Viking Dublin and the City-State Concept Parameters and Significance of the Hiberno-Norse Settlement

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The Vikings are normally credited with the foundation of Irish towns, and more than one historian has described the Hiberno-Viking towns as city-states struggling to survive in a hostile Irish rural society. The first use of the term city-state in a Hiberno-Viking context seems to have been by Edmund Curtis in 1942 who referred to "the city-states of Dublin, Waterford, Cork and Limerick".[1] A paper by Alf Sommerfelt was indeed titled "The Demise of the Hiberno-Norse City-States 1169-1171".[2] However, the term city-state is not in common use by Viking historians, and a discussion of the city-state concept in a Viking context begs the question what if any benefit is to be had by accepting the term. This paper will address just that question, dealing mainly with the Norse settlement of Dublin.

The Scandinavian Backdrop

Most Viking Scandinavian towns grew from prehistoric settlements, and while their origins were no doubt related to trade, jurisdiction, ceremony and power, we do not have evidence to explain the origin and early development of individual towns in detail. For long-term survival the towns depended on the successful merger of more than one function, be it jurisdiction, religion, trade, communication, minting etc.[3] The lesson of recent detailed studies of the Danish Late Iron Age is that computer-aided analyses will revolutionise our understanding of the archaeological evidence.[4]

In the 1980s and 1990s archaeologists have demonstrated that nucleated settlements for trade, handicraft and power are in evidence at least from the Roman Iron Age in Denmark and Sweden. Knut Helle summarises the evidence thus: "In most cases, such activities probably had a largely seasonal character. But permanent settlement has been proven archaeologically in some of the early centres. In a few exceptional cases, it is even justifiable to speak of towns. Judged by the size of the built-up areas within their semi-circular earth banks, their supposed numbers of inhabitants, and their general centrality, both Hedeby and Birka in the Mälaren area may be termed 'urban centres' in the 10th century."

There is less evidence for nucleated settlements in Norway. Indeed, the best-known Norwegian settlement of Kaupang was small and seasonal and hardly qualified as a town. The ninth- and early tenth-century raiders of Ireland came from an overwhelmingly rural background, and it might therefore seem an anomaly that, when Vikings of predominantly Norwegian origin settled in Ireland, they created urban settlements as most historiography will have the reader believe. In fact, of course, they did not, and the myth of the pure Scandinavian origin of Irish towns should be laid to rest as indeed most contemporary Irish historians have done. In Scandinavian and English historiography the myth lives, however. The traditional interpretation of Irish history as the constant struggle between the original (Celtic) population and the new (Viking and later Anglo-Norman) intruders continues to carry weight in the minds of historians (Holm [1994]). Our interpretation of the (Hiberno-Norse) towns needs to be freed of this simplistic dichotomy.

The Irish and Norse Proto-Towns

In response to the traditional view that Ireland had no towns prior to the Viking attacks, Ó Corráin and later Butlin have observed that by the ninth century the larger monasteries had developed proto-urban features, and monastic centres like Armagh and Glendalough had urban attributes such as workshop areas and streets (Butlin [1977]; Clarke & Simms [1985]). The monasteries probably functioned as multi-pur-

pose centres which facilitated distribution, trade and other secular functions in addition to their main religious purpose. The consensus seems to be, however, that the proto-urban Irish settlements cannot be termed towns pure and simple, locked as they were in the monastic structure and with such trade as there was mainly in luxury items and handicraft for ecclesiastical and royal sponsors (Clarke [1998]).

Viking attacks on Ireland were first noted in 795, and became annual occurrences from 822. In the 830s and 840s, Ireland was widely raided by several fleets that came inland via the many navigable rivers. These fleets were under the command of Norwegian earls. From 841, they stayed in Ireland for the first time during the winter. The Vikings' own terminology for these camps is not known. The ninth-century annals mention a "longphort" in Dublin by the River Liffey, in Waterford by the Barrow, in Limerick by the Shannon, and in Anagassan by the Boyne. Later camps included Wexford and Cork. The Irish word *longphort* can be translated "defended ship camp" or "shore fortress", and the camps must have originated as winter camps at places which offered safe anchorage and beaching for the ships in addition to some natural features which rendered the site defensible. It may have been "a small defended fortress as at Birka or Haithabu around which was situated the houses and booths of an undefended trading station" (Wallace [1982] 138).

From 853, Norse activity must be analysed within the wider framework of the complex schemes of the internal Irish power struggle as the longphorts seem to have put their ships and weaponry at the service of the highest-bidding Irish king. Until the Norman Conquest in 1170, Ireland was largely divided among three or four rival over-kingdoms, and mercenary troops were in high demand. The Norsemen were out of a job only during momentary truces, and then resorted to more or less random Viking attacks. Attention was also given to possibilities across the Irish Sea in England and Scotland. After the Viking conquest of the Danelaw in England, Norwegian and Danish mercenary warriors seem to have moved between the Danish camp in York and the Norwegian camp in Dublin. While the Dublin kingship seems to have been predominantly Norwegian and the York kingship mainly Danish, the ethnic distinctions seem to have had little significance to the Viking warriors. Indeed, the Dublin kingship was shared between two co-regents in the 860s, Olaf and Ivar, who also made significant conquests in Scotland and tried in vain to win the kingship of York.

The Hiberno-Viking *longphorts* did not survive the ninth century. Already by 866, the camps on the northern Irish coast were destroyed by the powerful Uí Néill-king. A momentary Irish truce seems to be the explanation for the expulsion of the Norsemen of Dublin in 902 who dispersed to England and France to take part in the conquest of new territories. The fate of the southern camps is not known but they are not likely to have survived.

