William "had deep speech with his counsellors and sent men all over England to each shire ... to find out ... what or how much each landholder had in land and livestock, and what it was worth" (Anglo-Saxon Chronicle).

One of the main purposes of the survey was to determine who held what, and what taxes had been liable under Edward the Confessor; the judgment of the Domesday assessors was final—whatever the book said about who held the material wealth, or what it was worth, was the law, and there was no appeal. It was written in Latin, although there were some vernacular words inserted for native terms with no previous Latin equivalent, and the text was highly abbreviated. The name Domesday comes from the Old English word dom (of which the Modern English doom is descended), meaning accounting or reckoning. Thus domesday, or doomsday, is literally a day of reckoning, meaning that a lord takes account of what is owed by his subjects. Richard FitzNigel, writing c. 1179, stated that the book was known by the English as 'Domesday', that is the Day of Judgement "for as the sentence of that strict and terrible last account cannot be evaded by any skilful subterfuge, so when this book is appealed to ... its sentence cannot be put quashed or set aside with impunity. That is why we have called the book 'the Book of Judgement' ... because its decisions, like those of the Last Judgement, are unalterable."[41]

In August 2006, a complete online version of Domesday Book was made available for the first time by the UK's National Archives.

The Domesday Book

The Domesday Book is really two independent works. One, known as Little Domesday, covers Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex. The other, Great Domesday, covers the rest of England, except for lands in the north that would later become Westmorland, Cumberland, Northumberland and County Durham. There are also no surveys of London, Winchester and some other towns. The omission of these two major cities is probably due to their size and complexity. Most of Cumberland and Westmorland are missing because they were not conquered until some time after the survey, and County Durham is lacking as the Prince-Bishop (William of St. Carilef) had the exclusive right to tax Durham; parts of the north east of England were covered by the 1183 'Boldon Book', which listed those areas liable to tax by the Bishop of Durham. The omission of the other counties has not been fully explained.

Despite its name, Little Domesday is actually larger — as it is far more detailed, down to numbers of livestock. It has been suggested that Little Domesday represents a first attempt, and that it was found impossible, or at least inconvenient, to compile the work on the same scale for Great Domesday. An excerpt for the survey of Wiltshire:

I p an līer p wyltshīr að famýl MacCarbaigh lýftstukk at 644 cewb. Hostall landen-suw Morgann famýl ron, rintað an MacCarbaigh, iusti utenõrõynn. Um tasseryfin 20%, iltað, paðer u Kongerk Masimus. Að nejn unnen sklab. Then it translates it to Latin: Omum lideralis familiae inimt Vitlsinum, MacCartagus est, a 644 mucheum. In terrum sus, rentatis pro se, MacCartagi, farum is hostalis recumin fa Morgann Familia, iustificates est. Un tassis suo fa 20% in acordum, accordae risius Rex Maximus, igunsi. Nientum tenenriae sclavusae. Translating as: The leader Wiltshirian family, with 644 cows, is the McCarthy. In their land, rented by them, the McCarthy's, there is an inn that is being run by the Morgan family, justified it is. They pay 20% of their tax to the family, which pays to the Maximus King. They do not own slaves.

For both volumes, the contents of the returns were entirely rearranged and classified according to fiels, rather than geographically. Instead of appearing under the Hundreds and townships, holdings appear under the names of the landholders ('tenentes'), i.e. those who held the lands directly of the crown in fee.

In each county, the list opened with the holdings of the king himself (which had possibly formed the subject of separate inquiry); then came those of the churchmen and religious houses in order of status (for example, the Archbishop of Canterbury is always listed before other bishops); next were entered those of the lay tenants-in-chief again in approximate order of status (aristocrats); and then king's serjeants (servientes) and English thegns who held land.

In some counties, one or more principal towns formed the subject of a separate section; in some the claromes (disputed titles to land) were similarly treated separately. This principle applies more specially to the larger volume; in the smaller one the system is more confused, the execution less perfect.

Domesday names a total of 13,418 places. [2] Apart from the wholly rural portions, which constitute its bulk, Domesday contains entries of...
interest concerning most of the towns, which were probably made because of their bearing on the fiscal rights of the crown therein. These include fragments of custumals (older customary agreements), records of the military service due, of markets, mints, and so forth. From the towns, from the counties as wholes, and from many of its ancient Lordships, the crown was entitled to archaie dues in kind, such as honey.

The information of most general interest found in the great record is that on political, personal, ecclesiastical and social history, which only occurs sporadically and, as it were, by accident. Much of this was used by E. A. Freeman for his work on the Norman Conquest.

