* were made of second-, third- and fourth-tier units; [2] the assessments of these units in terms of obligations to their immediate overlords, and ultimately to the *bretwalda* Wulfhere or Æðelred of Mercia, were calculated in multiples or fractions of 300 hides; [3] the areas covered by each of these secondary territories reflect the main physical elements of the landscape.

Following Dr. Hart's interpretation of *Tribal Hidage* more or less closely, it has been possible to allocate territories to the various groups in the northern Home Counties which are consistent in their relationship to certain major boundaries, both natural and administrative. These boundaries are more likely to be those of hundreds and dioceses than shires, since the latter were essentially tenth-century creations.

Whether the suggested assessment system was developed *de novo* by the Mercians after 650 as their sphere of influence spread dramatically beyond their original territory in the West Midlands, or whether it represents the takeover and development of similar methods in each of the territories in the *Tribal Hidage* must remain an unanswered question. The apparent uniformity, however, might be taken as tilting the balance of probability in favour of the former. The role of the leading ecclesiastics of the day, notably Eorcenweald and Theodore, is difficult to discern, but the desire to set the English church on a firm footing now that the Conversion period was drawing to a close, and the parallel demand for the alienation of considerable estates from royal hands to support the new minsters may be seen as part of a wider movement towards greater administrative competence. It should not be forgotten that most of the kingdoms had only emerged during the period 575–625 and would have taken time to develop a system of tribute-gathering throughout their territories, especially during a period characterised by more or less continuous warfare.

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