In conclusion, the ninth-century *longphorts* may be largely considered as warrior camps. They were undoubtedly visited by Scandinavian craftsmen and merchants and they may indeed have had some trade relations with the immediate Irish hinterland. There is, however, no historical evidence to support the view that they were urban in character, and given the failure so far to locate ninth-century Viking settlements we do not have any archaeological evidence for the character of the settlements. We do have evidence of the wealth of silver that the Vikings brought to Ireland in the form of jewellery lost and later found archaeologically (Graham-Campbell [1978] 121), but there is no evidence which suggests a full-blown urban culture. Given the evidence at hand, the camps may be characterised as proto-urban warrior nuclei in the midst of what was essentially hostile territory. The Vikings were for a time able to play off the Irish kings against each other but the concerted effort to oust the Vikings in 902 suggests that the value of their Scandinavian trade objects and their service as mercenaries was not a decisive factor to the Irish. In this assessment, the Irish as well as the Norse behaved from the perspective of a warrior-like, non-urban society.

The Hiberno-Norse Towns

By 914, a new generation of warriors sought land for themselves in Ireland and took up the old campsites by the river estuaries. In the 920s, the kings of Dublin, the grandsons of Ivar, controlled the Irish Sea area from their strongholds in York and Dublin. For a brief period of time, the Viking kingship was a major political force in the history of both England and Ireland. In 927, Godfred was ousted from York by Æthelstan, king of the Anglo-Saxons, but the Dublin king re-captured York in 939 and held it almost continually to 952. The Dublin-York kingship was, however, repeatedly attacked and never managed to obtain a truce with any of its neighbours. The English reconquest of the Danelaw also weakened the Irish Vikings. For all practical purposes, it was a kingship of the sea and the rivers, based on camps, and it did not secure a firm

Fig. 1. Viking age Ireland

territorial grip. Annalistic evidence of the tenth century makes it clear that Dublin and Limerick were locked in battle not only with their neighbouring Irish kings but also with each other, not so much for territory itself as for maritime supremacy and in particular for control of the riverine seaways. In the Irish context, Dublin and its allied camps ceased to have an independent political status after heavy defeats in the 940s. Norse warriors were once again reduced to mercenaries in the Irish power struggle.

A total of 20 camp sites are documented throughout Ireland in these years but most did not survive the defeats of the Vikings in the 940s. Only Dublin, Waterford and Limerick are known to have existed continually through the tenth century while other Viking towns may only have been regenerated as economic centres in the eleventh century. The term used in the Irish annals for the tenth-century Viking camps is *dún*, "fortress". A distinction between dún and *longphort* is made in 1026 in connection with an Irish king's visit to Dublin. *Dún* describes the town while *longphort* refers to the king's encampment outside the town (AI 1026).

The layout of the Viking camp site of the 920s is not known, and therefore it is impossible for the time being to discuss in any detail the character of the settlement and the degree to which the military camp integrated urban functions. The site did attract craftsmen and probably merchants quite soon, and by the mid-tenth century the archaeological evidence shows clear remains of an urban site. The urban layout was probably modelled on other developing towns of the late ninth/early tenth century such as York and Chester, and it is likely that the camp was soon secured by an earthen rampart, although the earliest archaeological remains of a rampart date from the mid tenth century. Anglo-Saxon Mercian towns were fortified in the early tenth century, and the Norse will have experienced the advantage to a town defence of an earthen rampart through their defeats in NW England. The Hiberno-Norse are likely to have copied these earthworks in their new Irish settlements (Wallace

[1982] 138). The origin of Hiberno-Irish towns should therefore be seen as the result of a complicated process of military and political considerations by the Viking kings, economic need for protected trade stations, and a mode of urban planning which developed in the British Isles in the early tenth century. To further complicate the picture we should consider also the trade networks of the Irish economy which linked into the world of the Hiberno-Norse merchants. All in all, the period ca. 920-950 clearly was formative for the Hiberno-Norse towns and kingships but the sources do not permit a detailed analysis of the process.

The last outbursts of Norse political aspirations came under the rule of Sigtryg Silkenbeard (r. 989-993, 995-1042). From 980, Dublin had to recognise the over-kingship of the Irish king of Meath, and Sigtryg repeatedly allied with the king of Leinster to establish his sovereignty. However, he was forced to pay tribute to Meath in 995, 998, and 1000. Even though he probably was the engineer of the great alliance in 1014 of Leinster and the Orkney earl, he wisely kept out of the battle of Clontarf, thus saving Dublin from total defeat. By his death in 1042, Dublin was a minor political power, but a growing merchant town. The other Norse camps also came under Irish control, Limerick by 968 and Waterford in 1035. The history of the camps at Wexford and Cork is not known, whereas camps at Strangford and Carlingford Loughs, including Anagassan, were evacuated during the contraction of Dublin power in the 940s.

The luxuries of the Dublin market and the profits to be gained by controlling it attracted the interest of Irish kings. In 1052, Dublin was forced to acknowledge a son of the king of Leinster as regent. Except from 1078 to 1094, when Dublin was controlled by the Norse king of Man and the Isles (the Hebrides), the town was held by Irish kings. They were, however, allowed a degree of self-rule until the Norman conquest. The town continued to have a mercenary fleet. It was used by Irish and sometimes Scottish, Welsh, and even Norman warlords, and was only dissolved by the Norman Conquest. The Vikings were excellent mercenaries, and their ships, battle-axes and swords were put to good use (Holm [1986] 340-5).