The survey [edit]

From the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, it is known that the planning for the survey was conducted in 1085, and from the colophon of the book it is known that the survey was completed in 1086. It is not known when exactly Domesday Book was compiled, but the entire work appears to have been copied out by one person on parchment (prepared sheepskin). Writing in 2000, David Roffe argued that the inquest (the survey) and the construction of the book were two distinct exercises; the latter being completed, if not started, by William II following his assumption of the English throne and quashing of the rebellion that followed and based on, though not consequent on, the findings of the inquest.[3]

Each county was visited by a group of royal officers (legati), who held a public inquiry, probably in the great assembly known as the county court, which was attended by representatives of every township as well as of the local lords. The unit of inquiry was the Hundred (a subdivision of the county, which then was an administrative entity), and the return for each Hundred was sworn to by twelve local jurors, half of them English and half of them Normans.

What is believed to be a full transcript of these original returns is preserved for several of the Cambridgeshire Hundreds, and is of great illustrative importance. The Inquisitio Eliensis, the Exon Domesday (so called from the preservation of the volume at Exeter), which covers Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Somerset, Wiltshire, and the second volume of Domesday Book, also all contain the full details which the original returns supplied.

Through comparison of what details are recorded in which counties, six "circuits" can be determined.

1. Berkshire, Hampshire, Kent, Surrey, Sussex
2. Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Somerset, Wiltshire (Exeter Domesday)
3. Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Middlesex
4. Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire
5. Cheshire, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Shropshire, Worcestershire — the Marches
6. Derbyshire, Huntingdonshire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Yorkshire

Purpose [edit]

For the object of the survey, we have three sources of information:

- The passage in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, which tells us why it was ordered:

  "After this had the king a large meeting, and very deep consultation with his council, about this land; how it was occupied, and by what sort of men. Then sent he his men over all England into each shire; commissioning them to find out 'How many hundreds of hides were in the shire, what land the king himself had, and what stock upon the land; or, what dues he ought to have by the year from the shire.' Also he commissioned them to record in writing, 'How much land his archbishops had, and his diocesan bishops, and his abbots, and his earls;' and though I may be prolix and tedious, 'What, or how much, each man had, who was an occupier of land in England, either in land or in stock, and how much money it were worth.' So very narrowly, indeed, did he commission them to trace it out, that there was not one single hide, nor a yard of land, nay, moreover (it is shameful to tell, though he thought it no shame to do it), not even an ox, nor a cow, nor a swine was there left, that was not set down in his writ. And all the recorded particulars were afterwards brought to him."

- The list of questions which the jurors were asked, as preserved in the Inquisitio Eliensis

- The contents of Domesday Book and the allied records mentioned above.

Although these can by no means be reconciled in every detail, it is now generally recognized that the primary object of the survey was to ascertain and record the fiscal rights of the king. These were mainly:

- the national land-tax (geldum), paid on a fixed assessment,
- certain miscellaneous dues, and
- the proceeds of the crown lands.

After a great political convulsion such as the Norman conquest, and the wholesale confiscation of landed estates which followed it, it was in William's interest to make sure that the rights of the crown, which he claimed to have inherited, had not suffered in the process. More especially was this the case as his Norman followers were disposed to evade the liabilities of their English predecessors. The successful trial of Odo de Bayeux at Penenden Heath less than a decade after the conquest was one example of the growing discontent at the Norman land-grab that had occurred in the years following the invasion. The survey has since been viewed in the context that William required certainty and a definitive reference point as to property holdings across the nation so that it might be used as evidence in disputes and purported authority for crown ownership.[4]

The Domesday survey therefore recorded the names of the new holders of lands and the assessments on which their tax was to be paid. But it did more than this; by the king's instructions it endeavoured to make a national valuation list, estimating the annual value of all the land in the country, (1) at the time of Edward the Confessor's death, (2) when the new owners received it, (3) at the time of the survey, and further, it reckoned, by command, the potential value as well. It is evident that William desired to know the financial resources of his kingdom, and it is probable that he wished to compare them with the existing assessment, which was one of considerable antiquity, though there are traces that it had been occasionally modified. The great bulk of Domesday Book is devoted to the somewhat arid details of the assessment and valuation of rural estates, which were as yet the only important source of national wealth. After stating the assessment of the manor, the record sets forth the amount of arable land, and the number of plough teams (each reckoned at eight oxen) available for working it, with the additional number (if any) that might be employed; then the river-meadows, woodland, pasture, fisheries (i.e. weirs in the streams), water-mills, salt-pans (if by the sea) and other subsidiary sources of revenue; the peasants are enumerated in their several classes; and finally the annual value of the whole, past and present, is roughly estimated.

It is obvious that, both in its values and in its measurements, the survey's reckoning is very crude.

The rearrangement, on a feudal basis, of the original returns enabled the Conqueror and his officers to see with ease the extent of a baron's...
possessions; but it also had the effect of showing how far he had engaged under-tenants, and who those under-tenants were. This was of great importance to William, not only for military reasons, but also because of his firm resolve to make the under-tenants (though the "men" of their lords) swear allegiance directly to himself. As Domesday Book normally records only the Christian name of an under-tenant, it is not possible to search for the surnames of families claiming a Norman origin; but much has been done, and is still being done, to identify the under-tenants, the great bulk of whom bear foreign Christian names.

