

in totally different parts of the country could only have been accomplished by a dominant central power—the king. The camps should be regarded as barracks; they could probably accommodate 6,000 men in all. Well protected against sea attack because of their withdrawn position by narrow, navigable channels, they were of no use in defending Danish coastal waters: their position was for self-defence alone.

On the other hand, it is striking that they are all situated near important overland routes. If the camps had a strategic significance, apart from their function as barracks, this was not directed against foreign invaders but against the people in Denmark itself. The Danish king and the *Landsthings* could compel the male population to take up arms when the country was invaded, and to a limited extent for offensive measures, but this army could not be forced to serve in barracks on its native soil. Consequently, it seems likely that the four camps were occupied by professional soldiers.

In times of peace, the resources of the Danish king were not large enough to enable him to maintain a permanent army of several thousand. Therefore, the fortresses must be associated with a period of prolonged and profitable warfare which could supply the funds for this. Suitable conditions were provided during the reign of Svend Forkbeard (c. 985–1014). Virtually every year from 994 until 1013, the king carried out raids on England which was at that time in a state of political disorganization, and unable to offer any effective resistance. Attempts were made to buy peace instead in the form of repeated payments of tribute to the Viking army. This in turn renewed its strength and inspired fresh attacks, until the Vikings finally were in a position to conquer England, who paid for her own conquest in this way. Svend Forkbeard was proclaimed king of England in 1013.

This easy and profitable method of warfare must have produced a large force of professional warriors: men who did not just go on a few lucrative raids before settling as farmers in their native country, but men to whom war was a permanent occupation. The soldiers came from all over Scandinavia, and we can assume that the camps were built as winter barracks and training centres for these men, serving to control the country strategically at the same time.

The short duration of their occupation demonstrates how closely the camps were associated with the Viking raids on England. The Danish king had neither reason nor resources to maintain them when the raids ended, and the large fortresses fell into decay so rapidly that they were obliterated from living memory by the late twelfth century when the history of the Danes was recorded by Saxo Grammaticus and Svend Aggesen.

## THE YORK VIKING KINGDOM; RELATIONS BETWEEN OLD ENGLISH AND OLD NORSE CULTURE

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’På Richelieus tid var en fallgröp som noll, och en dolk liksom en leksak, ser Frida, och musketörrens kappa bar blodbestänkt fall, som fladdrade kring glimmande slida.’

ANYONE with a background mainly linguistic and literary must be uneasily aware of the dangers gently mocked by Sjöberg in this quotation; not least because historians and archaeologists so often assume (or at any rate behave as if they assumed) that the evidence of literary works can only be of this hectic, over-dramatized and essentially inaccurate kind. And when one looks at the way in which an earlier generation of literary scholars resolutely defended the direct verbal inspiration (not to speak of the infallibility) of some quite indefensibly fictitious sagas, it is difficult to blame very severely the, as I think, now somewhat exaggerated mistrust of literary sources. Once bitten twice shy, and however much we may protest that we will not be tempted into supposing that a work is true just because it is great literature, the historian will see looming behind us Finnur Jonsson’s heroic asseveration; that in the case of a clash (about the dating of a battle in England) between contemporary English written annals and an orally transmitted Icelandic saga of two and a half centuries later, the saga is right.

This mistrust may have other reasons than ‘once bitten twice shy’. Sometimes it seems a methodological puritanism, implying that such literary works of art should be examined and evaluated exclusively as works of art, and not perversely used as evidence of matters of which the only true evidence is the rigidly Marxist material resources of actual objects in actual sites. It may be implied that as the art-historian can take this view of the development of styles seen on different brooches, caskets, etc., the same process is the only intellectually respectable one to apply to the literature. The answer to this must come from a more recent school of linguists than Finnur Jonsson’s. I do not think that ornamental styles are particularly expressions of the social structure in which they are found (in spite of such obvious instances as the gripping beast style of the Viking age). But language is a social product, a society is unmistakably defined in its vocabulary, and the characters of literature are subject to a greater compulsion to credibility than are the animals in most Viking carvings—