To revert to the perennial question of who founded the Irish towns, the answer would seem to be that they came into being in an interplay between the Norse and the Irish. Indeed, the whole question of when Dublin took on a significant commercial character is not solved. Archaeological evidence points to a growing mercantile and artisanal activity from the mid-tenth century when Dublin's political independence was on the decline. The former obviously played a leading role but the camps would never have developed as towns and city-states had not the Irish seen the benefits of their commercial and mercenary activity.

Territory and Settlement Pattern

To survive, the Viking camps and towns needed supplies of grain and meat. Although large monasteries like Finglas and Tallaght were in the immediate vicinity of Dublin, there is no sign that monastic life was discontinued. A possible explanation is that these monasteries negotiated protection for steady supplies to the pagan warriors. The analysis of animal bone finds from the archaeological excavation of Dublin shows that the Norse primarily ate cows of more than four years of age. This finding is in contrast to finds from a contemporary Irish royal settlement which provided numerous finds of calves' bones. Cows were thus only led into the town to be slaughtered. Thousands of cattle grazed the lands of the town, partly as payment in kind for Viking mercenary services. Through the eleventh and twelfth centuries the Irish kings sent thousands of kine to Dublin in return for the service of the Norse ships (e.g. AFM s.a. 1154, 1166). The Vikings introduced some agricultural improvements. Surprisingly the earliest known Norse loanword in an Irish tenth-century manuscript is *punnan*, "sheaf". The word for beans, *ponair*, is also Norse (Greene [1976] 79). The good quality of Dublin's wheat, cheese, bacon and beef is mentioned in a tenth-century poem (Young [1950] 14f).

Mogens Herman Hansen has suggested that the typical maximum extent of the hinterland of a city-state was one day's march from the urban centre, equalling 30 km, or 3,000 km^2 (*supra* 17). We have no evidence for the extension of the ninth-century Hiberno-Viking camps. As regards the tenth-century camps/towns, there is some evidence for Dublin. In 970 the monasteries of Louth, Dromiskin and Monasterboice were plundered by an Irish party, allegedly because they were possessed by the Vikings (AFM s.a. 968); these places almost 50 km north of Dublin were close to Dublin's old subsidiary camp Linn Duachaill, and the Norse may well have had dispersed lands in this area. Closer to Dublin, within a 10 km radius we have good evidence that the Fine Gall (land of the foreigners) was controlled by Dublin. The name is first attested in 1013, and contained the monasteries of Finglas and Swords which were consequently sacked by attacking Irish kings.[5] In 1056 in another plun-

dering of Fine Gall the monastery of Lusk, almost 20 km from Dublin, was included (AT p. 393, cf. ALC s.a. 1133). The southern limit of the Norse territories is not known but they probably did not stretch to Wexford as an Irish raiding party is recorded as having to cross Irish territory to reach the site in 1128 (ALC s.a. 1128). Norman thirteenth-century land registers show that the Ostmen (as the Norse came to be called because they originated from the east) mainly owned land within a circumference of some 10 km of Dublin. Other property was spread across present-day County Dublin and towards the south into County Wicklow (Bugge [1904] 292-3).

Place-names may supplement the documentary evidence. There is a small total of 78 place-names of possible Norse character from all of Ireland, no less than 46 of which are considered doubtful.[6] Most of the names are of places near known Viking camps or designate characteristic land marks on the sail route between them. The names have not been assimilated by the Irish language but are recorded through the Anglo-Normans who settled in the former Viking towns. The Norse language may have been in use in Dublin's hinterland until the mid-thirteenth century but as an active place-name factor its influence must have come to an end with the Norman conquest of 1169-72. Most Norse place-names are found around Dublin and Waterford. Approximately 40 km north of Dublin are the Skerries, and Holmpatrick, "Patrick's holm"; the last names being typical of the inverted word order which was adapted by the Norse from Irish syntax. South along the coast the Norse impact is evident in the names for the islands of Lambay and Dalkey, and for the two natural harbours of Wicklow and Arklow.[7] These small Norse settlements were part of Dublin's territorry in the eleventh and twelfth century, and as indicated above may only have been settled in the eleventh century.

The town and its maritimity were at the core of the identity of the Hiberno-Norse realm. Yet there seems to have been a complementary denomination for the Dublin hinterland, the so-called Fine Gall, land of the foreigners in Irish. The realm is called in twelfth-century Icelandic sources "Dyflinarskiri", the shire of Dublin. The name reveals an Anglo-Saxon origin, "scir", which is surprising given the fact that the Dubliners spoke a Norse language. It seems probable that the name was introduced by analogy with the English shires. If this holds true, the Dublin king cannot have looked on the territoriality of his lands as the defining measure of his kingship. Rather, the Dublin king will have looked to his fleet and the town itself for the defining parts of what essentially was a kingdom of the sea rather than of the land.

In addition to the Irish lands, Dublin claimed political supremacy over the Norse settlements of the Isle of Man from the time of the death of the Orkney earl Sigurd in 1014 till 1052 when the Dublin king fled to the Isle of Man. Later the Hiberno-Manx king Godred ruled Dublin 1072-1094. The degree of interaction between the Dublin and the Isle of Man settlements is not known but it is likely to have been close (Dolley [1976] 15-21).