To a large extent, it comes down to the king's knowing where he should look when he needed to raise money. It therefore includes sources of income but not sinks of expenditure such as castles; unless their mention is needed to explain discrepancies between pre-and post-Conquest holdings. Typically, this happened in a town, where separately-recorded properties had been demolished to make way for a castle.

Subsequent history

Main article: Publications of the Domesday book since 1086

Domesday Book was originally preserved in the royal treasury at Winchester (the Norman kings' capital). It was originally referred to as the Book of Winchester, and refers to itself as such in a late edition. When the treasury moved to Westminster, probably under Henry II, the book went with it. In the Dialogus de scaccario (temp. Hen. II,) it is spoken of as a record from the arbitration of which there was no appeal (from which its popular name of Domesday is said to be derived). In the Middle Ages its evidence was frequently invoked in the law-courts; and even now there are certain cases in which appeal is made to its testimony.

It remained in Westminster until the days of Queen Victoria, being preserved from 1696 onwards in the Chapter House, and only removed in special circumstances, such as when it was sent to Southampton for photozincographic reproduction. Domesday Book was eventually placed in the Public Record Office, London; it can be now seen in a glass case in the museum at The National Archives, Kew, which is in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames in South West London. In 1869 it received a modern binding. Most recently, the two books were rebound for its ninth centenary in 1986, when Great Domesday was divided into two volumes and Little Domesday was divided into three volumes. The ancient Domesday chest, in which it used to be kept, is also preserved in the building at Kew.

The printing of Domesday, in "record type", was begun by the government in 1773, and the book was published, in two volumes, in 1783; in 1811 a volume of indexes was added, and in 1816 a supplementary volume, separately indexed, containing

1. The Exon Domesday—for the south-western counties
2. The Inquisitio Eliensis
3. The Liber Winton—surveys of Winchester late in the 12th century.

Photographic facsimiles of Domesday Book, for each county separately, were published in 1861-1863, also by the government. Today, Domesday Book is available in numerous editions, usually separated by county and available with other local history resources.

In 1986, the BBC released the BBC Domesday Project, the results of a project to create a survey to mark the 900th anniversary of the original Domesday Book. In August 2006 the contents of Domesday went on-line, with an English translation of the book's Latin. Visitors to the website will now be able to search a place name, see the index entry made for the manor, town, city or village and, for a fee, download the appropriate page.

Although unique in character and invaluable to the student, scholars are unable to explain portions of its language and of its system. This is partly due to its very early date, which has placed a gulf between the language of Domesday and our own, and refers to itself as such in a late edition.

To the topographer, as to the genealogist, its evidence is of primary importance, as it not only contains the earliest survey of each township or manor, but affords, in the majority of cases, a clue to its subsequent descent.

Bibliography


See also

- Medieval demography
- BBC Domesday Project
- Quia Emptores
- Publications of the Domesday book since 1086
- Photozincography of the Domesday Book
- Cestui que

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1. ^ ed. C. Johnson, Dialogus de Scaccario, the Course of the Exchequer, and Constitutio Domus Regis, the King's Household 64. London, 1950.
English Wikipedia Content policies According to the rules on the English Wikipedia, each entry in Wikipedia, to be worthy of inclusion, must be about a topic that is encyclopedic and is not a dictionary entry or dictionary-like. A topic should also meet Wikipedia's standards of "notability", which usually means that it must have received significant coverage in reliable secondary sources such as mainstream media or major academic journals that are independent of the subject of the topic. Jimmy Wales has described Wikipedia as "an effort to create and distribute a free encyclopedia of the highest possible quality to every single person on the planet in their own language". The English Wikipedia is the English-language edition of the free online encyclopedia Wikipedia. Founded on 15 January 2001, it is the first edition of Wikipedia and, as of November 2017, has the most articles of any of the editions. As of March 2019, 12% of articles in all Wikipedias belong to the English-language edition. This share has gradually declined from more than 50 percent in 2003, due to the growth of Wikipedias in other languages. As of 7 March 2019, there are 5,818,058 articles on the

External links

- Wikimedia Commons has media related to: Domesday Book
  - Domesday Book, from The National Archives (UK), Searchable text and page scans (complete).
  - Focus on Domesday, from Learning Curve Annotated sample page.
  - Secrets of the Norman Invasion Domesday analysis of wasted manors.

Domesday Book (also known as Domesday, or Book of Winchester), was the record of the great survey of England completed in 1086 C.E., executed for William the Conqueror. The survey was similar to a census by a government of today. William needed information about the country he had just conquered so he could administer it. Whilst spending the The Domesday Book reveals that one Brighton landowner did exactly that — with 4,000 herrings to be precise! It acquired the name “Domesday Book™” because of the huge amount of information that was contained in it. Indeed, it was noted by an observer of the survey that “there was no single hide nor a yard of land, nor indeed one ox nor one cow nor one pig which was left out.” This led the