Oxford Cambridge and RSA

Thursday 23 May 2024 – Morning

A Level History A

Y302/01 The Viking Age c.790–1066

Time allowed: 2 hours 30 minutes

You must have:
- the OCR 12-page Answer Booklet

INSTRUCTIONS
- Use black ink.
- Write your answer to each question in the Answer Booklet. The question numbers must be clearly shown.
- Fill in the boxes on the front of the Answer Booklet.
- Answer the question in Section A and **any two** questions in Section B.

INFORMATION
- The total mark for this paper is **80**.
- The marks for each question are shown in brackets **[ ]**.
- Quality of extended response will be assessed in questions marked with an asterisk (*).
- This document has **4** pages.

ADVICE
- Read each question carefully before you start your answer.

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SECTION A

Read the **two** passages and answer Question 1.

1 Evaluate the interpretations in **both** of the two passages.

Explain which you think is more convincing as an explanation of the development of York under the Vikings. **[30]**

Passage A

How far was the growth of trading and market sites, such as York, a result of Viking stimulus? Would such towns have developed anyway, even if there had been no Scandinavian influence? Was there anything particularly Scandinavian about the character of Viking Age York? Excavations over the last two decades may mean that we are now getting closer to answering these questions.

The general picture which has emerged from the York excavations is of a fairly squalid urban environment. The town has been described as a large compost heap composed of rotting wooden buildings with earth floors covered by decaying vegetation and surrounded by streets and yards filled with pits and rubbish dumps of organic waste. There is nothing particularly Scandinavian about the deposits from York. Indeed, one must also question whether there is anything distinctively Viking about York, apart from a new taste for Scandinavian-style ornaments. Certainly there is no evidence to show that the inhabitants were Scandinavian in origin. Scandinavian traders were not responsible for establishing York and other towns as major trading sites. On the contrary, York's international contacts were disrupted in the ninth century, and only recovered after an interval.

In York, the Vikings may have contributed to the urban community, but are unlikely to have created it. The seizure of the countryside by Scandinavian settlers may have caused some of the rural dispossessed to seek new opportunities in the town. It may not be a coincidence that the fastest-growing ninth-century towns, such as York, were in those areas most affected by Scandinavian land-taking.

Julian D. Richards, Viking Age England, published in 1991.

Passage B

Trading and small-scale manufacturing occupied much of Viking Age York. Although it is at this stage too early to comment fully, recent archaeological finds imply a well-organised townscape, and a vibrant commercial and industrial centre integral to well-used trade routes to other regions of Western Europe and even the Islamic world.

Viking Age York was exceptionally large by the standard of English towns, with a population numbered in many thousands and with great wealth. How should we explain the exceptional rise of Viking York as a manufacturing and commercial settlement? Previously, York lay on the periphery of a trading network centred on the Channel. The Viking Age created a different orbit, centred on Scandinavia but encompassing Ireland, Scotland and the Atlantic as well as the great European river valleys and the eastern Mediterranean. York served as a hub of Viking trade routes in the west. One consequence of successive Viking occupations by armies rich with plunder was the revival of the Northumbrian currency. The Vikings minted silver coins in considerable quantities. The new elite probably treated the city as a quasi-capital. Kings, archbishops and their retinues, and an inflow of taxes and renders from the Viking kingdom, capitalised the markets and attracted imports, encouraging trade and manufacturing. York should be viewed both as a centre of manufacturing and commerce and also as a focus of government and elite consumption at the core of a vibrant Viking kingdom.

Nicholas J. Higham and Martin J. Ryan, The Anglo-Saxon World, published in 2013.

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SECTION B

Answer any **two** questions.

2* ‘Throughout the period from c.790 to 1066, accession to the throne and personal power in Viking society was determined by personal wealth.’

How far do you agree? **[25]**

3* ‘The reward of treasure was the most important motive for Viking raids on England and Scotland.’

How far do you agree with this view of the period from c.790 to 1066? **[25]**

4* ‘Harald’s Jelling monuments were the greatest expression of Viking culture and religion in the period from c.790 to 1066.’

How far do you agree? **[25]**

END OF QUESTION PAPER

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