In sum, the evidence does not give us full insight into the extent of Dublin's territory but it seems reasonably certain that Dublin claimed land at least within a 10-15 km radius, perhaps stretching further south and southwest into County Wicklow. Thus, some hinterland settlement is likely to have taken place, probably already in the late tenth century, and increasing in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. However, due to repeated Irish raidings of the Norse lands, a high percentage of the total Norse population is likely to have remained in the urban centre, either within the protective walls or in the immediate vicinity. The evidence for a scattered secondary settlement comes mainly from the period after the Norman invasion and largely reflects the effects of the banishment of the Ostmen from the towns into special rural cantreds outside the walls. Some settlements like Wicklow and Arklow are, however, possibly eleventh century resettlements of earlier camp sites. Sources for other Irish settlements also indicate considerable land holdings, although the evidence is not as good as for Dublin.

Population

The typical city-state is reckoned by Mogens Herman Hansen to be a "face-to-face" society with room for variation in size between 1,000 and 100,000 inhabitants plus (*supra* 18). We have no direct evidence of the population size of Viking towns. However, it is a fair guess that the population will have been in the lower end of the range indicated. The excavator of Dublin, P. Wallace, estimated that the town probably counted "several thousands" (Wallace [1982]). By 1250, it is estimated that the town had upwards of 10,000 inhabitants (Graham [1977] 45).

There are several possibilities for guesstimates of the total population. Indeed, the settlement before ca. 1100 encompassed an area approximately 600 m from east to west along the curved river and 300 m inland from north to south making the town a rough rec-

tangle (Ó Ríordáin [1971] 73). In total, the town covered some 180,000 m^2 and was densely inhabited if the excavations may be taken as a fair sample of the area. If we use Russell's assessment of an average density of 120 persons per urban hectare in the medieval age (Graham [1977] 45), Dublin would have had roughly 2,200 inhabitants in the Viking period. Alternatively, we may take the excavated portions of Viking Dublin to represent a typical land use. Excavated plot sizes are generally between 120 and 180m^2 and contain normally one living house and an additional workshed. A total of between 600 and 900 plots may be estimated, and as the average household size is not likely to have been less than five persons, we calculate a total population of 3-4,500 people.

If the Irish annals are to be trusted on face value, the Norse lost more than 6,000 men in battle in the years 948-51 when Dublin's power was seriously in decline. This may not be an impossibly high number if we accept that most of these were mercenary soldiers who may have lived in encampments outside the walls of Dublin. However, there is no way to corroborate the number, and the evidence must therefore be put aside.

To establish an approximation of Dublin's military power we may turn to the evidence of fleet sizes. In a famous critique of earlier scholarship which enumerated fleets of many hundred Viking ships and armies of 40,000 warriors, P.H. Sawyer called attention to the much smaller numbers of 3, 16, or 35 ships in what he deemed to be contemporaneous and trustworthy records of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. Sawyer drew attention to the fact that the different versions of the Chronicle put the Viking fleet in the pitched battle with King Alfred of Wessex in the 890s at no more than 200, 250 or 350 vessels. Obviously, the chroniclers were not precisely informed, but the fleet probably did not count more than a couple of hundred ships. As regards crew size, Sawyer based his estimate on the 32 oars of the Gokstad ship which he accepted as an average for Viking ships of the period. By this yardstick, the *here* (army) of 892 would have counted a maximum of between 1,200 and 1,500 men. Sawyer added that as the ships would have carried horses and some women and children as well, the total number was "well under 1,000 men" (Sawyer [1991] 120-8). Sawyer's critique was not universally accepted, and indeed caused himself to hypothesize a peaceful secondary immigration to England to explain the evidence of the place-names for a widespread Danish rural immigration.

Unfortunately, Sawyer's damaging critique of previous scholarship has led most later historians to evade the issue of quantity altogether. However, any assessment of the Viking activity presupposes some rough assessment of sizes involved, and given that the annalistic evidence is all we have to go by, it should be carefully considered. Sawyer did not consider the Irish evidence but the fleet sizes noted in the Irish annals do not seem inflated. The largest Viking fleet ever noted in the annals was Olaf and Ivar's fleet of 200 ships returning from Scotland in 871 (AU 871). The large operations of 837 were conducted by two fleets of three score ships each; the Danish fleet of 849 counted seven score ships, which were eventually defeated by a Norwegian fleet of eight score (AU 837, 849, 850). Royal fleets of the tenth century numbered 32 and 20 ships (AU 921). Later figures are for a mercenary fleet of fifteen ships in 1138 (Annales Cambriae s.a. 1138), while the Norse of Cork mustered 32 ships in their final desperate battle against the Normans in 1173.[8] A mixed Norse and Irish fleet of 300 vessels in 988 is the largest claimed in the Irish annals, while two mercenary fleets commanded by Irish kings in the early twelfth century numbered 190 vessels and seven score respectively (AI 988; AFM 1127; AT 1137).

We have little information about actual crew sizes. The survivors of a raiding party of three Viking ships which was defeated by the Dál Riata counted at least seven score who were executed or sold, giving an average crew size of around 50 men (AU 986). Another party of three ships counted 120 "or a little more" (AU 1098). A great new fleet foundered with a loss of more than nine hundred crew-members (AU 924). In general, the evidence does not contradict Sawyer's findings. Indeed, Sawyer stressed that tenth- and eleventh-century ships tended to be larger than earlier vessels and contain up to 60 men, thus pushing the average of 30 men per vessel upwards (Sawyer [1991] 131). Recent archaeological findings confirm this assumption.

In conclusion, it is probable that the fleet of Dublin numbered at least between 50 and 100 vessels in the tenth century and probably also later, and that the demand for full crews would have been no less than 1,500 and perhaps as high as 4,000 men. In addition, it is conceivable that the Norse king would be able to summon the assistance of the Norse of other Hiberno-Norse towns and the Hebrides and the Isle of Man. The calculation is of course very approximate but it does have implications for our understanding of the demography of the town.

