

Abstract

This master's thesis is the result of an effort to analyse Witenagemot, the Anglo-Saxon medieval assembly in terms of its constitutional functions and its relationship to the English monarch during its existence from the 7th to the 11th century.

In the beginning, the work deals with etymology and the definition of the term Witenagemot, which is cited not only in historical sources but also in English historiography. Furthermore, through critical analysis of historical sources and available English literature, the work discusses Witenagemot's origins, development, organization and basic functions in dedicated chapters. In these chapters, particular emphasis is placed on the drafting of Anglo-Saxon charters conferring privileges and patronages, on the appointment of prelates and nobility, on the exercise of justice, and on the creation of Anglo-Saxon law codes as an important source of Anglo-Saxon law.

The thesis also deals with the right of the assembly to elect the king and its significance for the formation of Anglo-Saxon law within the framework of the English constitutional development at the end and after the dissolution of the assembly itself in the second half of the 11th century. Attention is paid here, above all, to the way in which the right to elect the king was used to permanently alter Anglo-Saxon law and the status of the King of England in the critical moments of the English state during the 11th century.

In the end, under the weight of historical evidence being able to trace a certain line of constitutional development, especially during the reign of the last Anglo-Saxon rulers Æthelred II, Canute I. and Edward III. the Confessor, the work attempts to defend the position that sees Witenagemot as the founder of the English constitutional tradition. The tradition which eventually led to the elaboration of Magna Carta and the emergence of the first English parliament.