Even if we accept the minimum figure of 1,500

warriors and the maximum number of inhabitants for Dublin of 4,500, it is very unlikely that the town would have been able to man the ships itself. Given the high number of children needed to reproduce the population and the excess number of women in any warrior society, the ships would have required each and every male, old and young, artisan or merchant, for the crews. Thus, there can be no doubt that a large portion of the town's inhabitants will have been semi-professional warriors attracted to the service of the ships and willing to serve as mercenaries to anyone who demanded their service. Many may not have resided within the walls but in camps outside. Indeed, as the political independence of Dublin decreased, the role of the mercenary fleet in the Irish and later even the Welsh power-struggle increased. Dublin's king therefore had to strike a balance between the interests of his merchants in peaceful relations and the needs of his warriors for spoil. This was an ongoing theme throughout Dublin's existence as a Norse town.

As regards the other Hiberno-Norse towns, we have almost no information about the size of the population. As late as the early part of the thirteenth century, there were a hundred Norse freeholders with their families around the town of Wexford, and in 1290 a man of Norse descent claimed to have "400 of his race" about him (Curtis [1908] 215).

Urbanisation

As regards urbanisation and the urban space, we are again forced to consider Dublin only. Dublin and Limerick were the two major Viking settlements in Ireland, serving as central places, while Cork, Waterford, Wexford and the early ninth-century ship-camps were second-order settlements that related to one of the two major settlements. However, Dublin is the only settlement that we can study in any detail.

The ships entering Dublin's port facilities, to the extent that it had any, were met by the Long Stone, which was visible even in the seventeenth century. It was localised in the Staines area, outside the urban space enclosed by the early Viking wall, and seems to have been a marker of Viking control of the area. Staines place-names are known from a number of other Viking settlements, and the stones were probably put in place as a prominent symbol of power (Haliday [1969] 144-51). In this area immediately to the east of the town walls were also located the Thingmount, site of the town's judiciary assembly, and the *haugar*, the gravemounds of kings and chieftains of the town. The *þing* assembly was normally considered holy and any attendant to the *þing* would be guaranteed safe passage. This must at least have been the assumption of the king of Brega when he was taken prisoner during the proceedings and sent overseas (AU 1023). On the other side of the river, north of the town, was Thor's forest, Caill Tomair. This must have been a sacred wood and was deliberately cut down by king Brian Boru of Munster when he conquered the town at Christmas in the year 1000. The cutting was a considerable undertaking and may have been conducted to clear an open passage to the town as much as to undercut a pagan rite which by then must have been rapidly declining.[9]

We do not know the exact location of the Dublin market. The word for the market itself, Irish '*margadh*', was assimilated by the Irish as well as the Norse '*scilling*', shilling (Greene [1978] 119-123). In Limerick the market was located outside the town itself (AI 1108), and it seems reasonable to expect a market outside the walled town in Dublin as well, perhaps in the Staines area. The Dublin king started issuing coin in 999. Fig. 2, which shows the distribution of silver finds in Ireland of the ninth to twelfth century, makes clear that both the Anglo-Saxon coins of the tenth century and the Hiberno-Norse coins of the eleventh century circulated almost exclusively within a radius of about 50 km of Dublin. This would have been the immediate market hinterland of the town while of course trade and gift-exchange to royal courts would have taken place all over the island. Mysteriously, the Limerick merchants seem to have operated almost without coin. Table I makes clear that this distribution pattern does not seem to be distorted by find circumstances as coinless hoards are found in equal measure within the spheres of interest of both Dublin and Limerick.

Table I. The distribution of silver finds according to spheres of interest (Fig. 2), 830-1050.

find	Dublin Ireland	North Wexford	Waterford, Cork	Limerick
Coin hoards	28	6	4	4
Single coin find	3	1	–	3
Mixed hoard	6	–	2	1
Coinless hoard	2	7	4	10
Bars and ingots	13	8	4	13

Sources: Graham-Campbell (1973); Hall (1973)

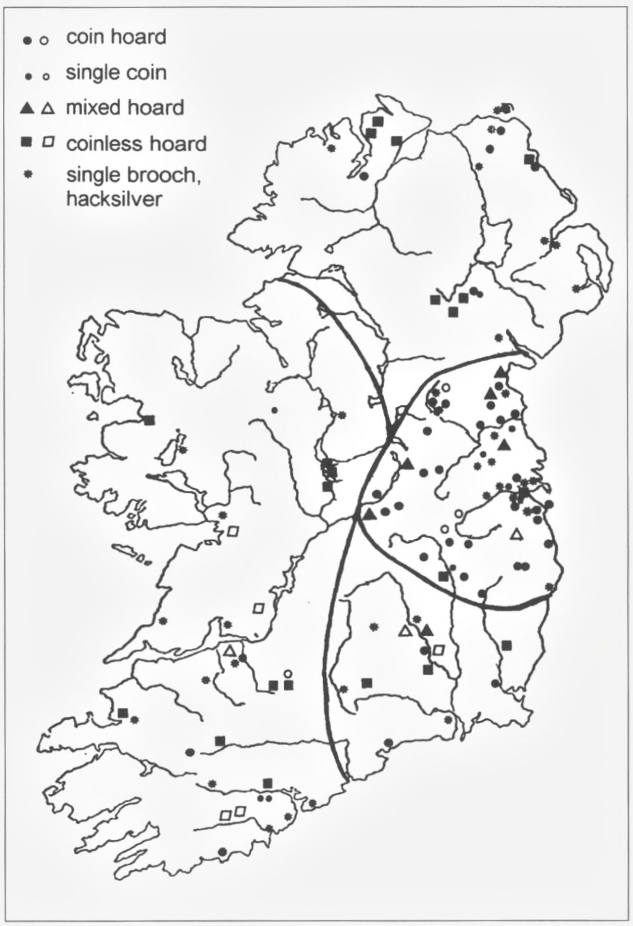

Fig. 2. Distribution of silver finds in Ireland, 9th-12th centuries.

Inside the town walls, the urban space must have been divided between private and royal quarters. The site of the king's castle is not archaeologically located but is likely to have been at the site of the later Dublin Castle. In addition, the king owned other plots of land in the town, one of which Sigtryg Silkenbeard donated for the building of Christchurch Cathedral in 1036. Another plot is known only from late twelfth-century evidence which relates that the last king of Dublin, Höskuld, owned a '*gardha*' by the western town gate. Other Dublin place-names in *-gardha* are Fissegard, Taxsagard and Apilgard (Bugge [1900] 325). '*Gardha*' is Norwegian '*garð*', and is known in a contemporary Irish source for 989 when king Maelsechlainn demanded tribute of Dublin: "... and an ounce of gold for every garden (*gardha*), to be paid each Christmas night, for ever" (CS s.a. 987). It has been suggested that the *garðs* of Dublin be identified with the fenced plots attested archaeologically. Obviously, one ounce of gold would be a very high tax on these small tenements, indeed impossibly high, notwithstanding the fact that the number of plots must be counted in several hundreds. The identification of *garð* with plot is not tenable from a philological point either. The Norwegian meaning of *garð* is one or more peasant farmsteads in a fenced settlement with their complement of dependent labour (Bjørvik [1960]). Thus, a Dublin *garð* must have been a much larger section of the town than a fenced plot, perhaps a cluster of plots belonging to a chieftain.

We do not know if the 989 tax was enforced on an annual basis in the following years but similar taxes were levied on Dublin in 995 and again in 1000 by other kings (AT pp. 349-50, 352). It is likely therefore that a regular tax system was enforced within the town for these occasions. In 1029 Dublin paid 1200 cows, six score Welsh horses, sixty ounces of gold and sixty ounces of silver in addition to "the Sword of Carlus" as the ransom of king Sigtryg's son (AU 1029). We shall return to the Sword and remark only on the tax. Clearly, the tax of 1029 was calculated on a system of scores, and it seems reasonable to suppose that a simple system of taxation was enforced within the town. This system may have been the *garð*. If the gold tax was levied on the model of 989 with one ounce per *garð*, every *garð* paid in addition to one ounce of gold and silver 20 cows and two Welsh horses.

Obviously, we cannot prove that the *garð* was in fact the basis of the system but it seems likely that some system based on a division of the town in sixty portions was enforced. Piling one hypothesis upon the other, it is tempting to see here a foundation of the town based on a military system. A priori, it is probable that any governance of a town ultimately based on the strength of its fleet would have been based on the ships. The Scandinavian system of "*leidang*" (itself a word which gained currency in Irish for "ship") was organised as a tax system perhaps in the eleventh century and was headed by one *stýrismaðr* (steersman) for each ship. Dublin may have organised a tax system related to the *garð* on the basis of 60 parts for the organisation of the fleet. If such a system was in operation, each *stýrismaðr* will have organised one ship's complements, including the crew. Given an average crew size of 30 or possibly 40 men, a system of 60 *garðs* will have provided the king of Dublin with 900 or 1,200 men. As mentioned above Dublin had between 600 and 900 plots, or between 10 and 15 plots per *garð*. Each plot will then have been obliged to provide one or two men for the fleet.

All this is highly conjectural of course, and as the evidence stands must remain a matter for speculation. In the High Middle Ages, Scandinavian towns were obliged to provide the king with ships for his defence

(Wikström [1974] 590). However, the ship taxes of Scandinavian towns were never of the magnitude of Dublin's. What is obvious from the above speculations is the immense costs to Dublin's economy in keeping the fleet, and only in so far as the fleet was able to pay its own way by selling mercenary services would it be possible for the town to keep it. The thousands of slaves and cattle which entered Dublin's market each year in the eleventh and twelfth centuries indicate that the fleet earned its income (Holm [1986]); but we will never know if ends were being met or resources were being drained from the town's economy.

Self-government

We have very little substantial information about the government of Scandinavian towns in the Viking age. The law codes of the High Middle Ages are clearly not of use in this context, and we are therefore forced to rely on scraps of evidence. The best pieces may be found in Rimbert's *Vita Anskarii* (pre-876). Rimbert accompanied Anskar to Birka so his account seems trustworthy (Fritz *et al.* [1974] 546). His terminology for the towns is *vicus* and *portus*, which were both widely used terms for towns in North Europe at the time, alongside *emporium*. The *vicus* or *portus* seems to have been a trading-place protected by the king, while the *emporium* seems to signify an undefended meeting-point for merchants. The tenth-century Scandinavian towns like Hedeby and Birka were fortified by earthen walls and palisades, entry being allowed through a fortified gate, and the towns enjoyed royal protection (Wikström & Saxtorph [1974] 584-9). According to Rimbert, the missionary negotiated with the town council (*placitum*) and a royal servant (*prefectus vici*) who presided over the council of Birka. In Hedeby Rimbert calls the royal servant *comes vici*. Eleventh-century evidence shows that the kings claimed *fori iura* which secured income from market tax and fines. Customs and mints were also later closely linked. Royal interests were administered by the town master, *gældker*, and the king had a town castle (*borg*) and sometimes owned part of and perhaps originally all of the town land. It is tempting to surmise that this later evidence shows that towns originated on royal lands, and that later medieval town freedoms developed from the town council.

How far this is relevant to the Hiberno-Norse towns is not clear. By the twelfth century, Dublin had a large house, "domus grandis", which was the seat of commercial negotiations, "ubi tanquam in foro pro rostris sedere consueverant" (Gilbert [1854] I: 153). The house was located by the river in present-day Winetavern Street and may have been an English-style Guildhall. It certainly gives evidence of increased commercialisation and the development of specialised crafts and trade by the twelfth century but it is not known when it came into being.

Incidental mention of what must have been town officers are contained in the Irish annals. Thus in the tenth century we learn of a pirate band of Lagmanns, Old Norse *lögmaðr*, who must have derived their nicknames from their position at the Thingmote, the assembly of the *þing*. In Waterford, the leading officer of the town is called *ármann*, Old Norse *ármaðr*, in the twelfth century. Dublin's king Sigtryg Silkenbeard killed king Ragnall of Waterford in 1031, and after that the town seems mostly to have been under Dublin's rule. Probably, the *ármaðr* was a representative of the ruler.[10]

The legal position of the Norse was a cause for puzzlement to the Norman invaders. Around 1250 a Norman enquiry into the conditions of the Ostmen in Wexford revealed that in the early years of the century around 100 Ostmen lived outside the town; they were wealthy and owned many head of cattle. The Norse farmers did pay dues for their cattle and the land they tilled but they enjoyed peculiar legal rights to Norman eyes. In return for their dues they claimed a right to elect their own lord.[11] Although they had been ousted from their own town, the Norse evidently claimed a hereditary freedom which made them stand apart from society at large.

Dublin's ceremonial symbols, the Sword of Carlus and Thor's Ring, are known from annalistic evidence. The Sword must have been part of the king's regalia while the ring obviously was the emblem of the *goði*, the leader of pagan rites and legal proceedings. We know that the kings of the Viking warriors swore an oath to king Alfred in 876 by the holy ring ("on þam helgan beage"), and the Icelandic Hávamál mention the '*baugeiðr*', ring-oath. It seems also likely that the ring was worn by the *goði* during the sacrificial slaughter (Olsen [1966] 48). We do not know if the Dublin king and *goði* were one and the same person. In 995, during internecine troubles in Dublin, the Irish king Máel Sechnaill took the town and stole the insignia (AT pp. 349-50). The Sword was later restored to the Dublin king, only to be taken again in 1029. It was returned and only finally lost to Dublin in 1061 when the king of Leinster took Dublin and invaded the Isle of Man to levy a tribute (AFM s.a.1058). The Ring, however, was permanently lost,

and the Irish burning of Thor's Wood in 1000 indicates a commitment on the part of the Irish to eradicate any remaining symbols of paganism.

By this time, the town had at least two generations of Norse Christians. Some christenings of Norse kings had taken place already in the ninth century, and again in the early tenth century. The conversions may have been caused by political expediency but by the 940s the annals record a more general christianisation of Norse inhabitants. The Norse kings were certainly Christians from this time onwards (Young [1950] 28-9). However, the break with paganism does not seem to have been abrupt which may account for the Irish actions. The loss of the Ring may not have been considered too great by king Sigtryg, who became a founder of Christchurch Cathedral and a pilgrim. The Sword, on the other hand, was a profound loss, and Sigtryg may have regained it in return for military services in the next few years when Dublin became firmly allied with the building up of the power of Brian Boru, one of the mightiest Irish kings of the eleventh century.

Ethnic and Political Identity

A town full of mercenaries and merchants like Dublin is likely to have experienced a constant migration of people of many origins. The shifting role of Dublin and York in the late ninth and early tenth centuries were but part of a wider pattern of Norse migrations of which we do not have the full picture. It is likely that Danish Vikings came to Dublin from Normandy once the Norman overlordship was settled after 911, and likewise there will have been Danish and Norwegian immigrants from England and Scotland during the tenth and eleventh centuries. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Norse were very active in Wales, and again there will have been a flux of merchants and warriors to and from places like Swansea which had a Norse population (Duffy [1995] 378-96). Intermarriage between Norse and Irish was common. It is well documented by the mid tenth century, and the occurrence of Irish and Norse personal names in Norse and Irish contexts respectively make it probable that there were numerous families of mixed ethnicity in the town and countryside. We cannot be certain about the extent of intermarriage but the reference in Irish sources to the dialectal "gig-gog" of the foreigners seems to refer to a *lingua franca* which made communication possible between the Norse and the Irish.[12] While there is no doubt about the Scandinavian origin of the Dublin kingship through the twelfth century, any clear ethnic identity of Dublin's citizens is unlikely to have existed. What mattered surely must have been the ability of the Dublin king in military affairs to secure the survival of the town and enough income to alleviate the citizens of the terrible burden of the upkeep of the fleet.

The title for the Dublin leader himself, '*rí*' or king in the Irish annals, seems unambiguous but probably was not (Ó Corráin [1979] 283-323). The kingship seems to have been heriditary within a group of offspring of the sons of Ivar, the ninth-century Dublin king. Other contestants do appear, the sons of Bárid, for instance, and the Limerick kingship clearly belonged to a competing dynasty. After 1095 the Turcall dynasty reigned over Dublin until 1171. Significantly, when the Irish kings conquered the towns, they did not incorporate them in their dominion but instead added the title of King of Dublin (See e.g. AU 1052, 1070). We hear also of subordinate *iarla*, earls or Old Norse jarls (AU 918). The nature of the evidence, however, is such that we can hardly elucidate the nature of the kingship.

As regards the question of citizenship – who were the true Dubliners – we are left in the dark. We do not know if and to what extent the Norse of Dublin gave a privileged role to descendants of the first invaders of the tenth century, and we do not know to what extent foreigners of other ethnic origin like Anglo-Saxons and Irishmen were incorporated in the citizenship. We do know from archaeological finds that there was a strong influence of both English and Irish material culture on the Norse and vice versa. As regards social stratification, there is good evidence for slavery within the walls of Dublin. Irish slaves seem to have been given Norse names, and that certainly was the case for the servant Kolbeinn who slew his Dublin king and master. The fact that even in the thirteenth century the Norse stood out as a self-defined group in Norman documents does, however, indicate that there was clear demarcation between Norse and non-Norse people of the town.

Conclusion

Was Dublin then a city-state according to the definitions of the Copenhagen Polis Centre? Clearly, it was a self-governing community and indeed an independent and autonomous state during the tenth and first part of the eleventh centuries. Although Dublin was heavily influenced by Irish political pressures already from the 940s, there is no doubt that it kept some internal sovereignty throughout its existence as

a Norse town, though by the mid-eleventh century onwards it hardly had any external sovereignty. Dublin's political identity centred on the town itself almost to the exclusion of both smaller and larger entities. In short, therefore, Dublin may be usefully analysed as a city-state and by implication so, too, may Waterford and Limerick, while the other Norse settlements are better regarded as city-state outposts. In sum, the Hiberno-Norse warrior camps and commercial towns of the tenth and eleventh centuries may be usefully conceived of as forming a city-state culture as defined by Mogens Herman Hansen.

What benefits can be had from recognising the Hiberno-Irish towns as city-states? The answer is twofold. By discussing the possible city-state character of the Hiberno-Norse towns, the evidence of these towns can be brought to bear on the wider discussion of the concept of city-state. Secondly, the rigorous framework of the city-state questionnaire highlights the present state of knowledge in the field and forces us to imagine answers to questions we would otherwise have preferred not to put. However, informed guesswork is better than undeclared assumptions. In view of the limited nature of our present knowledge of the Norse towns clearly we need more archaeological research and more evidence to be gleaned from the documents. The Copenhagen Polis Centre is to be thanked for asking some pertinent questions.

Notes

1. Curtis (1942) 99. I wish to thank my respondent for his observations on the draft paper.
2. Sommerfelt (1957). The most recent treatment of the Viking period in Irish history is Ó Cróinin (1995).
3. On Scandinavian towns, see Fritz, Blom, Schledermann & Kroman (1974) and Helle (1993).
4. Geographical Information Systems, which have been implemented as a tool for archaeological analysis only in recent years, will undoubtedly revolutionise our understanding of physical evidence, see Fabech & Ringtved (1999).
5. AU s.a. 1035, cf 993, 1014; AFM s.a. 1024; AI s.a. 1013; AT p. 385 ca. 1045. Also AFM s.a. 1052.
6. Ordnance Survey, Árt Ó Maolfabhail, pers. comm. 1978.
7. Leixlip, 15 km inland, is frequently referred to in the literature to be of Norse origin. Marstrander (1915) 149, however, disproves this assumption.
8. Giraldus Cambrensis, *Expugnatio hibernica*, eds. A.B. Scott & F.X. Martin (Dublin, 1978) 136.
9. AI 1000; *Cogadh Gaedheal re Gallaibh*, 116, 196, 198. See Marstrander (1915) 84-5.
10. Bugge (1900) 306, 315; Bugge (1904) 274. The meaning of another title "primhoigthigern Gall", AU 1124, is not clear to me. Bugge 1904, 301 identifies "arlabraid" of Dublin mentioned in 978 as an Irish translation of *þulr* (speaker) or *lögsögumaðr*.
11. Bugge (1904) 312: "Et dicunt quod tempore Marescallorum solebant praedicti Oustmanni terram tenere de quo domino volebant infra comitatum pro praedictis redditibus et serviciis domino Marescallo solvendis et reddendis."
12. The degree of bilingualism in the Hiberno-Norse settlements and indeed at Irish courts is highly contested in the literature and no firm conclusion can be made. Greene (1978) 122 argues that "bilingualism was the exception rather than the rule". However, his evidence is mainly ninth-century sources, while a recent reevaluation of eleventh-century court prose indicates that there will have been a bilingual audience in the Norse towns who appreciated the Irish propaganda (see Ó Corráin [1998]). A priori, we must accept that inhabitants of Dublin will have been bilingual enough for commercial purposes by the tenth-eleventh centuries.

Abbreviations

AI S. Mac Airt (ed.), *Annals of Innisfallen* (Dublin 1951).

AFM J. O'Donovan (ed.), *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters* 1-7 (Dublin 1848-51).

AT W. Stokes (ed.), "Annals of Tigernach," *Revue Celtique* 16 (1895) 374-419; 17 (1896) 6-33, 119-263, 337-420; 18 (1897) 9-59, 150-97, 276-303.

AU S. Mac Airt & G. Mac Nioclaill (eds.), Annals of Ulster (Dublin 1983).

CS W.M. Hennessy (ed.), *Chronicon Scottorum* (London 1866).

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